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The child star syndrome : a screenplay
THE CHILD STAR SYNDROME: A SCREENPLAY

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THE CHILD STAR SYNDROME

A SCREENPLAY
BY
BOB COUSINS

January 19, 2000
FADE IN:

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN - DAY

The screen is blank. CLICK. The television turns on:

EXT. BONDS MANSION - DAY

The palatial Bonds mansion in Beverly Hills. "$STOCKS & BOND$" appears on the screen. CHEESY THEME MUSIC.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

It is 1985. The house is a monument to the excess of the 80s. The dining room has an obscenely huge oak dining table.

The Bonds family sits around this table, the usual telegenic family. The mother and the two teenage daughters are blond and beautiful. The father and the teenage son are handsome. There is one empty chair.

UNCLE FRANK, late 40s. The family's portly English butler.

UNCLE FRANK
(yelling)
Master Bonds! Time for dinner.


BREANNA
Hurry up, nerd-boy!

CANNED LAUGHTER.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

The sweeping grand staircase is the centerpiece of the house.

JACK STRATTEN, 30. Former child star. He's short, chunky and his childhood cuteness has long since abandoned him. His thinning hair is spiked, long in the back.

CANNED APPLAUSE AND CHEERS.

He has the mannerisms, the syntax and the wardrobe of a 12 year old boy. He slides down the wide marbled bannister with practiced ease and disembarks with a slight grimace.

UNCLE FRANK (O.S.)
Buddy! You're late for dinner!

Jack runs toward the dining room.

JACK
It's not my fault!

CANNED LAUGHTER.
INT. DINING ROOM - DAY
The family eats dinner. Uncle Frank hovers nearby.

**UNCLE FRANK**
(to Jack)
I'll bring Master Bonds dessert if he promises to eat his veggies.

Jack does his trademark Buddy Bonds "sign": he makes a gun with his thumb and forefinger. Then the famous catch phrase:

**JACK**
It's a deal!

APPLAUSE AND CHEERING.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT
The plush bathroom features two sinks set in a large marbled vanity. The wall above this is covered by mirrors. Jack, wearing action figure pyjamas, brushes his teeth.

The center mirror slides open, framing Breanna who brushes her teeth in the adjoining bathroom.

**JACK**
Hey Breanna, do you want to sneak out to the arcade with me?

**BREANNA**
Like Mom and Dad will let us go.

Jack reaches down and pulls open the large laundry chute.

**JACK**
The Budster is the man with a plan: I'm going to slide down the laundry chute into the basement.

CHUCKLES.

**BREANNA**
And land in someone's dirty underwear? Grotty to the max!

CANNED LAUGHTER.

She slides the mirror closed. Jack sees his reflection. He angles the hinged end mirrors to produce infinite reflections. Jack appears fractured and not quite whole.

**JACK**
You're not Buddy. Who are you?
INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

Present day Los Angeles. Jack is lying on a couch.

DR. RICHARD JENKINS, late 40s and bald. A shallow man with big ambitions. He sits behind his desk, pretending to write on a notepad. An old-fashioned alarm clock is on his desk.

JACK
I'm still having that same dream. It's always the same episode every night. It's driving me crazy.

DR. JENKINS
I don't see anything symbolic about it, Jack.

JACK
I'm an adult trapped in a child's body. That has to mean something.

DR. JENKINS
Silly me, I forgot that you have the MD in psychiatry and I'm the fucked up ex child star.

JACK
I'm not getting any better.

DR. JENKINS
Because of the Child Star Syndrome, your life's a mess. You drink too much, snort coke, smoke crack, get arrested and you screw around on your girlfriend.

JACK
(shrugs)
I'm not a well adjusted ex child star but I play one on television.

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN - DAY

"COOPERSTOWN" appears on the screen followed by this montage:

A clip of Buddy Bonds, aged 12/Jack, in handcuffs, with the police/Jack making notes in a large lecture hall/Jack flashing a "Private Eye" badge/Jack jumping into a '65 red Mustang convertible, license plate: "COOP"/Jack, with a stunning blond, sitting at a bar. They share a laugh with the goofy looking bartender.

ACTION MUSIC plays over this sequence along with a VOICE OVER.
ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (V.O.)

CREATED BY JACK STRATTEN, TRISH METAIXA & HEYWOOD HINCKLE JR. Appears on the screen. We move into the television.

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY (PILOT)

"ACT I" appears on the screen. Jack Stratten plays JIM COOPER.

JIM COOPER
Hi! My name's Jim Cooper.

OTHERS
Hi Jim!

JIM COOPER
And I'm an ex child star.

The OTHERS are ex child stars. GRATUITOUS EX CHILD STAR CAMEOS: a pint sized African-American, a slightly chubby, freckled face red head and a formerly slim heart throb.

JIM COOPER
(continuing)
I was on a television series called "Stocks and Bonds" which ran from 1983 to 1989. And everyone thinks I'm Buddy Bonds.

Murmurs of agreement.

JIM COOPER
(continuing)
At times, I think I'm Buddy Bonds.

Laughter from the group.

DR. LAURA NIGHTRAIN, late 20s and gorgeous.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
Are you still in the business, Jim?

JIM COOPER
No. After three failed series, I realized the entertainment world only sees me as Buddy Bonds.
EX CHILD STAR 1
They only see you as a gratuitous cameo role during "Sweeps Week."

EX CHILD STAR 2
Using nostalgia as an inexpensive and demeaning way to boost ratings.

EX CHILD STAR 3
As ex child stars, we see ourselves reduced to obscure pop culture references.

JIM COOPER
I'm not Buddy Bonds. I never was.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
These are excellent insights.

JIM COOPER
I'm a law school graduate who works as a private investigator.

EX CHILD STAR 1
"Buddy Bonds P.I."

EX CHILD STAR 2
Sounds like you have a new series.

Laughter from everyone.

JIM COOPER
No thanks. I'm through with that self destructive merry-go-round.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
Acceptance is a key step, Jim.

Jim checks his watch and stands up.

JIM COOPER
Thank you, Dr. Nightrain. And thank you special people for your understanding and support.

EX CHILD STAR 3
We're always here for you, Jim.

JIM COOPER
I have a friend who needs me. A former co-star who's in denial about her own Child Star Syndrome.
EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM, 30, tall and thin with a large nose. He wears a security guard's uniform. He enters the building's revolving doors as Jim exits the building through them.

He looks at Jim and he stops the door. After an awkward choreograph, he ends up back on the outside with Jim.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
You're Buddy Bonds!

JIM COOPER
I'm Jim Cooper but I played Buddy Bonds on television.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
What do I know? I'm just a dumb security guard but you're Mr. Bigshot Sitcom Star. Is that it?

JIM COOPER
I'm sorry if I offended you.

Jim extends his hand but Chuck ignores it.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
It should have been me!

JIM COOPER
(uneasy)
Sure, whatever you say. I must be going, I have an appointment.

Jim walks toward his car. Chuck makes the "sign".

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
(to himself)
With destiny, Mr. Bonds.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jim parks in front of a dilapidated apartment building.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Jim scans the occupant's list. He points to "2G Donna Marx".

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

A seedy, darkened hallway. Jim knocks on door "2G".
INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Dark, dank and musty. Dissected by sunlight from a broken blind. Garbage, drug paraphernalia and empty bottles.

Passed out on the hide-a-bed: DONNA MARX, late 20s. She is an attractive girl beneath the black bags and the stringy hair.

JIM COOPER
Donna. It's me, Buddy.

Donna is wasted. She squints at him and strokes his face.

DONNA
I love you, Buddy. Always have, always will.

She smiles and nods off. He gently kisses her on the cheek. He clears a space on the coffee table and puts some money on it. He takes out a business card and he writes on the back.

CLOSE ON: "I care about you and I want to help. Buddy."

INT. CAR - DAY

Jim exits the building and walks to his car. He climbs into his convertible and DRIVES off.

We see this from the POV of someone who is across the street. We look over to the apartment. The car door opens.

INT. THE COOP - DAY

An old style drinking establishment with a long wooden bar and glass covered beer coolers behind it.

Jim sits at the bar, drinking coffee. The bartender is SHERMAN OAKS, mid 20s. He has unkept hair and a goatee.

SHERMAN OAKS
(sighs)
I need a new agent. My acting career is over before it started.

JIM COOPER
Did you ever think it might not be your agent, but your name?

SHERMAN OAKS
What's wrong with Sherman Oaks?

JIM COOPER
It sounds like a punchline on "Match Game".
SHERMAN OAKS
When I first broke into the biz,
my agent told me to change my name.

JIM COOPER
What's wrong with your real name?

SHERMAN OAKS
It's Jody Foster. With a "y".

JIM COOPER
Now that sounds like a punchline.

AMBER SPARKS, early 30 and a stunning blond, sits at the bar
next to Jim. She smiles a sea of white.

AMBER
Interested in checking my legal
briefs, Coop?

JIM COOPER
Isn't there a statute of
limitations on that old gag?

They share a laugh and then a kiss.

SHERMAN OAKS
(rolls his eyes)
Geez Amber, I'm going to gag on
all this cornball legal humor.

AMBER
Don't you mean "acorn" ball legal
humor, Mr. Oaks?

Jim and Amber laugh again.

SHERMAN OAKS
No drinks for you. Counsellor.

As he pours her a glass of wine, he looks up at the entrance.

SHERMAN OAKS
(continuing)
Red alert. Excited oldsters
approaching. I repeat, red alert.

A RETIRED COUPLE, in garish attire, enter the bar. They wave
excitedly at Jim and hurry to the bar.

OLD LADY
I know you! You're that cute
little boy with all those dimples.
OLD MAN
You're that guy. What's your name?

JIM COOPER
Could you be somewhat less specific? I'm experiencing informational overload.

Amber hits his arm and gives him a dirty look.

OLD LADY
(grabs Jim's cheek)
You're on that television show. It's so funny. And those dimples!

OLD MAN
(cocks his finger)
Remember this? "It's a deal"!

OLD LADY
He's little Barney Bonds.

EXT. THE COOP - DUSK

Jim and the oldsters stand in front of the stylized bar logo painted on the front window. Jim wears a big, phony grin.

FLASH! Amber takes their picture.

OLD MAN
We took a guided tour of the studio and we saw your old house.

OLD LADY
They told us it's the most popular attraction. The Japanese love it.

JIM COOPER
I never really lived there. It was the set where they filmed our show.

OLD LADY
(giggles)
I saw your bathroom.

JIM COOPER
(still smiling)
That's great. Isn't it, Amber?

Approaching figures. TED SHANKS, gruff and 50ish, from the old school. JANICE CHU, polite and 30ish, from the new school. Both are detectives in the L.A.P.D.
SHANKS
Can I have your autograph, Buddy?

INT. THE COOP - NIGHT

Amber, Jim and the detectives sit in a booth next to the window. Under the painted logo.

AMBER
What is the L.A.P.D. doing here, Shanks? Planting evidence or assaulting suspects?

JANICE
We wish to question Mr. Cooper.

JIM COOPER
Sorry to disappoint you, Janice. My days as a delinquent ex child star are behind me.

JANICE
Donna Marx is dead.

SHANKS
But actor-boy already knew that.

EXT. THE COOP - NIGHT

A small but determined band of paparazzi and television reporters are setting up shop for the big show.

INT. THE COOP - NIGHT

Light, from these media sources, illuminates the booth.

JIM COOPER
Are you responsible for this freak show outside my establishment?

SHANKS
I thought you television types craved publicity?

Sherman brings them coffee. He looks out the window.

SHERMAN OAKS
It's a good thing you don't park out front, Amber. It's a zoo.

JANICE
We received a phone tip about an hour ago saying Donna was murdered.
JIM COOPER
I can't believe she's dead. I saw her this afternoon.

AMBER
As your attorney, I advise you to not say anything.

JIM COOPER
I've got nothing to hide, Amber.

SHANKS
Except the truth.

Janice hands Jim a photograph.

CLOSE ON the picture of Deanna's apartment. "I killed Breanna Bonds" is written in red on the wall.

JANICE (V.O.)
Someone shot her in the head and then wrote this with her blood.

PULL BACK. Jim is shaken but Amber comforts him.

AMBER
It might be the work of a demented fan. Not unheard of in L.A.

JANICE
We're also looking at drugs. Donna ran with a rather eclectic crowd.

SHANKS
Maybe it was a jealous ex lover who left his calling card.

Shanks holds up an evidence bag with Jim's card in it.

JIM COOPER
I was trying to help her.

SHANKS
A bullet to the brain is some help.

Jim grabs Shanks. The men are pulled apart by the women.

AMBER
That's enough of this third rate innuendo. The interview is over.
JANICE
This must be awkward for you, Mr. Cooper. I'm sorry. But trust me, we want to find her killer.

SHANKS
We'll be back, television-boy.

INT. THE COOP - NIGHT
Sherman is closing up. Jim and Amber sit at the bar.

JIM COOPER
I feel like a drink. And I don't want to feel like that tonight.

AMBER
It's not your fault she died.

JIM COOPER
I could have saved her.

AMBER
Only Donna could have done that but she chose not to.

JIM COOPER
Growing up like we did, under those conditions, a real bond—pardon the pun—develops. I'm going to find the sick son of a bitch that did this to her.

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY
We see "The Coop" for what it really is: a set. The crew is present as this previous scene is shot.

HEYWOOD HINCKLE JR. (WOODY), early 40s. Tries to look like Francis Ford Coppola. He speaks with a faux English accent.

WOODY
Cut! That line isn't in the script.

JACK
It's called ad libbing. You used to encourage that. Remember?

WOODY
Back when I thought you could act.

JACK
Fuck you, you fucking...fuck!
Jack storms off the set.

WOODY
Witty fellow. And articulate.

DIANE MILLER is the actor who plays Amber.

DIANE
Get off his case, Woody. This re-shoot has him on edge.

WOODY
His whole life is on edge. No thanks to his conjugal co-star.

DIANE
We're not sleeping together.

WOODY
Diane, you've been doing it since "Stocks & Bonds".

Jack returns with TRISH METAXIA, late 20s. She plays Donna Marx. She is in her street clothes.

JACK
Trish is co-creator and co-writer. She okayed my ad lib in rehearsal.

WOODY
Then it isn't an ad lib. It's a script revision. As the director, I have final authority over that.

TRISH
(points at Diane)
If you can call that acting, then we can call this an ad lib. Agreed?

Diane takes a step toward Trish.

DIANE
What's wrong with my acting?

TRISH
Nothing, as long as you believe a real lawyer could function with your limited I.Q.

DIANE
I'm not the one who got dumped as Amber Sparks. You went from being the lead actress to being a corpse.
TRISH
At least, it's your dead body that I'm playing.

DIANE
It's not me. Is it, Jack?

JACK
This is only a television show. Her character's name is Donna Marx not Diane Miller. Like me, I play Jim Cooper. Not Jack Stratten.

WOODY
It's a fictional spin on reality. Much like Jack's life.

Jack takes a step toward Woody.

JACK
You've always been jealous of me.

WOODY
Of what? You're a former child star who's best acting these days takes place in front of a judge.

Diane pushes past Trish and confronts Woody.

DIANE
Jack isn't responsible for his legal problems because he suffers from the Child Star Syndrome. That's what the jury said.

JACK
You're lucky my therapist has taught me to control my temper.

WOODY
It's too bad he can't teach you how to act.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

JUDY is late 40s and pleasantly plump. Her desk sits between the doors to the two different offices behind her. There are separate waiting areas for each office.

A man and a woman are sitting in the right waiting area.

Jack and Trish approach the desk. Off the set and without make up, Jack looks older and more haggard.
JUDY
If it isn't our favorite patient and famous star, Jack Stratten! It's so good to see you again.

TRISH
I have an appointment with Dr. Almonzo, at 3 o'clock.

