

The Most Hated Woman In America

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FADE IN.

CREDITS over a black and white slide show of BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, circa 1950's. Slides are of the many churches in BALTIMORE, and can include people worshipping. There may also be shots/slides of school children doing bible study, or being instructed by a priest, etc. The last slide is on the MURRAY HOUSE.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- NIGHT

(Perhaps dissolve to color) ESTABLISHING: Snowflakes drift down.

SUPER: BALTIMORE, JANUARY, 1959.

A wireless program is playing. There is a political broadcast on, perhaps an interview (it should be an authentic broadcast of the period: a Presidential interview). The broadcast expresses nationalism, belief in God, and strong moral values. It may be centered on an issue of the day.

Moving up to a sitting room window, we look inside. MADALYN MURRAY (40), PUP, her father, and BONNA, her Mother, sit in the cozy room, listening to the broadcast. Pup smokes, Madalyn knits.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Madalyn lowers her knitting, worried. She checks her watch and looks toward the front door. She crosses to it.

PUP

(not looking round)

Looking out every five minutes ain't
going to help.

Madalyn dismisses him with a look, rubs the frost from the alcove glass, and looks out. She reaches for her coat.

INT. BUS -- MOVING -- NIGHT

BILL (13) (to play up to 16) sits on an old bus. It has only a few PASSENGERS - people as grey and somber as the conditions. The bus interior is cold and dimly lit. Bill, looking weary, studies the bland people around him.

EXT. STREET CORNER -- NIGHT

There is a dim street light. Madalyn stands on a street corner, looking around, her breath steaming the air. She is worried.

The bus rounds a corner and rumbles toward her.

It pulls up on the other side of the street. It moves out of frame. Bill is left standing on the sidewalk.

Madalyn opens her arms as he comes toward her. They hug.

MADALYN

God, where've you been? I been worried sick.

BILL

Buses were delayed. Thought I'd never get home.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Madalyn stirs custard in a pot on the stove. Bill sits at a table, hungrily consuming his dinner. Madalyn is thoughtful.

MADALYN

Ah, to hell with these late nights, kiddo.

BILL

(grinning, gnawing a bone)
So I'm going to public school tomorrow?

Madalyn is mildly surprised.

BILL

You're an open book...kiddo.

He chuckles, licking his fingers. Madalyn grins.

INT. MURRAY HOME - FOYER -- MORNING

Bill is on the phone. He cups the mouthpiece.

BILL

Mother, I have to see the principal and be accompanied by a parent.

Madalyn appears at the kitchen door, buttering a slice of toast.

MADALYN

You're thirteen.

BILL

I know that.

MADALYN (advancing)

Gimme.

BILL

Mom, I know what the woman said.

Madalyn stops. She sighs and shrugs.

MADALYN

I'll try to get time off work.

She goes back to the kitchen.

BILL (into the phone)

Yeah, that's okay. Thank you.

He hangs up.

INT. CAR -- MOVING -- DAY

Madalyn drives, Bill alongside.

MADALYN

(sighing, shaking her head)

Public schools. The slop they program into kid's heads.

BILL

I got my own brain you know. I mean at Park School I learnt Bar Mitzvah, Hanukkah, Passover...

MADALYN

Okay, so I didn't realize it was a Jewish school. To be exposed to sub-culture values is very broadening.

Madalyn grins. The grin fades from her face however as she notices the high school.

WOODBOURNE JUNIOR HIGH is a bleak institution, on a bleak day.

EXT. WOODBOURNE JUNIOR HIGH -- DAY

The car swings into the schoolyard and into a parking area.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT -- DAY

Madalyn and Bill move away from the car, Bill is slower, locking his door.

MADALYN

Come on, come on. Mommy has to register-
register her little baby boy at the nice
big schooly-wooly.

Bill sucks his thumb as he draws alongside. Madalyn slaps his hand
down playfully. He does it again, she slaps it again, then hugs him.

INT. SCHOOL. CORRIDOR -- DAY

Madalyn and Bill enter through a side door. Long, sterile corridors
going in either direction.

MADALYN

Christ, it's the goddamned catacombs.

BILL

Everyone must be in class.

MADALYN

Yeah, it's after nine.

They are indecisive about which way to go. Bill heads off one way,
Madalyn the other. Madalyn wins out as Bill hurries to catch her up.

INT. AN ADJOINING CORRIDOR -- DAY

Madalyn and Bill round a corridor corner and stop as they see the
next long corridor. It is like the catacombs.

BILL

God.

Suddenly a swell of young voices engulf them. The Lord's Prayer is
being recited in each classroom. Madalyn and Bill look at each other
and laugh ironically.

Traveling with them down the corridor, past the classrooms, each
with its chorus of voices.

Bill lifts his head slightly, attempting to peep into a classroom
through the glass in a door.

HIS P.O.V.: Sweeping by there are glimpses of STUDENTS standing and
reciting the prayer.

Bill's expression is innocent, apprehensive.

INT. HEADMASTER'S OUTER OFFICE -- DAY

Madalyn and Bill sit, waiting. There is a stern looking SECRETARY not far away. After a moment...

BILL

(voiced whisper)

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Son of Mary, sired by the Holy Ghost, descendant of David, the bearer of the Holy Word, Redeemer of Life, and the Gate by which we enter Heaven and are saved, in whose Grace we walk...

Madalyn, grinning, slaps his leg to shut him up.

MADALYN

(voiced whisper, falsely sarcastic)

They teach you that at Park School?

BILL

Hell no. Jews want education, not indoctrination.

Madalyn stifles a laugh.

SECRETARY (stern)

You can go in now.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Madalyn enters, followed by Bill. Madalyn stops dead, almost laughing out loud.

The PRINCIPAL is a woman in her mid-40's. She is garishly made up, with her face powder many shades too light, and bright rouge circles on her cheeks. Her 'princess' dress has a plunging neckline revealing large breasts overflowing a bodice brassiere. She does not smile, but looks them up and down imperiously.

PRINCIPAL (to Bill)

You may wait outside.

Bill begins to obey, but Madalyn stops him with a finger to his shoulder.

MADALYN (to the Principal)

Why?

PRINCIPAL

We need to discuss this, and the pupil should not be present.

MADALYN

What's to discuss? He's transferring to your school.

All three wait.

PRINCIPAL

Why, this is highly irregular.

MADALYN

I'm not trying to create a problem. This is my son. We live in your school district. He is transferring from Park School, today.

PRINCIPAL

Where are his psychologicals?!

MADALYN

His what?

PRINCIPAL

Why, it is necessary for us to see if he can assimilate here.

MADALYN

You're kidding, right?

Madalyn bursts out laughing. The Principal bristles. Bill lowers his head, concealing a grin.

PRINCIPAL

We feel we are privileged here to have one of the finest educational systems in the country. We need not accept just anyone; we must see if they integrate...

MADALYN

Oh, then this is not a public school?

PRINCIPAL

Your son will need to take a physical. Both of you will need to be counseled. Park school will need to furnish his psychologicals and his grade equivalents.

MADALYN

Madam, I'm afraid you are badly mistaken. There is a compulsory school attendance law, requiring my son attend public school. So, here he is. The telephone will connect you with Park School to verify his grades. I will give birth, residency and any other similar information in case you feel a thirteen year-old cannot undertake such simple tasks.

She turns to Bill, pointing to the Secretary's desk outside.

MADALYN

Bill, give them your name, rank and serial number. That's all the Geneva Convention requires.

Bill exits. She turns back to the Principal, irritated by her.

When my son and I arrived this morning, we heard pupils reciting the Lord's Prayer. What was that about?

The Principal's jaw drops.

PRINCIPAL

Why, that's our morning devotion.

MADALYN

This is 1959 you know, and this is a public school.

PRINCIPAL (thunderstruck)

Yes?

MADALYN

Public? Non-religious? Separation of church and state ring a bell? My son is here to get education, not indoctrination.

She looks deliberately at the crease in the Principal's breasts, and lets her eyes come slowly back up.

Madam.

Principal flushes red with anger.

Madalyn walks out.

FADE IN: Children singing a hymn.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. MURRAY HOUSE. LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Bonna sits by the radio, alone, listening to a devotional show. She hears the front door open and shut. She is already out of her chair, turning the station, a guilty look on her face. Madalyn enters, takes in the scene.

MADALYN

Hi.

BONNA

Hi.

MADALYN

Have a nice day?

BONNA

Oh, yeah.

MADALYN

Where's Garth?

BONNA

He's tucked up. Said he wasn't feeling well.

MADALYN (concerned)

Oh?

She moves immediately toward a staircase.

BONNA

I took his temperature. It was fine.

But Madalyn has gone. Checking Madalyn is really gone, Bonna re-tunes the radio to the devotional service.

INT. GARTH'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

GARTH (4) lies in bed, wide awake. He hears his Mother coming, turns and watches the door.

The door opens. Garth smiles. Madalyn smiles back. They hug.

MADALYN

Hello mommy's darling boy. What's all this in bed at this hour? You sick?

Garth shakes his head.

MADALYN

But Grandma said you were sick.

Garth shakes his head and hugs her.

Oh, you just missing your mommy
are you. C'mon,

Madalyn picks him up and walks toward the door.

you can come with me down to the
cellar while I do some work on my
rug. Would you like that? I missed
you at work today.

GARTH

Yeah?

MADALYN

Oh yeah, I thought about you all day long.

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- NIGHT

CAMERA explores the room. It is large and handsomely finished in timber. There are a great many books in large shelves. There are a great many hobbies in various stages of completion on tables everywhere. There is ham radio, leatherwork, sewing, crochet, ceramic-tile coffee tables, boat models and so on - suggesting an unending thirst for activity and creation. Bill works on a school assignment at a desk, Garth plays with toys, Madalyn works on a small loom, weaving a rug.

Bill writes, referencing from an opened magazine. He finishes the sentence, stands and closes the magazine. The cover reads "U.S.S.R. Cultural Exchange Magazine" Bill has moved toward his Mother, taking his assignment with him.

BILL

Hey Ma, could you read this for me?

MADALYN

Sure.

She nods her head at a table. He drops it on the table and turns to go.

MADALYN

How's school?

BILL

Oh, okay I guess. Standard's low compared to Park.

MADALYN

So no excuse for poor grades.

BILL

Read it and weep.

Madalyn grins.

FAST DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL ROOM. WOODBOURNE JUNIOR HIGH -- DAY

The exercise book is in TEACHER 1's hand. She is a clone of the PRINCIPAL in manner and dress.

TEACHER 1 (reading)

"....Perma frost has its uses. The Russians have found that they can lay vast underground pipelines merely by tunneling in the ground. Oil is shipped many thousands of miles using this method."

Teacher 1 looks up, and shakes her head. Bill stands in his place toward the rear of the class.

TEACHER 1

How dare you hand in work like this.

She waits for a reaction. Bill is stunned.

TEACHER 1

Who put you up to this?

BILL

No one.

TEACHER 1

No one. No one inspired you to write this pro-Russian insanity?

BILL

Miss, I just wrote the facts about...

TEACHER 1

Don't you dare insult my intelligence!
I know Communist propaganda when I read
it. I want you to know, young man, that
this is an American school. We don't
like Communists here, and we don't take
kindly to traitors like you telling us
how we should live. I would expect each
pupil in this class to go to this boy and
get an apology from his own lips personally.
I am not in the habit of condoning nor giving
sanctuary to Stalinists like yourself.
You can stand right there until the end
of period.

Teacher 1 flings the exercise book at him. Bill catches it. He is dazed, confused. As the above speech has taken place, CUT AWAY to REACTION SHOTS of some of the tougher BOYS in the class looking dangerously at Bill. Teacher 1 picks up the next exercise book.

TEACHER 1

Ah yes, Mary Whitehouse, some good
work here, Mary.

MARY WHITEHOUSE beams with pride.

TEACHER 1

It's well written. (reading) "Communism
is a word synonymous with Atheism. The
system which has been forced on hapless
millions of innocent people,

Bill stands, bewildered.

TEACHER 1 (O.S.)

"people who long for the freedom to
worship a Christian God, and to
participate in a free market economy,
people who long for free speech...

INT. CORRIDOR -- DAY

Bill walks down the crowded corridor toward his locker. Suddenly he is shoved heavily by passing MALE STUDENT 1. His books are knocked from his hand. He looks round, but the Student has disappeared into the crowd. Bill collects his books and opens his locker, putting the books inside. He looks at the people around him, wondering about them.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- DAY

Bill walks, on his way home from school. Suddenly he is struck painfully in the back with a rock. He staggers and turns. MALE STUDENTS 1-5 from his school are not far behind him.

STUDENT 1

Hey, Commie! We've come for our apology!

STUDENT 2

Yeah, you Commie fink! You dirty Red!

Bill takes off.

STUDENT 1

Get him!

They give chase.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- DAY

The chase goes on. Bill is scared. He falls heavily, but is on his feet quickly and running again. He sees something up ahead.

A woman, MRS. PARKER, takes mail from her letterbox.

BILL

Mrs Parker! Mrs Parker!

Mrs. Parker freezes as she sees what is coming.

INT. SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE -- DAY

Madalyn is on the phone.

MADALYN

And they're still outside?

INTERCUT TO:

INT. MRS. PARKER'S HOUSE -- DAY

BILL

(on the phone)

Yeah, right outside.

Mrs. Parker looks out through a crack in the curtains.

BILL (O.S.)

All I did was...you know that assignment
I did on Russia, well my teacher
accused me of being a Communist.

Looking over Mrs. Parker's shoulder: the Students linger around the front fence to her property. Mrs. Parker half-glances round at what Bill is saying.

The vague electronic sounds of Madalyn on the line can be heard.

BILL (O.S.)

Okay, see you then.

He hangs up. Mrs. Parker looks him up and down.

MRS. PARKER

You're not a Communist are you, Bill?

Bill half-laughs with exasperation. Mrs. Parker watches him expressionlessly, waiting for an answer.

EXT. MRS. PARKER'S HOUSE -- DAY

As Madalyn arrives in her car the Boys begin to move off.

MADALYN

Hey, wait a minute, I want to talk to you!

As she gets out the Students move off more rapidly. They catcall as they go - "Dirty Commie scum!" "Rotten Red rats!" etc.

MADALYN

Hey come back here!

They break into a run.

Madalyn looks round. Bill exits the house.

MADALYN

You okay?

Bill nods and gets in the car. Madalyn hasn't moved. She looks at Bill, to the retreating Students, then to the house. Mrs. Parker stands at the front door.

MADALYN

Thanks, Mary.

Mrs. Parker merely watches her. Madalyn gets into the car.

EXT. CAR INT -- MOVING -- DAY

BILL

I would have gotten an 'A' on that paper at Park school.

MADALYN

Well...people have built in biases. It's a fact of life.

Bill doesn't reply, but looks sullenly out the window.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

PRINCIPAL

Your son provoked this attack. Those boys are American boys, defending their country.

MADALYN (incredulous)

What are you talking about?

PRINCIPAL

Your son will be disciplined by our office. I plan to have him in here to chastise him. That was a shocking paper he wrote.

MADALYN

Well, then...we are in total conflict. My son is not here to be indoctrinated in accordance with your opinion of the USSR. I read that paper. It was factual, objective...

PRINCIPAL

It was pro-Russia.

MADALYN

Examining factually is a crime in your school?

PRINCIPAL

Patriotism is a part of every American school program.

MADALYN

You're daring to impugn the patriotism of my son?

PRINCIPAL

The paper was pro-Russian.

MADALYN

What about the youngsters who ganged up on him? Have they been disciplined?

PRINCIPAL

Your son provoked this.

MADALYN

With a paper written for a teacher, seen by no one else? Your teacher provoked this.

PRINCIPAL

The teacher had every right to show this element in the classroom.

MADALYN

Element?! Element?!

PRINCIPAL

This was obviously pro-Russian.

MADALYN

My son's account is correct then? A teacher ridiculed him in front of a peer group and then tried to arouse violence against him?

PRINCIPAL

Patriotism, love of country, is a necessary part of the program of all American schools...

MADALYN

My God! You are quite insane! You countenance this?!

PRINCIPAL

Those boys were defending their country.

Madalyn realizes it is pointless. She picks up her purse.

MADALYN

I strongly suggest you see a psychiatrist.

She exits.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - CLUB CELLAR -- NIGHT

Madalyn and Bill play a duet on the piano while singing. Garth is on Madalyn's lap. They are having a wonderful time. They finish the song, and hug, laughing.

EXT. CAR-INT - MOUNTAINOUS AREA -- DAY

Madalyn drives, Bill studies a topographical map.

BILL

That dirt road must be on our left soon.

MADALYN

How far?

BILL

Soon.

