1. INT. OPEN COCKPIT BIPLANE - FLYING - DAY

OLD MEN
YA-HOOOO!!!

Wearing goggles and helmets, two old men SCREAM like crazy kids as their SPUTTERING biplane loops and rolls.

2. EXT. BENEATH A SHADY HIGHWAY UNDERPASS - DAY

A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY naps inside his police cruiser. Suddenly, his radar WAILS: it flashes "120".

ROAR! The biplane BLASTS past, upside down, the old men HOLLER and wave. The cop SCREECHES off after the biplane, lights and SIREN BLAZING.

3. INT. OPEN COCKPIT BIPLANE - FLYING - DAY

Upside down, the old men CACKLE as the police cruiser quickly, impotently falls away below.

4. EXT. LOW, ON THE GROUND - SUNSET

The plane flies away, barely under control: it careens and SPUTTERS off into a huge heroic sunset.

5. INT. CLUTTERED ARTIST'S STUDIO - DAY

A phone RINGS. A hand sketches: a whimsical lion peers out of a cornfield. The ARTIST picks up the phone:

ARTIST (into phone)
Hello?

TELEPHONE (V.O.)
Walter Caldwell...? I have bad news. It's about your two uncles...

6. INT. MODERN-ERA CAR - MOVING - DAY

He drives past a lonely landscape. A distant voice ECHOES:

MAE (V.O.)
Walter...? Walter...?!
INT. BEAT-UP MID-50'S CADILLAC - MOVING - DAY

MATCH DISSOLVE: a boy, WALTER stares out at the same landscape. He is pale, quiet: one of life's wallflowers. The clothes, the car, the road signs, the RADIO MUSIC... all say the time is now the early 1960's.

His mother, MAE, drives; she is far deeper into her desperate thirties than she will ever admit.

MAE
Walter! Good news! You're spending the summer with your two uncles....

Walter CHOKES, lunges for the window and hangs out it, THROWING-UP. Mae scowls, fires up a long cigarette.

MAE (Cont'd)
It'll only be a few weeks, a month or two, tops. I'll definitely come get you before school starts.

Walter turns from the window and sits, pale.

WALTER
That's what you said at that summer camp. And the time with the nuns. And before that...

MAE
Walter! Look! I promise this time. Scout's honor. OK...? Cross-my-heart-hope-to-die! OK?

Walter still isn't buying it. Mae SIGHS.

MAE (Cont'd)
Walter: someday you're gonna have to learn to trust people. Or you'll grow up bitter and disappointed.

He looks bitter and disappointed right now.

WALTER
Where you going this time?

MAE
"The Fort Worth College of Court Reporting". I met a guy last night, he's pulling some strings. Court Reporters have their pick of good jobs, and their pick of good husband material: lawyers, judges, cops...

Walter thinks; DISSOLVE TO:
WALTER'S IMAGINATION - A COURTROOM

Dreamlike, a quick jump into Walter's head: in an imagined courtroom, Mae busily court-reports, avoiding the admiring smiles of respectable LAWYERS, COPS, THE JUDGE... ...and returns the lewd grin of a slimy CONVICT in chains.

BACK TO SCENE

Walter SIGHS, glumly looks back out the window.

MAE
You'll have fun with your uncles. You'll see.

WALTER
Mom. You're an only child.
(off her look:)
I know what uncles are.

Mae colors slightly, exhales hard, a blast of smoke.

MAE
Well Mr. Smarty-pants, they really are your uncles: your great uncles, my mother's brothers. They disappeared forty years ago and just now showed up back here in Texas.

WALTER
Can't I come with you?

MAE
No! I'm gonna be working my little tail off learning Court Reporting! I'm doing everything I can to keep this family together, Walter. How about some help here?! OK?

He nods, retreats back into his silence.

MAE (Cont'd)
Now look. They say these two old men got millions stashed away, in cash. They got no kids, nobody to leave all that money to. And me and you, why, we're as close as any family they got...

WALT
You want them to like me so they'll die and leave us their money?

(CONTINUED)
MAE
We could settle down, maybe buy a house: wouldn't that be nice...?
(Walter looks wistful)
But watch out for other relatives. You wouldn't believe all the crooks, backstabbers and thieves we have in this family...

Walter nods soberly. Mae turns the Cadillac onto a dirt road; it's flanked by a huge terrifying sign: "NO TRESPASSING! Violators will DISAPPEAR!" Walter GASPS.

MAE (Cont'd)
This is it! Oh, look at your face.

She TSK-TSKS, SPITS in a Kleenex, rubs it over his face, as his big eyes follow more alarming signs: "DANGER! EXPLOSIVES!" "KEEP OUT! WEAPONS TESTING RANGE!"

MAE (Cont'd)
By the way: I hear these two were in some state nuthouse for forty years, and got all their money from a big lawsuit or something...

Walter GULPS. More signs: "LOOSE RABID ATTACK DOGS!" "NUCLEAR RADIATION! PERSONNEL IN PROTECTIVE SUITS ONLY!"

WALTER
Maybe we should'a called first....

MAE
Naa! Older people just love surprises.... Here we are!

The Cadillac pulls up; Walter looks out, GULPS:

A ramshackle home: a tower leans crookedly. Beyond, a wide, blue lake fades into the horizon. Motley chickens loiter around an old barn. An old truck rusts silently.

Dogs HOWL: a pack of ugly stray dogs races up and SLAMS into the car, HOWLING, WAILING, teeth SNAPPING.

MAE
Show them you're friendly. Let them smell your hand.

Walter thinks not. The dogs are joined by a large SQUEALING hog, another member of the dog pack. Then, GUNSHOTS: the dogs race off. More GUNSHOTS and YELLS.

(CONTINUED)
MAE (Cont'd)
Sounds like they're down by that lake. Come on.

EXT. SHORE OF THE LAKE - DAY

In shallow water, a catfish swims. The water EXPLODES.

Standing out in the lake, wearing big hip-waders, HUB and GARTH fire shotguns down into the water. KA-BOOM!

HUB
Where'd it go?

GARTH
There! Between your feet!

HUB
Ha! Winged him!

GARTH
He's running for it!

Both BLAST AWAY at the frantic fish: BAM-BAM-BAM! CLICK.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Damn! Empty!

HUB
You get ammo! I'll cover him!

MAE (O.S.)
Yoo hoo!

Startled, both look up: at the shoreline, Mae waves.

HUB
(to Garth, disgusted)
You sent for a hooker?

MAE
Uncle Hub! Uncle Garth! It's me! Mae! Your niece! Pearl's daughter! And I brought Walter! Your nephew!

Behind her, Walter peers out timidly. The two men CURSE:

GARTH
Relatives!

HUB
Damn it!
12 EXT. UNCLE'S HOME BACK PORCH - DAY

The wet angry men storm up, pursued by the wheedling Mae.

HUB
We're old, dammit! Leave us alone!

GARTH
Last thing we need is some little sissy-boy hanging around all summer!

The furious men storm inside. Mae smiles at her son.

MAE
Walter honey? Why don't you stay out here and play.

She goes in; Walter sits, hears the ARGUMENT CONTINUE:

MAE (O.S.) (Cont'd)
He can help out here! Do chores!

HUB (O.S.)
Help out? Look at him: the kid's a damn weenie!

MAE (O.S.)
That's why he needs to be around real men! Like you two!

Walter SIGHS. A shadow covers him: the pig glares right in Walter's face, eyeball to eyeball, almost... hungrily.

WALTER
Good boy. Nice doggie! Go play.

The pig GROWLS, a pretty-fair dog imitation.

WALTER (Cont'd)
Mom...?

13 EXT. UNCLE'S HOME/BY THE CADILLAC - DAY

Mae STARTS THE ENGINE. Beside the car, Walter stands, miserable, shoulders slumped, a shoddy bag at his feet.

MAE
This is for your own good, Walter...
You know, I bet all that money's hidden real close-by. Imagine! Real buried treasure, like in those books you're always reading!

Walter's misery remains impregnable. Mae gives up.

(CONTINUED)
MAE (Cont'd)

Walter: maybe if you'd smile once in a while, then people might like you.

He sees two hostile uncles staring, arms crossed, furious.

MAE (Cont'd)

Now. Give me a big smile to remember you by.

Walter tries: it's more of a grimace than a grin.

MAE (Cont'd)

You're gonna have to work on that smile while I'm gone. OK?

Walter nods solemnly. Mae blows a kiss and motors off. Morose, Walter watches the dogs chase the Cadillac away.

Walter picks up his bag, turns, looks up at the brothers: OK, now what? Finally:

GARTH

Well. Supper time.

INT. THE KITCHEN TABLE - DAY

Walter watches the uncles wolf down fish, steak, sausage. The dogs and the pig crowd to look in a porch window.

Walter stares down at huge portions of shot-up fish, steak, and sausage. He tries the fish, bites something hard, spits a shotgun pellet out onto his plate: PLINK. SIGH. He hacks off a chunk of steak, chews with all his strength.

WALTER

This steak is... weird.

HUB

Venison! Not steak!

Walter frowns, decides to try the sausage: not bad.

HUB (Cont'd)

Pork!

GARTH

We raise our own pigs.

Walter freezes mid-bite, looks at the window: now the pig glares even more murderously at him, and GROWLS. Then, Hub suddenly SLAMS his fist down on the table.

(CONTINUED)
HUB
Know what I hate about houseguests? This! Dinner table chit-chat! Acting so damn nice and polite!

GARTH
Hell Hub! Then just be yourself!

Hub glares at Walter: well? Walter GULPS, nods, agrees. Dinner resumes, in SILENCE. Walter eats and tries to ignore the pig's now-murderous stare.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - LATE DAY

The uncles sit, sipping huge glasses of what may be iced tea; beside them, two shotguns stand ready, close at hand.

Sitting on the porch steps, Walter wonders: they seem to be waiting for something... Finally, he SIGHS.

WALTER
If my mom calls, can we hear the phone out here?

GARTH
Don't have one.

WALTER
No telephone?

Walter thinks about that.

WALTER (Cont'd)
OK if I watch television?

GARTH
Ain't got one.

WALTER
No television? What do you do?

Dizzy, Walter wonders if he's fallen off the edge of the planet. GRAVEL CRUNCHES: a car approaches.

Both men lean forward, PUMP their shotguns. Below, a SMILING SALESMAN alights from his car.

SALESMAN
Gentlemen! Word is out you two are sophisticated men of means. Do you worry about the future? Of course you do! That's why I, a representative of the Mississippi Mutual Insurance Company...

(CONTINUED)
BLAM-BLAM! Hub and Garth fire BLASTS just over the salesman's head. Walter YELPS, ducks. The Salesman SHRIEKS, jumps in his car, SCREECHES off. The dogs HOWL and chase the car away.

Walter shivers, stunned; he stares as the brothers calmly sit back down, drink, and reload.

WALTER
There's plenty of entertainment on TV. Educational stuff too! It's a good thing to do in the evenings!

GRAVEL CRUNCHES again. The brothers raise their shotguns. A GRINNING SALESMAN appears:

GRINNING SALESMAN
Rumor has it you two got millions stashed away! Why not put that money to work for you with the high return only investing in gold and silver can bring....

BLAM-BLAM-BLAM! Another salesman flees for his life. The brothers sip reflectively, and reload.

WALTER
Everybody loves TV! You oughta get one! You'd like it! Really!

The brothers consider that. Gravel CRUNCHES: A BEAMING SALESMAN opens his trunk: a display of kitchen gadgets. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! The salesman hightails it away. Finally, Hub turns to Walter, and says definitively:

HUB
No TV.

The brothers sit back reflectively.

GARTH
Nice evening... Peaceful.

INT. STAIRS LEADING UP - NIGHT

Walter gingerly cradles a lit lantern and his bag; he stares up at narrow, steep stairs, winding up out of sight.

GARTH
You sleep up there... the tower.

It sounds so ominous. Walter GULPS, nods, inches upstairs.

(CONTINUED)
Hey! We don't know nothing about kids. If you need something....

Find it yourself! Better yet, learn to do without!

We're both gettin' old...

...and fixin' to die any minute! If we kick off in the middle of the night, you're on your own.

Eyes huge, Walter stares at them, his imagination whirls:

In his p.j.s, Walter comes in for breakfast, YAWNS, calmly sits at the table beside two clothed skeletons, the former Hub and Garth. Walter nonchalantly MUNCHES his Cheerios.

Walter flinches, nods; he continues up the steep steps.

Jumpy little feller.

Mmmm. Quiet though....

Walter staggers in, looks around... the tower room is heaped with debris, trunks, chests, suitcases, junk.

He opens his bag, takes out a toothbrush, sees a small door by the stairs: a bathroom? He opens the door, something tumbles over him: an old Santa Claus costume.

He tries on the beard, admires his reflection in a murky mirror. Then, he hears: downstairs, two snoring-world-champions WARBLE and hit every SNORING-note Man can hear. He SIGHS, BRUSHES his teeth, further explores the room:

One trunk is covered with exotic travel stickers. He fingers the big padlock. Locked. Walter looks crushed.

(CONTINUED)
19 CONTINUED:

He crawls into bed; as he leans out to blow out the candle he grabs a big knob on the headboard... the knob comes off in his hand, he tumbles onto the floor.

Walter stares at the knob in his hand: a key falls out. Walter looks at the key, then at the locked trunk. He tries the key in the lock. CLICK: it fits. Slowly, he opens the lid: CREAK... empty. No money, no jewels, only:

WALTER
Sand...?

Puzzled, he runs his fingers through sand that covers the trunk bottom. Enchanted, he SNIFFS a handful: it smells exotic. MUSIC ECHOES, evocative, Arabic perhaps.

Beneath the sand he sees something, picks it up: it's a faded photo of the most beautiful woman he's ever seen; dark hair, olive skin, piercing eyes. Walter wonders.

BANG! A door SLAMS. Walter leaps to the window, looks out: below, Hub strides purposefully out of the house carrying a toilet plunger; he disappears into darkness. Walter runs out of the room, leaps down the stairs.

20 EXT. THE FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Walter bursts out the front door, runs after Hub.

21 EXT. THE LAKE SHORE - NIGHT

Walter arrives at the lake, looks around: no one there. It's spooky. A NOISE: startled, Walter turns... Hub looms over him, the toilet plunger raised in attack.

WALTER
Aaaagh!

Walter cowers. But Hub stumbles on past, down towards the water. Walter stares: Hub now stands at the shore, waiting; silently, the dogs and pig all join Walter.

WALTER (Cont'd)
He's sleep-walking!

The dogs lay down, eyes fixed on Hub. Watching. Waiting.