JUDY
That's strange, I always know when you're coming. Did you have an appointment today?

JACK
No, but I really need to see Dr. Jenkins. It's been a bad day.

JUDY
Poor Jack, that's so terrible. Have a seat and I'll try to work you in right away. Poor Jack.

Jack sits down in the waiting area to the left. Trish is still standing at the desk.

TRISH
Is there a problem, here?

JUDY
(winks at her)
No problems. We'll squeeze Jack in.

Trish points to the appointment calender on the desk.

TRISH
My name is Trish Metaxia. Unlike Jack, I have an appointment.

JUDY
Dr. Almonzo is currently engaged with official police business. Take a seat, Miss Manners.

Trish sits down next to Jack.

JUDY
(continuing)
This area is for Dr. Jenkins' patients only. You belong on Dr. Almonzo's side of the room.
INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

Jack is on the couch, the Doctor is pretends to make notes.

   DR. JENKINS
   What's the reason for your visit today, Jack? Do you need some more
   clean urine for your drug tests?

   JACK
   I know what you're going to say, Doc. But getting high is the only
   way I can deal with this pilot.

   DR. JENKINS
   How many times have I told you?

   JACK
   I know, but it's the strain of
   having to play myself in the pilot.

   DR. JENKINS
   Call me, Richie.

We move through the wall to the next room:

INT. ALMONZOS OFFICE - DAY

DR. CONSUELA ALMONZO is in her late 30s. She sits on an old
sofa talking to a fidgety man. LEMUEL HOFER, late 20s. Slow.

   DR. ALMONZO
   Do you know why the police brought
   you here, Lemuel?

   LEMUEL
   Buddy Bonds and me are friends.

   DR. ALMONZO
   How long have you known him?

   LEMUEL
   Since we were kids.

   DR. ALMONZO
   You realize that Buddy Bonds is a
   character on a television show?

   LEMUEL
   Of course, he's on TV. That's how
   I found his house.

   DR. ALMONZO
   You know that he isn't real.
What are you talking about? When I turn on the TV, he's right there in front of me. That's real.

We move back through the wall to other therapist.

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

DR. JENKINS
Aside from the drugs, the drinking and the infidelities, you're making excellent progress.

JACK
But it doesn't feel like progress.

The alarm clock RINGS. Richie opens a desk drawer and turns on a hidden tape recorder. He pulls out a new notebook, "Chapter Nine" stamped on the cover.

DR. JENKINS
Your time is up, Jack. It's my time, now.

JACK
Already? But I don't know what to do about Trish and Diane.

DR. JENKINS
(he makes the "sign") Remember, "It's a deal".

He laughs uproariously and Jack sits up.

JACK
This stuff is for your textbook on the Child Star Syndrome?

DR. JENKINS
Yes, and everything you say is in the strictest confidence, Mr. "X".
(chuckles)
Tell me about the time you and Diane videotaped yourselves.

JACK
I was 15 and we snuck back on the set—How did you know about that?

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Lemuel sits next to Trish. She checks her watch and stares over at Judy. She goes back to reading her "Reader's Digest".
18.

Fuming. Lemuel is reading the same magazine but a "TV Guide" is hidden inside his copy. He keeps staring at Trish.

LEMU,E
Are you here for a court ordered assessment, too?

INT. ALMONZOS OFFICE - DAY

ALICE SPANNER, early 40s and one of the few African American female detectives in the L.A.P.D. STEVE DELPHI, late 30s and one of the few openly gay men.

STEVE
He's charged with criminal trespass and stalking Mr. Hinckle.

ALICE
We need to know if Lemuel has the mental faculties to form intent.

DR. ALMONZO
He can't distinguish between fact and fantasy. He has problems with consensual reality.

ALICE
Is this another one of your fancy, made up, "syndromes" that allows a criminal to walk free?

DR. ALMONZO
In his current mental state, Lemuel believes something is more real because he sees it's on television. If you allow me to develop the metaphor, Lemuel Hofer is not plugged into reality.

ALICE
Is this condition treatable?

DR. ALMONZO
I've had some success with similar cases. It involves intensive group therapy and counselling.

Steve and Alice both rise.

STEVE
Thank for your time, Doctor. But we have to return Lemuel to "The Twilight Zone".
INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

Richie is falling off his chair with laughter and tears stream down his cheek.

DR. JENKINS
Remember the episode when Buddy had his date with Mary Lou Retton?

JACK
I felt her up in rehearsal. Little titties, but firm. Nice.

INT. ALMONZOS OFFICE - DAY

The Doctor pours tea for Trish. They sit down on the couch.

TRISH
Your information on consensual reality helped with the script.

DR. ALMONZO
Good. How is the pilot going?

TRISH
Excellent. There's been a few minor changes. Like replacing me with one of Jack's girlfriends.

Tears of anger run down Trish's face.

DR. ALMONZO
You're smart and attractive, why do you stay with Jack?

TRISH
I have my reasons.

DR. ALMONZO
I hope they're damn good ones.

TRISH
They are.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Jack and Judy. Jack checks his watch impatiently.

JACK
Is Trish still in there? I'm always waiting for that broad.
EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

An extravagant abode in Beverly Hills. It is a doppelganger for the Bonds mansion on TV. Jack walks up the stone steps.

An old, beat up car passes behind him on the street and HONKS. Lemuel sticks his head out the window.

LEMUÉL
Hey, Buddy! It's me. It's me.

Jack arrives at the massive front doors, puffing. He RINGS the doorbell. REPEATEDLY. The door opens. DAWN WAVERLY, mid 30s, strikingly attractive. Due in part, to plastic surgery.

DAWN
What the fuck do you want?

JACK
Are you still mad about my autobiography? We printed a retraction. It's not even my fault. I didn't write it.

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

HEYWOOD HINCKLE is in his late 60's. He has an obvious rug, big "Moe Greene" glasses, gold chains and a big cigar.

Dawn lights a cigarette and sets the pack on the wet bar which is situated against one wall of the large living room.

DAWN
I'm leaving, Hey. He better not be here when I get back.

HEYWOOD HINCKLE
You can't order Heywood Hinckle around in his own house! If I want Jackie to stay, he stays.

DAWN
Half of this is my house, now. Make sure he stays in your half.

She gives Jack "the finger" and leaves.

HEYWOOD HINCKLE
(yells after her)
Bitch!

DAWN (O.S.)
Thanks for the seven lines of dialogue, asshole.
(yells at her)
Blame Trish. She wrote it.

Heywood Hinckle
Get us a drink, Jackie.

Jack pours a double for the producer and half a glass for himself. He sees the pack of cigarettes on the bar, looks around, and puts them in his pocket.

They both recline on some expensive furniture.

JACK
I want "Cooperstown". I know he's your son, but Woody's ruining it.

Heywood Hinckle
He said the same thing about you.

JACK
Please, this pilot is my last shot.

Heywood Hinckle
I hate this fucking "Cooperstown". You belong in a sitcom. You're Buddy Bonds, not Tom Sellick.

JACK
I'm an actor.

Heywood Hinckle
You're a television personality.

Jack stands and SMASHES his glass against the marbled wall.

JACK
Give me the goddam show or I'll sue you for my residuals!

Heywood Hinckle
I've had a lousy week. Some weirdo breaks in looking for Buddy Bonds. Dawn's upset and I'm worried.

JACK
Some wacko's stalking me?

Heywood Hinckle
He's not stalking you. It's my house he's after. He thinks it's the Bonds mansion. Like on TV.
JACK
How can you stalk a house?

HEYWOOD HINCKLE
They arrested him. Crazy world.
(pause)
No more talk about lawsuits. Ok?

JACK
But you screwed me on the residuals for "Stocks & Bonds".

Hinckle stands up and crosses over to Jack.

HEYWOOD HINCKLE
I give you whatever you want! I treat you better than my own son. How many times have I kept you out of jail?

JACK
You're filthy rich because of me. I made "Stocks & Bonds" a hit. I was the star. Me, Buddy Bonds!

HEYWOOD HINCKLE
You're no Buddy Morton!

JACK
Buddy who?

HEYWOOD HINCKLE
I have a tape that could destroy your sorry career.

They stand toe to toe.

JACK
What tape?

HEYWOOD HINCKLE
If you ever mention the residuals again, I'll phone that muckraker, Eddie Esposito. After he sees my tape, you'll be kaput!

JACK
Old man, I know a lot of scary people. For a couple of "eightballs", they'd do a Charlie Manson on you and the bimbo.

HEYWOOD HINCKLE
Get out of my house!
JACK
Don't you mean Dawn's house?

EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
Jack walks down the steps and Hinckle is at the front door.

JACK
(yelling)
Fuck you! Fuck you!

HEYWOOD HINCKLE
Fuck you! Fuck you!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT
Diane and Jack are having sex. She's on top, eyes closed, riding him hard as she reaches orgasm.

DIANE
I'm fucking Buddy Bonds. I'm fucking Buddy Bonds.

Shortly after. They are both in bed smoking a crack pipe.

JACK
What's wrong with our relationship?

DIANE
Nothing. We have a chemistry.

JACK
We can't stand to be together or apart. It's always been that way.

DIANE
We make a good couple on television. That's why Heywood replaced Trish with me.

JACK
But we're living in the real world.

DIANE
Who's to say?

INT. TAXI - NIGHT
Jack is in the back seat. He is "fried" an fascinated by the large roll of fat on the taxi driver's neck.

The TAXI DRIVER looks at Jack in the rear view mirror.
TAXI DRIVER
You're that guy. Ain't ya?

JACK
Could you be a little more specif— no wait, could you be a little less spec— no wait. Fuck off.

TAXI DRIVER
You're nothing but a washed up ex child star. You'll end up behind the wheel of a cab.

JACK
Not with my driving record.

INT. JACKS HOUSE - NIGHT
Jack stumbles through his tiny house with a bottle of whiskey.

JACK
Trish? Are you home?

He enters the bathroom and urinates in the direction of the toilet while drinking from the fifth.

He staggers to the living room. After a few tries, he manages to operate the answering machine. BEEP. CLINK.

METALLIC VOICE
You have four messages. Four. Message four.

A pause, then Trish yelling over the LOUD MUSIC.

TRISH (V.O.)
We're still waiting for you, Jack.

JACK
Whatever.

He disconnects the phone and falls toward the couch. He turns on the television and lights up a joint.

He passes out as an INFOMERCIAL plays.

Trish enters the living room. He wakes and squints into the darkness. TELEVISION SOUNDS.

JACK
(continuing)
Diane? Is that you?
Daylight and Jack is still asleep. Trish walks in, wrapped in a towel. The television catches her eye.

TRISH
You're in big shit now, Jack.

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN - DAY
Paramedics load a covered body into an ambulance. Police and media surround the front of the Hinckle mansion. It is night.

A generic NEWS ANCHOR is heard over the news clip.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
Hinckle was most famous for his Reagan era sitcom "Stocks & Bonds" which launched the career of troubled ex child star Jack Stratten. He rocketed to stardom playing the precocious Buddy Bonds.

INT. JACKS HOUSE - DAY
Jack is smoking and using the remote. CLICK.

EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - DAY
A generic NEWS REPORTER is outside the house.

NEWS REPORTER 1
Police will not confirm or deny rumors that ex child star Jack Stratten was seen here last night.

CLICK. Different channel, different talking head, same locale.

NEWS REPORTER 2
Hinckle was found shot to death by his wife, Dawn Waverly, who played oldest daughter Britney Bonds. (points behind) This house literally served as the model for the Bonds mansion.

CLICK. Dawn, make up intact, addresses the media.

DAWN (crying)
He was the kindest, gentlest man. We had nothing but love and respect for each other. And love.
EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY (VIDEO TAPE)

A run down section of Los Angeles. Jack emerges from the store carrying a loaf of bread and a can of beans. He looks grubby, fat and unkept. His eyes are red cinders.

Approaching him is EDDY ESPOSITO, late 40s, chubby with bullet proof hair and an annoying, recognizable voice. He carries a microphone and directs the camera crew.

EDDY
This is Celebrity Tracker Eddy Esposito. Look who's hit the skids. It's ex child star, Jack Stratten. Little Buddy Bonds has grown up and out. Way out.

JACK
Get the BEEP away from me, you BEEPING piece of BEEP!

Jack attacks Eddy and hammers on the gossip maven with the can of beans. The camera records this from an odd angle because the operator is now in the middle of the fight.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
Stratten was charged with attempted murder for this vicious attack but he made legal history.

EXT. COURT HOUSE - DAY

Jack stands next to Dr. Jenkins, who relishes the attention from the media throng.

DR. JENKINS
Jack's acquittal, due to the Child Star Syndrome, is an important first step in his recovery.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Jack smokes as he conducts a one-on-one interview with a CELEBRITY JOURNALIST. The stylized "STOCKS & BONDS" logo is on the monitor behind them.

CELEBRITY JOURNALIST
Jack, you are known for your many unrepentant brushes with the law. Including 3 arrests for felony drunk driving. Any regrets?

JACK
I hated that bannister slide.
CELEBRITY JOURNALIST
I don't think I'm following you.

JACK
On the show, I always had to slide down the BLEEPING stairs.

CELEBRITY JOURNALIST
How was that a problem?

JACK
When I hit the curve near the top, it crushed my nuts -- you know -- my testicles. It was like getting hit in the balls, everytime.
(shrugs and exhales)
Showbiz. What are you gonna do?

EXT. JACKS HOUSE - DAY

Jack stands on the sidewalk in front of his ridiculously tiny house. He wears shades and a hat. He looks across the street.

Eddy Esposito, a prominent curved scar on his forehead, waves at Jack from the other side of the residential street.

JACK
Stay away from me, Esposito. I have a restraining order.

EDDY
This is a 100 feet. But you have to back up another 50. I have my own restraining order for 150 feet.

JACK
Against me?

EDDY
That disorder makes you a menace.

Jack pulls out his cellular phone.

JACK
It's a syndrome. This is harassment, I'm calling the cops.

EDDY
Go ahead. They're looking for you. They want to know about last night.

Jack puts his phone away.
JACK
I'm not talking to you.

EDDY
Why did you kill Heywood?

JACK
I didn't do it. I loved Heywood. He was like a father to me.

EDDY
My sources tell me Hinckle had a tape that could ruin you.

JACK
What's on this tape?

EDDY
That sounds like a motive to me.

JACK
Woody's your source, isn't he? He wants me out of the picture so he can steal "Cooperstown". Bastard.

A car pulls up in front of Jack. KEVIN SMIENK, mid 30s and handsome, rushes out. He looks over at Eddy.

KEVIN
We have a restraining order against you, scumbag.

EDDY
This is touching, big brother. Brandon Bonds to the rescue.

KEVIN
I'm just Kevin Smienk. Agent. My acting days are over, asshole.

EDDY
If only Jack were as honest.

INT. KEVINS CAR - DAY

Jack still wears his disguise.

JACK
What could be on this tape?

KEVIN
There is no tape. Heywood was screwing with your head because you brought up the residuals.
JACK
Eddy knew about this tape.

KEVIN
Don't listen to him. He's poison.
So is Heywood, I'm glad he's dead.

JACK
He was like our father!

KEVIN
The Godfather, you mean. What
about his partner? Charlie Cole is
a fucking pedophile.

JACK
Charlie has his problems, sure.
But that's not Heywood fault.

KEVIN
They're both a couple of snakes.
Years ago, Charlie got caught
molesting a kid and Heywood
covered for him by bribing the
victim and framing an innocent man.

JACK
That's just a rumor.

KEVIN
Media time. Get your head down.

EXT. STUDIO GATE - DAY

Kevin's car arrives at the entrance to the lot. The media are
everywhere. So are curious onlookers, Lemuel is one of these.

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

The set for "The Coop". The crew is readying for the morning
shoot as Jack and Kevin enter.

