

BUBBLES

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Based on true events

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EXT. APE SANCTUARY - DAY

BUBBLES, a grizzled, muscular, 33-year-old chimpanzee lazily knuckle walks across the floor of a large, domed enclosure nestled in a verdant Florida woodland.

SUPER: Center for Great Apes - Wachula, Florida - Present Day

BUBBLES (V.O.)

There are many kinds of kingdoms in this world. And many kinds of kings.

Bubbles scoops up a hunk of sweet potato from the ground.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I have known more than most, though all here have served outside these castle walls in some capacity.

He comes upon a cluster of three chimps, acknowledges them.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Butch and Chipper served The Ringling Brothers, as did Petunia.

Moving along, he passes two other chimps.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Ellie and her friend Kodua were both in a Super Bowl commercial.

A third chimp runs over, WHACKS Ellie on the head and then runs off.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

That's Jonah. He starred in a "Planet of the Apes" film. Unfortunately, it was the one people didn't enjoy.

Bubbles effortlessly ASCENDS a wooden jungle gym, then sits perched on the top of it, overlooking his domain, munching his sweet potato.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Now this is their kingdom, and I am their king. But it was not always so. I was once heir to the greatest kingdom on Earth, one ruled by a king like none before him. But every kingdom, great or small, has its boundaries. Its walls. Every kingdom is itself a kind of cage.

(MORE)

BUBBLES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I have in my life become a student
of cages.

His ruminations are interrupted by...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Good morning, everyone.

He looks down to see LAURA (30s), one of the sanctuary staff,
approaching from outside the enclosure.

LAURA
We have a visitor today...

Bubbles shifts his gaze to an indistinct figure behind her -
a MAN IN WHITE. Dark, longish hair. Sunglasses.

Could it be..?

Bubbles' eyes widen. His pulse quickens. He scurries down
from his perch. Races across the enclosure, nudging other
chimps from his path.

But as he nears...his face falls. The visitor is not who he'd
hoped. It's just a stranger in lab coat. It's just...

LAURA (CONT'D)
...a primate specialist who has
come all the way from Orlando to
meet you!

Bubbles regards DR. ARNOLD OMAR (40s) a moment. Disappointed.

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

A tiny two-year-old Bubbles sits in a small metal cage,
clasping a terry cloth blanket. Lonely. Frightened.

SUPER: "University of Texas - Anderson Cancer Center - 1985"

BUBBLES P.O.V.

...as a doorway opens at the end of a long, antiseptic
hallway lined with caged baby chimps.

Two men enter. One is the LAB TECH familiar to Bubbles, the
other a stranger in dressed in white. Curly black hair. Giant
mirrored shades.

As they near, the two men become visible only from the waist down. They stop in front of Bubbles' cage.

LAB TECH

This is the one.

The strange man leans over and we see it's...MICHAEL JACKSON (27) the King of Pop in his ethereal prime.

MICHAEL

Oh my gosh. He's so beautiful.
Hello, little friend!

LAB TECH

Lucky for him, he was in the control group.

(beat)

Anyway, he's aged out of our study now, so...

Michael reaches a gloved finger through the cage bars.

LAB TECHNICIAN

I wouldn't do that, sir, he might--

Before he can say more, Bubbles wraps his tiny hand around Michael's finger. Michael beams with joy.

MICHAEL

I love him.

INT. LIMO - MOVING - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Michael rides in the back of a large limo. Bubbles sits in his lap, looking out the window. BILLY BRAY (50s), Michael's beefy African-American chief of security, sits opposite them.

MICHAEL

This is Los Angeles. This is where you're going to live.

Michael points out the window at the Hollywood sign.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

That's where they make movies. Have you ever seen a movie?

He points in another direction.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And over there is Disneyland. You can't see it from here, but it's the best place in the whole world!

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 You'll love it here. Everyone is so
 friendly. Watch...

The limo pulls to a halt at a stoplight. Michael Jackson rolls down the window. The car next to them is filled with TEENAGE GIRLS dressed in 80s mall gear.

Jackson sticks his head out. One girl sees him, then another. They grab each other, point, roll down their windows. A frenzy of disbelief.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 Hey, girls.

In unison they open their mouths and SCREAM.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 I had been among humans since birth
 yet never before had I heard a
 sound such as this.

The noise terrifies Bubbles. He clings to Michael, who laughs and rolls up the window, drowning out the sound of the still screaming girls. Bubbles is shaken.

MICHAEL
 We're going to have so much fun
 together.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - DAY

The limo pulls into a long driveway as iron gates close behind it. Ahead is Hayvenhurst - a large, mock Tudor mansion with an ornate fountain in the front yard. Parked in the driveway are several EXPENSIVE CARS.

Billy exits first, then Michael gets out carrying Bubbles.

MICHAEL
 Let's go meet your new friends.

EXT. HAYVENHURST MANSION - MENAGERIE - DAY

Michael carries Bubbles through his private menagerie. They encounter TWO PEACOCKS freely wandering the grounds.

MICHAEL
 This is Winter, and that one is
 Spring.

Next they move onto TWO LLAMAS in an enclosure.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 This is Louis Armstrong and Lola
 Falana. Lola is the grumpy one.

Next, a GIRAFFE.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 And this is Jabar.

Moving on, a RAM.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 And his name is Mr. Tibbs.

Now they approach a large PYTHON.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 And this is Madonna. She's pretty,
 but she's mean.

Bubbles recoils with atavistic fear. Michael laughs, pats
 Bubbles' head.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 It's okay. No one will hurt you
 here. I would never let that
 happen.

A beat as Bubbles watches the snake flicker its tongue.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 Let's go have ice cream.

INT. HAYVENHURST - MICHAEL'S ROOM - DAY

The room is a clutter of books, magazines, record albums,
 stuffed animals. On the walls, pictures of Diana Ross, Barbra
 Streisand, Shirley Temple.

Bubbles eats an ice cream cone as Michael looks on with a
 smile. Then he hears a RUMBLE from outside. Michael leaps to
 his feet, crosses to the window. He pulls back the shades and
 looks out. His expression darkens.

MICHAEL
 Joe.

He continues watching for a moment, then he races over and
 SNATCHES up Bubbles, causing Bubbles to drop his ice-cream.
 Cradling Bubbles to his chest, Michael dives under his bed.

MICHAEL AND BUBBLES' POV

...as they look out from their hiding place. Bubbles WHIMPERS at the sight of his ice-cream cone lying tantalizingly out of reach. Michael cups his hand over the chimp's mouth.

FOOTSTEPS approach. There's a KNOCK at the door. A moment passes and then FOOTSTEPS recede down the hallway.

BACK TO SCENE

...as Bubbles scampers out from beneath the bed, scoops his ice-cream off the floor and resumes eating.

INT. HAYVENHURST - PLAYROOM - NIGHT

"The Wizard of Oz" plays on a large TV in the background while Michael, now dressed in pajamas, blows soap bubbles from a bubble wand.

Bubbles watches one float across the room. He is instantly, utterly captivated.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

A name, a name, what is in a name?
Would my fate would have taken some
better turn had I shown greater
interest in one of the many other
playthings surrounding me in those
days?

Bubbles follows the bubble across the room.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Might I have earned a moniker more
dignified? More regal? A name
befitting the future king?

Bubbles climbs onto the couch as the soap bubble rises. He leaps down to chase it as it drifts further away.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

So much our lives are writ in our
youth, a time largely beyond our
control, a time when events unfold
without our consent. Though perhaps
all of life is ever thus.

Bubbles catches up with the bubble. He cautiously reaches out to touch it. The moment his finger makes contact...POP! It bursts, startling the chimp.

Michael cracks up, clapping his hands in delight.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
And so it was I became "Bubbles."

INT. HAYVENHURST - MOVIE THEATRE - DAY

Michael shovels popcorn in his face as he watches "Peter Pan." Bubbles sits in the seat next him, examining a popcorn kernel. He gives it a curious sniff.

A shaft of light emerges from the back of the room as a door swings open. Michael turns to see...

LINDA (30s), an attractive if tired-looking member of the house staff silhouetted in the doorway.

LINDA
Sunday supper.

MICHAEL
I already ate.

LINDA
Your mom said to come get you.

MICHAEL
Is Joe gonna be there?

LINDA
All I know is Katherine told me to come tell you it's Sunday supper.

Bubbles turns in his seat. Linda startles at seeing him. Then just shakes her head. Another day at Hayvenhurst.

INT. HAYVENHURST - HALLWAY - DAY

Holding Bubbles at his hip, Michael moves through a hallway lined by trophy cases displaying gold records, framed Jackson 5 concert posters and various memorabilia. Michael doesn't spare them a glance as he crosses into the...

INT. HAYVENHURST - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...where (almost) all of Michael's brothers and sisters are seated around a large table. They include: REBBIE (35), JACKIE (34), TITO (32), JERMAINE (31), LA TOYA (29), MARLON (28), and RANDY (24).

Also at the table, the family matriarch - KATHERINE (55), prim, conservative.

All eyes are on Bubbles as they enter.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I had not until then understood The King had so many subjects living with us there in the castle.

La Toya squeals with delight.

LA TOYA

Oh my God!

KATHERINE

Language.

LA TOYA

He's so cute!

Tito rolls his eyes. Jermaine smirks.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I would later find it telling that, though he had introduced to me each member of his menagerie by name, he felt the people here seated to be beneath my acquaintance.

MICHAEL

Where's Janet?

As Michael and Bubbles take a seat, JOE (57) enters. A large, imposing man. Slick suit, lots of jewelry.

JOE

Out on tour. Her record just hit six million. What do you think of that, Michael?

(noticing Bubbles)

Oh, hell no. Not in my house.

Michael casts down his eyes. Afraid to look at Joe.

LA TOYA

He's adorable, Daddy.

Joe simmers.

JOE

At least put a diaper on him. I don't need his monkey junk staring me in the face while I'm trying to eat my beanie weenies.

Marlon and Randy snicker. A SERVER enters with a tray of canned PEPSI soft drinks. Michael recoils at the sight of them.

LATER

The meal is finished. SERVERS cart the dishes away.

JOE

I was on the phone with Don King today. And we both think it's high time for another Jackson Five album.

Randy, Tito, Marlon and Jermaine nod in agreement. Bubbles reaches for a Pepsi. Michael moves it out of his reach.

JOE (CONT'D)

Then next year we tour again. Make it even bigger than Victory. What do you say?

MICHAEL

I don't know. Maybe.

The brothers exchange glances.

JOE

Listen, Michael. We let you make that movie. We let you do solo records -- not just the one, but two. Now it's time to start recording with your brothers again. Maybe you think you're some kinda big star, but in this house--

MICHAEL

(softly)

I own this house now. You keep forgetting that.

JOE

And you keep forgetting that if it wasn't for me and the rest of this family--

Suddenly Michael springs from his seat, holding Bubbles outstretched.

MICHAEL

Oh no!

Bubbles is in mid-urination. His stream SPRAYS onto the table as Michael holds him aloft, panicky, unsure what to do.

Chaos erupts! Jackson brothers push back from the table. GLASSES overturn, dishes CLATTER to the floor.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
No Bubbles! Stop! Bad!

La Toya giggles. Katherine covers her eyes. Joe takes another swig of Pepsi, unamused.

JOE
Told you he needs a diaper.

INT. HAYVENHURST - MICHAEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Michael plays with Bubbles (now in a diaper) on the floor.

MICHAEL
Who's a bad little chimpanzee?

He points at Bubbles. Bubbles imitates him, points back.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I'm bad? No. You're bad. Let's try again. Who's bad? Who's bad, Bubbles?

Michael points at Bubbles. Bubbles points at Michael. And then...their fingertips meet. Like the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, or the poster for E.T.

Michael smiles. Bubbles smiles back.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - ROOF - NIGHT

Michael and Bubbles (now in a diaper) sit atop the roof, gazing at the sky. It's quiet. Peaceful. The stars bright, the moon full.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
It was the first time I remember being fully immersed in the beauty of night. Stars spilling across the deep black expanse of the universe entire, the moon aglow, so massive and close it seemed like you could feel its reflective warmth upon your skin, seemed as if you could reach out and take it in your very hands.

Bubbles then sees that Michael is silently crying.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Having been delivered to this unexpected paradise, I was surprised to discover The King did not share my reverence for this place, this moment. It was then perhaps I first began to understand that fires silently raged within him, first began to fathom depth of his unhappiness and glimpse the immensity of his ambitions.

MICHAEL

We've got to get out of this place.
Go somewhere we can be free.

MONTAGE - THE EDUCATION OF BUBBLES

-- Bubbles wears overalls (he will be clothed from here on except where noted) and sits in Michael Jackson's lap on the couch. Michael reads aloud to him from "Great Expectations."

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But first, there was the matter of my education...

-- Michael reads Bubbles "Grimm's Fairy Tales."

-- Bubbles looks through a ViewMaster at a reel of "Disney's Robin Hood."

-- Bubbles holds a paint brush. Michael guides his hand across a canvas.

-- Michael reads Bubbles "The Tales of King Arthur."

BUBBLES (V.O.)

...much of which, despite his many duties, The King attended to personally...

-- Bubbles scribbles in a "Wizard of Oz" coloring book.

-- Bubbles thumbs through "The Complete Illustrated Works of William Shakespeare." He holds the book upside down.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Though he would occasionally commission others to assist with some of the more advanced lessons.

-- La Toya teaches Bubbles how to use a spoon to eat applesauce.

-- A GROUNDSKEEPER lets Bubbles hold the hose to water flowers.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
Chief among these tutors was The
Bearded One...

EXT. HAYVENHURST - MENAGERIE - DAY

Bearded animal trainer BOB DUNN (30s) kneels down to be at eye level with Bubbles. He holds his hand out palm up in a chimp gesture of submission.

BOB
How you doing there, fella?

MICHAEL
Bubbles, this is your new friend
Bob. He's going to be teaching us
sign language so we can talk to
each other.

Bubbles touches Bob's hand. Bob smiles.

INT. ELIZABETH TAYLOR'S HOME - TEAROOM - DAY

Michael and Bubbles have tea with Michael's good friend, the outsized former movie icon ELIZABETH TAYLOR (54).

BUBBLES (V.O.)
There was also Lady Teacups.

Bubbles signs to Liz.

MICHAEL
He's saying 'thank you.'

LIZ
Sign language? Oh, that's darling!

They watch Bubble fumble with his teacup.

MICHAEL
Maybe you can teach him how to
drink tea properly, Liz.

Elizabeth smirks.

LIZ
Heaven knows I'm all about
propriety.

INT. HAYVENHURST - DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Music BLARES as Michael runs through some of his signature moves in front of a wall of mirrors. He sweats. Working hard.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
My education also included physical training, which The King approached with the utmost rigor and discipline.

As Michael spins, Bubbles mimics him, twirling on all fours. Michael emits one of his famous high-pitched YELPS...

MICHAEL
Shamone!

BUBBLES (V.O.)
As he loosed his war cry, I understood these sessions were not simply a matter of exercise. He was building strength and stamina.

Bubbles attempts the war cry, but manages only an awkward CHIRP-GRUNT.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
The King was preparing for battle.

INT. HAYVENHURST MANSION - MICHAEL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Michael looks at the man in the mirror, unhappily inspecting his face a moment before picking up a bottle of Porcelana skin bleaching cream.

Bubbles sits on the stool next to him, watching as Michael rubs the cream into his face.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
Before venturing forth to the battlefield, he would don war paint that turned his face a spectral, phantasmic shade meant to strike fear into the heart of his enemies.

LATER

Michael faces the mirror again. A bandage covers his nose.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Often he would return from these battles with bandages covering wounds received in combat.

Michael peels the bandage away to reveal a noticeably narrowed nose.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But he had remarkable powers of self-healing, each time recovering from such injuries without so much as a scar.

LATER

Michael picks up a tube of lipstick and writes a number across the mirror:

"100,000,000"

Michael stands back to gaze at it.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Each morning he would contemplate this royal edict scrawled upon the reflecting glass. I knew not its meaning, but it's inscription seemed to mark the end of that cloistered phase of our lives together, and my introduction into the greater world beyond the castle walls.

INT. FRANK DILEO'S OFFICE - DAY

Michael's manager, FRANK DILEO (40) -- undertall and overweight, a cigar chomping, gregarious fast-talker -- sits behind his desk in a swanky Beverly Hills office.

Covering the walls are framed pictures of him with Luther Vandross, Gloria Estafan, Meatloaf and Ozzy Osbourne -- and of course, his biggest client of all, Michael Jackson.

Opposite him sit Bubbles and Michael. Bubbles plays with a Rubik's Snake toy.

FRANK
One hundred million?

MICHAEL
It's gotta be big, bigger than
"Thriller."

Frank considers.

FRANK
Well, you know I've always admired
your ambition.

MICHAEL
But?

FRANK
"Thriller" is the best selling
album in the history of history!
You captured lightning in a bottle
and you know what they say about
lightning striking the same bottle
twice.
(off his look)
Don't get me wrong. If anyone could
do it, it would be you. But...

INT. JOHN BRANCA'S OFFICE - DAY

Rock-n-roll lawyer JOHN BRANCA (35) sits behind his desk. Beach Boys tour posters, photos of John with Neil Diamond, Bob Dylan and Thriller-era Michael decorate his office.

Bubbles concentrates on his Rubik's Snake. Twisting, turning.

JOHN
...but why compete with yourself at
this point? Why not do an album of
cover songs? Pay tribute to the
legends and influences who--

Michael's look stops him cold.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Unless you have new material you're
excited about.

