

# **BALLS COMING AT YA!**

The Mother of All Sports Movies

by

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Registered WGAw

FADE IN:

EXT. OLYMPIC VILLAGE - DAY

**Superimpose: 1988 Summer Olympics. Seoul, South Korea.**

Athletes from all countries mingle, listen to music and play frisbee on the grass. "Let's Go Crazy" by Prince plays from a dorm window. The camera picks up,

DICKY BIRD WATKINS and ACE DUNBAR (both 18) strolling the Olympic village in "Team USA" running suits and headbands with classic mullets.

Dicky Bird, all wide-eyed innocence, bounces a ping-pong ball off his paddle, thrilled to be here.

Ace, the alpha male, grins wolfishly and winks at every female swimmer, gymnast and track star they pass.

DICKY BIRD

This is totally awesome! Can you even believe it?

ACE

I know. Everywhere I look there's grade-A trim--

DICKY BIRD

(gesturing in wonder)

No. What I mean is we're here, at *the Olympics* representing our country. I just hope we're ready.

ACE

I hope I brought enough rubbers.

Ace nods at a sexy African American GYMNAST on the grass, stretching her legs behind her head.

ACE

Sweet Georgia Brown.

DICKY BIRD

(goofy look)

She's awfully limber.

ACE

Gymnast. I'd give my half my nut sack to pommel her horse.

DICKY BIRD

We need to *focus*, Ace. Tomorrow we begin our quest for the gold.

ACE

Relax, Dicky Bird. It's in the bag.  
(waving to gymnast)  
So is Miss Stretch Armstrong.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

"Dirty Laundry" by Don Henley plays. A wide-eyed Dicky Bird sits answering reporters' questions.

DICKY BIRD

It's an honor to represent Team USA. We're going to do our best.

BLACK REPORTER

Are you afraid to play against the vaunted Chinese team?

DICKY BIRD

Those fellas put on their jock-  
straps one leg at a time... like  
everybody else.

Reporters exchange curious looks.

BALD SWEATY REPORTER

What do you say to detractors who say ping-pong isn't a real sport but rather a game best left to barflies and retirees?

DICKY BIRD

It's called *table tennis*.  
(controlled fury)  
And whoever thinks it's not a sport has never been on the receiving end of a 180 mile per hour serve.  
(dead serious)  
This is my life. It's not a game.

SEXY FEMALE REPORTER

Where's Ace? Isn't he supposed to be here?

DICKY BIRD

(amateur liar)  
He uh... wanted to be alone to prepare for the match.

INT. EMPTY GYMNASIUM - DAY

"Any Way You Want It" by Journey plays.

ON TRAMPOLINE, Ace plays slap and tickle with two gymnasts wearing "Team USA" panties and bras.

EXT. OLYMPIC COLISEUM - DAY

"Sweet Dreams" by Eurythmics plays.

Athletes practice on the track and the infield.

IN THE BLEACHERS, Dicky Bird holds hands with his buxom fiancée, CLEMENTINE DEL RIO (18).

CLEM

I'm so proud of you. Look at what you've done.

DICKY BIRD

I just hope I don't screw it up.

CLEM

Just be yourself and have fun. I know you'll do great.

DICKY BIRD

As long as I have you, Clem.

Clem gives Dicky Bird a peck on the cheek. He blushes.

DICKY BIRD

Thanks for postponing the wedding until after the Olympics.

CLEM

First, you win the gold then we get married then Niagara Falls for the honeymoon.

DICKY BIRD

I can't wait.

CLEM

(devilish grin)  
Neither can I... Donkey Kong.

DICKY BIRD

Honey britches.

The teen lovers smooch and hug. PULL AWAY as they plan their future together.

CLEM  
How many kids do you want?

DICKY BIRD  
I don't know. Six.

CLEM  
*Six?*

DICKY BIRD  
Sure. Three of each. Like in the Brady Bunch.

A romantic beat. Life doesn't get any better.

CLEM  
I'll love you forever, Dicky.

DICKY BIRD  
Not as much as I love you.

INT. OLYMPIC ARENA - NIGHT

Springsteen's "Born In The USA" as the crowd cheers, waving American flags.

AT CENTER COURT, Dicky Bird and Ace are deadlocked with the Chinese. The scoreboard shows the score is tied at 28-28.

CHRIS BERMAN (O.C.)  
It's been a classic match. Dead even from the opening point with no less than sixteen lead changes.

During a time out, Dicky Bird and Ace towel off and gulp water. The Chinese players stand, waiting to play.

INT. PRESS BOOTH - NIGHT

CHRIS BERMAN announces, sporting 1980s hair and clothes.

CHRIS BERMAN  
And though the mighty Hung Lo has recorded 16 aces with his 180 mile serve, the young American upstarts Dicky Watkins and Ace Dunbar have pushed the unbeaten Chinese team to the limit.

INT. AT PING-PONG TABLE - NIGHT

Play resumes. The Chinese champ, Hung Lo, bounces the ball off his paddle, preparing to serve.

Dicky Bird and Ace fall into defensive positions.

CHRIS BERMAN (O.C.)

It all comes down to this: sudden death match point. The Chinese have won the serve by lot.

Ace is in position to return serve.

CHRIS BERMAN (O.C.)

For the Americans, it appears Ace Dunbar has drawn the assignment to return serve.

(whispering)

Hung Lo serving for the Chinese.

Wu Ping winds up and delivers a 200 mile per hour serve.

Ace panics.

ACE

Switch!

CHRIS BERMAN (O.C.)

(calling the action)

Last minute switch? Looks like a choke job for team USA--

Ace slides out of the line of fire.

Stunned, Dicky Bird moves into the vacated spot -- on the receiving end of a rocket serve!

SLOW-MOTION. Dicky Bird freezes. Deer in the headlights. The ball hits him like a bullet-- and penetrates his forehead, lodging deep in his brain.

He drops like a fallen tree.

The Doors song "The End" plays as cameras FLASH! The crowd GASPS. Ace curses. The Chinese high-five as MEDICS rush in.

DICKY BIRD lies flat on his back like the Kurtz death shot from "Apocalypse Now".

DICKY BIRD  
 (repeating)  
 The horror. The horror. The  
 horror...

Dicky Bird passes out.

FADE TO BLACK:

**Superimpose: 20 years later.**

Start on a ping-pong table with a ball going back and forth.

INT. ST. ANNE'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Reveal the shabby table is in a shoddy GYM at a squalid Bronx orphanage. Two ORPHANS volley back and forth with splintered blocks of wood.

REVEAL Dicky Bird (now 44), ping-pong shaped bullet-scar on his forehead, mopping up the gym floor. He's a janitor.

One look at Dicky Bird and it's clear that life has not gone well. The last quarter-century has been a descending spiral of booze, failure, cheap women, self-loathing and bad clothes.

BUDDY "RIP" RIPPER (60) rolls up in a wheel-chair, looking like a grizzled gym coach. Rip runs the orphanage. He is Dicky Bird's only friend.

RIP  
 I need you, Dicky Bird. Got a hell  
 of a crisis in the bathroom. Bring  
 your mop.

DICKY BIRD  
 Overflow situation?

Dicky Bird runs after Rip, dragging mop and bucket with him.

INT. ORPHANAGE HALLWAY - DAY

Rip wheels himself ahead of Dicky Bird.

RIP  
 This piece of crap orphanage is  
 gonna put me in an early grave.

DICKY BIRD  
 What happened?

RIP  
 We served chili for lunch. I guess  
 the beef was past its prime.  
 (warning him)  
 It's a real shit storm. The stink  
 is almost as bad as the chili.

DICKY BIRD  
 (sighs)  
 There is no God.

RIP  
 I'll get a mop and give you a hand.

DICKY BIRD  
 (defeated)  
 No. It's my job.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

The bathroom is spotless. Dicky Bird is finishing up. He's  
 like a HazMat worker with goggles and a mask. Rip rolls in.

RIP  
 (grateful)  
 Nice work, kid. Take the rest of  
 the day off.

INT. ORPHANAGE SHOWERS - DAY

Dicky Bird stands, letting hot water spray down on him.

INT. SUBWAY, MOVING - DAY

Dicky Bird sits alone. Two STREET THUGS walk up and stand  
 over him... Dicky Bird hands them his watch and wallet.

THUG #1 (ZEUS)  
 Nice jacket.

THUG #2 (TRIP G)  
 Nice boots.

EXT. DICKY BIRD'S BUILDING - DAY

Dicky Bird walks up the street, wearing only boxers and tube  
 socks. He passes an OLD LADY watering a plant. She looks him  
 over and shakes her head.

DICKY BIRD  
 Afternoon, Mrs. Goldblatt.



MRS. GOLDBLATT

Bum.

INT. OUTSIDE DICKY BIRD'S APARTMENT - DAY

He walks up the stairs to his door. He's about to put his key in the lock when he hears LOUD SEX going on inside.

A woman is MOANING. A man TALKS DIRTY in an Arab accent.

ARAB MAN (O.C.)

You are pig! I fuck you like pig--

INT. DUMPY STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Dicky Bird bursts in. He finds his stripper girlfriend, CHERRY, in bed, porking the landlord, BOBECK PATEL (50s).

DICKY BIRD

Cherry! What the hell?

CHERRY

(barely fazed)

What? Bobeck came to fix the pipes.

Cherry shags on with no intention of stopping.

DICKY BIRD

Are you even *going to stop*?

CHERRY

One minute.

Dicky Bird waits. Checks his watch.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Cherry is in her bathrobe, packing her bags.

CHERRY

I'm dumping you.

DICKY BIRD

I got that much when I saw Bobeck plowing you from behind.

CHERRY

I'm tired of waiting for your big comeback.

DICKY BIRD

Is that the only reason you stuck around?

CHERRY

Why else?... Stupid me, I *thought* there'd be some easy money down the road once you cracked the pro circuit.

DICKY BIRD

Sorry to disappoint you.

CHERRY

(upset with him)

You were gonna make me respectable!

DICKY BIRD

So instead you bang the landlord behind my back?

CHERRY

Bobek lives next door. It was convenient.

DICKY BIRD

Just get out.

Dicky Bird opens his door and waits.

CHERRY

I see now you'll never make it to the big leagues.

DICKY BIRD

I said *get out!*

CHERRY

(flashes "L" sign)

You're a loser, Dicky Bird.

Cherry grabs her bag and walks out.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - SAME

She walks right into landlord Bobek's apartment. He's holding the door open.

CHERRY

If I get any mail, just leave it under Bobek's mat.

DICKY BIRD  
You're moving in with my landlord?

Bobeck points a menacing finger at Dicky Bird.

BOBECK  
You're evicted.

DICKY BIRD  
What for?

BOBECK  
I can get triple your rent. The only reason I keep you around was so I could defile your girlfriend.

DICKY BIRD  
But you're still defiling her, so can I stay?

BOBECK  
I want you out. *One week!*

He SLAMS his door shut.

INT. DICKY BIRD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dicky Bird drinks from a whiskey bottle as he packs old trophies and sports articles in a box. He listens through thin walls to Cherry and Bobeck having LOUD SEX.

Dicky Bird tries to ignore it. He looks through his mail and sees a Sports Illustrated with his ex-partner Ace Dunbar on the cover. The headline: Ace Goes For Number Seven!

DICKY BIRD  
Bastard.

Dicky Bird turns on the television. Modern-day Chris Berman is interviewing Ace on ESPN.

BERMAN  
Ace Dunbar, six time world champ and a ping-pong legend goes for lucky number seven this summer in Las Vegas.  
(turning to him)  
How have you been Ace?

ACE  
King of the World, Boomer. Life could not be better.

BERMAN

I heard a rumor you're engaged. Is the paddle king off the market?

ACE

That's right. I'm officially no longer a pussy hound.

(hand over mouth)

Can I say that on television?

BERMAN

You just did.

(looking off camera)

I see a vision of loveliness just off camera. Could she be the one?

Ace reaches off-camera and pulls Dicky's old sweetheart, Clem, into frame. He shows off her huge diamond ring.

ACE

My darling Clementine. Look at that ring boomer. Seven carrots.

CHRIS BERMAN

One for each world championship?

ACE

You bet your ass.

Ace plants a sloppy kiss on Clem. Dicky Bird watches. His heart is crushed like a beer can.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

A drunk Dicky Bird sits in the front row with a pyramid of empty shot glasses, salt shaker and limes in front of him.

A TRAPEZE GIRL swings upside down, shooting ping-pong balls from between her legs.

Blind from the booze, Dicky Bird grabs a waitress-tray and returns serve, spilling beer onto a crew of frat boys.

FRAT BOY (CHAD)

(pissed)

Omegas attack!

EXT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Six FRAT BOYS hustle Dicky Bird into the alley. They beat him with hazing paddles and leave him in a pile of garbage.

INT. DICKY BIRD'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Dicky Bird wakes up battered and hung over. He sniffs his armpit, disgusted. He hears more LOUD SEX through the wall.

DICKY BIRD  
 (pounding the wall)  
 For the love of God! Give it a  
 freaking rest!

INT. ST. ANNE'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Dicky Bird mops the gym floor again, head pounding. Nearby, Rip teaches a motley "dead end" crew of ORPHANS how to play ping-pong.

RIP  
 Table tennis is a simple game--

A bug-eyed kid whispers a joke. His buddy LAUGHS and spits on the gym floor.

RIP  
 Bug Eye! Spit! Pay attention. This  
 can be your way out.

A tardy orphan runs in. He accidentally kicks over Dicky Bird's bucket. Dicky Bird loses it. He throws his mop to the floor and shakes his head, frustrated.

RIP  
 Class dismissed. Everybody out!

Rip rolls over to Dicky Bird, who is cleaning up the mess.

RIP  
 Son, what the hell are you doing  
 mopping floors? You got a gift--

DICKY BIRD  
 Had a gift. I gave it a shot. It  
 didn't work out.

RIP  
 I seen a ton of paddle jockeys and  
 you were the best. You could've  
 been the best there ever was. You  
 could've smashed every record.  
 (disgusted)  
 One bad break and you quit.

Dicky Bird explodes, shaking his fist at the heavens.

DICKY BIRD

I have a ping-pong ball *in my brain!*

RIP

It don't gotta be a death sentence, candy ass!

DICKY BIRD

Doc said I could go blind or worse.

RIP

Look around. This *is* worse.

Rip rolls off, leaving Dicky Bird standing in mop water.

INT. ORPHANAGE, BATHROOM STALLS - DAY

Dicky Bird is taking a dump. Rip enters the neighboring handicap stall. As they sit side-by-side:

RIP

I'm sorry for what I said.

