

Theses and Dissertations

---

2022

## The art of provocative entertainment

F. Clint DeNisco

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd>



Part of the [Screenwriting Commons](#)

---

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Humanities and Teacher Education Division

Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

by

F. Clint DeNisco

April 2022

© 2022

F. Clint DeNisco

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

This thesis, written by

F. CLINT DENISCO

under the guidance of a faculty committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

April 2022

Faculty Committee

---

Leslie Kreiner Wilson, Ph.D., Chairperson

---

Richard Blasucci, MFA Faculty

---

Peter Hanson, MFA Faculty

---

Michael Feltner, Ph.D. Dean

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
THE ART OF PROVOCATIVE ENTERTAINMENT.....	1-13
JEFF DOOPS SOMBER GREETING (BAD ENTERTAINMENT).....	1-30
OFF THE CUFF.....	1-99
COOL COUNSELOR.....	1-32
NEXT DOOR ON ALICE STREET.....	1-31

## **I. Introduction: The Art of Provocative Entertainment**

I've always abided by the idea that art is simply a reflection of yourself and your experiences. We're not building a dishwasher from Sears with set instructions that either clean the plates or they don't – but instead, it's about putting creative ideas out there that, despite their oddity, you want to see. For example, when a child paints a picture to put on the fridge, most parents aren't going to say to the kid, "You almost had it, but the blue sky is ten percent too blue." Usually, the fun part is simply just seeing what the kid thinks the world looks like. Psychiatrists use this children's drawing test as a way to discover information about their state of mind. So the doctor isn't focused on the correct color percentage, they're focused on asking the kid something more revealing like, "Why did you draw mommy taller than daddy?"

This intuitive expression seems like a great motivation when writing for the screen. As long as someone can create something that feels like a perspective they want to see out there in the world, then everything else critically shouldn't matter. As a millennial who grew up near Branson, MO (the midwest Las Vegas), while also living in a time inundated with social media – I find myself in a unique situation where the perspective I come from is being surrounded by entertainment itself. Whether it's the dolled-up southern background dancers on a Branson stage show or seeing multimedia on my phone and gas station fuel pump – I'm interested in the various personalities revealing themselves and the way they look at the world through the entertainment they choose to make. How they structure the show, what clothes they choose to wear, and even how the performers portray themselves; all unintentionally reflect things about the culture that I think is endlessly fascinating.

Through my time at Pepperdine going for an MFA, I wanted to discover what it was about the culture from my perspective that I could easily tap into while writing, while also not

feeling like I was just parroting the “idea” of good entertainment. In fact, what I found was that the thing that feels naturally connected to what I do best – is bad entertainment.

I want to make clear that when I say bad entertainment, I mean my love for the satirical parody of bad media. That is to say, I like using the canvas of people making bad entertainment, as a way to show themes of humanity. Just like that director making a decision of how they look for a program on a gas station pump screen, the humanity of creative execution and how it reflects their worldview is what I am always looking at in my day-to-day life anyway.

However, there are many different ways to go about satirizing bad entertainment. Sometimes it’s through literally taking a known piece of content that went wrong and parodying that, or even more broadly it can be by doing something artistically in an original story that could, in context, seem jarringly bad or provocative to help express a theme. Because using things that are *bad*, to make a point that is *good*, can come from any format of film, television, or other media. I’ve learned through this program that I can utilize this abstract form of satire as a way of communicating a universal theme. The three people I will use as an example of what I want to do as a cultural satirist of entertainment are Christopher Guest, Tim Heidecker, and Stanley Kubrick. I will illustrate how these three creators, in their own unique perspectives, use “bad entertainment” to more keenly tell the story they want to tell.

## **II. Christopher Guest and Bad Characters**

“What interests me in dramatic scenes,” Robert Altman began to say in his collection of interviews *Altman on Altman*, “is watching human behavior” (157). Comedy director Christopher Guest points to Altman on this as an inspiration for how he tells stories. Whether it’s helping write British rockstar wannabes blinded by ostentatious pride in *This is Spinal Tap*

(1984), or writing out-of-touch dog breeders treating their craft as life-or-death in his film *Best in Show* (2000) – one could say that Guest uses the documentary format to elucidate the bad behavior of these characters doing entertainment. He even expanded upon Altman's point by saying in an interview on *Charlie Rose*,

I am interested in the notion that people can become so obsessed with their world that they lose sense and awareness of how they appear to other people. They're so earnest about it. But that's true of so many things. (Guest on *Charlie Rose*)

In fact, Christopher Guest believes so much in characters being the main focus of his stories that he doesn't even write traditional scripts. In his improvisatory style, the actors are given an outline of the basic plot of the movie, but more importantly, they're also given a full multi-page biography about who each character is and where they came from. There's a quote from the film *A Mighty Wind* (2003) in which the three main singers for a '60s folk group, called the Folksmen, regale the story of how they met and started. Within this explanation, we get a specific memory about how their first label didn't have the money to poke holes in the records in order to put them on the vinyl player. "You punched a hole in them, you'd have a great time," singer Mark Shubb (Harry Shearer) explains to the camera in the film. Is that piece of dialogue a sentiment that puts a dramatic thrust into the plotline that will change how the big climax unfolds at the end of the movie? No, but Guest instead uses the film's story of showcasing multiple personalities in folk singing getting ready for a big event, as a way that allows for us to watch these characters' thought processes and behavior in real-time. If it wasn't for the structure of the story, you wouldn't have the logical context for these characters to be shown. But if it wasn't for the characters driving the interest of the audience, there would be no story with any weight.



The thing Guest keeps in mind though is that he does want to tell a story. Even if it's not a hard plot, he has to be able to edit out the things that may be funny in a vacuum – but don't follow the arc he's crafting. Though it's just a simple outline, without a script, having a story that sticks to his thematic ideas, allows for the characters to really thrive in his realistic and relatively mundane environment. In Guest's case, he records 50 hours of footage of actors riffing on the information they're given. He then spends a year to two years editing the footage to craft the plot into something concise. When asked on the *Kevin Pollak Chat Show* if it's hard to “kill the babies” as it's called in the writing world of cutting funny scenes, Guest responded simply,

No, it's not. It really isn't. Because you just have to tell the story. There are going to be funny things in it. You can't let it go in a million different directions. It's not crazy, people just yakking away. It's very linear, yet the dialogue is open. It's not even ‘ooh I wish.’ It's just what it has to be. (Guest on Kevin Pollak)

He uses the ultra-realistic environment that comes from the story to juxtapose the stand-out bad characters he's created. This is where improv filmmaking is a useful technique for him, because he values having his absurd characters being grounded in honesty, more than he does having the actors follow the exact dialogue of a script.

A trait that follows all of Guest's characters, within his films, is their willingness to exude a passion that is inherently charming or interesting – even despite their bad tendencies. In *This is Spinal Tap*, a film that means the most to me in terms of how I first found this comedic air of tone and timing, the characters' intentions are terribly out of left field and ultimately illusory. However, there is a reason the fictional band still tours and plays music to thousands of real cheering fans to this day: the music isn't bad. Most may think the idea is that they are a bad

band, who can't even find their way out of the back theater onto the stage in Cleveland. In truth though, when asked about this on the *Charlie Rose* show, Guest retorted,

Well it's bad in the concept. The music isn't bad. It's not played badly. It's just a little more subtly interesting. It's less interesting if they are idiots who can't play music, because who wants to watch that... and human beings are never really that simple either. There's always something deeper about that character, even if they are diluted. (Guest)

Guest continues to say it's usually about the characters going for something further than they should be reaching. What made Guest and his co-writer Michael McKean laugh about the song "Stonehenge," was not only the over-the-top performance climaxing to a six-inch Stonehenge prop on the stage – but it was the ego the band members had to think that they can explain everything about history. Of course, within that though, the guitar playing and singing is on par with any standard music group. It's also an artistic choice that not only reflects the entertainers, but the audience itself. Because while the girls in the audience are sitting on someone's shoulders cheering and excitedly blowing kisses to the band, while they play cool music, the singer Nigel Tufnel ignorantly speaks into the microphone for the Stonehenge opening lines:

In ancient times,  
 Hundreds of years before the dawn of history  
 Lived a strange race of people, the Druids  
 No one knows who they were or what they were doing  
 But their legacy remains  
 Hewn into the living rock, of Stonehenge

We're getting to see the humanity of our culture reflected back to us, both from the performers and the audience, through the storytelling device of "bad music." The film started simply as a subtle parody of the music they saw and heard around them, but ended with a true-to-life experience that mirrors, at least to Christopher Guest, the people he sees in this world.

### III. Tim Heidecker and Absurdist Realism

If one person's way of writing bad entertainment comes from showing a perfectly authentic world with a normal framing device to show absurd characters, that means the reverse way of going about this is creating performances that seem mundane and real within an absurd world. This is where the work of Tim Heidecker comes in. Coming to fame from his sketch show *Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!*, Heidecker used the crazy style of lo-fi TV commercials and corporate marketing to create entertainment that skewered the motivations of these products and their format – while portraying the actors with a dry sense of reality. One could find it to be truly inspiring to be able to inately show marketing culture in a way that isn't that much weirder than the actual commercial and entertainment landscape. It's a way to show the self-seriousness of entertainment, by, seemingly, not being serious.

In fact, a comedian who works along that same line, Michael Ian Black, has defended this style of writing by stating in an interview on *Katie Nolan Garbage Time* that,

A lot of audiences can have the wrong context by thinking what we do is thoughtlessly stupid, as opposed to thoughtfully stupid. I want it to be thoughtfully stupid. (Black on Garbage Time)

Tim Heidecker and his sketch show partner Eric Wareheim did a self-funded promo campaign in 2007 for the film *Shrek: The Third*, in which they posted themselves on the internet painted in green with the ogre's ears on. However, they spoke to the camera with the same vocality of an HSN host calmly explaining the benefits of a new mattress. Saying, “You’re going to love all the new characters, but also the oldies, like Mike Meyers, Eddie Murphy, and of course, my favorite Cameron Diaz.” Now is there anything on the surface about what they’re saying that has a

punchline or is bad? No, but what makes the comedy is the context of absurdly having two C-level celebrities spending their time marketing for a huge movie like a Shrek sequel that, by no means, needs their help getting people to the theater. To see two guys in their late-twenties earnestly talking about the benefits of Shrek.com, oddly mirrors our culture of absurdly unnecessary products being treated normally for us as a sometimes gullible audience.

I believe Tim Heidecker's style actually was prescient of the current state of media we live in. Right now, everyone is surrounded by entertainment and content from all sides, all the time. If you compare it to even the 1990s when we basically just had movies and the 4 television channels -- we now deal with the media trying to talk to us and entertain us from every facet of our lives. Not only is it us as the viewers taking in entertainment, but it's us being the entertainment itself and putting on a performance for social media. When even my grandma is posting funny videos of herself cooking something on Facebook -- you know we've truly entered an oversaturated world of entertainment that needs to be discussed and satirized.

Heidecker and Wareheim had a sketch from their show that reflected this numbness to the media when they filmed a fake local business commercial that was selling prices. They would excitedly yell to the camera, "we got \$20 for the low price of \$19.99!" It's a kind of nonsensical exploration that on its face can just seem like stupid wackiness -- especially with the gag-a-minute green screen effects going laughably bad -- but it's also something that certainly parallels the constant flood of advertisements we are drowned with every day. It's the realism of their performances, even if it's just in small nuanced moments of specific mannerisms, that makes this reflection of the absurd media during mundane parts of life, that much better. The joke would not play as well if, literally, everything in the video was insane. They like that slight bit of earnest authenticity to jarringly make you lose your footing while watching.

A technique Heidecker will use, as well, is to even skewer comedy itself. Whether it's pretending to be a local news host telling bad jokes to his co-host, or as far as a full stand-up special from a pompous character yelling about how smart he is – this form of anti-comedy is equally as important. However, he doesn't simply view this, and his style as a whole, as being an artistic challenge that's only about joylessly pointing a finger at the bad. I agree that just because he's fully investing in this format to execute bad humor, doesn't mean it's that much different than the big arena comedy that Steve Martin did. When Martin tells a joke in his stand-up special *Let's Get Small*, in which he informs the audience that his upcoming bit is meant only for plumbers – the joke is both “anti-comedy,” but also just simply comedy. There is a point where the line of parody and non-parody is forgotten and we're just laughing at a bit that makes us happy. Thomas Merton says in his book *No Man is an Island*, “Art enables us to lose ourselves and find ourselves at the same time” (102). I believe this is why we can more easily accept this style of satire in music when listening to bands like The Kinks, who write songs that are technically parodying music we know – but at the same time, they are just composing a good song that is catchy. Rob Jovanovic wrote about the Kinks primary songwriter in his book *God Save the Kinks* that “Ray Davies is a songwriter who may have too much on his mind, ironically, but there is always humor in his songs” (4) We may forget, for instance, that a song of theirs is toying with the style of a children's rhyme because we're enjoying the melodies and instrumentation in a visceral and subconscious way. It is a form of satire, but we are enjoying it in the same way that we would a pop standard like *Let it Be* by The Beatles. This means that the use of “bad entertainment” as a format, doesn't have to actively be parodying a well-known quantity for it to get a point across. Rather, it's about using that satire to viscerally get a reaction.

#### IV. Stanley Kubrick and Provocative Storytelling

Albert Einstein put forth a perspective on art in the book *The World as I See It*, saying “The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science” (7). Another mid-century man that fancied himself a genius was my favorite director Stanley Kubrick. The thing that instantly drew me to Kubrick, as I began to discover his filmography, was his willingness to write something that is discordant and provocative. Amongst all the critical discussion of his work that describes the director as a hard-nosed perfectionist – there also is a filmmaker who will film something under the moniker of what I would call “bad entertainment” in a scene. In a similar conversation to Heidecker making satirical media as a play on advertising, Kubrick actually took inspiration for getting his ideas across from commercials themselves. In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, he expressed,

With the editing, photography and the eight frame cuts: They are just beautiful. And you realize in 30 seconds they've created an impression of something rather complex. The ultimate way of telling our own stories would have more to do with television commercials than it does the way they are presently told. The economy of statement and the kind of visual poetry... you get it with what these advertisements are doing. (Kubrick)

It’s that impressionist idea that pertains to what I love about writing for film and television. Unlike the comedic pointedness of the first two writers, going for the parody of these people and companies – Kubrick wants to appreciate a commercial's ability to get your attention in mysterious ways. Because advertising creators use the concept of “all press is good press” to write and perform things that may even come across as adversely “bad,” but in fact are piquing

our interest by even having us pay mind to it! So though Kubrick may want his ideas to be executed pristinely as a director, he also recognizes that the writing should tap into the parts of our brain that can be unknowingly pulled by the oddness happening in front of us. In the film *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, Kubrick could have just as easily gone by the rules, and even by the actual book, *Red Alert*, and written a scene in which the bomb from the fighter plane was finally dropped from the container and had aptly fallen on the land below. The same plotline would have followed, with the other countries responding to that bomb with a doomsday device of their own and the film would have, just the same, ended there. However, the effect of what Kubrick is trying to get across becomes that much more impactful, when you have a cowboy riding the bomb like a bucking horse, waving his hat all the way down to his, and Earth's, demise. We're both sitting up from the nonsensical scenario shown before us, but also paying attention more acutely to the types of people this film has been parodying all along. However, you can also show something similarly low-brow that doesn't have a direct meaning at all. What does the smash zoom cut to the man in a bear costume in *The Shining* represent? Unclear, but it does force you to try to make sense of everything else happening. It's his juggling act of the low-brow and the high-brow that brings us back to subconsciously soaking in art like a great piece of music. This is why I equally think of his dramatic work as an example of cinematically manipulating "bad entertainment."

### **V. Conclusion: My Road Map to Success**

My first instinct is to take the left-handed view of everything. When someone talks about a new TV show or story, I'm already going to the metatextual ironic version of that discussion. At first I thought it was a wrong-headed defense mechanism. As if I was actually too afraid to

talk or write authentically, so I have to be ahead of it by making fun of it. However, I've come to learn that this is actually just a more specific trait of artistic expression that has benefits in this industry. In a modern society surrounded by talking heads, noise, and images – someone has to take on the entertainment itself. Even if it's by using those low-brow images and ideas to better articulate my own serious thematic point.

I've been able to use my experience finishing my MFA at Pepperdine as a way to simultaneously create my own works directly onto YouTube, other comedic websites, and even at live shows in Los Angeles. Since my mission is to pitch a show for television, I've found my goal after Pepperdine to be directly communicating with contacts with a similar kinship to what I want to create. This can be either through showing them my ongoing work that relates to the shows I want to create -- or by simply having them relay other relevant contacts to me who would want to collaborate. Ideally, each new person leads to me being able to create demos of the shows I directly am looking to produce, on a progressively higher scale.

In some ways, I'm lucky as a writer, in that I am able to perform and produce my work into video (even if it's on a lower scale than I envisioned). Pepperdine has taught me to use my affinity for satire and continually work, through trial and error, on how to make it connect with a general audience. For the past 5 years, I've thought of my career as having the headline: Project Get to the Pitch Room – since my first major goal is just to be in an opportunity where I can pitch my ideas to a television studio. As pompous as it sounds, I do find my talents are best served writing for something original. I've directed all my efforts towards that end line. It involves turning down or simply avoiding other paths that may seem easier, but I believe would distract me from putting my best foot forward in writing. That is to say, I want to further



continue this goal of working hard on a single piece of work, which takes time, but I think is important.

Now, of course, none of this entails just sitting back in my chair waiting for Ted Sarandos of Netflix to shoot me a text. I know that actively creating new ways to produce my own things, especially using a format like “bad entertainment” that needs contextualizing, is the best way to give myself a higher percent chance of getting in that pitch room. One of my favorite inspirations, Fred Willard, said as a point of advice once, that up-and-comers looking to get noticed should, “Put themselves out there in front of people. Even if you do a stand-up show that wasn’t your best work, you may catch the interest of an industry creator looking to make you his TV show’s wacky next-door neighbor.” (Willard) So as I move into the next chapter, MFA in hand, I want to use that advice to meet people and showcase my work outside myself in a way that will connect me to audiences and help me hone in on what they like about my style of satire. I can show that glimmer of artistic personality to someone who may want to use it. In the same way I realized that my affection for creating “bad entertainment” isn’t a defense mechanism, I shouldn’t let fear dissuade me from expressively putting myself out there. Worst comes to worst, I can always claim any artistic mistakes I make as being “intentionally” bad.

## Works Cited

- Altman, Robert, and David Thompson. *Altman on Altman*. Faber & Faber, 2011.
- A Mighty Wind*. Directed by Christopher Guest, Castle Rock, 2003. Perf. Michael McKean and Harry Shearer. DVD.
- Best in Show*. Directed by ---, Castle Rock, 2000. Perf. Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, Eugene Levy. DVD.
- Black, Michael Ian. "Katie Nolan Garbage Time." *YouTube and Fox Sports 1*, 2016.
- Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Directed by Stanley Kubrick, Columbia Pictures, 1964.
- Einstein, Albert, and Alan Harris. *The World as I See It*. New York, Philosophical Library, 1949.
- Guest, Christopher. "Charlie Rose." *Public Broadcasting Service*, 2003.
- Heidecker, Tim, and Eric Wareheim. *Tim and Eric, Awesome Show, Great Job!* Adult Swim, 2008, disc 6. Television.
- Kubrick, Stanley. "Rolling Stone's Interview with Kubrick." *Rolling Stone Magazine*, 1987.
- Martin, Steve. *Let's Get Small*. Warner Bros., 1977.
- Jovanovic, Rob. *God Save the Kinks: A Biography*. Aurum Press, 2013.
- Merton, Thomas. *No Man Is an Island*. Boston, Shambhala, 2005.
- Pollak, Kevin. "Kevin Pollak Chat Show." *YouTube*, 2011,  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=CncBFKdL70Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CncBFKdL70Q).
- The Shining*. Directed by Stanley Kubrick, Warner Brothers, 1980. Perf. Shelley Duvall.
- This Is Spinal Tap*. Directed by Rob Reiner and Christopher Guest, MGM Entertainment Studios, May 1984.
- Willard, Fred. "Television Academy Interviews." *Television Academy*, 2010.

"JEFF DOOP'S SOMBER GREETING"

*A 1990s TEEN ROM-COM  
FROM THE ARCHIVES OF*

***BAD***

**Entertainment**

Written by

F. Clint DeNisco

"BAD Entertainment" is an anthology series in which every episode we unearth a different piece of content from this storied production company.

-- In 1935, an entertainment company was formed that has produced some of the most laughably terrible content, in all different forms of media. However, recently, there was a big discovery. The executive's grandson, Hayden, accidentally threw away the copyright renewal with his Lunchables -- so we now have free access to all of the content in their decades-long comedy-of-errors archive.

This 90s Teen Romance was one of them.

\* The director wrote this after his ex-girlfriend said he's not mature enough to be a loving partner.

\*\* This was the first and last film he ever directed.

The "**BAD ENTERTAINMENT**" company logo glistens over black as regal fanfare music builds to a finishing crescendo --

CAUCASIAN MAN'S face. Mouth agape like a dumbfounded guinea pig. There's a poster for TAMPAX TAMPON on the wall behind.

Silence.

His mouth forms to vocalize and he finally moves his body to start singing a 50s-esque MUSICAL NUMBER towards someone.

**INT. BRIGHT PINK BEDROOM**

CAUCASIAN MAN

*LET'S DO THE SMOOCH / ON THE MOUTH.  
SMOOOOCH, PLEASE / I'D LIKE TO NOW  
ON THE DIVAN/ OR SOMEWHERE ELSE*

As we zoom out, we reveal it's a girl's bedroom with *feminine-related things inside*: A large spread of make-up that's just laying on the ground, stuffed animals, and multiple pink doll houses -- This is clearly some male director's misguided understanding of a teen girl's bedroom. The CAUCASIAN GIRL sits unsure on her bed, listening --

CAUCASIAN MAN (CONT'D)

*EXPRESS OUR LOVE/ REBEL THE NORM*

As the singing continues, an EXTREMELY WINDY OSCILLATING FAN is seen in the corner blowing so hard that it obscures some of their lines.

CAUCASIAN GIRL

*I'M JUST TOO SHY/ I'M SCARED THAT  
IF-- (fan noise blocks it out) --  
...INSIDE MY HEART!*

CAUCASIAN MAN

*IT WOULD FEEL GOOOOOOOD...  
(music swell)  
WHICH WILL BE GREEEAAAT!*

We hear a CHOIR join in for that big stanza, as the sing-along lyrics pop on screen, repeated over and over again.

CHOIR

*IT WOULD FEEL GOOOOOOD...  
(music swell)  
WHICH WILL BE GREEEAAAT!*

We ZOOM OUT more to realize... that scene was a projection.

There's actually an audience watching that scene at a --

**EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER (1993) - NIGHT**

The director of this movie "*cleverly*" pulled the bait-and-switch of unveiling a film within a film. That 50s-esque musical number from the film continues to echo in the air.

It's a picturesque fall night with cars of young couples delicately kissing lips *while patting each other's stomach*, for some reason... like the other person is doing a good job.

However, we zoom out more to reveal that the drive-in screen is EMBARRASSINGLY SMALL. *6ft by 5ft*.

Walking with a hotdog from the refreshment shack is SAMANTHA (20s, thoughtful girl next door) who actually stands taller than the screen itself! She's wearing a shirt that reads:

*"I'll Only Smooch This Boy --> or EL"*

GUY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Who's El?

Holding her hotdog, she turns to see a SMALL BUFF GUY putting on the schmooze (who is also bare-handing a hotdog). Samantha is already a tall girl, but especially with heels on, she towers over the Small Buff Guy like a child. Yet he has a tight shirt with bulging biceps and wears cross-shaped earrings that dangle down to his jaw.

SMALL BUFF GUY

And how can this single amigo become *El Bradley*.

SAMANTHA

Haha, no. A boy I used to be with has the other half of the shirt that says "VIS."

She points at her shirt.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

We were both Elvis Presley nuts.

SMALL BUFF GUY

Haha, women and the choices they make in regards to clothing and fashion garments.

The ambient warm glow shimmers onto Samantha from the nearby Refreshment Shack.

SAMANTHA

Well, that boy--

She said her line early.

SMALL BUFF GUY

Is this a boy you were once with?

SAMANTHA

--Well, that boy tried to land me a smooch in his car, but spilled Coca Cola all over me. He wanted my lips, but instead he got a mess... He wanted my lips, but instead he got a mess.

We are, for no reason, looking down at the Small Buff Guy's feet while he talks. Wearing slip on shoes with tight jeans.

SMALL BUFF GUY (O.S.)

Then I would like to take advantage of the opening. Table for two, please.

Samantha coyly crosses her arms, as the *actress playing her* slightly stumbles on a piece of gravel.

SAMANTHA

Haha no, you wouldn't want to be with my sorry bastard ass.  
(*pointing at projection*)  
I'm just another desperate girl from the moving pictures.

Both of them turn to watch a scene from the DRIVE-IN FILM. We're watching the projection with them -- except they're awkwardly standing on either side of the screen, so we kind of have to look past their shoulders to see:

**INT. ORANGE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The film's Caucasian Man and Girl are singing their song back and forth to each other, in the vein of "*Baby, It's Cold Outside*." He pulls her along reluctantly to dance.

CAUCASIAN MAN

LET'S DO THE LIP

WHITE GIRL

OH I'M NOT SURE

CAUCASIAN MAN

OH PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE

WHITE GIRL

WHAT IF I'M POOR?

CAUCASIAN MAN  
 YOU'LL BE MY FIRST.

**WE FOCUS BACK** on Samantha and Small Buff Guy.

SAMANTHA  
 (*angry*)  
 See! All boys want the same thing!  
 I want someone who looks at my mind  
 not my mouth.

She crosses her arms, hotdog in hand, with frustration.

SMALL BUFF GUY  
 Well hey, forget about Elvis and  
 come-come to me.

He worded it like that.

SAMANTHA  
 It was not Elvis I was speaking of,  
 it was just some selfish boy. I  
 dreamed of marriage day and bonding  
 with each other. But that was too  
 much hope for my sorry bastard ass.  
 I thought he was... different.

The *musical* from the Drive-In film gets louder.

CHOIR  
 IT WOULD FEEL GOOD, WHICH WILL BE  
 GREAT / IT WOULD FEEL GOOOOOD --

SMALL BUFF GUY  
 Then who's this boy?

The music SWELLS to an end.

CHOIR  
 WHICH WILLLLL BEEEEEE GREAAAAAT!

Beat. Samantha looks right at us.

SAMANTHA  
 Jeff.

LOUD 90s synth drums come POUNDING IN on the transition.

**MATCH CUT TO:**

Samantha's face is replaced by the boy's face, JEFF.



**EXT. EMPTY WOODED PARK - DAY**

Hands on his backpack straps, we watch Jeff (20s, boyishly handsome) run through greenery with purpose, yet blank-faced.

As we continue cutting to different angles of him RUNNING, the loud pounding music FADES OFF to silence...

Our excitement of the moment also fades... we're just watching a guy sprint, then slow down to a halt on-camera. ANOTHER SHOT of him RUNNING... then slow up at the end again. Why are we staying on these disjointed shots so long?

FINALLY, while still watching him run, a karaoke version of "In the Summertime" by Mungo Jerry plays.

**INT. OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY**

Jeff finishes running to open an office door. The door plate reads: "JEFF DOOPS - Musical Greeting Cards Performer"

**INT. JEFF'S STUDIO OFFICE**

In keeping with the 90s aesthetic, the walls and objects are all grey. The only pop of color is Jeff's big blue sweater. He throws down his backpack and sits at the recording desk -- pushing away the studio microphone to physically vent his frustrations.

JEFF

Jeff, what have you done? What have you done in terms of the situation regarding Samantha?