The road is coming up.

They turn into it.

BILL

Now you go a mile up here, and there's a gate. Then we walk.

MADALYN

How far?

BILL

God, you want everything so precise.

MADALYN

So precisely. How far?

BILL

'Bout half a mile.

MADALYN

What's the gradient?

BILL

Pretty steep.

MADALYN

One in what?

Bill hesitates.

MADALYN

Remember what I taught you? Square your distance, square your highest point, add them...

BILL

I'm doing that...One in four.

MADALYN (grinning)

Not bad.

BILL

Did you have to do that a lot building the turnpike?

MADALYN

Yeah. You get so you just look at a map and you can judge the grade. It's like everything, just practice.

BILL

How come you've done things like that, you know, things men do?

MADALYN

Like what?

BILL

What do you mean like what? Like working on skyscrapers and turnpikes, being a mathematician, being an aeronautical engineer, being a lawyer.

MADALYN

So?

BILL

Well, how many women do you know do those things?

MADALYN

Well what about my gardening, my crochet, my knitting, my weaving?

BILL

Well, women normally do that.

MADALYN

Bill Murray, I don't think you've gained a single insight from this whole Communist debacle. You've got a closed mind about women's roles the same way those people think about patriotism. You want to know why I do the things I do? Because life my friend is short. You only get one shot. There ain't no heaven and there ain't no hell. Take a good long drink of life, because you only get one taste.

BILL

You really believe God doesn't exist?

MADALYN

Well so what if He does? No God ever gave any man anything, nor answered any prayer at any time, nor ever will.

BILL

Well, why don't you say that out loud?

MADALYN

Just did.

They pull up.

EXT. MOUNTAINS -- DAY

They have arrived at a gate. Madalyn and Bill get out of the car and climb through.

BILL

You know what I mean. Why don't you make a stand about it?

MADALYN

What for? I said drink from the cup of life, not spill it.

BILL

Yeah, you've always got the right answer, right, but you can't just brush it off like that. You're always telling me to live by my principles, but you don't. That's hypocrisy.

EXT. MOUNTAINS -- DAY

They move down a steep track.

MADALYN

I stand up for what I believe in all the time.

BILL

Yeah, but you do it in such a way that you're bound to lose. You just register your opposition, but you don't do anything. That's hypocrisy.

Madalyn stops and points.

MADALYN

There's your river.

Bill looks.

There is a small brook at the bottom of the gully.

BILL

That's the start of the Chesapeake River?!

MADALYN

That's it.

BILL

Gee Whiz!

He rushes down to look at it further.

Madalyn grins at his enthusiasm. The grin dries on her face, however, as she considers what he has been saying.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BY A BROOK -- DAY

Bill's running foot splashes in the water. His rolled up trouser legs mount the bank and hurry to Madalyn, asleep on a blanket nearby.

Bill stops, standing over her. He pants and grins, full of youthful vigor.

MADALYN (waking suddenly)
You're Mother is no hypocrite.

Bill bursts out laughing.

BILL

Have a nice nap?

Madalyn realizes she had been dreaming. He drops beside her.

BILL

When we get home, we've got to do something. We've got to show we can't accept things the way they are.

MADALYN

Oh?

BILL

You want to tell me about Atheism?

MADALYN

Well, A-theism. It's non-belief in any religious dogma.

BILL

Ma, I don't believe you sometimes, you're exasperating! I want you to tell me about it! All the other kids, they've got religion...

MADALYN

Yeah and they're indoctrinated...

BILL

They may be indoctrinated but at least they have something! What do I have? Nothing!

MADALYN

I've told you before I don't have the right...

BILL

I don't want to hear that again...

MADALYN

I don't have the right to make you a Catholic, a Jew, a Protestant, a Republican, a Democrat. Anything! And yes, even an Atheist.

BILL

You mean you can't tell me what's good or bad about it?

MADALYN (shrugs)

You see how I live.

EXT. CAR INT. -- MOVING -- THE MOUNTAINS -- DAY

They drive in silence, Bill deep in thought.

MADALYN

Well suppose you dream up some kind of special activity that will show the world you are going to be a man of your convictions.

BILL

I have. Just thinking of the right way to go about it.

MADALYN

Well?

BILL

I'm not going to read the Bible in school anymore or listen to anyone else reading it. And I'm not going to recite the Lord's Prayer anymore.

Madalyn looks at him, wondering, worried. Bill looks round at her.

BILL

And you, madam, are going to help me.

Madalyn grins unconvincingly, and watches the road.

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY -- DAY

Madalyn steps out from behind a screen, buttoning up her dress.

DOCTOR

It's simple. Your insides are a mess. You need a full hysterectomy. How long have you been bleeding like that?

MADALYN

Six months.

DOCTOR

Six months?!

MADALYN

It's not easy paying off a mortgage and raising two boys on your own. I can't afford the time off work.

DOCTOR

What's your job?

MADALYN

I'm a lawyer with Social Security.

DOCTOR

You need extended sick leave. And we'd better have a talk about cleaning out your womb. That bleeding can only get worse until it's a flood. One day you might just bleed to death.

Madalyn nods tiredly.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- DAY

Madalyn gives Garth and Bill their breakfast. Bill finishes up, ready to go to school. Madalyn cooks toast.

BILL

It won't do any good to see the principal, she's crazy, and if I say something to the teacher she's such a minor player it'll get lost in the ball game. So it's you that has to take the ball and run with it for the first half.

MADALYN

Are we talking grid iron or basketball?

BILL

Will you be serious, mom.

Pup enters, carrying a paper.

PUP

Morning all.

MADALYN

Morning, Pup.

He sits at the table and begins to read the paper. Bill is irritated at the interruption. Madalyn crosses to Pup and pours him a coffee.

PUP (referring to the paper)
See old Ike got that bill through Congress.
Good man.

Madalyn growls with disapproval.

PUP

You know your ma was a cryptographer on Ike's personal staff during the war.

BILL

What's that?

PUP

Cryptographer? No idea, but I know he turned her down for a date and she's never forgiven him.

MADALYN (taking the bait)

Oh he did not! Like I'd date a Republican!

Bill gets up and surreptitiously jerks his head to Madalyn as he leaves the room. Madalyn shoots Pup a terse look and follows. Pup reads the paper, grinning.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- HALL -- DAY

BILL

(whispering intently)

Can you call the school today and tell them I'm not going to say prayers or read the Bible anymore. If I tell them, they'll think I'm just a fourteen year old brat...

Madalyn makes a face suggesting he is a brat but is interrupted by Bonna coming by.

BILL

Morning, grandma.

BONNA

Morning.

She looks at them peculiarly as she enters the kitchen. Snickering, Madalyn and Bill move down to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY

BILL

Look the thing is, I'd get nowhere. Now you tell them that I will not pray, and see what they say.

MADALYN

Aye aye, sir, Mr. Bossman, sir.

BILL

It's not like that...

MADALYN

Look Bill, all I have to know is do you really want to do this? These aren't liberal people we're dealing with. They're ignorant and self-righteous.

BILL

I'm sure, ma.

MADALYN

Okay.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

Madalyn is at a desk. She glances up at the clock. It is 9 a.m.. She dials a number from the phone book. The person on the line can be heard.

FEMALE VOICE 1 (telephone V.O.)
Board of Education.

MADALYN

Excuse me, Ma'am. I don't know to whom I wish to speak. The problem is my son is required to read the Bible and recite the Lord's Prayer every morning in his school; that's Woodbourne Junior High. He has decided that he does not care to do this anymore. To whom do I speak to get a solution to this situation?

Long pause. Madalyn wonders if the woman is still there.

FEMALE VOICE 1 (telephone V.O.)
Just a moment. I'll give you
Administration.

The phone rings on the line.

FEMALE VOICE 2 (telephone V.O.)
Administration.

Madalyn sighs.

MADALYN

Excuse me, Ma'am. I don't know to whom I wish to speak.

She looks up at the clock.

It is a few minutes past 9.

MADALYN (O.S.)

The problem is my son is required
to read the Bible and recite the
Lord's Prayer...

Her VOICE FADES OUT as we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

The clock now reads 10 past 10.

Madalyn's VOICE FADES IN.

MADALYN (O.S.)

To whom do I speak to get a solution
to this situation?

Madalyn, sits in a forward position, wearily resting her chin on her hand.

FEMALE VOICE 3 (telephone V.O.)
I'm afraid Dr. Vavrina is in conference
and cannot be reached for at least
another hour or more.

MADALYN (sweetly)

I'll wait.

FEMALE VOICE 3 (telephone V.O.)
But it may be an hour...or even two.

MADALYN

That's perfectly alright. I'll hold.

She changes the phone to her other ear.

DR. VAVRINA (telephone V.O.)
Dr. Vavrina.

INTERCUT or diagonal split screen TO:

INT. DR. VAVRINA'S OFFICE - DAY

MADALYN

Ah, Dr. Vavrina. The problem I want to
discuss with you is my son is required

MADALYN (Cont'd)

to read the Bible and recite the Lord's Prayer every morning in school. He's in Woodbourne Junior High. And he's decided that he does not care to do this anymore.

DR. VAVRINA (aghast)

Why...I have never heard of anything like this in my life.

MADALYN

Well, another day another crisis.

DR. VAVRINA

Madam, prayers have been in our schools for as long as there have been schools. This is part of the history of our culture, our total background. I have never had a request like this in my life.

MADALYN

Dr. Vavrina, I am merely stating that my son does not want to say Prayer and he does not want to read from the Bible anymore.

DR. VAVRINA

Why, I never heard of anything like this in my life.

MADALYN

You said that.

DR. VAVRINA

Do you realize that Bible and prayer have always been in the public school? No one has ever not wanted to have them. This is a part of American history. I have never, ever, heard anything like this in my life.

MADALYN

Sir, I am an Atheist. I support my son without equivocation.

DR. VAVRINA

You're a what?

MADALYN

An Atheist.

Dr. Vavrina groans.

DR. VAVRINA

Do you realize what you are saying,
Mrs. Murray?

MADALYN

Dr. Vavrina, my son will need to be excused
from the morning devotional exercise of
Bible Reading and Prayer Recitation.

DR. VAVRINA

Well, we can't...I just don't see how...

MADALYN

Suppose you call me this afternoon advising
me how this matter will be handled. Your
secretary has my number.

She hangs up.

SCREEN WIPE to DR. VAVRINA'S OFFICE:

Dr. Vavrina hangs up slowly, stunned.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - STREET -- LATE DAY

Bill runs down the street, home from school. He whips into his yard,
and into the house.

CUT TO:

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - KITCHEN -- LATE DAY

Madalyn dices vegetables. Bill enters, breathless.

BILL

What'd they say?

MADALYN

Nothing yet. They'll ring just before five.

BILL

They say that?

MADALYN

Bureaucrats always call just before they
shut up shop, that way you can't complain
either to them or their superior until the
next day. People usually give up by then.

She hands him a carrot.

MADALYN

You've just got time to do your homework.

BILL

Who's going to call?

MADALYN

Dr. Vavrina. Superintendent of Secondary Schools.

BILL

Wow! Out-standing!

He exits, happy. Madalyn watches him go, a little worried.

INT. HALL -- LATE AFTERNOON

The hall clock reads five to five. The phone rings. Madalyn comes from the kitchen, wiping her hands on her apron.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL -- LATE AFTERNOON

Bill hurries from his room to the upstairs extension.

Madalyn pauses beside the ringing phone, and looks upstairs.

MADALYN

Got it?!

BILL

Yeah!

He places his hand on the phone.

Madalyn picks up her phone.

Bill picks up his phone.

MADALYN

Hello?

INTERCUT TO:

INT. DR. VAVRINA'S OFFICE -- DAY

DR. VAVRINA

This is Dr. Vavrina. We have had a conference here, which included

The Woodbourne Principal, and DR. BRAIN stand nearby.

DR. VAVRINA (Cont'd)
the principal of Bill's school,
and Dr. Brain, the head of the
educational system in Baltimore...

MADALYN
Excuse me, did you say Dr. Brain?

DR. VAVRINA
Yes. And we have come to a decision about this.

MADALYN
Yes?

DR. VAVRINA
Bill will, Bill shall attend these services.

MADALYN
I am sorry, but Bill will not attend
these services. He does not want to.

DR. VAVRINA
He can refuse to say the prayer, but he
will be required to move his lips as if
he were saying it.

MADALYN
What?!

DR. VAVRINA
He will stand, bow his head in reverence...

MADALYN
Are you serious?

DR. VAVRINA
Now we have had an extensive conference
on this, and we've made our decision.
The matter is settled.

MADALYN
For you maybe. Bill and I won't accept
that decision.

She hangs up. There is a thumping along the upstairs hall as Bill approaches. He stops half-way down the stairs. They exchange a long, portentous look.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - WOODBOURNE JUNIOR HIGH -- DAY

Dr. Vavrina, Dr. Brain, and the Principal are present.

DR. BRAIN (reading a letter)
 "When there is a clear violation of the principle of separation of Church and State, and when my good conscience as a confirmed and practicing Atheist requires that I must rebel against such a flagrant violation of basic constitutional rights, I am compelled, in the action of civil disobedience, to withdraw my son, William, from the Maryland public schools. I do not intend to send him to a private school. He will remain at home and will be schooled under my personal tutelage, without religion."

He passes the letter on to the Principal.

DR. VAVRINA

I've never heard of anything like this in my life.

PRINCIPAL

Well? What do we do now?

DR. VAVRINA

Well she's clearly in breach of the law. We'll simply file truancy charges against her son.

DR. BRAIN

No. No, I'm afraid you're wrong, Doctor. This Murray-O'Hair woman, she's dangerous. She knows the law.

DR. VAVRINA

Oh? How so?

DR. BRAIN

(taking the letter back)
 It's right here. She's deliberately provoking us. She wants us to charge her son with truancy. Get it to court. Then she'll pit our civil law against constitutional law. She'll quote the First Amendment. It's right here, "separation of Church and State". We wouldn't stand a chance.

PRINCIPAL

Well, what should we do?

DR. BRAIN

My advice?...nothing.

DR. VAVRINA

What? We can't just do nothing...

DR. BRAIN

We do nothing...We just wait her out. Let her tutor her son at home. It's expensive, difficult, boring. Let them work with each other eight hours a day 'til they're sick of it. They'll toe the line.

PRINCIPAL

But that was sent by registered mail.

DR. BRAIN

Who signed for it?

PRINCIPAL

My secretary.

DR. BRAIN

(holding his hands up in revelation)
It's impossible to get good help these days.

Dr. Vavrina and the Principal look worried.

DR. BRAIN

Relax, she'll tire before we do.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- MADALYN'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Madalyn is in bed, asleep. Bonna enters and shakes her.

BONNA

I just went to get Bill ready for school and he said he was going on strike and that you knew about it.

MADALYN

What?...Oh...Yeah.

BONNA

Now you've had some nutty ideas in your life, Madalyn Mays, but this has got to be the worst.

Madalyn groans and hides under the covers.

BONNA

Putting a young boy through this sort of thing just because you're an Atheist is stupid. You hear me? Stupid. That young man should be in school, getting a good education, getting ready for life...

MADALYN

Mother...

BONNA

Saying the Lord's Prayer never did anyone any harm...

MADALYN

Mother...

BONNA

You don't have to believe it, you just do it. That's what getting along with people is all about...

MADALYN

(pulling back the covers)

Mother!...Good morning?

BONNA (crossing to the door)

What harm did it ever do you? Just tell me that. You're alright, aren't you? You survived. You look in pretty good shape to me!

She exits, closing the door heavily behind her.

Madalyn, on her elbows, becomes thoughtful, worried, and lies back.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Madalyn enters the kitchen. Pup is having coffee, smoking.

MADALYN

Well, Pup? I've heard from Mother.

PUP (shrugging)

He's your son.

MADALYN

You think what we're doing is right?

PUP

Well, I think you think it's right.

She places her hand on his.

MADALYN

Is that it?

PUP

Can't say yet. But if you do something, do it fully. Don't be half-assed about it.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

There are schoolbooks, assignments, books, everywhere.

SUPER: 10 DAYS LATER.

MADALYN (O.S.)

Four. In one thousand words or more, describe the uses water from the Colorado River is put to by man from its source to the sea. Five.

BILL (O.S.)

Hang on.

Bill writes furiously. He nods.

MADALYN

Five. In one thousand words or more, describe...

BONNA (O.S.)

Madalyn!

MADALYN

Yeah?!

BONNA (O.S.)

The man from the Civil Liberties is here!

MADALYN

Oh. Be right up! (to Bill) Probably best I speak to him alone.

