

CYMBAL LINE

Written by

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Based on  
*The Tragedie of Cymbeline*  
By William Shakespeare

EXT. ROOFTOP-- MORNING

The sun rises over the campus of an American public school. It's quiet-- serene-- idyllic. Though the architecture is a bit brutalist, and the whole place looks a bit like a prison, the orange glow of the sunrise gives the place a certain beauty.

A MUSIC STAND looks fairly anachronistic at the edge of this roof. A SYMPHONY is proudly displayed on it, and, in a style that calls to mind compositions too elegant for the space, reads:

"CYMBAL LINE"

A hand reaches for the sheet music. Flips it to it's first page.

CLOSE ON: The heading. "PRELUDE".

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. VIEWING ROOM-- MORNING

ELMER HARTMAN, a broad-shouldered man of about fifty, sits in silhouette before a large PROJECTED SCREEN. His shoulders slink. His head falls warily into his shoulders.

ON-SCREEN: We are high above a STADIUM. The words "MARCHING WORLD" fly into each other, in a dramatic comic book font.

The silky-smooth voice of a VIDEO STAR cuts through the noise.

VIDEO STAR (V.O.)  
WELCOME to the BADASS WORLD of  
competitive marching band!!

Images flash across the screen: SAXOPHONES! CLARINETS! GUYS IN FUNNY, POOFY HATS!

VIDEO STAR (V.O.)  
What was once an activity delegated  
to nerds, geeks, and complete  
pussies, marching band has asserted  
itself as the HIP NEW ACTIVITY for  
the next millenium!

INT. ARENA-- DAY (ON-SCREEN)

The VIDEO STAR, a familiar face from the 90s-- KELSEY GRAMMER, if possible, paces along the sidelines of a MEGA-ARENA FOOTBALL FIELD.

KELSEY GRAMMER

Hi. I'm Kelsey Grammer. You might know me as Frasier, from the T.V. I'm at Lucas Oil Arena in sunny Indianapolis to talk to the King of Kings, the One True Begotten Son of the Marching Arts.

CUT TO:

The Video Star sitting in a chair along the sidelines.

KELSEY GRAMMER (CONT'D)

On my T.V. show *Frasier*, on which I play Frasier, my character, Frasier, often relays the soothing adage: "I'm listening". But *what* exactly is he listening to? The answer is the smooth sounds of Elmer Hartman, the so-called "Bad Boy of the Brass" that's been taking the marching world by storm.

Kelsey Grammer holds up a C.D.: "LEAVES OF BRASS: THE POETRY OF WALT WHITMAN, BUT IT'S ON THE TROMBONE".

KELSEY GRAMMER (CONT'D)

Once the lead trombonist at Notre Dame University, he's made quite a career for himself as a solo artist, his debut album "Leaves of Brass" holding steady on the Billboard charts for eight consecutive weeks. Today I'll be talking to him about the road so far, and what comes next for America's tromboning sweetheart.

Kelsey Grammer turns. Smiles at his subject.

Sitting in the chair opposite is a YOUNG Elmer. Now about twenty-eight years old, he has a beard, mullet, and aviator sunglasses. It's the mid-90s and he's one cool dude.

KELSEY GRAMMER (CONT'D)

Elmer... I'm listening.

HARTMAN

Glad to be here.

KELSEY GRAMMER

Now, you have something of a "party animal" image. Do you think you're setting a good example for the next generation of marching artists?

Hartman gives a wry smile-- the kind that can only come from youthful arrogance.

HARTMAN

I sure as hell do. Am I allowed to swear on here?

KELSEY GRAMMER

Well, no, but...

HARTMAN

Anyways. Life, marching. They're about joy. You're supposed to have a little bit of fun. If not, why do it?

KELSEY GRAMMER

Speaking of future generations, do you have any words of advice for our viewers out there, who might be thinking of dipping their toes into the industry?

Hartman thinks a moment.

HARTMAN

Well... Don't give up. Follow your dreams. All that bull.

Kelsey Grammer chuckles.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

No, but seriously... If you want to be good, really, if you want to do this thing at all, you've gotta be ready to give a part of yourself up to the whole. You need to learn to become one with your fellow man. And above all else: Don't be a hero. Heroes die.

KELSEY GRAMMER

Thank you, Elmer.

HARTMAN

Thank you.

KELSEY GRAMMER

Just one more question for our viewers at him: What comes next for Elmer Hartman?

We ZOOM IN on Hartman's face. At the last moment-- a look to the RIGHT, and a FLICKER OF UNCERTAINTY.

CUT TO:

INT. VIEWING ROOM- MORNING

The present. Elmer, where we left him, his face aglow with the memories of years gone by. The same look of uncertainty.

We see him in full detail now. Twenty-five years older now, he's gone bald, and lost his beard. His face has softened. He doesn't wear sunglasses, but he DOES wear that same MARCHING RANGERS coat we saw him in before. It's rattier than before, but he is, too.

He sighs. Shuts off the projector. Rises.

Goes to eject the VHS.

It's jammed.

Sighs. Shrugs. Leaves.

EXT. ROOFTOP-- MORNING

A MYSTERIOUS FIGURE, dressed in FULL MARCHING UNIFORM, walks towards the music stand.

The Figure kneels. Snaps something open. A TRUMPET CASE.

On by one, he snaps his instrument together. Slowly. Almost ritualistically. He becomes THE TRUMPETEER.

When he's completed, he raises the bell of his instrument to the sky, and begins to play a low, quiet tune. Peaceful, almost mournful. Something like "MOON RIVER" by Mancini.

Underneath this sort-of-overture, we see the following, in ELEGANT MONTAGE:

--MANSFIELD, the band's technical director, late-50s, fiddling with a GREAT MASS OF WIRES, behind a large contraption on the FOOTBALL FIELD

--NEWTON, a bug-eyed high-schooler senior, sitting in a cramped PRACTICE ROOM, playing his saxophone, alone

--RICARDO, a RIPPED high-schooler in a douchey TANK TOP, awakening in a sea of BEER CANS, in the PARKING LOT

--LULU, head of the color guard, twirling a flag inside of the gymnasium

--RANDY, a young man with angry eyes, beating a PADDLE in front of a BATHROOM MIRROR

And, most especially, we see:

INT. NICK'S CAR- MORNING

A young couple, NICK and LAURA, sitting side-by-side in the front seats of a beat-up Toyota. They hold hands; look into each other's eyes, which are red from crying.

There is a quiet, melancholic intimacy to the motion- the kind of intimacy that can only be achieved by young lovers who know that their time is up.

Laura leans in close, and kisses Nick.

INT. TROPHY CASE-- MORNING

CLOSE ON a black-and-white image of a high school football team. Handsome, strapping young lads, what some would call "All-American", beaming with pride. The caption: "DIVISION III CHAMPS 1957".

We PAN DOWN. More championship photos for more championship seasons, going all the way to the present...

...Until we get to the section of the trophy case headed 'MILLMEADOW MARCHING BRAVES'.

There is a single trophy (third place), dating all the way back to the 80s, and decidedly few championship photos.

EXT. ROOFTOP-- MORNING

The Trumpeteer lowers his bell. Flips to the next page of the SCORE.

INSERT: A SNARLING MOUTH, IN EXTREME CLOSE-UP. IT'S **GLASS**, HARTMAN'S IRASCIBLE ASSISTANT!

GLASS  
 ALRIGHT, SHITHEADS! LET'S TAKE IT  
 BACK TO MEASURE ONE! FIRST  
 MOVEMENT! AND MAKE IT GOOD THIS  
 TIME! ONE! TWO! ONE-TWO-THREE-  
 FOUR!!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BAND ROOM-- MORNING

A FRENZIED MASS OF HIGH SCHOOLERS. Snapping together their instruments in rapid succession. Chatting amongst each other. The excitement of youth. The anxiety of competition day. Chaos, underscoring the BOMBASTIC MARCHING MUSIC BELOW.

INT. HALLWAY-- MORNING

Hartman STEPS OUT of the Viewing Room and is IMMEDIATELY SWARMED by throes of Marchers. They greet him-- he greets them back-- but pushes through them in a rather unfriendly manner.

He is approached by PRATT, early-30s, his nebbish personal assistant.

PRATT  
 Elmer.

HARTMAN  
 Pratt.

PRATT  
 Mansfield says the fireworks are messed up. That you need to get to them A.S.A.P., 'cause they could go off at any time.

HARTMAN  
 O.K.

PRATT  
 So that needs to be talked through with Newton. And--

HARTMAN  
 Where is he?

PRATT

In a practice room, with his  
minions. But--

Hartman BURSTS IN to a nearby

INT. PRACTICE ROOM- MORNING

Where Newton waves his arms, conducting. Two YOUNG  
SAXOPHONISTS sit in front of him, playing: JAKE and COOP.  
They play a Cole Porter classic. It doesn't sound very good.

HARTMAN

Practice is starting.

Jake and Coop lower their saxophones and turn towards the  
door.

NEWTON

Not yet. We still have three  
minutes.

HARTMAN

That's not drum major attitude.

NEWTON

Well, *I'm not drum major*. By the  
way. One of the kids in my section  
is missing his ligaturé.

HARTMAN

His *what*?

NEWTON

The gold thing you use to screw  
your reed on? You seriously don't  
know what a--?

HARTMAN

You mean a ligature?

NEWTON

Yeah, sure. Whatever.

Newton turns to Jake and Coop.

NEWTON (CONT'D)

(harsh)

Let's take it back to measure  
sixteen. And this time, make it  
good.

Hartman sighs and steps back into the



HALLWAY

Where he is immediately set upon by Pratt, and they continue their long march.

HARTMAN

What about the other bands? You hear from them?

PRATT

I just got off the phone with the Barthelmes School. They'll be here in about a half-hour. Iachimo requested a private zoning area for his "party bus".

HARTMAN

Little prick.

PRATT

Dentonville's gonna get here in about forty-five. The Marching Bears in an hour.

HARTMAN

Judges?

PRATT

Four. Hughes, Reinhardt, Riley, Samson. We'll have three on per performance.

Coming up behind him, quickly, are ANGIE and MRS. HORNBERGER-- heads of the band boosters, each in their late-40s. Mrs. Hornberger constantly carries around a large camcorder, which obscures her face.

PRATT (CONT'D)

Now, before we perform, before you even *start rehearsal*, it's vital that you--

ANGIE

Mister-- Mister Hartman?

HARTMAN

(to Pratt)

Take attendance, will you?

PRATT

But--

HARTMAN

Attendance.

Sighing, Pratt starts off.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
Yes, Angie?

ANGIE  
Well-- First of all-- Hello, good morning--

HARTMAN  
Good morning.

Mr. Hartman senses Hornberger's presence next to him, and turns. He's startled a bit by the camera's close proximity to his face-- even if he should be used to it by now.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
Good morning, Mrs. Hornberger.

Mrs. Hornberger tips the camera-- a friendly "good morning" wave.

ANGIE  
So, um, we ladies at the band boosters have, um, well, we came up with two different designs for the buttons, and we were wondering as to which one you might prefer...

CLOSE ON: The two buttons-- nearly identical representations of 'THE MILLMEADOW MARCHING BRAVES', and the corresponding, more-than-vaguely-racist logo.

Mr. Hartman looks at them curiously.

HARTMAN  
What's the difference?

ANGIE  
The kerning is slightly different on this one.

HARTMAN  
Which one do you have more of?

ANGIE  
I ordered ten-thousand of each.

Hartman lets out a heavy sigh. Gets close to rolling his eyes-- but lets go of the impulse.

HARTMAN  
Sell them both. Put any extras in the storage closet.

Angie smiles-- it's a genius idea, one she never would've thought of-- and bounces out, followed every step of the way by Mrs. Hornberger.

Hartman turns and enters...

INT. BAND ROOM-- MORNING

...where he is immediately and suddenly overtaken by that same ANXIOUS CHAOS we saw before.

GERTRUDE  
'Morning, Mister Hartman.

Hartman turns. Below him, sitting up against the wall, are three DRUMMERS-- DUNCAN, JOHN, and GERTRUDE.

Duncan drums-- and never stops. Gertrude snickers. John has his mouth to something small and metallic-- he immediately hides it in his pocket.

HARTMAN  
That better not be--

JOHN  
Just a pitch pipe.

GERTRUDE  
I thought you had perfect aural skills.

HARTMAN  
Don't let me see it again.

Hartman exchanges "good morning's" with SALT, the Head of the Brass, who conducts a group of TUBAS as they move up a scale.

Arriving at the opposite end of the Band Room, Hartman steps into

INT. HARTMAN'S OFFICE-- MORNING

Where his frantic pace doesn't let up. He changes outfits, gathers papers, searches through drawers for a ligature, etc., with a fervent energy.

After a moment, Pratt appears from seemingly nowhere.

PRATT  
I've taken attendance.

Hartman jumps, startled.

HARTMAN

Jesus, Pratt. We've gotta put a bell on you, or something.

PRATT

I've taken attendance. Woodwinds fully accounted for. Brass present. A few of the seniors are still hungover from last night, but the drumline's all here. We're just missing Nick and Laura.

HARTMAN

(with sudden concern)

Do you know where they are?

PRATT

Several students have seen them embracing inside of Nick's car. Which means they're either breaking up or having sex. Both of which are bad for our efficiency and performance.

Hartman turns, exits the office.

HARTMAN

Give me a B-flat.

The Tuba plays a B-flat.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Concert B-flat.

The Tuba switches to the next tone.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Good.

Hartman moves on to the next Brass Player as he continues his info-dump with Pratt.

PRATT

Also. Principal Clark's here. Says he wants to talk to you.

HARTMAN

Sharp. About what?

PRATT

What do you think? The budget.

