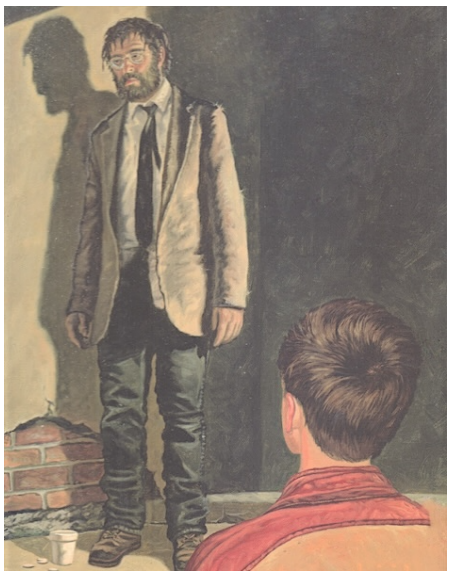

So What Do You Do?

By
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Based on his book: So What Do You Do?

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FADE IN:

EXT. BUSY STREET - DAY

CHARLIE FULLER, 12, walks down a busy sidewalk filled with street people He watches JOE ADAMS, 50, raggedly-dressed and disheveled, panhandle with Styrofoam cup at his feet.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
You can be walking down a sidewalk in the middle of the day and see five or ten street people... panhandlers. Mostly guys about my dad's age. And they look perfectly able to get a job and everything. But they want me to give them money, and I'm just a twelve-year-old kid. So what do you do?

JOE ADAMS dumps coins into pocket and heads down sidewalk.

CHARLIE follows.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I suppose the California weather is what brings homeless people here. Some act crazy. Some smell bad. Some seem friendly and smile. Some stagger around talking to themselves.

JOE ADAMS enters alley and lifts lid of Dumpster.

CHARLIE watches from behind car as man lifts out a sandwich and bites into it.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
But there was this one man that really got to me. He looked familiar ...I thought I knew him. It was weird recognizing a homeless person.

JOE ADAMS leaves alley.

CHARLIE follows.

JOE ADAMS strides down sidewalk to a library and enters.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

JOE ADAMS sits at a table reading *Don Quixote*. CHARLIE watches him from behind book shelf.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I stood there and watched this man read in the library. That's when I knew. That's when I was sure who he was. I could tell by the way his head bent over the book. I remembered how he had bent over me while I read to him. His beard was new. His hair had gray and was much longer. But I knew him. He was Mr. Adams...my third-grade teacher.

CHARLIE walks up to table. JOE ADAMS remains slumped over book.

CHARLIE
Hey, Mr. Adams. It's me, Charlie Fuller. Remember? I had you for third grade. I always wore black sneakers, and so did you, and I was the worst writer in the class. Remember me now? Charlie Fuller. You might not recognize me. I mean, I've grown a lot...I'm almost as tall as my mom now. Man, third grade was the best class in the world, Mr. Adams. You were my all-time favorite teacher ever. I remember you played the guitar and we sang songs. Can you still juggle? And you always drew those cartoons on our math papers. Remember? And the time you roller-bladed around our classroom. That was crazy.

JOE ADAMS wipes his nose with sleeve and turns page of book.

CHARLIE
Remember Colleen Martin? She's in my homeroom at the middle school. (pause) Hey, what happened, Mr. Adams? I mean, what are you doing here? How did you get so...you know...? And why did you quit teaching? What's going on?

JOE ADAMS
(looking up from book)
You got a dollar to give me?

CHARLIE
(pulls five dollar bill from pocket)
Sure. Sure I do, Mr. Adams. Here you go. That's all I have.

JOE ADAMS stuffs bill into pocket.

CHARLIE
You know, Mr. Adams, I hated school before I had you. My mom says you were the teacher who straightened me out. I guess I used to be pretty lazy about schoolwork. But now I'm doing pretty well, Mr. Adams. Really. You can ask my teachers. Especially my art teacher. She says I'm one of the best drawers she's had in sixth grade. I told her about you. Remember how you gave me a sketch book once. Remember how you had a special place on the bulletin board for my drawings? Remember that, Mr. Adams? Here I'll show you some sketches I did today. Look at these, Mr. Adams.

CHARLIE pulls drawings from pocket and lays them on table.

JOE ADAMS stands and stares wild-eyed at him.

JOE ADAMS
(shouting)
Get away from me!

CHARLIE
(backing away)
Sure. I understand.

JOE ADAMS
I don’t know you. Get away!

JOE ADAMS hurries from library.

INT. FULLER DINING ROOM - HOUR LATER

MICHELLE FULLER, 40; ROBERT FULLER, 40; TANYA FULLER, 7, and CHARLIE FULLER sit around dinner table eating spaghetti.

MICHELLE FULLER
(to Charlie)
Colleen called. She sounded upset, Charlie. Weren't you suppose to go over there to study for a math test?

CHARLIE
Remember Mr. Adams? I just ran into him.

ROBERT FULLER
Mr. Adams? Your grade-school teacher?

CHARLIE
Yeah, but he didn't look normal. I mean, he was dirty and... he was begging on the street... panhandling. I think he's one of those homeless people. I gave him money.

MICHELLE FULLER
Mr. Adams? Are you sure?

CHARLIE
Yeah, I'm sure.

ROBERT FULLER
Didn't Joe Adams tell us he was going to live in England? He wanted to write books for children. Panhandling, huh?

MICHELLE FULLER
It couldn't have been Mr. Adams, Charlie. He's not that type of person. And besides, you had no business giving money to beggars.

CHARLIE
It was him, Mom. But he didn't remember me.

ROBERT FULLER
They say we're all just one step from the streets. You can get down on your luck and have no family or friends to turn to for help. So there you are --homeless and having to beg for a living. It happens.

CHARLIE
Mr. Adams left Pleasant Hill the year after I had him, didn’t he, Dad?

ROBERT FULLER
Big loss for the school. He was an excellent teacher. Too bad your sister won't be able to have him.

TANYA
(with mouth full of pasta)
A man teacher? Yuck

MICHELLE FULLER
I still say the man you were talking to was someone else, Charles. Mr. Adams was the last person in the world who would ask for handouts.

ROBERT FULLER
Maybe it was the story in the newspaper. Maybe that's why Joe Adams quit. Once something like that gets in the papers, the people of this community never forget it.

CHARLIE
What happened? I don't remember anything in the paper.

ROBERT FULLER
Oh, I don't know. Some kid in your school claimed Joe Adams pushed him. The kid probably made the whole thing up. Who knows? The school board never said Joe Adams did anything wrong, but at the end of the year he offered his resignation all the same.

CHARLIE
Had Mr. Adams been teaching at our school for a long time?

ROBERT FULLER
Twenty years or so. I know a lot of people in this town who had him for a teacher.

CHARLIE
(setting down fork)
So what do you do?

MICHELLE FULLER
Your homework. Right after dinner. Colleen is expecting you over there. And head straight home afterward. It gets dark early now.

EXT. FOURTH STREET - NIGHT

CHARLIE, hands in pocket of Forty-Niner,s jacket, walks down Fourth Street. Homeless people sit on sidewalk.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
This was stupid. No one ever goes to Fourth Street after dark. Every week I read a column in the newspaper called the "Crime Blotter". It tells every crime that was reported to the police during the week. You read about all the assaults and robberies that take place on the very street I was now walking down. But I wasn't going to Colleen's for homework. I knew I had to find Mr. Adams.

INT. FOURTH STREET CAFE - NIGHT

CHARLIE walks up to counter. JANINE, waitress, 20, well-pierced and tattooed, stands behind counter.

CHARLIE
(to Janine)
Have you seen a tall man with a beard? He's wearing a tweed coat. He's one of those men who lives on the streets, but not really. I mean, he used to be my teacher.

JANINE
(smiling)
Lots of homeless people, like, spend the night in the park. Your teacher could be in there. But I wouldn't go in...not you..not like at this hour.

CHARLIE
Right

CHARLIE starts walking away

JANINE
Hey, are you OK?

CHARLIE
(turning)
Right. Sure. Thanks.

JANINE
I mean, if you're looking for someone you should, like, ask the police or something.

CHARLIE
OK. Thanks

CHARLIE exits cafe.

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT

CHARLIE walked into park along dimly lit path. Homeless people are camped on grass. Dogs bark. A guitar plays.

CHARLIE stops before a grove of rhododendron bushes where cardboard shacks have been erected.

CHARLIE
(to self)
Cardboard City. I gotta go in there if I want to find Mr. Adams. OK, Mom. OK, Dad. OK, Tanya even. If I don't come home tonight, you can read about me in tomorrow's Crime Blotter.

CHARLIE enters grove. He stumbles over lawn chair.

CHARLIE spies a cardboard shack in a clearing. Opera music comes from behind sheet covering the doorway.

CHARLIE walks up to shack and listens.

CHARLIE
(to self)
I know that song. Mr. Adams used to play it on his CD player.

CHARLIE pulls aside sheet and drops to knees.