She hands him the paper and exits. Bill watches her, then continues transcribing the question.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Bonna talks to NEIGHBOR 1 over a side fence. It is obvious from her reaction when Madalyn appears on the front porch that she has been deriding her daughter's actions to Neighbor 1.

C.L. ATTORNEY

(exiting the house briskly)

You're wrong, wrong, wrong, Madalyn. I'm a Jew. I had to say a prayer to Jesus Christ. I had to go through what your son is going through. Look at me. Did it change me? Does a Jew accept Jesus Christ because he hears about him in public schools all the time? You're just plain wrong.

They move out to his car. Bonna moves away down the side of the house so she cannot be seen. NEIGHBOR 1 shakes her head in disgust at Madalyn.

MADALYN

Goddamn it, I'm not wrong. If something is inherently unjust and you can see it, then you have to stand up and do something about it.

C.L. ATTORNEY

You know you are some kind of nut. What do you hope to gain from this? This Bible and prayer thing does nothing to anyone. We all survive it. It's nothing.

MADALYN

If it's nothing then why is there such an effort to make it compulsory?

C.L. ATTORNEY

You're crazy.

She grabs him by the arm.

MADALYN

Look, if I get arrested and thrown in jail for letting my boy be truant will you at least bail me out?

C.L. ATTORNEY

Christ, Madalyn, you are nuts. You're actually going through with this?

MADALYN

Will you bail me out, yes or no?!

C.L. ATTORNEY

What is the point...?!

MADALYN

Yes or no?!

C.L. Attorney sighs heavily.

C.L. ATTORNEY

Yeah, Madalyn. Yeah, I'll get you out.

He gets into his car, and drives off, shaking his head.

Madalyn watches his car go. She returns to the house. Neighbor 1 is watching.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL -- DAY

Madalyn moves down the hall. She appears faint. She stops for a moment, leaning against the wall. She enters the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM -- DAY

Madalyn enters. She hitches up her dress. There is a stream of blood running down her legs.

MADALYN (weak, exhausted)

Oh, God.

She slumps against a wall.

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

Bill studies.

SUPER: 1 WEEK LATER.

Madalyn comes down the stairs, bringing a plate of sandwiches.

MADALYN

Chow time.

BILL

Oh, great.

MADALYN

I was just looking at the calendar.

BILL

Yeah. (I know)

MADALYN

You know my sick leave can't go on forever.

BILL (nods)

So?

MADALYN

Is everyone out of step but Johnny?

BILL

Pretty much.

MADALYN

So, what's next?

BILL

Well it's pretty obvious they're pretending we don't exist.

MADALYN

Yeah. So what do we do?

BILL

Exist. We should write to a newspaper.

MADALYN

You know, for fourteen and a half, you surprise me sometimes.

BILL

And that's just my IQ.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - FRONT -- DAY

Madalyn arrives in her car and swings into the drive.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - REAR -- DAY

As Madalyn brings the car to a halt, Bill barrels from the house.

BILL

You'll never guess! You'll never guess what!
It's too good! Too good!

MADALYN

What? What?

BILL

This guy called me and he wants to speak to me. And he wants to know what I think about Russia, and he wants to know if I'm a Communist, and he wants to know if we come from Russia or if we got family in Russia...

MADALYN

Whoa, whoa, hold up there, partner. Here, take these.

She indicates nearby NEIGHBOR 2 surreptitiously. The man is listening. Bill gets the message and unloads the groceries.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

They enter. Madalyn unpacks as they speak.

BILL

This guy wanted to talk to you and then he asked for me when I said you were at the store, and I said I was me.

MADALYN

'I said it was I'

BILL

Yeah, yeah, he said he's going to call you back. He wanted to know all about the paper.

MADALYN

What paper?

BILL

I didn't know if I should say anything to him or not.

She hands him a bag of canned food and directs him to a cupboard.

MADALYN

What paper?

BILL

The one about the U.S.S.R.!

She looks at him blankly.

BILL

The one I got chased home from school for!

MADALYN

Oh! Well, you mean this guy wasn't calling about your strike?

BILL

Yes, of course he was. The school told him we were Communists. They said they had the paper, and I was sticking up for Russia...

MADALYN

Will you slow down!

BILL

I'm trying to tell you. You won't listen!

MADALYN

Bill, sit. Sit.

Bill sits down.

Now start from the phone call. Who rang?

BILL

(springing to his feet)

This reporter from the "Baltimore Sun". I said that. When he knew it was me he started right off on this thing about Russia. Oh, oh my God!

MADALYN

What?! What?!

BILL

(racing from the room)

I've got to find that paper. He's going to want to read it!

MADALYN

Bill!...

But he is gone. She shakes her head, laughs slightly, and continues unpacking.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

A black and white television screen fills frame.

STOCK FOOTAGE: RICHARD NIXON gives an impassioned speech about atheistic Communists (speech exists).

Pup, Bonna, Madalyn and Garth are present in the room. Garth sleeps on Madalyn's lap. Disgusted, Madalyn gets up and carries Garth up to his room.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL -- NIGHT

Madalyn enters the upstairs hall. She finds Bill, sitting in a chair, staring at the phone. He glances up self-consciously.

INT. GARTH'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Madalyn tucks Garth into bed.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL -- NIGHT

Madalyn moves down the hall. The chair by the phone has been vacated. She taps on Bill's door. There's a muted noise from inside. She enters.

INT. BILL'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Bill lies on his bed. Madalyn sits beside him.

MADALYN

Staring at the phone doesn't make it ring.

Bill acknowledges.

MADALYN

You realize whatever happens, you're going to be attacked as a nut, a delinquent?

Bill nods.

MADALYN

A loudmouth, a vagabond.

They share a grin.

BILL

I see their tactics. First they pretend we don't exist. They figure we'll eventually just give up. But when we write to a newspaper they expose their second line of defense: obscure the issue. I want to talk about Prayer and Bible Study, they talk about Communism.

MADALYN

Bill, this is going to get rough. They have two big guns in their arsenal that we don't, bigotry and convention. Fighting against one is tough enough but...

BILL

I want to do it, mother.

MADALYN

I'm proud of you.

She kisses him, and exits.

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

Bill does schoolwork. Madalyn does leatherwork. The phone rings. Bill bolts for it. Madalyn, much closer, picks it up just before he arrives.

MADALYN

Hello...Speaking...Yes...Oh, yes.

Bill bounces round her, trying to find out who it is.

MADALYN

Well, what would suit you?...Three. That sounds fine...Alright, I look forward to it.

She hangs up. Bill's face asks the question. Madalyn nods.

BILL

Yes! Out-standing! Yo!

MADALYN

Yeah, well okay...

BILL

Out-standing. I'm finally going to have my say.

MADALYN

Bill.

BILL

It's just the...Yeah?

MADALYN

Just keep one thing in mind. No matter what happens you stay with your issue. You're a big boy now. I can't speak for you.

BILL

Alright already, Ma.

MADALYN

Okay.

She indicates his schoolbooks. Bill laughs. He crosses back to them, chuckling. Madalyn picks up her leatherwork.

She looks up at him, worried.

Bill grins and nods to himself as he works.

INT. LOUNGE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Bill's exercise pad is held before a man's face. STEVE, a reporter, lowers the pad.

STEVE

The fuss is over this?

Bill nods.

STEVE

They beat you up for this?

MADALYN

I had to go pick him up. They had him cornered at a friend's house.

Steve shakes his head.

STEVE

I keep this?

BILL

Sure.

They move to the front door.

STEVE

Well, you seem to know your bible, Bill. At least you've taken the time to know what you're objecting to. Now I can't guarantee this'll even make the paper. That's up to my editor. Understand?

BILL

Yes, sir.

STEVE

And I have to report all the facts as I see them, you understand that too?

BILL

Yes, sir.

STEVE

Good. Well. Nice to meet you. You're a fine young man.

He shakes Bill's hand, then Madalyn's.

STEVE

Ma'am.

He exits. Bill looks at his mother for an opinion. She rocks her head and shrugs, unsure.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - STREET -- EARLY MORNING

A newspaper DELIVERY BOY rides by on his bicycle and throws a paper into the front yard. He rings his bell. The paper has barely hit the ground before Bill bounds into frame and recovers it. He races inside.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Bill searches through the paper. He turns to the back page.

Pup enters.

PUP

Oh, there it is. Been looking for that.

BILL (disappointed)
(leaving)

Sorry, Grandpa.

PUP

That newspaper fella didn't report anything, huh?

BILL

No. Guess not.

He exits.

PUP

Well, maybe tomorrow. Things take time, you know.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - STREET -- MORNING

The Delivery Boy approaches the house once more. He throws the paper, and rings his bell.

INT. BILL'S ROOM -- MORNING

Bill groans and rolls over in bed.

INT. MADALYN'S ROOM -- MORNING

Madalyn sleeps. The downstairs doorbell ring. Madalyn stirs. The doorbell rings again. Madalyn opens her eyes and groans. She rolls up to a sitting position, barely awake. She sighs and staggers to the window.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

LOOKING DIRECTLY UP: Madalyn's bedroom window slides up. Her head protrudes out.

MADALYN

Yes?

There are a half dozen NEWSMEN at her front door.

NEWSMAN 1

Do the Murray O'Hairs live here?

MADALYN

Yes.

NEWSMAN 1

Can we see Mrs. Murray O'Hair.

MADALYN

I am me. I mean, she.

NEWSMEN 1

We're from the newspapers. Can we talk to you and Bill?

Madalyn stares down at them, stunned.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- LOUNGE -- DAY

The house is filled with newspaper, television, and radio Newsmen. Bonna runs coffee and beer to everyone. Pup observes, a newspaper and ashtray in one hand, a cigarette in the other.

Madalyn holds Garth on her hip. Newsman 2 is handing her a card as we move by.

NEWSMAN 2 (English accent)
Don Roberts, Reuter's News Agency.

Moving on, Bill is discovered sitting on the sofa, surrounded by Newsmen, holding microphones toward him.

NEWSMAN 1
And how do you respond to Dr. Brain's decree that he will enforce the rule requiring your attendance at Morning Prayer?

BILL
Well, the school denies I've been on strike for the past month. In fact they've ignored the requirement for attendance at school itself. So what does Dr. Brain want? That I just go up to the school for Morning Prayer and then come home?

NEWSMAN 3
You don't really mean that Dr. Brain is suggesting that?

BILL
I mean that it's a demonstration that the School Board considers Prayer and Bible Study a priority over school attendance itself.

NEWSMAN 1
So what do you think about Dr. Brain's name? Think that's funny?

BILL
I...I'm not interested in discussing people on a personal level. I just want to talk about the issue of compulsory Prayer in Public Schools.

The Newsmen are impressed with Bill.

Pup has seen enough. He moves into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Pup enters. Newsmen 4 & 5 are pounding away on typewriters on the kitchen table. They are both smoking.

NEWSMAN 4
Oh, are we in your way, Pop?

PUP

No, no I'll take it on the porch...son.

He exits.

EXT. BACK PORCH -- DAY

Pup exits from the house. He moves out to a garden chair, puts his ashtray down, and sits. As he begins to read the paper, he notices NEIGHBOR 2, watching their house.

PUP

Morning.

NEIGHBOR 2

What's going on?

PUP

Can't rightly say, not sure m'self.

NEIGHBOR 2

There was a report on the news last night.

PUP

Is that a fact?

NEIGHBOR 2

Never knew you was Atheists.

PUP

Actually I'm Presbyterian.

Neighbor 2 goes inside. Pup's eyes drop to the newspaper headline.

"BOY 14, BALKS AT BIBLE READING". There is a picture of Madalyn and Bill beneath the headline.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO -- NIGHT

Bill watches as a microphone is placed before him. He sits within an interview set. On the other side of the studio a NEWSREADER reads news which is being recorded.

NEWSREADER

(News of the day/era.)

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- SOUND ROOM -- NIGHT

Madalyn looks down on Bill in the studio. There is a monitor in the room showing the Newsreader, and another shows Bill. Another monitor shows a two-shot of Bill which also encompasses the Host's seat.

NEWSREADER
(News of the day.)

NEWS EXECUTIVE (O.S.)
So you're the one behind all this.

Madalyn turns in surprise to find that a big, late middle-aged man has entered the room behind her.

MADALYN
Who're you?

EXECUTIVE
The boss.

Madalyn dismisses his authority, and looks back at Bill.

EXECUTIVE
What're you hoping to achieve?

MADALYN
Equal rights.

EXECUTIVE
Bullshit.

Madalyn turns back to him.

MADALYN (annoyed)
You through?

EXECUTIVE
They said you had balls.

MADALYN
At least four.

Executive laughs, dangerously.

EXECUTIVE
(indicating the Newsreader)
Bet you thought that joker analyzed the news himself, wrote it himself.

Madalyn looks at the Newsreader.

EXECUTIVE

That prick's a card carrying actor, wouldn't know a news story from a melodrama. And dumb? Watch him. See him panic if a hair's out of place, even though he might be reading about the death of fifteen babies.

MADALYN

Do you have a point?

EXECUTIVE

You're going to get your head kicked in. I been a newsman for thirty years. Listen to me, I'm the only one who'll tell you straight because I'm powerful enough not to give a shit. Hell, nobody believes in God these days. You're rocking the boat, kid. How could we control the beast of man if they don't have a god to fear? Why we can line 'em up to fight for God and the American way.

MADALYN

Then I'll be protecting other young boys from monsters like you. Christian or not.

Executive laughs, dangerously. He crosses to the door.

EXECUTIVE

I like you.

He exits. Madalyn looks down at Bill, shaken.

INT. STUDIO -- NIGHT

The interview HOST comes on set. He wears his make-up bib.

FLOOR MANAGER

Left your bib on again, Charlie.

HOST

(taking it off)

Oh.

He moves onto the rostrum.

Hello, kid.

Bill nods.

HOST

How long?

FLOOR MANAGER

'Bout fifteen.

The Host sits down and reads his clipboard. Bill watches, looking nervous. He looks up.

Madalyn's face is just recognizable through the glass.

BACK TO:

Madalyn through the glass - she places her hand on it, her expression urging Bill not to be afraid.

BACK TO:

Bill grins, and nods slightly, grateful.

The FLOOR MANAGER signals the five second countdown.

CUT TO:

NEWSREADER

And Bill Murray, the young man at the center of the controversy, is with us in the studio this evening. Here to host the discussion is Charles Downey.

CUT TO: (and INTERCUT to Madalyn, watching):

HOST

Thank you, Ron...Bill...are you a Communist?

BILL

No, Sir.

HOST

Would you call yourself a patriotic American?

BILL

Yes, Sir, absolutely.

HOST

Well, could you tell our viewers why you originate material in favor of Communism?

BILL

What you're referring to is a school paper I submitted. I gave a factual analysis of the Soviet Union, which is what I thought was required. I described the country geographically, and economically, but I didn't give an opinion on it's government. Because I didn't give an opinion, that is, a criticism of anything Russian, then I was ridiculed in class and later assaulted.

HOST

And you're an Atheist.

BILL

I'm not sure. The answer is 'probably', yes. But I'd like to reach my own conclusions my own way. I mean, if we're going to have compulsory Bible study then why don't we have something to balance it out, like Darwinism?

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE -- NIGHT

Executive watches Bill's interview on a monitor. He snorts.

BACK TO:

HOST

So you think we evolved from apes? You think your ancestor was a monkey?

BILL

Well actually a moneky's not an ape. But, no, going on the evidence in either the bible or "Origin Of Species" I would have to lean toward Darwinian theory simply because it isn't full of contradictions, barbarism, sadism, hypocrisy, as the bible is. But I respect other people's opinion to disagree with me. However I'd like them to respect my right not to hold the same views as them. What is the School Board so afraid of that they must force pupils to believe in God to the exclusion of science, or even other religions?

Finish on Madalyn's face, grinning proudly.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE, SITTING ROOM -- NIGHT

The family is gathered round the television. Pup is missing.

BONNA

Come on, Pup, what are you doing out there?!

PUP (O.S.)

Alright, alright, hold your horses.

BONNA

Oh, this is so exciting. You know I've rung all the relatives and told them.

MADALYN

You did?...Should be interesting.

GARTH

Is it soon?

MADALYN

Yes, sweetheart, soon. You want mommy to put you to bed now, instead?

GARTH

No, I want to see Billy.

Bill leans over and takes Garth, tickling and hugging him.

BILL

Come here, Sport.

BONNA

Pup! What are you doing?!

PUP (entering)

Alright! God, woman, you're like a goddamned foghorn...

MADALYN

Alright you two, cut it out. This is Bill's night. Bill, you want to turn the sound up. Quick, it's that bit.

Bill whips from his chair and turns the volume up.

