

"FULL COUNT"

EXT. CARNIVAL MIDWAY - NIGHT - CLOSE ON EVANGELISTS FACE
(EVANGELIST, JORDAN, MAIN ASSISTANT, WANDA, WALTER, SERENA)

EVANGELIST

GOD HATES LOSERS! If there's anything
God hates more than sinners, it's
goddamned losers; and I can say this
with no fear of vanity for the Lord's
name because God damns losers. Now
you may think this an odd topic for
a baptism, er a series of baptisms,
but nobody ever said I wasn't odd...

He laughs heartily.

MIDWAY DUNK TANK - ESTABLISHING SHOT

An EVANGELIST stands in the midst of a gathering crowd, in
front of a carnival midway dunk tank. He holds a well-worn
Bible.

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

Friends, as I've said, and you know,
we are gathered here today to witness
the sacred rite of bap-tism. I am
here today to BAPTIZE, to do a little
laundry for Jesus Christ our Lord.
For those of you who are joining us
from outside our church, you may be
taken aback by our methods: but I
assure you that we are Baptist through
and through; a bit north of the
Southern Baptists, and a bit south
of the Northern Baptists if there is
such thing, but dyed-in-the-wool-of-
the-lamb Baptists nonetheless.

ANGLE ON CROWD

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

GOD! God-God-God! I love you my God.
You have given me my rod and my staff
and they comfort me, but yea, when I
walk through the valley of the shadow
of death...

The Evangelist's MAIN ASSISTANT hands him a baseball and
glove.

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

(continuing)

...You give me BALL AND GLOVE: they
are simple tools, o Lord, but it is
with simple tools I do Your bidding.

The main assistant checks the schedule.

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Of the four souls I am to cleanse today I am most concerned with the youngest. The young ones today, Lord, you know this, but I'll tell you out loud so that they can hear it, THE YOUNG ONES LORD ARE LOST. Today, if they even make it to term-- if the Devil doesn't cut them down early-- today, the young souls are delivered from the womb directly to the hands of Evil.

CLOSE ON EVANGELIST'S FACE

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

But Lord God, with simple ball and a simple glove I endeavor and shall succeed...

(deadly serious)

to deliver them to You.

JORDAN JERVIS

A young, long-haired teenager dressed in his best suit of clothes, JORDAN JERVIS is sincere and attentive, but just a little slow. He smiles when he gets the chance.

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

JORDAN ANDREW JERVIS! Your father and your father's father have toiled on the life-giving soil of your family's farm for the last fifty years. They praise God with their calluses and bruises. Your father has given his right hand and forearm and I dare say a few toes to see that this black earth fulfills its promise of tobacco, of corn, of beans, its promise to God to provide our needs.

ANGLE ON EVANGELIST

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

But you Jordan--and you realize this or you wouldn't be here-- you have foiled the toil of the soil. You and your ROADRUNNER have been clocked at over 1000 miles an hour... and with the radio on! I remember myself being passed by that notorious 351 Cleveland with wide black stripes and rear spoiler wing. FOR SHAME!

ANGLE ON EVANGELIST

Jordan-Jordan, can't you see the signal? God is telling you to take the pitch and Sammy Sosa Satan is telling you to swing for the parking lot. You have a full count, will you take the pitch?

JORDAN

YES!

THE PADDED PLUNGER

The ball strikes dead center.

DUNK TANK

Jordan and his long, stringy hair and his darkened blue-grey suit flounder in the tank. The Evangelist's assistants fish him out.

MAIN ASSISTANT

Out! Out! Pull him out! Called out on strikes and sent back to His dugout. Pull him out! He knows now, he knows!

WANDA HOOVER

A strikingly mature teenage girl in white dress and matching white shoes, WANDA HOOVER is nervous about her surroundings, but anxious to get started. In the b.g. the assistants help her onto the precarious seat.

