

CAN BOYS FLY

A Pilot for Television

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Based on the Charles P. Ries published memoir,

The Fathers We Find
The Making of A Pleasant Humble Boy

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CAN BOYS FLY

EPISODE ONE

"Mink DeVille"

FADE IN:

EXT. SHEBOYGAN, WI - DAY

THE MINKTRONICS (SONG)
Time moves slowly.

Numerous long metal: From above it looks like a gigantic manufacturing plant of some kind; oddly located in rolling farm lands by a family's compunction to keep the rich fashionably warm.

THE MINKTRONICS
The time it moves slowly.

And instead of two of every species **there are ten thousand of one:** Mink. Rows and rows and more rows of wire cages that house the enigmatic, fleece-clad animals.

THE MINKTRONICS
Waiting for our loved ones, waiting
for our loved ones.

Their little eyes stare into the abyss; they wait for the transubstantiation from a living, breathing creature to the burnished immortality of enclosing forever a human being in their paradoxically desired fur.

A SERIES OF SHOTS, over THE MINKTRONICS:



THE MINKTRONICS
 Moving in motion. Moving in
 synchronous motion, Moving in
 synchronous motion...



INT. FEED HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON NEAR DUSK

Single over head light bulb is on, concrete floor is wet and glistening, frozen 100 pound blocks of garbage fish and condemned chicken, rabbit, and cow livers and tripe are being carried from a cooler and placed on to the Feed House floor to thaw overnight for tomorrow's mix, stand up wood stove is hot, light comes in through window.

CHUCK DIEDRICH is 11. Crazy smart with a touch of iconoclasm in his perception of the world he inhabits. A leader in follower's clothes, Chuck is our hero.

And this is the story of Chuck becoming who he was meant to be. Careful when you mention mink, dear friends. Oh, yeah -- Chuck has a stutter.

BROTHER JOHN is six years older then Chuck. Short, stocky, light brown hair. A detail guy, careful, but bullheaded too.

JOHN

Dad says your helping with grading tomorrow.

CHUCK

Not me. I'll get chewed up. Look like a dumb shit. I'll do chores.

BROTHER JIM is four years older then Chuck. Good looking, 5'9" brown hair. Talks non-stop. Talks before he thinks. Loves being loved.

JIM

He says you can start with pastel females. Work you way up to the big guys. Even a dip shit can handle females without drops.

CHUCK

Noooo th-th-th-thanks. I'm not fuuuucking up in front of everyone. What's the hurry?

JIM

We'll be short tomorrow, Schmidt's can only send three guys. Your number is up, Chuck.

John makes a puking sound, as in Chuck will puke when he works with the females.

CHUCK

Fuuuuck.....yooooou.
(stutters...nervous)

JIM

Marvin says you gotta pay \$1 for every slip, \$2 for every drop, and \$3 for every bite down. If dad gets shanked, your fucked.

Frozen blocks side-by-side on the floor. John turns to the hot stand-up cast iron stove and spits on it; he finds the sizzle and steam entertaining.

EXT. STEPS OUTSIDE BACK DOOR OF HOUSE - DAY

Chuck, John, and Jim, PEEL OFF their dirty, muddy work shoes - stupid banter ensues.

JIM

I win the most shit on my shoes contest, again.

JOHN

You got the most shit in your brain.

JIM

You a brain surgeon or just jealous of my good looks?

Boys ramble in the house and go to the basement, where they get out their work clothes and into their house clothes.

MOM (O.S.)

(Calling from upstairs)
Dinner's almost ready. Get cleaned up. One of you run out the cooler and get a gallon of milk.

CHUCK

(He offers without complaint)
IIIII'll get.

Chuck hurries out to the Feed House and into the cooler where a few gallons of milk stand on the floor just below 100 pound blocks of frozen mink feed that sit in racks floor to ceiling, where they will start to thaw - ingredients in the next days mink feed.

He grabs a gallon, closes the cooler door, and goes to sit on the 5 gallon bucket, that is turned upside down, beside the warm stove. It is twilight.

He looks at his hands, which have their share of bites and cuts. He puts his head in his hands and takes a deep breath...

CHUCK
Shit. Fuck. Shiiiiit.

CHYRON: *THE STUTTER*

INT. MOM AND DAD'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Where mom works on her sewing machine. Chuck rushes in with something important to say.

CHUCK
Mom, mom I-I-I-I read thaaaat
whooole book. The-the-the whole
thing, by by by myself. It it it
was really goooooood!!

MOM (HELEN DIEDRICH) is small, petite woman. Maybe 100 pounds. Brown hair, house dress on. Tidy and organized. Mom turns to face Chuck.

MOM
Slow down, and think about what you
are going to say.

Chuck takes a deep breath, closes his eyes, and starts over again. He pauses between each word until he slowly painfully gets all five or six words out.

CHUCK
I... r-read.. the....whole b-book.

Mom is patient but concerned.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Small, well kept kitchen. Mom and dad do dishes. He washes and she dries with kitchen towel.

CARL DIEDRICH is 5'9' receding hairline, black hair, distinguished profile. A thin but sturdy build.

MOM
Dr. Pauly thinks we should cut skin
membrane under his tongue. Thinks
his tongue is too short to talk
normal.

(MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)

Called a frenectomy or something like that. Just a quick snip. Won't hurt too much.

DAD

He struggles just saying the simplest things.

MOM

He's no Ricardo Montalban. Poor guy seems all tied up inside.

She carefully stacks the dishes.

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

MOM

Don't be scared, Chucky, you will be singing like a little bird soon.

Chuck is in the middle of the back seat; we see his doe eyes in the review mirror; he talks silently to himself.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Chuck sits between mom and dad.

DR. PAULY is a balding, chubby man, flat affect and in a white doctor's coat.

DR. PAULY

Well young man, you ready to start speaking normal?

CHUCK

(SMILES bravely)

Yeeeeees. I-I-I-I-M READDDDY.

DR. PAULY

Well come on in. Carl and Helen, you want to see the magic happen?

MOM

We're fine waiting.

INT. DR. PAULY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Chuck sits on the edge of the examination table.

DR. PAULY

This won't hurt much for a tough
farm kid like you.

(then)

Okay, open wide.

With some tamped-down trepidation Chuck opens wide and Dr. Pauly snips under Chuck's tongue. Chuck grimaces, forces down any tears, and gives a closed mouth smile.

DR. PAULY

Here, hold this cotton ball under
you tongue, the bleeding will stop
soon, and then in an hour or so you
can try singing The Star Spangled
Banner.

(off Chuck's look)

Or whatever...

INT./EXT. CAR - LATER

On the drive home Chuck in the back seat; holds the cotton ball. Sees his father's eyes silently checking him in the rearview mirror.

EXT. CHUCK'S HOUSE - PICNIC TABLE

Chuck, alone. Stares out at the mink shed. Hears a mink squeal. Chuck whispers to himself.

CHUCK (V.O.)

Dear God, make this snip remove the
marbles in my mouth. Please make me
speak like a normal person.

Another mink squeals back at the first one. We can tell their squeals apart. So can Chuck. Now he bargains with his God, who neither hears nor speaks because God only.. sees.

CHUCK (V.O.)

I'll never spit or bite Joe again.
I'll stop breathing excessively on
the back of his neck before we go
to sleep at night just to piss him
off and I won't envy his successes.
Rather, I'll accept myself and my
failings as gifts of your divine
and perfect love. Your Best Friend,
Chuck.

A short time later, mom finds Chuck outside. His eyes are closed. He is deep in thought - perhaps day dreaming of singing.

MOM

Chuck!?!

CHUCK

Just.. thinking.

MOM

How do you feel? Do you want to try talking a little?

Chuck nods vigorously.

MOM

Well, say something. Take your time. Think about what you're going to say, and then just say it.

Chuck thinks, gathers himself, speaks.

CHUCK

W-w-w-eeee d-d-d it! I-I_I_ can speak normal, ca-ca-can't I????

OFF Mom's expression of concealed concern, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MINK YARD - MID-MORNING

October, bright sun, cool day.

Dad is outside of the mink shed. Men bring mink to him to be examined or graded. Lots of friendly banter. One after another they present their animal to Dad, who grades them.

Chuck is next in line and presents the pastel female to his dad. The mink is agitated. Chuck is, too. He has seen all this before, but now he's got to do it. Chuck looses his grip on the female's head. She latches on to Carl's finger:

DAD

God damn it Chucky! Can't you hold that Goddam mink still! For Christ's sake, how many fingers do you think I have? Shit!

