

CHAPTERS OF A LIFE

By

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THE BOOK: CHAPTERS OF A LIFE

OPENING CREDITS.

Title: Chapters Of A Life.

NARRATOR (V.O)

The year 1926 was as good a time as any to be born in America. Lots of great music. Dance. Baseball. No wars at the time. Everyone felt they were in the same boat. Street cars. The dawn of automobiles. Ragtime.

FADE IN:

INT. MCCANN'S SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

A band is thrilling the audience with a sweet rendition. JACK CONNER is the lead singer of the band. His amazing voice keeps the listening audience enchanted.

In the corner, a beautiful brunette leads a few paying in the rudimentary steps of the latest dance. She is LUCY. Jack stares in her direction intermittently.

SUPERIMPOSE: 1926.

The music stops. Lucy catches her breath. The customers can't wait for another thrill.

JACK

This song is dedicated to the beautiful brunette who is helping all of our customers interpret the beat through their feet.

Jack holds up a glass of beer and toasts to Lucy. She, in turn, performs a most artistic pirouette, followed by a curtsy.

Jack bubbles with a smile.

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

The stadium is packed with the supporters of the two playing teams.

SUPERIMPOSE: ST. LOUIS BROWNS VS YANKEES.

Jack and Lucy are enjoying each other's company as they cheer alongside the Browns supporters as BABE RUTH steps up against a Brown's thrower.

LUCY

Babe Ruth, he is having a much better season compared to last season. Two hundred and ninety batting, twenty-five home runs, and sixty-six batted in.

Jack is amazed.

JACK

How do you know this stuff so well?

LUCY

A family of boys...
(winks)
...and tomboys.

Lucy chucks her fingers into her Cracker Jack box. Her face wrinkles in confusion. She takes a bright blue plastic ring out of the box, turning to Jack in surprise.

Jack impulsively places the ring on her finger. The fans standing behind them cheer for them this time.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A quiet bar with customers sitting at different tables.

Jack and Lucy sit at a table. Each sports a wedding ring on their fourth finger. The look on their faces reveals the tension between them, with Lucy looking more affected.

LUCY

You want to go on the road three weeks out of every month.

Jack stares at his wife with some sympathy.

JACK

It's twice what I make now...If we get so lucky as to have a baby, this could provide a financial cushion. Also, it could offer you the opportunity to raise our kid, God willing, with some opportunities.

The couple goes silent for a moment.

Lucy sips on her Coke, while Jack gulps his beer. They remain silent, Lucy looks everywhere else apart from Jack's face.

Lucy returns her gaze to Jack.

LUCY
It's okay, you can go.

Jack beams a smile with appreciation.

LUCY (CONT'D)
And make sure you become "world famous."

JACK
I will do my best. Thank you.

EXT. JACK / LUCY'S HOUSE - DUSK

A taxi pulls to a stop at the street side. Jack alights from the backseat, pays the drivers, then walks up the front door.

He rings the doorbell. Soon, Lucy opens the door. Elated to see her husband, she jumps into his arms. They kiss passionately, moving back into the house.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Lucy enter the room holding each other in an embrace and kissing. They both fall onto the bed.

INT. BATH ROOM - DAY

Lucy stands before a mirror staring at her reflection. She is clad in her bra and panties.

SUPERIMPOSE: Three Months Later.

She runs her palm over her belly with a smile on her face.

INT. SHOWBOAT / LOBBY - DAY

Jack and his band thrill customers sitting at tables enjoying their food and drinks.

JACK
Rock a bye, your baby, with a dixie melody. When you croon, croon a tune, from the heart of Dixie.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL / HALLWAY

Lucy sits in a wheelchair with her face wrinkled in pain. She is due for delivery. Two nurses push her down the hallway toward the labor room.

JACK (V.O)

*Just hang my cradle, mammy mine,
right on that masoned, dixie line.
And swing it from Virginia to
Tennessee, with all the love that's
in ya.*

The nurses push Lucy into the labor room at the end of the hallway.

INT. SHOWBOAT / LOBBY

The customers continue to enjoy the sweet melody by Jack and the band.

JACK

*Weep no more, my lady, sing that
song again, for me. Sing on black
Joe, just as though, you have me on
your knees.*

*A million baby kisses, I'll
deliver, if you will only play that
Swanee river. Rock a bye your rock
a bye baby, with a dixie melody.*

INT. HOSPITAL / LABOR ROOM

Lucy is on the theatre bed laboring with tears, pains, and ecstasy. She labors to deliver her baby. A doctor and a few nurses surround her.

JACK (V.O)

*Oh! Weep no more, my lady, sing
that song again, for me. Sing on
black Joe, just as though, you have
me on your knees.*

The doctor welcomes a baby boy for Lucy. She smiles with tears in her eyes as she cradles her baby.

JACK (V.O) (CONT'D)

*A million baby kisses, I'll
deliver, if you will only play that
Swanee river...*

INT. SHOWBOAT / LOBBY

Jack is lost in the music, singing with his eyes closed. The watching audience is in awe.

JACK

*Rock a bye...your rock a bye baby,
with a dixie melody.*

The thrilled audience applauds.

INT. JACK / LUCY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Lucy sits on the bed with her baby in her arm. Jack walks in. He is shocked and amazed at the sight of Lucy and the baby.

Lucy places the baby in his father's arms. Jack holds him in an embrace.

EXT. SOULARD MARKET - DAY

Jack stands beside an apple-filled cart singing "*Brother, Can You Spare a Dime*". His face looks as dull as the several faces walking to and fro the lane.

SUPERIMPOSE: 1929. The Great Depression.

As Jack ends his song, a smattering of applause ensues from traders and passersby around him.

A MAN walks up to the apple cart. He holds out a nickel to Jack.

MAN

Please, can I get one apple for a
nickel?

Jack beams a faint smile.

JACK

Pick one.

The man hands Jack the nickel, picks up one apple, and leaves.

INT. JACK / LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack, Lucy, and little CHAZ CONNER sit at the dining table eating a soup of apple and cheese.

They eat in silence, with a dull look on their faces.

EXT. SOULARD MARKET - DAY

The atmosphere is frosty. Jack sits by his apple cart looking sad. He has a wool scarf around his neck.

More apple sellers stand or sit beside their carts.

A MAN walks up to the apple cart looking hungry and weak. He nods to Jack and then picks up an apple.

Jack sighs sadly as the man walks away. He tries to sing, but notices some hoarseness.

An OLD LADY approaches Jack's cart, buys some apples, and walks away.

INT. JACK / LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack and Lucy are sitting at the dining table. They are finishing up with a meal of warmed-over apples.

Lucy notices the look of depression on Jack's face.

LUCY

What's the matter, honey? Tough day?

JACK

They're all tough.

LUCY

Well, we can only pray that things will get better.

Lucy forces an optimistic smile.

JACK

I doubt it.

LUCY

Of course, it will. Someday soon, the music clubs will come back, and you'll be able to regain your rightful role as singer extraordinaire.

Jack doesn't answer. He just looks down at his plate, and tears slowly roll down his cheeks.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The DOCTOR sits at his desk studying some test results. Jack sits on the opposite side of the desk, staring at the doctor with curiosity.

The doctor finally looks up at Jack.

JACK

So?

DOCTOR

It's a vocal-chord dysfunction.
Something like asthma.

JACK

Can you cure it?

DOCTOR

Not really. It's chronic. But it's
not fatal.

The doctor smiles at Jack.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Unless you're a big-time singer,
you should be able to enjoy a long
life.

Jack is speechless. Sadness clouds his face.

INT. JACK / LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack sits at the dining table writing on a piece of paper.

JACK (V.O)

I think both of you will be better
off with a fresh start. Lucy, you
are the most wonderful woman any
man could ever meet. And, Charles,
you have a world of opportunity in
front of you. I do hope both of you
have Blue Skies in your future...

EXT. JACK / LUCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It is the dead of the night. Jack walks out of the front door and quietly closes the door.

JACK (V.O)

As for me, I had my chance at life.
I just choose not to live the rest
of my life silently selling apples.
Love, Jack.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A ragtag group of nine-year-old boys is standing on the sideline. They all listen attentively as JAMES "DUFFY" DUMAS issue out orders to them.

CHAZ CONNER is one of the boys.

SUPERIMPOSE: 1935.

COACH DUMAS

Three things to remember about baseball. You can't daydream out there. Otherwise, you're going to get bonked on the head. Two: You gotta hustle on every play. If you start doggin' it, then you're gonna be 'boom-bang-bing' out of the lineup. And three: It's just a damn game. I don't want any crybabies on this team. OK? Hey, you come to every practice. You work hard. We all have some fun. And we win more than we lose ... hopefully.

Coach Dumas looks at "The Lions" with a rare smile.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)

(gesturing to the boys)

OK. This half, out in the field.
This half, in a line to see if you
can hit a ball.

The boys follow the command of the coach: Half spread out in the field, while the other half lines up.

Dumas is pitching for the team. While Chaz is the hitter. He misses an eighteen-inch at the plate.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)
 Keep your eye on that pea. Try to
 hurt that baseball and drive it.

After two more whiffs by Chaz.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)
 Try to follow the ball as it comes
 out of my hand and watch it hit
 that bat. And as soon as you hit
 it, run your ass off to first base.

Chaz connects to the next throw and lofts a soft looper back
 to the mound. Coach Dumas nabs it with his bare hand and
 smiles at Chaz.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)
 No need to run on that one. But
 that's the idea. See the ball hit
 the bat. And take a good swing.

The contact on Chaz's next swing is exhilarating. The bat
 feels explosively charged in his hands, and the sound
 booming in his ears. The ball scurries between the third
 baseman and the shortstop and rolls into the outfield.

Chaz rounds first base in full spirit before the ball
 reaches the left fielder.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)
 (smiling)
 Stay there. Good eye. Good hustle.

Chaz grins then tips his hat and grabs two handfuls of dirt.
 He rubs it into his white T-shirt.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)
 Next!

One by one, the eight remaining boys run through the same
 batting fundamentals. None is better than Chaz.

TIME CUT:

ONE HOUR LATER.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)
 Everyone sit on the grass.

The Lions team sits on the grass. Dumas paces to and fro a
 few times, gathering his thought.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)

Good first outing. But ... and it is a huge but ... we got lotta work to do. We're gonna practice every Wednesday at six and every Saturday at 10:00 a.m. right here in the ball field behind the church. If you wanna get better and compete, youse guys gotta practice between those team practices. Grab some buddies after school. NEWMAN, BRENNAN, KERSTING, ALDER ... it looks like you boys can throw the ball. But you gotta work at it. Aim for the catcher's glove and land the ball in that glove. It doesn't have to be that fast. Control counts. Besides, most kids can't hit that well ... as our batting practice proved. Only three of you got hits: Conner, WELTON, and BENDER. And what's the secret to hitting the ball? Anyone?

Chaz raises his hand.

CHAZ

See the ball hit the bat.

COACH DUMAS

Right. Forget going for home runs. Leave that for Joe Medwick of the Gashouse Gang. For youse guys, just connect. And to connect, you gotta swing. I don't have much time for kids who strike out with the bat on their shoulders. Swing the damn bat.

Dumas looks at the boys in silence for a moment.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)

Practice on your own. Next team practice? Wednesday at six. Get practice with your friends before that ... and stay out of trouble.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Coach Dumas is racing the boys around the bases to see who has speed.

- Coach Dumas bats grounders to the infielders and soft fly balls to the outfielders. He schools each kid on how to hit.

TIME CUT:

The team is seated on the field with Coach Dumas standing before them.

COACH DUMAS

Jimmy Kersting and Scott Alder, you both are the pitchers for our first game this Saturday afternoon.

Kersting and Alder beam a bright smile.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)

Chaz Conner, Tommy Newman, Dickie Brennan ... keep hitting. I can see the results of your practices. Nice even swings. We're gonna need your bats if we home to score some runs.

Coach Dumas reaches into a box and pulls out the official hats and T-shirts. The boys glow with bright smiles.

CHAZ

Wow.

ALDER

Red.

BOY 1

Just like the Gashouse Gang.

CHAZ

Can't wait to wear it.

Coach Dumas hands each team member a uniform. The boys elatedly wear the uniforms immediately.

TEAMMATES

(racing around the bases)

Lions! Lions! Lions!

Coach Dumas watches with a smiling face.

COACH DUMAS

That's the enthusiasm I want to see from each of you this Saturday. The game's at three, here ... against the Robins. Get here at two. Meanwhile, keep practicing. Practice. Practice. Practice. I want all of youse guys to play. Everyone gets in the game and plays ... and tries hard. Remember this: Don't give up. Give it 110 percent. That's more important than a win. You hear me?

CHAZ

Go Lions!

TEAMMATES

Go Lions! Go Lions! Go Lions!

FADE TO BLACK.

ON THEIR FIRST OFFICIAL LEGION BALL GAME, THE LIONS DEFEATED THE ROBINS 12-4. THEY WENT ON TO EACH GAME FOR THE NEXT SIX WEEKS.

INT. LUCY'S HOUSE / BATHROOM - DAY

Lucy is washing Chaz's dirty uniform. Chaz stands by the door watching her.

LUCY

I don't even understand why I wash this dirty T-shirt. You just get it dingy, dirty, and grubby before the first inning.

CHAZ

It's part of our secret to success. It's our good-luck charm, just like the Gashouse Gang.

Lucy smiles and shakes her head.

LUCY

Yeah, well the Cardinals better watch their backs. They haven't put the pennant away yet, and the Cubs are gaining on them. But I do believe in good luck. So I'm gonna wash it clean and watch you get it dirty when you lead your team to

(MORE)

LUCY (cont'd)
 victory, my boy. By the way, you're
 a good player. I liked that triple.
 Could you hear me from the stands
 screaming 'That's my son.' And I'll
 be there to root you guys to
 victory this Saturday.

EXT. SUBLETTE FIELD - DAY

The turf of the "Ambrose Bears". The home team supporters are seated filling one of the two stands in the stadium.

The Ambrose Bears are waiting on the pitch. They are uniformed in green and orange...hats, baseball shirts, baseball pants, and socks.

Two buses pull to a stop outside the field. One carry the Lions team and Coach Dumas. The other bus is carrying their supporters of which Lucy is one of them.

One by one, Chaz and his teammates alight from their bus. Each dressed in T-shirts and blue jeans. They are daunted by their opponents.

Coach Dumas gathers his team at one side of the field. While Lucy and the rest of the supporters proceed to the stands for the opposing team.

COACH DUMAS

Listen to me. Youse guys are as good as those guys. Better in my book. Hey, we came from kids who couldn't throw or hit and turned into winners.

Coach Dumas turns back and steals a glance at the rival team as they try a practice of 6-4-3 double play. There is a squint of admiration in his eyes. He turns back to his team.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)

They think they deserve it cause they have fancy uniforms. We don't. We're like the Gashouse Gang. We play hard. We get dirty. We play out every ground ball. We never give up.

The Lions look all inspired. Coach Dumas turns his gaze to Chaz.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)

Chaz, how do we play? How hard do we slide? How dirty do we get? How close are we to Gashouse Gang?

Chaz reaches into the dirt and rubs it on his clean T-shirt. Coach Dumas performs the same ritual on his T-shirt with his eyes on the team and then smiles at them.

One by one, the Lions' teammates do the same thing.

LIONS TEAMMATES

Go Lions. Go Lions. Go Lions.

TIME CUT:

Adler leads off with a two-hard double between the centerfielder and left fielder.

SUPERIMPOSE: FIFTH INNING.

Ambrose Bears' player, MARGHERIO, walks the next two Lions hitters.

With the bases loaded, Chaz rubs more dirt on his T-shirt and swings the bat in the batter's box.

Lucy and the rest of the Lions supporters start to cheer:

LIONS SUPPORTERS

Conner! Conner! Conner!

Chaz hits a hard ground ball in the hole on the first pitch. The ball rolls off the shortstopper's glove. In a panic, the short-stopper throws it over to the second baseman's glove, scoring three runners.

Lions lead 5-0 at the end of the fifth inning.

The Lions move to their coach on the sideline.

COACH DUMAS

We're doing well. Don't get cocky.

Sixth inning:

The Lions yield three errors and allow three runs, with Kersting throwing three balls in a row.

Coach Dumas substitutes Kersting for Brennan.

Brennan strikes out the next three batters, who swing at fast but out-of-the-box balls.

Seventh inning:

Scores: Ambrose Bears 2-5 Lions.

The fans on both stands are on pins and needles.

With one squib hit and two walks, the Lions have bases loaded and two outs.

Chaz rubs his hand in the dirt and wipes it off on his already dirty T-shirt as he steps up to the plate. The visiting fans are buzzing subtly.

LUCY

You're the man, Chaz.

The first three pitches are outside by inches but are clearly called balls. The home team supporters murmur in disapproval.

Chaz digs into the batter's box for the third pitch. The catcher looks him in the eyes.

CATCHER

Great game, so far. Especially when you're winning 5-2.

CHAZ

(distracted)

Yeah.

Chaz watches a screecher zoom by on the inside of the plate. The next pitch nicks the outside edge of the plate with speed.

The catcher fires the ball back to the pitcher and clenches his fist in encouragement. He then turns to Chaz.

CATCHER

Hey, it ain't over till it's over.

Chaz is puzzled by the sentence. He watches the next pitch speed toward him. He sees the ball seem to accelerate as it conceivably catches the outside borderline of the plate.

