

A LITTLE STING

by

Steve Saylor

Steve Saylor  
409 Caballo  
Carbondale, CO 81623

(970) 963-1846

FADE IN:

EXT. TOWN - DAY

An idyllic afternoon in small-town, rural America. The village of Valley Falls is surrounded by green, rolling fields. Giant oaks sway in the summer breeze.

On the outskirts, a FACTORY appears to be abandoned. Gates are chained, and warnings posted: "Closed. No Trespassing!" A sign on the building reads, "AmeriCom Electronics".

Nearby, a PARK is alive with holiday activities.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Families, Frisbees, barbecues. BOYS chatter on the sideline of their softball game.

JAMIE WALKER, 13, holds a Tootsie Pop as a "microphone", carries on a rap-commentary to no one in particular.

JAMIE

Steppin' to da plate, Bigfoot  
Bobby Slade. Got the swing, got  
the power, he da man of the hour,  
dude could use a shower.

His teammates pay him no attention, but a couple FIVE-YEAR-OLDS sitting close by hang on his every word.

JAMIE

Ain't no arm on the pitcher,  
throws just like my sister.

A TEAMMATE walks by.

TEAMMATE

Right, Jamie. He struck you out.

JAMIE

Part of my plan. I let him  
believe I can't hit, he gets  
careless, then next time I'm up...  
(back to the rap)  
Pow! Mutilation! And for them,  
humiliation!

The teammate smirks. The five-year-olds seem very impressed.

Nearby, RACHEL WALKER -- 16, very pretty, self-assured -- talks to an older BOY who sits on the hood of his sports car.

When they say good-bye, she joins her GIRLFRIENDS.

GIRL 1

So? Did he ask you out again?

RACHEL

He wants to take me to Glenwood tonight to see the fireworks.

GIRL 2

And?

RACHEL

(coy)

I told him I'd think about it?

GIRL 3

(sarcastic)

You're not just going out with him because he drives a Corvette, are you, Rachel?

RACHEL

Of course not. I'm going out with him because he lets me drive the Corvette.

PICNIC TABLE

Near the baseball diamond, the DADS tip a few.

PETE WALKER -- 40's, medium build, average looks, easygoing -- grabs a beer from the cooler.

PETE

So you're really gonna go? Won't be the same around here without...

MAN 1

Hey, it's not like I want to leave this place. But at least I got a job waitin' for me.

MAN 2

Doin' what, exactly?

MAN 1

I dunno, puttin' widgets on some thingamajigs... with my brother-in-law... in a little shed next to his trailer. Sounds like heaven, don't it?

Pete stares across the field to where Jamie steps to the plate, takes the first pitch. UMPIRE calls "STRIKE".

PETE

Come on, Jamie!

MAN 2

Did you hear Carter managed to sell his house? Just about broke even. Movin' to Florida is what I heard.

MAN 1

It's like a Cecil B. DeMille movie around here... so many people leavin' town.

MAN 2

How 'bout you, Pete? What are you gonna do?

PETE

(takes a swig, grins)

I'm thinking of moving to India. That's where all the jobs are.

PICNIC TABLE

At the next table, LINDA WALKER -- 40's, short hair, slender - keeps an eye on the baseball game with the MOMS.

LINDA

Pete wants to stay at least another year. For Rachel. Let her finish high school with her friends.

(beat)

Come on, Jamie!

The pitch. Jamie takes a solid cut. Misses. Strike two.

WOMAN 1

Ever since they closed the plant, it's cut our business at the diner in half.

LINDA

It'll swing back the other way, you'll see. There's something good up ahead... waiting right around the corner.

WOMAN 2

It's just gettin' to the corner... that's the trick.

Linda SHOUTS encouragement to Jamie. Here comes the pitch.  
 He swings so hard that he FALLS DOWN. Strike three.  
 Jamie gets up and does a silly dance on his way to the bench.

LINDA  
 You see? That's how we do it  
 around here. You get knocked down,  
 you get back up, do a little dance.  
 (pause)  
 I mean, they can't keep you down,  
 am I right?

EXT. PARK - DAY

People pack up and head home. They move quickly, hurried  
 along by THUNDER! The approaching storm darkens the sky.

LINDA  
 I just felt a raindrop. We'd  
 better run.

RACHEL  
 We could be driving home, but no,  
 dad doesn't want to take the car.

Pete's in a rather jovial mood. Beer and sun.

PETE  
 That's because we're Pete and  
 Linda Walker, and you are Rachel  
 and Jamie Walker. Together, we  
 are the Walkers, destined to walk  
 this great land of ours...

RACHEL  
 While the rest of the world passes  
 us by. And wasn't I supposed to  
 have a car of my own by now?

PETE  
 Patience, my child. One of the  
 heavenly virtues...

RACHEL  
 Yeah, um... I don't really "get"  
 that concept yet. I'm a teenager.

As they start across a field, Rachel waves to a passing car.  
 It's her girlfriends. They stop. She runs to join them.

PETE  
 She's deserting us!

JAMIE

Traitor!!

PETE

This will not stand! The Walkers  
must stick together. We must walk  
as one!

A CRACK of THUNDER, and the rain begins to fall.

LINDA

Okay, it's time for the Walkers...  
to run!

They shift into high gear, race across the field, getting  
soaked, laughing.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Small tract home. Freshly mowed lawn. A big "For Sale" sign  
by the curb.

Rachel and her date walk to the Corvette parked in front.

INT. KITCHEN

Jamie eats dessert at the counter as his parents wash dishes.

They look out the window when the Corvette pulls away.

LINDA

Those cars are dangerous, you know.  
Should we be worried?

PETE

Yeah, probably.  
(a beat)  
I'm kidding. He'll be careful.

The Corvette accelerates with a SQUEAL. They cringe.

LINDA

You don't think he'd let her drive?

PETE

No way.

Jamie carries his plate to the sink.

JAMIE

We should go to the fireworks, dad.

PETE

Too far to drive. Too much traffic. We can watch 'em on television.

JAMIE

Great. Nothing like watching the bombs bursting in air... on a TV.

EXT. HOUSE - SUNSET

Pete and Linda relax on the patio. His mood has soured.

LINDA

If we have to, we can always dip into our savings.

PETE

That's a last resort. But if I can't find a job here soon... We're two months behind on the mortgage. Even if we can sell this place, we may not have enough to pay off the loan.

LINDA

Yeah. But today is a holiday. And you know what that means. We put reality on hold.

PETE

I just wish I could do more for the kids. I promised Rachel...

LINDA

Rachel will have to wait for that car, okay? Now stop it, or I'll tie you up, then pat you down...

