

IN TOO DEEP:
THE BRIAN FUTZ STORY
(A LONG LOST 80'S MOVIE)

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FADE IN:

INT. A GENTLEMEN'S DEN - EVENING

A velvet wing-back chair with brass buttons sits empty before a crackling fire.

A dignified, silver-haired man approaches the chair, dressed in tweeds and a turtleneck, carrying a snifter of brandy. TERENCE MERIWETHER takes a seat in the chair.

He unbuttons his blazer, swirls his brandy, and then seems to notice the camera. He smiles, pleasantly surprised.

MERIWETHER

Oh, hello. I didn't see you there.
I'm Terence Meriwether.

He takes a sip and settles himself more comfortably.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

Bogart and Bacall. Abbott and Costello. Martin and Lewis. Of all the great screen duos in cinema history, actors are often the first to come to mind. But we must never forget the masters behind the camera, as well. From Merchant and Ivory to the Duplass brothers, creative collaboration has always been a hallmark of Hollywood excellence.

He sniffs his brandy thoughtfully.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

But perhaps no behind-the-camera duo has dominated an entire decade the way Lucien Thorne and David Baxter Donnelly put their screen-writing stamp on the 1980s.

We see photos of Thorne and Donnelly in action. At the typewriter. Inspecting film reels. Screaming at each other. They look like Loggins and Messina, but with more hair spray.

MERIWETHER (V.O.)

Hugely prolific and no strangers to controversy, Thorne and Donnelly wrote many of the most beloved 80s hits. *Kung Fu Summer Camp*, for instance. The joyous little romp known as *Bikinis on Top*.

(MORE)

MERIWETHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And of course who could forget
Breakfast Club 2: Back For Seconds?

The photos give way to a collage of newspaper clippings:
 'SCREEN SCRIBE SLAUGHTER', 'BEVERLY HILLS BLOODBATH',
 'HOLLYWOOD ENDING: DUO RUBBED OUT ON RODEO.'

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)
 But Thorne and Donnelly will always
 be remembered for the way they met
 their shocking demise. In the
 springtime of their manhood, the
 two writers - gunned down on July
 4th, 1986, outside Rodeo Drive's
 most exclusive brasserie, Le Petit
 Lapin.

A photo of two candy apple red cars - matching Ferrari
 Testarossas - parked on Rodeo and riddled with bullet holes.

A black and white photo of two matching headstones covered in
 flowers. The headstones are inscribed with the words:
 'THORNE & DONNELLY - DREAMS NEVER DIE.'

Back on camera, Meriwether leans forward to adjust a
 crackling log with his ivory-handled fire-poker.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)
 And what heinous villain committed
 this crime? The truth, my friends,
 is that no one knows. But theories
 abound.

We see a ONE SHEET for an 80s movie. It shows Al Pacino in a
 white suit, carrying a boombox on his shoulder.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)
 Was the murderer a Cuban-American
 incensed by the duo's culturally
 insensitive blockbuster, *Scarface*
2: Barrio Breakdance?

A still photo: Thorne and Donnelly partying hard with a
 mountain of BLOW and a cavalcade of scantily clad WOMEN.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)
 Perhaps an Eastern European drug
 lord collecting on Thorne and
 Donnelly's truly gargantuan cocaine
 debts?

Still photo: Olympic Champion MARK SPITZ, beaming. Arms
 folded on the side of the pool.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

One theory even points to this man.
Nine-time Olympic Champion Mark
Spitz.

Another ONE-SHEET, this one bearing the title *Shaved Legs and Dark Secrets: The Life and Crimes of Mark Spitz*.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

The duo's only made-for-TV offering, an unauthorized biopic, *Shaved Legs and Dark Secrets*, drew the ire of Spitz. The former World Record Holder calling it, quote: "Pure fantasy. A drug-fueled hatchet job by the two shallowest men in Hollywood."

We see a modern-day photo of a rusted Ferrari Testarossa, riddled with rusted bullet holes.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

But Thorne and Donnelly had one more trick up their silk sleeves. Unbeknownst to their friends and family, the eccentric scribes had secretly deposited a brand-new script in a safe-deposit box just hours before their bloody deaths. Now, in 2019, thanks to the dogged work of the Beverly Hills Police Department and our friends at Buena Park Pictures, that script has, at last, seen the light of day. And the result is the film you are about to enjoy.

Terence Meriwether pours himself another drink from a crystal DECANTER. Noticeably larger than the first.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

Epitomizing the spirit of the 1980's, when archaeologists carried bullwhips, time travel seemed inevitable, and karate was the national pastime, Thorne and Donnelly's final film is a reminder of an earlier, more innocent age. This is the film America has been waiting for. This is *In Too Deep: The Brian Futz Story*.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AQUARIUM - MORNING

SUPER: 1986

Tanks filled with rainbow colored tropical fish, stingrays, octopuses, and jellyfish. All the colors of the rainbow.

INT. FISH TANK - SAME

Underwater. A SCUBA MAN scrubs scum from the glass wall.

INT. FISH TANK - MINUTES LATER

A hammerhead shark glides through the clear water.

INT. FISH TANK - MINUTES LATER

Scuba Man fiddles with the underwater filtration system, trying to unclog a hole. A blast of SLUDGE envelopes him.

Wiping away the scum, he checks his Swatch. 7:56 AM

SCUBA MAN
(underwater, muffled)
Shit.

EXT. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AQUARIUM - MINUTES LATER

Scuba Man emerges from a service door and shuts it behind him, locking it with a key from an enormous key ring.

A line of SCHOOL KIDS waits impatiently for the aquarium to open. A NERDY GIRL notices Scuba Man.

NERDY GIRL
Hey, mister. You a shark trainer?

The "mister" in question is BRIAN FUTZ (40). With his Tom Selleckian mustache, Brian Futz is not an unattractive man, but he's wet, disheveled, and 15 pounds overweight.

FUTZ
No, kid. I just clean the tanks.

NERDY GIRL
You smell like fish sticks.

FUTZ
Scram, kid.

The girl shakes her head disapprovingly.

INT. 'HOT BODS BY BLAIR' JAZZERCISE STUDIO - MORNING

BLAIR (39) - A voluptuous brunette in a skin-tight, pink and grey leotard, white hi-tops, and big slouch socks - bounces to the beat of an 80's dance tune. All around her, dozens of WOMEN in pastels twist and shake and bounce.

BLAIR
Keep it going, ladies! Don't
forget the pelvis! Push it. Pull
it. Push it. Pull it.

Blair hears the rumble of an engine over the music. She glances out the floor-to-ceiling window, where a smoke-belching pickup truck has just pulled up. Her eyes harden.

BLAIR (CONT'D)
Cinnamon, can you take over a sec?

CINNAMON (22) bounds to the front of the class, leading with her perky breasts and gleaming white smile.

CINNAMON
Keep it up, ladies! That's right!
We're walking on sunshine!

EXT. 'HOT BODS BY BLAIR'. JAZZERCISE STUDIO - SAME

Brian Futz climbs out of his red 1980 Toyota pickup. The car has some salt water damage and a smashed right fender.

BLAIR (O.C.)
You're late, Futz.

Blair stands with her arms folded. In the window behind her, leotard-clad bodies bounce to the barely audible bass line.

Staring a beat too long at a young MOM in a yellow leotard, Futz takes a check from his pocket and offers it to Blair.

FUTZ
(still watching the mom)
Here you go, last one.

BLAIR
Show some respect, Futz. Those are
my customers.

She grabs the check and studies it. Makes sure it's legit.

FUTZ

Customers? I thought I was paying
to put you through law school.

Blair folds up the check and tucks it into her high-tops.

BLAIR

Oh, didn't I tell you? I own this
place now, Futz.

A JEEP rolls by with a SKATEBOARDING TEENAGER hanging on to
the tailgate. He waves to the dancing women, who wave back.

FUTZ

I know you couldn't afford this
place on my alimony.

BLAIR

Yeah, tell me about it. It was my
birthday present from Chadwick.

FUTZ

Oh, right. Chadwick P. Pickering.
Of the Pomona Pickerings.

BLAIR

Save it, Futz. He's a well known
patron of the arts. And he's about
to make Senior Partner.

FUTZ

What does he have that I don't?

BLAIR

Besides good looks, money, and
power? How bout a college degree?

FUTZ

I went to college.

BLAIR

But you didn't finish, Brian. In
fact, the Brian Futz I know quits
everything as soon as it gets too
hard. Our marriage. Your swimming
career. Your Olympic dreams. You
could have had it all, Futz.

FUTZ

I work for the most successful pool
and aquarium cleaning business in
The Valley.

BLAIR
Exactly. You're just a pool boy.

That hurts.

BLAIR (CONT'D)
It's time to face facts. You're a quitter, Futz.

Blair turns away and heads back inside. Futz watches her go, totally deflated, the word "Futz" echoing in his ears.

INT. SWIMMING POOL. UNDERWATER - DAY

A younger, slimmer Futz is submerged in the crystalline blue water of an Olympic-sized pool. Stark naked. He's also not swimming, just drifting slowly toward the bottom.

A CROWD is chanting, their voices distorted and dreamlike.

CROWD (O.S.)
Futz. Futz. Futz. Futz.

As Futz drops lower and lower, a tattered red Speedo floats by on the surface above him, like blood in the water.

And now a phone begins to RING.

INT. BRIAN FUTZ'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Futz wakes with a WAIL of pain. Sits straight up in bed. A sweaty mess. A phone is ringing on the beside table, surrounded by empty bottles of Bartles and Jaymes.

The phone stops ringing. We hear the CLICK of an answering machine, a BEEP, and the emphysemic voice of a CHAIN SMOKER.

CHAIN SMOKER
Futz, this is Midge. From All Valley Pool Pros. You need to get down to Westlake High. One of the rich little bastards thought it'd be cute to go numero dos in the deep end. Better take your oxygen tank. Sounds like a nasty one.

The line goes dead. Futz looks at the phone, then inspects his shitty little apartment. How did it ever come to this?

INT. WESTLAKE HIGH. AUDITORIUM - DAY

A banner above the door reads 'COLLEGE RECRUITMENT FAIR.'

All the Ivy League schools are here. Harvard. Princeton. Yale. A sea of prep school snobs in khakis and navy blazers.

And in walks Futz. Oxygen tank on his back. Wine cooler in hand. Keeps his head down as he passes the RECRUITERS.

HARVARD RECRUITER (O.C.)

Studies show the average Harvard graduate earns sixty thousand more dollars a year than ...

YALE RECRUITER (O.C.)

You don't want to disappoint your parents, do you? ...

PRINCETON RECRUITER (O.C.)

The opportunities are endless at Princeton ...

Futz stops at the STANFORD RECRUITER's table.

STANFORD RECRUITER

Uh. Hi. You're not interested in Stanford, are you?

FUTZ

Just looking for the pool, lady.

A SUPER COOL TEEN suddenly notices Futz.

SUPER COOL TEEN

Dude, you smell like a pair of gnarly deck shoes.

Futz takes a swig of the Bartles & Jaymes. A squeaky-voiced school SAFETY OFFICER steps between them.

SAFETY OFFICER

Excuse me, sir. You can't have that in here. We're a dry campus.

Futz gives her a look. Puts the bottle to his lips and drains it. Holds the bottle upside down.

FUTZ

There. Dry.

INT. AQUATIC AREA - SECONDS LATER

A single recruitment table for Southern California State University has been set up in the empty pool area.

There are two people manning the table. One is SCOTTY FARMER (20), a handsome, excitable young black man with a high-top fade and a VHS camcorder on his shoulder.

The other is RIKI ROJAS (41). A real firecracker, she looks like she'd be equally at home rocking out to Bon Jovi or reading the collected works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Futz lugs his oxygen tank up to the table. He notices the SoCal State sign and gives a knowing smirk.

FUTZ

Typical. They stuck you guys way in the back.

Riki leans forward eagerly. Beside her is a plate covered in little sandwich-sized lumps wrapped in tinfoil. A hand-drawn sign reads: 'RIKI'S PECULIAR PUPUSAS. FREE FOR APPLICANTS.'

RIKI

Hi. I'm Riki Rojas. Are you interested in SoCal State?

Futz frowns at the pupusas, but decides not to ask.

FUTZ

It's my alma mater, actually.

The young guy, Farmer, focuses the camera squarely on Futz.

FARMER

Yeah? What class were you in?

RIKI

And this is Scotty Farmer.

FUTZ

I dropped out.

FARMER

Why?

Futz doesn't answer. Takes out a fresh Bartles and Jaymes.

RIKI

Well, it's never too late to go back to school, Mr. Futz.

FUTZ

I'm just here to clean the pool.

Futz pops the top. Snaps the bottle cap off his elbow.

RIKI

You got one of those for me?

Futz is surprised by her moxie. Gives her a faint smile.

FUTZ

Sorry. This is a dry campus.

He takes a long, slow drink.

INT. AQUATIC AREA - MINUTES LATER

Futz is in the pool, wearing his cleaning/scuba gear. Farmer is stalking him with the camera while Riki looks on.

FUTZ

What's with you, Farmer?

RIKI

Scotty is one of our most celebrated film students. We've asked him to do some filming today for our recruitment video.

FUTZ

And how's the recruiting going?

RIKI

Not great. You're only the second person we've seen.

FUTZ

Who was the first?

FARMER

The kid who shit in the pool.

RIKI

(nodding to Farmer)
Scotty's short film, 'För Djupt' just finished second in the Valbueana Film Festival.

FARMER

Man, 'För Djupt' was my early period. Just wait till I get funding for my new project -- "Min grotta av illusioner."

FUTZ

I don't understand those words.

FARMER

Man, it's Swedish. As in the cinematic genius Ingmar Bergman. They call me Lil' Bergie.

RIKI

They don't call you Lil' Bergie.

FARMER

They will.

FUTZ

Good to meet you, Little Birdie.

FARMER

Ber-gie.

FUTZ

Oh, like Fergie.

FARMER

The Duchess of York?

RIKI

I don't know any other Fergie.

FUTZ

Good to meet you, Fergie.

FARMER

Lil' Bergie.

RIKI

(turning to Futz)

What do they call you, scuba-man?

FUTZ

They call me Brian Futz.

CAMCORDER POV

We see the grainy, black and white footage from Farmer's camcorder as he zooms in Futz's face.

FARMER (O.S.)

Wait. Futz? Not THE Brian Futz?

FUTZ

You've heard of me?

BACK TO SCENE

FARMER

Are you kidding? You're a legend.
Coach Carruthers says your records
will never fall.

FUTZ

Old man Carruthers is still alive?
He was ancient when I was there.

FARMER

Man, he brags about you all the
time. Says Spitz had nothing on
Futz.

FUTZ

I don't talk about Mark Spitz.

FARMER

(confused)

Why not? He the reason you dropped
out or something?

FUTZ

I don't talk about that either.

RIKI

You don't talk about much, do you
Mr. Futz? Scotty, give us a sec.

Scotty reluctantly walks away. But keeps the camera focused
on Futz. Riki crouches down near the pool's edge.

RIKI (CONT'D)

Listen. You oughta reconsider.
It's a great story. One of our
most famous students coming back to
class, 20 years later.

FUTZ

Sorry, lady. That ship has sailed.

RIKI

My name's not "lady." It's Riki
Rojas. Now try this pupusa.

She holds out one of the little lumps covered in tin foil.
Futz takes it from her warily. Frowns as he unwraps it.

FUTZ

This is like an empanada or what?

RIKI

Please. Empanadas are for chumps. This is a traditional Salvadoran corn fritter, but filled with my trademark peculiar ingredients.

Futz takes a bite.

FUTZ

Grape jelly?

RIKI

Boysenberry. And I want you to take my card. Call me if you reconsider.

Reaching for the card, he accidentally splashes the pupusa.

FUTZ

Shit. I got my pupusa wet.

RIKI

You know what, Futz? You're all wet if you don't go back to school.

Stone-faced, Futz puts his goggles back on. Tucks the card behind the strap. Dives back to the bottom of the pool.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

The gleaming, crystal clear waters of the brand new, sun-filled aquatic center on the campus of SoCal State. A CROWD applauds politely as a dedication ceremony gets underway.

The bleachers are filled with FACULTY MEMBERS and DONORS of SoCal State. Behind the podium is DEAN PHILIP A. MOOBURY (39), a smarmy little stuffed-shirt in a bow tie.

MOOBURY

As a former member of this Golden Retrievers' swim team, it's my honor to help dedicate the Chadwick P. Pickering Aquatic Center.

Three generations of Pickerings hold an oversized pair of scissors, posing for photos, and preparing to cut the ribbon.

CHADWICK P. PICKERING (50), in tweeds and tans, was born with one silver spoon in his mouth and another up his ass.

His father, ASCOT PICKERING (85), has the flinty glare of a man who built his empire from the ground up.

Chadwick's son, BLAKE PICKERING (20) rocks a giant mane of blonde hair and a thin tie emblazoned with Golden Retrievers.

MOOBURY (CONT'D)

I think we can safely say that without the Pomona Pickerings, our beloved SoCal Golden Retrievers would have been put down long ago.

