

COLUMBIA HOUSE TAPE CLUB

Written by

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FADE IN.

INT. CHEAP APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Open on the interior door of the apartment. The door opens into the living room, which is sparsely decorated. A stained couch looks upon a TV that sits on an actual TV tray. There's a coffee table with coffee cup stains on it. An ashtray filled with ashes and butts. A generic Wal-Mart art piece hangs crookedly above the couch.

A key slips into the slot and unlocks the door. SCOTTIE NICHOLS walks in and shuts the door and locks it behind him. Scottie is a 10-year-old boy. He is dressed for the winter and he carries a stack of mail and wears a Transformers backpack.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Scottie puts the mail on the table next to a stack of magazines. He looks towards a plate with two cookies on it. A note next to it says "I know how much you love cookies, Dad! Love Scottie." The cookies haven't been touched.

Scottie hides his disappointment, even though no one is around to see it. He eats the cookies.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Scottie takes off his hat and coat and puts them on a small wall-mounted rack next to the front door. A key hangs on a strap around his neck.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Scottie opens his backpack and takes out a comic book and an envelope and sets them on a neat desk. The comic book is issue #3 of *Secret Wars II*. He hangs his backpack on a hook in the closet.

He sits down at the desk and grabs the envelope. It's addressed to "Ms. Whitney Chapel." He opens it, careful not to tear the envelope. He pulls out a letter and quickly reads it.

The CAMERA stays on the letter as certain phrases are highlighted: "Dear Ms. Chapel," "We are concerned about your son...", "He doesn't have any friends in class...", "We're afraid that his social development lags his classmates...."

If the letter bothers Scottie, it doesn't show. At the bottom is a spot for his mother to sign.

Scottie opens a drawer and pulls out a folded letter. He opens it. It's a letter his mother wrote to him when he was visiting relatives. He places his mother's letter on top of the school letter, careful to match the signature on one letter to the signature line on the letter beneath.

He grabs a black pen and traces over his mother's handwriting on the top letter, something he's clearly done several times before. He pushes so hard that it imprints his mother's name on the school form. He removes the old letter and uses the pen to "sign" as his mother, writing over the indentions made from the other letter.

He puts the old letter away and puts the new letter back in the envelope.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Scottie reaches into the fridge and pulls out a gallon of milk. He sets it on the counter next to a box of Cocoa Puffs and a can of Strawberry Quick. He shuts the fridge door.

On the outside is a note from his mom.

WHITNEY (V.O.)

Hey Scottie-Bear, I'm working late again tonight. There's a casserole in the fridge if you want to cook it. Directions are in the binder above the stove. I got some random magazines from the school you might like. Some teacher was just throwing them out. Anyway, I'll check on you when I get in. Love. Kisses. Mom.

Scottie walks across the kitchen and looks at the stack of magazines on the table. A couple of random *Newsweek* issues, a fishing magazine, several issues of *Sports Illustrated*, including covers with Magic Johnson, Mary Lou Retton, Daryl Strawberry and the Swimsuit Issue with Paulina Poritzkova, and an issue of *Rolling Stone* with Prince on the cover.

Scottie grabs the *Rolling Stone* and the Swimsuit Issue.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Scottie sits on the couch with a TV tray in front of him. He eats from a large bowl of Cocoa Puffs.

A half-empty glass of Strawberry Quick sits on the tray. On TV, the show "The Invaders" plays in syndication.

Scottie is really into the show as he eats his cereal, cheering along as humans fight aliens. The magazines sit on the couch next to him, face down, so no one would see the swimsuit issue OR Prince.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Scottie turns the TV off. His bowl and glass already returned to the kitchen, he puts away the TV tray.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Scottie sits at the desk and finishes reading the *Secret Wars II* comic. He shrugs and puts it in a plastic bag (with NO board). He walks across the room and puts the comic in a short comic book box, behind the first issue of the original *Secret Wars* series.

