

# Montana Joe

By Barry Cole

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. RURAL CEMETERY - MONTANA - DAY**

A small rural cemetery enclosed by a white-painted picket fence. A burial service has just concluded, and groups of MOURNERS make their way to their cars.

Among them is JOSEPH TONKAHASKA, a tall, handsome man in his mid-twenties with jet black hair reaching down to his broad shoulders. He is dressed in a sombre suit, white shirt and black tie. Walking beside him is his wife, SHANNON. A year or so younger than Joseph, she is an attractive woman with a slender figure and long blonde hair. Holding onto her hand is the couple's three-year-old son, BILLIE.

JOE

Honey, you and Billie go on back  
with your folks... I'm gonna take  
a ride out to the ranch.

SHANNON

Can't it wait until tomorrow?

JOE

I guess not.

SHANNON

Okay, but don't be too long.

JOE

I won't. I'll be back before supper  
I promise.

Joe kisses her quickly, ruffles his young son's hair and walks across to a new Jeep Grand Cherokee in the parking lot. He gets in and starts the engine.

Joe backs the Jeep onto the highway and accelerates away.

We move with it as it travels through miles of rolling grassland. Away in the far distance, snow-capped peaks dominate the horizon.

**INT. JEEP - RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY**

Joe turns off the highway onto a dirt road and pulls up alongside a rusting mailbox sitting atop a wooden post. Painted on its side in faded letters is the name.

"TRASK"

Joe lowers his window, reaches out and opens the mailbox. The box is empty. Joe closes up the flap, withdraws his arm and continues down the dirt road.

A timber-built ranch house with a shingle roof and wide front porch comes into view. Off to one side is a corral, and behind that, stables and a hay barn. The place is deserted.

Joe pulls up and turns off the engine. Leaning over the steering wheel, he fixes his gaze on the house.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

Joe climbs out of the Jeep and walks across to the house. Climbing the porch, he retrieves a key from the lintel above the front door and fits it into the lock.

**INT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY**

Joe steps in through the doorway and stands for a moment. The house is decorated in traditional Western style. In the living room, a stone fireplace with a high wooden mantel dominates the end wall. All the furniture is old but of good quality and solid. Home-made curtains hang at each window, and there are Navajo rugs scattered on the wood-boarded floor.

Joe walks into the living room. He picks up a framed photograph of himself and Bill Trask taken years earlier. He wipes the glass with his sleeve, sets the frame back down on the table and moves towards the rear of the house and into a narrow hallway with three doors leading off it.

Joe opens one of the doors and peers in. This had been his room, and it was just as he remembered it. Nothing had changed, his bed was covered by the same brightly coloured quilt, and his old Rodeo posters were still pinned up on the wall.

Next to his room was the bathroom, and opposite it the door to Bill Trask's bedroom. Joe, feeling like an intruder, opens it and steps inside.

**INT. BILL TRASK'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Joe shuts the door behind him and takes in the Spartan room. A single bed sits up against the back wall, standing beside it is a pine dresser. A straight-backed chair occupies one corner, and over by the window is a low table covered in a lace cloth. On top of the table, in a simple silver frame, is a photograph of a woman and a young boy. Beside it is an old leather football.

All the walls are bare save for one, which is completely covered in newspaper and magazine clippings.

Joe, amazed, scrutinises the clippings. They chronicle his football achievements in High School, College and the NFL.

After a while, Joe picks up the football and leaves the room.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH/PORCH - DAY**

Joe steps out onto the porch and sits down on the top step. Clutching the OLD FOOTBALL, he gazes pensively towards a dilapidated pick-up truck over by the corral.

**SUPER: "Thirteen Years Earlier"**

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - NIGHT**

A full moon reveals a young Joe and two other CHEYENNE TEENAGERS, all wearing jeans and windcheaters, moving cautiously towards the pickup. One opens the door, and they all climb in.

**INT. PICKUP - NIGHT**

One of the teenagers hot-wires the ignition. The engine ROARS into life. The driver lets out the clutch, and the truck shoots forward.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - NIGHT**

BILL TRASK, a lean, built man in his late sixties with thinning grey hair and a weather-beaten face, rushes out the front door. He is barefoot and wearing just a vest and long johns. Clutched in one hand is a RIFLE.

He throws up his rifle and FIRES at the pickup.

A FLASH of brake lights and the truck is gone.

Bill lowers his gun, curses, and then goes back into the house. A light comes on, and through the window we see him talking on the telephone.

**EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

A police patrol car is parked beside the highway. Seated in the front are TWO POLICE OFFICERS.

**INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT**

EARL, a portly middle-aged man with receding hair and a double chin, helps himself to a cup of coffee from a Thermos flask.

His partner, WAYNE, a skinny, fresh-faced twenty-year-old with slicked-back hair, stares thoughtfully up at the night sky.

WAYNE

You reckon them astrologer  
people really got names for  
all them stars, Earl?

EARL

Well, they sure as hell spend  
enough of our taxes looking at  
the darn things. If I had...

The car's two-way radio CRACKLES into life.

DESPATCHER (SO)

Control to all cars. We just  
got a call from Bill Trask. Says

(MORE)

DESPATCHER (CONT'D)  
his pickup has just been stolen.  
It's likely some kids from the  
Res and they'll sure as not be  
heading for the highway. Units  
in the area, please respond. Over.

Wayne instantly guns the motor and pulls onto the highway.

Earl, unprepared, spills coffee into his lap.

EARL  
Jesus Christ, Wayne, watch it,  
will you!

Wayne, oblivious, switches on the siren and hits the accelerator  
pedal. The car leaps forward.

EARL  
(dealing with the Thermos)  
And turn off that goddam noise.

Reluctantly, Wayne obliges.

#### **EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

The pickup truck is moving at speed, its tires screeching as the  
driver steers recklessly from one side of the road to the other.

#### **INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT - TRAVELLING**

Wayne, his adrenaline pumping, grips the steering wheel. The  
speedometer needle creeps past seventy.

Earl, scowling, mops up the coffee spill with his handkerchief.

Up ahead, the flash of tail lights illuminates the darkness.

Wayne sees them, he reaches out and flicks a switch, and the wail  
of the siren shatters the silence.

#### **INT. PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT - TRAVELLING**

The three teenagers are in high spirits, WHOOPING and YELLING. Then, the glare of headlights reflects in the rear-view mirror, followed by the sound of the police siren. The teenagers fall silent.

The driver glances across at his wing mirror, then slams his foot down hard on the accelerator, and the pickup truck picks up speed.

**EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

The two vehicles speed along the unlit highway, their headlights stabbing the darkness.

The driver of the pickup loses control, and the vehicle swerves off the highway and hits a fence post. Moments later, it comes to a sudden stop with its front wheels in a ditch.

The driver's door opens, and the driver clambers out and races off into the darkness. A second teenager runs after him.

Joe, with blood running down his face from a gash in his forehead, climbs groggily from the pickup.

The patrol car pulls up, blinding Joe with its headlights.

Wayne leaps out of the patrol car and, drawing his gun, he takes Joe into custody.

**INT. COURTROOM - MUNICIPAL BUILDING - HELENA - DAY**

Joe, a bandage covering the cut on his forehead, stands behind a desk facing the judge's bench. His ATTORNEY, an overweight man in a crumpled suit, sits beside him. Also present are Bill Trask and the two arresting officers.

The CLERK, a middle-aged man dressed in a dark suit, stands up. Clears his throat, he reads out the charges.

CLERK

Joseph Tonkahaska, you are  
charged that on the night of

(MORE)

CLERK (CONT'D)

September twentieth, you stole  
a motor vehicle from the home  
of Mr William Trask and that you  
drove said vehicle on the public  
highway in a dangerous and wreck-  
less manner and without the  
benefit of a driver's licence  
or insurance.

The JUDGE, a big-jawed man in his late sixties, with swept-back greying hair, peers at Joe over the top of his glasses.

Joe lowers his head.

JUDGE

Well, young fella, you heard the  
clerk read out the charges. Now  
I need you to tell me how you  
intend to plead. Guilty or not  
guilty?

And when Joe doesn't respond.

JUDGE

So what's it to be? You guilty  
or not?

JOE

Guilty, I guess. It was me who  
stole the pickup

JUDGE

And were you the one driving it?

Joe hesitates for a moment before replying.

JOE

Yes Sir.

Joe's attorney gets to his feet. He whispers in Joe's ear.

JOE

I mean, yes, your honor.



The judge throws the attorney an unfriendly look.

JUDGE

Are you sure about that? Only in their report the officers who made the arrest stated that there were other people in the truck with you.

Joe shoots a look at the two policemen.

JOE

No, your honor, there was just me. I stole the truck, and it was me driving it.

Earl glares at Joe, thinks about getting to his feet, then changes his mind.

The judge adjusts his glasses, scans the papers in front of him, then fixes his gaze on Joe.

JUDGE

I see you took a knock on the head... Could be you're not remembering things too well?

Joe averts his eyes. Remains silent.

JUDGE

Only in their report, the officers say they found some blood on the windshield, right about where the passenger might have hit his head if he'd forgotten to buckle up. Which seems mighty strange to me, seeing you say there was nobody else in the truck with you.

Joe looks across at the two police officers.

JOE

I recollect being flung around some when I crashed. Could be that's when I hit my head.

The judge ponders for a moment.

JUDGE

Has your attorney made you aware  
of the severity of the sentence  
you can receive for committing  
these offences?

Joe's attorney jumps to his feet.

ATTORNEY

Your Honor, I ...

JOE

Yes, your Honor. He told me I  
could go to jail.

Joe's attorney returns to his seat.

JUDGE

Did he now, and yet you still say  
there was nobody else involved.

JOE

Yes, your honor.

JUDGE

Very well then... I

Bill Trask jumps to his feet.

BILL

You mind if I say something  
your honor?

The judge looks over his glasses at Bill.

Flustered by the interruption, the clerk stands up.

CLERK

Mr Trask, your Honor. It was  
his pickup that...

The judge waves his hand dismissively.

JUDGE

Yes, yes, I'm aware of that...  
Very well, Mr Trask, let's hear  
what you have to say?

BILL

Well, your Honor, it sure seems  
to me, like we're all gonna end  
up losers here.

JUDGE

Would you care to elaborate on  
that Mr Trask?

BILL

Well, no offence, your Honor, but  
from what I'm hearing this here  
trial is only gonna have one  
outcome.

JUDGE

Oh, and what might that be?

BILL

The boy's gonna get himself locked  
up, plain and simple...Now I ain't  
saying that he, don't deserve to be  
punished for what he's done. But the  
way I see it, you locking him up  
ain't what he needs, and it sure  
don't help get my truck fixed either.

JUDGE

You don't carry insurance, Mr  
Trask?

BILL

Just third party, your Honor...  
Ranching don't pay, real well.

A ripple of laughter runs through the courtroom.

JUDGE

Order! Order!

Fixing his gaze on Bill.

JUDGE

Well, Mr Trask, as you seem to have given the matter so much thought, perhaps you'd like to enlighten us on what you think a more suitable alternative might be. I take it you have something mind?

BILL

I sure do, let the boy come and work for me, your Honor. Least ways till he's earned enough to pay for the repairs to my truck.

A murmur goes up from the people in the courtroom.

BILL

I'll see to his room and board and pay him a fair wage.

The courtroom falls silent.

JUDGE

Well, Mr Trask, I can see how that might work for you. But I'm here to see that justice is served, and not getting your car fixed.

BILL

I appreciate that, your Honor, all I'm saying is, I reckon that paying his dues this way is a whole lot better for all concerned.

(glancing at Joe)

He, don't seem all that bad to me. A bit misguided, maybe. Could be a spell of hard work is all he needs to straighten him out.

The judge removes his glasses, sits back in his chair and deliberates on the matter.

Joe, bemused, stares across at Bill.

JUDGE

Well, Mr Trask, what you're suggesting is highly irregular, but it's not with out its merits, I'll grant you that.

He fixes his eyes on Joe.

JUDGE

You've heard what Mr Trask has to say. You have any objections to what he's suggesting?

JOE

No, sir, your Honor, I sure don't.

JUDGE

Counsellor?

ATTORNEY

No, your Honor, I have no objection.

JUDGE

Very well then. The court hereby rules that the defendant, Joseph Tonkahaska be placed into the custody of Mr Bill Trask until such time as he has paid for the repairs to Mr Trask's vehicle by forgoing payment for his work.

He looks hard at Joe over his glasses.

JUDGE

Now I've not taken this decision lightly, young fella, and I expect you to carry out your obligation to this court and Mr Trask. Fail to do so, and I will see to it that you are severely dealt with. Is that understood?

JOE

Yes, your Honor. I sure won't let you down, I promise.

JUDGE  
See to it that you don't.

The judge looks across at Bill.

JUDGE  
Mr Trask, I'll see you in my  
office directly.

He brings down his gavel.

JUDGE  
Court is adjourned.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

A police patrol car driven by Earl pulls up outside the house.

Bill steps down off the porch and walks towards the car.

Earl lowers his window.

EARL  
Howdy Bill.

BILL  
Earl.

EARL  
I brought your new hired hand.

The car's rear door opens. Joe gets out, clutching a duffel bag.

BILL  
So, I see... You got time for  
A coffee?

EARL  
No, thanks all the same, but I'd  
best be heading back.

BILL  
Suit yourself.

EARL

I hope you know what you're doing.