Dad shakes his hand like his finger is on fire and then squeezing it to stop the blood flow.

Chuck gets a good grip on the female and shows it to his dad.

DAD

We'll pelt her. No need to mark anything on her feed board. We keep all the 3's for breeding stock. Once we graded the herd, we'll go back through any who score 2 or 1 and see how they shine; if we still need breeding stock. The rest we pelt. Now take her back and focus. This should be like breathing air by now. You're old enough. Focus!

Chuck carries his mink back into the shed, places it back into its pen. Grabs another pastel female.

INT. MINK SHED - CONTINUOUS

MARVIN RAMMER is a handsome young man in his early 30's, 6'2", broad shoulders, strong, a real working machine; cheerful. A wise man in a farmer's jump suit.

Marvin grabs a mink out of a pen next to Chuck.

MARVIN

Hold the head tighter, don't worry about the tail; tails don't bite.

Brother Jim is at the pen next to Chuck's and snatches another mink to present to Dad.

JIM

Who the fuck let you out of the play pen? I thought you were helping mom with house cleaning. I told Marv Dad's hands would be bit to shit today.

MARVIN

You're no gold metal winner, Jimmy. Leave Chucky be. He's just getting warmed up.

JIM

So the worst is yet to come! Shit I should have worn my nut protector.

ROLLIE SCHMIDT is gray haired, in his late 60's. As he enters the shed...

ROLLIE

You boys having a meeting or what?
Get a move on. Chucky, you'll get
hang of it. We all got chewed up at
bit at first. All part of the fun.

EXT. MINK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Marvin, Rollie, Jim, John, and Rollie's son, William, all
carry mink out to be graded. Rollie holds a pastel female for
Dad to grade.

DAD

That's a beauty; give it a 3.

Rollie returns the mink to its pen.

Brother John stands holding pastel female behind, Marvin --
and loses his grip. The mink tumbles to the ground and
scampers off.

JOHN

Damn it!

MARVIN

(laughing loud and
joyfully)

Now there is a true professional.

CHUCK

I thought they tooook your yard
pass away for the most drops in a
day. Diiiiip shit!

John takes off down the shed. Chases the mink on the loose
and grabs it with outstretched arms, like one might grab a
fumbled football and captures the mink between his two
catching gloves - heavy leather mittens.

JOHN

I'm irreplaceable and under paid
too. Pays to be in top shape; not
something any of you old farts
could do. Yup, I might drop a few,
but I get`em back. Reflexes of a
cat!

John gets back in line, and shows his mink to dad.

DAD

Pelt.

MARVIN

Carl, that's it for the pastel females. Lets take a look at the darks.

They move to the end of the next shed. This shed holds darks; females on one side, males on the other.

Marvin takes Chuck aside, warm hand on his shoulder.

MARVIN

You'll be fine. These guys are a little more fired up - high strung. You gotta move a little faster. Hang on tight.
(mimes grabbing)
Grab the back of the neck, pull the tail -stretch them out.

CHUCK

Right. Okay. Sure.

MARVIN

Take a breath, Chucky. Good to breath while you having fun.

Marvin goes back into shed and Chuck pauses for a moment to look beyond the Guard Fence (The Prison Wall), where he sees some birds darting about and beauty of some late blooming flowers. He sort of spaces out for awhile.

CHUCK

(WHISPERS to himself)
Fun is freedom...

Marvin pokes his head outside the shed entrance.

MARVIN

Hey, you working or dreaming? Get you butt in here.

FOLLOW Chuck INTO THE SHED. He opens a kennel of the black male; it's a big animal. He lifts it out of the box and the animal is whipping around when it locks down onto Chuck's catching glove and bites into his hand.

CHUCK

Umph! Shit! Damn that hurts!!

Chuck drops the mink and he races down the shed aisle after it and out of the shed itself. He leaps to grab it and misses.

Chuck continues to race after it, again leaps to catch it and this time he does.

He picks it up and totes it back into shed and gets in line to show the animal to his dad. Ahead of him is Rollie.

ROLLIE

Nice grab. Maybe I'll hire you to work on my ranch.

CHUCK

Thanks Mr. Schmidt; that would be great. Always happy to help you guys out. But shit these darks!!!!

ROLLIE

Yes, darks got a little more gas in the tank. A little meaner than the pastels or off whites; but they look good. Your dad's darks are special. And women love ranch dark mink coats. We're sort of in the happiness business, Chucky.

Rollie shows his animal to my dad.

DAD

Pelt.

Chuck displays his animal to his dad. He holds the agitated dark male firmly. His dad runs his hands over the nap. He blows into the nap to part the guard fur and gazes into the under fur.

DAD

You see that? You see that? That's special.

CHUCK

See what?

Chuck looks down at his dad's hands, which have parted the fur. He is looking into the fur; into the under fur.

DAD

Powder blue, soft gray, how it pairs with the guard firm. And look at that sheen. It's soft to the touch. I mean really soft. The guard fur and the under fur perfectly even. That is a beautiful animal. Give it a three. And bring me a dozen more where that came from. That's a money maker.

Chuck takes the mink INTO THE SHED and puts it back in its kennel. He places three XXXs on the feeder with a black crayon. Rollie and Marvin are next to him, grabbing another animal.

CHUCK

He sees a rainbow. I see gray. I don't see what he sees. He thinks I'm an idiot.

MARVIN

Now, now, don't think that way. He's got the eye. Took him a long time to get it. He's good at this business. Maybe you will follow in his footsteps one day. Or Maybe not. Just don't ever call yourself an idiot. Least not around me.

CHUCK

Thanks, Marv. Not so easy being me.

MARVIN

Well right now you just got to hang on to your damn mink.

Jim is a few kennels down, when he drops a large dark male, who runs up the back of his of his coveralls.

JIM

What the...!!! Get him off me!

JOHN

Just look at that boy do the twist. Who taught you to dance?!?!?! Very sexy.

MARVIN

He's looking for white meat, Jimmy. Just keep those family jewels tucked up and tight in a safe place - don't want have a nut fatality.

Jimmy runs down the shed with a very irritated mink hanging on. Everyone is laughing, as they continue to work.

No one is going to rescue Jimmy. Every one has work to do and the mink is not going to kill him. Finally the mink falls to the ground, and Jimmy scoops him up.

JIM

Well, I guess the girls love me and
the freaking mink find me
irresistible.

MARVIN

You just got that special
something. Don't they call it savoy
faire; shit even mink can smell it.

Chuck pulls a large dark male from its kennel and gets in
line. As he displays it to Dad, Chuck loses his grip. It
bites Dad in the same finger that is now taped from the first
slip up.

DAD

Christ's sake, I won't have any
fingers left.

Dad bends over, holding his flinger for just a moment and
rises up. He takes a deep breath; calms his anger.

DAD

One more and your back to shoveling
manure full time! Or worse, house
cleaning. Pay attention!

CHUCK

Sorry, dad. Really, sorry. Maybe
better if I shovel shit for a
living.

DAD

No damn way; you're a mink farmer.

Chuck goes back into...

THE SHED

Chuck vigilantly glances around. Good. He's the only one in
here. He goes to a tool rack. Stretches his arm behind it and
pulls out a copy of VOGUE MAGAZINE.

Checks again to be sure he's alone. He is. He opens the
magazine and studies THE FEMALE MODELS. Not so much in a
sexual way (but there is that, back in the growing fields of
his hormones) but with a certain and very real fascination,
as if the models, posed, poised and immaculate in their
stages of dress, were not of this earth.

Finished, Chuck closes the magazine, then becomes transfixed with the cover:



STAY ON CHUCK, transfixed, as if the model were in mid-sentence. He speaks to the cover:

CHUCK
Tell me about the world...

STAY ON CHUCK, as we...

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. ROOSEVELT PARK BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY

Chuck, his brother Joe, cousins MARK and ALLEN sit in the bleachers, side by side. They watch a softball game. Other people are scattered about.

ALLEN has a flat top; chronically fidgety. Bossy to a fault. MARK is thin, kind, easy to be with, thoughtful.

ALLEN
(bored)
Jesus. Fucking softball blows chunks.

MARK
I dunno. I'm pretty decent at it.

ALLEN
It's baseball for old men and women.

MARK
(mildly protesting)
So, so what're you saying?