DICKY BIRD

No. You're right. My life is a train-wreck. I got dumped by my stripper girlfriend--

RIP

She was trash.

DICKY BIRD

I got kicked out of my apartment. I have eleven bucks to my name and no place to live.

(pause)

If I didn't have this crap job I'd be completely screwed.

A beat.

RIP

Damn. That makes what I gotta say harder.

DICKY BIRD

Oh, Jesus--

RIP

The state is tightening its belt,  
cutting back. I gotta close the  
orphanage.

DICKY BIRD

How bad is it?

RIP

We got 90 days to come up with  
fifty grand or they shut us down.

DICKY BIRD

What about to the orphans? Bug Eye,  
Spit, Duff, Tiny Jim, Angel, Whitey  
and the Babe. What happens to them?

RIP

They're on the street, along with  
yours truly.

DICKY BIRD

Got to be something we can do.

RIP

I have an idea.

Rip slips a Sports Illustrated UNDER THE STALL. The one with  
Ace on the cover.

RIP

Table Tennis World Series. It's in  
Las Vegas this year.

(explaining)

Amateurs can sign up for qualifying  
rounds. First prize is \$100 grand.

DICKY BIRD

Have you lost your mind? It's a pro  
tournament... The best players from  
all over the world--

RIP

All you need is the right partner  
and six weeks to work out the rust.

DICKY BIRD

Coach, I'm retired.

RIP

It's time for a comeback. If not  
for yourself then for the orphans.

(MORE)

RIP (cont'd)  
 (beat)  
 I know you're scared.

DICKY BIRD  
 Forget it. I loved the game but it  
 never did love me back.  
 (voice cracking)  
 I'm done with ping-pong.

Dicky Bird FLUSHES the toilet, ending the conversation.

INT. ORPHANAGE, BEDROOM WARD - NIGHT

The orphan boys are in pajamas, gathered around Rip who is talking to them before bedtime.

RIP  
 I'm not going to soft-pedal it to  
 you boys. Dicky Bird might be a  
 washed-up lush but he's the only  
 one who can save you little pissers  
 from living out of a cardboard box,  
 eating dog food and selling your  
 butt-cheeks on Seventh Avenue for  
 pocket change.

WHITEY (black kid) and TINY JIM (chubby kid) look at each other, confused.

WHITEY  
 What can we do?

TINY JIM  
 Yeah what the hell can we do?

RIP  
 Watch the fucking language, Tiny  
 Jim!  
 (more calm)  
 You just need to look sad and  
 pathetic and in need of saving.

BUG EYE  
 Coach, we are sad and pathetic and  
 in need of saving.

RIP  
 Then it should be a breeze. Okay,  
 lights out.

Rip CLAPS his hands and the lights shut off.



INT. ORPHANAGE, RIP'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Rip picks up the phone and dials. It RINGS, then:

MAN'S VOICE

Max Malone, Sports Desk, Daily Post.

RIP

Maxie Boy, it's Buddy Ripper. I got a story for you and it's a beauty.

(dramatic pause)

It's about redemption.

INT. STREET NEAR SUBWAY - DAY

Dicky Bird walks to work. He passes a newsstand. He stops in his tracks, backs up and stares at his old Olympic PHOTO, on the cover of the Post.

The headline: One Hit Wonder Coming Back for the Orphans!

INT. ST. ANNE'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

A bevy of local NEWS CREWS report on the story. The orphans line up on the steps in their Sunday best, faces washed and hair combed.

A FEMALE REPORTER speaks to the camera.

BLACK FEMALE REPORTER

Toniqua Dawson here at St. Anne's Orphanage in the Bronx where a human story is unfolding. Due to budget cuts the orphanage has been targeted for shut down in 90 days.

She walks over to Rip and the orphans. Bug Eye and Tiny Jim go into "pathetic" mode.

BLACK FEMALE REPORTER

But this reporter has learned that ex-table tennis star Dicky Bird Watkins is attempting a comeback to raise cash to save the orphanage. With me is Buddy Ripper, headmaster of the orphanage.

(turning to Rip)

Tell us about Dicky Bird.

RIP

The man is a saint. He didn't want a big news story. He just wants to make sure the boys don't lose their home.

BLACK FEMALE REPORTER

Do you think he has a chance?

RIP

You ever see the man in his prime, sister? It's like riding a bike.

REPORTERS spot Dicky Bird arriving for work. They converge.

REPORTER #1

Where have you been for the past 25 years?

REPORTER #2

Is there still ping-pong shrapnel lodged in your brain?

DICKY BIRD

No comment.

REPORTER #3

Have you forgiven your ex-partner, Ace Dunbar?

REPORTER #4

Will you be re-teaming with him?

Dicky Bird runs the gauntlet, teeth clenched. He wheels Rip inside.

INT. ST. ANNE'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Dicky Bird lays into Rip.

DICKY BIRD

What have you done?

RIP

When I was a little snapper I was afraid to jump into the local pool. I thought I'd sink to the bottom and my lungs would fill up with water and I'd drown.

(MORE)

RIP (cont'd)

All summer long my brothers and sisters swam and frolicked in the pool while I stood on the sidelines like an asshole *wanting* to be in the pool but *afraid* to jump in.

DICKY BIRD

I get what you're saying--

RIP

I'm not done yet!

(resuming the story)

Come Labor Day my old man got sick and tired of seeing me standing on the side. So he picks me up like a sack of fertilizer and tosses me in the deep end.

Dicky Bird doesn't want to hear it.

DICKY BIRD

And you swam and frolicked in the sun!

RIP

No. I belly-flopped on the surface and the sting disoriented me. I opened my mouth to scream for help and sucked down a gallon of water.

(pause)

Next thing I know I'm face down at the bottom of the pool. That's all I remember before I passed out.

DICKY BIRD

(stupid story)

*What?*

RIP

Yeah. I was out for six minutes and they had to pump my stomach. My folks claim I sustained brain damage but what the fuck do they know--

DICKY BIRD

A lot. They know a lot, coach.

RIP

Ha ha. Do you even get my point?

DICKY BIRD

You're throwing me in the pool, is that it?

RIP

No! You're already at the bottom of the pool. You're drowning, son.

(beat)

You need to do this... for you.

Dicky Bird considers Rip's words.

INT. ESPN STUDIO DESK - DAY

JEREMY SCHAAP anchors "Outside The Lines". We see a photo of young Dicky Bird and the headline: Crash and Burn, The Dicky Bird Watkins Story.

JEREMY SCHAAP

Dicky Bird Watkins. An athlete on the brink of greatness was denied a career by a freak injury and his own inner demons.

PHOTOS OF DICKY drunk through the years: at Studio 54 with Warhol; at CBGBs with the Sex Pistols, on the Sunset Strip with Axel Rose; in Compton with Snoop Dog and Dre.

JEREMY SCHAAP

What followed was two decades of booze, run-ins with the law, cheap women, bad clothes and really bad haircuts.

INT. DICKY BIRD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dicky Bird watches on TELEVISION.

JEREMY SCHAAP (O.S.)

He fell off the radar for 20 years. But now, a shot at redemption at an age when most athletes hang up their paddles. Dicky Bird Watkins is attempting a comeback... for the orphans.

Dicky Bird turns down the volume and walks to a CLOSET. He pulls out an old duffle bag, brushes off dust and pulls out his Team USA sweat suit.

He sees an OLD PHOTO of himself with Clem under the Olympic Rings.

DICKY BIRD  
 (smiling, fondly)  
 Honey Britches.

Dicky Bird grips his old paddle. He puts on his TEAM USA headband and checks himself in the mirror. "Born in the USA" plays (again) in his mind.

DICKY BIRD  
 Not bad.

Dicky Bird bounces on his feet, twirling his paddle. Takes a few practice swings. He hears the crowd CHEERING... then he suddenly freezes up, terrified, and has a PTSD flashback--

**FLASHBACK:** INT. OLYMPIC AUDITORIUM - DAY

NIGHTMARE SHOTS: Dicky Bird and Ace in position. Chinese champ Wu Ping unleashing the 200 mph serve.

ACE  
 (slow and garbled)  
 Swiiiiiiiiitch!

Dicky Bird freezes, eyes wide. The ball STRIKES him like a "Matrix" slo-mo bullet, EXPLODING in impact -- blood SPRAYS two rows deep.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Gothic. Dicky Bird is in bed, head bandaged. Ace is there, playing a Game Boy. A SURGEON enters in mask and gloves.

DOCTOR  
 We can't operate. It penetrated the cranium.

He turns on the X-RAY BOARD. Dicky Bird's skull clearly shows a ping-pong ball embedded deep in his brain.

DOCTOR  
 Another shot to the head could be mean blindness, or worse. It's over, son. You'll *never play again*.

The doc's line "never play again" echoes as we,

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DICKY BIRD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Dicky Bird comes out of it in a cold sweat. He shakes it off then hears Cherry and the landlord having LOUD SEX again.

DICKY BIRD  
 For the love of God!  
 (pounding the wall)  
 Read a book! Play Scrabble!

INT. PUBLIC ACCESS STUDIO - DAY

Dicky Bird and Rip are doing a personal injury lawyer-type commercial advertisement for a ping-pong partner. Both men are wearing suits.

Dicky Bird reads from cue cards:

DICKY BIRD  
 Ever played professional ping-pong?  
 Are you a regional champ or just a  
 neighborhood legend? Well my name  
 is Dicky Bird Watkins and I want to  
 make your dreams come true.  
 (pointing to camera)  
 If you've got the right stuff, call  
 the number on the screen.

RIP  
 (disclaimer)  
 If you have ever been convicted of  
 a class D felony or above, are left-  
 handed, morbidly obese, have a  
 bladder condition that forces you  
 to wear adult diapers or expect to  
 get paid, then you need not apply.

INT. ORPHAN GYMNASIUM - MONTAGE.

Beck's "Loser" plays as Dicky Bird auditions a parade of partner-candidates.

**Begin montage:**

- A BLIND MAN flails at serve after serve, whiffing every time.
- An ARMLESS MAN stands with the paddle in his mouth. A serve bounces off his forehead.
- A HASIDIC RABBI sermonizes "The Talmud says..."

- A FAT WOMAN seems more interested in her Snickers bar than returning serve.
- A RAGE-AHOLIC misses a shot and breaks his paddle in two, heaves the pieces at Dicky Bird.
- Hasidic Rabbi continues sermon "Let us rise for the prayers of Yizkor..."
- The STRIPPER (from before) in a bikini fondles and licks the paddle as she dances to the music in her head.
- A MIDGET can barely peek his head over the table-top.
- A CRAZY MAN pulls his shorts down, GRUNTS and stares at Dicky Bird as he takes a dump on the floor.
- Punk GUITAR PLAYER plays through an amplifier, pounding his head on the table. He finishes, blood on his face.

GUITAR PLAYER  
So do I get the gig?

Dicky Bird is distraught.

**End montage.**

INT. ORPHAN GYM - LATER

Dicky Bird lies on the ping-pong table, wiped out. Rip rolls up in his chair.

RIP  
Trouble finding a partner?

DICKY BIRD  
(frustrated)  
Not if I want to start up a punk-metal band.

RIP  
I think I can help.

DICKY BIRD  
I can't partner with a 60 year old paraplegic.

RIP  
I'm offering to coach, you moron.

DICKY BIRD  
Cool. What about a partner?

RIP  
Ever been to Kansas?

DICKY BIRD  
Fuck no! Why?

RIP  
I heard rumors about a farm boy...  
an unknown phenom with mad skills.

EXT. KANSAS FARM - DAY

"Road To Nowhere" by Talking Heads plays.

Dicky Bird and Rip drive a two-lane rural highway past wheat fields. The rental car turns down a DIRT ROAD, past a "KEEP OUT" leading to a rundown old farm.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

The house and barn need paint. The porch needs fixing. The animals are bone-thin.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Dicky Bird drives up the bumpy road, looking around. Rip is riding shotgun, wheelchair in the back.

DICKY BIRD  
Look at this place. We've landed in  
hillbilly heaven.

RIP  
Nice and quiet.

DICKY BIRD  
If a toothless Cajun tells me I got  
a "perty mouth" I am out of here.

RIP  
Just because these people live on a  
farm doesn't mean they're yahoos--

A SHOTGUN BLAST shatters the windshield. Dicky Bird swerves out of control and drives the car the POND.

EXT. FARM POND - DAY

Dicky Bird fishes Rip out of the drink. GRAMMY COX (70s) runs up holding her shotgun.



GRAMMY

Lord! I'm begging your pardon! Did I kill anybody?

DICKY BIRD

Only the car.

GRAMMY

See I thought you were them bank officers come to take my land.

Dicky Bird drags Rip's wheelchair to dry land. Grammy signals them inside.

GRAMMY

C'mon in for pie and lemonade.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Grammy slices the pie. She FARTS a slow burner. Dicky Bird and Rip exchange looks. Grammy chuckles.

GRAMMY

Pardon the wind. I got what them city doctors call extreme chronic flatulence. Runs in the family.

Grammy lets fly a PINCHED WHISTLER and points to a family portrait.

GRAMMY

Uncle Elijah had it so bad he had to sleep in the barn.

RIP

Good thing you live on a farm.

GRAMMY

Oh yeah, open spaces is best for our kind.

Dicky Bird catches Grammy's smell, eyes burning.

DICKY BIRD

Ma'am, do you have a grandson?

GRAMMY

Of course I do. You come all this way to recruit him, didn't you?

RIP

Yes, ma'am.

GRAMMY

Call me Grammy. Sonny is in the fields, practicing.

DICKY BIRD

Is he any good?

Grammy grins and rips a MUDDY BULLFROG.

GRAMMY

Eat your pie and listen up.

(telling the story)

Sonny come into this world on the night of the big storm, right out there in that barn on a rusty old ping-pong table.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Sonny's birth. The ping-pong table is upright, mom's legs spread and covered by a sheet. A younger Grammy wears a bandana for a mask.

The infant Sonny is born. As he is removed by Grammy, he reaches for a nearby ping-pong paddle on the table.

GRAMMY

I knew right from the start he was a special boy with a special gift.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

TODDLER SONNY (2) sits on the wood floor in a diaper, hitting a rubber ball against a wall with a wooden spoon.

GRAMMY (V.O.)

He knew what he wanted early on and that's about all he ever did.

**FLASHBACK:** EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

YOUNG SONNY (6) tosses and turns as a thunderstorm rages outside his window. He looks out as

LIGHTNING strikes an oak tree, splitting it in two.

GRAMMY (V.O.)

It wasn't until the great lightning storm of '84 that we all knew Sonny was destined for greatness.

"The Natural" theme plays.

