

**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 & BONDS\$" 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 BONDS, 13. Youngest daughter and step-sister.

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.)  
 "Cooperstown" is a Heywood Hinckle production. Starring Jack Stratten and Diane Miller. With Rupert Vernon as Sherman Oaks. Tonight's episode, "The Real Buddy Bonds".

CREATED BY JACK STRATTEN, TRISH METAXIA & 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 paraphenalia 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. FED 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.

LEMUEL

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".

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

LEMUEL

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.

LEMUEL

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.

JACK  
(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" and 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. KEVIN'S 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.



KEVIN

The disguise worked, we managed to avoid the hordes of media.

TRISH

But not the police.

EXT. MALIBU BEACH HOUSE - DAY (PILOT)

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

JIM COOPER

You look fantastic, Dawn.

They are drinking coffee and staring out at the ocean.

DAWN

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

JIM COOPER

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

DAWN

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

JIM COOPER

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

INT. OFFICE - DAY

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

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Jim and Kevin Smienk sit at a large conference table.

KEVIN

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

JIM COOPER

"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 wiseguy.

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  
(lispig)  
"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 CHANTELLE, 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. Rumped.

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 apleness.

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

I knew it. You're just another Hollywood wannabe. That's why you hate me. You're jealous.

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. NIGHTRAIN

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. NIGHTRAIN

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 HORNS 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 the 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 charcater.

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 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 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  
 getting 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](http://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!

Charlie CLICKS 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:

"\$STOCKS & BONDS\$ 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 and slightly over. 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 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  
 Coop! 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.

Light. The room is unsteady and unfocused. Spinning. Darkness again. Then light. Unfocused. Spinning.

CHUCK CUNNINGHAM (O.S.)  
(continuing)  
Wakey, wakey!

SLAP. SLAP.

Jim is handcuffed and lying on the 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.

LEMUEL  
(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 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.

Jack drops his gun on the bar. He looks dazed. Trish looks dazed. Diane picks up Jack's gun.

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  
Omigod! 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.



LEMUEL

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

Jack Stratten. Asshole in life. Profitable in death. Or near death.

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.