

BROOKLYN ODYSSEY

Original screenplay

by

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FADE IN:-INT - KITCHEN OF A THREE STORY TENEMENT ON CONEY ISLAND AVENUE, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK JANUARY 26,1953 - 8 AM

A chill hangs over the kitchen. A homemade lemon meringue pie sits smashed and uneaten on a porcelain table. Fourteen-year old ANTHONY puts his argyle V-neck sweater on. EVELYN, his mother, rinses breakfast dishes at the sink. She wears her coat and hat.

EVELYN
Remember, no more scenes after
Today.

THERESA, Anthony's seventeen-year old sister, rushes through the kitchen, dressed for school.

THERESA
(to Evelyn)
You got to be kidding. No more
Scenes? Him?
(to Anthony as she pushes him)
Move!

Anthony clears a path. Theresa goes into the living room.

ANTHONY
(to Evelyn)
You too, after today.

Door buzzer RINGS. Anthony grabs his jacket and leaves.

EVELYN
(over her shoulder)
Theresa, tell your father FRANK is
here.

Evelyn crosses into the bedroom, opens the window as Theresa knocks on the bathroom door.

THERESA (O.S.)
Dad. Frank.

EXT - CONEY ISLAND AVENUE

The street with dirty snow in piles. A City sanitation car is running. The driver stands on the sidewalk.

EVELYN
(calls to him)
VINNIE will be right down.

FRANK

Can we give you a ride?

EVELYN

No thanks, Yetta and I are taking
the bus. We have a union meeting.

Anthony enters the street.

EVELYN

Anthony, you have money?

ANTHONY

(looks up)

Aunt Anna gave me five dollars for
my birthday.

EVELYN

They're not going to let you in.

Anthony crosses the street. Evelyn shakes her head and closes the window. Anthony turns back to watch Theresa exit the Building. She carries books and a gym bag with sneakers dangling. She walks away. Vinnie exits the building. He wears a sanitation officer's uniform and hat. He goes to the passenger side of his car, gets in. Frank drives away. As soon as Evelyn comes out of the building, she exchanges a look with Anthony, then he walks away. Evelyn pauses near the outdoor garbage pails, her face ablaze with the eternal wisdom of women who know life is not always a blessing. Evelyn places the garbage in the pail. Then she walks towards her bus stop.

We hear the SOUND of a trolley car in the distance. Evelyn climbs into her bus.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CONEY ISLAND AVELUE. SUMMER SUNDAY. 1944

The trolley travels on tracks.

BROOKLYN ODYSSEY

bleeds across the screen. The trolley stops to pick up people going to the beach for the day, then passes out of sight. Parishioners from Sunday mass are returning home. Neighbors sit on the stoop of their building. Garland's "Over the Rainbow" plays from a distant radio as the camera PANS up.

EXT OUTSIDE OPENED THIRD FLOOR WINDOW

INT EVELYN'S KITCHEN

It is now seven years earlier. Evelyn is preparing Sunday Dinner, pouring rigatoni from a pot of boiling water into a colander at the sink.

EVELYN

Find him.

Theresa is ten years old. She is unstringing a stuffed beef on a platter with meatballs and sausages.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Go, or he won't eat today.

THERESA

He never listens to me.

Evelyn crosses into the front room to the opened window.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND AVENUE

FYVUSH, owner of a candy store, is sweeping his sidewalk.

EVELYN

(over street sounds)

Anthony! ... Anthony! ... Anthony!

INT - EVELYN'S KITCHEN

Evelyn crosses back to the kitchen.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Get your brother.

THERESA

He won't eat anyway. Thinks he's Fred Astaire.

EVELYN

(grabbing the string)

Stop! What are you doing with this?

THERESA

Dancing in the movies. What a jerk!

EVELYN

Don't be such a pain in the ass,
Theresa. Let's enjoy a Sunday dinner.

Theresa storms out of the apartment, passing Vinnie, who is reading the Sunday papers in the living room. He is wearing a coach's baseball uniform. Vinnie comes to the kitchen as Evelyn pours sauce over the macaroni.

VINNIE

The game starts in an hour. He's not interested.

EVELYN

He'll go with you.

Vinnie eyes her, attracted.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

What are you looking at?

They laugh, sexy, as Vinnie sits to eat.

EXT - CONEY ISLAND AVENUE

THERESA

(over a passing trolley)
Anthony!!!! Anthony!!!!!!!!!!!!

Theresa calls to Fyvush.

THERESA (CONT'D)

Fyvush, you see my brother?

FYVUSH

He's with Lillian.

INT - HALLWAY WITH STAIRCASE -LILLIAN'S BUILDING

Theresa goes into Lillian's building, to the second floor. Apartment door is ajar."Somewhere Over The Rainbow" comes to an end.

THERESA

Anthony?

INT - LILLIAN'S APARTMENT

Anthony and Lillian turn towards the sound of her voice as Theresa enters and sees they are naked.

THERESA (CONT'D)

(shocked)

What are you both doing?

ANTHONY

Dancing.

Theresa flings his clothes to him.

THERESA

You're going to get killed.

ANTHONY

(dressing)

Why?

THERESA

Where's your mother Lillian?

LILLIAN

At my uncle's.

THERESA

Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?

ANTHONY

We were dancing.

Theresa pushes him out of the apartment.

EXT - CONEY ISLAND AVENUE

As they enter the street Theresa smacks Anthony in the face.
He rushes ahead.

INT - EVELYN'S KITCHEN

Vinnie and Evelyn are eating. We hear Anthony run into the
bathroom and slam its door. Theresa enters the kitchen.

THERESA

Your precious son was naked with
Lillian in her apartment!

Vinnie and Evelyn look to each other.

EVELYN

Where is he?

THERESA

Hiding.

Theresa sits down to eat heartily.

EVELYN

Anthony, eat before it gets cold.

THERESA

Aren't you going to give it to him?

EVELYN

Don't worry. He'll get it.

Anthony enters, wiping his washed face.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Come and eat.

ANTHONY

No thank you. I just had a baked apple.

Evelyn and Vinnie laugh.

EVELYN

Baked apple? What are you talking about?

THERESA

Fyvush tells him to avoid things he doesn't like with this stupid baked apple thing.

ANTHONY

(sits)

He says it always gets a laugh. And he was right. You both laughed.

THERESA

I didn't laugh.

ANTHONY

You never laugh.

EVELYN

If you like baked apples why didn't you tell me. I'll make them.

THERESA

He doesn't like baked apples! He's trying to get out of a beating. Can't you ever see what he's doing?

ANTHONY

Fyvush was in the vaudeville.

EVELYN

There's a war on now. Don't let
Fyvush fill your head with stupid
things. Vaudeville!

ANTHONY

(pushing food away)

I'm not hungry.

EVELYN

If you don't finish that entire
plate you're not going today.

ANTHONY

It's too much.

EVELYN

You'll sit there all afternoon and
eat even when it gets cold.

THERESA

He won't eat and you'll let him go
anyway.

EVELYN

Mind your p's and q's.

THERESA

(to Anthony)

Brat!

VINNIE

What were you doing at Lillian's?

EVELYN

(pushing food back to him)

Eat and go with them.

ANTHONY

I can't eat all that.

EVELYN

Eat half of it then.

Theresa is angry.

ANTHONY

Fyvush traveled all over the world.

EVELYN

Dreaming will get you nowhere. Keep your feet on the ground. War on today, you never know what's going to happen.

VINNIE

I asked you a question.

ANTHONY

What?

VINNIE

What were you doing at Lillian's?

THERESA

He was naked. That's what he was doing.

VINNIE

Why were you naked?

EVELYN

Eat, for god's sake.

VINNIE

I'm waiting for an answer. How did you get naked?

ANTHONY

I took my clothes off.

Evelyn laughs boisterously, frustrating Theresa.

VINNIE

Then what happened?

ANTHONY

We danced.

VINNIE

Why did you take your clothes off?

ANTHONY

You know.

VINNIE

No, I don't know.

EVELYN

What's the difference. They're
little kids. What could happen?

THERESA

If I did that I'd get a beating.

ANTHONY

I'm going to be a dancer.

EVELYN

Oh sure, tomorrow, don't forget.
Where do you get these silly ideas?

ANTHONY

Fyvush said his whole family sang,
danced and played instruments.

EVELYN

Now he owns a candy store so what
good did it do him?

ANTHONY

He showed me how to do bells.

VINNIE

Bells? What are bells?

Anthony rises from the table, leaps up and tries to kick
both feet into the air on one side, but crashes to the floor.
Theresa, Evelyn and Vinnie laugh in good humor.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

Oh Bells! Now I understand.

(teasing)

Want to do it again?

ANTHONY

(rising)

I have to practice.

EVELYN

Will Fyvush pay the hospital
bills when you break your neck?

ANTHONY

(sit)

Can I take lessons?

VINNIE

Dancing lessons? Nobody in our family ever went in for dancing.

ANTHONY

So what? I want to.

VINNIE

Well it's easier to do things your family can help you with.

ANTHONY

I don't like those things.

THERESA

(to Anthony)

You turn my stomach.

VINNIE

You can be batboy today.

ANTHONY

I don't want to be batboy.

VINNIE

We can't keep up with you. Last week you were angry because we left without you.

ANTHONY

I wanted to watch, that's all.

EVELYN

Well hurry and eat and go with them. Figure it out when you get there. Children in China would be happy to have this food, believe me.

ANTHONY

Then mail it to them. I'm not eating it.

EVELYN

People must think I don't feed you. Put some meat on those bones.

Theresa storms off as Uncle's ANDY and WILLIE, in baseball uniforms, enter the kitchen, carrying a pan.

ANDY
(to Vinnie)
Let's go coach, our last game. Next
month We'll be pitching bullets
into Adolph.

WILLIE
(handing pan to Evelyn)
Anna made eggplant parmagiana.

Vinnie leaves with Andy and Willie.

EVELYN
(to Anthony)
Hurry and finish. They're leaving.

ANTHONY
It tastes funny!

EVELYN
Tastes funny? Learn to keep your
mouth shut if you know what's good
for you.

ANTHONY
(through clenched teeth)
I kknnoow whhat's gooooddd for
meeeeee!

EVELYN
(amused)
Mr. Big Shot! Get outta here!
You'll eat this later.

Anthony runs off after his father and uncles.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
That mouth is going to get you into
trouble. Mark my words!

The door slams.

INT - BROOKLYN PREPARATORY SCHOOL - 8:55 A.M. - JAN 26, 1953

Anthony walks into Brooklyn Preparatory School, surrounded by a
thunderous cacophony of preppies each wearing blazers and ties.
Anthony is dressed in his suede zippered jacket. He walks
through conversations.

A SENIOR

(to a group of Seniors)

But the cows eat it, then we drink it. When it assimilates it doesn't become less effective, just absorbed. It's still radioactive.

A JUNIOR

(to new freshmen)

They never teach until you study the material first. Each class starts with a five minute quiz to be sure you did your homework. It's not really stupid.

DEBATING TEAM MEMBER

Once they started on the second world war I knew we were in at least for the bronze. Charlie drilled us all semester. St. John's didn't have a chance.

STUDENT

We took the gold?

DEBATING TEAM MEMBER

By 11:15 we had covered every invasion firsthand. No way we couldn't take the gold. I got home at one, studied for the physics test till four, and plan to sleep through the weekend. I drank three cups of coffee to get here.

An elderly Jesuit passes, holding essays over his head.

BRIAN

Father, I get a 90?

JESUIT

Your only 90 today Brian is your temperature.

The Jesuit moves on.

A bell RINGS.

Preppies rush to classes. In a flash Anthony is alone in this spotless hallway of long traditions. He looks at the

polished floors, shiny wooden oak doors and half-paneled wooden walls below an off-white patina that looks like vanilla ice cream. The sun through the black wrought iron bars on the windows creates mosaic patterns on the floors and walls. Anthony sees a sign for the Headmaster's Office.

INT - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - 9:01 A.M. - JAN 26, 1953

Anthony enters. NANCY, a pretty twenty-year old secretary, in a small connecting office, glances up from her typing.

SECRETARY

Yes?

ANTHONY

I would like to see the headmaster.

SECRETARY

He's not here.

ANTHONY

Will he be back?

SECRETARY

He's not scheduled to be in till late.

ANTHONY

May I wait?

SECRETARY

I mean this afternoon.

ANTHONY

What?

SECRETARY

Father won't be back till this afternoon.

ANTHONY

May I wait?

SECRETARY

(stops typing)

It's 9 A.M.

ANTHONY

Yes I know.

SECRETARY

He's at a conference in New York.
Perhaps I can help.

ANTHONY

No. Thank you.

SECRETARY

Could you tell me what you want to
see Fr. Watson about?

ANTHONY

Well, I would rather talk to him.

SECRETARY

Maybe it's something he can't help
you with.

ANTHONY

I would still rather talk to him.

SECRETARY

Why don't you come back later?

ANTHONY

I don't live around here.

SECRETARY

Does he know what you want?

ANTHONY

No.

SECRETARY

Does he know you're here?

ANTHONY

No.

SECRETARY

Does he know you?

ANTHONY

No.

SECRETARY

Perhaps his assistant, Fr. Ryan,
could help you?

ANTHONY

No. Thank you.

SECRETARY

You'd have to wait all day.

ANTHONY

I don't mind.

SECRETARY

Wouldn't it be better to tell
someone what you want?

ANTHONY

I want to see the headmaster.

SECRETARY

He'll be in all day tomorrow.

ANTHONY

I have to see him today.

SECRETARY

All right then.

ANTHONY

(anxiously)

Will he definitely be back?

SECRETARY

I assume so.

ANTHONY

I mean today.

SECRETARY

Well, he lives here.

ANTHONY

Thank you.

Anthony takes off his jacket, revealing his argyle sweater. Secretary takes letters into the Headmaster's office, which has an outside entrance. FR.CULKIN enters Nancy's office with a stack of exams. He sees the door ajar, peaks in.

CULKIN

I'm leaving the Greek grades on
your desk. Juniors.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Thank you.

Culkin smiles at Anthony as he exits the secretary's office.
The Secretary returns.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

I'm Nancy Doherty by the way.

ANTHONY

Irish?

SECRETARY

English and a bit of German. You?

ANTHONY

Anthony Bartholemeo.

SECRETARY

Italian obviously.

ANTHONY

All four grandparents.

SECRETARY

Speak it?

ANTHONY

No.

SECRETARY

Does anyone in your family speak
Italian?

ANTHONY

No. My mother can understand and
speak just a little. But my father
doesn't understand any of it.

SECRETARY

That's too bad. Were they born there?

ANTHONY

No. They were all born here except
my grandparents, but they came over
as little kids and grew up here.

SECRETARY

You have a large family?

ANTHONY

Yes.

SECRETARY

That's nice. I bet they're fun.