Sonny's DAD carve a ping-pong paddle from the fallen tree, burns a lightning bolt in the handle.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

The family eats supper on a homemade ping-pong table. Sonny (7) and his dad volley back and forth as they eat.

GRAMMY

Sonny didn't say a word 'til he was seven. He wore diapers 'til he was nine. But he could smoke his pappy at the ping-pong by age six.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. COUNTRY CHURCH HOUSE - DAY

The PREACHER is sermonizing with great gusto. Preacher hears a bouncing sound, trying to ignore it.

GRAMMY (V.O.)

Sonny brought that damn paddle everywhere.

PREACHER

Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I will fear no evil--  
(throwing up his arms)  
What the fuck is that sound!?

In the back row, SONNY (9) is hitting a ping-pong ball against a pew over and over.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY (PRESENT)

Grammy shows Dicky Bird and Rip into Sonny's room: ping-pong memorabilia, antique paddles, trophies and a ping-pong table with a sleeping bag underneath it.

GRAMMY

Sonny sleeps under the table. Not exactly a hip bachelor pad, is it?

DICKY BIRD

He certainly loves the game.

GRAMMY

Lives and breathes it... The boy sleeps with a paddle in his hand.

"Ping-Pong Weekly" MAGAZINE covers wallpaper the room-- one shows Dicky Bird and Ace posing together. Dicky Bird stares at it.

Rip sees a photo of Sonny's parents.

RIP

What happened to his folks?

GRAMMY

His pappy was carried off in the locust invasion of '87.

**FLASHBACK:** Sonny (8), watches DAD play fiddle when a sudden SWARM OF LOCUST sweep in and carry dad off. The fiddle lands on the grass where he was standing.

GRAMMY (V.O.)

His mammy was taken by the great tornado of '89.

**FLASHBACK:** Sonny (10), watches MOM play harmonica when a TORNADO races past and carries her away. The harmonica lands on the grass where she was standing.

INT. SONNY'S ROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Grammy dabs away a tear.

GRAMMY

Life is hard on the farm.  
(shaking her head)  
Sonny seemed to go inward after that. Kept to himself and played the ping-pong for hours on end.

RIP

Can we meet the boy?

GRAMMY

He's out on the back forty.

EXT. FARMLAND, WHEAT FIELDS - DAY

Grammy drives Dicky Bird and Rip on her TRACTOR out past blowing wheat fields. They emerge into a flat clearing.

"The Natural" score swells as we reveal--

SONNY COX (30), playing ping-pong solo in SLOW-MOTION, bare chest glistening, blonde hair blowing in the breeze.

Sonny performs MIRACLE SHOTS behind his back, under a leg, somersaulting forehands and cart-wheeling backhands. He moves the paddle from left to right hand. He can even grip the paddle with his feet.

DICKY BIRD  
Holy mother of ping-pong!

RIP  
Kid's a natural.

Sonny sees his Grammy and smiles big.

EXT. FARMHOUSE PORCH - DAY

Sonny and Grammy sit on a swing. Dicky Bird and Rip sit on lawn chairs, drinking lemonade.

SONNY  
I'm sorry, fellas. I can't leave my Grammy alone. She relies on me.

Grammy rolls her eyes.

GRAMMY  
Boy you need to share your gift with the world, maybe get yourself laid. You don't do nothing here but slap your paddle all day and night.  
(to Rip) )  
And I ain't talking ping-pong.

Sonny turns to Grammy, whispering to her.

SONNY  
Grammy, I'm kind of scared. I never been off the farm.

GRAMMY  
I got news, pumpkin. Pretty soon we all gonna be off the farm for good.

SONNY  
(confused)  
Say what?

Grammy nods and FARTS, fighting back tears.

GRAMMY  
The bank is set to foreclose unless we come up with back taxes on the land and the mortgage.

SONNY  
What's a mortgage?

GRAMMY  
Don't tax your brain. Just know  
that we're going to lose the farm.

Sonny shakes his head, stunned.

SONNY  
I had no idea we had trouble.

GRAMMY  
I done sold everything that ain't  
nailed down: Farm animals.  
Furniture. Equipment. Ain't you  
noticed stuff disappearing?

SONNY  
I thought you were striving for a  
Spartan lifestyle.

Grammy ruffles Sonny's blonde hair.

GRAMMY  
Sonny boy, you got your head in the  
clouds.

SONNY  
Sorry--

GRAMMY  
Don't be. You're an innocent lamb.  
It's why I love you.

Rip sits, thinking pretty hard.

RIP  
Grammy, how much moola do you need  
to save the farm?

GRAMMY  
The bank says I gotta come up with  
\$50 thousand.

Rip turns to Dicky Bird, excited.

RIP  
Top prize at the World Series is  
\$100 grand. It's enough to save the  
farm and the orphanage.

SONNY

That is an *amazing* coincidence.

DICKY BIRD

It's a sign.

Rip holds out a hand, willing the others to join him. Dicky Bird puts his hand in the huddle. Grammy offers her withered paw.

They all look at Sonny, waiting for him.

RIP

What do you say, kid? Want to play some Goddamn ping-pong?

Sonny grins and joins the huddle. Rip leads them in a CHEER as the music swells.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Grammy opens a barn door, revealing a 1955 Cadillac. The men are all behind her.

GRAMMY

This was Uncle Elijah's pride and joy. I couldn't sell her.  
(sniffing the leather)  
Seats might be a touch ripe but she runs like a dream.

She tosses Sonny the keys.

GRAMMY

You take her.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Dicky Bird and Rip are in the Caddy. Sonny and Grammy say a tearful goodbye with Grammy FARTING throughout.

SONNY

I hate to leave you out here all by your lonesome.

GRAMMY

Don't worry about old Grammy. Go share your gift with the world.

Grammy squirts out a WET CREEPER, kisses Sonny on the cheek.

GRAMMY

You grown into a fine man. Your  
mammy and pap would've been proud.

SONNY

I'll call you every day, Grammy.

GRAMMY

We don't got a phone, Sonny. Just  
scribble me a letter now and again.  
(shooing him away)  
Now Grammy's got a bladder the size  
of a peanut so y'all get going.

Sonny drives off in the CADILLAC, waving, fighting back  
tears.

Grammy waves and walks back to the house... fanning her  
backside.

EXT. CADDY, ON THE ROAD - DAY

Sonny rides shotgun, sleeping with his head on Dicky Bird's  
shoulder. Rip is in the backseat.

DICKY BIRD

You think we can pull it off?

RIP

Failure is not an option. The kid  
has unlimited potential.

DICKY BIRD

(reflective)  
So did I once.

RIP

You boys need a tune-up to see how  
you mesh and what needs tweaking.

DICKY BIRD

Any ideas?

RIP

I signed you up for the Atlantic  
City Invitational this weekend.

EXT. ON THE ROAD - DAY

The Caddy burns up the highways of America to Jerry Reed's  
"East Bound and Down".



SUPERIMPOSE A MAP showing our guys heading East.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY STREETS - DAY

Our boys ride into town in the Cadillac.

A street-banner promotes the "Atlantic City Table Tennis Invitational". The pro ping-pong circuit. The big leagues.

INT. TRUMP PLAZA HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny Boy enter. Sonny is wide-eyed at the gaudy opulence.

SONNY

Gee whiz.

DICKY BIRD

Just remember, it's only ping-pong.  
And you're the best I ever seen.

The place is buzzing in anticipation. Dicky sees a poster featuring defending champ Ace. He pats Sonny on the back.

DICKY BIRD

I'll buy you a drink.

The two partners head for the --

INT. LOBBY BAR - DAY

Dicky's former partner Ace Dunbar is boozing it up with his fellow pro players and a bevy of hot Ping-Pong groupies.

Dicky sees Ace and turns to leave, trying to avoid Ace.

DICKY BIRD

C'mon, this place is dead.

Ace sees Dicky and breaks into a cruel grin.

ACE

Dicky Bird Watkins!

(to the room)

Hey everybody, this is the guy I  
been telling you about. Took a  
Chinaman's stinger to the melon.  
Now he's a janitor. Ain't that some  
crazy shit?

Ace and his cronies LAUGH their asses off. Ace gives Dicky Bird a phony hug.

ACE

Heard you were trying a comeback or something. You still got that ping-pong ball in your brain?

DICKY BIRD

Yes. It's a millimeter from my optic nerve.

ACE

Well, good luck with that.

Ace CHUCKLES. His cronies fight back laughter.

DICKY BIRD

Okay. Good catching up, Ace. We gotta go.

Ace grabs him.

ACE

No, no... lemme buy you a drink. You look like you could use one.  
(notices Sonny)  
Who's the rube?

SONNY

Sonny Cox.

ACE

Never heard of you. Where you been hiding?

SONNY

Milford, Kansas. I play mostly with myself on the farm.

Ace shakes his head.

ACE

Jesus, they'll let just about any loser into these open tournaments.

DICKY BIRD

Lay off the kid, Ace.

ACE

I was talking about you, Dicky.

More LAUGHTER.

ACE  
You scrub toilets and such, right?

DICKY BIRD  
Custodial services.

ACE  
(laughing)  
And before that he was a rodeo  
clown, before that a grave digger--

DICKY BIRD  
You forgot human research subject.

ACE  
Jesus, and now what? Big comeback  
with a dirt farmer for a partner?

Sonny opens his jacket. He's wearing his "lightning bolt"  
paddle in a holster. Ace is amused.

ACE  
What's with the paddle, kid?

Sonny draws his paddle, twirls it.

SONNY  
It's mostly for swatting assholes.

ACE  
What do you mean?

He KNOCKS OUT Ace with one full-swing blow.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny wheel a dazed Ace on a bellhop's dolly.  
Ace has a waffle pattern in his cheek from the paddle.

DICKY BIRD  
Nice forehand, partner.

SONNY  
Thanks. It felt pretty good.

INT. ACE'S SUITE - DAY

Sonny holds the door. Dicky Bird wheels Ace inside. Ace is  
BABBLING like a punch-drunk fighter.

DICKY BIRD  
Let's get out of here before he  
calls the cops--

CLEM (O.S.)  
Ace? Is that you?

Clem walks out of the bedroom. She looks good in a tight  
yoga pants. She sees Dicky Bird and stops in her tracks.

CLEM  
Dicky Bird?

DICKY BIRD  
Hi, Clem. It's been a while.

CLEM  
18 years.

DICKY BIRD  
How have you been? I missed you.

Clem turns to Sonny who is standing next to Ace.

CLEM  
Excuse me... and you are?

SONNY  
I'm Sonny Cox.

CLEM  
Sonny, can I borrow that?

She points to Sonny's paddle. Sonny hands it to her. Clem  
SLAPS Dicky Bird hard across the face, leaving waffle marks.

DICKY BIRD  
Okay. I deserved that.

WHACK! She smacks him hard on the other cheek.

DICKY BIRD  
That, too.

WHAM! She kicks him ferociously in the nuts. He crumples to  
the floor. Fetal position. Clem hands Sonny his paddle.

CLEM  
Thank you, Sonny.

SONNY  
I'll leave you two to catch up.

Sonny makes a quick exit.

On the floor, Dicky Bird WHIMPERS like a sick dog.

DICKY BIRD  
(in agony)  
You... look... fabulous.

CLEM  
Sweet of you to say, ass clown.

DICKY BIRD  
Can we talk about it?

EXT. ACE'S SUITE, BALCONY - DAY

Dicky Bird and Clem sit overlooking the ocean. Dicky Bird has an ice bucket wedged between his legs. Clem is silent.

DICKY BIRD  
Why Ace?

CLEM  
He pursued me. The more I rejected him the harder he pushed.

Ace appears behind the glass door and taunts Dicky Bird by simulating rude sex acts on Clem. She doesn't see it.

DICKY BIRD  
He's the devil.

CLEM  
No. You're the devil. Ace can be a very sweet man.  
(heart still aching)  
I couldn't wait forever. After a decade I decided my prince charming wasn't coming back.

DICKY BIRD  
Hey wait... you bailed on me?

CLEM  
You checked out long before I left.

DICKY BIRD  
Yeah. Sorry I let you down.

CLEM  
You lost your confidence is all.

Dicky Bird nods.

DICKY BIRD  
Answer me one question--

CLEM  
You're *not* going to ask if he's  
better in bed, are you?

DICKY BIRD  
Of course not.

Clem gives Dicky Bird a bittersweet smile.

CLEM  
You'll always be my Donkey Kong.

DICKY BIRD  
Honey Britches.

CLEM  
You rocked my world, Dicky. But  
there's more to life than multiple  
orgasms.

DICKY BIRD  
There is?

Clem's smile vanishes.

CLEM  
It's not funny. It stopped being  
funny a long time ago.

DICKY BIRD  
I know.

CLEM  
You quit on yourself. You quit on  
us. Worst of all, you quit on the  
game.  
(holding back tears)  
Please, you have to go now.

DICKY BIRD  
Right. You have a wedding to plan.

Dicky Bird turns to leave. Clem stops him.

CLEM  
I'm glad you're back. I just wish  
it had been sooner.

Dicky Bird sees Ace pressing his butt cheeks against the glass behind Clem. He sighs.

DICKY BIRD  
That's makes two of us.

CLEM  
Good luck tomorrow.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny suit up before the match. Pro players mull about along with reporters, trainers and coaches.

Sonny looks around, nervous. Dicky Bird notices it.

DICKY BIRD  
Hey, what's wrong?

SONNY  
I'm afraid to get naked.

DICKY BIRD  
What for?

SONNY  
The other boys in gym class used to tease me about my thing.

DICKY BIRD  
Look partner, everybody knows guys underestimate their relative penis size. It's okay.  
(patting his back)  
I swear, nobody is gonna laugh.

Sonny nods, reassured. He pulls down his shorts and the room gets a look at him... GASPS all around. Jaws drop.

From the reaction, it's obvious that Sonny is humongous.

FEMALE REPORTER  
(drops her microphone)  
*Sweet corn on the cob!*

TRAINER  
(averting his eyes)  
Dude, you want to put a leash on that thing?

SONNY  
 (to Dicky Bird)  
 You were right. Thanks!

Sonny tries to hug Dicky Bird, who makes the sign of the cross with his fingers.

DICKY BIRD  
 It's cool. Stay where you are. Fist bump.

INT. HOTEL GYM - DAY

The match takes place on a basketball court. There are maybe 50 diehard fans, including Clem and Ace.

Dicky Bird and Sonny stretch, loosening up. Rip wheels back and forth, pacing. A bored JUDGE sits, eating a bagel. He looks down at a clipboard.

JUDGE  
 Atlantic City Invitational, court #57, qualifying match.  
 (reading names)  
 Dicky Bird Watkins and Sonny Cox versus... the veterans of the 10th Mountain Division, World War II.

