

91st and Broadway

by

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FADE IN:

SUPER: AUTUMN, 91ST AND BROADWAY, NEW YORK

EXT. 91ST AND BROADWAY, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A half empty street lined with Brownstones and businesses. A makeshift baseball diamond is set-up in the street.

Tensions mount as a group of neighborhood kids wait to be picked for a ball game.

Only three kids remain: REED JENKINS(RJ), NICK STEIN and TIM CONSIDINE. RJ, an awkward 13 year old, tosses a ball up and down.

CRAIG TURELLI, alpha male and legend in his own mind, is holding court.

TURELLI
We'll take Considine.

Considine walks over to Turelli's side.

TURELLI (CONT'D)
BUSH, who you want - Jenkins or Stein?

BUSH
Neither. They both suck.

RJ and Stein look at each other dejectedly. They listen as their fates are decided.

TURELLI
No shit. -- Tell you what. You take the Special Olympians and we'll give you first ups.

BUSH
Fine. (to RJ and Nick) Get over here.

They shuffle over to Bush's side. RJ hands him his ball.

SERIES OF SHOTS OVER CREDITS:

- RJ whiffing.

- RJ attempting to catch a fly ball like a girl. The ball goes way over his head. He falls down and a teammate makes the catch and shakes his head.

- Stein takes a Babe Ruth cut. The ball trickles down the first base line. He makes a dash for third. His teammates scream at him for going the wrong way.

BACK TO SCENE

Bush is on third.

BUSH
Just hit something...please.

RJ enters the batter's box and stands a mile from the plate.

Turelli winds up and deliberately beans RJ in the back.

RJ
Ah...

KINCAID
Come on Turelli! And, you wonder why we never want you to play.

TURELLI
What? He's crowding the plate?

Kincaid picks up the bat and hands it to RJ.

KINCAID
You okay?

RJ
Yeah...

KINCAID
Good, don't worry about that jerk. Base hit and we win this thing man. You got this. Just keep your eye on the ball.

RJ moves up in the batter's box, ready for the pitch. Turelli goes through a goofy pre-wind-up routine, then stops.

TURELLI
Hey Jenkins, you sure you don't want your sister to bat?

He points to Nick who's on the sidewalk sketching on top of his backpack, oblivious.

RJ
Just pitch it Turelli.

Turelli looks around at his teammates scattered on the street. He stares down RJ one last time.

TURELLI

Whatever, you know I got more game
than X-Box. Hit this ya fairy.

SLOW MOTION:

Turelli fires the ball inside. Time seems to slow down for a moment.

RJ(VO)

It was just another game between
the guys in the neighborhood. And
as usual, I was picked last and we
were losing. -- The meathead on
the mound, that's TURELLI. He's
everyone's worst nightmare; loud,
obnoxious, and one hell of a
baseball player.

RJ closes his eyes and swings for the heavens.

RJ (V.O.)(CONT'D)

No one ever could have predicted
that one lucky swing would have
such an effect on so many
lives...including my own.

RJ smashes the ball past Turelli, almost taking his head off.
The ball goes over the second baseman and bounces off a
parked car. A kid tries to stop it, but can't.

The ball rolls into an air vent/sewer.

RJ rounds the bases as his teammates cheer him on.

RJ(CONT'D)

Yeah!

TURELLI

Hold up, hold up! No homer! No
homer!

KINCAID

What are you talking about?

TURELLI

It's a ground-rule double - it went
in the freakin' sewer.

Nick walks over and looks into the air vent as the other kids
join them.

NICK

Actually, Craig it's not a sewer,
it's an air vent from the old
subway station.

TURELLI

Thanks for the history lesson, EIN-
Stein.

Turelli pushes Stein out of the conversation.

TURELLI (CONT'D)

Either way, the ball's outta play.
It's a double.

RJ

Says who?

TURELLI

The rule book.

KINCAID

What rule book? The one you just
pulled outta of your butt? Game
over. We win.

TURELLI

Wait a sec. Fine, we'll count
Bush's run, but Jenkins has to stay
on second. Where's the other ball?.

BUSH

We don't got one.

CONSIDINE

Forget it man, it's getting' late.
I gotta bounce anyway. See ya guys
tomorrow. (to everyone else)

TURELLI

Whatever...I should've known better
than to waste my time with you
wusses.

He grabs his sweatshirt and walks away. RJ and Nick continue
to stare into the air vent.

RJ

Oh man, that was my US Open ball.
Do you think we can scoop it outta
there with a stick or something?

RJ looks around, searching for a stick.

NICK

It's at least ten feet to the bottom and with that slope it wouldn't do you any good anyway.

RJ

Great, my grandpa bought me that.

NICK

Look on the bright side, at least we won.

RJ

WE? Some help you were Picasso? You sketched the whole time.

A COP walks up behind them as they stare into the vent.

COP

What's up fellas?

RJ

Nothing officer. Our ball went down the sewer. Is there any way to get down there?

COP

Nope, not for you. Nothin' down there except sewer rats and broken dreams.

RJ and Nick turn around. The streetlight comes on.

COP(CONT'D)

It's getting late, why don't you boys call it a night?

The cop and Nick start to walk away. RJ continues to stare into the vent. He thinks he sees something and jumps back.

RJ

Whoa. Nick come here!

Nick walks back over to the grate. The cop is gone.

RJ(CONT'D)

Hey man, I think I just saw something move.

NICK

Probably just an alligator.

RJ
No, I'm serious, it was someone's
face.

Nick gives him a "you're out of your mind stare."

NICK
You want me to chase the cop down
and tell him you found Jimmy Hoffa?

RJ
I'm telling you, someone's down
there.

NICK
You finish Hanley's history dittos
yet?

RJ
Nah, I'm gonna do 'em later.

Nick walks over to the bus stop.

RJ (CONT'D)
You're taking the the bus? You live
three blocks from here.

A bus arrives on the corner. Nick pulls out his bus pass.

NICK
Just getting my money's worth. See
you tomorrow.

Nick boards the bus and RJ walks down the street, alone.

INT. RJ'S HOUSE - NIGHT

RJ enters the kitchen. We see his mother, SUZANNE JENKINS, a
40-year old housewife. She's addicted to QVC, Ebay and
cooking shows.

Suzanne prepares dinner and watches a cooking show on a tiny
kitchen TV.

RJ puts his cap and baseball glove on the kitchen counter.

His father, TOM JENKINS, is sitting at the dinner table. He
glances up from a laptop, which shows commodity charts.

TOM
Hey, Jeeter how many times do I
have to tell you? Keep your gear
off the counter.

RJ's sister, BRITTANY, a 14-year old girl, sits at the table and continues to stare at her cell phone.

TOM (CONT'D)

And, another thing you two. I came home from work tonight and this place was lit up like the Good Ship Lollipop and no one was home. We have enough problems as it is with the damn circuit breaker. Turn off the lights! Understand?

RJ

Yeah...

Tom STARES at Brittany who shakes her head in disgust.

BRITTANY

Yes Dad.

TOM

(to Suzanne) Suze?...

Suzanne turns around.

SUZANNE

Yes dear.

BRITTANY

(to RJ) The library called again. Your *Bill Nye The Science Guy* videos are overdue. Bring 'em back already so they'll quit stalking me you geek.

RJ

I DID you idiot. So sorry they interrupted your texting.

BRITTANY

What...ever. Just stop talking you little turd.

Suzanne walks over to Tom at the table and places food down.

SUZANNE

Tom, I'm high bidder so far on a vintage Ginsu Turkey Slicer.

Tom still concentrating on his charts.

TOM

Just buy ONE Suzanne, please.
Half the stuff you bought last year
is still sitting in the garage
unopened.

Tom starts to carve the pot roast while Suzanne distributes food.

RJ

Hey, Dad, we finally beat Turelli's
team today.

TOM

Really, how'd he take it?

RJ

Not good, he was a jerk as usual.

Brittany starts laughing out loud, in her own world.

SUZANNE

(to Brittany) Brit, I was THIS
close today to getting that limited
edition Thanksgiving Broche I
showed you. I swear my redial's on
the Fritz again.

BRITTANY

That sucks. (The sound that a text
has arrived grabs her
attention)(laughs to
herself)OOOOHHHHH... I knew she was
cheating on him. Shannon's SO...
two-faced.

TOM

Will you put that damn thing away!

Brittany reluctantly puts the cell phone down on the table.

RJ

There's a reason they're called
crack berries dad.

BRITTANY

Shut-up.

RJ

Dad, I lost the U.S. Open ball
grandpa bought me.

TOM

How'd that happen?

RJ
I finally got a hit and it went
down the subway grate. While I was
trying to find it, I thought I saw
something move.

Half in the conversation and still concentrating fully on the
computer charts.

TOM
Maybe it was an alligator?

RJ
That's what Nick said. I think...

He reacts to something on his laptop screen.

TOM
Damn crude oil!

Tom's Blackberry buzzes on the table. He answers it.

TOM
Yeah, yeah, I'm looking at it right
now... Keep an eye on London. We'll
talk about it first thing tomorrow
morning... Bye.

BRITTANY
You ever hear the expression, "The
apple doesn't fall far from the
tree?"...Dad.

SUZANNE
Honey, it's part of your father's
business.

BRITTANY
Crack berry, crack berry.

RJ
I know I saw someone down there.

TOM
Down where?

RJ
I told you! In the subway grate!

TOM
Come on --

RJ
I'm serious.

Brittany resumes texting.

BRITTANY
Seriously retarded.

RJ
Shut-up!

TOM
Brittany, you want me to take that
away?

She puts it down and puts her hands in the air, mimicking
"not guilty."

SUZANNE
(to Brittany) Eat your dinner
before it gets cold. (to RJ) So
what did this "someone" look like?

RJ
I don't know. It was getting too
dark so I couldn't really tell.

BRITTANY
See Dad, I told you he's schizo.

RJ
Whatever. I'm getting that ball
back tomorrow.

SUZANNE
I don't think that's a good idea,
honey.

TOM
Yeah, I don't need a huge hospital
bill because you decide to go
spelunking in some sewer.

RJ
It's not a sewer, it's an old
subway station.

TOM
I don't care what it is, I don't
want you going down there!

RJ takes a bite of his food and nods reluctantly. Brittany
gives him a dirty look.

INT. RJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

RJ sits on his bed, working on his history dittos and listening to his I-Pod. In frustration, he puts them aside and reaches underneath his bed. He extracts two writing composition notebooks that are bound together with a rubber band.

He walks over to his desk which is next to a window. He begins to write. He pauses for a moment and looks out his window. He sees steam rising from the air vent. He slowly shuts his drapes.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - MORNING

RJ walks out his front door, on the way to school. Prominently displayed on the stoop is his US Open Tennis ball sitting on top of a Coke can. Pasted to the can is a piece of torn notebook paper with a note on it.

INSERT - NOTE

RJ
Nice hit. I figured you'd want this
back. - Jimmy Hoffa

BACK TO SCENE

RJ
What the...

He glances in all directions. He takes the ball and puts it in his jacket pocket. He runs to catch the bus.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

A classroom door reads, "U.S. History, Mr. Hanley."

INT. THE CLASSROOM - SAME

Your typical middle school classroom, controlled chaos. Kids sit in class, waiting for the day to end. Turelli, Nick Stein and three other boys are clustered around RJ's desk. RJ holds the ball in his hand.

RJ
I told you it was just sitting on
the stoop with this note.

Considine grabs the note.

CONSIDINE
Jimmy Hoffa?

He shows everyone the note.

EVERYONE ELSE
Come on!

After a beat.

RJ
You guys are messing with me,
right?

Turelli, in the middle of a conversation with a girl, SALLY
turns around.

TURELLI
Yeah, we called Ladder 49. They
worked all night digging it out for
you, you moron.

Turelli pushes all of RJ's books off his desk. RJ picks them
up slowly.

NICK
(holding comic book) Maybe it was
one of the Mole People?

Turelli flips it out of his hand.

TURELLI
You're an idiot too.

RJ
I'm telling you, there was
something down there.

TURELLI
Yeah, it's called people's crap.

Turelli turns around and continues talking to the girl behind
him.

TURELLI (CONT'D)
So, we hanging this weekend or
what?

SALLY
Why would we do that? I hated you
yesterday and I hate you
today. (smiles)

TURELLI
You'll come around.

He turns around to RJ and points to Sally.

TURELLI (CONT'D)
Girl loves me.

RJ hangs on to his books for dear life.

RJ
Obviously.

MR. HANLEY, a hip, thirty-something teacher enters the class, carrying his mail.

MR. HANLEY.
Alright settle down. I step out for
a second and you guys go crazy.

The class begins to quiet down.

MR. HANLEY (CONT'D)
OK...Let's see.

He looks down at his planner.

MR. HANLEY (CONT'D)
Right. I hope everyone enjoyed last
night's homework.

The class groans.

MR. HANLEY (CONT'D)
What? You think I'd forget? Let's
go. Hand 'em up.

More groaning as the papers make their way up to the front of the class. Turelli looks flabbergasted.

TURELLI
(to RJ) These were due today?

SALLY
Ah...yeah...

MR. HANLEY
Is there a problem Mr. Turelli? You
look like you're having a seizure
back there.

Class laughs.

TURELLI

I thought we'd have part of class to work on these.

MR. HANLEY

Sally, could you please enlighten Craig on the meaning of "homework."

SALLY

Ah...you do it at home... dork.

Everyone laughs, except for Turelli.

TURELLI

Shut-up.

MR. HANLEY

Craig...please...pass 'em up.

RJ hands his papers to Nick, who sits in front of him.

RJ

I'm going down there as soon as we get back from the trip. You in?

Nick shows him the Mole City comic book.

NICK

I don't know...

Mr. Hanley takes the pile of dittos and places them on his desk.

MR. HANLEY

Okay, where were we?

He looks down at his planner to jog his memory.

MR. HANLEY (CONT'D)

Right. Let's try to finish up our discussion about the Battle of New York.

He pulls down a map portraying New York City in 1776, overlaid on a current map of Manhattan.

MR. HANLEY (CONT'D)

What was the name of the British ship that was sunk in the East River during the battle?

A few people raise their hands. RJ is picked.

RJ

Was there ever a subway station at
91st and Broadway?

People chuckle. Turelli puts his head down on his desk.

TURELLI

Give it up Jenkins!

MR. HANLEY

What does that have to do with what
we're talking about?

RJ

A cop told us there was a subway
station there. Is that true?

MR. HANLEY

Yep, there was a stop there in the
50's. It's been abandoned ever
since. Now, if you don't mind,
let's get back on topic.

He looks at Nick, who doesn't have his hand raised.

MR. HANLEY (CONT'D)

Nick, come on, help us out here.

NICK

I believe it was the HMS Wales. It
was rumored to be carrying gold to
pay the Hessian mercenaries
fighting for the British.

MR. HANLEY

Exactly...

School bell rings.

MR. HANLEY (CONT'D)

Saved by the bell.

The kids begin to file out.

MR. HANLEY (CONT'D)

Not so fast. Hold up a minute.

The kids stop what they're doing.

MR. HANLEY (CONT'D)

For those of you going on the
Columbus Day trip, the bus leaves
in an hour. Don't be late. You got
that Turelli?

TURELLI

I hear ya. You won't have to look far for me Mr. Hanley. I'll be sittin' right next to Sally. Right baby?

He grabs her hand. She wrestles his hand off hers.

SALLY

You wish perv...

Students begin to exit the classroom.

MR. HANLEY

RJ, stick around for a second.

The rest of the kids file out. RJ stops in front of Mr. Hanley's desk.

MR. HANLEY

What's the story buddy?

RJ

What do you mean?

MR. HANLEY

LORENA never got your permission slip and deposit for the trip.

RJ

What? I gave it to my parents a month ago.

MR. HANLEY

The deadline was yesterday. I'm sorry, but we can't let you go without your parents' consent.

RJ

This sucks. I can't believe this. I got all my stuff in my locker.

MR. HANLEY

Follow me; we'll see if we can get them to fax it in.

RJ follows Mr. Hanley into the secretary's office.

LORENA

RJ, we sent two different reminders this month alone.

RJ dials his mother. The phone rings several times.

INT. RJ'S HOME - SAME

Suzanne watches QVC which is playing very loudly. She doesn't hear the phone ringing.

