

A PLACE TO GROW

Screenplay by

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FIRST DRAFT  
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Property of  
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GEORGE HOLLIDAY VIDEOTAPE OF THE RODNEY KING BEATING

TITLE: "APRIL 29TH, 1992"

STOCK FOOTAGE: RODNEY KING TRIAL VERDICT

MONTAGE SEQUENCE mixing stock footage with live action as rage erupts at the Intersection of Florence and South Normandie Avenue downtown Los Angeles.

- Shop windows are smashed
- Property destroyed
- Motorists dragged from their cars and beaten
- Cars and buildings in flames
- Entire city blocks completely destroyed

The violence, property destruction and looting continue throughout the evening.

EXT. SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES - EARLY MORNING

A car moves cautiously through a once familiar route now looking more like war-torn Baghdad. There's smoke everywhere.

- The streets covered with broken glass, twisted metal, and broken cinder blocks. Buildings reduced to rubble.
- cars, many of them still ablaze, are overturned along with shopping carts.

ANGLE

A Car approaches the intersection of Vermont and Vernon Avenue. WE CAN'T SEE the DRIVER clearly due to all the smoke and ash moving through the air. The smoldering ruins of what used to be a large shopping center is to the left of the car

ANGLE ON A PAIR OF HANDS

as their grip tightens on the steering wheel. SOUNDS OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY BROADCAST are heard quietly over the car radio. The anxious hands turn the wheel to the left.

HIGH ANGLE - 40-FOOT-SIGN - "CHALLENGERS

as the car pulls slowly into the driveway.

LOW ANGLE

as the car door swings open

LOU DANTZLER, 50s, black, bald head, moustache with speckles of gray and white on the tips, steps out of the car like a giant tree growing out of the earth. He's tall like a mountain. Although his eyes burn from the smoke he struggles to look further in the distance.

He looks around him at the destruction in disbelief... a mixture of horror and profound sadness. He cautiously walks to the chain-link fence, unlocks the gate, swings it open and drives in.

HIS P.O.V.

through the windshield WE SEE the shape of a large building.

ANGLE on Lou

as he holds his breath. Bringing the car to a stop and shutting off the engine.

EXT. WIDE - CHALLENGER'S CLUB

A derelict basketball looms in the foreground as Lou steps out of the car. Lou SCANS the building and is relieved to see the Club building is still intact and seemingly untouched at least from the front.

WE FOLLOW him as he moves to the front door, unlocks it and swings it open.

INT. CHALLENGER'S GYM - EARLY MORNING

The gym is cool, dark, and empty. Lou steps cautiously inside as the door closes behind him with a LOUD CLAMOR.

ANGLE ON LOU as he walks across the gym floor stepping in and out of pools of smoky sunlight coming in from the windows. WE HEAR THE SOUND of another car pulling up in the parking lot just outside the front door.

LOU

stops in his tracks and swings around to the front door.

ANGLE ON THE DOOR

LOU

as he peers through the crack in the door.

Lou's P.O.V.

An UNMARKED POLICE CRUISER parks next to Lou's car. LT. BRUCE HAGERTY, early 40's, a solid man with a thick moustache, square chin and kind compassionate eyes steps out. He's in uniform. He's head of detectives for the LAPD's 77th Street Division and the Challenger's President of the Board.

ON LOU, exhaling with relief at the sight of Bruce, as he opens the door...

LOU

Over here!

BRUCE

instinctively grabs his holster and spins around to see Lou.

BRUCE

Hey. Lou.  
(catching his breath)

Bruce relaxes as Lou approaches. They embrace and hold each other for a long time.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Are you Okay? How are you doing?

Lou and Bruce

LOU

(emotions erupting)  
Oh, man...

Bruce looks at Lou and cradles the back of his head. A few moments pass... both men overwhelmed by the violence and destruction.

CLOSE ON LOU as he hunches over to catch his breath. He focuses on an overturned car amongst the rubble on the streets just beyond the fenced-in parameter of the club.

WE MOVE IN on THE FLAMES of the burning vehicle.

TITLE CARD: AUGUST 12, 1965

SECOND TITLE: THE WATTS RIOT

THIRD TITLE: 27 YEARS EARLIER

STOCK FOOTAGE

Showing disturbingly similar events to the Rodney King Riot, white motorists being dragged from their cars and beaten, vehicles burning, some of them over turned, and vandalism on a grand scale.

INT. SHOP OWNER - EARLY MORNING

A MAN AND WOMAN work feverishly to tape a hastily made poster on the cracked window of their small convenience store.

ANGLE FROM THE OUTSIDE

The sign reads: BLACK-OWNED.

No sooner then the sign is up a brick comes flying through the air SMASHING the glass. WE MOVE across what was once a small collection of shops to see PACKS of ANGRY YOUNG ADULT RIOTERS & LOOTERS carrying baseball bats, machetes, knives, stones, and Molotov cocktails. Many of them are yelling, "BURN, BABY, BURN!"

TELEVISION SCREEN: News footage showing a hand-lettered sign at the top of one of the street corners "TURN LEFT OR GET SHOT."

ANGLE ON LOU - now 27 years younger, & HIS WIFE RUBY

standing a few feet from their BLACK & WHITE TELEVISION SET, the young couple are heartbroken and transfixed by the horror unfolding on before them. WE HEAR the SOUNDS of RIOTING on the television as well as OUTSIDE the house. They HEAR a LOUD RUMBLING. It begins to shake the house.

LOU rushes to the window to look out onto the streets.

ANGLE

ARMED TANKS surrounded by NATIONAL GUARDSMEN move down the neighborhood streets.

ON LOU as Ruby clutches onto his arm.

LOU

Four and half years in the military  
never once seeing a battlefield...  
(seeing the irony)  
Naw! I have to come home for that!

MONTAGE SEQ. THE NATIONAL GUARD

The weekend warriors put on their helmets, their flat jackets, fix bayonets, and prepare their machine guns.

ROADBLOCKS & BARRICADES are established around the perimeter of the "battle zone."

WIDE - SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES BATTLE ZONE

The smoke begins to clear. There are very few two story buildings.

CLOSE - RUBBLE

CLOSE - GLOVED HANDS PICK UP TWISTED METAL & BROKEN CINDER BLOCKS

CLOSE - AN INDUSTRIAL BROOM SWEEPS SHARDS OF BROKEN GLASS FROM THE PAVEMENT

NEWS FOOTAGE - MARTIN LUTHER KING, Jr. curtailing his tour through South Central Los Angeles after being heckled and jeered.

EXT. LOU'S NEIGHBORHOOD - LATE AFTERNOON

LOU and a MAN from the neighborhood are returning from foraging around the community to assess the damage and to see what stores if any were open for business.

MAN

(talks fast)  
Well, we found a 7-Eleven opened up for business... at least we can feed our families something.

LOU

I read that the Vons supermarket on 51st Street and Vermont Avenue won't be re-opening.  
(a beat)  
Has the world gone crazy?

MAN

Shit! This shit had to happen! Only a matter of time!  
(MORE)

MAN (CONT'D)

I'm worried about some of those stores opening up again. I bet a lot of companies are going to move out. I'm wondering if I'm going to have a fuck'n job to go back to. But this was a good thing over all!

MAN and LOU exchange looks.

MAN (CONT'D)

The white establishment only does something when a crisis comes up and bites them on the ass!

They exchange looks again.

MAN (CONT'D)

Don't give me that damn look now! You have to admit violence woke every one up... it done woke 'em up! Focused the world on all the fuck'n shit we've been going through. I mean Fuck! Whitey's listening to us now ain't he?!

LOU

Yeah, they are. There's no denying that, but all this seems to only confirm what many of them believe about us...

MAN stops in his tracks.

MAN

Yeah, and what's that?

LOU

That we're violent, lawless thugs who deserved to be put down and locked up.

MAN

We better stop talk'n I'm getting pissed off all over again. I mean those are fight'n words, don't come to me saying that shit! Let's talk about something else...

LOU

Okay. I'm thinking about starting my own business...

MAN

Your own business?! What kind of  
business you thinking about...?

LOU

Maybe a lawn mowing business...  
help neighbors clean up the  
neighbor's yards stuff like that..

The two men continue walking back to their homes. Their  
conversation fading off into the distance.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - FALL AFTERNOON

LOU pulls up to a neighbor's house in a BLUE FORD PICK-UP  
TRUCK. His 5-year old son MARK is with him in the front seat.  
Seemingly out of no where a bunch of neighborhood boys (ages  
8 to 14) swarm around the truck eager to help him unload his  
equipment from the back.

LOU

(teasing tone to all the  
kids)

You here again?

The kids laugh as Lou makes his way to the back of the truck  
and lowers the door. They were all well rehearsed: they'd  
done this before.

LOU (CONT'D)

What's your names any way?

ANGLE ON TWO OF THE BOYS.

TERRY B.

Terry.

LOU

(to the other boy)

What's your name?

TERRY S.

Terry.

LOU

You both named Terry? You brothers?

TERRY S.

No. We're both name Terry. He's  
Terry Baker and I'm Terry Smith.

TERRY B.

Can we help you with the yard work?

LOU

Well, all of you guys...  
It's such a beautiful day! Why  
aren't you at the park? Don't you  
want to play ball with each other  
or something like that?

Lou recognizes another kid in the group.

LOU (CONT'D)

Hey, you're Milton Collins. You're  
the young man who lives kitty  
corner from my place.

ON MILTON, 11 or 12, bright kid with a sense of humor, he  
lowers his head and begins kicking an invisible rock off the  
sidewalk.

MILTON

(murmuring)

Yeah, we like ball. But the park's  
too far to walk.

TERRY S.

My mom won't take me to the park  
'cause of the drug dealing.

TERRY B.

The last time we went and started  
playing, these older kids came up  
and said it was their court and had  
to get off or pay to use it.

(holding back tears)

Then they took my ball.

LOW ANGLE ON LOU, he's been listening to these kids and his  
heart is breaking into a thousand pieces.

LOU

Okay. I could use some help pulling  
out the weeds.

LOU walks over to his customer's front yard and kneels down  
to the ground. ALL the KIDS come up next to him and do the  
same thing.

LOU (CONT'D)

You guys know the difference  
between weeds and regular grass?

MILTON

Weeds grow all over the place and  
every which way....

TERRY S.

Yeah, they're taller than everything else too...

ANGLE ON THE FRONT YARD as LOU explains the difference between weeds, grass, and flowers.

LOU

All very good answers. They're not always taller than everything else. See, this here is a flower and that over there is a what they call a herb... you don't want to pull those out. One is beautiful, and the other - the herb, is helpful, we eat them or cook with them. The grass looks nice, and weeds... well, weeds just get in the way of having a nice garden. So you got to decide which are the weeds and which are the good plants.

LOU stands up and looks at the kids for a moment then goes to his truck to get some extra work gloves. He hands out what extra gloves he has.

LOU (CONT'D)

You guys can help me pull out the weeds. Don't pull anything out if your not sure. Ask me first. Got it?

The kids are excited to help.

THE KIDS

Got it, Mr. Lou.

INT. LOU'S DINING ROOM - THAT EVENING

Lou's wife RUDY, late 20's, beautiful complexion, light and breezy, and now pregnant with their second child. She finishes the final toss on a salad and brings it to the table where Lou and their son Mark wait for her to sit down. Lou says grace and then, without skipping a beat, surveys the culinary offerings on the table.

LOU

Mmmm Hm! Everything looks so delicious! Thank you Honey.

Rudy leans over to offer her cheek. Lou quickly picks up on her body language and gives her a gentle kiss.

Rudy gets up almost as soon as she sits down to portion out samples of everything on the table onto Mark's plate.

But when Rudy gets to the bowl of Brussel Sprouts...

MARK

But I don't like those Mommy!

LOU

(intervening)

We want you to try them at least.  
Just one bite. You don't have to  
finish them. Okay? Deal?

MARK

Okay. Deal.

ANGLE ON RUDY as she returns to her chair.

RUDY

I read today that Pepperdine  
University is leaving town.

LOU

Where are they going?

RUDY

To a bluff overlooking Malibu  
Beach.

LOU

Definitely sounds like an upgrade  
from sunny South Central.

RUDY

How was your day?

LOU

Oh, I was so heart broken. The kids  
around here have nothing to do. I  
mean the highlight of their day is  
me showing up to cut their mom's  
front lawn.

(a change... more somber)

These kids aren't even out of  
childhood yet and they have to deal  
with adult issues...

(catching himself, Mark's  
at the table)

It's just sad is all.

(noticing that he's set a  
heavy tone for dinner)

(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)

They seem so fascinated by my lawn equipment, especially my leaf blower. They love the leaf blower. They line up just for a chance to crank that baby and watch the leaves fly in the air. They're all yelling, "My turn! It's my turn!"

(to Rudy)

They follow me around the whole time asking why I'm doing that and what this equipment does...

RUDY

Well, I guess most of them don't see a man around much. You and Mark must be a welcome sight for them.

LOU

Yeah, you're probably right. Huh Mark?

MARK

Right! I think they like me.

LOU

Of course they like you. What's there not to like?!

RUDY

'Careful Honey, you don't want to give him a big head.

LOU

You know. I have to stop and marvel at the fact that I spent the last dozen years escaping those chores Momma used to make me do every day as a kid.

(amusing himself)

Here I am choosing to do them all over again.

RUDY

The difference this time dear is that you're getting paid for it and you're your own boss.

LOU

Good point Honey. I knew there was a good reason I'm doing it.

There is a pause in the conversation so everyone can eat. Mark of course has been chowing down the whole time.

RUDY

My Dad wants to bring Michael by tomorrow for a hair cut. Do you have time for him?

Mark hears Michaels name and immediately gets excited.

MARK

Really, Mike's coming over tomorrow?

LOU

(to Rudy)

Oh, yeah. I always have time for him. Our neighbor wants me to cut their boy's hair this week. I'll ask her to send him over tomorrow. Might as well get him out of the way too.

RUDY

Why do you say it like that?

LOU

He's a difficult customer. He's 11 years old and sooo picky about the way I cut his hair. But Michael, yeah, I always have time for him.

Rudy starts getting sentimental. She takes her husband's hand.

RUDY

Remember when we had to take Michael with us when we were dating?

LOU

Do I ever. He always seemed to have a 6th sense for when I was about to kiss you because...

Rudy joins in with a smile that lights up the room...

LOU & RUDY

He'd always jump between us!

MARK

Really, is Mike coming over??

LOU

(recognizing his son's excitement)

(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)

Ask your brother if he wants to go with us out to the park this Saturday to play ball.

RUDY

I'm sure my Dad, and my Mom, would love that.

(to Mark)

Want some more mashed potatoes Mark?

MARK

(even more excited)

Really, is Mike coming over??!

Rudy and Lou start laughing.

LOU

Yeah, looks like your Coz is coming over.

INT. KITCHEN - THE FOLLOWING DAY

Lou is putting the finishing touches on the hair cut he's giving to Michael, Mark's 7 year old cousin. Michael's father, MR. TALLEY, 50's, sits patiently at the table sipping iced tea garnished with a sprig of mint.

LOU

You still playing the horn at night after work Mr. Talley?

MR. TALLEY

You know it. You can take the man away from the music but you can never take the music out of the man. It's one of the things I most look forward to.

(a beat)

How about you. Rudy tells me you're holding down 4 jobs and just took on another one... janitor at some school.

LOU

It sounds like a lot, but it really isn't. I was never an "oh-it's - my - day - off -so-I'm-going-to-sleep-all-day-and-watch-TV kind of guy. Besides, I enjoy what I do.

MR. TALLEY

Out of all those jobs you do, what do you enjoy the most?

LOU

(continues cutting Mike's hair as he considers the answer)

My lawn business.

MR. TALLEY

Why?

LOU

(continues cutting hair)

I take tremendous pleasure in knowing that, when I pull up any given day, the grass is poking up unevenly and threatening to overtake the sidewalks... and dandelions and crabgrass are beginning to choke the flowerbeds, and when I leave everything is in order and the grass is immaculate. I like seeing a neatly trimmed green patch surrounded by nicely sculpted hibiscus or camellia bushes, with not a weed in sight.

MICHAEL

(eyes looking upward as if to watch how Mr. Dantzler is cutting his hair)

I hope you don't mistake my head for one of those lawns you mow.

MR. TALLEY

Son, watch it. You be respectful to Mr. Dantzler.

LOU

(looks at Mr. Talley)

I think of it as more than mowing lawns. I think of it as landscaping and I loose myself in it. I don't think of nothing else. It's just me and nature.

MR. TALLEY

(smiles)

It's like that with me when I play my trumpet. It's just me and the music.

(MORE)

MR. TALLEY (CONT'D)

Miles Davis says that when the creative spirit speaks to you, you got to do something with it. 'Cause if you don't, it'll get up and go find someone who will.