Hub smiles, a cold smile. Then, with a CRY, he swings his plunger like a sword and begins to fight: parry, thrust, savage overhead cut... Walter watches, eyes wide; from far away, he hears echoes of SWORDS CLANGING, HOOFBEATS, WHINNIES, CRIES OF MEN IN BATTLE.

(CONTINUED)
Continued:

Walter and the animals watch the thrilling moonlit battle at the water's edge. MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE LAKE SHORE - DAWN

Morning. Walter, the dogs, and the pig all sleep curled up together. Walter stirs, sits up, looks around:

The lakeshore is deserted, Hub is gone. Walter wonders: was it all a dream?

A rooster CROWS. Frantic, he runs toward the house.

EXT. BACK PORCH/REAR DOOR INTO KITCHEN - MORNING

Walter skulks up, looks in: at the table, Garth works on huge stacks of mail. Garth stands, walks out.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Walter sneaks in, starts for the stairs... but the stacks of mail are too intriguing. He thumbs through the mail:

It's all coupon responses from magazines and mail order catalogs; all have "Please have a salesman call" checked or written in. Walter GASPS, shocked. FOOTSTEPS APPROACH. Walter panics, tries to look innocent, as Garth enters.

GARTH

Thought you'd run away.

Walter shakes his head "no". Garth hurriedly gathers up the mail, puts it away. Then, Garth CRACKS eggs into a huge frying pan full of SIZZLING sausage.

Walter sits, confused. Finally, he just has to ask:

WALTER

Y-y-you send mail to all those salesmen? You ask them to come here so you can shoot at them?

GARTH

(sighs, finally nods)

Don't tell Hub. It'd take all the fun out, ruin it for him.

Walter looks even more confused. Garth stirs the eggs.

GARTH (Cont'd)

Every man needs a hobby.

(Continued)
Walter considers that. Hub enters, rubbing his shoulder.

HUB
Brand new mattress. And I'm still waking up tired and sore.

Garth smiles knowingly, then sees Walter staring at Hub. Garth wonders, dishes out eggs and sausage.

Walter eats, then freezes, he's being watched: in the window, the pig now has an angry rooster perched on its head; now two animals glare murderously at him. SIGH.

WALTER
So... you two disappeared for forty whole years? Where were you?

The brothers chew reflectively. Finally....

GARTH
Africa, mostly.

WALTER
Africa? Where in Africa?

GARTH
North Africa. Morocco, Algeria, Kenya, the Sudan....

HUB
...but that was long ago, and we're old and worthless now!

All eat. Silence. Walter tries again.

WALTER
Still, I bet you two sure got lotsa good stories to tell, huh...?

HUB
Stories! Ain't nothing sadder than a couple'a has-beens jabbering about the "good old days". Those days are through, and so are we!

All eat in silence. Long pause.

GARTH
I don't know how a feller can concentrate on eating with all this talk-talk-talk.

For just a second, Walter thinks he sees a twinkle in Garth's eye. Then, it's gone.
EXT. THE GARDEN - DAY

The uncles and the boy hack at hard Texas earth, the start of an ambitious garden. Walter struggles with a too-large hoe. The dogs and pig watch, puzzled.

HUB
I hate this!

GARTH
We're retired. Gardening is what retired people do.

HUB
Why the hell do we want any damn vegetables, anyway?

GARTH
They're good for you. Make you live to be a hundred.

HUB
To hell with that!

He throws down his hoe, storms off.

GARTH
Getting old's bad enough! Getting pissed-off about it don't help!

Walter absorbs this. A horn HONKS: a car drives up, across the new garden rows: loud relatives pile out, all talking at once: RALPH; HELEN; MARTHA, 13; and TWO WILD BOYS, 9.

ALL (all talk)
Uncle Garth! Where's Uncle Hub?
Kids, say hello to Uncle Garth!

CHILDREN
Hello Uncle Garth!

ADULTS (all talk)
We're here for a nice long visit, the whole weekend! We know how lonely our favorite uncles get!

Garth CURSES, throws down his hoe, STORMS off. The loving smiles instantly disappear: all turn and glare at Walter.

RALPH
Who are you?

WALTER
W-W-Walter.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

HELEN
Walter, Walter... Mae's boy?

Walter nods. The others look confused. Helen explains:

HELEN (Cont'd)
Pearl's daughter. That loose widow-woman, always "running around".

RALPH
Figures she'd try to muscle in.

HELEN
Is Mae here?  
(Walter shakes his head)
How long are you here for?  
(he shrugs, who knows?)
Well! We'll just see about that!

She storms off. SCREECH! The kids fly in all directions.
The dogpack YELPS, scatters. Ralph glares at Walter.

RALPH
We know what you're up to. And you're not getting away with it.

He stalks off. Walter thinks. Then he throws down his hoe and walks toward the house.

EXT. BACK PORCH/REAR DOOR INTO KITCHEN - DAY

Walter reaches the door, starts to go in, but hears:

HELEN (O.S.)
Men at your age! Taking in that strange little boy! He's probably robbing you blind!

Inside, Walter sees Hub and Helen ARGUING, toe to toe.

HELEN (Cont'd)
If you want young people around you're welcome to any of mine! They're very well behaved!

Walter hears a SQUEAL behind him, turns: the two wild boys ride the terrorized pig, BAWLING Indian war-whoops. Walter rolls his eyes, looks back inside:

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

HUB
Hell! We don't want any damn kids!

(CONTINUED)
HELEN
You two can't even take care of yourselves! Now you take in this strange boy with all his problems?!

GARTH
His momma's due back before long.

HELEN
That woman? Ha! What I hear, she may never come back! What then? You'll be stuck with him!

WALTER - AT THE REAR SCREEN DOOR

Walter, miserable, backs away. He slinks off.

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH - DAY

Martha sits reading, sees Walter staring at her. She raises a haughty eyebrow: "Well?" On the spot, he BABBLES:

WALTER
I read a lot of books too.

MARTHA
Oooh. I'm so impressed.

He peers at her book: "Horses". He starts to speak...

MARTHA (Cont'd)
Yes: horses. Daddy says when my uncles die I can have a pony.

Walter blinks, scrambles to think of another opener.

WALTER
Uncle Hub and Uncle Garth told how they used to live in Africa.

MARTHA
They're big fat liars. That's what Daddy says. He should know. He's a lawyer.

WALTER
But, but...! Then where were they for forty years? Where'd they get all their money?

MARTHA
They robbed banks.

(CONTINUED)
Walter GASPS. Martha is quite matter-of-fact.

MARTHA (Cont'd)
Daddy has it all figured out.
Years ago, there were these two
famous bank robbers nobody ever
captured. They wore disguises...
(Walter looks dizzy)
The famous Santa Claus Bandits.

Walter GASPS, shaken. Dazed, he slowly goes inside.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

HELEN
Take him to the county boy's home!
They know how to handle
troublemakers like him!

GARTH
If his momma doesn't show back up
soon, we may have to...

HUB
If we're lucky, we won't live that
long!

Walter slinks in. Hub and Helen stand toe-to-toe.

HELEN
I'm telling you: take him to the
orphanage right this minute!

HUB
Whether we take him to the orphanage
or tie him up and throw him in the
lake, it's our business, not yours!

Walter GASPS: all turn, see him standing there, wide-eyed.

RALPH
Here he is now! Spying!

Ralph roughly grabs Walter: Walter panics, kicks out and
SMACKS Ralph's knee hard; Ralph YELPS, Walter bolts away.

EXT. HIGH OVERLOOKING THE HOUSE - DAY

Walter races out the front door and down the driveway; he
streaks toward the road, running away as fast as he can.
A RECEPTIONIST puts on her hat and coat to leave; but one last CALL COMES IN. She SIGHS, answers.

RECEPTIONIST
Fort Worth College of Court Reporting....

WALTER (O.S.)
I need to find my mom! She's a student there!

RECEPTIONIST
I'm sorry, we're closed...

Walter: exhausted, face streaked with dirt and tears.

WALTER
It's an emergency! Please! Her name's Mae! Mae Coleman!

She SIGHS, scans a card file. INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION.

RECEPTIONIST
Hmmm. I'm sorry, there's no Mae Coleman registered here.

WALTER
Oh, well, try Mae Carter....

RECEPTIONIST
Uh... no, I'm sorry...

WALTER
How about Mabel Cartwright? Mame Callaway? Donna Tomko?

RECEPTIONIST
Young man, are you in some kind of trouble?

WALTER
She's gotta be there! She just started....

She takes a deep breath, and replies delicately:

RECEPTIONIST
Our classes all started back in January. No one could possibly have just started....

(CONTINUED)
33 CONTINUED:

Walter GASPS, turns white, the wind knocked out of him.

RECEPTIONIST (Cont'd)

Hello? Hello? Young man! Where are you...?

Walter panics, hangs up. As darkness falls, a small figure sits on the gas station's low front step and buries his head in his knees.

34 EXT. RALPH'S NEW 1962 BUICK - NIGHT

A new 1962 Buick pulls up to a stop sign with three unhappy men inside, out looking for Walter. Hub GRINDS the gears.

RALPH

Ouch! Hub! I don't know why you have to drive, it's my car....

HUB

Stop whining!

Hub GRINDS the gears again. Ralph glowers.

RALPH

When we find him, that kid's gonna get a piece of my mind!

Down a ways, Garth sees the gas station... and Walter.

GARTH

There he is....

35 EXT. THE GAS STATION - NIGHT

Walter studies a piece of paper.

The Buick pulls in, runs over the air hose: DING-DING. Walter looks up, goes back to studying his paper.

36 EXT. THE BUICK AT THE GAS STATION - NIGHT

Garth and Ralph start to get out.

HUB

Lawyer. Stay in the car.

Ralph starts to argue, sees Hub's glare, sits back down. Hub nods "go ahead" to Garth, settles back to wait.

GARTH

Hub. Come on.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

HUB

GARTH
Hub. Get out of the car.

Hub CURSES, follows Garth over.

EXT. FRONT OF GAS STATION - NIGHT

Walter studies his paper. Garth sits on the curb beside Walter, motions for Hub to sit. Hub scowls, but sits.

They look at Walter's paper, a page ripped from a phone book: it's the area code map of the United States.

GARTH
Planning your next move?

Walter nods. Studies his map.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Where you figure on going?

WALTER
Here. Area code 406... Montana.

GARTH
Why Montana?

WALTER
Their license plates say "Big Sky Country".

Hub and Garth nod. It's a good choice. Pause.

HUB
Family...!

GARTH
What Hub means is: sometimes, family can be a real pain in the butt.

Walter's lower-lip quivers, he hides his face in his knees. The two brothers look awkward.

GARTH (Cont'd)
How come you aren't heading to Ft. Worth, where your momma is?

WALTER
She's not there. She lied. Again.

Hub and Garth exchange troubled looks: uh oh.

(CONTINUED)
GARTH
You got a father somewhere?

WALTER
Mom says he died. World War Two.

Hub and Garth exchange "wait a minute" looks.

GARTH
Kid. That war was over twenty years ago!

WALTER
Yeah, she's not good with numbers. He probably just took off before I was old enough to remember.

GARTH
Look kid. We know you got your heart set on Montana, but it's late... Hub, help me out here.

HUB
Why? Sounds like his mind's made up. Good luck in Montana, kid!

Hub stands to go; Garth yanks him back down.

GARTH
We got better maps than that one, back at the house. Right Hub?

HUB
A man needs a good map, that's for sure....

All nod: all agree on the importance of good maps.

WALTER
I've been in the orphan home before. I don't wanna go back.

HUB
Dammit kid! It ain't our fault you got a lousy damn mother!

Hub is puzzled why Garth now glares furiously at him.

HUB (Cont'd)
What?!

Walter stands. Consults his map, orients himself.

(CONTINUED)
WALTER
I should get going. Which way is north?

Hub points. Garth shoves Hub's hand down, glares at him. Ralph angrily HONKS his horn. Hub notes it:

HUB
I'll say one thing for this kid: he sure pisses off the relatives.

That gives Garth an idea, an inspired idea:

GARTH
Look kid: do us a favor! If you come back to the house and stay awhile, why, our relatives will hate it! In fact, I bet they'll hate it so much they'll go away and leave us all the hell alone!

HUB
It's so crazy, it just might work!

GARTH
So kid. C'mon! Help us out here!

Walter hesitates. Hub frowns at his watch.

HUB
Make up your mind! We got salesmen back home, waitin' on us!

WALTER
Oh. Guess I could come back, for awhile. Seeing it's so important...

All stand and nod agreement, as if they've just concluded a deal. Hub and Garth walk Walter back to the car.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

The relatives sit beaming at Hub and Garth with phony smiles: they're still here. Hub looks over at Walter:

HUB
So, kid! How's that root beer?

Walter sips a huge root beer, nods: it's good. Then, he blinks: the relatives now glare murderously at him. Hub and Garth lean back, satisfied: "The Plan" is working.

Helen gives Ralph a "go on" sign. He clears his throat:

(CONTINUED)
RALPH
Uncle Hub, Uncle Garth, this has been such a wonderful weekend, so I hate to bring this up: but did you two look at those wills I left you?

Hub and Garth shake their heads, and SPIT.

RALPH (Cont'd)
It's best to be prepared...

GARTH
We ain't planning on dying any time soon.

HUB
Speak for yourself!

RALPH
You both need to be thinking about these things, at your age.

GRAVEL CRUNCHES: a car pulls up. A salesman. Hub and Garth smile, jack rounds into their shotguns: KA-CHUNK KA-CHUNK. Helen SHRIEKS. Walter covers his ears.

Below, this SMART SALESMAN leaps out and quickly crouches down behind his car, safe behind cover.

HUB
Damn!

GARTH
He's been here before....

SMART SALESMAN (O.S.)
Don't shoot!

Safe behind his car, the salesman waves a white flag.

GARTH
This is no ordinary salesman...!

HUB
I like a challenge.

SMART SALESMAN
Brothers McCann! Let's talk!

HUB
Come out where we can see you!

(CONTINUED)
SMART SALESMAN

Put down your guns! Then I'll come out!

GARTH

This guy is good.

HUB

I'll cover him, you sneak around....

Walter tugs at Hub's shirt; Hub wheels around, SNAPS:

HUB (Cont'd)

WHAT?!

WALTER

W-W-Why not see what he's selling?

HUB

What the hell for?

WALTER

M-M-Maybe it's something you want! To b-b-buy!

Hub and Garth exchange flabbergasted looks: it's never occurred to them. This greatly upsets the relatives:

HELEN

Your uncles know better than to squander their money like that!