With a dismissive wave, Bill turns away. Accompanied by his dog, he heads towards the barn. Joe follows them.

**INT. BARN - DAY**

A wide timber building with a sloping roof and dirt floor, there are double doors at each end, and a row of stalls lines each side. A number of stalls have horses in them. The door to a small tack room stands open. Bill leads Joe inside.

**INT. TACK ROOM - DAY**

A narrow room with a cobweb-covered window allowing in some daylight. A bed is pushed into one corner, and an assortment of saddles, bridles and ropes cover the walls. Joe wrinkles up his nose at the overpowering smell of horse liniment.

BILL

Bed ain't much but it's solid,  
and there's an outhouse behind  
the barn. You take your meals  
up at the house: My cooking  
ain't fancy, but nobody's died  
from it yet.

Joe puts his duffel bag on the bed.

BILL

Come on up to the house when  
you're settled in.

JOE

(stroking the dog)  
What do you call your dog?

BILL

Can't say as I ever gave him a  
one. Speaking of names, you want  
me to call you Joe or Joseph?

JOE  
Joe is just fine.

BILL  
You call me Mr Trask, okay?

Joe nods.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

Joe sits on an upturned crate applying a coat of paint to Bill's newly repaired pickup.

A beat-up station wagon towing a horse trailer drives up and parks alongside the corral.

Bill greets the driver.

BILL  
Howdy, Charlie.

CHARLIE, a short, stocky man approaching sixty, with a weather-beaten face and deep-set eyes, climbs out from behind the wheel. Dressed in jeans, boots and a quilted jacket with a battered Stetson pulled low across his face. The quintessential cowboy.

Favouring his right leg, he moves round to the rear of the trailer.

CHARLIE  
Got a real mean one for you this  
time Bill.  
(rubbing his leg)  
Son of a bitch kicked me yesterday,  
an dammed near broke the bone.

Bill calls across to Joe.

BILL  
Open the coral gate and then go  
and fetch a couple of ropes.

Joe puts down his brush and hurries away.

Moments later, he returns with the two ropes.



Charlie lets down the tailgate.

Bill takes one of the ropes, opens the trailer's side door and climbs in.

A moment later and the horse backs out, kicking out with its hind legs.

Charlie moves out of range. Joe stands ready with the second rope.

Pulls on the halter, Bill leads the horse into the corral, and Joe closes the gate behind them.

Charlie closes the tailgate as Bill walks across to him. The two men shake hands.

Charlie climbs into the station wagon and winds down the window.

BILL  
I'll give you a call in a couple  
of days, okay?

CHARLIE  
You watch out for that mean son  
of a bitch now.

BILL  
Hell, I've broken worse.

CHARLIE  
I sure hope they ain't gonna be  
famous last words.

Bill slams his hand down on the roof of the station wagon.

BILL  
Get out'a here, you old Coot.

The station wagon drives away in a cloud of dust.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

Bill is in the corral with Charlie's horse. Despite his best efforts, he is not having much success in getting a saddle on it.

Joe, busy applying a second coat of paint to the pickup, looks on.

Bill finally gives up and leads the horse back into the barn.

He emerges moments later, and clearly in a bad mood, he stomps off towards the house.

**INT. BARN - NIGHT**

Joe emerges from the tack room with a blanket in his arms.

He crosses to the stall where Charlie's horse is stabled, opens the door and goes in.

**INT. STALL - NIGHT**

Joe bolts the door, spreads out his bedding on the straw and lies down. The horse eyes him nervously.

**INT. TRASK RANCH/KITCHEN - DAY**

Bill is preparing breakfast. The sound of the dog BARKING draws him to the window. He looks out towards the corral and sees Joe riding Charlie's horse.

BILL

Well, I'll be darned.

Bill watches for a moment, then opens the window and shouts out.

BILL

Breakfasts on the table!

Bill closes the window, crosses to the stove and breaks two eggs into a frying pan. The eggs sizzle in the hot fat.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

Bill and Joe emerge carrying a variety of tools: a post-hole

shovel, wire cutters and a nail-box and walk across to the pickup. Looped over Joe's shoulders are coils of baling wire.

In the back of the truck are several fence posts. Bill and Joe dump the tools and wire on top of them.

Bill walks towards the driver's door, hesitates, turns and throws the keys to Joe.

BILL

Say, how about you drive?

Joe catches the keys. Embarrassed, he lowers his head. He knows he's been found out.

JOE

I can't. I never learned how.

Bill resists the urge to smile.

BILL

Well, I guess now's as good a time as any to start. Get in.

#### **INT. PICKUP - DAY**

Bill sits behind the wheel and demonstrates the rudiments of driving. Joe watches, taking it all in.

Lesson over, Bill gets out, walks around to the passenger door and opens it. The dog jumps up onto the seat, and Bill climbs in after it.

Joe reluctantly slides behind the wheel, starts the engine and puts the truck in gear. He lets out the clutch too fast, and the engine stalls.

BILL

Try it again. Ease it off, real slow this time.

Joe starts the truck. Putting it into gear, he eases back on the pedal. The pickup slowly inches forward.

BILL  
Give it some more gas.

Joe pushes down on the gas pedal, and the truck speeds up.

BILL  
Okay, now put it into second gear.

Joe pulls down on the gear stick. The gearbox WHINES in protest.

BILL  
Push down hard on the pedal.

Extending his leg, Joe pulls down on the gear stick. Mercifully, the gears mesh smoothly, and the truck picks up speed.

Gripping the steering wheel, Joe stares in horror as the pickup begins heading towards the corner of the porch.

Closing his eyes, he yanks on the steering wheel.

Beside him, Bill whispers a silent prayer as the porch slides by unscathed.

Relieved, Joe drives the pickup onto the dirt road.

BILL  
You're doing just fine.

Unconvinced, gripping the wheel, Joe stares straight ahead.

#### **INT. PICKUP - DAY - TRAVELLING**

Despite Joe's best efforts, the pickup weaves erratically from side to side along the dirt road.

Suddenly, a front wheel hits a pothole and the pickup careers towards the fence.

Bill instinctively grabs hold of the steering wheel and yanks it over. As he does, the dog barks once and jumps out of the window.

Horrified, Joe stares after it.

BILL  
Don't pay him no heed... Time  
for you to worry is when I  
jump out!

Responding with a nervous smile, Joe focuses on his driving.

**EXT. OPEN RANGE - DAY**

A length of fence runs off into the distance. A section has been damaged. Fence posts are broken and tangled with wire.

The pickup pulls up, and Bill and Joe climb out. Bill surveys the damage while Joe begins unloading the truck.

**INT. PICKUP - DAY - TRAVELLING**

Joe is driving. Seated beside him are Bill and his dog.

BILL  
I ain't never had me a chauffeur  
before. I kinda like it.

Joe throws him a look and grins.

**INT. TRASK RANCH/KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Joe finishes the washing up and puts the dishes in a cupboard.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Bill crosses to the TV set, switches it on, and adjusts the volume.  
Joe walks in from the kitchen.

JOE  
Goodnight, Mr Trask. Thanks for  
supper.

BILL  
Say, you wanna watch the game?  
The Broncos are playing the  
Raiders.

Joe smiles his thanks and sits down on the sofa. Bill slumps into a beaten-up armchair and stretches out his legs.

**THE TV SET - MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL GAME**

The game kicks off.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER**

**TV SET**

The Broncos' quarterback is under pressure.

Bill, animated, leans forward in his chair. Shouts at the TV.

BILL  
Throw it away. Throw the damn  
ball away.

**TV SET**

The quarterback's pass is intercepted and run in for a touchdown.

Bill groans and slumps back in his chair.

BILL  
Damn fool. Why in hell's name  
do they always do that?

Turning to Joe, he sees that he has fallen asleep.

Bill gets up, switches off the TV set and leaves the room.

He returns holding a blanket. After spreading it over Joe, he turns off the lamp and leaves the room.

**EXT. LOCAL GROCERY STORE - SMALL TOWN - DAY**

Bill and Joe carry boxes of provisions from the store and load them into the pickup.

HARVEY STONE, a well-built man in his late fifties with close-cropped hair and dressed in a seersucker jacket and jeans, approaches them along the raised sidewalk.

HARVEY  
Morning, Bill.

BILL  
Harvey.

HARVEY  
This here your new hired hand?

BILL  
Yup, sure is.

HARVEY  
Kinda young ain't he?

BILL  
Young is fine by me. I got me  
enough age for the both of us.

HARVEY  
Can't argue with that, but you  
sure you ain't breaking the law?

BILL  
Hell no. Matter of fact, I got  
me a judge's say-so.

HARVEY  
Yeah, I heard all about your performance  
over at the courthouse. You sure got  
some nerve, Bill Trask, and that's a fact.

Bill looks across at Joe and winks.

BILL  
Oh, I'd say it worked out just  
fine for all concerned.

Joe smiles and goes back into the store.

HARVEY  
Well, most folks wouldn't agree,  
but I reckon your heart's in  
the right place... You coming  
to the Friday night game?

Bill climbs into the pick-up.

BILL  
You gonna win this time?

Harvey tosses a dismissive hand and strides away. Without turning his head, he shouts over his shoulder.

HARVEY  
I'll see you Friday.

BILL  
I'll be there.

Joe comes out from the store, loads the last box and gets in behind the wheel.

#### **EXT. SPORTS GROUND - COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY**

A football game is underway. An appreciative CROWD look on from the Bleachers. Bill and Joe sit with them.

Harvey, head coach for the Coulter High School team, acknowledges them with a wave.

On the sidelines, the Coulter High CHEERLEADERS go through their routine. SHANNON, a very pretty fifteen-year-old with long blonde hair, catches Joe's eye.

Shannon notices him too and likes what she sees.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

Coulter High's running back is tackled, and the play ends.

The punt kicker jogs onto the field.

The ball is snapped. The kicker shanks the kick, and the football sails over the heads of the crowd.

Joe outruns a pack of BOYS and retrieves the football. With apparent ease, he throws a perfect pass back to an OFFICIAL, who catches it.



Bill watches the incident with interest.

**INT. PICKUP - DAY - TRAVELLING**

Joe is driving. Bill sits beside him.

BILL  
You play much football, son?

JOE  
Oh, I fooled around some, but I  
ain't never played in a real  
game before. Why?

BILL  
Oh, no particular reason.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

The pickup pulls into the yard. Bill and Joe climb out.

Wagging its tail, the dog ambles across to them.

BILL  
Wait here.

Bill disappears into the house. Joe makes a fuss of the dog.

Bill reappears moments later carrying an old leather football. He  
tosses it to Joe.

Joe catches the football and gives Bill a puzzled look.

Bill turns and walks away.

BILL  
Stay put.

Bill stops when he is beyond the corral and turns to face Joe.

BILL  
Okay, now let's see you make  
that throw again.

Joe shrugs, sets himself, and throws the football. The ball sails through the air in a perfect spiral.

Bill jumps up and makes the catch. Throws the football to Joe.

BILL

Try it again... Don't put so much on it this time.

Joe sets himself and throws the football back to Bill.

Bill catches the perfectly thrown pass.

**BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS - TRASK RANCH**

A) Bill and Joe bring in a small herd of horses.

B) Bill and Joe are throwing the football.

C) Joe is painting the side of the barn.

D) Bill imparts quarterback skills to his protégé.

**END SERIES OF SHOTS**

**INT. BARN - DAY**

Joe puts fresh straw into a stall.

BILL (SO)

Hey Joe, come on out here.

Joe puts down the pitchfork and walks to the barn door.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH/AREA OUTSIDE BARN - DAY**

A steady rain is falling. Bill stands out in it; held in his hand is the football.

The barn door opens, and Joe peers outside.

BILL

Come on out.

Joe hesitates.

BILL  
Heck, it's just a little rain.

JOE  
If it's all the same to you  
I'd just as soon stay in here  
and tend to my chores.

Bill smiles slowly and holds up the football.

BILL  
Time you learned football ain't  
just a fair-weather game.

JOE  
But I got chores to do.

BILL  
Chores can wait... Now get on out  
here before I drown.

Joe turns up his collar and steps outside.

Bill throws him the football.

Joe grabs at the ball, but it slips from his grasp and falls onto the ground.

BILL  
Slippery little devil ain't it?

Joe retrieves the football and throws Bill a wobbly duck!

Bill manages to hold onto the badly thrown pass and wipes his hand under the armpit of his jacket.

BILL  
Dry off your hand next time.

Bill throws the football.

Joe catches it cleanly. Takes Bill's advice and throws the football back to him.

Bill and Joe pass the football back and forth. The rain soaks their clothes, making them cling to their bodies.

### **THE PORCH**

Bill's dog, head on paws, watches them fixedly.

Bill makes a catch, loses his footing and falls onto his backside in the mud.

Joe, struggling to keep a straight face, helps Bill to his feet.

Bill catches Joe unaware and pulls him down onto the muddy ground.

The two men lay on their backs in the mud with the rain washing their faces. Simultaneously, they both burst out into fits of laughter.

Abruptly, Bill falls silent. Something has just occurred to him.

BILL

You know what we need?

JOE

A bath, maybe?

BILL

Hell no, what we need is more  
players.

### **INT. TRASK RANCH/KITCHEN - DAY**

Bill is at the stove. He drops a pat of butter into a frying pan.

Outside, the dog begins to bark.

Bill takes the pan off the stove. Crossing to the window, he looks out.