LOU

Speaking of doing something Mr. Talley. I was thinking about taking Michael to the park Saturday to play ball with me and Mark.

Michael suddenly gets interested in the conversation. He keeps his head still but moves his eyes to catch his Pa's reaction.

LOU (CONT'D)

Is that okay?

Michael reacts with excitement.

MR. TALLEY

Of course Lou. You don't even have to ask. It's important to keep these little monsters busy you know. They've got a lot of energy.

LOU

Yes, they do.

MR. TALLEY

So many kids are out there on the streets with nothing to do. Little wonder they get themselves into trouble.

LOU

"Idle hands are the Devil's workshop" my Mom always said.

MR. TALLEY

And she was right!

Lou puts the finishing touches on Michael's haircut. He brushes away the cut hair from around the neck and shoulders and removes the barber's tape from Michael's neck.

LOU

There you go. You're all set.

MR. TALLEY

Just come on by Saturday and get 'em.

(MORE)

MR. TALLEY (CONT'D)  
(pats Michael on the back)  
You'll be ready won't you sport?

MICHAEL  
Oh, you bet I will!

EXT. LOU'S HOUSE

Lou stands at the door way and waves "Good-Bye" to his Father-in-Law and Brother-in-Law. WE FOLLOW him back to the kitchen where he automatically grabs a broom and begins sweeping up Mike's cut hair from the floor.

There's a KNOCK at the front door. WE FOLLOW Lou back to the front door. WE CAN SEE a skinny 11-year old neighbor boy, DONALD, fun loving and mischievous.

LOU  
Hey, perfect timing Donald. Come on in. Let's cut your hair.

DONALD  
Hi Mister Dantzler. Can you not cut it so short as last time?

Lou and Donald walk back to the Kitchen.

LOU  
But your Mom asked me to cut it short.

DONALD  
But it's my hair!

LOU  
But she pays me. Besides, she's your Mother and we gotta do what your Mother says.

Donald reluctantly sits in the chair and resigns himself to a haircut.

DONALD  
So Mr. D, you work on Saturdays and Sunday's too?

LOU

Not Sundays. Sunday is the Sabbath. Everyone's suppose to rest and be with family on Sunday, but I do have a busy schedule all day Saturday mowing lawns and trimming bushes.

DONALD

What about Mrs. D?

LOU

She usually does the shopping Saturday morning. Why do you ask?

DONALD

Just ask'n.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE FRONT LAWN - EARLY SATURDAY MORNING

Lou has just finished a job and, as always, his group of followers is eager to help him load his lawn equipment back into the truck.

LOU

I really appreciate your help guys but it's not necessary.

TERRY S.

It's okay Mr. D. We like helping you out.

TERRY B.

Mr. D can we ride in the back?

LOU

I'm sorry boys. Not today.

BOYS

(collectively)

Oh, come on Mr. D. Just for a little bit?

LOU

It's Saturday! Don't you guys have something to do?

ANGLE ON THE TWO TERRY'S

Some other kids in the background. They all look at each other and shrug their shoulders as if saying, "of course not."

LOU

as he looks at them a moment. He glances down at his watch.

CLOSE ON WATCH - 10 AM

LOU (CONT'D)

(giving in)

Okay, but a quick one. And when I say "Out!" Everyone jump out no back talk! Right?

BOYS

Yeaaaah!

ON LOU

He can't help but smile seeing the kids so excited.

LOU

Okay! Let's go!

Lou climbs into the driver's seat while several boys jump into the back of the pick-up truck.

LOU as he starts the engine. He turns back to see that everybody's in the back.

LOU (CONT'D)

Everybody in?

BOYS

Yeah, we're in!

LOU

Oookaay! We're taking off!

The boys in the back of the truck yell out as the pick-up truck moves away from the curb and down the block.

ANGLE ON LOU

speeding up and then slowing down. Lou looks in his rear view mirror.

HIS P.O.V.

All the boys are smiling ear to ear.

BOYS  
 (ad-lib excited commotion)  
 What's he doing? Is he gonna stop  
 now?! Whooooooooooooaaaa!"

WIDE - NEIGHTBORHOOD STREET CORNER

Lou's Blue pick-up turning down another street with a bunch of happy boys in truck screaming with delight and having a good time.

EXT. LOU'S HOUSE - LATER THAT MORNING (SUMMER 1968)

Lou pulls up to the front of the house and, needing to use the rest room, rushes to the front door leaving the lawn equipment in the truck.

INT. LOU'S HOUSE

Lou unlocks the door and steps inside. we HEAR some movement in the back of the house.

Lou glances outside. No car in the drive way.

LOU  
 Ruby? Honey, you home?

Lou takes a step forward. He HEARS a sudden movement like a cord being ripped from a wall.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 Who's there?  
 (trying to sound  
 convincing)  
 I got a gun!

There's the SOUND of someone SCRAMBLING to toward the kitchen area and THE SOUND of the SCREEN DOOR flying open. Lou runs to the kitchen in time to see a little kid bolting out the back. In just few long strides (Lou's a tall man), Lou is close enough to catch the boy by the color.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 (yelling)  
 What are you doing boy?!

CLOSE - THE BOY DROPS AN ALARM CLOCK RADIO

CLOSE - HE TURNS AROUND trying to break free from the large hand gripping his shirt collar. It's Lou's neighbor Donald - the same kid whose hair he had cut just a couple of days before.

LOU (CONT'D)

Donald?!

LOU & DONALD

LOU marches the frightened boy next door.

EXT. NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE (DONALD'S HOUSE)

LOU, still holding DONALD by this shirt collar, stomps in front of the door and knocks loudly on the door and rings the door bell repeatedly.

DONALD'S MOTHER

Yes.

(notices her son)

What's this about? Lou what are you doing?!

She opens the screen door and grabs one of Donald's arm. DONALD breaks free from both of them and runs back into his bedroom and slams the door.

LOU

Your son, Mrs. Davis, broke into my home and was steeling our alarm clock radio.

Not half way through Lou's explanation, Mrs. Davis turns away and covers her face with her hands.

DONALD'S MOTHER

Oh, my Lord! I don't know what to do with that child. His Dad's never around. I've got 3 jobs to make ends meet same as you.

LOU

You don't see my kid breaking into other people's homes.

DONALD'S MOTHER

(now angry)

I am sorry Mr. Dantzler, but I don't know what else to do. Keeping him out of the gangs, away from drugs, I can't do it. I don't know what to do with him. I mean I have to work. I can't be watching him all the time.

LOU as he realizes that the mother is overwhelmed.

On LOU as grows irritated by the whole situation. Fed up, he walks briskly past her. WE HOLD on her.

DONALD'S MOTHER (CONT'D)  
(muttering)  
That's right, you talk to 'em.

Lou opens the door to Donald's room and goes inside.

LOU  
Hey, man!

ANGLE ON DONALD

his head turned away staring out the window off into the distance, a stoic expression on his face.

LOU takes a brief moment to calm down. He looks at Donald reassessing the situation.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Do you like basketball? Baseball?

ON DONALD

not what he expected at all.

DONALD  
What?

LOU  
I'm going to take Michael and mark  
to the park in the truck in a few  
minutes... just to shoot some hoops  
or play some baseball.  
(making eye contact)  
Wanna come?

DONALD, he's surprised but quickly snaps to. His eyes lighting up with enthusiasm.

DONALD  
Huh? Yeah!

MONTAGE SEQ.

CLOSE - LOU

on the phone with Michael.

LOU  
I've invited Donald to join us  
today. I'm thinking of asking  
Milton too. That okay?

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
Fine with me.

LOU  
Wanna see if your friend Terry  
wants to come?

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
Which one? Terry Smith or Terry  
Baker?

LOU  
Well, both of them.

MICHAEL  
Okay. I'll call 'em.

INT. MILTON'S HOUSE - THROUGH SCREEN DOOR

WE SEE LOU approach from across the street. He's moving fast.

CLOSE - LOU TALKING TO MILTON

CLOSE - MILTON'S REACTION - SMILING EAR TO EAR

MILTON  
Can I ask my cousin Ronald to come  
along too?

LOU  
Sure. But hurry!

Down the hall Milton's younger sister VALERIE sticks her head  
out from her bedroom.

VALERIE  
Can I go too?

LOU  
No baby doll. It's just for boys.

VALERIE  
(scowling)  
That's not fair!

CLOSE - LOU ON THE PHONE WITH HIS FRIEND GEORGE MAY

LOU  
 Hey George! You still seeing that  
 woman with 5 teenage boys?

GEORGE (O.S.)  
 Yeah.

LOU  
 Well, grab them. Let's go play  
 basketball!

WE HEAR over the phone line, George's girlfriend CORINNE...

CORRINE (O.S.)  
 Take them. Take them.

ANGLE ON LOU back at his truck. Donald, Milton, and his son  
 Mark waiting on the curb.

LOU  
 Okay guys! We have to make some  
 room in this truck. Help me move  
 all this equipment into the garage.

As the boys are loading the lawn equipment into the garage  
 Lou is busy adding up the names on a small note pad.

CLOSE - NOTEPAD

12 NAMES

ANGLE ON LOU as he looks at the back of his truck. He turns  
 around and NOTICES their new redwood picnic table in the  
 backyard.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 Guys! Help me get these two benches  
 into the back of the truck.

ANGLE ON BOYS HELPING LOU

IN THE KITCHEN - packing a cooler with ice and cartons of  
 milk and containers of water.

AT THE TRUCK, benches already in position, one on either  
 side, loading up balls, bats, and gloves.

ON THE BOYS as they climb into the truck. The bigger kids on  
 the bench. The smaller ones on the floor holding onto the  
 legs of the bigger kids. Lou shuts the door.

EXT. WIDE - L.A. FREEWAYS

Lou's blue pick-up truck, with a back full of happy kids, as it approaches the exit for Centinela Park in nearby Inglewood.

EXT. CENTINELA PARK (SUMMER 1968)

A skinny, mile-long patch of green and shade provided by Sycamore, Magnolia, and Jacaranda trees scattered along gentle rolling hills. Most importantly, it has 2 BASEBALL DIAMONDS and 2 concrete BASKETBALL COURTS.

PICK-UP TRUCK as it pulls up to the park.

The kids jump out as if their legs were spring loaded.

Lou comes around back, opens the door, and grabs a handful of equipment.

LOU

Okay. Let's go have some fun!

MONTAGE:

Lou leads the group in doing push-ups

-- jumping jacks

-- sit ups

-- running laps around the baseball diamond

Everyone's working up a sweat and enjoying being out doors.

BASEBALL

The kids play. Lou doing double duty as pitcher, cheerleader and coach. It's a toss up as to who's enjoying it more... the kids or Lou.

BASKETBALL

Lou's right in there with the kids playing a heated defense one moment and intense offense the next. He's definitely not taking it easy on the kids. He really wants them to be competitive.

EXT. CENTINELA PARK - LATE AFTERNOON (SUMMER 1968)

The shadows are now longer, and the sun has dipped low behind the trees and the sky is turning a soft purple.

CLOSE ON LOU & HIS BUDDY GEORGE

as he reminisces about growing up in South Carolina.

LOU

(to George)

I love this time of day. It reminds me that anything... absolutely anything is possible if you just set your mind to it. Let's call the boys in.

Everybody finds a spot under the biggest trees near the basketball courts. The cooler is opened, everybody's snacking on milk and cookies.

LOU as he notices Donald laughing and giggling about something. LOU smiles.

All the kids are smiling and laughing with each other while enjoying their snacks.

LOU (CONT'D)

What do you guys think? Did you have fun?

BOYS

(ad lib)

Oh, yeah!

LOU

That's great! Do you want to do it again in a couple of weeks?

ANGLE ON EACH OF THE YOUNG BOYS as their eyes get really wide and their mouths make little Os of excitement. In disbelief they turn to look at each other as if to ask "is this for real or are we dreaming?"

BOYS

Sure man! You Bet! I'll be here for sure! Great idea Lou!

ONE BOY raises his hand and then speaks before being recognized.

BOY WITH HAND RAISED

Can I ask my friend to come?

BACKGROUND BOY

How about my neighbor?

LOU

Yeah, what ever you guys want!

Another CHORUS of CHEERS and CLAPPING.

WIDE DISTANT ANGLE OF THE LOU'S CAMP UNDER THE TREE

as he sits on the ground with them to start a kind of round table conversation.

EXT. L.A. FREEWAYS - TWILIGHT

Lou's pick-up heading back to the neighborhood

INT. TRUCK CABIN

Mark is fast asleep. His head on Lou's lap. WE TILT up to see Lou with a huge smile on his face.

EXT. FRONT YARD - LATE AFTERNOON

Lou mowing the front yard of one of his clients.

CLOSE - NOTEPAD

as he writes one lawn mowing appointment right after another. He WRITES a name at 5:30 right under the previous entry at 4:30.

CLOSE - LOU'S ALARM RADIO STARTS PLAYING- 7:30 AM

Lou wakes up and shuts the alarm off. He swings himself upright. Looks at his wife next to him and gets up to wash his face.

ANGLE ON LOU, MARK & MICHAEL

hoping into the truck.

He picks up the two Terrys who have a COUPLE OF FRIENDS with them.

CORINNE'S HOUSE - he picks up her 5 teenage boys and they have a COUPLE of FRIENDS also.

THE FRONT OF THE TRUCK

We can see it's a tight squeeze. There are twice as many kids as the first trip.

EXT. CENTINELA PARK

The boys encounter a fountain that shoots water into the air.  
They get into a massive water-fighting-free-for-all.

EXT. CENTINELA PARK - TENNIS

The entourage passes by tennis courts.

EXT. AMPHITHEATER

There is so much clowning and hamming on stage that several of the younger boys have to be dragged off. Some other BOYS in the audience section laugh hysterically.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND

A good energetic. The boys become sweaty and tired.

EXT. PUBLIC POOL

The BOYS lead by LOU walk passed a pool. They look through the chain-link fence. Most of them hadn't seen a pool before.

CLOSE ON LOU as he writes a note to himself.

THE NOTE PAD - "Find a place to swim"

EXT. THE VISITING TREE - LATE AFTERNOON

The boys sit around in semi-circle enjoying their snacks.

LOU

You know, we could do this on a regular basis, make it a club something.

The kids respond enthusiastically.

LOU (CONT'D)

We could have shirts, have dues, and have a name.

More cheering.

LOU (CONT'D)

What do yo uthink we should call ourselves?

BOYS  
 (ad lib)  
 The Tigers! The Hellcats!

Michael stands up.

MICHAEL  
 How about the Challengers? From the  
 comic book 'The Challengers of the  
 Unknown.'"

The group of boys really like Michael's suggestion. Most of  
 them, after all were fanatics about comics.

DONALD  
 How about the Challenger's Boys  
 Club?

LOU  
 Let's take a vote. How about the  
 Challenger's Boys Club? Raise your  
 hands.

Everybody's hands go up. It's unanimous.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 Now, how about age range? Youngest  
 and oldest?

MICHAEL  
 What's the youngest and oldest  
 here?

LOU  
 That would be Mark. He's 6. And  
 Ryan, you're what? 18. Show of  
 hands.

Again, every one's hands go up.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 And is every cool with 15 cents  
 every two weeks?

Some hands go up. The rest just say "yeah, that's cool."

Lou smiles.

INT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - EARLY MONDAY MORNING FIRST PERIOD

Michael tells his best friend Kenny Rogers about the new club  
 during Science class.

## HALLWAY

Kids get books out of their lockers and quickly touch base with their friends.

Terry S. and Terry B. talk about the Challengers Club to the friends between classes.

## INT. LOU'S HOUSE - WEEK NIGHT - AFTER DINNER

Lou's on the phone. There's a hand drawn chart and a legal pad in front of him.

LOU

Hi Ed, you know how I've been taking a group of boys out to the park every other week?

ED (O.S.)

Yeah

LOU

We'll the number of boys have been doubling every week and I need seem help transporting them all to and from the neighborhood and park.

ED (O.S.)

Be happy to Lou. Sounds like fun.

## EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD KID'S HOUSE - EARLY SATURDAY MORNING

Lou's truck, already full of some kids, pulls up into the driveway and Lou HONKS the horn to announce they're arrival. A couple of seconds later, a little BOY comes dashing out of the house and is helped into the truck by his friends.

## EXT. A DIFFERENT HOUSE

The pick-up pulls up. Lou HONKS the horn and another kid comes running out to get on board.

## EXT. ANOTHER KID'S HOUSE

The truck pulls into the drive way. Lou HONKS, but nothing happens. Lou figures no one is coming so he starts backing out of the drive way. A 10 - year old boy comes stumbling out of the house with his pants still down around his knees.

## THE BOYS IN THE TRUCK CRACK UP LAUGHING

Lou pretends not to see him and continues a little way down the street. The kid chasing after him while fastening his pants. Lou stops the truck so that the kid can catch up and get in. Then he proceeds down the road to the next pick up point.