Helen yanks Walter away, but Walter still calls out:

WALTER

But what good is having all that money if you never spend any? (relatives look alarmed) It's no good to you after you're gone!

Ralph's hands reach for Walter's neck. The uncles think:

GARTH

Could be, the kid has a point...!

HUB

We'll see what the man's selling... then we shoot him.

GARTH

Good plan!

Both lower their shotguns and amble toward the salesman. Relatives GROAN. Walter breaks away and follows.
THE SALESMAN BESIDE HIS CAR

The wary, sweaty Salesman sees the brothers approach.

SMART SALESMAN
Gentlemen! After our previous unsettling encounters, I've searched the world over for the perfect item for two exuberant sportsmen such as yourselves. And I've found it!

He pops open his trunk, removes a large contraption.

SMART SALESMAN (Cont'd)
Voilá!

WALTER
What is it?

SMART SALESMAN
The sport of kings! Up to now, only Heads of State could afford a fine piece of equipment like this. And it's simple enough this child can operate it!

Really?

SMART SALESMAN
My boy, just press this button...

Walter presses a button: a powerful arm flings a clay pigeon skyward. The salesman grabs a shotgun out of his trunk, swings it up, and KA-POW! He blasts the clay pigeon. Hub and Garth GASP: it's Love At First Sight.

WALTER
WOW!

SMART SALESMAN
The most powerful machine on the market! And very reasonably priced!

The relatives all scowl and BABBLE:

HELEN
Why, that's the biggest waste of money I've ever...!

RALPH
Mister, you load up that contraption and get the hell out....

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

HUB

WE'LL TAKE IT!

GARTH
And all the targets and ammunition you can get!

HELEN
Oh no you don't! I won't have my children around all this gun-foolishness!

HUB
Then LEAVE!

Garth pulls out a huge money-wad, peels off big bills. Helen fumes, storms off; her furious family follows.

As Garth counts out money, the Salesman nearly faints: the once-in-a-lifetime moment every salesman dreams of.

The relatives drive away: all glare daggers at Walter.

SUMMER MONTAGE - THE FRONT PORCH - NEXT DAY

EVOCA TIVE MUSIC PLAYS. Walter stares, stunned, at the front porch heaped with cases of targets and ammo.

SUMMER MONTAGE - LAKE SHORE - THE SKEET SHOOTING MACHINE

Walter, with make-shift hearing protection, loads up the skeet machine, pulls the handle. CLANG!

Clay pigeons WHOOSH out over the lake. Hub and Garth BLAST away, never miss.

SUMMER MONTAGE - A SEED SALESMAN

Walter watches Garth select a variety of colorful seed packets from a SEED SALESMAN. Nearby, Hub scowls.

SUMMER MONTAGE - THE GARDEN

The uncles and Walter finish planting and admire their handiwork. Hub pulls out his pouch of chewing tobacco, gets a plug; he holds the pouch out to Garth, who takes some. Without thinking, Hub then holds it out to Walter.

Walter anxiously peers deep into the tobacco pouch. Bravely, he takes the smallest possible piece, puts it in his mouth, chews... and SWALL OWS.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Walter instantly turns green and starts gagging. Garth slaps him on the back and glares at Hub. Walter gives Hub a pained look of "How could you?" Hub scowls.

SUMMER MONTAGE - THE GARDEN

A sprout has just broken the soil. Beyond, Walter lies on the ground, stares at it, amazed. The music ends.

EXT. THE HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

The house is dark, except for a light high up in the tower.

INT. THE TOWER - NIGHT

Walter sits in bed, stares at the evocative picture of the mysterious beautiful woman. The Arabic theme plays.

A door slams downstairs. Walter jumps up, looks out: Garth walks toward the barn. Walter runs downstairs.

INT. DOOR INTO THE BARN - NIGHT

Walter peers in: Garth pushes aside hay bales, reveals a trapdoor in the floor. Garth descends into the ground.

Walter gasps: frightened, but fascinated. He skulks up near the hole, peers down... he hears Garth climbing back up. He leaps into a pile of hay, burrows deep inside.

Garth emerges, counting a big wad of cash. He pushes hay bales back into place and leaves. Beat.

WALT (O.S.)

Ahhh-choo!

Inside the haystack, two eyes open wide with wonder.

INT. THE HIDING PLACE UNDER THE BARN - NIGHT


Startled, Walter looks up: above, the dogs and pig stare down at him curiously.

WALTER

Oh! You scared me!

(CONTINUED)
Walter and the animals look at all the money.

WALTER (Cont'd)
This money look stolen to you?
(the dogs look suspicious)
Yeah. Me too.

Walter thinks. He comes to a decision.

WALTER (Cont'd)
There's something we gotta do.

EXT. BY THE LAKE - LATE NIGHT

The dogs and pig watch Walter dig a hole. Walter picks up: the Santa Claus costume.

WALTER
If the cops find this Santa Claus costume, the uncles go to jail and we're all homeless.

The dogs seem to understand. The pig SNIFFS the costume, allows Walter to bury it. Walter TAMPS down the covered hole. There. Then, the dogs BARK, run off.

Curious, Walter follows, sees: at the lake's edge, Hub stands looking far out over the water. It's eerie.

WALTER (Cont'd)
U-u-uncle Hub?

No answer. Walter shivers, finally reaches out to Hub... but a hand grabs him, Walter YELPS: it's Garth.

GARTH
Don't. I tried to wake him once, he nearly took my head off. Let's give him a few minutes....
(realizes)
What are you doing out this late?

Walter shrugs innocently. They sit on a rise, overlooking the lake. Hub stands there, motionless. The wind BLOWS.

WALTER
What's wrong with him?

GARTH
Well... A man's body grows old, but inside, his spirit can be as young and restless as ever. And him... in his day, he had more spirit than twenty men.

(CONTINUED)
Walter nods: Hub stares far out over the distant horizon.

WALTER
It looks like... he's **looking** for something.

Garth SIGHS sadly... and finally nods.

WALTER (Cont'd)
*What?* What's he looking for?

GARTH
He's looking for **her**.

WALTER
*Who?* What was her name?

Long pause. Finally, Garth answers.

GARTH
Jasmine.

Walter wonders, eyes wide, remembering the photo he found.

WALTER
OK! **Tell me.**

The dogs and pig gather closer, as if to listen themselves.

GARTH
You want me to tell the story? *Now?* It'll take **days**....

WALTER
There's no TV: what else have we got to do?

GARTH
Much of it's second, third hand. Rumors, really. I wasn't there for some of it, and Hub damn sure won't talk about it.

Walter nods and waits, eyes pleading. Garth SIGHS.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Well. My brother was always too restless for Texas. So he convinced our folks he needed to go to Europe. And that I needed to come along. That was the summer of 1914.

A STEAMSHIP WHISTLE BLOWS. Walter's mind whirls:
YOUNG HUB AND GARTH, both late teens, leave a ship and enter an exotic French port, full of colorful characters.

GARTH (O.S.)
Unfortunately, just as we arrived in France, so did the Kaiser and the entire German army.

They see headlines: "Germany Invades!"

GARTH (Cont'd)
I wanted to go home, but Hub said we'd tour Europe one step ahead of the Germans. So we did. What a time that was! I remember these girls from Toulon. Twins! We....

Garth catches himself, COUGHS, skips that part.

GARTH
Anyway... eventually, we wound up in Marseilles, with passage booked on the last ship out of Europe, leaving in the morning. My brother decided we should spend our last night enjoying the local nightlife.

A WILD BAR: full of CAN-CAN GIRLS, SAILORS, SOLDIERS.

GARTH (O.S.)
He made friends with some soldiers. They bought us drinks: strange, strong drinks.... We woke up on a ship, bound for North Africa. Shanghaied.

WALTER (O.S.)
Shanghaied!

The brothers wake up, disoriented. Other SHANGHAIED MEN waken in the same state. A SERGEANT yells orders.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GARTH
We found ourselves in the French Foreign Legion. "It's all my fault", my brother said. He told me not to worry, he'd make sure nothing happened to me.

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - A FIERCE TRENCH BATTLE - DAY

In a narrow front-line trench, Garth ducks: TWO ARABS on horseback fly past just overhead. He leaps up, panics: an ARAB HORSEMAN looms over him, sword high: Garth's a goner. But then: Hub flies in, tackles the Arab, finishes him, grins at his brother. Garth SIGHS, smiles his thanks.

GARTH
And, in four long years of fighting all over North Africa, battling Germans, Turks, and Arabs, nothing ever did. He saved my life countless times....

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - A FORTRESS PARAPET WALL - DAY

TURKS with ladders attack a fortress wall: Garth tries to fire, but his rifle's jammed... a huge TURK looms, sword raised. Garth lamely fumbles for his sword... Hub flies in, snatches up his rifle and SWINGS: arms flail as the TURKS on the ladder fall away. Hub grins, hurries off.

GARTH
We fought in many battles, against overwhelming odds, against countless enemies, all fierce and worthy, every one.

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - AN EPIC BATTLE - NIGHT

Greatly outnumbered, Garth fights with swords on horseback. A HUGE ARAB knocks Garth off his horse, he falls, can't stand: his leg is broken. Helpless, Garth sees his comrades fall: a line of ARABS, GERMANS, and TURKS overrun the front line, SCREAMING... He's done for. But then: out of the smoke, Hub gallops in, swings Garth up behind him, they ride away, the last survivors of the epic battle.

GARTH
He was promoted to Captain, me to Lieutenant.
GARTH (O.S.)
After the war, we went our separate ways... I ended up leading safaris, mostly for writers and Hollywood folk. But that was too tame for Hub. He got commissions from the new North African governments to put an end to the slave trade....

Horsemen top a hill: young Hub and his Bedouin GALLOP into a encampment. CLANG! Swords collide, SLAVETRADERS fight; VEILED ARAB WOMEN, prisoners tied together, WAIL. Hub frees the women, then single-handedly stands off a counter-attack. The women all watch him, amazed.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GARTH (O.S.)
No one, slavetrader or Bedouin alike, had ever seen anything like him, this mad American who fought like twenty men....

WALTER

Walter, all ears and wide eyes, hangs on every word.

HUB (O.S.)
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TWO DOING OUT HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?

Walter jumps: Hub looms over them.

GARTH
Just enjoying the cool night air.

HUB
Neither one of you got a lick of sense! Go to bed!

Hub storms toward the house, shaking his head. Garth and Walter exchange shrugs, stand, and follow.

EXT. THE UNCLES' MAILBOX - DAY

Walter's hand retrieves the mail, a lot of mail-order catalogs. Then, Walter sees a letter from "Mae Caldwell".

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH - DAY

Walter rips open the letter, reads....

MAE (V.O.)
"Dear Walter. How are you? Found your uncles' money yet?"
(Walter frowns)
"Here I am at school in Fort Worth, my nose to the Court Reporting grindstone...."

Walter looks at the envelope, stares at the postmark: "Las Vegas, Nevada. America's Fun-Tier!" He crumbles the letter. He sits, eyes wet. SNIFFLES.

Inside the screen door, Garth watches, looks thoughtful.

HUB (O.S.)
Damn you, brother! I'm not going anywhere looking like this!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Hub pushes Garth Hub out onto the porch: both wear stiff new bib-overalls and straw hats, price tags fluttering.

HUB (Cont'd)
I look like a damn sharecropper!

GARTH
We're gardening! This is what gardeners wear!

Hub stalks off. Garth turns to Walter.

GARTH (Cont'd)
I bought you some clothes. They're up in your room.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Hub, Garth, and Walter hoe: all three wear new bib-overalls and straw hats. The plants are knee-high now, identical.

Walter watches Hub, fascinated: Hub attacks the ground as if it was a fight to the death.

HUB
We need this much damn garden?

GARTH
Think how good all these vegetables are gonna taste. Peas, beans, squash, tomatoes....

Walter scans the garden: it's all identical knee-high green stalks, every plant just alike. He wonders...

WALTER
What's this row?

Garth glances at the row's seed packet on a stake.

GARTH
Beets.

WALTER
And what's this row?

GARTH
Cabbage.

Garth rows, unconcerned. Walter suspiciously compares the beets and cabbages, back and forth: identical.

WALTER
Aren't beets red smelly things?

(CONTINUED)
GARTH
That's how they look in cans.
This is how they look growing in
the field.

Now Hub looks suspicious; Walter points to a third row.

WALTER
What's this row?

GARTH
Uhh.... Potatoes.

HUB
Now wait one damn minute! What's
this row?

Garth looks. The packet shows a big bushy plant of:

GARTH
Tomatoes....

Now Garth knows something's wrong. Hub storms through,
YANKING up seed packet stakes that don't match their rows.

HUB
Lettuce! Squash! Sweet potatoes!
Carrots! Bok Choi... Bok Choi?

GARTH
A type of Chinese cabbage....

WALTER
Hey! This row looks right.

They join Walter. Only this packet's photo looks like
its row; in fact, just like all the other rows....

HUB
Corn.

GARTH
All the seeds did look alike, come
to think of it....

HUB
Yeah! Like corn!

GARTH
...but I figured that's how all
seeds are supposed to look....

HUB
Nothing but corn!

(continued)
CONTINUED: (2)

GARTH
Boy. That seed salesman sure saw us coming....

HUB
CORN!

Fratricide appears imminent. Garth is saved by: HONK!

A truck carrying big crates pulls in: a giraffe's head sticks far out of one crate. The brothers grin, excited:

HUB (Cont'd)

It's here!

GARTH
Kid! Help him unload! We'll be right back!

They hurry toward the house. Walter goes to the truck.

THE TRUCK

The truck says "Acme Animal Movers". Walter peers into one crate's opening... and YELPS, leaps back as a lion paw darts out, just misses him. ROAR!

DRIVER
Watch it kid. He's a man-eater.

Walter nods, eyes wide. The DRIVER consults a clipboard.

DRIVER (Cont'd)

This the McCann place?
(Walter nods)
We brought your lion. Sign here.

ROAR! Walter GULPS, signs.

WALTER
But, but... where'd it come from?

The driver SNAPS his gum, checks his clipboard.

DRIVER
Cincinnati.

The bored HELPER leans on the truck and picks his teeth.

HELPER
King of da beasts. Terror of da jungle.

(CONTINUED)
DRIVER
Quit yakking and help me unload.

Hub and Garth hustle up: both wear new safari clothes and pith helmets, price tags fluttering. They noisily load big bullets into new huge rifles. The truckers exchange "now I've seen everything" looks.

DRIVER (Cont'd)
So. Where do you want him?

GARTH
Right here will be just fine.

Ammo dry, Hub and Garth stand ready. The truckers start to unload a crate; it says "Cincinnati Zoo" on the side.