### **EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

The front door opens, and Bill steps onto the porch. Pulling on his battered Stetson, he looks across at the pickup.

**THE PICK-UP**

Joe stands by the driver's door, a huge grin on his face. Forming a line beside him are seven CHEYENNE BOYS of varying ages and sizes.

Bill steps down off the porch and crosses to the pickup. Straight-faced, he walks along the line of boys like a parade ground NCO.

JOE

You said we needed more players?

BILL

I do believe I did.

Bill ponders a moment, then softens his expression.

BILL

You fellas ate breakfast?

The seven Cheyenne boys shake their heads from side to side in unison. No.

BILL

Well, I guess we can't have you  
playing football on an empty  
stomach now, can we?

The seven Cheyenne boys exchange enquiring looks with each other.

Bill turns away and walks towards the house. The seven Cheyenne boys troop after him.

BILL

Be sure and wipe your boots.

**BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS**

- A) Bill makes breakfast for his 'players'.
- B) Bill organises the boys into offense and defence.
- C) Joe showcases his quarterback skills.
- D) Bill takes a hit from a young William Perry lookalike.

E) Practice over, the Cheyenne boys pile into the Pickup.

**END SERIES OF SHOTS**

**EXT. LOCAL TOWN - DAY**

Bill drives his pickup along the main street. He slows when he spots Harvey coming out of the barber shop sporting a GI haircut.

Bill calls out to him through the open driver's window.

BILL

I see you sure got your money's worth.

Bill pulls up alongside the sidewalk.

HARVEY

Least I got me some hair to cut.  
Not like some folk I could mention.

Bill lifts his Stetson and runs a hand through his thinning hair.

BILL

Shucks, who needs hair when the good Lord gave us the Stetson.

Harvey laughs despite himself.

HARVEY

Where's your chauffeur today?

BILL

Oh, I like to keep my hand in.

HARVEY

You ain't forgotten about the Play-off game next week, have you?

BILL

Nope. I'll be there as always.

HARVEY

We got us a good team this year, Bill.  
I'm real optimistic.

BILL

Well, I guess the whole town will be  
rooting for you. Been a while since the  
Cougars reached the play-offs. Sure be  
nice to have a winning team to brag about.

HARVEY

Well, ain't nothing certain in football.  
Hell, you'd know that, but we'll give it  
our best shot.

BILL

Can't ask for more than that. I'll see  
you at the game.

Harvey waves after him.

#### **EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL/SPORTS GROUND - NIGHT**

The Play-off game between the Coulter Cougars and the Braxtonville Bears is underway.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

The Cougars' offense has the ball. They break from the huddle and move to the Line of Scrimmage. It's third down and eight on their forty-yard line.

#### **THE SCORE BOARD**

The game is tied at seven points each.

#### **BACK TO SCENE**

The ball is snapped. The quarterback looks downfield. He doesn't see the blitzing linebacker and takes a hard hit.

The center recovers the football, and the REFEREE signals the play dead with a blast on his whistle.

The Cougars quarterback leaves the field clutching his arm.

The PUNT KICKER jogs onto the field.

Concerned, Harvey walks across to the quarterback.

HARVEY  
You okay, Mitch?

MITCH  
I ain't sure, coach. It sure  
hurts like hell though.

Harvey beckons to a young COACHING ASSISTANT.

HARVEY  
Okay, we'll get the doc to  
take a look at it.

The assistant leads Mitch away.

### **PLAYING FIELD**

The Bears' kick returner catches the ball. He runs it back to the fifty-yard line before being tackled.

The Cougars' defense take the field.

### **INT. LOCKER ROOM**

The DOCTOR, a portly man in his late sixties, examines Mitch's arm. He turns to the assistant and shakes his head.

DOCTOR  
I can't be a hundred percent sure  
but my best guess is that the boy  
has a fractured arm. Either way, he  
won't be throwing a football for a  
while and that's a fact.

ASSISTANT  
I'll go tell Coach Stone... You  
want I should come back and run  
Mitch down to the hospital?



DOCTOR  
Yes, I'd be obliged. Sooner we  
get it X-rayed, the better.

The assistant walks quickly away.

**EXT. SPORTS GROUND/COUGARS SIDELINE - NIGHT**

The assistant approaches Harvey. He gives him the bad news about Mitch's arm.

**PLAYING FIELD**

KARL BECKENBAUM, a muscular, blonde-haired teenager, six two with broad shoulders and big hands. He is the Cougars' star linebacker.

He tackles the Bears' tight end. A blast on the referee's whistle signals the end of the first Quarter.

The teams change ends.

**COUGARS SIDELINE**

Harvey strides across to the team bench. He places a hand on the backup quarterback's shoulder. He tells him to warm up.

**PLAYING FIELD**

The Bears' offense lines up in shotgun formation on the Cougars' forty-yard line, it's third down and four.

Karl instinctively moves up onto the shoulder of the defensive end.

The ball is snapped. The quarterback buys time with a pump fake, then hands the football off to the running back.

Karl isn't fooled. He rushes forward. Evading the guard, he tackles the running back down for a loss of yardage.

**BLEACHERS**

The Cougars supporters CHEER wildly. Bill and Joe join in.

**COUGARS SIDELINE**

Shannon and the other Cougars cheerleaders wave their pom-poms. Behind them, the Bears' kicking team run onto the field.

**BLEACHERS**

Joe tries to spot Shannon, but his view is obscured by the crowd.

**PLAYING FIELD**

The referee spots the ball on the fifty-yard line.

The offense and defense face each other at the Line of Scrimmage. The Cougars have a first and ten.

The backup quarterback takes the snap. He hands the ball off to the running back. The back powers ahead for a five-yard gain.

**SIDELINE**

The CHAIN CREW moves the sticks.

**PLAYING FIELD**

The offense runs the same play and gains a first down.

**COUGARS SIDELINE**

Harvey looks on anxiously. After consulting his playbook, he sends two wide receivers into the huddle.

The running back and tight end jog off the field.

**PLAYING FIELD**

At the Line of Scrimmage, the backup quarterback calls the play. The defensive players adjust their formation in response.

The ball is snapped, and the defense blitzes.

Overwhelmed, the offensive line is pushed back.

The backup quarterback frantically looks for an open receiver. He sees a linebacker bearing down on him. Panicking, he throws a wild pass.

The covering cornerback intercepts the pass and runs in for a touchdown.

#### **BLEACHERS**

The Bears supporters go WILD.

Surrounded by silent, glum-faced Cougar supporters, Bill and Joe look on.

BILL

The kid's been watching too  
Many Monday night games.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

A fired-up defense leaves the field.

#### **BEARS SIDELINE**

The players watch as the kicker goes for the point after.

They whoop with delight as the football splits the uprights.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

The kickoff unit takes to the field. The Bears' kicker sends the ball deep into Cougar territory.

The Cougars' kick returner catches the football and begins his run-back.

Two Bears players head him off and force him out of bounds.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

The Cougars' offense, heads down, trots onto the field.

Harvey, in a vociferous voice, rallies his players.

Singling out the backup quarterback, he PATS him on the helmet.

**PLAYING FIELD**

The Cougars' fullback rushes for a first down and lifts the offenses spirits.

The offense moves up to the Line of Scrimmage. It's first and ten on their forty-yard line.

The center snaps the ball. The back-up quarterback spots an open wide receiver and gets off his pass.

The wide receiver makes the catch. Shrugging off a tackle, he races across the fifty-yard line.

A safety closes on him. Tackling the ball carrier, he drags him to the ground.

Pumped up, the backup quarterback takes the snap and fumbles the football.

Players scramble to recover the ball. A defensive lineman smothers it and secures a turnover.

Chants of Defence! Defence! Ring out from the Bears supporters.

**BLEACHERS**

Bill looks at Joe and pulls a face.

**PLAYING FIELD**

The Bears' offense begins their drive downfield. The quarterback throws for a first down.

The offense goes into the huddle. The Bears' head coach rotates his players.

The players move to the Line of Scrimmage. The center snaps the ball.

Dropping back, the quarterback hands the ball off to the fullback. Following his BLOCKER, he runs in for a touchdown.

**BLEACHERS**

The Bears supporters go WILD.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

Harvey, head in hands, turns away.

#### **EXT. SPORTS GROUND - NIGHT - LATER**

##### **THE SCOREBOARD**

Braxtonville Twenty-one - Coulter High Seven.

##### **PLAYING FIELD**

The Cougars have possession. The backup quarterback scrambles to avoid the pass rush. He throws the football to a wide receiver.

A Bears' linebacker intercepts the pass and runs it back. The Cougars' fullback tackles him.

##### **BEARS SIDELINE**

Looking up at the game clock, the Bears' coach sends on his field goal unit.

##### **PLAYING FIELD**

The ball is snapped. The catcher positions the football, and the kicker runs up and takes the kick. Turning away, he punches the air. Behind him, the football splits the uprights.

The referee blows his whistle for the half-time intermission. Both teams troop off the field.

#### **INT. COUGARS LOCKER ROOM**

The locker room has a tiled floor. Wooden benches line two walls, with a third row down the centre of the room. At the far end are twenty or so clothes lockers. A door with frosted glass leads into the showers.

Players sit with their helmets off, staring down at the floor, disconsolate.

Harvey moves among them, offering words of encouragement.

Bill and Joe walk into the locker room.

Leaving Joe by the door, Bill crosses over to Harvey and leads him over to a corner of the room.

Several of the players look across at Joe, standing by the doorway.

Joe acknowledges them with a nod, but they don't respond.

#### **FAR CORNER**

Bill and Harvey stand together like two conspirators.

BILL  
You're getting killed out there.

HARVEY  
You think I don't know that?

BILL  
Ain't you got another quarterback  
you can play?

HARVEY  
If I had, don't you think I'd  
play him? Jesus Christ, Bill, at  
times you sure ask some dumb-ass  
questions.

BILL  
Now don't go biting my head off.  
Could be I got me an idea that  
just might save your bacon.

Harvey stares at him and frowns.

BILL  
Now, what I have in mind may appear  
a mite unorthodox but just hear me  
out okay?

HARVEY  
I'm all ears.

BILL

You remember Joe, the young fella  
I got working for me? Well, he can  
play quarterback for you.

Harvey, nonplussed, slowly shakes his head.

BILL

I know it sounds kinda wild, but I  
know real talent when I see it and  
that boy's got more natural talent  
than you can shake a stick at. Heck  
he throws a football better than  
some pros, and that's a fact.

Harvey stares at Bill in disbelief. Recovers his composure.

HARVEY

Look, I ain't doubting what you're  
saying. I guess you, of all people,  
should know what you're talking about.  
but ain't you forgetting something?

BILL

And what might that be?

HARVEY

He don't attend Coulter High.

BILL

I know that, but Braxtonville sure  
as hell won't. You put a helmet on  
him, and nobody's gonna know he's not  
your regular quarterback. He's the  
same build, same height, the truth is  
they could be twins.

Harvey shakes his head.

HARVEY

I can't believe I'm listening to  
this bullshit. You know the rules  
as well as I do, and the fact is your  
young Indian ain't eligible to play  
and that's the top and bottom of it.

BILL

Come on, Harvey, you're telling me you  
you never bent the rules before?

HARVEY

Sure, I've bent the rules on occasion.  
Hell, who hasn't? But you're not just  
asking me to bend them, you're asking  
me to throw them out the window.

BILL

So what if I am? What about  
those kids?

Bill points towards the Coulter players.

BILL

The way I see it, if you send them  
boys of yours out there with that  
backup quarterback, they're gonna  
get beat so bad they ain't gonna  
want to play another game of football  
ever again. You want that to happen?

Harvey casts a rueful look at his dejected players.

BILL

Jesus Harvey, this is a play-of-game.  
When did Coulter High last reach the  
play-offs, eh? Never that's when...  
You owe it to them to at least give  
it a shot.

HARVEY

Look, I hear what you're saying, Bill,  
truly, I do, but even if I was to go  
along with it, there ain't no way he  
could play at quarterback for us. I  
mean he ain't even played football  
before, you said so yourself. Hell,  
I'd have to be plumb loco to do what  
you're suggesting.

BILL

You done talking?



Harvey scowls at him, then nods.

BILL

Good... Okay, so it's true he ain't never played before, but that don't mean he can't turn things around for you if you give him the chance.

#### **EXT. SPORTS GROUND - NIGHT**

The Cougars players emerge from their locker room. Joe brings up the rear. He is wearing the injured quarterback's uniform and helmet.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

Harvey takes Joe to one side. He draws some basic plays on a chalkboard.

Joe stares apprehensively at the lines and crosses.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

The Bears kick off. The Cougars' kick returner catches the ball and runs it back to the forty-yard line.

Offense and defense take the field. Joe lines up in shotgun formation. The football is snapped.

The defense comes on a blitz. Just in time, Joe spots an open receiver and gets off his pass.

The ball is dropped, and the play is called dead.

The offense hurries to the line of Scrimmage. The center snaps the ball.

Joe takes the football. Sidestepping a tackle, he runs for a first down.

#### **SIDELINE**

The chain crew mark off the yardage.

**PLAYING FIELD**

Growing in confidence, Joe takes the snap. Faking a pass, he hands it off to the running back, who rushes for an eight-yard gain.

Second and two. Joe spots a linebacker racing towards him. Avoiding the tackle, he steps up into the pocket and throws the football downfield.

