

Joe's Thumb

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(101 pages)

FADE IN

EXT. HWY. 25 NEAR LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO — FRIDAY MORNING

MUSIC: Sinatra singing 'They Can't Take That Away From Me.'

A CLOSEUP of a BIG THUMB against the deep blue New Mexico sky. The camera pulls back to reveal JOE BLOUGHSTEIN, a somewhat pudgy white guy, 20-something, by the side of the road hitching a ride. He is dressed for work in his usual wardrobe of a light blue leisure suit. Behind him is his old white Cadillac. The car's hood is up, and steam rises from its engine.

A bumper sticker on the front bumper reads: KARAOKE ROCKS!

A pickup stops to pick up Joe. Hispanic farm workers, and a young pig, stare at Joe from between the wooden rails of the pickup's bed. The Hispanic DRIVER looks around a stack of boxes in the passenger seat and smiles at Joe.

DRIVER

Buenas dias, señor. You have
a, how you say, big thumb, no?
I saw it from way back there.

JOE

And you stopped to tell me that?

DRIVER

Si. You need a ride, señor?
Your car. . .she is hot, hot?

Joe hesitates; from his POV we see the driver's gold teeth, the crucifix hanging from the mirror, the figurine of the Virgin Mary on the dash, the pig, and the men in the bed of the truck.

JOE

Yeah. Are you going to Las Cruces?

DRIVER

I am going to Doña Ana, señor, but
that is pretty close. You can
ride in the back with my workers.

JOE

Okay. . .cool. Gracias.

Joe climbs onto the bed of the truck and they take off.

The six Hispanic workers beside him are drinking beers. When they finish them they toss them out onto the sides of the road. A man named HECTOR turns to Joe and smiles.

HECTOR
You want a beer, señor?

JOE
It's a little early for me.

HECTOR
My cousin makes it. It's very good and nutritious. It has special hops and Vitamin B. The 'B' stands for bueno.

JOE
Yeah, well, I have a little drinking problem, you see. I mean, I shouldn't drink.

HECTOR
It's not a big thing. I mean, not like your thumb, hmm?

Joe self-consciously conceals his right hand under his left arm.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
Excuse me, señor, but do you mind if I ask how you came by that glorious thumb of yours?

JOE
I was born with it.

HECTOR
Surely it is the most magnificent thumb I have ever seen. God has blessed you in a big way, no?

Joe pulls his hand from under his arm and holds up his thumb for the MEXICAN WORKERS to see. They make the sign of the cross.

JOE
What kind of god would give me this?

MEXICAN WORKERS
Ai! . . .Ave Maria! . . .Oh!

JOE
I'm a freak.

HECTOR
No, señor, it is a miracle.

JOE
You have no clue, dude.

HECTOR
Si, I think so. And you must be
a muy good thumb wrestler, no?

Joe considers the compliment and nods his head in agreement.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
I was the champion thumb wrestler
of my village. I tell you what,
señor, I will give you a beer for
every time you can beat me or one
of my amigos here. Si?

Hector rolls up his sleeve and he and Joe lock hands.

JOE
Well, okay. . .but you're gonna
lose, amigo.

Hector tries valiantly, but Joe pins his thumb in a few seconds.

MEXICAN WORKERS
YI, YI, YI, YAYEE! AI!

Joe accepts a beer and takes a swig. Another WORKER comes and locks hands with Joe. The man looks frustrated as he tries to pin Joe's thumb. Joe chugs the bottle while the man is trying. He feints one direction and quickly pins the man's thumb.

WORKER
OH!

JOE
Ugh. . . strange beer. . . .

Hector clinks his bottle to Joe's bottle and laughs.

HECTOR
I told you. Is good, no?

JOE
Well. . .ugh. . .yeah.

EXT. TEN MILES FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD

Joe, Hector, and the other men are laughing. The little pig is sitting contentedly on Joe's lap. The bed of the pickup is littered with bottles. The Mexican workers are rubbing their sore thumbs.

The truck comes to a stop sign at the juncture of the highway that goes north to Doña Ana, and south to Las Cruces.

Joe stands and leans over the rail. He taps on the hood of the truck and the driver leans his head out the window.

JOE (CONT'D)
Hold on, dude. . .this is my stop!

