

THE MAN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

Written

By

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Inspired by a true story

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OUTER SPACE

Boundless black pierced by a billion stars and galaxies... We boom down to reveal the blue marble, EARTH.

BUCKY (O.S.)

I live on earth at present. And I don't know what I am. I know that I'm not a category, not a thing, not a noun. I am an evolving process... an integral function of the universe. I am a verb.

EXT. PENOBSCOT BAY, MAINE - DAY

We're on the water, bobbing gently. Mist drifts...

A ROW BOAT in the distance. An OLD MAN in a black suit rows.

INT. ROW BOAT - CONTINUOUS

BUCKY (80), rows easily. Thick HORN-RIMMED GLASSES magnify his eyes comically. He speaks directly to us.

BUCKY

Used to summer up here in Penobscot Bay. Would row two miles every day... "toing and froing" out to Eagle Island or Deer Isle. Just to get the mail and come back again.

(beat)

Thought you'd like to see it.

He stops rowing, takes in the scenery.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

The very essence of my life now has become one of thinking and using intuition... I bought this boat, knowing it would be my last, and gave it that name.

SEE the name on the stern: "INTUITION." He resumes rowing.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

It's intuition that is continually opening doors of thought --it's the compact between our conscious and subconscious. The Twilight Zone that gives us ingenuity and innovation that involves all of humanity. Our future depends on it.

(MORE)

BUCKY (CONT'D)

(beat)

We now have the option for all humanity to make it successfully on this planet in this lifetime. Or not. Whether it is to be Utopia or Oblivion will be a touch-and-go relay race right up to the final moment.

(beat)

I talk too much.

(beat)

But what did you expect from me?

EXT. SHORELINE - MOMENTS LATER

Bucky sits on a driftwood. Faintly visible through the trees behind him; a small geodesic-dome house made of plywood.

BUCKY

I'm not a genius. I'm just a great big bundle of experience. But the one thing I know for certain...

Bucky stands and approaches the camera, looking right at us.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

A good life is meaningless without giving it to all people. Anything short of that... is a failure of our species.

(close into the lens)

Am I boring you?

(beat)

Wake up!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KATHY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY - PRESENT

An ELDERLY MAN's eyes flip open. BUD STOECKER, 88, slumps in a wheelchair. Bucky sits in the corner of the room.

BUCKY

It wasn't easy getting here, you know? And I have a good sense I won't be coming back. The least you can do is stay awake.

VOICES are heard from outside the room.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

Sounds like the party is starting.

The door opens. Enter MATT BLISS, 40. He approaches Bud.

MATT

Hey, Grandpa. I'm gonna take you to the living room, okay? It's gonna start soon!

BUCKY

He could definitely use a change of company. I seem to be boring him senseless.

Pushing his wheelchair toward the door...

MATT

I'm really excited for you to see this.

Matt and Bud exit. Bucky follows.

BUCKY

We're both ecstatic. Can't wait to see--

Matt closes the door on Bucky's face.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

The big surprise...

INT. KATHY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Chaos. KIDS of all ages run amok. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS and DECORATIONS. SNOW out the window.

KATHY STOECKER BLISS (63), hurries in and places CHIPS and DIP on a COFFEE TABLE. TOBIN BLISS (38), Matt's brother, fiddles with the remote control for the TV while JON BLISS (65), carries in chairs.

Matt enters, pushing Bud into the room.

MATT

Hurry! It's starting soon.

TOBIN

I'll DVR it so we can watch--

MATT

It has to be live! When else am I gonna get the chance to see myself with millions of people all watching at the same time? It's my moment--

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)
 (looks at Bud)
 --our moment. Right, Grandpa?

Bud stares at Bucky sitting nearby. Bucky smirks.

BUCKY
 (re Matt)
 Reminds you of someone, huh?

KATHY
 You're right, honey. Deep breath.
 We're so proud of you.

Bucky puts his hand over Bud's tenderly.

BUCKY
 Though he had it a little easier
 than we did.

BUD'S EYES zero in on his GREAT GRANDSON (8), playing with blocks on the floor, MAGNETIC TILES. Attempting to build a cube--

BUCKY (CONT'D)
 We're all born great.

--but the two vertical tiles of the cube collapse in on each other and form a TRIANGLE. Bud fixates on it.

BUCKY (CONT'D)
 (gravely)
 It's our ability to navigate the
 unexpected that keeps us great.

Bud slowly pulls his hand away, and we push in on the TRIANGLE...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GEORGE STOECKER'S HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK (1934)

A TRIANGLE--blurry and distant, comes into focus revealing...

A CHRISTMAS TREE IN THE WINDOW OF A NEIGHBORING HOUSE.

YOUNG BUD (5), sits gazing out the window at the ornate tree.

GEORGE (O.S.)
 Move away from the window, son.

Young Bud looks across the dimly lit living room... past a SMALL, SAD CHRISTMAS TREE, dead plants, crooked picture frames, stacks of newspapers, into the KITCHEN where his father GEORGE STOECKER (36), tensely scrubs the dishes, shirt sleeves rolled up.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We're not a sideshow for gawkers.
They can't mind their own business,
and they're not gonna mind ours!

Young Bud can't hold back. He begins licking his lips and tugging on his earlobe, in a somewhat manic manner, then bursts into tears.

George enters--stopping for a beat to watch his heart-broken son weep. George fights his own emotions, then snaps--

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I told you, get away from that
window!

He yanks Young Bud away who sobs inconsolably.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

That's enough. Stop your crying! I
said stop, damnit!

Frightened by his father's booming voice, Young Bud stifles his crying. George kneels down close.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Nobody needs to see your sadness.
Ever. We are Stoeckers! Don't ever
forget that. We're strong!
(with a burning look)
Great men don't cry.

His father yanks the curtain shut--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KATHY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - PRESENT

--Bud's GRANDSON kicks the magnetic tiles, the pieces go flying--

The DOORBELL rings. Matt's uncles ROBIN STOECKER(59), and JOHN STOECKER (57), enter with gifts, when--

Robin trips on a stray tile but quickly recovers with an agile pirouette, and strikes a pose in front of Bud.

ROBIN
 Still stickin' the landing, Dad!
 (hugs Bud)
 Hey... It's me... Robin.

JOHN
 He knows who you are. How ya
 feeling, Dad? You look good.

Bud and Bucky stare at John.

BUCKY
 The "quiet conscience". John, I
 believe? Heck of a hook shot. But
 he needs to borrow my glasses--you
 look anything but good, Bud.

Kathy and Matt enter with champagne and Hors d'oeuvres.

KATHY
 Come in! Come in! Find a seat!

MATT
 Uncle Robin! John! You guys are in
 for a surprise!

ROBIN
 I'm just glad Dad's home... thanks,
 Kath.

KATHY
 I couldn't stand him being all
 alone in that place.

ROBIN
 (to Matt)
 He, uh... ever say your name?

Matt swallows hard, shakes his head.

KATHY
 Nothing is ever lost. We're all in
 there. All his memories are. And
 when the time comes--it all goes
 with him. We never lose our
 memories... or our hope.

The front door swings open--DEAN STOECKER (55), sashays in
 toting wine, Kleenex, and a LARGE FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH.

DEAN
 Hubba Hubba!
 (singing)
 Happy Holidays! Happy Holiday!

Behind him, STEPHEN STOECKER (61), dances in, singing along.

BUCKY

"Baby Dean" and Stephen. Brains and looks--marvelous engineering, Bud.

Dean sets the photograph on Bud's lap. The siblings gather, faces softening as they, and Bucky, gaze at the photo.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

The only thing that has inspired me to do what I do--to really go all out? There's no question about it, it all comes back to... love. Nothing is more mysterious to me. It's beyond physics. Love is... metaphysical gravity.
(re: the photo)
Do you remember that day? I do...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO - LECTURE HALL - DAY - FLASHBACK (1947)

A vast dark space. CENTER STAGE, at a podium, PROFESSOR DISMISSIVE is mid-introduction, reading from a card.

PROFESSOR DISMISSIVE

-- engineer, inventor, mathematician, cartographer, philosopher, poet, choreographer, cosmogonist, and architect--to name a few. Though he has no formal training in any of the above, and was expelled from Harvard--twice, he is called the "inventor of the future." Please welcome, Mr. Buckminster Fuller, or, "Bucky", as he prefers to be called.

A smattering of applause. The Professor takes his seat next to two other PROFESSORS; DISINTERESTED and DISDAINFUL.

BUCKY approaches the podium, squinting through his funny glasses and shielding his eyes from the HARSH SPOTLIGHT. A few uncomfortable giggles emerge from the blackness.

BUCKY

Can you kill the spot? And bring up the house lights, please?

The spot dims, and the house-lights fade up to reveal:

Among rows of BAFFLED STUDENTS, a now college-aged BUD STOECKER sits on the edge of his seat, electric blue eyes laser focused on Fuller, navy haircut meticulously groomed.

On his desk a BOOK, "NINE CHAINS TO THE MOON" by R. Buckminster Fuller, covered in handwritten notes, pages marked with colored tape.

Bucky remains SILENT for an awkward beat. Raises one hand behind his head like he's compressing thoughts from his brain

BUCKY (CONT'D)

When I'm invited to speak, I never prepare. I have no agenda, no intended topics. When I speak it is because of you. To you. And you.

(pointing at Bud)

And you.

(Bud straightens proudly)

That's why I need to see your eyes.

Bud hangs on his every word.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

Otherwise, I don't know who I'm talking to or what the hell to say!

Bud LAUGHS. The PROFESSORS cringe.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

You see, I was severely cross-eyed til I was four. My mother found a doctor who discovered the problem and corrected it with these lenses. This was 1895 -- before motion pictures or Frank Sinatra.

(laughter)

Same lenses -- same prescription. When I take them off, I travel back in time and see the world as I once did.

(takes his glasses off)

My sister used to describe to me all the things she could see, and they sounded so fantastical that I thought she was making it up. Because I couldn't see the world the way she did.

(puts the glasses back on)

But now I can. Now I see what you see. I can see you.

(MORE)

BUCKY (CONT'D)

But none of you ever saw the world as I once did, and that, perhaps, is why I'm here today.

(beat)

Which brings me to the question every young person wonders -- at least they should wonder... unless institutions like this beat the curiosity out of you. And believe me, it's the one thing they know how to do.

STUDENTS exchange looks. The PROFESSORS are indignant.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

You see, everyone is born a genius, but the process of living de-geniuses you. For instance, you're not here to learn how to think. You're here to learn how to think like them! Which is not to think, but to comply.

A missile hit to the Professors. A few students walk out.

Bud unconsciously licks his lips and tugs his earlobe--small habitual gestures that have grown to signal when he is trying to solve the world's problems.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

But if you choose to go to school you should think about whatever it was you were thinking about before somebody came along and told you, you had to earn a living!

(beat)

But I digress. Where was I?

Bud's hand shoots up. He jolts out of his seat.

BUD

The question every young person wonders!

STUDENTS titter. GLORIA, an overly made-up blonde, sizes Bud up. He doesn't notice. He's caught in Fuller's gaze, where, for one divine moment-- a connection is made.

BUCKY

Thank you, young man. Good memory. It's the eternal question, hm?

(emphatic)

What is my purpose in life?

(beat)

(MORE)

BUCKY (CONT'D)

You see, all humans are born naked and helpless. And our only instinct for survival is to love and be loved.

Bud is practically hypnotized.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

And yet we allow war, hunger and homelessness when we have the vast abundance of resources to support all humanity at an omni-high standard of living. It is a matter of converting technology from weaponry... to livingry.

Professor stands in an attempt to gain control.

DISDAINFUL PROFESSOR

I'm sorry -- *living-ry?*

BUCKY

(with sudden force)

Either war is obsolete, or man is! We have overlooked the most essential product for industrial production -- the very key to humanity's success -- the home.

Bud's eyes light up.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

You are the architects of the future! Not its victims. And you must learn to do more with less until we can eventually do everything with nothing.

Bud flips to one of the tabs in the book to find a circled word: "EPHEMERALIZATION".

BUCKY (CONT'D)

Sometimes the only way to fix a broken system is to render it obsolete! Because we were designed by the universe to be an extraordinary success.

Bud is exalted, clutching Buckminster's book.

CUT TO:

The remaining students pack up and exit as the Professors usher Bucky towards a rear stage door. Bud flies down the steps to the edge of the stage --

BUD
Mr. Fuller!

Disdainful Professor darts Bud a disapproving look.

FEMALE VOICE (O.C.)
Well, what'd you think?

Bud's eyes stay on Fuller.

BUD
I think he just changed my life!

GLORIA
Hmm.

Bud turns to see Gloria.

BUD
Oh, hello, Gloria.
(He can't help but notice)
That's, uh, some dress.

GLORIA
Why, this old thing?

Bud notices Bucky exiting the stage door.

BUD
'scuse me, gotta catch Mr. Fuller-

GLORIA
Better hurry. He's headed to the train station, Joe Conner's driving him.

BUD
Who's Joe Connor?

GLORIA
Nobody, really. Got a face even a mother could forget. Unlike you.

Bud smiles politely, starts to leave. She steps in front.

GLORIA (CONT'D)
We're all going dancing later if you'd --

BUD
 Aw, thanks, I'm a dead hooper,
 really. But, thanks!

Bud sprints out of the auditorium --

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO - CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

-- Bud bursts through the doors, spots Bucky making his way towards a shlubby student leaning against a '46 HUDSON. JOE CONNER. Bud books it across the lawn, races up to Joe.

BUD
 Joe! Just the man I want to see.

JOE
 You know me?

BUD
 Sure I do! Joe Conner.
 (offers his hand)
 Bud Stoecker.

JOE
 Oh, I know who you are. Just didn't
 think you knew me.

BUD
 Course I do! Why wouldn't I?

Bud darts an anxious look at Bucky who talks to STUDENTS.

BUD (CONT'D)
 Heard you're Fuller's chauffeur?

JOE
 Yeah. Just my luck.

BUD
 If it means that much to you, why
 don't you let me drive 'im?

JOE
 Can't.

BUD
 Give you ten bucks.

JOE
 You'd have to give my parents two-
 thousand bucks! I need the extra
 credit or I fail. What's it to you
 anyways?

Bud holds up Bucky's book.

BUD

Read this?

(off his head shake)

But you've heard of Fuller before today?

(another head shake)

That's why I need to drive him!

JOE

Huh?

BUD

He's my hero! The man's a genius!

He's the greatest living philosopher, architect -- he's a revolutionary comprehensive anticipatory design scientist!

Joe blinks, confused. Bud tugs his ear. Bucky's on the move.

BUD (CONT'D)

Rita Hayworth! You like her?

JOE

Lady of Shanghai!

BUD

"From" Shanghai, yeah. Say Rita's in town and I'm supposed to drive her to the train station, but I've never even seen her pictures. Would you want to drive her?

JOE

Heck yea!

BUD

Now you understand.

JOE

Wait, Rita Hayworth's in Boulder?

BUD

Yeah, Joe! Rita Hayworth is in Boulder, and I'm driving her -- but you want to drive her. So, I let you.

Joe processes, then shakes his head.

JOE

Nice try, Bud. No dice.

Bud groans. Bucky approaches!

BUD
 You disappoint me, Joe.
 (beat)
 But I got another idea...

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

Joe drives. Bucky rides in back...

WIDEN TO REVEAL -- BUD riding shot gun. He spins around to face Bucky, who has his eyes closed.

BUD
 Mr. Fuller, your lecture was awe-
 inspiring. Just electrifying! My
 name is Bud Stoecker, and, well,
 thank you, Sir, for coming to
 Boulder today.

Silence. Bucky doesn't open his eyes. Bud fumbles through his notebook and we see it is filled with HOUSING DESIGNS.

BUD (CONT'D)
 I believe your theory of
 ephemeralization -- doing more with
 less -- is our best hope for the
 future, and I just have a few
 questions if...
 (stops, takes a breath)
 ... after hearing you speak today,
 well, more than ever, I want to
 make things, build things -- with
 my own hands -- that change the
 world!