JACK
I can't believe Woody wants to
shoot. His father's still warm.

KEVIN
Maybe Woody killed Heywood. He has
everything to gain from his death.

JACK
Including, "Cooperstown".

Trish walks up to them.
The disguise worked, we managed to avoid the hordes of media.

But not the police.

"ACT II" appears on the screen. Jim Cooper is sitting on the sundeck when Dawn Waverly arrives. He stands up and hugs her.

You look fantastic, Dawn.

They are drinking coffee and staring out at the ocean.

I haven't seen poor Donna for years. Her life was a terrible tragedy. She was always so needy.

But you've adjusted quite well to life after the series.

I was older, more grounded, when I started playing Britney Bonds. Life away from television suits me fine. How are you doing, Jim?

You're the only person from the show who remembers my real name.

A computer laden environment with a stylized, "SMIENK SOFTWARE" logo on the wall.

Jim and Kevin Smienk sit at a large conference table.

I think the last time I saw Donna was that stupid made-for-cable movie in the early 90s.

"A Stocks & Bonds Christmas".

They both laugh.
KEVIN
I'm surprised you even remember shooting that turkey. You were pretty messed up back then.

JIM COOPER
I was a walking pharmacy.

KEVIN
And now?

JIM COOPER
Clean and sober. Thanks to the program and to Amber.

INT. CAR - DAY
From the driver's side, we watch as Jim leaves the building.

EXT. STUDIO GATE - DUSK
Jim's car pulls into the studio lot.

INT. DERWOODS OFFICE - DUSK
Jim looks at the many publicity pictures, from TV series past, that line the walls. With him is DERWOOD DUFFY, late 50s, tall, tanned, with capped teeth and silver hair.

DERWOOD
Losing Donna's been tough on me. She's like one of my own children. All of you are.

JIM COOPER
You can't blame yourself.

DERWOOD
I tried everything for her: the clinics, the rehabs. In the end, I couldn't save her.

JIM COOPER
She couldn't save herself.

DERWOOD
I can't help but think her death is another Derwood Duffy Production. Like "Stocks & Bonds" without a laugh track.

JIM COOPER
You're not like that. I owe my sobriety to you, my whole life.
The both sit down at Derwood's desk. Jim toys with an Emmy.

DERWOOD
I only wish Donna could say that. Who could do such a horrible thing?

JIM COOPER
The police don't know. I wonder why "Breanna Bonds" not "Donna Marx" was written on the wall?

DERWOOD
That's weird. You think it's someone in the business?

JIM COOPER
I have a feeling this is more like a crazed fan or a psycho stalker.

DERWOOD
That reminds me, I got a strange phone call the other day. This guy says he's working on an "80s Retro" special. He wants to know if I still have the pilot for "Bonding in Beverly Hills".

JIM COOPER
"Bonding in Beverly Hills"?

DERWOOD
(laughs)
It was an earlier, beta version of "Stocks & Bonds". I retooled it much like Roddenberry did with the original pilot for "Star Trek".

JIM COOPER
Why don't I remember any of this?

DERWOOD
Because you weren't in it. That was one of its biggest flaws.

JIM COOPER
Do you have a copy of this pilot?

DERWOOD
There's one around here, somewhere. I'll try to find it.

JIM COOPER
This could be our lucky break.
EXT. STUDIO LOT - NIGHT

From across the street, we see Jack exit the Derwood's office. Walking towards his car, he cautiously looks about. He gets in and DRIVES off.

We WALK across the lot, a pistol in our gloved hand. A dead security guard lies on the pavement where we stood.

INT. DERWOODS OFFICE - NIGHT

We see Derwood behind his desk. The handgun, at the end of our extended arm, looms large in his face.

From Derwood's POV, we see Chuck Cunningham aiming the gun.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
Remember me, Derwood?

INT. THE COOP - NIGHT

Jim and Sherman are locking up, turning off lights as they move toward the front doors.

SIRENS and the SCREECHING of car tires. Doors SLAMMING. Bright light blinds them both.

SHANKS (O.S.)
You can't stay out of the spotlight. Can you, thespian?

EXT. THE COOP - NIGHT

Police and the media crowd the entrance to the bar. The detectives handcuff Jim and Sherman.

SHANKS
You're under arrest for the murder of Derwood Duffy.

JIM COOPER
Woody? Woody's dead?

SHANKS
Still playing the innocent? Get a new script, actor-boy.

SHERMAN OAKS
What about me? I didn't do anything. Why am I under arrest?

Janice holds up Sherman's drivers license.
JANICE
I've seen some phony looking ID's in my time but Sherman Oaks?

SHANKS
What's your real name, weird beard?

SHERMAN OAKS
Jody Foster. With a "y".

SHANKS
A wise guy.

JANICE
Book'em, Shanks.

INT. DERWOODS OFFICE - NIGHT

Police technicians work over the crime scene. The pictures have been ripped from the wall. In their place, written in Derwood's blood, "The Creator is destroyed".

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Jim, wearing a suit, is at the defendant's table. Amber is standing before the JUDGE, a Japanese American with a beard.

AMBER
My client is at no risk of flight, Your Honor. His celebrity status makes that an impossibility.

The PROSECUTOR, late 20s, tough but gorgeous.

PROSECUTOR
May I remind His Honor, we are dealing with a murder charge.

JUDGE
And a celebrity defendant. This is becoming a bit familiar.

PROSECUTOR
We can link him to another murder.

JUDGE
Whose? Nicole Simpson?

AMBER
My client is charged with one murder, Your Honor. To which, I'm preparing a motion of dismissal due to a lack of evidence.
PROSECUTOR
We have eye witnesses, motive, forensics and a time line.

The judge BANGS his gavel several times.

JUDGE
I am releasing Mr. Bonds on bail.

LAUGHTER from the court. The judge smiles.

JUDGE
(continuing)
My mistake, Mr. Cooper. The defendant is a well known public figure. This makes him a low risk for flight. Bail is set at-

EXT. COURT HOUSE - DAY
Jim and Amber push through the crushing wall of media. They arrive at a sleek black limousine.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY
Amber and Jim are in the back.

JIM COOPER
Nice wheels.

Amber wears her mini-mini dress. She looks at her legs.

AMBER
Thanks for noticing.

JIM COOPER
Funny. Where’s your faithful SUV?

AMBER
This limo belongs to our law firm. We use it for high exposure cases. It looks more impressive on TV.

EXT. COURT HOUSE - DAY
A crowd swarms the limousine. Lemuel is among them.

LEMUEL
Hey, Buddy!

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY
The crowd, including Lemuel, surges against the window.
JIM COOPER
Where's Sherman?

AMBER
He's being processed at the INS as an illegal. It's all a mistake because of that stupid name. Our immigration guy is working on it.

JIM COOPER
They won't let me near Derwood's office so I need you to find the tape of that pilot.

AMBER
You think it's important?

JIM COOPER
My Child Star Sense is tingling. It's obvious that someone wants to frame me. But I think they're out to get Buddy Bonds not Jim Cooper.

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

Jack and Kevin sit with Detectives Spanner and Delphi in the booth next to the window on the set of "The Coop". The cops are making notes and reading from notebooks.

ALICE
Did you argue?

JACK
Are you kidding? I loved Heywood. He was like a father to me.

STEVE
According to neighbors, you left the house screaming profanities at each other. Then you urinated on his prize roses. Allegedly.

An uncomfortable silence.

JACK
(lisping)
"Hith prithe rotheth"? Does the L.A.P.D have a "don't-ask-don't-tell" policy?

KEVIN
Shut up, Jack.
ALICE
You're out of order, Mr. Stratten.

JACK
How would you feel? My friend is dead and you think I killed him.

STEVE
We're sorry for your loss but we need your help to find his killer.

ALICE
Can you think of any reason why someone would want Hinckle dead?

JACK
(snaps his fingers)
I bet it's the tape.

KEVIN
It doesn't exist.

ALICE
What tape?

JACK
Heywood had this tape of the pilot. Wait, that was Derwood.

ALICE
Who is Derwood?

STEVE
What pilot? What tape?

JACK
No. I'm meant Heywood's tape.

ALICE
Start making some sense. Now.

KEVIN
(laughing)
They are doing extensive re-shoots on the pilot. Jack's confusing reality with fiction.

STEVE
Why does that sound familiar?

ALICE
Is this the same pilot as on Derwood's tape? Who's Derwood?
KEVIN
(sweeps his arm)
No. I’m talking about this pilot, “Cooperstown”.

JACK
I’m talking about Heywood’s tape.
The one he said could ruin me.

KEVIN
(cuts in quickly)
Derwood is Heywood in the pilot.
And Jack is a little bit --no,
make that very-- confused by it.

ALICE
That makes three of us.

KEVIN
Jack is filming the pilot for
“Cooperstown”. Part of the plot
revolves around a pilot, on a
tape, that results in the death of
Derwood who is modelled after
Heywood. Jack mixes them up.

STEVE
Who wrote the pilot for
“Cooperstown”? That’s the real one
and not the fictional one. Right?

JACK
I did, naturally. It’s a fictional
spin on reality.

KEVIN
Tell the truth. Trish wrote it.

INT. DERWOODS OFFICE - DAY
Trish and Woody are on another part of the set.

WOODY
We wanted to create a new genre.
A TV show that redefines the
uncertain line between fact and
fancy. Now we have the chance.

TRISH
We could integrate real footage of
Heywood’s death and Jack’s
suspicion into the pilot.
WOODY  
It's perfect!

TRISH  
Heywood's death could be the best thing to happen to our show since-

WOODY  
Heywood's death.

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

ALICE  
I'm glad we got that straight.  
(writing)  
Now. Where did you go after leaving Mr. Hinckle's residence?

JACK  
I took a taxi straight home.

STEVE  
(reading)  
Diane says you went to her house.

JACK  
Like I said, I took a taxi from her house. Check with the driver. He's a big fat guy.

ALICE  
How long were you at her place?

JACK  
An hour. Maybe, two.

STEVE  
Diane says you left in the morning.

JACK  
That bitch is lying! Ask Trish.

ALICE  
(reading)  
Trish says you came home in the morning because you were, and I quote, "doinking Diane".

Kevin massages his temples.

JACK  
Woody is the one you want! He hates his father and he has everything to gain by his death.
ALICE
That's funny. Woody said exactly
the same thing about you.

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY
Trish, Woody and Diane join them but Kevin is gone.

DIANE
Jack left after a couple of hours.
I was only trying to protect him.

ALICE
(to Diane)
Because you thought he was guilty.

JACK
Thanks a lot, Diane.

STEVE
Trish, you didn't know Jack was at
Diane's. You lied for him too.

ALICE
(to Trish)
Because you thought he was guilty.

JACK
It was Woody! He's the killer.

WOODY
I was at the Club with Trish.

TRISH
Jack was supposed to meet us there
but he went to the slut's instead.

DIANE
You're jealous of me because you
ended up playing me and I'm
playing you playing me.

The detectives shake their heads. No one notices Jack
slinking away from the table.

ALICE
Not again.

STEVE
I'm afraid to ask.
WOODY
In the original pilot, Trish played the role of Amber Sparks. Amber was loosely based on Diane, had she any brains.

TRISH
Amber is an ex child star who becomes a lawyer.

DIANE
I replaced Trish because Jack and I have a chemistry. And history.

ALICE
Jack plays Jim. He's screwing Diane, who plays Amber. But he lives with Trish, who played Amber when she was based on Diane?

STEVE
And Heywood is Derwood.

DIANE
And they're both dead. Weird?

A strange silence as everyone considers this.

ALICE
I need to see a script.

STEVE
A copycat killer?

WOODY
That would be fantastic.

TRISH
Where's Jack?

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

Jack is on the set of Dr. Nightrain's office. He is with JERI CHANTEILLE, the actor who plays Dr. Nightrain. They are having sex against an unsteady wall of the set.

JERI
Harder, Jim. Sorry, I mean Jack.

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

Richie meets with an AGENT, late 20s. They are reading his notebooks on Jack.
DR. JENKINS
A behind-the-scenes expose of "Stocks & Bonds".

AGENT
Now that Hinckle's dead, the legal ownership of the show is in limbo.

DR. JENKINS
Set against the tragic figure of Jack Stratten.

AGENT
It's open season on the series. We can print whatever we want.

DR. JENKINS
I have all this juicy stuff on Stratten. All the dirt on his screwed up life.

AGENT
It would make a hell of a movie.

They both look at each other.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY
Jack is out of breath. He looks a mess. Rumpled.

JUDY
Our favorite patient! How are you today, Jack? You look great.

JACK
I need to see Richie. Now.

He starts for Richie's office but Judy rises from her desk and blocks him with her amleness.

JUDY
He's in an important meeting and cannot be disturbed. He left me specific instructions on that.

JACK
Get your fat ass out of my way.

They carry on a brief pas de deux as he lunges at the doorway and she blocks it with her large behind. He swings around her but fails to notice that he is now in front of the wrong door.
INT. ALMONZOS OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Almonzo leads her group therapy session. It consists of several strange looking people, including Lemuel.

DR. ALMONZO
Television is a seductive illusion. It's a struggle for you brave people in our tele-saturated culture. Believe in yourself and remember our Golden Rule, "Television is not Real".

The door opens. Jack stumbles in, avoiding Judy's fleshy arm.

LEMUEL
Look! It's Buddy Bonds!

Jack glances around the room and then at Dr. Almonzo.

JACK
Yes. Yes, I am.

(does the "sign")

It's a deal!

He flashes his television smile and beats a hasty retreat.

LEMUEL
This is a sign from God!

DR. ALMONZO
(in Spanish with English subtitles)

Stupid prick.

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

Jack is on the couch. Richie pretends to write.

JACK
I don't know who I am anymore.

DR. JENKINS
Heywood's death is a terrible loss to you. In times of crisis, the Child Star Syndrome results in the manifestation of the alter ego.

JACK
Which one? I have a hard time keeping them apart. So does Jeri.

DR. JENKINS
Who's Jeri?
JACK
Jeri Chantelle is my therapist on "Cooperstown". We have a professional relationship.

The alarm RINGS. Richie brings out a new notebook. "SCREENPLAY", is on the cover.

DR. JENKINS
It's my time, now.
(laughing)
Remember the episode when Buddy wanted to join the Contras and Cesar Romero was Commander Zero?

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jack exits the therapist's building, lights a smoke, and runs into Eddy who lurks to one side. Jack pulls out his phone.

JACK
A 100 feet, Esposito. Or I'm calling the cops. Fuck it. Just leave me alone.

He puts the phone away.

EDDY
No cameras. Just a friendly chat about Heywood's tape.

JACK
Kevin says there is no tape. It was only a bluff.

EDDY
My source tells me that if it sees the light of day, you're ruined.

JACK
Tell Woody to screw himself.

EDDY
How do you know my source is not someone you're screwing?

Jack grabs Eddy. They start to grapple.

JACK
You keep Diane out of this or I'll fucking kill you!

Lemuel exits the building and he sees the tussle.
LEMUEL
Let go of Buddy!

Lemuel tackles Eddy and puts him in a choke hold.

JACK
Thanks, man. Are you a cop?

LEMUEL
I'm a security guard.

JACK
(alarmed)
At the studio?

LEMUEL
No, Wal-Mart.

The hidden camera crew arrives from across the street. A skirmish ensues and Lemuel releases Eddy, who gasps for air.

EDDY
I'll sue you and your fucking psycho bodyguard!

LEMUEL
Nobody touches Buddy Bonds.

JACK
No cameras, right? What else are you lying about, Heywood's tape?

EDDY
I'm going to find that tape and air it on my television show. Then you're screwed, Stratten.

Eddy and his crew walk away.

LEMUEL
Where are your Secret Service agents? Remember? When the Sandinistas were after you?

JACK
The Sandy-who? Oh yeah. We were just talking about that episode.