As the ball poofs into the catcher's mitt.

UMPIRE

Steerike!

Coach Dumas lowers his head in disappointment.

In the visitor's stand, Lucy's face is filled with pity for her son. Chaz looks at her, shakes his head, and takes position in left field.

Adler walks the first two opposition batters. He strikes out the next hitter, but the next batter dribbles the ball between the pitcher and the third baseman, loading the bases.

The Bears catcher rubs his hand in the dirt, and then firms grip on the bat. He takes two practice swings before entering the batters' box.

After two outside pitches, the next one comes right down the middle of the plate, and the Bears batter takes full swing. He connects with a wild crack...

...Chaz watches the ball fly over his head. He immediately backtracks and witnesses the ball soar at least eight feet above the left-field wall. As he sinks in defeat, he looks back at the infield and sees the catcher leaping between first and second base.

The home team supporters are jubilant, cheering:

HOME SUPPORTERS
Yo-gee. Yo-gee. Yo-gee.

The entire home team waits at home plate to celebrate with the catcher as he skips toward the plate.

Slowly and dejectedly, the Lions trudge back toward their first base bench.

COACH DUMAS
Sit down, boys.

The Lions sit as the coach instructed.

COACH DUMAS (CONT'D)
Boys, we played a helluva game. And we just lost by a hair. No one here should hang their head low. I don't want to see any tears. Youse guys hold your heads up high. I'm proud of your progress and effort. now line up and congratulate the Bears.

The Bears are already lined up between the pitcher's mound and first base.

one by one, the Lions shake the hands of the rival team. Chaz meets the home run hero.

CHAZ
 Why did people keep screaming
 "Yo-gee"?

CATCHER
 Cause that's my name. Yogi Berra.

Chaz shakes Yogi's hand.

CHAZ
 I am Chaz Conner. Well, it was a
 great hit.

YOGI
 And a great game...

EXT. FOREST PARK - DAY

It is a carnival. There is a carousel, a Ferris wheel, a tilt-a-whirl, dodgem cars, some animal rides, food stalls, and midway games. Many carnival goers engage in the different games, while many others watch and socialize.

Chaz (15) is standing at the basketball hoops booth. He is about to sink the first of three balls. A few people wait in line for their turn.

On both sides of the booth are prizes. Plush tigers, eagles, cardinals, teddy bears, and more.

Chaz sinks the first two, then rolls the ball in his hand like a pro and takes one step back from the counter. He gazes to his left and finds his focus on a young beauty...

...AMY ARCHER (14) stands twenty yards away from Chaz, watching him as their eyes meet. Given the afternoon sun, it is as if she is backlit for a Hollywood movie.

Chaz is distracted staring at Amy.

CHAZ
 (mutters)
 Wow.

The business owner barks in a gruff tone:

BUSINESS OWNER
 C'mon, son. Let's get this game
 going. You got people waiting in
 line behind you.

Chaz takes one more look at the prizes on the sides of the booth. He then takes another look at the basketball rim and aims. As the ball softly rolls off his finger, it approaches the target, bounces on the rim to the left, then to the right, and then arcs toward the ground.

BUSINESS OWNER (CONT'D)

Next.

Chaz clenches his fists in utter disappointment and trudges away from the booth. He steals an embarrassed glance at Amy...

...Amy still has her eyes on him. She shrugs her shoulders, sending a "no big deal" message.

CHAZ
(mumbles)

Wow.

Chaz slowly walks over to her.

AMY
Sorry you missed that last shot.

CHAZ
I think there may have been something wrong with that last basketball. It may have been less filled with air than my first two. Or more filled with air.

AMY
My name is Amy.

CHAZ
Chaz.

AMY
I think that last shot didn't just go as planned.

CHAZ
You're right.

Chaz smiles sheepishly.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
You came alone?

AMY
No. I came with my elder brother.

Amy's elder brother, RALPH (16), hastily walks up to her holding a bright fluffy teddy bear.

RALPH

Hey, sis, look what I won ya by shooting baskets at that booth.

Amy accepts the gift, carefully not trying to embarrass Chaz.

AMY

It's really cute.

RALPH

Come on, sis, let's go.

Ralph gives Chaz a "We are out of here" gesture. He and Amy begin to walk away.

CHAZ

Hey, were you able to use the same basketball for all three shots?

RALPH

The same basketball? What difference would it make for an all-star like me?
(chuckles)
Swish. Swish. Swish.

Chaz watches the siblings walk across the grassy field toward a yellow bus. Amy looks back at him and flashes a sly smile.

CHAZ

Wow.

INT. STEAK 'N SHAKE - DAY

It is scanty. Chaz and Amy sit at a table sharing an orange freeze.

SUPERIMPOSE: Three days later.

The duo can't seem to find their words. They enjoy each other's company in silence, blushing most of the time.

INT. MR. ADLER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Chaz sits on the sofa looking nervous. He is neatly dressed in pants and a shirt. Amy sits beside him dazzling in a gown. Sitting across from them are...

... MR. and MRS. ADLER sits on the sofa. They both look at Chaz with a straight faces.

MR. ADLER

So, Chaz, you'd return Amy to the house at exactly 10:30 p.m.

CHAZ

Yes, Mr. Adler, I promise.

Ralph walks in. He is surprised to see Chaz.

RALPH

Hey, I know you from the carnival. By the basketball booths. That's when I sunk three in a row. Swish. Swish. Swish.

Chaz turns his gaze to Mr. and Mrs. Adler, who still has their eyes fixed on him.

CHAZ

And that's how we met.

MR. ADLER

Are you a good basketball player?

CHAZ

Not really, but I am a good person.

Silently admiring the response, Mr. Adler winks at Chaz.

MR. ADLER

Bring Amy back at 10:45. Latest.

CHAZ

You bet.

Chaz and Amy leave the house.

INT. TIVOLI THEATRE - NIGHT

The theatre is filled with couples. Chaz and Amy are one of them. They sit next to each other seeing a romantic movie. They both share a buttered popcorn and some cokes.

Chaz fakes a yawning stretch and ends up with an arm around Amy's shoulder. Amy smiles, reaches up with her left hand, and pulls his arm closer around her neck.

CHAZ (V.O)

Wow.

Chaz and Amy happily watch the rest of the movie.

EXT. MR. ADLER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chaz and Amy come into view. They stop in front of the steps to the porch. They stare at each other in silence for a moment.

Amy glances at her wristwatch. It's "10:15".

AMY

Would you care to sit on the porch swing until 10:45?

CHAZ

I would love to.

Chaz and Amy move over to the porch swing and sit. Amy reaches for his arm and puts it around her neck. Chaz beams a smile.

After a few seconds, Chaz puts his fingers on Amy's chin and brings it up to his face. He kisses her softly.

Suddenly, a fist crushes Chaz in the left jaw ... it's Ralph. He stands over Chaz, fuming.

RALPH

What the hell do you think you are doing with my little sister?

Chaz springs forward and body-slams Ralph into the picture window. The window crashes into Mr. Adler's living, and so does Ralph.

Amy starts to cry.

Mr. Adler rushes out to the porch. He sees Chaz lying on the shattered glass in the living room.

MR. ADLER

Ralph, stay in the living room. I will come to get you in a few minutes.

Mr. Adler looks at Amy.

MR. ADLER (CONT'D)
 Amy, I think it's time to say
 goodnight to your friend, Chaz.

Amy weakly waves to Chaz and walks up the stairs.

Mr. Adler walks Chaz down the sidewalk.

MR. ADLER (CONT'D)
 Young man, I don't think you are
 necessarily a bad guy. I know my
 son has a short fuse. I understand
 that. But I think it's going to be
 best if you don't come again. I
 don't want the two of you to get
 into fisticuffs again. And I don't
 want to replace a picture window
 every week. Understand?

CHAZ
 I do. I wish it could have turned
 out differently.

MR. ADLER
 Probably just not the right time,
 or right age. But I do wish you
 well.

CHAZ
 Thank you, sir.

Chaz walks down the sidewalk. He touches his bruised left
 jaw to assess the damage.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Chaz walks through the front door. He is dazed to see Lucy
 standing in the center of the room with a sad look on her
 face and teary eyes.

SUPERIMPOSE: 1940.

LUCY
 Have you heard?

CHAZ
 Heard what? Mom, what's the matter?
 Did someone get hurt?

Lucy hugs Chaz.

LUCY
 (sobbing)
 Thousands got hurt, and thousands
 more will get hurt in years to
 come. Oh my God, what is the world
 coming to?

Chaz can't make sense of what his mother is saying.

CHAZ
 Mom, sit down. Tell me what's
 wrong.

Lucy walks over to her radio console and dials from left to
 right until she can hear Franklin Delano Roosevelt's speech.

Lucy walks back to Chaz.

LUCY
 Listen.

FDR (V.O)
 Yesterday, December 7, 1941 ... a
 date which will live in infamy ...
 the United States of America was
 suddenly attacked by the naval and
 air forces of the Empire of Japan.
 As commander in chief of the army
 and navy, I have directed that all
 measures be taken in our defense.
 Hostilities exist. There is no
 blinking at the fact that our
 people, our territory, and our
 interests are in grave danger. I
 ask that Congress declare that
 since the unprovoked and dastardly
 attack ... a state of war has
 existed between the United States
 and the Japanese Empire.

Chaz is surprised by the news. Lucy slowly walks over to the
 radio console and turns it off.

LUCY
 (sighs)
 It's awful. We're in for some tough
 years.

CHAZ
 Well, we got each other, and that's
 a good thing. No one can beat us.
 No one.

Lucy walks back to him and gives him a long, strong hug.

LUCY
You're a good boy. I don't want
anything bad to ever happen to you.

CHAZ
It won't.

Lucy just shakes her head and looks at the floor.

LUCY
You're all I got. You gotta promise
me to do well in high school. Work
hard. I don't want you to end up in
some trench holding a gun ... and
dodging bullets.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy and Chaz are sitting on the couch, relaxing after
dinner.

Chaz studies his mother's face for a moment.

CHAZ
Mom.

LUCY
Yeah.

CHAZ
Scot Samuel and Billy Welton have
enlisted in the army. They both
fudged their age to be able to
enlist.

Lucy buries her head in her arms, silently trembling.

LUCY
(firmly)
Not until you are eighteen. Not a
day before.

Chaz raises his hand in rebuttal.

CHAZ
Mom, you raised me to be a
responsible guy. I just want to do
my part.

LUCY
Not until you are eighteen.

Chaz looks at her with love and smiles.

CHAZ

Okay.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Chaz and Lucy sit at the dining table eating lunch. Chaz suddenly stops eating, looking up at his mother.

CHAZ

It is a strange time to be at home.

Lucy looks at him in silence.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I would love to defend the wonderful way of life you have created for me. And I think you raised me to know that this is right.

Lucy remains silent. Only her face shows signs of fear.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I will be eighteen next week.

INT. BUS - DAY - TRAVELING

Passengers fill up the box seats. Lucy and Chaz are sitting alongside the passengers.

Chaz looks cheerful and curious. Lucy is extremely worried.

EXT. SELECTIVE SERVICE OFFICE - DAY

Lucy paces back and forth on the street corner. A few parents wait around for their children.

Soong, Chaz bounds out of the office waving a white paper above his head. He sees his mother across the street and races over to her and hugs her.

CHAZ

I'm in.

LUCY

When?

CHAZ

Four weeks from now, I get to report to Fort Leonard Wood for basic training.

Lucy pauses for a moment.

LUCY
I am proud of you ... as always.

INT. KEMOLL'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Diners sit at different tables. Lucy and Chaz sit at a table over chicken parmesan and veal piccata.

Lucy stops eating, staring at Chaz. The look on her face shows she is missing him already.

LUCY
You know I'm really proud of your exploits in grade school.

Chaz smiles in appreciation.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Your fascination with the Gashouse Gang was enjoyable, too. And then love that vacation we took to the Lark of the Ozarks.

Chaz beams an even brighter smile.

CHAZ
You've had faith and always been unselfish. I still remember that celebration of my First Communion. You invited almost the whole neighborhood over for a homemade buffet and took every Kodak picture you could in your camera.

Lucy smiles broadly.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
Remember the day we went to the Chain of Rocks amusement park? How I held on to you for dear life on the death-defying roller coaster.

Lucy laughs.

LUCY
Unlike now, you were so scared.

Lucy looks around the room and holds her finger in the air.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Waiter.

The waiter in sight walks to the table.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Two glasses of wine. Pinot Grigio.

The waiter leaves to get the order.

CHAZ

(whispering)

Mom, I'm only eighteen. I don't know if they will serve me.

LUCY

If they don't, I will create a ruckus like they have never seen at Kemoll's. If you're gonna go over to Europe and save America, you may as well have any kind of wine or liquor you want.

TIME CUT:

Lucy and Chaz are now enjoying their glasses of wine.

Lucy hands Chaz a gift in a small rectangular box. Chaz opens the it. It is a beautiful blue Waterman fountain pen.

CHAZ

(surprised)

This is really expensive, Mom.

LUCY

I think you like to write. I want you to send me a message every week. Tell me what's going on. Tell me you are safe. Tell me what you fear and what you hope. Most of all, I just want to hear your words.

Chaz rotates the pen in his right hand. He walks around the table and kisses Lucy on the cheek.

CHAZ

I promise.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lucy sits on the couch. She is reading through a letter.

CHAZ (V.O)

Dear Mom, well, here I am in Fort Leonard Wood, along with hundreds of other recruits who are anxious to save the free world from the bad guys.

CUT TO:

INT. FORT LEONARD WOOD / RECRUIT QUARTERS - MORNING

Several young boys are in the hall. Some are making their beds, while others are getting dressed. Chaz is one of the formal. He makes his bed with precision.

All the boys have their heads shaved, including Chaz.

CHAZ (V.O)

I have to make my own bed every morning perfectly. No wrinkles are allowed. My boots must be shined so you can see your face in the toe. I have turned into a responsible young man, but that's the way I was raised.

EXT. FORT LEONARD WOOD - DAY

Chaz and some recruits march along a path. They are followed behind by SERGEANT BRANSTEAD.

CHAZ (V.O)

Most of the day, we march, march, march ... and told what lowly creatures we are by Sergeant Branstead, who uses more profanity than any human being I have ever met.

Sergeant Branstead sees a boy marching out of line.

SGT. BRANSTEAD

(inaudibly)
"Get in line, you grunt recruits."

CHAZ (V.O)

"Get in line, you grunt recruits."

The out-of-line recruit quickly falls back in line.

CHAZ (V.O)

"Chin up, chest out...otherwise you are a bunch of...bags." I understand and accept that it's all part of the plan to make us a cohesive unit.

BACK TO:

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lucy now has a smile on her face as she continues to read the letter.

CHAZ (V.O)

You would probably not recognize me. My head is shaved and shiny like a cue ball, but it's the same for everybody. The maneuvers that we practice have already started to sculpt my body. I am sure I have lost a few flabby pounds and put on a few muscles ... no thanks to the food, which is "mess-hall" horrid. I miss the veal piccata at Kemoll's; but more than that, I miss you.

INT. FORT LEONARD WOOD / RECRUIT QUARTERS - NIGHT

It's the dead of the night. The recruits are sleeping, except Chaz, who is writing a letter with his Waterman pen.

CHAZ (V.O)

However, I know I am in the right place. I am proud to be here and feel a sense of honor and duty I could only imagine weeks ago. Please don't worry about me. As promised, I will write you often with the magnificent fountain pen you gave me. Hopefully, my penmanship will get better with each letter. Meanwhile, keep smiling. When I close my eyes, I can see your face, and it makes me happy. Your loving son, Chaz.

EXT. US MILITARY BASE - DAY

A mix of old and first-time soldiers stand listening to their commander as he talks in mute.

SUPERIMPOSE: ITALY.

CHAZ (V.O)

Dear Mom, I have landed in Italy and am feeling quite cosmopolitan. What a beautiful, but war-torn country. I have been assigned to a troop that is a fair mix of seasoned regulars and a few first-timers like myself. They treat me well and make me feel like a valuable member of the team.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

In a war-torn neighborhood. Soldiers are cautiously marching through. Each soldier holds a gun. Chaz is one of them.

CHAZ (V.O)

By day, we try to gain a few miles in our march northward. We rarely run into gunfire, perhaps because we are very careful to clear up to thirty miles for any possible enemies. So far, I have not heard a single shot. However, rest assured, I am always prepared to hear one and defend myself.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy sits at the dining table. She is relaxing after dinner, reading Chaz's letter.

CHAZ (V.O)

In St. Louis, I hope you are hearing that we are "winning" the war. I feel that, but I don't know whether it is just our spirit-building cheer. I'll be honest. Most of my fellow soldiers think it's going our way. All of them feel we are fighting the just, righteous cause. Consequently, we all feel like heroes. It's a good feeling ... even when we get

(MORE)

CHAZ (V.O) (cont'd)
lonely. All my fellow soldiers do.
All of them have family back
home...whether it's Maryland,
Georgia, Arkansas, Colorado, or
Missouri.

EXT. MILITARY CAMP - NIGHT

Chaz and the rest of the soldiers are resting around a
campfire. A young soldier discusses inaudibly with Chaz.

CHAZ (V.O)
As I write this letter, my friend
Marc Obie asked me to say hi to you
from him. I asked him to say hi to
his mother from me. That's the
power of being part of a company of
more than one man. But there is
only one mom. And I want you to
know that you are the best one I
could ever dream of having. Be
brave. Keep the faith. Your loving
son, Chaz.

