A Screenplay
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts

by

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This graduate paper, written by

NICOLAS SASSONE

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MASTER OF ARTS

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SUBJECT TO CHANGE...

WITHOUT NOTICE

by

Nicholas Sassone

7/1/78
FADE IN:

INT. BACK ROOM OF PUB - NIGHT

A wild bachelor party is in progress in the small room. Most of the 25 young men jamming the room are getting very drunk.

The groom, RICK SALADINO, is a well-built, medium sized Italian, about 25.

He sits at the head of the table. He seems quite lethargic for what should be a happy occasion for him. He has all the symptoms of a very bad cold and is constantly wiping his nose with a handkerchief. His left eye is partially closed.

HAROLD, Rick's closest friend moves to him to talk privately. He is slim, about Rick's age, and quite close-mouthed with everyone but his intimates. He senses his friend's condition and decides to joke about it.

HAROLD
Hey, Rick--we all know you're a sap for biting the dust--but it can't be all that bad--

Rick gives him a wan smile.

RICK
Do I really look that bad?

HAROLD
Yeah. Like you won't survive this bachelor party and make the wedding tomorrow.

RICK
Well, I never was a one for expressing my emotions. A Brando I'm not. I feel worse than I look.

HAROLD
Believe me, you're doing a great job of looking bad. What the hell's (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

HAROLD
(Cont'd)
wrong with you? What's
wrong with your eye?

RICK
I don't know. I've had this
goddamned cold or flu or what-
ever the hell it is for about
two weeks. I can't shake it
for anything. I also--

Rick takes out his handkerchief and blows his nose.

HAROLD
Yeah, so what's the matter?

RICK
(agitated)
How the hell am I supposed to
know? First my head; then to
my chest--

HAROLD
(interrupting)
You'd better get it checked.

RICK
Oh yeah--when? Maybe I should
take him on my honeymoon so he
can check my pulse after Jo Anne
gets through with me tomorrow
night.

Rick sneezes again and reaches for his handkerchief.
Harold laughs.

RICK
I don't know. I must be anemic
or something. I feel so damned
weak. Must be a low sugar count.

They both look toward the door as a commotion arises.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ANGLE - INCLUDE DOOR

DEAN, a robust prankster and one of Rick's closest friends, leads FIVE GUYS in wheeling a gigantic Hostess Twinkie box. They move it to a point before Rick. All eyes are on them as Dean waves for quiet.

DEAN
May I have your attention, please!

VOICE
Sit down, you drunken bastard!

Everyone including Dean LAUGHS.

DEAN
(Cont'd)
So why should I be different from anyone else?

More LAUGHTER.

DEAN
(Cont'd)
Seriously, though. What bachelor party would be complete without a cake--and Richard, my man--

(puts an arm around Richard)
--You deserve the best.

(YELLING to all)
Isn't that right?

One large CHEER. With great difficulty, Rick manages to LAUGH. Dean deliberately looks down at Rick's crotch.

DEAN
(Cont'd)
We were going to get you a Devil Dog--but thought a Twinkie would be more appropriate.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

More big LAUGHTER.

DEAN
(Cont'd)
Let me propose a toast.

They all lift their glasses.

DEAN
(Cont'd)
We just want you to know, Rick, that since you're the first, we can't empathize with you. But being a poor slop bas you are, we most certainly have sympathy. Seriously, though, we wish you much happiness—if that's what is supposed to happen when you get married. If this is your last fling—we're going to make sure it's your finest hour!

Immediately, a scantily clad GIRL in her late twenties with a sensational figure, jumps out of the Twinkie box. Everyone APPLAUDS. She points to Rick with relish.

GIRL
So that's the guy I'm supposed to rehabilitate!

The room rocks with LAUGHTER, amid cries of "Speech! Speech!" Rick shouts above the chant.

RICK
Okay! Okay!

FAVORING RICK

The room quiets down. Rick sneezes and goes for his handkerchief again. The crowd senses that it is a chore for him to give the speech. He lifts his glass high.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

RICK
(Cont'd)
You do realize that you're all high--

He sneezes again—and his glass drops from his hand, CRASHING to the ground. Dead silence, as the others stare at him. He stands there, trembling, embarrassed. He stares at his hands, which are shaking very badly.

Dean rushes to him. Rick begins to sag. Dean grabs him as, fiercely:

DEAN
Call a doctor—somebody call a doctor!

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE PLAINS HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ENTRANCE - DAY

An auto pulls up to the entrance. Rick's father, NICK SALADINO, gets out and hurries through the emergency entrance. He's short, nervous, bald, about 60.

Rick sits in the back seat of the car, staring into blank space. A hospital AIDE, with Rick's father, comes out of the entrance, wheeling a wheelchair. Both men open the rear door and help Rick into the wheelchair. They push him back into the building.

CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY WARD DESK - DAY

Rick is wheeled to the desk. The CLERK, a huge black man, is ready with some forms.

CLERK
We'll have to fill out some papers while you wait for your doctor. Let's start with your name.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Richard Saladino.

CLERK
Middle initial?

Rick continues to stare into space, almost completely mesmerized as if he cannot believe what is happening. He is paralyzed from the waist down and has very little finger coordination. His left eye is still half closed. He answers in a very low tone.

RICK
H.

CLERK
(unable to hear)
What's that?

RICK
H--as in help.

ANGLE - RICK'S FATHER

He is standing about 30 feet away speaking with the EMERGENCY PHYSICIAN.

NICK
I couldn't get him outta bed.
It took an hour just to get him into the car--
  (raising his voice)
--and it's his wedding day.

BACK TO RICK

RICK
Yesterday--I noticed that my left eye was starting to close and I felt weak in my knees.

CLERK
(as he writes)
Weakness...

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

ANGLE - FAVORING RICK'S FATHER

NICK
(to physician)
Thank God it's Saturday and I was home. His mother is out doing last minute odds and ends and doesn't know about this yet. Hell...either does his fiance.

RICK AT DESK

CLERK
What kind of coverage do you have?

RICK
(trying to joke)
Ah, the magic question.

My last request--just place my blue shield on my blue cross over my blue body.

ANGLE - FAVORING EMERGENCY ROOM DOORS

Rick's physician, DR. LELAND, enters through the large swinging doors. He is a short, balding, distinguished man of about 45. His is graying slightly at the temples. He moves up to Rick.

NICK
Dr. Leland, you don't know how glad I am to see you! My son can't move. He woke up this morning and couldn't move.

DR. LELAND
(approaching Rick)
This is his wedding day, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Nick is puzzled.

NICK

Yes.

DR. LELAND
(joking)
Well we, in the medical profession, call that a simple case of--chickenning out.

Nick smiles. They both reach Rick.

DR. LELAND
Well Rick--don't think for a moment that I'm going to along with your little scheme.

Rick surrenders a slight smile.

DR. LELAND
(Cont'd)
How do you feel?

BEAT

RICK
Oh--I can't kick.

They LAUGH.

DR. LELAND
Well, I can see you haven't lost your crisp wit.

Rick becomes serious.

RICK
Okay, Doc, enough of the kidding around. I can't walk! It happened in just one day. It couldn't be polio or MS, not in one day--could it?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

DR. LELAND
Hey, hold on. I haven't even examined you yet and you're already going bananas.
(pause)
Relax--I'll be the one to make the diagnosis.

CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Rick, who has regained his composure, is being wheeled into a private examination room. A pretty red-haired NURSE draws the curtain as Dr. Leland begins his examination. He checks Rick's eyes, ears and throat. He then checks for body movement and notes that Rick can't move certain parts. He quickly leaves the room.

FAVORING RICK

RICK
(to nurse)
Where is he going?

NURSE
Relax honey, there's nothing to worry about.

RICK
Have you ever seen a case like this before?

NURSE
I don't even know what you have.

RICK
It's that I don't have--movement. And it only started in one day.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NURSE
Calm down. Dr. Leland is one of the best around--you're in good hands. Don't worry, he'll have a diagnosis soon.
(beat)
You'll be allright.

Rick stares at the nurse with a little more confidence.

NURSE
(Cont'd)
Now just lie down and relax.
I'll be leaving you for a few minutes.

She exits leaving Rick alone in the room.

CLOSE ON RICK

A tear is starting to form under his good eye.

ANGLE FAVORING DOOR

As Dr. Leland escorts DR. BRONSKO, toward Rick. Bronsko is a neurologist who takes his work very seriously. He lacks the humor of Leland. He is of Hungarian descent and speaks with a slight accent.

DR. LELAND
Rick, this is Dr. Bronsko. He's a neurologist and will assist me in finding your diagnosis.

DR. BRONSKO
(to Rick)
Nice to meet you, Rick.

Dr. Bronsko shakes hands with Rick. While doing so he checks his hand strength. Bronsko, being a total thinker, is totally oblivious to the fact that the hand shake is anything more than a muscle test.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK

Hi.

MEDIUM ANGLE

Dr. Bronsko gives Rick a thorough examination. As Dr. Leland did, he notes Rick's inability to move certain parts of his body. He moves on to check his ears and eyes and also the muscles in his face.

DR. BRONSKO

Close your eyes Rick and keep them tightly shut.

Rick does as he says as Dr. Bronsko proceeds to open and close his eye lids. He then removes a reflex hammer from a nearby table and proceeds to test his reflexes. He notes that Rick has no reflexes from the waist down.

The Nurse moves in close with a tray full of instruments.

DR. LELAND

Well Rick, this is the last test for a while. We have a pretty good idea what's wrong with you, but we want to do a spinal tap to cover just one more area.

RICK

(nervously)

Now you're getting serious. What do you need a spinal tap for?

DR. LELAND

Relax, we just want to make sure before we rule out spinal menengitis and ensephatitis.

RICK

What the fu--spinal menengitis, ensephatitis--what's going on?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

DR. LELAND
I said relax. It's only a standard procedure.

Dr. Leland performs the spinal tap. Rick, turned on his side, supports a fearul expression on his face.

DR. LELAND
(while working)
So how do ya think the Mets are going to do this year?

There is no reaction from Rick as he continues to stare at the wall. Dr Leland tries to get him talking.

DR. LELAND
Yep, I've got the feeling they'll walk all over the other teams in that eastern division.

RICK
(slightly mesmer-ized)
Yeah--walk.

Rick suddenly screams as his leg kicks into the air.

RICK
(in pain)
Yeow!

(beat)
I thought this wasn't going to hurt?

DR. LELAND
Okay, so now I know where the nerve is.

Rick glances incredulously at Dr. Leland. He finishes up with the spinal tap and, once again, exits with the Nurse followed by Dr. Bronsko.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ANGLE - INCLUDING DOOR

Dr. Leland and the Nurse return. They walk up to Rick.

DR. LELAND
I've spoken with Dr. Bronsko and both of us have agreed on a tentative diagnosis. We won't know for sure until we get your lab cultures back from Albany. Right now we think you have a type of poly-neuropathy—more specifically, Gillion Barret Syndrome.

RICK
Who?

DR. LELAND
Gillion Barret Syndrome? It's an inflammation of the nervous system brought about by a virus. Your father told me the whole story. You could have picked it up anywhere after your flu. Only about one in every five hundred thousand people contract the disease and it usually occurs in young healthy people. No one really knows why.

RICK
Some people win the million dollar lottery and some people get this. Shows ya where my luck is.

(beat)
Shows ya where I've been and probably where I'm going. Am--am I going to be all right?

DR. LELAND
There isn't a cure for the disease persay. The only thing we can do is treat its complications.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Panic falls upon Rick's face.

DR. LELAND
The answer to your question is yes. Dr. Bronsko and I agree that, given your age and physical condition prior to this, you have an excellent chance of recovery—but--

RICK
(raising his voice in fear)
But what?

DR. LELAND
It's going to take time. No one can say how long. It could take three weeks, three months, three—

(beat)
--you must be patient:

RICK
Hey Doc, I don't give a damn how long it takes. Just as long as it takes.

DR. LELAND
You're going to need patience. As you probably know you will be here for a while so you might as well start getting used to the place. I'm leaving now. Either Dr. Bronsko or myself will be in to see you later this evening.

Dr. Leland rises and moves toward the door.

RICK
Oh, Doc.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

Dr. Leland turns.

DR. LELAND
Yes?

RICK
You did say that I have an excellent chance of recovery, right?

DR. LELAND
That's right.

Rick's face drops down again. Leland turns to exit, stops, and turns back towards Rick.

DR. LELAND
Rick, please stop worrying.

Rick manages to crack a smile as Dr. Leland exits out the door. The room is quiet again. A few seconds later THREE NURSES and a male NURSE'S AID enter with a gurney. Rick is slowly lifted onto the gurney and is wheeled out.

INT. RADIOLOGY ROOM - DAY

Rick is being given a chest X-ray.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

After X-ray, Rick is wheeled into an elevator. Rick looks up and notices the rising numbers.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rick is wheeled into his room. This is probably the oldest wing in the hospital. The room is very gloomy due to a lack of direct sunlight. This is the worst wing for many reasons. This is because most of the people on this floor are old and are biding their time with terminal illnesses. The chorus of agony is constantly heard.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FULL ANGLE

As Rick is transferred from the gurney onto the bed closest to the window. In the bed next to him lies ART McCauley. Art is a 55 year old man, semi-frail, with a thick head of white hair. Art is an ex-alcoholic and is probably suffering from that previous condition but the doctors have yet to pin-point a diagnosis.

Because of the spinal tap, Rick is not allowed to sit up for 24 hours. Art has been watching Rick's full entrance.

ANGLE ON RICK AND ART

ART
(friendly)
Well, I see they've got you too.

RICK
Yep.

Art extends his hand to greet Rick.

ART
My name's Art McCauley.

They shake hands.

RICK
Mine's Rick Saladino--nice to meet you.

The nurses and aid complete the transfer and exit. One nurse turns to Rick before exiting.

NURSE
(to Rick)
Your urinal is on the side of the bed. Ring you buzzer when you have a specimen for me.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Anything for you, sweety!

The nurse exits. Rick turns to Art.

RICK
Jesus Christ! Isn't anything sacred around here?

ART
Not a damned thing. You lose any kind of modesty in this place.

RICK
Yeah, I guess everything is routine for them. What are you in here for anyway?

ART
The doctors don't really know. They gave me a biopsy yesterday. Stuck a fuckin tube about this long—

(holds his hands out about two feet apart)

--in me and pulled out a chunk of my liver. You see, I used to be an alcoholic and now and then I sneak one in, then I get all these pains here in my gut.

RICK
Man, that's a bummer.

ART
They're sending me home tomorrow because they can't perform exploratory surgery until about three months from now.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

Why not? RICK

ART
I've got mononeucleosis.

Rick shouts in surprise.

RICK
Mono?

Rick breaks out into a fit of LAUGHTER.

RICK
(Cont'd)
At your age?

ART
Yeah, the doctors had a big laugh too. You know what the odds are against me coming down with mono?

RICK
About the same odds as you coming across a virgin nurse!

ART
(laughing)
Right.

They both LAUGH. The laughter then turns into a dead silence.

ART
What's wrong with you.

The smile vanishes on Rick's face.

RICK
I don't know how it happened.
I woke up yesterday morning
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
(Cont'd)
feeling really weak. Barely
had enough strength to go to
my own bachelor party.
(beat)
Oh shit, I just thought of it.
What time is it?

Art glances at his watch.

ART
Two thirty--why?

Rick looks up at the ceiling.

RICK
Congratulate me Art.

ART
What for?

RICK
I was just married 15 minutes
ago.

Art is surprised.

ART
No--this wasn't your wedding
day?

Rick nods his head.

ART
(Cont'd, understanding)
I'm so sorry son. What a bad
thing to happen. I mean it's
bad enough--but on your wedding
day?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
To tell you the truth, my health means more to me right now than anything else. I just thought about that damned wedding. You know, she hasn't even come to see me--she's got to know by now.

ART
Ah, you never know what might have happened.

RICK
Yeah.

Rick purposely changes the subject.

RICK
I really don't know how it happened. I woke up yesterday morning and felt weak all day. And today when I couldn't even move--it scared the shit out of me. They call it Gillon Barret Syndrome. I guess some Frenchman discovered it.

ART
I never heard of it.

RICK
Neither did I. Only about one in a million get it.

ART
No wonder I never heard of it. What is it?

RICK
I don't really know. They tell me it's a virus--some sort of inflammation of the nerves. I could have caught it anywhere.
CONTINUED:

Art is concerned for his own well being.