LEMUEL
Can I have your autograph?

JACK
Whatever.
He hands Jack a pen and some paper. Jack starts to write.

LEMUEL
I seen you the other day. I was
driving by your house and I waved.
I stopped by earlier but you
weren't home. Some old guy was
there. Could I visit you some time?

Jack ignores these ramblings. He finishes and hands the paper
and pen back to Lemuel.

JACK
Whatever.

Lemuel looks at the paper.

LEMUEL
Who's Jack Stratten?

EXT. PARK - DAY

Alice and Steve are eating lunch on a park bench outside a
public washroom in Will Rogers Park.

ALICE
Her performance on the evening
news aside, Dawn's marriage to
Hinckle was a joke.

STEVE
She was screwing around?

ALICE
With Arthur Eastcott, Hinckle's ex
partner in "Stocks & Bonds". Dawn
was with him the night Heywood
bought it. Coincidence?

STEVE
Convenient. Any witnesses?

ALICE
About 18,000 people at the Laker's
game. We can't win them all.

STEVE
There's always our friend, Lemuel.

ALICE
He's nuts. That doesn't make him
a murderer. Any luck finding him?
STEVE
No. When I said he lived in his own world, I didn't mean literally.

ALICE
Who does that leave?

STEVE
Little Buddy Bonds.

ALICE
And Woody, the not-so-grieving son.

Steve nods toward the public washroom.

STEVE
Compared to them, my days at "Vice" were downright refreshing.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Trish and Jack are both wearing black.

TRISH
Are you screwing anyone else?

JACK
We didn't have sex. I went over to Diane's because I was upset with Heywood. We talked for awhile and then I fell asleep on her couch.

TRISH
Like, I believe that.

JACK
Check with those two cops. Our stories match.

Jack is starting to sweat.

TRISH
Except Diane didn't lie about "falling asleep".

JACK
Yes she did. I told her to.

TRISH
What about Jeri Chantelle?

JACK
Who's that? Do I know her?
TRISH
Only in the biblical sense.

Jack crumbles.

JACK
It's not my fault! It's the Syndrome. Ask Richie.

TRISH
I forgot. You're the victim.

JACK
I have a medical condition, Trish.

TRISH
Called addiction. To booze, drugs, sex and lying.

JACK
I've had a rough life. It's not easy being a child star.

TRISH
It's no picnic in the real world, either. We can't blame everything on the past. We overcome it and learn to accept responsibility.

JACK
It's not easy being Buddy Bonds.

TRISH
Try Trish Morton: father dies in studio accident. Mother files lawsuit but high-priced studio lawyers play hardball. Mother and daughter left penniless.

JACK
What about me? Does anyone know or even care about Jack Stratten?

TRISH
I was almost a child star, once. Because the studio hooped us, we had to leave L.A. I lost my father and a promising career.

JACK
I'm a person. What about my needs?

Trish looks at him with astonishment.
TRISH
I met Woody after I graduated from Film School. I worked as an intern for their production company.

JACK
I should quit this crazy business.

TRISH
I lived with him for two years. We broke up just before I met you.

JACK
I'm going to write an expose of Hollywood and all of the backstabbing hypocrites.

TRISH
(shakes her head)
You haven't heard a single word. You're amazing!

JACK
I guess I am. I can act and write. I could direct too, if I wanted.

His cell phone RINGS. He answers it.

JACK
(continuing)
How did you get my number?

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY
A line of black limousines winds into the peaceful cemetery. A cell phone flies out the back window of the last limousine.

JACK (V.O.)
Fuck you, Esposito!

EXT. PORN SHOP - NIGHT
A light is on in the apartment above the shop.

INT. ESPOSITOS APARTMENT - NIGHT
A temporary studio more than a home: video cameras, video monitors and editing equipment cram the small hovel. Eddy flips through the shooting script. He is drunk.

EDDY
"And you? - Clean and sober."

He laughs a bitter retort. Jack is seething.
JACK
Where did you get that script?

EDDY
I'm a journalist, Jack. I have my sources. Or should I call you, Jim?

He laughs even harder.

JACK
So your source steals a script. Big fucking deal. That doesn't prove you have Hinckle's tape.

EDDY
I give up. I can't outwit Jim Cooper, Private Eye.

JACK
Say goodbye to your money, fucker.

Jack puts on his jacket and starts for the door.

EDDY
Buddy Morton is on that tape.

Jack stops. He pulls out ten one hundred dollar bills.

JACK
I don't believe that tape exists. But I'll give you a grand, if you tell me who does.

EDDY
I won't sell out my source. Not for your pieces of silver.

JACK
What about a juicy guest shot in the pilot? Think of the publicity.

Eddy flips through the script.

EDDY
I want a recurring role. As a cop.

Jack pulls the script away from Eddy.

JACK
EDDY
That's bullshit and so are you.

JACK
Fame, celebrity and pussy. I got it, you don't and it's killing you!

EDDY
You're going to lose it all when I show the world Heywood's tape.

EXT. SEEDY STREET - NIGHT
A limousine cruises by some "working girls" in the wee hours of the morning. The back window ROLLS down and Jack smiles.

JACK
Any of you girls want a 100 bucks and my autograph?

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT
Jack gives the driver two hundred dollars.

JACK
You never saw me.

The chauffeur's window ROLLS up. Jack pours some champagne for his "date". The prostitute is a hard looking veteran of the streets. He hands her a "c-note".

JACK
(continuing)
This is for the hummer. Remember, Sugar. You never saw me.

She starts to go down.

INT. NEWS DESK - DAY
The GOSSIP SHOW HOST is nearly skeletal, but really perky. A picture of Jack is on the monitor behind her.

GOSSIP SHOW HOST
"The Gossip Show" has learned that Sunshine Street, a transvestite hooker, claims to have performed oral sex on Stratten.

INT. ANOTHER NEWS DESK - NIGHT
The HOST of the cable channel's news parody is young and hip.
HOST
The bottom fell out of the Bonds market today. What was Jack Stratten thinking? A 100 bucks for a blow job? I only pay 50. That includes tax and tip.

INT. NEWS DESK - DAY

The monitor behind the perky Host shows mug shots of the prostitute as "Sunshine Street" and as a man.

GOSSIP SHOW HOST
In light of this startling development, famed entertainment lawyer Arthur Eastcott has been retained by ex con, Gerald Hoover.

INT. SET OF THE BONDS MANSION - DAY

The two detectives handcuff Jack in front of the cast.

ALICE
You're under arrest for the murder of Eddy Esposito.

As they lead Jack out, Steve and Alice pass in front of Janice and Shanks.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Alice, Steve, Jack and his LAWYER, 40ish.

JACK
We talked, had a few drinks and I left by midnight.

STEVE
Did you fall asleep on his couch?

ALICE
I find it odd that two men, who took out restraining orders on each other, would meet for drinks.

STEVE
Fill us in on your friendly chat.

LAWYER
My client does not have to reveal the nature of this conversation.
JACK
Eddy had a copy of our script for "Cooperstown". I was worried he might leak details on his show.

ALICE
"Cooperstown" is the pilot you co-wrote with Ms. Metaxia?

JACK
It was mine. She just typed it.

STEVE
Is it a coincidence that Hinckle and his fictional alter ego, Duffy, were both shot in the head?

LAWYER
What are you implying? That my client is acting out his script?

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN - DAY
CLICK. The television turns on to a montage of the news.

NEWS ANCHOR
Celebrity Tracker Eddy Esposito was found shot dead in his home early this morning. Troubled ex child star-

Another channel:

NEWS REPORTER 1
Troubled ex child star-

And another:

NEWS REPORTER 2
Troubled ex child star-

EXT. STREET - DAY (VIDEO TAPE)
Jack grabs Eddy. They start to grapple.

JACK
You keep Diane out of this or I'll BLEEPING kill you!

Lemuel exits the building and he sees the tussle.

LEMUEL
Let go of Buddy!
He joins the frey as the tape continues to run.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
Lemuel Hofer was recently fired as a security guard at Wal-Mart.

INT. ANOTHER NEWS DESK - NIGHT
HOST
Can anyone say Mark David Chapman?

INT. NEWS DESK - DAY
GOSSIP SHOW HOST
Stratten is once again on the comeback trail with the pilot for "Cooperstown". He has starred in a string of failed TV series since "Stocks & Bonds" ended in 1989.

INT. SET OF THE BONDS MANSION - DAY
Jack wears a Hawaiian shirt. His hair is in a big cow lick. In the living room, a menagerie of animals surrounds Jack.

GOSSIP SHOW HOST (V.O.)
His last series was the USA Network's "Buddy Bonds Pet Detective". It was cancelled after one show due to abysmal ratings.

INT. ANOTHER NEWS DESK - NIGHT
HOST
He's working on a new pilot called "Arrested Development". I want to know. Who plays the hooker?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY
JACK
Okay. I didn't write the pilot. Trish wrote it and Heywood put my name on it. To market it.

ALICE
That's convenient. The script becomes incriminating and suddenly, you no longer wrote it.

JACK
It's true. I'm nearly illiterate.
STEVE
That's a novel defence.

LAWYER
My client is illiterate.

ALICE
The Writer's Guild will be happy to hear that.

The door opens and the CAPTAIN, 50ish, enters.

STEVE
What it is, Captain?

CAPTAIN
The Assistant D.A. is here.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

A different room and the ASSISTANT D.A. She's in her 40s.

ASSISTANT D.A.
The limo driver picked up Stratten at Esposito's just after midnight.

CAPTAIN
The Medical Examiner puts the time of death at around one A.M.

ASSISTANT D.A.
Thanks to Gerald Hoover, Jack has the best known alibi in L.A.

CAPTAIN
Guess what? Ballistics says the gun used to kill Eddy Esposito was the same gun that killed Hinckle.

ASSISTANT D.A.
Stratten is still our best suspect. Bring me some hard evidence and I'll be happy to nail his celebrity ass to the wall.

ALICE
I don't think our boy Jack has the balls, or the brains, to kill one person. Let alone two.

STEVE
Hinckle stole Jack's residuals and Esposito publicly humiliated him.
ALICE
Maybe Jack Stratten has an avenging angel.

Steve whistles the theme from "The Twilight Zone".

STEVE
An obsessed fan?

CAPTAIN
Find that wacko. What's-his-name, you took to the shrink,

ALICE
I have a feeling Jack's agent is hiding something from us. Smienk knows more than he lets on.

ASSISTANT D.A.
Lean on him. Find out what.

STEVE
This is a long shot, but what if Jack's being framed?

ASSISTANT D.A.
Forget that. A list of people Stratten's pissed off would be thicker than the L.A. phonebook.

EXT. L.A.P.D. - DAY
Jack, his lawyer and a large media scrum.

JACK
I will not rest until I bring the killer, or killers, of Heywood and Esposito to justice. Any questions?

GOSSIP SHOW HOST
Did you know Sunshine Street was a man?

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY (PILOT)
"ACT III" appears on the screen. Jim and Dr. Nightrain.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
That awful policeman was here asking questions about you.

JIM COOPER
What did Shanks want?
DR. NIGHTRAIN
Information on you. He wants to know if I thought you could kill.

JIM COOPER
What did you tell him?

DR. NIGHTRAIN
Anyone is capable of murder given the right circumstances.

JIM COOPER
That's a good evasive answer.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
I thought so.

(pause)
I'm worried about you, Jim. The enormous strain you're under might trigger the Child Star Syndrome.

JIM COOPER
Forget about me. I'm here for your professional expertise. You've studied the psychology of fame and how it relates to child stars.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
That's one of my fields.

JIM COOPER
I need you to create a profile.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
Of a troubled ex child star?

JIM COOPER
Or a troubled fan.

INT. CAR - DAY
From across the street, someone watches the building.

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

JIM COOPER
A confused fan who thinks he's an ex child star.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
I read a similar case study. The patient was so immersed in this fantasy, he developed a pseudo form of the Child Star Syndrome.
JIM COOPER
Who'd want to be an ex child star?

The Doctor puts her arms on Jim's shoulders.

DR. NIGHTTRAIN
Jim, I need to tell you something but I'm bound by the doctor-patient privilege. I have this patient. He was the "case study".

JIM COOPER
A child actor on the periphery: a guest shot, a commercial, a failed-

DR. NIGHTTRAIN
Please Jim, listen to me.

JIM COOPER
-pilot.

He walks over to the window and uses his cell phone.

INT. SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE - DAY

Amber is talking on her phone while driving at EXCESSIVE SPEEDS. Paralyzing Sherman with fear.

AMBER
(into the phone)
We got the tape, Coop. No problem. When I told Duffy's lawyer it might be subpoenaed as evidence, he begged me to take it.

SHERMAN OAKS
Watch out for that bus!

TIRES SQUEAL and HORMS BLARE. Amber does a quick lane change that almost sends Sherman through the roof. Literally. Amber picks up the ordinary looking tape and examines it with her free hand. HORNs BLARE.

AMBER
(into the phone)
What's on this sucker?

SHERMAN OAKS
Try looking at the road!

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

The Doctor stares out the window. Jim walks over to her desk and surreptitiously rifles through her appointment book.
JIM COOPER
(into the phone)
I'm hoping, the killer. I'll meet
you back at "The Coop". Maybe
Shanks will let us open for
business again. Love you.

He puts the phone away and the Doctor turns to him.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
We need to talk.

JIM COOPER
Can it wait, Doc? I'll call you
from the bar.

INT. CAR - DAY

The car door opens.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Jim is going through the revolving doors and he sees Chuck,
in his security guard uniform, approach.

JIM COOPER
Another satisfied customer.

He exits the revolving doors just before Chuck enters.

JIM COOPER
(continuing)
About the other day, I'm sorry if
I somehow offended you.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
Don't talk to me, Mr. Bigshot
Movie Star. I'm late for work. We
do that in the real world.

Jim sees the name of a studio on Chuck's shoulder patch.

JIM COOPER
You work in this building?

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
Yes. Now quit annoying me.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jim's Mustang PEELS off. We see his vanity plate, "COOP".
INT. MUSTANG - DAY
Jim drives at a HIGH SPEED. He uses his carphone. DIALLING.

JIM COOPER
Why didn't I think of this before?
(into the phone)
Mr. Roach-Hickman's room, please.

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY
The Doctor is on the phone. BUSY SIGNAL. She hangs up.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
Get off the phone, Jim!
She looks up in surprise as a silhouette falls over her desk.

DR. NIGHTRAIN
(continuing)
Why don't you put the gun down, Chuck. We can talk.

Chuck smiles. He aims the gun at her in a parody of Buddy.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
"It's a deal". Not!

GUNFIRE.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY
TREVOR ROACH-HICKMAN played Uncle Frank. His hair is greyer and he is heavier than on the "Stocks & Bonds". He wears an expensive, monogrammed bathrobe. A KNOCK. He shuffles off the bed and answers the door. Jim enters and Trevor hugs him.

TREVOR
Buddy. This is a pleasant surprise.

EXT. BALCONY - DUSK
A smoggy L.A. sunset. Trevor sips sherry and Jim has a soft drink (obvious product placement). Trevor laughs.

TREVOR
"Bonding in Beverly Hills"? That was a turkey. Poor old Derwood, bless him, misfired on that one.

JIM COOPER
Why? His track record with sitcoms is pretty good.
TREVOR
A successful television series
needs a variety of crucial
elements. Number One is-

JIM COOPER
I see you haven't lost your
propensity to pontificate.

TREVOR
(ignores Jim)
Sex appeal. The original pilot was
all men, if you wish to include
Uncle Frank in that gender.

JIM COOPER
It was just Dad, Uncle Frank and
the two kids?

TREVOR
Yes, Brandon and Bentley.

JIM COOPER
Bentley? What happened to Buddy?

TREVOR
Number Two is a child star.