HARTMAN

Sharp. Hey, didn't I tell you to warm up the kids?

PRATT

Glass said she'd do it.

Suddenly growing wide-eyed Hartman SHOVES his way through the line of Students, and out the back door!

EXT. MILLMEADOW HIGH SCHOOL- MORNING

Hartman BURSTS out the BACK DOOR, sprinting down the PATH to the STADIUM. There is fervent intent in his eyes: He knows that he must stop Glass, lest the woodwinds face the terrible fate of having to endure her wrath.

Passing the PARKING LOT, Angie suddenly COMES INTO FRAME with an OVERFLOWING BOX OF PINS. She crumbles under it's weight.

ANGIE

Hart-- Could you please take it--  
Over to-- Heavy-- Very heavy--...

Without looking, Hartman takes the box of pins. Feels it's weight. Does not slow down.

In the B.G., a SWARM OF STUDENTS has begun pouring out of every orifice of the school, running behind Hartman.

One of these students is HENRY, a tear-streaked freshman, who comes up beside Hartman.

HENRY

M-- Mister Har-- I-- I lost my--

Hartman takes the LIGATURE from his pocket and TOSSES it to Henry.

HARTMAN

Wash it out before you give it back.

Henry stands, stunned, beaming. His eyes tear up in relief.

Hartman continues his trek as the DESCENT OF BAND GEEKS overwhelms the stadium. Four-eyed and pimple-faced, they RUSH through the stadium entrance, making their way to the field, where we start to hear the booming voice of GLASS...

GLASS

*Forty-nine! Fifty! Fifty-one!*

Hartman passes John and Ophelia, who stand against the wall--  
John with vape in hand.

HARTMAN

Give it.

John groans and tosses his vape to Hartman.

Up ahead: Another group of DRUMMERS, playing in-time with our  
cadence.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Hit the field.

The Drummers-- and our backing-- come to the end with a  
satisfying rhythmic flourish.

In time with this finale, Hartman steps out of the entryway  
and into...

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD- MORNING

Glass, mid-50s, Hartman's irritable assistant, barks out  
commands from a large metal PODIUM. On the field below, a  
MASS OF REED PLAYERS crumble under the weight of fifty  
sadistic push-ups.

Hartman scales the podium like Kong scaling the Empire State  
Building-- and, reaching the top, he rips the megaphone from  
Glass with the same jungle-beast ferocity.

HARTMAN

Alright, everybody! Hey! HEY!! You  
can stop the push-ups now.

On the field, the teens look up, exhausted. They slowly rise  
to their feet-- looking up at Hartman as if he were a sort of  
divine angel come to free them from their struggles.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Yes, good, yes, you can do it...  
Let's all give a big round of  
thanks to my lovely assistant,  
Glass, for leading today's warm-  
ups...

Sporadic polite applause from the teens.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Now, we're going to start from the  
top... That's Set Numero Uno... And  
we're going to take it through the  
whole first movement, O.K.? O.K...

Catching his breath, Hartman leans against the railing. Glass glares at him-- majorly P.O.'d.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Glass, you've been by my side since Bishop High, and not once have I questioned your judgement. But what is going on here? Why are you torturing these kids?

Glass looks out over the field-- a strange mix of pride and hatred.

GLASS

I'm here to create winners, Hartman. Even if you're not. You see Clark down there?

Glass cocks her head over to the BLEACHERS, where PRINCIPAL CLARK stands his arms folded.

GLASS (CONT'D)

The pressure's on.

HARTMAN

But--

GLASS

Don't tell me they're just kids, Hartman. Doesn't mean we have to accept they're gonna be shit. I stopped rehearsal because Henry Thombs--

HARTMAN

He's missing his ligature.

GLASS

And that's his fault. And the band must be punished for it.

From BELOW, we hear the sound of Nick, in full uniform, scaling the podium.

GLASS (CONT'D)

When one of us fucks up, we all fuck up.

Nick appears.

NICK

Sorry I'm late. I--

HARTMAN  
Just start her up.

Hartman lags for a moment.

NICK  
What?

HARTMAN  
Nothing. I just can't help but feel  
I'm forgetting something.

Hartman thinks for a moment, then shrugs.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
Count in for four. All the way to  
the end of the first movement. Got  
it?

NICK  
Got it.

Hartman descends from the podium. He mutters to himself.

HARTMAN  
*I feel like I'm forgetting...*

Pratt appears beside Hartman.

PRATT  
Need a hand?

Hartman jumps.

HARTMAN  
No. No. I-- I just can't help but  
feel I'm--

NICK  
ONE! TWO! ONE-TWO-THREE--!

Hartman suddenly remembers. His eyes go wide with terror.

HARTMAN  
No! Wait! *STOP!!*

BOOM. He's too late.

In a GRAND BURST OF LIGHT, the FIREWORKS whizz off of the  
Jupiter Head, showering sparks over the field. The band  
immediately stops playing and flees the field in terror.

Hartman slinks. A defeated expression spreads across his  
face.



Pratt gives him a look: *I told you so!*

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACK- MORNING

Hartman and Principal Clark walk the track that surrounds the field. The band rehearses behind them.

PRINCIPAL  
Got a good show this year.

HARTMAN  
Uh-huh.

PRINCIPAL  
They're working hard.

HARTMAN  
Real hard.

PRINCIPAL  
Who's conductor this year? Er.  
Sorry. *Drum major.*

HARTMAN  
Nick Caswell.

PRINCIPAL  
Nick Caswell! You mean little Nick  
Caswell? Jesus, I remember when he  
was just up to here, playin' that  
saxophone that was bigger than he  
was... Jesus, they grow up so fast,  
don't they?

HARTMAN  
Yeah. All grown up.

PRINCIPAL  
Now, uh... What's *that* huge thing?

The Principal gestures to the massive head of JUPITER, placed centerfield.

HARTMAN  
That's Jupiter. King of the Gods.  
We wanted to make this piece that  
was, in a way, almost like a  
tribute of sorts, like the kind  
they'd make back in Ancient Rome--

PRINCIPAL

Uh-huh.

HARTMAN

--When they wanted a good harvest, or something, and you know, we're thinking, me and my team, we're thinking that the world is all sort of messed up and we could really use some help from the gods, and so we--

PRINCIPAL

What are those there? Around his head?

He gestures again. Along the head of Jupiter is a series of rockets- all planted orange, looking like a crown, or an extremely-pointy wig.

HARTMAN

Pyrotechnics.

PRINCIPAL

Pyrotechnics? Isn't that a bit much for a school band?

HARTMAN

Well, it's a lovely effect. The crowd goes wild.

PRINCIPAL

I'm sure they do. But what ever happened to just playing *music*? I heard The Marching Bears are doing patriotic songs this year. Everyone likes patriotic songs.

HARTMAN

Patriotic songs don't win trophies.

The Principal shrugs- the kind of shrug that very clearly says "I'm right, you're wrong, let's agree to disagree".

PRINCIPAL

Well, it's your world, not mine. Speaking of which... Mark. We gotta have a talk...

HARTMAN

Uh-oh.

PRINCIPAL

Not uh-oh, just... Look. I'm going to put this as nicely as I possibly can. Millmeadow High cannot afford you. Now, it's your choice what 'you' is. Is it 'you'- Elmer Hartman, and your expensive pyrotechnics- or you- the band?

HARTMAN

What are you saying?

PRINCIPAL

What I'm saying is bring home some trophies.

The Principal turns and begins to walk away.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

And lay off the pyrotechnics!

**MEANWHILE ON THE FIELD...**

The band reaches the end of a set. Trumpets pop up. Flags fly into hands. The Marchers snap to attention.

We WEAVE through the crowd, taking in several sotto, corner-of-the-mouth conversations...

RANDY

Psst. Hey. Newton.

NEWTON

(annoyed)  
*What?*

RANDY

Freshman Initiation. Lunch. You in?

NEWTON

No. I am not in.

RANDY

Come on. It's a tradition. We got *our asses beat.*

NEWTON

I have more important things to do.

RANDY

What could be more important than beating child ass?

And we PAN away from the frustrated Newton over to...

THE COLOR GUARD, with their myriad FLAG-TWRILERS and RIFLE-SPINNERS.

LULU, early-30s, the leader of the guard, stands before them.

LULU

O.K., rifles! I wanna see measures seventy-nine to ninety-one, and take it slow! One, two, one-two-three-four!

Lulu turns to Laura, who spins her rifle.

LULU (CONT'D)

So spill. What happened?

LAURA

Nothing *happened*.

LULU

You broke up. *Something* happened. Did you have a fight?

LAURA

Yeah.

LULU

A big one?

LAURA

Pretty big.

GRACE, a younger member of the guard, catches her rifle in a particularly graceful movement.

GRACE

Did you see THAT, Miss Lulu?!

LULU

(without looking)

Very good, Grace!

(her attention back to Laura)

Does your dad know about it?

LAURA

Yeah. He knows. He's the one who told me.

LULU

Told you what?

LAURA

That Nick was cheating on me.

In the background, Grace throws rifle up again. She watches it soar higher and higher into the air...

THEN COME CRASHING DOWN ONTO HER FACE!!

GRACE  
(bursting into tears)  
MISS LULU!!!!

LULU  
IN A MINUTE!!

**AND AT THE FRONT OF THE FIELD...**

Nick lounges on the edge of the podium. Below him, RICARDO, another high school senior, practices a funky groove on his marimba.

RICARDO  
Hey, Nick. Heard about you and  
Laura.

NICK  
Yeah.

RICARDO  
That sucks. She was hot.

NICK  
Yeah.

RICARDO  
You sad about it?

NICK  
("obviously")  
Yeah.

RICARDO  
Sucks.

A long beat.

RICARDO (CONT'D)  
Hey. I know someone who could cheer  
you up.

NICK  
Who?

RICARDO  
*Iachimo.*

Nick thinks for a moment-- then shakes his head.

NICK

No, no.

RICARDO

Come on--

NICK

I don't want anything to do with  
him.

Salt, leaning against the edge of the podium, looks up to  
Nick.

SALT

You wanna take those measures  
again?

Nick nods, and turns back towards the band.

RICARDO

Think about it.

Nick turns to the band.

NICK

Alright! Get set for measure  
seventy, running through to the end  
of the second movement!

On the field, the band begins to hurry to their positions.

In the distance, we hear the BASS-BOOSTED BLARING of PARTY  
MUSIC.

RICARDO

Iachimo.

PRATT

(fearful)  
Iachimo.

HARTMAN

Iachimo.

LULU

Speak of the devil.

The band, one-by-one, turns away from the field and towards  
the road, where, coming up in the distance...

IS A CARAVAN OF SCHOOL BUSES-- led by a IACHIMO'S PURPLE  
PARTY BUS.

The Teens charge to the fence at the edge of the field.

Henry gets caught up in it all-- and drops his new ligature, which is promptly crushed under the weight of the stampede. He gets down on his knees and sobs over it's mangled corpse.

At the edge of the field, Hartman sighs.

HARTMAN

That's lunch.

EXT. BUS DEPOT- DAY

It's like the grand bazaar, or the marketplace of ancient times. Pent-up teens hop off of buses, run around aimlessly, play cacophonous bursts of music from untuned instruments.

We PAN ACROSS one of the myriad buses in particular. It's beat-up in comparison to the others in the lot; it's paint is peeling, it's black lettering, which reads 'DENTONVILLE HIGH', is shoddily-applied and fading.

Stepping off of the bus is a frenzy of teens, looking as sloppy and salt-of-the-Earth as their transportation.

JEANINE, early-30s, looking comparatively well-put-together, checks off the names of each teen that comes off the bus.

JEANINE

Remember, we're up *first!* That's at 6:05... You need to be back here and in uniform by 4:30...

At the end of the long line of sloppy teens is HANK, mid-30s, looking just as sloppy as his students. He is Jeanine's assistant; he carries in both arms a mess of sheet music, uniform accessories, and other miscellaneous marching objects.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Hank?

Hank whirls around, dropping things from his arms without even noticing.

HANK

Yeah?

JEANINE

We've been cleared the areas between parking space 1G and space 14H... Here's the attendance sheet... Here's the itinerary...

Jeanine piles the papers into Hank's arms.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

...And at 4:15 they're allowing us to use the North Soccer Field for our warm-ups, but they want us out by 5, which means we'll have to find a place to practice before...

HANK

I'll take care of it.

JEANINE

Thanks, Hank. I'll meet you by the registration table. There's someone I need to catch up with.

Hank turns, smiles, and walks towards their designated area-- buckling under the weight and dropping things as he does.

**IN ANOTHER PART OF THE BUS DEPOT...**

Angie and Mrs. Hornberger man the registration table, as a sea of BELEAGUED BAND LEADERS piles up.

At the front of the line is SAMPSON-- early 40s, a JUDGE with an affable yet world-weary face.

He eyes Hartman suspiciously, before leaning in to Angie and whispering:

SAMPSON

Sampson. I'm a judge.

ANGIE

What was that?

SAMPSON

My name is Sampson. I'm a--

ANGIE

Could you speak up please?

SAMPSON

SAMPSON!!

The crowd goes quiet. Hartman turns. Eyes Sampson.

ANGIE

O.K. then. I just need a copy of your drivers' license...

An embarrassed Sampson places his driver's license on the table. Mrs. Hornberger, nosy as always, points her camera at it.



ANGIE (CONT'D)  
No, Mrs. Hornberger, don't film the  
driver's license...

Angie hands a Judge's Badge to Sampson.

ANGIE (CONT'D)  
Here you are. Happy judging!

Sampson smiles and steps away. Behind him in line is

JEANINE

Who smiles at Hartman.

JEANINE  
Hey, Hart-Man.