WALTER
You bought a lion? A used lion?

GARTH
Stand back kid. You don't want to get mauled and eaten.

ROAR! The brothers grin.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Listen to him!

HUB
A big one!

WALTER
What are you doing?

GARTH
Brother, this was the best idea you ever had!

HUB
This lion head'll sure look good hanging over our fireplace.

WALTER
What fireplace? You don't have a fireplace!

HUB
We'll buy one.

WALTER
You're gonna shoot it?

The crate is down. Another ROAR: but the ROARS all comes from another crate, one still on the truck.

(CONTINUED)
GARTH
Hey! This the right crate?

The driver checks a clipboard, nods.

HUB
We want that lion!

DRIVER
It's going to Fresno.

Garth puts an ear to their crate: he hears nothing.

GARTH
You sure there's a lion in here?

DRIVER
Absolutely! Be seein' ya!

HELPER
Nice cornfield you got there!

The truck pulls away. All stare at the silent crate. Hub kicks it. Nothing. Garth listens again:

GARTH
I hear breathing. He's in there all right!

On the soundtrack, AFRICAN DRUMS begin to BEAT. LOUDER. Hub aims at the crate as Garth unhooks the crate's latches.

WALTER
I don't think this is very sporting...

HUB
Kid, at our age, this is as sporting as we get.

GARTH
Walter, come here.

Garth lifts the wary Walter atop the crate.

GARTH (Cont'd)
When I give the word, pull this.

The uncles raise their rifles. Drums BEAT LOUDER, FASTER.

WALTER
Maybe I should have a gun too. Just in case....

(CONTINUED)
GARTH

Pull!

Walter sweats, pulls, ducks. The crate side falls, SPLAT! Hub and Garth aim, the DRUMS BEAT TO A CRESCENDO... and nothing happens. The DRUMS TRAIL OFF. Pause. Walter peeks between his fingers.

HUB
Hey! Come on out of there!

Nothing. All look in: a mangy lion looks out at them.

GARTH
Hey you! In the crate! Get your lion butt outta there!

Nothing. Walter, still atop the crate, peers in upside-down: the lion just sits there, looking bored. It YAWNS.

WALTER
It looks awful tame....

GARTH
This lion's no good! It's... defective!

HUB
It's alive! That's the main thing!

GARTH
Well then, go ahead! Shoot it!

HUB
That wouldn't be sporting, shooting it inside a crate!

GARTH
Yeah? So?

HUB
Wait 'till it sticks its head out. Then we blast it.

Garth shrugs: sounds fair enough. Walter peers in.

WALTER
He looks old. Worn-out looking.

GARTH
Oh! Perfect!

It is indeed a pretty sad looking animal. It YAWNS.

(CONTINUED)
WALTER
He's real old. Look: he's only got two teeth.

GARTH
Some lion hunt this is!

Walter hops off the crate, takes a step inside.

WALTER
Here kitty, kitty. Nice kitty....

ROAR! Walter scrambles atop Hub's shoulders. All leap back. Then: COUGH COUGH COUGH, a hacking, old lion cough.

WALTER (Cont'd)
He's sick! You can't shoot him!

HUB
Get off me!

GARTH
Defective and dying. A reject! A sick zoo cast-off!

WALTER
So can I keep him?

Hub and Garth look at Walter, flabbergasted.

WALTER (Cont'd)
I'll feed him and take care of him and clean up after him and everything! I never had a pet of my very own! So can I keep him? Huh? Huh? Can I?

Hub GROWLS. Hub looks at Walter seriously.

HUB
So kid. You want to take care of it? Nurse it back to health?
(Walter GULPS, nods)
Good. Then we shoot it!

Hub and Garth head back to the house, arguing:

GARTH
That's some lion you bought....!

HUB
Yeah? That's some garden seeds you bought....!

As Walter closes the crate door, he speaks soothingly:

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (5)

WALTER
Don't worry. They're not as bad as they seem right at first.... I'll be right back with supper.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - EVENING

Hub and Garth watch Walter at the crate, HAMMERING, SAWING.

INT. LION'S CAGE - EVENING

The lion eats, and curiously watches the crate renovations.

EXT. THE CRATE - EVENING

The dogs and pig watch as Walter removes every other vertical slat, making narrow openings.

WALTER
There. Now you can see out.

He looks in: the lion BELCHES contentedly. Walter goes.

The pig and dog rush up, stick their heads inside. ROAR! All scatter, SQUEALING. From the crate: COUGH-COUGH-COUGH.

The lion stares out at the thick green jungle of leafy stalks, just out of reach, with an urgent, primal longing. JUNGLE DRUMS, JUNGLE SOUNDS ECHO.

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH - EVENING

Walter steps up and sits.

GARTH
You sure he can't get out?

WALTER (nods)
She. It's a girl lion.

Hub frowns: it figures. He leans back, SIPS....

WALTER (Cont'd)
I named her "Jasmine".

Hub CHOKES, bolts upright, furious:

HUB
Dammit! Have you two been talking about...?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Garth shrugs innocently. Hub glares at Walter: well?

WALTER
I-I-I got it out of a book of Fairy Tales! It just seemed like a good name! For a lion!

Hub storms inside, SLAMS the door.

GARTH
Thanks a lot! You trying to get me killed?

Angry, Garth goes in. Walter wonders, SIGHS.

EXT. FEED STORE - DAY

Hub, Garth, and Walter follow a FEED STORE OWNER.

FEED STORE OWNER
Sorry it took awhile to come in. In forty years I never had a call for it. I wouldn'ta believed they even made such a thing.

They join others, FARMERS mostly, staring down at a pallet stacked with bags marked:

FARMER
"Purina Lion Chow". I'll be.

The farmers scratch their heads in wonder.

FEED STORE OWNER
If you'll wait a few minutes, my boys will load you up.

Hub frowns, grabs a bag, throws it over his shoulder.

HUB
Garth. Pay the man.

GARTH
Brother, be careful.

FEED STORE OWNER
Mr. McCann, those bags weigh fifty pounds apiece....

Hub glares, stalks off. Even the farmers are impressed.
Hub tosses the last of the bags into their old farm truck, straightens his back. Garth and Walter watch, concerned.

HUB
There. If you two old ladies want to get in now, we can go home.

Hub hops down off the dock... suddenly his eyes roll up in his head: he collapses and he crumples to the ground.

GARTH
Hub!

Ignored by busy HOSPITAL PERSONNEL, Garth and Walter wait, anxious: they closely watch a nearby open doorway where hurried NURSES and DOCTORS rush in and out.

Walter trudges over to a water fountain.

Walter struggles to operate the water fountain.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Psst! Little boy!

Walter sees a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN motion to him.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN (Cont'd)
You're with those McCann brothers? I know about them.

She motions him closer, lowers her voice:

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN (Cont'd)
I know... that they're ex-Mafia hit-men, on the run with millions they stole from Al Capone.

WALTER
Uh huh. Excuse me.

Walter joins Garth. They sit silently. Waiting.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

WALTER
Tell me more about Africa. About you and Uncle Hub. And Jasmine.

GARTH
Why would a smart kid like you want to hear hokey old stories?

WALTER
What else we got to do?

Walter waits expectantly. Finally, Garth SIGHS.

GARTH
OK, OK.... Now where was I?

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - THE DESERT OASIS

Young Hub and his Bedouin again scatter slavetraders.

WALTER (O.S.)
"No one, slavetrader or Bedouin alike, had ever seen anything like him, this mad American who fought like twenty men..."

GARTH (O.S.)
Oh yeah, right...

TIGHTEN on one particular veiled young WOMAN prisoner.

GARTH (O.S.) (Cont'd)
It just so happened that one women Hub freed was a handmaiden to a princess.

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - JASMINE'S PALACE

She is joyfully reunited with her mistress and HANDMAIDENS; all wear veils. EUNUCHS stand guard.

GARTH
She told her mistress the story of her rescue. Most of all, she told her of the handsome heroic American.

The veiled PRINCESS's eyes sing and dance....

GARTH (Cont'd)
"I must meet this man," the Princess said....

The women huddle together, GIGGLING. Plotting.
Horse hoofs POUND the shoreline.

GARTH
One day, Hub rode his horse at
dawn, along the Mediterranean.

Young Hub rides his magnificent stallion, both horse and
rider at the peak of their youth, strength, and power.

GARTH (Cont'd)
When out of nowhere, there appeared
another rider who drew up alongside.

An Arab, face covered, turns to ride alongside.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Well! You know Hub. There was no
way he'd let any challenge pass.
It became a race....

The two ride at breathless speed, flat-out, neck and neck.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Many considered Hub the finest
horseman in North Africa. He'd
never lost a horse race, not one.
But this rider stayed right with
him, neck and neck, as the race
went on and on. And on.

Hub looks at the mysterious rider in wonder.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Then: a horse stumbled, the horses
collided, and both riders flew
into the sea. Hub leapt up, his
sword drawn, ready for anything.
So he thought. He wasn't ready at
all for what he saw next....

Hub pulls his sword, whirs... stares: the rider sits up
out of the sea, disguise gone, water streams from her
long black hair. She meets Hub's eyes, smiles, and LAUGHS.

GARTH (Cont'd)
She was the Princess. She was the
most beautiful woman he had ever
seen. She was....

WALTER (O.S.)

Jasmine!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She is, of course, the woman from the picture: Jasmine. Hub laughs. And the two look into each other's eyes.

GARTH (O.S.)
Now most people don't believe in such things nowadays: they say it's something you only find in stories. But when those two first laid eyes on each other, it was honest-to-god, no-kidding, sure-enough, once-in-a-lifetime...
"Love At First Sight".

MUSIC SWELLS. The horses caper and court in the surf behind the couple who have eyes only for each other.

WALTER
Walter listens blissfully; then his eyes focus, he realizes Garth has finished. Walter becomes more and more bothered:

WALTER
Wait a minute. Where is she?

Garth looks at him, surprised. Walter talks in a rush.

WALTER (Cont'd)
If it was true love they would have gotten married and lived happily ever after and she'd be right here with us now! Right?

A shadow of sadness sweeps across Garth's face.

GARTH
Aren't you jumping ahead of the story?

WALTER
Well... OK. Keep going.

GARTH
Well... Things weren't easy for them, back then: they were from different worlds. She was from a royal family, her father a Sultan. But none of that mattered to them. They arranged often, to meet....

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - A BUSY ARAB MARKETPLACE/BAZAAR

Jasmine swoops up behind a waiting Hub. They embrace.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GARTH (O.S.)
They made plans to run away together. But there was one big problem: she was promised to another man, a powerful Sheik from a nearby kingdom, an evil Sheik who wore a patch over one eye.

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - AN OLD EVIL SHEIK

CLOSE-UP: An Arab whirls around and glares: the SHEIK with one eye. An evil, brutal-looking, ugly old man.

GARTH (O.S.)
Surprisingly, despite his ruthless ways, the evil Sheik was said to be quite young and handsome....

WALTER

Walter jumps, startled. He *rewinds* his imagination:

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - A YOUNG EVIL SHEIK

An Arab whirls and glares, a different SHEIK: this Sheik's young and handsome, but still one nasty customer. WIDEN, REVEAL: in Jasmine's father's palace, the Sheik threatens a kind-looking Sultan, JASMINE'S FATHER.

GARTH (O.S.)
The evil Sheik heard Jasmine loved another: he threatened her father to hand Jasmine over at once, for their wedding to take place that very night. Her father had no choice. And so the evil Sheik took Jasmine off to his kingdom and locked her away in his harem.

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - THE EVIL SHEIK'S HAREM

Imprisoned in a fabulous harem, Jasmine SOBS. OTHER WIVES try to comfort her, but Jasmine will have none of that.

GARTH
She told the other wives she'd rather die than to be a wife to the evil, heartless Sheik. She hid away a knife, so that when the Sheik came for her that night, she could slit her own throat....
WALTER

Oh! What did Uncle Hub do?!

GARTH

Why, he rescued her, of course...

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - THE EVIL SHEIK'S HAREM

Swords CLANG! Hub fights his way through the harem, past WARRIORS and EUNUCHS; wives point him to an alcove where...

...knife poised, Jasmine is about to end her life. Hub slashes the curtain aside. She is saved.

GARTH (O.S.)

As they galloped for the gates of the city, there was only one horseman brave enough to stand in their way: the Sheik.

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - AT THE CITY GATES

On horseback, the Sheik waits ominously, sword drawn.

GARTH

It was a thrilling battle on horseback, between two expert swordsmen... but Hub drew first blood, a mighty stroke that cut a big long scar down the side of the sheik's once-handsome face.

After a short but thrilling swordfight, Hub and Jasmine race through the gates, toward the desert and freedom.

GARTH (Cont'd)

They galloped away, got married, and lived together happily ever after. The End.

THE HOSPITAL

Walter revels in the story's after-glow. But then....

WALTER

But wait! If they lived happily ever after, she'd be here. So where the heck is she?! Didn't they have kids? Where are they?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Garth looks sad and evasive. A Nurse exits Hub's room.

GARTH
Nurse! What's going on?
(she hurries off)
I wish somebody'd tell us something!

Anxious, both turn to Hub's doorway. Suddenly, medical supplies fly out of the room, SMASH against the wall.

HUB (O.S.)
Where the hell are my pants?!

Garth and Walter sit back and EXHALE, relieved.

CRASH: DOCTORS and NURSES spill out: Hub storms out, head bandaged, wearing a hospital gown, carrying his clothes, trailing an I.V. bottle. He glares at Garth and Walter.

HUB (Cont'd)
Who brought me here? You two?

Garth and Walter shake their heads innocently. Hub glares, storms for the exit. Walter and Garth hurry after him.

INT. UNCLE'S OLD FARM TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

The three ride along in silence: of course, Hub drives.

HUB
Hospitals! Lot of good they are!

GARTH
How would you know? You're never in one long enough to find out!

Hub scowls; sweating, he squirms, tries to ease his back pain. Garth and Walter see it, know it's getting worse.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Hey! You missed the turn!

HUB
Did not!

GARTH
Home is that way!

HUB
I want to go THIS way!

Ahead out the front windshield, Walter sees the familiar gas station/country store now draped with new signs: 

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

"Now selling BARBECUE!" "Ribs! Sausage! MEAT!"

WALTER
Wow! Look at that! That's why we went this way, huh Uncle Hub?
Let's stop!

Hub nods, pulls over.

INT. GAS STATION/COUNTRY STORE - DAY

SLAP!: atop butcher paper, huge slabs of ribs, brisket, and sausage are piled high by a SCRAWNY OLD WOMAN OWNER.

