

Four Days In May

INT. MURPH'S BEDROOM - DAY

A RADIO BROADCAST President Nixon's speech.

SUPERIMPOSE:

"MAY 1, 1970. 8:00 A.M. KENT, OHIO"

PRESIDENT NIXON (V.O.)  
When you think of those kids...

EXT. BATTLE FIELD - DAY

News film footage of U.S. Soldiers fighting in Vietnam.

PRESIDENT NIXON (V.O.)  
I say "kids." I have seen them,  
they are the greatest. Fighting for  
our country.

INT. TOMMY'S BEDROOM - DAY

TOMMY, (19) a lanky, semi-long haired college student,  
wearing hippie clothes with John Lennon style glasses, gets  
dressed.

On the walls of his messy room hang peace signs and posters.

PRESIDENT NIXON (V.O.)  
Then you see these bums, you know,  
blowing up the campuses. Listen,  
the boys that are on the college  
campus today are the luckiest  
people in the world, going to the  
greatest universities.

EXT. BERKLEY CAMPUS - DAY

News footage of campus riots at Berkley.

PRESIDENT NIXON (V.O.)  
And here they are burning up the  
books. I mean, storming around  
about this issue. You name it, get  
rid of the war; there will be  
another one.

EXT. AKRON CITY STREET - DAY

Fully armed National Guard jumps out of a deuce and a half  
truck and into formation.

SARGE, (35) a hard-looking, stocky-built man, shouts orders.

PATRICK, (21) a serious, clean-cut soldier, stands in formation. His nametag reads, "MURPHY."

PRESIDENT NIXON (V.O.)

Then out there we have kids who are doing their duty. They stand up tall and are proud. I'm sure they are scared. But when it comes down to it, they stand up and boy you have to talk up to those boys.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Frames of medals hang on the wall. A name tag reads, "MURPHY" with an Army major's insignia next to it.

A family picture shows Murph, Helen, Patrick (in uniform), Tommy, and Ruthie.

PRESIDENT NIXON (V.O.)

They are going to do just fine; we have to stand in back of them. We need to support our troops.

INT. KITCHEN

HELEN, (44) a motherly, heavy-set woman, puts breakfast on the table.

RUTHIE, (17) a cute, petite blonde, eats cereal. She wears a conservative skirt, blouse, and light sweater.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

That was President Nixon speaking at the Pentagon this morning, where he plans to discuss the invasion of Cambodia. In more news--

INT. MURPH'S BEDROOM

MURPH, (45) a friendly-looking, nerdy man with a buzz cut and horn rimmed glasses, wears a dark suit, white shirt, and tie.

He turns off the radio and exits.

INT. MURPHY HOUSE - HALLWAY

ROCK MUSIC blares from behind a door with a peace sign on it. Murph BANGS on the door.

MURPH  
Turn that music off. You're going  
to make us late.

He walks down the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN

A TELEVISION BROADCAST blares.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
The invasion of Cambodia continues  
as thousands of troops cross the  
border...

Murph enters while the family golden retriever, FLASH, barks. The PHONE RINGS. Murph answers it.

MURPH  
Hello! Hello! Flash, stop barking!

He puts his hand over his ear.

MURPH (CONT'D)  
What? No, not you. Hold on!

He goes into the closet and closes the door. Tommy enters and goes under the phone cord that blocks his way.

TOMMY  
Morning, Mom.

He sits across from Ruthie.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Hey, squirt. The big announcement.  
It's today, isn't it?

RUTHIE  
Yep, first woman editor. Look out  
Radcliffe here I come.

Murph comes out of the closet and places the phone back on the hook. He pours a cup of coffee.

HELEN  
Who was that?

MURPH

Charlie Hudson. I'm a peace marshal  
for the weekend.

HELEN

But we're busy this weekend.  
Patrick's coming home--

MURPH

It's Kent. You know our students,  
they'll yell a little, sing some  
songs, make a couple of speeches.

Murph takes a sip of coffee.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Besides, I won't miss Ruthie's  
birthday party.

HELEN

Well, I think they should get  
someone else.

RUTHIE

What are they yelling about?

MURPH

Well--

TOMMY

Nixon's invading Cambodia and  
everyone's pissed off.

HELEN

Tommy!

MURPH

Language, please.

TOMMY

Okay, how about this? Our friends  
are being slaughtered in a  
senseless war.

MURPH

Not this early.

TOMMY

But it's the truth.

Helen clears Ruthie's cereal bowl.

HELEN

Tommy, what do you have on?

Tommy stands and grabs his backpack.

TOMMY  
Come on guys, I can't be late.

HELEN  
Tommy, you look like a hippie.

TOMMY  
Mom, it's the style.

Tommy holds up the peace sign.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Peace.