He turns. Beams at her.

SMASH CUT TO:

**THE SYMPHONY.**

A hand flips to the next page...

**MOVEMENT II**  
BALLAD

MOVEMENT II: "BALLAD"

Various portraits of various lunches. Tucked into different corners of the school.

--Some FRESHMEN, laughing together around a piano in a practice room.

--A group of ROWDY TEENS watching as a clarinetist, who has pulled her sweatpants up as high as they go, and tucked her arms inside, dances to a rap song.

--Principal Clark, wandering the band hallway, stopping to take a look at the trophy case.

And FINALLY:

INT. PROJECTION ROOM-- DAY

Pratt and Glass, enveloped in the cinematic glow of LAST WEEK'S TAPE. Taking copious notes.

EXT. MILLMEADOW HIGH SCHOOL (BLEACHERS)- DAY

Laura, and a group of friends from the color guard, sit on the bleachers, eating their subs and chatting.

Suddenly, a uniformed LEG appears. Then another.

Newton stands, hair slicked back, in full uniform. He's trying his best to look sexy-- perhaps by utilizing a bit too much Blue Steel.

Behind him are Jake and Coop, their trumpets at the ready.

The girls wait, weirded out by this whole thing-- but waiting for Newton and his Cronies to say, or do, *anything*.

NEWTON

Uh... A one, two, a one two three  
four...

And the Cronies break into a rousing rendition of Cole Porter's "**I GET A KICK OUT OF YOU**". They don't start together, and occasionally one loses rhythm, but hey, they're young and they're trying their best. If there is any blame, it's to be put on Newton, who sways back and forth, crooning:

NEWTON (CONT'D)  
 I GET NO KICK FROM CHAMPAGNE  
 MERE ALCOHOL DOESN'T THRILL ME AT  
 ALL  
 SO TELL ME WHY SHOULD IT BE TRUE?  
 THAT I GET A KICK OUT OF YOU!

The girls look at each other. Giggle a bit. They aren't quite sure what to do.

NEWTON (CONT'D)  
 SOME GET A KICK FROM COCAINE  
 I'M SURE THAT IF I TOOK EVEN ONE  
 SNIFF  
 THAT WOULD BORE ME TERRIFICALLY TOO  
 YET I GET A KICK OUT OF YOU

Newton hops onto the bleachers, and does a strange shuffling step. *Who does he think he is? Fred Astaire? Frank Sinatra? JOHN TRAVOLTA?!*

NEWTON (CONT'D)  
 I GET A KICK  
 EVERYTIME I SEE  
 YOU STANDING THERE BEFORE ME  
 I GET A KICK  
 THOUGH IT'S CLEAR TO SEE  
 YOU OBVIOUSLY DON'T ADORE ME  
  
 SOME GET A KICK IN A PLANE  
 FLYING TOO HIGH  
 WITH SOME GAL  
 IN THE SKY  
 IS MY IDEA OF NOTHING TO DO  
 BUT I GET A KICK OUT OF YOU

The girls just sit back in shock. Laura tries her best to look flattered. It's not an easy task.

Newton reaches into his pocket-- it's a struggle, while in full uniform-- and removes a crumpled rose, which he holds out for Laura.

NEWTON (CONT'D)  
 So, how about it, Laura?... You  
 wanna, uh, catch a movie  
 sometime?... Now that you're... Uh,  
 single?

The same shocked stares. None of the girls say anything.

NEWTON (CONT'D)  
 You, you got the song, right? It's  
 like...

(MORE)

NEWTON (CONT'D)

I don't like all those other things... But I like *you*, I get a kick out of *you*, and, uh...

LAURA

Look, Newton...

Newton sinks his head. Avoids eye contact. He knew this was going to happen.

NEWTON

I completely understand. I get it.  
I-- No. I understand.

And Newton walks off-- quickly, his head to the ground, mourning his loss of pride more than his heartbreak.

Jake and Coop wait in their spots for a long moment, not quite sure what to do. They smile awkwardly at the girls.

NEWTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(with the fury of a  
thousand incels)

LET'S GO, FRESHMEN!!

Jake and Coop hurry off of the bleachers-- where they are immediately intercepted by Randy.

RANDY

Not so fast, freshies. You're comin' with me.

Randy grabs the freshmen by the shirt collar and drags them off, their eyes growing wide with terror.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM- DAY

CLOSE ON: Pratt's FACE, ILLUMINATED by the projection in front of her. We see, reflected in his eyes, the blown-up image of a marching formation. He reaches down, and clicks the remote.

The projection lurches a frame forward. Click. One frame back.

Click. Forward. Click. Back.

Click. Zoom.

The image of a SAXOPHONE PLAYER fills Pratt's eyes. She clicks forward again. Back again. The Saxophone player on the screen moves back, and to the left.

Click. Forward. Click. Back.

EXT. BACK ALLEYWAY-- DAY

Jake and Coop, their hands against the wall.

Randy standing over them, with a paddle.

RANDY

There are those who say that at any given moment, there is a certain threshold of pain to be distributed in the world...

Jake and Coop wince.

RANDY (CONT'D)

...That in this alley here, and upon your asses, there is to be a certain amount of pain. Now...

Randy stops.

RANDY (CONT'D)

...Your fuck-up friend Henry is nowhere to be found. Which means that in order to keep the universe in balance, I must deal his pain to you.

Randy pulls back the paddle.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Welcome to Marching Band, fuckers.

SLAP.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM-- DAY

We hear the DOUBLE DOORS at the front of the room CLANG OPEN. Henry enters nervously-- cringes at the ruckus his entrance has made.

HENRY

Uh, excuse me? Mr. Pratt?

Glass whips around-- immediately taking up a defensive pose, ready to strike her potential attacker.

GLASS

WHAT DO YOU WANT?!

Henry jumps back, startled. As he always does when someone with authority is angry at him, he begins to tear up.

HENRY

I-- I'm s-- I was wondering if-- I was looking for--

Glass grabs Henry by the shirt collar.

GLASS

Looking for *what*?

HENRY

N-- Nothing--...

GLASS

You lost something? How? You weren't paying enough attention? Too busy doing something else? Doing *what*? Practicing your sets, I hope. Or memorizing your music. Or actually FIGURING OUT HOW TO KEEP TIME!!

Glass looks Henry right in the eyes.

GLASS (CONT'D)

You better have been practicing, because every time you mess up a set, which is about as frequent as a horse shits, it's like you're sticking a rusty fork into my heart and twisting. You got that?

Henry gulps.

HENRY

Y-- Yes.

Glass drops Henry. He scurries away.

GLASS

Now get the hell out of here.

Glass sits back down.

GLASS (CONT'D)

Now play that back.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM- DAY

Pratt, Lulu, Glass and Salt stand in front of the projection. They're a bit confused.

SALT

So?

PRATT

Watch closely.

Forward. Back. Forward. Back. The saxophonist on the screen steps off. The judge starts in his direction. Gets caught in his path. Is knocked over.

SALT

So? The kid with the saxophone messed up.

PRATT

He didn't.

Pratt points to the toppled judge.

PRATT (CONT'D)

He did.

Pratt rewinds to before the collision. Plays it back slowly.

PRATT (CONT'D)

The judge sees him coming-- note the quick glance right there-- and yet steps into his path anyways, leading to the final collision.

Pratt pauses the film and turns to his compatriots.

PRATT (CONT'D)

*Why?*

Lulu and Salt stare at the screen. They have no idea.

Pratt turns back to the film. Rewinds to before the collision.

PRATT (CONT'D)

Because he's looking for something to mark us off on. That's why. But there's one thing he didn't anticipate.

SALT

Mrs. Hornberger's camera.

PRATT

Very good. Mrs. Hornberger is stationed in the second row, approximately two yards to the left of the fifty-yard-line, giving her the *perfect* view of the collision to come. The official judge's report states: At five-minutes-thirty-two (five-thirty-six on the Hornberger video), a member of the saxophone line collided with Judge Sampson at just below the fifty. Here we are: five-thirty, five-thirty-four. Forward a few frames: We see the making of the collision. The saxophone player preps back, and to the left. Samson preps to his right. Saxophone player moves, and to the left. Back, and to the left. Back, and to the left.

They watch in silence for a long moment. Then:

SALT

I still don't get it.

She turns to go.

PRATT

This is evidence of a widespread conspiracy!

A frustrated Pratt slams the REMOTE against his thigh.

The VHS PLAYER whirs to life.

He looks up at the screen.

As the V.H.S. comes on, we PAN to the corner, where Newton is hiding-- his eyes red from crying.

He suddenly gets an idea. Stands up. Leaves without being noticed by Pratt, who watches the PROJECTOR with fascination.

KELSEY GRAMMER (O.S.)

*So tell me, what comes next for Elmer Hartman?*

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACK- DAY

Hartman and Jeanine pace the track.



HARTMAN  
So how'd you get stuck with  
*Dentonville High*?

JEANINE  
It's a funny story actually. I  
started out at this bougie private  
school--

HARTMAN  
Not French, I hope?

JEANINE  
No. All-American. Kids of  
diplomats, senators, and stuff.

HARTMAN  
So little shits.

JEANINE  
That's right. Little shits.

They laugh.

JEANINE (CONT'D)  
So I taught a few semesters there,  
ran the marching program, but...

Her voice trails off. She stops.

HARTMAN  
What?

JEANINE  
I can deal with little shits, the  
ones doing it just for their  
college apps, but when it's  
something inside of *me* that doesn't  
give a damn... Well, that's  
different. They're good kids, Hart.  
And they need my help.

HARTMAN  
*O Captain, My Captain.*

JEANINE  
(shrugging)  
Not every school can have  
fireworks.

Hartman's face sours. His brow furrows. *Does he tell her?  
That THIS school can't have fireworks?*

But he just smiles.

HARTMAN

And not every school can have you.

INT. JUDGE'S TENT- EVENING

Judge Samson carries a paper plate of food to a fold-out table. He sits down.

On the other side of the table is Newton. He eyes Samson, picks up his own plate, and moves across from the judge.

NEWTON

(gesturing to the judge's  
hamburger)

Good?

Samson chokes down the burger.

SAMSON

Not really.

Newton shrugs. Opens his own, dry, uneaten hamburger. Looks inside.

NEWTON

You have a refined critical eye.

Samson stares back at him, confused. Blinks.

SAMSON

Thank you?

Newton closes his hamburger and sets it down.

NEWTON

A less principled judge would've  
stayed polite. After all, you never  
knew who you're talking to.

Newton stares down the judge. He's having a good time playing his role.

SAMSON

You didn't make these burgers, did  
you?

NEWTON

I don't know. Would you like to  
change your answer?

Samson opens his burger, and looks down at it. Considers it for a moment, becoming oddly immersed in Newton's game.

He shakes his head 'no'.

SAMSON  
No. It's still shit.

Newton smiles. Impressed.

NEWTON  
Good man.

Newton picks up his burger and throws it behind him.

NEWTON (CONT'D)  
We have similar tastes, you and I.

Newton leans in towards the judge.

NEWTON (CONT'D)  
Why don't we discuss the Millmeadow  
Marching Braves? See if our  
opinions line up?

Judge Samson's mouth hangs open. He's confused. Doesn't know what to say.

NEWTON (CONT'D)  
Or how about we talk about  
Barthelmes School for Boys? I'm  
sure we must both have a taste for  
them, yes?

SAMSON  
They are a good band, yes.

NEWTON  
Hmm. Just *good*?

SAMSON  
They're a *great* band. But I'm not  
supposed to show any preference.

NEWTON  
No. Please. Show preference. It's  
your God-given right, isn't it?

Samson smiles. It's as if no one's told him this before.

SAMSON  
Yeah.

NEWTON  
And it would be unconstitutional,  
wouldn't it, to not let you have  
your preferences?

SAMSON

I guess so.

Newton leans forward conspiratorially.

NEWTON

So tell me: What do you think of  
the Millmeadow Marching Braves?

Samson smiles even wider. He's excited for this.

EXT. BUS DEPOT- EVENING

...Which has an almost eerie emptiness to it; gone are the excited school-kids, gone are the excited preparations. We can see a few stragglers, and a few groups warming up in the distance, but the parking lot is primarily empty save for Ashbury and Bucky, who lead Nick and Ricardo.

ASHBURY

It's just up here.

Just ahead of them is Iachimo's Bus: standing alone, there is a certain regality to it. Strobe lights flash from inside; in perfect unison with some BOOMING HIP-HOP.

NICK

I'm guessing that's Iachimo?

Ashbury knocks on the door to the bus. After a moment, it swings open as if by itself.

IACHIMO

Nick Caswell.

NICK

Iachimo.

IACHIMO

Please forgive me for the less-than-pleasant atmosphere. I had limited time, and I was working from shit.

Iachimo reaches over and grabs a remote from the seat beside him. Turns down the hip-hop, and sets the lights at a moody blue.

Nick stands in place for a moment, taking this all in.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

Won't you please sit down?

Nick hesitantly sits in one of the bus seats; Ricardo across from him. Ashbury hovers from the seat behind them, and Bucky stands in the aisle with her arms folded.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)  
 Ashbury, would you kindly get  
 Mister Caswell something to drink?

Ashbury nods. She opens a trombone case and takes out the instrument. She empties the spit valve INTO A SHOT GLASS.

She hands the glass to Nick. He's repulsed. Looks to Ricardo. He wants it. Needs it. Randy takes it. Downs it.

But Nick is still disgusted-- and looks on the verge of puking.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)  
 I assure you it's clean. Bucky is  
 very good at rinsing out valves.

Bucky, in the aisle, lets out a perverted chortle.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)  
 Now, Nick. I've heard what happened  
 between you and Laura.