**DOWNFIELD**

A wide receiver makes the catch and runs in for a touchdown.

**BLEACHERS**

The Cougars supporters CHEER and SHOUT.

**COUGARS SIDELINE**

Joe, elated, walks off the field. The placekicking unit runs on.

Harvey pats Joe on the helmet. Looks up towards Bill in the spectators' stand.

**PLAYING FIELD**

The extra point is good. Karl Beckenbaum leads the Cougars' defense onto the field.

**BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS - FIELD OF PLAY**

- A) The Bears quarterback throws an incomplete pass.
- B) The Bears' running back is stopped at the Line of Scrimmage.
- C) Karl sacks the opposing quarterback.
- D) The Bears' field goal attempt is no good.

**END SERIES OF SHOTS****EXT. SPORTS GROUND/BEARS SIDELINE**

The Bears' coach exhorts his players.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

Joe's teammates huddle around him. The referee blows his whistle. The players move up to the Line of Scrimmage.

The ball is snapped high. Joe jumps to catch it. The pass rush threatens to envelop him. Remembering Bill's advice, he throws the football away.

#### **BLEACHERS**

Bill smiles appreciatively.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

Second down and ten. Joe drops back into the shotgun. The defense blitzes. A defensive lineman grabs at Joe's arm. Spinning out of the tackle, Joe side-arms a pass to the running back. A linebacker drags him to the ground.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

Frustrated, Harvey YELLS at the offense.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

The offense responds. Stepping up, the fullback blocks a defensive end. Spotting a gap, Joe scrambles for a first down.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

First down on the Bears' thirty-yard line. Harvey sends on a third wide receiver. The tight end jogs off the field. Joe signals the play.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

The offensive line blocks the Bears' pass rush. Joe steps up and throws the football. The ball arcs through the air in a glorious spiral.

#### **DOWNFIELD**

The wide receiver out-jumps the covering safety and makes a spectacular two-handed catch in the end zone for a touchdown.

#### **BLEACHERS**

The Cougars supporters go MAD.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

Ecstatic, Harvey punches the air with his fist.

The cheerleaders shake their Pom-Poms at the crowd.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

The kicker makes the extra point. The referee blows his whistle and brings the third quarter to an end.

#### **EXT. SPORTS GROUND/PLAYING FIELD - NIGHT - LATER**

The Bears' offense has the ball. The quarterback hands off to his running back, who barrels forward for a four-yard gain.

The offensive players go into the huddle.

Karl moves among the defense, motivating them.

The referee spots the ball. The opposing teams face each other at the Line of Scrimmage.

Karl lines up outside the defensive end.

Chants of Defense! Defense! Reverberate around the playing field.

The ball is snapped, and the Bears quarterback backpedals. Looking downfield for an open receiver.

Karl powers forward. Evading the despairing tackle of an offensive lineman, he puts a blindside hit on the quarterback, who drops the football.

Leaping over him, Karl recovers the fumble for a turnover.

Triumphant, Karl holds the football aloft.

**COUGARS SIDELINE**

Harvey and the entire offense LEAP into the air.

**BLEACHERS**

Bill and the Cougars supporters are on their feet, YELLING. Bill makes his way to the steps.

**COUGARS SIDELINE**

Harvey looks up at the game clock. A minute and fifty seconds before the final whistle. Signalling to the FIELD OFFICIAL, he calls a timeout.

Harvey gathers the offense into a huddle.

**HARVEY**

First off, we don't panic. We got plenty of time on the clock, and thanks to our defence, we got good field position. Now Joe's passing has got them spooked, so my guess is they'll sit back.

(turning to Joe)

They're gonna be expecting you to pass on first down, so I want us to run the ball. Same on second down... They know we need a field goal to tie, so they're gonna come after us on third down. This is when I want you wide receivers to run post patterns and give Joe here a chance to kill them off with a pass play... Any questions?

The players shake their heads.

**HARVEY**

Just make darn sure you don't give up the football... Okay, fellas, go get'em.

As the Cougars' offense jog onto the field, Harvey takes Joe aside.

HARVEY

Call all your plays without a huddle, okay? I figure if you run the ball on every down, you got time for two first downs. Pass on third down if you can, but remember the important thing is to get us in field goal range.

JOE

Yes, coach.

Patting Joe on the back, Harvey turns around to find Bill standing beside him. Both watch as the two sides line up.

HARVEY

Hell, I ain't felt this nervous since you got me on a horse.

Bill smiles knowingly.

### **PLAYING FIELD**

The referee spots the ball.

Joe calls the play from the shotgun. Catching the football, he hands it off to the running back.

The running back cuts to the outside. A linebacker forces him out of bounds and stops the clock.

The offense hurries back to the Line of Scrimmage. The center snaps the ball.

Joe fakes a hand-off to the running back. The defence buys the decoy play. Evading his blocker, a defensive end, slams into Joe.

The play is whistled dead, and the umpire spots the ball.

The referee signals the CHAIN CREW onto the field.

The chain crew mark off the yardage.

The referee holds up his hands, palms facing, inches apart. Joe had failed to get the first down.

**BEARS SIDELINE**

The Bears' coach calls a timeout.

**COUGERS SIDELINE**

Harvey takes Joe and the team's wide receivers aside. He draws a play on his playboard. The four players focus on it.

**PLAYING FIELD**

The field official signals the timeout over. The players move up to the Line of Scrimmage.

Joe surveys the defense. The Bears' linebackers show blitz, but their three safeties remain deep in the backfield.

Joe signals his fullback to move up alongside him.

Third and inches. The center snaps the ball. Lined up on both sides, the Cougars' wide receivers race downfield. The Bears' safeties and cornerbacks shadow them.

The Cougars' offensive line is under pressure. A linebacker breaks through. The fullback blocks him. Under pressure, Joe looks downfield.

**DOWNFIELD**

Evading the Bears' cornerback, a wide receiver cuts infield.

**COLLAPSING POCKET**

Joe spots him. Setting himself, he throws the football.

**DOWNFIELD**

The receiver catches the perfectly thrown football and high steps into the end zone for the winning touchdown.

**COUGARS SIDELINE**

Bill and Harvey hug each other. The defense goes WILD.

**BLEACHERS**

The Cougars supporters WHOOP with delight.

### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

The Cougars' defensive players surge onto the field. Elated, the offense jogged towards them.

Harvey moves among the melee of players, congratulating them.

Spotting Shannon, JOE removes his helmet.

Magnanimous in defeat, the Bears' coach shakes hands with Harvey. Seeing Joe without his helmet, he frowns.

### **INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT**

Removing his uniform, Joe puts on his clothes.

All around him, players in various stages of undress let off steam.

Unnoticed, Joe slips away. As he makes his way to the door, a hand grabs him by the shoulder. Joe turns around.

KARL

Hey, you leaving already?

JOE

Yeah, I got a lift waiting.

KARL

Man, you were awesome out there tonight. When we lost Mitch, I sure as hell thought we were gonna get beat real bad.

JOE

You played pretty well yourself. I'm real glad I wasn't on the other side.

KARL

Say, how come you got to play for us, anyway? Coach Stone never said...

Evading the question, Joe turns away.



JOE  
Look, I gotta go. Maybe we can  
catch up later, okay?

KARL  
(puzzled)  
Yeah, sure thing.

As Joe heads for the door. Karl calls after him.

KARL  
There's a school dance tomorrow  
night. You're welcome to come  
along if you want; your call.

Joe heads out the door without replying.

**INT. LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL/SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT**

On stage, a five-piece band are playing dance music. TEENAGE COUPLES move around the floor. Off to one side, two TEACHERS are keeping a watchful eye on proceedings.

**FAR CORNER**

Shannon and two of her girlfriends help themselves from the refreshment table.

Karl approaches her and asks if she would like a dance.

Smiling, Shannon puts down her drink cup. Karl takes her hand and leads her onto the dance floor.

Shannon's friends watch. One places a hand on her heart and flutters her eyelashes demurely.

Looking over Karl's shoulder, Shannon pulls a face.

The two girls GIGGLE.

**EXT. SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT**

Standing outside, Joe peers in through a window. He sees Shannon and Karl dancing together.

**INT. SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT**

As they glide around the dancefloor, Shannon spots Joe looking in through the window.

The dance ends, and Karl walks Shannon back to her friends.

The band begins playing another tune. Two of Karl's TEAMMATES ask Shannon's girlfriends for a dance. The girls accept.

Leaving Shannon, Karl walks over to the buffet table. Filling two cups with lemonade, he surreptitiously removes a small flask from his pocket. Unscrewing the cap, he pours some of its contents into each of the cups.

Returning, Karl discovers that Shannon is gone.

**EXT. SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT**

Joe is looking in through the window. Stepping outside, unnoticed, Shannon walks towards him.

SHANNON  
Aren't you going to come inside?

Caught off guard, Joe turns to her.

JOE  
Oh, hi there. I was just...

Sensing his embarrassment, Shannon smiles.

SHANNON  
I'm Shannon, by the way.

JOE  
Pleased to meet you.

An awkward silence follows.

SHANNON

Well, aren't you going to tell  
me your name?

JOE

Names, Joseph, but most people call  
me Joe.

SHANNON

That's a shame, I think Joseph's a  
nice name.

JOE

Thanks. Guess I've just got  
used to people calling me Joe.

Silence follows. Then they speak at the same time.

JOE

So how long...

SHANNON

The game yesterday...

JOE

Sorry. You go first.

SHANNON

You played a great game yesterday.

JOE

You think so?

SHANNON

Yes, don't be so modest. If it hadn't  
been for you, we would have lost the  
game for sure. Randy is a nice guy,  
but he's not much of a quarterback.

JOE

Oh, he didn't do so bad.

SHANNON

They say Mitch, he's our regular  
quarterback has fractured his arm.  
So does that mean you'll be playing  
for us in the Championship game?

Ignoring her question, Joe makes his excuses.

JOE  
I'd best be going. I've got an  
early start in the morning.

SHANNON  
Maybe I'll see you in school?

Joe doesn't answer. Walking away, he stops and looks back.

JOE  
It's been real nice meeting you.

#### **HALL DOORWAY**

Karl stands in the doorway watching them, his face like thunder.  
Putting the flask to his lips, he takes a swig.

#### **INT. LOCAL TOWN/DINER - DAY**

A WAITRESS shows a family to a corner table.

#### **WINDOW BOOTH**

Two casually dressed MIDDLE-AGED MEN sit drinking cups of coffee.

MAN #1  
You hear about the football team?

MAN #2  
Yeah, but I guess rules is rules.

MAN #1  
So, you're saying if you had been  
the coach, you wouldn't have done  
the same?

Man #2 shrugs. Reaches for his cup of coffee.

MAN #1  
Well, I sure as hell would. I mean,

(MORE)

MAN #1 (CONT'D)

there ain't no way the Cougars were gonna win the game the way things stood. Any fool could see that. If you ask me, he didn't have much choice in the matter.

MAN #2

Now, I ain't saying I wouldn't have done what Coach Stone did. All I'm saying is he broke the rules and he got caught.

MAN #1

You reckon the team will get disqualified?

MAN #2

Sure, seems likely.

MAN #1

Don't seem fair somehow. I sure would have liked to have seen them play in the final. Especially if that young kid was playing at quarterback. He sure knew how to throw a football. I reckon he could have won the championship for us.

MAN #2

Could be your right. Been a long time since I saw a youngster play football like that. Quick feet and a strong arm, he sure had Braxtonville on the ropes and that's a fact.

MAN #1

Did Coach Stone say who he was?

MAN #2

Nope. Seems he won't say.

MAN #1

You reckon he'll lose his job on account of it?

The waitress approaches carrying a pot of coffee. She refills both men's cups.

MAN #2

Seems likely. The school board sure  
ain't gonna like their team being  
kicked out like that.

#### **ADJOINING BOOTH**

Grim-faced, Bill counts out some money and puts it onto the plate in front of him. He has overheard the two men's conversation.

He gets up and walks out of the diner.

#### **INT. LOCAL SCHOOL/HARVEY'S OFFICE - DAY**

Harvey sits at his desk signing some papers. He looks up when the door is suddenly flung open.

Seething with anger, Bill strides into the room.

BILL

Is it right what I am hearing?

Harvey stops writing and leans back in his chair.

HARVEY

I guess it all depends on what it  
is your hearing.

BILL

Don't go playing games with me.  
You know darn well what I am  
talking about. Are they gonna  
disqualify the team because Joe  
played quarterback?

Harvey gestures towards a vacant chair, but Bill ignores him.

HARVEY

Truth is, I don't rightly  
know.

BILL  
But it's a possibility?

HARVEY  
Yes, it's a possibility. A mighty  
strong one at that.

Bill THUMPS the desk hard with his fist.

BILL  
Damn fine mess that idea of mine  
has got you into.

HARVEY  
It may have been your idea, Bill,  
but it was my decision to go along  
with it, so don't go blaming your  
-self for what happened. Besides  
what's done is done, and there ain't  
a darn thing we can do about it.

Bill slumps down in a chair.

BILL  
You're sure taking this mighty  
calmly. Word is you could lose  
your job over this.

Harvey ignores the question and picks up an official-looking  
letter. He hands it to Bill.

HARVEY  
This came yesterday.

After scrutinising the letter, Bill puts it down on the desk.

BILL  
How in hell's name did they find  
out we played a ringer?

HARVEY  
Truth is, I don't know and they  
sure ain't gonna tell us, least-  
ways not until the hearing.