Now finished acting moody, he pulls the microphone back and flips on the recording switch. As "In the Summertime" karaoke continues to play, he gets his studio area ready, and we hear a voice-over:

JEFF (V.O.)

My job is making parody songs for greeting cards. The singer. When you open 'em.

**MONTAGE OF SCENES****INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

A father watches as two little girls, with presents surrounding them, open up a birthday card that reads: "Congrats on 9!"

Jeff's vocals finally sing over the "In the Summertime" music that is now coming from the card:

ON YOUR BIRTHDAY TIME / WHEN THE PIZZA'S HOT / ON YOUR  
BIRTHDAY TIME / THE GIFTS ARE FINE / ON YOUR BIRTHDAY TIME /  
YOU HAVE WOMAN YOU HAVE WOMAN ON YOUR MIND

The two girls nod at each other with smiles as they listen.

CUT TO:

**INT. DINING ROOM - DAY**

A woman sitting on a chair bent over with sadness, surrounded by flowers and used tissues, reads through condolences cards.

JEFF (V.O.)  
I make 30 thousand 200 dollars. 60  
thousand annual.

The sad woman OPENS her card that has a cartoon person crying with tears arcing out, and a sentence that reads:

*"Your relative has passed."*

A karaoke version of "Blue Moon" by the Marcells inappropriately BURSTS out her card:

BA BA BU DA BAH DANG DANG DANG (almost mock crying) WAH WAH --  
BOO HOO, BOO HOO, BOO HOO, DOO DOO DOO DOO --

JEFF'S VOICE  
BOO HOOOO! / I KNOW THAT YOU'RE SAD

--KNOCK! KNOCK!

**BACK TO STUDIO**

Jeff quickly looks over at the studio door. Walking in, happily, is FRANK (20s, rad, plaid hoodie, ski goggles).

Jeff BOLTS up from his chair and angrily LAYS INTO HIM.

JEFF  
You lowlife piece of pig guts. How  
(BLEEP)ing dare you walk (BLEEP)ing  
in here. You should burn in hell  
for interrupting what I've (BLEEP)  
worked my (BLEEP)ing life for. I  
oughta slam your head in that wall,  
until you're bleeding out your  
EYES!!!

Frank stands blank-faced. Jeff's face remains boiling mad.

Beat.

Jeff releases a quiet single chuckle under his breath. Frank tries to hold it in, but does the same. THEN--

BIG LAUGHS! They did the classic "*fake angry, but actually they're good friends*" introduction... except this was weird. They keep hugging and running in place, like a bunch of giggly frat boys, for WAY too long... 15 seconds.

FRANK

How's it going Jeff? Are you ready for your big live show recording this weekend? I was actually at the venue yesterday and there was...

For some reason, Frank is FADED OUT mid-sentence. Jeff's dialogue cuts him off, as if Frank wasn't even talking.

JEFF

I don't know, I feel like I've ruined my chance of giving Samantha a smooch. And now I'm supposed to focus on my art.

FRANK

*(robotic, staccato)*

Dude! At the event, you should sing Samantha Night. It. Is. A. Spoof. Of. The song Saturday Night by Bay. City. Rollers. It will make...

JEFF

I could try to get a smooch at prom, but it's just been so swamped here at the office, and my sisters' grandkids are coming to town.

FRANK

I've been writing Samantha Night just for you to perform.

*(singing)*

ON SAMANTHA NIGHT! SAMANTHA NIGHT!

Mid-singing the frame GLITCHES on an unflattering face.

JEFF

And I know she's mad about how I acted last night. After school today I must prove to her I'm not just another working class man.

FRANK

I stored some of the songs this weekend on my floppy, but I wonder if we can place those files on your computer, so that...

Once again, Frank's dialogue awkwardly FADES OFF, as we watch Jeff grab his jacket and dramatically walk out of the studio.

DISSOLVE TO:

***VHS GLITCHING.***

It finally flickers to an educational video.

The Female Body. A diagram of a woman as we ZOOM OUT:

**INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY**

The room is almost childishly designed. Alphabet wallpaper and fall-festive decorations of paper ghosts and pumpkins. A sleeping teacher and SIX BOYS, including Jeff and Frank, watch the uninformative video on the rolled-in TV cart.

*"The female body differs in certain areas and sections..."*

FRANK

(like a diva)  
Oh... my Gawd.

BOY 1

I wish that was an actual girl we were looking at, not a diagram.

FRANK

Oh... my Gawd.

BOY 2

I don't care if it's on TV or not, I'd still lay my lips right on that line-drawn mouth of hers.  
(drawing a mouth in air)

JEFF

(laughing)  
I wish we knew what a real girl's mouth was like!

The other students aren't laughing. They're perplexed.

BOY 1

Wait... Jeff... have you... never smooched a girl?

Jeff nervously looks around in an anxious sweat.

**INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GIRL'S CLASSROOM - SAME**

CINDY

You are no longer with Jeff?

Samantha, a HUNK TEACHER, and five girls, including close friend CINDY are also watching a video... but their's is just a jewelry-based episode of antique roadshow.

SAMANTHA

It is a situation that's hard to talk about.

GIRL 1

That means Jeff is a free agent!

GIRL 2

I'll take him!!

SAMANTHA

I mean, yes he was fly, but I didn't want the plane ride.

(beat)

Yes he was fly, but I didn't want the plane ride.

Hunk Teacher whistles for Samantha's attention. A flirty nod.

**BACK TO BOYS CLASSROOM - SAME**

BOY 1

You haven't smooched her yet, dude?

BOY 2

Getting lip to lip is why we live!

FRANK (O.S.)

Oh... my Gawd.

Frank repeatedly says this through the scene.

BOY 3

Jeff you know you have the mouth for it. And boy, so does Samantha. Even Eugene has smooched a girl!

Everyone turns to the seat directly behind Jeff. But the camera doesn't go that far... Eugene is right off-screen. We hear him *murmuring*, but we're just watching five guys stoically listen to a person we can't see. Like we're looking at raw footage from the wrong camera angle. Jeff continues.

JEFF

Yeah, trust me, I want it. I wrote  
a song for a wedding shower  
invitation card just for her.

(singing)

*RETURN THE BLENDER!*

FRANK

(excited, yet robotic)

I'm telling you. You need to  
perform the spoof Sa-mantha Night.  
You can be a soldier of greatness!  
ARMED for a girls warm embrace.

He STANDS on his desk, doing the "spirited speech" thing.

FRANK (CONT'D)

A BATTLE for the female soul to be--

**BACK TO GIRLS CLASSROOM**

-- Of course, Frank got FADED OUT mid-sentence.

GIRL 2

Wait, if you just broke up --

GIRL 1

-- then you haven't phoned anyone.

GIRL 3

And if you haven't phoned...

CINDY

Then you haven't talked to boys.

GIRL 2

Which means...

GIRL 1

You used to have Jeff --

GIRL 3

As your prom date.

GIRL 2

Which means...

GIRL 1

You haven't planned your prom date.

CINDY

And if you didn't plan --

GIRL 2  
You're free.

GIRL 3  
For prom day, you are free.

GIRL 2  
(*rubbing her eyes*)  
You haven't picked a man.

GIRL 1  
If you haven't picked. We--

CINDY  
Gotta get you a man.

Samantha coyly plays off whatever that whole dialogue was.

SAMANTHA  
I don't know, I feel like my  
feelings for Jeff are raw, and this  
isn't a rump roast you get at the  
deli, it's a relationship.

GIRL 1  
Did you smooch?

**SPLIT SCREEN - GIRLS CLASSROOM ON LEFT | BOYS ON RIGHT**

SAMANTHA	JEFF
No!	No!

It *seems* like a split screen moment where they are about to have a fun side-by-side, like something from *Grease*... However, we slowly realize that both sides are just conversing to their protagonist at the same time.

It's incomprehensible. A CACOPHONY of multiple people talking mundanely to each other. Unrelated, a girl is seen spending time to fix her ponytail. One guy gets up in the background and loudly sharpens his pencil.

CINDY  
(singing a musical)  
*YOU MUST BE YOURSELF!*

But that promising song abruptly ends.

We're watching two sides make mundane chatter and classroom noise. Adding to the unintelligible sounds -- a QUIRKY MELODY plays over it. Our eyes and ears don't know what to pay attention to. *Did the director think of this fun split-screen idea, but then forget to film anything coherent?*

Finally the MELODY ends on it's last 2 QUIRKY NOTES --  
 -- on beat, Samantha and Jeff slam their binders SHUT.

*BELL RINGS!*

**EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - TOWN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS**

Students leave the school and walk right out to the TOWN SQUARE FESTIVAL that is going on. Surrounding the leaves-filled streets of the nearby courthouse are wooden kiosks that are churning butter, selling wooden trinkets, and handing out hot apple cider. Jeff and Frank, still with their backpacks, grab a cup of the cider.

SPLASH!

Jeff's cup of hot cider gets shoved into his shirt. It was STAN and BRICK, who walk up to Jeff with bad intentions. Except they don't look particularly like bullies. They're both the same small height of Jeff. Stan has a large pastel colored Starter jacket that is HUGE... like he's hiding multiple bed covers underneath. Brick rolls up on a tiny scooter with streamers coming off the handles to the ground.

JEFF

(nicely)

Oh, Hey Stan and Brick.

BRICK

I heard you haven't had a smooch!

JEFF

Haha, true, true.

Stan and Brick laugh with each other mockingly.

BRICK

Jeff the press! Bench press that is! *(he mimes weight lifting)*  
 Whoops! Sprained my crotch and now my pants are soiled.

JEFF

Haha, true, true.

Jeff pulls out posters for his show from his backpack.

STAN

Look! He's writing music, Brick!!

Stan pretends Brick's scooter is a music conductor stand. He taps it with a pencil, he pulled from his ear, like a baton.



BRICK  
*(mock acting)*  
 Tell me when to play maestro.

Stan conducts.

STAN  
 La di da! Di da da! Hit the high  
 notes!!

They both stop and laugh uproariously.

JEFF  
 Haha, yeah. Music can be unorthodox  
 sometimes.

Frank just stands in the background with his hands behind his  
 back. Like he's not part of the scene and is waiting.

JEFF (CONT'D)  
 But I'm hoping this will help me  
 get a smooch.

STAN  
 Oh! He's going for the homerun,  
 Brick!!

Brick pretends his scooter is a baseball bat.

BRICK  
 The next challenger is at the  
 plate.

Stan and Brick once again pretend to mime out this fake  
 scenario. But it's way too involved... they all run out onto  
 the street and take their bases like a full baseball diamond.  
 We watch them scatter to their positions from above like  
 small dots in Pac-Man.

STAN  
 He awaits the pitch.

BRICK  
 Here it comes.

He throws a fake ball. Jeff and Frank take their positions as  
 well, going along with this for some reason.

STAN  
 Huge hit!

BRICK  
 He's rounding the bases.

Brick runs through Frank and continues to run around. Jeff awaits at "home base."

STAN  
He's coming home!

Frank pretends to throw the ball from the outfield.

STAN (CONT'D)  
Jeff tries to stop the runner!

Brick runs and SLIDES onto home plate, as Jeff grabs the invisible ball off the ground and JUST misses tagging him. Jeff looks disappointed he didn't win this pretend game.

JEFF  
Haha, well, if Samantha likes my show, then I can change all that.

Brick gets back on his scooter and rides off.

BRICK  
You'll never get Samantha's mouth, Jeff Press!

JEFF  
Haha, see you later guys!

A SCHOOL FRIEND of Jeff runs up to him. We now see a busy ARCADE on the other end of the courthouse square.

SCHOOL FRIEND  
You still going to the arcade?

JEFF  
Let's go!

They run past Frank who is just standing, again. We PUSH on his face as he unknowingly stands mouth agape in front of us.

CROWD (O.S.)  
(*chanting*)  
Will he piss his pants! Will he  
piss his pants! Will he piss his  
pants!

DISSOLVE TO:

**ON TELEVISION**

MTV Spring Break in the 90s. Venice Beach type boardwalk. Tons of people and the host watch a guy drink multiple lemonades... taking out each umbrella with every drink.

CROWD (CONT'D)  
Will he piss his pants!

**INT. ARCADE SHACK - EVENING**

We PULL OUT of the corner TV to the lively wood-paneled arcade, with Halloween-themed decorations; like hay bales, cob webs, and orange chalk on the snack bar menu board.

Jeff, now with glasses, staples his show poster on the wall. We can't read most of it, except "SATURDAY" and a cartoon guitar. Frank puts gold tinsel around the small stage area for the performance.

JEFF  
Higher vertical-wise, Frank.

Jeff looks through the young crowd dancing and laughing with drinks in hand around the arcade machines - to nervously see:

*Samantha*. With an angelic hazy glow surrounding her. This is a dreamed moment. Clearly meant to be an imagined sequence like the pool scene from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*... except it's not sexy at all. She's standing behind a *greasy hot dog roller machine* that covers most of her face.

SAMANTHA  
(*flirtatiously*)  
Wouldn't mind giving you a smooch.  
Let's smooch, Jeff... Jeff.

FRANK (O.S.)  
Jeff. Jeff. The girls are--

Jeff BREAKS his trance. Samantha is dancing with friends.

JEFF  
I'm gonna grab a hot dog with  
mustard up top.

As Jeff walks over to grab a hot dog near Samantha, CINDY (Sam's friend, passionate) steps in front, like a bodyguard.

CINDY  
Jeffrey.

JEFF  
I'm just grabbing a hotdog.

Samantha, trying to be unfazed, starts dancing wild and free.

SAMANTHA  
You can do what you want.

Impressed with her tantalizing moves, the crowd hoots and hollers. Jeff playfully watches along with a sly smile.

JEFF

You can't dance. When did you learn how to dance?

SAMANTHA

I got moves. Maybe you were never looking at my hips.

Jeff coyly laughs. Out of nowhere, Cindy SLAMS Jeff against a wall halfway across the room.

CINDY

Listen here, bud! I care about my best friend!

At first this plays like a comedic moment where the aggressively caring friend berates the boy about treating Samantha right... but it quickly becomes almost traumatic.

-- Jeff's cheeks are pressed on the wall while he tries to catch his breath. She has her fingers fish-hooking his mouth.

CINDY (CONT'D)

She deserves the world, hear me?

She pulls him back and slams him again. His glasses break and fall to the ground. This is now like a mafia film. A bloody nose, shaky camera, and Jeff squinting in pain. Samantha watches and giggles, like it's just her goofy friend.

CINDY (CONT'D)

You're not gonna play games with my friend, okay?

Frank, leaning on his pool stick, playfully laughs. What a silly and cute moment of a girl *terrorizing* a guy. Finally, she lets go. Jeff also giggles, like this was normal.

JEFF

Look, I'm just here to have fun.

Suddenly, the school jock, JONATHON-RYAN (letterman jacket, yet the balding hairline of a 40 year-old) struts in.

A girl winks and waves at him, as he and his posse glide through the arcade crowd. He bends all the way to the ground to look the winking girl up and down.

JONATHON-RYAN

Let's see that thing near the top.

He fake kisses in her direction. Finally he spots Samantha.

JONATHON-RYAN (CONT'D)  
My sweet, sweet, honey Samantha.  
Heard you're a free agent.

SAMANTHA  
Hey Jonathon-Ryan.

CINDY  
We're just trying to have dance  
time, Jonathon-Ryan.

JONATHON-RYAN  
Come on! What's a man gotta do to  
be in the lip situation? Do I have  
to beat every hometown citizen here  
in a game of *swish and dunk*?

He shoots one of the balls from the extravagant 2-player  
BASKETBALL ARCADE MACHINE. Complete with beautiful small  
hoops and a backboard with colorful angular shapes.

JONATHON-RYAN (CONT'D)  
For every person I beat. I get a  
free lip smack from sweet Samantha.

SAMANTHA  
I'm not interested in your  
demoralizing games, Jonathon-Ryan.

JONATHON-RYAN  
Oh come on sweet sweet honey.

He bends over to whisper in Jeff's ear.

JONATHON-RYAN (CONT'D)  
Girls pretend they don't want a  
smooch. But the dirty secret is...  
(*getting closer*)  
They want it just as bad as anyone.

Jeff ANGRILY retorts.

JEFF  
I'll take you on, Jonathon-Ryan!

SAMANTHA  
(in shock)  
Jeff!

JONATHON-RYAN  
Ha ha, my friend. Let's do it.

Weird way to word that. Anyway, Frank rushes up to Jeff.

FRANK

Jeff, I can do this. I've won a multitude of local tournaments.

JEFF

*(focused)*

Turn it on.

The crowd circles around in excitement. The game is clicked on, as the lo-fi game sounds echo in the room. The MACHINE ANNOUNCER starts up: *"Let's see your shot, player."* Jeff and Jonathon-Ryan stand next to each in position, ready to shoot.

*"3...2..."*

Jeff takes a slow motion glance back at Samantha --

*"1... SHOOT!"*

And we're off! They frantically throw up the balls in rapid succession, as onlookers surround the machine.

But instead of high-intensity crowd shots, we just watch the two guys toss balls at the baskets with the game announcer blaring from the machine, not able to keep up--

*SHOT! THREE POINTS! SHOT! SHOT! THREE POIN-- SHOT! TH-- SHOT!*

The crowd is just stoically standing around with arms folded, no enthusiasm.

*SHOT! SHOOT FOR TWO-- SHOT! THREE P-- SHOT! THR-- SHOT!*

It's like a sports movie scene, except there's no music and no one is reacting. Only the disjointed sound of the manic arcade game announcer yelling.

FRANK

*(quietly)*

Come on, Jeff.

With a score of 5-3. Jeff quickly pulls a GREETING CARD from his back pocket. He opens it up and it reads: *"Congrats on your game win!"*

Playing from the card is Jeff's parody of *"We Will Rock You."* But instead of the famous *"stomp stomp clap"* -- everyone goes *"stomp stomp -- and then four quick quadruplet claps"...* it doesn't fit at all with the lyrics.

CROWD  
("We Will Rock You")  
WEE  
MAY... DEFEAT YOU.

Jeff is now in a groove as the crowd chants along.

The score is 5-5. 10 seconds left on the machine clock.

Seeing this, Jonathon-Ryan grabs a ball out of Jeff's hands and throws it backwards, then makes his own shot, with his leg popping up, to take the lead. A woman anxiously *screams*.

All in slow motion, Jeff runs back to get his ball, meandering through the crowd. He snags it, looks at the clock counting down to 1 second left, and begins to HEAVE it.

It looks at first like a LONG cross-the-room, game-tying bomb. Until another shot reveals he is only, like, *6 inches* away from the machine... with his arm back to chuck it --

-- Jeff throws the ball. The woman now *screams bloody murder*.

-- The clock strikes zero... And the ball hits the rim.

Miss.

CROWD MAN  
Jeff lost.

Everyone quickly walks away... including Jonathon-Ryan.

The scene just completely deflates, like nothing big just happened. We don't even see Jonathon-Ryan gloat or anything. Just everybody walking off camera, like they were told.

SAMANTHA  
Why would you try to win that game?

Samantha was waiting with her arms folded, near Jeff.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)  
I'm not just some sports trophy  
game prize.

She walks away, as Jeff looks on, disappointed. The music from the "We Will Rock You" parody comes back, as the scene ends on Jeff's sad face and a --

-- STOMP STOMP CLAP-CLAP-CLAP-CLAP --

**EXT./ESTAB. - SUBURBAN HOUSE - FALL NIGHT**

Halloween decorations fill the yard with overhanging trees.

**INT. - SUBURBAN HOUSE - JEFF'S BEDROOM - SAME**

A warm-colored room with space posters on the wall. Jeff and Frank sit on the back of their legs on the floor, like young boys having a sleepover, leaning forward at each other.

JEFF

I just gotta give her a smooch. But I don't know what she wants. I'm going to sneak into her house and hear what she's saying!

FRANK

Jeff, you should just perform Samantha Night, a spoof of Saturday Night--

JEFF

Why should I have to beg for a smooch? She should be going for me. On top of it all, I had too much for lunch and my stomach hurts.  
(*he looks at his dog*)  
At least Froofie cares for me.

Froofie walks up to Jeff, taking his gentle pet.

FRANK

You could try seltzer water or a chewable digest--

JEFF

(*to his dog*)  
Imma take a dump and then head out.

He continues to pet the dog and speak in a caring manner.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Imma take a dump and then head out.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING**

An all white and grey "90s modern" living room. Sitting comfortably with their feet on couches are Samantha, Cindy... and some 60-year old STEP-DAD. Samantha and Cindy laugh with each other as the Step-Dad quietly chuckles as well.



CINDY

I was so cold in bed last night!

They laugh hard, while drinking wine.

SAMANTHA

I've become a socks in bed, girl.

CINDY

I'm telling you! I had on 3 covers,  
a coat, and ear muffins... WAIT!

They HYSTERICALLY laugh at that slightly funny mess up.

As they continue to giggle, we now look upon them from the kitchen door frame to see Jeff *slyly* lean his head out. In a close-up it looks like Jeff is hiding right behind the wall, but when we cut back to the girls... he is standing out PLAIN AS DAY in the doorway -- but they are oblivious, I guess.

CINDY (CONT'D)

I like the idea of a bad boy, but I don't want them to do meth.

SAMANTHA

I would be fine with normal guys.

The old Step-Dad grunts in agreement.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

You'd think girls like us could just get a nice normal boy, right?

CINDY

Are things still--

She rushed her line.

SAMANTHA

But those boys don't seem to like the normal that's in me.

CINDY

Are things still not going well with Jeff?

SAMANTHA

Oh Jeff just isn't the right boy.

JEFF

THAT'S IT!

(angry)

YOU were the one that--

CINEMATIC NOISE BOOM. Jeff comes from behind the wall In a *slow motion* fit of rage -- but we barely hear him. We're watching him slowly walk up with muffled yelling.

SAMANTHA

We want different things, Jeff!

Now a big argument, Jeff stands awkwardly behind some chairs of the dining room, while Samantha is in the lounge area.

They scream at each other from far away across the house.

JEFF

This can't all be my fault!

SAMANTHA

*(whisper talking)*

You think this is a joke!

Oh boy, the terrible acting is on display here. They yell their line, *then pause*, then the next person yells their line -- as if their turn ended and are waiting patiently.

JEFF

I just thought--

Beat.

SAMANTHA

Exactly, you thought!!

JEFF

I believed we could smooch!

Beat.

SAMANTHA

I'm not ready for that kind of commitment!!

Meanwhile, during this argument, the old Step-Dad just sits casually watching, while Cindy is looking out the window.

JEFF

I just want to understand!

It's now supposed to be a CLOSE-UP shot of Samantha, but Jeff is standing right in front of the camera.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Look at me. Look at me.

We can't see her.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

What about our relationship gave you the idea I wanted to smooch?

JEFF

I wrote a song for a wedding shower card just for you. It's an Elvis tribute. Our shirts, babe. It parodies Return to Sender.

SAMANTHA

Jeff, your songs are jaw-droppingly funny. The lyric humor is truly breathtaking. But when are you gonna see? This... isn't a song.

JEFF

(singing)

*RETURN THE BLENDE--*

Samantha angrily pushes his face to the side and walks away, distraught. I guess it was supposed to be a slap, except there wasn't a sound and he just slowly moved his head with her hand. Jeff is now melancholic.

As the scene DISSOLVES OUT -- 6 or 7 people walk out of the kitchen. Wait, *who are they?* Did they forget to cut that?

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. COURTHOUSE SQUARE - DAY**

Jeff staples his show poster on a telephone pole. He smiles.

It reads: "COME SEE! A Live Recording For a Greeting Card! w/ Jeff DOOP! -- Saturday 4pm, @ Wood Panel Arcade Shack. INCLUDING A SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR A SPECIAL PERSON!"

**INT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - LATER**

Still teary-eyed, Samantha solemnly sits on her couch, but then looks on her coffee table to see: *A greeting card.*

At first unsure, she grabs the card and opens it up.

On the inside it reads: "I Dream of the Smooch."

Playing from the card is a parody of *"I Won't Back Down"* by Tom Petty. JEFF'S VOICE is singing in a similar style.

JEFF'S VOICE  
*I WILL... NOT GIVE UP / I WILL...  
 NOT GIVE UP.*

Samantha releases an awkward cry smile, as her mind wanders.

JEFF'S VOICE (CONT'D)  
*I CAN SEE YOUR LIPS AND THEY'RE  
 PUCKERED UP, BUT I WILL NOT GIVE UP*

As the synth-driven karaoke music continues, we go to a:

FLASHBACK --

**EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY**

Walking and talking right in the middle of a football field --  
 Samantha, Cindy, and the Step-Dad giddily banter.

Suddenly, WHACK! Samantha bumps into a stranger on the field.  
 She drops her books and binders. Picking her stuff off the  
 ground -- is Jeff. He beams a smile.

JEFF  
 That's my fault. Here's your  
 education materials.

Flirtatiously putting her hair behind her ear, she grabs the  
 books from his hand. Cindy and Step-Dad stand with their  
 backs turned away and hands behind them... as directed.

Samantha SNEEZES. Her and Jeff share a playful laugh.

SAMANTHA  
 I'm so embarrassed!

JEFF  
 Hey, I've done it too. It's funny.

Another long flirtatious shared laugh.

SAMANTHA  
*(giggling)*  
 I even burp sometimes also as well!  
*(beat)*  
 I even burp sometimes also as well!

Jeff puts out his hand to dance.

She lovingly grabs his hand and they sway, while eye gazing.

JEFF  
 Jeff Doop.

SAMANTHA  
Samantha Bamm.

**BACK TO SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - END OF FLASHBACK**

The song on the card finishes out. She is now teary-eyed with joy. Then Jeff's Voice from the card has a final word:

JEFF'S VOICE  
Sammy, my show is tonight at the  
arcade. I know you like the seat by  
the toilet room where you can piss.  
So, I'm going to save--

-- He BURPS. Samantha bursts out a teary-eyed LAUGH through her happy cry.

JEFF'S VOICE (CONT'D)  
-- I'm going to save it for you.

**INT. WOOD PANEL ARCADE SHACK - LATER**

The wood-paneled arcade now has guests filtering in to sit in front of a small stage with decorations and a sign: *This Is A Greeting Card Live Recording With Jeff Doop & Company.*

Frank plays his bass guitar on stage. Head back - mouth open - feeling it - in front of the sparse crowd. Of course, though:

We CROSS DISSOLVE to Jeff walking up with his acoustic guitar. Frank moves to the corner of the stage.

JEFF  
What do you guys think?

The crowd responds with one loud SINGLE CLAP. Odd... anyway, entering to her seat is Samantha! Cindy sits next to her and Step-Dad sits behind. Jeff sees her and plays it off, cool.

JEFF (CONT'D)  
Thanks everyone for coming today.  
Hope it's been a Happy Halloween. I  
know I had candy-based diarrhea.

Huge laugh from the crowd. Samantha is still acting a little dismissive. Only allowing a small sarcastic smile.

JEFF (CONT'D)  
It's going to be a great card. And  
I want to dedicate this to someone  
who truly... means a lot to me.

He signals to the back to play the karaoke track:

It's *Saturday Night by the Bay City Rollers!* But different.

CROWD: *S . A . M-A-N . T-H-A Night!*

*S . A . M-A-N . T-H-A Night!*

Frank looks over at Jeff in joyful surprise! That's his song!

FRANK

Oh... my Gawd.

Samantha releases another smile, recognizing the lyrics.

CROWD: *S . A . M-A-N . T-H-A NIGHT!*

*S . A . M-A-N . T-H-A NIGHT!*

She shares the moment with Cindy. Jeff confidently sings:

JEFF

*I'LL KEEP ON DANCING 'TIL I HAVE  
HER SOUL / IT'S SAMANTHA'S NIGHT,  
SAMANTHA'S NIGHT / GAZING AT THAT  
SOMETHING RIGHT BELOW HER NOSE*

Samantha continues to laugh and shake her head in disbelief.

