

FOGGY BOTTOM

"The Virgin Missile Crisis"

an original television pilot

written by

Hoyt Hilsman

682 S. Mentor
Pasadena, CA 91106
626.755.3498
hoyth@aol.com

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TEASER

EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - DAY - 1962

Ivy-covered walls.

A BELL RINGS.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

It's October, 1962. I'm in the ninth grade at the Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C.

Gangly boys in sports coats and ties, girls in skirts and knee socks pour out of the building.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

It's a private school that used to be run by Quakers but was taken over by liberal humanists.

Duncan, 16, a mop of hair and half-tied tie, ambles down a walkway.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

They split off from the Quakers so now the school only has prayer meeting once a week and has actually admitted some very cute Jewish girls with big breasts.

Two pretty girls with big breasts round the corner and pass Duncan. Duncan stares at them.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

I'm lucky to be here. I was headed for juvenile delinquency in public school -- anyway that's what my mother thought when I skipped school with my friend Steve Webster, who ended up doing fifteen to twenty at Easton State for armed robbery.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Duncan's mother, Anne, answers the phone.

ANNE

Hello? Yes, this is Duncan's mother.

Her face darkens.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Well no, he isn't home sick today.

(beat)

But I sent him off to school this morning. He even had his lunch.

(beat)

There must be some mistake.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

So they suspended me from school for a week for not coming to school one day. This was supposed to be a valuable life lesson, although I still don't know what it was.

ANNE

All right. We'll come in tomorrow. Goodbye.

She hangs up the phone.

She lets out a huge wail, and begins to sob.

INT. ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Duncan sits quietly next to his mother, who is still sobbing.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

My mother begged the Assistant Principal to let me come in and clean toilets instead.

The assistant principal shakes his head.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My mother is a former Catholic who still believes in martyrdom and suffering even though we now go to a Unitarian Church which is full of cute formerly Catholic and Jewish girls with big breasts.

The Assistant Principal comforts Duncan's mother, who is sobbing even more now.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - PUBLIC SCHOOL - DAY

The yard is full of Kids.

One group of beefy, clean cut jocks wear blue athletic jackets.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My mother thought I hung out with a bad crowd because I belonged to a jacket club which was our version of a gang.

Another group of boys, this one more stylish, wear yellow jackets.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

We all wore different colored jackets.

Another group, this one ethnic, wears red.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

My friends and I couldn't get into any of the regular jacket clubs so we started our own....

Duncan and his friends, clearly outcasts and losers, wear candy-striped jackets.

MUSIC: "THE PEPPERMINT TWIST"

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

The Peppermint Jackets. We were losers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan, frustrated, in front of the mirror, tries over and over to tie his regimental tie, but gets all jumbled up.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My mother thought the next step was jail, so she overcame her liberal aversion to ruling class institutions and enrolled me in private school.

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Duncan sits, his tie knotted in a hopeless mangle, his homework spread before him, carefully arranging M&M's.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And my Dad made me spend every afternoon in his office during summer school to make sure I studied. He works for the State Department. Intelligence.

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - VENDING MACHINE ROOM - DAY

Duncan waits patiently behind a professorial guy in frayed tweed jacket who is trying to decide between "Twinkies" and "Yoohoos."

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Sounds glamorous, but it isn't really. Mostly a lot of tweedy academics smoking pipes and reading newspapers in Russian and writing reports that nobody reads.

Finally, Duncan points to the "Yoohoos" and the professor type nods appreciatively.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING

An empty hallway. Duncan plods down the hallway.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Mostly pretty boring. Until this week.

A phone rings somewhere. Duncan heads down the hall.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

Hear that? When my Dad got his new job, a bunch of workers in overalls came into my parents' bedroom and put in this red phone that is on a direct line to the White House....

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A red phone next to the bed rings.

Duncan enters.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

...so the Russians or the French or whoever couldn't listen in.

The phone RINGS again.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

But it never rang. Until now.

He stares at the phone.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The red phone is ringing.

Duncan stands in the doorway, staring at the phone.

ANNE

(O.C.)

What's that?

LEE

(O.C.)

Oh, no. It's the red phone.

Duncan's mother enters, wearing a slip.

The phone rings again. She stares at it.

ANNE

Should I answer it?

His father, Lee, enters from the bathroom, wearing boxer shorts, garters for his black socks and wingtip shoes. He has a very odd haircut, which is combed forward to a point in front.

LEE

No!

Lee rushes to the phone.

Duncan's sister Amy, a twelve-year old with a bouffant hairdo and white lipstick, appears at the bedroom door.

LEE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

Hello?

AMY

Is it the President?

Duncan looks at her like she's an idiot. Out of scene:

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DEN

A 45-rpm record spins on a portable turntable. Beatles' "Do You Want to Know a Secret" plays under.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My sister Amy isn't stupid. In fact, she's going to grow up to be a very successful and angry feminist professor of law specializing in women's contract law, women's criminal law and women's tax law.

Amy, wearing pedal pushers, lounges on the sofa, sipping a coke and talking on a princess phone.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

But right now she's in the middle of her stupid phase. Even so, I think she sneaks into my father's study at night and reads the New Republic.

Lee enters, gives her a withering glance.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

My father says that "Teenage girls should be given a pill to put them to sleep for six years and that would spare the world a lot of agony."

Lee mouths the words as Amy claps her hands over her ears.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

My sister never had very much sense of humor about my father and that's part of the reason why she's going to end up teaching feminist tax law. What the hell is "feminist tax law" anyway?

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan smirks at Amy.

DUNCAN

Of course it's not the President.

AMY

How do you know?

LEE
 (into phone)
 Yes, sir.

DUNCAN
 (to Amy)
 Because it's not the President, stupid!

AMY
 I am not stupid!

ANNE
 Shhhh! Kids, be quiet!

LEE
 (into phone)
 No, I didn't get a chance to read the memo, sir. But I'll look at it right away. Yes, sir. I will. Goodbye.

ANNE
 Who was that?

LEE
 (amazed)
 The President.

AMY
 (to Duncan)
 See!

DUNCAN
 (V.O.)
 This was defining moment for me. I thought the red phone might actually be a fake. But here was my father actually talking on the red phone to the President of the United States. The actual John F. Kennedy who lived with Jackie Kennedy and may have even seen her completely naked. I was beginning to see my father in an entirely new light.

ANNE
 What did he want?

LEE
 I can't discuss that.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

He couldn't even discuss his
conversation with the President.
It was that important.

LEE

I need an Old Fashioned.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DEN

Duncan's mother mixes a drink at the bar.

Duncan's father paces nervously.

Duncan and Amy watch.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

He always needs an Old Fashioned at
moments like this. And at most other
moments after five o'clock. Do you know
what's in an Old Fashioned? Gin, sugar
and bitters. You might as well drink
straight rubbing alcohol. He drinks two
of these before dinner and three more
before bed.

Duncan's father hovers over his mother as she mixes the
drink.

ANNE

Is everything alright?

LEE

It's fine, babe. Fine.

OUT OF SCENE

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

A serious, bespectacled SHRINK listens to an unseen patient
on the couch.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Actually, my father is an alcoholic but
I won't figure that out for about twenty
years and at least twenty-five thousand
dollars in therapy.

BACK TO SCENE

Anne hands Lee the drink.

ANNE
Here you are.

Duncan and Amy watch as Lee takes a big swig.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
Right now, I just think he really likes
Old Fashioneds.

AMY
Why did the President call you?

LEE
That's classified information,
sweetheart.

Another big swig.

AMY
Come on. Give us a hint!

LEE
If I gave you a hint, it wouldn't be
classified anymore, would it?

He checks his very weird haircut in the mirror.

LEE (CONT'D)
(cont.; to Anne)
You think I need a haircut, babe?

ANNE
You're seeing the President tomorrow,
aren't you?

LEE
I can't say. Classified.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
He is definitely seeing the President.

AMY
At the White House?

DUNCAN

No, at the Safeway.

AMY

Mom!

ANNE

Don't tease your sister.

DUNCAN

That's not teasing. That's sarcasm.

(V.O.)

No one in the family understands my sense of humor. Except my mother. But she's afraid to laugh because that would make other people upset. And my mother hates more than anything making anyone upset. Unless it's herself, and then she doesn't mind.

LEE

I think I'll just stop by the barbershop before they close. I'll be home in time for dinner. Bye.

ANNE

Bye.

They kiss.

He pats her butt.

ANNE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

Lee!

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She actually doesn't seem to mind when he does that.

LEE

Bye, kids.

KIDS

Bye.

LEE

And do your homework.

KIDS

We will.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan sits, bored, at his desk.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

We always do our homework. There's nothing else to do. We didn't get a TV until last year and therefore missed the entire Golden Age of television because my mother thought we might spend our time watching groundbreaking television instead of reading the classics.

Duncan stares out the window.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Even now we aren't allowed to watch "Perry Mason" because she thinks it's too violent. She doesn't realize it now but this will be a major handicap to me in my future career as a writer when the whole world becomes a huge visual circus and all the literary classics go right into the garbage can.

He picks up a basketball from the bed.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Duncan's mother frowns at him.

ANNE

Did you finish your homework?

DUNCAN

Yes, Mom.

ANNE

How about your extra reading?

DUNCAN

I did it. Now can I go outside?

ANNE

Did you practice the piano?

DUNCAN

No. But can I just go outside for half an hour?

ANNE

What for?

DUNCAN

I don't know. Shoot a few baskets.

ANNE

Why?

DUNCAN

Because I like to, Mom. I'm a kid. Kids like to play sometimes.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Or watch TV.

ANNE

Alright. Half an hour.

DUNCAN

Thanks.

ANNE

Then practice your piano.

DUNCAN

I will.

He flees out the door.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Duncan carefully lines up a shot at the hoop in his driveway.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Mostly I play by myself while the rest of the neighborhood kids are inside their houses watching "Perry Mason."

He bounces the basketball in a ritual, focusing his whole mind on the shot.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

And I make up games like if I hit ten baskets in a row then everyone in my family will disappear and I'll be assigned to a normal family with a big brother that likes to play basketball instead of future feminist tax lawyer who beats me at Monopoly and hearts.

He shoots and misses.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

But I never hit ten in a row.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Duncan, 8, dressed in his Roy Rogers pajamas, creeps down the half-lit stairway to the landing.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I used to imagine that my family were actually a coven of witches or a clandestine cell of aliens and that everyone else in the family belonged to but me.

Duncan strains to listen we pan down to....

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Duncan's mother, father, sister and even the family dog are all dressed as witches -- not Halloween, but something out of the Saturday night horror movies.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I would sit on the stairway landing trying to hear their conversations.

ANNE

Do you think he suspects anything?

LEE

No. How could he?

ANNE

I caught him snooping around the trap door to the torture chamber behind the furnace.

AMY

He'll never find it. He's too stupid!

They all laugh.

Duncan cringes.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

After awhile, I gave up on the whole thing and started wondering if maybe I was the alien.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan's father, dressed in boxer shorts, garters on his socks and wingtips, is carefully combing his hair.

Duncan is watching.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My father has a kind of modified J. Robert Oppenheimer haircut. It started out as a crew cut that grew in.

Duncan's father vigorously rubs Brylcream into his hair, then brushes it forward. He looks like a greasy Julius Caesar.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I never saw anyone else with a haircut. In about thirty years, PeeWee Herman will copy it and get caught masturbating in a movie theater. But right now, it's unique.

His father carefully combs his hair into a peak in the front.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(to his father)

So are you seeing the President today?

LEE
Can't tell you.

DUNCAN
Why not?

LEE
Classified.

DUNCAN
But I'm your son.

LEE
Still can't tell you.

DUNCAN
Because of national security?

LEE
Right.

DUNCAN
If you told me you were going to see the
President and somebody like the Russians
or the French found out then maybe they
could follow you and bomb the White
House or something?

LEE
Something like that.

DUNCAN
Okay. (beat) So you're not going to
see the President today?

LEE
Can't tell you.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
This was beginning to be fun.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(to his father)
Does Mom know?

LEE
Nope.

DUNCAN
You can't even tell her?

LEE

Nope.

DUNCAN

Then you are definitely going to see him.

LEE

Can't say.

Amy enters.

DUNCAN

Dad's going to see the President today.

AMY

Really, Dad?

DUNCAN

He can't tell you.

AMY

Why not? He told you.

DUNCAN

No he didn't.