INT. FRANK DILEO'S OFFICE - DAY

MICHAEL
I've got sixty songs. And I want to
sing duets on this one.
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I've written parts for Barbra,
Liza, Whitney...

FRANK
Wait, sixty songs? With lyrics and--

MICHAEL
Full multi-tracked demos.

A beat as this sinks in. Frank clearly impressed.

FRANK
Jesus. Guess you haven't been
monkeying around.
(nodding at Bubbles)
Present company excluded.

INT. JOHN BRANCA'S OFFICE - DAY

MICHAEL
And I want to tour. It's gotta be
bigger than Victory. The biggest
tour the world has ever seen.

JOHN
And your brothers, are they going
to be involved with this, or--

Bubbles twists his Rubik's Snake into a cat-like shape.

MICHAEL
No. Absolutely not.

INT. FRANK DILEO'S OFFICE - DAY

FRANK
You ever thought of maybe doing
something with Janet? She's pretty
hot right now.

MICHAEL
I don't need her.

FRANK
Just thinking out loud.

Frank lights a cigar.

MICHAEL
Uncle Tookie...

Frank gives him an apologetic look, grinds out the cigar.

FRANK

Alright. You want to make an album,
let's make an album.

MICHAEL

Not just an album. The perfect
album.

Bubbles makes the final twist to shape his Rubik's Snake into a rhombicuboctahedron (a ball, basically). Puzzle complete.

INT. WESTLAKE AUDIO RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Michael and Bubbles enter the top-of-the-line facility. QUINCY JONES (44), producer extraordinaire and coolest cat around, rises from his chair at the console as they enter.

QUINCY

There's my man. How you doing,
Smelly?

Michael smiles. They high five, embrace. Old friends.

MICHAEL

Man, why you always call me smelly?

QUINCY

Because you got that nose that
knows when a tune has the smelly
jelly gonna make it a hit.

(on Bubbles)

Who is your friend?

MICHAEL

This is Bubbles.

QUINCY

How you doing, Bubs?

Bubbles turns away, shy.

MICHAEL

(to Bubbles)

This is Quincy, Bubbles. Shake his
hand. He won't bite you.

Bubbles reluctantly reaches out a hand. Quincy gently shakes it and smiles.

QUINCY

I already like him better than that
python you used to show up with.
So...you ready to get funky?

Michael covers Bubbles' ears.

MICHAEL
Quincy! He's just a little kid.

QUINCY
Michael, I told you before, 'funky'
is not a dirty word.

MICHAEL
Yeah, but Bubbles doesn't know
that!

Quincy just shakes his head and laughs.

STUDIO MONTAGE

-- Michael pins a note card reading "DIRTY DIANA" to a large, empty corkboard. Then he pins another. And another.

-- Quincy and Michael stand in front of the corkboard, now covered with sixty note cards, each representing a new song.

-- Drummer OLLIE BROWN adjusts his ride cymbal.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
In the days that followed, The King
summoned forth a legion of
courtiers...

-- Bassist NATHAN EAST plugs into an amp.
-- GREG PHILLINGANES enters carrying a keyboard.
-- DAVID WILLIAMS takes a guitar from its case.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
...who brought with them a great
variety of implements, the purpose
of which I could not immediately
discern.

-- JERRY HEY pops a mouthpiece onto his trumpet.
-- Michael, alone in the vocal booth, taps a mic, testing it.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
But soon The King's designs were
made clear.

-- Engineer BRUCE SWEDIEN flips a power switch on the console, bringing it to life.
-- The drummer lays down a HEAVY BEAT. Bubbles startles at the sound.
-- Michael closes his eyes. Nods along.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I had, of course, been exposed to music before The King plucked me from obscurity.

- The rhythm guitarist adds a chicken scratch.
- The bassist adds a FUNKY BASS LINE.
- The keyboardist joins in.
- Michael starts to move more loosely. Feeling the groove.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But no being I've ever encountered, before or since, had such an intimate relationship to this layered, mesmeric panoply of sound.

- The trumpet BLASTS a four note fill.
- Michael SPINS. Kicks. HOWLS into the mic.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

These subjects were here assembled to conjur magic from The King, to summon forth some new expression of movement and sound that would lead his people to even greater glory.

- Michael shuffles sideways...and BUMPS up against the wall of the vocal booth.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Even if it meant putting himself in a cage.

- Michael frowns. Removes his headphones. Frustrated.
- Quincy motions to the musicians to stop playing.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Being under the weight of such a burden, The King was no easy man to please.

- Quincy, Michael and Bruce sit huddled around the mixing console, engaged in heated discussion.
- Michael removes a card marked "CRACK KILLS" from the corkboard. Tears it in half.
- He does the same with "BE ME 4 A DAY"
- And again with "GROOVE OF MIDNIGHT"

BUBBLES (V.O.)

When The King tired of his courtiers, new ones were summoned forth.

- PAULINHO DA COSTA sets up Samba drums.
- Guitarist STEVE STEVENS tunes his instrument.
- JOHN BARNES runs through scales on a synthesizer.
- Female BACK UP SINGERS harmonize around a mic.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 And when his cage proved an
 impediment, a larger one was
 hastily commissioned.

- Michael slides across the parquet floor of the newly expanded vocal room - no longer a booth, but a mini-dance studio with multi-directional mics.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 If I was to win The King's favor,
 and one day assume his crown, I
 would need to begin my musical
 training in earnest.

- Bubbles picks up a tambourine. He SLAPS it and SHAKES it arhythmically to the delight of the Back Up Singers.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 Alas, though my early efforts met
 with some enthusiasm...

- Bubbles reaches for a knob on the mixing console and sound engineer Bruce swats his hand away.

- Bubbles PLUCKS the string of a guitar. Steve Stevens pulls the instrument out of his reach.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 ...my curiosity was largely
 unwelcome by the courtiers.

- Bubbles KNOCKS over the samba drums. As they CLATTER to the floor Michael laughs. Quincy looks annoyed.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 I began to fear I had no natural
 aptitude for these implements. That
 any musicality I possessed would
 have to be expressed through my
 voice alone.

- Bubbles HOOTS in the vocal isolation booth. Bruce winces, cuts his mic.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 And yet that, too, was found
 wanting.

(MORE)

BUBBLES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But The King was not one to leave possibilities for my betterment unexplored.

INT. ARNOLD KLEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Bubbles and Michael on a couch in the office of DR. ARNOLD KLEIN (40), dermatologist to the stars. An original Andy Warhol painting hangs on the wall.

DR. KLEIN
 Great to see you, Michael. You're looking fantastic.

MICHAEL
 Hello, Dr. Klein.

DR. KLEIN
 Arnie. Call me Arnie. Let me have a look at you.

He moves in very close. Takes Michael's face in his hands, scrutinizes Michael's skin. It's kinda creepy.

DR. KLEIN (CONT'D)
 Amazing. You are my most beautiful work of art, you know that? My Michelangelo.

He releases Michael's face.

DR. KLEIN (CONT'D)
 So what can I do for you? You need some more skin lightener? Some Valium?

MICHAEL
 I wanted to ask about Bubbles.

Dr. Klein looks at Bubbles for the first time.

DR. KLEIN
 Hmm. I suppose he could use some collagen around the eyes.

MICHAEL
 No, nothing like that. I want him to be able to speak. So he can share his thoughts and his feelings. I've read a lot about primates. They're very smart.
 (MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

They just don't have the same kind of vocal cords we do and that's why they can't talk or sing. But what if Bubbles had human vocal cords put in him? Can they do that?

Dr. Klein narrows his eyes, considers.

DR. KLEIN

An interesting question. But I'm a dermatologist. That's a little outside my area of expertise.

INT. STEVEN HOFFFLIN'S CLINIC - OPERATING ROOM - DAY

DR. STEVEN HOFFFLIN (41) wears full surgical scrubs. A bejeweled Beverly Hills HOUSEWIFE lies topless and unconscious on an operating table behind him.

Michael stands across the room, holding Bubbles. Both wear surgical masks.

DR. HOFFFLIN

I'm a cosmetic surgeon, Michael. You should see a veterinarian or primatologist for this.

MICHAEL

But do you think it's possible?

DR. KLEIN

In considered medical opinion... anything is possible, baby.

Dr. Klein winks. Michael smiles. Just the answer he was hoping for.

INT. UC DAVIS SCHOOL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE - OFFICE - DAY

DR. ANGELA OWENS (30s) sits behind a desk, her walls lined with diplomas and animal pictures. She can barely contain her horror at what Michael is proposing.

DR. OWENS

Absolutely not. No. That's just...no. No.

Michael is crestfallen.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

And so it was my musical career concluded before it commenced.

INT. HAYVENHURST - VIDEO ARCADE - NIGHT

Child star EMMANUEL LEWIS (16, very small for his age) plays Donkey Kong while Michael looks on. Bubbles watches from across the room, clearly unhappy.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

My failure was made more stingingly acute by the increasing presence of a variety of pint-sized interlopers who began appearing inside the castle walls.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - FRONT YARD - DAY

Costumed cowboy MACUALAY CULKIN (8), chases a Native American headdress wearing Michael around a tree, firing a toy six shooter at him.

Bubbles sits in the tree, looking down with disdain.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

They were an unmannered lot, physically weak and given to clamorous entertainments. I did not, in those halcyon days, comprehend the threat they represented to the kingdom.

INT. HAYVENHURST MANSION - DANCE STUDIO - DAY

COREY FELDMAN (15) -- dressed like a little mini-Michael -- busts some lame breakdancing moves as music booms through the studio.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I knew only that they had usurped The King's attention. I was determined to find some way to win it back.

Bubbles peeks in the doorway. Spying.

COREY

Hey, Michael -- do that thing you did at the Motown show, man. The backward floating move.

MICHAEL

The moonwalk? You don't want to see that.

COREY
Come on, man. Do it!

Michael shrugs and then...unleashes a perfect moonwalk.
Bubbles' eyes widen. He's mesmerized.

COREY (CONT'D)
That's awesome!

BUBBLES (V.O.)
And so it was.

Corey attempts a moonwalk. It's terrible. Michael laughs.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
And now I knew the thing wherewith
to earn the favor of The King.

INT. HAYVENHURST - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael sleeps on the floor next to the fireplace. He's a loud snorer.

Bubbles lays in his crib, under a blanket. He takes off the blanket. Sits up. Looks at Michael sleeping...

...then climbs out of his crib and makes his way quietly across the room.

INT. HAYVENHURST - DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

Bubbles knuckle-walks into the empty studio. Crosses and stops in front of the mirror. He stands on two legs. Looks at his reflection for a moment and then turns sideways.

With great concentration, he takes a step back. And another. And...falls on his butt.

Bubbles gets up. Readies himself for a second attempt. But then he hears WHISPERING coming from the hallway.

INT. HAYVENHURST - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bubbles pokes his head out to investigate, where he sees...

...Joe embracing the maid, Linda. Pawing her. She tries to wrestle free of his embrace.

JOE
Come on, baby.

LINDA
I'm working right now.

JOE
You know this won't take but a minute. Katherine is out with the Witness elders, so you don't need to worry none about her.

LINDA
Joe...AAAHHHH!!!

She screams as she spots Bubbles. The noise freaks Bubbles out. He starts YELLING too.

Joe releases Linda and charges towards Bubbles.

JOE
You damn monkey!

But Bubbles is too fast. He propels himself off a wall, grabs a 1980s tracklighting unit overhead and SWINGS jungle gym style from one light to the next right over the head of Joe.

Bubbles then drops to the floor and races away as Joe fumes.

INT. HAYVENHURST - JOE'S OFFICE - DAY

Animal trainer Bob Dunn (the same guy we saw teaching ASL to Michael and Bubbles) sits in Joe's office. Pictures of Joe with the likes of Don King, Berry Gordy, Muhammad Ali are on display.

JOE
Thanks for coming. Michael didn't see you, did he?

BOB
No, I didn't run into him.

JOE
Good. Listen, this chimpanzee of his? Bubbles. We need to do something about him.

BOB
Do something?

JOE
I can't have a chimp running all around here. The other animals are bad enough, but at least they're outside. Or in cages.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - SAME TIME

Bubbles sits on the roof, listening to their conversation through an open window.

BOB (O.S.)
Have you brought this up with Michael?

JOE (O.S.)
Michael ain't listened to me since he was nineteen years old. Anything I say, he'll go and do the opposite. But you he trusts.

INT. HAYVENHURST - JOE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BOB
I don't know. He and Bubbles are pretty close.

JOE
You say that like it's a good thing.

BOB
What I mean is, chimps are social animals. They develop very real, very complex relationships with the people around them. Just ripping him away from Michael could be psychologically damaging.

JOE
Damaging, huh? Let me ask you this - how long do these things live?

BOB
Up to sixty years.

JOE
I'm a 57-year-old man. So you're telling me, that for the rest of my natural born goddamn life...

EXT. HAYVENHURST MANSION - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

JOE (O.S.)

...I'm gonna have to contend with a wild jungle creature roaming this here house that I built with my own sweat and blood and business acumenity? Because I'd say that's psychologically damaging!

BOB (O.S.)

I'm just saying be patient. Bubbles is growing. Getting bigger, stronger. More independent. It won't be long until he is too powerful to handle.

Bubbles swells with pride. Liking the sound of this. Until...

BOB (O.S.) (CONT'D)

There is no scenario where he doesn't end up in a cage.

These words hit Bubbles HARD.

INT. HAYVENHURST MANSION - JOE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BOB

That's just the reality. By the time they're seven or eight years old, chimps are unmanageable. And Michael will understand that when the time comes. Believe me, Bubbles will make him understand that.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

A cloud passes across the sun, throwing shadows over our troubled young chimp.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Thus was the prophecy spoken.

NIGHT

Bubbles hasn't moved or even changed his expression.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

The stars shone darkly over me as I pondered the malignancy of my fate.

DAY

Bubbles still as the Buddha as the sun rises.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But by morning's first light, I had resolved not to humbly submit to destiny. I would disdain fortune. I would rage against the prophecy through docility...

INT. TOYS R US - NIGHT

Bubbles rides inside a shopping cart pushed by Michael, head held high.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

...and assume steerage of my course through acquiescence.

Billy Bray and TWO BODYGUARDS follow with shopping carts as Michael and TWO YOUNG KIDS (9,10) grab toys willy-nilly off the shelves.

INT. HAYVENHURST - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael sleeps as Bubbles climbs out of his crib.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I would meanwhile redouble my nightly training regimen.

INT. HAYVENHURST MANSION - DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

Bubbles working on his moonwalk. Able to stay on his feet now.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

And await the ideal moment to unleash my hard-won talents onto an unsuspecting world.

INT. CHILDREN'S CLOTHING BOUTIQUE (BEVERLY HILLS) - DAY

Michael wears a wide brimmed hat, big mirrored shades, a surgical mask and a grey wig. His 'old man disguise' seems crafted to both repel and invite attention.

He holds Bubbles' hand as they stroll through racks of high-fashion kids wear.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But as I ventured further into the kingdom at large, my self-composure would be challenged in new ways.

Manager Frank Dileo tags along. Michael picks up a pair of overalls off the rack, holds them up.

MICHAEL

You think these would look good?

Frank looks across the room, sees the STORE MANAGER talking quietly into the phone and giving the group pointed glances.

FRANK

I have no opinion, Michael.

MICHAEL

You're no fun. Bubbles, do you like this one?

Bubbles nods. Michael takes three identical pairs off the rack, hands them to a trailing star-struck SALES ASSOCIATE.

Franks again eyes the Store Manager suspiciously. The Manager gives him a weak smile as he hangs up the phone.

FRANK

So I spoke to Barbra's people this morning. She doesn't want to do it.

MICHAEL

Why?

FRANK

She thinks it would look weird doing a love song with you. Because the age difference.

Michael is a little hurt.

MICHAEL

Fine. We'll get Liza.

FRANK

Liza is shooting a movie. Sequel to that alcoholic midget thing.

MICHAEL

What about Whitney?

FRANK

Whitney would love to do it. She's crazy about the idea. Her people?

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Not so much. They think she's overexposed. But I've got an idea. It may seem a little nutty at first, but--

Billy Bray ducks his head in the store.

BILLY

We need to go. There's a situation developing.

Behind him, we see several ONLOOKERS peeking over his shoulder, trying to get a glimpse of Michael.

Michael sighs. Turns to the Sales Associate.

MICHAEL

Can you have these wrapped up and sent to my house?

SALES ASSOCIATE

Of course, Mr. Jackson.

Michael hands him a wad of cash.

SALES ASSOCIATE (CONT'D)

Um, I'll need an address. To send your purchases to?

Michael gives him a blank look. He has no idea what his address is.

FRANK

4641 Hayvenhurst Avenue. Encino.

A couple TEENAGE KIDS press their faces up against the store window. They point and grin. Bubbles is unnerved.

As they make their way toward the exit, Frank calls out to the Store Manager.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You're an idiot. He would've spent five times as much in here as whoever you tipped off is paying.

Michael scoops up Bubbles, pushes the door opened.

EXT. CHILDREN'S CLOTHING STORE - CONTINUOUS

Pademonium! A crowd has gathered, blocking the sidewalk. Police are popping out of cars, trying to figure out what's happening. There's a WHIR of SHUTTERS as the paparazzi snap photos.

TEENAGE GIRL

Oh my god! There he is!

Another girl SCREAMS. Everyone in the crowd surges forward. Michael's BODYGUARDS take up positions and do their best to wrestle Michael, Frank and Bubbles through the crowd.