She sits on his lap, gives him a kiss and a poke in the ribs.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Or I could always put on the Marilyn Monroe wig and sing "happy birthday".

PETE

Stop, you're making me feel better.

LINDA

Ah ha. You're onto my plan.  
(another kiss)  
And if you really want to do something special for the kids...  
For one kid... right now.

She looks toward the house, then back at Pete. He breaks into a smile, jumps up.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

Colorful EXPLOSIONS in the sky. "Ooohs" and "Aaahs" from the crowd.

Pete, Linda and Jamie lie back on their blanket. Big smiles.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The RADIO pops on. Local news station.

VOICE (ON RADIO)  
... has begun an investigation  
into AmeriCom, and that could  
affect lots of folks right here  
in Valley Falls.

PETE  
Linda! Did you hear that?

He reaches over, turns up the volume.

VOICE (ON RADIO)  
... with anti-trust allegations  
against Edward Sinclair.

Pete bolts out of bed.

INT. BANK - DAY

Pete is among the anxious CROWD inside the bank.

At a desk, a MAN is in the midst of a heated discussion with a bank official. He gets up, joins the crowd.

MAN  
He says we can't touch it  
right now.

PETE  
What do you mean we can't?

MAN  
They've frozen the accounts.  
Indefinitely.

PETE  
They can't do this.

MAN  
Yeah, well... they just did.

INT. TAVERN - EVENING

The local watering hole. Evening NEWS on a TV above the bar.

PETE

But it wasn't just AmeriCom who guaranteed those accounts. The bank said they were insured...

MAN 1

They're not saying that anymore.

MAN 2

Sweet Jesus... I had most of my savings in those funds.

PETE

I had all of mine.

MAN 2

All of it?

PETE

Yeah. Almost fifty grand.

MAN 3

Hey, listen up, everybody!

REPORTER (ON TV)

... as earlier today Edward Sinclair held this press conference.

All eyes turn to the TV where EDWARD SINCLAIR -- 50's, tall and thin, smooth talker -- faces the microphones.

SINCLAIR (ON TV)

These accusations are entirely without merit, and I'm confident that any investigation will bear this out.

Pete stares at the tube, silent. Others mumble "Damn liar", "Put the crook behind bars".

SINCLAIR (ON TV)

... and we ask our friends to be patient while these matters are being resolved.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The family is busy in the kitchen. Pete enters. He quietly walks past them, down the hallway.

BEDROOM

Linda enters their bedroom, looks at Pete.

PETE  
The pension fund is worthless.

LINDA  
But it can't be just... gone.

HALLWAY

Jamie edges down the hallway, stops just outside their door.

BEDROOM

PETE  
Sinclair's blaming the banks, and they're blaming him, but the bottom line is... It's not there anymore.

LINDA  
What are we going to do, Pete?

PETE  
Well, first of all, I imagine we'll lose the house. And after that... I really don't know.

LINDA  
But we've got to do something.

PETE  
Like what? If you were smart, you'd get rid of me.

LINDA  
Oh, stop it. Please.

Linda walks toward him, reaches out. He withdraws.

PETE  
Don't. Okay?

She steps back, drops her head.

INT. WALKER'S GARAGE - DAY

The workbench is covered with electronic gadgets. Radios, routers, amplifiers. On the front panel of an audio mixer is the brand name, "AmeriCom".

Jamie wears a headset with MICROPHONE and EARPIECE.

JAMIE  
 (into mic)  
 I just put the signal through the  
 pre-amp. It's loud and clear.  
 Amazing. You're five miles away  
 and I can hear everything.

Pete appears in the doorway.

PETE  
 Jamie, we need you in here.

JAMIE  
 Now?

PETE  
 Yeah, now. And turn that stuff  
 off. You can help me pack it up  
 later. They're taking it all back  
 tomorrow. Consolidating their  
 inventory. Squeezing every last  
 drop out of...

JAMIE  
 Geez, you'd think they'd give it to  
 you. I mean, I figure they owe us.

PETE  
 Yeah, you'd think so, huh? Come  
 on, hurry it up. Family meeting is  
 about to come to order.

INT. LIVING ROOM

They join Linda and Rachel. Everyone takes a seat.

RACHEL  
 What is it? What's going on?

PETE  
 We need to have a little talk.

The kids take a seat, and Pete takes a deep breath.

PETE (CONT'D)  
 It's no secret what's happening in  
 this town... with the economy like  
 it is, the opportunities are, well,  
 there aren't any opportunities to  
 put in bluntly. And the only place  
 to find a job now is in the city...

Rachel's eyes shift toward her mother.

PETE (CONT'D)  
 ... and we really don't have any  
 choice at this point.

Rachel jumps to her feet.

RACHEL  
 You said we'd stay here until...

LINDA  
 I know I did, sweetheart. But your  
 father and I talked this over...

RACHEL  
 I'm not leaving! And you can't  
 make me!

PETE  
 Please, don't fight us, Rachel.

She dashes for the front door, runs outside. Pete and Linda  
 look at each other, shrug. In a moment, Jamie perks up.

JAMIE  
 All right! Bright lights, big  
 city! Let's blow this pop-stand!

MONTAGE

- A) They pack their belongings, move furniture.
- B) Pete holds up their credit cards, along with a pair of  
 scissors.

PETE  
 I've been wanting to do this for a  
 long, long time.

Big smile as he cuts the cards into tiny pieces.

- C) Garage Sale. The yard is packed with their possessions.  
 Jamie works the crowd, making change with a fistful of  
 dollars.
- D) Neighbors and friends wave as their van pulls away.

INT. VAN - DAY

Jamie and Rachel sit in cramped quarters behind their  
 parents.

RACHEL  
 I don't know why I couldn't stay  
 with Jill. Or get my own place.

LINDA  
Don't be ridiculous, Rachel.

JAMIE  
It's not a bad idea, mom. Might  
be best for everybody. We could  
dump her right now.

RACHEL  
(to Jamie)  
If we're gonna dump anybody...

LINDA  
Rachel, I know you don't want to  
move. Lord knows we're all a  
little apprehensive about what lies  
ahead. But one thing you have to  
learn is, you can't look back. And  
everything that's waiting for you  
up there on the horizon... it can  
be whatever you want to make it.

Pete looks over from the driver's seat, nods.

PETE  
Nice speech, hon.

LINDA  
Come on, we should look at this as  
an adventure, a whole new world for  
all of us. And when school starts,  
both of you will make new friends.

RACHEL  
I'll probably have to join a gang  
just so I don't get beat up.

LINDA  
Rachel, I know you don't believe  
that.

RACHEL  
I'm serious. I just hope I can  
make it out of high school without  
getting stabbed. Let's turn around  
while there's still time.

