

THE JAM

by

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The SOUND OF A CAR RADIO SCANNING through stations until it lands on a seminal song from 1989/1990-

FADE IN:

SUNRISE MONTAGE of Washington D.C. as the RADIO SCANS: RFK Stadium; The Capitol; National Mall and the Reflecting Pool; Vietnam Vets; the Lincoln Memorial, over the Potomac River, following 66 WEST amidst the traffic; a shot of the **Welcome to Virginia - Virginia is for Lovers** sign. RADIO TRANSITIONS to SCORE.

Ribbons of highways become local roads, landing on a sign - **RESTON** - an up-and-coming Virginia suburb outside D.C.: Lush woods; walking trails; man-made lakes; yellow school buses on their pickup routes.

TEXT ON SCREEN: **SUMMER 1990**

EXT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE - MORNING

SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL is a tan-yellow brick box. An emblem of a blue and green seahawk out front. The ropes holding the U.S. and Virginia State Flags CLINK in the slight, humid breeze. A MAROON DODGE OMNI HATCHBACK with tons of miles on it comes down the school's road and stops at the front doors.

INT./EXT. ABUDAIR FAMILY DODGE OMNI - SAME

In shotgun is SAM ABUDAIR, 17, unkempt black hair, asleep against the window. At the wheel is OMAR ABUDAIR, 45, mustache, oxford shirt, necktie, suit jacket hung over his seat.

OMAR

We're here.

Sam doesn't stir. Omar grabs a cassette tape and jams it into the deck - ROSSINI'S WILLIAM TELL OVERTURE/THE LONE RANGER THEME blasts on. Sam is jolted awake. Omar conducts with his fingers.

OMAR (CONT'D)

(singing)

Awake, awake, it's time to be
awake/Get out, get out, get out of
the damn car.

(lowering music)

Summer's over, yalla yalla habibi,
(hurry, hurry my dear in Arabic)

SAM

(yawning)

Okay, okay.

OMAR

And don't forget what we talked about with finding some work. How do you get fired from mowing lawns anyway?

SAM

I don't know-

OMAR

-probably because you have to show up and actually mow the lawn. Stop wasting your talent. And show some enthusiasm for crissakes.

SAM

Good motivational speech.

Sam exits with his BACKPACK and GYM BAG, shuts the door, Omar pulls off. Sam stretches his arms out as other kids exit vehicles and enter the school, though Sam walks away from the front doors and slips around back.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL BACK WALL - MORNING

Sam sits against the back wall of the school listening to Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* on his YELLOW SONY WALKMAN, finishing a toke of weed from his one-hitter - wake and bake. A CUSTODIAN, arriving for work, walks past, Sam hides his stuff.

CUSTODIAN

You know I smell that right?

SAM

(feigning ignorance)

Where's that coming from?

Custodian shakes their head and continues on. Sam grabs his stuff and heads off, slight buzz kill.

COACH WATKINS (V.O.)

Let's shake off that Summer rust.

EXT. SCHOOL FIELD - LATER

Sam, now in cross country running gear, stretches on the high school track. COACH VANESSA WATKINS, late-20's, African-American woman, leads the stretch from the front of the group.

COACH WATKINS

Now left leg.

Sam switches legs and catches sight of another runner. MARY HILL - brown hair tied perfectly in a running ponytail, a threaded braid runs behind her ear, tanned and newly shaved gleaming legs, a big smile as she stretches and chats with other runners. Sam rubs the middle part of his unibrow between bloodshot eyes, stops himself from staring.

COACH WATKINS (CONT'D)
Warm up lap, then splits.

EXT. SCHOOL FIELD TRACK - MOMENTS LATER

ON THE TRACK as Sam runs, an easy pace. KAPLAN, 17, high energy, sidles up-

KAPLAN
What up Abudair?!

SAM
Kaplan.

KAPLAN
How was your Summer dude?

SAM
(panting)
Good. You?

KAPLAN
Same. Are you high?

SAM
Just-Say-No-Nancy-Reagan.

KAPLAN
Where do you get weed anyways?

SAM
They don't call it weed anymore,
Kaplan, they call it terwilligers.

KAPLAN
How much terwilligers do you smoke?

SAM
Enough to make this run tolerable.

KAPLAN
I heard you guys are playing Jen
Seidell's birthday house party this
weekend?

SAM
(out of breath)
Yeah.

KAPLAN
Nice. Her parents gonna be there?

SAM
Too many questions, Kaplan.

COACH WATKINS (O.S.)
(in the distance)
Pick up the pace!

KAPLAN
(pulling ahead)
Pick up the pace Abudair.

Sam is winded, gets dropped. Coach Watkins monitors the times on her stopwatch, presses the lap button, the TICKING continues.

PRINCIPAL METZLER (V.O.)
Welcome back students, faculty, and staff!-

INT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL HALLS - DAY

Students flood the halls to PRINCIPAL DIANA METZLER doing morning announcements. MONTAGE of the diverse student body of the DC suburbs: multi-ethnicities; hairsprayed bangs still happening; some 80's clothing turning into the 90's.

PRINCIPAL METZLER (V.O.)
(Over the Intercom)
A big shout out to our future class of '91! Greatness is achieved by small and big efforts every day. Let's keep building a tradition of Seahawk excellence...

INT. JAZZ BAND STUDIO - LATER

Sam enters the Jazz Band Studio as kids arrive. Noodling on guitar is IAN COLEMAN, 17, white, dirty blond long-ish haircut, t-shirt and jeans.

SAM
Ready for the last year of Jazz Band?

IAN
I can't contain my excitement.

SAM
Band practice today?

IAN
Yeah, same time, same place.

FRESHMAN JAZZ KID
(sidling up)
What's up, Ian.

IAN
Who are you?

FRESHMAN JAZZ KID
(thumbing to himself)
9th grade, new guitarist. Do you
know how to play an augmented D
ninth chord?

IAN
Man, get the fuck out of my face.

Freshman Jazz Kid walks off.

SAM
Kids these days.

GABE and DENNIS enter, 17 going on 18, hip, all black
clothes, skaters, punks, whatever.

SAM (CONT'D)
What about you Janet Jackson's
rhythm nation, band practice after
school?

GABE
In.

Dennis nods, doesn't say much, quiet bass player type.

SAM
Jen asked us to play Bon Jovi at
her birthday. I can do the keyboard
sound from Living on a Prayer.

IAN
Oh god, can't we just skip the hair
metal stuff?

SAM
We're getting paid to play, so the
customer is always right-

IAN
-only in matters of taste.

SAM
America's taste is Bon Jovi.

Ian shakes his head in disgust. Walking past, showing a
little smile and nod is REBECCA MILLER, cool hair, cool
clothes and jewelry, cool everything.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Rebecca? What happened to you?
 Where'd you go?

REBECCA
 My dad's State Department, so we
 were in Kenya 10th and 11th grade,
 now we're back.

SAM
 Oh yeah, holy shit.

REBECCA
 2 years away and nobody remembers
 my name.

SAM
 I remembered!

REBECCA
 You remembered!

SAM
 You look different, but the same.

REBECCA
 Same with you.

MR. JAMES (O.S.)
 Welcome old, welcome new-

BOB JAMES, "MR. JAMES" enters, 50's, kind of hip and square,
 the jazz band director, takes his place at the front music
 stand.

MR. JAMES (CONT'D)
 Every night you should fall asleep
 to your metronome, because all we
 care about is rhythm and time.
 Keeping. The. Time! Bring that
 swing. Hopefully you all practiced
 our first tune over the summer,
 let's stumble through it.
 (tapping baton)
 And 2-3-4-

The kids stumble into *Summertime* by Gershwin. Sam starts up
 on piano, Gabe on drums, Dennis on stand-up bass, Ian with a
 few guitar chords, Rebecca on Clarinet.

MR. JAMES (CONT'D)
 (stopping with baton taps)
 Where's the swing?! C'mon! This is
 Gershwin! Porgy and Bess, man! We
 need to find the heart of it.
 McConnell!

MCCONNELL, 16, white kid on trumpet, nervous, is stunned Mr. James is even talking to him.

MR. JAMES (CONT'D)
McConnell, summon your inner Louis Armstrong!

McConnell empties his spit valve.

MR. JAMES (CONT'D)
Gabe - good swing, keep that time, everybody listen to each other, listen to the swing. And 2-3-4-

Summertime begins again. Sam does a little extra something on the piano. Ian hears it and does a little extra lick on top of that. Rebecca does a little something snazzy as well.

MR. JAMES (CONT'D)
(laughing, over music)
This isn't Miles at Montreaux in '72. Stay in the pocket. Porgy and Bess!

A clunky Summertime fades...

COACH WATKINS (V.O.)
What were you up to all Summer?-

INT. SOUTH LAKES GUIDANCE COUNSELOR OFFICE - LATER

Sam, walkman headphones around his neck, stares at the posters on the wall: "*Hang in There*" with Cat Hanging from a Branch; "*Perseverance*" with a photo of feet in a frozen tundra; A rocket ship with "*Sky's the Limit - Go For It!*". Coach Watkins now in work clothes (also Sam's Guidance Counselor) flips through his file, looks up at him.

SAM
-Mowing lawns, playing basketball, band practice.

COACH WATKINS
Not running.

SAM
Some running.

COACH WATKINS
What kind of stuff does your band play?

SAM
We mostly do covers, but we like rock and blues and other stuff.

COACH WATKINS

Cool. You know you can be in a band and not smoke, right?

SAM

Phillip Morris is practically giving these things away! 200 more Camel miles and I'll get a beach towel.

COACH WATKINS

Looking at your numbers from last year - you're way off-pace.

SAM

I'll try to get back into it.

COACH WATKINS

When's the last time you ran 5 miles?

SAM

Do we really need to get into who did what and when they did or didn't do it?

COACH WATKINS

Get out there and get some long runs in. But more importantly - what do you want to do with the rest of your life?

SAM

Go on tour with Miles Davis?

COACH WATKINS

Sounds like a solid plan.

SAM

My parents really want me to go to, like, law school or med school or do engineering or something.

COACH WATKINS

What does your dad do again?

SAM

Like, politics. My mom's a nurse.

COACH WATKINS

Oh right, she took out Kaplan's stitches last year. Have you ever studied engineering? Like do you build things?

SAM

You mean play piano?

COACH WATKINS
(looking at papers)
Oh, your PSAT's were pretty low.

SAM
Yeah, not much of a test taker. I
like testing other people though-

COACH WATKINS
(ignoring him)
-So maybe fine arts?

SAM
I guess so?

COACH WATKINS
You guess so?
(closes the file)
Sam, it's senior year. Time is kind
of this thing that marches on.

Sam scratches his head.

COACH WATKINS (CONT'D)
Well, I'll skip the pep talk.
Higher score on SAT. College
applications due in January. Beef
up your application since your test
scores are low.

SAM
That was sort of a pep talk.

COACH WATKINS
Do you know what I mean when I say
beef up your application?

SAM
Kind of?

COACH WATKINS
What makes you tick? Who are you?
What did you do that mattered?

Sam thinks.

COACH WATKINS (CONT'D)
Go and run. Get out of here.

SAM
I'm going, I'm going.

Sam gives two thumbs up, but it becomes a yawn, as he gathers
his stuff.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES GUIDANCE COUNSELOR OFFICE - SAME

Just outside Coach Watkins' office, Sam walks past Mary.

MARY

Hey Sam.

SAM

Hey Mary. How was your summer?

MARY

It was great. We went to Cancun.
How about yours?

SAM

Went to Ocean City, which is like
the Cancun of Maryland. Got stung
by a jellyfish. Pretty good all
around.

COACH WATKINS

(calling out)

Come on in, Mary.

MARY

See ya.

Sam gives a little wave and walks into the Main Office at the same time as PRINCIPAL DIANA METZLER walks through - late 40's, buttoned up, Margaret Thatcher hair, Barbara Bush skirt suit, 80's shoulder pads in the sports jacket - followed by DOT MCKENNA, editor of the school newspaper, bangs, cat-eye glasses, sharp, notebook in hand.

DOT MCKENNA

How do teachers and the
administration motivate themselves
for another school year?

PRINCIPAL METZLER

We challenge our students
academically, really see ourselves
as a prep school for college, which
is motivation enough-

Sam is kind of listening. Metzler sizes Sam up.

PRINCIPAL METZLER (CONT'D)

Another Abudair headed toward
graduation?

SAM

Yep. We have a little brother too
starting next year.

PRINCIPAL METZLER
And what type of student will he
be? Like you? Or your older
brother?

Sam, deer in headlights eyes.

PRINCIPAL METZLER (CONT'D)
The bell's about to ring, don't you
have your next period to get to?

SAM
Oh, right.

Dot gives Sam an "eek" look. Sam gives Dot a little smile as
he scurries out.

OVERLAY - LIVE MUSIC, GUITARS AND BASS OUT OF AMPS, DRUMS...

EXT. RESTON TRAILS - DAY

Sam walks the trails finishing a cigarette, nearing a nice
Condo development, a public golf course surrounding.

EXT. IAN'S BASEMENT BAND PRACTICE SPACE - SAME

Sam arrives at a condo basement sliding door where band
practice sounds emanate - Sam pauses to listen - sounds like
punk/grunge being played.

OMITTED

INT. IAN'S BASEMENT BAND PRACTICE SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Sam enters the sliding doors to the basement living room
fashioned into a band practice space. Ian on guitar, Gabe on
drums, Dennis on bass, they stop what they're playing-

IAN
(drinking a beer)
Where you been, boy?

SAM
Guidance counselor.

IAN
(into the mic)
What you want to be when you grow
up BOYYYYY!

A few laughs from the dark basement - a DUDE and some GIRLS
on a couch, drinking, passing a joint.

SAM
Damn, y'all startin' early.

IAN
You're late.

GABE
Louie Louie!

IAN
I'm not fucking playing Louie Louie
this weekend.

SAM
It's party gold!

GABE
We should play it in double time!

Gabe begins playing a fast, double-time, Purdie shuffle
version of Louie Louie, Dennis starts a throbbing bass line,
as Sam saddles up behind his keyboard and jumps in, which
quickly turns into shambles and they stop playing.

SAM
You guys want to write a new song
for the party?

Ian shrugs, gulps a beer.

SAM (CONT'D)
Remember that thing we were trying
a few weeks ago?

Sam tries a few chords, but nobody joins in.

IAN
(to couch partiers)
Pass me that you punks.

Dennis kind of plays along with Sam, Gabe joins, but soon
stops. They all noodle around, nobody listening to each
other. Sam's eyebrows go up. Ian gets the joint from the
couch folks, ignores the band.

EXT. RESTON TRAILS - SUNSET

Sam jogging home: through woodsy trails; underground tunnels;
bridges over lakes. He arrives in front of his house and
enters the modest, aluminum-sided house, flips on the outside
lights as he enters.

OVERLAY - SOUND OF TELEVISION NEWS-

INT. SAM'S HOME - NIGHT

Sam ducks under a telephone cord attached to Omar, on a call,
necktie off at the telephone desk off the kitchen. A
corkboard filled with: photos of the family;

Mondale-Ferraro, Dukakis, Jesse Jackson campaign buttons;
phone numbers, schedules - crazy, beautiful chaos.

OMAR
(on phone)
Of course, of course, tell mom
we'll figure this out.
(then in Arabic)
*What, does she want to fight Saddam
face to face? I'm just glad you got
back to Jerusalem!*

Omar nods to Sam and Sam back to his dad. Sam's younger
brother, MOUSA, 12, does some homework at the table, waiting
for dinner.

SAM
What up punk-

MOUSA
Hey-

NANCY
(watching news)
Shhh!

NANCY ABUDAIR, mid-40's, white, wedge hairstyle, nursing
scrubs, simultaneously stirs something on the stove, watches
the news, reads The Washington Post. ON THE TV: Tom
Brokaw/NBC NEWS has an update on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

SAM
Who's dad talking to?

NANCY
Uncle Fouad, they left Kuwait.

MOUSA
Because of Saddam?

NANCY
Yep.