Cheers from the crowd, along with scattered BARKS and HOWLS of celebration from the other MEMBERS of the swim team.

MOOBURY (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the new Chadwick P. Pickering Aquatic Center.

The Pickerings cut the ribbon. The GOLDEN RETRIEVER MASCOT pumps his paw, flaps his tongue.

Blair Futz is sitting just off to the side of the Pickering men, dressed like Jackie O., applauding with delight.

Chadwick P. Pickering steps to the podium.

CHADWICK

Thank you, Dean Moobury, for that gracious introduction. I know I speak for all Pickerings when I say that we're delighted to make this small contribution to the SoCal State family. Particularly now that my son, Blake, has just been named captain of the swim team.

More howls and barks from the swim team. Blake beams.

CHADWICK (CONT'D)

And, of course, none of this would be possible without my father, the great Ascot Pickering. Sixty years ago this month, he planted his first cucumber seeds in Pomona, never dreaming he would one day own the largest pickling empire in the western United States.

ASCOT

Actually, I knew exactly what I was doing.

BLAKE PICKERING

Quiet, old man.

CHADWICK

At the risk of tooting the family
horn, I'll go out on a limb and
predict this will be our best
swimming season yet!

Frenzied clapping. On the front row of the bleachers is
COACH CARRUTHERS (80), an ancient billiard ball of a man.
Carruthers cups two hands over his mouth and shouts at Blake:

CARRUTHERS

Only if you work on your butterfly,
Pickering!

Blake flushes with embarrassment. Chadwick's smile falters,
but he brings the ceremony to a close and rejoins Blair.

BLAIR

It's so nice to be with a winner.

She bites his cheek and purrs like a demented kitten.

EXT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - SAME

Futz's truck puttters past the gleaming new center.

INT. FUTZ'S TRUCK - LATER

Futz pulls to the side of the road to gaze at the school he
once attended, his eyes filled with sadness and regret.

Suddenly he hears the RATTLE of a cocktail shaker. Across
the street, Futz notices a dive bar called 'THE GLASS KEY'.

INT. 'THE GLASS KEY' BAR - DAY

MARY KATE ASHLEY (22), a pretty bartender with dark skin,
darker hair, and the darkest eyes pours well-Scotch and
carrot juice into a glass. Slides it to Ascot Pickering.

His arthritic hand swipes it. Pulls the glass to his lips
and downs the concoction in one big gulp.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Scotch and carrot juice? Why do
you drink that stuff?

ASCOT PICKERING

Didn't I ever tell you? It gets me
drunk. But I see straight.

He drops a crisp \$20 on the bar and leaves, just as Futz breezes through the door.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
Have a good day, Mr. Ascot.

Futz and Ascot make eye contact. Futz notices the \$20.

FUTZ
Generous tipper.

Mary Kate Ashley snatches up the \$20.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
Don't think I've seen you around here before.

FUTZ
Well, I haven't been in this neighborhood in a long, long time. Name's Futz. Brian Futz.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
Mary Kate Ashley. Whatcha drinking, Futz?

FUTZ
Bartles and Jaymes. Piña Colada.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
Jesus. No wonder you look so miserable. That's like tanning lotion. I think we can do better.

FUTZ
Yeah?

MARY KATE ASHLEY
I want you to try something -- on the house. It's called the 'Fuzzy Nipple.'

FUTZ
Let's taste your fuzzy nipple.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
It's a 'Glass Key' original.

She begins to pour.

MARY KATE ASHLEY (CONT'D)
One part Sambuca, one part Bailey's, and equal parts Vodka, Peach Schnapps, and orange juice.

She passes it to him. He takes a drink.

FUTZ
Is it supposed to make my teeth
feel this fuzzy?

MARY KATE ASHLEY
(nods)
And your nipples rock hard.

The front door swings open. Enter Blake Pickering, strutting
as he leads his fraternity -- the TEKES -- to the bar.

MARY KATE ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Uh oh. Keep your head down, Futz.
The Tekes are here.

FUTZ
Who or what is a Teke?

MARY KATE ASHLEY
Tau Kappa Epsilon. The "coolest"
fraternity on campus.

Futz glances over at the Tekes as they sit down.

FUTZ
They look like a 'Men At Work'
cover band.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
(to the Tekes)
The usual, boys?

BLAKE PICKERING
That's right. A bucket of Busch.

Mary Kate Ashley swiftly produces a plastic bucket filled
with crushed ice and eight cans of Busch beer.

INT. 'THE GLASS KEY' BAR - 2 HOURS LATER

Futz is hammered on Fuzzy Nipples.

FUTZ
One more. Then cut me off.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
I think I'm gonna rename this after
you. The Futzy Nipple.

Futz smiles, then notices Blake Pickering, making obscene gestures to his buddies at Mary Kate Ashley's backside as she bends over the ice machine.

FUTZ
Grow up, kid.

Blake turns, smirking.

BLAKE PICKERING
What's that, old man?

FUTZ
You heard what I said, dipstick.

BLAKE PICKERING
You're slurring, old man. And you smell like boat trash.

FUTZ
And you shouldn't treat a lady like that.

Mary Kate Ashley straightens up. Realizes what's going on.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
Look, Futz, it's sweet of you, but I can handle the Tekes.

FUTZ
You deserve better, Ashley Marie.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
It's Mary Kate Ashley.

Futz stands up. Puffs his chest. He's ready for a fight.

FUTZ
Listen up, hairdo -- we could do this the easy way or the....

And, oh shit, he's way, way more drunk than he realized.

BLAKE PICKERING
Don't piss yourself, grandpa.

Futz falls face-first into dirty linoleum. He's unconscious.

EXT. DIMLY LIT STREET - 3:00 AM

Brian Futz is both beaten and hammered, stumbling down the street in front of the new Aquatic Center.

He drops to his hands and knees.

INT. TRI-COUNTY SWIMMING FINALS - DAY

SUPER: 1966

A YOUNGER FUTZ wears only a Speedo. A towel draped over his shoulders, barely concealing his chiseled frame.

Despite the 20 year time difference, Coach Carruthers appears to be the same age. Overweight, bald, crotchety.

CARRUTHERS

Listen, kid. With your passion,
your God-given talent, and your
super-human hip-flexors, there is
no one in the Tri-County, maybe no
one in the country, who out-flexes
the Futz. Not even Spitz. Listen
to 'em, kid...

INT. TRI-COUNTY SWIMMING FINALS - MINUTES LATER

Futz is now on the starting blocks. The crowd CHANTS:

CROWD (V.O.)

Futz. Futz. Futz. Futz.

The starting pistol fires. BANG. Swoosh. Into the water.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The 1986 Futz VOMITS on the sidewalk. AN OLDER COUPLE, hand-in-hand, approaches. The woman hands Futz some loose change.

WOMAN

Oh, you poor thing. Here you go.

MAN

Princess, don't give money to
crazy, drunk pedestrians.

They walk on. Accepting the change, Futz notices a nearby payphone. Gives it the up and down. Stumbles over.

INT. PAYPHONE - NIGHT

Hand trembling, Futz forces coins into the slot. Takes out the water-logged business card Riki Rojas gave him. Dials.

We hear several RINGS, then RIKI's voice.

RIKI (V.O.)
 You've reached the office of Riki
 Rojas. Please leave a message.

Futz waits for the BEEP, then shouts drunkenly:

FUTZ
 This is Futz! I'm coming back to
 school!

CUT TO:

INT. A GENTLEMEN'S DEN - PRESENT DAY

Terence Meriwether, minus the tweed jacket and now visibly more intoxicated, tops off his snifter.

MERIWETHER
 Ohhh, that poor Futz. He might
 just be in over his head this time.
 But Thorne and Donnelly sure
 weren't. At the top of their game,
 and firing on all cylinders...

Still photo: Thorne and Donnelly wildly doing cocaine off the space bar of a typewriter.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)
 According to Thorne biographer, G.
 Randy Tartufian, this magical
 screenplay was written during a 48
 hour cocaine bender...

Still photo: Pornography store.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)
 ... in the back room of a little
 known pornography store in West
 Hollywood, where...

Still photo: Thorne screaming, holding DEFIBRILLATOR PADDLES. Donnelly looks DEAD.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)
 David Baxter Donnelly's heart
 reportedly stopped beating for a
 full 6 minutes.

Back On Camera, Terence Meriwether swirls his brandy.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

But just as Lucien Thorne zapped new life into his writing partner that fateful day, let's find out if college is the jolt Brian Futz needs to get his life back on track. And just maybe climb back into the pool.

EXT. SO.CAL STATE CAMPUS - DAY

CO-EDS of all cliques, creeds, and classes hustle and bustle around the quad. Including a visibly annoyed Brian Futz.

FUTZ

Are you seriously going to follow me around with that thing all semester, Farmer?

Scotty Farmer goes in for a tight shot with his camcorder.

FARMER

Man, it's your existential crisis. You're like Isak Borg in 'Wild Strawberries', confronting your past and shit.

FUTZ

I'm not doing so bad.

He's not doing so good either.

FARMER

It's brave. What are you, like 50?

FUTZ

40.

FARMER

Showing up here, surrounded by all these frat boys and sorority sisters, with their bourgeoisie mentality, and their "greed is good" defense of the capitalist ruling class.

FUTZ

I just don't want to clean pools anymore.

FARMER

Exactly.

INT. RIKI ROJAS' OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Riki is seated casually on the front edge of her desk, facing Futz. Scotty Farmer has the camera rolling.

RIKI

I've got your schedule right here.
Zoology, Geometry, Jazz
Appreciation, oh and Marine Biology
with 'The Dootz'. A full load.

FUTZ

'The Dootz'?

RIKI

Sheila 'The Dootz' Duitsman. Only
the most eccentric Marine Biology
professor on the Pacific Coast.

A knock at the door. It opens before Riki has a chance to respond. Enter Dean Moobury. Farmer zooms in on him.

MOOBURY

Riki, I wonder if you'd be
interested in joining me at Le
Petit Lapin tonight --

RIKI

Ah, Dean Moobury. I want you to
meet our newest non-traditional.

Futz and Moobury look each other up and down.

MOOBURY

Brian Futz.

FUTZ

Phillip Moobury.

RIKI

You two know each other?

MOOBURY

Futz and I were on the swim team
together.

RIKI

Then I'll bet you two have a lot of
catching up to do.

FUTZ

Moob was the towel boy.

MOOBURY

And now I hear you're a pool boy.

RIKI

Or maybe no catching up at all.

MOOBURY

And now I'm the Dean.

RIKI

Brian is just 18 credits shy of his degree in Marine Biology.

MOOBURY

That's right. I do seem to remember you dropping out after a unfortunate incident in the pool. And then what was it? A breakdown?

Futz gets close to Moobury's face. Wild-eyed.

FUTZ

I think we all get a little bit nuts sometimes. Right, Moobury?

Moobury takes a step back.

MOOBURY

Listen, Futz. I don't want any trouble out of you.

FUTZ

(feigning nonchalance)
I'm just here to learn. Not swim.

MOOBURY

Good thing. I'd hate to see you disappoint everyone all over again.

Farmer artfully captures the ice cold glares from both men.

INT. CLASSROOM - MINUTES LATER

Marine Biology Professor, SHEILA 'THE DOOTZ' DUITSMAN, looks like she got dressed in the dark. Crimped hair. Giant glasses. And a necklace made of shark teeth.

Futz sits among other STUDENTS in their 80's fluorescents.

DOOTZ

I'm sure many of you know me,
Professor Duitsman.

(MORE)

DOOTZ (CONT'D)

I look around the room and see some familiar faces and some new faces.

Futz looks at some of the faces of the younger students.

DOOTZ (CONT'D)

That's why I think it's a good idea to go around the room and introduce ourselves. Say your names and tell us one interesting fact about yourselves.

Everyone hates this idea.

BIG BANGS

I'm Melanie and I've seen 'Lisa, Lisa' in concert like 18 times.

BIG BANGS GIRL pops her bubble gum.

GREEN SPIKED HAIR

Dave. God is dead. Reality is subjective.

FUTZ

Thank you, Nietzsche.

GREEN SPIKED HAIR GUY rolls his eyes.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

I'm Brian Futz. And I swim with sharks.

DOOTZ

Then you're in the right place, Mr. Futz.

MARY KATE ASHLEY (O.S.)

Hey, Futz!

Futz turns. Spots Mary Kate Ashley across the classroom.

FUTZ

Fuzzy Nipples!

No one else knows what that means.

EXT. SO.CAL STATE CAMPUS - AN HOUR LATER

Futz and Mary Kate Ashley walk together, filmed by Farmer.

FUTZ

So what are you doing here? I thought you were a bartender.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

A mixologist.

FUTZ

You can get a degree in that now?

They walk past the aquatic center.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

It's my job. I'd probably do it forever if it weren't for my mom. She's always pushing me to do more.

FUTZ

I know the feeling. Some lady with free pupusas guilted me into coming back to school.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Oh, so you know my mom.

FUTZ

Riki Rojas is your mom?

MARY KATE ASHLEY

She's got this crazy idea about a wacky flavored pupusa empire.

Blake Pickering, wearing his letterman jacket, swoops in and puts his arm around Mary Kate Ashley.

BLAKE PICKERING

Wow, Mary Kate Ashley. You're looking bodacious today.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Thanks, Blake.

BLAKE PICKERING

So, where we going?

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Well, WE have Computer Science class together. You want to come?

BLAKE PICKERING

I've already played with my Wang once today. Besides, my dad says computers are a waste of time.

Blake finally appears to notice Futz.

BLAKE PICKERING (CONT'D)
Bogus. Didn't realize it was bring
your grandpa to school day.

FUTZ
Boy, you're more and more charming
every time I see you.

BLAKE PICKERING
And you still smell like boat
trash.

He slaps Futz on the shoulder.

BLAKE PICKERING (CONT'D)
I'm just yankin' your chain,
broham.

Leaves his hand on Futz's shoulder a menacing beat too long.
Turns his attention to Mary Kate Ashley.

BLAKE PICKERING (CONT'D)
And I'm gonna dial you up about the
party at the Teke house. It's
gonna be bad to the bone.

Another Teke, the handsome but tragically stupid BRAD
THOMLINSON, runs up and tries to high-five Blake Pickering.

Blake pulls his hand back and runs it through his hair.

BLAKE PICKERING (CONT'D)
Too slow, Joe.

THOMLINSON
No, Blake. It's me, Thomlinson.

BLAKE PICKERING
It was a joke.

THOMLINSON
Brad Thomlinson. Not Joe.

BLAKE PICKERING
Shut up, dummy.

THOMLINSON
We're on the swim team together.

BLAKE PICKERING
 I know who you are, idiot.
 (turns to Mary Kate)
 We gotta jet. Swim practice.

THOMLINSON
 (to Mary Kate)
 We're on the swim team together.

BLAKE PICKERING
 Catch you on the flip side.

Blake gives the 'hang loose' fingers to Mary Kate as he goes.

FUTZ
 You know that Pickering guy's a
 total hoser, right?

MARY KATE ASHLEY
 I can think of worse things on
 campus to look at.

Thomlinson, the handsome Teke, gives her a second glance.

MARY KATE ASHLEY (CONT'D)
 Or better.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - MORNING

The Aquatic Center is dimly lit by the rising sun.

A lone SWIMMER glides through the water with brilliant
 precision. Effortless. But he's not going full tilt.

The CLICKING sound of switches in a breaker box. The
 overhead halide lamps buzz and flicker to life.

CARRUTHERS (O.S.)
 Is that a Futz in my pool?!

Brian Futz touches the wall and raises his swim-capped head.

CARRUTHERS (CONT'D)
 I haven't seen a butterfly like
 that in 20 years!

Futz gives a grateful but prideful smirk.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - LATER

Brian Futz is toweling off his generous midsection.

CARRUTHERS
You look fat.

FUTZ
You look like death.

CARRUTHERS
Better than the alternative.

FUTZ
What's the alternative?

CARRUTHERS
Death.

They embrace. Slapping each other on the back. Old friends.

FUTZ
How's the season looking, Coach?

CARRUTHERS
This is the year the Golden
Retrievers set the record.

FUTZ
What record's that?

CARRUTHERS
Most consecutive losing seasons in
the Tri-County. 20 in a row.

Carruthers chuckles.

FUTZ
Don't blame yourself, coach.

CARRUTHERS
No, I blame you for most of it.

FUTZ
I missed you, too.

CARRUTHERS
I'm half-kidding. Half too-old-to-
give-a-shit. We do have a couple
of rising stars, though.

FUTZ
It's not that prick Pickering?

CARRUTHERS
Pickering's a putz, Futz. But he's
a damn fine swimmer, and his name's
on the building.

FUTZ

Did I mention Blake's father is dating my wife?

CARRUTHERS

Care to elaborate on why you're swimming in your wife's boyfriend's son's new pool?

FUTZ

Feeling nostalgic, I guess. Now that I'm a student here again.

CARRUTHERS

Heard a rumor about that. Figured it was only a matter of time before I caught you in here.

FUTZ

That predictable, huh?