JEFF (CONT'D)

*I I I I LOVE HER FACE / BUT I I I I  
GOTTA WAAAAAIT!*

We watch Jeff perform his triumphant song like a music video. Jonathon-Ryan gets up and tries to talk to Samantha once more. Cindy splashes him with a coffee. He angrily leaves.

The on-screen sing-along lyrics are back again.

JEFF (CONT'D)

*LIPS LIKE A ROCK AND ROLL MID-50S  
ELVIS SHOW / SAMANTHA'S NIGHT /  
SAMANTHA'S NIGHT / I WANT THAT GOOD  
SMOOCH BUT I KNOW IT'S FOR THE  
BEST, I GOTTA HOLD / SAMANTHA NIGHT*

Samantha's eyes begin to glimmer with a sense of connection. This song really has re-sparked something in her. Out comes another giddy smile that she nicely shares with Cindy.

CROWD: *S . A - M-A-N . T-H-A NIGHT!*

*S . A - M-A-N . T-H-A...*

FRANK

Knife!

Frank is holding a KNIFE and gazing RIGHT at Jeff!

Jeff looks over, shocked and confused.

Amongst awkward silence, Frank lets loose a grunt and LUNGES at Jeff, as they both thump down hard on the stage.

Frank has killed Jeff. He gets up in a rage yelling at crowd:

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'm the one that's always loved  
Samantha. That's why I wanted that  
song! I had an epiphany that...

In the middle of this FIERY monologue, once again, we DISSOLVE away from him to panning shots of the crowd...

A waiter nonchalantly giving a table their drinks. Two girls calmly walking out the exit, putting on their sunglasses.

It's... it's like the wrong footage is here. None of the characters are rightly reacting to the on-stage murder.

We THEN FADE to a now empty venue, except for Samantha and Frank sitting at a table. A quiet orchestral piece plays.

SAMANTHA

You know, I've realized what I  
really needed was the ability to  
love myself. For me, relationships  
are like a deer lost in the forest.

Frank, in his same plaid hoodie and ski goggles, mindlessly looks around, nodding and mumbling.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Fighting for what I believe in is  
the only thing I know. So, I can't  
promise anything, Frank. But I'm  
willing to try and learn.

Frank starts to stand up, like he was early on his cue.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

We should go and finish this  
conversation at my place. You can  
follow my car.

Pushing their chairs into the table, Frank and Samantha walk away -- past the stage... where Jeff still lays dead.

We stay on Jeff's murdered body. THEN--

**MUSIC:** "RETUUUURN THE BLENDER! RETUUUURN THE BLENDER..."

On a freeze-frame of Jeff's body, we get a TITLE overlay:

DEDICATED TO THOSE INVOLVED IN THIS TRUE STORY. OMAHA, 1986.

SAMANTHA BAMB -- a vintage picture shows that the real Samantha was a *BLACK WOMAN*. Side-by-side with white Samantha.

JEFF DOOP -- a side-by-side picture shows Jeff.. was black.

FRANK PENNINGTON -- was black.

PAUL HENRY -- the step-dad, okay he actually was a white guy.

**CUT TO CREDITS.**



**OFF THE CUFF:**  
**AMERICA'S WORST IMPROV DUO**

Written by

F. Clint DeNisco

*"The omniscient narrator can sometimes  
be intrusive to the characters' story."*

**Mark Twain**

*"An unreliable narrator is a narrator whose  
credibility is compromised.[1] They can be found in  
fiction and film, and range from children to mature  
characters.[2] The term was coined in 1961 by Wayne  
C. Booth in 'The Rhetoric of Fiction.'"*

**Mark Twain**

BLACK

A MALE VOICE, who we think is the narrator.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)  
In the beginning, God said let  
there be light.

We now see a small FLASHING dot pulsating in middle of black.

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)  
Then **boom bam**, light.

The BIG BANG of our universe slams across the screen, as we  
are YANKED into fast-motion space creation.

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)  
He made the moons, planets, and  
stars... and then in the year 1990  
and 1996, made two more stars. Two  
stars that would make a difference  
in the comedy world.

The moving images of space and Earth creation FADE TO BLACK.

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)  
And tonight, with the help of our  
touring tech guy, Dale... we will  
present that stardom in full force  
through the art of comedic improv.

SMASH TO:

AN UPSIDE-DOWN COMEDY THEATER?

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)  
Hailing from Kansas City, MO, and  
reviewed by Midwest Art Magazine as  
"They're an improv duo."

We PULL BACK and realize...

the upside-down theater was just a PICTURE ON A WALL...

...hanging upside-down by a thread on a nail.

REVEAL we're inside that comedy theater the picture shows.

INT. SMALL COMEDY THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

Six or seven audience members sit scantily across the seats,  
staring at an empty stage.

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)  
 Ladies and gentle--  
 (coughs)  
 Excuse me. Ladies and Gentlemen,  
 put your hands together and hold  
 your applause, we are that improv  
 team... OFF THE CUFF!

*We now recognize the opening voice was one of the performers.*

Only a couple people lightly clap as the stage music POPS ON:

*"Modern Love" by David Bowie*

Our two improvisers, dash happily on-stage --

CHANCE KANTOR (28) tall, pompous, and overbearingly bossy --  
 especially to Aspen. Imagine a goofball rock-star wannabe

ASPEN WELLS (22) short, shy, and passive. Dapper skinny tie.  
 Imagine a student tour guide for a private school

They woo and clap along with music in standard overly-perky-  
 beginning-of-the-show entertainer fashion.

CHANCE  
 PUT YOUR HANDS TOGETHER!!

The six people sit stoic-faced, watching Chance and Aspen  
 prance around in front of them as the music **blares.**

ASPEN  
 (passively)  
 All right.

CHANCE  
 WOO!!

He and Aspen run past each other, high-fiving. Then, they  
 stop excitedly in center stage.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Welcome, everybody! We are--

The MUSIC is still blaring extremely loud, drowning Chance's  
 voice.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 (angrily to back theatre)  
 Dale!

*We never see the tech guy, DALE, on screen.*

Chance's yelling is barely audible over the music, as the audience stay's emotionlessly still.

One person lightly coughs.

                                  CHANCE (CONT'D)  
                                   Dale! For the love of God, cut the  
                                   music off!

Aspen nicely chimes in:

                                  ASPEN  
                                   Dale. If you could please...

                                  CHANCE  
                                   We're standing up here like idiots,  
                                   Dale!

Multi-colored lights flash across stage.

                                  ASPEN                                  CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Dale.  DALE!

An audience member is dully looking at his phone.

                                  CHANCE (CONT'D)  
                                   (motioning to Aspen)  
                                   I'm going back there!

Then -- the music abruptly **cuts off** in mid-lyric.

Chance and Aspen are caught off guard standing on a silent blankly-lit stage.

                                  CHANCE (CONT'D)  
                                   Oh...  
                                   (back to audience)  
                                   Welcome.

A few quiet claps.

                                  CHANCE (CONT'D)  
                                   We are Off the Cuff, from Kansas  
                                   City, MO,... and boy do we have an  
                                   exciting show for you guys,  
                                   tonight!

Aspen gives a firm thumbs up to audience.

                                  CHANCE (CONT'D)  
                                   Basically, improv is this thing  
                                   where you guys give us suggestions  
                                   for scenes...  
                                   (MORE)

CHANCE (CONT'D)

and then-- and then we think of things off the top of our heads. People have loved it everywhere we've gone.

Silent beat.

ASPEN

That's right, we actually are finishing up our **international** tour. We started in the great city of Bismark, North Dakota. Then Fort Yates, North Dakota...

CHANCE

Yes... and now here we are in Los Angeles-- the city of angels-- for our **international** tour.

A person adjusts his seat, creating a loud **squeak** amongst the dead-quiet audience.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Well, let's go ahead and introduce ourselves. Get this show rolling!

Both Aspen and Chance clap with enthusiasm, switching sides across the stage.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

My name is Chance Kantor and I've been doing improv for a while now. Really have mastered it. I started in high school... sophomore year I want to say. I got the bug for it and went to a couple state competitions and realized I truly have a gift for this. So then I graduated, went to college. Became, like, a president of the improv group. Really got it booming for the university. Then graduated college, did a couple festivals, a couple clubs... and that's where I met comedy partner Aspen.

(gesturing towards Aspen)

My other half, if you will.

Aspen softly clasps his hands together, with a smile.

ASPEN

That's right, my name is Aspen Wells, and I've taken 3 or 4 improv classes.

Silent beat.

CHANCE  
(chuckling)  
And this guy's funny, by the way.

ASPEN  
Oh, jeez, thanks.

CHANCE  
I don't what it is. I'm not sure if  
it's just the way you say it.  
(pointing at audience)  
It might just be a personal thing.  
You guys might not like it.  
But uh-- I like it.

Silent beat.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
All right! Before we start, we  
should also mention our tech guy,  
Dale. He's been with us the entire  
tour! Give him a round, ladies and  
gentlemen!

Tepid applause from the audience looking for where Dale is.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
But more importantly Dale will be  
taping us tonight, because big news  
is that we are actually going to be  
transitioning into TV.

ASPEN  
Well...

CHANCE  
We will be taking this video and  
sending it to CBS, the Columbia  
Broadcasting System. Hopefully have  
a show in a couple months--

ASPEN  
-- well, we love doing the live  
shows though. Everyone loves it,  
including my dad, who might  
actually be here for the first time  
tonight...

He looks into the audience but there is no dad.

CHANCE

No, he never is. Doesn't matter, we're excited to get that TV showing going! But Aspen, how about you get them warmed up for us!

ASPEN

Okay, it's always give to get the audience practice in yelling at us with suggestions. I want everyone to yell out your favorite color!

He gestures his arm to the audience.

A couple quiet voices are heard distantly in audience.

QUIET VOICES

Blue... red.

ASPEN

All right. Very cool. Now for another suggestion, yell out your favorite... your favorite...

Aspen nervously thinks.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

Your favorite, uh....

CHANCE

(softly to Aspen)  
Come on...

ASPEN

Like your favorite, umm...

CHANCE

(interrupting)  
Your favorite toy or something.

ASPEN

Yeah. Favorite toy!

A couple quiet voices again, as Chance and Aspen stand awkwardly on stage.

QUIET VOICES

My stitch doll... Hot Wheels.

ASPEN

Very cool.

The VENUE MANAGER walks impatiently towards front of venue with his arms folded.



VENUE MANAGER  
You got 7 more minutes, guys.

CHANCE  
Oh, okay. Thank you.

ASPEN  
Thank you for informing us.

CHANCE  
What do you say, everyone! You  
ready to start the show!

ASPEN  
All right!

Another firm thumbs up from Aspen.

CHANCE  
Let's get a suggestion for a job.  
What's a job you've had?

The six people in audience are silent.

ASPEN  
Anything. Just any job.

Silence.

The Venue Manager, begrudgingly fills the void.

VENUE MANAGER  
Bell boy.

CHANCE  
Bell boy! Yeah, this is actually a  
personal one for me, my grandfather  
was a bell boy. So... this is a  
special moment.

The venue manager squints his eyes in doubt.

ASPEN  
Do you want me to start this scene?

CHANCE  
Yes, Aspen will start! The  
suggestion is bell boy!

Chance and Aspen walk to the back of the stage, then Aspen  
wanders up to begin the scene.

He fashions his hand like a pirate hook and shuts an eye.

ASPEN

GARRRR! I'm Dave the pirate. And  
I've got a ship for me mateys.

Chance wanders up with his arms crouched like a t-rex, but  
high up to his chest... for some reason.

CHANCE

(4-year old child voice)  
Hi theyah Dave the pirate. I'm  
looking for some ice-cweem from a  
bell boy.

ASPEN

Argh! I don't know anything about a  
bell boy. I'm a sea-loving pirate.

CHANCE

Do you know where we can find a  
bell boy. I really want a bell boy.

ASPEN

Well, I want to cut you with my  
hook!

CHANCE

Oh God!

Aspen shows his hook hand. Chance motions for Aspen to follow  
him, as he slowly pretends to be chased in a circle on stage.

ASPEN

I'm gonna cut you nice and good.

CHANCE

Oh no, don't cut me!

They continue to slowly circle around the stage, then Chance  
looks at Aspen and points to his back.

Aspen pretends to cut his back.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Oh God, my back!

ASPEN

My leg's made of wood!

CHANCE

(loudly)  
And I wanted-- I just wanted a bell  
boy!

Chance awkwardly smiles at audience. Then Aspen and him nod at each other.

They passionately make the trademark "X" with their arms--

ASPEN  
OFF THE CUFF!

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
OFF THE CUFF!

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
That was our first improv scene!

The audience is gives a courtesy golf clap, as Chance and Aspen proudly laugh and smile.

**FOR THE FIRST TIME**, we hear the movie NARRATOR, with a voice that is strong, yet sounds relatable like your best friend.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And just like that. The story of Chance and Aspen moves into the rising action. A journey of two ostracized boys, never actually defeating large odds, and obviously not going to achieve their dreams. Like a Rhinestone cowboy...s.

TITLE CARD: "OFF THE CUFF: AMERICA'S WORST IMPROV DUO"

A glitch in BLACK accidentally reveals...

**Computer screen desktop and Movie Maker editing program open.**

BACK TO BLACK

FLASHBACK - MISSOURI SWIMMING POOL

*"Wouldn't It Be Nice"* by Beach Boys

Past the Joplin, MO Recreation Pool sign, kids and teenagers joyfully dive in the pool and laugh in playful summer fun.

In the middle of this, a 12 year-old boy sits alone at the swimming pool snacks table. He tries to pick up a square piece of pizza from his paper plate, but the cheese keeps sliding off before it reaches his mouth -- dropping on plate.

A couple of tables over, a group of 13 year-old boys and girls are joking and laughing. A SUAVE BOY glances over:

SUAVE BOY  
Yo, Chance!

The 12 year-old boy, a young Chance, still battling the cheese pizza into his mouth, awkwardly pulls down the food mess onto his plate. He wipes cheese on his trunks and curiously walks over to Suave Boy and his friends.

SUAVE BOY (CONT'D)

Do that thing with the small mouth.

With a piece of melted cheese still on the side of his mouth, Chance plays it cool, yet follows their every whim.

CHANCE

Okay! Yeah, it's so stupid.

SUAVE BOY

Nah, I love it. Do it!

Chance shrinks his mouth to a cartoonish size with a smile.

The group BUSTS out laughing at Chance's move. One of the GIRLS really belly laughs at the sight.

GIRLS

Oh my God. That's so weird!

Chance, trying to be self-aware, is motivated by laughter.

CHANCE

I call it my little wussy  
Leprechaun character.

Suave Boy is unsure what the means, but keeps hardily laughing, just to be that guy who captains the hysteria.

SUAVE BOY

Okay, I guess!

CHANCE

Top O' the morning. Here's a punch  
in the face!

Chance pretends to punch himself in the face, as the group continues to cackle.

Now he punches himself in the stomach, really hitting hard, to keep prodding those laughs.

With the momentum, he kicks himself in the leg and punches his neck, falling over and NAILING his chin on the corner of a table bench -- He keeps laughing with the group, holding in the pain, because he clearly didn't mean to do that part.

SUAVE BOY  
 (to the group)  
 That's his thing! Chance is the  
 goofy guy!

With a cheesy and bruising chin, Chance internalizes Suave Boy's insightful statement. He then demands a nearby younger 4th grade girl:

CHANCE  
 Hand me a napkin. Quickly.

END OF FLASHBACK

FLASHBACK - ASPEN'S SUMMER CAMP

Past a Peoria, IL Blessed Hills Camp sign, a 10 year-old boy, ASPEN. Sitting at a picnic table with his DAD, as they watch the other boys playing and having fun.

DAD  
 All right, this is what I thought would happen. What's the use of even being here? Let's just go home and I'll throw you in front of the TV until you're 18, I guess.

Then a BOY runs up to Aspen

BOY  
 See, this is Aspen who was doing voices in the bathroom stall!

DAD  
 Yeah, trust me, I don't get his whole thing either.

BOY  
 No, it was hilarious. He was doing a spot on Morgan Freeman!

Aspen, at first nervous, dives right in:

ASPEN  
 (exact Freeman voice)  
 And just like that the two little penguins bonded to survive the storm and found themselves happy just to be penguins together.

OTHER BOY  
 We call him Penguin! And he's gonna be a funny star!

The Dad looks on to Aspen with a look like he's finally, at least for the moment, not disappointed.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. MONKEY TOASTER PRODUCTIONS - PRESENT - MORNING

Aspen and Chance stand outside a backstreet office building that has a sign reading "MONKEY TOASTER" with a picture of two monkeys popping out of a toaster, like fresh bagels.

The street is empty and it's clearly way too early.

Chance paces around with his hands in pocket, while Aspen holds his arms, shivering a bit.

CHANCE

(to himself)

Pleasure meeting you. Pleasure meeting you. It's a pleasure meeting you. It's a pleasure speaking with you.

ASPEN

I should have brought my hoodie.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Under a freeway, on the fringes of Glendale. The clouds were gently kissing the morning dew. The silhouette of life was like the top of a shimmering green hill. The opposite of what Chance and Aspen are soon to bungle.

CHANCE

Remember, big smile, and don't talk over me. Especially once I really get on a roll and they're loving the idea and I'm blasting one great gem after the next -- just smile big and point at your notepad, it'll make us seem like we're prepared.

ASPEN

I forgot my notepad.

CHANCE

That's fine.

Then a lady in her 40s, MARTHA, walks up with a large black coat, pulling the door keys out of the her pocket, surprised by our two boys.

MARTHA

Can I help you gentlemen?

CHANCE

Yes, hello, are you the TV person, executive, for the company?

MARTHA

No, I'm her assistant. Who you were trying to speak with?

ASPEN

I believe her name was Margaret.

MARTHA

Are you looking to pitch a show with our production company?

ASPEN

I believe so, yes.

CHANCE

(correcting)

Yes, that is of course what we're doing.

(beat)

I can say that with confidence -- because -- we are prepared.

Martha sets her stuff down on the desk and clicks on her computer.

MARTHA

Okay, Margaret would have nothing to do with that, she just refills our paper towels and washes down the counters.

ASPEN

Very nice of her.

MARTHA

If you were to pitch, it would be to our main producer, Stacy, but she's busy minute-to-minute and isn't even here, today.

Then... a busy-body woman, STACY (53), walks in the door.

STACY

Did you say my name, Martha?

Martha rubs the back of her head, dealing with unfortunate circumstance.

MARTHA

Alri-- okay. Stacy, these gentlemen were here to meet with you, from a recommendation of Margaret.

STACY

Who?

MARTHA

The janitorial woman.

STACY

Oh, Mary.

Chance prances out of his seat. Then stands next to Stacy awkwardly still with his arms to his side.

CHANCE

Stacy, it's a pleasure meeting you, today. Looking forward to our talk today. How was your day so far?

She looks over at Aspen, still grabbing his arms for warmth.

STACY

I'm doing okay. Is the AC on too high?

ASPEN

No, it's okay. I should have brought my hoodie.

CHANCE

Yeah, we are absolutely fine. Especially now that we're here, talking to you. I really am a fan of all the Monkey Toaster movies.  
(counting on fingers)  
*Shoot the Breeze* in 1996. *TGIF* in 2003, I believe. It stopped there on Wikipedia.

STACY

We've been lending a hand with multiple TV projects, moreso recently.



ASPEN

Wow, that's exactly what we're here for. Like Michael Douglas said in Wall Street.

(Douglas impression)

Sometimes the stars line up.

Chance nudges Aspen.

CHANCE

(whispering)

Pull it back. No impressions.

Stacy puts her coat on Martha's desk.

STACY

Oh, okay. Listen, I got a tiny, tiny, small window of time to hear a pitch you have. Let me eat my yogurt.

CHANCE

Absolutely. It's a pleasure speaking with you--

Aspen echoes Chance.

ASPEN

It's a pleasure!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Surprise confidence, from a man-boy with constantly beaten down pipe dreams.

SERIES OF FLASHBACKS

1. Chance holding a script in front of an audition room.

PERSON 1

That's a no... but good luck on your future endeavors.

2. Chance in Shakespeare attire on stage with a group of fellow auditioners.

PERSON 2

But good luck on your future endeavors.

3. Chance, as an 8 year-old, at Elementary school gym, getting picked last for dodgeball. An 9 year-old JOCK continues the trend.

JOCK

But good luck on your future endeavors.

END FLASHBACKS

BACK TO STACEY'S OFFICE

Chance points to his smiling face, reminding Aspen to do so.

Posters from various works of television and film hang on her wall with a couple trophies standing on cabinets.

A picture of her posing and shaking hands with Ted Danson hangs centered behind her desk.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It was like two sea horses falling into a jungle. Out of place and untamed.

She sits exasperatingly.

STACY

So guys, I'll shoot it to you straight, we're not exactly in the market for another show right now, but if it's a great idea, I'm here to listen.

CHANCE

Absolutely. And seriously, it's a pleasure speaking to you.

ASPEN

Definitely. Definitely.

Chance gives Aspen a nudge to speak.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

Oh. Yes. I have done 2 TV commercials and have experience acting on camera.

CHANCE

(pointing at Aspen)

That face.

(to Stacy)

Amen?

She's confused by their motive.



ASPEN

And that's how we move into the second act.

CHANCE

(frustrated)

No-- no.

(pointing at his sheet)

The river thing.

ASPEN

Sorry, yes, Chance fell into a river and bareback-floated down the Mississippi.

CHANCE

Without knowing it, I loved the thrill of rolling down that river.

ASPEN

(singing)

Old maaan river.

(talking like Will Smith)

Man, I did a rendition of the Showboat musical off-broadway in 1996 after Men in Black.

Stacy gives a courtesy half-smirk.

CHANCE

Aspen is a cinephile. Anyway, the point is that I feel so personally attached to this character and therefore showing the executive that you are the only one to make this show-- that I had to make a TV show and let Aspen play that character.

ASPEN

(jokingly)

That-a-me.

CHANCE

Aspen, please, she already saw your Michael Douglas.

ASPEN

I wasn't. I was just talking.

CHANCE

Oh, okay.

Silent.

Stacy looks at her watch.

STACY  
Is there a logline for your show,  
before you leave.

CHANCE ASPEN  
An 8 year old-- An 8 year old--

Chance cuts Aspen off with his arm.

CHANCE  
No, I'll say it.  
(beat)  
An 8 year old genius prodigy gets a  
job as a life insurance agent --  
only one problem...  
(loudly)  
He's a clinically diagnosed thrill  
seeker!

Through a silent beat, he looks over at Aspen.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Okay, that was the part we say  
together-- anyway, before we  
continue on with the pitch, do you  
have any questions?

Stacy finally puts her notepad down and stands up from her desk.

STACY  
Look guys, I can tell you have a  
lot of ideas, but how about you  
refine your idea until it's  
something manageable and I'll have  
Martha message you in the future.

Chance eyes drop in worry, much more so than Aspen.

CHANCE  
Shoot, there may have been a  
miscommunication, we absolutely  
have the idea fully refined, you  
just didn't understand it,  
possibly.

ASPEN  
It's okay.

Stacy walks towards the door, leading the way.

CHANCE

I want to show you that I care about this project and it needs to be made, so I'm not gonna leave the office, too quickly, so it doesn't come across that I'm not passionate.

STACY

I should say, that you did a good job briefly skimming over the first two and a half chapters of "The Pitch Bitch Manual" by Kim Gordly.

CHANCE

So you see see something in our courage... Or?

STACY

Please, see yourself out into the lobby and thank you for coming by Monkey Toaster.

Chance's voice is more breath-y. Clearly desperate to not let this moment slip.

CHANCE

Stacy, can we come back tomorrow and present it in a way that is great for you. It's a pleasure speaking with you-- and speaking in the future.

ASPEN

It's fine. Is there a bathroom around the hall I could use?

STACY

Yes, past Martha's desk and to the right.

She pokes her head out her office door, as Chance and Aspen enter the lobby.

STACY (CONT'D)

Martha, can you point that gentlemen to the bathroom. Good afternoon, boys.

ASPEN

(to Martha)

It's just to do a pee, so no worries.

Chance bumps into the desk, following Aspen to the restroom.

CHANCE  
That was so stupid.

ASPEN  
(unconcerned)  
Yeah.

CHANCE  
Like, clearly she didn't really focus in on the deep worlds with unique character landscapes I was throwing her way.

ASPEN  
Yeah.

MUSIC UP: "Spirit in the Sky" by Norman Greenbaum.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
They say life is a game of chess that really ends up being poker. A selfish strategy to busy ourselves, until the luck of uncertainty tears you down.

Aspen enters the bathroom, as Chance talks to him from outside.

CHANCE  
That was the moment we've been planning for months now, Aspen. We gotta do something quick, or we're gonna be in our 40s in the same spot as our high school jock friends as local bank tellers.

Amid the sound of gentle pee stream.

ASPEN (O.S.)  
I'd be in my mid-30s technically.

The "Spirit in the Sky" car **BEEPS AND CHIMES** interrupt Chance's monologue.

CHANCE  
It's like we're slowly moving with our real talent, while others are moving up the ladder faster and faster.

Aspen flushes and walks out of the bathroom, buttoning his pants.

ASPEN

Yeah, we can just go back and work on it, like she said, or whatever.

CHANCE

Forget her. We should be on television by now. We--

"Spirit in the Sky" **BEEPS AND CHIMES** again.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

It should just be here now--

**BEEPS AND CHIMES--**

CHANCE (CONT'D)

We should be doing something and--

*Norman Greenbaum's voice comes in loudly from the song...*

*"When I die and they lay me to rest..."*

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They once again, restart life, right back where they began. Lost and confused.

THEN -- Chance POINTS UP TO THE SCREEN -- muffled under the loud "Spirit in the Sky" all we catch from his yelling is:

CHANCE

-- the narrator!

"Spirit in the Sky" STOPS --

ASPEN

Sorry, say it again.

CHANCE

We're being sand-bagged by the narrator of this movie!

Aspen scratches his elbow.

ASPEN

Why is it their fault?

CHANCE

Look around you, Aspen! Do you not hear him? We are being intentionally tampered with for drama.

OUTSIDE STUDIO - PARKING LOT



NARRATOR (V.O.)

Albeit, you could say I'm merely the messenger, Chance.

CHANCE

No! If I do wrong, I'll be the one to control that. Not some narrator in...

(beat)

Where are you?

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Chance, life is surreal. Albeit, I'm merely the one that sends a message.

CHANCE

Stop it and stop saying albeit!

(turning to Aspen)

Wait, did you ever see the movie Body English?

ASPEN

No, never heard of it. Is it old?

CHANCE

It's the same narrator! The voice is the same from that movie. I know, because I remember thinking, "Wow, the narrator's voice totally ruins the flow of the movie!"

ASPEN

Are you sure you're not just hearing the drive-thru speaker at that Arby's over there?

CHANCE

No, it's the narrator of this movie. And he was the narrator of Body English. Who voiced that? Come on you're the cinephile!

ASPEN

I don't know that one--

CHANCE

Well look on your phone, mine's dead.

Aspen pulls out his phone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Honestly, knowing who I am, won't change the labyrinthine fate you will soon endure. Anywhere from Say Anything's sentimental boom box love story to a climactic bullet's flying shoot out like that of Heat.

CHANCE

Yeah, I don't those movies.

Aspen's quickly searches on his phone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A rare cold wind of summer blasts through the Glendale air.

The cold wind AGGRESSIVELY blows past Chance and Aspen, making them stumble on their feet a bit.

CHANCE

Good God, just type it in and look up cast and crew.