ANTHONY

They're great.

Nancy records semester grades. Anthony waits.

EXT -BRIGHTON BEACH AT CONEY ISLAND - JUNE DAY - 1944

ANNA, a woman, about forty-two inches tall, with a Humpback, is Anthony's 29 year old godmother. She is in a cotton skirt and blouse. She sits under an umbrella, knitting an unfinished argyle sweater against 6-year old Anthony in a bathing suit. (Anna and the others are Evelyn's good-natured family: GRANDMA, JOSIE, GRACIE, ROSIE, TOMMY, JUNIOR, ALFRED.) They sit and lay upon three large blankets. A fourth blanket is filled with food baskets.

ANNA

We never did such things. Dance Lessons, I guess. How else? With this war nobody knows what they're doing. War makes everyone crazy, which in our family is easy. We're all crazy to begin with.

ANTHONY

(meaning the sweater)
It's itchy Aunt Anna.

ANNA

You'll roll up the sleeves and the waist until you grow into it. Twenty years from now this sweater will still fit you.

Gracie, Anthony's 26-year old beatific aunt, holds two hands full of food and is about to move away. Josie, his 25 year old aunt, steps in front of Gracie.

JOSIE

Where you going?

GRACIE

(indicating beach strangers)
Maybe some of these people are hungry.

JOSIE

If they're hungry, they'll buy
frankfurters. What are we, charity?

Everyone laughs. Josie takes the sandwiches from Gracie.

GRACIE

What if they have no money?

JOSIE

They have no money they don't eat.
We have no money either.

GRACIE

Well we brought too much.

Josie pushes Gracie away from the food.

JOSIE

What we don't eat we take home. Get
your mind off food. Our Holy
Mother, St. Gracie! God must be
laughing his head off.

GRACIE

Don't be so selfish.

JOSIE

(to Anthony and Junior)

Your fat aunt was going to sneak off
and eat it all herself.

GRACIE

I'm not afraid to eat in front of
you.

JOSIE

We see.

(to entertain others)

You're busting out of your bathing
suit.

GRACIE

It's three years old.

JOSIE

You bought it April this year. Who
are you trying to fool?

GRACIE

It shrunk when I went into the
water.

(to Anthony, Junior and Alfred)
Aunt Josie makes up stories. Don't
pay any attention to her.

Evelyn shouts to the ocean.

EVELYN
Vinnie!!!!!!

ANNA
Evelyn, you expect him to hear you?

EXT - ATLANTIC OCEAN

Theresa dives off Vinnie's shoulders.

EVELYN (O.S.)
(still shouting)
That undertow is too strong.

ANNA (O.S.)
(making fun of Evelyn)
Your mother sees the undertow from
here!

EXT - BLANKET AREA

EVELYN
I can feel it.

ANNA
(to others)
Evelyn feels the undertow!

Grandma, a bountiful Santa Claus type, sits up.

GRANDMA
(to Evelyn)
Vinnie knows what he's doing. Go
swim with them. See for yourself.

EVELYN
I don't go in the water. You go.

GRANDMA
Swim with all those people peeing
in their bathing suits?

Everyone laughs.

EVELYN

But you want me to go in?

GRANDMA

Eh! It doesn't bother everybody,
but when I want a bathroom, I go to
a bathroom.

Uncle Tommy wakes up.

TOMMY

Where's the bathroom?

JOSIE

Near the boardwalk, where else?

He leaves.

GRACIE

(sneaking back to the food)
Junior, you want peppers and eggs?
Maybe half, we'll share it.

JOSIE

She's at it again! Gracie you're
going to blow up like a blimp today.

Gracie gobbles half a sandwich in one gulp. Aunt ROSIE, the
33 year old hard of hearing wife of Tommy, shouts.

ROSIE

I'll take the veal cutlet.
(shouting to Tommy)
Tommy, you want peppers and egg?

ANNA

He can't hear you.

ROSIE

(louder)
Tommy, roast beef?

ANNA

(to the others)
Rosie's deaf.
(shouting)
Rosie!?

ROSIE

Tommy.....PROVOLONE???

ANNA
ROSIE!!??

ROSIE
Tommy! Tommy!

ANNA, JOSIE & GRACIE
ROSIE!!!!

Rosie turns. Everyone laughs, but Rosie doesn't understand.

ANNA
Tommy can't hear you. I made
sausages with Rabe on Italian
bread.

ROSIE
Where are they?

ANNA
In the straw bag.

Rosie moves to the straw bag.

ROSIE
Tommy?!!!!.....Tommy???? Rabe with
Sausages?

The family is hysterical. Junior and Alfred, Tommy and Rosie's sons, wrestle Anthony into a sandy mess. Gracie gives sandwiches to strangers. Josie curses Gracie to everyone's amusement, calling her "puttana". Anna walks over to brush sand off Anthony, to measure a sleeve.

ANNA
(in good fun)
Pay no attention or you'll become
just like us Anthony. We grew up during
the depression, scared of our own
shadow. You'll be the first to get
out. You're interested in things we
never were.

ANTHONY
Get out?

ANNA
Not be afraid. But we can't help
you cause we don't know how.

Theresa and Vinnie race back to the blankets to dry off.

VINNIE

(placing an arm around Evelyn)

The water is beautiful. Come in.

EVELYN

(to her family)

Two kids, government drafts him
anyway. Sonsabitches!

Hot sun fades into sunset.

INT - EMPTY APARTMENT ON CONEY ISLAND AVE -JULY - 1944

Anthony watches moving men take Evelyn's last piece of hand
carved furniture from the apartment. Evelyn finishes cleaning
the kitchen floor. Theresa cleans the kitchen sink.

ANTHONY

Grandma and Grandpa don't have
enough room. How can we live there?

EVELYN

Get off the floor. It's wet.

ANTHONY

Who's going to live here?

EVELYN

Go in the living room.

ANTHONY

Where's Germany?

EVELYN

Enough already!

ANTHONY

What does the war have to do with
my taking lessons?

EVELYN

I SAID, GET OUT!!-

(ranting to herself)

Break up my home and our lives for
what?

ANTHONY

I'm not going. Fyvush will teach me.

EVELYN

Good. One less mouth to feed.

Anthony crosses to window, stares out.

EVELYN, O.S.

You and Fyvush can Charleston to
China.

EXT - CONEY ISLAND AVENUE

Anthony watches movers load the truck in the snow.

EVELYN (O.S.)

Let's go. Aunt Anna's waiting for
us.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

I'm not going.

INT - EMPTY LIVING ROOM

Evelyn grabs him by the hair and flings him across the room.

EVELYN

Get your coat on before I kill you
today.

THERESA

Today is not the time to be your
usual pain in the ass, brother.

Theresa gives him his coat. Evelyn puts on her coat. Anthony holds his hurt head. Evelyn takes one last look around at her empty home, takes the apartment keys and flings them against a wall, grabs Anthony's hand and storms out of the apartment. Theresa follows.

EVELYN

Goddamn Nazis!

INT - HALLWAY IN GRANDPA'S AVENUE U APARTMENT - NIGHT - 1945

Anthony rushes to the closet for his jacket as his GRANDFATHER, a sweet old man, puts his coat and hat on. Anna tries to dissuade Anthony.

ANNA

Every night you get your mother crazy.

ANTHONY

I'm going out.

Anthony blocks the front door.

GRANDPA

(pained)

Anthony? Your mother said you have
to stay home.

Aunts Josie and Gracie arrive.

JOSIE

(taking Anthony by the hand)

Come in and listen to Fibber Magee.

ANTHONY

I'm going with Grandpa.

GRANDPA

(reopening coat)

I'll stay home. It's okay. It's
okay.

DOTTIE, Anthony's youngest aunt, enters.

DOTTIE

Go pa, take your walk.

She opens the door. Anthony runs and grabs Grandpa's leg.

GRACIE

Take him with you pa, for god
sakes!

EVELYN

(pulling at Anthony)

Let go of Grandpa. Come on!

ANTHONY

Why can't I ever go out?

EVELYN

It's after dark. The police don't
allow children out.

(to the others)

Give me a hand.

Evelyn, Josie, and Dottie try, unsuccessfully.

GRACIE

Let him go with pa. All this fuss.
(crossing to the closet)
I'll get his jacket.

JOSIE

Gracie, mind your business. Go pa,
go. We'll hold him.

Grandpa starts again through the door. Anthony grabs the door knob, holding Grandpa back.

GRANDPA

Bulla manouna! I won't go.

JOSIE

(pulling his hand)
I got his hand. Jesus, you're
strong for a little weakling. Let
go.

DOTTIE

I know how to get him.
(tickling Anthony)
Now pa, hurry.

Anthony laughs and releases his hold from the knob. He falls to the floor. Evelyn and Dottie push Grandpa through the door. Evelyn locks the door, then goes to the parlor with Josie, Dottie, Anna.

GRACIE

(to Anthony)
Grandpa just talks to his cronies.
They smoke those terrible cigars.
Then he comes right back, that's
all.

RADIO is turned on in the parlor.

GRACIE CONT'D)

Come on, let's listen to Fibber
Magee and Molly.

Anthony doesn't answer.

GRACIE CONT'D)

You want to sit here all alone?

He doesn't answer.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Then come inside when you're ready.

Gracie leaves. Anthony sits on the floor alone. Theresa comes into the hallway.

THERESA

(whispering)

Come here. I want to show you something.

ANTHONY

No.

THERESA

(through clenched teeth)

I said come here.

Theresa grabs him by the neck and lifts him up.

INT - BEDROOM OF GRANDMA & GRANDPA

Theresa pushes Anthony into the bedroom, closes its door, drags a chair to climb to the top of the closet. She brings out wrapped Christmas presents.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

These are your presents from Santa Claus.

ANTHONY

He's been here?

THERESA

How many times I have to tell you there's no Santa Claus?

(lifting present)

This one is from grandma and grandpa. These, Aunt Josie. This, Aunt Anna. On Christmas morning they'll tell you Santa Claus came by in the middle of the night and left them.

ANTHONY

If there's no Santa Claus why does everybody say there is?

THERESA

Because they like to lie to kids.
(giving Anthony one present)
Open this.

He opens the present.

THERESA (CONT'D)

Don't rip the paper.
(holding up pajamas)
I'll re-wrap it. Now when they tell
you Santa Claus brought you these
pajamas on Christmas Eve you'll
know there's no Santa Claus.

Theresa takes the pajamas back.

THERESA CONT'D)

Now get out of here.

He stares, saddened for her, then returns to the hallway.

INT - LONG HALLWAY OF THE APARTMENT

Grandpa enters the apartment, sees Anthony.

GRANDPA

Come! I don't need to go out
tonight.

Grandpa hangs his coat in closet, his hat on the peg, puts his
hand behind Anthony's head and takes him to the dark kitchen.

INT - AVE U KITCHEN

Grandpa turns on a soft lamp on a side counter, so the
kitchen has a warm glow. He goes into the pantry and gets a
large onion, takes a big sharp carving knife, opens the
bread box and brings a loaf of Italian bread with the onion
and the knife and lays them on the clean white porcelain
table. Anthony sits at one end. Grandpa goes to the
frigidaire and takes out a hunk of Roquefort cheese, and on
his way back gathers two small glasses and a bottle of
homemade red wine. Grandpa peels the onion, and cuts it in
half, throws the skin away. He hands Anthony half of the
large onion and places the other half for himself. He rips
the bread apart and gives Anthony a chunk and the heel for
himself. He cuts the Roquefort and lays some in front of
Anthony and a larger piece for himself. He pours a glass of
wine, and a small amount in the other glass for Anthony.

Throughout this scene and to its end there is silence. They eat a piece of Roquefort, bread, bite their onion, and sip wine. Roquefort, bread, onion, wine. Roquefort, bread, onion, wine until finished, smiling at each other all the time. Then Grandpa gathers the knife, glasses and wine. Anthony collects bread, and the chunk of cheese, and returns them to their places. Grandpa washes the knife and glasses, takes a wash cloth and cleans the kitchen table. He turns out the light. Grandpa and Anthony leave the kitchen.

INT - PARLOR

The family is sitting in the parlor, listening to the radio.

JACK BENNY, O.S.
Oh Rochester!.....Rochester

ROCHESTER O.S.
Yes boss?

Grandpa and Anthony enter the parlor.

BENNY, O.S.
Rochester, I'm thinking of throwing
a Bachelor party for my brother.

ROCHESTER, O.S.
Your brother is not getting
married.

BENNY, O.S.
I know that. (pause) That's why
it's a bachelor party.

The family laughs.

ANTHONY
Where do the voices come from?

JOSIE
There are actors in the radio. But
if you try to see them they hide.

Anthony shakes his head and raises his eyes over Josie's foolish attempt to get away with saying a stupid thing.

INT - EVELYN, THERESA, ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Josie is making the double bed and airing the room. Theresa is gathering a pillow from her small bed. Anthony is doing homework. Sinatra sings "Five Minutes More" on the radio.

JOSIE

Your father's furlough is just for
a couple of days, that's all.

THERESA

There's no place to sleep there.

JOSIE

You'll sleep with Aunt Dottie.
Anthony with Aunt Anna. It'll be a
pajama party.

Theresa leaves, frustrated. Josie closes the window.

ANTHONY

Aunt Josie, spell cousin.

JOSIE

c o u s i n .

ANTHONY

Often.

JOSIE

O r p h a n .

ANTHONY

What?

JOSIE

'o' 'r' 'p' 'h' 'a' 'n'.

ANTHONY

No it's not. Often.

JOSIE

Orphan, O R P H A N .

ANTHONY

That's not how you spell often.

JOSIE

O R P H "I" N?

ANTHONY

(laughing)

"O" "F" "T" "E" "N"

JOSIE

Oh, orften! I thought you were
talking about a child with no parents.

There is a commotion. Voices from hallway: "They're here."

INT - HALLWAY INSIDE APARTMENT

Evelyn in a Spring dress and coat enters with Vinnie in his army uniform. Hugs for Vinnie from Theresa, sisters-in-law, Grandpa and Grandma as Anthony and Josie run in.

GRANDMA

You look wonderful. Those packages come in handy, don't they?

VINNIE

You bet. Who made the eggplant?

ANNA

Did you like it?

VINNIE

I loved it.

ANNA

I made it. If you didn't like it I was going to tell you Rosie made it.

The family laugh.

GRANDMA

We'll eat in half an hour.

VINNIE

(grabbing his duffle bag)
Anthony, come with me.

Anthony grabs his father's suitcase and struggles down the hallway from its weight.

DOTTIE (O.S.)

I'll help get dinner ready.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

I'm doing that, You go inside.

ROSIE (O.S.)

I'll set the table. How many are we?

EVELYN (O.S.)

Ten.

INT - BEDROOM

Anthony and Vinnie enter the bedroom.