Joe gets out of the truck, a little unsteady on his feet. Empty bottles tumble from the tailgate onto the road. The pickup takes off and the workers offer thumbs up gestures to Joe.

HECTOR
ADIOS, JOE! ADIOS, AMIGO!

EXT. THE HIGHWAY TO LAS CRUCES – TEN MINUTES LATER

Joe sweats profusely while hitchhiking. A red convertible approaches, driven by a beautiful blonde woman. She is wearing sunglasses, a revealing dress, and a scarf. Joe's suit is rumpled and he dusts off the straw it's acquired from the truck bed. He smiles but the woman drives past, and he imagines. . .

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN LAS CRUCES – DAY

Joe is driving the convertible, in a white sequin-covered jacket. The car is a low-rider with lots of chrome, moving in slow motion. Women are waving from balconies, and tossing roses. Joe has his hand on the blonde's beautiful thigh, and she is hot for him. He's singing I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN.

JOE
I've got you, under my skin
I've got you, deep in
the heart of me. . . (MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

So deep in my heart. .
 that you're really a part of me
 I've got you, under my skin
 I tried so, not to give in
 I said to myself this affair
 never will go so well
 but why should I try to resist
 when baby I know so well
 I've got you, under my skin. . .

SFX: A VW VAN HORN SOUND

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE HIGHWAY TO LAS CRUCES – MORNING

Joe's fantasy is broken by the sound of the horn. He turns and sees a multicolored '69 VW van is pulling up alongside him.

The van is driven by BILLIE WELLS, an attractive 'hippie' looking girl. Joe glances at the van's tie-dye style paint job, and the peace symbol on its front where the VW symbol once was.

BILLIE

Hi! I saw your car back there.
 Can I give you a lift?

JOE

Sure. Totally.

Joe gets in and they take off. He sees a sticker on the dash that reads: I DON'T EAT ANYTHING WITH A FACE. There is a photo of Frank Sinatra on the dash with the words, I DID IT MY WAY.

BILLIE

Did your car overheat?

JOE

Definitely. It's toast.

BILLIE

I thought I was the only one who
 lived so far from town.

JOE

(laughs)
 Yeah, I'm in the boo. . .boonies.

Billie realizes Joe is intoxicated. She expects him to recognize her but he's watching the guardrail posts they are passing.

BILLIE
You smell like beer.

Joe sniffs his shirt.

JOE
Do I?

BILLIE
You seriously reek.

Joe shrugs and they ride in silence for a moment.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
You don't remember me do you?

JOE
Should I?

BILLIE
Billie Wells? I just started working at Hargrove and Svenson Real Estate. You don't remember seeing me there?

JOE
Sorry, I don't. I'm Joe Bloughstein.

He looks at the Frank Sinatra photo again.

JOE (CONT'D)
Whoa. . .you like Frank?

BILLIE
What? Oh. . .my dad liked him. Are you into Sinatra? Old Blue Eyes?

JOE
DUH. . .he's A GOD! He's like the Rat Pack leader. They were like, rogue rats without him.

BILLIE
(laughs)
Ugh, right. It's kind of odd you aren't into more modern music.

She is smiling. They seem to have nothing in common, but she is attracted to him. Joe is too drunk to notice her flirtatiousness.

JOE

(burps)

Yeah, well, I'm kind of odd.

BILLIE

Are you going to work drunk, smelling like a brewery?

JOE

Does this van have a shower?

BILLIE

No. I just wouldn't want you to lose your job.

Joe shrugs as if he doesn't care.

JOE

Don't worry, they won't fire me.

BILLIE

And why is that, Joe?

JOE

I'm like the Michelangelo of office workers. I blaze on a keyboard.

BILLIE

I know. I've seen you shred lots of documents; you're pretty good.

JOE

And, I'm a pro at PowerPoint, and Skype. But it's a temporary gig.

BILLIE

You have another job lined up?

JOE

My dad owns the Lottaburger in Las Cruces, so I will probably inherit that. And I do karaoke.

BILLIE

Really? Karaoke? Seriously?

JOE

You think it's lame?

BILLIE

Well, it's not too normal.

