

THE PRINCIPAL

by
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FADE IN:

INT. THE SCHOOL BOARD CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Five Members of the SCHOOL BOARD look over the duplicated job application of RICK LATIMER, a handsome and imposing figure of a man sitting in a lone chair at the focus of the Horseshoe Table.

Board President, JANE BUCHANAN comments on the papers without looking up.

MS. BUCHANAN

Well. You certainly look good on paper. Your student evaluations. References from colleagues. I'd say you're doing rather well as a teacher.

Board Member PIERCE notices Rick covering his nervousness with a slight smile.

MR. PIERCE

So then why do you want to be Assistant Principal?

RICK

Because I'm doing well as a teacher.

MR. PIERCE

And?

RICK

And I can do more for the students.

MR. PIERCE

That's very noble of you. But doesn't the higher salary amount for anything?

RICK

After three years of night school, the drive-thru at Jack in the Box would've netted more per hour.

The Young Turk Superintendent GEORGE VALDIS nods his head from his place at the end of the table.

VALDIS

With better benefits.

Jane Buchanan continue reading from the application papers.

MS. BUCHANAN

It says in your bio you came across country when you were sixteen years

old, all by yourself with twenty dollars in your pocket.

RICK

Actually, I was about to turn seventeen.

MR. PIERCE

You were a runaway, Mr. Latimer.

RICK

No. More like a throw away. After my father kicked me out of our house in Pittsburgh, I figured I could make some kind of life out West.

MS. BUCHANAN

It looks like you did. Pulled yourself up by your own bootstraps.

RICK

Sure. That woulda been true if someone else hadn't done most of the pulling.

MS. BUCHANAN

Your ex-wife, was it?

RICK

No. Just a friend.

A heretofore silent board member suddenly interrupts.

MR. CLEVELAND

Mr. Latimer. Why did you smash up another teacher's car with a tire iron? I think it was about a year ago?

RICK

I paid for all the damage. He didn't file any charges.

MR. CLEVELAND

I know that. But why did you do it?

Rick is put off by the man's rude persistence.

RICK

He parked in my space.

MR. PIERCE

Mr. Latimer. This is very important.

RICK

I'm sorry. But it was personal. It had something to do with my ex-wife.

The board president speaks up before he says anything else.

MS. BUCHANAN

We understand. You don't have to go into it. That will be all.

Not totally satisfied, Rick gets up from his chair as Superintendent Valdis steps over from the table to walk Rick to the door.

VALDIS

It all looks good, Rick. I'll be in for lunch tomorrow. I'll let you know.

Valdis pats him on the shoulder as Rick walks out by himself.

CUT TO:

INT. A CLASSROOM - DAY

Thirty students in five evenly spaced desk columns hunch over their multiple choice GEOMETRY TEST, filling in the little bubbles with their No. 2 PENCILS.

Their teacher, RICK LATIMER, sits up front with his legs on his desk. He's nervous and restless, still thinking about the job and the interview as he shifts positions in his chair for the tenth time.

He looks out at the testing students then notices something in the back rows that makes him sit up straight.

Rick reaches into his desk for a pair of Bushnell BINOCULARS.

ANGLE - THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

as we see what Rick sees: A rather bookish looking student named LANCE WOODBURY copying his answers from an ANSWER KEY he hides under his own test.

Lance looks up to see the binoculars staring straight at him.

The CLASS BELL rings. A few students stand up from their desks to turn in their tests as Rick puts the Binoculars away.

RICK (CON'T)

All right. Get 'em up and don't fret. Course is available next year.

Lance quickly rolls up the Answer Key and folds it in half to make what he has to hide from the teacher as small as possible.

He looks for a pocket then stuffs it in his mouth, doing his best to blend in with the other students now filing out the door.

RICK (CON'T)

Lance, Buddy! What's the hurry?

Lance very reluctantly and nervously stays behind as the classroom empties to only him. Rick smiles.

RICK (CON'T)

Talk to me. Tell me a story.

Lance takes the folded up Answer Key out of his mouth to start begging for clemency.

LANCE

I'm sorry, Mr. Latimer. Please don't turn me in on this. It's just that I've been staying up all night on my Chemistry Lab and I didn't get a chance to study. And my Dad says if I don't keep a 3.8, I can kiss off any help for college. I'll do anything. Please?

Rick studies the frightened and pleading face of a desperate student. He shakes his head with forced regret as he packs up the other tests.

RICK

Lance. The problem is I've already seen it. I recognize that was you pulled out of your mouth as the answer key I reported missing from the computer room.

LANCE

Please? Isn't there something?

RICK

I don't know. I have a meeting with Principal Meyer right now. If he asks me about it, how can I tell him I didn't see my name on the top right there? How can I say I didn't recognize it?

Rick opens the door without further comment.

Lance picks up on what his teacher is hinting. He stuffs the folded up Answer Key back into his mouth and starts chewing wildly.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE 400 QUAD COURTYARD - DAY

RICK locks the door to the classroom while LANCE continues chewing for his academic future. He pulls the SOGGY WAD out of his mouth for Rick's inspection.

Rick pretends to be surprised and shocked.

RICK
I recognize that! That's my missing
answer key.

Lance stuffs the wad back in his mouth while he walks with Rick out the Courtyard crowded with lunch-bound STUDENTS.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL QUAD COURTYARD

Still doing his best to chew the ANSWER SHEET beyond recognition, LANCE walks alongside RICK through the chaotic crowd of white students in the school's Central Quad.

Lance takes the wad out of his mouth for inspection. Rick forces a confused expression as he scratches his head.

RICK
Hey, Lance. Aren't those my missing
test answers?

Back into Lance's mouth the wad of wet paper goes as Rick notices a passing GIRL trying to hide the CIGARETTE she's smoking.

RICK (CON'T)
(disappointed)
Ah, Sybil... Give me that before
they go planting a tree for you.

The Girl reluctantly hands Rick the smoking Cigarette then goes on her way with a defeated smile. Rick continues through the crowd with the paper chewing Lance, taking a drag from the confiscated Cigarette so as not to waste it.

CUT TO:

RICK

stopping in front of the Main Office door to extinguish the CIGARETTE in the dirt planter then toss it into the trash can while LANCE holds out the unrecognizable WAD OF WET PULP.

RICK (CON'T)

Oh, yuch. What is it? Throw it away before I barf.

Lance tosses the mess into the trash can unsure if he's passed.

RICK (CON'T)

And meet me before school Monday. I think there's a Geometry test you have to make up.

Lance beams as Rick walks backs into the Main Office.

LANCE

Thanks, Mr. Latimer.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICES

It's typewriters, bustle, and students waiting to see counselors that RICK walks into from the noise outside. Down the hallway to the Principal Meyer's office, he stops cold at another marked ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL Chet Workman.

Rick looks incredulously at the name and the young man inside behind the desk. The man gives him a friendly but somewhat nervous nod.

NERVOUS MAN

Uh. You must be Richard Latimer. They're expecting you.

The man points to the Principal's office almost as if to shoo Rick away, but Rick just stands and stares at him.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL MEYER'S OFFICE

PRINCIPAL MEYER, a fat balding man of forty, is sitting behind his large Mahogany desk when RICK walks in. He looks over to Superintendent GEORGE VALDIS then back to Rick who simmers with a look of disappointed confusion.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

You're late, Rick.

RICK

Yeah. Sorry. I was lunching with a student.

Rick sits down in front of Principal Meyer's expensive desk. The confidence he displayed with the students outside seems shaken by what he just saw.

The two administrators know what he saw and wait for him to say the first word about it.

RICK

You had already decided, hadn't you?

PRINCIPAL MEYER

Well, yes. I've had Chet in mind for some time.

Rick's simmering anger is now starting to build. He thinks about what it feels like to be used.

RICK

Then why did you put me through all this shit, and then drag me in for an interview?

VALDIS

Because we want to make you a principal, Rick.

Rick is taken aback. He looks at the two men for a moment of disbelief before a faint embarrassed smile appears on his face.

RICK

Oh.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

At Chaparral High School.

Rick's smile fades back when he hears the school's name.

RICK

Chaparral? Why... Why there?

VALDIS

Because there's no one really in charge there now. And we think you can do a good job.

There is a long silence as the three just look at each other, all thinking the same thing. Rick thinks it out loud.

RICK

You know it's a shit hole. You know it's a dead end. What makes you think I'd accept that position?

VALDIS

Rick. Please. Think it over.

RICK

What is it about me that makes you think I'd take that? Is it my background? Any particular incident in my past?

VALDIS

No one's trying to get rid of you. You're welcome to stay if you don't want the job.

RICK

All right. I will.

There is a long moment of awkward silence. Rick looks to the School Superintendent shaking his head, disappointed.

VALDIS

That's a shame. With your record and experience, I really thought you could do something for the students there.

RICK

I'm sorry I couldn't.

Rick stands up from his chair, not at all convinced he didn't snap to a decision.

CUT TO:

INT. A BILLIARD ROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE - LOOKING UP A POOL CUE

at the face of a GRAY-HAIRED MAN, leaning over a Billiard Table, taking his time to make a game-winning eight ball shot that's not exceedingly difficult, but not terribly easy.

The YOUNG TOUGH he's playing stands nervously by the STACK OF BILLS at the side of the table. But the Gray-Haired Man still waits to make the shot.

GRAY-HAIRED MAN

Double or nothing says I put it in the pocket I'm leaning over.

YOUNG TOUGH
No way, old man. No way.

The Young Tough adds another stack of bills to the table.

RICK
Twenty on the side says he does.

RICK LATIMER tosses a BILL down next to the stack. The Young Tough tosses his twenty on top.

GREY-HAIRED MAN
Look what happens when you leave the door open. Old stray dogs wander in.

He shoots.

The Eight-Ball rolls back into the said pocket as the Gray-Haired man stands up from the shot to reveal a very conspicuous CLERICAL COLLAR under the Sport Coat he straightens.

FATHER ROBERT JULIAN walks around the table to scoop up his sizable winnings under the dumbfounded face of the Young Tough.

FATHER JULIAN
Gambling's a sin. Don't forget it.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CITY STREET - NIGHT

FATHER JULIAN and RICK LATIMER walk together from the entrance of the sleazy BILLIARD ROOM down the sleazy street lined with sex shops, movie theaters, and liquor stores.

FATHER JULIAN
What brings you here, Rick. You must want something.

RICK
Yeah, I do. Forty bucks of that is mine.

FATHER JULIAN
It's a donation.

RICK
Donation to what? I'm not Catholic.

FATHER JULIAN
Didn't you come down here because you've been thinking it over and you've decided to convert?

RICK

No way.

Father Julian thinks it over as he walks through the Heavy Wooden door of a Catholic Church.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHURCH ENTRANCE

FATHER JULIAN holds the door open for RICK.

FATHER JULIAN

Then just consider it a deposit.
Until you do.

The Gambling Priest tosses the WAD OF MONEY to a NUN keeping books in a small office near the front entrance, then continues on into the church.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIEST'S QUARTER'S - NIGHT

RICK follows FATHER JULIAN into his small but comfortable room filled with all sorts of pictures and memorabilia.

FATHER JULIAN

C'mon, Rick. Get a clue. There's no such thing as a "bad school". Just neglected.

RICK

Well this one's been neglected beyond all hope.

FATHER JULIAN

Then why don't you just forget it?
Why are you bothering me about it?

RICK

Because I'm not sure.

FATHER JULIAN

Then tell me what it's like. What's it look like? What are the students and teachers like?

RICK

Huh. Yeah. I've never actually been there. I've just heard about it from other people.

Father Julian is incensed. He grabs Rick by the EYES, EARS, and NOSE respectively.

FATHER JULIAN

Did the good Lord give you all this expensive equipment just so you can sit on your ass and "hear about it from other people?" Go down there and see it for your-self.

Rick changes the subject by noticing a PHOTOGRAPH on mantle of himself, eight years younger and in a Marine Corps Uniform, with his arm around a PREGNANT WOMAN.

RICK

Why do you still have this?

FATHER JULIAN

(placing it back on shelf)
Because I introduced you. And because I don't break speed records for dropping all hope like you do. What do you think you looked like when I gave you a job and let you sleep on my floor? What do you think I should have done when I "heard it from other people" you were just some worthless punk who rode in on his bike from Pittsburgh.

While Rick considers this, he casually slides over a Small Vase to cover the image of the Pregnant Woman.

FATHER JULIAN (CON'T)

Don't you see what a grand opportunity this is? This could be your school. You could be responsible for where it goes from here. You can steer it down its dark course or you can re-navigate its direction. You could do it.

Rick thinks about it for a long time before a smile breaks out across his face.

RICK

God, Bob. Sometimes you are so damn corny.

FATHER JULIAN

Does that mean you're taking the job?

RICK

It means I'll go down there. I'll check it out.

Father Julian shakes his head at how much it took to get him this far.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A SMALL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Across an unmade mattress on the floor, we move into the lighted kitchenette where RICK LATIMER rips open an envelope of Carnation Instant Breakfast and pours it into a large wet GLASS.

He takes out a Carton of Milk but stops before filling the glass. Expiration Date: August 11. He puts it back into the near empty refrigerator then looks for one at least a month more recent. The other two cartons have July dates and the only other fluids are a Bottle of Coors and a Can of COKE.

He opens the can of Coke and pours it in the Glass with the Instant Breakfast powder, stirring it as if it weren't the first time he'd used a substitute.

Downing the entire glass in a matter of seconds, he walks out the door with a leather jacket on and a Helmet tucked under his arm.

CUT TO:

EXT. A SMALL APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT (DAWN)

ANGLE - A BLACK BOOT

kick starting a Honda Nighthawk MOTORCYCLE to the light of a nearby street lamp. The ROAR of the engine breaks the early morning silence in this middle class apartment neighborhood.

The HELMETED FIGURE of RICK LATIMER rides out the driveway and onto the quiet street under the dark grey sky.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY (DAWN)

The HELMETED FIGURE rides through the clean and empty streets of the city's financial district. A street sweeper looks down from his noisy truck. A homeless man sleeps inside the warm entrance to a bank.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AN INNER CITY STREET - DAY (DAWN)

As the streets grow more cluttered with parked cars, litter, and potholes, so do the sidewalks where early risers wait for the long ride to work.

A large black woman with her hand on a cane watches the MOTOR-CYCLE RIDER go by from her place on a bus bench. So do a group of Mexican men, waiting at a street corner to be chosen for a day's work.

A black man tending a small fenced-in garden stands up to watch the faceless apparition ride by.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANOTHER STREET

As the dim morning gets brighter, the neighborhood gets poorer. Every house, small or smaller, has METAL BARS on its duct taped windows. Store fronts are boarded up. Every open wall is covered with black, blue, and red gang GRAFFITI.

Riding past the barks of junk yard dogs, where the wind between buildings blows litter rolling across the street in front of him, the faceless rider approaches a long stretch of high chain linked fence with barbed wire running along its top.

Behind the fence are acres of asphalt with yellow flowered weeds growing up through the cracks.

The motorcyclist comes to a stop across the street from the fence's LOCKED GATE. Through the tinted helmet shield he looks at the sign on the gate: "CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - Gate Open During Regular School Hours - 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m."

The Helmeted Figure checks his watch, then turns off his engine. MUSIC and MAIN TITLES come to an end so that the only sound is the wind and the distant traffic from the city's center.

Across the empty parking lot inside the fence, he sees the old brick SCHOOL BUILDING standing by itself, covered with the same kinds of graffiti that blemish the rest of the neighborhood.

Rick takes off his shaded HELMET to get a better look at his bleak surroundings and the sad looking school through the chain-link fence.

RICK

Jesus. They were right.

He starts to get off his motorcycle when--

--one, two, then three WHITE TEENAGERS burst out from around the corner, running as if for their lives in all directions.

One runs past us. One disappears. The third and especially UGLY ONE, with brown ratty hair and a blue jeans jacket, races across the street and starts climbing the front gate.

RICK (CON'T)

What the..? Hey!

The sound of RICK LATIMER's lone voice is drowned by the SQUEAL OF TIRES as a red '68 CHEVY IMPALA, full of black faces, rips around the corner and smashes full speed into the GATE the Unkempt White is climbing on.

The White falls onto and rolls over the speeding hood which continues on through the fence and across the empty parking lot.

RICK (CON'T)

HEY!!

Rick revs up his motorcycle and speeds through the torn open gate, several hundred feet behind the Impala dragging a section of SPARKING FENCE across the asphalt with an ugly white teenager still holding onto it.

The Impala fishtails. The white teenager rolls off the chain links and onto some dead grass where he jumps to his feet and runs to the back of the school building. Three BLACK TEENAGERS burst from the car and start chasing, two with LEAD PIPES, one with a CRESCENT WRENCH. The DRIVER shouts instructions from the car.

BLACK DRIVER

Just kill 'im. That's all.

Picking up full speed across the broken asphalt parking lot, Rick chases the action on his motorcycle, accidentally dropping his Helmet when he runs over the stretch of torn fence by the Impala.

CUT TO:

THE LUNCH AREA

where the three BLACKS, wearing red shoelaces and red bandanas in their back pockets, are just about to corner the UNKEMPT WHITE inside the vending machine cage he has opened for sanctuary.

RICK races past two of the blacks on his motorcycle. One stops, confused at seeing him.

BLACK ASSAILANT

Hey!! Who he with?!

Rick skids to a stop between the unkempt white, who's fallen to the ground in front of the drink machine, and the last charging black, a little heavier than his friends, coming at him with a CRESCENT WRENCH.

RICK

All right. Just stop.

WRENCH BEARER

He white! He with him!

Rick has no choice but to swing the charging WRENCH BEARER around the back of his motorcycle into the plate glass of a "TOMM'S" SNACK MACHINE, falling to the ground himself.

The Unkempt White jumps to his feet to thrust a twelve inch KITCHEN KNIFE toward the gut of the fallen wrench bearer.

RICK

Hey!

Rick scurries back to his feet and charges into the Unkempt White. The knife flies as do the rest of the blacks save the wrench bearing fat boy screaming after them from his seat in the snack machine.

WRENCH BEARER

Get your ass back, niggers!!