Still nothing. Bud visibly sweats. Joe signals him to shut up. Bud turns around, disheartened.

BUCKY
 The minute you choose what you
 really want to do, it's a different
 kind of life.

Bud spins back around. Bucky opens one eye.

BUCKY (CONT'D)
 Questions?

BUD

Oh! Yes, Mr Fuller! W-would you sign my book? It changed my life, made me your biggest fan.

JOE

It's true, mister. He'd rather drive you than Rita Hayworth.

Bucky takes the book.

BUCKY

Does your friend often make bad choices?

BUD

Forgive me if I sound naive--

BUCKY

We should all dare to be naive.

BUD

But these essential homes you spoke of -- how do we get there?

BUCKY

Consider bees.

BUD

Bees? Like bumble bees?

BUCKY

Yes. Yes. Those architects of resilience and community. A place for every one of them. What if our societies mimicked such natural genius? You talk about bricks and mortar, but sometimes we must ponder the galaxies. Our reach must always exceed our grasp, Bud.

BUD

But how does a person do that?

BUCKY

Ever see the Queen Mary? The whole ship goes by -- and then comes the rudder. And there's a tiny thing at the edge of that rudder called a trimtab. It's a miniature rudder that takes almost no effort to move -- but it builds enough pressure to pull the rudder and steer the whole damn ship.

(MORE)

BUCKY (CONT'D)

(beat)
Be a Trimtab.

Bud tugs his ear, befuddled.

BUD
I should be a "trimtab?"

BUCKY
Yes... And more.

BUD
And more?

Joe pulls up to the curb. Bucky hands Bud his book.

BUCKY
Thank you for the ride, gentlemen.
Best of luck to you, Bud.

BUD
Wait! Mr. Fuller -- what's the 'and
more'?!

Bucky steps out, flashes Bud a mischievous smile.

BUCKY
That's yours to find.

Bud opens the book, reads Bucky's inscription--but we don't see what it is just yet. Bud darts one last awestruck look at his hero, when he notices something odd--a slight, otherworldly glow around Bucky... And then, he is gone.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DENVER, COLORADO - LATER

Joe's car weaves in and out of Saturday night cruisers.

INT. JOE'S HUDSON - CONTINUOUS

Joe ogles girls on the street, ignoring Bud's shouting.

BUD
"Either war is obsolete, or man
is!" Can you believe he actually
said that? And "Now is the time to
learn to do everything with
nothing!"

JOE
Is that some kind of metaphor?

BUD

It's a philosophy, Joe. It's about efficiency and sustainability, principles we need to live by if --

Joe pulls up to a stoplight. Bud glances out the window, when, something catches his eye...

AT THE TROLLEY STOP

Two girls sit on a bench; MARILYNN CARTER (16), African American, and CHARLOTTE "LOLLIE" ALLEN (16), a captivating blend of Jewish-Russian-Hispanic heritage -- but Bud can't make out her face.

As the TROLLEY approaches, Marilyn jumps up, when -- her book strap breaks, and her books tumble to the ground.

In a flash, Lollie assesses the situation and pulls the ribbon from her ponytail, releasing a cascade of hair.

She knots her ribbon around the two ends of the broken leather strap and ties them together around Marilyn's shoulder. Scoops up the books and places them in the now functioning strap. Marilyn smiles.

Bud smirks, impressed. He tries to get a look at Lollie, but the trolley arrives. When it pulls away, the girls are gone.

BUD

Follow that trolley, Joe!

Joe floors it. Bud stands in his seat, wind whips his face.

BUD (CONT'D)

Faster! Faster! Catch up!

EXT. TROLLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Joe races alongside the trolley. Bud aligns with the window.

Marilynn notices and nudges Lollie who looks up -- BUD AND LOLLIE'S EYES MEET. Time slows... Suddenly -- Bud leaps out of Joe's car --

INT. TROLLEY - CONTINUOUS

-- onto the moving trolley. Packed with PASSENGERS -- Lollie at the OPPOSITE END.

Bud pushes his way towards her. Their eyes meet at awkward moments; above a woman's hat, under a man's arm, etc. Until --

Bud trips over a man's briefcase, lands at Lollie's feet: HER SCUFFED SHOES are worn and a size too big.

LOLLIE'S FACE floats above him dreamlike. Jet-black hair unfurls over olive skin, big brown eyes shine with resilience and grace.

BUD
(soft, from the floor)
An empherealized angel.

Lollie glances around, taken aback and embarrassed.

LOLLIE
Huh...?

BUD
You look like a beautiful tomorrow.

Lollie's eyes widen. Marilyn giggles. Bud stands, grabs onto the same sway strap she holds.

BUD (CONT'D)
Sorry for the dramatic entrance,
hope I didn't scare you.

LOLLIE
Not every day a fellow jumps
onto a moving vehicle.

MARILYNN
I'll say!

BUD
Well, for the record, it was worth
the leap... I'm Bud Stoecker.

LOLLIE
You always storm trolleys for
introductions, Bud Stoecker?

BUD
Only when I'm chasing destiny.

Lollie gives him a once over. He's handsome. Too handsome. She shoots him a 'does that line always work?' look, then glances out the window at Joe, still driving alongside.

Bud licks his lips, thinks fast, gestures to Marilyn.

BUD (CONT'D)

I saw your quick fix with the strap. Pretty ingenious.

She turns back to face him. They lock eyes.

LOLLIE

One learns to make do. Or do without.

Bud nods. Their eyes linger, a flash of something deeper transpires. She turns away.

BUD

Can I persuade you to tell me your name or do I need to jump off something higher?

Lollie hides a smile. The trolley pulls over.

LOLLIE

Our stop, Marilyn.

BUD

Wait! How can I see you again?

LOLLIE

If we're destined, you'll find a way?

MARILYNN

Or another trolley.

The girls giggle as they head for the exit.

EXT. TROLLEY STOP 2 - NIGHT

Lollie, Marilyn, then Bud step off. Joe pulls up to the curb

BUD

(shouting)
Joe, meet Marilyn.

MARILYNN

Nice wheels!

JOE

Wanna ride?

Marilynn heads for Joe's Hudson.

LOLLIE

Marilynn!

Marilynn squeals in delight as Joe drives slowly along the curb. Bud hurries after Lollie.

BUD
How have I missed you on campus?

LOLLIE
Maybe cuz I'm at Manual.

BUD
Manual? Manual High?!

LOLLIE
Yep.

Beat.

BUD
That takes grit. How old are you?

LOLLIE
Sixteen.

BUD
Sixteen?!

LOLLIE
Still wanna know my name?

BUD
Depends. Does your dad throw a punch like Joe Louis?

LOLLIE
I wouldn't know. But my mom has a mean left hook.

BUD
Well, I served two years in the Navy -- reckon I can handle your mom.

LOLLIE
You haven't met my mom.

BUD
No.
(charming and sincere)
But I'd like to.

Lollie blushes.

BUD (CONT'D)
C'mon, tell me your --

MARILYN
 (calling out)
 Good gosh! Just tell him your name,
 Lollie!

BUD
 (smiles)
 Lollie?

Lollie whirls around and bumps into Bud. Her eyes drift slowly upwards and meet his. They gaze at one another and the world around them fades into a blur.

LOLLIE
 (softly)
 Charlotte Tilly Allen. Only my
 friends call me Lollie.

BUD
 Give me a chance to earn that
 right?

The CLOCK CHIMES, snapping Lollie back to reality.

LOLLIE
 Curfew! Marilynn --

BUD
 Can I call you?

Marilynn joins Lollie, gives her an encouraging nudge.

LOLLIE
 Well, I...

BUD
 Hold on! Stay right there! Just
 need to find a --

Bud throws open Joe's car door and searches, when -- something catches his eye. He looks up to see...

LOLLIE, ON TIPTOES, WRITING HER NUMBER IN THE DUST ON JOE'S WINDSHIELD WITH HER FINGERTIP.

BUD (CONT'D)
 -- pen.

Each digit she draws dances with life of its own. Bud stares, dumbfounded.

LOLLIE
 Happy?

She holds up her dirty finger. Bud clammers out of the car, offers his handkerchief. She takes it, cleans her finger, hands it back.

BUD

Keep it.

Lollie looks down at the smudges on the otherwise pristine white cloth, next to the monogram: BUD.

She flashes a smile that makes Bud's heart skip a beat. He takes a step back, utterly enchanted. She laughs softly, walks away.

INT. JOE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Bud, in a daze, stares at Lollie's number on the windshield, the sparkling lights of the city lighting it up.

JOE

She's a knockout -- and you're a legend, Bud Stoecker!

EXT. BOULDER NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Marilynn and Lollie walk down a dark street. Marilynn stops.

MARILYNN

See ya, Lol'.

Lollie holds Bud's handkerchief, distracted. Marilynn laughs.

LOLLIE

Oh! Goodbye, Marilynn.

EXT. ALLEN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lollie continues next door to a tiny house with weathered wood and peeling paint. SHOUTING can be heard from inside.

Lollie stands at the door, her demeanor darkening. She tucks Bud's handkerchief in her blouse, opens the door to the sound of a loud CRASH --

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY - (1934)

THWACK! Dirt hits a casket. ON A HEADSTONE: FLORENCE STOECKER

Young Bud (5), watches his FATHER shovel dirt -- THWACK!
 LIGHTNING strikes, a CLAP of THUNDER --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BUD'S BEDROOM - DAWN - (1947)

-- THUNDER jolts Bud awake. He glances at rain pelting the window, THWACK! THWACK! And then it dawns on him --

BUD
 No, no, no, no!

He leaps out of bed --

EXT. JOE'S STREET - DAWN

-- Bud races down the rain-soaked street in pajamas. His path a BLUR OF REFLECTED STREETLIGHTS. He races up to Joe's car, searches for Lollie's number -- but it's too late.

INT. BUD'S KITCHEN - DAY

Bud holds a phone book, columns of 'Allens' crossed off.

BUD
 (into phone)
 Hello, is there a Charlotte Allen
 there? Goes by Lollie?
 (click)
 Hello?

DIAL TONE. Bud grimaces, uses a pencil and ruler to strike through another name, dials the next.

BUD (CONT'D)
 Hi, Ma'm, is there a Lollie home by
 any chance?... No, no, not Mollie --
 Lollie. Yes, it is a cute name...
 sorry to bother you.

He sighs, crosses off the number, dials.

BUD (CONT'D)
 Good day! I'm looking for a girl
 named Charlotte... What about
 Lollie?... No. It's the same girl
 and I think she's the love of my --

DIAL TONE. Bud hangs up, leans back in despair.

INT. ALLEN HOUSE - SAME TIME

CIGARETTE SMOKE swirls through the cramped one bedroom house. The RADIO blares. LAUGHTER BOOMS among the CHAOS of Lollie's 4 boisterous teenage BROTHERS.

NORA (18) lounges on the sofa in a bathrobe cracking nuts from a bowl. Her mother GERTRUDE's sharp voice scolds.

In the KITCHEN, Lollie wipes sweat as she scrubs food off a pile of dishes.

Nora enters and TOSSES her bowl into the sink, splashing dirty water all over Lollie. She eyes Bud's handkerchief sticking out of Lollie's blouse, grabs it--

NORA

Does mom know you have a boyfriend?
Does Jesus?!

Lollie yanks the handkerchief from Nora's grasp. Nora trips backward, crashes to the floor, lets out a PIERCING SCREAM.

NORA (CONT'D)

Mom!!!

Gertrude rushes in and dotes over Nora when the PHONE RINGS.

JOHNNY

(into phone)
Yankee Stadium, second base....
(looks at Lollie)
Maybe. Who wants to know?

Lollie perks up.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

She don't know nobody named "Bud".

A FOOTBALL grazes her head as she races to grab the phone.

LOLLIE

(nonchalant)
This is Lollie...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BUD'S KITCHEN - DAY

Bud, disheveled and exhausted from calls, leaps up. ANGLE ON phone book; pages of 'ALLENS' crossed off.

BUD
Holy commolly! Lollie?! I mean,
 Charlotte Tilly Allen-- it's you?!

LOLLIE
 Well, hello, train hopper.

JOHNNY
 (overhears, announces)
 Lollie's datin' a train hopper!

Lollie covers the phone.

LOLLIE
 Shut up!
 (into phone)
 Sorry...

BUD
 I wanted to know if you'd join me
 Friday night at the Trocadero
 Ballroom. I've got two tickets to --

LOLLIE
 (blurting out)
 I'd love to go!

BUD
 Don't you even want to know who's
 playing?

LOLLIE
 (putting on airs)
 Well, it's the *ballroom*, after all?
 Can't go wrong.

BUD
 Ah! You've been?

Lollie cringes.

LOLLIE
 Nah.

BUD
 Oh... ok, well, it's settled! I'll
 pick you up at seven?

Lollie glances around at the angry chaos of her house.

LOLLIE
 Oh! If it's all the same, I'll meet
 you there?

PRE-LAP: BIG BAND MUSIC.

INT. TROCADERO BALLROOM - NIGHT

A PIANIST's fingers dance across ivory keys. Well-heeled COUPLES glide across the floor. Sequins, bow ties...

Bud paces nervously, searching for Lollie...

LATER

Still no Lollie. Bud takes a seat amongst lone MEN at the BAR and checks his watch, discouraged.

MAN AT BAR

(with a drunken slur)

Cheer up, buddy! Goin' stag ain't so bad.

(he toasts himself, then)

But what I wouldn't give to be the fuzz on that peach!

Bud follows the Man's gaze to see --

LOLLIE STANDING AT THE ENTRANCE

-- looking stunning in a simple but elegant dress. She stares in awe at DANCING COUPLES doing the jitterbug, then spots Bud staring at her from ACROSS THE DANCE FLOOR.

They make their way towards each other....

Glittering light reflects off a large mirror ball above them, casting sparkles across Lollie's skin. Bud marvels.

BUD

(shouting over the music)

You look beautiful!

LOLLIE

What?

A DANCER plows into Lollie.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

Oh! Excuse me!

(back to Bud)

What did you say?

BUD

(louder)

I'm happy you made it!

LOLLIE
My brother's car broke down!

BUD
What?

A DANCER bumps into Bud.

BUD (CONT'D)
Pardon me!
(back to Lollie)
What did you say?

Awkward beat, they both burst out laughing. A new song begins

LOTTIE
I said, sure! I'd love to dance!

BUD
(taken aback, grins)
I thought I'd never ask.

He offers his hand with a charismatic grin. She takes hold, and the dance begins... their bodies move in sync. Bud swings her with perfection. Lollie is blooming, laughing, having the time of her life.

The MUSIC CRESCENDOES, and they execute a flawless final spin, until, Lollie slips -- and spirals toward the floor --

Bud reacts with lightening speed, catching her and in one fluid motion, dips her dramatically, then gently rights her back up. Their eyes lock.

FEMALE (O.S.)
Sure don't look like a dead hooper
to me, Bud Stoecker!

Reveal-- Gloria, batting eyes at Bud. His eyes are on Lollie.

BUD
I just needed the right
inspiration.

EXT. COLORADO UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS - LATER

The campus glows under the soft light of lampposts. Bud and Lollie stroll across the quad. As they near, we hear singing.

BUD & LOLLIE
Ole Buttermilk Sky, I'm keeping my
eye peeled on you.
(MORE)

BUD & LOLLIE (CONT'D)

What's the good word tonight? Are you gonna be mellow tonight?

They harmonize the last line badly, and crack up.

BUD

Hot diggity! Just like Bing and Judy.

LOLLIE

(giggling)
Gorgeous!

BUD

If I was a smooth talker, I'd say you were the prettiest girl at the Trocadero.

LOLLIE

Well, how would you say it?

BUD

You're the prettiest girl in all the Rocky Mountains.

LOLLIE

Everything is pretty here. I bet even the grass feels like velvet.

BUD

Wanna find out?