BILL  
What hearing?

HARVEY  
The one mentioned in the letter I  
just gave you. Can't you read?

BILL  
Alright, so my eyes ain't what  
they used to be.

Harvey holds out his glasses.

HARVEY  
You wanna borrow these?

BILL  
Hell no. Just tell me about this  
damn hearing.

HARVEY  
Nothing much to tell, it just says  
that Braxtonville High have lodged  
a complaint, and I have to appear  
before a hearing of the State  
Football Commission next month.

BILL  
This mean you get a chance to  
put your side of things?

HARVEY  
I ain't counting on it. Like as not  
all they're gonna say is that we broke  
the rules, and we've been disqualified.

BILL  
What, and you're just gonna roll over  
and let them?

HARVEY  
Face facts, Bill, we tried something  
we shouldn't have and got caught.  
Now we gotta take our medicine.



Bill removes his Stetson. Runs a finger around the headband.

BILL

Sure leaves a bad taste, though.

HARVEY

I guess it does. Still, one thing's for sure: you were right about your young Indian. The boys sure got a real talent for the game. Shame it's gonna be wasted.

Animated, Bill jumps to his feet.

BILL

When did you say this here, hearing was?

Harvey scans the letter.

HARVEY

The twenty-seventh of next month. Twelve days from now. Why are you asking?

BILL

I've got me an idea.

Harvey drops his head into his hands and GROANS.

BILL

Just hear me out, okay?

HARVEY

I'm listening, but this better be good.

BILL

What if I was to get Joe to attend school? You reckon that committee might go easy on the team?

Harvey, intrigued, straightens up in his chair.

HARVEY

Kinda like a goodwill gesture, you mean?

BILL

Something like that. I know it don't change things, but if they see he's back in school, they might go easy on you. What do you think?

HARVEY

I don't rightly know. I suppose it might help. No harm in trying, I guess.

Pulling on his Stetson, Bill heads for the door.

HARVEY

What if he don't want to go back to school? You thought of that?

BILL

Now you ain't doubting my powers of persuasion, are you? I got him to play football for you, didn't I?

HARVEY

I wish you luck.

**INT. RANCH HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Bill and Joe have just finished supper. After clearing away their plates, Bill fills the sink with water and begins washing up the dirty dishes. Joe picks up a towel.

BILL

I went to see Coach Stone today. Seems Braxtonville ain't too happy about him playing you at quarterback, the other night. He reckons the team could be disqualified on account of it.

JOE

That sure don't seem fair.

BILL

Fair or not, the truth of the matter  
is the State Football Commission  
might just do it.

JOE

Ain't there nothing anybody can  
do to stop them?

BILL

Well, the way they see it, with you  
not being a student at Coulter High  
you ain't eligible to play for the  
football team.

JOE

Shouldn't Coach Stone have known  
that?

BILL

The truth is, he did. But I persuaded  
him to do it anyway.

Joe puts down the plate he was drying and scowls at Bill.

BILL

Come on, you saw how bad things were.  
With that backup playing, they were  
gonna lose the game for sure.

JOE

So, it was your idea to get me to  
play for the team?

BILL

Sure as heck worked, too, didn't it?

JOE

Yeah, except now the team's gonna  
be disqualified because of it.

BILL

Maybe, maybe not. It all depends on  
how the State Football Commission  
sees things.

JOE

Seems to me if the rules were broken  
they don't have much choice.

BILL

Maybe you're right. But there is some-  
thing we could try, that might persuade  
them not to. We could get you enrolled  
at Coulter High... I ain't saying it'll  
work, but it's gotta be worth a try.

JOE

You're saying you want me to go back  
to school?

BILL

That's the general idea.

JOE

Well, there ain't no way that's  
gonna happen. No way at all.

BILL

Why, don't you want to try and put  
things right?

JOE

So, you saying this is my fault?

BILL

Hell no. I admit it was me who got us  
into this mess. All I'm trying to do is  
figure a way out of it, that's all.

JOE

And me going back to school, that's  
gonna fix the problem, is it?

BILL

I ain't saying that. All I'm saying  
is, there's just a chance that it might.

JOE

Well, I'm telling you now there's  
no way I'm going back to school.

BILL

Oh, is that right? And what about Coach Stone and the football team? You just gonna turn your back on them?

JOE

They ain't my concern.

BILL

Maybe not, but you sure as hell could help them out.

JOE

Seems to me that if anybody should be helping them out, it's you. Maybe if you tell this here Committee it was all your fault, they might see things differently.

BILL

You think I wouldn't if I thought it would do any good? Damn right I would.

Joe stares at him, but remains silent.

BILL (CONT'D)

Look what is it you've got against going back to school anyway? I mean it ain't like it's a bad thing. Heck, you could even get yourself a scholarship and go to college. Maybe even play college football. You sure got the talent for it, and that's a fact.

JOE

Got it all figured out, have you? Well, just because you got me working for you don't mean you can tell me what to do. I ain't going back to school and that's an end to it.

Bill rounds on him, his voice full of venom.

BILL

So, what are you gonna do then? Go back to that damn reservation of yours and waste your life away like the rest of the down-and-outs. Get drunk and do drugs. Steal folks' cars. Maybe even get yourself shot dead by some trigger happy Federal agent. Sure is some future you're looking at, boy.

Throwing down the towel, Joe storms out of the house.

**INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

Bill sits alone at the table. Across from him is Joe's plate, the food untouched. Bill picks up the plate and puts it on the floor for the dog to eat.

**BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS - TRASK RANCH**

- A) Joe is forking bedding into a stable when Bill leads a horse into the barn. They both ignore each other.
- B) Bill and Joe sit at the kitchen table, eating their evening meal in silence.

**END SERIES OF SHOTS**

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Joe is at the sink drying dishes.

Bill walks in and crosses to a cupboard. He opens a drawer and removes a tin box.

Setting it down on the table, he lifts off the lid and empties the contents: A folded invoice and a quantity of dollar bills in various denominations.

Joe watches as Bill unfolds the invoice, then counts out most of the money into a pile.

BILL  
That about covers the repairs.  
The rest is yours.

Bill offers Joe the remaining money.

Joe hesitates, then takes the money from him.

BILL  
That makes us fair and square. You  
can pack up your things, and I'll  
drive you back to the reservation  
in the morning.

JOE  
Yes sir.

Joe turns back to the sink.

BILL  
Leave that. Get yourself off  
to bed.

Joe sets down the towel and walks slowly towards the door.

#### **INT. TACK ROOM - NIGHT**

Joe lies fully clothed on the bed. Bill's dog lies beside him. He gazes out through the small window.

#### **INT. RANCH HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

The room is dark and silent. Bill, still in his work clothes, sits in his chair, the old leather football resting in his lap. Deep in thought, he absent-mindedly runs a hand over its worn casing.

#### **EXT. TRASK RANCH - MORNING**

Bill's pick-up is parked out front with its engine running.

Joe comes out of the barn carrying his duffel bag. He walks across to the truck and opens the passenger door.

**INT. PICK-UP - DAY**

Bill sits behind the wheel. Joe climbs in beside him and closes the door. They both sit staring out through the windshield.

BILL

I guess I owe you an apology for what  
I said last night. I had no right  
saying those things, and I'm real sorry.

Joe throws Bill a quick look.

JOE

That's okay. I guess you were  
pretty mad at me.

BILL

That ain't no excuse, I still shouldn't  
have said what I did. It ain't my place  
to go passing judgment on how other  
folks live their lives.

The two sit in silence for a moment.

JOE

I... I did me some thinking last  
night. About what you said an all.

BILL

I seem to remember I said a lot of  
things that I hadn't ought to.

JOE

No, I mean about me going back to  
school.

Bill looks at him questioningly.

JOE

Do you reckon I could play college  
football?

BILL

Sure, I do. Wouldn't have said so if  
I didn't mean it.



When Joe doesn't respond.

BILL

Course, getting a scholarship means  
Going back to school. And as I recall,  
you weren't too keen on that happening.

JOE

A person can change his mind if he  
wants can't he?

BILL

Sure, he can. Heck, I do it all the  
time.

Joe smiles, feeling a little more relaxed.

BILL (CONT'D)

So you telling me you're having a  
change of heart?

JOE

Could be I am.

BILL

Well, I'm might pleased to hear it.  
And before you go snapping my head off,  
it ain't got nothing to do with the  
ruckus over the football team. Okay?

Joe nods his head.

BILL (CONT'D)

The reason I got so mad was on account  
of you throwing away a God given talent.

JOE

You reckon they'll let me attend  
Coulter High... Me being...

BILL

You being a Cheyenne, you mean?

Joe nods.

BILL

As I recall, you being Cheyenne  
sure didn't seem to make one bit  
of difference the other night.

Joe ponders the remark for a moment.

JOE

I didn't think of that.

BILL

Besides which every American has the  
right to attend school. And I guess  
you're more American than most folk  
I know: Heck, you're more American  
than Christopher Columbus, and he  
discovered the place.

Joe throws Bill a look. Seeing the funny side of it, he smiles.

Bill switches off the engine and opens his door.

BILL

Course, I'll still expect you to pull  
your weight around here. Helping out  
after school and on weekends. You  
gonna have a problem with that?

Joe stares at Bill open-mouthed.

JOE

You saying that I can stay here?

BILL

Looks that way. Don't go thinking you're  
indispensable, mind. Truth is, I've kinda  
gotten used to having you around the place.

JOE

Gee, thanks, Mr Trask, I sure appreciate  
you keeping me on.

BILL

That's settled then. Now, how about you  
see to the stock while I fix breakfast?

Joe and Bill climb out of the pick-up. As Bill walks away towards the house, he CALLS OUT over his shoulder.

BILL

When you're done, you'd better move your things into the house... Can't have a sophomore student living out in the barn now, can we?

**EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY**

Bill's pick-up pulls up outside Coulter High School.

Joe gets out. After hesitating for a moment, he walks towards the building. Relaxing a little when he sees Coach Stone waiting for him outside the entrance.

Seated behind the wheel, Bill watches anxiously as Joe and Harvey disappear inside the building.

**EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY - LATER**

Bill is pacing up and down. He throws an anxious look towards the entrance. The door opens, and Harvey appears. Raising an arm, he waves.

Relieved, Bill climbs into his pick-up and drives off.

**INT. LOCAL TOWN/CLOTHING STORE - DAY**

Bill is in the men's wear section of the store. He selects two shirts and moves across to the rack displaying a selection of Levi's.

**STORE COUNTER**

Shannon finishes serving a customer and sees Bill checking a pair of Levi's for length. She walks over to him.

SHANNON

Hello, Mr Trask. Can I help you?

BILL

That's mighty kind of you, Shannon.  
Truth is, I've got a young fella  
helping out on the ranch, and he's  
kinda short on clothes.

SHANNON

Is he the boy who played quarterback  
for us in the play-off game, the other  
night?

BILL

You heard about that then?

SHANNON

Yes, it's all over the school. There's  
even a rumour that the football teams  
going to be disqualified on account of  
him not being a pupil.

Bill returns the Levi's to the rack.

BILL

Well, he is now. He starts school on  
Monday. The truth is that's why I'm  
here. His wardrobe ain't what you  
would call extensive!

SHANNON

Gee, that's great news... Does this  
mean the football team won't get  
disqualified?

BILL

Well, that I ain't sure of. Guess  
we'll just have to wait and see  
what's decided. The important thing  
is he's back in school.

SHANNON

Could be he'll be in tenth grade  
like me... I could call by and go  
over some of my class work if you  
like. Help him catch up.

BILL

Why, that's real kind of you, Shannon  
Shannon. I'd sure appreciate it. I  
ain't much with books myself.

Shannon turns her attention to the Levi's.

SHANNON

Any idea what size he is?

BILL

Can't say as I do. He's about six feet  
tall, I reckon, and kinda skinny.

Shannon smiles to herself. Kinda cute looking, she would have said.

She sorts through the Levi's and selects a pair.

SHANNON

These should fit just fine.

BILL

Guess I'd better take me two  
pairs while I'm here.

Shannon looks at the SHIRTS Bill is holding. She pulls a face.

Smiling good-naturedly, Bill hands them to her.

She leads him over to the shirt rack.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

Shannon rides up on horseback. Dismounts.

Stepping down off the porch, Bill takes the reins from her.

BILL

He, still behaving himself?

SHANNON

Oh, he gives me a little buck now  
and then, but he knows who's boss.

Bill smiles then, calls out.

BILL  
Joe, you got company, come on  
up to the house.

Shannon removes some school books from her saddlebag.

BILL  
Go right on in, Shannon.

Bill leads Shannon's horse towards the corral.

**INT. RANCH HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Shannon puts her books down on the table. Looks around the room.

The door opens, and Joe walks in. He smiles when he sees Shannon.

JOE  
Hi.

SHANNON  
Hi yourself.

Joe looks at the stack of books on the table.

JOE  
Wow! Sure looks like I got some  
catching up to do.

SHANNON  
It looks worse than it is. Besides,  
you will probably know a lot of this  
stuff anyway.

JOE  
Well, I doubt it, but thanks anyway.  
It's real nice of you to do this.

Shannon smiles.

Joe pulls out a chair, and Shannon sits down. Joe sits beside her.  
He watches as she selects a textbook.

Bill walks in and heads for the kitchen.

BILL (OS)  
You kids want something to drink?

Joe looks at Shannon. She shakes her head.