ASPEN

I am. I had to restart the browser, because it was glitching on me.

CHANCE

Of course.  
(looking up)  
Why not?

The winds pick up even more -- rain follows behind.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Here I can do it faster.

Chance grabs the phone and comes to a screensaver.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Oh God, it locked out. What's your password?

ASPEN

Here, it's actually a finger gesture.

A FAST GUST OF WIND pushes the phone near the tips of Aspen's fingers.

CHANCE

Woah, hurry Aspen! Before the narrator uses the devils of nature to end this!

The wind DRAMATICALLY teeters Aspen's phone in his hand like a car about to fall off a cliff.

For them this is a BIG OBSTACLE to find the name before the wind knocks it out of his hand...

ASPEN

Almost there... almost there!

Chance desperately dives to Aspen's feet to stop the phone from falling, by holding it above his head like the Atlas statue holding the world.

He unlocks the screen with his fingers and opens to the IMDB.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

Wait, I was on it. Body English voice-over credit...

-- More WIND! The phone teeters further and further.

CHANCE

Come on! Come on!

Aspen's eyes widen.

ASPEN

I got it!

Chance bolts up and points at the name... "Gene Planderman"

CHANCE

Gene Plane-derman. Plan-derman?  
Recorded at Electric Aardvark studios in New York!

ASPEN

He all the way across the country.

CHANCE

And he knows that. He thinks we wouldn't go that far. But Aspen... we have to get him!

He grabs Aspen by the shoulders.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

This has to be our next goal if we want to succeed in showbiz.

(MORE)

CHANCE (CONT'D)

If we want to break past the people holding us back, not believing in us. Like someone who should be watching you, but isn't...

Aspen looks down in thoughtfulness looking at his phone screensaver of his Dad.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

We'll tour on the way to New York. Refine our comedy while using the money to get there and get him!

Aspen scratches his elbow again.

ASPEN

All right. I guess I'll call my dad and let him know.

CHANCE

We're going now, Aspen!  
(pointing to sky)  
We're coming to get you!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And away we go! A 2009 movie starring Maya Rudolph and John Krasinski!

SMASH TO:

EXT. LONG BEACH - BOARDWALK - SNACKS N' MORE SHOP

Aspen and Chance walk furiously out with his arms full of snacks to the back parking lot.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It should be stated that only you can hear me, the people--

CHANCE

-- Yeah yeah, nobody else can hear you. It's like a freakin' Charles Dicken's book. That's a stupid rule by the way. Like, just let everyone else hear you. Notta big deal.

ASPEN

Are we taking my car, I guess.

CHANCE

Yeah, my sister is taking my car for the weekend, so we'll have to use yours.

Chance and Aspen walk to a 2015 Cube car, while Aspen grabs for his keys.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And with a click of the car door. A journey across America--

CHANCE

Wait, no one clicked a door yet.

ASPEN

Yeah, I'll unlock it for you.

CHANCE

No, don't. The narrator--  
(looking to Narrator)  
We could never open that car door and your story would be false about our actions.

ASPEN

I can just open it.

CHANCE

Aspen, just-- What I'm saying is, the narrator said you clicked the car. But you haven't yet.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Think of it like a GPS system. You can take whatever route you want, but I'll still recalculate you to your eventual destination.

CHANCE

(sarcastically)  
How about you say that again, while we get a thesaurus again to understand what the heck you said.

Aspen watches Chance yell at sky.

ASPEN

Is the narrator being wordy now or something?

CHANCE

Let's just go. We're GETTING him.

ASPEN  
Should I click open the door?

CHANCE  
It's fine now.  
(to Narrator)  
It's fine now, because **we** are now  
deciding to do it. Spontaneously.

ASPEN  
Yeah!  
(beat)  
You'll have to throw some stuff in  
the back seat. It's a little messy.

CHANCE  
To Flagstaff!

ASPEN  
To Flagstaff!

SMASH TO:

EXT. CALIFORNIA HIGHWAYS

Montage of driving across the desert highways, with Chance and Aspen wearing sunglasses and resting their arms on the window ledges.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
They once called themselves the  
Butch Cassidy and Sundance Kid of  
comedy. Mainly because Chance once  
heard that he "kinda sorta looks  
like Paul Newman in the eyes, but  
not, like, a spitting image." He  
put a lot of stock in that.

EXT./ESTAB. FLAGSTAFF, AZ - BIG PINE COMEDY HUT - NIGHT

Past a GRUFF TICKET TAKER, is the small theater where we see Aspen and Chance performing, in mid-show, to a small crowd.

CHANCE  
Dale, turn the lights down a bit!

ASPEN  
Yeah, I can barely see the  
audience.

CHANCE

And it's just warm on my face, I'm starting to sweat.

After that, they plaster back on a smile for the audience.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Let's get another suggestion here. What's the next subject that we do here?

ASPEN

(to audience)

A president. What's a president you can think of? Any President at all.

SLIGHT MURMURS give suggestions.

SLIGHT MURMURS

Jimmy Carter.

ASPEN

No... no.

CHANCE

No, not him. Who else?

The audience doesn't understand why their suggestion would be rejected.

SLIGHT MURMURS

George Bush.

ASPEN

No...

CHANCE

No, how about more 80s. Like early to mid-80s?

SLIGHT MURMURS

Ronald Reagan.

ASPEN

Ronald Reagan!

CHANCE

There we go! Ronald Reagan.

Chance and Aspen make their way to the sides of the stage.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

All right let's do this.

ASPEN

Okay, so I'll be Reagan?

CHANCE  
 (pointing to himself)  
 Yeah, I'll be Reagan.

ASPEN  
 I'm Reagan?

CHANCE  
 Cool, I'll be Reagan.

They finally get to their spots on side of stage.

ASPEN  
 Perfect, I'll be Reagan.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 I'll be Reagan.

The audience looks confused at the empty stage.

Chance and Aspen both come out with Reagan impression.

ASPEN  
 Tear down this wall!

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

They STOP, realizing.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Uhp. Umm...  
 (back in Reagan)  
 Mr. Gorbachev, I'm Ronald Reagan. I don't know who you are.

ASPEN  
 (Reagan impression)  
 I'm the real Ronald Reagan. You must be an impersonator.

CHANCE  
 No, no. I'm Ronald Reagan. My wife's name is Nancy. You are another person in the 80s.

ASPEN  
 No, I'm the 1980 president Ronald Reagan.

CHANCE  
 You must be a--  
 (back in own voice)  
 I'm Reagan.

Chance gives a face of demand to Aspen.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 I'm Reagan. All right.



Aspen folds and gives in.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Mr. Gorbachev tear down this wall,  
right down the middle.

ASPEN  
(pirate voice)  
GARR matey! I'm Dave the Pirate.  
And I'm gonna walk a plank.

CHANCE  
(angry)  
No. No. Okay. You know what? Mr.  
Gorbachev we're going to tear down  
this wall by myself.

He waves off Aspen.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
I don't need you, I'm just going to  
tear down this wall myself, because  
I'm Ronald Reagan. Here I am by  
myself, tearing down the wall.

ASPEN  
Garr, I can help too.

CHANCE  
No. Just me, Gorbachev, tear down  
this wall. AHHHH--

Chance acts out breaking down a wall.

Aspen and Chance look at each other. Chance disappointedly.

They give the "X" arms.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Off the Cuff!

ASPEN  
Off the Cuff!

Aspen smiles with excitement. Chance rubs the back of his  
head with a small grunt.

CHANCE  
All right...  
(beat)  
Aspen likes to shoehorn that pirate  
character into every show.

ASPEN  
Yes, the audience loves it.

CHANCE  
No, well, that's your opinion.

SMASH TO:

NEW MEXICO HIGHWAYS - CAR - GOPRO FOOTAGE

Chance clicks on the camera, while holding a notepad in his lap as Aspen drives.

CHANCE  
Okay, after we get the narrator, we'll be on a fast track to get a show made. So lets keep blasting out beautiful treasures of story.

ASPEN  
What if we open the show in the script with curtains opening. The guy looks with surprise at the audience and goes, "Oh, hello, I didn't see you there!"

Chance laughs hysterically!

CHANCE  
Oh my God! Oh, I could play that guy!

ASPEN  
Yeah, okay.

CHANCE  
Jot that down!

ASPEN  
Has their been anything ever done about Humpty Dumpty?

CHANCE  
Well, Humpty Dumpty.

ASPEN  
(disappointed)  
Oh yeah, shoot.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And so the ideas came like butter, for our two protagonists. But if comedy sex is having similar goals that flutter, then our two were abstinent.

Chance and Aspen are excited, high-fiving.

ASPEN

Wait, do we get off this exit?

Chance lifts his phone up.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Just like the future, your  
connection is now lost!

CHANCE

Crap! I can't get data.

This is another HUGE OBSTACLE. Will the GPS turn on before  
the next exit?

ASPEN

IS IT EXIT 54 or 53B?

CHANCE

It's recalculating, Aspen! The  
Narrator is destroying our life!

ASPEN

54 or 53b?! I want to cry!

They slowly drive closer to the exit... plenty of time.

CHANCE

(glaring at phone)

RECALCULATING! RECALCULATING! Just  
take 54! Take 54!

EXT./ESTAB AMARILLO, TEXAS - COMEDY VENUE - NIGHT

The neon sign reads "THE AMARILLO ARMADILLO" with a picture  
of an ARMADILLO HOLDING A MICROPHONE.

CHANCE (V.O.)

All right, this a big improv game.  
Definitely one of my favorites.

INT. AMARILLO, TEXAS - COMEDY VENUE - SAME

Once again, 6 or 7 uninvested audience members sit scantily  
amongst the seats.

ASPEN

Absolutely.

CHANCE

Aspen, I know it's one of your favorites. This is a game that all the bigs do like Second City, Saturday Night Live, and many more.

ASPEN

Yes.

CHANCE

This is a game called Zip Zap Zop.

Aspen claps in excitement.

ASPEN

Woo! All right!

CHANCE

Here are the rules! Basically, it goes like this. I go zip.

Chance shoots his arm forward to Aspen when he says "zip."

ASPEN

Then I go zap!

Aspen shoots his arm to Chance. They continue back and forth.

CHANCE

Then I go Zop.

ASPEN

And we'll do it really quickly and fastly.

CHANCE

If one of us messes up and says the wrong word on their turn. Then they're out.

ASPEN

They're gone!

CHANCE

And no one wants that. So first we'll do a little practice round, so you guys understand. It's a little complicated.

The audience stares blunt-faced.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Big game! Classic game! Zip Zap Zop! Here we go!

They get into game position with hands.

Their arms FLURRY in motion as they speed up their actions along with zips and zops.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Zip!

ASPEN

Zop!

CHANCE

Zop!

(victoriously)

And got ya!

They both stop moving. Waiting for next guy to speak.

ASPEN

No, no. You're out. You said it wrong.

CHANCE

What? No. I said zip and then you said zop and then I said zip. So there was a mess up and it was on your end. You're out. I win.

A girl in the audience, SAMANTHA BELL (20s) ponytail through her ball cap, CHUCKLES cutely.

ASPEN

No, no. Okay, you said zip right?

CHANCE

Right.

ASPEN

Then I said zap and you said zip again. So that's two zips. You're out.

The audience is at first still blunt-faced, but then--

Samantha CHUCKLES amongst the silence.

CHANCE

I did not! You were off by a zip and threw everything off from beginning.

ASPEN

No you said zip twice.

CHANCE  
So I went zip zip? No.

ASPEN  
No, not zip zip. You went zip then  
I said zap and you said zip.

Samantha's laugh starts to get **louder**. The other audience members look over at her in surprise, then look up at Chance and Aspen with a newfound appreciation and start to smile.

CHANCE  
No. Okay, for one thing, you're  
pulling your arm back.

ASPEN  
What? No.

CHANCE  
Yeah, you're like holding it up and  
not doing the full motion.

Chance moves his arm up and down, like doing "the robot."

ASPEN  
It's not about the arms.

CHANCE  
You have to go zip and go full down  
with arm.

Samantha is now full out **belly laughing**. A couple snorts she's going so hard.

The audience relay off that energy and start to build up laughter, as well.

ASPEN  
It's not about the arms.

CHANCE  
It's both. It's both things. Arms  
and the words.

The audience is now in HYSTERIC! People are slapping each other's back in humorous camaraderie.

Chance turns and looks out at the audience.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Okay. All right. Fine I lost that  
one. It's not my favorite game.  
It's a staple improv tradition, but  
by no means a thing I enjoy doing.

ASPEN  
Yeah, cuz I deserved to win.

CHANCE  
Yeah, anyway. We have to do it, but  
I'm just glad it's over.

They both look out in happy appreciation of the audience now  
STANDING and clapping.

ASPEN  
Wow, thanks.

CHANCE  
I'm glad you enjoyed it.

Samantha looks up fondly at Chance and Aspen, biting her lip.

Chance looks down at her.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
It could've been smoother, but this  
laughter we're hearing is exactly  
what we do it for.

ASPEN  
(Jimmy Stewart impression)  
Clarence, I wanna laugh again!

The audience continues to laugh as Aspen winks at them.

ASPEN (CONT'D)  
(to Chance)  
Next bit, or...?

CHANCE  
You know what? Let's end it there!  
We're Off the Cuff, improv duo,  
thank you so much!

Chance and Aspen give a surprised, yet happy look at each  
other.

Then, with the, now legendary, "X" arms--

ASPEN  
OFF THE CUFF!

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
OFF THE CUFF!

They prance off the stage, waving and clapping.

The audience continues their STANDING OVATION! Some sitting  
down in pure laughing fatigue.

CUT TO:

## BACKSTAGE GREENROOM

Continuing from the stage, Chance and Aspen high-five each other. Proud and excited... yet dumbfounded.

Chance flops on the couch and grabs his water bottle.

CHANCE

I guess, we killed it out there, man. Great job.

ASPEN

Oh, jeez.

CHANCE

It didn't feel like it, but that's why you always just gotta trust your abilities and everything will fall into place naturally.

ASPEN

Really great job.

CHANCE

No, Aspen. I wanna say something. I started the engine, but you're the one that really revved off with some awesome stuff. You deserve most of the credit for that thing.

ASPEN

Oh come on!

The STAGE PRODUCER waltzes into the room, baffled, looking at his watch.

STAGE PRODUCER

You guys were only on for 8 minutes! I booked this show slot for 45.

CHANCE

And thanks again for booking us, Tony. You really gave us a gift by letting us do our thing in front of this great audience.

A knock is heard on the backstage door, as Samantha peaks her head inside.

SAMANTHA

You guys!

Chance stands up proudly.



CHANCE

(to stage producer)  
Oh here we go, speaking of which.

SAMANTHA

Off the Cuff! That was so great out there. It was such a unique show and you really had to the courage to put everything out there.

ASPEN

I barely did anything.

CHANCE

Oh Aspen. Not true.  
(to Samantha)  
I'm telling you. This guy carried the whole thing. What's your name again?

SAMANTHA

I never told you, but I'll tell you now. It's Samantha. Samantha Bell. I've been coming to shows at the Amarillo Armadillo for years now and you two take the cake.

CHANCE

Hey, who's birthday is it!

Chance laughs really hard.

ASPEN

Mine's not until June.

Samantha laughs at what she thought was Aspen's joke.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

For the first time this story. A connection between Chance and Aspen. Aspen and Chance. Off the Cuff... and an unexpected fan.

CHANCE

(to Narrator)  
Oh, unexpected. How gracefully kind of you. It's when I have enlightening moments of success like this-- that I really just feel sorry for you, as the narrator.

SAMANTHA

What do you mean?

CHANCE

Oh it's the narrator of this movie.  
Aspen and I are going across  
country to get him.

SAMANTHA

Get him?

ASPEN

Yeah, I can't hear him, but I can  
feel it.

SAMANTHA

I don't hear anything?

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And with a slippery restaurant  
ground, leaves restaurant waiter in  
the air.

THEN -- a WAITER trips and spills salsa and guacamole right  
on Chance. Without saying a word, Samantha quickly moves away  
to sit by Aspen.

Then, a dapper MOVIE PRODUCER (30s) walks into the room.

MOVIE PRODUCER

Excuse me. Aspen is it?

CHANCE

(to Waiter)

Can I get a warm damp wash cloth?

ASPEN

Yeah, I am Aspen.

MOVIE PRODUCER

You really got a great look going,  
brother! I want to give you my  
card. I'm filming a budgeted movie  
in North Carolina. Keep in contact  
and be expecting a call from me.

Aspen takes the card in awe and pure delight.

ASPEN

I absolutely will. Thank you sir.

CHANCE

We're hitting our stride now. Can  
you ask that guy if he knows a  
studio we could pitch our show too?

ASPEN

Oh, shoot, he left already. But if I call him, he might know somebody.

CHANCE

Of course he does. As long as he gets us in a room with someone, we'll be gold from there! I'm glad he saw you, man! You deserve it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Absolutely.

Odd Silence.

Samantha steps up to the boys.

SAMANTHA

You know, I'm going to New York this Thursday for the Raspberry Muffin Festival that my college friend invites me to every year. Maybe I'll see you along the way.

She gently touches Aspen's shoulder with hopefully-obvious affection.

CHANCE

Our final stop may be in Nashville if we get the narrator there. But if not, then sure. Love fan chats!

SAMANTHA

Okay. Bye Aspen.

INT. AMARILLO MOTEL - BUSINESS COMPUTER ROOM - LATER

In the small room with a couple computers, a fax machine, and a printer -- some hotel patrons come and go. Chance walks back and forth, like a predator, thinking, while Aspen looks up with a notepad. Chance taps the pen to his chin.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Feeling closer to success, our two improvisors come up with brilliant TV show ideas.

(beat)

The word brilliant was supposed to sound sarcastic. But it didn't really read that way.

CHANCE

Are there shows about different  
races of people?

ASPEN

What if it's a show about two guys  
and one girl. But the girl-- she's  
just having one of those days.

(beat)

She's just having one of those  
days.

Chance taps the ceiling light bulb with his pen.

CHANCE

Can the motel lady, Edna, fix the  
intensity of the light in here? I'm  
barely able to think with the  
amount of dimness surrounding me.

ASPEN

Yeah, that would probably help us.

CHANCE

Absolutely. Edna!

Aspen and Chance both walk passionately with their hands  
hanging near their chest towards the motel lobby.

MOTEL LOBBY DESK

ASPEN

Edna!

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Edna!

The Narrator chimes in with a voice like he's telling secret  
in a Dr. Seuss book.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So Chance and Aspen, like two  
graceful hyenas, interrupted their  
TV writing session to have a word  
with Edna, the motel clerk.

Edna looks up in surprise from the yelling.

EDNA

Can I help you?

CHANCE

The light is dimmer than it should  
be in the computer center, I feel.

EDNA

Yeah, I have no control over that.  
And I doubt a maintenance person is  
going to come down at midnight.

CHANCE

We actually know a person who's  
head of maintenance for Monkey  
Toaster productions, have you heard  
of it?

EDNA

No, I haven't.

CHANCE

Well she was the first person  
intrigued by our show ideas -- if  
you happen to see someone that can  
fix the light, let me know.

EDNA

(ending conversation)  
Okay, goodnight gentlemen.

BACK TO BUSINESS CENTER

Chance and Aspen are back in their exact same positions in  
the room.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The inspiration fairy comes to  
those who write together. You have  
brains in your head. You have feet  
in your shoes. You can steer  
yourself any direction you choose.  
Like the climactic shootout in  
Heat.

ASPEN

I've had this idea for a while  
about a spork utensil who doesn't  
have any friends.

Chance closes his eyes and looks to the ceiling. Aggressively  
trying to seem like a brainstorming genius.

CHANCE

Okay, keep going. Keep going.

ASPEN

And he says, nobody likes me.  
(miming sadness)  
I'm too fork-y for soup, but too  
spoon-y for tater tots.

CHANCE  
Good good. Jot that down.

ASPEN  
I don't have a pen.

CHANCE  
Do you hear a, like, giraffe  
coughing up a fur ball in the  
distance.

He gestures towards the window.

ASPEN  
I don't think so.

Chance opens the door.

CHANCE  
Edna!

Arms hanging to their chest again.

ASPEN  
Edna!

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Edna!

MOTEL LOBBY

Edna begrudgingly looks up from her computer.

BACK TO BUSINESS CENTER

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But alas, and obviously, no giraffe  
was to be seen.

INT. TENNESSEE GAS STATION - LATER

Chance and Aspen pick through the snack aisles.

ASPEN  
Boy, call me a weirdo. But this is  
like my favorite part of road  
trips.

CHANCE  
The gas station?

ASPEN

Yeah, I mean. I actually have more fun memories just hanging out with friends at a gas station, on our way to a big awesome thing, than I did the actual awesome thing.

Chance grabs a York Peppermint Pattie and opens it up.

CHANCE

Oh, that's pretty cool. I never thought of it like that, but you're right.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It's like I've said. The best parts of life are the non-event.

Aspen grabs a box of Good N' Plenty and opens it up.

CHANCE

(to Narrator)

You had wedge yourself in, didn't you? We're having a nice connection and the narrator of this movie has to take ownership of a wisdom line.

Chance takes a bite out of his Peppermint patty.

Then-- BILL HADER (as a **gas station clerk**) aggressively darts out from behind the counter.

BILL HADER

No! You guys have to pay for that. You can't just start eating it.

ASPEN

Oh wow. Bill Hader!

CHANCE

(stilted)

We're meeting you along the way!

Silence as they happily stare at each other.

We hear the DIRECTOR of this movie's voice...

DIRECTOR

And cut...

Bill Hader and the actors playing Aspen and Chance in this movie, RYAN GOLDSHER and CLINT DENISCO, start taking off their attached microphones.

CLINT DENISCO  
 (to Bill Hader)  
 Thanks again for doing this man.

RYAN GOLDSHER  
 Yes, it's a big moment to have you.

BILL HADER  
 No problem. You think this'll be a  
 fun part, with me?

CLINT DENISCO  
 Oh are you kidding me? Yeah, the  
 audience--

SMASH TO:

EXT. DANCE CLUB - BACKLOT - LATER

On a small platform with a few people sitting on lawn chairs,  
 Chance and Aspen pull out a chair. A dog BARKS continuously.

CHANCE  
 All right, we like to get the  
 audience involved. I know you guys  
 are probably thinking. "You two can  
 do improv really well. I can do  
 that, too."  
 (chuckling)  
 Well, lets see if you can. We're  
 gonna bring somebody up here.

ASPEN  
 Yes, this is a big improv thing  
 that all the places like SNL and  
 improv magazines talk about.

CHANCE  
 We're gonna bring one of you up to  
 give a BIG speech. And then we'll  
 take that big speech and make an  
 improv scene about it. Let's see  
 how you do.

Aspen surveys the audience.

ASPEN  
 Let's get a volunteer. Who wants to  
 come up?

Chance aggressively points at a person.



CHANCE

You! Get up here. Come on!

A BORED MAN begrudgingly walks up, as Aspen pulls him by the arm, and sits in the chair. The dog still BARKING.

ASPEN

Tell us how you started your morning and everything you did.

Bored Man takes a long slow breath. Dog still BARKING.

BORED MAN

I got up at like 12.

ASPEN

Oh. Nice.

CHANCE

Late.

BORED MAN

Changed into my comfortable house shoes. Brushed my teeth. Um. Got a bowl of cereal ready.

Chance starts patting him on the back.

ASPEN

Oh. Try to be positive. Really be happy and have a positive story.

CHANCE

Exactly. Like the first thing you learn in improv is that you stay positive and keep the scene progressing. Called "Yes and."

BORED MAN

(doesn't care)  
All right.

CHANCE

Also make sure you're breathing.

ASPEN

Absolutely.

CHANCE

That's a big thing you also learn. Use your diaphragm. In and out. Really take a breath.

Chance mimes breathing with his gut.

ASPEN  
But it's okay.

CHANCE  
Yeah, it's fine. We're professionals, so you're not gonna know that kind of stuff.

BORED MAN  
Okay, well, I actually--

Chance pushes him on back to leave platform.

CHANCE  
Anyway, thank you so much. That's all we needed. Give him a hand!

Bored Man slowly walks to his seat as no one claps, but the dogs continues to rapidly bark.

EXT. HIGHWAYS - TENNESSEE - DAY

Chance and Aspen drive on, amongst the Tennessee small mountains and scant houses.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Hey everybody! We're back on the road. That's something a local band would post on their Facebook page. But it's also true of this magical journey that, Off the Cuff partners, Chance and Aspen continue to endure.

Chance turns on the GoPro cameras in the front windshield as Aspen drives.

CHANCE  
(to camera)  
All right. Vlog #2 of Off the Cuff's New York mission adventure. Aspen say hi.

ASPEN  
(peeking down)  
Hello.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Past the ridged mountains of Tennessee, Chance and Aspen--

CHANCE

Hey! No, no. You can't do dramatic exposition on top of our low-fi GoPro show. Totally throws off the tone of what we're going for.

ASPEN

I agree.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A reflection of nature. Life is surreal.

(beat)

Also, you actually turned Aspen's camera back off. He turned it on while you were in the gas station.

FLASH TO:

GOPRO FOOTAGE IN CAR - FLASHBACK

ASPEN

Hello world! Just wanted to give an update! Chance is inside getting some Slim Jim's. I'm just out here in beautiful Oklahoma, chilling!

We see the coat of a HOMELESS MAN walking up to car window.

HOMELESS MAN (O.S.)

Hey man, do you have a couple dollars? I'm looking to get a soda.

ASPEN

I don't, sorry.

The homeless man walks off.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

(quietly to camera)

I do have a lot of change in my cupholder, but I'm scared of what they're up to.

EXT./ESTAB. NASHVILLE - CHUCKLE VILLAGE COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

In between two dive bars, a neon sign flashes "CHUCKLE VILLAGE" with a lit logo of a Teepee next to a laughing boy.



He looks at Aspen and they walk towards the audience...  
ending the scene.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Let's get another suggestion.  
Something fun to work with.

ASPEN

(to Chance)

We should probably mention our  
sponsor.

CHANCE

Oh, yes! Good timing. While we're  
paused here, we would be remiss if  
we did not mention our sponsor for  
this tour.

ASPEN

Absolutely.

CHANCE

(enthusiastically)

Guys! We would not be here tonight,  
if it was not for them. So we want  
to thank Smuckers.

ASPEN

Thank you Smuckers!

CHANCE

75 dollars to help us with the  
tour. Really means a lot. I'm not  
sure what they do, to be honest.

ASPEN

But they provide us money, which we  
need now.

CHANCE

Yes, has anyone heard of Gene  
Planderman? He wasn't at the studio  
here in Nashville, so we're really  
dependent on this Smuckers  
sponsorship to get us to New York.

The audience doesn't know how to react to odd information.

JUMP TO:

INT. KENTUCKY SLEEPY INN MOTEL - NIGHT

Aspen and Chance walk into their room, putting down their luggage.

ASPEN  
This is pretty nice.

CHANCE  
Best part of hotels is the first  
jump on the bed.

Chance belly flops onto the bed.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Woo! Little stiff. But still  
classic fun.

Aspen then belly flops onto his bed.

ASPEN  
Hello, Kentucky!

Aspen lands **jarringly hard**. Like hitting a stub in a wall.

ASPEN (CONT'D)  
Oh, jeez...

He winces, grabbing his stomach.

CHANCE  
Wow, you all right? Like I said,  
it's a little stiff.

Aspen pouts and holds back tears, like a 9 year boy.

ASPEN  
Gosh.  
(wobbly crying voice)  
Mine was like messed up or  
something.

Then, we hear a LOUD MAN and a LOUDER MAN with muffled voices from the next door hotel room.

Chance is giddy to eavesdrop.

CHANCE  
Ooh, Aspen, listen.

Aspen brightens up and joins Chance in pointing his ear to the wall.