CARRUTHERS

Shed a few of those L-Bs and you could teach these kids a thing or two.

Carruthers flicks Futz's flab. It jiggles.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Futz and Farmer walking near the campus. Farmer isn't filming, but he's still carrying his camera at his side.

FUTZ

You do realize we weren't invited?

FARMER

My man, it's the perfect accompaniment to the "fish out of water" narrative I'm going for.

They approach the T-K-E frat house, where a party is raging.

And now a 1986 Z-28 pulls up to the curb.

FARMER (CONT'D)

Yo, check it out. It's your girl.

Mary Kate Ashley and her friend, CRYSTAL (20) - dressed in neon, their bangs extra big - exit the back of the car.

FARMER (CONT'D)

And your other girl.

Riki Rojas - dressed like a fairly normal human being, aside from the massive shoulder pads - exits the driver's side.

FUTZ

Ladies.

He said nobly, doffing an invisible cap.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Oh, phat! It's Futz.

FUTZ

That's the second time I've been called fat today.

RIKI

I wouldn't so much call you fat. Maybe a little pudgy.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Phat. P-H-A-T. Phat. Pretty, hot, and tempting. Right, mom?

Riki Rojas gives her a death stare. Crystal pops her gum.

MARY KATE ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Crystal, this is my friend, Futz.

Farmer clears his throat in an exaggerated manner.

MARY KATE ASHLEY (CONT'D)

And his ... documentarian? Farmer.

FARMER

Crystal, your bangs and bangles look particularly choice tonight.

Crystal pops her gum and rolls her eyes.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Yeah, well, we're gonna jet inside. See if these Tekes have anything to offer besides free Busch.

FARMER

Mind if I join you? I want some footage of these privileged capitalist progeny in their native element.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Whatever floats your boat, Farmer.

The three kids stroll off to the party, leaving Futz and Riki standing awkwardly together on the sidewalk.

Before either of them can talk, they hear A SHOUT above them.

In the second-story window of the frat house, a nearly NAKED TEKE is crouched on the window ledge in a diving pose.

He gives a drunken TARZAN YELL and dives out of the window. Lands in the bushes and tumbles onto the lawn, unconscious.

Other TEKES cheer from the window above.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE T-K-E HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Futz and Riki Rojas sit on the hood of her Z-28.

FUTZ

So, you drive your daughter to all the frat parties?

RIKI

I figure she's going to go anyway. Going to need a D-D. Might as well be me.

FUTZ

So, you're the cool mom.

RIKI

I'm the mom who had a kid nine months after a frat party.

They sit in silence for a beat.

FUTZ

It really is a beautiful night.

RIKI

Aside from that guy on the lawn.

He's still there, snoring.

Another beat. Futz glances speculatively at the house.

FUTZ

You know, Farmer seems to think this party's worth checking out. He says it'll be "Kafkaesque."

Riki realizes what he's getting. Shrugs and grins.

INT. T-K-E HOUSE. MIDDLE OF THE PARTY - MINUTES LATER

The frat house is filled with DRUNK CO-EDS and ATHLETES in letterman jackets. A BAND called 'Almost Texas' is on stage.

Futz pumps the keg. Hands Riki a red Solo cup of beer.

FUTZ

Bogart said it best, I think. The whole world is three drinks behind.

Futz is drinking a Bartles and Jaymes. Of course.

RIKI

You're not exactly Bogey with the Scotch whisky, Futz.

FUTZ

Well, I don't want to brag, but...

He takes a big swig of his tropical-berry libation.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

... I'm basically keeping the wine cooler industry afloat.

A visibly drunk Blake Pickering stumbles up to the keg.

RIKI

Speaking of drinking too much.

BLAKE PICKERING

Futz!

Pickering extends his hand for a handshake, then pulls his hand back and slicks it through his golden hair.

BLAKE PICKERING (CONT'D)

Psych!

Pickering falls into Futz, clinging to him for support.

BLAKE PICKERING (CONT'D)

I'm just futzin with you, fuck.
Ha. Futz.

FUTZ

Can I get you something, Blake?
Water? Aspirin? A savage beating?

BLAKE PICKERING

As if. Hey, did you, did you know
my dad is boinking this guy's mom?

Riki is confused.

FUTZ

Your dad is not boinking my mom.
Your dad is boinking my wife. Ex-
wife. And I'm completely
comfortable with that.

He's completely uncomfortable with that.

BLAKE PICKERING

We're gonna be brothers, broham.

Blake gives Futz another drunken hug, then turns his
attention to Riki Rojas.

BLAKE PICKERING (CONT'D)

Shit. You're that hot chick's mom.

RIKI

I'll tell her you said "hi."

BLAKE PICKERING

(turning back to Futz)

I'm gonna smell you later, boat
trash. Stay outta the deep end.

Blake slaps Futz on the shoulder and stumbles away.

The Band transitions into something funky and robotic. The
Co-Eds show off a variety of dance moves, including 'The
Prep', 'The Wop', 'The Biz', and 'The Kid 'n Play'.

Futz and Riki Rojas walk past Mary Kate Ashley - in CLOSE
conversation with Thomlinson, the handsome but stupid Teke.

THOMLINSON

The ladies say I'm really good with
my fingers.

Riki Rojas raises a questioning eyebrow at her daughter.

THOMLINSON (CONT'D)

Because my passion is needlepoint.
I'm in the sewing club.

Mary Kate Ashley watches her mom walking away with Futz and
reciprocates the arched brow.

INT. T-K-E HOUSE. BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Futz and Riki Rojas sit on an unmade bed in a sloppy room
decorated with posters of Ferraris and Tawny Kitaen.

RIKI
This brings back memories.

FUTZ
Of a Whitesnake concert?

RIKI
Of 22 years of raising a daughter
by myself.

An awkward silence.

FUTZ
I saw Whitesnake once at a Waffle
House in Van Nuys.

Riki Rojas sips nervously from her red Solo cup.

FUTZ (CONT'D)
Your kid is pretty special. Ever
since I met her, I feel like she's
been looking out for me.

RIKI
She's like that; she's a good kid.

Riki Rojas takes a foil-wrapped pupusa from her purse.

RIKI (CONT'D)
Pupusa?

Futz finishes his drink. Wipes his mouth with his sleeve.

FUTZ
Yeah, I'll have some pupusa.

He unwraps it and takes a bite.

FUTZ (CONT'D)
SPAM?

RIKI
My newest creation.

Futz subtly spits it out and tucks it under the mattress.

RIKI (CONT'D)
All right, Futz. So what happened?

FUTZ
When?

RIKI
20 years ago. I've seen your trophies. I've heard the rumblings about your meltdown.

FUTZ
I didn't have a meltdown.

RIKI
What would you call it then?

FUTZ
My ... my momentary contretemps.

RIKI
A meltdown, then. Tell me about it.

Futz clearly doesn't like talking about this.

FUTZ
Well, the thing is, I used to be the best ... the best of the best.

INT. TRI-COUNTY SWIM MEET FINALS - DAY

SUPER: 1966

A younger Futz, wearing a red Speedo, is on the blocks.

CROWD (V.O.)
Futz. Futz. Futz. Futz.

The starting pistol FIRES. Swoosh. Into the water. Futz's unorthodox butterfly technique is a churn of elbows and hips.

FUTZ (V.O.)
Olympic dreams, even. It was supposed to be a '68 showdown in Mexico City -- Brian Futz against that brash son of a bitch, Mark Spitz.

INT. T-K-E HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

RIKI
Wait. Why do you hate Mark Spitz so much?

FUTZ

I don't want to talk about it. The point is, it was supposed to be Futz versus Spitz. For all the gold. And a Speedo sponsorship.

INT. TRI-COUNTY SWIM MEET FINALS - DAY

Futz is already well out in front, cheered on by Carruthers.

FUTZ (V.O.)

But here's the thing. My gift is my curse.

At the wall, Futz makes a clean turn. Then, he's off like a butterfly rocket.

CARRUTHERS

Now, Futz! Flex it, Futz!

FUTZ (V.O.)

See, my hip flexors generate twice the power of a normal man.

CROWD (V.O.)

Futz. Futz. Futz. Futz.

RIKI (V.O.)

What's so bad about that?

FUTZ (V.O.)

It means I have the loins of the Incredible Hulk. Up against most of the college kids, I barely had to churn my Futz-flexors. But on that day...

The crowd collectively GASPS.

FUTZ (V.O.)

On a day when I needed to make a statement to the world of competitive swimming.

The crowd POINTS.

FUTZ (V.O.)

On a day when that smug bastard, Mark Spitz was in the stands.

Futz stops in mid-stroke.

FUTZ (V.O.)
 On the day of the Tri-County Swim
 Meet Finals.

The crowd LAUGHS hysterically.

FUTZ (V.O.)
 Snap, crackle, and pop. My Speedo
 couldn't take it. Shredded.

Mark Spitz LAUGHS hysterically.

FUTZ (V.O.)
 There I was. Totally naked. In
 the cold water, in front of the
 entire school. My friends and
 family and future Olympic coaches.

Futz, in the water, struggles to cover up.

All other SWIMMERS finish the race.

FUTZ (V.O.)
 I was paralyzed. Couldn't breathe.

Futz's tattered red Speedo floats alone. Blood in the water.

INT. T-K-E HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Riki Rojas is on the edge of her seat.

FUTZ
 I never swam competitively again.

RIKI
 Wow. That must've been humiliating.

FUTZ
 I tried to make a comeback.
 Training in secret for most of the
 70's. Experimenting with different
 body lubricants. A variety of
 briefs and trunks. But when my hip
 flexors start churning, the speed
 and intensity are too much for any
 normal fabric to withstand. The
 technology just is not there.

He's clearly crestfallen. Riki puts a hand on his shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. A GENTLEMEN'S DEN - PRESENT DAY

Half in the bag, Terence Meriwether is refilling his glass.

MERIWETHER

Prior to filming, producers did reach out to a number of specialists in order to substantiate the logic of the Futz/flexor dilemma, only to be met with universal scorn. Experts in physics, anatomy, and thermodynamics all denounced the idea as nonsense. Poppycock. Junk science.

He tries to fill his glass from the decanter, only to realize that it's empty. He flushes with rage.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

God damn it! Somebody fill this fucker! Sandra?! Sandra!

He furiously shakes the empty decanter.

INT. T-K-E HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Riki Rojas still has her hand on Futz's shoulder. But the intimate moment is ruined by the sound of distant SHOUTING.

INT. T-K-E HOUSE. MIDDLE OF THE PARTY - SECONDS LATER

Futz bursts out of the bedroom and pauses at the top of the stairs, looking down from the second floor.

On the floor below, Blake and Thomlinson are nose to nose, ready to fight. A SYCOPHANT TEKE stands just behind Blake.

Mary Kate is trying to break them up.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Come on you two. Enough.

BLAKE PICKERING

Why are you even talking to this guy, Mary Kate? Don't you know he has the IQ of a retarded pony?

Thomlinson SHOVES Blake.

THOMLINSON

What's your damage, dweeb?

BLAKE PICKERING

Walk away, Thomlinson. I told you
to stay away from her.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

I'm not your property, Blake.

Blake puts his hands a little too firmly on her shoulders.

BLAKE PICKERING

I just want to talk, kitten.

THOMLINSON

Get your hands off her.

Thomlinson tries to dislodge Blake's grip. Blake dodges,
grabs Thomlinson's arm, twists him into an awkward position.

Futz bounds down the stairs and vaults a couch to reach them.

FUTZ

Okay, guys, chill out.

BLAKE PICKERING

Beat it, boat trash; this doesn't
concern you.

FUTZ

You know, I'm getting pretty sick
of you calling me "boat trash."

THOMLINSON

(teeth clenched in pain)
Stop it, Blake. That's my sewing
hand.

BLAKE PICKERING

What are you gonna do, Futz?

FUTZ

There's a pretty solid chance I'm
going to punch you in the face.

BLAKE PICKERING

I'd like to see you try...

Blake twists Thomlinson's arm a little harder.

SYCOPHANT TEKE

Dude, you're breaking his arm!
He's one of us!

Thomlinson's arm POPS. He YELPS. Blake loosens his grip.

Thomlinson takes a wild swing at Blake and accidentally punches Futz in the ear. But not very hard.

FUTZ
Why'd you do that?

THOMLINSON
I was trying to hit him.

FUTZ
Like this?

Futz punches Blake in the face. Blake drops like a sack of potatoes, blood trickling from his nose.

BLAKE PICKERING
Oh, you are so dead, Futz.

Blake struggles to his feet, aided by the Sycophant Teke.

SYCOPHANT TEKE
We gotta get outta here, Blake.
Coach is gonna kill us.

Blake and the Sycophant Teke turn to leave.

BLAKE PICKERING
This isn't over, Futz!

They leave. Everyone at the party stands in silence.

Futz glanced around a little wildly, filled with adrenaline.

FUTZ
Hey, come on. This is still a
party, right?

Futz hops up on the stage, next to the band. Grabs the mic.

FUTZ (CONT'D)
Gentlemen ... give me something
with a beat.

Inexplicably, the band breaks into a song from Futz's heyday in the 60's. Think 'Born To Be Wild' or 'Wild Thing.'

Futz sings. And, against all logic, everyone at the party enjoys this performance and DANCES.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

Swimmers stretch and snap Speedos and put goggles into place. We hear the booming voice of a TV sports announcer.

KELSOW (V.O.)

Overlooking the lapis lazuli blue waters of the Chadwick P. Pickering Aquatic Center on the campus of SO-CAL-STATE. It is the first meet of the season for the swimming Golden Retrievers.

INT. ANNOUNCE BOOTH - SAME

Two ANNOUNCERS are in the announcing booth, backed by glass windows that look down on the fans, 30 feet below. TODD KELSOW in the lead. TED COLLINS providing color commentary.

Collins holds a spoonful of relish, dressing a hot dog.

KELSOW

I'm Todd Kelsow, as always, alongside Ted Collins. So many tremendous competitors here today, including Blake Pickering and Brad "Magic Fingers" Thomlinson for these Golden Retrievers.

COLLINS

Two of the finest swimmers in the Tri-County. No doubt about that.

KELSOW

And we are christening our new aquatic center with a little tailgate party, here in the booth.

COLLINS

(holding up his hot dog)
Because nobody does a wiener like SoCal State, Todd.

KELSOW

Darn right, Ted. With our game faces on, we are just a few minutes away from the starter's pistol.

INT. POOLSIDE - SAME

In obvious pain, Thomlinson wears his windbreaker with his Speedo, nursing his wounded wrist as Carruthers approaches.

CARRUTHERS

Thomlinson, get that jacket off and get in your lane.

THOMLINSON

I don't know if I can do it, coach.
My wrist's in really bad shape.

CARRUTHERS

What'd you do to yourself,
Thomlinson?

Blake Pickering gives Thomlinson a menacing look.

THOMLINSON

I, I don't know, Coach. I've got
no range of motion. I think it's
radial palsy.

CARRUTHERS

What in blue hell is radial palsy?

THOMLINSON

I'm worried, coach. Do I need two
arms to swim?

CARRUTHERS

Christ on a cracker, Thomlinson.
You must be dumber than a Golden
Retriever.

THOMLINSON

I have a cat named Mittens.

CARRUTHERS

I'm sure you do, son. But we need
you out there in a big way today.
Shake it off and get on the block.

Carruthers slaps Thomlinson on the ass and walks away.

INT. IN THE STANDS - SAME

Chadwick P. Pickering and Blair sit in the stands, eating
caviar off fine China. A BUTLER stands beside them.

Blair is disgusted by the WRETCHED FANS surrounding them.
Chadwick shouts through cupped hands at his son.

CHADWICK

Make the Pickerings proud today,
boy!

FROM POOLSIDE - Blake Pickering gives his father a 'thumbs
up' and a big smile.

IN THE STANDS - A FAT GUY holding three hot dogs squeezes in directly behind Blair, bumping her head with his belly.

FAT GUY
Oh, excuse me, Miss.

Blair gives him a snarly look of disgust.

INT. ACROSS THE ARENA - SAME

Futz, Riki Rojas, and Mary Kate Ashley sit poolside, behind a table filled with foil-wrapped pupusas. The hand-drawn sign: RIKI'S PECULIAR PUPUSAS. \$1.

FUTZ
When you invited me to the swim meet, I didn't realize it was as a food vendor.

RIKI
This is my business. It's my dream.

Futz unwraps a pupusa.

FARMER
They really are the best pupusas in the Tri-County, Futz.

FUTZ
No one asked you, Little Birdie.

RIKI
I put my heart and soul into these pupusas.

Futz takes a bite. And chokes.

FUTZ
Your heart and soul and what else? New England clam chowder?

RIKI
Ok, that one wasn't my best creation.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
But mom is right; there really is a market for her 'Peculiar Pupusa.'

Ascot Pickering walks over, wiping his mouth with a napkin.

ASCOT
 Young lady, that was the best
 pupusa I've ever had in my life.

RIKI
 Thank you, Mr. Pickering. Can I
 get you another?