## INT. LOU'S HOUSE - FRIDAY NIGHT

Lou's on the phone finding out who's going with them on Saturdays.

LOU

Hi, this is Lou Dantzler. Is Joey and his friend going tomorrow with us to the park?

JOEY'S MOM (O.S.)

Yeah, they're both over here. They're looking forward to it.

LOU

Okay. I'll pick 'em tomorrow. Goodnight Mrs. Benson.

ANGLE ON NOTE PAD as Lou keeps track of who's coming and who's not. He also has a list of which kids are being picked up by which driver.

## INT. KITCHEN

Lou's still on the phone. Ruby's in the background reading the paper and occasionally steels a glance at him.

LOU

George?

CORRINE

I'll get him. Hold on.  
(a moment while she calls  
him to the phone)

GEORGE

Yeah?

LOU

Hi George, I'm just calling everyone to make sure they know we're meeting up at Griffith Park tomorrow morning and not Centinela Park.

GEORGE  
Got it. We'll be there.

Lou hangs up the phone and turns to look at Ruby.

CLOSE ON LOU

LOU  
We're going to have close to a 100  
boys tomorrow.

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK - EARLY SATURDAY MORNING

The cars unloading the kids.

MED. ON LOU

Helping some of the kids unload a few boxes

CLOSE ON LOU

As he opens one of the boxes and pulls out new CHALLENGERS T-Shirts.

EXT. PARK

LOU, GEORGE, ED, and the BOYS have their new Challenger shirts on. They huddle like they're reviewing football strategy.

LOU  
Okay. George? Ed? We need to split  
these boys into age groups. I'll  
take the 6 to 9 year olds. The  
younger ones will wander off when  
they can't play at the same level  
as the teens. Milk and Cookies  
won't sit well with some of the  
older ones. You guys take the  
teenagers.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - LATE AFTERNOON

MED. THREE SHOT - LOU, ONE of the Challengers' kids, and his  
TEACHER at a school parent-teacher conference.

INT. LOU'S DINNING ROOM

Lou and Ruby are reading the L.A. Times.

CLOSE ON THE L.A. TIMES - 4 COLUMN ARTICLE ON LOU & THE CHALLENGERS.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD 50TH STREET

CARL REED, 13, a smart kid, smart mouth and a temper to match, has just arrived in the neighborhood together with his MOM - LAURA, and his 8 brothers and sisters. He's walking with a neighborhood boy, YUCK, 17, and bouncing his basketball. They're searching for a place to play a game.

YUCK

So what's your name?

CARL REED

Carl.

YUCK

They call me YUCK. Short for Yuck-yuck.

CARL REED

What kind of name is that?

YUCK

"Cause it's the sound I make when I laugh at jokes.

CARL kind of chuckles.

YUCK (CONT'D)

We should head back Cuz.

CARL REED

C'mon man, we're almost there. Saw it just the other day.

YUCK

You're pretty new around here, huh?

YUCK (CONT'D)

Where'd you say you came from? You gotta watch were you go around here. What clique you with?

CARL REED

Huh? What?

YUCK

You with any group?

CARL REED

Naw.

YUCK

We'll you better join up with us  
then. You need some body to protect  
your ass.

CARL REED

I can take care of myself.

YUCK smiles at him thinking "yeah" he'll do alright.

They're approached by TWO TEENAGERS.

TEENAGE BOY #1

Hey man! You guys have got get out  
of here or pay the toll.

CARL

What the fuck you talking about?

TEEN BOY #2

Got any money on ya?

CARL

What?

The taller TEENAGE BOY #1 steps forward and slape the  
basketball out of CARL's hands while TEEN BOY#2 pushes Carl  
backwards. Carl almost falls down.

YUCK

C'mon fellas back off!

TEENAGE BOY #1 moves close to YUCK and pulls out a  
switchblade.

YUCK (CONT'D)

He's new here and doesn't know  
anything.

TEEN BOY #2

Tough shit. What's your excuse?!  
Pay up or we got to knock you out.

TEENAGE BOY #1

You!

(to CARL)

Got any money.

CARL

I don't have anything.

TEENAGE BOY #1

Then we'll take your ball for  
payment. Cuz, go get his ball.

CARL rushes ahead to grab the basketball and run.

YUCK pushes the Knife BOY away and runs in a different direction.

CARL looks back as he's running and sees YUCK running the other way and being chased. He lets TEEN BOY #2 catches up to him, spins around, throws the ball at his feet. TEEN BOY #2 awkwardly struggles to keep his balance. CARL punches him straight in the nose. BLOOD splatters every where as they boy falls to the ground. The BOY is stunned. CARL grabs his ball and runs off.

TEEN BOY #2 gets to his feet with his hands over his nose.

TEEN BOY #2  
Son-of-a-bitch!

WIDE - NEXT STREET OVER

YUCK runs from yard to yard, effortlessly jumping fences as he needs to. He turns one corner and runs right into the TWO TEENAGERS again.

YUCK  
Fuck Cuz! You scared me.

TEENAGE BOY #1  
Good. Think we scared the newbie?

YUCK shakes his head as he doubles over to catch his breath.

YUCK  
(to TEEN BOY #2 with the  
bloody nose)  
What happened to you.

TEEN BOY #2  
The little fucker punched me in the  
nose. Can't wait to pay him back.

TEEN BOY #2 starts laughing followed by TEENAGE BOY #1 and YUCK (we get to hear first hand why he's called Yuck-Yuck).

EXT. CARL'S NEIGHBORHOOD

CARL walks home by himself. He comes across KIDS playing football in front of his house. JEROME, about CARL's age, throws the ball. NICKY, one of Jerome's buddies, misses the ball and the ball slams into CARL's front door.

CARL REED  
Hey, ass holes, get away from my house.

NICK  
Hey ass hole. Watch who you're calling ass hole.

CARL walks onto his yard. JEROME and his buddies group closely behind.

CARL REED  
I don't want to deal with you jerk-offs. Just keep your dumb black asses away from me and my house.

JEROME  
You got some mouth on you boy.

CARL turns to confront JEROME.

CARL REED  
Whaddya going to do about it.

NICK comes up behind him and bounces the football against the back of his head. CARL turns around and is pushed from behind by JEROME. Suddenly, CARL's down the ground and there's a DOG PILE of JEROME'S BUDDIES slugging away at him.

INT. CARL REED'S HOUSE (SUMMER 1968)

LAURA REED, soft spoken yet strong and beautiful, comes home after work to find her son CARL with black eyes, cuts and bruises all over and busted lip.

LAURA REED  
What happened to you?

CARL REED  
I got into a fight.

LAURA REED  
With who?

CARL REED  
The kids across the street. Three of 'em jumped me.

LAURA's concern become anger. She grabs her son by the arm and storms out the front door. WE FOLLOW THEM as she pulls CARL across the street and over to their neighbor's house.

CARL REED (CONT'D)  
Mom, what are you doing? Mom...!

He tries to squirm away.

LAURA REED  
Keep it up son and you'll have  
black eyes on your black eyes and a  
busted butt to boot!

FRONT DOOR - TAYLOR HOUSE

LAURA pulls CARL onto the front porch and KNOCKS ferociously on the screen door. MRS. TAYLOR calls out from somewhere in the house. Her tone is blasé.

MRS. TAYLOR  
Yeah. Who is it?

LAURA REED  
It's Laura Reed and her son Carl  
from across the street.

MRS. TAYLOR opens the screen door as if totally oblivious to LAURA's anger and frustration.

MRS. TAYLOR  
Oh, hi! How are you doing today?

LAURA REED  
I was doing great until I came home  
and found him looking like this.  
(to Carl)  
Tell her what happened.

CARL doesn't want to tattle-tell.

LAURA REED (CONT'D)  
(impatient)  
He says your boy and some of his  
buddies beat up on him.

MRS. TAYLOR isn't too concerned.

MRS. TAYLOR  
Well, boys will be boys. Today it's  
your boy... tomorrow it might be  
Jerome gets it.

LAURA notices Jerome coming up the street with his BUDDIES. She abruptly turns around and heads for the boys.

LAURA REED

Boys. Did you guys beat-up on my son?

JEROME

He picked a fight with us!

LAURA REED

Did he hit you?

NICK

No, but he was smarting off with his big mouth!

One of the buddies BILLY jumps into the conversation.

BILLY

He's been smart'n off ever since you guys moved into the hood. Time to teach him a lesson.

LAURA REED

So all of you got into, huh?

JEROME and his BUDDIES drop back a bit.. not proud of the fact. Jerome and CARL exchange looks.

LAURA REED (CONT'D)

You know, you boys are cowards. It took all of you to beat up on one guy. He's smaller than each of one of you. The next time you disagree, at least do it one-on-one.

LAURA tries to make eye contact with the kids but they all have their heads down. She looks back at the Taylor House. Jerome's Mom has come out resting against a pillar with one hand on her hip. Laura walks back home.

ON CARL as he keeps his ground for a moment.

LAURA REED (O.S.) (CONT'D)

C'mon Carl. Get in the house!

Carl shuffles across the street and follows her inside.

INT. MISS JONE'S LIVING ROOM

Miss Jones gives Lou an envelope. Her boys going about their evening routine in the hallway behind her.

MOTHER JONES

It's not much Mr. Dantzler, but it'll help out a little bit... been holding some little fund raisers for the club.

LOU

That's very much Miss Jones. Every little bit goes a long way.

MOTHER JONES

I know it does. You know for months, I'd been yelling at that boy to brush his teeth in the morning. Not only does he brush his teeth twice a day now, he also takes a shower and washes his own shirt out on Friday nights before he comes to the club on Saturdays.

LOU

Yeah, I told these guys that they couldn't come with dirty shirts and dirty faces.

MOTHER JONES

Well, thank you because for once, he's really listening! He said, Oh, Mr. Lou said if I didn't wash my shirt I couldn't go to Griffith Park, so there he was, doing it himself? Amazing. So I gotta ask... What's your secret?

They both start laughing.

SPLIT SCREEN - MULTIPLE IMAGES of the Children having fun on various outings to the park, the beach, and the mountains.

INT. LOU'S DINING ROOM/KITCHEN - SATURDAY NIGHT

Lou returns from his day with the Challengers. Ruby is in the kitchen preparing supper. Lou gives her a kiss on her cheek. She turns and looks at him. Lou notices the funny look on her face.

RUDY

You're not going to believe the phone call I just had.

LOU

Why? Who was it?

Ruby reaches into her apron for the scrap sheet of paper and hands it to him.

RUDY  
His name is Toby Walker.

LOU  
(taking the paper)  
Never heard of him.

RUDY  
He said he read about you in the  
paper and said he wants to help us.

LOU  
Yeah?

RUDY  
Yeah. He couldn't believe you were  
a custodian at the junior high  
school. He said we had to get you  
out of that job and into doing the  
club thing full time!

LOU  
He did, huh?

RUDY  
That's what he said.

LOU  
(laughing)  
What, he sound crazy?

RUDY  
As a matter of fact he sounded  
sincere... real business too.  
Maybe you should talk to him Lou.

LOU wads the paper up and stuffs it into his pocket as he walks to the bathroom to wash his hands.

INT. GAGE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Lou has just finished his morning routine and pushing his cleaning cart back to the storage closet to replenish supplies.

MED. LOU UNLOCKING STORAGE CLOSET

His SUPERVISOR walks up to him.

SUPERVISOR

Hey Lou, you gotta a phone call.

FACILITY OFFICE

ANGLE ON LOU as he rushes to the phone.

LOU

This is Lou.

TOBY (O.S.)

Lou Dantzler? Hi there, this is  
Toby Walker. You're a hard man to  
get a hold of.

LOU

Hi there. How can I help you?

TOBY

I read the article in the Times and  
I'd like to help you. Can you come  
to my office tomorrow morning  
around 10 AM?

LOU

Um, okay. Sure.

TOBY

Here's the address...

LOU

Hold on, let me get a pencil and  
paper. Okay. Go ahead.

TOBY

9255 Sunset Blvd in Beverly Hills.  
It's Campbell and Company on the  
6th floor. So, see you tomorrow.

LOU

See you then.

CLOSE ON LOU as he looks down at the note he just wrote.

CLOSE ON THE WORDS - BEVERY HILLS.

EXT. LONG SHOT - SUNSET BLVD & DOHENY DR. - MORNING

Lou pulls up in his pick-up truck and gets out of the car.  
He's wearing the only suit he owns. It's a simple blue suite  
with matching tie. Very conservative.

ANGLE ON LOU as he looks at his note.

CLOSE ON NOTE - 9255 Sunset Blvd., Suite 600, Campbell and Company, Beverly Hills.

CLOSE ON LOU - he takes a breath and goes inside the building.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CAMPBELL & COMPANY

Lou enters. Glad he wore a suite, Lou looks around at the plush surroundings. All the men are dressed in suits, the women in upscale professional dress suits. Lou goes to the RECEPTIONIST.

LOU

Hi, Lou Dantzler to see Tob Walker.

RECEPTIONIST

Hello Mr. Dantzler. I'll let Mr. Walker know you're here. Please have a seat.

Lou takes a seat on the sofa next to the Receptionist as she calls Toby Walker's office.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Mr. Dantzler, Mr. Walker will be with you in just a moment. Can I get you something to drink while you wait? A glass of water, cup of tea or coffee?

LOU

No, thank you.

Lou continues to take in the surroundings. He has never been in such a lavish environment.

LOU (CONT'D)

Miss, excuse me. What kind of place is this... what does this D.A. Campbell actually do?

RECEPTIONIST

We're an investment banking firm.

A secretary walks down a corridor and into the waitin area to greet Lou.

SECRETARY

Mr. Dantzler. I'm Sharon. Mr. Walker's secretary. Follow me please.

Lou follows her through a maze of wood paneled hallways with large mahogany doors and thick lush carpeting. The MUTED but BUSY SOUNDS of phones RINGING, muffled TYPING, and quite but purposeful conversations in the distance.

They reach the end of a hall way and the Secretary knocks on the door.

TOBY (O.S.)

Come in.

The Secretary opens the door and stands aside for Lou to enter.

SECRETARY

Mr. Walker, this is Mr. Dantzler.

The Secretary closes the door gently after Lou enters the room.

ON LOU

as he looks at Toby who is wrapping up some business on the phone. TOBY WALKER, 30's, energetic, fair skin, sandy brown hair, a nicely dressed businessman, continues his rapid fire conversation as he motions for Lou to take a seat in front of his desk. He seems to have all the confidence in the world.

Lou sits in one of two large leather arm chairs.

CLOSE ON LOU as he waits for Toby to finish the phone call. He begins to subtly look around the office.

LOU'S P.O.V.

The window view just behind Toby's desk of Sunset Strip and near-by Hollywood Hills.

CLOSE - a framed photograph of a woman, holding 2 children.

CLOSE - a framed degree certificate from Harvard University.

TOBY

(hanging up the phone)  
Lou Dantzler? Toby Walker.

Toby extends his arm across the desk to offer a handshake with Lou.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Thank you for coming down. How are you?

LOU

I'm fine.

TOBY

It took me a long time to track you down. I kept calling that number in the newspaper article and it would just ring and ring. I finally got your wife one afternoon. She sounded very nice by the way.

LOU

Thanks.

TOBY

When I didn't hear back from you I had my secretary track you down at work. I liked what I read in the paper. Tell me a little bit more about what you do.

LOU

Well, it all started about 18 months ago just taking a few neighborhood kids to the park to have fun. Boys only at first.

ON TOBY, poker-faced, but listening intently.

LOU (CONT'D)

These boys don't have fathers around.... I mean nobody to spend time with them. Most of them haven't even traveled more than 4 blocks from their house. These are all-black communities... kids going to all black schools. How are they expected to adapt to the outside world if they never deal with people who are different from them. It's usually the parents' job to show them, right?! These kids don't have fathers around and the mother's are too busy trying to just get by. So if the old man leaves home who do kids pattern themselves after? The older kids on the street right? And there are a lot of negative things on the street right.

(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)

I want to get these kids before the street does. I want to instill character in these kids... things like leadership, awareness, and responsibility. I want to show them it doesn't matter where they come from, they can still dream big and achieve great things.

Toby sits quietly for a few moments.

TOBY

You seem really committed to this, but it sounds like a big project. Are you sure this is what you want?

LOU

I really don't know what you mean by that. I have been doing it now for a year and half. Of course it's what I want.

TOBY

I just want to know that you're in it for the long haul.

LOU

Oh, yes. I am.

Toby sits in silence considering what he's heard. Finally he stands up and extends his arm for a handshake.

TOBY

Let me see about this. I'll call you in a few days Mr. Dantzler.

Lou stands up and shakes Toby's hand.

LOU

Okay. Thanks for your time.