NICK  
 Who told you?

IACHIMO  
 You should know by now that I'm  
 more-or-less omniscient. Or is it  
 omnipresent? No matter. The point  
 is that I know you've been through  
 a particularly rough patch lately.  
 Which is why I've invited you here.  
 You see, our bands have been  
 enemies for much too long. I  
 thought I ought to extend you some  
 kindness.

Nick shifts in his seat.

NICK  
 Well, thanks, but--

IACHIMO  
 But nothing, Nick. Now: Would you  
 like to talk about it?

NICK  
 Why?

IACHIMO

Because I'm a private ear. Someone  
to tell all your troubles to.

NICK

I-- I don't know if I--

RICARDO

That bitch left his ass because he--

IACHIMO

I ask you to please refrain from  
using that language in my presence,  
Ricardo.

Iachimo turns to Nick-- an inquisitive glare.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

Now... That bitch left your ass  
because *what?*

Sweat begins to pool on Nick's brow. He gulps.

CUT TO:

**THE SYMPHONY.**

We're at the end of the MEASURE. There's a weird symbol: A  
CIRCLE caught in CROSSHAIRS.

Next to it, in FANCY-PANTS TEXT: *D.S. al Coda.*

Our unseen Musician scrawls next to it:

*(back to the beginning)*

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS DEPOT- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Nick stares into the fire.

Suddenly, Ricardo comes up behind him and claps him on the  
back. Following behind is RANDY, another buff trumpet player,  
and a GAGGLE OF WANNABES.

RICARDO

You good, man?!

NICK

Yeah. I'm fine.

RICARDO  
You got this glazed-over look.

NICK  
I'm just thinkin' of Laura.

RANDY  
Yeah? Thinkin' about what? Her  
totties?

RICARDO  
Her bugangas?

Randy and Ricardo laugh hysterically.

NICK  
No, I'm not-- One day someone is  
gonna punch you both in the face.

RANDY  
Well, if you're not thinkin' about  
her big ole chest melons, how about  
I have a turn with her?

Nick stops.

NICK  
You're a real shit, you know that,  
Randy? I love her. And the way you  
talk about her...

RANDY  
Hey. Relax.

NICK  
No. I don't care about anyone else,  
she's all that I have, and I will  
not have you talk about her that  
way.

RICARDO  
O.K., Mr. Rogers.

RANDY  
Oh, shit. Oh SHIT!

Randy stops, mid-gasp. Puts his hand out-- stopping his  
friends, and the Wannabes, as well.

RANDY (CONT'D)  
They got the fucking Hart-Man  
here!!

Randy wraps his arm around a very uncomfortable looking Hartman.

RANDY (CONT'D)  
What you doing here, Hart-Man?

HARTMAN  
I came to pick up my daughter.

Nick hangs back, watching the boys go off with Hartman. He stares pensively, his hands in his pockets.

Suddenly, Laura is behind him.

LAURA  
Nick? I need to talk you.

NICK  
Sure.

EXT. NICK'S CAR- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Nick in the driver's seat, Laura the passenger. Solemn.

LAURA  
I think we should take a break.

A long pause.

NICK  
What does that mean? Take a break?

LAURA  
It means we... Should stop seeing each other. We should stop going out.

NICK  
Well, I figured *that*. But I mean, are we...? Like, for good?

LAURA  
I don't know.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Nick. I love you. I really, really do. But...

NICK  
But what?

Laura looks out the window. Avoids his eyes.



NICK (CONT'D)  
I have something for you.

Nick reaches into his pocket. Removes a shining SAXOPHONE LIGATURE.

NICK (CONT'D)  
It's the closest thing I could find  
to a ring...

LAURA  
What is that?

NICK  
It's a ligature. For a saxophone.

LAURA  
Where did you get a ligature?

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD- DAY (FLASHBACK)

Randy runs up to Nick, triumphant.

RANDY  
Just stole this ligature off of  
some freshman. You want it?

INT. NICK'S CAR- MORNING

NICK  
Nowhere.

Laura slips the ligature onto her ring finger.

She admires it in the rearview mirror. Combined with the glow of the fire in the bus depot behind her, there is an almost radiant quality to her. She stares deep into her eyes, before noticing Nick noticing her.

Nick begins to hum-- Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concert No.2 In C-Minor". Laura's eyes begin to water-- clearly this is a song that means a lot to her.

He suddenly grabs her face and kisses her. She doesn't reject the kiss-- but when she pulls away, she averts her eyes, and lets out a beleaguered sigh.

She thinks for a moment. Almost reaches out a hand to him-- but instead starts for the door and begins to step out.

NICK (CONT'D)

Wait.

Laura stops.

NICK (CONT'D)

Is this... Is this because of something *he*--....

Laura sighs. Closes the door. This might take a while.

LAURA

...Yes.

NICK

O.K., then, O.K., that's all I wanted to know, but-- I mean, I don't know *why you*, why he thinks he--

LAURA

Nick.

NICK

--*controls you*, because you're, like, *almost an adult*, and--

LAURA

But he was right.

Nick stops. Looks to her.

LAURA (CONT'D)

What he said was right.

NICK

What did he say?

CUT TO:

INT. BUS- EVENING

Iachimo lounges, listening with a sort of quiet introspection. Ashbury and Bucky watch, rapt.

ASHBURY

Ooh! Let me guess. He said you were ugly.

NICK

No, he-- He didn't say I was ugly!

BUCKY

It was something more practical.  
Like they're going away to  
different schools.

ASHBURY

That's a good one.

IACHIMO

He doesn't like the way you  
conduct.

Ashbury and Bucky look to Iachimo, confused.

BUCKY

What's that supposed to mean?

IACHIMO

He doesn't like the jib of your  
fingers. The lilt.

INT. NICK'S CAR- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

LAURA

He said... Well, that he doesn't  
think it's a good idea... For us to  
be together...

NICK

And you just, what, you *agreed* with  
him?

LAURA

Well... I mean, it's not really  
*practical*...

NICK

Why not?

LAURA

Well... We are going away to  
different colleges.

INT. BUS DEPOT- EVENING

Bucky, triumphant.

BUCKY

I knew it!

Ashbury shushes Bucky.

INT. NICK'S CAR- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

NICK  
Well, yeah. In nine months. It's  
something else, isn't it?

Laura evades his eyes once again. Sinks into her seat.

NICK (CONT'D)  
What is it?

LAURA  
He knows you cheated on me.

INT. BUS- EVENING

Ashbury and Bucky gasp. Iachimo smiles wryly.

IACHIMO  
I was not expecting *that*.

INT. NICK'S CAR- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

As before.

NICK  
What? I didn't--

LAURA  
He saw you, Nick.

Nick stammers a moment-- a million arguments flying around on his head before landing firmly on:

NICK  
He's lying.

LAURA  
Why would he lie?

NICK  
I don't know. Maybe because he-- He  
doesn't like the way I *conduct*...

LAURA  
That has nothing to do with it.

NICK

Well, it mus-- It's got *something* to do with it, because why else would he-- When I've done nothing to even, in the loosest definition of the word, I've done *nothing* even *resembling*--

LAURA

He said that Glass saw you with one of Iachimo's girls.

INT. BUS- EVENING

Ashbury and Bucky eye Nick. He shakes them off.

INT. NICK'S CAR- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

As before.

NICK

O.K. then, so Glass doesn't like the way I--

LAURA

Please, Nick. Please. Just...

She tucks her head into his shoulder.

INT. BUS- EVENING

Nick stops. Ashbury, Bucky, and Iachimo want in anticipation for more.

NICK

That's it. That's the end of the story. We slept in the car and-- Yeah. *That's it.*

IACHIMO

(a smirk)  
No break-up sex?

Nick balls his fists.

NICK

I'm sorry, Iachimo, but I don't think it's very funny that--

Iachimo raises a gentle hand-- a concession, though obviously he still finds it quite funny.

IACHIMO

Oh, no, I'm sorry, Nick, I don't mean to be rude, nor do I mean to be vulgar, but I was just merely commenting on the *expectation* of break-up sex in our libido-centric society, as well as the *implication* of your phrase "we slept in the car".

Nick's face is red. He's clearly getting annoyed. He rises to leave.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

But did you not refute her claim?

NICK

I'm-- I-- I don't have to put up with this.

IACHIMO

I was simply inquiring--

NICK

Fuck you and your, your *inquiring*. We're done here.

IACHIMO

No, stay, Nick. Please.

Bucky blocks his path.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

Have a drink. It'll take your mind off things.

NICK

No, I-- We're supposed to warm up soon, and, he doesn't like the way I *conduct*, so I--

IACHIMO

Why didn't you fight for her?

NICK

Because-- How am I supposed to-- There's such a thing as burden of proof, which says that I-- A negative statement can't be disproven, that's like, a syllogism...

BUCKY

Come on, man. Fuck him. Fuck her.  
Have a drink.

Bucky pours Nick a drink. Hands it out to him.

NICK

I-- I can't-- I need to--

IACHIMO

You can't conduct in this state,  
Nick. You have to take your mind  
off it. And I suppose that you  
would be very fluid if you were  
drunk.

NICK

No. I-- Sorry.

Nick puts up a hand, definitively refusing the drink.

IACHIMO

No need to apologize, Nick. You did  
the right thing. I'm just  
surprised...

NICK

Surprised by what?

IACHIMO

That you're not too keen on taking  
advantage of your newfound freedom.

Nick leans in. Intrigued.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

I mean, if I had just gotten out of  
a partnership, with a woman who  
said that I wasn't faithful...  
Well, I think I'd immediately begin  
engaging in acts of debauchery, the  
moment she let me go. But that's  
just me.

Iachimo leans back. He's going in for what he knows is the  
kill.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

Is she enjoying her freedom?

NICK

What do you mean?

IACHIMO

What I mean is... I'm very surprised that she is not using this opportunity, you know, this *convergence* of artists, and musicians, and bus drivers, to engage in those same circus acts of debauchery I know you crave deep down.

NICK

No. She... She wouldn't do that.

IACHIMO

You wanna bet?

Iachimo smirks. Ashbury smirks. Bucky smirks. The game is afoot.

EXT. ALLEYWAY- DAY

Duncan, John, and Gertrude lean against a wall.

GERTRUDE

What time is it?

DUNCAN

Five, almost.

GERTRUDE

Great. In approximately thirty minutes they'll be here. They'll pay ten dollars admission at the gate, and they will consume us, and gorge themselves on popcorn. They will buy raffle tickets. They will buy souvenir photos of their kids. We will become a commodity, and our art will die in their eyes...

JOHN

Yeah, their eyes are like, gonna kill us.

John takes a hit from his vape. We lose ourselves in the cloud, transitioning hazily to...

**EVENING**



Which, being October on the East Coast, represents the LAST FLEETING MOMENTS before we are all PLUNGED INTO COMPLETE DARKNESS.

SMASH CUT TO:

**THE SYMPHONY.**

A hand flips to the next page...

**MOVEMENT III**  
WALTZ

MOVEMENT III: "WALTZ"

## MONTAGE

As before, we travel through various sections of the CAMPUS; this time, though we are accompanied by the voices of BIGGO and BIXLY, two obnoxious RADIO DJs.

BIGGO (V.O.)  
*Hellllllooooo Millmeadow High!!*

The STADIUM LIGHTS kick on. The shutters on the SNACK BAR are pulled open. Eager spectators waltz through the STADIUM ENTRANCE, purchasing raffle tickets dispensed by Angie and Mrs. Hornberger.

BIGGO (V.O.)  
*And welcome to the 38th Annual New York State Marching Band Championships!!*

We CRANE UP to the ANNOUNCER'S BOX, high above the field. Biggo and Bixly sit at the controls. They look about as you'd expect-- pierced ears, frosted tips, shirts with incredibly loud patterns, etc.

BIGGO  
We're your hosts, Biggo and Bixly,  
from 101.4 THE MILK.

Bixly hits a button, and THE EXTREMELY LOUD SOUNDS OF A COW BEING MILKED fills our unfortunate ears.

BIGGO (CONT'D)  
We're coming to you live with all  
the action, all the music, all the  
euphoniums!

Bixly hits a button. Euphonium.

BIGGO (CONT'D)  
So stay tuned, and if we're lucky,  
we might just get a visit from a  
Certified Marching Legend!

Biggo switches off the mic as we PAN AWAY.

BIGGO (CONT'D)  
Cool it with the milking sounds,  
dude. It's disturbing.

Accompanied by the ECLECTIC SOUNDS OF A POP MARCH, we CONTINUE OUR MONTAGE, stopping at:

--Mansfield, on the **Head**, fiddling with wires. He reaches into his pocket-- unhooks a PAIR OF PLIERS. Snips a wire. Gets a shock.

EXT. ALLEYWAY- EVENING

Randy continues to deal out the beatings.

Jake and Coop are in a permanently wincing state-- but have developed a sort of blasé attitude about the whole thing.

JAKE

I can't believe he's still going.

COOP

How is this even fun for him?

JAKE

Yeah, what even is the point of this?

RANDY

Makes me feel like a man, boys.

EXT. SNACK BAR- EVENING

Laura chats with a group of GUARD GIRLS. They eat cheesy potatoes out of paper bowls.

Iachimo saunters up.

IACHIMO

Good evening, ladies.

Iachimo bows. The "ladies" are shocked-- a bit embarrassed, but also a bit impressed with his audacity.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

I'd like to speak to Laura alone, please. Not that I don't enjoy the company of you lovely ladies-- but some things are meant to be kept private.

The girls look to Laura-- confirm that she's O.K. She nods, and they go off chattering.

Iachimo swaggers towards Laura.

LAURA

What are you doing?