LOUDER MAN (O.S.)  
 You said you were gonna bring the  
 snacks and beverages inside.

LOUD MAN (O.S.)  
 I thought you said to leave them in  
 the car?

LOUDER MAN (O.S.)  
 Why would I want to leave cold soda  
 and sandwich meat in the back of  
 the car?

Chance and Aspen look at each other open-mouthed with  
 bewilderment--

Then they burry their heads in their pillows laughing like  
 little boys.

LOUD MAN (O.S.)  
 I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

LOUDER MAN (O.S.)  
 You're terrible at your job. I only  
 brought you along because you're  
 cousins with my Carol. Otherwise  
 you'd dead by now.

Chance and Aspen, once again, are open-mouthed with  
 bewilderment, then bury their heads in pillow, laughing.

LOUD MAN (O.S.)  
 What am I supposed to do. You're an  
 unstable guy to work for.

LOUDER MAN (O.S.)  
 You know what? I change my mind.  
 This is the end of the line. I'm  
 giving you a two hour head start  
 and then I'm sending my boys after  
 you.

LOUD MAN (O.S.)  
 (scared for his life)  
 No, God. Please, no! Don't do this.

LOUDER MAN (O.S.)  
 I'd leave now, or your life will be  
 over by sunrise.

LOUD MAN (O.S.)  
 (scream crying)  
 Oh God, no!

We hear the other hotel room door open and shut loudly.

Chance and Aspen give the same fun-loving look of bewilderment and laugh even harder into their pillows.

They blissfully fall to their backs on the beds. Arms relaxed behind their heads, happily pondering above.

CHANCE

We're actually gonna make it,  
Aspen. Look at us, we're so close.  
Once we get the narrator, it'll  
kick into high gear for us.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTA, GEORGIA - JOHN'S LAUGH PALACE - NIGHT

To a standard next-to-nothing-sized crowd, Aspen holds a ball cap with papers inside.

CHANCE

So now, our favorite improv game.  
Dale back there has cut out all the  
headlines from the local newspaper  
and you guys in the audience will  
grab one for us to do and we'll  
create a improv scene from it.

ASPEN

We have not seen these before.

CHANCE

No, this will be the first time  
hearing these. So Aspen, go find a  
nice gent or lady to pick one out.  
Once again, News Headlines!

Aspen brings the ball cap down to a SHORT WOMAN who begrudgingly pulls a headline out and reads it:

SHORT WOMAN

Train crashes on the coast of  
Nigeria killing over 300 on board.

Aspen and Chance look at each other a little worried.

CHANCE

Oh boy. Um. Little dismal. Let's  
pick another one.



ASPEN

Yeah! Pick another one. News  
Headlines!

She grabs a new one.

SHORT WOMAN

Watch this leaked footage of nearby  
Atlanta corporation slaughtering  
puppies to sell in fur trade.

Chance and Aspen THROW their arms up, fed up.

CHANCE

Dale!

ASPEN

Not the best, Dale.

CHANCE

Dale, did you even look over these  
suggestions before you put them in  
there? We can't work with that.

The crowd sits non-responsive.

Aspen shuffles through the ball cap.

ASPEN

Let's see, is there any more? Yeah  
there's one more. News Headlines!

CHANCE

News Headlines!

She grabs the last paper.

SHORT WOMAN

Mother drowns her six babies in  
pool, while grandfather watches.

Chance and Aspen look at each other... considering.

CHANCE

Well... I guess we can try that.

ASPEN

Yeah, okay. At least try.

Chance mimes strangling a baby near Aspen.

CHANCE

I'm gonna kill you bab-- you're  
gonna drown--

(MORE)

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 (interrupting)  
 No. God this is terrible.

He gives the no-go cut symbol to his neck.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Dale!

ASPEN  
 That wasn't good, Dale.

CHANCE  
 You gotta vet the headlines, so  
 we're not stuck in this mess!

ASPEN  
 You probably shouldn't have let  
 Dale control that at all.

JUMP TO:

INT. ATLANTA, GEORGIA - MOTEL - NIGHT

Aspen and Chance are talking on their phones. Chance sitting  
 on toilet. Aspen standing outside hotel door.

We JUMP back and forth between them.

CHANCE  
 Yeah, mom. I'm making sure to save  
 money. Aspen's dad gave us free  
 mugs to sell. We're really close to  
 New York, so that's pretty cool.

JUMP TO:

We hear Aspen's CAMP COUNSELOR on phone.

ASPEN  
 Yes, my socks are packed. But yeah,  
 I actually got a commercial agent  
 that's interested in me.

CAMP COUNSELOR  
 Are you a star yet, Penguin? You  
 were the most entertaining guy at  
 camp. Everyone loved Penguin!

ASPEN  
 Jeez, they loved you too... Mr.  
 Best Camp Counselor Ever.

JUMP TO:

Chance speaks with a sincere heartfelt voice, for once.

CHANCE

Oh, you got promoted at the school?  
That's great.

(listening)

Yes mom, I am. I'm proud of you.

JUMP TO:

ASPEN

So things are decent, I guess. Kind  
of just doing the same show with  
Chance.

CAMP COUNSELOR

How are you not a star yet,  
Penguin? You should just go full  
throttle with that movie producer.  
He'll get you seen by everyone!

ASPEN

Hmm. Probably.

INT. COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA - GIGGLE HOUSE - NIGHT

A large white projection screen hangs behind Chance and Aspen  
on stage.

ASPEN

(to audience)

Let's get a song suggestion. Any  
song you can think of.

QUIET VOICE

Macarena.

CHANCE

Ah. Okay. Not a good song, but fun  
dance, I guess.

The audience member looks confused by Chance insulting her  
suggestion.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Before we move on, though. Once  
again, we would be remiss if we did  
not keep mentioning our sponsor  
Smuckers.

ASPEN

Absolutely. Lotta great things  
going on with them.

CHANCE

We actually brought a little graphic to put on screen here about some Smuckers products you'll like.

Nothing appears on the projector.

ASPEN

Dale?

CHANCE

Dale, the picture, so they can see it. He forgot the USB didn't he? God. Well, anyway, thank you Smuckers. \$75 to put on this tour.

They walk back to their spots on stage.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Well, technically \$55...

(to Aspen)

And Aspen, I didn't tell you this, but after we met with them at McDonalds. The Smuckers people at McDonalds in LA?

ASPEN

Right.

CHANCE

(annoyed)

They charged us for the McDonalds.

ASPEN

They charged us for their McDonalds?

CHANCE

No, they made us pay for our McDonalds. I thought it was courtesy meal. It was 20 bucks. So it's like \$55 all together.

(beat)

Anyway. Thank you Smuckers, now let's continue on with your suggestion.

They prepare to act out the scene in character.

ASPEN

(looking lost)

Hello there.

CHANCE  
 Hi. What was the um--  
 (thinking)  
 What was the suggestion?

ASPEN  
 Shoot.

The audience sits silent, not helping out.

CHANCE  
 Oh, Reagan!

ASPEN  
 Reagan! That's it.

CHANCE  
 Here we go with Reagan!

They walk to opposite sides and start scene as characters.

Then--

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.

ASPEN  
 Garr, matey. I'm Dave the Pirate.

Chance stops in frustration.

CHANCE  
 No.

ASPEN  
 And you be walking off ye plank--

Chance **jarringly** switches out-of-character.

CHANCE  
 Stop it.

Silence.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Stop it.

ASPEN  
 What?

CHANCE  
 It's the third time. Just do  
 something else.

Chance gets back in Reagan. Aspen looks agitated.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

We need to tear down the German wall.

Aspen interrupts--

ASPEN

Oh, would you look at that. Reagan's dying.

CHANCE

What? No, no, if I was dying it would be like Alzheimer's in the future or something.

ASPEN

Nope. It's now. Reagan is dying. Reagan is dead.

CHANCE

No, I'm not dying.  
(faking shock)  
But oh my God! You have cancer. So now you're dead.

ASPEN

No, I took the cancer away and threw it on you, so now you're dying.

CHANCE

No, you can't take off cancer.

ASPEN

You're dying!

CHANCE

Well I have poison and now you're dead.

Chance aggressively fakes pouring poison down Aspen's throat. Aspen tries to fight it off.

ASPEN

No, I spit it out. And now you're dying.

CHANCE

A couple drops still stayed in there.

ASPEN

No.

CHANCE

Yes, a couple drops still stayed  
down your throat. You're dead.

Aspen starts to give in.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

You're dead. Get down.

Chance motions for Aspen to get down on the ground dead.  
Aspen lowers his head in disappointment and lays flat on the  
ground motionless.

Chance gets back into Reagan character.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Mr. Gorbachev. Oh no, he's dead. Oh  
God, he's dead.

He circles around Aspen's open-eyed body, awkwardly  
pretending to look like he's holding back a cry.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Oh God. He's dead.

Aspen quickly stands up to just end it, giving the "X" arms.

ASPEN

Off the Cuff.

CHANCE

(uninspired)

Off the Cuff. All right. It's good  
to end it with the deadliness, I  
guess. Shows we got balls.

INT. SOUTH CAROLINA HOTEL - NIGHT

Aspen and Chance lay still in their beds under the covers --  
turned opposite ways.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Sometimes the search for  
fulfillment leads to disappointment  
from high expectations. Aspen with  
his impressionable desperation and  
Chance with--

(sounding tired, drifting)

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Chance with his blinding arrogance--  
 separating two everyday people--  
 everyday people...

Seemingly falling asleep, the Narrator stops and we FADE TO:

WHITE

"Question" by Moody Blues faintly crescendos.

-- An opening of clouds.

-- A beam of light flashing over the solar system.

-- The ocean of Earth.

-- The beam of light hits on a surreal and faded FLASHBACK of a boy and man sitting on a small sailboat.

-- Both ends of the ocean curl into the sailboat? Enveloping the boy and man, like the wrapping of a present.

-- Then, LIGHT FLASHES, separating the water from the boat like the parting of the red sea.

-- Pearly Gates. A Garden. Clowns. Christmas Trees. The song "Christmas Means to Me" by Stevie Wonder.

-- FADING back into the Pearly Gates, we see Earth distantly leaving from view as the ocean tides flop on the planet.

SMASH TO:

BACK TO HOTEL

Startled, Chance JUMPS up from his bed.

ASPEN  
 What?

CHANCE  
 I think the narrator of this movie had a dream or vision, like cool sequence thing.

ASPEN  
 Eh, I was almost asleep, Chance...

CUT TO:



INT. NORTH CAROLINA - DIVIDE AND CONQUER COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Chance stands by himself on-stage, speaking to the six audience members.

CHANCE

So now we're entering into what we call, "Off the Cuff Intermission." Aspen and I both have our own individual acts we've prepared for you lovely audience. I'll go second, but first...

Aspen walks on stage with an orange monster puppet, and pulls up a chair.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Aspen has been taking ventriloquist lessons and wants to show you what he's got tonight, with an act he likes to call "The Big Trump Joke!"

ASPEN

All right.

CHANCE

(chuckling)

Now, I have never seen this. So this is just as new to me as you folks.

Chance walks to the back of the stage, with his back against the wall, watching from a distance at lone Aspen.

ASPEN

Hello. This is the big Trump joke. Really big nowadays. And I'm lucky enough to actually have him here tonight.

Aspen has one arm inside the PUPPET and the other arm using a stick to control the puppet hands.

He does a pretty spot-on Trump impression, but with his mouth WAY too wide and toothy. Clearly not good at hiding that he's the one talking.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

(Trump voice)

We're gonna build a wall. Twitter is what I do. Muslims.

(beat)

Orange.

Aspen pretends to agree with Trump puppet.

ASPEN (CONT'D)  
I see. What do you think's about  
Trump tower and all that?

Aspen looks dumbfounded, deer in the headlights, at the audience. He seemingly blanked on the next line.

ASPEN (CONT'D)  
Um...

Chance quietly gives a voice of warning and disappointment.

CHANCE  
Aspen... you said you practiced.

ASPEN  
I did. I did. Sorry. Say Trump!  
What about your wife, Melania?  
She's the first lady, right?

Aspen forgets line again. Same frightened nervous face.

Silence.

CHANCE  
Come... on...

Aspen snaps himself out of it.

ASPEN  
Okay. I've got it now. Here we go.  
Um. Trump, you have a Vice  
President named Mike Pence. How has  
he helped with the White House and  
laws?  
(Trump voice)  
I uh... he, uh...

He slowly shakes his head, realizing he can't remember.

CHANCE  
(fed up)  
All right. All right. Is that it?  
Is this done?

Aspen gets up and walks off stage, disappointed.

ASPEN  
Yeah, I'll just stop.

Chance walks to center stage.

CHANCE

All right, clearly Aspen has some work to do on that. He promised he had it down, but that obviously was very disorganized. Nonetheless, I'm gonna bring BACK the energy with a little bit of dance.

Dance music plays through speakers.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

When I was a young teenager in Missouri, a man on the street walked up to me and said, "hey you should take dance lessons at this studio that I now about."

He gives a look of proud surprise to the audience.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Wow. He recognized something in me.

(beat)

So for the mere cost of \$730 a session... I became a master of the art of choreography and dance. So, now years later, I will perform for you tonight.

A DANCE SONG hits full climax as Chance awkwardly LUMBERS and PRANCES across the stage, with a long red ribbon in hand, in a fury of flashing stage lights and overly-passionate dance.

The audience watches with closed mouths.

CUT TO:

BACKSTAGE GREENROOM

Aspen packs his Trump puppet into his duffel-bag, as Chance dashes in the room from the stage, after his dance.

CHANCE

What the heck was that up there, Aspen? You're sandbagging us. I had to save our butts out there.

Chance puts his ribbon in his back pocket and puts on his leather jacket.

ASPEN

I don't think this is what I should be doing, man.

CHANCE  
What do you mean?

ASPEN  
Off the Cuff. It might not be my thing. I just don't feel like doing it, sometimes.

CHANCE  
Well, that's why I'm here. I'll give you a little nudge every show to make sure you keep up.

ASPEN  
I don't know. I don't know. I called that producer that gave me a card...

Chance interrupts with a voice of worry and frustration.

CHANCE  
Yes, and?

ASPEN  
And he promised a main character in the movie their making, if I meet with her this weekend.

CHANCE  
This weekend?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
The jarring nature of hearing what you don't want, always leads to desperation and inconsideration. Like when parents divorce in what seemed like a perfect 1950s family.

-- OUR ENVIRONMENT CHANGES into humble black and white 1950s. Like we're in a Billy Wilder movie. Everything changes in the room EXCEPT Aspen and Chance.

CHANCE  
You realize we're right in the middle of our tour that we've worked tirelessly on and I've invested a lot into. Not to mention, we're this close to finally GETTING the narrator.

ASPEN  
I don't know, this seems like the better option now. Getting the narrator doesn't seem real.

CHANCE

So you're just going to leave for some random producer, and be like the bad character in this scenario for bailing on me?

ASPEN

I talked to my dad, and he said I should do the producer movie thing.

CHANCE

Oh great. I'm glad you're dad chimed in. He knows all about the strategy to become a comedy star...  
WORKING IN MUG SALES!

ASPEN

He's not in mug sales. He owns a custom print shop.

CHANCE

You realize I can just as easily, if not easier, do Off the Cuff by myself, right?

ASPEN

(relieved)

Okay, whew. Good. Perfect. That works for everybody, then.

CHANCE

No, I meant that in a way that would make you change your mind. Listen! If we can just get the narrator. I can take care of the rest and we WILL have a TV show.

ASPEN

I don't know.

EXT. NORTH CAROLINA MOTEL - LATER

Chance and Aspen walk up the motel steps, rolling their luggage. Silently.

With each step, their suitcases flop and twist off the wheels. Forcing them to awkwardly flip them back onto their wheels so they can roll.

They turn for the second set of steps. FLOP and TWIST go the suitcases. Frustratingly so, they keep positioning them back into place.

They turn for the third set of steps. FLOP. TWIST. FLIP.  
REPOSITION. FLOP. TWIST. REPOSITION.

Finally they reach top level and look at each other.

CHANCE

All right.

ASPEN

All right.

Rolling their suitcases, they walk **separate** directions out of frame.

INT. WASHINGTON D.C. - CAPITOL UNDERGROUND LAUGH CLUB - NIGHT

Six audience members wait patiently looking at a dark empty stage in the small intimate theater.

Then, we hear Chance's voice over theater speakers:

CHANCE (V.O.)

God said let there be light, then boom bam life. He made the planets and the stars and then in the year 1990 made one more star. A man who would soon make a difference in the comedy world, with the help of his touring tech guy Dale can now present the story of his world famous celebrated celebrity li-- celebrated celebrity life. Bleh, sorry that's a tongue twister. Ladies and gentlemen put your hands together and hold your applause for the man who's done it all. The one, the only, Mr--

The lights FLASH on stage. The side TV's display his name: "Chance Kantor" popping on screen.

INTRO MUSIC plays, as Chance (wearing a large scarf around his neck, a leather jacket, and sunglasses) walks around stage clapping his hands RIGHT in front of the audience.

CHANCE

Welcome, my name--

The music still blaring, Chance gives the cut signal.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Dale, please don't do this to me.

The music shuts off.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Welcome. My name is Chance Kantor.  
Tonight is the story of world-  
renowned comedian Chance Kantor. I  
am Chance Kantor... and once, again  
my name is Chance Kantor.

A single stage light is BEAMING right in an audience person's face. So blinding, she has to use her hand to block it.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

You probably recognize me from the famous improv duo called "Off the Cuff." That was with my partner, Aspen Wells. FORMER partner, I should say. He has left us. And it is just me. We were actually just on a huge INTERNATIONAL tour on route to New York so that we could get somebody. As any young men would do. Unfortunately, Aspen decided he wanted to sell out and do a movie. So he's in Carolina going down that path and apparently learning the art of dog breeding for the role.

Most of the audience members scratch the back of their heads in apparent misunderstanding as to the point of this speech.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

But alas, I am actually better and stronger, as a comedian, by myself. My life is just being a comedian. I don't need a guy next to me going, "uh, uh, yes and" -- NOPE!

The audience person with light in her eyes, waves her arms towards the back of the room, hoping for a tech guy, Dale, to shut off the light.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to show you guys every step of my life that got me where I am today as a successful comedian. Just me and my scarf. No partner.

Chance stops in his tracks.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Gotchya. Just kidding. I don't wear  
 a freaking scarf!

Chance takes off the scarf and attempts to toss it into the audience, but it barely goes 3 inches and it floats back onto his shoe.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 I'm just kidding. But that's the  
 point of tonight.  
 (beat)  
 I'm just kidding. I've been kidding  
 my whole life. And you guys will  
 get to see firsthand, all the  
 awesome decisions, I made, that  
 brought me here.

Chance awkwardly adjusts the crotch of his pants.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 God sake, my underwear is riding up  
 the seat of my pants. You know  
 what? There's a little introduction  
 video I made for you guys to watch.  
 I'm going to change real quick.  
 I'll be right back.

Chance grabs the belt loops of his pants and sprints off stage.

The lights turn off and the two side video displays TURN ON.

ON THE SIDE THEATER TV'S: Chance, wearing the same outfit he's wearing on stage-- appears on-screen, turning on his camera in a hotel room. There's a long pause in the video, as he clicks the record button, fixes his hair and sunglasses, and then takes a breath.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Enjoy the story of Chance Kantor,  
 without Aspen. Just Chance--

We hear a door slam in the background.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Dale! I'm filming something...  
 (more noises)  
 I'm filming something...  
 ...Just Chance. Doing great. I even  
 have a gig at the Kirkland  
 Elementary School, down the road,  
 if you guys are looking for a good  
 time tomorrow afternoon.



He begins to click off the camera, but before he does:

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Dale, I told you I was recording.

SMASH TO:

INT. NORTH CAROLINA - FILM STUDIO ROOM - DAY

Camera men look over at Aspen in happy surprise.

CAMERA MAN  
Happy to see you, Aspen! Take a  
step in front of the white screen.

Aspen stands straight among a large white screen with lights  
enveloping his body.

MOVIE PRODUCER  
You're gonna kill it, man.

CAMERA MAN  
Can you just give me a quick smile?  
Nothing extra. Just like you'd do  
for a triumphant movie close-up.

ASPEN  
Sure.

He smiles gently. A bunch of camera flashes FLURRY.

CAMERA MAN  
Great! Keep that! This is so great!

MOVIE PRODUCER  
You're already awesome, Aspen.

He keeps uncertainly maneuvering his body, trying different  
smile looks for the camera.

CAMERA MAN  
Seriously, you're going to rock  
this movie, just from these  
pictures. Awesome job.

MOVIE PRODUCER  
Everybody's loving you here, Aspen.

The crew members in the studio chime in:

CREW MEMBERS  
 You're awesome Aspen!/  
 Keep working it Aspen!/  
 Aspen, you're my idol! Seriously!

Aspen smiles for the cameras with a twinkle in his eye from pure ecstasy of the loving acclaim.

He clearly feels like a Hollywood movie star!

SMASH TO:

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Chance sits Indian-style on an assembly floor, WEDGED IN-BETWEEN two 2nd grade kids who are jokingly wiping boogers on each other's light-up tennis shoes.

At the front of the crowded cafeteria-turned-assembly room of elementary kids, a teacher stands next to TWO BOYS dressed as cops, reading from a paper into a microphone.

TWO BOYS  
 (unison)  
 Cops are people working day and  
 nights. Protect the streets from  
 theft and fights. Donuts and badges  
 and blue outfits...

As the Two Boys continue with their speech, Chance nudges the Boy sitting next to him on the floor.

CHANCE  
 Can you please scoot your feet over  
 a bit? I'm a big guy.

BOY  
 It's usually someone our age that  
 sits in that spot next to me.

CHANCE  
 I'm sure there usually is. I'm just  
 saying, you guys are bumping into  
 me a lot.

BOY  
 We usually don't bump, because  
 there's someone our age that sits  
 in that spot next to me.

CHANCE  
 (nonchalant)  
 I understand.

At the front, the Two Boys finish their speech and walk away, as the TEACHER claps and walks to the microphone.

TEACHER

Thank you. Let's give Robbie and Kaden a hand for doing their career project on police officers. Well, now boys and girls, we have a special guest who is a funny guy that will really make everyone laugh. Show your manners and clap together for our Kirkland Elementary guest... Chance *Kanton*.

Chance awkwardly unfolds his legs and tries to position himself up from the floor, stepping on the boy's foot.

BOY

Ow!

CHANCE

Sorry. Sorry.

He slightly jogs to the front and shakes the Teacher's hand.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Thank you, miss.

He grabs the microphone from the stand and paces back-and-forth like a stand-up comedian.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

How's everyone doing?

The assembly kids scream altogether--

But then murmur uncontrollably to each other. It's now a ruckus of restless kids laughing and talking to each other.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Um. Just a second. Let me talk.

All the SCHOOL TEACHERS **shush** and **yell** at the kids.

SCHOOL TEACHERS

Everyone quiet! Stop talking this instant. Respect our guest.

The kids, slowly but surely, quiet down. Chance is maladaptive and continues to pace around.

CHANCE

What a day, huh? The weather today. Good god, it's crazy sometimes.

A girl wearing a pink "Moana" shirt sneezes.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

How about this. You ever notice how every freaking woman responds to your compliment about their outfit, with the place that they bought it and how much it cost.

A Teacher winces with his jarring attitude, as Chance mimes a fake conversation.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Hey, I like your blouse!

(as another woman)

25 dollars at Kohls.

(back to first person)

Oh you know what? Now it's kind of lost its allure. I imagined that you hand stitched it this morning. SHUT UP about where you bought it!

(chuckling)

Women...

The kids sit silent.

BACK TO NORTH CAROLINA FILM STUDIO

Aspen is still taking photos in the studio. Camera's flashing all around.

MOVIE PRODUCER

You're really rocking it, Aspen.

ASPEN

Thank you. When do I start my first scene or meet with the other performers? I really think I do characters like Jim Carrey and others, if the movie is a comedy.

MOVIE PRODUCER

We're actually going down a different route in how we use you for the film -- to really ride the gravy train.

ASPEN

I don't know that phrase.

MOVIE PRODUCER

You're gonna be big in an even better way.

ASPEN  
Better than Jim Carrey?

MOVIE PRODUCER  
Well look, you're not a funny guy.  
That's not your thing.

ASPEN  
Wow. Okay.

MOVIE PRODUCER  
Just keep taking these pictures for  
the director. We're going to make  
you a whole new kind of Hollywood  
star. You don't need to be funny.

Aspen squints his eyes from hearing that out-of-nowhere  
information... but also because of the camera flashes.

INT. BOSTON BUILDING - SMALL OFFICE - DAY

Three executives sit at a table, as Chance stands in front  
holding his script.

CHANCE  
There's flexibility with the  
script, right? I can make it my  
own?

EXECUTIVE  
If you want to expand a little bit  
to make it natural, yes.

CHANCE  
Great.

Chance takes a breath. Then looks up intensely, not even  
using the script.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Sometimes you feel like a nut.  
Sometimes you don't. Almond Joy's  
have nuts. Mounds don't.

He starts pacing back and forth, staring over-dramatically  
across the room.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Where's my almond joy, Papa? I want  
my almond joy, Papa!

Chance is now frantically yelling and throwing chairs.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Where's it at, Papa! You said, if  
mowed the lawn I get a treat! Well  
guess what I want? -- I WANT AN  
ALMOND JOY. Not a Mounds bar!

He pauses for effect.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

I'm an almond joy boy! Not a mounds  
clown!

He pauses again.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

I'm an almond joy boy! Not a mounds  
clown!

The executives stare down at their papers, their chins  
resting on their hands.

Chance throws another chair.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Where's my almond joy, papa! I'm  
freaking hungry. I barely even had  
dinner.

One last pause. He slows down and speaks softly:

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Sometimes you feel like a nut.  
Sometimes you don't.

Chance takes a bow.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Aspen slowly glides across monkey bars, with a forced half-  
smile, as a film crew shoots him on set with no other actors.  
MOVIE PRODUCER stands intently by.

MOVIE PRODUCER

Can you believe you had no real  
goals or plans a couple days ago,  
and now you're getting captured in  
all kinds of places for the world.

ASPEN

I guess. Chance and I were going to  
get the narrator of this movie, he  
was hearing. But this is good too.

## MOVIE PRODUCER

More than good, Aspen. Narrator's are tomorrow's problem. No need to get them.

## NARRATOR (V.O.)

Need... is fleeting. Ever-changing. A constant life-long coming of age that starts with the age of coming to know true human connection.

## FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

Through a vignette of sunlight and faded film.

7 YEAR-OLD ASPEN...

With another LITTLE BOY in his childhood LIVING ROOM:

## LITTLE BOY

I love this glass eagle. It's so cool!

The Little Boy picks up the glass eagle.

## ASPEN

(trying to be nice)  
You can have it, if you want.

## LITTLE BOY

Awesome! This nutcracker thing is really cool too. They actually crack big nuts, that's so helpful!

Aspen grabs and hands him that, too.

## ASPEN

You can have it, if you want.

Then, ASPEN'S MOTHER walks up to them, annoyed.

## ASPEN'S MOTHER

Aspen! Stop giving people our personal house items.

FLASH TO:

## SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

On the kickball asphalt, boys and girls run around the painted bases.

A YOUNG CHANCE tries to dive towards a base, but falls WAY short, right on his stomach. He jarringly holds back a pout.

A fellow student KICKBALLER walks up to Chance.

KICKBALLER

That looked like it hurt like a damn shit.

YOUNG CHANCE

I'll be fine. I just tripped.

KICKBALLER

It hurt like a damn shit, right?

YOUNG CHANCE

A little bit.

KICKBALLER

You don't even cuss, do you Chance?

YOUNG CHANCE

Oh, yeah, I do. I'm just not now.