LONG SHOT - DOOR TO TOBY'S OFFICE

Lou steps out of the office and closes the door behind him unsure of what to make of the meeting.

INT. CARL REED'S HOUSE - LATER AFTERNOON (SUMMER 1969)

JEROME walks up the screen door and knocks with a bit of trepidation. Carl's Mom LAURA comes to the door.

LAURA REED

Yes?

JEROME

Hi Mrs. Reed.

LAURA REED

You're the Jerome boy from across the street, right?

JEROME

Yes maim. I was wondering if Carl could come out and play.

LAURA REED

I'm not letting him go to your house any more. If you don't want to stay away from him, you can come over here.

LAURA opens the screen and faces JEROME directly. Jerome puts his head down.

LAURA REED (CONT'D)

But just know that whatever I'm gonna do to him, I'm gonna do to you, so if you don't like that, then you can just stay away.

JEROME

Okay...

LAURA REED

Okay, what?

JEROME

You can do that.

LAURA opens the screen door for JEROME.

LAURA REED

You can come inside then. Carl is in the back.

JEROME walks into the house.

INT. LOU'S KITCHEN - LATER THAT EVENING

Lou has just returned from work. Ruby's preparing supper.

RUDY

How was your meeting with Mr.  
Walker this morning?

LOU

I don't know if it's going to come  
to anything. What's for supper?

RUDY

Meatloaf.

Lou makes a YUMMY SOUND.

The phone RINGS. Lou answers it.

LOU

Hello.

GEORGE PUTNAM (O.S.)

Mr. Dantzler? My name is George  
Putnam. I'm a news anchorman for  
CBS. I want to do a story on your  
as part of my nightly newscast. I  
read about you and your wife in the  
paper. Can you and your wife come  
to the studio tomorrow evening?

LOU

Sure. Sounds exciting.

Lou hangs up the phone.

LOU (CONT'D)

(to Ruby)

You're never going to guess who  
called?

EXT. CBS STUDIOS - EARLY EVENING (1969)

The front gates as Lou and Ruby's car pulls up to the guard  
gate. A GATEMAN hands him a paper to put on the dashboard.  
Lou's car continues onto the lot.

INT. CBS NEWS ROOM RECEPTION

Lou and Ruby sit waiting by the Receptionist desk. They stand  
as MR. PUTNAM'S ASSISTANT approaches.

PUTNAM'S ASSISTANT

I'm sorry. Mr. Putnam hasn't  
returned from dinner yet.

LOU  
Yeah, we're a bit earlier.

PUTNAM'S ASSISTANT  
He asked me to take you next door where they're taping TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES. You could watch the show while you're waiting for Mr. Putnam. How does that sound?

Lou and Ruby are both excited.

LOU  
That sounds great!

RUDY  
I'd like to see...

PUTNAM'S ASSISTANT  
Follow me.

Lou and Ruby follow the assistant.

INT. WIDE - SOUND STAGE - TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES SET (1969)

The show is in progress. Putnam's Assistant leads them into the audience seating area from behind the set. WE FOLLOW them as Lou and Ruby are led to a couple of empty seats on the front side of the audience. Immediately, Lou and Ruby become enthralled by all the behind-the-scenes action.

BOB BARKER  
Wanna know the answer? Find out right after a word from our sponsor.

CLOSE - APPLAUSE SIGN LIGHTS UP

RUDY  
Wow! Never thought we'd be here doing this tonight. O' Lou, this is exciting!

Prompters ANNOUNCE the commercial break coming to a close. Ruby and Lou notices Bob Barker walking towards them.

RUDY (CONT'D)  
Oh, look Lou! Bob Barker's walking over here.

LOU  
Maybe we'll be on TV!

BOB BARKER

as he walks right up to where Lou & Ruby are sitting then stops. The 3 STUDIO CAMERAS swing over to him. The ANNOUNCEMENT 5-4-3-2-

APPLAUSE SIGN LIGHTS ON.

BOB BARKER

And now, ladies & gentleman, I have a special treat for you.

He pulls out a newspaper clipping from his jacket pocket

BOB BARKER (CONT'D)

I have a newspaper clipping here from the L.A. Times and it's about a remarkable man... a "marvelous man" is how they describe him. His name is Lou Dantzler.

ANGLE ON LOU - stunned hearing his name spoken on television by Bob Barker.

BOB BARKER (CONT'D)

Now, I bet you that seated right here is Lou Dantzler....yessss!

Suddenly, a microphone is in his face.

BOB BARKER (CONT'D)

Stand up, Mr. Dantzler! I'm glad you're here!

Lou struggles to his feet. His legs like Jell-O. The audience APPLAUDS.

BOB BARKER (CONT'D)

You were told that George Putnam was going to interview you, and then someone said he was held up at dinner and they brought you in here to wait, right?

LOU

(wide eyed...looking around)

Uh-huh.

Bob Barker puts his arm around Lou.

BOB BARKER

Well, Mr. Putnam is a fine man, and I'm sure he would like to interview you, but he's not going to right now. We arranged all of that to get you down here for "Truth or Consequences!"

LOU - as it finally hits him.

LOU

Oh, man!  
(giggles nervously)  
Oh, brother!

BOB BARKER

(to the audience)  
Now, let me tell you about this man...this gentleman has been working with boys from ages 8 to 16...

(to Lou)  
Is that right?

LOU

That's right.

BOB BARKER

How long have you been doing this?

LOU

About a year and a half.

BOB BARKER

(to the audience)  
What he has done he has done on his own time, after a full-time job, with his own money and perhaps a few donations from appreciative mothers in the neighborhood. He has formed a club and chosen boys to join this club who are from fatherless homes, right?

(to Lou)  
And from what I understand, you also grew up without a father, so you knew what it was like to be a boy without a man around the house. What are some of the things you do with these boys?

LOU  
 (making an effort)  
 I'd just take them to the park for  
 a game of softball and basketball  
 then we sit around and talk about  
 things. Well, they talk. I listen.

BOB BARKER  
 Come on stage with me for a moment  
 Mr. Dantzler.

Bob Barker takes him by the hand and leads him onto the  
 center of the stage.

BOB BARKER (CONT'D)  
 There's some people here you've met  
 before.

On cue: SHARON IRELAND - the social worker, his associate at  
 work ED NEAL, and even the PRINCIPAL of Gage Junior High  
 School.

Bob Barker goes up to the Principal.

BOB BARKER (CONT'D)  
 Tell us who you are and how you  
 know Lou Dantzler.

PRINCIPAL  
 I'm the Principal of Gage Junior  
 High where Mr. Dantzler works.

BOB BARKER  
 What's he like as an employee?

PRINCIPAL  
 Oh, he's great! No complaints. He's  
 never late.... never takes a sick  
 day... always does more than what's  
 expected. I wish there were more  
 people like him.

on LOU, still stunned... a smile from ear to ear.

CLOSE ON RUBY, beaming with pride.

BOB BARKER  
 (to the cameras)  
 Now I want to bring out some guys  
 whoe really know a lot about this.  
 Boys, come out here and say  
 'Hello!'

The ORGAN MUSIC plays and the AUDIENCE APPLAUDS as Michael; the two Terrys; and two other members, Eddie Robinson and Scott Cunningham walk onto the stage.

BOB BARKER (CONT'D)  
What's your name?

MICHAEL  
Michael.

BOB BARKER  
How do you know Mr. Dantzler?

MICHAEL  
(with excitement)  
He's my Brother-n-Law!

Everyone in the audience LAUGHS.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
He spends more time with me than my Pop. He plays ball with me, cuts my hair, takes me out for ice-cream and movies. And of course now, we have the club which is every other weekend. I help him out with that!

ANGLE ON LOU & BOB

BOB BARKER  
A fine group of young men there. You must be very proud of them.

LOU  
I am. I am very proud of them.

BOB BARKER  
I understand that one of your challenges is getting the boys where you want to go. You often have to make several trips to the park in your old truck, isn't that right?

Lou shakes his head.

LOU  
Yes, sir.

BOB BARKER  
Well, you won't be using that truck anymore, Mr. Dantzler. You know why?

Lou shakes his head.

BOB BARKER (CONT'D)  
Look at what we have for you!

THE GIANT GLITTERY CURTAIN behind Lou and Bob suddenly sweeps open. The MUSIC SWELLS and the AUDIENCE CHEERS. Lou turns around with Bob as they look... revealing...

...more kids from the club surrounding a gleaming new Gold 1970 Pontiac Catalina Safari Station Wagon.

LOU  
Oh, man! Is that ours?

BOB BARKER  
That's right! And you can get plenty of boys in there!

LOU  
Oh, yeah! We can get at least 40 in there!

The audience laughs.

LOU (CONT'D)  
'Cause one of the guys who helps me has a Volkswagen Bug, and he got 15 of 'em in it.

More laughs even from Bob Barker.

BOB BARKER  
If you can get 15 in a Volkswagon, I'm sure you can get a more in this! I'm so proud of you Mr. Dantzler.... from everything I read in the article and then just meeting you and seeing your attitude, I can see why you've been so successful with these boys. Thank you for being such a fine man!

ANGLE ON RUBY

RUBY  
Yes, thank you Honey for being such a fine man!

LOU  
(close to tears)  
Thank you. Thank you so much!

The applause and cheers are thunderous! Lou just stares out into the lights with a huge smile on his face. He's overwhelmed with gratitude.

INT. BACKSTAGE - AFTER THE SHOW

Lou and Ruby are sitting with Bob.

BOB BARKER  
Mr. Dantzler, seriously, is there anything else you need?

LOU  
Well Mr. Barker, we need a clubhouse.

BOB BARKER  
If you find a suitable location, I'll personally try to help you get it.

LOU  
There's this old grocery store in our neighborhood. It's been abandoned since the riots a few years ago. It's on 60th and Crenshaw. It's a big old place with lots of room that would be perfect for us and it would be a place where we could grow. I think it used to be a Safeway store.

Bob turned to one of his assistants.

BOB BARKER  
Do we know anyone who could help with this?

BARKER ASSISTANT #1  
We'll have to look it.

Bob looks back to Lou & Ruby.

BOB BARKER  
We've got your phone number, and we will look into this for you. How about that?

Lou stands up and shakes his hand.

LOU  
 Thank you Mr. Barker. Thank you.  
 This whole evening has just been  
 too incredible!

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Introduce CARL REED as a tough kid. He gets into a fight but there's too many of them. Suddenly, some bigger kids help him out. The bigger kids tell him he should hang out with them.

EXT. LOU'S DRIVE WAY

Lou is washing the new station wagon. The phone RINGS inside the house. WE CAN HEAR Rudy answer it. Moments later. She sticks her head out from behind the screen door.

RUDY  
 Lou, it's Toby Walker again.

LOU  
 Really?!

Lou shuts off the hose. Rudy hands him a dry hand towel.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 Wow! I didn't expect to hear from  
 him again.

Lou wipes his hands dry, kisses Ruby on her cheek as we he goes inside the house.

ANGLE ON THE PHONE - the receiver lying cross ways across the top. Lou grabs it.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 Hello.

INT. TOBY'S OFFICE

TOBY  
 Lou, I got you an appointment with a friend of mine. He's an attorney named Paul Nathanson. He will set-up your non-profit for you. Can you meet him Thursday morning?

ON LOU

LOU  
 Sure! Thanks, Mr. Walker.

TOBY

Sure, no problem. Just tell him what your needs are, and he'll take care of it as a favor. And by the way, Lou, you can call me Toby. You got a pencil and paper handy. I want to give you the address...

Lou grabs a paper and pencil.

LOU

Yeah, ready...

TOBY (O.S.)

It's O'Melveny and Myers and it's at 5-5-5 South Spring Street...

INT. O'MELVENY & MYERS - THURSDAY MORNING

The office is huge, much bigger than Toby Walker's office from before and just as luxurious. Sitting with Lou is Sharon Ireland. The meeting has been going well and they're wrapping up with Paul Nathanson. PAUL, 40's, well dressed, straight-laced, friendly but to the point.

PAUL

You should have your non-profit set up within a couple of weeks. Everything's taken care of.

INT. CORRIDORS OF O'MELVENY & MYERS

Lou and Sharon step outside Paul's office and walk down the hallway.

SHARON

See, Lou? I knew as soon as the word got out about you that people would line up to help.

SPLIT SCREEN: LOU & TOBY ON THEIR PHONES

TOBY

How were you treated?

LOU

Fine. They treated me first class.

TOBY

Great. What else do you need?

LOU

Bookkeeper. Ruby's been doing it up  
til now but she's not a bookkeeper.  
I want to make sure we do  
everything right.

TOBY

Indeed. Let me make some calls and  
I'll get back to you. Anything  
else.

LOU

Yeah, a clubhouse.

OLD FASHION SWAP TRANSITION TO

LOU & TOBY ON THE PHONE (SPLIT SCREEN)

TOBY

Okay Lou, a friend of mine named  
Carl Moser at Coopers, Ross  
Brothers, and Montgomery. He said  
he'd help with the books. They're a  
Big Eight accounting firm. I know  
they'll do right by you. Here's the  
number; he's expecting your call.

LOU (V.O.)

Carl Moser was a really great guy.  
We clicked right away. He had heard  
my whole story and didn't interrupt  
me or make me feel rushed. I mean  
as far as I could tell, I was his  
most important appointment of the  
day....

Under the above V.O. WE SEE

MEDIUM 2 SHOT - Lou meets CARL MOSER

DIFFERENT ANGLE - Carl & Lou sit and talk

CLOSE - Carl as he writes down some information.

WIDE 3 SHOT - Carl and Lou have a Coffee.

WE PULL BACK FROM CARL as he shakes hands with Lou.

CARL MOSER

Sure, we can do the book for you:  
no problem and it won't cost you a  
thing. Don't worry. What else do  
you need?

LOU  
Well, we need a clubhouse.

BACK TO THE PHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN TOBY & LOU

but continuing on the scene between Lou & Carl Moser.

LOU (V.O.)  
...then he asked me if I had any  
ideas. I told him about the Safeway  
store not paning out...

EXT. LOU IN HIS CAR - VERMONT AVE. & 51ST STREET

Lou gets out of the car and looks at the abandoned Von's  
Super Store. It's huge.

LOU (V.O.)  
...then, do you know what he told  
me?

INT. COOPERS ROSS BROTHERS \$ MONTGOMERY ACCOUNTING FIRM

Carl sits across from Lou.

CARL MOSER  
Vons, huh? Hmmm.... one of our  
clients is the Von der Ahe family.  
They own Vons. Let me check on it  
and get back to you.

EXT. BACK PATIO - LOU'S HOUSE - SUMMER EVENING (1970)

A dark scene lit mostly by moonlight in which Lou has just  
finished having dinner with his wife. He reflects on how much  
the Challenger's Club has grown and what has been achieved  
over the past couple of years. He also vents his frustration  
over needing a club house. They had build so much momentum  
and now everything had screeched to a halt.

LOU  
I don't know Ruby. I guess it's  
that things had been moving along  
so well. I mean really picking up  
steam. It's been over a month now  
since I asked Carl about the Von's  
store. Nothing.

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY (SPRING 1970)

Huge windows, daylight shines onto the long wooden conference table. There are about half a dozen ATTENDEES. At the head of the table is the Chairman ROGER STRANGELAND. The surface OF the table is clean and polished save for glasses of water, cups of coffee. A few MEMBERS have folders, sheets of paper, or a note pad in front of them.

GENE MULKEY, handsome, middle-aged man, sits quietly and attentively, poised with a pencil ready to take notes. Gene is the Assistant to the Executive Vice-President WILFRED L. VON der AHE who sits next to him sipping on a glass of Orange Juice. OUR VIEW passes onto Carl Moser - the accountant Lou had met with earlier.

ROGER STRANGELAND

The next item on the agenda concerns the question of donating one of our buildings in South Central Los Angeles to a newly formed non-profit.

VON DER AHE

I am familiar with that situation and I like what they're doing.

DEL SANTOS

My only concern is that not only are they new... they're brand spanking new. The ink on their non-profit certificate isn't even dry yet. If we're going to give one of our buildings away we should make sure they're going to be around for a while.

VON DER AHE

That's a very good point. My family used to live in that neighborhood, on 48th and Vermont. Of course that was a few years ago.

Everyone laughs.

VON DER AHE (CONT'D)

I'd be glad to see this man succeed. If giving him a building so he can give something to that community, I am all for it, but I do understand that he's untested. Carl what did you have in mind?

CARL MOSER

I think it would be best for all concerned for this non-profit - The Challengers, to become affiliated with an established non-profit organization like YMCA or the Boy Scouts... something like that.

VON DER AHE

That's a great idea. Then that organization can lease it to "The Challengers for a dollar... 10 years for a dollar."

DEL SANTOS nods his approval.