INT. CARDBOARD SHACK - NIGHT

CHARLIE looks in from entrance way.

Candles light the shack's interior that's filled with books and debris. JOE ADAMS lies past out on bed of newspapers.

CHARLIE
(grimacing)
Man, Mr. Adams. The smell. What a mess. This is disgusting.

CHARLIE crawls in and turns off CD player. He blows out candles, and leaves.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - MORNING

CHARLIE sits in school room.

Students file into room.

COLLEEN MARTIN, 12, enters and CHARLIE waves her over to sit by him.

CHARLIE
(to Colleen)
Guess who I saw last night?

COLLEEN
(sarcastically)
Let's see, there's three billion people on earth, so I must get three billion guesses.

CHARLIE
Mr. Adams...standing on Fourth Street. And guess what he was doing?

COLLEEN
Well, there are thousands of things he *could* be doing, so...

CHARLIE
Panhandling. Right there on Fourth Street. And he's homeless, Colleen. He's living in a cardboard shack in the park.

COLLEEN
(making a face)
What are you talking about?

CHARLIE
Mr. Adams. He’s living in Central Park with the bums and drug addicts. I went there last night and saw him.

COLLEEN
You? You went into the park, by yourself, all alone, after dark?

CHARLIE
And I saw Mr. Adams. That’s where he’s living.

COLLEEN
You’re serious, aren’t you?

CHARLIE nods.

COLLEEN
This isn’t one of your...*exaggerations*?

CHARLIE shakes head

COLLEEN
But that's so sad. How could that happen? Mr. Adams was the best teacher in the school. I thought he was in England.

CHARLIE
He's different now, Colleen. He acts strange. I mean, he's nuts, crazy or something.

COLLEEN
You know, Mr. Adams was the teacher who turned me on to reading and writing. Remember we once tied his shoelaces together when he was reading us a story. All the girls had a crush on him.

CHARLIE
Do you remember Neil Turner?

COLLEEN
How can you forget him? He spit on me once. I tried to make friends with him when he first came, but he kept being so obnoxious.

CHARLIE
He came in January during third grade, didn't he? His parents moved around a lot.

COLLEEN
They were creepy, too. They were the one who got Mr. Adams in trouble. They said he pushed their dear little Neil. But do you know what Neil was doing at the time? Trying to dunk Jenny's head in the fish tank! Remember that?

CHARLIE
I guess I was at the Resource Room at the time. So what happened?

COLLEEN
Neil Turner complained to his parents and they went straight to the newspaper. Mr. Adams changed after that. I've always wondered where he went when he quit.

CHARLIE
So what do we do?

COLLEEN
I don't know. But it's sad. That whole City Park is sad. My mom says the homeless are not our problem. She calls panhandlers “panhasslers”. My dad says they're the Four D's...dope pushers, drug addicts, drunkards, and dropouts. I'd never tell my parents what I plan to when I get to college.

CHARLIE
Date football players like your sister?

COLLEEN
Funny, Chucky. I'm going to study to become a social worker.

CHARLIE
Social worker? So what do they do?

COLLEEN
You know, help people and stuff. I want to help fix what's wrong with our cities.
(MORE)

COLLEEN (cont'd)
(pause) Show me where Mr. Adams lives. Take me there. This afternoon.

CHARLIE
What's the point? What good would it do?

COLLEEN
I just want to see him. I want talk to him.

CHARLIE
Listen, Colleen. He's not the same Mr. Adams we knew. He's a different person. He's weird. And it's too dangerous to go down there.

COLLEEN
Then I'll go by myself.

CHARLIE
OK, OK, OK. I'll meet you in front of the library after school.

EXT. LIBRARY STEPS - AFTERNOON

COLLEEN sits on library steps.

CHARLIE walks out of the library.

CHARLIE
OK, so he’s not in the library or on Fourth Street. He must be in the park. But that’s not a great place to go at this time of day.

COLLEEN
(standing)
I’m going to find Mr. Adams with or without you, Chucky. Are you in or out?

COLLEEN starts off down sidewalk. CHARLIE follows.

CHARLIE
OK, OK, OK.

EXT. CITY PARK - MOMENTS LATER

CHARLIE and COLLEEN walk down a cement path through City Park.

CHARLIE
You know, Colleen. I don't know what Mr. Adams will think about two people coming to his shack. You probably won't recognize him. Who knows what he'll be like today?

COLLEEN
I just want to see him again.

POLICE OFFICER, 25 wearing blue shorts and bike helmet, rides up on mountain bike.

POLICE OFFICER
Everything all right, you two?

COLLEEN
Sure. We're just taking a short cut through the park.

POLICE OFFICER
Where you kids live?

COLLEEN
On the hill. We go to Pleasant Hill Middle School.

CHARLIE
We're not runaways or anything.

POLICE OFFICER
(smiling)
Well, watch yourselves. We've had a number of robberies in this area recently.

POLICE OFFICER pedals away. CHARLIE and COLLEEN watch him go, before cutting into the rhododendron area.

Music comes from JOE ADAM'S cardboard shack.

CHARLIE
Remember that song?

COLLEEN
(singing)
Donna è mobile.

CHARLIE
Right.

COLLEEN
From the opera *La Traviata* by Verdi.

CHARLIE
Right

CHARLIE peeks through crack in cardboard walls. JOE ADAMS lies on newspapers reading.

CHARLIE
Maybe we better forget this whole thing, Colleen. I told you he was cuckoo.

COLLEEN pushes aside sheet and sits in doorway.

INT. CARDBOARD SHACK - AFTERNOON

JOE ADAMS rolls over and throws paperback book at COLLEEN.

JOE ADAMS
Get. Get.

CHARLIE kneels in doorway beside COLLEEN.

CHARLIE
Hey, Mr. Adams. Hey, I'm back. This is Colleen. Remember Colleen Martin?

COLLEEN
I remember when you played the piano and sang those arias in third grade.

JOE ADAMS
(snarling)
Get. Get.

CHARLIE pulls twenty-dollar bill from pocket.

CHARLIE
Look, Mr. Adams. I brought some more money.

JOE ADAMS reaches for bill, but CHARLIE pulls it away.

CHARLIE
We've come to take you to dinner. We'll go to the café on the corner. Great hamburgers and everything. We'll pay. You think better after you've eaten. That's what you used to tell us in the afternoon at school.

COLLEEN gives CHARLIE an impressed look.

JOE ADAMS rises and barges out doorway.

INT. FOURTH STREET CAFE - HALF-HOUR LATER

CHARLIE, COLLEEN, and JOE ADAMS sit in booth at rear of cafe. JANINE steps up.

JANINE
(to Charlie)
Is he the teacher you were looking for last night?

CHARLIE shrugs.

COLLEEN
This is Mr. Adams.

JANINE
Well, what'll it be?

CHARLIE
Hamburgers and fries for us all.

JANINE
(smiling)
Three hamburgers and three sides of French fries. You got it.

JANINE walks away.

CHARLIE and COLLEEN sit nervously staring at JOE ADAMS.

CHARLIE
That's a pretty neat cardboard house you're staying in, Mr. Adams. My sister and I make forts like that in our basement whenever my parents get a new refrigerator or something.

COLLEEN
(giving Charlie a look)
I loved the music you were playing, Mr. Adams. I've been listening to opera for a long time because of you.

JOE ADAMS slurps from water glass. JANINE arrives with order.

JANINE
(placing dishes on table)
Here you go. Enjoy.

CHARLIE
Looks good. I'm starved.

COLLEEN
Bon appétit.

JOE ADAMS stuffs food into mouth. CHARLIE looks on in disgust.

CHARLIE
Hey, take it easy.

COLLEEN
You can order all you want, Mr. Adams. I bet you haven't had a good meal in a long time.

CHARLIE'S napkin falls on floor. He bends to retrieve it and sees that JOE ADAMS has peed in his pants.

Grimacing, he motions to COLLEEN to leave.

COLLEEN
(ignoring Charlie)
Remember all the stories you had us write in third grade, Mr. Adams? I still have every one I wrote. Now I'm writing a lot of stories on my own. I even had one published in the school newspaper.

JOE ADAMS continues wolfing down food.

COLLEEN
I'm reading lots of grown-up books now, Mr. Adams. I just read Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck. That was very good.

CHARLIE
(under breath to Colleen)
Man oh man! Who cares?

COLLEEN
(ignoring him)
I'm reading Portrait of a Lady by Henry James right now. I thought it would be hard, but it's not. What other books would you recommend, Mr. Adams?

JOE ADAMS mumbles and food falls from mouth.

CHARLIE tosses napkin onto table and stands.

CHARLIE
Well, I guess we should be getting home before it gets dark.

CHARLIE leaves twenty dollar bill on table. He heads out the door.

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE CAFE - MOMENT LATER

JOE ADAMS, CHARLIE, and COLLEEN stand together.

JOE ADAMS
(to Charlie)
Listen. Leave me alone, Chas. Forget about me. I'm no good.