AMY

Then how do you know?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She's cross-examining people already. Because he didn't tell me. Right, Dad?

LEE

No comment.

DUNCAN

See?

(V.O.)

This was really getting exciting. I always thought my father was this geeky guy with a weird haircut who liked Old Fashioneds. But now that he was meeting with the President and discussing classified information on the White House phone, I was starting to change my opinion.

DUNCAN (cont)

(to his father)

So what will you be talking about with
the President?

LEE

Nice try.

DUNCAN

Can I guess?

LEE

Sure, go ahead.

DUNCAN

So you are meeting with him.

LEE

I didn't say that. I said you can
guess.

DUNCAN

Okay. Berlin?
(no response)
Is it Berlin?

LEE

I said you can guess. I didn't say I
would answer.

DUNCAN

Korea? The Congo? The Middle East?
(no response)
Am I getting warmer?

LEE

Maybe.

DUNCAN

Maybe. Eastern Europe? Cuba?

Lee clears his throat.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(cont.)

What did that mean?

LEE

What?

DUNCAN

That. You cleared your throat when I said "Cuba."

LEE

I had something in my throat.

DUNCAN

And....?

LEE

And I'm late. Bye.

DUNCAN

It's Cuba, isn't it?

LEE

No comment.

He kisses Anne, pats her butt.

ANNE

Lee!

He exits.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I also think he likes it when she tells him to stop, even though she doesn't actually want to him to stop. Some kind of weird married ritual, I guess. And believe me, these people are weird.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Anne, upset, sits on a small ottoman.

Lee stands nearby.

ANNE

You've been home late every night this week. What's going on?

LEE

I'm afraid that's classified, dear.

ANNE

You're having an affair, aren't you?

LEE

No, of course not. Who would be interested in me?

ANNE

It's that Deirdre Henderson, isn't it?

LEE

That's ridiculous. Deirdre is my administrative assistant.

ANNE

And you're in love with her!

LEE

That's crazy. I'm not in love with anyone.

ANNE

Because she's young and attractive and intelligent.

LEE

She's forty-three and overweight.

ANNE

I knew I should have finished college.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Duncan walks past the den in his bathrobe.

LEE

(O.C.)

Honey...

ANNE

(O.C.)

Don't touch me!

Duncan freezes.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Uh-oh.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Duncan's mother is standing at the sink. She's been crying.

DUNCAN

(O.C.)

Mom? Mom?

Duncan, dressed for school, comes into the kitchen.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Mom?

ANNE

(her voice quivering)

Yes, Duncan.

He goes over to her.

DUNCAN

Are you okay?

ANNE

I'm fine.

DUNCAN

Then why are you crying?

ANNE

I'm fine. Really. It's nothing.

DUNCAN

Okay.

ANNE

I'm sorry, Duncan.

DUNCAN

That's okay.

ANNE

No, I shouldn't burden you with my problems. You have more important things to worry about.

DUNCAN

Like what?

ANNE

I don't know, but I'm sure you do.

Duncan opens the cupboard.

DUNCAN
Is there any cereal?

ANNE
(stricken)
Oh, no. I forgot. I'll go out right
now and get some more.

He opens the refrigerator.

DUNCAN
No, no. It's okay. I'll have a
leftover fish stick for breakfast.

He pulls out a crusty fish stick.

ANNE
Are you sure?

DUNCAN
Sure.

He takes a bite and winces.

ANNE
You're okay?

DUNCAN
I'm fine, Mom.

ANNE
Are you really, Duncan? Are you really
fine?

DUNCAN
Yeah, Mom. I'm fine.

ANNE
Good. Because I want you to be fine,
Duncan. More than anything else your
father....(chokes up)...and I....both
want you to be fine.

He takes another bite of the cold fish stick.

DUNCAN
Uh-huh.

ANNE

And we're glad you're fine. So when you tell us you're fine, you know, we feel good. Because more than anything else, we want you to be fine.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

We have these kinds of conversations a lot and I can never quite figure out what's she's talking about except there's this whole load of stuff going on at this entirely different level that I can't begin to understand. This will take me even longer to figure out in therapy than my father's alcoholism. But right now all I have is this kind of empty feeling in my stomach because my mother's unhappy. A lot. And there's nothing I can seem to do about it.

ANNE

I'm fine, Duncan. You don't have to worry about your father and me. Because we're fine. And, besides, you have a lot more important things to worry about.

He heads for the front door.

She follows.

DUNCAN

Okay, Mom. I guess I'll go off to school now.

ANNE

Oh, good. School. Yes. Of course. Go to school, Duncan. And remember, no matter what, be strong.

DUNCAN

Alright, Mom. Whatever you say. Bye.

ANNE

Bye, dear.

(mouthing the words)

"Be strong"

Duncan's shoulders slouch as he heads out the door.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

MRS. MATTERS, early 40s, dismisses the class.

Duncan starts to leave.

MRS. MATTERS

Duncan, would you see me after class,
please?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My history teacher, Mrs. Matters. She's
very intelligent and kind and I actually
admire her a lot even though she is a
divorcee and is therefore either crazy
or a nymphomaniac.

Duncan sits down at her desk.

MRS. MATTERS

Duncan.

DUNCAN

Yes, Mrs. Matters?

MRS. MATTERS

Are you having trouble paying attention
in class?

DUNCAN

Me? No.

MRS. MATTERS

Because I noticed you were having
trouble paying attention.

DUNCAN

Not really.

MRS. MATTERS

You're not stupid, you know, Duncan.

DUNCAN

Who said I was stupid?

MRS. MATTERS

No one. But you could be doing much better in this class if you paid attention.

DUNCAN

I'll try, Mrs. Matters.

MRS. MATTERS

I'm sure your father expects a lot of you now that he has a such an important job at the State Department.

DUNCAN

What do you mean?

MRS. MATTERS

Well, your father has a very sensitive position in the administration and it wouldn't look very good if his son were not doing his very best in history class.

DUNCAN

Wait a second, Mrs. Matters. What are you saying?

MRS. MATTERS

He has to uphold his reputation. And so do you.

DUNCAN

I do?

MRS. MATTERS

(ignoring this)

I'm sure you're very proud of your father. He has a very important job. In fact, he could be meeting with the President right now.

DUNCAN

(amazed)

Who told you he was meeting with the President?

MRS. MATTERS

No one told me, Duncan. All I said was that he could be meeting with the President right now on some important issue of national security.

DUNCAN

Like what?

MRS. MATTERS

I don't know, for heaven's sake.

DUNCAN

Did someone tell you that my father was meeting with the President today?

MRS. MATTERS

No.

DUNCAN

Because if they did, it could be a very upsetting breach of national security. What if the Russians found out? Or the French?

MRS. MATTERS

The French?

(bell rings)

Maybe you should run along to your second period class, Duncan.

DUNCAN

Yes, ma'am.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

This was getting weird. How did she know my father was meeting with the President?

INT. SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM

An intense girl wearing a black turtleneck and beret is directing two other students in a drama scene.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

This is my girlfriend, Susie Grabill. She's two years older and we met in the drama club when she directed me in a very avant-garde production of "This

Property is Condemned" by Tennessee Williams, one of my all-time favorite writers.

SUSIE

(to the student actors)

No, no, no!

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

We love each other like no man and woman have ever loved each other in the history of the world. Although sometimes I wonder what exactly she sees in me.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Later I will realize in therapy that I was overly stimulated by my mother who didn't respect my personal boundaries and therefore I was likely to fall in love with anybody who even hinted they might take their clothes off in front of me.

SUSIE

(noticing him)

Hey, babe.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She's very avant-garde. I'm a lucky guy. I think.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(to Susie)

Hey, babe.

She comes over and gives him a kiss. The other students giggle.

SUSIE

Wanna go down to Georgetown tonight and hang out at the coffee house?

DUNCAN

Uh....sure.

SUSIE

I'll drive.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
She has a license.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - STREET - NIGHT

An old, beatup VW bug sits in front of Duncan's house. The windows are all steamed up.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
She has this VW bug called Yagiv Kashpitsky, named after a character from "Crime and Punishment." At first I was worried about the possible Russian connection, but then I decided it was a Dostoevsky/Kafka thing rather than a Khrushchev/Gromyko thing.

INT. VW BUG - CONTINUOUS

Duncan and Susie in long, clutching embrace.

SUSIE
(squirming, in pain)
Ow!

DUNCAN
What's wrong?

SUSIE
The gearshift.

DUNCAN
Sorry. Kind of tight in here. You okay?

SUSIE
Did you ever wonder what it's like to be a cockroach?

DUNCAN
Uh...not really.

SUSIE
Trapped in this armor-plated body, scurrying around under the refrigerator waiting to be squished or even worse dying this suffocating death from chemical insecticide.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I didn't see exactly what this had to do with sex.

SUSIE

How long have we been out here?

DUNCAN

Two hours or so. Maybe I should go in. My Mom's probably worried.

SUSIE

Why? We're right outside.

DUNCAN

They don't know that.

SUSIE

Yeah, but I'm sure they're not worried.

DUNCAN

You don't know my Mom. Sometimes she cries and gets weird.

SUSIE

Oh. Well, if you've gotta go...

She leans over and kiss him a long kiss.

Endless, in fact.

Duncan starts to get out.

DUNCAN

Goodnight.

SUSIE

Goodnight.

They kiss again.

DUNCAN

Until....tomorrow.

Another long kiss.

SUSIE

Bye.

DUNCAN

Bye.

He gets out, then leans in the window.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(cont.)

Bye.

SUSIE

Bye.

DUNCAN

Bye.

They kiss again. She drives off while they're kissing.

He watches her VW disappear into the night.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT - A MOMENT LATER

Duncan enters dreamily. The light is on.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Boy, this love stuff is really great.
I'm not going to get to sleep for around
twenty-six hours. It's like my whole
body is tingling, every nerve is...

Duncan's reverie is interrupted by...

LEE

Duncan...!

DUNCAN

Oh hi Dad.

LEE

Where the hell have you been?

His mother rushes in. She's obviously been crying.

ANNE

(hugging him)

Oh, Duncan....Thank God!

LEE

Your mother's been worried sick.

ANNE

Where have you been, honey?

DUNCAN

I was out front.

ANNE

Out front of the house?

LEE

This whole time?

DUNCAN

Yeah. I was out front.

ANNE

By yourself?

DUNCAN

No. With Susie.

ANNE

Why didn't you ask her in?

DUNCAN

We were busy.

He gives his father an explanatory shrug. His mother doesn't get it.

ANNE

What were you doing that whole time?

DUNCAN

Talking about Kafka.

ANNE

Oh. Well we were worried sick.

LEE

We certainly were, young man.

(to Anne)

Honey, why don't you go along to bed while I have a word or two with Duncan.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Uh-oh.

ANNE

All right, dear.

(to Duncan)

I'm glad you're okay, sweetheart.

Because you know your father and I worry about you.

DUNCAN

I know, Mom.

ANNE

Goodnight.

They watch her go upstairs.

LEE

(sotto to Duncan)

Let's go into the study.

Duncan follows his father into the study.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

This was definitely not a good sign.
Whenever he took me into the study it was going to be one of those man-to-man conversations...

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Lee closes the door, then solemnly puts his hand on Duncan's shoulder.

LEE

Son, I wanted to talk to you about your mother.

DUNCAN

What about her?

LEE

She's been under a lot of pressure lately....and she's crazy.

DUNCAN

Mom is crazy?

LEE

Absolutely. I've been trying to get her to go to a psychiatrist for years but she refuses.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I have to admit that I kind of agreed with him. I'm not an expert, but I don't think it's normal to spend the morning crying over the kitchen sink.

LEE

So it's up to you kids not to make it worse.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Here comes the corker.

LEE

Just for the time being, I don't want you to do anything that would upset her. Be on your best behavior. Okay, chief? Otherwise God knows what could happen.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

The message was clear. Clean up your act or your mother's going to slit her wrist. Her death will be on your conscience. And it will become this curse that will haunt our family for generations...

LEE

Can I count on you, chief?

DUNCAN

Uh....sure, Dad.

LEE

Good. Now let's go to bed.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lee heads down the hallway.

Duncan trudges behind him.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

"Ask not what you can do for your country..."

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(afterthought)
Hey, Dad...How was your meeting with the
President? Dad?

Ice tinkles in a glass as the bedroom door closes.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Lee is standing in front of a huge blow-up of a u-2
reconnaissance photo.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
I'll find out later, much later, that my
father had been chosen that very day to
explain reconnaissance photos taken over
Cuba by a U-2 spy plane.