ROGER STRANGELAND

Okay. On the matter of donating our building on Vermont and 51st Street, Carl Moser will look into attaching The Challengers to a well established non-profit. Once that happens, we'll donate the building to that non-profit and they'll in turn lease it to "The Challengers" for 10 years for one dollar. All in favor.

WIDE - THE BOARD - The vote is unanimous

EXT. BACK PATIO - LOU'S HOUSE - SUMMER EVENING (1970)

Ruby reassures him that things will happen all in good time and that he continues to positively change the lives of so many neighborhood kids.

INT. GAGE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - SUMMER DAY

Lou is working. His co-worker Ed Neal comes up to him.

ED NEAL

Hey, Lou! You've got a phone call.

ANGLE ON LOU as he picks up the phone.

CARL MOSER

Hey, Lou! Good news. We've got a donation.

LOU

Really? That's great news! How much is it?

CARL MOSER  
It's for \$187,000.

LOU  
Come again?

CARL MOSER  
that's right, \$187,000! But it's  
not in cash, mind you. It's in  
kind.

LOU  
In what?

CARL MOSER  
That means, well... the donation is  
from Vons. They're giving you the  
building on Vermont. It's worth  
almost \$200,000.

On LOU as he becomes ecstatic! He starts jumping up and down,  
yelling, and pounding!

ED NEAL  
(to himself)  
Lou's finally cracked under the  
strain...  
(to Lou)  
What is it Lou?

LOU  
We've got a clubhouse! I have to  
show some of the kids! I have to  
check out our new place. Cover for  
me will ya Ed?

EXT. THE NEW STATION WAGON - DAY (SUMMER 1970)

Lou's still excited. The kids: MICHAEL, MILTON COLLINS,  
KENNY, the two TERRYS are in the back.

MICHAEL  
Are we going to ice-cream of  
something?

MILTON  
Ice-Cream?

MICHAEL  
Yeah, what's the matter with ice-  
cream?

MILTON

I don't think we'd be so excited  
about taking us to ice-cream!

TERRY S.

What is it, Papa Lou?

TEERY B.

Where you taking us?

MILTON

Maybe he discovered a new place for  
us to go swimming?

MICHAEL

I still it could ice-cream.

Lou looks at the kids through the rear view mirror.

LOU

All I'm going to say it's a  
surprise and you kids are going to  
love it! Love it! Love it! Yes  
indeed! This is powerful stuff!

The gold sparkling Station Wagon turns a corner. WE CAN STILL  
HEAR the animated chatter in the back seat.

ANGLE ON THE BOYS IN THE BACK SEAT

as the car slows down and comes to a stop. Their chatter  
STOPS. Looks of puzzled astonishment on each of their faces  
as they see...

INT. ABANDONED DILAPIDATED VON'S SUPER MARKET - DAY (SUMMER  
1970)

The old building occupies the whole city block and is  
surrounded by a decrepit chain-link fence. There are holes in  
some places with other sections knocked down entirely. There  
is garbage everywhere... on sidewalks, over the weed-choked  
parking lot, and piled high against the building.

MILTON

What's this Lou?

MICHAEL

It's not ice-cream.

LOU

No, it's not ice-cream.

MICHAEL

What are we doing here?

Lou steps forward and sweeps his arm across the horizon.

LOU

This, is ours.

Turns to look at the boys. His smile is big.

LOU (CONT'D)

It's our new clubhouse!

THE BOYS

In unison there heads snap around. Their eyes widen as their mouths drop open.

MICHAEL

This big place?

KENNY

It's all ours?

MILTON

It's kind a creepy... looks haunted.

LOU

It just needs some TLC! Do any of you know what that is?

MICHAEL

No.

LOU

Tender Loving Care.

Lou leads the boys over to a large hole in the fence. They crawl through it.

INT. DILAPIDATED VON'S SUPER MARKET

The place is dark. A large board covers a hole in back of the building. It is already partially pried open, Lou and the kids are on the other side of the board. They pry it open the rest of the way and carefully step through the opening they just made.

Michael reacts to the foul stench. He waves his hand in front of his nose.

MICHAEL

Whew! It sure stinks in here!

The other boys hold their noses.

TEERY B.

Sure does.

LOU

The building has been closed for more than 3 years. Watch step guys. And let's stay together.

Lou leads the boys deeper into the old dark grocery store. Soft muted sunlight spills in from a huge skylight overhead. WE CAN SEE how filthy and rodent infested the place really is. They pass the old checkout counters, empty shelving and freezers.

MICHAEL

This place is going to need a lot of TLC!

LOU as he points to one corner.

LOU

You see, over there! We could have the arts and crafts section right in that corner.

Lou continues looking around. He no longer sees the abandoned broken down building but his vision of a bright colorful clubhouse.

He points to another area.

LOU (CONT'D)

And there... could be where we have the woodshop or photography studio.

The boys react to what he's saying.

LOU (CONT'D)

And right here... right where I'm standing.. we can put up some walls and have a library...

He continues the tour. The kids are transfixed as they follow him.

LOU (CONT'D)

Over here, we could get a pool table or something and set-up a teen center. Doesn't that sound great?

The boys collectively are just as caught up in Lou's vision as he is. They see past the broken linoleum flooring and the rotted sagging ceiling. They see his vision of the place and are excited.

THE BOYS

When can we move in, Lou? When can we get started?

LOU

Right away!

EXT. PARKING LOT - OLD VON'S STORE - SATURDAY MORNING (SUMMER 1970)

Several cars and pick-ups pull onto the broken and cracked parking lot including Toby Walker's Mercedes.

LOU gets out of the station wagon. He sees Toby get out of his car. They make eye contact and Toby waves. ED NEAL quickly gets out of his car and joins Lou. ED hasn't seen the place.

ED NEAL

How big is this place, Lou?

LOU

It's almost an acre of land. The building is 20,000 square feet.

A group of boys overheard Lou and yelled out: "20,000 square feet!? Yipppeee!!" Before going their separate ways to explore and play.

EXT. BACK OF OLD VON'S SUPER STORE - DAY (SUMMER 1970)

JEFF GADLIN, club member, drags a large plastic trash barrel full of debris, wood, and small chips of cinder block out to the dumpster. TWO TRASH MEN hoist its content into a much larger dumpster. Jeff drags the empty barrel back into the building.

INT. OLD VON'S BUILDING - DAY (SUMMER 1970)

Several young BOYS pick up trash and debris off the floor and into trash cans or boxes what ever is available. One of the boys is sweeping the floor. Another struggles to carry a small box full of broken wood out to the dumpster.

INT. OLD VAN'S MARKET - DAY (SUMMER 1970)

WIDE - 100 BOYS run around. Some are playing and some are working the massive clean-up job. LOU takes center stage.

LOU  
(yells)  
Okay! Rap Session!

Like a team of well disciplined soldiers, the scattered group of boys come together and form a semicircle around LOU.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Now listen. I want you all to know that this is your club. Yours. This is going to be a place where you can come any day of the week to hang out, see your friends, and play. With a little hard work, we can have this place looking good in no time!

All the boys cheer.

LOU (CONT'D)  
But, it's going to take some work. We won't have as much time to go to the park any more because we'll be working here to fix things up. You understand? If you don't like that and don't want to be a part of it, that's okay. But those of you who do want to make this place the best club in Los Angeles are welcome to stick around and help. Are you with me?

More cheers. No one leaves.

INT. OLD VON'S BUILDING

LOU uses a flashlight to show TOBY what's left of the electrical wiring. Lines are frayed and some are poking out the walls.

LOU

The power lines were cut some time back. Any way, the wiring throughout this place is in bad shape.

TOBY

Let me make some calls. See if I can find someone to get us some juice.

INT. OLD VON'S BUILDING - A FEW WEEKS LATER (SUMMER 1970)

The only light still spilling down from the huge skylight overhead. A ELECTRICIAN holding a clip board goes over some preliminary findings with LOU.

ELECTRICIAN CAPTAIN

The whole place has to be completely rewired. Everything has got to be replaced. It's going to take a few weeks to finish the job.

LOU

Wow. A few weeks. What's the estimate?

ELECTRICIAN CAPTAIN

Costs? Nothing. I see what you're doing here and I want to help. So, don't worry about it. It's just going to take a while.

INT. OLD VON'S BUILDING

A large sheet of roofing comes loose and falls to the ground. LOU looks up and sees how badly the ceiling is sagging.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO OLD VON'S BUILDING - PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON (FALL 1970)

A ROOFING CONTRACTOR stands with LOU giving him a quote to replace the ceiling.

ROOFING CONTRACTOR

It's going to cost at least \$5,000 to remove the ceiling.

LOU

That's the cost to just take it out?!

ROOFING CONTRACTOR

Yep. There's a lot of damage, a lot of mold, and lots of rats.

LOU

Well, how do you plan to go about it.

ROOFING CONTRACTOR

The roofing material is all but coming down any way. We're just going to help it. Because of the mold, we're going to wear mask. We'll also have to have an exterminator deal with the rats.

INT. OLD VON'S BUILDING - DAYS LATER (FALL 1970)

LOU directs several of the bigger BOYS and a few ADULT VOLUNTEERS to pull down the loose hanging sheets of roofing.

ANGLE ON PILE OF SALVAGED MATERIALS

some of the ceiling tiles, undamaged wood, and steel beams are piled together.

EXT. BACK OF OLD VON'S SUPER STORE

The salvaged undamaged materials (wood, tiles, steel beams) are loaded onto a truck.

EXT. SCRAP YARD - EVENING

LOU collects \$3,000 cash for salvaged scrap.

EXT. WIDE - OLD VON'S SUPER MARKET - DAY (FALL 1970)

All kinds of vehicles are going in and out of the old parking lot. It's a beehive of activity. People in the neighborhood becoming increasingly curious as they watch hordes of kids and adults armed with hammers, saws, and ladders spilling in and out of the building.

ANGLE ON CURIOUS NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS as curiosity gets the better of them. A FEW OF THEM walk over.

CURIOUS BOY

What are you all doing?

ED NEAL

We're building a clubhouse for kids  
in the community. Wanna help?

EXT. OLD VON'S SUPER MARKET - DAY (FALL 1970)

A NEIGHBORHOOD BOY shows up with a jar of nails. ANOTHER ONE has brought a couple of cans of paints. AN OLDER LADY FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD brings a pot of lemonade. SEVERAL VOLUNTEER WORKERS are sweating and appreciate the thought.

INT. OLD VON'S SUPER MARKET

Everyone's working hard. They're sweating but having a good time. One group just finishes a section of dry wall. They cheer!

ANGLE ON TOBY & LOU

Toby has a note pad in hand. They approach the front of the building where two large glass doors open directly onto the sidewalk of Vermont Avenue.

LOU

I don't think the entrance should  
be on such a busy street.

TOBY

I agree. There's an entrance on  
north side off the parking lot.  
Don't need to. Let's get rid of it.

INT. OLD VON'S SUPER MARKET - DAYS LATER (FALL 1970)

WIDE - GAPING HOLE WHERE THE FRONT GLASS DOORS used to be.

LOU and TOBY, wearing different clothes, walk into frame from opposite sides.

LOU

I've arranged for brick layer to  
patch up this opening but it's  
going to be like this for least a  
day.

TOBY

Shall we board it up?

LOU

Nawh, I already checked with Ruby.  
I'm going to stay here tonight to  
keep watch.

EXT. OLD VON'S SUPER MARKET - LATER THAT DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

The last of the volunteer help has arrived. The golden station wagon now sits alone on the massive broken parking lot. LOU walks across the expansive parking lot to lock the new gate that surrounds the property.

INT. OLD VON'S BUILDING

Lou walks around the inside of the building checking out the progress and making sure the windows and doors are locked.

INT. OLD VON'S SUPER MARKET - LATER - TWILIGHT

The last of the sunlight fades away. LOU opens a small cooler and takes out an apple and some crackers. He makes himself comfortable with a book.

LOU HEARS MOVEMENT deep in the back of the building. It SOUNDS like people WALKING SLOWLY & CAREFULLY as if trying to be quiet. He grabs his flashlight and heads towards the sounds.

LOU

Is anybody here?

INT. DARK CORRIDOR

LOU walks through several works-in-progress rooms. There are wooden frames in place and bellowing sheets of plastic. Some frames have dry wall nailed in place.

LOU

Hello. No one else is supposed to  
be here. Especially after dark.

LOU rounds a corner. Several of the OLDER BOYS step up behind him and startle him.

LOU (CONT'D)

You guys scared me!

The kids start laughing. Real fun!

TOMMY

We heard you were staying the night. Standing guard.

SAMMY

Yeah, we're wondering if we could stay here with you. You know... keep you company.

LOU

What about your Moms? Do they know where you are?

TOMMY

Shit! She's used to it. I'm never home at night.

SAMMY

Me neither Papa Lou.

LOU

Okay, but if I catch hell of it I'm going to tell 'em what you told me.

LOU heads back to the cooler.

Yeah! I'd be glad to have the company. We can make it like camping out. You guys ever do that?

TOMMY

No, but I've seen it in the movies.

TOMMY & SAMMY follow him.

INT. OLD VON'S SUPER MARKET - NIGHT

LOU and the KIDS have made an impromptu camp right next to the huge hole in the wall. They've been talking and eating all kinds of junk food.

[INSERT SCENE - WHERE LOU TELLS THEM A GHOST STORY

PERHAPS TOMMY SHARES ONE OF HIS OWN]

TOMMY

Aren't you sleepy Papa Lou?

LOU

What!? Are you kidd'n?! Between you guys scaring me earlier and the ghost stories... but don't let me stop you. Get some shut eye.

WIDE - LOU sits watchfully while the BOYS sleep.

EXT. CHALLENGER'S CLUB - LATER AFTERNOON (FALL 1972)

The old Von's Super Market has become the Challenger's Club. There is still a lot of work to be done but it looks dramatically different than before... more like a clubhouse and less like an abandoned old super market. Some boys are playing ball in the parking lot.

ON LOU

as he cleans the outside walls and windows. He notices a GROUP of FIVE YOUNG TEENS looking at the club from across the street. They all have attitude.

LOU's P.O.V. - THE GROUP OF KIDS

pointing and talking... CARL stands tall in the back as if keeping watch. He's cradling a basketball. Next to him is JEROME. The SMALLEST BOY, 10 years old, jams his hands into his pockets and strides purposefully across the street and onto the parking lot.

LOU continues scrubbing but periodically watches the boy as he approaches.

SMALL TEEN

Hey, what you guys doing here?

LOU still scrubs and cleans.

LOU

We've got a boy's club here. This is our clubhouse.

SMALL TEEN

(challenging)

I thought it was a grocery store.

LOU

Well, it was, but they gave it to us for us to use for the boy's club.

SMALL TEEN

What's a boy's club?

LOU

It's a place where boys can come,  
play, and make friends.

LOU puts the sponge down, wipes his had and pulls out a sheet of paper from a small stack near the wall.

LOU (CONT'D)

Sometimes we take field trips to  
the park and play football or  
basketball, you know... things like  
that.

SMALL TEEN

Can we join?

The Small Teen gestures to his friends across the street.

LOU notices this and grabs a few extra sheets of paper.

LOU

Sure you can. You just gotta get  
your parents to fill out this form  
and come back with the 65 cents for  
dues.

The kid takes the forms and runs back to the group across the street. LOU moves to go back to cleaning the walls but keeps on eye on what's happening across the street.

LOU'S P.O.V.

The SMALL TEEN talks to the others in the group. Carl listens to the boy but holds his position with the basketball. He makes a gesture and the whole group follows him.

ON LOU as he continues to watch where they go.

Carl leads the GROUP north on Vermont and disappears behind the houses.

[insert scene - GANG VIOLENCE with Carl involved]

EXT. CARL REED'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING (FALL 1970)

CARL comes out his house to get the newspaper for his stepfather. He reaches down to pick it up and suddenly finds himself staring down the barrel of a shotgun held by a CRIP GANG MEMBER.

CRIP GANG MEMBER  
 You and your buddies better join  
 the Crips or you're gonna die on  
 this block.

Carl stares at the CRIP GANG MEMBER.

CRIP GANG MEMBER (CONT'D)  
 You got it?

Carl continues staring. Unflinching, he stands there holding  
 the paper.

CRIP GANG MEMBER (CONT'D)  
 Tell me you got it.

There's a tense moment as the two just stare at each other.  
 The CRIP pulls the hammers back on the shotgun. They continue  
 staring at each other. Finally...

CARL  
 Yeah, I got it.

CARL remains calm, and like nothing happened, turns around  
 and goes back in the house.

INT. CARL REED'S HOUSE

CARL closes the door and presses his back against. His calm  
 demeanor crumbles as soon as he slides to the floor: he's  
 scared to death.

CARL'S STEPFATHER (O.S.)  
 Hey Carl, did you get the paper?