JOE ADAMS strides away.

COLLEEN and CHARLIE watch him enter park.

CHARLIE
Well, I'm glad that's over. How embarrassing. What a waste. Mr. Adams is a lost cause.

COLLEEN
I’m going to help him.

CHARLIE
You're crazy, Colleen. I mean, you're both crazy. Mr. Adams doesn't even remember us.

COLLEEN
Don't you remember what he said when he left?

CHARLIE
Yeah, he told me to leave him alone.

COLLEEN
Correct. And then he called you Chas.

CHARLIE
(thinking)
That’s right. He did call me Chas. No one had called me that nickname since third grade.

EXT. LIBRARY STEPS - AFTERNOON

COLLEEN sits on library steps. Two shopping bags full of clothes and food sit by her side.

CHARLIE arrives and shakes head.

COLLEEN
(holding up container)
Look what I made. Rice Krispies Treats. Remember how Mr. Adams used to joke about not having any kids of his own, so the only time he ever got his favorite snack was when one of his students had a birthday party in the classroom?

CHARLIE
Man, Colleen. Rice Krispies Treats? The man doesn't even have milk or bread. I mean, this whole thing seems stupid. I mean, he never asked for our help, did he? Maybe he's happy the way he is.

COLLEEN stands. She hands CHARLIE the shopping bags.

COLLEEN
Carry these. If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

CHARLIE
OK. OK. OK.

EXT. CITY PARK - AFTERNOON

CHARLIE, lugging shopping bags, and COLLEEN walk along path in park. They pass a homeless woman also carrying two shopping bags.

CHARLIE
(to Colleen)
Hey, a bag lady. And I'm a bag boy.

COLLEEN gives look.

CHARLIE
(grinning sheepishly)
It's going to be cold tonight. I wonder where she'll sleep.

EXT. OUTSIDE CARDBOARD SHACK - AFTERNOON

CHARLIE and COLLEEN approach shack.

CHARLIE peeks through crack.

CHARLIE
Well, he's not here. Let's go.

COLLEEN enters shack.

Soon newspapers and whiskey bottles fly out of doorway.

CHARLIE
(through doorway)
Hey, make yourself at home, why don't you? What do you think you're doing?

COLLEEN
(appearing in doorway)
I'm cleaning up this place. I brought some thing to make it more homey.

CHARLIE
Homey? Man, Colleen, this is a crumby cardboard shack.

COLLEEN shakes head and retreats into shack.

CHARLIE shrugs, grabs bags, and joins her.

INT. CARDBOARD SHACK - AFTERNOON

MONTAGE: COLLEEN and CHARLIE toss out junk, straighten up books, and sweep floor.

They spread foam pad and sleeping bag on floor.

They tape up cracks with duct tape and cut windows in walls.

They erect a shelf and place dishes, soap, candles, and towels on it.

Finally they spray the shack with air freshener and crouch in doorway to admire their work.

COLLEEN
Well, it’s a start.

CHARLIE
This place looks all right. Almost homey.

OTTO (O.S.)
(from behind
What’s up, young sister, young brother? You robbing, the Professor?

Startled, CHARLIE and COLLEEN turn.

EXT. OUTSIDE CARDBOARD SHACK - AFTERNOON

OTTO, 30, wearing army fatigues and headphones with wire dangling stands before shack.

CHARLIE and COLLEEN spring to feet and face him.

OTTO
Oooweee! Calm down, young brother. I'm not the enemy.

COLLEEN
We were just cleaning up this house.

CHARLIE
We were making it homey.

OTTO kneels and peers inside shack.

OTTO
Now I see that, young sister, young brother.
(MORE)

OTTO (cont'd)
And it looks mighty fine in here. I must say The Professor's place needed some cleaning up.

CHARLIE
The Professor? You mean Mr. Adams? You know him?

OTTO
I've known The Professor since he arrived here a few months back. Used to be a teacher, I hear. That's why we call him The Professor. I stop by occasionally to... check that he's all right.

CHARLIE
He used to be our teacher. In third grade.

OTTO takes business card from and hands it to CHARLIE.

OTTO
Oooweee! Now ain't you lucky, young brother. Call me Otto. Here's my card.

CHARLIE reads business card.

Close up:

Otto Anderson, Professional Panhandler
Address: Under the sky
Handouts greatly appreciated.

CHARLIE
(handing card to Colleen)
Get this.

COLLEEN
(after reading card)
I'm Colleen. That's Charlie. What's a *professional* panhandler?

OTTO
My line of work, young sister. My job. My occupation. What I do for... a...*living*.

CHARLIE
Panhandling is your career? That's all you do?

OTTO
That's right. You'll never find me working at some boring indoor job. No, sir. I couldn't stand having a boss ordering me around or a time schedule to keep. And to tell you the truth, I make more money on the streets than I did cooking in a fancy restaurant. Out here...oooweee!...people just hand you the money. Tax free!

CHARLIE
My dad complains about his boss and job all the time.

COLLEEN
(giving Charlie a look)
You make life on the streets sound easy, Mr. Anderson.

OTTO
Don't get me wrong, young sister. Most people think panhandling is easy and takes no brains. But let me tell you, it's an art. To be successful at it you need talent. Talent, smarts, and know-how.

CHARLIE
I thought you just hold out a hand and say, 'Spare change? Spare change?'

OTTO
No, sir, if you want a decent meal each night, an occasional room at the Y, and still have change to do your laundry now and then, it takes time and practice to learn the best lines and best places to stand.

CHARLIE
I always see panhandlers in places where people are stuck waiting...like at bus stops or ATM's.

OTTO
(rubbing thumb and finger together)
You got it, young brother. That's when people have fresh money...oooweee!
(MORE)

OTTO (cont'd)
Outside the subway entrance is another excellent place to stand. You catch people coming and going. In the evening nothing beats asking for change outside a movie theater where there's a long line waiting to get in. Men love showing off their *generosity* to their dates...oooweee! I 'm telling you, young brother, young sister, it takes talent to live on the streets...talent, smarts, and know-how.

CHARLIE
But panhandling sounds as boring as a regular job, Otto. I mean, doing the same thing day after day. A job is a job. Work is work.

OTTO
That's where you're wrong, young brother. You see, I can hit the road whenever I have the itch. In the summer I make a fine income up north in Seattle. Each night I sleep under a starry sky in the mountains. Come autumn I hit the road again and drift south, stopping at Portland for fresh resources. Occasionally, I might cut over to the coast for some beautiful nights on the beach. By winter, I'm back here in sun-kissed California.

CHARLIE
Sounds grand, Otto. I mean, real grand.

OTTO
Let's go out on the grass, young brother, young sister. It's the purple hour of the evening...the time when the park is most splendid.

COLLEEN and CHARLIE follow OTTO to the lawn. Homeless men and women greet him on the way.

They lay on grass.

COLLEEN
But, Mr. Anderson, don't you think it's dangerous to stay in this park overnight?

OTTO
It can get rough at times. That's one reason I come over and check on The Professor. He needs protection.

CHARLIE
From other street people?

OTTO
No, sir. There are some bad dudes in the park, all right. But I worry more about the outsiders.

Otto points to a black Jeep driving by the park.

CHARLIE and COLLEEN exchange knowing looks.

OTTO
Rich kids. They cruise by in their fancy cars with nothing better to do than hassle helpless people like The Professor. They toss beer cans at him and shout the insults.

CHARLIE
(looking toward Colleen)
Oic.

COLLEEN
Well, we need to get home before dark, Otto.

CHARLIE
I have boring homework to do and boring chores. Then it's back to boring old school tomorrow.

OTTO
(pointing toward path)
Well, young brother, young sister, before you leave you can say hello to The Professor. Here he comes now.

JOE ADAMS walks past CHARLIE, COLLEEN, and OTTO on grass.

JOE ADAMS
Get. Get

OTTO
(winking)
Evening, Professor. You had two fine visitors today.

COLLEEN
We'll come back tomorrow, Mr. Adams.

EXT. CITY PARK - AFTERNOON FOLLOWING DAY

CHARLIE and COLLEEN stand outside the cardboard shack with more bags of food

CHARLIE
I brought some sandwiches and potato chips for Mr. Adams. No more Dumpster food for him.

COLLEEN
(knocking on wall)
Hello? Mr. Adams? It's us again.

CHARLIE
We brought some sandwiches and stuff.

COLLEEN pulls aside sheet door. As she crawled forward, a paperback book hits her shoulder. She falls backward.

COLLEEN
Mr. Adams! I only...

JOE ADAMS (O.S.)
Get. Get

CHARLIE
No problem, Mr. Adams. We'll just leave the stuff out here and you can get it whenever you want.

OTTO appears behind COLLEEN and CHARLIE.

OTTO
Give The Professor time.

COLLEEN
(wiping tears on sleeve)
He won't let me in.

OTTO
(jingling coins in pocket)
Give The Professor time to know he's among friends again. He'll come around.

CHARLIE
Have you been panhandling all day?