Several officials are gathered around.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(V.O.; cont.)
In the photos were these little white
boxes that turned to be sheds housing
nuclear missiles.

Seated in a rocking chair, with only the back of his head
visible, is the President.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(V.O.; cont.)
So there was my father making history.
The only problem was that everybody in
the room kept staring at my father's
hair instead of the little white boxes.
Even the President.

Lee notices this, and self-consciously runs his hand through
his hair. It's greasy from Brylcream. Everyone winces.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(V.O.; cont.)
This was before the Beatles got big.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Lee is standing at the mirror, obsessively combing his hair.
Duncan enters.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

By this time, even I knew something was up, because my father had been coming home very late and the news had been talking about strange goings-on at the White House.

He watches his father for a minute.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

It's Berlin, isn't it?

His father manages a half-smile.

LEE

No comment.

DUNCAN

Is there going to be a war or something?

LEE

(hesitating)

I hope not, son.

Lee puts his hand gently on Duncan's shoulder.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Something about the way he said that made me very scared. All of sudden it wasn't so cool anymore that my father with the weird haircut who drank too many Old Fashioneds was meeting with the President. It was becoming all very Dr. Stangelove.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. DUNCAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan lies on his bed, staring at the ceiling.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

It was clear to me now that something pretty serious was happening, but I didn't know what.

Duncan flips on the record player.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

At times like this, when I get really upset, I like to listen to opera. Specifically Puccini's Tosca. I admit this is pretty weird for a regular American kid, even one whose Dad is in the State Department.

Duncan pretends to be conducting the orchestra.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

And for awhile I was real worried that this meant I was homosexual which really freaked me out. I couldn't quite understand why if I was gay I would spend around eighteen and a half hours a day thinking about girls' breasts, but I decided the opera thing was the determining factor.

Duncan starts singing along, loud.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

So I made up my mind right then to enlist in the Army like my father and grandfather. It would be a hard road, painful and dangerous, but this was the only way to overcome...

Amy enters, scowling.

AMY

Would you please turn that thing down?!

DUNCAN

(sheepish)

Okay.

He turns it down.

AMY

Why do you like that stuff anyway?

He gives her a hateful stare.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Anne is at the sink, crying. Duncan enters.

DUNCAN

Mom?

She quickly dries her eyes.

ANNE

Yes, dear?

DUNCAN

I was thinking about maybe joining the Army. You know, when I graduate. What do you think?

ANNE

Why would you want to do that?

DUNCAN

I can't say.

ANNE

Why not?

DUNCAN

It's sort of personal.

ANNE

You can tell me. I'm your mother.

DUNCAN

Well, you know how sometimes when I get really upset I like to listen to opera. Do you think that's weird?

ANNE

No, sweetheart not at all.

DUNCAN

Do you know any regular guys that listen to opera?

ANNE

Sure. How about your Uncle Frank?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

That did it. Uncle Frank lives in Greenwich Village and wears a beret. I might as well just kill myself.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(mumbling)

Thanks, Mom.

ANNE

Certainly, sweetheart.

Duncan starts to leave, then stops.

DUNCAN

Hey, Mom?

ANNE

Yes, dear?

DUNCAN

Where's Dad? He hasn't been home in like three days.

Her lower lip starts to quiver. She starts to cry.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I guess that was the wrong thing to ask.

INT. SCHOOL - BASEMENT

Mrs. Matters, wearing a hardhat with a radiation symbol on it, checks off a list of students as they file into the bomb shelter. Duncan stands in line with Susie.

SUSIE

Man, I hate these bomb shelter drills. So Orwellian.

DUNCAN

Can I ask you something?

SUSIE

Sure, babe.

DUNCAN

Would you break up with me if I joined the Army?

SUSIE

Jeez, why would you want to join the Army? They're all fascists.

DUNCAN

I don't know, I figure it would be kind of cool. I could go to war and get material and write about it. You know, like Hemingway.

SUSIE

Cool, babe. The only thing is that I heard there's a lot of homosexuals in the Army.

DUNCAN

(dumbfounded)

Where did you hear that?

SUSIE

Artie at the coffee house. When he was in the Army, some sergeant made a pass at him.

DUNCAN

Really? A sergeant?

MRS. MATTERS

Hurry up you two.

They hustle inside as Mrs.Matters bolts the door.

DUNCAN

Mrs. Matters?

MRS. MATTERS

Yes, Duncan?

DUNCAN

Do you think we'd actually be safe in here if there was a nuclear attack? I

mean, this school was built way before they had nuclear weapons.

MRS. MATTERS

It's only a drill, Duncan. Nothing to get excited about.

DUNCAN

I'm not getting excited.

A big, jockey kid, Ralph, comes over to Duncan.

RALPH

Hey, Dunc.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Ralph Peterson. Asswipe. His father was Undersecretary of Treasury in the Eisenhower administration, which must have given him the idea that he could pick on anybody he wanted to. Please don't call me "Dunc", Ralph.

Ralph sneers at him.

RALPH

Why not?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I'm really starting to hate Republicans.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

My name is Duncan.

RALPH

(nodding toward Susie across the room)

Is that your girlfriend?

DUNCAN

Yeah.

RALPH

Isn't she a little weird?

DUNCAN

No.

RALPH

How come she dresses in black all the time?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

A Republican and a philistine.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Because she's an artist, asshole.

RALPH

Hey, don't call me an asshole, "Dunc."

He pushes Duncan down.

DUNCAN

Hey!

Duncan dives at Ralph's legs. They start wrestling.

MRS. MATTERS

Boys, boys!

Susie leans over to a girlfriend.

SUSIE

Guys are so immature.

She blows a big bubble of gum. Mrs. Matters pulls the fighters apart.

MRS. MATTERS

BOYS!!!

INT. SCHOOL - LATIN CLASS - DAY

Duncan and Ralph sit in detention, glaring at each other.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I'd never had detention before. This was a gross injustice that was clearly the result of going to a school that admitted aggressive, card-carrying Republicans.

Miss Rosebrook, the elderly maiden Latin teacher, has her eye on her charges and her ear on her favorite radio program, which features ballroom dancing music.

On the board are declensions of several Latin verbs that Duncan and Ralph are supposed to be copying.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Miss Rosebrook, my Latin teacher. She reminds me of those delicate women in Tennessee Williams' plays who constantly fan themselves and look like they are about to faint.

Miss Rosebrook fans herself with a wadded-up tissue. Duncan listens to the music for a moment, staring into space.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Duncan?

DUNCAN

Yes, Miss Rosebrook?

MISS ROSEBROOK

Are you working on your declensions?

DUNCAN

Yes, Miss Rosebrook.

Ralph silently mimics "Yes, Miss Rosebrook"

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Republican sense of humor.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Duncan?

DUNCAN

Yes, Miss Rosebrook.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Why is an "ir" verb like an old maid?

She starts to giggle uncontrollably. Duncan looks at her, bewildered.

DUNCAN

I don't know.

MISS ROSEBROOK

(giggling)

No "bo" in the future. Get it? Stabo, stabas, stabat. No beau? Old maid?

She giggles on, furiously fanning herself.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I really like Miss Rosebrook a lot.
Which only confirmed my suspicion that
there was something very wrong with me.

The music on the radio stops abruptly.

ANNOUNCER

The following is a bulletin just issued
by the White House. The President will
address the nation tonight at seven p.m.
Eastern time. That's in a little more
than three hours. There's been a great
deal of speculation in the nation's
capital lately about some sort of major
foreign policy crisis, and the
President's address is another
indication...

The voice fades away as Duncan goes into himself.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I couldn't believe what I was hearing.
Here I was sitting in detention hall
with the world on the brink of global
war while my father was probably at this
very moment being transported to an
underground bunker three miles below
Storm King mountain....

MISS ROSEBROOK

Duncan!

DUNCAN

Yes, Miss Rosebrook?

MISS ROSEBROOK

(pointing at the board)

Declensions, if you please.

Duncan slumps in his chair, picks up his pen and starts
writing.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Duncan, his mother and his sister gather around to watch the
President's address to the nation.

PRESIDENT

This secret, swift and extraordinary buildup of Communist missiles - in an area well known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States..

AMY

We're all gonna die, aren't we Mom?

ANNE

Of course not, dear.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Mom was doing her best under the circumstances, but I could see the old lower lip starting to quiver.

AMY

Really? Because I read the Russians have about ten trillion kilotons of nuclear weapons which are enough to blow up the entire world fourteen ti...

DUNCAN

(to Amy)

You're crazy.

AMY

I am not. I read it in the New Republic.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

See! I knew she was reading the New Republic!

ANNE

Duncan, it's not nice to call people "crazy." Especially members of your own family.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She should hear what Dad says about her.

PRESIDENT

Therefore, the United States will undertake the following strict measures...

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

But as I listened to the President that night, I thought that this was probably it. I'd never get to be Hemingway or go to Paris or even get to drive a car. And that my mother probably was crazy and that my sister was always going to be smarter than me, no matter what I said.

PRESIDENT

First, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba....

He glances over to the living room bar and several empty cocktail glasses.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And I thought about my Dad. And whether I'd grow up to be like him. Or whether I'd get a chance to grow up at all...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

A loud, window-rattling boom as a military jet screams low across the sky above.

Duncan's mother is saying goodbye to Duncan at the doorstep.

ANNE

Did you get all your homework done?

DUNCAN

Yeah. I don't know why I bothered though, if the world's going to get blown up.

ANNE

Duncan, listen to me.

She grabs him by the shoulders.

DUNCAN

What?

ANNE

Your job is to do your homework, whether or not the world is going to be blown up.

DUNCAN

Why?

ANNE

Because we all have our jobs to do. And I'm sure your father would want us to do our jobs...

(her voice chokes)

...wherever he is.

(drying her eyes)

Now you go off to school.

DUNCAN

Okay.

ANNE

And remember, no matter what happens. Be strong.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Duncan and Susie sit outside drinking coffee.

SUSIE

I figure we have like thirty-six hours
and the whole thing goes up in smoke.

DUNCAN

I don't think you should be so
pessimistic. You know, my Dad's one of
people that's working on this.

SUSIE

Is that supposed to make me feel better?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She has a point.

SUSIE

I want you to listen to something.

She picks up a book and takes a deep breath.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

"Some say the world will end in fire,
some say in ice. But what I've tasted
of desire, I hold with those who favor
fire."

DUNCAN

Robert Frost.

SUSIE

Isn't that incredible? He knew. And he
read at Kennedy's inauguration.

DUNCAN

Yeah, but he didn't read that. Susie,
you shouldn't get so worked up about
this.

SUSIE

The world is ending, Duncan. Our puny,
insignificant lives are going to be
over, along with rest of the whole

miserable human race. And you don't want me to get worked up?

DUNCAN

I was only trying to be helpful.

SUSIE

Listen, Duncan, if you want to be helpful, there is something you can do.

DUNCAN

What?

SUSIE

Sex.

DUNCAN

(startled)

What do you mean?

SUSIE

I don't want to die a virgin.

DUNCAN

You're a virgin?

SUSIE

Yeah. Aren't you?

DUNCAN

Well, yeah, I guess so. But I thought, I don't know, you seemed so experienced.

SUSIE

Yeah well I was saving it. I don't know what for, the way things are working out. So that's where you come in. I've been reading the "Tibetan Book of the Dead" lately, and there's this tantric cleansing ritual with candles and drums we can perform that would be perfect...

As Susie chatters on, Duncan stares at her in disbelief.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Here I was with the girl who I loved more than anyone has ever loved another person and who I dreamed about going to bed with since the first time we kissed in Yagiv Kaspitsky. But something

about this whole Tibetan ritual thing
was making me feel a little weird.

SUSIE

My little brother has a bongo drum we
can borrow. And we can rent a hotel
room at the Belvedere. I have a
girlfriend who went there once and they
never checked I.D....

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And I started to get this very strange
feeling, like I wasn't completely sure I
wanted to do this.

SUSIE

So we could meet there, say, about 4:30.
And the whole ritual should take about
an hour and a half or so...

Duncan is staring straight ahead.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

Duncan? Is something wrong?

DUNCAN

No. I guess I have to think about it.

SUSIE

What do you mean think about it? Are
you saying you don't want to do this?

DUNCAN

No, no. It's just that I thought maybe
for the first time we would go to Paris
or somewhere. Like Hemingway.