At a long bar-like counter, Walter, Hub, and Garth dig in. Walter eats his barbecue, but he's all ears.

GARTH
Brother, someday you're going to have to start acting your age.

HUB
What the hell does that mean?

GARTH
Your whole life, you've never been afraid of anything. So what's eating at you now? Gettin' old? Dying?

HUB
Hell no!

GARTH
What then? What?

HUB
Being useless!

Pause. Finally Garth nods, he understands.

HUB (Cont'd)
Me and you, we shoulda died in the last battle of the last war.

GARTH
Unfortunately, we lived.

HUB
It's a damn shame! All around us, people died, good people. And we didn't, we're still here. Why? What the hell for?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GARTH
I don't know.

HUB
When we were young there was always a reason. A point. Things made sense. There were always things worth dying for. Freedom. Honor. Virtue. Now there's no point to anything. What do we do? We garden.... We outlived our time.

GARTH
Maybe there's still things worth living for, brother...

BURP! Startled, Hub and Garth look over at Walter: he grins, embarrassed, his face smeared with grease.

WALTER
Good barbecue!

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Bearing "Get Well" balloons, relatives peer into Hub's room: they see an empty bed. Helen grabs a DOCTOR.

HELEN
Doctor! Where's Mr. McCann?

DOCTOR
Oh. I'm afraid he's gone....

The relatives try to hide joyful smirks and look somber.

MARTHA
Finally!

HELEN
Well, he led a long, full life... where's the body?

DOCTOR
No, he's gone. Left. Mr. McCann checked himself out....

HELEN
Left? But...! On the phone, it sounded serious!

All look crushed. Martha pouts, STAMPS her foot:

MARTHA
I'll never get a pony!
INT. GAS STATION/COUNTRY STORE - DAY

HUB
These days, nothing makes sense. Nothing matters.

Through double screen-doors, a convertible SCREECHES UP, music BLARING. FOUR HOODS jump out: leather jackets, duck tails. They SLAM open both doors, swagger in, stare around insolently as if they own the place.

Walter watches the old woman scurry into a door marked "Ladies Room". SLAM. CLICK: she locks the door.

Three hoods help themselves to six-packs from a cooler. The leader, FRANKIE, sees the uncles, swaggers over.

FRANKIE
Hey! Old man! How's that barbecue? Gimmie some!

HUB
Get lost, boy. We're busy here.

FRANKIE
What? What did you say?

Hub shakes his head, continues to Garth:

HUB
Here's a perfect example of what I'm talking about. Since this boy was suckling on his momma's teat he's been given everything but discipline. Now his idea of courage and manhood is to get together with a bunch of punk friends and ride around irritating folks too good-natured to put a stop to it.

Garth nods sadly. The punks are flabbergasted:

FRANKIE
What? Who do you think you are, old man? Huh?

Frankie pushes Hub against the bar. Hub's eyes blaze.

GARTH
Hub: he's just a dumb kid. Don't kill him.

The punks LAUGH. Frankie takes a fighting stance.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FRANKIE
Ha! Hey old man! Answer me! Who do you think you are? Huh?

Frankie swings... but Hub dodges easily. Hub grabs the punk's throat, squeezes hard, lifts him off the ground. Frankie GAGS. Hub's fierce eyes drill deep into the startled, helpless punk's eyes. Hub GROWLS:

HUB
I'm Hub McCann. I've fought in two world wars and countless smaller ones on three continents. I've led thousands of men into battle with everything from horses and swords to artillery and tanks. I've seen the headwaters of the Nile and tribes of natives no white men had ever seen before. I've won and lost a dozen fortunes, killed many men, and loved only one woman with a passion a flea like you could never begin to understand. That's who I am.

Walter's huge eyes shine.

HUB (Cont'd)
Now. Go home... boy.

With one last patented-Hub-look, Hub tosses Frankie away.

HOOD # 1
You're the McCann brothers? We know all about you!

HOOD # 2
Everybody in town says you're escaped Nazi war criminals!

Walter rolls his eyes. Frankie pulls a switchblade: CLICK.

FRANKIE
Come on! We'll show this old bastard who's tough.

The others pull knives: CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

KA-CHUNK. In the store's doorway, Garth now levels a shotgun at the punks.

GARTH
Now boys, you're fixing to let those teenage hormones get you into a world of trouble.

(CONTINUED)
The pale hoods drop their knives. And Hub is furious.

**HUB**

Damn it Garth! Did I ask you to butt in?!

**GARTH**

You just got out of the hospital!

**HUB**

Hell, there's only four of 'em!

**GARTH**

OK, fine. You fight him...

(nods at Frankie)

...then I'll let you fight the rest of 'em. OK?

Peeved, Hub knows better than to argue, nods angrily. The hoods look confused. Garth points to Frankie.

**GARTH (Cont'd)**

Hey, you. Pick up that knife.

**FRANKIE**

Huh?

**GARTH**

Son, you need all the help you can get.

Frankie snatches up his knife, crouches in front of Hub, and SWISHES the knife back and forth dramatically.

**FRANKIE**

Come on, old man!

**HUB**

You're holding the knife wrong.

**FRANKIE**

Huh?

When Frankie glances at his knife, Hub chops his arm, the knife flies away, Hub elbows the hood hard in the face.

Garth turns to the other hoods, shakes his head:

**GARTH**


With a HOWL, Frankie rushes Hub, SLAMS into him, fists flailing: The Fight Is On. The boy flails at Hub, lands an occasional blow, but mostly just expends energy. Hub, however, calmly and collectedly takes the young man apart.

(CONTINUED)
Frankie manages a lucky shot, bloody Hub's nose. Hub touches it, surprised; he smiles, actually pleased.

Walter watches, amazed. The hoods can't believe it:

HOODS
Frankie's losing!

GARTH
Then you three better get in there and help him.

The other hoods charge in. And, for a minute, it appears Hub is at a disadvantage.... But not for long.

Anxious, Walter joins Garth: Garth casually cleans his fingernails with one of the hood's switchblades.

WALTER
How come you're not helping?

GARTH
My brother always hogs the bad guys. He's selfish that way.

WALTER
But there's four of 'em...!

One hood SLAMS against the bar beside them, SLIDES to the ground, unconscious.

WALTER (Cont'd)
...three of 'em! Couldn't you both share?

GARTH
Naa. After forty years, I'm used to it. Besides... right now, he needs them worse than I do.

Hub fights, a grin on his face: he's having the most fun he's had in years.

The relatives arrive at the house, look around:

HELEN
They're not home yet.

RALPH
I'm sure, with Hub just out of the hospital, they're taking it slow and easy on the way home.

(CONTINUED)
88 CONTINUED:

Helen nods, he's right. The kids scatter, SCREAMING. The two wild boys spot the crate by the cornfield.

BOY # 1
What's that?

BOY # 2
Beats me. Let's tear it up!

89 INT/EXT. THE LION'S CRATE

The lion sleeps. SAW! HAMMER! CREAK! She opens one eye, sees two boys working furiously on the crate. CREAK: one side of the crate SLAMS to the ground.

BOY # 1
What is it? A lion rug?

BOY # 2
No, stupid! It's stuffed!

The boys jump on the lion, tugging its ears. Then: GROWL!

BOYS
AAAAGGGHHH!

The boys run off SCREAMING.

The lion COUGH-COUGHs, lazily stands, stretches. She stares at the chest-high cornfield; it beckons to her: jungle drums SOUND, exotic birds SHRIEK. She pads out of the crate and disappears into the cornfield-jungle.

90 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

BOYS
Momma! A lion tried to eat us!

Helen whirls around and SLAPS them.

HELEN
What have I told you about those lies of yours?!


RALPH
Where's Uncle Hub? What have you done with Uncle Hub?

The convertible SCREECHES UP: A bruised, happy Hub drives, with four badly beaten passengers, all GROANING.

(CONTINUED)
HELEN
Lord! There's been an accident!

WALTER
It was a fight! Uncle Hub won!
It was great!

HUB
Kid! Go get some meat!

Beside Hub, Frankie presses a rag to his bloody nose:

FRANKIE
I wadda doe hobe now!

HUB
You're in no shape to go home now...

GROANS from corpses in the rear. Walter runs up with steaks: Hub and Garth slap the steaks onto black eyes.

HELEN
Those are the biggest hoods in the whole county! And you brought them home?

GARTH
We couldn't leave 'em lying in the roadway.

The little boys still BAWL: Helen SMACKS them.

BOYS
But momma! There is a lion!

WALTER
Oh! Jasmine! (to Hub and Garth)
I gotta feed Jasmine! She hasn't eaten all day! I bet she's really hungry!

The uncles nod distracted. Walter runs off with a steak.

HELEN
Jasmine? And who is Jasmine?

GARTH
The boy's lion.

FRANKIE
Lion? You got a lion?

GARTH
It's locked up.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

BOYS
No it isn't! It tried to EAT us!

Everybody freezes, stunned, as the implications sink in.

HUB
The kid. Where'd he go?

GARTH
To feed the lion. Said it was hungry, hadn't eaten all day....

Everyone's eyes go wide at the dire implications.

HUB
GET THE GUNS!

EXT. THE CRATE BY THE CORNFIELD - DAY

WALTER
Here kitty, kitty. Nice kitty....

Walter peers into the remains of the crate. No lion.

Then, in the nearby cornfield: CORNSTALKS RUSTLE, a moving trail of shaking stalks, like the wake of a submerged shark... it heads straight toward Walter.

WALTER (Cont'd)
Jasmine...?

P.O.V. THE LION MOVES THROUGH THE CORNFIELD 'JUNGLE'

The Lion's P.O.V. through the "jungle": DRUMBEATS pound faster and faster, as her P.O.V. bursts out of the "jungle", leaps, and flies toward a startled Walter.

WALTER
Jasmine...?

EXT. THE HOUSE - DAY

Uncles, relatives, and hoods madly tear out of the house, trailing guns and ammunition, sprint toward the cornfield.

Hub and Garth freeze: in the distance, the lion pins Walter on the ground. Helen SCREAMS. Hub aims.

GARTH
Don't shoot! You'll hit him!

All run closer, guns raised, faces tense.
The lion has Walter pinned, eyeball to eyeball.

WALTER
Oof! Get off me, lion-breath!

Jasmine smiles, gives Walter a affectionate lick: SLURP.

WALTER (Cont'd)
Eeee-yuck!

The lion sees everyone approaching, ROARS! It grabs Walter's foot in its mouth, drags him into the "jungle".

Walter's rescuers run up and stare at the "jungle's edge", where Walter and the lion have disappeared.

GARTH
They're gone!

ROAR! SLURP! The rescuers look stricken. All hear LICKING NOISES, SQUEALS, SOUNDS OF STRUGGLE: it sounds dreadful. Helen SCREAMS, faints dead away. THUD.

FRANKIE
We're too late!

HUB
Move in!

JUNGLE DRUMS POUND. All follow Hub and Garth toward the awful NOISES, tense, guns aimed, prepared for the worst....

WALTER (O.S.)
Jasmine! Stop!

HUB
Attack!

All rush in, guns aimed, and freeze: the lion licks Walter, who SQUEALS and tries to temper the lion's wet affection.

WALTER
Yuck! Lion-spit! Blaah!

Walter notices all the guns pointing at them.

WALTER (Cont'd)
Look! She's feeling a lot better!

Walter strokes the lion: she PURRS.

HUB
Jesus! KID!

(CONTINUED)
Hub snatches Walter up, lifts him to eye level and frantically inspects him, top to bottom.

HUB (Cont'd)
You're OK...?

WALTER
Were you worried about me, Uncle Hub?

Hub HARUMPSES... and for once, perhaps the first time ever, Hub seems at a loss for what to say.... Then he glares at everyone standing around:

HUB
You people tryin' to ruin our whole damn crop? Get out of the cornfield!

EXT. EDGE OF CORNFIELD - MINUTES LATER - DAY

WALTER
Come on kitty! Back in the box!

Hub and Garth watch as Walter tries to drag the lion out of the cornfield; the rescue party stumbles out, drops their guns. Two hoods help revive a weak, dazed Helen:

HELEN
A lion! They bought a lion!

WALTER
But she's real friendly! See?

Walter pulls the lion's tail with all his strength; he's suddenly jerked off his feet back into the cornfield.

WALTER (Cont'd)
Come on kitty! Lions don't belong in cornfields! Bad kitty! Bad lion! Come!

The stunned hoods join the uncles, watch their struggle.

GARTH
The animal seems pretty tame.
(Hub nods, thoughtful)
And if we get rid of it... what are we going to do with a thousand pounds of Purina Lion Chow?

HUB
That is a consideration.

(CONTINUED)
A crazed Helen stumbles up, hat askew, hair a mess.

HELEN
We're leaving! And we're not coming back until you get rid of that, that... monster!

Walter watches, anxious, as Hub and Garth trade dead-pan looks. Then:

HUB
The lion stays.

Walter CHEERS, the hoods grin. Helen storms off.

CHILDREN
'Bye Uncle Hub! 'Bye Uncle Garth!

HELEN
Shut up! Get in the car!

The furious relatives drive away, for the very last time.

Finally, Walter leaves the cornfield: he gives up.

WALTER
She won't come out of the cornfield!

All watch: the lion paces, patrolling her corn-territory.

HUB
She thinks she's in the jungle....
(all realize he's right)
She's a zoo animal. This cornfield's the closest thing to a jungle she's ever seen.... The jungle's in her blood. She knows it's where she belongs.

The hoods shake their heads, amazed at all this. Far off, jungle drumbeats ECHO, exotic birds CALL.

GARTH
You boys hungry? Wanna stay for supper?

The hoods shrug: why not? They follow Garth to the house.

FRANKIE
What are we having?

Garth peels the steak off Frankie's face.

GARTH
Meat. Lots of meat....

(CONTINUED)
Hub and Walter watch the lion pacing.

WALTER
Look! I think she's happy!

Hub nods; then, a rare sight: Hub smiles. Then, more rare, Walter smiles, his first smile in a long, long time.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - EVENING

Walter and Garth sit, enjoying the evening. Down by the hood's car, Hub intensely lectures to the young men. In the cornfield the lion ROARS happily; COUGH-COUGH-COUGH

Garth expertly shuffles a deck of cards, with impressive professional-gambler flourishes, deals a hand of solitaire.

WALTER
What's he saying to them?

GARTH
He's giving them his "What Every Boy Needs to Know About Being a Man" speech.

Below, Hub paces back and forth like Patton addressing the troops. The hoods stand up straighter.

GARTH (Cont'd)
A lot of men have heard that speech over the years. A lot of men.

WALTER
Will he give the speech to me?