JOE

I'm not a big fan of normalness. Besides, there are stranger hobbies. Like rock climbing, for example. I mean, some people think that climbing rocks is fun, but it's lame. My hobbies are awesome.

BILLIE

Rock climbing's not strange, or lame. You should go with me sometime. You might like it.

JOE

Oh, geez, sorry. I didn't know you were into it. And I would go, because you're kind of cute, but honestly I'm not really big on dying.

BILLIE

You won't die. I'll belay you.

JOE

Yeah? Sounds kinky.

BILLIE

It means I'll use ropes to hold you.

JOE

Right. . .ropes. Kinky.

BILLIE

You have to use ropes.

JOE

You have to, or do you want to? So, what do you do at work?

BILLIE

Filing, and I take photos for real estate listings. Actually, I'm studying to take my real estate license in a few months.

JOE
Yeah? Cool. My buddy, Leon, manages
their website. He's the code-meister.

Joe has noticed the van's ceiling has a mural on it.

JOE (CONT'D)
Whoa, what's with this artwork?

BILLIE
Do you like it?

JOE
Did you paint it?

BILLIE
My old boyfriend did it.

Joe realizes the mural is of the Virgin Mary.

JOE
I've never been so close to the
Virgin Mary before. She's so, like,
totally watching me with virgin eyes.

BILLIE
My boyfriend was sort of religious.

JOE
So did he run off to become a priest?

BILLIE
No, he became a missionary in Africa.

JOE
Oh, like he's saving the world now? Cool.
His Virgin Mary is peering into my soul.

BILLIE
Yeah? Are you a dirty, filthy sinner?

JOE
Admittedly, my soul is tarnished, because
of my porn phase, but I quit because Leon
said I was going to burn in Hell. I figure
God has a sense of humor about nudity. Some
chicks look good naked. They fill a need.
I respect women, don't get me wrong.

BILLIE

So you don't like good girls?

Joe shrugs. He is rubbing his forehead, and Billie notices the thumb on his right hand is unusually large.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Did you hurt your thumb?

Joe is embarrassed and hides his right hand.

JOE

No. . . .

BILLIE

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to. . .

JOE

Does it make you horny?

BILLIE

WHAT? Why would it make me horny?

JOE

I don't know. Some girls see it and assume I'm well endowed.

BILLIE

No, you perve. Can I see it again?

Joe holds it up for her to see.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

It's nice. It has a nice shape.

Joe puts his right hand in his pants pocket to conceal his thumb.

JOE

Yeah? Try hiding your thumb all your life. It's not easy. And, like, try being called "Little Jack Horner," and having kids give you the thumbs up sign all the time.

BILLIE

Sorry, I didn't mean to offend you. If you have a headache I've got aspirin in the glove box. Help yourself.

Joe opens the glove box and takes two aspirins from a bottle.

JOE

Thanks. Do you have any beer to wash these down with, or do you want me to swallow them dry and choke to death?

Billie hands Joe a bottle of water. He puts the aspirin in his mouth and takes a long drink of water.

JOE (CONT'D)

God, I feel like crap.

BILLIE

What kind of beer was it?

JOE

Homemade Mexican. Geez, it's like a thermonuclear bomb went off in my head. Note to self: Never drink frigging home brewed Mexican beer.

BILLIE

(laughs)

How many beers did you drink?

JOE

(burps)

Apparently one too many.

They ride in silence for a moment as Joe collects himself.

BILLIE

Does it bother you that your thumb doesn't affect me in a sexual way?

JOE

Well, you're not a lesbian are you? So, like, it would be normal.

BILLIE

No, I'm not a lesbian. I'm just not impressed by any dude who thinks the size of his penis will impress me. That's a big turnoff.

JOE

My thumb impressed you. It's big.

BILLIE

Look, Joe, girls are more impressed
by guys with big hearts.

JOE

And gigantic piles of money. Ugh.

Joe rubs his stomach. Billie notices he looks pale.

BILLIE

Are you okay, Joe? You look sick.
Your face is as white as a sheet.

JOE

I'm great like a bowl of frosted
flakes. Oh, god. . .mphh. . .I
feel like I'm on a carnival ride.
Everything is spinning. Whoa.

BILLIE

DON'T YOU DARE BARF IN MY VAN!

Joe rolls the window down and hangs his head out.