VINNIE
(opening suitcase)
These are for you.

Anthony looks at medals and stripes, a Japanese helmet, a German officer's jacket, a large Nazi flag, and a bayonet.

VINNIE (CONT'D)
Be careful with the bayonet. It's sharp.

ANTHONY
Smells funny.

VINNIE
That's from ammunition and ...everything.

ANTHONY
How did you get all this?

VINNIE
When the enemy is killed soldiers take souvenirs. I exchanged a German pistol for a Japanese helmet. I figured you've never seen these things.

Anthony begins to smell and touch the contents.

VINNIE (CONT'D)
Have fun.

Vinnie leaves.

INT - PARLOR

DOTTIE
Momma made all Vinnie's favorites.

She holds tray of Italian hors d'oeuvres. Vinnie enters.

EVELYN
Anna made the lasagna your favorite way.

VINNIE

I didn't eat today. We were too excited.

GRACIE

Willie wrote and said you were together in Paris?

VINNIE

We spent three days. He looks great.

EVELYN

Did you go to Pigalle if I know the two of you?

VINNIE

Ah Pigalle!!!

EVELYN

You did, didn't you? You skunks. Is that what you do with the chocolates we send?

She pushes him backwards jokingly.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

(looking over Vinnie's head)

What the hell is that?!!.....

Anthony is running down the hallway dressed in the German officer's jacket, Japanese helmet, with the Nazi flag wrapped and flowing from his shoulders, holding the bayonet in its sheath ahead of him, the epitome of war.

ANTHONY

CHARGE!!!! CHARGE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

EVELYN

Ohmygod! What a stupid!

(to Vinnie)

How could you do such a thing?

VINNIE

These are souvenirs. I wanted him to have them.

Evelyn drags Anthony to the bathroom.

INT - BATHROOM

EVELYN

I can't believe you...Souvenirs?
I'll never get rid of this smell of
death.

Evelyn turns on the water and rips Anthony's clothes off.
She flings the booty and Anthony into the tub. Theresa
watches.

ANTHONY

Ouch! It's hot.

EVELYN

Stupid war! Bring all this junk
home.

ANTHONY

I was playing.

EVELYN

Goddamn Germans! Who needs all
this?

What a smell! Evelyn scrubs with frenzy.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

I did everything I could to keep
this war from this house.

INT - KITCHEN - NEXT DAY- SUNDAY MORNING

The next morning Grandma is frying meatballs. Anthony enters
in pajamas, sees Nazi flag on the clothesline with German
officers jacket and the Japanese helmet next to it.

GRANDMA

Guess what's ready.

ANTHONY

I smelled them.

GRANDMA

Get your cup.

Anthony gets a mug, fills it with coffee, then sits at the
porcelain table, adds milk and sugar. Grandma brings him a
bowl of fried meatballs. She watches him drop a meatball
into his coffee, break it apart with his spoon, then eat it.

GRANDMA CONT'D)

God bless you Anthony. What a stomach you have!

ANTHONY

Grandma how come you don't go to church?

GRANDMA

Don't go to church? What are you talking about? Were you up at 5:30 this morning?

ANTHONY

No.

GRANDMA

Well I went to six o'clock mass before anybody else was awake. So don't say I don't go to church.

ANTHONY

(laughing)

I don't think so.

GRANDMA

You calling your grandmother a liar?

ANTHONY

Yes.

GRANDMA

(laughing)

Well, I don't have to go to church to talk to God. I talk to Him while I'm cooking. Besides who wants to give my hard earned money to that scrawny little Irish priest. He puts it into his purse, and buys whisky. His little rummy nose is all red from drinking. I don't work all week for him. God understands.

ANTHONY

(teasing)

I'm going to tell the priest.

GRANDMA

What's he going to do? I'd throw him over my shoulder with one arm. The bishop would find him tied up.

Anthony laughs with grandma. The family return from church and enter the kitchen. Anthony's table area is a total mess.

DOTTIE

(to Evelyn)

Where did you get this kid? I don't think he belongs to us.

(to Anthony)

How can you eat that?

ANTHONY

You want some Aunt Dottie?

DOTTIE

...meatballs, milk, coffee and sugar?

GRANDMA

Leave him alone. It makes him happy.

ANTHONY

(teasing)

There's one left. I saved it for you Aunt Dottie.

DOTTIE

Get out of here you nut, who else would eat that?

EVELYN

(to Anthony)

Get dressed. We're leaving.

ANTHONY

I'm staying and playing with my things.

EVELYN

You're going to get it, you hear me?

ANNA

(to Evelyn)

Let me talk to him. Go get ready.

GRANDMA

Evelyn you better take those things off the line. The neighbors will be hysterical.

EVELYN

Oh my god, what was I thinking of?

Evelyn climbs out the window onto the rooftop.

ANNA

Why don't you want to go?

ANTHONY

I just don't.

ANNA

Your father came all the way from Europe.

ANTHONY

Why do we have to go there?

ANNA

That's your father's family. Your family. I thought you liked them?

ANTHONY

I like them, but....

ANNA

What?

He doesn't answer.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You can't fight every battle that comes your way. Otherwise nothing becomes special. Save your energy for a worthwhile fight. Understand?

He nods yes.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Wear your sweater. I want to see how it fits.

He watches as Anna takes her hat off, climbs a chair and begins to put spaghetti into a pot of boiling water.

INT- KITCHEN OF VINNIE'S PARENTS - SAME DAY - 1945

Evelyn is stirring a pot of spaghetti at her in-law's house in Queens. Other sisters-in-law are also cooking. In the dining room Vinnie, his brothers, and brothers-in-law are arguing over their favorite boxers, baseball players, etc.

EVELYN
(calling off)
Anthony....?

GRANDPA, Vinnie's father enters, limping from arthritis.

GRANDPA
Ciao bambino?

EVELYN
No pa....not you....my son. He
exits to the backyard.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Anthony.....? Anthony.....?
Anthony.....?

Two cousins enter kitchen from opposite directions.

TWO COUSINS
Aunt Evelyn, you calling me?

EVELYN
No, my son.

ONE COUSIN
He's upstairs.

EVELYN
(climbing stairs)
Anthony.....? Anthony.....?
Antho.....

INT - ANTHONY'S GRANDPARENTS BEDROOM

Evelyn enters and finds Anthony in his loose argyle sweater.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Why didn't you answer me?

ANTHONY
How am I supposed to know you meant
me? Everybody here is named
Anthony.

EVELYN
Shut up before your father hears
you.

ANTHONY

You mean he doesn't know we're all named Anthony? Why don't we tell him?

EVELYN

Everybody is named after someone else. It's an honor to be named after somebody.

ANTHONY

And we all had to be named after Grandpa?

EVELYN

(amused by him)

That mouth is going to get you into trouble.

ANTHONY

I want my own name. From now on call me Eugene.

EVELYN

Your name is Anthony.

ANTHONY

My name is also Eugene.

EVELYN

That's only your baptism name.

ANTHONY

Why do I have it, if I can't use it?

EVELYN

It's the name God knows you by, no one else.

ANTHONY

(laughing)

Mom, that's stupid.

EVELYN

Well someday when you meet Him, ask Him.

They laugh.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

I named you Anthony for life. You have no choice.

ANTHONY

Then from now on call me Tony.

EVELYN

Only gangsters are called that.
Your name is Anthony.
(starting downstairs)

ANTHONY

When you call me Tony from now on
I'll answer.

EVELYN

Till the day I die that name will
never leave my lips. Mark my words!

EXT - BACKYARD, CONTINUOUS

Anthony goes out to his grandfather's vegetable garden where
his father, in uniform, is talking to grandpa.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Dinner's ready.

THREE WOMEN (O.S.)

(yell)

Anthony....!?

Each of three Anthony's call back.

THREE ANTHONYS (O.S.)

"Coming" (o.s.) "One second" (o.s.)

"Be right there" (o.s.)

Grandpa heads towards the house.

GRANDPA

Anthony, let's go.

Grandpa & Vinnie enter the house. Anthony shakes his head.

INT - EVELYN, THERESA, ANTHONY - BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1945

Vinnie is ready to leave from his furlough, holding his
Duffle bag.

ANTHONY

What should I tell them?

VINNIE

Only you can make that decision.

ANTHONY

But they all keep asking. Why do they always want to know what I'm going to be when I grow up?

VINNIE

What matters is you pick the job that is right for you and makes you happy.

ANTHONY

How do I do that?

VINNIE

Find the thing in life you like the most and that comes easiest to you. Do that and you'll be successful.

Vinnie exits. Anthony ponders his father's advice, as ad lib farewells (o.s.) can be heard down the hallway.

INT - EVELYN, THERESA, ANTHONY - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Evelyn and Theresa are in bed. Anthony searches the closet.

EVELYN

Only priests have altars. What's wrong with you?

THERESA

He's crazy. That's what's wrong with him.

ANTHONY

I want an altar.

EVELYN

Where did you ever get such an idea?

ANTHONY

From church. The priest has one.

EVELYN

He's a priest.

ANTHONY

Well I want one.

EVELYN

Over my dead body. Now go to sleep.

ANTHONY

Tell me what you did with my things.

EVELYN

I lost them.

ANTHONY

Daddy gave them to me.

EVELYN

Keep looking for them. You'll find them.

ANTHONY

You had no right to throw them away.

EVELYN

Your father didn't know what he was doing. Go to bed.

ANTHONY

I'm going to make an altar. You can't stop me.

EVELYN

What's this thing about an altar?

ANTHONY

Grandma wants me to be a priest.

EVELYN

My mother?

ANTHONY

Daddy's.

EVELYN

Who the hell does she think she is telling you to be a priest? Waste your life for what?

ANTHONY

She says the family needs one.

EVELYN

She can go to hell. A priest? What a thing to tell a kid. If she wants a priest let her have another baby.

INT - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - 11:00 A.M. - JAN 26, 1953

Secretary files papers.

SECRETARY

Maybe you should take a walk.

ANTHONY

What if I miss him?

SECRETARY

He won't be here for hours. Really.

ANTHONY

Where can I walk?

SECRETARY

You might go out to the football field. But you can't go upstairs.

ANTHONY

May I leave my coat here?

SECRETARY

It's cold out.

ANTHONY

I won't be long.

Anthony leaves her office.

INT-PREP'S FLOOR CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Anthony walks through the spotless hallway.

INT - AUDITORIUM/GYM -CONTINUOUS

Anthony enters and walks across the auditorium. He sits.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT- BROOKLYN PREP AUDITORIUM - DAY - May 1952

Anthony is surrounded by hundreds of thirteen-year old boys

sitting at desks in this auditorium. Jesuits are leading others to their seats. The Jesuits are dressed in plain black slacks with black cassocks, no ornaments of any kind. Anthony sits, wearing pants, a white shirt and a tie. Lay teachers wear professorial black robes.

FR. HILL

Paul! I can take four more.

FR. HILL is fifty years old, business like. Paul is FR. PAONE, a fifty-five year old working-class man. He stands at the doorway with applicants. He sends in four boys.

FR. PAONE

Two thousand, counting classrooms.

FR. HILL

We'll make it. Send another two.

Two Jesuits are setting up a long table against the front edge of the stage. They indicate to Fr. Paone with their fingers for twelve boys. Paone sends them twelve. Tables are also set up on the stage itself. Fr. Culkin, the thirty year old 6'3"ex college basketball type, addresses applicants.

FR. CULKIN

Make certain you have elbow room, about two yards. You need space to think, and to place your papers, rulers and erasers.

FR. PAONE

(amused)

John, one yard will have to do.

FR. CULKIN

Oh! Of course.

FR. PAONE

Two yards John is 72 inches.

(to students)

Don't worry. Fr. Culkin teaches Greek.

The boys laugh. Anthony is happy.

FR. CULKIN

Father keeps me humble. Okay, one yard. But the point is you must be comfortable to do your best work

and think clearly. Don't get nervous or intimidated by the questions. Read each question at least twice. If you have no answer for it, move on to a question that you can answer. The sooner you solve the problems that are easy for you to solve the sooner you can return to those questions that seem too difficult.

FR. HILL

Check to see that your pen is filled with ink. Your pencils are sharp. Your ruler is ready and your eraser is cleaned.

STUDENT

(raising his hand)

Can I sharpen my pencils?

FR. PAONE

Come over here. If you need to sharpen your pencils during the test raise your hand for one of us. Do not speak to each other during these exams, or we will ask you to leave.

FR. CULKIN

My name is John Culkin and I'll be moderating five hours of testing. Three this morning, and two this afternoon. So before you begin - Stand up. Now! Everybody up!

(to Jesuits)

Open all the windows.

Jesuits open all the windows.

FR. CULKIN (CONT'D)

Now breathe. Deep. Exhale. Breathe. Exhale. Touch your toes. Up. Down. Come on. Up. Down. Now jump up and down a couple of times. Faster. Lift those knees to your chest. Shake your head and let it fall down. Lift your shoulders and drop them a few times. Now stand still. Relax! Breathe slowly through your

nose. Hold it. Exhale through your mouth. Again: breathe, hold, exhale. Now just stand there for a few seconds, close your eyes, relax. Until the bell rings just relax. Receive the grace to do your best work.

The auditorium is silent. Spring breeze fills the room. Anthony smiles with eyes closed. He has found his hope.

INT -ANTHONY IN THE AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUSÂ

A voice surprises Anthony out of his reverie.

FR. RYAN

What are you doing out of class?

ANTHONY

I don't go to school here.

FR. RYAN

What are you doing here then?

ANTHONY

Just looking.

FR. RYAN

Why?

ANTHONY

No reason.

FR. RYAN

No reason?

ANTHONY

No.

FR. RYAN

What's your name?

ANTHONY

Anthony.

FR. RYAN

I'm Mr. Ryan.

ANTHONY

The headmaster's assistant.

MR. RYAN
How did you know?

ANTHONY
His secretary told me.

MR. RYAN
Sounds like an odd thing for a
secretary to talk about.

ANTHONY
She calls you Fr. Ryan.

MR. RYAN
I will be. Mister until ordination.

ANTHONY
Oh.

MR. RYAN
First thirteen years as Mister.
Then Father. I have two more years.

ANTHONY
She said I could walk around.

MR. RYAN
Go ahead.

ANTHONY
But that I can't go upstairs.

MR. RYAN
Well you can go upstairs and peak
around, quietly. No noise in the
hallways is permitted during
classes that's all. Just don't run
into Fr. Engles.

ANTHONY
Why?

MR. RYAN
You'll know why if you meet him.
He's our Prefect of Discipline, to
maintain school rules, and believe
me he does.

ANTHONY
Sounds scary.

MR. RYAN

I've been afraid of him for years.

They laugh.

ANTHONY

What'll I do if he stops me?

MR. RYAN

Pray. God is merciful.

They laugh.

MR. RYAN (CONT'D)

Can I help? Do you want something?