GARTH
Oh, I guarantee it... Assuming he's still around, of course.

Walter nods, troubled at that.

WALTER
You didn't finish the story. About Uncle Hub and Jasmine.

GARTH
Sure I did: "They got married and lived happily ever after. The End." Remember?

WALTER
But, what happened after that? What happened to her?

(CONTINUED)
GARTH
You don't believe all this "Africa" stuff...

WALTER
It's a good story! Please...!

GARTH
Well... After Hub rescued Jasmine, several years passed. Wonderful years.

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - A ROMANTIC BEACH
ANGLES: Hub and Jasmine ride along a romantic beach.

GARTH (O.S.)
No two people were ever so happy, so in love. It was perfect.... Except for one thing.

WALTER (O.S.)
The Sheik!

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - THE SHEIK'S PALACE
The Sheik rants and curses at his followers.

GARTH
Yes, the Sheik. He hated Hub for stealing Jasmine and for scarring his face. He put a price on Hub's head: ten thousand pieces of gold, a fortune. Assassins came from thousands of miles away....

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - A BUSY MARKETPLACE/BAZAAR
Hub and Jasmine shop: Hub leans down to smell spices... a knife flies in and quivers just over his head.

TWO ASSASSINS with swords leap at them: Hub ducks, SLUGS one; Jasmine throws red pepper in the other's face. He COUGHS, blinded; Hub tosses him into a pile of melons.

GARTH
Many dangerous men tried to kill Hub and get the fortune.

They turn a corner: THREE ASSASSINS rush them. The lovers dart into a stall: Hub yanks out a tent pole, the awning falls over the assassins, traps them.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Jasmine SIGHS, gives Hub a "Let's go home..." look.

GARTH (Cont'd)
He and Jasmine had to be on guard every minute of every day....

As Hub and Jasmine exit the bazaar: FIVE MOUNTED ASSASSINS DRAW SWORDS. The lovers run back into the crowd, hotly pursued by five horsemen as they duck and dart through the maze of merchant stalls...

Hub ducks: a SIXTH MOUNTED ASSASSIN swings, misses. Hub YANKS him off the horse, leaps up, pulls Jasmine up behind him. They GALLOP away....

WALTER

So how come all those assassins stopped coming? All we get here now are salesman.

GARTH

Hub was furious at the constant danger to Jasmine; he knew the Sheik would never stop. There was only one thing to do. So: one day an assassin led Hub, bound in chains, into the Sheik's fortress to claim the ten thousand pieces of gold.

WALTER

WHAT...?

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - SHEIK'S PALACE

NIGHT. Two riders on horseback approach the Sheik's fortress: a masked Assassin leads Hub, covered with chains.

Inside, the Sheik's GUARDS surround a face-covered Assassin leading the bound Hub before the evil Sheik.

GARTH (O.S.)
The Assassin was given bags and bags full of gold, more than most men could carry, as the cruel Sheik ordered that Hub be taken down into the Sheik's notorious "Dungeon of One Thousand, Three Hundred and Eighty-Seven Tortures"....
WALTER (O.S.)
What kind of greedy no-good scum would turn in Uncle Hub for money?

GARTH
Well... I would.

Walter GASPS:

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - THE TORTURE CHAMBER

As the Assassin juggles his heavy burden of gold, his facecloth slips just enough to reveal... it's Garth.

WALTER (O.S.)
A ha! It was a trick!

GUARDS lead the helpless, chained Hub into a nightmarish torture chamber. Terrifying HOODED TORTURERS await.

GARTH (O.S.)
In the dungeon, I whipped out my sword and singlehandedly killed everyone and freed Hub, without dropping a single gold coin....

Garth whips out a sword, easily defeats the bad guys, and frees a grateful, humble Hub....

WALTER (O.S.)
Wait a minute! Wait a minute!

GARTH, WALTER

Walter looks very skeptical.

WALTER
You killed all the bad guys? You saved Uncle Hub? And all that time you were carrying hundreds of pounds of gold?

GARTH
You don't believe I killed all those men and saved Hub?

Walter shakes his head: nope, he doesn't. Garth SIGHS.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Well. Maybe Hub helped a little....
Hub throws off his chains and fights the Sheik's men. Garth fumbles for his pistol, trying not to drop the gold.

GARTH (O.S.)
We were greatly outnumbered. We fought incredible odds....

Garth tries to juggle gold and aim, but Hub is faster and dispatches Garth's target first. Garth scowls as Hub defeats the bad guys before Garth can fire a single shot.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Then we split up: we each knew what we had to do....

At the doorway, Hub heroically salutes Garth, runs swiftly away. Garth hobbles out with his heavy burden of gold.

High in his opulent bed chamber, the Sheik slept. Until he awoke with Hub's sword at his throat....

Hub stands atop the bed, his blade pins the Sheik.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Terrified, the Sheik knew his life was over, that Hub would certainly kill him. Hub smiled... then lowered his blade. He threw the Sheik a sword, honorably offering his lifelong enemy a fair fight. "Defend yourself!" Hub cried.

The evil Sheik grins. The fight begins: CLANG-CLANG! And almost instantly, faster than the eye can follow, Hub sends the Sheik's sword flying and pins the Sheik once again, against a pillar, his blade to the Sheik's throat.

GARTH (Cont'd)
It was over in a second: Hub had humbled him. The Sheik knew he was surely now a dead man, with no right to even beg for mercy....

As Hub smiles and raises his blade high, the Sheik falls to the floor, WHIMPERING, closing his eyes.... And nothing happens. The Sheik looks up: Hub stands in a window.

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CONTINUED:

GARTH (Cont'd)
Hub told him, "Twice, I held your life in my hands. Twice, I gave it back to you. Next time, your life is mine."

Hub leaps out into darkness. The Sheik runs up, looks out: far, far below, Hub and Garth GALLOP away into the dark desert night.

GARTH (Cont'd)
From that moment on, the assassination attempts stopped. Some say it's because the Sheik knew that, next time, Hub would surely return and kill him, as he had promised.

The Sheik feels his tender but still-intact throat, and stares after the vanished horsemen.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Others say that since Hub had twice spared the Sheik's life, the Sheik felt it was a point of honor to allow his enemy to live.

WALTER
Walter smiles blissfully. Either way sounds right.

GARTH
Personally, I think the Sheik just got too darn busy once they discovered oil in his kingdom and he became one of the five richest men in the world....

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - THE SHEIK AND HIS GOLD
The Sheik, surrounded by gold stacked high to the ceiling, looks dazed, helpless with all his wealth.

WALTER (O.S.)
WHAT?!

WALTER
What kinda ending is that?! The bad guy gets filthy rich?!! What (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
WALTER (Cont'd)
the heck kinda story ends that way?!

(CONTINUED)
GARTH
I just told it the way it happened.

Walter looks very confused. Garth deals another hand.

WALTER
So that's how you got all your money? The gold from the sheik?

Garth does an amazing waterfall of cards a yard long.

GARTH
One of the ways....

Walter blinks. Below, Hub watches the hoods drive away.

WALTER
Hey, wait! You still didn't tell me what happened to Jasmine! After Uncle Hub defeated the Sheik there was nothing standing in their way, right? Then where the HECK is she?! Tell me!

Garth puts a finger to his lips: Hub stiffly ascends the porch, plops down into his chair.

HUB
Those young men will be OK now.

GARTH
Will you?

Hub leans back painfully, exhales.

HUB
Damn it. I feel... old.

GARTH
You've been busy. Terrorizing doctors and nurses, beating up teenagers, chasing after lions. You've had a full day.

HUB
Lucky those boys don't know squat about fighting. It won't be long 'til the kid here can whup my ass.

The more Hub thinks about it, the more it bothers him.

HUB (Cont'd)
Won't be long, I'll be helpless in a fight. Useless.

(CONTINUED)
He looks sad, bitter. It bothers Walter and Garth.

**GARTH**
Brother, you'll feel better in a day or two...

Hub waves him quiet, struggles to his feet.

**HUB**
I'm going to bed. G'nite kid.

**WALTER**
Walter...!

Startled, Hub stares at Walter, who panics:

**WALTER (Cont'd)**


**HUB**
"Walter". Doesn't seem... manly enough. How 'bout I call you "Walt"?

**WALTER** (beams proudly)
O.K.!

**HUB**
Goodnight. Walt.

He goes inside. Garth can't believe what he's just seen.

**WALTER**
Now. Are you finally gonna tell me what happened to Jasmine?

Garth smiles, looks cagey, shuffles too casually.

**GARTH**
**Nope...!**

**WALTER**
**WHAT?**

**GARTH**
You want to find out what happened to Jasmine... you have to ask him.

**WALTER**
What? Ask Uncle Hub, about Jasmine? Are you crazy?! Look what happened last time!

(CONTINUED)
109 CONTINUED: (4)

GARTH
But you and he are buddies now. Don't let the fact he's hasn't spoken about it for forty years bother you...

WALTER
I can't ask him! Uncle Garth! Please...?

GARTH
I'm tired of doing all the dirty work around here. If you want the end of the story, you'll have to ask him... Walt.

Garth shuffles the cards, looks very pleased with himself. Walter looks wide-eyed, trapped.

110 LATE SUMMER MONTAGE - FISHING ON THE LAKE

Hub, Garth, and Walter sit in a brand-new fishing boat, fishing poles in the water, having no luck. Hub looks impatient as Garth consults a "How to Fish" book. Then Hub spies a fish, whips out a shotgun, BLASTS it.

Hub proudly holds up his shot-up prize for Walter to admire. Garth scowls, casts his line, ignores them.

111 LATE SUMMER MONTAGE - THE CORNFIELD

Hub, Garth, and Walter look at their corn with pride, at its peak: huge golden ears. It's a beautiful sight.

112 LATE SUMMER MONTAGE - DINNER TABLE

Dinner: a big steak; sausage; and now fresh sweet corn. Hub, dubious, nibbles: it's great. The three eat happily.

113 LATE SUMMER MONTAGE - BREAKFAST

Breakfast: eggs, sausage, and corn. Hub and Walter frown.

114 LATE SUMMER MONTAGE - THE CORNFIELD

Hub, Garth, and Walter harvest corn: bushel after bushel. Jasmine watches curiously. They pluck the ears, leaving the stalks (and the jungle) intact.
LATE SUMMER MONTAGE - WALTER AT A ROADSIDE STAND

Walter proudly sits at a home-made roadside stand, surrounded by dozens of bushels of corn. A sign says: "Corn! 25 cents a bushel!" MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

LATE SUMMER MONTAGE - THE STAND - DAYS LATER

The stand, now abandoned: no corn has been sold, and the prices are marked down and down until it finally reads, "Corn! Free! Take all you want!"

LATE SUMMER MONTAGE - THE SKEET THROWING MACHINE

Walter sends a clay target flying, reaches into the box for another: it's empty. Now what?

A dog runs up, a ear of corn in its mouth to play catch. Walter smiles, puts the corn on the machine: BOING!

Hub and Garth blast the flying ear of corn out of the sky. Both give Walter "atta boy" grins.

SLOW MOTION: ear after ear of corn poetically bites the dust. By the machine, Garth loads up corn from a bushel.

Walter wrestles with a shotgun larger than he is, getting lessons from Hub; Walter has a pillow tied to his butt. Walter fires, the recoil knocks him onto his pillow-cushioned-butt. Hub slaps Walter on the back.

In the cornfield jungle, the lion watches, happy.

INT. TOWER - MORNING

Walter struggles into his pants: he can't fasten them at the waist, too small. He looks down: they're now too short. With a surprised grin, Walter realizes: he's grown.

He looks into a murky mirror: he's filled out, his pale complexion now more tanned. Compared to the timid, pale child who arrived in early summer, he's blossomed.

A HONK from outside: Walter looks out the window: a truck pulls into the farm carrying an old biplane.

WALTER

An airplane?
EXT. THE FARM - DAY

Hub watches DRIVERS unload a broken-down WWI-era biplane. Garth and Walter stare; they're joined by dogs, the pig... the lion sticks her head out of the cornfield and gapes.

GARTH
Hub...?

Garth and Walter exchange troubled looks. The airplane is a wreck: it rolls off the truck on flat rotten tires. CREAK! The tail swings wildly, held by a single wire.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Hub! An aeroplane?

HUB
Yup. Always wanted one.

GARTH
You always said you'd never set foot in an aeroplane! That you don't trust them to fall right out of the sky!

HUB
Yup. They're dangerous, all right. Plenty dangerous....

Hub smiles, a disturbingly dark smile. Walter and Garth circle the plane dubiously: half the propeller is missing. Even the animals look worried. Hub calls to the DRIVER:

HUB (Cont'd)
Does this thing come with a... book, instructions...?

DRIVER
Look inside.

Hub digs through the cockpit, finds a WWI era dog-eared manual "The Airman's Handbook".

HUB
Ah ha!

GARTH
Hub, you don't know the first damn thing about aeroplanes!

Hub dramatically and pointedly opens the manual, reads:

HUB
"To climb, pull back on the stick.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
HUB (Cont'd)
To descend, push forward on the stick." See? Everything I need to know is right here.

Garth CURSES, stalks off. Walter and the animals watch, deeply concerned. Hub climbs in; the tail falls off.

HUB (Cont'd)
A little fixin' up, and she'll be in the air in no time.

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH - EVENING
Garth and Walter sit, waiting for salesmen: but Hub isn't there. Both watch him, down by the barn, hard at work on the airplane; CLANKS and POUNDING sounds are heard.

WALTER
Maybe it's just a new hobby. Maybe he doesn't really mean to, you know, do anything crazy.

GARTH
You think so?

Walter shakes his head: he doesn't believe it either.

GARTH (Cont'd)
You ask him yet? About Jasmine?

Walter shakes his head "no".

GARTH (Cont'd)
Well, you better make it quick.

He goes inside. Walter thinks, agonizing.

EXT. THE HOUSE - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT
Walter purposefully exits the house, carrying a blanket.

EXT. THE LAKESHORE - NIGHT
Hub stands at the shoreline, looking out over the water. Walter appears, followed by dogs and pig. Walter stretches way, way up, and drapes the blanket over Hub's shoulders.

Walter paces, deeply troubled. The animals wonder what's going on. Walter has to talk to Hub, he just has to....

(CONTINUED)
Finally, gathering all his courage: he creeps to Hub, takes a deep breath... shoves Hub with all his strength and darts away. The dogs YELP, run off. Hub EXPLODES, YELLS, flails, whirls around, starts to come to his senses.

HUB
What the HELL?!!!
(see Walter)
It's the middle of the night!
What in blazes are you...

Hub realizes there's a blanket over his shoulders.

