



LOTO

by Paul Moore

FADE IN:

INTERIOR - CLASSROOM - HIGH SCHOOL

ANGLE SHOT OF TEACHER STANDING AT FRONT OF CLASSROOM

TEACHER: Can anyone tell me the main cause of the War of the Roses?

PAN SHOT OF CLASSROOM. The pupils, almost uniformly, are staring back at their teacher with the recognizable stare of the unresponsive. But there are two notable exceptions, and the camera dwells on these a little longer than the rest. The first is Bill. He is handsome and lively-looking and, with a grin on his face that is looking for a chance to sidestep, he is scanning the classroom. The second exception is John. John is looking through the pages of his scribbler for the answer to the teacher's question. He is thinner and darker than Bill. And, different than Bill and the rest of the kids, he is actually taking this history lesson seriously. It can also be seen that he marches to the beat of a much slower drum than Bill does. Also, he doesn't appear free of care.

CAMERA HOLD ON JOHN

TEACHER: John?

John raises his eyes to look at her in a way that suggests he hopes his ears have lied.

CUT TO TEACHER.

She is looking down at John.

CUT BACK TO JOHN

He slowly begins to rise from his chair. As he does he keeps his eyes on the scribbler on his desk. Before he stands to full height (which would put him out of reach of the scribbler) he takes the scribbler gingerly in his hands; all the while staring down at it. He stands there for a minute of deadly silence. His head remains down.

TEACHER: Just the main cause of the War of the Roses, John. Don't worry about giving me all of them.

There is another pause, but then John slowly starts to speak, in a very low, soft voice.

JOHN: The main cause of the...War of...Roses, was...

VOICE IN BACKGROUND: A tulip shortage.

Classroom breaks into laughter.

CUT TO FULL SHOT OF CLASS

The whole class is laughing and John remains standing, his head down.

CUT TO BILL

Bill is quite pleased with the effect his little line has achieved. Girl in front of Bill turns around, laughing. Bill winks at her and smiles; he is master of the situation.

CUT TO ANGLE SHOT

Since John is sitting beside Bill we see both of their faces from this angle. The profile of Bill's smiling face is closest to the camera, and we can see John's full face, because at the same time that he's sitting down, he's also looking over at Bill. John feels his eyes and turns.

CLOSE-UP ON BILL

The smile fades from his face. The reason it has faded is because of what he sees on John's face.

CLOSE-UP ON JOHN

The thing that is most noticeable in John's eyes is not the defensive belligerence that Bill might have expected, but the unmasked pain, the confused hurt, of a much pierced innocence that has been pierced once again. John looks away from Bill and down at his own hands. His look stays there.

CUT BACK TO ANGLE SHOT

From here we can't see Bill's face. He is still looking at John. John is still looking down at his hands. Then Bill turns around and we see his profile. He realizes what he has done and he's not proud of it. The teacher, meanwhile, seeing that John will not be gotten up again, has asked somebody else the question. And this person has proceeded to answer it. All this has gone on as background sound during the preceding close-ups of John and Bill, starting at approximately the same time that John sat down.

FADE OUT, THEN FADE IN:

EXTERIOR - SCHOOL IN BACKGROUND - DAY - MED.

CLOSE-UP ON JOHN

There are no cars or people in background. John is walking down sidewalk away from school, by himself. He is very graceful at walking.

BILL: John!

CUT TO BILL

Bill is running toward John with football uniform on. He slows down as he approaches him.

CUT TO ANGLE SHOT

As Bill enters frame we see John, surprised, watching him. They are now facing one another.

JOHN: Hi.

BILL: We were just finishing football practice, and I saw you...hey, just wait a sec, (Bill, out of breath, takes a deep one and takes his football helmet off) ...that's better. Yea, I just saw you walking down here and I...(quickly) decided to come over.

There is silence between them. John stares at the ground. Bill's doing a bit of that, but is concentrating mainly on shifting from foot to foot. But then he stops and looks at John.

BILL: (with complete, utter honesty) John, I really came over because I wanted to apologize for cutting you off in class this morning. I was trying to be funny and sometimes not everybody appreciates the joke. I'm sorry.

JOHN: (pause, then he raises his eyes to meet Bill's) Thank you.

BILL: (pause, there's something in John's eyes that hits him very hard when he sees it. He's having trouble getting used to it.) Um, you're new around here, aren't you?

CLOSE-UP ON JOHN

He abruptly shifts his eyes back down to the side-