OTTO
(removes book from back pocket)
Oooweee! Did I have a good day at the office, young brother! Now excuse me, but your old teacher and I have business to attend to.

EXT. CARDBOARD SHACK - FOLLOWING AFTERNOONS

MONTAGE: COLLEEN and CHARLIE return with more food.

They clean and rake area.

COLLEEN sits in old wicker chair doing homework, while CHARLIE sketches shack.

COLLEEN and CHARLIE plant daffodils outside shack with OTTO looking on.

COLLEEN
(to Otto)
Otto, where do you find toilets and sinks to wash in?

OTTO
You find places, young sister. It's all a part of the smarts you need to succeed on the streets. They have showers in the basement of the church. Sometimes I wash in the restroom at the Exxon station. The cleanest toilets are in the bookstore.

CHARLIE
Maybe we could take Mr. Adams over to the church.

OTTO
Oh, I've tried that, young brother. But he won't come. I've never seen him at the shelter or down at the mission for free meals.
(MORE)

OTTO (cont'd)
I doubt he'd even come for the big Thanksgiving feast. No, sir.

COLLEEN
Then we'll have to have a Thanksgiving right here.

CHARLIE
What? How? We can't.

COLLEEN gives CHARLIE her look.

EXT. CARDBOARD SHACK - MORNING THANKSGIVING DAY

CHARLIE rides up to shack on bike. Two Hungry Man TV turkey dinners are stacked on bike rack.

COLLEEN sits in wicker chair with a bag of Thanksgiving decoration.

They exchange nods and kneel in front of sheet door.

CHARLIE
(into shack)
Mr. Adams? OK if we come in?

COLLEEN
It's us, Mr. Adams. Happy Thanksgiving.

CHARLIE and COLLEEN exchange looks and crawl through doorway.

INT. CARDBOARD SHACK - DAY

JOE ADAMS lies on sleeping bag reading. CHARLIE and COLLEEN sit beside him.

CHARLIE
(holding up TV dinner)
I brought you this for Thanksgiving. Two of them. It's got turkey and stuffing and even some cranberry sauce.

COLLEEN
I remember when you dressed up in that Pilgrim outfit, Mr. Adams. I'll never forget that.

JOE ADAMS sits up and begins eating.

COLLEEN and CHARLIE exchange smiles.

EXT. CITY PARK - DARK RAINY AFTERNOON

CHARLIE and COLLEEN walk through park. CHARLIE holds an umbrella. COLLEEN holds bags full with Christmas decorations.

MUGGER, 18, wearing hooded nylon jacket, follows them into rhododendron grove.

MUGGER steps out from behind a bush

MUGGER
(jamming finger in Charlie's chest.)
I see you in this park. You bring stuff for that old, crazy, man.

CHARLIE
(terrified)
Mr. Adams. His name is Mr. Adams.

MUGGER
Now give *me* something.

CHARLIE
(reaching for wallet)
No problem. OK? You can have all I got.

COLLEEN
We are not giving you a thing. Now please get out of our way.

MUGGER
Shut you trap.

COLLEEN
Let us do our work.

MUGGER pulls out knife and holds it to COLLEEN'S neck.

CHARLIE stands petrified.

MUGGER
What was that, young lady? Now hand over that bag.

COLLEEN
(dropping bag)
Please don't. Please don't. Take it. Take anything..everything.

JOE ADAMS, clean and neatly dressed, appears.

JOE ADAMS
Let her go.

MUGGER
(looking toward Mr. Adams)
Stay out of this, Professor.

JOE ADAMS
(calmly)
This girl has nothing for you. She's a friend of mine. Let her go.

POLICE OFFICER rides down path on bike.

MUGGER runs off with POLICE OFFICER in pursuit.

COLLEEN drops to knees.

JOE ADAMS
Are you all right, Colleen? He’s gone.

COLLEEN
(nodding)
Yes...yes, I’m all right.

JOE ADAMS
(looking toward Charlie)
You OK.

CHARLIE
Sure. No problem. That guy got nothing. (pause) You look good, Mr. Adams.

COLLEEN
(picking up muddy bag)
We brought you some Christmas decorations. But now they’re all ruined.

JOE ADAMS
That was very kind of you. Let’s get out of this rain.

CHARLIE
Let’s go get hamburgers? My treat.

INT. FOURTH STREET CAFE - AFTERNOON

COLLEEN, CHARLIE, and JOE ADAMS sit in same booth as before.

JANINE delivers hamburgers and smiles.

JOE ADAMS
(wipes mouth with napkin)
I loved being a teacher. I chose to teach young children because I felt it was easier to prevent problems than to fix them. And in what other job do you get to do sing songs, read books, make clay pots, and watch caterpillars change to butterflies?

COLLEEN
So what happened, Mr. Adams? Why did you stop teaching?

CHARLIE
Yeah, how'd you end up living on the streets?

JOE ADAMS
Everything went wrong at once. Life can be like that sometimes. Health problems. Problems with my marriage. They happen.

COLLEEN
No one knew.

JOE ADAMS
Don't you remember how cranky I was toward the end of the year. I felt bad about that.

CHARLIE
I don't remember you ever being crabby.

COLLEEN
Is that about the time the article appeared in the newspaper?

CHARLIE
About Neil Turner?

COLLEEN
He was awful, Mr. Adams.

JOE ADAMS
(shrugging)
It was hard to look at any fellow teacher in the face after that.

COLLEEN
They say bad things come in threes. And you had three whoppers at once.

CHARLIE
So what do you do?

JOE ADAMS
I had no friends or family to turn to for help. I felt ashamed to be a teacher, so I left the school. Soon the doctor bills ate up my savings. Before I knew it I was living on the streets.

CHARLIE
You sure seemed different when I first found you. The only normal thing you did was read.

JOE ADAMS
Books were my way of escape, Chas. I get lost in a good book and don’t think about my problems.

COLLEEN
(twirling straw in soda)
Mr. Adams, you taught us that if we want to write well, we should read lots of good books. You made us write every day about things we did, things we knew about. Now that I'm trying to be a writer, I think about that a lot.

JOE ADAMS bites into his hamburger.

COLLEEN
Are you ever going to try writing again?

JOE ADAMS
I don't know. Don't know if I can.

CHARLIE
You remember me in third grade, don't you, Mr. Adams? I was the kid who did flash cards so slowly that you pretended to fall asleep and snore. Man, you were funny.

JOE ADAMS
I remember your wonderful sketches, Chas. I admire the ones you have taped up in my cardboard cabin.

CHARLIE
I used to think I was a loser at everything I did in school. You taught me that I wasn't.

JOE ADAMS
(wiping mouth with napkin)
What did I say?

CHARLIE
You said I was a loser only if I thought I was a loser. You said everyone has a talent. I remember. You said a teacher’s job is to help a student discover what his talent is. Maybe mine is art.

JOE ADAMS
(surprised)
I said all that?

CHARLIE, COLLEEN, and JOE ADAMS laugh.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

MONTAGE: COLLEEN serves food to homeless from FOOD BANK truck.

JOE ADAMS reads with OTTO on park bench.

CHARLIE sits in wicker chair doing homework.

Daffodils around cardboard shack grow.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
All winter Colleen and I visited the park. Although the nights were cold there seemed to be more homeless people than ever sleeping there. Colleen started volunteering in the Food Bank truck that makes free meals for the homeless and I spent a lot of time doing my homework by Mr. Adams shack. I often saw Mr. Adams sitting on a bench with Otto. I think he was teaching him to read. I figured Otto would soon head up north.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
I could tell Mr. Adams was getting more healthy.

INT. FULLER TV ROOM - EVENING

CHARLIE is watching TV when phone rings.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
Things were going well until Spring Break. I was watching TV when Colleen called. I heard police sirens in the background.

CHARLIE answers phone.

CHARLIE
(into phone)
Hello.

COLLEEN (O.S.)
(on phone screaming)
Charlie! Listen, Charlie! I'm outside the park.

CHARLIE
(into phone)
What? You're crazy! What are you doing there this late?

COLLEEN (O.S.)
Charlie, I need your help. It's my sister's boyfriend and his friends. I heard them talking. They're coming here to bash trolls.

CHARLIE
Trolls?

COLLEEN (O.S.)
People who might sleep under a bridge...*homeless* people!

CHARLIE
What? Why?

COLLEEN (O.S.)
It's...it's bad, Charlie. Real bad. The police are here. It's like a riot. I have to find Mr. Adams.

CHARLIE
(phone clicks)
Hello? Colleen? You still there?

EXT. OUTSIDE CITY PARK - NIGHT

CHARLIE on bike pedals up to park entrance. Police cars are parked along street.

CHARLIE dismounts and enters park through bushes.

He races to the cardboard shack and finds it demolished.

He finds a book on ground and stuffs it into pocket.

OTTO steps out into the open.

OTTO
Your rich neighbors came, young brother. They tore up the place. The Professor didn't even fight back.

CHARLIE
Where’s Colleen?