SAM
War is usually a good time to leave
a place where war is.

MOUSA
Saddam is like a bad guy from Red
Dawn.

NANCY
What's Red Dawn?

MOUSA
Wolverines!

SAM
Wolverines!

SAM (CONT'D)
 (back to mom)
 It's that movie about a communist
 takeover of the United States.

NANCY
 Communism! Oh dear!

SAM
 Drago kill Creed, Rocky beat Drago.

MOUSA
 (in Russian Accent)
 "I must break you."

NANCY
 You boys watch too many movies.

SAM
 What else is there to do?

Sam sets the table, handing stuff to Mousa who helps and
 clears away homework, Sam pretend-slapping the back of his
 head. Omar hangs up the phone.

OMAR
 Yalla, maybe it'll blow over, just
 posturing-

NANCY
 -As if! You think Bush will let him
 get away with invading Kuwait?-

OMAR
 -but what are we going to do, send
 in troops?

NANCY
 Uh, yeah. Especially since Saddam
 is like a bad guy out of, what is
 it?-

MOUSA
 Red Dawn-

Wolverines! SAM

MOUSA (CONT'D)
 Wolverines!

OMAR
 If Arafat sides with Saddam, Israel
 will start beating the drum.

MOUSA
 Is Palestine even close to Kuwait?

OMAR
 Close enough-

The table is set, they all sit and begin passing food.

NANCY
-But we don't think anything will
happen to our family there,
sweetie.

SAM
"You smell that?"

MOUSA
What?

SAM
(hand on his Mousa's
shoulder)
"Nothing else in the world smells
like that. I love the smell of
napalm in the morning."

MOUSA
I love a good war.

SAM
"Someday this war's gonna end."

Omar and Nancy shake their heads.

NANCY
How was the first day of school?

SAM
They said I learned what I needed
and don't have to go back tomorrow.

NANCY
Just get into college. Mousa's
next. Then we're free.

MOUSA
Love you too mom.

SAM
We could skip college and stay home
forever.

OMAR
Don't skip college-

NANCY
-Don't waste your talent.

MOUSA
Why are you always telling us this?-

NANCY
 (pointing the universal
 remote)
 Shhh-

ON THE TV: The volume raises on news of Iraqi forces invading Kuwait and other updates from Tom Brokaw/Peter Jennings/Dan Rather.

OVERLAY: A METRONOME CLICKING followed by PIANO SCALES

INT. ABUDAIR PIANO ROOM - LATER

Sam, lit by a lamp on top of the piano, practicing. He pauses to write. On the paper: *SET LIST*. He plays the first few chords of *Louie Louie*-(A Major, D Major, E Minor and back down).

OVERLAY: THE FULL BAND PLAYING LOUIE LOUIE through PA speakers.

EXT. JEN SEIDELL'S HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

The Band plays to a bunch of kids dancing at Jen's backyard party, trees adorned with streamers and twinkly lights. A row of parents hover, supervising, nursing wine coolers and beers in koozies. Sam looks out at the little crowd, bobs his head along. Ian breaks out into some soloing/improv, sloppily, a little drunk.

SAM
 (off mic, to the band)
 Tighten it up, get back on the one!
 (back into mic)
Said Louie Louie, oh baby, me gotta go

The entire bands belts out the stupid lyrics to *Louie Louie*, finally end it to applause. Ian shoots eye daggers at Sam, throws back a swig of beer.

IAN
 (into the microphone)
 Thank you. This next song was
 written by my friend Jimi Hendrix.
 It's for you, Jen. Happy birthday!

Ian starts up the riff to *Foxy Lady*, his guitar overpowering. Sam steps off the stage as Dennis and Gabe join in the song. Sam wanders through the party, nodding and saying hey to other kids.

EXT. JEN SEIDELL'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Sam finds himself in the front yard-

REBECCA (O.S.)

Sam!

Rebecca waves him over, she's standing with a group of kids, Sam joins their circle, is passed a joint from DAVE, slacker, 18.

DAVE

-All's I'm saying is that Laura Palmer was probably killed by her parents-

Sam takes a hit, passes the joint.

REBECCA

Shouldn't you be rocking in the rock and roll band?

SAM

Apparently *Foxy Lady* doesn't have keys.

REBECCA

Crosstown Traffic has piano-

SAM

-And *Little Wing* has that glockenspiel.

REBECCA

-Your band needs glockenspiel. Are these what Jen's parties have been like the last couple of years?

DAVE

Pretty much.

SAM

The partying is a little more out in the open, her parents gave up I guess.

REBECCA

Kinda feels like sorority slash frat training.

SAM

We were all in 3rd grade class together with Jen.

REBECCA

Mrs. Morgan's class! Holy shit, legendary. Now we're reprobates!

SAM

We've had to play *Louie Louie* for 4 years straight and I feel gross.

REBECCA
What kind of stuff do you really
want to play?

SAM
I dunno, everything.

REBECCA
Did you hear the new Sonic Youth
album?

SAM
Who?

REBECCA
You don't know Sonic Youth?

SAM
Shit, should I?

REBECCA
What about Bad Religion?

SAM
Heard a couple of tracks in
somebody's car, I think.

Pixies?	REBECCA	SAM (CONT'D)
		Red Hot Chili Peppers?

No.	REBECCA (CONT'D)	SAM (CONT'D)
		Yes.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
Chili Peppers are kinda gross.

SAM
Living Colour?

REBECCA
Slightly better, but not my thing.

SAM
Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*?

REBECCA
I'll play clarinet to that.

SAM
What other instruments do you play?

REBECCA
Mostly guitar.

SAM
Oh rad.

REBECCA
Your name was always Ismaeen in the
yearbooks.

SAM
Samuel in Arabic.

REBECCA
Shmuel in Hebrew.

CHUCK (O.S.)
Yo Miller!

CHUCK THOMAS, Black, laid back, life of the party, rolls in.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
What y'all doing over here?

Sam hands him the joint.

REBECCA
What's your take on Hendrix, Chuck?

CHUCK
Top 5. Better than fuckin' CC
Deville white boy shit. What up
Abudair?

SAM
Yo Chuck, where you been?

CHUCK
They don't invite black people to
this shit. You were the darkest
dude before I got here. Cops will
be here soon.

REBECCA
We should just call the cops
anyway, put this thing out of its
misery.

SAM
Thanks for the schmoke. I should
get back.

CHUCK
Salam Ulaikum, Ismaeen.

Sam winks and throws up a V for peace/victory.

IAN (O.S.)
Gonna do a quick original

EXT. JEN SEIDELL'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Sam approaches the stage, off to the side. Ian begins a really fast punk-rock sounding progression. Gabe and Dennis come in - this one is not a party tune, can't be danced to. Kids stop and watch, some rocker kids bob their heads.

IAN
(singing)
You don't want anarchy.
Okay.
You won't hear blasphemy.
Okay.
Sit down, shutup-
no thanks.
Tell me one more time what to do-
No thanks!

Sam crosses his arms, taken aback. Rebecca and other kids gather around to listen. JEN'S DAD approaches Sam-

JEN'S DAD
(talking over amps)
It's kinda loud, he's gonna have to
turn that guitar down.

SAM
(yelling back)
Sure thing, Reverend Shaw Moore.

JEN'S DAD
What?

SAM
Are we allowed to dance? John
Lithgow? Kevin Bacon?

JEN'S DAD
(can't hear)
It's too loud.

SAM
(thumbs up)
One more song to get the feet loose
and then we'll wrap it up.

Jen's Dad nods and walks away. Ian wraps up his song to applause as Sam jumps onstage.

SAM (CONT'D)
(to the band)
We're getting the parental axe. How
'bout *Let's Dance* by Bowie?

IAN
You want me to play it in time?

SAM
 (getting behind keys)
 Or you could just play whatever you
 want?

Ian and Sam stare each other down.

GABE
 (with drum sticks)
 2-3-4-

They start up the Bowie tune. The kids gets back to dancing
 and partying.

EXT. JEN SEIDELL'S FRONT YARD - LATER

Kids file out as the band loads out their amps and
 instruments into cars. Sam and Ian kind of get in each
 other's way, have to do a little dance, Ian holding a beer,
 drunker. Sam hands everybody cash from playing.

SAM
 (handing cash to Gabe)
 \$50 for you.
 (same to Dennis)
 \$50 for you.
 (to Ian)
 Here.

IAN
 There's word of an afterparty.
 Who's going?

GABE
 I'm down.

SAM
 You okay to drive?

IAN
 Do you want my keys mom?

Sam loads in his keyboard.

SAM
 I'm headed home.

IAN
 I wrote a song and now you're all
 hurt? Do I have to run everything
 by you?

SAM
 You don't have to do anything, but
 you could have said something.

GABE

We were just trying something new
for fun-

IAN

-Not every song needs a fucking
keyboard.

GABE

Dude, Ian, take it easy-

SAM

What the fuck is wrong with you?-

IAN

-Maybe I'm just being honest-

SAM

-oh, so brave-

GABE

-You guys!-

IAN

-and sick of being IN a band that
plays the same old shit and want
something different.

SAM

-Just say so, instead of leaving me
out of it. Kind of embarrassing
watching my own band play.

IAN

How do I keep you in every song if
what you play isn't part of it?

SAM

I thought being in a band was
making it work with what you got.

IAN

Well, then, that's stupid. I'm cool
making a few bucks, but otherwise
what's the point?

SAM

I didn't start this band with you
in middle school, playing and
singing Journey covers in your
bedroom just to make money at
birthday parties. I did it because
I love music and being in a band.

IAN

Journey sucks.

SAM
I'm not talking about Journey you
fucking idiot-

IAN
-what the fuck did you just call me-

Ian rushes at Sam, Gabe and Dennis jump in to break it up.

GABE
You guys, c'mon, just cool it.
Let's just call it a night.

Sam quickly loads his amp into the family hatchback, jumps in his car, takes off.

INT. ABUDAIR FAMILY OMNI - CONTINUOUS

Sam drives away, stressed. In the rearview mirror he sees the band.

EXT. RESTON STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The streetlights illuminate the quiet, suburban streets as Sam drives home into and out of light and darkness.

INT./EXT. ABUDAIR FAMILY OMNI - LATER

Sam pulls in front of his house, gets out. Pulls his keyboard out, looks at it, BODYSLAMS it down onto the street, kicks it. Sits on the curb and picks up a broken key. Head in hands, Sam pulls at his hair, the sound of locusts fills the late Summer night.

COACH WATKINS (V.O.)
Let's go on an adventure.

EXT. TRACK - MORNING

The cross country team finishes stretching, it's sunny, but there's steam coming from mouths. Coach Watkins stretches her arms. Sam catches a wrist tattoo on Watkins - "SXE", which means "Straight Edge". Coach takes off running, setting a brisk pace as the cross country team follows.

RUNNING MONTAGE: Across the fields near the school; the running/walking trails of Reston; through the golf courses; past the man-made lakes with a still surface. Kaplan sidles up next to Sam.

KAPLAN
Cool party this weekend.

SAM
Yeah.

KAPLAN
You guys playing again soon?

SAM
Don't know.

KAPLAN
You're quiet this morning, you okay?

SAM
Just trying to run.

KAPLAN
Dude, you should be able to talk at this pace.

SAM
Man, leave me alone, Kaplan.

KAPLAN
I'm sick of everybody calling me by my last name.

Sam tries to pull up and hang with Mary, Coach Watkins, and some of the more elite runners on the team, leaving Kaplan behind, but he struggles, so Kaplan catches up then passes him. Sam falls back, the pace is too fast.

MR. CAPAS (V.O.)
But let's get back to local civics, why is voting important-

INT. AP HISTORY CLASS - DAY

Quiet around the room as SAM CAPAS "MR. CAPAS", 50's, white, probably listens to Allman Brothers, tries to get the discussion going. Sam sits near the front. Ian in the back. Dot, Rebecca, and other familiar students in the same class. SOME KID raises his hand.

MR. CAPAS
You don't have to raise your hand, it's an open discussion.

SOME KID
Money?

MR. CAPAS
Uh, okay, money is involved in politics. And about voting?

ANOTHER KID
Dude, power.

MR. CAPAS

Right, okay, but what power does a voter or a locally elected official or a Congressperson have?

ANOTHER KID

It's all politics, man, they'll say whatever to stay in power-

IAN

-approves money for defense spending.

MR. CAPAS

(excited)

Yes! Congress approves these defense bills and you tell them what you support and don't support.

SAM

We need to fund the Top Gun program or else an unnamed country may fly jets freely around an ocean.

REBECCA

Poor Goose.

IAN

But they'll still vote along party lines, so who cares what we tell them?

MR. CAPAS

So, you're just going to stop telling them what to do? Do they not represent you?

IAN

They may do something for us, but then they'll go and vote for something that has nothing to do with us.

MR. CAPAS

Don't they have party politics, constituents to attend to?-

DOT MCKENNA

-And lobbyists...

SOME KID

What is a lobbyist-

SAM

(ignoring)

Do you think they're going to approve invading Kuwait and Iraq?

MR. CAPAS
Don't ask me, what do you think?

SAM
I think we always approve war.

IAN
Our biggest export IS war.

MR. CAPAS
We do have our interests abroad
don't we? Should we protect them or
not?

SAM
Depends on how we always pretend
we're saving lives and spreading
freedom-

REBECCA
-and democracy-

SAM
-but we mostly kill brown people
along the way.

MR. CAPAS
What we're talking about here is
Balance of Power and Hegemony.
Country's gaining allies and foes
to spread their power.

DOT MCKENNA
Same thing in the Peloponnesian
Wars in the way that Athens, Sparta
and the City States-

Everybody groans.

DOT MCKENNA (CONT'D)
-Oh, sorry I studied Ancient
Greece! Sue me.

MR. CAPAS
Let's keep it 20th Century and not
get too far away from this idea -
what can young voters and future
voters like you do? What is a
local, political thing you can do,
to organize, to make change? Some
of us still care about that kinda
thing.
(sitting on desk)
So this is your project since as
1990 ends and we head into '91 - a
five-minute presentation of a
local, civic action.

Sam thinks about it as the BELL RINGS and he packs up, avoiding crossing paths with Ian walking out of class.

INT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL HALLS - MOMENTS LATER

Sam is pulled aside by Gabe as they head to the next period.

GABE
Hey, you okay?

SAM
I guess.

GABE
We should all talk.

SAM
Why?

GABE
Just to, I don't know, hash things out.

SAM
What's there to hash out? We broke up.

GABE
But we don't have to-

SAM
Gabe, it's over.

GABE
Sucks.

SAM
Not for you.

GABE
We could do our own thing too, though, you know? I'm always down to play with you.

SAM
My keyboard, is, it's broken, so I'm just kind of taking a break from music...

GABE
Oh shit, sorry. We're going to see Fugazi in a couple weeks at the 9:30 Club. A bunch of us are going, you should come.

SAM
Maybe. I gotta get a job first.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL BACK WALL - DAY

Sam, walkman headphones on, alone, sits on the back wall eating lunch. OVERLAY: *Don't Want to Know If You Are Lonely* by Husker Du-

INT. KEMP MILL RECORDS - DAY

Sam enters the local record store jam packed with: bulletin board flyers; comic book racks; posters; tight rows of CD's, Vinyl, and cassette tapes. A gaggle of music heads are at the counter talking to STAN, early 40's, African-American/Biracial, the owner/manager, glasses.

STAN

A Love Supreme is the best fucking album of all time. Not Dark Side of the Moon or Led Zeppelin 1 to whatever or The Beatles. Coltrane was talking to God in a way that Jimmy fucking Page can only dream.

RECORD STORE GROUPIE 1

Did you come up with this bullshit all on your own?

STAN

It's like you're still listening to Gregorian dyads and chants and the rest of us are listening to real, actual art!

(to Sam)

Hey bro, can I help you find anything?

SAM

Looking for Sonic Youth and, like, what's the best rap album to listen to right now?