They flash each other a devilish smile and like two excited kids, pull off their shoes. She wobbles undoing a buckle.

BUD (CONT'D)

Here, let me hold that shoe of yours while you...

She grasps onto his shoulder for balance. Her touch electrifies him and he drops her shoe.

BUD (CONT'D)

Alas, I'm the prince of klutzes!
(takes her other shoe)
Your slipper, my lady.

LOLLIE

You may escort me to the lawn, Sir.

They take a grand first step together onto the grass. Beat.

BUD
 Hey, Lollie. You were right,
 it feels like walking on dreams.
 Why haven't I done this before?

LOLLIE
 I'd do it every day if I went to
 school here!

OFF the look in her eyes.

BUD
 College? Is that what you want?

Her look says 'yes'. She twirls happily. He catches her hand,
 moves in closer... but she pulls away.

BUD (CONT'D)
 Too bad I won't be here by then.

She spins back.

LOLLIE
 Where will you be?

BUD
 New York. Chicago. Maybe even
 Paris?

LOLLIE
 Paris?! What will you do there?

BUD
 Oh, you know... change the world.

LOLLIE
 Is that all? I was worried you were
 aiming too low. I've never been out
 of Boulder.

BUD
 There's a whole world out there,
 Lollie! A world that needs a roof,
 and a floor -- and that's what I'm
 gonna give 'em! Because everyone
 deserves a house!

Beat. She studies him.

LOLLIE (SOFTLY)
 A house? Or a *home*?

Bud stops in his tracks, struck by her distinction.

FOOTBRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Bud and Lollie lean on a footbridge arching over a tranquil pond. LIGHT and SHADOW reflects off the water.

BUD

I'm gonna create new ways of living. Throw out the old model and build a new one that doesn't just take human nature into account but uses humanity as the blueprint.

(beat)

Oh, gosh, am I talking too much --

LOLLIE

Not at all!

BUD

Think your mother would approve?

(OFF her look)

Everything ok?

LOLLIE

All that talk of humanity... truth is, you won't find much of that at my house.

(OFF his look)

Did I scare you off?

BUD

Not on your life...

(a charged moment)

I don't want this night to end.

Romantic tension escalates. Lollie dodges it with --

LOLLIE

Hey! Got a penny?

He looks at her puzzled, pulls out two PENNIES. She takes one. Closes her eyes, throws it in with a splash.

BUD

What'd you wish for?

She looks at him provocatively, teasing, begins singing.

LOLLIE

Ole buttermilk sky, can't you see my little donkey and me...

Bud closes his eyes and throws his penny in the pond.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)
What did you wish for?

BUD
(singing)
Ole buttermilk sky...

BUD (CONT'D)	LOLLIE
We're as happy as a Christmas tree, headin' for the one I love...	We're as happy as a Christmas tree, headin' for the one I love...

To their amazement, they harmonize the last line perfectly. They stare at each other, nervous. She pulls on her shoes.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)
I have to get up early.

BUD
But it's Sunday.

LOLLIE
Exactly.

BUD
Don't tell me you go to --

LOLLIE
And what's wrong with that?!

BUD
Not a thing --

LOLLIE
My family acts like I'm a fool for going.

BUD
Then why do you go?

LOLLIE
Because of how I feel after I've been. My neighbors took me the first time. I sat in mass, and I just... felt something. At first it was the stained glass windows, the candles, music... but then it was the message... and more.

BUD
(taken aback, mutters)
And more? Yes!... We used to go when I was young. My father stopped taking me when... my mother died.

Lollie gasps. Bud looks relieved, as though he's waited a lifetime just to say those words out loud.

BUD (CONT'D)

So, you see... my house was no Norman Rockwell painting either. Oh, my dad's alright --

LOLLIE

My dad left when I was six.

A silent moment as they see each other fully. Their connection bringing them closer, lips nearly touching.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

(softly)

I guess we both have a lot to wish for.

Overcome by excitement and passion, Bud jumps on the railing.

BUD

Tell me your wishes, Lollie! Every one of 'em! If you want to go to college-- I'll build you one! Then I'll build you a church! You'll worship God while I worship you. Or maybe, when my ship comes in, I'll build you the most beautiful house-- home-- you've ever seen! Not a stale, old mansion with pillars and staircases that defy nature and gravity, but a humungous Dymaxion house -- round, like a flying saucer -- with windows all around -- 365 degrees -- so we never feel closed off from the world! And there's space -- so much magnificent space -- yet we're always just steps away from the center... Lollie, you'll never have to wish for anything again.

Lollie is swept away. We see the metaphysical gravity in action as they have their first kiss...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STOECKER HOME - KITCHEN - DAWN - (1969)

We move up a DOOR JAM marked with the growing records of five Stoecker children: Kathy, Stephen, Robin, John, and Dean, to reveal:

LOLLIE (37), in an apron, wipes sweat as she flips bacon with one hand and fixes her daughter's hair with the other.

HAMMERING SOUNDS emit from a SHED on the side of the driveway

KATHY ANN STOECKER (18), sits at a large DINNER TABLE, pushed up against one wall to fit inside the tiny kitchen. She wears a cheerleading uniform and recites a psalm.

KATHY

Love is patient, love is kind. It
does not envy, it does not boast.

HAMMERING starts up -- Kathy doesn't miss a beat --

KATHY (CONT'D)

(yelling over the noise)

IT IS NOT PROUD, IT DOES NOT
DISHONOR OTHERS. IT IS NOT SELF
SEEKING. IT IS NOT...

(thinks hard)

Love is not...

Lollie flips a pancake.

LOLLIE

"Easily angered."

ROBIN STOECKER (15), enters the kitchen upside down, walking on his hands, executes an elegant back walkover and lands in a chair at the table opposite Kathy.

KATHY

IT KEEPS NO RECORDS OF WRONGS--
Good morning, Robin-- IT DOES NOT
DELIGHT IN EVIL --

We drift through the house, past homemade furniture; mid-century-modern and a bit odd.

KATHY (CONT'D)

-- BUT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH.

Down the HALLWAY, past STOECKER FAMILY PHOTOS...

KATHY (CONT'D)

IT ALWAYS PROTECTS, ALWAYS TRUSTS,
ALWAYS HOPES, ALWAYS PERSEVERES!

The HAMMERING stops.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Love never fails.

The sound of SAWING starts up... at the end of the hall, the

BATHROOM

JIMI HENDRIX' "FOXY LADY" plays from a transistor radio.

STEPHEN REED STOECKER (17), blonde hair and blue eyes like Bud, dances in the mirror, admiring himself. He wears a NERU SHIRT with floral embroidery and styles his Beatles inspired mop-top with precision. He mouths along to the song, dances over to the window, pulls back the curtain--

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

TERRY DANGERFIELD (17), in a bra, parades across her room.

EXT. STOECKER DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

JOHN STOECKER (13), unruly curly black hair, dribbles a basketball down the driveway, makes a perfect hook shot.

BUD (O.S.)

John! Get Stephen and come out here
for a minute.

John darts a look at the BATHROOM WINDOW where he catches Stephen ogling Terry. He laughs loudly --

Terry snaps a look out the window, licks her lips seductively, teasing Stephen, then pulls the curtain shut.

JOHN

Hey, loverboy! Dad wants us in his
office!

INT. STOECKER HOME - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephen admires his reflection one last time.

KITCHEN

The kitchen is alive with laughter. Lollie barely manages to scramble eggs she's shaking so hard. Kathy clutches her stomach watching Robin lurch comically around the room.

ROBIN

The house ain't gonna decorate
itself, Bud!

Stephen strolls in. Lollie shoves a plate of food at him, her tone shifting to serious.

LOLLIE

Take this to Dad. Big day for him.

The kids exchange a look.

EXT. STOECKER HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen meets John in the driveway, both snickering as they watch their neighbor, FRANK SHRIER SR. (56), wrestling a gigantic, tangled ball of Christmas lights. Frank, adorned in a work shirt from DENVER LUMBER & CONSTRUCTION, lurches around his lawn comically, in the manner Robin just imitated.

STEPHEN

Houston, we've decided to land in the Shriers' front yard. They've got the brightest lights on the planet.

INT. STOECKER SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Bud's kingdom of creativity, cluttered yet organized. Lawnmower, bicycles, shovels, camping gear, and a gigantic roll of black plastic line one wall. On the other; a pile of lumber and a half-built oddly shaped mid-century modern chair

BUD (40ish), in pajamas, saws off a piece of wood.

The door swings open. Stephen munches bacon, John spins a basketball on his finger.

Bud stands next to a hinged contraption mounted on the wall.

JOHN

(whispers to Stephen)
Dad's latest brainchild.

BUD

Hey, troops! Rally over here to see this year's masterpiece for Deanarino!

Bud unlatches a bolt at the top of the wall and pulls down a wooden platform holding a train set.

BUD (CONT'D)

Behold, the Murphy Train!

STEPHEN

A cantilever hinge! Ingenious, Dad.

JOHN

Didn't Dean get this last
Christmas?

BUD

Sharp memory, my boy. But he's
never had the chance to use it
properly-- no room-- 'til now!

The train chugs to life. Bud claps his hands, delighted, and
does the "Charleston knee dance".

BUD (CONT'D)

Where there's a wall, there's a
way!

EXT. STOECKER STREET - DAWN

Bud and sons step out of the shed just as Lollie and Kathy
exit the house in time to see Frank Sr. swathed head-to-toe
in the tangle of lights. Each movement tangling him further.

BUD

(waves to Frank)

Going all out this year, eh, Frank?

MR. SHRIER

It's December, Bud! House ain't
gonna decorate itself!

Lollie and the kids stifle a laugh.

MADLINE SHRIER (51), steps out followed by eleven SHRIER
DAUGHTERS who line up to kiss their entangled father goodbye.
The procession ends with FRANK SHRIER JR. (18), the only son,
who receives a manly pat. Madeline tries to help Sr., when--

A SHRILL WOMAN'S VOICE calls from NEXT DOOR.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Yoo hoo! Morning!

Bud turns to see Gloria Dangerfield -- the blonde from CU!
Gaudy jumpsuit, bouffant. Bud nods. Lollie rolls her eyes.

NED DANGERFIELD (50s), scurries to his car, pecks Gloria. She
pulls him back for an inappropriately dramatic kiss.

Terry, their daughter, and Stephen exchange a lusty stare.

INT. STOECKER HOME - SAME TIME

John arranges the last scraps of breakfast on a plate: pair of sunny-side-up eggs for eyes, bacon strip for a mouth. He leaves the plate on the table and grabs his backpack...

EXT. STOECKER HOME - CONTINUOUS

John joins his family on the sidewalk for a cacophony of chatter, overlapping conversations, etc.

JOHN

When are we gonna get a tree? It's Dean's turn to pick.

BUD

Soon, champ! We'll get one soon.

Suddenly alarmed, Lollie does a headcount of the kids and hurries back to the house, Kathy tags along.

KATHY

Mom, we have a game in Franktown tonight, so... don't wait up.

Lollie, preoccupied, nods as she rushes inside.

INT. STOECKER HOME - JOHN & DEAN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A CRAYON DRAWING OF LOLLIE with child's handwriting:

"MY MOTHER IS AN ANGEL BECAUSE SHE COOKS BETTER THAN A MAID AND LOOKS GOOD ALL THE TIME. -- DEAN ARTHUR STOECKER"

Lollie sits on the bed next to DEAN (10), strokes his hair. He opens his eyes to see his Mom illuminated by morning sun

LOLLIE

How can my baby sleep through all the ruckus?

DEAN

Same way my mom falls asleep in thirty seconds.

She chuckles at his sleepy wit.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Dean smiles at the food left just for him, hurries out--

EXT. STOECKER STREET - MOMENTS LATER

-- Dean scurries after his siblings.

JOHN

Dad said you get to pick the tree soon.

DEAN

Remember the sorry one you picked last year?

INT. STOECKER BEDROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Bud stands in front of the mirror, adjusting his tie. Close on Bud's face as he cycles through emotions. A flicker of anxiety, a wince of doubt... then a small determined smile... he rallies his spirit with a deep, steadying breath.

INT. STOECKER LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bud enters to find Lollie dozing in a chair, a prototype of his latest design. He kneels beside her.

BUD

You even manage to make this chair look comfortable.

She stirs, giggles, takes his hand.

LOLLIE

Ready for today? How you feeling?

BUD

Better than expected... and you know the best part? I haven't thought about a cigarette once.

LOLLIE

(rye smile)

It's only seven thirty.

(beat)

If I can quit, so can you.

He nods, kisses her gently.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

Sock it to 'em, love.

Bud pauses at the door, shoots her a look of quiet resolve.

BUD

The minute you decide what you want to do in life... it's a different kind of life.

INT. BUD'S 62 CHEVY - MORNING

Bud drives as the RADIO plays.

RADIO DJ

... one of the deadliest years of the Vietnam War with 283,586 young men drafted thus far...

EXT. DELTA VACATION HOMES OFFICE - MORNING

Bud pulls up to a small mobile trailer. Joe (39), waits out front, visibly anxious. Bud approaches carrying a large framed picture, a hammer, and a donut bag.

BUD

Mornin' Pard!
(offers donut to Joe)
Your favorite.

JOE

Thanks, Bud, but I'm too knotted up. My heartburn is killing me, this is a... big leap.

BUD

I know... it's my savings too... but it's now or never, Joe. No more piddling around selling sketches in Popular Science. We're finally doing it for real!

INT. DELTA VACATION HOMES OFFICE - MORNING

A MAN IN A SUIT pushes contracts across the table.

MAN

Sign here and here.

MOMENTS LATER

Bud marvels at the space. Joe paces.

JOE

No turning back now. That was a lot of money, Bud, with Christmas comin'--

BUD

Merry Christmas, Joe! You just invested in your future, your children's future, your children's children's future!

JOE

Too bad I don't have children.

Bud hammers a nail, hangs the picture, but we don't see what it is just yet.

BUD

Locking in two years saves us a bundle, and just like that, we've got ourselves a real shop! We'll invite clients and showcase our models. It's everything we've been dreaming of. We're gonna change the world... one vacation home at a time!

Bud eats Joe's donut.

BUD (CONT'D)

You wanna know the best part? I haven't even thought about a cigarette all morning!

Joe pulls out a flask, swigs.

BUD (CONT'D)

Little early in the day, huh? Oh, what the heck, it's a celebration.

Bud grabs the flask, chugs, suddenly -- spits out pink liquid

JOE

It's Pepto, Bud! For the heartburn.

BUD

(checks his watch)
Crimentently! I gotta get to work.

JOE

Yeah, don't quit your day job.

Bud throws open the door.

BUD

-- mark my words, the minute we get our first client, I'm done! I'm never workin' for 'the man' again. And neither will my kids.

The men exit. Reverse to reveal the photograph Bud hung:

THE STOECKER FAMILY AT THE 1964 WORLD'S FAIR. Behind them, a 250-FOOT GLASS GEODESIC DOME. The caption reads:

"BUCKMINSTER FULLER'S SKYGRADE BUBBLE! THE LARGEST CLEAR STANDING STRUCTURE IN THE WORLD AND A TECHNOLOGICAL MARVEL!"

EXT. CRYENCO HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A small nondescript concrete building.

BUD (O.S.)

Every year, thousands of workers risk severe injury from handling liquid nitrogen tanks. Did you know that 90% of these injuries happen when opening and closing the tank?

INT. CRYENCO HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A sterile white room. A LARGE TANK sits in the center of a conference table, surrounded by BUD's COWORKERS and BOSS.

BUD

The primary issue? Conventional tanks lack safe, ergonomic features. One drop of this stuff can turn your hand into glass in less than a second!

Coworkers look at Boss for how they should react.

BUD (CONT'D)

And the design of the tank makes it nearly impossible to find leverage or stability.

Bud simulates opening the tank, it wobbles dangerously close to a coworker who flinches.

BUD (CONT'D)

See?! That's the danger. That's why I created...