EXT. STREETS OF ROME - DAY

Chaz and the rest of the soldiers are marching through the
war-torn streets. They are all cautious with their guns in
place to shoot any impending enemy.

CHAZ (V.O)
Dear Mom, over the past week, we
liberated Rome. Our air
intelligence led us to believe that
the enemy was in retreat.
Fortunately, that was true. We
marched across the Italian fields
and occasionally encountered some
abandoned trenches, but no weaponry
or gunfire. Even so, we are very
careful.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It is buzzing. Chaz and some troop members are enjoying
bowls of spaghetti. Other troop members dance with beautiful
young girls. The rest of the troop members drink and
socialize with the locals.

CHAZ (V.O)

By the time we reached Rome, we all felt safe. What a stunning city. And as beautiful as the buildings are, the women are even more beautiful. Sono Bella! We all enjoyed bowls of spaghetti tonight in the city. I must say that the townspeople, despite being under Mossolini's thumb for decades, have treated us as conquering heroes.

INT. LUCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucy sits in her bed intently reading a letter from Chaz. The look on her face shows how much she misses her son.

CHAZ (V.O)

We all danced in the streets for hours. Fun! I'm sure that tomorrow, it will be back to grind ... but tonight, everyone in the troop feels very happy. I hope you are enjoying the summer. I think of you every day and miss you.

Lucy holds the letter in an embrace.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)

Your loving son, Chaz.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Chaz and the soldiers are camping for the night. Most of the soldier are asleep. A few soldiers gaze into the campfire. Chaz is busy writing a letter.

CHAZ (V.O)

Dear Mom, I shot a man today. I tell you this not to brag or imply in any way that this may somehow be a pivotal turning point in the war. After the casualties of Normandy, my incident is just a blip in the grand scheme of things. However, I do tell you this for two reasons: I have such a good, honest relationship with you, and am not afraid to share my secrets.

Chaz stares blankly at the lowly burning fire.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)

Also, I don't want you to worry about me (and I know you worry every day). If nothing else, this proves that your son is an able-bodied soldier who is more than capable of defending himself. Let me explain the circumstances of the event...

EXT. WOODS - DAY

In a vast field. Several abandoned trenches can be seen. No sign of soldiers.

Chaz and the troop are cautiously marching through the field. Their guns are in place to shoot any enemy soldier that shows up. Their eyes scan the perimeter for any sign of life.

CHAZ (V.O)

Having secured Rome (and thoroughly enjoyed our celebration in town), our troops were replenished to hold on to that city and push northward into more hostile territory. Somewhere up there, Mussolini still survives. I was part of this mission, along with dozens of other soldiers. Every hundred yards or so, we would run into another abandoned trench, but approach cautiously ... just to make sure there were no enemies in the bushes.

Chaz and the troop successfully cross one trench, and head toward another.

The LIEUTENANT gestures to some soldiers to head left and right. The soldiers do as instructed.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)

After about a mile of this maneuver, we again approached another clearing. We sent a few soldiers to the left and right just to make sure we were not walking into an ambush.

One of the soldiers on the left begins to wave his hand in the air.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)
The guy on the left waved
ferociously, signaling trouble.

The Italian soldiers rise out of a hidden trench, with their rifles ready to shoot. Chaz and some soldiers see them.

Chaz aims at the enemy soldier in the middle and takes him out with one shot. The other two enemy soldiers are taken by other soldiers.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)
Almost immediately, three Italian soldiers rose out of the hidden trench, with their rifles ready to fire. A few of us saw them and aimed in retaliation. I aimed at the guy in the middle. One shot and I saw him immediately, lifelessly slump down back into the trench.

Chaz and the soldiers continue to shoot toward the trenches.

We see a few enemy soldiers scurry for the hills.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)
Along with my fellow soldier, I took a few other shots. In the end, I know all three adversaries disappeared below the line. Meanwhile, we saw about six other enemies scurry for the hills. Retreat. Retreat. Retreat.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lucy is standing with a letter in her one hand, and gagging her mouth with the other hand. A tear rolls down her cheek.

CHAZ (V.O)
After a few minutes of silence, our sergeant claimed victory and advised us to walk back to Rome and gain reinforcements. Consequently, I never actually witnessed the dead bodies in the trench (and I am thankful that I didn't). However, I did see the effect of my bullet.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy is having dinner at the dining table. She reads Chaz's letter as she eats.

CHAZ (V.O)

Dear Mom, I was promoted today. From now on, you must address your letters to Corporal Charles Conner, USA. (La-di-dah!) I guess they appreciate me in the US Army.

Lucy beams a smile amid the worry that is evident on her face.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)

Consequently, I will be asked to inspire and keep twenty enlistees safe from the dangers of war. Not an easy task, given the dangers of this ugly conflict. I am not sure I am ready for this responsibility, but I assume my commanding officers think I am...

EXT. LUCY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Lucy is standing by the mailbox, retrieving some mail from the box. She heads for the front door with the mail in her hand.

CHAZ (V.O)

Dear Mom, guess what? Along with my squad. I have just been transferred to Southern France.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Chaz and his squad are marching down the quiet street. The soldiers admire the beautiful buildings on the street.

SUPERIMPOSE: Nice, France.

CHAZ (V.O)

We all took a boat to Nice and are now on the march northward. I must say admit that the Riviera is about as pretty as any place I have ever imagined. Yes, I love Italy ... but

(MORE)

CHAZ (V.O) (cont'd)
this country is breathtaking.
However, my sergeant warned us: it
is not that pretty after a day or
two of walking through the
mountains and hearing the German
gunfire...

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Lucy sits on the sofa reading Chaz's letter.

CHAZ (V.O)
I have passed this caution on to my
squad and have practiced extra
maneuvers with these young men. My
major goal is to leave no man
behind.

Lucy smiles.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)
I have tried to instill in them
that we must protect ourselves...at
all costs. I think I am a pretty
good leader of these soldiers.

Lucy's smile broadens even more.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)
Obviously, I learned my lessons
from the master: Lucy Conner. I
think of you every day. Please,
please, please ... do not worry
about me. I have fifteen guys to
protect me. Au revoir. Your loving
son, Chaz.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A group of French and American soldiers are celebrating in
the center of the street with wines. Chaz is one of the
soldiers. He sits in a corner happily writing a letter with
his fountain pen.

SUPERIMPOSE: Paris.

Several locals including beautiful young women watch from
the street side.

CHAZ (V.O)

Dear Mom, with the French free forces and united Allies, we have secured the city of Paris. Wow! The Germans have evacuated the city and moved a few miles north, leaving the City of Lights to the good guys. What food! What amazing-looking women! Ooh la la. We intend to have a night of celebration and then chase the enemy into submission.

A soldier approaches Chaz and hands him a glass of wine. He chuckles as he takes the glass.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)

Wait, someone poured me another glass of wine! I have to get back to the bon vivant. I miss you. Your loving son, Chaz.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Chaz and his squad are taking refuge in the trenches in the woods. They lie in wait for enemy soldiers.

CHAZ (V.O)

Dear Mom, bad news. I have been injured. I have thought about how to get to the point of that sentence for hours, and have finally decided that truth is the best answer.

CUT TO:

INT. LUCY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Lucy sits at the dining table in the kitchen with the letter in her hand. Tears roll down her cheeks.

CHAZ (V.O)

The good news is: I will survive (maybe with a limp). Let me explain. We moved ten more miles northward above Paris.

BACK TO WOODS

Chaz and his squad remain in their positions in the trenches.

Suddenly, there is gunfire by enemy forces... It's a crossfire between Chaz's squad and the enemies.

CHAZ (V.O)

Suddenly, there was gunfire. More devastating, it was a crossfire. We had dug trenches, but the bad guys were on the sidelines and lobbed grenades toward us.

The enemy soldiers begin to lob grenades at Chaz and his squad. Two of the American soldiers are hit by a grenade resulting in instant death.

CHAZ (V.O) (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, two of my men lost their lives...one from Utah, one from Maryland. My grief about their loss has consumed me for the past two days. I intend to write a letter to their parents about what wonderful men they were. But first, I wanted to write you.

A grenade lands beside Chaz. He quickly jumps on it, and it explodes on his right leg. He falls to the ground screaming in pain inaudibly.

CHAZ (V.O)

In the midst of battle, I jumped on a grenade. It exploded on my right leg. Evidently, I have shrapnel up to my right thigh.

INT. HOSPITAL / WARD - DAY

Injured soldiers are being tended to by young beautiful nurses. Chaz lies in one of the beds, with his right leg bandaged.

CHAZ (V.O)

I think I'll have a few operations over the next couple of weeks. I'll probably end up with scar tissue...so there goes my chance to be Mr. America. Fortunately, the site of the explosion was not too

(MORE)

CHAZ (V.O) (cont'd)
many miles from the Paris
hospitals, which are quite good.
The nurses are treating me well and
are a treat for my eyes.

INT. LUCY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Tears stream down Lucy's cheeks as she continues to read the letter.

CHAZ (V.O)
I can only imagine how worried you
are. Don't be. There are soldiers
here in far worse condition than
me. I will heal. I will walk again.
However, this will probably end my
stint in the army. I am told that
an injury such as mine normally
results in an honorable discharge
since the infantry doesn't need men
in crutches (and that's probably
what I will require for at least
six months). At some point, I will
better understand the next steps. I
assume I will be home by Christmas
... and look forward to seeing you.
Your loving son, Chaz.

INT. LUCY'S HOUSE / CHAZ'S ROOM - DAY

Chaz lies in bed. He is holding a notebook to his face.

INSERT: NOTEBOOK

"Tomorrow Forward" is written ten times in the notebook.

He puts the book down and looks toward the door. He can see Lucy making lunch in the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Lucy is making scrambled eggs. She is more cheerful than the last time we saw her.

CHAZ (O.S)
Can I join you in the kitchen in
about ten minutes?

Lucy smiles.

LUCY

Can you make it eight minutes? The scrambled eggs will be perfect by then.

BACK TO CHAZ'S ROOM

Chaz helps himself up on the bed.

CHAZ

Eight minutes it is.

Chaz begins to put on his straight leg brace. He awkwardly crutches himself slowly toward the kitchen.

BACK TO KITCHEN

Lucy turns off the cooker and takes the frying pan off it. Chaz shows up in the door way, then clomps toward the kitchen table.

Chaz winks at Lucy as he slowly approaches the table.

CHAZ

That smells great. I wish I could help you cook.

Lucy smiles as Chaz continues to slowly draw closer to the table.

LUCY

It's enough reward to just be able to share a lunch with you.

Lucy puts some sustenance on each of the two plates on the table.

Lucy and Chaz sit at the table.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Have you read the papers? It looks like Germany is in total retreat.

CHAZ

Yep. Read it all.

Chaz digs into his softly scrambled eggs.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I just hope my guys are all safe.

LUCY
They have to thank you for their
lives.

CHAZ
Some of them. Some are now gone.

Chaz takes another bite of his brunch and shakes his head sadly.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
(softly)
They all had families.

The mother and son go silent for a moment. Lucy reaches for Chaz's hand.

LUCY
Honey, a war like this one affects
everyone. But I thank God every day
that you have come back with four
limbs and a sound mind.

CHAZ
(chuckles)
I'm not sure about four limbs. I've
got to get back on my own two feet.
This lying in bed thing is driving
me nuts. I wonder if you could help
me get to the VA hospital for
therapy.

LUCY
Let's do it. When?

INT. LUCY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lucy is sitting at the dining table ready to have dinners. A meal of roasted chicken and potatoes are on the table.

SUPERIMPOSE: Months later.

Chaz walks in without the help of a clutches. He sits joins his mother at the table.

LUCY
You have two letters in the mail.
One from the US Army and the other
form Mizzou.

Lucy hands Chaz the two letters. He keeps them beside his plate, then helps himself to some roasted chicken and potatoes.

CHAZ
It looks delicious, Mom.

LUCY
Of course, it's delicious. I made
it with thyme and lemon, but read
the letters.

Chaz opens the letter from the US Army.

CLOSE ON: The letter.

The first word in the letter is "congratulations."

Chaz scans through the one page letter. A sense of pride
radiates on his face.

LUCY
Yes? Do tell.

CHAZ
Wow, I was awarded the Purple Heart
for my actions in France.

Lucy quickly bounds across the table and gives him a huge
hug.

LUCY
I am so, so proud of you.

A tear escapes from Lucy's eye and rolls down her cheek.

CHAZ
(humbly)
It's a nice honor.

LUCY
It's deserved.

Lucy moves back to her seat. She stares at her son with a
smile on her face.

LUCY (CONT'D)
You are the best son a mom could
ever have. And the bravest. Read
the next one.

Chaz takes another bite of his chicken and takes a few
seconds to stare at the second letter.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Open it up.

Chaz sighs, cleans off his knife and opens the letter.

CLOSE ON: The letter.

The first line of the letter reads "congratulations."

Chaz looks up at Lucy, who stares at him with curiosity.

CHAZ

Mom, you know with GI Bill, I could attend a topflight university with a financial burden.

LUCY

Yes, we talked about this. But you need to figure out what you want to do with the rest of your life. Remember? So you could maybe go to St. Louis University ... or Washington U.

Chaz holds the letter up, showing it to Lucy.

CHAZ

Or Missouri University.

LUCY

(quietly)
It's so far.

CHAZ

It's not that far. And they have the best journalism school in the country. Hands down.

Lucy drops her knife and fork, staring at Chaz in surprise.

LUCY

Journalism?

Chaz reaches in his shirt pocket and pulls out an old gift from his mother...it's Waterman pen.

CHAZ

Your instinct was one hundred percent correct. I like to write. And Mizzou has the best journalism school in the country.

LUCY

You think you can do it that well ... to compete with the best in the country?

CHAZ

I think I have the curiosity and the talent for that. And you do too. Otherwise, you would have never given me this fountain pen and encouraged me to put sentences together.

Lucy sighs in defeat.

LUCY

When?

CHAZ

The semester starts in September.

Chaz shrugs apologetically. Sadness wrinkles Lucy's face.

LUCY

So soon. I wish it weren't so sudden, so I could enjoy your company every day.

CHAZ

I know. But I think I may do well in this field. I think it may be my calling. And I think I will make you very proud to call me your son.

LUCY

I already feel that.

Slowly, Lucy pushes her chair back and walks over to Chaz. She hugs him as tears wells up in her eyes.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I am so very, very proud of you.

SCREEN TO BLACK.

AS A FRESHMAN, CHARLES CONNER BEGAN TO WRITE FOR THE COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN, WHICH WAS PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY FOR LOCAL AND NATIONAL STORIES, OPINION, SPORTS, ARTS, LIFESTYLE.

HE WAS ALSO GIVEN THE OCCASIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF COVERING THE LOCAL CITY-COUNCIL MEETINGS AND FILING A REPORT.

IN HIS SECOND, HE WENT ON TO JOIN PI KAPPA PI FRATERNITY AND BECAME THE ASSISTANT OF THE MISSOURI COLUMBIA.

INT. PARTY HALL - NIGHT

A mix of young men and women are swaying to the loud party music. Others stand on the sides socializing. Chaz is among the latter.

LEAH CARMICHAEL (18) is a bystander in the party. She dazzles in a gown.

CHAZ (O.C)
Wow, you look amazing tonight.

Leah turns to find Chaz standing beside her. She smiles.

LEAH
You're the writer.

Chaz is struck by Leah's hazel eyes.

LEAH (CONT'D)
You know, I really loved that piece
you wrote on the Jimmy Stewart's
movie.

Leah continues to talk inaudibly. Chaz is zoned out, his eyes shuttles between her eyes and lips.

FADE.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The front door opens. Chaz comes in carry his box in one hand. He closes the door.

CHAZ
Mom!

Chaz drops his box to the floor as Lucy skips into the living. The mother and son embraces each other.

LUCY
You look great. You look happy.

CHAZ
I am very, very happy to be home.
I've got a plan for the next twelve
weeks.

Chaz pulls his mother to the sofa and they both sit.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I say that once a week, we go out to dinner and just shoot the breeze ... without you having to prepare a meal, or me needing to dry the dishes.

LUCY

Yeah, but I like to cook meals for you.

CHAZ

And you're damn good at it. So you get to do it six nights a week, and I get the thrill of drying those dishes six nights a week. But on one night a week, it's like we're on a mom-son 'date.' Not in a 'date-like' way. Are you game?

Lucy smiles.

LUCY

That would be fun. As long as we don't blow our whole budget on the biggest restaurants in town.

CHAZ

No, a bunch of local dives ... and at least once at Kemoll's.

LUCY

Deal.

INT. SANTORUM'S PIZZA PARLOR - NIGHT

College students fill the restaurant, sitting in groups at different tables. Lucy and Chaz share a table.

Lucy glances around the room, staring at the different faces dining at each tables. She then returns her gaze to Chaz.

LUCY

Do they look like your roommates?
Are the women across this
restaurant as attractive as all the
beautiful young women in your life?

Chaz is surprised.

CHAZ

No. And no.

(low tone)

Well this is going to be
challenging.

Lucy gives him a "what are you talking about?" look.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

When was your last date? How was
it? Do you still teach dancing? Do
you ever meet a person you want to
squeeze?

Lucy is amused. She takes a sip of her budweiser.

LUCY

Never. Not applicable. Yes. Not
yet.