EXT. CHALLENGER'S CLUB (WINTER 1970)

LOU is out on the parking lot turned into make-shift  
 playground. Over his shoulder is a net full of several basket  
 balls. Lots of CHILDREN are playing. LOU notices a couple of  
 OLDER BOYS - GANG BANGERS hanging out at the front entrance.  
 They wear hats, starched jeans, suspenders, blue shirts and  
 blue bandanas. They're talking to one of the YOUNGER BOYS  
 FROM THE CLUB (wearing a Challengers Club T-shirt).

LOU  
 Can I help you guys?

GANG BOY #1  
 No, that's okay. We're just  
 enjoying the day.

LOU walks over to the CHALLENGERS' BOY and places his hands on his shoulder.

LOU  
C'mon, go over and play with the others. Let me talk to these gentlemen in private.

CHALLENGERS BOY  
Okay Papa Lou.

THE CHALLENGER BOY waves good-bye to the GANG BANGERS and runs off to join the game. LOU walks over to the fence.

LOU  
How old are the both of you.

GANG BOY #1 & #2  
We're 19.

LOU  
You're too old to join the club. Unless you're interested in being on the staff. These kids could always use more positive role models.

ANGLE ON THE TWO GANG BANGERS  
as they just look away and walk off.

EXT. CHALLENGERS' CLUB

CARL walks along the chain link fence and yells for one of the boys inside the club to come over.

CARL  
Hey, I want to talk with you a moment.

The BOY stops running and walks over.

CARL (CONT'D)  
I was watching the way you run. You're pretty fast. You live just on 51st street don't ya?

LOU comes out of the building and notices CARL with a his sidekicks JEROME TAYLOR and JESSIE LEON talking to a couple of club members through the fence. He walks over to them in a friendly non-threatening manner.

LOU  
Hey, there. How ya doin' man?

CARL REACTS as LOU approaches.

CARL  
Al' right, al'right. Y'all gonna  
play some ball here?

LOU  
Yeah, we'll probably get a game  
going this afternoon.

CARL indicates JEROME standing next to him.

CARL  
Can we play?

LOU  
Sure, once you join the club. Let  
me get a couple of membership  
forms.

LOU turns to go to the building. CARL pulls a piece of paper  
from his jacket pocket as does JEROME and JESSIE.

CARL  
Got one right here.

His SIDEKICKS do the same.

LOU turns to take the forms.

CARL (CONT'D)  
And here are the dues.

Carl and his SIDEKICKS hand over some coins.

LOU smiles.

LOU  
Great! Come on.

LOU begins to lead them past the fence.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Let me tell you the rules.

Suddenly, CARL and his SIDEKICK stop in their tracks.

CARL & JEROME  
(in unison)  
Rules?!

LOU  
 Uh-huh, rules. We have no fighting here, no bullying or disrespecting of any kind; otherwise, I put you out of the club. You're suspended.

JEROME & CARL as they exchange looks.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 It's no big deal. Just follow my rules and everything will be okay.

ON CARL, he's obviously not thrilled. He swings the basketball ball around with both hands and spins it. He wants to play ball.

CARL  
 Okay.

LOU looks at JEROME.

JEROME  
 Okay.

LOU looks down at the completed forms.

CLOSE ON FORMS - VIEW ON THEIR NAMES: CARL REED on one form. JEROME TAYLOR on another form, and JESSIE ROBERTS on another.

EXT. CARL REED'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING (WINTER 1972)

LOU pulls up in his pick-up truck just outside Carl Reed's large 2-story Craftsman home. He gets out of the car, so does CARL and JEROME. They walk up to the front door and go inside.

INT. FRONT DOOR - CARL REED'S HOUSE

LOU waits at the door. JEROME bolts ahead of Carl making himself at home.

CARL  
 Maaa! Somebody here to see you!  
 (to Lou)  
 Come on in.

INT. DINNING ROOM - CARL REED'S HOUSE

LOU is seated at the dinner table. Laura pours him a cup of tea then sits down across from him. It's a busy house full of kids running around.

LOU

Mrs. Reed, my name is Lou Dantzler and I run the Challengers' Boys Club one street over.

LAURA REED

Uh, huh. I know. Call me Laura. Carl and Jerome told me about the club.

LOU looks over at CARL & JEROME. They're hanging out in the Living Room.

LOU

So Carl and Jerome are pretty tight?

LAURA REED

They are now, wasn't always that way though. When we first moved here those boys were going at each other all the time. Now they're good friends. Jerome spends a lot of time over here. There's a lot of trouble at his house.

LOU takes a sip of tea.

LOU

When I get a new member sign-up I always make a point to meet the parents. I need the parents to back me up on the home front or if I have to discipline them at the club. I need parental support.

LAURA REED

I understand. In fact, I told Jerome that when he's over here he has to obey me like the rest of my kids. If he can't do that then he's not welcome. So, I hear what you're saying.

LOU

That's right. Same rules for everybody, no exceptions. I want everybody to be clear on the standards at the club and I like to get the parents involved early so they know what's going on with their children... you know what I'm saying.

LAURA REED  
 (smiling... nodding in  
 agreement)  
 I sure do. I know what you're  
 saying.

LOU  
 Disrespect of anyone in the club is  
 not allowed. Clothes have to be  
 neat and clean, and no fighting or  
 bullying.

LAURA REED  
 (to Carl in the Living  
 Room)  
 Did you hear that Carl?

ANGLE ON CARL & JEROME

CARL  
 He already told us, Mom.

LOU turns to look at LAURA.

LOU  
 Well, I know you're busy. I won't  
 keep you. Just wanted to say, Hi!

They both get up from the table.

LAURA REED  
 Well, Mr. Dantzler...

LOU  
 Call me Lou.

LAURA REED  
 Okay, Lou. I'm glad you took the  
 time to come by.

They reach the front door.

LAURA REED (CONT'D)  
 (so Carl can hear too)  
 Lou, if you have any problem with  
 Carl or Jerome, you just call me,  
 and I'll be right there.

LOU turns to face LAURA and the BOYS.

LOU  
 Thank you Laura.  
 (to the boys)  
 And I'll see you guys at the club.

EXT. CHALLENGERS' CLUB - EARLY MORNING

LOU is the first to arrive at the club. A COUPLE OF GANG BANGERS are already waiting not far from the front gate.

LOU gets out of the car to unlock the gate.

LOU

You guys are up might early. What's going on?

The GANG BANGERS stand their ground.

GANG BOY #1

Nothing. Just out to get a jump start on the day. Same as you.

LOU walks over to the GANG BANGERS

LOU

Guys, I don't want any trouble. I'm just hear to help. Young kids are going to be dropped off here throughout the day...

GANG BOY #1

...and...

LOU

I don't want you guys talking to any of them. Just leave them alone.

GANG BOY #1

Hey, we're not doing shit.

LOU & the GANG BANGERS lock eyes for a moment. LOU turns to unlock the gate. He gets back into his car and drives in.

EXT. CHALLENGERS' CLUB PARKING LOT (SPRING 1971)

CARL and his friends are playing basketball on the makeshift court. ROCK, 13, energetic, angry like most of them, is horsing around and teasing CARL.

ROCK

(laughing)

Can't make it, huh! What's a matter! Waiting for an invitation.

CARL REED

Stop laughing, man! I'm trying to make a shot.

ROCK

Yeah, trying to make a shot is right!

ROCK knocks the ball out of CARL'S hand.

CARL REED

Okay, that's a foul!

ANGLE ON THE TEAMS as they line up for CARL'S free throw.

CARL prepares to shoot. He's tries to concentrate, but ROCK keeps laughing.

CARL REED (CONT'D)

Stop it!

ROCK keeps cutting up.

CARL REED (CONT'D)

If you don't stop it I'm going to come over there and pop you one!

ROCK laughs harder.

CARL throws the ball and immediately stomps over to ROCK and punches him in the eye. Blood spurts every where as ROCK's head is thrown back. ROCK quickly recovers and charges CARL. They grapple. CARL punches him in the side.

LOU sees the whole thing and runs over to break up the fight.

LOU

(yelling)

Carl! Stop! Stop it and get out!  
You're out of here!

CARL pushes ROCK away. ROCK runs at CARL again but is stopped by LOU.

LOU (CONT'D)

You're out of here for a week!

LOU continues to hold onto ROCK. CARL backs away, grabs the ball and slams it against the fence.

CARL REED

It's not my fault. I told him to stop bother me and just kept on...

LOU

I don't care what he does. Hitting him is not going to solve it.

LOU let's go of ROCK and moves closer to CARL.

LOU (CONT'D)

If you tell someone to stop bothering you, and they keep doing it, you have to tell me or another adult, you understand!

CARL doesn't look at LOU. He has his hands on his hip looking off into the distance.

LOU (CONT'D)

You're suspended for a week!

CARL stiffens up, fists clenched.

CARL REED

I don't give a shit!

LOU struggles to hold his temper.

LOU

Okay, a month then.

CARL takes a step closer to LOU.

CARL REED

You can make it a year, but you can't make me get out of here! Just try!

The TWO square off with each other. LOU weighing the options. CARL ready for a fight. LOU figures it out and goes into the building. CARL smiles. He thinks he won that round.

CARL REED (CONT'D)

See. I'm not going anywhere.

He goes to pick up the basketball.

CARL REED (CONT'D)

Okay, let's play.

EXT. STREET CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

A station wagon turns the corner and comes barreling up the street. It screeches to a halt just outside the club. It's Carl's Mother - LAURA and she's pissed. She sees LOU as he gestures for her to pull the car onto the parking lot.

She pulls along side and gets out of the car.

LAURA REED  
I'm sorry Lou. I apologize for Carl  
but I'm here to take care of it.

LAURA REED (CONT'D)  
(yelling to CARL)  
Carl! Carl!

ON CARL, as he stops playing ball with his FRIENDS and turns  
to see his MOM and LOU over by the car.

LAURA REED (CONT'D)  
(yelling so all can hear)  
What's going on here? You don't  
want to do what Mr. Lou say?

CARL emerges from his PACK OF CRONIES. Still tough.

CARL REED  
It wasn't my fault. Rock was  
bugging me all day and he wouldn't  
stop.

LAURA REED  
Get in the car, now.

CARL REED  
But Momma.

LAURA REED  
Get in the car!

CARL takes a deep breath and stands his ground. His chest  
pushes up like a peacock preening for his street BUDDIES who  
were watching from the fence. There are "Oooohs" and "Aaaahs"  
from the younger kids looking on from the playground. They're  
in shock.

LAURA REED (CONT'D)  
Mr. Lou says you are suspended for  
a month, Carl, but you won't listen  
to him. You won't leave. Excuse me?  
Is that the way I raised you?

CARL REED  
(quiet so his friends  
don't hear)  
No, ma'am.

LAURA REED  
That's right! Now get in the car!

CLOSE ON CARL as he rolls his eyes and SIGHS theatrically. He stands his ground.

Carl's MOM stares at him a moment then quickly walks over to him and BAM! Smacks him across the head. Stunned, Carl's eyes spring swell up with tears.

They're squared off now like a Drill Sergeant and a fresh recruit.

LAURA REED (CONT'D)  
(shouting to his face)  
You get in that car right now, or  
you'll get more of that when you  
get home, you hear?

CARL lowers his head so his friends can't see his tears, his shoulders slumped over, he walks passed his MOM to the car and gets in. His MOM follows closely behind. She gets in behind the wheel.

ANGLE ON CARL'S BUDDIES by the fence. They continue watching this incredible display of maternal power.

VIEW is on CARL sitting next to his MOM. CARL'S head is down. Still angry, his MOM looks at him and SMACKS HIM one more time before starting the car and leaving the parking lot.

EVERY ONE on the playground is silent and still. LOU looks over at the gang of CARL'S STREET BUDDIES by the fence. They all look away and shuffle down the street.

INT. CARL REED'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

LAURA walks into the living room cleaning up. Outside the front window we can see CARL, JEROME, and another BOY talking on the porch. She stops to listen to them.

CARL  
C'mon Man. WE got to show him.  
Just drop out! Sooner or later he  
won't have no one to boss around.  
Look, I'm out...

JEROME  
Yeah, but there's no other place to  
play ball.

BOYS  
It's boring around here without the  
club. Nothing else to do.

JEROME

Look man, your suspension'll be  
over soon. Just ask Mr. LOU to jump  
back in...

EXT. CHALLENGER'S CLUB (SUMMER 1971)

LOU brings out a net bag full of basket balls and kick balls and places them next to the wall. The playground is full of KIDS. LOU notices CARL, basketball in hand, standing at the fence. He sees CARL motioning for some of his friends to come over. All of them shake their heads, "no." CARL slams his basketball in angry dribbles back up the street.

[INSERT scene - The Bullet House - Carl MEETS up with one of the CRIPS again, they tell him Raymond wants to talk to him personally. At the meet up Raymond tells CARL he will be a CRIPS and can still go back to the club

but that he needs to join the CRIPS for his own health and well-being as well as protection for his mom, sisters and brothers.]

INT. BOARD ROOM - NIGHT - (SUMMER 1971)

The first official board meeting. Among those present are TOBY WALKER, CARL MOSER, AL SECRIST - with the Boys & Girls Club.

TOBY

I have an announcement that is very fitting for our first official board meeting. We have a our first grant.

(gestures to AL SECRIST)

The Boys & Girls Club has given us \$5,000.

A collective WHOOP from around the table.

CLOSE ON LOU as he scribbles on a note pad: fix the floor, pool table, new baseball gloves.

TOBY (CONT'D)

... and I think we should use it to hire a full-time director.

ON LOU looking concerned and bracing himself for something he doesn't want to hear as one-by-one, each of the BOARD MEMBERS approve the idea.

TOBY (CONT'D)

There is only person I know of who could run this place as it needs to be run. Lou, would you consider taking the job?

Everyone looks at LOU and smiles.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Actually, the Boys Clubs gave us this money with the condition that we find matching funds to hire a director, which would make your yearly salary about \$10,000. Can you live on that?

LOU considers the sum. It's a reduction in pay but he's resolute. This is what he has always wanted to do.

LOU

I'll do it.

EXT. BACK PATIO - LOU'S HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

It's a beautiful moonlit night. LOU, MARK, and RUBY have just finished having dinner on the patio.

LOU

Dinner was wonderful... as usual.

LOU gets up from the patio table.

LOU (CONT'D)

Honey, it's such a beautiful night let's walk around our beautiful backyard a bit.

He walks over to pull Ruby's chair out.

LOU (CONT'D)

At the board meeting tonight, they offered me the full time position of directorship of the Challengers for \$10,000. So it would be half what I've been making at the school and my side jobs. It would be a huge pay cut. How do you feel about that?

RUDY

Since we moved into this neighborhood, there have been wonderful changes.

(MORE)

RUDY (CONT'D)

Any one can see how it's been getting just a little better every day. And it's largely because of you Lou. You are doing something truly useful.

(looks at her husband)

What did you tell them?

LOU

I told them yes.

RUDY

Good. It's the right thing for you to do. The Club is where you need to be. As for the budget reduction, we'll make it work.

Lou holds her close. They kiss.

INT. LOU'S OFFICE - CHALLENGER'S CLUB (FALL 1971)

Lou is busy doing some paper work at his desk.

CARL REED (O.S.)

Uh, I'm sorry for fighting.

LOU looks up and sees CARL standing at the door to his office.

LOU

Hi Carl.

LOU gets up from his desk and walks over to CARL.

LOU (CONT'D)

I know you're a good kid; you've just got a temper, that's all. Just don't fight here anymore, that understood?

CARL REED

Yeah, Mr. Lou.

LOU

All right then. Why don't we go out and play some ball, show these kids what's what!

LOU puts his arm around CARL's shoulders as they walk outside together.

INT. CHALLENGER'S CLUB (SUMMER 1972)

WE MOVE through what used to be an old abandoned grocery store not a clean, bright club full of BOYS & GIRLS doing activities. WE SEE a wood shop, a boxing ring, and a library. WE CONTINUE through two new doors that lead to the out doors basketball court, baseball diamond and football field.

INT. CHALLENGER'S CLUB (SUMMER 1972)

CARL passes by MICHAEL.

CARL REED

(teasing)

You guys gonna sing today, Michael?  
Singing's for sissies. You must be  
a sissy. Real men don't sing and  
dance.

MICHAEL

Shut up, man! You don't know what  
you're talking about!

CARL REED

(more threatening)

What's that jive boy? You talk'n to  
me partner?

LOU sees CARL and MICHAEL from across the room. CARL has his chest up and is invading MICHAEL's personal space. Their fists are clenched. LOU walks quickly towards them. He's fed up. This is like the 15th time.

LOU

There a problem here again, fellas?

MICHAEL and CARL are silent. They just stare daggers at each other.

LOU (CONT'D)

I said, Is there a problem?

MICHAEL & CARL

No, Lou.

LOU

Fine, then put your fists down. If  
you want to fight, take it into the  
ring.