Bubbles clings to Michael, terrified.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I feared then that I wouldn't survive to see the inside of any prophesized cage but would instead be torn asunder by the incensed mob. But The King was unwavering, steadfast in his courage.

Michael smiles and waves.

MICHAEL

I love you. I love you all.

The group makes it to the curb and ducks inside the awaiting limo. People YELL and press their faces up against the windows. Bubbles shows his teeth, afraid, as the limo slowly pull away from the chaos.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I had still much to learn about the art of valor.

When it's finally quiet...

MICHAEL

(to Frank)

So what's this idea of yours?

INT. WESTLAKE RECORDING STUDIO - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Michael, Bubbles, Frank and Quincy sit on one side of a conference table. Silent. Waiting.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Even amidst relative quietude, danger was ever present.

(MORE)

BUBBLES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

For during my studies with The King, we read much about the histories of ancient civilizations. Tales rife with courtly machinations, royalty in exile, double-dealings and betrayals.

Frank checks his watch. Shrugs.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

So naturally when I heard the name of the man who had been summoned forth, I felt some trepidation.

The door swings OPENED. Two gorgeous, scantily-clad AMAZONIAN WOMEN (20s) enter followed by a diminutive fellow wearing a flowing coat of regal purple. He is recognized the world over as PRINCE (29).

BUBBLES (V.O.)

For I was precocious in the knowledge that one's place in the world is never truly secure...

As he steps into the room, the Amazons remove his coat. One pulls out a chair for him. He sits. They remain standing.

Prince and the King of Pop eye each other coolly. Two young lions sizing each other up.

PRINCE

Michael.

MICHAEL

Prince.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

...and that there will always be aspirants to the throne.

FRANK

Thanks for coming. This is really fantastic. Do you or the ladies need anything? Water? Champagne? Pepsi?

Prince shakes his head.

PRINCE

So what's this idea of yours?

Frank gives Quincy a nervous glance. Quincy nods encouragement.

FRANK

A duet. You and Michael. You're two young toughs, beefing over turf. And in the song - and the video, this is gonna be the first single and we're thinking we can get Coppola to direct - the two of you are trading barbs. Cutting heads. Battling it out on the streets through song and dance to see who is the baddest.

MICHAEL

But good bad. Not bad bad.

PRINCE

Right. Got it.

FRANK

Now here's the genius part, if I may toot my own flag -- months before the song comes out, we leak to the tabloids that you and Michael are bitter rivals. That the two of you can't stand each other. I'll say something mean to Rolling Stone about you, your camp says something terrible to People about Michael.

PRINCE

You want me to bad mouth your client?

FRANK

Nothing about musicianship or dancing ability. Those will be off limits for both sides. But like, I dunno, what's with the hyperbolic chamber he sleeps in --

MICHAEL

Uncle Tookie!

Frank holds up a hand - "hear me out."

FRANK

-- or what kind of nut would want to buy the Elephant Man, or why does he always hang around with some hairy chimpanzee when he could surround himself with beautiful women like you do, or--

Quincy clears his throat. Gives Frank a look.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Well, you get the idea. And then, once we get the press all in a lather? Bam! We drop the video. The two biggest superstars on the planet going head-to-head to see who...is...the baddest!

Prince considers a moment.

PRINCE

But Michael wins, right?

Frank defers to Quincy.

QUINCY

Well, we haven't broken it down line by line as far as who sings what. Maybe we'll record two versions and--

PRINCE

It's his record, so he wins.

Quincy and Frank reluctantly cede his point - Michael wins. Prince lets them dangle for a moment before...

PRINCE (CONT'D)

Let's hear the demo.

A relieved Quincy rises, crosses to a boombox set up in the corner. He puts in a cassette tape labelled 'BAD', hits PLAY.

The song's intro BOOMS through the room. Michael (on tape) starts singing the first verse. He gets three lines in before...

...Prince raises a finger in the air. Quincy stops the tape.

PRINCE (CONT'D)

What's that first lyric?

Quincy and Frank trade glances again.

FRANK

'Your butt is mine.'

PRINCE

Your butt is mine.

Frank nods. An awkward silence ensues.

PRINCE (CONT'D)
 Nobody is going to sing that line
 to me. And I'm sure as hell not
 going to sing it to Michael
 Jackson. I think we're done here.

Prince snaps his fingers. The two Amazons rise, pull out his chair, help him into his coat. Nobody says anything as Prince and the ladies make their way toward the door.

Just before exiting, Prince stops. Turns around.

PRINCE (CONT'D)
 Besides, you don't need me. That
 song is a hit already.
 (nodding curtly)
 Michael.

MICHAEL
 (returning the nod)
 Prince.

INT. WESTLAKE RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Only ten note cards remain on the corkboard.

Bruce, Michael and Quincy sit huddled over the mixing console, each wearing headphones. All are exhausted -- they've been up for days. Bubbles practices his moonwalk in the corner, unnoticed.

The men remove their headphones in unison.

QUINCY
 What do you think, Smelly? We got
 an album here?

Michael thinks about it. Hard. Reluctant to let go.

MICHAEL
 I guess so.

Quincy and Bruce are hugely relieved. Finally.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 You guys can go. But I want to
 listen to it one more time on the
 speakers.

QUINCY
 You got it.

Bruce hits a button on the console and the tape REWINDS.

Quincy rises. Puts on his coat. Bruce stands. Follows Quincy toward the door. Quincy turns off the lights as they go, leaving the studio dimmed.

Michael slumps into the couch. Bubbles climbs into his lap.

The tapes STOPS rewinding. Playback begins and the room is filled with a few seconds of TAPE HISS.

Michael points at Bubbles. Bubbles points back. They bring their fingers together.

MICHAEL

One hundred million, here we come.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - BACK YARD - DAY

Little people dressed as the SEVEN DWARVES stand on a portable stage set up in the backyard. A woman in a SNOW WHITE costume lays in bed.

GRUMPY

Angel, ha! She's a female! And all females is poison! They're full of wicked wiles!

BASHFUL

What are wicked wiles?

GRUMPY

I don't know, but I'm against them!

The handful of seated children watching the show LAUGH. Michael, seated with them, laughs hardest of all.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Katherine and Joe watching him. A mixture of love and concern on Katherine's face.

KATHERINE

That boy is a mystery to me.

Joe grunts in unhappy agreement. Looks on as Bubbles walks by with Bob Dunn.

LATER

The show is over. Michael stands near the empty stage uncomfortably chatting with an ELDER (70s) from the Jehovah's Witnesses.

ELDER

I wish you all the best with the new recording, Michael. May Jehovah bless and keep you.

MICHAEL

Thank you. That means a lot.

ELDER

There won't be any supernatural nonsense in the videos this time, will there?

Behind him, a crowd gathers near the stage. There's a growing hubbub.

MICHAEL

No, sir. Nothing like that.

ELDER

Well, that's a comfort. Say, I'd like to talk about setting up an interview for The Watchtower.

La Toya grabs Michael by the arm.

LA TOYA

Michael, you've got to see this!

See drags him over in front of the stage, where he takes up a place next to manager Frank and lawyer John. And now we see what all the fuss was over.

BUBBLES

...is onstage, "dancing." The crowd, adults and kids alike, are eating it up. And then, just as he's whipped them into a frenzy, he unleashes his...

...moonwalk! It's far from perfect, but the intention is clear and the crowd LOVES it.

Michael laughs, impressed. A proud parent.

JOHN

You should make him part of the act.

FRANK

(to Michael)

Ideas like that are why he's your lawyer and I'm your manager.

JOHN

I don't mean bring him onstage or anything. But put him in a video, or maybe on one of those animal shows. Promote the brand and you can claim him as an expense. Write off his care and feeding.

Wheels turn in Michael's head.

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE - "LIVE! DICK CLARK PRESENTS"

TV host DICK CLARK in front of a studio audience, mic in hand.

DICK CLARK (V.O.)

(on TV)

Now, there's a celebrity sitting in our audience...

There's a HOOTING sound. Camera PULLS BACK to REVEAL...

Bubbles in the front row, next to Dick. The audience laughs.

DICK CLARK (V.O.)

As I was saying, there's a celebrity in our audience here that's been getting the full superstar treatment. He goes in the side entrances of hotels, hides out from teenage girls so they don't smother him with kisses. He is Michael Jackson's favorite companion, and he is bound to be the object of a lot of affection.

(to Bubbles)

Did you bring the letter from your boss?

Bubbles hands Dick a letter. Dick describes it.

DICK CLARK (V.O.)

It comes on M.J.J. Productions stationary with a moonwalker at the top and says, 'Dear Dick, I'm giving Bubbles the night off from his busy schedule so he can come and play on your show.' There it is. And believe it or not, it's signed 'Micheal Jackson!'

Dick holds up the letter for the cameras. The audience CLAPS and CHEERS.

INT. HAYVENHURST - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael and Bubbles sit on the bed, watching the Dick Clark broadcast on TV. Bubbles is munching M&M's from a bag.

ON TV

DICK CLARK (V.O.)

(on TV)

Now, I met you about two years ago, Bubbles. And, you've had a lot of publicity in the meantime. Are you still the same sweet old chimp that you always were?

Bubbles sticks out his tongue. The audience laughs.

BACK TO SCENE

MICHAEL

(jokingly)

That's bad, Bubbles. You should respect Mr. Clark. No more candy for you.

He yanks the M&M bag out of Bubbles' hand.

BUBBLES

(signing)

Give back candy.

MICHAEL

Nope.

Bubbles tries to grab it back, but Michael raises it aloft, out of reach. Bubbles LEAPS on Michael, playfully tackling him off the bed and to the floor.

Michael and Bubbles roll around, wrestling. Bubbles grabs a fistful of Michael's curly locks.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Ow! No pulling hair!

La Toya bursts into the room, in tears.

LA TOYA

You can't go on tour.

They stop wrestling. Michael stands. Turns off the TV. Bubbles snatches back the M&M bag, scurries away.

MICHAEL
What's wrong?

LA TOYA
I can't take it anymore! They treat me like I'm a child. Don't leave me here, Michael. Please.

MICHAEL
You'll be fine. I'll be back in a few months and then everything will change. I promise.

LA TOYA
Change how?

Michael gives her an enigmatic smile.

LA TOYA (CONT'D)
(off his look)
What are you up to?

MICHAEL
It's a secret.

Now she's intrigued.

LA TOYA
Tell me.

MICHAEL
I can't.

LA TOYA
Don't you trust me?

MICHAEL
Oh my gosh, never. You're a Jackson!

She WHACKS him on the shoulder half playfully, half in anger.

LA TOYA
When have I ever betrayed you? I've always kept your secrets and always will.

Michael thinks about it. Looks at Bubbles quietly munching M&M's, watching himself on TV.

MICHAEL
Alright. But you can't tell a soul. Not even Bubbles knows yet.

As she waits anxiously to hear his secret we...

CUT TO:

INT. JUMBO JET - NIGHT

Bubbles looks out the window at the rainy tarmac as workers load a staggering number of giant amplifiers in hard, wheeled cases stenciled "MICHAEL JACKSON."

BOB

Time to put on your seat belt,
Bubbles.

Bubbles sits, Bob fastens his belt.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I was determined to be on my best behavior in the presence of the Bearded Prophet. To prove that I was the very antithesis of ungovernable, and that I no more belonged in a cage than did The King himself.

Other members of Michael's 132 member strong entourage file past, stuff carry-ons into the overhead bins. There's a palpable air of excitement.

Bubbles signs something in A.S.L. to Bob.

BOB

Michael is on a different plane.
Don't worry, you'll see him soon.
Just sit tight and relax. You've got a big adventure ahead.

LATER

The plane shakes as it accelerates down the runway. Bubbles grips the hand rests tightly. He watches scenery race by out the window.

EXT. LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

The plane lifts off the ground. We see Bubbles' face framed in a window as the plane pulls out of sight.

INT. JUMBO JET - DAY

Bob, Bubbles and pretty much all the other passengers are asleep as the plane touches down with a JOLT.

Bubbles opens his eyes, disoriented. The voice of a JAPANESE STEWARDESS addresses them over the P.A.

JAPANESE STEWARDESS (V.O.)

Ladies and gentleman, we have arrived at Narita International Airport. Welcome to Japan. We wish you much success and great happiness during your stay. *Domo arigato gozaimasu!*

The passengers CHEER and whoop it up. Bubbles CLAPS.

INT. NARITA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (TOKYO) - HALLWAY - DAY

Bubbles holds Bob Dunn's hand as a JAPANESE HANDLER escorts them down a private hallway. As they near a door at the end of the hall, they can hear people CHANTING and CHEERING on the other side. The noise gets louder as they near.

BOB

(to handler)

Guess they thought Michael was on this flight, huh?

JAPANESE HANDLER

Oh no, sir...

He opens the door...

INT. NARITA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - ARRIVALS - CONTINUOUS

And the gathered crowd goes NUTS! People CHEER, flashbulbs POP. The handler has to shout to be heard above the cacophony.

JAPANESE HANDLER

They are here for Bubbles. He is big time star in Japan. Very big time success!

A TEENAGE GIRL holds aloft a hand drawn picture of a Michael and Bubbles. Another waves a sign that says "Bubbles I love!"

Bubbles surveys the crowd, awestruck. Bob is tickled pink, as are other members of the entourage. He leans down and speaks into Bubbles' ear.

BOB
 Better say hello to your fans,
 buddy.

Bubbles hesitates a moment, and rises to full height. He pushes out his chest proudly and gives them a big wave.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 I had arrived.

INT. TOUR BUS - NIGHT

Neon light flickers over Bubbles' face as he looks out the window and takes in the crowded Tokyo streets.

As they approach the Capitol Tokyu Hotel, Bubbles spots a crowd gathered on the sidewalk in front. They chant the Japanese pronunciation of Jackson's first name as a row of policemen stand guarding the hotel entrance.

CROWD
 My-ke-ru! My-ke-ru! My-ke-ru!

The sound RATTLES the bus windows as they near.

INT. CAPITOL TOKYU HOTEL - 26TH FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The elevator doors WHISK open and Bob and Bubbles exit, followed by an immaculately dressed CONCIERGE. Two BELLHOPS trail with luggage.

A velvet rope manned by HOTEL SECURITY GUARDS blocks the hallway.

The concierge nods to the security guards and both of them bow deeply to Bubbles and Bob and then pull the velvet rope aside.

BOB
 (under his breath)
 Jesus...he's taken over the whole
 floor.

INT. CAPITOL TOKYU HOTEL - JACKSON SUITE - NIGHT

Half the luxurious suite has been converted into a makeshift dance studio complete with portable hardwood floors and full-length mirrors. Michael is running through moves as...

...the DOOR OPENS and Bubbles and Bob enter. Jackson stops dancing and turns to face them.

MICHAEL

Bubbles!

Bubbles races across the room and leaps into Michael's awaiting arms. Michael laughs, rubs Bubbles' head.

Frank strolls in from an adjoining room. He's carrying a giant 1980s mobile phone, his hand cupped over the mouthpiece to mute the sound.

FRANK

Hey Michael, some bigwig from Pepsi corporate is begging for extra tickets and --

MICHAEL

No.

FRANK

Figured. Also, that school for the cripples?

MICHAEL

Handicapped, Uncle Tookie.

FRANK

Right. How many tickets we giving them?

MICHAEL

Two hundred.

FRANK

Really?

(off his look)

Okay. Fine. Oh...some rock band from New Jersey are staying at the hotel and really want to meet you. You got a few minutes?

MICHAEL

What do you think, Bubbles? You want to meet a rock band from New Jersey?

Bubbles shrugs. Whatever.

LATER

Five shaggy headed young rockers in jean jackets and leather enter the room. They are the members of Bon Jovi -- JON BON JOVI (25), RICHIE SAMBORA (28), DAVID BRYAN (25), TICO TORRES (34) and ALEC JOHN SUCH (34).

Frank, alone on the couch, waves them over.

FRANK

How you doing, fellas? Come on over and have a seat. Michael will be out momentarily.

They cross. Sit. Look around at the giant room, awed.

RICHIE SAMBORA

Holy shit, man, this room is three times bigger than ours.

JON BON JOVI

And there's five of us in there.

TICO TORRES

Not counting, you know, maybe some guests of the female persuasion later.

The boys all have a laugh. Frank chuckles amiably. Jon Bon Jovi lights up a cigarette.

FRANK

Uh, better put that out. Michael is very protective of his voice.

JON BON JOVI

Right. Sorry.

He puts out the cigarette. Frank notices something across the room. Rises hastily...

FRANK

Gentleman, I present to you the King of Pop. Michael, this is Bon Jon and the Jovies.

The guys turn to see...Bubbles stroll into the room clad in a miniature Jackson-style military jacket with gold accents and a sequined glove.

The members of Bon Jovi look at Bubbles. Look at each other. Look at Frank - who is totally deadpan. Just when its getting uncomfortable...

...Michael pops up from behind the couch with a half-crazed smile.

MICHAEL

Ha! You guys should see the looks on your faces!

The guys all laugh nervously. But Michael is just busting up. Bubbles is confused.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Should I have been alarmed that the notion of myself as sovereign provoked such laughter from The King? Or that seeing me festooned in the regal accoutrements induced only befuddled discomfiture from these hirsute gentlemen of New Jersey?

Michael comes around the couch, extends his hand. Jon Bon Jovi rises, shakes it.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Perhaps.

MICHAEL

I'm Michael. Nice to meet you.