RJ (V.O.)
Mom, if you're there, pick up...
Mom, please...

His mother doesn't answer the phone.

RJ hangs up and dials his father.

INT. NEW YORK MERCANTILE EXCHANGE OFFICE - SAME

Tom speaks with a customer on his Bluetooth. He looks at an array of computer screens.

TOM
London's already called higher on the open. We're looking at a bull market here.

SFX: call waiting beep

Tom looks down at the caller ID and ignores it.

TOM (CONT'D)
Jeff, I think you're making a huge mistake unloading right now. Don't forget I got you and your partners in at 60 dollars a barrel. Yeah, yeah...

SFX: call waiting beep again.

TOM (CONT'D)
I understand that...

Tom doesn't click over.

INT. THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE - SAME

RJ puts the phone down and shakes his head.

MR. HANLEY
Sorry buddy. I know how much you were looking forward to this trip. I wish I could bend the rules, but I can't. There'll be other trips this year.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

RJ enters the empty bathroom and hits the door in frustration. The steel door bounces back and forth on the hinge. He enters the stall and sits down with his bag between his legs. He breaks down and starts to cry. It's not the first time he's been let down.

EXT. STREET - LATER

RJ walks down the street, carrying his duffle bag and a Mole City comic book. He shuffles along dejectedly.

A school bus full of his classmates drives by. Turelli pulls down the window and yells at RJ.

TURELLI

Hey Jenkins, have fun jerking off
to American Idol! Loser.

MR. HANLEY (V.O.)

Craig, sit down! I'm not gonna tell
you again. Put up the window.

RJ watches the bus pull away.

EXT. 91ST AND BROADWAY - TEN MINUTES LATER

RJ starts to walk in the direction of his house. He stops and then glances at the comic book cover.

INSERT MOLE CITY COMIC BOOK COVER

A hideous-looking Mole Man climbs out of a sewer. His father's voice pops into his head.

TOM (V.O.)

I don't want you going down there.

BACK TO SCENE

RJ hits the comic book against his hand.

EXT. AIR GRATE - LATER

RJ (V.O.)

As you've probably already guessed,
I pretty much did whatever my
parents told me. But, that got real
old, real fast. And it was about to
change.

RJ walks over to the air grate to investigate. He can barely make out the old subway entrance which continues underneath the concrete. The stairs seem to lead underneath an old office building.

He walks over to the building and looks back at the air grate. He may be on to something. He enters the building.

INT. THE BASEMENT - SAME

RJ locates a boiler room. He probes around inside it and finds a crawl space. He hoists himself into the crawl space and across thirty feet of rock.

He comes up against a concrete wall. He sees a triangular section of the wall deliberately chipped away. He shimmies through the gap and lands on his feet in a dark maintenance room.

INT. THE MAINTENANCE ROOM - SAME

RJ reaches inside his backpack and extracts a penlight from his key chain. He turns the penlight on, revealing pieces of equipment that have succumbed to fifty years of weathering.

He shines the light on the floor and 20 fist-sized cockroaches scatter in all directions.

RJ

EEEEWWW...

His instincts tell him to turn back, but his curiosity propels him forward.

He walks through the room and pushes open a rusty steel door. It leads to a dark hallway.

He walks down the hallway, with his penlight illuminating the way. Crawling on the walls are gigantic centipedes and hungry ants.

A horrific stench permeates the air.

He continues and enters the main section of the subway platform.

On the platform lies a huge possum that's been hit by a train. Its flesh is being devoured by hungry maggots, some of which are crawling in and out of its eye sockets.

RJ

Aw...

He covers his mouth and gags. His penlight flickers and dies.

RJ
You call recycling jewelry on Ebay
busy.

SUZANNE
RJ!

TOM
I'm not gonna warn you again.

He gives RJ "the stare" in the rear-view mirror.

RJ
I gave you guys the permission slip
twice! I can't believe this! You
just don't give a crap.

SUZANNE
We MADE a mistake. We're sorry.

TOM
I'll tell you what. I'll make it up
to you. We'll go to Comic Con this
year.

RJ
News flash - Comic Con's over. If
you really want to make it up to
me, don't make me go to this suck
fest tonight.

Brittany elbows him while texting.

SUZANNE
You're gonna love the Sound of
Music!

RJ
I'd rather die.

SUZANNE
I just love those songs.

RJ
Mom, it's not gonna be like the
movie. It's a bunch of high school
losers hacking away.

TOM
Your sister's worked very hard for
tonight.

RJ

Yeah, playing the tambourine is reeeeealllly difficult. She's only doing it to pad her C average. Technically, it's not even an instrument.

BRITTANY

Shut-up. It is too.

RJ

This is a skill?

RJ takes a magazine from the seat pocket and starts to mimic a tambourine player. He also pounds his feet.

RJ (CONT'D)

(singing badly) "The hills are alive with the sound of farting..."

He mimicks farts with his mouth.

BRITTANY

You're so immature.

Brittany starts to scream. A centipede moves across the floor and over to RJ's side of the car.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)

Oh, my god what is that?

She sees what it is.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)

It's a bug! AHHHHHHHHH. Kill it!
Kill it!

TOM

What the hell's going on back there?

RJ frantically tries to kill the centipede with his shoe. Finally, he succeeds, crushing the large bug into a pool of yellowish and brown goo.

BRITTANY

There's bug guts all over the floor. Dad, pull over, I think I'm gonna puke.

SUZANNE

Brittany, stop being a drama queen.

She sniffs in the air.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)
What is that smell?

BRITTANY
Ooo...(to RJ) disgusting...did you
fart?..AHHH Mom...

She rolls down the window.

TOM
RJ cut it out!

RJ
I swear. It wasn't me.

Tom rolls down his window.

SUZANNE
Ok, then what is it?

RJ looks at his boots which have smeared something on the
carpet.

BRITTANY
It's RJ's shoes. They smell like
the sewer.

She sniffs RJ's coat.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)
Ah nasty. IT IS RJ.

RJ
Get off me!

Pushes her over to her side.

TOM
You better not have been down in
that sewer.

RJ
It's the subway!

TOM
I don't care what it is. I told you
not to go down there!

The traffic is jammed up on the street. TWO HOMELESS MEN,
CRAZY JAKE AND BROADWAY JOE, approach their car. Crazy Jake
carries a squeegee and Broadway Joe carries a roll of stolen
public bathroom paper towels and a bucket.

TOM
Oh, for Christ's sake. What's next?

SUZANNE
Relax Tommy.

TOM
It's every day with these people.
They make more money than I do.

Crazy Jake knocks on their window.

CRAZY JAKE
A dollar gets your windows squeaky
clean sir.

Tom shakes his head. Broadway Joe knocks on the front window.

BROADWAY JOE
Cleanest windshield in the city.

Broadway Joe dumps out some dirty water on to the windshield.
Crazy Jake starts to squeegee the windshield. Tom rolls down
the window.

TOM
Are you guys deaf? I said no!

Tom hits the horn.

RJ
Come on dad, it's just a buck.

Tom ignores him. The men continue to wash the windshield.

TOM
Which I earned.

Tom deliberately turns on the windshield wipers and pushes
the spray button, hitting Joe and Jake in the face.

CRAZY JAKE
Hey man, that's not cool!

TOM
Get lost!

The light changes and Tom accelerates, almost knocking the
men down. Crazy Jake just stares in awe.

RJ
You didn't have to be so mean Dad.
They're just trying to make a buck.

TOM

What they need is a job. I work every day. What's their problem?

RJ

Nothing, they're trying to work right now.

SUZANNE

Be thankful it's not us. Times are tough.

Brittany looks up from her texting.

BRITTANY

I'm with Dad. Homeless people suck.

She goes back to her texting.

INT. RJ'S HOUSE - MORNING

RJ walks into his bedroom, carrying a Capri Sun. He stops and looks at his desk. There is a crude Sound of Music program from the night before. He crumples it up and throws it away. He searches for his backpack.

He looks at the floor and sees that his duffle bag is gone too. Finally, he looks at his mud-covered boots. He leans back on his bed realizing what he has to do.

RJ

Oh, man...

INT. OFFICE BUILDING, 91ST AND BROADWAY - LATER

RJ enters the subway platform the same way as the night before. He carries a large Mag light.

RJ looks around and sees his duffle bag laying on the ground where he dropped it. He sees a shadow in the distance slowly getting closer.

A figure emerges into the light. It's POPE SULLIVAN, age 14, African-American, holding RJ's backpack.

POPE

Looking for this?

RJ starts to slowly back up.

RJ
Sorry, I...I don't want any
trouble. You can have everything.
Please don't hurt me.

POPE
Take it easy man. I'm not gonna
roll ya. I gave you your ball back,
didn't I?

RJ stops in his tracks. He shines the flashlight in Pope's
face.

RJ
That was you?

POPE
Yeah. Luke, cut the light saber,
will ya.

RJ shines it away from his face.

RJ
Sorry.

They walk into a sun-lit portion of the platform.

POPE
I didn't mean to scare you
yesterday.

RJ
Scare me? I almost had a heart
attack!

POPE
You didn't exactly give me a chance
to say anything. Glad ya left these
though. You got some great comics
in here.

He hands RJ the backpack.

RJ
Thanks.

RJ looks at the backpack.

POPE
It's cool. You can count 'em if you
want.

RJ looks around.

RJ

It's fine. (a beat) What are you doing down here?

POPE

I live down here. I usually try to stay away from the grate, but you nailed me. Don't need any trouble, ya know.

RJ

Yeah.

POPE

You were bitching so much about that ball, I figured I'd give it back.

RJ

Thanks. What's your name?

POPE

Pope, Pope Sullivan.

They shake hands.

RJ

Pope?

POPE

Yeah, long story. What about you?

RJ

RJ.

A faint whistle from the darkness. Pope turns around and whistles back.

RJ (CONT'D)

There's more people down here?

Miming a zombie and referencing RJ's comic.

POPE

Of course, we're the "Mole People", remember?

RJ

(laughing) Oh, yeah, right.

POPE

They're sorta like my family. You want to meet 'em?

RJ
Yeah, is it safe?

POPE
Safer than the streets of New York.
We got a good thing going on down
here. So, if I take you, you gotta
promise you'll keep this on the
D.L.

RJ
D.L.?

POPE
Down low.

RJ
Oh yeah, of course. I promise.

POPE
Seriously, we don't need the 5-0
running us outta here.

RJ
Okay. I got it.

POPE
Let's roll.

RJ follows Pope as they walk cautiously along a 12 inch concrete walkway. They continue on for about 100 yards, inches from the subway wall.

Pope stops.

POPE
We gotta cross here.

RJ starts to move. Pope holds out his arm, blocking RJ. He looks at his watch.

POPE (CONT'D)
Hold on. Five, four, three, two...

A blast from the subway can be heard. Suddenly, a subway train rockets through the tunnel a mere foot from their faces.

RJ
Ahhhh...

POPE
Don't move!

Like a ghost, it disappears into the darkness. Pope grins.

POPE

That was the 4:25. We got ten minutes.

RJ

What happens if your watch is wrong?

Pope grins.

POPE

(matter of factly) Then we die.

RJ

Maybe, this isn't such a good idea.

POPE

Come on. I'm kidding. I do this every day.

Pope jumps down and starts to walk across the tracks.

RJ

Wait a minute. What about the third rail? I don't want to get fried.

POPE

Trust me. It's cool. Just do what I do.

RJ jumps down and follows Pope. He watches as Pope nimbly steps over the third rail and over to the other side. RJ follows suit.

They walk through a concrete maze.

Pope flicks on a flashlight. RJ turns on his as well. A huge, rat waddles past them.

RJ

Holy hell. That thing's huge.

Pope shines his light on the rat.

POPE

That's just Mickey. He's harmless. He eats better than we do.

They continue through the maze and see a faint light up ahead. Trumpet riffs can be heard in the distance.

RJ
What's that?

POPE
THAT is MONROE WATKINS. One of the
best musicians you never heard.

Pope sniffs the air.

POPE (CONT'D)
Smells like grilled cheese...again.

They get to the entrance, which is a heavy wool blanket that crudely covers a doorway.

POPE (CONT'D)
Remember, this stays between us.
Right?

RJ nods.

RJ
Got it.

Pope moves the blanket aside and they walk in.

INT. LIVING QUARTERS - SAME

A forty by forty foot concrete bunker. On the floor is a rotten, Jerry-rigged coffee table made out of two old copper wire spools with a large piece of plywood covering them.

To the right of the coffee table is a weathered, 80's recliner that is losing stuffing. On the other side of the coffee table is a 70's lime green plaid couch with a rickety fold out bed.

An old 27 inch color TV with perfect reception sits in a corner with an improvised erector set antenna system that snakes its way up the wall.

RJ notices a set of bunk beds in the rear of the room next to a curtained-off area. There is a modified kitchen with a bare bones table and four chairs next to a sink basin. An old army cot rests against the wall near the TV.

RJ
Wow! This is cool.

An African-American man in his 60's, MONROE WATKINS, abruptly stops playing his trumpet and a middle aged professor, ZENO VANDERWICK, looks up from reading his book.

POPE
Guys, this is RJ. He lives up on
91st.

Monroe coughs horribly. He gets out of his seat and walks
over to Pope.

MONROE
We need to talk!

Monroe looks at Zeno and he follows suit.

POPE
Okay...

ZENO
Now!

Monroe and Zeno follow Pope outside as RJ stands alone in the
room.

MONROE
Have you lost your damn mind
bringin' that boy down here? What
the hell are you doing?

ZENO
We're compromised. This kid could
be RP.

POPE
RP?

ZENO
Rail police. They're everywhere.

POPE
You guys are crazy. He's fine. I
filled him in.

MONROE
I thought we agreed, no outsiders -
ever!

POPE
He's not an outsider. He's our
neighbor.

ZENO
He's a surface dweller! How many
times have I told you, surface
dwellers can't be trusted.

POPE

Don't forget, we were all surface dwellers once.

MONROE

Well, we ain't now!

Monroe continues to cough. RJ speaks through the curtain.

RJ

Guys, I'm not gonna say anything.

POPE

See, good enough for me.

Pope walks back inside. They follow him. Zeno grabs Pope by the arm.

ZENO

We'll finish this conversation later.

Zeno sits back down in the Lazy-Boy and opens his book. Monroe walks back to the kitchen table and grabs his trumpet. He starts to play Dave Brubeck's "Take Five." Monroe stops and coughs up specks of blood into a handkerchief. He quickly puts it into his pocket so no one can see the blood.

POPE

Monroe, I was just telling RJ how good you play.

MONROE

Really? Check this out.

He continues playing.

ZENO

Will you please stop that racket? I'm trying to study.

MONROE

Why man? You haven't taught a class in five years, since city college gave you the heave-ho.

Zeno looks at RJ.

ZENO

How many times do I have to tell you. I wasn't fired. There were cutbacks.

MONROE
(laughs) Calling your students
incompetent little assholes ain't a
cutback.

Monroe breaks into a short version of Taps, taunting him and laughing.

A distinguished older woman, FAYE, with long blond hair walks in carrying a canvas grocery bag. Pope walks over and takes it from her.

POPE
I'll take that.

FAYE
Thank you sweetie.

She looks at RJ.

FAYE (CONT'D)
Well, hello. Who are you?

RJ points toward the ceiling.

RJ
RJ, surface dweller.

ZENO
You got that right.

FAYE
Nice to meet you, Mr. Surface
Dweller. I see you've met everyone.

RJ
Yeah, unless someone else is hiding
behind the curtain.

FAYE
Nope this it. Just ignore those
two. They're bark is worse than
their bite.

ZENO
He was just leaving Faye, RIGHT
POPE?

Pope walks over to RJ.

POPE
Let's get out of here.

RJ
Okay...nice to meet you.

ZENO
Don't be too late Pope. You still
need to finish that Algebra lesson.

POPE
Yeah, yeah I know.

Monroe coughs. They walk out of the room.

RJ
You're taking Algebra?

POPE
I take whatever that crazy bastard
gives me. He's a little nutty, but
he's a great teacher.

RJ
So, you don't go to school?

POPE
Everyday - school of hard knocks.--
Let's go, we got two minutes before
the express rolls through.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RJ'S HOME, THE GARAGE - AFTERNOON

RJ stands in the garage with his Dad, who's wearing a velour
warm-up suit and carrying his racquetball racket.