As the following proceeds, INTERCUT from the TELEVISION, to REACTION SHOTS of Madalyn, Pup, Bonna, and Bill. Each time coming back to Bill we are closer in our ZOOM, until finally in E.C.U.. There could also be a building SOUND EFFECT as the horror of what has transpired mounts on Bill's face, until the Television dialogue is dominated.

NEWSREADER

And Bill Murray, the young man at the center of the controversy, is with us in the studio this evening. Here to host the discussion is Charles Downey.

CUT TO:

HOST

Thank you, Ron. Bill...are you a Communist?

BILL

Yes, Sir, absolutely.

HOST

Well could you tell our viewers why you originate material in favor of Communism?

BILL

What you're referring to is a school paper that I submitted.

HOST

And you're an Atheist.

BILL

The answer is probably, yes.

HOST

So you think we evolved from apes? You think your ancestor was a gorilla?

BILL

Going on the evidence in either the Bible or "Origin Of Species" I would have to lean toward Darwinian theory, simply because it isn't full of contradictions, barbarism, sadism, hypocrisy, as the Bible is.

CUT TO A PRERECORDED REPORT (now being shown on the TV):

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

The Host stands in front of the Murray house, microphone in hand.

HOST

The Murray O'Hairs are Atheists. We need be in little doubt about that. They are also anarchists, prepared to shake the fundamental institutions of our society to the core, and why? Just to stop little

HOST (Cont'd)
 children being able to say their prayers in school. It's not the object of this reporter to lead the viewer into an opinion. However, in this case, I think the facts speak loudly and clearly for themselves. Back to you, Ron.

CUT TO:

NEWSREADER

(making a face of forced tolerance)
 Thank you, Charles. In Detroit today a spokesman for General Motors said that things are really gearing up for the release of this year's model... (etc.)

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - STREET -- DAY

A group of housewives are in the street. NEWSMAN 4 questions them. HOUSEWIFE 1 is particularly incensed.

NEWSMAN 4

Well, can you tell me, do you know if she drinks?

HOUSEWIFE 1

No, she is just a dirty bitch!

NEWSMAN 4

Do you mean she's filthy?

HOUSEWIFE 1

No, she's just a bitch, a dirty bitch!

NEWSMAN 4

Well, why? Does she beat her kids? She abuse them, neglect them?

HOUSEWIFE 1

No, she is a filthy rotten Atheist!

NEWSMAN 4

Well, does she stay out late? Does she have boyfriends?

HOUSEWIFE 1

No. She is an...an Antichrist!

HOUSEWIFE 2

It's a shame! A disgrace!

HOUSEWIFE 3

Just look at the dirty Atheists! Look
for yourself! Filthy scum!

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

NEWSMAN 1 & 2 are staring out the window. (The house is full of
Newsmen - They sit about, relaxed, drinking beer, talking, smoking,
debating, laughing).

NEWSMAN 1 (chuckling, very amused)
God, he's good.

Madalyn overhears as she arrives with two cans of beer.

NEWSMAN 1
Oh thanks, Madalyn.

Housewife 1 roams up and down before the front fence, her taunts
clearly audible. Newsmen 1 & 2 lampoon what she is saying.

HOUSEWIFE 1
Get out of town you filthy Atheist scum! Oh
the shame, the shame in our neighborhood!
May you burn in hell, Madalyn Murray! You
love it don't you?! All this publicity!

Newsmen 1 & 2 burst out laughing.

MADALYN
God, you bastards are cynics.

NEWSMAN 1
No. (suddenly yelling outside) Hey, you
shut up out there!

He gets an immediate rise out of Housewife 1.

HOUSEWIFE 1
Oh, you come out here and make me! You come
out here and try! This is a free country and
I'll say what I like you Communist! (etc.)

Newsmen 1 & 2 break up. Madalyn is forced to smile.

MADALYN
That's what I mean. You haven't got a story,
so you orchestrate one.

NEWSMAN 1 (opening his can)
 You know what people want to read, Madalyn?
 ...controversy.

MADALYN
 Why don't you give them the truth.

BILL (O.S.)
 Mother.

PULL FOCUS TO: Bill stands with the phone in his hand.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Madalyn crosses to the phone.

MADALYN
 Hello.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. AN OFFICE -- DAY

C.L. ATTORNEY
 I think you started something, Madalyn.

MADALYN
 Oh? I thought I was wrong, wrong, wrong?

C.L. ATTORNEY
 This could develop into an issue.

MADALYN
 It always was an issue.

C.L. ATTORNEY
 I'll call up Brain and make an appointment.

MADALYN
 Does that mean Civil Liberties are
 representing us?

C.L. ATTORNEY
 No, the ACLU can't commit itself officially
 at this time.

MADALYN

Bill and I have decided he's going to go to school and in the middle of Prayer he will walk out, saying it violates his freedom of conscience and the Constitution.

C.L. ATTORNEY

No, he shouldn't do that.

MADALYN

Why not?

C.L. ATTORNEY

He should just walk out, say nothing.

MADALYN

But the Prayer is the thing that is illegal. Look, the school is telling the newspapers that Bill was just absent. If he says nothing then nobody'll know why he's walking out. The issue of his absence and the Prayer have to be joined.

C.L. ATTORNEY

Well you'd be doing that against my advice.

MADALYN

So you're our attorney then?

C.L. ATTORNEY

No, the ACLU can't commit itself. We'll make a statement about that and...

MADALYN

Of course, that gives you free publicity, doesn't it.

C.L. ATTORNEY

I'll talk to you after I talk to Dr. Brain.

MADALYN

You don't have my authority to represent us to Dr. Brain.

C.L. ATTORNEY

Madalyn, I can make a deal to have Bill excused.

MADALYN

So then I can announce ACLU is handling it for us?

C.L. ATTORNEY

We will not take a position on that. There is no Constitutional issue here.

MADALYN

So you want your cake and eat it too? Ring me when you cowards decide what you want. Meanwhile I have an attorney.

C.L. ATTORNEY

Who?

MADALYN

(producing his card)

A...a Walter Goldstein.

C.L. ATTORNEY (laughing derisively)
Oh hell, well aren't you the lucky one!

MADALYN

Oh, go to hell!

She slams down the phone. Nearby:

As Newsman 1 closes the front door there is a glimpse of a TELEGRAM BOY walking away. Newsman 1 hands Madalyn an envelope.

NEWSMAN 1

Telegram.

Madalyn opens it and reads. Newsman 1 watches her. She lowers the telegram, shocked.

MADALYN

I've been fired.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Newsmen are gathered round the back of the house. There are numerous cameras mounted at different angles to capture footage of Bill coming through the back door on his way to school.

NEWSMAN 3

Okay Bill, when you're ready.

Small pause, then Bill appears. He moves down toward the back gate.

NEWSMAN 5

(camera operator)

Sorry. Sorry, we'll have to go again.

Bill stops.

NEWSMAN 3

Sorry, Bill. Would you mind?

Bill goes back inside. Madalyn appears at the back door.

MADALYN

If you fools don't stop screwing around my boy
won't even make it to school before Prayer
begins!

NEWSMAN 3

Sorry, Madalyn. Last take. Promise.

Madalyn gives a surly grunt and goes inside. Newsman 3 looks at
Newsman 5 and lowers his voice.

NEWSMAN 3

Glad she's on our side.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- DAY

Bill walks his normal route to school. Not far up ahead, Newsmen
continually dart onto the sidewalk and snap shots of him. In the
street a car tows a flatbed trailer. On the trailer, a CAMERA CREW
films his journey. Madalyn's car, some distance back, trails them.

EXT. CAR INT. CAR TRAVELING -- DAY

Madalyn looks worriedly ahead.

HER P.O.V: The carnival of Newsmen around Bill.

MADALYN

God, you're so stupid! Why did you let
them?! Stupid!

EXT. SCHOOL OFFICE -- DAY

Through the window to the outer office, the Secretary, looks out
worriedly. She is joined by the Principal. The Principal looks
alarmed.

Bill and the cavalcade of Newsmen come through the gate.

The Principal exits frame. Her place is taken by Dr. Vavrina.

INT. CORRIDOR -- DAY

Bill walks down the corridor to his Home Room, alone. Suddenly he is intercepted by the Secretary.

SECRETARY

(grabbing his arm)

And where do you think you're going?

BILL

To my Home Room.

SECRETARY

I don't think so. You're to see Dr. Vavrina in the Principal's office right now.

BILL

(taking back his arm)

I don't think so.

He walks on.

SECRETARY

Bill Murray, you report to the Principal's office right now!

He ignores her and keeps walking.

INT. CORRIDOR -- DAY

Bill approaches his Home Room. He sees the Principal and Teacher 1 inside. The Principal addresses the class. Bill puts his hand on the door, but finds it locked. The Principal looks round at him. She continues talking to the class. Bill looks along the corridor. There is a second rear door to the classroom. He crosses to it and tries it. It is also locked.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Madalyn is with the Newsmen as Bill, escorted by the Secretary, approaches.

NEWSMEN 1 & 2

What's happening, Bill?

BILL (not stopping)

They locked me out of the classroom.

He moves into the office. Through the window he can be seen entering the Principal's office. Dr. Vavrina sits behind the desk.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

The office door opens. Bill comes out. He moves into the corridor. There is a cacophony of questions from the Newsmen. Bill holds up his hands.

BILL

Just give me a minute please, fellas. Mother.

He signals her to one side. They speak in voiced whispers.

BILL

Dr. Vavrina's here. He said he's here because I'm a discipline problem.

MADALYN

Do you think you'll be alright here today?

Bill shrugs, uncomfortable.

MADALYN

You scared?

Bill reluctantly nods.

BILL

But I won't let on.

MADALYN

Bill, I'm scared, and I don't care if they know.

BILL

Look, if things get bad I'll phone. Okay?

MADALYN

You listen to me. You mean more to me than just some superstitious mumbo jumbo.

Bill grins, and squeezes her arm. He moves back to talk to the Newsmen. Stay on Madalyn. As Bill is assailed with questions, Madalyn decides to confront Dr. Vavrina. She enters the office.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Dr. Vavrina sits at the desk, surprised when Madalyn enters.

MADALYN

Why did you want to see my son?

DR. VAVRINA

The Principal called me and told me she had a disciplinary problem.

MADALYN

Oh? And the problem is?

DR. VAVRINA

Your son has been a disturbing influence in this school. He...

MADALYN

My son has not been in attendance here.

DR. VAVRINA

The Principal called me and told me your son needed disciplining. So, here I am.

MADALYN

What did you talk to my son about?

DR. VAVRINA

He has created a disturbing influence by his conduct here...

MADALYN

He hasn't even been in your school.

DR. VAVRINA

The Principal called me. She said she had a discipline...

MADALYN

Why was my son locked out of his Home Room?

DR. VAVRINA

Oh? You think he was locked out?

MADALYN

What are you going to do about Bible Study and Prayer in this school, Dr. Vavrina?

DR. VAVRINA

Whatever are you talking about, Mrs. Murray?

MADALYN

What are we doing here right now?

DR. VAVRINA

The Principal called me and said she had a disciplinary problem with your son. So I came over, as is my custom in these matters.

MADALYN

Dr. Vavrina. You are a totally unprincipled man.

He grins at her.

EXT. CORRIDOR -- DAY

Madalyn enters the corridor.

NEWSMEN 1 - 4

Are they going to do anything? What did you and Vavrina talk about? Will they discipline Bill? What are you going to do now?

MADALYN

You all know the story. They're pretending that Bill has just been truant from school, and they're not going to let him confront his class or bring this to issue.

NEWSMAN 1

Well, what are you going to do?

MADALYN

Bill will be back in the morning to try again.

EXT. CAR PARK -- DAY

Madalyn tries to locate the keys in her purse. A small, balding Jewish man, GOLDSTEIN (35), appears at her car window.

GOLDSTEIN

Um, Mrs. Murray O'Hair?

MADALYN

Yes?

GOLDSTEIN

I'm Goldstein. Walter Goldstein.

MADALYN

Oh, the attorney. How do you do.

She offers her hand.

GOLDSTEIN

Oh, yes, thank you. I just wanted to remind you that I'm prepared to handle your case for free. For free, Mrs Murray.

MADALYN

Yes, so you said in your letter.

GOLDSTEIN

I was just wondering...I was just wondering...

MADALYN

Mr. Goldstein, I think I'd like to see how things pan out before committing myself. But I really do appreciate your offer and I'll keep you in mind.

She starts the car.

GOLDSTEIN

Yes. Well. Thank you.

She gives him a friendly nod, and drives out.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE. KITCHEN -- DAY

Moving across a huge pile of mail on the kitchen table - Pup, Bonna, and Madalyn sit reading.

MADALYN (reading)

Oh, here's a good example of advanced Christian thought, "Dear Commie, I think you are a slut. Why don't you go back to Russia where you belong. You need to be nailed up and crucified and your guts torn out to show you the true meaning of why 'He' died for us. You pig sucking scum slut."

BONNA

Madalyn, if you want to become some kind of freak in a fight like this, that's your business, but you have no business dragging your children down in the gutter with you.

MADALYN

Oh God!...Mother, aren't you learning anything?

She angrily grabs a handful of letters.

MADALYN

It isn't very 'Christian' to talk about my ideas being in the gutter. I haven't said a single word publicly against God or Christianity or anyone's beliefs. This is a fight to do with the law. I am a qualified lawyer. The Constitution clearly states separation of Church and State. I am defending that Constitution against this.

BONNA

And you're saying I'm one of them.

MADALYN

Oh, if the shoe fits!

She strides angrily from the room. There is a large patch of wet blood on the seat of her dress.

Pup notices it. He looks at the seat on which she was sitting and nudges it out with his knee.

The seat has blood on it.

PUP

Better go tell her.

Bonna tuts in sympathy and gets up.

PUP

Try not to get her excited.

Bonna sighs and nods. She exits. Pup lights a cigarette, looks at the pile of letters, and shakes his head.

INT. MADALYN'S ROOM -- NIGHT

She is dressed in a nightie. She sits on the end of her bed, reading the newspaper and brushing her hair. Suddenly she stops brushing. She picks up the paper, angry over an article.

EXT. HALL -- NIGHT

Madalyn moves briskly down the hall to Bill's room. She knocks.

INT. BILL'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Bill dabs iodine onto numerous shin wounds.

BILL

Oh, just a minute!

He rolls down his pants and disposes of the iodine. He opens the door. Madalyn enters.

MADALYN

Have you seen this? (reading) "William Murray is to undergo special counseling and testing in lieu of Bible reading and Prayer recitation." Can you believe that? They're trying to make you sound like some loony or something. Were you told about this?

BILL

No.

MADALYN

I'll get to the bottom of this...What's that smell?

BILL

What?

MADALYN

That's iodine.

BILL

Oh, I just had a bit of a scratch on my leg.

MADALYN

Oh? Show me.

BILL

It's nothing, just a scratch.

Madalyn looks into the waste paper basket.

MADALYN

Three cotton balls on a scratch? Show me.

BILL

Honestly, it's...

MADALYN

Show me.

Bill rolls up his trouser leg.

BILL

It's just...I got some kicks in the shins,
that's all.

MADALYN

My God! Who did that to you?

BILL

It was...lot's of people, Mother...

Madalyn is stunned.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE -- NIGHT

NEWSMAN 5 is on the phone.

NEWSMAN 5

(unable to get a word in)

It was...I know I...Yes, but that's...Mrs.
Murray, that's what the Principal said. I was
only quoting her. It was the school's official
position.

INTERCUT TO:

EXT. HALL -- NIGHT

MADALYN

Well, quite obviously you didn't have to couch
it so Bill looks like a nut case. You know what
the true situation is. Why don't you grow a
backbone and write the truth for a change!

She hangs up and walks away. The phone rings. Surprised, she looks
at it momentarily. She crosses back and answers it.

Hello?

There is a man's voice through the phone.

PHONE (telephone V.O.)

Woof! Woof!...Woof! Woof!

MADALYN

Woof Woof? Don't you think you should say hello
first before barking at me.

PHONE (telephone V.O.)

Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!

MADALYN (W.C. Fields impression)
Well there's no need to bite my head off.

She hangs up and walks away, shaking her head.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Newsmen are gathered. Bill is escorted into the office by TWO MALE TEACHERS. They each have hold of one of his arms.

NEWSMAN 1
How'd you go, Bill?

BILL
(grinning)
Thought I'd come round the office again.

NEWSMAN 1
What'd they want you for this time?

Bill holds ups his hands (which are being supported), mystified. Madalyn watches, concerned, angry.

INT. OUTER OFFICE -- DAY

Bill sighs wearily as he fills out a form, one of many forms he has been required to fill out. He stands opposite the Secretary. Madalyn sits against the wall. Newsmen mill around outside.