STAN

Excuse me, I must help this lost child-

(stepping out and going down the rows, handing out CD's as they walk)

-Fear of a Black Planet. And check out this new shit from De La Soul. Eric B. and Rakim's Follow the Leader. Don't sleep on A Tribe Called Quest. Just listen to Sonic Youth's new one, Goo. Major label, but builds off their last album.

SAM

(holding up a CD)

Wait, I all ready have A Love Supreme.

STAN
 (to the heads)
 See, shitbags, this kid knows
 what's up.
 (back to Sam)
 You know Nirvana?

SAM
 Uh-

STAN
 -You should, because they're gonna
 break and you'll be left behind and
 me and all your friends, IF you
 have any friends, will make fun of
 you. There's a whole Grunge thing
 coming out of Seattle.

SAM
 I can't afford all these.

STAN
 (patronizing)
 How many can you afford poor,
 little upper-middle class Tiny Tim?

SAM
 One.

STAN
 We have a 2-for-1 special, so get
 Fear of a Black Planet and Goo.
 Come back for the rest when you get
 a fucking job.

SAM
 Are you guys hiring?

STAN
 God no, I can barely afford to pay
 myself.

Sam pays at the register.

RECORD STORE GROUPIE 2
 You guys gonna get tickets to
 Lollapalooza?

SAM
 What's Lollapalooza?

RECORD STORE GROUPIE 1
 Perry Farrell from Jane's Addiction
 is putting together a lineup with
 all these different bands, all
 alternative, for a big show next
 Summer.

RECORD STORE GROUPIE 2
Yeah, it's the anti-Monsters of
Rock tour.

SAM
Cool.

RECORD STORE GROUPIE 1
I'm gonna try and go.

STAN
He basically stole that shit from
WHFS, the HFStival. But at least
they'll be girls there unlike every
Henry Rollins show.

RECORD STORE GROUPIE 2
Why aren't there ever girls in
here?

STAN
Because you guys are lame.

SAM
(paying)
Thanks.

STAN
Sure thing.
(doing a cross)
In the name of Stevie Ray Vaughn,
Amen.

Sam leaves smiling and perplexed.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - DAY

Sam steps out of Kemp Mill and does a survey of the retail
shops at South Lakes Village Center, the local strip mall. He
notices Mary Hill opening up the door for a customer at
HARVEST CLOTHING - a trendy clothing shop.

INT. HARVEST CLOTHING - DAY

Sam walks in, sizes up the mannequin wearing the preppy
clothes on offer at Harvest Clothing Shop. Mary, at the front
register, looks up and smiles.

MARY
What's up Sam?

SAM
Hey, I, uh, was wondering if you
all were hiring?

MARY

Doug, the manager/owner, he takes applications all the time, I think. Want one?

SAM

Sure.

Mary hands him one.

MARY

We mostly sell, kind of, trendy clothes, but we do pretty well with like accessories - earrings, bracelets, scrunchies.

SAM

Oh right, scrunchies.

MARY

There's a guys section too.

CHAD, blond, square jaw, sweater and jeans, approaches.

CHAD

What up Abudair.

SAM

Hey Chad.

CHAD

Dude, we have 3rd period together.
(sees the application)
You applying to work here?

SAM

Just grabbing an application.

DOUG, the Harvest manager approaches.

DOUG

Can I help you?

SAM

I was just saying hey to Mary, oh and Chad too, and grabbing an application.

DOUG

Do you have sales experience?

SAM

Not really. But I'm friendly and all that.

DOUG
Do you usually wear running shoes
with jeans?

SAM
I'm on the track team, so yeah, I
guess I do wear running shoes all
the time. Except when my family
goes to weddings and funerals.

DOUG
(to Mary and Chad)
Can you stock the new inventory?

MARY
See ya, Sam.

Sam realizes he's been dismissed and leaves.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - DAY

Sam folds the Harvest application and sticks it between his
new CD's. He looks over at the grocery store, SAFEWAY.

GARY (V.O.)
We need the most help in the
bakery.

INT. SAFEWAY BAKERY - DAY

GARY, late-30's, balding, the stressed out Safeway Grocery
Store Manager, gives Sam a tour.

GARY
Baking shit, decorating cakes, all
that. And when you have downtime,
which you'll have, I want you out
front loading groceries, bringing
carts back, helping people.

SAM
Shouldn't I fill out an application
or something?

GARY
Look, I beg my ex-wife to keep her
hands off my tiny salary, alimony
you know? You gonna make me beg you
to work here? We need help, man.

SAM
Uh, okay.

GARY
Don't smoke out front on your
breaks. Smoke out back.

SAM
I don't smoke.

GARY
Sure you do. Just do it out back.
Your older brother was one of my
best workers. He smoked out back.

SAM
Family tradition.

GARY
And don't steal beer.
(secretly)
I drank beer in high school, so I
get it. You want beer, we can
figure something out, just don't
steal it.
(shaking Sam's hand)
Welcome to the team.

Gary trots off. Sam looks at, then throws the application for
Harvest into the trash.

INT. ABUDAIR HOME - LATER

Sam enters to voices and commotion, enters the kitchen to
find GRANDMA "SITTI" AISHE, 82, white hair partially covered
by an embroidered head scarf, sitting in her wheelchair at
the table.

SITTI AISHE
(in Arabic)
Eeeeeee, Ismaeen, my god, all grown
up. A man!

She kisses Sam a million times on each cheek.

SAM
(to dad)
What's going on?

OMAR
She couldn't stay in Kuwait or
Jerusalem. Needs better health care
for the diabetes.

Nancy has her arms crossed, looking at Omar.

OMAR (CONT'D)
(to Nancy)
She couldn't stay.

NANCY
I didn't say anything.

OMAR
But there was a look.

Nancy stares at him blankly.

OMAR (CONT'D)
You don't have to do anything,
she's my mom.

SAM
Where's she gonna sleep?

They all look at Sam. Sam back at them.

SAM (CONT'D)
No, c'mon, for real?

OMAR
Your grandma can't sleep in the
basement.

SAM
What about my health? The state is
like testing for Radon down there!
And there might be Ebola!

The family ignores him. Sam is defeated.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sam gathers clothes from the floor of his room. He removes
pictures and posters from the wall.

MUSIC OVERLAY: *Welcome to the Terrordome* by Public Enemy.

INT. SAM'S BASEMENT ROOM - LATER

ON the AIWA 6-DISC CD PLAYER. Underneath stark overhead light
Sam moves boxes around in his new basement bedroom. He puts
up one of his posters, sits on the bed.

EXT. SAM'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

From outside, through the basement window, we see Sam shake
his head at his new room.

INT. JAZZ BAND STUDIO - DAY

Jazz Band finishes up Summertime.

MR. JAMES
Good job friends. Sounding much
better. Keep listening to each
other. Keep the time!
(handing out sheet music)
As we go into the Fall, get to know
Autumn Nocturne next.

Sam crosses his arms. Gabe looks his way. Dennis as well. Ian packing up his guitar. Rebecca looks over at Sam.

MR. JAMES (CONT'D)
It's far away, but I want you all
thinking about the Jazz Band spring
concert. What do you want to play?
Seniors get first choice.

The students shuffle out.

OMITTED

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - EVENING

Sam removes his Safeway apron as he walks out of work. He stops and looks over at Harvest, an inviting scene, Mary at the front counter folding a shirt.

INT. HARVEST CLOTHING - CONTINUOUS

Sam enters Harvest, Mary turns with a bright smile.

MARY
Hey Sam.

SAM
Hey, how's it going? You guys sell
running shoes?

MARY
Aisle 8. Are you working at
Safeway?

SAM
Yeah, just walking home. I was
wondering, do you want to hang out
sometime?

MARY
Okay. Yeah. Sure.

SAM
Around this weekend?

MARY
Justin Kerlin is having a house
party on Saturday, we could check
it out.

SAM
Uh, okay.

Chad walks by and nods to Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)
You guys sell scrunchies?

Chad points to them as he's passing, unironically. Mary laughs.

SAM (CONT'D)

Later.

Sam exits.

EXT. LAKE AUDUBON WALKING TRAIL - LATER

Sam walks home on the Reston trails, a little sunset illuminating the lake, Fall foliage surrounding. A small smile on his face, he begins jogging the rest of the way.

INT. SAM'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam uses a shoehorn to put on his "dressier" shoes, looks at himself in the mirror, Mousa behind him.

SAM

What do you think? Okay with jeans?

MOUSA

Are you going to a funeral or something?

Sam shakes his head, pretend-backhand slaps his brother.

INT. MARY'S HOME - NIGHT

Sam enters Mary's townhome to find modern decor, upscale, uncluttered. Mary closes the door behind him.

MARY

Did you walk here?

SAM

Yeah. Is that okay? I don't drive that much.

MARY

Sure, I can drive. My parents just wanted to meet you and say hello.

Sam is led into the open layout kitchen to meet MR. and MRS. HILL, yuppies, athletic, they're making some kind of exotic meal.

MR. HILL

(offering his hand)

Steve Hill.

SAM

(shaking)

Sam Abudair.

MRS. HILL
Hello Sam.

SAM
Need any help?

MARY
Sam works the bakery at Safeway.

SAM
I could decorate anything you make
with icing, for an extra charge.

MR. HILL
So, where ya from Sam?

SAM
Just down the road.

MR. HILL
Oh, no, like what's your
background? What are you?

Mrs. Hill awaits a response with a smile.

SAM
What am I? Uh, my mom is like
European background, but my
grandparents were, well, are from
Palestine. My grandmother lives
with us, she's Muslim.

MR. HILL
Palestine? You know Sirhan Sirhan
was from Palestine?

SAM
Who?

MR. HILL
The guy who killed Robert F.
Kennedy?

SAM
Oh.

MRS. HILL
You're on the track team, Sam?

SAM
Yep. Not breaking any records, but
I enjoy it.

MRS. HILL
Mary broke the state record in 1500
meters.

SAM
Yeah, we were all really impressed.
Must be her shoes.

MR. HILL
I think it's her discipline.

MARY
He's joking, dad.

MR. HILL
Oh, like the Palestine bit?

Sam's face goes flush, wishing he could crawl out of his skin.

MRS. HILL
So, where y'all headed tonight?

MARY
I think we're gonna maybe see a movie? Get something to eat?

MRS. HILL
Okay, no drinking and driving.

Sam nods and looks at Mary and peels right outta there.

INT. MARY'S BMW - LATER

Mary turns the car ignition.

MARY
Sorry, my parents are like the Spanish inquisition.

SAM
That's actually true, except I don't know if the Spanish asked that many questions, they just mercy-killed everybody.

MARY
He didn't mean anything by it, they're just curious is all.

SAM
Curious about political assassins?

MARY
I don't know even know about all that stuff.

SAM
Should we go to McTacoHut?

MARY

Sure.

EXT. MCTACOHUT - NIGHT

McTacoHut is a little shopping center with McDonald's, Taco Bell and Pizza hut all in the same little block. Sam and Mary sit outside and share some fries.

MARY

We're not supposed to eat these.

SAM

Because of running?

MARY

Yeah.

SAM

Good carbs. I eat these before every race.

MARY

You think you'll run in college?

SAM

I haven't really thought about it. You?

MARY

Yeah.

SAM

Are you getting running scholarships?

MARY

Some offers, both in-state and out.

SAM

Damn, that's awesome. I mean, I figured.

MARY

Sometimes wish I could take a break from it all.

SAM

Run away with the circus?

MARY

My parents just push, push, push, really want me to go straight to college or have some grand plan.

SAM

Well, consider just hittin' the road. That BMW would get you as far as Tennessee on one tank of gas. Or hitchhike.

MARY

Where to?

SAM

Head to Denver, then down to ole Mexico, then back up to San Francisco. Write a book about it.

MARY

I have no idea what you're talking about, but sounds kind of crazy and awesome.

SAM

On the Road, man. American freedom!

MARY

Want to go to Justin's?

SAM

(shrugs)
Or see a movie.

MARY

I fall asleep in movies.

SAM

Okay, let's go to Justin's.

EXT. JUSTIN KERLIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cars are parked every which way on Justin's street. Out front, a fight is being broken up, girls are screaming to leave, people are laughing, drinking beers. Mary and Sam move past and inside.

INT. JUSTIN KERLIN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They enter to loud music - *But Anyway* by Blues Traveler - a party filled mostly with drunk jock kids.

MARY

(over the music)
Let's say hi to Justin.

Sam follows as Mary moves further in, approaching JUSTIN, 18, backwards white baseball hat, managing the chaos.

JUSTIN

(Over music)
What up, Hill!

MARY
Hey Justin. You know Sam?

JUSTIN
Yo, what up. \$2 if you want out of
the keg. Or, you know what, fuck
it.

Justin reaches into the 24-pack of Milwaukee's Best under his
arm and hands two to Mary and Sam.

SAM
Thanks, man.

JUSTIN
Let me know if you see the
douchebag who stole my CD Case.

EXT. JUSTIN KERLIN'S HOUSE - BACK DECK - NIGHT

Sam and Mary sip on warm Milwaukee's Best on the back deck.
Kids are smoking cigarettes and pot. Some pounding beers. A
group of guys playing Spades, a card game, at the outdoor
table, each with a 12-pack of Milwaukee's Best next to their
chairs.

MARY
I don't party too much.

SAM
First french fries, now beer?!

MARY
You're a bad influence.

SAM
Me? I was offering you popcorn and
a movie! Rocky V is coming out
soon!
(swigging)
Milwaukee's Beast. Yech.

MARY
My dad doesn't notice when I take
his beer, which is better than this
stuff.

SAM
Justin Kerlin's brother punched my
brother their junior year.

MARY
Why didn't you tell me?

SAM

His brother punched everybody he thought was a fag or artsy or a metalhead.

MARY

Still. Do you want to leave?

SAM

No, I'm good. It's just, I walk into parties like this and feel like a cowboy walking into the wrong bar, everybody looking at him funny.

MARY

Nobody cares about cliques and stuff.

SAM

Most of these people still do.

MARY

You have your own clique.

SAM

You think so?

MARY

Yeah, like the burnout, stoner, music kids.

SAM

(laughs it off)
At least we're, like, a non-date-rapist clique.

MARY

That's not cool.

SAM

I was just joking.

MARY

No you weren't.

A POLICE SIREN WHOOPS, RED AND BLUE LIGHTS FLASH. People begin scrambling into the woods or wherever they can.

EXT. JUSTIN KERLIN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Kids are running this way and that, swirling around Justin Kerlin out front-

JUSTIN

Who fuckin' stole my CD's?!

AT MARY'S BMW - Mary is about to jump in.

SAM
I'm just going to run home from
here.

MARY
No, c'mon, I'll give you a ride.

SAM
It's not that far.

Mary comes around to Sam's side.

MARY
You know, sometimes I feel the same
as you, just want to get out of
here. But I can't say anything or
be different or whatever.

Sam listens.

MARY (CONT'D)
I'm always putting my head down and
running through it.

SAM
You're a good runner.

MARY
So are you. C'mon, I'll give you a
ride.

SAM
Nah, I'm good. For real. I'll see
you at school.

MARY
Thanks for asking me out, Sam.

Sam heads off on foot.

EXT. RESTON STREETS - NIGHT

Between the darkness and lighted areas between street lights,
Sam runs home. He quickly slows down and goes into a limp,
then stops. He sits on the curb and removes his dressy shoes
to reveal blood on the heel of his sock. And a huge blister
on the other foot.

SAM
(yelling through clenched
teeth)
Fuck.

He looks up, measuring the distance home in his mind, puts on his shoes, stands and begins walking through the pain, then jogging, then gritting his teeth and running through the pain, falling into the darkness between street lights.

MR. JAMES (V.O.)
You can't quit!

INT. JAZZ BAND STUDIO OFFICE - DAY

Sam sits in Mr. James's office.

SAM
I'm just feeling especially, like, weird and I don't get along with everybody in the class.

Mr. James stands up.

MR. JAMES
I don't have another pianist. C'mon, Sam, you've been with me since you were a freshman, don't you want to make it to the Spring Concert?

Sam is unsure.

GARY (V.O.)
Not a chance, Abudair.