Bud spins the tank around on the table revealing a METAL BAR

BUD (CONT'D)

Tada! "The SafeHandle". Simple, unobtrusive, and inexpensive. No spills, no exposure. We keep our customers safe for a negligible investment.

BOSS

How much is 'negligible'?

BUD

Not much, an increase of maybe 2% per tank?

Coworkers exchange skeptical glances.

BOSS

You're all dismissed. Stoecker, stay.

Coworkers leave, snickering.

BUD

I also designed a warning label and safety instructions here.

Boss shakes his head, closes the door.

BOSS

I'll admit you have ideas.

BUD

Thank you, sir --

BOSS

And they all stink! Every single one of them --

BUD

How is protecting people a bad idea?!

BOSS

-- they always cost us money!

BUD

"You have to decide whether you want to make money or make sense." Buckminster Fuller said that --and he's right, people get injured --

BOSS

It's my fault. I ignored the red flags --

BUD
The money you'd save on lawsuits
would more than cover the costs --

BOSS
Eight jobs in the last ten years --

BUD
With all due respect, sir, I can
explain it to you, but I can't
understand it for you!

Boss' stare turns stony. Bud realizes he's gone too far.

BOSS
You're just not a company man, Bud.
You never were.

BUD
You don't like it, forget it. I'll
just go back to my desk and --

BOSS
You're fired, Stoecker.

Boss pulls a pink slip out of his desk, writes.

BUD
Wha -- what? But... you can't do
that... you wouldn't do that!

BOSS
Sorry.

BUD
It's two weeks 'til Christmas! You
met Lollie, the kids -- think about
them? Please! Think about them!

BOSS
You've got til five to clear out.

BUD
Well... I don't need that much
time. I'm already gone. How could I
be somewhere that doesn't see me?

Bud grabs the tank and stops at the door, a last hopeful
look. Boss holds out the pink slip but Bud's hands are full
with the tank. He tucks it in Bud's pocket, opens the door.

BUD (CONT'D)
Merry Christmas!

EXT. CRYENCO HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The door bursts open, Bud exits hauling the cumbersome tank. He stashes the tank in his car, SLAMS the door, notices coworkers gawking out the window. He waves.

BUD
(shouting)
Ever need a custom made home --
come and find me!

He gets in his car with a triumphant smile. SLAMS his door.

INT. BUD'S CHEVY - CONTINUOUS

Alone in his car, Bud's heart sinks. The weight of the moment settling in. He pulls the pink slip out of his pocket, then yanks off his tie with shaky hands, breathing hard.

CLOSE ON Bud's face, once again cycling through emotions--panic, despair, anger. He grips the steering wheel then frantically rummages through the car: Glove compartment, in the seat, under the seat, when-- he finds what he's looking for: a pack of WINSTON CIGARETTES.

He pulls a cigarette out, hands trembling, places it between his lips, pushes in the car lighter, waits, when...

He sees something else he pulled from under the seat... a small worn stuffed animal with Dean's name on it.

POP! The lighter ejects. Bud doesn't reach for it. He slowly removes the cigarette from his lips, crushes it in his hand.

EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - LATER

Bud pulls into the lot. The sign reads "\$10 A TREE". He takes out his wallet, counts seven dollar bills. Thinks. Shoves the money back in his wallet and drives away.

EXT. STOECKER HOME - CARPORT - NIGHT

Bud pulls into the carport, kills the engine, sits slumped in the dark. He glances at the tank in the seat next to him...

INT. STOECKER HOME - MOMENTS LATER

... Bud sails through the front door hauling the tank, places it in the center of the dinner table, sashays over to Lollie and picks her up in a Princess Lift. She squeals.

LOLLIE

Oh, Bud!

BUD

(calling out)

StephenJohnRobinDean!

The boys rush in, curious and excited.

BUD (CONT'D)

Alright, everyone -- keep your eyebrows where I can see them! This stuff is colder than my mother-in-law's shoulder!

Bud hooks a rubber band onto a hanger, dips it into the tank. The family leans in. In a dramatic flourish, Bud pulls it out-- frozen solid. The kids GASP. Lollie's eyes widen.

Fueled by his audience, Bud dashes over to the fruit bowl and grabs a banana. Dips the banana in the tank-- freezing it solid. He holds it like a hammer and bangs it on the table.

Lollie gets an idea and rushes out --

LOLLIE

Get the nails, Bud!

Lollie reenters with a basket full of mismatched socks.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

Time to hang those stockings! I'll pick one for Kath. Choose yours.

The kids search through the basket, each picks a sock.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bud dashes in, family on his heels. He nails the stockings to the wall using the frozen banana as a hammer. The family erupts with laughter and applause. Bud beams.

KITCHEN - LATER

Now alone, Bud clutches the tank by the safety handle, and hauls it away, disturbed.

INT. BUD AND LOLLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dimly lit. Lollie climbs in bed next to Bud and kisses him. Her lips trace a path from his neck to his chest. But Bud is distracted.

LOLLIE

You okay?

BUD

Sure, sure, honey. Just... thinking about the new business.

Beat. She tries to read him. He smiles weakly. She resumes kissing, now from his chest to his tummy.

BUD (CONT'D)

(still tense)

I, uh, got to be at Delta bright and early, Lol, get things moving, you know?

A tiny flicker of rejection in her eyes. She takes his arm and wraps it around her.

LOLLIE

Of course, darling. Just hold me.

Bud spoons her, though his eyes remain wide open. Long beat.

BUD

Lollie, I, uh... truth is, I should've told you earlier... but, well, I got laid off today... more than laid off—I was fired. And... I put all our savings down on the new office-- but it's gonna pan out! I know it will. It has to. And I don't want you to worry about anything, okay? I'm still gonna make this the best Christmas ever, okay, Lol? Lol?

He looks over to find Lollie sound asleep. He stares into the darkness, eased by the gentle rise and fall of her breathing.

INT. STOECKER LIVING ROOM - LATER

Lollie sits on the couch in the dark, a worried look on her face. HEADLIGHTS out front make her jump up. The front door opens quietly revealing... Kathy.

KATHY

(nonchalant)

Oh... hey, Mom... We stopped after the game. Payphone was broken.

LOLLIE

Who is he?

KATHY

Huh?

LOLLIE

The boy, Kath.

Kathy shoots her a look of disbelief.

KATHY

(sighs)

Unreal.

LOLLIE

What?

KATHY

You can see around corners!

Kathy sits. Lollie strokes her hair easing the tension.

KATHY (CONT'D)

(excited whisper)

He's a football player, Mom. A really good one. And he's nice! Sooo nice. I think you're gonna like him!

LOLLIE

Have you kissed him?

KATHY

If I had, you'd already know!

LOLLIE

(beat)

You really like him?

(off Kathy's nod)

Kathy... liking someone—that's easy. Loving someone...

(glances towards the bedroom)

... that's the part where it gets tricky.

KATHY

Don't tell Dad yet, okay? Seems like he's got a lot on his mind right now.

Lollie smirks, she's not the only one with intuition.

LOLLIE

You'll tell him this weekend?

KATHY

I promise.

Kathy hugs her Mom.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I love you, Mom.

LOLLIE

I love you too, honey.

Kathy heads to her room. Lollie's gaze drifts out the window, and across the street where the SHRIER'S CHRISTMAS LIGHTS shine bright...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KATHY STOECKER'S - DAY - PRESENT

Bud in his wheelchair gazes at KATHY'S CHRISTMAS LIGHTS, Bucky at his side.

BUCKY

They called me a dreamer too. We were outsiders, by choice or chance... or necessity.

(soft chuckle)

Those pink slips weren't a measure of your failure, but a sign of your courage. Transformation is inevitable to those who have the faith to evolve.

(with sincerity)

Faith is much better than belief. Belief is when other people do the thinking for you. It's passive. Faith... is a verb.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DELTA VACATION HOMES OFFICE - DAY - (1969)

Bud sketches elaborate A-Frame housing designs at a draftsman's table. Joe plows through the door.

JOE

(out of breath)

Bud! Bud! We got a call! Mitch Dunfrey!

BUD

Who's Mitch Dunfrey?

JOE
 (grandiose)
 Mitch Dunfrey is the regional V.P.
 of KOA!

BUD
 KOA?

JOE
 Kampgrounds of America! He wants to
 talk about the A-frames!

Bud jumps up, his chair clattering behind him, and breaks
 into a freestyle 'Bud jig'.

BUD
 I knew it! I knew it!

JOE
 Not just one -- campgrounds worth!

BUD
 You see what happens, Joe! A
 different kind of life!

JOE
 It's just a first meeting but, Bud,
 it's a franchise! Must have over
 five hundred locations across the
 U.S.-- even Canada!

BUD
 (tugs ear, licks lips)
 A party... we'll have a party!
 Live music! An open house, an
 inauguration party!

JOE
 Little premature to celebrate, Bud.

BUD
 It's not for us, you big goof! It's
 to impress KOA! All for Mitch!

A KNOCK interrupts. Joe opens the door. A SALESMAN wears a
 crisp suit and a wide smile.

SALESMAN
 Welcome to the neighborhood! Wasn't
 sure you were open for business.
 Almost drove right past you cuz you
 have no visibility.

JOE
Good point, Mr --

SALESMAN
Flemming. Mort Flemming! ACME Sign Company. You know with the right signage, you fellas could really put this place on the map.

JOE
Sure we could, yeah, signage --

Bud jumps in.

BUD
Thanks for stopping by, Flemming, we'll be sure to call you as soon as we land our first client.

Bud ushers him out, shuts the door, and turns to Joe.

BUD (CONT'D)
Every salesman from here to California is gonna come sniffing around. Don't fall for it! We need to keep a tight purse-string.

INT. STOECKER HOME - LINEN CLOSET - MORNING

Bud hunches in the closet next to a large file cabinet with labeled drawers: REPORT CARDS, YEARBOOKS, AWARDS, SPORTS, NEWSPAPER MENTIONS. On top of the cabinet is a stack of POPULAR SCIENCE magazines.

He looks both ways, pulls the pink slip from his pocket and tosses it in a drawer with a pile of pink slips.

He drops a dime and nickel into a small white envelope, seals it, writes "STOECKER'S - 15 CENTS" across the front. Takes out a LEDGER and opens to a tab: "TITHINGS", records the date and amount in a column.

FURTHER DOWN THE LEDGER, the numbers get smaller and smaller, and are highlighted in RED. Bud sighs.

EXT. STOECKER NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

Bud, Lollie and the kids rush out of the house wearing their Sunday best, pile in the car. Across the street the Shriers, dressed in church clothes, board a '68 VW bus.

FEMALE (O.S.)
Happy Sunday, Fun-day!

Bud turns to see Gloria, nods politely.

LOLLIE
(under her breath)
Some folks dress for Sunday morning
like it's Saturday night.

As Bud pulls out of the driveway, the Stoecker boys ogle Terri hoola hooping in her yard. She locks eyes with Stephen.

STEPHEN
Dig it.

JOHN
(whispers to Dean)
It's the hair.

MOMENTS LATER

All heads turn as they pass a CHRISTMAS TREE LOT.

DEAN
Dad! Can we --

BUD
(quickly)
How about givin' mom a treat and we
hit Little Banquet after church?

The kids CHEER.

DEAN
Chicken a la King!

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Lollie sits with her family, beaming proudly. Bud looks guilty and stressed. FATHER RICCI at the pulpit.

FATHER RICCI
(heavy Italian accent)
The fighting overseas and protests
at home weigh heavily on our hearts
today. We are a nation scarred by
the loss of many young men --

Stephen looks uneasy. Lollie watches Madeline Shrier, holding Frank Jr.'s hand, head bowed, eyes closed.

Dean cocks his head trying to decipher Ricci's accent

FATHER RICCI (CONT'D)

We may feel helpless, unable to do anything, to stop the injustice. But we, as a community of faith, have a responsibility to heal and bridge the divides. In the face of division, we are the agents of hope. The advocates for justice, equality, and unity.

Father Ricci waves Kathy over. She approaches the pulpit, darts a look at her parents. We now see a NERVOUS BOY sitting in the pew behind Bud and Lollie. Kathy gives him a reassuring look, clears her throat, and begins reciting the PSALM she rehearsed at home.

KATHY

Love is kind...

Kathy continues. Bud, unable to contain himself, leans over.

BUD

(strained whisper)
Lollie... I got fired.

LOLLIE

(dumbstruck)
What?!

BUD

They let me go--

LOLLIE

What happened?!

BUD

It was a good idea-- a great idea--

LOLLIE

(whispering, incredulous)
Please tell me you're joking?!
(he's not joking)
You choose now to tell me?

BUD

I tried to tell you before -- I'm sorry...

LOLLIE

How can I even react right now?!

KATHY

Love is not easily angered.

Lollie notes that last line, takes a deep breath, sits stiffly, trying to process. Bud reels.

Suddenly, there's a tap on Bud's shoulder. They turn to see -- JON BLISS (18).

JON BLISS
(sweating)
H-hello, Mr. Stoecker. Pleasure to meet you.

Bud nods, confused.

BUD
The pleasure is all yours.

JON BLISS
(blurts out in a quivering voice)
I'm very fond of Kathy... and I'd love to have a word--

BUD
(spinning around)
I'm sorry, who're you?

JON
Kathy's boyfriend.

LOLLIE
Kathy's boyfriend.

Bud shoots Lollie a look.

BUD
Looks like we both had something to share.

Kathy notes her parents' and Jon's stressed faces.

KATHY
Love... never... fails?

The CHOIR begins to sing. Lollie fixes Bud with a deep look then softens.

LOLLIE
Maybe it's time you stop trying to change their world, and start building your own.

Bud nods, throws his arms around Lollie. Jon Bliss sinks back, embarrassed.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

As the family exits, Bud spots an elderly gentleman, MR. ELDRIDGE.

BUD
Mr. Eldridge, my condolences. I heard about Mrs. Eldridge...

MR. ELDRIDGE
Thank you, Bud. Just me and Ruff now... but I'm at the store all day, and, um, a dog needs a family.

Eldridge gives Bud a hopeful look.

BUD
I wish I could help, I really do. But between feeding the kids and everything else...

Bud notices Lollie standing with Kathy.

BUD (CONT'D)
Excuse me, Mr. Eldridge.

As Bud walks toward his family, Jon Bliss intercepts him.

JON BLISS
Sir, I've got a scholarship to CU next year that includes room, board, books, fees, tuition and a small monthly stipend. I have a savings, it's not big, but, uh, I've never smoked marijuana and don't intend to. I would like to ask your blessing for your daughter's hand--

Suddenly, John and Dean rush up --

DEAN
Dad! Hurry! Hurry!

JOHN
The Shriers are on the move!

BUD
Hold that thought, Jon Bliss --

Bud and family rush to the Chevy and pile in. Kathy glances out the window at Jon as Bud SCREECHES out of the lot.

INT. BUD'S CHEVY - DAY

The kids point and shout, 'Oh no!', 'Catch 'em Dad!', etc, at the Shrier's van idling at a traffic light two blocks ahead. Bud glances over to see an ALLEYWAY.

BUD

Hold tight!

Bud floors the gas and spins the wheel -- takes a sharp turn down the alley -- SCREECHES through the narrow passage.

The family SQUEALS, bouncing in their seats as the car thuds over potholes --

EXT. LITTLE BANQUET - PARKING LOT - DAY

-- Bud zooms into the parking lot at the exact same moment as the Shrier's minivan. He shoots a competitive look over at Frank Sr. The Kids all lock eyes.

Stephen points to a parking spot.

STEPHEN

There, Dad, there!

Frank Sr. and Bud simultaneously SCREECH into spots.

FRANK SR.

Better luck next time, Stoeckers!

INT. LITTLE BANQUET - CONTINUOUS - DAY

The MANAGER looks out the window, recoils when he sees fourteen Shriers and seven Stoeckers bounding across the parking lot towards the door.

MANAGER

(shouting)

Get reeeeeaaaady!

(weakly)

We gotta raise our prices.