TOM
I want the whole garage swept-up
and organized by the time I get
back.

RJ
Alright. Alright. I got it.

TOM
Make sure you lay down that sawdust
and get rid of these oil stains.

RJ
Dad, I know how to do it.

A beat.

TOM

Good. One last thing... and don't mention this to your mother; I want all of this Ebay crap (he points) taken down to the Salvation Army. Got it?

RJ

Yeah.

Tom exits as RJ looks around the garage taking in all of the unopened merchandise. A sly smile develops across his face.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NEXT MORNING

RJ emerges into the subway station with an overstuffed duffle bag. He looks at the dark tunnel in front of him and begins to walk.

RJ

Pope?...You there?

RJ continues to walk along the edge of the tracks.

Pope emerges from the darkness.

POPE

Who's Pope!

He grabs him by the arm and RJ recoils in fear.

RJ

Man, Don't do that. You scared the crap out of me!

Pope sees the duffle bag.

POPE

What's all that? You moving in?

RJ

You'll find out. Take me to your leaders.

RJ turns on his flashlight and they start to walk.

POPE

Okay. But, it's your ass.

INT. POPE'S LIVING QUARTERS - LATER

RJ and Pope walk down the hallway toward the living room area door.

Faye, Monroe and Zeno can be heard arguing.

FAYE AND MONROE (O.S.)
 SYZYGY is not a word!

MONROE (O.S.)
 This is outrageous man. You've
 stooped to a new low. We can never
 just have a friendly game.

RJ and Pope enter. The others don't notice them.

FAYE
 I'm looking it up.

ZENO
 Go ahead. All it's gonna say is
 that it means to yoke together.

MONROE
 (laughing) Ha! Yoke together?

ZENO
 OR, any form of symmetry between
 two related objects. Take your
 pick.

MONROE
 Who the hell even knows a word like
 that? You gonna gloat and tell us
 the origin too?

Faye has the dictionary open.

ZENO
 Sure, it comes from the Greek word,
 Syzygos.

MONROE
 Greek my ass you crazy koot.

FAYE
 Well, I'll be damned. He's right
 Monroe. Take a look.

Monroe squints at the page and swats it away frustrated.

MONROE
 Okay, I'll take your word for it.

ZENO

You need your eyes checked Monroe.

MONROE

I would except for the fact that my health benefits expired seven years ago.

Monroe sees the over-stuffed army surplus duffle bag on RJ's back. He starts to speak, but begins another coughing fit.

MONROE (CONT'D)

What's with you? You get drafted or somethin'?

ZENO

Looks like the kid's moving in.

RJ takes off the backpack and starts to unpack it.

FAYE

Stop harassing the poor boy. What do you have there honey?

RJ

I brought you some stuff I thought you could use.

Faye walks over to RJ.

She pulls out an inflatable air mattress, a portable camping shower, a tent, an electric camping stove and two, two-way radios.

Pope unwraps the box he's been carrying, revealing a rechargeable camping lantern.

FAYE

We can't accept these honey. They're brand new.

MONROE

Why do my hands feel like they're burning son?

RJ doesn't understand the lingo.

RJ

Huh?

ZENO

We don't accept stolen goods young man.

RJ

They're not stolen. My mom's got a shopping addiction. My Dad told me to clear out her stockpile and give it to the Salvation Army.

Faye holds up the electric stove.

FAYE

I don't know guys. We certainly could use some of this stuff.

POPE

Hello? Have you looked around? We're living in a concrete bunker not the Carlisle.

MONROE

We ain't no charity case.

RJ

I was just trying to help.

POPE

You are! Monroe, all you do is complain about your back because of that tore up mattress you have to sleep on. And Zeno, you whine about the stove running out of fuel every week. That stove is twice as big and all we have to do is plug it in.

FAYE

And, those radios will sure help us keep track of one another. Beats running up and down the tunnels.

Monroe and Zeno look at each other and nod.

POPE

Cool. That settles it. We're keeping everything. Thanks RJ.

He looks at the adults.

FAYE

Thank you RJ.

MONROE

Thanks man.

ZENO

This stuff better not be hot. I'll be watching the news.

Pope grabs the radios. He tosses one to RJ.

POPE

I'll be back in a few. We're gonna test these out.

FAYE

You boys be careful.

The boys exit.

MONROE (O.S.)

Faye, let me get a good look at that mattress.

EXT. BUS STOP - LATER

RJ and Pope stand at a bus stop.

RJ

Where we going?

POPE

It's a surprise. I thing you're gonna like it.

RJ

Give me a second to check in with my mom.

RJ dials his cell phone.

INT. RJ'S HOUSE - SAME

Suzanne sits in the living room, with a Bluetooth headset on her ear. A wide screen TV is tuned to QVC and the Home Shopping Network can be seen through the picture in picture.

She stares at a laptop open to Ebay. She's bidding frantically on an oversized antique roasting pan. There's fifteen seconds remaining in the auction.

The phone rings.

INTERCUT: RJ/SUZANNE

SUZANNE

Hi honey.

RJ
 Hey. I'm heading over to the
 library on 53rd for a while.

Suzanne watches the auction, which has just ended and cheers.

SUZANNE
 Yes! I won. I won. Whoo...

RJ
 I won't be home til' later.

SUZANNE
 Yeah, okay. Have fun sweetie.

RJ hangs up and watches the bus pull to a stop.

BACK TO SCENE

RJ and Pope board the bus. RJ begins to take out some money.
 Pope stops him.

POPE
 I got it.

Pope takes out a Ziploc bag full of coins from his jacket
 pocket. He pays.

RJ
 Thanks.

POPE
 Week's worth of street coins. Gotta
 use 'em or lose 'em.

They sit down.

POPE (CONT'D)
 You'd be surprised how much change
 people drop in grates and
 fountains. I Jimmied-rigged a big
 magnet to a fishing reel.

Pope pulls out a gleaming silver dollar.

POPE (CONT'D)
 This thing's worth about 50 bucks.
 Monroe and I saw it on Coin Vault
 last week.

RJ
 Really? I love that show!

RJ looks at it.

POPE
I'm gonna sell it and buy us some
groceries.

EXT./INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The bus moves into Harlem. RJ looks a little uneasy.

RJ
I never been uptown this far. You
gonna tell me where we're going or
what?

POPE
To the doctor.

RJ
What?

POPE
DOC SHADWELL, an old friend of
Monroe's. He owns a pool joint over
on 137th. You play?

RJ
Not really...137th street?

Pope smiles.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- The bus drives along the Hudson River. Fall colors reveal their full splendor. RJ looks out the window at the sun reflecting off the water.
- The bus drives through a working class neighborhood. Guys are on the stoops, talking and playing craps. Kids chase each other on bikes.
- The bus drives past Columbia University. Like ants marching toward a picnic, different colored backpacks move across the campus.
- The bus turns into a run down neighborhood. Many homeless people mill about a virtual shanty town. The bus stops and picks up a couple homeless-looking people. Pope knows one of them and he introduces the man to RJ. The man sits down next to them and they talk.
- The bus enters a Hispanic neighborhood. Puerto Rican and Cuban flags hang from different porches and rear view mirrors. A stickball game is in progress. Pope taps RJ on the shoulder to show him the game.

- The bus stops at a light. RJ looks out the window and sees a monument to the Battle of Harlem Heights.

- The bus begins to enter the outskirts of Harlem. Pope catches some shut eye. RJ begins to scribble in his journal.

RJ (V.O.)

Moving through New York in that bus, made me realize that I had been missing out on a lot over the years. Each neighborhood reminded me of different play productions. Each one with their own unique cast of characters and identities. I don't know why my parents tried to shelter me from these places. But, I'm beginning to realize that people like Pope have more to offer than any of the rich people around 91st and Broadway.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. BUS STOP, HARLEM - CONTINUOUS

The bus pulls to a stop. RJ and Pope jump off.

A grizzled-looking old man, CHARLIE, sweeps up trash in front of the entrance to Doc's Pool Hall.

CHARLIE

(sees Pope) Well, well, well, if it ain't Pope Sullivan. How the hell you doin' young man?

They high-five.

POPE

Survivin' and you?

CHARLIE

What do you think? Is this any way to spend the sunset of your life?

POPE

Is Doc around?

CHARLIE

Yeah, he's in there. But, so is CURLEY. He's been waitin' on you for a couple weeks.

RJ looks at Pope.

POPE
(laughing) Is that right?

Pope opens the door and RJ follows him inside.

INT. DOC'S POOL HALL - SAME

The lights are dimmed. Cool, 1970's music plays lightly on an old jukebox. Several black men sit at a bar sipping beers.

A dozen men play pool in the background. RJ sticks out like a white dot on a domino.

DOC, a forty-something African-American man, stands next to a pool table while an extremely large man, TINY lines up a shot. Tiny tries to hit a striped ball into the corner pocket, but instead hits a solid ball into a middle pocket.

RJ
(to Pope) Maybe this isn't such a good idea...

POPE
Relax man - trust me. I come here all the time.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM

DOC
(laughing) Thanks Tiny, you're my best player.

Doc sees Pope and RJ.

DOC (CONT'D)
Oh, Lord, here comes trouble with a capital "P".

Pope walks over to Doc and does his best Bugs Bunny impression.

POPE
What's up Doc?

DOC
You just can't resist, can you?

POPE
Nope...You almost finished?

DOC
Almost...just a few more shots before I put Tiny into retirement.

POPE
You gonna take that?

TINY
He's been talkin' smack all
morning.

Doc lines up an easy shot, looks directly at RJ, without
looking at the ball and sinks it.

DOC
Who's the white shadow?

POPE
This is RJ.

DOC
RJ, pleased to meet you. Doc
Shadwell.

They shake hands.

POPE
Doc's the best pool hustler this
side of the Hudson.

A bathroom door flies open so fast it's almost torn off its
hinges. CURLEY, a man with a huge afro exits from the
bathroom, holding a white, ivory pool cue.

CURLEY
Except for me of course. (to Pope)
Sullivan...I've been lookin' for
you.

POPE
Well, you must not be looking too
hard. I'm black not transparent.

CURLEY
You interfered last game.

Tiny shrugs his shoulders indifferently.

POPE
Is choking interference?

Curley approaches him.

CURLEY
You better watch your mouth kid.
(to RJ) What are you looking at?

He points the pool cue at RJ. RJ panics and falls backwards over a bar stool.

RJ
Nothing...nothing.

Pope starts laughing and helps RJ up.

POPE
(to RJ) Don't worry about him. He's all talk.

DOC
Curley you need to chill. You're just pissed that ole Pope got you by the long johns last time.
(laughs)

Everyone laughs, even RJ.

CURLEY
I want a rematch. Fifty bucks. Winner takes all.

DOC
Come on man. Pope here's on the streets. He ain't got that kinda coin.

RJ
(hesitant) Actually, he does....a....have that coin.

Everyone looks at RJ. Pope thinks for a second and then pulls out the coin and lays it on the table.

POPE
This is a genuine 1971 Eisenhower Silver Dollar. It's worth 50 bucks.

Curley walks over to get a closer look and then points to a crudely inlaid gold tooth.

CURLEY
Yeah right, and this tooth is worth 500. Quit lyin'.

RJ
He's not. It was on Coin Vault. They're all over the internet.

DOC
I got a computer in the back. Lets go have a look.

Curley, Tiny, Pope and RJ follow Doc into an office. Inside, another man, LONNIE, is counting a stack of cash and using an adding machine.

Lonnie sees everyone and throws a jacket over the pile of cash.

LONNIE

Doc, I didn't know you was coming back.

DOC

You know the rules Lon. Keep the door locked when you're conducting business. Watch away.

Doc motions for him to get up. Doc sits down and uses the computer. Pope looks at RJ and shows him his crossed fingers.

DOC

Got it right here. '71 Eisenhower silver dollar. You can buy it now on ebay for \$55. Damn, Curley, you'll be up five bones if you win.

POPE

Yeah, if...

They walk back outside into the pool hall.

CURLEY

So, it's my fifty bucks up against that...that Clinton dollar.

RJ

It's an Eisenhower actually.

CURLEY

(points to RJ) Who the hell is this kid?

POPE

He's my accountant. You want him to take your money now or later?

Curley gives them a look. He pulls off his jacket and chalks up the end of his cue.

CURLEY

Rack 'em Tiny. I'm about to teach these punks a business lesson.

Tiny racks 'em up. Pope breaks. They each trade shots.

Curley makes an impossible shot to win, but the cue ball bounces off one rail and eventually makes its way over to the corner pocket barely falling in. He forfeits the game.

DOC

No interference that time, Curley.
Pay the man.

Curley snaps the pool cue over his leg like a matchstick. He shakes his head and hands over the money to Pope.

EXT./INT. MR. LUCE'S BARBECUE - LATER

RJ and Pope walk into a typical Harlem barbecue. MIKE LUCE, a rotund African-American wears a red and white checkered apron. He greets Pope.

MIKE LUCE

Hey Pope, where you been? Long time
no see.

POPE

I've been around. How's business?

Mike Luce puts down a basket of wings and dries his hands with a cloth..

MIKE LUCE

Good, how the others doin'?

POPE

They're alright, thanks for asking.

MIKE LUCE

You tell Monroe and Faye I said hi.
And, the white dude that's a little
crazy.

Mike Luce makes a crazy sign with his finger.

POPE

You mean Zeno.

MIKE LUCE

Yeah, right, Zeno.

POPE

This is RJ. I promised him the best
barbecue in New York.

MIKE LUCE

Well, you came to the right place
son. You want a couple samplers?

POPE

Sure.

MIKE LUCE

Two samplers comin' right up.

RJ and Pope sit down at a table.

INT. MIKE LUCE'S BAEBECUE - LATER

RJ and Pope finish their food. Both have piles of napkins and each is wearing a stained bib. MIKE LUCE walks over to the table. RJ fishes for money.

RJ

I'll get this.

MIKE LUCE

It's okay kid. We got an understanding?

He winks at him.

POPE

How many we talkin'?

MIKE LUCE

The usual...

MONTAGE:

- RJ and Pope doing dishes in MIKE LUCE's kitchen: RJ rinses the dishes. Pope slides them into the industrial dishwasher. They both stack clean dishes on the other side.

- RJ and Pope battle each other across the kitchen with spray hoses.

- RJ and Pope walk down a New York street in Chinatown and enter a peep show.

- They run out of the peep show as an old Chinese lady chases after them yelling with a towel.

- RJ and Pope board a ferry at the South Street port.

- They ride the Staten Island ferry around New York harbor and stare in awe at the Statue of Liberty as the sun begins to set.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RJ'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

RJ sits on his bed playing a portable video game. His Dad walks in holding two ticket stubs and a bus transfer.

TOM

RJ...

RJ has earphones on and can't hear him.

TOM (CONT'D)

(loud) REED JENKINS!

RJ looks over and pulls off the headphones.

RJ

Hey, Dad.

TOM

What are these? Your mother found them in the laundry.

RJ

Nothing...

Tom glances at the stubs.

TOM

Nothing? What the hell were you doing in Harlem? And, why on earth would you be on the Staten Island ferry?

RJ

I don't know...I was just hanging.

Tom has never heard this before.

TOM

Hanging? With who; the Sopranos? You said all of your friends went on the trip!

RJ

I was with this guy from the neighborhood, Pope.

TOM

Pope? What is he some holy-roller?

RJ

No! He's cool. He goes to school at Saint Ferris.

TOM

RJ, I don't want you going all over Manhattan with some stranger. You want to "hang" with him, stay in the neighborhood, or even better, have him over so we can meet him.-- Where's your subway pass?

RJ

It's in there.

RJ points to his desk drawer.

RJ (CONT'D)

Why?

TOM

I'm taking it. You'll get it back in a couple weeks when I can trust you won't abuse it.

RJ

Jeez...

RJ reaches into the drawer and begrudgingly hands it over.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA, TWO DAYS LATER - AFTERNOON

School is out for the day. Two, middle-aged, hair-netted ladies, KATHY and JOANNE are in the middle of a conversation.

JOANNE

That little bastard tried to pay me in pennies.

