

HOMER & CASSANDRA

Written and Adapted to the Screen by

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FADE IN:

Homer & Cassandra

SUPER: "When you do the right thing you often find yourself way out in front, and you have to wait for the rest of the world to catch up..."

-Tommie Smith (1968 U.S. Track & Field)

INT. MAPLE AVE. BOXING GYM - DAY

An elderly African American women, late 60's, sits SERENELY on a commode, reaching for a swath of toilet paper.

SUDDENLY, thunderous JOLTS shake the STALL violently.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM-BOOM!

The women holds on for dear life.

INT. MAPLE AVE. BOXING GYM - TRAINERS OFFICE - DAY

We INTERCUT with a young TRAINER, TAVARIS, late 20's, African-American, fit, focused, and his boxer, late teens-early 20's, CAUCASIAN. This is VAL.

A look of BEWILDERMENT shared between the two.

BOOM!...BOOM-BOOM!...BOOM!...the women hits the stall floor, OUCH...

TAVARIS BOLTS down the staircase, where he SPIES... "a man", medium stature & build, in the MAIN gym.

Face concealed by a HOODIE, POUNDING the life out of a heavy bag.

A nearby BOXER holds an iPHONE UP, recording the whole thing.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM-BOOM!

The chain attached, RECOILS & RETRACTS, as small amounts of DUST rain down from the ceiling.

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A few Golden Gloves trainees, and their handlers, GATHER, but "the man" pays no mind.

TAVARIS makes a beeline for the CULPRIT.

POV: iPhone Camera

TAVARIS
(screaming over the
sound)
Yo! Hey man! Whoa!

TAVARIS grabs the bag, leans INTO it for a second, and throws up his other hand to halt the action.

TAVARIS
Time out!

"The man" stops momentarily, waking from a trance.

TAVARIS
Whoever he was, he ain't getting
back up.

"The man" takes a few breaths, PEELING off his HOODIE, to reveal: a man in his early 60's, world-weary, KIND eyes.

The onlookers go back to training.

END iPhone POV.

TAVARIS
What's your name Rocky?

HOMER
Homer.

TAVARIS
You owe me 250 bucks Homer.

HOMER
Huh?

TAVARIS
You've broken 3 of my chains. My

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAVARIS (CONT)
 maintenance guy's getting tired
 of replacing em.

A couple of LOUD whispers, FURTIVE GLANCES.

GOLDEN GLOVES AMATEUR
 Yo Grandpa got some pop.

ELDERLY TRAINER
 (to his fighter)
 He hit harder than you champ...

HOMER
 I'm sorry. I didn't know.

TAVARIS
 Where'd a man of your age learn
 to hit with that kinda thunder?

HOMER
 (a beat)
 I been fighting since I got out
 of the woom, to be honest.

TAVARIS
 Don't take a shrink to see that.
 My old man used to say, strength
 only gets you so far. The rest
 comes from in here.

Pointing to his heart.

TAVARIS (CONT)
 To hit like that, you gotta want
 something pretty bad.

HOMER
 Ya...you could say that..

INT. LOCAL GROCERY STORE - DAY

From behind, we see a young blonde boy, bright BLUE EYES,
 energy off the charts, 5-6, tagging along with his mother,
 attractive, petite, 30's, as they shop for groceries.

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CONTINUED:

The boy CLINGS to her sweater with one hand, and plays with a "matchbox red choo choo train" in the other.

Looking up, the boy sees an elderly BLACK MAN, lean, late 60's, greying, but strikingly REGAL, in his countenance.

HOMER looks up, admiringly, as REGAL man returns the innocent gesture, smiling broadly, a slight CHUCKLE to himself.

The man indicates for HOMER to "catchup" to his mother, who has continued, "out-to-lunch".

HOMER quickly catches up, and, rounding a corner aisle, HOMER drops the "matchbox train", DISTRACTED by his encounter.

After a few beats, we hear a voice:

REGAL MAN

Mam?

BILLY JEAN, turns, and taken aback, SHIELDS HOMER with her arm closest, instinctually.

REGAL MAN

Oh, your son dropped this.

HOMER GAZES up, to see the "train" handed back.

Reaching up with a smile, HOMER unexpectedly inserts the "train" in his mouth!...

Still smiling at the now-departing man.

SUDDENLY...SLAP!!! The "toy train" squirts from HOMER's mouth, onto the ground.

HOMER begins to cry.

BILLY JEAN

(screaming)

HOMER MICHAEL SARGENT! Don't you know better than to put a dirty

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY JEAN (CONT)
 toy in your mouth boy?! That old
 nigger man probably has all kinds
 of diseases on him!

Dragging HOMER away from a few slack-jawed shoppers, she
 GLARES at REGAL MAN from a distance.

A wistful look between the teary-eyed HOMER & the MAN.

EXT. OLD FARMHOUSE PORCH - NIGHT

SUPER: 1965 EAST TEXAS (Just Outside Clarksville)

HOMER's family "extended" sits on the front porch, listening
 to Martin Luther King's SELMA FREEDOM MARCH, on a transistor
 radio.

UNCLE RJ, 50's, tall and distinguished, a little extra
 weight, sits on a swing, while COUSIN JERRY, shorter, early
 30's, lean and friendly, sits on a lawn chair nearby, and
 BILLY JEAN, HOMER'S mother, a few years older.

Over the RADIO ANNOUNCER, we hear INTERMITTENT "screams"
 from HOMER, coming from inside.

Every time a scream is heard, JERRY WINCES.

HOMER (OC)
 (a pronounced
 stutter)
 P-p-p-please daddy, NO!?

RADIO ANNOUNCER (VO)
 Reports are the procession has
 reached 25,000, and they are
 expected to arrive in Montgomery
 on March 24th.

HOMER (OC)
 Agh!!!! D-d-d-daddy please.

Another scream, as RJ and BILLY JEAN share a knowing,
 SHAMEFUL glance.

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CONTINUED:

Abruptly, the screen door flies open, and out STUMBLES SARGE.

HOMER'S father.

Late 30's, tall, dark, and handsome, with a bit of "Elvis" in his essence & swagger.

A slight beer gut, and receding hairline, time's only distinguishable markings, despite "hard living."

SARGE dons "military aviators," despite the late hour.

Putting his belt back on, he sets down a half empty bottle.

JERRY

Homer must've done something
pretty bad to deserve that kind
of whuppin, huh Sarge?

Another big gulp, wiping his mouth.

SARGE

I don't know what he did...but I
bet he won't do it again.

Quiet reactions all around re: SARGE'S callousness.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (VO)

As you listeners may or may not know, the marchers are now being accompanied by nineteen hundred members of the Alabama National Guard. This after state troopers and county "posse-men" attacked the unarmed marchers with billy clubs and tear gas after they passed over the county line...

BILLY JEAN

Serves em right.

RJ

(chiming in)

Hey Sarge...Homer's becoming a

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RJ (CONT)

young man. He's almost datin age.
What're you gonna do if he brings
home a colored gal?

A small giggle from BILLY JEAN.

JERRY

What? Ain't a bad question.
Colored's and whites are being
put together now. Sign of the
times.

After a long swallow...SARGE turns, gazing into the
distance.

SARGE

Kill him dead.

A pregnant beat.

EXT. CREEK - AFTERNOON

HOMER, now 13, handsome, athletic build starting to show, is
WHISKED by a couple of friends to an "after-school fight."

One of boys, CARL, 14, wiry and MANIC, strips his shirt in
anticipation, they make their way to the top of a hill,
overlooking a creek.

HOMER, a pronounced stutter.

HOMER

I...I...I...don't understand why
you guys....keep....keep losing
these scraps. Black fellas ain't
any tougher than us.

As they reach the top, we GAZE down on 20 African American
boys (12-16) CONFRONTING a group of white rivals, same ages.

White T-Shirts, replete with rolled-up Cigarette pack,
loafers, and rolled-up blue jeans, compose the UNIFORM.

The two FACTIONS, separated by a few yards.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARL

You're with us now HOMER, time to teach these niggers who's in charge.

HOMER pauses, watching CARL run down, and join the other whites.

HOMER GLIMPSES the cause of the confrontation:

Whites screaming racial epithets, taunting the opposition.

WHITE BOY #1

Hey Nigger! Why don't you go pick some cotton, like your daddy!

WHITE BOY #2

Oh wait, you ain't got no daddy!

SLOW MOTION: We follow a beer bottle through the air, SHATTERING on a young African Americans head, knocking him down, and drawing blood.

With that, the rumble ensues:

SMACK! Black fists PACKING white faces...

On HOMER, as he slowly backs away, and heads home.

INT. KITCHEN - BREAKFAST

At a breakfast table are HOMER, SARGE, and BILLY JEAN.

HOMER'S grandmother, GRANNY CRICK, late 70's, tall and still beautiful, a fiery disposition, is cooking BACON & GRITS, along with flapjacks, as a radio plays nearby.

Also nearby is GRANNY CRICK'S African-American aid, IRA, late 60's, sweet disposition, but frail.

IRA stands on a wooden foot STOOL, cleaning the cabinets.

HOMER scarfs down flapjacks and bacon.

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CONTINUED:

GRANNY CRICK

(nonchalant)

Somebody ought to kill that nigger King. He's giving the colored's false hope ya ask me.

SARGE

He ought try marching here in Texas. Alabama national guard or not, he'd be dead fore he made it 10 feet.

BILLY JEAN

Preach.

HOMER SNEAKS a peek at IRA, concerned.

A BELABORED breath from IRA, as he sways off the foot-stool, catching himself on the counter at the last minute, and turning over the stool.

GRANNY CRICK jumps to his aid, leaving the stove burning.

GRANNY CRICK

Dammit IRA, I'll take care of them cabinets, just sit yourself down, and let me feed ya. I swear I'm gonna out-live you, sugar.

GRANNY CRICK helps him down gently, and gives him a chair, a plate.

Patting him sweetly on the shoulder.

BILLY JEAN and SARGE don't notice, but HOMER does, thoroughly confused by the at-once, racially charged, and yet, compassionate, atmosphere.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - DAY

A BUZZER sounds and a high school basketball game ends.

HOMER and GENE, 17, tall and heavysset, donning LETTERMAN jackets, get up and head towards the EXIT, getting BACK SLAPS, ATTABOYS from several in the HERD, flowing towards

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

the exit.

Clearly, the popular football kids.

BOY #1

Hey Homer, hell of a game Friday!

GENE

What about me?

BOY #1

You didn't run for 120 yards and
2 TD's...

GENE

I'm only the freaking
quarterback! Man alive!

On their way out, a group of whites, WEST SIDE STORY attire,
hair greased, white t-shirts, etc, PUSH past the stars,
BUMPING HOMER, as they pass.

HOMER turns, to see, a FRACUS in the making, just outside,
near the bleachers.

GENE

(to HOMER)

Word is there's gonna be a
rumble...don't even think about
it...we need you Friday vs
Lewisville.

As HOMER turns back to exit, a STUNNING, beautiful African
American girl, 17, Afro, soulful eyes, all the right curves,
runs out of the the crowd and directly into him...smack!

A shared recognition, no shortage of FIREWORKS.

HOMER'S stutter is less severe, occasional.

HOMER

I..I...I'm sorry.

CASSADRA

Watch where your goin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER
(taken aback)
Oh..I...I...didn't see you...

CASSANDRA
Is that all you can say?

GENE, noting his slack-jawed friend.

CASSANDRA (CONT)
(amused)
I'm messin with you...bye Homer.

CASSANDRA giggles, exits.

HOMER watches her go.

HOMER
(to himself)
I...I didn't catch your name...

GENE
Swept her off her feet.

HOMER is locked on the departing CASSANDRA, who gives a small wave back, before disappearing.