JOE

Could you please pull over?
I have to hurl. Mphhh. . .

Joe barfs and, from his POV, we see it streak the entire length of
the van. Billie pulls off the highway and screeches to a stop.

BILLIE

Eeeyew. . .GROSS!

Joe gets out and bends over to barf on the side of the road.

EXT. THE SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY BEHIND THE VAN

Joe stands up. Billie is staring at the barf streak.

BILLIE

Did you eat eggs for breakfast?

Joe comes and stands by her. He is intrigued by it too.

JOE

Yeah. Geez, and there's the salsa.
And look, there's the aspirin. Cool.

BILLIE

You are so going to wash my van.

JOE

Like heck I am. Forget you, lady.

BILLIE

OH YES — BEFORE IT DRIES!

JOE

IT'S ALREADY FRICKIN' DRY! It's just beer barf. It'll come off with frickin' Windex in, like, two nano-seconds, or less.

EXT. A GAS STATION ON THE HIGHWAY OUTSIDE LAS CRUCES

Joe is hosing off the barf from Billie's van. Billie is supervising the cleaning, and pointing out a place Joe has missed.

INT. HARGROVE & SVENSON BUILDING, LAS CRUCES — MORNING

CLOSEUP on Joe's hands to show him at his desk, pulling staples with a staple remover.

Suddenly the staple remover breaks in two.

JOE

FRICKING-A!

Joe begins pulling staples from documents with his fingers. He puts a stack of paper in the shredder. CONNIE BONITA, a pretty blonde secretary, comes and puts more papers on his stacks. Joe watches her leave, and takes a small can of breath freshener from his desk and sprays it in his mouth. He sprays some on his beer stained shirt too.

Billie is standing nearby, watching Joe watch Connie. She is upset by Joe's interest in Connie. When he drops a paper on the floor she places a newspaper ad in his in-box and walks away. Joe doesn't see Billie drop off the ad, as he is still distracted by Connie. He pricks his big thumb on a staple.

JOE (CONT'D)

OW! GEEZ!

Joe sucks his wounded thumb and imagines. . .

DISSOLVE TO:

THE HARGROVE AND SVENSON OFFICE is now lit like it is a nightclub. Joe is in a black silk suit with a garish yellow handkerchief. A spotlight illuminates Joe. As Joe starts to sing, Connie and the other office girls dance around him. The other girls swirl out of view and Connie turns to him. The song, WITCHCRAFT begins.

JOE

Those fingers in my hair
That sly come hither stare
That strips my conscience bare
It's witchcraft -

Connie is walking in a sultry way towards him. She is dressed in a low-cut sparkly red dress that shows her cleavage. Connie and Joe join hands and begin a slow tango. Joe dips her.

JOE (CONT'D)

And I've got no defense for it
The heat is too intense for it
What good would common sense for it do?
'Cause it's witchcraft, wicked witchcraft
And although I know it's strictly taboo. . .

Joe leans to kiss her, when. . .

THE SOUND OF A STACK OF PAPER LANDING ON JOE'S DESK

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE HARGROVE AND SVENSON REAL ESTATE OFFICE - MORNING

LEON CRUZ, his Hispanic pal, has plopped down a stack of paper. He looks at Joe, who is still mesmerized by the fantasy. He follows Joe's line of sight and sees Connie laughing with WAYNE HARGROVE by the water cooler.

LEON

Bueno. Joe? HEY - LOVERBOY!

Leon snaps his fingers. Joe blinks and looks up at Leon.

LEON (CONT'D)

She's pretty hot, hot, no?

JOE

Tell me about it. (MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Man, can you imagine being with Connie? She has the most amazing legs. I would call them 'atomic legs.'

LEON

You like her legs? Well, it may interest you to know she wraps those atomic legs around Hargrove, twenty-four seven. They go at it like rabbits.

JOE

You don't know that, Leon! You're just making junk up because you don't want me to have the hottest babe in Las Cruces texting me 24/7.

LEON

Sorry, that could never happen to you. But I understand why you would imagine it. Men have it hard. They are attracted to holes, and woman only want holes to bury their husbands, so they can retire rich. The holes are very different. It's unholy.

Hargrove whispers in Connie's ear and she laughs.

JOE

Hargrove is a slime-ball.