ASCOT
 Please, call me Ascot. Do you have
 any with the tuna fish?

A HOT DOG VENDOR approaches, handing Futz a dog.

HOT DOG VENDOR
 You Futz?

FUTZ
 I didn't order this.

HOT DOG VENDOR
 It's on the house.

FUTZ
 What?

HOT DOG VENDOR
 Some guy gave me 10 bucks to bring
 it to you.

Futz reluctantly takes the hot dog as the vendor takes a
 second glance at Futz.

HOT DOG VENDOR (CONT'D)
 Hey, you're not THE Brian Futz?

FUTZ
 That's what they call me.

HOT DOG VENDOR
 Well, be careful with that wiener,
 Futz. Last time I saw you near a
 pool, you TOTALLY CHOKED.

The vendor laughs and strolls off, leaving Futz stone-faced.

Not far away, unnoticed by Futz and the others, Dean Moobury
 stands in the shadows, watching Futz with an evil smile.

INT. ANNOUNCE BOOTH - SAME

With Kelsow at his side, Collins is finishing his hot dog.

KELSOW

Getting ready now for heat-one of the 100 meter freestyle, and the start of what is expected to be the best season in two decades for these Golden Retrievers.

Collins winces, holding his stomach in pain.

KELSOW (CONT'D)

You doing all right, buddy?

Collins -- belly squealing -- gives the A-OK.

KELSOW (CONT'D)

We are just about ready to send you down to poolside.

Collins puffs his cheeks as he silently burps.

INT. IN THE STANDS - SAME

So many CHEERING FANS. So many HOT DOGS.

INT. STARTING BLOCKS - SECONDS LATER

The SWIMMERS, including Blake Pickering, Thomlinson, and OTHERS are in the blocks. The starter pistol FIRES.

KELSOW (V.O.)

And we are underway, with all eyes on Pickering and Thomlinson.

IN THE POOL -- Pickering looks great in the water.

COLLINS (V.O.)

Pickering looking great, out to an early lead. But something's wrong.

KELSOW (V.O.)

What, oh what, is going on with "Magic Fingers" Thomlinson?

Thomlinson swims IN A CIRCLE, his bad arm hanging limp.

KELSOW (CONT'D)

He's swimming in perfect circles, Ted.

COLLINS (V.O.)

That's a sure sign of radial palsy, Todd.

Thomlinson continues to swim in circles. Coach Carruthers looks on in disgust. Slaps his own forehead.

Pickering makes the turn at the wall.

INT. POOLSIDE PUPUSA STAND - SAME

Riki cheers the action. Mary Kate Ashley looks concerned about Thomlinson. Futz is doubled over as Farmer films him.

FARMER
You okay, my man?

FUTZ
That's the worst dog I've ever had.

FARMER
You're not gonna be sick are you?

FUTZ
I'm fine.

Futz is a sweaty mess.

FUTZ (CONT'D)
No, I'm gonna be sick.

Farmer puts down his camera.

FARMER
Man, I hope it doesn't smell. I'm one of those people who throws up when he smells throw up.

Futz covers his mouth. Throws up in his hand.

FARMER (CONT'D)
Oh God, it smells.

Farmer gags. Dry heaves. Holds it in.

Futz pukes in a trash can.

INT. IN THE POOL - SAME

Blake Pickering glides into the final wall. Finishes first.

KELSOW (V.O.)
And a huge victory for young Blake Pickering, finishing first in the 100 meter at a very respectable 56-point-2 seconds.

Pickering pumps a fist and splashes the water.

INT. IN THE STANDS - SAME

Some FANS are cheering. HOT DOG EATERS have turned green.

One HIGH ENERGY FAN rips off her foam spirit finger and vomits into it.

Then ANOTHER FAN vomits. And ANOTHER.

And the Fat Guy pukes directly into the back of Blair's head.

A CHAIN REACTION of projectile pink and green hot dog vomit in the stands. It spreads like THE WAVE.

INT. POOLSIDE PUPUSA STAND - SAME

Futz and Farmer are in bad shape. Teary-eyed. Sweaty.

FARMER

Man, Futz, the smell. My hyper-sensitive gag reflex. I can't.

RIKI

Here, wrap this around your head.

Riki Rojas takes a towel out of her bag. Helps Farmer wrap it around his face like a protective mask.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Breathe. Breathe.

Farmer huffs and puffs, then vomits into the towel. It explodes out the sides.

FUTZ

Oh god. It's so awful.

It's so awful.

INT. ANNOUNCE BOOTH - SAME

Collins holds his heat in his hands, MOANING.

KELSOW

Well, there's something you don't see everyday. 5,000 people vomiting in unison. A horrific tapestry of pink and yellow and green, in the new Chadwick P.

(MORE)

KELSOW (CONT'D)
Pickering Aquatic Center. And it
is just awful, Ted.

Looks around for Collins.

KELSOW (CONT'D)
Ted?

Collins opens the booth's window and vomits onto the crowd.

Kelsow chuckles and shakes his head.

KELSOW (CONT'D)
Well, all I know is, some poor soul
is going to have to clean up this
horrible, horrible mess.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - NIGHT

Hours later, the arena is dimly lit and nearly recovered from
the vomit fest. Futz is IN THE POOL, wearing his gear.

Finishing his most disgusting job to date, Futz hoists
himself to the side of the pool. Lifts off his mask.

CARRUTHERS (O.S.)
Thought I might find you here.

FUTZ
Covered in shame and vomit? Says a
lot about my character.

Carruthers helps Futz to his feet.

CARRUTHERS
Did you see what happened out there
today, Futz?

FUTZ
Besides the puke?

CARRUTHERS
Besides the puke.

FUTZ
I saw Blake Pickering deliver.

CARRUTHERS
The kid was great. But it's a team
sport, Futz. Pickering's swimming
for himself.

FUTZ

And poor Thomlinson. Swimming in circles in a square pool.

CARRUTHERS

Now he's out for six months.

Futz takes a Bartles and Jaymes out of his bag.

CARRUTHERS (CONT'D)

My Golden Retrievers are drowning, Futz. We need a backup plan. In fact, we need you.

FUTZ

Me? To do what?

CARRUTHERS

To get back in the pool, Futz. For your school. For your fans. Hell, do it for me.

Futz takes a long, slow drink.

CUT TO:

INT. A GENTLEMAN'S DEN - PRESENT DAY

This time, Meriwether's wingback chair is unoccupied.

MERIWETHER (O.S.)

Fire.

We pan to find Meriwether sitting by the fireplace, gazing into the flames. Flushed and sweaty, he has traded in his turtleneck for a dressing gown - a la Noël Coward - and a white silk shirt with black buttons.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

According to ancient lore, fire was the gift of the god Prometheus, who sought to give mankind the light of reason and understanding. But so much remains shrouded in mystery.

Meriwether holds out his empty glass.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

Sandra.

A hand comes into frame to fill the glass with brandy.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

The murders of Thorne and Donnelly, for instance. On the surface, it seems so clear. A pair of beautiful stallions cut down in the prime of life. But look closer, and the picture becomes hazy.

Another photo of the bullet-riddled Ferraris in front of Le Petit Lapin. Lots of blood and broken glass, but no bodies.

MERIWETHER (V.O.)

Witnesses on that fateful night reported glimpsing two mangled masses of flesh and 'Members Only' jackets, but no one could make a positive identification.

A candid shot from Thorne and Donnelly's funeral. Molly Ringwald weeps over two closed caskets.

MERIWETHER (V.O.)

The screenwriters were buried at 'Hollywood Forever' in a private ceremony with no publicity. No photos of the corpses were ever released.

Meriwether's face is bathed in flickering light.

MERIWETHER

Cast your minds back to the heady days of 1986. Thorne and Donnelly were magicians of the silver screen, yes, but times were changing. The dawn of the 1990s would bring a new culture to Hollywood. Names like Tarantino. Spike Lee. Innovative auteurs who would use their edgy aesthetic to usher in a new era. Sandra.

He holds out his glass. Sandra tops him up.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

Thorne and Donnelly might've been morons, but they were no fools. In the character of Scotty Farmer, they brilliantly anticipated the hip new ethos of the cinematic artistes of the 90s.

A photo of Thorne and Donnelly standing back to back in matching swim trunks.

MERIWETHER (V.O.)

It was a world that would have no place for a pair of culturally insensitive screen scribes with a host of enemies and a mountain of cocaine debt.

A wider angle on the photo shows that Thorne and Donnelly are standing on the deck of an enormous luxury yacht.

MERIWETHER (V.O.)

It was during the filming of *Bikinis on Top* that David Baxter Donnelly purchased his beloved yacht, the S.S. Karma Chameleon.

Donnelly piloting the yacht, wearing only a captain's hat.

MERIWETHER

Stocked with a metric ton of caviar and capable of reaching cruising speeds of eighty knots, Donnelly boasted that he and Thorne could survive for years at a time on the Karma Chameleon, ranging the open seas like modern-day Magellans.

Meriwether leans uncomfortably close to the camera.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

And where, you ask, was the Karma Chameleon on that fateful night of July 4th, 1986? Two hundred miles off the California coast, speeding south toward the Baja peninsula.

Meriwether leans back, sloshing brandy on the rug.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

Was it a coincidence? Or was it the greatest disappearing act in the history of stage and screen?

Meriwether drains his glass.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

Keep that question in mind, my friends, as you continue your journey through the murky waters of *In Too Deep: The Brian Futz Story*.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN - UNDERWATER - DAY

A jungle of sea life. SHARKS - White Tips, Tigers, and Makos. Finally, the steely, dead eyes of a huge GREAT WHITE.

DOOTZ (V.O.)

Nature's perfect killing machine.
Stealthy hunters and virtually
impossible to out-swim, whether
you're fish or man.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The image of the Great White pauses on a TELEVISION SCREEN. That sort of jerky, staticky pause you get from a VCR. Dootz steps away from the A/V cart to turn on the lights.

DOOTZ

But here's the thing. A Great
White is what's called an obligate
ram ventilator.

Futz and Farmer sit together, listening closely.

DOOTZ (CONT'D)

It always has to be swimming. Or
it sinks. If it sinks, it dies.

FARMER

(whispering to Futz)
That's pure 'Annie Hall,' man. A
shark is like a relationship.
Woody Allen's a huge Bergman fan.

Futz ignores him. He's fascinated by Dootz's lecture.

DOOTZ

But Mother Nature did bless Great
Whites with a pretty unique gift.
Their skin. Or, the scales on that
skin, to be precise.

FUTZ

How so?

DOOTZ

They're called dermal denticles.
Tiny V-shaped scales. They're more
like teeth that cut through the
water. The denticles decrease
turbulence and drag. Allowing our
shark friends to swim faster.

Futz furiously scribbles notes.

EXT. SOCAL STATE CAMPUS - LATER

Futz walks with Farmer.

FARMER

Man, why are you so hung up on these denticles?

FUTZ

Don't you see, Farmer? If there's one thing a swimmer needs, it's less drag.

FARMER

Yeah? This conversation's a drag.

FUTZ

Just like a shark, you wanna cut through the water.

Futz makes a slicing motion and accidentally chops a SUITED MAN in the back. It's Moobury, standing with Riki Rojas.

MOOBURY

I say.

FUTZ

Oh, hey Moob. Sorry about that.

MOOBURY

That's "Dean Moobury" to you, Futz. And I was just leaving.

Moobury turns to walk away. Turns back.

MOOBURY (CONT'D)

Riki, I'll call you about dinner.

Making a phone with his thumb and pinky as he walks away.

FUTZ

You're not seriously considering dining with that gas-bag?

RIKI

That "gas-bag" is the preeminent authority in the pastoral poetry of Basque ranching culture.

FUTZ

He has a micro-penis.

RIKI
I'll pretend I didn't hear that.

FUTZ
So do you want to come to the Glass
Key with us to sample some of your
daughter's Fuzzy Nipples?

Farmer's jaw drops.

RIKI
I'll pretend I didn't hear that,
too. And, you're on.

She gives him double fake guns.

INT. THE GLASS KEY - TWO HOURS LATER

Two hours later, Futz and Riki are both just the right amount
of drunk. A couple of empty glasses before them.

The brief drum solo from Phil Collins' 'In the Air Tonight'
pounds from the bar's speakers.

FUTZ
Fun fact - Phil Collins wrote this
song after watching someone drown.

RIKI
What? Why didn't he help him?

FUTZ
Phil Collins can't swim.

RIKI
I don't really get that from the
lyrics.

FUTZ
No, but there was another guy there
who could swim. And he didn't help
the guy either, intentionally
letting him drown, I guess. So,
Phil Collins wrote the song,
invited that guy to the concert,
then had him arrested.

Mary Kate Ashley drops off another round of 'Futzy Nipples'.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
You know that's not true, right?

FUTZ

It is absolutely true. I know someone who was at the concert.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

I know someone who was at the concert, too. Nobody drowned. Phil Collins saw someone get shot in an alley and invited the killer to the concert. Then had him arrested in the middle of the song.

Mary Kate Ashley clears the empties and walks away.

RIKI

So, Phil Collins never intervenes in a dangerous situation.

FUTZ

Speaking of swimming, Carruthers wants me back on the team.

RIKI

How is this just now coming up?

FUTZ

I'm not going to do it, of course. It's absurd. I can't compete with 19 and 20 year olds.

RIKI

Yeah, you're probably right.

FUTZ

(indignant)

What do you mean: I'm probably right?! I'm a rare talent.

RIKI

You are a rare talent ... with freakish hip flexors. I'm not skeptical of your ability, Futz; I'm worried you'll end up naked and mentally destroyed, all over again.

FUTZ

What if this is my last shot at redemption?

RIKI

Okay, then redeem yourself. Go for it. I'll just have to get you back in shape.

FUTZ
You're going to train me?

RIKI
I'm going to train you.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
(from behind the bar)
Radical. I'm in too, Futz.

FARMER
(from behind his camera)
It's like when Antonius Block
challenges Death to a chess match
for his life. And I'm your Jöns.

FUTZ
What are you talking about, Farmer?

FARMER
Man, it means you're gonna need all
the help you can get.

CUT TO:

INT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS. POOL, GYM, KITCHEN, ETC. - MONTAGE
Training montage - SET TO MUSIC - think Van Halen's 'Jump'.
Futz shaves his chest. Shaves his legs.
Futz dives into the pool.
Futz does jumping jacks, sit-ups, etc. Riki Rojas blows a
coach's whistle. Mary Kate Ashley and Farmer cheer him on.
Riki Rojas in her kitchen, crafting peculiar pupusas.
Futz swims laps, his Speedo shredding with each stroke.
Futz's Speedo snaps. Naked in the pool. Riki Rojas, Mary
Kate Ashley, and Farmer all look away.
A pile of shredded Speedos. Another one lands on the pile.
Futz in the pool, hips churning. Another Speedo snaps. It
slingshots out of the pool and hits Farmer in the face.
Blake Pickering looks on in disgust.
Futz takes a bite of Riki Rojas' latest pupusa.
Another shredded Speedo on the pile.

Futz on the scales, weighing himself. Looks disappointed. Farmer hands him a box of Dexatrim.

Futz at 'The Glass Key' turning down a 'Futzy Nipple' from Mary Kate Ashley. She gives him milk instead.

Futz eats a handful of Dexatrim, grimacing.

Futz, poolside, already wearing a Speedo, puts on another. And then a third layer.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - NIGHT

The overhead lights of the aquatic center are shutting down for the night. Futz and Riki Rojas sit on the pool's edge.

FUTZ

Listen, Riki, I want to thank you for all you've done the past few weeks. It means a lot.

RIKI

It was kind of fun, actually.

FUTZ

And I want to repay you.

RIKI

Yeah? With cash?

FUTZ

Better.

He takes an envelope from his pocket.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

Two tickets to the county fair in Pomona.

EXT. LA COUNTY FAIR. POMONA - NIGHT

All the terrifying rides and characters and carnies of a county fair. The TILT-A-WHIRL, the DROP TOWER, the ZIPPER.

An AIR RIFLE shoots BBs at a line of mechanical ducks. A duck falls over.

A MAN in a CAPTAIN'S HAT - a man who looks oddly similar to an aging David Baxter Donnelly - hands Futz a PINK ELEPHANT.

CAPTAIN'S HAT

Here you go, Mr. Futz.

Futz takes the elephant. Does a double take.

FUTZ
How'd you know my name?

RIKI
Here's what I love about the
fair...

Futz turns his attention to Riki Rojas, who's holding a heaping mound of powder-blue cotton candy.

RIKI (CONT'D)
... You eat things here that you
wouldn't dare eat anywhere else.

Riki Rojas takes a generous bite of cotton candy.

FUTZ
Actually, ever since I was a kid, I
came here for the pickles. After
my folks split up, the LA County
Fair was the only time I saw my
dad. Every year, we'd share a
giant Pickering dill.

Riki puts her hand over her heart.

RIKI
Brian, I had no idea.

FUTZ
You know what's ironic? These
Pickering pickles meant so much to
me my whole life. And now it's my
ex-wife who's getting the big
pickle from Chadwick P.