SUSIE

There isn't time to go to Paris.

DUNCAN

Or maybe New York City. Or even camping
in the mountains.

SUSIE

Duncan, we are talking about a spiritual journey into the realm of the dead spirits. And you want to go camping?

DUNCAN

Okay, okay. I just need some time to think about it.

SUSIE

Tomorrow. 4:30. The Belvedere. I'm counting on you. You've got to be strong, Duncan.

She gets up abruptly and leaves.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Where have I heard that before?

INT. BUS - DAY

Duncan, on his way home from school, sits in his usual spot in the back of the public bus. Several passengers have worried looks on their faces as they read the newspapers. An elderly bag lady hums softly to herself.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Susie did have a point. If we were all going to die, we should at least have a chance to have sex once in our lives, even if the whole Tibetan thing sounded a little weird. I mean, we're all going to be dead anyway.

The elderly lady gives him a toothless grin, followed by a wink.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Duncan shuffles across the empty golf course -- his shortcut home.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And, besides, where did I come up with the whole Hemingway/Paris fantasy? Here's a real, live girl that I love more than anyone has ever loved another person in the history of the world and

I'm not sure I want to go to bed with her just because she's into some bizarre Tibetan ritual? What am I, crazy?

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Duncan skips a stone across a pond on the golf course.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Then I suddenly had a terrible thought. What if I didn't want to go to bed with Susie because I was gay? What if even though I thought about breasts all day long, reading Hemingway and Tennessee Williams and listening to the opera had actually turned me queer? I decided I better call Susie right away.

He takes off at a run.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Anne and Amy are glued to the television set.

INSERT TV

Adlai Stevenson is addressing the U.N. Security council.

STEVENSON

And we have photographic evidence right here in black and white of medium and intermediate range missiles.

Behind Stevenson, a large blow-up of a U-2 photo.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan enters.

ANNE

Duncan, honey, look at this.

DUNCAN

I can't. I gotta make a phone call.

AMY

Look, it's Dad.

DUNCAN
(staring at TV)
What?

INSERT TV

Behind Stevenson, next to the photo, pointer in hand, is Lee.

Stevenson turns to the Soviet delegate, Ambassador Zorin.

STEVENSON
All right, sir, now let me ask you one question.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan squints at the screen.

DUNCAN
You're crazy, that's not Dad.

ANNE
Duncan, don't call people "crazy."

AMY
It is, too. Look at his hair.

INSERT TV

As Stevenson speaks, the camera zooms in for a moment on Lee and the photo.

STEVENSON
Do you deny that the USSR has placed medium and intermediate range missiles in Cuba?

DUNCAN
Oh, my God. Dad.

Several U.N. Delegates are looking quizzically at Lee's hair.

STEVENSON
Yes or no -- don't wait for the translation -- yes or no?

BACK TO SCENE

Amy smirks at Duncan.

AMY

Told you so.

Duncan watches, dumbfounded.

DUNCAN

Are they looking at his hair?

STEVENSON

(V.O.)

I am prepared to wait for your answer until hell freezes over, if that is your decision.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

They were looking at his hair.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Mrs. Matters, talking in hushed tones, addresses the class.

MRS. MATTERS

Class, this is an historic moment. In a few hours, a fateful decision will be taken.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

As I sat in what could be my last history class ever, I thought about how much my life had changed in the past week. The red phone in my parents' bedroom that never rang had started a bizarre chain of events that led to my father appearing on television right next to Adlai Stevenson in the most ridiculous haircut the United Nations had ever witnessed.

MRS. MATTERS

Either the leaders of the Soviet Union will choose the wise course and turn their ships around or the world will face a war unlike anything mankind has ever seen before. I'm not a religious person, but I think we should all bow our heads and say a prayer for peace. "Our father, who art in heaven...."

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And in a few short hours, the world would come to an end and I would have sex for the first time, at least proving that listening to opera does not necessarily make you a homosexual.

(beat)

I decided right then I better wear my new undershorts.

EXT. HOTEL BELVEDERE - DAY

Duncan stands motionless in front of the hotel. He takes a deep breath.

MRS. MATTERS

(V.O.)

"...and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. For thine is the kingdom..."

He fishes in his pocket and pulls out an unlit pipe, which he sticks in his mouth. Trying to look grownup, he starts up the stairs of the hotel, a little wobbly.

INT. HOTEL BELVEDERE - DAY

Duncan cautiously approaches the desk, struggling to keep the pipe in his mouth. The Clerk is watching the news on tv.

DUNCAN

Excuse me...

The Clerk sees him.

CLERK

May I help you, sir.

Duncan gulps. He takes the pipe out of his mouth.

DUNCAN

(voice trembling)

Yes...uh...I was wondering...if I could maybe....have a...room.

The Clerk looks at him askance.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

This had to be the hardest thing I had ever done in my entire life. But I realized that if there was ever a moment for extraordinary courage, this was it.

CLERK

Certainly, sir. What was the name?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And as I was standing there I heard my mother's words echoing in my ears...

ANNE

(V.O.)

"Be strong, Duncan..."

DUNCAN

(paralyzed)

Uh.....name?

CLERK

Yes, sir.

SUSIE

(V.O.)

"Be strong, Duncan..."

DUNCAN

My name?

CLERK

Yes, sir.

DUNCAN

Uh.....Duncan. Mr. Duncan.

CLERK

Ah, Mr. Duncan. There's a young lady in Room 402 who told me to send you up when you arrived.

DUNCAN

402?

CLERK

Right.

DUNCAN

Oh, good. Yes, well. I should go on up then. Good.

Duncan backtracks toward the elevator. He punches the button and waits. The elevator opens. There is Miss Rosebrook, kissing a mailman.

She sees Duncan and does a double-take.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Duncan?

DUNCAN

(shocked)

Miss Rosebrook?

MISS ROSEBROOK

What are you doing here?

DUNCAN

Well...uh...I thought...maybe... I guess...

MISS ROSEBROOK

(fanning herself with a tissue)

It's been such a strange day, my head is just swimming. Everybody's going around glued to the radio waiting for some news. I just don't know what to think. I was going to have some iced tea, but then I thought I'd go for a walk. It's all so distressing.

DUNCAN

Yes, yes it is.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Nothing we can do about it, is there. Oh, well. Goodbye, Duncan.

DUNCAN

Bye, Miss Rosebrook.

She scurries into the lobby with the mailman right behind her.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

So there was a "beau" in her future
after all.

Duncan gets into the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Duncan punches the button for the fourth floor.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

How strangely appropriate that Miss
Rosebrook would be the last person I
ever see before I lose my virginity. It
was as if I was saying goodbye to my
past of Tennessee Williams and opera and
greeting a bright new future of tantric
sex and the end of the world.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Duncan hesitates, for a moment, hearing a bongo drum inside.
He takes a deep breath and knocks on the door of room 402.
The bongo drum stops.

SUSIE

(V.O.; sexy voice)

Come in.

Duncan opens the door and goes in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is filled with candles and draped in black and red.

The radio plays a mournful dirge. In the midst of this
funereal scene is Susie, a vision of teen angst, decked out
in a kind of black lingerie ensemble that a teenage girl
might find in a Sears catalogue.

DUNCAN

(astonished)

Susie?

SUSIE

Hiya, babe.

She sticks out her chest.

Duncan sticks out his chest.

DUNCAN

Uh...hi.

SUSIE

I got some Bull's Blood.

She points to a bottle on ice.

DUNCAN

Bull's Blood?

SUSIE

It's a drink. From Hungary.

DUNCAN

Oh.

Duncan watches as she sweeps across the room, trailing black lace.

SUSIE

Isn't this perfect?

DUNCAN

Yeah, really.

SUSIE

I like classical music, don't you?

DUNCAN

Oh, yeah. As long as it's not opera.

SUSIE

I thought you liked opera.

DUNCAN

Nah. Not any more.

SUSIE

Why don't you get comfortable while I pour us some Bull's Blood?

DUNCAN

Actually, I'm pretty comfortable.

SUSIE

No, I mean comfortable.

She gives him a sly smile.

DUNCAN

Oh, okay.

She starts to pour the bull's blood.

He awkwardly takes off his shirt and pants.

He stands in front of her in his new undershorts.

SUSIE

Nice underpants.

DUNCAN

Thanks. They're new.

She hands him the drink.

SUSIE

Why don't we go over to the bed and get started. I have everything ready to go.

Sprawling on the bed, she holds up a dog-eared book. Duncan freezes.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

What's wrong? Are you nervous?

DUNCAN

Me? No, not at all.

He stumbles over to the bed, nearly tripping on his pants. He lays down on the bed next to Susie.

SUSIE

First I'm supposed to chant for a minute and then we press our lips together and "divest ourselves entirely of our garments."

DUNCAN

All right. Fine. I can do that.

SUSIE

(chanting)

"Namingo rengo kyo, Namingo rengo kyo...."

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Here I was, Duncan Ambrose, on the very precipice of manhood. About to experience the ultimate pleasures of love with a woman that I loved more than any man has loved a woman in the history of the entire world. And yet it didn't feel real somehow.

SUSIE

Now we're supposed to press our lips together.

DUNCAN

Okay.

They kiss for a long beat.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I was having an out-of-body experience when I should have been having an in-body experience.

The classical music stops suddenly.

ANNOUNCER

(V.O.)

We're interrupting our concert with this bulletin that has just come over the wire.

Duncan pulls away a second.

SUSIE

Come on, babe. Don't stop.

ANNOUNCER

(V.O.)

The Associated Press is reporting that the Soviet vessels have turned back, honoring the U.S. quarantine.

SUSIE

Duncan...

DUNCAN

Okay.

Duncan goes back to kissing her.

ANNOUNCER

(V.O.)

The White House is waiting for details,
but it looks at this moment as if
nuclear war has been averted.

They kiss for another moment. Then Susie suddenly stops.

SUSIE

Wait a minute. Does this mean that
there's not going to be a nuclear war?

DUNCAN

Not necessarily. The White House is
waiting for details.

SUSIE

Are they saying the world is not going
to end?

DUNCAN

No, no. It's still very likely that it
will end.

(he kisses her again)

Very likely.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

By now I had overcome all my doubts and
was actually quite eager to move into
the actual sex part of the ritual.

He kisses her.

SUSIE

Duncan! Stop it!

She pushes him away.

DUNCAN

But what about "divesting all our
garments?"

SUSIE

This was supposed to be this incredibly
cosmic experience. And now it's totally
ruined.

She grabs her robe.

DUNCAN

I really think that report was a fake.
By the French or somebody.

SUSIE

The French?

She starts dressing hurriedly.

DUNCAN

I mean, Khrushchev is this very macho
guy. He's not going to back down just
like that.

She puts her sweater on backwards.

SUSIE

Duncan, I think we should just go back
to the way it was before. And if I hear
one word of this around school, I will
never speak to you again. Goodbye.

Susie storms out the door.

DUNCAN

Bye.

Duncan leans back in bed.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I knew I wasn't her first choice.

He flips on the radio.

Puccini's Tosca is playing.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

But I couldn't really blame Susie. I
mean it had been a very upsetting few
days for everybody. And then, after a
moment, this feeling swept over me.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Susie, her sweater on backwards and hair a mess, rushes past
Miss Rosebrook and the mailman making out.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

I realized that something inside me was even stronger than everything that was happening around me, if that makes any sense.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Lee bursts through the door and hugs Anne.

Music continues under.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

That even though my father had met with the President and stood next to Adlai Stevenson and my family was actually a coven of witches, I was still somehow me.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lee stands in front of the U-2 photo, pointer in hand.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

And even though I listened to opera and loved Tennessee Williams' plays, there was more to my life than that.

All the neighbors, as well as Mrs. Matters and Miss Rosebrook, gather around as Lee points to the photo.

They are all staring at Lee's hair.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's dark in the room, except for the moonlight streams in.

Duncan sits on his parents' bed.

Next to him, the red phone.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

In a strange way, I was disappointed that there wasn't a nuclear war. And I was glad Susie and I didn't have sex. Kind of weird, don't you think?

Duncan runs his fingers along the red phone.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I was thinking about how important this week is going to be later on in my life. But right now it just seems like a dream. You know how when you wake up and it all seems unreal. Wouldn't it be strange if the whole world was just a dream? I've been thinking about stuff like that a lot lately. Weird, huh?

FADE OUT.