INT. SAFEWAY BAKERY - DAY

Gary is irate. Sam avoiding eye contact.

GARY
You drive a hard bargain. I'll give you \$1.50 more an hour. Don't be a loser and quit.

Gary jogs off, leaving Sam in the dairy aisle.

SAM (V.O.)
I just, like, I'm not enjoying it much.

INT. COACH WATKINS OFFICE - DAY

Sam sitting, slouched. Coach Watkins taking him in.

COACH WATKINS
Running is hard and not always fun. Maybe you're going through stuff, but don't quit.

SAM
I just don't see the point.

COACH WATKINS

The point is it's good for you.
Colleges might care. Don't you
think your parents will care if you
quit?

SAM

I don't know.

COACH WATKINS

If you need some time off, that's
cool, just don't quit today.
Remember what we talked about -
what do you want this year to be
about?

Sam thinks about it, kind of defeated, can't even quit
anything.

OVERLAY: SOUND OF KIDS CLAPPING AND CHEERING -

COACH SUPCOE (O.S.)

Believe in yourselves, because
nobody else is gonna believe in you-

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

The large gym is filled with every grade as the Football
Coach, COACH SUPCOE, on the microphone, gets everybody
pumped.

COACH SUPCOE

-Except your team. And if you don't
have a team, then join one. Or make
your own team. Or go solo. You
know? And wait for your moment.
Because our moment is now. Seahawks
on three: 1, 2, 3-

CROWD

Seahawks.

COACH SUPCOE

I. Can't. Hear. You. Seahawks on 3 -
1, 2, 3-

CROWD

SEAHAWKS.

COACH SUPCOE

Wooooo!

Supcoe walks off, friggin' pumped as heck, and up to the mic
comes Principal Metzler.

PRINCIPAL METZLER
So, are we going to win this weekend?!

The students mildly cheer.

PRINCIPAL METZLER (CONT'D)
I can't hear you! I said, are we going to win this weekend?!

Students slightly louder.

IAN (O.S.)
(from somewhere in the bleachers)
Yeeeeaaaah!

The crowd laughs. Some kids shake their heads, "so disrespectful". Angle closer on a remote part of the stands - Ian is surrounded by Gabe, Dennis, assorted stoners, metal girls, hippie chicks, rebels, weirdos. A nearby teacher gives Ian, "hey, cool it buster" kind of look, hands on hips.

PRINCIPAL METZLER (O.S.)
For our Seniors, this is their last homecoming game, so let's make it a fun and festive weekend.

Sam sits nearby, closer to Rebecca, Dave, others.

SAM
I genuinely feel like we're in an 80's movie right now.

REBECCA
Quiet or you'll get our ass kicked by the entire football team.

SAM
I'm actually starting QB of the football team.

REBECCA
I'd like to see that movie.

PRINCIPAL METZLER (O.S.)
Go Seahawks!

The Concert Band starts up *We Will Rock You* by Queen. Cheerleaders, Football Team standing around slapping 5's. Sam doesn't move as kids shuffle past.

REBECCA
Pep rallies are so lame.

SAM
Yeah.

REBECCA
You okay?

SAM
Yeah.

REBECCA
You sure?

SAM
Uh huh.

Rebecca looks him over, steps over him down the bleachers, Sam doesn't move.

EXT. ABUDAIR HOME - DAY

Sam and Mousa returning home from school, Sam takes the key from around his little brother's neck and without removing it, forces his brother to lean forward to unlock the door.

INT. ABUDAIR HOME - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Mousa enter to find Sitti in the family living room, stumbling around, then slowly begin to fall forward. Sam dashes out to catch her.

SAM
(in Arabic)
What's wrong?

SITTI AISHE
(in Arabic)
Where are my glasses?

SAM
(in Arabic)
On your face?

MOUSA
(still at the door)
I can't get the key out!

Mousa slides his neck out of the lanyard holding his key in the lock.

SAM
Did you take your insulin?

SITTI AISHE
Insulin? Where?

SAM
You need juice!
(to Mousa)
Moose, go get a Capri Sun, quick.

INT. ABUDAIR KITCHEN - LATER

Sitti sits at the table, drinking a juice, some of the life coming back to her eyes.

SAM
You can't let your blood sugar get too low, Sitti. What'd you eat for breakfast? Just coffee?

SITTI AISHE
I have coffee.

SAM
Okay, okay. Drink your juice.

Mousa sits there a little shellshocked.

SAM (CONT'D)
She's good, man. Go play some Nintendo or something. I'm going to go for a walk.

Mousa nods.

EXT. RESTON WALKING TRAILS - DAY

Sam walks the nearby trails, finishing a cigarette.

EXT. LAKE DOCK - DAY

Sam sits on a public dock on the lake and watches the water bugs, the ripples from frogs and fish.

REBECCA (O.S.)
Sam!

He looks up. Coming across the lake on a PARTY BOAT/BARGE are Rebecca, Dave piloting, BETSY, a hippie chick, and others, waving their arms. Sam stands and waves.

DAVE
Come join us on the boat!

Dave steers it close to the dock, so Sam can jump on, joins the crew.

EXT. PARTY BARGE - CONTINUOUS

Rebecca is playing guitar as they all smoke cigarettes and joints, taking in the quiet, Autumn scene.

SAM
Whose boat is this?

DAVE
We don't know. Nobody locks their
shit up in this town.

REBECCA
We're waging class warfare.

BETSY
What's wrong? You seem low.

SAM
Nothing.

DAVE
George Bush gettin' you down again?

SAM
Him and Ollie North.
(thinking)
I wonder if in 30 years we're going
to remember any of this. That all
there was to do was go to school,
go to 7-11, smoke cigarettes, watch
tv.

BETSY
That's heavy.

REBECCA
Sam, we heard your band broke up...

SAM
Wow, word gets around.

REBECCA
Maybe it's not all bad.

SAM
Why?

REBECCA
Ian's kind of an asshole.

SAM
I think he's just super honest
sometimes. I've known him since we
were little-

REBECCA
So?

SAM
Whaddya mean "so"?

REBECCA
Who cares if he's honest if he's
not a good friend?

SAM
What do you care?

REBECCA
Because I care about you. We all
do. We don't want to see you down.

SAM
Feels like nothing matters.

REBECCA
Shit matters, man.

SAM
Like what?

REBECCA
There has to be something!

SAM
To make this entire year not suck?!

REBECCA
Yes!

Sam looks out, shakes his head.

SAM
I should get back to my grandma.

DAVE
You're bringing us down anyway,
man!
(gets kicked by the girls)
Kidding, kidding, you're not
depressing us at all.

The Party Barge slowly spins around.

REBECCA
The Merry Pranksters are hanging
out this Homecoming weekend.

SAM
Who're the merry pranksters?

REBECCA
Us. And we don't give a shit about
football. My folks are out of town.
Come.

Sam jumps off the boat, back onto the dock. The boat spins
around again.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 For real, come. Be merry, these are
 the best years of our lives.

Sam walks off.

INT. TOWER RECORDS - NIGHT

Sam walks through the rows and rows of CD's in the new, well-lit, corporate music store. He stands at a bank of headphones where you can listen to different, new releases. He walks by book shelves; poster racks; classical, jazz, and folk sections. Hands in pockets, he walks out.

INT. KEMP MILL RECORDS - NIGHT

Sam flips through the vinyl records bin as Stan walks by.

STAN
 What's wrong with you?

SAM
 (looking up)
 Huh?

STAN
 You're just flipping through that
 bin, blank stare, breathing through
 your mouth. You're missing all the
 magic in there.

SAM
 I'm just...I don't know. I went to
 that new record store...

STAN
 Tower Records? And then you came
 here to atone for your sin.
 (does the cross)
 You are forgiven. Shit, man,
 they're coming. Music stores backed
 by the Corporate Record Label
 Industrial Complex. My place and
 all others like it are gonna
 disappear.

SAM
 Sucks.

STAN
 No shit. I'm gonna have to get a
 real job, get all into computers
 and shit. You're bringing me down.
 What's wrong with you?

SAM
Everything?

STAN
(grabs record)
I've seen this before. Follow me.

OVERLAY: Scratches from the record player starting up, *Bad Condition* by Otis Spann begins. AT THE FRONT REGISTER - Sam slumps his head on his arms on the counter.

STAN (CONT'D)
What troubles ya?

SAM
My band broke up.

STAN
It's a damn shame, son.

SAM
I live in the basement.

STAN
Let it out.

SAM
My grandma, she ain't doing so good. I hate school. I hate running. I hate working-

STAN
Boy, god damn-
(slams his hand on the counter)
-I knew it. I knew it. You got the blues! Got them stare-at-your-hands, low down, wondering how you'll get out of this mess-kind of blues. You know what I'm saying?

Sam nods. They listen to Otis.

STAN (CONT'D)
Look, you're not Black, so you don't know about the real blues, but this was created to deal with struggles, to cope with the pain. Don't you play?

SAM
Yeah.

STAN
Go play your white boy version of the blues.

SAM
Half white.

STAN
Well, then half will suck, the
other half will have better rhythm
or something.

Sam nods, breathes deep. OVERLAY: Moody minor, blues chords.

INT. ABUDAIR PIANO ROOM - NIGHT

Sam with just his lamp on, playing the blues on his piano.
(Some of the chords/melodies he is improvising will become a
song later.) A KNOCK on the piano room door as Nancy and Omar
enter, turn on the light, ruin the mood.

OMAR
We need to talk.

SAM
Oh god.

NANCY
Just for a minute.

Sam turns to them.

OMAR
Just what in the hell do you want
to do with your-

NANCY
No, stop, hold on-

SAM
-with the rest of my life? Don't
know, run a gas station-

OMAR
-run it? You'll be lucky to even
pump gas if you don't make it
through high school!-

NANCY
-Knock it off you two. Sam, we got
a call from Coach Watkins, she's
your advisor, and she says you're
practically failing everything
right now. And you want to quit
track and jazz band and Safeway?

SAM
I'm just a little behind. And I'm
going through some stuff...

OMAR

You know life actually gets harder?
You've actually got it easy right
now. You can't just fuck off your
senior year.

SAM

I'm not fucking it off-

NANCY

Stop cursing-

SAM

I'm just, I don't know, going
through whatever.

NANCY

What?

SAM

Stuff. Everything. The band broke
up. Those guys were my friends. I
live in the basement!

NANCY

Why didn't you tell us you were
feeling all this?

SAM

(shrugs)

I don't know. I just found out
tonight that I have the blues.

OMAR

The blues? You know what my dad
wanted me to do for a living?
Become a barber! Well, I had bigger
plans for myself. Psh, the blues. I
know I'm a broken record, but
you've got talent and potential, so
do something with it.

Omar walks off. Nancy forces him to scooch over on the piano
bench. They play a Scott Joplin ragtime piece, *Weeping
Willow*, as a duet, mess up here and there, but they still got
it.

NANCY

You were always my best duettist,
always liked to practice and play,
made it easy. Baseball, you hated.

SAM

The outfield was so boring. And the
kids just weren't my people.

NANCY

Have to keep searching for your people.

SAM

I'm trying.

NANCY

We want you to be ready to take on the world. Right now, it's like you can't do the dishes or your laundry or your homework.

SAM

I know.

NANCY

You want to get out of here right? Go off to college?

SAM

Yeah, I just don't really know what that's all about, you know?

NANCY

Sam, you have to move towards things, not away from them.

Nancy gets up and leaves him contemplating under the piano lamp.

OMITTED

OVERLAY: Marching Band playing *U2's With or Without You*.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Mary Hill, wearing a formal homecoming dress is escorted by Justin Kerlin, the quarterback, in football uniform, carrying his helmet, to the 50-yard line.

ANNOUNCER

And nominated for Senior Class Homecoming King and Queen - Justin Kerlin and Mary Hill.

Sam, in the stadium bleachers, watches Mary on the field. Rebecca, Dave, and others are clapping vigorously and singing the U2 lyrics, ironically. A HIPPIE KID sidles over and sits next to Rebecca and they exchange SOMETHING. He leaves.

REBECCA

Another year where I didn't win Homecoming Queen. Bullshit. Let's go.

They all leave as the Marching Band gets some music going for the 2nd half - Louie Louie perhaps.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD PARKING LOT - LATER

The band of Pranksters arrive at Rebecca's car. She begins handing out tabs of LSD.

REBECCA
No pressure, but we're all gonna trip tonight.

SAM
For real?

REBECCA
Never done it?

SAM
No.

REBECCA
Everyone here is totally cool, it's gonna be safe and chill. Betsy will be our Bus Driver.

Betsy twirls over and wraps an arm around Sam.

SAM
What's a bus driver?

BETSY
My job is to make sure you get where you need to go man. And that you stay hydrated.

Sam takes the tab and holds it.

REBECCA
Do you have anything to do tomorrow?

SAM
I don't think so...

REBECCA
Then cheers matey, bottoms up.

Sam puts it on his tongue. Betsy whirls around like at a Dead concert. OVERLAY-Acoustic Guitar.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REBECCA'S BACKYARD FIRE PIT - NIGHT

The flames of the fire. Sam shakes himself out of staring too closely into it, looks around. Rebecca strums her guitar.

Others around the fire are in contemplation. Dave hears a sound and bolts off running towards it or away, we're not sure.

SAM
I keep asking myself, "when's it gonna start?".

REBECCA
But it all ready has.

SAM
It all ready has!

REBECCA
It's a fucking circle.

SAM
And fire! This is how it ALL started, you know?

BETSY
I know.

SAM
How did you know?

BETSY
Because I've been here before and somebody drove the bus for me. A circle.

SAM
(to Rebecca)
A circle. Why did you stop playing?

REBECCA
Did I stop playing? Or did you stop listening?

Everyone in the group is stunned at this revelation. Rebecca begins strumming The Sundays song *Here's Where the Story Ends*.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
Sam, you know this song, sing it with me?

SAM
I don't know if I can sing out loud.

REBECCA
Don't you sing backup?

SAM

But nobody has to hear me, like,
right up close. I want to sing, but
I don't know.

REBECCA

Come on, you can sing-

Sam is frozen.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

*People I know, places I go, make me
feel tongue-tied
And I can see how, people look down
They're on the inside
Here's where the story ends
People I see, weary of me showing
my good side
And I can see how people look down
I'm on the outside
Here's where the story ends
Oh, here's where the story ends*

BETSY

You don't have to sing if you don't
want to.

SAM

I want to, but...

Sam rests his head back and listens, his eyes teary. Betsy
pats his arm.

REBECCA

*It's that little souvenir, of a
colorful year, which makes me smile
inside, So I cynically, cynically
say, The world is that way
Surprise, surprise, surprise,
surprise
Here's where the story ends
Ooh, here's where the story ends*

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - LATER

Sam wanders around the house looking at photos on the wall
followed by Rebecca and Dave.

SAM

(at a photo)
Are these all for real?

REBECCA

All of them.

SAM
You have a brother? I have a
brother! Two of 'em!

REBECCA
So weird, right?

DOWN THE HALL - Betsy is talking to somebody through the door
who seem to be locked IN the laundry room.

BETSY
(yelling through door)
Now, twist the little lock thing.

INT. REBECCA'S KITCHEN - LATER

They watch and wait for the toaster oven to warm up, but
there's nothing in it, it pops up, they jump, then press it
down again.

INT. REBECCA'S TV ROOM - LATER

Everybody is dancing to Madonna's *Vogue* on MTV. Dave is
staring at a remote control, struggling with all the buttons,
turns it all off by accident, everybody yells and they pile
onto him on the couch.

INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - MUSIC ROOM - LATER

Sam sits at the piano, playing a couple of chords. Rebecca
quietly enters the room with her guitar.

REBECCA
I found you.

SAM
I'm kind of stuck in here, can't
leave.

REBECCA
It's a great place to be stuck.

SAM
It's just very awesome in here.

Rebecca sits and starts up *Box of Rain* by The Grateful Dead.
Sam finds the chords to play along.

REBECCA
*Walk into splintered sunlight
Inch your way through dead dreams
to another land
Maybe you're tired and broken
Your tongue is twisted with words
half spoken
And thoughts unclear*

Sam joins in, his voice building up.