TWO VETERANS (80s), hobble out in fatigues, green T-shirts and dog tags. One guy is using a walker. The crowd cheers, waving American flags. As the veterans walk past:

VETERAN #1  
 (to Dicky Bird)  
 Are you ready to eat shit?

VETERAN #2  
 (to Sonny)  
 You're going down, dogface.

**Begin montage:**

Dicky Bird and Sonny get slaughtered.

- Spooked by the CROWD, Sonny is frozen with stage fright.

- Dicky Bird reacts to a serve. He flinches in fear and ducks under the table.

- Sonny goes for a shot and SMASHES into Dicky Bird. He's not used to playing with a partner.



- Rip chews on a towel, ready to explode.
- Dicky Bird sees Clem in the stands with Ace, who makes rude sex gestures behind her. Dicky Bird whiffs a shot.
- The veterans score a BARRAGE of winning shots, leaving ball welts all over Sonny and Dicky Bird.

**End montage.**

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny are hugging and weeping. Rip gives each of the boys an ice bucket.

RIP  
Here. Ice down your nuts.

DICKY BIRD  
What for?

RIP  
The cold shock will take your mind off the crushing defeat.

Rip gives the boys a pep talk.

RIP  
Did you think you were gonna waltz in off the street and kick ass?  
(explaining)  
It's like with a broad. The first time you make love you got no idea what makes her squeal like a pig--

Rip moves his fist, the universal sign for balling.

RIP  
But you work that love box a few times, get to know the landscape--

DICKY BIRD  
Stop! We get the metaphor.

SONNY  
What now, coach?

RIP  
Road training.

Rip draws a map of the states on WHITE BOARD. He marks an "X" on the East coast and an "X" near the West coast.

RIP

We're here.

(drawing a line)

The World Series is *here* in Vegas in six weeks. I know every arcade, skating rink, pong hall and youth-center along the way.

(fiery)

I'm gonna teach you marshmallows how to hustle ping-pong. By the time we hit Sin City you'll be wiping each other's poop-chutes and old Rip will have hustled us up some pocket cash. Any questions?

SONNY

(innocent)

What's a love-box?

EXT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Sonny tosses luggage in the trunk of the Cadillac. Rip sits in the passenger seat. He checks his watch.

RIP

Where is that partner of yours?

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Dicky Bird is pacing, nervous. Clem exits the elevator, looking sexy in short shorts.

DICKY BIRD

Thanks for coming down.

CLEM

I shouldn't be talking to you. Ace wouldn't like it.

DICKY BIRD

I wanted to say goodbye... and I am sorry for hurting you. You stood by me for years. I never let you help me.

CLEM

Oh, Dicky...

DICKY BIRD

You got a right to be with whoever you want...

(MORE)

DICKY BIRD (cont'd)

And I have the right to enter the  
Table-Tennis World Series in Vegas  
and kick your fiance's ass. So  
that's what I'm gonna do.

(pause)

What do you say about that?

CLEM

Welcome back. And good luck.

Clem kisses him on the cheek and runs off. A smile slowly  
spreads across Dicky Bird's face.

EXT. OPEN HIGHWAY - DAY

The Allman Brothers "Jessica" plays.

SERIES OF SHOTS: The Cadillac burns up the road across the  
country... Rip charts their course on a map... The boys piss  
at the side of the road, Rip from his wheelchair...

MORE SHOTS: Sonny and Rip sleeping as Dicky Bird drives in  
solitude... He takes a frayed photo of Clem from his wallet  
and look at it lovingly as--

--the car drifts into the oncoming lane and nearly runs into  
a Mack truck. Dicky swerves back into his lane. The guys  
don't even wake up.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

The Cadillac rolls past the Spectrum.

**Superimpose: Philadelphia**

INT. DUMPY MOTEL - DAWN

The trio shares one room. Rip wakes the boys up. He forces  
them to drink a raw eggs concoction.

RIP

Rise and shine, girls. Drinky-poo.

DICKY BIRD

What is in this stuff?

RIP

Eggs, pure protein, multi-vitamin  
mix, my own urine and Tabasco.

SONNY  
I hate Tabasco.

As they drink, the training theme to "Rocky" plays.

**Begin montage:**

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - MORNING

The boys jog past the locals who cheer them on. A vendor tosses Sonny an apple. Other vendors start tossing produce.

The boys dodge incoming fruit until a cantaloupe hits Dicky in the head and EXPLODES. Knocks him out cold.

INT. YMCA WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Coach Rip lectures the boys as they do push ups.

RIP  
Gotta learn to be *one organism* with  
four arms, four legs, two assholes.

INT. DENNY'S - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny feed each other breakfast.

RIP (O.S.)  
You got to get to where you don't  
know where one starts and the other  
ends. One organism.

INT. SHOWER - DAY

Dicky Bird washes Sonny's hair.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

They take tango lessons together.

EXT. PARK - DAY

They ride a double-seat bicycle.

INT. SAUNA - DAY

The boys skip rope, sweating off the pounds. Rip sits in his chair, eating a burrito.

INT. CHURCH CENTER - NIGHT

Dressed as priests, the boys play two hyper-competitive nuns. SISTER AGNES disputes a call (we can't hear) and flips Sonny the bird. Dicky Bird mouths "fuck you".

Game over. SISTER THERESA counts \$100 out on the table. Rip grabs it and motors off.

**End montage.**

INT. CADDY, ON THE ROAD - NIGHT

Sonny is driving. Dicky Bird rides shotgun, Rip is in the backseat.

SONNY

Coach, I been meaning to ask you a question.

RIP

I'm listening.

SONNY

Why'd you ever leave the game?

Silence. Sonny has hit on a sore subject.

SONNY

Did I say something wrong?

DICKY BIRD

Drop it, Sonny.

RIP

It's okay. The kid deserves to know.

Rip looks up at the sky, memories rushing back.

RIP

It was summer of 1973. Hippies were protesting the war and balling like monkeys. Watergate was about to become a nationwide buzz-kill. And ping-pong was going global.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. OLYMPIC AUDITORIUM - DAY

Doubles ping-pong. The Americans taking on the Chinese. YOUNG RIP (30), a hotshot coach with a Jerry Curl perm and a peach leisure suit, paces the sidelines (no wheelchair).

RIP (V.O.)

I was a hotshot Olympic coach, considered by many the greatest mind in the sport. All because I beat the Chinks and brought home the gold.

The American team scores the winning point. Fans carry Rip off the floor on their shoulders.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

Rip disputes a call. Enraged, he tosses a chair onto the ping-pong table.

RIP (V.O.)

But I was obsessed with winning. I couldn't accept defeat.

**FLASHBACK:** EXT. WIMBLEDON-TYPE ARENA - DAY

The refined British crowd watches in shock as Rip upends a Gatorade table. He moons a referee after an ejection.

RIP (V.O.)

I demanded perfection from my players, the judges, even the ground crew.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

Rip oversees a grounds-keeper who scrubs a ping-pong table with a toothbrush. Rip points to a spot, SLAPS the table.

The grounds-keeper breaks down, crying.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. FILM ROOM - NIGHT

Alone, Young Rip watches game film on Super 8 and drinks Wild Turkey from the bottle.

RIP (V.O.)

I had a short fuse and an explosive temper.

(MORE)

RIP (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 I drank too much and I ate nothing  
 but donuts. A recipe for disaster.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Rip destroys the place with his bare hands. He pulls a  
 shotgun from his locker and starts blasting.

RIP (V.O.)  
 I was out of control. It was just a  
 matter of time before the fall.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Rip berates a reporter after a bitter loss.

YOUNG RIP  
*How does it feel to lose a close  
 game?*  
 (pulling his hair out)  
 That's the dumbest fu**BLEEP**ing  
 question I ever heard! Do you work  
 for a fu**BLEEP**ing high school paper?

Reveal a nerdy four-eyed KID REPORTER (12), who actually  
 does work for a junior high school paper.

KID REPORTER  
 (crying, scared)  
 I'm sorry! I'll never ask it again.

RIP (V.O.)  
 It all came crashing down in the  
 '76 Olympics during a match against  
 the Ruskies.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. OLYMPIC AUDITORIUM - DAY

Young Rip chokes his own player until he passes out.

RIP (V/O)  
 I lost it and choked my own player,  
 then I beat myself up real bad. It  
 created an international incident.

Rip starts whacking himself with a paddle. He SLAMS his head  
 on the ping-pong table as the judge and opposing coach try  
 to stop him.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. OLYMPIC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Like the old show "Branded", Olympic OFFICIALS strip Young Rip of the USA blazer patch. He does the walk of shame as the doors close behind him.

RIP (V.O.)  
The bastards slapped me with a lifetime ban. I got drunk for a year and lost all self-respect.

**FLASHBACK:** INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Young Rip sits on the bed, an empty bottle of Wild Turkey in one hand, a paddle in the other. Zonked, he opens a window. The wind blows through his perm. He jumps.

RIP (V.O.)  
Finally I tried to kill myself by leaping out of a hotel window.

Reveal that the window is only 20 FEET off the ground. Rip lays in a heap on the pool patio below. Alive.

RIP (V.O.)  
Unfortunately it was a second floor window, hence the wheel chair.

INT. CADDY, ON THE ROAD - DAY (PRESENT)

Rip comes out of his reverie. He smiles a world-weary smile.

RIP  
In the hospital, I realized my life was meaningless. So I decided to start the orphanage, help some kids to a better way.  
(worried)  
I just hope we can do that.

Reveal Dicky Bird and Sonny (the driver), both staring back at Rip, absorbed. Nobody is minding the wheel.

THE CADDY glides into an oncoming lane at a Mack truck.

DICKY BIRD  
(noticing)  
Sonny! *TRUCK!*--

Sonny grabs the wheel and SWERVES. The truck horn BLARES just before impact.



EXT. SEARS TOWER, DOWNTOWN - DAY

**Superimpose: Chicago**

The Caddy rolls into the city. One side is wrecked, mirror dangling and rear bumper in the back seat with Rip.

RIP (V.O.)

You boys will become a well-oiled machine on and off the court. You will become a single organism with one goal: ping-pong dominance.

"Maniac" by Michael Sembello plays.

EXT. MOTEL POOL - DAY

Hydro-training. A ping-pong table is in the pool. The boys volley. Rip's chair is in the water. He pushes them hard.

EXT. POOLSIDE - DAY

The boys do the "Star Wars" Jedi blindfold thing with paddles instead of light sabres, moving in "Tai Chi" unison.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Dicky Bird and Sonny sleep in the same bed. They turn over in their sleep at the same time.

EXT. CHICAGO PARK - DAY

Dicky Bird (guitar) and Sonny (harmonica) play blues music together in the park. Both wear sunglasses.

INT. PUBLIC PARK BATHROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny enter, sweating from a long run. Dicky Bird unzips to pee. Sonny reaches down to hold it for him.

DICKY BIRD

What are you doing?

SONNY

What did coach say? One organism.

DICKY BIRD

Are you serious?

SONNY  
 (deadly serious)  
 Do you want to beat Ace?

DICKY BIRD  
 Fine. For training. But you're not  
 wiping my poop chute so don't even  
 ask.

Dicky Bird begrudgingly allows Sonny to hold his wang (off  
 screen). In mid-pee, two ripped body-builders walk in.

BODYBUILDER (CHUCK)  
 Holy George Michael!

DICKY BIRD  
 Fellas! It's not what it looks  
 like.

SONNY  
 See, we're in training.

The bodybuilders grin knowingly.

GAY BODYBUILDER (CHUCK)  
 Is that what they're calling it  
 these days?

GAY BODYBUILDER (KEVIN)  
 Let's do us some *training*, lover.

They flip the lights off and enter.

EXT. PUBLIC BATHROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny flee the bathroom on the dead run.

INT. ORPHAN CENTER - DAY

Our boys face two dirty ragamuffins who can't afford paddles  
 so they use their own shoes. Conflicted, Sonny goes easy on  
 a serve. Rip loses it.

RIP  
 What the hell was that? No MERCY!  
 You damn *corn husker!*

SONNY  
 I'm from Kansas, coach.

RIP  
 Stick it up your ass, Dorothy!

Sonny scores the winning shot. Game over. Rip forces the orphans to cough up a few grimy pennies.

RIP  
Is that all you got?

SKINNY ORPHAN  
Yes, sir. Sorry we couldn't give you a better game.

SICKLY ORPHAN  
(cough, cough)  
See, we're very hungry.

RIP  
Drink water. I hear that fills you up.

Sonny and Dicky Bird stare at Rip, willing him to do the right thing. Rip looks back at them, sighs.

INT. HOUSE OF PANCAKES - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny buy the orphans pancakes. Rip drinks coffee, annoyed.

RIP  
Bleeding hearts.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Sonny does wrist curls. Rip rides him hard.

RIP  
Snap it off, cupcake! You want a 200 mile per hour serve? It's in the wrists!

LATER. Sonny spots Dicky Bird on bench press. Dicky Bird is running out of gas, arms shaking.

SONNY  
(urging him)  
One more! You want to beat Ace?

Dicky Bird seethes, using hatred and jealousy of Ace to motivate himself. MOVE IN on Dicky Bird's intense gaze.

CUT TO:

**Dicky Bird's surreal jealous nightmare:**

INT. SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

Ace and Clem are doing it doggy-style on a ping-pong table. Ace slaps her booty with his paddle. The crowd CHEERS.

AT THE SPORTS DESK, Berman and McEnroe do play-by-play.

BERMAN (O.C.)

Look at the way he snaps off that forehand. What do you think, Mac?

MCENROE (O.C.)

Ace is in the zone.

Berman speaks directly into the camera (to Dicky Bird).

BERMAN

It could have been you, Dicky Bird.

MCENROE

If Ace hadn't called "switch" you wouldn't have caught that ping-pong shrapnel to the head.

BERMAN

A split-second decision catapults Ace to super-stardom and frankly, terrific sex.

MCENROE

Meanwhile it plunges you into the crapper for 25 years.

ON THE TABLE Ace paddles Clem's booty again. He looks into the camera... at Dicky Bird.

ACE

(taunting)

I got the girl and the glory. Top of the world, Dick Wad!

Ace and Clem LAUGH. Berman and McEnroe LAUGH.

BERMAN

(trademark line)

Ace could go... all... the... way!

**End jealous fantasy.**

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird comes out of it. And passes out, weights crashing to the floor.

INT. NEUROSURGEON'S OFFICE - DAY

Dicky Bird's brain MRI displays on a BIG MONITOR, ping-pong ball clear as day.