JAMIE  
See what I mean? She's not on the  
team. Let's cut our losses now.

RACHEL  
(elbows Jamie)  
Can't we just strap him to the  
roof...

LINDA  
 Okay, that's it.  
 (holds up a cassette)  
 I'll put on the Willie Nelson tape  
 if you don't stop it right now.  
 (pause)  
 Is that what you want? Because  
 I'll do it. Swear to God.

Jamie and Rachel sit back, turn away from each other, stare out the window. Quietly, Pete begins to sing.

PETE  
 On the road again...

EXT. CITY - DUSK

They move slowly in traffic. At dusk, it's stark, gray, dirty. Pete pulls into a DINER, parks next to the window.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

They sit in a booth near the window, dig into their dinner.

PETE  
 We'll stay in a hotel for a few days. Won't be anything fancy, but it's only temporary. Soon as I find a job, we'll get ourselves a nice apartment.

JAMIE  
 Yeah, way up high. On top of one of those buildings.

PETE  
 Oh? You wanna live in the penthouse?

JAMIE  
 (dramatic)  
 It is my destiny.

PETE  
 And I suppose you'll be driving a big 'ol Cadillac...

JAMIE  
 I was thinking more like being driven. In a limousine.

EXT. DINER

Across the parking lot, a car pulls out of the shadows, then parks in front of the diner, on the other side of the van.

A MAN gets out, walks into the diner. Another MAN -- who'd been hiding in the car -- slips out the back door, BREAKS a window on the passenger side of the van, unlocks it.

He crawls inside, crouches on the floor, hot-wires the van.

INT. DINER

LINDA

You just might have to wait until  
you get that college degree, Jamie.

JAMIE

Why waste valuable time? I'm  
ready right now.

PETE

Oh my God! No!

Pete JUMPS out of his chair, SPRINTS toward the entrance.

EXT. DINER

The van SCREECHES out of the parking lot. Pete flies out the door, RUNS to the edge of the street.

PETE

Stop that van! Somebody! Help!

The van disappears in traffic as the family runs outside.

LINDA

How in the world did...

PETE

I don't know! I had my eye on  
it the whole time.

JAMIE

Me, too. I didn't see a thing.

RACHEL

What are we going to do now?

PETE

We've gotta call the police.  
And then... maybe they'll...

His voice trails off. They stand there in silence.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Pete fills out a report with a COP at the front desk.

PETE

Everything we had was in there.  
Clothes, a computer, our money.

COP

How much money?

PETE

Over two thousand dollars. But  
it was hidden under...

COP

I'm sure they'll find it.

PETE

Unless we find them first.

COP

We'll do everything we can, but...

PETE

You don't understand. I've got  
twenty dollars in my pocket, and  
that won't even get us a room...

COP

Don't you have any credit cards?  
(Pete can only laugh)  
I'm really sorry. Look, if you  
need a place to spend the night,  
there's a Shelter not far from  
here.

Pete shakes his head and mutters...

PETE

A Shelter?

He turns around, sees his family standing near the door,  
staring at him, searching for any glimmer of hope.

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

An old, three-story hotel in the inner city. The Walkers  
step inside, then stop, look around, a flock of lost lambs.

LINDA

Listen, honey. I can call Kevin...

PETE

No. I told you, we're not gonna  
ask your brother for help. I'll  
get us through this.

A woman in her 50's, MRS. BRADLEY, walks toward them. Pete meets her halfway, stops and talks.

RACHEL  
 (whispers to mom)  
 This is so embarrassing. I'll  
 never forgive him for this.

Linda puts an arm around her daughter, says nothing.

MRS. BRADLEY  
 We have private rooms upstairs  
 where families can stay together.  
 Unfortunately, they're full now.

She leads them down a hallway.

MRS. BRADLEY (CONT'D)  
 In the meantime, we have extra  
 beds in two rooms down here.  
 You'll have to split up. Men  
 there. Women here.

DORM

Pete and Jamie enter the dorm. Thirty cots, spaced wall to wall. It's dark. They can't find two together. Pete locates an empty cot for his son.

PETE  
 Here you go, Jamie.

JAMIE  
 I wanna stay next to you, dad.

PETE  
 I'll be right over there. Get  
 some sleep now, okay? I'll see  
 you in the morning

Pete tucks in his son, walks to another cot, lies down.

Jamie stares at the ceiling, listens to the sounds: snoring, a cough, murmuring, breathing. He turns his face to the side and GASPS when he sees...

ARCHIBALD (ARCHIE) MCGEE, 60'S. The old man stares right at him, then speaks in a whisper.

ARCHIE  
 Well, what have we here?

Jamie's too frightened to say anything.

## ARCHIE (CONT'D)

A nice young boy. Good. We can use some new blood around here.

Jamie slowly pulls up the covers. Over his chin, his nose, his eyes, until he disappears.

INT. DORM - NIGHT

Jamie's eyes pop open in the middle of the night. There's a muffled NOISE coming from the hallway. He slips out of bed.

HALLWAY

He tiptoes along, notices smoke in the air. The noise is coming from the next room. SNAPS and POPS. Like the CRACKLING of a fire.

The door is ajar. With the slightest push, it swings open, and Jamie FREEZES when he sees four OLD MEN huddled around the low flames. Like hobos around a campfire.

Behind them, two BOYS are tied to a pole! Bound and gagged! When he takes a closer look, Jamie realizes that one of the boys... IS HIM!

The men become aware of Jamie. As they meet his gaze, Jamie recognizes the old man who was sleeping next to him...

CUT TO:

INT. DORM - DAWN

Jamie wakes with a start, breathing hard from the NIGHTMARE.

There's light behind the curtains. It's morning. A few of the dormers struggle out of bed. Mostly old men. Nothing scary about them in the light of day.

Jamie gets up, sees that his father is still asleep.

INT. CAFETERIA - MORNING

He enters the cafeteria, looks around at the people having breakfast. Old, young. Families. White, black, brown.

TIM

Want some juice? That's what they call it anyway. It's just Kool Aid.

TIM, 12, is a waspy kid, not all that different from Jamie.

JAMIE

Thanks. Name's Jamie. Just got  
in last night.

TIM

Congratulations. You must be  
very happy. I'm Tim. Doughnut?

Jamie takes some food, follows Tim to a table.

TIM (CONT'D)

I've been here for a month now,  
but we're leaving soon. My dad  
just got a job in California.

They sit at a table next to two young BOYS and a GIRL.

TIM (CONT'D)

Hey, everybody. This is Jamie.  
That's Miguel.

MIGUEL, 13, Hispanic, wears a T-shirt and leather jacket.

MIGUEL

How you doin'?

Jamie, trying his best to be hip, utters one word.