KICKBALLER

Do it.

(intensely with friends)

Cuss right now.

YOUNG CHANCE

Damn... shit.

KICKBALLER

All right, whatever. You guys lost, so we get to use the CD player.

Kickballer flips on the small round CD player and "Who Let the Dogs Out" by The Baha Men plays.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. PHILADELPHIA AIRPORT - DAY

Chance runs up frantically to a --

KIOSK

An AIRPORT WOMAN stands typing on a computer.

CHANCE

I need a flight right now! The first one to New York! I came all the way across the country.

(MORE)



CHANCE (CONT'D)

I have no money. My mom angrily gave me her flyer miles and this is my only chance to get the narrator. I need to get the narrator!

The Airport Woman slowly picks up a couple charging wires.

AIRPORT WOMAN

I just sell portable battery packs.

CHANCE

Oh... Where's the ticket place?

AIRPORT WOMAN

Over there, in front of that line.

Chance looks left, where the ticket place is 9ft over.

The long line weaves and curls to the ticket booth.

Chance casually cuts in front of the ticket booth line. Conversationally talking to the TICKET MAN.

CHANCE

Did you hear what I was saying to her back there?

TICKET MAN

No, I'm busy over here. What did you say?

CHANCE

I'm, um... getting the narrator of this movie and need a flight.

TICKET MAN

Look, there's an extremely long hectic line that you're budging.

A RANDOM PERSON in line shouts out.

RANDOM PERSON

Yeah, we've been standing for hours and there's barely any air in here! It's hot!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

There's a world where you could just relax and go home. 'Ole Kansas City. Your family wants that.

CHANCE

(yelling aloud)

Everybody! I'm trying to get a guy!  
(MORE)

CHANCE (CONT'D)

The narrator of this movie. He's sandbagging my every move. This is my only way to New York to get him!

RANDOM PERSON

Not literally the only way.

CHANCE

Well... basically.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - AFTERNOON

**Christmastime!**

Ice skating and New York holiday whimsy.

"Modern Love" by David Bowie plays.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The end of a journey seems unreachable until it's reached. Precisely because we cannot predict the moment, we must be ready at all moments.. And Chance clearly isn't.

Pulled in on a RICKSHAW, Chance sits in the back, before coming to a stop and standing to look at the sky.

CHANCE

Clarence, I want to live again...  
I want to get again.  
(heroic beat)  
Get you!

Chance runs into a building --

ELECTRONIC AARDVARK STUDIOS

NARRATOR (V.O.)

High expectations without caution can lead to rejection.

Chance bulldozes past the lone 90 year-old SECURITY GUARD.

SECURITY GUARD

Excuse me. It's okay to go inside. You just need to tell me and I'll ring them up.

CHANCE  
 (overly aggressive)  
 Not today! I'm gettin' him.

Chance hops over a table that *wasn't even in his way*.

SECURITY GUARD  
 Okay. I'll ring them up for you.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Chance flies through the multiple  
 stories of Electronic Aardvark  
 Studios. A comedic dream blinding  
 his fruitless scheme.

The elevator opens on the 10th floor.

Chance frantically sprints across the hallways, trying to  
 read the room names signs.

CHANCE  
 No... no... narrator... come on.

He stops ABRUPTLY at a glass wall. With a glass door leading  
 to an office annex.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 No. No!

He desperately feels his hands all over the glass, looking  
 for any kind of entry.

Finally, he bends down to pull up the bottom of the door?

Is he trying to flip it upside-down like the Price is Right  
 wheel?

As he keeps trying to upturn it from the bottom, the door  
 SWINGS OPEN NORMALLY with his every pull...

...he could just simply open the door.

Finally, with a hard upward YANK -- the bottom of the door  
 SHATTERS and Chance somersaults underneath the broken glass.

The climax of Bowie's Modern Love -- "*BUT I TRY. I TRY.*"

Chance rushes through the annex to a lobby of 7 office doors.

ONE BY ONE Chance goes to each office door and strongly  
 jostles the knobs to find the one unlocked.

At the same time, the lobby TV above him shows a TV NEWSWOMAN  
 headlining a story with b-roll of a smoky airport.

TV NEWSWOMAN (ON TV)

Maintenance malfunctions in multiple Philadelphia jet airliners today have forced many passengers on board Flight 737 to JFK exposed to near lethal fumes and sequestered in a local airport to prevent an deadly occurrences.

Chance finally gets to the final 2 doors. Jostling the knobs violently.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Before the final downfall is arrogance. But in the wake of honor is humility.

Chance BREAKS THROUGH the last unlocked door into --

SMALL AUDIO STUDIO

Standing in front of a microphone, behind the glass --

THE NARRATOR

GENE PLANDERMAN. A 45 year-old man with a large yellow sweater, glasses, and a bald spot.

By the large audio mixer rig, is the AUDIO ENGINEER.

AUDIO ENGINEER

Whoops. Gene, let's do that again. You said arrogance. It's ignorance.

Chance stares blankly. SHOCKED.

The video of Chance running into the studio (that we just witnessed) pauses in a still on the VIDEO PLAYBACK SCREEN.

CHANCE

What is this? That's the narrator, right? Gene Planderman?

AUDIO ENGINEER

I mean yeah. But wait 'til we record the line cleanly this time.

Chance blasts through the BOOTH DOOR to the Narrator.

CHANCE

I'm here. I did it. I'm here to get you.

GENE PLANDERMAN

It's just for entertainment, man.  
Of course if some art came from it,  
that'd be quite the happy accident.

CHANCE

Just stop it all. The stupid weird  
meta style of telling my story is  
just ruining everything.  
Everything. Including my comedy  
career I've dreamed my whole life.

The Audio Engineer casually walks in to break the tension.

AUDIO ENGINEER

Look Chance, he's just a guy that  
makes scale doing voice over work.

CHANCE

What if I get him?

GENE PLANDERMAN

I would need a script, if you  
wanted to try.

The Narrator coughs heavily.

GENE PLANDERMAN (CONT'D)

God sakes, I have been hankering  
for a lozenge all day.

He pulls a lozenge out of his sweater pocket.

CHANCE

So you're just a guy that makes  
scale doing voice over work?

AUDIO ENGINEER

Let's just cut for lunch if we're  
gonna chitchat about stuff.

CHANCE

I came all the way from Los Angeles  
across the country to New York. A  
life journey that started in my  
childhood home in Mount Vernon,  
Missouri. I'm in the same career  
spot as a freshman college boy.

Gene Planderman scratches his ankle and then reacts:

GENE PLANDERMAN

Don't overthink it, man. This whole sequence we're doing right now is going to be boring and exhaustive. Like the part of the story where I would just start talking to my wife about whether or not we should put the wreath back in the garage.

CHANCE

God. You're just a guy who makes scale doing voice over work.

GENE PLANDERMAN

Okay! Umm... there's a charity show at the Main Street Theatre that my musician friend's Luke and Torey were going to perform, but got stuck in the Philly airport mess.

In excited response, Chance glances over at the Audio Engineer... who's just slowly putting Splenda in his tea.

JUMP TO:

MAIN STREET THEATRE - LATER

Banners and streamers decorate the theater and stage for the large viewing audience. The crowd is mostly posh.

A sign in the back of the stage reads "3rd Annual Compassion International Charity Ball"

On stage, ACROBATS balance on a hula hoop using only their finger as they roll past each other in choreographed whimsy.

A THEATER OWNER standing on the side stage, happily clapping her hands along the entertainment, gets interrupted by a stage worker.

The worker desperately hands her a NOTE.

She reads, then looks at the worker with FEARFUL HORROR.

JUMP TO:

NEW YORK SIDEWALKS

Past a busy New York City street, Chance stands upright in a rickshaw, as he's pulled IN A RUSH.

A stopped crosswalk -- Chance HURRIEDLY jumps off the rickshaw and slows down his pace to do the courtesy "fast walk with exaggerated moving arms" through the crosswalk.

As he reaches the end of the crosswalk and continues to run, he spots to his left -- SAMANTHA, with a group of girls.

CHANCE

Samantha? What are you doing here?

SAMANTHA

This is where I actually live, Chance.

CHANCE

Okay. I'm glad I ran into you when the population of New York is well over 8 million. I was getting the narrator.

SAMANTHA

Is that where you're going?

CHANCE

No.

(angry)

He's just a guy that makes scale doing voice over work.

SAMANTHA

Well I'm here with my girls to meet my boyfriend. I just wanted to hook-up with Aspen or something. I was a little woozy from Nyquil that night in Texas.

CHANCE

Well, you can see basically the same performance if you drive me to the Main Street Theatre for a show opportunity I'll be headlining.

SAMANTHA

You're not good at comedy, Chance. Like you're not actually funny.

CHANCE

What?

SAMANTHA

Maybe you should get the Narrator and change everything about your goals.

CHANCE

He's a guy that makes scale doing voice over work! You made it seem like you were falling for me.

She laughs with her group of girls.

SAMANTHA

I'm with someone. But I support you.

CHANCE

This all seems so **extra!** I was going to let you act in my pilot. You were flirting at our show.

Samantha and the group sing to the song "My Boyfriend's Back" by the Angels.

SAMANTHA

*MY BOYFRIENDS BACK AND YOU'RE GOING TO BE IN TROUBLE*

GIRLS

HEY YAW/  
HEY YAW/  
MY BOYFRIEND'S BACK

Chance brushes past the group of girls and continues running.

CUT TO:

MAIN STREET THEATRE

The THEATER OWNER frantically runs back to a service desk with a SHOW PRODUCER.

She hands the Show Producer the NOTE. She reads scared.

SHOW PRODUCER

Do we think this is real? This could happen now?

THEATER OWNER

I'm not sure.

CUT TO:

NEW YORK SIDEWALKS

Chance flies in on an Uber.



CHANCE

Thank you. I can tip you on the app, right?

UBER DRIVER

Yeah.

CHANCE

Bye!

He looks to see--

MAIN STREET THEATRE

He sees a sign that reads "Performers in back entry" and then runs around to the back.

INT. MAIN STREET THEATRE - BACKSTAGE

An OLDER MAN sits on a chair, leaning his arms on his knees as he scrolls through his phone.

Chance rushes through the door.

CHANCE

Hi, I'm Chance Kantor I'm here to be a professional comedy performer.

The Older Man barely lifts his sleepy eyes from his phone.

OLDER MAN

I thought Luke and Torey were after those acrobats, or whatever.

CHANCE

The narrator of this movie said they had airplane problems and that I should be the replacement.

OLDER MAN

(unfazed)

All right. As soon as they come off you can just walk on and start.

CHANCE

Thank you!

OLDER MAN

Do you have tech?

CHANCE

My tech guy Dale took a train here couple days ago, after my almond j--

OLDER MAN

--Please, just wait at the curtain.

CHANCE

Okay!

(beat)

It's not paid... or anything,  
right?

OLDER MAN

No.

CHANCE

That's fine, that's fine.

Chance continues to side stage in preparation. He pulls out a paper from his pocket, clearing his throat for backstage mic.

AT THE FRONT OF THE THEATER

The main doors suspiciously SLAM CLOSED tight. Creating a darkness in the lobby.

BACK AT THE STAGE

The acrobats fall back onto their hoops and then bow with nice audience applause.

Chance ready's his speech for the microphone.

TO A DARK EMPTY STAGE

CHANCE (V.O.)

In the beginning, God said let  
there be light. But---

-- We hear the distant voice of OLDER MAN interrupting.

OLDER MAN

Nope. We can't use the back mics.  
Just go up and talk on stage.

The stage lights come on.

CHANCE

Okay, okay.

THEATER STAGE

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen. I am Chance  
Kantor and I am an improviser from  
the former duo "Off the Cuff."

A big THUD comes from the lobby of the theater.

The audience looks back in shock and worry.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Now as you all know, we are no longer a duo. I will be performing by myself tonight. I will certainly give you everything I have as a lone comedian providing improvised entertainment. Can I get a suggestion for a toy. What's toy you can suggest.

A preoccupied audience, continues to stare back at the lobby in curiosity. Some frantically texting on their phones.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

I think I heard Ferbies. Okay, great. Here we are. Ferbies!

Amongst a standing murmuring crowd, Chance walks to the side of the stage and takes a breath for the scene.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

(4 year-old)  
Hewoh, theyah! I want get a nice big fluffy Foybee!

Chance turns to play a both characters...

CHANCE (CONT'D)

(gruff man)  
We don't have any more of those.  
(4 year-old)  
But I wanna Foybee!

We see a glimpse of the Theater Owner through the auditorium door to the lobby run across, as he yells cautiously aloud:

THEATER OWNER

Do not shut all the doors! DO NOT shut all the doors!

The crowd reacts in audible SHOCK.

Chance obliviously continues on with his show.

CHANCE

(4 year-old)  
There has to be a Foybee, somewheyah!

Chance returns to his man character, but trips over a stage wire.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 (falling)  
 Oh, God. Dale! Did you position  
 these wires? That's a clear hazard.

Back in character.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 (gruff man)  
 Let's see if we have some ferbies  
 in the back, but oh no...  
 (proudly rationalizing)  
 There's a bunch of wire-like snakes  
 back here. Oh God!

He falls over again. This time an obviously fake fall.

On the ground he looks up at the disinterested crowd.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Crap. I know. I know. The wire  
 threw everything off. How about I  
 do a song to get things going. It's  
 usually the big music finale, but  
 we gotta bring the energy back.

The crowd continues to murmur. Some leaving their seats to inspect the lobby doors.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 (desperately worried)  
 Crap! No. No.

He rushes backstage.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 I didn't bring my instruments. Are  
 there any I can use back here!

The Older Man is no longer there.

Chance runs back on stage.

The hysteria from the audience is now so loud, we barely even hear Chance's voice.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
 Look everyone. I don't know. I  
 don't have my instruments.  
 (MORE)

CHANCE (CONT'D)

But maybe we can get another suggestion. For like a umm... a suggestion for a umm...

We hear clear VOICE come from backstage...

It's Aspen.

ASPEN

How about a toy or something.

Chance looks back in joyous amazement.

CHANCE

Aspen!

Chance runs to the back of the stage.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Holy cow. This is a moment! I actually already did toy as a suggestion, though.

ASPEN

I brought instruments, for the big music finale.

CHANCE

I think that finale is now, buddy. It's such a disastrously low energy crowd out there, and it's because they are used to seeing me and you. You and I. Off the Cuff!

Chance puts the guitar over his shoulder and tunes his guitar, as Aspen does the same with his keyboard.

They slowly go in and out of tune.

ASPEN

Are you in C sharp?

Beat. Still tuning.

CHANCE

Yeah.

CUT TO:

The Theater Owner runs on stage, past the crowd.

THEATER OWNER

Ladies and gentlemen of the audience.

(MORE)

THEATER OWNER (CONT'D)

I have some terrible news. We have received a unnamed note that there is a sniper somewhere in this theater.

She takes a scared breath, as she shakes the note for everyone to see.

THEATER OWNER (CONT'D)

It stated in the note that we must hand over all charity earnings, of 50,000 dollars, on the stage or else nobody can leave the theater. If anyone tries. Quote...

(reading note)

A sniper is waiting.

The crowd AWES in fear with various light screams.

THEATER OWNER (CONT'D)

We are of course, going to cooperate. Please no sudden movements and remain calm.

The audience is distraught with hysteria. Theatre Owner runs quickly off stage.

CUT TO:

BELOW THE STAGE

Aspen and Chance step into a large glass cube container -- that will rise from below onto the stage.

They take a breath and click the container button and attach themselves strapped to the bottom, holding them down.

ASPEN

I'm glad I'm here, Chance. You know what I mean?

CHANCE

Well, yeah. Not that scholarly of a concept, but yeah, I agree. What happened with your producer?

ASPEN

Just too many photo shoot things.

CHANCE

This whole thing we're doing right now is unexpected, isn't it?

ASPEN

What do you mean?

As the CONTAINER slowly rises, the entire thing rotates in a complete 360 circle. Upside down and back around.

CHANCE

Just this scenario we've been in recently. And now we're standing here holding instruments at a stage in New York City, even though we're from Kansas City and moved to Los Angeles.

ASPEN

I don't know. Maybe we should just keep going with this scenario.

CHANCE

Why are we here, Aspen? What's the point of any of this? Do you even know anything about my life? A whole life of stuff that happened before any of this started? Granted, I don't about yours, besides what's been told to me recently.

"Rock N' Roll Suicide" by David Bowie plays.

ASPEN

I'm sure we'll find out if we continue.

CHANCE

It feels like we haven't reached our dreams because we're constantly pretending. Instead of doing what we know we want to do in our heads, we live our lives like we're characters in some other person's stupid story. Are we just going to go up now and do this whole performance thing and just do that... thing?

ASPEN

I just want this scenario to pay off, I guess. Whatever it is, it's clearly important for me, as a person, that I depend on you for moving forward with this scenario.

CHANCE

Man. I just walk around in moments like, "Hey I'm Chance, I guess."

ASPEN

I don't know.

CHANCE

Like just look at our mouths as we talk.

He points to Aspen's mouth.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Like, sometimes it's fun and meaningful and we're people that other people think about. And sometimes it's just bleh. And we're just...

(chuckling)

Continuing on. "Hey, I'm Chance and you're Aspen. Here we go!" Right?

ASPEN

I don't know. I don't know. Just keep the scenario going. Improv. Positivity. *Yes, and.*

Chance wistfully pauses and places his hand on Aspen's shoulder.

CHANCE

*Yes, and.*

ON STAGE

The lights flash on as Chance and Aspen walk on proudly.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen of Main Street Theatre. We... are Off the Cuff!

The crowd is POUNDING on the back lobby doors. Everyone is desperately asking questions and badgering the Theater Owner.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Hey, Aspen, what time is it?

ASPEN

I'll tell you what it is...

They SING and PLAY!



CHANCE  
IT'S THE BIG MUSIC FINALE/  
IT'S THE BIG MUSIC FINALE!

                  ASPEN (CONT'D)  
IT'S THE BIG MUSIC FINALE/  
IT'S THE BIG MUSIC FINALE!

No one is paying attention.

The lights flicker in and out.

"Modern Love" plays over the theatre speakers.

                  CHANCE  
Dale!

                  ASPEN  
Dale, not the song.

                  CHANCE  
We're playing a song. So obviously  
don't turn on another song, Dale!

The crowd murmurs louder, as a POSH WOMAN yells to Owner:

                  POSH WOMAN  
What is happening?!

Chance looks over at Aspen.

                  CHANCE  
I know. I know. Dale was supposed  
to set the lights and music this  
time, so we wouldn't have to plan.  
                  (beat)  
Turn the music off and lights down,  
Dale!

The lights FLASH in and out. "Modern Love" turns ON and OFF.

                  ASPEN  
I don't think that's it.

Some of the curtains PULL OVER a little bit.

                  CHANCE  
No, not the curtains, Dale!

The main stage light BEAMS LIKE THE SUN, blinding Aspen and  
Chance in the process and revealing... on a rafter... behind  
the stage... in the top right corner...

The SNIPER.

-- He's blinded by the light

-- The mechanism on the rafter platform he is on, begins to JOLT up and down. KNOCKING the sniper off his spot.

CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Dale, stop just clicking things!  
(to Aspen)  
He always does this when he panics.

ASPEN  
I know.

The POSH WOMAN glances to see the sniper falling from his platform with the light beaming on him.

Chance's voice comes from the speakers. Audio from his previous solo show.

CHANCE (V.O.)  
Hi and welcome to the story of  
world-renowned comedian Chance  
Kantor.

Chance, on-stage, waves off Dale.

CHANCE  
No, no.  
(to Aspen)  
I did a solo version of the show  
while you were gone.

ASPEN  
I wouldn't blame you.

The rest of the THEATER HYSTERIA continues.

CHANCE  
All right!

They get their instruments ready again.

CHANCE (CONT'D)	ASPEN
IT'S THE BIG MUSIC FINALE/ IT'S THE BIG MUSIC FINALE!	IT'S THE BIG MUSIC FINALE/ IT'S THE BIG MUSIC FINALE!

The audience members rush HURRIEDLY out of the theater. Workers for the theater surround the side stage, grabbing the gun as it falls from the sniper's hands.

The workers largely gather on either side of the stage. It creates a surreal wave effect surrounding Chance and Aspen--

Mirroring...

THE VISUAL TIDAL WAVES FROM THE NARRATOR DREAM

CONTINUOUS TO:

INT. SECOND CITY HOLLYWOOD THEATRE - NIGHT

Aspen and Chance, singing the ending of the same previous song, but to their standard six person crowd--

In the tune of "Roll with the Changes" by REO Speedwagon.

                  CHANCE  
KEEP ON ROLLING/  
KEEP ON ROLLING!

                  ASPEN  
KEEP ON ROLLING/  
KEEP ON ROLLING!

They SLAM a final note on their guitar and keyboard--

                  ASPEN (CONT'D)  
OFF... THE.... CUUUUUUUUUFFFFF!

                  CHANCE  
OFF... THE.... CUUUUUUUUUFFFFF!

Chance waves to the crowd.

                  CHANCE (CONT'D)  
Thank you! We are Off the Cuff and  
we will see you guys, next time!

                  ASPEN  
Woo!

Samantha has all her friends in the crowd and urges everyone to applaud loudly!

Chance and Aspen walk to the back of the stage. Blankly staring at the wall.

Silence. They're just standing there. Aspen peeks his head back a little bit.

                  ASPEN (CONT'D)  
Dale, can you turn the lights off?

                  CHANCE  
Yeah.  
                  (beat)  
Or at least dim 'em.

SMASH TO BLACK

**COOL COUNSELOR**

**"Pilot"**

Written By

F. Clint DeNisco

**INT. HOTEL - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING**

LYLE BISHOP (mid-20s, modest-looking like a shaggy-haired Will Ferrell) plays a scratched acoustic guitar, performing a song in the vein of "Return to Sender" by Elvis.

LYLE  
(singing)  
RETURN THE BLENDER/ RETURN THE  
BLENDER

There are only a few elderly couples scattered amongst empty tables in the breakfast lobby, not paying attention.

An old woman tries to spoon some oatmeal in her mouth, but it falls short and lands on the table.

A poster behind Lyle reads: "Branson's Best SunComfort Hotel"

LYLE (CONT'D)  
I WENT TO SEARS THIS MORNING/ FOR  
SOMETHING THAT CAN BLEND MY SHAKE/  
BUT WHEN I PLUGGED IN THAT BLENDER/  
I SAW THE RAZORS BREAK/ YOU KNOW I  
HAD TO/ RETURN THE BLENDER/ THE  
DANG THING QUIT/ RETURN THE  
BLENDER/ FOR STORE CREDIT

On the FINAL STRUM of the guitar... no one reacts. An old man chokes on his apple a little bit.

Finally, a girl in the back, MARY BETH (Lyle's 17 year-old sister, artistic yet impressionable to pop culture), claps quietly as Lyle puts down his guitar.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
(marketing himself)  
All right, thank you guys so much.  
Again, my name is Lyle Bishop, I  
perform every third Thursday here  
at the beautiful SunComfort Hotel.  
Hope you enjoyed it, and uh --  
thanks again!

With still nobody paying attention, Lyle packs up his guitar as his sister walks up to him.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
Oh, hey, sis. I didn't know you  
were coming by here, I would have  
talked to Marty about getting you a  
free bagel.

MARY BETH

I'm surprised you're still doing this, despite mom going on about you actually getting a full time job and stuff.

Marty walks by.

MARTY

Oh does your girlfriend want a bagel?

LYLE

No it's okay she's my sister. She's here for more than bread.

MARTY

(not really following)  
Okay.

LYLE

You know how these things go. You just gotta keep doing creative stuff until something hits. I mean, music is my passion in life. Just got to wait for a producer guy to come to one of these shows.

MARY BETH

I doubt a producer is going to come to a hotel breakfast at 6:30 in the morning to scout talent.

LYLE

Well, if they stop by to eat here for breakfast on a third Thursday, I'm standing right here in the spotlight, aren't I?

MARY BETH

(sarcastically)  
I guess getting called "Most likely to do stuff" in your yearbook now rings a little too vague once you got your masters degree.

A HOTEL JANITOR hears the conversation while sweeping the carpet and chimes in.

HOTEL JANITOR

Is someone looking for a job?

Before Lyle answers, an OLD WOMAN walks up.

OLD WOMAN  
 (deliriously)  
 I once threw a jelly bean at Elvis  
 Presley.

LYLE  
 Thank you so much, I'm glad you  
 enjoyed the song.

**EXT. MARKET SQUARE - DAY - NEXT DAY**

On the market sidewalks, Lyle pulls a rickshaw with a  
 BUSINESS MAN and a WOMAN inside. Running quickly, Lyle talks  
 on his bluetooth.

LYLE  
 Hey Buddy, it's Lyle.

A voice from the bluetooth, BUDDY (suave yet plays Magic) is  
 heard.

BUDDY (O.S.)  
 Why are you so out of breath?

LYLE  
 I'm working the rickshaw on the  
 square. Kind of a cool thing  
 actually. Not exactly something  
 anybody we know does as a job.

BUDDY  
 Wait, you're actually one of those  
 guys pulling people from building  
 to building?

LYLE  
 You bet. Just like when we were  
 pulled as kids. Here, you can talk  
 to my client now.

He clicks a speaker button on his bluetooth and faces the  
 business man.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
 Hey, say hello to my friend Buddy!

BUSINESS MAN  
*No Ingles?*

Lyle clicks back his bluetooth.

LYLE  
Never mind, he doesn't talk  
English.

The WOMAN turns to the Business Man.

WOMAN  
Why did you pretend that?

BUSINESS MAN  
I feel weird shooting the breeze  
with a guy pulling me by foot.

Lyle continues pulling the rickshaw to a steep hill.

LYLE  
(to bluetooth)  
Speaking of Ultimate Frisbee...

BUDDY  
We never were speaking of that...

LYLE  
Do you wanna come play, tonight?  
We're always short one handler.

BUDDY  
I don't know what that word means,  
so I probably shouldn't be  
physically performing it.

Continuing up the hill, Lyle starts to go slower and slower,  
struggling with each step.

LYLE  
Just a second Buddy, this hill is  
giving me trouble.

The business man and woman look worried.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Come on calves, you got this.

WOMAN  
It's okay to just stop--

LYLE  
We're going down!

BUSINESS MAN  
Wait, are you kidding--



As Lyle stumbles over his feet, the rickshaw plunges quickly backwards OUT OF SHOT.

**EXT. SOCCER FIELD - LATER**

As players throw Frisbees back and forth, in warm-up fashion, Lyle stretches with Buddy (26, frail body type).

BUDDY  
So you're still at your parents'  
house, right?

LYLE  
Yeah, just as a layaway situation.

BUDDY  
(confused)  
What do you mean a layaway?

LYLE  
Like I'm just there to hold me over  
until my job comes through.

Buddy mulls over the vocabulary for a second.

BUDDY  
Yeah, so you don't mean layaway  
then.

A GIRL PLAYER tossing a Frisbee nearby, chimes in.

GIRL PLAYER  
Yeah, layaway is like at Wal-Mart  
when you pay to get an item later.

LYLE  
Well, that's what I mean. I'm  
securing it for later.

BUDDY  
I get what you're trying to say,  
but that still wouldn't be the  
right word. I can't think of what  
the word would be... but not that.

Buddy tries to throw the Frisbee underneath his legs. It hits his ankle and fails.

GIRL PLAYER  
Maybe, interim would work.

BUDDY  
Yeah, or momentary.

LYLE

I knew what I meant in my head, it just came out wrong.

He jumps high to narrowly catch a disc in his fingers.

LYLE (CONT'D)

The point is I'm good at abnormal jobs. For instance, Frisbee. I feel like this is my passion. But there's not a full-time job at a "Frisbee firm" to work my way up the Frisbee ranks. I just gotta keep doing it until I get sponsored on a pro team.