EVANGELIST

WANDA ANNAMARIE HOOVER! Your mother and father are hard-working, decent individuals. Hoover Drugs can take pride in being the medium through which God has extended the life expectancy in Waltrip County a good ten-fifteen years, as well as providing us all a grand countertop around which to fellowship following a Sunday service. Wanda, I'm glad your father's grill is on our side.

CLOSE ON WANDA

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

But drugs is not the only service the name Hoover is associated with. Hoover is also a prominent manufacturer of a relatively well-known household worksaving device, and Wanda has unfortunately become associated with a certain hose

(MORE)



EVANGELIST (CONT'D)
 attachment for said device renowned
 for its tenacious suction. WANDA!
 God does not ask if these petty,
 sophomoric allegations hold an ounce
 of truth. He does not desire
 confirmation or rejection: He is not
 judging you now!

ANGLE ON EVANGELIST

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)
 But Wanda, true or not, your count
 is full. Even if Sparky is only asking
 you for a little bunt back to the
 pitcher, God wants the bat on your
 shoulder. Will you take the pitch?!

WANDA
 God, YES!

THE PLUNGER

The ball dents the dead center of the pad.

MAIN ASSISTANT
 Wait gents. Let her soak there a
 bit. OK! Out-out-out! She didn't
 even see it, Pastor!

EVANGELIST
 (correcting)
 Oh, she saw it, and she let it pass!
 Glory be to God, ALL OF IT TO HIM!

The assistants pull the drenched and quietly ecstatic Wanda
 from the tank. Her white dress clings to her limp form.

WALTER WALTRIP III

A thin little boy, nearly eleven years old, WALTER is helped
 onto the plank above the still-sloshing water. The Evangelist
 stands in the b.g.

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)
 (peevied)
 WALTER WAYNE WALTRIP III! Have you
 ever heard of fire and brimstone?
 Have you ever heard of the hand of
 God? Son, have you ever dreamt of
 standing, of KNEELING in a burning
 lake of fire? I know you have, I
 told you about 'em last week.

The crowd laughs.

CLOSE ON EVANGELIST



EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

And here ya are again son, here ya are again. Little Walt, yer family started this little town. Back in 1807 they named it after your great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great Grandpa Simon Peter Waltrip: a real statue of a man. Walt, you own the only bank, the only grocery, the largest restaurant, your daddy's president of the Lion's Club, you donated the land for the park and the money for the varsity gym (and it's a beaut!).

Applause. One of Walt's friends yells out, "Yeah, Walt!"

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

But Buddy, you're on a one way trip to Hell. Your momma--bless her heart--already told me about what you're doin' at school--

WALTER

(honestly)

What?

EVANGELIST

Well, you're talkin' back, for one. You're lettin' baseball get in the way of your studies, and in Sunday school yer askin' questions that don't have answers. That's WHAT, Walt. And this Sunday it got a little worse, didn't it?

WALTER

(resignedly)

Yeah.

EVANGELIST

Ya started askin' questions about the omniscience of God and his test of Abraham. AND you were questioning Mrs. Hargraves about logic again, weren't ya? Well Walt, I gotta tell you again, let it go.

CLOSE ON WALT

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

LET GO OF ALL YOU DREAD AND DIS-TRUST.
LET GO OF PAIN AND AGONY. LET GO OF
LOGIC AND LEARNEDNESS. LET GO OF
FEAR AND LOATHING. LET GO OF BEING
AND NOTHINGNESS.

(MORE)

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

(he slows)

But, Walt, most of all, won't you
let this pitch go by? Won't you allow
this little ball they say is made in
Haiti, won't you allow it to save
your soul?

(begins to sob)

Won't ya allow it to put you in the
hand of the Man who calmed the water?

(pause)

Son?

Walt hangs his head in submission. The Evangelist hurls the ball with the force of 1.5 Nolan Ryans to the dead center of the plunger.

CLOSER ON EVANGELIST

In SLOW MOTION he regains his balance after the pitch. SFX:
THE CROWD FROM DETROIT STADIUM.

CLOSER ON WALT

The plunger is hit, but there is a moment before the plank drops away. Of course, the boy ends up floating in the tank.