GENE SNAPS his fingers, WHISTLES, nothing.

GENE (CONT)
Houston...we have a
problem...Houston...repeat, we
have lost satellite communication
with Homer Sargent...come back.

HOMER seeing stars.

GENE (CONT)
Let's go Romeo.

GENE grabs HOMER by the shoulders, guiding him to the PARKING lot.

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CONTINUED:

GENE (CONT)

What the hell you gonna do with
that colored girl anyway?

The SCRUM behind our compatriots, gets their attention:
Mish-mash of black and white students JAWING at each other,
pushing, shoving.

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT

Fuck you peckerwoods!

WHITE STUDENT

Bad enough we gotta share a
locker room with you coons!

On the front line, we're CLOSE on a white hand, GRIPPING a
sock, coins at the bottom.

ABRUPTLY, the SOCK swings up, and connects with an African
American student, who goes down in a heap.

IT"S ON!!!

The scrum moves around, and through the "fallen boy",
towards the bleachers.

FISTS flying, shirts pulled, etc.

From afar, HOMER SPOTS a WHITE student on his back,
SURROUNDED, unable to get to his feet, taking kicks to his
gut, face.

Another white FOOTBALL player, JT, 16, GANGLY and tall,
grabs HOMER, pulling him towards the action.

JT

Come on Homer. We need you!

GENE

Get lost JT! Ain't our fight!

HOMER looks back to the 3 on 1, kid still down, SPURRING
HOMER into action.

HOMER throws off GENE, and heads in their direction.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A smile from JT.

HOMER
(announcing)
Hey! Since when is 3 to 1 a fair
fight?!

One of the African Americans, looks up, and without pause, swings at HOMER, who blocks with his left, knocking him out with a straight right hand.

The other two face HOMER, one pulling out a short metal PIPE.

An OVERHEAD view: their vicinity clearing out, forming a CIRCLE.

2 vs 1. HOMER avoids a left hook from the closest boy, and throws a 1-2 combination, knocking him out, leaving: just the boy with the pipe.

Like young lions, they circle for a few beats, finally engaging when:

GENE
HOMER! Watch out!!!

From behind, HOMER is knocked unconscious.

INT. HOMER'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Close-on BLOOD, dripping into a sink, revealing HOMER, washrag, DABBING a sizable cut on the back of his head.

A long stare into the mirror, and labored exhale, is INTERRUPTED:

BANG! BANG! BANG!

SARGE
Hey boy! Phone call. Thought I
told you to tell yer friends not
to call this late.

HOMER makes his way to the kitchen, woozy, picks up:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INTERCUT: CASSANDRA in her room, laying in bed.

Posters of *DIAHANN CARROLL* and *DOROTHY DANDRIDGE* in the background of CASSANDRA'S BEDROOM.

HOMER

Hello?

CASSANDRA

Hey Homer...it's Cassandra.

HOMER

(tongue tied)

Oh...hey.

HOMER nervously GLANCES around, making sure SARGE is out of earshot.

CASSANDRA

I was just calling to check on you.

HOMER

(whispered)

..Uh huh...I don't really remember what happened to be honest.

CASSANDRA

Well, I heard you took a cake cutter to the back of the head.

HOMER

(whispering)

...listen, I..I..don't know how to say this...but I can't talk to you.

CASSANDRA

(annoyed)

I understand the situation. I just wanted to make sure you're alright. Are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

I...I'll live...thank you
Cassandra.

CASSANDRA

Ok, well, maybe you should go see
a...

SARGE enters FRAME, grabbing a beer from the fridge,
prompting HOMER to COVER, poorly:

HOMER

Ok sounds good bud. See you at
practice.

HANGS up, looks to SARGE, exiting.

After a beat.

CASSANDRA

(knowingly)
Goodbye Homer.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

HOMER, with GENE and a couple of girls, 16, cute, re-
playing, and, in GENE'S case, embellishing, the STUDENT
RIOT.

GIRL #1

(to GENE)

Oh my goodness are you hurt?

GENE

I told Homer I didn't wanna
fight. But what could I do, I had
to back up my boy.

HOMER peers THROUGH the group, to SPY CASSANDRA, making a
funny face, getting a laugh from HOMER.

GIRL #2

Are you ok Homer?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER
(preoccupied)

Huh?

GENE
He's still a little woozy. Took a hell of a shot. But not before he laid these two fools out, I mean flattened em! Bam! Bam!

CASSANDRA smiles coyly, HOMER a heavy sigh, BEAMS back.

A friend of CASSANDRA'S, SARINA, African American, 17, attractive, pigtails, and quick with the GOSSIP, sees her friend's DISTRACTION.

SARINA
Really girl???

CASSANDRA gathers herself.

CASSANDRA
What?

SARINA
You KNOW what! You gotta thing for the captain of the damn football team. Lemme count the ways that can't work.

CASSANDRA
I know what I'm doing.

CASSANDRA leaves her friend, walks in HOMER'S direction, who seizes his opportunity, heads towards CASSANDRA.

GENE
Homer? Yo, space cadet!

SARINA
(calling out)
Don't say I didn't warn you!
Mercy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As they GLIDE by each other, CASSANDRA nonchalantly passes a note.

A smile washes over HOMER'S face, as they continue down the hallway.

MONTAGE:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

1) HOMER in Class, unfolds a note from CASSANDRA, glances around to see who's watching, EXCITEDLY reads a few lines.

2) CASSANDRA opens a note in class, giggling to herself.

3) CASSANDRA peeks around a corner to SPOT HOMER. He winks ON CUE, and they pass each other, this time, HOMER doing the note-passing.

4) HOMER reading another note from CASSANDRA, at home.

Close on CASSANDRA'S writing:

GO TO THE MIRROR AND MOUTH "OLIVER COOL."

5) HOMER, in the boys room at school, holds the note in one hand, whispers "OLIVER COOL" into the mirror.

HOMER

....This is stupid...

A passing student, 16, smallish, glasses, stops to wash his hands...catching HOMER'S eyes in the mirror.

STUDENT

What are you doing?

HOMER

None of your damn business! Get out!

The student JUMPS, exits.

6) CASSANDRA opens a note at home.

Close On: "WHO IS THIS OLIVER COOL GUY? SHOULD I BE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONCERNED?" She laughs hysterically.

7) From a distance, in the hallway, HOMER and CASSANDRA flirt from their usual POSTS.

CASSANDRA mouthing something that looks like: "I LOVE YOU"

HOMER finally makes it out.

HOMER

I love you?

CASSANDRA's eyes light up, nodding her head, she FLASHES a piece of paper with big block letters:

"OLIVER COOL".....

HOMER gets it, BLUSHES.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LOCKERS - AFTERNOON

SUPER: LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

HOMER at his locker, HOLDING a YEARBOOK, pen in hand, muttering to himself.

Scribbling, he speaks it out loud...

HOMER

(out loud)

"Have a great summer cassandra. i hope you don't forget me." Stupid ass. That sounds desperate. I hope you don't forget me? Idiot.

He tries to ERASE, but it's in pen, TOO LATE.

HOMER (CONT)

Crap!

Gazing longingly down the hallway, SEARCHING for her.

Two teens in letterman jackets run by screaming, RIPPING a

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

"HAVE A SAFE SUMMER" sign from the wall, BUMPING into unsuspecting students.

UNAWARE, HOMER is wrapped up in a bear hug, lifted from his locker.

This is best friend JIMMY THORTON, 17, medium build, brunette, a used car SALESMAN charisma.

JIMMY

Ahh that's so sweet Homer. You want me to sign your yearbook? I thought you'd never ask.

HOMER

I got something for you to sign.

JIMMY

Let's cut outta here man, I gotta case of Lone Star waiting for us, and a couple of lucky gals who are game to help the cause.

Two cute female teens 16-17--can be the same girls from GENE'S "fight recap," giggle nearby.

HOMER, distracted, looking around JIMMY, and down the hall.

JIMMY

(conspiratorially)

Hey daddy-o. Did you hear me? Lone Star, women, Jimmy and Homer becoming legends?

HOMER starts off...

HOMER

Ya...I got something I gotta take care of...I'll catch up with y'all.

The GIRLS watch him go, look QUIZZICALLY at JIMMY.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - AFTERNOON (CONT)

MONTAGE:

- 1) HOMER jogs into a park, no-one there.
- 2) HOMER, SWEATING, SPRINTS into a diner, no CASSANDRA.
- 3) HOMER, sulking, walks down a modest residential street, passing the Public Pool, nothing.
- 4) Finally stumbling into a public rest area, with a sign that reads: "VANDERGRIFF PARK", where he SPOTS a young girl under a giant oak tree. CASSANDRA?

The girl WAVES him over, without getting up.

As he approaches, QUICKLY wipes the sweat from his brow, tucks his shirt, and nonchalantly fixes his hair.

CLEARLY enjoying the sight of her GOOSE, after his chase, CASSANDRA finishes the last of her yearbook scribbling, and without looking up:

CASSANDRA
Well hello stranger.

HOMER
I ahh...I'm not the best writer
in the world.

Hesitatingly hanging onto her yearbook.

CASSANDRA
Uh huh. And what else?

HOMER
And...I just can't seem to say
what I wanna say when you're
around.

CASSANDRA
And...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER
(with herculean
struggle)
And, I'm gonna miss you
Cassandra.

She finally looks up, LOCKING EYES...

No words for what seem like an ETERNITY.

CASSANDRA
(breaking the
silence)
I'm gonna miss you too Homer.

She hands over his yearbook, and he begins to open it.

CASSANDRA (CONT)
Uh-uh! Nope. You have to wait
till you get home. Promise!

HOMER
Come on!?

CASSANDRA
No. And I promise not to read
yours till I get home. Do we have
a deal?

She holds out her hand, and after a beat...he takes it with
his LEFT, and LIFTS her up to standing, just inches away.

They gaze into each other's eyes, as he takes her other
hand.

HOMER
Well Goodbye...until September I
guess.

CASSANDRA
I'll wait for you...

HOMER
You will?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA
I said I would.

Giggles.

HOMER
I don't know if I can.

CASSANDRA, pleased, leans in, preparing for a kiss...

CASSANDRA
I know...

HOMER FLUSHED, shies away, releasing his grip, and HEADS off.

TRIPPING over a nearby branch, waves goodbye...one more look.

HOMER
(awkwardly calling out)
Ok. See you soon I hope. Bye.

CASSANDRA just giggles. A big sigh.

CASSANDRA
(waving)
Bye Homer!

EXT. SARGENT FRONT PORCH - AFTERNOON

SARGE drinks a beer in the front lawn, ABSENTLY sprays a hose in no particular direction.

HOMER SPRINTS through the stream of water, and through the screen door in a flash!

SARGE
(calling after)
Hey! Jimmy and two hussies came by.

HOMER slams the door to his room, locks it, and kicks his feet up on the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Opening the yearbook in eager anticipation.

He begins, as we listen to CASSANDRA:

CASSANDRA (VO)

If you kept our deal, did you cheat? You're at home right now, and probably in bed. Homer, I know we can't be together. Your Mom and Dad would kill you, and if I'm being honest, my Dad would kill me. But my mother always says you can't help your feelings, and I have been fighting mine since we met. Can you keep a secret? They are winning Homer, my feelings. I care about you. And I seem to care more with each passing day.

HOMER SWALLOWS hard.

CASSANDRA (VO) (CONT)

This, whatever THIS is, is more than any friendship I've ever had. I think I'm in love. Ya, I'm pretty sure.

HOMER SIGHS fondly, lit up like a Christmas tree.

CASSANDRA (VO) (CONT)

I love you Homer Sargent. Well, that's it for now. Enjoy your summer, and no more fights ya hear? I want you back in one piece. Your friend or more, Cassandra.