JAMIE

Cool.

TIM

And Sandy.

SANDY, 12, a girl with short hair under her cap. A real  
tomboy. She gives Jamie the once-over, then goes back to her  
comic book.

TIM (CONT'D)

And this is Jerome Hawkins.  
But everybody calls him Hawk.

HAWK, only 10, is an extremely cute African-American kid.  
Jamie raises a fist, speaks with a twinge of slang.

JAMIE

Yo.

Hawk looks around at his buddies, smiles.

HAWK

Yeah, right on, bro.

JAMIE

Nice to meet all of you. I think we're gonna get along just fine. Yeah, this isn't gonna be so bad after all. Especially now that I'm here to liven' up the...

Jamie stops in mid-sentence, eyes wide.

TIM

Whatsamatter?

JAMIE

That guy. He's coming over here.

MIGUEL

Hey man, that's just Archie.

JAMIE

He's scary. I don't trust him.

The kids look at each other, share a smile, as Archie and another old man, MR. SANCHEZ, sit down beside them.

ARCHIE

Top o' the mornin' to ya.

TIM

This here's Jamie. Just got in last night.

ARCHIE

I know. He slept in the bunk next to me. Hope I didn't scare you.

JAMIE

Not at all.

ARCHIE

A pleasure to make your acquaintance, my lad. I'm Archibald Rockerfeller.

Some chuckles from the kids.

JAMIE

That's not your real name.

ARCHIE

Of course it is. I'm the genuine, blue-blooded article, although I'll admit to being the black sheep of the family.

MR. SANCHEZ

It's true, Jamie. This man is filthy rich. But he likes to hang around here because he appreciates fine company. Isn't that right, Mr. Rockerfeller?

Hawk shakes his head with a laugh.

HAWK

Archie changes his name a lot.

ARCHIE

Keeps me far from the arm of the gendarme.

HAWK

Whatever that means.

JAMIE

Gendarme is the French word for "police". Isn't that right, Mr. Rockerfeller?

The kids look at each other, perplexed. Then Archie exclaims...

ARCHIE

A smart one! We got a smart one this time. Ain't life grand.

Now Jamie looks puzzled.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

A family meeting in the lobby.

PETE

Your mom and I will be back this afternoon. Hopefully one of us will find a job today.

LINDA

Mrs. Bradley said she'll keep an eye on you. There are other kids here, so try to make a few friends.

PETE

Here's a little money, but don't spend it unless you have to.

He hands them a bill. Rachel snatches it.

RACHEL  
Gosh, Jamie, think of all the fun  
we can have with five dollars.

LINDA  
Just do as you're told. And stay  
together. Okay?

Linda gives them a peck on the cheek. The parents exit.

RACHEL  
(to Jamie)  
See ya later.

JAMIE  
Not if I can help it.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

Rachel converses with Mrs. Bradley's granddaughter, ANNIE  
BRADLEY -- 14, dark hair, homespun.

ANNIE  
When you get to the main street,  
you turn that way, and it's maybe  
three blocks. Not far at all.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rachel walks along the sidewalk, sees the building up ahead.

INT. MALL - DAY

She enters an enormous, indoor shopping plaza, steps onto the  
escalator, looks around with a smile as she ascends.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

Jamie explores the old hotel. He climbs the stairs to the  
second floor, peers into a large room with racks of clothing,  
sort of an "in-house thrift store".

He hears VOICES coming from the back. Sounds like kids, but  
they speak a foreign tongue.

Jamie edges forward, peeks through a rack of coats to where  
Tim and Sandy stand side by side in front of a mirror.

TIM & SANDY  
God dag, aur mar du.

NANCY, a soft-spoken, good-natured woman in her 60's, recites  
more phrases in Swedish. The kids repeat them.

NANCY

Very good. You're coming along.

The kids look totally different from this morning. Very spiffy. Tim wears a coat and tie. Sandy, a pink dress.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Jamie peeks around a corner, sees Tim and Sandy walk down a hallway and out the door. His curiosity takes hold. He's quickly on their trail.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

He follows them along sidewalks, through the city streets.

They're not the only ones being followed. HAWK pulls up the rear, stays a block behind Jamie.

INT. HOTEL

Tim and Sandy enter the lobby of a big hotel, blend in with the people waiting to be seated at the adjacent restaurant.

Jamie enters, stands far away, unseen.

The kids just sit there until finally... ARCHIE appears out of nowhere, cleanly shaven, dressed like an employee.

ARCHIE

The Borgins twins. A message for the... You must be them.

Tim and Sandy nod. He hands them the message, disappears.

TIM

Jag forstar inte vad detta ar.

The kids stare at the note as an older COUPLE look on.

WOMAN

Can you children read English?

SANDY

(heavy accent)  
English, no.

WOMAN

Here. Let me help you.  
(takes the note)  
"We regret to inform you that your parents have..." Oh my.

The woman passes the note to her husband.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You poor children. Your parents must've been on their way here...

TIM

Parents. Yes?

WOMAN

Well, your parents... they were in a car accident near Springfield, and they're in the hospital...

(no reaction)

Your parents. They've been hurt.

SANDY

Parents? Hurt?

WOMAN

Oh, you poor dears. We've got to get you there immediately. Do you have any money?

The kids play dumb. She takes out a twenty dollar bill.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Do you have... any... money?

EXT. HOTEL

The older couple escort the kids to a taxi. Jamie follows.

MAN

Their parents are at Springfield Hospital. How much for that ride?

CABBIE

I don't know. Forty, fifty bucks.

The man takes out three twenties, hands them to the driver.

MAN

You kids might need some more.

Sandy takes the next couple twenties, says something in Swedish. Jamie watches in amazement as the taxi pulls away.

HAWK'S VOICE

Well now, how about that?

Jamie spins around. Hawk stands right behind him.

JAMIE

What's going on here?

Hawk looks at him with a big grin, then runs around the corner. Jamie follows, sees the taxi pull to the curb.

INT. TAXI

Sandy speaks in her regular voice.

SANDY

Hand over that money, then I'll pay ya for the ride.

CABBIE

Forget it, you little scam artists. He gave me the money.

SANDY

Come on! Sixty bucks for one block? Okay, I'll give ya twenty, but I want the rest of it. Now!

CABBIE

Oh yeah? What are you gonna do?

SANDY

I'll scream. You wanna deal with harassment? Now fork it over, bud.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

A shaded patio set back from the sidewalk. Archie and Miguel relax at a big round table, sample the appetizers.

Tim and Sandy enter, pull up a chair. Then Hawk strolls in, plops down, sips a waiting milkshake.

ARCHIE

How'd it go?

SANDY

Okay. Had a little trouble with the cabbie, but here's what's left.