Bill hands over the form.

BILL
There, that's the last one.

SECRETARY
You're free to go to your class now.

Bill grins at his mother and begins to walk out. Madalyn motions him to wait.

MADALYN
May I see the Principal now? I do have other things to do with my day than wait on her.

SECRETARY
I'll see.

The Secretary enters the Principal's office and closes the door.

MADALYN (quietly)
Come in with me.

Bill nods. The Secretary emerges.

SECRETARY
You can go in now.

Madalyn crosses to the door. Bill follows. The Secretary sees Bill too late. She says nothing.

INT. OFFICE -- DAY

Madalyn enters, closely followed by Bill. The Principal stands when she sees Bill.

PRINCIPAL
I do not discuss matters in front of students. Bill, return to your class.

Madalyn shuts the door.

MADALYN
I can invite the press in if you wish.

The Principal sits slowly.

PRINCIPAL
What do you want?

MADALYN
I've been apprised by reporters that you issued the statement that Bill was in need of 'special counseling' and you are about to explain to me, right now, just exactly what you mean by that, Madam.

PRINCIPAL
It isn't proper he be here for...

MADALYN
Proper? I don't care what you think is 'proper'. This is no child, and nor are the other young men you dress to seduce. Get your jollies somewhere else. I am putting a stop to you right now.

PRINCIPAL
Are you threatening me?

MADALYN

I'm telling you I know your kind. You have openly lied, dissembled and manipulated. I'm sorry, I can't be polite when you seek to ruin my son. He needs no counseling, no testing, no special guidance. And you attempt to force him into any procedure for which I have not given approval, and I will intrude my physical presence immediately. And now let's get to the nature of the threat with which you just charged me.

She leans forward.

You attempt to discredit or humiliate my son one more time and I will beat you senseless in this very room. Now...I think we understand each other.

The Principal is white with shock.

INT. CORRIDOR -- DAY

Pick up Bill, carrying books, walking through a crowded corridor. He turns into a stairwell. Note two boys about his age, STUDENTS 1 & 2, follow not far behind. They exchange a look of understanding.

INT. STAIRWELL -- DAY

At the head of the stairs, Students move up toward us. Suddenly there is a commotion further down the stairs. Students 1 & 2 appear through the press of bodies and make their escape.

Bill lies awkwardly at the bottom of the stairs, his books in a mess around him. He is badly bruised. He looks at the Students around him.

HIS P.O.V.: They merely stare at him.

Bill forces himself to get up and not show pain. He moves on.

EXT. SCHOOL OUTDOOR PARKING AREA -- DAY

Madalyn parks her car, having driven Bill to school. They get out of the car and move toward the administration block. As they do so, a car full of Newsmen arrive. Among them is Steve, the reporter who first interviewed Bill.

STEVE

Hey, Bill.

BILL

Hi, Steve.

STEVE

Going to give it another shot today?

BILL

You bet.

STEVE

Best of luck.

Bill grins.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CLASSROOM -- DAY

Bill peeps cautiously round the corridor corner.

Aside from Students entering the classroom, the two MALE TEACHERS are waiting outside the classroom door. They chat.

Bill recoils back around the corner. He is thinking hard.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Steve checks his watch. He looks across at Madalyn. PULL FOCUS to Madalyn, checking her watch. She looks at Steve. PULL FOCUS back to Steve. He looks away, up the corridor i.e. in the same direction Madalyn is looking. The bell to commence 1st period sounds. Steve looks round. PULL FOCUS to Madalyn. She shrugs, hopeful.

INT. CLEANER'S CLOSET -- CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CLASSROOM -- DAY

BILL'S P.O.V.: Looking through the crack in the door, the two Teachers wait. Male Teacher 1 checks his watch.

Bill's eye peeps through the crack in the door.

BILL'S P.O.V.: The Male Teachers exchange some words, and come to an agreement. They move toward us.

The crack in the door disappears as it is pulled shut.

When they have gone the door opens and Bill is inside the closet. He looks toward the classroom.

INT. OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Madalyn and the Newsmen wait. The sound of footsteps approach along the corridor. Those waiting stiffen as the footsteps draw near. The

two Male Teachers round the corner and enter the office. There is hubbub as everyone realizes Bill is not with them. Everyone watches the Teachers. They say something to the Secretary. She enters the Principal's office. The Principal comes out immediately. She questions the Male Teachers. They shrug, confused. The Principal looks distressed. The Principal and Teachers leave hurriedly. The Newsmen become excited.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CLASSROOM -- DAY

Bill approaches the classroom door. He hesitates, apprehensive. He opens the door and enters.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Bill enters. The noisy classroom falls silent. TEACHER 1 looks round. She is astonished to see him.

TEACHER 1

You're wanted at the office.

Bill crosses to his desk and sits.

BILL (defeated)

I've been there. They told me to return to my Home Room this morning.

Teacher 1 watches him carefully. Slowly, a look of triumph comes to her face.

TEACHER 1

Take out your Bibles and stand.

The class obeys. Bill obeys, appearing defeated. Students around him look at him, happy to see him crushed.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. CORRIDORS -- DAY

The Principal and Male Teachers walk briskly along.

INTERCUT TO:

Teacher 1 takes her time, licking her finger and indulgently flicking through pages in the Bible, looking for a suitable prayer which will convey an appropriate message to Bill and the rest of the class.

Bill looks up, becoming anxious over the delay.

BILL'S TEACHER

I shall read psalm 70. Turn to page 114.

The class obeys.

BILL'S TEACHER

"May God lead me away from sin..."

She looks pointedly at Bill. But suddenly:

BILL

I refuse to participate in this opening exercise of Bible reading and prayer recitation because it violates my freedom of conscience and the Constitution of the United States.

There is a stunned silence. Bill grins innocently.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OFFICE -- DAY

Bill approaches the last few feet to applauding Newsmen.

STEVE

You did it?

BILL

You bet I did!

STEVE

Good show, Bill!

The Newsmen cheer and crowd into the office, overwhelming the Principal with questions.

Madalyn approaches Bill, grinning proudly. They hug.

MADALYN

It's all over now.

BILL

No, Ma, that ain't quite right.

They walk away, his arm around her.

That's the end of the beginning.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

A TV screen fills our picture. The ATTORNEY GENERAL of Maryland sits behind his desk, harassed by Newsmen. He holds his hands up, trying to get a word in over their questions.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (exasperated)
 Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Please! The case of the
 Murray O'Hairs will be addressed in due course.
 It may be a current issue to you but I assure
 you it is of no more relevance to the Attorney
 General's department than any other matter.

He is immediately assailed by questions.

SMASH CUT TO:

A stone is hurled through the front window.

Madalyn, Pup and Bonna are in the LIVING ROOM. They jump to their feet.

BONNA

Oh, my God!

EXT. FRONT PORCH -- NIGHT

The cover has been removed from an exterior light. A hand appears and takes out the light bulb. It drops a paper clip onto the exposed points. They spark.

BACK TO:

The lights in the living room go out. Bonna yelps in fright.

QUICK CUTS TO:

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Bill is in the tub.

BILL

Hey, what's going on?!

BACK TO:

Madalyn picks up the rock angrily.

MADALYN

Those bastards.

She strides toward the front door. She is intercepted by Pup.

PUP

I'll handle this.

EXT. FRONT PORCH -- NIGHT

Pup exits from the house. He looks around angrily, warily.

There is no one to be seen.

Suddenly he is hit in the face with an egg. He reels with the impact.

The sounds of people running off.

Madalyn rushes to Pup's aid.

MADALYN

Pup!

She helps Pup straighten up. They look about, dazed and angry.

PUP

Well, look who's got egg on his face.

INT. KITCHEN -- MORNING

An egg breaks in a pan. Madalyn makes breakfast. Bonna enters from the garden.

BONNA

You'd better come see.

Madalyn looks round, apprehensive.

EXT. BACK YARD -- DAY

Madalyn approaches her garden bed. All the rose bushes have been crushed into the ground. She looks at them in dismay. Bonna stands in the background, trying not to cry. Madalyn looks at the garden path.

MADALYN

My God, these people can't even spell.

The word "Comunist" has been written in red paint across the path.

Her eyes drift up. She sees the garage door is open. Bill's ham radio aerial is broken down before it. She crosses to it.

MADALYN

Why would they break Bill's radio aerial?

She moves through to the garage.

Looking out over the car bonnet, Madalyn enters the garage. She pauses, shocked.

MADALYN

Pup!...Pup!

EXT. BACK YARD -- DAY

Pup crosses the yard.

Back to our original shot of Madalyn. Pup approaches, looking at the car. He groans. He moves forward and touches it.

His hand touches the bonnet, where there is a hole in the paint.

MADALYN

They must've thrown acid on it.

PUP (shaking his head)

Eggs.

MADALYN

Eggs couldn't do this!

PUP

Yep. Egg white. Eat the paint right off anything, then eat the metal. Why buy acid when you can just throw an egg.

MADALYN

They've slashed the tires too.

PUP

(walking off)

Had to get a new set anyway.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- FOYER -- DAY

The front door opens. TWO POLICEMEN stand on the porch.

MADALYN

Well, it's about time. It's been 6 hours.

POLICEMAN 1

We do have other calls, ma'am.

MADALYN

Crime is that rampant it takes you six hours to travel the three miles from the station?

POLICEMAN 1 (to Policeman 2)
Come on, we got better things to do than
help this Atheist bitch.

They walk away.

MADALYN
Oh, I get it, you first have to be a white,
God-fearing Klansman before you can get help
from the police force.

Policeman 1 comes back, looking dangerous.

POLICEMAN 1
One more word out of you, you Commie slut,
and you and that bastard son of yours will
have no front teeth and a two month stretch
for verbal abuse of a police officer.

MADALYN
Oh, you call that abuse?

POLICEMAN 1 (to Policeman 2)
You hear the way she spoke to me?

POLICEMAN 2
Mouth on her like a gutter rat, surprised you
don't just slap the cuffs on her right now.

Madalyn looks at them, knowing she is outgunned. She swings the door
shut.

INT. FOYER -- DAY

Matching shot. The door opens. Three people, WOMEN 1 & 2 and MAN 1,
stand in a tightly knit group. They are quite scared, fighting for
courage.

MADALYN
Yes?

Man 1 is nudged by Women 1 & 2.

MAN 1
(blurting it out)
You should give yourself up to the police!

MADALYN
Beg yours?

MAN 1

You're an Atheist.

MADALYN

So are lots of people. It's not a...

MAN 1

We know you did it.

MADALYN

Did what?

WOMAN 1

How could you leave that little girl lying in the road like that?

MADALYN

Would you people like to step inside?

WOMAN 2 (adamant, scared)

No thank you!

MADALYN

Okay, one of you crackpots better tell me what's going on, or I'm going to close the door.

WOMAN 1

You know very well what's going on. Only an Atheist would do such a thing.

MADALYN

Do what?

WOMAN 1

Why, hit that little girl and leave her in the middle of the road. How could you, even if you don't believe in God, how could you?

MADALYN

A little girl's been hit by a hit and run driver?

They nod.

MADALYN

And you think I did it?

They nod.

MADALYN

Why?

The three exchange a look of confusion.

MAN 1

You're an Atheist.

The door swings shut in front of them.

INT. FOYER -- DAY

Matching shot. The door opens. A rough looking TRUCK DRIVER stands in the doorway. He chews a toothpick.

TRUCK DRIVER

Where do you want it?

MADALYN

I know I'm going to be sorry I asked.
Where do I want what?

He shows her his clipboard.

TRUCK DRIVER

You ordered a ton of brussel sprouts.

The door swings shut in front of him.

INT. MADALYN'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Matching shot. The door opens. Bonna stands, holding a petition.

BONNA

I hope you're proud of yourself. Here.

Madalyn takes the petition and reads. She laughs mirthlessly. Bonna marches off down the hall.

MADALYN

Where's your name?

BONNA

Oh, you can be smart. It doesn't mean anything to you that we're so much hated by our neighbors that they petition us to leave.

MADALYN

You're in so tight with them - you tell those neighbors they can come in here and watch me wipe my arse on this. (checking her watch)

MADALYN (Cont'd)

'Bout twenty minutes. (mumbling) Haven't had my coffee yet.

Suddenly a large rock smashes through a window further up the hall. It rolls to a stop in the middle of the passageway. Bonna looks back at Madalyn.

BONNA

I hope you're satisfied!

EXT. INT. CAR. - MOVING -- DAY

The car pulls up for a red light. The C.L. Attorney is driving.

C.L. ATTORNEY (heated)

You stupid Commies are all alike. You get your ass in a sling and then you hustle to us rotten capitalists to get you out of it!

MADALYN (heated)

If you can't tell the difference between a Communist and an Atheist then you are more half-assed than even I thought you were. You take your help and shove it!

She begins to get out of the car. The light turns green. The C.L. Attorney grabs her arm.

C.L. ATTORNEY

Alright! Alright! I'm sorry!

The car behind them toots.

C.L. ATTORNEY

Yeah, alright already!

Madalyn shuts the door belligerently. They drive on.

INT. BOARD OF EDUCATION -- HALLWAY -- DAY

A sign above a large doorway reads: "Board Of Education". TILT DOWN through the open doors into a large room where a conference is underway.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

The BOARD OF EDUCATION is in public meeting. There are numerous TV CAMERAS and CREWS throughout the crowded room. Madalyn and the C.L. Attorney sit together in an area reserved for spectators.

MEMBER OF THE BOARD (bored, boring)
 And certainly the issue of supervision on the
 sporting grounds has to addressed.

As monologue continues CUT TO:

LOOKING BETWEEN THE C.L. Attorney and Madalyn: The MEMBER OF THE
 BOARD speaks. The C.L. Attorney leans across to Madalyn. She also
 leans in.

C.L. ATTORNEY (voiced whisper)
 You can see it's entirely useless.

MADALYN (voiced whisper)
 Meaning what?

C.L. ATTORNEY
 Meaning there's no point in my trying to say
 anything.

MADALYN
 You mean you aren't going to do anything?

C.L. Attorney shakes his head.

MADALYN
 Well, by God, I am.

Much to C.L. Attorney's chagrin, she stands.

MEMBER OF THE BOARD (concurrent background)
 There is clearly a need for the
 appointment of Teacher Aids to assist in
 supervisory duties. Now whether or not we want
 to approach PTA's to see if a voluntary program
 is viable, or, if not, then we will have to do
 some kind of feasibility study...

MADALYN
 Mr. Chairman! Mr. Chairman! I would like to be
 recognized if I may.

All TV CAMERAS swing onto her. There is hubbub throughout the room.
 The MEMBER OF THE BOARD is attempting to speak on.

MADALYN
 Mr. Chairman! Mr. Chairman! May I be
 recognized, please!

The C.L. Attorney slumps in his chair, hiding his face behind his hand.

MADALYN

Please! Please! I would like to be recognized!
My name is Madalyn Murray O'Hair and I would
like to address the issue of separation of
church and state in our public schools.

INT. ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Before a bank of TV cameras and NEWSMEN from all media, the Attorney General sits at his desk and reads a prepared statement.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Objections to the exercises of Bible reading
and prayer recitation are not considered by me
to be valid reason for non-compliance with the
public school law.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM -- DAY

CLOSE on TV screen.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Master William Murray, and his mother, Mrs.
Madalyn Murray O'Hair, should therefore be
prosecuted for breach of truancy regulations
as specified by law.

Madalyn watches the TV, her face hardened with disappointment. Pup draws on a cigarette, thoughtful. Bonna bites her lip. Bill is outright angry.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (TV V.O.)

It is my opinion that the children of Maryland
have the right and the duty to bow their heads
in humility before the Supreme Being.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS -- DAY

Madalyn, Bonna and Bill in the family car, swing into the grounds, proceed toward the outdoor parking space, and park.

ATTORNEY GENERAL (TV V.O.)

In conclusion I will concede, however, that
William Murray may remain silent in the class
and that he does not have to participate in
these religious exercises in any way. By way of
further concession to keep the peace, he may,
if he wishes, be excused from the room.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Madalyn and Bill are proceeding toward the office. (Bonna waits in the car.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL (TV V.O.)

I sincerely believe that William Murray, like all non-conformists, will suffer acute embarrassment and isolation as a result of his actions. However, this is the price that all non-conformists must pay.

CROSSFADE WITH SOUND TO:

INT. PRINCIPLE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Madalyn and Bill are sitting. The Principal strides about the room, dictating the terms of their surrender.

PRINCIPAL

In order to achieve this officially, you will have to write me a letter, requesting he be excused from the exercises. He will then take up a position outside the door until the duration of the period.