KATHY

I caught him stealing Doritos twice this week. You'd think these kids could afford a bag a chips with the tuition their parents are paying. My daughter pays less for college.

The ladies see RJ's face behind the window on the door. He knocks and waves. They motion for him to come in.

JOANNE

Hi RJ. (to Kathy) Now here's a kid who'd never try to pay me in pennies, would you?

RJ

No, why would I do that?

KATHY

(to Joanne) See, if more students were like him, this place would be better off.

JOANNE

What do you need sweetie?

RJ

I was wondering what happens to all the leftovers every day?

KATHY

Well, if there's not enough to use later in the week, we throw them out. Why?

RJ

Uh...mmm, well, there's a couple stray dogs I see wandering around the park.

JOANNE

Oh, I think I've seen them. They're a bag of bones, poor things. -- You see, Kath, the kid's a saint. That's very thoughtful of you, honey.

KATHY

You just stay right there RJ. I just put away some leftovers in the fridge. They're yours if you want 'em.

RJ

I'll take whatever you can spare.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

RJ walks across the playground carrying two grocery bags. Nick catches up to him on his bike.

NICK

RJ, wait up, wait up.

RJ stops.

RJ

Hey. You guys just get back?

NICK

Yeah.

RJ
How was the trip?

NICK
It was awesome. You're never gonna guess what happened.

RJ
What? Van Dyke pissed the bed again?

NICK
Worse. Turelli hooked up with Sally on the Smithsonian tour.

RJ
No way. I thought she hated him.

NICK
So did everyone else. But, Mr. Hanley busted 'em making out on the I Love Lucy set.

RJ
How the hell does he do it? He's such a tool and still hooks up!

Nick spots Turelli on the other side of the playground. He begins to ride toward them on his bike.

NICK
Oh no...

RJ
Go, go. Hurry. I'll talk to you later.

Nick takes off on his bike.

TURELLI
Stein, you wuss!

Turelli rides over and does a skid right in front of RJ.

TURELLI
What do you got there Shakespeare?

He takes the bag of food from RJ.

RJ
Come on, Turelli. Give it back.

INT. PUBLIC BUS - SAME

Pope looks out the window as the bus pulls to a stop. He sees Turelli harassing RJ..

PLAYGROUND

TURELLI

Oh, I love tater tots.

He eats a few, then smashes the rest on RJ's face, knocking him to the ground.

Pope jumps off the bus and walks with a purpose over to them.

POPE

Hey! Cut it out!

TURELLI

What? You want some of this
(Mocking) B-R-O-T-H-A?

POPE

Sure.(Mocking)C-R-A-C-K-A. What are
you gonna do?

Mr. Hanley sees the confrontation from a distance. He pushes the squelch button and yells into a bullhorn.

MR. HANLEY

(yelling)What's going on over
there?

TURELLI

Nothing...

MR. HANLEY

Craig, give him back his stuff and
get over here! We've been back
five minutes and already you've got
another detention.

Turelli throws the bag at RJ.

TURELLI

I won't forget about this Jenkins.

Pope puts out his hands.

POPE

Whoo...we're terrified.

Mr. Hanley pushes the siren button.

MR. HANLEY
Let's go Craig.

TURELLI
I'm coming. I'm coming. God!

Pope helps RJ up.

POPE
You alright?

RJ
Yeah, thanks.

POPE
Let's get out of here.

EXT./INT. RJ'S HOUSE - LATER

RJ and Pope stand in front of the stoop. RJ hands Pope the bag full of food.

RJ
Wait here. I'll be right back.

POPE
Yeah, well hurry up.

RJ
Why? You in a hurry?

POPE
No. But take a look around. Your neighbors'll think I'm robbing the place.

RJ smiles.

Pope sits down on the stoop and eats a few tater tots.

RJ walks inside the house. He empties his backpack in the kitchen. He uses his two-way radio.

RJ
You want a Capri Sun?

POPE (V.O.)
What the hell's that?

INT. BRITTANY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Brittany sits at her desk doing homework. She hears the radio squelch outside and gets up to look out the window. She sees Pope sitting on the stoop.

RJ (V.O.)

A juice box man. It's good.

POPE

Fine. Just hurry up. I'm getting a few looks. I'm assuming there's a shortage of brothers around here.

RJ puts two Capri Suns in the backpack and heads upstairs. He enters his mother's bathroom and opens the medicine cabinet.

He sees an array of medicine. He grabs three bottles of pills and a plastic dial. He shoves them in his backpack and heads downstairs.

RJ walks out the door and hands him a Capri Sun. Brittany watches them.

She goes into her mother's bathroom and opens the medicine cabinet.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

RJ and Pope watch as three Streets and Sanitation trucks are parked in front of a building. They've blocked off an intersection. Crazy Jake, approaches Pope, who's opening a fresh pack of gum.

CRAZY JAKE

Pope, got one for me?

Pope pulls out a stick and hands it to him. RJ hopes Jake won't recognize him from his dad's outburst.

POPE

What's going on?

CRAZY JAKE

Pumps gave out. River flooded the basement.

POPE

Right...Seriously, what happened?

CRAZY JAKE

I told ya man, the river flooded the basement! The city's full of 'em. I seen 'em.

RJ
Where? In there?

He motions like a drugged out hippy.

CRAZY JAKE
Everywhere...MAN....Everywhere!

POPE
Can you show us?

CRAZY JAKE
We'll that depends. What's in it
for me?

Pope takes out the whole pack of gum.

POPE
Draw us a map to these "rivers",
and the whole pack's yours.

POPE
You got a pen?(to RJ)

RJ takes one out of his backpack.

Jake thinks about it for a second then grabs the pen and starts to draw on an old brown paper bag he fishes out of the trash can.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - LATER

RJ and Pope carry the grocery bags and enter the concrete living room. Monroe lies in bed, shivering. Faye shuts off a whistling tea kettle.

Zeno sits in a chair watching Jeopardy.

ALEX TREBEK (V.O.)
What is the formula for the
acceleration of gravity?

ZENO (O.S.)
What is nine point eight meters per
second squared?

ALEX TREBEK (V.O.)
A mountain range in Southern Poland
rumored to be Pope John Paul II's
favorite.

ZENO
What are the Carpathanians?

ALEX TREBEK (V.O.)

In 2007 Doris Lessing became only
the 11th woman to win this--Pearl
Buck won in 1938.

ZENO

Piece of cake....Pulitzer
Prize..next.

POPE makes a buzzer sound.

POPE

Nobel Prize in Literature.

Pope's correct.

POPE (CONT'D)

You're slippin' Z.

Monroe lets out a fit of hacking coughs and covers his mouth
with a handkerchief. The handkerchief is full of blood.

Faye finishes fixing his tea. Pope picks it up and brings it
over to the air mattress.

FAYE

You need to see a doctor.

Monroe takes a sip from the tea.

MONROE

I'm fine, I'm fine.

ZENO

Like hell you are. Faye's right.

Monroe puts the tea down and lays back again.

MONROE

You think I'd be better off sittin'
in county all day?

FAYE

We're just tryin' to help. (to RJ
and Pope) What's in the bag boys?

RJ

I brought some food from the
cafeteria and a few things for
Monroe.

Faye takes the bags and goes through them.

FAYE

That's very thoughtful of you
honey, thanks.

She hands the drugs to Zeno.

MONROE

Put my PB & J on hold.

Monroe goes into another terrible coughing spell. RJ looks at Pope.

Zeno closely examines the prescription drugs and some cough syrup.

Zeno nods and tosses the bottle to Faye who is filling up the camping shower bag with hot water from the stove.

Monroe begins another coughing fit.

ZENO

Bingo...These are exactly what you
need Monroe. Z-packs.

POPE

What's a Z-Pack?

ZENO

It's a subclass of macrolide
antibiotics.

MONROE

Spare me the chemistry lesson Z.
Does the stuff work?

ZENO

It treats most bacterial
infections, including the clap,
which in your case is probably
good. Take one every day for a
week.

He hands it to Pope who gives it to Monroe.

RJ sets down his backpack and the paper map falls out in front of Zeno.

ZENO

What's this? You boys digging for
treasure?

POPE

Nah, we got it from Crazy Jake. He was saying that there's underground rivers all over Manhattan. He drew it.

Zeno looks at it.

ZENO

It's crude...But, it looks about right.

RJ

What do you mean? He wasn't lying?

POPE

There really are rivers here?

ZENO

In case you haven't noticed boys, Manhattan's an island. Except for Harlem, most of it was swampland. Nature doesn't disappear just because you pour some concrete over it.

RJ

(to Pope) We should check it out then.

POPE

Hell yeah we should!

ZENO

No, no, no! Don't even think about it. There's thousands of caverns down there that are dangerous and unpredictable.

POPE

So, you've seen 'em?

ZENO

(shakes his head) No, it's almost impossible to find an entrance because of the fluctuating water table. Don't even think about it boys. You hear me?

RJ AND POPE

Yes...

Pope grabs the map from Zeno and pockets it.

RJ
 (to Pope) I better get going. I
 gotta a lot of homework to do.

ZENO
 RJ...

RJ turns around and Zeno throws him a plastic dial of pills.

ZENO
 I'm gonna let you keep those. You
 don't want another sister do you?

RJ
 Huh?

RJ looks at the pill case.

ZENO
 They're birth control pills. Your
 mother'll be looking for those, so
 put 'em back ASAP.

RJ
 Ewwwwww...

RJ puts the pills back in his backpack. They both exit.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NEXT DAY

RJ, Pope, Nick, Considine, Kincaid, Bush and GINTHER argue in
 front of a bleacher.

KINCAID
 We need one more to make it even.

GINTHER
 Bush call your brother.

BUSH
 He's doing some Boy Scouts crap.

CONSIDINE
 What? Since when?

BUSH
 Since he stopped liking girls!

Considine and Bush laugh.

BUSH (CONT'D)
 See if Robinson's home? He lives
 close enough.

GINTHER

Here comes Turelli. Never mind.

Turelli barrels over on his bike. Everyone groans.

KINCAID

Come on. We got no choice. He evens it up.

Turelli gets off his bike. He gives RJ a dirty look. In the background, Pope plays catch with Considine.

TURELLI

(to RJ) You ever leave your girlfriend?(points at Pope)

RJ

His name is Pope.

BUSH

He plays at Saint Ferris.

TURELLI

Saint Ferry's? They suck. We beat the hell outta of those homos every year.

Pope walks up behind Turelli. He doesn't notice.

POPE

You're sure in love with those gay jokes tough guy. Maybe you need to explore those feelings.

Everyone laughs. Turelli turns around.

TURELLI

Oh yeah? Why don't you say that to my face...(Mocking)DOG.

POPE

Nah, you're better looking from behind.

Kincaid steps in between them.

KINCAID

Come on guys. Can we just play?

TURELLI

Yeah. POPE. Try to cover me and see what happens.

POPE

Whatever you say meatball.

The head to different sides of the makeshift field.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Four sweatshirts mark the end zone boundaries. Each player's breath can be seen in the crisp autumn air.
- Each team goes through several series running and passing the ball. It's pretty evenly matched.
- RJ tries to catch a pass that bounces off his chest. Turelli comes in late and gives him a vicious hit in the back, sending him airborne and down to the ground.
- RJ doesn't move.

BACK TO SCENE

POPE

What the hell are you doing man?

He kneels down next to RJ.

POPE (CONT'D)

You alright?

RJ

My back...

Pope runs over to Turelli and gets in his face.

POPE

What's your deal? Why are you such a jerk all the time?

TURELLI

It was an accident. What are you his mother?

Turelli pushes him away then sucker punches him. Pope takes the punch and decks him in the face with a right cross. They fight as the other kids watch.

Pope's street fighting abilities are no match for Turelli. The bully's been exposed. He lies on the ground; stunned and bleeding. Pope puts his foot on Turelli's throat.

POPE

If you know what's good for you, leave RJ alone.

After a beat he removes his foot.

POPE (CONT'D)
(to the others) Sorry fellas, looks
like the resident jerk off ruined
the game. We're outta here.

Everyone slowly walks away as Turelli sits on the ground,
trying to get his bearings.

RJ and Pope walk over and board a bus.

INT. BUS - SAME

RJ and Pope sit on the bus, lost in their own thoughts. RJ
scribbles in his journal.

POPE
Why are you so quiet? Are you mad
at me? Don't worry about him.

RJ stops writing and closes his journal.

RJ
How could I not worry? You beat him
up in front of everyone. It's only
gonna get worse.

POPE
Well then you better learn to stick
up for yourself. I won't always be
around to help you out.

RJ
Good. I never asked you to. Look,
I'm just not tough like you.

POPE
That's such crap man... You were
tough enough to crawl down into the
subway station weren't you?

RJ
I guess.

POPE
Good. Then don't give that racist
idiot another thought. This is us.

EXT./INT. NY PUBLIC LIBRARY - LATER

The bus arrives in front of the main NY Public Library on 53rd Street.

RJ and Pope walk into the computer room, sit down and log on to the internet.

RJ

Alright, we need to Google
underground rivers in New York.

Pope looks at a hot twenty-something babe studying.

POPE

Now, there's something I'd like to
Google!

Clueless, RJ looks up from the computer.

RJ

What?

POPE

Man, I love college chicks.

RJ

Come on - focus.

Pope sits down next to him.

RJ (CONT'D)

Check this out.

Pope looks over.

POPE

The Viele Map? Looks pretty old.
What is it?

RJ

Says it's an old survey map from
the 1800's. Shows where every
underground river and lake is in
the city. I guess contractors still
use it today.

POPE

Where's 91st and Broadway.

RJ keeps clicking the mouse.

RJ
It won't let me zoom in anymore.
Can you read that?

No answer. Pope is approaching the hot babe at a nearby table. He engages her in conversation.

RJ realizes that Pope is not sitting behind him. He continues to stare at the map.

Pope returns with a glum expression on his face.

POPE
I guess she's not into underage
homeless guys. Her loss. What'd you
find out?

RJ
I can't see anything specific on
here. But the real map is on
display at the NY Historical
Society.

Pope looks at the computer's time clock.

POPE
It's about to close. We'll never
make it over there in time.

RJ
I gotta go home for dinner anyway.
You wanna come? My parents kind of
want to meet you.

POPE
Sure.

INT. RJ'S HOUSE - LATER

The house is empty. RJ and Pope sit in the living room watching TV.

POPE
This is awesome. How many channels
do you get?

RJ
I don't know - 500 or so.

POPE
You gotta be kidding me. How do you
keep track? We're lucky to get ten
on a good day.

Suzanne and Brittany enter the house.

SUZANNE

RJ?

RJ

Yeah, in here.

SUZANNE

Did your father give...?

Suzanne enters the den with Brittany. They see Pope. He stands up.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

Oh...hello.

POPE

Hi, I'm Pope Sullivan.

RJ

Mom, this is the guy I've been telling you about.

SUZANNE

Nice to finally meet you Pope, this is RJ's sister, Brittany.

BRITTANY

Hey...

Pope gives her a smile.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)

Do you go to The Woodlands? I've never seen you there.

POPE

Nah, I'm over at Saint Farris.

Suzanne looks at both of them.

SUZANNE

Oh, I've heard great things about that school.

BRITTANY

It sucks. I'll be upstairs.

She exits. RJ looks at her strangely.

SUZANNE

Brittany! What's wrong with you?
(to Pope) Do you live in the area?

POPE

Yeah, just a little bit below 91st
and Broadway.

Pope plays it cool as RJ's eyes widen.

SUZANNE

You must live in the Johnston
Building.

POPE

Ah...yeah, I've been living there
with my Dad for a while. He works
over at NYU.

SUZANNE

Really? I was just about to start
dinner. You're welcome to stay if
you'd like.

POPE

I wouldn't want to impose --

SUZANNE

You're not imposing. We're happy to
have you.

He looks at RJ.

POPE

Okay, thanks Mrs. Jenkins.

INT. DEN - LATER

RJ and Pope continue watching TV. Brittany enters with two
Capri Suns. She stands in front of the TV.

RJ

Get out of the way Brit!

She continues to stand there and tosses the Capri Sun to
Pope.

BRITTANY

I wouldn't want to impose....Mrs.
Jenkins? Are you kidding me?

RJ

What? He's polite. Unlike you.
Move!

BRITTANY
I saw you take that stuff from
Mom's medicine cabinet.