HOMER lets the yearbook rest on his chest for a few beats, taking this in.

EXT. SARGENT FRONT PORCH - AFTERNOON

Behind SARGE taking a long pull from his beer:

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CONTINUED:

The SCREEN DOOR flies open, HOMER barreling into the street.

HOMER
I LOVE YOU TOO!!!...

Laughing to himself, hands on his knees.

SARGE shakes his head.

INT. MAPLE AVE. BOXING GYM - DAY

Present Day: HOMER and TAVARIS' back-and-forth continues.

Joined now by TAVARIS' new boxing protege, VAL, white, handsome, middleweight, 20's, resembles a young HOMER, and a younger fighter, COLIN, African-American, 19, BRASH, loud-mouthed.

VAL
(to TAVARIS)
The brothers still don't believe
I can fight.

TAVARIS
Ain't you listening to the man.
WE had a reason to fight. Hell,
we still do.

VAL
I love the sweet science. It's
the only thing I've ever been
good at.

COLIN
(mocking)
Huh huh the sweet science.

VAL
You wouldn't know fool.

COLIN
Who you calling fool?

As the two boys playfully SHADOW BOX, the older black women from our COMMUNE ACCIDENT, is seen behind HOMER, getting

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

confirmation it's him.

TAVARIS

(noticing)

Oh, there's someone I want you to meet.

The women makes a bee line for HOMER.

TAVARIS

Hey Bernice I want you to meet...

SUDDENLY, WHACK, a purse slams against HOMER'S head.

BLACK WOMEN

You knocked me off the damn toilet!

Laughs all around.

BLACK WOMEN

What's so damn funny?

HOMER

I'm sorry mam. Homer Sargent.

His handshake, not returned.

BLACK WOMEN

You too old to be hitting that bag like that.

TAVARIS

I was telling him the same thing. Homer, meet Bernice Sherman. Bernie when you're on her good side. Bernie owns the building, so, you on your own.

HOMER

Well I hope to live long enough to call you Bernie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAL

Homer was a local hero. Married a black girl, pretty ballsy, even for now.

BERNIE

Damn right. But you trouble. Maintenance bout to put an APB out on you.

COLIN

Homer fought in tournaments round here back in the day. Shit, he might win one now.

BERNIE

You kiss your mother with that mouth? I remember those. Smokers they called em. How come you didn't go pro young blood?

HOMER

Had a daughter when I was still in high school, so I went to work.

BERNIE

Hold up, you married a sista AND knocked her up? In Dallas? In the 60's? You crazy.

HOMER reaches for his phone, pulls up a pic of LARISSA:

HOMER

(showing off)

Larissa Antoinette Sargent.

TIGHT on pic of LARISSA, at about 18.

TAVARIS, VAL, and COLIN lean in for a better view.

BERNIE

Ohhhhh my, she a model? Your wife must be beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

Ya, Cassandra was a vision.

VAL

(on LARISSA)

Damn Homer! She single?

COLIN

Please, girl's got taste.... But
can I holler at her Homer?

HOMER giggles.

TAVARIS

Where is Cassandra now?

No response.

TAVARIS (CONT)

Oh, my bad.

HOMER

That's alright.

BERNIE

(to COLIN)

OK, Grab me a chair son. Champ
got some explaining to do.

On HOMER, looking to the EXIT...

BERNIE (CONT)

Come on now, I just may forget
your maintenance fee's...

EXT. HOMERS MAILBOX - AFTERNOON (CONT)

The sun beats down on HOMER, 17, as he wipes sweat from his
brow.

FEVERISHLY sifting through mail, and finding a FLOWERY
envelope, with "CASSANDRA STOKER" on it.

His eyes light up, as he glances around, stuffs it in his
pocket, RUSHES inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Now in his bedroom, HOMER takes a DEEP SNIFF of the letter, and begins to read:

CASSANDRA (VO)
 Well, it's been almost two months
 and my feelings haven't changed.
 If I'm being honest, I kinda
 hoped they would, as I know our
 folks wouldn't see past it. Hell,
 maybe not even our friends. But
 we can be friends right? Good
 friends. Here's my number-call me
 if you get a chance. All my love,
 Cassandra.

HOMER SNEAKS outside, peeks around the living room, then the garage, no SARGE.

Dialing her number.

HOMER
 Please answer, please answer.
 Breathe idiot.

INT. CASSANDRA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

INTERCUT: CASSANDRA, her little sister BEA, 12, cute with pigtails, and brother MARCUS, 8, fiery & precocious, sit on either side, watching *SANFORD and SON* on a black & white.

The phone is ringing, but no-one wants to get it.

RED FOX (VO)
 "How in the hell you gonna leave
 one swalla of orange juice in the
 bottle women! What the hell I
 supposed to do with that? Gargle
 with it?"

On the 3rd ring, CASSANDRA gets up.

CASSANDRA
 Y'all lazy as hell...

Picking up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA (CONT)

Hello?

HOMER

Thank God.

CASSANDRA jumbles the cord, as she turns from EARSHOT, tangling herself in the process.

CASSANDRA

(hushed)

Homer? I miss you!

HOMER

I miss you too.

CASSANDRA

You get my letter?

HOMER

Just finished it.

CASSANDRA

And?

HOMER

You're doing it again.

CASSANDRA

(knowingly)

What??

HOMER

Making me flustered.

CASSANDRA

(laughing)

And oh how I love it, so what now?

HOMER

I just wanna see you.

CASSANDRA takes a look at her siblings, gets an "idea."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA

Tell you what, we're celebrating
Juneteenth, day after tomorrow.
Why don't you stop by.

HOMER

What's Juneteenth?

CASSANDRA

Only the day we celebrate blacks
being freed from slavery, that
all, but hey.

HOMER

I had no idea. You sure it's ok
with your Dad?

CASSANDRA

Oh ya, everyones in a good mood
that day. They'll be barbecue,
dancing, beer, dominoes...

HOMER

I'll be there. Should I bring
anything?

After a beat.

CASSANDRA

Use your imagination.

INT. RECORD STORE - EARLY AFTERNOON

HOMER, MASSIVE WATERMELON IN TOW, wears a SHORT-SLEEVED
dress shirt, striped tie, and slacks that are TOO SHORT.

PICKING through a stack of records.

He finally pulls the JIMI HENDRIX album *Electric Ladyland*
into focus.

Turning over the album, we make out JIMI HENDRIX' wild afro,
eyes closed in musical bliss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A smile washes over HOMER'S face...victory!!!

EXT. STREETS OF DALWORTH, TX - DAY

SUPER: 1969 DALWORTH, TX

DALWORTH is located between Dallas and Fort Worth. A "hood" composed mostly of African and Mexican-Americans. African Americans south of the railroad tracks, and Latinos to the north, crackheads in the middle.

The overwhelming sound of *cicada's* tell us it's the "dog days" of Texas summer.

Overhead we look down and SPY HOMER, walking down a dusty thoroughfare.

Bars, Ice Houses line either side.

Now SWEATING profusely, HOMER looks up at a street corner sign, double checks his directions.

Approaching a railroad track, HOMER switches the watermelon to the other arm, presses on.

Motown Music BLARES from seemingly every porch.

A few epithets HURLED in HOMER'S direction:

Where you think you are Cracker!?

Hey Honkey you ain't in Kansas no mo!

A group of 3-4 locals shooting dice nearby, HOMER fixes his gaze straight ahead.

Wearing a 3-piece suit and matching FEDORA, early 20's, average build, but hard-living adding a few years, OMAR, calls out:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OMAR

Bellamy, I must be seeing things.
I think I see a white boy
carrying a damn watermelon!

BELLAMY, lean, 30's, ragged white t-shirt, torn jeans,
work boots, chimes in.

BELLAMY

No my brother your eyes do not
deceive you.

HOMER nods, and continues his baton death march.

OMAR

You either stupid, crazy, or
both.

BELLAMY

He got the heat stroke!

OMAR

(laughing)

Hey peckerwood! You know where
you are? This here's "the cuts"
son.

BELLAMY

Don't let us catch you after
dark...

HOMER STEELS himself and continues, pretending to ignore the
harassment.

EXT. CASSANDRA'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

HOMER SETS his gifts down, hurriedly RE-TUCKS his shirt,
wipes the sweat away, gives his hair a
once-over.

A single FINGER OMINOUSLY fills the frame, as the doorbell
rings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Music is heard, a cacophony of voices BELLOWING in the backyard.

After several awkward moments, the door SWINGS open, REVEALING...L.C. STOKER...CASSANDRA'S father.

40's, a little over 6 feet tall, HARDBITTEN, sweaty tank top, showing off powerful arms from years of hard labor.

EYEBALLING HOMER from head-to-toe...Taking a sip of beer, and SPOTTING the watermelon.

Breaking the awkward silence:

HOMER

Mr. Stoker?

Swaying slightly from a few too many, MR. STOKER offers no response.

HOMER

Uh...Mr. Stoker, your daughter Cassandra invited me over. I'm a friend from school.

HOMER begins handing off the gifts to a HOVERING BEA and MARCUS, jabbering incoherently.

HOMER (CONT)

Yes yes sir Cassandra mentioned you you all were having a barbecue today and I thought I'd pick up some extra watermelon...not that I I assumed you liked watermelon...

L.C. just stares back, UNIMPRESSED.

HOMER (CONT)

only that I like it, and if you did too, then maybe maybe you wouldn't run out, and, since

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER (CONT)
CASSANDRA likes dancing so much,
I thought I'd bring a record,
and...

L.C. STOKER unceremoniously exits, a parting BELCH.

The kids are passing around the Hendrix album, as MARCUS
cries out:

MARCUS
Black people don't listen to Jimi
Hendrix!?

We follow HOMER'S gaze to CASSANDRA, who gives a TENSE
smile.

HOMER approaches, the worst seemingly over, when
MR. STOKER appears between them, BRANDISHING a SHOTGUN!!!

HOMER is paralyzed.

Doubling down, LC RACKS the gun!

MR. STOKER
(slurring slightly)
Listen up white boy. I don't give
a good God damn what your name
is. I'm fixing to kill you right
here and now.

CASSANDRA, powerless.

MR. STOKER, stone-faced.

HOMER, EYES WIDE, makes a mad dash for the door!

HOMER FLYING out the front door, onto the street, with LC
HOT on his HEELS!

BANG!!! ...SMOKE dissipates from the BARREL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Not breaking stride, we HOVER above HOMER, following his SPRINT down the street.

One of the guests, LAMAR, 40's, beer gut, an easy audience, stands next to LC, giggling...

LAMAR

That boy ain't gone for long. He had that look in his eyes.

LC

Shut up Lamar.

LAMAR

That white boy just walked to Dalworth with a damn watermelon for your girl, watchu think?

On L.C.

HOMER SPRINTS past our GAMBLERS, still playing cards.

OMAR and BELLAMY share a look, give each other a DAP, and laugh hysterically.

INT. STOKER RESIDENCE - NIGHT

CASSANDRA, in tears, as L.C. sits across from her.

BEA and MARCUS enter.

BEA

Why you cryin Cass?

L.C.

Your sister says I'm a monster.

MARCUS

Cause you shot at that white boy?

CASSANDRA

(to MARCUS and BEA)

Get out!?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEA

Excuse us for livin. By the way
we listened to that Jimi whatever
record he brought...it's God
awful!

L.C.

Out you two.

They scatter, and, after a deep breath:

L.C. (CONT)

Ok...Cassandra, you tell me in
what world this thing can work.

CASSANDRA

I love him Daddy.

L.C.

Ain't enough. Not in this town.
Not today, not tomorrow.

CASSANDRA

Why can't people worry about
themselves? It's got nothing to
do with them!