RIKI
Of the Pomona Pickle Empire?

ASCOT PICKERING (O.S.)
Hey! Aren't you the lady whose
pupusa tastes like tuna fish?

Everyone in the vicinity turns in shock, looking at Riki.

Across the midway, Ascot Pickering - nattily dressed in shirtsleeves, apron, and straw boater hat - waves them over to a booth. Over his head hangs a "Pickering Pickles" sign.

ASCOT PICKERING (CONT'D)
I knew it! You're that young
firecracker I met at the pool.

RIKI
Mr. Pickering?

ASCOT PICKERING
Call me Ascot. And you must be Mr. Fatz.

FUTZ
Futz.

ASCOT PICKERING
My grandson despises you. That's okay - I'm not very fond of him. No work ethic. No calluses. Do you have calluses, Mr. Fatz?

Futz shows him his callused hands.

ASCOT PICKERING (CONT'D)
I like you, Fatz.

FUTZ
Futz.

ASCOT PICKERING
And what a lovely couple you two make. Summer nights at the fair remind me of my sweet, sweet Sally Bream, God rest her soul.

A moment of reflection.

ASCOT PICKERING (CONT'D)
Say, young lady, you wouldn't have any of those delicious pupusas in that purse of yours, would you?

RIKI
As a matter of fact I do, Ascot.

ASCOT PICKERING
I'll trade your pupusa for my Giant Pickering Dill.

He hands her a pickle. She bites into it. Her eyes widen, as if the taste of the pickle has given her a revelation.

As she takes a second bite, Ascot taps Futz on the chest.

ASCOT PICKERING (CONT'D)
So, Mr. Fatz. I hear you'll be swimming tomorrow. I hope you can keep them under control.

FUTZ
Keep what under control?

ASCOT PICKERING
The nerves. A man of your age,
getting back in the pool. I
imagine you'll be a nervous wreck.

Futz frowns. He hadn't thought of that.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER. POOLSIDE - DAY

Futz is manic. Pacing, mumbling, checking his Speedo.

KELSOW (V.O.)
We are LIVE at the Chadwick P.
Pickering Aquatic Center on what is
sure to be a huge day for the
swimming Golden Retrievers of SoCal
State. And all eyes on the once-
legendary Brian Futz.

INT. ANNOUNCE BOOTH - SAME

Todd Kelsow and Ted Collins in the booth.

COLLINS
Of course, we all know what
happened last time this Futz swam
competitively, Todd.

KELSOW
We sure do, Ted. We sure do.

They both shake their heads in sport-announcer sadness.

INT. POOLSIDE - SAME

Futz is pale and sweaty. Riki Rojas and Mary Kate Ashley
offer support. Farmer points the camera at him.

FUTZ
I don't think I can do this. I
don't know if I can handle that
kind of embarrassment. Not again.

Riki Rojas slaps him across the face. Hard.

RIKI
Snap out of it, Futz! You've got
three layers on! Now, eat this
pupusa.

She jams a pupusa in his mouth. He chews, eyes widening.

FUTZ
This is the best and most peculiar
pupusa I've ever had.

RIKI
It's my new flavor. Pickle.

FUTZ
It's ... delicious.

She snatches it away.

RIKI
Don't eat too much; you'll cramp.

FUTZ
You really are a firecracker.

Farmer grabs the half-eaten pupusa. Takes a bite.

FARMER
This is a mästerverk.

CARRUTHERS (O.S.)
Futz! Get in position!

Futz yanks a swim cap over his head and runs off.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - MINUTES LATER

The CROWD on its feet. The SWIMMERS on their platforms.

The starter pistol FIRES. Futz is off like a flash.

The crowd ROARS. Futz is flying. Distancing himself from
the competition by one length. Two. Three.

KELSOW (V.O.)
It's as if time has stood still all
these years for THE Brian Futz.

COLLINS (V.O.)
Like poetry in motion, Todd. At an
astonishing pace, possibly under 50
seconds.

Futz's dolphin kick at the wall is gorgeous. His first few strokes out of the turn are perfection.

And then...

Futz loses a shredded Speedo. Floating in his wake.

KELSOW (V.O.)

A close call for Futz. But the wily veteran, well aware of his all-too-powerful hip flexors, has apparently come prepared.

His lead on the competition is huge. Blake Pickering in a very, very distant second place.

But, halfway home, another layer of shredded Speedo peels away. A second buzz-sawed bikini brief in the pool.

15 meters from the finish, Futz stops, mid-stroke. And begins a weird doggy-paddle-style walk to the finish.

KELSOW (V.O.)

What, oh what, is wrong with Brian Futz?

COLLINS (V.O.)

He's lost his momentum, Todd. Or maybe his mind.

Pickering passes Futz. Then two other SWIMMERS.

KELSOW (V.O.)

And it is Blake Pickering taking this one by just a hair.

Two more SWIMMERS touch the wall.

Then Futz.

COLLINS (V.O.)

Wow. And Brian Futz, after jumping out to a seemingly insurmountable lead, finishing in fourth place. Doggy paddling in the home stretch on this, his first time back in the pool for these swimming Golden Retrievers of SoCal State.

Futz looks at the scoreboard. Lowers his head in shame.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MINUTES LATER

POV of Scotty Farmer's VHS camcorder. Black and white. A defeated Futz, wearing a towel over his head and a frayed Speedo around his loins.

CUT TO:

Coach Carruthers enters, followed by Blake Pickering.

CARRUTHERS

What the hell happened, Futz?

BLAKE PICKERING

Yeah, what happened out, Futz?

CARRUTHERS

Shut it, Pickering.

FUTZ

You said it yourself, Coach; it's a team sport. And thanks to yours truly, this team took second today.

CARRUTHERS

The Brian Futz I know never settled for second.

BLAKE PICKERING

I haven't seen a doggy paddle like that since kindergarten.

CARRUTHERS

I said "shut it," Pickering.

Futz stands up. Walks toward Blake Pickering.

FUTZ

Listen, hairdo. You see this Speedo? This Speedo was one Futz flex away from snapping. So, I hit the brakes. And you know why? Because I can trace every bad thing that's happened over the past 20 years to the moment that --

The final threads snap on Futz's current Speedo.

NAKED, aside from the towel around his shoulders. Everybody looks away in embarrassment.

INT. RIKI ROJAS' LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - NIGHT

A large knife slices a full pickle.

It is, of course, Riki Rojas at the kitchen counter.

Riki Rojas' home includes an open kitchen that looks out over the living room. Cramped and cozy.

On the living-room side of the counter, Mary Kate Ashley mixes drinks like potions. Off to one side is a pickle jar.

Futz sits at a table crunching numbers and sketching designs.

Farmer fiddles with the VCR. The sound of grinding tape.

They're all intent on their work, talking at each other and not to each other. Never making eye contact.

RIKI

It'd be a big help to me, Scotty.

SCOTTY

It'd be a big help if your Beta Max didn't eat my 'Seventh Seal'.

FUTZ

C'mon, Farmer. It's just a commercial.

SCOTTY

Man, I scorn your ready-made art.

RIKI

How else am I supposed to get anyone to taste my pupusa? A prime-time spot is just what we need.

FUTZ

Scotty, you're always talking about directing that stupid film of yours. This could be practice.

SCOTTY

It's not a stupid film. It's 'The Tomb of Illusions'.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

What, pray tell, is the 'Tomb of Illusions'?

SCOTTY

It's the story of an artist of the purest kind.

(MORE)

SCOTTY (CONT'D)

A poet who doesn't write poems. A
painter who doesn't paint. A
composer who doesn't compose.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

That's beautiful, Scotty. I think?

RIKI

How are you ever going to achieve
artistic independence if you refuse
to take part in the capitalist
economy?

SCOTTY

You mean, when am I going to stop
believing my life is my work?

Futz slams down a notebook.

FUTZ

Son of a bitch!

RIKI

No luck with your new Speedo
design, Futz?

FUTZ

It's these damned hip flexors! And
this damn weak fabric. The
technology is just not there!

Futz wads up a piece of paper and throws it away.

Mary Kate Ashley hands Futz a shot glass.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

What's this?

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Whiskey. Drink it.

He drinks it. She hands him another glass. He sniffs it.

FUTZ

Pickle juice?

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Drink it.

He drinks it. And is pleasantly surprised.

FUTZ

Not bad. What do you call it?

MARY KATE ASHLEY
The Pickle Back.

Riki puts the tray of pupusas in the oven.

RIKI
Okay, Scotty. What if we gave you full creative control? You write the script for the commercial. You shoot it exactly the way you want.

Farmer pounds the Beta Max. Heaves a sigh of exasperation.

FARMER
Fine! If it means that much to you people, I'll do it.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
Here, Farmer. Have a Pickle Back.

Farmer takes the shot glass of whiskey and downs it.

FARMER
But just so you know, full creative control means FULL. CREATIVE. CONTROL.

Takes the shot of pickle juice from Mary Kate and downs it. Raises his eyebrows, impressed.

FARMER (CONT'D)
Utsökt!

CUT TO:

INT. A GENTLEMAN'S DEN - EVENING

Terence Meriwether is HAMMERED. Now has the belt from his dressing gown tied around his head, like Rambo. He slowly unbuttons his silk shirt as he speaks.

MERIWETHER
Pickles? Pupusas? Pickerings? Is anyone even keeping track of this? Let's be honest. Can we be honest? Thorne and Donnelly were nuts. They were hacks. If Mark Spitz hadn't killed them, somebody else would've. They had it coming.

Wearing a headset and carrying a brandy bottle, Meriwether's producer, SANDRA, enters frame and WHISPERS in his ear.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

What? Why the hell not?

She whispers some more. Terence smiles icily at the camera.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, my apologies. Evidently I have once again strayed into the perilous waters of legal slander. Of course the truth is no one knows who killed Thorne and Donnelly. One theory --

Sandra pours brandy into Meriwether's mouth.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

Thank you, buttercup. One theory claims the screenwriting pair faked their deaths and fled east, where they capitalized on the deregulated cinematic market of Gorbachev's Russia. Another theory suggests the Hollywood stallions were slain by two Beverly Hills drug peddlers named Matt Crabbs and Hayworth Dinwittie. More, please.

Sandra obediently pours more brandy into his mouth.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

A third theory - Christ I love a good cognac - argues that Thorne and Donnelly, terrified by Mark Spitz's rage over the lies they'd told in *Shaved Legs and Dark Secrets*, went into hiding and assumed the fictitious identities of those same dope peddlers, Crabbs and Dinwittie. Their unexpected skill at the drug trade, however, attracted the attention of Bogota, which lured them south with promises of mountains of blow.

Meriwether has finished unbuttoning his shirt. He shrugs it off and tosses it to Sandra, who smells it greedily.

Meriwether stands before us in all his silver-chested glory.

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

But does it really matter in the end? Must we assign to Thorne and Donnelly a single fate?

(MORE)

MERIWETHER (CONT'D)

Or should they live on as symbols of a more innocent and imbecilic age? Sailing away into that warm and golden sunset, attended by flocks of eagles, aiming for the North Star, while the rest of us are left to tread water in the muddy lanes of everyday life - just like Brian Futz - in just a little too deep?

We zoom in on Meriwether's crazy blue eyes. He HICCUPS.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

The crystal blue water of the pool. SWIMMERS stretching.

KELSOW (V.O.)

We are live, once again, at the Pickering Aquatic Center for the qualifying round for next week's all-important Tri-County swim meet.

INT. ANNOUNCE BOOTH - SAME

Kelsow and Collins in their usual positions.

KELSOW

As always, I'm Todd Kelsow alongside Ted Collins, the best color man in competitive swimming.

COLLINS

I have to tell you, Todd - I couldn't be more excited about today's meet, which is a key stage on the journey to the Pan Am Games. All eyes are on Blake Pickering, SoCal State's breakout star. Blake continuing to outshine his older rival, Brian Futz, whose unorthodox doggy-paddle has repeatedly landed him in second-place.

KELSOW

You bring up an interesting point, Ted. Some fans have been asking whether Futz is simply past his prime, or if the peculiar doggy-paddle is a result of his well-known difficulties finding adequate swimwear.

A ROAR from the poolside CROWD

COLLINS

Let me stop you right there, Todd.
Something has captured this
capacity crowd's attention.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER. POOLSIDE - SAME

Brian Futz enters the arena dressed in a skin-tight, well-lubricated, metallic gold, full-body swimming suit.

KELSOW (V.O.)

And what, oh what, is Brian Futz
wearing?

COLLINS (V.O.)

It appears to be some sort of
prophylactic unitard designed by
Aurich Goldfinger, Todd.

KELSOW (V.O.)

I'm not sure what that means, Ted.
But that's why you're the best
color man working today.

Members of the CROWD point, gawk, laugh at poor Futz.

Riki Rojas gives Futz a thumbs up.

INT. ANNOUNCE BOOTH - SAME

KELSOW

The question now: can we even be
sure that suit is regulation?

COLLINS

Actually, Todd, according to
section 3.3.1 of the collegiate
rule book, full-body coverings are
perfectly permissible.

Kelsow gives Collins a solemn nod of professional respect.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER. POOLSIDE - SAME

Futz tries to concentrate. Blake Pickering confronts him.

BLAKE PICKERING

Nice unitard, Futz. Did'ya get
that at ballet class?

FUTZ
I borrowed it from your dad's girl.

BLAKE PICKERING
You mean your ex-wife?

Futz frowns, realizing that his comeback was awful, as Coach Carruthers approaches.

CARRUTHERS (O.S.)
That's enough grab-ass, you two
panty-waists. Get in position.

INT. STARTING BLOCKS - MINUTES LATER

Pistol FIRES. SWIMMERS launch themselves into the water.

KELSOW (V.O.)
And here we go. The 200 Meter
Butterfly. As usual, Brian Futz is
first off the blocks.

COLLINS (V.O.)
I'll tell you something, Todd - I
don't care if he's sheathed in a
skintight suit of gold, Futz's
butterfly is a thing of beauty.

In the stands, Riki Rojas is on her feet, cheering her man.

RIKI
Come on, Futz!

KELSOW (V.O.)
He just seems to glide through the
water, doesn't he? But Pickering
is gaining on him.

A few rows away from Riki, Dean Moobury scowls as he watches Futz. His tiny white fists are balled in silent rage.

COLLINS (V.O.)
Pickering is a Golden Retriever pup
nipping at the heels of the gray-
muzzled veteran.

Not far from Moobury, Chadwick P. Pickering and Blair cheer.

CHADWICK
Push it, Blake! Pickering pride!

KELSOW (V.O.)
 And now the turn - Futz still in a commanding lead. On pace to destroy the world record, currently held by German Michael Gross.

Futz makes a beautiful turn.

Mary Kate Ashley and FRIENDS pump fists, jumping up and down.

COLLINS (V.O.)
 The old dog doesn't need any new tricks!

Scotty Farmer cups his hands over his mouth and shouts:

FARMER
 Swim, Futz! Swim, you old bastard!

Slowly, however, Scotty Farmer lowers his hands. His smile fades. Something is wrong.

KELSOW (V.O.)
 Uh oh - what is this? Is Futz fading, Ted, or resorting again to that inexplicable doggie paddle?

FANS are shocked. Aghast.

COLLINS (V.O.)
 He's paddling, Todd. And the Gross record is safe.

Riki Rojas can't stand to watch.

KELSOW (V.O.)
 Pickering now closing the gap. Ten meters. Five.

On the pool deck, Coach Carruthers hangs his head.

KELSOW (V.O.)
 And there it is - Pickering coasting to the win with Futz a few meters behind.

INT. POOLSIDE - MINUTES LATER

Futz slowly emerges from the pool. His skin tight unitard seems at first to have remained intact.

But then, as he climbs out, we see his lower half.

The bottom portion of the suit hangs in shreds, like the folds of a cheerleader's miniskirt.

BLAKE PICKERING
Ra-ra-sis-boom-bah, huh, Futz?

The crowd LAUGHS at Futz as he walks the walk of the damned.

CARRUTHERS
For God's sake, put a towel on.

Carruthers throws a towel at Futz.

INT. SCOTTY FARMER'S DORM ROOM - EVENING

Riki Rojas, Mary Kate Ashley, and Brad Thomlinson sit cramped, side-by-side on Farmer's love seat.

They look at a wall of sketches. A STORYBOARD.

Farmer wears a black turtleneck and horn rimmed glasses. Slaps a RIDING CROP against the palm of his hand as he paces.

FARMER
Okay. This is the commercial as I see it. We fade in on pickles floating silently in a jar of brine. Black and white.

RIKI
Farmer, it has to be in color.

FARMER
Black. And. White!

RIKI
Fine. But absolutely NO subtitles.

Farmer takes a deep breath.

FARMER
Agreed.

He smacks his riding crop against the storyboard.

FARMER (CONT'D)
Pickles. Floating in a jar. In the vast Sonoran Desert. A man alone. Stumbling through the sand. Breathless.

A KNOCK on the door. The door opens. It's Futz.

FUTZ

Where's the Bartles and Jaymes?

Futz looks at the storyboard.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

What the hell is this?