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DUSK
The blinding flash of a camera. Police technicians work
through the crime scene. Janice and Shanks are with them.
Written in red on the wall: "The real Buddy Bonds".

SHANKS
It looks like we better re-arrest
the real Jim Cooper.

EXT. BALCONY - DUSK
TREVOR
In summary, "Stocks & Bonds"
became a hit with the addition of
the blond beauties and a certain
young man named Jim Cooper.

JIM COOPER
Your flattery is embarrassing me.

TREVOR
You were cute and you were a ham.
Two essential qualities for a
successful child star.
JIM COOPER
Your flattery is embarrassing me.

TREVOR
The child actor who played Bentley was tall and rail thin with a rather prominent nose. Cute for a child star means short and chubby.

JIM COOPER
(annoyed)
Your flattery is embarrassing me.
How did Bentley become Buddy?

TREVOR
Derwood wanted a nickname that sounded "cute" and was easy to remember. Hence, Buddy was born.

JIM COOPER
Do you remember who played Bentley?

TREVOR
That was a while ago.
(snaps his fingers)
Chuck Cunningham.

Jim pulls out his phone and DIALS.

JIM COOPER
Excuse me, Trevor.
(into the phone)
Hello. Dr. Nightrain?

INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON the appointment book. The names of patients flip past, including "Chuck Cunningham".

Shanks sets the book down. The phone on the desk RINGS. Shanks nods at Janice who answers it.

JANICE
This is the police. Hello?
(to Shanks)
They hung up.

SHANKS
We're wasting valuable time. Let's pick up Mr. Ex Child Star.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Jim puts the phone away.
TREVOR
You think Cunningham murdered both Donna and Derwood?

JIM COOPER
Yes and you can add Dr. Nightrain's name to his list.

INT. MUSTANG - NIGHT
Jim is driving FAST and using the carphone.

JIM COOPER
(into the phone)
Come on Sherman, answer it.

JIM COOPER (V.O.)
Hi! This is Jim "Buddy" Cooper proprietor of "The Coop". I'm not-

Jim hangs up and DIALS another number.

JIM COOPER
Where are you, Amber?

EXT. THE COOP - NIGHT
The mustang comes to a stop, TIRES SCREECHING. Jim leaps out. He draws his gun and approaches the front door.

INT. THE COOP - NIGHT
Jim KICKS open the door. He comes through it, gun first.

JIM COOPER
Amber! Sherman!

The bar is in shambles. A message is written in red lipstick on the large mirror over the bar, "You can go home again".

JIM COOPER
(continuing)
You're a subtle boy, Chuck.

THUMPING. He turns toward the bar, aiming his gun.

Behind the bar, the glass encased beer fridges are frozen over. THUMPING. Something moves.

Jim sets his gun on the bar and pulls on the ice covered door. WHOOSH. A cloud of iced air escapes and Sherman falls out. He looks like the Abominable Snowman and he's shivering.
SHERMAN OAKS
H-h-he's g-g-got A-a-amber.

SIRENS. Jim looks out the window. TIRES SCREECH and DOORS SLAM. FOOTFALLS. Red lights and spotlights flood the bar.

SHANKS (V.O.)
(through a megaphone)
This is the police. Come out with your hands up, Cooper.

JIM COOPER
We have to save Amber.

SHERMAN OAKS
M-my s-secret-t e-esca-ape r-route.

JIM COOPER
Good old paranoid, Sherman.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT
Jim and Sherman crawl out of a wooden trash bin set against the brick wall of the bar. Red lights and POLICE NOISES in the b.g. They hurry in the opposite direction, crouching down.

SHERMAN OAKS
To think you once laughed at my secret escape route.

JIM COOPER
I was laughing at the reason.

SHERMAN OAKS
When I was Chavez Ravine, who knew the name was taken? Rupert Murdoch has no sense of humor.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT
They steal out of the alley and across the street. Amber's SUV is parked near a store front.

JIM COOPER
Good old paranoid, Amber.

They climb into the vehicle.

A patrol car cruises out of the alley and turns slowly onto the street. It DRIVES down the street.

The SUV SPEEDS off in the opposite direction.
INT. SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE - DAY

Woody is driving. Jack is not.

JACK
What's the deal with Trish? She didn't wait to give me a ride.

WOODY
You totally humiliated her.

JACK
It was only a blowjob. From a hooker. That's not cheating.

WOODY
Why would she dump me for you?

JACK
Tell me about Buddy Morton.

WOODY
She dumped me for Buddy Morton?

JACK
What are you talking about?

WOODY
Me? Who's Buddy Morton?

JACK
He's on Heywood's tape.

WOODY
What fucking tape?

JACK
I know you're Esposito's source.

WOODY
Start making some sense. It's a long walk to the studio.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Jack is becoming Jim Cooper. He wears make-up and he is squeezing into a girdle. Woody and Kevin are with him.

KEVIN
You're in big trouble, Jack. We have to clear your name.
WOODY
Why? Don't you see what a gift these murders can be to the show?

JACK
I'm on every channel.

KEVIN
As a murder suspect!

WOODY
It's great publicity for the pilot. Morbid fascination will bring higher ratings.

JACK
There's no bad publicity. It's all about name recognition. As my agent, you should know this shit.

KEVIN
Are they going to let you film "Cooperstown" from death row?

JACK
I'm not going to jail. I didn't kill anyone.

KEVIN
The police think so. Alice Spanner told me the Assistant D.A. is out to crucify you.

WOODY
This is a stroke of luck. We could interweave your real trial into the pilot, redubbing the dialogue.

JACK
A trial? Think of the publicity!

Kevin grabs Jack and forces him to look into the mirror.

KEVIN
This isn't television. This is reality. Society is tired of celebrities who break the law and don't pay for it. Now, it's payback time. You're fucked, bro.

JACK
What can we do?
KEVIN
We have to find the killer.

WOODY
You mean, act like detectives?

JACK
You're right. I'm fucked.

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY
Amber, Jim, Sherman, Janice and Shanks are at "The Coop".

WOODY
Cut! It's a wrap.

Janice, Amber and Shanks leave. RUPERT VERNON, the actor who plays Sherman, stays.

RUPERT
I'm having a hard time reconciling my relationship with Janice. It seems shallow and too convenient.

Trish enters.

TRISH
It's an "opposites attract" thing, Rupert. It gives us future material to use for your character.

RUPERT
Why not give me something in the pilot? I'm, like, so underwritten.

TRISH
You're the goddam sidekick. Your dramatic function is comic relief.

JACK
It's called "Cooperstown". If you don't like it, get your own series.

RUPERT
I'll remember that when you're getting cornholed in San Quentin and Woody's looking for a new lead.

WOODY
For Christ's sake, Sherman Oaks is a sidekick. Take him or leave him.

RUPERT
I'm Sherman Oaks. Don't forget it.
He stalks off the set. An awkward silence between the three.

WOODY
We need your help. Don't do it for Jack or for me. Do it for the show.

TRISH
You want me to re-write the script with Rupert as Jim Cooper?

JACK
That's not funny.

WOODY
We need to find this Buddy Morton. How do we start?

TRISH
Who's Buddy Morton?

WOODY
We think he's on a secret tape that Heywood owned.

JACK
He tried to blackmail me with this tape. He said it could ruin me.

TRISH
Why didn't you tell me about this sooner? I remember. You were too busy screwing Diane and Jeri.

JACK
If you're going to be like that, then forget we asked. You need to be more forgiving. Like Diane.

Trish kicks Jack in the balls. He doubles over.

TRISH
Start with a casting director. Like Billy Conroy, he's been around forever.

INT. ESPOSITOS APARTMENT - DAY

The detectives are viewing videotapes on two of the monitors. The apartment is covered with yellow "Crime Scene" tape.

STEVE
We could find Esposito's stash of hardcore porn for you. Now that you've struck out with Kevin.
ALICE
I didn't strike out. There's still a mutual attraction. The circumstances aren't helping any.

Steve points to her monitor and she freezes the tape.

STEVE
On the footage from "Celebrity Tracker". Look in the background.

EXT. STUDIO GATE - DAY (VIDEO TAPE)
Kevin's car arrives at the entrance to the lot. The media are everywhere. So are curious onlookers, Lemuel is one of these.

INT. ESPOSITOS APARTMENT - DAY

ALICE
Why is it that everywhere we look, Mr. Hofer keeps turning up?

STEVE
It gets better. Woody gave me a copy of the pilot so that I could compare the similarities between it and the recent murders. Look.

EXT. COURT HOUSE - DAY
A crowd swarms the limousine. Lemuel is among them.

LEMUEL
Hey, Buddy!

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY
The crowd, including Lemuel, surges against the window.

INT. ESPOSITOS APARTMENT - DAY

ALICE
Lemuel is an extra.

STEVE
That would give him the chance to steal a script and act it out. Heywood is Derwood. Remember?

ALICE
Acting? This is the boy who can't separate fact from fiction. What did Dr. Almonzo say about him?
STEVE
Lemuel is unplugged.

INT. ALMONZOS OFFICE - DAY
Dr. Almonzo and Lemuel.

DR. ALMONZO
The police are anxious to talk with you.

LEMUEL
I didn't do nothing. I don't think I did. I've been confused a lot.

DR. ALMONZO
You were on the evening news. Tell me about that.

LEMUEL
This scummy guy tried to hurt Buddy, but I took care of him.

Dr. Almonzo raises an eyebrow.

LEMUEL
(continuing)
Then Buddy invited me over to his house. But this time, that crazy old man won't call the cops.

DR. ALMONZO
Because you took care of him?

LEMUEL
Yeah. I took care of him.

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

Diane and Jack are in street clothes and they join Woody, Trish and BILLY CONROY, an endearing man in his 60s.

TRISH
Thanks for coming.

BILLY
For you Trish, anything. I loved HeyHey and I hope you catch the bastard that did this to him.

WOODY
Ever heard of Buddy Morton?
BILLY
The name sounds familiar but it
doesn't. If you know what I mean.

JACK
This guy's great. Isn't he, Trish?

DIANE
Shut up, Jack.

BILLY
I seem to recall someone with that
name but I can't quite remember.

JACK
Great detective work, Billy.

BILLY
Jerry Morton! He was a freelance
writer who sent us some scripts.

WOODY
For "Stocks & Bonds"?

BILLY
Earlier. It was probably for a "A
Peck of Pickles".

DIANE
Isn't there, like, records or
paperwork?

JACK
Good answer, Einstein.

WOODY
She's on to something. Old Heywood
was a first class tightwad.

BILLY
There's one man cheaper than him.
His ex partner, Arthur Eastcott.

JACK
The guy who screwed Heywood and
Heywood's wife.

INT. EASTCOTTS DEN - DAY

ARTHUR EASTCOTT, 60ish. Plastic surgery makes him look ten
years younger. Tanning beds make him look twenty years older.
ARTHUR
(into the phone)
Woody, I checked our records all
the way back to "The Grady Gang"
but there's no Jerry Morton.

Dawn comes into the den with a video in her hand.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
Conroy is wrong. Buddy Morton?
Hold on, I'll check.

He puts the phone on hold.

DAWN
Artie, is this the videotape?

ARTHUR
Yes. It's the only remaining
evidence of a link between Hinckle
and us. We have to get rid of it.

DAWN
Do you think we're in danger?

ARTHUR
No. We still have our patsy.
(into the phone)
I found one reference to a Buddy
Morton. I think he was a child
actor. Talk to Charlie Cole.

EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Woody, Billy and Jack are standing in the parking lot. Woody
puts his phone away.

BILLY
I don't know why, but Arthur is
lying about Jerry.

WOODY
You were in charge of casting for
Heywood. You must remember Buddy.

BILLY
That's a long time ago. I hate
going old.

JACK
You're a big help, Grandpa.

Trish and Diane return. Trish has a notepad in her hand.
TRISH
Billy's right. Jerry was a writer in the 70s. Mainly sitcoms. The Writer's Guild has no record of him since the early 80s.

DIANE
His phone number is now a carpet cleaner. But we have an address.

TRISH
I'm sure it's a dead end.

JACK
Me and Diane will check it out.

WOODY
One of the neighbors might remember something.

DIANE
I'm not going with you.

TRISH
I'll take Diane. Woody, you and Jack can talk to Charlie Cole.

WOODY
I'm not going near Cole. He's a fucking pedophile with emphysema.

JACK
Fine, be that way. Me and Diane will go see Cole.

DIANE
I'm not going to see that creep and I'm not going with you.

Kevin enters with Rupert who points at Billy.

RUPERT
They're planning to fire me. Why else would Woody bring in a casting director?

WOODY
Piss off, Rupert. We're not replacing you.

RUPERT
(to Kevin)
You're my agent, talk to him.
WOODY
We have a lead on Buddy Morton.

KEVIN
We need to find him. Pronto.

RUPERT
Thanks, Kevin. You've been a big help. You're all out to get me!

He stalks off and everyone ignores him.

WOODY
Arthur Eastcott thinks Buddy was a child actor.

KEVIN
Ask that fucker, Cole. He's got a photographic memory when it comes to child performers. Lots of polaroids, as well.

JACK
Good idea. Me, you and Diane will go talk to him.

DIANE
I'm not going with you. We might end up with a transvestite hooker.

JACK
Is that what you're mad about? I was framed by the media. Nothing happened. We just talked.

TRISH
It must have been a pretty one-sided conversation.

INT. JACKS HOUSE - DAY

Kevin watches as Jack reaches under his bed.

KEVIN
Don't do this. It's degrading.

JACK
It's not a biggie. A lot of people have seen this video. I even put parts of it on the Internet.

KEVIN
On our www.buddybonds.com site?
JACK
No. I sold it to some porn sites.
We should sell it in video stores.

KEVIN
You were 15 and Diane was 16. That
makes it kiddie porn. And illegal.

Jack stands up with a tape in his hand. He looks at it.

JACK
Bingo! Buddy and Breanna Bonds do
it on the dining room table.

Kevin grabs him.

KEVIN
You're not selling out to Cole.
We'll find Morton some other way.

JACK
Listen Kev, I'm being framed. If
I go to jail, I want it to be for
something I did.

EXT. JACKS HOUSE - DAY

The media confront Kevin and Jack as they walk to the car.

KEVIN
No comment.

JACK
We're working on a solid lead.
We'll find this guy.

NEWS REPORTER 1
Did you know Sunshine Street was
a man?

INT. SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE - DAY

Woody is driving. Diane, looking at a map, sits up front and
Trish is in the back.

DIANE
I think we missed the turn off.

WOODY
Give me the bloody map!

He tries to grab the map but Diane pulls it away. HORNS and
SCREECHING TIRES. Woody corrects the wheel.
TRISH
Jesus, Woody. Keep your eyes on the road. Give me the map, Di.

DIANE
Forget it. I'm in the front seat and that makes me the navigator.

TRISH
You're in the front seat because we couldn't stand your whining.

WOODY
You don't have the first clue how to read a map. Give it to Trish.

Diane opens the window and tosses the map.

DIANE
Oh oh. Stupid me. I lost the map.

TRISH
I bet you and Jack have some interesting philosophical debates on quantum mechanics.

DIANE
If you don't like Jack, why do you live with him?

WOODY
I've never understood it.

TRISH
I have my reasons.

EXT. WAL-MART PARKING LOT - DAY

Detectives Spanner and Stavros are walking to their car.

ALICE
Let me get this straight.

STEVE
Lemuel gets fired from his job and he doesn't return his gun.

ALICE
Which happens to be the same caliber as the murder weapon.

STEVE
He has a run-in with each victim shortly before their death.
ALICE
But the Assistant D.A. won't listen to our evidence because she's out to get Jack Stratten.

STEVE
The politics of retribution. She wants a celebrity trial where the prosecution is guaranteed a win.

ALICE
That idiot Stratten is gift wrapping it for her.