Chuck studies the blossoming friction between his two cousins.

ALLEN
I'm saying unless this was a young chick baseball game, we're just watching ourselves get old.

Joe savors the vision of...

JOE
Girls playing baseball. When they bat their bottoms stick out.

ALLEN
The only thing sticking out here is your boner.

JOE
I do not have a boner.

MARK

It doesn't look like he has a boner.

ALLEN

I was JOKING, all right? Jesus in heaven, Mark, you take everything so laterally.

CHUCK

(Quietly correcting him)
Literally.

ALLEN

(to Joe)
Tell your brother he reads too much. Lets go for a ride.

JOE

Where to?

MARK

You want to ride over to River at Kiwanis's Park? Maybe there is football practice or something going on at the athletic field.

JOE

Too bad girls don't play football.
"Hike it to me, baby."

Everyone cracks up, Laugh, laugh, laugh. Then:

ALLEN

I got it, I got it.
(he's so excited by this idea he is panting)
I'm a genius. I dare you to ride your bikes down Kiwanis Hill, from the high end. If that doesn't bust our nuts, I don't know what will.

CHUCK

No way!

Chuck, muffling his real alarm, checks the others' faces.

ALLEN

Yea, way!!!! Or the high way, Chuck.

ALLEN

I can't believe I never thought of it before. Are you kidding me? We'll shit our pants. What a freakin' ride!

CHUCK

We don't have time! It's dangerous even during sledding season. I saw a toboggan packed with people snap in two --

ALLEN

-- Let's go.

Allen rushes to his bike, Joe and Mark are in hot pursuit.

The stampede has begun. The Hill awaits.

Three boys on bikes peddle fast through the streets of Sheboygan, CHUCK a short distance away.

ALLEN

Hi Ho Silver!!! Yippee Kiyea!!

EXT. TOP OF KIWANIS HILL - JUST LATER

Three boys on bikes lined up at the top of the hill. They look down with excitement and silence, when...

Chuck catches up. Stops in line with them. Looks down.

Chuck looks down the undulating hill: One he has sledged down, but never thought to race down on his bike.

It'll be like flying. He sees himself leaping from small plateau to plateau. He is getting high on fear and anticipation. This boy is going to fly!!!!

ALLEN

Here's the scene cowboys: We're a posse called the Lonesome Sausage and Cheese Riders. You see that pioneer family down there getting their asses whooped by those blood thirsty redskins?

Mark looks to Chuck.

MARK

My balls are tingling.

As Chuck stares down the massive hill, STAY ON HIM as Allen prattles on:

ALLEN (O.C.)

Here are the rules: No coasting. We peddle at full speed.

Allen talks to everyone but he looks at Chuck:

ALLEN
 Nobody backs out. No cutting
 sideways and wimpy-assing down.
 That pioneer family needs us
 lads!!!!

Its like the scene from *Doctor Strange Love* with Chill Will sitting on the nuclear bomb and being dropped out the plane's cargo hold:

Allen sets his feet on his pedals. He's off!

P.O.V. CHUCK:

Allen hits a bump and nearly flies off his bike, but makes it to the bottom, spins his bike around to face the hill and face his three Lonesome Riders and beckons.

ALLEN
 (amped up and crazed)
 That was great! That was not
 softball. That was fucking nuts!
 Come on boys, if Allen can do it,
 so can you. I dare you!! I still
 got both my balls; I counted. And
 not fucking softballs either!

Mark, and then Joe launch their bikes. WHOOSH! HALF-WAY DOWN they cheat just a bit and cut slightly off "straight down".

Joe nearly loses control of his bike, but makes it down without mishap. All three now face the hill and look up at Chuck high above.

ALLEN
 Chuck! Get your ass down here, you
 little wimp. It's great! It'll do
 you good, scare the shit out of you
 and no fair coasting, you got to
 put the peddle to the metal.

Chuck's looks down.

CUT TO:

BRIEF INSERT - SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD

Or perhaps *somewhen*, like Time bent into itself by an Almighty hand: We see A HUNDRED GROWN MEN in dirty white garb stream, single-file into a MOSQUE and form a circle...

CUT BACK TO:

CHUCK on his bike: Peddling in a little circle at the top of the hill, he checks out the bumps, the ruts down in the middle of the hill, then he stops. Faces the slope as we...

CUT BACK TO:

BRIEF INSERT - THE CIRCLE OF MEN

SLOWLY bend forward at the waist, then back to upright. They repeat this over and over. When they are bent forward they utter the word, LA -- Arabic for **NO or DEATH**, and as they bend back straight, they utter the word, HI -- Arabic for **YES or LIFE**.

SUFI MEN
(bent forward)
HI.....!

SUFI MEN
(bent back)
LA.....!

SUFI MEN
(bent forward)
HI.....!

SUFI MEN
(bent back)
LA.....!

CUT BACK TO:

CHUCK, AT THE TOP OF THE HILL. Tense. On his bike. He acknowledges the steepness of the slope near the bottom with a grim NOD.

CUT TO:

BRIEF INSERT - THE SUFI MEN

Repeat their chant as they slowly rock back and forth in their human mandala of a circle.

SUFI MEN
HI...!

SUFI MEN
LA...!

Now a HOLY MAN APPEARS IN THE CENTER OF THE CIRCLE as...

CRISP CUTTING BACK AND FORTH NOW -- THE SUFIS/CHUCK

CHUCK wriggles in his seat to find the best position. Sets his feet on his pedals.

THE HOLY MAN recites a PRAYER juxtaposed to the Sufi Men's CHANT:

THE HOLY MAN Unity of consciousness and eternity. Unity of the world and the heavens. Unity of my views of reality and the dreams of sleeping eyes.	SUFI MEN (ROCKING back and forth) ALLLLL....! LAAAAAA! ALLLL...! LAAAA! ALLLL...! LAAAAA!
---	--

As the SUFI MEN begin to rock back and forth a little faster:

CHUCK subconsciously ROCKS bike back and forth. He glances behind him, where there is no death-defying hill -- just the ennui of the flat place called Sheboygan Falls where nothing goes down except your knees during prayer, as...

THE HOLY MAN continues and the SUFI MEN pick up their rocking pace -- back and forth, back and forth:

THE HOLY MAN Unity of my desire for isolation and my desire for connection. I never have to choose one of the two.	SUFI MEN LAAA! ALLL! LAAA! ALLL! LAAAA! ALLL! LAAAA! ALLL!
--	--

HOLY MAN

My conflicts dissolve. I
never had to choose between
this or that.

A SCREEN GRAPHIC translates their chant: NO! YES! NO! YES!
LIFE! DEATH! LIFE! DEATH!

CHUCK looks down at his three comrades, safe on their bikes, at the bottom of the hill, all laughter and adrenaline coursing through their veins. STAY ON CHUCK, AS...

HOLY MAN (V.O.)
(agitated)
I am the conscious universe and the
black sea behind my meditating eyes
that holds the silence of the
wordless!

Now THE SUFI MEN in their mandala are worked up to a frenzy, and they rapidly ROCK BACK AND FORTH now, like fingers on a hand, clutching; opening. Clutching, opening:

SUFI MEN
HI-LA! HI-LA! HI-LA! HI-LA!

A SCREEN GRAPHIC translates their chant: NO! YES! NO! YES!
LIFE! DEATH! LIFE! DEATH!

Chuck NODS to himself. He's ready. And he's not just going to do it, he is going show them how to do it.

HOLY MAN (V.O.)
(possessed)
**I do not need to split into two. I
am the wave and the sea!**

Chuck bucks his bike up like The Lone Ranger on his Palomino and lurches down the hill.

THE SUFI MEN **ROAR**, AS --

CHUCK PEDDLES; he hits and launches over the first four terraces, up down, up down -- woah! Then hurtles towards the final and fifth terrace. The athletic field is closing in, victory is within sight. He peddles even faster. He was born to do this. He can do this!

WHACK! Chuck's front tire hits an immovable object buried in the grassy hillside.

(An object he later discovers was a sprinkler head.) He is thrown from his bike like a bullet out of a gun. He slams and slides on his belly and, oh no, hits a pitch-laden running track.

Chuck lands on the right side of his face and chest -- and still slides, face-first into a cloud of cinder dust and gravel until his misbegotten trip to destroy the Indians has done something awful; he can feel the hot cinder-covered side of what was once his face.