BUDDY

Yeah, I've actually talked with a couple guys on the Magic forum about being sponsored for the next Magic tournament in Indiana.

LYLE

The card game you play?

BUDDY

Well, you could call it that, but it's technically referred to as Magic: The Gathering.

Lyle feigns interest, then a Frisbee hits him in the ankle.

LYLE

Ow! All right, hey, I got the good Frisbee, so I'll pull.

Everyone stands on either side of the field in a line to play the game. Lyle rears back and throws the Frisbee.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Ultimate!

**INT. LYLE PARENTS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Lyle opens the bedroom door with his knee, holding a hot bowl of soup. He sits at his computer, blowing on the soup and mixing it with a spoon, watching an NBA YouTube clip.

There's a bulletin board filled with Lyle's pinned up middle school certificates and school play programs. Completing the wall are two posters of the BRANSON UNIVERSITY PEACOCKS and CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL.

CAROL (51) Lyle's mother who is whimsical yet bossy, SMACKS open the door, standing in the door frame.

CAROL  
Lyle, you were you supposed to mow  
the lawn yesterday.

Lyle nonchalantly continues to eat and watch his computer.

LYLE  
I know.

The door DOESN'T STAY OPEN, so Carol has to HIT it open every time it slowly closes back again.

CAROL  
You can't just stay here, throw  
your stuff all over the room and  
expect your old dad to mow the lawn  
for you!

LYLE  
Yeah, of course, Mom.

She hits open the closing door, then picks cups off the bed.

CAROL  
I mean, look at this, Lyle. It's  
like a tornado came through here.

LYLE  
(chuckling)  
Mom, obviously, I know to clean my  
room. You're painting me like I'm  
some deadbeat. I just got back from  
Frisbee and rickshaw. I'll do it.

CAROL  
We're going to--

The door closes on her, fading off her voice. She HITS it back open.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
We're going to charge you rent, if  
you wanna stay here and not work a  
full-time job. I mean it.

LYLE  
(surprised)  
What's the difference between today  
and yesterday that I would need to  
pay all of a sudden now!?

She hits open the door, but before she gets a word out, she SNEEZES loudly, like Monstro from Pinocchio, as the door closes back and she hits it again--

LYLE (CONT'D)  
God bless you.

CAROL  
Look, I met my old high school friend Ladasha at the post office this morning and I said "Hi Ladasha!" And she said "Hi Carol!"

LYLE  
Makes sense.

CAROL  
She said there's a job opening for school counselor at Hillview. She'll gladly recommend you, so I printed out the application.

She lays the application on his laptop as he eats his soup.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
Do it!

As she walks out, she loudly sneezes again. Mary Beth accidentally bumps into Carol on her way to Lyle's room.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
(angry)  
Don't ram into me. I'm fragile!

MARY BETH  
Sorry. Sorry.

Mary Beth props Lyle's door open with her foot.

LYLE  
(chuckling while eating)  
Classic mom, huh?

MARY BETH  
Hey, have you seen the movie Airplane? I just watched it.

LYLE  
Of course! One of the landmarks of comedic satire. Technically a parody of Zero Hour, though that gets forgotten. Really set Leslie Nielsen apart as a funny guy.  
(MORE)

LYLE (CONT'D)

David Letterman was actually originally considered for the lead role. Anyway, as you know, I'm a huge cinephile. Prosecuted, but never convicted.

Lyle chuckles, though Mary Beth didn't take all that in.

MARY BETH

... Yeah, I liked it.

**EXT./ESTAB. HILLVIEW ACADEMY - NEXT DAY**

The rustled voice of MR. SENEGAR (bald, obtuse, down on his luck) is heard.

MR. SENEGAR (V.O.)

Lyle Bishop. Welcome. Thank you for coming in this morning.

**INT. HILLVIEW ACADEMY - PRINCIPAL OFFICE - SAME**

In a bland gray office, Mr. Senegar sits across from Lyle at a desk. Reading from a resume.

LYLE

Please, just call me Lyle.

MR. SENEGAR

(stoic)

Yeah, I was going to, I'm just reading your name from the resume.

LYLE

Great! Then we're on the same page.

MR. SENEGAR

Masters degree in education from Southern State two years ago.

LYLE

That's right.

(chuckling)

Not that anyone can really master a degree. We're always learning, right?

MR. SENEGAR

Actually for a professional job working with kindergarten through high school kids, we'd hope you're not an amateur at your degree.

LYLE

Right. I just was riffing around.

MR. SENEGAR

Boy, you really have gone from job to job here. And none of it pertains to your degree. Do you usually have trouble holding a job?

LYLE

Oh yes, very much. I get antsy pretty easily... you can probably relate to this, by the first day I'm ready to book it out of there, try new things.

Mr. Senegar adjusts his glasses and rubs his eyes.

MR. SENEGAR

Where do you see yourself in five years?

LYLE

(suavely)

Boy, just living life... you know what I mean? Just breathing in and taking it slow. Hopefully getting khakis that don't have a broken button.

Lyle stands up and maneuvers his khaki pants.

LYLE (CONT'D)

I mean not to digress from the interview, but look at these. They're so baggy in the seat, it looks like--

(smirking)

It looks I made a mess down there.

MR. SENEGAR

I'll give you this, you're very candid.

LYLE

Wow, sorry that was on the brain all day. Obviously not proper etiquette for an interview, but I just wanted to show you I can handle a challenge... by using a paper clip as the button.

Lyle sits down.

MR. SENEGAR

Do you have previous teaching experience?

Lyle looks up, thinking.

LYLE

Just a second, I'm trying to measure my words here. I've really been doing the classic "say stuff I think helps but actually makes me look like an idiot" thing today--

Mr. Senegar puts down the papers.

MR. SENEGAR

Look, I'm just going to cut you off. We lost our last part-time counselor pretty abruptly, because he was opaque about a lot of elicited information about himself. The review board is coming within the month. You seem like an honest guy and Ladasha knows your mom, so I'm gonna hire you on a probationary basis and we'll see where we go from there.

Lyle excitedly stands up to shake his hand.

LYLE

Wow, thank you. Look forward to working alongside you.

Mr. Senegar stands up and shakes his hand, but quickly PULLS AWAY.

MR. SENEGAR

It's three days a week from 8 to 1, so I'm sure we won't get in each other's way too much.

LYLE

Right, of course.

As they walk out, Lyle attempts to kindly open the door for Mr. Senegar but it awkwardly hits his foot and loudly RUMBLES from the impact.

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWO**INT. HILLVIEW ACADEMY - COUNSELOR OFFICE - DAY**

Lyle awkwardly holds the door open for Mr. Senegar by pulling it up against his chest -- pinning Lyle back between the door and the wall.

They walk into the counselors office filled with self-help pamphlets and many university brochures cascading the walls.

MR. SENEGAR

Mrs. Jackson here will give you the proper literature to fill out by today. Good luck.

Lyle motions fixing his tie -- though he isn't wearing one.

LYLE

Yeah, you too, yeah.

Sitting at the cluttered desk is the secretary MRS. JACKSON (60) African-American, bright gaudy clothing, quirky.

MRS. JACKSON

Hello, good morning and congratulations, I assume.

LYLE

(faking sincerity)

Nope, I didn't get it. He just wanted me to talk to you because he thought you were lonely.

Instantly interrupting himself, huge laugh.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Kidding, kidding! I did get it, thank you.

Mrs. Jackson searches on her computer.

MRS. JACKSON

Lyle Bishop, right? I went to school with your mom, Carol.

LYLE

Yeah, my mom and Paul told me!

MRS. JACKSON

I would just call him Mr. Senegar.

Lyle squints seeing her desk name plate: "La-a Jackson"



LYLE  
Is it Lay-Uh? Luh-Uh? Or straight  
Laaaa--

MRS. JACKSON  
Ladasha.

Squinting at the plate again and realizing.

LYLE  
Oh wow! Now that is clever. My  
fault for not getting that.

She finishes typing.

MRS. JACKSON  
All right, honey, I have you in the  
system. Just fill out these papers  
for me and you'll be ready to work  
today.

She hands him some papers.

LYLE  
Sounds good.

Grabbing for the papers, he SLICES his pinky. Dropping the  
papers and grabbing his hand:

LYLE (CONT'D)  
Youch. Paper cut. That is a pain in  
the butt, isn't it?  
(beat)  
Figuratively.

Aiding his finger by gently licking it, Mrs. Jackson walks  
over and tapes a piece of paper to the door:

"LYLE BISHOP (School Counselor)"

Below that is a sign-up sheet with one name written on it.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
Oh wow, I've already got my first  
customer. How did they know I was  
starting today?

MRS. JACKSON  
This position cycles through pretty  
often, the kids know to just write  
their name down regardless of who's  
actually the counselor that day.

Lyle pulls down the sign-up sheet, observing the name.

LYLE

Dana Cook. Any problems I should be aware of with this lass.

MRS. JACKSON

She's in 8th grade and comes in every week.

LYLE

(nervously)

Okay, I guess she's needing some real guidance from me.

MRS. JACKSON

Yep.

LYLE

Do you hold my calls or anything?

MRS. JACKSON

Oh no, honey. I just do the paperwork.

LYLE

Ah makes sense. Well I'm gonna hold my own calls.

Lyle shuts the door into his office.

**INT. HILLVIEW ACADEMY - LYLE'S OFFICE - LATER**

CLOSE on Lyle's face. He mutters to himself, mimicking a conversation--

LYLE

So what do you want to do with your life? What do you want to do with the life you're living?

He leans back in his chair and ponders more questions.

LYLE (CONT'D)

How old are you? Not in a creepy way. Just so I can gage where you're at in life. Not like the house you're living in, but--

We REVEAL DANA COOK (13, reserved, always questioning herself) is sitting in the chair across the desk. She has red hair in a ponytail that goes through the back of her ball cap.

DANA

I'm sorry. Are you ready for me?

Lyle nervously shuffles his books and papers off his desk.

LYLE

Oh my bad. Yes, please. Tell me about yourself... ma'am.

DANA

My name's Dana, by the way.

LYLE

I know, I know. Peeped your name on the sign-up sheet. My name's Lyle, I have a master's in Education. But... don't worry. I'm a cool counselor. So I already feel like I understand you.

(reading the name)

Dana Cook.

She lays her bookbag down and sits in the opposite chair.

DANA

That's me.

LYLE

Have you ever cooked pasta or something and then said your name like Tarzan?

(caveman voice)

Dana Cook. Dana Cook good.

DANA

Yeah, that's the only way I gain confidence to macaroni and cheese.

Lyle's caught off guard.

LYLE

What do you mean?

DANA

I was just joking--

LYLE

(quickly realizing)

Oh, nice, nice. Yeah, you've thought about it. Good joke.

Dana clasps her hands together, getting serious.

DANA

So, I wanted to discuss being able to presently enjoy a moment as it happens. Instead of only liking things in hindsight.

LYLE

Aw yes, good one. I get this question a lot. Let me ask you this. Have you ever thought to yourself, "Wow, life really is a journey, huh?"

DANA

Kind of, yeah.

LYLE

Have you ever thought to yourself, "I want to succeed at this goal, so I'm going to work really hard to achieve that said goal?"

(beat)

And I'm not talking just soccer goals or hockey goals--

DANA

No, of course--

LYLE

--I'm talking goals that you can achieve metaphorically. Not like physical net goals.

DANA

Right.

LYLE

Here's how I like to think of it

(beat)

Underneath a tree.

(beat)

That's where I do all my critical thinking, and that could be a good place for you, as well.

DANA

Seems more like a personal thing. I was wondering, though, if there's a moment when we really feel rewarded for good things?

(beat)

I guess as long as we're doing something, it's beneficial.

LYLE

Right.

Lyle tents his fingers together, pretending to follow.

DANA

Is it possible to actually be content no matter what successes happen around you?

(beat)

I guess what happens around you is not in your hands.

LYLE

Right, right. All very good stuff.

The bell rings.

DANA

Okay, thanks Mr. Bishop. I gotta get to wood shop.

LYLE

Glad to help, Dana. I'm here literally anytime you need me. Except after 1pm. And only on Wednesday through Friday.

DANA

Thank you.

As Dana walks out of the office, Lyle continues behind to Mrs. Jackson's desk.

LYLE

That went pretty well.

MRS. JACKSON

Mr. Senegar wanted to speak with--

Mr. Senegar BOLTS in.

MR. SENEGAR

Hello, Mrs. Jackson. Mr. Bishop. So, apparently, Principal Davis bolstered his job here at Hillview for a school board position in Kansas...

MRS. JACKSON

(in shock)

Wow, after three weeks?

MR. SENEGAR

(frustrated)

Yep. So our board is having a meeting this second, to find the replacement.

MRS. JACKSON

You're next in line to take the position, right?

MR. SENEGAR

We wouldn't be having a board meeting if that was the case.

(angry)

Despite my eighteen-year tenure.

LYLE

Eighteen years! I was seven when you started here. Circle of life.

Mr. Senegar ignores the remark.

MR. SENEGAR

Nonetheless, Lyle, the English teacher Mrs. Blevins will be attending the meeting--

LYLE

Oh cool.

MR. SENEGAR

Well, my point is there was supposed to be a "You Can Succeed Day" where the counselor spends an hour informing the students to believe in themselves.

Mr. Senegar briskly walks out of the room.

MRS. JACKSON

Let me give you the room number.

Lyle yanks up his khakis, that are drooping.

LYLE

Look at me, one day in and I already have a performance booked.

MRS. JACKSON

That's funny. Looks like you're in room 110, College English.

LYLE  
 But wait this is a High School,  
 they messed up!  
 (chuckling, long beat)  
 Okay, I'll see you later.

**INT. HILLVIEW ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - LATER**

Just outside the classroom door, Lyle looks down at this attire and fixes the wrinkles in shirt.

As he brushes the back of his khakis down, a girl student has to awkwardly step around him to get in the classroom.

LYLE  
 (slightly lower voice)  
 Whoop, sorry. After you.

He walks into the classroom, full of students sitting in chatter. He reads the note from the teacher on the desk.

As he reads, he stands in front of the class.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
 All right everybody, you guys are finishing the Sun Also Risen-- Sun Also Rises project, so I have some assignments here--

A STUDENT interrupts

STUDENT  
 There's still some free time before the bell rings when everybody gets here.

Lyle looks up at the clock.

LYLE  
 (maladaptive)  
 Oh, okay. Sorry. Let's wait for the other students.

Lyle sits down at the desk, pretending to look over the notes, as the bell then instantly rings. He glances up at the clock and awkwardly stands right back up.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
 Okay, cool, cool. So here are the assignments I was given to hand you guys.

Lyle continues to pass them out. One GUY reacts annoyed of the assignment with his friends.

GUY  
God, two pages?

Lyle yanks the pages out of his hand.

LYLE  
Kidding! There is no Sun Also Risen project.

GIRL  
Rises...

LYLE  
I'm here to talk to about believing in yourself. I noticed you didn't believe in your ability to do stuff about that book.

GUY  
Wait, don't you play Frisbee at Spirit park? I've seen you there with my brother.

He plays it cool, while walking back to his desk.

LYLE  
I do, I do. I can teach you how to throw sometime.

GUY  
Oh I already play Frisbee on the touring team with Daniel.

LYLE  
(slightly embarrassed)  
Oh, you made Daniel's team? Cool, cool.

Walking up the desks, a girl student looks up to see Lyle's UNZIPPED pants right in her face. She quickly glances back down at her desk.

Lyle notices and not-so-smoothly turns around and zips it up.

GUY  
You're sister goes here, right? Mary Beth?

LYLE  
Yepper, that's my sis.



As Lyle shuts the class door, his foot hits the door stopper that REVERBERATES loudly as it springs back and forth.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Boy oh boy.

A GIRL chimes in, holding her assignment up in the air.

GIRL

Sir, we do have a project on that book due though, right?

LYLE

Well, yes, but you're not doing today was my point.

GIRL

Okay, well you'd help me believe in my ability to do this assignment, if you'd tell me if my last sentence is correct?

LYLE

Sure absolutely.

He confidently walks up to her and grabs the paper.

Reading from it:

LYLE (CONT'D)

When author Ernest Hemingway wrote the Sun Also Rises, he aimed to show an accurate depiction of the European life.

He grabs a marker from the white board.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Good, good. What you're writing is correct-- the content is there. I mean what you have factually is on point with that storybook by Ernest.

GIRL

Oh okay. Thanks.

LYLE

You basically have it, but just grammatically remember that he and she are capitalized when referring to an author.

He writes "He" and "She" up on the board.

GIRL  
 (correcting)  
 Well, only at the beginning of a  
 sentence, right?

ANOTHER GIRL chimes in.

ANOTHER GIRL  
 You don't capitalize he or she for  
 authors, do you?

Lyle looks at the board, realizing, but tries to play it off.

LYLE  
 Right, but, when they're pronouns--  
 you do.

GIRL  
 I thought they weren't capitalized.

ANOTHER GUY retorts

ANOTHER GUY  
 Yeah, he and she aren't changed.  
 This book writes it without  
 capitalization for the author.

A couple more students start to agree out loud.

LYLE  
 Let me look at your passage again.

He squints his eyes, pretending to realize something new.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
 Oh, never mind. I thought you  
 started the sentence with he. But  
 you didn't, so... right you don't  
 capitalize it in the middle of a  
 sentence.

ANOTHER GUY  
 That's what I thought.

LYLE  
 See what I did there was have  
 complete trust in what I was doing.  
 I may not have known the answer  
 quickly, but I believed in myself!  
 (pause)  
 I mean, I knew the answer for that,  
 I was pretending a bit, to help get  
 the point across that you guys can  
 do whatever you put your mind to!

The class look at each other, charmed by Lyle's passion.

GIRL

Thanks, Mary's brother.

Lyle glances up at the clock again. It's only a couple minutes after.

LYLE

I'm going to use the restroom real quick. Just keep thinking about what makes you believe in yourself. I'll be back for your questions.

With the students left unanswered, Lyle steps out of the room-- BANGING his foot on the doorstep again.

**INT. HILLVIEW ACADEMY - LYLE'S OFFICE - LATER**

He takes long quick strides past the lockers, exhaling a deep breath. Seeing a TEACHER far down the hallway walking toward him, he stares at the ground until he's a foot away from her.

LYLE

How are you?

TEACHER

Good afternoon.

After that, he fixes his shirt cuffs and awkwardly tries to adjust the bottom of his way-too-long khakis from sliding on the ground. Without looking, he ambles into a --

**INT. HILLVIEW ACADEMY - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

He opens up a stall, pulls down his pants, and sits down.

Only seeing the bottom half of his legs from the outside of the stall, we hear him quietly muttering to himself.

LYLE

The word he isn't capitalized. It is but it isn't. It's your first day, Lyle. You're fine. You're fine.

Then, two student girls walk in, laughing with each other. Lyle's in the girl's bathroom.

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE****INT. HILLVIEW ACADEMY - GIRLS BATHROOM - DAY**

From Lyle's POV, we hear school girls chatting outside stall.

GIRL 1 (O.S.)  
I like your dress, by the way.

GIRL 2  
Oh thanks, my grandmother actually  
gave it to me.

One girl washes her hands at the sink and the other opens up  
the stall next to Lyle's.

GIRL 1  
Oh my gosh! This is disgusting.  
Someone left toilet paper all over  
the ground.

GIRL 2  
Hillview slobes at their finest.

She attempts to open Lyle's stall.

GIRL 1  
Oh, is there someone in this one?

She BENDS DOWN to see if someone's using it.

We see Lyle RAPIDLY yank up his legs and steel-toed shoes up  
onto the seat, trying to hide.

The girl noticed.

GIRL 1 (CONT'D)  
Oh my gosh! I think there's a guy  
in here!

Lyle's face cringes.

GIRL 2  
What?!

GIRL 1  
There's a guy in that stall. He was  
wearing steel-toed shoes and he  
tried to pull his feet up so I  
couldn't see.

GIRL 2  
Is it a 2nd grader or something?

GIRL 1  
No, it must be a senior, he had big shoes.

GIRL 2  
That's disgusting.  
(yelling aloud)  
You're disgusting!

GIRL 1  
I'm going to find a teacher and bust you... guy!

The two girls race out.

Lyle frantically rolls down the toilet paper and wipes.

He looks down underneath the stall. There's footsteps, but he doesn't see anyone. Just to make sure--

LYLE  
Hello?

Unexpectedly--

DANA (O.S.)  
Yes?

Lyle, like clockwork, pulls his feet up on seat again.

LYLE  
(to himself)  
Jeez, come on!

DANA (O.S.)  
Mr. Bishop?

Lyle recognizes the voice.

LYLE  
Oh hey, Dana. Look, you don't need to warn anyone, it was a mistake--

Dana turns on the sink to casually wash her hands.

DANA  
No, I understand. The girls plaque was knocked off on bring your child to work day, when the janitors kid hit it with a mop stick... So you'd have no way of knowing.

LYLE  
I'm gonna jump out real quick.

DANA  
Wait a second!

Then, a teacher wearing a pant suit, MRS. JOHNSON walks in.

DANA (CONT'D)  
Hello, Mrs. Johnson.

Mrs. Johnson peeks around the bathroom.

MRS. JOHNSON  
Hey Dana. Are you just waiting in here? Some girls told me a guy was in the bathroom?

DANA  
One of the stalls is messy, so I was cleaning it up with the stall door closed and probably made some man-like grunts bending over.  
(mimicking grunts)  
Ugh. Mmm. Rrrg.

MRS. JOHNSON  
That's what we have janitors for. You don't have to do that.

DANA  
True. Well, I've already started, so I'll keep going it at, I guess.

MRS. JOHNSON  
(chuckling)  
Okay, Dana.

Mrs. Johnson attempts eyeing around the stalls but then leaves the bathroom. Dana peeks outside the door.

DANA  
Okay. Come on out. No one's coming.

Lyle bolts out of the bathroom, like a mother power-walking through the neighborhood.

#### **HALLWAY**

Lyle goes straight for the water fountain to play it cool.

LYLE  
That was emasculating, huh?

DANA  
No, anyone could have done it.

LYLE

(formally)

See that's an example of handling a challenge, that happens a lot in life, especially for a young student like yourself.

DANA

Or just understanding that stress can actually make a situation worse, if we let it take over our normal thinking.

LYLE

Right, right. Exactly. Good.

Dana takes a water fountain drink and then they continue to walk down the hall.

DANA

I actually was hoping to set-up another appointment with you. Maybe this nut can finally get cracked.

LYLE

Wow there ways to take that wrong, but I won't tell anyone. But yes, sign-up... I'm gonna crack you.

DANA

Great, thanks Mr. Bishop. See ya later.

Holding her books, she slightly jogs down a separate hallway. Lyle stands by himself, fixing his shirt cuff.

**INT. COUNSELOR OFFICES - LATER**

Mrs. Jackson sits at the desk, scrolling through her computer. Lyle walks in, tapping his hand on her desk.

LYLE

You still doing okay, Ladasha?

MRS. JACKSON

I am, sweetie, thank you. Your final appointment for the day is already in your office if you're ready for him.

LYLE

Of course.

MRS. JACKSON

By the way, I saw that photo your mom posted of you playing at the SunComfort Hotel.

LYLE

(embarrassed)

Oh boy, she posted it? She would do that.

MRS. JACKSON

So you like to perform? My brother owns the Coffee Cabin. I could tell him to have you play music some nights there, if you want.

Getting ready to open his office door.

LYLE

That would be amazing, Ladasha, thank you. I guess you already have my private information!

MRS. JACKSON

(chuckling)

That I do. But I'll just have him call you.

LYLE

Okay, great.

**LYLE'S OFFICE - LATER**

Lyle sits back in his chair listening, as a 7-year old boy, BRADLEY, with a hot wheels t-shirt and heavy jersey accent, rambles on:

BRADLEY

So I says to this broad "look Hayley, you promised me the blocks when you were done playing. You're supposed to share!"

LYLE

Okay. Then how'd you handle it?

BRADLEY

Just like anyone would. I threw down my capri-sun, turned to her and yelled, "That's not FAYUH!"

LYLE

Did she let somebody else use the blocks?



BRADLEY

No, this gal put's them away in the toy bucket like she owns the place.

LYLE

So you could have just got them back out of the toy bucket, right?

BRADLEY

(frustrated)

But she promised! The rule is clearly stated if you pinky swear then blocks have to be on carpet.

LYLE

What if they break the pinky swear?

BRADLEY

Wet finger to the ear.

Lyle writes that important info on his note pad.

LYLE

Let's try an experiment, Bradley--

BRADLEY

-- I just want her to stop, okay? She does this every day. We wait in line for lunch and she'll budge in front of me, even though obviously M comes before P in the alphabet.

LYLE

I assume you're the name with M?

BRADLEY

Of course!

LYLE

I understand. Here's the experiment I want to try.

Bradley leans forward excited.

BRADLEY

I'm listening.

LYLE

Next time Hayley or anybody does something you don't like, just ignore it.

BRADLEY

That's not FAYUH!!

LYLE

I know, but if she puts away the blocks and then you grab those blocks with a freaking smile on your face, she's gonna be curious why you're so nice, isn't she?

BRADLEY

Maybe.

LYLE

Because Bradley, you can be honest with me. You like Hayley don't you.

BRADLEY

(nervous...)

No, no, I mean you heard me, she doesn't even know how to shayuh.

LYLE

All right, all right. Try it for the week, Bradley. If it doesn't work, and if she doesn't start to talk to you, then you can punch me in the stomach.

BRADLEY

Are you allowed to say that!?

Lyle fixes his shirt cuff, worried for a second.

LYLE

I'll tell you, Bradley, by the time you get to my age, you realize that you gotta find that thing that gives you solace.

BRADLEY

What does that word mean?

LYLE

Man, you are gonna suck at English when you grow up --  
(laughing it off)  
Kidding! Believe me, if you knew my humor, I wasn't actually making a remark about your intelligence.

(beat)

Solace means being happy simply in comfort and contentment.

Bradley looks down, kicking his legs, thinking.

BRADLEY  
Oh okay. Thanks Mr. Bishop.  
(beat)  
How do you solace?

Lyle chuckles.

As his chuckles diminish, his face becomes more stoic.

He looks up blankly... pondering.

MUSIC CUE: "Return to Sender" by Elvis.

FADE TO BLACK.

**NEXT DOOR ON ALICE STREET**

Written by

F. Clint DeNisco

(Pilot)

"Along Comes Mary"

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN MISSOURI NEIGHBORHOOD (1960S) - DAY

High birds-eye shot descends on Alice Street.

A neighborhood game of street baseball. The only part of the street without overhanging trees. Some kids stand on make-shift bases, while everyone else stands in line to bat. Waiting in the back of the line:

GREYSON, a modest looking young teenager with shaggy hair stands with another kid, seemingly uninterested in the game.

A very young child outside a nearby house pulls a porch swing all the way back, gives it a big push, and jumps on for the ride as it harshly swings back and forth.

GREYSON

Boy, that cannot be safe.

A ball is hit high in the air and the batter runs to first base (a jug). The next batter walks up.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

I feel like we haven't even really moved since we got here. Are they budging?

The kid standing next to him doesn't respond, looking straight ahead with a stoic expression.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

Oh, what am I doing? You can't even hear me.

Greyson snaps his fingers right next to the kids ear. No reaction, just the same stoic face.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

(singing Yardbirds to his ear, still snapping)

WELL MISTER YOU'RE A BETTER MAN  
THAN I-E-I.

Then, a girl, MARY [young teenager, blonde, artistic] intrudes behind them.

MARY

Is that the Yardbirds?

Greyson turns around and quits snapping.

MARY (CONT'D)

I thought I was the only kid that knew that song.