CHAZ

I am assuming from your last answer
that you may be open to a new
relationship.

Lucy takes a moment, pondering her response.

LUCY

Quite honestly, I have not been
looking. Maybe I should. I don't
know. I wouldn't even know where to
begin.

CHAZ

Yeah, well, you are still a
fantastic-looking woman ... and a
great catch.

Surprised, Lucy winces.

LUCY

Yikes... wow... oh boy.

CHAZ

I don't want to make you
uncomfortable. I just want to
understand your head better.

LUCY

My head? Is that jargon at college?

CHAZ

Yeah, sort of ... Mom, I just want to know you better. And this spring, I thought of all these questions I had for you. Like all my journalism interviews, I put them on 3x5 cards. It's just so I know how to stay on the topic. I write the subject down ... and we can meander any way and anywhere after that.

Chaz reaches in his pocket and pulls out an index card. He hands his mother the first card...

... Lucy glances at the card... It reads "Do you date?"

LUCY

Didn't we just cover that topic?

CHAZ

Yeah. So it was just an example. A short trial run.

LUCY

This is really the way you conduct a journalistic interview?

CHAZ

Sometimes... Sometimes I like the element of surprise. But with my own dear mom, I thought that might be a little too tricky ... so I'd rather be up-front about the topic on my mind. Do you mind?

Lucy looks back at the card.

LUCY

That was a pretty good question. Are your other ones as good?

CHAZ

Maybe better.

The mother and son pause for a brief moment. Lucy winks at Chaz.

LUCY

This could be fun.

Chaz beams a broad smile. The duo continues in mute.

SNAPSHOTS: CHAZ AND LUCY'S DINNER DATES AT RIVER CITY GRILL, MOOKI'S BAR-B-Q, ABIGAIL'S COOKERY, AND BLUEBERRY HILL.

INT. BALIBAN'S - NIGHT

A hip restaurant. Customers dine at different tables. Chaz and Lucy sit at a table.

Chaz drops a 3x5 card in the middle of the table. The card reads "Subject: Gender inequality."

LUCY
Holy moley.

Lucy laughs out loud.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Are we going to be here for the
next ten hours?

Lucy looks to the waiter, waiting at their table.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Perhaps a bottle of Chardonnay.

TIME CUT:

Chaz and Lucy have enjoyed their first glasses of the wine standing beside the 3x5 card on the table.

LUCY (CONT'D)
We change the diapers. We push you
to school. We ask to see your
homework. We share your success. We
are crushed by your failures. We
are forever in your corner.

INT. THE HILL - NIGHT

Chaz pulls out the chair for his mother, she seats. Chaz settles on the chair across from his mother. He places his 3x5 card face-down in the middle of the table.

Lucy waits in curiosity to see what the topic will be, while Chaz finger drums on the table. He finally turns the card over... It reads "Love."

Lucy picks up the card and smiles.

LUCY
Love? It's a pretty broad topic.
Care to limit it just a tad?

CHAZ
Yeah. How do you know?

Lucy beams another smile.

LUCY
Wow, that's a doozy of a question.

Lucy takes a sip of her water and looks up at the ceiling briefly.

LUCY (CONT'D)
The honest answer is this. You
don't know. Otherwise, every
relationship would work out
perfectly. It's not science. It's
just instinct.

CHAZ
Right, but some relationships
definitely work out better than
others. Just luck?

LUCY
No.

Lucy invites the waiter over to the table. The waiter walks over to the table.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I want some toasted ravioli and
chicken Caesar salad.

CHAZ
I'll go with the scampi ... also
bring two glasses of Pinot Grigio.

TIME CUT:

ONE HOUR LATER.

Chaz and Lucy are done their meals and enjoy their wines.

LUCY
I think part of the secret is that
sacrifice is not viewed as burden.
It's just what you want to do.

CHAZ
And arguments?

LUCY
Disagreements are OK. Otherwise one begins to hold a grudge because you can't come clean.

Chaz nods in agreement.

CHAZ
Contributions?

LUCY
It doesn't have to be fifty-fifty ... as long as it feels close to that without taking out a slide rule.

CHAZ
What's your biggest advice?

LUCY
My biggest advice though is to not completely lose yourself or be consumed by the other person.

Lucy takes out a paper napkin from her purse. She draws a Venn diagram consisting of two intersecting circles, with similar areas on the left, the right, and the shared space in the center.

LUCY (CONT'D)
(illustrating with her drawing)
Let's say that's you. and that's her.

Lucy points to the center of the drawing.

LUCY (CONT'D)
And let's call that 'we.' If there's not enough on the left or the right ... the right or the left will lose interest. Understand?

CHAZ
(chuckling)
I want to take notes.

LUCY
No, no, no ... you already know it in your bones.

Lucy takes a sip of her white wine. She assesses Chaz's face as he grins from ear to ear.

LUCY (CONT'D)

But why do you raise this? Is it because you're wondering about Leah? ... whom I know you call at least a few times a week?

Chaz is surprised.

CHAZ

You don't listen to our conversations?

LUCY

Of course I don't listen to your private telephone calls. But I know you care about this girl. Otherwise, you wouldn't call her so frequently. My last three pieces of advice: Don't rush it. As college students, neither one of you are completely free. You both have studies and degrees to pursue. No. 2: Call her tonight. Let her know you had a great conversation with your mother about Leah-Chaz relationship. Nothing makes a girl fall more in love with a guy than knowing the he is more than willing to bring her up to his mother. No. 3: Enjoy every minute, and don't overthink it.

Happily, Chaz blows a kiss to Lucy.

LUCY

I like this game. What's next week? Don't tell me. Sex? Chances are, I will not be so forthcoming.

CHAZ

No, it might be more revealing and more enlightening than a discussion about that.

INT. KEMOLL'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is buzzing with diners. Chaz and Lucy are seated at a table. They both stare at each other with a sense of curosimy.

SUPERIMPOSE: Last Dinner Date.

Chaz steals a glance at the 3x5 card in his shirt pocket. He returns his gaze to his mother.

CHAZ

Are you up for this?

LUCY

Go for it.

Chaz places the card on the center of the table. It reads "My history". He flips the card over revealing the topic to be discussed... "My dad."

Lucy looks at the card for second in astonishment. She expels a long sad sigh, and nods to Chaz.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Maybe we should order first because this will take a while.

Chaz nods in agreement.

CHAZ

Mombo, you raised me. Without you, I would be nothing. However, I just want to know what happened. I want to know why my dad was never around. I want to know why it fell upon you to be the most amazing heroine of the family.

Lucy lets out another sigh.

LUCY

Your father was perhaps the most talented singer I ever met. He could sing with any ragtime band in the country. Raves. Standing ovations.

Chaz subconsciously beams a smile.

LUCY (CONT'D)

He would gladly work eighty hours a week in the St. Louis clubs and the

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 river cruises. He was handsome, and
 an amazing lover.

Lucy scoffs.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington,
 and other luminaries wanted your
 father in their bands. He was that
 good.

TIME CUT:

Lucy is slowly picking on her meal of 'osso buco.' While
 Chaz makes do with 'chicken scarpariello.' Two glasses of
 white wine stand beside the plates of the mother and son.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 Your father loved me, and ... at
 the time ... envisioned that we
 would be together until we were in
 our eighties.

Lucy reaches toward her napkin and wipes away the tears
 welling up in her eye.

LUCY (CONT'D)
 However, he called it quits.
 Consequently, I have tried my best
 to raise you to be strong ... and
 rise above adversity.

Chaz swallows a lump.

CHAZ
 Tell me about the adversity.

Lucy shakes her head with sadly.

LUCY
 He could sing a grand song. But
 that was his one talent. Yep, it
 was an amazing talent. He was a
 newsworthy star. An awe-inspiring
 headliner. But, despite his ability
 to enchant people with song, he
 could not react to changing times.

CHAZ
 (softly)
 And so he killed himself ... and
 gave up on me?

LUCY

It wasn't aimed at you. to be perfectly honest, your father was in such a personal tailspin at the time, I don't think he wasn't thinking about you ... or me.

Chaz takes a moment processing his thoughts.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I'll tell you this. Your dad would be very, very proud of all your achievements. I'm sure of that.

CHAZ

You think so?

LUCY

Absolutely. Now let's get out of here. I have a bunch of photos of your dad in a shoebox somewhere in my closet. If you want, I'll go over them with you back home.

INT. LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lucy and Chaz are sitting on the sofa. Chaz rests his head on his mother's shoulder as they go over black-and-white family pictures.

A few of the pictures show young Chaz and his father on the porch, the backyard, in a park, and more...

After a while, Chaz yawns and kisses his mother on the forehead.

CHAZ

Mom, I'm so thankful I've had you all these years. You're not just a mother, but also a father. And more than that, you are a best friend. I could not have gotten luckier than to have you in my life.

Lucy quietly smiles. Chaz stands up and heads for his room.

FADE TO BLACK.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: IN 1949, CHAZ CONNER WAS NAMED EDITOR IN CHIEF OF THE COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Chaz is heading the meeting with his Columbia Missouri staff. Other attendees are: MITCH KENDALL (sports editor). CAROL YOUNG (arts and leisure editor). ANDY MOONEY (front-page and editorial head). GERRY LEITZES (advertising director).

CHAZ

Don't worry. I don't intend to abuse this privilege. Maybe two or three times a year.

Chaz's staff give a thumbs-up.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

Besides I don't think you'd like working here if I turned into some corner-office, ledger-sheet grunt who has no passion for the craft of journalism. There'll be plenty of time for that when we enter the real world of big-city newspaper.

The listening staff smile.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I intend to take advantage of our unique advantages. Here's the idea for starters. I want all our illustrious alumni to have the chance to editorialize in The Columbian. Put more explicitly, I want to invite them to write in a column I will call The Columbian Alumni Corner. Here's a partial list just to get us going.

Chaz pass a printed list to each of the staff. He studies their faces as they go through it. He senses some momentum.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I would like each of you to come up with a half dozen names and topics that might hold our readers' interest ... or perhaps even win some awards.

ANDY

That's a great idea.

CHAZ

And that brings me to my next priority: I want the Columbia Missouriian to be recognized, awarded, and quoted newspaper of our size in America. I am quite serious. I want us to win the National Peacemaker Award, which goes to the best college newspaper in America ... and perhaps even a Pulitzer Prize. Let's think big.

The staff applaud.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

We will all gain advantages from these accolades, and we may even become better journalists in the process.

The staff nod in agreement, applauding once more.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: CHAZ CONNER'S TORE INTO THE SOUTH AFRICAN MOVEMENT THAT HAD JUST INSTITUTIONALLY CODIFIED PREJUDICE AGAINST BLACKS IN A ONE THOUSAND ESSAY TITLED "WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT APARTHEID?"

CHAZ CONNER WENT ON TO DECRY THE SEGREGATION IN THE US MILITARY, THE SANCTIONING OF "WHITE ONLY" JOBS, THE BAN ON INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE, AND THE POLICE STATE THAT WAS REQUIRED TO ENFORCE SUCH STRUCTURES.

INT. MOSSOURI COLUMBIA PRESS HOUSE / CHAZ'S OFFICE - DAY

Chaz sits at his desk reading a letter. The cherrful look on his face tells us he is enjoying the read.

INSERT: LETTER

The letter is from BART GRIMES.

BART GRIMES

(letter)

I was impressed. Compared to most college essays, this one has depth, facts, and emotion. Sometime, I would like to meet you if you are ever in Chicago. We always need good people at the Trib. Keep in touch.

Delighted, Chaz nods his head in excitement.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: THE MISSOURI COLUMBIAN WAS AWARDED THE NATIONAL PEACEMAKER AWARD.

INT. CHAZ / LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Leah and Chaz are sitting on the sofa. They are enjoying each other's company.

LEAH

Do you think it would be OK to invite my mother and father to this thing? It would be a nice way for them to meet you ... and it might make for a fun weekend.

CHAZ

I like that idea.

Chaz gives her a big hug.

LEAH

Your mother has to come.

CHAZ

Of course, she does.

CHAZ / LEAH'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Chaz sits on the couch holding the telephone receiver to his ear. He is on the phone with Lucy.

CHAZ

Mom, I can't work thirty-five to forty hours a week running a newspaper and take fifteen credit hours. It's impossible. But this will help demonstrate to you that it's all worthwhile. Leah will be there. So will her mom and dad. And I'm supposed to give a speech. You gotta be there.

LUCY (V.O)

Can't wait.

INT. TIGER HOTEL EVEN HALL - NIGHT

Students, lecturers, and guests sit at different tables. Chaz is on stage giving his speech. He holds the plaque of the "National Peacemaker Award" in one hand.

Leah sits with her parents at a table. While Lucy happily watches her Chaz and his team's table.

CHAZ

Thank you to every staff that has been a part of this journey. However, my greatest thanks goes to that lovely woman at my table.

Lucy beams a smile.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Mom, would you please stand up?

All eyes turn to Lucy as she slowly stands up. The attendees applaud her.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Her name is Lucy Conner, and she raised me from scratch ... through thick and thin ... and always said 'do something great with your mind.' When I joined the army, she even gave me a reminder, which I carry with me every day. It's a Waterman pen, bought through weekly savings when we had none. And she said 'Write. Write. Write. You have it in you.' Everyone on staff has it in them ... and that's why we won this prestigious award. I would like to congratulate our entire staff and my mother. You are the best in the business.

The attendees stand to their feet, clapping.

TIME CUT.

LATER.

Chaz is speaking with a some attendees. Leah leads her parent, MR. and MRS. CARMICHAEL, to Chaz.

The couple shakes Chaz's hand like longtime neighbors. Chaz is happy to meet them.

CHAZ

I'm so glad to finally meet you two.

MR. CARMICHAEL

I've heard a million speeches at these honorific dinners, but that's as good as it gets.

MRS. CARMICHAEL

I like the fact that you saluted your mother.

MR. CARMICHAEL

Exactly.

CHAZ

Thank you.

MRS. CARMICHAEL

And let's have dinner with your mom tomorrow.

MR. CARMICHAEL

Exactly.

TIME CUT:

Leah and Chaz are standing with Lucy. There is a broad smile on the faces of the trio.

LEAH

My name is Leah Carmichael. I know your son, but not as well or as wonderfully as you know him.

Lucy is speechless. She just leans into Leah and gives her a kiss on each cheek.

LEAH (CONT'D)

I have heard a million wonderful things about you. And I so look forward to knowing you better.

Lucy nods with an emotional smile.

LUCY

I look forward to knowing you better too.

TIME CUT:

Lucy and Chaz are seated next to each other at Chaz's table. They watch on as the band group readies themselves for a performance on stage.

Lucy smiles at her son.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I approve. She's a wonderful young woman.

Chaz smiles broadly.

The band begins to play "Sunshine Serenade."

Chaz takes her mother's hand and leads her to the open floor. They dance like pros.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: CHAZ CONNER LANDED A POSITION AT THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE, WORKING UNDER HIS MENTOR, BART GRIMES.

LEAH CARMICHAEL GAINED AN ENTRY-LEVEL JOB AS A HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR AT THE LATIN SCHOOL, A PRESTIGIOUS, UPPER-CRUST PRIVATE INSTITUTION IN THE LINCOLN PARK AREA. SHE WORKED AS A DUAL PSYCHOLOGY/EDUCATION GRAD.

INT. AMBASSADOR EAST HOTEL / BAR - NIGHT

Chaz and Mr. Carmichael is sitting at a table for four. Chaz is looking serious. Mr. Carmichael stares at him in anticipation of what he has to say.

A few other customers enjoy their drinks in front of the bar.

CHAZ

I hope you know that I think the world of your daughter. I also have such good feelings about you and Mrs. Carmichael, but that's not the point right now. This is about Leah ... and, hopefully, me. I would like to ask your permission to marry her.

Chaz pauses waiting for Mr. Carmichael's response.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I fully believe I will be a good provider, but I actually believe it is more important with two professionals to capture each other's attention and interest for

(MORE)

CHAZ (CONT'D) (cont'd)
a lifetime. She does. She makes me
smile. I believe I do the same for
her.

MR. CARMICHAEL
(sternly)
Stop.

Chaz is puzzled.

MR. CARMICHAEL (CONT'D)
Quit selling. I already consider
you part of the family, and this
just formalizes it.

Chaz sighs. Relieved.

Mr. Carmichael turns to the Bartender.

MR. CARMICHAEL (CONT'D)
Decant a chilled bottle of Moet &
Chandon. And four champagne flutes.

Mr. Carmichael returns his gaze to Chaz.

MR. CARMICHAEL (CONT'D)
By the way, will this announcement
come as a total surprise to my
daughter, who has already hinted to
her mother that you and she will
most likely get married someday?

CHAZ
(smiling)
It will most likely not come as a
shock to Leah.

The Bartender brings the drink to the Chaz and Mr.
Carmichael's table, and then leaves.

Leah and Mrs. Carmichael come back to the table and settle
down.

Mr. Carmichael silently fills the four glasses with a good
sense of drama. He looks at his wife and his daughter, and
then at Chaz.

MR. CARMICHAEL
(holding up his flute)
To our new expanded family.
Welcome.

Leah and Mrs. Carmichael are not surprised. They spontaneously dance around the table with kisses all around.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL / EVENT HALL - DUSK

It is glamorous wedding reception. The decoration consist of pastel rose hues and lime-green tones.