ANTHONY

No, thank you.

MR. RYAN

Nothing?

ANTHONY

Well I'm waiting to see Fr. Watson.

MR. RYAN

He's at a conference.

ANTHONY

In New York, I know.

MR. RYAN

You probably know more of what's going on here today than anyone else.

ANTHONY

I hope not. For your sake.

This amuses Ryan.

MR. RYAN

Since I'm his assistant perhaps I can help. What do you want?

ANTHONY

I want to talk to Fr. Watson.

MR. RYAN

And no one else?

ANTHONY

Well I really want to talk to him.

MR. RYAN

You sure?

ANTHONY

Yes.

MR. RYAN

(impressed)

Okay. Nice meeting you.

Ryan leaves the auditorium. Anthony also leaves the auditorium. He goes outside to the field.

A class bell RINGS.

Gym students rush by him.

INT - KITCHEN OF AVENUE U APARTMENT - DAY- WINTER - 1945

Anna is standing on a kitchen chair stirring a huge pot of minestrone. Anthony is placing cans of food, chocolates, underwear, gloves and socks into four cardboard boxes. There is a frightening sound of the apartment buzzer. Anna climbs off her chair and goes into the hallway.

INT - THE APARTMENT FRONT DOOR

WESTERN UNION MAN

(standing at the door)

Western Union! Alfredo Sbarra. Can you sign?

ANNA

Yes. I'm his daughter.

She signs, closes the door, then rushes to the kitchen.

INT - KITCHEN

She opens the telegram, then holds her chest.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Oh my god...Andy. Oh dear mother of God they shot my little brother.

Anthony doesn't know how to help her.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Oh God Anthony pray he'll be all right. He's in a hospital in France.

ANTHONY

He'll be all right. He's alive.

ANNA

Thank God for that.

ANTHONY

Why do we have war?

ANNA

To kill people.

ANTHONY

I mean what are we fighting for?

ANNA

Peace. It's all so stupid.

ANTHONY

Is there no other way?

ANNA

How do I know. It's enough to break your heart. Take the sardines out of the bag and divide them in the boxes. We've got to let them know we care.

She bastes chicken and potatoes in the oven.

ANNA CONT'D)

Wait till your aunts and grandpa hear. Anthony, pray to end this war. Tell God to put some sense into everyone's brainless heads.

INT-DOOR OF PREP'S TRACK AND FIELD- 11:08 - DAY -1953

The field is in the background as Anthony re-enters the building. We see boys running track to a coach's stop watch.

INT-BEDROOM OF GRACIE, JOSIE, ANNA - NIGHT - 1946

Anthony, in pajamas, is making an altar. He is draping a large white bed sheet over a wooden cigar box and along the top and sides of a low dresser. He adds candles, a statue of the Lady of Prague, the crucified Christ and dry flowers in a vase. Gracie enters surreptitiously, letting in radio war news from the parlor. She is holding a crystal stem glass, a bottle of Grandpa's wine and three biscuits.

GRACIE

(about the crystal)

Don't let this drop. You can use it for a chalice. Here are biscuits for the wafer. Don't ever tell your mother I did this, she'll kill me. I brought you more candles from church. Anthony are you going to become a priest?

ANTHONY

No. Where can I get real flowers?

GRACIE

I don't know if you're supposed to make an altar if you're not going to be a Priest.

ANTHONY

(placing chalice and biscuits)

God understands Aunt Gracie.

An air raid siren begins.

DOTTIE (O.S.)

(shouting)

Get the lights, hurry.

EVELYN (O.S.)

Lower the shades.

Josie opens the door.

JOSIE

The lights. Hurry!

GRACIE

Oh my god! Anthony, quick, let's go!

Josie runs off. Gracie lowers the shades, turns off lights.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

(hysterical)

I can't see anything. Anthony!?
Josie, are you here? Where's Anna?

ANTHONY

(lighting a match)

Relax Aunt Gracie, it's just an air
raid test.

GRACIE

We should be with the others.

He holds the match while she finds her way to the door.
Dottie passes with a lighted candle.

DOTTIE

(running past)

Hurry! This one's real. I can feel it.

Gracie and Dottie run off. Anthony closes the bedroom door
to blackness, then lights the candles. He clasps his hands
and begins to talk to God against the sound of sirens.

ANTHONY

(thinks of how to pray, then:)

What is war?

(waits for God to answer)

INT-A STAIRCASE-BROOKLYN PREP - 11:10 A.M.- JAN 26, 1953

Anthony climbs a back staircase.

INT - SECOND FLOOR

The hallway on the second floor is empty. He enters. The
sound of a teacher's voice from an open classroom is heard.
Anthony tiptoes behind the opened door, through the crack of
which he can see the back of the priest sitting on the top
of one of the student desks.

PRIEST

How many of you studied with the
nuns?

Half of the students raise their hands.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Brothers?

Two raised hands.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Lay teachers?

A few hands.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Fuck.

The class stirs. Anthony's eyes open wide.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

What? What? Speak up.

STUDENT

What you said.

PRIEST

What did I say?

STUDENT

You know.

PRIEST

What?

STUDENT

I can't say it.

PRIEST

Fuck?

The class stirs. Anthony reacts happily.

STUDENT

Yes, of course.

PRIEST

Nuns?

STUDENT

Yes.

PRIEST

The good nuns feel an obligation to teach children, so they make things simple. We teach men. There is nothing wrong with the word you, or the word fuck. It is the intention that matters.

STUDENT

Why is it such a taboo then?

PRIEST
(egging him on)
What?

STUDENT
.....fuck.

PRIEST
That feel good?

STUDENT
Very.

PRIEST
Because people remain ignorant and
don't think for themselves. The
majority do not become individuals,
but learn to conform.

Anthony walks to the next staircase, as priest continues.

PRIEST (O.S.CONT'D)
You must first investigate early
memories where you formed
prejudices which now hold you back
and clutter your soul.

Anthony stops to take in the priest's next comment.

PRIEST (O.S.CONT'D)
Take out a pen and jot down the
first memory you have of some
prejudice you feel. Let's see if we
can erase it.

INT - BROOKLYN PREP STAIRCASE -CONTINUOUS

Anthony climbs the stairs behind two Jesuits.

JESUIT 1
He spent eight months behind the
iron curtain in a jail cell with
four nuns and three other priests.
Soldiers would rape the nuns, then
kick Paone and the other priests in
their groins until they passed out.
I read his diary till four.

JESUIT 2
He returns to the missions as soon
as his health is better.

Anthony ponders.

INT - AVE.U APARTMENT KITCHEN - AFTERNOON - 1945

Anthony is mixing milk and spices in a bowl. Evelyn is beading jewelry.

ANTHONY

(singing)

"Birds fly over the rainbow, way up high. Why, then, oh why can't I?"

EVELYN

You're giving me a headache. You're like a broken record.

ANTHONY

"If happy little bluebirds fly, beyond the rainbow".

EVELYN

What a pain in the ass you are. Do you know that?

ANTHONY

(stops singing)

Do you know you're a pain in the ass too?

EVELYN

Who do you think you're talking to?

ANTHONY

(looking around)

Do you see anybody else in the room?

EVELYN

(amused)

Wise guy. Keep your voice down. Grandma's not feeling well. What are you mixing?

ANTHONY

I'm cooking.

EVELYN

What are you cooking?

ANTHONY

Dinner.

EVELYN

Throw it away for god's sakes.

ANTHONY

We're going to eat it.

EVELYN

Well you eat it first. If you're still alive the rest of us will eat it.

ANTHONY

(rubbing his eyes)

Ouch.....oh...wow.. it hurts.

EVELYN

What do you have in that bowl?

She takes him to the sink. Evelyn leans Anthony's head backwards so she can pour water into his eyes. Anna is at the stove, cooking.

ANTHONY

That's too cold.

ANNA

What happened?

EVELYN

He burned his eyes.

Anna crosses to look at the window to see his concoction.

ANNA

Black pepper, red pepper, crushed pepper...paprika, no wonder.

EVELYN

Now maybe you'll learn to keep your mind on school.

ANNA

How do you feel?

ANTHONY

It burns.

ANNA

It'll go away. Go inside while we cook.

He exits.

EVELYN
(tauntingly)
"Somewhere over the rainbow."

INT - PARLOR

Anthony runs into the parlor, turns on the radio. He dances with an imaginary partner, singing along.

ANTHONY
"...and suddenly found the somebody
who could make me blue could make
me be true, just to be glad
thinking of you."

Evelyn appears and watches from the doorway.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
"Some others I've seen, might...."

Evelyn turns the radio off.

EVELYN
Why do you keep wishing for things
you can never have?

The roar of a PLANE is heard overhead.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
You'll break your heart. You hear
me?

Anthony rushes to the window to look up to that plane.

ANTHONY
I wish I was on that plane.

EVELYN
You don't even know where it's
going.

ANTHONY
Well I know it's not stopping here.

EVELYN
You would rather be anywhere but
here? That doesn't make me feel so
good.

ANTHONY
I want to see things.

EVELYN

You want all the wrong things in life. Settle down as soon as possible. That's my advice to you. You're head is too big for such a little boy. Our people work hard. We don't get things handed to us on a silver platter.

ANTHONY

What does that mean?

EVELYN

We have bigger problems than worrying about dancing or traveling around the world. That's not so hard to understand.

ANTHONY

Like what?

EVELYN

Stop thinking of yourself. What have I raised here?

ANTHONY

Like what? That's not such a hard question to understand, is it?

EVELYN

Like a war you idiot. People are suffering all over the world but you're only interested in having fun? Where did you come from? Ha?

ANTHONY

Don't you ever want to travel and see things?

EVELYN

The world is the same wherever you go. You think you get off a plane and things are different?

ANTHONY

Why is the world the same? Something must be different.

EVELYN

Let me give you some simple advice.

You'd be better off just to sit quietly in a corner, close your eyes, and thank God for the life you have. There are people struggling to survive, who don't even have a bed to sleep in at night. Some are living with bombs over their heads.

ANTHONY

Let's help them.

EVELYN

Oh you're going to solve everybody's problems? My helpless son.

ANTHONY

Why not?

EVELYN

Anthony take care of your own life. One less person causing trouble in this world is good enough. When this war ends and you're older you'll see what I'm talking about. Meantime keep your nose clean.

ANTHONY

There must have been something in life you dreamed about when you were young.

EVELYN

When I was a few years older than you are now I was working in a factory.

ANTHONY

Why?

EVELYN

Aunt Rosie, Uncle Alfred and I were the oldest. That's why. And Grandma and Grandpa worked too, but none of us made much money, just enough to keep the family together. There were seven younger brothers and sisters, remember. And Aunt Anna spent two years with a cast over her entire body because of her illness. We had to pay for all of that.

ANTHONY

Did you ever dream about anything else?

EVELYN

When I saw Myrna Loy I was eight years old and thought I looked liked her, maybe I could make movies.

ANTHONY

Did you ever try?

EVELYN

Don't you listen? I worked in a factory and that was that.

ANTHONY

But I don't have seven younger brothers and sisters.

EVELYN

But if it's not one thing it's another. There's talent too you know. You think Fred Astaire learned how to dance? He's a natural, so that's what he did.

ANTHONY

You mean I can't learn?

EVELYN

Not the way you think. And you could waste your life trying to be something that you weren't born for. You ask too many questions for me but teachers are happy with you. School is your thing Anthony.

Evelyn leaves. Anthony thinks, then closes his eyes.

INT -THIRD FLOOR- BROOKLYN PREP-11:25 A.M.-JAN 26,1953

Anthony peeks into the Physics class.

OLD JESUIT

Heat? Its conductor force? That's not a hard topic Mr. Carney. Not unless you spend every afternoon running track and not doing your homework.

CARNEY

We had a meet.

OLD JESUIT (CONT'D)

When you flunk out of school and your parents ask me why, I'll tell them you had a meet.

CARNEY

I get your point.

OLD JESUIT (CONT'D)

Let's have a round of applause.

There is applause from the students.

OLD JESUIT (CONT'D)

Now can we return to heat conductors. Mr. Robinson...?

INT - EVELYN, THERESA, ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 2 AM

Theresa is in bed. Anthony is leaving the darkened room.

THERESA

Stay here. You'll only be in the way.

Anthony pays no attention to her. He walks through the darkened parlor to the dim hallway, as Josie and Anna are coming to the front door with a doctor.

DOCTOR

I'll be back in the morning.

The Doctor leaves.

JOSIE

Anthony, get to bed. Come on now.

Anthony sees Grandpa sitting in the kitchen, alone.

ANNA

(to Josie)

He'll be all right.

Josie and Anna re-enter Grandma's bedroom. Anthony sees that Evelyn, Dottie and Gracie are changing Grandma's bed clothes. The door closes. Grandpa is sitting in his chair at the porcelain table. Anthony walks to the pantry, takes a large onion and brings it to the table.

SOUND: The crying of women begins o.s.

Grandpa hugs Anthony like a teddy bear.

INT - FUNERAL PARLOR - TWO NIGHTS LATER - 1945

Dottie, Gracie, Josie, Andy and Rosie are accepting sympathy from relatives, neighbors and friends, some wear yarmulke's. While Rosie introduces neighbors to the family Anthony walks to Grandma's coffin, blesses himself as he kneels, and kisses Grandma's cheek.

ROSIE

I want you to meet my mother's
sister Mary and her husband Joey
Kaufman.

ANTHONY

(returning to Evelyn)
Are you kidding?

EVELYN

(red-eyed)
That's how we do it.

ANTHONY

She felt like cement.

EVELYN

You have to learn to live with
death Anthony whether you like it
or not. That's what life is all
about. Grandma brought so much life
to this earth her death should not
be offensive to anyone.

ANTHONY

What happens to her now.

EVELYN

God takes her back.

ANTHONY

Where?

EVELYN

Heaven, you know that from
catechism.

ANTHONY

But how's He do that?

EVELYN

He does that's all.

ANTHONY

How?

EVELYN

Those are mysteries, Anthony, no one knows but God.

Evelyn goes to the door to greet members of Vinnie's family.

ANTHONY

(calling after Evelyn)

Someone must know.

Anthony notices Anna and Grandpa near the coffin. He moves to the back of their chairs and stands with a hand on each of their necks. Grandma's "little scrawny Irish priest with the whisky nose" gathers the family to pray the rosary.

INT-FOURTH FLOOR -BROOKLYN PREP-11:40 A.M.-JAN. 26, 1953

Anthony sees Fr. Culkin.

FR. CULKIN

And the greatness of Odysseus is measured by.... what?

(Three hands are raised)

Mr. Azzarto.

MR. AZZARTO

His ability to get his men out alive.

FR. CULKIN

Yes the dilemma of Scylla and Charybdis. You may meet them many times before you die. Mr. McMillan?