Dicky Bird sits on the medical table in a gown as the doctor updates his condition.

DOCTOR

The ping-pong ball has shifted.

DICKY BIRD

What does it mean?

DOCTOR

Any further movement and you could go blind or even die. On the plus side, the pleasure center of your brain might be stimulated. Have you had any spontaneous erections since you passed out?

PULL BACK to reveal Dicky Bird is pitching major tent-- we're talking Level-5 boner.

DICKY BIRD

Just one long one. Hey doc, don't tell anyone about this, okay?

DOCTOR

The boner?

DICKY BIRD

No, the blindness and death part.

INT. LESBIAN BAR - NIGHT

Disguised as dykes, our boys are skunking the lesbian league champs. Sonny slams a behind-the-back shot for match point.

SONNY

(valley girl)

Like, game over!

DICKY BIRD  
 (southern belle)  
 I declare. It appears are  
 triumphant. I recall the bet was  
 one hundred Yankee dollars.

As Dicky Bird hive-fives Sonny--

His bouffant wig falls off, revealing they are dudes. Dead  
 silence. A lesbian crowd gathers. Lead dyke, GAYLE, pulls  
 Sonny's wig off.

GAYLE  
 You *girls* wouldn't be hustling us,  
 would you?

Dicky Bird opens his mouth to respond. PUNCH!

EXT. LESBIAN BAR PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The lesbian mob is beating the crap out of our boys. A gun  
 BLAST stops them.

REVEAL RIP in his chair, a smoking shotgun across his lap.

RIP  
 Party's over girls. Get on back  
 inside.

LESBIAN (JANICE)  
 I say these two chiselers need a  
 little more meat work.

RIP  
 And I got another load of buckshot  
 says you made your point.

LESBIAN (GAYLE)  
 I'll shove that shotgun up you're  
 ass, old man.

RIP  
 Feeling froggy? Bring it on, you  
 neckless bull-dyke.

Gayle and her lesbian crew don't move.

RIP  
 That's what I thought.  
 (to Dicky Bird)  
 Bring the car around, Miss Dubois.

EXT. SOUTHWESTERN HIGHWAY - DAY

**Superimpose: Phoenix**

The Caddy rolls west through the desert.

IN THE CAR, Dicky Bird drives with a raw steak over his eye. Sonny has frozen peas over a nose. Rip cleans his shotgun in the backseat.

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - DUSK (GOLDEN HOUR)

In the desert, Rip teaches the boys a special move. Sonny sits on Dicky Bird's shoulders, holding both paddles.

RIP

(dramatic)

The *dragon snake*... It's an Asian style of doubles ping-pong from the sixth century. Genghis Khan and his Mongol army trained in this style.

DICKY BIRD

Genghis Khan played ping-pong?

RIP

The thing about *dragon snake* is the element of surprise.

SONNY

When do we use it?

RIP

Only as a last resort.

Rip holds his palms together and bows.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Dicky Bird looks at an old SCRAPBOOK with photos of him and Clem in love. He longs for her. Sonny is on the phone.

SONNY

I miss you too, Grammy. Where you calling from? Feed store, right.

GRAMMY'S VOICE on the other end. We can't make out what she's saying but we hear FARTING throughout.

SONNY

Did you get my letter?... What's a stamp?

(pause)

No we're doing real good. Coach is real smart and Dicky is like a big brother.

Sonny listens. Grammy TALKS while squeezing out GAS BOMBS.

SONNY

No, I ain't got laid yet but coach promised to get me a hooker as soon as we reach Las Vegas. I gotta go.

(pause)

Love you too, Grammy. Bye-bye.

Grammy BEEFS a goodbye. Sonny hangs up.

SONNY

Grammy says "hey".

Sonny sees Dicky Bird staring at the scrapbook, forlorn.

SONNY

Are you okay, pard?

DICKY BIRD

I still love her.

SONNY,

Grammy?

DICKY BIRD

No, Clem...

SONNY

Of course you do, but don't sit and pine. Tell her how you feel.

DICKY BIRD

I did but it was 25 years too late.

Dicky Bird closes his scrapbook.

SONNY

It ain't never too late to say "I love you." She gonna be in Vegas?

DICKY BIRD

With Ace. Her *fiancee*.



SONNY

Don't quit on that girl.

DICKY BIRD

Why not?

SONNY

Because she's special and she still loves you, fool.

DICKY BIRD

You don't even know her.

SONNY

I saw the way she paddle-slapped you. That's love, pard.

A KNOCK on the door--

RIP (O.C.)

Open up! Let me in!

Dicky Bird opens the door. Rip is outside, drunk and horny. He's with a sexy black transvestite, PEACHES (50s).

RIP

(slurring his words)

Hi boys! This is Peaches. We met at that roadhouse down the street.

(to Peaches)

Have a seat, sweet cheeks. I got to have a word with my players.

Rip signals the boys OUTSIDE.

RIP

Old Rip needs you to vacate the room for a spell.

SONNY

(innocent)

Why? You gonna take a nap?

RIP

Nap? Sonny boy, I'm about to have me some peach pie--

SONNY

(looking around)

I don't smell no pie.

RIP  
 Boy, you do need to get laid.  
 Speaking of--  
 (to Dicky Bird)  
 Got any extra rubbers?

DICKY BIRD  
 In my suitcase. But--

Dicky Bird glances in the open door at Peaches who is adjusting her bra and rubbing lipstick off her teeth.

DICKY BIRD  
 Are you sure you know what you're doing, coach?

RIP  
 It's like riding a bike.  
 (getting excited)  
 You never forget how and your nuts always ache after a bumpy ride.

Rip rolls himself inside. SLAMS the door shut.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Dicky Bird and Sonny walk over to the roadhouse.

SONNY  
 Peaches seems like a sweet lady.

DICKY BIRD  
 She's sweet. The lady part, I'm not so sure.

SONNY  
 Why? Because she enjoys a little roll in the hay? Grammy says sex is as natural as breaking wind.

DICKY BIRD  
 (odd look)  
 Peaches is a dude, in drag.

SONNY  
 Is that a fact? Huh...  
 (matter of fact)  
 We don't get much of that down on the farm.

(MORE)

SONNY (cont'd)

But every Easter Grammy dresses our cow Annabelle up like Patsy Cline, feeds her peanut butter and has her lip sync the words to "Back in Baby's Arms".

DICKY BIRD

Grammy sounds like a wildcat.

SONNY

Should we tell coach?

DICKY BIRD

Let's not spoil his party.

INT. ROAD HOUSE - NIGHT

Dicky Bird and Sonny saunter up to the bar. Dicky Bird holds up a finger.

DICKY BIRD

Whiskey.

(to Sonny)

You want a soda, maybe a juice box?

SONNY

I think I wanna try some of that whiskey stuff, too.

DICKY BIRD

You sure? It's pretty strong, especially for a hayseed like you, no offense. I mean have you ever even seen the inside of a bar?

SONNY

First time for everything.

They CLINK glasses and drink. Bottoms up.

INT. KARAOKE STAGE - LATER

Dickey Bird and Sonny duet on Cheap Tricks' "I Want You to Want Me". Dicky Bird is smashed, shirtless, in a cowboy hat. Sonny is holding him upright.

A bevy of hot bar tramps cheer Sonny on. They love the kid.

EXT. ROAD HOUSE - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sonny and three BAR TRAMPS hold Dicky Bird upright over a trash dumpster. He's heaving his guts out as he sings:

DICKY BIRD  
 Oh my darling!  
     (haauuuh!)  
 Oh my darling, Clementine,  
 You are lost and gone forever!  
     (haauuuuhh!)  
 I'm good.

Sonny walks Dicky Bird over to THE CADILLAC. Dicky Bird sports an impressive vomit beard.

DICKY BIRD  
 Clem... I gotta get her back.

SONNY  
 Trust me, you will. I'm psychic  
 about these things.

Sonny lifts Dicky Bird into the backseat of the convertible and covers him with a blanket.

SONNY  
 I'll stay and keep an eye on you--

DICKY BIRD  
 No, I'm fine. You go show those  
 roadhouse tramps a good time.

SONNY  
 Are you sure?

DICKY BIRD  
 You promised Grammy you'd get laid,  
 didn't you? It's time to hunt some  
 red beaver.

SONNY  
 Beavers aren't red, silly.

DICKY BIRD  
 Are you kidding me? I'm talking  
 about the honey pot. The bikini  
 biscuit? The bearded oyster? Fur  
 burger? Hairy goblet?  
     (off Sonny's blank face)  
 The pussy, man!

SONNY

Aaaah...

(grinning)

I catch your drift, partner. Grammy calls it her axe wound. Anyway, I'm on it.

Sonny heads inside flanked by the bar tramps.

Alone, Dicky rests in the BACK SEAT, staring up at the stars, missing Clem. He dials her number on his phone.

CLEM (ON PHONE)

(waking up)

Hello?

DICKY BIRD

I want you back.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Clem is sexy in a T-shirt and nothing else. Ace is snoring next to her. She's WHISPERS.

CLEM

Dicky? Is that you? It's three in the morning--

DICKY BIRD

I want you back. I'm gonna prove it by winning the World Series.

CLEM

You sound shit-faced.

DICKY BIRD

This much is true. But listen to me: Do not marry Ace Dunbar.

CLEM

Go to sleep.

DICKY BIRD

Okay, didn't want to say it but I been in locker rooms with Ace.

CLEM

So?

ACE

He's a pencil dick.

CLEM  
 (laughing)  
 Stop.

DICKY BIRD  
 You said I was your Donkey Kong.

CLEM  
 That was a long time ago.

DICKY BIRD  
 Some things never change, like my  
 natural endowment and our love.  
 (more serious)  
 Clem, this is your life. Don't you  
 want to marry the nice guy with the  
 circus-ready member?

Dicky Bird waits for Clem's answer.

CLEM  
 I want you to go to bed now.

DICKY BIRD  
 Just think about it. Will you just  
 think about it?

CLEM  
 I have been thinking about it.

Dicky Bird lights up with hope.

DICKY BIRD  
 Good. That's very good. Okay. I'll  
 see you in Vegas?

CLEM  
 That's where I'll be.

DICKY BIRD  
 I never stopped loving you, Honey  
 Britches.

He's talking to DIAL TONE.

REVEAL ACE, wide awake, faking his SNORING. He's been  
 listening and he's already scheming against Dicky Bird.

EXT. NEVADA HIGHWAY - DAWN

The Cadillac rolls into Las Vegas. The lights of the Strip  
 are still glowing against the gray morning.

The MGM GRAND is advertising the Table Tennis World Series.

EXT. BLACKJACK MOTEL - DAWN

In SKID ROW VEGAS, far-far-far away from the strip...

Our guys park near a scum-brown pool. Toothless AARP-age hookers prowl the mezzanine. Hobos play hackysack around a trash dumpster on fire.

INT. MGM ARENA - DAY

It's a bird's-eye view of 100 PING-PONG tables.

UPPER DECK -- Dicky Bird and Sonny emerge from a tunnel to view the spectacle. A church organ plays in the distance.

DICKY BIRD

Holy crap! It's a cathedral.

Sonny INHALES, absorbing the grandeur. He puts a brotherly arm around Dicky Bird.

INT. LATER SCENE - DAY

Dicky Bird checks the PAIRINGS BOARD for round one, sees they are matched against the dreaded Russians.

DICKY BIRD

Sweet mother of Russia...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny suit up for the opening match. They both have butterflies. Ace comes by with his entourage.

ACE

Good luck, Dick Wad... Catch!

He tosses Dicky Bird a catcher's mask.

ACE

To protect you from those power serves.

(laughing)

Just remember, if you blow it today you can always go back to scrubbing toilets.

Ace LAUGHS. He doesn't see Rip, rolling up behind him.

RIP  
Get lost fuck-face!

ACE  
Relax, hot wheels. I'm wishing your  
boys good luck.

RIP  
I said beat it, unless you want to  
get shivved in the rib-cage.

Rip pulls out a sharpened screwdriver, backing Ace out of  
the room.

ACE  
You crazy little man.

RIP  
I'll gut you like a pig.  
(calling after him)  
Cocksucker!

Alone, Rip hands Dicky Bird a gift box.

RIP  
Open it.

Dicky Bird opens it. Inside are shiny new red, white and  
blue satin uniforms. The boys are touched, become weepy.

DICKY BIRD  
Don't know what to say, coach.

SONNY  
Me neither. Hey Coach, you got  
another pep talk for us?

RIP  
Just remember why we're here.  
(to Sonny)  
You gotta save the farm so Grammy  
Cox can have the freedom to blast  
weapons-grade cheese and not feel  
so bad about herself.  
(to Dicky Bird)  
And you gotta save the orphanage  
for my boys and hopefully take a  
dump on Ace's head as a bonus...  
And maybe you win back that sexy  
mamacita, Clem Del Rio. She's the  
real prize you ask me.  
(pause)  
(MORE)



RIP (cont'd)  
 Now get on out there and stomp the  
 fuck out of them Godless Ruskies!

INT. MGM ARENA - CENTER TABLE - DAY

Sonny and Dicky Bird are playing two Russian brothers with bulging muscles, pizza-face acne and serious table rage -- especially for warm-ups.

IN THE PRESS BOX, Berman and McEnroe call the match:

BERMAN  
 Tough first round draw for Dicky  
 Watkins and his protege Sonny Cox  
 as they are matched against the  
 dreaded Russian champions. How do  
 you see it, Mac?

MCENROE  
 I agree, Boomer. This Cinderella  
 story might be over before it gets  
 started.

BERMAN  
 The Petrovitch brothers have been  
 dogged by rumors of steroid use.

MCENROE  
 Boris and Vlad have gotta be on the  
 juice. Look at the size of them.

BERMAN  
 And the outbursts, another sign--

MCENROE  
 Yeah, I haven't seen this much rage  
 since my divorce.

INT. MGM ARENA - CENTER TABLE - DAY

The judge rolls the ball over to Dicky Bird. He takes a deep breath and gets set to serve.

BERMAN (O.C.)  
 Dicky Bird Watkins takes his first  
 step on the comeback trail. And it  
 begins...

Dicky launches a sweeping serve that curves at the right moment, forcing the Russian to miss. Dicky pumps his fist and high fives Sonny.

Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" plays as our boys kick some major ping-pong ass.

**BEGIN "WINNING" MONTAGE:**

INT. OUTER TABLE - DAY

Dicky and Sonny roll over the Russians. Our boys move in sync, making powerful forehands and amazing trick shots. The furious Russians smash their paddles and SCREAM at each other.

Dicky wins match point. Sonny jumps in his arms with legs wrapped around him. Boris HOWLS and Vlad's head EXPLODES.