THE END

FOGGY BOTTOM

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an original television pilot

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"The Virgin Missile Crisis"

TEASER

EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - DAY - 1962

Ivy-covered walls.

A BELL RINGS.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

It's October, 1962. I'm in the ninth grade at the Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C.

Gangly boys in sports coats and ties, girls in skirts and knee socks pour out of the building.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

It's a private school that used to be run by Quakers but was taken over by liberal humanists.

Duncan, 16, a mop of hair and half-tied tie, ambles down a walkway.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

They split off from the Quakers so now the school only has prayer meeting once a week and has actually admitted some very cute Jewish girls with big breasts.

Two pretty girls with big breasts round the corner and pass Duncan. Duncan stares at them.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

I'm lucky to be here. I was headed for juvenile delinquency in public school -- anyway that's what my mother thought when I skipped school with my friend Steve Webster, who ended up doing fifteen to twenty at Easton State for armed robbery.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Duncan's mother, Anne, answers the phone.

ANNE

Hello? Yes, this is Duncan's mother.

Her face darkens.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Well no, he isn't home sick today.

(beat)

But I sent him off to school this morning. He even had his lunch.

(beat)

There must be some mistake.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

So they suspended me from school for a week for not coming to school one day. This was supposed to be a valuable life lesson, although I still don't know what it was.

ANNE

All right. We'll come in tomorrow. Goodbye.

She hangs up the phone.

She lets out a huge wail, and begins to sob.

INT. ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Duncan sits quietly next to his mother, who is still sobbing.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

My mother begged the Assistant Principal to let me come in and clean toilets instead.

The assistant principal shakes his head.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My mother is a former Catholic who still believes in martyrdom and suffering even though we now go to a Unitarian Church which is full of cute formerly Catholic and Jewish girls with big breasts.

The Assistant Principal comforts Duncan's mother, who is sobbing even more now.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - PUBLIC SCHOOL - DAY

The yard is full of Kids.

One group of beefy, clean cut jocks wear blue athletic jackets.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My mother thought I hung out with a bad crowd because I belonged to a jacket club which was our version of a gang.

Another group of boys, this one more stylish, wear yellow jackets.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

We all wore different colored jackets.

Another group, this one ethnic, wears red.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

My friends and I couldn't get into any of the regular jacket clubs so we started our own....

Duncan and his friends, clearly outcasts and losers, wear candy-striped jackets.

MUSIC: "THE PEPPERMINT TWIST"

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

The Peppermint Jackets. We were losers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan, frustrated, in front of the mirror, tries over and over to tie his regimental tie, but gets all jumbled up.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My mother thought the next step was jail, so she overcame her liberal aversion to ruling class institutions and enrolled me in private school.

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Duncan sits, his tie knotted in a hopeless mangle, his homework spread before him, carefully arranging M&M's.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And my Dad made me spend every afternoon in his office during summer school to make sure I studied. He works for the State Department. Intelligence.

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - VENDING MACHINE ROOM - DAY

Duncan waits patiently behind a professorial guy in frayed tweed jacket who is trying to decide between "Twinkies" and "Yoohoos."

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Sounds glamorous, but it isn't really. Mostly a lot of tweedy academics smoking pipes and reading newspapers in Russian and writing reports that nobody reads.

Finally, Duncan points to the "Yoohoos" and the professor type nods appreciatively.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING

An empty hallway. Duncan plods down the hallway.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Mostly pretty boring. Until this week.

A phone rings somewhere. Duncan heads down the hall.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

Hear that? When my Dad got his new job, a bunch of workers in overalls came into my parents' bedroom and put in this red phone that is on a direct line to the White House....

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A red phone next to the bed rings.

Duncan enters.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

...so the Russians or the French or whoever couldn't listen in.

The phone RINGS again.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

But it never rang. Until now.

He stares at the phone.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The red phone is ringing.

Duncan stands in the doorway, staring at the phone.

ANNE

(O.C.)

What's that?

LEE

(O.C.)

Oh, no. It's the red phone.

Duncan's mother enters, wearing a slip.

The phone rings again. She stares at it.

ANNE

Should I answer it?

His father, Lee, enters from the bathroom, wearing boxer shorts, garters for his black socks and wingtip shoes. He has a very odd haircut, which is combed forward to a point in front.

LEE

No!

Lee rushes to the phone.

Duncan's sister Amy, a twelve-year old with a bouffant hairdo and white lipstick, appears at the bedroom door.

LEE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

Hello?

AMY

Is it the President?

Duncan looks at her like she's an idiot. Out of scene:

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DEN

A 45-rpm record spins on a portable turntable. Beatles' "Do You Want to Know a Secret" plays under.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My sister Amy isn't stupid. In fact, she's going to grow up to be a very successful and angry feminist professor of law specializing in women's contract law, women's criminal law and women's tax law.

Amy, wearing pedal pushers, lounges on the sofa, sipping a coke and talking on a princess phone.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

But right now she's in the middle of her stupid phase. Even so, I think she sneaks into my father's study at night and reads the New Republic.

Lee enters, gives her a withering glance.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

My father says that "Teenage girls should be given a pill to put them to sleep for six years and that would spare the world a lot of agony."

Lee mouths the words as Amy claps her hands over her ears.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

My sister never had very much sense of humor about my father and that's part of the reason why she's going to end up teaching feminist tax law. What the hell is "feminist tax law" anyway?

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan smirks at Amy.

DUNCAN

Of course it's not the President.

AMY

How do you know?

LEE
 (into phone)
 Yes, sir.

DUNCAN
 (to Amy)
 Because it's not the President, stupid!

AMY
 I am not stupid!

ANNE
 Shhhh! Kids, be quiet!

LEE
 (into phone)
 No, I didn't get a chance to read the memo, sir. But I'll look at it right away. Yes, sir. I will. Goodbye.

ANNE
 Who was that?

LEE
 (amazed)
 The President.

AMY
 (to Duncan)
 See!

DUNCAN
 (V.O.)
 This was defining moment for me. I thought the red phone might actually be a fake. But here was my father actually talking on the red phone to the President of the United States. The actual John F. Kennedy who lived with Jackie Kennedy and may have even seen her completely naked. I was beginning to see my father in an entirely new light.

ANNE
 What did he want?

LEE
 I can't discuss that.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

He couldn't even discuss his
conversation with the President.
It was that important.

LEE

I need an Old Fashioned.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DEN

Duncan's mother mixes a drink at the bar.

Duncan's father paces nervously.

Duncan and Amy watch.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

He always needs an Old Fashioned at
moments like this. And at most other
moments after five o'clock. Do you know
what's in an Old Fashioned? Gin, sugar
and bitters. You might as well drink
straight rubbing alcohol. He drinks two
of these before dinner and three more
before bed.

Duncan's father hovers over his mother as she mixes the
drink.

ANNE

Is everything alright?

LEE

It's fine, babe. Fine.

OUT OF SCENE

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

A serious, bespectacled SHRINK listens to an unseen patient
on the couch.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Actually, my father is an alcoholic but
I won't figure that out for about twenty
years and at least twenty-five thousand
dollars in therapy.

BACK TO SCENE

Anne hands Lee the drink.

ANNE
Here you are.

Duncan and Amy watch as Lee takes a big swig.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
Right now, I just think he really likes
Old Fashioneds.

AMY
Why did the President call you?

LEE
That's classified information,
sweetheart.

Another big swig.

AMY
Come on. Give us a hint!

LEE
If I gave you a hint, it wouldn't be
classified anymore, would it?

He checks his very weird haircut in the mirror.

LEE (CONT'D)
(cont.; to Anne)
You think I need a haircut, babe?

ANNE
You're seeing the President tomorrow,
aren't you?

LEE
I can't say. Classified.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
He is definitely seeing the President.

AMY
At the White House?

DUNCAN

No, at the Safeway.

AMY

Mom!

ANNE

Don't tease your sister.

DUNCAN

That's not teasing. That's sarcasm.

(V.O.)

No one in the family understands my sense of humor. Except my mother. But she's afraid to laugh because that would make other people upset. And my mother hates more than anything making anyone upset. Unless it's herself, and then she doesn't mind.

LEE

I think I'll just stop by the barbershop before they close. I'll be home in time for dinner. Bye.

ANNE

Bye.

They kiss.

He pats her butt.

ANNE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

Lee!

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She actually doesn't seem to mind when he does that.

LEE

Bye, kids.

KIDS

Bye.

LEE

And do your homework.

KIDS

We will.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan sits, bored, at his desk.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

We always do our homework. There's nothing else to do. We didn't get a TV until last year and therefore missed the entire Golden Age of television because my mother thought we might spend our time watching groundbreaking television instead of reading the classics.

Duncan stares out the window.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Even now we aren't allowed to watch "Perry Mason" because she thinks it's too violent. She doesn't realize it now but this will be a major handicap to me in my future career as a writer when the whole world becomes a huge visual circus and all the literary classics go right into the garbage can.

He picks up a basketball from the bed.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Duncan's mother frowns at him.

ANNE

Did you finish your homework?

DUNCAN

Yes, Mom.

ANNE

How about your extra reading?

DUNCAN

I did it. Now can I go outside?

ANNE

Did you practice the piano?

DUNCAN

No. But can I just go outside for half an hour?

ANNE

What for?

DUNCAN

I don't know. Shoot a few baskets.

ANNE

Why?

DUNCAN

Because I like to, Mom. I'm a kid. Kids like to play sometimes.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Or watch TV.

ANNE

Alright. Half an hour.

DUNCAN

Thanks.

ANNE

Then practice your piano.

DUNCAN

I will.

He flees out the door.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Duncan carefully lines up a shot at the hoop in his driveway.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Mostly I play by myself while the rest of the neighborhood kids are inside their houses watching "Perry Mason."

He bounces the basketball in a ritual, focusing his whole mind on the shot.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

And I make up games like if I hit ten baskets in a row then everyone in my family will disappear and I'll be assigned to a normal family with a big brother that likes to play basketball instead of future feminist tax lawyer who beats me at Monopoly and hearts.

He shoots and misses.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

But I never hit ten in a row.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Duncan, 8, dressed in his Roy Rogers pajamas, creeps down the half-lit stairway to the landing.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I used to imagine that my family were actually a coven of witches or a clandestine cell of aliens and that everyone else in the family belonged to but me.

Duncan strains to listen we pan down to....

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Duncan's mother, father, sister and even the family dog are all dressed as witches -- not Halloween, but something out of the Saturday night horror movies.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I would sit on the stairway landing trying to hear their conversations.

ANNE

Do you think he suspects anything?

LEE

No. How could he?

ANNE

I caught him snooping around the trap door to the torture chamber behind the furnace.

AMY

He'll never find it. He's too stupid!

They all laugh.

Duncan cringes.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

After awhile, I gave up on the whole thing and started wondering if maybe I was the alien.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan's father, dressed in boxer shorts, garters on his socks and wingtips, is carefully combing his hair.

Duncan is watching.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My father has a kind of modified J. Robert Oppenheimer haircut. It started out as a crew cut that grew in.

Duncan's father vigorously rubs Brylcream into his hair, then brushes it forward. He looks like a greasy Julius Caesar.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I never saw anyone else with a haircut. In about thirty years, PeeWee Herman will copy it and get caught masturbating in a movie theater. But right now, it's unique.

His father carefully combs his hair into a peak in the front.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(to his father)

So are you seeing the President today?

LEE
Can't tell you.

DUNCAN
Why not?

LEE
Classified.

DUNCAN
But I'm your son.

LEE
Still can't tell you.

DUNCAN
Because of national security?

LEE
Right.

DUNCAN
If you told me you were going to see the
President and somebody like the Russians
or the French found out then maybe they
could follow you and bomb the White
House or something?

LEE
Something like that.

DUNCAN
Okay. (beat) So you're not going to
see the President today?

LEE
Can't tell you.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
This was beginning to be fun.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(to his father)
Does Mom know?

LEE
Nope.

DUNCAN
You can't even tell her?

LEE

Nope.

DUNCAN

Then you are definitely going to see him.

LEE

Can't say.

Amy enters.

DUNCAN

Dad's going to see the President today.

AMY

Really, Dad?

DUNCAN

He can't tell you.

AMY

Why not? He told you.

DUNCAN

No he didn't.

AMY

Then how do you know?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She's cross-examining people already. Because he didn't tell me. Right, Dad?

LEE

No comment.

DUNCAN

See?

(V.O.)