The sign on the door reads: "A DOLLAR TWENTY NINE! TAKE ALL YOU WANT, EAT ALL YOU TAKE!"

EXT. LITTLE BANQUET - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Stephen and SANDY SHRIER (15), arrive at the door at the same time--tense beat. Stephen glances at his mom, then down the line of Shrier Girls, arms crossed, eyebrows raised.

STEPHEN
Ladies first.

The Stoeckers watch the huge Shrier family enter.

INT. LITTLE BANQUET - BUFFET LINE - LATER

A ladle plunges into Chicken a la King. The Shriers pile their plates high, the Stoecker family trails behind.

FRANK SR.
(to Bud)
Benefits of having girls, Bud,
first in line and no draft worries.
How 'bout that lottery, huh?

BUD
It'll all be over before Stephen's
of age.

FRANK SR.
Frank Jr. just turned eighteen.

Lollie and Stephen exchange a look. Bud looks uncomfortable but sympathetic.

BUD
He'll be in college by--

FRANK SR.
College?! With three jobs we'll be
lucky to make it through Christmas.

MADELINE
Thank goodness for JC Penny
Layaway.

LOLLIE
If you can do it with twelve,
Madeline, I can do it with five.

FRANK SR.
Well, least if Jr.'s drafted, he'll
have a shot at going to school on
the G.I. bill.

Madeline shoots Lollie a terrified look. Lollie pats her shoulder warmly.

FRANK SR. (CONT'D)
Aw, what am I complaining about? I
only got one kid needs college. You
got four!

Kathy shoots her mom a look. Lollie observes Bud closely, waits for him to say more. He doesn't.

REGISTER - MOMENTS LATER

The Manager tallies up the Shrier's order.

MANAGER

Fourteen lunch platters. That's eighteen dollars and six cents.

Frank Sr. counts out his money.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

You're short two dollars.

The Shriers wait on edge as Frank Sr. searches his pockets, face reddening and starting to panic.

Bud discreetly pulls two dollars from his pocket, drops them on the floor. Only Dean notices.

BUD

Frank, I think you dropped this.

Bud hands the cash to a visibly relieved Frank.

FRANK SR.

Th-thank you, Bud! I owe you one.

STOECKER TABLES - LATER

Dean eyes the Shriers eating happily, beams proudly at his father and takes a big bite of Chicken a la King.

Bud, Lollie, and Kathy are engaged in a tense conversation in a separate booth.

BUD

(adamantly)

No way, Kathy. Not happening. Not now, not ever.

LOLLIE

Well, one day, darling, just not anytime soon.

KATHY

Why not?!

BUD

You're in high school!

KATHY

So was Mom when you met!

BUD

That's different!

KATHY

Why?!

LOLLIE

(carefully)

Maybe Kathy has a point, Bud. We did start young. Remember our early days? Falling in love, the rush of it all, that magical first kiss...

BUD

We'll talk about kisses when you're thirty-six!

Something at the BUFFET catches Bud's eye -- a MARIACHI BAND.

LOLLIE

Then comes marriage-- standing before the world and swearing to love each other for *all* of eternity. Living together day in, day out, and discovering all those little habits your partner has that you never noticed before. Then there's the joy of learning to predict what your husband's thinking because he doesn't know how to communicate it.

KATHY

But... why?

LOLLIE

(with a soft laugh)

Oh, you'll find out once you're married, sweetie. And morning sickness! Remember that, darling? I threw up every day for months!

Off Kathy, growing increasingly uncomfortable.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

And childbirth! The most excruciating pain you can imagine, but oh so worth it!

Kathy glances over at her brothers to see Robin juggling bread rolls, John and Stephen sparring with forks, and Dean purposefully dropping his apple on the floor so he can crawl under the Shrier Girl's table and look at their legs.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

Because then you get to enjoy the real fun! Like budgeting a household, or sacrificing a new dress for baby shoes. And the spontaneity and surprises of marriage -- like when your husband tells you he was fired in the middle of a sermon.

Bud, distracted by the Mariachis, snaps back.

BUD

(forced chuckle)

Lol...

KATHY

You were fired again, Dad?!

Bud nods.

BUD

And it was the best thing that could have happened to us! Joe and I are about to land a client -- a big one. So, this marriage conversation is over. We'll revisit it in a couple hundred years, for now, I'm gonna need your help.

INT. DELTA VACATION HOMES OFFICE - DAY

Bud's new office abuzz with excitement. The Stoecker kids stand in a line in front of Bud.

BUD

(playfully)

Ok, team! Anyone who doesn't want to volunteer for balloon duty, take one step back!

All kids step back, except Robin who is confused. Bud tosses him a package of balloons.

BUD (CONT'D)

Those Olympic lungs of yours will come in handy!

He tosses streamers to Kathy. Lollie hands John and Stephen brooms. Everyone gets to work. Dean approaches Bud.

DEAN

What should I do?

BUD

Hey buddy, I have just the job for you! You see, every office needs a supervisor. That's the person who makes sure everyone is doing a good job and helps everybody out. You're gonna be our supervisor. Think you can handle that?

DEAN

You mean I'm the boss?

BUD

No bosses here. Only partners.

Bud musses Dean's hair.

BUD (CONT'D)

You know this night is important, right?

(Dean nods)

So, you understand I had to spend the money for a tree on the party?

DEAN

Ok, Dad... But we'll still get one?

BUD

Of course! Just a slight delay, that's all. We're gonna knock Mr. Dunfrey's socks off, and then you can pick the biggest tree on the lot!

DEAN

You're doing all this for one guy?

BUD

No. I'm doing all this for you. Now get supervising!

MARIACHI MUSIC BLASTS...

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME PLACE - NIGHT

OPEN HOUSE in full swing. The Shriers and Dangerfields mix with church members, Father Ricci, and a few random people like the Manager from Little Banquet.

The Mariachi Band plays. Kathy and Robin dance while Lollie circulates with eggnog. John and Dean serve cake, eating more than they serve. Stephen sells raffle tickets, the prize: a set of Bud's oddly designed chairs.

Dean sits in a chair watching his dad talk with Joe and MITCH DUNFREY (40). Bud points to a blueprint on the wall; an impressive design of a beautiful A-Frame cabin.

BUD

Affordable, efficient, and stylish.

MITCH

Bud, I have to admit, you're on to something. These could really transform our campsites.

Lollie brings over a pitcher of eggnog, pours.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(sips)

Mmm!

BUD

We call it Lollie's Mystery Eggnog.

LOLLIE

The mystery is rum!

As Lollie leaves, Joe snags the pitcher from her with a look. Throughout, he continues to refill Mitch's cup.

BUD

Like I was saying, Mitch, the A-frames give you the most room in the least amount of space. We do more with less.

JOE

That's our motto.

Stephen holds up raffle tickets.

STEPHEN

(calling out)

Number 3716! Bring your ticket to the --

CHURCHGOER 1 squeals, holds up her tickets.

CHURCHGOER 1
Me! That's me! 3716!

She rushes over to Stephen who presents Bud's chairs.

ANGLE ON CHURCHGOER 2 crumpling up his raffle tickets, disappointed.

MITCH
(laughing, tipsy)
You guys sure know how to throw a party. You definitely got something here. Let me look this over with fresh eyes and talk to legal first thing in the morning --

JOE
(to Bud)
They're headquartered in Montana --

MITCH
And then we can talk turkey.

BUD
(shaking his hand
emphatically)
That's swell, Mitch!

MARIACHI TRUMPETS BLAST. Bud and Lollie take to the dance floor, followed by the Stoecker kids, dancing into the night.

RADIO REPORTER (PRELAP)
In financial news, today's sharp escalation in Vietnam is sending shockwaves through the markets with the Dow plummeting by over 30 points as investors brace for an uncertain future...

EXT. DELTA VACATION HOMES OFFICE - MORNING

The SUN rises over Delta.

INT. BUD'S CHEVY - CONTINUOUS

Bud pulls up. His RADIO plays softly, but he's whistling a happy tune and not paying attention.

INT. DELTA VACATION HOMES - MORNING

Bud hangs up his coat and flips the heater on full blast. He punches a balloon playfully, stops to admire his blueprints.

SOMETIME LATER

Bud sits at his desk DOODLING TRIANGLES. Joe enters.

JOE
Did he call?

BUD
He will.

SOMETIME LATER

Joe glances over to see Bud staring at the phone.

JOE
A watched pot never boils, Bud.

With a burst of enthusiasm Bud picks up the phone.

BUD
I'm calling him!
(dials)
It's ringing.
(into phone)
Good morning, Mitch, it's Bud
Stoecker... yes, thanks again for
coming last night. Hope you're not
suffering too much from Lollie's
mystery... I've been out of the
office all day with clients so I
might have missed your call...
(winks at Joe and listens)
Yes... sure... mmmm... I see... we
could come down on that... I see...
okay... take care.

Bud hangs up slowly. Joe stares at him in suspense.

BUD (CONT'D)
He talked to legal. Not the right
time... maybe when the war ends.

Joe sinks into a chair. Bud rises, paces almost manically, fighting panic, licking his lips, tugging his ear. He pulls his coat back on and flips the heater off. Sits at his desk, pulls out a clipboard with names and numbers.

BUD (CONT'D)

Ok, ok, ok. Minor set back. We got calls to make!

JOE

To who, Bud?

BUD

KOA's not the only game in town. I'll set up meetings with Jellystone and Good Sam -- you don't change the world by feeling sorry for yourself!

Bud picks up the phone, dials, when, there's a KNOCK on the door. Joe answers to find a MAN IN A SUIT. We can't hear the exchange but we see the man hand Joe a business card.

BUD (CONT'D)

(hangs phone up)

Who was that?

JOE

Oh, uh... just another salesman.

Joe tucks the man's card into his pocket with a furtive look.

Bud glances down at his TRIANGLE DOODLE, a curious look on his face as he slowly turns the paper, positioning the vanishing point at top...

EXT. DEE GEES CONVENIENT STORE - NIGHT

Bud places a six pack of beer on the counter. Mr. Eldridge raises a brow, rings him up.

MR. ELDRIDGE

Tough day?

Bud looks the most vulnerable we've seen him.

BUD

Took a gamble with my kids' Christmas. Didn't pan out.

ELDRIDGE

You know, nothing says Christmas like a new dog! First year of chow on me.

BUD

Sorry, Mr. Eldridge. I would really love to. It's just bad timing.

Bud turns to go when something catches his eye:

TIME MAGAZINE WITH BUCKMINSTER FULLER ON THE COVER.

MR. ELDRIDGE
Quite the odd duck, that one.

BUD
(half-smiling)
My hero in college. Made me believe
I could change the world.

Bud holds out the six pack.

BUD (CONT'D)
Could I exchange --

MR. ELDRIDGE
Go on, take it, Bud.

EXT. DEE GEES CONVENIENT STORE - CONTINUOUS

Bud exits carrying the beer and the magazine, when he notices a HIPPIE holding a sign: ""HOMES NOT BOMBS.""

Bud gets in his car, looks back at the sign, deep in thought.

INT. STOECKER HOME - DEAN & JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John does homework at a small odd "Bud-desk". Dean peers out the window at Bud drinking beer on the back porch.

DEAN
(whispers to John)
Dad's got beer.

JOHN
Uh oh...

EXT. STOECKER HOME - FRONT YARD - LATER

Stephen and Terry flirt in the yard. Lollie opens the door.

LOLLIE
(calls out)
Time for dinner, sweetheart.

Stephen shrinks with embarrassment.

INT. STOECKER HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lollie wipes sweat off her brow as she pulls the chicken out of the oven. The family rushes in, each taking a share of the modest amount of food.

LOLLIE

Who wants to say grace?

Dean's hand shoots up. Lollie nods. The family joins hands.

DEAN

Thank you for my angel Mom and this yummy chicken food. Please bless all the soldiers and all the astronauts. And God, please help Dad take me to pick out our Christmas tree, because it's my turn this year, and it's gonna be Christmas soon.

THE FAMILY

Amen.

Everyone digs in, overlapping conversation begins. Bud is unusually quiet.

LOLLIE

(casually)

Jon B seems nice, Kath.

THE BOYS

Ooooooo! Jon B!

KATHY

Grow up, guys.

STEPHEN

Hey, Mom? Please could you not call me sweetheart anymore.

Lollie stops eating, masks a hurt smile.

LOLLIE

Okay... what should I call you?

STEPHEN

Grandpa calls dad 'son'. Call me that.

LOLLIE

Oh... Okay... *son*.

Lollie gets up from the table, pretends to get the salt from the stove, but hides tears.

When she returns to the table, everyone's plate is full except hers. She picks scraps off the back of the chicken.

KATHY

Here, Mom, have some of mine.

LOLLIE

It's ok. I prefer the back.

ROBIN

But there's no meat on the back.

JOHN

Do chickens even *have* backs?

LOLLIE

Well, either way we'll be eating chickens back to front all winter. Won't we, Dad?

Bud manages a strained smile. Kathy pulls papers from her bag

KATHY

Mom, Dad, I've been waiting for the right time to show you this. And now that Dad is working with a franchise -- here are the tuition papers for CU! I've decided to wait on marriage and go to college first.

Lollie beams proudly. Then she looks at Bud, color draining from his face as he looks at the college tuition costs.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Dad? Is everything okay?

BUD

Those astronauts... they're just regular folks doing extraordinary things. Makes me believe we can to, if we set our minds to it.

Lollie and kids stare at him, puzzled.

LOLLIE

Bud. You can talk to us. We're a family. We'll get through it together.

BUD

Mr. Dunfrey backed out. It's a bummer, I won't lie.

Bud scans their worried faces.

BUD (CONT'D)

(more upbeat)

But hey, tomorrow morning, I've got a meeting with the bank that will turn things around for us.

(enthusiasm growing)

And Dean, buddy, we're still on for picking out that tree. It's your year, and it's going to be a special one. The best Christmas ever, just you wait!

The kids look to Lollie for confirmation.

LOLLIE

Delta was always your Dad's dream. We believe in you.

Bud smiles. A happy moment, until, a little voice --

DEAN

Is there any more chicken?

JOHN

I'm still hungry.

ROBIN

Me too.

Bud quickly divides his own chicken between the boys.

BUD

If we had some rice, we could have chicken and rice, if we had some chicken!

Giggles fuel Bud. He playfully seizes the carcass.

BUD (CONT'D)

Uh-oh! You've done it now! You've made this chicken mad!

He dances the carcass around, grease and bones flapping. The kids burst out laughing. Lollie cracks up. Bud rises CLUCKING loudly, circling the table with the bird.

BUD (CONT'D)

(shouting)

It's revenge of the carcass! Anyone who doubts this will be the best Christmas ever, is gonna get carcassed!

Bud chases the kids through the house, laughing wildly and forgetting all about their hunger.

BUD & LOLLIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bud, propped in bed, reads the TIME magazine.

Lollie enters quietly, her silhouette elegant in tasteful lingerie. She pauses, expecting a reaction. Bud's eyes remain glued to the page; he doesn't look up.

She climbs in bed beside him, runs her hand across his chest. Bud automatically places his hand on hers, but his eyes don't leave the page.

Lollie waits. Her patient smile fades as the silence stretches. Finally, she turns away, faces the wall.

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME PLACE - LATE NIGHT

Dark. Bud sleeps, when -- he wakes abruptly to the sound of DISTORTED CHRISTMAS MUSIC. He rushes into the LIVING ROOM to find Lollie and kids looking pale and sickly, staring in horror at something in the corner...

THE BONES OF A GIANT, UPRIGHT CHICKEN CARCASS, ON A STAND, ADORNED WITH LIGHTS AND ORNAMENTS. A GHASTLY SIGHT.

DEAN

(sobbing)

This is the worst Christmas ever!

BUD'S BED

Bud bolts upright, trembling, HEART POUNDING. He glances over to see Lollie fast asleep. Sighs, relieved it was a dream.

BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MOONLIGHT. Bud splashes water on his face, when-- a DARK FIGURE appears in the reflection behind him. Bud jumps.

BUD
 (recognizing)
 Bucky?!

BUCKY
 Human beings always do the most intelligent thing... after they've tried every stupid alternative and none of them have worked... but never forget, Bud, that you are one of a kind. That if there weren't any need for you in all your uniqueness to be on this earth, you wouldn't be here in the first place. No matter how overwhelming your challenges seem to be, never forget that one person can make a difference in the world. In fact, it is always because of one person that all the changes that matter in the world come about. So be that one person, Bud.

SMASH CUT TO:

MORNING.

Bud's eyes pop open. He bolts up, invigorated from the dream.

BUD (PRE-LAP)
 Imagine a place where every family can escape to the great outdoors. That's what Delta Vacation Homes offer!

INT. DENVER BANK 1 - MORNING

Bud is dwarfed by an oversized leather chair, mid pitch. Next to him, Joe fidgets nervously. BANKER 1, young and pompous, scrutinizes Bud's designs.

BUD
 Our A-frame cabins aren't just structures; they're a chance for everyone to live the good life. Simple, sustainable, and affordable, they're part of a vision to make the world accessible to every family. A low-cost, high-quality solution that respects both our wallet and our planet.

(MORE)

BUD (CONT'D)

With your help, we can roll these out across the nation and super-charge our marketing.

JOE

And we know there's a market because we've sold hundreds of blueprints through magazine ads.

BANKER 1

I'm confused. Why do you need a loan to sell blueprints?

BUD

My partner meant to say that there is tremendous interest. What we are selling are kits. Pre-cut wood with simple, clear instructions. The loan would let us stockpile inventory when lumber is at an optimal price.

BANKER 1

Interesting...

BUD

We do the most with the least-- most stability with the least amount of parts. Most living space for the least materials. Dynamic, maximum, tension -- rain proof, snow proof, adaptable to any environment. And the best part, a Delta Vacation home is delivered on a small truck with instructions so simple my kids could put it together!

BANKER 1

Well, there's no doubt this is a good idea...

(Bud and Joe inflate)

If it were any other time. Sorry, gentlemen, I like the idea, but you're timing is a little off.

BUD

What does that mean?

BANKER 1

One word. Recession. People are gonna have enough trouble hanging on to one house. I think Nixon'll turn it around pretty quick.

(MORE)

BANKER 1 (CONT'D)

And when that happens, come back,
and we'll talk.

BANK LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Obnoxious Christmas music blasts, as Bud and Joe slink away.

JOE

I thought we had him, Bud.

Bud is distracted by a gaudy plastic Christmas tree. He peers up oddly through the trees' branches. Joe shoots Bud a look.

BUD

(deep in thought)
We can't learn less, we can only
learn more.

INT. BUD'S CHEVY - DAY

Lollie drives with groceries, eyes peeled to the road, as --

EXT. DENVER STREET - SAME TIME

Kathy walks down the sidewalk. She spots her mom driving towards her and ducks behind a building.

Lollie drives past. Kathy comes out of hiding and heads inside MR STEAK RESTAURANT, a HIRING NOW sign in the window.

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

Joe and Bud ride in silence. Bud stares ahead. Joe takes a swig from his flask of Pepto, groans.

BUD

We were designed by the universe to
be an extraordinary success. An old
friend told me that.

(off Joe's look)

We just gotta keep going!

Joe notices a flicker of despair underneath Bud's grin, when, suddenly -- something out the window catches Bud's attention.

BUD (CONT'D)

(urgent)

Stop the car, Joe!

Joe brakes abruptly. Bud throws open the door and leaps out--

EXT. DENVER STREET - MOMENTS LATER

HORNS BLAST as Bud charges through traffic --

EXT. PARK - PLAYGROUND - MOMENTS LATER

Bud stares in awe at a GEODESIC DOME CHILDREN'S PLAYSCAPE.

He approaches it with a sense of reverence, circles it slowly, running his hand along the bars, eyes tracing the TRIANGLE SHAPED spaces in between.

Then... he crawls underneath, lies on his back and gazes up through the bars. Clouds drift across a powder blue sky.

ABOVE BUD, a KID plays on the bars, peers down.

KID'S MOM (O.S.)

Reed, come away from there, honey!

The kid scrambles down and runs to his mom. Bud lays still gazing up as GOD RAYS stream down through the parting clouds.

ANGLE ON JOE'S CAR - Joe eyes Bud warily. 'He's lost it.'

EXT. STOECKER HOME - CARPORT - DAY

Lollie unloads groceries, stores loaves of "DAY OLD BREAD" in a FREEZER.

Lollie hoists a crate of milk bottles from the stoop, when -- she notices Joe's car stopped outside the Dangerfield's.

Lollie watches as Gloria ushers Bud out of the car and into her house. Lollie seethes. Stephen enters.

LOLLIE

Stephen!

STEPHEN

Yeah, Mom?

LOLLIE

I need you to do something...

Dean at the table coloring, overhears and perks up.

EXT. DANGERFIELD HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen jogs across the yard, is about to knock on the FRONT DOOR, when he sees it is ajar...

INT. DANGERFIELD HOUSE - SAME TIME

Stephen enters to find his dad hunched under the sink.

Gloria leans against the counter as Bud takes apart the plumbing!

GLORIA

It just slipped right down the drain! I took it off cuz the diamond snags the dish gloves.

BUD

You're lucky I make house calls.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW behind Stephen, Dean and John rush up, and peer in.

Stephen turns to see Terri leaning casually against the HALLWAY entrance-- in a very similar pose as her mother. She subtly beckons him to follow her...

EXT. DANGERFIELD HOUSE - SAME TIME

Dean and John scramble around the side of the house --

INT. TERRI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephen and Terri make out, when --

DEAN AND JOHN'S FACES APPEAR IN THE WINDOW, EYES WIDE...

INT. STOECKER HOME - NIGHT

Lollie scoops out casserole and splats it on the kids plates. Kathy notes her mother's tension.

LOLLIE

Casserole again! Hope it's enough to fill you up. How did the bank go, Bud?

BUD

Oh, uh... every 'no' is closer to a 'yes'. Another meeting tomorrow.

Tense silence.

KATHY

(blurting out)

I got a job at Mr. Steak.

Beat. Bud and Lollie try to process.

DEAN
 (to Kathy)
 Maybe you can take me to get the
 tree?

Bud looks like he just got slugged.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Bud slumps on the couch. ON THE TV:

TV REPORTER
 Tune in tomorrow for a look at
 massive war protests on college
 campuses across the nation. Next
 up, the Dick Cavett show with
 Buckminster Fuller!

Bud bolts upright.

KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Lollie plunges dirty dishes into the water. Hears the TV.

BUCKY (O.S.)
 War is a tool of politics.

LIVING ROOM - BUCKY ON THE TV TALKING TO DICK CAVETT

BUCKY
 If you took all the politicians in
 the world and put them in a rocket,
 and sent them to the moon, peace
 would reign on earth.

BUD
 So true!

Lollie stands behind Bud, drying a dish, preoccupied.

BUCKY
 People say to me, I wonder what it
 would be like to be on a spaceship.
 And I tell them, don't you realize?
 Everyone is an astronaut and we're
 all living aboard a beautiful
 little spaceship called earth.

BUD

Yes!

But Lollie is too preoccupied and goes back to the

KITCHEN

Lollie scrubs a pan when she hears Bud's laughter. Then--

BUCKY (O.S.)

Essentially, a woman is a baby
factory and a man's role is to
simply press the right buttons.

STUDIO AUDIENCE LAUGHTER BOOMS. Lollie's face tightens; she
SLAMS the pan down.

BUD & LOLLIE'S ROOM - LATER

Lollie fluffs the pillows vigorously. Bud enters.

LOLLIE

Everyone's an astronaut? Even those
of us stuck in the kitchen and
laundry room?

BUD

(taken aback)
Lol, that's not...

LOLLIE

Our daughter-- whom you didn't even
bother to defend when Frank, Sr.
snubbed her-- won't suffer the same
fate! There are five Stoeckers to
get to college! Not *four*-- five!
(under her breath)
Six, if you count me!

Bud reels from her intensity. Lollie stifles a sob.

BUD

Hey...

He reaches for her, she pulls away.

LOLLIE

You're not the only one who had
dreams!

(MORE)

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

I was supposed to go to school, we were gonna travel-- twenty two years later, all I am is a "baby making machine" still washing other people's dishes! Because I stuck by you so you could reach for yours and we could raise a family that was different from where we came from. Well, I may not have a degree like your college floozy, but you better believe Kathy will!

BUD

Of course she will! Wait-- what?

LOLLIE

(blurting out)

I saw you with her, Bud! You went into that woman's house when her husband wasn't home! I saw you!

BUD

Lollie...

LOLLIE

Look at me, Bud-- my body's carried and birthed five children. It's stretched, scarred, and I feel faded and invisible. Like I've lost parts of myself to motherhood, while you... you've just kept your dreams alive. You have no idea how it feels to see your body change and not recognize yourself in the mirror anymore.

BUD

I worship your body!

LOLLIE

Then why haven't you touched it in weeks?

(breaking)

Are you having an affair with Gloria Dangerfield?!

A beat as they lock eyes intensely. And then Bud bursts out laughing.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

How is this funny?!

BUD

Good God, Lollie! I couldn't be less interested in Gloria if she were made of Limburger cheese! I'm as in love with you as the first moment I saw you. I can't imagine life with anyone else, not ever, not in ten million lifetimes. I love you!

(gravely)

The problem isn't loving you... it's loving myself.

Bud stares into Lollie's eyes, their connection palpable. She softens, strokes his face and hair. He melts in her embrace.

INT. BUD'S CHEVY - MORNING

Bud drives practicing a pitch.

BUD

Even in hard economic times like these... people still want to feel like they're doing well. Imagine a vacation home the average struggling person can afford...

Bud idles at a red light. His BLOODSHOT EYES drift to a HOMELESS VET in a wheelchair holding a paper cup with the words: "VIETNAM VET.""

Bud stares at the Vet, heart melting. The Vet returns his gaze. A powerful moment passes between them. Bud sifts around the car for change, but can't find any. HORNS BLAST.

INT. BANK 2 - MORNING

Bud sits in the big leather chair pitching. Joe darts looks at BANKER 2 a heavysset, balding man.

BUD

Dynamic, maximum, tension -- rain proof, snow proof, adaptable to any environment. And the best part of a Delta Vacation home...

(he falters)

A Delta vacation home...

Joe looks concerned-- glances at the confused BANKER, when, Bud starts pouring out his thoughts.

BUD (CONT'D)

...is not really a *vacation* home.
It's... a home.

(following his thoughts)

What if houses were cheaper than
the land they sat on?! It would
revolutionize housing -- it would
change the world!

Banker is dead-pan. Joe nervously adds...

JOE

And they're really easy to
assemble!

EXT. BANK 2 - LATER

Bud exits, Joe storms out after him. PEOPLE on the street
gawk as the men argue on the sidewalk.

JOE

What the hell was that?! Were you
planning on telling your partner
that we're in a whole new business
now?! What were you thinking, Bud?!

BUD

When I was in the Navy, we were
kids risking everything for an
idea... the idea of safety and
freedom. The idea of home. And here
we are talking about luxury, when
some of these boys are coming back
to no home. That's not right.
That's not what we fought for!

(beat)

We should be doing something that
matters, Joe! Not retreat houses,
but affordable, efficient homes for
vets and families trying to make
ends meet. Especially in a
recession!

A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE has stopped to listen, APPLAUDS.

INT. DELTA VACATION HOMES OFFICE - LATER

Joe SLAMS in. Bud follows.

JOE

Turned down -- again! What now?

BUD
We just have to keep on--

Bud notices something on Joe's desk: BUNDLES of PRICE TAG STICKERS the size of playing cards with an ornate DOLLAR \$IGN on them. Hundreds of them.

BUD (CONT'D)
What are these?

JOE
Oh... when I still believed in this venture, I thought those would come in handy.

BUD
Price tags?! For what?!

JOE
We are theoretically selling things--

BUD
(realizing)
You let a salesman in, didn't you?!

JOE
No!
(sheepishly)
It was a woman.

BUD
Joe!

JOE
I couldn't resist! Ten bucks for 500 of 'em --

BUD
That's the price of a Christmas tree! What the hell am I supposed to do with 500 price tags?!

Beat.

JOE
Look, Bud. Maybe our timing *is* off.

BUD
What are you talking about?

JOE
We tried. We failed. Maybe we get out while we can.

BUD

What do you mean get out?! We just got the office-- we gave every last cent for the next two years!

Joe pulls out the Man In Suit's card.

JOE

Or we unload it. This guy offered to take over the lease. Cash us out with 20% over. I think we should take it, Bud. I mean, I want out. And so should you -- for God sakes, think of your family.

And Bud does think of his family.

INT. RANUM HIGH - GYMNASIUM - DAY

Lollie and the kids sit together on the risers, awestruck by:

ROBIN WHIRLING THROUGH THE AIR --

Bud rushes in to see Robin catapult off the high beam, double flip and stick the landing. A ROAR OF APPLAUSE. Bud cheers from the sidelines, bounds up the RISERS to join his family.

BUD

(to Lollie)

Coach Sandoval says he's a shoe-in for a scholarship wherever he wants to go!

Lollie looks at Bud and all tension from the night before dissolves. They watch their son, beaming with pride.

BUD'S POV: Robin's body draws SPIRALING CIRCLES and TRIANGLES

DOWN THE RISER John holds his basketball in his lap. Darts an envious look at his father watching Robin.

Bud swallows hard, turns to Lollie.

BUD (CONT'D)

Someone offered to take over the lease. They'll pay cash up-front.

LOLLIE

What do you mean?

BUD

I think it's time to let it go... hunker down with a reliable job.

(MORE)

BUD (CONT'D)

And we'll have some money for
Christmas.

LOLLIE

What?! If this is about last night--

BUD

I have to sell the business. It's
what makes sense.

LOLLIE

Oh, Bud...

BUD

We're meeting him tonight to do the
deal. I won't be home for dinner.
Trust me, Lol, it's for the best.

Lollie puts her head on his shoulder, heart breaking.

GYMNASIUM EXIT - LATER

STUDENTS exit, congratulate Robin. John eyes Bud rubbing
Robin's shoulder, when, Bud turns to see John looking at him.
As though reading John's mind --

BUD

(calling out)

Yo, Johnny!

Bud signals John to pass him the ball. John's face lights up.
He throws the ball to Bud. Father and son play. John leaps,
dunks the ball --

BUD (CONT'D)

(calls out)

Good move, buddy!

John beams. Bud does goofy moves with the ball, weird hooks
behind his back, bouncing the ball through his legs. The
family busts up laughing.

INT. DELTA VACATION HOMES OFFICE - NIGHT

Heavy silence. Bud sits at his desk staring at a CONTRACT.
Joe and the BUYER wait. Bud takes a deep breath, picks up the
pen, hovers it above the paper...

INT. STOECKER HOME - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a crayon drawing of Bud and Lollie standing in front of the Eiffel Tower, taped to the kitchen wall.

The house is dimly lit. Dean, in pajamas and a bow tie, sits looking out the window. BUD'S HEADLIGHTS turn in the drive.

DEAN
(whispering)
He's here! He's here! Dad's home!

The kids whisper and scramble about. Stephen rushes to the FRONT DOOR and opens it just as Bud turns the knob.

STEPHEN
Good evening, Mr. Stoecker. Your table for two is right this way.

Bud enters slowly, takes in the scene: ORANGE CLOVE POMANDERS hang from the ceiling. A PYRAMID OF SOUP CANS wrapped in foil serves as a candle holder in the center of the table where Lollie sits smiling.

LOLLIE
Welcome, Mr. Stoecker.

Robin steps out in a funny top hat.

ROBIN
May I take your coat, Sir?