LEON

But a rich, rich slime-ball, no?

AN HOUR LATER

Joe is shredding papers and drops papers on the floor. He squats to pick them up. From his POV we see Connie standing over him in her tightfitting dress. He follows her beautiful legs up her fantastic figure to her perfect face framed by perfect blonde hair. She smiles down at him, and he smiles back. She has a stack of paper in her hands, and sets it on Joe's desk. She kneels to help him pick up the papers. He has an awesome view of her cleavage.

CONNIE

Do you need some help, Joe?

JOE

Uh, sure. Thanks, Connie.

She is not aware that he is scoping out her body. He forgets to keep his big thumb out of sight. She stares at his thumb, and licks her perfect lips.

CONNIE

Whoa, you have a GI-NORMUS THUMB.

She reaches to touch Joe's thumb but he pulls it away. She looks at his face and sees he is sweating and pale.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Sorry, I. . .are you okay?

She places her hand on his forehead to see if he has a fever.

JOE

I'm jellin' like Ellen. Though I'm a bit shaky from performing last night.

CONNIE

Performing?

They stand and Joe straightens the paper on his desk.

JOE

I sing karaoke.

CONNIE

(laughs)

You're kidding, right?

JOE

You ought to come see me.
And later, we could hang out.

Connie steps close to Joe and dusts straw from his suit.

CONNIE

I would like to Joe, but I don't think Wayne, um. . .
Mr. Hargrove, wants employees to date. Sorry.

She turns and walks to her desk. Joe watches the sway of her hips and is spellbound. She turns and flashes a smile at him.

TWO HOURS LATER

Joe finds the ad Billie left in his in-box. From his POV we see it reads: JIM-BOB'S KARAOKE LOUNGE KARAOKE COMPETITION. FIFTY-DOLLAR FIRST PRIZE! A NEW CONTEST EVERY FRIDAY, AT 8PM.

Joe glances to see who put the ad in his inbox, and sits down at his desk. He is focusing on shredding paper.

MUSIC: A RAP TYPE SONG.

BILLIE PASSES BY JOE'S DESK. SHE MOVES IN SLOW MOTION. She turns her head to see if Joe is watching her. Joe is moving to the beat in his chair, watching her pass. He falls off his chair.

SFX: A RECORD SCRATCH SOUND AS THE SONG ABRUPTLY ENDS.

INT. A DINER IN LAS CRUCES - NOON

Joe is eating lunch with Leon at a booth next to the windows.

JOE

I think Connie wants me.

LEON

Have you lost your mind?

JOE

Seriously, Leon, she put this in my inbox.

Joe hands Leon the note about a karaoke contest.

LEON

Why do you do karaoke? Do you want to be New Mexico's version of Wayne Newton, wearing one of them gay glitter suits, singing for old retired chicks?

JOE

Who the heck is Wayne Newton? Dude, check it out; Connie came to my desk and gave me a view of her Grand Canyon. Her boobs were like ripe juicy melons. She tried to touch my gi-normous thumb! She is totally hot for me. I almost got a boner, dude.

LEON

Dude, reefer makes you hallucinate. Quit smoking reefer and you'll be fine.

JOE

I don't smoke reefer at work, dude.

LEON

You are high now, no?

JOE

My thumb is a chick magnet, bro!
Connie was scoping it out today!
It's like suddenly I'm realizing
this freakish thumb is an asset!

LEON

Um, no, definitely not, buddy.
Your thumb makes chicks pity you.
They are thinking, 'Oh, poor Joe;
he was born with a deformity.'

JOE

Dude, you are being so negative.
You should be a cheerleader, dude.
You should go buy a frickin' skirt
and be doing a cheer for me if you're
my friend. Geez, man! Whoa!

LEON

You want a cheerleader? Okay, here's one:
Two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar,
that thumb ain't gonna make no chick
holler. How you like that cheer, homeboy?

JOE

You're just jealous, Leon.

LEON

You are like chili rellenos without
the fluffy eggs, or salsa, no?

JOE

What?

LEON

Like, without cilantro, and chilies.
Or sopapillas without honey and butter.

JOE

You're just jealous because Connie has
the hots for me, and likes the way I roll.