This was really getting exciting. I always thought my father was this geeky guy with a weird haircut who liked Old Fashioneds. But now that he was meeting with the President and discussing classified information on the White House phone, I was starting to change my opinion.

DUNCAN (cont)

(to his father)

So what will you be talking about with
the President?

LEE

Nice try.

DUNCAN

Can I guess?

LEE

Sure, go ahead.

DUNCAN

So you are meeting with him.

LEE

I didn't say that. I said you can
guess.

DUNCAN

Okay. Berlin?
(no response)
Is it Berlin?

LEE

I said you can guess. I didn't say I
would answer.

DUNCAN

Korea? The Congo? The Middle East?
(no response)
Am I getting warmer?

LEE

Maybe.

DUNCAN

Maybe. Eastern Europe? Cuba?

Lee clears his throat.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(cont.)

What did that mean?

LEE

What?

DUNCAN

That. You cleared your throat when I said "Cuba."

LEE

I had something in my throat.

DUNCAN

And....?

LEE

And I'm late. Bye.

DUNCAN

It's Cuba, isn't it?

LEE

No comment.

He kisses Anne, pats her butt.

ANNE

Lee!

He exits.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I also think he likes it when she tells him to stop, even though she doesn't actually want to him to stop. Some kind of weird married ritual, I guess. And believe me, these people are weird.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Anne, upset, sits on a small ottoman.

Lee stands nearby.

ANNE

You've been home late every night this week. What's going on?

LEE

I'm afraid that's classified, dear.

ANNE

You're having an affair, aren't you?

LEE

No, of course not. Who would be interested in me?

ANNE

It's that Deirdre Henderson, isn't it?

LEE

That's ridiculous. Deirdre is my administrative assistant.

ANNE

And you're in love with her!

LEE

That's crazy. I'm not in love with anyone.

ANNE

Because she's young and attractive and intelligent.

LEE

She's forty-three and overweight.

ANNE

I knew I should have finished college.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Duncan walks past the den in his bathrobe.

LEE

(O.C.)

Honey...

ANNE

(O.C.)

Don't touch me!

Duncan freezes.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Uh-oh.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Duncan's mother is standing at the sink. She's been crying.

DUNCAN

(O.C.)

Mom? Mom?

Duncan, dressed for school, comes into the kitchen.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Mom?

ANNE

(her voice quivering)

Yes, Duncan.

He goes over to her.

DUNCAN

Are you okay?

ANNE

I'm fine.

DUNCAN

Then why are you crying?

ANNE

I'm fine. Really. It's nothing.

DUNCAN

Okay.

ANNE

I'm sorry, Duncan.

DUNCAN

That's okay.

ANNE

No, I shouldn't burden you with my problems. You have more important things to worry about.

DUNCAN

Like what?

ANNE

I don't know, but I'm sure you do.

Duncan opens the cupboard.

DUNCAN
Is there any cereal?

ANNE
(stricken)
Oh, no. I forgot. I'll go out right
now and get some more.

He opens the refrigerator.

DUNCAN
No, no. It's okay. I'll have a
leftover fish stick for breakfast.

He pulls out a crusty fish stick.

ANNE
Are you sure?

DUNCAN
Sure.

He takes a bite and winces.

ANNE
You're okay?

DUNCAN
I'm fine, Mom.

ANNE
Are you really, Duncan? Are you really
fine?

DUNCAN
Yeah, Mom. I'm fine.

ANNE
Good. Because I want you to be fine,
Duncan. More than anything else your
father....(chokes up)...and I....both
want you to be fine.

He takes another bite of the cold fish stick.

DUNCAN
Uh-huh.

ANNE

And we're glad you're fine. So when you tell us you're fine, you know, we feel good. Because more than anything else, we want you to be fine.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

We have these kinds of conversations a lot and I can never quite figure out what's she's talking about except there's this whole load of stuff going on at this entirely different level that I can't begin to understand. This will take me even longer to figure out in therapy than my father's alcoholism. But right now all I have is this kind of empty feeling in my stomach because my mother's unhappy. A lot. And there's nothing I can seem to do about it.

ANNE

I'm fine, Duncan. You don't have to worry about your father and me. Because we're fine. And, besides, you have a lot more important things to worry about.

He heads for the front door.

She follows.

DUNCAN

Okay, Mom. I guess I'll go off to school now.

ANNE

Oh, good. School. Yes. Of course. Go to school, Duncan. And remember, no matter what, be strong.

DUNCAN

Alright, Mom. Whatever you say. Bye.

ANNE

Bye, dear.

(mouthing the words)

"Be strong"

Duncan's shoulders slouch as he heads out the door.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

MRS. MATTERS, early 40s, dismisses the class.

Duncan starts to leave.

MRS. MATTERS

Duncan, would you see me after class,
please?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

My history teacher, Mrs. Matters. She's
very intelligent and kind and I actually
admire her a lot even though she is a
divorcee and is therefore either crazy
or a nymphomaniac.

Duncan sits down at her desk.

MRS. MATTERS

Duncan.

DUNCAN

Yes, Mrs. Matters?

MRS. MATTERS

Are you having trouble paying attention
in class?

DUNCAN

Me? No.

MRS. MATTERS

Because I noticed you were having
trouble paying attention.

DUNCAN

Not really.

MRS. MATTERS

You're not stupid, you know, Duncan.

DUNCAN

Who said I was stupid?

MRS. MATTERS

No one. But you could be doing much better in this class if you paid attention.

DUNCAN

I'll try, Mrs. Matters.

MRS. MATTERS

I'm sure your father expects a lot of you now that he has a such an important job at the State Department.

DUNCAN

What do you mean?

MRS. MATTERS

Well, your father has a very sensitive position in the administration and it wouldn't look very good if his son were not doing his very best in history class.

DUNCAN

Wait a second, Mrs. Matters. What are you saying?

MRS. MATTERS

He has to uphold his reputation. And so do you.

DUNCAN

I do?

MRS. MATTERS

(ignoring this)

I'm sure you're very proud of your father. He has a very important job. In fact, he could be meeting with the President right now.

DUNCAN

(amazed)

Who told you he was meeting with the President?

MRS. MATTERS

No one told me, Duncan. All I said was that he could be meeting with the President right now on some important issue of national security.

DUNCAN

Like what?

MRS. MATTERS

I don't know, for heaven's sake.

DUNCAN

Did someone tell you that my father was meeting with the President today?

MRS. MATTERS

No.

DUNCAN

Because if they did, it could be a very upsetting breach of national security. What if the Russians found out? Or the French?

MRS. MATTERS

The French?

(bell rings)

Maybe you should run along to your second period class, Duncan.

DUNCAN

Yes, ma'am.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

This was getting weird. How did she know my father was meeting with the President?

INT. SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM

An intense girl wearing a black turtleneck and beret is directing two other students in a drama scene.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

This is my girlfriend, Susie Grabill. She's two years older and we met in the drama club when she directed me in a very avant-garde production of "This

Property is Condemned" by Tennessee Williams, one of my all-time favorite writers.

SUSIE

(to the student actors)

No, no, no!

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

We love each other like no man and woman have ever loved each other in the history of the world. Although sometimes I wonder what exactly she sees in me.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Later I will realize in therapy that I was overly stimulated by my mother who didn't respect my personal boundaries and therefore I was likely to fall in love with anybody who even hinted they might take their clothes off in front of me.

SUSIE

(noticing him)

Hey, babe.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She's very avant-garde. I'm a lucky guy. I think.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(to Susie)

Hey, babe.

She comes over and gives him a kiss. The other students giggle.

SUSIE

Wanna go down to Georgetown tonight and hang out at the coffee house?

DUNCAN

Uh....sure.

SUSIE

I'll drive.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
She has a license.

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - STREET - NIGHT

An old, beatup VW bug sits in front of Duncan's house. The windows are all steamed up.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
She has this VW bug called Yagiv Kashpitsky, named after a character from "Crime and Punishment." At first I was worried about the possible Russian connection, but then I decided it was a Dostoevsky/Kafka thing rather than a Khrushchev/Gromyko thing.

INT. VW BUG - CONTINUOUS

Duncan and Susie in long, clutching embrace.

SUSIE
(squirming, in pain)
Ow!

DUNCAN
What's wrong?

SUSIE
The gearshift.

DUNCAN
Sorry. Kind of tight in here. You okay?

SUSIE
Did you ever wonder what it's like to be a cockroach?

DUNCAN
Uh...not really.

SUSIE
Trapped in this armor-plated body, scurrying around under the refrigerator waiting to be squished or even worse dying this suffocating death from chemical insecticide.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I didn't see exactly what this had to do with sex.

SUSIE

How long have we been out here?

DUNCAN

Two hours or so. Maybe I should go in. My Mom's probably worried.

SUSIE

Why? We're right outside.

DUNCAN

They don't know that.

SUSIE

Yeah, but I'm sure they're not worried.

DUNCAN

You don't know my Mom. Sometimes she cries and gets weird.

SUSIE

Oh. Well, if you've gotta go...

She leans over and kiss him a long kiss.

Endless, in fact.

Duncan starts to get out.

DUNCAN

Goodnight.

SUSIE

Goodnight.

They kiss again.

DUNCAN

Until....tomorrow.

Another long kiss.

SUSIE

Bye.

DUNCAN

Bye.

He gets out, then leans in the window.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(cont.)

Bye.

SUSIE

Bye.

DUNCAN

Bye.

They kiss again. She drives off while they're kissing.

He watches her VW disappear into the night.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT - A MOMENT LATER

Duncan enters dreamily. The light is on.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Boy, this love stuff is really great.
I'm not going to get to sleep for around
twenty-six hours. It's like my whole
body is tingling, every nerve is...

Duncan's reverie is interrupted by...

LEE

Duncan...!

DUNCAN

Oh hi Dad.

LEE

Where the hell have you been?

His mother rushes in. She's obviously been crying.

ANNE

(hugging him)

Oh, Duncan....Thank God!

LEE

Your mother's been worried sick.

ANNE

Where have you been, honey?

DUNCAN

I was out front.

ANNE

Out front of the house?

LEE

This whole time?

DUNCAN

Yeah. I was out front.

ANNE

By yourself?

DUNCAN

No. With Susie.

ANNE

Why didn't you ask her in?

DUNCAN

We were busy.

He gives his father an explanatory shrug. His mother doesn't get it.

ANNE

What were you doing that whole time?

DUNCAN

Talking about Kafka.

ANNE

Oh. Well we were worried sick.

LEE

We certainly were, young man.

(to Anne)

Honey, why don't you go along to bed while I have a word or two with Duncan.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Uh-oh.

ANNE

All right, dear.

(to Duncan)

I'm glad you're okay, sweetheart.

Because you know your father and I worry about you.

DUNCAN

I know, Mom.

ANNE

Goodnight.

They watch her go upstairs.

LEE

(sotto to Duncan)

Let's go into the study.

Duncan follows his father into the study.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

This was definitely not a good sign.
Whenever he took me into the study it was going to be one of those man-to-man conversations...

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Lee closes the door, then solemnly puts his hand on Duncan's shoulder.

LEE

Son, I wanted to talk to you about your mother.

DUNCAN

What about her?

LEE

She's been under a lot of pressure lately....and she's crazy.

DUNCAN

Mom is crazy?

LEE

Absolutely. I've been trying to get her to go to a psychiatrist for years but she refuses.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I have to admit that I kind of agreed with him. I'm not an expert, but I don't think it's normal to spend the morning crying over the kitchen sink.

LEE

So it's up to you kids not to make it worse.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Here comes the corker.

LEE

Just for the time being, I don't want you to do anything that would upset her. Be on your best behavior. Okay, chief? Otherwise God knows what could happen.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

The message was clear. Clean up your act or your mother's going to slit her wrist. Her death will be on your conscience. And it will become this curse that will haunt our family for generations...

LEE

Can I count on you, chief?

DUNCAN

Uh....sure, Dad.

LEE

Good. Now let's go to bed.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lee heads down the hallway.

Duncan trudges behind him.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

"Ask not what you can do for your country..."

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(afterthought)
Hey, Dad...How was your meeting with the
President? Dad?

Ice tinkles in a glass as the bedroom door closes.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Lee is standing in front of a huge blow-up of a u-2
reconnaissance photo.

DUNCAN
(V.O.)
I'll find out later, much later, that my
father had been chosen that very day to
explain reconnaissance photos taken over
Cuba by a U-2 spy plane.