MCMILLAN

When we meet them what do we do?

CULKIN

Everything you do in your life adds up, even when you are unaware. The strongest characters are leaders who complete their Odyssey and lead the way for others. Put simply, you

beat Scylla and Charybdis. You
become leaders. Something to think
about, huh?

Anthony walks towards staircase, happy.

EXT- BROOKLYN-VICTORY BLOCK PARTY- SUMMER DUSK - 1945

On an empty side street Vinnie, Andy, Willie and Alfred
stack cases of beer and soda in iced chests. Neighbors set
up decorations on a bandstand and prepare tables for food.

ANDY

You didn't get to first base before
the war.

WILLIE

You dirty dog. Wait till next summer.
I'm going to pitch for the other team.

ANDY

Vinnie! Willie's pitching against
us. How can we lose?

ALFRED

We better keep him, or the other
team will kill us.

WILLIE

You skunk. Let's go to the park and
hit a few. We'll see who still has
it.

ANDY

Remember my purple heart.

WILLIE

We're never going to live that down.

INT - KITCHEN OF AVENUE U APARTMENT -DAY -CONTINUOUS

Evelyn, Anna and Dottie prepare huge pans of chicken
cacciatore, fried veal cutlets, pepper and sausages. Josie
is making homemade pizzas and bringing them onto the roof
adjoining the kitchen window where Grandpa sits alone.
Gracie is making large bowls of macaroni and potato salads.

ANNA

Momma would have loved this.

Anna leaves the kitchen. The women nod in agreement.

INT - DINING ROOM

Theresa is making hundreds of sandwiches. Surrounding her are homemade baked cookies, pies, and cakes.

INT - PARLOR

Anthony is listening on the radio to "I'll be seeing you in all the old familiar places". Anna enters.

ANNA

I miss her Anthony. Who ever thought when you worry about your sons at war it's worse than if you were in the war yourself. All that worry broke her heart. What's grandpa going to do without her?

ANTHONY

Now the war is over it'll be okay.

ANNA

I don't know what to do.

ANTHONY

What do you mean?

ANNA

You'll all be gone. Aunt Gracie and Aunt Josie are young women. They don't need to take care of me all their lives.

ANTHONY

But you take care of everybody.

ANNA

They pay the bills. I'm in their way.

ANTHONY

Let's go to the party. Okay?

ANNA

You go. I'm in no mood for a party.

ANTHONY

You have to come. I was going to ask you to dance.

ANNA

(Laughing)

You and me, Anthony, what a sight that
Will be!

ANTHONY

Please?

ANNA

What the hell, maybe it'll change
my luck.

EXT - BLOCK PARTY LIT UP AT NIGHTTIME - JUNE 1945

People dance under red, white and blue streamers. Balloons and lights hang everywhere, a unified 'happening' of family and neighbors. Josie, Evelyn, Vinnie, Rosie, Tommy, Theresa, Junior, Alfred, Grandpa, Gracie, Dottie and her boyfriend, Jerry. The veterans wear uniforms one last time and everyone, including Theresa, dance. The night ends in a conga line.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - BLOCK PARTY - DAWN

A littered street. American innocence. End of World War II.

INT-STAIRCASE AT BROOKLYN PREP-11:55 A.M.- JANUARY 26,1953

Anthony leaps down the staircase, passing Fr. ENGLES, a bull of a steel structured man, who shouts at him like a foghorn.

FR. ENGLES

Hey Jack!

Anthony freezes.

FR. ENGLES (CONT'D)

What are you doing out of class?

ANTHONY

(looking up)

I don't go to school here.

ENGLES

Then what are you doing on the
fourth floor?

ANTHONY

Just looking around.

ENGLES

Who said you could?

ANTHONY

Fr. Ryan.

ENGLES

You mean Mr. Ryan?

ANTHONY

Yes, Mr. Ryan.

ENGLES

Why?

ANTHONY

I'm waiting to see Fr. Watson.

ENGLES

He's not here today.

ANTHONY

Yes I know.

ENGLES

So what are you waiting for if you know he's not here?

ANTHONY

I'm waiting till he comes back.

ENGLES

All day?

ANTHONY

Yes.

ENGLES

Why?

ANTHONY

I want to talk to him.

ENGLES

About what?

ANTHONY

Well I'm waiting to talk to 'him'.

ENGLES

(ordering, military style)
Go downstairs and wait. His office is on the first floor, not the fourth.

A bell RINGS.

Anthony descends stairs, passing students who rush up the staircase but tone it down when they see Fr. Engles.
"Look out" "Freddie!" "Watch it!"

INT - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - 12:05 P.M.

ANTHONY
(entering)
Is he back?

SECRETARY
You were gone a long time.

ANTHONY
Is he back?

SECRETARY
No. Fr. Ryan said you met.

ANTHONY
He calls himself mister.

SECRETARY
He's practically a priest.

ANTHONY
He told me I could go upstairs.

SECRETARY
Did you?

ANTHONY
Yes.

SECRETARY
And?

ANTHONY
I learned a lot.

SECRETARY
You did?

ANTHONY
Yes.

SECRETARY
Like what?

ANTHONY

You know that priest who brought
you the Greek grades this morning?

SECRETARY

Fr. Culkin.

ANTHONY

He spoke about life.

SECRETARY

What did he say?

ANTHONY

Well, he said life is a tight rope
that all adds up.

SECRETARY

Sounds like Culkin.

ANTHONY

I know a lot of people who don't
make it work.

SECRETARY

Life?

ANTHONY

(discovering a truth)

They give in. It's an easy thing to
waste.

Reflecting upon his comment Nancy types. Anthony sits and
waits.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - THE FORT GREENE PROJECTS - AUGUST - NOON - 1947

Anthony stands in the midst of three six-story brick buildings
that lack any architectural character. Fort Greene Projects.
Neighbors are races and nationalities who share a primal
estrangement from each other. Puerto Ricans. Hawaiians.
Blacks. Asians. Whites.

INT - A THREE-BEDROOM APARTMENT ON SIXTH FLOOR - LIVING ROOM

Evelyn arranges her hand carved tapestry parlor set, kept in
storage. Boxes are everywhere. Andy enters, breathless,
carrying a sofa with Alfred and Vinnie.

ANDY

My purple heart is turning black.

ALFRED

Send the bastard back so they can finish the job.

EVELYN

Put the sofa against that wall.

VINNIE

How come we didn't get shot. You must have walked in front of a bullet for a furlough.

ANDY

You guys didn't get shot cause you spent all your time dealing the black market.

VINNIE

Who you kidding, I saw more action than any of you.

Evelyn starts to the kitchen. Theresa enters with boxes.

THERESA

What are these?

EVELYN

Dishes.

Evelyn helps Theresa to the kitchen.

VINNIE

Let's get the bed.

ALFRED

(to Andy)

Come and help us.

ANDY

What the enemy couldn't do to me!

INT - KITCHEN

Dottie is preparing dinner as Theresa and Evelyn enter.

EVELYN

Where's your brother?

THERESA
In the clouds, where else!

EVELYN
(exiting kitchen)
Get him to help.

THERESA
(calling to her)
He's not my son.

INT - LIVING ROOM

Evelyn sees Anthony enter. She grabs a box, hands it to Anthony.

EVELYN
Give me a hand.

Anthony and Evelyn enter his new bedroom.

ANTHONY
(puts the box down)
Have you seen the people around here?

EVELYN
(busy with other boxes)
I mind my own business. You do the same.

ANTHONY
What do you mean?

EVELYN
Stay out of trouble.

ANTHONY
What trouble?

EVELYN
Any trouble. You hear me?

ANTHONY
Like what?

EVELYN
You think the world is so wonderful. You're old enough now. Go take a look! But if you can't handle yourself out there, stay home. And don't ever get your

father to fight somebody for you or I'll kill you myself. If something happens you have to talk about, tell me, you hear?

ANTHONY

I don't know what you're talking about?

EVELYN

I think you do.

ANTHONY

If this is such a bad neighborhood why did we move here?

EVELYN

There are good people anywhere. And bad people. Learn to pick and choose. If you see something bad, keep moving. Monday I'm starting a job and you're beginning school. So mark my words: Tu parles quanda piasca aline!

ANTHONY

What?

EVELYN

Tu parles quanda piasca aline!

ANTHONY

Thanks mom! I meant what does it mean?

EVELYN

It means you talk when the chicken pees.

ANTHONY

(laughs)

What does that mean?

EVELYN

Since the chicken never pees, it means keep your mouth shut.

INT - LIVING ROOM

Anthony and Evelyn walk through the living room.

ANTHONY

The chicken never pees? How do you know that?

EVELYN

Anthony have you ever seen a chicken pee?

Anthony laughs hysterically.

EVELYN CONT'D)

(thrilled with herself)

Right? You have no answer this time, huh?

INT - KITCHEN

Vinnie, Willie, Alfred and Andy are drinking beers. Evelyn and Anthony, still laughing, enter.

DOTTIE

How soon you want to eat?

VINNIE

Whenever you're ready.

DOTTIE

It'll be about ten minutes.

ANTHONY

Momma says chickens never pee.

ANDY

I wish you hadn't told me that. I'll never be able to eat another chicken, thinking all his urine is inside.

DOTTIE

Well we're broiling steaks with baked potatoes and spinach, so you don't have to worry for tonight.

ANDY

How long do chickens live? Think about it Anthony, no peeing your whole life. What pains you would have.

Andy acts out a chicken stuffed with urine. They all laugh with him. Theresa enters, quizzical about the joke.

ANDY (CONT'D)

(to Evelyn)

Where did you ever get such an idea?

EVELYN

Tu parle quand piesca aline.

(to Alfred)

Remember?

ALFRED

Momma's favorite expression.

(to Dottie and Andy)

You two weren't born yet.

DOTTIE

Our family legacy built on chickens that never pee. No wonder we have to spend our lives washing and ironing.

ANTHONY

I'll change all that.

((sings))

"Give me five minutes more, only five minutes more."

He moves to embrace Theresa.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

"Let me stay in your arms evermore."

Theresa pushes him backwards.

THERESA

Get outta here creep.

DOTTIE

(joking)

What a voice. Anthony, become an accountant. You're good at arithmetic.

ANTHONY

If I danced in movies you wouldn't have to wash and iron anymore.

DOTTIE

Suddenly your voice sounds better. I like this kid.

Dottie jitterbugs with Anthony.

DOTTIE & ANTHONY

"All week long I dream about our
Saturday date."

INT -HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - 12:20 P.M. - JAN 26, 1953

SECRETARY

Getting tired?

ANTHONY

No. I'm fine.

SECRETARY

It's lunchtime. I'll have to close
the office for an hour.

ANTHONY

(rising nervously)

That's okay. I'll wait in the
hallway.

SECRETARY

You can get a sandwich around the
corner. Follow the seniors. They're
allowed out.

ANTHONY

What if he comes back?

SECRETARY

Then he'll be in the office.

ANTHONY

You sure?

SECRETARY

I'm sure.

ANTHONY

(turning to leave)

Okay.

SECRETARY

Do you have money for lunch?

ANTHONY

(touched, he turns)

Yes, thank you. I have five dollars
my Aunt Anna gave me for my
birthday.

SECRETARY

When was that?

ANTHONY

Yesterday.

SECRETARY

Happy Birthday!

ANTHONY

Thank you.

He starts out.

SECRETARY

Anthony, your coat!

ANTHONY

I don't need it.

SECRETARY

It's cold outside.

ANTHONY

That's okay!

SECRETARY

I won't forget. I promise.

He gets the point, smiles with her, then takes his coat and exits. She muses admiration.

The bell for lunch RINGS.

INT - FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR AT PREP

Seniors rush to leave the building with Anthony among them. The street has mounds of dirty snow.

EXT - CARROLL STREET - FRONT OF BROOKLYN PREP

SENIOR A

(to Mr. Carney)

You're going to get kicked out!

SENIOR B

Twelve seniors were booted last month so don't think you're safe.

MR. CARNEY

I'm trying.

SENIOR B

Fr. Hill helped me through
trigonometry last year. Go to him.

Some of the seniors smoke cigarettes.

INT - CARL'S APARTMENT, ANTHONY'S BEST FRIEND

Carl and his parents live in the building across from
Anthony. They are black people whose great grandparents go
back to the days of slavery. MRS. CRUIKSHANK is wrapping
ribs for Anthony to bring home.

MRS WALKER

Thank your mother for those
mussels. We loved them!

ANTHONY

I'll tell her.

MRS WALKER

I am so glad you and Carl are
friends. To protect each other.

Anthony and Carl share a smile.

INT - THE APARTMENT IN THE PROJECTS - WINTER- 1948

The living room has remains of Christmas packages under a
decorated tree. Evelyn and Vinnie are putting on coats.
Theresa is watching roller derby on Television, the family's
Christmas present, its crate lying nearby. Anthony enters.

EVELYN

Dinner's on the stove. Where were
you?

ANTHONY

Carl's place. Mrs. Cruikshank gave you
ribs. Where you going?

EVELYN

Aunt Anna is sick.

ANTHONY

What's the matter?

EVELYN

Her nerves got the best of her.

ANTHONY

What do you mean?

EVELYN

We'll tell you tomorrow when we know.

ANTHONY

I want to know now.

VINNIE

We don't know ourselves.

ANTHONY

Tell me what happened.

EVELYN

The War! Grandma's death! Aunt Anna was never herself again.

VINNIE

She's in a hospital. The doctors want to look at her for awhile, to see what's wrong. There's shrimp and flounder on the stove, a sweet potato and broccoli in the dish. Do your homework and get to bed early.

VINNIE

(exiting)

We'll be back late so don't worry. But we'll be back.

THERESA

(straightforward)

She had a nervous breakdown. The doctors are going to give her shock treatments. They thought it would upset you to know.

ANTHONY

How could this happen?

THERESA

It happened.

Anthony and Theresa suffer this moment together but can only share it in separate ways.

INT - ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - 3 A.M.- LATER THAT NIGHT

Anthony can't sleep. He is sitting at his window, shivering.

INT - SACRED HEART CHURCH - 6 A.M. - NEXT DAY -

The congregation is five elderly people and Anthony. Anthony goes to the altar for communion. The church is cold and dark.

EXT- SACRED HEART CHURCH-CLERMONT AVE BROOKLYN NAVY YARD

In front of a tenement next to the church Anthony watches a fight spill onto the stoop. One black man fights two Puerto Ricans, egged on by family and neighbors everywhere, all in their underwear. "Moricon." "Goddam spics", "Pa'jaro." Police cars arrive. Anthony walks away, despondent.

INT - KITCHEN OF THE PROJECTS APARTMENT - LATER

Evelyn and Vinnie are drinking coffee. They hear the door open.

VINNIE

Anthony?

ANTHONY (O.S.)

Yah.

VINNIE

Where were you?