He makes one last lunge at the unkempt White before Rick grabs his wrench hand and bangs it against the machine. Rick picks the two up by their Levi's jacket and bloodied tee-shirt so that their ugly white and baby fat black faces are close to his.

RICK

Is that all for today?!

He throws them both onto the seat of a LUNCH TABLE. The Unkempt White wipes his bleeding nose. BABY FAT EMILE wipes his bleeding head.

BABY FAT EMILE

Man?! Who you think you are?!!

Catching his breath, Rick looks around at the ravaged school and the two bleeding teenagers in front of him just as if he were dreaming the whole thing.

He thinks hard for a long confused moment, but finally answers.

RICK

The principal.

And with that, he's taken the job. He picks the two up to take them to his new office.

CUT TO:

INT. CHAPARRAL PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Through a row of clear windows that keep it separate from the main office -- one window, now only a board -- we see the

arriving SECRETARIES watching from their desks as RICK manhandles the combatants past them all and into his new office.

RICK
Morning, ladies.

They continue to watch him through the windows as he pushes the two into empty chairs, then sits down himself.

RICK
Gentlemen. We can sit here all day.

EMILE
Fuck you.

RICK
What was that? I didn't hear.

WHITE ZAC
That's his name. "Fuck You".

EMILE
Yeah. But you just call me "Fuck".
(pointing to White Zac)
And call this ugly asshole "White Zac". His whole name be too long to say.

RICK
I said we have all day.

EMILE
White Zac of Shit.

After a short pause, Rick picks up the large KITCHEN KNIFE he'd laid on his desk and looks straight at White Zac.

RICK
Tell me, Mr. Shit. What class is this for?

WHITE ZAC
Any class Victor Duncan tries to kill me in.

Emile glares at White Zac as if he'd broken some unwritten law.

EMILE
You shit...

Secretary DOROTHY JENKINS, a white woman in her fifties who looks like a throwback to the same era, sticks her head in the open door.

MS. JENKINS

Uh, If you're Mr. Latimer, Assistant
Principal Darcy is here.

Still holding the kitchen knife, Rick looks over as ROBERT DARCY, an intense man of small stature, enters the office, his eyes moving from the knife to White Zac and Emile, bloodied at the head and nose respectively.

Rick puts the knife down, wiping his hand to shake.

RICK

Mr. Darcy. Rick Latimer. I'm your
new principal.

But Rick has his eyes fixed instead on the beautiful and self-assured hispanic teacher, HILARY OROZCO, who steps into the office behind Darcy.

DARCY

The teacher from Sycamore. I was
hoping to speak with you before this-

RICK

--this welcoming party. Would you
please bring "Victor Duncan" into my
office now so I can reward his
thoughtfulness.

DARCY

Yes. That's not as simple as it--

EMILE

Motherfucker!

Emile lunges and swings his fist into White Zac's face.

EMILE (CON'T)

Be the last time you say his name.

The Secretaries stand from their chairs to look in on the fist fight which lasts only a few seconds before Rick pulls them apart, barely missing a word in his instructions to Darcy.

RICK

And get me expulsion papers on Mr.
Shit and Mr. Fuck here after you
phone the police.

DARCY

Wait, just a minute. Let's take our
time here.

JOE PHILLIPS, the black and athletic head of security, rushes in from his office in time to see Rick throw the two back down into

their chairs causing Emile to fall backwards in his. Rick extends his hand to Phillips.

RICK

Rick Latimer. I mean Principal Latimer.

PHILLIPS

Joe Phillips. Head of school security.

Hilary picks up the telephone and starts dialing. Emile wipes blood off his face with a grin that becomes a giggle.

EMILE

Expulsion. That a good one, Ricky.

Hilary hands the receiver to Rick from which we can faintly hear, "Central Police, May I Help You?" Darcy slams his hand on the BUTTON. He turns to Joe Phillips.

DARCY

Joe. Keep an eye on these two.
(to Rick)
Could we speak in my office?

Rick hesitates, but sees no reason to resist. He looks to Phillips, who gives him a reassuring nod, then to Hilary who whispers to him as he walks out with Assistant Principal Darcy.

HILARY

Open a window and don't step in it.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBERT DARCY'S OFFICE

With great urgency, ROBERT DARCY opens the door for RICK then escorts him to the window overlooking the parking lot and front entrance.

DARCY

Those are the only expelled students at this school.

Darcy is pointing down to the mostly black and hispanic students hanging around and playing in front of the school before going in. Some GANG MEMBERS stand out prominently.

DARCY (CON')

Except they arrive here, like garbage from all over the school district. Condit High. Sumner. You might even recognize a few kids from your own

school. Maybe some of the white kids trying to move in on Victor Duncan's action.

RICK

That's right. The ones he nearly had killed for it.

DARCY

It wouldn't be the first time.

RICK

Then why the hell do you put up with it?

DARCY

Because garbage never leaves the dump.

Rick takes a hard look at whom he'll be working with, considering what he's said, but unable to believe his choice of words.

RICK

That's very endearing language, Mr. Darcy. The students must love you here.

DARCY

They leave me alone. That's all I care about.

RICK

You talk as if they're all prison bound?

DARCY

Enough of them are.

RICK

Then why do they even bother coming to school? Are your hot lunches that good?

DARCY

No. It's just the only place they're not harassed by the police.

RICK

Even if one tries to run a knife through another?

Darcy is clearly getting impatient with Rick's impatience.

DARCY

Rick, the police don't bother with Chaparral. They have enough trouble with what's going on outside. They'll come, but we save them for a real emergency. The students know what we consider an emergency, so they leave us alone.

RICK

How can you run a school like that?

DARCY

What school? Christ, at a school students go to class and do homework. At a school you can walk down the hallway without thinking about your back. At a school you have real power to promote discipline.

Darcy looks at Rick who's fixated with the bleak view from the window, possibly wondering if he can get out of the job.

DARCY (CON'T)

Do you still want me to file those expulsion papers? In this instance the district will do everything they can to block them.

Rick shakes his head "no", then walks out, not entirely sure what to do next.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL HALLWAYS

LOUD MUSIC blasts from the end of the long hallway which RICK walks down, passing with every step an infraction that would earn a suspension or expulsion at his old school.

Three scuzzed-out white guys smoking pot play "Bloody Knuckles", a game where one person tries to snatch a METAL HAIR COMB balanced on the knuckles of his opponent and run the TEETH across the same knuckles before the opponent can pull his hand away.

The kid with his knuckles all scratched up and bloodied notices Rick stop and stare for a moment, then nod his approval.

RICK

May the best man win, men.

WHITE KID

Yeah, dude.

Latino gang members pitch quarters into a drinking fountain near where a LATINO COUPLE lean against the lockers with their tongues down each other's throats.

The guy puts his hand up her SWEATER, exposing her breast under his fingers. Rick discreetly pulls the girl's sweater down over the event as he passes by it. They look at each other like, "Who the hell is he?"

Rick continues on to where a BLACK KID sits on the floor smoking a brown Sherman Cigarette with his eyes closed and a huge RADIO blasting into his ear and the rest of the hallway.

RICK

Excuse me! The neighbors are complaining!

The kid doesn't respond. Rick reaches down and turns up the volume even more. The kid freaks dropping the radio into his lap with heavy breath. He doesn't look at Rick but straight ahead as if he were dreaming. Rick turns off the radio causing the BLACK GIRL teaching her friends a dance step to protest.

BLACK GIRL

Hey! I'm not through yet.

Rick kneels down to look into the kid's eyes. They are totally glazed over. He takes the Sherman Cigarette from his hand and smells the smoke. He grimaces.

RICK

Where did you get this?

The kid points to a line of students, some of them boys, waiting to get into the GIRLS' REST ROOM.

Rick takes it to the front of the line as the Black Girl turns up the radio again. A bleach blonde LATINO GIRL protests.

LATINO GIRL

Hey! No cuts!

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' REST ROOM

Holding the Burning Cigarette, RICK marches into the crowded smoke-filled rest room where TREENA LESTER, an attractive but forceful black girl, sits on the edge of a toilet dispensing the same SHERMAN CIGARETTES from a CAFETERIA TRAY resting on a stool.

TREENA

Just Dead Presidents on paper. But if you wanna leave a tip, I won't argue.

(to Rick's waist)

Back of the line, dickface.

RICK

Do you have an exchange window? Mine seems to have been soaked in "Windex".

She looks up as Rick puts his Burning Cigarette on the tray to pick up another and smell the tip. Treena grabs it back from his hand.

TREENA

Windex? This is good shit. Don't touch it 'til you made a deposit.

Rick picks up the entire TRAY full of Cigarettes, pulls Treena off the TOILET by her wrist.

TREENA (CON'T)

Hey! What're you doing?!

RICK

Making a deposit.

Rick dumps the tray into the TOILET and flushes it with his foot. It doesn't flush. He tries again. It gurgles.

TREENA

Man, you stupid fuck! You know who those belong?

RICK

What class are you supposed to be in, young lady?

Treena gets down on her knees and starts fishing the Cigarettes out of the toilet one by one.

TREENA

(pointing outside)

Next door! But my teacher, he ain't never there yet. Man, Victor. He gonna come look for you.

RICK

Yeah. You give him directions. The big office, end of the hall.

Rick walks back out through the shocked line of students.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY

RICK marches across the noisy hallway to where the open door to a CLASSROOM shows about two dozen students playing around and talking in the absence of a teacher.

Even angrier, Rick heads down the hall to a guarded "TEACHERS LOUNGE" DOOR. He tries it. It's locked.

RICK
Open it. Please.

The young GUARD fumbles with his set of keys.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TEACHER'S LOUNGE

Nearly all the two dozen or so teachers, mostly white but a racial mix, look up from their magazines, newspapers, coffee, and machine dispensed snacks when their new principal bursts in.

RICK
Guess what, everybody. I just caught a student selling Sherman cigarettes soaked in "good shit", across the DMZ, during school hours.

Rick surveys the dead faces of the teachers who find their only day's peace in the guarded lounge furnished with moth-eaten couches and a view of the parking lot.

Not one speaks.

RICK
I can see you're all in shock. But don't get up. I took care of it.

None of the teachers are looking at him directly except HILARY OROZCO, the beautiful latino woman from the office, who stops correcting journals at her place by the window.

RICK (CON'T)
Oh, yeah. And whomever teaches 11th grade social science this period, your class has broken up into small groups to discuss the dialectic and class struggle. You might want to sit in on this one today.

JACK HARPER, a tired middle-aged white social science teacher looks up from his Sony WATCHMAN and over his Horn-Rimmed glasses to see the source of sarcasm.

MR. HARPER

Might I? I really find dialectic and class struggle rather dull.

Rick walks to where he towers over the sitting man.

MR. HARPER (CON'T)

Especially when it's discussed with double digit vocabularies.

RICK

You just haven't given it a chance. C'mon. There's still thirty minutes left in your class.

Rick walks behind the man, reaches down, and turns off his little television set.

MR. HARPER

What the hell are you trying to do?

RICK

Help you to your assigned class. You obviously don't give a shit enough to go by yourself.

MR. HARPER

All right, Mr. Latimer is it? I'm going to class.

(standing up)

But I don't ask me to ask me to "give a shit." 'cause I don't get paid enough.

There is quiet but general consensus around the room. Hilary finally says something from her place at the window.

HILARY

You're absolutely right, Jack. But you're still overpaid.

MR. HARPER

Oh really, Ms. Orozco? Do you think my students would learn anymore if I showed up to class on time? If I showed up at all?

HILARY

No. I don't think they would.

RICK

Why are we guessing? Why don't you
just go in and find out?

A black woman teacher named MARY SINGER has heard more than she
can take.

MS. SINGER

Just who the hell do you think you
are? You haven't even been here a
couple of hours.

RICK

It doesn't even take that long.
Don't you see it anymore?

Mr. Harper stuffs his Watchman back in his briefcase and heads
for the door.

MR. HARPER

We see it. We just know we can't
change it.

RICK

Because you don't have a "give a
shit" clause in your contract?

MR. HARPER

I've heard enough of this.

RICK

No you haven't.

Rick grabs hold of Mr. Harper before he can leave.

RICK (CON'T)

'Cause tomorrow at this time,
everyone here is going to help seat
students at the all-school assembly
in the auditorium. So you can hear
even more self-righteous bullshit.

A hush of outrage spreads through the room.

MR. HARPER

An assembly?! Are you mad?

MRS. RECTOR

My God! Why are you doing that?!

RICK

I don't know. Maybe I like the
attention.

Hilary shakes her head with a smile, then goes back to correcting her journals. Rick storms out amidst the flurry of protests.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

It is near the end of the day as RICK sits quietly and alone at his desk, looking through some paper work and wondering what the hell he is doing at this place.

Through his windows he looks up to see the School Secretaries locking up their desks to leave together. He gets up from his own desk and opens the big FILING CABINET next to his door.

It's a mess. He looks through some of the File Headings: Appropriations, Yearly Budgets, and Students. One file stands out among the rest because it five times thicker than the others.

It's labeled: "VICTOR DUNCAN". Rick pulls that file.

CUT TO:

RICK'S OFFICE (LATER)

All the secretaries are now gone as RICK has been reading the various papers in the Victor Duncan file. By the expression on his face we can tell that some of it is very chilling.

So engrossed is he in what he's reading, he is barely conscious of a strange noise coming from the hallways outside: Something bouncing off the lockers.

It is a very methodic bouncing, almost as if to call him out.

He gets up from his chair to see who or what it is.

CUT TO:

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

RICK steps out cautiously into the empty hallway until he sees a tall but lanky BLACK STUDENT throwing an old TENNIS BALL against the lockers, and catching it behind his back.

The Black Student stops when he sees Rick. Their eyes lock together over the dozen or so yards between them.

RICK

What're you doing here?

No answer. The kid just stands there looking at him. Rick starts to cautiously approach him when Head of Security JOE PHILLIPS appears from around the corner.

PHILLIPS
Oh, Rick. I'll take care of it.

RICK
Who is he?

PHILLIPS
No one. Just a scared kid. He got
beat up for not joining a gang.

RICK
Geez. Either way, how can he win?

PHILLIPS
He can't. But I've been letting him
hang out after school.

The Black Kid smiles slightly when he sees Phillips.

RICK
And I thought he was this Victor
Duncan guy.

Phillips laughs as if that were preposterous.

PHILLIPS
Yeah, Right. I better drive him
home.

Phillips goes back to the office for a moment leaving Rick to
watch the kid just standing there. He goes back to throwing the
ball against the lockers as we--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

--and the ROAR of fifteen hundred students being led into the
heretofore unused school auditorium. The teachers leading them
in do their best to keep their groups together but once inside,
the steady flow of students quickly coagulates into groups of
friends, cliques, and most noticeably -- because of their
distinct racial make-up and dress -- youth gangs.

ANGLE - WHITE ZAC

sitting inside a Small Gang of the school's only WHITES, keeping
his eyes on HILARY leading students in through a side door.

He whispers to his white friend, ROLF.

WHITE ZAC
We got the little black boys scared.
Few more weeks, we'll be running
business here.

Rolf, who despite his acne looks like he could have earned a part in "Triumph of the Will", rubs the shoulder of TREENA LESTER sitting with some other black girls in front of them.

ROLF

Hear that, colored lady? We have an opening that needs to be filled.

WHITE ZAC

(to Treena)

If you have one too.

White Zac and Rolf laugh at their joke until the louder, forced laughter from behind makes them turn around to see--

--EMILE and several dozen members of the black gang have taken ALL THE SEATS surrounding them.

EMILE

You jus' watch your own openin's,
Dough Boys.

ANGLE - THE STAGE

where the MICROPHONE on a STAND is the day's only entertainment.

RICK walks to it from the back of the stage and stops, saying nothing, looking out into faces of the noisy crowd.

Close up we see a man, just a teacher only a few days before, not at all sure about what he is doing, but doing his best to make it look like he is sure.

From this vantage Rick sees the hundred different types that go to Chaparral, not just the more obvious delinquents and junior criminals, but also the regular students who keep to themselves, trying their best to learn and survive in a school neglected by the people in whom they invest their limited trust.

By now, most everyone has seen Rick standing alone on the stage, somewhat ominous in that he hasn't said a word. Some of the students hoot at him yelling stupid little phrases like, "Are you gonna sing for us?" and "How 'bout a dance, Faggot?"

After an excruciating long moment, Rick finally speaks.

RICK

(with cracking voice)

I am not going to stand here and talk
about the value of education--

The end of the sentence is lost in a wave of hoots and catcalls including, "Then what're you going to do? Beat off on stage?" Rick looks off-stage making a gesture to turn up the volume.

RICK (CON'T)

I just have two words for you:
"No More".

A Latino student shoots up out of his seat.

LATINO

I've got two words for you, man:
"Fuck You!".

A short wave of laughter moves through the auditorium as others in the latino gang throw out their own two words: "Eat Shit", "Suck Me", "Bite Dick", "Lick Pussy", "Wipe Butt", "French Ass".

The laughter rises with each one while all Rick does is offer a nervous smile and shake his head.

RICK

I'm impressed. They told me you
couldn't form complete sentences.

A wave of laughter crushes the previous. The same latino stands up to rebut.

LATINO

Hey, man. You think you're funny but
you're really full of shit.

RICK

Two connecting clauses. With that
education you might even have a
future -- cleaning toilets.

Another roar of laughter. Rick blocks a third reply with a thunderous demand.

RICK (CON'T)

No more!!

The crowd quiets slightly under Rick's newly established presence.

RICK (CON'T)

No more missing classes. No more
loitering in the hallways. No more
gambling. No more extortion. No
more selling drugs on campus. No
more gang intimidation. Arson.
Rape. Robbery. Whatever you're
majoring in here. No more.

While Rick speaks he notices a BLACK FIGURE standing in the double-doorway at the back of the auditorium, silhouetted by the light from the hallway.

RICK (CON'T)

I know what most of you are thinking. That son of a bitch can't do anything. He can't expel students from Chaparral. Maybe that's true. But then the same goes for principals. You can't expel me either.

Rick notices the figure at the back of the auditorium slowly walking down the aisle.

RICK (CON'T)

So as long as I'm here, I'll promise you one thing. I'll do whatever it takes to enforce my painfully simple rule: No more.