JOE  
No, we're both fine, thanks.

Joe and Shannon give their attention to the textbook.

**EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY**

Joe sits on a fence where the dirt road to the ranch meets the highway. He watches as the school bus approaches.

The bus pulls up. Jumping down from the fence, Joe climbs aboard.

**INT. SCHOOL BUS**

Joe sees Shannon seated near the back. He goes and sits in the seat next to her. They exchange smiles.

As the bus pulls away, heads turn in their direction.

**EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY**

The school bus pulls up outside. The door opens, and the STUDENTS head towards the entrance. Joe and Shannon are among them.

**INT. MAIN HALLWAY/COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY**

Crowds of students throng the main hallway. Shannon leads Joe to their classroom.

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

Shannon goes to her desk. Spotting an empty desk, Joe goes and sits at it.

Shannon looks across at him and smiles.

Seated at the back of the classroom, Karl leans back in his chair and scowls.

**INT. TRASK RANCH/LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Joe and Shannon sit opposite each other at the table. Scattered on top of it are several school books.

As they reach for the same book, their hands touch. They gaze into each other's eyes.

Just then, the front door opens, and Bill walks in. He spots the holding hands.

Embarrassed, Joe and Shannon pull their hands away and make a show of studying.

Keeping a straight face, Bill walks through to the kitchen.

Peering up from their books, Joe and Shannon smile at each other.

Sneaking a look towards the kitchen, Joe reaches for her hand. Shannon frowns and slaps his hand away.

Joe screws up his face.

BILL (OS)  
Time Shannon was heading home,  
Don't want her folks worrying.

JOE  
Sure thing, Mr Trask.

Picking up her books, Joe and Shannon make their way to the door.

SHANNON  
Bye, Mr Trask.

BILL (OS)  
Bye Shannon... Say hi to you're  
folks for me.



SHANNON

I will.

**EXT. OPEN RANGE - MONTANA - DAY**

Joe and Shannon are on horseback, galloping across open range land. They race Neck and neck, towards a gate in the fence.

Reining in their mounts, Joe opens the gate. Holding it open while Shannon rides through, they ride on a little way, then dismount.

Joe looks towards a cluster of buildings surrounded by trees.

JOE

Sure, is a nice place, your folks  
have... I like all the trees.

SHANNON

My Grandpa and his brother built the  
house. They planted all the trees, too.  
They keep the house cool in the summer.

Joe looks down, not wanting to say goodbye just yet, but too tongue-tied to say anything.

Suddenly, Shannon's horse spooks and pushes her against him.

Instinctively, the two kiss.

**EXT. ARNOTT RANCH/BARN - DAY**

Stepping out of the barn, JIM ARNOTT, Shannon's father, a man in his mid-forties with rugged features and greying hair, sees Joe and Shannon kissing. A look of displeasure clouds his face.

**EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY**

Joe waits for the bus where we last saw him. The bus pulls up, and he climbs aboard.

**INT. SCHOOL BUS**

Joe makes his way down the aisle looking for Shannon. He sees her sitting with a group of teenage girls.

She averts her eyes as Joe walks past.

Puzzled, Joe takes a seat near the back.

**EXT. COULTER HIGH/CLASSROOM - DAY**

Shannon sits at her desk. Joe walks into the classroom and makes his way over to her.

When Shannon doesn't look up, Joe walks to his desk and sits down.

At the back of the classroom, Karl watches events with interest.

**EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL**

Karl and several classmates are fooling around with a football on an area of LAWN. Karl spots Joe.

KARL

Hey, you wanna play some football?

Feeling obliged, Joe joins them. Karl tosses him the football.

The classmates split into two teams. Karl on one side, Joe on the other. The ball is snapped, and Joe throws the ball to a teammate.

Karl tackles him and strips the football.

Joe and his TEAM go into the huddle, then line up.

Joe takes the hand-off. Spotting Karl charging towards him, he gets off a pass. Jumping up, Karl bats it down. He celebrates by mimicking a war dance.

Ignoring him, Joe sets himself, for the next play.

Joe runs a bootleg. The other team buys it, and his team scores a touchdown.

Joe runs the same play. Karl misses a tackle, and Joe's team scores.

#### **PATHWAY**

Shannon and a group of girls walk along the path. They stop and watch the impromptu game.

#### **LAWN**

Karl and Joe both spot Shannon.

Joe takes the snap. Picking out a receiver, Joe throws the football to him. After the throw, Karl hits him with a late tackle and knocks him to the ground.

Winded, Joe lies on the grass. Reaching out a hand, Karl pulls him to his feet.

KARL

Gee, sorry, chief, guess I got  
a little carried away.

As he walks back to his teammates, Karl looks across at Shannon and smiles.

The game continues.

#### **CLASSROOM WINDOW**

Framed in the window, Harvey watches the game for a moment and then turns away.

#### **LAWN**

Joe fakes a handoff and runs in for a score. As he touches the ball down, Karl slams into him, knocking Joe onto the ground.

Angry, Joe gets to his feet.

Clenching his fists, Karl eggs him on.

Suddenly, Harvey appears. Striding across the lawn, he positions himself between them.

HARVEY

Okay, that's enough. Now back off  
before I get mad and bang your stupid  
heads together.

Joe and Karl glare at each other.

Harvey picks up the football. He turns to the watching students.

HARVEY

Haven't you all got classes you  
should be at?

The students hurry away into the school building.

HARVEY

I'll see you two at practice. Now get  
back to your class.

**EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY**

The school bus pulls up, and Karl gets off.

As the school bus pulls away, we SEE Joe standing by the roadside.

**HIGHWAY**

Karl sees Joe standing by the side of the road watching him.

KARL

Well, well, look who it is. What's  
up, Tonto, you miss your stop?

Ignoring the remark, Joe drops his school bag onto the ground.

JOE

No, I figure we got something  
that needs to be settled.

Looking pleased with himself, Karl sets down his school bag.

KARL

Now, is that a fact? Well, I guess  
we'd better get to it then.

His fists clenched, Karl rushes forward. Lashing out, he lands a punch on the side of Joe's face.

Riding the blow, Joe lowers his shoulders, shoulder and charges into Karl. Knocked off balance, Karl staggers backwards. Instantly, Joe begins swinging his fists, the blows thudding into Karl's body. Reaching out, Karl wraps his massive arms around Joe's waist and locks him in a bear hug.

Desperate to free himself, Joe places the palm of his hand under Karl's chin, and pushing upwards, he forces his head backwards.

Unable to withstand the pressure, Karl releases his grip. Gasping for breath, the two stagger back.

Reenergised, GROWLING with anger, lashing out with his fists, Karl rushes forward. Standing toe to toe, the two youths trade blows.

As they stand slugging it out, a station wagon pulls up. The driver's door opens, and Charlie gets out. Striding across to the two fighters, he pulls them apart.

CHARLIE

(stepping between them)

Okay, that's enough now, you  
hear me.

Karl and Joe stand glaring at one another. Both gasping for air.

CHARLIE

Now, whatever it is, you two  
need to settle this, ain't the  
place to do it.

CHARLIE

(turning to Karl)

Now get on home.

Karl doesn't move.

CHARLIE

Go on now, git.

Wiping away the blood from his nose with the sleeve of his jacket, Karl snatches up his school bag and stomps off.

CHARLIE  
You get in the car.

Retrieving his school bag. Joe climbs into the station wagon. Getting behind the wheel, Charlie, drives off.

**EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DUSK**

Charlie's station wagon pulls up alongside the dirt road leading to Bill Trask's ranch.

Joe gets out. The station wagon pulls away.

**INT. RANCH HOUSE - EVENING**

Joe SNEAKS in through the front door and makes for his bedroom.

Bill spots him from the kitchen.

BILL (OS)  
Home kinda late ain't you?

Joe freezes but doesn't look around.

JOE  
I guess so.

Bill emerges from the kitchen. Approaching Joe, he spots his swollen eye.

Embarrassed, Joe lowers his head. Reaching out a hand, Bill lifts Joe's chin.

BILL  
My, my, that looks painful.

Joe averts his gaze.

BILL  
You wanna tell me what happened?

JOE  
I walked into a door, that's all.

Bill looks at Joe's grazed and swollen knuckles.

BILL  
Is that a fact?

Joe shrugs his shoulders.

BILL  
Alright, then let's get you  
patched up.

He leads Joe into the kitchen.

### **KITCHEN**

Joe pulls out a chair and sits down.

Crosses to a cupboard, Bill takes out a bottle of iodine and a pad of cotton wool. Placing them on the table, he then opens the refrigerator and removes a dinner plate. On it are two good-sized steaks. Selecting one, he places it over Joe's swollen eye.

BILL  
Hold onto that, you'll be  
having it for supper later.

Crossing to the table, Bill picks up the iodine and cotton wool.

BILL  
So, you wanna tell me what  
really happened?

Joe doesn't reply.

Removing the cork from the bottle of iodine, Bill soaks some of the cotton wool. Lifting Joe's free hand, he applies some iodine to Joe's knuckle. Smiling as he winces.

JOE  
If you must know, I got in a fight  
with Karl Beckenbaum.

BILL  
Ain't he that big fella who plays  
Linebacker for the Cougars?

Joe doesn't reply.

BILL

Seems to me he ain't someone you'd  
wanna go up against. No sir.

JOE

Yeah, well, he don't scare me none.  
Besides, he had it coming to him.

After getting Joe to swap hands, Bill goes to work on Joe's other swollen knuckle.

Job done, Bill walks over to the sink. Picking up a saucepan containing peeled potatoes, he fills it with water.

BILL

This here disagreement, it wouldn't  
have anything to do with Shannon  
by any chance?

Joe remains silent.

Smiling, Bill sprinkles a fistful of salt into the saucepan and sets it on the stove.

**INT. CAPITAL BUILDING/ROOM - HELENA - DAY**

A spacious, airy room with maple wood panelled walls. A long table stands at one end. Grouped in front of it are several rows of matching chairs. Although the window blinds are open, the lights have also been switched on. Seated behind the table are four members of the Montana State Football Commission.

Sitting facing them is a rather uncomfortable, looking Harvey.

DAN FISK, the Committee Chairman, a smartly dressed man in his fifties with a friendly face, leans forward in his chair.

DAN FISK

You'll admit, Coach Stone, that there  
was a violation of the rules?



HARVEY

Technically, yes, Mr Chairman, but it's not like I intended to gain an advantage by playing the boy at quarterback. All I hoped was...

A committee member interrupts him.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

Technicality or not, Coach Stone, you did break the rules, did you not?

HARVEY

Okay, so I played someone who wasn't on the roster.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

More than that, Coach Stone, isn't it also true that this player wasn't even a pupil at your school?

HARVEY

Yes, I guess that's true.

**INT. CAPITAL BUILDING/CORRIDOR - DAY**

Bill strides along the corridor, scrutinising each door.

On the door at the far end of the corridor, a notice reads:

STATE FOOTBALL COMMISSION  
NO UNAUTHORISED ADMISSION

Bill reaches for the door handle and opens the door.

**INT. ROOM - DAY**

Bill enters and marches defiantly up to the desk and runs his eyes over the four men seated behind it.

BILL

Name's Trask. Bill Trask and I got me something to say on the matter your discussed.

Committee Member #1 leans across the desk. Picks up a telephone.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1  
I'll call security.

Dan Fisk reaches out a hand and restrains him. A flicker of recognition crosses his face.

DAN FISK  
Please take a seat, Mr Trask.

Reluctantly, Bill sits down. Leaning towards him, Harvey tells Bill to take off his Stetson. Bill places it on the chair next to him.

DAN FISK  
So, Coach Stone, just what was it you hoped to gain by fielding this ineligible player? Surely you must have had a reason for doing it?

HARVEY  
Truth is the reason I...

Bill jumps to his feet.

BILL  
The reason he did it was because I persuaded him to. Whole idea was mine from start to finish.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1  
Would you sit down, sir and let Coach Stone, answer the question!

BILL  
Hell, it ain't him you should be questioning, it's me.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1  
This is intolerable, Mr Chairman, I insist that Mr Trask be told to leave.

Dan Fisk ignores him. Stares hard at Bill.

DAN FISK

Forgive me, Mr Trask, but am I right  
in thinking that you once played at  
Quarterback for the New York Giants?

A murmur goes up from the committee members.

BILL

You got a mighty fine memory, sir.  
Last time I threw a football for  
The Giants was over forty years ago.

DAN FISK

Let's just say there are some people  
who live long in the memory.

He looks enquiringly at the other committee members.

DAN FISK

Given Mr Trask's involvement in the  
matter, if you gentlemen have no  
objection, I think perhaps we should  
hear what he has to say.

The other Committee Members nod their agreement.

DAN FISK

The floor is all yours, Mr Trask.

BILL

Well, the truth of the matter is I  
got a young fella working for me  
who's got a real talent. Hell, he  
throws a football as good as any  
(looking at Dan)  
Pro. Damn near as good as I used to.

Dan Fisk smiles.

BILL

Well, I've been coaching him some,  
so when I seen Coach Stone's team  
getting beat real bad, I figured I'd  
talking him into playing the boy at  
quarterback.

DAN FISK

Even though you knew that this was  
against the rules?

BILL

Yes sir. It shames me to say it, but  
that's what I done.

Amazed by Bill's frank admission, Dan Frisk remains silent.