Anthony enters the kitchen.

ANTHONY

Church.

VINNIE

Breakfast?

ANTHONY

No.

EVELYN

I'll boil two eggs.

ANTHONY

I don't want them. What did the doctor say?

EVELYN

It'll take awhile.

ANTHONY

What's wrong with her?

EVELYN.

She needs to get her health back.

ANTHONY

What happened to her?

EVELYN

Life, what else?

ANTHONY

What will make her well again?

EVELYN

(crying)

I don't know.

ANTHONY

Does anybody know?

EVELYN

On Sunday we'll bring samples of
food to remind her.

ANTHONY

Of what?

EVELYN

Of her cooking. Maybe that will
bring her back?

ANTHONY

You mean she doesn't remember? You
got to bring her food to remind her
who she is?

EVELYN

She's very sick.

ANTHONY

Is she going to get well?

EVELYN

What am I a psychiatrist? How the
hell do I know?

ANTHONY

Does anybody know anything?

EXT- NOSTRAND AVENUE - 12:55 P.M.- JAN 26,1953

Anthony is outside the ice cream parlor, trying to follow the seniors in, but these seniors have very accomplished images about themselves. They are cheerful and very robust. He has become intimated so he crosses the street to a candy store.

EXT - MRYTLE AVENUE SUMMER AFTERNOON 1950

Carl and Anthony are stopped by a thin Latino man on the street.

LATINO MAN

Hey kids, come 'ere!

He takes them with him a few feet closer to a building, for privacy.

LATINO MAN (CONTD)

You know this address?

He shows address on a little box

CARL

Sure, behind our buildings.

LATINO MAN (CONTD)

I want you to take this to the second floor, apartment 206. Just knock on the door and hand this to whomever opens the door, then leave. Can I trust you?

Carl and Anthony nod yes.

LATINO MAN (CONTD)

Good. Here's about three dollars worth of change. Keep your mouths shut. Got me?

They both nod. Latino man leaves. Carl and Anthony start walking to that building.

ANTHONY

Is that the address of that murder?

CARL

I hope not.

ANTHONY

I think it is.

CARL

What are we going to do?

They see the building.

ANTHONY

It is.

CARL

Your making me scared. How are we going to protect each other? My mother thinks you can fight and protect me. You can't ever fight beat up your sister. What is my mother thinking?

They arrive at the building. They walk in apprehensively up a staircase, They find #206 and knock on its door. A man opens the door, sees the package, takes it quickly and shuts the door.

CARL

Wow! Let's get out of here.

Carl and Anthony run back to their courtyard, frightened and breathless. Vinnie is throwing a football with teenage boys and Theresa. Carl heads to his building.

ANTHONY

(calling to Carl)

Six o'clock.

CARL

Okay.

INT - LOBBY

Anthony enters his lobby and runs into the closing elevator.

INT - ELEVATOR

Inside is MURRAY, 18 years old, mentally challenged, weighted down with rusty pots, a rusty washing board, a rusty iron and two long rusty pipes.

MURRAY

Anthony? Do me a favor.

ANTHONY

What?

MURRAY

If my parents are home would you hold my things for me?

ANTHONY

Where?

MURRAY

In your place.

ANTHONY

(ironically)

That would make my mother real happy.

MURRAY

Thanks.

ANTHONY

Murray don't you understand anything?

INT - SIXTH FLOOR HALLWAY

The elevator opens. Murray exits cautiously.

MURRAY

Knock on my door. See if anyone is there.

ANTHONY

What if they are? What do I say?

MURRAY

Nothing. Just see if they're there.

ANTHONY

Murray, if they open the door I have to say something.

MURRAY

Just walk away.

ANTHONY

I'll tell them you want to come home. Okay?

MURRAY

Good. That'll be good.

Anthony turns the corner off the elevator and knocks on their door. There is no answer. He waits, then calls to Murray.

ANTHONY

They're not home.

Anthony watches the paranoid Murray enter his apartment with all of his rusty junk.

INT - EVELYN'S KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Carl is a guest for dinner. They are half way through the meal of southern fried chicken, mashed potatoes, carrots, spinach and a pan of eggplant parmigiana.

EVELYN

They're supposed to take care of themselves. They're boys.

THERESA

I can fight better than he can.

EVELYN

What kind of talk is that for a girl?

VINNIE

(to Carl)

Do you play baseball?

CARL

Yeah.

VINNIE

Why don't the two of you form a team?

EVELYN

Carl, you like the eggplant?

They hear yelling in the hallway.

THERESA

It's Murray.

Theresa and Anthony head for the door. Evelyn blocks them.

EVELYN

Get back. You don't go and watch

people's suffering. That poor family has enough trouble without you two adding to it.

MURRAY (O.S.)
You're the idiot, not me.

MURRAY' FATHER (O.S.)
Don't come back.

Murray's mother cries hysterically o.s.

MURRAY'S FATHER (O.S.CONT'D)
We don't want you here.

MURRAY (O.S.CONT'D)
Fuck you!

MURRAY'S FATHER (O.S.CONT'D)
Go and don't ever come back.

MURRAY (O.S.CONT'D)
I hate you both.

ANTHONY
Murray buys rusty things from a junk yard with his paycheck every Friday night.

EVELYN
What do you care what he buys?

THERESA & ANTHONY
We were just interested.

EVELYN
That embarrasses them. You have no manners? They're orthodox people. God has given them some cross with Murray.

MURRAY'S MOTHER (O.S.)
(screaming)
My eyes. Ouch!

EVELYN
Oh my god.

Evelyn grabs a kitchen towel, wets it and rushes to the door, followed by Vinnie.

INT - SIXTH FLOOR HALLWAY OF PROJECTS

Evelyn runs to Murray's mother who is on her knees bleeding. Vinnie positions himself to protect Murray's father. Anthony, Theresa and Carl watch from a distance.

MURRAY'S FATHER

Stay away from us.

MURRAY

(furiously)

Guns for the Arabs, shit for the
Jews.

The parents scream in excruciating pain at such a thought.

MURRAY'S FATHER

Don't you ever come back.

Murray runs to descend the staircase. Murray's father rushes inside.

MURRAY

Guns for the Arabs, shit for the
Jews.

Murray's mother is doubled over in tears. She has a cut on her forehead that is bleeding profusely while Evelyn is washing it down. The father returns and flings dishes after Murray down six flights of stairs as Murray's voice echoes and resounds throughout the building:

MURRAY (CONT'D)

"Gunns foorr tthhee Arraabbss,
SSSHHIITT fffoorrrrr tthheee
JJJJJJJJEEEEEEewwwsssss."

Murray's mother runs into her apartment taking Evelyn's wet towel with her. Murray's father follows her in. Carl, Vinnie, Evelyn, Theresa, and Anthony are left in the hallway.

CARL

I better get home.

EVELYN

Not yet. I made apple pie.

EXT - CARROLL STREET OUTSIDE PREP - 1:10 P.M.- JAN 26, 1953

Anthony roams in front of Brooklyn Prep. He looks lost, lonely.

INT - EVELYN'S KITCHEN, PROJECTS - SUNDAY MORNING - 1950

Evelyn, Vinnie, Josie, Gracie. Grandpa and Willie enter the kitchen. They are returning from church.

WILLIE

A cup of coffee, then we'll go.

EVELYN

I have to heat up the minestrone.

JOSIE

I brought minestrone.

EVELYN

That's all right. The other patient will eat what's extra.

JOSIE

Dottie baked butter cookies.

VINNIE

It takes an hour by car. The trains double the time. We better get going.

GRACIE

Does he ever miss?

EVELYN

We can't keep him home even when he has a fever.

VINNIE

Last week we told him he had to stay home until he felt better. We left for work, he went to church. Every day! He never misses.

Anthony enters.

ANTHONY

Can I go with you today?

EVELYN

Mister one-track mind! For the fiftieth time, no. You're too young. We tell you that every week.

ANTHONY

I could wait outside.

GRACIE

You don't want to see all that.
It's a mental hospital.

ANTHONY

I don't care. I want to see her.

EVELYN

Aunt Anna is getting better. Last
week her spirits were good.

WILLIE

We have to go. I told Tommy and Rosie
we would be there by 12:30.

Willie, Evelyn, Josie, Gracie, Grandpa exit.

VINNIE

Finish your homework. Remember
we'll do everything to support your
education. But you have to hold
your own. We can't do that for you.

ANTHONY

I want to go with you.

VINNIE

You're too young. They won't let
you visit.

ANTHONY

I'll wait in the car. She can come
to the window. At least I could see
her. I'll bring my homework. Come
on, Dad!

VINNIE

Okay, let's try it.

INT- OLD PONTIAC - AFTERNOON -

Anthony sits alone, his eyes riveted upon a window at the
Kings County Mental Ward.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE SHOTS OF THIS SCENE OVER THREE SEASONS 1950/1951

These dissolves show how many Sundays he waits. The final
dissolve ends in mid winter the next year. The windshield is
covered with snow. Anthony turns on the car and then the

windshield wipers. His argyle sweater fits him better because he is older (now played by the actor who is already playing Anthony at Prep). Anthony turns on the radio and hears Tsychaivsky's PIANO CONCERTO #1.

EXT - A SNOWY AFTERNOON IN THE PROJECTS - DUSK - 1951

Anthony returns from school to the front of his building and an angry crowd. Two women are ripping each other's clothes off. The Hawaiian is bare chested. The Puerto Rican is bleeding from the nose. Neighbors are blood-thirsty.

PUERTO RICAN

Hija de puta.

HAWAIIAN WOMAN

If you gave your husband what he needed he wouldn't come to me. Bitch!

PUERTO RICAN

El cono de tu madre gonorrea.

The crowd joins, in delight.

CROWD

(overlapping)

Don't take that shit from her.
Rompele la cabeza. Ripe her tits
off, she'll have nothing to give
him.

Relatives enter the fight ferociously. Anthony is startled by Evelyn's hand grabbing him behind his neck. She is returning from work. She leads him towards their building.

EVELYN

Don't contribute to their madness
by watching crazy women. They have
nothing better to do all day than
act worse than men. What the hell
were you doing there?

ANTHONY

Everybody hates each other. What a
world!

EVELYN

Half of the world gets along. You
look in all the wrong directions.

INT - LOBBY

Evelyn goes to mailboxes. Anthony presses for the elevator.

ANTHONY

Can we get a piano?

EVELYN

This something new?

ANTHONY

I want a piano.

EVELYN

Why? Do you know how to play the piano?

ANTHONY

How could I know how to play the piano?

EVELYN

Well if you don't know how to play the piano what do you want a piano for?

INT - ELEVATOR

Anthony follows into the elevator, amused by her logic.

ANTHONY

I could take lessons.

EVELYN

Every five minutes you put in for a bid. If it's not one thing it's another. When you see me coming I think you make up things just to aggravate me.

ANTHONY

I like music.

EVELYN

What family do you think you were born into, Rockefeller? It's going to take us ten more years to catch up from that war. We have no money for a piano, or lessons and no room for it in any case. Stick to your schoolwork. You'll go further. We're just starting to get back on our feet.

INT - EVELYN'S KITCHEN, CONTINUOUS

Evelyn and Anthony enter. Theresa is preparing dinner.

ANTHONY

I wanted to dance you wouldn't let me. I want to play the piano you won't let me.

THERESA

You got to be kidding. Piano?

EVELYN

I never stopped you. You've been jumping around since you could walk. You want to dance, dance. It's good exercise.

ANTHONY

You know what I'm talking about. This is important.

Theresa drowns out any impending argument.

THERESA

(at the top of her lungs)

Tura lura lura, tura lura
laaaaaaaaaa!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Anthony and Evelyn are stunned by Theresa's rage.

INT - ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Anthony is doing homework.

MILTON BERLE (O.S.)

My mother's in the first row. Hi Mom! She came by to pick up my paycheck.

T.V. Audience laughs o.s., as do Evelyn o.s., Vinnie o.s. and Theresa o.s. A chorus of The Texaco Hour begins o.s.

ANTHONY

Would you turn that down. I can't study.

THERESA (O.S.)

It's over in ten minutes.

ANTHONY

I have a history test tomorrow.

VINNIE O.S.

Come in and watch. Then you can study.

INT - LIVING ROOM

Anthony enters.

EVELYN

There's ice cream in the freezer.

ANTHONY

I hate ice cream. You know that.

THERESA

Where the hell did you come from?

ANTHONY

When you find out send me back.

MILTON BERLE

(in drag, on screen)

Mom, I've been meaning to tell you something.

Audience laughs.

MILTON BERLE (CONT'D)

Your kitchen's on fire!

Anthony sadly watches family's involvement over the silly television.

MILTON BERLE (CONT'D)

(singing)

There once was a sailor from
France, who decided to take off his
pants. Wait! Momma you can't leave
yet. Come back! Momma! The check!

Vinnie, Evelyn and Theresa laugh with the audience.

ANTHONY

And we can't afford a piano?

Anthony exists, shaking his head in disbelief.

INT -PREP'S GROUND FLOOR

Anthony follows seniors back into Prep.

The bell RINGS

Students run to class. Once again Anthony is alone in total silence. He rushes to the Headmaster's office. Nancy is unlocking the door.

INT - OUTSIDE HEADMASTER'S OFFICE -1:30 P.M.-JANUARY 26,1953

SECRETARY
(anticipating)
Not yet.

INT - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE

He follows her in, sits with his coat on.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)
You all right?

ANTHONY
I got cold.

She starts her work but keeps an eye on him. He waits.

EXT - FORT GREENE PARK - TWILIGHT - SUMMER, 1951

Teenage gangs fight quite seriously with chains, brass knuckles, and bats. Anthony and Carl hide and watch from behind a tree smoking camels, horrified and nervous. The gang moves off in battle. AUGUST, a 12 year old Puerto Rican boy, comes over to show Anthony and Carl a homemade gun.

AUGUST
(to Anthony)
Have you decided yet?

ANTHONY
You make them yourself?

AUGUST
You ask me that every time. You want it or not?

ANTHONY
Bullets and everything?

AUGUST

Bullets are extra. You know that.

ANTHONY

I'll have to save up.

AUGUST

You keep saying the same fucking thing. Yes or no?

ANTHONY

Of course I want it.

AUGUST

Don't pull my dick if you don't want it.

ANTHONY

Why don't you let me have it and I'll pay you when I get the money.

AUGUST

Bull shit. You get the money you get the gun. Keep your mouth shut about this, you hear me?

ANTHONY

Of course.

August starts off to an open field.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

(whispers to Carl)

Watch this.

(shouting)

August! I'll give you a quarter each week until I pay it up.

AUGUST

Get the money first. All of it.

ANTHONY

That'll take me too long.

AUGUST

I'm not giving this to you for nothing, so forget it.

August starts off. Anthony shouts to him in feigned anger.