HUB (Cont'd)
Oh. I wondered where all the blankets were coming from...
(see Walter's look)
What is it? What's the matter?

Walter tries to speak, but all courage is gone. His mouth opens and closes, but no sounds emerge.

HUB (Cont'd)
What...? What is it?

Walter struggles, makes some progress: SQUEAKING NOISES.

HUB (Cont'd)
What? You got something to say, spit it out!

Walter SWALLOWS HARD, shaking, hyperventilating; he blurts:

WALTER
What happened to her, Uncle Hub?
What happened to... Jasmine?

Hub flinches, as if struck hard by a forceful blow; he churns inside. Walter quivers, ready to run. Finally, Hub turns away, and looks far out over the water.

WALTER (Cont'd)
I have to know. I have to!

The wind BLOWS mournfully. Finally:

HUB
She died. She died in childbirth. Her and the baby.

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - AN ARAB HOSPITAL

Hub, back turned, head bowed, silhouetted before a Moorish arched window. Don't see his face. Don't need to.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Garth rushes in, still wearing safari clothes; he stands helpless, at his brother's side. MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

BACK TO SCENE

Hub, stands in the same grief-stricken stance, forty years later: his sorrow and grief still so intense, so crippling, after all those years. Walter's heart breaks in two.

WALTER
What did you do?

HUB
I went back to the only life I knew. Back to The Legion.

WALTER'S IMAGINATION - A LEGION PARADE GROUND

Assembled TROOPS see Hub ride in: they SNAP to attention, sad and proud as Hub slowly rides in to rejoin their ranks.

HUB (O.S.)
For the next forty years there was always one more war to fight. Then I got too old and came here.

BACK TO SCENE

HUB
You should go in now. You'll catch cold.

WALTER
Those stories, about you, about Africa: they're true. Aren't they?

HUB
It doesn't matter....

WALTER
It does too! Around my mom I hear so many lies I don't know what to believe in....

HUB
Dammit, if you want to believe in something, believe in it! Just because something isn't true, that's no reason you can't believe in it!

Walter blinks, confused. Hub SIGHS....

(CONTINUED)
HUB (Cont'd)
There's a long speech I give to young men. Sounds like you need to hear a piece of it....
(pause)
Some times the things that may or may not be true are the things a man needs to believe in the most. That people are basically good. That honor, virtue, and courage mean everything; that money and power mean nothing. That good always triumphs over evil. That true love never dies.

Walter's eyes are wet. Perhaps, so are Hub's.

HUB (Cont'd)
Doesn't matter if they're true or not. A man should believe in those things anyway. Because they are the things worth believing in.

Walter thinks, finally nods: he understands. They both watch moonlight ripple the water, both lost in thought.

WALTER
That was a good speech.

HUB
Thanks.

WALTER
When are you gonna give me the rest of the speech?

HUB
When you're ready.

WALTER
When's that?

HUB
When you're almost a man....

WALTER
OK! You promise?

Suddenly, Hub realizes where this is going.

HUB
Now wait one minute...!

Walter goes for broke, speaks in a rush:

(CONTINUED)
WALTER
I really need you to give me the rest of the speech! I can't be a good man unless I hear the whole speech, now can I?!

HUB
I see what you're trying to pull!

WALTER
So you have to stick around until I'm grown up so you can give the whole speech to me!

HUB
I'll write it down!

WALTER
No! I want you to give me the speech!

Walter starts to cry: Hub looks awkward, at a loss.

HUB
You won't be living here then...

WALTER
But you're my uncle! I need you to stick around and be my uncle!

Hub frowns, feeling more and more trapped.

WALTER (Cont'd)
And what about Uncle Garth? He needs you! He can't fight off all those salesmen by himself! What about the dogs and the pig and the lion?! We all need you!

HUB
Now you're just being silly.

WALTER
No! It's true! We need you! I know you miss Jasmine, an awful, awful lot! But if you go, we'll all miss you! Just as much as you miss her! Just as much!

Hub looks dazed, rocked. Walter BAWLS, a torrent of tears. Hub stares at the boy: Hub looks completely and utterly helpless, for perhaps only the second time in his life.

Hub agonizes: he looks trapped. Finally he CURSES, angrily throws up his hands.

(CONTINUED)
Face still wet, Walter starts to smile: **he knows**:...

**HUB**

All right, dammit! **You win!** I'll stick around and be your damn uncle!
But don't expect me to be happy about it!

Hub thrusts out his hand to shake on it. Walter SNIFFLES, grabs Hub in a big hug, mid-thigh. Hub looks startled... then, he reaches down and gently pats Walter's head.

**INT. TOWER BEDROOM - PRE-DAWN**

Walter wakes, looks out: in the misty light of pre-dawn, a **CAR PULLS UP** outside.

**INT. FRONT DOOR/LIVING ROOM - PRE-DAWN**

Walter opens the front door: Mae smiles at him.

**MAE**

Walter!

Walter, this is Stan. We're engaged! Isn't that wonderful?

**STAN**

Walter! Heard a lot about you!

**WALTER**

Walt. My name is Walt.

**STAN**

OK. Walt it is.

Walter sizes up Stan: a bad comb-over, but he seems friendly enough. Mae hears the uncles' **SNORING**.

**MAE**

Your uncles are still sleeping?

It's early, let's not wake them....

They sit on the couch, keep their voices low. Walter sits on a big chair, his feet don't touch the ground.

(CONTINUED)
MAE (Cont'd)
Stan here is a detective. A private eye, just like in movies.

WALTER
Wow! Really?

STAN
Sure. You want to see my badge?

Walter nods. Stan flips open a badge billfold: Walter tries to look closer, but Stan flips it closed.

MAE
Stan works in Las Vegas. How about that?

WALTER
What about Court Reporting School?

MAE
Oh, I had to quit. Stan wants me to stay home and be a wife and mother. We're gonna buy a house and have lots of kids. You'll have brothers and sisters. Isn't it all wonderful?

Stan smiles, nods. Walter looks dazed, stunned.

MAE (Cont'd)
So Walter. I bet you found where your uncles hid the money, huh?

Walter starts to nod, catches himself... looks stubborn.

WALTER
Why do you want to know?

Stan and Mae SIGH sadly; Stan puts his arm around Walter.

STAN
Walt. Your uncles match the description of two bank robbers from the 20's and 30's.

WALTER
No. You're wrong!

STAN
When Mae told me about them, I got copies of the reports and showed them to her.

(CONTINUED)
MAE
It's them all right, honey.

STAN
They used shotguns, wore disguises...

WALTER
(weakly)
Santa Claus suits?

STAN
Come to think of it, I believe they did wear Santa Claus suits...

Walter trembles. And remains silent.

STAN (Cont'd)
They stole all that money and shot people. Innocent people.

WALTER
No! Not them. It can't be!

MAE
Stan knows what he's talking about.

WALTER
But... what about Jasmine? She and Uncle Hub were in love! I got her picture!

STAN
Jasmine...! Wasn't that the name of the woman that drove their getaway car? I think it was, yeah. She was wounded, and they both ran off and left her to die.

Walter's breath is knocked out of him; he GASP.

STAN (Cont'd)
I know this hurts. But they're criminals and they lied to you.

Walter starts to CRY. Mae clutches him to her chest.

MAE
My poor baby! In the arms of vicious criminals! We rushed here as soon as we knew, we've come to take you away! Now tell Stan where the money is and go pack your things...

(CONTINUED)
Walter looks up at her.

WALTER
Why do you need to know where the money is?

STAN
It's stolen, it doesn't belong to them. Bet it's buried outside, isn't it?

Caught off guard, Walter almost nods, catches himself.

WALTER
But why do you need to know?

MAE
Walter!

Stan stands, takes out a big flashlight.

STAN
Walt, let's take a walk. You can show us around the place.

At the door, Stan and Mae wait for Walter expectantly; dazed, he joins them.

EXT. BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND BARN - PRE-DAWN

In the eerie, shimmering mists of pre-dawn, Stan shines the light around, watches Walter closely for a reaction: as the beam hits the barn, Walter's eyes widen. They walk toward the barn: Stan uses the flashlight and Walter's reactions as a divining rod.

STAN
Now Walter. Your mother and I found this nice house, just like you always wanted. But we don't have enough for a down payment. We could turn your uncles in for the reward, but they'd go to jail...

He sees Walter shakes even more as they near the barn.

STAN (Cont'd)
I know you wouldn't like that. So we thought: with all the money your uncles have, they'd never miss it if we took some. Especially since we're doing them such a big favor by keeping our mouths shut.

(CONTINUED)
MAE
Since it's stolen, we have as much right to it as they do.

STAN
Nobody gets hurt, and we get a nice home and family. See?

MAE
Isn't it wonderful, Walter? It's what you always wanted! So, Walter.... where is it?

Walter's struggles build and build. Ahead, in the early morning mist... the barn looms.

STAN
C'mon! They're old, they're gonna die soon anyway. You want the government to get it all?

MAE
We finally have our chance to be happy, honey. Just tell us.

They're in front of the barn. Walter shakes, terrified, torn. Then, softly, an Arab flute PLAYS hauntingly.

Suddenly, Walter's struggles cease; his trembling stops. He's made up his mind. He smiles.

WALTER
Hub and Garth didn't rob any banks. They were in Africa.

MAE
Africa? Walter! Be serious!

WALTER
Really! They were shanghaied into the Foreign Legion and had adventures for forty years! They couldn't have robbed any banks!

MAE
Then where'd they get the money?

WALTER
Well, Uncle Garth ransomed Uncle Hub to this rich evil Sheik....

MAE
Walter!

(CONTINUED)
...who hated Hub for stealing the Princess Jasmine out of his harem and killing all his assassins....

STAN
Walter, you don't believe that!

WALTER
Yeah. Uh-huh. Sure I do!

MAE
You? Mr. Doubting-Thomas? Here, Stan has actual evidence, and you believe that Africa crap? Walter, you've never believed in anything your entire life! And now you mean to tell me that out of all the things you could have picked to believe in, you believe this? Harems? Princesses? Evil Sheiks?

Walter seems as surprised as her.

WALTER
Yeah...! Isn't that something?

MAE
Now I want you to think hard. Do you really believe this Africa nonsense? Really and truly? From the bottom of your heart?

Walter thinks very, very hard. He seems to search his soul. Then he smiles proudly.

WALTER
Yes. Yes I do.

Mae throws up her hands. Stan takes Walter's arm.

STAN
Mae, go inside and let us men talk. Man to man.

Walter look troubled at this. So does Mae.

WALTER
Mom...?

STAN
Go on Mae. We'll be right in.

Mae bites her lip anxiously, then nods, walks off. Stan takes Walter by the arm, pulls him into the barn.
Walter panics as they near the trap door; he struggles.

WALTER
Let go!

Stan SLAPS Walter hard. Walter is stunned. Stan drags Walter to his feet: they're standing on the trap door.

STAN
Now. Let's me and you get a few things straight: you and me can be friends. Or we can be enemies.

The old Walter would have cringed, maybe started crying. But this Walter glares right back.

STAN (Cont'd)
I've had a run of crummy luck lately, and some bad people are looking to make things tough for me. I need that money, I know it's real close, and I'll be damned if some little brat is gonna stand in my way!

Walter glares back at Stan with Hub-like murderous fury.

STAN (Cont'd)
So. Are we friends? Or enemies?

Walter smiles. A very cold smile. A very Hub smile. Somewhere, far off, Arabic music PLAYS.

WALTER
Defend yourself!

STAN
Huh?

Walter kicks the crouching Stan right in the crotch: THUD.

STAN (Cont'd)
OOF!

Walter runs out of the barn. Stan stumbles after him:

STAN (Cont'd)
Come back here!
131  EXT.  OUTSIDE THE BARN - PRE-DAWN

Walter runs, looks back: Stan gains on him. Walter darts toward the cornfield; but Stan tackles him.

Stan pins Walter to the ground, SLAPS him hard. Walter SCREAMS. Stan puts his hand over Walter's mouth.

Beyond the struggle looms the cornfield. SLAP.

132  EXT.  THE CORNFIELD - PRE-DAWN

The edge of the cornfield rustles: the lion looks out: she sees Walter pinned on the ground, struggling. SLAP.

The lion's eyes narrow fiercely: a look never seen on this lion before. GGGGRRRROOOWWWWLLL!

133  STAN, WALTER

Stan freezes: what was that? Then, behind him, impossibly fast, comes a speeding lion freight train. The lion SLAMS into Stan, both fly off Walter. GRROOWWLL!

Dazed, Walter sits up: what happened? He sees a lion furiously attacking Stan with everything its got. A lion in its prime... A real lion. GRROOWWLL!

WALTER
....JASMINE...?!

134  EXT.  THE UNCLE'S HOUSE - LONG SHOT

Lights CLICK on: Hub and Garth run out, carrying shotguns.

135  EXT.  RUNNING FROM FRONT PORCH TOWARD CORNFIELD - DAWN

Hub, Garth, and Mae run toward the frightful HOWLS: GGGGRRRROOO... The cry CHOKES and cuts off, mid-roar: there's one last death-rattle WHEEZE... then SILENCE.

136  EXT.  NEAR THE CORNFIELD - PRE-DAWN

Hub, Garth, and Mae run up, see the lion sprawled atop Stan, both lie still. Walter picks up the lion's head.

WALTER
Jasmine!

Hub checks the lion and Stan. Hub shakes his head sadly.

(CONTINUED)
HUB

Dead.

MAE
My god! He's dead? Stan's dead?

HUB
Oh, he'll live, I was talking about the lion.

All see Walter's bruises, put two and two together.

HUB (Cont'd)
What happened... did he do that?

Hub GROWLS and grabs Stan, but Garth stops him.

GARTH
We have to get him to the hospital. Mae, get your car. Mae! Your car!

Mae is nearly hysterical, but she nods, rushes off.

GARTH (Cont'd)
Let's get the lion off him.

All turn over the limp lion, look down. Garth WHISTLES.

GARTH (Cont'd)
I believe this man's gonna need some stitches.

HUB
A lot of stitches.

But Walter only cares about Jasmine: he cradles the limp head of the valiant lion in his lap.

WALTER
What happened to her?

GARTH
It looks like her old heart just gave out in all the excitement. She was plenty old, you know.

WALTER
Look! She's... smiling.

They look: she does indeed look as if she's smiling.

GARTH
Well! I'd say she died happy.

(CONTINUED)
HUB
She died with her boots on. That's the main thing.

GARTH
Yup. Protecting her cub.

WALTER
She really was a real lion, wasn't she? There, at the end. A real jungle lion. A real Africa lion!