Several officials are gathered around.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(V.O.; cont.)
In the photos were these little white
boxes that turned to be sheds housing
nuclear missiles.

Seated in a rocking chair, with only the back of his head
visible, is the President.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(V.O.; cont.)
So there was my father making history.
The only problem was that everybody in
the room kept staring at my father's
hair instead of the little white boxes.
Even the President.

Lee notices this, and self-consciously runs his hand through
his hair. It's greasy from Brylcreem. Everyone winces.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
(V.O.; cont.)
This was before the Beatles got big.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Lee is standing at the mirror, obsessively combing his hair.
Duncan enters.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

By this time, even I knew something was up, because my father had been coming home very late and the news had been talking about strange goings-on at the White House.

He watches his father for a minute.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

It's Berlin, isn't it?

His father manages a half-smile.

LEE

No comment.

DUNCAN

Is there going to be a war or something?

LEE

(hesitating)

I hope not, son.

Lee puts his hand gently on Duncan's shoulder.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Something about the way he said that made me very scared. All of sudden it wasn't so cool anymore that my father with the weird haircut who drank too many Old Fashioneds was meeting with the President. It was becoming all very Dr. Stangelove.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. DUNCAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Duncan lies on his bed, staring at the ceiling.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

It was clear to me now that something pretty serious was happening, but I didn't know what.

Duncan flips on the record player.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

At times like this, when I get really upset, I like to listen to opera. Specifically Puccini's Tosca. I admit this is pretty weird for a regular American kid, even one whose Dad is in the State Department.

Duncan pretends to be conducting the orchestra.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

And for awhile I was real worried that this meant I was homosexual which really freaked me out. I couldn't quite understand why if I was gay I would spend around eighteen and a half hours a day thinking about girls' breasts, but I decided the opera thing was the determining factor.

Duncan starts singing along, loud.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

So I made up my mind right then to enlist in the Army like my father and grandfather. It would be a hard road, painful and dangerous, but this was the only way to overcome...

Amy enters, scowling.

AMY

Would you please turn that thing down?!

DUNCAN

(sheepish)

Okay.

He turns it down.

AMY

Why do you like that stuff anyway?

He gives her a hateful stare.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Anne is at the sink, crying. Duncan enters.

DUNCAN

Mom?

She quickly dries her eyes.

ANNE

Yes, dear?

DUNCAN

I was thinking about maybe joining the Army. You know, when I graduate. What do you think?

ANNE

Why would you want to do that?

DUNCAN

I can't say.

ANNE

Why not?

DUNCAN

It's sort of personal.

ANNE

You can tell me. I'm your mother.

DUNCAN

Well, you know how sometimes when I get really upset I like to listen to opera. Do you think that's weird?

ANNE

No, sweetheart not at all.

DUNCAN

Do you know any regular guys that listen to opera?

ANNE

Sure. How about your Uncle Frank?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

That did it. Uncle Frank lives in Greenwich Village and wears a beret. I might as well just kill myself.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(mumbling)

Thanks, Mom.

ANNE

Certainly, sweetheart.

Duncan starts to leave, then stops.

DUNCAN

Hey, Mom?

ANNE

Yes, dear?

DUNCAN

Where's Dad? He hasn't been home in like three days.

Her lower lip starts to quiver. She starts to cry.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I guess that was the wrong thing to ask.

INT. SCHOOL - BASEMENT

Mrs. Matters, wearing a hardhat with a radiation symbol on it, checks off a list of students as they file into the bomb shelter. Duncan stands in line with Susie.

SUSIE

Man, I hate these bomb shelter drills. So Orwellian.

DUNCAN

Can I ask you something?

SUSIE

Sure, babe.

DUNCAN

Would you break up with me if I joined the Army?

SUSIE

Jeez, why would you want to join the Army? They're all fascists.

DUNCAN

I don't know, I figure it would be kind of cool. I could go to war and get material and write about it. You know, like Hemingway.

SUSIE

Cool, babe. The only thing is that I heard there's a lot of homosexuals in the Army.

DUNCAN

(dumbfounded)

Where did you hear that?

SUSIE

Artie at the coffee house. When he was in the Army, some sergeant made a pass at him.

DUNCAN

Really? A sergeant?

MRS. MATTERS

Hurry up you two.

They hustle inside as Mrs.Matters bolts the door.

DUNCAN

Mrs. Matters?

MRS. MATTERS

Yes, Duncan?

DUNCAN

Do you think we'd actually be safe in here if there was a nuclear attack? I

mean, this school was built way before they had nuclear weapons.

MRS. MATTERS

It's only a drill, Duncan. Nothing to get excited about.

DUNCAN

I'm not getting excited.

A big, jockey kid, Ralph, comes over to Duncan.

RALPH

Hey, Dunc.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Ralph Peterson. Asswipe. His father was Undersecretary of Treasury in the Eisenhower administration, which must have given him the idea that he could pick on anybody he wanted to. Please don't call me "Dunc", Ralph.

Ralph sneers at him.

RALPH

Why not?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I'm really starting to hate Republicans.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

My name is Duncan.

RALPH

(nodding toward Susie across the room)

Is that your girlfriend?

DUNCAN

Yeah.

RALPH

Isn't she a little weird?

DUNCAN

No.

RALPH

How come she dresses in black all the time?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

A Republican and a philistine.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Because she's an artist, asshole.

RALPH

Hey, don't call me an asshole, "Dunc."

He pushes Duncan down.

DUNCAN

Hey!

Duncan dives at Ralph's legs. They start wrestling.

MRS. MATTERS

Boys, boys!

Susie leans over to a girlfriend.

SUSIE

Guys are so immature.

She blows a big bubble of gum. Mrs. Matters pulls the fighters apart.

MRS. MATTERS

BOYS!!!

INT. SCHOOL - LATIN CLASS - DAY

Duncan and Ralph sit in detention, glaring at each other.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I'd never had detention before. This was a gross injustice that was clearly the result of going to a school that admitted aggressive, card-carrying Republicans.

Miss Rosebrook, the elderly maiden Latin teacher, has her eye on her charges and her ear on her favorite radio program, which features ballroom dancing music.

On the board are declensions of several Latin verbs that Duncan and Ralph are supposed to be copying.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Miss Rosebrook, my Latin teacher. She reminds me of those delicate women in Tennessee Williams' plays who constantly fan themselves and look like they are about to faint.

Miss Rosebrook fans herself with a wadded-up tissue. Duncan listens to the music for a moment, staring into space.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Duncan?

DUNCAN

Yes, Miss Rosebrook?

MISS ROSEBROOK

Are you working on your declensions?

DUNCAN

Yes, Miss Rosebrook.

Ralph silently mimics "Yes, Miss Rosebrook"

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

Republican sense of humor.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Duncan?

DUNCAN

Yes, Miss Rosebrook.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Why is an "ir" verb like an old maid?

She starts to giggle uncontrollably. Duncan looks at her, bewildered.

DUNCAN

I don't know.

MISS ROSEBROOK

(giggling)

No "bo" in the future. Get it? Stabo, stabas, stabat. No beau? Old maid?

She giggles on, furiously fanning herself.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I really like Miss Rosebrook a lot.
Which only confirmed my suspicion that
there was something very wrong with me.

The music on the radio stops abruptly.

ANNOUNCER

The following is a bulletin just issued
by the White House. The President will
address the nation tonight at seven p.m.
Eastern time. That's in a little more
than three hours. There's been a great
deal of speculation in the nation's
capital lately about some sort of major
foreign policy crisis, and the
President's address is another
indication...

The voice fades away as Duncan goes into himself.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

I couldn't believe what I was hearing.
Here I was sitting in detention hall
with the world on the brink of global
war while my father was probably at this
very moment being transported to an
underground bunker three miles below
Storm King mountain....

MISS ROSEBROOK

Duncan!

DUNCAN

Yes, Miss Rosebrook?

MISS ROSEBROOK

(pointing at the board)

Declensions, if you please.

Duncan slumps in his chair, picks up his pen and starts
writing.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Duncan, his mother and his sister gather around to watch the
President's address to the nation.

PRESIDENT

This secret, swift and extraordinary buildup of Communist missiles - in an area well known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States..

AMY

We're all gonna die, aren't we Mom?

ANNE

Of course not, dear.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Mom was doing her best under the circumstances, but I could see the old lower lip starting to quiver.

AMY

Really? Because I read the Russians have about ten trillion kilotons of nuclear weapons which are enough to blow up the entire world fourteen ti...

DUNCAN

(to Amy)

You're crazy.

AMY

I am not. I read it in the New Republic.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

See! I knew she was reading the New Republic!

ANNE

Duncan, it's not nice to call people "crazy." Especially members of your own family.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She should hear what Dad says about her.

PRESIDENT

Therefore, the United States will undertake the following strict measures...

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

But as I listened to the President that night, I thought that this was probably it. I'd never get to be Hemingway or go to Paris or even get to drive a car. And that my mother probably was crazy and that my sister was always going to be smarter than me, no matter what I said.

PRESIDENT

First, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba....

He glances over to the living room bar and several empty cocktail glasses.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And I thought about my Dad. And whether I'd grow up to be like him. Or whether I'd get a chance to grow up at all...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

A loud, window-rattling boom as a military jet screams low across the sky above.

Duncan's mother is saying goodbye to Duncan at the doorstep.

ANNE

Did you get all your homework done?

DUNCAN

Yeah. I don't know why I bothered though, if the world's going to get blown up.

ANNE

Duncan, listen to me.

She grabs him by the shoulders.

DUNCAN

What?

ANNE

Your job is to do your homework, whether or not the world is going to be blown up.

DUNCAN

Why?

ANNE

Because we all have our jobs to do. And I'm sure your father would want us to do our jobs...

(her voice chokes)

...wherever he is.

(drying her eyes)

Now you go off to school.

DUNCAN

Okay.

ANNE

And remember, no matter what happens. Be strong.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Duncan and Susie sit outside drinking coffee.

SUSIE

I figure we have like thirty-six hours
and the whole thing goes up in smoke.

DUNCAN

I don't think you should be so
pessimistic. You know, my Dad's one of
people that's working on this.

SUSIE

Is that supposed to make me feel better?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

She has a point.

SUSIE

I want you to listen to something.

She picks up a book and takes a deep breath.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

"Some say the world will end in fire,
some say in ice. But what I've tasted
of desire, I hold with those who favor
fire."

DUNCAN

Robert Frost.

SUSIE

Isn't that incredible? He knew. And he
read at Kennedy's inauguration.

DUNCAN

Yeah, but he didn't read that. Susie,
you shouldn't get so worked up about
this.

SUSIE

The world is ending, Duncan. Our puny,
insignificant lives are going to be
over, along with rest of the whole

miserable human race. And you don't want me to get worked up?

DUNCAN

I was only trying to be helpful.

SUSIE

Listen, Duncan, if you want to be helpful, there is something you can do.

DUNCAN

What?

SUSIE

Sex.

DUNCAN

(startled)

What do you mean?

SUSIE

I don't want to die a virgin.

DUNCAN

You're a virgin?

SUSIE

Yeah. Aren't you?

DUNCAN

Well, yeah, I guess so. But I thought, I don't know, you seemed so experienced.

SUSIE

Yeah well I was saving it. I don't know what for, the way things are working out. So that's where you come in. I've been reading the "Tibetan Book of the Dead" lately, and there's this tantric cleansing ritual with candles and drums we can perform that would be perfect...

As Susie chatters on, Duncan stares at her in disbelief.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Here I was with the girl who I loved more than anyone has ever loved another person and who I dreamed about going to bed with since the first time we kissed in Yagiv Kaspitsky. But something

about this whole Tibetan ritual thing
was making me feel a little weird.

SUSIE

My little brother has a bongo drum we
can borrow. And we can rent a hotel
room at the Belvedere. I have a
girlfriend who went there once and they
never checked I.D....

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And I started to get this very strange
feeling, like I wasn't completely sure I
wanted to do this.

SUSIE

So we could meet there, say, about 4:30.
And the whole ritual should take about
an hour and a half or so...

Duncan is staring straight ahead.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

Duncan? Is something wrong?

DUNCAN

No. I guess I have to think about it.

SUSIE

What do you mean think about it? Are
you saying you don't want to do this?

DUNCAN

No, no. It's just that I thought maybe
for the first time we would go to Paris
or somewhere. Like Hemingway.

SUSIE

There isn't time to go to Paris.

DUNCAN

Or maybe New York City. Or even camping
in the mountains.