He sits back down and starts flipping through the Swimsuit Issue. He lingers. Scottie gets up and puts the magazine between the mattresses of his bed.

He sits back down and starts flipping through the *Rolling Stone* magazine. He checks the little news and notes section. Then the article about Prince. And right there is where he finds it.

The most glorious of all advertisements: The Columbia House Tape Club. 12 cassettes for a penny. Scottie looks at the little dish on his desk where he throws pocket change. He has a penny. And the ad has a place to tape that penny.

SCOTTIE

Rad.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Scottie leaves the *Rolling Stone* magazine on the desk, open to the Columbia House ad. The return mail form has been neatly cut out. A few dozen albums have been circled on the ad.

He walks to the front door and places the postcard in the mailbox mounted next to the door. He puts up the flag.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Scottie sits on the couch watching "The Invaders." He pours more Cocoa Puffs into his bowl of brown milk. An empty glass of Strawberry Quick sits on the tray.

The doorbell rings.

Scottie jumps up and rushes for the door. He opens it and a box sits on the ground. The label says "Scott Nicholson." He frowns briefly at the typo and then takes the box inside.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sitting at his desk, Scottie tears open the box. Inside are the Columbia House tapes. Among the visible ones are "Born in the USA," by Bruce Springsteen; "Like a Virgin," by Madonna; "1984," by Van Halen; "Run-D.M.C.," by Run-D.M.C.; and "The Unforgettable Fire," by U2.

Scottie grabs the tape he's most interested in, "Purple Rain," by Prince and the Revolution.

Scottie opens it and puts the cassette in his Walkman. He puts the headphones on and begins listening to Prince. He smiles. We can't hear it, but when the opening monologue ends and the music kicks in for "Let's Go Crazy," Scottie DOES go crazy, bopping along.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Scottie talks to his mother on a wall-mounted rotary phone.

SCOTTIE

I don't know, mom. It has the wrong name.

He listens.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)

Scott Nicholson.

Beat.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)

I don't know.

He listens again.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)

Will you bring home some stamps?

He frowns.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
When's that?

Beat.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
Friday? But how--

He nods.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
What is stenography?

He frowns again.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
Okay. Bye.

He hangs up.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: Friday

Scottie walks to the fridge and sees a note from his mom. It says:

WHITNEY (V.O.)
Scottie, sorry I couldn't get stamps this week. Next time. There are some more magazines on the table and Hot Pockets in the freezer. I'll check in on you when I get home. Late. Love. Kisses. Mom.

Scottie frowns.

He walks to the table and eats the cookies his father never showed up to eat. He flips through a Rolling Stone magazine with Bob Dylan on the cover. He finds a new Columbia House Tape Club ad. This one comes with a reply postcard.

Scottie detaches the postcard from the magazine and flips it over. He rubs his finger over the square that says "No Postage Necessary."

He very clearly writes "Scottie Nichols" on this card along with the address. He tapes a penny to it and sticks it in the mailbox.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doorbell rings. Scottie opens the door. Two packages sit at the door. He grabs them and takes them to his room.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Scottie sits at his desk, headphones on. He reads the liner notes to "Cargo," by Men at Work, and nods his head along to the music.

Next to him, a torn box spills out several cassettes, including "Private Dancer," by Tina Turner; "Stop Making Sense," by the Talking Heads; "Make It Big," by Wham!; and "Heartbeat City," by the Cars. The box is addressed to "Scottie Nichols."

Scottie puts down the Men at Work case and picks up the smaller box. This one addressed to "Scott Nicholson." He opens it and it's another cassette, "Into the Gap," by the Thompson Twins.

Scottie stares at the cassette, puzzled.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doorbell rings. Scottie opens the door and grabs a package. He sits back down at the TV tray, but his cereal bowl is empty. "The Invaders" plays on TV.

The package is addressed to "Scott Nicholson." He opens it and pulls out a cassette, "Centerfield," by John Fogerty.