Farmer slams the riding crop into his hand.

FARMER

Have a seat, Futz. Tystnad.

Futz obeys.

FARMER (CONT'D)

This is our story. Black and white. Pickles. In a jar. In the vast, hopeless Sonoran Desert. A handsome man -- that's you, Thomlinson.

Thomlinson looks pleased.

FARMER (CONT'D)

The handsome man -- alone. Breathlessly stumbling through the sand. Falls. Looks around. One Pupuseria. And another. A Pupusa Salvadorena tent. A food truck. The man looks around, in a panic, tumbles down a hill.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT. BLAZING SUN - DAY

Thomlinson, covered in sand, looks around.

THOMLINSON

The suffering. The sorrow. The hunger. Dios mio.

Thomlinson drops to his knees and looks to the heavens.

INT. SCOTTY FARMER'S DORM ROOM - EVENING

Farmer paces. The gang looks on.

FARMER

So many Pupuserias. So little flavor. This is a man who yearns. A man who craves flavorful pupusas.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT. BLAZING SUN - DAY

Thomlinson, on his knees.

THOMLINSON
My pupusa. So bland. No flavor.

FARMER (V.O.)
And then...

Thomlinson sees a giant pickle jar on the shimmering horizon. He runs toward it. Dripping sweat. Falling along the way.

INT. GIANT PICKLE JAR - SAME

BEAUTIFUL WOMEN in PICKLE COSTUMES, Mary Kate Ashley in the center, engage in a gorgeously choreographed swim dance.

FUTZ (V.O.)
Wait a second.

The pickle-dancers freeze.

INT. SCOTTY FARMER'S DORM ROOM - EVENING

FUTZ
Farmer, where are you going to get the money for twenty-four synchronized swim dancers?

FARMER
Full artistic control means FULL. ARTISTIC. CONTROL.

FUTZ
Use your brain, Lil' Bergie. You get one pickle suit. You put Mary Kate in it. Find a swimming pool and pretend it's a pickle jar.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
We could use the pool here, actually. The aquatic center.

RIKI
No way. Pickering's a freak for security. After hours, you'd have to get past motion detectors, thermal sensors, and two Dobermans.

THOMLINSON
I have a cat named Mittens.

RIKI
And lasers.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
So the aquatic center's out. What
other pool could we film it in?

FUTZ
You want a pool?

He takes an enormous key ring out of his pocket.

FUTZ (CONT'D)
I happen to clean pools for a
living.

He starts flipping through the keys.

FUTZ (CONT'D)
Boys and Girls Club. Los Feliz
YMCA. Bob Hope USO at LAX. B'nai
B'rith International. Beverly
Hills Gun Club. Westlake High
School. Burbank Senior Care --

RIKI
Westlake High - that's where we did
our recruiting day, right? That
could work.

FARMER
Yeah, that could work. If you get
another director. Because I'm
either getting twenty-four
synchronized swim-dancers, or I'm
walking out this door.

THOMLINSON
This door?

FARMER
I don't compromise my art.

THOMLINSON
Isn't this your room?

Futz goes over to Farmer and puts his hands on his shoulders.

FUTZ
Farmer, listen to me. You're a
brilliant artist. You're going to
make beautiful movies full of
depressed Swedish people.

(MORE)

FUTZ (CONT'D)

But before you do, you have to do a lot of artistically compromised, soul-crushing hack work, because life sucks and nobody gets anything without suffering.

RIKI

That's dark.

FUTZ

It's the truth. So what do you say, Farmer? Are you ready to do what it takes to be a real artist? Or do you want to sit here slapping your riding crop?

Farmer looks down at his riding crop. Comes to a decision.

FARMER

Fine. But don't blame me when the whole *mise en scène* collapses.

INT. THE GLASS KEY - HOURS LATER

Mary Kate Ashley tends bar.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Hey, you guys are a couple of regulars. I want you to try something.

She pours shots of whiskey for two drunk sports announcers, Kelsow and Collins. They use their booming TV voices.

KELSOW

That's a fine pour, Ted.

COLLINS

It sure is, Todd.

They take their shots.

COLLINS (CONT'D)

It's just whiskey.

KELSOW

It sure is, Ted.

She pulls two shots of pickle juice from behind the bar.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Now, take these.

They do.

KELSOW

I have to tell you, I couldn't be more pleased with that unexpected burst of pickley flavor.

COLLINS

That's right, Todd. Words simply do not do it justice.

Behind the announce team at a table are Futz, Riki Rojas, Farmer, and Thomlinson. Three 'Futzy Nipples' and a glass of white milk for Thomlinson.

FUTZ

What about Wednesday?

RIKI

Can't Wednesday. Karaoke.

FUTZ

What about Thursday?

FARMER

Man, part 3 of 'Scenes From A Marriage' is on PBS.

THOMLINSON

My parents are married.

RIKI

Next Monday night?

FUTZ

Swim practice. Tuesday?

FARMER

Tuesday night, then. 10 o'clock?

RIKI

Westlake High parking lot?

FUTZ

Should we synchronize our watches?

Dean Moobury enters the bar.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

The usual, Dean?

MOOBURY

Milk. Chocolate.

She slides him the glass of milk. He takes a big swig. Notices Futz and the gang at the table. Approaches.

MOOBURY (CONT'D)

Say, gang. What's the celebration?

RIKI

We're filming a commercial for my pupusa business. Brian just found us the perfect filming location. Have you tried my pickle pupusa?

MOOBURY

I would love to try your pupusa.

FUTZ

I bet you would, Moobury.

MOOBURY

Oh, Futz. I'm glad you're here. The Dootz mentioned she has a backlog of research on sharks and dermal denticles. I volunteered you to help out. No extra credit, but lots of long nights working alone. You're used to that, right, Futz?

The mention of dermal denticles gets Futz's attention. He frowns in thought as Moobury turns to Riki Rojas.

MOOBURY (CONT'D)

Could I see you for a moment at the bar, Riki? Sorry gang - official university business.

Moobury steers Riki over to the bar. She seems worried.

RIKI

This isn't about our recruiting numbers, is it? I know we didn't hit our target, but it's so hard to compete against the private colleges, especially with --

MOOBURY

No, no, no. Your recruiting is exemplary. Everything about you is exemplary. It's Futz.

RIKI

Futz?

MOOBURY

Look, I hate to say this, but if you're depending on Futz for this commercial, you'd better forget it. Futz isn't the kind of guy you can count on. He never follows through on anything. He's a quitter, Riki.

Riki takes a step back. Her faces flushes in anger.

RIKI

I'm sorry, Dean, but I'm afraid I don't agree. The Brian Futz I know is a caring, dependable man who's always there for his friends.

MOOBURY

(shrugs)

Agree to disagree, I guess.

Thomlinson, meanwhile, has wandered over from the table. He looks quizzically at the glass in Moobury's hand.

THOMLINSON

Your milk's darker than mine.

Moobury and Riki look at Thomlinson in concern.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Students file out of Professor Duitsman's classroom. Futz hangs back, watching Dootz remove files from her briefcase.

FUTZ

You wanted to see me, Professor?

DOOTZ

Ah, Mr. Futz. Please, call me Dootz.

FUTZ

You wanted to see me, Dootz?

DOOTZ

Dean Moobury suggested you might be interested in back-breaking labor and long hours in the stacks.

FUTZ

He mentioned something about dermal denticles.

DOOTZ

Mr. Futz. Do you have children?

FUTZ

Uh, no, I don't have any ki--

DOOTZ

This research.

She points to the folders.

DOOTZ (CONT'D)

These are my babies, Mr. Futz. I'm offering you my babies.

FUTZ

Well, I am interested in shar --

She grabs her necklace.

DOOTZ

You see these teeth, Mr. Futz? I yanked these teeth out of the mouth of a young, beautiful Carcharodon Carcharias. The same Carcharias that ate my late husband, Professor Stanley Duitsman.

FUTZ

Wow. I didn't realize you --

DOOTZ

This is my life's work, Mr. Futz. Decades of data I've collected while researching sharks off the Baja Peninsula.

FUTZ

Well, I'm --

DOOTZ

You're willing to accept my babies and care for them as if they were your own children? Good. This shouldn't take you more than eight or nine hours.

FUTZ

Well, I actually have to help some friends tonight, so I might not --

Dootz shoves a stack of file folders into his hands.

DOOTZ

Babies, Mr. Futz. Little tiny infants so young their skin is still fuzzy. That's what I'm giving you. Don't let me down.

INT. SCOTTY FARMER'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Farmer hands Mary Kate Ashley two objects that look like huge white fluffy pillows. They're shaped like gloves.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

What the hell are these?

FARMER

Part of your costume.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Where'd you get them?

Farmer nods across the room. Thomlinson is lying on Scotty's bed, scraping peanut butter from a jar with a fork.

THOMLINSON

I told you I was good with my hands.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

You sewed my costume?

THOMLINSON

Crocheted it, actually. But be careful with the seams. I used the ancient Chinese *mian-mai* technique. It can be a little temperamental.

He laughs and holds up a forkful of peanut butter.

THOMLINSON (CONT'D)

This stuff tastes like peanuts.

INT. SOCAL STATE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Futz sits at a desk, reading files in the light of a lamp with a green shade. He is deeply, utterly fascinated.

FUTZ

... reducing the rate of drag by eighty-eight-point-two percent. Fascinating.

Reaches for another file.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The windows of Westlake High are darkened for the night.

Riki Rojas climbs out of a Datsun; a moment later, Mary Kate Ashley climbs out of the other side, dressed in a pickle costume with huge white shoes and pillowy white gloves.

Scotty Farmer wears a beret and carries his riding crop.

FARMER

Where's Thomlinson?

MARY KATE ASHLEY

On his way.

FARMER

It's already ten-fifteen.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

He's coming from the emergency room.

FARMER

Is he sick?

MARY KATE ASHLEY

He stuck his peanut butter fork in an electrical socket.

INT. SOCAL STATE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Futz is hunched over the stack of files, making notes in the margins, biting his lower lip in concentration.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

FARMER

And where the hell is Futz? He's got the key to the pool.

RIKI

Maybe he got stuck in traffic.

FARMER

This time of night? Why don't you call him?

RIKI

Call him with what? There isn't a pay phone for miles.

Because it's the 80's, remember?

INT. SOCAL STATE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Scribbling furiously, Futz is writing out chemical equations.

FUTZ

Maximal flexion and optimal
elasticity combined with denticular
resilience...

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Farmer, Riki, Mary Kate Ashley, and Thomlinson all sit on the sidewalk in front of the door to the school's pool.

Farmer is looking at his watch and shaking his head.

Riki is frowning and looking concerned.

Thomlinson's right arm is black and bandaged.

Mary Kate Ashley is still dressed like a pickle.

INT. SOCAL STATE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Futz stops scribbling and looks up. Smiles. Laughs.

FUTZ

It's so simple. Staring me in the
face the whole time.

But slowly his smile disappears. His brow furrows.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

Except for the pattern of the
fabric weave, that is. Your normal
hexagonal cross-stitch isn't going
to survive the torsional strain.
How do you get yourself out of that
pickle, Futz?

He starts to scribble again, then stops.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

Pickle.

The color drains from his face.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Farmer hurls the riding crop against the door to the pool.

FARMER

Man, to hell with this! This was never the right approach anyway. We're going to do what we should've done from the beginning. Rewrite. Recast. Rethink my vision.

THOMLINSON

My arm smells funny.

FARMER

An homage to the greatest genius in cinematic history.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Burt Reynolds?

FARMER

Ingmar Bergman, and his immortal allegory of man's search for meaning, 'The Seventh Seal'.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT, LATER

A woman's voice murmurs quietly in Swedish.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Livets smärta förstör långsamt min vilja att leva.

Mary Kate stands against the brick wall of the high school, looking forlorn, wearing a black dress and black head scarf.

Thomlinson kneels at her feet, holding a loaf of bread.

THOMLINSON

Du får inte glömma den glädje du får från smaken av pickles.

Farmer is behind his camera, capturing everything on film.

Riki, now dressed as the pickle, paces angrily behind him.

INT. FUTZ'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Futz driving at high speed, SCREAMING around corners.

FUTZ
Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Thomlinson, still kneeling at Mary Kate Ashley's feet, holding out a single pickle with his blackened hand.

Mary Kate Ashley's reaction is interrupted by the sound of Futz's truck, SCREAMING into the lot, fishtailing to a stop.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT, LATER

Farmer keeps the camera rolling as Mary Kate Ashley and Thomlinson resume their weird Swedish scene.

Back by Futz's truck, Futz and Riki try to keep their voices low as they argue.

RIKI
No - you said you would be here,
Futz. You promised me.

Farmer puts a finger to his lips, telling them to be quiet.

Futz drops his voice to a whisper.

FUTZ
I know. It's my fault. But you
don't understand. I had a
breakthrough tonight.

RIKI
"Me, me, me," Futz. That's all I
hear out of you.

She pokes Futz in the chest with her comically large glove.

RIKI (CONT'D)
YOUR breakthrough. YOUR hip
flexors. YOUR dermal denticles.

FUTZ
Riki, this is the real thing. I
figured out how to stop the Speedos
from shredding. If I can find the
right fabric-construction pattern,
I can create swimming briefs that
mimic the drag-reducing properties
of a shark's dermal denticles.

RIKI
 (raising her voice)
 Tonight wasn't about you, Futz.
 Tonight was about me. And, by
 extension, us. Don't you see,
 Futz? I don't want to be some
 tired old woman peddling her pupusa
 on the street corner.

She holds up a pupusa.

RIKI (CONT'D)
 I want to share my pupusa with the
 whole world.
 (shaking her head sadly)
 Dean Moobury was right. You care
 more about this stupid obsession
 than you care about me. You're not
 the man I thought you were, Brian
 Futz.

Ouch. That one cuts Futz to the bone.

FUTZ
 It's not stupid; it's swimming.

But Riki doesn't hear him. She's already walking away.

In front of the camera, Thomlinson has a pickle in each hand
 and is recreating the synchronized swim-dance from Farmer's
 first version of the script.

THOMLINSON
 Lyckan! Lyckan! Glädjen som min
 älskare har hittat i pickle
 pupusas.

INT. THE GLASS KEY - NIGHT

A hand comes into frame and slams down an empty glass.

FUTZ (O.S.)
 Another round.

Behind the bar, Mary Kate Ashley reaches for the Jack.

MARY KATE ASHLEY
 How about you sit this one out,
 Futz? Have some coffee instead.

FUTZ
 Another round.

Futz is not in a good place. But Farmer is still riding high from his artistic triumph at the commercial shoot.

FARMER

Man, Futz, it was like Bergman himself was there tonight, whispering in my ear.

FUTZ

Emeralds.

FARMER

The dialogue was right. The shots were right. The lighting was perfect.

Mary Kate Ashley fills a glass with whiskey and hands it to Futz. He downs it in one swallow.

FUTZ

Glittering green emeralds infused with kindness and understanding.

Farmer takes a swig of his root beer.

FARMER

What the hell are you talking about?

FUTZ

Riki Rojas. The love of my life. I'm going back to the pool, Farmer, to drown myself in the deep end.

Futz starts to get off his stool. Farmer puts a hand on his shoulder and shoves him back down.

FARMER

Man, haven't you ever gone through a break-up before? You go to her tomorrow. You apologize. You tell her what an asshole you were. And all is forgiven. She loves you, Futz. I can tell.

FUTZ

I can't go to her tomorrow, Farmer.

FARMER

Why not?

Mary Kate Ashley refills the glass. Futz downs it again.

FUTZ
I have to swim.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

Hundreds of Golden Retriever fans fill the stands, chanting, howling, high-fiving, doing the wave.

Swimmers are lining up on the blocks for the butterfly. Blake is lane 4. Next to him, in lane 5, the space is empty.

KELSOW (V.O.)
There's a nip in the air, the pumpkins are ripening, the shops on Sunset Boulevard are all displaying the sexualized nursing costumes my partner and I so much enjoy. You know what that means, swim fans. It's time for the Pacific Coast Conference Semi-Finals!

INT. BROADCASTING BOOTH - DAY

In the booth, Kelsow and Collins are dressed for Halloween. Kelsow as Little Bo Peep; Collins as a dirty little lamb.

COLLINS
Couldn't have said it better myself, Todd. We already know that our two breakout stars, Blake Pickering and Brian Futz, have qualified for the Conference Finals later this month. But their performance today still matters. The top-placing qualifier will earn himself the all-important fourth lane at the Conference Finals.

KELSOW
Far be it for me to baaa-argain with you, Ted, but what kind of money would you be willing to lay down on Pickering finishing first?

COLLINS
To be honest? I'd have to say --

KELSOW
Hold that wager a moment, Ted. What do we have here? Is that the aforementioned Brian Futz?

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

Blake Pickering, on the blocks, looks over his shoulder to see a disturbing sight: Futz, dressed only in goggles, a pair of tighty whities, and socks, staggers up to the blocks.

FUTZ
(slurring)
Is okay. Am fine. Hello to all.