SAM/REBECCA
*What do you want me to do
 To do for you to see you through?
 A box of rain will ease the pain
 And love will see you through*

A few folks gather into the music room - at the door, sit on the floor, to listen in. Sam and Rebecca hit a couple of harmonies - they sound so good together.

DISSOLVE TO:

SAM (V.O.)
 (Movie Trailer Voice)
 "There I was. Fall of 1990-

EXT. GOLF COURSE - EARLY MORNING

The Pranksters all sit on the 9th hole of the local golf course.

SAM (CONT'D)
 -Saddam Hussein was driving. Casper Weinberger in shotgun. It was the best trip of my life. This Summer, see Sam's Trip."

Rebecca has her guitar and strums a whimsical chord. They all laugh.

DAVE
 Dude, you sound just like that movie trailer guy.

BETSY
 Do it again!

SAM
 (movie trailer voice)
 "There they were. Where were they? No where. When was it? They forgot. Will time run out? It all ready has. This Summer, see Sam's Trip...2."

Rebecca plays it with a tense strum. They all laugh. A GOLF BALL LANDS on the green and rolls in between their circle.

DAVE
 It's raining golf balls.

GOLFER (O.S.)
 GET OFF THE GREEN!

Their POV: A couple of golfers, waving their arms for them to skedaddle, perturbed.

SAM
Damn, we better go, they're madmen!
(to Betsy)
What time is it?

Betsy looks at her watch.

BETSY
6:45AM.

SAM
Shit, I better get home.

The group agrees, stumbles off the green.

DAVE
(to the golfers)
We mean you no harm!

EXT. ABUDAIR HOME - BASEMENT ENTRANCE - EARLY MORNING

Sam climbs into his basement room, which he can easily sneak into and out of.

INT. SAM'S BASEMENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He strips off his shirt and collapses onto the bed. He dozes off. SUDDENLY, the door opens, Omar enters, turns on the light.

OMAR
Up and at 'em, time for your track meet. We're all coming to watch.

SAM
Track meet?

OMAR
Cross Country meet. *Yalla, yalla.*
You should eat something before.

Sam sits up and tries to comprehend what on earth is happening as Omar walks out.

INT. ABUDAIR FAMILY CAR - MORNING

Sam sits in the backseat between Sitti and Mousa, hair wild, bags under his dilated eyes, the radio playing the Lone Ranger theme song.

OMAR
Doesn't this get you motivated!

Sam nods, gives a thumbs up.

MOUSA

Dad, change the station!

OMAR

Okay, how about this?

Dad switches to the pop station, Paula Abdul's *Straight Up Now Tell Me* plays.

MOUSA

Paula Abdul will get you pumped up
to run.

OMAR

Paula Abdul is Syrian! You know who
else is Arab? Cas-

MOUSA

Casey Kasem.

SAM

Casey Kasem.

MOUSA (CONT'D)

We know dad.

Sam watches the light refracting through the window, he's still seeing trailzzz.

EXT. CROSS COUNTRY RACE - MORNING

The team stretches, led by Coach Watkins. Sam leans back into a completely prone position, staring at the sky. Sam's POV: The morning clouds are moving a little quickly, a bird passes into view in slow motion, then Coach Watkins fills the frame.

COACH WATKINS

You ready?

SAM

Wa'allah, I've never been more
ready.

COACH WATKINS

What is wallah?

SAM

"I swear to god". If you believe in that kind of thing.

COACH WATKINS

Run focused, run hard, do your best.

SAM

As did the ancients.

EXT. CROSS COUNTRY STARTING LINE - MORNING

Scan down the line up of very serious runners - some setting wrist watches, others in intense focus, landing on Sam, half smiling, standing still.

SAM
(to some runners)
It's good running weather, not too cold or hot. Kinda medium.

They ignore him. Kaplan looks at him and just shakes his head. AN AIRHORN - marking the beginning of the race. WILLIAM TELL OVERTURE plays. Sam starts out, waves to his parents wildly, smiling. The family waves back, Sitti in wheelchair waves, throws up a Victory V sign with her fingers.

SAM (CONT'D)
Everyone's so serious!

COACH WATKINS
(clapping)
Let's go Seahawks!

Sam makes an "eek" face, stays with the group. He has a spring in his step. Sam's POV - lanes opening up in front of him, which he accelerates through. After a while, Sam is with the lead group.

SAM
(to lead runner)
Do you eat before you run?

The guy ignores him.

SAM (CONT'D)
I had orange juice.

The guy and another runner burst forward, but Sam keeps up.

SAM (CONT'D)
You guys, slow down, there's, like, 10 miles to go I think.

RUNNER
It's a 10K idiot.

SAM
Oh, right, kilometers. Shit, we better go faster then.

Sam takes off and the two runners fall behind. UP AHEAD - a volunteer points the runners to go right.

SAM (CONT'D)
(panting, thumbs up)
Thank you! Very helpful.

Sam keeps on, looking back to see the other runners trailing. He enters a woodsy area, a wide trail that keeps them on their way. Lone Ranger Theme fades to Sam humming Paula Abdul.

SAM (CONT'D)
(humming/singing)
*Straight up now tell me do you
really want to love me foreva, wa
wa wa, or are we just having fun...*

Sam is kind of lost in Paula Abdul and pretty soon he doesn't quite know where he is. He's looking around while still running. Ahead, he sees an older guy walking a dog.

SAM (CONT'D)
Am I still on the trail?

DOG WALKER MAN
The trail for what?

SAM
For the race.

DOG WALKER MAN
The race for what?

The dog barks at a distant cowbell CLANGING.

SAM
Thanks boy!

DOG WALKER MAN
It's a she.

Sam takes off. He runs through the woods, clomping over some felled trees, the cowbell still CLANGING, takes off running for it. He's clear of the woods, back onto the trail. Sees some runners up ahead. Takes off at full clip. At a bend in the trail, Sam sees the Pranksters - Rebecca, Dave, Betsy, and others - there to cheer him on! Dave, with a cigarette in his mouth, tries to run alongside, but Sam is cooking and can't stop - Dave falls as they all laugh and cheer.

Sam passes a group of guys, sees the two dudes he was with before just ahead. To the SOUND OF SAM'S HEARTBEAT, along with Paula Abdul, Sam has entered a zone. But it's not enough to get him past the other dudes, crossing the line at 3rd Place. He's exuberant and out of breath. Coach Watkins approaches quickly-

COACH WATKINS
Dude, nice final push.

SAM
(heaving)
I can't breathe.

COACH WATKINS

Walk it off. Here, have some water.
Breathe.

Sam chugs it, spilling it all over his running tank and then plunging it over his head. Sam follows her around until he catches his breath. He raises his hands over his head in his own victory.

EXT. CABLE ACCESS SETUP - LATER

Sam stands with Dot McKenna, reporting for local cable access television, being interviewed in front of CAMERAPERSON behind camera.

DOT MCKENNA

How does it feel to come in third?

SAM

Well, it's not as great as second.
Or first. But better than 4th. A
person I've never met before gave
me this medal-

DOT MCKENNA

The Superintendent?

SAM

Yes, he. Yes, him? I don't know how
to say that. He also shook my hand
and he didn't pronounce my name
right.

DOT MCKENNA

Where do you get the motivation to
run?

SAM

I do it for my grandma, she was a
farmer, so she didn't have much
time for running. It's a good way
to blow off steam. You know,
friendships don't always last...but
then maybe you make new friends.
Running lets you think about stuff
like that and kind of lose your
train of thought...

(staring into camera)

...wait, should I talk to you or
directly to the camera?

DOT MCKENNA

To me.

SAM

Dang. I keep looking right at the camera - the lens just sucks you right in doesn't it...

DOT MCKENNA

Well, congrats Sam.

(to camera)

And that wraps up our coverage of the Cross Country Fall Race.

(motioning to cut, then to Sam)

Are you okay?

SAM

Yeah, no, I'm good. I just need to eat.

DOT MCKENNA

I heard the band broke up.

SAM

Yeah. How are you?

DOT MCKENNA

Good. We should hang out sometime, Sam.

SAM

For sure. I just need to sleep and then I'm free after that.

Dot and the cameraperson share a bemused look as Sam walks off, Omar and Nancy approaching.

OMAR

Ready?

SAM

For breakfast, yes.

OMAR

Let's grab a quick bite, get changed, and then we'll head over.

SAM

Head over where?

NANCY

Haha, Sam, SAT's start in an hour.

Sam nods, pretends to remember. He follows his parents, but he's totally freaking out.

INT. EXAM ROOM - LATER

Sam sits in a large exam room. THE PROCTOR holds up a large clock timer.

PROCTOR
And begin.

Sam opens up the page on his SAT test. Looks at the first question, fills in a "C" on the scantron sheet with his #2 pencil. He looks around, tries to shake his head awake. He looks around, surrounded by focused test takers, lets out a big, cacophonous LAUGH.

PROCTOR (CONT'D)
Shhhhh!

He ducks his head and looks blankly at the page.

INT. SAM'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - LATER

TIME-LAPSE of Sam in bed, the sun charts a path over him and turns to night.

INT. SAM'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sam takes a shower, scrubbing away the last 36-48 hours.

INT. ABUDAIR TV ROOM - NIGHT

Sam walks through the kitchen/tv room, Mousa watching a movie.

MOUSA
We recorded you on public access.
You want to see?

SAM
For real? I made it on TV?

Mousa cues up the VHS tape, has to rewind a bit. The Cable Access Sports Show report on the track meet comes up.

SAM (V.O.)
(tv clip)
"I just like running and it's a
good way to blow off steam from
school-"

The rest of his wild statement is edited out.

SAM
That's it?

MOUSA

(shrugs)

That was funny how they misspelled
our last name and had "Third Place"
under it.

SAM

Monitor the local newspapers for
any additional news. Don't record
over that tape, future generations
must know about it.

INT. ABUDAIR KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam wanders around the kitchen, finds a plate left out for
him. Sitti sits at the table doing cross-stitch. Sam sits
across.

SAM

What's today?

Sitti looks up at him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sunday, right?

SITTI AISHE

Yalla, you should eat.

Sam eats some food, trying to collect what the hell happened.

INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - MUSIC ROOM - LATER

Sam sits at the piano. Rebecca on a stool, feet on the baby
grand piano in her house.

SAM

Serious question - did you also
take the SAT's?

REBECCA

No! Did you?

SAM

Yeah.

REBECCA

Oh shit. If you bombed, you can
take them again next month.

SAM

I'll prob try to take them without
drugs.

REBECCA

It's probably bad for us, but it's
fun. Doesn't make me feel as lost.

SAM
You feel lost?

REBECCA
Not always, but sometimes.

SAM
Do you ever, like, not tell people
what you are?

REBECCA
Like, because people get weird?

Sam nods.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
Sometimes, people are ignorant. I
think you're the only Palestinian
person at school.

SAM
I think so.

REBECCA
I don't care what people think. I
mean, I care, but I don't care.

SAM
I know what you mean.

Sam plays a few chords. Rebecca joins in on guitar. They
stumble through a few progressions.

SAM (CONT'D)
(singing)
I don't know where I'm going

REBECCA
I don't know where I am

SAM
*All I can do is keep running
as fast as I possibly can...*
(stops)
What if we switch to this after
that verse?

Sam changes chords, something interesting. After a bit, they
find an ending, find a final harmony.

REBECCA
We just wrote a song! Now what?

SAM
Write more?

REBECCA
And then what? We should play out
man!

SAM
I don't know...

Rebecca's PARENTS pop their heads in - ALAN and PRISCILLA,
late 40's.

ALAN
Hey, you must be Sam?

SAM
(shaking hands)
Nice to meet you.

ALAN
Rebecca has just been raving about
you.

PRISCILLA
She says you remind her of the kids
at her American Schools overseas.

SAM
I give off an international vibe.
Thanks for letting us play here, I
love your house.

PRISCILLA
We love you all filling the house
with music. Keep playing!

Alan and Priscilla leave them to it. Rebecca blushes.

REBECCA
They're the welcome mat kind of
Jews, you know?

SAM
They know I'm Palestinian?

REBECCA
Uh, yeah! Dude, they'd be mad if we
weren't friends.

Rebecca throws up a peace sign. Sam returns it.

SAM
What about LSD, are they pro-LSD?

REBECCA
(stage whisper)
Shutup!

They go back to playing a song, which OVERLAYS:

INT./EXT. SAFEWAY - MONTAGE

Sam loading groceries; wearing a hairnet and baking some rolls; Sam high-fiving the down syndrome guy, SHELBY, who's collecting carts; sitting out back at sunset and smoking a cigarette; removing his apron as he punches his card to end his shift; Gary handing Sam a 12-pack of beer as they crack one open in the back of the store.

O JR. (V.O.)
What you have to understand is that
Post-Colonial Arab countries are
still locked into these paradigms-

INT. ABUDAIR KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

CLOSE on the oven - a turkey is baking in a bag. Sweet potatoes; mashed potatoes; peas; black olives. At the table sits OMAR JUNIOR or "O", 21, the eldest of the family, wearing a corduroy blazer with a Fishbone t-shirt, earring. His girlfriend next to him, SARAH, round glasses and a beret.

SARAH
You know, the U.S. Government
actually propped up Saddam?

Omar and Nancy look at each other, duh.

NANCY
You don't say.

O JR.
We have prioritized white, European
conquest, inflicting upon brown
people the Colonial Megastructures
in the name of Western civilization-

SARAH
-and patriarchy and chauvinism.

SAM
I don't know, guys. Sounds to me
like you guys don't fully
appreciate Thanksgiving-

SARAH
You realize this war will kill
hundreds of thousands?

SITTI AISHE
(holding bowl of peas)
You want beas?

SAM
Do I want world peace?
(in Arabic)
Yes!

SITTI AISHE
 (to Mousa)
 You want beas?

MOUSA
 I told you, Grandma, I don't like
 beas.

SITTI AISHE
 (to Omar Sr.)
 You want beas?

OMAR
 (in Arabic)
*Mom, enough. Like, all the time
 with the peas?*

SITTI AISHE
 (in Arabic)
*You eat too much crap, American
 food.*

OMAR
 It's Thanksgiving, we're supposed
 to eat crappy American food.

SITTI AISHE
 (back in English)
 You need fresh vegetable.

OMAR
 If diabetes doesn't kill me, she
 will. Wa'Allah.

SITTI AISHE
Insha'Allah.

The family continues passing food around.

INT. SAM'S BASEMENT ROOM - LATER

Sam reads, has music on. Knock on the door reveals O Jr., who
 steps in and sits on the bed.

O JR.
 What have you been listening to?

SAM
 Everything, I guess.

O JR.
 Guns and Roses?

SAM
 Haha, yeah right. Why'd you listen
 to so much hair metal growing up?

O Jr. laughs.

SAM (CONT'D)
It was abusive, kind of ruined our family.

O JR.
I mean, that's just the way it was.
I started to switch to the good
shit after a while.

SAM
You had a Ratt poster in your room!

O JR.
Let's just say it was ironic.

SAM
Dude, that poster was not ironic.

O JR.
Have you heard about Nirvana and
Pearl Jam and all this grunge?

SAM
Starting to.

O JR.
(sits)
Don't do so many drugs.

SAM
What are you a cop?-

O JR.
-For real, let your brain do it's
thing, have fun later.

SAM
You should talk.

O JR.
I am, I'm telling you from my
experience. You gotta get more
serious about shit.

SAM
Like what?

O JR.
Like everything.

SAM
I am serious.

O JR.
You play off stuff with a lot of
jokes.

SAM
I like jokes.
(leaning close)
So, you think I should go more
preppy? Get an oxford shirt, go for
swim team?

O JR.
That's what I mean! Senior year can
be fun, but it goes fast and then
all of a sudden shit ends.

Sam takes it in.

O JR. (CONT'D)
Where you gonna go to college?

SAM
I don't know where I can get in.

O JR.
But where do you want to go?

SAM
Music school somewhere.