Hub and Garth nod. Beyond them, the cornfield rustles in the pale early morning light. DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE CORNFIELD - DAY

Inside the cornfield, wearing Sunday best: Walter, Hub, Garth, and the animals surround a grave-mound: they've buried the lion where she belonged, in the cornfield.

Walter SNIFFLIES as he POUNDS in a wooden cross, says a silent prayer, and looks up at his uncles. Pause.

GARTH
You finish packing?
(Walter nods sadly)
Your momma's gonna be back from the hospital soon. You can wait for her on the front porch.

He nods. The uncles sadly watch him trudge to the house.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Forlorn, Walter waits on the front porch, surrounded by dogs and the pig, all in the same mournful mood.

Mae's Cadillac pulls up, with a bandaged Stan the front-seat passenger. Mae exits, approaches:

MAE
So, all packed? Where's your suitcase?

WALTER
Upstairs. In my room.

MAE
Let's go get it.
Stan is a mummy, immobilized in bandages head to toe. His eyes widen in alarm as he sees Hub and Garth approach.

GARTH
Howdy, Stan.

STAN
Mmmm! Mmmm-MMMM!

HUB
Stan, you were lucky... lucky that lion got you before we did!

Stan's eyes grow very wide.

HUB (Cont'd)
Know they do to men who hurt kids back in North Africa, Stan?
(Stan shakes his head)
Well! First they take a rope....

Walter looks around his tower room for the last time. Outside the window, Mae sees the uncles lecture to Stan, with a lot of descriptive hand-and-arm motions.

MAE
I wonder what your uncles are saying to Stan?

WALTER
Probably their "What Every Boy Needs to Know About Being A Man" speech.

MAE
I'm glad to see they're making friends.

Walter carefully puts his precious photo of Jasmine atop his clothes, closes his suitcase.

MAE (Cont'd)
There now. Ready?
...and then, after every bone in the body is broken, they take a razor sharp sword and two hundred pounds of salt....

Just getting warmed-up, Hub sees Walter and Mae approach.


MAE
I hope Walter wasn't too much trouble.

HUB
We managed.

GARTH
(nods at Stan)
What are you gonna do about him?

HUB
Man like that's got no business being around your boy.

MAE
Oh, of course! What kind of mother would I be? We're just dropping him off in Vegas on our way....

Time to say goodbye. Garth SIGHS, Hub looks uptight, the dogs look miserable, and Walter's eyes grow wet. Pause.

WALTER
...I'll be back for the rest of that speech... if... if...

Walter stumbles. But Hub answers definitively:

HUB
I'll be here.

Walter SNIFFLES, then rushes to Hub and hugs him, low. Hub awkwardly pats him on the back. Walter turns to Garth.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

WALTER
Thanks for the stories. And
everything! It meant an awful,
awful lot.

GARTH
I'm glad.

They hug tightly. Then Walter climbs into the car.

INT. THE CADILLAC - DAY

The animals sadly press their noses against Walter's
window. As the car pulls away, he starts to cry.

EXT. THE HOUSE - DAY

The uncles sadly watch the Cadillac drive away.

HUB
Damn it! That woman don't deserve
that kid! Let's get us a lawyer!

GARTH
No judge is gonna take a child
away from its mother and give it
to two old bachelor uncles.

HUB
Maybe she'll sell him to us! How
much money we got?

GARTH
Hub! There's nothing we can do.
He's gone!

Hub glowers. They watch until the car is out of sight.

INT. CADILLAC - MOVING - DAY

Walter looks back, watches the "WARNING" signs pass behind.
The house and tower gradually fade from view.

EXT. THE HIGHWAY - DAY

The Cadillac turns onto the highway, accelerates away.

INT. THE CADILLAC - MOVING - DAY

All settle in. But something still bothers Walter.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

WALTER
Mom? It was all a lie, wasn't it? About the uncles being bank robbers. And you were in on it the whole time, right?

MAE
I did what's best for us. You want those men to come after Stan?

He looks out, sees the field of bluebonnets pass by.

WALTER
So. Where we going?

MAE
I told you. Las Vegas.

WALTER
I mean after. After we drop Stan off.

MAE
Well now, honey, Stan's gonna need a lot of looking after...

She reaches over and pats Stan gently on the knee.

And suddenly Walter knows everything: he GASPS.

Walter grabs the car door, opens it, sees asphalt and grass racing past... and starts to jump.

MAE (Cont'd)

Walter!

The Caddy SWERVES violently, Mae SLAMS on the brakes, Stan SMASHES into the windshield... and Walter jumps.

EXT. A RISE OVERLOOKING THE ROADWAY - DAY

Walter rolls to a stop, jumps to his feet, scuffed but unhurt. He runs up a small rise overlooking the road. Below, the Caddy backs into frame, BRAKES hard, SLAMMING Stan backward: he YELPS.

MAE
Walter!

She jumps out, runs after him. Walter collapses in the field of bluebonnets, and CRIES. Mae approaches:

MAE (Cont'd)

Walter! What's got into you?!

(CONTINUED)
WALTER
You're still marrying him? After... everything?

MAE
He's not so bad... a little rough around the edges, but he can change.

WALTER
Mom!

MAE
He says he loves me and I'm not getting any younger....

WALTER
Has he hit you yet?

MAE
Mind your own business!

Walter stares at her knowingly. She looks away.

WALTER
You always think a new boyfriend solves everything. But you always pick losers. And he's the worst of 'em all.

MAE
Walter. We got no choice.

WALTER
Maybe you don't....

MAE
What?

WALTER
Mom. Do something for me. For once. Do something that's best for me. OK? Promise?

MAE
Well... Let's hear it.

INT. CADILLAC - DAY

Stan lays askew, face SMUSHED into the windshield; he GROANS. He strains to look, sees Walter and Mae talking. Then, both hug, crying. He wonders: what the hell?
Hub, Garth, and the animals listlessly sit on the porch in their "waiting for salesmen" places. Long pause.

GARTH
Salesmen oughta be along in two, three hours.

HUB
Whoop de do.

A dog's head goes up; so does another's. The uncles look up: far down the road, a small figure approaches, on foot. The uncles squint: who is it? The dogs run down the road, BARKING. Finally the uncles' eyes bug out: they drop their shotguns and hustle down the steps to meet...

WALTER
Walter, carrying his bag, trudges up to the uncles, sets down his bag, and smiles. All three--this new family--grin at each other. Happily, this time.

WALTER
If I'm gonna live here, there's some conditions....

HUB
CONDITIONS?

WALTER
One: you both stick around until I'm through high school at least, preferably college. You both got responsibilities now: PTA, Boy Scouts, Little League, the works.

Hub GROANS. Garth hides a smile. Finally, both nod.

HUB
Looks like we got no choice...!

WALTER
Two: you both take better care of yourselves: more vegetables, less meat.

Hub throws up his hands, storms for the house. Walter and Garth follow.

GARTH
I wonder if traveling salesmen sell school supplies...?  

(CONTINUED)
WALTER
Three: no dangerous stuff. No fighting teenagers, no airplanes...

HUB
Now wait one minute!

WALTER
...at least until I'm out of college. Maybe longer...

HUB
What do the hell you expect us to die of? Old age...?

Walter smiles, nods: exactly. Garth smiles at Walter.

GARTH
So Walt. Welcome home.

And Walter breaks into the biggest, sunniest smile of his entire life. So far. FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE: "Thirty years later..."

EXT. BIPLANE COCKPIT - FLYING - DAY

HUB & GARTH
YA-HOOOO!!

Wearing goggles and helmets, two old men SCREAM like crazy kids as their SPUTTERING biplane loops and rolls.

EXT. LOW, ON THE GROUND - SUNSET

The plane flies away, barely under control: it careens and SPUTTERS off into a huge heroic sunset.

INT. CLUTTERED ARTIST'S STUDIO - DAY

The man draws at a table: he's forty, handsome, athletic, confident. He smiles a familiar smile, a smile full of grace. He's the ADULT WALT. The phone RINGS.

WALT
Hello?

Behind him are awards and drawings on a wall: a successful syndicated comic strip in the style of Calvin & Hobbes. The romantic Arabic theme PLAYS.

(CONTINUED)
TELEPHONE (V.O.)
Walter Caldwell...? I have bad news. It's about your two uncles. Sir, they've passed away.

A sketch: a child's lettered sign "Africa" points to a cornfield where a whimsical lion sticks out her head.

The lion and her companion, a small boy in a pith helmet explore an exotic African jungle cornfield. The strip is entitled: "Walter and Jasmine".

TELEPHONE (Cont'd)
It's a blessing they didn't suffer.

Night: by a cornfield and lake is a familiar ramshackle house, a light on at the top of its leaning tower.

TELEPHONE (Cont'd)
And a blessing too, in a way, that they went together...

A hand freezes over a drawing: the boy addresses his "troops" that include a pack of dogs, chickens, and a surly pig. The lion looks skeptical.

TELEPHONE (Cont'd)
I found their will. I'll give it to you when you get here.

Walt's face: the news he's dreaded has finally come.

INT. WALT'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Walt drives, turns in, passes the familiar "Warning!" - signs, faded now. Ahead, the farmhouse looms, its tower leans even more. He parks beside a SHERIFF's car.

EXT. BY THE CARS - DAY

SHERIFF
Walter Caldwell?

WALT
Walt.

Walt and the Sheriff shake hands, then both turn to look at the barn: in an upper opening, the tail of the crashed biplane sticks out, upside down at a crazy angle.

Walt stifles a LAUGH. The Sheriff scratches his head.

(CONTINUED)
SHERIFF
Best I can figure, they were trying
to fly through the barn upside
down.

Walt shakes his head, a LAUGH bursts out, is cut off.

WALT
I always knew that airplane would
get them.

SHERIFF
We had a bunch of reporters out
here earlier. Even CNN. I guess
anytime a biplane from the first
World War crashes, doing acrobatics,
flown by two ninety year-old men
with no pilots' licenses, well....

Both try to keep straight faces, finally both grin.

SHERIFF (Cont'd)
Here. I found their will.

A single piece of paper. Walt reads the scrawls:

WALT
"The kid gets it all. Just plant
us in the damn garden with the
stupid lion."

Walt's eyes become wet. He looks out at the garden, and
the lake beyond. Wind rustles stalks of corn.

WALT (Cont'd)
These last few months, my Uncle
Hub's been sick with pneumonia.
From sleepwalking. More and more
lately, we'd find him out there in
the middle of the night, staring
out over the water....

The Sheriff looks at the plane with new understanding.

SHERIFF
Well. They had a good long run,
both of them. And they went out
with their boots on.

Walt nods: they sure did that.
EXT. THE GARDEN - DAY

The day of the funeral, in the garden: it's a real garden now, with a variety of huge, beautiful vegetables.

MOURNERS, mostly curious locals, gingerly make their way through rows of beautiful vegetables to the grave site, between the tomatoes and the watermelons.

THE CARS

WALT'S WIFE arrives. TWO BOYS bounce out of the car, dueling with curved plastic Arab swords.

WALT'S WIFE
Put the swords back in the car!

The boys turn: one wears an eye-patch and has a crayon-drawn face scar.

BOYS
Oh, mom...!

WALT'S WIFE
Go stand with your father.

EXT. THE GARDEN/GRAVE SITE

The boys run up to Walt.

BOYS
Dad! Dad!

WALT
Hub, you're standing on the squash. Garth, lose the eyepatch.

Walt sees four prosperous-looking MEN in their fifties arrive with their wives; the four eye him, grinning.

FRANKIE
Walter? Little Walter...?

WALT
I'm sorry, I don't remember....

The four turn up collars on the suit jackets: the hoods.

WALT (Cont'd)
Frankie and the hoods! I didn't recognize you guys without your leather jackets!

(CONTINUED)
By now, perhaps two dozen people stand among the vegetables. All wait, look at Walt expectantly.

WALT (Cont'd)
Oh. Well.... In her life, my mother made a lot of mistakes. But once, by sheer accident, she did do something right: she dumped me off one summer with two crazy old men. And there, in the most unlikely of places, I found a home. My home.

The wind blows softly, rustles the corn stalks.

WALT (Cont'd)
They had no idea of how to deal with a troubled little kid. So, they told me stories. Amazing, unbelievable stories. Stories about harems, sheiks and princesses, valiant men and evil villains. About courage. Honor. They knew those stories were exactly what a terrified young boy needed to hear.

Walt smiles wryly, shakes his head.

WALT (Cont'd)
Even though we cynical adults know such tall tales can't possibly be true, I believed them. In a way, I still believe them. Because, as my Uncle Hub taught me, just because something isn't true, that's no reason you shouldn't believe in it. That's what fathers do for sons: teach them the things that, despite everything, are worth believing in.

Some folks don't understand. But others do.

WALT (Cont'd)
It was the proudest day of my life when I turned eighteen and Hub gave me his full, unabridged, "What Every Boy Needs to Know About Being a Man" speech.

TITTERS, smiles. Frankie and the hoods nod knowingly.

WALT (Cont'd)
And one of these days, I'll give that same speech to my sons.

(CONTINUED)
The two look up at their dad and grin.

WALT (Cont'd)
I really, really loved those two old characters. I'm really going to miss them....

He wipes his eyes, looks up.

WALT (Cont'd)
Please, as you leave, help yourself to all the vegetables you can carry.

LAUGHS. And it's over. All start to leave. But then:

WHOOOSH! Airbrakes: two huge livestock trucks pull in.


WALT'S BOYS
It's The Legion!

The Legion forms up into a mounted Honor Guard. Walt can't believe his eyes. Nor can anyone.

Then, they see another vehicle drive up: a long, long limo pulls up and parks; its doors open: a dozen ARAB WOMEN wearing veils emerge in a dense pack, surrounding someone of obvious importance. The pack approaches.

Walt's boys' eyes shine. They watch the Legion on horseback, stallions prancing in glorious precision.

And then, at the garden's edge, the pack of women parts: revealing an old, old man in a wheelchair, an ancient SHEIK who wears an eyepatch and has a long scar running down one side of his once-handsome but cruel face.

WALT'S BOYS (Cont'd)
Yikes!

Walt is startled; his sons jump behind him, and peer out:

The old sheik glares at the coffins with incredible fury. The women start WAILING mournfully; the old sheik glares at them, then shakes his fist at the two coffins.

Old enemies die hard.

(CONTINUED)
The amazed locals watch as the mounted Honor Guard snaps to attention.

With a stunned realization, the adult Walt is now certain of what young Walter finally, truly believed:

BOYS
It was all true. Huh Dad?

WALT
Yes. It was all true.

And so it was.

ROMANTIC ARAB THEME UP FULL.

THE END