Helen throws her towel at him, half laughing. Ruthie and Murph kiss Helen and follow Tommy out the door.

EXT. UNIVERSITY SCHOOL - DAY

Murph pulls over an older sedan in front of the school. Tommy sits in the passenger seat. Ruthie climbs out of the car.

TOMMY  
Hey, squirt. Good luck today.

RUTHIE  
Thanks. Bye, Dad.

Ruthie smiles and shuts the door. She walks towards a group of students.

INT. OLDER SEDAN

Murph drives as they pass campus buildings including the Army ROTC building.

MURPH  
Why'd you say, "good luck?"

TOMMY  
The editor thing.

MURPH  
Darn, I forgot. She's got her heart set on that. That and Radcliffe.

TOMMY  
She's got it in the bag.

MURPH

Let's hope so. Things don't always go as planned.

TOMMY

Like your kid's a hippie?

MURPH

Tommy... I just worry.

TOMMY

Shit, dad, after what happened to Eric, I worry, too.

Tommy rolls down the window.

MURPH

How's Sarah doing?

TOMMY

Pissed off. What do you think?

MURPH

I was just asking.

TOMMY

Sorry... She'll be okay.

MURPH

Make sure she comes to dinner.

TOMMY

Yeah... With Patrick. That should be interesting.

MURPH

Brothers need to talk.

TOMMY

About what?

MURPH

Well... the Guard.

TOMMY

Dad, I'm not joining the Guard.

Murph parks the car. Tommy jumps out.

MURPH

But I pulled a lot of strings to--

TOMMY

Shit, I'd rather go to Canada.

Tommy slams the door and walks towards the Commons, a large grassy area that slopes up towards Taylor Hall.

I/E. OLDER SEDAN

Murph watches Tommy walk towards SARAH, (18) a pretty college coed with long straight hair, a headband, and fringed jacket.

Sarah hands out flyers with her back to the car. Tommy comes up behind her and puts his hands over her eyes. She laughs and turns to him. Tommy kisses her and grabs some flyers.

EXT. COMMONS

Tommy and Sarah walk across the Commons. They climb the gentle hill that leads to brick campus buildings.

SARAH

My mom called this morning. They're finally sending Eric home.

TOMMY

When... when will he get here?

SARAH

They want to bury him at Arlington.

She starts to cry. Tommy puts his arm around her.

TOMMY

Shit, he wouldn't want that.

SARAH

I know... but... there's nothing I can do.

TOMMY

Fuck this shit.

Tommy breaks away and holds up a flyer.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Rally at noon. End this fucking war, now.

INT. HISTORY CLASSROOM - DAY

MR. BROWN, a student teacher with long hair pulled back into a ponytail, stands in front of the classroom.

MR. BROWN

War is murder. Our forefathers did not write the Constitution for us to invade other countries.

Students listen intently. Ruthie looks down at her journalism notebook.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)

We are murdering the innocent.  
(pause)  
Miss Murphy!

Ruthie looks up, startled.

RUTHIE

Yes, sir.

MR. BROWN

Your father is a war hero. Right?

RUTHIE

He was in the Army, sir.

MR. BROWN

I know who your father is. Major Murphy was in two wars. Right?

RUTHIE

Yes, sir. But that was before he became a professor.

MR. BROWN

And just what did he do in the war?

RUTHIE

He was an infantry officer.

MR. BROWN

Infantry. They fight. Right?

RUTHIE

Yes, but--

MR. BROWN

And while they fight, they kill. Isn't that right, Miss Murphy?  
(no response)  
Miss Murphy?

Ruthie stares directly at her foe, Mr. Brown.

RUTHIE

They fight to protect the country.

MR. BROWN

Our country? Our country? Is  
Vietnam our country? Is Cambodia  
our country? How about it class, is  
Cambodia part of the United States?

Some students respond with a weak "no." Ruthie looks down at her journal.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)

My point exactly.

Mr. Brown holds up two fingers to form the peace sign.

MR. BROWN (CONT'D)

Remember, ladies and gentlemen,  
it's all about peace. Not war. Not  
invasions. Not murder. Peace.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Ruthie walks down the hall with her friends: LORI, (17) a fun-loving, cute junior and RANDY, (18) a good-looking senior. Lori and Randy hold hands.

RANDY

What an ass. And he's not even a  
real teacher. Did you tell anyone?

RUTHIE

Tell who? I was so embarrassed.  
Everyone just stared at me.

LORI

I would have kicked him in the  
balls, right there, in class.

RUTHIE

Then he held up his fingers and  
said, "Peace." I hate that shit.

RANDY

Forget about him. He'll be gone in  
a few weeks anyway. He's just a  
college communist.

RUTHIE

At least there's Journalism.

LORI

You got this. Don't worry.