JON BON JOVI

Oh man, it is such an honor. I'm Jon. This is Richie, David, Tico... and Alec.

The men rise in turn and shake Michael's hand as they are introduced.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But I took an instant liking to these fellows.

Now Bubbles steps forward and offers his hand. Amused, each member of Bon Jovi shakes hands with him.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Perhaps because they reminded me of orangutans.

LATER

Everyone is seated on the couch. The members of Bon Jovi are drinking beer. Michael sips lemon tea.

MICHAEL

So are you all brothers?

JON BON JOVI

No, no. We just named the band Bon Jovi because it sounds cool.

MICHAEL

That's good. I was in a band with my brothers for awhile. I wouldn't recommend it.

The guys all laugh.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

So where are you playing?

JON BON JOVI

Oh, it's crazy, man. We're playing at Budokan! There's gonna be like 20,000 people there.

MICHAEL

Wow. That's great!

JON

Where are you playing?

MICHAEL

Um...some stadium.

JON

Ticket sales going well, or..?

Michael doesn't want to brag. So...

FRANK

We've sold out all three nights. One hundred thirty five thousand tickets. Actually, the whole tour is sold out. Fourteen dates.

RICHIE SAMBORA

All stadium shows?

Frank nods, nonchalant. Bon Jovi dudes exchange looks -- this Michael Jackson cat is in a whole different league.

JON BON JOVI

Well, hey man, we're off tonight and we're gonna be hanging if you want to come by. We're two floors down. Nothing serious. You know, a few beers. Should be mellow.

Michael sips his tea. Offers a shy smile.

MICHAEL

Yeah. Thanks. That sounds fun.

INT. CAPITOL TOKYU HOTEL - 24TH FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bubbles POV as he moves down the hallway. Muted sounds of ROCK MUSIC grow louder with each step he takes.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

As it was, The King remained in his quarters. The Bearded Prophet and I were sent as his emissaries.

They stop in front of Room 2436. Faint sounds of MUSIC from the other side of the door. Light LAUGHTER. Bubbles looks up at Bob. Hesitant.

BOB

Just a quick beer for this jetlag and then we'll go, okay?

Bubbles nods. Steps forward. Raps FEEBLY against the door.

INT. CAPITOL TOKYU HOTEL - BON JOVI ROOM - LATER

HEAVY METAL BOOMS through the smoke-filled room. We're in the middle of a full-on they-don't-make-them-like-that-anymore-hotel trashing 1980s rock star party.

PARTIERS

(chanting)

Bubbles! Bubbles! Bubbles!

We move past the drunken ROADIES and drunken GROUPIES and RANDOM PARTIERS. We pass...

BOB

...passed out on the couch with a half-empty bottle of sake in his hand and rice cracker crumbs in his beard.

PARTIERS (CONT'D)

(chanting)

Bubbles! Bubbles! Bubbles!

We keep moving until we find...

BUBBLES

...riding atop Richie Sambora's shoulders. A RISING SUN BANDANA wrapped kamikazi-style around his head, a pitcher of beer in either hand.

Richie steers over to two BUSTY GROUPIES in white T-shirts.

RICHIE SAMBORA
Ready, ladies?

They nod and giggle.

RICHIE SAMBORA (CONT'D)
Now, Bubbles!

Bubbles dumps the pitchers and beer SPLASHES over the groupies' chests. Bubbles HOOTS! He tosses the pitchers in the air, steals a beer out of Richie's hand and chugs it. The Partiers go nuts! Bubbles is the life of the party.

INT. CAPITOL TOKYU HOTEL - 24TH FLOOR HALLWAY - LATER

Bubbles rides on a LUGGAGE TROLLEY as the Bon Jovi guys push it down the hall bobsled-style, running as fast as they can.

Partiers CHEER as the trolley ZOOMS toward its target - an open stairwell at the end of the hall.

Jon Bon Jovi trips and the other guys fall over him, spilling drunkenly across the floor.

The trolley FLIES down the hall. Just as it is about to enter the stairwell, Bubbles LEAPS and...

...grabs onto the door frame as the trolley SAILS down the stairs and CRASHES.

Bubbles swings back and forth in the doorframe for a moment and then drops to safety as the partiers CHEER and CLAP!

LATER

Bubbles stands alone in the empty hallway. Sounds of WHISPERING and giggling down the hall. Jon Bon Jovi pokes his head around the corner.

JON BON JOVI
(stage whispering)
Do it, Bubbles!

Bubbles knocks on the door to room 2421. A moment later...a SALARYMAN (40s) in pajamas answers.

He stares dumbfounded at Bubbles. Bubbles gives him a big smile and then...

...whips out a fire extinguisher concealed behind his back and SPRAYS.

The Salaryman sputters and curses as he's enveloped in the thick fog. The partiers CRACK UP as Bubbles drops the fire extinguisher and scampers off down the hall.

INT. CAPITOL TOKYU HOTEL - SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT

Partiers encircle the hotel swimming pool.

PARTIERS
Bubbles! Bubbles! Bubbles!

Bubbles stands at the edge of the pool, gathering his nerve.

PARTIERS (CONT'D)
Bubbles! Bubbles! Bubbles!

Then he leaps...

Bob walks in on the scene just as Bubbles SPLASHES into the water.

BOB
Jesus, you guys! Chimps can't swim!

He pushes past them and DIVES into the water after Bubbles.

UNDERWATER

...Bubbles can still hear the muffled sound of the partiers CHANTING his name as Bob swims to his rescue.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPITOL TOKYU HOTEL - JACKSON SUITE - DAY

MICHAEL
Bubbles...Bubbles...

Bubbles is passed out on the floor. Michael -- in a bathrobe, his face covered in skin bleaching cream -- gently rocks his shoulder. Bubbles opens his eyes. Blinks against the harsh morning light. Smacks his lips. Hungover.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Wake up. We've got a show to do.

EXT./INT. KORAKUEN STADIUM - DAY

A procession of semi-trucks pulls into the parking lot outside the stadium.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Having survived the numerous attempts on my life made by the gentlemen of New Jersey, I was the following day summoned to the battlefield...

ROADIES wheel dozens of huge amplifiers out of a truck. Bubbles hops aboard one, taking a ride as it goes into a...

TUNNEL

...leading into the stadium proper, where the amplifier procession joins more roadies carrying lighting equipment, cables, scaffolding.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

...where I would first witness the sheer scale of The King's crusade.

Bubbles continues his ride into the...

BACKSTAGE

...area, past racks of glittery costumes. Techs unload instruments from their cases and Bubbles moves past them and onto the...

STAGE

...where people are assembling scaffolding, rigging lights, taping down cables.

Bubbles hops from the amp. He scampers over and expertly ascends a wall of speakers, making his way to the top in no time.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I assumed the role of sentinel, resolute in my duty to warn of any sign of approaching enemy forces.

Bob strolls onstage below, looks around. Sees Bubbles atop the speakers.

BOB

Bubbles...lunchtime!

Bob holds up a pair of apples.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
Alas, hunger soon overtook me.

Bubbles climbs down. Races to Bob.

INT. KORAKUEN STADIUM - BACK STAGE - NIGHT

The audience CHANTS so loud the ground shakes.

AUDIENCE
My-ke-ru! My-ke-ru! My-ke-ru!

Bubbles, Michael, and fifteen PERFORMERS (MUSICIANS, BACK-UP SINGERS, and DANCERS) stand huddled in a circle, their arms around each other's shoulders as Michael leads them in a pre-show ritual.

MICHAEL
Thank you, dear God, for giving us
this chance to put on a great show
for all these wonderful people here
tonight and spread your message of
love.

PERFORMERS
Amen!

They break the circle and begin clapping. A palpable air of excitement.

Bubbles follows as the performers jog onto the stage, is about to take the stage himself when Michael stops him in the wings.

MICHAEL
You have to wait here, Bubbles.

Bubbles is disappointed but puts up a stoic front. Michael leans closer.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Who's bad?

They bring the tips of their pointer fingers together in their special ritual. Bob emerges to take Bubbles' hand.

Michael jogs onstage and disappears into the fog being pumped by smoke machines.

Then the stage lights reveal him and the audience ERUPTS. The sound is DEAFENING.

HELICOPTERS circle overhead. The stadium floodlights come on to reveal a vast sea of people in the audience, all of them whipped up into a frenzy. It's breathtaking and terrifying.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

As I looked upon their screaming faces, feverish and contorted, I feared for The King's life. Their numbers were so vast that there could be no escape should they turn against him.

Michael and his back up singers bust some choreographed moves as a song intro BOOMS through the speaks.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But he held them completely in his thrall. It was then I began in some small way to comprehend just what The King meant to his subjects. And slowly, to grasp the immensity of the kingdom itself, and the weight of the crown I would one day inherit.

INT. OSAKA CITY HALL - DAY

Bubbles and Michael (in sunglasses) stroll into a conference room and sit at a table. A FUNCTIONARY bows and smiles. Another brings a cup of tea.

Opposite them are about fifty photographers.

FUNCTIONARY

(to Michael)

Welcome to Osaka. We are very honored. Did you know Bubbles is the first animal ever allowed inside Osaka City Hall?

Michael offers a polite smile.

MICHAEL

Did you hear that, Bubbles? It's a historic occasion. You better behave.

Bubbles reaches for the tea. Puts the cups to his lips. The photographs ooh and ahhh. SHUTTERS WHIR, flashbulbs STROBE.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Lady Teacups had taught me well.
But it was during this tea party
that I began to get my first
inklings of unfavorable effect
those flashing devices were having
upon The King's ever fading skin.

EXT. SYDNEY AIRPORT (AUSTRALIA) - DAY

Michael (in sunglasses) steps off airplane on the tarmac.
Flash bulbs STROBE as Michael waves.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

He wore eye protection in their
presence to prevent being blinded,
but these thin shields could not
entirely fortify him against their
deleterious effects.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL (AUSTRALIA) - NIGHT

Michael signs autographs and poses for pictures with sick
children in hospital beds.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

The popping lights were clearly
leeching his skin of color.

INT. OLYMPIC PARK STADIUM (MELBOURNE) - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

A MAKE-UP ARTIST works on Michael's face in front of a
mirror. Bubbles focuses on his own reflection.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Oddly, as his skin became lighter,
my own grew darker. And I was
changing in other ways, too.

Bubbles through the backstage area and onto...

EXT. OLYMPIC PARK STADIUM (MELBOURNE) - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

...the darkened stage. He leaps, does a somersault...

BUBBLES (V.O.)

My body was growing stronger. My
spirit bolder.

...and heads for the scaffolding. He clamors upwards, graceful, agile...

EXT. PARRAMATTA STADIUM (SYDNEY) - CONTINUOUS

...and reaches the top of the scaffolding. Perched at the pinnacle, he looks out over the empty stadium and the night sky beyond.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
My star was in ascendance.

Bubbles sees a storm approaching on the horizon.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
But I could not say the same of The King's.

INT. RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL (NYC) - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Bubbles and Bob watch the 1988 Grammy Awards on a small TV in a backstage dressing room. Bubbles eats popcorn.

BOB
Check it out, Bubbles...Michael and Quincy are about to get a Grammy.

ON TV

Presenters AL JARREAU (48) and RUBEN BLADES (40) stand on stage at the mic.

RUBÉN BLADES
And the producer of the year is...

He opens the envelope.

RUBÉN BLADES (CONT'D)
Narada Michael Walden.

There's a shot of Michael in the audience. He's upset.

LATER

Presenters JODY WATLEY (29) and the three members of LaVert - SEAN LAVERT (30), GERALD LAVERT (19) and MARC GORDON (21) are onstage.

GERALD LAVERT

And the winner for best R&B Male
Vocal Performance is..."Just to See
Her." Smokey Robinson!

LATER

Now presenting, GLORIA ESTEFAN (30) and RICHARD MARX (24).

GLORIA ESTEFAN

And the winner for Best Pop Vocal
Performance, Male, is..."Bring on
the Night." Sting!

LATER

Up next, DIANNA ROSS (43) and HERB ALPERT (52).

DIANA ROSS

And the Album of the Year is...the
Joshua Tree, U2.

INT. LIMO - MOVING - NIGHT

BUBBLES (V.O.)

So much for the Bearded Prophet's
powers of divination.

Bubbles, Michael, Quincy and Frank ride in the swanky limo
making its way through NYC. A chilled bottle of champagne
sits untouched in half-melted ice. No one feels like
celebrating.

Finally, Frank breaks the silence.

FRANK

It's the Grammys, Michael. Nobody
cares about the Grammys.

Michael says nothing.

FRANK (CONT'D)

The only reason Smokey Robinson won
is because everyone thought he was
gonna die from all the crack he was
smoking two years ago. Now he gets
clean and makes a record and people
are like, 'Good for you, pal. Way
to not die! Here's a Grammy.'

INT. HELMSLEY HOTEL (NYC) - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

As the elevator ascends...

FRANK

U2? Okay, they've got a sound. I'll give them that. But why did they win? Because people feel bad about what's happening in Ireland, that's why. IRA bombs and whatnot. 'Oh, you're a band from Ireland? We're sorry. Here's a Grammy. Please don't blow us up.'

Quincy smirks. Michael remains inscrutable behind his mirrored shades.

INT. HELMSLEY HOTEL (NYC) - HALLWAY

Quincy and Bob wave good night, head off the other direction. Now it's just Bubbles, Michael and Frank. As they walk down the hall...

FRANK

And Sting? You think he could draw half a million people in Japan? Not even if the tickets included all you can eat sushi and a handjob from Hello Kitty! He stole Wynton Marsalis' entire band and still sounds about as funky as Margaret Thatcher addressing Parliament. So why did he win? I don't know. That one is a mystery. One that will forever remain unsolved because...no one cares about the fucking Grammys!

They arrive at Michael's room. Michael unlocks the door.

MICHAEL

Good night, Frank.

Michael goes into the room. Bubbles follows and closes the door behind him.

FRANK

'Frank'? What happened to 'Uncle Tookie'?

INT. HELMSLEY HOTEL (NYC) - MICHAEL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The moment the door closes, Michael removes his sunglasses and bursts out crying. He lurches across the floor and dives face first into the bed. His crying turns into deep, heaving sobs.

Bubbles climbs onto the bed and sits next to Michael. He holds out his pointer finger to initiate their little ritual, but Michael is too upset to notice.

Bubbles reaches out and pats Michael gently on the head.

INT. HEATHROW INT'L AIRPORT (LONDON) - ARRIVALS - DAY

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But the defeats of that evening
would soon be put behind us as The
King embarked upon another crusade
in a far off land.

Bubbles, Michael and his entourage wait in line at UK Customs. A British CUSTOMS AGENT looks over Michael's passport, checks some of his paperwork. Wrinkles his brow.

CUSTOMS AGENT

One moment, Mister Jackson, sir.

FRANK

Is there a problem?

The customs agent slips out of his booth, taking Michael's paperwork with him.

INT. HEATHROW INT'L AIRPORT - BACK OFFICE - LATER

Frank berates an agent from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, as Michael looks on, worried.

FRANK

Do you have any idea who you are
dealing with here?

MINISTRY AGENT

I am quite aware of who Mr. Jackson
is, sir. And I'm aware that he
greatly enjoys the companionship of
his chimpanzee. But the law is
quite clear.

Bubbles plays with one of the many buckles on Michael's boots.

MINISTRY AGENT (CONT'D)
Animals entering the U.K. must be
quarantined for six months until
proven free of diseases.

FRANK
Diseases?! It's not like we're
bringing him from some African
jungle. Bubbles is from Los
Angeles! It's one of the least-
diseased places on the planet!

The Ministry Agent raises a doubtful eyebrow.

MINISTRY AGENT
Be that as it may.

Frank storms toward the door and digs his brick-sized mobile
phone out of his jacket pocket.

FRANK
Don't you worry, Michael. I will
take care of this in two phone
calls.

Frank holds up two fingers to the The Ministry Agent - the
British equivalent of flipping someone off. The agent
maintains a stiff upper lip as Frank exits and SLAMS the door
behind him.

LATER

Frank quietly opens the door. Walks back in with a hangdog
expression. He looks at Michael and shrugs. Michael nods to
Bob. Bob approaches Bubbles.

BOB
Come on. We have to go home.

Bubbles doesn't want to go. He clings to Michael's legs.

MICHAEL
I'll be back real soon, Bubbles.

Bob reaches out..but Bubbles SWATS his hand away.

Bob tries again. Bubbles WHIRLS on him. Bob backs away as
Bubbles rears up on his hind legs and puffs out his coat,
angry. Bubbles SLAMS his palms against the floor and then
rises again.

BOB
Easy, now. Take it easy.

A tense moment as everyone in the room realizes they're dealing with an angry, wild animal.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But not a moment too soon, I remembered the prophesy, and my hunger to overcome it.

Bubbles regains his composure. Lowers himself to all fours. Ashamed, he shuffles over to Bob. He looks away and offers his palm in a simian gesture of docility, submission.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

The cabin lights are off and all the passengers asleep. Except for Bubbles. He sits next to Bob, silently brooding.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Bob's pickup truck pulls up in the private driveway. He exits the vehicle, opens the passenger side door. Bubbles hops out, takes Bob's hand.

La Toya stands by the front door, gesturing them to hurry inside before anyone sees.

INT. HAYVENHURST - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bubbles and Bob follow La Toya as she moves quickly down a hallway.

BOB

Just for a few days. Until I can free up a space for him at the ranch.

LA TOYA

Don't worry, I love Bubbles! Plus, Michael is going to owe me big time after this.