MADALYN

Hold on just a second. That's punishment and you know it. It's an attempt to humiliate my son.

PRINCIPAL

I do believe the Attorney General made mention of the price of non-conformity.

MADALYN

Why the whole period? Why not just during Prayer?

PRINCIPAL

Bible study is not always given with prayer. It can happen at any time during the first period, at the teacher's discretion.

MADALYN

That's a convenient excuse and you know it.

PRINCIPAL

Then I suggest you complain to the Attorney General's department, Mrs. Murray.

SLOW DISSOLVE on Madalyn's face to:

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR -- DAY

Madalyn is on her way back to her car, alone.

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)

Bill will be assigned a new locker. He will also be assigned a table in the cafeteria which will be his and his alone. What's more, as the Attorney General pointed out, Bill has been truant. He will be required to make up every bit of homework and class assignment he has missed in the last two months.

EXT. SCHOOL CARPARK -- DAY

Madalyn sits in her car. She starts it up. Suddenly STUDENT 1 appears through the door of the administration block. He motions to her, and hurries across to her car. Madalyn winds down her window.

MADALYN

What's wrong?

STUDENT 1

Are you Bill Murray's mother?

MADALYN

Yes.

He spits in her face.

STUDENT 1 (calmly)

That's for you, you Atheist bitch.

STUDENT 1 departs. Bonna watches in stunned silence as Madalyn takes off her glasses, and wipes her face with a handkerchief.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- YARD -- DAY

Garth stands inside the yard. A GROUP OF CHILDREN are outside the yard. As they chant "Sa-tan" they throw sticks and pebbles at him. Garth takes the hits with the missiles bravely. After a moment, he begins gathering them up. He crosses to the fence, and holds out his hand, offering them back to the children. One by one the children stop chanting. There is silence. Eventually...

GARTH

Tan.

ELDEST BOY

What?

GARTH

Tan...Tan, tan, tan, tan.

ELDEST BOY

We're saying Satan, you jerk, not 'say tan'.
Gawd!

He moves on, shaking his head. The other Children follow. Garth watches them go, confused.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Madalyn watches out the window, tears streaming down her face.

Little Garth stands by the fence, alone.

EXT. BACK PORCH -- DAY

Pup reads the paper. Garth sits on the back step, dejected.

GARTH

Grandpa.

PUP

(not looking round)

Yep?

GARTH

When we go to purgatory, you going to drive us?

Pup looks round at him. Just then, Madalyn's car comes up the driveway. His eyes follow the car.

PUP

Can't. Your Ma's got the car.

He goes back to reading. Garth frowns at the answer. He watches Madalyn cross toward him, carrying a cardboard box.

MADALYN

Close your eyes.

GARTH

Why?

MADALYN

'Cause I got a surprise for you.

Garth closes his eyes. Madalyn places the box down beside him.

MADALYN

Ahh. No peeking.

She takes out a KITTEN, and places it onto Garth's lap. He opens his eyes and gasps with joy.

GARTH

Oh! The little pussy cat! Hello. Hello.

Madalyn watches him, relieved to see a smile on his face again.

Pup watches, a slight grin on his face. He goes back to reading.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE. CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

Madalyn pounds away at a typewriter. Bill enters, carrying his schoolbag.

BILL

Hi, Ma!

MADALYN

Hi. How'd it go?

BILL

Fine. What's doing?

MADALYN

Applying for jobs.

BILL

You haven't got time.

Madalyn stops typing and looks at him.

Just got the homework.

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- NIGHT

CLOSE UP: There are reams of school material spread out over a table. TILT UP to discover Madalyn and Bill examining it. Madalyn lowers a paper.

MADALYN

This is unbelievable. A university student wouldn't miss this many assignments in two years.

The phone rings. Madalyn answers it.

MADALYN (bored, expecting a nut)
Trick or treat?

INTERCUT TO: EXTREME CLOSE UP: A WOMAN'S lips, whispering.

WOMAN
Mrs. Murray?

MADALYN
(nodding knowingly to Bill)
Yes, this is she.

WOMAN
This is one of Bill's teachers.

MADALYN
Oh, yes. Say, you want to speak up a bit.

WOMAN
I don't want you to know who this is. Listen,
Mrs. Murray, all of the teachers have been
ordered not to speak to Bill.

MADALYN
What?

WOMAN
No contact unless absolutely necessary. And
Mrs. Murray...

MADALYN
Yes.

WOMAN
Make carbon copies of the homework.

The line suddenly goes dead. Madalyn lowers the phone and looks across at Bill. He studies the homework, making notes. Madalyn sighs, worried.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM -- DAY

STUDENTS are handing their homework to the front. Bill receives the pile of homework from behind him. He adds five times as many assignments to the pile as the others, before handing it on.

TEACHER 1
Here are last week's tests. Pass them back.

The tests travel back up Bill's row. When he receives the pile, he cannot find his paper. He looks through those left. It is not there. He hands them on, and holds up his hand.

BILL

Excuse me, Ma'am. My paper doesn't seem to be here.

TEACHER 1

Well of course not. For your paper to be there you first must hand it in.

BILL

Excuse me, Ma'am, but I did hand it in.

TEACHER 1

I'm not interested in your lies, Bill Murray. You can do the make up test after school or be graded zero.

BILL

But, Ma'am, that test was a week ago. I'm cold on the facts now.

TEACHER 1 (ignoring him)

Take out your Bibles. Turn to page 224.

Bill, helplessly watches the teacher. She turns to him.

TEACHER 1

You. Outside.

INT. CORRIDOR -- DAY

Bill stands outside the classroom door, alone in the corridor. The class reading from the Bible out loud.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- BACK YARD -- DAY

Garth plays with his Kitten. CHILDREN 1 & 2, slightly older than him, appear at the fence. They are mesmerized by the Kitten.

CHILD 1

What's her name?

GARTH

It's a boy. His name is Whiskas.

CHILD 2

Can we pat him?

GARTH

Sure, come in.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Madalyn is on the phone. Pup drinks coffee at the table.

MADALYN

Oh, Pup said that they've torn down your aerial again.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Bill is on the 'student's phone'.

BILL

Oh...Alright, I'll pick up a new one on the way home.

MADALYN

Now you watch yourself coming home, young man. You sure I can't pick you up?

BILL

I'm sure.

MADALYN

Okay, see you round four.

BILL

Yeah.

MADALYN

Round four, Bill?

BILL

Yeah. Yeah. Stop worrying, Ma.

They hang up. She crosses to the kitchen window and looks out on the back yard.

Garth and Children 1 & 2 are playing with the Kitten.

Madalyn grins.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR. GIRL'S LOCKERS -- DAY

MALE STUDENTS 1-3, are spitting through slats in the locker onto Bill's jacket inside. Numerous FEMALE STUDENTS around them

laugh at what they're doing. MALE STUDENT 1 becomes alert.

MALE STUDENT 1

Hey hey, here he comes!

Bill comes down the busy corridor. Male Student 1 hurries Male Students 2 & 3 away.

Bill approaches his locker and opens it. Female students are watching him, snickering in anticipation. Bill groans as he sees his jacket. He takes it out, covered in spittle. Female Students openly laugh at him.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL -- DAY

Bill arrives on his bike. His jacket is stuffed into one of the saddlebags, and he shivers. He hurries into the mall.

INT. HARDWARE SHOP -- DAY

Bill approaches the counter.

BILL

Could I have a short roll of number eight wire, please.

ATTENDANT

Sure thing.

He goes to get it. As Bill takes the money from his shirt pocket, he glances round. He stiffens as he sees THREE YOUNG ROUGHNECKS staring at him through the shop window. The ATTENDANT returns with the wire.

ATTENDANT

Okay, that'll be \$3.20, thanks.

Bill hands over the money. The Attendant rings it up.

ATTENDANT

You must have one hell of an aerial by now. Where you broadcasting to? Antarctica?

BILL (barely attentive)

Something like that.

He takes the change and exits the store.

INT. MALL -- DAY

Bill exits from the Hardware store. He walks toward the mall entrance, toward his bike. He notices that the Roughnecks follow

him. Christmas carols are playing.

Bill approaches the front entrance. He halts as he sees a group of around 7 Roughnecks on the sidewalk, blocking him from his bike. He glances to one side and sees a phone booth. He runs for it and just manages to get the door shut before Roughnecks beat on it.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE. CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

Madalyn sighs wearily as she places a carbon sheet between two sheets of paper and then winds all three into a typewriter. The phone rings.

MADALYN
(annoyed, to the phone)
I'm doing my homework!

It keeps ringing.

Can somebody get that!

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Pup reads the newspaper as he smokes. The phone still rings. He ignores it.

BACK TO:

Muttering, Madalyn, gets up to answer the phone.

MADALYN
Hello?

INTERCUT:

Bill struggles to keep the door shut, unable to speak.

MADALYN
(hearing the commotion)
Hello, Bill?

BILL
How'd you guess?!

MADALYN
What's that noise?

BILL
There's a prayer meeting going on!

Suddenly Roughneck 1 pushes his foot through the door. Bill has to drop the phone to get the door shut again. That done, he grabs the phone once more.

BILL

Back again.

MADALYN

What was that?

BILL

I'm trapped in a phone booth down at the mall!

MADALYN

I'm on my way.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Madalyn bursts in.

MADALYN

Bill's trapped in a phone booth at the mall!

PUP

You're not going down there?

MADALYN

Pup!

PUP

I'll go. You're going to monkey around until those nuts kill my grandson.

MADALYN

We'll both go, two cars. Where's Garth?

She rushes to the window.

MADALYN

Garth! Garth!

EXT. BACK YARD -- DAY

Garth and CHILDREN 1 - 5 are now playing with the kitten. Garth looks round.

MADALYN

Come inside now! Hurry!

Garth goes to grab the Kitten but it squeezes through the fence.

GARTH

Oh, Whiskas.

He decides to go around to get it.

MADALYN

Garth, come now! Now! Hurry!

GARTH

But Whiskas...

MADALYN

Don't worry about Whiskas, he'll be alright,
you come now!

Garth obeys. He moves from frame. HOLD on Kitten, surrounded by the children, looking up at them.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Bonna stands on the front porch, holding Garth by the hand. Madalyn, driving her car, backs furiously into the street. Pup, driving his car, is close behind. They roar down the street.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL -- DAY

Madalyn screeches to a halt. Bill, in the now smashed phone booth, suddenly makes a break for it, is knocked down, but manages to get free. He dives into the car and slams the door.

INTERCUT TO:

INT/EXT. CAR -- DAY

BILL

Go! Go!

Madalyn stalls the car. The Roughnecks surround them. Madalyn attempts frantically to start the car. The Roughnecks spread round the car and begin to shake it. There are enough of them to turn the car over. They are tipping it drastically back and forth. (The car is a small Renault.)

Suddenly there is a screech of tires as Pup in his Oldsmobile comes to a halt behind them. He is out of the car immediately, marching toward the group.

PUP

Get off that car, you punks, or you'll have
more trouble that you can handle!

The Roughnecks are momentarily stunned by the authority in his voice. A wailing siren can be heard in the distance. The sudden combination is too much. The group scatters in all directions.

Bill winds down his window.

BILL (to Pup)
Well, fancy meeting you here.

He turns to his mother.

BILL
Who was that masked man?

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- CLUB CELLAR -- NIGHT

Madalyn and Bill do the homework.

MADALYN
Listen to this. Roman history. Write an essay giving the outline and survey of the Old Testament. Can you believe these people? We're never going to get all this crap done.
(muttering) Roman history.

She begins to move upstairs.

BILL
(working on, sing song)
Momma said cra-ap, Momma said cra-ap.

MADALYN (mumbling)
(exiting)
I'll say more than that if you don't shut up.

INT. HOUSE -- NIGHT

Madalyn ascends the stairs, grinning.

BILL (O.S.)
Momma said cra-ap, Momma said cra-ap.

As she reaches the top of the stairs the front doorbell rings.

MADALYN
I'll go.

She crosses to answer it.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- FRONT PORCH -- NIGHT

Madalyn opens the door. She hesitates, it is very black on the porch.

MADALYN

Who's there? Have you broken our light again?

She hears a slight noise. Suddenly she realizes the whole porch is full of YOUNG MEN.

MADALYN

Who are you? What do you want?

YOUNG MAN 1

We've come for Bill Murray.

Madalyn moves onto the porch.

MADALYN

What do you want with my son?

YOUNG MAN 2 has a rope with a noose in it. He jiggles it in her face.

YOUNG MAN 2

We want him. Bring him out. Or do we come in and get him.

Madalyn marches straight at him, furious.

MADALYN

You get your ass off my porch before I throw you off. If you don't clear out of here you're going to be arrested for trespassing.

The group stands their ground. However one of them, toward the rear, decides to jump off the porch. Hearing the sound of his jump, the others slowly follow suit. Madalyn watches them go, fighting to keep calm.

INT. HOUSE -- NIGHT

Madalyn enters and shuts the door. Bill comes up the stairs. He sees the strained look on her face. Suddenly Madalyn's legs give way, and she collapses against a chair. Bill rushes to her, helping her back up.

BILL

What was that?

MADALYN (amazed)
I think I peed my pants!

Suddenly Bonna screams from the kitchen. Madalyn and Bill rush toward it.

INT/EXT. KITCHEN/BACK PORCH -- NIGHT

Bonna stands in the back doorway, her hands to her mouth.

Madalyn and Bill enter the kitchen.

MADALYN
What is it Ma, what?!

BONNA
(crying, turning away)
Oh, poor Garth, poor little Garth!

Madalyn and Bill arrive at the back door, and halt.

The strangled body of Whiskas hangs from a cord of rope tied to a beam.

Madalyn comes forward.

MADALYN
Bastards...You call yourself Christians!

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- NIGHT

The house within the neighborhood. Madalyn and Bill are small standing in the doorway:

MADALYN
Bastards!!...Bastards!!

The neighborhood is silent.

INT. DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

At the dining table, Madalyn yawns, bitterly picking up an exercise book and searching through it for Bill's latest transcription from her typing. They are still working on the homework. Bill copies in longhand from a typewritten page. The rest of the family are in bed, and aside from the dining room light, the house is in darkness.

MADALYN
Fifteen hundred pages. We've written the equivalent of five novels.

BILL (edgy)

Yeah, well we're getting there, one day at a time.

MADALYN

I know we're getting there, don't tell me, I'm the one doing it.

BILL

Yeah, well don't tell me, I'm the one getting his arse kicked every day. Doing homework's a bit easier than getting beaten up, you know.

MADALYN

Oh God, Bill, look at this!

She throws the exercise book back at him.

I can't read that handwriting, copy it again.

BILL

(leaping to his feet)

You copy it! And don't you throw things at me! I'm sick of you telling me what to do! I'm sick of...

MADALYN

(shouting back)

Just sit down and do it! Just sit down and do it!

BILL

(overlapping)

Don't you tell me what to do! You don't have the right! You don't have...

In reflex reaction to his aggression, Madalyn slaps his face. Bill stops suddenly and recoils. They stare at each other, both in shock at what just happened.

The stairwell light comes on. Pup descends the stairs, doing up his dressing gown. Bonna is not far behind him.

PUP

Hey, what the hell's going on down here?

The cuckoo clock goes off. It is midnight.

BONNA

Now this has just gone far enough.

PUP

(looking at Bill)

Get him a shot of whisky.

Bonna does so.

PUP

Just take it easy, son. Take it easy
both of you.

Bonna hands Bill the whisky. He gulps it down.

BONNA

Here. Now this has got to end. I am
fed up with this boy being persecuted.
There is not a reason in the world
for this, Madalyn. This is more of
your insanity, and now this poor child
is involved in it. Stop and think, these
are your children, not pawns in some
stupid game!

PUP

I think everybody had better get to bed.
That boy should be in bed and covered up,
kept warm. Come on Bill, hit the sack.

He crosses to the light switch.

PUP

All of you, out of here. We aren't going to
settle anything at this hour.

He turns out the light.

All except Madalyn exit up the stairs. As they go...

BONNA

Oh, the very idea. This boy should be in bed
every night by nine. He has to get up in the
morning. Her and her stupid Atheism. God has
intervened in this home tonight. I have never
heard of anything like this in my life.

Madalyn sits in the darkness and lowers her head in shame and
frustration.

INT. MADALYN'S BEDROOM - FIRST LIGHT

Madalyn sleeps in her bed. She appears pale, sickly looking. She stirs, feverish.

MADALYN

(whispered, half-asleep)

So cold.

Suddenly she gasps. She pulls the bedclothes aside. The lower half of the bed is soaked in blood. Madalyn sits up, panting.