BILL (CONT'D)

Now I know that sounds bad, especially  
coming from someone who ought to have  
known better, but I never thought for a  
minute that he could win them the game,  
for them, no, sir.

DAN FISK

And yet from what I've been told, that's  
exactly what he did. Am I right?

BILL

Guess I'd be lying if I said otherwise.

The room falls silent. As the members of the committee deliberate,  
Bill climbs to his feet.

BILL

Now I know this don't make things  
right, but I'll say it anyway. Fact  
of the matter is the boy is now  
enrolled at Coulter High.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

A little after the event wouldn't  
you say, Mr Trask.

Bill chokes back his anger.

DAN FISK

Thank you, Mr Trask, I'm sure we'll bear  
that in mind. Now, if you gentlemen would  
care to wait outside. I think we now have  
all the information we need... We'll let  
you know our decision in due course.

Getting to their feet, Bill and Harvey walk towards the door. Pausing in the doorway, Bill turns and looks back at Dan Fisk. His gaze evokes long forgotten memories for both men.

**INT. CORRIDOR - DAY - LATER**

Harvey sits quietly. Bill paces up and down like a caged lion.

The committee room door opens, and they are ushered inside.

**INT. ROOM - DAY**

Bill and Harvey return to their seats.

DAN FISK

Well, gentlemen, though not a unanimous one, we have reached a decision. While not condoning the actions taken by Coach Stone, the committee feels that rather than disqualify Coulter High, a better course of action would be for the game to be replayed. And as the injured party, Braxtonville High should have home field advantage.

Dan Fisk looks across at Harvey.

DAN FISK

I trust you have no objections, Coach Stone?

HARVEY

No, sir, no objection at all.

DAN FISK

Very well then if...

Harvey interrupts him.

HARVEY

Just one thing, Mr Chairman, seeing as how the boy is now back in school is he eligible for the team?

Dan Fisk looks for and receives nods of approval from the other committee members.

DAN FISK

No, we see no reason why he shouldn't play. Well, if there's nothing further that concludes the hearing... You'll be notified of a date for the replay in due course... I wish you good day, gentlemen.

Bill and Harvey shake hands with each member of the committee and leave the office.

Dan Fisk collects his papers.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

Is it true that old cowboy was the Quarterback for the New York Giants?

DAN FISK

He was forty years ago.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

So, how the heck did he end up living way out here like some old recluse?

DAN FISK

It's a pretty sad story.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

I'm all ears.

Resigned. Dan puts his bundle of papers down.

DAN FISK

Well, forty years ago my family lived in New York. My Dad was a big Giants fan, and he used to take me to all their home games.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

And this here, Bill Trask played at quarterback?

DAN FISK

Yes. The best quarterback they ever had, according to my Dad.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

So, what happened to make him quit?

DAN FISK

Well, as I recall, Bill was driving to the game with his wife and son, and he lost control and crashed into a tree... Both his wife and son were killed, and he walked away without a scratch. There was talk of the Police getting involved, but nothing came of it. Anyway, I guess he blamed himself for what happened because a few weeks later, he just vanished into thin air.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

Wow, that's tough. Guess you never thought you'd bump into him again way out here in Montana?

DAN FISK

That's a fact.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

He sure must think highly of that young kid to want to speak up like he did. He must have real potential.

Dan picks up his papers.

DAN FISK

Well, if Coulter High make it through to the final, I guess we'll get to see just how good he is for ourselves, won't we?

#### **INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAY**

Bill walks into the store and crossing to a rail of clothing, he makes a show of inspecting some men's jackets.

Shannon is with a customer. Seeing Bill, she averts her eyes.  
When she has finished serving, Bill walks over to her.

BILL  
Howdy Shannon. How you doing?

SHANNON  
Hi Mr Trask... I'm fine, thanks.

BILL  
Ain't seen much of you lately...  
Is everything all right between  
you and Joe?

Shannon doesn't reply.

BILL  
He ain't been making a nuisance of  
himself, now has he?

SHANNON  
No, it's nothing like that.

BILL  
In case you're wondering, I know about  
him and Karl getting in a fight.

SHANNON  
It's not that either. It's my Pa, he  
says I'm not to see Joe anymore.

BILL  
Did he say why?

SHANNON  
It's on account of him seeing Joe  
and me kissing... I really like Joe  
Mr Trask, and it wasn't like we were  
doing anything wrong.

BILL  
But your Pa don't want you taking  
up with an Indian is that it?



SHANNON

No, that ain't the reason, he's not prejudiced like that. No, the real reason is cos he thinks I'm too young to be going out with boys.

BILL

If my memory serves me right, I seem to recall him marrying your Ma, when she was barely seventeen.

Shannon smiles.

BILL

What's your Ma have to say on the subject anyway?

SHANNON

She thinks school is more important than boys right now. Says she wants me to go on to college and to make something of myself. Wants me to have the chances she never had, I guess.

BILL

That ain't such a bad thing... But it sure, don't mean you can't smell the roses along the way now, does it? Besides, just because you're Ma didn't take her chances, it don't mean you won't take yours when they come along. Well, I reckon I'd best be going. See you around, Shannon. Take care now.

Shannon watches Bill leave the store.

**INT. ARNOTT RANCH HOUSE/HALLWAY - NIGHT**

A loud knock at the front door.

**TOP OF STAIRS**

Shannon appears, dressed in her pyjamas and starts downstairs.

**HALLWAY**

ELIZABETH ARNOTT, an attractive woman in her mid-thirties with shoulder-length blonde hair and a figure that could still turn men's heads, walks towards the door.

She sees Shannon on the stairs.

ELIZABETH  
It's okay, Honey, I'll go.

Shannon reluctantly climbs back up the stairs.

Elizabeth opens the door and finds Bill Trask standing outside on the porch.

ELIZABETH  
Mr Trask.

BILL  
Howdy Elizabeth... Sorry to call  
on you so late... You mind if I  
come in for a minute?

ELIZABETH  
No, come on in.

Bill steps into the hallway and removes his Stetson.

ELIZABETH  
Come on through. Jim's in the parlour.

**PARLOUR**

Elizabeth leads Bill into the parlour. Jim Arnott gets up out of his chair, and the two men shake hands. Bill sits down.

ELIZABETH  
Can I get you anything? A cup of  
coffee... I've got some made.

BILL  
No, thank you, kindly. I'm fine...

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

I'm real sorry to be calling on you folks this late. Truth is, I've been meaning to come over to thank you for letting Shannon help Joe out with his school work. I just never got round to it.

ELIZABETH

That's all right, we understand how busy you must be.

**HALLWAY**

Shannon creeps down the stairs and listens in.

**PARLOUR**

BILL

Still, ain't no excuse for me not thanking you both... Truth is, I got me another reason for being here tonight, and I reckon you know what it is.

JIM

Now look here, Bill...

Bill holds up a hand. Cuts him short.

BILL

Hear me out. It won't take but a minute and it needs saying... Now I reckon you know the reason I got Joe living with me. Well truth is it worked out a whole lot different than I imagined. But that's another story. Now I can't pretend that I know too much about the boy's background, but while he's been living with me, I've found him to be decent and hard-working. The truth is, if he was my own son, I couldn't wish for a better one. Now I

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

appreciate you wasn't to know this when you let Shannon visit after school, which is all the more reason why I owe you a debt of gratitude. It's also why I feel so bad that you think Joe has let you down by his conduct towards your daughter.

ELIZABETH

Mr Trask... Bill, it's not that...

BILL

Please, Elizabeth, let me finish... Now the way I see it, what happened between them was only natural for young people who have feelings for each other, and I can't punish the boy for that... But I appreciate that you're entitled to your concerns, and so I want you to know that from now on, I'll see to it Joe respects your wishes were Shannon's concerned.

Bill gets to his feet.

BILL

I'm obliged to you for your time  
... I'll see myself out.

Bill walks towards the hallway. Jim and Elizabeth get up from their chairs and follow after him.

#### **HALLWAY**

Shannon scurries back upstairs. She has heard everything.

Bill opens the front door and disappears into the night.

#### **EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

Bill and Joe are fooling around with the football. A four-by-four driven by Jim Arnott pulls up outside the ranch house.

Shannon, clutching an arm full of books, jumps out and goes to stand beside Joe.

Lowering his window, Jim looks across at Joe and Shannon.

JIM

Maybe your young man might like  
to come over for supper tonight?

Shannon beams, hands Joe the pile of books and pushes him towards the house.

Jim acknowledges Bill with a casual wave of his hand. Drives away.

Shannon walks up to Bill. Plants a kiss on his cheek.

**EXT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY**

Two school buses are parked outside. Students, members of the football team and cheerleaders climb aboard.

**EXT. BRAXTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL/FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY**

The Bleachers are packed with supporters watching the Braxtonville School band parade up and down the field.

On the sidelines, both sets of cheerleaders perform their well-rehearsed routines.

The referee calls the captains together for the coin toss. Braxtonville wins and elects to receive the football.

**INT. TRASK RANCH/BARN - DAY**

Bill watches as the VETERINARIAN bandages a horse's injured leg.

**EXT. BRAXTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL/PLAYING FIELD - DAY**

The Bears' wide receiver runs into the end zone for a touchdown.

**SCORE BOARD**

The Bears lead it fourteen to seven.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

The Veterinarian drives off in his car. Bill gives him a wave and walks into the house.

**EXT. BRAXTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL/PLAYING FIELD - DAY**

Joe is sacked by a blitzing linebacker.

**INT. TRASK RANCH/KITCHEN - DAY**

Bill sits eating his evening meal. He glances up at the clock on the wall, then pushes his plate away.

**EXT. BRAXTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL/PLAYING FIELD - DAY**

Joe spots an open receiver and throws the football downfield.

**END ZONE**

The Cougar's wide receiver drops the perfectly thrown pass, then beats the ground with his fists in frustration.

**INT. TRASK RANCH/LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Bill sits in his chair reading a newspaper. Agitated, he gets up and paces around the room.

**EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

A school bus pulls up. The door opens, and Joe jumps down. The bus pulls away.

**INT. TRASK RANCH HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Bill is fast asleep in his chair. The dog is stretched out at his feet.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH/DIRT ROAD - NIGHT**

With his duffel bag slung over his shoulder, Joe walks along the road towards the ranch house.

**INT. TRASK RANCH HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

The dog suddenly begins to BARK. Bill wakes with a start and heads for the front door.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - NIGHT**

Joe sees Bill framed in the doorway. Letting out a YELL, he punches his fist in the air.

The two run towards each other and execute a perfect high-five. Whooping and yelling, the couple break into a crazy dance, a mix between a reel and a war-dance.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

Bill sits on the porch enjoying a little late afternoon sun.

Shannon rides up. Dismounting, she walks over to him and sits down beside him.

BILL

Howdy, young lady, Joe ain't here, he's  
at football practice, got a big game  
coming up.

Shannon shrugs her shoulders.

SHANNON

I know, that's why I came over.

BILL

You two had a fight?

SHANNON

No, nothing like that... It's just  
that he's being so... so pig-headed!

Bill smiles. Puts his arm around her casually.

BILL

You wanna tell me about it?

Shannon scowls.

SHANNON

He says he won't go to the end  
of year dance with me.

BILL

He say why?

SHANNON

It's on account of him not being  
able to dance.

BILL

Maybe he can't.

SHANNON

Well, he could learn, couldn't he?

Bill remains silent. Aware of what's coming.

SHANNON

Maybe somebody could teach him.

BILL

Whoa, now hold on, young lady, it's  
been quite a while since I did me  
any dancing.

SHANNON

Yes, but I just know you could do  
it. Oh, please, Mr Trask, please  
say you will. It would mean so  
much to me... Pleeese!

Bill removes his arm.



BILL

Well, I guess I could give it a try. That's assuming he's willing to go along with the idea.

Shannon throws her arms around his neck.

SHANNON

Oh, thank you, Mr Trask. I just knew I could count on you.

Bill stands up and heads for the door.

BILL

Before you go, I got something for you. I've been meaning to get Joe to take it over to you.

Bill goes into the house and returns holding a brown paper package carefully tied up with string. He hands it to Shannon.

SHANNON

What is it?

BILL

Search me... Joe's Grandpa came over with it yesterday. Said I was to give it to you but not to say a word to Joe.

Shannon walks over to her horse. Puts the package into her saddlebag.

Bill watches her ride away.

**EXT. TRASK RANCH/OUTSIDE LIVING ROOM WINDOW - NIGHT**

The sound of a STRAUSS WALTZ emanates from the living room. We PEER IN through a crack in the curtains.

**INT. LOUNGE/TRASK RANCH - NIGHT**

The furniture has been pushed back against the walls, and the rug rolled up. Arm in arm, Bill and Joe circle the floor.

BILL

One two three, one two three...  
Slow down, will you, this here's  
a waltz, not a goddam war-dance!

**INT. COULTER HIGH SCHOOL/SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT**

Dancing couples move around the floor. All the young men are dressed in formal wear. Their partners wear beautiful ball gowns.

Joe stands alone in a corner. He tugs self-consciously at his collar. Gazes nervously around the room.

On stage, the band stops playing. As the couples leave the dance floor, their eyes are drawn towards the entrance. Watching in amazement as Shannon enters the hall. She is wearing a beautiful doeskin dress, exquisitely decorated with coloured beads and quills. Smiling, Joe walks across to her. The band begins playing a waltz. Taking Shannon's hand, Joe leads her onto the dance floor.