O JR.
What do mom and dad say?

SAM
They mentioned that I have a mind
for law and architecture.

O JR.
Ha, that's what they said to me.

SAM
What's there to get serious about?

O JR.
Computers. You write this code and
make programs and develop stuff.

SAM
Oh, really? I thought you were all
into politics?

O JR.
We're in the Information Age and
it's all going to be connected
anyway.

SAM

I don't know what that means.

O JR.

Technology is going to shift everything.

SAM

Seems like just last year we were taking typing classes and now they're saying we'll be able to surf the world wide web.

O JR.

Imagine buying a book online? Or a CD?

SAM

You have to unplug dad's work phone to connect the modem, so how are we gonna order stuff? I'll stick to mail order - it's only 1 penny for Freedom Rock-

O JR.

-and then 10.99 a month after that - remember when mom killed you for doing that?

SAM

Yeah, but now we have Freedom Rock One and Two! And 10 other CD's for free!

O JR.

Is Metzler still ruining everyone's lives?

SAM

Yeah.

O JR.

We were the last class to have a battle of the bands.

SAM

That was your senior year?!

O JR.

Some kid jumped off the stage and fucked up his knee. And another kid flipped his car that night, but he wasn't even there.

SAM
 Fuck, I forgot about that. That's
 why there's no more music at South
 Lakes?

O JR.
 Yeah. But also because she's
 uptight and hates good music.

Sam considers this.

SAM
 So why are you really here? Just to
 tell me to get my shit together?

O JR.
 What kind of scenario situation is
 there for, you know-

O Jr mimes weed smoking.

SAM
 (stage whispering)
 Marijuana?!
 (throws his one-hitter)
 It's fresh. Have at it.

O JR.
 Thanks bro.

O Jr stuffs the one-hitter in his pocket and exits.

INT. ABUDAIR PIANO ROOM - NIGHT

A solitary lamp lighting Sam finishing some math homework,
 puts it down. The piano room door is closed to the sound of
 his family and news, he returns to the keys, drowning it out.
 He works through a chord progression, trying different
 things, writing as he goes--

EXT. RESTON WALKING TRAILS - MORNING

--Sam running: on winding pathways; roads; golf courses.

INT. CLASS - DAY

Sam nods off, but shakes head to wake up, stay focused.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Sam runs the track, steady pace, but listless, Kaplan running
 up behind him and passing. MUSIC fades to FUGAZI.

EXT. 9:30 CLUB - NIGHT

HAND DRAWN POSTER/FLYER FOR FUGAZI that says "ALL AGES. \$5
 DOLLARS. NO FASCISTS".

Sam arrives at the infamous 9:30 CLUB in NorthWest DC to a line of punk rock folks. He goes through the Security Table and patting people down is Coach Watkins.

SAM

Coach?

COACH WATKINS

Yo Sam.

Sam gets patted down by RON, a big security guard.

SAM

How many jobs do you have?

COACH WATKINS

I'll let you in on a little secret - teacher's pay ain't all that, so I do this on the side. Upside is good music. Have fun in there.

Sam enters to FUGAZI'S "REPEATER"-

INT. 9:30 CLUB - NIGHT

Sam takes it all in, looking around for Gabe or Ian or anybody he knows. The music ramps up and a mosh pit gets going, the lights matching the intensity. Gabe grabs Sam by the shoulder.

GABE

(over music)

What do you think?

SAM

Cool!

GABE

We're over here.

Ian is on the outskirts of the mosh pit, nods to Sam. Sam nods back. They all get pulled into the mosh pit. Flailing arms. Kids moving around in crazy circles. Sam gets body-checked, Ian pushes some kid off of Sam. Sam tries to stay within the chaos, pushing back, moving with the pit. Ian revolving nearby. Sam gets shoved down. ON THE FLOOR - it's all feet stomping around him, two hands reach and grab him by the lapels - it's COACH WATKINS. The song ends-

MCKAYE (O.S.)

(lead singer of Fugazi)

Hey, knock off the fucking mosh pit, clowns. We came to listen to music.

Coach leads Sam out of the bodies.

COACH WATKINS
(to Ian)
It's a show, not a fist fight.

EXT. 9:30 CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Sam leans against a wall. Ian and Gabe and some others come out.

IAN
Holy shit, right?

SAM
I saw my life flash before my eyes.

GABE
The energy is insane.
(motioning to Ian)
He says it's the sound of DC.

SAM
I thought DC was Go-Go.

IAN
It's that too. And Bad Brains and
Chuck Brown. But this scene is,
it's just what's happening. Not 12-
bar blues.

SAM
I don't care about 12-bar blues, I
just like playing.

IAN
So do I.

Gabe looks at them both.

SAM
I just didn't want to find out the
band was breaking up midway through
a show.

IAN
That's fair. I mean, look, I was a
little drunk, but I said what I
said. I just want to do my own
thing.

Sam nods.

GABE
You guys, we can all still be
friends. Right?

Ian nods and heads back in.

GABE (CONT'D)

I tried.

Gabe follows Ian in. Sam looks at his watch and takes off running. SOUND OF FUGAZI DISSOLVES.

INT. DC METRO - LATER

Sam runs his card through the Metro turnstile, books it.

INT. DC METRO - ORANGE LINE - LATER

Sam looks through the Metro windows as it comes up from underground, following along 66 East-West, headlights scanning his face.

EXT. RESTON STREETS - DAY

TEXT ON SCREEN: 1991

The streets are slushy and cold, Winter is full blown. Sam is bundled up as he runs through the icy, snowy trails, trying to keep his traction, steam coming out of his mouth.

INT. AP HISTORY CLASS - DAY

Dot finishes up her Civics pitch-

DOT MCKENNA

In summary, staging a walk-out will raise awareness of the Exxon Valdez spill and the next step is protesting on the Capital Steps to make sure laws are passed that make companies clean up this mess, and they stop killing our environment.

MR. CAPAS

Okay, just please don't walk out of my class. But your generation holding the government and corporations accountable is a good message. Next, Sam?

Light applause as Dot sits down. Sam has his notebook and stands up, looks around, looks at Ian. Ian sketches in his notebook, kind of looks up.

SAM

I think we should have a concert, inviting all the local Reston bands to play.

MR. CAPAS

That's it?

SAM
Yeah.

MR. CAPAS
What's it for?

SAM
It's for us. It's to have something
look forward to.

MR. CAPAS
So it's a good idea, but what more
can you do?

Sam thinks.

SAM
I mean, honestly, sometimes there
is nothing to do, no where to go.
We have late night basketball
programs and a 24-hour diner that
lets us smoke in it, but that gets
old. So it's just a show. We'll do
it near graduation, so we can have
a good time. And we'll call it The
Jam.

The class claps loudly, they're all in favor. Mr. Capas nods
his head, likes this idea. The PERIOD BELL RINGS, class
disbands.

MR. CAPAS
(laughing, shaking his
head)
Let me know how I can help.

Sam has some wind in his sails as he walks out of class.

INT. ABUDAIR FAMILY OFFICE - NIGHT

Sam sits at the family typewriter typing out a college essay,
Omar behind him. Sam makes a mistake, uses white-out to fix
it. ON THE PAPER: *"I am many things, but underneath
everything is music and that's why I want to attend..."*

SAM (V.O.)
Ma'am, I just won't do it. It's not
allowed.

INT. SAFEWAY BAKERY - DAY

Sam, with hairnet, is across the counter from a white, OLDER
LADY.

OLDER LADY
What's illegal about having
Southern pride?

SAM

It's just a corporate thing,
probably, so I can't ice your cake
with the Confederate Flag. Also,
the Confederacy lost and they were
traitors.

OLDER LADY

Young man, you should show more
respect.

Sam slides the sheet cake towards her.

SAM

You're welcome to get food coloring
and ice it yourself.

OLDER LADY

You need to learn your history.

SAM

You're right, ma'am. I'll try to
remember the Lost Cause and all of
History's losers.

OLDER LADY

You better.

She takes the sheet cake grumpily and walks off.

INT. PRINCIPAL METZLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Principal Metzler reads from a form. Sam waits patiently
flanked by Rebecca and Dot.

PRINCIPAL METZLER

So, what is this exactly? Your
handwriting is terrible.

SAM

We thought it'd be cool for the
community to have a final concert.

PRINCIPAL METZLER

Where?

SAM

Well, here, in the auditorium.

PRINCIPAL METZLER

When?

SAM

Any of the weekends around
graduation.

PRINCIPAL METZLER
Sorry, no.

REBECCA
That's it? Just "no"?-

SAM
-it's a community event.

Metzler slides the paper back over.

PRINCIPAL METZLER
The last time we had a punk rocker
concert it got out of hand.

SAM
That won't happen this time-

PRINCIPAL METZLER
-there was a broken leg and a drunk
driving incident.

DOT MCKENNA
We verified that the drunk driving
incident was unrelated to the show-

SAM
-and the broken leg was actually a
torn ACL, everybody was mad because
he was the starting Varsity catcher-

PRINCIPAL METZLER
-the community won't go for it.

REBECCA
Aren't we the community?-

PRINCIPAL METZLER
Parents and the Administration are
also part of the community.

DOT MCKENNA
Principal Metzler, what do you say
to accusations that low performing
students are being moved out of our
school to make us look better?

PRINCIPAL METZLER
This is not the time or place. No
Comment.

SAM
We could even do the show outside
if we can supply power.

PRINCIPAL METZLER
 Now you want the school to supply
 power? It's not going to work.
 You'll have to find elsewhere to
 put on your show.

Sam, Rebecca, and Dot are stunned to silence.

INT. ABUDAIR PIANO ROOM - NIGHT

Sam finishes up scales, the sounds of dinner, family conversation audible through the french doors separating the piano room. Sam stops and does some homework - math homework - and then continues doing different scales - major, pentatonic, flats and sharps.

OMAR (O.S.)
 It's starting!

The volume of the television goes up. Sam exits the piano room -

INT. ABUDAIR TV ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam enters to find CNN full blast as Nancy and Mousa watch. Sitti Aishe says a silent prayer.

OMAR
 We're going into Kuwait.

SAM
 Holy shit.

OMAR
 (in Arabic)
Fuck the world!

NANCY
 Watch your language-

OMAR
 It's a war!

SAM
 So, what's going to happen?

OMAR
 I don't know.

ON THE TV - Archival footage from CNN/Major Networks of those first missile strikes; Schwarzkopf at his theater of war; Bernard Shaw at the CNN anchor desk; George H.W. Bush speaking from the Oval Office announcing the beginning of Operation Desert Storm.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Sam walks through the halls, walkman headphones on, music charting his way through to the next class. A kid walking past him motions toward Sam, so he pulls off his headphones.

SAM

Huh?

RACIST KID

I said, what's up Dune Coon?

SAM

What?

RACIST KID

You're Saddam's fuckin' camel jockey.

Sam is stunned, pushes the kid!

SAM

What the fuck did you say to me?!

A TEACHER and other kids step in between them.

TEACHER

Knock it off! Get to class.

The Racist Kid keeps walking, a couple of hanger's on laughing as they go. Sam is shaking, walks away.

INT. ABUDAIR HOME - DAY

Sam enters and puts his bag down.

SAM

(in Arabic)

Grandma! I'm home!

SITTI AISHE

(muffled)

Ismaeen! Help!

Sam runs upstairs.

INT. ABUDAIR UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam opens the bathroom door. Grandma has fallen, is on the floor.

SAM

Grandma, what happened?

SITTI AISHE

I fallen and I can't get up, like from the tv.

SAM
That's not funny, Sitti. Shit. We
have to call the ambulance. I'll be
right back.

AMBULANCE SIRENS...

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Sam, Mousa, Omar and Nancy push Sitti Aishe in a wheelchair
around the mundane and sterile nursing home as the NURSING
HOME MANAGER leads the tour.

NURSING HOME MANAGER
She'll have round-the-clock care, a
roommate. Every month we have
entertainment to perform. And
weekly games and fun.
(to Aishe)
Do you like magic?

SITTI AISHE
I like cowboy movie.
(to Omar in Arabic)
Ya Omar, don't leave me here.

OMAR
(in Arabic)
*You can't fall again, mom. Like, we
can't take care of you the way they
can.*

SITTI AISHE
Ismaeen! I need my television.

SAM
I'll make sure we get your TV-VCR
combo, so you can watch your
westerns. They have cable here,
sitti.

SITTI AISHE
I like cable.

They walk towards Aishe's new room.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES TRACK - DAY

Sam runs in a track meet, he's actually in the front pack
along with Kaplan.

SAM
(looking right)
C'mon Kaplan, let's push.

Sam pulls ahead, Kaplan drafting off of him. They put a dent
in the field of runners.

SAM (CONT'D)
Let's go, get out in front.

Kaplan whips around Sam, Sam giving him a little nudge. They finish 1-2. Kaplan gives Sam a big, victorious hug. Coach Watkins gives them all high fives.

COACH WATKINS
Told you not to quit!

INT. SAM'S BASEMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Sam studies/reads, listens to 99.1 WHFS out of Baltimore, playing out of his STEREO, a KNOCK at the door. Mousa enters, nods what's up, sidles in and sits at the end of the bed.

SAM
What up?

MOUSA
Nothing. What're you doing?

SAM
Reading Grapes of Wrath. More like Grapes of Boring. These farmer's crops went dry in the dustbowls and they had to move. It's about class and poverty and wonderful American life.

MOUSA
Did you ever get called Sand Nigger?

SAM
Whoa.
(puts book down)
Somebody call you that?

MOUSA
Yeah.

SAM
When?

MOUSA
Today. All this week.

SAM
Did you punch them in the fucking head?

MOUSA
No. I just walked away.

SAM
Me too.

MOUSA
What did they call you?

SAM
Dune Coon, Camel Jockey, A-Hab the
A-Rab is a classic. You tell your
teacher?

MOUSA
(scoffing)
And then what?

SAM
Yeah, usually they make you sit
down and talk and do all that
conflict resolution crap. Dad
usually loses his cool in those
situations, then the other kid
hates you even more.

Mousa lies down, thinking.

MOUSA
Remember that movie My Bodyguard?

SAM
Want me to come and push around
random kids so nobody messes with
you?

MOUSA
That'd be cool. You can't do that
though right?

SAM
What? Push around 8th graders? No.

MOUSA
No, I mean, come to school with me?

SAM
I don't think so.

MOUSA
Yeah, I guess you're right.

The radio plays *Fascination Street* (Extended Remix Version)
by The Cure.

CUT TO:

INT. MOUSA'S MIDDLE SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

Through the Middle School doors walks Mousa with Sam, side-by-side, with a little slow-motion swagger. Little kids look up at Sam, clear out of the way.

INT. MOUSA'S MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASS - MOMENTS LATER

Sam walks Mousa into his class, helps him with his jacket and backpack. Mousa nods toward the bully kid. BULLY KID has a bully vibe, Sam appears behind-

SAM
(whispering behind)
I'm watching you, punk. Say another word to my little brother and I swear to god we'll tell our terrorist cousins where you live. You understand?

The kid is frozen.

SAM (CONT'D)
I said, do you under-fucking-stand?

The kid nods vigorously.

MRS. OLYMPIA
Sam Abudair?

SAM
Hey Mrs. Olympia, I had you in 7th grade!

Sam rubs Mousa's head and walks out. Mrs. Olympia is confused. Mousa perks up in his seat, shoulders relaxed - nobody messes with the family.

SAM (V.O.)
We need help.

INT. FACULTY LOUNGE - DAY

Sam is seated across from Mr. Capas and Watkins.

SAM
Metzler isn't gonna let us do it here, so we need help putting this thing together.

COACH WATKINS
What do you want us to do?

SAM
Kind of, like, sponsor us?

COACH WATKINS
What's Diana's problem with it?

SAM
She said we can't do it in the amphitheater. And that it got too out of control last time.

MR. CAPAS

What good is a rock show if it
doesn't get a little out of
control?

SAM

That's what we're saying. So, what
should we do?

MR. CAPAS

Since it's a community event, maybe
there's an alternative. Go find
some places and we'll sponsor you.