OTTO
Young sister showed up in the middle of the brouhaha. She screamed like a mountain lion. When the police came, she ran off with The Professor.

CHARLIE
Where'd they go, Colleen and Mr. Adams? What happened to them?

OTTO
(kicks at paperback)
Don’t know. But The Professor was limping badly.

CHARLIE takes cell phone from pocket and presses COLLEEN’S number.

COLLEEN (O.S)
(voice mail)
This isn’t me. Leave a message until I’m back.

CHARLIE
Colleen, I'm at the park. Otto's here. Where'd you go. It's crazy down here.

CHARLIE puts phone in pocket

CHARLIE
(to Otto)
Where would they go?

OTTO
To Colleen's house?

CHARLIE
Not with her parents.

OTTO
The po-leece station?

CHARLIE
(shaking head)
Colleen would never let Mr. Adams end up there. So where...? Some place familiar, but safe.(pause) The school.

OTTO
The *school*?

CHARLIE
Right, it's empty now. Colleen and Mr. Adams have run to our old elementary school.

EXT. PLEASANT VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL- NIGHT

CHARLIE rides bike through school parking lot. Moon lights the way.

He rides up to former classroom. The room is dark. The window is open.

CHARLIE dismounts bike and climbs through window.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - NIGHT

CHARLIE stands in dark. Moonbeams shine through window.

CHARLIE
Colleen? You there? It's me. Are you in here?

COLLEEN (O.S.)
(from corner)
Charlie? Charlie?

CHARLIE
You OK? I can't see a thing. Is Mr. Adams with you?

COLLEEN (O.S.)
Yes, he's here. He's asleep. He's hurt.

CHARLIE fumbles to closet and pulls out container marked: EARTHQUAKE EMERGENCY.

He takes out flashlight and shines it into corner.

Light falls on COLLEEN sitting on rug. JOE ADAMS lies beside her with head on her lap.

CHARLIE walks to corner.

CHARLIE
(kneeling)
It's OK, Colleen. It's OK. Everything's going to be OK.

COLLEEN
(crying)
It...it was horrible, Charlie. When I got there the boys were kicking down the cardboard shack. They threw things everywhere. I tried to stop them.

CHARLIE
They probably didn't know the house belonged to Mr. Adams.

COLLEEN
(shaking head)
What does that matter? They attacked Mr. Adams just because he was homeless. He was a helpless human being and they pushed him and kicked him.

CHARLIE pulls blanket from earthquake container.

He covers JOE ADAMS.

CHARLIE
How did you get him here?

COLLEEN
When we got out of the park I flagged down a taxi. I didn't know where else to go. He fell asleep as soon as he lay down.

CHARLIE
Man, Colleen, we need a plan. He should go to a hospital or something. That ankle looks bad.

COLLEEN
(brushing away tears)
I told Mr. Adams that, but he wouldn't go.

CHARLIE
(fumbling through earthquake container)
But look what's in here...dried fruit, granola bars, and stuff. A first-aid kit, batteries, a dozen silver thermal blankets, matches, a rope, gloves, candles, and a handcrank radio. We have everything we need to stay right here for a long time.

COLLEEN
Stop joking, Charlie. This is serious. We're in a school. Remember?

CHARLIE
And it's spring break. Remember? They won't be using this classroom for another week. By then Mr. Adams should be better. It's warm and dry here. This rug is probably the softest thing Mr. Adams has slept on in a long time.

CHARLIE shines flashlight around room.

CHARLIE
Remember? There's also a sink in here. A stove, pots and pans. Admit it, Colleen, this classroom is the perfect place to hide out until Mr. Adams gets better.

COLLEEN
But...but I can't stay here, Charlie. I have to get home.
(MORE)

COLLEEN (cont'd)
My parent will ground me if I stay out much later.

CHARLIE
(kneeling)
That's OK too. I'll stay here tonight with Mr. Adams. I'll call and tell my parents I'm at a friend's. Tomorrow we can talk to Ray. He was Mr. Adams' friend, and he knows a lot about first aid. He'll know what to do.

COLLEEN
(standing)
That's good, Charlie. Tomorrow I'll bring some breakfast. Will you be OK?

CHARLIE
Sure. In third grade I took lots of naps, in this very reading corner.

COLLEEN
(walking toward window)
Sweet dreams, Charlie. Sleep tight. Don't let the bookworms bite.

COLLEEN exits through window.

CHARLIE shines flashlight around room.

JOE ADAMS snores on rug.

CHARLIE
(to Joe Adams)
Things will be OK, Mr. Adams. Everything will be OK.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - MORNING

School bell rings.

CHARLIE wakes up on corner rug. JOE ADAM, under blanket, is still asleep.

COLLEEN stands at stove cooking pancakes.

CHARLIE
(to Colleen)
Hey. Hey, what's going on?
What're you doing?

COLLEEN
Morning, Chucky. Welcome to the Third-Grade Motel...peaceful, quiet, breakfast included.

CHARLIE
(yawning)
The whole thing last night...the park and everything...it seems like a nightmare.

COLLEEN
Breakfast will be served in fifteen minutes, Chucky. I'm using my family's secret pancake recipe.

CHARLIE
Now *that* could be a nightmare.

CHARLIE shakes JOE ADAMS.

CHARLIE
Hey, Mr. Adams. Wake up.

JOE ADAMS' head pops out from under blanket.

He sits up and looks around bewildered.

JOE ADAMS
I'm not...I'm not. No, I couldn't be. Am I where I think I am?

CHARLIE
We're back in our old third-grade classroom, Mr. Adams. Colleen brought you here last evening. I spent the whole night with you.

COLLEEN
And I'm cooking breakfast.

JOE ADAMS
(smiling)
Well, good morning, children. I see everyone is present today.

Classroom door opens.

RAY enters room.

CHARLIE
(standing)
Hey, Ray. It's me, Charlie Fuller.

RAY
(shaking head)
What the...? Well, kid, you're in for it now. Breaking and entering? What else?

CHARLIE
No, wait, Ray. I'm not stealing anything. Mr. Adams is with me. He's here. Look.

RAY
(looking toward corner.)
What the...? Joe? It's really you? How in the world...

JOE ADAMS
Morning, Ray.

RAY rushes to corner.

He examines JOE ADAMS.

RAY
Hey, Joe, you're a sight. Been having a rough time of it I see.

CHARLIE
He's been living in the park, Ray. Some high school boys trashed his place last night.

RAY
(disgusted)
Rich-kid fun.

JOE ADAMS
I'll be all right. No real harm done.

RAY
(examining ankle)
No broken bones, but it must be painful. I'll get it fixed up right away.

COLLEEN
Breakfast will be served soon. You're all invited.

RAY
(looking toward Colleen)
Colleen Martin. What has been going on in here?

CHARLIE
We'll explain the whole thing over breakfast, Ray.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - MORNING LATER

CHARLIE and JOE ADAMS sit at art table.

RAY is bandaging ankle.

COLLEEN serves pancakes.

RAY
(finishing bandage)
So, Joe. I've missed you. I miss our chats. Things haven't been the same around here since you left.

JOE ADAMS
Can't believe I'm back at this place, Ray. Some of my best memories came from this very room.

CHARLIE
(with mouth full)
Mr. Adams built this neat shack out of cardboard. We helped fix up the place.

COLLEEN gives CHARLIE her look.

RAY
(nodding)
Well, we won't be shooting hoops together in the gym again for a while. Meantime, you'll stay right here in these glorious accommodations for the rest of the vacation. Looks as if you have two friends who will take good care of you.

CHARLIE
The cardboard shack is gone anyway, Mr. Adams. I was there. They destroyed everything.

COLLEEN
(sitting down)
So the Third-Grade Motel will now be your home, Mr. Adams.

RAY
The locker room shower is available.

CHARLIE
(dinging bell on teacher's desk)
Just call for room service whenever you need something.

JOE ADAMS
But I must get back to the park. There's something I need to find. It's probably gone by now, but I have to look.

COLLEEN
Not much was left in the park, Mr. Adams. All the CD's and books were ruined.

JOE ADAMS
(shaking head)
No, there was something else. All my work.

CHARLIE pulls a notebook from jacket pocket. He hands it to JOE ADAMS.

CHARLIE
You mean this. I found it last night.

JOE ADAMS
Chas, this is terrific. How did you ever know?

CHARLIE
I know how important your writing is to you.

RAY
So, Joe, you never gave up on your dream of being a writer.

JOE ADAMS
Oh, I gave up on it many times. But these two friends have helped me find it again.
(MORE)

JOE ADAMS (cont'd)
They reminded me about things I taught them in this very classroom.

COLLEEN
There's a computer and wi-fi in this classroom. I'll bring a laptop if you need it.

JOE ADAMS
(looking around room)
Friends, food, warmth, and a computer. What else could I ask for?

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - MORNING LATER

JOE ADAMS sits at computer with COLLEEN.

CHARLIE lies in corner reading. Bell rings.

