

FADE IN

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD PARKING LOT - DAY

The lot is somewhat full of cars. An Announcer for a baseball game calls a play over the loudspeaker which can be heard in the parking lot.

A 1990 Ford Bronco races into the parking lot.

KNOX STEWARD, 40s, disheveled, and harried, jumps from the Bronco and runs toward the stadium.

EXT. STADIUM GATE - CONTINUOUS

Knox fumbles impatiently for his wallet to purchase a ticket.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

On the mound TODD STEWARD, cleancut, 17, and wearing a jersey that says CROCKETT COWBOYS, pitches during a baseball game.

EXT. BASEBALL STANDS - CONTINUOUS

The crowd is sparse and mostly parents. It's a junior varsity game, not worthy of a huge student crowd.

SHANNON STEWARD, 40s, well-dressed and wearing sunglasses, watches the game. MARIAN STEWARD, 80, regal and with a walking cane by her side, sits next to Shannon.

Shannon looks at her watch and grimaces. Marian observes.

Knox steps into the bleachers and sits next to Shannon. Shannon is cold to Knox.

KNOX
Hi, Mom. Shannon.

SHANNON
It's the seventh inning.

KNOX
Faculty meeting ran late.

She sighs. She doesn't believe him.

KNOX

The traffic across town was terrible.

The crowd applauds as the inning ends.

ON THE FIELD Todd walks toward the dugout. He sneaks a look into the stands.

KNOX

I got his transfer approved.

SHANNON

Knox, we need to talk about this.

KNOX

If he goes to my school next year, he can still play ball, and I won't have to travel across town to his games.

SHANNON

What did Todd say?

KNOX

About what?

SHANNON

About the transfer.

KNOX

I haven't told him yet.

SHANNON

Don't you think you should?

KNOX

I wanted to run it by you first.

SHANNON

What do you talk about when he visits?

KNOX

Is this a test?

MARIAN

Shhh. The game's almost over.

LATER - AFTER THE GAME

Knox, Marian, and Shannon stand by the fence as Todd comes up. Todd hugs Marian but not his mother or his father.

SHANNON
Good game, honey.

TODD
Yeah.

They wait awkwardly for Knox to say something. Knox is embarrassed that he hasn't seen the game.

KNOX
Yeah. Good game.

Shannon glares quickly at Knox.

MARIAN
You remind me of Bob Feller.

TODD
Thanks. Who?

SHANNON
Will you be home soon?

TODD
Me and Darren are going to a movie.

SHANNON
All right.

Todd walks away. Knox calls after him.

KNOX
I'll see you this weekend.

SHANNON
It's not your weekend, Knox. You had him last weekend.

KNOX
Right.

Shannon walks away.

MARIAN

Your father would be proud of your son.

KNOX

Yeah. Maybe so.

INT. CAR - DAY

Todd sits in a car with DARREN, 17, longish hair, cool. Darren has two potted marijuana plants in his hands.

DARREN

We tell her it's a science experiment.

TODD

I'm not taking science.

DARREN

She doesn't know that.

TODD

What kind of experiment?

DARREN

I don't know. We're growing tomato seeds that came from the moon, from a damn spaceflight or something.

TODD

I don't want my grandmother to get busted.

DARREN

Who's gonna look in an old lady's garden?

Todd smiles. Darren puts out his hand.

DARREN

Partners?

Todd shakes hands.

EXT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The American flag flies from the flagpole at the entrance. At the foot of the pole is a plaque on a GRANITE STONE with the engraved words, "TO OUR BOYS LOST IN VIETNAM."

The parking lot is full of parked cars, but no people. Suddenly the 1990 Ford Bronco races into the lot and pulls into the handicapped spot.

INT. FORD BRONCO - DAY

Knox, disheveled, eyes the mirror, pats his hair, grabs a folder, and jumps out.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DAY

Knox runs across the interior drive. As he passes by the granite stone with the engraved names, he drops his folder. He stoops to pick it up. He reaches over and quickly touches the granite stone. Then he hurries off.