Robin hangs Bud's coat while Dean ushers Bud to the table, pulls out the chair next to Lollie, and hands him a crayon-colored MENU for "LE PETIT STOECKER". Bud opens it to read:

"SOUPE DE POMMES DE TERRE AUX HARICOTS VERTS"

DEAN
(whispers)
Potato soup and green beans.

Kathy, in an apron, enters from the kitchen carrying a serving tray.

KATHY
And for your entree, baked potatoes with all the fixins! Courtesy of Mr. Steak.

She joins her siblings standing in a row. Stephen strums a ukulele, Dean clacks spoons, John blows into an empty jug, Robin plays a kazoo as the kids break into, "HAPPY HOLIDAYS".

STOECKER KIDS

Happy holiday, (happy holiday)
 Happy holiday, (happy holiday)
 While the merry bells keep ringing,
 Happy holiday to you!

Bud and Lollie crack up, applaud.

LOLLIE

Thanks to all our gracious hosts.
 I'll take it from here.

Kathy ushers the kids out, giggling. Lollie moves to the record player and puts on "their song". Then sits beside Bud.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

We know it must've been difficult--

BUD

I didn't do it.

LOLLIE

What?

BUD

I didn't sell the business. I bought it.

Lollie's jaw drops.

BUD (CONT'D)

Lollie, even if I worked three jobs we couldn't put five kids through college. Delta is our ticket. It's a future for all of them.

HIDING AROUND THE CORNER -- the kids huddle, listening.

BUD (CONT'D)

This is our shot, Lol! We can do this together. A real family business.

LOLLIE

But what about Joe?

BUD

I bought him out. Well, I will as soon as I raise some money--
 (electric with optimism)
 Stephen and John can help with the cutting schedules-- those kids are whizzes in geometry! Kathy can keep the books.

(MORE)

BUD (CONT'D)

Robin, well, he's taken care of,
and Dean will be the best little
carpenter in the Rockies!! And,
Lollie... you can take classes at --

LOLLIE

Metro State!

Bud scoops her in his arms and kisses her.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

Oh, Bud! You're out of your mind!
And I love you.

IN THE HALLWAY -- the kids peer around the corner, watching
Dad carry Mom into the bedroom. And Lollie kicks the door
closed with her foot.

BEGIN MONTAGE.

EXT. DELTA VACATION HOMES OFFICE - DAY

Bud finishes painting a SIGN on the building:

"DELTA AFFORDABLE HOMES - DO IT YOURSELF A-FRAME KITS"

KATHY (O.S.)

Delta Affordable Homes! Where they
believe waste is a sin and no house
should cost more than a Cadillac!

Lollie, Stephen, and Robin paint the office, giving it a
fresh, vibrant look.

INT. DELTA AFFORDABLE HOMES - CONTINUOUS

Dean and John attempt to assemble a miniature MODEL of an A-
FRAME with LEGOS. They pour over the blueprints and
instructions.

Kathy reads from a piece of paper into a tape recorder.

KATHY

(reading)

Cost effective and easy to erect!
Bud Stoecker's newest A-Frame
design kits include precut lumber.

The family forms a production line, assembling DELTA
BROCHURES. Robin does acrobatics. The portable RADIO plays.

EXT. DENVER STREET - DAY

Lollie and kids distribute flyers on cars, in mailboxes, and to PEDESTRIANS. Kathy's voice is replaced by a Radio DJ.

RADIO DJ (O.S.)
 They're weather proof, fool proof,
 and perhaps best of all-- proof
 that Dad can build just about
 anything!

INT. DELTA AFFORDABLE HOMES - DAY

Dean and John put the finishing touches on the model A-frame and beam at their accomplishment...

RADIO DJ (O.S.)
 Or hire Bud and his team to build
 it for you!

Until the triangular facade snaps loose and crashes forward.

The PHONE RINGS. Lollie answers.

LOLLIE
 Delta Affordable Homes! Spreading
 joy one A-Frame at a time!
 (listens, eyes grow wide)
 Can you hold one second?!

She excitedly covers the receiver and turns to Bud.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)
 It's the Rocky Mountain News! They
 want to do a story on you!

Bud does a happy dance.

BUD
 You mean on US!

Back on the phone, Lollie writes down his information.

LOLLIE
 Thank you so much!

She hangs up. Bud pulls Lollie up and dances with her.

BUD
 Aribop-Aribop-Malrooney!

The PHONE RINGS again.

BUD (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Yello! Delta Affordable Homes.
 (a sudden change in mood)
 Oh, hi, Joe... yeah... I know...
 (increasingly somber and
 perturbed)
 I know, Joe, but... please trust
 me. You'll have it by Christmas...

Bud hangs up, turns to find the family looking, perks up.

BUD (CONT'D)
 Who wants to go ice skating?

INT. BUD'S CHEVY - DAY

Bud turns down Colfax Street, the cheerful chatter of the Stoecker kids is drowned out by the angry shouts of protest.

The street ahead is filled with ANTI-WAR PROTESTERS carrying signs reading "BRING THEM HOME!" and "NO MORE ENDLESS WARS!"

DEAN
 Why are they so angry, Dad?

BUD
 It's... a lot of things, Deano...
 gains made for some Americans were
 not made for all Americans.

STEPHEN
 (eyeing a Vet)
 How we gonna tell those people in
 Vietnam how to live if we can't
 treat our own people right over
 here?

Beat. Each kid has their own experience, reality sinking in.

BUD
 The rink will have to wait, guys.

The kids groan. Bud's eyes linger on VETS wearing worn military jackets and faded service medals.

INT. STOECKER HOME - NIGHT

The mood in the house is somber. Kids in various locations look unhappy. Bud, Lollie, and Stephen watch the TV, on edge. And left by the front door: 5 pair of unused ICE SKATES.

ON THE TELEVISION

NEWS REPORTER (ON TV)

We now bring you live to
Washington, D.C. for a pivotal
moment in American history.
Officials have just initiated the
draft lottery, determining the fate
of young men across the country.

INSIDE THE LOTTERY ROOM (REAL FOOTAGE)

ARMY OFFICERS draw capsules out of a glass bowl, display
birthdates of draftees on a large board.

Lollie peers OUT THE WINDOW, ACROSS THE STREET to see --

INT. SHRIER HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

-- Frank Sr. gripping the armrest of his chair. Madeline
wailing, arms wrapped around Frank Jr.

INT. STOECKER HOME - SAME TIME

Devastated, Lollie spins to Stephen, tears in her eyes.

LOLLIE

I want to make one thing clear! I
will no longer say it in public,
but you will always be my
sweetheart!

INT. BUD'S SHED - LATER

Bud stands in his shed licking his lips and tugging his ear.
He stops, stares at the humongous roll of black plastic...
then his eyes go to the TANK of LIQUID NITROGEN.

INT. STOECKER HOME - DEAN & JOHN'S ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Dean wakes to strange sounds in the back yard. He climbs down
from the bunkbed and peers out the window to see Bud in the
backyard laying plastic tarp on the ground.

EXT. STOECKER HOME - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Bud rigs a pump on to the valve of the LN tank and begins
pumping liquid nitrogen over the tarp.

Then he gets the GARDEN HOSE and sprays the frozen tarp.

FADE OUT.

INT. STOECKER HOME - MORNING

Dean runs from BEDROOM to BEDROOM waking the family --

DEAN
(shouting excited)
Get up! Get up! Dad made an ice
rink! Come on everybody!

EXT. STOECKER HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Dean, John, Robin, Stephen, and Kathy hobble out of the house wearing winter coats and ice skates.

SERIES OF SHOTS of kids and NEIGHBORS skating. Sandy Shrier skates up to Dean.

SANDY
Where's your Christmas tree?

DEAN
We don't have one yet... But we
have an ice rink! So much better!

Dean and John high five.

INT. STOECKER HOME - LINEN CLOSET - MORNING

Bud writes on an envelope: "STOECKERS - IOU". Sighs, when, something catches his eye-- the CLOSET POLE. He stares, oddly

INT. BUD'S CHEVY - MORNING

Bud and family pull up to the Church. He looks over to find Lollie asleep, turns back to the kids.

BUD
Shh-shh. Let Mom rest.

He gingerly turns the car off, places his coat over her and exits the car to find a DISAPPROVING CHURCH LADY walking past, eyeing Lollie.

BUD (CONT'D)
 (to Church Lady)
*And she rested on the seventh day,
 from all her work that she had
 done.*

INT. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

The CHOIR SINGS. Bud, surrounded by his children, sits quietly in a pew. His face reveals the weight of his burdens. HIS EYES drift, trace the architecture of the church, landing on a TRIANGLE at the back of the church. His expression shifts to one of resolve. He bows his head and quietly prays.

INT. BANK 3 - MORNING

Bud sits confidently in the big leather chair opposite BANKER 3 and MR. STANWICK (60s).

BUD
 And the best part? The kits are designed so people can build it themselves. It's a DIY revolution!

STANWICK
 DIY?

BUD
 Do. It. Yourself. No need for contractors or carpenters. The kit is delivered on Monday, and by Friday you're sleeping in your new home.

STANWICK
 You can build a house in five days?

BUD
 (with a charming twinkle)
 No. You can build it in five days. I could do it in one.

BANKER 3
 How many of these kits have you sold so far?

BUD
 Well... none. That's why I'm here -- why I need the loan --

BANKER 3

Who is going to buy a do it
yourself kit house?

BUD

How many people come into this bank
every year wanting to buy a house?
How many of them do you turn down?
And how many don't even bother cuz
they know they don't have a
prayer?! That's who will buy my
family's homes.

Stanwick smirks at Bud's audacity. Bud opens his ledger
displaying a detailed plan.

BUD (CONT'D)

I've been tracking the price of
lumber for a while and I found a
pattern that makes it easy to
predict. All I need is the capital
so I can hedge--

STANWICK

Hedge?

Bud turns to a tab in the ledger. Stanwick leans in, curious.

BUD

Stockpile lumber when prices are
down. And every piece would be
accounted for so there's literally
no waste.

(drops his pitch mode,
becomes heartfelt,
authentic)

When I got out of the navy I met
the love of my life, had five
beautiful kids, and bought a home.
That's the least any person
deserves, and yet it's impossible
for millions. Because we don't
think they have a right to one. But
we all do.

(raw, impassioned)

Please... all I need is a small
loan, and I can give people the
thing they need most in life: a
home.

A beat of silence. Stanwick is moved, but the others?

BANKER 3

Here's the problem, Mr. Stoecker. You have no sales, no pre-orders no numbers, and no collateral. This bank finances businesses-- not ideas. And for those reasons we respectfully decline.

Bud is stunned silent. At a loss, in shock as the weight of the world crushes him in an instant.

BUD

You decline? So that's it? You don't see the need? Or you just don't care?

Bud grabs his blueprints and brochures and starts to leave.

BUD (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas...

He exits. Banker 3 shrugs and exits, leaving Stanwick alone. Stanwick notices Bud's ledger left behind. He glances around, but Bud is gone. He opens it curiously.

INT. BUD'S CHEVY - DAY

Bud SLAMS the door, punches the steering wheel, buries his head in his hands. Turns the key with shaking hands-- the ENGINE SPUTTERS.

BUD

(panicking)

No, no, no! C'mon!

Finally, it starts. Bud SCREECHES out onto the icy road, squinting through the foggy windshield, when--

A SHADOWY FIGURE appears in the REARVIEW MIRROR. Bud spins around to see the brim of a fedora lift to reveal... BUCKY.

Bud jerks the wheel -- TIRES SQUEAL as he spins out of control into a 360 on the ice, leaving a CONCENTRIC SPIRAL PATTERN etched in the frost.

The Chevy jerks to a halt. Bud breathes, HEART POUNDING, the ghostly visage of Fuller gone.

INT. STOECKER HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

A Barbara Streisand record spins on the record player. Bud lays on the floor, staring out the window with a haunted look

Lollie removes her apron and goes to him. Without a word, he puts his head in her lap and she gently strokes his hair.

The kids peer around the corner.

BUD'S EYES drift to the ceiling to a FIXTURE with CONCENTRIC RINGS. He studies it, wheels turning... in a sudden burst of energy, he jumps up, startling Lollie, and rushes outside in his slippers --

EXT. STOECKER HOME - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

-- Bud walks in an erratic manner then begins yanking down the laundry line, face and hands turning pink from the cold.

INT. STOECKER HOME - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

The family stands at the WINDOW watching.

STEPHEN

Um... what's Dad doing?

KATHY

Has he lost it, Mom?

Realizing his family's eyes are on him, Bud's demeanor shifts on a dime. He makes a funny face, pats the top of his head with one hand and rubs his belly with the other.

The kids mirror him, patting heads and rubbing bellies. He changes hands, patting his belly and rubbing his head. Kids follow suit, lightening the mood and cracking up.

INT. STOECKER HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Bud dashes inside, past the family, ranting --

BUD

Who needs a warehouse when you've got a yard?!

-- he tosses the laundry line into the LINEN CLOSET, grabs his housing designs and rushes towards the door --

BUD (CONT'D)

We'll build it right here! A model everyone can see --

(turning back)

What are you waiting for? C'mon!

EXT. STOECKER HOME - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Lollie brings out his coat and shoes and helps him put them on as he shouts his plan.

BUD

Okay, team, first we stake our foundation! Stephen, John, grab the tape measure and mark the boundary lines. Precise measurements now, every inch counts!

Stephen and John run off towards the SHED.

BUD (CONT'D)

KathyRobinDean, scour the garage for anything we can use to mark off our floor plan.

LATER

GOD'S EYE VIEW: Kids scattered about, measuring and marking off the yard with household items: BROOM, RAKE, PAIL, OLD PAIR OF SHOES -- creating the diagram of an A-Frame house. Inside the PHONE RINGS.

LOLLIE (O.S.)

(calling out)

Bud? Telephone!

INT. STOECKER HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Bud rushes inside...

BUD

(into phone)

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BANK 3 - SAME TIME

Stanwick thumbs through BUD'S LEDGER: "TITHINGS", "AUTOMOBILE", "KIDS GAMES: POINTS SCORED, REBOUNDS, TACKLES". "ROBIN'S SCORES: HIGH BEAM, RINGS, VAULT, MAT".

STANWICK

It's Wells Stanwick from First National.

BUD
(surprised)
Mr. Stanwick?

STANWICK
You left your ledger here this morning...

BUD
(slightly disappointed)
Oh... thanks. I'll come by and--

STANWICK
You're extremely detailed, Mr. Stoecker. Your accounting is very thorough. But I'm especially impressed by Robin's gymnastic's scores.
(Stanwick smirks)
Not to mention John seems to be a hell of a shot!

Bud smiles, embarrassed.

BUD
Too bad pride in my kids doesn't count as collateral.

STANWICK
Bud, my wife tells me I have good instincts when it comes to people. And I must admit, you impressed me as a person. And this ledger? Well, it proves my wife right. But the bank doesn't operate on intuition. They need proof. And frankly, we just don't believe anyone can build these themselves--

BUD
Then let me prove it to you!

STANWICK
Pardon me?

BUD
Mr. Stanwick, my family and I are going to build one right here! Come witness for yourself -- a live demonstration! Watch a model being built in front of your eyes!

Long pause. Bud turns to see Lollie and kids waiting on edge.

STANWICK
How's Saturday?

BUD
Saturday is perfect! Thank you,
thank you, Mr. Stanwick!

The family jumps up and down, silently cheering.

STANWICK
You know, Bud, there's two kinds of
people: those who will do anything
not to fail and those who will do
anything to succeed. Which one are
you?

BUD
Me?... I'm an astronaut.

Stanwick smirks.

Bud hangs up, spins to Lollie and kids with a huge smile.

BUD (CONT'D)
We're gonna show him we can do it!
Everyone outside, pronto!

The kids run out, except Dean trails behind to overhear...

LOLLIE
Bud? Aren't you forgetting one
little detail?

Bud thinks, his smile drops when he realizes--

BUD
Lumber... Oh my God! How do I pay
for 2 tons of wood?
(snaps his fingers)
I'll open an account-- buy it on
credit. There's a million companies
-- one of them has to let me.