IACHIMO

Oh, nothing. Just listening to the music of the night. I think there's an awful lot of music in life, don't you? Just listen. The hum of the crowd. That's music. The passing of planes overhead. The rotation of hot dogs at the snack bar...

LAURA

Iachimo, what do you want?

Iachimo adjusts himself. He wasn't prepared for this prickly reception.

IACHIMO

What does anyone want? Peace. Love. The feeling that I'm not alone. What do you want? Come on. You wouldn't have asked me what I wanted if you, too, didn't want something... And if you didn't want me to know it.

LAURA

I don't want anything.

IACHIMO

Somehow I don't believe that. You want someone to love you, don't you?

Iachimo peers intrusively at her, as if trying to peer into her soul.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

I've hit the nail on the head, haven't I?

Laura nods, slowly.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

Well I don't believe you.

Laura turns on him.

LAURA

Why not?

IACHIMO

Because... There is someone out there who loves you, someone who needs you just as much as you need him, and here you are. At the snack bar.

Iachimo closes in on Laura, a comforting sensuality. Laura leans away from him.

LAURA

You're talking about Nick. Well, you're wrong. He wants nothing to do with me.

IACHIMO

Hmm. Well that explains his odd behavior.

LAURA

What do you mean?

IACHIMO

Well, when last I saw him, he did not appear to me as a man who just lost a goddess. He appeared to me as a man who, for the first time in his life, was free.

Laura hides her eyes. Glancing down. *Could her father have been right?*

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

You see, he was becoming quite flirtatious with my assistant, Ashbury. He even went so far as to give her a ligature.

Laura fingers the ligature in her pocket.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

Now, I didn't understand it, but he said it was a symbol of his love for her. Or lust. Most probably lust. I'm ashamed to admit it, Laura, but I left the two of them alone to enjoy themselves, not knowing the grief he had caused you...

Laura looks up to Iachimo-- looking for some sort of warmth in him. It isn't there.

LAURA

What do you actually want?

Iachimo starts to speak. Laura shushes him.

LAURA (CONT'D)

And I don't want to hear any B.S. about eternal happiness or anything. I want to know what you really want. Right now.

IACHIMO

I want the one thing Nick Caswell doesn't want. You.

Iachimo pulls Laura up and brings her close to him. An intimate moment. She looks up and down his face-- stopping at his lips-- and leans in just the slightest bit.

He leans in MUCH further.

She pushes him away.

LAURA

Iachimo, I-- No.

IACHIMO

You smell of cheesy potatoes, my love. Come. Kiss me.

He leans in again. This time, she pushes him off much more forcefully.

He looks at her for a moment, shocked.

LAURA

Creep.

She walks away, leaving Iachimo standing there befuddled.

IACHIMO

Well. Looks like it's time for Plan B.

INT. DRESSING ROOM- EVENING

Ashbury and Bucky push a large tuba case past a frenzy of girls, nearly knocking several of them over.

BUCKY

Watch out! Coming through!

Salt steps in front of the tuba case, stopping Ashbury in her tracks.

SALT  
Can I help you?

BUCKY  
Yeah. We gotta put this tuba here.

Ashbury and Bucky try to push on. Salt stops them again.

SALT  
But-- Who-- Why do you have a giant tuba?

BUCKY  
So many questions! All I know is I gotta put this tuba here!

They push on, Salt too baffled to do anything about it.

We PAN OVER to a vanity, where Laura sits, talking with Lulu. They each apply the flamboyant winged make-up typical of high school color guards.

Laura stops, holds up the ligature, and admires it shining in the mirror.

LULU  
I don't really see what the big deal is. I mean, fuck your dad, right? Why should he tell you what to do?

Laura, staring at the ligature, begins to cry.

LULU (CONT'D)  
What's wrong?

LAURA  
He was right... Oh, God. He was right!

We PAN OVER to the tuba case. It opens slightly-- a hand curled around the rim of the case.

A PAIR OF EYES looks out-- Iachimo!

IACHIMO'S POV: He scans the room. Looking past girls putting on overalls and marching jackets and epaulets, searching for Laura.

He spots her. Sitting in front of a vanity. Applying make-up.

Suddenly, Lulu passes by the case, a little too close for comfort. Iachimo slams it shut, retreating like a turtle into it's shell.

LULU  
 Alright, ladies! You've got five minutes! Then it's down to the gymnasium for stretches!

In the corner, the clock ticks to 5:30.

EXT. ALLEYWAY- EVENING

Randy brings his beatings to an end with a satisfied flourish.

He takes a moment-- collects himself.

RANDY  
 (satisfied)  
 And that is how it's done.

Jake and Coop turn to leave-- but Randy stops them with a wave of his paddle.

RANDY (CONT'D)  
 Not so fast, boys.

Jake and Coop slink in defeat.

RANDY (CONT'D)  
 There's still one more step to your initiation. One more little game before we can all sing Kumbaaya.

JAKE  
 What is it?

Randy smirks.

RANDY  
 Two words, boys. Panty. Raid.

INT. DRESSING ROOM- NIGHT

Iachimo lifts the lid off of the tuba case. Peeks around. The coast is clear. Emerges.

He walks over to the vanity. There, shining under the lights, is the ligature. Iachimo pockets it, satisfied.



Suddenly, the door opens. Iachimo sprints to the tuba case, and shuts himself inside.

JAKE (O.S.)

*Dude, we are, like, not supposed to be here...*

IACHIMO'S P.O.V.: The two Freshmen enter into the dressing room, nervously.

COOP

Now if I were a panty, where would I be?

JAKE

This feels very problematic.

Iachimo, seeing his chance, emerges from the tuba case and sprints to the door.

Jake and Coop watch him as he goes.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Shit! We're caught!

COOP

No, that dude is definitely on a panty raid, too.

INT. MILLMEADOW HIGH SCHOOL (HALLWAY)- NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Iachimo steps into the hallway, passing Randy, who leans against the door, listening in.

Iachimo stares disgustedly at them for a moment.

IACHIMO

Bunch of public school perverts.

And he goes off down the hall.

INT. STORAGE CLOSET- NIGHT

Jake and Coop open the door of an adjoining storage closet. They step inside.

They switch on an overhead light, revealing a cramped, musty space.

The door closes behind them.

JAKE  
Why would there be panties in a  
storage closet?

COOP  
I don't know. Extras?

Coop opens a filing cabinet. Begins to flip through.

COOP (CONT'D)  
Drills, Music, Music 1990, Music  
1991, Music 1992...

EXT. STADIUM ENTRANCE- EVENING

The Dentonvillians are getting into formation-- their 4x4 grid in which they will march into the stadium. Jeanine is assembling them with a deft elegance.

Hartman and Hank watch from the sidelines, impressed.

HANK  
You taught her everything she  
knows, huh?

HARTMAN  
Most of it.

HANK  
She talks about you all the time.  
Talks you up to the kids. She's got  
this saying she uses-- says she got  
it from you. "Don't be a hero.  
Heroes die."

HARTMAN  
(a light chuckle)  
Yeah, that's one of my favorites,  
yes.

HANK  
I don't know it means. I mean,  
everyone dies, right? Not just  
heroes. But whatever it is, she  
gets it.

The band in formation, Jeanine turns to Hank.

JEANINE  
You ready?

HANK  
Ready.

JEANINE  
(with a wry smile)  
Then let's hit the road.

Hank turns forward, rigid, and shouts:

HANK  
LEFT! LEFT! LEFT RIGHT LEFT! LEFT!  
LEFT RIGHT LEFT!

And they march on.

INT. STORAGE CLOSET- NIGHT

Coop flipping through the filing cabinet, as before.

COOP  
Music 2021, Music 2022,  
Passports... Nope. No panties.

JAKE  
Check "U". "Underwear".

INT. JUDGE'S TENT- NIGHT

Samson excitedly pores over files, spread across the table.

SAMSON  
Here we go, here we go. Set Number  
17... You see that shape here?

Newton is looking over his shoulder.

NEWTON  
Uh-huh.

SAMSON  
See the curve? The U-shape?

NEWTON  
Yeah.

SAMSON  
Now, what kind of idiot puts a U-  
shape so close to the end of the  
movement? And right after a jazz  
run? It's almost guaranteed that  
about half the band won't be in  
place.

NEWTON

Right, but-- I was hoping we could talk more about the actual performance...

SAMSON

And Set 20. Oh, Set 20 is my favorite. Set 19, now there's a fine set, not perfect, just *fine*, but with Set 20 I have no idea what Elmer Hartman was thinking when he...

We CLOSE IN on Newton. He grimaces.

Samson drones on.

EXT. STADIUM ENTRANCE- NIGHT

The Dentonvillians march into the tunnel leading to the stadium. Elmer is beside them, as is Jeanine.

HANK

LEFT! LEFT! LEFT RIGHT LEFT!

The band responds:

DENTONVILLIANS

LEFT! LEFT! LEFT RIGHT LEFT!

He watches them go into the tunnel, staying behind.

Jeanine looks back at him. Waves.

JEANINE

Wish me luck!

Hartman smiles and waves back.

HARTMAN

You don't need it!

She turns, and is gone, inspecting her band.

Hartman watches for a long while, as the cadence grows slowly softer in the tunnel.

Pratt comes by, and breaks his concentration.

PRATT

I know this probably isn't a good time...

Hartman jumps.

HARTMAN

Jesus, Pratt! You gotta stop scaring me like that.

PRATT

Mansfield says that the fireworks are busted again.

HARTMAN

What?!

PRATT

(as before)

Mansfield says that the fireworks are--

HARTMAN

I'll deal with it after, O.K.? Right now... I just want to see what she does.

INT. SPORTSCASTER BOOTH- NIGHT

Biggo and Bixly watch as the Dentonvillians march onto the field.

BIGGO

And here we have Dentonville High making their way onto the field.

BIXLY

Dentonville is currently ranked last in Division Three, after having moved up from Division Four two seasons ago.

On the field, the Dentonvillians split off and get into position.

BIGGO

Last season's show, a retrospective on the works of Bruce Springsteen "Marchin' In The Dark: A Night With The Biss".

BIXLY

I believe that should be "The Boss", Biggo.

BIGGO

No, I'm pretty sure it's "The Biss". Anyways, The Dentonville High Marching Braves proudly present: "A Night With Elton Jogh".

BIXLY

I'm pretty sure that should be--

BIGGO

Dentonville High, is your band ready?

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD- NIGHT

Hank, on the sidelines, turns and shouts towards the booth.

HANK

SIR, YES, SIR!

BIGGO (O.S.)

*Judges, are YOU ready?*

FIRST JUDGE

Yes, sir.

SECOND JUDGE

Ready.

A long pause. The judges look to each other. Then up.

BIGGO (O.S.)

*Is Judge Samson there?*

INT. JUDGE'S TENT- NIGHT

Samson continues to drone on.

NEWTON

(unable to take any more)  
I'm sorry. Judge Samson. I have to confess something to you.

Samson looks up from his files.

SAMSON

Yes?

NEWTON

I'm not really a judge.

SAMSON

I know that.

NEWTON

You do?

SAMSON

Yeah. Your name is Aaron Newton. You're the lead clarinetist for the Millmeadow Marching Braves. You auditioned to be Drum Major but Nick Caswell got it instead. He also got the girl you wanted. Am I incorrect?

Newton shakes his head 'no'. Samson sits.

SAMSON (CONT'D)

And I also know that you're one jealous son of a bitch. And you know that I can help you better than she can. You see, I think you know that if your band doesn't take home the trophy tonight, they're going to fire Elmer Hartman. Which could work out very well for you. I've got it all sorted out...

Newton looks over Samson's shoulders. He is demonstrating his extremely well-thought-out plan on the same detailed map we saw earlier.

SAMSON (CONT'D)

The third movement. A very volatile moment in the show. Something disastrous happens there, the whole thing is ruined. So that's when I do the collision. During the third movement, four measures after the change into--

NEWTON

The 3/4.

SAMSON

Yeah.

NEWTON

That's in the third movement.

SAMSON

Uh-huh.

A young VOLUNTEER rushes into the tent.

VOLUNTEER

Judge Samson! Judge Samson! They're  
looking for you out there.

Samson turns to the Volunteer, waves. Turns back to Newton  
and says, his voice low:

SAMSON

Don't fuck this up.

Samson joins the Volunteer, who leads him off towards the  
field.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD- NIGHT

Samson comes out of the tunnel accompanied by the Volunteer.  
The audience applauds; some boo.

SAMSON

Sorry! Sorry.

BIGGO (V.O.)

*Judge Samson, are you ready?*

Samson gets into place, gives a THUMBS UP to the booth.

BIGGO (V.O.)

*Good. Dentonville High School, you  
may now take the field in  
competition.*

Hank, on the podium, raises his hands, and the band is off.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM-- NIGHT

Randy is getting impatient.

RANDY

What's taking so long?!

He swings the door open. Jake and Coop are still poring  
through the filing cabinet. They jump back, startled, and  
look at Randy in fear.

JAKE

I-- I-- I--

RANDY

It is a SIMPLE task!



Randy whips out the paddle.

RANDY (CONT'D)  
And if you can't handle a simple  
task...

Jake and Coop look to each other. Shaking. Terrified.

SUDDENLY, JAKE BREAKS AWAY! Running into

INT. HALLWAY-- NIGHT

As Randy storms out of the DRESSING ROOM, giving chase to Jake, and the slightly lagging Coop.

RANDY  
Get back here, you little shits!

Further along, Jake DUCKS into a large STORAGE ROOM. Coop follows behind.

INT. STORAGE ROOM-- NIGHT

Rows and rows of marching equipment and memorabilia. Jake and Coop, terrified, run through the aisles, passing puffy hats, bent-in-half instruments, and massive props akin to the JUPITER HEAD.