After a short silent moment, a black freshman starts clapping in the front row. This sets more than half the auditorium into a somewhat timid applause which is soon drowned by a stream of hisses.

Rick turns his attention from the audience to the figure walking down the aisle where the light from the stage reveals it to be the toughest and dirtiest looking young black man one would ever hope to see. With an intense expression and a head of hair stuffed into an old maroon sweater cap, the TOUGH BLACK continues walking with his deep stare locked on the principal's.

RICK (CON'T)

You. Sitdown.

He doesn't. Rick motions to a white GUARD standing to the side of the stage.

RICK (CON'T)

Usher?! Please help this gentleman find a seat.

The guard doesn't move. He stands petrified at the sight of the tough looking Black who's stopped about ten yards in front of the stage to look Principal Latimer straight in the face.

TOUGH BLACK

You talk too much.

Angry at the affront, Rick starts to climb down from the stage. The Tough Black thrusts his hand out to the side.

Rick stops for a moment, waiting to see what he's going to do, then continues down from the stage.

The Tough Black reels off a series of complex HAND SIGNALS causing the BLACK GANG to suddenly attack the WHITES with a war cry.

In a matter of seconds the orderly assembly becomes a full scale riot.

Frightened students start pushing their way through the exit. Curious students push to the center to get a better look. The Tough Black who started it all disappears as both aisles are now flooded with chaos.

The security guards and two large MALE TEACHERS start their way in to the center along with Rick who has jumped down from the stage to meet them in eye of the hurricane.

White Zac, Rolf, and some of the other whites hold their own well, but eventually fall victim to the blacks in greater numbers.

Some combatants, both white and black, lay bleeding on the floor between the folding chairs.

The outnumbered security guards pull combatants apart. Rick does the same until he comes face to face with JOE PHILLIPS amidst the melee.

RICK (CON'T)

Is that our friend?

PHILLIPS

Forget it. Not now.

Rick starts pushing his way through the students towards the auditorium exit.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAYS

Safe from the riot inside the auditorium, students push their way through the hallway to wherever they're going next. RICK does the same, spotting the tough BLACK FIGURE walking down the center of the hall in front of him, students parting to get out of his way.

Rick pushes through until he is near enough to call out.

RICK

Victor!

The tough black figure of VICTOR DUNCAN turns around slowly to greet the new principal with a long intense stare. Rick stops ten feet short of him, studying the dark and icy visage of perhaps the most vicious human being he's ever see.

RICK (CON'T)

That was an admirable display of poise and authority.

Victor remains silent, rubbing his chin down with his hand as if he had a beard.

RICK (CON'T)

You know if you work real hard I just might be able to get you into Student Council.

Victor smiles slightly, then starts to walk away again. Rick follows him through the captivated students.

RICK (CON'T)

Course you'll have to stop all your extracurricular business. You know harassment. Drug dealing. Gang fights. Pimping. That stuff doesn't look good at leadership camp.

Victor turns slowly towards Rick who stops only a few feet in front of him. The crowd around them hushes.

VICTOR

Doesn't look good, huh?

RICK

No. I don't like it at my school either.

Victor clicks a SWITCHBLADE from his pocket and waves it past Rick's face. "This could be it", Rick appears to be thinking as he does his best not to look scared or affected.

VICTOR

Well, boy. If you don't like it--

With a quick movement, Victor flips the switchblade around and extents it to Rick by the handle.

VICTOR (CON'T)

--you'll need this.

Rick takes the blade from his hand, confused. Victor smiles.

VICTOR (CON'T)

'Cause this school is my school. And I make the rules.

Rick looks down at the Switchblade he's left holding while we follow Victor ambling away through the crowd with a grin.

The CLATTER OF METAL makes Victor look to the floor where the SWITCHBLADE comes to rest, bloodied and broken in two pieces.

He looks back at Rick who stares at him with bleeding hand.

RICK

Not anymore.

Rick's own amazement in what he's just done seeps through his tough facade as he turns around and walks to his office.

Victor picks up the switchblade halves and wipes the blood off. This new principal is different. Maybe.

CUT TO:

EXT. A DOWNTOWN CITY STREET - NIGHT

RICK walks briskly alongside Superintendent GEORGE VALDIS with the other pedestrian rush hour traffic.

RICK

The only reason this guy comes to school at all is to sell drugs, intimidate students, and collect money. All I'm asking is to be able to do what any other principal could do.

VALDIS

But you're not like any other principal. If you got rid of every student who broke the rules at your school, you wouldn't have any left.

RICK

Just this one, that's all.

VALDIS

No. It's like salted peanuts, one leads to another. Besides, if I approved his expulsion, what school would we place him in?

RICK

No school. He's seventeen. He's old enough to be out on his own.

VALDIS

You think that's what the people of this city want? Victor Duncan out on his own? On the streets everyday?

RICK

Bring that up with the police. My concern is the students and the school.

VALDIS

I think the police would just as soon have him stay there.

Rick stops walking. Valdis turns around amongst the other pedestrians.

RICK

What should I write on my tax return this year? High School principal or Warden?

VALDIS

Probably both.

Rick doesn't know what to say. He is surprised by the man's candor.

VALDIS (CON'T)

Rick. Listen. I'm sure I can accommodate you on most of the things you've asked for. Fixing the plumbing and so forth. But as for a general policy on student expulsions, you would have to be able to prove a serious infraction.

RICK

How serious do you want? A gang rape? Dismemberment? A murder maybe?

VALDIS

Just something the police can work with. I gotta go now. But hang in there, guy. You're doing a great job.

Rick agrees with a slight disgusted nod as Valdis continues on his way.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICE - DAY

In the small public waiting area, heavy-set JOE PHILLIPS defends himself to Assistant Principal DARCY in the presence of three young, almost boyish, SECURITY GUARDS.

PHILLIPS

He told us to wait here.

DARCY

And I told you to get back to your posts. Do you know what could happen after his assembly stunt yesterday?

RICK bursts in through the office door with two muscular and heavy set male P.E. TEACHERS in his footsteps.

DARCY

Latimer. What is this about?

Rick ignores him while he glances past the three not-so-heavy set young guards waiting with Joe Phillips.

RICK

I said the entire security force.

PHILLIPS

Yeah.

After studying Phillips' sincere face, Rick realizes he's looking at the entire security force.

RICK

Oh God... We'll need more.

The "entire" security force stands up and follows Rick and the two teachers into the office area where Rick now acknowledges Darcy.

RICK (CON'T)

Every assistant from the athletic department. Every student's class schedule. And every attendance sheet. Bring 'em all into my office.

DARCY

Right now?

RICK

No. Surprise me on my birthday.

DARCY

Latimer!

Rick finally acknowledges Darcy as he makes his way to his office with his entourage.

RICK

That's "Mr. Latimer", Darcy. And put these two men on temporary payroll as security guards.

DARCY

What?

RICK

They've been deputized. Get 'em some badges.

DARCY

But they're teachers.

RICK

Big teachers. They deserve raises after my "assembly stunt".

The big teachers smile at the assistant principal as they file into Rick's small office with the other guards.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

His hand still bandaged from breaking the switchblade, RICK stands behind his desk while his small army of five squeezes in to take instruction.

RICK

What I want is painfully basic. Every student back in the class he or she's supposed to be in. Use the schedules for those you recognize. For those you don't and who won't cooperate, bring 'em in. We have pictures.

A GUARD

What if they refuse to go?

RICK

Ask 'em nicely.

The guards laugh as if he's joking.

A GUARD

And if they still won't?

RICK

Grab their wrists. Twist their arms. Put 'em in a head lock. Then ask 'em nicely.

ANOTHER GUARD

All right.

A surge of tempered enthusiasm spreads through the guards. A few slap each others' hands. JOE PHILLIPS appears more skeptical.

PHILLIPS

Rick. I don't mean to spoil the mood, but excessive force breaks our guidelines for proper behavior.

Rick is looking at Phillips as if he recognizes from somewhere else but can't place him.

RICK

"Proper behavior" is for proper behavior.

PHILLIPS

But it's our jobs on the line. We all have contracts with the district.

RICK

The district has broken its contracts. I'll take full responsibility.

Joe Phillips thinks about it for a moment, then nods his head in ascension.

PHILLIPS

Let's do it.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN HALLWAY

The usual melee. Students go about their business pitching quarters, smoking, playing loud music, and engaging in public foreplay.

KEVIN ARBURTHA, a black student and a member of Victor's gang, lets a Sherman Cigarette drop from his mouth when he looks down the hall.

KEVIN

Fuuuuck...

REVERSE ANGLE and we see what he sees--

--A WALL OF SEVEN SECURITY GUARDS moving down like a tidal wave, swallowing up truant students never to be seen in the hallways again.

Kevin and two of his black friends take off through the double-door exit.

A group of blonde latino girls escape into a nearby rest room.

ANGLE - BEHIND THE WALL OF GUARDS

where the large P.E. TEACHER turned guard pushes two white truants up against the lockers.

P.E. TEACHER
Chris Hopkins and Terry Wolfe.

JOE PHILLIPS checks the class lists and marks them off.

PHILLIPS
Rooms 203 and 224.

The P.E. teacher takes them away by their collars.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GIRLS' ROOM

The group of LATINO GIRLS scream as TWO GUARDS walk in with impunity to pluck them out of their smoke-filled sanctuary.

CUT TO:

INT. A CLASSROOM

Teacher, JACK HARPER, looks up from his desk when a ANOTHER GUARD bursts in with two TRUANTS squirming in his hands.

GUARD
Here to deliver Franklin Wright and
Maria Lopez.

The guard pushes the two students into two empty seats.

MR. HARPER
Take 'em back. They're too far
behind.

ANOTHER STUDENT
Behind what, man?

The class laughs as the guard walks out the door and back to the front lines.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CENTRAL QUAD

JOE PHILLIPS and another guard chase a small but quick LATINO BOY into the lunch area then on into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL KITCHEN

The two guards run in to find the kitchen full of truants of all colors taking refuge amongst the school cooks going about their business.

PHILLIPS

Yep. Too many cooks here.

The two start rounding them up.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN HALLWAY

The hallway is jammed with students passing between classes like any other school. It starts to thin out as they disappear into their assigned rooms for the period.

When the BELL RINGS, the magnificent seven SECURITY GUARDS move down the hallway swallowing another round of truants.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

RICK examines a stack of ATTENDANCE SHEETS while JOE PHILLIPS, looking somewhat uneasy, is now the only guard sitting in front of the principal's desk.

PHILLIPS

Yeah. Most of them stuck to their schedule after the first time. They knew we'd just get 'em again.

RICK

Any problems with Victor?

Phillips hesitates but answers truthfully.

PHILLIPS

No.

Rick looks up from his desk, knowing he's not getting the entire picture.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)

We don't make problems with Victor.

RICK

Where is he?

PHILLIPS

Where he usually is: In the alley between the physical plant and the

maintenance garage. Now he's selling refuge there at five dollars per person per day. Making a living off your new program.

Rick shakes his head as if he can't believe it.

RICK

Jeez. How many students has he sold it to?

PHILLIPS

Maybe twenty. But most of them are sherm-heads. Gang bangers. You could be generous and call them "students".

RICK

I will, as long as they're on these sheets. Why didn't you clear them out?

Phillips hesitates as if he's finally going to say what's been on his mind.

PHILLIPS

Because I can't ask my men to do that. And they wouldn't if I did.

RICK

Maybe there's some other form of persuasion. Maybe I'll ask them.

PHILLIPS

(shaking his head)

Please. Last Spring one of them got a knife in his neck making a drug bust in there. They all know how unprotected they are between those walls. And even if they got them out, how are they supposed to handle that many people? They're not police. They're just guys. They don't get paid much.

Rick doesn't have an answer. He just stares at Phillips, thinking. He stands up and looks out the window.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)

I really like what you're doing here. You don't know how long I've been waiting to see this. But sometimes you gotta compromise.

Phillips waits for Rick's answer as he continues his stare across the school yard.

RICK
Yes. I suppose you're right about that.

Rick leaves the window looking straight at Phillips.

RICK (CON'T)
But this isn't one of those times.

Rick walks past Phillips and stops at the door. Phillips doesn't get up, but only looks around. Rick gives him a friendly and reassuring smile.

RICK (CON'T)
C'mon. I think I know the form of persuasion.

Phillips gets up not knowing what he could possibly mean.

CUT TO:

EXT. VICTOR'S ALLEY - DAY

ANGLE - A PAIR OF BLACK HANDS

passing out a stack of FIVE DOLLAR BILLS as if they were cards in a poker game.

JOJO, and KEVIN -- present at White Zac's attack -- pick up their share off the orange crate while VICTOR wraps a rubber band around the remainder.

Jojo points to a curtain in the back of the alley behind which a couple can be heard making love.

JOJO
What about her?

Victor looks back to the noisy curtain, thinks about it, then pulls one FIVE DOLLAR BILL from his own stack.

VICTOR
Where's baby fat Emile?

KEVIN
He go to class this time.

VICTOR
Why?

JOJO

Who knows? Maybe Nigger be liking
that shit.

Victor stares ahead with quiet anger as he pockets Emile's stack.
He notices a commotion from the other end of the crowded alley.

VICTOR

(to Jojo)
Go check that.

Jojo hops to his feet. We follow him as he passes truant
students playing gambling games, dipping cigarettes into a some
sort of chemical then laying them out to dry, sleeping, and just
hanging out in the refuge of the alley.

Jojo joins another black GANG MEMBER facing off with RICK at the
opening by the basketball courts.

JOJO

What he want?

GANG MEMBER

Say we breaking the fire code. Say
we have too many homeboys in alley.

Jojo looks at Rick, totally dumbfounded.

RICK

Maximum capacity is ten, gentlemen.
And I'm afraid you're aisles and
exits are all blocked.

GANG MEMBER

He say he hafta take pre-ven-tit-tive
measures if we don't correct the
problem.

Jojo laughs.

JOJO

Go ahead, Mr. Prin-C-Pal. Take your
pre-ven-titive mea-sures and fuck
off.

Jojo puts his hand in his pocket, presumably on a switchblade.

RICK

All right.

Rick steps back just as a FIRE HOSE rounds the corner in the
hands of JOE PHILLIPS and the P.E. TEACHER.

JOJO

Sheeiii----!!!!

Before Jojo can get out his last "t", a BLAST OF WATER throws him into the screaming crowd behind.

Utter chaos as everything we saw before is blown into a wet disarray. Realizing there is no safe place inside, soaking students run out past the fire hose marching deeper into the alley.

ANGLE - RICK

and the FIVE OTHER SECURITY GUARDS catching the wet students as they come out and tying them wrist-to-wrist with tightly stretched, old elastic JOCK STRAPS.

ANGLE - THE FIRE HOSE

digging further into the alley, shattering orange crates, and even sending Victor out as well.

A P.E. TEACHER grabs the soaking Victor by the arm as he emerges and holds him next to Rick.

RICK
Did I interrupt your busy-ness,
Victor?

VICTOR
Man, doughboy. You blind.

Phillips calls from inside the alley.

PHILLIPS (O.S.)
Rick! Come here!

Rick pushes Victor over to be tied then walks down the wet and empty alley. TREENA LESTER runs past, crying and holding her blouse over her BARE CHEST.

A few steps further down the alley, Phillips and the big teacher hold the raging stream aside while a WHITE MAN struggles on one foot to get his wet trousers up.

PHILLIPS
It's Peterson from Food Service.

Rick shoots an angry glance back to Treena running out, then again to her customer.

He grabs the nozzle from Phillips sending the white man flying into a stack of orange crates, then keeps it on him giving him a good long shower. Phillips smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. A CLASSROOM

HILARY OROZCO stops a class discussion for a moment as some of her students stand up to look out the windows at a noisy chain of WET STUDENTS being led across the asphalt.

She tries to cover her annoyance as she goes back to the front of the room.

HILARY
Sit down, please.

Remarkably enough, all of them do. She continues the discussion by pointing to a large MAP OF EUROPE dated 1914.

HILARY (CON'T)
So how is it then that an entire world war which killed thirty-eight million people erupt out of one politically minor assassination?

The class is silent as it thinks. The melee can still be heard outside.

ANGLE - EMILE DOBSON

who's blank expression turns to an odd amazement when he realizes he actually knows the answer. He raises his hand while speaking at the same time.

EMILE
Yeah. I know that shit!

HILARY
Emile?

EMILE
It's like they all be homeboys. Yeah. Germany and Hungry Austria be homeboys on one side and France and England be homeboys on the other side. Homeboys just be lookin' for action, that's all. That dead Archduke? He jus' an excuse for some action.

HILARY
Yes. That's about how it was.

EMILE
It still is. When that Hoo-Rah done killed a Kitchen Boy, we do a drive-by on a Hoo-Rah 'cause the Kitchen Boys, they be on our side.

Hilary nods her head, pleased the student is taking an interest, but still a bit uncomfortable with his candor.

HILARY

That's just what happens when--

EMILE

--Yeah! Like when White Zac here be sellin' Sherms in our hood--

WHITE ZAC rears his ugly head at hearing his name just as RICK bursts in with the P.E. TEACHER holding a soaking VICTOR in his hand.

RICK

(very serious)

This is what we call a "classroom".
And these are "students".

Victor breaks off towards Emile. He runs his fingers through the front of Emile's hair to hold his head back and lock eyes down the length of his outstretched arm.

VICTOR

Who you with, Baby Fat?

The P.E. Teacher pulls Victor away. Rick points to an empty seat in the back row.

RICK

How considerate. Someone saved you a seat.

Victor is put gently but firmly into the seat with Rick sitting next to him. Rick dismisses the P.E. Teacher with a nod.

Victor glares at the back of Emile's head while Hilary glares at Rick. She continues the class discussion as if nothing happened.

HILARY

Continue Emile.

EMILE

Huh? I wan't sayin' nothin'.

Emile rubs the back of his neck as if he could feel Victor's stare.

WHITE ZAC

Yeah, you were, you lying shit. You were saying how you were trying to drive us whites outta the school business 'cause you got your tongue so far up Victor's ass you can taste his breakfast.

The class laughs at Emile. Hilary cuts in.