SAM

Okay. Thank you. And thank you for
letting me see the inside of the
faculty lounge.

EXT. IAN'S BASEMENT BAND PRACTICE SPACE - DAY

Ian is on the back porch, smoking, sitting on a chair, as
Gabe stands behind shaving his head with clippers. Sam walks
from the nearby trail.

SAM

Hey.

GABE

Yo.

SAM

(peeking into the house)
Where's all your equipment?

IAN

We had to clear it out. I'm kind of
flunking everything right now
except Jazz Band, so my dad says no
more band practice here.

SAM

Fuck.

IAN

He literally said that if I make
any other mistakes he's forcing me
into the Navy.

SAM

You don't strike me as the Navy
type.

IAN

He was Navy, so was my grandpa.

SAM
 (Military voice)
 "But you got a bad attitude son."

Ian chuckles, drags from his cigarette.

IAN
 Your track coach told me about
 being Straight Edge.

SAM
 And?

IAN
 (stubs out cigarette)
 I'm trying.

SAM
 I'm gonna organize this show, so...
 do you guys want to play in it?

IAN
 It's like a Battle of the Bands?

SAM
 No, just a concert.

Ian and Gabe look at each other.

IAN
 Yeah, we're in.

SAM
 Cool.

INT. JOHNNY'S GARAGE BAND PRACTICE SPACE - DAY

JOHNNY, turtleneck, long Jeff Buckley hair, leads his band with his guitar, along with synth drummer, synth keyboards, and bass player. Sam and Rebecca are jamming along with them. They stop playing.

JOHNNY
 So, it's a battle of the bands?

SAM
 It's really just a concert.

REBECCA
 It's a chance for everyone to play.

JOHNNY
 We'll do the Battle.

EXT. SHADOW WOOD APARTMENT BACKYARD - DAY

Chuck finishes a hit off a blunt, passes it to Rebecca who takes a quick one, then to Sam, then around to some others playing Spades, a card game. Chuck throws down a card and wins a trick.

CHUCK
Becca, you suck at Spades.

REBECCA
Do I? Maybe you're a bad teacher.

CHUCK
Yeah, right. We'll play. For \$500.

SAM
Jesus, Chuck-

CHUCK
I'm just playing. I get it, it's for the "community". We're going to win this fuckin' battle of the bands-

SAM
It's not a battle of the bands-

Chuck throws down a card and wins another trick.

OMITTED

INT. NURSING HOME AISHE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sam sits with Sitti Aishe, turns up the television, as they watch the end of The Cowboys.

SITTI AISHE
John Wayne. He trains the boys.

SAM
Yep. Johnny Cowboy.

SITTI AISHE
Eeee, Johnny Cowboy.

The Cowboys ends and we hear: The opening to the tv show Taxi - *Angela (Theme from Taxi)* by Bob James. Sam's eyes go wide, he goes to the TV and cranks it.

SAM
You hear that? That's a Fender Rhodes! Holy shit.

Sam bobs his head along. ON THE TV: A yellow taxi making it's way across the Brooklyn Bridge, NYC skyline behind it as it cuts to commercial.

SAM (CONT'D)
Hot damn.

Sam goes to Sitti's phone and dials.

SAM (CONT'D)
Yo Rebecca - don't you also play
some flute?

MUSIC OVERLAY MONTAGE - *Angela (Theme from Taxi)*

INT. JAZZ BAND STUDIO OFFICE - DAY

Mr. James in his Jazz Band office listening, looking at the sheet music as Sam pleads his case, nodding to the beat.

INT. SAFEWAY BAKERY - DAY

Sam stocks the bakery shelves. Mary walks by with her mom and waves shyly. Sam waves back.

EXT. RESTON TRAILS - DAY

Sam runs through the trails as the Winter wanes, flashes of Spring are coming: buds/cherry blossoms on trees; sun poking through clouds; green grass and trees; little hints of renewal; Sam running at a good pace through it all.

INT. RESTON COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Sam, Rebecca, Mr. Capas and Coach Watkins tour the Reston Community Center and the large, open performance space. COMMUNITY CENTER MANAGER points to where the risers will go; flicks on stage lighting on the ceiling; removes the vinyl cover from an upright piano.

OVERLAY: the sound of Sam and Rebecca's playing.

INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

They wrap up practicing Angela.

REBECCA
You know Fleetwood Mac? Like, have
you really listened to Dreams?

INT. REBECCA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rebecca cues up the CD and the two listen intently.

SAM
A fucking Fender Rhodes!

REBECCA

That's what I'm saying. It's such a simple song, it's just two chords, but, damn, Stevie Nicks just nails it. Her and Christine McVie are such bosses.

They both quietly listen, two high school kids sitting on the floor, listening to music. They make eye contact, this is it, lean into a little kiss, pull away, not much of a spark.

SAM

Sorry if you're not into me that way.

REBECCA

I think it's me, Sam.

SAM

No, it's me, it's fine, wasn't right. Fuck. I fuck everything up-

Sam leaves the room.

INT. REBECCA'S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Sam has the door halfway open and Rebecca stops him.

REBECCA

Don't leave like that.

SAM

I'm just embarrassed is all.

REBECCA

It wasn't bad-

SAM

-I should've asked-

REBECCA

It's okay, it's okay.

Sam hangs his head.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Did you ever think, that, like...shit. Like, maybe I'm not that into guys.

SAM

Oh. Oh shit. My bad. It just felt like a moment.

REBECCA

The kissing moment, like in a movie.

SAM
Yeah.

REBECCA
It's okay. Don't leave.

INT. REBECCA'S ROOM - LATER

Sam and Rebecca lie down on her bed, *Dreams* continues.

REBECCA
Not trying to bum you out, but I
love you like a brother.

SAM
Yeah, yeah, yeah.

REBECCA
I don't tell many people about
being gay or whatever.

SAM
I'm slow to pick up on things
sometimes.

REBECCA
A lot of guys are.

Sam throws his arm under her head and brings her close and
they grab hands, holding them tight.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
I feel fine about it, but not
exactly sure the shitheads at
school would be. They all make us
feel like oddballs.

SAM
You're an oddball.

REBECCA
No, you're an oddball!

SAM
Oddballs. Maybe it'll get easier
when we're older.

REBECCA
Easier huh?

SAM
That's what they say.

REBECCA
Who's they.

SAM
Older oddballs.

REBECCA
We should play the Jam.

Sam sighs.

SAM
That's kind of scary.

REBECCA
Yep.

SAM
I guess we're a band.

REBECCA
Yep.

DREAMS fades to Gershwin's *SUMMERTIME*.

INT. SOUTH LAKES AMPHITHEATER - NIGHT

The Jazz band all wear tuxedo shirts and bowties, finishing Summertime, they finally got it pretty good. Mr. James steps over to the mic.

MR. JAMES
Senior Sam Abudair chose this one
and I think it's got a really good
feel.

Mr. James steps back to the lectern. Sam sits at the FENDER RHODES, he looks up to Rebecca who is standing at her music stand with flute, she nods.

SAM
(quietly)
2-3-4-

Sam and Rebecca begin the intro to *Angela - Theme from Taxi*. The rest of the band join after the first measure and they are LOCKED IN. Sam takes the first solo. Crowd claps. Ian takes the guitar solo. They finish out with the flute outro. Smiles all around: Sam, Ian, Gabe, Dennis, Rebecca, Mr. James. McConnell the trumpet player.

INT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Sam enters Rebecca's music room to find Gabe and Dennis setting up drums and amps.

SAM
What are you guys doing here?

REBECCA
If we're going to play in the Jam,
then we need a band.

GABE
I play drums, he plays bass.

Dennis plays a bass line.

SAM
Usually you guys would show up the
night of the concert and just know
exactly what to play.

GABE
Like in Back to the Future?

SAM
Yeah. But prob better to practice.

They start warming up with Sam on piano-

MR. CAPAS (V.O.)
Have a seat everyone.

INT. RESTON MAIN LIBRARY - NIGHT

Ian, Chuck, Johnny, Sam and Rebecca and their assorted band
members sit around a room in the library. Mr. Capas, Coach
Watkins, Stan from the Record Store, and OFFICER MCNULTY,
40's, cop uniform, sit among them. Dot McKenna stands at the
door, notebook in hand.

COACH WATKINS
Everybody, this is Officer McNulty
with the Reston Police. When you're
doing an event like this, it's good
to connect with law enforcement
before. The earlier they're
involved, the better.

MR. CAPAS
Officer McNulty-

OFFICER MCNULTY
-Let me cut you off right there.
First off, favorite band of all
time - Dire Straits. Second off -
Steely Dan is cool too. I play a
little guitar myself.

Stan "pshaws" under his breath, rolls his eyes.

STAN
What do you think of Prince?

OFFICER MCNULTY

I think he shreds. Purple Rain is one of my top 10 songs.

Stan and the bands all look at each other, like, okay McNulty's cool.

OFFICER MCNULTY (CONT'D)

We'll have a few officers in the parking lot, so no partying in cars or hanging around there. You either have to be walking into, inside the Community Center, or on your way safely home.

MR. CAPAS

Thanks Officer McNulty. You all know Stan who owns the record store who will do sound for the event. Stan?

STAN

You guys know me from Kemp Mill where you buy horrible records. I was assistant sound engineer for Farm Aid. You all ever heard of that? Didn't think so. I will tell you this - in no uncertain terms - this will be the best sounding show in the DC Metro Area.

OVERLAY: A song from one of the acts at the original Farm Aid show-

MONTAGE GETTING READY FOR THE SHOW:

- Posters getting designed and printed.
- Risers being built at the Community Center.
- Stage Lights On/Off.
- Posters placarded all over town.
- Tickets being sold by Dot and Rebecca at school.
- Metzler wringing her hands at the posters in the Hallway.
- P.A.'S and Amplifiers getting set up.
- Stan at the console working his magic with a bunch of high school kids as his crew.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

The full moon creates long shadows as two figures, wearing hoodies, sneak across the rear school parking lot.

EXT. OUTSIDE BAND DOOR - CONTINUOUS

The figures leap up the stairs, run to a door leading into the school. They look around - it's Ian and Gabe.

IAN

Screwdriver.

Gabe hands him a flathead screwdriver. Ian has a credit card and within moments is able to jury-rig the door open. We stay outside the door, waiting -- Ian and Gabe reappear rolling the FENDER RHODES out.

IAN (CONT'D)
Don't drop this shit.

GABE
Are you kidding me? This is like my baby.

The SOUND OF A TRASH CAN ON WHEELS as the Custodian comes around the corner and sees the boys. Ian and Gabe try to act natural.

CUSTODIAN
What're you boys doing?

GABE
Oh, we forgot something in the school and had to come back for it.

CUSTODIAN
You forgot a keyboard?

IAN
This is actually a Fender Rhodes electric piano, sir.

CUSTODIAN
Mr. James know about this?

IAN
Oh yeah, of course.

Custodian shakes their head, wheels the trash can away. Ian takes out his flashlight and turns it on 3 times, an engine revving can be heard far off, now getting closer, as the boys roll the Rhodes over to the main school driveway.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Dennis rolls up in his minivan, leaps out, pops open the back. Ian and Gabe quickly haul in the Rhodes, flash a thumbs up, the doors close on them, Dennis gets back in, drives away into the night, a successful heist.

OVERLAY: SOUND OF TAPE DECK CLOSING, somebody hitting play, Echo and the Bunnymen plays.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER PARKING LOT - EARLY EVENING

The parking lot fills up.

EXT. RESTON COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

A ticket booth is collecting cash and giving out tickets.

INT. RESTON COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

The bands are setting up drums, mic stands. Stan is doing sound checks. Kids are filing in, standing around, milling about.

INT. RESTON COMMUNITY CENTER - LATER

The crowd is at capacity. Kids, Parents, Dot and the Cable Access Camera Crew is there. Sam, Ian, the bands, Rebecca, friends, all of our cast of characters stand behind the stage. Coach Watkins steps up to the mic.

COACH WATKINS
What's up Reston?

Quiet response.

COACH WATKINS (CONT'D)
I said, what's up Reston?

The crowd amps up louder.

COACH WATKINS (CONT'D)
I want to hear you say "oh yeah".

CROWD
Oh yeah!

COACH WATKINS
Louder! Oh Yeah!

CROWD
(louder)
Oh yeah!

COACH WATKINS
That's what I'm talking about.
Tonight is all about you. About
this community. And about how the
DC area knows good music! Let's
hear it for the first band up!

The Crowd cheers. Johnny's New Wave band starts an upbeat, cool, dance-friendly song and all the kids start bouncing and dancing and getting it going. Coach Watkins and Mr. Capas look at each other, big thumbs up to each other and to Sam. Sam smiles. The Jam just got going. The New Wave band dissolves to...

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER STAGE - LATER

Ian strums a few fast, grungy chords to test the sound. Stan gives him the thumbs up.

IAN
(into mic)
We're Man on Fire.

Ian revs up a fast chord change and they rip into it.

IAN (CONT'D)
 (singing)
This is it
Don't quit
Come Together
Then Split
I try to listen
You try to listen
Don't quit
this is it

And then a vicious guitar strut, moving to double time. The kids are banging their heads.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER MAIN DOOR - CONTINUOUS

In walks Principal Metzler surveying the scene, slightly disgusted look on her face. Mr. Capas and Coach Watkins clock her, walk over to say hello. With music over, we see Metzler speaking animatedly with Capas shrugging. Dot McKenna is also nearby, watching.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Ian starts a new song, even faster, more rocking.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Sam paces outside in the Spring air, Ian's band muffled. Rebecca comes out and puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

REBECCA
 Nervous?

SAM
 Yeah, I guess so.

REBECCA
 Me too. What's more nerve wracking -
 playing or running a race?

SAM
 I used to be sick before races
 until this year.

REBECCA
 What changed?

SAM
 Coach Watkins made it fun. Once I
 quit caring about winning or losing
 then I just did my best.

REBECCA
 Let's just do our best.

SAM
I really do care about this thing
though.

REBECCA
Are you going to throw up?

SAM
No.

REBECCA
Hey, we did it. We put on a show.
YOU put on a show. And we're all
gonna be up there together.

SAM
I've never sung in front of this
many people.

REBECCA
Let everyone hear your voice.

SAM
Okay.

They bring it in for a big hug.

REBECCA
Wanna warm up?

Rebecca sings a note and Sam matches it and they go up a note
on the scale together, then harmonize.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Ian and the band reach a final, rocking crescendo. The crowd
goes wild.

IAN
Thank you guys. A couple more
bands.

Ian pops off the stage and he and Sam exchange a bro shake.

SAM
You guys sounded amazing.

IAN
You're going to love it up there.
Hey, I heard your keyboard got
whacked.

SAM
Yeah, I'm just gonna play the
community center piano.

IAN
Don't you have some songs that
would sound good with a real
electric piano?

Gabe and Dennis roll the Fender Rhodes up to the feet of Sam.

SAM
What the...?

IAN
You complained about your keyboard,
so we got you the Rhodes.

SAM
What do you mean you "got" the
Rhodes?

IAN
The school lent it to us.

He and Rebecca raise their eyebrows, this is going to change
their sound. Ian helps Sam and the guys bring it on stage
where Stan is re-cabling things.

STAN
What year Rhodes is that? '78?
Probably the best year. I knew you
all didn't totally suck.

Sam and Rebecca set up their stuff. Sam sits in front of the
Rhodes, looks out. He sees: his parents and brothers; Coach
Watkins and Capas; the Merry Pranksters; Ian. Stan gives them
the thumbs up. Rebecca looks at Sam expectantly. Sam takes a
deep breath and begins a little intro jam-

SAM
(into mic)
Hey everybody! Thank you all for
coming out. I just quickly want to
thank Coach Watkins and Mr. Capas -
let's give them a round of
applause.

The crowd gives a resounding applause. The teachers wave and
smile.

SAM (CONT'D)
I guess we're called Oddball.

The Community Center is super full, people bobbing their
heads to Sam's upbeat, warm-up chords. ON SAM.