Randy is close behind. Jake and Coop duck behind one the massive shelves.

RANDY  
Come out, freshies... I'm not gonna  
hurt ya... I'm just gonna paddle  
your little asses off...

Coop begins to pray. Jake eyes him.

JAKE  
Are you-- *Praying?*

COOP  
I'm coming home to you, God, I'm  
coming...

SUDDENLY, Randy JUMPS in front of them-- cornering them at the end of the aisle!!

RANDY  
End of the line, chucklefucks!!

He approaches them slowly-- beating his paddle, and relishing every sadistic moment.

He raises the paddle. Jake and Coop hold each other. Sobbing.

Jake looks to the shelf. Sees an OUT-OF-SHAPE FLUTE.

Reaches for it.

And just as the PADDLE is about to COME DOWN, he SWINGS the flute and KNOCKS THE PADDLE AWAY!!

Randy stands stunned for a moment, then turns to fury.

He also reaches for the shelf, and grabs a BENT TROMBONE.

A swashbuckling duel. Randy and Jake fight through the aisles, their instruments bending and clanging as they do. It's almost musical.

Eventually, Randy knocks the flute out of Jake's hand. It's a moment of defeat, and Jake knows it. He backs away terrified as Randy approaches him, looking even more sadistic than before.

RANDY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna enjoy *this*.

And as he raises the TROMBONE, he suddenly SLIPS!! Falling forward into Jake, and the nearby shelf.

One-by-one, the shelves tumble.

It's pretty musical as well, as scores of out-of-tune instruments go flying, creating a strange, cacophonous symphony.

Once all the shelves have been leveled (taking Randy, Jake, and Coop down with them), there is a long moment as the din rings through the air.

Then, in a pained voice:

RANDY (CONT'D)

My ass hurts.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS DEPOT- NIGHT

Nick waits anxiously outside of the bus. Inside, the strobe lights are back on-- and we can see the silhouettes of Ricardo, Ashbury, and Bucky rocking inside.

Iachimo approaches. Nick goes to him-- cautiously-- as Ricardo steps off of the bus, a red Solo cup in hand.

NICK

So?

Iachimo holds up the ligature. Nick's face drops.

RICARDO

Oh, shit, man.

IACHIMO

Why don't you come with me?

Iachimo wraps his arm around Nick. Escorts him onto the

PARTY BUS

Where Ashbury and Bucky rage on.

IACHIMO

Bucky, pour this man a drink. He has just gone through what many would consider to be the world's oldest humiliation: The cuckolding.

Bucky pours Nick a drink. Hands it to him.

BUCKY

You'll need it.

Nick eyes the drink. Is tempted.

NICK

No.

IACHIMO

You've earned it, don't you think? Besides, I insist. After all my cruelty, I really must insist.

NICK

No.

BUCKY

Come on. It'll make you feel better.

NICK

No!

Nick slaps the drink out of Bucky's hands. He points an accusatory finger at Iachimo.

NICK (CONT'D)

I don't know what you have planned, Iachimo, but I'm not going to be a part of it.

IACHIMO

You already are, Nick. Remember? Our deal?

Nick stops.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you'd forgotten so soon? Let me fill you in. We made a deal. Yes. And I won. Which means that for the time being, your life, and, more importantly, the Millmeadow Marching Braves, are in my hand. You have lost once, and you will lose again. At the start of the third movement, in the switch to three-four, you will not switch to the three-four, rather to thirteen-eight.

Bucky hands Nick another drink.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

So drink up. You've screwed your performance already.

Nick takes the drink. Looks into it for a moment.

Then suddenly **THROWS IT IN IACHIMO'S FACE!**

Iachimo chuckles lightly-- trying his best to be unfazed.

Through the WINDSHIELD, we see the elegantly dressed marchers of BARTHELMES HIGH approaching, rank-and-file. Monsieur leads the charge, commanding his troops with perfect clarity and diction:

MONSIEUR

Left. Right. Left right left.

Iachimo points his thumb towards them.

IACHIMO

I've gotta go.

Iachimo turns his back on Nick and swaggers down the aisle. He exits the bus, taking up his position from Monsieur...

IACHIMO (CONT'D)  
 Left. Left. Left right left.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD- NIGHT

The Dentonville Band comes to a triumphant finish. The audience applauds, Hartman most especially.

BIGGO  
 Wow! Talk about a performance.

BIXLY  
 I for one felt like I was really in the room with Sir Elton. Except in this room, Sir Elton was a bunch of trombones and other assorted instruments.

BIGGO  
 Is that the only instrument you know? The trombone?

BIXLY  
 I know others.

BIGGO  
 Like what?

BIXLY  
 Well, there's the trombone...

Over the previous, Hartman has made eye contact with Jeanine. They smile warmly at each other, before she goes and converses excitedly with Hank.

Hartman watches her for a moment, then turns to go. He pushes past several DISGRUNTLED AUDIENCE MEMBERS.

INT. LOADING GARAGE- NIGHT

Mansfield fiddles with wires, high atop the Jupiter Head. The Detonator lies a bit below him, dangling on the end of a cord.

He rubs two together. They spark a bit.

HARTMAN (O.S.)  
*Mansfield!*

Mansfield turns. Smiles and waves at the approaching Hartman.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

I hear we've got some trouble with the fireworks.

Mansfield descends from the Head. He nods.

MANSFIELD

Yes, sir. Big trouble.

HARTMAN

What can we do?

MANSFIELD

I'm doing all I can.

HARTMAN

You think we still have a show?

MANSFIELD

Can't say. I'm doing all I can. This wire, that wire. I've been putting a bunch of wires together. Sparks are flying. But give me a couple more minutes. A couple more wires. We'll be good as new. Hopefully.

HARTMAN

And if we're not good as new?

MANSFIELD

Those babies can go off at any time. Like this morning. Which is dangerous. And not very theatrical. Now if you'll excuse me, I must get back to my work.

Mansfield ascends the Head as Pratt sneaks up behind Hartman.

PRATT

Hart.

As usual, Hartman jumps.

HARTMAN

What? WHAT?!

PRATT

I've got some more bad news.

CUT TO:

INT. NURSE'S OFFICE- NIGHT

Jake and Coop sit on a bed, in bandages.

HARTMAN  
What the hell happened here?

PRATT  
It appears to have been some sort  
of bizarre hazing ritual.

HARTMAN  
You guys O.K.?

They groan.

PRATT  
You should see the other guy.

Pratt motions to another bed, where Randy is WRAPPED UP IN  
BANDAGES.

HARTMAN  
This means someone else has gotta  
do the solo, right?

Pratt nods.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
I'll tell Newton.

Hartman turns to go, but Pratt stops him with a hand on the  
shoulder.

PRATT  
Can I talk to you about something?

Hartman shifts uncomfortably.

HARTMAN  
Uh. Sure.

Pratt leans in close.

PRATT  
I believe I've uncovered evidence  
of a widespread conspiracy.

Hartman stares at him befuddled.

HARTMAN  
What the hell are you talking  
about?!

PRATT

I believe that there is a network of bad-faith actors present within the New York State Marching Band community.

HARTMAN

Just warm up the kids.

PRATT

I, I have video evidence of--

HARTMAN

Warm up the kids.

INT. STADIUM ENTRANCE- NIGHT

Barthelmes High marches down the hall, tall and proud. Monsieur mills about with a clipboard, checking in on his performers.

MONSIEUR

All set? Hydrated? In-tune? Let me hear a B-flat.

At the head of the line, Iachimo stops. The rest of the band stops with him.

Outside, we hear the booming voice of Bixly:

BIXLY (O.S.)

*And just behind the gate, we have Barthelmes School for Boys.*

IACHIMO

(to his band)

ATTENTION!

The band snaps to attention.

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

FORWARD MARCH!!

The band marches towards the field, Iachimo calling out all the way:

IACHIMO (CONT'D)

Left. Left. Left right left.



INT. SPORTSCASTER BOOTH- NIGHT

Biggo and Bixly watch as the Barthelmes School marches regally onto the field.

BIXLY

The Barthelmes School for Boys is currently ranked first in the state for their marching program, and have taken home the first place trophy the past six years in a row.

BIGGO

It's a truly beautiful program, Bixly. Makes you wanna smoke a cigarette.

BIXLY

I'm not quite sure what you mean by that, Biggo.

BIGGO

Neither do I, Bixly.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD- NIGHT

Samson speaks into a walkie-talkie.

SAMSON

Barthelmes into position. Drum major ascending. Over.

Iachimo gracefully climbs to the top of the podium.

BIGGO (V.O.)

*Now, if you don't know who that is, you've been living under a rock for the past couple years.*

BIXLY (V.O.)

*I don't know who he is.*

BIGGO (V.O.)

*That's because you're an imbecile, Bixly. That's Iachimo, perhaps the most-feared drum major to ever live. He rules his band with an iron fist. Women want him. Men want to be him.*

Iachimo, at the ready, turns towards the bleachers.

The audience comes to a hush.

BIGGO (V.O.)  
*Sir Iachimo, is your band ready?*

IACHIMO  
 We are.

BIGGO (V.O.)  
*Judges, are you ready?*

The two judges on the field nod.

BIXLY (V.O.)  
*It appears that we're missing Judge Sampson again, Biggo.*

BIGGO (V.O.)  
*Who cares, Biggo. It's Barthelmes High. We know they're gonna win.*

BIXLY (V.O.)  
*You forgot to cover the mic there.*

BIGGO (V.O.)  
*I'm just saying what we're all thinking. Barthelmes High, you may take the field in glorious competition.*

Iachimo counts in his band and they're off to the races.

INT. JUDGE'S TENT- NIGHT

Newton confers with Samson.

SAMSON  
 So then, when you finish saying Jupiter's speech, and you go up to set off the fireworks, that's when you DON'T set off the fireworks.

NEWTON  
 That's it?

SAMSON  
 The fireworks are the money maker. If they don't go off, the whole show falls apart. And I'll be doing one of my trusty collisions. You watch for it. Four measures into the 3/4 portion, there's a clarinet player that's gonna absolutely mow me down. Watch for it. It's gonna be great.

NEWTON  
You've thought this out.

SAMSON  
Twenty-five years of hatred will do that to you.

NEWTON  
Do you still play music anymore?

SAMSON  
No. It's never been the same since then. Every time I think about the saxophone it just makes me angry. Pretty much everything makes me angry nowadays.

Newton turns to leave.

NEWTON  
I've, uh, got to go. We're about to go on.

And as soon as he leaves the TENT, he's intercepted by a frantic Hartman. They walk and talk.

HARTMAN  
Newton. I need to talk to you. There's been a slight change on plans...

NEWTON  
Laura *does* want to date me?

HARTMAN  
What? No. But Randy, Jake, and Coop have all been injured in some bizarre hazing incident. Which means you need to do the solo.

Newton stops.

NEWTON  
The saxophone solo.

HARTMAN  
You play any other instruments?

NEWTON  
Well, yes. The euphonium, the bassoon, and I like to believe that I'm quite the skilled vocalist...

HARTMAN

You know what I mean. Second movement, the solo's yours. And to tell you the truth, I always wanted it to be you. It was Glass that shot it down.

Newton, uneasy, looks to Samson in the tent. Samson eyes him.

NEWTON

I'm sorry. I... I... I have to do the fireworks.

HARTMAN

We'll get someone else. It's just a button it's not that hard.

NEWTON

I... It's what you told me I had to do. I have to do it.

Newton walks away.

HARTMAN

Newton! Come on! The only other saxophone player is Henry, and he doesn't even have a ligature! COME ON!!

INT. STADIUM ENTRANCE- NIGHT

The Millmeadow High Band is lined up, ready to perform. We hear the echo of the Barthelmes performance coming to a close inside.

We PAN ACROSS the rows of marchers, taking in some reactions specifically:

--Duncan, who can't stop drumming.

JOHN

Dude. *Stop.*

DUNCAN

I can't.

JOHN

*Stop.*

DUNCAN

I literally cannot.

GERTRUDE  
(sotto)  
That is mad annoying.

--Henry, who fiddles with his reed and mouthpiece, trying to get it to stick.

Hartman comes up behind Henry, quickly.

HARTMAN  
Henry.

Startled, Henry drops his reed.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
You dropped your reed.

HENRY  
I know.

Henry bends, picks up his reed, brushes it off, and sticks it back in his mouth.

HARTMAN  
Henry.

HENRY  
Yeah?

HARTMAN  
I need you to do the solo.

HENRY  
What?!

Henry's eyes go wide in true terror.

HARTMAN  
All the others are out of commission. So it's just you. I know that you know it. I hear you playing it in warm-ups every day.

HENRY  
But I-- I don't have my--

HARTMAN  
You just need a little courage, is all. In fact, I think we all do.

Hartman gives Henry a friendly pat on the back.

A long, awkward pause. Salt comes up behind him.

SALT  
Hello, sir.

They nod at each other. Another long, awkward pause. Hartman sways a bit, smiles at the absurdity of the whole thing. *What else is there to do?*

SALT (CONT'D)  
Uh... Mr. Hartman?

HARTMAN  
Yeah, Salt??

SALT  
Permission to swear?

HARTMAN  
Go ahead.

SALT  
I think we're fucked.

The gate begins to CREAK OPEN, revealing the FOOTBALL FIELD at an agonizingly slow pace.

HARTMAN  
I think so too.

The gate having been opened, Hartman crosses to the front of the band, and yells out:

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
LEFT! RIGHT! LEFT RIGHT LEFT!  
RIGHT! LEFT RIGHT LEFT!

EXT. BLEACHERS-- NIGHT

Iachimo squeezes past disgruntled spectators, parking himself in between Ashbury and Bucky. He carries a plate of cheesy potatoes.