CHARLIE leaps to feet.

CHARLIE
Recess time. I'm going to the playground.

CHARLIE heads to door.

JOE ADAMS
(to Charlie)
Ten minutes

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GYM - MORNING

RAY mops gym floor.

CHARLIE appears in doorway.

CHARLIE
Hey, Ray.

RAY
(looking up)
Stay right where you are, kid. What can I do for you?

CHARLIE
I was wondering about Mr. Adams. What's going to happen when his ankle gets better? Where will he go? Where will he write? I mean, school starts up again next Monday.

RAY
(leaning on mop)
That's something I've been thinking about myself. And so far I don't have an answer. Now will you answer me this. What sort of teenagers are we raising in this town? What sort of teenagers would go into a park and beat up homeless people?

CHARLIE
Some of them probably even had Mr. Adams for a teacher, and knew how great he was.

RAY
Ironic, isn't it, kid? I saw it year after year in this school. They always gave Joe Adams the worst students and he would straighten them out...get them fired up about school and learning.

CHARLIE
So what do you do, Ray?

RAY
You think I don't remember you at this school, Charlie? But I do. I remember you as far back as kindergarten. You were this scrawny brown-haired kid who moped around the playground all alone, too scared to try anything. Then you got to third grade and Joe Adams built up your confidence. Now, kid, maybe that's what Mr. Adams needs now. A friend to help him restore his confidence.

CHARLIE
Yeah, but what can *I* do?

RAY
Well, seems to me like you've been doing it.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - LATE EVENING

CHARLIE, JOE ADAMS, and RAY lay floor watching a DVD movie on TV. They eat pizza from delivered boxes.

ALAN VEGA, 21, police officer in uniform, appears at window.

ALAN VEGA
(through window)
Police. Who's in there?

CHARLIE rushes to door and opens it.

ALAN VEGA enters and looks around.

CHARLIE
It's not what you think, officer. I belong here. I'm taking care of my teacher, Mr. Adams.

ALAN VEGA
(looking toward floor)
Your teacher? Mr. Adams? Mr. Adams, the teacher? He left this school years ago.

CHARLIE
(pointing to floor)
But he's over there. Really. There he is. He has a beard now and a lot of gray hair.

ALAN VEGA
(spying JOE ADAMS)
Mr. Adams? Mr. Adams...I can't believe this!...It's me, Alan...Alan Vega...I was in this classroom in third grade...Mr. Adams, you're back in Room 7...our old classroom...It's great to see you again.

JOE ADAMS sits up and shakes ALAN VEGA'S hand.

JOE ADAMS
How are you, Alan? What have you been up to these past years?

ALAN VEGA
I'm on the police force now, Mr. Adams. As if you couldn't tell. I'm called Officer Vega now.

JOE ADAMS
Good for you, Alan. Well done.

ALAN VEGA
Do you still play the piano, Mr. Adams?
(MORE)

ALAN VEGA (cont'd)
I've always wanted to play the piano like you. I'll never forget the way your Adam's apple bobbed up and down when you sang. You always laughed when we called you Mr. Adam's Apple. Do you still sing?

JOE ADAMS
Sometimes, Alan. Sometimes.

ALAN VEGA
(looking around room)
But what are you doing here? I heard you left this school. Are you back teaching now? I can't imagine you not being a teacher. You were the best. Hey, what happened to your head? (addressing Ray) What’s up, Ray?

RAY
Our old teacher’s been busy.

CHARLIE
There's *a lot* of explaining to do.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - NIGHT

ALAN VEGA, RAY, JOE ADAMS, and CHARLIE sit at reading table eating pizza and laughing.

ALAN VEGA
I've worked the City Park area before. It's a rough place at night.

CHARLIE
Are you going to arrest us? Are you going to throw us out of here?

ALAN VEGA
Arrest Mr. Adams? It looks like this classroom is the best place for our teacher right now.

RAY
Yes-sirree Bob

ALAN VEGA
Meanwhile, keep the door locked and lie low. I'll stop by tomorrow to see how things are going.

EXT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

RAY and CHARLIE walk with ALAN VEGA to police car.

CHARLIE
Hard to believe you had Mr. Adams in third grade. I mean, you seem so...so...

ALAN VEGA
(laughing)
Old. (puts on hat)
Mr. Adams' teaching career covered a whole generation, Charlie...twenty years or so.

CHARLIE
(admiring stars)
I never looked up until Mr. Adams taught my class about what was going on up there...planets, constellations, and everything.

ALAN VEGA
I've been looking up a lot ever since he taught me the same thing. Now get some sleep, Charlie. And don't worry. Tomorrow's a new day. Tomorrow we'll find a way to help our teacher.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - MORNING

Bell rings. CHARLIE lies on reading corner rug. JOE ADAMS sleeps beside him.

CHARLIE rises and looks out window.

RAY is outside washing windows.

COLLEEN rides up on bike.

She enters classroom with bag of food.

COLLEEN
Morning, Chucky. Fruit Loops OK for breakfast?

CHARLIE
(stretching)
Whatever. I always hated that morning school bell, and now I hate it more than ever.

COLLEEN
How was the night? How was Mr. Adams?

CHARLIE
Nightmares I think. He kept moving and moaning. Before that a policeman came.

COLLEEN
A policeman? Here?

CHARLIE
It turned out OK. His name was Alan Vega..Officer Vega. And he knew Mr. Adams. He had him as a teacher long before we did. He's going to help us.

COLLEEN begins setting table.

COLLEEN
Really? But we still need a plan. The Third-Grade Motel closes down in a week, and we still don't know where Mr. Adams will go.

CHARLIE rises.

He helps COLLEEN set table.

CHARLIE
I know. I know. I'm thinking. I'm thinking.

INT. FULLER DINING ROOM- MORNING

CHARLIE enters front door.

He presses button on phone answering machine.

MICHELLE FULLER (O.S.)
(on machine)
Charlie? We've missed you the last few days. Sorry. It's been hectic at work. Listen, your dad and I will be home early tonight. We promise. Tanya's at Suzanne's and I'll pick her up around four. Let's have a good family meal tonight. OK? Check the fridge if you need anything to eat before I get home. We love you. Bye.

CHARLIE
(to self)
Fine. Fine

CHARLIE begins walking away. Phone rings. He answers it.

CHARLIE
Hello. Charlie Fuller speaking.

JACK KELLER (O.S.)
(on phone)
Charlie. Good. I just called the school and Ray said you were headed home.

CHARLIE
Yes, I'm here.

JACK KELLER (O.S.)
(on phone)
Charlie, my name's Jack Keller. I'm a friend of your dad's. We met once at a basketball game.

CHARLIE
Oh, yeah. Hi.

JACK KELLER (O.S.)
(on phone)
Charlie, listen. I received a call today from a police officer...Alan Vega. He explained what you have been doing these past few days.

CHARLIE
You're a lawyer, right? But I didn't break any laws. At least I don't think I broke any laws. I mean, I hope I didn't break any laws.

JACK KELLER (O.S.)
(on phone)
Listen, Charlie. It seems that you, Alan Vega, and I have something important in common. We all belong to the same club...the *Mr. Adams Fan Club*. Did you know I was in one of Mr. Adams' first classes at Pleasant Hill Elementary School.

CHARLIE
Oh, I see.

JACK KELLER (O.S.)
(on phone)
We stayed in contact for years after my third-grade year. In fact, Joe Adams helped me get into law school. But then we lost contact. I assumed he was living in Europe.

CHARLIE
He's been living in City Park in a cardboard shack.

JACK KELLER (O.S.)
(on phone)
Alan Vega explained the whole story to me, Charlie. I heard you and Colleen Martin have done some remarkable things for our former teacher.

CHARLIE
He needed help. That's all.

JACK KELLER (O.S.)
(on phone)
Listen, Charlie. Alan Vega and I discussed a plan. I want to roll it past you and hear what you think.

CHARLIE
Sure

JACK KELLER (O.S.)
(on phone)
Charlie, there are dozens of parents and former students in this town who feel the same way we do about Mr. Adams. I'd like to take up a donation... collect money to rent an apartment, buy food and supplies. On Saturday...and I've asked Ray Wilson already...we'll meet in the school gym. Past students, young and old, can show how much we appreciate him.

CHARLIE
Great! What do you want me to do?

JACK KELLER (O.S.)
(on phone)
I've just talked to Colleen Martin.
(MORE)

JACK KELLER (O.S.) (cont'd)
She's going to arrange for decorations and refreshments. I want you to do what you've been doing, look after Mr. Adams and keep him company. We'll keep this a surprise. Charlie, we all owe a lot to that man. Saturday is the day we can give something back to him.

INT. FULLER DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CHARLIE, TANYA, ROBERT FULLER and MICHELLE FULLER sit around dinner table eating chili.

ROBERT FULLER
(to Charlie)
So, Charlie. What have you been up to for the past few days?

CHARLIE
Oh, nothing. Nothing much.