Dean studies his father for a beat before exiting.

INT. DELTA AFFORDABLE HOMES - DAY

Bud sits bundled up at his desk, breathing white smoke from
the cold. PILE OF BILLS. PHONE BOOK open. YELLOW PAGES:
LUMBER COMPANIES. He picks up the phone, dials, puts the
receiver to his ear to hear --

OPERATOR RECORDING (O.S.)
 We're sorry, your phone has been
 disconnected...

Bud SLAMS the receiver down, when... something on his desk catches his eye: the TRIANGLE DOODLE. He grabs a pencil, slowly draws CONCENTRIC RINGS around the TRIANGLES...

His eyes dart about wildly -- spot the MASONITE COUNTER.

Bud grabs a sledgehammer from a toolkit in the closet and begins WHACKING the masonite counter apart. Each strike a cathartic release of his pent-up frustration.

INT. STOECKER HOME - LINEN CLOSET - DAY

Dean sneaks into the closet, gathers Bud's cutting schedules and slips out the front door.

EXT. SHRIER HOME - DAY

Dean knocks on the Shriers' front door. Frank Sr. opens it...

INT. STOECKER HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lollie sets the table with a modest amount of food. Bud enters the front door covered in masonite chips.

LOLLIE
 Just in time for dinner. Any luck?

BUD
 Bucky said there's no such thing as luck. Just complex underlying patterns and individual choices.

LOLLIE
 Have some food.

BUD
 Think I inherited Joe's stomach. I can't eat until I find--

Lollie counts the kids at the table.

LOLLIE
 (calling out)
 Dean?! Where's Dean?

The front door opens, Dean enters.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)
Baby! Where were you?!

DEAN
Talking to Mr. Shrier. He said he
owes you one, Dad.

BUD
Owes me what?

DEAN
Wood! He said to tell you he'll
have it here Saturday morning.

Bud's jaw drops. The family cheers. John high fives Dean.

LOLLIE
(to Bud)
Now will you eat something, dear?

Bud flashes a guilty look at the meager amount of food.

BUD
You and the kids should--

The front door swings open. Kathy skips in wearing her MR.
STEAK UNIFORM and holding a large bag full of baked potatoes.

KATHY
They'd just be thrown out!

The family laughs and chatters eating baked potatoes
smothered in bacon, cheese, and butter.

SAME PLACE - LATER

The dishes are stacked in the sink. Bud's blueprints on the
table. The kids looks exhausted, Bud, nervous.

BUD
Stephen! Show me "A-7".

Stephen eyes the diagram, places the Legos piece on the model

BUD (CONT'D)
(to John)
"F-16".

John places the Legos piece on the model, completing it.

LOLLIE
Ok, Bud. That's three times now.
Think they've got it. Time for bed.

BUD
 We can't sleep, Lollie! Everything
 has to go perfect! One more time--

Bud breaks apart the Legos model. Lollie studies him, rises.

LOLLIE
 Kathy and Dean wash the dishes.
 Robin, dry. John, put them away,
 and Stephen take out the trash.
 Then everyone straight to bed. Big
 day tomorrow. Your father and I
 need to go somewhere, be back soon.

BUD
 What? Where are we --

LOLLIE
 Get your coat, Bud.

EXT. COLORADO UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS - NIGHT

Lollie leads Bud across the quad towards a familiar site...

THE FOOTBRIDGE

LOLLIE
 The wish I made all those years
 ago... wasn't to go to school here.
 (Off Bud's surprise)
 It was to go to Paris with you. I'd
 never been out of Boulder, never
 even considered it. But from the
 moment you jumped on that trolley--
 I knew you were gonna show me
 things I'd never dared to dream of.

Bud hangs his head.

BUD
 But... I didn't...

She climbs up on the railing as he once did. Bud stares,
 taken aback at her behavior.

LOLLIE
 Did you really think I believed you
 were gonna build me a flying
 saucer?! "With 365 degree windows
 all around!"

Bud shoots her a sheepish look. She laughs at the absurdity.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

Is that what you thought I fell in
love with? What I've been waiting
for all these years?

(feigning anger)

Where's my saucer, Bud?!

Now he cracks up at the absurdity. They laugh to the point of
tears. She jumps down, shakes his shoulders.

LOLLIE (CONT'D)

It was you! You towered over this
whole town! And all I wanted to do
was climb to the top of that tower
and gaze down-- wave goodbye to the
pain of a family that never
bothered to know me... and start
one with you. We created something
we never had, but we can't run from
our pasts either. You're allowed to
miss her, Bud... to think about her
every day. That's how you honor
your mother.

BUD

Great men don't cry.

LOLLIE

Yes. They do. Sometimes we have to
deal with bad things and we're
allowed to cry, to feel-- together,
not alone where no one can see. The
other night, you helped me trust
again... well, haven't I shown you
that you can trust me? That I would
never use anything you share with
me against you? I feel like you've
got emotions I've never seen,
screams I've never heard, poetry
you've never let me read, pain and
love buried so deep in your heart,
mind, and gut, that you won't share
with me... because you think I
can't handle it? But I can. You
don't have to change the world.
Just... be you. Whatever happens
tomorrow, we'll be okay.

They embrace. Two souls meant for each other, kissing like
they did twenty years ago.

FADE OUT.

EXT. STOECKER HOME - MORNING

A DENVER LUMBER & CONSTRUCTION TRUCK pulls up to the house. Frank Sr. & Jr., Jon B, NEIGHBORS, and CHURCH MEN help the Stoecker boys unload lumber and carry it to the BACKYARD where Bud arranges it. He notes the WIND picking up.

Lollie and Dean sit on the porch, watching. Dean jumps up. Lollie pulls him back, folds her arms around him.

LOLLIE
(softly)
Watch from here, baby...

A '69 FLEETWOOD parks in front. Stanwick gets out as a GUST OF WIND blows. Bud meets him coming up the driveway.

BUD
Mr. Stanwick! Welcome! Thank you
for your time. We appreciate it.

STANWICK
I believe this is yours.

Stanwick smiles and hands Bud his Ledger. Stanwick sees Lollie on the porch. She smiles and waves. Bud hands him an INSTRUCTIONAL MANUAL.

BUD
Just follow along with this!

STANWICK
Show me what you got, Bud.

MOMENTS LATER

Stanwick glances at the manual, watching closely as Bud and the kids work feverishly like a well-oiled machine, step by step building a house in front of his eyes.

BUD
(calling out)
Stephen, B4!

Stephen confidently carries a beam over, slotting it into place. He and John hammer it down.

BUD (CONT'D)
(to Stanwick)
He's only 17.
(calling out)
John, C7!

John, not missing a beat, brings the next component.

BUD (CONT'D)
And he's just 12!

Stanwick nods, impressed.

LATER. Stanwick sits in a lawn chair spectating as the family works. Lollie brings him a cup of coffee.

LATER. Each kid works diligently while Bud moves around over-seeing and getting his hands dirty. It's taking shape!

LATER... Moment of truth as the entire TRIANGULAR FACADE of the A-frame is hoisted and locked into position with a series of locking joints and bolts... and then... it's done! A triumphant moment as... the house stands! Stanwick rises in wonder and awe.

DEAN
(excitedly)
It worked! It worked! Dad did it!

Stanwick turns to Bud, a smile forming. He gives Bud a nod.

Lollie and Dean jump up, excited, when -- A HUGE GUST OF WIND BLOWS THROUGH. Lollie's eyes widen, her face contorts in horror --

LOLLIE
(bloodcurdling scream)
ROBIN! LOOK OUT!

Bud and Stanwick turn to see -- the A-Frame rattles -- a horrendous POP of a joint -- and the entire TRIANGULAR FACADE detaches, collapsing forward right where Robin is doing a celebratory handstand! It happens too fast for anyone to stop a half-ton of wood from crashing on top of the boy, seeming to flatten Robin!

Lollie screams, the kids and neighbors panic in horror--

Stanwick rushes after Bud, digging, tearing through the wood.

BUD
(screaming)
ROBIN! ROBIN!!!

Bud and others struggle to lift the facade to reveal...

ROBIN, WEDGED SAFELY IN A SMALL DITCH UNDERNEATH, UNTOUCHED, BUT SHOCKED. He's okay!

Lollie bursts out crying with relief. Bud pulls Robin out of the ditch, grabs him hard and forceful, and hugs him tight. Dean rushes over and throws his arms around Bud and Robin.

Stephen and John embrace their father and brothers, Kathy and Lollie join, laughing, crying, hugging -- long and hard...

And Bud -- like a dam holding a life of pain bursts open -- weeps uncontrollably. The pain mixes with joy as he cries and laughs. And utters the words of his father.

BUD (CONT'D)

We're Stoeckers... we're strong...

As Stanwick slips away, wiping his brow with a handkerchief, the family holds the embrace for an eternity...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KATHY'S HOUSE - PRESENT

The Stoecker family is all here, gathered in front of the TV.

BUCKY

(soft to Bud)

My first dome collapsed...
Blackmountain College, North
Carolina, nineteen-forty-eight.
Everyone expected me to be unhappy,
but I was delighted. Because I
learned something important.
Anytime you try to do something,
you always learn more -- you can't
learn less. And humans have only
learned through mistakes.

THEME MUSIC FOR SHARK TANK BLASTS.

MATT

Here it comes! Here it comes!

ON THE TV: Mark Cuban, Kevin O'Leary, Robert Herjavec, Lori Greiner, and Barbara Corcoran all stare at something -- Matt on TV!

BARBARA CORCORAN

How ever did you come up with this
idea, Matt?

INT. STOECKER HOME - DAY - (1969)

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS. SOCK-STOCKINGS... but still no tree.

Bud bursts through the front door, hair mussed, covered in paint and masonite chips.

BUD
 Will the beautiful wife of Bud
 Stoecker and all Stoecker kids
 report to the kitchen immediately!

The family rushes in.

BUD (CONT'D)
 Sit! Sit! Close your eyes and don't
 peek!

Bud hurries into the LIVING ROOM. LOUD NOISES emit as Bud
 moves furniture around and plugs in a power cord. The room
 floods with BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT -- lighting up his face.

Bud smiles, until - BAM! The house is plunged into darkness.

BUD (CONT'D)
 (panicking)
 Criminy!
 (calling out)
 Keep your eyes shut now! Just gotta
 find a fuse!

LOLLIE
 Check the left drawer in the hall
 closet.

BUD
 Keep those eyes shut!

EXT. STOECKER HOME - CONTINUOUS

Bud flies out the back door toward the fuse box. He
 frantically flings it open, scanning for the blown fuses.

BUD
 C'mon, c'mon, let there be light!

Just then, a BORDER COLLIE adorned with a festive bow bounds
 into the yard startling him.

MR. ELDRIDGE (O.S.)
 Ruff! C'mere, Ruff!

BUD
 (re: the dog)
 Oh, no!

MR. ELDRIDGE enters chasing after Ruff.

MR. ELDRIDGE
 Sorry, Bud! He's too excited!

As Eldridge tries to wrangle the dog, Bud secures the last fuse. Ruff bolts through the back door into the house.

Suddenly the LIGHTS flash back on! HAPPY SHOUTS from inside.

INT. STOECKER HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bud enters to see his family...

AWESTRUCK, ILLUMINATED BY THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF:

BUD'S HOMEMADE CHRISTMAS TREE.

Comprised of house-hold objects he has been collecting:

- CLOSET POLE is a TREE STAND
- MASONITE cut into CONCENTRIC RINGS from biggest at the bottom to smallest at the top.
- LAUNDRY LINE holding the dangling rings in place to make it triangle shaped.
- ORNAMENTS DANGLE from holes drilled in the rings.
- A FLOOD LAMP bounces light off the ornaments, sparkling, flickering around the room. And Ruff tears around the house delighting the kids.

MR. ELDRIDGE

(chuckling)

Seems Ruff's already at home! Merry Christmas!

(re: the tree)

What do you call that?!

LOLLIE

(to Mr. Eldridge)

Spectacular.

(looking at the dog)

Um, Bud?

BUD

(shirking)

Nothing says Christmas like a new pup! Isn't that right, Mr. Eldridge?

Lollie glances over at the kids and Ruff playing together.

LOLLIE

(happy sigh)

Oh, Bud...

Dean tugs on his dad's pant leg, grinning ear to ear.

DEAN

It's the best tree ever, Dad!

JOHN

So much better than last year!

Bud gets on his knees and crawls underneath the tree, lays flat on his back and gazes up. Then Lollie follows suit, laying beside Bud. The kids watch curiously.

Until Kathy follows. Then the boys, until the whole family lays under the tree gazing up at --

A SPIRAL OF RINGS, STRETCHING TO INFINITY...

Mr. Eldridge watches the peculiar scene... when the wall phone rings. He instinctively answers it

MR. ELDRIDGE

Stoecker residence. ...hang on.

(covering the receiver)

Bud, it's a Mr. Stanwick?

Bud and Lollie turn to look at each other...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KATHY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ON THE TV: Matt smiles at Barbara Corcoran.

MATT

Actually... my Grandpa made it.

REVEAL what Matt is pitching: BUD'S TREE -- only modernized, professionally built, and elegantly illuminated. A nod to mid-century aesthetics that captures Bud's unique vision.

Each of the grown Stoecker kids react to seeing their father's tree, personal memories flooding back. A mix of elation, sadness, and love.

And Bud Stoecker, an old man now, raises his head and looks at the TV and then at Bucky. He extends his arm, weak and shaky, pointing at something on the floor: a CRAYON. Bucky smiles.

BUCKY

Wish I could help you with that.

Just then, a GRANDCHILD notices Bud pointing and picks up the crayon, hands it to him with a piece of paper.

One by one the other Stoeckers notice what Bud is doing and turn to watch.

With great effort Bud struggles to draw an ornate and familiar DOLLAR SIGN. They seem to get what he means-- though they are missing the point.

KATHY

That's right, Dad! It's a success.

Bucky shakes his head and stands.

BUCKY

Don't worry, Bud. They'll figure it out...

Bucky is holding an ASTRONAUT HELMET.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

And more.

And then Bucky hands Bud his own ASTRONAUT HELMET, then helps him to his feet.

Bud takes Bucky's arm to steady himself as Bucky escorts Bud toward the front door.

EXT. PENOBSCOT BAY - DAY

Bucky enters the rocky shore, helmet in hand. And Bud is with him -- carrying his own helmet. They head toward a waiting rowboat...

They get in the boat and row out on the bay. The sky spreading wide and gray in front of them, and a SHADOW descends over the bay -- a huge, round shadow grows bigger and wider as if cast by a flying saucer or... a Dymaxion house? Bucky and Bud put on their helmets.

FADE OUT.

EPILOGUE

INT. KATHY'S HOUSE - ATTIC - PRESENT

Matt carries a box to the dusty attic and sets it down next to a dozen others. Curious, he pulls the top open and finds it full of Bud's books. Dozen of his LEDGERS and PHOTO ALBUMS.

He pulls out a book: NINE CHAINS TO THE MOON by R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER. It's Bud's old, marked up copy. He opens the book, and we see the inscription:

**"BUD -- WE ARE ALL ASTRONAUTS
LIVING ON A BEAUTIFUL SPACESHIP
CALLED EARTH." - Buckminster Fuller**

Then he pulls out a leather-bound PHOTO ALBUM. On the cover: A groovy looking sticker from the '60s -- an ornate DOLLAR \$IGN! The PRICE TAGS that Joe bought. And on the price line are the hand-written words: "STOECKERS 1969".

INSIDE: FAMILY PHOTOS FROM '69. Kathy, Stephen, Robin, John, Dean, Lollie... and Ruff. And on each page, a dollar sign price tag with Bud's hand-written captions on them. He found a good use for them. To bequeath his fortune. And more.

THE LAST PHOTO: BUD AND LOLLIE IN FRONT OF THE EIFFEL TOWER.

THE END