Everyone stands still. MICHAEL and CARL silently glaring at each other.

LOU (CONT'D)

Okay, so you're not going to take it into the ring. But you two are going to have to learn how to get along. You are two of my top leaders; you are here to set the example for the younger kids and they get along better than you two guys. How can you expect to teach them anything about respect and leadership if you two guys are always going at it?!

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

CARL walks along the side walk and is approached by several CRIPS GANG MEMBERS, including YUCK... all of them have the ever present blue bandanas stuck in their pockets or wrapped around their heads. [confrontation... more pressure and harassment to join the CRIPS]

EXT. CHALLENGER'S CLUB - NIGHT (FALL 1972)

A hand drawn sign on poster board announces a Dance at the Challengers. Hundreds of Boys and Girls are showing up. Some have driven up in their cars, some are dropped off, while many of them are on foot.

INT. CHALLENGER'S CLUB - KITCHEN AREA

LOU has recruited some of the older MEMBERS and is coaching them on helping keep an eye on the younger ones.

LOU

I want you to be generous, courteous, and respectful. Above all, set a good example. I need the help of each of you tonight. I need you to help me regulate things.

INT. CHALLENGER'S GYM - DECORATED FOR THE DANCE

GROUPS OF KIDS ranging from 11 to 18 are getting the party started. The lights are low and EVERYONE is dancing to the music on a portable record player. Some BOYS & GIRLS are still scoping out the scene, standing near the long tables of punch and cookies.

INT. CHALLENGER'S GYM - DANCING

The vibe is low key now as the KIDS dance to a slow Smoky Robinson song.

LOU walks around making sure everyone is having a good time. He's the chaperone.

INT. MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE GYM

A GROUP of unfamiliar faces arrive at the party. These faces are harder. They have the demeanor of criminals who have done hard time. They don't belong to the club. The club members who seem them get out of their way.

LOU can see the crowd moving from the other side of the room.

YUCK, 17, walks up to CARL and taps him on the shoulder.

YUCK

Hey Cuz, how come you didn't tell us about this party? Looks fun Cuz! Things are a bit slow though. Maybe you have tired blood. I can liven things up a bit.

CARL

Hey man, you're not supposed to be here.

YUCK

No, it's you Cuz. It's you who are not supposed to be here. You should be out with us. It's like being out in the wild, you know. The Bad dogs group together and become a pack 'cause if they don't. You know what happens to them? They die.

LOU sees the GANG MEMBERS. He recognizes the blue bandanas as the symbol of the CRIPS. He can tell CARL is getting angry.

The place is crowded. LOU has a difficult time moving quickly through the kids dancing and having fun. LOU runs into one of his recruited HELPERS.

LOU

Hey, go turn on all the lights will ya? Turn off the music. Do it now.

YUCK & CARL

as YUCK cuts in between CARL and his DANCE PARTNER

YUCK

First thing Cuz, when you're in a pack you gots to learn is share...

CARL pushes YUCK away from the girl.

LOU reaches the center of commotion. CARL is ready for a fight. YUCK has a knife drawn on him. LOU steps right into the middle of it between CARL and the knife.

LOU

(remaining calm but firm)  
Hey, man be cool!

LOU looks at YUCK - the leader straight in the eyes.

LOU (CONT'D)

I'm not going to have any of that here. You need to take that outside.

YUCK holds his position shifting his gaze from CARL to LOU as if sizing him up. LOU stands there, unflinching all six-foot-two 250 lbs of him. It's clear that he's not backing down.

ON THE GANG LEADER as he lowers his knife. The others follow suit.

LOU & YUCK, their eyes still locked. YUCK weighs his options. Finally, he nods to his cohorts and they leave. YUCK backs away slowly. His harden stare remaining locked on LOU.

WIDE ON THE GYM DANCE FLOOR

as YUCK let's the door close as he exits the building. Suddenly, the sound of 300 TEENAGERS letting out their breath in unison bursts through the tense silence.

LOU himself remembers to breath.

LOU (CONT'D)

This dance is over. Everybody get ready to go home.

There is no argument. All the KIDS begin to collect their belongings. WE HEAR comments like: "Wow!" and "Did you see that?!" CARL himself is clearly impressed by the way LOU handled himself.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING (FALL 1972)

A tall lanky boy about 11 or 12, CHRIS ESTEVES, practices free throws on a school Basket Ball court. He misses and the ball bounces off the back board.

ON THE BASKET BALL as it rolls along the cracked cement. It's suddenly stopped by a foot and is then picked up by a COUPLE OF GANG BANGERS. They have blue caps on and ear-rings in the left ear.

CHRIS  
Hey, give me back my ball.

GANG BANGER #1  
It's not yours any more Cuz.

Chris is angry but he doesn't want to fight these guys.

CARL REED (O.S.)  
Give it back to him jerk-offs!

CARL walks up from the street and stands next to Chris.

The GANG BANGERS seem to recognize CARL at least by reputation. GANG BANGER #1 tosses the ball back to CHRIS and then they both walk off the court.

CHRIS  
Hey, thanks man, but I could've handled it.

CARL REED  
Yeah, I saw how you was handling it. Hey, man, I'm putting a team together at the Challengers club. I'd like you to play.

CHRIS  
But I'm already on a team.

CARL REED  
You talk'n about run by Eli Sherman?

Chris nods.

CARL REED (CONT'D)  
  
He's been there 20 years and long since burnt out. Shit, he's high most of the time. We won't have any of that on our team.  
(MORE)

CARL REED (CONT'D)  
I'm putting together the best time  
South Central's ever had.

CHRIS  
Who would know it? At least his  
team draws attention from high  
school and college recruiters.

CHRIS turns to shoot some more hoops from where he's  
standing. He's still listening to CARL.

CARL REED  
Man, that has nothing to do with  
the Coach. It's because none of the  
brothers have the means to get out  
to Sherman Oaks or wherever to  
play on any other team. It's just  
the luck of the location.

CARL watches as CHRIS shoots and makes the basket.

CARL REED (CONT'D)  
Yeah, I'm serious. I'm going to  
build a good program at the  
Challengers and I'm gonna to talk  
to Sherman about getting into that  
league.

CHRIS shoots again and makes it.

CHRIS  
Yeah, you do that.

INT. WESTSIDE JEWISH CENTER - BASKETBALL COURT

ELI, a refugee from the Hippie era, is casually over seeing  
basketball practice from the bleachers. CARL enters the gym  
and sits next to him. CARL shakes his hand and they begin  
talking.

ELI SHERMAN  
Are you a member of the Westside  
Jewish Center?

CARL  
No, but I'm putting this team  
together. It'll be a good team and  
we want to play in your league  
because it's a good league.

ELI SHERMAN

Son, it's a great league. We've got some of the best teams around, you don't want to do that with a new team. They're not used to playing together. It'll be bad for their morale.

CARL

You don't have to put us in the best division.

ELI sits up with his elbows on his knees thinking about it. After a moment he turns to look at CARL.

ELI SHERMAN

Okay, bring the money by Monday, and you've got a deal. Fee is a 100 bucks.

INT. LOU'S OFFICE - CHALLENGER'S CLUB

LOU enters and collects a clipboard stuffed with paper from his desk, a whistle dangling from a lamp, and a net bag of basket balls from the corner of the room. CARL follows after him as promptly heads down the corridor to the Challengers' gym.

CARL REED

In order for our basketball team to compete we've got to join the League. It's going to cost \$100 dollars and I need it by Monday.

LOU

I'm sorry Carl. What money we do have is all going into the summer program.

LOU twists around to look at CARL who's close behind.

LOU (CONT'D)

You'll have to come up with the money elsewhere. Do some fund raising.

CARL stops following.

CARL REED

No problem.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD HAMBURGER STAND - TWILIGHT(1972)

CARL sits at one of the outdoor round tables with RICKY, a CRIPS. Ricky has just returned from the order window with a box of French Rries

RICKY

Yeah, you gotta a reputation.  
Raymond is particularly keen on you  
joining.

RICKY waits for some kind of reaction and misinterprets CARL's silence for a lack of understanding. But CARL understands too well.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Let me tell you something Cuz. A  
couple of years ago, I'd be walking  
down my neighborhood and a couple  
of guys would stop me and ask me if  
I have any money to give them. I'd  
say no and they'd beat the crap out  
of me. Knocked me out one time.  
Since I started Crippling ain't  
nobody fuck'n with me. Sooner or  
later man you gotta join to stay  
alive.

CARL REED

Yeah, well... right now alls I'm  
trying to do is get a good ball  
team together and to do it I need a  
hundred bucks.

RICKY

Shit... a hundred bucks that's  
nothing.

RICKY reaches into his jacket and cautiously pulls out brown paper package. He slips it to CARL under the table.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Tomorrow's Saturday. Around 3 in  
the afternoon 53rd and Vermont  
there'll be an ice cream truck  
cruising around. When they stop at  
the stop sign, you'll be waiting  
there for 'em. Just give that  
package. I'll give you a hundred  
dollars.

CARL

That's all I got to do?

RICKY

Yeah, that's it. Nothing else.  
Consider it our donation to further  
the cause of the fine sport of  
Basketball. Compliments of the  
CRIPS.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - 53RD & VERMONTL - SATURDAY AFTERNOON

CARL waits at the stop sign. An ice cream truck comes around the corner and drives down the whole length of the neighborhood street without stopping until it reaches the stop sign where CARL waits.

The driver looks at CARL then gets out of the driver's seat to the back of the truck.

The rear door swings open revealing an assortment of candies and ice-cream. CARL walks right up to the truck and hands the man in the white uniform the brown paper wrapped package. The man takes the package and closes the door.

EXT. STREET CORNER

RICKY hands CARL a one hundred dollar bill.

RICKY

This is chump change Carl.

INT. WESTSIDE JEWISH CENTER

CARL hands the money to ELI who smiles and pats him on the back.

ELI SHERMAN

Welcome to the league. Now get your  
team together.

INT. CHALLENGER'S CLUB - MEETING ROOM (SPRING 1975)

LOU sits at one of the table. His junior counselors MICHAEL, TERRY, JEROME sit on one side. MICHAEL has his a scowl on his face.

LOU

What's the matter with you Michael?

MICHAEL just lowers his head... all but ignoring LOU.

CARL comes in late and grabs a seat across from MICHAEL glaring at the top of his head. It's obvious there's tension between these two.

LOU looks at MICHAEL and silently waits for an answer.

MICHAEL  
 (bursting outward)  
 It's ridiculous, Lou! Carl is  
 letting some of those kids get away  
 with murder. He's such an idiot!

CARL pushes away from the table and jumps to his feet and so does MICHAEL. They're ready to fight. TERRY & JEROME react.

CARL REED  
 (shouting)  
 Whaddya talk'n about, man?!

LOU  
 All right, settle down! Cool it!  
 Sit down Carl!

CARL slowly takes his seat. His eyes never leaving MICHAEL.

LOU glares up at MICHAEL.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 Now, Michael.

MICHAEL sits down.

LOU (CONT'D)  
 What are you talking about?

MICHAEL  
 It's Chris. That ballplayer, Chris Esteves, you know the one that Carl recruited to the club. I thought he was all right, but he's starting to change, and he needs a firmer hand. Yesterday, I could swear he came to the club high -- I'm sure he had been smoking weed, and all Carl did was tell him to sit down and get himself together. He's babying him, Lou; he's letting him slide all because he's a start player. It's horse shit man.

CARL REED  
 Now hold on...

LOU

Just a minute, Carl. Is this true?  
Did Chris come here high?

CARL REED

Yeah, Lou. He was high, but I'm  
working with him though. I'm on him  
all the time and he's making  
progress.

MICHAEL

Progress?! That's bullshit!

CARL gets back up and moves over to confront MICHAEL. LOU and  
the others stand up as well.

CARL REED

I'm not taking this shit any more!  
I'm sick and tired of always being  
the bad guy around here!

MICHAEL clenches his fist and swells up his chest.

MICHAEL

Then do something about it  
motherfucker.

CARL lunges at MICHAEL. LOU grabs his collar and pulls him  
back.

CARL REED

You arrogant Son-of-a-bitch! Let's  
finish this shit! Get your whiney  
ass outside.

LOU

Both of you - get out! You're both  
suspended! Get out of this club!  
You're supposed to be leaders--I  
can't have you behaving this way.  
You guys know better and you still  
can't control your temper or your  
mouths. Get out of here now! Both  
of you!

EXT. LOU'S HOUSE - BACK PATIO - THAT EVENING

LOU sits with RUBY on the back patio with their two boys MARK  
and CORY. RUBY knows that whatever happened today that LOU is  
still affected by it. LOU gets up and inspects part of his  
backyard.

He sees some weeds growing in the flower and herb garden he planted a few years ago. He pulls them out by their roots and sits back in his chair.

RUBY

Do you want to talk about it?

LOU

I had to suspend Michael and Carl today.

RUBY

What happened?

LOU

They were like two angry roosters. All the anger, resentment, and hostility from the past several years just erupting.

RUBY

Maybe you don't see it Lou, because sometimes change happens slowly. You see those boys every day, but I can tell they've grown.

LOU

Carl could have a bright bright future if he could just harness that temper of his.

RUBY

That's what I mean Lou Honey. It's amazing how Carl has calmed down in a just few years.

LOU considers her comments.

LOU

I have to hand it to him, he didn't lay a finger on Michael and Michael was being a real smart mouth. I'm sure Carl could have made short work of him. He got angry but he didn't lash out like I'm sure he would have a year ago.

RUBY

It's like you've always told me, a step forward and two steps back.

LOU gets up and tosses the weeds into a trash can and then goes over to Ruby and kisses her on the cheek.

LOU  
I love you Honey.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - NIGHT

CARL and his old buddy JESSIE are walking in the neighborhood. They haven't seen each other for a long time.

CARL REED  
So whaddya been doing all this time  
Jess? How come you dropped out of  
the club.

JESSIE  
I'm not saying the club isn't  
great. It is. It's a great place to  
be, but soon as you walk out it's  
the hard world again. My cuz on the  
street is fulltime. I don't see  
where I have that many choices.

CARL REED  
There always choices Cuz.

A large car pulls up behind them and follows from a distance slowly.

JESSIE  
I know everyone needs money and I  
can make some money. Why don't you  
do both Cuz? You can make good  
money in a short amount of time.  
Here look at these.

Jessie holds up one of his feet showing off his new white leather basketball shoes.

JESSIE (CONT'D)  
They're brand new. Made of Leather.  
You'll be feared and respected. Do  
that and you can still play ball at  
the club.

CARL thinks about what Jessie says and is aware of the car following closely behind them.

CARL REED  
Do you know these guys following  
us.

JESSIE  
Yeah, they're supposed to be kind  
of secret about it.

CARL REED  
Well, they're not.

The car pulls up. Windows roll down...

GANG BANGER #1  
Hey Cuz.

JESSIE  
What's up Cuz.

GANG BANGER #1  
We got a job. Need some dependable  
pick up guys Tookie and Ray want to  
see ya.

CARL & JESSIE look at each other.

JESSIE  
(to Carl)  
Let's go Cuz. Walk with me for a  
while. I'll walk with you next  
time.

They both get into the car and it disappears into the  
darkness. Inside the car, the two are blind folded with blue  
bandanas.

EXT. SECRET HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

The large car pulls onto a drive way. JESSIE and CARL, still  
blinded folded and sitting in the backseat are helped out of  
the car.

CARL & JESSIE are escorted around the back of the Secret  
House and led through the double doors of a basement.

INT. BASEMENT - SECRET HOUSE

The lights are off except for black lights. There are velvet  
black light posters on the wall.

WE PASS by a pool table with a veritable military armory  
spread out over the surface. The collection includes several  
kinds of machine guns and even hand grenades. The blindfolds  
are removed.

CLOSE on CARL

He's never seen so many guns in one place.

GANG BANGER #1

Wait here Cuz.

CARL & JESSIE stand between the pool table and a large desk lit by the only source of warm light in the black-light lit room.

RAY

(to Carl)

Alright if I call you the Masher?

CARL REED

Call me whatever you like. My name's Carl.

RAY

That's what everybody else calls you. Around here, especially by me, you're the Masher. Why? Because you mash people up who get in your way. Any way, I want you, Fatman and Po Boy to go out tonight and borrow some sugar from a neighbor's hosue on Hoover Street.

Raymond tosses CARL a wad of \$100 bills.

RAY (CONT'D)

That's just an advance. Lots more where that came from Cuz.

CARL

What do I have to do for it? Make another delivery?

RAY

Nopey Dope. Just going along for the ride. I want you to observe and wake up to the fact that this is where you're living.

RAYMOND nods to some of the other GANG BANGERS in the room. CARL and JESSIE and FAT MAN are once again blindfolded and escorted from the basement.