ART
Anywhere? It's not--contagious, is it?

RICK
Relax, they wouldn't have put me here with you if it were. The doctors told me that I have a good chance of recovery.

ART
(relieved)
That's good to hear.

RICK
Oh yeah? I don't know about you, but I want some kind of guarantee.

ART
Hey listen son, nothing is guaranteed. Look at yourself. You look pretty athletic--I bet you were always in good shape, now what. Just as soon as you think things are going great the roof caves in. The only thing you can do is fight it out. Most of the time everything seems to work itself out.

RICK
Yeah--I guess you're right. You know, you never know what you have until you've lost it.

ART
Losing it is only half the battle--it's getting it back that's the real challenge. And believe me, just by talking to you now, I know you're going to make it!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Do you think so?

ART
Sure I do, but it's going to be up to you--are you prepared to fight?

RICK
You bet I am!

ART
Right on!

Rick looks perplexed.

ART
What's the matter? You didn't think an old fart like me could talk like that? I've got young daughters your age--somethings got to rub off.

They both laugh.

CLOSE ON RICK

He settles back and closes his eyes to try and rest.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

It is now five o'clock in the evening and dinner is being served. Rick is alone in the room as the aid brings in his tray and sets it down in front of him. He continues to lie flat on his back. The aid leaves as Art enters clad in a bathrobe.

ART
Thought I'd take a stroll down the hall--it's good to have a change of scenery.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
I know whatcha mean.

Rick looks outside his window.

RICK
I've been counting the bricks on that building across the street.

They both laugh.

ART
It's good to see you're keeping your spirits up. Believe me--it's the only way.

Rick glances over at his food.

RICK
Well, so far I'm keeping my spirits up. Now if I could only get the damned fork up.

ART
Yeah, it looks like it could be trouble. Let me give you a hand.

MEDIUM ANGLE

Art goes to Rick's bedside.

RICK
Hey listen, I don't want to put you outta your way.

ART
(playfully)
Shut up.

(beat)
There's no problem. Just do me and yourself one favor.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
What's that?

ART
I'm leaving tomorrow morning so if you need anything—any kind of help at all—if you're in any kind of pain, ring that goddamned buzzer.

(beat)
Don't be proud. That's what the nurses are here for. I bet they don't even know that you can't feed yourself.

(beat)
Speak up, son.

RICK
I've always been independent.

ART
That's fine in the outside world, but you're in a hospital now.

Art picks up Rick's utensils and begins to feed him.

Rick lies on his side. He glances at his tray.

RICK
What in the hell is that supposed to be?

ART
Soup. Chicken 'n rice.

RICK
It's all rice.

ART
This is your wedding day, right?

Rick nods his head.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ART
Well, if you can't get the chick—you've got plenty of rice!

Rick breaks out into a fit of LAUGHTER.

ART
No, there's no problem here. I raised eight kids all by myself. At different times of course.

RICK
(shocked)
Eight kids?

ART
Yep. Three of mine and five of my sister's. She wasn't able to take care of them—a drinking problem.

RICK
Must a really kept ya busy.

ART
Yep, didn't have much time between that and my job. You know I'm a counselor for the AA. The poor slobs, I know just what they're all going through.

Rick listens with all his attention. Art continues to feed him.

FAVORING DOOR

JOSEPHINE SALADINO, Rick's mother, enters the room with a nurse. She is a woman of 57, small and petite. She's been crying, but tries desperately to keep her composure.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She and the nurse smile at the sight of Art feeding Rick.

MEDIUM ANGLE

Josephine goes to Rick's side and gives him a big hug and kiss.

NURSE
I'm sorry Rick. I didn't know you needed help.

RICK
That's cool. Art's been doing great. Mom, I'd like you to meet Art McCauley. Art--my mom.

They both exchange greetings.

ART
Pleased to meet you Mrs. Saladino. Rick's a fine young man.

JOSEPHINE
Why thank you--we think so too.

(beat)

How do you feel. Do you have any pain? They wouldn't let your father or I in until visiting hours. He's outside parking the car. Your brother made all the phone calls. Everyone's worried sick about you. We passed Sacred Heart so I went in and lit a candle. Can you move your toes?

Rick tries to calm down his mother.

RICK
Hey mom, take it easy. I'm okay.

JOSEPHINE
Do you have any pain?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The nurse comes up to them.

NURSE (to Josephine)
Will you please excuse us for a moment. I have to check Rick’s temperature and blood pressure.

The nurse closes the curtain around Rick's bed as his mother walks over to talk with Art. The nurse rolls Rick over on his side.

RICK
Jeez, that thing is cold! What happen to the oral ones?

NURSE
These new digital rectal ones are more accurate.

ART AND JOSEPHINE

ART (whispering)
Your son is scared Mrs. Saladino, but that’s only natural. I realize that this is going to be as tough on you and your husband as it is on him, but you can't let him know that.

FULL ANGLE

Mr. Saladino enters the room.

JOSEPHINE
Nick, this is Art McCauley.

They both exchange greetings. A serious tone, once again, prevails.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ART
As I was saying to Mrs. Saldino, your boy is scared but you can't let him know that you are. Now I was talking to one of the nurses down the hall and she says that if Rick's case is like the other one she's seen, he's in for a long battle.

NICK
Yeah, Dr. Leland told me the same thing this afternoon.

ART
You can't let him know it.

(beat)
Now I'm leaving tomorrow, so you'll have to pick up the slack. Keep his spirits up. These Goddamned hospital personnel run this place like a business and that's all. They're so regimented. I swear, they never take the person into consideration.

JOSEPHINE
It's hard to hold it in.

ART
I know--first you have to keep your spirits up. All that I'm telling you is from practical experience. I know--I work with alcoholics and it's the same thing--reinforcement, and it's got nothing to do with how bad he is. He's got to constantly have something to strive for.

The curtain opens and Mr. and Mrs. Saladino put on an obviously false smile.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NURSE
Make sure you let me know
when you urinate.

FULL ANGLE

Rick's parents go up to greet him.

NICK
How's the food?

RICK
Hi dad--it's really not that
bad. You know I can't hold
anything in my hands anymore.
There just isn't any strength
or coordination left. I can't
even push the button to call
the nurse. If it wasn't for
Art--

NICK
(interrupting)
Leland said everything that's
happening is expected.

Rick raises his voice as he simultaneously lifts his
head from the pillow.

RICK
Whata ya mean expected? How
far is this supposed to go? My
legs, my hands--what's next?

ART
Calm down. You've been watching
too many medical shows on TV. Doc-
tors don't keep anything from you.
They like to lay it on the line.

Rick lies down and is temporarily relieved.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ART
(Cont'd)
Remember what I said. Get those negative thoughts outta your head right now. You're going to get better.

RICK
Well...at least I don't think you can die from paralysis.

Nick and Josephine's faces drop at his remark. Rick notices their change in expression.

RICK
(raising his voice)
Hey, somebody know something I don't?

The two quickly regain their composure.

JOSEPHINE
(laughing)
You know you look so funny lying there. What a life--nurses waiting on you. Your brother couldn't believe what happened.

RICK
Mom, what is happening?

JOSEPHINE
Now stop this Rick. Do you think if you were in any real danger we'd be here talking to you. We'd at least have a priest here with us.

NICK
All your brother kept asking was, "You mean he can't move his legs, (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NICK

(Cont'd)
you mean he can't move his fingers." He's really worried but I told him to stay home for a couple of days. I said you'd be fine.

Rick is pleased at his brother's concern.

ART
You didn't tell me you had a brother.

RICK
Yeah, he came down from school for the wedding. You know I have a fiance' too?

He looks over at his father.

RICK
Where is she?

NICK
Mom called her this morning so she knows. She was really disappointed. Mom'll call her again tonight.

RICK
Oh--she was disappointed. How about concerned?

JOSEPHINE
Yes she sounded concerned, so don't start something that isn't there. Are these the only things you can think of?

RICK
Maybe your right, but it's kind of tough laying here in the hospital paralyzed for nine hours and your parents show up before your fiance'. Your wedding day no less.

(continued)
CONTINUED:

JOSEPHINE
Oh, so your saying that your father and I should care less than Joanne.

RICK
No, no...listen. I'm sorry but I didn't mean it that way.
(beat)
God; I don't think I know what the hell I want to say. I love you both you know that. It's just that...well. It's just like I said before. I've been lying here since this morning and there still hasn't been a call.

ART
Please excuse me for prying into your family affairs and I don't mean to be righteous but Rick, did you ever stop to think that maybe she's just too shook up right now and doesn't want you to know? Maybe she's doing it for your own benefit. Think about it.

Rick contemplates for a moment.

RICK
All right. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt.

ART
What doubt? She's your fiance'.

Rick, once again, thinks it over.

JOSEPHINE
He's right.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Yeah, I guess your right.
(beat)
Now let's talk bout something else. So how long's Tony down for?

NICK
A couple of days.

RICK
Tell him to drop by--it'll seem like a couple of years in this place.

ART
Think that way and it will.

RICK
Thinking--that's all I've been doing since I got here. That's all there is to do. I think I'm gonna turn into a contemplator.

JOSEPHINE
I wish you would get your mind on something else: Not for me but for your own good. If not for yourself than do it for me. Just do it.

RICK
Well the big subject of thought right now is--when will I urinate? that's the big question.

JOSEPHINE
(scolding)
Oh Rick.

RICK
I'm serious--that's all the nurses keep asking me for. Come to think of it--it has been a while.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ART
So you're going to worry about it?

RICK
You're damn right I'm going to worry about it. She said that if I was unable to go they would be forced to catheterize me. You know, that's when they stick this long tube your your--

JOSEPHINE
(interrupting)
All right, we know what it is.

ART
That's all he does--stare at the ceiling and think. For the last time--think of something else!

RICK
Ah yes, think.

ART
--I mean don't think.

A VOICE is heard on the PA system: Everyone listens.

VOICE
(v.o.)
Visiting hours are now over. Would all visitors please leave the building, thank you.

ANOTHER ANGLE

NICK
The time really flew. I know we should have come earlier.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JOSEPHINE
(to Rick)
I'm taking a leave of absence from the dress shop so I'll see you here tomorrow. I think visiting hours start at two.

Josephine goes to Rick's side and kisses him on the cheek. Nick throws a kiss.

JOSEPHINE
I'll keep everyone informed.

NICK
Let me know if there's anything you need.

NICK
(Cont'd)
And stop staring into space.

Nick and Josephine exit.

MOVE IN TIGHT onto a vase of flowers near Rick's bed.

DISSOLVE TO;

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

It's the next morning and Rick is wincing with severe pains in his abdomen. Art, hearing Rick's groaning, gets up to call the nurse.

ART
Damn it kid: I told you not to be modest.

Art presses his buzzer. The nurse acknowledges the call.

NURSE
(v.o.)
Yes, may I help you?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ART
(into intercom)
Yes. It's my room mate. He's in pain.

NURSE
I'll be right there.

FAVORING RICK

A few seconds later, the nurse enters the room. She quickly moves towards Rick's bed.

NURSE
Where does it hurt?

Rick points to his abdomen.

NURSE
This morning's report says you haven't urinated since you've been here.
(beat)
Don't you know it's better to give than to receive?

Rick can't smile at the remark.

NURSE
I'll be right back.

She exits.

RICK
(in pain)
God it hurts.

ART
She'll be right back.

The nurse enters with a RESIDENT PHYSICIAN. She carries with her the necessary instruments to perform a catheterization. Rick is surprised at what he sees.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RIC
Oh, shit.

DOCTOR
I'm sorry, but we've tried everything else. You just don't have the muscles to go so we're going to help you along a little.

CLOSE ON RICK

He closes his eyes as the Doctor performs the task. There is no pain but the thought of what is happening irritates Rick. After completion, he sighs with relief.

RESIDENT DOCTOR
I think we struck oil.

MEDIUM ANGLE

The nurse takes a specimen to the lab. A throat culture is taken and all the hospital personnel leave the room after their all finished. The curtains are opened. Art stands looking at Rick.

ART
Feel better?

ART
Better.

ART
You'll learn to use that buzzer yet.

A HOSPITAL EMPLOYEE enters with their breakfast. Rick is now allowed to sit up and is assisted by Art. He cranks the bed up into an upright position. Art takes the cover off the breakfast exposing eggs, oatmeal, etc.

ART
Sugar on your oatmeal?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Yeah.

ART
Jam on your toast?

Rick nods as he watches Art prepare his breakfast.

RICK
What time are you leaving?

ART
Oh, my wife's supposed to come around eleven.

RICK
You know it's not going to be the same.

ART
Of course not. You're going to get better.

RICK
That's not what I meant.

ART
I know what you meant so let's get one thing straight for the last time. You just do what I told you and you'll be all right. Do you hear me? I said all right. In a few months from now we'll celebrate the ending of this nightmare. That's all it is.

Rick tries to fight back from crying.

RICK
Art, what can I say? You've been great.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ART
(joking)
Rick, what can I say? You've been worrying.

Rick laughs.

ART
(Cont'd)
Listen, don't mention it. I love doing it.

RICK
Almost like a second father.

ART
Now cut the crap.
(beat)
I'll keep a tab on your progress.

RICK
If everything does come back,
I just hope it does in time
for me to finish up the semester
and then head out for grad school
in L.A. next fall.

ART
Remember, it's going to take time.
So if you don't finish out this semester--California will still be there.

RICK
Not if the big one hits.

Art laughs.

ART
True.

(CONtinued)
CONTINUED:

RICK
I'll tell ya Art. I don't know what I'd do without your encouragement.

ART
You'd probably get some sleep.

RICK
Yeah. I didn't get much of that last night.

ART
You better try.

There is a pause as Rick's eyes slowly shut. He is exhausted.

Dissolve to:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

It is a couple of hours later and Rick is awakened by Dr. Leland and a nurse.

Full shot

Rick looks to his right and notices that Art has been released.

RICK
Where's Art.

DR. LELAND
You mean the man who was in the other bed?

NURSE
He was discharged an hour ago. He didn't want to wake you but he told me to tell you to keep pulling. He'll be in touch.

(Continued)
FAVORING RICK

A look of disappointment falls upon his face. Dr. Leland checks his chest and asks him to move different parts of his body. Rick has grown noticeably worse and can not move his arms very well.

DR. LELAND
I don't want to scare you but we're moving you upstairs to the Intensive Care Unit. Before you reach any conclusions, it's only a precautionary measure. You can't call the nurse from down here so we'll have one watching you all the time.

RICK
Intensive care--that's heavy.

MEDIUM ANGLE - RICK & LELAND

DR. LELAND
As it looks now, what I said before still goes. It's going to get worse before it gets better.

Rick is slightly agitated by the remark.

RICK
Worse, whata ya mean worse? How worse?

DR. LELAND
We don't know. Only time will tell. The virus has to work itself out and there's no medicine to treat it--only the complications.

Rick becomes pales and gazes at Leland.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

DR. LELAND
(Cont'd)
It's a natural progression.
I'm telling you this so you're not surprised later on. I'll check on you later upstairs.

FULL ANGLE

Dr. Leland exits as a nurse and three aids enter with a mobile ICU bed. The nurse, AMBER, is a 23 year old brunette with very petite features. Amber looks closer to 17 than she does to 23. One would call her a bubbly sort of person but one who takes her work extremely seriously.

The four lift Rick up and transport him to the ICU bed.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Rick is wheeled down a hallway to an elevator and then taken inside.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - FULL ANGLE - DAY

Rick is wheeled into the ICU unit. The unit is divided into four cubicles, each containing a curtain. The cubicles are surrounded on both sides by two isolation units. All six are equipped with oxygen facilities and are in clear view of the nurse's desk.

Rick is wheeled into isolation room #1. His bed is positioned so that he is constantly in view of the desk.

FAVORING RICK

A special NURSE who does nothing but administer and maintain intervenous bottles, inserts one into Rick's arm. She sticks a long needle into his arm and connects it with a hanging bottle of liquid with a long hose.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

A MONTAGE of hospital activity is shown. All of the activity is concentrated on Rick. A nurse's aid gives him a sponge bath, brushes his teeth, and shaves off his already thick growth of facial hair. Amber takes his temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure.

MEDIUM ANGLE

A respirator lab therapist, TOM FRENSCA, enters Rick's isolated room with a rectangular machine. The machine registers the amount of air Rick can expel. It measures his forced vital capacity. Tom is a robust fellow of about 25 who is definitely overweight and sports a full growth of beard. He is very witty and in the course of this story will provide a much valuable "pick-up" for Rick. The machine resembles a gigantic bong-water pipe.