HILARY
That's excellent description, Zac.
You speak from experience?

The class breaks now laughs at White Zac who stares at Hilary as if he could kill her. He says "fucking bitch" under his breath.

Victor notices this as the BELL RINGS. The class gets up.

HILARY
Wait. Sit down.

The class stays standing as Hilary checks her watch, the clock on the wall frozen for years at 6:00.

HILARY (CON'T)
All right. But I want three more
journal pages. From everyone.

The class moans as it moves out. Emile waits timidly by the door for Victor whom Rick taps on the shoulder from behind.

RICK
See if you can fit it in. Between
your Scout meetings and charity work.

Victor turns around and assaults Rick with the unexpected grin.

VICTOR
Huh, huh, huh. Chuckle, chuckle.
Whatever you say, Ricky.

Getting up, he tips his dirty sweater cap to Hilary, then thrusts Emile out the door.

Hilary is looking at Rick, not as though she were glad to see him, not as if she were angry, but as if she were studying him as a behavior psychologist.

The class clears to empty except for ARTURO DIEGO, a latino student waiting by her desk.

Rick almost timidly walks to the front, doing his best to hide how captivated he is by this teacher's dark beauty.

RICK
I'm sorry for the inconvenience.
It's just that we're doing a little
remodeling.

Hilary takes a long look at him, as if disappointed.

HILARY
What is it you're really doing?

RICK
What do you mean?

Hilary thinks for a moment then, totally out of the blue, picks up a heavy TAPE DISPENSER from her desk and hurls it across the room at Rick. It misses him by a few inches but puts a major dent in the chalk board behind him.

Arturo can't believe what he sees. Neither can Rick.

RICK (CON'T)
What was that?!

HILARY
You're own language. What're you doing?

Rick is at a temporary loss for words. Hilary picks up a STAPLER from her desk and readies it for another communication.

RICK
I'm trying to make this a school again.

HILARY
Well it certainly looks like a school. Now that the halls are tidy and the bathrooms empty, you can invite your friends over for open house.

Hilary puts down the stapler.

HILARY (CON'T)
Think about it. I have a student.

Arturo looks at the ground, embarrassed by the conflict. Rick doesn't say anything else. He simply walks out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY

Still taken aback from his discussion with Hilary, RICK marches down the empty hallway when VICTOR comes strutting out of the Men's Room wiping his hand on a paper towel with a grin on his face.

VICTOR
Whatta matter, Ricky? She don't go for macho?

Rick doesn't say anything. He stares at Victor for a moment, then motions the hallway GUARD nearby by to go away.

GUARD

You sure?

RICK

Yeah.

The Guard turns the corner leaving Rick alone, face to face with Victor who continues wiping his hand with the paper towel.

RICK

Look around, Victor. It's just you and me. No one else around. No one else to show up for.

VICTOR

So what?

RICK

So we can do whatever you want. We can duke it out if you want. Right here.

Rick puts up his fists almost playfully.

RICK (CON'T)

We can call each other names. We can talk about something. We can even meet down the street for a beer. No one has to know.

Victor studies Rick very seriously. We can almost see the hundred things going through his mind, just one of them being accepting Rick's preposterous offer.

VICTOR

Are you trying to reach me, Mr. Princ-Pal? 'Cause if you are, I just cut off your hand.

RICK

I have another, Victor. But it's not as gentle.

VICTOR

Do yourself a favor, man. Get out of this place. Get out while you can.

Victor drops the paper towel on the ground then walks backwards to the double door exit disappearing into the flood of noonday sunlight.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lying on his mattress bed with his feet propped up on the bookshelves, Rick finishes blowing up a YELLOW BALLOON for no apparent reason.

He pinches the end while he picks up the TELEPHONE RECEIVER from between his legs.

RICK

I'm tying the end now. There. You hear that? I told you the party's out here. Oh, C'mon. You're eight years old today. You're old enough to take charge, make your own decisions. Move out of the house. Stop laughing. When I was your age I had my own car and my own place. And a different girl every night to watch T.V. What do you mean you don't like girls? It's because you live in the Mid West. If I had your choice, I wouldn't like girls either. C'mon out here. I'll set you up.

The exuberant smile on Rick's face begins to fade.

RICK (CON'T)

No. I don't need to talk to Mom. You set her straight for me, Thomas. And don't forget what I said. Happy birthday.

Rick hangs the phone up to the silence of his empty apartment with only a yellow balloon in his hand.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICE - DAY (MORNING)

When RICK walks into the main office with his HELMET tucked under his arm, MS. JENKINS makes a seemingly redundant announcement.

MS. JENKINS

Mr. Latimer. You have a visitor.

Mr. Darcy's secretary points back to what looks like the entire faculty of Chaparral High School crammed into his office.

RICK

In a herd.

MS. JENKINS

No. I didn't mean them.

But Rick is already on his way in to his office as if this day were no different.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

RICK walks into a flurry of questions, accusations, and complaints while he takes off his leather jacket to start the day.

MRS. COLLINS

Mr. Latimer!! Is there any reason--

MR. BROWN

If I have to put up with another--

MS. JAFFE

Please, Mr. Latimer. Do you have to make them all--

Rick taps his Helmet loudly on his desk. The teachers shut up. He looks at them all as if he were confused.

RICK

There's a custom called "raising your hand." Any of you heard of it?

JACK HARPER speaks up without raising his hand.

MR. HARPER

Mr. Latimer. It's one thing to invite riots with school assemblies, but when you start dumping animals in my classroom--

MRS. RECTOR

Animals? I'd rather have animals. They don't carry knives.

MR. BROWN

Please, Mr. Latimer. Couldn't you just make the students who want to learn come to class? Is that too much to ask?

MRS. KOSEY, a red-haired woman in her mid-thirties, is clearly more emotional than the rest.

MRS. KOSEY

It was getting so much better. Javier stopped talking back to me. Liz and Stacy started turning in homework. I was finally getting

through to them when all of a sudden, six more are seated in my class who have no respect for anything. They throw things. One of them urinated on the floor. Now the whole class is in chaos and no one's learning anything. It's pushed me back to the beginning.

With this more poignant account, the teachers wait for Rick's reply.

RICK
I'm sorry. I hoped that wouldn't happen.

MRS. KOSEY
What are you going to do?

RICK
Are those six on your attendance sheet?

MRS. KOSEY
Yes, they are. But--

RICK
Then the law says they have to be in there.

That was the match in the gas tank. Nearly every voice in the room is heard at full volume.

MR. HARPER
What law?!

MS. NEWTON
No one complained before you came. No one!

MRS. RECTOR
My nerves can't take the new ones. They'll short circuit.

MR. KOSEY
They don't have to be in class. They never were before.

Rick notices MS. KOSEY not able to keep her eyes from welling up with tears. Mrs. Rector tries again.

MRS. RECTOR
There's nothing stopping you from bending the law. It's a matter of tradition at Chaparral.

Rick shoots up from his chair, angrier than ever.

RICK

Now it's a dead tradition. C'mon, you people. You don't choose your students. You don't take the easy ones, and throw the rest in the garbage. You take what the school gives you and teach them all the best you can. If one's a problem, you deal with him in class. Then you send him to me. If he doesn't go, I'll come and get him. But every student we leave in the hallway, or in the parking lot, or in the alley, is one more brick off the foundation of this school. We can't have that.

The teachers don't reply. Some of them look down, perhaps realizing he's right. Some stare at him hatefully.

RICK (CON'T)

All I'm asking from you is to brave it through. Just have a little courage, that's all.

From the back of the jam packed office, one person's loud CLAPPING breaks awkward silence.

Rick can't see who it is until the teachers who look around open a line of sight to a Rick's friend FATHER ROBERT JULIAN still clapping proudly and looking directly at Rick.

RICK

Oh God. Not today.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICE - DAY

JOE PHILLIPS shakes his head, smiling, as he waits with FATHER JULIAN by the door to the hall.

PHILLIPS

So Rick was once a down and out homeless bum. And I figured he'd come down from some mountain in a lighting storm.

Some eavesdropping secretaries laugh as if they'd thought the same thing.

FATHER JULIAN

Well he stood as tall as a mountain today. I've never heard him speak with such conviction.

Father Julian calls across the main office to RICK speaking privately with Assistant Principal DARCY.

FATHER JULIAN (CON'T)

Richard. Let Mr. Phillips hear a little bit of your speech. Perhaps the good part about the bricks in the foundation?

ANGLE - RICK

who tries to maintain his composure though he is clearly embarrassed. Darcy holds a RELEASE FORM in triplicate.

DARCY

She's a lost cause, Rick. Just sign her paper you'll never have to think about her again.

RICK

Well I do want to think about her so leave the papers on my desk.

DARCY

Christ. What do you think you can do?

RICK

I looked at her records. The girl has potential.

DARCY

Hell, a lot of them do, but it doesn't earn 'em a living now. And it also doesn't help when their teacher calls them a "cheap whore" in front of the class.

RICK

Did Harper do that? Damn. Is there any way we can do about him?

DARCY

Uh uh. Tenured faculty. That's why he's here.

Darcy takes the papers to Rick's office.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

RICK and his old friend and mentor, FATHER JULIAN, walk from the main building to the parking lot.

FATHER JULIAN
I should have called first, but in all honesty I couldn't wait to see this new school of yours.

RICK
Is it what you expected?

FATHER JULIAN
It's better than I expected.

RICK
How could it be?

FATHER JULIAN
There's important work to be done here. Sure, I wish you'd keep the kids from writing on the walls, but at least they're writing. I was getting worried about you in a soft leather chair. I was afraid you'd end up like it.

RICK
It woulda been comfortable.

FATHER JULIAN
Comfort is death. Don't ever forget that. A man needs to challenge the world from a hard wooden chair. Now what're you gonna do about this girl dropping out?

RICK
I don't know.

FATHER JULIAN
Then stand up straight and think. A visit to her parents is in order.

RICK
I'm not sure they'd like that.

FATHER JULIAN
Why? Because you're white?

RICK
Of course not. But just being principal, I don't think there's anything I can do about it, Bob.

Stopping by his old but reliable '72 FIAT, Father Julian thinks about this for a moment.

Very suddenly he grabs Rick by the shirt and pushes him up against the car.

FATHER JULIAN

Don't you ever say that again, ever in your life. There is always something you can do. You just have to get up off your ass and find it.

(whining mimic as he gets into his car)

There's nothing I can do about it, Bob. It makes my lunch come up.

Rick smiles at his father making fun of him. He closes the door for him.

FATHER JULIAN (CON'T)

It's exactly what you said when that teacher took your wife and son to Chicago.

RICK

Maybe they're better off. Who knows?

FATHER JULIAN

I know, and I don't like it one bit. A man shouldn't be away from his family.

Father Julian reaches out the window to straighten Rick's shirt.

FATHER JULIAN (CON'T)

Otherwise he has no one to tell what to do. Good bye, Rick.

He drives off leaving Rick standing in the parking lot. Rick looks over to his motorcycle nearby.

CUT TO:

EXT. A POOR RESIDENTIAL STREET

RICK stops his motorcycle at the curb to check an address on a piece of scratch paper.

He stops the engine, and parks it near the sign: "Mountain View Housing Project." He starts walking in across an untended lawn between two long concrete structures -- once built with the best of intentions, now covered in gang graffiti with every other window boarded up.

Rick stops in front of unit #109, the number on the address.

A CHILD'S VOICE
Ha!! Gotchew cornered.

Rick turns around as a small black BOY, about four years-old, lets loose his "Star Trek" Thaser Gun. Four small plastic COLORED DISKS spin out and bounce off Rick's chest.

SMALL BOY (CON'T)
You're dead.

RICK
Dead?! It's just a flesh wound.

The three year-old bends down and carefully picks up each valuable disk from the doorstep. Rick turns around to knock on the door but before he can, the small boy is already opening it.

SMALL BOY
No, you're dead. But you can come inside here and pretend you're not.

RICK
Thanks.

Rick follows the boy in.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT #108

The SMALL BOY pulls up his oversized pants as he leads RICK across a small but tidy living room, kept dark by the boarded up window, to a cluttered dining table next to the kitchen.

SMALL BOY
Sit here. I'll get you some medicine.

RICK
I'm looking for Treena Lester. Is she here now?

Rick sits down at the table. The boy goes to the refrigerator, takes out a pitcher of Hawaiian Punch, and pours it into two cups on the kitchen counter.

SMALL BOY
She just come home.

The boy gives Rick his cup, then sits down across from him to enjoy his own refreshment. Rick drinks, obligingly.

RICK
I'd like to speak with her.

Without leaving his seat, the boy yells at the top of his lungs.

SMALL BOY
MOM!!

No answer. A BABY starts crying in a back room. The boy leaves the table taking a few steps down the hall.

SMALL BOY (CON'T O.S.)
MOOOOOMMM!! There's a man here--

He's cut short by a WHACKING sound and TREENA's voice.

TREENA (O.S.)
Little shit! You woke him up.

The boy comes running back, crying.

SMALL BOY
You didn't have to hit me about it.

He hides behind the seated Rick. Treena comes out holding a crying baby.

TREENA
Who the fu--?

She sees Rick. Rick stands up.

TREENA (CON'T)
Who do you want?

Rick says nothing for the moment, still in shock from learning the boy's parentage.

TREENA (CON'T)
So I have a kid. So what?

RICK
Sounds like you have two.

TREENA
The baby's my sister's, if it any of your business. Now you get out of here 'fore someone sees you.

RICK
Where's your sister?

TREENA

At work. Where no one squirts her
with a fire hose. Whatta you want
from me?

The little boy, who's stopped crying, hands Rick the "Star Trek"
gun and the six DISKS he shot out of it. Rick loads them back in
the gun for him while he speaks with his mother.

RICK

I want to keep you from dropping out
of school. Your grades are good
enough for graduation. Maybe even
college.

TREENA

Who cares?

RICK

I do.

TREENA

Why? I'm not selling shit in your
bathroom no more. Victor got me a
better job.

Rick's heart seems to sink at hearing that.

RICK

Better than what? Washing laundry in
a prison? C'mon. If you have to get
a job, can't you get a real job?

TREENA

Oh yeah. There's a MacDonal'd's ten
miles away with a two year waiting
list.

Rick hands the loaded Star Trek gun back to the boy.

SMALL BOY

Thanks.

RICK

Treena, if you work for Victor now,
you'll be working for Victors for the
rest of your life.

TREENA

I can't think that far ahead. I
don't have that luxury, Mr.
Principal.

Treena looks to her son who's now sitting at the table drinking Hawaiian Punch. Rick picks up his and finishes it, buying a few seconds to think.

RICK

Starting tomorrow, I'll be at school every morning at six o'clock in room 211. I'll tutor you in every subject until you're caught up enough to stay in school.

TREENA

Why?! Why you wanna do that?

RICK

Six A.M. You'll have the rest of the day to do whatever job you have to.

The small boy points to Rick and starts laughing.

SMALL BOY

You have a red moustache!

Rick pats the boy on the head as if he were his own, then walks to the open door wiping his mouth. Treena calls after him.

TREENA

Go ahead and be there. I hope you like teachin' by yourself.

Rick disappears without turning around. The baby continues to cry.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 211 - DAY (MORNING)

ANGLE - A WRIST WATCH

where the hands read fifteen minutes after six o'clock. From the teacher's desk, RICK looks up from his watch to the door, now certain Treena is fulfilling her promise not to show.

He pulls the rubber band off a folded newspaper and opens it up to pass the remaining hours.

A STACK OF BOOKS plops on one of the student desks. Much to Rick's surprise, it's TREENA. He tries to hide his relief by checking his watch again.

RICK

You're late.

Treena doesn't say anything. She just stands and stares as if a hundred things were going through her mind. Rick gets up and

comes over to where she's standing. He notices a German book among the stack.

RICK (CON'T)

What do you want to start with?

TREENA

The bathroom.

RICK

Yeah. All right.

She walks to the door, then turns around.

TREENA

My little Charles was asking about you.

Rick smiles, but doesn't quite know what to say.

RICK

Oh.

Treena looks at him again, then walks away. Rick opens one of her books to prepare the tutorial.

Something catches his attention: The sound of CLANGING METAL coming from the parking lot outside. He walks to the window.

Down in the empty parking lot, seven black GANG MEMBERS are dismantling his MOTORCYCLE with wrenches and crowbars. He can't believe what he sees.

RICK

HEY!!! STOP!!!

They don't. Rick takes a half step around when EVERYTHING GOES WHITE and a BLACK FIST swings into his gut.

EMILE DOBSON holds the WHITE TOWEL tightly over Rick's face while VICTOR, JOJO, and KEVIN take turns slugging away at their principal, totally caught off guard.

Victor delivers his blows mostly to the gut, sometimes with his stockinged foot, while Jojo and Kevin take turns making the white face towel turn red.

Desks scatter as the one sided fighting crashes across the floor.

Totally helpless, Rick takes a few blind swings, connecting once on Jojo's face.

JOJO

Ouuuuww!! Moth--!!

VICTOR

Ssshhh!!!

Victor threatens him for raising his identifying voice while he delivers several more blows to Rick's gut.

Emile drops the principal to the floor, unconscious, with the bloody towel still over his face. The other three run quietly out the room, grabbing their shoes at the door.

VICTOR (CON'T)

(whispering)

The last we'll see of that homeboy.

The three take off down the hallway. Emile stares at the motionless body for a confused moment, then closes the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY (LATER)

School has started as the hallway is jammed with students opening their lockers, loitering before their first class, and a few smoking with a watchful eye out for security.

HILARY OROZCO walks through all of this to her students waiting outside room 211 to be let in.

She sticks her key in the slot, but discovers it unlocked. Not able to look through the door's small window which she's covered -- as many teachers do -- with white tissue paper for privacy, she pushes the door open a bit to see inside.

HILARY

Oh. God.
(to the students)
Stay here.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

With the curious students pushed up and peeking around the door, HILARY walks through the desks to the motionless body lying on the floor, a blood-stained towel covering its identity.

Hilary pulls aside the towel to reveal Rick's badly bruised and bloody face.

HILARY

Oh... Mr. Latimer.

He coughs. Blood comes out onto the towel.