INT. AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Knox runs down the hall. A bell RINGS. Students scurry.

INT. HISTORY TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Knox bursts through the door and grabs a book from a desk. RITA, 40s, a colleague, pours a cup of coffee and hands it to Knox.

KNOX

Quick. Ask me a question.

RITA

Why?

KNOX

That'll do. Thanks.

He hustles back out with his coffee.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Knox rushes down the hall.

INT. KNOX'S CLASSROOM - DAY

At their desks students do homework. Some talk. Some sleep. Knox walks in.

KNOX

Sorry I'm late. My department head had a question for me. So. Where did we leave off yesterday?

Knox sips his coffee. SHEILA, 16, a bright student, answers.

SHEILA

The Civil War.

KNOX

Great. Let's get out our notes.

LATER - KNOX'S CLASSROOM - DAY

One student drops her pen and shakes her hand. Another rubs her neck. Another yawns. A couple kids sleep. Knox drones on at his lectern, reading from his notes.

KNOX

Lee evacuated Petersburg. Was surrounded at Appomatox. Surrendered April 9, 1865 to Ulysses S. Grant.

SHEILA

Hey, that's almost the same day.

KNOX

How's that?

SHEILA

The war started April twelfth and ended April ninth.

KNOX

Well, how about that?

The bell RINGS. Pupils gather their things and start out.

KNOX

Chapter ten tonight. Answer the questions at the end.

The students MOAN. Sheila remains behind and approaches Knox.

SHEILA

Do you like teaching, Mr. Steward?

KNOX

Of course. Why would I devote my life to something I didn't like?

SHEILA

You just taught the entire Civil War in one class period and put half of us to sleep. The Civil War, Mr. Steward.

Sheila walks out. Knox leans back in his chair and stares at the ceiling. He lets out a breath of exasperation.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Knox enters. He takes papers from his school mailbox. The secretary, RENEE, looks up from her desk.

RENEE

Knox, a lady's here to see you.

KNOX

I don't have time for a parent conference, Renee.

DONNA (O.S.)

I'm not a parent.

Knox turns to see DONNA WILSON, 40s, business-like.

DONNA

Hi. I'm Donna Wilson.

KNOX

Knox Steward.

DONNA

I'm with the Coalition of Families.

KNOX

I already gave to United Path or Way or whatever.

DONNA

I'm head of the families of unaccounted-for servicemen.

She hands him her card. He puts it in his pocket.

KNOX

Did my mother send you?

DONNA

Yes. She's one of our biggest contributors.

KNOX

Look, Miss...

DONNA

Wilson.

KNOX

My father died twenty-five years ago.

DONNA

Thirty-eight.

KNOX

Whatever.

DONNA

Have you seen the body?

KNOX

What kind of question is that?

DONNA

Last year a man escaped from North Korea. He'd been a prisoner since the Korean War fifty-five years ago.

KNOX

I'm sorry. I've got to get to a faculty meeting.

Donna follows him to the door.

DONNA

What if he's still alive?

KNOX

Look. I know my father's been missing for thirty-eight years. I said twenty-five because that's when I gave up hoping he'd ever return.

Knox proceeds out the door.

INT. CROCKETT SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Todd takes a book from his locker when KELLY, 16, bubbly, sweet, athletic, covers his eyes with her hands from behind.

KELLY

Guess who?

TODD

Uh. Britney Spears.

KELLY

How did you know?

TODD

The calluses on your hands.

KELLY

Just my serving hand. Hey, I've got something for you.

Kelly unzips the tennis racket bag slung over her shoulder and hands Todd an envelope. He opens it.

TODD

The Body Shop? I don't own a car.

KELLY

Body piercing. You'd look cute with an earring.

TODD

You're weird.

KELLY

Happy birthday.

She kisses him.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Establishes the MARRIAGE COUNSELING office. A sign on the door reads: Dr. Diane Iverson, Marriage Counselor.

INT. MARRIAGE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Knox, Shannon, and DR. DIANE IVERSON, 40s, sit at a table.

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For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at
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