TOM

Hi, I work for the welcome wagon.

Rick laughs.

TOM
(Cont'd)
My name's Tom Frensca.

RICK
Rick Saladino.

Both nod. Rick glances down at the huge machine.

RICK
Jesus Christ! That's the biggest bong I've ever seen.

TOM
Sorry—you and I aren't that lucky.

(beat)
This machine will measure and record your forced vital capacity.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Forced capacity what?

TOM
We're going to measure the amount of air you can force out of your lungs. It tells us what great shape your abdomen is in. That, in turn, tells us how well you're breathing. Now what you do is take a deep breath after I put this clip on your nose, and then blow into this tube as hard and as long as you can.

Tom places the clip on Rick's nose so he is permitted to breath through his mouth only.

TOM
Any time you're ready.

Rick takes a deep breath and holds it. Tom places the tube into his mouth and Rick blows as hard as he can. He does so until fully exhausted.

TOM
Come on, more--more!

Rick finishes the long exhalation. Tom reads the graph.

TOM
Not bad, thirty-six.

An incredulous look falls upon Rick's face.

RICK
What's that?

TOM
Three point six liters. That's how much air you exhaled.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Well--how did I do?

TOM
Not bad.

RICK
Come on, compared to what?

TOM
Not bad.
(beat)
I'm now going to do a blood gas test.

RICK
What kind of test?

TOM
Damn you ask a lotta questions--relax. I take a blood sample--put it into the computer--and it tells me the content of your blood, exygen level and carbon dioxide level.

RICK
Hey Tom, level with me. How am I?

TOM
Not bad.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Tom writes the information on his report sheet. He then removes a kit from his pocket. The kit contains a disposable sirine, a plastic bag and a needle. He then goes to put ice into the bag. Upon returning, he assembles the syringe. After doing so, he takes Rick's arm and attempts to find the main artery. This is a meticulous task, and it takes what seems like eternity until he locates it.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

TOM
Now all you'll feel is a slight pinch.

RICK
That's what they all say.

Tom finds the artery and sticks the needle into Rick. He winces in pain.

TOM
Okay the worse is over. Now relax. The blood'll flow easier.

INSERT - CLOSE SHOT - SYRINGE

The syringe slowly fills up with Rick's blood.

BACK TO SHOT

When the syringe is fully filled, Tom places it in the ice bag and fastens the top with a piece of wire. Amber enters the room to empty his waste bag and to check the timing on his intervenus bottle.

RICK
(to Amber)
What's your name?

AMBER
Mrs. Adamonic.

TOM
Okay, I'll see you later. I've got to get this to the computer before it gets moldy.

Rick laughs.

RICK
Don't worry. I don't think embalming fluid spoils.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Tom smiles as he leaves the room. Amber follows him.

RICK
Oh, Mrs. Adamonic.

AMBER
Yes?

RICK
Were there any calls for me?

AMBER
Nothing.

Rick, disappointed, glances out the window. It is now late afternoon and he is exhausted. He closes his eyes to rest.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ISOLATION ROOM - NIGHT.

It is now early evening and Rick is awakened by the head ICU nurse on the swing shift. She is KATHY MCPAT-

RICK, a slightly overweight nurse, about 28 with long black hair (tied underneath her cap), and blue eyes. She is tom-boyish but very pretty. She carries much responsibility and tries to be stern but many a time, lapses into her true nature—that of having a good time. She's business at work but her Irish nature runs wild after hours.

FAVORING RICK & KATHY

Kathy immediately takes Rick's blood pressure, temperature and pulse rate (vital signs). Rick slowly wakes up.

KATHY
Good evening, sleeping beauty.

Rick is a bit groggy.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Evening, already? I musta been out for a while.

KATHY
That you were.

RICK
My name's Rick Saladino. Sorry I can't shake your hand.

KATHY
I know all that already. I also know your age, birth date, height, weight, blood type, doctor; religious persuasion, etc.

She finishes the blood pressure test.

KATHY
(mumbling to herself)
Hum...ninety over sixty.
(to Rick)
Now I know your blood pressure and in a few minutes I'll know your pulse rate and temperature.
(beat)
By the way...my name's Kathy.

She turns him on his side and takes his temperature.

RICK
Yep--this hospital has all the latest equipment. Digital thermometers...now only if they could prevent chilly applicators.

KATHY
Maybe you're right. But it's better than a barium enema.

RICK
I guess you're right. Where are you from?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

KATHY
Horsehead.

RICK
Where the hell's that?

KATHY
Upstate New York.

RICK:
Is that near Hooterville or Petticoat Junction?

Kathy catches the joke and laughs.

KATHY
No it isn't wise guy.

In b.g. Tom enters with his machine. As he does so, he notices a candy stripe VOLUNTEER constantly observing him at the nurse's desk.

KATHY
(Cont'd)
I've been down here now for over six years so I guess this is my home.

Tom notices Rick also staring at the Candy Striper.

TOM
She lives over on Maple. If ya want her number just let me know.

Kathy hits him in the arm lightly.

TOM
(Cont'd)
She's a fox isn't she?
CONTINUED:

Kathy is embarrassed by all of this.

KATHY
Okay fellas, I don't know how many compliments I can take in one day.

TOM
Oh, Kathy, you love every minute of it.

KATHY
(to Rick)
How do you like the total professionalism of this place?

RICK
I love it. I see he brought his bong again.

KATHY
Now all we need is some good columbian.

TOM
Nope. All I need is a good breath from you.

Tom places the clip on Rick's nose as Rick takes, once again, a deep breath.

TOM
(Cont'd)
Whenever you're ready.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Rick exhales as hard and long as he can. Tom and Kathy both encourage him to try harder. Rick can't go any

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Kathy applauds. Tom looks at his graph.

TOM
Twenty eight.

RICK
Two point eight liters, right?

TOM
Yep.

RICK
How's that?

TOM
Not bad.

RICK
(loosing patience)
It's worse than before, isn't it?

TOM
It's not bad.

KATHY
Really, it isn't.

Rick takes a moment to reflect upon the situation. He nods his head in the direction of the Candy Stripper.

RICK
Who's that?

KATHY
That's Amy.

Tom leaves the room.
CONTINUED:

TOM
(on the way out)
If you're interested in that one too I'll getcha the number. No problems, that's what I'm here for.

Tom finally is out the door. Rich shouts after him.

RICK
(shouting)
If I could only dial a phone!

KATHY
He's a character isn't he?

RICK
That he is.

KATHY
Amy's a volunteer. I put her there to watch you. That's why I leave this light on when you're sleeping. Now where are you going to get service like that?

RICK
Not bad...

KATHY
You're beginning to sound like Frensc. This place is gonna grow on ya.

(beat)
You haven't met Eileen yet, have you?

RICK
Nope.

Kathy exits the room for a minute as Rick looks all a-

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

round the room. If he is to be here for a while, he might as well familiarize himself with the place.

CLOSE SHOT - RICK

He looks out of the window near his bed.

POV - WHAT HE SEES

A small neighborhood bar--GG's. It is early Sunday evening and the locals are all ready strolling in.

FULL ANGLE - ROOM

Kathy returns with a very petite Barbadian nurse, EILEEN. She is about five feet tall, with golden brown skin, a very small bone structure and big beautiful brown eyes. Originally from Barbados, Eileen lived in England for ten years and has been working in this hospital for a few years. She speaks with a slight accent.

KATHY
Eileen, this is Rick. Rick--
Eileen.

EILEEN
How do you do?

RICK
Hi.

EILEEN
There are just two of us on to-
night and there are only three other patients out there. How do you like all this attention?

RICK
I love it. I just wish I could stand at attention.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Kathy's a tough shift supervisor, but I don't think she'd resort to that.

Kathy laughs.

KATHY
Now cut it out Eileen. You're making me out to be some kind of tyrant.

EILEEN
I'm only joking.

Eileen turns to Rick.

EILEEN
Actually on occasion, she does display some feelings.

Kathy playfully hits her in the arm. Rick turns his head and stares out the window.

RICK
Yeah, feelings. That's about the only thing I do have.

FAVORING DOOR

Precisely after this last statement, Dr. Bronsko enters the room. The mood suddenly changes from one of a tea-time chat to one of total professionalism. Bronsko's expression is the same--totally straight.

DR. BRONSKO
Good evening.

Everyone replies. Kathy and Eileen briskly exit the room closing the door behind them. Bronsko opens his medical bag and removes a few instruments.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FAVORING RICK & DR. BRONSKO

DR. BRONSKO
How are you today?

RICK
Well, besides being a little tired, I'm okay.

Dr. Bronsko checks his eyes.

DR. BRONSKO
I heard you didn't sleep much last night. Well, we'll have to provide a little medication.

Dr. Bronsko strikes Rick at various parts of his body with a reflex hammer. He then picks up a long needle and pricks Rick on the bottom of his feet.

DR. BRONSKO
Do you feel anything?

RICK
Yes.
He brushes the needle along both his legs.

DR. BRONSKO
Now?

RICK
Yes.
He pricks his fingers and runs the needle up his arm. He looks at Rick and nonverbally asks him if he can feel anything. Rick nods his head.

DR. BRONSKO
Close your eyes and keep them shut.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Rick does so as Dr. Bronsko tries to open them. He opens them easily. Dr. Bronsko then goes down to the foot of the bed and looks closely at Rick's toes.

DR. BRONSKO
Move your toes.

Rick tries desperately to do but there is no movement.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Dr. Bronsko takes a glance at Rick's medical log as Rick stares at him in anticipation. Dr. Bronsko places the notebook down and jots down some notes.

DR. BRONSKO
As you probably know--you're getting worse. Yesterday you were able to move your torso and arms, and today you have lost virtually all the previous movement.

Rick listens intensely. It is obvious that he is scared.

DR. BRONSKO
(Cont'd)
I see by your chart that you are slowly losing your breathing and I can tell that your voice has grown fainter. I just want to warn you so you're not alarmed later; you could reach a point where all you'll be able to move will be your eyes.

Rick stares up at the ceiling.

DR. BRONSKO
But I think you have a good chance of recovery.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Is there a possibility that some things will never come back to normal?

DR. BRONSKO
Of course, that possibility always exists, but I wouldn't worry about it. I don't know how much will come back--only time will tell.

(beat)
Try not to worry, it'll only make things worse. I'll be in again tomorrow.

Dr. Bronsko gets all his things together and exits.

RICK
(sarcastic)
Thanks doc!

Dr. Bronsko is out the door.

RICK
(Cont'd, to himself)
One day...

INT. ISOLATION ROOM - NIGHT

Rick is, once again, the center of attraction as he speaks with Kathy and Eileen. It is 11:00 P.M. and the graveyard shift should be due shortly.

EILEEN
Believe me, the respirator will assist in your breathing.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Even if I can't breath at all?

KATHY
Yes. We're not in the 1920's you know. These are the 70's. Medical science has come a long way.

EILEEN
And besides, Bronsko said there's a chance of you losing your respiratory movement.

RICK
Yeah, he also said there's a chance of full recovery.

KATHY
Come on Rick, be reasonable. What do you expect him to do--guarantee it?

(beat)
Do you think the man's a miracle worker?

Rick feels foolish and is lost for words. This temporary embarrassment relieves his mind of his ill health.

RICK
But he said--

(beat)
--my eyes would be all that I could move.

KATHY
Has it happened yet--no! Such a worry wart.

RICK
But--

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

KATHY
(interupting)
--but you're going to be okay.

The graveyard shift enters the room.

MEREDITH
No who's complaining?

FULL ANGLE

MEREDITH LLOYD is a strawberry redhead of about 32 years of age. She is short with a rather large posterior. Blue eyes and freckles complete this cute package. Meredith is very much an extrovert. She is followed by TWO TOBAGAN NURSES in their late twenties, MRS. BANYOW and ELSA PETRIE. Both are dark brown and very beautiful. Eileen glances at her wrist watch.

EILEEN
Eleven o'clock already?

She turns to Rick.

EILEEN
Talking to you sure makes the time fly.

KATHY
Meredith, this is Rick. A Guillion Barret.

They exchange greetings.

MEREDITH
(interested)
Guillion Barret eh. It's nice to have a change of pace from the ordinary post operations, motorcycle accidents and overdoses.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She turns to Eileen.

MEREDITH
You know lady, you've got three other beds in there.

EILEEN
All resting comfortably.

KATHY
(to Rick)
Rick this is Mrs. Banyow and Mrs. Petrie.

All parties exchange greetings. LENNY RIVERSA enters the room. Lenny is 20 years old--a short, skinny boy with curly brunette hair. The nurses call him cutey, but only in the purest sense of the word. He's the type of guy that could substitute for a teddy bear. He rolls in the forced vital capacity tester.

LENNY
A party. What's the occasion?

MEREDITH
(flatly)
We're celebrating.

LENNY
Celebrating what?

MEREDITH
Our first patient under 57 years of age-in over a month.

MEREDITH
Lenny--this is Rick.

RICK
How's it going?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Lenny nods his head.

LENNY
I really don't wanta make
a bad first impression, but
I need some blood.

RICK
Who doesn't?

Lenny rolls the forced vital capacity tester next to the
bed as Mrs. Banyow and Mrs. Petrie exit to check on the
other patients.

LENNY
And I'm sure you're familiar
with this.

FAVORING RICK & LENNY

Lenny puts the tube up to Rick's mouth and places the
clip on his nose. Rick takes a deep breath.

LENNY
Now make believe you've got
a bowl of hash.

Rick blows hard and long. Everyone is cheering him on--
pleading him not to give up. There's a constant cheer
of "More!", "More!". Rick blows until he is blue in the
face.

RICK
(exhausted)
That's...it.

Lenny looks at the graph.

RICK
How'd I do? And don't say
not bad.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LENNY
Why not? It just so happens that one point nine isn't.

Rick is alarmed at such a low figure.

RICK
One point nine?

LENNY
It's not great, but it isn't that bad.

MEDIUM ANGLE

MEREDITH
It really isn't.

Kathy glances at her watch.

KATHY
Let's get on with the meeting. I wanna get outta here.

All the nurses leave the room and fill in their reports in a separate lounge. Kathy and Eileen turn to Rick as they leave.

KATHY
We'll see you tomorrow afternoon.

EILEEN
Not me, I'm off tomorrow. I'll see you the day after.

RICK
Take care.

The nurses turn and are almost out the door when Rick calls for them.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Oh wait, just one thing.

They stop and turn.

RICK
(Cont'd)
Were there any calls for me?

KATHY
Nothing, sorry.

The nurses leave. Rick is obviously disappointed.

LENNY
(joking)
What'sa matter--waiting for your honey to call?

RICK
(solemn)
Yeah.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Lenny realizes that he has touched upon a soft spot and quickly changes the subject.

LENNY
So whata ya think about the clan so far?

RICK
Quite a motley crew.

LENNY
Yeah, and you haven't even met Jeri, Dawn or Mother Tibbs yet.

RICK
Mother Tibbs?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LENNY
Yeah...that's what we all call here. She works days—the head nurse over all the ICU shifts. She's a real nice lady, but, then again, I don't work directly under hear.

RICK
If you did, you'd probably get arrested.

Lenny laughs.

LENNY
Probably so. But I tell ya--I wouldn't exactly mind working under Margaret. She's another ICU nurse. Let me tell you—a fox in the best sense of the word.

RICK
Hey, I'm practically a married man.

LENNY
Oh cut the double standard crap. Are you or are you not married?

RICK
I'm just barely single.

LENNY
So, until you're married, you've gotta fit in all you can get.

Not knowing the degree of seriousness of Lenny, Rick goes along with what he thinks is a joke.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
So, where is she?

LENNY
This is her night off.

RICK
Sadist--get me all excited only to let me down.

LENNY
It's okay. Margaret will never let you down.

RICK
It's okay. I couldn't do anything with her anyway. I mean, in my prime I used to be called "The Amiable Amorist". Now, The Anemic Quadraplegic is more appropriate. Hell--your machine just told me I can't breathe hard anymore.

LENNY
So--temporarily choose a nice slow tempo and make amends.

Rick laughs and then turns the conversation into a serious one.

RICK
(serial)
Lenny...one point nine...I'm getting worse.

LENNY
Yeah...so?

RICK
So, so you have to breath to live.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LENNY
No you don't. We have a machine that does it for you.