Dignitaries are seated at the well decorated tables. Attendees include; Mr. and Mrs. Carmichael, Lucy, colleagues of the couple, associates, TV stations, the media conglomerates, and major retailers.

Model-worthy men in morning coats walk the room with champagne bottles in hand, serving the guests.

SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL, 25, 1952.

The playing band, led by LOUIS ARMSTRONG, is singing "Chicago, Chicago ... that toddlin' town. Chicago, Chicago ... I'll show you around."

The guests give the couple a standing ovation as they walk down the center aisle. The couple proceed to their table.

TIME CUT:

The wedding reception is in full swing. Chaz stands on the podium, the guests fix their eyes on him.

CHAZ

First of all, let me thank all of you for coming here tonight and making this an evening to remember for the rest of our lives. I would like to pay a special tribute to three people. One: A woman I am now so tickled to call Mrs. Charles Parker Conner. Most of you know her as Leah.

Leah winks at Chaz with a smile on her face.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I know her as wonderful. Kind. Loving. Sharing. A kindred spirit. Everything a young man could hope for as he hopes to build a new life in this great city.

Chaz turns his gaze to Mr. and Mrs. Carmichael's table.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Two: I would like to celebrate and thank my new mother- and father-in-law. Mr. and Mrs. Lou Carmichael. I have grown to know both of them over the past few years, and I must say, they are the easiest people to like.

Mr. Lou Carmichael raises his glass of wine to Chaz with a broad smile on his face.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Sometimes funny. Sometimes challenging. Always engaging and embracing. I have never once felt I was on 'an audition' with them. That's how good they are.

The guests chuckle and applaud.

Chaz turns his attention to Lucy's table. She beams a smile at him.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Three: I would like to throw a bouquet to the woman who made it all possible for me. Many of you know her. Even Louis Armstrong knows her...

Louis Armstrong tilts his hat from the band corner.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Actually, he came up to me after one of his songs and asked, 'That's your mother? She once taught dance lessons in St. Louis when I was a struggling band member and your dad was wowing crowds. This woman knows how to dance. Can you keep up with her?'

Chaz smiles at his mom, and she reciprocates with the blow of a kiss.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Mom, I don't know if I can ... but Louis suggests that once upon a time, when I was only three or four years old, you knew how to cut the rug on this particular tune. I say we give it a try.

Chaz holds out his hand to Lucy, and she joins him.

The band begins to do a downbeat. Louis Armstrong steps forward and takes the microphone.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

When I was a young man struggling
for any recognition ... and she was
a young woman who danced better
than anyone in America, we lit up
the clubs in St. Louis, once upon a
time. Young man, I only wish you
can turn out as good as your dear
mother.

Louis Armstrong and his band performs:

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

*Give me a kiss to build a dream on.
And my imagination will thrive upon
that kiss. Sweetheart, I ask no
more than this... A kis to build a
dream on.*

Chaz gives his mother a hug and a kiss. He then moves to Leah. He gives her a hug and a kiss.

Chaz turns to Louis Armstrong.

CHAZ

Louis, can you please perform the
song we discussed earlier?

Louis Armstrong nods with a smile. He picks up his trumpet and begins the solo performance of "La Vie en Rose."

Chaz escorts Lucy to the center of the ballroom. He then sends a wink to Mr. Carmichael.

Mr. Carmichael escorts Leah to the same place. Mrs. Carmichael joins them on the dance floor, squired by MR. JOSEPH P. KENNEDY.

Everyone dances happily.

INT. CHAZ'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Leah is sitting by the front window, staring out on to the street. She is somewhat impatient.

SUPERIMPOSE: JANUARY 8, 1953.

Leah sees Chaz walking up the steps to the front door. She quickly stands to her.

Soon, Chaz enters the living room. Leah jumps into his arms.

LEAH
Guess what?

Chaz is puzzled.

CHAZ
You love me more today than you did
yesterday?

Leah's heart thumps in joy.

LEAH
Especially more today than
yesterday. Cause guess what? We are
pregnant.

CHAZ
Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

Chaz grips her more securely, as he is holding the most fragile vase in the Louvre. He gently moves her to the sofa.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
Sit down right here. Don't move. Be
careful getting in the chair.

Bemused, Leah sits down on the sofa, with Chaz still holding her. Tears of joy well up in her eyes.

LEAH
Can you believe it?

Chaz sits beside her.

CHAZ
Did you go to the doctor today?

LEAH
Yes, it's positive. And it's
really, really early. My
pediatrician tells me we should
wait until the first trimester to
tell anyone ... including your
mother and my mother and father.
Can we keep this secret?

CHAZ

I don't know.

LEAH

I don't know if I can either ...
but we're only talking about eight
weeks. C'mon. Whadya say? We can
have our little secret for two
months, don't you think?

INT. CHAZ'S HOUSE / ROOM - NIGHT

A small, empty bedroom. Chaz and Leah walk in holding hands.
They stand in the center of the room looking around.

LEAH

You'll probably miss this as a
place to polish some of your
writing.

CHAZ

We have other rooms. The dining
room could work, or the kitchen. I
could even convert part of the
basement into sanctuary for stories
or your school work. I say we cross
that bridge when we come to it.

LEAH

We have months to figure that out.
However, I do have an appointment
with DR. MEYER next week, just to
make sure the first trimester is
going according to plan.

CHAZ

Would you like me to join you?

LEAH

There's no need. It's routine. But
assuming everything goes well, I
imagine the good doctor will say
it's safe to tell people.

Chaz takes another look round the room. He beams a smile as
if he could already see the baby there.

INT. MARSHALL FIELD SHOPPING CENTER - DAY

Customers walk through the sections of the mall, shopping their needs.

Lucy, with a big bump, is shopping in the kiddies section. She is checking out diaper bags and crib beddings...

... MRS. SALLY HIGBIE, a middle-aged woman, stands beside Lucy.

Suddenly, Lucy's face wrinkles. She lets go of the diapers in her hand.

LEAH

Omigod, omigod, omigod.

A puddle of water gathers around Leah's feet. Mrs. Sally looks to the floor and sees the puddle. She rushes off and returns with an armchair.

Mrs. Sally helps Leah sit on the chair.

MRS. SALLY

Honey, forget the diaper bag. You sit here. Within minutes, you will be on your way to Cook County Hospital.

Mrs. Sally's assistant runs in to frame with a sense of urgency.

MRS. SALLY (CONT'D)

Get a wheelchair and an ambulance at the front door.

The assistant runs off.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mrs. Sally and her assistant are pushing Leah toward the elevator in a wheelchair. Two staffs run alongside Mrs. Sally and the assistant.

A few shoppers are stepping into the elevator.

MRS. SALLY

Emergency. Emergency.

Mrs. Sally wheels Leah into the elevator. She pushes the shoppers out, and hits the button for down floor.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

An ambulance is waiting. The responders rush to the door as Mrs. Sally wheels Leah out.

The responders quickly get Leah on a stretcher and pushes her toward their van. Mrs. Sally follows behind them. Leah smiles at her.

MRS. SALLY

Honey, this is all going to turn out OK. You are going to have a beautiful baby, and you are never going to be happier in your life. If you wish, I will do my best to reach your husband. What's his name? Where does he work? How can I reach him?

LEAH

Chaz Conner. The Chicago Tribune.
382-1623.

The responders wheel Leah into the back of the van.

LEAH (CONT'D)

(to Mrs. Sally)
And what's your name?

MRS. SALLY

Sally in maternity. They know me. Good luck. Godspeed. I will do my best to reach reach your husband. Relax. Breathe. Breathe.

One of the responders closes the back of the van. Mrs. Sally watches as the car drives away.

EXT. COOK COUNTY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A limo drives to a stop in front of the hospital. Chaz jumps down from the back of the car. He looks a bit roughed-up, but why should we care when he doesn't? With a sense of urgency, he pays the driver and then races through the entrance door.

INT. MATERNITY WARD / FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

... Chaz exits the elevator and skids to a stop at the front desk. He is out of breath, but he has no time to catch some.

CHAZ

Leah. Leah. Leah Conner.

The receptionist pages through her status statement for several minutes. Chaz waits, impatiently. The receptionist smiles at him after what looks to be an eternity, at least that's how he would think so.

RECEPTIONIST

She's out of delivery. Evidently, everything went well.

CHAZ

Omigod. Thank God.

RECEPTIONIST

She is now in room 513.

CHAZ

Which way?

He races down the hallway as soon as the receptionist points to a direction.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

... Chaz zooms into the room, then stops abruptly. He is in awe at the sight of Leah cradling their newborn. All the sweat and frustration is finally worth it.

Leah smiles at her husband.

LEAH

Glad you could make it.

(winks)

By the way, you look worse than I do.

CHAZ

Well, it has been a nerve-racking trek, but I am sure nothing to compare with what you went through.

Slowly, Chaz graciously proceeds toward Leah and their child.

LEAH

Say hello to your son.

Leah holds up the newbie to his father. Chaz wraps his hands around the "bundle of joy." He looks the baby in the face. Surely, he is most delighted to meet him.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: WITH THE RISE OF NEWS BROADCAST ON TELEVISION, CHAZ CONNER REALIZED TIMES WAS CHANGING. IN 1956, HE HAD AN URGE TO MAKE THE SWITCH FROM WRITING JOURNALIST TO A TV NEWS BROADCASTER.

INT. BART GRIMES' OFFICE - DAY

BART GRIMES, a dyed-in-the-wool middle-aged-man, sits at his desk. Chaz sits on the opposite side of the desk with a glassy look on his face. He listens intently to his boss.

BART GRIMES

It's a bunch of monkeys on talk shows. It will have no long-term bearing on the impact of journalism. Nothing will ever replace the morning newspaper under every commuter's arm and the power of indepth feature stories. Don't worry about it. You are gonna be a newspaper star. I knew it from the first editorials you ever wrote. Don't waver. You should do this for the next sixty years and win tons of Pulitzer Prizes.

Chaz nods in acknowledgement, or at least pretends to be in agreement with his boss.

INT. CHAZ'S OFFICE - DAY

Chaz sits behind his desk. He is in deep thought. The look on his face tells us he is worried.

CHAZ'S FLASHBACK:

INT. EATERY - DAY

Mr. Lou Carmichael and Chaz having a brunch. The father- and son-in-law enjoy each other's company eating and discussing.

MR. CARMICHAEL

You are tailor-made for this new medium ... and make no mistake, it will become the biggest preoccupation in our lives.

Mr. Carmichael leans into Chaz, lowering his tone.

MR. CARMICHAEL (CONT'D)

We are planning to become the world's first all-color TV station. That's a game changer. It will affect presidential elections from here on out. I will have David Sarnoff come to the Merchandise Mart to turn on the switch at WMAQ. Things are changing ... by leaps and bounds. Forever. If you need more evidence, watch Ed Sullivan this weekend, when this new guy called Elvis Presley will mesmerize the entire nation with his shaking hips and surly looks. After you hear this, think of Rudy Vallee as the old fart print medium.

END CHAZ'S FLASHBACK.

BACK TO CHAZ'S OFFICE

Chaz reaches and grabs the telephone receiver. He dials Mr. Lou Carmichael and holds the receiver to his ear.

CHAZ

You mentioned David Sarnoff once. You suggested that he might be looking for a fresh face for broadcast news.

MR. CARMICHAEL (V.O)

I remember the conversation.

CHAZ

I might be interested. Should we have lunch at Merchandise Mart tomorrow?

MR. CARMICHAEL (V.O)

At 12:00 noon. Flannery's, on the first floor. We'll put heads together and figure out a plan of action.

INT. BART GRIMES' OFFICE - DAY

Bart Grimes sits behind the desk with uncertainty written all over his face. Chaz sits opposite from him. A mix of worry and pity radiates on his face.

CHAZ

I met with David Sarnoff two days ago at the Merchandise Mart.

Bart Grimes wrinkles his face as if he has been hit with the worst news of the year, or maybe he has.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

He liked my audition and wants to hire me for a weekend newsmagazine position. However, I told him that it would only happen on one condition ... only if I could hold on to a diminished, but important, role at the Tribune.

BART GRIMES

Let's slow down. Are you quitting?

CHAZ

(smiles)

No. I would like to hold down two jobs. A once-a-week editorial for the Trib and a weekend anchor job at WMAQ.

Bart Grimes is still in disbelief. Chaz holds up his finger in the air.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

If need be, I will leave tomorrow to begin employment in the broadcast media. However, I still love the Trib. I still love the written word. And believe you me, I will bring credit to this august publication.

BART GRIMES

(skeptically)

I am listening.

CHAZ

I have a hunch this can be very good for the newspaper in terms of 'a draw.' It's not like I will be a celebrity, but if the TV show is a

(MORE)

CHAZ (cont'd)
 success, it will increase the popularity of any column I would write ... even if it's only on a once-a-week basis. I believe I could do such a thing for magazines, but I would rather do it for the Tribune...partly because I love this place, and partly because you are the best boss a guy could ever have.

Chaz pauses briefly and studies Bart Grimes' expression, which shows he is still lost.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
 On the other hand, I know you are a purist. If in your heart of hearts, you think this is mixing oil and water, and you must have only 100-percent dedicated print journalist, I can certainly respect that. I'll be sad, but...

BART GRIMES
 ... Let me think about it. My first instinct is, I don't like it. I love ink on my fingers, and the whirr of printing presses late at night. I love the smell of Camel cigarettes in the newsroom ashtrays. But I don't live in an igloo. I know the world is changing.

Bart Grimes lights up a cigarette and looks at Chaz in those "I will miss you" kind of looks.

BART GRIMES (CONT'D)
 You're one of the best writers I have on staff. I would hate to lose you. I just don't know if what you're proposing would have enough of an impact on our paper.

CHAZ
 We could try it out.

BART GRIMES
 Let me think about it.

Bart Grimes pushes his desk chair back, stands up and shakes Chaz's hand. It's a sad goodbye for both men.

INT. CHAZ'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Chaz sits at the dining table. He is busy with his writing. The telephone on the of the dining table begins to ring. He grabs the receiver.

BART GRIMES (V.O)

The management of the paper thinks this could work out well ... and to both of our benefit. And I agree.

A feeling of fulfilment radiates on Chaz's face.

CHAZ

I'm so happy to hear that.

BART GRIMES (V.O)

We can kick around topics midweek, and make sure there is a column on Sunday's paper. It'll work.

CHAZ

I'll make sure it does. And I'll make sure you will not regret it. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

INT. WMAQ HEADQUARTERS / CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

BRAD PHILIPS, a young man in his early thirties, and the would-be producer to the TV show, is sitting at a conference table with Chaz. The latter is in middle of suggestion.

CHAZ

It is going to be one-hour, in-depth interview with one person on a Saturday or Sunday morning. The title could be called "One on One."

Brad is delighted.

BRAD

Wow, what a great title. You're going to be a natural on air. Now, we need to set up a wish list of ideal Chicago guests.

CHAZ

(innocently)

You think they all need to be from Chicago?

BRAD

Not necessarily. Although it's probably a good place to start, since you are better known in Chicago. However, you can get plenty of people who come through Chicago. Hell, given your connections with the Merchandise Mart, you could probably start off the show with an interview of JOHN F. KENNEDY. You can't get a much bigger debut than that.

CHAZ

You think I could?

BRAD

You might have to lean on your father-in-law for that, but I would think so. The senator and future president is not exactly camera-shy.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: ON JULY 4, 1958. LEAH CALLED HER MOTHER TO WATCH OVER HER SON, LEW, WHILE SHE AND CHAZ HEAD OVER TO COOK COUNTY HOSPITAL FOR THE DELIVERY OF THEIR SECOND CHILD.

INT. CHAZ'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Lou Carmichael, and LEW stand in the center of the room. Their eyes is fixed on the door as if they are expecting Santa to walk through it.

The door opens. Chaz and Leah come in. Leah carries her newborn, SERENA, in her arms.

Mrs. Carmichael stretches at her arm. Leah walks over and hands her the baby.

MRS. CARMICHAEL

She looks like you, Leah.

Mr. Carmichael shakes Chaz's hand and pats him on the back. Chaz then picks up Lew and hugs him tightly.

EXT. CHAZ'S HOUSE / BACK PORCH - LATER

Chaz and Mr. Lou Carmichael sit in the porch enjoying the view of the back yard. Each holds a lit cigar.

MR. CARMICHAEL
How's the show progressing? I've heard good things.

CHAZ
So far, so good.

Chaz takes a puffs and looks out the yard.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
I think the show will have an interesting format. Good in-depth interviews. And, Lou, thanks for pulling some strings to get John F. Kennedy on as the first guest.

MR. CARMICHAEL
He's a very personable guy. You'll like him.

CHAZ
Do you know why he's in town?

MR. CARMICHAEL
No, but he comes in all the time. Probably fund-raising or lining up supporters for the upcoming election. It's rumored he's going to run.

CHAZ
Well, I do plan to get into that with him.

MR. CARMICHAEL
Maybe you'll get a scoop.

CHAZ
I doubt that. These politicians are pretty coy this far out in front of a convention.
(takes another puff and chuckles)
But you can't blame a guy for trying.

INT. WMAQ HEADQUARTERS / PREPATORY ROOM - DAY

A small desk stands in the center of the room with a telephone on top of it.

JOHN F. KENNEDY, 40s, handsome and full of life, is led in by Chaz. The two men are in good spirit for the upcoming event.

JFK flashes a smile at Chaz.