INT. HAYVENHURST - LA TOYA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A canopy bed, lots of pink, girly decor.

LA TOYA

Welcome home, Bubbles!

Bubbles stands at the center of the room, befuddled. This is not home.

LATER

La Toya sits on her bed, watching "The Cosby Show." Next to her, Bubbles plays with a stuffed PANDA BEAR toy.

There's a KNOCK on the door.

JOE (O.S.)
We need to talk, Toya.

La Toya rolls her eyes. Bubbles CHIRPS at the stuffed panda. She claps a hand over his mouth.

JOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What was that?

LA TOYA
It's called a TV.

JOE (O.C.)
Don't make me break down this door.

Exasperated, La Toya gets out of bed. She puts a finger to her lips to shush Bubbles. Then she takes him by the hand and guides him into her...

CLOSET

...an empire of tacky 80s outfits on hangers.

LA TOYA
(whispering)
Stay here. I'll be right back.

Bubbles nods. La Toya exits, partially closing the closet door, leaving it open just an inch to let in light.

LATER

Bubbles sleeps on the closet floor, cuddling his panda.

LATER

La Toya BURSTS back into her bedroom and SLAMS the door behind her, startling Bubbles awake. He spies her through the crack in the door. She yells at no one in particular.

LA TOYA
You don't own me! I'm a grown woman!

Mascara runs down La Toya's face. She crosses to the bed, drops to her hands and knees and YANKS loose a suitcase from under the bed. UNZIPS it.

She opens a dresser drawer, grabs clothes, shoves them in the suitcase. Then she heads for her closet. She yanks open the door.

LA TOYA (CONT'D)
Oh, Jesus!

La Toya startles at seeing Bubbles looking up at her.

LA TOYA (CONT'D)
I forgot you were in here.

Bubbles emerges from the closet. He offers her the panda toy. La Toya is touched by the gesture.

LA TOYA (CONT'D)
You're so sweet. But you keep it.
Tell Michael I just couldn't wait
anymore. You'll be okay, right?

She pats his head. Then zips up her suitcase and heads out the door. Then she closes the door and is gone. The only sound is CANNED LAUGHTER from The Cosby Show.

LATER

It's late at night. Bubbles has climbed on top of the canopy over La Toya's bed, where he flips through Vogue magazine. From the TV he hears...

REPORTER (O.S.)
The King of Pop met with some
fellow royals today...

Bubbles LEAPS off the canopy and lands on the floor. He walks up for a closer look.

ON TV

Michael shakes hands with PRINCESS DIANA (27) and PRINCE CHARLES (36).

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...prior to the first of his three
sold-out shows at London's Wembley
Stadium.

Michael, Diana, Charles and PEPSI EXECS pose for photos behind a giant check.

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Jackson used the occasion to donate \$450,000 to the Prince's Trust and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

Michael performs onstage at Wembley.

REPORTER (CONT'D)
 Jackson had reportedly removed his controversial song "Dirty Diana" from the night's set list, only to reinstate it when the Princess of Wales told him it was her favorite.

Michael and JIMMY SAFECHUCK (10) exit Hamley's toy store, each clutching a giant shopping bag of toys as the paparazzi go nuts. The smiling boy is dressed just like Michael.

BACK TO SCENE

Bubbles tightens his grip on the magazine.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 While I was hidden away in this lonely castle tower, banished to some pink hell, The King roamed a farflung corner of the realm accompanied by some whelp of no consequence.

REPORTER (O.S.)
 Jackson is now midway through the European leg of his record-breaking Bad tour, which will return to the U.S. this September.

Bubbles THROWS the magazine at the screen.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 I experienced what can only be described as a terrible urge to defecate on the floor and hurl my feces willy-nilly about the room.

Bubbles squats. And then quickly rises.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 But I understood the necessity of
 resisting such impulses.

CUT TO:

Feces are splattered all over the walls. La Toya's room is utterly destroyed. Bubbles sits in the middle of the aftermath, a potrait of calm after the storm.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 Alas, some impulses prove
 irresistible.

Footsteps THUNDER down the hallway outside.

JOE (O.S.)
 What the holy hell is going on in
 there? It's one in the goddamn
 morning!

Joe THROWS open the door...and stands frozen at what he sees.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 But fate is a fickle mistress, and
 my moment of madness had delivered
 opportunity to my door.

Bubbles CHARGES. Joe backs away as Bubbles darts past him, out of the room.

INT. HAYVENHURST - VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

Bubbles RACES through the house, CATAPULTING over furniture, LAUNCHING himself off the walls, SWINGING on chandeliers as he heads to...

INT. HAYVENHURST - MICHAEL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...where he calmly climbs into his crib. Comfortable. Content. At home.

FADE TO:

INT. HAYVENHURST - MICHAEL'S ROOM - DAY

Bubbles hits random buttons on a Speak-n-Spell toy as Joe cautiously enters. He holds a banana in one hand, an open can of Pepsi in another.

JOE
Good morning, Bubbles.

Bubbles recoils. Suspicious.

JOE (CONT'D)
Now don't get excited. I'm not
upset about last night. Just
figured you might be hungry is all.

Joe sets the Pepsi and the banana on the floor. Smiles as he
backs away.

JOE (CONT'D)
Enjoy your breakfast.

Joe closes the door. Bubbles hesitates a moment and then...

...lopes across the room. He picks up the banana, examines
it, SNIFFS it. Nothing amiss. He peels it, takes a bite.
Yummy. He stuffs the rest in his mouth.

Then he picks up the Pepsi. Takes a sip. SMACKS his lips. Not
bad. Then he CHUGS the whole thing and tosses the empty can
over his shoulder.

He goes back to pick up his Speak-n-Spell...but STUMBLES.
LURCHES...and COLLAPSES unconscious to the floor.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - MENAGERIE - DAY

Bubbles wakes up groggy and disoriented. He's inside a small,
metal cage. He rises and finds himself face-to-face with a...

BENGAL TIGER

...in the adjacent enclosure. Bubbles scrambles back in
fright. He scans for an escape, but there is none. He is
trapped. The tiger regards him a moment, then turns away with
feline disinterest.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
And so it was The Bearded Prophet's
words were made manifest. I had
done my utmost to demonstrate
obedience, yet the prophecy had
been realized nonetheless.

Bubbles slumps to the floor of his cage. Defeated.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - MENAGERIE - NIGHT

A GROUNDSKEEPER pushes a bowl of food into Bubble's cage and then closes the door.

Bubbles saunters over. Finds the bowl filled with mushy dog food. He SNIFFS it, grimaces in disgust, and pushes it aside.

HEADLIGHTS SWEEP over the cage. Bubbles sees...

BOB'S PICKUP TRUCK

...motoring up the driveway and pulling to a halt. Bob gets out and begins walking toward the house.

Bubbles GRUNTS. Bob halts in his tracks - did he really just hear that?

Bob turns, hustles towards the menagerie. He spots Bubbles and is clearly dismayed at finding him caged.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I expected the Bearded Prophet to revel at witnessing his conjecture proven correct. But he betrayed no jubilation at my present state.

BOB

La Toya put you in there?

Joe steps out of the shadows.

JOE

No. That was me. La Toya's gone. Flew the coop.

BOB

Oh. Well, I'm here to pick up--

JOE

We like him right where he is.

Joe unleashes a chilling smile.

BOB

I think Michael would be upset if he knew Bubbles was in a cage.

JOE

Would he, now? You think maybe Michael might be so upset that he'd actually speak to his father?

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Because as it stands, I can't even get that little ingrate to return my damn calls.

BOB

Look, whatever is between you and Michael--

JOE

I'll tell what's between us. Eight million dollars. That's how much them Moonies are offering for the Jackson 5 to perform four shows in Korea. But without Michael, there's no deal.

Bob puzzles through it.

BOB

You're holding Bubbles for ransom?

JOE

I'm negotiating. You tell Michael it's up to him what happens next.

Joe turns and trudges back toward the house. Bob gives Bubbles a look of sympathy.

BOB

Be patient. We'll get this get sorted out.

Bubbles turns away in disappointment and retreats into the shadows of his cage and turns his back..

Over his shoulder, we see Bob walk back and get in his truck.

Bob drives the truck to the gate and then stops. The gates open. Bob leans out and says something to the security guard manning the gatehouse and then...

...throws the truck in REVERSE. It races back up the driveway and then Bob throws on the brakes.

Bob jumps from the car. Scans to make sure Joe isn't around, and then sprints to the menagerie.

BOB (CONT'D)

Pssst. Bubbles.

Bubbles turns. Sees Bob. Waves him off. Bob UNLOCKS the cage. Now he has Bubbles' attention.

BOB (CONT'D)
 (signing)
*Climb tree. Go over fence. Find Bob
 other side.*

Bubbles nods - he's down with the plan.

BUBBLES
 (signing)
*Thank you, Bearded Prophet. Your
 gallantry and loyalty to The King
 restore my faith in the court.*

Bob is mystified. Bubbles simplifies it.

BUBBLES (CONT'D)
 (signing)
You go now. Me follow.

INT. BOB'S TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Bob approaches the security gate. Shows the security guard his watch. The security guard chuckles, waves him through.

EXT. HAYVENHURST - NIGHT

Bubbles deftly ascends a tree at the edge of the property. He reaches the top and then leaps down, freefalling before he...

...grabs a low branch and slingshots himself over the fence.

EXT. ADJACENT STREET - CONTINUOUS

Bubbles hits the ground and somersaults down a short embankment to break his fall before...

...he hits the street and bounds into the open window of Bob's awaiting truck. The truck PEELS OUT in a cloud of exhaust and ZOOMS away.

EXT. BOB'S RANCH (SYLMAR, CA) - DAY

CU on Bubbles happily munching on a mango.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

He's in a small enclosure, not much bigger than the one at Hayvenhurst.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Yes, I was again behind bars. But now I was no prisoner. As the heir apparent, I had to be protected from usurpers who sought to do me harm. The temporary loss of my freedom was a small sacrifice to preserve the royal succession. To uphold the very kingdom itself. And my new confinements were not without their amenities.

Bubbles turns to face...a FEMALE CHIMP, slightly older, in an adjacent cage.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Her name was Daisy. Though she lacked the educational advantages bestowed upon me in my youth, she enjoyed a rudimentary grasp of sign language and was a kind and noble spirit.

Bubbles hands Daisy a hunk of mango through the bars. She stuffs it in her mouth.

DAISY

(signing)

Thanks, yo. Tastes good shit.

BUBBLES

(signing)

You are most welcome, my good lady.

Daisy motions to Bubbles. He turns around, backs toward her. She reaches through the bars of her cage and begins grooming him.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

After much clumsy discourse and daily observation of her behavior, I ascertained she'd been raised in a circus...

INSERT SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Daisy stands on her hands.

-- Daisy cartwheels around her cage.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

...where she had mastered a variety of talents...

-- Daisy bends over, sticks her butt in the air and BLOWS A RASPBERRY.

BACK TO SCENE

Bubbles motions to Daisy - his turn to groom. Daisy turns to reveal DEEP SCARS crisscrossing her back.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
...acquired at a very hefty price.

Bubbles picks the nits from her back. CRUNCHES them between his teeth.

DAISY
(signing)
Thanks, yo. Feels shit good.

LATER

Bubbles and Daisy lean against the bars closest each other, watching the sun set.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
My banishment served as interlude.
A caesura of peaceful
contemplation, wherein, unburdened
by courtly responsibilities, I was
free to muse upon the mysteries of
the stars, to ruminate upon the
nature of life and fate.

Daisy bores of the sunset. She GRUNTS, retreats to the corner of her cage and begins MASTURBATING.

Bubbles watches her for a moment, then turns his attention to HEADLIGHTS from an approaching car as it nears, passes, and snakes away in the distance.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
But I grew weary of tranquility. My
heart longed for the next movement
to begin. For the beating of the
drums, the howling of the mob, the
dizzy thrum of my own blood
coursing thick and wild inside my
veins. I longed for the resumption
of my tale.

Daisy climaxes with a SQUEAL. Snorts.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
I longed for his return.

EXT. BOB'S RANCH - DAY

Bubbles blinks awake. Yawns. And then sees...

Michael looking at him through the cage bars. Bubbles blinks in disbelief. Michael smiles.

MICHAEL
Wake up, lazybones.

INT. LIMO - MOVING - DAY

Bubbles looks out the window as the car winds through a deserted stretch of hills. Nothing but dust and scrub brush.

They arrive at an ornate gate that reads "NEVERLAND" and is decorated with the heraldic Michael Jackson coat of arms.

The gates open and the car goes inside.

EXT. NEVERLAND - MAIN RESIDENCE - DAY

Two dozen smiling SERVANTS are lined up in formation on the front steps of the massive main house.

SERVANTS
(in unison)
Good morning, Michael.

MICHAEL
Good morning, everyone. This is
Bubbles. He's going to live here.

SERVANTS
(in unison)
Good morning, Bubbles.

Bubbles is nervous with so many eyes upon him. He and Michael continue into the...

INT. NEVERLAND - FOYER - DAY

...where stands a statue of a butler holding a tray of real cookies. Michael grabs one and hands it to Bubbles. They continue into the...

DEN

...a room crammed with expensive marble statuary, kitschy art and weirdly life-like MANNEQUINS.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

In this new dwelling, there was much of the beautiful, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust.

They move toward a grand piano. On top, Disney memorabilia and dozens of framed photos of friends and family (Joe is conspicuously absent), as well as head shots of yesteryear child actors Shirley Temple, Jackie Coogan, Spanky McFarland.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

The new castle was a manifestation of The King's own psyche, a portrait rendered in wood and stone, ceramic and plastic.

Michael points out a photo of Bubbles.

MICHAEL

Look, there's you.

It's a shot of Bubbles as a very young chimp. Bubbles is embarrassed by it, turns away. Next they move into the...

KITCHEN

Airy, spacious, modern - the only kitsch-free room of the house. Two COOKS in immaculate white uniforms chop vegetables. They nod greetings as Michael and Bubbles enter.

MICHAEL

This is where you can get ice-cream, peach cobbler. Whatever you want. Anyway, you can explore the rest of the house later. Let's go outside and have fun.

NEVERLAND MONTAGE

-- Michael drives Bubbles in a golf cart down a gravel path, pointing out a sculpture of kids playing ring-around-the-rosie.

-- They ride in a small train. Michael points out a pond with an island populated by pink flamingos.

-- They stroll through the zoo, past giraffes, sheep, orangutans, tigers, an elephant.

-- They ride painted wooden horses aboard a gaudy carousel.

-- They climb a tree. Bubbles leaps from branch to branch with ease while Michael struggles to ascend.

EXT. NEVERLAND - AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

Bubbles and Michael sit in the car of a Ferris wheel. As the car reaches the apex of the ride, it shudders to a halt.

They gaze at the moon and stars.

MICHAEL

You can do whatever you want here.
Neverland is a place where we can
finally be free.

Michael smiles at Bubbles and then...

SIZZLE....POP!

Fireworks explode across the night sky.

EXT. NEVERLAND - VARIOUS - DAY

Dozens of KIDS (8-12) LAUGH and SQUEAL as they file out of school buses.

Michael wears dark glasses and carries an umbrella as he makes his way down the stairs outside the Railway Station, holding Bubbles by the hand.

Bubbles winces at the noise from the kids.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Evidently, Neverland's liberties
did not extend to being free from
aural assault...

LATER

Michael and Bubbles ride the train, surrounded by boisterous children. Michael looks like he's in heaven. Bubbles is annoyed.

LATER

Flashbulbs POP as Michael and Bubbles pose for pictures with the kids.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

...nor the freedom from subjecting oneself to dozens of portraits in the company of pocket-sized, grinning cretins. I knew not whether this practice was brave or foolish on behalf of The King, given that his visage grew daily more ashen and bloodless.

LATER

Michael and Bubbles sit on a park bench, watching kids ride the Pirate Ship. Michael sneaks a prescription PILL BOTTLE out of his pocket. It's labeled "Valium."

BUBBLES (V.O.)

This despite his increasing self-administration of nostrums I hypothesized were concocted to slow the rapid decoloration of his skin.

Michael dumps a couple pills into his palm, pops them in his mouth and swallows.

EXT. NEVERLAND - POOLSIDE - NIGHT

Christmas lights and decorations abound. Adult PARTY GUESTS chit-chat and tipple champagne.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

On rare festive occasions, various courtiers and royal advisors would assemble inside the castle walls to attend lavish banquets.

Bubbles, dressed in an elf costume, moves through the crowd past lots of familiar faces - Elizabeth Taylor, Quincy Jones, John Branca, Dr. Klein, Dr. Hoefflin, etc.

Noticeably absent -- any members of the Jackson family.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I relished such occasions as I found their company a great deal more desirable than that of the screeching guttersnipes with whom The King increasingly preferred to fraternize.

Bubbles spots Bob chatting with Frank DiLeo and runs to greet him. Bob scoops Bubbles up and rubs him on the head.

BOB

How you doing, Bubbles?

BUBBLES

(signing)

Tolerably well, thank you. And yourself, my Bearded Prophet?

FRANK

What did he say?

BOB

I don't know. Something about my beard.

Bob sets Bubbles down, then reaches into his pocket and produces a candy cane. He hands it to Bubbles. Frank admires the Ferris wheel turning in the distance.

FRANK

Place is something, huh?

BOB

Yeah, it's something alright. I just wonder if it's good for him.

FRANK

Bubbles?