RICK
So I'm supposed to carry my own private aqualung for the rest of my life?

LENNY
Of course not. It's a temporary thing.

RICK
Have you seen a case like this before?

LENNY
No, I just know what they tell me.

RICK
What's that?

LENNY
That no one really dies from it anymore and of the cases they've had in this hospital, everyone mostly recovered.

RICK
What do you mean by mostly?

LENNY
It means they left here walking.

Once again, constant reinforcement acts as a therapy in itself. Rick smiles.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LENNY
It took time of course. I heard two years. You're probably better than he was anyway.

(beat)
Well, I'd better make my rounds. If you feel short of breath don't hesitate to touch your buzzer.

RICK
I can't press the buzzer.

LENNY
I said "touch" it. They're contact alarms. That's it on your chest next to your hand. What's the matter, the nurses didn't tell you about it?

RICK
There was a lot of commotion today. I guess they forgot.

LENNY
Welcome to "Intensive Care".

Lenny suddenly realizes that he's almost forgotten to take a blood sample for the gas test.

LENNY
I can't believe I almost forgot.

RICK
What?

Lenny removes the syringe kit from his pocket. Rick groans with displeasure.

LENNY
I need a souvenir of my visit.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Lenny assembles the syringe as Meredith enters with her blood pressure meter and thermometer.

MEREDITH
I'm glad that's over with.
I can't stand paper work.

ANOTHER ANGLE

She takes his blood pressure and temperature. Then his pulse rate on his right wrist as Lenny takes blood from his left one. Rick observes the two holding his hands.

RICK
Oh... this is really cute.

Both laugh when they realize the situation resembles that of a spiritual meeting.

RICK
(Cont'd)
This is some revival meeting.
(beat)
Dracula to my left and Florence Nightingale on my right.

Meredith checks his I.V. bottle to make sure it's flowing at the proper rate.

RICK
What's in there?

MEREDITH
5% dextrose and water plus saline and potassium.

RICK
(joking)
And embalming fluid.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Meredith
(joking)
Not yet.

Rick's tone becomes serious.

Rick
You're joking?

Meredith
Of course. What's the matter...
(beat)
you're the only one that can
do that around here.

Rick
You must safeguard your total
professionalism.

Meredith
Oh bullshit. I'll use my own
bedside manner.

Rick cracks up laughing.

Rick
I love it, don't change.

Lenny finishes up and places the syringe in the ice bag.
His beeper goes off.

Lenny
Whew, just in time. They must
be wondering what the hell hap-
pened to me. See you later.

Lenny rushes out of the room.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FAVORING RICK & MEREDITH

She finishes up with her things.

    MEREDITH
    It's about time you got some sleep.

    RICK
    Yeah, all this non-activity is making me drowsy.

    MEREDITH
    That's because you're thinking too much. I don't know what
    you're thinking about but all I know is—you had better start
    putting a smile on your face. It's really good therapy—exercising
    your cheek bones.

Rick smiles.

    MEREDITH
    See you in the morning.

Meredith exits. Rick glances at the doorway and can just barely see the nurses activities. He closes his eyes to rest.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ISOLATION ROOM — DAY

The graveyard shift nurses (Meredith, Mrs. Banyow and Mrs. Petrie) give their reports to the daytime crew (Amber, Mrs. Thompson and, of course, Mrs. Tibbs).

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FULL ANGLE

Both Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Tibbs are in their late fifties and have slightly grayed hair. Mrs. Thompson has a round jolly face and this jolly appearance reflects her personality. Mrs. Tibbs has a long and narrow face and a first impression would mark her as an irritable woman. Quite the contrary—she is very pleasant towards her patients but is firm, yet friendly, with her employees. Her position, like any boss, leaves her open to ridicule. Meredith puts the finishing touches on the report. The day nurses take notes.

MEREDITH
And in bed #1 our Guillen Barret, Richard Saladino.

THE ISOLATION ROOM (Rick's Area)

Rick is given a sponge bath by JERI, a 24 year old Black nurse's aid. Jeri's been at the job for six years and is very knowledgable of the nursing field despite her lack of education. She is knowledgable that some hospital officials are trying to pull strings for her to advance in the field. She is rubbing Rick's chest with a damp cloth.

FAVORING RICK & JERI

JERI
Feeling good?

Rick's voice is noticeably fainter.

RICK
Mmmmm...that old addage is true.

JERI
Say what?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
That old saying.

JERI
What's that?

RICK
That Black chicks got the best rhythm.

She smiles as she rubs harder.

JERI
When Jeri puts her mind to it honey, she's liable to add to the addage.

CUT TO:

INT. NURSES DESK - DAY

Meredith is continuing her report.

MEREDITH
He rested comfortably last night--vital signs stable...

CUT TO:

INT. ISOLATION ROOM - DAY

Jeri is applying shaving cream to Rick's face.

JERI
Yep, Mrs. Tibbs don't allow no beards when you're a patient of hers. You're lucky, she must like you. She didn't say nothing about your mustache.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
I'd check out before I was forced to shave it off. It's me.

JERI
Yeah, and Mrs. Tibbs is Mrs. Tibbs and what she says goes around here.

Jeri begins to shave Rick. He is understandably nervous since this is the first time he hasn't shaved himself.

JERI
Don't be scared. I wouldn't hurt this pretty face.

CUT TO:

INT. THE NURSE'S DESK - DAY

MEREDITH
His forced vital capacity is down to nineteen. His voice is noticeably fainter. Appetite: good...

CUT TO:

THE ISOLATION ROOM

Jeri is just finishing up the shave and wipes Rick's face with a damp cloth. She pulls out a toothbrush and puts toothpaste on it. Rick is amused at Jeri's mannerisms and carefree attitude.

JERI
Now open up those jolly jowls.

Rick opens his mouth wide.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JERI
Mm-Mmm. Look at all them shiny white teeth. You sure you ain't got a little nigga in you?

RICK
Sorry, I'm not into Marvin Gaye, The Spinners, James Brown or Harold Melvin and The Blue Notes.

JERI
Ain't you into music?

RICK
Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, Jackson Browne, Neil Young--

JERI
(interrupting)
Like I said...ain't you into music?

RICK
Well I don't dance if that's what you mean. Do you dance?

JERI
Honey--the last dude that boogied with me, ended up like you--paralyzed.

Rick laughs.

JERI
(Cont'd)
That's it, keep smiling. It makes it easier to brush your teeth.

Rick becomes solemn. (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK

Jeri?

JERI

I'm still here.

RICK

Have you seen anything like this before?

CUT TO:

THE NURSES DESK

MEREDITH

And the valium was administered at three A.M. And...

Meredith looks down at her notes.

MEREDITH

(Cont'd)

That seems to be about it.

She looks up.

MEREDITH

Be sure to keep a good eye on him.

CUT TO:

INT. ISOLATION ROOM - DAY

JERI

...and then they sent him to Brook.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
What's that?

JERI
A rehabilitation center about two miles from here.

RICK
A rehabilitation center, huh. What was he, an ex-con?

JERI
No silly it's for handicapped people. Guarantee it you'll be there.

RICK
Oh yeah?

JERI
You'll probably go down to our therapy department in the beginning. About an hour a day. But honey, when you get to Brook, you're gonna wish you was back in the hospital. I heard they work you five--six hours a day.

FAVORING DOOR

MRS. TIBBS enters the room with all the vital sign equipment (thermometer, blood pressure tester, etc), as Jeri rinses his mouth.

MRS. TIBBS
Well, well, how's our patient today?

JERI
Our patient is doing quite well, Mrs. Tibbs.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Mrs. Tibbs shoots her a look which hides her real feelings.

MRS. TIBBS
(curly)
Forty-five minutes on personal hygiene for one patient Geraldine? You do know that we have other patients.

JERI
Yes Mrs. Tibbs I know--
(beat)
Oh, we got one more this morning.

MRS. TIBBS
Yes Geraldine.

JERI
Sorry Mrs. Tibbs.

Jeri walks behind Mrs. Tibbs and makes a funny face behind her back as she does so. She exits. Rick tries desperately to conceal his laughter.

FAVORING RICK AND MRS. TIBBS.

Mrs. Tibbs places the blood pressure tournequet around Rick's arm and the thermometer in his mouth as she checks his pulse rate.

RICK
I've heard so much about you Mrs. Tibbs.

MRS. TIBBS
Good I hope.

Rick tells a little white lie.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
But of course. You're highly respected around here.

Mrs. Tibbs hard exterior is broken as she blushes in embarrassment. Rick continues to score points with his snow job.

RICK
Everything's run like clock work.

MRS. TIBBS
Efficiency. That's the name of the game in this business.

RICK
Above all, I noticed that you're still able to maintain that personal touch.

Mrs. Tibbs is more flattered than ever.

MRS. TIBBS
Well yes...I learned it all from the war.

Rick puts the icing on the cake.

RICK
Korea?

MRS. TIBBS
It looks as though you're going to be one of the better patients. You're just too kind. I'm sorry to say that it was the Second World War. Yes, when you're a nurse in the army, you sure learn the meaning of efficiency!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
I bet you've seen a lot.

MRS. TIBBS
That's for sure. As a matter of fact, when I first saw you here this morning, it reminded me of those polio days.

Rick is no longer in a humorous mood.

MRS. TIBBS
In the early 50's, we used to have twenty or thirty kids a week come in with it.

Rick listens intently.

MRS. TIBBS
(Cont'd)
The hospitals were full of them--some worse than others. That's when the physical therapy field really opened up.

She contemplates for a second.

MRS. TIBBS
Yep, those were the days.
(beat)
I remember--

Jeri enters with clean linen.

MRS. TIBBS
(Cont'd)
Well, I've got work to do. I'll see you later and if you have any problems, just ring that buzzer.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She exits.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Jeri has a shocked expression on her face.

JERI

Boy, killer--you sure got her number.

RICK

I don't know you're talking about. She seems to be the nicest lady--do you know she was in the army?

JERI

Yeah, she was probably drafted. (beat) Speaking of draft, I think we need a little one. It's kinda stuffy in here.

Jeri goes to open the window and after doing so, turns Rick on his side in order to change his sheets.

JERI

Jeri's the best at changing the sheets with the patient still in bed. And only once did a patient end up in the hamper.

Rick cheers up once again:

DISSOLVE TO:

A MONTAGE of hospital activity follows as time passes. We see Tom enter and perform bedside spirometry and take blood for a gas test. A MAINTENANCE MAN sweeps
CONTINUED:

the floor around the bed.

A nurse enters and removes the intervenus entrances from Rick's left arm and sticks a new needle in his right arm.

Amber enters to change the intervenus bottle and measures his urinary output.

A radiologist enters with a portable X-ray machine and Rick's bed is raised into a sitting position. His trunk is directly perpendicular to his legs which causes great pain in his hamstring muscles and lower back. His muscles are tight from inactivity. The radiologist takes the picture.

DIANE, a physical therapist, enters the room to give him non-voluntary movement. She opens and closes his hands, moves his fingers, moves his arms and legs—all for the purpose of preventing stiffness and improving circulation. Rick is unable to assist her. She is an extremely smart girl of 24, a very short and frisky girl fresh out of college and just recently married.

This MONTAGE covers a period of about four hours and it is now approaching the lunch hour.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. ISOLATION ROOM - DAY

Jeri enters with lunch.

JERI
You've been bothered a lot this morning. You must be starved.

She rolls the tray next to Rick's bed and places the tray in front of him.

RICK
I could use some food.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Jeri reads the items in which Rick has ordered.

JERI
(reading)
Apricot juice, chicken chow-mein, bean sprouts, apple pie, milk--

She quickly uncovers the tray exposing the meal.

JERI
(Cont'd)
Wa la!

Rick stares at the food. Jeri notes his reaction.

JERI
Somehow it sounds better than it looks.

RICK
Well, beauty is only skin deep.

JERI
It's your skin.

Rick is amused but doesn't have the energy to laugh. Jeri begins feeding him--Rick is bored by it all.

JERI
What kinda service are you gonna get somewhere else?

He smiles.

JERI
(Cont'd)
Now all ya gotta do is clap ya hands and the dancers come out.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Rick looks down at his hands and then back up to Jeri. She then realizes what she's said.

JERI
Whoops, sorry honey.

MEDIUM ANGLE

Rick's mother enters the room much to the delight of Rick. Upon seeing her, Jeri becomes very polite.

RICK
(his mouth full)
Did I get any calls?

JERI
Nope.

Josephine Saladino, carrying a shopping bag, strolls over to Rick and gives him a big hug and kiss.

FAVORING RICK & HIS MOM

JOSEPHINE
How do you feel?

RICK
Okay.
(beat)
Mom, this is Jeri.

JOSEPHINE
Hello Jeri.

JERI
Nice to meet you Mrs. Saladino.

JOSEPHINE
I see your taking good care of my baby.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JERI
I haven't had a patient as good as Rick in a long time.

JOSEPHINE
If you have something else to do...I'd appreciate it--
(beat)
Could I feed him?

Jeri understands.

JERI
Of course.

Jeri hands her the utensils.

JERI
(Cont'd)
I'll see ya later tiger!

She leaves the room with a smile on her face.

CLOSER ANGLE - THE TWO

JOSEPHINE
So, how are things?

RICK
Okay, I guess.

JOSEPHINE
What do you mean, I guess?

RICK
Did--

JOSEPHINE
(cutting him off)
No...we haven't heard from her.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The news saddens Rick.

    JOSEPHINE
    (Cont'd)
    I can read you like a book.

    RICK
    (sad)
    Well do me a favor and change the plot.

    JOSEPHINE
    Now don't start feeling sorry for yourself again.

    RICK
    (raising his voice)
    Well who am I supposed to feel sorry for? Her?

    JOSEPHINE
    She wouldn't be able to visit anyway. Visitors for intensive care are restricted to the immediate family.

    RICK
    So what you're saying is, given one more day and she woulda qualified. Cut it out Ma. I appreciate the fact that you're trying to make me feel good but I can't play any games. I asked you before and I'm asking you again...please--
    (beat)
    --level with me.

    JOSEPHINE
    What makes you so sure you're right. Why don't you give her the benefit of the doubt?

    (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Ma--
(beat)
--There comes a point where
the only doubt you give the
benefit to, is your own.
(beat)
I'm telling ya Ma, I feel like
I'm a commodity, only now I'm
a damaged good.

JOSEPHINE
Oh stop it. Don't talk like
that.

RICK
Don't talk...

Rick's chest is congested and he must cough up his sec-
retions. His cough reflex is totally gone.

JOSEPHINE
Come on, cough it up.

Rick takes a deep breath and tries to let go with a
mighty cough. Except for a slight whisper, nothing hap-
pens.

FULL ANGLE

Josephine runs out of the room to the nurses desk. Rick
tries desperately, once again, but to no avail.

Josephine enters with Amber.

AMBER
Try and cough it up.

He tries again but he can't.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

AMBER
(Cont'd)
Okay, It'll be taken care of in a minute.

Amber removes a long suction tube from its package and connects it to the suction outlet in back of Rick. She then guides the tube down his throat and the mucus is removed, providing instant relief. Amber exits. Josephine is also relieved.

JOSEPHINE
Better?

Rick nods with approval.

JOSEPHINE
(Cont'd)
You know, you're right.

RICK
How's that?

JOSEPHINE
I'm going to tell the truth. It would be silly not to.

Rick listens intently.

JOSEPHINE
(Cont'd)
It isn't to say that I have any "earth shattering" news. (beat) I called JoAnne last night.

BEAT.

RICK
Yeah, so?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FAVORING RICK & HIS MOTHER

JOSEPHINE
And I was right.

RICK
About what?

JOSEPHINE
She said she didn't want to see you in this condition.

Rick is furious and YELLS in rage.

RICK
What a fuck'in cop out.

He realizes his mother's presence and subdues himself.

RICK
I'm sorry Ma.
(beat)
Of all the flimsy excuses.

JOSEPHINE
She said she'd be in when you were better.

RICK
Ma, you call her tonight and you tell her I wanta see her. Tell her she can wear a surgical mask over her eyes. I don't care, I want her here!

FULL ANGLE

Both Dr. Leland and Dr. Bronsko enter with Tom and his vitalograph. Rick is disgusted by the interuption.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Oh shit, not again.

DR. LELAND
I understand you're having a little problem.

RICK
Doc, if you only knew.

DR. LELAND
Tell me about it.

RICK
My fian--

Josephine cuts him off before he can go any further. His personal problem has shaken him so much that he has temporarily forgotten his illness.