ROBERT FULLER
(blows on chili)
Really? I got a call this afternoon from Jack Keller. Remember him?

CHARLIE
Right. Sure.

MICHELLE FULLER
You should have told us about Mr. Adams. We would have liked to help out.

ROBERT FULLER
We owe Mr. Adams a lot.

CHARLIE
But I've heard you talk about the homeless people. You always said the government should take care of them.

ROBERT FULLER
(interrupting)
But Mr. Adams is different. We know him.

TANYA
You mean we know a homeless person?

MICHELLE FULLER
Mr. Adams isn't really a homeless person. He just doesn't have a place to live.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL- DAY

MONTAGE: COLLEEN, RAY, CHARLIE, and JOE ADAM eat hamburgers around art table.

CHARLIE helps RAY clean whiteboards.

ALAN VEGA talks with CHARLIE.

RAY removes JOE ADAMS' bandages.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
The next days were busy. I helped Ray around school and talked with Mr. Adams a lot. Jack Keller kept me informed about Friday's celebration. He's collected tons of money and my mom found an available apartment.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - MORNING

CHARLIE enters room. RAY, dressed in bike leathers, stands at window.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I showed up at school early on Friday morning. I wanted to go hiking with Mr. Adams while Colleen and her sister decorated the gym. Ray was in Room 7 when I got there.

RAY
(to Charlie)
He's gone, kid. Joe took off sometime last night.

CHARLIE
What? What are you talking about?

RAY
(starts toward door)
Let's get moving, kid.

CHARLIE
What? Where to, Ray?

PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

CHARLIE follows RAY to motorcycle.

RAY
I called Alan Vega. He'll have the police department on the lookout for him. But I can't just sit here and wait. We're going to find your teacher.

CHARLIE
But how, Ray? I only have my bike.

RAY enters janitor's room.

He comes out with two motorcycle helmets. He throws one at CHARLIE'S gut.

RAY
We'll take my cycle.

RAY walks to motorcycle and gets on.

RAY
Get on, kid. Ever been on one of these?

CHARLIE
(climbing on back of bike)
Only in third grade when you gave me a ride around the parking lot.

RAY
(revving up motorcycle)
I think we'll search Fourth Street first. Hang on.

Motorcycle peels out of the parking lot.

EXT. CITY STREETS - MORNING

RAY and CHARLIE tearing down a city street on motorcycle.

Motorcycle stops at red light.

MICHELLE FULLER in SUV stops next to them.

TANYA sits in back seat of SUV. She looks over and sticks out tongue.

Light turns green and motorcycle takes off.

RAY
(calling back)
You still back there, kid?

CHARLIE
I think so.

EXT. CITY PARK - MORNING

RAY rides up City Park path.

RAY
(calling back)
Joe’s not around here.

CHARLIE
Try the BART station. I know a friend of his who might be there.

EXT. SUBWAY STATION - MORNING

RAY pulls up to BART entrance.

OTTO panhandles with a baseball hat.

CHARLIE slides off bike and runs up to him.

CHARLIE
Hey, Otto!

OTTO
What's happening, young brother?

CHARLIE
Mr. Adams is missing. He was staying at our school. Now he's gone. We gotta find him.

OTTO
I haven't seen The Professor around the park in days. City workers came and carted all his stuff away...Spare change?

MAN drops dollar in hat.

OTTO
Thank you kindly.

CHARLIE
Maybe he headed up north the way you do. How would he do that, Otto?

OTTO
(continuing to panhandle)
Some folks hitch along the freeway...Spare change, sir?...Others go to a truck stop and ask for a ride.

WOMAN drops quarter in hat.

OTTO
Thank you very much...I prefer the rails. Best to find an open boxcar down at the railyards to stay the night and wait for the train to roll north in the morning.

CHARLIE
(running off)
Thanks, Otto.

OTTO
(calling after him)
Hey, young brother. When I get off work here, I'll start looking for him myself.

EXT. RAILYARDS - MORNING

RAY drives across rail tracks. Boxcars line the rows of parallel tracks.

RAY parks motorcycle in dirt lot.

CHARLIE
Looks hopeless. What’s the chance of ever finding Mr. Adams in this place?

RAY and CHARLIE dismount

They walk to a eucalyptus grove.

Four men stand around a fire burning in oil barrel.

RAY
Morning, gentlemen. We're looking for a friend of ours...black-gray hair, bearded, about fifty, and (holding a hand above head) ... about yeah tall.

CHARLIE
His name's Mr. Adams. He always wears a tweed coat.

MAN IN HOODIE
Fellow like that showed up last night. Asked about trains going north. Saw him head for the boxcars over there.

CHARLIE
Thanks.

RAY
Best to you.

CHARLIE follows RAY to row of empty boxcars.

RAY
(pointing)
You go thataway.

RAY runs left.

CHARLIE runs right checking open boxcars.

CHARLIE
(shouting into boxcars)
Mr. Adams? Hey, Mr. Adams? You there?

RAY
(calling to Charlie)
Over here, kid.

INT. BOXCAR - MORNING

RAY kneels inside boxcar. JOE ADAMS lies on burlap sacks covered with a silver thermal blanket.

CHARLIE, still wearing helmet, appears in doorway.

RAY
(shaking Mr. Adams)
Hey, Joe. Hey, old man. Your buddy Ray is here.
(MORE)

RAY (cont'd)
The kid is with me. He has something to tell you, Joe. Some big plan to help you...He's a good kid. Everything's going to work out fine.

JOE ADAMS rolls over. RAY nods to CHARLIE.

CHARLIE climbs into boxcar.

He kneels beside JOE ADAMS.

RAY
Tell him what’s happening, kid.

CHARLIE
Everyone's coming, Mr. Adams. Jack Keller...remember him?...he called all your old students. They donated money and stuff. There's an apartment for you with furniture. It's this afternoon in the gym in two hours.

RAY
Come on, old man. We need to take you back to school. Get you fixed up.

JOE ADAMS
(combing fingers through hair.)
No, I can't. I just can't, Ray. You understand, don't you? I can't face those people. They have families and good lives. They used to look up to me. Now I'm a loser. I just can't face them like this...not like this.

RAY
What did you say? Loser? (rap on Charlie’s helmet with knuckles) Just look what you've done for this kid here. People in this city still admire you, Joe. Lots of them.

JOE ADAMS
Then let them remember me the way I used to be. It was hard being back at that nice school. When I went for a walk in the neighborhood I knew I didn't belong there anymore.
(MORE)

JOE ADAMS (cont'd)
Not after what I've become. I'm a bum...a drunk. You can see that. I don't deserve anything better than a shack in the park.

Boxcar shakes.

CHARLIE
I think we're going to start moving soon.

RAY
(to Charlie)
I'll meet you back at the bike, kid. I want to have a private word with your teacher.

EXT. RAILYARDS - MORNING

CHARLIE climbs from boxcar.

He walks toward motorcycle.

RAY soon follows.

Boxcars start to move.

CHARLIE and RAY mount motorcycle.

RAY
Let’s get out of here, kid.

CHARLIE
(looking toward boxcars)
You've let us down, Mr. Adams. You've let all of us down.

INT. FULLER DINING ROOM - AFTERNOON

CHARLIE enters house.

TANYA stands there in new dress.

TANYA
I thought you were with that homeless man. What are you doing here? Why were you on that motorcycle.

CHARLIE
None of your business.

TANYA
(shouting)
Mom! Charlie's home. Why is Charlie home?

MICHELLE FULLER enters room hooking earring onto ear.

MICHELLE FULLER
Charlie? Why aren't you with Mr. Adams? And look at you...your clothes are a mess. Hurry now. Get changed. The ceremony starts in an hour.

CHARLIE
But didn't anybody call? Jack Keller or anybody?

MICHELLE FULLER
No one called, Charlie. Now go, or we'll be late... and we certainly don't want to be late for our own son's ceremony.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Charlie, showered, puts on good clothes.

CHARLIE
(to self)
So what's going to happen tonight? What will Colleen say when I show up in the gym without Mr. Adams? What will Jack Keller do? Would they make me get up on the stage and make a speech...something like, *Sorry, folks, but our teacher Mr. Adams isn't coming tonight. He's decided to stay homeless, a loser, and a drunk. So I guess all that stuff he taught us, stuff about never giving up, and you're a loser only if you think you're a loser was a lie, because Mr. Adams didn't believe it himself. They last saw him in a boxcar headed north.*

CHARLIE walks to bedroom door.

CHARLIE
(to self)
Well, let's get the shoe on the road.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)
That's what Mr. Adams always said.
Let's get the *shoe* on the road.

EXT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL PARKING LOT - EVENING

FULLER FAMILY gets out of car.

They join people entering gym.

JACK KELLER and JOYCE KELLER, 21, attractive, stand at gym door.

They greet guest and hand out name tags.

CHARLIE walks up to door.

JACK KELLER
(pumping Charlie’s hand)
Well, there's our young hero. As soon as Joe Adams gets here we'll start the presentations. Do you know my wife, Joyce.