L.C.

You want the truth?

CASSANDRA nods.

L.C.

It's cause they don't wanna look
at themselves. Spend so much time
being angry, that when they see
somethin good, they wanna knock
it down, make em selves feel
better.

CASSANDRA

Ok kettle.

L.C.

Yeah, I guess so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA

You think I'd be in love with a biggot daddy? You and momma raised me better. He's a good man, and he loves me.

L.C.

Watermelon he brought was bigger than he was.

A shared giggle.

CASSANDRA

Just give him a chance Daddy? That's all I ask.

A long look from L.C...sigh of resignation.

MONTAGE:

1) HOMER back at the STOKER'S, dancing "BADLY," as the kids laugh at him. L.C. walks by, SHAKES his head, exits.

2) HOMER & CASSANDRA making their way to their seats in a movie theatre. WHISPERS, stares, from a BLACK couple.

3) HOMER & CASSANDRA at a cafe, ENRAPTURED, not noticing a couple of WHITE older waitresses, GOSSIPING, from afar.

4) HOMER & CASSANDRA walking back to HOMER's pickup in a parking lot.

A couple of black GANGSTERS "cat-call" CASSANDRA, HOMER starts towards them, and she holds him back.

END MONTAGE.

INT. HOMER'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

HOMER sits, WOUND UP on the couch.

After a few moments:

HOMER

Momma! Can you come in here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Close on small KNAPSACK sitting at his feet.

BILLY JEAN appears.

BILLY JEAN
Your room is a pig stuy son, can
you....

HOMER
(interrupts)
Sit down momma.

BILLY JEAN eyes the knapsack, plops down next to HOMER.

BILLY JEAN
What's on yer mind?

HOMER
Momma...I'm in love with
Cassandra, and there's nothing
you or Daddy can do to change it.

BILLY JEAN, STOIC.

BILLY JEAN
That girl who keeps calling?

HOMER
You gotta know. I love her more
than I've ever loved anything and
I'm gonna make her my wife.

BILLY JEAN
The colored girl.

BILLY JEAN almost grins.

HOMER (CONT)
Well, let's hear it. Gimme your
worst!

BILLY JEAN starts to chuckle...then outright laughter.

HOMER looks back cock-eyed?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY JEAN

I had a feelin.

HOMER

You did?

BILLY JEAN

You been acting like a damn crazy person for weeks. A mother knows when her son's in love.

HOMER

And you're not mad?

BILLY JEAN

Unlike your father, I understand you have to grow up. And that means girls.

HOMER

Are you gonna tell him?

BILLY JEAN

Tell him what? That you're in love with a colored girl? No, I think it'd be better for your health if I didn't.

HOMER

Well, he's gonna find out at some point.

BILLY JEAN

Oh honey...Tell you what, you just keep trying to date that gal, and see what the world says.

Getting up, BILLY JEAN looks down at HOMER'S knapsack.

BILLY JEAN (CONT)

I give it a month tops...Call it a mothers intuition.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY JEAN exits, and HOMER is left speechless.

BILLY JEAN (CONT) (OC)
(calling back)
And clean your damn room!

INT. HOMER'S TRUCK- HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - MORNING

Close on HOMER'S palms, sweating, shaking.

SWEAT drips, as he fixes the rear view MIRROR on himself.

HOMER
You can do this.

We follow **HOMER'S POV**: His footsteps up to the school entrance, through the DOORS.

As people pass, and look directly into CAMERA, greeting HOMER:

CUTE BLONDE GIRL
Hey Homer! Good luck Friday!

GENE
Homey! You alright man, you look a little sick?

JIMMY
Ya man you tie one on last night?

HOMER rounds the corner, running into SARINA, CASSANDRA'S friend, who sighs disapprovingly, and moves on.

Round another CORNER to see CASSANDRA, at her locker, casually grabbing her books.

Back to Regular POV: we see HOMER tap CASSANDRA on the shoulder, and, as she turns, he grabs her shoulders tenderly, and PULLS her in for a KISS...

After an awkward beat,,,She drops her books, and throws her arms around him, we are tight on our couple's FIRST KISS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A gaggle of nearby passing students, stop, stare, and continue.

INT. HOMER'S TRUCK - NIGHT

HOMER and CASSANDRA have pulled up to CASSANDRA'S house.

They kiss passionately, pausing to rest on each other's foreheads.

HOMER

Where'd you come from?

CASSANDRA

Where'd YOU come from Homer Sargent?

HOMER

Nowhere good.

They go back to kissing. A MAGNET drawing them together.

HOMER abruptly stops.

CASSANDRA

What's wrong?

HOMER laughs, reaches across to the glovebox.

CASSANDRA

What are you up to?

HOMER pulls out a paper bag and small black box.

HOMER

It's not much, but I put a lot of thought into it.

CASSANDRA goes quiet.

HOMER opens the box in CASSANDRA'S direction.

CASSANRDA

(noticing)

You're shaking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

Cassandra Stoker...this ring is a promise. A promise to always be true to you and you alone. And to be there whenever and wherever you need me.

CASSANDRA

Are you asking me to marry you?

HOMER

(stumbling)

Hmmm...I wasn't going there, but...maybe I am.

CASSANRDRA

You guess?

HOMER

Well it's not an engagement ring, but I can get you a better one...

Grabbing his face.

CASSANDRA

It's not about the ring.

HOMER

You're my new home. I just don't wanna lose you.

CASSANDRA

I'm not going anywhere. Well... Put it on.

HOMER puts it on her ring finger--it's WAY too big..

HOMER

Oh no...crap.

CASSANDRA

Relax Homer. I can get it re-sized. I love it!

Throwing her arms around him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

I love you...

CASSANDRA

You better...

INT. MAPLE AVE. BOXING GYM - DAY

Present Day: HOMER'S audience has GROWN, with BERNIE front and center, joined by a small group of young boxers and their trainers.

COLIN and VAL rapt at attention.

COLIN

Shoot you were only a few years older than me, Homer. I'm never getting married though. Too many ladies out there.

Laughs all around.

HOMER

Like being in the ring, the fight ain't real, until you get hit in the jaw.

COLIN

Not me! I'm like a ghost man.

TAVARIS

You hit like a ghost...

Laughs, playful slaps.

TAVARIS (CONT)

So that's it? Y'all ride off into the sunset together?

HOMER

(referencing COLIN)

Nah. Like our buddy there, I thought I was invincible. But make plans, and God laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERNICE

You know how many black women
would die for a man like that?

TAVARIS busts a gut.

BERNICE (CONT)

I'm serious. A man who would
stand up to black gossip. Honey
if we want you gone, you gone.

HOMER smiles knowing all too well.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS OFFICE - DAY

HOMER sits awkwardly, outside the High School Counselors
office.

A black janitor, OTIS, 50's, rail thin, replaces a trash
bag, EYEBALLING HOMER.

HOMER catches him, AVERTS, then locks eyes.

OTIS stops, looks around to make sure there's no
EAVESDROPPING.

OTIS

You know where you are boy?

HOMER

What's that supposed to mean?

OTIS

It means, there ain't enough
white women here for you?

HOMER

I'm not interested in just any
women.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OTIS

Son you the star running back at this school, and word round the campfire is you got a good pair of hands...so I'm asking you. Why her?

HOMER

You married Otis?

OTIS

41 years this July.

HOMER

Why'd you marry her?

OTIS

She said yes.

HOMER chuckles.

HOMER

She black?

OTIS

Whatchu think?

HOMER

You ever picture the rest of your life without her?

OTIS

Never could.

The DOOR flies open, and an attractive young white teen, pigtails, SHUFFLES out, kleenex in hand, sniffing.

Behind her, CHERYL WILLIAMS, African American, late 30's, 6 feet TALL, attractive, athletic, and STATELY.

CHERYL

Ok Homer.

HOMER and OTIS take a long look at one another, not lost on CHERYL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

(to OTIS)

We have more in common than you think...

OTIS watches HOMER disappear into the office.

INT. SCHOOL COUNSELORS OFFICE - DAY

CHERYL sits, hands folded, looking HOMER over.

After a few beats, she addresses the ELEPHANT in the room.

CHERYL

What have you gotten yourself into?

HOMER

Yes mam.

CHERYL

(referring outside)

You know those white people out there are not going to casually allow a mixed baby.

HOMER

Yes mam.

CHERYL

You have a great chance at a scholarship next year Homer. And Cassandra's grades are good enough to get her there...Then y'all have to go and do this.

HOMER

I've been working at Gibson's after school, nights, weekends, and I want Cassandra to go to college. If that's what she wants.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHERYL

Uh huh. Well, I've talked with her, and I'm gonna make sure she has all the support she needs to help her graduate.

CHERYL gazes out the window, in DEEP thought.

CHERYL (CONT)

To be honest I'm more worried about you...

HOMER sits, KNOWING she's right.

CHERYL

I've heard you're the toughest kid here. That's a lot of pressure. I know you've finished more than you started. And I've seen you run over the best defenses in this district. Now.....multiply that by 100.

HOMER

Ms. Williams? I was raised in it. My own parents have basically disowned me. But I appreciate your concern.

CHERYL

Well, Cassandra may not have your thick skin.

HOMER

She doesn't need it. Ms. Williams ..

CHERYL

Cheryl.

HOMER takes a moment to paint his favorite picture.

HOMER

Cheryl...it's like she doesn't see it. Like she's floating above

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER (CONT)
it, never seen anything like it.

CHERYL
Well for both your sakes...let's
hope she never comes down.

On HOMER.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LUNCHROOM - DAY

SUPER: 9 MONTHS LATER

JIMMY & GENE flank HOMER, BLABBING about the upcoming
weekend festivities.

HOMER just eats, other things on his mind.

A faceless student COVERTLY passes FLIERS to another student
and so on, table to table, as the conversation continues.

Finally making its way to JIMMY:

JIMMY
Hey Homer...take a look at this.

GENE picks one up:

GENE
West Dallas Boxing Tournament.
Next Friday, free entry.

HOMER
Not interested. Gotta work.

HOMER grabs the flier, quick peek.

SUDDENLY, a boisterous student, OTTO GAMBLE, 17, scrawny,
always writing checks his butt can't cash, is STANDING on a
table, ANNOUNCING:

OTTO
(regaling)
Ladies and gentleman, boys and
girls, friends and neighbors of

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OTTO (CONT)
Arlington High...you may have
seen a flier making its way
around...I have 50 dollars in my
hot little hand, says no man from
Arlington can beat any man from
West Dallas.

Ooh's and Ahhh's.

A few hoots and hollers: YA! BRING IT ON! BET! BET! BET!

JIMMY
You believe this guy?

OTTO
This ain't monopoly money
friends. This is cold hard cash.
Any takers!?

CLOSE on HOMER, back to food.

JIMMY rises, STANDING on the table.

JIMMY
Not only will HOMER SARGENT beat
a West Dallas fighter, but

HOMER pulls at his EMBOLDENED, now MOUTHY friend.

HOMER
Shut your mouth Jimmy. I haven't
been training.

JIMMY (CONT)
(overlapping)
I'll raise your 50, and put up
100 that says...: HOMER WILL WIN
THE WHOLE DAMN THING!

The ooh's and ahhh's hit a FEVERED pitch: 'WHOA!' 'BET!'
"BET!"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OTTO

Jimmy Thorton?! Surprise
Surprise. You do know that West
Dallas is un-defeated dating back
to the 50's?

Abruptly, RUSTY JENKINS, African American, 16, cute, FIREY,
an axe to grind, jumps up on a adjacent table.

RUSTY

HOMER! Melvin Jenkins is gonna
kick your white ass. You can
print THAT!

JIMMY

Who in the Sam Hill is Melvin
Jenkins??