LEON

She likes you 'cause you resemble a roll. She's all about the big rolls of money, which is why she's banging the boss like there's no tomorrow. It's all about security, Joe. It's been that way since the cave man days, when a cave-dude with his own cave could snag a chick. Connie is doing the boss because she's a gold digger. I heard them doing it at work.

JOE

Dude, shut up. You didn't hear anything.

LEON

They sounded like a washing machine stuck on the spin cycle.

JOE

STOP! Please. Seriously, man.

Billie enters the restaurant and pauses by their table.

BILLIE

Do you mind if I join you guys?

LEON

No; here, sit on my lap, Billie.

Billie smiles, sits down beside Leon, and picks up a menu. A WAITRESS comes to their table and addresses Billie.

WAITRESS

Hi hon', what can I get you, today?

BILLIE

Do you have vegan dishes?

WAITRESS

Is that like vegetarian?

BILLIE

Sort of.

WAITRESS

Uh, we got us a garden burger. I have no idea what's in it. Soy protein would be my guess.

BILLIE
That'll be fine.

The waitress leaves.

LEON
My mother is a vegan.

BILLIE
Really?

LEON
Si. She has been one since my
father died. It happened while
he was eating a steak from our
prize Angus bull, whose name was
Estefan Ignatio Juan Marquez. But
we just called him WOOLY BULLY.

BILLIE
I'm so sorry.

Joe rolls his eyes at Leon's story.

LEON
One minute he was chewing Wooly
Bully, and boom! He keeled over dead.

Joe, who is eating a steak, sets down his knife and fork.

JOE
Did you have to tell that story?

LEON
You don't like it?

JOE
NO. It's bogus.

BILLIE
What? Did he just make that up?

LEON
Si, did you like it?

BILLIE
Why would I like it? You lied, like
ninety-nine percent of all guys.

LEON

Because you want to encourage me as a future writer?

JOE

She didn't like it, Leon. He's just yanking your chain, Billie. He's not always a jerk.

BILLIE

So Leon, your father didn't die?

LEON

Si, he died. . .while roasting chilies. He was turning the frickin' crank of his roaster and he had a heart attack. He died on our patio. I found him when I came home from school. That's the truth.

BILLIE

Oh. . .I am very sorry.

LEON

Si. It was the smoky perfume of charred chilies that made him think of a lost love. Which shows you that love can kill you.

The waitress brings Billie's garden burger.

WAITRESS

There you are dear. You boys want anything else?

JOE

No, we're totally stuffed.

The waitress lays their bill on the edge of the table and leaves.

LEON

Excuse me, Billie. I have to go pee.

Billie stands and let's Leon out of the booth. Leon goes to a nearby restroom. Billie sits again.

JOE

Listen, Billie, pay no attention to Leon. He's just flirting with you.

BILLIE

I think he's kind of cute. But he's not really my type, anyway.

(beat)

Do you feel any better? I can't believe you didn't just go home after barfing on my van.

JOE

Oh, uh, yeah. Sorry about that.

BILLIE

(laughs)

They should have fired you. You smelled like cheap beer.

JOE

They'd drown in paper without me, and they know it, so therefore I will never be fired.

Leon returns. He overhears their conversation.

LEON

Paper is so old school. In the future, if you see a newspaper, or book, they will be in a museum. The computers will be implanted in our heads.

JOE

Whatever. Let's go, dude. See you back at the office, Billie.

Billie has an anxious look on her face as they turn to leave.

BILLIE

Uh, Joe. . .

Joe and Leon stop and look at her.

JOE

Yeah?

BILLIE

Did you see the, uh. . .

JOE

See what?

LEON

He saw the note from Connie,
about a karaoke contest. But fifty
bucks isn't much prize money.

BILLIE

From Connie? It was from. . .

LEON

He thinks Connie is hot for him.
I told him he was being stupid.

JOE

GEEZ. . .shut up, Leon.
(to Billie)
What were you saying?

BILLIE

Oh, uh, nothing. Never-mind.

EXT. HARGROVE & SVENSON BUILDING — FIVE MINUTES LATER

Joe and Leon go in the front door of the building.

INT. A HALLWAY TO THE ELEVATOR

JOE

Billie has a painting of the Virgin
Mary on the ceiling of her van. It
freaked me out.