EXT. BACK YARD -- DAY

Madalyn, very pale, re-spades her garden bed, repairing the damage, and planting new flowers. Pup coats his Oldsmobile with an industrial sealant to protect it from the eggs. Bill restrings the aerial wire for his ham radio. Bonna scrubs "Atheist Filth" written in black paint on the pathway. They work in silence, downhearted. Garth comes onto the back porch.

GARTH

Whiskas!...Whiskas! Kitty, kitty, kitty.

He continues round the yard, calling. Madalyn, Bill, Pup and Bonna can only watch as he continues about the yard, forlornly calling for his kitten. Madalyn's eyes fill with tears.

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

Madalyn lies in bed, looking unwell. The Doctor seen examining her earlier, enters.

DOCTOR

Ready to do battle?

MADALYN

Who? Me?

The Doctor grins ambiguously.

SLOW FADE TO WHITE:

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

FADE IN.

Post-operation. Madalyn lies in bed, semi-conscious. There is an I.V. inserted in her arm, and she appears ill. A YOUNG MALE DOCTOR enters cautiously. He checks her chart, wondering if she is strong enough to take what he is about to say.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Mrs. Murray, we received a phone call.

MADALYN
Yes?

YOUNG DOCTOR
I'm sorry. It seems your father died.
Heart attack.

MADALYN
Can you get me to a phone?

INT. DAYROOM -- DAY

Madalyn, propped up with pillows, is in a wheelchair. Her I.V. is on a stand beside her. A nurse hands her the telephone. It rings and is answered.

BONNA (telephone V.O.)
Hello?

MADALYN
Mother?

BONNA (telephone V.O.)
Yes?

MADALYN
When did it happen?

BONNA (V.O.)
When did what happen?

MADALYN
You know...Pup.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. MURRAY HOUSE. KITCHEN -- DAY

Bonna is on the phone. Pup sits at the table, eating ham and eggs. Bonna looks round at Pup.

BONNA
What about him?

MADALYN
I was just told he died.

Bonna takes the phone away from her ear.

BONNA

It's Madalyn. She wants to know if you're dead.

PUP

No...no, I'm fine.

BONNA

No. He says he's fine. It's not a very funny joke, Madalyn. Did the operation go okay? How do you feel?

MADALYN

I'm fine now. I'll see you when you come up.

BONNA

Okay. I don't think dad liked your joke.

She hangs up. She looks at Pup. He stares back, chewing.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- DAY

SUPER: 5 MONTHS LATER.

Bill runs. He is pursued by a mob of TWENTY YOUNG MEN. They whip him with industrial web-belting with metal tabs on the ends, the type used to bundle newspapers. Bill screams as each lash cuts into his flesh.

There is a bus shelter ahead. A MAN in the bus shelter rises to his feet, alarmed at what he sees. Behind him, the bus approaches the stop.

BILL

Help! Get help! Please!

EXT. BUS SHELTER -- DAY

Bill arrives at the bus stop. He is seized by the Young Men. In the midst of the struggle, Bill recognizes one of them. CAMERA notes some of the faces of the Young Men (for later scenes). Suddenly, they shove Bill in front of the oncoming bus.

Bill's P.O.V.: The front of the bus looms at him.

The bus stops inches from his shocked face.

Realizing he is free, Bill rushes for the door.

EXT. BUS INT -- DAY

The Man is boarding the bus ahead of Bill. Bill leaps up the steps. He is grabbed at by his pursuers, but fights them off.

BILL
(to the DRIVER)
Close the door!

The DRIVER does so. The Young Men immediately pound on the side of the bus. Bill finds some fare money in his pocket and pays the driver. He walks down the aisle as the bus begins to pull away from the stop. PASSENGERS stare at him warily. He sits down with relief and recovers his breath.

INT. BILL'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Bill peels off his shirt. His abdomen is covered in red welts and scratches. He looks at himself in the mirror, and his eyes drift up to meet his own.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Bill, Bonna and Garth cover themselves on the floor. Every window in the kitchen is being smashed with a sustained barrage of rocks. Pup tries to get them to cover behind a door. It is a terrifying ordeal.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE - STREET -- DAY

Madalyn walks down the street, quite ill. She carries her overnight bag and purse.

Pup is on the front porch, sweeping broken glass up into a pile. He looks up.

Madalyn approaches along the street. She stops.

They exchange a long look. Pup tries to grin.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

A MAILMAN walks up the pathway to the house. He knocks on the door. Shortly the door is answered by Madalyn.

MADALYN
Yes, can I help you?

MAILMAN

Yes Ma'am, you made a complaint about your mail not being delivered?

MADALYN

Oh yes, that's right.

MAILMAN

Well here.

He hands her a large handful of letters, and immediately walks away.

Close on the letters in Madalyn's hand. Suddenly she realizes that they have all been opened and there is nothing in them.

MADALYN

Hey!...Hey!!

The Mailman does not look round.

MADALYN

You bastard! Come back here! You bastard!

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

Madalyn makes up a stencil as Bill attempts to work a mimeograph machine. Bill curses almost continuously under his breath. Both of them have black ink on their hands and faces, Bill is virtually covered in it. He finally cracks.

BILL

Oh you want to play rough, huh?! You want to play rough?!

MADALYN

(grinning pleasantly)

So, Billy boy, how's it going there, hon?

BILL

I'm going to murder this stupid thing! I'm going to murder it!

MADALYN

Oh?

BILL

If this thing thinks it's going to get the better of me it's got another think coming!

MADALYN
(exiting)

So, who's for a homemade lemonade?

BILL

I'm going to kick this thing so hard it'll
print backward!

MADALYN

I'll just pop up and get some. Shan't be long.

Madalyn grins to herself as she walks up the stairs.

INT. HALL -- DAY

Madalyn reaches the top of the stairs and heads for the kitchen.
Bonna knits in an armchair. She notices something out front.

BONNA
(happy at the prospect)

Oh, here's the mailman.

It's like a red flag to a bull for Madalyn. She immediately heads
for the door, ready for battle. As she passes a window there is a
glimpse of a very tall Mailman, BILL MOORE, walking up the path to
the house.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Madalyn flings open the door.

MADALYN
Alright you son of a bitch...!

BILL MOORE
(taking off his hat)
Well glad to see you too, Madalyn.

MADALYN
Bill! Oh! You...

She throws her arms around him.

MADALYN
Well, what are you doing here? Oh...

She suddenly separates from him.

BILL MOORE
What? What's wrong?

MADALYN
 (looking around)
 Nothing. Quick come in the house.

They go inside.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

They enter.

BILL MOORE
 What's going on?

Madalyn shuts the door.

MADALYN
 Nothing. Hey Ma, look who's back in town.

BONNA
 Bill!

He turns. Bonna crosses to him with her arms outstretched.

BILL MOORE
 There she is! There's my girl! C'mere,
 beautiful.

He leans down from his great height and embraces her, lifting her from the ground. Bonna laughs loudly.

PUP
 Hey you, put my wife down!

Pup comes over, grinning. Bill puts Bonna down and they shake hands.

BILL MOORE
 John. God, look at you. 'Bout time we took you up the hospital, got that newspaper cut out of your hand.

PUP
 Yeah, well at least I know what's going on round here. Just no one ever stops to ask me.

They laugh.

BONNA
 Would you like a hot chocolate?

BILL MOORE

Oh, now you know that's the whole reason I came back here.

He looks up, an expression of horror coming to his face.

BILL MOORE

What is that?

Bill stands at the top of the cellar stairs. He smiles, and his white teeth flash out from his almost totally blackened face.

BILL

Bill!

He rushes to hug him.

MADALYN

Bill, no, no!

BILL MOORE

No, Bill!

But Bill hugs him. Bill Moore laughs.

BILL MOORE

Well, this was a clean shirt.

Everyone laughs.

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

Madalyn, Bill Moore and Bill stand round the mimeograph machine, examining it like a corpse.

BILL MOORE

Why are you doing this?

MADALYN (to Bill)

Go on.

BILL

We're going to send out a newsletter.

Bill Moore nods. Bill doesn't go on, and so receives a look from Bill Moore that he should continue.

BILL

We thought we could appeal to those people who've been writing in support of us to donate some money for the case in the Supreme Court.

BILL MOORE

The case been taken up by the Supreme Court?

BILL

Well, no...not yet.

BILL MOORE

Do either of you know how difficult it is to get a case to the Supreme Court? I mean there's murders, rapes, organized crime...

MADALYN

We know. But this is a constitutional matter. It's a matter of discrimination...

BILL MOORE

Where'd you get the money to buy this?

BILL

Borrowed it from my uncle.

BILL MOORE

You two are really serious about this? A newsletter?

He sees that they are. He rolls up his sleeves.

BILL MOORE

Okay. Let's see if we can get this baby to roll.

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- NIGHT

MUSIC MONTAGE: Bill Moore shows Bill how to use the mimeograph. He shows them tricks of the trade in how to fold newsletters quickly, how to quickly insert the newsletters into envelopes, how to bend stamps for ease of sticking them on. Eventually a large pile of envelopes grows on the table before them. They smile and laugh as they work, fooling around. At montage end, Bill Moore looks at the clock on the wall - 3.00 a.m.. As he throws the last letter on the pile, he notices Bill asleep across the table. He exchanges a loving smile with Madalyn.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Bill Moore rolls up in a mail truck and gets out. He carries two letters in his hand. He knocks on the front door of the house and immediately enters.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Bill Moore enters.

BILL MOORE
Hey, Madalyn! Bill!

MADALYN (O.S.)
We're down here!

He heads for the club cellar.

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

Bill Moore enters.

BILL MOORE
(smiling)
Got some replies.

Madalyn and Bill make noises of delight and excitement. Bill takes the envelopes and opens one of them carefully.

MADALYN
Can you see a check?...Will you hurry!

Bill opens the letter and reads. His face drops.

BILL
(reading)
"You nut, who in the goddamned hell gave you my name? Don't bother me again with your stupid newsletter."

Everyone is downcast. Despondently, Bill opens the second letter.

Bill finds a stamp inserted in their newsletter.

BILL
It's a stamp, and they've ticked the box that says they want to receive the next newsletter.

He grins sadly at Madalyn.

BILL MOORE

Wow, amazing...a 50% success rate already.

He laughs. Madalyn and Bill grin, but are disappointed.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Bill Moore arrives in his van once more. This time he carries a shoe box full of letters to the front door.

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

Madalyn opens a letter. The letters are in the box on the table. Madalyn's face splits into a joyous smile.

MADALYN

It's a check!

The three of them hug.

BILL

(singing)

We're in the money....

Madalyn and Bill Moore pick up on the song, and the three of them dance in a tight group round the room.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

MUSIC OVER: Bill Moore arrives in the mail van. This time he carries a canvas bag to the door.

INT. CLUB CELLAR -- DAY

MUSIC continues. The letters from the canvas bag spill over the table. Bill leaps onto the table and frolics among the letters. Madalyn smiles warmly at Bill Moore, grateful and affectionate.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Madalyn drives her car, with Bill Moore in the passenger seat, and Bill in the back. She pulls to the side of the road. They get out and go round to the boot. Madalyn opens it, and they extract a sandwich board. They help Bill Moore strap it on. The front panel is black and has written on it in white, "Black or White eat at Joe's". On the white back panel is written in black, "Atheist's walk for fellow man".

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

MADALYN

You're going to have sore feet by the time you get there.

BILL MOORE

I'm a mailman. Comes with the job. Oh Bill, could you grab that protest letter for me.

Bill collects it off the dashboard.

MADALYN

Where did you tell the press you'd be?

BILL MOORE

About a mile up ahead.

They exchange a meaningful look. Bill Moore touches her face.

Bill hands him the letter.

BILL MOORE

Well, how do I look?

MADALYN

Like the rest of us. Just another fool with a cause.

She kisses him. It means something to both of them.

Bill tries to hug him, but can't because of the sandwich board.

BILL MOORE

Kind of awkward, ain't it.

Bill Moore leans down and kisses Bill on the forehead. They laugh.

BILL MOORE

Well, suppose I'd better get started.

MADALYN

Yeah, no point in hanging around.

BILL MOORE

Yep, better hit the road. Which way's Washington again?

BILL

Think it's that way.

BILL MOORE

This way?

BILL

Yeah.

BILL MOORE

You sure?

BILL

Yeah.

He moves off in the opposite direction.

BILL MOORE

Great.

MADALYN

Say hello to the President for us.

BILL MOORE

Sure thing. I hear he's your biggest fan!

They laugh. Madalyn puts her arm around Bill and they wave, smiling. A car toots its horn angrily as it goes past, the DRIVER shouting an obscenity. Bill Moore waves to the driver in a friendly way.

Madalyn shakes her head, worried.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD INTERSECTION -- DAY

Some NEWSMEN are waiting. Bill Moore rounds the corner of a road.

NEWSMAN 1

(disposing of a cigarette)

Hey, here he comes!

The Newsmen move down to him. They begin taking pictures, etc. Bill Moore does not stop walking.

BILL MOORE

Hi, fellas.

NEWSMAN 1

Have you got anything you want to say publicly to the President, Bill?

BILL MOORE

Yes, that I'm making this walk because I believe in integration, just as I believe in our constitution where it says that all men are created equal.

NEWSMAN 2

Isn't that created equal before God, Bill?

BILL MOORE

Equal is equal regardless of whether it's before God or in the absence of God. We live in a democracy where church is supposed to be separated from state.

NEWSMAN 3

So why are you making the walk as an Atheist?

BILL MOORE

Because I want to show that Atheism does not mean immorality. Some of the greatest heroes who have fought and died for humanity throughout the ages have been Atheists. Atheists love their fellow man more than they love a God in Heaven. I'm walking for my love of other people.

CROSS FADE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

An isolated location. Bill Moore trudges on by the roadside. He whistles softly. A car can be heard approaching. It is a Ford pick-up.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. PICK-UP INT -- DAY

A middle-aged man drives. He appears to be a REDNECK, carrying with him all the prejudices the name implies. He sees Bill coming toward him. A shotgun is on a rack across the rear cabin window.

The truck goes past Bill Moore. The Redneck watches Bill in the rear vision mirror.

INT. MADALYN'S BEDROOM -- EARLY MORNING

Madalyn sleeps. The door opens, Garth, dragging a pillow, enters quietly. He crawls onto the bed beside his mother. Madalyn grins without opening her eyes, lifting the covers for him. They snuggle.

Suddenly Bill's loud screams come from downstairs. Madalyn's eyes spring open. She rushes for the bedroom door.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- EARLY MORNING

Bill, in his pajamas, is in the middle of the room, wailing in sorrow. A newspaper is in his hand. Madalyn comes running down the stairs. Bill crosses to her.

BILL (hysterical)
 Mother! Mother! Mother! They shot him!
 They shot him! They killed him! Bill
 Moore's dead! Bill Moores's dead!

He thrusts the newspaper at her. Madalyn takes it.

There is a photograph on the front page of Bill Moore lying dead by the roadside. Half the sandwich board has been blown away by a shotgun blast.

MADALYN
 Oh no, oh no, oh no.....

She sinks down on the stairs, weeping.

FADE OUT.

INT. COURT -- PRETRIAL HEARING -- DAY

As JUDGE HAMMERMAN talks Madalyn, Bill and Goldstein exchange a worried look. Steve, the journalist, sits in the gallery, also frowning in disbelief. The Boys who attacked Bill at the bus stop stand beside the DEFENSE LAWYER.

HAMMERMAN
 As to the attack, well, who's to say if the bus would have ever hit Bill Murray. And I think it is more than a little clear that Master Murray has a history of inciting hatred. After all, the Murrays are Atheists. I therefore believe that I can and will prevent this case going to trail. Dismissed.

He bangs his gravel once. To the Bailiff:

Next case.

There is hubbub in the court, the accused Boys celebrate.

GOLDSTEIN

(shouting over the noise)

Your Honor, your Honor! If you do this you will be sending a message that anyone can attack the Murrays, admit it in open court, and get away with it!

HAMMERMAN

Bailiff, clear the court.

He exits to his chambers.

GOLDSTEIN

Your Honor! Your Honor!

INT. HALL -- COURT HOUSE -- DAY

Madalyn, Bill, and Goldstein exit the building.

MADALYN

You did good today.

GOLDSTEIN

I was shit. I'm always shit.

They approach the doors to the building.

EXT. COURT HOUSE - DAY

They exit the building. As they continue they receive belligerent stares from the Boys who attacked Bill, grouped on the stairs.

MADALYN

No, the judge was shit...What's happening with the Supreme Court?

GOLDSTEIN

We're up for review. The Board of Education slipped up with it's demurer. There's a slim chance the Supreme Court will pick up our case now.

MADALYN

How slim?

GOLDSTEIN

About three hundred to one.