HILARY (CON'T)
(to the students)
An ambulance! Someone call an
ambulance.

She starts to get up. Rick grabs her tightly by the wrist. He does his best to shake his head.

HILARY (CON'T)
What do you mean?
(to a student at the door)
Javier!

RICK
(delirious)
No! It's okay. I was just...
taking a nap.

HILARY
My God! Don't be an idiot.

Still holding Hilary's wrist, Rick slowly gets up with the aid of a desk. He barely balances on his feet again.

HILARY (CON'T)
What are you trying to prove?

Letting Hilary go, he takes two careful but painful steps to the door -- then plummets into the desks again.

There is a gasp among the witnessing students, now crowded even tighter around the door.

Rick wastes no time getting up again at the door where the students part at the intensity of his stare.

CUT TO:

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

At the doorway, RICK establishes his balance again, straightens his tie, holds his bloody chin up as best he can, then starts an intent but precarious march down a hallway packed with the gaping stares of students, staff, and teachers.

His face badly beaten and his body bruised all over, no one witnessing the event is unmoved in some way by their the principal never breaking the composure his position demands.

He smiles slightly to the eyes he makes contact with.

RICK
Good morning.

When he reaches the stairwell, he carefully grabs hold the rail. He takes each difficult step down with the best form he can muster.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MAIN BUILDING

RICK continues his wobbly march alone across the parking lot to where his MOTORCYCLE lay in pieces. As best he can, he picks up the GAS TANK, and carries it about fifty feet to the garage entrance of the Industrial Arts Building.

Some LATINO MECHANICS work on an old but polished Corvair Spider.

CUT TO:

INT. INDUSTRIAL ARTS AUTO SHOP

The Latino mechanics continue their work on the Corvair Spider when they see the apparition of the beat-up RICK in the doorway holding the gas tank from his motorcycle.

He marches over with a firmer step and places the gas tank on the hood of the Corvair.

RICK

Who?

Absolute silence. Rick looks around at the frightened faces, ARTURO DIEGO from Hilary's class among them.

RICK (CON'T)

I know you saw this. Who was it?

Arturo rises above the other's intimidation by slowly shaking his head.

ARTURO

We can't tell you. You know we can't.

After a moment's delirious thought, Rick realizes the boy is right. They can't tell him.

ARTURO (CON'T)

But we can put it back together. If you want.

RICK

I do. Like it was.

Disgusted with everything, Rick turns his back on them all and heads to the door.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE - DAY

RICK leans back in his chair holding an ice pack to his face while Assistant Principal DARCY paces in front of his desk, too wrought up to sit down.

RICK

So much for your leaving us alone,
huh Darcy?

DARCY

Rick, don't let this go to waste. If you bring the police in now, sure, they'll question Victor. It's their job. But he'll be back in school the next day and there'll be hell to pay. For all of us.

On Darcy's last word, JOE PHILLIPS and another GUARD bring TREENA LESTER in kicking and screaming. Darcy shoots a glance at Rick for this seemingly instant defiance of his advice.

PHILLIPS

Just what you ordered.

Phillips and the guard plop her in the chair in front of the desk. She immediately throws a tightly wound WAD OF FIVE-DOLLAR BILLS into Rick's chest.

TREENA

(almost in tears)

There! Take it! That's all of it.

Rick looks over the money -- about a hundred dollars.

RICK

Treena. I don't have any use for this.

TREENA

I don't have no use for it neither. So just take it. It's yours for what they did to you.

RICK

For what who did?

TREENA

I ain't sayin' nothin' 'cept it's yours and you oughta leave him alone.

RICK
Where is he, Treena?

DARCY
Let it lie, Rick. Don't provoke him.

RICK
I mighta heard where he is from
someone else. One of the white kids
who love him so much.

TREENA
Why you wanna bother him? All he
wanna do is make some money here.

RICK
Really? Is that all?

TREENA
Just take the money. I don't need
it.

Rick pushes the money back across the desk.

RICK
Yes you do.

Rick looks into Treena's desperate eyes as if to call her bluff. He reaches into his desk for a pack of matches with which he proceeds to light the BUNDLE OF MONEY on fire.

Treena grabs the money before it burns.

TREENA
Paco Diaz. They all at Paco Diaz.

Rick puts away the matches.

RICK
Right. That's what I heard.

Treena takes the money back but not without a long, almost apologetic look at the beat-up Principal. Rick returns the gaze with some pity for her situation before she finally runs out of the room.

PHILLIPS
He runs a nasty little pool room on
the edge of the barrio. A convenient
pit stop for drug trafficking.

DARCY
And getting killed. C'mon, Rick. If
you let him win now, if you show some

restraint, this whole damn thing won't escalate and you won't get hurt any worse.

RICK

Then we're back where we started. Sucking up to him as if he owned the place.

DARCY

Is that really so bad? Is it really anything more than pride?

Rick is seriously grappling with the dilemma. He looks to Phillips for his opinion.

RICK

What do you think I should do?

Phillips takes a long look at Darcy, then turns back to Rick.

PHILLIPS

Take a baseball bat.

Rick nods as if that were a good idea. Darcy shakes his head as if he could see the end of the world coming.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PARKING LOT - DAY

It is later in the afternoon when the battered RICK walks between the cars with a BASEBALL BAT in his hand.

Anticipating his arrival, the LATINO MECHANICS wheel out his freshly rebuilt motorcycle from the auto shop.

With great pride, they stand around it, their expectant eyes waiting for his approval. He notices a new addition: "EL PRINCIPAL" is air-brushed across in fiery letters above a large LIGHTNING BOLT electrifying a tiny Chaparral-like Brick Building.

He's incensed and confused. Are they making fun of him?

RICK

I said "like it was".

Arturo polishes their work on the gas tank to make it shine with greater luster.

Rick finally realizes the sincerity of the gesture. He raises his Bat as a show of support sending a wide, relieved smile spreads across the collective face of the artist/mechanics.

Rick climbs aboard his new machine and speeds off with the baseball bat tucked under his arm.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE INNER CITY

The black and brown faces of the afternoon crowd watch the white "El Principal" ride by with a baseball bat.

ANGLE - THE MOTORCYCLE

as we follow RICK through the streets and past the storefronts which gradually change from English to Spanish. A red '68 CHEVY IMPALA is parked next to a White VOLVO in front of a rundown bar called "PACO DIAZ".

Rick gets off his motorcycle and walks to the uninviting heavy and splintered wood door just as WHITE ZAC comes out, stopping to eyeball Rick's beat-up face and the Baseball Bat in his hand.

White Zac gives him an oddly maniacal grin before going on his way. Rick pauses, takes a deep breath, then enters as if a regular customer.

CUT TO:

INT. PACO DIAZ

From the bright sunlight, RICK's eyes have to adjust before he sees thirty unfriendly other pairs staring at him from pool tables, card games, and the bar where teenage hoods drink side by side with their adult mentors.

KEVIN, JOJO, and EMILE, celebrating with beers around a center table can't believe who they see approaching them with bruised face and a baseball bat. The BARTENDER finally acknowledges his presence.

BARTENDER

Baseball's outta season, asshole.

Rick doesn't respond until--

RICK

Paco Diaz. Where is he?

BARTENDER

Follow my voice. Asshole.

As Rick walks around the one table, he carefully studies direction of the three gang members' nervous gaze for any clue to the whereabouts of Victor Duncan.

He takes a Chicago Cubs BASEBALL CAP from Kevin's head and puts it on his own.

RICK

Mr. Diaz. Were you aware that some of your valued customers are truant high school students?

PACO DIAZ

Yeah. Whatta ya specting me to do about it?

Rick notices Jojo glancing every so often at a CLOSED BACK DOOR near the bar.

RICK

Not much. I just thought you should know before baseball season starts.

Several of the MEN AT THE BAR put down their beers as if to get ready for action.

A little nervous, Rick clenches his teeth and starts singing under his breath.

RICK

Take me out to the ball game.
Take me out with the crowd.

He strolls in the direction of the Back Door and PACO DIAZ who looks at him as if he were a lunatic. A few of the bar sitters stand up now to fight.

RICK (CON'T)

Buy me some peanuts and Crack-Ker-Jack
I don't care if I ever get--

JOJO

--Victor!!

PACO DIAZ

Wha--?

On "Back", Rick swings with everything he has. The closed Back Door smashes open in an instant.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BACK ROOM

Continuing his song, RICK topples a stack of BEER CASES, jamming the door closed so that no one can follow him--

RICK
Oh we'll root, root, root
for the home team.

--then smashes a BALANCE SCALE that VICTOR was about to use to measure an unseen drug from a large BROWN PACKAGE.

VICTOR
 FUCK!!!!!!

RICK
If they don't win it's a shame.

Victor's friends do their best to get in but are only able to push the obstructions a few inches.

A white BUSINESS MAN picks his money up from the table and looks for some avenue to exit. There isn't any.

BUSINESS MAN
 Uh. Excuse me.

RICK
For it's one, two,

Victor clicks a SWITCHBLADE. Rick swings the bat and the switchblade flies.

VICTOR (CON'T)
 FUCK!! My hand!!

RICK
THREE strikes you're out,
at the old ball game.

With the bat, Rick pushes the bent over Victor to the ground as he finishes the song. He tosses the baseball cap onto his lap, then picks up the heavy Package from the table with a sincere smile.

RICK
 You were taking this to school,
 Victor? Let me. It's on my way.

Rick kicks aside the beer cases and throws open the door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BAR

Letting RICK take only two steps into the bar, KEVIN ARBURTHA swings a SWITCHBLADE to his heart that instead lands in the Brown Package. A stream of WHITE POWDER starts leaking from it.

Rick throws Jojo aside by the arm and charges out the door with the leaking package.

VICTOR comes running out from the back room ready to kill.

VICTOR
Don't just be standing there, niggers!

PACO DIAZ
Victor!

Paco Diaz throws him a long-barreled .38 REVOLVER.

PACO DIAZ (CON'T)
Keep it if you get him.

CUT TO:

EXT. PACO DIAZ - DAY

With the leaking package tucked under his arm, RICK starts up his motorcycle and rides off leaving a trail of white powder.

VICTOR burst out with drawn revolver as his fellow gang members pile into the Chevy Impala with baby fat EMILE behind the wheel.

VICTOR
Mow the motherfucker down.

CUT TO:

RICK

riding back through the streets to school with the TEN POUND PACKAGE between his legs, leaking onto the street.

ANGLE - HIS REARVIEW MIRROR

and the RED IMPALA approaching rapidly, about to mow him down.

Rick shifts gears and takes off even faster around a corner.

He sticks his finger in the hole to make it bigger. WHITE POWDER starts pouring out at a much greater rate.

CUT TO:

INT. THE IMPALA

VICTOR watches from the passenger seat in horror at the sight of thousands of dollars of COCAINE spilling onto the street from the motorcycle in front of him.

VICTOR
Step on it, homeboy. Mow 'im down.

EMILE
Shit, man, I'm floorin' it!!

ANGLE - EMILE'S HEEL

digging into the floor below the accelerator, pretending to "floor" it.

CUT TO:

PEDESTRIANS

watching as the Coke spilling "EL PRINCIPAL" races by. Some of them laugh. Some applaud. Most just stand and stare.

CUT TO:

AN ALLEY

which RICK speeds down leaving a white trail for the Impala to drive over.

CUT TO:

THE SCHOOL GATE

where the GUARD watches in amazement as the caravan races past. The red Impala scratches its side in the fence.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL BUILDING

RICK screeches to a stop in front of the school building. He gets off his bike. The four black teenagers pile out of the Impala after it spins out in front of him.

Rick throws the empty bag at VICTOR.

RICK
Here. You can get your nickel
deposit.

With JOJO, KEVIN, and EMILE standing behind him, Victor walks straight up to Rick and points the REVOLVER into his forehead with an extended arm.

He doesn't say anything or do anything. He simply stares Rick directly into his eyes.

Rick does his best to quell his nervousness, never having had a gun pointed at him in his life. He glances up at Victor's thumb pulling back the hammer.

The School Bell suddenly RINGS with an alarming volume. Rick glances up to the school building as does Victor: Nearly every window has students or teachers looking down at the event.

Rick sighs with relief.

RICK

They'll like you in prison, Victor.
You might even get a big surprise up
that wise little ass of yours.

Victor takes the gun away from Rick's head, looking at him with an intent and piercing stare.

VICTOR

No one saw nothing.

He steps back and grins. With the other three, he climbs back into the Impala which starts up and screeches out the gate.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

ANGLE - A BIG SPOONFUL

of a Mystery Stew plopping down on a white plate, then extended under the glass to RICK LATIMER standing in the line with JOE PHILLIPS to sample what daily prepares a good number of students at Chaparral for prison food.

Rick grimaces as he puts the plate down on his tray next to his milk and silverware.

RICK

Then what did they say they saw? A
gun hanging in mid-air? Right in
front of my face?

PHILLIPS

Most of the kids said they didn't see
anything. But some just couldn't
identify him.

Rick shakes his head, frustrated.

RICK

What about teachers? I know I saw at
least four at the windows.

PHILLIPS

I've interviewed all of them with the
promise of complete confidence. Only
one teacher was willing to tell me
what she saw. Considering Victor

didn't blow your head off, it probably won't be enough.

Rick and Phillips exchange glances of frustrated disbelief. HILARY OROZCO intercepts them as they find a place at the end of a long table.

HILARY

Joe, I have a meeting with a student after school today. Will someone will be around to let me out?

PHILLIPS

Sure, we're here 'til four. We were just talking about you.

Rick realizes here that the one teacher was Hilary.

RICK

Yeah. Thanks for coming forward. But there's no point in going it alone.

Hilary sits down next to Rick.

HILARY

I wouldn't have to be if Jack hadn't scared the others?

RICK

Jack Harper?

HILARY

They were going to tell what they saw until he painted this graphic scenario of gang rapes and gasoline dousings if they did. I couldn't believe it.

Rick stands up from his alleged food.

RICK

That does it. Time to drop kick his ass right out of here.

PHILLIPS

You can't do that, Rick. He's tenured.

Rick stops, reluctantly remembering.

HILARY

Why don't you just try talking to him. Sometimes it works.

RICK

All right, Ms. Orozco. I will. Then
I'll drop kick his tenured ass right
out of here.

Rick walks out of the cafeteria leaving Hilary slightly annoyed.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK HARPER'S CLASS - DAY

Some students can't help but giggle quietly. Some try to keep a straight face as they do the lesson out of their old beat up textbook.

And some just go on talking with their friends, not noticing their principal RICK LATIMER is sitting back among the students of JACK HARPER's noisy and neglected Social Studies class.

Harper doesn't notice Rick either or anything else for that matter as he sits with his legs on his desk and his Sony WATCHMAN television on his lap.

A LATINO GIRL walks up front to ask Mr. Harper a question we don't hear. He takes out his earphone, annoyed by the interruption.

MR. HARPER

It's written right here in English.
Can't you read English?

LATINO GIRL

Yeah, I can. I just didn't know what they meant.

MR. HARPER

Well if you can't understand this,
there's no point in bothering with the rest.

The girl goes back to her desk, dejected. But Mr. Harper doesn't stop there.

MR. HARPER (CON'T)

And for Chrissake, hold your pen properly. It's not a spray can.

The girl can't believe the racial slur.

LATINO GIRL

Why did you say that? Why did you have to go say that?!

RICK

Because he's garbage, that's why.

Rick is walking up to the front of the class with a threatening stare to Mr. Harper who rises to his feet.

MR. HARPER
Latimer. What do you want?

RICK
Tell her you're sorry.

MR. HARPER
For what? Speaking the truth?

RICK
I said tell her you're sorry.

MR. HARPER
You can't force me.

Harper backs up against the blackboard. Rick grabs him by the waist and lifts him up over his shoulder.

MR. HARPER (CON'T)
Latimer! What are you doing?!

RICK
Taking out the garbage.

The class LAUGHS but is mostly stunned as Rick carries their struggling teacher out like a Fireman.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

Most of HILARY's students have gone to the window at the sound of Mr. Harper's shouting. EMILE laughs out loud.

EMILE
Look at Ricky. He cleanin' up the school.

Hilary walks to the window to see RICK marching across the parking lot with MR. HARPER hanging and struggling over his shoulder with DARCY catching up from behind.

After an unsure moment, she smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PARKING LOT

DARCY hangs on RICK's ear as he carries MR. HARPER out to the front gate.

MR. HARPER

I'll sue, you son of a bitch. Do you understand me? I'll sue!

DARCY

This is a criminal act, Rick. This is an assault.

RICK

Uh uh. Just a little custodial work.

DARCY

You tell that to the school board.

RICK

What are they going to do? Fire me? Have me beat up?

Darcy stops following as Rick passes through the gate and crosses the street to where a TRASH DUMPSTER stands full.

RICK

Here, Jack. You'll feel more comfortable with your own kind.

Rick lets him down gently next to the dumpster.

RICK (CON'T)

The truck should be by soon.

MR. HARPER

Just go to hell, Latimer. I'm going to retire off our settlement.

Rick passes the GATE GUARD on the way back in.

RICK

Don't let the garbage blow in again.

As Rick walks back into the school, the STUDENTS at the windows appear totally stunned.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

The gymnasium is empty now. RICK walks in alone, looking around as if he were seeing it for the first time. Old Championship Banners hang tattered around the large neglected interior.

He walks across the Basketball Court, the only things new are the Nylon Nets on the hoops.

A VOICE

Catch!!

Rick whips around in time to catch a BASKETBALL in front of his face. JOE PHILLIPS walks up from center court. Rick passes it back to him.

PHILLIPS
I thought you'd abandoned school.

RICK
No. I just had to get away from all that shit about what I did today?

PHILLIPS
It'll pass. They're just not used to disposable teachers. What's your game?

Rick looks at Phillips holding the basketball under his arm. Something connects in his mind about seeing him here.

RICK
Donkey?

Phillips laughs.

PHILLIPS
All right.

Phillips dribbles the ball to the top of the key, turns around and shoots. It sinks with a swish.

RICK
Wait a second. Do I know you from somewhere?

Rick tries the same shot, but barely misses.

PHILLIPS
You got a "D".

Phillips takes another shot, this time a lay-up where he twists around in mid-air before sinking the ball.