JFK

My dad tells me I'm the first guinea pig here.

(winks)

I don't mind that, I like being first. Hell, I may even try to aim for a few other firsts in the next few years.

Chaz reciprocates with a smile.

JFK (CONT'D)

I will be a fun interview. And joking aside, I am honored to be the first guest on your new show, which I am sure will have a long run.

Chaz flashes an even broader smile. He hands JFK a piece of paper.

CHAZ

These are the kind of questions I will be asking you.

JFK takes a brief glance at the piece of paper.

JFK

All right, good topics. I'll try to come up with some good answers ... or at least try to reach someone on the phone who can come up with a good answer, so I can memorize them.

CHAZ

Anticipating that, that's why we made sure you had a room with a telephone.

JFK laughs heartily.

JFK

You're good. This will be a good interview.

CHAZ

Thirty-five minutes until showtime. Wish me luck.

JFK

And wish me luck.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Chaz and John F. Kennedy are both sitting on swivel chairs. They are ready to go live. They are in good spirit. A musical theme plays in the background.

BOOTH ANNOUNCER (O.S)

Welcome to One on One. The in-depth interview show that gets to the bottom, the top, and the in-betweens of today's issues. And here's your host, Chaz Conner.

Chaz immediately beams a smile at the camera.

CHAZ

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am very pleased to have one of the most compelling political figures in America with us today. Senator John F. Kennedy, who came within a whisker of being the Democratic nominee for vice president on the first ballot just two years ago.

(turns to JFK)

Senator Kennedy, welcome.

JFK

(smiles)

Thank you, Chaz. Let me first congratulate you on your new program. As you might know, I love this town. I have deep ties here. And I believe this is a pivotal city and state in the future of this country ... especially at this time in our history.

CHAZ

Well, speaking of this time...

Chaz leans toward the senator with a sly smile.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Would you like to use this moment to announce that you are throwing your hat in the ring for the presidency of the United States?

John F. Kennedy does a slight double-take, but instantly corrects the reaction with some grace.

JFK

I'm thinking this is not the precise moment for such momentous declaration.

CHAZ

Why not? You love the city. You have deep ties here. And as you say, it's pivotal at this point in time.

JFK just smiles.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I'm just saying that if you announced it here and now, it would have the element of surprise.

JFK

That's for sure. I know it would surprise my beautiful wife.

JFK flashes his 'famous smile' and get Chaz back on a kilter.

JFK (CONT'D)

As I'm sure you can appreciate, a decision such as this ends up affecting everyone in the family...brothers, sisters, in-laws, mother, father, and of course, Jackie and little Caroline. So there are a lot of considerations. And it's not all glamour. You know the nature of public service calls for sacrifice, and one needs to know if everyone is willing to sign up for that.

CHAZ

Fair enough. Care to handicap the Republican candidates?

JFK

Oh, I think it would be best to leave that decision to the august body of the Republican power brokers.

CHAZ

Of course, if history is any indicator, they tend to usually nominate the next person in line, so I wouldn't expect a lot of drama at the Republican convention here in Chicago.

JFK

And that next person in line would be Richard Nixon. Would that be fun?

Chaz beams another sly smile.

CHAZ

Assuming you would be the nominee on the Democratic side?

JFK laughs aloud and good-naturedly wag his finger at Chaz.

JFK

You are very clever. But that announcement is not going to come at this point in time.

CHAZ

Fair enough.

JFK

Fair enough.

CHAZ

Senator Kennedy, thank you for joining us here in our inaugural program.

JFK

It was a pleasure.

The studio sound decreased, the lights dims. JFK and Chaz rise from their chairs and shake hands.

Brad Philips gives Chaz a thumbs-up gesture from the booth. Mr. Lou Carmichael hurries into the studio and heads over to Chaz and JFK.

MR. CARMICHAEL

I couldn't resist, I just wanted to witness the interview in person. Chaz, nice job. Senator Kennedy, you are an amazing interview. You're like a rock star.

JFK

I don't know about that, but I think it was a damn interesting interview.

JFK runs his fingers through his hair like a Hollywood movie star.

JFK (CONT'D)

Lou, thanks for setting this up. It can only mean good things for this country.

MR. CARMICHAEL

Well, I'm offering to take my son-in-law to a brunch at the Langham. If you would like to join us, Senator Kennedy, you are certainly invited.

JFK

Yes, I might enjoy that. I think we might have quite a bit in common.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: JOHN F. KENNEDY WENT ON TO BECOME THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. HE TRADED SOME LETTERS WITH CHAZ CONNER, INVITING HIM TO JOIN HIS MEDIA AIDE, WHICH THE LATER DECLINED.

THE TWO MAINTAINED A GOOD RELATIONSHIP. EXCHANGING WRITING EACH OTHER FROM TIME TO TIME.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A crowd of men, women, and Children line up the road all the way to the plaza in anticipation of the arrival of the president. Many wave small handheld versions of the American flag.

Security operatives try their best to keep the crowd in check.

SUPERIMPOSE: NOVEMBER 22, 1963. 12:00 PM.

An open Lincoln Continental convertible drives into view. In the car is president JFK and his wife. They wave to the cheerin crowd as they car continues to move.

An escort vehicle trails behind the president's car.

EXT. DEALEY PLAZA - CONTINUOUS

The crowd cheers loudly waving their flags rapidly. Chaz stands in the crowd observing.

... The Lincoln Continental pulls to a stop in front of the building.

Suddenly, a loud gunshot is heard. Many heads turn left and right, but most doesn't react as they think it's a firecracker.

Another gunfire follows. This time, the bullet explodes JFK's head. His hands involuntarily grip toward his neck, and his wife, in horror, tries to jump out of the back of the convertible.

A secret service agent jumps out of the trailing car and pushes the First Lady back into the convertible.

There is pandemonium in the crowd as bloody convertible races off.

In shock, Chaz hastily walks off down the street.

EXT. PARKLAND MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Chaz is standing in front of the hospital with his crew for a live broadcast. Several nurses are behind him in the background shading tears and hugging their colleagues.

SUPERIMPOSE: NOVEMBER 15, 1963. 2:00 PM.

CHAZ

I stand here before you at Parkland Hospital in Dallas and sadly report the most historical assassination in this country in over hundred years. The president is dead. The First Lady is in tears. The entire nation is in state of shock. And within days, the entire world will be mourning for the loss of this

(MORE)

CHAZ (cont'd)
 one charismatic leader who has,
 until minutes ago, been widely
 considered the shining star of the
 future.

Chaz pauses briefly.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
 There is stunned silence all around
 me. Whispers and tears. Disbelief
 and despair. Thirty short minutes
 ago, there was a frantic state of
 panic, but with the pronouncement
 of President Kennedy's
 death...which, according to the
 hospital, was result of a 'mortal
 wound'...the pavilion here is
 quiet. We will undoubtedly know
 more in the minutes to come, but
 for now, let us say a prayer for
 his widow, for his children ... and
 for this nation.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: LEE HARVEY OSWALD, THE SHOOTER AND
 KILLER OF JFK, WAS ARRESTED AFTER SHOOTING OFFICER J.D.
 TIPPIT. HE WAS APPREHENDED FOUR BLOCK FARTHER AT THE TEXAS
 THEATER.

INT. NBC NIGHTLY NEWS STUDIO - DUSK

Chaz is on a live broadcast of the evening news. He has a
 bloody face, but unfazed about it.

CHAZ
 The theater of the bizzare
 continues. Just a few minutes ago,
 the alleged assassin of the
 forty-third president of the United
 States was murdered in full sight
 of the Texas police force in their
 police station. I was standing
 perhaps two feet from the gunfire.
 Perhaps you can see the awful blood
 of the anarchy on my face.

Chaz pauses briefly.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
 The man jumped out of the crowd,
 and is reputed to be a man called
 Jack Ruby, who is alleged to own a
 (MORE)

CHAZ (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 major striptease club in Dallas. As
 of this time, we do not know his
 other connections. Perhaps it is
 with Cuba or with the Soviet Union
 or with other connections within
 the United States. As of now, we
 only know the man jumped out of the
 crowd and decided to kill a killer.

Chaz, with some sense of drama, takes out his pocket
 handkerchief and wipes off the blood on his face.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
 We are now in an uncertain world.
 However, we are now the most
 sympathetic nation on earth. The
 planet loved this president. The
 world abhorred a miscreant who
 would choose to murder him, And we
 are now confused by the order of
 law that would allow him striptease
 manager to kill him, point-black,
 in front of those who are in charge
 of his safety. We have a lot to
 figure out, do we do?

Chaz just stares blankly at the camera for a few seconds.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: ON MAY 6, 1970, CHAZ CONNER PUBLISHED
 AN EDITORIAL IN THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE TITLED "ENOUGH IS
 ENOUGH." IT EXCORIATED THE POLICE ACTION AGAINST THE
 STUDENTS OF KENT STATE, WHO WERE DEMONSTRATING TWO DAYS
 EARLIER AGAINST THE NEVER ENDING VIETNAM WAR.

AS A RESULT OF THE CONFRONTATION, FOUR COLLEGE STUDENTS WERE
 SLAIN, SPARKING AN OUTRAGE IN MANY US CITIES.

"IT'S BAD ENOUGH THAT WE ARE KILLING TENS OF THOUSANDS OF
 VIETNAMESE. BUT NOW, WE HAVE TURNED THE BULLETS ONTO OUR OWN
 COLLEGE STUDENTS. AT WHAT POINT WILL WE ASK, 'WHAT'S THE
 POINT?'" -- CHAZ CONNER.

CHAZ CONNER'S SON, LEW, WENT ON TO FIGHT IN THE VIETNAM WAR
 AFTER OPTING TO JOIN THE ARMY, INSTEAD OF GOING TO COLLEGE.
 HE DIED AFTER TWO WEEKS IN THE WAR.

INT. CHAZ'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The house is quiet. No one in sight. The telephone on the coffee table is ring.

SUPERIMPOSE: 1974.

Chaz walks into the room and answers the phone.

CALLER (V.O)
Chaz Conner, please.

CHAZ
(humbly)
This is he.

CALLER (V.O)
Wow, you sound like yourself.

CHAZ
I usually do.

CALLER (V.O)
This is ROONE ARLEDGE, the big muckety-muck of ABC News, and I am trying to shake up things here on West Fifty-Seventh Street of New York. I've watched your One on One videotapes and have a hunch you might enjoy the shake-up. It could be good for your career and for ABC.

Chaz pauses for a few seconds.

CHAZ
Is that your exact title:
muckety-muck?

Roone can be heard laughing at the other end of the phone.

ROONE
See, that's the quick wit I want on the news, especially the news interview shows. What do you say we get together next Wednesday in NY for lunch? My treat. Michael's on Fifty-Fourth Street. Are you game?

CHAZ
I'll be there at 1:30 p.m.

INT. MICHAEL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The enviroment is serene. A few customers sit at tables enjoying tranquility it offers.

A middle-aged-man in his fifties walks up to the table. This is ROONE ARLEDGE. He dazzles in a Paul Stuart suit. He sit at a table waiting patiently.

Chaz walks through the door. His eyes scans the room for a moment. Roone spots him and waves at him. Chaz walks over to him.

ROONE

(shaking hands with Chaz)

My name is Muckety-Muck ... but you can call me Roone.

CHAZ

My name is Chaz, but you can call me Chaz.

Roone laughs at Chaz's confidence.

TIME CUT:

Chaz and Roone are now seated at the table sharing a bottle of wine.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

If you want me to replace Jim McKay, I am not as good as him on lugging competitions, cliff-diving, or pole vaulting.

Roone smiles.

ROONE

No, what I have in mind is a news program ... but with the pace of Wide World of Sports. Unlike my mistakes with ABC Evening News, I don't want many different anchors. I want one anchor...you. Yeah, sure there can be other reporters in the field. But one clever guy pull it all together. Chaz Conner. And here's the angle. Given America's shrinking attention span, I don't want any segment to be longer than ten minutes. Boom. Boom. Boom. Some segments could be three minutes. Some could be eight minutes. But

(MORE)

ROONE (cont'd)
 nothing should be longer than ten
 minutes.

Roone continues his explanattion in mute. Everytime he says "Boom," he punches the air and smiles, as if it is a winning jab.

After the explanation, Roone looks at Chaz for a reaction.

ROONE (CONT'D)
 What do you think? You are the one
 guy for this. I have seen you vamp.
 I have seen you get the quotable
 quotes in the morning news reviews
 ... interested?

CHAZ
 (instinctively)
 Yes.

ROONE
 Great. I took the liberty of
 drawing up a contract.

Cockily, Roone proffers and pantomimes a reach into his pocket. Chaz's face wrinkles in surprise.

CHAZ
 Not so fast...I said I am
 interested, but not completely
 sold. I have a wife who has a job
 in Chicago, and she is important to
 me. I have a daughter who is in her
 last year of high school. I have a
 job at the Trib that has been my
 mainstay of life for the past
 fifteen years. I have an audience
 at WMAQ every Sunday.

ROONE
 All true. All considered
 (smiles)
 What? Do you think I would ask you
 to give up your family for this
 job?

CHAZ
 I don't know. This is the first
 time I have actually met you.

ARLEDGE

Well, I wouldn't. At least on a first lunch.

EXT. MICHAEL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Chaz and ROONE exit the restaurant. Both have a look of satisfaction on their faces. The two men shake hands.

CHAZ

The supposed contract, was it a ploy?

ROONE

Do you actually want to make news with your interviews?

CHAZ

(looking Arledge in the eyes)
In my case, it might possibly be just egotism, or just a desire to beat the competition to the headline...but I do crave a scoop. I always have.

Chaz pauses for a moment.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I always will. I absolutely love writing. I absolutely love reporting. But more than all of that, I love being the first with the story.

INT. CHAZ'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Chaz sits on the sofa. He holds the telephone receiver to his ear with optimism. Roone is on the end of the phone.

CHAZ

I've been thinking. It sounds interesting ... but would it be possible to base this out of Chicago?

ROONE (V.O)

It would be a little of a challenge, especially since I am something of a control freak ... but it's not impossible.

CHAZ

I don't think any particular news segment should be less than five minutes. I know you said it could be three minutes at our lunch. Too short for anything other than headline news.

ROONE (V.O)

Agreed. How many news stories do you envision covering in sixty minutes?

CHAZ

At least eight. I totally agree with the concept of fast news. My proposal? No story beyond ten minutes.

ROONE (V.O)

I think it's time for another lunch in NYC.

CHAZ

You name the place.

ROONE (V.O)

I like the influence of our first lunch at Michael's on Fifty-Fourth. Perhaps that might be goodluck for both of us.

CHAZ

Noon on Sunday.

EXT. MICHAEL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

It is a sunny Sunday afternoon. A taxi pulls to a stop at the roadside: Chaz and Leah alight from the backseat. The husband and wife heads for entrance looking all graceful.

LEAH

I don't mind meeting the guy, but I don't want this to be an interview about me.

CHAZ

Honey, it will not turn out that way. This is a chance to break some bread and get to know each other. If Roone decides to pitch a job right here in front of you and his

(MORE)

CHAZ (cont'd)
 wife, that will be a deal breaker,
 I promise yu. He wouldn't do that.
 He's not that kind of guy.

INT. MICHAEL'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Roone Arledge and his wife, JOAN ARLEDGE, sit at the bar waiting for their guests. Roone spots Chaz and Leah approaching. He quickly gets off his stool.

ROONE
 Wow, he's right. You are a
 beautiful woman.

Leah flashes a bright smile. Joan stands beside her husband.

ROONE (CONT'D)
 And this is beautiful Joan. Joan?
 Chaz. Leah, I am Roone.

They all shake hands and blow air kisses. Then Roone turns to Chaz.

ROONE (CONT'D)
 Chaz, I thought it might be good to
 discuss a contract before we sit
 down for appetizers.

Chaz is shocked. Leah gives him an "I told you this was a bad idea" look.

Roone suddenly bursts out laughing.

ROONE (CONT'D)
 I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding.
 (to Leah)
 Leah, I promise you ... if I were
 ever to try something like that,
 Joan would divorce me. She may want
 to anyway, but mixing business with
 pleasure is not a very good brunch
 idea.

Relieved, Leah and Chaz just smile. Roone claps his hands as a segue.

ROONE (CONT'D)
 We are just here to have fun and
 make some new friends. That's it.

The quartet make themselves comfortable at a reserved table.

EXT. MICHAEL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A limo is waiting at the roadside. The driver, SERGE, stands beside the car waiting.

Chaz, Roone, and their wives exit the restaurant. The quartet hugs each other and bid their "goodbyes."

Serge opens the backseat of the limo, Leah enters. Roone holds up a finger to Chaz as he tries to enter the car.

ROONE

Just one more thing. Your wife is great. Please let her know that I had fun with the two of you. I will call you next week. We should talk about business. This was not the time or place. But someday soon, I hope it will be the time and place.

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

... Chaz joins Leah in the car. Serge closes the door.

LEAH

So, he wants to talk to you, but was smart enough not to do it here.

CHAZ

Yes.

Leah nods in admiration.

LEAH

I must admit he does have a sense of spontaneity and a pretty good sense of humor. Believe you me, I was completely flummoxed by his desire to discuss a business contract with you within thirty seconds of meeting me ... and completely won over when he revealed that it was just a joke.

(pauses)

He's a little charming, like you. You are very similar beings.

Chaz smiles.