**EXT. RESERVATION/JOE'S GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE - DAY**

Joe's GRANDFATHER, a thin man with stooped shoulders and dressed in worn Levi's and a padded jacket, is standing by an ancient pick-up with its hood up, tinkering with the engine.

Joe rides up on horseback. Dismounting, he walks over to him.

The old man looks up at him. His weathered face is devoid of emotion.

JOE

Sure, don't sound too healthy  
does it?

GRANDFATHER

No, I reckon if it were a horse, I'd  
have to shoot it.

Joe pushes his hands into his pockets. Kicks aimlessly at a stone.

Turning away from the pick-up, the old man wipes his hands on a rag.

GRANDFATHER

Don't see much of you these days.

Joe remains silent. Kicks at another stone.

GRANDFATHER

As a child, you used to kick at stones. It usually meant you had something on your mind.

Joe manages a smile.

GRANDFATHER

So are you going to tell me what's troubling you? Or shall I get on with fixing my truck?

JOE

I guess you know the Championship game is coming up?

GRANDFATHER

Yes. You have made your people very proud, grandson.

JOE

Yeah, that's the problem. What if we go and lose the game? What are they gonna think of me then?

GRANDFATHER

What they think is not important. It's what you think about yourself that matters the most.

JOE

Well, right now, I'm scared I'm gonna let a lot of people down.

GRANDFATHER

This is only natural. This game is very important to you, and because of this, bad thoughts have wormed their way into your head.

JOE

So, what do I do, grandpa?

GRANDFATHER

You must drive them out.

JOE

And how do I do that?

GRANDFATHER

You must do what our people have always done, you must turn to the Great Spirit, for help.

JOE

And how do I do that, Grandpa?

GRANDFATHER

First, grandson, you must believe in his power, only then can he help you. Only then will you find the strength to face your fears and overcome them.

JOE

Well, I believe there is a God. Is that the same thing?

GRANDFATHER

Yes, but to your people, he is the Great Spirit.

JOE

So, you mean I've got to pray to him? To ask him for his help?

GRANDFATHER

Yes, but you must purify yourself.

JOE

And how do I do that, grandpa?

GRANDFATHER

You must spend time in a sweat lodge, to cleanse your body and your mind. Then will he listen to you.

JOE

And then what will happen?

GRANDFATHER

Then, if your heart is good, he  
will drive out these bad thoughts.  
He will show you how to believe in  
yourself again.

JOE

So, how do I give it a try?

GRANDFATHER

(smiling)

Well, it will mean doing some work. A  
sweat lodge is not like a hot tub; you  
don't just buy one from a store, you  
have to build one.

JOE

And how do I go about that?

GRANDFATHER

First, you are going to need some  
help. It's a pretty hard thing to  
do on your own, especially if you  
don't know how to go about it.

JOE

I'm thinking someone like you would  
know how to go about it.

GRANDFATHER

I might. But it all depends.

JOE

On what?

GRANDFATHER

On you visiting your grandparents a  
little more often.

JOE

(grinning)

I guess I could agree to that.

GRANDFATHER  
Wait there, I need to get some  
things from the house.

**EXT. REMOTE CREEK - DAY**

Joe's Grandfather's pick-up is parked under some trees. Joe's horse is tethered to it.

**BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:**

- (A) Armed with shovels, Joe and his grandfather are digging a shallow pit. Once it is finished, filling it with firewood, they set light to it.
- (B) When the firewood has burned down to a bed of REDHOT ashes, they collect stones from the creek and drop them into the shallow pit.
- (C) Leaving the stones to heat up, they walk down to the creek and begin cutting willow wands.
- (D) Joe's Grandfather marks a circle on the ground. Pushing the willow wands into the earth at intervals, he bends them into a conical frame. With Joe's help, he ties them together with thin strips of bark.
- (E) Fetching a tarpaulin from the truck, he covers over the frame leaving a small entrance and then seals the perimeter with rocks.

**END SERIES OF SHORTS:**

**INT. SWEAT LODGE - DAY**

Joe, stripped to the waist, sits cross-legged on the ground, his body glistens with sweat.

Reaching for a container, he pours water from it onto the cluster of large stones in front of him. A cloud of steam instantly envelopes him.

**EXT. REMOTE CREEK - DAY - LATER**

Joe stands beside the pickup; his face is emblazoned with war paint. His Grandfather loops a buffalo bone breastplate over Joe's head and secures it.

GRANDFATHER

Find a high place, my Grandson.  
Speak to the spirits of your  
people. If your heart is good,  
they will hear you and give you  
strength... Nomoheto!

Joe mounts his horse and rides off.

#### **INT. TRASK RANCH/KITCHEN - DAY**

Bill prepares a breakfast of bacon, eggs, hash browns and toast.

The dog sits patiently beside the table. Bill throws it a piece of bacon.

BILL

Hey, lazy bones, you gonna lie in  
in bed all morning?

Bill serves the food up onto two plates, puts them on the table and sits down.

BILL

Breakfasts on the table, if you  
ain't out here in two minutes,  
the dog gets to eat yours.

Bill shakes some ketchup onto his plate and begins eating. After a couple of mouthfuls, he slams down his fork and heads for Joe's bedroom.

#### **JOE'S BEDROOM**

The room is empty, and Joe's bed hasn't been slept in.

Bill makes for the front door. We move with him as he goes outside and walks over to the barn.

He opens the door and calls out.

BILL  
Joe, are you in here?

Turning away, he walks back towards the house.

Before he reaches the house, an old pick-up drives up and Joe's Grandfather gets out.

BILL  
Howdy. Say, you seen your Grandson?  
Only his bed ain't been slept in  
and we got us a big game today.

GRANDFATHER  
Don't worry, Mr Trask, he'll be along  
soon.

BILL  
I got my breakfast getting cold.  
You wanna come inside and tell me  
what the heck is going on?

Joe's Grandfather smiles and follows Bill inside.

#### **EXT. HIGH BUTTE - MORNING**

Fingers of golden sunlight reach out from the horizon. Joe sits cross-legged on a shoulder of rock with a buffalo robe wrapped around him. Eyes closed, he extends his arms upwards. Behind him, his horse paws impatiently at the ground.

#### **EXT. UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA - FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY**

##### **PLAYING FIELD**

CLOSE ON Joe's face. His war paint is visible through the face guard of his helmet.

Joe moves up under the center. He looks along the opposition's defensive line. In the backfield, he spots two linebackers preparing to blitz. He shouts out a change of play.



His tight end drops back from the Line of Scrimmage and resets himself.

JOE  
Twenty-seven... Forty-six...  
Hut.

Joe takes the snap. Back-peddalling, he gets off his pass.

A blitzing linebacker delivers a late hit.

An official throws a FLAG.

REFEREE (ON-FIELD MIC)  
Roughing the passer, fifteen  
yard penalty, automatic first  
down.

The umpire spots the ball on the opposing team's thirty-yard line. Both sets of players step up to the Line of Scrimmage.

Joe hands off to his running back. His run brings up another first down.

The opposing team's head coach calls a TIMEOUT.

#### **COUGARS' SIDELINE**

The offence walks over to the sideline. Harvey calls them into a huddle.

HARVEY  
Okay, now listen up. Chances are they're gonna expect us to run the football on our first two downs, so let's mix it up a bit, Okay? Receivers and tight ends find some open lanes. Let them think we are going long. Keep them guessing, that way, when we run the ball, they're not gonna be expecting it... Right, now go put some points on the board.

The officials' whistle signals the end of the time-out.

**PLAYING FIELD****BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS - FOURTH QUARTER**

- A) The Cougars' back runs for a five-yard gain.
- B) Joe scrambles for three yards.
- C) Joe hits the tight end in the end zone for a touchdown.
- D) The extra point is good.
- E) Karl leads the defense onto the field.

**END SERIES OF SHOTS:****EXT. UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA/COUGARS SIDELINE**

Harvey turns his head towards the scoreboard.

The Cougars lead the game thirty-five to thirty-one.

**PLAYING FIELD**

The opposing team's offense moves downfield with a succession of first downs. Faced with a long third down on the Cougars' fifteen-yard line, their quarterback fakes a hand-off and hits an open receiver.

The Cougar's safety misses his tackle, and the wide receiver runs into the end zone for a touchdown.

**BLEACHERS**

The opposing team's supporters go wild.

The kicker runs up and kicks the ball between the posts for the extra point.

Following the kickoff, Joe pulls on his helmet and leads his offense onto the field.

**GAME CLOCK**

A minute and fifty-six seconds remaining.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

Joe's first pass finds a receiver for a first down just short of his own forty-yard line.

Going without a huddle, Joe's next pass is batted down by a lineman.

He throws on second down and completes a first-down pass to the tight end, who steps out of bounds and stops the clock.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

Harvey sends out a running back.

Joe runs a quarterback draw and gains another first down.

It's first and ten on their opponent's twenty-yard line, and Joe goes with a hurry-up offense.

He hands off to the running back, and a blitzing linebacker stops him at the line of scrimmage.

Joe drops back into the shotgun. The center snaps the ball, and Joe desperately looks for an open receiver. The pass rush threatens to break through the offensive line. Joe, aware, throws the football out of bounds.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

The field goal kicker warms up.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

On third and ten, Joe's pass play splits the defense, and he scrambles for eight yards before being tackled and brought down.

The placekicker jogs onto the field, and a hush falls over the watching spectators.

The football is snapped, and the holder spots the ball.

#### **GOALPOSTS**

The football sails just wide of the uprights. The two match officials signal that the kick is no good!

#### **BLEACHERS**

Groans of disbelief and disappointment from the Cougars supporters are drowned out by the jubilant cheers from the opposing fans.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

Karl leads his defense onto the field. Joe, purposeful, crosses over to him.

JOE

Get me one more shot, Karl.

Karl eyes his old antagonist. Pulls on his helmet.

KARL

Sure thing, chief!

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

The Cougars kick off.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

Joe and his offense team look on, anxiously.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

The kick returner is tackled at his own thirty-yard line.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

The Cougars' offense leap to their feet.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

It's first and ten, and just as the ball is snapped, Karl moves up onto the shoulder of the defensive end.

Powering between two offensive linemen, Karl sacks the quarterback and drives him into the grass.

The two teams move up to the Line of Scrimmage.

Chants of "Defense" "Defense" ring out around the stadium.

Second and twenty. Karl, unstoppable, goes after the quarterback and forces him to throw the football out of bounds.

Third and twenty and a fired-up defense blitz.

The quarterback steps up and gets off his pass.

Downfield, the receiver leaps to take the catch, but the covering safety bats it away.

The opposing team punt on fourth down, and the Cougars' kick returner runs it back to the twenty-yard line.

#### **COUGARS SIDELINE**

Joe pulls on his helmet and leads the offense onto the field.

#### **GAME CLOCK**

Forty-six seconds remain.

#### **PLAYING FIELD**

It's first and ten on the Cougars' twenty-yard line. Joe sets up in the shotgun.

Sensing a pass play, the defense drops back into zone coverage.

Joe reads the situation and calls the play.

Faking a hand-off to the running back, Joe uses him as a blocker and runs up the middle for a fifteen-yard gain and a first down.

The offense hurries back to the Line of Scrimmage.

Joe spikes the ball and stops the clock. He takes his players into the huddle.

Offense and defense face each other at the Line of Scrimmage. Joe stays back in the shotgun. Calls the play.

His two wide receivers run clear out routes downfield, while the tight end runs a slant. Joe side arms the ball to him, but he can't hold onto the football.

The referee rules the pass incomplete and brings up second and ten.

Joe runs a play action pass, but both his receivers are covered, and he is forced to throw the football out of bounds.

With seconds remaining, confident of victory, the defense show blitz.

Joe sees this and changes the play.

The center snaps the ball, and the offensive line forms a protective shield around Joe and buys him some time.

Joe looks downfield and spots a blown cover. He sets himself and gets off his pass.

A hush descends over the stadium as the football flies through the air in a perfect spiral.

#### **DOWNFIELD**

The wide receiver catches the football and races for the end zone. The safety makes a desperate tackle and brings him down just short of the goal line.

Joe and the offense rush forward to the Line of Scrimmage. Joe shouts instructions to the fullback.

#### **THE GAME CLOCK**

Eight seconds remaining.

Joe steps up under the center and takes the snap. The fullback sprints forward.

Joe hands the ball off to him, and the fullback dives over his teammates and into the end zone for a touchdown.

#### **VIP SEATING AREA**

Dan Fisk and Committee member #2 are sitting together.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2  
Well, your old quarterback was  
right about one thing, the kid  
can sure throw a football.

DAN FISK  
Never doubted it for a minute.

### **PLAYING FIELD**

The Cougars players celebrate their victory. Joe pulls off his helmet and stares up into the bleachers.

### **BLEACHERS**

Bill and Joe's Grandfather stand side by side, their arms held aloft.

### **EXT. TRASK RANCH - DAY**

Joe sits on the top step as before, the old leather football cradled in the palm of his hand, a far-away look in his eyes. On the finger of his right hand is a SUPER BOWL RING. He rotates it pensively.

The moment passes, and Joe gets to his feet. Pulling back his arm, he throws the football towards the coral.

An APPARITION of Bill Trask appears, jumping to make the catch. When the football reaches it, the apparition vanishes, and the football hits the ground and bounces away.

With a heavy heart, Joe slowly walks back to his car.

**FADE OUT**