BERMAN

Vlad seems to have blown a gasket.

MCENROE

Ouch!

INT. BRACKET BOARD - DAY

Dicky's team moves to the next round.

INT. CENTER TABLE - ACE'S MATCH - DAY

Ace hits a winning forehand then taunts his opponent.

INT. BRACKET BOARD - DAY

Ace's team advances to the next round.

INT. OUTSIDE TABLE - DAY

Dicky and Sonny make acrobatic shots, laughing and filled with the joy of the sport. They win again.

IN THE CROWD -- reveal Clem in wig and sunglass disguise. Dicky notices her. She holds up an "I LOVE DICK" sign.

INT. COX FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Grammy Cox eats chili and listens to Sonny's match ON RADIO. She CHEERS a victory, then rips a LOUD FART that chases the dog from the room.

INT. ACE'S SUITE - NIGHT

Ace watches Dicky and Sonny win another match on ESPN. They high-five each other. Ace looks worried.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dicky and Sonny soothe their sore muscles in WHIRLPOOL TUBS. Rip in the THIRD TUB. After a beat, Peaches lifts her head up out of the water of Rip's tub.

INT. MGM HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Dicky and Sonny are ping-pong Gods. Dicky signs autographs. Sonny is mobbed by GROUPIES who slip him room keys, panties and dildos.

FROM A LOBBY BAR, Ace sees the attention Dicky is getting and doesn't like it one bit.

INT. MGM ARENA - CENTER TABLE - DAY

Dicky Bird charges the net and wins an extended rapid-fire volley -- point and match!

INT. BRACKET BOARD - NIGHT

Dick Bird and Sonny move into the finals.

INT. MGM ARENA - CENTER TABLE - DAY

Ace SLAMS a winner, pumps his fist then flips the bird to the team he's just defeated.

INT. BRACKET BOARD - NIGHT

Ace moves into the finals against Dicky.

INT. CENTER TABLE - NIGHT

Mid-match, Dicky looks to the crowd, sees Ace kiss Clem. He point at Dicky and makes an "I'll snap you" gesture.

Dicky stares hard, looking both scared and determined.

**END "WINNING" MONTAGE:**

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dickey Bird and Sonny at a PRESS TABLE in front of reporters and cameras. The media is running with the Cinderella story.

REPORTER

Dicky Bird, is it true you've come back to save an orphanage where you also work as a janitor?

DICKY BIRD

It's all true. But I've also come back to reclaim my life. After 25 years of scrubbing toilets and being alone I know what I want now.  
(looking into camera)  
And I'm prepared to do whatever it takes to get it.

INT. MGM GRAND LUXURY SUITE - DAY

Clem sits on the bed watching ESPN. Dicky Bird is talking to her through the television screen.

INT. MGM GRAND LUXURY SUITE - TV ROOM - SAME

Ace and his agent sit watching the press conference. Ace is peeved at the publicity Dicky Bird is receiving.

ACE

Fucking orphans...  
(to his agent)  
I need a charity. What group is more pathetic than orphans?

AGENT

How about retards?

ACE

Good. Get me some retards and put them front row at all my matches.

AGENT

You going to donate your winnings, like Dicky Bird?

ACE

Do I look like a retard?

AGENT

Then what?

ACE

We announce we're going to do it,  
but we never follow up.

In the doorway, unseen, Clem overhears this. Disgusted, she grabs her purse and walks out on Ace.

EXT. BLACKJACK MOTEL - DAY

Clem pulls onto the lot and parks. Hobos are playing Marco Polo in the scummy pool.

Clem KNOCKS on the door to a room. Dicky Bird opens it and sees Clem is fighting back tears.

CLEM

Can we talk? I didn't know who else  
to turn to.

DICKEY BIRD

Honey Britches, what's wrong?

Dicky is sharing a single shitty room with Sonny, Rip and Peaches. All wave "hello". Clem waves and forces a smile.

CLEM

You wanna take a walk?

DICKY BIRD

That'd be real nice.

EXT. SKID ROW VEGAS - DAY

Clem and Dicky Bird walk past street-walkers, bum fights and thieves stripping a car as she confides in him.

CLEM

I must have been blind not to see  
Ace for what he was. That man is an  
ass-clown.

(shaking her head)

How could I have been fooled?

DICKY BIRD

He fooled me, too. I trusted him as  
a partner, look what it got me.

CLEM

Ace can be charming when it suits  
him.

DICKY BIRD  
 Just like Satan.  
 (pause)  
 Can I buy you pancakes and console  
 you some more?

CLEM  
 I have a better idea.

DICKY BIRD  
 Better than pancakes?

CLEM  
 You want to drive out to the desert  
 and spend the day with me?

Dicky Bird's heart soars. He tries to play it cool.

DICKY BIRD  
 I gotta ask Coach. Let's go!

He grabs her hand and runs back to the motel.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird frantically changes clothes. He applies deodorant  
 and toothpaste directly into his mouth.

DICKY BIRD  
 I love her, coach.

RIP  
 I know you do, son.

PEACHES  
 You might want to tell her.

DICKY BIRD  
 I will. Thanks, Peaches!

RIP  
 No matches today. Go have fun.

DICKY BIRD  
 (checks his wallet)  
 Can I borrow some cash?

Rip and Sonny (and Peaches) dig deep, giving him all they  
 have. Sonny tosses him the car keys.

DICKY BIRD  
 (to Sonny)  
 Wish me luck.

SONNY  
 You don't need it.

Dicky Bird runs out.

**Romance montage:**

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Patsy Cline sings "Back In Baby's Arms" as Dicky Bird and Clem drive the Cadillac into the desert for a magical day.

EXT. ROADSIDE ARTS SHOW - DAY

They eat snake-on-a-stick and peruse Native American jewelry.

EXT. RUNDOWN NUDIST RESORT - DAY

The lovebirds soak in a HOT SPRING with a trio of hippie octogenarians.

EXT. OPEN DESERT SANDS - DAY

They smoke peyote and hike across a surreal desert landscape, hallucinating and vomiting.

EXT. TOP OF MESA - DAY

Still tripping, they climb a mesa and make out at the top. Clem turns away and tosses more cookies then goes back to sucking face with Dicky.

EXT. VALLEY OF FIRE PARK - DAY

Like feral animals, Clem and Dicky hunt prairie dogs with crossbows. They kill one and eat it raw.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE DESERT - BALLOON RIDE - DUSK

The lovebirds enjoy a beautiful sunset at two thousand feet. Clem removes Ace's engagement ring, tosses it over the side. She and Dicky kiss and shed clothes, dropping down in the basket (out of sight) for some reunion sex

The balloon driver wears a blindfold.

**End romance montage:**

INT. ACE'S MGM GRAND SUITE - NIGHT

Clem returns to the suite after a long day of fun and sex. Ace has been waiting and he's pissed.

ACE  
Were you with Dicky?

CLEM  
You bet.

ACE  
Jesus, Clem! I'm a six-time Table  
Tennis Champion. He cleans toilets  
for a living. Don't embarrass me--

She walks right past him and starts packing a suitcase.

ACE  
Where the hell are you going?

CLEM  
Far away from you.

ACE  
Where's my ring? What is going on?

CLEM  
What is going on is you are an  
asshole and I never want to see you  
again and your ring in somewhere in  
the Nevada Desert. I tossed it from  
a hot air balloon right before I  
had the best sex of my life with  
Dicky Bird Watkins.  
(walking out)  
So long, pencil dick.

She opens the door to leave. He grabs her.

ACE  
You don't walk out on Ace Dunbar.

CLEM  
And you don't walk at all.

ACE  
The fuck does that mean?



Clem WHACKS Ace with his own paddle. He falls to the ground, out cold.

INT. MGM ARENA - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny are practicing when Ace calls.

DICKY BIRD

Hello.

ACE

It's Ace. Can you come up to my suite? I think we need to talk.

DICKY BIRD

Nothing to talk about, Ace.

ACE

Please, I know Clem is with you now. I just wanna bury the hatchet so we can maybe be friends.

(pause)

I scouted the team you're playing in the semis. I can help you win.

DICKY BIRD

(suspicious)

Why would you help me?

ACE

Because I want to beat you in the championship.

Dicky Bird thinks about it.

DICKY BIRD

Okay, I'll be right up.

INT. ACE'S SUITE - DAY

Ace answers the door, phony smile on his face. He hugs Dicky Bird who notices a familiar waffle pattern on Ace's cheek. He points to it:

DICKY BIRD

Clem give you that?

ACE

No, practice injury. I zigged when I was supposed to zag. Clem and me broke clean and amicable.

He leads Dicky Bird inside.

ACE

I wish you best of luck with Clem.  
She's a great girl. And you two  
were meant to be together. Drink?

DICKY BIRD

Can't. I'm in training.

ACE

Virgin margarita? C'mon, I wanna  
toast you lovebirds.

DICKY BIRD

Sure, why not.

Ace fixes Dicky Bird his drink, spiking it with Rohypnol  
(AKA, a roofie). As they shoot pool:

ACE

You know, I was thinking if you and  
me ever re-teamed...we could make a  
lot of money.

DICKY BIRD

I have a partner, Ace.

ACE

You mean the corn-cob from Iowa?

DICKY BIRD

(slurring his words)  
He's from Kansas and he's better  
than you and me combined.

ACE

That's why he's gotta be stopped.

DICKY BIRD

(slurring)  
Huh? You say somegin...?

Dicky Bird is zonked, missing cue shots. Ace opens the door  
to his bedroom and signals two scantily-clad bimbos.

ACE

Girls, why don't you play strip  
eight ball with Dick Wad here.  
(to Dicky Bird)  
You don't steal Ace Dunbar's girl  
without paying for it.

Ace moves out onto THE BALCONY and speed-dials Clem.

CLEM (PHONE VOICE)  
 What do you want? Don't call me  
 anymore, Ace!

ACE  
 (sensitive)  
 Hear me out, Clem... If you don't  
 want me anymore, I accept it. Just  
 come and tell me to my face. Let me  
 say goodbye. I need closure.

INT. SUITE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Don Henley's "Dirty Laundry" blasting on stereo. The bimbos  
 have dressed Dicky Bird in female panties. They are crawling  
 all over him in bed.

Ace videotapes the "sexcapade" on his phone and uploads the  
 sordid Vegas sex tape to YouTube.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE ACE'S SUITE - NIGHT

Clem approaches, music pounding, Ace's door left ajar. She  
 walks in and sees Ace standing outside the bedroom door with  
 a fake-concerned look.

Clem hears GIGGLING and MOANING coming from in the bedroom.

ACE  
 I'm sorry I had to be the one to  
 show you Dicky's dark side. But I  
 couldn't let him break your heart  
 all over again.

Ace opens the door and Clem sees the Dicky Bird BACCHANAL  
 going on inside. Dicky's face is resting on the crack of one  
 of the bimbo's ass. Dicky is oblivious.

CLEM  
 WHAT THE FUCK!?

DICKY BIRD  
 (out of the fog)  
 Whaaah... Oh hey, Honey Britches.

CLEM  
 How could you, Dicky?

INT. MOTEL 6 - NIGHT

Dicky Bird comes back to the motel.

Sonny is waiting. He is watching Dicky Bird's leaked SEX TAPE on that shitty TMZ gossip show on the motel television.

SONNY

(disappointed)

You have like two million hits on YouTube.

DICKY BIRD

(still half-drugged)

News travels fast on the inter-web.

SONNY

You broke training to party with Ace and his Babylonian bimbos.

DICKY BIRD

Back off, hayseed. You'd still be on the farm sniffing Grammy's ass-cheese if I hadn't found you.

SONNY

Wake up, fool! Everybody on the circuit knows you're a broken down has-been... even coach Rip.

DICKY BIRD

What?

SONNY

It's *me* who's been carrying *you* the whole time.

DICKY BIRD

You been drinking moonshine, boy?

SONNY

If I'm wrong then tell my why Ace asked me to partner with him ten minutes after our first match.

DICKY BIRD

(thrown)

He did?

SONNY

Yeah... and guess what? I told him to shove it up his two-hole.

DICKY BIRD

You did?

SONNY

Because I already had a partner and  
a brother. Or so I thought...

Sonny grabs his suitcase and heads for the door.

SONNY

Guess I was wrong on both counts.

DICKY BIRD

Wait! Where are you going?

SONNY

Back home to the farm. I've had  
enough of this big city drama.  
(heart breaking)  
Good luck...pard'.

He rushes out, wiping tears from his eyes.

EXT. SEEDY VEGAS STREET #1 - NIGHT

Glen Campbell's "Rhinestone Cowboy" plays as Sonny walks  
alone past hookers, porn shops and XXX theaters.

EXT. SEEDY VEGAS STREET #2 - NIGHT

Dicky Bird walks past panhandlers and crackheads. Intercut  
between the two lone ex-partners until we reveal,

THEY ARE ACROSS THE STREET FROM EACH OTHER...

Dicky Bird looks up... surprised to see Sonny. He waves.  
Sonny waves then gets on a bus and rides off.

INT. MGM GRAND - DAY

Early morning, Dicky Bird returns to the hotel, alone.

INT. MGM GRAND - CLEM'S ROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird knocks on Clem's door. She opens it, sees Dicky  
Bird and tries shut the door. He blocks it with his foot.

DICKY BIRD

Just let me explain--

CLEM

(crossing her arms)

Okay, fine, explain to me how you come to find yourself smack dab in the middle of a hooker three-way.

She opens the door and Dicky sees that her bags are packed. Clem is waiting. Dicky Bird is sweating.

DICKY BIRD

Okay, first off...

(breaks down, begging)

Oh, God! Clem, I don't even remember what happened! Ace and I were toasting our love, you and me getting back together. He wanted to bury the hatchet and next thing I know I'm knee-deep in boobies.

CLEM

All men are pigs.

She grabs her suitcase and storms out.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Dicky Bird follows Clem, trying to convince her of his love.

DICKY BIRD

Don't leave me again! I love you, Honey Britches--

CLEM

You don't get to call me that, not anymore.

She gets on the elevator. He follows her.

INT. MGM GRAND - LOBBY - DAY

The elevator door opens. Clem and Dicky walk out, still arguing.

DICKY BIRD

But it wasn't me! I mean it was me but it wasn't. I can't remember--

CLEM

You don't remember your face buried in that girl's butt-cheeks? Because I CAN'T FORGET IT!

She runs outside. Dicky Bird is on her heels.

EXT. MGM GRAND - STREET - DAY

Dicky Bird tries to stop Clem. She pulls free. They are face to face on the curb, cars RUSHING by.

CLEM

It was a mistake to rekindle our love. Too much time has passed.