ALLEN
What a ride! Wow! Think he's dead?

The three drop their bikes and come running to their comrade/Lonesome Rider.

MARK
Chuck, are you okay? Can you hear me?

JOE
You can get up now. That was amazing.

ALLEN
Never saw anything like it.
(then)
(MORE)

ALLEN (CONT'D)

You can get up now, Chuck. You can
get up, right, buddy?

MARK

Can you hear me? Can you get up?
You really kissed the ground,
cousin. Your bike is totaled.

Mark is rubbing Chuck's back in the hope that it will have
some medicinal healing effect.

Chuck pushes himself up to his knees; his two hands planted
on the ground. He shakes his head as if trying to think
straight. He realizes he is not dead, but the side of his
face is starting to feel like a griddle at lunch time.

The three boys help get Chuck to his feet. Chuck is a little
dopey. And now the boys can see all of his face clearly.

MARK

(innocently)

Gee, Chuck, the side of your face
looks like --

BUMP. Before Mark can finish, Joe kicks Mark in the leg to
shut him up.

JOE

It'll wash off, Chucky.

ALLEN

Let's go to the field house. Maybe
the janitor will be there or at
least, someone.

The boys walk their bikes to the Field house; Joe walks both
his bike and Chuck's bike whose front tire is a flattened
bent oval.

EXT. THE FIELD HOUSE - JUST LATER

THEIR THREE BIKES are propped outside the field house,
Chuck's bent one splayed on the ground before them like some
Picasso sculpture.

INT. FIELD HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Allen knocks on the door marked "Janitor," while Joe and Mark
help Chuck stand, blood beginning to seep from the road work
on the side of his face.

The Janitor's door is slightly open, they hear A VOICE inside.

ROY (O.S.)

Yup, sure, you bet, just drop the beer off at the front of the Field House and we'll keep it cold until the game.

Allen sticks his head into the door.

ALLEN

Hello. We have kind of an emergency we need some help with.

JOE

Well maybe it is actually an emergency.

ROY

Well come on in....

ROY is in his 60's, a weather beaten. Chews a cigar. Wears a the green pants and shirt of a maintenance man; *Roy* is embroidered on his pen pocket, which is jammed full of stuff.

The boys enter his office.

INT. MAINTENANCE/JANITOR OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Chuck, maybe in shock, gazes around: Small. Cluttered, beat up metal desk. Filthy refrigerator, cleaning supplies, plumbing tools.

ALLEN

He fell off his bike; actually he fell off his bike and on his face. Actually he fell off his bike, on his face, and landed on the running track.

MARK

Well, he actually slid face-first into the running track. Wow, he looks like --

ALLEN

Shut up, Mark.
(to the janitor)
He got a little messed up.

ROY
Let me have a look.

Mark, Allen and Joe stand in front of Chuck and as they part, Roy studies Chuck with amazement and curiosity.

ROY
(a look of stunning
amazement on his face)
Christ Almighty, you got quite a
dinger der little buddy.

Roy clears his throat; pats Chuck on the shoulder.

ROY
Well shit, it ain't that bad. Could
be a whole lot worse. Just a
scrape. I seen knees skinned up a
whole lot worse than your face.
You're not even bleeding.
(adding)
That much.

Roy shambles over to a table and reaches into a box marked
"Medical Supplies". Roy rummages around in the box, which is
as cluttered and messed up as his office.

ROY
Got it. Here's the magic.

MARK
He's gonna need magic when his
parents see him.

JOE
Shut up, Mark.

MARK
I'm just sayin.'

CHUCK
(to Joe)
Is it that bad?

Joe makes a face, shakes his head, no -- but can't say it.
Chuck gingerly touches the ruined side of his face. Comes up
with tar and bits of black gravel.

CHUCK
(alarmed)
Joe --

ROY

You come right over here and sit down. I'll fix you up. Shit you'll be looking pretty good in no time.

Roy never takes his cigar out of his mouth.

Allen, Mark and Joe surround the chair that Chuck is sits in.

Roy goes to the refrigerator and pulls out a cold bottle of coke. Opens it and hands it to Chuck.

ROY

Take a swig of this junior. It'll wet your whistle and get some of the cinder dust out of your throat. It'll help the sting go away.

Just now Mark, Allen and Joe are not listening to Roy. They are transfixed by the calendar that hangs above the refrigerator. It is a Snap-On-Tool with Miss Snap On August showing her wares.

Roy notices.

ROY

What, you little dinguses never saw a cute girl before??? You shoulda seen Miss July - make your peckers stand at attention.

The only one who doesn't salivate over Miss Snap-On is Chuck, who impulsively reaches for his cinder-track tattooed face, then thinks better of it.

ROY

(Roy clears his throat)

Now I want you to sit real still while I put some of this medicine on your, ah - face. I gotta say, sonny boy, I haven't seen anyone manage to get a skin burn on their darn face before. How the hell did you manage to do that? Holy cripes!

Roy pours a large amount Iodine into some cotton balls and starts to dab the red orange concoction on the stunning skin abrasion.

Chuck flinches in pain. But does not cry. After a few minutes every inch of the wounded area has received a healthy dose of Iodine.

ROY

You're a tough kid, junior. Your face looks like shit but nothing seems broken. You want to have a look at the goddamn holy mess you've made of yourself?

Allen, Mark and Joe who have been silent (watching the calendar) come back to life.

ALLEN

Ah, maybe better to wait until you get home to look at yourself.

JOE

You look fine, Chucky.

MARK

Yeah. The other half of your face actually looks like you.

JOE

Shut up, Mark.

STAY ON CHUCK, who could use a Phantom of the Opera mask real, real bad, as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FIELD HOUSE - LATER

Mom jumps out of her pick-up truck and rushes into...

INT. FIELD HOUSE - JANITORS OFFICE

Mom gasps when she sees Chuck's face.

MOM

Oh, my God! What happened to your face!

ROY

Ma'am, I think your son flipped his bike while riding down Kiwanis Hill.

(suppresses a laugh)

Slid into the finish line on the side of his face. But I fixed him up.

MOM

I can see that. Thank you Mr..?

ROY
You can just call me Roy.

MOM
Well, thank you, Roy for taking
such good care of him.

Chuck looks up to his mother for solace. Gets scolded instead.

MOM
Oh my God, what happened to you!
Just look at your face. You told me
you were going to watch a Softball
game!

Chuck sneaks a look at Allen, who surreptitiously shrugs,
like, "Don't look at me, Lone Ranger."

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. CAB OF TRUCK

Chuck and Joe sit in the seat next to mom. Mark and Allen sit
in the truck bed with the bikes.

Mom glances at Chuck, then has to look away and find some
blame for her son's scourge.

MOM
Did Allen get you up to this???
Don't answer, I know he did. That
boy is the devil. You need to speak
up when he tries to talk you into
dumb and dangerous escapades. You
know better; now look at you. You
could have killed yourself.

JOE
Chuck actually tried to tell Allen
to not be stupid, but....

MOM
Well I can see that did a lot of
good!!

Again her eyes find Chuck. He feels her stare. Ouch.

INT. ENTRY HALLWAY OF THE DIEDRICH HOME

Mom points towards the bathroom without looking at Chuck, her latest gambit not to bear witness to her son's satanic foolishness.

MOM

You'd better take a bath and try to clean some of that mess on your face. You have a bunch of cinders in your skin so don't rub too hard. The cinders will come out as you heal. Thank God nothing worse happened.

(then, as close to cursing
as she comes)

That Allen!! He's got a tail and a pitch fork!

She finally clutches her wounded son's chin and takes the full-on sight of his badly scraped face. Their eyes meet. Chuck holds onto what little composure but tears well in his mother's eyes.

MOM

Is this what you're meant to do?
Hell-bent on worshiping false
idols? Trying our patience by
insisting on walking on the wrong
side of reason?

Her hand on his chin, he tries to look away.

CHUCK

I don't do it on purpose...

Finally, his mother reluctantly surrenders a hug and just like that it's enough for her and she bounds away, leaving her youngest son to...

INT. BATH ROOM - LATER

Chuck runs the bath tub water and finally looks in the mirror. Checks out the good-half of his face. Then slowly turns to the wreck that doubles as the other half. He sees a palate of gray, black, red, and iodine orange in the mirror.

CHUCK

(to himself)

God...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN TABLE - NIGHT

Jim, John, Joe, Kathleen, and Sue and Chuck are at the dinner table. Dad is at the end of the table, and mom runs back and forth like a short order cook, getting, fetching and sitting down to eat, too.