BIGGO (O.S.)  
*Taking the field now is the  
Millmeadow Marching Braves.*

Iachimo rubs his hands together expectantly.

IACHIMO  
Here we go.

He goes to suck the cheese off of a delicious cheesy potato. He spits it out-- it's scalding hot.

ASHBURY  
(concerned)  
What?

IACHIMO  
HOT!!

EXT. SIDELINES-- NIGHT

The band breaks into two STRANDS: the marchers, led by Laura and the color guard onto the field, and the Pit Crew towards the podium, led by Nick.

He ascends the podium.

BIGGO (O.S.)  
*Scaling the podium is drum major Nick Caswell. Originally a member of Millmeadow High's saxophone line, he's spent the last two seasons as drum major. His absence at last year's championship performance has been speculated as a leading factor in the Braves' failure to take bronze at the competition...*

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD-- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Anxious faces. Marching into position. Newton wipes sweat from his brow.

**Behind the Jupiter head**, Mansfield wraps the detonator in DUCT-TAPE-- not noticing his shirt sleeve getting wrapped across the CROWN.

**On the side-lines**, Hartman, Pratt, Salt, and Lulu huddle together.

HARTMAN  
Gang. I just want to say... If this is our last stand, I'm glad I'm going down with all of you.

Hushed confusion from the others.

SALT  
What do you mean?

LULU

Come on, Hart. What's going on.

But any additional protests are cut off by a hush falling over the crowd, as they turn and see that the band is in FORMATION:

BIGGO (O.S.)

*Drum Major Nick Caswell... Are you ready?*

NICK

YES, SIR!

BIGGO (O.S.)

*Judges, are YOU ready?*

On the field, Samson raises a perhaps overly-enthusiastic hand.

SAMSON

Aye, aye!

Newton glares. Samson glares back.

BIGGO (O.S.)

*Millmeadow High, are you ready?*

In-time with a flourish from Nick, the band SNAPS into position.

BIGGO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*You may now take the field in championship competition.*

Applause from the bleachers. Iachimo scowls.

On the podium, Nick counts off:

NICK

One. Two. ONE TWO THREE FOUR!

And we're off.

Behind the Jupiter Head, the sudden EXPLOSION OF SOUND is enough to send Mansfield, sprawling off of the tiny platform. He's stopped-- left hanging twenty feet above the ground by his shirt sleeve.

He eyes the detonator.

On the field, We SWEEP BACK-AND-FORTH between marchers, between instruments.



The Drumline looks badass as they keep in perfect time with each other. Henry looks back-and-forth, doubting himself. A TRUMPET PLAYER throws away his mute.

Samson is in-between it all, speaking into his mic:

SAMSON

0:36, flute player off-step with  
drum major, minus 0.1. 0:37,  
failure to properly dress the line,  
minus 0.2.

It's an exhilarating experience to be sure, and we're finally able to understand why everyone has been taking this so damn seriously.

The Color Guard SPINS past the Jupiter Head, and we SPIN WITH THEM to find Mansfield still in his place, dangling a la Buster Keaton, from the CROWN. He tries to reach the detonator with his foot. It's too far.

His shirt begins to tear.

The march continues.

Iachimo tries the cheesy potatoes again. Still hot.

Behind the Jupiter head, Mansfield continues to dangle. He finally wraps his leg around the detonator cord, and pulls it up to himself. He tears open the HATCH. Looks at the mass of WIRES inside. Reaches into his pocket for his PLIERS.

Pats again.

They're not there.

Mansfield begins to panic, frantically searching through every orifice for his tool.

He's so flustered that he doesn't even notice that he's DANGLING BY A THREAD now-- literally.

On the detonator, one of the LIGHTS SWITCHES TO GREEN.

Mansfield's eyes fill with fear.

KA-BOOM.

A small explosion from the top of the Jupiter Head, as one of the rockets is set off. Sparks fly.

Mansfield falls to the ground, his shirt tearing at the top. He collects himself for a moment, then runs, shirtless, towards the END ZONE.

From the BOX, Biggo and Bixly watch the half-naked man charge across the field.

BIXLY

Woah! We got a streaker on our hands!

BIGGO

I believe one has to be fully nude to be considered a streaker.

BIXLY

You might be right. No hog, no glory. Coward.

Samson PATS himself all over. He's flaming-- caught in the crossfire of the sparks from the explosion. He ducks behind the Jupiter Head.

The performance continues. We're reaching the end of the first movement-- and the bombastic energy from before has begun to reach it's CLIMAX.

There is a FINAL BURST, and the Marchers snap to attention.

The mood is electric. We PAN through the band-- to Newton-- to Laura-- to Grace-- and finally, to Henry, who shakes, shivers, and breathes in deep as if the specter of death were upon him.

There's a long moment. Even Ashbury and Bucky on the bleachers are a bit amazed.

Nick begins to conduct again. Slowly.

BIGGO (O.S.)

*And now it's time for the ballad portion of tonight's show.*

The terrified Henry steps forward, out of his line. He tries to balance his reed onto his mouthpiece with his tongue-- it doesn't work.

The reed FALLS TO THE GROUND!!

He considers what to do for a moment, and, facing turning red, he bends over and picks it up.

BIGGO (CONT'D)

*It appears that the young saxophonist has dropped his reed.*

INSERT: Hartman leans forward anxiously. Tries cueing Henry in.

In the pit, a timpani pounds out a droning note.

Behind the Jupiter Head, Samson removes his shirt and surveys the damage. It's torn to pieces.

Newton pops his head in.

NEWTON  
What's happening?

SAMSON  
I got set on fire!

Samson turns around.

Running up Samson's back is a SAXOPHONE TATTOO.

On the bleachers, Pratt's eyes widen.

PRATT  
(under his breath)  
It's him...

#### HENRY CONTINUES HIS SLOW MARCH

And the timpani drones on as, in SLOW-MOTION, we see Mansfield charge onto the field, PLIERS in hand. Just as he is about to reach The Head, he is TACKLED, by a group of SECURITY GUARDS, a look of pure defeat washing over him as he is pummeled to the ground.

Mansfield reaches out desperately for the DETONATOR.

It swings.

He reaches for it.

Iachimo tries his cheesy potatoes.

There is a SUDDEN WHISTLING NOISE, and Mansfield looks up in terror.

One of the rockets FLIES FROM THE HEAD and TOWARDS THE CROWD. They scream.

It soars past and explodes behind them, but not before a PANICKED Ashbury and Bucky try to flee the crowd, accidentally KNOCKING IACHIMO'S CHEESY POTATOES into his lap.

Iachimo screams as his legs are scalded. He frantically tries to WIPE OFF THAT HOT OOZE-- not noticing that the LIGATURE, which has been WRAPPED AROUND HIS FINGER, has come FLYING OFF and has landed on the TIMPANI below.

Above, Hartman mouths:

HARTMAN

Go! Go!

Henry tries to squeak out a note. It doesn't sound great-- in fact, it doesn't really sound like anything at all.

BIGGO (O.S.)

*What is that ungodly noise?*

BIXLY (O.S.)

*Well, Biggo, there's no accounting for taste, I can tell you that.*

In the pit...

The ligature BOUNCES OFF OF THE TIMPANI, soaring into the air!!

It lands at Henry's foot.

Astonished, he bends and picks it up. Attaches it to his mouthpiece. Begins to play.

He's pretty damn good.

There is a long, quiet moment, as everyone takes in the solo. No one speaks; except Samson, who says to Newton in sotto voice:

SAMSON

It's time.

He nods, and turns the corner of the Head, his shirt still flaming a bit.

Nick begins to count in We PAN ACROSS the band, and then back to Hartman; all involved panting wildly.

At the front, Henry snaps to attention. The crowd applauds him. He smiles-- begins to cry happy tears. for the third movement, as Iachimo on the BLEACHERS leans forward...

IACHIMO

Here... We... Go...

...And we're OFF, into the EPIC THIRD MOVEMENT.

ERIC

Listen to Mark! He's got the beat.

Eric and Ophelia sync themselves up with Mark. They high-five as they play.

JOHN  
I can't. Stop. Drumming.

Ophelia cocks her head up towards Nick.

OPHELIA  
What the hell is he doing up there?

Nick continues to conduct in a very clearly wrong fashion.

Samson starts towards the CLARINETIST, intently stepping in his way to hit him-- but misses him entirely.

SAMSON  
DAMMIT!!

Newton marches towards the back of the head. Sets his saxophone down.

He climbs onto the platform of the Jupiter head, and lies underneath the pulley-system. This is how the mouth moves. He speaks into a microphone directly behind him. It looks pretty ridiculous.

The band begins to slow down, turn to the head. They kneel. The music comes to a stop, save for some mythical-sounding glissandos from the PIT ORCHESTRA.

NEWTON  
(voice low; through the  
Jupiter Head)  
Greetings, mortals.  
I am the great god Jupiter.  
I am here to tell you mortals  
How it is that you should live.  
Be not so hateful to each other,  
Do not seek out war.  
You may not want to band together,  
But united you're so much more.  
Be selfless, be brave,  
And above all else:  
If there's someone to save  
Save them before yourself.

Newton moves away from the mic. He's been unexpectedly moved by the whole thing.

The band begins to play again as Samson rounds the corner to the back of the head. Gasps.

Newton is scaling the back of the Jupiter head, towards the fireworks.

SAMSON

You son of a bitch.

Samson charges towards the head.

He begins to climb. He reaches Newton shortly. They fight.

Newton falls to the ground.

Newton looks up. Samson has almost scaled to the top.

Newton starts climbing after Samson, who kicks at him.

Samson reaches his scissors closer and closer to the wire...

...When, in front of the head, the COLOR GUARD executes a flag throw. The girls all catch theirs...

...Except for our favorite young Flag-Twirler, who looks up, confused at where hers went.

Samson, millimeters away from cutting the wire, is suddenly STRUCK ON THE HEAD and tumbles all the way down to the bottom of the platform.

Newton SWITCHES ON the fireworks.

There is a frenzy of explosions from the head.

Newton is thrown off of the platform, landing on the ground, next to the wounded Samson.

The audience on the BLEACHERS gasps.

When the light fades away, the band is in position, seemingly unaware of the flaming head behind them. They stand triumphant.

The audience doesn't quite know what to make of it at first. But slowly, surely, the applause comes. It's riotous. Even Ashbury and Bucky rise to their feet, but are pulled down by a furious Iachimo.

Nick descends the podium and is immediately intercepted by Hartman, who looks at him furiously.

NICK

Mr. Hartman-- I--

HARTMAN

I can smell it on you, Nick. Come on. And what is that?

Hartman gestures to a spot on Nick's collar. SMEARED RED LIPSTICK.

NICK

That's not-- I didn't--

Hartman's face turns red. His anger flares.

HARTMAN

You-- You s-- You-- You--

Just as he is about to lose his temper, Jeanine comes up behind him, and places a comforting hand on his shoulder.

JEANINE

Good job, Hart.

Hartman warms immediately-- takes her hand.

HARTMAN

Thanks, Jeanine.

Hartman turns again to Nick-- taking a deep breath-- before finally saying, holding back everything within:

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Do you know how much I wanted you  
to prove me wrong?

Hartman shakes his head and walks away. Nick watches him go, regretfully.

INT. MEN'S ROOM- NIGHT

Iachimo washes himself in the sink-- trying desperately to rid himself of that horridly cheesy stain.

IACHIMO

Damned hot potatoes...

He observes himself in the mirror. He's soaked. He groans.

INT. COSTUME CLOSET- NIGHT

Iachimo flips through RACKS OF OUTDATED MARCHING UNIFORMS. He assesses one-- a FRILLY RED DISCO SUIT.

He grimaces. Puts it back.

In the distance, we hear:

PRATT (O.S.)  
*...I only need it for a second...*

Iachimo turns as Pratt steps into frame, wheeling a C.R.T. T.V. through the room. Accompanying him is Lulu.

Iachimo steps into the rack, hiding.

PRATT (CONT'D)  
 I've uncovered evidence of some  
 sort of grand conspiracy...

Iachimo's eyes widen. He's caught!

He watches them leave, then rushes out the door, cheesy pants and all.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD-- NIGHT

On a platform, Biggo hands out trophies from a small table.

The bands, and their respective drum majors, are lined up behind him.

BIGGO  
*...Which is why it's my honor to  
 award tonight's third place prize  
 to the Norwalk Marching Bears.*

A DIRECTOR and DRUM MAJOR, wearing bear costumes, shake Biggo's hands and take their trophy.

BIGGO (CONT'D)  
 And now, here to present the first  
 place trophy, is a certified  
 Marching Legend!

The Marching Legend emerges from the entrance hall, to the rapturous applause of the spectators. He waves, blows kisses, as he makes his way to the ceremony platform.

He takes the trophy from Biggo, looks towards the Photographer, smiles as his photo is taken. Crosses to the mic. Clears his throat.

MARCHING LEGEND  
 Marching. Band. What is it that  
 makes it so special? Some say it's  
 the feet. Others say it's the  
 instruments. Others say that it's  
 the warm, erotic feeling you get  
 when you hear the crash of the  
 cymbals.



On the **bleachers**, Hartman, Angie, Salt, and Lulu watch nervously.

MARCHING LEGEND (CONT'D)

What I think makes marching band so special is the fact that, despite everything, we can always turn to it, when we're in need of marching, and bands. As a young boy in Skokie, Illinois, who first saw the Chicago Nude Volunteer Cymbal Line at a very impressionable young age...

Angie leans in towards Hartman.

ANGIE

(whispering in Hartman's ear)

Elmer... Why did you hire a pervert to come speak?

HARTMAN

I thought you hired him.