INT. KEVINS CAR - DAY
Kevin is driving. Jack stares out the passenger window.

JACK (V.O.)
I need better name recognition.

KEVIN
Can I tell you something personal?

JACK (V.O.)
Kevin's an alright agent but I need a publicist. A good one.
(to Kevin)
Yeah, whatever.

KEVIN
You know that before I was Brandon Bonds, I was little Scotty Pickles.

JACK
I read for that role but Heywood figured I was too young.

KEVIN
I never knew that. Anyhow, you see. When I was 10, I was molested on the set of "A Peck of Pickles".

JACK (V.O.)
Cher. Everybody knows her.

KEVIN
Charlie Cole molested me.

JACK (V.O.)
The secret to name recognition is single celebrity names.
KEVIN
Several times, in fact.

JACK (V.O.)
Maybe, I should use a single celebrity name. Like Cher.

KEVIN
That story isn't a rumor. I was the boy who got molested.

JACK (V.O.)
What if I call myself, Jack?

KEVIN
Did you here me? I was that boy.

JACK
What? That's a tough break.

KEVIN
A few years later when Heywood was casting for "Stocks", I told him about Cole.

JACK (V.O.)
It wouldn't work. Everyone knows Nicholson is "Jack".

KEVIN
Heywood promised me the role of Brandon Bonds, if I said it was someone else who had molested me.

JACK (V.O.)
I got it! Buddy.

KEVIN
I didn't want any part of it. But he pressured my parents and they made me sign this legal affidavit.

JACK (V.O.)
No, Buddy Holly has that name covered. How about, Bonds?

KEVIN
I glanced over it and I saw the patsy's name. Guess who?

JACK (V.O.)
James Bond is too famous. Wait, he's Bond but I would be Bonds.
Kevin slams on the BRAKES and comes to a dead stop.

    KEVIN
    Are you listening to me! The guy
    I helped to set up for Heywood and
    that fucker Cole, was Jerry
    Morton. Don't you understand?

    JACK
    Yes. All the good single celebrity
    names are taken.

INT. SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE - DAY

Woody parks in front of a small house in an older neighborhood. They are looking at house numbers.

    WOODY
    That must be the house, over
    there. You ready, Trish?

    TRISH
    Take Amber Sparks. I'm not cut out
    to be a detective or a lawyer.

    WOODY
    That wasn't my fault. You know it.

    DIANE
    I can't go. I'm way too stupid.

    WOODY
    I wish you'd both gone with Jack.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Woody RINGS the doorbell. No response. He RINGS again and there are NOISES from inside the house. The door opens a crack. The chain is still across. A VOICE, sounds Asian.

    VOICE
    Sorry, not interested. Thank you.

Woody speaks slowly and loudly.

    WOODY
    I'm looking for the former owner
    of this house.

    VOICE
    No farmer, here. You go now.
WOODY
I'm looking for Jerry Morton. He lived in this house some years ago.

VOICE
No Jelly Roll Morton. Go way, please. Thank you.

The door closes and LOCKS. Woody POUNDS on the door.

WOODY
Learn to speak English, refugee!

INT. KEVINS CAR - DAY

The car stops in front of an Art Deco mansion.

KEVIN
You still don't get it, do you?

JACK
You claim that Charlie Cole molested you. And now you blame Heywood for your fucked up life.

KEVIN
You want to give a pornographic tape, you starred in as a kid, to a pedophile in exchange for information about someone that he helped to frame twenty years ago?

JACK
Sounds like a good plan to me.

KEVIN
It's rock solid.
(pause)
This isn't television and you're not Jim Cooper P.I. People are dying and you could be next.

INT. ALMONZOS OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Almonzo is on the phone.

DR. ALMONZO
I need to speak with Detectives Spanner or Delphi. This is urgent.

We move through the wall to the adjoining room.
INT. THERAPISTS OFFICE - DUSK

Richie is on the phone.

DR. JENKINS
This screenplay is practically writing itself. I have a short list of directors we might consider for this project.

INT. CAR - DUSK

Kevin holds out a snub-nosed .38.

KEVIN
I should my head examined for giving bad boy Jack Stratten a gun.

JACK
I can't take that, it would violate all of my probations.

KEVIN
Use this to get information from Cole. Threaten him. If you were my true friend, you'd shoot the wizened old bastard in the balls.

JACK
(takes the gun)
What are you saying? You're not coming in with me?

KEVIN
No!

JACK
Why, is emphysema contagious?

EXT. STREET - DUSK

MRS. HUGHES, a kindly old lady in her 70s, calls to Woody from her porch next door to the Morton's old house.

MRS. HUGHES
Sonny! It's been a long time since I heard the name of Jerry Morton.

INT. SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE - DAY

The girls are watching Woody talk to Mrs. Hughes.

DIANE
What's up with the old bag?
INT. COLES HOUSE - DUSK

The living room of a dying man's house: claustrophobic, hot and humid. The AIR EXCHANGE from the pump on the oxygen tank competes with the rattle from his chest. CHARLIE COLE, late 60s, is a wisp of a man but he has a menacing voice, for his size and sickness. He has steely eyes and manicured nails.

CHARLIE
You're looking old.

JACK
You look like shit.

CHARLIE
And fat.

JACK
(alarmed)
I don't look fat.

CHARLIE
Chubby, maybe. You got the tape?

Jack hands him the tape.

CHARLIE
(continuing)
Do I look like I could bound out of this chair? Put the tape in the video machine, you idiot.

Jack inserts the tape, his face is red. Charlie uses his remote. VCR SOUNDS. Jack stands awkwardly to the side of Charlie's chair, near the large oxygen tank.

JACK
A tape for a tape. That was our deal. Where's mine?

CHARLIE
(watching the screen)
The lighting's poor. The quality of this tape isn't very good.

JACK
It wasn't a big priority at the time. If you know what I mean.

Charlie uses the remote, SOUNDS OF PASSION. They grow LOUDER.

BREANNA (V.O.)
I'm fucking Buddy Bonds. Ooh ahh.
JACK
That's enough! Turn it off!

CharlieCLICKS it off. He chuckles.

CHARLIE
Are you afraid I might see your little dinkie?

Jack pulls the gun out of his front pants pocket, rather awkwardly. He points it at the old man.

JACK
Shut your mouth you old pervert! Where's my fucking tape?

CHARLIE
I see you're anxious to solve the mystery of Buddy Morton.

INT. PARLOR - DUSK

The room has an old fashioned feel to it. Mrs. Hughes serves Woody tea from a silver serving set.

MRS. HUGHES
It's your accent, I knew you couldn't resist.

WOODY
Actually, I despise the stuff. (a phony laugh) But a stiff upper lip and all that.

She pours tea and sits close to him on the love seat.

WOODY
(continuing) Tell me about the Mortons.

MRS. HUGHES
Are you from the police?

INT. SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE - DUSK

Diane leans over and HONKS the horn. REPEATEDLY.

DIANE
What do you think she's saying?

TRISH
Learn to relax!
INT. COLES HOUSE - DAY

Charlie pulls a tape from under his garish quilt. He passes it to Jack and points at the VCR. He's out of breath.

CHARLIE
This tape got Heywood killed and Eastcott knows it. So he brought me into it, hoping to buy time for himself and Dawn.

Small bubbles of air form at the corners of his mouth.

JACK
You think this tape has something to do with the murders?

CHARLIE
I think the killer's on this tape.

He STARTS the VCR but then he STOPS and REWINDS.

CHARLIE
(continuing)
Dammit, it's not rewound. In 1982, Jerry Morton, a writer we infrequently employed, came to us with a pilot in the can.

JACK
Already filmed? That's unusual.

CHARLIE
It was videotaped. He mortgaged his home and maxed his credit cards in order to make it.

JACK
Why did he do that?

Charlie catches his breath and shrugs. Jack puts the gun away.

CHARLIE
He was a control freak. The production values were poor but it had potential. So did the pilot's star: little Buddy Morton.

The VCR WHINES to a stop. Charlie aims the remote.

CHARLIE
(continuing)
See for yourself.
CHEESY MUSIC from the tape as light from the television is cast upon Jack's stunned face. He moves closer to the TV.

   JACK
   Oh, shit.

CLOSE ON the television screen as Charlie freezes it:

"$TOCKS & BOND$ created by Jerry Morton and Sarah Cooper".

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

   MRS. HUGHES
   The Mortons --I call them that even though she kept her maiden name of Cooper-- were fine people. He was a writer for television.

HONKING from outside.

   WOODY
   I have to get back to the station house. My partner's impatient.

   MRS. HUGHES
   I hope I was helpful, Detective Delphi.

Woody stands up.

   WOODY
   Quickly, tell me what happened.

   MRS. HUGHES
   It's so sad. There was some sort of a scandal at the studio, involving Jerry.

   WOODY
   When was this?

   MRS. HUGHES
   1982. Then Jerry shot himself in the head, right before the bank foreclosed. Mrs. Morton and Buddy lost the house and had to move. Poor little Lemuel cried for weeks.

   WOODY
   Lemuel Hofer?

   MRS. HUGHES
   Yes, he lived across the back alley. He was Buddy's best friend.
INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lemuel drives his beat up car, lost in his own world. Other motorists HONK and SWEAR at his inattentive driving.

LEMUEL
I'm coming, Buddy.

INT. COLES HOUSE - NIGHT

The picture is frozen on the title credits.

JACK (V.O.)
You stole "Stocks & Bonds"?

CHARLIE (V.O.)
We knew the show could be a hit. We wanted Morton as a partner but he demanded too many concessions. He was bargaining from a position of strength. Or so he thought.

JACK (V.O.)
Then you and Heywood used Kevin.

Jack and the pedophile.

CHARLIE
We persuaded Jerry Morton to sell us the pilot at a somewhat reduced rate. Very favorable terms for us.

JACK
Why didn't he fight back?

CHARLIE
With a battery of high-priced lawyers and the judicious use of gossip and innuendo, he didn't stand a chance. We made sure he'd never work in this town again.

Breathless, Charlie can barely talk. Drool runs down his chin.

JACK
That was Jerry Morton. Who was Buddy Morton?

CHARLIE
Buddy was Jerry's daughter. She had this sense of timing you rarely see in a child actor. It was innate, you can't teach that.
JACK
Buddy Morton was his daughter?

CHARLIE
(he cackles)
You didn't know? Buddy Morton's a split tail.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

HONKing.

WOODY
Lemuel knew Buddy Morton?

MRS. HUGHES
Buddy looked after him. She didn't mind that Lemuel was different.

WOODY
She?

MRS. HUGHES
Buddy. You thought she was a boy?

WOODY
Naturally. I just assumed.

MRS. HUGHES
She was a tomboy. But most people thought she was a boy because of her nickname.

WOODY
Buddy's not her real name?

MRS. HUGHES
Jerry called her "L'il Buddy" when she was a baby and the name stuck.

HONKing.

WOODY
Do you know where she is?

MRS. HUGHES
I still write to Mrs. Morton and she told me Buddy moved back here some years ago. She's an actress.
INT. COLES HOUSE - NIGHT

CHARLIE
Jerry killed himself and the family was broke. They moved away and I looked everywhere for her. She was a special talent.

JACK
You think Buddy Morton killed Heywood to avenge her father?

CHARLIE
I bet Eastcott and I are the next to die. You should be worried too.

JACK
Me? I didn't steal the pilot and cause Jerry's death.

CHARLIE
You're in bigger shit than the rest of us. You stole her life.

He STARTS the tape and Jack moves closer to the television.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Mrs. Hughes returns with a framed photograph and hands it to Woody. We see this action from a doorway behind the loveseat.

MRS. HUGHES
Her mother sent me this publicity photo. Buddy's starring in some sort of television pilot.

WOODY
(stunned)
This is Buddy Morton?

MRS. HUGHES
Not anymore. Because of her father's scandal, she uses her middle name as her last name. In the pilot, her is Amber Sparks. Isn't that a beautiful name?

An arm rises. Follow down the length of the arm to a gun. We see the back of Woody's head in the gun's sights.

INT. COLES HOUSE - NIGHT

Corny Theme Music over GASPING sounds. Charlie tries for Jack's attention but Jack is transfixed by the videotape.
JACK
This can't be happening. This is a nightmare.

CLOSE ON Jack's foot. He is standing on the plastic tube that carries oxygen from the tank into Charlie's nose tubing.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Jack's surprise.

JACK
(continuing)
I'm not the real Buddy Bonds.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

The gun moves up and over slightly. Now aiming at Mrs. Hughes. Her forehead. A SHOT is fired. She DROPS.

INT. COLES HOUSE - NIGHT

SITCOM sounds. Jack stares at the television screen. In a daze, he pulls his phone out and DIALS. Charlie is a mottled purple hue, spittle on his chin. His hands no longer flutter.

JACK
(into the phone)
Answer the fucking phone, Woody.

INT. SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE - NIGHT

Woody is driving. The carphone RINGS. He looks over to his right. He pauses and then answers it.

WOODY
In my car. Jackie-boy, there's been some unusual developments. I suggest we meet back at Heywood's house to discuss them.

JACK (V.O.)
Whatever you do. Don't bring Diane.

A gun points at Woody from the passenger side.

WOODY
Too late.

INT. COLES HOUSE - NIGHT

Jack puts the phone away. He pulls out the gun, rather awkwardly, from his pocket. He turns to Charlie.
JACK
Time to make yourself useful, old man. We're going for a ride.

Charlie's head slumps on his chest.

JACK
(continuing)
Hey, bedshitter! Wake up.

Jack pokes him with the gun. He leans closer for a better look. He lifts the dead man's face, now an ashen purple.

JACK
(continuing)
This is fucking wonderful! You picked a great time to die.

Jack puts the gun back in his pocket. He takes the tape out of the VCR and and he retrieves his own video. He puts both tapes in his jacket. Tears roll down his cheek.

JACK
(continuing)
I'm not the real Buddy Bonds.

He picks up car keys from an end table next to the cadaver.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alice's modest apartment. Kevin sits next to her on the couch. They are holding hands.

KEVIN
That patsy was Jerry Morton.

ALICE
You think Buddy Morton is related to Jerry and that he killed Heywood and set up Jack?

KEVIN
It makes sense. Jack Stratten is a lot of things, but he's not a cold-blooded killer.

CELL PHONE RINGING. Kevin and Alice both check their phones.

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

The garage door opens and a vintage white 70s Lincoln pulls out. It STALLS. RESTARTS and moves slowly down the driveway. Turning onto the street, it KNOCKS over some garbage cans.
INT. CAR - NIGHT

Jack can barely control this behemoth. He oversteers. SQUEALING TIRES and blaring HORNS. Jack looks in the mirror.

JACK
You're the real Buddy Bonds.

He glances at the road and slams on the BRAKES. He gives someone the finger. He lights up a smoke with his previous one as he DIALS his phone. HONKING and SQUEALING TIRES.

JACK
(continuing)
I know you're home, Richie.

INT. MOTHERS HOUSE - NIGHT

An old two-storey house. It looks like a museum. A time warp. Richie is at the top of the wooden stairs. He slides down the rickety wooden bannister. He disembarks and makes the "sign".

DR. JENKINS
"It's a deal!"

A telephone RINGS. He yells into the other room.

DR. JENKINS
(continuing)
I'm not here, Mommy. I'm playing.
This is my time, now.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

JACK
(into the phone)
Can you tell him I called, Mrs. Jenkins? It's an emergency.

He REDIALS as he wrenches on the steering wheel. SQUEALS.

JACK
(continuing; into the phone)
Kevin! Yeah, it's me. Everything's screwed up. You have to call the cops. Try to get hold of that chick, what's her name, Spandex?

EXT HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

SQUEALING TIRES and BRAKES. Jack overshoots the curb and ends up on the front lawn. KNOCKING over garbage cans.
EXT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT (PILOT)

"ACT IV" appears on the screen. The fake house, with the astro turf lawn, sits on a corner of the studio lot. One car is parked out front. On the street.