OTTO

Only an ex-inmate who's last
three opponents are still in the
hospital. They say he coulda gone
pro at 17.

RUSTY

Better tell Cassandra to say her
goodbyes!

JIMMY

(to Rusty)

YOU are a traitor, and Melvin
Jenkins will wish he never met
Homer Sargent. We got a bet Otto?

OTTO

Is a frogs ass watertight?

The crowd reacts: OHHHHH....BET! BET! BET!!!!

The BELL rings, breaking up the festivities, and announcing
the end of lunch.

JIMMY and OTTO, one more long look.

JIMMY sits, still BUZZING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE high fives JIMMY, over HOMER, who slowly turns to JIMMY, staring holes through him...

EXT. UAW CONFERENCE HALL - DUSK

A MARQUEE reads: **BOXING TOURNAMENT: DALLAS REGIONAL SMOKER**
"Last Man Standing"

A HALO of smoke hangs above a make-shift boxing ring.

THRONGS of students & adults, LARGELY African-American, rep. their respective schools, with letterman jackets, WEST DALLAS SIGNS.

Different colors/mascots in various sections.

GENE and his date, cute, 17, brunette, eat popcorn, CRANE their necks to find HOMER.

CASSANDRA, about to POP from LARISSA, and her girlfriend, SARINA, sit next to them.

The WEST DALLAS FANS overwhelm the rest of the schools.

GENE SCANS the tournament breakdown:

We follow his pencil, find HOMER SARGENT, advancing to the SEMI-finals.

Previous opponents crossed out.

HOMER is led to the ring from the WINGS, with a couple of older trainers, African American, and, of course, JIMMY THORTON.

GENE
(to his date)
Oh oh here he comes!

Adjacent to GENE and his date, is the rowdy WEST DALLAS STUDENT SECTION, all STANDING.

An ANNOUNCER comes over the PA system:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PA ANNOUNCER (VO)
And then there were 4!!! How we
doin boxing fans??

The crowd responds with HOOTS and HOLLERS.

PA ANNOUNCER (CONT)
Let's here it for today's
competitors!

More applause.

PA ANNOUNCER (CONT)
Are you ready for part one of our
semi-final?

Louder cheers.

A WEST DALLAS fighter, DANUEL COLEMAN, black, 18, 6 feet,
210 pounds, intimidating scowl, makes his way to the ring.

The WEST DALLAS section spots him, and starts to BARK,
stomping their feet, clapping in unison,
and going into a chant:

WEST DALLAS CHANT
West D gonna stick...West D gonna
move...West D hit you so hard yo
Momma feel the groove!

Chant continues in the background.

PA ANNOUNCER (CONT)
We got a doozy for ya! We got
another of West Dallas' finest
making his way to the ring:
weighing in at two hundred and
five pounds, from LG Pinkston,
his last 2 opponents didn't make
it outta the 2nd round, give it
up for Danuel Coleman!

WEST DALLAS fans go crazy, GENE boos, to no avail.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PA ANNOUNCER (VO) (CONT)
And fighting out of Arlington
High...

BOOS REIGN down.

GENE stands up, DEFENDING HOMER, throws popcorn their way.

PA ANNOUNCER (CONT)
Come on folks, this fella's been
the surprise of the tournament.
Winning his previous two by
first round TKO,

HOMER gazes across the ring at the MENACING DANUEL COLEMAN.

PA ANNOUNCER (CONT)
Standing at 5'10, 180 pounds, he
reminds me a little bit of Willy
Pep..but y'all wouldn't remember
him...let's hear it for HOMER
SARGENT!

More Boos, GENE now in a shouting match with one
of the WEST DALLAS faithful.

GENE
That white boy's gonna whup his
ass!

WEST DALLAS STUDENT
Sit your fat ass down!

HOMER gets last minute instructions from his corner.

JIMMY
HOMER, don't get inside with this
cat. Stick and move, you hear me!

HOMER nods, as he notices something pulling at his trunks.

RUSTY
Your white ass is going down
Homer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER
(turning away)
Thanks for the support.

DING! DING! DING!

HOMER dances around DANUEL for a tick, getting his bearings..

DANUEL pursues, then STOPS, gesturing with his gloves for HOMER to "stop running!"

DANUEL
Come on pecker-wood, I didn't
come here to dance.

HOMER finally ENGAGES, throwing a couple of measuring JABS at an INCOMING DANUEL.

DANUEL pushes past, MISSING with a MONSTROUS LEFT hook, and right upper cut, then LANDING a follow-up left hook to HOMER'S RIGHT EYE!

CASSANDRA puts her face in her hands, as the WEST DALLAS crowd ROARS.

HOMER dances away, a bit SHAKEN.

DANUEL
Where you goin? Stop runnin!

Cobwebs gone, HOMER ENGAGES, FAKING a jab, shifting his weight to his right, as DANUEL misses another HAY-MAKING LEFT.

As HOMER ducks, he UNLOADS a thunderous RIGHT to the body, and we HEAR DANUEL GASP, his air, GONE!

Another right to the body, ANOTHER GASP, and DANUEL takes a knee!

GENE, CASSANDRA, and co. are on their feet.

GENE
YEAH!!! COME ON BABY!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER looks to his corner, JIMMY jumping up and down uncontrollably.

Referee counts to 6, DANUEL rises.

This time HOMER is the aggressor, faking a jab, and GOING TO THE BODY, DANUEL doing his best to cover.

DANUEL manages to get off the ropes, throwing a wild left hook, which HOMER dodges, and COUNTERS, with a RIGHT UPPER CUT.....GAME OVER!

DANUEL falls like a large tree, UN-CONCIOUS before he hits the canvas.

SILENCE falls over the biased crowd.

DANUEL's corner attends to him.

Referee counts to 10, and walks over to HOMER.

REFEREE

I think he's gonna need a new kidney. What you got in those gloves son? You got one more in you?

HOMER

I guess I don't have a choice do I?

CASSANDRA, GENE, and co. in tow, meet HOMER ringside.

JIMMY, taunting the WEST DALLAS faithful as they exit:

JIMMY

Your boy just got SLEPT! What y'all got now!!???

A couple of WEST DALLAS faithful stand, throwing up their arms, beckoning JIMMY to backup his mouth.

HOMER pushes JIMMY, CASSANDRA, and co. towards the EXIT.

As they pass, we hear a WEST DALLAS student yell:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WEST DALLAS STUDENT
What y'all gonna name that Zebra
baby?

HOMER STOPS, DEAD in his tracks.

SCANNING for the culprit.

CASSANDRA
Come on sugar. Forget him.

The Student makes his way down to the railing:

WEST DALLAS STUDENT
(over the crowd)
Don't y'all know black and white
birds don't flock together!?

HOMER starts to climb the railing, GENE and JIMMY struggle
to drag him down.

The WEST DALLAS kids throw popcorn down on the group,
BOOING.

To add insult to injury, RUSTY, finds her way to the group
for a final parting shot...

RUSTY
(screaming)
Hey Homer!?

HOMER slowly turns...

RUSTY (CONT)
Better leave with your 2nd place
trophy while you still got teeth,
haha!

HOMER exits.

INT. UAW CONFERENCE HALL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT (CONT)

HOMER sits, an icepack concealing a large cut over his right
eye, as GENE and the gang REVEL in the victory, and await
HOMER's championship opponent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA, holds HOMER's hand in silent support, her feet up on a nearby chair.

TRAINER

You gonna have to protect that eye son. Once that gets opened up, it ain't gonna stop.

JIMMY

Let's just hope Melvin's fight goes the distance...

Soon as he finishes the sentence, we hear the ROAR of the crowd "OHHHH...AHHHHH"

GENE

Or not...

....and overhear the PA ANNOUNCER:

PA ANNOUNCER (VO)

That's all she wrote folks, another first round knockout for the undefeated West Dallas champ...give it up for the hometown hero, MELVIN JENKINS!!!

Crowd goes wild.

GENE

How much time does he have?

TRAINER

Half an hour, hour tops.

JIMMY

(to HOMER)

We're almost there! And with our winnings, I'm gonna buy us dinner at El Phoenix and more margaritas than they got in all of Mexico!

CASSANDRA starts to WINCE in pain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARINA attends to her.

SARINA
Hey girl. Something you ate?

She doubles over, BREATHING progressively heavy.

HOMER
Cass! You ok?

CASSANDRA grabs her belly, GRIMACING in abject pain.

CASSANDRA
(screaming)
DO I LOOK OK!?

SARINA
That's our cue.

HOMER
Ok baby let's go!

HOMER starts to pack up, as the group helps a STRUGGLING CASSANDRA to her feet.

CASSANDRA
Where you going?

HOMER
With you.

CASSANDRA
No you're not. You got one more fight.

Another CONTRACTION, followed by deep breaths.

HOMER
Baby...

CASSANDRA
(interrupting)
We finish what we start Homer Sargent, you hear me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

Cass, they'll be other fights.

CASSANDRA

Not like this. These folks trying to make us feel like strangers in our own home. You ok with that?

HOMER

Well, it's more your home than mine.

A look from CASSANDRA that would stop a bear, COLD.

HOMER

No mam. I feel you honey.

CASSANDRA

Ok then.

Another contraction.

HOMER fishes for his keys, tosses them to SARINA.

HOMER

(to SARINA)

Take my truck. We'll meet you there.

SARINA ushers CASSANDRA out.

HOMER

(calling out)

I love you...

INT. BOXING RING - NIGHT

DING! DING! DING!

Round 1 HOMER vs. MELVIN.

MELVIN, 18, standing 6'1, 230 pounds and solid as a rock, a wry grin, TAUNTS a charging HOMER, dodging easily, and dropping his GLOVES, begging for a punch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER, charges forward again, and this time, MELVIN lands an over the top RIGHT HAND, staggering HOMER.

MELVIN follows with a vicious combination: finishing with a left to the body, and a right hook to the TEMPLE, that FLOORS HOMER...

Barely 30 seconds into the first round.

The WEST DALLAS crowd goes wild!

A WAVE forms, culminating in the fans LEANING their heads onto their hands, ON CUE:

WEST DALLAS CHANT
NIGHT NIGHT!!!

HOMER's **out-of-focus POV** of his corner, shows JIMMY banging the canvas with his towel.

JIMMY
"GET UP MAN!.....GET UP!!!"

"5!.....6!.....7!..." HOMER shakes it off, gets up.

A half-surprised MELVIN grins, INVITES HOMER for more.

HOMER inches his way forward, working his left jab, trying to protect his right eye.

MELVIN spins HOMER towards the ropes with a left hook to the body, and goes to work: left-right combo to the body, then to the head, a flurry of punches.

HOMER, bobbing and WEAVING the best he can.

5 seconds SHOW on the "Clock"...

HOMER ducks under & FINALLY UNLEASHES a right hook to MELVIN'S body...a GASP and groan, on impact.

DING! DING! DING! HOMER stumbles back to his corner.

MELVIN takes a long look back, getting his wind, with some help from the CROWD.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER swishes, spits water back into a pail, as his trainers check his eye.

RUSTY, has gotten down near the ring, and hollers after HOMER.

RUSTY
(screaming)
What I tell you?!
You shoulda stayed
down.

DING! DING! DING!

This time HOMER stays outside, and waits for MELVIN.

MELVIN deftly moves in and out, landing a few STIFF jabs.

HOMER misses badly with a left hook, and MELVIN STAGGERS HOMER with his own left hook, flush on his "RIGHT EYE".

BLOOD, pouring from the cut, as the REF stops the fight, to INSPECT.

REFEREE
Homer that doesn't look good.
Normally I would stop this.

HOMER
Don't stop this fight. It's MY
eye.