Jamie observes from the sidewalk, then walks to the table.

JAMIE

Not bad, not bad at all. Against the law, but...

ARCHIE

They are good, aren't they? Sandy is a marvel to watch, and Tim couldn't be any better. But I'm afraid Tim is leaving us soon, and we just might be looking for someone to take his place.

They stare at Jamie. No answer. Archie flashes the cash.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

The money's pretty good. You'd be able to help your family. I'm sure that would make them very happy.

(still no answer)

But the fringe benefits are the best. Cheeseburgers, onion rings. And dessert? Chocolate eclairs, raspberry tarts, ice cream sundaes.

(he pauses, lets the images sink in)

Well, Jamie? Won't you join us?

JAMIE

I um... I don't think so.

The waitress arrives, her tray filled with glorious food.

ARCHIE

Well, have something to eat, anyway. I ordered a plate for you. Come on, sit down. Enjoy!

Jamie takes a seat, digs into his cheeseburger and fries.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

This afternoon we're going for a little ride on the train. You're welcome to come along.

INT. MALL - DAY

At the FOOD COURT, Rachel hovers near a group of TEENAGERS.

GIRL 1

And now my parents are making me get a job for the summer.

RACHEL

Me, too. And I just moved here. I don't even know where to start looking.

The girls give her the once-over. Looks like she passes.

GIRL 2

Have a seat. We can talk about it.

GIRL 1

Yeah, the longer we talk about it, the less we have to look.

INT. NOVELTY SHOP - DAY

One of those tourist-traps where they dress you in costumes, take your picture, and print the photo as "front page news".

The kids outfit themselves in cowboy hats, guns, holsters.

ARCHIE

Let's put Jamie right in the middle, make him feel at home.

They pull their guns, pose like a gang of desperadoes, as FLASHBULBS pop, and the picture "rolls off the presses".

EXT. RAILROAD CAR - DAY

Jamie stands between cars as the train rattles along. Sun on his face, wind in his hair, great view of the city skyline.

Miguel and Sandy, wearing ragged jeans and T-shirts, pass behind him as they walk from one car to the next. Jamie follows them inside.

INT. RAILROAD CAR

The car is half-full of stuffy BUSINESSMEN. And one young boy. HAWK looks adorable, dressed in a three-piece-suit, clean as a whistle. He sits alone with two small suitcases.

Miguel and Sandy stop to check him out, then take a seat next to him.

SANDY

Wo, what up with you, homey?

Hawk speaks with a perfect English accent.

HAWK

Excuse me? I beg your pardon?

MIGUEL

Well now. You're not from around here, are you, bro?

Jamie takes a seat nearby, keeps an eye on the proceedings.

HAWK

I'm from London. I'm visiting my father here. He's an Ambassador. Now I'm going to the airport to see my uncle who lives in Baltimore.

The train comes to a stop. More passengers climb aboard.

SANDY

A tourist, huh? So, how do you like America so far, Mr. Ambassador's son?

HAWK

Super. The people are so nice...

MIGUEL

Then maybe you'd like to return some of that hospitality by loaning me ten dollars.

A MAN behind Hawk leans forward.

MAN 1

Okay, kids. Why don't you leave this young man alone.

HAWK

No, that's quite all right.  
(to Miguel)  
What do you need the money for?

MIGUEL

Uh, well, it's my mother's birthday and I need to buy her a present.

MAN 2

Son, these kids are panhandling. It's okay to tell them no.

MIGUEL

Hey, why don't you stay out of it?

MAN 2

I don't want to see the boy taken advantage of. And what are you kids doing on this train? You don't look like you're headed for Hillsboro.

The train begins moving again.

SANDY

This is a free country, ain't it?

MAN 1

I'm going to get the conductor.

When the man gets up, Miguel and Sandy GRAB HAWK'S SUITCASES and run the other way.

MAN 2

Somebody stop those kids!

The train picks up speed as Miguel and Sandy run between cars, JUMP OFF, and disappear under a bridge.

Hawk looks terrified, tears in his eyes, as he cries out...

HAWK

Everything I had was in there. My money, my ticket, my clothes.

MAN 2

There now, young man. It's going to be all right.

HAWK

But how am I... I can't... Aaahh...

His head falls back, his eyes roll up, he begins to convulse.

MAN 1

Oh my God, this boy's in trouble. I think he's having a seizure.

The businessmen crowd around in a panic as Jamie looks on with amusement. Hawk's giving quite a performance.

ARCHIE'S VOICE

Get back. Please, everybody. Move aside.

Archie, who'd been sitting unnoticed in the back of the car, squeezes through the crowd and kneels above Hawk.

ARCHIE

Move back, everyone. I'm a doctor.  
(he opens Hawk's mouth)  
Oh no. He's swallowed his tongue!

Archie shoves a couple fingers down Hawk's throat and executes the tricky Tongue Retrieval Maneuver.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

There. We've got it. Now breathe, son. Breathe, long and slow.

Hawk does as he's told, slowly regains his senses.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

We've got to get you home. Do you live in the city?

MAN 1

He's from London. He was catching a flight to Baltimore, but his ticket and his money were in the suitcases.

ARCHIE

Then we have to get him there. How much is a ticket to...

MAN 3

At least two hundred dollars.

MAN 1

Come on, everybody. We've got to help this boy.

The man takes a twenty from his wallet. Archie matches it. More businessmen reach for their wallets.

ARCHIE

I'm on my way to the airport. I'll make sure he gets that ticket, and we'll report this to the police.

More and more bills are shoved into Archie's hands.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Forget about those kids, son. This is what America is all about. People reaching out to help their fellow man.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

A small "farewell party" in the lobby. Tim and family are about to depart. Archie takes the DAD aside.

ARCHIE

The kids and I... we do some odd jobs here and there, try to raise a little money for times like this.

Archie hands him an envelope. Tim's dad peeks inside.

DAD

Oh no, you don't have to...

ARCHIE

We want to. Now put that in your pocket. It's just a couple hundred. Something to help you along the way.

He thanks everybody, then Tim and family are out the door. Archie notices the kids looking a little sad.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Yes, Tim is gone. But at least now there's nobody around here who can beat me in a game of gin rummy.

SANDY  
 (a smile)  
 Wanna bet?

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

A lounge area with couches, tables and chairs. FOLKS from the Shelter play cards, watch the news on TV. Our family sits at a table with a stack of newspapers.

LINDA  
 Here's one I didn't see. Secretary  
 at a law firm.

JAMIE  
 You'd be perfect for that, mom.

LINDA  
 All I can do is apply.

PETE  
 Applications. My God, do you know  
 how many applications we filled out  
 today?

JAMIE  
 Then you'll definitely get a job.