ANTHONY

Thanks a lot.

AUGUST

(over his shoulders)

Fuck you.

ANTHONY

(screaming)

August, please. Sell me a gun.

August turns back to him.

AUGUST

Shut up, you crazy, fucking
bastard.

They stare each other down, then August runs off. Anthony and Carl laugh.

CARL

You fool him every time.

ANTHONY

He'll never figure it out.

INT - PEERLESS THEATRE - NIGHT - 1951

THE SEARCH with Montgomery Clift is on the screen. The audience is mostly adults except for Anthony and Carl. We see jump cuts of the movie and Anthony's tearful reaction to his discovery, finally, of what war is. He empathizes with this story of a lost German boy at the end of WW II.

INT - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - 1:45 P.M. - JAN 26, 1953

Anthony is standing by the door, ready to exit.

SECRETARY

Next door to Fr. Watson's entrance.

Anthony leaves her office, turns a corner, sees Watson's private bathroom.

INT - ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - 4:30 AM - MAY - 1951

Evelyn and Vinnie are waking Anthony. Theresa is looking on.

VINNIE)

Wake up.....Anthony!.....Wake up.

Vinnie turns on the bed lamp.

ANTHONY

Whaaat!?

VINNIE

Wake up.

ANTHONY

What time is it?

VINNIE

Four thirty.

ANTHONY

What's the matter?

VINNIE

Grandpa died.

Anthony is stunned.

EVELYN

He had a heart attack.

VINNIE

We just spoke to Aunt Josie. We're leaving in a little while.

EVELYN

Get ready for your confirmation.

ANTHONY

I'm going with you.

VINNIE

Grandpa would want you to be confirmed. Later you'll come to the funeral parlor. Uncle Tommy will take you.

ANTHONY

Does Aunt Anna know?

Vinnie and Theresa leave the bedroom.

EVELYN

It just happened. How could she know?

ANTHONY

Is anybody going to tell her?

EVELYN

That's all we would need now that she's getting better.

ANTHONY

When will you tell her?

EVELYN

When she gets out of the hospital. Go back to sleep. You have time.

She starts out.

ANTHONY

Why did Grandpa have a heart attack?

EVELYN

He watched Aunt Anna suffer her whole life. He couldn't watch her in that place any longer. How much more could he take?

Evelyn leaves the bedroom.

INT - FUNERAL PARLOR - NIGHT - 1951

Anthony stands over his Grandpa's corpse. He kisses the face of his dead grandfather.

INT- HEADMASTER'S BATHROOM -2:10 P.M.- JAN 26, 1953

Anthony is kneeling at the toilet bowl, having just thrown up. He flushes the toilet, sits on the floor in cold sweat.

INT-AVENUE U APARTMENT DOOR - SUNDAY - JANUARY - 1952

Josie opens the door. There are voices from the dining room.

"This'll make you more comfortable."
"Tommy, sit here." "Junior and Alfred'll eat in the kitchen." "No, let them stay. We set the card table. Come here and sit!"

JOSIE

(to Evelyn & Vinnie)

Just in time.

((whispering))

She knows about poppa. Be careful what you say.

Evelyn, Vinnie, Theresa enter. The camera stays on Anthony who closes the door, but lags behind.

JOSIE (CONT'D)

We thought you got caught in traffic.

They walk to the dining room.

VINNIE (O.S.)

There was more traffic than I expected.

INT - ANTHONY AT THE DOOR OF THE DINING ROOM

Anthony is shocked at the sight of his godmother.

GRACIE, O.S.

Anna, Helen and Vinnie are here.
And look, Anthony and Theresa too.

THERESA (O.S.)

(kissing)
Hi, Aunt Anna.

EVELYN (O.S.)

(Kissing)
You look wonderful.

VINNIE (O.S.)

It's good to have you back.
Congratulations.

Now we see Anna from Anthony's point of view. She looks like a frightened boy. She is sitting on two bed pillows, skinny with short, straight black hair.

GRACIE (O.S.)

Vinnie, sit here.

VINNIE (O.S.)

That's your seat.

GRACIE (V.O.)

No. Sit. I never eat. You know me.

JOSIE (O.S.)

Come, Theresa, Helen, sit.
(turning to Anthony)
What are you doing there?

Anthony is still in the doorjamb staring at Anna.

JOSIE (CONT'D)

Anthony, sit over here.

(leading him)

Come on, move.

He sits, staring down at his empty plate.

GRACIE O.S.)

Anna, Anthony went to mass and
communion every day you were away
so you would get better. Even
Saturdays! He was like the mail
man, rain or shine.

Dottie is placing chicken soup for Anthony.

DOTTIE

Watch out. These are very hot.

Josie and Rosie bring in more bowls.

ROSIE

Tommy you want parmesan? Tommy?

TOMMY

What????.... Rosie? I can hear you.
Stop screaming. Jesus!

ROSIE

Parmesan?

TOMMY

Yeah..... put it in.

She puts a spoonful over his soup.

JOSIE

Anthony eat. What's the matter with
you?

Anthony can't speak, or even look up.

GRACIE

Blow on it, if it's too hot.

Josie and Dottie sit to eat.

GRACIE CONT'D)

I'll eat it then.

(sitting)

You'll wait for the lasagna. I know you.

They eat. Anthony secretly looks up. Dottie helps Anna eat. No one knows what to say. There is pregnant silence.

ROSIE

Anna you want spinach in your soup?

Anna shakes her head 'no'. Silence, then....

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Anna? Remember the escarole in olive oil I brought you in the nut house?

The family's joint spine snaps.

ANNA

Forget? You brought it every week.

Their tension dissolves into laughter.

ROSIE

You said you liked it, that's why I brought it.

ANNA

Sure, I loved it. But the other patients used to make fun of you when you left. "Anna, the one with the escarole, you know, the deaf one. She belongs in here, not us. How come they let her out?"

ROSIE

I'd be better off. Twelve years with Tommy is worse than the nut house.

TOMMY

Who's in the nut house?

ANNA

Remember the old lady across from me?

JOSIE

The one who ate your chocolates and never said thank you.

ANNA

She decided to marry Willie when he visits next time. Good thing I'm out of there. She was serious. Said he was better looking than her four husbands, and that she had a nice big bed at home waiting for him.

JOSIE

Anything would be better than that puttana he married.

GRACIE

Josie, the kids!

JOSIE

Junior you know what puttana means?

JUNIOR

No, what?

JOSIE

A good for nothing bum. Someone who sits on her ass all day.

JUNIOR & ALFRED

Puttana!

EVELYN

Okay wise guys that's enough.

ROSIE

OOOh Tommy "Puttana" listen to them.

GRACIE

(To Josie)

See what you started?

JOSIE

Good. Now they'll know what to avoid when they get married.

JUNIOR

I'm gonna marry a puttana!

The family laughs.

JOSIE

You better learn to cook. Or you

and your puttana will starve to death.

Dottie, Gracie and Theresa collect empty bowls and start to the kitchen. The family disperses to gather the rest of the dinner. Rosie carries some dirty glasses.

ROSIE

(while exiting)

She'll be her old self in no time.
Fatten her up a bit, that's all.

Anthony goes to sit next to Anna. The family continues to speak loudly from the kitchen.

(GRACIE, DOTTIE, EVELYN)

"She remembered the food." "Isn't that something?" "Can you imagine."
"We knew it would work."

ROSIE (O.S.)

And you told me not to bring the escarole.

ANTHONY

(to Anna)

Was it hard - in the hospital, I mean?

ANNA

It was awful. Stay strong Anthony! Don't ever let your nerves get the best of you. When you lose who you are, you lose everything. That's all we have.

ANTHONY

But you recovered.

ANNA

I was lucky.

ANTHONY

What were the shock treatments like?

ANNA

They were frightening. I don't wish them on anyone.

ANTHONY

Do you mind my asking?

ANNA

No. You should know.

ANTHONY

Will it ever happen again?

ANNA

Not if I can help it.

The rest of the family enter and pass a feast of food around the table. Each of the aunts and Theresa carry some platter of something wonderful.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(to Anthony)

God forbid this family miss a meal.

EVELYN

(entering)

In only six years those pigs left a mess.

THERESA

We're moving?

EVELYN

We can be near the family again.

JOSIE

How did you find out about it?

EVELYN

I asked Mr. Pernetti to let me know when an apartment was vacant. Who ever thought it would be the same one.

THERESA

Where we going to sleep?

EVELYN

You and Anthony in one bedroom and Daddy and me in the other. Like before.

THERESA

That was before the war. I'm not sleeping in the same room with him.

EVELYN

Well you have no choice. We can't live in the Projects any longer.

THERESA

Why not?

EVELYN

It's no place for a teenage daughter. Can't you figure that out?

THERESA

I can take care of myself and I want my own bedroom.

EVELYN

When you get married you'll get one.

Theresa storms out of dining room. Gracie calls after her.

GRACIE

Theresa come on now, come back.

EVELYN

Anthony starts high school next year. He's taking entrance exams all over the city. The projects served its purpose.

JOSIE

Dottie thinks Anna should sell her cookies to the bakery.

ANTHONY

Will you?

ANNA

Have you ever seen our family sell anything? Aunt Gracie would be sneaking cookies to the church or whoever else she felt needed cookies for nothing. We'll all get into heaven just because of her. She's been buying us passes for years.

GRACIE

We move to our house in two weeks.

You'll help your godmother with the garden.

ANTHONY

Do you know anything about it?

ANNA

You and me, we'll figure it out.
Sun, earth and water! How hard
could it be?

INT- BATHROOM AT BROOKLYN PREP- 2:55 P.M.- JAN 26, 1953

Anthony is wet from sweating. He sits back against the door, dries his sweat with his handkerchief.

INT-LIVING ROOM AT CONEY ISLAND AVE - NIGHT - SEPTEMBER 1952

Anthony has been pacing from one family member to another. Evelyn is stretching lace curtains onto a wooden frame with dozens of little pins around the edges. Vinnie and Theresa are watching the World Series.

VINNIE

Brooklyn Tech?

ANTHONY

(frustrated)

No. Prep. Brooklyn Prep.

VINNIE

Never heard of it.

EVELYN

I heard Brooklyn Tech's a good school.

ANTHONY

This is Brooklyn Prep. It's run by Jesuits Sr. Elizabeth called them. I really liked it there.

EVELYN

If you get into Brooklyn Tech you should go there. Aunt Mamie's son became an accountant. Makes terrific money which is good now they have three children.

ANTHONY
(strung out)
Who wants to be an accountant?

THERESA
You haven't even passed the test yet.

ANTHONY
I will. I passed all the others.

EVELYN
Don't be so sure.

She goes to the kitchen to prepare dinner.

THERESA
Your head gets bigger by the minute.

ANTHONY
(turning towards her)
Yeah, well, you'll see.

VINNIE
Well if you get in we'll think about it.

ANTHONY
There's nothing to think about. I'm going no matter what any of you say.

EVELYN
(calling from kitchen)
Theresa mash the potatoes. The steaks will be ready in a few minutes.

THERESA
(engrossed in the game)
Make sure mine's cooked all the way.

ANTHONY
Doesn't anybody care?

EVELYN
(taking steaks from broiler)
One school is as good as another if you really want to learn.

ANTHONY

(crossing in to Evelyn)

This is different. It's special.
You should see it. Sr. Elizabeth
says the Jesuits are the best
teachers. That they're men of the
world.

EVELYN

Enough already. You're giving me a
headache. Men of the world! You
never let up, do you? You want to
be a man of the world, get a job.

ANTHONY

That the Jesuits fight for what
they believe in.

THERESA

Then you don't have to go there.
You fight for everything already.

ANTHONY

I'm going to school there!

EVELYN

Vinnie, Theresa come on.

Evelyn, Theresa and Vinnie go to the kitchen. Anthony stares
at them as they pass by him. The T.V. is on.

THERESA

This steak is bloody.

Theresa moves to fry her steak.

EVELYN

Anthony don't let your steak get
cold. It's rare, the way you like
it.

ANTHONY

What are you all afraid of?

Evelyn, Vinnie and Theresa turn to him.

EVELYN

What the hell are you talking
about?

Anthony knows he hit the mark.

EXT - BACK YARD - AT ANNA'S HOUSE -DAY- OCTOBER 1952

Anthony is helping Anna with the roses.

ANTHONY

The people in the projects were really sad. I want to know things. What's our family afraid of?

ANNA

People. The world. Ourselves.

ANTHONY

Why?

ANNA

We never felt we could have things other people had. .

ANTHONY

Why?

ANNA

They kept killing Italians all over America. Lynchings in New Orleans. Executions in Massachusetts. Innocent, working people! So we grew up frightened. Then our fear made us weak.

ANTHONY

How do I become strong?

ANNA

Fight for things that are important.

ANTHONY

Isn't school worth fighting for?

ANNA

If this is the right place make them understand. They want the best for you.

ANTHONY

I don't think they do.

ANNA

Your parents will do anything to

help you. Make them see what you want.

ANTHONY

How do I do that?

ANNA

If you can't figure it out who will? How can you get strong if someone else does it for you? Solve this problem, Anthony, you'll be on your way.

Anthony ponders this as he cuts branches.

INT - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - 3:50 P.M.- 1953

Nancy moves around quietly. Anthony is asleep.

EXT - CONEY ISLAND AVE - NOVEMBER - DAY - 1952

Anthony holds his acceptance letter in his hand and follows Evelyn. She carries groceries on her way home from work.

EVELYN

So you got in. We can't afford it anyway.

ANTHONY

But I have to go there.

EVELYN

Read those prices for tuition, books, travel. It's too expensive.

ANTHONY

But there's nowhere else.

EVELYN

Are you stupid or something? Nowhere else! You live in New York with dozens of high schools. You've been accepted everywhere.

ANTHONY

Not like this one.

EVELYN

We never planned to pay for high school.

They arrive at the stoop of their building.

ANTHONY

Why did you let me take all those tests?

EVELYN

We didn't let you. You went yourself. You want your freedom to do whatever you want, and then I have to pay for it?

ANTHONY

But this is the one. I have to register in three weeks or they won't let me in.

EVELYN

These priests will only fill your head with nonsense. It's not your job to save the world. Stick your neck out someone will chop your head off.

She enters the building.

ANTHONY

I'm going to Brooklyn Prep whether you like it or not.

EVELYN

Over my dead body.

ANTHONY

(Shouting after her)
If that's what it takes!

Evelyn hears this clearly and is hurt by it.

INT - SECRETARY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 4 PM

Anthony sleeps. Nancy starts to type an address on an envelope, realizes it would wake him, decides to write with a pen instead.

INT - LIVING ROOM AT CONEY ISLAND AVE. - NIGHT - DECEMBER 1952

A CHRISTMAS TREE is LIT. "I LOVE LUCY" is on T.V. Evelyn, Vinnie and Theresa eat ice cream.