DAD silently looks up from his dinner at Chuck. The old man isn't happy but then he is quiet, stolid by nature.

JIM

Wow. Impressive. You are now The Creature from the Barbecue Pit.

JOHN

Totally, a hamburger that fell off the grill in to the coals and rises up like The Creature from The BBQ Pit!!! Can I charge admission and have a few friends over for a quite look?

JIM

Hey, its not that bad. I've seen worse road kill.

MOM

Just leave him alone. Can't you see he looks awful? He knows he looks awful. Think he likes looking that way? Well, do you?

Jim and John just shrug.

MOM

He doesn't need you two reminding him what his face looks like. Wait till I get my hands on Allen.

Again father and fallen son exchange a silent look, as...

INT. CHUCK'S BEDROOM

He lies in bed, unable to sleep. He fucked up bad and seems inconsolable when A SHADOW enters the room.

There is DAD. He silently puts cool, wet cloths on Chuck's face... Makes the Sign of the Cross...

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The family gets ready to attend 6:00 a.m. Mass. Suits, clip on ties, hair gel, and sport jacket.

EXT. DRIVE WAY - BRIEFLY

Dad waits in the car. Feels the two-day stubble on his face. There wasn't time to shave because...

INT. BATHROOM

Mom stands behind Chuck, who faces the bathroom mirror. She straightens his clip-on tie and puts a flip in his locks with a hair product that has the consistency of honey; she dips a long comb in and applies the goop to Chuck hair.

CHUCK

Mom, do I have to go?

MOM

God does not care how ugly we look. He still loves us. You're going to church. You're are not sick or dead...you go to church. God will lift you out of this mess you got yourself in.

CHUCK

But.. how?

His mother stops with the hair gel. Shakes her head at her youngest, damaged son.

MOM

"Oh, ye of little faith."

As we hear the gentle tap of Dad's car horn...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAINT PETER CLAVER CHURCH - DAY

About fifteen rows from the front, right side of aisle. All eight Diedrich's are lined up in a row only Bob (the oldest) is missing. As mass is said.

AT COMMUNION TIME everyone rises and makes their way to the communion rail.

A LINE UP OF OUTSTRETCHED TONGUES get a small white wafer placed on them. The PRIEST holds the sacred host aloft and in front of the communicants eyes he utters...

PRIEST
Body of Christ.

COMMUNICANT
Amen.

PRIEST
Body of Christ.

ANOTHER COMMUNICANT
Amen.

Chuck has stealthily guided himself to the communion rail so as not to attract any attention, hiding behind Jim's back as he gets into position at the communion rail.

The Priest arrives in front of Chuck.

Looking to heaven and gazing at the Body of Christ the Priest says...

PRIEST
Body of Christ --

-- Until he gets a load of Chuck's face:

PRIEST
...Almighty, what happened to your
face, Chuck?

CHUCK
I fell.

The Priest just nods. Can't wait to move on, he slaps the eucharist onto Chuck's tongue then thankfully gets a normal-looking kid next and misses Chuck's defeated...

CHUCK
Amen.

Chuck slinks back to his pew. Kneeling with his face down, he pleads to the body of Jesus that was so quickly put in his mouth, you'd think the Priest had a cab to catch.

CHUCK (V.O.)
Oh dear God, heal me quickly and
lift this burden from your faithful
and disfigured servant. And please
do this as soon as possible. Amen.

STAY ON CHUCK, as he tries with his tongue to free the eucharist, stuck on the roof of his mouth.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MARY AND PETER DIEDRICH'S HOME (CHUCK'S GRAND PARENTS)

Dappled sunlight, under the canopy of great oak trees, a few apple trees scattered about. The farm home is made of cream city brick.

In the very near distance is the unique "L" shaped barn, aged gray with weather and wear. Also in the near distance is the Mink Yard, and the carpenter shop.

Chuck's family home is about 50 yards away, Chuck's Uncle's home is next to his parents, and his aunt's home is next to that. Between the three homes are 18 grand children. Four homes in row, in the country - a little Diedrich 'Ville.

EXT. UNDER OAK TREE

Diedrich Clan Summer Picnic. Four large tables created by putting old doors on top of two saw horses.

We see Chuck at one of tables with his three older siblings a few cousins, and Aunt Iris (A daughter of Mary and Peter).

CHUCK (V.O.)

The Holy Family. That's what they call us - behind our backs. My parents first three children all entered the religious life; right out grade school. Wow. Seems early for a career choice. Maybe God thinks differently? Not sure what to make of God these days.

PAN the table: First Bob, then KATHLEEN, then SUE.

CHUCK (V.O.)

Bob became a priest. Kathleen a Sister of Saint Agnes, and Sue soon to be a Carmelite nun.

Chuck regards his sister with some fondness, as..

CHUCK (V.O.)

Today is the last time I will see her. She is about to disappear behind the stone walls of cloister, never to appear in the real world again. A Bride of Jesus. Wonder what's so wrong with the real world?

Mom struggles with a massive bowl of German potato salad.

HELEN DIEDRICH - MOM
 Katy help me out with Grandma's
 salad.

Katy takes the bowl of from her mother and sets it on the
 table.

KATHLEEN
 Looks like grandma made sure you
 couldn't carry one more thing;
 whose gonna eat all that potato
 salad?

As Kathleen laughs...

HELEN DIEDRICH - MOM
 You are. Or you better, else you'll
 be hearing it from Grandma. You're
 not eating, you're not loving her.

Mom glances at the trio: Kathleen, Sue and Bob.

HELEN DIEDRICH - MOM
 Glad to see you three could all
 make it home today. Sue, last time
 for you.

SUE
 You can come and visit and I can
 talk on the phone once a month or
 so.

Helen, pauses to ponder this confusing blessing for a brief
 moment; pushes it aside and goes back to putting out food for
 the picnic.

AUNT IRIS
 What about you, Chucky? You going
 to become a padre one day too? Keep
 the holy roller hit parade going?

If Mary and Peter had an angry daughter, it was definitely
 IRIS. She looks like Ichabod Crane's evil twin sister.

CHUCK
 Not sure, Aunt Iris.
 (Then, with just a touch
 of distain...)
 I'm praying on it.

Chuck gets up from table with his siblings encouraged to
 relocate after Aunt Iris pokes her nose into things.

EXT. QUIET PLACE NEAR THE MINK YARD

In the distance is the CHATTER of the picnic. But Chuck doesn't hear a blessed thing. Because he sees a vision of loveliness swinging on a rope swing hung from a tree:

STEPHANIE

is 13, gorgeous, pious, smart, poised, and (well) sexy. She attends the Lutheran School that is next door to Chuck's grade school. Their playgrounds are separated by a tall metal fence to keep the Catholics and Lutherans apart.

Chuck
Oh my God Stephanie Campbell! What
are you doing here?

One last hard pump and Stephanie leaps from the swing and lands on her feet in front of Chuck, stealing his breath away.

STEPHANIE
Your uncle Ray invited me. He was
doing some work on my home; I was
bored and I figured out he was your
uncle.

CHUCK
(mesmerized)
Yes. Right. Sure. Wow. That is
cool.

Chuck lets go of a little laugh at his loss for words.

STEPHANIE
He asked if I wanted to come along.
I thought why not; maybe I'd run
into you.

CHUCK
I am definitely happy to see you.
(Easy, tiger.)
Can I show you around?

STEPHANIE
Sure you can. I've never seen a
mink farm up close before.

CHUCK
I'll give you the ten dollar tour.

Chuck walks Stephanie through a large gate that opens into the Mink Yard. He opens it then closes it behind him.

CHUCK

This is where it all happens. We just separated the kittens or kits from the females and moved them into the sheds.

STEPHANIE

You mean you kidnap them from their mothers?

CHUCK

(caught off-guard)

Well, no, I-I-I-I mean.. We call it weaning.

Chuck leads Stephanie into a shed, filled on one side with two mink in each pen (male and female).

CHUCK

Hope the smell doesn't bother you too much. High protein poop. We feed them the very best! But it does tend to stink.

STEPHANIE

(wry)

The flies seem to enjoy it too.

CHUCK

(a little self-conscious)

Heh, heh, yeah, I guess they do.

Stephanie moves close to Chuck to look into the pen. Chuck breathes in the scent of her hair. He notices her breasts.