MARCHING LEGEND

...But I think, more than anything, marching band is special because it is noble. You give up yourself for the greater good. You consent to becoming just a dot on the field. You act for others, for the whole. And that is why I'm honored to present this award to...

PRATT (O.S.)

WAIT!!

Everyone turns.

Pratt is rushing through the STADIUM ENTRANCE, pushing Lulu atop the C.R.T.

The crowd reacts-- a half-gasp-- confused.

PRATT (CONT'D)

There has been a horrific betrayal of all the tenets the marching arts stand for. And I have proof. Lulu?

LULU

The tape you are about to see has not been altered in any way.

Samson, infuriated, steps out of place.

SAMSON  
This is ridiculous!

PRATT  
Lulu, please press play.

SAMSON  
This is NOT the time for  
multimedia!

Lulu loads an unmarked VHS TAPE into the VCR. Presses play.

Projected, we see the GRAINY VIDEO TAPE from the beginning. The young Hartman is seated across from Kelsey Grammer--evidently, we are around the same place that the interview left off.

KELSEY GRAMMER  
So what comes next for Elmer  
Hartman?

HARTMAN  
Well, I figure I'll take a break  
for a bit... Take some time to  
myself... Maybe go to court, get a  
divorce from that damned  
trombone...

Kelsey Grammer chuckles.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
No, but seriously... I'm going into  
education. I just received an offer  
from Bishop High. One of the best  
marching programs in the state of  
Texas. They want me to come out and  
head up their program, start of the  
'89 season...

KELSEY GRAMMER  
Off to the Lone Star State for  
Elmer Hartman, huh? Well, better  
get yourself a nice pair of spurs.

HARTMAN  
Yeah. I always wanted to be a  
cowboy.

KELSEY GRAMMER  
Yeehaw. But, all kidding aside...  
That program is very lucky to have  
you, Elmer.

HARTMAN

Thank you.

KELSEY GRAMMER

Very. Lucky.

The screen freezes.

KELSEY GRAMMER (V.O.)

But they weren't. In fact they were the opposite of lucky. They were *unlucky*. Which is the *opposite* of lucky. Within four years of my interview with Elmer Hartman, the Bishop High band program, once one of the top programs in the state of Texas, was bankrupt. Those close to the program stated that the primary cause of it's shutdown was overspending, particularly on excessive production elements, and low performance scores and mediocre championship placements. However, many have also claimed that the downfall of the program was more personal in nature, and that behind-the-scenes, the band was plagued with turmoil.

A 90'S GIRL, dressed as her name implies.

90'S GIRL

It was, like, *banishment*.

A 90'S DUDE, dressed as his name implies.

90'S DUDE

It wasn't fair, like, at all.

Back to KELSEY GRAMMER.

KELSEY GRAMMER

It began with a feud between Hartman and the band's current drum major and former star saxophone player, Gary Samson.

A STILL IMAGE of GARY SAMSON appears: long-haired, a hippie type; about seventeen.

KELSEY GRAMMER (CONT'D)

Sources say that Hartman became  
jealous of Samson's ongoing  
success, and sought revenge for the  
perceived encroachment on his  
territory as band director.

A TEEN, carrying a EUPHONIUM.

EUPHONIUM TEEN

Samson was hot shit, and Hart  
didn't like it.

A TEEN, soaking a clarinet reed in their mouth.

CLARINET TEEN

Dude was dedicated. He even had his  
damn saxophone tattooed on his  
back.

INSERT: B-ROLL of the young Samson removing his shirt, and  
showing us the saxophone tattoo on his back.

KELSEY GRAMMER (V.O.)

*We even spoke to a certified  
Marching Legend, who gave us his  
take on the situation.*

The Marching Legend, looking the same then as he did now.

MARCHING LEGEND

It's a strange position to be in,  
band director. You want your kids  
to grow, but not so much that  
you're forced into their shadow.  
And I think that's what happened  
here.

In the background, a TECHNICIAN wheeling a CART OF PERCUSSION  
INSTRUMENTS stumbles. The cymbals come crashing to the  
ground. The Marching Legend turns, notices, then turns back,  
smiling suggestively at the camera.

The video stops. We hear the sound of the tape being EJECTED  
and we're back at

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD-- NIGHT

Where Pratt beams towards a shocked crowd.

Hartman, in the bleachers, slinks in shame.

BIXLY (O.S.)  
*What point is he trying to make,  
 Biggo?*

BIGGO  
 I don't know.

Biggo turns to Pratt.

BIGGO (CONT'D)  
 What point are you trying to make?

PRATT  
 Judge Samson. Please remove your  
 shirt.

Everyone looks to Samson. He stammers.

SAMSON  
 I-- I'm not doing that.

BIGGO  
 Take off your shirt, man.

Biggo turns to the audience.

BIGGO (CONT'D)  
 Y'all wanna see him take his shirt  
 off, don't you?!

CROWD  
 SHIRT OFF! SHIRT OFF! SHIRT OFF!

BIGGO  
 They're chantin'. You gotta do it.  
 Come on now. Don't let 'em down.

Sighing, Samson removes his shirt.

BIXLY (O.S.)  
*Who knew that a marching band  
 competition would yield so many  
 topless men? I sure didn't.*

PRATT  
 Turn around.

Samson turns around...

**REVEALING THE SAXOPHONE TATTOO SNAKING DOWN HIS BACK!!**

The crowd GASPS.

BIXLY (O.S.)  
*What is it, Biggo?*

BIGGO  
 Why, it appears to be evidence of  
 some grand conspiracy, concocted by  
 Judge Samson as revenge against his  
 old enemy Elmer Hartman.

Samson looks around nervously. All around him are accusatory faces.

Suddenly, he JUMPS from the podium, and runs across the field. He dodges the oncoming security and proceeds to

EXT. BUS DEPOT- NIGHT

Where he weaves through the empty and desolate rows.

He ducks behind one of the buses. Catches his breath. Watches the Security Guards rush past him.

He turns, and JUMPS.

Glass is right behind him!

SAMSON  
 Jesus. You scared me. What are you  
 doing here?

GLASS  
 Getting out of here. What are you  
 doing here?

SUDDENLY, THE BUS SPRINGS TO LIFE!!

He turns-- face-to-face with Iachimo's lively party bus. The door swings open, revealing Iachimo at the wheel.

IACHIMO  
 Get in.

Samson nods and throws himself inside.

INT. IACHIMO'S PARTY BUS- NIGHT

Glass puts the bus into drive. Iachimo guides her in backing up.

IACHIMO  
 Easy. Easy.

SAMSON  
What's goin' on here?

GLASS  
We're gettin' the hell out of dodge  
is what we're doing.

Glass slams on the gas. They take off with a JOLT.

GLASS (CONT'D)  
(turning to Iachimo)  
So what did you do?

IACHIMO  
I concocted a psychosexual  
conspiracy in order to bring down  
the Millmeadow Marching Braves.

GLASS  
What about you?

SAMSON  
Same. Conspiracy. No psychosexual  
stuff, though.

IACHIMO  
(to Glass)  
What about you?

We ZOOM ON Glass, as she cracks a wicked smile.

GLASS  
I'm glad you asked.

And we FLASH THROUGH various scenes from before, taken at  
alternate angles:

--Glass, on the sidelines of the BONFIRE, whispering  
something to Hartman.

We see Glass' plan enacted as she describes it to us. Sorry  
guys I still have to write this part, I just had the idea for  
it last night.

GLASS (V.O.)  
*First, I planted a rumor in Elmer  
Hartman's brain.*

GLASS  
...cheating on your daughter with  
one of Iachimo's girls...

GLASS (V.O.)

*Which I knew he was going to act on. I knew that you'd be paying us a visit, Iachimo, and that Ricardo wouldn't be able to resist your Bacchanal. So it was just a matter of time before he and Nick showed up at your doorstep...*

GLASS

Then, I smeared just a hint of lipstick on his collar, and poured just a smidgen of vodka on his sleeves, so even if he didn't take the bait, it would seem like he had. And I counted on Elmer Hartman losing his temper-- a temper that has been burrowing deep inside of him. That, combined with his complete inability to turn in a winning performance, would lead to his dismissal and my promotion to band leader.

INT. IACHIMO'S PARTY BUS- NIGHT

IACHIMO

But how did you know that was going to work?

GLASS

Because it already did. Thirty years ago. Bishop High.

ZOOM ON: Samson, as he comes to a realization.

SAMSON

You.

GLASS

What?

SAMSON

You did this to me. He never hated me. You did.

GLASS

What are you talking about?

SAMSON

Of course you wouldn't remember a guy like me. I was just a dot on a field. But I remember you.

(MORE)



SAMSON (CONT'D)

Years of looking up at you, and you just scowling back.

GLASS

Samson?

SAMSON

Oh yeah, baby.

Samson SUDDENLY grabs a hold of the wheel, wresting it out of Glass' grasp!

Glass tries for the wheel. There's a back-and-forth. The bus swerves. Iachimo eyes the road nervously.

IACHIMO

Uh... Guys?

They stare out. Quickly approaching are the STADIUM GATES. Glass slams on the brakes, but the bus spins out, and FLIPS OVER.

Our villains are SENT FLYING around the bus, and CRASH to the ground in pain.

A long moment.

Groans.

CLOSE ON: The FLAT TIRE, which, as we ZOOM ON, can clearly see has been punctured by...

A MILLMEADOW MARCHING BRAVES BUTTON.

EXT. MILLMEADOW HIGH SCHOOL- NIGHT

The Trumpeter watches the proceedings. Raises his trumpet and begins to play.

We see, in MONTAGE:

--Hartman walking with Laura, statue in hand, away from the FOOTBALL FIELD.

HARTMAN

Go clean up in the band room. And meet me at the car when you're done. O.K.?

Laura nods.

--Depardieu screaming at Iachimo outside of the WRECKED BUS

--Henry, sitting alone on the curb. After a moment, the Flag-Twirler approaches him.

FLAG-TWIRLER  
Hey. I liked your solo.

HENRY  
Thanks.

Henry begins to cry.

FLAG-TWIRLER  
Why are you crying?

HENRY  
Because I messed up!

The Flag-Twirler puts him on the back.

FLAG-TWIRLER  
It's O.K. I messed up too.

--The Principal, chatting on the BLEACHERS with Hartman.

PRINCIPAL  
Well, you son of a bitch, you did it.

HARTMAN  
On a technicality.

PRINCIPAL  
We'll be seeing you next year.

The Principal gives Hartman a supportive pat on the back.

--Laura, sweeping up in the band room.

Mrs. Hornberger enters, carrying a video-tape.

She puts it in the VCR.

Laura watches the tape: Nick confessing his love for her, at the BONFIRE. Mrs. Hornberger tapes from the bushes.

Laura begins to tear up.

EXT. BLEACHERS- NIGHT

Hartman stares out onto the field, where the giant Jupiter head sits in crispy ruin.

He stares down at the first place trophy.

Then back to the head.

Then at nothing, straight forward, at the void on the field.

There is a CLANKING as someone comes up the stairs to the bleachers. Hartman turns.

It's Jeanine.

She leans against the railing with Hartman.

A long, pensive moment.

HARTMAN  
How'd you like to stay here?

Jeanine looks at him curiously.

JEANINE  
What do you mean?

HARTMAN  
I'm making you an offer.

Jeanine scoffs.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
I'm serious. I've been here too long and I-- We could use a new voice around here.

JEANINE  
Hart.

HARTMAN  
Yeah?

JEANINE  
What is the one thing you always taught me?

HARTMAN  
The concert B-flat scale?

JEANINE  
Don't be a hero. Heroes die. When you march, you have to think about what's best for the group. Not the individual. And hell yeah I'd like a better job. Better pay. But Dentonville High is my band. And I need to look out for them. Not for me.

Jeanine sighs. Stares out at the field with Hartman. A long, quiet, intimate moment.

JEANINE (CONT'D)  
You know what I never got?

HARTMAN  
What? The fact that everyone dies,  
not just heroes?

Jeanine smiles at him.

EXT. PARKING LOT- NIGHT

Samson leans against the wall, a bandage over his head.

HARTMAN  
How's the head?

SAMSON  
Better.

Samson throws his hands into his pockets. Chuckles. Tries to relieve the awkwardness.

SAMSON (CONT'D)  
You put on a pretty good show out  
there. I have to admit.

HARTMAN  
You got hit so hard I'm surprised  
you remember any of it.

Another round of laughter.

SAMSON  
Look. I'm sorry I... It just hurt.  
Back then. And I thought--

HARTMAN  
No, no, please don't-- Don't  
*apologize...*

SAMSON  
No, I-- I was bitter, I was petty,  
and I-- I shouldn't have done it.  
Any of it.

A long pause.

HARTMAN  
Well, I shouldn't have either.

Another long pause. Forgiveness?

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

And that took some doing. What you did out there. It takes real smarts to know how to fuck up a show like that.

SAMSON

It's nothing. Just a bunch of crap I learned from you.

Laughter.

A long pause.

HARTMAN

You're still damn good at what you do.

Hartman takes a slip of paper out of his pocket and hands it to Samson.

HARTMAN (CONT'D)

The school is looking to fill a position within the band. Why don't you call them sometime?

Samson looks down at the slip and smiles.

SAMSON

Maybe I will.

They smile at each other.

Forgiveness.

INT. HARTMAN'S CAR- NIGHT

Hartman opens the car door. Sits. Waits for a long while.

Eventually, he turns the key. Starts the car. And pulls out of the parking lot.

EXT. MILLMEADOW HIGH SCHOOL- NIGHT

The Trumpeter watches Hartman leave the parking lot and travel down the long, winding road off campus.

One-by-one, the lights on the stadium go out.