EXT. HOOVER STREET - LATER THAT EVENING

The large car pulls up along the curb. The blindfolds removed from Carl, Jessie, and Fat Man. They are all given hand guns except Fat Man who is given a sawed off shot gun.

GANG BANGER #1

Okay. Here's the deal. Go in  
blasting. Grab the dope on the  
table and meet us back here.

The 3 guys slowly get out of the car and walk across the street.

EXT. DOPE HOUSE - HOOVER STREET

THE THREE GUYS approach the house from the backyard. The lights are on throughout the house.

CARL REED

We should split up.  
We should enter through different  
places. Po Boy, you and I take the  
back and you...

(to FAT MAN)

come in from the front.

FAT MAN

Okay.

Fat Man circles around front while CARL and JESSIE get in their positions at the rear of the house.

[scene - Carl tries to convince Jessie not to go through with the plan but Jessie is eager to prove himself, Carl backs out and walks away... FAT MAN & Jessie alone break into the dope house. Jessie is shot and wounded but escapes with some of the drugs. Fat Man is shot many times and dies at the scene]

[Scene from page 233-234 where LOU learns of Jessie's murder]

EXT. CHALLENGERS' CLUB - EARLY MORNING

LOU drives up to the gate. Directly across the street is the BULLET-HOLE HOUSE. There are several police cars and policemen. Not an unusual sight to see for this house, but this time there is something more ominous. Yellow police tape is wrapped around the perimeter of the front yard and part of the street. NEIGHBORS are crowded around the area.

LOU gets out of his car to unlock the gate to the Challengers Club. He turns to look at the commotion surrounding the BULLET-HOLE HOUSE and sees...

-- a white leather basketball shoe resting in a pool of quickly congealing blood.

LOU walks up to one of the police officers he knows.

LOU  
What happened?

POLICEMAN  
Gang retaliation. This guy...  
(pointing to the shoe)  
... robbed a dope house over on  
Hoover last night with Fat Boy -  
who got shot 45 times and died at  
the scene. This guy was luckier, at  
first any way. He was shot, got  
away, then came over here... and  
this is where his luck ran out. We  
just heard he died at the hospital.

LOU  
What was his name?

POLICEMAN  
Jessie Roberts.

LOU looks like he just got punched in the gut. He lowers his head and walks back to the club. It's a long walk and each step is an effort.

INT. CHALLENGERS' CLUB

LOU is working with some of the kids in the gym. One of the boys is wearing hard street shoes.

LOU  
Hey Timmy, how many times do I have  
to tell you, don't wear your street  
shoes on the gym floor. That's why  
you have basketball shoes. See?  
Look! You've already scuffed the  
floor.

CARL comes into the club. Some of the other KIDS react.

CARL REED  
Hey Lou.

ON LOU as he turns to see CARL. The sun spilling in behind him.

INT. LOU'S OFFICE

LOU sits behind his desk listening intently to CARL who sits in a chair in front of the desk.

CARL REED

I was walk'n through the alley behind the club, and there was Chris, smoking some weed. I took it away from him and he was pissed. And I told him, 'Listen, life is like a circle. There's always going to be someone to take the dope dealer's place or the lawyer's place; you just have to choose where you want to go. So it's all about choices. Do you want to be in a vicious circle or do you want to be in a successful circle? You make the choice.' I told 'em.

WE have PUSHED in on LOU as he listens to CARL. He's amazed at how much CARL has grown. He's a man now and taking responsibility.

LOU

I don't think any other kid has given me a tougher time than you Carl. Now, look at you. You've truly grown.

(smiles ... then more solemn)

I suppose you heard about Jessie?

CARL REED

Yeah, I did.

LOU

Even with all the resources we had and all we tried to do to help him. He was making such an effort to turn his life around.

CARL REED

He was back in school and even doing his homework.

LOU

I know. You were with him every step of the way. You did everything you could.

CARL REED

I was with him the night before.

LOU

What?

CARL REED

Yeah, we were crip'n. They've been after me for a while to get me and my friends to join with them. I mean a lot of pressure. You don't know Papa Lou, but these guys don't take "no" for an answer. Jessie wanted to join. He could make big money fast plus he would have their protection. So I went with him that night as far as the house. I tried to talk him out of it, but he wanted to prove he could go through with it.

LOU & CARL as they sit in silence. The SOUNDS of the KIDS playing down the hallway and outside.

LOU

Who's the leader? What's his name?

CARL REED

There's a few, but the head guy is Raymond.

CLOSE on note pad - LOU writes the name "Raymond."

He's a big guy. Smart. He knows what he's doing.

INT. CHALLENGERS' GYM - LATER THAT DAY

LOU walks with CARL. They're going out to mix it with the kids. Suddenly WE HEAR BOYS YELLING. A violent fist fight breaks out in the corner. LOU rushes over to break them up.

LOU

Okay. Stop it! You guys know the rules. What happened?

TIMMY

He called me Cuz.

LOU

So!

TIMMY

Only Crips call you Cuz. I'm not a Crip. You say that on my block and we'll beat your ass.

TYROME

You're a Blood. Whaddya doing at this club!

LOU grows angry and impatient but keeps his cool.

LOU

Bloods. Crips. Listen to me. You're Timmy and Tyrome. You leave that gang crap out there away from the club.

(to CARL)

Carl, take these two to the office and call their Moms to pick them.

CARL escorts the TWO BOYS back to the office.

LOU (CONT'D)

You guys are suspended for a week!

LOU walks purposely out the Challengers Club Building, across the playground, out of the gate and to the front door of THE BULLET HOLE HOUSE and knocks. A TEENAGE GANG BANGER, muscular, wearing starched trousers, suspenders and a blue T-shirt, answers the door.

TEENAGE GANG BANGER

Yeah, Lou. Whaddya need?

LOU

I wanna talk to Raymond.

INT. BASEMENT - SECRET HOUSE

It's the black light room we saw before but without all the artillery on display, just the pool table and the long desk. The room is dark with pools of light. LOU stands in the room waiting. A couple of GANG MEMBERS are shooting pool in the background.

RAY enters the room.

RAYMOND WASHINGTON

Hi, Mr. Lou. So you want to talk to me?

LOU

Yes. I do. There's no bullshit here Raymond. I'm just trying to help the kids in our neighborhood.

RAYMOND WASHINGTON

Yeah, me too.

LOU

I was driving to the bank down the block and saw a group of boys, they couldn't have been more than 8 years old playing handball over the chalk outline of a dead body. There was bloodstains and everything. Is that the life for an 8 year old? A 7 year old? A 6?.

RAYMOND WASHINGTON

What do you want me to do about it?

LOU

I'm asking that you stop having your guys hang out near the club recruiting our kids. There's no way we can compete with you and the world outside the club. Help me give these kids a choice. Most of them just want to play, be kids, and get educated.

RAYMOND WASHINGTON

Hey, it's not like we're opposed to those things. If it's not us it's some other gang or the police. If there isn't a strong power on the street then there's chaos. Rules.... you've got rules at the club, right?

LOU

Of course. We have rules.

RAYMOND WASHINGTON

Well, we're here to have rules too.

LOU

That's what the law is for.

RAYMOND looks knowingly at LOU. Neither one of them are that naive.

RAY

You know, the real enemy is our own self-hatred because the White - establishment has done such a good job making us feel like we have no value. Gangs like ours give us back some of that self-respect... returns some of that power to us whether white folk like it or not.

In a free society, I'm walking down the street. The policeman have got the nerve to ask me, "Where are you going? Where you coming from?" Can you imagine them asking white folks those kinds of questions out of the blue.

It ain't none of your damn business where I'm going. It aint none of your business where I came from... Fuck you talk'n about "...where you going?" People ask what are you doing here? You go anywhere else and ask people what are they doing there you stop and ask anybody else in this society "why do you exist?" You understand what I'm saying? But you have the nerve to ask me that all day every day. What do you think that does to me psychologically? What does that tell me? What message am I being fed? Every day I'm being fed a spoonful of hatred. Every day. That's my diet.

It's just a question of when this is going to erupt and upon whom is it going to erupt. AM I going to attack myself? Am I going to attack you? Or am I eventually going to attack the cause of my anger and the cause of my frustration?

Someday. Somewhere, and on some body.

You - your generation, feel we should bite the bullet... suck it up.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

Show that were greater than any oppression they rain down on us by simply outliving it... show that it doesn't work... That it won't destroy you... take the beatings and all the bullshit. You and my parents come from places where you have to step off the side walk if a 12 year old white kid comes by. You say "excuse me Maim or Sir," ...places where you couldn't enter because you were black... places where black men were lynched with regularity.

So from that perspective Los Angeles looks wonderful doesn't it? I mean you're certainly aware of the flaws but you see it as an improvement. You're children however... that is to say We! Have a very different perspective. We come along and we say we ain't going to take shit. You took it! But we're not!

Cops have weapons and they have the law behind them. We citizens don't have anything behind us except our own heart, our own desire, and our own determination. I mean we're just trying to survive. And our message to them..

You cannot whoop us. We're already dead. We're already beaten down. We've already got the wounds inside and the outside of our body. How are you going to hurt us further? You cannot threaten us. You cannot frighten us.

We live in the most frightening places under the most frightening conditions. We are immune to fear. We are immune to harm. You see what I'm saying.

You have stepped into a cesspool and you're the only who's going to get infected.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

You send me the message that my life is of no value. Why should your laws, your property, and your morals have any meaning for us?!

And those from our community...

(to Lou)

your generation, who organized for change...

They ran them down. They chased them down. They hunted them down. They murdered everybody that they could.

Alprentice Carter  
John Huggins  
MalcomX  
And  
Mar-tin Luth-er King

They made everybody else go into exile or they locked them up in the penitentiary for good and when all that was over with... a new element rose up... called THE CRIPS.

You see.

And the shit's starting all over again.

[long pause... the two men... their eyes locked]

Just like your club Mr. Dantzler, we're born out of necessity.

We come out of this neighborhood... like your Challengers club... both made of the children we pass by every day and pay no attention to... but the kids - they watch us and they see what's what.

You had the generation your parents came from and you had the great personalities of your generation to connect with. You had something. You had something to attach to. We didn't. We were born in a state of suspended animation... We are totally disconnected like a planet out of orbit.

Now, Mr. Dantzler,  
You gotta different line on this  
shit?

You wanna give it a shot... make it  
work when nobody else before you  
could do it. Man, that takes a lot  
of balls, a bigger heart than mine,  
and the patience of a fucking  
saint. Have at it.

I Say, as long as you don't fuck  
with us. We...  
(looking out into the  
room)  
none of us... will fuck with you.

EXT. CHALLENGER'S CLUB (BACK TO 1992) - EARLY MORNING

CLOSE ON LOU, still hunched over catching his breath looking  
at the overturned car amongst the rubble on the streets just  
beyond the fenced-in parameter of the club.

ANGLE ON BRUCE AND LOU as Lou straightens up. Bruce pats him  
gently on the shoulder.

BRUCE  
Let's walk around the building,  
Lou. Make sure it's okay.

WIDER ANGLE ON BRUCE AND LOU as they walk around the building  
amazed that nothing has happened to it. Not so much as a  
scratch.

LOU looks out beyond the Club's fenced in playground. The  
world is completely different. Not forty-feet away, rows of  
shops half a block long still smoldering, completely  
destroyed.

ANGLE ON LOU & BRUCE

LOU  
Look, they even burned down the  
church. How could anyone burn down  
a church?

LOU's P.O.V.

Between the burnt out shell of what was once a beauty parlor and a liquor store is a pile of rubble, hardly recognizable as a church or anything else.

BRUCE

I'm telling you, it's crazy.

LOU

How's your family? Have you been home yet?

BRUCE

They're fine. No, I haven't been home yet. So, you gonna keep the club closed today, Lou?

LOU

Yeah, I think that's best. I don't want anyone out on the streets today. It was bad enough last night, all of us trying to get these kids home safely in the vans after all the violence started.

Outside of the club's perimeter, the burnt out city starts to awaken. People slowly emerge from their broken homes. Many of them step outside very carefully unsure what to expect next and afraid of what they might see.

LOU (CONT'D)

No, I think I'll keep it closed today and tomorrow, just in case. Then it will be the weekend, and by Monday, hopefully things will be back to normal.

As BRUCE & LOU talk, they continue walk around the playground. LOU notices a COUPLE of TEENAGERS wearing the BLUE colors signifying the CRIPS. They are standing in someone's front yard about fifty yards away. One of them leans on a bat.

ON BRUCE, still in police uniform, follows LOU's gaze. His body stiffens and instinctively puts his hand on his holster.

LOU makes eye contact with one of them.

CLOSE on the TEENAGER with the BAT as he gives a brief nod and lets the bat drop to the ground.

ON LOU as he nods back.

NEWS FOOTAGE...President Bush Address:

PRESIDENT BUSH

I can hardly imagine. I try, but I can hardly imagine the fear and the anger that people must feel to terrorize one another and burn each other's property. But I saw remarkable signs of hope right next to traffic signs of hatred. This marvelous institution, this Boys & Girls Club, stands, unscarred, facing a burned-out block. And its leader is this wonderful man next to me, Lou Dantzler. It's existence proves the power of our better selves, and let's never forget it. Now, let me personalize it a little bit and tell you why clubs like this matter. Story about a little kid. Rudy Campbell, I saw him on television. He looked about 8 years old. His father was murdered a few years back and I didn't see his mother. Rudy is raised by his 22-year old sister who has 5 kids of her own. And he lives in South Central. And think about what he has already been through. 'Now,' he says, 'he fears things will only get badder and badder and badder. And it breaks your heart. And our children deserve better than that.'

... Epilogue [what are some of the Challengers' doing today]

INT. CHALLENGERS' CLUB - EARLY MORNING

LOU has just opened the doors for the day, he sees a scuff mark on the gym floor and bends down to clean it.

LOU

(whispering to himself)  
Oh, Lord, give me strength.

CARL (O.S.)  
Talking to yourself again?

ANGLE ON LOU

as he looks up to see who it is. The sunlight spilling into the room is so bright that we can't make out who it is, but the voice is familiar.

CARL REED  
(teasing)  
What, you don't recognize me after  
all this time, Lou?

ON LOU slowly standing to his feet.

LOU  
Hmmm... I don't recognize you yet.  
Wait, turn around!

CARL REED  
C'mon now, Lou - you must recognize  
me by now!

LOU starts to laugh as he hugs CARL.

LOU  
Man, look at you! The last time I  
saw you, you were a skinny little  
thing with a huge natural, and now  
look at you!

CARL looks sharp.

LOU (CONT'D)  
The last time I heard about you -  
you dropped out of college a few  
months shy of getting your degree  
because your wife got pregnant and  
you needed to support your family.

CARL REED  
--So I joined the Air Force, Lou.  
I've been stationed at Travis near  
San Francisco for the past few  
years. I got out and took a  
civilian job with an aerospace  
company.

LOU  
That's great. I'm proud of you. So,  
what are you doing here?

CARL REED

(sigh)

Well, something happened last  
December that really woke me up.

CARL & LOU begin to walk around the gym.

CARL REED (CONT'D)

The doctor found something in my  
colon and said they were going to  
have to do surgery if it were  
cancer or not.

CARL pauses a moment to collect himself.

CARL REED (CONT'D)

You know, with all the crazy  
situations I was in when I was  
younger, this was the first time I  
ever felt really scared that I was  
going to die. Here I'm only twenty-  
eight and facing cancer. I mean - a  
gangster looking to jump me? That I  
knew how to fight, but cancer? No  
way. It freaked me out, Lou. It  
really did. I was scared. And so I  
did what my Mama always taught me  
to do when I got scared and that's  
look to the Lord. I said, 'Lord, if  
you bring me through this, I want  
to go home. I want to go home and  
do what I was meant to do, which is  
to help kids in the community, give  
them direction on what I went  
through and try to spare them.' So  
I went through the operation and  
they cut the polyp out, and it was  
benign. The next week, I left and  
now I'm here.

CARL smiles.

LOU

Oh, Carl. Your coming back home is  
a godsend. Things have really  
changed since you've been away.  
When you were here, we had problems  
with the gangs, but it was nothing  
like it is now. Our membership is  
actually flat for the first time in  
our history. Kids are not joining  
here at 8, 9, or 10 anymore, and if  
you don't get them by that time,  
you might as well forget it.

LOU leads CARL off the gym floor and heads for his office.  
They disappear together down the corridor.

LOU (CONT'D)

...they're making money in those  
streets and they like it. They  
wonder why they should stay in  
school when they be making a couple  
hundred a day on the corner. How  
are we suppose to compete with  
that?

CARL REED

I know what you mean, Lou. I've got  
some ideas....

LOU

You got some ideas. That's good  
Carl. I'd like to hear 'em.

Their voices fade. Against the empty gym appear images of the  
Challenger kids who went on to lead productive lives together  
with legends briefly describing where they are now.