JOSEPHINE
It's his cough Doctor, he hasn't any.

DR. LELAND
(to Rick)
Cough.

Rick tries but cannot do so. Tom rolls the vitalograph by his side, places the clip on his nose, and inserts the hose into his mouth. Amber, Jeri and Mrs. Tibbs enter the room.

TOM
You know what to do.

Rick takes a deep breath and tries his hardest until he is blue in the face. The medical staff wait for the reading.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

TOM
Point seven.

DR. BRONSKO
Well, that's it then.

DR. LELAND
You called it Doctor.

Josephine and Rick listen intently for the verdict. Dr. Leland addresses both of them.

ANOTHER ANGLE

DR. LELAND
You're going to have to take a trip downstairs Rick.

RICK
The morgue?

Everyone but Josephine, Rick and Bronsko chuckle.

DR. LELAND
No, not that far down.

He moves closer to Rick.

DR. LELAND
(Cont'd)
You've lost virtually all of your abdomen movement and need assistance in breathing. It's necessary to do a tracheotomy whereby we make a small incision in your trachea and connect a tube from it to a respirator, which will assist you.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He addresses Josephine.

DR. LELAND
I'll need your permission of course.

JOSEPHINE
Of course.

DR. LELAND
Good, let's go out and take care of the paper work.

Everyone but Amber and Jeri exit.

RICK
Ma.

Josephine turns back.

RICK
When you call her...

BEAT

JOSEPHINE
Yes.

RICK
Tell her, "in sickness and in health."

Josephine pauses and then exits.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Rick is rolled out of ICU and into the corridor by Amber and Jeri. He is taken down the hall and into a elevator. Rick appears very concerned.

JERI
Relax, this ain't death row.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
They're gonna put me out, aren't they?

AMBER
It's such a simple operation, they just might not.

RICK
Oh shit!

JERI
Dr. Salvadore is the anesthesiologist. Hope you do get a local anesthesia.

AMBER
They say he likes to talk too much.

The elevator stops at the correct floor and Rick is wheeled to the operating room.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

We see Rick's POV throughout the operation. Dr. Leland and Dr. Salvadore are dressed in their surgical outfits and their faces covered with masks. Dr. Leland positions the three huge lamps to his liking.

DR. LELAND
You'll be awake during the entire operation and all that I ask is that you remain calm. Keep your head as steady as possible. Believe me—you won't feel a thing; Dr. Salvadore will see to that.

DR. SALVADORE
You'll just feel a slight pinch when I inject the anesthesia.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

An operating room NURSE holds Rick's head as Dr. Salvadore applies an anasthetic with a cotton ball on Rick's neck. The chemical has a dark brown color.

DR. SALVADORE
This, in the medical field, is known as basting.

Rick is too tense and ignores the joke.

DR. SALVADORE
(Cont'd)
Son, when we get through this you're going to have the sexiest scar.

Dr. Leland and the Nurse smile. Rick does not change his expression.

ANOTHER ANGLE
Dr. Salvadore injects the chemical into Rick's neck. He winces in pain as the Nurse holds him down. The Doctor does it again on the other side of Rick's neck. The same reaction occurs.

DR. SALVADORE
There--that's all the pain you'll feel.

NURSE
Are you okay, honey?

Rick nods his head as he sighs with relief. She wipes the perspiration off his forehead with a damp cloth.

Dr. Leland makes an incision and all we hear is the deep breaths of Rick. He watches every step Leland makes as if waiting for him to make a mistake.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Dr. Leland works for another two minutes until we hear a big burst of air, the sound similar to air rushing out of a balloon. Dr. Leland has broken through and Rick is now breathing thru his neck. He is completely unacustomed to breathing this way and breathes much harder in this state of panic. The nurse calms him down.

NURSE
Okay honey, take it easy. It's all over.

DR. LELAND
(to Rick)
Relax, breathe normal.

CUT TO:

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - DAY

Rick is wheeled into the recovery room which is adjacent to the operating room. Tom and BONNIE (a cute recovery room nurse of 27) await his arrival. Tom comments on Rick's operation.

TOM
No big deal, right?

Rick is still breathing hard.

TOM
Relax, it's gonna take you a little while to get used to breathing like that.

It is needless to say that Rick is unable to talk. The incision was made below his larynx, hence there is no air vibrating his vocal chords.

TOM
I bet ya feel like a whale.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Rick begins to take command of himself and starts to breathe more normally. He smiles in relief.

Tom points to his incision.

    TOM
    Man, you're gonna have the biggest and best hickie you've ever had.

Rick gives a larger smile. Tom connects Rick to a small respirator.

    TOM
    I'm gonna leave ya on this for a couple of minutes to get ya going. Just a couple of minutes until you're completely relaxed.

Bonnie checks on Rick.

    TOM
    Although I don't know if that's possible with all these foxy nurses running around.

Bonnie smiles.

    BONNIE
    I swear Frensca, you've got a one-track mind.

Rick settles down but stares at the ceiling—not believing all the events that took place today.

CUT TO:

INT. ICU - DAY

Rick is wheeled into the Intensive Care Unit by Dawn and Margaret. It is now past three P.M. and the three

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:
to eleven shift is on. Rick is placed in a cubicle which is directly opposite the nurses desk. The move was made so that they could watch him more carefully.

Rick is placed in position on the bed. He glances around and tries to get used to his new surroundings.

DAWN
I'm Dawn and this is Margaret.

Rick nods his head.

DAWN
As you can see, you're not the only one who has difficulty in talking.

Margaret takes Rick off the temporary respierator as Tom enters with a more permanent one.

TOM
The trache was just a precautionary measure. We'll keep you off the respirator until you really need it. If you have any difficulty in breathing, don't hesitate to call.

Tom removes a little instrument with a meter on it out of his pocket. It's a miniature version of the vitalograph. He places the clip on Rick's nose and puts the tube-like instrument in the hole in his neck.

TOM
Take a deep breath and blow hard.

Rick does so. Tom reads the meter. Rick tries to speak but can't. Margaret places her fingers over the hole so that he may speak.

MARGARET
Try now.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
What was the reading?

MARGARET
My my, some people are awfully nosey.

Margaret and Dawn turn Rick on his side to take his temperature. Dawn moves to his left to check his blood pressure as Margaret moves to his right to check his pulse rate.

MARGARET
(to Rick)
By the way, you have a sexy voice.

She leaves to get supplies with Dawn.

TOM
I can't believe it.

Rick has a perplexed expression on his face.

TOM
I've been trying to get into that for God knows how long, and all you say is, "What was the reading".

Rick smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

Rick is perspring with a high fever and Kathy affixes an ice bag on his forehead. Dawn and Margaret give him cold ammonia baths. The radiologist enters with a portable X-ray unit and takes a picture.

DISSOLVE TO:
MONTAGE SEQUENCE

Several weeks pass by depicting Rick's slow but progressive improvement.

Rick's neck is sutured allowing him to talk once again.

Jeri washing him. Rick splashes Jeri and a mild water fight takes place.

Long hours spent in the exercise room.

CLOSE SHOT - RICK'S FINGERS

They slowly begin to move showing hope of increased movement.

Rick being fed by a Nurse. Some of the food drops onto the bed and he laughs.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ICU ROOM - DAY

It is a bright morning as Dr. Leland briskly walks into Rick's cubicle.

MEDIUM ANGLE

DR. LELAND
I just dropped by to tell you that all the arrangements have been made to transfer you to Brook tomorrow.

Rick has a surprised expression on his face.

RICK
So soon?

DR. LELAND
That's right.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
But I--

DR. LELAND
(cutting him off)
--As I was saying...You'll be discharged tomorrow morning and your parents will take you over to Brook. I wrote a letter to the director over there and he granted permission to put you on the top of the list.

Rick can hardly believe his ears.

DR. LELAND
(Cont'd)
They're interested in unique cases and your's isn't that common. They also like young healthy people who they think have a good chance of full recovery. If you walk out of there fully recovered, it makes them look good. It makes them look like God.

RICK
(with unbelievable happiness)
Thanks, Doc.

DR. LELAND
I'll see you over at Brook.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Dr. Leland exits, Margaret strides up to Rick's bed.

MARGARET
I couldn't wait to see you after I heard the news.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The good news has already taken its effect--Rick has regained an almost healthy expression on his face as his whole being feels the anticipation.

RICK
I've kinda gotten used to this place after a few months. It has been that long hasn't it?

MARGARET
You've come a long way baby!

Margaret comes closer.

RICK
I've watched you closely and let me tell you sweety, my heart is out to you. How the hell can you put up with some patients--especially those nagging old ladies?

MARGARET
You get used to it and besides, at times it's very rewarding.

RICK
Oh really, when?

She gets closer still.

MARGARET
When we get patients like you.

RICK
Maggie, you're just too kind.

MARGARET
I'm serious. It's not often that we get nice people like you and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARGARET
(Cont'd)
your family. When we do, it makes up for all the complainers.

RICK
Well, I've got a complaint.

MARGARET
What's that?

RICK
There are too many gorgeous nurses like yourself running around that drive invalids like myself wild.

MARGARET
Invalid. Ha, that's a bunch of crap. At the rate you're going I can safely say you'll be fine.

RICK
Yeah, but what if--

MARGARET
(cutting him off)
--There ya go again with the "what ifs". What if this and what if that.

RICK
Will I ever be able to play the piano?

MARGARET
I don't see why not.

Rick looks at his hands and wiggles his fingers ever so slightly.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
That's great, but I don't even know how to play the piano to begin with.

Margaret catches the bad joke. Rick smiles.

CLOSER ANGLE

MARGARET
Oh that was bad. You really must get some fresh material because I hear that one on the average of two times a month.

RICK
A Woody Allen I'm not.

MARGARET
But a nice guy with sexy bedroom brown eyes you are.

Rick is embarrassed.

RICK
A lot of good it'll do me paralyzed like this.

MARGARET
I really don't believe that.

Rick looks deep into her eyes.

RICK
God Maggie, it's been so long...

MARGARET
Think positive.

RICK
But I'm just a vegetable.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEAT. Margaret smiles.

MARGARET
And I just happen to be a vegetarian.

Rick smiles as Margaret slides her hand underneath the sheets. A FIRE ENGINE SIREN is heard in the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The fire engines SIRENS GROW LOUDER but the trucks themselves are still not visible in front of the hospital. We HEAR Rick and Margaret's voices along with their heavy breathing.

RICK
(v.o.)
What's that?

MARGARET
(v.o.)
Who cares.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The fire trucks can be seen in the distance as they rapidly approach the hospital.

RICK
(v.o.)
What if it's a fire?

MARGARET
(v.o.)
There ya go again with the "what ifs". What if it's the police. Now relax and concentrate on one thing.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEAT. The heavy breathing continues.

RICK
  (v.o.)
But what if it's a fire?

Margaret is frustrated.

MARGARET
  (v.o.)
So what if it is a fire?

The trucks drive to the entrance of the hospital and the firemen run out.

RICK
  (v.o.)
Well you can just run out.
What the hell am I supposed to do?

MARGARET
  (v.o.)
We'll just wheel you out.

The firemen remove the hoses from the trucks.

RICK
  (v.o.)
Me and eight hundred other people.

MARGARET
  (v.o.)
There's a method. Don't underestimate us.

A few firemen enter the hospital.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK  
(v.o., nervous)
Oh, shit!

MARGARET  
(v.o.)
What's the matter?

RICK  
(v.o.)
Look out the window.

BEAT.

MARGARET  
Oh, God.

RICK  
F  (v.o., breathing harder)
For God's sake, hurry upt!

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Margaret rushes out of the room and into the corridor. She runs towards the ICU as she buttons up her blouse. A couple of FIREMEN followed by members of the hospital staff enter the unit.

ANGLE FAVORING RICK

He has somehow sat himself into a wheel chair and is slowly making his way towards Margaret's direction. He passes the nurse's desk and it is empty.

A thin film of smoke permeates the air. He becomes more nervous and tries to wheel himself faster, crashing into an abandoned stretcher as he proceeds. He comes to an  

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

abrupt halt when he reaches the ICU. TEN FIREMEN march out of the Unit and stroll down the corridor in the direction of the elevator. They all have a big smile on their faces and some have broken out into a fit of LAUGHTER.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Rick is totally confused. Dawn runs out of ICU and into the ladie's room in the corridor. A half dozen nurses pour out of the Unit and back to their respective posts. They are all LAUGHING. Margaret follows and notices Rick in the corridor.

MARGARET
(surprised)
What in the hell are you doing out of bed?

RICK
When there's a fire, I'll be damned if I'm gonna lay there turning into a toasted marshmallow.

MARGARET
So you came to see a fire did you?

Rick nods his head.

MARGARET
(Cont'd)
Well, I'll show you the fire.

She turns her head in the direction of the ICU and calls for Eileen.

MARGARET
Eileen, would you please come out here and show Mr. Saladino our inferno!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Eileen enters the corridor hiding something behind her back.

MARGARET
Go ahead, show him.

Eileen swings her hand from around her back and displays a piece of badly burnt toast. Rick can not believe it.

RICK
This is a joke, right?

Margaret and Eileen nod their heads back and forth.

MARGARET
The bread got stuck in the toaster and Dawn forgot all about it.

RICK
Three fire engines, all the firemen...

MARGARET
Right.

Eileen enters the ladie's room.

MARGARET
The hardest part is gonna be trying to get Dawn outta the bathroom. The poor girl's embarrassed.

Rick is still amazed.

RICK
I break my ass for a piece of toast.

MARGARET
That's your fault. You're just (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARGARET
(Cont'd)
gonna have to learn to trust
us. Common, let's get you back
into bed.

Margaret turns Rick around and wheels him down the corridor.

RICK
Tell me. Is there ever a dull
moment in this place?

Margaret LAUGHS.

CUT TO:

INT. ICU ROOM - NIGHT

It is later that evening as Margaret is talking with Rick.

MARGARET
Well it's nice to see your
spirits up. When you first got
here, God--your depression was
contagious. Now you know why
you were put into isolation.

Margaret tucks him in and runs her fingers thru his
hair. Rick obviously enjoys the attention.

RICK
Thank heavens it wasn't total iso-
lation.

Margaret smiles.

MARGARET
You changed completely. The
difference is like night and day.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
I'm gonna be all right, that's why. I'll be a human being again, that's why.

MARGARET
What makes you think you were less than human before.

RICK
Let's face it. You can sympathize with invalids but you can't empathize with them. I can.

(BEAT)
Do ya know what its like to ask your body to perform when it doesn't? Do ya know what its like to completely depend upon others in order to just stay alive? Let me tell ya--it sucks.

BEAT as Rick contemplates.

MARGARET
You asked me before if there was ever a dull moment around here.

Rick breaks from his contemplative trance and nods his head.

MARGARET
There is--when you're not here.

Rick is embarrassed.

MARGARET
(Cont'd)
Will you keep in touch?

Rick is put on the spot by the question.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Listen sweety, please--don't get any deeper. I'm practically mar...
(BEAT)
... I'm supposed to be married.

Margaret's eyes begin to water.

MARGARET
No one ever came... regularly.

RICK
I'd rather not go into it.

She wraps her arms around him and gives him a long kiss.

CLOSER ANGLE

RICK
I can't guarantee anything. I can't say a thing right now. I have to wait and see.

MARGARET
If something turns up in my favor, you'll know where to find me. Promise me. Promise me, brown eyes.

Rick doesn't answer.

MARGARET
(Cont'd, stronger)
Rick, promise me.

RICK
I promise, but I tell ya Maggié that and fifty cents will get ya on the subway.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARGARET
I don't care, I like you.
And besides, I've been taken for a ride before.

BEAT.

MARGARET
(Cont'd)
Get some sleep. You have a big day tomorrow.
(BEAT)
This is not a goodbye, I'll come and visit you.

RICK
Listen Maggie. I like you too. but I'm in a situation right now where, I really can't explain it. Please believe me when I say it's best that I contact you-- if anything.

She becomes depressed.

RICK
(Cont'd)
Please believe me when I say that I have to maintain my neutrality-- for now at least.
(BEAT)
Please.

She slowly looks up into his eyes.

MARGARET
Have a pleasant stay at Brook, Mr. Saladino.

She runs out of the room crying. Rick settles back and stares out the window. He obviously feels guilty.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Rick, fully clothed, is wheeled down the corridor by a NURSE. He is followed by his parents. They approach the Intensive Care Unit.