Brittany turns the TV off.

RJ
What you talking about.

BRITTANY
Think real hard and try to
remember.

The both play dumb.

BRITTANY
Here, I'll help. MOM!

RJ
Wait, wait, wait! Ok, fine. What do
you want.

RJ looks around nervously.

BRITTANY
Your I-Pod and I don't touch the
trash for a month.

RJ
One week.

BRITTANY
(Singing) Mom...

SUZANNE (O.S.)
What honey?

RJ
Two weeks, and not a day more.

BRITTANY
(smiles) Deal. (to Suzanne) Never
mind. I found it.

She makes a face at them, turns around and bounces out of the
room.

INT. RJ'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - LATER

RJ, Pope, Brittany, Suzanne and Tom sit at the table, eating.
Pope has a mountain of food on his plate.

POPE

Wow, these are the best mashed potatoes I've ever had Mrs. Jenkins.

Brittany rolls her eyes.

BRITTANY

Yeah, real masterpiece. They're instant.

SUZANNE

(To Pope) Would you like some more pot roast, honey?

POPE

Sure. Thanks.

She hands him a platter and he forks over several huge pieces of meat on his plate.

BRITTANY

Eat much?

TOM

Brittany, what's a matter with you?

Tom gives Brittany "The Look."

TOM (CONT'D)

So, Pope...that's an interesting nickname. Where'd that come from?

POPE

Good old Father Stelnicki. He's a priest over at Saint Sylvester's.

SUZANNE

The orphanage in Harlem?

POPE

Yep. My favorite book was The Pope of Greenwich Village. Used to carry it around in my back pocket. I probably read it 20 times.

TOM

Good book.

POPE

Yeah. The best. So, uh...because of that Father Stelnicki started calling me the Pope of Saint Sylvester's.

(MORE)

POPE (cont'd)

I guess it kinda stuck. I've been with my foster dad for the last three years and it's been great.

TOM

That's good to hear. I'm glad we finally got to meet you. You guys have been thick as thieves lately. (to RJ) You never bring anyone around here except Nick.

RJ squirms in his seat. The power goes off.

BRITTANY

Oh great. This place is such a dump.

SUZANNE

Brittany, you're welcome to stay somewhere else.

TOM

Jeez louise. You think with the mortgage on this place, I could at least get some reliable power. RJ...

RJ

I know. I'm already on it. I'll get the flashlight.

POPE

This happen often?

TOM

Unfortunately.

POPE

You check the breaker?

TOM

Yeah. That's not it. I think the electrical is shot.

POPE

Would you mind if I took a look.

TOM

Be my guest. Follow me.

RJ comes in with the flashlights.

INT. THE GARAGE - SAME

RJ, Tom and Pope stand in front of the junction box. RJ shines the light on it. Pope looks at it.

POPE

This is an old S Type fuse box.

RJ and Tom look at each other.

RJ

How do you know that?

POPE

I used to help out the handyman at Sylvester's. I'd do just about anything to get out of chapel. The place was ancient and with all the new appliances, we'd have to adjust each fuse to a higher amp.

TOM

That's a good theory, but it still won't keep the fuses from blowing.

Pope straightens the flashlight so its trained on a specific fuse.

POPE

There's your problem right there.

TOM

What?

POPE

You got a 10 amp fuse in a 12 amp slot. You got any spares?

TOM

I think so. Hold on.

Tom opens a drawer and hands Pope a pack of circular fuses. Pope pours some into his hand and looks at them.

TOM (CONT'D)

Looks like they're all the same.

POPE

They look the same, but they aren't. See the tiny numbers on the inside. That's the amperage.

TOM

Well I'll be damned. I never noticed that before.

He picks one out and starts to unscrew the blown fuse.

TOM
Be careful.

POPE
Don't worry. My shoe's got me grounded.

He replaces the old fuse with the new one.

POPE (CONT'D)
You want to do the honors RJ?

RJ
Yep, let there be light!

RJ flicks the breaker switch and the power comes to life.

TOM
Great! Now, let's hope it holds up.
I'm gonna finish up some work upstairs.

Tom puts out his hand to Pope.

TOM (CONT'D)
Pope - you saved the day. You're welcome around here anytime.

Pope shakes his hand.

POPE
Thanks. It was nothing.

INT. THE DEN - LATER

RJ and Pope enter the den. RJ sits down in front of the laptop. Pope is still fixated on the overwhelming # of cable channels.

RJ looks at the Ebay homepage still open on his mother's laptop.

RJ
Pope, check this out. You think we could use this?

Pope walks over. Ebay listings of camping equipment appear on the screen.

POPE

Yeah, we could use it. But, how the hell are we gonna pay for it?

RJ

Leave that to me. My mom buys so much crap on here - she'll never know the difference.

Pope nods. RJ types.

RJ (CONT'D)

Here goes.

RJ clicks on the "Buy it Now" button and it completes his purchase automatically.

POPE

Sweet. You got it! But what are your parents gonna say when it shows up here?

RJ

It won't be delivered here. I'll have it sent to school.

RJ proudly puts out his fist. Pope bumps it.

POPE

Nice. I'm becoming a bad influence on you... and I like it.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Turelli watches Pope and Zeno enter the office building.
- He runs over to the air grate, looks down and sees Pope and Zeno inside the abandoned subway platform for a split second.
- Turelli watches as Pope and RJ come out of the building and walk across the street.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

At the playground, Turelli sits on a bench sipping a Coke. Several feet away, Nick and RJ glance at a comic book.

Kids loiter around the playground, eating, talking and playing.

LORENA (V.O.)
 RJ Jenkins report to the office. RJ
 Jenkins to the office please.

RJ walks toward the office. Turelli trails behind, and waits at the entrance to the school.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - FIVE MINUTES LATER

RJ enters the office. Lorena is seated. Halloween decorations fill the hallways and offices.

RJ
 You paged me?

LORENA
 Yes, I did. You have a package.

RJ
 I do?

LORENA
 Yes...Why are you getting your mail sent to the school? We're not the post office!

She stands up and walks over to a medium size box and picks it up.

RJ
 It's a birthday present for my mom. I didn't want ruin the surprise.

She reads the label and hands him the box.

LORENA
 River of No Return Kayaks?

RJ
 Yeah... she's a Discovery Channel nut. Thanks Lorena.

LORENA
 You're welcome but don't let it happen again.

EXT. THE PLAYGROUND - SAME

RJ tries to carry the package home. The package partially obstructs his view.

Suddenly, the package is pushed against his face, knocking him backwards against the fence.

RJ
What the..?

Turelli picks up the package.

TURELLI
What'd you buy me Jenkins?

RJ
Come on Turelli. Give it back.

TURELLI
This a present for your girlfriend?

RJ
Stop. Just give it back.

TURELLI
Tell your girlfriend I haven't forgotten about the park. I'm on to both of you.

Turelli shoves the box at RJ's chest, knocking him hard into the fence. As RJ looks up, Turelli walks away.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Pope, RJ and his family go shopping in Bloomingdales. RJ and Pope look like they're dying of boredom.
- Pope and RJ fish for coins in various NYC fountains.
- Pope, RJ and his family watch a Broadway musical. RJ's dad catches them trading comic books.
- Pope, RJ and his family stand on the street and watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade. RJ looks on in fascination at a Mole People float.
- Brittany and Pope play RJ and Tom in a game of 2 on 2 basketball in a park.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. RJ'S HOUSE - THANKSGIVING DAY

A large dining room table over-flowing with various platters of traditional Thanksgiving food.

Inside the den, Tom watches a Detroit Lions/New York Jets football game on the big screen. RJ lays on the couch, reading a comic book, oblivious to the game. Brittany, text messages someone on her cell phone.

BRITTANY
(giggling) What a loser. I'm so over him.

A loud cheer on the TV as the Jets intercept a pass.

TOM
Yes! He picked it off! You see that RJ?

RJ
Huh?

Suzanne enters, wearing an apron.

SUZANNE
Dinner's ready. Tom, I need you to carve the turkey.

TOM
I think it's about time RJ took a crack it. He's old enough to handle it. (caught up in the game) First down!

RJ's eyes appear above the comic book for a second.

RJ
I don't want anywhere near that chain saw.

SUZANNE
Come on you guys, I NEED your help.

TOM
Brittany, RJ, go in and help your mother.

RJ and Brittany reluctantly get up and follow their mother into the kitchen.

A gigantic turkey sits in the antique cast iron pan that Suzanne bought off Ebay.

RJ
You think the turkey's big enough Mom?

BRITTANY

Who we having over...the Nicks?

SUZANNE

I got a great price on it over at Piscatelli's.

BRITTANY

Great - turkey sandwiches for a month.

RJ

It's like you ever eat anything anyway Miss Anorexia.

SUZANNE

RJ! Be nice. We're supposed to be giving thanks today.

She picks up the Ginsu Super Slicer out of its case and hands it to RJ. It has a foot long steel blade with a finely laquered faux wood handle.

RJ

Are you serious? What I am supposed to do with this thing, trim the hedges?

Suzanne lightly taps him in the back of the head.

SUZANNE

Honey, just help me out please.

From the den, we hear Tom cheering.

RJ picks up the Ginsu and fires it up. Brittany's eyes widen as RJ points it towards her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUBWAY STATION - SAME

Two rotisserie chickens sit in pie tins. Next to the tins are open cans of cranberry sauce, potatoes and green beans.

POPE (O.S.)

Touchdown!

Faye sets the table with plastic forks and spoons.

Pope and Zeno watch the football game as Monroe lies on the air mattress, coughing. He spits up blood into a paper napkin. He's past concealing how sick he is.

POPE

Z, Monroe's getting worse. I'm worried about him.

ZENO

Is there any more of that codine syrup left?

Monroe continues to violently cough. He looks over at Pope.

POPE

No, he finished it last night.

ZENO

Monroe, we need to get you to a doctor. I think you have pneumonia. The medicine's not working.

MONROE

I told ya, I ain't goin' to county. I'll take my chances down here.

INT. RJ'S HOUSE - SAME

Dinner is finished. Suzanne is back on her computer. Brittany is still at the table, furiously texting away, oblivious to her surroundings. Tom, a Triptafen victim, is drooling while fast asleep on the couch.

INT. THE KITCHEN - SAME

RJ piles leftover food into a large Tupperware container. He puts the container into his backpack.

Brittany enters and sees him.

BRITTANY

What are you doing?

RJ

Don't worry about it?

BRITTANY

You're so weird.

RJ

(yelling) Mom, I'm going to Nick's. I'll be back in an hour.

SUZANNE (O.S.)

Don't be too long honey. We're all going to watch Mary Poppins together.

RJ fakes excitement.

RJ

Great...

He exits.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY

Pope, Zeno, Faye and Monroe sit at the table, eating a small pumpkin pie and playing Monopoly.

Faye reads a card to Zeno.

FAYE

Do not pass go, do not collect 200 dollars.

POPE

At least you don't have to go to jail again.

Zeno has a sour look.

MONROE

I'd rather be in jail. At least there you get three hots and a cot.

RJ enters the living quarters. Zeno sees RJ.

ZENO

Ah...the Surface Dweller has arrived. Happy Thanksgiving my friend.

RJ

Happy Thanksgiving everyone.

EVERYONE ELSE

Happy Thanksgiving RJ.

RJ

I brought down a few things I thought you might like.

He pulls out the Tupperware container and a fresh apple pie from his backpack.

MONROE

Oh, please tell me there's some homemade mash potatoes and greens in there so I can die in peace.

Faye takes it from RJ and opens it. Zeno and Monroe stare at it.

FAYE

Take it easy, you savages. Let me at least heat it up.

ZENO

(to RJ) You play Monopoly?

RJ

It's been a while, but I think I remember.

MONTAGE

- Faye brings a paper plate of food to the table. Zeno, Pope and Monroe help themselves.

- RJ has bankrupted the other players and is now the resident Donald Trump. Zeno lands on RJ's Park Place with four hotels. Zeno coughs up his remaining cash to RJ's delight and hits him over the head with his last dollar bill.

- Monroe plays the trumpet for them, giving them an impromptu jazz concert. They all clap as he bows and coughs. They look at each other concerned.

- Dick Van Dyke sings "Chim Chim Cheree". Faye dances with a broom as they sing along to the Mary Poppins song.

BACK TO SCENE

MONROE

See. Bein' a chimney sweep ain't a bad gig. Specially if you can land a fine piece like Julie Andrews.

ZENO

It's a movie knucklehead. No chimney sweep would ever have a chance in hell with a dame like that.

MONROE

Hell, yeah he could. Money ain't everything Z.

Motioning to Zeno.

MONROE (CONT'D)

Don't listen to him fellas. All it takes to win over a women is confidence and the right moves.

ZENO

Oh, this should be interesting.

FAYE

Please enlighten us Casanova.

MONROE

As a youngster, I perfected an old skating trick that worked wonders with the ladies.

ZENO

Taking ice skating advice from a black man is like taking driving lessons from an Asian. It's dangerous.

MONROE

Very funny wise ass. (to RJ and Pope) Believe me boys, you'll be thanking me later. (coughs) When you're out on the ice and your dates are clinging to you for dear life, take a spill and pull 'em down on top of you. It's the ole "Drop and Cop" - drop her and cop a feel.

Monroe lets out a belly laugh that transitions into a cough.

FAYE

Monroe! Boys don't listen to him.

RJ

That works?

MONROE

Absolutely. It's foolproof...

He winks at them then coughs some more.

FAYE

If you really want to impress a girl. Just be yourself.

RJ looks at his watch and realizes he's late.

RJ

Ah man, I better get back. I told my parents I'd be home an hour ago. Thanks for letting me hang out, this was a lot of fun.

FAYE
It was our pleasure.

She gives him a hug.

EVERYONE ELSE
Good night RJ.

ZENO
You know what kid, you're not so bad for a surface dweller.

RJ
Yeah? Well your not too bad at everything...except Monopoly. Study up!

ZENO
I want a rematch next time Mr. Trump.

RJ
You got it. (to Pope) We meeting at the news stand tomorrow?

POPE
Yep, noon?

RJ
Sounds good. Later.

EXT. NEWSSTAND - NEXT DAY

RJ and Pope sip Cokes while looking through different comic books and graphic novels. They sit on the curb.

Down the street, Turelli observes them from the corner. He walks over to a pay phone and dials, "911."

EXT. NEWSSTAND - AN HOUR LATER

Pope and RJ continue to look at the comic books.

RJ
The Archies?

POPE
What? Veronica and Betty are smokin'.

He shows RJ. Pope looks at one of RJ's.

POPE (CONT'D)

You read anything other than "Mole City?"

RJ

No, why would I? There the best. This is the new one, "Mole City Massacre."

POPE

What time is it?

RJ turns on his I Phone.

RJ

One-thirty.

INSERT I-PHONE

There are six voice mails and two text messages. He checks the text messages.

12:15PM "Where are you? Mom and Dad are flipping out. You need to come home now!"

1:12PM "Are you okay?"

BACK TO SCENE

RJ

My sister's an idiot. We better get back. I think I'm in trouble.

EXT. 91ST STREET AND BROADWAY - LATER

RJ and Pope turn a corner and can't believe their eyes. Police cars, fire trucks, an ambulance, HAZMAT vehicles, streets and sanitation trucks, an MTA car and a car from child services line the street. Various city officials comb the area. A crowd of onlookers gathers. Crazy Jake and Broadway Joe check out the action.

POPE

Jake, what's going on?

A child services officer questions Tom, Suzanne and Brittany. Suzanne spots RJ and Pope in the crowd.

SUZANNE

Oh thank God! There he is! There he is!

She points to RJ and Pope. Two COPS run over to them. COP#1 puts his hand on his holster.

COP#1
Stay right where you are! Don't
move!

COP#2
RJ walk over to me.

RJ slowly walks over to the policemen.

RJ
What's going on?

COP#1 forcefully grabs Pope and shoves him into the back seat of the police car.

COP#1
I'll get back to you in a minute.
Don't do anything stupid.

Pope tries to open the door, but there are no handles. Suzanne hugs RJ.

SUZANNE
Thank God you're safe.

TOM
Are you okay?

RJ
What are you guys talking about?
What's going on?

TOM
Did they touch you in any way?