VINNIE

We can't afford it.

ANTHONY

Stop saying that.

EVELYN

Well, go to Brooklyn Prep without money and see how far that gets you.

ANTHONY

I can't understand why you won't do this.

VINNIE

What would you learn there you can't learn anywhere else?

ANTHONY

I don't know. I've never been there.

EVELYN

You always put yourself first. The money it would cost us means there are things we would do without. Is that fair?

ANTHONY

So do without!

THERESA

Bingo! He's your son. Step up and choose your prize.

EVELYN

With both of us working we're barely recovering from the war. Now you want us to go into debt again?

ANTHONY

By the time you recover I'll be finished with high school. This is my chance. I won't get another one.

THERESA

Give it up Anthony, You're not Going to win.

Theresa pushes him backwards. T.V. audience laughs uproariously. Anthony turns around and punches her in the stomach. Theresa doubles over.

VINNIE

(to Anthony)

Are you crazy? You never hit a woman in the stomach. Don't you understand?

ANTHONY

Tell her to stop hitting me.

VINNIE

You've made yourself unhappy by pursuing something we told you not to pursue.

EVELYN

Your head is too big for our pocketbook.

ANTHONY

You always told me my education was the most important thing in the world.

VINNIE

It is.

ANTHONY

Well I found the place to have that education and you won't let me.

VINNIE

Why are you so sure?

ANTHONY

I knew it the day I took the test.

VINNIE

Do you have friends there?

ANTHONY

No.

VINNIE

Are your friends planning to go there?

ANTHONY

No.

VINNIE

Had you ever heard of this school before?

ANTHONY

No.

VINNIE

Then how do you know?

ANTHONY

What's the difference? I know that's all. I'm positive. You told me to pick the thing in life that comes easiest to me, and that I like the best. You said if I did that I would be successful.

VINNIE

What a memory you have.

ANTHONY

So I picked it.

VINNIE

I was talking about a job.

ANTHONY

How can I find the best job if I don't have the best education? I don't know what I want to do with my life yet. Isn't that what an education is for?

VINNIE

Don't make yourself so miserable.

ANTHONY

I passed in the top percentage throughout the entire city.

VINNIE

You should be very proud of that.

ANTHONY

This is my last chance. If I don't register tomorrow I can never go there. Freshmen classes start in a month.

Theresa turns on the loud vacuum. Anthony is defeated.

INT - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - 4:15 P.M. -JAN 26, 1953

Anthony wakes to see darkness outside the window. Nancy is straightening her office. Anthony is upset.

ANTHONY

He didn't come back.

SECRETARY

No and I have to get to classes myself.

ANTHONY

Can I wait in the hallway?

SECRETARY

Let's wait a little longer. I need him to sign these letters.

She holds typed letters with envelopes. Anthony waits.

INT - BROOKLYN TECH - NEXT DAY- JANUARY 25, 1953- 2:30 P.M.

The homeroom door is opened to a noisy corridor.

MR. HUTCHINS

(flatly, to class)

You come to this room twice a day, 9 a.m. and 2:50 p.m. Unless you are also taking mechanical drawing and accounting. This is homeroom. You have been assigned to me until June. Any special problems you may have with other classes or teachers should come through me. If I can't help I'll send you to someone else.

Anthony sits stone faced with a stack of textbooks: 'Economics' 'Algebra' 'Calculus I' 'Mechanical Drawing' 'Biology' 'Accounting' 'English' 'History'.

HUTCHINS

Any questions?

(pause)

Until tomorrow class is over.

INT- HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - 4:35 P.M.- JAN 26, 1953

The light in Fr. Watson's office goes on.

SECRETARY

He's here.

She grabs the letters and enters Watson's office, closing the glass paneled door behind her.

INT - KITCHEN AT CONEY ISLAND AVE -LAST NIGHT- JAN. 25, 1953

They are eating breaded pork chops, eggplant parmigiana, spinach sauteed with olive oil and garlic, mashed potatoes and carrots. A homemade lemon meringue pie cools.

VINNIE

How was school today?

Anthony sulks.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

And, by the way, Happy Birthday.

Anthony mashes down the lumps in his potatoes. Silence.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

I asked you a question.

(Silence)

Look Anthony, we're getting fed up with you. How was school today?

ANTHONY

Fine.

VINNIE

That's it? Just fine?

ANTHONY

That's it.

VINNIE

What courses are you studying?

ANTHONY

It doesn't matter.

VINNIE

Why doesn't it matter?

ANTHONY

It doesn't, that's all.

VINNIE

You better make the best of
your high school years.

EVELYN

Let him find out for himself. If he
fails he'll learn the hard way.

VINNIE

What classes will you be studying?

ANTHONY

It doesn't matter.

VINNIE

Why doesn't it matter?

ANTHONY

(exploding)

Because I'm never going back. I
need an education to find out what
I want to do with my life. Not what
you want me to do.

EVELYN

Brooklyn Tech is an excellent
school.

ANTHONY

I don't want to be an accountant,
or an engineer, or a biologist.
Can't you get that into your heads?
You want me to waste my life doing
what I don't want to do. But I'm
never going back.

EVELYN

What does that mean?

ANTHONY

I won't go tomorrow or any other
day, and you might as well know it.

VINNIE

What will you do?

ANTHONY

I'll go to libraries and museums.
I'll teach myself. I won't go back
to Tech.

He tries to eat, to recover some dignity.

VINNIE

How can you be so sure of what you want?

ANTHONY

(spitting potatoes through excruciating tears.)

You always told me to do with my life whatever I thought was best for me. And I'm trying to do that.

Anthony runs into the living room. Vinnie follows.

VINNIE

Calm down.....come on, relax.....Hey!

But Anthony can't stop the floodgates.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

How can anything be this important?

EVELYN

Come back to eat. He'll go to school or he won't. He's spoiled rotten. We always gave in.

ANTHONY

I can't learn what I need at Tech.

EVELYN

(entering living room)

So go to Madison. What do you think other kids in the neighborhood do?

ANTHONY

When you go to work tomorrow, I'm staying home. I'm not wasting four years of my life studying stupid things.

EVELYN

Since you're staying home tomorrow take the wash. You can be my helper. I'm happy to hear it.

ANTHONY

Don't you want me to have the right

education?

EVELYN

Your head is full of nonsense. Of course I want you to have the right education. But you always have big ideas. What do you want to do this time, solve the problems of the world? Jesuits, men of the world, fighters; what is this war you're preparing for? The War ended seven years ago. Become a teacher. You'll have a good life. I'm scared to death you're going to become a priest.

ANTHONY

I want to be psychiatrist.

EVELYN

A psychiatrist? What happened to pianist, dancer? Your head is too busy. I've heard nothing but "I want" from you all your life. And always things you can't have.

ANTHONY

I can't have them because you won't let me. But I'm not wasting any more time listening to any of you. You're not interested in me.

EVELYN

Are you nuts?

ANTHONY

You're interested in my becoming like you. But I want my own life.

VINNIE

We're your family, Anthony, never forget that.

ANTHONY

(sarcastically)

Believe me I never will.

VINNIE

Can this school be so important that you would fight your own family?

ANTHONY

Yes.

VINNIE

I can't understand that.

ANTHONY

When I went to Prep I felt different, like I could find what I wanted there. Now it's too late.

VINNIE

(To Anthony)

Okay, okay calm down. I'll make a deal.

EVELYN

We agreed not to give in.

VINNIE

This is different.

EVELYN

No deals.

VINNIE

Go inside and let me take care of this.

EVELYN

Prep is way across Brooklyn. He's going to spend all day traveling? Who will ever see him again? What kind of education is that? Go to Madison or Tech. In the fall change to St. Augustine's. It's a diocesan school, two stops away.

ANTHONY

I hated St. Augustine's.

EVELYN

(heading to the kitchen)

Of course you hated it. I would have been surprised if you liked it. My stomach is turning sour.

VINNIE

Listen to me. You go to Prep

tomorrow, and if they let you in,
your mother and I will find the
money.

EVELYN

(turning back)

That's ridiculous.

VINNIE

First they have to let him in.
We'll find the way, if they let him
in.

She understands Vinnie's point and goes to the kitchen.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

Do you hear me? If they let you in.

ANTHONY

You know it's too late.

VINNIE

To be honest with you, you're
right. But if they let you in
tomorrow, we'll pay for it. You
will have won that. We don't want
to lose our son, especially to
hate. You're our family. We're not
used to anyone wanting the things
you want. Maybe this is the right
school. We just don't know anything
about it. If you get in tomorrow
that's where you will go. And we
will make the most of it. Deal?

ANTHONY

Deal.

VINNIE

But if you don't get in, you go to
Brooklyn Tech the next day. Or
Madison. And you make the best of
that. No more scenes.

EVELYN

We always give in.

VINNIE

No more scenes after tomorrow!

Evelyn, Vinnie and Anthony return to the kitchen as Theresa

brings the lemon meringue pie to the table. She holds it out towards Anthony and sings.

THERESA
Happy Birthday to you!

No one else joins her. Vinnie, Evelyn and Anthony sit.

THERESA (CONT'D)
Happy birthday little Anthony,
happy birthday spoiled brat!

Theresa places the pie on the table, takes the flat side of the knife and smashes the pie into four pieces. The others take in her rage.

INT - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - 4:50 P.M.- JAN 26, 1953

Anthony adjusts his shirt, fixes his sweater nervously.
WATSON comes to the door, standing next to Nancy.

FR. WATSON
You want to see me?

ANTHONY
Yes.

WATSON
Come in. They pass Nancy who closes
the door behind them.

INT - FR. WATSON'S OFFICE

Large well furnished office. Watson is a modestly built man with thin gold framed eyeglasses, about fifty-five years old. He is the perfect image of a bank president.

WATSON
I understand you have been waiting
since nine o'clock.

ANTHONY
Yes.

WATSON.
Well, what can I do for you?

ANTHONY
I want to go to school here.

WATSON

Aha! So that's the mystery. May I ask you why you would speak to no one else?

ANTHONY

Things sometimes get confused. I didn't want anything to go wrong.

WATSON

If I came back later tonight?

ANTHONY

I would have waited.

Watson stares at him, thoughtfully.

WATSON

You mean this semester?

ANTHONY

Yes.

WATSON

We began yesterday.

ANTHONY

I know.

WATSON

We closed the registration a while ago.

ANTHONY

I know.

WATSON

Did you take the entrance exam?

ANTHONY

Last year.

WATSON

Well that's good. What grammar school?

ANTHONY

St. Brendan's. East 14th St, Ave O.

WATSON

Then your folder will be here.

Watson turns away, rummages through a file cabinet, and finds the folder. He begins to open it, but first turns to Anthony.

WATSON (CONT'D)

Why do you want to go to school here?

ANTHONY

(hesitates, then)

I don't know.

WATSON

Well what made you feel you wanted to go to school here?

ANTHONY

The day I took the test...

WATSON

Yes?

ANTHONY

I heard...

WATSON

Heard what?

ANTHONY

Talk.

WATSON

What do you mean talk?

ANTHONY

The teachers made sense. They made the test easier because they were funny. They made us laugh. I liked them. I want to learn from them.

WATSON

You were aware of this while you took the test?

ANTHONY

Yes,

WATSONS

How interesting!

Watson stares at Anthony for a long beat, then opens Anthony's folder, reads carefully. He stops reading, to face Anthony. He scrutinizes him very carefully. Then checks several more pages. He looks to Anthony.

WATSON

I see you liked grammar school.

ANTHONY

Oh yes.

WATSON

(indicating the folder)

I see you have the grades and I must admit, waiting all day, obviously you have the spunk. How come you didn't register when we invited you?

ANTHONY

My parents thought the school was too far away from home.

WATSON

And now?

ANTHONY

They've changed their mind.

WATSON

You can go to school here. We'll be lucky to have you.

Watson smiles at Anthony, then turns away to close the drawer of the file cabinet. Anthony prevents himself from crying by feigning an itch on his nose.

WATSON (CONT'D)

(turning to Anthony)

You begin tomorrow at 9 A.M. Will you be ready?

ANTHONY

I'll be ready.

WATSON

Come to my office at 8:40 and I'll

give you your schedule. I want to be sure everything works out the first day.

ANTHONY

I'll be here. 8:40.

WATSON

See you then.

Watson brings Anthony's folder to place it on his desk. Anthony leaves.

INT - SECRETARY'S OFFICE

Anthony goes into Nancy's office to get his coat.

ANTHONY

I'm going to school here.

SECRETARY

How did you do that?

ANTHONY

I don't know.

Fr. Watson comes to the door.

WATSON

What do you like to be called?

ANTHONY

(takes the opportunity)

Tony!

WATSON

Okay Tony. See you tomorrow.

Anthony leaves the office.

INT- EMPTY HALLWAY

Anthony rushes through the dimly lit corridor to the front door and exits the school.

EXT - OUTSIDE STEPS OF BROOKLYN PREP

Anthony leaps high off the steps to kick bells, confident he can do it this time. Instead he crashes into two metal garbage cans at the foot of the stairs. An old Yiddish lady with groceries rushes to help him.

ELDERLY LADY

Oy very es mere! Zindala.

She mutters to herself as she tries to get Anthony to get feet.

ELDERLY LADY

Vus il ich tun? Du bust schmertzen?

ANTHONY

(rising, assuring her)

I just have to practice.

Then he runs, and runs, and runs to the two trains that will bring him home. When he arrives to the Kings Highway station he continues to run with exuberance. As he is about to enter his building he turns back to the street and does bells, but falls down the stone stairs and comes up with a bloody nose.

INT - CONEY ISLAND AVE APARTMENT- NIGHT-JANUARY 26,1953

As he enters Evelyn, who is on the phone, is the first to see his bloody nose.

EVELYN

Oh my God, they beat you up.

ANTHONY

I got in.

VINNIE

(reading newspaper)

They let you in?

EVELYN

Why did they beat you up?

ANTHONY

I got in.

VINNIE

Did they not want to talk to us?

ANTHONY

No. I got in.

VINNIE

(rising)

How did you do that?

ANTHONY

I don't know.

EVELYN

(wiping blood from his face)

Why are you bleeding?

ANTHONY

I start in the morning.

EVELYN

Sit and eat. I made stew.

Anthony sits at the table.

VINNIE

(crosses to stand over him)

What an accomplishment. You must be
very proud of yourself.

Evelyn pours stew on a plate for Anthony.

THERESA

(sits opposite Anthony)

You did good, brother.

ANTHONY

I got in.

THE END

CREDITS- INT - CONEY ISLAND AVE APARTMENT- NIGHT-JANUARY 26,1953

John Denver's "I Want to Live" underscores credits. Evelyn,
Vinnie, Theresa, Anna, Dottie and Gracie wash, iron and sew
cloths to prepare Anthony for school.