RICK
Wait just a minute. I want to say goodbye.

The nurse wheels him into the unit. The others follow. Mrs. Tibbs, Amber, and Jeri are on duty. Jeri runs over to Rick.

JERI
Damn you Rick. I ain't got nothin' to strive for with you gone.

AMBER
You had better get outta here quick before she getscha.

MRS. TIBBS
Do have a pleasant stay at Brook. I've been there many times for seminars and let me tell you, they have the most modern equipment and professional staff. You'll be up and around in no time.

JERI
Yeah, and we've only had three people come back here for bed sores.

AMBER
Oh Jeri, stop that.

JERI
Listen, if that's what it takes to get him back.

BEAT.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Thank you all...
(BEAT)
...for everything.

Jeri gives him a big hug. The others bid him fare well as the nurse turns him around and heads for the elevator. His parents follow.

JOSEPHINE
So how do you feel, after so many months?

RICK
It's strange. I'm gonna miss this place.

NICK
That's okay, you'll be home soon and get back into the swing of things.

INT. ELEVATOR - FULL ANGLE - DAY

They enter the elevator and descend to the ground floor. They exit the elevator and proceed to the front entrance.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - FULL ANGLE - DAY

They pass the front lobby. As he is being wheeled, Rick notices a beautiful girl in a volunteer's uniform.

RICK
Where the hell was she all this while?

NICK
Relax. In a short time you'll be home and forget all about this nightmare. You'll see JoAnnee.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK (sarcastic)
JoAnne...JoAnne...
(BEAT)
I seem to have heard that name before.

JOSEPHINE
Oh, don't be wise. We spoke to her a few weeks ago and she said that she's anxious to see you again.

RICK (skeptical)
Oh she is, is she?

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - FULL SHOT - DAY.

Nick's car is parked in front of the entrance and Rick is transferred from the wheelchair to the back seat of the car. His parents get in and they drive to Brook.

INT. CAR - DAY

As they drive, Rick notices that they are moving past a beautiful park.

RICK
Damn, it's good to get out! I went inside in the middle of winter and now...
(BEAT)
...God, look at those flowers?

We see a MONTAGE of buildings and parks—a balance of people and nature. Not a word is spoken as Rick takes in all the scenery.

CUT TO:
EXT. BROOK REHABILITATION CENTER ENTRANCE - DAY

The car arrives at the entrance of Brook. They drive thru two large pillars supporting an iron gate. Brook is a refurbished estate, donated by the Brook family.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The entire compound is surrounded by hundreds of acres of lawn and bushes. The spring season has left the flowers in full bloom--making a tremendous display of color. Brook consists of five main buildings--each equipped with rehabilitation and hospital facilities.

CLOSER ANGLE

As the car pulls up to the main entrance, all steps on the estate are provided with ramps for its patients and many day-hospital vans equipped with hydraulic lifts for wheelchairs are parked near the entrance.

Nick and Josephine enter Brook leaving Rick in the car.

FAVORING RICK

As he rolls down his window to take in the fresh air. As he does so, he notices FOUR INVALIDS basking in the sun viewing the scenery. For the first time in weeks. Rick lapses into a state of depression. He has gotten better, but suddenly realizes that these people are in their condition for life. Having gone through it himself, Rick is a rare person who can truly empathize with them. Rick feels segregated and out of place.

MEDIUM ANGLE - GROUP

The four people are MARIA, TOM BILL AND CUDDY. Maria, Tom and Bill are quadraplegics and Cuddy--a paraplegic. Maria, 21, is short and stocky while the others are in their late twenties. The guys are all thin and frail. They have all noticed the arrival of Rick.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

TOM
I told ya he wasn't a para. That's five bucks you owe me!

BILL
Okay...next check I get.

CLOSE SHOT - RICK

Rick is embarrassed with the knowledge that these people are talking about him. CAMERA PULLS BACK as he opens the door and swings his legs outside to show his mobility.

TOM
(shocked)
Holy...it's a walkie.

BILL
That's five bucks. It looks as though we're even.

BEAT.

CUDDY
Definitely not a Parkinson's patient. Probably heart condition.

TOM
Well, no need to print up another application.

(BEAT)
By the way, let's introduce ourselves.

The group slowly wheels towards Rick in the car.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MEDIUM ANGLE

TOM
Hi.

RICK
Hello.

TOM
I'm Tom and this is Bill, Cuddy and Maria.

They all exchange greetings.

BILL
(to Tom)
I guess you're right--the walkie is also a talkie.

Rick smiles.

RICK
Name's Rick, Rick Saladino.

TOM
Welcome to the Brook Rehabilitation Center. It's not exactly a humble abode, but if you consider that it's temporary, you'll keep your sanity.

RICK
I'm waiting for my parents. They're in the admitting office.

CUDDY
They're gonna give ya the orientation crap. Just a bunch of bullshit.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BILL
(looking at his watch)
Damn, it's ten thirty already.

TOM
That's right--mat class. Good luck in admittance, I hope you can stand a lot of verbal garbage.

WIDE ANGLE

Everyone except Maria enters the building. She wheels herself closer to Rick.

FAVORING RICK & MARIA

MARIA
Don't listen to them. It's just that they've been here so long that they think any newcomers are trespassing on their property.

RICK
How long do you have to stay here?

MARIA
As long as they see fit. When they think you can semi take care of yourself out there in the jungle, then they let you go.

BEAT.

MARIA
(Cont'd)
It's really not that bad. I mean, look at this place. Whoever thought (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARIA
(Cont’d)
I'd be living on someone's three hundred acre estate? See, being a cripple has its advantages.

Rick cannot laugh with her.

RICK
You're pretty strong.

MARIA
What am I supposed to do... cry all day long. You just have a certain amount of tears you know.

RICK:
Car accident?

MARIA
What else? Except for a couple of freak accidents, diving accidents and gun shot wounds, most of the cripples are here courtesy of Detroit.
(BEAT)
I saw you move your legs before. Why are you here?

RICK
I can't walk.

MARIA
What?

RICK
Yet, at least. I need rehabilitation.

PULL BACK to reveal Nick, Josephine and a hospital ASSISTANT exit the hospital and approach the car.

MARIA
What's wrong with you?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Guillon Barret.

MARIA
(sarcastic)
Oh of course—I should have known.

RICK
It's an inflammation of the nervous system due to a virus.

MARIA
If you walk out of the spinal injury ward, let me tell you...

(BEAT)
...you'll be a rare patient.

The trio approach the car.

JOSEPHINE
Well, so you've made friends already.

The hospital assistant transfers Rick from the car to the wheelchair.

RICK
By the way, they mentioned an application.

MARIA
Oh that. They were just referring to our little club for quadraplegics. We're called the Golden Chariots—kind of a social club where we meet and talk about our disabilities, how we're still people, how we'll cope when we get out of here.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
I guess it's good for the head.

MARIA
Yeah, it helps sometimes. It's closed to quadraplegics only although Cuddy is only a paraplegic. He's in on a prayer.

Rick is wheeled towards the building.

RICK
(to the Assistant)
Wait.

He stops. Rick stares at Maria.

Physically attracted to him, Maria looks at him in keen anticipation of a personal question.

RICK
Maria?

MARIA
Yes?

BEAT.

RICK
How's the food?

Maria's face drops, but then realizes the foolish fantasy. She LAUGHS. Rick is puzzled.

MARIA
About the same as your old high school cafeteria.

Rick's face drops as the Assistant turns the chair around and proceeds to the building.

RICK
Later.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEAT.

RICK
(Cont'd, to himself)
Shit!

He is wheeled into the building thru a pair of automatic sliding doors.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOK REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

Rick is wheeled down the corridor to the admittance office. He is very depressed at the sights along the way.

CAMERA DOLLIES DOWN the corridor showing all the patients in wheelchairs. Rick passes quadriplegics, paraplegics, Parkinson's and heart disease patients and amputees. He is sick to his stomach. Never before has he seen such a great influx of named people in one place.

INT. ADMITTANCE OFFICE - FULL ANGLE - DAY

Rick is wheeled into the admittance office and is introduced to JACK GIBRON, the admittance officer, psychologist and placement officer. Jack is 32, blond and balding, supports a handlebar mustache, good physique and tries to be witty but falls short.

JACK
How do you do Rick. My name's Jack Gibron--call me Jack.

RICK
(a bare whisper)
Hi.

He shakes his hand.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JACK
I'm sure you're going to enjoy your stay here at Brook. We have the most modern facilities available and a highly qualified staff.

Rick senses the verbal garbage and sales pitch. His mind starts to wander as he looks at all the diplomas, awards, and photographs in Gibron's office. The CAMERA PANS around the room, first showing a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology.

JACK
(Cont'd)
We're going to put you through various types of programs. They each last an hour and you'll have them five days a week.

The CAMERA PANS to show a Masters Degree in Psychology.

JACK
(Cont'd)
With Dr. Stein's permission, you'll be able to get a weekend pass--leave Friday night, and be back by 8 P.M. Sunday.

FAVORING RICK:

He is totally oblivious to the conversation at hand.

CAMERA CONTINUES TO PAN focusing on a few civil service awards from Seiko watches, Kōdak, Etc.

JACK
(Cont'd)
You're going to have physical therapy, occupational therapy, ambulatory gym...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

THE CAMERA PANS to show a number of pictures depicting the East Coast regional wheelchair olympics held at Brook for the last few years. Jack is in every picture.

JACK (Cont'd)
...hydrotherapy.

CUT TO:

FULL ANGLE

Jack is finishing up with his discussion.

JACK (Cont'd)
Since yours is of a neurological nature, we'll put you in the spinal chord injury ward-

Rick pays attention to this remark.

RICK (alarmed)
Private room!

NICK
It's not covered by the insurance.

He starts to panic.

RICK
I'm getting better. I don't need to be exposed to...That's all behind me. I'm gonna get better!

JACK
I'm sorry you feel that way. I was hoping you could set an example.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
(raising his voice)
Example...to whom? To some cripple!

JOSEPHINE
Rick--stop that.

Rick lifts his leg up and down.

RICK
(sarcastic)
Simon says, do this...

Nick and Josephine tell him to stop.

JACK
We don't have any singles left anyway.
(BEAT)
Look...Rick. I've got a Doctor-ate in Psychology. Look up there.

He points to yet another diploma on the wall.

JACK
(Cont'd)
When I got out of school I thought I was a hot shot, could solve everybody's problems as a psychologist. I chose this job because it's the most challenging. Believe me, it is.
(BEAT)
I still think I'm damned good at what I do but experience has taught me that all those degrees...
(he points to the wall again)
...and fifty cents will get me into the subway. I am so far behind you it's pathetic.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Rick is flattered with the compliment but still remains to be perplexed.

JACK (Cont'd)
I, along with everyone else in this institution can sympathize with them...you're the only one that can experience empathy.

RICK
I just want to experience discharge. I do my time and I'm out, as fast as possible.

JACK
You make this sound like a prison. If you're really unhappy, you don't have to be admitted. You need us, we don't need you.

RICK
This place thrives on cripples. We're your greatest advertisement. Who the hell else is gonna walk outta here?

JACK
These people have to make a big adjustment. Emotionally, psychologically, physically...
(BEAT)
You can't believe the great adjustment many make. You'd be surprised at what they can do.

RICK
That's not my job.

Rick stares at the wall.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JOSEPHINE
Please forgive him Mr. Gibron--
it's the adjustment.

JACK.
Believe me Mrs. Saladino, you
don't know what adjustment is.
None of us here do.

LONG BEAT.

RICK
(apologetic)
Look I'm sorry. It's just that,
I've been there and I don't like
it. It's not good for my head.

JACK
Now who's the psychologist? Rick,
believe me when I say I totally
understand but try and bare it for
a short while. I'm sure you'll pro-
gress rapidly and you'll be out of
here in no time.

NICK
You can go home on weekends.

JACK
With the doctor's permission.

(BEAT)
You'll be rooming with Steve Schultz.
He's about your age so you should
have a lot in common.

RICK
No we won't.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOK CORRIDOR - DAY

Rick is wheeled down the corridor as the camera photo-

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

graphs his P.O.V. Along the way to the elevator he passes the ambulatory gym and notices a number of amputees learning to walk on their new artificial legs.

FAVORING RICK

We see his reaction as he watches an amputee take his artificial leg off. He appears to be sickened at the sight.

RICK'S P.O.V.

Rick is wheeled closer to the elevators and passes the physical therapy wing. He sees physical therapists administering involuntary exercises, heat, cold, water and light to their patients. These treatments are used in the rehabilitation of patients who have fractures, amputations, nerve injuries, arthritis, brain and spinal chord injuries; and other disabling conditions. All patients in the corridors are also confined to wheelchairs.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Rick is being wheeled into the elevator. He is followed by his parents. AWARD ASSISTANT wheels six more patients into the already crowded elevator. Everyone is silent as the patients (most elderly), stare at Rick. He is very uneasy.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR - ANOTHER CORRIDOR - DAY

The patients are wheeled one by one from the elevator. Rick is the last to leave. He is wheeled down the corridor, past the nurses desk and is once again the recipient

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Of many stares. He is wheeled into his room, followed by his parents.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S ROOM - DAY

The room is fairly large. The bathroom is to the left, with toilet and shower and guide rails. Directly to the left is the sink and closet space. As one walks deeper into the room, two beds facing each other are noticed. The curtains are closed around the bed on the right.

FULL ANGLE

As Rick is wheeled next to his bed on the left. His lunch is waiting for him on a tray. There is the SOUND of two people talking behind the curtain. The hospital Assistant places the tray next to Rick and leaves the room.

The two people behind the curtain are STEVE SCHULTZ and DEBBIE SHORES. Steve is Rick's age, frail, supports a scraggly beard, and paralyzed from the neck down from an automobile accident eight months earlier. Debbie is his therapist. She is a tom-boyish girl in her late twenties with deep red hair. It is evident by their conversation that he is attempting to dress himself.

Rick looks around the room to try to get used to his new surroundings. His eyes stop and stare at the closed curtain.

JOSEPHINE
Very nice, don't you think so?

NICK
Very nice.

They both glance at Rick and await his reaction.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NICK
(Cont'd)
Nice, huh?

Rick slips back into reality.

RICK
Hum? Yeah, nice.

STEVE
(from behind the curtain)
Now if I can get this God-damned arm through!

DEBBIE
(offering encouragement)
Come on, you've got it, you've got it.

JOSEPHINE
(glancing at her watch)
Well Nick, it's one thirty. We better be off.

STEVE
(disturbed)
Fucking shirt!

Rick smiles as Nick and Josephine turn in shock. A NURSE enters to change Rick's sheets.

NURSE
Just changing the sheets.

DEBBIE
(to Steve)
I told you not to do it that way.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

STEVE
Well how the fuck am I supposed to do it?

Josephine does not appreciate the language behind the curtain. Nick notices her reaction to it.

NICK
Come on, let's go.
(to Rick)
We'll see you later.

Josephine kisses Rick. He continues to stare at the curtain.

JOSEPHINE
(To Rick)
Relax, you'll be home soon.

Josephine and Nick exit.

STEVE
(shouting with joy)
All right. Son of a bitch...all right.

Debbie CHEERS and APPLAUDS.

DEBBIE
Do you see what a little practice will do?

STEVE
Son of a bitch, alright.

DEBBIE
That's enough bedside therapy for today.

Debbie opens the curtains and startles Rick. He is sitting there staring at the two with his mouth full of food.

(CONTINUED)
DEBBIE
Well Steve, you're not alone any more.
(To Rick)
I'm Debbie and this is Steve.

RICK
Hi--I'm Rick Saladino.

Debbie gathers up her equipment as the two men stare at each other. She turns to exit.

DEBBIE
You know there's nothing wrong with your tongue Steve.

The silence continues.

DEBBIE
Bye guys!

RICK
Take care.

She exits. Rick takes another bite of his sandwich and turns back to Steve who is still staring at him.

FAVORING RICK & STEVE

Steve cracks a little smile and Rick counters with a slightly bigger one. The two compete until both break out into a fit of LAUGHTER.

STEVE
Man, how can you eat that slop?

RICK
This is gourmet compared to the hospital.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

STEVE
Hospital? You don't look like you just came from the hospital. Except of course, for that hickie on your neck.

Rick touches the scar from the operation on his neck.

STEVE
Must a had some nasty nurse.

Rick smiles.

STEVE
I got one of um too...see?

Steve struggles to point at his scar (also trach). His fingers remain in one position. He looks around at his night table.