RJ
Touch me? What? No!

Monroe is being wheeled out of the building on a gurney. He has an oxygen mask covering his face. Two paramedics load him into the back of an ambulance.

RJ
Monroe!

RJ runs over to Monroe. The ambulance driver close the doors and pull away. Pope witnesses the scene through the police car window.

POPE
Monroe! No!

RJ spots Turelli who's laughing at the scene with delight.

TURELLI

Told you I'd get you back!

RJ, enraged, runs over and tackles him. He pounds Turelli's face repeatedly, bloodying his nose. The police pull them apart.

Faye and Zeno are being led away in handcuffs by the police. Tom runs over to Zeno and confronts him.

TOM

What did you do to my son? You sick bastard!

He grabs Zeno's shirt.

ZENO

You've got it all wrong, I was helping the boys!

The police pull Tom off Zeno.

TOM

You son of a bitch! I should kill you myself!

He lunges at Zeno again and the police escort Tom away from Zeno.

RJ, in tears, breaks away from his mother and makes a beeline for Pope's police car. He opens the police car door and both of them run away faster than they've ever run before.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

RJ and Pope take a different route into the subway station.

RJ (V.O.)

To say that my parents over-reacted was the under-statement of the century. Most days they could care less what I did. But, befriend a few homeless people and they put the city on high alert. They just didn't get it.

Pope stops walking and turns to RJ.

POPE

Look, you don't have to do this.
They're after me. I'll understand
if you want to go home.

RJ

I'm not going home until they know
the truth. You guys are my friends.

POPE

Thanks man...Just wait here. I'll
see if everything's still there and
be back in two minutes. If anything
goes wrong, just head home.

RJ

Right.....Hey Pope.

Pope turns around.

RJ (CONT'D)

Everything's gonna be fine... you
got your guardian angel with you.

RJ shines a light on Mickey the rat who waddles next to him.
Pope lets out a much needed laugh and disappears into the
darkness.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER THAT NIGHT

RJ and Pope walk through the woods with two over-sized
backpacks.

RJ

You sure this is going to work?

POPE

It's gonna have to. We got no
choice.

They hear various nocturnal animal noises.

RJ

Was that a coyote?

POPE

This is Central Park, not
Yellowstone. Worse thing to worry
about is some rabid squirrel or a
pissed off chipmunk. We'll be fine.
You got the tent?

RJ

Yeah, here.

He pulls a camouflaged tent.

POPE

Nice. Let's get it set-up.

INT. FOX NEWS 13 STUDIO - NEXT MORNING

Cheesy, morning news show music plays. LAURA, a lead anchor in her mid-thirties sits on the couch and gives the audience a fake smile.

LAURA

Welcome back. This next story is particularly troubling and is a stark reminder of the homeless problem that pervades our city and threatens our youth. A 13 year old Manhattan boy, RJ Jenkins, was reportedly being held hostage by a band of vagrants who were living below 91st and Broadway in an abandoned subway tunnel. JANE SAUNDERS is at the Jenkins home reporting. Jane...

INT. RJ'S HOUSE - SAME

JANE, a pretty blonde field reporter stands in the living room, adjusting her ear piece. She sits between Suzanne and Tom.

JANE

Thanks LAURA. I'm here at the home of Tom and Suzanne Jenkins who are devastated over their son's apparent abduction by a homeless boy yesterday evening. Suzanne, if RJ is somehow watching, what would you like to say to him?

She holds the mic for Suzanne.

SUZANNE

Honey, if you can hear me...please, come home. Everything's going to be okay. We're not mad at you or Pope. I know it wasn't his fault. We love you and we just want you to come home safe.

Suzanne starts to cry. Jane places a supportive hand on her shoulder.

JANE

If there's anyone out there with any information on the whereabouts of RJ Jenkins or Pope Sullivan, please call the NYPD child abduction hotline at 212-555-0141. Back to you Laura.

LAURA

Just pulls at your heartstrings doesn't it. When we come back, JOEY CHESTNUT will update us on that cold front that's moving through the tristate area. Stick around...

EXT. STREET - DAY

RJ and Pope walk down the street. RJ spots a newspaper page sitting in a garbage can. He walks past it, stops and goes back. He picks it up and reads it.

INSERT NEWSPAPER PAGE

"TEENS ON THE RUN - POLICE ASK FOR HELP"

Underneath the headline are two terrible pictures of Pope and RJ. RJ's picture is two years old. Pope's is a crude police artist sketch that vaguely resembles him.

BACK TO SCENE

RJ shows it to Pope. Pope looks around and steers RJ into an alley. They look at the newspaper and burst out laughing.

RJ

Check this out. My parents gave the cops my fifth grade picture. They're so clueless.

POPE

Nice clip-on. Goes well with the sweater.

RJ

Thanks. Nice fro. You look like a 70's bible salesman.

They laugh. RJ reads a line underneath the pics.

RJ (CONT'D)

According to NYPD sources, Reed Jenkins(above left) is being held against his will by John Patrick Sullivan(above right). It is believed Sullivan, a homeless vagrant, may be mentally ill and possibly dangerous.

POPE

Jesus man...

RJ

I knew you were a nutjob.

POPE

Must be. Says it right here. Don't you know all homeless people are crazy. Newspaper's will print anything these days.

Pope crumbles it in a ball and throws it to the ground.

RJ

We probably should lay low till we figure out what we're gonna do.

POPE

Lay low? If we're gonna get caught, we might as well have some fun first.

Pope points to a huge circus advertisement that has been glued to a wall.

EXT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - DAY

RJ and Pope approach the Madison Square Garden marquee.

RJ

How we gonna get in? Do you know someone with tickets or something?

POPE

Ticket? Come on. You're with me.

He takes a right down a side street, leading them to the delivery entrance to the Garden.

They get to a hole in a fence. They both slip inside and make their way down to a dark loading dock.

Pope bends down and drags over an abandoned pallet.

POPE
Give me a hand with this.

RJ grabs a side and they place it on the metal roller belt that leads inside the shipping area.

RJ
What are we gonna do?

POPE
Follow me.

Pope climbs up on the dock and lays face down on one half of the pallets. RJ follows him up and lays down beside him.

RJ
Now what?

POPE
Hold on...

Pope pushes off the wall and they begin to move inside.

They hang on as they begin to pick up speed into the darkness.

The roller belt meanders through the bowels of MSG like a wild roller-coaster.

RJ
Ahhh...

POPE
Hang on. We're almost there.

The belt continues to wind through the interior of the building. A light appears in the distance.

POPE (CONT'D)
We're comin to the end. Get ready to jump.

RJ
What? We're going pretty fast.

POPE
Just jump when I tell you.

The belt leads into a semi-lit warehouse.

POPE
On three: one, two,!

Pope springs off and lands on the floor. RJ fails to jump off and crashes into a pile of boxes.

RJ
Ehh...

Pope laughs.

RJ (CONT'D)
What happened to three?

MAN (O.S.)
Hey, who's down there? Durham is that you?

POPE
Come on. Let's get out of here!

Pope and RJ scamper through a door.

INT. CONCESSION STAND - LATER

RJ and Pope stand in line.

RJ
What're you gonna get?

POPE
Couple beers. Maybe a dog.

RJ
No seriously...

Pope gives RJ a head nod that two girls their age, CHRISTY and SARAH are standing behind them.

Sarah drops her money. Pope bends down and picks it up. He gives it to her.

POPE
Here you go.

SARAH
Thanks.

POPE
Hey. I'm Pope.

SARAH
Hi, I'm Sarah.

POPE
Nice to meet you. This is RJ.

RJ's engrossed in the Dome of Death ad in the program. Pope elbows him. RJ looks up.

RJ
Huh...hey...hi.

SARAH
This is Christy.

CHRISTY
Hi.

RJ and Pope are now at the front of the line.

WORKER
What can I get you?

POPE
Ah...one cotton candy, a large popcorn, two chili dogs and a couple Cokes.

RJ looks at the girls.

RJ
What about you guys? We'll buy.

SARAH AND CHRISTY
Cool. Thanks.

SARAH
(to the worker) Two Cokes and two pretzels.

RJ hands the money to Pope. Pope nods at RJ.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - DAY

RJ, Pope, Sarah and Christy walk with their refreshments. They stop.

CHRISTY
This is our section. They're REALLY crappy seats.

POPE
If you want, you can sit with us. Best seats in the house.

Sarah and Christy look at each other.

POPE (CONT'D)
Alright, here's what we're going to do.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - LATER

The four walk towards the VIP section. There's one SECURITY GUARD who is enjoying an over-sized chili dog.

POPE
I'll see ya in five.

He immediately sprints, yelling, past the security guard.

The guard is startled for a second, drops the dog then gives chase.

The doorway is temporarily unguarded.

RJ
Let's go!

RJ and the girls scamper through a door and then run up a staircase.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN STAIRWELL - LATER

RJ and the girls are sitting on the stairs waiting. They hear a whistle and look up.

POPE
Up here.

They gather up their refreshments and start climbing the stairs toward Pope.

POPE (CONT'D)
You guys aren't afraid of heights are you?

They all look at each other, then up to the doorway entrance that reads, "MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL ONLY". Pope opens the door, revealing a catwalk railing with a bird's eye view of the circus.

Their jaws drop in amazement at the spectacular view. They all walk slowly out to the middle of the catwalk and sit down.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- A dancing bear act.

- Trapeze artists.
- "Steel Dome of Death" act.
- Fire swallows...
- Twenty-five clowns in a Volkswagen Bug.
- Tiger act...

BACK TO SCENE

The boys have now paired off with the girls. RJ talks to Sarah and Pope talks to Christy.

RJ

You know there's only 5000 Siberian tigers left in the world. And, they got two down there!

Pope gives him a look.

SARAH

(sipping her drink) Yeah, I know. Instead of having them jump through fire, they should have them do some water act. Unlike house cats, tigers love to swim.

RJ

Really? I didn't know that. That's awesome.

RJ's face lights up like a Christmas tree. He's found his ying to his yang.

CHRISTY

Thanks for getting us up here. This is so cool.

POPE

Hey, I heard they're setting up the rink at Rockefeller. You think you guys would be up for a little skating?

Looks at Christy.

SARAH AND CHRISTY

Sure.

Christy's phone buzzes. She looks at it.

CHRISTY

Great. It's my Dad. He's probably wondering where we are.

POPE

Cool. We'll walk you down. Can I get your number?

CHRISTY

Sure, do you have a cell?

POPE

Uh, It's busted. But, RJ can lock you in.

RJ fiddles with his high-speed I-phone.

SARAH

I love that phone. It's awesome.

CHRISTY

(to RJ) 555-8907.

SARAH

(to RJ) Do you want my number?

RJ

Yeah.

SARAH

555-7051.

RJ

Sweet, thanks.

They make their way down the stairs as RJ walks on cloud nine.

EXT./INT. NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - LATER

RJ and Pope walk into the building and up to a reference desk where an OLDER WOMAN sits.

OLDER WOMAN

May I help you boys?

RJ

Well, uh, mmm. We, ah...

Pope interjects like a well rehearsed Eddie Haskell.

POPE

Yes, Ma'am. We go to school at St. Ferris.

OLDER WOMAN

Okay...

POPE

And, we're doing a school project on how the New York landscape has changed since the 1800's.

RJ

Yeah, our teacher Father Stelnicki said you might have a VIOLA map?

Pope throws him a look as She laughs at the mispronunciation of the name.

OLDER WOMAN

Oh, you mean the VIELE map. It's on display in the Deleyser Room. Take the elevator to the second floor it'll be on your right hand side.

RJ AND POPE

Thanks.

INT. DELEYSER ROOM -SAME

RJ and Pope enter the Delyser Room. An ENGINEER and a DEVELOPER are looking at the Viele Map and arguing.

DEVELOPER

It clearly shows Minetta Creek runs right underneath the site. This should've been the first thing we checked during the initial survey.

ENGINEER

We took samples and everything. I didn't even know this map existed until last week.

DEVELOPER

Call the investors and schedule a meeting. We're going to have to halt construction until we sort this mess out.

They exit. The boys walk in front of the map which dwarfs the wall, like a modern-day billboard.

POPE
This thing's gigantic.

RJ
Where's 91st and Broadway?

POPE
Wait a second. It's sideways. Find
Central Park.

RJ points.

RJ
There it is.

POPE
Got it. 91st...and Broadway.

Pope takes out the paper bag map.

POPE
Crazy Jake wasn't lying. If this
thing's right, there's a river at
96th and...?

RJ
(looking) Columbus.

POPE
Nice. We can just walk from the
91st Street station. Let's get
outta here.

They start to walk toward the stairs. RJ heads into the gift
shop.

RJ
Give me a second.

He grabs a souvenir legal sized laminated VIELE map. He pays
for it and meets Pope back in the hallway.

RJ (CONT'D)
We're gonna need this.

INT. 96TH AND COLUMBUS SUBWAY STATION - LATER

RJ and Pope are in a secluded section of the station. They
examine Crazy Jake's map as a couple filthy street people
shuffle by waiting commuters.

RJ
If Crazy Jake's right, the entrance
should be in this station
somewhere.

POPE
I don't see anything.

RJ
It's gotta be here somewhere.

The subway train pulls out of the station, revealing the far
wall of the other side of the station.

On the other side of the platform is a 3 by 3 foot vent that
has been partially bent away from the wall.

POPE (CONT'D)
Check it out man. There it is.

Pope points to the vent.

RJ
Yeah, but how we gonna get over
there?

POPE
Follow me.

RJ
That's what I was afraid of.

They slowly walk across the tracks, avoiding the third rail.

SUBWAY PASSENGERS see them and a commotion erupts.

SUBWAY PASSENGER #1
Hey, what are you boys doin'?

SUBWAY PASSENGER #2
Are you crazy. You're gonna get
fried.

SUBWAY PASSENGER #1
Get back over here.

Another train arrives, blocking the passengers' view. RJ and
Pope walk over to the vent, standing on the narrow catwalk.

POPE
Someone's been through here.
There's no way it would be bent
back like that.

RJ
We'll fit, no problem.

POPE
Alright, it's a done deal then.

They bump fists. The train leaves. They walk back across the tracks. They see an adult pointing them out to a MTA OFFICER.

MTA OFFICER
Hey, you two, get over here.

RJ
Let's get out of here.

They both run up the stairs. Subway Passenger #2 sees the boys photos on the back page of another passenger's newspaper. She runs over to a police officer who is patrolling the station.

INT. RJ'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Tom and Suzanne eat breakfast. The phone rings.

Tom answers.

TOM
Hello?

DETECTIVE WELTY(V.O.)
Mr.Jenkins, this is Detective
Welty.

Tom signals for Suzanne to listen to the conversation.

DETECTIVE WELTY (V.O.)(CONT'D)
Last night RJ and John Sullivan
were spotted outside The Big Apple
Circus. And then later at the 96th
Street station.

TOM
Thank God. Is he okay?

DETECTIVE WELTY
We're not exactly sure ma'am. The
boys ran on both occasions before
they could be apprehended by
police. The officer did say that it
didn't look like he was being
threatened.

TOM

That doesn't make any sense. Why would he run from the cops?

DETECTIVE WELTY

Could be a classic case of Stockholm Syndrome. We just don't know. We're following every lead, including Faye Campbell's statement that the boys were storing camping equipment in the underground bunker.

TOM

I thought he gave that stuff to the salvation army.

DETECTIVE WELTY

We'll be sure to keep you posted sir.

TOM AND SUZANNE

Thank you detective.

Tom and Suzanne hug.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER ICE RINK - NOON

Rockefeller Center is illuminated and adorned with Christmas decorations. Skaters zip back and forth on the ice. The rink has just opened and is packed with overzealous skaters.

RJ, Pope, Sarah and Christy tie their skates, while sitting on a bench. Pope and RJ wear hats to partially conceal their identities.

The girls are finished first and head out on the ice together. Sarah is an advanced skater and begins to do figure skating moves.

Finally, Pope and RJ make their way to the ice.

POPE

Hey, don't forget about the Drop and Cop. Let's do it for Monroe.

RJ

Yeah, definitely.

RJ sees Sarah do a double axle.

RJ (CONT'D)
Great, figures I'd be paired up
with Michelle Kwan.

POPE
Good luck Romeo.