He reaches the blocks, trips on the edge of the pool, and falls into the water. Sputtering, he rises back to the surface, smiles, and then vomits into the bright blue water.

COLLINS (V.O.)
My, my. This pool has seen more
puke than a bulimic's toilet bowl.

High above Futz's floating vomit, in the special box-section of the bleachers, Blair puts a hand on Chadwick's shoulder.

BLAIR
I knew it. Drunk as a skunk. A
Futz never changes his stripes.

CHADWICK
I don't want that Futz in my pool!

INT. BROADCASTING BOOTH - DAY

Ted Collins, still in his sheep costume, stands up to get a better view out of the broadcasting window.

COLLINS
Baaa-tween you and me, Todd, I
think what we've got here is a
forty-year-old swimmer who's shown
up so snookered he's about to find
himself behind the eight ball.

INT. POOL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

In front of a row of lockers, Futz lies asleep on his back on a bench. He's still wearing the tight white underwear.

FUTZ
(snorting, waking up)
What?

Coach Carruthers steps forward, looking old and weary.

CARRUTHERS

You're out, Futz. Clear violation of the Golden Retriever Honor Code. "No athlete may appear in a state of drunkenness and/or secondary intoxication during an official university sporting event."

Futz coughs, vomits a little in his mouth, swallows it.

FUTZ

You mean I'm --

CARRUTHERS

You're off the team, Futz. I'm sorry.

FUTZ

But I --

CARRUTHERS

Goddamn it, Brian, you left me no choice. You're in too deep, this time.

Carruthers hurries away, snuffling back the tears.

CARRUTHERS (CONT'D)

You hear me, Futz? You're in too deep!

Futz, slack-jawed, realizes what this means.

INT. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AQUARIUM - MORNING

A 12 foot TIGER SHARK swims by.

Farmer, wearing a very stylish sweater, stands on the ledge of the tank, pointing the camera down into the water.

A Scuba Man pops his head up from the water. Holding a scrub brush. Lifts his goggles. Pulls out his mouthpiece.

FUTZ

I've thrown it all away, Farmer. Look at me. I'm a loser. Destined to be a scum scrubber.

FARMER

The Swedish have a saying. Det är ingen ko på isen. It means "there is no cow on the ice."

FUTZ

And what in God's name does that have to do with anything?

FARMER

It means you have nothing to worry about.

FUTZ

Well, it certainly feels like there IS a big fucking cow on the ice, Farmer.

FARMER

Here's the thing, Futz. You're a man with two great loves. But they're both consuming you. Destroying you. Riki Rojas is a once in a lifetime woman with a big dream. And I know you have a dream of your own. But you need to get your priorities in order. If you want to focus on dermal denticles and well-crafted power panties, then talk to Thomlinson.

FUTZ

Thomlinson? He's an idiot.

FARMER

An idiot savant. He knitted this sweater, as a matter of fact.

Futz feels the material of the sweater. He's impressed.

FARMER (CONT'D)

But that's the easy part. If you want to win Riki back, then you have to put her dreams before yours. The ultimate apology.

FUTZ

And what exactly does that entail?

FARMER

Perhaps a certain elderly Pomona plutocrat?

FUTZ

Ascot?

FARMER

Man, it's just a matter of appealing to his noblesse oblige.

FUTZ

How do you expect me to get to him?

FARMER

Oh, I think you know someone.

He does.

FUTZ

You don't mean...

Futz deflates. Closes his eyes.

FARMER

Go see her, Futz.

Futz sinks back into the water as a shark swims by.

EXT. 'HOT BODS BY BLAIR'. JAZZERCISE STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Blair and Cinnamon exit the Jazzercise studio, towels wrapped around their necks, wearing their ridiculous leotards, looking as sexy as a woman could look in the mid 80's.

BLAIR

A few more workouts like that, and we may really be ready for the Crystal Light Championships.

Cinnamon notices Futz sitting on the hood of his 4x4.

CINNAMON

Oh, barf.

Blair, shrugging helplessly at Cinnamon, walks to the truck.

BLAIR

What do you want, Futz?

FUTZ

I need your help.

BLAIR

Why would I ever help you?

FUTZ

Well, aside from the fact I put you through law school and stood by you through the darkest, most cacophonous days of your IBS, how about this - I'm heartbroken.

Blair hops up beside him on the hood of his 4x4.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

You and I have been through a lot. We made mistakes. I hurt you. You hurt me. You moved on. Now, as you see, I'm still making mistakes.

BLAIR

Very public mistakes.

FUTZ

Very, very public mistakes. But this isn't about me. I've hurt someone who I love very much. And as ironic as it is, you're the only one who can help.

BLAIR

You're serious.

FUTZ

One small favor. One phone call.

BLAIR

If I do this for you, you can't tell anyone.

FUTZ

Agreed.

BLAIR

And stay away from my Jazzercise studio. I think you're scaring Cinnamon and the girls.

EXT. THE PICKERING COMPOUND - NIGHT

Futz's truck follows the tree-lined drive of the Pickering's lush Pomona estate, stopping in front of the mansion.

INT. THE PICKERING COMPOUND IN POMONA - NIGHT

From the inside of the mansion, the doorbell rings. ARROWSMITH, the butler, answers.

ARROWSMITH

Good evening, Mr. Futz. Walk this way, sir.

FUTZ

(following him)
So, what's your handle?

ARROWSMITH
Sir?

FUTZ
Your name.

ARROWSMITH
Pennyfarthing Arrowsmith.

FUTZ
Wait, your name is Arrowsmith? And
you told me to walk this way?

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Black and white footage. This is THE pupusa commercial.

Thomlinson, dressed in all black, walks through the vacant parking lot. He cradles a pupusa.

(All dialogue spoken in Swedish with English subtitles.)

THOMLINSON
My pupusa. So bland. No flavor.
The blackest of all plagues.

Thomlinson drops to his knees.

THOMLINSON (CONT'D)
Death is near.

A single tear streams down his face.

THOMLINSON (CONT'D)
I call out to God in this darkness.

Riki, dressed as a pickle, walks by smoking a cigarette.

RIKI
Yet he remains silent.

Riki leaves the scene.

THOMLINSON
(watching her go)
A pickle. Peculiar.

INT. ASCOT'S YOGA STUDIO - NIGHT

The commercial - still in black and white - continues on the TELEVISION. Swedish dialogue with English subtitles.

Mary Kate Ashley stands against a plain brick wall, looking forlorn, wearing a black dress and a black head scarf.

MARY KATE ASHLEY

Life's pain slowly destroys my will
to live.

Thomlinson kneels at her feet, holding a loaf of bread.

THOMLINSON

You must not forget the joy you get
from the taste of pickles.

From the hallway, Arrowsmith opens the door.

Ascot Pickering, wearing an old-timey workout singlet with one strap, is in 'downward facing dog' with an upward facing pygmy goat standing on his back.

In fact, 7 more pygmy goats roam the hay-filled room.

ASCOT

Ahhhh, Mr. Futz. Welcome to my
sanctuary.

The little goat scrambles off of Ascot's back. Ascot rises to his feet. Clicks off the television.

ASCOT (CONT'D)

I find peace here in this little
pasture of mine, Mr. Futz. I find
therapy with pygmies after a long
day peddling pickles.

FUTZ

I need your help, Mr. Pickering.

ASCOT

Let me guess. You want me to get
you back on the swim team.

FUTZ

Actually, no. I want to talk
pupusa, Mr. Pickering. Your
seemingly insatiable appetite. I
want to introduce your Pickering
pickle to my Riki's pupuseria.

A pygmy goat BLEATS.

INT. PICKERING'S DEN - MINUTES LATER

Ascot and Futz drink scotch whiskey. Pickering, still in his singlet, has a towel draped around his shoulders.

ASCOT

I like you, Futz. You've got spunk. You remind me a lot of myself when I was younger. Willing to do anything for the woman you love. And I'm here to tell you, Futz, it's worth it. My Sally and I, we were a team. Everything I have today is because my sweet, sweet Sally Bream was there for me with her unique blend of brine.

Futz now carries a pygmy goat, wrapped in swaddling clothes.

ASCOT (CONT'D)

You know what they say about Bream brine, don't you, Futz?

FUTZ

It's the Bream Brine that gives the Pickering Pickle its potency.

ASCOT

I like the cut of your jib, Mr. Futz. And for that reason, I want to tell you a story.

Futz's goat bleats.

FUTZ

These pygmies really are precious.

INT. LITTLE BOY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Clown toys, wallpaper, sheets, pajamas, etc.

ASCOT (V.O.)

Once, there was a little boy who really, really loved clowns. He had wonderful clown toys. And clown wallpaper. And little clown pajamas. And clown bed sheets. I mean, he LOVED clowns. So, it's almost his birthday. And his parents throw him a clown-themed birthday party. With a clown cake. And clown cups and paper plates.

(MORE)

ASCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And they give him the only thing
 he's wanted his whole life. Front
 row tickets to the circus.

INT. PICKERING'S DEN - NIGHT

FUTZ
 The kid loves clowns?

ASCOT
 Loves clowns.

INT. THE CIRCUS. UNDER THE BIG TOP - DAY

A KID, on the front row of the circus. Wild-eyed. The
 action is described by Ascot Pickering.

ASCOT (V.O.)
 So, it comes time for the circus.
 And there the boy is, front row
 center. Studying the ringmaster.
 The elephants. The trapeze
 artists. And that guy who puts his
 head in the lion's mouth. But it's
 all ho-hum. Until the moment he's
 really been waiting for. The clown
 car, rumbling into the center ring.
 One after another, the clowns come
 pouring out of the car, with their
 big red hair, their floppy red
 shoes, and their bright red noses.
 And finally, the main clown gets
 out, all happy and goofy and
 whatnot. And the main clown sees
 the boy, who's on the edge of his
 seat, and walks up to him and takes
 the boy by his hand. It is the
 boy's dream come true. Stars-in-
 his-eyes with happiness. And the
 clown leads the boy to the center
 ring, where the clown says...

CLOWN
 I hear you love clowns.

The kid shakes his head with delight.

CLOWN (CONT'D)
 And clowns make you happier than
 anything in the world.

The kid shakes his head with even more enthusiasm.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

And all you've ever wanted in the world is to be a clown?

The kid is busting with excitement.

ASCOT (V.O.)

And then the clown says...

CLOWN

What kind of a loser are you, kid?
You're pathetic. You're a freak.
You're sick. You're just sad, kid.

The boy is crushed.

INT. PICKERING'S DEN - NIGHT

Futz is on the edge of his seat.

ASCOT

The little boy is crushed.
Destroyed. Devastated, Mr. Futz.

FUTZ

Obviously.

ASCOT

So the child rips down his wallpaper. Burns all of his clown possessions. His clown sheets, clown pajamas, clown toys. And he thinks about that clown every day for the next 5 years. 10 years. 15 years. And the little boy decides he wants revenge on this clown. So, what does he do?

FUTZ

I don't know. What does he do?

ASCOT

He gets that revenge. He obsesses. He wants to know what makes this clown tick. He wants to get inside the mind of this clown.

INT. THE CLOWN KID'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Kid, now a MAN, dresses as a clown before the mirror.

ASCOT (V.O.)

So, he studies and he learns and he trains. Even goes to clown school. Every day, he puts on the makeup, the big red hair, the floppy red shoes, the bright red noses.

The Kid laughs like a maniac.

INT. PICKERING'S DEN - NIGHT

ASCOT

You see what heartbreak in one's youth does to you, Futz? Finally, the circus is coming to town. And the boy, now a man, decides it's his one chance at revenge.

INT. THE CIRCUS. UNDER THE BIG TOP - DAY

The clown kid, now a Man, is NOT wearing clown makeup. But he is on the front row. In the same seat as before.

ASCOT (V.O.)

So, there he is. Watching the ringmaster. The elephants. The trapeze artists. And that guy who puts his head in the lion's mouth. Then, the moment he's been waiting for. The clown car, rumbling into the center ring. One after another, clowns pouring out of the car, with their big red hair, floppy red shoes, bright red noses. And finally, the main clown gets out, happy and goofy and whatnot. And the main clown, spotting the kid - now a man - walks up to him, taking him by his hand. The clown leads the man to the center ring. Where the clown says...

CLOWN

I hear you love clowns.

The man shakes his head with mock delight.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

And clowns make you happier than anything in the world.

The man shakes his head with even more mock enthusiasm.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

And all you've ever wanted in the world is to be a clown?

The man is busting with mock excitement.

ASCOT (V.O.)

And then the clown says...

CLOWN

What kind of a loser are you, boy? You're pathetic. A freak. You're sick. Just sad.

This clown gives the ultimate look of disgust.

INT. PICKERING'S DEN - NIGHT

Ascot pours Futz another scotch whiskey.

ASCOT

And you know what the kid - now a man - does? Do you, Mr. Futz?

FUTZ

At this point, I have no idea.

ASCOT

Good. The boy - now a man - turns to the clown.

INT. THE CIRCUS. UNDER THE BIG TOP - DAY

The boy - now a man - turns to the clown.

ASCOT (V.O.)

He turns to the clown and says:

MAN

Hey. Fuck you, clown.

INT. PICKERING'S DEN - NIGHT

Futz is startled. Confused.

ASCOT

And do you know who that man was, Mr. Futz?

FUTZ

You?

ASCOT

That man was President Warren G.
Harding.

Futz sits in silence for a beat. Then two beats. Pondering.

FUTZ

I think I get it. You're saying
dreams and failings and revenge can
consume us for a lifetime. You're
saying we should never consume
ourselves with the past.

Arrowsmith re-enters the room.

ASCOT

Are you even listening to me, Futz?
I'm saying a shot at redemption
only comes around every so often.

FUTZ

So, you're insane, then?

ASCOT

Oh, I'm quite lucid, Mr. Futz.
Between my pickles, your Riki's
pupusas, and your prowess in the
pool, I smell a sweet, sweet payday
for the lot of us.

Ascot snaps his fingers.

ASCOT (CONT'D)

Arrowsmith, cut the man a check.

Futz takes a long, thoughtful drink. As he does, the opening
chords of a GLORIOUS POWER BALLAD begin to play.

INT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS. POOL, DORM ROOM, ETC. MONTAGE

Water CHURNING as Futz does laps in the Westlake High pool.
Futz is all alone, his hip flexors a majestic blur.

The needle of a sewing machine STITCHING its way through a
length of red spandex. Hunched over the machine, Thomlinson
expertly guides the fabric, biting his lip in concentration.

Ice RATTLING in a shaker as Mary Kate Ashley prepares some
Fuzzy Nipples. Her gaze goes to the TV on the wall, where a
commercial advertises the Annual Tri-County Swim Meet.

A hand POUNDING a lump of pupusa dough. As she works, Riki
glances at the phone on the kitchen counter, hoping it rings.

INT. RIKI ROJAS' OFFICE - DAY

Riki leans over her desk, showing Dean Moobury a mock-up of a new recruiting brochure. Moobury stares down her shirt.

RIKI

And on the last page we have some quotes from SoCal alumni, talking about the value of their education.

MOOBURY

(ogling her perky breasts)
Beautiful.

RIKI

I think this last quote is particularly good. Sums up the sense of camaraderie we try to instill in our undergraduates.

MOOBURY

So full and luscious.

RIKI

Excuse me?

FUTZ (O.S.)

Jesus, Moob. I can hear you salivating from here.

Riki and Dean Moobury turn to see Futz standing in the doorway. He looks as trim and fit as Mark Spitz.

MOOBURY

Oh. Futz.

FUTZ

Moob. Sorry, but I need to talk to Riki.

MOOBURY

Well, we're in the middle of something, actually.

FUTZ

Fine. You want to stay and watch?
Stay and watch.

He turns to Riki.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

Riki, you were right. I let you down. Letting people down has always kind of been my thing.

(MORE)

FUTZ (CONT'D)

But I don't want it to be my thing anymore. I want you to be my thing. In a good way. I don't know how to do it, exactly, but I know that if you'll help me, I can learn how to do it. I can be the kind of man you deserve. I know I can. I just need your help.

He takes a check from his shirt pocket.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

And I also got Ascot Pickering to put up two hundred grand for your pupusa business. He's insane, but he believes in you. And so do I.

Riki is speechless. Looks from Futz to the check, from the check to Futz.

Moobury realizes that there's no advantage in sticking around. He backs discreetly out the door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Moobury slips out of the office and softly closes the door. When he turns around, he's face-to-face with Scotty Farmer.

FARMER

Dean Moobury! Just the privileged member of the bourgeoisie I was hoping to encounter. You remember that day at the pool when everybody ralped up their hot dogs?

MOOBURY

Uhh ...

FARMER

Of course you remember. Funny thing is, I didn't notice it that day, being so preoccupied with my overactive gag reflex, but I'd left the camera running the whole time. And it turns out I caught something very interesting, Dean Moobury.

MOOBURY

Uhh, you did?

Farmer claps a hand on his back.

FARMER

Come with me, my good man.

INT. RIKI ROJAS' OFFICE - SAME

Riki holds Pickering's check in her trembling hand. She's overwhelmed and confused.

RIKI

Jesus, Brian, what do you expect me to say? That all is forgiven?