EVANGELIST

Slowly he looks up to the plunger as it is reset. He is visibly fatigued, Walt's baptism has drained him. Suddenly the crowd is SILENT.

THE MAIN ASSISTANT

He makes eye contact with the Evangelist.

MAIN ASSISTANT

(breaking the silence)

Glory be to God in Heaven.

The crowd echoes with "Glory be to God in his Heaven."

The Evangelist nods to his assistant.

MAIN ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

SERENA OLEM JOVONOVITCH! Please step
to the seat.

SERENA JOVONOVITCH

A quiet, dark-haired, dark-eyed little girl in jeans and a tee shirt, SERENA looks up to her FATHER who sweeps her toward the tank.



MAIN ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
Come on. God won't hurt you-- unless
you deserve it!

The Main Assistant laughs with the crowd. The Evangelist
raises his hand.

EVANGELIST
(calm to the assistant)
Herbert... guide her gently.

An assistant gently helps Serena to her perch. She shivers.

EVANGELIST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Are you cold, Serena?

SERENA
Y-yes.

EVANGELIST (O.S.)
This won't take long.

EVANGELIST

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)
Serena, when I was a boy I met a
little girl named Serena, too. You
know she looked a lot like the way
you look now. But I hope that you
can be different from her. Right now
I have no doubt that the other Serena
is somewhere in Hell--and child, she
is chained to a rock and beaten with
flaming whips and searing leather
straps. The other Serena, my Serena,
well let's say she thought she knew
what she didn't know. She thought
she was capable of what she couldn't
do. She thought she could say what
couldn't be said. She thought she
could think what couldn't be thought.
Do you hear what I'm sayin'?
(biting)
Serena? Can you hear me?
(pause)
Let me put it another way: Do you
know what girls do? Do you know what
girls play with? Do you know what
girls say and how they say it? DO
YOU KNOW WHAT THE WAGES OF SIN IS?

CLOSE ON SERENA

She mouths: "A MOVIE."

CUT TO:

EXT. LIONS CLUB PARK (1969) - OTHER SERENA/YOUNG EVANGELIST
(OTHER SERENA, WARREN)

In a secluded spot of a dirty little playground near several little league baseball diamonds, the OTHER SERENA talks to WARREN, the Evangelist as a boy.

OTHER SERENA
Have you ever kissed a girl before?

WARREN
Course, bunch of 'em.

OTHER SERENA
Why does your daddy call you "Buck"
all the time?

WARREN
Cause I'm stubborn I guess.

OTHER SERENA
Doesn't he like your name?

WARREN
He didn't name me, my aunt did who
took care of mother when she was
sick.

OTHER SERENA
Do you like me, Warren?

WARREN
Yeah, I guess.

OTHER SERENA
Well, don't you know?

WARREN
I said, "Yeah."

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. CARNIVAL (PRESENT) - EVANGELIST
(OTHER SERENA, WARREN, CROWD)

We cannot hear his words, only the words he now remembers from the past. He continues the motions of his evangelizing.

OTHER SERENA (V.O.)
Do you like church?

WARREN (V.O.)
Sure. What do you mean?

OTHER SERENA (V.O.)
Well, have you ever thought about
it?

The Evangelist winds up to throw the ball at the Serena's
plunger.

WARREN (V.O.)
Yeah.

OTHER SERENA (V.O.)
Will you kiss me, Warren?

WARREN (V.O.)
Okay.

CLOSE ON THE PLUNGER

OTHER SERENA (V.O.)
Now?

The pitch ticks the plunger and rattles into the chain link
fence.

CROWD
Ooooooooooooo!

CLOSE ON EVANGELIST (SLO-MO)

The Evangelist's eyes roll into the back of his head. Then,
he glares at Serena.

FADE TO:

CLOSE ON PRESENT-DAY SERENA

Her dry face shows her terror and irrational childish guilt
at the glare of the Evangelist.

FADE OUT.

OTHER SERENA (V.O.)
(giggles)

THE END.