GREYSON

Well, I want to be a songwriter, so I probably know more than I should. Are you actually playing baseball with these guys?

MARY

Well, I want to be a baseball player, so I probably know more than I should.

GREYSON

(surprised)

Oh...

MARY

(laughing)

I'm kidding. I was just pretending to do what you did. The songwriter thing.

GREYSON

(embarrassed he didn't recognize that)

Oh that's good. That's good.

A baseball bat cracks and the ball lands next to the kid by Mary and Greyson. A young player, JOSH, aggressively tries to get the kid's attention.

JOSH

Hey boy, throw us damn back the ball.

The kid has no reaction. He's not even standing in the right direction. Stoic face.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Throw us damn back the ball, kid.

(to Greyson)

Tell him to throw us damn back the ball.

GREYSON

He's deaf. He wo--

JOSH  
(back to the kid)  
Hey kid, throw us damn back the  
ball!

GREYSON  
He's deaf--

MARY  
Hey! He's deaf! How do you  
not get that?

The BATTER goes next to Josh with his bat on his shoulder.

JOSH  
(to Greyson)  
Just tell him. I want to hear you  
tell him. Throw us damn back the  
ball.

BATTER  
You don't even cuss do you Greyson?

JOSH  
Come on, say "Throw us damn back  
the ball."

Greyson waves his arms, as if giving the signal claiming he  
doesn't comprehend.

GREYSON  
Me no cuss. Me no cuss.

JOSH  
(skeptical)  
I know you don't talk like that.

Mary grabs the ball by the kids feet.

MARY  
Here, the ball is yours.

She throws it back with authority. It falls right in the view  
of the batter.

BATTER  
(announcer voice)  
And here comes the pitch...

He slams the baseball back towards the line. Everyone ducks  
and it blasts through a wooden fence door.

JOSH  
(annoyed)  
Darnit, do we have do that thing  
where we scramble away, now?

GREYSON

No, that's my house. My parents left me some emergency money while they were gone, so I'll have a guy named Richard fix it. Don't worry about it.

JOSH

(uninterested)

That's weird. All right, let's keep playin'.

Everyone continues the game. The batter trips over a jug.

MARY

Your parents are gone all week?

GREYSON

Yeah, they were gone last week...

(counting on his fingers)

This week...

(beat)

Most weeks.

The deaf kid picks out a wedgie.

MARY

Jeez louse. You should come to my house. You can also use my phone to call Richard, or whoever, I guess.

GREYSON

Okay, that sounds-- okay thanks, Mary.

Mary and Greyson walk away down Alice Street towards Mary's house, leaving the deaf kid standing unknowingly by himself.

FADE OUT.



**ACT ONE**

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - DAY

A woman, DELORES (42) sun dress, wide-eyed, and whimsical -- tinkers with a record player in the living room. Nothing but frequent squeaks and scratches.

The door bell rings.

There is a huge hole in the kitchen ceiling that is leaking.

Without making a sound, Delores slips and falls straight to the ground. She stands up nonchalantly, not even dusting off her dress, just continuing to the front door.

She opens the door with Mary and Greyson standing there.

DELORES

Hey there Mary.  
(holding a laugh back)  
Your brother sure looks different.

Mary ignores the joke, as if expecting it.

MARY

Yeah, this is Greyson. His parents are gone for the week, so I thought he could come over for dinner tonight.

GREYSON

(news to him)  
Oh, I don't have to eat dinner. I got oatmeal cookies and green beans at home. I'll be fine.

DELORES

Greyson, if your parents are gone, then you are coming over for dinner.  
(beat)  
I don't mean that vindictively. I'm just doing that insisently nice thing.  
(bubbling up in her own humor, laughing)  
I'm not mad, I swear to God!

GREYSON

I understand.  
(to Mary)  
(MORE)

GREYSON (CONT'D)

Mary, I'd like to go back and change out of my play clothes before I eat with your family.

MARY

Okay, see you later Greyson.

Greyson starts running back off the porch.

GREYSON

Thanks Mrs. Mary-- whoops...

He stops running.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

What's your guys' last name?

MARY

Carson.

GREYSON

Okay, I'll be back Mrs. Carson.

Greyson runs back towards his house.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - YARD - LATER

FADE IN:

Greyson walks up the Alice Street sidewalk, towards the Carson house, fixing his collar.

Stepping out of a truck parked in the driveway is a man, CHARLE (54) hard worker, rough appearance, even-keel and another young teenager, PLANET [black, extremely mellow].

GREYSON

Oh hello sir. I guess, are you the father of the house?

CHARLE

Yes.

GREYSON

Sorry, but your wife and daughter invited me to have dinner.

CHARLE

Okay, great.

(pointing at Planet)

Well this is-- Oh, I have an idea.

INT. CARSON HOUSE - SAME

Charle takes Greyson and sneaks in the front door, as if surprising somebody.

CHARLE

Hey, it's just me and your brother.

Charle slightly chuckles. Delores laughs. Mary, once again, ignores the joke entirely. Greyson eyes a record player.

GREYSON

Oh wow, this sure is a fine record player.

CHARLE

It's more than fine.

Charle pulls a couple records from the underneath cabinet.

CHARLE (CONT'D)

Let me play some Chuck Berry.

(proud)

It's something you need to hear before you get any older.

GREYSON

Oh I love Chuck Berry. He was actually born in St. Louis, a few hours from Blue Springs.

CHARLE

(he didn't know that)

Um... yeah.

Charle tries putting the record on, but a loud squeak blares and the vinyl spins with a hump like rolling hills.

He calmly leans on the record player, giving up.

CHARLE (CONT'D)

Anyway...

DELORES

(from the kitchen)

I got the food finished.

PLANET

(aloud)

Should I get him a chair?

MARY

Yeah, just get mine from upstairs.

Planet heads upstairs. Everyone else goes to the kitchen.  
Delores shovels food from the skillet onto multiple plates.

DELORES  
(to Charle)  
Was Planet any help at the rail  
yards today?

CHARLE  
He actually was a good partner. We  
were trying to get a bag of bolts  
onto one of the train cars...

DELORES  
(while cleaning a dish)  
Right.

CHARLE  
(gesturing the motions)  
And I was trying to push him on top  
of one of the cars with the bolts  
and he farted right in my face.

DELORES  
(unfazed)  
Right.

CHARLE  
I just had to accept it and keep  
pushing him up.

DELORES  
I'll have to keep that mind for  
breakfast tomorrow.

Planet comes down with a chair, holding it from one of the  
legs upside down. He hands it to Greyson, who turns it right  
side up and sits down with the rest of the family. Everyone  
begins eating soup.

Silence. Charle releases some mmm's loudly. Greyson glances.

The kitchen ceiling continues to leak RIGHT ON the table.  
There's a bowl catching it, but it splashes with every drop.

MARY  
All right. I'll begin by saying--  
(to Greyson)  
Hey Greyson, this is my family.

Charle stops in mid-slurp.

CHARLE

Oh, I'm sorry Greyson. It was a long day a work.

He puts down his spoon and folds his hands in front of him.

CHARLE (CONT'D)

My name is Charle, and that's with no S.

(hardy laugh, beat)

I don't know why that's so funny. I've been explaining that to people my whole life now. Very unfortunate name to have, and now I'm over explaining it to a thirteen-year old. Delores.

He peers over and nods at Delores.

DELORES

My name is Delores

(bashful, twirling hair)

And I've been told by many people...that I'm allergic to grass... So I'm hoping that's not true.

Greyson nods his head, unsure how to respond.

DELORES (CONT'D)

I used to be an elementary school nurse, as you probably remember.

GREYSON

Actually, I moved here in fifth grade so I didn't go to the elementary school here.

DELORES

You sure you didn't pee your pants and come to me one Wednesday school morning in March?

GREYSON

Probably not.

Planet's spoon falls on the floor.

DELORES

Well, I quit doing that about a year ago, once Charle got promoted at the train depot. I still work part time at the library.

GREYSON  
(remembering)  
I was going to say, aren't you at  
the library every once in a while?

DELORES  
(excited)  
That's me! I probably gave you an  
overdue book. If I didn't, don't  
say anything. I'll just keep the  
suspension of belief.

Greyson nods. Mary gives him an apologetic look.

DELORES (CONT'D)  
This is Planet. We adopted him last  
year.

GREYSON  
(with a slight wave)  
Hey.

PLANET  
Hey. I mean, you've already seen me  
at school.

GREYSON  
True, true.  
(trying again)  
I still don't really know you,  
though. You're a year older than us  
aren't you?

Delores fashionably flips back her hair.

DELORES  
(chuckling)  
Yeah us. You're a year older than  
us aren't you?

She laughs, looking around the table.

CHARLE  
(quietly)  
Honey.

He shakes his head to just stop trying.

PLANET  
Yeah, I'm a year older than you and  
Mary. I guess, I could tell you  
that I'm a big fan of Stevie Wonder  
and The Zombies.

GREYSON

(excited to relate)

Oh I love Stevie Wonder. I'm a big lover of music in general. I want to be a songwriter. Not necessarily a performer, but I like writing songs.

Everyone continues eating their soup.

CHARLE

That's good, Greyson. So was I correct in hearing from Delores that your parents are dead?

GREYSON

(the only one taken back)

No, no, no. They just work away often. See, they travel away finding touring antique expos around the country, so they can sell and buy things.

PLANET

So your other family is dead, I guess?

CHARLE

Planet, please, let me say that in a better way.  
Do you have any not dead relatives that could take care of you?

Mary confers a look of surrender and continues eating.

PLANET

(to Greyson, realizing)

Oh, you said no. I thought you said Nole. As if that was the last name of your dead relatives or something.

GREYSON

I do have relatives, but they all live very far away. I guess you could say I'm pretty lucky.

CHARLE

(wise)

Never guess. All right? Little tip for ya there.

MARY

What about when you guess how many candies are in a jar?

CHARLE

(confident)

Don't do it.

MARY

That's the point, though. I wouldn't win anything.

CHARLE

Never guess, just always know.

MARY

But the idea is that you don't know-

CHARLE

Okay, I didn't know you were gonna throw the guessing game curveball. Just listen Greyson, if you want to earn a few dollars and hang out, you could help me at the railroad station. I appreciate any help.

Greyson raises his brows. Then pulls it back a little.

GREYSON

I actually would love to do that, if you don't mind.

CHARLE

Well, like I just said, I appreciate any help. Tomorrow afternoon.

Mary looks at Greyson with a pleased look, as if giving a telepathic thumbs up.

GREYSON

Okay, thanks Mr. Carson.

All of a sudden. A knock on the door.

Delores and Charle answer the door together.

A RAGGEDY MAN, (50s) with a rip in his hat, is standing on the porch. An old car filled with belongings is on the driveway.



RAGGEDY MAN

Hello, sir, my name is Orey. What do you do for living sir? I'd like to work for you for money, if you'd be kind enough. I'll live in my car right here on the carport. Won't bother you at all. Will that work?

Charle looks at Delores for any confirmation.

CHARLE

Well, um, let me think...

The raggedy man, OREY, pulls out a big hanky from his pocket and goes right into an unflattering nose wipe.

Greyson wanders up and glances at Charle with concern.

FADE OUT

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO**

INT. CARSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Charle, Planet, and Delores, in their sleepwear, are barricading the doors and windows by pushing cabinets in front of them.

Greyson is sitting on the couch, fluffing a pillow.

MARY

So are you all right sleeping on the couch, even though there's a guy right outside?

GREYSON

Like I said, I can just go back to my house and sleep. I don't mind.

MARY

No, it'll be better. You'll be right here and ready to make some sodapop money tomorrow with Dad and that guy.

Orey is standing outside looking through the window.

OREY

Remember, if you need anything, I'm just a yell away.

Charle moves the cabinet just enough to put his mouth through the slightly opened door.

CHARLE

Yeah, sounds good Orey. Good night.

DELORES

Charle, are we really going through with this? He smells like something that, like, isn't a good aroma.

CHARLE

Well, I could have really used an actual joke right there, because believe me, I'm worried too. I'm the one that's gotta work with this guy.

He shuts a window and looks over at Greyson.

CHARLE (CONT'D)

Well, him and the neighbor boy. But  
I don't exactly feel ready to go  
into trench warfare with that kid.

Everyone starts making their way upstairs. Delores kicks a cabinet to make sure it's sturdy.

DELORES

Goodnight, Greyson.

Greyson covers himself with a blanket.

GREYSON

Goodnight, Mrs. Carson.

PLANET

Hey Greyson, I have more blankets  
upstairs if you need any.

GREYSON

(staring at ceiling)  
Thanks, Planet.

FADE OUT:

INT. CARSON HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Greyson is faced inwards towards the couch, waking up.

He slightly folds up the blanket and puts it on the end of the couch, then he hears a car sound from outside. He takes a cautious peek out of the curtains.

The car is no longer in the driveway.

INT. CARSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Greyson, Planet, and Mary are sitting on a couch. Charle in a chair. Quietly watching TV.

ON TV:

Two guys are working at an appliance store. FIRST GUY with a cigarette, and the SECOND GUY leaning on the desk.

FIRST GUY

You ever had a one-night stand?

SECOND GUY

Sure, I got multiple of them at my house. I put my lamp on it.

FIRST GUY  
Not a night stand, you fool.  
I need to relax.

The first guy turns on a TV next to him.

WE ARE NOW WATCHING WHAT THOSE CHARACTERS ARE WATCHING:

A WOMAN and a MAN are sitting on a couch. The woman hits the man with a shovel.

MAN  
(rubbing his head)  
What was that for?

WOMAN  
You're sitting on the remote.

She turns on the TV.

WE ARE NOW WATCHING WHAT THOSE CHARACTERS ARE WATCHING:

A group of people are showcasing a dance routine.

INT. CARSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mary is the only one that reacts to the TV:

MARY  
(puzzled)  
What-- what just-- what are we  
watching?

Charle sits up in his chair with his arms on his knees.

CHARLE  
Well, I guess we might be free of  
that Orey fellow.

PLANET  
(confused)  
When did one of those get here?

CHARLE  
The guy that was here last night.

PLANET  
Oh, I thought you said, "We'll have  
to free that canary yellow." I was  
thinking, "That's weird!"

Mary pulls the window curtain open.

MARY

Do you think he's actually gone,  
dad?

CHARLE

Well, if he--

A car door shuts.

Everyone looks towards the driveway. Charle pushes a cabinet  
out the way so he can open the door. He looks around...

Nothing. Then:

OREY

(popping his head in)

Hey, are you guys ready to work? I  
had to go somewhere real quick, and  
I thought I'd park my car off your  
driveway, down the street a bit.

CHARLE

(caught off guard)

Oh okay, Orey. Well, we don't leave  
for the depot until three, so I'll  
let you know.

OREY

Okay, outta sight. I got some  
leftover snacks in my trunk, so  
I'll just eat there beforehand.  
When you need me, remember, I'm  
just a yell away.

CHARLE

(while shutting door)

Sure.

Greyson and Mary walk up behind Charle.

MARY

Dad, I don't know what leftover  
snacks in his trunk are, but it  
can't be very appetizing. Maybe we  
should let him have a sandwich or  
something, this one time, before he  
can pay himself.

CHARLE

That's nice of you Mary, but we  
don't know where this guy came  
from.

He moves the cabinet back in front of the door.

GREYSON  
(more confident)  
We're in our prime, we can take  
him, if worse comes to worse.

CHARLE  
(unconvinced)  
Well...

FADE OUT:

INT. CARSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Orey is sitting at the table with a single sandwich. Delores is doing the dishes.

OREY  
(taking a bite)  
Mam, this sandwich is mighty fine.  
You make a great cook.

Using the same snot-filled hanky, he wipes off the sandwich from his mouth.

DELORES  
I'm sure of it that you made the  
sandwich, Orey.

OREY  
That I did. But the materials you  
left me were just what I needed.

DELORES  
Okay, well just call me if you need  
something else, I guess.

Orey doesn't respond and takes another large sandwich bite.

Delores steps out the kitchen door. Greyson and Planet are sitting on the couch looking at a newspaper. She tries her hand at shoving rag on top her broom into the ceiling hole.

She falls straight down again. Face first. Then gets up.

DELORES (CONT'D)  
Okay, I'm done doing that.

Charle comes racing into the hallway.

CHARLE  
Boy oh boy, Delores, did you just  
leave that man in there alone?

DELORES  
Shouldn't it be wife oh wife?  
(chuckles)  
Or woman oh woman?  
(beat)  
You know what I'm going for.

CHARLE  
Listen, that man could be burping  
on our cookware for all we know.

DELORES  
Charle, it's probably better to  
give a man a chance, right?

Greyson peeks up from the newspaper.

CHARLE  
Yes, I know, trust me, I love all  
people as much as the next guy...

PAN to Planet, the next guy to him.

CHARLE (CONT'D)  
(to Planet)  
Right?

PLANET  
Yeah, I love people.

CHARLE  
Let's just hope this guy isn't a  
scuzz.

Greyson puts down the newspaper and follows everyone out.

EXT. RAILROAD YARDS - LATER

MUSIC: A warm 60s song in the vein of "Cabin Essence" by The Beach Boys.

MONTAGE OF SHOTS

Greyson, Charle, and Orey working on the railroad. Orey places pieces of metal on a train car. A nearby train passes by, Orey waves. Orey helps Greyson pull a lever back. Charle and Orey throw garbage bags onto a pile. Greyson smiles. Greyson, Charle, and Orey rotate a wheel off one train car. Orey oils a hinge on a train car then Charle closes it shut. High fives.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. CARSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Delores is on the phone, moving around, holding the base in one hand and the handset in the other.

DELORES

(to phone)

I'm telling ya Marty, I hear normal things in one ear and frogs croaking in the other ear.

She opens up a drawer to grab a fork. Almost all the forks are gone.

DELORES (CONT'D)

(worried)

Oh my, Marty, our silverware is gone. This isn't a laughing joke, Marty. This is a real moment. There was a guy, he was weird. There was a sandwich. I'm going to have to call you back.

She hangs up the phone.

EXT. RAILROAD YARDS - DAY

Greyson, Charle, and Orey sit on a rail, eating apples.

CHARLE

Boy, we got a lot done today. The engineer wanted me to take this letter to the post office. So I'll be back in a bit if you guys want to wait it out for me.

OREY

(mouth full of apple)

Far out.

GREYSON

That's fine.

CHARLE

Okay, I'll be back.

FADE OUT:

INT. CARSON HOUSE - PLANET'S ROOM - DAY

Planet is reading a sports encyclopedia. Delores knocks.



DELORES  
(through the door)  
Planet, dear. Could I talk to you  
real quick?

PLANET  
Yes.

Delores walks in and sits on the bed next to him.

DELORES  
Well, there are--

Interrupting herself, she sees a plain basketball poster.

DELORES (CONT'D)  
Wow, your posters are so generic.  
Are we supposed to just stare at  
this? Stare at the basketball?

Planet keeps reading his encyclopedia.

DELORES (CONT'D)  
Anyway, did you take a bunch of  
silverware today?

Planet pulls the socks down his leg. Rubbing it.

PLANET  
I love it when socks make tattoos  
on your skin.

DELORES  
Yeah, me too.

They both continue rubbing the skin indentations with  
amusement.

INT. POST OFFICE - LATER

Charle walks inside, meeting a man, HENRY, at the window.

CHARLE  
Hey Henry, got the engineer letter.

HENRY  
You're here earlier than usual.

Charle hands him the letter.

CHARLE

Well, I actually got a neighbor boy  
and some guy from out of town  
helping me move stuff today.

HENRY

Guy from out of town? You might  
want to watch out for that man.  
I've heard talk from nearby towns  
saying there's a guy who goes  
around to different houses just  
looking to scrounge as much as he  
can, and then moves on to the next  
town like it's nothing.

CHARLE

(concerned)

Well jeez Henry. Do you know what  
he looks like?

Henry hands him back a receipt.

HENRY

Don't know nothing about that. At  
least he's by himself now, though.

EXT. RAILROAD YARDS - SAME

Greyson walks up to Orey sitting by a campfire, holding a  
beat up guitar.

GREYSON

Hey, I found an old guitar in one  
of the scraps areas.

OREY

(no smile)

Well we better play music then,  
shouldn't we?

Greyson sits down and starts tuning the guitar.

FADE OUT

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

EXT. RAILROAD YARDS - NIGHT

Greyson is playing "Working on the Railroad" on guitar for Orey and Charle in front of a bonfire. Despite the rain drops, they clap in applause.

OREY

Well, that was fine.

CHARLE

Yeah, he wants to be a songwriter.

OREY

You wrote that song?

GREYSON

Well, not that song, but just in general.

OREY

(wheezy laugh)

I was gonna say!

As the rain starts to pick up, Greyson puts his guitar back in the case.

OREY (CONT'D)

Can you write us one, now?

GREYSON

(excitedly)

Yes! Um, if you want to think of something to sing about, I'll give it a try.

Charle looks up at the sky, thinking.

CHARLE

All right, well, we were working in the rail yards today. It was fun. Same place where my great uncle Joe died working. He's dead. But I'm alive and doing what I can. It hurts my hands, but it keeps me employed. If you want to try that  
(low baritone singing)

IN B MINOR.

Greyson picks at the some notes, creating.

GREYSON

All right, when I point at you  
guys, repeat the last line I sing.  
Is that okay? Here we go.

He starts playing in a folk ballad style.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

(singing)

I'M ALIVE/ HE'S DEAD/  
IT HURTS MY HANDS

He points and keeps playing.

EVERYONE

IT HURTS MY HANDS!

Charle and Orey applaud, again.

CHARLE

Great, that was good.

OREY

(wheezy laugh)

Yeah!

Greyson leans the guitar against the rail.

CHARLE

So anyway, I want to thank you guys  
for helping me today.

OREY

No problem.

(back to Greyson)

Do you know the song Woolly Bully?

GREYSON

Oh sure.

(clapping his hands)

WOOLLY BULLY!

OREY

(interrupting, harsh)

No, that part doesn't happen yet.  
That's too early.

The rain picks up more.

GREYSON

(taken back, sorry)

Yeah, I was just singing.

INT. CARSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Delores frantically shuffles through the silverware drawers.

DELORES

I just don't see how someone would want to steal a small amount of silverware. Mary, you probably left them in your room didn't you?

MARY

No, why would I take a bunch of forks to my room?

Delores keeps looking in the cabinets and shelves.

DELORES

Well you didn't take them all there at once. You probably just took some up, little by little, without thinking about it.

She looks in the sink. Realizing:

DELORES (CONT'D)

Oh dear, oh boy. They are right here lying in the sink. I haven't done the dishes on the left side, and sure enough. That makes sense they're here. Quite the mishap.

MARY

(resentfully)

You really made a big deal of that, at my expense.

DELORES

(ignoring)

Quite the mishap.

Charle and Greyson return back home.

DELORES (CONT'D)

(rushing up)

Oh thank the Lord, you're back. Don't worry, Orey didn't steal the silverware. They were lying in the sink all day.

CHARLE

(confused)

I wasn't involved in that situation. I don't know what you're talking about.

DELORES

Oh, right. Well, the silverware was gone, but it actually wasn't. It was in the sink.

Charle takes off his jacket. So does Greyson.

CHARLE

Well, I got to be honest, Orey was actually a great worker. I don't see him being a problem.

Orey is standing right behind them, on the porch.

CHARLE (CONT'D)

Um, Orey, are you coming in?

OREY

I'm actually just going to hit the hay-- car.

(wheezy laugh)

Charle, I got some oil on my garments today. Is there any chance that I could borrow a pair of your pants?

CHARLE

Yes, Orey, that's fine. I'll bring out a pair.

Charle looks up to see Orey's hanky properly tied around the ceiling hole. Stopping the leak.

Greyson puts his jacket back on.

GREYSON

All right, I'm going to head on back home, thanks for the work today, Mr. Carson.

CHARLE

That's fine, Greyson. You and Orey were good today.

Charle hands Orey a pair of pants. The Carson family go back inside.

EXT. ALICE STREET - LATER

Greyson walks back to his house door and feels his pockets. He forgot his keys. As he walks back to the Carson house, the lights are already all turned off.

Orey steps out his car.

OREY

Did you forget to give somebody a  
goodbye smooch?

GREYSON

(feign laugh)

No, I left my keys in the living  
room. But I can just get into my  
basement window, I guess.

OREY

Nonsense, I'll slip in the Carson  
house, right now. Is it on the  
table?

GREYSON

(hesitant)

No, please, you probably shouldn't  
do that.

Orey closes his car door and surveys the house.

OREY

It's fine, just got to find an  
opening here. I'll get those keys  
for you. Gotta sleep don't ya?

GREYSON

Well, I'll be okay. Don't--

OREY

Here we go, found a window. Let me  
just suck in my gut.

Orey awkwardly shuffles his torso through the kitchen window.

GREYSON

No, I'll just-- oh boy.

Orey disappears in the house. Then, we see a hand come  
outside the window, shaking a pair of keys. He climbs out.

GREYSON (CONT'D)

All right, thanks, Orey. You didn't  
have to do that.

Orey pats him on the head.

OREY

Okay Greyson, go to bed little boy.

Greyson starts walking back home. He looks back at Orey getting into his car.

INT. GREYSONS HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Greyson wakes up in his bed. He looks over at his night stand. His house keys.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - SAME

Greyson walks down the street to the Carson's front yard. Charle is pushing his tiller into a shed.

GREYSON

Hey Mr. Carson. I just wanted to tell you that I left my keys at your house last night-- where is Orey at?

CHARLE

Hello, Greyson. I'm not sure, to be honest. I don't see any of his stuff lying around.

The old neighbor man, TERRY, turns around the hedgerow.

TERRY

I heard from Tom at the pharmacy that there was a man with a packed car at the dime store earlier.

CHARLE

(sarcastic)  
Okay, good morning, Terry.

He shakes his head at Greyson, with apparent disapproval of Terry's intrusiveness.

TERRY

(oblivious to sarcasm)  
Yeah, he said there was a man near sunrise this morning that stood at the entrance and just looked around the area for a while.

FLASHBACK SHOTS

Orey stands suspiciously at the dime store entrance.

A bus drives in front of Orey. He looks around.



TERRY (V.O.)  
He would walk around from the dime store to the bus stop and kept looking around. Then next thing they knew, he was gone.

The dime store worker looks out the window. No one there.

BACK TO SCENE

TERRY  
And I guess, he's not here, is he?

Terry chuckles.

CHARLE  
(not laughing)  
Yeah, thanks, Terry.

He moves Greyson away from Terry, back to the house. Mary and Delores walk outside. Mary rubs her eyes.

DELORES  
Charle, is Orey here? I'm not wearing make-up or anything.

CHARLE  
Did you really need to look good for Orey?

He closes a house window near the driveway.

CHARLE (CONT'D)  
Apparently, he left town. So he's actually gone.  
(beat)  
I never got my pants back.

INT. CARSON HOUSE - SAME

Planet gets the record player to start working. An upbeat 60's song plays.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - SAME

Greyson scratches his head and starts walking away.

GREYSON  
Well, you guys are going through a lot. Better get out of your hair. I'm sorry.

Charle grabs Greyson's shoulder.

CHARLE

Hey listen, Greyson. You're nothing like Orey. Okay? I hope to see you helping me next weekend at the depot.

Mary smiles.

GREYSON

Sure thing Mr. Carson. See you later.

Greyson starts walking down Alice Street back home.

Mary walks up to the end of her yard.

MARY

(shouts down the street)  
Oh Greyson, and remember...  
(sarcastic smile)  
I'm just a yell away.

Greyson looks back toward her, smiling.

GREYSON

(thinking)  
Yeah, and how-- if the-- when--  
okay.

On the finishing note of that muffled quip, we pull back on a birds-eye shot of Mary and Greyson walking back to their houses in comforting delight.

FADE OUT

**END OF SHOW**