FUTZ

Yes.

RIKI

Well I'm sorry, but I can't do that. You can't expect me ... I mean, just because you come in here with all this money, saying you're going to make all my dreams ... and after what you did, and how I was counting on you ... and this check is seriously for two hundred grand? As in five zeroes?

FUTZ

As in five zeroes.

RIKI

That's crazy.

FUTZ

Pickering's crazy. But it's chump change for him, Riki. Take it. And take me back while you're at it. Please.

RIKI

I can't take you back, Brian. Not now. Not until I get my head on straight.

Futz thinks about arguing, but decides against it.

FUTZ

I understand. But whenever you're ready, Riki, I want you to know that I'll be here. Waiting for you.

It's a good line, and Riki almost melts. But she keeps herself together. Gives him a small nod and turns away.

INT. BROADCASTING BOOTH - DAY

Kelsow and Collins are side by side in their navy blazers.

KELSOW

Come one, come all to the greatest show on surf. We are live at the Tri-County Swim Meet Finals, overlooking the Capri colored waters of the Pickering Aquatic Center. As always, I'm Ted Kelsow, alongside my partner, Todd Collins.

COLLINS

That's right, Ted. We are dressed to the 9's for the biggest event of the collegiate swimming season.

KELSOW

From the waist up, at least, Todd. For all of you viewers at home, I would be remiss not to point out that my colleague here is something of a 'No Pants Jim Nantz' today.

COLLINS

Indeed I am, Ted. But, as you know too well, it's something that happens to all broadcasters at some point. In spite of our meticulous preparation for wardrobe changes, sometimes a broadcaster takes that dreaded Gumbel-stumble...

Close-up of the ice-pack covering Collins' genitals.

COLLINS (CONT'D)

... and ends up bruising his Dick Vitale in the process.

Kelsow and Collins CHUCKLE and shake their heads knowingly.

A beat later, the CROWD ROARS again, interrupting them.

KELSOW

Whoa, whoa, whoa, Todd. Something has grabbed this crowd's attention.

INT. POOLSIDE - SAME

Futz enters, wearing dark aviator glasses and a WALKMAN.

COLLINS (V.O.)

Yes, that is THE Brian Futz. A fan favorite for sure. But, for better or worse, he is no longer taking part in this swim meet.

Various shots of swimmers stretching, warming up, etc.

KELSOW (V.O.)

And what a shame it is, Todd. Because, as you know, this is a who's who of our biggest swimming stars in the Tri-County. Including the likes of Natan Klitzenberg from Cumby College, Rick 'Steak and Eggs' Graziano out of Tarzana Tech, and the Milkflower twins representing Encino.

Blake Pickering teases his big mane of hair.

COLLINS (V.O.)

And, of course, Ted, swimming today for the Goldens are the overall points leader, Blake Pickering, and a returning Brad Thomlinson, replacing Brian Futz.

INT. BROADCASTING BOOTH - SAME

KELSOW

Wait a minute. Has anyone seen Thomlinson yet today?

Collins shrugs.

INT. POOL LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Thomlinson leans against a locker, holding his shoulder. Coach Carruthers looks him up and down.

CARRUTHERS

Jiminy Christmas, son, don't tell me you got in another fight with Pickering?

THOMLINSON

No, sir. I think it's the sewing.

CARRUTHERS

Sowing? As in sowing the seeds of swimming greatness?

THOMLINSON

No, sir. I've been so focused on sewing the new design for Mr. Futz's briefs that I think I re-aggravated my radial palsy.

Before Carruthers can respond, Dean Moobury opens the door.

MOOBURY

Thomlinson, you're out.
Carruthers, come with me. It's time to talk Futz.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

Brian Futz slouches in his seat, keeping a low profile. But he can't help looking poolside, where Riki Rojas is selling pupusas at her homemade stand.

FUTZ

Maybe I should go talk to her.

Beside him, Farmer inserts a VHS tape into his camcorder.

FARMER

All in good time, my man.

Futz's response is cut short by the arrival of Moobury and Carruthers, winded from their climb into the bleachers.

MOOBURY

Futz. We need to talk.

CUT TO:

CAMCORDER FOOTAGE

We see a grainy shot of an unattended hot dog cart in the Aquatic Center. Dean Moobury sidles up to the cart with a spray bottle. Begins misting the dogs with a clear liquid.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - DAY

Farmer holds up his camcorder so that Futz can watch the footage through the viewfinder. Moobury looks on sheepishly.

MOOBURY

-- in other words, it's possible I poisoned the hot dogs at the pool that day and asked the vendor to deliver one to you personally.

FARMER

Possible?

MOOBURY

Okay. Probable.

FARMER

You're a petty little bastard, in other words.

Hearing raised voices, Riki glances over from her stand. Moobury, meanwhile, is miffed by Farmer's accusation.

MOOBURY

I have my moments of weakness - I don't deny that. But what's done is done. Meanwhile, Thomlinson's hurt, and we're one man short on the biggest swimming day of the season.

CARRUTHERS

What do you say, Futz? Get in the pool one last time?

FUTZ

I thought I'd committed "a clear violation of the Golden Retriever Honor Code."

CARRUTHERS

Sounds like off-setting penalties to me. I'm sure Dean Moobury will allow it.

MOOBURY

Absolutely. I think we've both made our share of mistakes. I'm asking you to rejoin the team, Futz. As a personal favor to me.

Futz is tempted, but he's too proud to give in. Meanwhile, Riki has made her way up to the stands to eavesdrop.

FUTZ

Sorry, Moob. Coach. My days in the deep end are behind me.

Moobury and Carruthers are surprised. But Riki is incredulous - and pissed. She steps forward angrily.

RIKI

Are you kidding me?

FUTZ

Riki?

RIKI

You're going to tuck your tail and run away NOW? After all you've gone through to get here?

FUTZ

Well -

RIKI

You think I wanted to get up this morning and come here, Brian? You think I like selling pupusas to hungover frat boys who smell like stale beer and boiling socks? And all the pervy old guys who try to look down my shirt?

Moobury looks ashamed.

RIKI (CONT'D)

You know damn well I didn't have to be here. Thanks to you, I could be out spending Mr. Pickering's two hundred grand. But I'm not, Brian. Because I care about you. No, I take that back. I don't CARE about you. I love you. You're the man who put the pickle in my pupusa.

Farmer frowns and cocks his head to one side, as if wondering if he heard that correctly.

RIKI (CONT'D)

The Brian Futz I love doesn't stand here arguing with coaches and deans when he should be down there on the blocks, getting ready to swim.

Riki's speech is just the kind of straight-talking truth that Futz has been waiting for. He gets to his feet.

FUTZ

You're right.

Futz rips off his breakaway jogging suit, standing before everyone in his gorgeous, Thomlinson-crafted, dermal-denticle-inspired Speedo.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

I have to swim.

RIKI
 (stunned by the Speedo)
 My god. Are those your...

FUTZ
 My dermal denticles. My Futz-flex
 technology.

RIKI
 You're not a man, Brian Futz.
 You're an aqua man.

FUTZ
 I'm an aqua man.

Futz poses in a superhero power stance.

INT. CHADWICK P. PICKERING AQUATIC CENTER - DAY, LATER

The Golden Retriever faithful are overcome with excitement.

CROWD
 Futz! Futz! Futz!

INT. BROADCASTING BOOTH - DAY, SAME

Ted Collins is carefully replacing the ice pack that covers
 the genitals of Todd Kelsow.

COLLINS
 There you go, my sweet prince.

KELSOW
 Thank you. And welcome to those of
 you at home who have stayed with us
 for these exciting developments
 here at the Chadwick P. Pickering
 Aquatic Center.

INT. IN THE STANDS - DAY, SAME

In the stands, Chadwick Pickering and Blair Futz are dressed
 in matching polos. They watch as the swimmers get warmed up.

BLAIR
 It was actually kind of sweet. He
 came to me to ask for my help. I
 think he really loves that pupusa
 lady.

CHADWICK

He's a low-rent pool boy.

BLAIR

He's more than a pool boy.

CHADWICK

He's trash, Blair. Boat trash. I don't like you singing his praises.

BLAIR

And I don't like your attitude, Chadwick. He might not be perfect, but he's still Brian Futz. And that means he's a champion.

INT. POOLSIDE - SAME

Futz stretches his arms as Blake Pickering approaches.

BLAKE PICKERING

Do yourself a favor, old man. Take your little shark skin swim briefs, fold them up real neat-like, and walk away. There's no room for a Futz in our Pickering pool.

FUTZ

Not gonna happen. But since we're doling out unsolicited advice, I've got some for you. Take a look at yourself.

Blake teases his hair.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

Because you're me, 20 years ago. And you see how that turned out. I was on top of the world and I blew it. I had a bad attitude and a fragile ego. Now, I'm not sure if you're acting out because mommy left, or because daddy doesn't love you, or because grandpa's money spoiled you. Maybe all three. Maybe something else. Whatever has damaged you, step back. Look at yourself. You've got it all. Good looks. Big muscles. A multi-sport athlete. A beautiful mane of golden hair. And you're not bad in a fight, either. Take advantage of it. But don't be a dick.

(MORE)

FUTZ (CONT'D)

Because, trust me, you don't want to be some 40 year old drunk, living in a rat trap in Reseda, looking back on what should have been.

Futz is starting to break through to the kid. A single tear forms in Blake's right eye.

FUTZ (CONT'D)

But I'll tell you one more thing, kiddo. There's no way in hell I'm letting you beat me today.

BLAKE PICKERING

Screw you, Futz. No amount of doggy paddling is gonna save you.

They stare each other down. Neither blinks first.

INT. ANNOUNCE BOOTH - DAY, SAME

COLLINS

Mere seconds away from the starter pistol firing before the 200 meter butterfly here at these Tri-County finals.

KELSOW

And maybe it's just the numbness spreading from my pelvis, but I don't think I've ever seen a more exciting buildup to a swim meet.

INT. POOLSIDE - DAY, SAME

Futz is on the blocks. All swimmers are in position.

COLLINS (V.O.)

You're not wrong, Todd. And I would add that my own genitals have also gone entirely numb.

The starter pistol FIRES.

Futz's push and entry are poetry in motion.

INT. IN THE POOL - DAY, SAME

Futz hits the water. The crowd ROARS. And then ... SILENCE.

We hear nothing, save for the sounds Futz hears in his own ears. The SPLASH of water. His BREATHING.

INT. POOLSIDE / IN THE STANDS / ANNOUNCE BOOTH - DAY, SAME

The CROWD is shocked and amazed. Cheerleaders, Carruthers, Moobury, Chadwick and Blair, Farmer, Collins and Kelsow.

In the stands, Mary Kate Ashley clutches Thomlinson who, inexplicably, is gleefully distracted by the Golden's Mascot.

INT. IN THE POOL - DAY, SAME

Nothing but the NATURAL SOUNDS of Futz. Holding nothing back, his butterfly is pure, reminiscent of a dolphin.

His hip flexors churn. The dermal denticles cut through the water. This Speedo won't tear.

While we don't see the other swimmers, we know something special is happening.

INT. POOLSIDE - DAY, SAME

Riki Rojas stands on tip-toes near Ascot Pickering, silently screaming through cupped hands. Blasts her arms above her head forming a 'V' for victory. Wraps her arms around Ascot.

INT. BROADCASTING BOOTH - DAY, SAME

Collins and Kelsow are on their feet, Kelsow clutching the ice pack over his crotch. They're wide-eyed, open-mouthed.

INT. IN THE POOL - DAY, SAME

The tiled surface of the wall glimmers in the blue water.

Futz is closing in. His right arm comes into frame, then his left - reaching for the wall - and finally TOUCHING it.

As soon as he touches it, the world EXPLODES with sound.

INT. POOLSIDE - DAY, SAME

The crowd is SCREAMING. Carruthers is WEEPING. Futz is GASPING for breath.

Futz has already won the race, but the other swimmers - including Blake - are still a half-lap behind.

COLLINS (V.O.)
A new Tri-County record!

Riki sprints over to Futz. She slips on the wet pool deck and goes into a face-first slide, zooming over the wet surface and coming to a stop face-to-face with Futz.

RIKI
I love you, Brian Futz.

FUTZ
I love you, Riki Rojas.

They kiss. It's a long, glorious kiss.

FUTZ (CONT'D)
You're such a firecracker.

Meanwhile, the crowd has left the stands and is storming the pool deck. A dozen ARMS reach down to pull Futz out of the water, hoisting him onto the shoulders of Thomlinson.

Blake has finally finished the race. He gets out of the water and stands for a moment facing Futz. Then, with a grim smile, he reaches out his hand.

Futz shakes it. The crowd CHEERS.

MOOBURY
Let me through! Let me through!

Dean Moobury breaks through the crowd and reaches Futz, holding a gold medal on a red-white-and-blue strap. Futz bends down. Moobury slips the medal over his head.

Mary Kate Ashley, Thomlinson, and the Retriever mascot DANCE in celebration. Farmer captures the action on his camcorder.

Carruthers, still weeping, gives Futz a thumbs-up. Futz returns the thumbs-up and gives him an all-American smile.

As Futz smiles into the camera, the scene suddenly FREEZES. Over Futz's handsome, smiling face, we see:

EPILOGUE - TITLE CARD #1

Brian Futz left the world of competitive swimming after the Tri-County Meet. He patented his 'Futz Flex' Dermal Denticle Technology forever changing the way swim briefs were crafted.

To this day, Futz researches shark migration patterns in the waters of the Pacific Coast.

He lives with his wife, Riki Rojas, in Playa Del Rey.

TITLE CARD #2

Riki Rojas opened her first upscale Peculiar Pupuseria in 1987. The chain now spans from coast to coast.

Riki's Peculiar Pupusas will be available in supermarkets in the spring of 2020.

TITLE CARD #3

Mary Kate Ashley now manages her mother's original Peculiar Pupuseria in Santa Monica.

She works behind the bar, specializing in craft cocktails.

TITLE CARD #4

Blake Pickering rose to national stardom in the late 80's and early 90's on the hit competition television program, 'American Gladiators'.

You know him as the show's best loved Gladiator, 'Zeus'.

TITLE CARD #5

Scotty Farmer won the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for his experimental masterpiece 'Min Futz. Min Ängel'.

TITLE CARD #6

Brad Thomlinson was electrocuted while using a sewing machine in the bathtub.

He died doing what he loved.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

SUPER: 1994

A small research vessel bobs in the waves. A hand-painted moniker on the stern: *In a Pickle*.

A bearded, deeply tanned Brian Futz emerges from the water. Places his goggles on his forehead. Climbs into the boat.

Once onboard, Futz picks up a clipboard. Documents his findings. He speaks as he scribbles in pencil.

FUTZ

4-point-5 meters. Carcharhinidae.
Genus? Galeocerdo. Macro-
predator.

Behind Futz, a luxury yacht enters frame. Futz shields his eyes to see its port side moniker: the *S.S. Karma Chameleon*.

On the ship's deck stand the two aged playboys, Lucien Thorne and David Baxter Donnelly, wearing unbuttoned Hawaiian shirts and bikini briefs.

DONNELLY

Ahoy, sailor.

Thorne doffs his captain's cap.

FUTZ

Who the hell are you guys?

THORNE

Just a couple of salty old seamen,
looking for a good time.

DONNELLY

What do you say, Brian Futz? Want
to come aboard?

Futz frowns. Shrugs.

Thorne tosses him a rope ladder. Futz starts to climb.

As he does, we begin to pull away, tracking backward over the blue Pacific water. Their voices slowly fade away.

FUTZ

You guys look familiar. Did you
ever see that stupid 80s movie?
Something about karate school?

THORNE

You mean *Kung Fu Summer Camp*?
Yeah, I believe we saw that one.
Didn't we, David?

DONNELLY

I think we did, Lucien ...

As we track backward over the water, skimming over the waves, we come across a tubular shape sticking out of the water.

It's the periscope of a submarine.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBMARINE - DAY, SAME

A CREWMAN dressed in an immaculate white sailor's suit steps away from the periscope and addresses someone off camera.

CREWMAN

We've found them, Mr. Spitz. The
Karma Chameleon, dead ahead.

And now we hear the unmistakable, diabolical VOICE of Olympic champion Mark Spitz.

MARK SPITZ (O.S.)

And Futz?

CREWMAN

He's onboard. They're playing with
pygmy goats and drinking wine
coolers.

MARK SPITZ (O.S.)

Good. *Very good.*

Mark Spitz reveals himself, slowly spinning around in his high-back, calfskin villain's chair. He screams wildly:

MARK SPITZ (CONT'D)

Get me Terence Meriwether on the
ship-to-shore!

CREWMAN

Certainly, sir. Shall I also
prepare your boat?

Spitz stops spinning. Makes an effort to calm himself.

MARK SPITZ

No, not yet. Not until nightfall.
Only then, with the light of the
Pacific moon, will I have my
revenge...

Spitz GIGGLES, then loses all control. As he begins to LAUGH
maniacally, we pull back from his calf-skin chair and we ...

FADE TO BLACK.