DICKY BIRD

But we did rekindle it... I think like four times. God help me, I never wanted that balloon to land.

CLEM

It landed, Dicky Bird. It crash-landed when I walked in and saw you wearing that harlot's panties.

(starts crying)

How could you do this to us!

She pulls free and runs out INTO THE STREET. Gets HIT by a taxi-cab and tossed 30 feet.

DICKY BIRD

HOLY CRAP! Clem, no--

IN THE STREET --

Clem pulls herself up to a knee. She shakes it off. Stands up, seemingly okay. Dicky Bird smiles, relieved.

DICKY BIRD

Oh, thank God! She's okay.

Clem takes one step forward --

-- INTO THE PATH of a Sapphire Strip Club party bus.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird is alone, tormented. He paces, out of his mind with worry and grief. An ER DOCTOR approaches, just out of surgery.

DICKY BIRD

Give it to me, doc. She okay?

ER DOCTOR

We relieved pressure. She's in a coma. The next 24 hours will tell the tale.

DICKY BIRD

Thank you.

The doctor pats Dicky Bird on the shoulder. He walks away then turns back. Dicky Bird looks up, waiting.

ER DOCTOR

(hands gesturing)

Nice tits.

He walks off.

INT. CLEM'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Dicky Bird and Rip hold vigil. It's been a long night. Ace appears in the doorway. Dicky Bird is surprised.

RIP

What the fuck are you doing here, pencil dick?

ACE

Back off, speed racer. I brought flowers.

Rip holds up his sharpened screwdriver.

RIP

I got my eye on you, meat.

DICKY BIRD

It's okay, coach.

Ace approaches Clem's bed.

ACE

(to Dicky Bird)

Tough break.

DICKY BIRD

She's gonna pull through.

ACE

Maybe, maybe not... If she does, you still might have to carve her meat for the next 40 years.



DICKY BIRD

Get out.

ACE

Right. We should go. C'mon, time to get ready for the championship.

DICKY BIRD

I can't play. Not with Clem like this.

ACE

Let me get this straight.

(pointing at Clem)

You're going to let coma girl stand between you and a shot at the World Series title?

DICKY BIRD

I'm staying, in case she wakes up.

ACE

(knocking on her head)

Helloooo!... She's an eggplant.

Dicky Bird PUNCHES Ace. They trade blows over Clem's bed with Clem absorbing most of the punches.

Rip wheels behind Ace and shanks him in the butt. He HOWLS in pain and retreats to the door.

ACE

Professor Xavier here is whacko, and you're a LOSER!

DICKY BIRD

We'll see.

ACE

You already lost. If zombie-girl here comes out of it you think she gonna take you back? After the sex show I arranged for her viewing pleasure.

(shit-eating grin)

That's right. I set up the whole thing with those bimbos to get you in dutch with Clem.

(pause)

I roofied your ass and asked Clem to come by just to bust you.

DICKY BIRD

Why?

ACE

What can I say? I hate to lose.

Ace walks out on Dicky Bird, again.

INT. CLEM'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Dicky Bird is alone, watching over Clem. He kneels at her bedside. Puts his hands together in prayer.

DICKY BIRD

Dear God... I know I've wasted a good chunk of my life but I'm begging you here. Bring her back to me and I swear I will dedicate the rest of my life to making her happy.

(fighting back tears)

Please, I can't lose her again.

Silence. We hear the life support MACHINE monitoring her vitals. The BEEPS grow faster. Dicky Bird looks up... filling up with hope.

Clem comes out of her coma. She opens her eyes and looks at Dicky Bird. It's a miracle.

CLEM

Hey...

DICKY BIRD

I'm here, Honey Britches.

CLEM

What happened?

DICKY BIRD

You got hit by a taxi cab then you stepped in front of a party bus.

(full of guilt)

It was all my fault. I'm sorry.

CLEM

It's okay--

DICKY BIRD

I was a fool to trust Ace. But I swear to God I didn't plow any of those bimbos.

(MORE)

DICKY BIRD (cont'd)  
 (scout's honor)  
 Honest. Not even a blow job.

CLEM  
 I know.

Dicky Bird is confused.

DICKY BIRD  
 Wait... How do you know?

CLEM  
 In my coma, I heard everything Ace  
 said about the set-up.

DICKY BIRD  
 (embarrassed)  
 Then, you heard my prayer?

CLEM  
 It was beautiful. I fell in love  
 with you all over again.

DICKY BIRD  
 I never stopped.

He kisses her, softly. She pulls away.

CLEM  
 There's just one thing you have to  
 do before we get married.

DICKY BIRD  
 Name it.

CLEM  
 Stomp Ace's bony ass and win that  
 championship.

He salutes.

DICKY BIRD  
 Yes, ma'am!

INT. VEGAS AIRPORT - DAY

Dicky Bird rushes through the terminal with Rip rolling  
 alongside him, KNOCKING OVER kids and old ladies.

RIP  
 You got eight hours to find Sonny  
 and get your balls back here or we  
 forfeit the match.

DICKY BIRD  
 I'll make it.

RIP  
 What makes you think so?

DICKY BIRD  
 (sprinting off)  
 Because she *loves me!*

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

Dicky Bird's plane touches down.

EXT. GRAMMY'S FARM (KANSAS) - DAY

Dicky Bird races the RENTAL CAR up to the farmhouse. Again,  
 Grammy SHOTGUNS the car into the duck pond.

Dicky Bird climbs out and wades to the shore, soaked.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Dicky Bird towel dries his wet hair, wearing Grammy's robe.

GRAMMY  
 Sonny was pretty broke up when he  
 got back.

DICKY BIRD  
 I know. I'm sorry.

GRAMMY  
 I don't know if he'll see you.

DICKY BIRD  
 He has to. Where is he?

Grammy considers it. Dicky Bird takes her hand, pleading.

DICKY BIRD  
 Please tell me.

GRAMMY  
 (after a beat)  
 Sonny's working a double shift at  
 the yarn factory.

Dicky Bird rushes into the bathroom, disrobing.

DICKY BIRD  
 Can I borrow some dry clothes?

GRAMMY  
 All I've got is my late husband's  
 old Navy uniform.

DICKY BIRD  
 It'll do. I need a vehicle.

Grammy points to a rusted motorcycle in the yard.

GRAMMY  
 Take my motorbike.

EXT. ROAD TO FACTORY - DAY

Dicky Bird, dressed as a Navy officer, drives Grammy's motorcycle up to the yarn factory. The song "Up Where We Belong" from "Officer and Gentleman" plays.

INT. YARN FACTORY - DAY

Dicky Bird enters. Sonny is tediously working yarn, wearing goggles and gloves. Dicky Bird walks up. The two men stare at each other.

Then Dicky Bird lifts Sonny off his feet and carries him off in his arms (like in the movie) as co-workers CHEER.

STOCKY CO-WORKER  
 (balling his eyes out)  
 Way to go, Sonny! Way to go!

Silhouetted in the sunlight, Sonny takes off Dicky Bird's navy cap and puts it on his own head. Freeze frame.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MGM GRAND ARENA - NIGHT

It's the championship match. A ping-pong table has been placed inside a boxing ring. It's like fight night with celebrities ringside and a buzz in the air.

INT. PRESS BOX - NIGHT

Berman and McEnroe are guests as the DESK ANCHOR introduces the story. A photo of Dicky Bird is on the graphics wall.

BERMAN

Welcome folks to the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino for the 2014 Table Tennis Championship. Chris Berman here with John McEnroe where an amazing story is unfolding here in the land of big dreams, Las Vegas, Nevada. It is the story of Dicky Watkins.

(pause)

Don't recognize the name? Why would you. Long ago in a land far, far away this one-time phenom was on the verge of Olympic gold and super-stardom when he suffered a career-ending injury that has left a ping pong ball lodged in his brain. His comeback is the stuff of legend.

MCENROE

Yes, toiling as a janitor at St. Anne's orphanage, Dicky learned the state was closing the orphanage for lack of funds so he picked up his paddle and a new partner in Kansas farm boy wunderkind Sonny Cox and is now on the verge of winning the Table Tennis World Championship.

BERMAN

(dramatic pause)

It is rare to find one pure thing in life but I think we have it in Dicky and Sonny...two Cinderfellas who have taken the sport by storm.

McEnroe rolls his eyes, losing patience.

BERMAN

Just one problem. Our Cinderfellas haven't arrived to the ball yet and the clock is ticking to midnight.

MCENROE

(losing it)

You have *got to me kidding me!*

BERMAN  
 (taken aback)  
 What?

MCENROE  
 Cinderfellas?

Berman shrugs.

The crowd is CHANTING for Dicky Bird and Sonny. Ace paces in the ring, imporing the judge, pointing to his watch.

BERMAN  
 It appears Ace Dunbar is lobbying the judge to have Watkins and Cox disqualified.

MCENROE  
 On the biggest night of their lives these knuckleheads pull a ghost.

BERMAN  
 Begging the question: Where are Dicky Watkins and Sonny Cox?

EXT. KANSAS CITY AIRPORT - NIGHT

Dicky Bird and Sonny slide the motorcycle to a stop and run inside the terminal.

INT. KANSAS CITY AIRPORT - NIGHT

Sonny watches from afar as Dicky Bird pleads with the ticket agent. He POUNDS the desk and storms over.

DICKEY BIRD  
 Goddamn! No flights.

SONNY,  
 All is lost.

VOICE (O.C.)  
 As I live and breathe. Is that Dicky Bird Watkins in the motherfuckin' house?

Dicky Bird turns and sees superstar rapper SNOOP DOG with his entourage of players and hot babes. Snoop is so cool.

SNOOP DOG  
 I been following the World Series on the tube. Boys got game.  
 (MORE)

SNOOP DOG (cont'd)

(confused)

But what are you doing here? Ain't you supposed to be slamming pong in Lost Wages for the title tonight?

DICKY BIRD

We are. But we can't get back in time. All flights are booked.

SNOOP DOG

Come fly with me, babies. The jet is fueled and ready for take-off.

EXT. SNOOP DOG'S JET - NIGHT

It takes off into the sky.

SNOOP DOG (O.C.)

Up, up and away, homies...

INT. MGM GRAND ARENA - IN THE RING - NIGHT

Ace is in the ref's face, lobbying the judge.

ACE

Two hours. Federation rules state if players aren't present 20 minutes prior to the start of match then you can disqualify them.

JUDGE

I know the rules, fuckface.

ACE

Well? Are you going to declare me the winner?

JUDGE

Those boys come a long way to get to this match. I'm gonna give'em another 10 minutes.

EXT. MCCARRAN AIRPORT - NIGHT

SNOOP DOG'S JET lands on the tarmac. The hatch-door opens, releasing a massive cloud of ganja smoke. Dicky Bird and Sonny deplane and run over to Snoop's WAITING LIMO. They wave to Snoop and hop in.

Snoop Dog steps off, smoking a cigar-joint, waving bye-bye as the limo speeds away.



INT. MGM GRAND ARENA - NIGHT

The crowd is CHANTING for Dicky Bird and Sonny.

INT. THE RING - CONTINUOUS

Ace checks his watch and holds up his hands to the judge.

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

Berman is reading a newspaper. McEnroe is texting someone on his iPhone. McEnroe realizes they are on air:

MCCENROE

Boomer, the judge is moving to the center of the ring. He's going to declare Ace Dunbar the winner.

INT. THE RING - CONTINUOUS

The microphone is lowered as the judge clears his throat.

JUDGE

Sports fans, I'm sorry to inform you that I must declare--

Loverboy's "Eye of the Tiger" comes blasting ON SPEAKER, interrupting the judge.

FROM THE LOCKER ROOM TUNNEL - IN SPOTLIGHT

Dicky Bird and Sonny appear with Rip. The crowd GOES WILD as our heroes make their way to the ring, high-fiving fans and kissing babies.

Sonny Boy signs a hot chick's boob. Dicky Bird autographs a fat dude's butt-cheek.

INT. THE RING - NIGHT

The judge nods approval. He speaks into the microphone:

JUDGE

I'm pleased to inform you the match is on. Balls drop in 20 minutes.

ACE

(fear creeping in)  
Aw' shit.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - VARIOUS SHOTS - NIGHT

- Dicky Bird suits up, kisses his headband and puts it on.
- Sonny shadow boxes while holding two paddles.
- Dicky Bird HEAVES into a toilet bowl. In the next stall, Sonny has EXPLOSIVE diarrhea.
- Sonny prays while Dicky Bird stares off into space.

SONNY

What are you thinking, pard?

DICKY BIRD

(deeply emotional)

I'm thinking that one day when I'm old and gray we'll be walking down the street and folks'll say "there goes Sonny and Dick...the greatest paddle jockeys there ever was."

Sonny throws an arm around Dicky Bird. In tears:

SONNY

God I love ping-pong.

DICKY BIRD

(tears flowing)

It's called table tennis.

Rip rolls in and sees them hugging and weeping.

RIP

If you sissies are finished dry-humping, we've got a match to win.

INT. MGM ARENA - IN THE RING - NIGHT

Dicky Bird and Ace are face to face in a stare-off as the judge explains the rules.

JUDGE

I know there's history, lotta bad blood. Keep it clean. I ain't putting up with no bullshit. You Boys start any bullshit and I drop the hammer on your bullshit.

(pause)

No bullshit. You fuckers got that?

Dicky Bird and Ace nod.

JUDGE  
I wanna hear you say it.

DICKY BIRD  
No bullshit.

ACE  
Yeah okay. No bullshit.

Dicky Bird looks around, confused.

DICKY BIRD  
You gotta partner, Ace?

JUDGE  
You gotta have a partner.

ACE  
(shit-eating grin)  
Oh, I gotta partner.

Ace steps aside, revealing his new partner: 17-time Grand Slam tennis champion and power server, SERENA WILLIAMS.

She offers her hand. A stunned Dicky Bird shakes it.

DICKY BIRD  
I'm a big fan.

SERENA  
That's nice. Dicky, can I speak  
with you over here for a second?

She leads him to HER CORNER where a MAN IN A SUIT is holding a briefcase.

DICKY BIRD  
What's with the suit?

SERENA  
This is my lawyer, Toby Feldman. We  
need you to sign a document.

DICKY BIRD  
Document?

TOBY FELDMAN  
It's a standard waiver.

Toby Feldman pulls out a one-page contract.

DICKY BIRD  
What am I waiving?

TOBY FELDMAN

It is a simple binding agreement stating you or any member of your family cannot sue Ms. Williams in the event one of her serves kills or maims you during this match.

SERENA

(offering pen)

Pen?

Dicky Bird takes the pen. Serena Williams offers her back as a desk. Dicky Bird signs the waiver.