CHAZ

I like him.

LEAH

I can see why. Let it marinate a while, my dear. I really do not want a disruption in my life at this time ... but I get the business chemistry.

The car pulls away. Chaz reaches over and takes Leah's hand.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: 1978: LEAH CONNER'S MIDLIFE TRANSITION.

INT. CHAZ'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Leah and Chaz sit at the dining table. There is tension in the air, at the least the frowned faces of the couple says so.

CHAZ

Look, Leah, I think we can gain a fresh start in Manhattan, especially since Serena has been accepted at Columbia University.

(pauses)

This is a no brainer. We both get a chance to reinvent our lives in the most exciting city on earth.

LEAH

No, my roots are here. My life is here. My friends are here. That maybe good for you and Serena, but not for me.

Chaz is flummoxed by her inflexibility.

CHAZ

Well, let's just say that a genie came downright now at this dining room table and said, 'I'll grant you a wish. Tell me how you wish to spend the next fifteen years, and it will come true.' What would your answer be?

LEAH

Chaz, that's a ridiculous game. And my life is not a goddamn game.

TEXT: CHAZ AND LEAH WENT ON TO HAVE A MESSY DIVORCE AFTER MONTHS OF ARGUING. CHAZ MOVED TO MANHATTAN TO WORK AT ABC STUDIO. LEAH WENT IN PURSUIT OF A MASTER'S PROGRAM AT LOYOLA.

INT. 21 CLUB - NIGHT

It's a busy night at the club. Customers sit at different tables making the most of their night.

Roone and Chaz are spotted at a table enjoying some drinks. They enjoy each other's company.

CHAZ

There is a rumor that Tom Brokaw would soon replace David Brinkley on NBC Nightly News. And Dan Rather has just assumed the job at CBS, after the venerable Walter Cronkite.

ROONE

He won't last. Too much fire and ire for the Nightly News.

Roone takes a sip from his glass of wine.

ROONE (CONT'D)

Look, a few years back, I appointed a troika of newspeople to climb out of the basement ratings. Unfortunately, Frank Reynolds has died recently, and Max Robinson is not considered ready for the sole anchor chair. What do you think?

CHAZ

Are you asking whether I am interested in the job? I definitely am not. I am a little too freewheeling to be strapped in an anchor chair every evening.

ROONE

(smiling)

I agree. What do you think of Peter Jennings?

CHAZ

Never met him, but I like him ... and I don't think he is too aristocratic for an American audience. He just sounds like a bloke who is smart.

Roone lights up a cigarette and salutes Chaz.

ROONE

You are a smart man, and a huge asset to the network.

CHAZ

And you, I believe, are a friend.

ROONE

I feel same way about you. As a friend, I need to figure out a way to expand the franchise of What's Next? without diluting your national appeal.

CHAZ

What do you mean?

ROONE

I want to expand the program to twice a week. Wednesdays prime time and Sunday.

CHAZ

I don't know that I have enough hours in a week to do that.

ROONE

You don't. That's why I am proposing a different format for Wednesday.

Chaz takes a sip of his vodka and smiles. Roone smiles back.

ROONE (CONT'D)

Chaz, don't panic. You will full control of both programs. Given the success of the show, it is bad business to not expand the franchise... and you must be the anchor of both shows. Otherwise, it is not a franchise.

CHAZ

Good to hear.

ROONE

However, two touring shows a week is too much to put on the shoulders of any one person. So we will need to build up a staff of correspondents who will report to you.

CHAZ

Will I have the authority to hire
the correspondents?

ROONE

Yes, but with a second interview by
me. After all, it is my damn
network.

CHAZ

Twice a week. Twice the work.

ROONE

Twice the pay.

CHAZ

Deal.

Chaz and Roone shake hands.

TEXT: THE CORRESPONDENTS CHAZ HIRED ARE: JON SCOTT, KAITY
TONG, MEREDITH VIERA, AND STAR JONES.

INT. CHAZ'S NEW HOME / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In a moderately furnished living room. Chaz sits on the
couch holding the telephone receiver to his ear. A bright
smile on his face. He is on a call with Serena.

SERENA (V.O)

Dad, seriously, you are turning
into "Crazy Eddie."

CHAZ

It's not that bad, is it?

SERENA (V.O)

Not quite, but every time I turn on
the tube, I see you.

CHAZ

Yeah, well, let's see each other in
person. How about dinner Wednesday
night?

SERENA (V.O)

Great. I might want to bring a
friend. His name is TOM.

CHAZ

Wow, so I should maybe be on my
best behavior?

SERENA (V.O)
That would be nice.

CHAZ
Cafe des Artistes, 8:00 p.m. Bring
Tom.

SERENA (V.O)
Bring your manners.

CHAZ
Love you.

SERENA (V.O)
Love you back.

INT. LANDMARK RESTAURANT / BAR - NIGHT

It is a lively night at the restaurant. Several customers occupy different tables enjoying night-out alone, in pairs, or with family. Chaz sits at the bar as he downs a shot of "Stoli on the rocks."

Serena (22), and her boyfriend, TOM (25), show up behind her father. Chaz immediately stands up from his seat.

Serena hugs and kisses her father. You could tell just how much they have missed each other.

CHAZ
Oh my God, you get more beautiful
every time I see you.

SERENA
And, Dad, this is my friend TOM
CONLEY. We go to school together at
Columbia. Different disciplines but
similar interests.

Chaz extends his right hand and shakes Tom's hand firmly.

CHAZ
Tom, I am very happy to meet you
... and look forward to getting to
know you better. Let's do it over a
delicious meal.

Chaz extends his hand toward the dining room and escorts Tom and Serena to their reserved table.

TIME CUT:

Chaz, Serena, and Tom are enjoying their dinner in good spirits.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
 (to Tom)
 Ok, let's change places.

In a dramatic but funny gesture, Chaz scoots out of the bench seat.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
 Tom, you sit in my sit.

Tom sits in Chaz's seat, while Chaz sits in his.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
 What are you studying?

TOM
 MBA.

CHAZ
 Why Columbia?

TOM
 My Princeton parents wanted a more
 citified experience.

CHAZ
 What's your favorite part of
 business?

TOM
 Innovation.

CHAZ
 Which newspaper, if any, do you
 read?

TOM
 Wall Street Journal and New York
 Times.

CHAZ
 How do you feel about my dear
 daughter, Serena?

Tom pauses for three seconds, then turns to Serena.

TOM
 I love her.

Chaz turns his gaze to Serena.

CHAZ
Have you anything to add?

SERENA
(laughs)
I don't know how I could get a word
in edgewise. Okay, I and Tom have
been going out for five months now,
and we have visited mom in Chicago.

CHAZ
How is she?

SERENA
You two don't talk?

CHAZ
Not too frequently.

SERENA
She likes her studies. And she has
a boyfriend.

Chaz is surprised.

CHAZ
Really?

SERENA
Some guy named Brad from the Art
institute.

Chaz takes a sip of his "Stoli." He rolls his eyes and
smiles at Serena.

CHAZ
I should probably give her a call
sometime and wish her well.

TEXT: APRIL, 1983. TOM AND SERENA WEDDED AT ST. CLEMENT'S.

FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS, CHAZ CONNER BURNISHED HIS IMAGE
AS THE PREMIER HOST OF BROADCAST MAGAZINES.

INT. ABC STUDIO - DAY

HARRY BELAFONTE, a middle-aged, African-American man in his
forties, is sitting in front of the studio camera with Chaz.
They are in the middle of an interview.

Harry looks sad as;

HARRY

The drought in Ethiopia has already claimed a million people, who has died of starvation. The UK has already come to the fore with a video called 'Do They Know It's Christmas.' But I believe that the US is the most generous country on this planet ... and I intend to mount a campaign for humanitarian aid to this part of the world.

CHAZ

Well, please let us know how this proceeds...

INT. ABC STUDIO - DAY

QUINCY JONES, a young African-American in his thirties, is in the middle of an interview with Chaz.

CHAZ

I understand you are concerned about the famine in Africa.

QUINCY

As should we all be, as citizens of the world.

CHAZ

Do the rich people in Hollywood and in the music business really care about this?

QUINCY

Well, perhaps we will see.

CHAZ

Do you have plans to unite the creative community out West to make a movie about this...or a TV special, or a concert?

QUINCY

We simply want to raise the consciousness of the problem in the best way possible.

CHAZ

There is a ninety-second video about the ugly feminine I'd like you to see.

The ninety-seconds video is played on a screen hanging behind Chaz and Quincy. The duo swirls in their seats and watches the video.

QUINCY

Thank you for raising attention to this tragedy.

Quincy extends his hand to Chaz and shakes him.

QUINCY (CONT'D)

Perhaps with your help, we can change the world.

Chaz turns his gaze to the camera.

CHAZ

Wouldn't that be nice? Wouldn't that be a wonderful What's Next? consequence for people who really need food to survive?

The lights on the set dims. Chaz and Quincy stands up.

QUINCY

I really appreciate you bringing that video up. You have upped the ante on the issue.

Chaz and Quincy head out of the studio room.

INT. WINGS - CONTINUOUS

... Chaz and Quincy walk in. The two stop and face each other.

QUINCY

I get the sense this isn't just about ratings.

CHAZ

If it were about ratings, I would never do a story on Ethiopia. No, no, no ... This is a human tragedy that must be addressed.

QUINCY

You've got the right attitude.

CHAZ

Anything I can do to help.

QUINCY

I just may do that. If you get a call from Quincy, return it. You might have to get on a plane in a matter of hours, but it will probably be worth it.

CHAZ

You've got a deal.

INT. ABC LEGAL DEPARTMENT - MIA'S OFFICE - DAY

A young lady in her thirties sits at her desk. This is MIA HANRATTY. Chaz sits on the opposite side of the desk.

CHAZ

I have a special request. I would like to cover a very secret story with a cameraman and sound recorder, but the subject is panicked about prematurely releasing the information. Can you draw up a contract for me, the cameraman, and the sound engineer that will reassure them that their secret is safe with us? I'm not a lawyer, but it should exert some sense of penalty if any leak is attributable to us.

MIA

Sounds diabolically tantalizing. What's the nature of the project?

Chaz laughs.

CHAZ

See, that's the thing. I can't tell anyone. Is that a trick question just to see if I can't keep a secret?

MIA

No, I'm just curious.

CHAZ

It kills the cat.

MIA

From a legal standpoint, I need to ask some pertinent questions: Does it involve any government secret?

(MORE)

MIA (cont'd)

Does it include an expose of a business that might consequently sue this network? Does it involve any international security questions, or even vague areas? Is there a risk toward ABC for libel or slander? Are you willing to vouch for the veracity of the contact and reimburse ABC for all expenses if secret missions tends to be a wash?

CHAZ

The answers to all your questions are no, even the last one. I figure ABC should trust ne on this one. If I blow it, they can fire me.

MIA

I don't think they ever will.
(smiles)

I will draw up three contracts that you can present to your 'subject.' Between the two of us, they may not be legally binding, but most people are persuaded by a legal contract, and it may scare anyone from leaking information.

Chaz nods in agreement.

CHAZ

That will be enough.

MIA

I wish I could be there for this secret 007 mission.

CHAZ

So come with me. I am not trying to immediately get in the scak with you...seperate rooms. Although you are amazingly attractive. But I do find you intellectually interesting and amazingly attractive just to repeat myself ... and it would be a big plus if I had a major attorney from ABC at my side as I tried to gain interviews from Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie, Billy Joel, and Bruce Springsteen.

Mia beams a bright smile.

MIA

Tantalizing. You may need me to
protect you from spilling the
beans.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: ON MARCH 8, 1985, WHAT'S NEXT?
TELECASTED A RARE ONE-HOUR SPECIAL FROM CHAZ ALONE THAT
CORRESPONDED WITH THE LIFE MAGAZINE STORY OF "WE ARE THE
WORLD."

INITIAL SHIPMENTS OF 800,000 RECORDS SOLD OUT IN THREE DAYS.
IT BECAME THE FASTEST-SELLING AMERICAN POP SINGLE IN
HISTORY. IT RAISED OVER SIXTY-THREE MILLION DOLLARS IN
FAMINE RELIEF.

CHAZ AND MIA'S RELATIONSHIP GREW EVEN STRONGER. HE INVITED
HER TO JOIN HIS TEAM ON A TRIP TO COVER THE FALLING OF THE
WALL BETWEEN EAST AND WEST GERMANY.

INT. CAFE WINTERGARTEN - NIGHT

Mia and Chaz are enjoying schnitzel and spaetzle in a
candlelit booth. A few bottles of Beck's beer are on the
table.

SUPERIMPOSE: Literaturhaus, Berlin. November 7, 1989.

MIA

This city is great. Can't imagine
the flip side across the wall in
East Germany.

CHAZ

It's not pretty.

MIA

(curiously)
Been there?

CHAZ

A long, long time ago ... before it
was even called East Berlin. I hear
it is grim these days. But hey,
it's supposed to all change while
we here.

Mia beams a light smile.

MIA

You know, this whole thing is
Pandora's box. Once it's opened,
everything unfolds, explodes, and

(MORE)

MIA (cont'd)
tumbles out. There's no going back.
You can't put the toothpaste back
in the tube.

Chaz is lost in her eyes for a moment.

CHAZ
I love the way you completely mix
metaphors.

He toasts to her. Mia reciprocates with a bright smile.

EXT. BORDER OF EAST / WEST BERLIN - DAY

It is a happy scenes: Families are hugging one another in a display of pure emotion. There are tears of joy. Some men and youths celebrate with their sledgehammers. Ruins from the fallen wall litter the ground.

Chaz stands in front of his cameraman as they cover the live broadcast.

CHAZ
As a dear friend of mine told me
the other night, this is Pandora's
box. It has now been opened. What
flows from this is actually up to
us...on the East and on the West.
It could be the dawning of a great
new day. Or it could simply be a
happy pause, as we slide back to
old tensions and uncomfortable
geopolitical chess games. In the
midst of this celebration, we must
hope for the former. It is happy.
It is contagious. It is wonderful.

INT. GOTTLOB RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Chaz and Mia sit across from each other at a table. They are sharing a dinner of pork tenderloin and asparagus. Their wine glasses are filled with some fine German white wine.

A waitress walks toward the table with a bottle of champagne. Mia is surprised to see her approaching.

MIA
Yes, I congratulate you on a
wonderful report.

CHAZ

No, this is not for me. It is for us.

The waitress reach the table. Chaz and Mia watch patiently as she pours the wine into two champagne flutes, and then leaves.

Mia picks her flute to drink from it. Chaz reaches in his pocket and puts a small box on the table, leaving Mia shocked and confused. She sets down her flute.

A handwritten message on the cover of the box reads, "From Pandora."

CHAZ

Open it.

Slowly, Mia opens the box and discovers a sparkling ring in it.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I am not a young man. And I never imagined I would ever marry again. But this weekend, together with you, and together with the falling wall, I am filled with optimism. I am in love with you. As I said on last night's broadcast, 'It's happy. It's contagious. It's wonderful.' Here's what I didn't say in front of the viewing audience: I would never want it to end. So let's make this happen. We may as well laugh together officially.

Chaz pauses momentarily. He looks straight into Mia's eyes.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Will you marry me?

Quietly, Mia picks up her flute and sips from it. She sets down the glass and looks back at Chaz. She then moves her chair back and walks over to him. Slowly and passionately, she kisses him on the lips.

MIA

Yes. I thought you'd never ask.

INT. MICHAEL'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The setting of the restaurant has evolved to match the changing time. More exquisite decorations. Better dressed waiters.

SUPERIMPOSE: MID-JUNE, 2001.

It is a busy night as customers dine at different tables. Chaz and Roone are spotted at a table. A bottle of vodka stands between them on the table.

Roone is looking at Chaz in a surprised manner.

ROONE

Don't tell me you want even more money.

CHAZ

No, maybe less money.

Roone is dazed.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I think it might be time to pass the torch to a new group of hungry newsmen.

ROONE

You're still hungry, and the show still gets great ratings, thanks to you. I don't want to give that up.

CHAZ

Well, I don't want either, really ... but I think it's time. I can hang in until the end of the year, at which time you figure out a great send-off for me. And, Roone, you are the best guy in the world at reinventing a news genre. You'll figure out a way. You always have.

Roone takes a drink of his vodka. Then he takes a moment to let the news sink in.

ROONE

Chaz, here is a better deal. I will honor your desires partway. We continue on as is until the end of the year, at which time we revamp the show, and you become anchor emeritus for both What's Next? and

(MORE)

ROONE (cont'd)

ABC Evening News. I'm thinking six in-depth feature stories a year. At least half of them can be on your schedule.

Chaz smiles. His eyes twinkles showing how much he likes the idea.

CHAZ

Mmmm.

ROONE

What else are you going to do? Walk the beach with a metal detector? Play pickup games of chess down at Union Square? Shop? C'mon, Chaz ... you have too much affection for this field and too much expertise to simply walk away. We can work on a more relaxed schedule, which might be good for you and for the network.

CHAZ

I like the idea.

ROONE

But until January 1, we keep this quiet. And you continue as anchor extraordinaire for every broadcast of What's Next?. Agreed?

Chaz extends his glass to Roone's, and they clink.

CHAZ

Agreed. Hell, for all we know, we might have a great story or two between now and the end of the year.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

It is a sunny morning. People are walking to and from the sidewalk in a hasty manner. Chaz is spotted, slowly walking down the street leading to Lincoln Square.