INT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT

Amber is bound and gagged on the plush couch. Chuck sits next to her, an Uzi on his lap. He watches the big screen TV. SITCOM SOUNDS: VOICES, APPLAUSE AND CANNED LAUGHTER.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
(pointing)
Look at me! That's acting. Wait, wait. This is the best part.

He laughs out loud, slapping his thigh. Amber looks at him, his attention is on the video. She tries to free her hands.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
(continuing)
I'm better than Jim Cooper. Where is that traitorous changeling?

With the remote, he pauses the tape. He pulls out his phone.

INT. THE COOP - NIGHT

The phone above the bar RINGS. Shanks bellows into it.

SHANKS
This is "The Coop". What do you want? Hello?

He SLAMS the phone down.

JANICE
Maybe I should answer the phone.

SHANKS
I'm a detective, not a secretary.

The phone RINGS. Janice answers it.

JANICE
Hello, this is- I'm Detective Chu.

INT. SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE - NIGHT

Jim drives recklessly. SQUEALING TIRES. He talks on the carphone. Sherman hangs on.
SHERMAN OAKS
Maybe you and Amber can get a
group rate for driving lessons.

JIM COOPER
(into the phone)
Janice? The killer's name is Chuck
Cunningham, a failed child actor
with big aspirations and a bigger
grudge. He's holding Amber
hostage. Sorry, I can't tell you.

INT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT

Chuck SMASHES his phone on the ornate coffee table.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
Where is he? I've got a little
surprise in store for him.

He walks over to the VCR and shows Amber another tape.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
(continuing)
This is my favorite TV show. It
also contains Semtex and a fuse
mechanism. When the tape hits the
cue, the plastic explosive is
detonated. Bye-bye, Buddy Bonds.

INT. THE COOP - NIGHT

Janice removes the appointment book from the evidence bag.
She flips through it.

JANICE
Jim is right. Cunningham is a
patient of the late Doctor.

SHANKS
It proves nothing. Cooper is a
narcissistic ex child star who's
doing what he does best, covering
his butt. It's a first class frame.

JANICE
Trevor Roach-Hickman says Chuck
Cunningham was in the failed pilot.

SHANKS
How do we know that Cooper isn't
framing this Cunningham?
JANICE
How do we know that Cunningham isn't framing Cooper?

EXT. STUDIO GATE - NIGHT
The SUV pulls up the studio lot.

INT. SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE - NIGHT
SHERMAN OAKS
I'm going with you.

JIM COOPER
No. Call Janice and wait here. Do not let Shanks near the house, Amber's life depends on that.

EXT. STUDIO GATE - NIGHT
Jim climbs over the locked gate and RUNS into the night.

EXT. STUDIO LOT - NIGHT
Jim RUNS across the deserted backlot.

INT. THE COOP - NIGHT
Janice hangs up the phone.

JANICE
That was Sherman Oaks. He's at the studio, the same one that fired Cunningham. Can you guess their most popular tourist attraction?

SHANKS
The "Partridge Family" bus?

JANICE
The Bonds Mansion. Still think Cooper's guilty?

EXT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT
Jim arrives at the fake house. He draws his weapon and walks up the faux flagstone steps, warily.

INT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT
Chuck watches a bank of black and white video monitors that show different areas of the replica house, inside and out. One monitor shows Jim walking up the steps. Chuck sees this.
CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
There you are! Sometimes, it pays
to be an ex security guard.

He comes out of the security room under the stairs. He yells
toward the living room.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
(continuing)
Honey! I’m almost home.

Chuck throws Amber, still bound and gagged, to the marbled
floor in the entrance foyer of the fake house. He turns down
the lights and waits in the shadows. With his Stun Gun.

EXT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT
Jim opens the massive front doors. He moves cautiously.

INT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT
Jim comes through the front doors, gun first. He squints into
the darkness and moves silently into the house. He sees Amber
on the floor and rushes over to her.

Chuck approaches Jim from the shadows.

Amber shakes her head. She manages to work out of her gag.

AMBER
Coo! It’s a trap. He’s behind you.

Jim pivots in that direction. He is hit with a massive SURGE
of electricity. ZAP. Darkness.

EXT. STUDIO GATE - NIGHT
Sherman stands with the two detectives.

SHERMAN OAKS
Cunningham is holding Amber
hostage at the Bonds mansion.

SHANKS
Are you still trying to convince
me that Cooper’s innocent?

SHERMAN OAKS
Get a new script, Shanks.

INT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT
Darkness.
CHUCK CUNNINGHAM (O.S.)
Wake up, Buddy! Time for school.


CHUCK CUNNINGHAM (O.S.)
(continuing)
Wakey, wakey!

SLAP. SLAP.

Jim is handcuffed and lying on the couch. Amber is next to him. She moves her hands, slightly. Chuck looms over them.

AMBER
Quit hitting him, you psycho!

He SLAPS her instead. He holds the Uzi in his left hand.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
Shut up or I'll kill you.

JIM COOPER
(groggy)
Cunningham, touch her again and I'll kill you.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
You already did that. Then you stole my identity and my life.

JIM COOPER
I'm sorry that you were replaced in the series but this is between you and me. Let Amber go.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
I'm the real Buddy Bonds! You're the guy who ruined my life and now it's time for you to pay.

Chuck removes "Bonding in Beverly Hills" from the VCR and inserts the other videotape. Jim's gun sits on the VCR.

JIM COOPER
More home movies?

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
This is my favorite episode of "Stocks & Bonds". You should get a real bang out of it.

He STARTS the VCR and laughs.
AMBER
It's a bomb.

JIM COOPER
I never knew your opinion of the show. That's a little harsh.

Amber frees her arms and legs. Chuck fiddles with the VCR. She launches herself and delivers a flying kick to Chuck.

EXT. STUDIO LOT - NIGHT

A SCREAMING police car comes to a SCREECHING stop in front of the replica house.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Shanks is behind the wheel. Janice and Sherman are up front.

JANICE
We play this by the book. There's a potential hostage situation.

SHERMAN OAKS
Jim can take care of himself.

SHANKS
I wrote the book and it says stop Cooper before he kills Cunningham.

INT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT

After a brief one-sided struggle, the black belted barrister subdues Chuck. She has the Uzi trained on him as she works on the VCR. She tries pushing different buttons.

AMBER
How do I stop this thing?

SITCOM SOUNDS: VOICES, APPLAUSE AND CANNED LAUGHTER.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
(laughing)
You can't.

He tries to stand. Amber shoves the gun in his face.

AMBER
One move and I'll send you to the Great Rerun in the Sky, Bentley.

JIM COOPER
Amber, get me the keys and my gun.
Chuck passes Amber the handcuff keys. She picks up Jim's gun from the VCR and she carefully throws both items over to Jim.

**JIM COOPER**
(continuing)
Don't take your eyes off him.

Shanks KICKS open the front doors and enters the fake mansion.

**SHANKS**
Freeze! This is the police.

Amber looks toward the entrance. Chuck gives her a vicious elbow chop to the stomach and rams his fist under her chin. He grabs the Uzi as she collapses.

Jim unlocks his hands and grabs his weapon from the couch. He aims this at Chuck, who is aiming the Uzi back at him.

**JIM COOPER**
Drop the gun or I shoot.

Shanks makes his way over to the living room, gun drawn.

**SHANKS**
You drop the gun, Cooper!

**JIM COOPER** (V.O.)
Stay where you are, Shanks. We have a situation in here.

Shanks moves toward the living room. From his P.O.V we see Jim holding a gun but nothing else due to the oblique angle.

**SHANKS**
Drop the gun or I shoot!

**JIM COOPER**
There's a man with an Uzi in here, detective. And enough plastic explosive to level the house. Get out of here before you kill us all.

**SHANKS**
For the last time. Drop the gun!

Jim lowers his weapon as Shanks comes into full view.

We see Jim as he drops the gun and motions with his head. We glance over in that direction. Someone with an Uzi? We react.

Chuck FIRES a spray of bullets at Jim and Shanks. Jim dives over the coffee table.
Shanks FIRES two shots but he is hit by Chuck's fusilade.
Jim lands on the carpet and rolls away from Chuck who FIRES.

EXT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT
Janice lies on the astro turf lawn, aiming her gun toward the house. Sherman is next to her. GUNFIRE. He begins to rise but she holds him back.

SHERMAN OAKS
Jim and Amber could be hurt.

JANICE
So could Shanks. We have to wait for the Emergency Response Team.

INT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT
Jim is at the foot of the stairs. He holds his right arm over a red blotch on his upper left: the ubiquitous shoulder wound.

JIM COOPER
I've got to draw Chuckie away from Amber and Shanks.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM (O.S.)
You can't run away from me Buddy because I'm you and you're me.

JIM COOPER
Then come and get us!

He starts up the stairs. As Jim nears the top, Chuck appears at the bottom and SHOOTS wildly. Jim dives for the top.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
(laughing)
When I kill you, is that suicide or murder?

Jim crawls along the hallway and into the boy's bathroom.
From the top of the stairs, Chuck FIRES down the hallway.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
(continuing)
Hey Buddy! Want to play guns?

In the darkened bathroom, Jim positions the vanity mirrors so that he can see down the hallway.

Chuck moves down the hall, FIRING blindly into each room. He laughs as GLASS SHATTERS. BULLETS RICOCHET and ECHO.
Jim crouches behind the door. He watches in the mirrors as Chuck approaches the bathroom, FIRING.

Jim hits Chuck with the bathroom door, sending the Uzi flying.

A fight between Jim and Chuck that carries into the bathroom. Chuck punches Jim's wound and Jim falls to the tiled floor. Chuck pulls a wicked looking knife from a sheath in his boot.

We see the up-raised knife reflected in the array of mirrors. An infinite number of knives. Poised to strike.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM
(continuing)
Bye-bye, Buddy Bonds.

Chuck brings the knife down. Jim pulls on the laundry chute and Chuck is hit in the knees. He stumbles.

Jim jumps up and slams Chuck's arm on the edge of the vanity. The knife drops. Jim knees Chuck in the groin. As Chuck doubles over, Jim smashes his head with the laundry chute.

Chuck crumbles. Jim opens the laundry chute. He pulls Chuck to his feet and stuffs the False Buddy down the laundry chute.

JIM COOPER
Who wants to see my dirty laundry?

He looks at his bruised and bloodied reflection and smiles.

LOUD THEME MUSIC plays over this slow motion sequence: Jim slides down the bannister/The videotape is running/Jim picks up Amber and puts her on his good shoulder/The videotape is running/Shanks stirs on the floor, his open jacket reveals a Kelvar vest/The tape is running/Jim half carries-half drags Shanks with his bad arm/The tape is running/Sherman and Janice help the trio through the front doors/The tape freezes on young Buddy cocking his thumb and finger/EXPLOSION/They outrace the flames in fine television fashion.

EXT. BONDS MANSION - NIGHT
Raining debris, ashes and smoke. Fire in the b.g.

JIM COOPER
Chuck got his final wish as an actor. He brought the house down.

INT. THE COOP - DAY
"EPILOGUE" appears on the screen. Jim's left arm is in a sling. He's sits at the bar with Amber.
Sherman is behind the bar but he is holding hands with Janice who sits on Jim's other side. Shanks is next to her.

JANICE
Don't you have something to say, Detective Shanks?

SHANKS
Thanks for saving my butt, Cooper. But it doesn't mean I have to like you, actor-boy.

AMBER
That sounds almost like gratitude.

JIM COOPER
That's ex actor-boy, Shanks.

SHERMAN OAKS
Don't you ever miss it, boss? All the fame and the glamour?

AMBER
The psychotic, wannabe fans?

JIM COOPER
I'm better off without it. The last few days have taught me a valuable lesson. Television is harmful to your health.

They all laugh. FREEZE FRAME. CLOSING MUSIC.

EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
On the lawn, Cole's car sits among scattered garbage cans.

INT. CAR - NIGHT
Jack looks into the rear view mirror. CLOSE ON Jack's eyes.

INT. COLES HOUSE - NIGHT
PULL BACK TO REVEAL Jack's eyes as he stares at the television, transfixed. Unaware of Cole's GASPING.

CLOSE ON the television screen.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY (VIDEO TAPE)
CHEESY MUSIC. BUDDY MORTON, 10. She looks like a cute little boy with her hair spiked. She is at the top of the stairs.
She runs and slides down the bannister. She dismounts with a
dramatic flair and makes a gun with her thumb and forefinger.
She points it at the camera and smiles.

BUDDY MORTON
It's a deal!

Appearing over this on the screen, "STARRING PATRICIA METAXIA
MORTON AS BUDDY BONDS".

EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
The front entrance. Gun in hand, Jack BUZZES the intercom.

JACK
(into the intercom)
It's me.

TRISH (V.O.)
If it isn't Dick Sargent. Come in.

The door CLICKS open. Jack walks into the mansion, leaving
the door ajar.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT
Alice KNOCKS on the bathroom door. Kevin is with her.

STEVE (O.S.)
How come in the movies, when
people unexpectedly show up, no
one is ever in the bathroom? But
tonight, we get a big break on the
case and where am I? Taking a dump.

ALICE
Shut up and wipe.

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
Jack is in the entranceway, holding his gun.

JACK
Honey, I'm home!

TRISH (O.S.)
That's original.

Jack moves towards the living room, gun first.

JACK
This is weird, it's like art
imitating life.
He comes into view of the others. Woody and Diane, who has a large lump on her forehead, are on the couch. Trish leans on the wet bar, aiming an old service revolver at them.

WOODY
It's life imitating art, you fucking moron!

DIANE
Kill her, Jack! She's insane. She thinks she's Buddy Bonds.

JACK
She is Buddy Bonds.

WOODY
Buddy Morton is really Buddy Bonds?

DIANE
I don't get it. Is it, like, me?

INT. CAR - NIGHT
Lemuel hardly looks at the road. He is singing the cheesy theme song to "Stocks & Bonds" (think the "Facts of Life" but ten times worse) in his terrible off-key voice.

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
Jack is in the same spot, still aiming at Trish. He is starting to sweat.

JACK
Patricia Metaxia Morton starred as Buddy Bonds in the original pilot.

WOODY
That's a lie. My father was a lot of things, but he wasn't a thief.

Holding the gun in one hand, Jack pulls a tape out of his jacket. He throws it toward Trish.

JACK
I can prove it, asshole! This is Charlie Cole's and it contains the first "Stocks & Bonds".
(to Trish)
Show him, Trish. Put it in the VCR.

She keeps the gun on the hostages as she picks up the tape.
DIANE
Shoot her, Jack! She hit me over the head and killed some poor old bag for no reason.

TRISH
Fuck, are you stupid. She was the only person who could identify me as Buddy Morton. She was the only link between me and the murders.

Jack is sweating profusely, becoming antsy.

JACK
Except for Cole's videotape.

WOODY
Which you just gave her!

TRISH
You're so fucking stupid, Jack. I killed Hinckle to get his copy.

WOODY
But Arthur Eastcott has a copy.

TRISH
I'm sure Eastcott's tape is toast. He's smart enough to destroy any self incriminating evidence.

JACK
Him and Dawn still know about you.

TRISH
Soon, they'll fall victim to a randomless act of violence. A carjacking, maybe. God, I love L.A.

WOODY
You might have Cole's tape, but he's still a witness.

JACK
No, he isn't. He's dead.

WOODY
Great. Did you kill Cole for her too? You already gave her the tape.

JACK
He died of encephalitis, genius.
TRISH
That's rather fortuitous.

WOODY
This whole thing's about revenge?

JACK
Christ! I'm going to piss my pants.

EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
Lemuel's old wreck drives slowly in front of the house and pulls in behind the Lincoln on the lawn. Lemuel gets out.