REFEREE
Another shot like that and I'm
stopping it.

REFEREE
Let's fight!

Immediately the two meet in the middle, exchanging haymakers toe-to-toe.

MELVIN landing a jab, missing with the straight right, as the SMALLER HOMER lands a STRAIGHT right of his own.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMY

What are you doing!? Get outta there!

MELVIN pushes off a resting HOMER, and lands a 1-2 combo, HOMER comes back with a body combo, straight right hand.

We hear a low RUMBLE in the distance: **HOMER! HOMER! HOMER!**

MELVIN comes back with a right hook, narrowly misses.

HOMER goes to the body: RIGHT, LEFT, MELVIN's mouth piece goes FLYING.

HOMER! HOMER! HOMER! The rumble becomes a ROAR!

GENE and his date, SURPRISED, looking to nearby spectators, now rooting HOMER.

JIMMY looks back at the crowd, re-energized, back to HOMER.

Tearing into MELVIN'S body with kidney shots, MELVIN grimacing in pain.

A straight right hand from MELVIN buckles HOMER's knees, but he manages to stay upright, and hug it out.

DING! DING! DING! End ROUND 2.

HOMER

That left hooks's got me hearing things Doc.

TRAINER

You ain't hearing things, they all behind you now.

HOMER looks around, notices someone tugging on his shorts: RUSTY.

RUSTY

Come on Homer. You can do it. Knock him out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRAINER

Wasn't that the same...?

HOMER

Ya.

TRAINER

Last round Homer, who wants it
more...that's all this is.

Protect the eye, and go to the
body.

HOMER takes a last long look around the smoke-filled
CONFERENCE HALL, all BLACK faces, save a few stragglers.

They're smiling at him, screaming his name: **HOMER! HOMER!
HOMER!**

He spies an innocent looking WHITE teenager, 16, overalls,
sticking out like a sore thumb.

INT. PARKLAND MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

HOMER, temporary EYE PATCH, and GENE, rush their way to the
attendant's desk.

HOMER

Cassandra Stoker?

ATTENDANT

You the father?

HOMER

Yes.

A POINTED look from an ORDERLY in the background.

ATTENDANT

You're a lucky man. She's gonna
be a heartbreaker.

HOMER

She?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER walks in to see CASSANDRA half asleep, holding a SWADDLED baby.

GENE hangs back as HOMER tip-toes to the bedside table, gazing at his new creation.

The baby looks up, blinking.

HOMER
(whispering)
Hey darlin. I'm Homer.

CASSANDRA, perks up.

CASSANDRA
Did you win?

HOMER, a million miles away, nods YES, after a few beats.

CASSANDRA (CONT)
(pleased)
Part of my strategy. You win, I
get to name her.

HOMER just stares with his one good eye.

HOMER
Was that the deal?

CASSANDRA
Um hm. Why don't you hold her.

HOMER picks her up gingerly, and begins to bounce her lightly, as he coos.

HOMER
(whispering)
What's your name?

CASSANDRA
Larissa Antoinette Sargent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER
 (to LARISSA)
 Yes you are. That's pretty hard
 to beat...

The ATTENDANT and a few nurses have gathered, watching from
 the doorway.

A NURSE whispers to the ATTENDANT:

NURSE
 They married?

ATTENDANT
 No.

Back on HOMER, CASSANDRA, and the new arrival.

NURSE (VO)
 Well at least they're in love.

ATTENDANT (VO)
 They're gonna need it.

EXT. HOMER'S HOME - DAY

SUPER: 3 Months Later

HOMER, light blue tuxedo with ruffles, stands anxiously at
 his front door, KNOCKING.

HOMER
 Mom?!...Dad?...

The door opens, and a RESIGNED BILLY JEAN answers, and
 weakly invites her son in.

The remnants of tears still fresh.

HOMER
 Momma...the wedding's in about 3
 hours. Cassandra's parents are
 gonna be there. It's only right.

BILLY JEAN gazes through her son with hate-filled BETRAYAL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER
Please I'm your son.

BILLY JEAN TURNS, walks away.

HOMER heads to his old room, stands in the doorway, for a few beats, ENTERS, not much has changed.

Football, Track, Boxing Trophy's and Awards, and Posters, line the walls.

Old newspaper clippings of City Championships, "**The Great White Hope**", etc.

Lost in REVERIE, HOMER doesn't notice SARGE, now standing in the doorway, behind him.

Still walking down memory lane, HOMER turns slightly, to acknowledge:

HOMER
Dad, it would mean an awful lot
to us if you and momma would
come.

SARGE
(slurring)
White men father black babies all
the time...they just don't claim
em.

HOMER turns, to see SARGE, holding a shotgun.

No SUNGLASSES to hide behind, bloodshot from tears and alcohol.

HOMER
Dad, just calm down. I just came
to beg you and momma one last
time. I'm gettin married for
God's sake!

RACKING the gun, raising it in HOMER's direction:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARGE

Son, I'm not going to your God damn wedding, and neither are you!

HOMER

(calling past SARGE)
Momma! Momma! Call the police!

Back to SARGE.

HOMER (CONT)

Dad put the gun down.

SARGE

(just as calmly)
I got all day boy.

HOMER

Momma! Call the police! Momma please!

No response.

HOMER, out of options, SUDDENLY pushes the barrel away with his left, and FLOORS SARGE with a right hand to the jaw.

SARGE stumbles against the hallway wall, SLAM!

The gun sits IDLE, near HOMER's feet.

HOMER, stands over SARGE.

HOMER

(tearful)
I'm sorry Daddy. Jesus...

HOMER exits, and CLIMBS into his truck.

Closing his eyes to get a grip, and catch his breath, he slowly reopens them to:

SARGE APPEARS 5 feet away, shotgun pointed at HOMER'S head, just outside the DRIVER'S SIDE, a small amount of blood on the corner of his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER bows his head for a final prayer:

HOMER
I love you Cassandra. Larissa.

After a FEW beats, HOMER opens his eyes to a different scene:

SARGE, shotgun NOW at his side, stands at MILITARY ATTENTION.

As HOMER carefully starts the truck, SARGE SALUTES, goes back to ATTENTION.

We glimpse SARGE via the back window, getting SMALLER and smaller, as HOMER heads to the chapel.

EXT. WEDDING CHAPEL - DAY

GENE and JIMMY are outside PACING, when they see HOMER pull up, SHODDY parking job, one wheel up on the curb.

HOMER jumps out, tucking his shirt, fixing his hair, as he approaches.

JIMMY
We thought you got cold feet champ...

Noticing his bloody knuckles, and BLOOD stain on his sleeve.

JIMMY
But I can see you had other business to attend to.

GENE
I'm gonna say it one last time cause I promised myself I would: ain't nobody believes this can work, and nobody would fault you if you "called it" right now...

HOMER, EXHAUSTED, deadpan stare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GENE (CONT)

And I can see that ain't gonna
happen.

HOMER turns and starts in for the ceremony.

GENE and JIMMY grab HOMER.

Fussing with his tux, dusting off his shoes, ok, ready!

JIMMY opening the door:

GENE

(to JIMMY)

You got the ring genius?

JIMMY

Does the pope where a funny hat?
Of course I have the damn ring.

We leave JIMMY, fishing through his pockets, panic'ed,
before finding what he's looking for.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY (CONT)

Bridesmaids in yellow, Groomsmen in blue, split the
wedding altar, as everyone awaits the Bride.

An UNEVEN number of attendees, CASSANDRA'S side more
represented.

ORGAN begins to play "Here Comes The Bride," and from
behind, we see CASSANDRA and L.C. join arms, and begin their
walk.

Slow motion:

- CASSANDRA looks STUNNING in her yellow wedding gown and
veil. GLOWING.
- CASSANDRA waves to her extended family, a few reach out
and give her hand a SQUEEZE, as she passes.
- A Black Husband, disapproving look, arms folded, looks

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

straight ahead.

- On HOMER'S side, sit JERRY and RJ, relatives from our front porch scene, pleasant smiles.
- Down the aisle, an older WHITE woman shows her disapproval, with a slow shake of her head.

As CASSANDRA approaches, we hear a DULL SCREAM coming from the back:

BILLY JEAN (VO)
(screaming)
Nigger lover! You sorry nigger
loving sonofabitch!

The crowd now TURNED, a few men on either side stand, ready to take charge.

HOMER, head down, walks past his lovely bride and LC, and out the back.

As the door opens, BILLY JEAN's cries get LOUDER:

BILLY JEAN
(screaming)
Go to hell, you're not my son!!!

BILLY JEAN, still in curlers, wearing pants under a nightgown.

HOMER
Mother, you're drunk. Enough.

BILLY JEAN
(more subdued)
You are no longer my son. You
died tonight!

HOMER
Calm down momma...my God...you
break my heart.

BILLY JEAN jumps in her truck, starts the car, before giving HOMER a parting shot:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY JEAN

I never wanna see your nigger
loving face again, you hear me.
Never!

HOMER gathers himself, takes a deep breath, and STALKS back up to the altar, embarrassed, but determined.

HOMER

Sorry about that reverend...
Whenever you're ready.

CASSANDRA looks admiringly at her new HUSBAND.

REVEREND

Ok then...Ladies, and Gentleman,
Family and Friends, Welcome!
There is a reason why you have
been invited to witness this
sacred union between Cassandra
Stoker and Homer Sargent...

HOMER and CASSANDRA gaze longingly at one another from across the altar...wink.

Mouthing "OLIVER COOL"...

REVEREND (CONT)

Because today marks the day that
these two beloved souls make
their union official...

INT. MAPLE AVE. BOXING GYM - PRESENT DAY

Present Day: at the Boxing gym.

VAL and COLIN are now wiping tears away, arms around each other. An unlikely, albeit comedic, moment.

COLIN

My man is the real life Rocky!

VAL

You're a legend Homer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAVARIS

It was a cruel world.

BERNICE

Still is, Honey.

HOMER

The more things change...

COLIN

So then what? You two lived happily ever after?

HOMER

Things didn't get any easier with the hate, but we were doing ok. Had a baby boy a few years later, named him Equillian.

TAVARIS

Equality.

BERNICE

Of course you did.

HOMER

Had a few offers to go pro but figured paying the bills was better than rolling the dice on a boxing or football career.

TAVARIS

Damn I wish I had been around...would've taken you straight to the top. Bills wouldn't have been a problem with those hands.

HOMER

I made out ok, better than ok actually. Made more money than my father and my father's father.

COLIN

Our boy's flush.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

Then I lost it.

VAL

Ouch.

COLIN

How many fights would you say you had Homer?

HOMER

Over a thousand I venture. Many of em had guns and knives too.

COLIN

Damn man.

TAVARIS

I bet not much can phase you.

HOMER

They always say God never gives your more than you can handle.

BERNICE

Amen.

HOMER

Well let's just say the big man must've thought I was Atlas.

COLIN

Who's that?

HOMER

Atlas was a Titan in Greek Mythology. He's responsible for bearing the weight of the heavens. A punishment put on him by Zeus.

VAL

Why'd Zeus punish him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

Cause Atlas sided with his own
people...

The group is left to ponder.

COLIN

Word.

INT. GRAND PRARIE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Two bailiff's ESCORT SARGE from the cell.

Now GAUNT, defeated, SARGE, withered, eyes the ground, as he
BUZZES out, greeted by HOMER.

Driving back home in the truck:

Awkward silence...broken by SARGE.

SARGE

I'm sorry son.

HOMER

3rd time this month Daddy.

SARGE

Since your mother left me...

HOMER

You need help...this ain't going
away on it's own...

SARGE

I know what needs to be done.

HOMER

I hope so. Cause dying from old
age is the least of your
worries..