STEVE
(Cont'd)
Hey man, can ya hand me one of them smokes?

Rick rolls over to the table and takes a cigarette out of the pack. He hands it to Steve.

STEVE
(Cont'd)
Ya gotta put it in the holder my man.

Rick notices a cigarette holder on the table and inserts the cigarette into it. He hands it to Steve.

STEVE
Thank you.

Steve struggles with a special lighter--one made large enough for him to grab it with his palms. He strikes

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

the flint with his palm and lights his cigarette.

STEVE
(Cont'd)
Are you amazed at what we can do?

Guilty of his motor functions, Rick is overcome by a feeling of selfcondemnation.

STEVE
(Cont'd)
Despite what many people think—we can usually do a few things, and even talk at the same time.

Rick is not at all offended by the sarcasm but rather is very remorseful.

STEVE
What happened?

RICK
Guillon Barret.

STEVE
I'm just a stupid quadraplegic... you better explain.

RICK
It's named after some French guy who discovered it. It's an inflammation of the nerves... a virus.

STEVE
I've had viruses...two aspirins, sleep, and fluids...now they put you in rehab centers.

Steve realizes the jealous streak in him.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

STEVE
(Cont'd)
Hey listen, I'm sorry if I've been coming on too strong. I've been accused of it now and then.

RICK
That's cool.

STEVE
Why? Because I'm in a wheelchair feeling sorry for myself. That's all I need--everyone else doing the same.

RICK
Hey, I understand.

STEVE
Whatever you do, don't start talking like Gibron the guru. I've heard enough of his lectures and saw enough of his films to know that the man doesn't know his ass from his elbow...

(BEAT)
...the slob tries though.

(BEAT)
I don't want to talk about it.

RICK
Do ya mind if I ask what happened?

STEVE
Why not...it happened.

(BEAT)
You'll only see three kinds in this place--gun-shot wounds, diving accidents, and fender benders to say the least.

(BEAT)
I'm for gun control and a Johnny Weismuller I'm not.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
When did it happen?

STEVE
Nine months, twenty-four days and...

(looking at his watch)
...ten and one quarter hours ago.

(BEAT)
Got fucked up one night on ludes. Drove home from a party with my seat belt and shoulder harness on. I might add. I didn't wake up till three days later. They told me I had turned over three times and landed in a big ditch off the side of the road. They didn't find me for six hours.

Tom, Bill and Maria enter the room.

STEVE
(Cont'd)
Right out there on the Sunrise Highway.

TOM
How many times have you had to tell that story?

STEVE
To many fu--

He realizes Maria's presence.

WIDER ANGLE

STEVE
(Cont'd)
--too many times.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

TOM
(to Rick)
I still ain't never heard
a what you got.

STEVE
He's got movement--does it
make a God damned difference?

A feeling of apprehension overcomes Rick. His guilt complex once again sets in and Maria senses his anxiety.

STEVE
(Cont'd, to the
others)
I'd still love to know why the hell they put a walkie in with us.

Maria senses Rick alienation and refuses to let it go any further.

MARIA
Are you admitting that you're different Steve Shultz?

Steve is shocked by this statement by the usually placid Maria. The room is quiet as all eyes are upon her. Rick is startled by her support.

MARIA
Do you think you're different?--Answer me!

BEAT. Steve is embarrassed by being put on the spot. He suddenly becomes very emotional.

STEVE
(raising his voice)
Different? No I'm no different
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

STEVE
(Cont'd)
from a rock, a carrot, a tomato--how many more vegetables do ya wanta hear about?

MARIA
You're not a vegetable Steve--you're a turkey!

The others giggle--except Rick.

MARIA
I mean, what are all the quad meetings for?

STEVE
Not for my health.

MARIA
What about the lecture, the films...

STEVE
Bull shit, all bull shit! Maria, if you wanna live in a prefabricated fantasy world of Jack Gibron that's fine. If you think things haven't changed since your accident then consider yourself fortunate.

MARIA
Of course they've changed, but--

STEVE
(cutting her off)
But don't give me no lecture.

MARIA
You don't see anyone else in this room sulking.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

STEVE
I swear Maria. If you weren't a chick I'd...if I weren't confined in a chair...

MARIA
If you weren't in an accident. What if? Now who's living in a fantasy world? Look around you Stevie. This is the real world--make the best of what's left!

Steve and Maria stare at each other for a few seconds as his eyes begin to get misty. He wheels himself briskly out of the room. All eyes turn to Rick, and realizing that he is the cause of the incident, is embarrassed.

TOM
(looking at his watch)
Well, some of have mat class.

Everyone leaves except Maria.

BILL
You coming Maria?

MARIA
In a minute.

FAVORING MARIA & RICK

RICK
I think I'd better check out.

MARIA
What for? Because of one quad who feels sorry for himself?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
How can you speak so casually about it Maria?

MARIA
How should I treat it? Should I cry twenty-four hours a day? I said I went through that trip. One day you wake up without any tears--bone dry..

She decides to confide in him..

MARIA
(Cont'd)
Steve's misfortune occurred closer than any of ours. What we see in him is exactly what all of us have gone through. He has to be put in place from time to time so he can straighten himself out.

(BEAT)
This is not to say that I don't lapse into it now and then. As you can see I'm human.

RICK
It's amazing, I know I couldn't go through it.

MARIA
You did.

RICK
Maybe briefly in the beginning but...

MARIA
Did a soothsayer say you were going to get better?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Well...

MARIA
Were there any guarantees?

Rick thinks for a moment.

MARIA
(Cont'd)
No, of course not. That's why you can sympathize, empathize... call it what you may. You're the only one in this place that's been there and returned. Did you know it was a round-trip ticket?

RICK
No.

MARIA
Well don't underestimate yourself. (BEAT)
You know Steve is right about Jack Gibron. The guy is good as a placement advisor—that's it. His psychology degrees are rendered useless on this job. You've got to go through it before you can ever begin to comprehend psychological ramifications. That's you baby.

Rick blushes with embarrassment.

RICK
Don't over-estimate me Maria.

Rick reaches over and touches her hand. She is startled at first and her first reaction is to pull away but she then welcomes the affection.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Listen...
(BEAT)
I want to thank you for your help.

MARIA
What did I do?

RICK
Don't be coy. That was one very difficult jam you got me out of.

MARIA
To coin a phrase--don't overestimate me Rick.

RICK
Oh be serious Maria.

He squeezes her hand.

RICK
(Cont'd)
Thanks a lot.

They both stare at each other. Maria breaks the ice by looking at her watch.

MARIA
Time for mat class.

RICK
Why don't I have it?

MARIA
You don't need it. It's for cripples only. You're going to get better.

Maria wheels herself out the door.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
You know, I feel so guilty.

WIDER ANGLE
She pauses for a second and turns around.

MARIA
Why?

RICK
I'm walking--not very well, but I'm walking. Nobody else is.

MARIA
Hey, they wouldn't worry about you if the situation were reversed.

(BEAT)
That excludes me of course.

Rick laughs. Maria smiles and leaves.

Rick glances over a Steve's dressing table and notices his hair brush and tooth brush equipped with special handles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY WARD - FULL SHOT - DAY

It is a few hours later and Rick is seated at a huge table with FIVE LITTLE OLD LADIES. The expression on his face indicates his total boredom. He is squeezing a silly putty between his fingers as he tries to block out the discussion between the old ladies.

His therapist, SUZI HOPKINS, is a blond, heavy set girl of 25 with a very good personality. She is unique in that she is able to relate to all age groups. The old ladies, obviously stroke victims, are engaged in assorted activity to enhance finger dexterity--board games, (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

knitting, string drawings, etc.

SUZI.
That's beautiful crocheting, Mrs. Nelson.

The old lady nods. Rick continues to glance about and is disgusted by the entire situation. He gazes out the window and sees Steve, Tom, Bill, Cuddy and Maria talking on the patio. It is obviously a quad meeting. They continuously glance through the window, indicating that he is the subject of the conversation.

SUZI
(to Rick)
Why do you keep looking out the window?

RICK
I'm usually uncomfortable when I'm being talked about.

SUZI
What makes you think they're talking about you?

RICK
I can tell.

SUZI
You're paranoid.

RICK
Maybe so, but they're still talking about me.

SUZI
Under normal circumstances I would totally prove you wrong.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SUZI
(Cont'd)
That's a quad meeting and they are supposed to be discussing their problems with one another. Trying to find better ways of coping after they get outta here.

(BEAT)
In actuality, I think it's nothing but a quadraplegic social club.

RICK
I'm their age, I'm sure I have a lot in common with them.

FAVORING RICK & SUZI

SUZI
Forget it Rick, you obviously don't have enough in common.

Suzi gives Rick a deck of playing cards.

SUZI
Here, practice shuffling these.

Rick has a very difficult time picking up the cards and shuffling them. His coordination and strength are obviously not yet normal.

RICK
Are their minds together?

SUZI
Why the preoccupation? Concentrate on the cards.

RICK
Can I relate to them?

Rick drops the cards and curses.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
(Cont'd)
Can I?

SUZI
Yes--maybe...I don't know.

RICK
That's all that really counts.

The two of them notice the quads leaving. Suzi picks up the remaining cards.

RICK
Meeting's over.

SUZI
If you want to get better and get out of this place, you're gonna have to concentrate on one thing--getting better.

She hands him a wheel with two handles projecting from each side. It is much like the exercise wheels used for toning the abdomen. She places an inclined board on the table and puts two eights around each handle of the wheel.

SUZI
Here, now push this wheel up the board.

Rick does so with much pain. He is exhausted after this exercise.

RICK
I've run three miles, played basketball and weight lifted all in the same day. Never have I been so ex-

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
(Cont'd)
hausted than today--working a
lousy half hour with silly put-
ty between my fingers.

SUZI
You were reduced to nothing. You
have to learn to do everything and
I mean everything over again. It's
a long...

RICK
Everything? Some things are like
riding a bicycle--you never forget.

Suzi is relatively naive when it comes to sex and to-
tally oblivious to the double entendre.

SUZI
(noticing another
lady's work)
Good work Joanne.

Rick is startled by the name and looks about the room.

RICK
Tell me something Sue.

SUZI
What?

RICK
Is dialing a telephone good for
finger dexterity?

SUZI
Excellent.

Rick drops his wheel and turns the wheelchair around.
He moves toward a wall phone across the room.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ANOTHER ANGLE

SUZI
Make it local!

He advances to the phone, locks his wheelchair and stands up ever so slowly. He is deliberate in this action and braces his legs against the chair when he is up. The expression on his face indicates exertion.

He slowly dials the phone—taking three times as long as a normal person would.

We HEAR the phone RING and eventually it is answered by a man. Rick is shocked and totally speechless. It is not until the man is about to hang up that he finally speaks.

RICK
Who's this?

MAN
(v.o.)
Hey buddy, I think you've got your lines mixed up. Who's this?

RICK
Is this 725-5750?

MAN
(v.o.)
Yeah, who ya looking for?

RICK
Does JoAnne Gotanda live here?

MAN
(v.o.)
Who is this?

RICK
(upset)
Does she live there?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MAN  
(v.o.)  
That's none of your business ass hole!

RICK  
Listen Bud, you tell her that her fiancé called and I'm ex- pecting one back real soon.

The man is startled.

MAN  
(v.o.)  
Oh yeah, sure.

RICK:  
Brook Rehabilitation Center, Room 214.

Rick slams the phone on the hook, startling some of the old people. He looses his balance and falls backward into his chair. Suzi runs over to help him.

SUZI  
Are you all right?

Rick is still seething.

RICK  
I'm fine.

SUZI  
No you're not, what's wrong?

RICK  
I'm fine!

At this moment Maria wheels herself into the room.

MARIA  
I heard a noise in the hall.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SUZI
It was nothing.

Rick's face is red with anger..

MARIA
Not by the looks of things.

Suzi motions to Maria not to say anything more. Rick regains his composure.

RICK
Meeting over?

MARIA
Oh, you mean the quad meeting? Yeah, it id't last long today.

RICK
Cuddy's a paraplegic--how come he got in the club?

MARIA
He's been around for a long time and just fell into it. Believe me it's a rarity.

RICK!
Why were you talking about me?

MARIA
Hey, why the twenty questions--and besides, I took an oath when I joined.

Rick feels uneasy.

MARIA
(Cont'd)
Hey relax, it was idle chatter.

Suzi strolls back over.
SUZI
Times up. What do you have next?

RICK
Ambulatory gym.

MARIA
(to Suzi)
I'll show him the way.
(to Rick)
Come, this way.

Rick follows Maria out the door.

SUZI
Bye now.

RICK
Later Sue.

INT. CORRIDOR - FULL SHOT - DAY

Cuddy is waiting outside the Occupational Therapy door. The others are clear across the long corridor. Rick is skeptical.

CUDDY
How ya doing Rick?

RICK
Fine Bud, how are you?

Rick glances over at Maria, but is clear that she knows nothing either.

CUDDY
Rick, I was wondering if you could do me a favor?

RICK
What's that?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CUDDY
Well, I'm practicing for the wheelchair olympics next month and, well... seeing that you're a walkie and all, I was thinking maybe...

RICK
And you want some stiff competition.

CUDDY
Right.

RICK
Well I don't throw the javelin, shot or discus...

CUDDY
How about a little race from here to the end of the hall?

RICK
(he looks toward the others)
You mean to them?

CUDDY
That'll be fine.

Rick positions himself to an imaginary start line.

RICK
(Cont'd)
I'm ready.

Cuddy supports a sardonic smile, confident that he will win. He positions himself next to Rick. The others await in eager anticipation. Cuddy motions to Steve.

STEVE
(smiling)
On your marks...get set...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

FAVORING RICK & CUDDY

STEVE
(Cont'd)
...Go!

The two dash forward, head to head, until thirty feet have past. Cuddy, obviously acclimated to the wheelchair, uses his developed triceps to overtake Rick.

It is no contest as Cuddy easily wins.

FULL ANGLE

The quadraplegics CHEER for Cuddy throughout the race and shout with joy after his convincing victory. Rick is exhausted and tries to regain his breath. Maria catches up with him to console him. The others crowd around Cuddy.

STEVE
All right, Cuddy baby, you kicked the walkie's ass!

Cuddy finally regains his breath.

CUDDY
That I did, didn't I!

MARIA
(to Rick)
You don't have to take this you know.

RICK
Why not? How many thrills could they possibly get?

MARIA
You let him win didn't you?

Rick continues to try and catch his breath.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Don't under-estimate yourselves
Maria.

The quadruplegics wheel down the corridor, all except
Steve, who turns to Rick.

STEVE
We're survivors...
(BEAT):
...survivors.

Steve turns to join the others. Rick watches him leave
as he reaches for Maria's hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY GYM - FULL SHOT - DAY

We see a MONTAGE of Rick participating in various phys-
ical activities. He rides a stationary bicycle, walks
(ever so slowly) the parallel bars, exercises with a
life preserver in the hydro-therapy pool, walks with
a THERAPIST in the ambulatory gym, works out with the
weight machines (pulleys, knee exercisers), various
occupational therapy exercises, etc.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A few weeks have passed and Rick has improved measur-
ably. He is able to walk periodically but must rest
frequently. He is playing backgammon with Maria as
Steve lies in bed reading.

RICK
(frustrated)
Damn, I hate these games of
chance.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARIA
Skill my dear.

RICK
What--twenty percent?

MARIA
(laughing)
That's twenty percent more than what you've had.

RICK
(joking)
Hey, I don't have to take this. Let alone from a God damned quadriplegic.

She LAUGHS as Steve looks up from reading his book. His stare is one of contempt. Rick gets serious.

RICK
A very pretty one at that.

She is totally embarrassed.

RICK
Hey, don't be humble with me.

BEAT

MARIA
Maybe, maybe a couple of years ago.

RICK
Two years Maria? One doesn't change much in two years.

MARIA
Oh don't play naive with me Rick...or sympathetic.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

   RICK
Empathetic.

She thinks for a moment.

   RICK
(Cont'd)
You're doing exactly what you've
preached against.

   MARIA
(disturbed)
I'm only human.

   RICK
   Yes, you are.

Steve gives a sardonic laugh.

   RICK
(to Steve)
That's right...human.

BEAT as he turns back to Maria.

   RICK
(Cont'd)
...and humans do more than just survive.

BEAT. Steve pushes the remote control button and turns
on his television to block out the conversation.

   MARIA
I was going to be a dancer.