STEPHANIE

Their so cute!

CHUCK

But vicious.

STEPHANIE

Vicious?

CHUCK

Temperamental. I got bites all over my hands. Just part of caring for them...no big deal.

Chuck shows his hands to Stephanie. She takes them in her hands and examines them.

STEPHANIE

Oh my, you must be very brave.

CHUCK

I'm used to it. Mink Farmer. That's me.

STEPHANIE

Well, your more then just a mink farmer.

CHUCK

(self-effacing)

Right. I'm a C- student, a lousy free throw shooter and the unholyest of Mom and Dad's seven children.

STEPHANIE

(coquettish)

What's so unholy about you, Chuck?

Chuck misses her flirty undertone; he takes her seriously.

CHUCK

Well, there's a lot of future nuns and priests in the family.

(then)

I just don't know... I wish I was made of the right stuff -- I mean, I hope.

(then)

Marvin always says he'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints.

(then)

Anyway...

(point to himself)

Mink farmer.

Stephanie regards Chuck in a way that tells us she still thinks he's more than a mink farmer -- then walks towards the shed door.

Chuck hurries ahead and guides her out of shed to a small grassy area with a view of the enter mink farm.

STEPHANIE

How many mink do you have here?

CHUCK

About 10,000 I guess. After pelting season it drops down to 2,000 or so - just the breeding stock. When they're pelted I don't have to work as much.

STEPHANIE

Do you kill them?

CHUCK

No yet, but I help with.. it. We call it pelting.

STEPHANIE

Do you like *it*? Killing them?

CHUCK

I'm too young to pelt. But I don't think much about it. It's what we do. We take good care of them. Fresh water, clean bedding, two meals a day, fresh air and sunshine. They have a really good life. Not so bad to be a mink.

STEPHANIE

You raise them to kill them, so people can have a coat made out of mink. Seems kind of pointless and cruel.

CHUCK

(his back a little up)
We're not cruel.

Woah there, boy, this is Stephanie, his living, breathing, orange blossom-scented wet dream.

CHUCK

(softer now)
We pelt them in a painless way, sort of like going to sleep. I mean, we all eat beef, pork, and poultry, right? We wear leather shoes and belts. The little purse you have is made of leather, I'll bet. I think mink fur is pretty nice. A nice mink coat is beautiful.

STEPHANIE

Well would you rather live in a cage, being fed two meals a day or be free, Chuck?

CHUCK

(again caught off-guard)
Well.. I.. I dunno. I-I-'m not a mink.

STEPHANIE

Just seems the world doesn't need
fur coats but the world needs food
to eat.

CHUCK

(He wants to move on to
less complicated matters)
How about I show the feed house and
my grandpa's old barn.

They walk away; Chuck leans slightly into her shoulder. He
smells her hair. He is gaga and awkward -- not feeling as
cool as he would like to.

CHUCK

What a great day for a picnic.

STEPHANIE

I better get back. Dinner awaits
and Netty won't stand for late.

CHUCK

Who's Netty?

STEPHANIE

Who's Netty? She's everything to
me. I love Netty more than my
parents.

(then, calming down)
Netty's our housekeeper.

Chuck and Stephanie share a silent look. And neither one
flinches. Love is on the wing, as

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE OF THE CARPENTER SHOP - EARLY EVENING

PETER DIEDRICH - Grandpa is outside the carpenter shop with a
bevy of grandkids. He ties kites, does simple magic tricks,
and chatters away as he is inspects his stilts. He is in his
early 80's tall, balding, wearing clean and faded blue bib
overalls, smiling, joyful and in the moment.

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA

There's Chucky!!!

CHUCK

Hey Gramps.

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA
What you up to? You been working on
juggling those balls I gave you?

CHUCK
Sort of.

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA
If you want to impress the girls,
you gotta juggle. It will set you
apart from all those other feather
heads. You make the girls smile and
you can have your pick. Just look
at me? How else could I have landed
a beauty like your grandma.

CHUCK
She scares me some days.

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA
She's just making sure you grow up
right.

Grandpa Peter throws three balls to Chuck.

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA
Show them how you do it!

Without missing a beat Chuck starts to juggle as best he can.

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA
That's the ticket!!!!

Grandkids ask Grandpa Peter to get up on his stilts. The
stilts are nothing special; just four pieces of wood and very
make-shift.

GRANDKID
Do it, grandpa. Get up on them.
Bet you can't. Were you in the
circus??

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA
Who needs a circus? Any old clown
can get up on stilts. Watch me.

Grandpa Peter steps up on a wooden box outside the carpenter
shop and steps on the stilts.

The kids roar. He's a little unsteady at first (or to make
you think he is). He's just getting his stilting legs under
him. He walks off, kids following.

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA
 Chuck, lead the way!!!

Chuck juggles and walks ahead of Grandpa.

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA
 Time for some sunshine apples!

GRANDKID
 Yes!!!! From the top of the
 tree!!!!

Chuck leads Grandpa Peter (on stilts) to an apple tree.
 Grandpa picks an apple from as high as he can reach, and
 tosses it to one of the kids then does the same for each of
 the children. He then walks off with his posse in tow.

PETER DIEDRICH - GRANDPA
 Sure is nice to 10 feel tall!!!

EXT. HORSE SHOE AREA

Older men mingle, keg of beer, tossing house shoes, smoking
 cigars, Carl smokes his signature pipe and drinks beer from a
 plastic cup. Uncle Ray joins them now.

CARL
 There he is. Where have you been,
 stranger?

UNCLE RAY
 Had to drive that cute little
 Stephanie home. Jesus, she lives in
 a mansion.

CARL
 What in the world would is she
 slumming around here for?

UNCLE RAY
 He's five foot five, used to
 stutter, drops more minks in a day
 than you do in a year and he's your
 only heathen child.

CARL
 (re: Chuck)
 There's still time...

UNCLE RAY
 Great to see Bob, Kathleen and
 sweet Sue.

(MORE)

UNCLE RAY (CONT'D)

You got some wonderful kids. Did you ever think all three would enter the religious life?

RAY has dark hair, mustache, medium build. He is a plumber. A very solid guy. Just is what he is and means what he says. Kind-hearted.

CARL

I guess I wasn't expecting all three would go serve the Lord. He's got a plan. Bob will be ordained this year.

(then)

So we got a priest in the family.

UNCLE RAY

That's what I hear. Well, you've sure done good for yourself, Carl. Great family, and a successful business. So many blessings. I'm happy for you.

CHUCK (PRELAP)

If I become a priest somebody shoot me.

EXT. ANOTHER TABLE UNDER A TREE

Chuck, Allen, Mark, Joe, and cousin Pat sit at the table. Chuck, Allen, and Joe are about 11-12 years old and Pat, we've met before.

ALLEN

I'm bored.

PAT

That means trouble.

ALLEN

Shut up oh ye of no imagination.

PAT

Yup. Trouble.

MARK

We must be running out of distractions. When we're done with helping cats swim in the cow trough, we are usually running on empty.

JOE

The food will be here soon. Could try to sneak some beer.

ALLEN

Painfully bored. I am not of this world.

Allen has turned the chair he was sitting on backwards so he is now leaning in and over the back of the chair -- the way an private eye in a film noir sits when he wants to think hard.

CHUCK

Got your baseball glove? How about catch? My dad set up a bad mitten net. Basketball hoop is up in the barn yard.

ALLEN

(he imitates the Wicked Witch of the West)

Bored. Bored. Bored. I'm melting!

Allen leans back just a bit from the back of chair. He sees a mystery in its spindles. He runs his hand across the top arch of the chair back and then grasps two spindles like prison bars. Now he puts his face to them and moans.

ALLEN

Get me out of here. I am losing my fucking mind!

As he does this he lowers his head into the spindles and starts to push.

MARK

I would not do that.

PAT

This will not end well. I predict you will live the rest of your life with a chair wrapped around you head. But wait! Grandma would rather have her chair than you, Allen. You know these are her kitchen chairs? Your days are numbered.

The chairs are study oak, worn with age, stained dark brown, doweled spindles run down the length of each. The spacing of the spindles is about 5 inches wide.

JOE

No way you can push your head
through there.

Allen is undeterred. He gets the spindles to bend just enough
for him to pop his head through.

ALLEN

Fucking weenie babies.
(ears red, face red, very
proud of himself)
Houdini. Freaking Houdini!!!