He hands her a bill.

GOLDSTEIN

That's for printing costs for our application.

He walks off. Madalyn sees the enormous amount on the bill.

MADALYN

I can't pay all this!

GOLDSTEIN

(not stopping)

I'm sorry, I didn't know how to proceed!
Don't go home, it's open season on you now!

EXT. CAR INT -- MURRAY HOUSE -- DUSK

Madalyn and Bill are returning in the car.

THEIR P.O.V.: A GANG OF YOUTHS are shoving Bonna around between them on the front lawn.

MADALYN

Oh, my God! Those bastards!

She stomps on the accelerator.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DUSK

Madalyn's car roars toward us, the horn blaring. It screeches to a halt. The Youths break and run. Bonna falls down. Madalyn and Bill run angrily up to Bonna.

MADALYN

You better run you cowards! You goddamned cowards!...Are you alright, Ma?

She helps her up.

BONNA

Yes...yes.

MADALYN

Where's dad, is he alright?

Bonna pulls away from her and moves immediately toward the house.

BONNA

He's just down the store. He's alright.

She pauses slightly on the front stairs.

BONNA

This is God's retribution, Madalyn.
You can't deny God, you know.

She moves into the house. Madalyn and Bill watch her go.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- NIGHT

In darkness, the Murrays move around the house, keeping low and hiding behind furniture. The house is attacked from all sides. All windows are being smashed with stones. It is as if they are being fired upon by an army of attackers. Madalyn shields Garth while yelling instructions to other members of her family to keep away from the windows. A window explodes just near her head, and she covers her face, screaming.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE. DAWN.

The yard is covered in debris and all the windows are broken.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE. DAWN.

The house looks as if a bomb has gone off inside. The members of the family sit and sleep in much the same positions as seen the night before. Garth sleeps on Madalyn's lap. Pup sits on the floor against a chair, opposite Madalyn. He is exhausted.

PUP

Babe, I can't take much more of this. I'm
not a young man anymore.

Madalyn studies his face with concern.

INTRODUCE SAD MUSIC. CLOSE UP: Pup.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUPREME COURT BUILDING. WASHINGTON D.C. -- DAY

ESTABLISHING.

SUPER: SUPREME COURT BUILDING, WASHINGTON D.C., JUNE 1963.

Walking toward us are Madalyn, Bill, Bonna, Garth, Goldstein, his WIFE, their TWO CHILDREN, and Goldstein's parents, MR & MRS GOLDSTEIN.

EXT. SUPREME COURT BUILDING -- DAY

Goldstein suddenly stops walking, fixated by the building. It takes a moment for the others to register that he is no longer with them. They come to a halt. Madalyn walks back to him.

MADALYN

What is it?

GOLDSTEIN

I can't go in.

MADALYN

Why?

GOLDSTEIN

I'm...Look at it...I'm afraid.

Madalyn looks round at the others. She looks back at Goldstein.

MADALYN (quietly)

Your wife and children are here. Your parents are here. This is your finest hour.

He groans, not taking his eyes from the building. Madalyn grabs him suddenly by the arm and propels him toward a doorway.

INT. SUPREME COURT BUILDING -- FOYER -- DAY

They arrive inside the foyer. Madalyn dumps Goldstein in a chair.

MADALYN

You'll be alright now.

GOLDSTEIN

Yes, thank you.

He is attended to by his Wife and Parents, who mop his brow.

BILL

This should be a lot of fun.

MADALYN

Well, look on the bright side. We made it into the building, so He must want us here.

INT. SUPREME COURT -- DAY

CLERK

Oyez, Oyez, God save our nation and this
honorable court!

Madalyn sits with Bill, Garth and Bonna in a gallery behind their
counsel's bench. Madalyn rolls her eyes and looks at Bill. They see
the ironic side of it and burst out laughing.

The NINE SUPREME COURT JUDGES file into the room, and take their
seats behind the lofty bench.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN

(reading from a list)

Ah, Mr. Goldberg....?

He looks at Goldstein.

GOLDSTEIN

(rising)

Goldstein, your Honor.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN

(rereading)

Yes...Proceed, please.

Goldstein swallows dryly.

GOLDSTEIN

The...the Constitution of the United States has
erected a wall of separation between church and
state...

JUSTICE STEWART

Could you tell this court where in the
Constitution that is so designated.

Goldstein freezes, terror in his eyes.

Madalyn's P.O.V.: Goldstein looks small as he stands before the
bench of nine Judges.

The pause seems unending. Eventually...

JUSTICE BLACK

I believe it was Jefferson that cited those
words, and the Supreme Court then sitting
incorporated them into a decision.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN
Continue Counsel.

GOLDSTEIN
The...the Bible...um...when you're, say, a
child and in the classroom, and you don't
believe what is going on, well you feel
pretty bad at telling the teacher...

His voice drifts off.

JUSTICE STEWART
What?

GOLDSTEIN
That you don't want to say it...prayers.
The Lord's Prayer.

JUSTICE STEWART
Well, what sort of children are we talking
about? Infants? Teenagers?

GOLDSTEIN
Any children.

JUSTICE STEWART
Are you telling me that a six year old is
going to analyze the Lord's Prayer and
dispute its efficacy with the teacher?

GOLDSTEIN
No.

JUSTICE STEWART
Then what are you saying?

GOLDSTEIN
Well, it's, it's a matter of principle.

JUSTICE GOLDBERG
I think what Mr. Goldstein is saying is that
the Bible is a religious book, and prayer is a
very real part of religion. Now if a person
professes a belief or disbelief, which is at
variance to what is going on in the school
room, those proceedings sponsored by the state,
then that person, particularly if that person
is a child, should not be subjected to

JUSTICE GOLDBERG (Cont'd)
that pressure. Especially given the
relationship of this matter to the
Constitution.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN
Just in relation to that point, Mr.
Goldstein, can you tell the court what
amendments of the Constitution you are
specifically referring to in relation
to your case?

GOLDSTEIN
(searching furiously)
Yes...Yes...I, I have that here...
if you'll just bear with me...for a
second...

He can't find it. Madalyn rolls her eyes and sighs, all but giving
up on Goldstein.

He continues searching. A long silence as he shuffles the papers.
Madalyn lowers her head.

INT. OUTSIDE THE COURTROOM -- DAY

Goldstein exits the courtroom and is immediately assailed by
Newsmen. He cannot disavow his connection with Atheism or the
Murrays quickly enough.

GOLDSTEIN
No, no, look I'm just an attorney. I'm just
representing the Murrays. No, no, no I'm not
an Atheist. I'm only here as legal counsel.

He finds a Men's Room and escapes into it.

INT. MENS ROOM -- DAY

Goldstein, his face dripping with water, leans on a handbasin, and
looks at himself in the mirror. He suddenly bursts into tears,
disgusted in himself.

INT. COURTROOM -- DAY

ATTORNEY 1 & 2, counsels for the states of Maryland and
Pennsylvania, address the full bench.

ATTORNEY 2

...Therefore the Bible in this context can hardly be described as a religious work, but rather as a reference, a benchmark, for moral values...

JUSTICE STEWART

Hold on a sec. Are you seriously putting to this court that it is not considered by you or those that you represent that the Bible is a religious book? I'm sure that there's a few people across this fair land that would likely disagree with you.

ATTORNEY 2

No, your Honor, we do not deny that the Bible itself is a religious book. However we do most vigorously argue that the reading of the Bible does not constitute a religious exercise. To read a book is not to believe...

JUSTICE STEWART

And to recite a prayer is not to believe... That is the direction you're going?

ATTORNEY 2

...Yes, yes, your Honor.

JUSTICE STEWART (sarcastically)

Yes.

ATTORNEY 3

If it please the court, we would like to submit to the court this letter.

He holds it out to the CLERK, who fetches it.

ATTORNEY 3

This is a letter from the Superintendent of Schools in Maryland. He makes the point very clearly that in his professional opinion schoolchildren are not such disciplinary problems when they begin the day with a religious service.

JUSTICE STEWART

Oh yes, and how is that miracle achieved? Is it the hand of God?

ATTORNEY 2

It's described in the letter there, your Honor, how children are significantly calmer, that they have a calm state of mind after the moral guidance that Bible reading and prayer recitation gives them.

JUSTICE STEWART

Well if we want them so calm why don't we just hit them with a handful of tranquillizers, that'd keep the little devils calm.

General laughter.

JUSTICE BLACK

How long does this Prayer and Bible study take? How much of the day is set aside for it?

ATTORNEY 2

A very insignificant amount of time, your Honor, merely minutes, and the children get so much from it.

JUSTICE BLACK

Well, if so much can be achieved in only three minutes, why don't we just scrap the education system and have Prayer and Bible study all day - make sure of the moral uplift.

ATTORNEY 2

Your Honor is joking of course...

JUSTICE BLACK

No, I'm not. Sir, this is the Supreme Court. We argue a point using your suggested logic. You don't want that logic, don't suggest it.

ATTORNEY 2

Your Honor, what we are arguing here is not new and is generally understood. A widely embraced religion such as Christianity would not be so popular if it did not bring moral uplift to the bulk of the population.

JUSTICE DOUGLAS

Well, what about the Koran. That's a good moral book. Why aren't you arguing for school children to read that?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN

Personally I'm a great admirer of the Buddhist faith. I think morally it'd be pretty hard to get a more temperate and fair philosophy. You know, I'm sorry, but if you look at it from a purely philosophical angle, which is what you're trying to do, then I think you'd have to admit that Buddhism is a clearer philosophy than Christianity. Surely it's better to give schoolchildren straight forward instruction in moral values than it is to give them a bunch of cryptic fables.

Attorney 2 is flustered.

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- DAY

The engraving on the headstone reads:

JOHN IRVIN MAYS
"PUP"
AUGUST 5, 1893 - JANUARY 9, 1963.

REVERSE ANGLE: Madalyn walks into frame, looking down.

MADALYN

We were right Pup. Well...I guess you've got nothing to say.

INT. SUPREME COURT -- DAY

ATTORNEY 3

...If a child asks to be excused from the service because he cannot accept it, he is not being forced to profess anything to his classmates, or to the school authorities...

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN

Why not?

ATTORNEY 3

Why not?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN

That's right, why not?

ATTORNEY 3

Well, there is no compulsion for the child to identify himself in the first place. He can stay in the room and participate and in that manner he would not be identified.

The Supreme Court Judges burst into derisive laughter.

INT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

The living room curtain. Bill moves into frame, and peeps out. He grins slightly, and half glances round.

A SQUAD CAR is parked behind the family cars, which are parked in the street in front of the house. Two POLICE OFFICERS write parking violations for the vehicles.

Bill looks round.

BILL

They're booking us again.

Madalyn sits in a chair, darning socks. She glances up indifferently. Bill flops in a chair beside her.

BILL

May the spirit of gawd guide you and keep you.

He grins at his mother.

BILL

Don't look now, Mother. But we won.

CUT TO:

INT. SUPREME COURT -- DAY

ATTORNEY 3 (becoming agitated)

Look we freely admit that that earlier demurer admits that Bill Murray suffered loss of caste with his fellows, but this was a matter of choice in the context of our argument. There is no compulsion for a child to identify himself. If there is nowhere for the child to go where he can be supervised, then yes, of course he has to stand outside the door. But that is not coercion, it is simply a matter of organization. The school system just does not have the resources for dealing with this sort of thing.

JUSTICE STEWART

This isn't an argument about resources, it's an argument about the Constitution. Separation of church and state. We've already ruled in other cases, "No pressures, even psychological, can be used to force the profession of faith or non-faith." Bill Murray didn't just lose caste with his fellows, he was regarded with aversion, and was subjected to insult and reproach. Now that was what is in this demurer.

ATTORNEY 3 (very flustered)

Oh look, this is the classic case of the Atheist versus the non-Atheist. What chance does a religious argument, an argument of faith, have against the regulations of bureaucracies.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN

Counsel, this court is not a bureaucracy, it is a court where fair judgments are sought. This is not a classic argument of faith versus non faith. There are many persons against compulsory prayer in schools, and many of those people are theists. Many of them are members of fine groups. Consider the Jewish people for instance.

JUSTICE GOLDBERG

Yes, these people are very religious. They've entered into this case with Amici Curiae briefs. What if the Mormon community wanted to teach Mormonism, what say you to that?

ATTORNEY 2

Well, that is precisely why we are proposing that each local School Board set down the Holy Book to be used. Then it would be fair.

JUSTICE BRENNAN

So what would you say to the Roman Catholic Minority, if the local School Board was made up of Protestants?

JUSTICE BLACK

I'd call it 'religion by local option'.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN
 Yes, the political issue would soon be, 'Who
 can control the School Board'.

The courtroom erupts with laughter.

Attorneys 2 & 3 look completely routed.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Bill is savagely beaten by SEVERAL POLICE in the front yard. Madalyn is being dragged bodily from the house by three more. Despite a bad beating she is hanging onto anything that will prevent her from being dragged away. Her nails are ripped out and bleeding. The POLICE pull her hair, hit her with billy clubs, punch and kick her. There is a crowd of around 150 jeering SPECTATORS in and around the house, urging the Police on with cries of "Kill her, kill them, kill the bitch. Kill! Kill!" etc.

CU: Madalyn.

FREEZE FRAME.

MADALYN (V.O.)
 "We had no idea that this was not the last
 court. We still had to fight the 'Battle of
 Religious Nuts' across the nation. That battle
 is not won yet".

CONTINUE ACTION: Bonna comes across the lawn to pull the POLICE off Bill as he is being kicked on the ground. She begins beating on POLICEMAN 1 with her tiny arthritic fists.

POLICEMAN 1
 Hey, get the bitch off me!

POLICEMAN 2 cracks her on the head with his billy club. She collapses.

MADALYN
 Ma! Ma!!

FREEZE FRAME.

SUPER: Following the Supreme Court decision to ban Prayer and Bible study, Madalyn Murray O'Hair was forced to flee with her family to Hawaii, where she sought political asylum.

CONTINUE ACTION.

NEIGHBOR 2 rushes up to the POLICE.

NEIGHBOR 2

Can I help?!

He wades in, kicking Bill on the ground.

EXT. MURRAY HOUSE -- DAY

Bill, handcuffed and bleeding badly, all but unconscious, is thrown heavily into the back of a police wagon.

Madalyn is hauled toward the door, and despite receiving a horrendous beating, successfully prevents several POLICE from throwing her into the wagon with Bill. Eventually, however, she is overpowered, handcuffed, and thrown alongside her son.

FREEZE FRAME.

STILLS OF BILL MOORE, SMILING.

SUPER: The murderer of Bill Moore was never brought to trial.

INT. POLICE WAGON. MOVING -- DAY

Madalyn sits opposite Bill. He looks at his mother.

BILL

Well...this is victory.

He tries to grin through his split and swollen lips. Tears of compassion in her eyes, Madalyn grins sadly back.

FREEZE FRAME ON Madalyn. SLOW ZOOM TO CLOSE UP.

SUPER: Madalyn Murray O'Hair was extradited from Hawaii by the State of Maryland on assault charges. She then fled to Mexico, and later to Texas. Extradited once more, the case was finally thrown out of court.

CONTINUE ACTION.

CUT TO: Bill.

FREEZE FRAME. SLOW ZOOM TO CLOSE UP.

SUPER: As the years passed the pressure became too much and Bill Murray became drug dependant. He now publicly talks of physical violence against those he loved. During this time he gave up his daughter, Robin, for adoption to his mother. But on Mother's Day,

1980, after fighting off drug and alcohol addictions, Bill announced he had found God. He is now a lay preacher.

A portrait photograph of Madalyn, Bill, and Garth.

SUPER: In August 1995, Madalyn Murray-O'Hair, her son, Garth, and her granddaughter, Robin, were kidnapped from their home. They were taken to a motel and later tortured, murdered, dismembered, and their bodies burnt. Their remains were discovered in January 2001, buried in an unmarked grave.

SUPER: "I hope I live my life in such a manner that when I die, someone cares - even if it is only my dogs. I think I want some human being somewhere to weep for me."

-- Madalyn Murray O'Hair

FADE OUT.

As CLOSING CREDITS ROLL, we hear the voice of Ronald Reagan in a broadcast speech, part of which reads, "And why shouldn't little children be allowed to say prayers in school" (Speech exists.)

Cross to the real Madalyn Murray O'Hair being interviewed on the Phil Donahue Show, on which she was a regular guest.

SUPER: Phil Donahue was able to get national syndication of his show due to Madalyn Murray O'Hair's appearances. The show's rising popularity was said to be due the Madalyn being the most hated woman in America. Phil Donahue's success ushered in other talk shows such as 'Oprah' and talk-show entertainment is now global.