PETE  
 A job? Oh, I already got a job.  
 Night shift at the Tower Office  
 Complex, doing the floors and  
 bathrooms. Janitor. Although they  
 don't call it "Janitor" anymore.  
 I'm a "Maintenance Associate", son.  
 And damn proud of it.

Pete's attention is drawn to the TV, a NEWS REPORT on Sinclair.

REPORTER (ON TV)  
 ... despite protests from Mr.  
 Sinclair, the state-attorney-  
 general took a step forward today  
 by filing criminal charges on  
 multiple counts of price-fixing,  
 tax evasion...

More people in the Shelter become aware of the report.  
 Scoff. Grumble. Sarcastic laughter.

REPORTER (ON TV)

...but one thing that becomes clear as you get to know more about Edward Sinclair is his fondness for the finer things in life. We have some pictures of his homes in New York, Palm Springs...

Pete turns red as they flash PICTURES of the beautiful houses, a private jet. He storms out of the room.

Linda starts to follow him, but stops halfway. Rachel looks at Jamie, puzzled.

JAMIE

He's the one who stole our money.

RACHEL

Who? What are you talking about?

Before Jamie can answer, Linda returns.

LINDA

He'll be okay. He's going through a terrible time. But everything's going to be all right.

They sit in silence. Then a look of resolve from Jamie.

JAMIE

I'm not worried, mom. I'm gettin' a job, too. I'll be bringing in some money myself. Soon. Real soon.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

A TV in a spacious living room broadcasts the same program.

REPORTER (ON TV)

...we'll keep you up-to-date as this story unfolds.

The TV is turned off. Edward Sinclair SLAMS his glass down on the table.

SINCLAIR

They could talk about my community service, or the people I employ. But no, they want to show the world my "material possessions". Is it a crime to have possessions?

RICHARD

Jealousy. That's all it is. Envy.

RICHARD GORDON, 40, is Sinclair's right hand man. Sharply dressed, lean and mean, a younger version of his boss.

A couple LAWYERS sit on the sofa.

LAWYER 1

We've got to make a public response to these law suits, Edward. And the sooner the better.

SINCLAIR

You know my strategy. Take the offensive, fight back.

LAWYER 2

And I say stall. We can drag this through the courts for a year or two...

RICHARD

... while we use the media to fight back. Public opinion is what counts right now. Some P.R. magic.

LAWYER 1

A miracle would be more like it.

HALLWAY

Sinclair escorts the men to the front door. They pass a den that's been converted into a gym.

MRS. SINCLAIR, 50, executes some karate maneuvers with her personal trainer, TERI BURTON, 30, blonde, athletic.

SINCLAIR

Give 'em hell, honey. Let's see your best move.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Okay. Here it comes.

She's a little overweight, and bulging in her tights. When she KICKS out with one leg, SPINS around, and finishes with a karate chop, it looks pretty silly.

MEN

Bravo, bravo!

They continue down the hallway.

LAWYER

Wow, her trainer sure is an eyeful.

SINCLAIR

Why do you think I encourage her  
with these classes?

Snickers. Sinclair bids them farewell. His smile fades.

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Jamie wanders around the Shelter, walks down a flight of stairs, hears MUSIC. He continues along the hallway to an open door.

INT. CLUB HOUSE

He stops in the doorway. It's like a party in here. Archie, the kids, and Nancy. An old record spins on a turn-table. A waltz. Nancy demonstrates a dance step with Archie.

ARCHIE

(notices Jamie)

There he is! Come on in, son.

Nancy immediately involves him in the dance, pairs him with Sandy. Miguel dances with Hawk, but not for long.

HAWK

Enough of this! Put on the fast  
one.

ARCHIE

Okay, okay. I know that's what  
you like, so here we go.

He drops the needle onto another "scratchy cut". A violin wails, up-tempo. Archie claps his hands. Nancy dances a jig.

Archie picks up an old violin, plays along. A second glance reveals there are NO STRINGS on the instrument.

ARCHIE

Get in step, Jamie. Faster!  
Before the music ends!

The place is alive with energy. Colorful. Like a dream.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Don't dally, son. It can all be  
gone. Blink of an eye.

He sees on that fiddle. Double-time. Possessed. Sandy takes Jamie by the hands, they lean back, begin spinning, faster, into a blur...

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. SHELTER - MORNING

Pete and Linda, holding the Classifieds, say good-bye to the kids.

LINDA

See you this afternoon. Be good,  
and stay together.

When they're out the door, Jamie and Rachel look at each other, then turn and walk away in different directions.

INT. CLOTHES ROOM - DAY

Nancy dresses Jamie in coat and tie.

NANCY

There now. You look so handsome.  
I'd be proud to call you my own.

JAMIE

Did you ever have kids, Nancy?

NANCY

No. I was married once. When I  
was young. Too young to know what  
I was doing. But now I have all of  
you. I consider myself lucky.

JAMIE

Are you and Archie... you know...  
boyfriend and girlfriend?

NANCY

(laughs)  
Boy and girl? I don't know. We  
might be a little ripe for those  
terms. Let's just say we're  
friends.

JAMIE

You know something about him then?

NANCY

I know he had a family of his own  
once. But they were taken from him  
in an accident. Gone in the blink  
of an eye, he says. He ended up  
here a couple years ago. Doesn't  
really need to stay anymore, but he  
says he's found a place.

JAMIE

Well, I like him. He's funny.

NANCY

Oh, yes. Very entertaining. Says it comes from his "theater background". I don't know about that, but he always makes me smile. Matter of fact, he makes a lot of people smile around here. And that's no small feat. Takes a knack. To make people feel good when things are... not so good.

Hawk and Sandy appear at the door.

HAWK

You ready?

Jamie nods. Nancy gives him the once-over, then a wink.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

Another luxury hotel. When a few ELDERLY COUPLES enter the lobby, Jamie and Sandy fall in behind them. They walk across the room, blend into the crowd.

JAMIE

How do you do, sir? Good to see you today.

Some folks smile and nod. Sandy pulls him along.

SANDY

Cool it!

JAMIE

I'm just getting into the part.

SANDY

Which means keeping your mouth shut. You don't wanna be noticed. You don't want anybody to remember what you looked like. Got it?

They take a seat beside two older LADIES who immediately strike up a conversation, seem charmed by the kids.

ARCHIE approaches with his "message", then disappears.

Uh oh. A SECURITY MAN by the front desk has his eye on them.

The familiar sting unfolds. The ladies become alarmed when they hear the children's predicament. As they open their purses, the Security Man appears.

SECURITY MAN

Excuse me, is something wrong?

Jamie freezes at the sight of this intimidating figure.