SUPERIMPOSE: September 11, 2001.

Suddenly, the sound of a low-flying jet is heard. Chaz looks up the skyline and sees a jumbo jet flying really close to the skyscrapers.

CHAZ

Wow, that's unusual.

Chaz face wrinkles in worry as he takes a second look at the jet.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Something is wrong.

Chaz immediately picks up on his pace.

INT. ABC NEWSROOM - MORNING

The crew and technician are setting up for the next news program. Among them is BILLY BENSON.

... Chaz hurries in with a sense of urgency.

CHAZ

Emergency. Emergency.

Everyone quickly turns their attention to him.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I need a van, a news camera, and a sound guy ASAP. We need to head downtown. Something is wrong, and I want ABC to be the first with the story.

Billy quickly grabs his camera. A sound guy follows up. They storm out of the room with Chaz.

EXT. WEST SIDE HIGHWAY - DAY

Cars travel to and fro the highway. We spot a van with "ABC News" designed on it.

Thick smoke can be seen in the distance going up in the sky.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Chaz, Billy are seated in the front of the van as the driver speeds through traffic. The look on the faces of the trio suggest worry and confusion. They are all seeing the smoke and they can't wait to know where it is coming from.

EXT. GROUND ZERO - CONTINUOUS

It is rowdy scene. The jumbo jet has crashed into a skyscraper leaving it in flames...this is TOWER 1. People run helter skelter in fear and confusion.

... The ABC News van arrive at the scene. Chaz, Billy, and the driver jump down from the front seat. The SOUNDMAN jumps down from the back of the van.

Billy quickly sets up his camera. He looks up to see a second low-flying plane heading toward TOWER 2. He points his camera upward and follows the plane as it crashes into the tower.

More chaos. More people trying to escape for their lives. More smoke in the air.

TIME CUT:

The choas continues. Sirens are wailing. Police cars, ambulance, and Fire Service trucks are screeching to a halt.

Chaz is now standing in front of Billy's camera.

SOUND MAN

5...4...3...2...

CHAZ

... We are down here at the base of the World Trade Center, where something is wrong. Let me correct that...something is very, very wrong. At 8:14 this morning, an airplane crashed into America's most famous business structure. At first, we thought it might be an accident. At least, we could hope so. But within the next half hour, another airplane crashed into Tower 2. According to most experts, it's nearly impossible to believe that this is nothing less than orchestrated strike on America.

The fire service men run in and out of the burning buildings, saving whoever they can, and escorting them out.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

As you can hear from emergency vehicles behind me, this is a major dramatic catastrophe. At this point, we don't know why it

(MORE)

CHAZ (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 happened, or exactly how ... but as
 your first network on the scene, we
 will do our best to find out. Stay
 turned. Say a prayer. This is
 morning rush hour in New York, and
 people inside those burning
 buildings need all the help they
 can get.

TIME CUT.

The west tower has now collapsed leaving an array gray dust
 and smoke in the air. Fire service men, police officers, and
 first responders continue to patrol the scene giving
 assistance to whoever needs it.

Chaz stands before Billy's camera once more broadcasting the
 latest update.

CHAZ
 Just a few minutes ago, the entire
 west tower of the World Trading
 Center just collapsed, creating a
 gray-out of smoke ... and untold
 deaths. This city...and, in fact,
 the entire nation...is in disbelief
 that such an attack could cripple
 an entire nation. At 9:08, all
 airplanes are banned from taking
 off at any NYC airports. At 9:21,
 all bridges and tunnels were
 closed. At 9:37, another jet
 crashed into the Pentagon in
 Washington DC. It's as if the
 entire nation is under siege.

The scene becomes very smoky darkening our screen. Soon, the
 smoke clears up just a for us to see Chaz now covered in
 soot and ash. He continues his broadcast.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
 We do have exclusive footage of the
 United 175 as it struck Tower 2.
 Look at this amazing act of
 terrorism.

Suddenly, Chaz faces wrinkles in more worry.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
 Wait. Wait. I just have it that a
 fourth plane has just been crashed.
 Oh my goodness. This one fell from
 (MORE)

CHAZ (CONT'D) (cont'd)
the skies in Somerset,
Pennsylvania, just southeast of
Pittsburgh. We pray that there will
be no other catastrophes, but as
anyone knows by now, the disasters
are coming in cascades. Just to
repeat the big news here from
ground zero, Tower 1 has just
collapsed, and...

Chaz quickly turns his attention to an undisclosed person in the background.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
Yes, yes, yes.

Chaz quickly returns his focus to the camera in front of him.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
Evidently, the police are asking us
to move from this spot, as it is a
potential danger zone. We will give
you as much information as we can
until we are forced to...

Suddenly, the sound is lost as thundering noise is heard. Billy quickly pans to his left and captures TOWER 2 as it collapses.

Visual is lost from the camera as a gray smoke engulf the scene.

INT. ABC NEWSROOM - SAME TIME

Several staffs are watching the live collapse broadcast on the monitoring screens. Their faces show fear and despair as they stare at the screens that show nothing but gray and white ashes.

INT. STUDIO - SAME

JON SCOTT sits at the news desk addressing the camera soberly.

The screen behind him displays the live video from the collapse scene.

SCOTT

We don't quite know what happened there at the location, but we have lost connection with our crew and our beloved anchorman, Chaz Conner. According to some adept camerawork from our camera hero, Billy Benson, it appears as if the second World Trade Center tower has fallen. At this time, we have no confirmation of this, but Benson appeared to have captured the collapse on film ... until our entire crew was disconnected. Oh boy...

In a show of emotion, Scott gulps revealing his anxiety.

SCOTT

This is a brave crew and we hope and pray that everyone is safe. Meanwhile, we will fill you in on other developments on this horrific day. Hold on. Hold on. We have some good news. We have Chaz Conner on the line right right...the bravest man in broadcasting...along with his inveterate crew who have survived the collapse of Tower 2.

Scott turns to the screen behind him, which shows a clearer picture of a more chaotic scene.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Chaz? Are you there?...

Chaz emerges on the screen. He is covered in white and gray dust. His dark suit and white shirt are now monochromatic light gray.

CHAZ (V.O)

Jon, we are fine.

BACK TO GROUND ZERO

Firefighters, police officers, and first responders run helter skelter looking for ways to get into the collapsed buildings and save more people.

... Chaz stands before Billy's camera. The soundman stands next to Billy. They are almost unrecognizable with the amount of dust they are covered in.

CHAZ

... But I fear to say that many of the people trapped in that building are no longer fine. It was an awful collapse, and you have to believe that there were many trapped people in that building. Whoever diabolically engineered this event must be a very sick person. Let us get our bearings here, and we will have more reports. We will try to ascertain casualties, the whys and the wherefores, and try our best, as always, to answer the question: What's Next?

EXT. GROUND ZERO - NIGHT

Police officers, Firefighters, machineries continue to scavenge the site for survivors. A news agency litter the parimeter broadcasting.

SUPERIMPOSE: 10:00 P.M.

We spot Chaz and his crew in the mix: Chaz is still covered in ash, standing in front of Builly's camera.

CHAZ

We have had a miserable event happen today, akin to Pearl Harbor. Who knows how many lives were lost in this tragedy? Who knows how many brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers will no longer be able to connect with their loved ones? Tomorrow at 8:00 a.m., we will try to explore that question. Until then, hug your loved ones and remind yourself how important they are.

INT. CHAZ'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mia stands in the middle of the room with a sad look on her face. She is staring at the door with teary eyes.

... Chaz comes in. He is still covered in dust and ash. Sadness wrinkles his face. He quickly moves and gives Mia a tight hug.

FADE TO BLACK.

INSERT: GEORGE W. BUSH - 9/11 BULLHORN SPEECH.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: IN THE NEXT SIX DAYS, CHAZ BROADCASTED EVERY EVENING FROM GROUND ZERO. HIS MARATHON BROADCASTS BECAME THE STAPLE OF INFORMATION FOR ALL NEW YORKERS AND THE NATION.

EXT. GROUND ZERO - NIGHT

This is now a less busy site, but retains the rubble from the destruction. Volunteers, firefighters and machineries continue to scavenge the site.

Chaz is standing in front of Billy's camera one more as he broadcasts the news.

CHAZ

I want to thank the viewers for tuning in and encourage them to keep the faith. What's Next? I have a hunch that we will someday see a silver lining through these gray skies. It might take some sacrifices on our part. It might take a few years. But keep the faith. We have bounced back from Great Depressions and World Wars... and will bounce back from this tragedy as well. It is in our DNA. It's the way we are made. It's what makes this nation special. You know it, and I know it.

Chaz pauses for a second.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I will see you on the regular broadcasts of What's Next? this Wednesday, but we will revisit this scene many times in the months to come...if for no other reason than to let the volunteers down here know that we appreciate their efforts and that this tragedy will never be forgotten.

INT. CHAZ'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Chaz and Mia are sitting on the couch. They both appear older than the last time we saw them. Mia is staring at her husband graciously.

SUPERIMPOSE: 2008.

MIA

What do you think you will do?

CHAZ

I'll do more of what I want to do. Seven or eight special reports a year, most of which I will choose.

MIA

Don't you think you will be bored?

CHAZ

I hope not. For one thing, we will have more time to travel and enjoy some dinners without me having to check my cell phone every damn minute to see if I need to get on a plane by 10:50 p.m. I won't have to have a piece of luggage prepacked for the fast gataways. And I won't have to research the entire world hours every day just to be conversant with every newsworthy person on the plannet.

Mia sighs.

MIA

I repeat the question. Don't you think you will be bored?

CHAZ

Not with you at my side, my dear. You have always had a knack for surprising and exciting me.

INT. ROONE'S OFFICE - DAY

Roone sits behind his desk in a spacious office. Age seems to be catching up with him also. Chaz sits on the other side of the desk.

CHAZ

The time is up, Roone. I can't keep going.

Roone nods in agreement.

ROONE

You're right, Chaz. It has been a hell of a ride. But, just to be clear, you know I will never give you up without a fight.

CHAZ

(smiles)

You will have to do just that this time. But, I'll be willing to take on one last assignment before I close this page.

Roone's eyes twinkle with curiosity.

ROONE

Which assignment would that be?

CHAZ

I could cover the inauguration of the first African-American president ever elected in the United States. I promise that will be my last.

Roone just smiles.

TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN: BARRACK OBAMA WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT. CHAZ CONNER LOBBIED HARD AND BECAME THE TRUE ANCHOR EMERITUS AND CORRESPONDENT IN CHIEF AT THE EVENT.

INT. ABC NEWS STUDIO - DAY

Chaz is sitting at the newsdesk broadcasting his closing speech for the inauguration.

CHAZ

Today, history was made. Fact is, it is made every time a US president is sworn into office, but this was a rather special inauguration. For the first time, an African-American was sworn into office. It was accompanied by the one and only Aretha Franklin, who sang "My Country, 'Tis of Thee."

(MORE)

CHAZ (cont'd)

The invocation was given by the evangelist Rick Warren, and the Bible used for the oath of office was the same exact one used by Abraham Lincoln. How fitting?

For the first, we see the people watching from the wings behind the cameraman and soundman. They are: Mia, Serena, LOUIS (Chaz's grandson), Tom, Rooney, friends and colleagues. They wait patiently to celebrate with Chaz.

Mia holds two flutes of champagne. Everyone else holds one.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Yesterday, on Martin Luther King Day, thirteen thousand community-service projects took place in the nation. Perhaps that's a testament to a changed nation. Perhaps it will be one where we care a bit more about our fellow man, woman, and neighbor.

Mia beams an emotional smile with tears-filled eyes.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

I am here today with my wife, my daughter, my son-in-law, and my grandson to witness this inauguration. I must admit, when I was a young boy, I never imagined such an event could happen in my lifetime. I am so glad to have survived long enough to see it happen. There is no downside to this whatsoever. As I used to sign off in my favorite show What's Next? ... and as Beach Boys sing today, 'God only knows.' As Barack Obama's poster declares: Hope. I will be doing so in the days and months again, and I hope you will be doing the same. Good night and good luck.

Chaz's cameraman and soundman motion they are off-air. Mia enters and hands Chaz one of the flutes.

Everyone else storm in, hugging and clinking glasses with Chaz.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Chaz and Mia sit on the hotel sofa watching a program on TV. There is a knock at the door.

Chaz walks over to the door and opens it. He is surprised to see Louis standing in the hallway with his hand behind his back.

LOUIS

Can I come in, Grandpa?

CHAZ

Of course.

Louis steps in.

LOUIS

I can't begin to tell you how moved I was by the inauguration and by your last words on TV. And I wanted to give you a gift to commemorate this event.

Louis reveals what he is hiding behind his back... It's a scroll, which he hands over to his grandfather.

CHAZ

(curiously)

Should I open it now?

LOUIS

Maybe tomorrow. But I predict you will like it.

Louis exits the room.

Chaz turns to Mia, shrugs, and then unfolds the scroll. It is Obama's presidential campaign poster.

Chaz breaks down weeping. Mia walks up to him and gives him a hug, consoling him.

INT. JOE ALLEN'S - DAY

Chaz, Mia, Serena, Tom, and Louis are sitting at table. They are enjoying some drinks and snacks. Everyone has added age and appear more matured.

SUPERIMPOSE: 2015.

CHAZ

I'm looking forward to this afternoon...partly because I am with my favorite people, and partly because I met Cyndi Lauper in my coverage of "We Are The World." She was a little wierdo then, but had loads of talent, and I predict we will soon see both this afternoon. Cheers.

Chaz raises his glass and clinks with everyone.

TOM

I guess there's no better time to say it, I've been promoted as the office manager at Marrill Lynch.

Chaz and Mia are surprised.

MIA

Congratulations, Tom.

CHAZ

Congratulations, I guess. Does that mean you will cease giving stock advice to individuals that have trusted you for years? Will you now just manage employees?

TOM

It just means more hours. I stipulated that I wanted to retain my portfolio of important clients, many of whom are widows and would be discombobulated with a change of stewardship.

Chaz smiles and turns to Louis.

CHAZ

Lewis, do you understand the word 'discombobulated'?

LOUIS

Messed up.

CHAZ

Close enough.

(to Tom)

By the way, Tom, that is an honorable decision.

Chaz turns to Serena.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

And you, my dear Serena, what are you up to?

SERENA

I am getting bored as a high school guidance counselor. I think I may want to go back to grad school and figure out a different path.

CHAZ

Such as?

SERENA

Music therapy is the new thing. Or young-people cancer therapy. Or, more dangerous, criminal or drug-related therapy. I just want to figure out a new path.

Chaz lets it sink in for a moment.

CHAZ

If you feel in your heart and soul, you need a change, you definitely must change. By the way, you really sound like your mother a few decades ago. I assume you stay in contact. How is she?

SERENA

She is good. She's alone now but seems to be happy with her job at the Chicago Institute of Art, where she continues to teach a class each week on the psychological implication of the great masters. I've attended the lectures, they're quite good.

Serena turns her gaze to Mia.

SERENA (CONT'D)

And what about you, Mia?

Mia takes a sip of her white wine and smiles.

MIA

I am extremely happy at this stage of my life. In the past twelve months, I have given lectures on the 'One-Day University' program on the topic of libel. I have a

(MORE)

MIA (cont'd)
wonderful man who wishes to see me
smile every day. He has a wonderful
family sitting around this table.
And my dear man continues to
agitate ABC news to get on the
biggest stories of the week. Once a
journalist, always a journalist.

Chaz turns his attention to Louis.

CHAZ
Lewis, what about you? I know you
are only fourteen years old, but
what do you think you might want to
do in the next ten, twenty, or
thirty years?

All eyes turn to Louis.

LOUIS
Not sure.

CHAZ
I understand. But take a valid
guess.

Louis only ponders a brief moment.

LOUIS
I like to write.

Chaz pauses for some seconds. He looks upward and reminisces momentarily. He returns his gaze on Louis.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
You will never find a finer
profession. If you choose to write
for a living, I want you to have
the Waterman pen my mother gave me
when I chose to chronicle times.
(to Mia)
Mia, you know where it is. Maybe
you can find it, and make sure it
is delivered to Lewis. It has the
potential to write good things.

EXT. BROADWAY STREET - NIGHT

Chaz and Mia and walking down the sidewalk heading toward the Kinky Booths. Other individuals walk back and fort the sidewalk.

Chaz and Mia continue on their way. Suddenly, Chaz grabs his chest in agony and crashes to the ground.

Mia knees beside him in shock and fear. She quickly takes her phone out of her purse and dials "911."

MIA
(sobbing)
Hello... My husband just grabbed
his chest and passed out on the
ground... We are at the Eighth
Avenue... Please come now!

SCREEN TO BLACK.

SIREN SOUNDS.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Chaz lies in the hospital bed. Wires are attached to his both arms and his head.

Mia sits on a side of the bed, holding his hand and staring down at him. Her eyes are teary.

Slowly, Chaz opens his eyes in a groggy manner. He manages to look up at Mia.

CHAZ
I love you. Give Louis the Waterman
pen my mom gave me. Tell him to
write something wonderful.

Once more, He slips out of consciousness. Tears trickle down Mia's face.

Shortly after, Chaz opens his eyes once more and looks up at Mia.

CHAZ (CONT'D)
What's Next?...

The life support manchine begins to beep rapidly. Mia breaks down crying.

FADE OUT.

THE END.