

THE MULLIGAN CAPER
(Eric Roberts is interested in playing the Homer character)
(Feature period piece/drama screenplay – 94 pages)

Best Scripts 2020 Semi-Finalist
Chicago Film Festival 2021 Semi-Finalist
Boston Film Festival 2021 Finalist

“Leaving a harsh life for the freedom of traveling the rails, a young man learns the importance of survival, friendship and love within an ever changing world, especially when the past catches up.”

OZZIE LEDBETTER, a seventeen year old living in 1932 Boston relates the beginning of the tale how his Pop left his young bride and three month old infant son (Ozzie) to fend for themselves. Ozzie's mother turns to prostitution in order to survive while Ozzie becomes self-sufficient, hawking newspapers and stealing to live through his unsupervised teen years. After a beating from a shop owner for stealing Ozzie returns to their meager apartment used by the many men for Mom's services to find the shop owner with her. Ozzie realizes it is time to go on his own and beats the shop owner to death with a ball bat then hands the bloody bat to a shocked Mom, wishing her well.

Ozzie leaves with a small valise to the train yard where he hops in an open boxcar. Inside, he is confronted by a hobo named HOMER, a middle-aged man wearing a stetson hat with feathers in the band. Homer takes Ozzie's valise and tosses him off the train. A hobo named SYDNEY, nicknamed TWITCH, a little older than Ozzie, who ran from an orphanage three years prior, strikes up a friendship with Ozzie and brings Ozzie along with him showing him some tricks of life on the rails. Twitch shows Ozzie the art of scoffing for food in poorer neighborhoods near train yards.

Ozzie goes off on his own to scoff and at one house comes upon a teenage girl (SUSIE) being molested by her step-dad. Ozzie stops the man from further assaulting Susie who then strikes her step-dad with a frying pan, knocking him out. Ozzie suggest she leave the abusive home and travel with him and Twitch. She accepts and joins them.

Twitch, Susie and Ozzie ride the rails toward Philly hiding from hardened rail police called BULLS who treat hobo's badly. At a stop in a rail yard, Susie and Ozzie climb a water tank to bath. Twitch waits and is confronted by two Bulls. Twitch tries to lie his way out but the Bulls beat him. He escapes, running through the train yard then is struck by a train, killing him. Horrified, Susie and Ozzie run to a train leaving the yard.

A hobo named FRIAR, a mature man, helps them climb aboard. He tells them he is a defrocked Pastor headed to Florida to become a clown for the Ringling brothers circus. When they learn the train is headed East, Friar decides to jump off, inviting Ozzie and Susie to join him. They do. Homer arrives in a small community in New Jersey where he finds cockfighting in a barn. He offers his services as a prior “bird expert” to handle the two roosters owned by DOUCHETTE, a middle-aged, criminal, bootlegger who uses the farm as a distribution center for his hooch. Douchette agrees and makes Homer his handler.

Under a railroad bridge by a river, Friar, Susie, and Ozzie make camp for the night. Friar leaves to a nearby farm to scoff anything he can find for a Mulligan stew. Susie and Ozzie prepare a boiling pot for Friar's return and talk about their journey while sensing a closeness growing between them. Friar returns with pockets full of vegetables, potatoes and two dead roosters.

Douchette paces the barn wondering where his “birds” have gone. One of his thugs states he has seen a campfire under the railroad bridge by the river where, “Bo's may have stolen the roosters for a stew.” Douchette is livid and orders MIKE, his Right Hand man, to get the automobiles and a few thugs. He also brings Homer and his assistant, a black man named CARL with them.

Friar, Susie and Ozzie are sleeping when Douchette, Mike, Homer, Carl and two thugs with shotguns surround them under the bridge. Ozzie recognizes Homer and angrily confronts him for tossing him from the train in Boston. Friar, Ozzie and Susie are made to kneel by a pile of feathers and rooster parts. Douchette angrily confronts them about his birds and hits Friar with a club. Susie tries to escape but is held by a thug. Susie calls out for Ozzie. Homer looks curiously at Ozzie, questioning him of his Mother and last name. Ozzie reluctantly tells him. Douchette is about to order them shot when Homer grabs a shotgun from a thug holding it against Mike ordering him to drop his gun. Carl places a knife against the other thugs throat removing his shotgun. Douchette is furious.

Homer tells Ozzie he is his Father. Ozzie is confused, angry and shocked. Homer explains to Ozzie what really happened to them. His real mother died at his birth. Homer had to go away in the army where he was a homing pigeon handler, hence his hobo nickname Homer. While he was gone, his sister, Ozzie's Aunt, offered to care for Ozzie, unknown she had no intention of returning the baby. Homer sadly relates how he searched everywhere but could never find a trace. He went on the road but always returned to Boston to search and had no clue it was his son he tossed off the train in Boston.

Homer, Ozzie, Susie, Carl and Friar escape in one of Douchette's automobiles traveling to a rail track running uphill where they can catch a train to Philly, then south. Homer says he's not going with them and removes a photograph of Ozzie's real mother from his hat and hands to Ozzie. He says they may meet up again someday. "Love you, son. Always did." Ozzie watches sadly as Homer drives away.

Years Later, in the circus compound in Florida, an older Ozzie is telling his young son (SYDNEY) the story. Susie is a showgirl riding in the elephant parade. Ozzie is a wrangler, putting up the tents. Friar is Jo-Jo the clown. As a MAN cleans an animal cage an older man wearing a stetson with feathers in the band approaches and asks if he needs help. "Have experience with animals?" Homer replies, "Worked most my life with animals. There's nothing like it in the whole wide world."

THE END