LADY

Their parents have been in an accident. We've got to get them to the hospital.

The Security Man nods, but he's a little suspicious.

SECURITY MAN

Are you kids staying at the hotel?

(Jamie nods)

What are your parent's names, son?

JAMIE

They're uh... it's... um... Pete...

Sandy jumps in.

SANDY

Pete and Susan Crawford.

SECURITY MAN

I see. What does your father do?

JAMIE

He's umm... well, he's...

SANDY

A banker. Vice president of...

SECURITY MAN

Why don't we let the boy answer this time? What's your home address?

Jamie's losing it. He tries to speak but can't utter a word. The Security Man waits. A long silence. Then Jamie JUMPS UP and RUNS!

SECURITY MAN

Stop that boy!

The DOORMAN grabs his arm, but Jamie escapes his grip and RUNS for the exit. The Security Man LUNGES at Sandy as she bolts out of her chair and SCRAMBLES toward another exit.

EXT. HOTEL

Jamie runs one way, Sandy the other. The Security Man comes outside, sees a POLICE CAR.

MAN

Police! That boy! Stop him!

The POLICE hop out of their car and give chase. Jamie flies around the corner, then turns up an alley. It's a dead end.

He looks around in desperation, sees a partially open window just below street level.

INT. BLDG.

He SCURRIES through the window, RUNS across the dark basement, DASHES up the stairs, smack dab into A CARCASS hanging from the ceiling! He's in a Butcher Shop!

He zigzags through the carcasses. The BUTCHER appears, YELLS at him, gives chase, meat cleaver in hand, as Jamie JUMPS the counter, runs outside.

EXT. STREET

Back on the sidewalk. More COPS across the street. A GARBAGE TRUCK pulls away from the curb. Jamie uses it for cover, runs along the sidewalk, and around the corner.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

He enters the Shelter, searches for his friends.

CLUB HOUSE

Downstairs. He opens the door, takes a step inside.

JAMIE

Hi, guys. I guess something went wrong. At least nobody got caught.

Archie stares at him, along with Hawk, Sandy, and Miguel.

MIGUEL

No thanks to you.

SANDY

For a guy who brags about his vocabulary, you can really clam up.

ARCHIE

You froze, son. And you just about got us all in a lot of trouble.

JAMIE

I'm sorry. Won't happen again.

MIGUEL

You're right about that. There won't be a next time.

JAMIE

Okay. That's fine with me. You know why? Because what we were doing today is wrong. You shouldn't be stealing money from innocent people.

ARCHIE

They're rich people. Which means they're probably not that innocent. We're just doing our part to spread the wealth.

JAMIE

Yeah, right.

ARCHIE

It's what they call "trickle down economics". That's the way things are supposed to work in this country. But sometimes you have to squeeze 'em at the top to start that trickle.

JAMIE

That's a pretty lame excuse.

ARCHIE

We're just taking from the rich, giving to the poor. Robin Hood was a hero, right?

JAMIE

Except that he stole from the king, who was evil, and who deserved it.

ARCHIE

Yes, well, the king is on my list, too. I'll be getting around to him. Anyway, I have no hard feelings, Jamie. I'm still your friend.

The kids look away. Jamie turns and walks out.

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

He ambles around the hallways. The place seems dreary now.

He walks through the LOBBY and sees his sister and his mom carrying boxes toward the stairs.

LINDA

Good news, Jamie. Mrs. Bradley has a room for us upstairs. And guess who got a job today?

RACHEL

You're looking at the new saleswoman at the perfume counter at Clark's.

JAMIE

Perfume counter. Wow, must be a dream come true.

LINDA

I think it's great, Rachel. And we're thankful that you're able to help out.

RACHEL

Now if we could just get this deadbeat on the team.

She smiles at Jamie. He snarls back at her.

INT. WALKER'S ROOM - DAY

A modest room with four beds and dressers. Pete, after working the night-shift, is under the covers and sound asleep.

Jamie reads a book in the next bed, hears something. He walks to the window, looks down to see a LIMO and a TV NEWS VAN.

LOBBY

He walks down the stairs, sees the crowd. Some kind of presentation is taking place. The man handing a check to Mrs. Bradley is none other than EDWARD SINCLAIR!

Richard Gordon, the P.R. man, runs the show.

RICHARD

Let's get the girl in here, too.

Mrs. Bradley and her granddaughter, Annie, stand beside him.

MRS. BRADLEY

We don't know how to thank you.  
This money will really help to...

SINCLAIR

Please. I'm as concerned as anyone  
with the future of these people.

Jamie moves in closer as FLASHBULBS pop.

RICHARD

Just one more. How 'bout you  
fellas?

Richard gestures to a couple MEN from the Shelter. They back  
away, wanting nothing to do with it.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Okay. How about this young man?

MRS. BRADLEY

That's Jamie Walker. He's with a  
family that's staying here now.

RICHARD

Perfect.

Jamie's hesitant, wants to resist, but is swept along in the  
action. Sinclair puts an arm around him.

SINCLAIR

Hi there, young fella. Now if you  
could just take hold of this check.

One of Sinclair's MEN whispers to Richard.

MAN

Get the friggin' kid to smile.

RICHARD

No. I like the image. The poor,  
destitute child from the streets.

More FLASHBULBS.

SINCLAIR

Thanks, son, and best of luck to  
you. Who knows, maybe someday  
you'll be working for my company.  
This is America, where anything can  
happen.

Sinclair discards the boy. The men head for the exit.

RICHARD  
Just a couple more stops.

As Jamie watches them walk away, confusion turns to anger. He knows he's been used.

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

The dining room is full. Festive atmosphere. Big band MUSIC on the boom-box. Archie carries a huge bowl of strawberries to the serving table.

We see more FACES of people staying at the Shelter. Hawk and Miguel sit with their FAMILIES. Sandy is seated next to her MOTHER who looks tired, almost sickly.

Our family occupies one table, along with Annie Bradley, who whispers a joke to Rachel.

ARCHIE  
Something special for dessert tonight. You know what that means.

A couple voices from the crowd call out "BINGO". Archie stands on a chair, makes a grand gesture.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
Yes, indeed. Saturday Night Bingo, where some lucky player will walk away with tonight's Grand Prize...  
(jiggles a key-ring)  
The keys to a brand new car!  
(a beat)  
Of course, it'll be up to you to find the car. Can't help you there. But we've got the keys!

Lots of LAUGHTER.

LINDA  
What a character. Mrs. Bradley says he's great with the kids. He even gives them "theater classes".

A smirk from Jamie.

JAMIE  
Uh huh. Something like that.

INT. CLUB HOUSE - NIGHT

Nancy sits in a rocking chair, sewing. Hawk and Miguel lounge on giant pillows. Sandy lies on a blanket with a big stuffed-animal giraffe.