Scottie shrugs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doorbell rings. Scottie opens the door and grabs a package and an envelope. The box is addressed to "Scottie Nichols." He tears open the box as he walks into the kitchen. It contains "No Jacket Required," by Phil Collins.

The envelope is addressed to "Scott Nicholson." In large letters the envelope says "CANCELLATION NOTICE." It's from Columbia House. He tosses the letter in the trash, unopened. It's a little obvious, so he pushes it down deeper, where his mom wouldn't think to look.

The phone rings and startles him. He jumps back from the trash can in shock.

Scottie takes a deep breath and answers the phone.

SCOTTIE
Hello?

Beat.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
Hey, mom.

He looks over towards the table. The cookies sit on the plate next to the note for his father.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
No.

He listens.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
At the stadium?

He shakes his head.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
No. I don't want to.

He looks towards the hall closet.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
I haven't played since...

He nods.

SCOTTIE (CONT'D)
Love you, too.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doorbell rings. Scottie opens the door and grabs a package and an envelope. Both are addressed to "Scottie Nichols."

He scans the envelope. Large letters on the exterior say "LAST NOTICE." He puts it underneath the box.

He rips it open to find "Around the World in a Day," by Prince. His eyes grow huge. Scottie runs towards his bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Scottie stops when he looks on the bed. Sitting there is a wooden cassette rack. It has slots for 100 cassettes. A note sits on top.

Scottie grins as he reads the note from his mom.

WHITNEY (V.O.)

Found this in the dumpster near the
dorms. Thought you could use it.
Love. Kisses. Mom.

Three dozen or so cassettes crowd Scottie's desk. He grabs the rack and starts placing the cassettes into it in alphabetical order.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A key slips into the slot and unlocks the door. It opens and Scottie walks in. He carries a newspaper, "The Huron: State University's Underground Rag." He goes straight towards his bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Scottie sits at his desk, headphones on. He's listening to Tina Turner. The newspaper is open before him. Another Columbia House ad. This one is different, though, as it only has some of the popular artists in other ads. These are more obscure and underground albums.

Scottie takes the postcard out of the newspaper and starts filling it out. On the "name" line, he writes "Whitney Chapel." He smiles to himself.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

No cereal or Quick today, Scottie sits impatiently waiting. He doesn't even have the TV on.

The doorbell rings. Scottie opens the door and grabs a package.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Scottie has his headphones on, listening to the self-titled debut cassette from Duran Duran. He dances along, awkwardly.

On the table, the ripped-open box reveals several other cassettes: "Ride the Lightning," by Metallica; "Reckoning," by R.E.M.; "She's So Unusual," by Cyndi Lauper; "Big Bam Boom," by Hall & Oates; "New Edition," by New Edition; and "Escape," by Whodini.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doorbell rings. Scottie opens the door and grabs a package containing a single cassette. It's addressed to "Whitney Chapel."

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Scottie opens the box to find the "Miami Vice" Soundtrack. He nods to himself and puts it in the Walkman.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Scottie finishes moving the cassettes in the rack so he can put the Miami Vice soundtrack in the proper slot, alphabetically. Once he's done, there's only one last slot. He puts his fingers into the final slot and smiles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The doorbell rings. Scottie opens the door and grabs a package. The package is the size of a cassette tape, but it doesn't have any of the usual markings. Nothing to identify that it's from Columbia House.

He takes it into his bedroom and sits at the desk. He looks closer, but there are no markings on the box other than his name and address. Not even processing marks from the Post Office.

Scottie tears open the package and pulls out a cassette. He looks in the box, but there's no paperwork or anything else inside.

He puts it down and looks at the tape, #100 in his collection. The cover and spine are completely black with no text or visible images.

He opens it up and takes it out. The cassette is also completely black with no markings. No liner notes. Nothing on the inside cover.