BOB

Michael. Out here in the middle of nowhere. Isolated. Insulated from the real world. Just him and...

A live REINDEER strolls by wearing a blanket that reads "MERRY CHRISTMAS" and is imprinted with the Michael Jackson coat of arms.

BOB (CONT'D)

...all of this.

FRANK

Gee, I don't know, Bob. You think maybe the kid still has a shot at a normal life?

Frank chuckles and lights his cigar.

INT. NEVERLAND - DEN - NIGHT

The party is over. Bubbles, Michael and Elizabeth Taylor, all in pajamas, sit by a crackling fire listening to Christmas music. Bubbles plays around with Liz's white Maltese terrier, SUGAR.

Elizabeth passes Michael a present. She's a little wasted.

ELIZABETH

Open it.

MICHAEL

Santa Claus bring this?

ELIZABETH

Yeah. Santa Claus of Bel Air.

MICHAEL

You shouldn't have.

ELIZABETH

If anyone deserves a gift, it's you. You give so much to so many. Open it.

Michael blushes. Hesitates.

MICHAEL

It's weird, celebrating Christmas. It still feels wrong.

ELIZABETH

If the Jehovah's Witnesses didn't want you to celebrate Christmas, they shouldn't have kicked you out of their church. Go on, open it.

Michael rips open the present.

MICHAEL

A Super Soaker!

ELIZABETH

I thought you'd like it.

MICHAEL

It's the best! I know how I'm
waking up Bubbles tomorrow.

He points the water gun at Bubbles, makes a spraying sound.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I got something for you, too.

Michael hands her an unwrapped jewelry box.

ELIZABETH

You're not proposing again, are
you?

MICHAEL

Liz! No!

ELIZABETH

I've had so much wine tonight, I
just might accept.

She opens the box to reveal a huge diamond ring.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

My goodness, Michael. This is...
heavens. This is lovely.

MICHAEL

I know girls like diamonds, so...

ELIZABETH

Divine. So beautiful. Thank you.

She slips on the ring. Michael passes Bubbles a present.

MICHAEL

And Bubbles, I got this for you.
(to the dog)
I didn't get anything for you,
Sugar.

ELIZABETH

She'd just chew it up, anyway.
She's a bitch like that.

Bubbles unwraps his present to reveal...

...a STUFFED ANIMAL from the "Michael's Pets" line. It's a
little chimpanzee wearing a jacket imprinted with the Michael
Jackson coat of arms - the same one both Michael and Bubbles
have on their pajamas.

MICHAEL
It's you, Bubbles! I gave you to
you!

ELIZABETH
Oh, that's so cute.

INT. NEVERLAND - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

BUBBLES (V.O.)
"So cute."

Michael sleeps alone in his giant bed, snoring. Bubbles sits on the floor outside his crib, staring intently at the stuffed Bubbles toy. He's sad, confused, ANGRY.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
This was me? This! A round-bellied
weakling with a pusillanimous grin?
"So cute."

Bubbles SMACKS the doll, sends it tumbling across the floor. It lands on its side facing him. Seems to stare up at Bubbles with...

BUBBLES (V.O.)
Two vacant eyes affixed to an
expanse of bovine imbecility
parenthesized by deaf ears of
outrageous proportion? This was me?
This was how the sovereign chose to
portray his successor? Was this
merely some inefficacious jest, a
wayward witticism not worthy of
consideration?

Bubbles expression darkens with the next thought.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
Or...was this in fact how the
sovereign truly viewed me?

Tears form in his eyes.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
Had I mistaken my place entirely?

His body begins to tremble.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Was I but the fleshy, blood-filled
twin of this smiling rag doll,
mute, inert and sideways prone
before me? Was I -- had I always
been -- a mere plaything? An
amusement? A toy?

Enraged, Bubbles seizes the doll. He RIPS its head off.
THROWS it across the room. He TEARS the torso to shreds,
obliterating the doll in a matter of seconds.

Then he sees his reflection in a darkened window. Focuses the
coat of arms on his pajamas.

He TEARS off his pajamas in a flurry.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

"I gave you to you?"

Bubbles stands naked and proud before his reflection.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Who dares tell me who I am?

INT. NEVERLAND - DINING ROOM - DAY

Michael sits at a large table. Behind him hangs a cheesy oil
portrait of Michael himself dressed as a knight in shining
armor carrying a golden sword.

Bubbles sits nearby -- unclothed -- munching on an apple.
Frank enters.

FRANK

(on Bubbles)

Jesus, he's growing fast.

MICHAEL

Yeah, getting to big for his
britches. He fights me when I try
to put clothes on him now. Don't
you, Bubbles?

Bubbles shrugs. Continues eating.

FRANK

So what can I do for you, boss?

Michael produces a stack of tabloids. He pushes a copy of *The
National Enquirer* across the table.

MICHAEL

They're saying I bleach my skin...

He slides across a copy of *Star*.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

...that I have hormone treatments
to keep my voice high...

Michael slaps down a copy of *The Globe*.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

...that I only bathe in Evian
water...

And then another *National Enquirer*.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

...that I've had cheekbone
implants...

And then *News of the World*.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

...that I'm terrified Prince is
using purple E.S.P. to control
Bubbles' mind in a plot to kill me.

Bubbles digs a finger into his nose.

FRANK

Purple E.S.P.? How is that
different from regular E.S.P.?

MICHAEL

It's not funny. It's ignorant. You
need to put a stop to these lies!

Frank chews his cigar. Shifts his weight, tugs up his pants.
Now has come the Time for Uncomfortable Truths.

FRANK

All due respect, Michael? You
started this whole shebang. That
stunt with the oxygen chamber? Your
idea. The story we planted about
the Elephant Man? Funny at the
time. But once that ball gets
rolling, you can't just turn around
and put the genie back in the
bottle.

MICHAEL

They're making me look like a
freak. Why do they want to hurt me?
I'm just a normal person.

Frank takes in the grandiose portrait hanging behind Michael. The weird costumed mannequins in the corners of the room. He chooses his next words carefully.

FRANK

OK. You want to come across as a
normal guy? Here are some pointers.
One, stop taking Bubbles out in
public.

MICHAEL

But he's my friend.

FRANK

I understand that. But it looks
weird, the biggest celebrity on the
planet running around with an ape.

Bubbles shoots Frank a look.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Sophisticate though he may be.

Bubbles is mollified.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Two -- and you're not gonna like
this, but I'm gonna say it anyway --
stop hanging out with kids all the
time.

MICHAEL

You don't understand, I never had --

FRANK

-- a childhood. I know. I get it.
But you've spent more time trying
to recreate this mythical lost
childhood of yours than a real
childhood even lasts. Take it from
me, I had a childhood. They're
overrated.

Michael grinds his teeth. Frank continues, undeterred.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Three -- whatever you're doing to
your skin, stop already. You look
like a ghost.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

And enough with the plastic surgeries. You're a healthy, attractive guy. But you keep going down this path, you're gonna fuck up your face beyond all reparations.

MICHAEL

I've only had two--

FRANK

Save the two procedure bullshit for *People Magazine*. Speaking of which...number four -- make yourself accessible. Give interviews. Go on TV. Go on Arsenio, talk to Oprah. Speak with reporters. Half the reason these tabloid hacks make up so much crazy shit is because you insist on hiding from the world. Show them the Michael Jackson I know. Because the Michael I know is not some reclusive weirdo. He's a funny, caring, energetic, thoughtful guy. A great guy to be around.

This is painful for Michael to hear. But it resonates.

FRANK (CONT'D)

And okay yes, he happens to be the most talented singer and dancer maybe of all time. I certainly think so, and millions of people all over this planet feel the same. But for me, he's also a real person, a man who -- and I think you will agree here -- grew up in an absolutely crazy situation within a tragic cartoon of family, and yet, despite all that, turned out basically okay. A lot better than most.

Tears run down Michael's face. A heavy, cathartic moment.

FRANK (CONT'D)

That's you. That's Michael Jackson. That's who you are.

Frank stops pacing. Sits across from him and leans close.

FRANK (CONT'D)

So be who you are. That's all people want. Because you give them a false Michael? This man-of-a-thousand-masks thing? Okay, they're entertained for awhile. There's a mystique there, a value in keeping them guessing. But eventually they get tired of guessing. Of having to think. People don't want to think. They want answers. Categories. Definitions. Comfort. You know a lot about animals, right?

Michael sniffs, nods.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Many of them are bigger than us, stronger than us. Like whatsername, that elephant Liz gave you...

MICHAEL

Gypsy.

FRANK

Gypsy. How do you keep Gypsy from smashing through her cage, breaking down the front door of this house and trampling both of us to death? Because she could do it.

MICHAEL

Gypsy would never do that.

FRANK

Because you feed her. By feeding her, you keep her from having to think. 'Where's my next peanut coming from, the fuck am I doing in San Ynez instead of the Serengeti? Why is Dumbo more famous than me?'

Michael snort-laughes.

FRANK (CONT'D)

She's satisfied, these thoughts never enter her mind. It's the same with the public. The media. You feed the beast, you control the beast. But if you starve the beast? It starts thinking. And thinking hurts. And so it turns this pain on you. And when it does, and you try to fight it?

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

You find the beast is bigger than you. Stronger than you ever imagined. You discover the beast never sleeps. And the beast will trample you underfoot without a second thought.

A long beat as Michael takes this all in.

EXT. NEVERLAND - AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Michael drives a customized golf cart complete with a portrait of himself as Peter Pan airbrushed on the hood. John Branca rides next to him, Bubbles rides in back.

Michael waves at CHILDREN standing in line for the ICE-CREAM MAN. Then he turns to John.

MICHAEL

I need you to fire Frank.

John can't believe his ears.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

And so the purge began...

JOHN

You kidding? Why?

Michael hesitates, as if searching for a reason.

MICHAEL

He promised "Bad" would sell one-hundred million copies.

JOHN

Michael, I have a hard time believing he "promised" any such thing.

MICHAEL

But that was the goal. And we didn't even come close.

JOHN

You had five number one hits on that album!

MICHAEL

Which means I did my part. He dropped the ball.

John is dismayed.

JOHN

No one is more loyal to you than Frank. That guy would take a bullet for Michael Jackson.

Michael says nothing. John looks sick to his stomach.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Fine. I'll call him this afternoon.

INT. NEVERLAND - STUDY - DAY

Michael paces his book-lined study as Bubbles thumbs through the picture book *Koko's Kitten*. Accountant RICHARD SHERMAN (40s) sits on a couch, taking notes.

MICHAEL

Also, I need you to fire John.

SHERMAN

Hold on...John Branca?

MICHAEL

He has too many other clients. And he always questions my decisions.

SHERMAN

John orchestrated that thing with Beatles catalogue and --

MICHAEL

But it was my idea.

SHERMAN

OK, but he's made you hundreds of millions of dollars, and as your accountant, I can't --

MICHAEL

I made that money, not him. And I'm not asking for your advice. I'm asking you to fire John.

SHERMAN

That's a little outside the realm of the services I normally provide.

Michael just looks at him, not saying a word.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Ok. I'll draft a letter tomorrow.

EXT. NEVERLAND - GATE HOUSE - NIGHT

Bubbles sits atop a nearby tree. Looking through the window of the gate house, he sees Michael standing next to security chief Billy Bray, scrutinizing a bank of security camera monitors.

Michael points at a screen.

MICHAEL

That guy. The one running the Zipper ride.

BILLY

Yeah?

MICHAEL

He never smiles. Neverland is a happy place. A magical place.

BILLY

You want me to...make him smile?

MICHAEL

No. Make him disappear.

EXT. NEVERLAND - POOL - DAY

Michael wears a bathrobe as he passes by the pool, Bubbles at his side. The GROUNDS CREW works nearby.

Bubbles beelines for the high dive and quickly scales the ladder as Michael continues into the pool house.

We hear a high pitched SCREAM...

...and then Michael charges out holding a...

PICTURE OF LA TOYA

...clipped from Playboy Magazine. She's naked, her legs wrapped around a giant white python. Michael is livid.

MICHAEL

You think this is funny? This is disgusting! You're all ignorant! Which one of you did this?

No one says anything. Michael rages.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Let me tell you something. If Bubbles spoke Spanish, I would have him fire all of you. So thank your lucky stars he doesn't!

He RIPS up the photo, tosses the pieces in their faces.

INT. JEEP - MOVING - DAY

Michael wears a cheap gorilla mask. Bubbles sits shotgun as they race towards Los Angeles.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

When governance of the castle proved too burdensome, The King would at times disguise himself and venture forth among his people.

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD (LOS ANGELES) - DAY

The car is pulled to the side of the road, steam coming out from underneath the hood. Michael, still masked, labors to pry open the hood.

But it's hot to the touch. He loses a signature one note yelp...

MICHAEL

Ooowww!

...kick turns and angrily struts back to the driver's side door.

He opens it, grabs his early 90s car phone. Pulls up his mask and dials 9-1-1. A moment later...

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

(on phone)

9-1-1, what is your emergency?

MICHAEL

(into phone)

Steam is coming out of my car.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Sir, is the vehicle on fire?

MICHAEL

It's stopped moving. I'm on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills, California. There are a lot of people around. Please hurry!

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Sir, an overheated vehicle does not constitute an emergency.

MICHAEL

What if I told you I was Michael Jackson?

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Then I'd tell you to call up Tito or Jermaine, because I don't have time for this.

CLICK. DIAL TONE.

Michael HURLS the phone back into the Jeep. He kicks the tires in frustration.

He rips the gorilla mask off just as an old pickup truck passes and we...

FREEZE FRAME

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Let us now ponder the vicissitudes of fate, she of domineering hand and ruthless will who can with but one easeful turn of her mighty wheel depose even the most fearsome of kings.

UNFREEZE

As the pickup truck driver SLAMS on the brakes. Angry motorists HONK. Swerve around it.

The driver is DAVE SCHWARTZ (53), once described by the LA Times as the "Jewish Steve McQueen." He gazes at Michael through the rearview mirror of the truck.

A beat and then the truck slowly reverses.

EXT. RENT-A-WRECK LOT - DAY

Bubbles hops out of the bed of the truck. Michael exits - now wearing a silken black hood and veil. Dave guides them through a lot filled with both classic cars and junkers.

Michael glances at the store sign.

MICHAEL

(impressed)

Wow, this is Rent-a-Wreck? I've seen your commercials on TV. They're funny!

DAVE

Yeah? Maybe we could get you to star in one sometime.

Michael smiles uneasily.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Kidding. C'mon inside.

Dave pushes open the door to...

INT. RENT-A-WRECK - RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

...where his EMPLOYEES have formed a star-struck welcoming committee.

Also with them is Dave's wife JUNE CHANDLER-SCHWARTZ (late 30s), Eurasian, a former model and actress. She steps forward, offers her hand. Michael shakes it.

JUNE

Michael, I'm June. Dave's wife. You probably don't remember this, but I saw you once about five years ago at a restaurant. Tommy Tang's on Melrose? I waved at you.

MICHAEL

Oh? That was sweet of you.

JUNE

I'm a big fan. But my son here, he is, like, a superfan.

She pushes forward JORDAN CHANDLER (12) - a shy, bright, good-looking kid.

JUNE (CONT'D)

This is Jordie.

Michael's eyes light up. He removes his veil. Bends down to be at eye level with the boy.

MICHAEL

Jordie. It's wonderful to meet you.

Bubbles eyes the kid suspiciously.

JORDAN

It's great to meet you, too. I really like your music. And your videos and stuff.

MICHAEL

It warms my heart to hear you say that. Are you interested in music?

JUNE

Oh, he's very creative. You know, when you were in the hospital after the Pepsi thing, Jordie here wrote you a get well card and sent you his picture. He was only four years old.

MICHAEL

(to Jordan)

I thought you looked familiar.

Everybody laughs. Jordan blushes.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

There had been others like him, yes, many others. But upon seeing this little Worm, my ill-diving soul shuddered and grew suddenly cold.

Bubbles urgently tugs at Michael's sleeve. Michael shakes him off. He simply can't take his eyes off the kid.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I knew at first sight he was a worthy rival. And I instantly hated him for it.

DAVE

Alright, this man needs an automobile, so everybody quit acting like they've never seen a Jackson before and get back to work.

Michael tears his attention from Jordan long enough to give nods and waves to the employees as they file back into their offices.

DAVE (CONT'D)

So what do you think, Michael, Pontiac Fiero suit you?

EXT. RENT-A-WRECK LOT - DAY

Dave guides Bubbles and Michael to their car.

MICHAEL

Are you sure I can't pay?

DAVE

Forget it. But there is a favor you can do for me.

He hands Michael a phone number written on a slip of paper.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Just give Jordie a call sometime. My stepson is a good kid, and he's going through some tough times right now.

MICHAEL

Does he have cancer?

DAVE

No. Jesus, no, nothing like that. Just, you know, conflicts with his biological father and...normal growing up kinds of stuff. But hearing from you would mean the world to him.

MICHAEL

Sure. I'll call him sometime.

Dave smiles and hands Michael the keys to the Fiero.

INT. NEVERLAND - FOYER - NIGHT

Michael picks up his Mickey Mouse phone. Dials a few numbers. Quickly hangs up.

He takes a bottle out of his pocket. Shakes out a couple pills. Swallows. Steels his nerves. He dials again. On the other end, the phone RINGS. Once...twice...

JUNE (V.O.)

Hello?

MICHAEL

(on phone)

Hi, this is Michael. Is Jordan there?

JUNE (V.O.)