RICK
That's it!! The Phillips Screwdriver!
You're Joey Phillips! Star of the
NCAA. Back in '73.

PHILLIPS
Yeah. I remember that.

RICK
Thirty points a game for three
seasons.

Phillips glows from the warmth of a more pleasant past as he makes another spectacular shot on the court.

PHILLIPS

All-American at Chaparral, when it had a basketball team, you know.

RICK

Joey "The Screwdriver" Phillips.
Yeah. You used to do that Victory Dance after you won a game.

Rick poorly mimics the Victory dance. Phillips breaks up laughing at the pathetic attempt.

RICK (CON'T)

You were the best. Why aren't you the principal here?

PHILLIPS

Are you crazy? Not if they paid me.
I mean really paid me.

Rick looks at Phillips a little more seriously at that reminder of salary.

RICK

What happened?

PHILLIPS (CON'T)

Nothing. It just turned out I wasn't the best. Only played half a Pro season for Milwaukee.

RICK

But you know you coulda-- You went to a good college.

PHILLIPS

Sure did. Had to spell its name to get in. It's okay. I took care of myself.

The two look at each other for an uncomfortable moment.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)

My men are locking up now. You can leave whenever you want.

RICK

No. You be the principal today. I'll go in and wait for 'em.

Phillips thanks him with a smile, then walks away doing another "Phillips Screwdriver" on the opposite net.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Regular Security Guards WILL and ERIC walk down the empty upstairs hallway, checking that doors are locked and looking in through the tiny three by six inch windows to make sure the lights are out in the classrooms.

WILL

No way. That don't sound nothin' like Jerry Lewis.

ERIC

Oh yeah? Well let's see you try it.

Eric looks into the blackened window of #211 then turns the door knob to make sure its locked.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 211: HILARY'S CLASSROOM

At the sound of someone checking the locked the door, HILARY looks over from the journals she's correcting. But unlike what the guard saw, the lights are on overhead.

A bad Jerry Lewis "wao wao" imitation can be heard through the door.

She doesn't think much of it as she looks back at a HANDWRITTEN NOTE on her desk which reads: "Miss Orozco, I need to talk to you real important after school. Emile."

She goes back to the journal she's correcting.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOYS' REST ROOM

Through the eyes of a MALE STUDENT standing on a toilet inside a closed stall, we see the last of TWO GLOVES being pulled over his hands, then the inside of a RUBBER HALLOWEEN MASK being pulled over his face and ours.

ANGLE - WILL, THE GUARD

sticking his head in the door of the bathroom, checking to make sure its empty, then turning out the lights.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

HILARY continues correcting her journals when something she's reading hits her like a ton of bricks. It's Emile Dobson's JOURNAL, but the writing does not match the writing on the note.

HILARY

Who in God's name...?

She crumples up the note, picks up her purse and the stack of student journals, and walks to the door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY

Stepping into the upstairs hallway now dark except for the light that seeps through the central stairwell windows, HILARY notices her own DOOR WINDOW has been blackened by a piece of CARBON PAPER wedged in behind the tissue paper.

This makes her even more frightened as she locks her door and starts walking briskly down toward the lighted stairwell.

A bathroom door squeaks open just past the stairwell to let out an undiscernible HUMAN FIGURE. Still a good distance away, Hilary does her best to see who it is.

HILARY

Joe?

No answer. The figure starts walking toward her. Hilary stops.

HILARY (CON'T)

Is that you, Joe?

The figure steps into the light that reveals the long nose and bulging eyes of a grotesque RUBBER MONSTER MASK which shakes when it mimics Hilary in a loud shrill.

MONSTER

Jooooooooe? Is that you, Jooooooooe?

Hilary screams. The Monster runs towards her. Hilary runs back to the safety of her classroom but, as if in some feverish nightmare, fumbles to find her classroom key while the monster catches up.

MONSTER (CON'T)

Jooooooooe?

Hilary inserts the key and clicks the door open.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

As fast as she bursts in, HILARY tries to get the heavy door closed. But she's too late. The masked intruder barges in throwing Hilary into the desks.

With his prey safely cornered in the classroom, the MONSTER stops to play with the LIGHT SWITCH before anything else.

MONSTER

Ooooooooo. Light show. Light show.

Hilary screams as the lights go on and off. The Monster closes the locked door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PARKING LOT

The very faint sound of Hilary's scream blends in with the wind and distant traffic as RICK starts up his motorcycle.

Before putting his helmet on, however, he notices ARTURO DIEGO sitting with LUTHER FRANKLIN, the scared kid from the hallway, just outside the closed up Industrial Arts building. He rides the fifty or so feet over to talk to them, past the blue CELICA he doesn't know is Hilary's.

RICK

What are you guys hanging around for?

ARTURO

No reason. I just like hanging around, man.

Luther doesn't say anything. He just nods with what Arturo said.

RICK

Wouldn't you rather hang around at home?

Arturo looks at Rick as if what he were saying were totally foreign.

ARTURO

What's at home?

Rick tries to think of something else to say. He points to the "EL PRINCIPAL" airbrushed on his gas tank.

RICK

Excellent work. Inspiring.

Arturo lights up a little.

ARTURO

I could do more right now. Maybe a desert scene on the fenders?

LUTHER

No. Star Wars.

ARTURO

Yeah. I could do that too.

Rick looks at his watch, considering it.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

HILARY is backed up against a wobbly student desk which she does her best to secretly unscrew while the masked MONSTER bangs the WWI MAP of Europe until it rips and falls.

MONSTER

Noooooo. I'm the teecheer now.

With one sweep, the masked intruder clears off everything on Hilary's desk. He pats it as if it were a bed.

MONSTER (CON'T)

And it's party time.

Hilary screams again, this time closer to the window.

MONSTER (CON'T)

What's the matter? You can pretend I'm Ricky.

The Monster approaches, putting the pointer up to its groin as if it were a huge erection. We see Hilary rolling off the last SCREW on the wobbly desk.

MONSTER (CON'T)

C'mon, baby. You can pretend.

With that, Hilary swings and hurls the flat desk top so that it flies like a frisbee into the monster's chest, knocking it to the floor.

MONSTER (CON'T)

Auuuggggh! Bitch!!!!

Hilary makes a run through the clutter of desks to the door which she opens, but doesn't get through before the monster grabs her from behind and slugs her in the chest.

She screams again. He slugs her again, knocking her against her own desk. For the first time, he speaks in his own voice.

MONSTER (CON'T)

Don't need this no more.

The Monster pulls off his RUBBER MASK: It's WHITE ZAC with a small five-inch KITCHEN KNIFE in his hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL ARTS - DAY

ARTURO and LUTHER entertain themselves trying to interest RICK in further alterations.

ARTURO

I could make it low ride for you?
Chain Link handlebars?

LUTHER

Hang some fuzzy dice from the mirror.

RICK

Maybe later. We gotta get goin'.

ARTURO

Oh. I'll just stay here, if you
don't mind.

RICK

Uh uh. I gotta lock the gate. You
won't be able to get your car out.

Rick points back to the blue CELICA, alone in the parking lot.

ARTURO

Man, that's not my car. That's Miss
Orozco's.

Rick looks around to the Celica, then back to Arturo,
dumbfounded.

RICK

How...? Where is she?

ARTURO

She's still here.
(shyly)
I was kinda waiting for her.

At that moment, a CHAIR crashes out the building's second story window allowing Hilary's SCREAM to escape. Arturo goes white, but Luther seems more scared.

RICK

Oh God. Oh shit.

Rick revs up his motorcycle and thunders off letting his helmet fall to the ground.

CUT TO:

THE SCHOOL GROUNDS

and RICK speeding across the parking lot along broken asphalt, directly toward the school building.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

WHITE ZAC ignores the sound of an approaching motorcycle as he unbuttons his Levis and tells HILARY, half conscious and laid out on the desk, what he's going to do to her.

WHITE ZAC

You been teachin' me all this stuff.
Now I'm gonna teach you something. If
you want me to stop and explain you
just raise your hand.

CUT TO:

RICK

speeding towards the building and up a grass embankment which sends him flying through the ground WINDOW of a stairwell.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE STAIRWELL

and the MOTORCYCLE crashing through the window panes, landing smack on the concrete stairs. RICK rolls off and runs up to the second floor.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

WHITE ZAC rips HILARY's outer clothes off with the knife before climbing atop her.

WHITE ZAC

The last time you make fun of me in
class. The last time.

As White Zac reaches down to let open the front of his pants, Hilary reaches around his BARE NECK for the loose KITCHEN KNIFE, cutting it severely as she brings knife around.

WHITE ZAC

Bitch!!! -- I'm gonna fuck you dead.

With bleeding neck, White Zac wrestles the Knife out of her hand scratching a cut across her ABDOMEN. Police SIRENS approach outside.

He raises the Kitchen Knife in the air to make a fatal plunge when RICK grabs him from behind and hurls him to the floor.

ARTURO arrives at the door as White Zac stands up to go after Rick with the knife. Rick throws a desk at him, knocking him to the ground again.

While the two fight, Arturo walks over to Hilary lying unconscious on her own desk bleeding from her cut. Arturo shakes uncontrollably, reacting as if it were his own mother.

ARTURO

Oh Mary, no. Please no.

He touches the blood to see if it's real just as Rick wrestles the knife out of White Zac's hand, and two POLICE OFFICERS appear at the door with their REVOLVERS pointed at both camps.

OFFICER

Police!! Hands in air!!

(to Rick)

Drop the knife, punk!!

Everything stops. Rick hesitates for a moment, then lets the large knife fall to the floor with a loud CLANG.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

ANGLE - INSIDE A LOCKER

piled high with junk that JOE PHILLIPS makes avalanche into a cardboard box.

PHILLIPS

Well, Rick. Now you know what it takes to get a student expelled.

RICK is standing with his back against the lockers, deep in thought. ROBERT DARCY is standing by for support.

DARCY

The hospital said she should be able to come back soon. They said the cut wasn't too deep.

RICK

Do they know who called the police?

DARCY

He hung up without before they could get his name. A black teenager.

RICK

Victor?

PHILLIPS

I'm thinking it was. He coulda heard what was going down, then called the police.

DARCY

And all of Zac's white friends who were selling drugs here? None of them showed up for school today.

PHILLIPS

They have no protection.

RICK

And Victor finally has his monopoly back. Free reign on the school.

PHILLIPS

Except you.

Phillips and Darcy look at Rick to see if he's at all frightened.

RICK

Me? I told you, Screwdriver. I'm making you the principal. I'm giving you my job.

PHILLIPS

(grinning)

And I told you where to put your job.

All of a sudden a SUBSTITUTE TEACHER bursts out from Hilary's classroom letting the noise of a fight into the Hallway.

The SUBSTITUTE steams past the three at the locker.

SUBSTITUTE

They don't pay me enough. They don't pay anyone enough.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

Nearly the entire class surrounds ARTURO attacking EMILE, almost to the death with fists and shoves into the desks. Emile defends himself with the same, but is clearly not the aggressor.

RICK marches into the center of the melee and pulls the two apart, holding each at bay with his two arms.

RICK

This better be good.

EMILE

I don't know what it be! He just get up and start hitting me.

ARTURO

He should be in jail. He helped White Zac get Miss Orozco.

EMILE

But I didn't. I really didn't.

Arturo reaches around Rick to take another swing. Rick responds by depositing them in two different desks.

Arturo straightens out his B. Kliban "Cat" tee-shirt, signifying an end to the conflict.

RICK

All right, boys and girls. Sitdown.

A STUDENT

But we don't have no teacher. He left.

Rick walks up to the front of the class. As the students start to take their seats again, the unpleasant figures of VICTOR, JOJO, AND KEVIN are revealed sitting across the back row, taking in everything without comment.

RICK

You do now.

A chorus of protest breaks out.

LATINO GUY

But you're a principal, man.

BLACK GIRL

There some law 'gainst this. I know.

RICK

Today I'm a teacher and there is no law, so sit down and shut up.

The rest of the class begrudgingly complies. They wait in their seats for Rick's next move as a teacher. He reads from a note jotted down by the substitute.

RICK (CON'T)

All right. So. Your journal assignment was "Why did they call World War One 'The war to end all wars?'"

From the page he glances a few inches away to where the BLOOD STAIN from Hilary's attack clearly remains within the cracks on the formica desktop.

He stops speaking to quell a surge of anger as he looks directly at accomplice Victor sitting smugly in the back row.

RICK

I'm sure you know that World War One did not turn out to be "the war to end all wars." Otherwise, it wouldn't have a number.

The class laughs as a courtesy. Emile breaks up as if it were the funniest joke in the world.

EMILE

"Wouldn't have a number." Your first joke be a funny one, Ricky.

Rick notices Victor glaring down at Emile. He continues the class.

RICK

So why would anyone be stupid enough to think you could have a war to end all wars? How could that be possible?

BLACK STUDENT

'Cause if you kill your enemy enough, he won't be around to fight you.

RICK

That's one reason.

Emile makes a farting sound with his lips.

EMILE

That a stupid reason, Ricky.

RICK

Emile, was that your way of telling me you want to stay after school and do push ups?

The class laughs. Emile turns around to see Victor with a stare just short of a verbal threat.

EMILE
No. I don't want that shit.

RICK
Then I misunderstood you.
(to the class)
So what other reason could they have
thought that this war would end all
wars?

BLACK GIRL
'Cause it would settle all the
differences they would ever have.

RICK
Right!

EMILE
O boo boo ba doo. We be miss smarty
pants.

RICK
Emile!

Emile answers with another bronx cheer, this time into the palm of his hand.

RICK (CON'T)
That's it. Two hundred push ups.
After school.

Rick pauses for a moment to watch the way Victor stares down at Emile -- as if he wanted to grab him by the neck -- and the way Emile appears strangely relieved at having to stay after school.

CUT TO:

EMILE

doing push-ups between a desk and a filing cabinet, each one more difficult than the previous.

EMILE
Twenty-eight... Twenty-nine...
Thirty!

He collapses, his red sweatshirt hitting the dusty floor.

INT. RICK'S OFFICE - DAY

Flipping through a stack of JOURNALS from Hilary's class, RICK looks over the top of his desk to Emile.

RICK
You've got one hundred and seventy more.

EMILE
I know. I do 'em. I jus' be tired now.

RICK
Yeah. Well, just be tired with your mouth shut.

EMILE
Okay. Whatever you say, Ricky.

Rick goes back to reading a journal which, instead of writing, has all sorts of weird drawings and curly cues as if comprising some kind of short hand. He shakes his head, angry and confused.

EMILE (CON'T)
(panting from more push-ups)
Ricky. Somebody be here for you.

Rick looks up to ARTURO DIEGO who appears to have been standing in the doorway for awhile.

ARTURO
Did you want to see me, Sir?

RICK
Yeah. Come in.

A little nervous at being in the Principal's office with Emile doing push-up, Arturo takes a few steps forward to Rick's desk.

ARTURO
Did I do something bad?

RICK
I don't know. Can you explain this?

Rick holds up the journal with curly cue pages. Arturo's apparent anxiety doubles.

ARTURO
Yeah.

RICK
Go ahead.

ARTURO

Well. Miss Orozco said I could do that just so's I could turn something in.

Rick looks through several more of the pages with the weird designs.

RICK

I'll be taking Ms. Orozco's place for a few days, and I'm afraid I never learned to read Alien.

Rick closes the journal and throws it on the desk before Arturo making him even more nervous.

RICK (CON'T)

So do me a favor and just write in English.

ARTURO

But...

RICK

Like everyone else.

ARTURO

But she said I could do that 'til I learned better.

Rick is just about to ask "what" when Arturo takes out a beat-up first grade level "Sam and Ann" reading WORKBOOK hidden inside his book bag.

ARTURO (CON'T)

(quietly)

She was teaching me in this during lunchtime every day.

Rick takes the book and looks through it. Penciled in are word constructions made by a new reader next to corrections made by a high school teacher.

RICK

I'm sorry. I didn't know.

ARTURO

I'm almost done with this book. She says she has another one for me.

Rick flips to the back of the book, then at Arturo whose pride barely shines through his embarrassment.

RICK

Do you want to finish it now?

A little apprehensive about studying with a new teacher in Emile's presence, Arturo musters his courage and nods his head. He sits down next to Rick who lays the book out at the starting place.

RICK
Go ahead.

Arturo takes a deep breath as he prepares to read the words.

ARTURO
(reading)
Sam -- and -- Tab -- run -- with --
Waaaalter.

RICK
No. This "a" sounds like a short "o".
Like in "dog".

ARTURO
Wolter?

RICK
Right.

Down on the floor, Emile appears curious.

RICK (CON'T)
Try this sentence.

ARTURO
Tab -- ran --

EMILE
(interrupting)
That sound like a baby book! Whatta
you be reading a baby book for?

RICK
Get that nose to the floor, Emile.
I don't hear any puffing.

That's because Emile has stood up from the floor and is now looking over the front of the desk.

EMILE
Look at that. Homeboy be learnin' to
read and shit.

ARTURO
Yeah, man. You got a problem with it?

EMILE

No. I just never heard nobody ever
learn nothin' at Chaparral.

Rick takes the workbook and puts it in front of Emile.

RICK

All right, Shakespeare. You read.
Anything.

Taken off guard, Emile hesitates before attempting a sentence.

EMILE

(reading perfectly)

Sam and Ann will want the dog and cat.
Tab ran up a tree after the bird.

Emile hands the book back to Rick.

EMILE (CON'T)

Mum taught us. At bedtimes.

Rick takes a last look at Emile, then goes back to the lesson.

RICK

Get out of here. Go on home.

Emile drops to the floor to avoid deportation.

EMILE

No I got more push-ups. Lots more
push-ups.

RICK

Then do 'em outside. In the hallway.

EMILE

A'right then. I'll go.

Emile very reluctantly and slowly gets up again to walk out.

ARTURO

I just have to do these three pages.

RICK

You're right. Three more pages and
this book is history.

Emile gives a delayed laugh as he continues out through the main
office.

EMILE (O.S.)

That a good one, Ricky! It be a
history book in your class!

Rick looks to Arturo when Emile is completely gone.

RICK
What is wrong with that guy?