Rick is lost for words. He struggles to find something
to say when he cannot, he moves toward her and holds her
hand.

   RICK
Maria...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEAT. She gets misty-eyed.

    RICK
    (Cont'd)
    I like you. I like you a lot.

Maria is embarrassed.

    MARIA
    I...

Rick glances at his hand holding hers.

    RICK
    You might not be able to grasp my hand but I know you want to.

A CANDY-STRIPER enters holding a package. She is a very cute teenager.

    CANDY STRIPER
    You've got a little mail here Rick.

Rick takes the package and an envelope. He proceeds to open the envelope first.

    CANDY STRIPER
    (Cont'd)
    Oh, and Maria--the eulogist asked me to tell you to go to your room. Time for residuals.

    MARIA
    (disturbed)
    Residuals--again?

    RICK
    Holy...this one's from Art McCauley!

    (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARIA
(to her)
Tell him I'll be right there.

Maria watches Rick read the card and is happy for him. She is amused at his happy face.

RICK
Art, I can't believe he wrote.

Art McCauley, he's doing fine.

MARIA
I'm happy for you.

RICK
When I first got to the hospital he helped me more than anybody else in that damn place.

MARIA
That damn place saved your life.

RICK
I saved my life. The question is--who's gonna save the rest of yours?

He points to her. She turns around and leaves. Rick glances over at Steve watching television. He then opens the package. Rick is surprised at the contents.

ANOTHER ANGLE

There is a medium profile shot of Steve watching television as the remote control lies on the bed along side of him. We see Rick's hand enter the frame as he picks up the remote control and turns the T.V. off. Steve is startled.

RICK
It doesn't look good for the leader of the Golden Chariots to be watching the Gong Show.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

STEVE
Why not? Most walkie's think our act is as fucked as anything on T.V.

RICK
I've got to set you straight my man.

STEVE
You're gonna set me straight?

Rick reaches into his package.

RICK
But I can't do it when I'm straight!

He pulls out a fifth of Jack Daniels. Steve's eyes get wider.

RICK
I kinda sensed from the start that you were a drinking man.

BEAT as Rick holds the bottle up to his lips. Steve then takes a good swig. Rick takes a shot and takes a bag of marijuana from the package.

RICK
(Cont'd)
I felt that you liked to smoke a little too.

Steve supports a big smile on his face.

RICK
(Cont'd)
Quite a care package, eh?

BEAT. Rick rolls a joint.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
(Cont'd)
This is a great exercise for me. Helps promote good finger dexterity.

STEVE
(feeling high)
All right, roll that sucker.

Rick laboriously finishes rolling the joint and takes a deep hit.

RICK
It's the first time you've been pulling for me since I've been here.

Steve just stares at Rick. Rick takes another hit and then puts it in Steve's mouth. Steve takes a big hit.

STEVE
Good shit!

RICK
Eh, my friends take care of me.

BEAT.

RICK
(Cont'd)
And I take care of my friends.

STEVE
You ain't so bad for a fucking walkie.

Rick places the Jack Daniels up to Steve's lips.

RICK
And you ain't so bad for a God damned quadruple!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Steve spits out the bourbon as he breaks up into a fit of LAUGHTER. The LAUGHTER is contagious as Rick joins in. They both are feeling extremely good.

RICK
Hey bud, you starting to get a little buzz?

STEVE
Am I human?

RICK
You bet your sweet ass!

Steve LAUGHS.

STEVE
Ya know, if I keep drinking like this, my leg bag is gonna burst.

RICK
Oh bullshit.

Rick puts the bottle up to Steve's lips and he takes another swig. Rick does so also. Both now slur their words.

RICK
Too bad we don't have anything to chase it with.

STEVE
Ah, you're a woman.

RICK
Well, I guess that makes me human too.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. RICK'S ROOM - NIGHT

It is a few hours later and the effects of Rick's and Steve's intoxication has diminished.

STEVE
Man, I just don't know what I'm gonna do when I get out there in the jungle.

RICK
Hey man, you're human right--humans have conquered jungles before.

STEVE
(in panic)
But what am I gonna do? Man, you've been there but now you're gonna get better. You can relate--others can't.

RICK
Make them.

STEVE
It's hard.

RICK
Well bud, if you can't than no one else can. That's your first handicap.

STEVE
That's easy to say ya know, very easy.

RICK
Hey--remember one thing: Nothings easy.

BEAT. Steve is trying to laugh off his depression.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK  
(Cont'd)
You say I've been there—big shit. Do ya think I could understand half of what's going on in your mind? I do know this though—society's handicapped you more than any accident ever has.

STEVE  
I hear ya.

RICK  
Ya hear me, but are you listening?

Steve breaks out in LAUGHTER. It is more of a nervous release than anything else.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Maria enters the room and is surprised to see the two in their condition.

STEVE  
Maria, come in Maria—join the party—come toast the revelations.

She is happy that the two have become friends. She leaves to get the others.

RICK  
Are ya listening Steve?

Steve listens intently.

RICK  
(Cont'd)
You've used every defense mechanism you could throw at me since (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
(Cont'd)
I've been here. Just who the hell are you fighting?

Steve is speechless.

RICK
You just sit around feeling sorry for yourself and getting nothing done. How the hell are ya gonna make those ass holes out there realize that their handicapping you if you think you're at a grave disadvantage in the first place!

Steve remains still.

RICK
(Cont'd)
You can do more than ya think ya can bud. Man, show em your paralysis ain't half the handicap that they've placed on ya!

BEAT.

STEVE
Are you finished singing me the national anthem?!

RICK
I'm just telling ya how I feel. You take it or use it as you may.

Tears come to Steve's eyes as he struggles to extend his hand to Rick. Rick watches, but refuses to help.

STEVE
Thanks, man.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Rick grasps his hand and shakes it. Maria enters the room with Cuddy and Bill. They are all surprised and delighted by the smoke in the room and the condition Rick and Steve are in.

CUDDY
(to Rick)
Do you see what I see?

RICK
I'd ask ya to pinch me but I wouldn't be able to feel it anyway.

Rick and Steve notice the others.

STEVE
Well, close the door and let's get down.

The others joyously join the party. Rick passes everyone the bottle and another joint. He then takes a mirror and finely cuts some cocaine. The noise level gradually rises.

STEVE
Hey, hold it down--the station is right down the hall!

The others party except Maria--who sits in a quiet corner of the room. She is solemn.

After a few minutes have passed and everyone has drunk, smoked and snorted, Rich notices that Maria is totally withdrawn. He speaks to Steve but alternately glances over at her.

STEVE
Hey man, I still don't know what I'm gonna do.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Well you're in the same predicament that almost every red-blooded American "walkie" is in.

Steve is confused. Rick glances over at Maria then back to Steve.

RICK
(Cont'd)
To go to school or not go--which job to take...it all boils down to the same shit.

STEVE
(perplexed)
But...

RICK
But what? This is 1978 my man! Almost every college has a program for handicaps. Gibron's got a file filled with jobs.

STEVE
Ah, Gibron.

RICK
The slob's not totally useless, ya know.

Steve supports a huge grin--a perfect example of réjuvenation. Rick is overcome by an inner feeling of self-satisfaction. He slowly rises from his wheelchair and, with the help of his cane, slowly moves toward Maria.

JUMP CUT TO:
INT. RICK'S ROOM - FULL SHOT - NIGHT

It is a few hours later.

STEVE
As founder and president of
the Golden Chariots, I hereby
declare Richard Saladino an hon-
orary member!

Everyone is seen cheering. Everyone is happy except
Maria who remains motionless.

Rick slowly rises with his cane and moves slowly to-
ward Maria. The others continue to APPLAUD him.

He stands in front of Maria and then drops to his knees.
The others continue to party in the b.g.

FAVORING RICK & MARIA

MARIA
(disgusted)
So this is your method of making
them believe in themselves--re-
ducing them to total enebriation?

Rick is annoyed at this remark. He tries to express
himself without slurring his words.

RICK
Listen woman, don't get on
my case.

MARIA
Will they feel the same way tomor-
ow morning? Somehow I feel your
ploy is of short duration.

RICK
Hey, we're having fun God damn it!
It's something that they've forgot-
ten how to do--It's something you've
forgotten how to do!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARIA
(looking around)
I hope you're satisfied.

RICK
Damn right I am.

BEAT as he looks around the room.

RICK
(Cont'd)
Just look around the room and tell me what you see.

She looks around the room.

RICK
(Cont'd)
Well, tell me--whata ya see?

MARIA
I see a bunch of drunken and stoned quadraplegic bums who think they can go out and run the hundred yard dash.

RICK
I see some happy faces.

MARIA
Under false pretenses.

RICK
(raising his voice)
I see a bunch of happy faces Maria!...when was the last time you saw that?

BEAT as she tries to think of something to say.

MARIA
Reality will wake them in the morning.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Well just let me put em to bed. Look around right now Maria and try ta take it away from them.

He looks into her eyes.

RICK
(Cont'd)
You asked me if I were satisfied--actually I'm not...yet.

Rick crawls along side of her and puts his arms around her shoulders.

RICK
(Cont'd)
You said you've always wanted to dance.

She nods her head in agreement.

RICK
(Cont'd)
Well...dance.

He places her hands around his shoulders, hunches over her, and pushes and pulls her around the room. The others see this and eventually the room is silent. All eyes are fixed upon them. The CAMERA PANS to show all their faces.

Maria holds on with all her might. Tears flow from her eyes.

CUT TO:
EXT. BROOK PARKING LOT - NIGHT.

It is the parking lot at Brook Rehabilitation Center and from a quiet atmosphere the noise of a speeding Corvette is heard as we see the car pull into a parking space.

The occupant, who we can't make out the face, gets out of the car and reveals a nice pair of legs. She crosses the parking area and is seen entering the building.

INT. BROOK LOBBY - FULL ANGLE - NIGHT

We see the woman's P.O.V. as the CAMERA DOLLIES to the registration desk. The guard looks up at her. We do not see her face.

WOMAN
Room 214.

GUARD
I'm sorry lady, but visiting hours have been over for two hours.

WOMAN
This is a discharge.

CAMERA DOLLIES down the hall as she leaves the desk. The guard calls out to her but she continues to head toward the elevator.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S ROOM - FULL SHOT - NIGHT

The two continue to dance as Steve starts to hum the wedding march. The others gradually join in as the volume gradually rises.

CUT TO:
INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

CAMERA continues to DOLLY as the woman walks down the long corridor. She stops as she sees the proper room number.

INT. RICK'S ROOM - NIGHT

FAVORING DOOR

As it is opened the woman walks directly into the light. It is JoAnne.

FULL ANGLE

Everyone except Rick is surprised to see her at the door. Maria is petrified. Rick stops the dance. We see Rick's face against Maria's shoulder.

JOANNE
(astonished)
I don't believe it.

Rick looks straight ahead and his expression indicates that the voice is familiar to him.

JOANNE
(Cont'd)
I don't fuckin believe it!

She breaks out into a sardonic LAUGH.

Rick slowly removes Maria's arms from his shoulders and he slowly turns around.

JoAnne walks up to him.

FAVORING RICK & JOANNE

He stares at her for a few seconds and then crawls across the floor to get his cane. He slowly lifts himself from

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

the floor with the cane and slowly moves toward her. His stare is freightning. JoAnne, noticing his expression, quickly retains a serious face. Rick stops five feet away from her as she starts to back up.

RICK
(low key)
Well, well...tonight's just filled with surprises.

JOANNE
Hi darling.

She moves toward him and gives him a big kiss. He remains mesmerized and does not return the affection. She notices his coldness.

She looks around the room and the sight of the quadriplegics makes her sick.

JOANNE
(crying)
I've come to get you out of this...place.

RICK
Leave JoAnne...right in the middle of a party? Now that would be rude wouldn't it?

She is ill at ease at his lack of cooperation.

JOANNE
Come on, let's go home.
Things will get back to normal in no time.

He turns around as she tries to touch him.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
(sarcastic)
Ah yes... normal. I haven't been too much of that lately. Just last week I could lift fifty pounds but this week I turned for the worse--sixty. A week ago I could walk twenty-five feet without a cane, but things really got abnormal this week--I walked fifty.

He turns and points to Maria who is seated behind him.

RICK
(Cont'd)
Was gonna marry this little girl, but now I've really turned for the worse--got really abnormal. Do you realize I've turned into a...walkie...I got scared and called the doctor and he said there was a lot of that going around.

JoAnne is furious.

JOANNE
I deplore your inuendo.

RICK
(YELLING)
And I deplore this entire scene right out of "Gone With The Wind".

JOANNE
You're obviously disturbed. I can see how this place can make you so.

RICK
Frankly my dear...I don't give a damn.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JOANNE
I want you back.

RICK
Frankly my dear...I think you're full of shit.

She turns around and is embarrassed at everyone staring at her.

JOANNE
Richard, not here!

RICK
(screaming)
Right here!

The guard enters the room with a nurse.

GUARD
Miss, I'm sorry, but I must ask you to leave.

RICK
She is officer, in just a few minutes. Thank you.

GUARD
Well...all right.

The officer leaves.

NURSE
Something's different.

RICK
Everything's fine.

An incredulous look falls upon her face. She turns and leaves.

Rick circles JoAnne.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Take a good look JoAnne. Richard Anthony Saladino—he walks, he talks, he wets...

JOANNE
Please--stop this.

RICK
It's one thing to be jilted at the altar. It's another thing to be jilted at the emergency room, the intensive care unit, and the spinal chord injury ward.

JOANNE
I just couldn't see you like that.

RICK
Like what? Like what?

He points to the rest of them.

RICK
Like the freaks?
(to them)
How's it going, freaks?

Everyone, except Maria, acknowledge their approval.

JOANNE
I'm not just going to stand there and take this. I love you.

She hugs him.

JOANNE
(Cont'd)
I want to start all over.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He backs away.

**RICK**

With a new model. What happened on your wedding day. Don't like damaged goods? Thought your gown would get tangled in my spokes going down the aisle!!!!???

**JOANNE**

You don't realize what I've been through.

**RICK**

(SCREAMING)

And what have I been through--a tea party?

Disgusted, he turns his back to her. She breaks down in tears. She rushes to him and wraps her arms around him. He stares directly toward Maria who is also crying.

**JOANNE**

(hysterical)

Richard I want you back! Honest to God, I want you back! Please forgive me, I'm sorry...I'm sorry.

He breaks her hold and moves to the other side of the room, leaving her by herself.

**WIDER ANGLE**

Rick stares at her for a few minutes as she slowly regains her composure. Maria continues to cry silently.

**JOANNE**

I'll be waiting for you in the car. I love you.

JoAnne leaves the room, but not after first glancing over at Maria. The two stare at each other for a long time. She then walks out.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

All is silent as all eyes are fixed on Rick.

STEVE

Hey man, don't worry about us.

Rick stares into blind space for a moment, then moves toward Maria. He stops in front of her and then falls to his knees. He continues his dance. All is quiet as they dance their way inadvertently toward the corridor. They stop just outside the bedroom door. Maria juggles her head as a sign for Rick to let go. He does so. She regains her composure.

FAVORING THE TWO

MARIA

Don't keep her waiting too long.

RICK

Who says I'm going?

MARIA

You're heart.

RICK

Five months ago there wasn't any doubt.

Maria wheels herself out into the corridor. Rick follows.

RICK

I'm confused Maria...we dance...

MARIA

How long does it take for the music to stop? We dance all right...but to a different drum.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RICK
Maria...

Maria acts apprehensive for the benefit of the situation. She wants Rick but knows that it is impossible in the long run. She fights back further tears.

MARIA
Think with your mind--
not your conscience.

RICK
Maria...

MARIA
Stop it, stop it right now.
I don't need sympathy...I
too am a survivor.

He stares at her for a few seconds then drops to his knees and hugs her tight.

RICK
(weeping)
I'm so confused.

MARIA
For absolutely no reason.

She backs up.

MARIA
Go!

Rick regains his composure. He is totally confused in his drunken stupor.

MARIA
(Cont'd)
You can't change the inevitable.

FULL SHOT

Rick slowly gets up and walks ever so slowly down the
CONTINUED:

corridor in the direction of the elevators. Maria turns and goes in the opposite direction. She goes ten feet, stops, and turns to watch him leave. She cries.

MARIA
(to herself)
Survive sweetheart...
survive...

CRANE UP

As he moves silently down into a elevator.

SLOW FADE OUT.

THE END