Yes! Oh my God, yes. Just second.
Thank you so much. Hold on.

Bubbles looks on from the balcony above, peering between balustrade railings. Not amused.

EXT. NEVERLAND - AMUSEMENT PARK GROUNDS - DAY

The usual chaos -- kids run around, LAUGH and YELL. Bubbles sits on a tree branch, dozing in the sun.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

For a time, life continued much as before. While The King busied himself charting a new crusade, I spent much time in easeful repose, death's counterfeit being the chief nourisher in this rich banquet of life.

Bubbles hears WHISPERING below. His eyelids just open when...

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But I was in for a rude awakening.

SPLAT! Bubbles is hit in the face with a WATER BALLOON. He scrambles to his feet, looks down. His assailants disperse and flee the scene. Bubbles focuses on the only kid holding a water balloon and...

...begins his pursuit, SWINGING and LEAPING from limb-to-limb in the canopy of trees.

The kid looks over his shoulder. Bubbles is nowhere to be seen. The kid starts to run again when...

THUMP! Bubbles SWINGS down and lands directly in his path. Bubbles realizes this now terrified kid is...

JORDAN CHANDLER

Bubbles rises to full height -- and we see how large and muscular he's grown. Jordan is petrified with fear. Bubbles steps forward. Leans close and SNIFFS.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

The Worm had wriggled his way
inside the castle walls.

Jordan drops the water balloon. It hits the ground and wobbles, but does not break.

Bubbles picks it up. Holds it level to Jordan's waist and SQUEEZES. The balloon POPS, SPLASHING water all over Jordan's pants.

INT. NEVERLAND - ARCADE - NIGHT

BUBBLES (V.O.)

In the coming days, The Worm's presence became a constant.

Children play video games in Michael's two story arcade. Michael stands next to Jordan, coaching him through a game of Donkey Kong.

MICHAEL

Watch out, Jordie. That gorilla is mean!

Michael is approached by Corey Feldman -- now twenty-years-old, noticeably matured since last we saw him.

COREY

Hey, Michael! Long time no see, man. How's it hanging?

Michael doesn't even look up.

COREY (CONT'D)

Man...this place is crazy!

MICHAEL

Yeah. Thanks.

COREY

Dude, I tried calling you like a hundred times, bro. You never call me back. What's up with that?

Corey smiles, playing it off like he's just giving his buddy a little good-natured shit.

MICHAEL

Guess I lost your number.

Corey's smile wilts and dies. Bubbles tries to offer him a video game token, but Corey slinks off, deflated.

EXT. NEVERLAND - BUMPER CARS - NIGHT

A helmeted Bubbles races around in a bumper car. Children pilot several other cars, ZIPPING about.

Bubbles spots Jordan in a car across the floor. He HITS the accelerator, RACING toward him. Just as he is about to smash his rival...

BAM!

Michael's car T-bones him. Bubbles body recoils from the impact.

MICHAEL

Ha ha! Got you good, Bubbles!

EXT. NEVERLAND - GO CART TRACK - NIGHT

Bubbles and Jordan poised at the starting line. They REV their go cart motors, give each other their best intimidating glances as they wait for the...

GREEN LIGHT!

Jordan hits the gas and ACCELERATES. Bubbles hits the gas and...

...goes ZOOMING backward and SMASHES into a pile of tires. Michael laughs and laughs.

INT. NEVERLAND - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jordan and Michael are having a pillow fight on Michael's giant bed. Jordan WHACKS Michael over the head.

Bubbles springs to his master's defence. He leaps across the room, somersaults to grab a big pillow and...

...CRACKS Jordan across the face, knocking him off the bed. Bubbles HOOTS in victory.

MICHAEL

That's too rough, Bubbles!

Michael goes to Jordan, who holds his hand over his mouth.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Are you okay, Jordie?

Jordan's hand comes away bloodied.

JORDAN

It's just a bloody lip.

MICHAEL

Bubbles, you have to be gentle.
That's dangerous! You could hurt
him.

Bubbles stands defiant.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

If you can't play nice, you have to
leave. Go on, get out of here.

Bubbles shoots Jordan a disdainful look then saunters out.

EXT. NEVERLAND - TRAIN STATION - DAY

Dozens of kids are gathered around as Michael hands out toys
and stuffed animals from the bed of a pick-up truck.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I determined I must once again win
the favor of The King. Of late I
had been working towards perfecting
a more recent of his signature
movements.

Bubbles scampers over and climbs on top of the truck cab.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

As my previous effort had proven
such a rousing success, there was
no reason to imagine this addition
to my repertoire would not be met
with great praise.

Bubbles starts dancing on top of the truck. A kid below
laughs and points. Soon all eyes are on him. Michael turns
around to watch just as...

...Bubbles grabs his genitals in imitation of Michael's
famous crotch yank move. But when Bubbles does it, it just
looks wrong. Obscene.

KID

The monkey is grabbing his wee wee!

All the kids LAUGH. Bubbles redoubles his efforts - hopping
up and down, yanking on his dick.

MICHAEL

No, Bubbles! Stop it! That's nasty!

Michael jabs his umbrella towards Bubbles. Bubbles jumps off
the truck. He runs away to the sound of laughter. Humiliated.

EXT. NEVERLAND - AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

Michael and Jordan sit in the car of a Ferris wheel. As the car reaches the apex of the ride, it slows to a halt.

MICHAEL

There are no rules in Neverland.
Neverland is where you can be who
you really are.

Michael smiles at Jordan and then...

SIZZLE....POP!

Fireworks explode across the night sky and illuminate...

BUBBLES

...who has stealthy ascended the Ferris wheel and now sits on top of the car behind them. Murder in his eyes.

EXT. NEVERLAND - MAIN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Bubbles sits on the roof just above Michael's bedroom. He listens to Michael and Jordan whisper and giggle through the open window.

Then Michael, clad in pajamas, shuts the window and draws the curtains closed. Moments later, the light goes out.

INT. NEVERLAND - KITCHEN - DAY

Jordan is in the kitchen with his mother June, eating a bowl of ice-cream. Bubbles has one, too. Watching Bubbles eat is EVAN CHANDLER (48). He has slicked back hair and wears aviator shades.

EVAN

So he just lets this chimpanzee
wander all over the house?

Jordan nods. He finishes his ice-cream and picks up a Game Boy.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Does he sleep with him? Like in the
same bed?

JORDAN

Sometimes. But last night it was
just me and Michael.

EVAN
Wait -- what?

Michael enters.

MICHAEL
Hope these two didn't eat all the
ice-cream.

JUNE
Hi, Michael. I want you to meet
Evan. Jordan's father.

Evans smiles and extends his hand, though he still looks
shocked, confused. They shake.

EVAN
Thought I should come say 'hello'
to the man who is spending so much
time with my son.

MICHAEL
He's great. So kind and sensitive.
I feel like our relationship is
cosmic.

Michael ruffles Jordan's hair. Evan notes it. A member of the
KITCHEN STAFF brings Michael a bowl of ice-cream. He sits
down next to Jordan and starts eating.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
So Jordie says you're a dentist?

EVAN
Screenwriter, actually. Although I
do have a dental practice. Did some
work recently on Carrie Fisher's
teeth. You know her?

MICHAEL
Princess Leia, right?

EVAN
Great set of teeth. But like I
said, these days I'm focusing on
screenwriting. I'm more the
creative type. Like you.

Michael shovels a large scoop of ice-cream into his mouth.

MICHAEL
That's great.
(to Jordan)
Help me finish this.

Jordan puts down his Game Boy, picks up his spoon.

EVAN

I wrote *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*.

Michael whispers something to Jordan. Jordan giggles. Evan looks on, suspicious, not liking this at all.

JUNE

Evan, Michael is thinking of taking Jordie along on tour in Europe next fall. Wouldn't that be amazing?

Bubbles' expression darkens. He eyes the unattended Game Boy.

EVAN

What about school?

JUNE

School will still be there when he gets back.

MICHAEL

I love to visit the museums when I'm in Europe. I dress up as a little old man and go around in a wheelchair looking at the paintings.

JUNE

(to Evan)

See? It'll be educational.

Bubbles snatches the Game Boy and sneaks out of the room.

EXT. NEVERLAND - POND - DAY

Bubbles tosses the Game Boy into the water.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

If the Worm accompanied The King on his next crusade I was certain it would spell my ouster.

EXT. NEVERLAND - MAIN RESIDENCE - DAY

Bubbles walks sadly back toward the house.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But what could I do to prevent such an eventuality? All my stratagems had thus far proven fruitless.

(MORE)

BUBBLES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Perhaps I was simply unfit to be
the future ruler.

Just then Evan comes barreling out the front door with June following close on his heels. Bubbles quickly ascends a tree as they approach.

EVAN
My son is not going to Europe or
anywhere else with that man, I'll
tell you that right now.

Bubbles is intrigued.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
It seemed that in my desperate hour
I had been delivered an unexpected
ally.

JUNE
Oh, so now you're just going to
swoop back in to his life and start
making the rules?

EVAN
You let him sleep in the same bed
with an adult stranger? What kind
of parent are you?

JUNE
He's not a stranger, he's Michael
Jackson!

Evan reaches his car. Opens the door.

EVAN
I'm well aware of who and what he
is. And you better believe I'm
going to be exploring my options.
You haven't heard the last of this.

He jumps in his car and SLAMS the door.

INT. NEVERLAND - FOYER

Michael talks on his Mickey Mouse phone. Bubbles dangles from a chandelier above.

MICHAEL
(on phone)
What? That's crazy!

JUNE (V.O.)

I know. I know. But Evan has filed for a modification of the custody agreement. My lawyer thinks we should comply for now.

MICHAEL

(on phone)

If he can't come here, I'll just visit him there.

JUNE (V.O.)

Actually, Evan requested that you not be allowed to see Jordie at all.

MICHAEL

(on phone)

That's just cruel.

JUNE (V.O.)

Michael, I don't know what he has planned exactly, but I think you should get a lawyer.

MICHAEL

(on phone)

Oh, I've got lawyers. Don't you worry about that.

INT. LIMO - MOVING - DAY

Meet Michael's legal team - dapper entertainment attorney BERT FIELDS (64), thuggish private investigator ANTHONY PELLICANO (49), and charismatic attorney JOHNNIE COCHRAN (55).

Opposite them sit Michael and Bubbles, the latter drinking orange juice from a sippy cup.

The car pulls up to the Westwood Marquis Hotel.

PELLICANO

We're here.

Michael takes the sippy cup from Bubbles' hand.

MICHAEL

Alright, Bubbles. Time to go inside.

The lawyers exchange glances.

FIELDS

I don't think it's a good idea to bring your, uh, friend along.

MICHAEL

We want to make a show of strength. Bubbles is strong.

Bubbles swells his chest with pride.

FIELDS

Right, right. But --

JOHNNIE

Actually, I like it. This will show them exactly how seriously we take this whole clown show.

Bert shrugs. Maybe Johnnie has a point.

INT. MARQUIS HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Seated at large conference room are Evan and his lawyer BARRY ROTHMAN (50s), a sleazeball.

As Michael and his team enter, Evan leaps from his chair, comes around the table and hugs Michael like they're old pals.

EVAN

Hey, Michael. Thanks for coming.

Michael is too confused to say anything. His legal team look equally puzzled.

Rothman offers his hand to Johnnie Cochran.

ROTHMAN

Mr. Cochran.

Cochran doesn't take it. Rothman moves down the line.

ROTHMAN (CONT'D)

Mr. Fields.

Fields doesn't take it either. Next up...

ROTHMAN (CONT'D)

Anthony.

...who at least gives him a wise guy nod of acknowledgment.

All parties take their seats. Rothman produces a letter from his briefcase and slides it across the table.

ROTHMAN (CONT'D)

This was written by a board certified psychiatrist after Mr. Chandler described to him - using no names, mind you - the nature of the relationship between Mr. Jackson and my client's son, Jordan Chandler.

Michael's team refuse to even acknowledge the letter's presence. After a beat, Rothman picks it back up.

ROTHMAN (CONT'D)

OK. I'll help you. This medical professional is of the opinion that, and I'm quoting here, "A minor in this type of relationship is in a state of clear and present danger. An adult male sleeping with a young, unrelated child is not only perverse, but meets the legal definition of lewd conduct."

COCHRAN

Are you accusing my client of a crime?

Evan dramatically whips off his sunglasses. There are tears in his eyes, but he is otherwise a terrible actor.

EVAN

You had sex with my son! How could you, Michael? How could you!

Michael remains calm.

MICHAEL

Evan, this is a big mistake.

ROTHMAN

This psychiatrist also stated that if such incidents had actually occurred, and he knew the names of the parties involved, he would have no choice but to report the matter to the Los Angeles County Department of Child Services.

FIELDS

This is absurd.

Rothman puts the letter back down on the table. Smiles.

ROTHMAN

My client does not wish to pursue this matter in court due to the trauma such proceedings would no doubt cause his child. Especially given the severe psychological damage Michael Jackson has already inflicted upon Jordan Chandler and his family.

COCHRAN

Objection.

ROTHMAN

Gentleman, we're prepared to settle this matter right here, right now, in this room.

PELLICANO

(to Bubbles)

Listen up, Bubs. Here comes the good part.

ROTHMAN

In exchange for agreeing not to file charges of sexual assault of a minor, we propose Michael Jackson Productions purchase four original feature motion picture screenplays from my client at a price of five million dollars a piece.

FIELDS

(to Michael)

I thought you said this guy was a dentist?

ROTHMAN

The amounts are to be rendered in increments of \$10 million dollars payable in two consecutive yearly installments. Michael Jackson Productions further agrees to shop each of these projects to no less than three major Hollywood studios.

Michael's team reach a silent conclusion, rise in unison.

COCHRAN

This is a shakedown. File whatever you want.

(MORE)

COCHRAN (CONT'D)

We'll see you in court on counter charges of blackmail, extortion and defamation of character.

Cochran walks out first. Evan shoots out of his chair and jabs an angry finger at Michael.

EVAN

I will bury you! Your whole world and everything you built is about to come crashing down!

FIELDS

Save it for the third act.

Fields walks out next. Pellicano follows, giving a jack-off gesture to Evan as he passes.

Bubbles rises to follow, but sees Michael is still seated. He looks stunned, stricken. Bubbles gently tugs his sleeve.

At length Jackson rises, unsteady on his feet.

INT. NEVERLAND - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bubbles wakes in his crib. Michael paces the room like a caged animal.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

The Worm had been vanquished, but there was no joy in my victory. Seeing The King brought so low caused me only sorrow.

EXT. NEVERLAND - AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Neverland is empty. Bubbles watches as Michael rides the carousel alone.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

I believed the passing of time would heal his wounded heart, but instead it only fed his mounting disconsolation, and thus, my own.

NIGHT

Michael still on the ride, going around and around.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Guilt gnawed at me. Had I elevated my own contentment above that of my sovereign? Had the envy provoked by the Worm rendered me disloyal to the crown? Or was I just attempting to preserve the kingdom by shielding The King from his own worst impulses? Such questions met no easy answers, and more questions were soon to come.

EXT. NEVERLAND - DAY

It's a beautiful summer morning. Bubbles sits in a tree enjoying a cool breeze and an apple when he sees...

...flashing lights on the horizon. As they reach the gates, he sees they belong to two POLICE CARS leading a procession of white VANS.

Bubbles watches, concerned, as one of the cars pulls up to the gatehouse. A policeman rolls down the window and hands Billy Bray a warrant.

The Neverland gates open and the vehicles enter. Bubbles leaps from the tree, and hurries toward the house.

INT. NEVERLAND - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Bubbles bursts in and races to the upper loft, where he finds Michael is not in his bed. And then he remembers...

BUBBLES (V.O.)

The King, despite his weakened condition, had embarked on a crusade. The cunning invaders had timed their attack to coincide with his absence.

INT. NEVERLAND - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bubbles sits on the bench of the grand piano, watching POLICE OFFICERS file into the room carrying arm loads of empty cardboard boxes.

INT. NEVERLAND - STUDY - DAY

Bubbles watches as a POLICE TECH drills into a large safe in the corner of the study.

INT. NEVERLAND - FOYER - DAY

Bubbles looks down from the landing above as police file out with boxes of videotapes, notebooks, scrapbooks, address books, pictures, audio recordings. Garbage bags filled with clothes, bed sheets, towels.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

They ransacked the castle entire,
leaving no stone unturned in
pursuit of The King's riches and
not absconding with their plunder
until several hours later.

EXT. NEVERLAND - MAIN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Bubbles sits on the roof, watching as the police load their vehicles and begin filing out.

Beyond the Neverland gates, he can now see NEWS VANS parked on the adjacent street.

Then he hears a HELICOPTER approach. The chopper's spotlight shines down on Bubbles, frightening him. He scurries down a rain gutter on the side of the house.

INT. NEVERLAND - KITCHEN - NIGHT

All members of the STAFF -- cooks, maids, security -- stand in the kitchen, gathered around a small TV as Bubbles enters.

ON TV

...the Jackson family (with the notable exception of La Toya) hold a press conference. Katherine Jackson reads from a prepared statement as the rest look on, grim-faced.

A crawl at the bottom of the screen reads: "POLICE RAID MICHAEL JACKSON'S HOME"

KATHERINE (V.O.)

Michael has been made a victim of a
cruel and obvious attempt to take
advantage of his fame and success.
We know, as does the whole world,
that he has dedicated his life to
providing happiness for young
people everywhere. We are confident
that his dignity and humanity will
prevail.

Flashbulbs POP, shutters WHIR.