INT. MGM ARENA, IN THE RING - NIGHT

Ace and Serena are introduced. The crowd BOOS as "Macho Man" by Village People plays on speaker.

RINGSIDE, Berman and McEnroe set the scene.

BERMAN

Here we are at the Table Tennis World Series Championship match.

(beat)

At stake is a \$100 thousand prize, a last chance to save St. Anne's orphanage and Grammy Cox's farm. Plus Dicky Bird's shot at revenge on Ace for destroying his career--

MCENROE

I heard a rumor Dicky Bird stole Ace's fiance, Clementine Del Rio--

BERMAN

--who used to be Dicky Bird's main squeeze back in the day before his career flamed out.

MCENROE

Not to mention, Ace's new partner, is tennis champ Serena Williams... Can you say ringer?

BERMAN

And a source tells me Coach Buddy Ripper is dating a dude.

Berman looks at a peeved McEnroe, shrugs.

MCENROE

Wowza! This match has more drama  
than an episode of "Scandal".

"Eye of the Tiger" plays on speaker as Dicky Bird and Sonny  
are introduced. Reveal their ringside CHEERING SECTION --

Grammy Cox, Clem and Peaches, the St. Anne's orphans and a  
bevy of smoking-hot groupies with "Love Cox" signs.

Dicky Bird and Sonny wave at the crowd.

BEHIND THEM --

Ace secretly spikes Dicky Bird's water bottle with horse-  
laxative. Rip sees this and just-as-secretly switches the  
bottles so that Ace has the horse laxative bottle.

INT. THE RING - LATER

The judge holds the golden "game ball" high in the air. The  
crowd goes silent. You can hear a pin drop.

JUDGE

First to 21 wins the game. Best two  
out of three wins the match.

(pause)

Players, good luck.

He rolls the ball to Serena Williams. She lines up in the  
serve position, staring down Dicky Bird...who crouches for  
her thunder-serve, shaking in his Reeboks.

BERMAN (O.C.)

This is Dicky Bird's "Maverick"  
moment of truth. He's not faced a  
power-server like Serena since the  
Seoul Olympics and we all know how  
that ended.

MCENROE (O.C.)

He still carries the failure of  
that night in his occipital lobe.

BERMAN (O.C.)

Dicky Bird must overcome his fear  
if his team is to have a chance.

The pressure builds until Serena UNLEASHES a 180 mph rocket  
serve. The ball flies at Dicky Bird in "Matrix" bullet SLO-  
MO as --

**START NIGHTMARE FLASHBACKS:**

INT. OLYMPIC STADIUM - NIGHT

Dicky takes ping-pong SHOT in the head.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - NIGHT

A neurosurgeon operates on Dicky, throws his hands up.

NEUROSURGEON

Fuck it! I can't help this man.

INT. DINGY APARTMENT - DAY

Clem walks out on Dicky who is drunk and looks like a hobo.

CLEM

You quit on yourself...You quit on us, Dicky.

DICKY BIRD

(sloppy)

Did you get milk? I need milk!

INT. SLEAZY STRIP CLUB - MORNING

Dicky sleeps on the dance floor, his head on a pile of shot glasses. Stripper CHERRY wakes him up by squatting low and peeing on his head.

**END NIGHTMARE FLASHBACKS:**

INT. IN THE RING (CURRENT) - NIGHT

Dicky Bird comes out of it, determined not to repeat his past failures He SMASHES a forehand that handcuffs Ace.

Dicky Bird and Sonny win the point. CROWD CHEERS. Game on. The fiercely contested match plays as a SERIES OF SHOTS to the score from "Hoosiers".

- Dicky and Sonny move as one, in sync

- Serena smashes a winner and high fives Ace

- Dicky wins close-net volley with Ace who flings his paddle into the crowd, KNOCKING out an old lady.

- Sonny chases down a serve, hits a between-the-legs winner

- Ace is down two points, calls a time-out and rips Serena a new one while drinking from the horse laxative water bottle.

- Play resumes, Ace goes for a backhand winner and suddenly grips his ass, trying to suppress the gathering storm

The "Hoosiers" score SCREECHES to a stop--

INT. THE RING - NIGHT

Play has stopped. Dicky Bird, Sonny, Serena and the judge all stare at

ACE

who is turning purple, sweating and clenching every muscle of his body. His belly is making a low GURGLING sound.

Ace runs from the ring, gripping his backside, past a GASPING crowd.

INT. LOCKER ROOM TOILET - CONTINUOUS

Ace runs in. Both stalls are occupied.

ACE  
Mother of God!

Desperate, Ace climbs over one STALL, shoving a janitor out and onto the floor. He drops his shorts and explodes. The BLAST echoes through the arena.

INT. MGM ARENA - CONTINUOUS

VARIOUS SHOTS: Fans react to the EXPLOSIVE DIARRHEA sounds coming from the locker room, many are disgusted, some are impressed...Dicky grimaces...Sonny gags...Rip laughs...and Grammy is soothed, like she's hearing classical music.

THE JUDGE signals for a 10 minute time out.

INT. RINGSIDE - PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

Berman and McEnroe react to the ACE'S BLAST SOUNDS and comment on his condition.

BERMAN  
Montezuma's Revenge! Ace's timing  
could not be worse.

MCENROE

The Judge is showing mercy with a  
10 minute injury time out.

BERMAN

I'm not sure 10 minutes will get  
the job done, Mac. It's appears Ace  
is dropping a serious deuce.

Berman turns to McEnroe who is glaring at him.

MCENROE

You are killing me.

INT. MGM ARENA - 10 MINUTES LATER

Ace emerges form the locker room, walking back to the ring.  
The crowd is silent. Nobody makes eye contact.

AT THE RING --

As Ace enters near Dicky and Sonny's corner, he secretly  
SPRAYS mace on Dicky's towel which is laying on the mat.

Nobody sees it.

Ace goes to his corner raising up to give Serena a high-  
five. She shakes her head. No thanks.

ACE

I washed.

JUDGE

You have each won one game. Game  
three is for the match. Ace, are  
you ready to resume play?

ACE

(wicked grin)

Let's party.

AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long" plays as we plunge  
into a **montage** of Dicky and Sonny kicking some Ace ass.

QUICK SHOTS:

- Dicky swings Sonny by his feet to reach as he makes an  
impossible shot

- Dicky returns a 200 mph Serena serve, lodging the ball in  
her cleavage before she can react.



- Sonny goes paddle-to-paddle with Ace at the net, ball moving at light speed. Ace's paddle starts smoking and burns his hand. He drops it. Sonny pumps his fist!
- Frustrated, Ace screams at Serena, she mouths "fuck off"
- Dicky wins a point, smiles at Clem who blows him a kiss.
- Grammy cheers a Sonny point then leans to one side and breaks wind. The folks around her react to her gamy funk.
- Ace rushes the table, chasing a Dicky drop shot, he misses and RAMS his crotch into the table, ouch! He calls time out.

**End montage.**

INT. THE RING - NIGHT

The scoreboard shows Team Dicky leading 20-6. They head back to their corner. Rip is excited.

RIP  
One more point boys. One more point  
and you're legends. You know what  
that means?

Dicky Bird wipes his face (eyes) with the mace-laced towel.

DICKY BIRD  
What, coach?

RIP  
Pussy. A roaring river of pussy  
...every flavor and as much as you  
can eat. Now go get it!

INT. PRESS BOX

Berman and McEnroe are splitting a pizza.

BERMAN  
(mouth full)  
Dicky Watkins and Sonny Cox have  
taken a commanding 20-6 lead in the  
deciding game.

MCENROE  
(mouth full)  
Yep, the championship looks like a  
foregone conclusion.

BERMAN

I can't imagine anything stopping  
Dicky Bird now.

INT. THE RING - NIGHT

Dicky Bird and Sonny walks back to the table. Dicky is  
rubbing his eyes which are now red. Sonny doesn't notice.

SONNY

You ready to do this, pard?

DICKY BIRD

Absolutely. Just one problem.

SONNY

What's that?

DICKY BIRD

I am blind.

Sonny turns and sees, Dicky's eyes are red and swollen shut.  
He is temporarily blinded. Can't see a thing.

SONNY

Holy fuck! What do we do?

DICKY BIRD

We win. This changes nothing.

SONNY

Are you loco? You're in the dark,  
man! Blind!

DICKY BIRD

Calm down. We just need one point.

AT THE TABLE --

Dicky feels around for his paddle. Sonny puts it in his  
hand. By now, Dicky's eyes are swollen shut, blistering,  
oozing puss and a gross red-purple color.

Ace sports a shit-eating grin.

ACE

Something wrong, Dicky Bird?

DICKY BIRD

I'm right as rain.

The judge notices.

JUDGE

Jesus and Mary! You need medical attention. I'm calling 911--

DICKY BIRD

(determined)

No! We play...We play now!

As Serena gets set to serve--

INT. PRESS BOX - NIGHT

Berman and McEnroe watch Dicky Bird blindly feeling around.

BERMAN

What's this? It appears Dicky Bird Watkins' eyes are swollen shut.

MCENROE

I suspect foul play.

BERMAN

You know what they say. If you're not cheating you're not trying.

MCENROE

Well folks, if you've never seen a blind man play ping-pong... you're about to.

INT. THE RING - NIGHT

The game swings back to Ace as blind Dicky Bird stumbles and fumbles his way toward defeat.

QUICK SHOTS:

- Dicky crouches to return a serve. Ace's liner sails past Dicky who doesn't move. A second later he swings at air.

- Dicky faces the wrong way. Sonny turns him around.

- Sonny salvages a point as Dicky grasps at air beside him.

- Dicky runs blindly - WHACKS Sonny in the back of the head.

- Ace and Serena win a point and SLAP high-five. Serena smells her hand.

- Dicky soldiers on, losing point after point, refusing to quit. The scoreboard reads 20-19 in Dicky's favor.

- Pissed, Rip calls a time out. Blind Dicky walks to the Ace-Serena huddle. Ace shoves him back to his own huddle.

INT. PRESS BOX - DAY

Berman praises Dicky Bird's heart.

BERMAN

Dicky Watkins is playing blind but he refuses to quit.

(waxing dramatic)

Not since Kurt Gibson or the great Willis Reed have we watched such a gutsy performance.

MCENROE

Sure Boom, but those guys *helped* their teams.

BERMAN

It's true. They've blown a huge lead and are now on the verge of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

INT. RING - DICKY'S CORNER - CONTINUOUS

Sonny leads Dicky Bird back to their corner. Rip draws up a play and BARKS out orders.

RIP

It's match point and Dicky Bird is as blind as Stevie Wonder.

DICKY BIRD

What's the play, coach?

RIP

Unleash the *dragon snake*.

Our boys grin and put their hands in the circle.

DICKY / SONNY / RIP

One-two-three, dragon!

Sonny leads Dicky Bird back to THE TABLE. Serena gets set to serve. The judge holds a ping-pong ball over his head.

JUDGE

Match point for Watkins and Cox. Next point wins the Table Tennis World Championship.

ACE  
 (to Dicky)  
 You ready to lose, Magoo?!

As Serena prepares to serve--

DICKY BIRD  
 Hey, Ace?

ACE  
 What's that?

DICKY BIRD  
 Dragon Snake!

ACE  
 (confused)  
 Dragon...what?

Sonny climbs on Dicky's shoulders, grabbing both paddles and HISSING like a snake. Dicky closes his eyes, a Zen Master.

In his mind, he hears Rip's voice...

RIP (O.S.)  
 Think about pussy and let the game  
 come to you.

Serena winds up for the power serve. Dicky Bird HEARS the paddle smack the ball and moves into perfect position.

Sonny reaches down and SLINGSHOTS the ball back at Ace who FREEZES with his mouth open. The ball FLIES into Ace's pie-hole, lodging deep in his throat.

BERMAN  
 Winner, winner chicken dinner!

MCENROE  
 Game, set and match!

THE CROWD goes nuts. RIP drops his head, thanking God.

Ace is choking, turning purple. Serena administers the Heimlich, sends the ball flying high into the RAFTERS --

-- where it SHATTERS the klieg lights!

Begin a fantasy "Natural" ending with pieces of light falling amidst pure celebration:

CLEM jumping in blind Dicky Bird's arms...legs wrapped around him ...she sucks his face...and he can see again.

DICKY BIRD  
 (exultant)  
 I can see! Healed by love!

SONNY lifting Grammy high on his shoulders... fist-pumping the air as she rips an AIR BISCUIT.

PEACHES sitting on RIP's lap, spinning in his chair.

THE ORPHANS in a scrum with Sonny's groupies, copping feels and motor-boating boobs.

DICKY BIRD AND SONNY come together for a team hug, raising their hands in the air like victorious boxers.

FREEZE FRAME -- on our two champions and,

CUT TO:

WRAP-UP MONTAGE PLAYS OVER END CREDITS

As Queen's "We Are the Champions" plays:

INT. IN THE RING - NIGHT

Dicky Bird and Sonny stand shoulder-to-shoulder, accepting the trophy and giant \$100 thousand check.

Ace is carried out of the ring in a stretcher.

Clem, Grammy, Rip and Peaches, orphan kids, ESPN announcers, Sonny's groupies all sing and wave the red, white and blue.

Dicky Bird and Sonny are mobbed by adoring fans. As Queen rocks on,

EXT. ST ANNE'S ORPHANAGE - DAY

Dicky Bird and Coach Rip pay off the orphanage, handing the check over to a government worker.

EXT. COX FARM - DAY

Grammy pays off the farm, shotgun in hand. She hugs Sonny. The BANKERS get in their car -- the windshield is blown out.

INT. ST. ANNE'S ORPHANAGE - CHAPEL - DAY

Dicky Bird and Clem get married. Rip and the orphans are there. The minister calls for the rings. Best man Sonny delivers them on a paddle.

INT. STRIP CLUB - DAY

Drunk Ace sits alone in the first row as an AGING STRIPPER fires ping-pong balls from between her legs.

Ace is so plastered, the balls just hit him in the face over and over again.

EXT. CRUISE SHIP - DAY

Rip and Peaches set sail on a cruise together. FROM THE DECK, they kiss and wave goodbye to Dicky Bird, Clem and Sonny.

SONNY

The heart wants what the heart  
wants.

DICKY BIRD

You're a poet, partner.

He hugs and kisses Clem. Sonny keeps waving goodbye.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Dicky Bird and Sonny Boy are photographed for the cover of Sports Illustrated. They are wearing USA Olympic uniforms with gold medals dangling.

**Flash! Flash!** The photo shoot becomes the SI cover.

Title: "Golden Boys!"

**THE END.**