ARTURO
It's Victor's gang.

Rick doesn't understand.

ARTURO (CON'T)
I heard he quit 'em. I heard he left
today.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

It is later in the afternoon when EMILE walks from the building alone, clutching himself over his red sweatshirt, little help against the cool wind blowing across the campus.

When he reaches the padlocked gate, he looks both ways before climbing the high chain link fence. He looks both ways again before walking down the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. AN ALLEY

Halfway down the alley with his hands pushed deep down into his blue jeans pockets, EMILE whips around suddenly at the sound of an ENGINE.

RICK slows his MOTORCYCLE beside him.

It doesn't take long to see Emile is extremely on edge. He becomes defensive very quickly.

EMILE
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to laugh at
him. I think it good he be learnin'
to read and shit. I jus' never seen
it before.

RICK
What did you want to tell me?

EMILE
I didn't want to tell you nothin'.

Emile stops and looks at Rick, wondering if he can trust him.

EMILE (CON'T)

I didn't have nothin' to do with what they did with Miss Orozco. They wanted me to write the note but I wouldn't. I swear.

RICK

I know. Who did?

EMILE

Victor be doin' it for White Zac so he become our homeboy and help us get rid of the other whites. I hate White Zac so I called the police.

RICK

You called the police?

EMILE

Yeah, but Victor and them now happy 'cause all the whites left school.

Rick thinks to himself as all this new information begins to make better sense.

EMILE (CON'T)

They say that you're all that's left and they're gonna make you behave.

RICK

How thoughtful of them.

Rick realizes he is watching a student more scared than he's ever seen one.

EMILE (CON'T)

They wanted me to help beat up that homeboy Luther today. But I said I wouldn't. I just told 'em no. And I told 'em I didn't like what they did to Miss Orozco. I like her.

Emile is finished. He stands now, almost shivering from the wind rushing through the alley.

RICK

You want a ride home?

EMILE

No. Thanks, Ricky. I stay nearby. But you be careful.

Rick gives him reassuring pat on the back.

RICK
I'll "behave". Thanks for telling me.

Rick starts to ride off, then looks back.

RICK (CON'T)
Three journal pages tomorrow, or its
two hundred more push-ups.

Emile pulls his journal from his pocket and waves it. Rick rides off.

CUT TO:

EXT. AN APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Wearing a thick wool coat and carrying a Manilla Envelope fully stamped and addressed to "Rick Latimer", HILARY OROZCO walks from the dark sidewalk to the stairs of the middle-class apartment building.

She knocks on a door. After a short moment, RICK, disheveled in the suit and tie as he never bothered to change from work, opens the door and looks at her as if she were absolutely the last person he expected to see on his doorstep.

HILARY
Well? Are you going to let me in?

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT

While RICK pulls two "Sam and Ann" READING BOOKS from the envelope, HILARY surveys the cluttered and unkempt bachelor apartment.

HILARY
I was going to mail them. But when I walked to the box, I just kept walking.

RICK
I'm glad you did. I mean, I need these.

HILARY
Rick, you spoiled an illusion. I always thought high school principals lived in mansions with a maid and two cars.

RICK
No. We just act like we do.

Hilary walks over to the unmade bed where several HISTORY BOOKS lay open next to an empty box of Triscuits. She picks one up.

HILARY

What are you reading about?

RICK

World War One. The Great Depression.
I have to stay a step ahead of them.
But if--

HILARY

But if I can walk five miles to your
place, why can't I do it?

RICK

I mean that. It's just that, you
know, they miss you.

Hilary has walked over to a CHEST OF DRAWERS, half of them open. She notices the class picture of a YOUNG CHILD on which is taped a half-deflated YELLOW BALLOON.

Hilary looks to see if the boy resembles Rick. It does.

HILARY

How old is he?

Rick replies with a bittersweet pride.

RICK

Eight.

He reaches over to take the shriveled balloon off the picture. Hilary looks to Rick for an explanation without asking.

RICK (CON'T)

I used to work late all the time.
Sometimes overnight.

HILARY

And your wife thought you were having
an affair?

RICK

No. But it gave her an excuse to get
me out. She didn't like being married
to a high school principal.

HILARY

She wanted more out of life.

RICK

She wanted a maid and two cars.

Hilary smiles at the irony. So does Rick, perhaps for the first time.

HILARY

I want you to come over for dinner,
Rick. Let me cook you something
that's not in a microwave. Eat
sitting down.

She's pointing to his messy corner of a Kitchen. Rick nods as if he couldn't think of anything he'd rather do.

Hilary continues her slow walk around the apartment, looking at things.

HILARY (CON'T)

You know. Everytime I close my eyes,
I see that monster mask.

RICK

I'm sorry. I really am.

HILARY

Why? You saved my life.

RICK

If I'da gotten there sooner, you
wouldn't have been hurt.

HILARY

You're right. You should've worn your
cape.

A look at Rick's sincerity makes her reconsider.

HILARY (CON'T)

I didn't mean that. Really. It's
just that even if the kid hadn't cut
me, I'd still be hurt.

She continues looking at things. Rick follows her.

RICK

But it seems to be healing okay?

HILARY

Sure. Isn't that the joke? Your body
just goes on healing whatever it is
that caused the damage. It doesn't
matter if it's from some surgery, or
an accident, or a student trying to
kill you to rape your body. It
doesn't know and it doesn't care. It
just goes about its business.

Hilary bites her lip to hold back a surge of emotion. Rick isn't sure what to do to comfort her. He puts his hand on her shoulder.

RICK

Do you want me to drive you home?

She nods her head very quickly. Rick grabs his Leather Jacket off a chair, then opens the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITY STREETS - DAY (EARLY MORNING)

There is foggy drizzle in the air as the helmeted RICK LATIMER retraces his route to Chaparral through the downtown and inner city.

The black woman with the cane still waits at the bus stop, this time with an umbrella. A different group of Mexicans wait for a day's work at the street corner.

All watch Rick ride by, the highlight of the morning.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL

RICK hangs up the lock on the entrance gate and leaves it open before riding in towards the parking lot and main building.

ANGLE - THROUGH RICK'S HELMET SHIELD

as we try to make out what he's looking at: A rain-soaked, red and blue cloth hanging from the FLAGPOLE.

Someone has left the flag out all night, Rick appears to be thinking by the annoyed manner he parks his motorcycle.

He takes off his helmet and carries it to the building, his eyes never leaving the wet desecration.

But as we approach and come around the flagpole, the red hanging from it becomes a RED SWEATSHIRT.

The blue becomes a pair of faded BLUE JEANS.

And Rick's minor annoyance spirals into horror when his eyes meet EMILE's staring blankly down a hundred feet, the flagpole cord wrapped securely around his neck.

Rick turns away. There's no one around to ask if it's still there -- if he's really seeing this.

He looks up again. Emile still stares down at him until the wind shifts his body away. And Rick explodes.

RICK

No!!!!!!!

He hurls his helmet as far as he can and falls to his knees.

CUT TO:

A PARKED AMBULANCE and a CROWD OF STUDENTS

watching TWO POLICE OFFICERS lowering Emile's Body down from the Pole the same they would a flag.

The scene is quiet. And though most of the spectators are used to living with violence, the sight of the dead but familiar face is enough to cut through a lifetime of built-up defenses.

A Police Officer reaches up and closes Emile's eyes as he's brought to the stretcher and laid down for the last time.

CUT TO:

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HILARY

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RICK

I'm glad you did. I mean, I need these.

HILARY

Rick, you've spoiled an illusion. I always thought principals lived in a mansion with a maid and two cars.

RICK

Oh yeah. Right. They said I'm on the waiting list for all that.

Hilary walks over to the unmade bed where several HISTORY BOOKS lay open next to an empty box of Triscuits. She picks one up.

HILARY

What are you reading about?

RICK
World War One. The Great Depression.
I have to stay a step ahead of them.
But if--

HILARY
But if I can walk five miles to your
place, why can't I do it?

RICK
I didn't mean that. It's just that,
you know, I think they miss you.

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She notices the class picture of a YOUNG CHILD on which is taped
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Hilary looks to see if the boy resembles Rick. It does.

HILARY
How old is he?

Rick replies with a bittersweet pride.

RICK
Eight.

He reaches over to take the shriveled balloon off the picture.

HILARY
And his mother? Where--?

RICK
She was taking French lessons from a
colleague of mine at Sycamore. Every
afternoon. In our house.

Hilary is hesitant to say what Rick is hinting at.

HILARY
You walked in on them?

RICK
No. My son did. The noise woke him
up from his nap.

HILARY
Oh, Jesus.

RICK
I think I would have gotten custody if
I hadn't trashed his car.

Hilary smiles, knowing what he's talking about. So does Rick,
perhaps for the first time about this incident.

HILARY

I want you to come over for dinner,
Rick. Let me cook you something
that's not in a microwave. Eat
sitting down.

She's pointing to his messy corner of a Kitchen. Rick nods as if
he couldn't think of anything he'd rather do.

Hilary continues her slow walk around the apartment, looking at
things.

HILARY (CON'T)

I keep seeing that monster mask, Rick.
Every time I close my eyes.

RICK

I'm sorry. I really am.

HILARY

Why? You saved my life.

RICK

If I'da gotten there a little sooner,
you wouldn't have been hurt like you
were.

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You're right. You should've worn your
cape.

A look at Rick's sincerity makes her reconsider.

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Sure. Isn't that the joke? Your body
just goes on healing whatever it is
that caused the damage. It doesn't
matter if it's from some surgery, or
an accident, or a student trying to
kill you to rape your body. It
doesn't know and it doesn't care. It
just goes about its business.

Hilary bites her lip to hold back a surge of emotion. Rick isn't sure what to do to comfort her. He puts his hand on her shoulder.

RICK

Do you want to go home?

She nods her head very quickly. Rick grabs his Leather Jacket off a chair and his keys of the table.

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He looks up again. Emile still stares down at him until the wind shifts his body away. And Rick explodes.

RICK
Son of bitch!!!

He hurls his helmet as far as he can and falls to his knees.

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Except for the Pouring Rain, the scene is quiet. And though most of the spectators are used to living with violence, the sight of the dead but familiar face is enough to cut through a lifetime of built-up defenses.

A Police Officer reaches up and closes Emile's eyes as he's brought to the stretcher and laid down for the last time.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

It is already lunchtime as an angry and wet RICK LATIMER marches into the Cafeteria crowded with noisy and lunching students seated on and around LONG FORMICA TABLES.

He looks down each Long Table until he finds the one he's looking for, the one with VICTOR DUNCAN sitting with his associates at the opposite end.

Victor looks down the table at Rick just standing there while more and more lunching students notice the staredown. Victor smiles slightly but tauntingly.

VICTOR
How's it "hanging", Mr. Prin-C-Pal?

Victor's associates laugh at their leader's joke. A few others in the room join in.

VICTOR (CON'T)
You 'member your flag salute?

And that's all it takes. Rick grabs his end of the table and starts pushing it with everything he has.

--Students sitting at it, jump up and away.
--Students sitting on it, roll to the ground.

And Victor Duncan fumbles to stop the table as it barrels into his mid-section, pinning him against the wall, and knocking the wind out of him as it has never been knocked out.

He gasps for breath, hunched over table.

Rick walks past the stares of the entire room, picking up a FRENCH FRY and dipping it in CHILI as he reaches the teenage murderer on the other side.

RICK

Here, Victor. Have a Chili Fry.

He stuffs it in Victor's gasping mouth. Victor spits it out, out of breath.

VICTOR

Stop... Fuck... I can't breathe.

RICK

Neither can Emile. Have another.

Rick stuffs another Chili Fry into Victor's mouth. Victor spits it out again, taking a swing at Rick who catches his fist with his hand.

RICK

What's the matter, Victor? You don't want to be seen lunching with the principal?

VICTOR

Fucker. What do you want?

RICK

I want to expel you, Victor. I want to send you to prison for the rest of your short life. But I can't because no one saw you stringing up Emile. So it's the same old story. But I will catch you Victor, and you'll wish you got out when you could.

VICTOR

Fuck you.

RICK

Very good. It's been a pleasure. Have another.

Rick dips another Fry and pushes it into Victor's face before walking out.

Victor wipes the mess of his face with his hand and yells after Rick.

VICTOR
You're expelled!!

Rick turns around.

RICK
What?

VICTOR
I expel you, fucker. You ain't the
Principal no more. You come here
tomorrow and try to be, you're goin'
home dead.

RICK
Are you threatening my life, Victor?

VICTOR
You're a dead man if you show up
tomorrow.

Rick looks around at some of the other witnessing students. He speaks to one directly.

RICK
Did you hear that? Did you hear him
threaten to kill me?

The kid is scared to death. He takes a moment before answering.

STUDENT
No. I didn't.

Rick can't believe it. He picks another student.

RICK
Did you?

The second student shakes his head. Rick looks back at Victor who repeats his threat.

VICTOR
You'll be dead if you show up
tomorrow.

Now Rick is taking him seriously. He stares down the same two students before walking out.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE - DAY

District Superintendent GEORGE VALDIS paces in front of the DESK.

VALDIS

Damn! I don't know what the hell we're going to do now.

RICK sinks in his chair behind it while JOE PHILLIPS sits up in front and ROBERT DARCY stands at the door with folded arms.

Valdis continues pacing and thinking aloud.

VALDIS (CON'T)

We'll let Darcy take over until we can get someone else.

Darcy seems just as surprised to hear this as is Rick.

VALDIS (CON'T)

I think I can arrange to get your job back at Sycamore, but probably not until Monday.

RICK

I have a job.

VALDIS

Yes, but.

RICK

That is my name on the door, isn't it?

VALDIS

Mr. Latimer--

RICK

--Yeah. That's it.

VALDIS

You've just had a serious threat to your life.

RICK

I did. In front of a lot of students. And if you make me bow down to it, you might as well give Victor Duncan this office, 'cause he'll be the one running the school.

VALDIS

You call this running a school? Ramming a table into a known killer? Carrying a teacher off the campus bodily? You know, he's still collecting salary.

RICK

For the same amount of work.

VALDIS

Don't push it, Rick. There's more than just a car at stake this time.

RICK

Then why not give us a little more help?

PHILLIPS

And maybe a little extra help from the police. At least until this thing blows over.

VALDIS

What support? The police can't even keep Zac Mawby from jumping bail.

Rick looks to Phillips as they both think the same thing. Rick hits the desk with his fist.

RICK

Shit!

VALDIS

And they won't respond to to a threat until it's being perpetrated. That's always been the case in this part of the city.

RICK

(calmly)

Well, then. If Victor tries to make good on his threat, we'll give them a call.

VALDIS

No you won't. I'm taking you out of this school today. I'm handing it over to Darcy.

DARCY

No, you're not.

Valdis can't believe what he's hearing. Neither can Rick.

VALDIS

What? What the hell is going on here?

DARCY

We're trying to run a school. That's all.

VALDIS

Okay. I see. So in the meantime,
you're just going to ignore what
happened today?

Rick gets up from his desk and puts on his coat.

RICK

In the meantime, I have a class to
teach.

Rick straightens his tie and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. AN APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

At a nicely set table, TWO PLATES OF FOOD remain uneaten but
played with. This is Hilary's apartment. Austere but, unlike
Rick's, very well taken care of.

RICK and HILARY sit awkwardly with each other at either side of
the dining table.

RICK

We can't even stop Emile from being
murdered, then this happens. If you
wanted to stay out until they caught
again him, I won't object.

Hilary gets up from the table and starts clearing their places.
She takes them into the kitchen before speaking.

HILARY

Rick. There's a boarding school back
east. Boys and Girls, in a beautiful
part of connecticut. They called me
back today.

Rick doesn't need to hear anymore to figure it out.

RICK

Like I said. I won't object.

HILARY

I'm leaving tomorrow. My sister's
having my things sent out to me later.

Rick stands up from the table. From the kitchen, Hilary finally
turns around to look him in the eye.

HILARY

I'm not afraid, Rick. I'm not a
coward.

RICK

You never were before. Why should you start now?

HILARY

It's just that for once I want to open my eyes and not see ugliness. I don't want to hear about it. I don't want to know it's there. You can only be so dedicated. There's only so much you can do for other people before you have to do something for yourself.

Rick takes his leather jacket off the back of the chair and puts it on. Hilary comes close to hold his leather lapels.

HILARY (CON'T)

Do you hate me for that?

RICK

No. I envy you.

Without another word there is that brief tension reserved for cars and doorsteps as the two look into each other's eyes.

Rick kisses her very politely, then steps back to look at her.

RICK (CON'T)

I better go.

Hilary pulls him down again and starts kissing him as passionately as any teacher has her principal.

And as if all the tension of the past several weeks were being released in these moments, Hilary pulls Rick's jacket off again.

They fall back onto the couch in a continued frenzy as if they were both trying to extract as much as possible from each and every second of their limited time together.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

In a tight, frenzied embrace under the covers, RICK and HILARY make passionate, if not hysterically passionate, love to each other in the light from the streetlamp outside.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HILARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

RICK lay wide awake in the bed with HILARY's sleeping head on his chest. He looks at the clock radio: 5:05 a.m. As delicately as possible, he starts to get up out of the bed.

Hilary holds him down, lifting her head. She too, is wide awake.

HILARY

Rick. Why are you going to school today?

Rick thinks about it for a moment, but they both know the answer.

RICK

It's my job.

They both lie there thinking about it.

HILARY

It's funny, you and me. We never really got a chance.

RICK

I know. But not many around here do.

He kisses her once more before getting up completely.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILARY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT (DAWN)

ANGLE - A BLACK BOOT

kick starting a Honda Nighthawk MOTORCYCLE. The roar of the engine breaks the silence in this lower middle class hispanic neighborhood.

RICK looks up before putting on his helmet. Hilary is standing on the balcony. They exchange a long, hard stare.

Rick smiles reassuringly, then rides off into the dark morning.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

In the middle of the new day, the graffiti covered school stands by itself in the lot as if ready to make a fresh start.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAYS

Students go about their business getting to their class before the bell rings. When it does, the halls are empty save several security guards.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S CLASSROOM - DAY

RICK LATIMER, the man responsible for the school's return, conducts his class as if it were any other day, pointing to a model of a MODEL T FORD on what was once Hilary's desk.