LEMUCEL
(whistles)
Buddy's new car is a beaut.

He starts up the walk. Whistling the theme song.

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
Jack is starting to resemble Niagara Falls. He holds his free hand over his crotch. Like a child.

DIANE
Let us go. We had nothing to do with the pilot.

TRISH
Except star in it and become famous at my expense.

JACK
You're over reacting. I have to take a leak. Real bad.

DIANE
You won't get away with this. The police will figure it out.

WOODY
How? There's no proof.

TRISH
Now that I have Cole's tape, Buddy Morton does not officially exist.

WOODY
Thanks to Jack's stupidity.

JACK
Shut the fuck up, Woody! Kevin's bringing the cops. We'll see.
TRISH
(points with her gun)
They'll discover a tragic scene:
Jack Stratten kills his one true love, Amber and his life long rival, Woody. But he couldn't kill his long suffering girlfriend, me.

JACK
They won't believe any of that!
The cops will know you did it.

TRISH
Who are they going to blame? Trish Metaxia, a nobody. Or a troubled ex child star with a history of violence and a mental disorder?

JACK
It's a syndrome. I got to piss.
This is serious.

TRISH
Jack is today's equivalent to the Lone Gunman. Troubled, violent and living in a fantasy world.

WOODY
What could you gain from our deaths? Apart from the obvious satisfaction of killing Jack.

TRISH
"Stocks & Bonds".

INT. CAR - NIGHT
Kevin sits between Steve and Alice, who is driving.

STEVE
This is a childhood fantasy come true. A visit to the Bonds mansion.

ALICE
Don't tell me you had a crush on Buddy Bonds.

STEVE
No, Uncle Frank.

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
Jack is nearly doubled over. His free hand still grips his crotch. He moves from one foot to another. Lightly.
WOODY
Greed or vengeance?

TRISH
A little of both.

DIANE
Why would you get the series?

TRISH
I never changed my address. According to common law, Woody and I are practically married.

WOODY
This is such a relief! You only dumped me so that Jack could be your patsy. I understand. Bravo.

JACK
You lived with Woody? I'm always the last to know.

WOODY
What makes you think that I inherit the show, not Dawn?

TRISH
Eastcott's a moaner.

JACK
You slept with Eastcott? You were unfaithful? But I love you, Trish.

TRISH
I'm fucking touched, Jack. That was the most difficult part of my plan, pretending to care for you.

JACK
You were pretending? The whole time? You used me.

WOODY
That's certainly ironic, isn't it Jack? What about Esposito?

TRISH
Another great loss. I was his source so I could frame Jack for his murder. But Gerald Hoover changed that plan.
JACK
What do you have against me?

TRISH
You stole my life. You had the world handed to you, Jack. You fucked it up. Whining all the way.

Jack puts both hands on the gun and aims it at Trish.

JACK
I've had it! Don't move a fucking muscle or I swear, I'll shoot!

Diane screams. Trish aims at Jack and slowly backs away from the wet bar as Jack races behind the bar, UNZIPPING with one hand and holding his gun on Trish with the other.

TRISH
I only intended to kill Heywood, for obvious reasons. And to send Jack to death row. For obvious reasons. But Jack screwed up.

WATER RUNNING. Jack urinates in the sink. Relief.

DIANE
Shoot her, Jack!

JACK
It's not my fault-

TRISH
Nothing is ever your fault!
(to Woody)
I really like you Woody. You have no scruples but you're honest about it. I would have gone back to you after Jack was arrested.

WOODY
Jack's self absorption ruins another life. I must admit it's a great plan, Trish. I bet that gun is the same one that killed my father, Esposito and your father.

WATER RUNNING. Jack is winding down.

TRISH
Touche, Woody. "Cooperstown" is my favorite, though. Lots of hints. It's no wonder Heywood hated it.
DIANE
She's psychotic! Shoot her.

WOODY
Not true. He thought it was well written but he didn't think Jack's acting could carry it.

EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Lemuel walks through the open front door.

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Jack finishes and he starts to ZIP UP but he is going too fast, careless. He screams.

JACK
My fucking dick!

He sets the gun on the bar and turns his attention to his zipper. Trish smiles and cocks the hammer.

DIANE
What are you doing, Jack?

JACK
It fucking hurts!

Diane stands up and starts toward Jack. Trish aims at her.

TRISH
Sit down.

DIANE
Jack's hurt. He needs me.

TRISH
He's not worth dying for.

DIANE
(shrugs)
You're going to kill me anyhow.

Woody tries for Jack's gun. He almost makes it to the bar but Trish Shoots him in the knee. He screams and collapses. Jack grabs the gun from the bar and points it at Trish. Who aims at Diane, who stops short of the bar.

JACK
Let Diane go or I'll kill you. I swear. I'm serious.
TRISH
You can't shoot, Jackie. What would Freud think? Or Richie?

DIANE
Shoot her, Jack! Please.

LEMUEL (O.S.)
Hey, Buddy! Are you home?

Lemuel walks in, unfazed by the Beverly Hills stand off.

JACK
Who the fuck are you?

EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT
Alice's modest sedan parks on the street.

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

LEMUEL
Remember me? You said I could stop by your house sometime.

TRISH
I saw you at Dr. Almonzo's office.

JACK
She's the psychiatrist. He's crazy?

Lemuel is staring at Jack's gun.

LEMUEL
Hey, Buddy.

JACK
I'm Jack Stratten, you fucking nut! I played Buddy Bonds on TV.

LEMUEL
Mr. Stratten, your safety's on and your penis is hanging out.

Jack fumbles with the gun as he looks for the safety.

JACK
The safety! Where is it?

TRISH
(laughing)
Jim Cooper, my hero.

She moves her gun from Diane to Jack. Diane screams.
Jack struggles with the safety. His gun FIRES.

JACK
Oops.

Trish looks at him with a quizzical expression as a red stain appears on her lower abdomen. She drops the tape.

TRISH
You shot me.

She drops her gun and puts her hand on her stomach. She pulls it away, covered in blood. Jack turns to Lemuel.

JACK
It's not my fault. It was an accident! You saw me.


DIANE
Keep your gun on her, Jack. She almost killed us.

JACK
That wasn't real. Was it, Trish?

WOODY
She's insane, Jack. Help me up!

Lemuel obliges. Diane puts the gun back in Jack's hand.

DIANE
She's your fucking girlfriend. You deal with her. And zip up.

Lemuel and Diane help Woody but he stops and turns around.

WOODY
Grab the tape, Diane. It's our only real evidence.

Diane picks up the tape. Trish falls to her knees, bleeding.

LEMUEL
We can't leave Buddy.

WOODY
He's a detective, now. Remember?

LEMUEL
What happened to his red car?
They walk out. Jack puts the gun in his pocket. He ZIPS UP and runs around the bar over to Trish.

TRISH
I can't believe you shot me.

JACK
Stay right there. I'll get hot water and some bed sheets. Whatever you do, don't panic.

He screams and runs out.

He runs, literally, in circles around the main floor. He arrives at the bottom of the stairs.

JACK
(continuing)
Calm down. The bedrooms are upstairs. They have sheets.

He runs up the stairs but he trips near the top, falling face down. A GUNSHOT. A BULLET WHIZZES over his head.

Trish leans on the bannister at the bottom of the stairs. She's holding her stomach with one arm and trying to aim.

TRISH
That should have taken your head off. You always were a lucky prick. Like walking into the role of a lifetime.

JACK
You might have invented Buddy but I brought him to life.

TRISH
I created the gesture, the bannister slide and the trademark catch phrase. What did you add?

BUDDY
Stuff.

TRISH
Like what?

BUDDY
Stuff.

She FIRES at him.
EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Lemuel ties a tourniquet on Woody's leg. Diane and Kevin lie next to him on the lawn. The detectives are covering them from behind Cole's car. GUNFIRE from the open front door.

KEVIN
I have to save Jack.

WOODY
We have to get our stories straight. If Trish dies, nobody mentions the tape of Buddy Morton. She killed Heywood because he replaced her in "Cooperstown".

DIANE
(crying)
What if she kills Jack?

WOODY
Then I marry her to keep "Stocks", Jack is the killer and Kevin replaces him as Jim's brother, Kenny Cooper. We'll write Jim's death into the new pilot. Agreed?

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Jack dives for the top of the stairs. A light EXPLODES.

Trish starts, painfully, up the stairs.

Jack crawls along the dimly lit hallway.

TRISH (O.S.)
I hate you!

A SHOT. Jack crawls to the boy's bathroom. He starts in but backs out. He crawls a few more feet down the hallway and scurries into the girl's bathroom.

EXT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The detectives, guns drawn, run from the car to the others.

ALICE
Don't even think about it, Kevin. We're staying right here until we get a handle on the situation.

LEMUEL
Wow. Are you guys cops?
STEVE
Allegedly.

LEMUEL
What TV show are you on?

INT HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

In the dark bathroom, Jack hides between the toilet and the wall. Shaking, he pulls out his gun.

Trish reaches the top of the stairs. She FIRES down the hallway. Her breathing is labored. She starts down the hall.

Jack cowers and his breathing quickens. Hyperventilating.

TRISH (O.S.)
Hiding in the bathroom? You're so fucking original.

Trish is in front of the boy's bathroom. She FIRES several shots into the dark.

GUNFIRE. BREAKING GLASS. WHIZZING BULLETS. Jack shuts his eyes and shields himself behind the toilet. RAPID BREATHING.

Cautiously entering the bathroom, Trish flips the light switch on and holds her gun in front of her.

A shaft of light, from the girl's bathroom, pierces the darkened room through the shattered mirror above Jack's head. RAPID BREATHING. Jack stares at the light and slowly rises.

Trish moves with deliberate caution as she searches the boy's bathroom. She reaches the laundry chute and laughs.

TRISH
The laundry chute? Poor unimaginative, Jack.

RAPID BREATHING. Slowly and wavering, Jack moves toward the center mirror, ghastly lit by the shaft of light.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

BUDDY BONDS, is 12. He's short, cute and cuddly. He has irresistible dimples and spiked blond hair, long in the back. He is wearing action figure pyjamas and brushes his teeth.

The center mirror slides open, framing Breanna who brushes her teeth in the adjoining bathroom.
BUDDY
Hey Breanna, do you want to sneak out to the arcade with me?

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

RAPID BREATHING. Jack aims at the center mirror. From behind him, we can see (barely, in the darkened room) that the mirror image shows Jack pointing the gun at himself.

JACK
Bye-bye, Buddy Bonds.

Trish is looking down the laundry chute.

JACK (O.S.)
Bye-bye, Buddy Bonds.

She looks up at the center mirror and reacts to Jack’s voice by raising her gun. She sees her reflection in the mirror.

Jack looks away and closes his eyes. He FIRES the gun. Several times. The mirror SHATTERS and light streams in. CLICK. CLICK. Empty. He DROPS it and opens his eyes.

Trish is lying against the wall, half slumped to the floor. Blood and shards of broken glass cover her. She tries to move but slides further to the floor, leaving a smeared red streak. She tries to speak but WET SOUNDS escape from her.

We see Jack from Trish’s P.O.V. He is framed by the shattered mirror. He looks shocked. He disappears.

Jack rushes into the boy’s bathroom. He kneels down next to Trish. She opens her mouth and blood trickles out. Jack puts his ear close to her mouth. She whispers.

TRISH
I'm Buddy Bonds.

EXT HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

STEVE
How many shots was that?

ALICE
I'm getting a very bad feeling.

Alice is holding Kevin back.

KEVIN
Let go of me! Jack could be hurt.

A loud SCREAM emanates from the house.
ALICE
I'm getting a very bad feeling.

LEMUEL
That's Buddy!

He bolts past Steve and runs through the front doors.

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Covered with Trish's blood, Jack walks out of the bathroom and down the hall. He stops, turns and looks back.

JACK
Trish is the real Buddy Bonds and she's dead. So Buddy Bonds is dead. I'm free. I'm free. I am.

He laughs as he reaches the top of the stairs.

JACK
(continuing)
There's no more Buddy so there's no more Child Star Syndrome. I'm cured. I can finally have a life. Jack Stratten can have a life.

He starts down the stairs but stops and returns to the top. He laughs and sits on the bannister. He starts to slide.

On the sweeping curve, he grimaces in pain, and he removes one hand to adjust his groin. This causes him to shift. He loses his balance. He over compensates and tumbles off the side, falling toward the marble floor. SCREAMING.

INT. ANOTHER NEWS DESK - DAY

HOST
Boy, the bottom really fell out of the Bonds Market.

INT. HINCKLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Lemuel runs in. A crumpled figure lies on the marbled floor.

LEMUEL
Omgod! They've killed Buddy.

Blackness.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Blackness turns to light.
Woody sits in a wheelchair, his leg propped up. Diane, Kevin, Lemuel and Richie hover over Jack's hospital bed. We see them from his P.O.V. Around the bed.

WOODY
You're in the clear, Jack. The cops know Trish killed Heywood and Esposito in order to frame you. She was unbalanced like her father and insanely jealous of you.

DR. JENKINS
She was disturbed. Did you know she was a patient of Dr. Almonzo? The police do. Case closed.

WOODY
"Stocks & Bonds" is ours. It cleared probate with no move from Eastcott. We own it.

KEVIN
You were right about publicity, Jack. Your name recognition has never been higher.

DIANE
Thanks to you, the show is hot again in the syndication market.

WOODY
For the last 10 years, Hollywood has been waiting for the 80s nostalgia boom. You've just started it. Congratulations. Woody leads a round of high fives. He stops at Jack.

WOODY
(continuing)
Just kidding. I wouldn't want to break anything.

They all laugh but tears leak out of Diane.

KEVIN
You're hot. Everyone wants your life story. We have a firm offer. Seven figures. "A Movie of the Week" during Sweeps!

DR. JENKINS
Guess who's writing the script? I'm a player now, Jack. A player.
LEMIUEL
So am I. Thanks to you, Buddy.

WOODY
You've created a great buzz for "Cooperstown". The network has committed for twenty episodes. Lemuel has joined our happy family.

INT. THE COOP - DAY
The epilogue from "Cooperstown".

Lemuel, with a goatee and mussed up hair, is behind the bar but he is holding hands with Janice.

SHERMAN OAKS
Don't you ever miss it, boss? All the fame and the glamour?

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

DIANE
For no acting experience, he makes a pretty good Sherman Oaks.

WOODY
It plays into our whole concept of blurring fact with fiction. Naturally, we've had to write your little accident into the show. We had to reshoot some of the pilot.

DIANE
It's too bad Trish wasn't around for that. She was a good writer.

KEVIN
Thanks to you bro, I'm out of the agent game and back into acting. Alice thinks it's a good move for me. Therapeutic. Steve's jealous.

INT. THE COOP - DAY
Pan around from Lemuel and across the bar. Kevin's left arm is in a sling. He sits at the bar with Amber.

AMBER
The psychotic, wannabe fans.
KENNY
I'm better off without it. The last few days have taught me a valuable lesson. Television is harmful to your health.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

We see Jack from their P.O.V. He lies in bed hooked up to life sustaining machines. HOSPITAL SOUNDS. His eyes are open but nothing is behind them. A monitor above Jack shows many flat lines. Diane looks up at this. She starts to cry.

DIANE
He's still on television. Sort of.

KEVIN
Think of it as a television set with a different program.

DIANE
I'm going to miss you, Jack.

WOODY

KEVIN
Thanks for the second chance, Buddy. I'm going to miss you.

Lemuel tries to say something but he bursts into tears.

DR. JENKINS
I speak as your court-appointed guardian and the attending physician. Your time is up, Jack. It's my time, now.

He leans over and turns off switches, he unhooks tubes from Jack and finally, he unplugs a power cord from the wall.

CLOSE ON the monitor. CLICK. The screen goes black.

FADE OUT.