Archie paces in front of them, reads from a play, acts it out.

ARCHIE

... and he says, "You think you could get me in that game?" The conductor shakes his head, "There's usually a waiting list." Gondorf flashes a couple hundred and now he's in...

JAMIE'S VOICE

Just a couple hundred? That's all?

They turn around to see Jamie standing in the doorway.

ARCHIE

Hello, son. Come on in. Join us for a story.

JAMIE

Not really in the mood for a story.

MIGUEL

Then get outta here, ya creep...

Nancy snaps her fingers, scolds.

NANCY

Miguel. We don't talk like that around here. Do we?

Miguel shakes his head, mumbles an apology.

JAMIE

I want to see the real thing. Not a story or any of your little shows. I want to know if you're ready for the Big Time.

The kids roll their eyes. Archie looks at Nancy with a grin.

ARCHIE

Sounds like you've got a plan.

JAMIE

That's right.

ARCHIE  
We're listening.

Jamie takes a few steps forward.

JAMIE  
Okay. The evil king? He was here today. Edward Sinclair. The biggest fish in the sea. And we can hook him. Not for a couple hundred. I'm talkin' a million bucks!

Snickers from the kids. Even Nancy has to smile.

ARCHIE  
And how do you propose we do that?

JAMIE  
He's got some problems right now. Big problems. We just have to find his weak spot and...

ARCHIE  
... and you just keep on dreamin'.

JAMIE  
I'm serious. We could do it!

ARCHIE  
Before you could even think about it, you'd need somebody on the inside. Someone real close to him.  
(pause)  
Do you know anybody like that, Jamie?

Jamie stands there, silent.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)  
That's all right, my boy. Nothin' wrong with dreamin'. Nothin' at all.

INT. WALKER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jamie lies in his bed, stares at the ceiling. While everyone else sleeps, he dreams... and schemes.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Jamie strides along the sidewalk, wears a coat and tie, carries a briefcase. He stops when he looks up and sees...

A towering steel-and-glass skyscraper -- SINCLAIR'S BLDG. -- with huge letters across the top: "AMERICOM".

INT. ELEVATOR

He steps into the elevator with half-a-dozen BUSINESSMEN.

MAN

Your floor?

JAMIE

I'll be going to the penthouse,  
thank you.

The men look at each other, smile.

INT. PENTHOUSE

He enters the Executive Suite. A secretary, ROBERTA, looks up.

ROBERTA

Can I help you?

JAMIE

I'm here to see Mr. Sinclair.

INT. SINCLAIR'S OFFICE

Roberta stands before Sinclair, Richard, and the LAWYERS.

SINCLAIR

A job? A 12-year-old kid? You're  
wasting my time, Roberta.

ROBERTA

He won't go away until he sees you.

SINCLAIR

Then have him thrown out.

ROBERTA

But he says you offered him a job  
yesterday. At the Shelter.

SINCLAIR

I what?

ROBERTA

You had your picture taken with  
him, and you said...

SINCLAIR

I don't remember what I said. Just  
get rid of him.

RICHARD

Wait. Before you do that, let me have a word with Edward.

She exits. The Lawyers look a little puzzled. Sinclair slowly breaks into a grin.

SINCLAIR

Okay, I know what you're thinking.  
(a beat)  
Go ahead. Tell them.

Richard stands before the group, paces. Gets dramatic.

RICHARD

You offer the poor homeless kid a job. Sure, it's only for a few weeks, just until school starts. But you give him the opportunity to see what really goes on inside the corporate world. You help him to experience it all firsthand, so that one day he might rise above the poverty in which he is so unjustly mired. And, with the help of Edward Sinclair, he may someday acquire that prized piece of the American Dream that has sadly eluded his poor family: A home of his own!

(beat)

You want publicity...?

SINCLAIR

(winks at lawyers)  
He's good, isn't he?

RECEPTION AREA

Jamie waits. Then a VOICE on the intercom.

SINCLAIR (ON SPEAKER)

Okay. Send him in.

A surprised Roberta looks over at a nervous Jamie.

ROBERTA

Mr. Sinclair will see you now.

SINCLAIR'S OFFICE

Jamie enters, looks at the men gathered around the desk.

SINCLAIR

Come on over here, Jamie Walker,  
and pull up a chair.

(he does)

Now then. I'm told you'd like a  
job with my company.

JAMIE

Remember yesterday? You said  
someday I just might work for you.  
Well, I'm ready now.

Sinclair leans back in his chair, plays along.

SINCLAIR

I see. And in what capacity do you  
envision yourself employed here at  
AmeriCom?

JAMIE

Excuse me?

SINCLAIR

Where would you be working? In  
sales, research and development,  
legal?

JAMIE

Anywhere you need me. I can do  
just about anything.

SINCLAIR

Oh? You're that good, are you?

Jamie sticks out his chest.

JAMIE

Yes, I am.

The men look at each other, smile.

SINCLAIR

Gosh, Jamie, I just don't know.  
Normally we would need to see  
resumes and references, and look  
into your background.

JAMIE

Mr. Sinclair, I don't know about  
all those things, but I'll tell you  
what's more important. I'm hard  
working, I'm smart, and I'm  
dependable. You can count on me to  
be here every day, giving one  
hundred percent to this company.

SINCLAIR

Well, I guess that settles it.  
(a beat)  
You're hired.

EXT. SHELTER - EVENING

Jamie climbs up the fire escape, onto the ROOFTOP, where Archie, Mr. Sanchez, and a few more FOLKS share a drink at sunset.

JAMIE

Archie, can I talk to you?

He gets up, walks over to the kid.

ARCHIE

What is it, Jamie?

JAMIE

You said we'd need somebody on the inside? Well, we got him. Me.  
(Archie raises a brow)  
I went to Sinclair's office today and guess what? He personally gave me a job with his company.

ARCHIE

You're kidding me.

JAMIE

He hired me for the rest of the summer. I can work anywhere I...

ARCHIE

Do you know why he's doing this? I'll tell ya. It's just for the publicity.

JAMIE

Who cares? I'm on the inside now.

ARCHIE

Forget it.

JAMIE

But you said...

Archie turns to leave.

ARCHIE

It's way out of our league, boy.  
But you keep on dreamin'.

JAMIE

I know what your problem is,  
Archie. You're afraid. You're  
just a scared old man.

Archie turns back around.

ARCHIE

That ain't it, kid. What I am is a  
wise old man. Smart enough to know  
how to keep himself out of trouble.

(he lowers his tone)

You're familiar with the phrase,  
"young and foolish"? It's one  
that's been around a long, long  
time.