Ruthie walks into her next class as Lori and Randy continue down the hall.

INT. JOURNALISM CLASS - DAY

MR. PHILLIPS, (33) curly-hair with a large mustache, writes an assignment on the chalkboard. Students take notes.

Ruthie watches the clock. The BELL RINGS.

MR. PHILLIPS

Ruthie. Stephen. I need you two to stay after for a second.

Students file out. Ruthie grabs her books and stands in front of the desk.

STEPHEN, (17) an intelligent looking student wearing horn-rimmed glasses, joins her.

RUTHIE

Mr. Phillips, I thought you were announcing next year's editor.

MR. PHILLIPS

I know you're anxious to find out, but I have until Tuesday.

RUTHIE

But you told me... yesterday. You said I had the job.

STEPHEN

I guess he hasn't decided yet.

MR. PHILLIPS

Ruthie, please understand... This decision belongs to the school. You both have excellent potential.

RUTHIE

What?

Mr. Phillips walks around the side of the desk and sits on it. He holds up a small paper bag.

MR. PHILLIPS

I think a little competition is in order. In here are several story ideas. You'll each pick one. Rough draft is due Monday. Final story with pictures by Tuesday. The best story wins. Understand?

STEPHEN

Yes, sir.

RUTHIE

No. What happened?

MR. PHILLIPS

I know you're upset, but there are others... involved. The school wants a clear decision.

RUTHIE

You mean Principle Webb and the rest of the men--

MR. PHILLIPS

Ruthie, this is not up for debate.

Mr. Philip's holds out the bag. Stephen jumps in front of Ruthie and draws first.

STEPHEN

Groovy! "The Cuyahoga River Clean Up." I have some cool stuff already.

Ruthie draws next. She looks at the paper and rolls her eyes.

RUTHIE

"Reaction to Nixon's invasion of Cambodia." No one even cares about that except the hippies, and they never come to school.

INT. SCHOOL HALL

Ruthie walks down the crowded hall. Lori pushes through the hall behind her. Randy follows.

LORI

Ruthie! Ruthie! Wait.

They catch up with Ruthie.

LORI (CONT'D)

Earth to Ruth. I've been yelling your name and you just ignore me.

RUTHIE

Not in the mood to talk.

LORI

We heard. It's all over the school.  
Stephen's holding court down the  
hall. Such a kiss ass.

RANDY

Yeah, but we have an idea. There's  
a protest rally on campus. You need  
to be there.

RUTHIE

Great, but I'd need to sign out. My  
mom would never do that.

LORI

(changing her voice)

This is Mrs. Murphy. My daughter  
needs to sign out for a dentist  
appointment at eleven forty-five.

RUTHIE

You didn't?

Lori holds up three blue passes.

RANDY

Let's split.

EXT. COMMONS - VICTORY BELL - DAY

The Commons, a grassy place of gathering, stretches out over  
a sloping hill. At one end is the football practice field. At  
the top of the hill is Taylor Hall. At the other side of the  
hill stands the Army ROTC building.

The Victory Bell stands at the halfway point between Taylor  
Hall and the practice field. A student RINGS the BELL.

Hippie students stand by including KEVIN, (25) a short, yet  
imposing graduate student with long hair.

A COED plays the guitar and sings "One Tin Soldier."

COED

Now they stood beside the treasure,  
on the mountain, dark and red.  
Turned the stone and looked beneath  
it. "Peace on Earth" was all it  
said. Go ahead and hate...

EXT. COMMONS - HILL

A sign hangs on a tree that says: "WHY IS THE ROTC BUILDING STILL STANDING?"

About one hundred students sit peacefully on the hill listening to the song. They include Tommy, Sarah, and MARCUS, (22) semi-long hair, wears a tie-dye T-shirt.

COED (V.O.)

... your neighbor, go ahead and  
cheat a friend. Do it in the name  
of Heaven, you can justify in the  
end. There won't be any trumpets  
blowing come the judgment day...

EXT. TAYLOR HALL - VERANDA

Taylor Hall stands at the top of the hill. A balcony style veranda wraps around the building.

DANIEL, (44) a conservative English professor wearing a suit, and FRANKLIN (23) a graduate student wearing jeans and a short-sleeved button down shirt, watch the rally.

Daniel wears a blue armband, while Franklin wears a white armband.

COED (V.O.)

On the bloody morning after... one  
tin soldier rides away.

EXT. COMMONS - HILL

As the Coed sings, Ruthie, Lori and Randy walk toward the group of hippies. Ruthie takes pictures with her camera.

LORI

Shit, we look out of place.

RUTHIE

Just act like we belong. No one  
will notice.

Tommy sees Ruthie and runs toward her.

TOMMY

Squirt!

LORI

Yeah, that worked.

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