EXT. SARGE'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT (CONT)

We see HOMER and SARGE at the front door, fiddling with the
lock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA and the kids pull up.

SARGE
(spying CASSANDRA)
I have an idea.

SARGE starts for CASSANDRA'S drivers side.

HOMER
What are you doing?

SARGE KNOCKS rapidly on the window, startling CASSANDRA, who is tending to the kids.

She WHIPS around, a bit taken aback.

CASSANDRA
Yes, Mr. Sargent?

SARGE
Hey Cassandra. I've heard your
cookin is the stuff of legend.
Any chance you could come in cook
for us?

CASSANDRA
Huh?

HOMER
(under his breath)
Shit.

After a beat:

Rolling down the window.

CASSANDRA
Ok.

HOMER
What?!

CASSANDRA
I said ok.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

Daddy we gotta get back...

SARGE

Great! Larissa, Equillian, come on, let's go inside and get everything prepped for your mother.

EQUILLIAN is yanked by LARISSA, out of the back of the car, who then, DRAGS her mother towards the house.

LARISSA

Come on Momma, I'm gonna help!

CASSANDRA gives HOMER a look.

The group files inside, as HOMER stays, looking out, PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE.

INT. SARGE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (CONT).

Batter in a bowl, and raw pieces of chicken being dipped, rolled in the BATTER.

SARGE grabs drinks for everyone, juices for the kids.

SARGE

Apple juice for Miss Larissa, and milk for Equillian, so he grows up strong like his Daddy.

HOMER, arms folded, a STOIC look, sits unimpressed nearby.

SARGE notes HOMER, and heads back to CASSANDRA, who is happily cooking.

SARGE

Cassandra...I...wanted to tell you something.

SARGE, just a few feet behind CASSANDRA, BREAKS down:

Small sobs become deep...a lifetime of HATE coming down...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER, sensing, grabs the CONFUSED LARISSA, EQUILLIAN, and heads into the back room.

CASSANDRA TURNS, takes it in for a sec...He OWES her that.

SARGE

(between sobs)

Cassandra, I am... so...
sorry...I wish I could change the
past...I have no excuse. I've
been a terrible human being. I
hate the site of myself, and if
it wasn't for you and Homer, I
would've done myself in months
ago.

CASSANDRA

Mr. Sargent.

SARGE

(interrupting)

Sarge please...I know..... you
will never forgive me. I can't
fairly ask you to. But give me a
chance to make it up to you?
That's all I ask.

After a beat.

CASSANDRA

How can I possibly hate you...

SARGE didn't expect that.

CASSANDRA (CONT)

You gave me your son. My husband
and father to my children.

SARGE, wiping tears away, trying to PROCESS CASSANDRA'S
sentiment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA

Homer is everything to me and my kids. Thank you for your son...

SARGE

...I think my son married an angel.

CASSANDRA

Psshaw...now go get your grandkids and get ready for the best fried chicken this side of the Mississippi.

SARGE

(calling out)

Homer, kids, get in here!

LARISSA, being trailed by HOMER, carrying EQUILLIAN, re-enter.

CASSANDRA closes the oven, wipes her hands, listening.

LARISSA

Why were you crying Grandad?

SARGE

Because Grandad is a hot mess sweetheart..

LARISSA

A what?!

SARGE

Homer, I want you and the family to move in.

HOMER

That's a terrible idea.

A look from CASSANDRA.

SARGE

..I'M SICK, I know that... and the only way i'm getting better

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARGE (CONT)
is with yall's support. This is
my last best chance son...this is
it.

HOMER and CASSANDRA exchange looks.

LARISSA breaks the tension:

LARISSA
Can Quilly and I sleep in Dad's
old room?

HOMER
I'll leave it up to your mother..

After a moment:

CASSANDRA
Family first...let's get you well
Mr. Sargent...Sarge.

SARGE gauging HOMER'S approval.

CASSANDRA (CONT)
(aside to HOMER)
It's just for a while...

CASSANDRA sensing the GRAVITY of her decision.

CASSANDRA
(with a clap)
Well don't just stand there, this
chicken ain't gonna serve itself.
Larissa set the table like I
showed you. Homer, come ere and
mix this salad while I pull the
chicken out.

On SARGE, watching the family work like a well-oiled
machine.

EXT./INT. SARGE'S HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

HOMER pulls up the driveway, EXHAUSTED from the day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shuffles to the front door, and we follow him in:

HOMER
Larissa A? Eqillian?

No response. HOMER drops his briefcase, continues inside.

HOMER
Honey?

HOMER makes his way back to the guest room, KNOCKS, and creaks the door: LARISSA and EQUILLIAN sleeping soundly.

A smile WASHES over as he continues to SARGE's room, and hears... LAUGHTER.

HOMER pauses, listens:

INTERCUT: ROOM and HALLWAY

CASSANDRA (OC)
Homer told em, you hit my friend again and there's gonna be consequences...sure enough he did, and HOMER dropped him like a bad habit.

SARGE (OC)
He gets that from me you know..

A WRY grin from HOMER.

CASSANDRA
(giggling)
Well his gang wasn't too happy about it... and waited for us in the parking lot, with guns. Luckily, the fuzz showed up and sent everyone home...

SARGE
(through coughs)
That boy was bulletproof...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA

We thought so too, but two days later Homer and I are at my place, my brother comes in from outside and says, Homer, "there's a man outside...says he wants to fight ya...I told em ain't no one man beat Homer Sargent"

SARGE

Oh Lord...

CASSANDRA

But I guess my brother Daryl didn't see too well, cause we peaked outside, and right hand to God, there were 25 brothers lined up on the sidewalk, ready to end YOUR son.

SARGE

What'd he do?

CASSANDRA (OC)

He said, "Uh, no Daryl, this uh may take a minute..."

Laughter.

HOMER chuckles to himself quietly, not wanting to interrupt.

CASSANDRA (CONT)

Low and behold, momma comes outta nowhere with a shotgun, and told them boys how the cow ate the cabbage!

SARGE

No!?

CASSANDRA

In her bathrobe!

Laughter! COUGHS from SARGE...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARGE

What'd she say?

CASSANDRA

She said: "Well, I guess this white boy's as tough as they say, cause 3 of you bastards weren't good enough, you thought 25 might make the odds better, huh?" They stood they ground for a second, that's when she racked that gun and said...

Fighting though laughter:

CASSANDRA

"If you boys don't believe that fat meat is greasy, we'll I'll show you!"

SARGE is beside himself COUGHING, WEEZING, laughing.

SARGE

Oh that's good...I shoulda used that.

CASSANDRA (OC)

I don't know where she came up with such things.

ON HOMER, EYES WELLING with tears, more taken by their relationship, than the tale.

SARGE (OC)

That boy fought the damn world and won. Homer 1...World Zero...

CASSANDRA (OC)

Don't tell him that...don't want him gettin a big head. Now eat your soup, so we can get YOU back in the game ...

HOMER, wiping a tear, WALKS back to the living room...

INT. MAPLE AVE. BOXING GYM - PRESENT DAY

Present Day: HOMER SHAKING his head, noticing his audience.

HOMER

Don't y'all have someplace to
be???

VAL

Homer one, World Zero. Damn...

TAVARIS

I think I speak for everybody
when I say, we wanna know how
this ends...

BERNICE

Hell, we family now Homer.

HOMER

You may not like it...

COLIN

We can take it Homer.

HOMER

YOU can take it huh?

VAL, TAVARIS, and BERNICE chime in with: YA HOMER!, Spill
it!, You can trust us!

EXT/INT. HOMER'S NEW ARLINGTON HOME - DAY

SUPER: 1995 ARLINGTON, TEXAS

We hover above a picturesque and fairly luxurious COLONIAL-
style home, white pillars, two stories, replete with
"SARGENT" on the entrance gate.

A spacious CIRCULAR driveway, and two matching cream-colored
Cadillac DeVilles.

The front door opens, REVEALING CASSANDRA, beautiful MINK
coat, covering a gorgeous dress, HEELS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA
 (calling back)
 Be back in a bit Maria. Oh, Can
 you make sure Quilly's room is
 made up?

MARIA (OC)
 Yes Mrs. Sargent, already done!

CASSANDRA
 You're the best!

As CASSANDRA approaches the drivers side, the next door
 neighbor calls out.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR
 Hey Cassandra! Don't forget about
 Saturday night. Jim is convinced
 he's gonna break Homer's streak
 in Ping Pong...between us, he's
 been practicing...

CASSANDRA
 Haha we wouldn't miss it. I'll
 remind you know who...

We follow the Cadillac out, onto the tree lined street.

White picket fences, a breeze blowing through the trees, and
 children on their big wheels--SUBURBAN HEAVEN...

We're close on the FRONT of CASSAANDRA'S Cadillac.

She parks in front of an *Arlington Strip Center*.

EXT./INT UPSCALE DRY CLEANERS - DAY (CONT)

We follow CASSANDRA'S CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN heels, as they
 walk up the immaculate, cobblestone SIDEWALK, enters...

We hear her entrance "Brrrrriiiiiing."

An upscale DRY CLEANING biz, leather COUCHES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Expensive ART adorns the walls, a small "beverage station" nearby.

An elderly RICH white women, early 70's, takes her credit card back, TURNS, and gives CASSANDRA the "once-over" as she exits.

CASSANDRA notes the look, laughs it off...

DRY CLEANING EMPLOYEE

(abruptly)

Can I help you miss?

A tall brunette women, 50's, white, overly dressed, and made up, BEHIND the register, catches CASSANDRA off-guard.

CASSANDRA

(taken by surprise)

Oh, yes, where's Charlotte?

DRY CLEANING EMPLOYEE

Charlotte's off today, did you need something?

CASSANDRA

Just my Dry Cleaning.

CASSANDRA pulls out her "CALENDAR/DATE BOOK" and begins flipping through, casually.

EMPLOYEE

Last name?

CASSANDRA

(without looking up)

Sargent.

EMPLOYEE

Wait here.

The women disappears, as CASSANDRA peers at her watch, glances outside.

After a few beats, another women enters, "brrrrriinnnnnggg."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Younger, WHITE, blonde, 30's, seemingly pleasant, as she recognizes CASSANDRA.

BLONDE PATRON

Hey! How are you?

CASSANDRA

Hey! Not bad, made it just in time, huh?

BLONDE PATRON

Thank God. Is anyone working back there?

The DRY CLEANING EMPLOYEE RETURNS with 4-5 items, hangs them near the register, and CLOCKS the new PATRON, singing a much different tune!

EMPLOYEE

Hello mam! Thanks so much for coming in to see us. I'll be right with you!

BLONDE PATRON

Great.

CASSANDRA shakes her head, places her credit card on the register, and begins taking the clothes:

DRY CLEANING EMPLOYEE

Ok, just gonna need to see some ID.

CASSANDRA

I'm sorry?

DRY CLEANING EMPLOYEE

Store policy.

CASSANDRA

Since when?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLONDE PATRON
I can vogue for her, she's in
here as much as I am.

A shared look from the BLONDE PATRON & CASSANDRA.

EMPLOYEE
I'm afraid I can't release these
items without seeing some ID, I'm
sorry.

CASSANDRA locks eyes with her, and finally, RELENTS.

CASSANDRA
Fine.

Handing it over, the woman takes EXTRA time matching it with
CASSANDRA, who GLARES back.

EXT./INT UPSCALE DRY CLEANERS - DAY

CASSANDRA exits, walks to her car, SHAKING her head softly
at the UPPITY employee.

As she opens her back passenger door, she notices...

THE EMPLOYEE has followed her out, jotting down her PLATE
NUMBER!

CASSANDRA
What the hell are you doing?

CASSANDRA, ENRAGED, throws the clothes in the car, SLAMS the
door, heading the woman off.