SAM (CONT'D)
This is an original. It's called
Run.

Sam starts in on a set of chords - jazzy, progressive, folksy, jammy, original. Rebecca strums in on guitar, Gabe starts a methodical beat.

SAM (CONT'D)

(singing)

*I don't know where I come from/I
don't know who I am/put one foot in
front of the other and run/ as fast
as I can.*

And then Dennis drops in on bass and it gels. The quiver in Sam's voice fades away, he's singing confidently, louder, clearer.

SAM (CONT'D)

*We don't know where we're going/
We don't know where we've been/
They started a race so we'll run/as
fast as we can/*

The band switches into a new section. Omar and Nancy watch from the back, mom sheds a tear.

SAM (CONT'D)

*We run through everything/while all
the seasons change/heads down and
suffering/don't want to grow up
some days/we all grow up someday/we
run through everything.*

O Jr. grabs some random kid.

O JR.

That's my fucking brother up there!

The song reaches a crescendo, a great groove. Heads in the crowd bobbing. The Merry Pranksters holding down a big circle of love on the dance floor.

SAM

*Now we know where we're running/now
we know where we've been/down that
road we're gonna run/as fast as we
can/*

(Rebecca and band joining)

*as fast as you can/as fast as I
can/as fast as we can/*

(Sam solo)

as fast as I can.

The song ends. The crowd erupts. Rebecca smiles and nods at Sam. Sam takes a big, deep breath. Ian appears behind, plugs in his guitar.

SAM (CONT'D)
 (looking back)
 Another surprise?

REBECCA
 (to Sam)
 We need some electric guitar in
 this song.
 (into mic)
 This is a cover. It's called
 Dreams.

They launch into *Dreams* by Fleetwood Mac, Sam doing the two-chord progression, Ian playing that Buckingham guitar lead.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
*Now here you go again, you say you
 want your freedom/well, who am I to
 keep you down?/It's only right that
 you should play the way you feel
 it/but listen carefully to the
 sound of loneliness.*

The entire band singing backup during the pre-chorus.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
*Oh, thunder only happens when it's
 raining/players only love you when
 they're playing/say women they will
 come and they will go/when the rain
 washes you clean, you'll know.*

They sound really fucking good for a high school band. Stan at the sound booth is in shock - Fleetwood Mac hits him HARD, he and Mr. Capas both have tears in their eyes, avert their eyes. Omar and Nancy dance old-folks style.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Into the community center backstage walks Chuck with his full band carrying equipment, conga drums, two girls in matching outfits, it's a scene.

COACH WATKINS
 How many people in this band?

CHUCK
 Y'all want to entertain these
 people or what?

COACH WATKINS
 I don't know if the stage is big
 enough.

CHUCK
 We don't even need the stage.
 (to his band)
 Let's go.

Stan is sizing up what he's in for. Dreams Fades...

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - LATER

Now it feels really packed, because Chuck brought in EVERYBODY from town, the community center is jumping. Chuck has his mic as he stands behind a set of nice-ass conga drums.

CHUCK
 If you from Reston, let me hear you
 say, Heyo!

CROWD
 Heyo!

CHUCK
 If you ready to get down to the
 funky drummer, let me hear you say
 "Funky Drummer"!

CROWD
 Funky Drummer!

CHUCK
 Now, on the count of three, I want
 to hear this Go-Go beat drop. And
 when it drops, I want to see you
 mothafuckas DANCE! And-a-one-two-
 three drop it-

- With an insane fill, the Drummer DROPS-IN the DC GO-GO Beat along with keyboard, drums, guitar, conga drums all coming in. The crowd starts dancing all at once. Chuck's dancer girls are out front.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
*This is how we do it!/This is how
 it's done/This is how we do it/now
 let's all have some fun-*

Chuck is the MC for the universe.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
*This is how we do it/from Africa to
 France/Get ya booty on the floor to
 see that booty dance/and a 1-2-3-
 drop it!*

ANGLE ON SAM and Ian bouncing their heads, stage right. A TAP TAP comes on Sam's shoulder, it's Coach Watkins motioning "Come with me."

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER MAIN DOOR

Sam, Rebecca and Ian follow Coach down a hallway just outside the main doors to find Mr. Capas, Officer McNulty, Mr. James, talking to Principal Metzler. The doors close, but not before Dot McKenna slides through, as it goes uncomfortably quiet out here.

MR. CAPAS

I don't understand what the problem is, Diana.

PRINCIPAL METZLER

A serious crime has been committed.

COACH WATKINS

Maybe not a crime-

PRINCIPAL METZLER

This is breaking and entering, criminal mischief, grand theft larceny-

OFFICER MCNULTY

-Not completely sure about those charges, but-

PRINCIPAL METZLER

(to Sam and Ian)

-Where did you get that electronic piano you were playing Mr. Abudair?

SAM

Electric Piano-

PRINCIPAL METZLER

I know what it is! Because Mr. James says he didn't give anybody permission to borrow it from the Jazz Band studio.

Mr. James looks apologetic, but what can he do? IAN'S FATHER steps up.

IAN'S DAD

Not only did I tell you that you were to take a break from music, if I catch wind you took this thing, I swear to god-

MR. CAPAS

Everybody calm down-

PRINCIPAL METZLER

I asked the Custodian and he said,
and I quote, "I didn't see
nothing." Nonetheless, I am
prepared to press full charges.
Right now. On the spot. Now, how
did you get it?

Ian has his arms crossed, about to come clean, but Sam steps
up-

SAM

(cutting Ian off)

First of all, I took it. I should
have told Mr. James, but if anybody
said no, it would've ruined our
band's set. We...I, the royal I,
went in after school and borrowed
it. I was going to bring it back on
Monday.

PRINCIPAL METZLER

You're saying that nobody helped
you? Like your bandmates?

SAM

It was just me.

Metzler eyes Ian, this was not her plan. Ian is shocked, but
knows Sam is taking the fall, so he doesn't have to face more
trouble.

PRINCIPAL METZLER

Arrest him.

McNulty sighs.

OFFICER MCNULTY

Did you really break into the
school when the door was locked?

SAM

I guess?

OFFICER MCNULTY

Alright, let's go.

PRINCIPAL METZLER

Aren't you going to cuff him?

OFFICER MCNULTY

I don't think that's necessary.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

McNulty has Sam by the arm, leading him out to a cop car. Rebecca, the rest of the band, others, have caught wind, are in the parking lot watching Sam.

INT. COP CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sam looks out. Ian looks at Sam, feels horrible. McNulty pulls out and they drive off. Go-Go Music from inside the Community Center fades...

INT. RESTON POLICE STATION DESK - LATER

Omar stands at the Police Station front desk, the sound of a stamp and paperwork being stapled, gets handed over. Sam is led out of a little holding cell.

INT. ABUDAIR FAMILY CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Nancy sits shotgun. Sam in back. Omar puts the keys in the ignition, but doesn't turn it over.

SAM

So, how much money did we make?

OMAR

(in Arabic)

Don't screw around.

(back in English)

Always with the jokes. This is serious you know that right?

SAM

I know.

OMAR

Your grandparents didn't immigrate to this country so that you could steal things.

SAM

I know-

NANCY

Your great-grandparents were pioneers who walked the plains of America-

OMAR

-on foot! Toiling and starving and eating each other. Like that game? The computer game?

NANCY

What computer game?

SAM
Oregon Trail?

OMAR
Yeah!

SAM
Jesus, dad-

OMAR
-So they did all that so you could steal keyboards?

SAM
Dad-

OMAR
-Is going to jail what we have in store for your future?-

SAM
-Dad! Mom! I didn't steal the keyboard.

OMAR
What?

SAM
Ian and the guys did it. If Ian got caught, his asshole dad kicks him out of his house or sends him to military school or the Navy.

OMAR
Maybe he needs the Navy...

SAM
I just tried to help out my friend. Because he helped me.

OMAR
And what makes you think I wouldn't kick you out of the house and make you enlist?

SAM
Because you're both critical of the military industrial complex?

OMAR
Yeah, but that doesn't mean you and your brothers couldn't be analysts at the CIA or work at the State Department or something.

Sam sighs.

OMAR (CONT'D)

It's like a misdemeanor, so it doesn't go on your record. You'll have community service though.

NANCY

It was amazing to hear your voice tonight. I didn't know you could sing like that. You're an artist, Sam, since you were little.

SAM

I always thought it would make our ancestors turn over in their graves if we became artists?

OMAR

Nah. They came here so we could follow our dreams.

SAM

It was the scariest thing I've ever done.

OMAR

But you went for it! Don't waste that talent you have.

SAM

Thanks.

Omar starts up the car and they all take off.

INT. ABUDAIR DINING ROOM TABLE - DAY

Sam opens up the Washington City Paper to a page with the headline: "Excellence and the Realness in the DC Suburbs" with Dot McKenna's byline. The first paragraph says something about Metzler's grade fixing, graduating flunking athletes, and Sam's concert.

OVERLAY: POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

INT. SOUTH LAKES GYMNASIUM - DAY

Mary Hill stands at the lectern, she's the valedictorian and class speaker.

MARY

-And that's why, even in an uncertain future, we must always keep running.

There's vigorous applause. Angle on Sam as he stands and encourages others for a standing ovation, which a few oblige.

Chuck steps up to the mic along with Sam and Rebecca to sing Boyz II Men's *It's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday* a capella. Angle on Coach Watkins; Capas; Ian; members of all the bands; Rebecca; Dot McKenna. Diplomas are passed. Caps are thrown.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DAY

PRINCIPAL METZLER stands outside shaking hands and giving well wishes. Omar and Nancy approach.

PRINCIPAL METZLER
Oh, the infamous Kader family. I hear we have another of your brood headed our way.

NANCY
Brood? How many children do you think I have?

PRINCIPAL METZLER
Well, I certainly love the diversity you bring to our school.

OMAR
We read an article the other day in the City Paper about a few principals in Northern Virginia moving low performing students to other schools, expelling problem students, changing grades around. Pretty interesting.

PRINCIPAL METZLER
I had nothing to do with that. I don't know what you're suggesting, but-

NANCY
-there weren't any suggestions, it was pretty factual. The article named you.

PRINCIPAL METZLER
This couldn't be further from the truth.

OMAR
Like the one about students stealing a keyboard?

PRINCIPAL METZLER
It was either your son or one of his friends.

OMAR

You can't steal something that belongs to them. Our taxes pay for those instruments in these schools. They are not the personal property of the administration.

NANCY

But at least you get to live with being the kind of person that has kids arrested on the night of the concert they organized. That's an interesting story.

PRINCIPAL METZLER

Mr. and Mrs. Abudair, I'm finishing up graduation, I don't have time to talk right now. I wish you both and your family and your son luck.

NANCY

Sam doesn't need luck, he has talent and integrity and honesty. Unlike you.

PRINCIPAL METZLER storms off.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE - LATER

Sam lines up with Mousa, O Jr., Sitti Aishe, and his parents for a graduation cap-and-gown photo, becomes a STILL SHOT.

OVERLAY: *It Ain't Over 'til It's Over* by Lenny Kravitz.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIRFAX COUNTY PARKWAY MEDIAN STRIP - DAY

Power lines; sweltering green grass and trees; the sound of locusts. The cars rush by in the humid, hot part of the day, early Summer in Northern Virginia as Sam sweats profusely, wearing an orange-yellow hi-vis vest, holding a grabber and trash bag, picking up trash alongside Fairfax County Parkway.

INT. SAFEWAY - DAY

Safeway montage: Sam rolls in some carts; stares the clock and calendar on the wall; the clock's second hand is the slow work of the devil.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Sam wears the same hi-vis vest weed-whacking overgrown parts of the field, finishes a row and switches off the weed whacker.

IAN (O.S.)
(in the distance)
You missed a spot!

Sam looks up to see a bunch of cars - his old band, Merry Pranksters, Rebecca, and Mary, over in the parking lot waving at him. Sam shakes hands with the Community Service crew and peels off his vest.

EXT. SOUTH LAKES PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Sam approaches everybody.

SAM
Does everybody have their tickets?

IAN
Where we're going, we don't need tickets.

SAM
I need to take a shower.

IAN
There's no time, man!

They all jump in their cars.

EXT. LAKE FAIRFAX WALKING TRAILS - LATER

The merry band of friends walks in the dense, Virginia woods. Sam walks with Mary.

SAM
I feel like we're headed off to go see a dead body.

MARY
(laughing)
How was community service?

SAM
Fine, I could see a career in it. What've you been up to?

MARY
Lifeguarding. Bored. Ready for school to start.

SAM
Where did you decide to go?

MARY
Boston.

SAM
We should stay in touch.

MARY
I'd like that.

SAM
I'm glad you're hanging out with us
riff-raff.

MARY
I'm just ready to break out of this
box.

SAM
You always seemed like you could
see the road laid out ahead.

MARY
You always seemed like that to me.

SAM
But I never really felt that way.

MARY
Me neither.

Dot McKenna catches up to them, camera over her neck.

SAM
Damn, Dot, you did Metzler good
with that City Paper story.

DOT MCKENNA
Hate to call it revenge, but...

SAM
Crazy to think we actually had one
of those horrible principals like
from a movie.

DOT MCKENNA
Yeah, like, she wasn't evil, but
she was unlikeable. Maybe she'll
actually try to not be a horrible
person now.

SAM
I like your sense of fairness, Dot.

DOT MCKENNA
I like that you like my sense of
fairness, Sam.

They look at each other, finally, there are sparks. Rebecca
just ahead, stops, holds them up.

REBECCA
You hear that?

They all shush up and they can hear - crowds, loud music, energy in the distance. Rebecca takes off running to catch up with everybody, Sam and Mary and Dot follow. The sounds swell-

EXT. LAKE FAIRFAX CONCERT VENUE - DAY

The Pranksters criss-cross through the crowds of people away from the main entrance.

SAM
(over the din)
Where are we going?

IAN
(also yelling)
Follow me!

EXT. LAKE FAIRFAX CONCERT VENUE SIDE/VIP ENTRANCE - DAY

The crew arrives and a security guard stops them.

RON SECURITY GUARD
Whoa whoa whoa, this is the VIP
Entrance.

IAN
We're VIP.

RON SECURITY GUARD
You don't look VIP.

Coach Watkins shows up behind wearing "Event Staff" gear and pats Ronnie-Security on the shoulder.

COACH WATKINS
These guys are cool.

Sam is shocked.

COACH WATKINS (CONT'D)
Though, I'm not sure we should let
in a hardened criminal.

SAM
I stopped stealing musical
instruments, I swear.

Coach brings him in for a big hug.

SAM (CONT'D)
You kept me going all year. How can
I ever repay you?

COACH WATKINS
Come back and visit and we'll go on
a run together.
(breaking the hug)
(MORE)

COACH WATKINS (CONT'D)
 Don't say I never did nothin' for
 ya.

She opens the gate for the crew of friends and they enter the grounds of Lollapalooza to the sound of Living Colour's *Cult of Personality* -

EXT. LOLLAPALOOZA - SUNSET

The sweltering heat can be seen! Stage lights light up the faces of concert goers. (*will execute this budget friendly.) Ian wraps his arm around Sam's neck, they smile and laugh. *Stop* by Jane's Addiction starts and the crew rushes into the Pit. Sam, Rebecca, Mary, Betsy, Dave, Kaplan all thrashing around, holding arms, laughing, dancing, in dervish spins. Dot takes a picture:

FREEZE FRAME ON SAM - A PORTRAIT OF A KID IN 1991.

STILLS MONTAGE: Ian; Rebecca; Gabe and Dennis; the Merry Pranksters moshing; Real photos from the first Lollapalooza at Lake Fairfax, Virginia in '91 - crowdsourced and from documentarians and journalists.

MUSIC SHIFTS TO SAM'S SONG as an instrumental.

CREDIT MONTAGE: the community center; basement band practice space; jazz band studio; empty football fields; Sam's house; walking trails; tunnels; woods; lakes; power lines; highway underpasses; Reston, Virginia.; D.C.; Black.

THE END.