RICK
Besides just transportation, what else did the widespread ownership of automobiles?

LATINO GIRL
Just cruisin' around?

RICK
Sure. But what did the privacy of the automobile allow?

A BLACK STUDENT eagerly raises his hand as he answers.

BLACK STUDENT
It gave 'em a place to fuck.

RICK
Right!

While the class giggles aloud, Rick notices TREENA LESTER sitting in the third row. He continues with the lesson.

RICK (CON'T)
Which really isn't important except for how it affected the moral climate of the time. It's why the twenties became "roaring".

A few more giggles spread through the mostly attentive classroom.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

It's later in the day as RICK sits at his desk finishing some unseen paperwork. He folds it up and stuffs it into an envelope addressed to "Father Robert Julian".

He looks up. TREENA is standing in the doorway. She is very nervous, and speaks as if she rehearsed what she was going to say.

TREENA
I was wondering, Mr. Latimer, if you could help me with school in the mornings? Like we were going to?

Rick hesitates before answering. Could this be how Victor is going to get him? Treena takes his hesitation as a "no".

TREENA (CON'T)

Please? Nothing's gonna happen. He doesn't even know. I just want to catch up in school, that's all. I just want to get out.

Rick slowly nods his head, thinking he may be taking a risk to trust her.

RICK

First thing tomorrow morning. I'll be here.

Treena smiles with enthusiasm tempered only by Rick's sullen expression. She turns around and walks out past JOE PHILLIPS.

PHILLIPS

You wanted to see me?

Rick extends the letter to him.

RICK

Keep this. Mail it if anything happens to me.

Phillips looks at the letter, then back at Rick with a somber expression.

PHILLIPS

Your friend the Priest.

RICK

Yeah. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be here.

PHILLIPS

Is it a hate letter?

The two look at each other and laugh.

RICK

No. But I'm sure he'll have plenty to say about it.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAYS

The SCHOOL BELL RINGS with a haunting pitch as students make their way to their lockers for the last time before home.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

In all their various forms of transportation, STUDENTS exit en masse through the open front gate with a jubilant spirit commensurate to the sunny weather.

Some dance to music from the LARGE RADIOS they weren't allowed to play in school.

Others tear out onto the road in their cars, free again for nineteen hours.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAYS

The high spirits are shared by the SECURITY GUARDS who check the classrooms as fast as they can.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S CLASSROOM

In the back row of the empty classroom, RICK sits in a student's desk next to ARTURO who finishes reading a page.

ARTURO

Sam -- and -- Ann -- will -- waaant, I mean wont, will want...

He stops, deep in thought.

RICK

Go ahead.

Arturo looks up at HILARY OROZCO standing like an apparition at the door. Although she is carrying her books as if returning to work, she wears a very worried expression.

HILARY

Rick. The students aren't going home.

Rick is just as surprised to see her as Arturo. He gets up out of his deskchair to look out the window.

All along the fence by the front gate, students hang their hands on the chain links, looking into the school lot, waiting for something to happen. Arturo knows what they're waiting for.

ARTURO

Man. You gotta let me stay with you.
You gotta let me help you fight.

RICK
There isn't going to be any fight.

ARTURO
Fuck, there isn't. Look at them.

RICK
Hilary, how long are you here?

HILARY
For good. I hope.

Rick looks to her with a quelled joy at hearing the news that should be cause for a party, on any other day.

RICK
Then drive the eager Mr. Diego
somewhere else to finish his lesson.
Maybe your place, if it's picked up.

Arturo blows up in protest.

ARTURO
That's not fair! You have to let me.
They made us afraid to say what we
saw! They made us afraid to even
leave the garage.

Rick walks to the door while Hilary picks up the reading book off the desk. Rick speaks with the SECURITY GUARD at the open door.

RICK
Take them to her car, get inside, and
don't get out until you're all at her
place.

The Guard nods obediently, grabbing hold Arturo as he heightens his protest.

ARTURO
Don't you see?! I hafta prove myself.
I hafta prove I'm a man.

Rick looks seriously to the angry teenager as if he were considering granting his wish.

RICK
All you have to do is grow up.

And with that Rick heads quickly down the empty hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICES

RICK bursts in to meet PHILLIPS in the middle of the empty main offices.

PHILLIPS
Something's going down.

RICK
Yeah, or they all can't wait for school tomorrow.

They continue on into Rick's empty office.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

PHILLIPS goes straight to the open second story window while RICK reaches into his desk for his Bushnell BINOCULARS.

More students have found places on the fence to watch whatever they expect to happen in the schoolyard.

RICK
Is everyone out?

PHILLIPS
'cept you and me.

ANGLE - THROUGH RICK'S BINOCULARS

as he surveys the scene in the schoolyard. Students hang on the fence, but there is no sign of Victor.

RICK (O.S.)
All right, Screwdriver. We'll give them a minute, then go on our way.

In the foreground, the SECURITY GUARD escorts the still struggling ARTURO to the blue Celica with HILARY. The guard gets in with Arturo.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL GROUNDS

HILARY looks back in the direction of Rick's office and hesitates a moment before climbing behind the wheel.

We follow the blue Celica as it passes through the guarded gate and along the road that borders the school grounds.

As the car passes, we stop on WHITE ZAC coming out an alley. He puts on his MONSTER MASK, then starts climbing the fence with a pair of long handled CABLE CUTTERS under his arm.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

PHILLIPS closes RICK's window and latches it shut.

PHILLIPS
It's time to go home.

Rick surveys the situation outside one last time. He sees something in the direction of Victor's old alley.

RICK
Oh, God. No it isn't.

When Phillips comes back to the window, we see what he sees:

THREE FIGURES walk toward the school with their faces covered by Cheap Halloween Masks. White Zac is not one of them.

ANGLE - THROUGH RICK'S BINOCULARS

for a closer look at the three wearing Caspar the Ghost, Felix the Cat, and Mr. "T" FACES over the SKI MASKS that cover their heads. They carry a Pump Action SHOTGUN and two large caliber REVOLVERS in their hands.

RICK (CON'T)
It's your Saturday morning favorites.
With a fucking arsenal.

Phillips comes back from his office with a handful of heavy chains.

PHILLIPS
Call the police. I'll chain the front doors inside.

RICK
Does this mean the "threat's being perpetrated?"

Phillips smiles at Rick's ability to joke under the pressure as he runs out the office with the chains.

Rick takes another look at the three approaching across the school yard as he picks up the receiver for the TELEPHONE.

He pushes a button for a line out. Nothing. No sound. He tries another. No sound. He jiggles the receiver. How could this be?

He looks out again at the approaching three when it hits him.

RICK

JOE!!!!

Rick grabs his BASEBALL BAT as he runs out the office to warn his friend.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Rick charges into the hallway with the Bat in time to see the Monster WHITE ZAC smashing the CABLE CUTTERS over JOE PHILLIPS head for the second time.

RICK

Hey!!!

Rick runs after him. White Zac pushes the unconscious Head of Security down the central stairwell before pulling a Double Barrel SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN.

Rick dives beside some lockers as it explodes in his direction.

He retreats down the stairs behind him for his life.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY

A bad situation for RICK gets worse as he escapes down into the hallway where THREE SILHOUETTES walk from the open double-doors, faceless and backlit by the sunlight behind them.

Rick tries a classroom door. It's locked. He smashes the small DOOR WINDOW with his bat as WHITE ZAC joins the other three from the central stairwell with a war cry.

Rick reaches in and opens the door.

VICTOR

We got 'em, fucker.

The four Cartoon Characters holler like children at recess as they run the distance toward the classroom Rick disappeared into.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

The four explode through the doorway, firing their .45 AUTOMATIC, their .38 REVOLVER, their SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN, and their PUMP ACTION SHOTGUN in all directions at anything and everything.

PYREX BEAKERS explode.

GRADUATED CYLINDERS crash.

The TABLE OF ELEMENTS shreds into nothing.

Mr. "T" VICTOR raises his hand to stop firing. In the silence, there is no sight or sound of Rick.

Monster WHITE ZAC finishes reloading his double-barrel Sawed-Off Shotgun then walks slowly between the lab counters, ready to blow away the hiding principal at every dark turn.

Broken Jars of CHEMICALS fizz together.

White Zac reaches the last counter. No Rick. He shrugs his shoulders to Victor who points Caspar the Ghost JOJO to the window.

Jojo walks over and looks around out the open window.

JOJO

I don't see nothin', Vic.

But with the CLATTERING OF LOOSE CHANGE five feet below, Jojo is halfway out the window shooting his .45 at rolling COINS.

RICK drops down from the narrow ledge above. He rolls Jojo out the window onto the broken glass and asphalt.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL - DAY

As the students along the fence watch silently from a distance, Felix the Cat KEVIN and Monster WHITE ZAC point their .38 and sawed-off shotgun at RICK rolling JOJO's front side around as a shield.

JOJO

Don't shoot me, niggers!!

KEVIN

Keep him there. I'll blow his head off.

While Kevin starts to climb out the window for a point blank kill, Rick uses his superior strength to point Jojo's GUN HAND with his own.

JOJO

Kev! Watchit!!

Rick reaches around Jojo with his other arm and belts him in the stomach -- full force.

Jojo convulses, squeezing his trigger. It FIRES, ricocheting off the brick over Kevin's head.

 JOJO (CON'T)
You bastard!!!

Still trying to get the gun, Rick belts him again. Jojo fires again causing Kevin to retreat back into the Chemistry Class where he coughs from the FUMES. Rick rolls Jojo over the asphalt to the Basement Window.

The two fall through it with a loud CRASH.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT FOOD STORAGE

RICK and JOJO fall onto some SACKS OF FLOUR spread out over the cement floor with enough force to knock the gun from Jojo's hand and under some storage shelves.

Rick belts the weaponless student in the gut and in the face but is not able to retrieve the loose gun before KEVIN jumps down from the broken window firing off his .38 REVOLVER.

Rick has no defense but to run.

Kevin chases after him, firing as often as he can. REFRIED BEANS ooze from a twenty-pound can. FRUIT PUNCH floods the floor. MUSTARD explodes.

Kevin runs up the dark stairs after Rick.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL KITCHEN

RICK dodges around counters, hanging pots and pans, and the industrial stove top looking for some defense against Felix-faced KEVIN firing bullets into CLANGING metal.

Rick pulls down a SKILLET. A bullet goes right through it. He wings it at his assailant, buying time for an escape.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CAFETERIA

Reloading his gun, KEVIN walks by the ends of the long formica LUNCH TABLES spanning the length of the room.

One of the tables starts barreling into to him.

Kevin quickly moves out of the way but the Principal is nowhere to be seen.

Kevin bends down to look under the MOVING TABLE just as RICK thrust his side upward. The table falls over on Kevin's back.

Rick ducks to the floor as the BLAST of a SHOTGUN announces the arrival of Mr. "T" VICTOR and Monster WHITE ZAC on either side of the cafeteria.

Kevin writhes on the floor. He sees Rick in a crawling race toward his loose gun, but he can't catch his breath to warn Victor.

He tries to make a sound. Any sound. But just when Rick is within arm's reach, it comes.

KEVIN
Vic..! My gun!

His call is answered by a barrage of SHOTGUN FIRE from both sides.

Rick rolls under the table. Victor and White Zac stalk him like hunters. Rick dives under another table.

VICTOR
I got him!

Victor FIRES. Misses. Fires. CLICK. He pats his jacket but takes out only one SHELL. He puts it in and cocks.

VICTOR (CON'T)
Shit, man! Gimme some shells.

WHITE ZAC
No. He's mine.

White Zac fires into the table at Rick. He misses.

VICTOR
You hear me, Motherfucker?

WHITE ZAC
I didn't hear nothing, Nigger.

Victor turns his SHOTGUN at White Zac and explodes his last shell into his chest. White Zac flies back, very bloody and very dead.

VICTOR
(over his body)
I said "gimme some shells."

Victor picks up White Zac's Double Barrel Gun and Box of Shells as Rick darts across the tables and out the front door. Victor grins as he takes of his Mr. "T" MASK and Ski Mask under it.

VICTOR (CON'T)
It's just you and me, Ricky.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

RICK runs around the side of the school building only a few strides ahead of a grinning VICTOR putting two more shells in his double barrel shotgun.

VICTOR
Special delivery for Ricky Lateemer.

Rick ducks into the open double-doors.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY

RICK runs as far down the hallway as he can before VICTOR stops at the entrance with his sawed-off double barrel aimed straight ahead.

VICTOR
Sign on the dotted line.

Victor fires both barrel as Rick dives into the central stairwell.

CUT TO:

THE STAIRWELL

and RICK doing his best to revive JOE PHILLIPS lying unconscious on the stairs with VICTOR's official sounding voice not far behind.

RICK
C'mon, Joe. No time for sleeping on the job.

VICTOR (O.S.)
Paging Mr. Latimer. Richard Latimer.

Rick starts to carry Phillips around the bend of the stairs as the STAIRWELL WINDOW explodes from another blast.

ANGLE - VICTOR

slowly climbing the stairs, smiling, knowing he has the advantage and another barrel to blow.

VICTOR (CON'T)
Mr. Death calling.

Halfway up the stairs, he hears the MEN'S ROOM DOOR closing. He hurries to the top. The LIGHT is on under the door, next to which Phillips is propped, unconscious but just barely coming to.

VICTOR (CON'T)
(put on woman's voice)
I'm sorry, Mr. Death. Mr. Latimer, he
in in the toy-let.

He opens the shotgun and starts replacing the spent shell.

A FIRE EXTINGUISHER hits him in the gut sending SHELLS and SHOTGUN flying over the side, clattering on the bottom floor.

RICK
You wanna go down after it?! Let me
help you.

Rick starts to lift Victor over the side.

Victor reaches into his jacket and fires a .22 CALIBER BULLET, point blank into Rick's shoulder.

Rick falls back down the stairs. Victor laughs, pointing the small REVOLVER at him again while he wipes blood from lip.

VICTOR
Didn't you know, Ricky? I was a Boy
Scout! Ha ha ha ha.

Victor fires into the stairs, kicking the bleeding Rick further on down them.

VICTOR (CON'T)
You're gonna die now. You know that?
You're gonna die.

Rick doesn't answer. Victor fires another round, barely missing. He kicks him again.

VICTOR (CON'T)
Tell me what it feels like to know
you're gonna die. You're the teacher.
I wanna know.

Rick holds firm, not answering. He does whatever he can to protect himself as Victor kicks him around the bend of the

stairwell across the broken glass, the gun always pointed and ready to kill.

VICTOR (CON'T)

I need to know. I'm the student.
Look! I'm even raising my hand!

He is as he kicks Rick down the second set of stairs and fires a ricochet off the cement.

VICTOR (CON'T)

Tell me!! ...now

Victor takes careful aim at Rick's head with the HANDGUN--

--the same Gun that flies from his hand with the swing of a BASEBALL BAT.

Victor looks up into the scared, angry, and beat-up face of LUTHER FRANKLIN, the kid he'd been harassing to join up.

VICTOR

What...?

LUTHER

I hate you, fucker.

Luther swings again, but Victor is no match for him. He catches the bat after it misses and yanks it from the Luther's grip.

VICTOR

That was stupid. Dead stupid.

Frozen with fear, Luther sees Victor reach back for his fallen GUN on the stairs--

--and RICK'S FIST go smashing into his face.

Victor goes flying back to the hallway floor, stumbling to his feet just in time to get another from Rick's good arm.

RICK

Special delivery from Ricky Latimer

Rick smashes his face again. Victor tries a few ineffectual swings as he backs toward the Front Entrance. Rick is feeling no pain as he lays another.

RICK (CON'T)

Sign on the dotted line.

Victor swings, but Rick hits him again. And again. And again. Until he reaches the open double door.

He lifts the delirious Victor up over his head with his good arm.

RICK
'Cause this one's goin' Air Mail.

Rick hurls Victor out through the doors so that he rolls unconscious on the steps.

A POLICE SIREN can be heard approaching from the distance outside. A few of the students start to come in from the gate.

Rick turns around. Luther is helping JOE PHILLIPS down the hallway toward where Rick now stands. They stop at the doorway where Phillips regains his own balance.

He looks to Luther, then to Rick.

PHILLIPS
I better drive him home.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL BUILDING (LATER)

ANGLE - VICTOR

looking out from the back seat of a POLICE CAR at RICK sitting wounded on the front steps, answering the questions of one POLICE OFFICER while others investigate the scene.

POLICE OFFICER
Had the suspect been seen around the school before? Had he ever come on to the campus?

RICK
Yeah. He was a student here. I think he still is.

The Officer shakes his head as he writes it down.

Rick's eyes are locked on Victor who looks back through the window at him with a mixture of hatred and respect. He offers an ever so slight but evil grin as the police car starts up to take him away.

HILARY approaches from behind where the police car was. She stops in front of Rick who seems surprised to see her. They look at each other for a long exhausted moment.

RICK
You forget something?

HILARY
Yes.

She hugs him tight, helping him get up.

HILARY (CON'T)
(to the Police Officer)
I think I better get him to a hospital.

POLICE OFFICER
That's fine, ma'am. I just need to ask one more question.

ARTURO comes up through the crowd wheeling Rick's MOTORCYCLE, stopping it in front of Rick. Rick lifts his leg around it.

HILARY
Rick! Are you crazy? Let me drive you.

RICK
No. Not today.

Rick kicks starts it up. The engine roars. He looks out at the students still outside the fence.

RICK (CON'T)
Especially not today.

POLICE OFFICER
(over roar of engine)
Sir. What do you do here? What's your occupation?

Rick looks around, then at the officer, somewhat surprised he has to ask.

RICK
The Principal.

The officer writes it down. Rick rides across the broken asphalt steering the motorcycle with his good arm. He stops briefly at the front gate as TREENA stands there looking at him, scared he may be angry with her.

RICK
Tomorrow morning. I'll be here.

Treena smiles.

TREENA
So will I.

Rick revs up and takes off along the street still lined with students.

Most of them just stare as he passes. Some of them wave slightly. A few start to run after as he turns the road that leads to the heart of the city.

FADE TO BLACK

END