A wealthy white younger couple, 20's, walks by, and stops to
WITNESS the confrontation.

EMPLOYEE
Just verifying you are who you
say you are...

CASSANDRA
Have you lost your God Damn mind.
Listen bitch, if you don't get

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA (CONT)
your old white ass back in that
store, I'll have you arrested for
harassment!

EMPLOYEE
Oh YOU'LL have ME arrested?

The EMPLOYEE finishes writing, gives CASSANDRA a caddy
SNEER, heads back in.

CASSANDRA, behind the wheel, SHAKING so hard, she's unable
to get the KEY'S in the ignition.

She tries to STEADY herself, but it's no use.

FINALLY, she let's out a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM, that
reverberates throughout the block: AGHGHGHHHHH!!!

Head down, she SLOWLY looks through the WINDSHIELD.

A young white mother, 20's, baby in a stroller, pointing at
CASSANDRA to another white MOTHER, 20's, an almost identical
baby stroller.

Bewilderment on their faces.

CASSANDRA looks out the DRIVERS side, an ODLER WHITE MAN
"shakes his head" in disgust.

She begins to SOB, slowly, then DEEP, full body HEAVES...HER
body shaking in anger and DESPERATION.

EXT. PAYPHONE - STRIPMALL - DAY

INTERCUT: CASSANDRA, still SHAKING, breathing erratically,
inserts a couple of coins into a payphone.

HOMER, shirt and tie, walks a WORKROOM floor with a couple
of EMPLOYEES, explaining the next ROLLOUT, etc.

A female assistant, white, 20's, peeks her head out as they
pass:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASSISTANT

Homer! Cassandra's on the phone.

HOMER

Tell her I'll call her right back.

ASSISTANT

I think it's an emergency.

HOMER looks to the two men.

HOMER

Excuse me fellas.

HOMER picks up, the ASSISTANT closes the door, EXITS.

HOMER

You ok?

CASSANDRA

(muttering
incoherently)

Hommmmeerr....I need you...I need you to come....

HOMER

Baby calm down. Where are you?

CASSANDRA

I can't drive...I need you Homer.

HOMER

Tell me where you are.

CASSANDRA STEELS herself with a few breaths.

CASSANDRA

(comprehensible)

I need to to come down here and kill this women Homer.

HOMER

What?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Screaming into the phone!

CASSANDRA
Kill her Homer! She deserves to
die!!!

A few Passers-by look on in horror.

HOMER
Calm down baby. Breathe.
Shhhh...just breathe...

CASSANRDA'S sobs become DEEP again.

HANGS up the phone, and slides down to the ground.

CURLING up in a ball, ROCKING herself...

HOMER
Cassandra! Cassandra?

Nobody there.

HOMER (CONT)
Shit!

HOMER grabs his keys, and RUSHES out.

EXT. DALWORTH - DUSK

Super: DALWORTH

We hover above CASSANDRA'S cream-colored CADILLAC, as it rolls through a bad part of DALWORTH, coming to a halt just outside a beat-up SHANTY.

We again follow CASSANDRA'S LOUBOUTIN HEELS, this time around cracks in the PAVEMENT, broken GLASS, up to a front door.

Close on her HAND, knocking on the door...

After a few moments, the door OPENS, a RAIL THIN black man, 40's, ASHEN complexion, DEAD EYES...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks her over, his eyes LAND on her hand, HOLDING a wad of cash...

CASSANDRA enters, as the man gives a final GLANCE around, before shutting the door.

INT. SERGEANT MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

SUPER: 6 MONTHS LATER

MARIA, a pleasantly attractive Hispanic maid, 30's, KNOCKS on the Master Bedroom door.

MARIA

Ms. Cassandra? Do you want me to change the sheets?

A few more GENTLE knocks...

MARIA

Ms. Cassandra?

CASSANDRA, SPRAWLED out on the bed, no sheets, STARES BLANKLY at the wall..

She wears an AFRICAN-printed "Bohemian Muumuu" dress, her hair is LONGER and UNKEMPT, no makeup.

HOMER passes MARIA in the hallway, they share a CONCERNED look.

HOMER

Thanks Maria.

MARIA exits, as HOMER turns towards the door.

HOMER (CONT)

Baby? I'm comin in.

HOMER enters, ASSESSES the state of things.

HOMER (CONT)

Hey sugar. How about I get Maria to cook up some enchiladas...you're favorite with

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER (CONT)
the green chile, and we can take
a walk around White Rock later?

No response.

HOMER comes closer.

HOMER (CONT)
I'm worried about you, the kids
are worried about you. Maybe it's
time to go see a Doctor.

CASSANDRA
(barely audible)
You people and your Doctors...

HOMER
You people?

CASSANDRA
You heard me.

Rising... enough to LOCK eyes with her husband.

CASSANDRA (CONT)
Some damn white doctor gonna
prescribe me some bullshit or
another without as much as ask me
my name.

HOMER
Cass...just tell me what to do...
I'll do it.

CASSANDRA falls back to the bed, and STARES blankly at the
wall.

HOMER (CONT)
Please let me help you.

CASSANDRA
Take me to Dalworth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER

What? No.

CASSANDRA

Homer.

CASSANDRA rises again, and FIXES her GAZE...

CASSANDRA (CONT)

This is over.

HOMER looks back in DISBELIEF.

EXT./INT. HOMER'S CADILLAC - DALWORTH - DUSK

CASSANDRA PEERS blankly out the passenger side window, as the car pulls up to a DILAPIDATED home.

A black woman, 20's, underweight and DISHEVELED, is nursing her infant on the PORCH, and stands to GREET CASSANDRA.

CASSANDRA starts to open the door, HOMER grabs her hand:

HOMER

Did I do this?

CASSANDRA, RESIGNED, looks over:

CASSANDRA

Don't blame yourself Homer. You respecting your promise.

HOMER'S eyes well with tears, his body PARALYZED in its misery, as CASSANDRA grabs her suitcase from the back seat, and LEANS in.

CASSANDRA (CONT)

Tell the kids I love em. Now go.

HOMER PULLS away, EYES fixed on the REARVIEW mirror, and CASSANDRA, ambling up to the house.

Tears STREAM down HOMER's face, as he tilts his head back to BRACE for the pain.

INT. HOMER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

HOMER sits alone at the kitchen table, drinking a cup of coffee, bottle of whiskey nearby.

CASSANDRA'S mom VIVIAN, still pretty, a few extra pounds, 70's, enters.

VIVIAN
(calling out)
Cassandra! Cassandra? Get yo ass
down here girl. I've been telling
you about poker night for weeks.
Don't make me come up there!

Noting HOMER, who HANGS his head.

VIVIAN
What's gotten into that girl?
Will you grab her, she listens to
you...

HOMER
(slurring)
I'm afraid I can't do that...

VIVIAN
Homer, where's Cassandra?

HOMER
Gone...

VIVIAN
Where. Is. My. Daughter?

VIVIAN'S face drops...eyes blinking...knowing what's coming.

VIVIAN
HOMER...

HOMER
I took her to Dalworth...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIVIAN

You did WHAT!?! Well you have to get her! Now Homer! Do you hear me?! NOW!

HOMER

(through tears)

I promised her Viv...I promised I would never hurt her, and I promised I would never stop her from leaving.

VIVIAN

I don't give a shit about yalls promise, she needs our help!!!

VIVIAN, tearful, GRABS HOMER by the shirt, and starts pulling him, YANKING him back and forth.

VIVIAN

Get your ass up...and go get my baby girl!!!

HOMER begins to cry, grabs VIVIAN'S hand, STILL pulling on his shirt.

VIVIAN

Go get her! You got to kick her ass Homer. You can do it. Hear me?!

HOMER

Viv...

VIVIAN

She'll listen to you. I give you permission to kick her ass!?

HOMER

Vivian...

VIVIAN

(losing steam)

We'll make her listen!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMER grabs VIVIAN around the WAIST, and begins to sob.

VIVIAN, slowly realizing it's a lost cause, RELENTS, and HOLDS HOMER close, quietly rocking each other..

INT. MAPLE AVE. BOXING GYM - PRESENT DAY

Present Day: TAVARIS, VAL, COLIN, and BERNICE, all wipe away their own tears, shaking their heads...

BERNICE

I'm sorry sugar.

HOMER

Me too...

BERNICE

World ain't all sunshine and rainbows.

TAVARIS

She still alive?

HOMER

Ya...

VAL

We'll pray for her Homer.

HOMER

(choked up)

Thanks bud..well hell, y'all know just about everything about me, and I don't know squat bout y'all.

TAVARIS

Well, if it's ok with Bernie, I'd like to have you back every week. Help with the kids.

COLIN

That'd be cool as hell Homer!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERNIE

You got my blessing. Just give a
girl a heads up when she's on the
toilet... tryin do her
business...

Laughs all around.

Everyone's gathers their things, getting back to their
ROUTINES.

HOMER

You got it miss Bernice.

BERNICE

Oh it's Bernie now sugar. See you
next week.

VAL gives HOMER a big hug.

VAL

Thanks Homer.

HOMER heads out, JUMPS in his truck, and we see:
a BOUQUET of flowers, sitting in the passenger seat.

We see the truck pass a SIGN, that reads:
"RUSTLING PINES REHABILITATION CENTER"

EXT. RUSTLING PINES REHAB - GARDEN - DUSK (CONT)

HOMER, FLOWERS in tow, is making his way out to a GARDEN,
searching for someone.

One of the REHAB attendants points to where she is.

From BEHIND, in the distance, we see a black women, sitting
in a WHEELCHAIR.

HOMER begins to make his way over, when he STOPS, to notice
a WHITE COUPLE, 30's, and their daughter, 5, blonde and
curious, walking near CASSANDRA.

The little girl, carrying a box of chocolates, is GESTURING
towards CASSANDRA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The couple is URGING her on: "Go on honey," "ask her" "it's ok."

The little girl approaches CASSANDRA:

LITTLE GIRL

Hi, I'm Kaitlyn...what's your name?

Pulling CASSANDRA, now in her late 60's, GREYING, from her TRANCE.

CASSANDRA

(surprised)

Cassandra.

KAITLYN

Do you like chocolate?

CASSANDRA

I do...

KAITLYN

Well...you can have these. It's a present.

Taken by the little girls COURAGE.

CASSANDRA looks around, finding the MOM and DAD nearby.

She winks at them, they smile back.

CASSANDRA

I like presents. Tell you what miss Kaitlyn: I'll accept your present on one condition.

KAITLYN

What's that?

CASSANDRA

That you sit here and share them with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Loud enough for the parents to hear.

CASSANDRA (CONT)
If that's ok with your Mom and
Dad.

KAITLYN looks to MOM & DAD, who nod in agreement.

KAITLYN
They said ok.

HOMER just watches in WONDER...not wanting to disturb the
moment.

CASSANDRA
Well pull up a chair sweetheart.
Do you like stories...?

MOM and DAD grab KAITLYN a chair, then sit nearby.

KAITLYN
Ya.

CASSANDRA
Well let me tell you a story
about Homer and Cassandra, the
most unlikely love story you've
ever heard.

We begin to pull back, and HOVER ABOVE the scene:

KAITLYN (OC)
I don't like boys.

CASSANDRA (OC)
I didn't like em when I was your
age either...but...they grow on
ya...like a fungus!

KAITLYN (OC)
(faintly)
A what?!

Giggles....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Passing to reveal HOMER, sitting PEACEFUL, watching.

We are well above the GARDEN now, and the REHAB CENTER.

From our ZENITH, we see the title pop up on the HORIZON:

HOMER and CASSANDRA:

THE END

FADE TO:

SUPER:

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."*

-Martin Luther King Jr.

ROLL CREDITS.