Scottie stares at the cassette for a few seconds and then puts it in the Walkman. He puts on the headphones and hits play.

VOICE (O.S.)
We know what you did.

Scottie is taken aback.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Did you really think we wouldn't
find out?

Scottie looks around the room.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Did you think you were going to get
away with it?
(yelling)
WELL YOU DIDN'T!

Scottie recoils from the volume.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Scottie.

He rips the headphones and throws them on the desk. He uses enough force that the headphones pull out of the jack.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That's right. We know who you are.
We know where you live. We know
where your mother goes to school.
We know where she works. We know
you don't have any friends.

Scottie is aghast.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We know your daddy left you because
you're a worthless little thief.

Scottie tries to stop the tape, but no matter how many times he pushes the button, it won't work.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You're only going to get one
warning. This is it.

Scottie backs away from the Walkman.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
If you don't stop, we're going to
pay you a visit.

(MORE)

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You'll hear that doorbell ring and
it will be us. We're going to take
all your tapes. We're going to take
your Walkman. We're going to
destroy your comic books.
Especially, that *Secret Wars* #1. We
know that's your prized possession.
We're going to rip it up and use it
for toilet paper.

Scottie's jaw drops.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And if you STILL don't stop... Then
we're going to get violent.

Scottie runs from the room. He goes to the front closet and
grabs the baseball bat.

He runs back to his room and smashes the bat down onto the
Walkman.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
See you soon, you li--

He smashes it again. And again. And again.

Then he turns towards his cassette collection, which sits in
the wooden case. It's on the floor, leaning against the wall.
Scottie yells as he runs towards the cassette rack and
smashes it with the bat.

EXT. BACK PATIO - DAY

Scottie piles the shards of cassette cases and cassettes and
the broken Walkman on the patio. He grabs lighter fluid from
near the grill and squirts it all over the pile.

He grabs a long wooden match from a box near the grill. He
lights it and tosses it onto the pile. Flames whoosh higher
than he expected and he backs away a few steps.

He watches them burn.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Scottie sits at the TV tray. Eating cereal. Drinking Quick.
Watching "The Invaders."

The doorbell rings.

He freezes in terror.

He stares at the door for a while and then finally gets up.

He walks across the room quietly, hoping no one outside can hear him.

He reaches the door, but doesn't want to touch it.

Eventually he reaches out and touches the knob like he's afraid it's going to bite him. It doesn't.

He opens the door slowly and peeks outside. Nothing's there. Except the new phone book, wrapped in a plastic bag to keep it dry from any rain.

Scottie looks around and then slams the door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: Six months later

A key slips into the slot and unlocks the door. Scottie walks in and stops short.

Sitting on a TV tray is a new stereo, with both a cassette player and a CD player. There's a note on the front:

WHITNEY (V.O.)

Got this amazing present from my
NEW boyfriend. Isn't he the
sweetest?!? I don't even know what
a CD is... Don't break or burn this
one, it's MINE! Love. Kisses. Mom.

Scottie goes to his bedroom and shuts the door.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Scottie sits at his desk. ALL of his comics are stacked on the desk, face down. He finishes reading the last one and puts it back in its' plastic bag. He's re-read all of them.

He goes and lays down on the bed. He tries to nap, but it doesn't work.

Scottie gets up and walks into the living room. He turns on the TV and flips through. Soap opera. Infomercial. Some random British thing from the 60s. Baby cartoons. Baseball. He turns it off.

He looks at the stereo for quite a while.

Scottie gets up and goes into his bedroom. He lifts up the mattress. Between the Swimsuit Issue, an issue of *Playboy* and an issue of *Penthouse* lays a lone cassette: "Purple Rain."

He takes a deep breath.

Scottie walks into the living room and puts the cassette into the new stereo. He plugs in his headphones. He pushes play.

The music washes over him and he relaxes for the first time in a while.

The doorbell rings. His eyes dart towards the door in a panic.

CUT TO BLACK.

END.