RJ
You too.

Pope skates over to Christy.

MONTAGE:

- Pope and Christy skating together.
- RJ and Sarah skating together.
- All four holding hands with each other and skating.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER ICE RINK - SAME

Sarah skates backwards and pulls RJ with her. He looks terrified. Across the rink, he sees Pope execute a perfect "Drop and Cop."

Pope and Christy skate by them. Pope winks at him.

Sarah lets go. RJ skates to catch up. He tries to execute his own Drop and Cop. Instead, his momentum carries them into the board like two aggressive NHL hockey players.

Sarah bounces off the board like a puck and goes sprawling across the ice. RJ crumples on the ice like a wet noodle. They're both in pain.

Pope and Christy race over, barely able to contain their laughter.

CHRISTY
Oh, my God.

POPE
You guys alright?

RJ
Ah...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER, NIGHT

RJ, Pope, Christy and Sarah walk past Central Park. Sarah holds an ice pack to her head. RJ has a Band aid on his face.

CHRISTY

That was fun...Thanks for inviting us.

SARAH

Yeah, thanks for the hockey lesson RJ.

She gives RJ a flirtatious bump with her hip.

RJ

I warned you I couldn't skate. We all can't be Sasha Cohen.

EXT. SUBWAY STATION ENTRANCE - LATER

RJ, Pope, Christy and Sarah stand at the entrance.

SARAH

This is us.

POPE

You guys want to maybe get together another time?

CHRISTY

Definitely...

SARAH

Definitely, but without skates!

RJ

Amen...Like Bowling. Seems way safer.

They all laugh.

They look at each other and there's an awkward adolescent pause. Pope makes his move and gives Christy a hug goodbye. Sarah takes the lead and moves in on RJ. She hugs him and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

They start to walk down the stairs.

SARAH

See you guys.

CHRISTY

Bye.

RJ AND POPE

Bye.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER

RJ and Pope walk across Central Park.

RJ

You think I should French kiss her
next time?

Pope gives him a look.

POPE

Uh...yeah. I use my tongue every
time.

RJ

You do?

POPE

Turns 'em on.

RJ

It does?

Pope hits RJ in the arm. They see Crazy Jake who's sitting on
a park bench, stuffing a large hot dog into his mouth.

POPE

(softly) Hey Jake!

Jake acknowledges them. RJ and Pope sit down next to Jake.

CRAZY JAKE

Are you guys crazy running around
here? The Police are looking for
you both.

POPE

Where? Here?

CRAZY JAKE

Everywhere man...

RJ

Hey, we want to sneak in and see
Monroe. But, we don't know what
room he's in.

POPE

Can you help us out?

CRAZY JAKE

Sure. Just let me just finish this first.

Jake takes a big bite. Relish and mustard drips all over his shirt.

CRAZY JAKE (CONT'D)

Oh man...

EXT. SAINT LUKE'S HOSPITAL - LATER

Crazy Jake, RJ and Pope stand in front of the entrance.

CRAZY JAKE

Okay...I'll find out what room he's in. You guys stay out of sight and then I'll come get ya. Cool?

RJ and Pope nod.

They watch as Crazy Jake walks inside and speaks with a nurse at the front desk. She looks at a computer screen. She touches his hand lightly while speaking.

Crazy Jake walks out and looks at RJ and Pope.

POPE

Well, what'd she say?

CRAZY JAKE

Let's take a walk.

POPE

No! I don't want to take a walk. What'd she say Jake?

Pope already knows the painful answer.

CRAZY JAKE

Come on buddy.

Pope tears up.

POPE

No...No...

CRAZY JAKE

I'm sorry Pope.(a beat) Monroe passed this morning.

Pope lets out a guttural sound as if he's been punched in the stomach.

POPE

Ah....

RJ tries to comfort him. Pope brushes him aside and runs toward Central Park.

CRAZY JAKE

(yelling) Pope..!

RJ

It's okay Jake. I know where he's going. Thanks for trying.

CRAZY JAKE

I'm sorry RJ.

RJ

Me too.

RJ takes off after Pope.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - SAME

Pope runs through Central Park by himself. Tears run down his face. He stops next to a tree and drops to his knees. He starts to sob uncontrollably and pounds the ground with his fists.

Fourteen years of pent up pain explode to the surface in one moment.

POPE

Why? Why'd you have to take him?...No, no!

He cradles his head with his hands and breaks down emotionally.

POPE (CONT'D)

Monroe...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - SAME

RJ searches for Pope, but can't find him.

EXT. THE TENT - LATER

A camouflaged tent is hidden in a grove of thick trees. RJ sits Indian-style in front of the tent. Using his camping lantern, he writes in his journal.

RJ hears something moving through the woods.

RJ
Who's... there?

He cuts the light. Pope emerges from the darkness.

POPE
It's me.

RJ turns the light back on.

RJ
You alright?

Pope sits down next to him.

POPE
I just can't believe this.

A beat.

RJ
I'm really sorry.

POPE
Thanks. I just took for granted
that he'd always be around.

FLASHBACK

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Pope wanders the streets of Manhattan in the dead of winter.

- He sees Monroe, standing on a street corner, playing his trumpet for meager donations.

POPE (V.O.)
He was like a Dad to me. When I ran away from Saint Sylvester's, I was roaming the streets. I hadn't eaten in days and I was scared. I was walking around Times Square and heard the most beautiful sound in the world. I can't really explain it, but it was like someone took me by the hand and led me over to him. (starts to choke up) Before I knew it, I was standing in front of an old trumpet case with an even older trumpet player.

BACK TO SCENE

RJ nods. Pope smirks in remembrance.

POPE (CONT'D)

From the minute I met him he treated me like an equal, instead of some runaway kid. He always listened to what I had to say and never judged me. He was the first person I ever told about the beatings.

RJ

One of the priests?

POPE

No, this prick, Mr. Gibson. He was the headmaster. He used to work me over with his belt.

RJ

Jesus...

POPE

Monroe helped me deal with all that. He used to always say "don't let your past dictate your future."

Pope stops himself from breaking down again.

POPE (CONT'D)

He saved me...and I couldn't save him when he needed me most.

RJ

There's nothing you could have done for him Pope. He was really sick.

POPE

I just wish I could've said goodbye. I'm really gonna miss him.

RJ

Yeah...

They sit in silence for a moment. Pope exhales.

POPE

It's been a long day. I'm gonna crash.

RJ

Me too.

INT. THE TENT - SAME

They lay on opposite sides of the tent trying to get some sleep.

RJ. POPE

Yeah. RJ

Thanks for being here. POPE

Don't worry about it. That's what friends are for. RJ

Pope starts to think about Monroe again and tears streak down his face.

RJ stares at the top of the tent lost in his thoughts wishing he could help his friend.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NEXT DAY, EARLY MORNING

RJ unzips the tent to find Central Park lightly covered with snow. Pope is still asleep. RJ looks at the beautiful landscape in front of him. He opens up his notebook and begins to write.

RJ (V.O.)
 Watching the snowflakes fall on Central Park, was a stark reminder that autumn was over and winter had finally begun. Since entering the subway station I felt like one of the many leaves that had fallen around me. A part of me had indeed changed. Like the barren trees surrounding me, perhaps I will one day bloom as well.

Pope unzips the tent and steps outside. He rubs his eyes and squints.

Wow, it snowed huh. POPE

Yeah, looks pretty cool huh? RJ

Pope points to RJ's journal.

POPE

What are you always scribbling in there?

RJ

Nothing, it's stupid. Just a bunch a chicken scratch.

POPE

Like what? Did you write that we were attacked by coyotes and a rabid squirrel?

RJ

Nah, more like a bunch of crazy bums... no offense.

Pope hits him in the arm.

POPE

Where's your journalistic integrity? I'm not a bum. I am vagrant. Didn't you read the papers?

RJ smirks.

RJ

Oh, right. I'll make sure I edit it.

POPE

Come on man, let me see? It can't be that bad.

RJ

Fine.

He hands it to Pope. He opens it to a random page.

POPE

(reading) "I can't believe what happened yesterday. Things just happened so quickly and were blown way out of proportion. I'm just glad I helped Pope escape. He's the best friend I've ever had. We might live on opposite sides of 91st and Broadway, and be from two different worlds, but it really doesn't matter to me. I'd be happy to call him my brother any day.

(MORE)

POPE (cont'd)

If there's one thing I've learned from this whole mess it's that the world would be a better place if everyone just stopped for a second and looked a little below the surface. December 2nd."

Pope is speechless and moved.

POPE (CONT'D)

Wow...thanks man. That's probably the nicest thing anyone's ever said about me.

RJ

It's nothing.

He grabs the journal.

POPE

No I'm serious. You're a good writer. Confidence, man. It's the name of the game.

RJ starts to put the journal away.

POPE (CONT'D)

Hey, I did notice that you forgot one thing.

RJ

What's that?

POPE

This...

Pope wings a fistful of snow at RJ and takes cover in the tent. They're both laughing. RJ gets up and runs out of the bush area to gather up enough snow for a snowball.

He suddenly stops and sees 3 NYPD officers 200 yards away and closing. He drops the snowball and runs over to the tent.

RJ

We gotta get outta here! The cops are here!

POPE

What?

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)

NYPD, don't move!

Pope dives into the tent and throws RJ his backpack and grabs the other.

POPE

Let's go!

They run in the opposite direction of the three policemen. They sprint across the clearing where another group of police are pursuing them.

RJ

Go to the right and head towards
96th Street!

They turn right, run through a thick grove of trees and emerge on to a busy street. They run into an office building and run out the other side.

Two policemen spot them and give chase.

RJ and Pope run a couple more blocks with the police in hot pursuit.

They run down the stairs, jump the turnstile and head into the 96th Street station.

INT. 96TH AND COLUMBUS SUBWAY STATION - SAME

As commuters wait for a train, RJ and Pope jump off the platform and into the middle island, between two tracks.

An express train rockets past them as the commuters look on in horror.

The police jump the turnstiles and enter the station.

The local train pulls up and stops.

POPE

It's now or never!

RJ and Pope jump down and run across the far tracks. Pope lifts RJ up and into the grate. He hands him his bag.

A whistle can be heard in the distance and a light can be seen. Pope reaches for the entrance, tries to pull himself up but slips and falls.

The train is closing fast. On the other side, the local train departs. The policemen jump down onto the tracks.

Pope sees them and finally is able to jump up and grab part of the grate.

RJ reaches out and grabs his other hand. He helps pull Pope inside just as the train rockets past the grate missing him by mere inches.

The policemen look on, frustrated. POLICEMAN #1 keys his mic.

POLICEMAN #1

We got a Code 20. I repeat Code 20.
Have the MTA shut down all north
and southbound trains at 96th and
Columbus. We found those kids and
we're going in after them - over.

RADIO (V.O.)

This is base. Roger. We copy Code
20.

INT. AIR VENT, 96TH AND COLUMBUS SUBWAY STATION - SAME

RJ and Pope crawl through the air vent. They're wearing large hiking back packs. The air vent is filled with rats, gigantic cockroaches, spiders and a noxious greenish/brown slime that coats the entire pathway.

RJ shines his flashlight on the creatures. They scatter in all directions.

RJ

Did you see the size of that thing?

POPE

Just keep going. It's only a few
more feet. I can see the end.

A shout from the other direction.

POLICEMAN #1 (O.S)

It's over boys. There's no where to
go. Make it easy on everyone and
come on outta there.

He flashes a powerful beam of light into the air vent. It causes the creatures to flee right toward RJ and Pope.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - SAME

A half dozen policemen stand at the entrance to the air vent. A SERGEANT gives orders.

SERGEANT

I need two volunteers to get in
there.

He looks around and notices everyone but two young officers are overweight slobs and would never fit inside the grate.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
KOWALSKI, you and MURPH get those
kids outta there.

He hands each one a big mag flashlight.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
Welcome to the force.

Kowalski and Murph are straight out of the academy. They reluctantly climb up and into the air grate.

INT. AIR VENT, 96TH AND COLUMBUS SUBWAY STATION - SAME

RJ and Pope reach the end of the air vent. There is a 10ft drop from the grate to the ground. RJ detaches a length of rope from his backpack and ties it around the grate. He holds onto the rope and makes his way to the ground. Pope follows his lead. They make their way down the dark path.

They turn on their flashlights and dead end at a crudely constructed access wall from the 1800's. It's in total decay.

Pope gives it a hard kick and the whole thing crumbles onto itself. They walk through the debris and enter a pitch black cavern.

Something brushes past RJ's face.

RJ
What was that?

Something brushes past Pope's head.

POPE
I felt it too. Don't move.

Pope turns on his flashlight, revealing a cavern full of sleeping bats hanging from the ceiling.

A horrific screech fills the air as thousands of them begin to take flight. The bats fly all around them and toward the air vent.

RJ
Run!

They run through the bats, fighting them off and continue through the tunnel. They come to a fork in the path, leading to two similar sized tunnels.

POPE
I need the map.

RJ reaches into his cargo pocket and pulls out Crazy Jake's map. They examine it.

RJ
This way.

They turn left and head down another black tunnel.

INT. AIR VENT, 96TH AND COLUMBUS SUBWAY STATION - SAME

The two police officers crawl through the air vent. Kowalski puts his hand in some slime.

KOWALSKI
I'm gonna kill those kids when we catch 'em.

MURPH
What the hell's that?

A humming sound gets louder. Suddenly, the air vent is full of fleeing bats.

KOWALSKI
Get down!

KOWALSKI AND MURPH
Bats!

The bats fly into them and over them, exiting out the grate, and into the subway station.

INT. TUNNEL - SAME

RJ and Pope meander through the tunnel. They hear a cough and freeze in their tracks.

RJ
Hello? Who's there?

They hear a grunt.

POPE
(quietly) Sshh...I don't think we're alone.

They continue to move. They hear another grunt. RJ turns around and shines his light on MOLE MAN#1. The man has a hideous case of leprosy. His face is covered in pustules.

His eyes have whitened over from the lack of light. His fingernails have curled on to themselves, resembling claws. His clothes are torn and tattered, revealing sores, which maggots feed upon.

The overwhelming stench of death and despair hang in the air.

MOLE MAN#1 looks at them and hisses as he tries to crawl toward them. Pope notices that one of MOLE MAN#1's feet has been reduced to a bloody stump, having been slowly devoured by various cave-dwelling rodents. The other foot has webbing that resemble a duck.

POPE

Don't stop. Just keep moving.

RJ and Pope move back slowly, turn around and bump into MOLE MAN#2. MOLE MAN#2 is bleeding from his left eye, while his right is completely scarred over. He has a giant cyst the size of a grapefruit on his neck. He makes Quasimodo look like a prom queen. He bites the head off of a live rat. His mouth is bloody.

He continues to hold the rat as its body convulses. He makes a move toward Pope. Pope knocks him over with his backpack.

POPE AND RJ

Ahhhhhhh.....

They run through the remainder of the tunnel. The stench of urine and feces causes them to vomit.

INT. TUNNEL - LATER

RJ and Pope stop at a dead end - a 20 foot high wall of rock. Pope kicks at the wall. Nothing happens.

POPE

What now?

RJ pulls out the map and looks at it. Pope sits against the wall and leans his head back. He sees a beam of light hitting the top of the wall on the other side.

He gazes up and sees a faint light source. He whistles to get RJ's attention.

RJ

Huh?

POPE

Look up.

RJ sees the light and he looks at his map again.

INSERT MAP

An arrow indicating "UP."

BACK TO SCENE

RJ
This has gotta be it. We're gonna
have to climb.

Pope grabs a rope and ties it around his waist as RJ watches.

POPE
I'll free-climb up, then throw you
the rope.

Pope free climbs up the wall. He hoists himself into the air shaft and wedges himself against both walls in the narrow space. He looks down the air shaft and notices that it drops at a severe angle.

POPE (CONT'D)
I'll anchor you. Use your feet and
just walk right up the wall.

Pope drops the rope and RJ begins to climb. He's having a hard time. He slips and falls.

RJ
I don't know if I can do this.

POPE
Come on man. It's not that hard.
Just take one step at a time. You
can do it!

There are flashlights in the distance. We can hear voices from the police officers.

POPE
Come on RJ. We didn't come this far
to get caught now.