JOYCE KELLER
(handing Charlie name tag)
You know, Charlie, there are lots of people in this gym who are anxious to meet you.

CHARLIE
(slapping name tag on shirt)
Oh, great.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GYM - AFTERNOON

Gym is decorated with crepe paper and balloons. A sign above stage reads WELCOME MR. ADAMS WE APPRECIATE YOU. Table has punch and Rice Krispy Treats on it. Gym is filled with people of all ages.

CHARLIE mills through crowd shaking hands. He spies COLLEEN nearby.

COLLEEN mouths *Where is he*?.

CHARLIE pretends to shoot basket and walks away.

RAY with ATTRACTIVE WOMAN,21, on elbow walks by and winks.

BRADLEY and ISABEL, 12, classmates, walk up to CHARLIE.

BRADLEY
Hey, Big Deal, where's Adams?

ISABEL
Let's get rolling, Chuck.

CHARLIE pretends to shoot another basket. He grabs Rice Krispy Treat off table.

ALAN VEGA, in turtleneck and khakis, walks up.

ALAN VEGA
Good job, Charlie. This is quite a turnout. This is very exciting.

CHARLIE
I think it's time to talk to Jack Keller.

ALAN VEGA
Is there a problem?

CHARLIE
(bites Rice Krispy Treat)
Big problem. Excuse me.

Crowd faces gym door. Gym fills with applauds and cheers.

COLLEEN grabs CHARLIE'S arm.

CHARLIE
What's up? What's happening?

COLLEEN
He's here, Charlie?

CHARLIE
(perplexed)
Who's here?

COLLEEN
Our guest of honor.

CHARLIE
You mean Mr. Adams? He's here? He can't be here.

COLLEEN
Oh, *Charlie*.

CHARLIE pushes through crowd.

He sees JOE ADAMS, shaven and wearing clean suit, shaking hands with people.

JOE ADAMS shakes hands with SCOTT, 35.

JOE ADAMS
(grinning)
So how's the writing coming along, Scott? You always had a great skill with words. I read your column in the newspaper every week. Good writing.

SCOTT
Thanks, Mr. Adams. Great to see you again. I still have some stories I wrote for you in third grade.

JOE ADAMS shakes hands with BRETT, 20.

JOE ADAMS
Brett, how are you? I hear you're graduating from Stanford this year with honors. Congratulations. Keep up the good work.

BRETT
I'm majoring in zoology, Mr. Adams. I'll never forget all the creatures you had in our classroom.

JOE ADAMS shakes hands with WILLIAM, large boy, 18.

JOE ADAMS
I remember how you could toss a football around this playground, William. Hope you get the football scholarship to C A L you've always wanted.

WILLIAM
Thanks, Mr. Adams. I'll send you game tickets if I do.

JOE ADAMS shakes hands with JACK KELLER.

JOE ADAMS
Well, Jack, you wanted to do something rewarding with your education. I hear you're helping the needy with legal problems. Good for you.

JACK KELLER
I'd have gotten nowhere if it weren't for you, Mr. Adams.

CHARLIE walks up to RAY standing nearby.

CHARLIE
Hey, Ray? What's going on? I mean, how did Mr. Adams get fixed up so fast...the clothes, the haircut, the shave? And where did he learn so much about these people? I know, he read a lot over the years, but he was out of it most of the time.

RAY
(punching Charlie's shoulder)
Pride, kid. Joe has a good memory, all right, but he also has a ton of pride. He's been studying up on his former students all afternoon.

CHARLIE
You helped him. You let him into the school office and let him go through the old records. Didn't you, Ray?

RAY
Something like that, kid. Back in the boxcar he asked me to help him out. He said if he came tonight he would have to come as a teacher, not as a bum. Oh, I made sure he was able to clean up and get some new threads, but he was the one who insisted on refreshing his memory about his students. No, he wasn't going to let these people down.

CHARLIE
(watching Mr. Adams)
He's going great. He's just like the Mr. Adams I used to know.

RAY
(punching shoulder again)
You got it, kid. What you see is a great teacher doing what great teachers do best. He's making people feel special.

INT. PLEASANT VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GYM STAGE - EVENING

JACK KELLER stands on stage, holding microphone.

Crowd faces him and hushes.

JACK KELLER
Your attention please, ladies and gentlemen. It's time to make a special presentation. Mr. Adams, will you please come up here?

Crowd claps. JOE ADAMS works his way onto stage.

He bows deep and crowd laughs.

JACK KELLER
Mr. Adams, we wish to present you with a small token of our appreciation for what you have done toward our education and the influence you had on our lives.

ALAN VEGA steps on stage.

He hands JOE ADAMS a check and a set of keys.

Crowd cheers wildly.

JOE ADAMS takes microphone.

JOE ADAMS
(clears throat)
I can't thank you enough for this wonderful tribute. It's great to see so many of my former students here tonight. But if I may, I'd like to give a special thanks to two very special students of mine...Colleen Martin and Chas Fuller. Colleen is serving the delicious treats in back and Chas is hanging out over there by the drinking fountain the way he often did in third grade during P.E.

Crowd laughs.

CHARLIE stares at floor.

JOE ADAMS
Few students were as kind and giving as Colleen. Even back in third grade she wrote stories about how she wanted a career dedicated to aiding people.
(MORE)

JOE ADAMS (cont'd)
Eight-year-old Colleen told me once that giving was far more enjoyable to her than receiving. Who could have imagined back then that the person to whom she would give the most would be an old geezer living in a park...me?

Crowd cheers and claps

JOE ADAMS
(looking toward Charlie)
And who could ever forget Chas in third grade. I remember him not only as a fine artist, but as a boy always aware of other people's feelings. Charlie had a hard time in third grade. Whenever he ran into trouble in his schoolwork or on the playground, he would shrug his shoulders and say, 'So what do you do, Mr. Adams?' But, mind you, he always found a way of working things out for himself. It was Colleen and Chas who found me living on the streets last fall and decided to do something about it. I would be on this stage now if it weren't for them. Colleen and Chas, I thank you both with all my heart.

Crowd cheers.

CHARLIE
(to self)
Oic

Mr. Adams sits at piano on stage.

Crowds cheers.

JOE ADAMS
Now here’s a song you might remember. And I want everyone singing along... Even you shy boys in back. (begins playing. Sings)
But the cat came back the very next day,
The cat came back, they thought he was a goner;
But the cat came back, it just couldn't stay
Away, away, away, away.

EXT. PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

CHARLIE walks out of gym.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
So I guess the evening was a big success. Jack Keller drove Mr. Adams to his new apartment. Ray roared off on his motorcycle with his girlfriend, and Colleen thought she was the greatest social worker in the world. I decided to hang out around the school and talk to friends. As I walked out of the gym, guess who I saw standing in the parking?

OTTO stands in parking lot holding out baseball cap.

CHARLIE runs up to him.

OTTO
Spare change, madam?...Thank you kindly...Any change?...OK, maybe next time...Spare change?...Spare change?

CHARLIE
Hey, Otto. How's business?

OTTO
(continuing to panhandle)
Excellent, young brother. Your friend Colleen invited me here tonight. Spare change, sir?...Thank you very much...I thought I would skip all those fancy speeches and turn this into a money-making opportunity...Any extra change, madam?...Have a good evening...And it's been very profitable, I must say, young brother. These people are in a very charitable mood this evening...Spare change?

CHARLIE
I've been thinking about your way of life a lot lately, Otto.

OTTO
What about it, young brother?

CHARLIE
Well, you know I want to be an artist someday. And I was thinking in a few years when I can quit school, maybe I could join you on the road and sketch stuff as we travel. You know, the mountains, the beach, the cities, all those things you told me about.

OTTO
(jingling change)
Sorry, young brother, but I can't come with you. I'm enrolling in college next term, the community college downtown.

CHARLIE
What are you talking about, Otto? You're going to school?

OTTO
That's right, young brother. That's why I've been working so hard lately. I need the money for tuition.

CHARLIE
(thinking)
Back in the park, with Mr. Adams...

OTTO
That's right, young brother. The Professor was helping me study for the GED. Yes, sir, I never finished high school, but now I'm working for a diploma.

CHARLIE
And you want to go to the community college after that?

OTTO
I want to study landscaping. You know, work outdoors, designing parks and gardens. No inside work for this dude, no, sir.

CHARLIE
Man, Otto.

OTTO
You know, young brother, you and your friend Colleen had a lot to do with my decision.

CHARLIE
What do you mean? What did we do?

OTTO
(dumps coins in pocket)
You took action. And good actions lead to more good actions. They snowball, young brother. I could see how your actions were helping The Professor. It gave me hope. Good actions snowball, young brother. They snowball.

CHARLIE smiles and looks up.

OTTO puts on cap and also looks up.

CHARLIE
(in tone of teacher)
Those aren't just shining periods up there in the sky at night, young man. Those are humongous balls of gas or planets or maybe a comet or a galaxy made up of billions of stars.

FADE OUT