INT. NEVERLAND - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Michael wanders through the rooms of his home late at night, talking to himself...

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 When The King returned from his
 crusade, he arrived a much
 diminished figure. Despite the
 turmoil facing the kingdom...

Michael occasionally stops to argue with the many lifelike mannequins posed throughout his house.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 ...his chief occupations were
 debating the statuary and...

INT. NEVERLAND - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Bubbles watches as Michael washes down a handful of pills, shielding his eyes from his own reflection in the mirror. He's so high he can barely stand up.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 ...administering nostrums at such
 an accelerated pace that...

INT. NEVERLAND - MICHAEL'S BEDROOM

Michael lays passed out on the floor. Bubbles plays with an empty pill bottle.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
 ...they sometimes left him for
 hours in death-like repose.

Elizabeth Taylor enters.

ELIZABETH
 I know you're in here. Now come on
 out and tell me why you've been
 avoiding my calls.

Then she sees Michal passed out on the floor. Sees Bubbles playing with the pill bottle. With a rising sense of panic, she holds out her hand to Bubbles.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Can I see that?

Bubbles hands it to her. She looks at the label, relieved.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Pfft. Lightweight.

Elizabeth spies the Super Soaker squirt gun in the corner. She retrieves it, aims, and SPRAYS Michael in the face.

He wakes, annoyed.

MICHAEL

Go away.

ELIZABETH

I will not. Be downstairs in ten minutes.

INT. NEVERLAND - DINING ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth Taylor sits next to Michael, holding his hand. On the other side of the table are Cochran and Fields. Bubbles lingers nearby.

COCHRAN

While you've been away, we've been meeting with Liz to discuss the case. We've concluded it's in your best interest to settle.

MICHAEL

You want me to pay? I didn't do anything wrong! I'm not giving that man a dime.

COCHRAN

No one is saying you did anything wrong.

MICHAEL

But you don't think we can win?

COCHRAN

We'd probably win, but...

FIELDS

...it could take years. Instead of spending your time here --- or in a studio, or out on tour, making money -- you are going to be stuck in a courtroom.

COCHRAN

Hearing a lot of nasty stuff.
Facing questions you don't want to
face.

MICHAEL

I have nothing to hide.

COCHRAN

I can't tell you how many clients
over the years have spoken those
very words. But when push comes to
shove -- and it always does --
everyone has something to hide.
Everyone.

Liz pats Michael's hand.

LIZ

You need to put this behind you,
Michael. It's killing you.

Michael stands. Paces the room, thinking, trying to calm his
mounting anger. And then...

MICHAEL

No.

Michael's voice is suddenly, masculine, deep. The legal team
exchange glances -- they've never heard him speak like this.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

If I settle, everyone will think I
did these terrible things.

COCHRAN

Any settlement will include
language denying any wrongful--

MICHAEL

They'll think I'm guilty, anyway.
All my fans around the world.
Everything I've done or ever will
do will be seen as the work of a
man -- a monster -- who takes
advantage of children. The media
will turn me into a boogeyman. And
this place, Neverland, they'll say
I created this whole magical,
wonderful place just to lure
children in. Like it's some giant
spiderweb.

FIELDS

They're saying these things already. And the longer this goes on, the more chances they have to say it.

MICHAEL

I pay Evan Chandler, all the wicked, conniving parents of every kid who ever stepped foot in Neverland are going to be thinking they just won the lottery. I'm not giving him or anyone else my hard-earned money.

COCHRAN

It's not really your money.

MICHAEL

What do you mean it's not my money?

COCHRAN

Your insurance company is prepared to pay a liability settlement. But if you go to court and lose? Then you'll be deemed negligent, and that they won't cover. That money will be yours.

Michael slumps into a chair. Ponders the whole mess.

INT. NEVERLAND - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A drugged Michael wanders into the kitchen, skin bleaching cream covering his face. He opens the fridge to get a glass of milk. Someone has left the small TV on.

ON TV

MTV News plays a news item under the banner "La Toya Speaks Out." She looks just as chemically zonked as Michael.

LA TOYA (V.O.)

Michael is my brother and I love him a great deal. But I cannot, and will not, be a silent collaborator to his crimes. I have seen checks payable to the parents of these children. My mother has shown me these checks, and they were for a great amount...

BACK TO SCENE

Bubbles enters. Sees tears streaming down Michael's face. He approaches. Climbs up on the counter, tries to initiate their finger-touch ritual.

But Michael just stares off into space.

INT. NEVERLAND - HALLWAY - DAY

Johnnie Cochran and Billy Bray stand outside Michael's room, looking unhappy. Bubbles lingers some distance behind them.

COCHRAN
How long has it been?

BILLY
An hour.

Cochran grimaces and KNOCKS on the door.

COCHRAN
Come on out, Michael. Let's just get this over with.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Don't make me go down there.
Please.

COCHRAN
They have a court order. Our hands are tied.

A moment later the door opens and an anguished, sickly looking Michael emerges wearing a bathrobe. Billy shoos Bubbles away.

BILLY
Go outside and play or something.

EXT. NEVERLAND - BACK YARD

Bubbles chases a butterfly in the backyard. Then he sees a FLASH coming from the living room window. Curious, he sneaks over and peaks inside where he sees...

MICHAEL

...standing on a raised platform in the living room, naked. A police PHOTOGRAPHER points his camera. More flashes go off.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

The invaders had returned, this time bearing instruments of torture, which they purposed mercilessly against The King.

Michael turns and Bubbles sees the utterly humiliated look on his face. Bubbles can't watch any longer. He backs away from the window in dismay.

INT. NEVERLAND - FOYER - NIGHT

Michael lumbers down the stairs, still wearing his bathrobe. Impossible to tell how much time has past since last we saw him. He looks completely defeated, a broken man.

Bubbles watches from the study as Michael picks up a phone, dials.

MICHAEL

It's over. They win. I'll pay.

EXT. NEVERLAND - GAZEBO - DAY

Bubbles sits in the gazebo, overlooking the house and the valley below. It's peaceful, gorgeous.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

If there was a silver lining to the tempestuous clouds that had so long shadowed the kingdom, it was the absence of the guttersnipes. I dared then imagine a life of tranquility, one free from their obstreperous ways. Began to hope that this peace now glimpsed upon would settle over the kingdom for good.

In the distance, Bubbles sees the gates of Neverland parting to admit...

SCHOOL BUSES

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But hope so often serves only to prolong our torments.

EXT. NEVERLAND - MAIN RESIDENCE - DAY

Michael hands out lollipops to all the boys and girls.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
The King had learned nothing.

Bubbles wants one, too...but by the time he reaches Michael, all the lollipops are gone.

EXT. NEVERLAND - AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Bubbles glowers as Michael leads a delegation of kids down a path toward the amusement park. There is a manic quality to his movements.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
He was as some mad Pied Piper,
determined not to drive the snakes
away but lead them instead to the
very heart of his kingdom.

Michael laughs a little too brightly as he rides atop a carousel horse with all his noisy little friends.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
Determined to lower the drawbridge
for these pint-sized Trojan horses
and let them carry him away in a
stampede of frivolity.

A hungry Bubbles picks up a discarded lollipop. CRUNCHES the candy between his teeth.

INT. NEVERLAND - MOVIE THEATRE - DAY

Michael sits front and center in his packed theatre, shoveling popcorn into his mouth and watching "Dennis the Menace" (1993).

BUBBLES (V.O.)
I knew then no ordeal would change
him.

Bubbles reaches for the popcorn. Michael pulls it away.

MICHAEL
Get your own. You know where it is.

INT. NEVERLAND - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A bunch of kids are finishing eating ice-cream. Bubbles looks on, hungry, jealous, more angry by the second.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

No brush with ignominy, no
humiliation, no torture, no trial,
no punishment.

He again approaches Michael, tugs on his sleeve.

MICHAEL

Not now.
(to the gathered kids)
Who wants to have a slumber party?

The kids CHEER their approval.

INT. NEVERLAND - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bubbles stands just outside the opened door of Michael's bedroom, watching all the kids in pajamas enjoying a massive pillow fight. Down feathers from ripped pillows drift through the air like falling snow.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

He had waded so far into a sea of
infamy that returning was as
tedious as continuing to the other
side.

Michael shuts the door in Bubbles' face.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But that did not mean that I had to
stand by and idly watch.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Michael, alone, pours himself a glass of white wine. He corks the bottle, puts the bottle back in the cabinet and turns to see...

BUBBLES

...hunched on the counter. Watching.

MICHAEL

Get down, Bubbles. You're not
supposed to be up there.

As if to give him one last chance, Bubbles rubs his own stomach. Points to the freezer.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You can have ice-cream tomorrow.
Now get down from there.

Instead, Bubbles rises to his full height. Steps forward. Michael looks a little frightened now. He uses his seldom-heard masculine voice...

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Down!

And that's when Bubbles SCREAMS and...

...SPRINGS from the counter with terrifying speed and delivers a powerful KICK to Michael's chest with both feet at once.

Michael tumbles backward, his wine glass SHATTERING to the floor. He struggles to his feet, tries to back away.

Bubbles LEAPS, grabs Michael's hair in one hand and HURLS him into...

INT. NEVERLAND - LIVING ROOM (CONTINUOUS)

...where Bubbles instantly seizes him again, raises Michael over his head like a rag doll and...

...SLAMS him down on top of the grand piano, sending photos CLATTERING to the floor.

Michael rolls off the piano and HITS the ground. He makes a feeble attempt to rise but Bubbles swings a fist into his face...

...BREAKING Michael's nose pretty much off. Michael HOWLS in pain as Bubbles grabs a ceramic statue of Peter Pan.

Bubbles raises it above his head, prepared to bring it smashing down on Michael in what will surely be a fatal blow...

MICHAEL

Please, Bubbles. No...

Bubbles bares his fangs. Tightens his grip on the statue...

...then spots a painting hanging on the far wall - it's a self-aggrandizing oil portrait of Michael dressed as a king, sitting upon a throne.

Bubbles wavers and then...HURLS the statue at the painting.

Michael moans feebly from the floor. All at once Bubbles realizes what he has done. A wave of guilt washes over him. He goes on all fours, cowering in shame as he slinks out of the destroyed room.

FADE TO:

EXT. NEVERLAND - DAY

An ANIMAL CONTROL AGENT from Santa Barbara County loads a tranquilizer dart into the breech of his rifle. He raises his weapon.

THROUGH THE RIFLE SCOPE

He sees Bubbles calmly sitting in a tree, looking right at him. The crosshairs wander as the agent tries to steady his aim.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

There's no need for that.

BACK TO SCENE

The agent lowers his weapon. We see the voice belongs to Bob Dunn. Bob walks toward the tree.

BOB

Come on down. It's time to leave.

Bubbles scurries from the tree. He calmly walks across the yard to the driveway where Bob's truck is parked.

There's a cage in the back. Bubbles hops into the truck bed, then climbs into the cage and shuts the door behind him.

INT. BOB'S TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

Bubbles watches out the back, bittersweet as the gates of Neverland close and recede into the distance.

FADE TO:

EXT. BOB'S RANCH - DAY

Bob leads Bubbles by the hand past rows of cages. Bob has clearly expanded his business, and now houses a variety of birds, dogs, reptiles, and chimpanzees.

He leads Bubbles to a cage and opens the door. But this cage isn't empty -- inside is his old friend, Daisy. As Bubbles moves inside...

INT. BUBBLES' CAGE - (CONTINUOUS)

DAISY
(signing)
Hey, Bubs.

BUBBLES
(signing)
Hello, good lady Daisy.

DAISY
I knowed you would come back, yo.

Bubbles nods. Mixed emotions.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
Perhaps in my inmost heart, I knew so, too.

Bob Dunn closes the cage door. Locks it.

EXT. BOB'S RANCH - DAY

CU on Bubbles' eyes as he watches the sunset.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
And I knew my great adventure with The King had come to an end. I had crossed a boundary beyond which there was no return. With little else now to occupy my mind, one might think I spent my days reminiscing about life in the castle, replaying all those events over and over again if hoping the very act of recollection would render their outcomes more favorable.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Daisy happily picking nits from Bubbles' back.

BUBBLES (V.O.)
But I had no desire to suffer twice, once in reality and once in retrospect. What was done was done.

PULL BACK FURTHER to reveal all the animals at Bob's Ranch behind the bars of their respective cages.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

My heart still did beat. I had food and water. There was light enough to see and air enough to breathe. I had the friendship of Daisy, who, though she would never spark a tempest in my soul, proved a good and reliable companion.

And then Daisy FADES OUT of the picture.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Alas, time's winged chariot raced ever onward and the disadvantages of Daisy's youth were too great for her hearty spirit to overleap. She succumbed to an early, though easeful death.

Other animals start FADING OUT - chimps, gorillas, dogs, etc.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

And then our community began disappearing, little by little. Some shuffling off to their great reward, or simply being led out of their cages one day by the Bearded Prophet never to return. Their homes stood empty for a time...

And now the empty cages themselves begin to FADE OUT.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

...but soon, they, too, were taken away. Only myself and a few others of my ilk remained constant.

Two chimpanzees and a ragged tiger look out from their cages.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But I knew that constancy was an illusion. That one night my eyes would close, never to open again.

The sun has dropped now and its almost completely dark as Bubbles slowly closes his eyes.

FADE TO:

EXT. BOB'S RANCH - DAY

Bob -- now gray haired and worn out -- leads Laura (we met her way back on page 2) towards the cages holding Bubbles and the remainder of the chimpanzees.

BOB

I found homes for most of the little guys, but placing these older ones has been tricky.

LAURA

Why are you closing up shop, anyway?

BOB

No market. People don't need real animals in their movies now. They just make them on a computer. Besides...

They reach Bubbles' cage. Bob eyes him sadly.

BOB (CONT'D)

I don't know. I guess it's just time to move on.

Laura leans over. Looks in the cage. Smiles at Bubbles.

LAURA

Hi, Bubbles. How would you like to come live with me in Florida?

INT. BUBBLES' CAGE - DAY

Bubbles draws patterns in the dusty floor of his cage.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But while travel arrangements were being completed, I did receive one final visitor.

He hears approaching footsteps and looks up to see...

A little girl wearing a strange, feathered MASK. This is PARIS JACKSON (7).

BUBBLES (V.O.)

Or should I say 'visitors.'

A boy in a similar mask runs up and stands next to Paris. This is PRINCE JACKSON (8).

PRINCE
Daddy, is this him?

Bubbles rises slowly to his feet, anxious as...

Michael comes into view. He's older, paler, thinner, his reconstructed nose like that of Peter Pan. He pushes a stroller with a blanket draped over it. The legs of PRINCE "BLANKET" MICHAEL JACKSON THE SECOND (2) stick out.

MICHAEL
How you doing, Bubbles?

Bubbles stands frozen in disbelief.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I wanted my children to meet you before you went to your new home. I've told them a lot about you. All the fun we had back in the day.

He puts a hand on his daughter's shoulder.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
This is Paris.

And then pats the head of his eldest son.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
And this is Prince. The little one in the stroller here, he's Prince Michael Jackson the Second. But we just call him "Blanket."

Bubbles struggles to control his emotions. Paris turns her head, points off to another cage.

PARIS
Is that a tiger?

PRINCE
Can we go and look at it?

MICHAEL
Sure. Take Blanket with you.

Paris takes the stroller and the children move out of frame. Now it's only Michael and Bubbles. Alone again together after all these years. Neither can maintain eye contact.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I want you to know...I'm sorry. It was a crazy time. But I should have been better to you.

Bubbles blinks. Rubs his nose. His hands shake. He SNIFFS.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Well, I should go. Before Paris feeds Blanket to that tiger.

Bubbles nods.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

But if I'm ever in Florida...on tour or whatever...maybe I'll stop by, see how you're doing. Would that be okay?

Bubbles SNORTS. Looks away. Looks back. Looks away.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Well, I guess this is goodbye. You take care, Bubbles.

Michael turns to walk away. He takes three steps before Bubbles emits a lone HOOT.

Michael turns back around. Bubbles walks to the front of his enclosure. He wriggles his hand through the bars. Extends his pointer finger toward Michael.

Michael removes his sunglasses. He walks back to the cage. Kneels. Reaches one hand toward Bubbles pointer finger extended until...

Their fingers touch.

FADE TO:

EXT. APE SANCTUARY - DAY

SUPER: Center for Great Apes - Wachula, Florida - Present Day

Bubbles turns away as Laura continues giving Dr. Arnold Omar the tour.

LAURA

This is another one of our chimp habitats. We have seven adults in this dome, plus the two youngsters you see over there...

Her voice trails off as Bubbles walks away.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

No, it was not the King. I have not seen him since leaving the Bearded Prophet. But one day, he shall come.

Bubbles passes the wrestling young chimps.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

It will be difficult to abdicate my throne, to leave this modest kingdom to which I have grown accustomed to ruling. My subjects are as faithful and true as any king could wish for, and have treated me well. In turn, I hope I have proven a wise and capable leader over these many years.

Bubbles ascends the wooden jungle gym. Takes up his perch. His throne. Looks down upon his domain.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

But if he asks me to serve, I shall again answer his call. Because though there are many rulers, and many realms, there is no king like my king.

Bubbles gazes out over the treetops to the greater world beyond.

BUBBLES (V.O.)

And so I await the return of the once and future king, the greatest king the world has ever known. This time nothing shall come between us. This time no cage shall be strong enough to hold us back. This time, together, we shall conquer all.

FADE TO BLACK.