Milking the moment, Allen becomes a version of Rodney
Dangerfield or Sid Caesar. He turns his head to Chuck.

ALLEN

Chucky, you ever hear the story
about the couple who got chopped up
by a one-armed axe murder?

And then to Pat on the other side of him. Allen is a wonder
of the world and the center of the universe.

ALLEN

Pat, did you see that vampire film
where the guy gets all blood sucked
out of him?

MARK

Remember the time I ate three earth
worms and washed them down with
chocolate milk?

PAT

So lets see you back your ass out
of this one, bone head.

Allen is not deterred. He takes a deep breath and starts
pulling and using his two hands to pull the spindles just a
tiny bit wider. To the amazement of all, his head pops
out...ears bright red, panting, but not bowed or humbled.

ALLEN

Damn! Just damn mighty man! Okay
you dip shits, whose next? Mark?

Mark is of slender build and does not have Allen's big head.
He is a lot smarter then Allen and is so with a
proportionately smaller cranium.

MARK

Sure, but there's a price. I do it
and you sneak me two cups of beer.

ALLEN

That's all? You got nothing better then that? Shit, your insulting me. Yes, two beers. And if you get your head full of shit stuck in the bars, you fetch me a six pack of PBR.

MARK

No problemo.

Mark kneels down before the chair at the lowest level of the chair where the spindles are set just a bit wider apart; he pushes his head through.

MARK

I'm feeling mighty thirsty.

And then pulls his head back out.

MARK

Yes, mighty thirsty.

ALLEN

Lucky. Obviously small heads with small brains go through a lot easier. I'll sneak your some beer with this event has concluded. Who's next?

Chuck has been observing carefully. He is both mesmerized and perplexed. Such simple game. But with a element of risk.

CHUCK

Sure, let me try. If Allen's fat head can get through, I should be able to get mine in and out again.

What Chuck has failed to calculate is that his head is just a quarter-of-an-inch bigger then Allen's. The Diedrich family line is filled with big headed people. The difference between Allen and Chuck's big heads are that one was too full of ideas and one was full of nothing.

PAT

You don't have to be dumb like Allen, Chucky. This is not a good idea.

CHUCK

(he brushes off Pat)
Yes, I can do this.

Chuck gets down before the chair and pushes. He turns his head from side to side, he presses into the spindles. His head is not half way through - up to his ears.

The spindles bow open just a fraction of an inch and he presses harder. He can hear a slight cracking of a spindle. He will not be deterred. And pops through.

The group cheers.

ALLEN

Now that boy has DETERMINATION.

JOE

Did it hurt?

Chuck is feeling impressed with himself.

CHUCK

Not too bad. My ears are still attached.

At this point, the group who has been playing horse shoes walks over to see what the commotion, cheers, and laughter is all about. And Grandpa has brought his entourage over as well.

The boys become nonchalant; like nothing is going on except it is clear, Chuck's head is now stuck between the spindles of Grandma's kitchen chair.

UNCLE RAY

Did you put him up to this, Pat?

PAT

I discouraged it. Mob mentality won out.

UNCLE RAY

A new level of stupid then. Clearly you boys have nothing better to do.

CARL

Chuck, this is not good. This is not smart. Get your head out of there.

The gathering audience inspect Mark, Joe, and Allen. Looking for the ring leader; suspecting it might be Allen. But Allen is not looking them. He is adjusting his belt buckle or looking in the distance for an approaching space ship - after all he is not from this planet.

CHUCK

Right. Well I was just about to do that.

CARL

These are Grandma's chairs, she would not be pleased to see you stuck in one them.

Chuck pulls, twists, but to no avail. Grandpa Peter and others at the picnic gather around. The group encourages Chuck to free his head.

GRANDPA PETER

Well just look at that, will you. That is something special. I'd say you got yourself in a really tight pickle, Chucky. Not sure I got the magic dust to get you out of this one.

Wearing her faded floral apron, Grandma Mary trundles over to the circle of gawking spectators and quickly surmises the problem. Her sons, Ray, Pete and Carl know their mother.

She is smoking mad.

RAY

Ma, maybe we should just saw the spindle off the chair - poor guy has his head stuck.

Hands on hips, she contemplates her next move.

GRANDMA MARY

Chuck you bring you and my chair to the porch outside the kitchen. I got no time for this nonsense. It's time to eat. I'll get you head out of my chair when I'm done with dishes.

Grandpa Peter and Grandma Mary's eyes cross. He could see there was no point in an intervention. He knew better then to ask for Chuck's freedom. His wife's feet were as firmly rooted as the oak tree she stood under. She would not ruin a perfectly good chair. Chuck and his big head would just have to wait.

Allen, Joe and Mark, keep Chuck company.

EXT. GRANDMA MARY AND PETER'S FRONT PORCH

Everyone has adjusted to Chuck being locked in a Wisconsin farm version of a stock and pillory. Yes, it was unusual, and the city folks might have just cut him loose. Who cares about an old kitchen chair, but for a clan brought up to respect property and avoid moments of pure stupidity, they realized Chuck was getting the punishment he deserved.

His sisters and mom stop by to give a word of encouragement or something to eat. Drinking from a bottle of soda is tricky, so they give him a straw.

Here's DAD, adding to his misery:

DAD

Better be out of that by morning.
We have an early day.

And as Dad leaves his pilloried son he passes...

GRANDMA MARY, as she exits screen door leading to front porch, she is carry a large crock-pot.

GRANDMA MARY

Chuck, you know better. You don't do stupid things. But stupid people might make you do stupid things.

Grandma catches Allen out of the corner of her eye; she turns her gaze toward him and burns a hole in him.

GRANDMA MARY

So, Allen, did you have a hand in this mess? I know what your up to. I've got eyes in the back of head. I know a little scheister (shit) when I see one. You just watch your little hinder.

ALLEN

I know you look after all your grandchildren grandma, and you love us all.

(sweetness and syrup)

You're the best grandma ever.

ALLEN

What's in the jar? You going to get Chuck out?

CHUCK

Sorry about being stupid, Grandma. Didn't mean to harm your chair.

GRANDMA MARY

I know that. Well you're lucky
because I got just ticket. Your
head will pop in no time. I got the
magic fat.

The crock pot is filled with congealed fat and grease from cooking. Since dumping cooking fat down the drain was out of the question, and re-using it again for another kitchen application was a possibility, it was poured off and into a large crock pot under the sink.

GRANDMA MARY

Just shut your mouth, close your
eyes, and start pulling when I tell
you to.

She reaches into her crock-pot and pulls out a fistful of fat, grease, and remnants of past meals and began to rub it into Chuck's head. She was a Turkish masseuse gone mad, working with a diligence that would have made her German ancestors proud.

There is a slight smile of pleasure on her lips. And she was a woman who did not smile.

Along with Chuck doing his best, so pull his head out of bondage, Grandma held his shirt collar and used it to push and pull. She would not be defeated. Her chair would not be destroyed. The punishment the fit the crime. Even if Chuck must receive the punishment.

Out pops Chuck's head.

GRANDMA MARY

There. Done. Good! Back to work.

Those standing around, cheer in a silent respectful way not wanting to risk her ire. For these are serious matters.

HELEN DIEDRICH - MOM

Let's get you home and clean you
up. You know the German word,
Dumkoph?

CHUCK

I guess I don't.

HELEN DIEDRICH - MOM

It means "bonehead". It is not a
good thing to be.

As Chuck wipes his neck, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHUCK'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING - DAWN

As he hurries to get dressed, he checks out of his window to see if the others have started the day without him when he sees --

STEPHANIE! as she sloughs through the snow.

CHUCK
(to himself)
Oh, my go --

He rushes out of his room without a coat, then...

EXT. YARD - CONTINUOUS

Ecstatic and freezing, by the time he's outside Stephanie is gone. But where? His eyes dart about. Where? Where is she?

Then he knows: Chuck sees FOOTPRINTS leading to the mink shed. And they're too dainty, too small to be made by anyone else but the girl with whom he is in love -- Love, he knows this now,

Feels his heart pound-pound-pounding, his feet crunching through the snow, his body drawn to the shed as if by a magic, invisible rope she must command. As he rushes to be close to her, to be by her side, the cold makes him stutter:

CHUCK (V.O.)
I w-w-won't say stupid things. I'll
be b-b-b-brave and direct with her
and she'll l-l=love me back. *I know*
it.