He starts to urgently climb again. He's almost at the top. The police officers are closing in on them.

KOWALSKI
Hey stop!

Pope pulls RJ with all his might. RJ barely makes his way inside.

Pope loses his footing and cascades down the air shaft. Because they are still attached by the rope, RJ is pulled inside and down the chute as well.

They slide downhill for 30 yards before landing inside a dark cavern. Pope slowly rises and helps RJ to his feet.

POPE

You okay?

RJ

Yeah, that was crazy. We gotta hurry up they're right behind us.

POPE

Give me the map.

RJ

We don't need it. This is where it ended.

They walk about twenty yards. RJ stops Pope.

POPE

What?

RJ

Shhh...

They stop in silence for a second. Both of their eyes widen.

RJ (CONT'D)

You hear that?

POPE AND RJ

Water!

They run in the direction of the running water. They stop at a large sinkhole. Twenty feet down, is a river.

POPE

Apparently crazy Jake ain't so crazy.

RJ

I can't believe we found it. I'll blow up the kayak.

They pull out a battery operated pump and inflate a professional grade, two-man river kayak.

Pope searches with his light and finds an old piece of warped mining track ten feet away. He loops the end of a rope underneath the track. He tugs it to ensure its secure.

POPE

I'll go down and tie off the kayak.
You throw down the bags and come
down after me.

Pope shimmies down into the water, with the kayak attached to the end of the rope.

POPE (CONT'D)

Man, wait to you see this. it's
incredible.

Pope gets in the kayak. The current causes it to drift slightly. The rope lengthens and becomes taut.

POPE (CONT'D)

Throw down the packs.

RJ tosses them to Pope. He tucks them into the front and rear of the kayak.

RJ

What am I supposed to do now?

POPE

Take off your belt, loop it around
the rope, then slide down.

RJ starts to climb over. Someone grabs his shirt.

MURP

We got you now you little bastard.

RJ reels around and kicks him in the balls. The man drops to his knees and lets out a high-pitched squeal.

Kowalski runs toward the scene with his flashlight.

KOWALSKI

Stop!

RJ wastes no time. He throws the belt over the rope and slides down into the kayak. Pope cuts the rope. They start to drift away as Kowalski looks down over the side. They disappear.

RJ and Pope wave mocking them.

POPE AND RJ

Later!

They continue on a slow-moving river, paddling in the dark, using their flashlights occasionally. They look at the icicle-like rock formations around them.

POPE
Check out those stalagtites.

RJ
Don't you mean stalagmites?

POPE
Nope, stalagtites hang from the top. Stalagmites grow from the bottom.

RJ
Excuse me Bill Nye.

POPE
You must have missed those episodes. You forgot I went to Zeno U.

Something hits the front of the boat and splashes in the water.

RJ
What was that?

POPE
What?

Pope shines the light up at a stalagtite. A dozen water moccasins and other water snakes are curled around it.

POPE (CONT'D)
Holy...

RJ AND POPE
Snakes!

POPE
Paddle hard!

They start to paddle urgently. Suddenly, RJ realizes Pope isn't paddling. He turns his head and sees Pope going through his backpack.

RJ
What are you doing?

POPE
Just keep paddling.

Pope shines a light on the water. There are hundreds on the water. He holds a can of bug spray and ignites it with a lighter, turning the can into a makeshift flamethrower.

Some snakes catch on fire, others coil and hiss. RJ looks on in horror and frantically paddles.

RJ

Ah...

The current is getting stronger and the river is widening. They begin to ride over rocks.

RJ (CONT'D)

There's rapids ahead.

POPE

Hang on man.

The river gets wider and rough. They move swiftly over the rocks. The sound of rushing water gets even louder.

POPE

Oh no...Waterfall! Grab the rails!

POPE AND RJ

OH...SHIT...

The kayak reaches the waterfall and they go airborne for a moment, sailing in the air and landing roughly about 12 feet down, into a calm pool of water.

They poke their heads up and look around.

POPE

That was awesome. Talk about writing material!

RJ

You have to be alive to write.

POPE

We're fine. Would you rather be in school right now?

RJ checks his watch and pocket.

RJ

My I-Phone's gone. My parents are gonna kill me.

POPE

Relax. That's probably how the cops found us in the first place.

RJ

What the hell are we doing here? We could've died back there?

POPE

We could've, but we didn't. Come on man, this is epic.

Something in the distance catches Pope's attention.

POPE (CONT'D)

Oh my god.

RJ

Don't tell me... more snakes?

POPE

No.(pointing) Look!

They both see a wooden sail ship fifty yards away. The ship is illuminated by light filtering in from the ceiling. The ship's hull is partially covered in sediment. The top half of the ship is clearly visible. A torn, weather-beaten Union Jack dangles limply from a mast.

Two cannons protrude from the hull.

RJ

That's a British war ship. And, it's really old.

POPE

Look at those cannons man. Let's paddle over there.

They paddle fast to the ship and slow down next to it. They see an engraving on the side which reads, HMS Wales.

RJ

HMS Wales. My teacher was talking about this ship! It was sunk during the Revolutionary War.

They paddle slowly next to the ship until they see a large rope net hanging off the bow.

RJ

Should we go up?

POPE

Hell yeah. We'll tie off here and climb aboard.

They secure the boat and climb gingerly up the net. They land on the deck and test out their footing.

RJ

Feels pretty sturdy.

POPE
Let's get the flag.

They continue a few more steps, when the rotted deck gives in, sending them below deck. They land in the section with the cannons.

RJ
You alright?

POPE
Ahh, man that hurt.

They slowly rise to their feet. RJ walks over to take a look at the cannons.

Pope walks to the other side, looking at some wooden powder kegs.

RJ is the first to see it. Not more than fifteen feet away are the skeletal remains of a British Redcoat and a Continental Soldier, side by side. The Redcoat has a musket bayonet lodged in his rib cage. He holds a flint-lock in his hand.

POPE
Huh... Check out these cannon balls.

Pope holds them under his groin.

RJ
Pope...

POPE
What?

RJ
We've got guests.

Pope turns around and walks back over to RJ. They both stare at the skeletons.

POPE
Jeez.

RJ is now fiddling with a door.

RJ
It's stuck. Help me open it.

Pope walks over and they both try to jimmy the door open. It opens and a skeleton in a blue Continental Army jacket falls on top of RJ.

RJ
(screaming like a girl) Ahhh...Get
it off me, get it off!

Pope is laughing hysterically. He kicks the skeleton over and helps RJ up.

They enter the room and investigate the quarters. They see a Redcoat sitting in the chair. He wears an ornately adorned coat, denoting his high rank. He's slumped over with a pistol in each hand. The room is slightly different than all the others.

RJ quickly realizes they're in the captain's quarters. He gazes around.

Pope looks at the captain's jacket. He sees a leather cord hanging from the skeleton's neck. He takes out a pocket knife and cuts the cord. He pulls it out and sees a key attached to it. The spine snaps in half and the skeleton's head fall off and rolls over to RJ.

POPE
Hey, look at this.

RJ walks over.

RJ
Is it for the door?

POPE
Nah, why would he keep a door key
around his neck. It's gotta be for
a lock box or a chest somewhere
around here.

They ransack the room, but to no avail. Pope is so mad he kicks over the captain's skeleton and knocks him to the floor. RJ notices that one side of the captain's chair is now protruding out.

RJ
What the heck...

RJ kneels down and slides the panel out of the way. He pulls out a small chest and hands it to Pope.

Pope opens it up. Four gold coins fall to the floor. RJ picks them up and pockets them.

POPE
These are worth a fortune man!

Pope locks the case. The sunlight that was previously illuminating the cave has moved. The area is now getting eerily dark.

RJ

Let's get out of here. This place is giving me the creeps.

They move back up on deck. RJ starts to climb down. Pope hands him the chest.

POPE

Take this. I'm gonna grab the flag.

Pope cuts down the Union Jack and they continue on their way.

They paddle across a large slow-moving lake that eventually leads to another river whose current has picked up significantly.

The fast-moving water quickly turns into rapids.

POPE

Get ready. Grab the paddle and help me steer.

They ride through a roller-coaster of rapids. Both of them are almost catapulted out of the kayak several times.

They can see a bright light in the distance.

RJ

That's gotta be Hell Gate. We're almost out.

POPE

It's the East River.

They hear a freighter horn. They continue to be tossed around until they finally hit the mouth of the East River. Heavy snow flurries swirl violently and high winds create large swells around them.

A freighter chugs by, narrowly missing them.

POPE (CONT'D)

That was close.

Pope reaches for the case and realizes it was bucked out of the raft along with his backpack. He panics and turns around to see both floating 20 feet away.

POPE (CONT'D)

No! The gold!

RJ and Pope paddle for their lives toward the box that is bobbing gingerly on the surface, teasing them. As they are just about to reach it, a wave kicks up and submerges it. They watch in horror as the chest sinks.

They stop paddling, exhausted. RJ looks and sees a red NYPD tugboat not more than fifty yards in front of them and closing.

RJ

I think we got trouble.

POPE

(oblivious to the police) Yeah, I know. We just lost the mother load.

A siren squelch. Pope snaps to attention.

POLICE OFFICER#1

You boys stay right there. It's over. We'll come to you.

A beat. The police boat pulls along side.

POLICE OFFICER#2

Paddle over to the ladder, tie off and climb up.

RJ and Pope obey the police. They toss them their gear, tie off and slowly climb up the rope.

EXT. A STREET IN NEW YORK - DAY

Christmas decorations light up the city.

SUPER: DECEMBER 23RD

INT. SUPERIOR COURT, DECEMBER 23RD - SAME

RJ, Pope, Tom, Suzanne, Fay, Zeno and a SOCIAL WORKER are led down a barren corridor by a BAILIFF. They turn into an empty courtroom and sit down.

The Bailiff disappears for a moment and then returns.

BAILIFF

John, JUDGE THOMPSON would like to speak with you in his chambers. Come with me please.

Pope follows the Bailiff into Judge Thompson's office.

The office is adorned with forty years' worth of knick-knacks and commendations. Judge Thompson sits behind his desk, reading a file. He looks at them.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Thanks Art, this is the last case until the 26th. Have the family sit tight for a few minutes.

BAILIFF

Yes sir.

Art, the Bailiff exits.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Sit down son.

Pope takes a seat in front of the desk.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Are you nervous?

POPE

Yeah, a little.

JUDGE THOMPSON

I would be too. You have a big decision ahead of you today. I just finished looking through your file again.

He rises and sits on the edge of his desk holding the file.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)

John, I've been practicing law a long time and rarely have I been involved with such an interesting and unusual case. Normally, these types of cases are pretty cut and dry.

Pope nods.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)

With that being said. Your case is far from cut and dry. Having had the opportunity to get to know you a little bit these last few weeks I've been extremely impressed with your perseverance, considering the circumstances that you faced in your life thus far.

He rises and grabs a picture from the wall.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)
You recognize that stoop?

POPE
Saint Sylvester's!

JUDGE THOMPSON
See that gangly kid on the left.

POPE
That's you?

JUDGE THOMPSON
Yep, in 1968.

POPE
How long we're you there?

JUDGE THOMPSON
I was a lifer. Got out when I
turned 18.

POPE
Man, nobody ever adopted you?

JUDGE THOMPSON
I don't have to tell you. You know
how it is...

Pope nods his head. Judge Thompson sits on the edge of the
desk again.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)
Pope. That's your nickname right?
May I call you Pope?

POPE
Sure...

Judge Thompson picks up his file folder.

JUDGE THOMPSON
You see this?

POPE
Yeah.

Judge Thompson drops it into the garbage can in front of the
desk.

JUDGE THOMPSON
That represents your past. None of
that was your fault.
(MORE)

JUDGE THOMPSON (cont'd)
What you have now is unique - a
second chance at a great future.

POPE
So you're not gonna send me back?

JUDGE THOMPSON
That's going to be up to you.

A beat.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)
With the blessing of child
services, and myself. Mr. and Mrs.
Jenkins have requested that the
state allow you to live with them
under foster care. They were
impressed with your character
before the incident and doubly so
in getting to know you after it.

A beat.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)
I'm confident you have a bright
future ahead of you Pope, and that
you'll continue to do the right
things. But, regardless whether you
stay with the state or live with
the Jenkins, your success will be
determined solely by you.

Pope looks at him.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)
It's your decision and I'm afraid
that I'm going to need it today.

Judge Thompson walks out the door and into the courtroom.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)
Art, bring everyone in.

Everyone follows Art into the judge's chamber. The door
closes.

EXT. RJ'S HOUSE, CHRISTMAS EVE - NIGHT

SUPER: CHRISTMAS EVE

A taxi stops in front of the Jenkins' residence. Tom and Pope
exit. Tom carries a worn out suitcase and they walk up the
stoop.

INT. RJ'S HOUSE, CHRISTMAS EVE - NIGHT

Brittany opens the door. Tom and Pope enter the house.

EVERYONE
Merry Christmas!

Pope is embraced by Zeno, Fay and Suzanne. He gives RJ a fist bump.

A warm fire crackles as RJ, Pope, Brittany, Suzanne, Tom, Zeno and Faye celebrate Christmas Eve.

The doorbell rings. A PRIVATE SECURITY OFFICER enters with a briefcase, handcuffed to his wrist. He opens it and places it in front of RJ.

RJ takes out four identically wrapped gifts and hands them to Faye, Zeno and Pope. He keeps the last one.

RJ
What are you waiting for? Open 'em.

They unwrap their gifts. Inside is a red velvet case. They open them. Inside each red velvet case is a gold coin and a certificate of authenticity. Each coin's value is 100,000 dollars.

ZENO
Whoa...

Faye puts her hand over her mouth.

FAYE
Oh my God.

POPE
No way. How'd you get these? I thought we lost 'em all.

RJ
Remember the ones that fell on the ground? I put them in my pocket and forgot about 'em during all the commotion.

Zeno and Faye hug and start to cry. So do Brittany and Suzanne. RJ nudges Brittany who has finally shown a chink in her armor.

ZENO AND FAYE
Thank you so much. You've all been so kind.

RJ just smiles and opens up the fourth coin.

RJ
This one's for Monroe.

Suzanne hands the Security Officer a cup of eggnog. Tom clinks his glass.

TOM
I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas. Suzanne and I have a little surprise of our own.

RJ retrieves an envelope. He hands it to Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)
Pope, I know up to this point life hasn't been very easy for you. You've had a profound influence on RJ and now I know why. Any parent would be proud to have you as a son.

Tom hands the envelope to Pope and motions for him to open it. Pope does.

TOM (CONT'D)
Suzanne and I are honored to have you officially join our family.

Pope looks at the official foster parent papers from the state of New York and starts to cry.

POPE
Thank you.

He gives Suzanne and Tom a hug.

EXT./INT. MONROE WATKINS COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

SUPER: FIVE YEARS LATER

RJ (O.S.)
Helen Keller once said, "Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light."

Taped to a classroom window is a poster advertising, Anton Chekhov's, "The Seagull." Faye is playing Arkadina.

Inside the classroom, she's teaching a drama class.

RJ (O.S.)(CONT'D)

I used to walk alone in the dark
but Pope Sullivan and his friends
provided me with light just when I
needed it most.

Down the hallway, in another classroom, Zeno is teaching an English class. On the door, is a nameplate, "English 101", Dr. Zeno Vanderwick."

In the center of the building is an open lounge room. A crowd of people and young adults sit in an audience, listening to a book being read by a young author.

Seated among the crowd are Tom, Suzanne, Brittany, Doc Shadwell, Curley, Tiny, Crazy Jake, Broadway Joe, Kincaid and Mr. Hanley.

Seated at the main table are: Pope, RJ and Nick Stein.

A large advertisement for the book, 91st and Broadway, A Journal is displayed. It shows the author as RJ Jenkins with illustrations by Nick Stein; epilogue by Pope Sullivan.

Eighteen year old RJ Jenkins reads from a copy of his book.

RJ

Friends come in many shapes and sizes: rich or poor, young or old, male or female. But in the end, true friendships simply come down to one thing: whether or not they make us better people. The friends I made below 91st and Broadway changed my life for the better and hopefully, in some small way, they've changed yours for the better too.

RJ Jenkins.

He closes the book as everyone claps.

FADE OUT:

THE END