SUSIE

Duncan, we are talking about a spiritual journey into the realm of the dead spirits. And you want to go camping?

DUNCAN

Okay, okay. I just need some time to think about it.

SUSIE

Tomorrow. 4:30. The Belvedere. I'm counting on you. You've got to be strong, Duncan.

She gets up abruptly and leaves.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Where have I heard that before?

INT. BUS - DAY

Duncan, on his way home from school, sits in his usual spot in the back of the public bus. Several passengers have worried looks on their faces as they read the newspapers. An elderly bag lady hums softly to herself.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Susie did have a point. If we were all going to die, we should at least have a chance to have sex once in our lives, even if the whole Tibetan thing sounded a little weird. I mean, we're all going to be dead anyway.

The elderly lady gives him a toothless grin, followed by a wink.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Duncan shuffles across the empty golf course -- his shortcut home.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And, besides, where did I come up with the whole Hemingway/Paris fantasy? Here's a real, live girl that I love more than anyone has ever loved another person in the history of the world and

I'm not sure I want to go to bed with her just because she's into some bizarre Tibetan ritual? What am I, crazy?

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Duncan skips a stone across a pond on the golf course.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Then I suddenly had a terrible thought. What if I didn't want to go to bed with Susie because I was gay? What if even though I thought about breasts all day long, reading Hemingway and Tennessee Williams and listening to the opera had actually turned me queer? I decided I better call Susie right away.

He takes off at a run.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Anne and Amy are glued to the television set.

INSERT TV

Adlai Stevenson is addressing the U.N. Security council.

STEVENSON

And we have photographic evidence right here in black and white of medium and intermediate range missiles.

Behind Stevenson, a large blow-up of a U-2 photo.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan enters.

ANNE

Duncan, honey, look at this.

DUNCAN

I can't. I gotta make a phone call.

AMY

Look, it's Dad.

DUNCAN
(staring at TV)
What?

INSERT TV

Behind Stevenson, next to the photo, pointer in hand, is Lee.

Stevenson turns to the Soviet delegate, Ambassador Zorin.

STEVENSON
All right, sir, now let me ask you one question.

BACK TO SCENE

Duncan squints at the screen.

DUNCAN
You're crazy, that's not Dad.

ANNE
Duncan, don't call people "crazy."

AMY
It is, too. Look at his hair.

INSERT TV

As Stevenson speaks, the camera zooms in for a moment on Lee and the photo.

STEVENSON
Do you deny that the USSR has placed medium and intermediate range missiles in Cuba?

DUNCAN
Oh, my God. Dad.

Several U.N. Delegates are looking quizzically at Lee's hair.

STEVENSON
Yes or no -- don't wait for the translation -- yes or no?

BACK TO SCENE

Amy smirks at Duncan.

AMY

Told you so.

Duncan watches, dumbfounded.

DUNCAN

Are they looking at his hair?

STEVENSON

(V.O.)

I am prepared to wait for your answer until hell freezes over, if that is your decision.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

They were looking at his hair.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Mrs. Matters, talking in hushed tones, addresses the class.

MRS. MATTERS

Class, this is an historic moment. In a few hours, a fateful decision will be taken.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

As I sat in what could be my last history class ever, I thought about how much my life had changed in the past week. The red phone in my parents' bedroom that never rang had started a bizarre chain of events that led to my father appearing on television right next to Adlai Stevenson in the most ridiculous haircut the United Nations had ever witnessed.

MRS. MATTERS

Either the leaders of the Soviet Union will choose the wise course and turn their ships around or the world will face a war unlike anything mankind has ever seen before. I'm not a religious person, but I think we should all bow our heads and say a prayer for peace. "Our father, who art in heaven...."

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And in a few short hours, the world would come to an end and I would have sex for the first time, at least proving that listening to opera does not necessarily make you a homosexual.

(beat)

I decided right then I better wear my new undershorts.

EXT. HOTEL BELVEDERE - DAY

Duncan stands motionless in front of the hotel. He takes a deep breath.

MRS. MATTERS

(V.O.)

"...and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. For thine is the kingdom..."

He fishes in his pocket and pulls out an unlit pipe, which he sticks in his mouth. Trying to look grownup, he starts up the stairs of the hotel, a little wobbly.

INT. HOTEL BELVEDERE - DAY

Duncan cautiously approaches the desk, struggling to keep the pipe in his mouth. The Clerk is watching the news on tv.

DUNCAN

Excuse me...

The Clerk sees him.

CLERK

May I help you, sir.

Duncan gulps. He takes the pipe out of his mouth.

DUNCAN

(voice trembling)

Yes...uh...I was wondering...if I could maybe....have a...room.

The Clerk looks at him askance.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

This had to be the hardest thing I had ever done in my entire life. But I realized that if there was ever a moment for extraordinary courage, this was it.

CLERK

Certainly, sir. What was the name?

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

And as I was standing there I heard my mother's words echoing in my ears...

ANNE

(V.O.)

"Be strong, Duncan..."

DUNCAN

(paralyzed)

Uh.....name?

CLERK

Yes, sir.

SUSIE

(V.O.)

"Be strong, Duncan..."

DUNCAN

My name?

CLERK

Yes, sir.

DUNCAN

Uh.....Duncan. Mr. Duncan.

CLERK

Ah, Mr. Duncan. There's a young lady in Room 402 who told me to send you up when you arrived.

DUNCAN

402?

CLERK

Right.

DUNCAN

Oh, good. Yes, well. I should go on up then. Good.

Duncan backtracks toward the elevator. He punches the button and waits. The elevator opens. There is Miss Rosebrook, kissing a mailman.

She sees Duncan and does a double-take.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Duncan?

DUNCAN

(shocked)

Miss Rosebrook?

MISS ROSEBROOK

What are you doing here?

DUNCAN

Well...uh...I thought...maybe... I guess...

MISS ROSEBROOK

(fanning herself with a tissue)

It's been such a strange day, my head is just swimming. Everybody's going around glued to the radio waiting for some news. I just don't know what to think. I was going to have some iced tea, but then I thought I'd go for a walk. It's all so distressing.

DUNCAN

Yes, yes it is.

MISS ROSEBROOK

Nothing we can do about it, is there. Oh, well. Goodbye, Duncan.

DUNCAN

Bye, Miss Rosebrook.

She scurries into the lobby with the mailman right behind her.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

So there was a "beau" in her future
after all.

Duncan gets into the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Duncan punches the button for the fourth floor.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

How strangely appropriate that Miss
Rosebrook would be the last person I
ever see before I lose my virginity. It
was as if I was saying goodbye to my
past of Tennessee Williams and opera and
greeting a bright new future of tantric
sex and the end of the world.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Duncan hesitates, for a moment, hearing a bongo drum inside.
He takes a deep breath and knocks on the door of room 402.
The bongo drum stops.

SUSIE

(V.O.; sexy voice)

Come in.

Duncan opens the door and goes in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is filled with candles and draped in black and red.

The radio plays a mournful dirge. In the midst of this
funereal scene is Susie, a vision of teen angst, decked out
in a kind of black lingerie ensemble that a teenage girl
might find in a Sears catalogue.

DUNCAN

(astonished)

Susie?

SUSIE

Hiya, babe.

She sticks out her chest.

Duncan sticks out his chest.

DUNCAN

Uh...hi.

SUSIE

I got some Bull's Blood.

She points to a bottle on ice.

DUNCAN

Bull's Blood?

SUSIE

It's a drink. From Hungary.

DUNCAN

Oh.

Duncan watches as she sweeps across the room, trailing black lace.

SUSIE

Isn't this perfect?

DUNCAN

Yeah, really.

SUSIE

I like classical music, don't you?

DUNCAN

Oh, yeah. As long as it's not opera.

SUSIE

I thought you liked opera.

DUNCAN

Nah. Not any more.

SUSIE

Why don't you get comfortable while I pour us some Bull's Blood?

DUNCAN

Actually, I'm pretty comfortable.

SUSIE

No, I mean comfortable.

She gives him a sly smile.

DUNCAN

Oh, okay.

She starts to pour the bull's blood.

He awkwardly takes off his shirt and pants.

He stands in front of her in his new undershorts.

SUSIE

Nice underpants.

DUNCAN

Thanks. They're new.

She hands him the drink.

SUSIE

Why don't we go over to the bed and get started. I have everything ready to go.

Sprawling on the bed, she holds up a dog-eared book. Duncan freezes.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

(cont.)

What's wrong? Are you nervous?

DUNCAN

Me? No, not at all.

He stumbles over to the bed, nearly tripping on his pants. He lays down on the bed next to Susie.

SUSIE

First I'm supposed to chant for a minute and then we press our lips together and "divest ourselves entirely of our garments."

DUNCAN

All right. Fine. I can do that.

SUSIE

(chanting)

"Namingo rengo kyo, Namingo rengo kyo...."

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

Here I was, Duncan Ambrose, on the very precipice of manhood. About to experience the ultimate pleasures of love with a woman that I loved more than any man has loved a woman in the history of the entire world. And yet it didn't feel real somehow.

SUSIE

Now we're supposed to press our lips together.

DUNCAN

Okay.

They kiss for a long beat.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I was having an out-of-body experience when I should have been having an in-body experience.

The classical music stops suddenly.

ANNOUNCER

(V.O.)

We're interrupting our concert with this bulletin that has just come over the wire.

Duncan pulls away a second.

SUSIE

Come on, babe. Don't stop.

ANNOUNCER

(V.O.)

The Associated Press is reporting that the Soviet vessels have turned back, honoring the U.S. quarantine.

SUSIE

Duncan...

DUNCAN

Okay.

Duncan goes back to kissing her.

ANNOUNCER

(V.O.)

The White House is waiting for details,
but it looks at this moment as if
nuclear war has been averted.

They kiss for another moment. Then Susie suddenly stops.

SUSIE

Wait a minute. Does this mean that
there's not going to be a nuclear war?

DUNCAN

Not necessarily. The White House is
waiting for details.

SUSIE

Are they saying the world is not going
to end?

DUNCAN

No, no. It's still very likely that it
will end.

(he kisses her again)

Very likely.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

By now I had overcome all my doubts and
was actually quite eager to move into
the actual sex part of the ritual.

He kisses her.

SUSIE

Duncan! Stop it!

She pushes him away.

DUNCAN

But what about "divesting all our
garments?"

SUSIE

This was supposed to be this incredibly
cosmic experience. And now it's totally
ruined.

She grabs her robe.

DUNCAN

I really think that report was a fake.
By the French or somebody.

SUSIE

The French?

She starts dressing hurriedly.

DUNCAN

I mean, Khrushchev is this very macho
guy. He's not going to back down just
like that.

She puts her sweater on backwards.

SUSIE

Duncan, I think we should just go back
to the way it was before. And if I hear
one word of this around school, I will
never speak to you again. Goodbye.

Susie storms out the door.

DUNCAN

Bye.

Duncan leans back in bed.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I knew I wasn't her first choice.

He flips on the radio.

Puccini's Tosca is playing.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.; cont.)

But I couldn't really blame Susie. I
mean it had been a very upsetting few
days for everybody. And then, after a
moment, this feeling swept over me.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Susie, her sweater on backwards and hair a mess, rushes past
Miss Rosebrook and the mailman making out.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

I realized that something inside me was even stronger than everything that was happening around me, if that makes any sense.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Lee bursts through the door and hugs Anne.

Music continues under.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

That even though my father had met with the President and stood next to Adlai Stevenson and my family was actually a coven of witches, I was still somehow me.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lee stands in front of the U-2 photo, pointer in hand.

DUNCAN

(V.O.; cont.)

And even though I listened to opera and loved Tennessee Williams' plays, there was more to my life than that.

All the neighbors, as well as Mrs. Matters and Miss Rosebrook, gather around as Lee points to the photo.

They are all staring at Lee's hair.

INT. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's dark in the room, except for the moonlight streams in.

Duncan sits on his parents' bed.

Next to him, the red phone.

DUNCAN

(V.O.)

In a strange way, I was disappointed that there wasn't a nuclear war. And I was glad Susie and I didn't have sex. Kind of weird, don't you think?

Duncan runs his fingers along the red phone.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

I was thinking about how important this week is going to be later on in my life. But right now it just seems like a dream. You know how when you wake up and it all seems unreal. Wouldn't it be strange if the whole world was just a dream? I've been thinking about stuff like that a lot lately. Weird, huh?

FADE OUT.

THE END