Chuck reaches the shed door. Surveys the surroundings for the damnable presence of his brothers or uncles or his father but no, he's alone, the crystalline dawn clashing swords with the new-fallen snow.

He feels the tremor in his hand as he turns the knob. ENTERS.
As Chuck closes the door on us...

INT. MINK SHED

CHUCK. The shed is still and quiet, devoid of it's ordinary sounds -- the mink aren't squealing; there is no jangling of the cages. Just pure, mysterious silence.

CHUCK
Stephanie?

STEPHANIE (O.S.)
I'm here.

He voice is transcendent and content. He follows it around the corner of a bank of feed barrels and there is...

STEPHANIE. He takes in the vision of her beautiful face, a hint of troubled reproach in her tender smile.

Now he sees the rest of her: She's wearing a full-length white stroller mink coat and she's barefooted. Chuck is about to ask her where he shoes are when suddenly --

Stephanie lets the mink coat fall to the floor. Naked and breathtaking, she lets her arms swing behind her so that nothing of what he's dreamt about thousand times is hidden from him.

Chuck gestures to the mink coat sublimely bunched around her slender ankles.

CHUCK
Where did you..?

Stephanie looks into his eyes.

STEPHANIE
Thou shall not kill.
(then, slower)
Thou shall not kill.

Chuck shakes his head.

CHUCK
No, it isn't like that. They go peacefully. It's... It's...

Stephanie beckons him with a wave. He moves towards her then stops about the length of an erection in front of her. He slowly reaches for her breasts, but

BOTH OF HIS HANDS slide through her. Astonished he retracts his hands to find them covered in blood and he screams --

And his scream MORPHS in the voice of his brother, JOE...

INT. CHUCK'S ROOM

Joe yells for Chuck to...

JOE
Get up, you dunderhead. Dad's
having a shit fit.

Chuck leaps out of his bed, the nightmare gone, but it's time has stolen his and now he's late. He jams on his jeans. Joe throws his shoes at him.

JOE
See you at the kill box. And hurry,
man!

And Joe's out the door. Chuck jams on his right boot, then his left, which gives him grief. Fuck it. It's on finally but speed-tying the shoe, he leaves a long lace -- which instantly tips him up as he bolt for the door.

Down he goes but not before he SLAMS his forehead against the door jamb -- which KNOCKS HIM UNCONSCIOUS..

EXT. THE HOUSE - LATER

Chuck awakens with the sun in his eyes. He's moving towards the shed but HORIZONTALLY. Because carrying him are all his brothers and sisters, dressed as either priests or nuns.

CHUCK
What the hell??

But his siblings, carrying him, ignore his question and quietly pray.

They carry Chuck into the shed. They stop in front of his Dad, whom he looks up at.

CHUCK
Dad? I'm sorry I'm late, I couldn't
get my boots on and I tripped --
(then, sensing something
terribly wrong)
What?

His brothers and sisters expectantly wait for an answer from Dad. He looks down at Chuck, then answers his children.

DAD
Pelt.

CHUCK

What???

Chuck cranes to see where his brothers and sisters in their holy garb are carrying him -- and he sees his favorite UNCLE RAY, who holds a large and very sharp knife.

CHUCK

Noooooo!

Chuck bolts upright in his bed. This time the nightmare is really over. His face bathed in sweat, his hair matted, he sits on the edge of his bed and tires to fathom his dream(s) when there's a KNOCK at the door.

His father enters. He has a cup of coffee for Chuck and kindly passes it to his hands.

DAD

`Morning, son. You ready for basketball?

STAY ON CHUCK, drained, electric, petrified, wondering, as we...

EXT. ST. PETER CLAVER ELEMENTARY - PLAYGROUND - DAY

Sunday Mid-Afternoon, January. Windy. Cold.

Two cars are seen on the playground, their engines are running as Chuck and his dad drive up to them. Chuck rolls down his car window.

The two waiting cars already have 4 players each in them. The three remaining team mates stand outside the cars and gab to their friends through open car windows.

CHUCK

(excited)

Hey guys! Ready to eat some Plymouth Cheese Puffs! Lets get rolling. Whose coming with me and my dad?

The three team mates hop into to Carl Diedrich's car.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

TEAM MATE 1

Hey Chuck. Hey Mr. Diedrich. Thanks for driving.

CHUCK

I gave my dad a free pass from the
mink farm and church work.

TEAM MATE 2

Your first time, Mr. Diedrich?

CARL

Never been to a basketball game,
but today is the day.

TEAM MATE 3

Smart choice, you will see a
massacre. Saint John's will get the
cheddar cheese kicked out of them
today.

The cars file off the playground and drive to Plymouth.

Lots of quick, loud, spontaneous chatter. Four boys all talk
at the same time.

CHUCK

WOKY any one?

Chuck turns on the radio, Sam and Dave's 'Soul Man' comes on.

TEAM MATE 1

"I'm a soul man; that's what I
am!!!"

TEAM MATE 3

You are a soulless man.

TEAM MATE 1

I got the feeling. I got that funky
feeling!!!!

General pandemonium.

Carl turns off radio - CLICK!

CARL

Who wants to say a rosary? We got
just enough time for one before we
get to Plymouth.

Silence. Shock. Awe. Confusion.

Carl takes the silence for consent.

CARL

Sounds like a plan. Okay men use your fingers to keep count of the Hail Marys and the Holy Marys. I'll do the rest.

Carl has a rosary in his pocket and starts the rosary.

CHUCK (V.O.)

How could he do this me? This can't be my real father. He can't be anyone's father. Please make this man disappear. Send me my real father. Oh God, if you truly exist, please save me!

Three pair of silent eyes, burn holes in Chuck from the back seat.

EXT. SAINT JOHN'S GYM

Three teammates explode out of the back seat of Carl's car. Both doors rear doors are left wide open, the winter breeze blowing through like a desolate wind tunnel.

Carl (oblivious) to it all, puts his rosary in its small pouch.

CARL

So there. That was good. Now let's get going.

CHUCK (V.O.)

Good? Yes, I guess the rosary was good for my father but for me, on this day of days, it was just another thorn in my tarnished crown. I was defeated. I would never rise from the dead. But what could I do? I was convicted of being Carl Diedrich's son. I accompanied His Holiness into the gym.

SHOTS of the game. General grade school gym stuff, bleachers, cheering. Boldness versus shyness among the infant teens.

St. John's players: everything they put up goes in. Chuck and his teammates: Nothing goes in. Steals by St. John's. Chuck's team seems to still by saying the rosary -- or feeling the after-shock of having to do so.

CHUCK (V.O.)

We should have won. We always did.
Yet despite the blessing and
angelic rewards that our rosary
should be showered upon us we were
beaten by a bunch of guys who know
more about milking cows than
handling a basketball.

Chuck and his teammates put their winter coats right on over
their playing uniforms (no showers). They pull on their
galoshes over their gym shoes.

TEAM MATE 2

Total losers. They suck!

TEAM MATE 1

Freaking cow farmers. Lets get the
heck out of here.

TEAM MATE 3

Time for hamburgers and cokes at
Charcoal Inn.

EXT. SAINT JOHN'S GYM

The team mates rush out the gym doors and pile into the two
waiting cars, engines running.

Chuck exits a few moments behind, just in time to see them.
He waves, and shouts, points to his car.

CHUCK

You coming with us? Hop in. My dad
is driving. My dad is...

The two cars are seen slowly pulling away. We see Chuck and
his dad framed by the Saint John's gym doors. Standing side
by side.

INT. CARL'S CAR

Carl is seen starting another rosary as Chuck looks at him.

CHUCK (O.S.)

As I look back on that day, I
marvel at how oblivious my father
was to the world around him. He
didn't notice feelings or the looks
in people's faces. He floated in a
perfectly ordered world of work,
routines and prayer.

ON CHUCK

Eyes squeezed closed as if he's in deep prayer:

CHUCK (V.O.)

It didn't bother him that no one wanted to ride home with us that day. Nor did he sense my crushing disappointment and embarrassment. He had no clue about what had just taken place, and he didn't care. He just opened his little leather rosary case and we began another round for the salvation of saints and the forgiveness of sinners.

EXT. REAR OF CAR

As it slowly pulls away from the loss. We see the TWO SILHOUETTES of Chuck and his dad. FOLLOW THEM as they traverse the rural County Road back to the mink farm --- back to their strange and unique little world...

GO TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT EPISODE