LEON

That's why you won't love her?

INSIDE AN ELEVATOR

JOE

Mary's like the virgin of virgins, dude.

LEON

But Mary wasn't a virgin forever. She
had like a whole bunch of kids. But
they couldn't walk on water or nothing.

JOE

Whatever. All I'm saying is, how could I
do it with Billie in her van, when the
Virgin Mary is watching us?

LEON

I suppose you could try respecting her. I am also attracted to virgins because of the Catholic church, where statues of the Virgin Mary are everywhere.

JOE

She might not be a virgin, Leon. Like, maybe she's just going through a Virgin Mary phase.

LEON

Does that stuff happen to chicks?

JOE

Sure, they do surgery to make them virgins again. I read about it.

INT. AT JOE'S DESK - AFTERNOON

Joe is seated, taking staples out of bound papers. Billie sets a stack of paper on Joe's desk, and smiles at Joe.

BILLIE

What do you do with all the paper, staples, and plastic?

JOE

Obviously, I eat them, which is why I'm so freakishly fat.

BILLIE

You're not fat; you're just lazy.

JOE

When I'm a millionaire with a six-pack you'll rue the day you called me lazy. But, to answer your question, we put trash in a dumpster, and they haul it to a landfill.

BILLIE

They don't recycle it?

JOE

That's not the New Mexico way.

BILLIE

Don't these people care about the Earth?

JOE

Sorry, we don't drive cars that run on vegetables down here. We figure life is short and we're gonna be dead pretty soon anyway.

BILLIE

Well maybe you should. Then the planet wouldn't be dying.

JOE

What planet are you from?

BILLIE

I'm from Oregon.

JOE

Oh yeah, the logger state, where they clear cut forests, and make trees into the paper that I shred.

BILLIE

I think we should start recycling.

JOE

WE DO. I shred it, they burn it at the dump, and it becomes DIRT.

BILLIE

That's HORRIBLE.

JOE

Sorry, we aren't like the hemp wearing hippies in OR-REE-GONE.

BILLIE

Ha ha. If I find a recycler can I sell it for the company?

JOE

You'll have to ask the big cheeses.

BILLIE

Okay. Um, I'm sorry I called you 'lazy.'

JOE

It's cool. I know I'm a lazy lard ass. I'm a lost cause. Go save the planet.

BILLIE
I'm going to try.

She smiles and walks away. Joe is intrigued by her idealism.

EXT. HARGROVE & SVENSON PARKING LOT – DUSK

The workday is over and Joe and Leon walk to Joe's car. Billie watches them and crosses the street to her van.

LEON
So you got your car fixed?

JOE
It cost eight hundred frickin' bucks.

LEON
Hmm, so they ripped you off?

JOE
Tell me about it.

LEON
Are you goin' to the Fisherama?

JOE
I don't know. I think Pop expects me to help at the Lottaburger.

LEON
You are lucky to have a career in burgers. I only manage websites.

JOE
Yeah, but aren't you studying to be a real estate agent?

LEON
Si, but I would rather be a cosmetic surgeon. I have an affinity for ladies. I would be like the Picasso of surgeons. I would change the world one facelift at a time. But I suppose I'd have to live in Beverly Hills, or Orange County.

JOE
It's a little late to go to medical school, Leon. You're what, twenty-four?

LEON

Are you trying to crush my dreams?

Leon has a big smile on his face.

JOE

No. It sounds really great. Seriously.

LEON

Si. So, what are you doing tonight?

JOE

Laundry. And watching hockey on TV until I go to sing karaoke.

LEON

Hockey is a gay sport, no? The men skating around like Canadians. But I like the fighting. That's manly.

JOE

Hockey is the opposite of gay.

Joe unlocks his car and sits in the driver's seat.

LEON

In New Mexico it's very gay. Anything on ice is gay. Their costumes are so tight and frilly. The men are way too pretty to be men. It makes it, G, A, Y.

Leon picks a flake of paint off the roof of Joe's car.

JOE

You're confusing hockey with figure skating, dude.

LEON

It's all the same. Done on those frozen ice rinks. Men with big sticks chasing a puck. They should combine the two sports and have the Canadians chase hot chicks.

JOE

Let's change the subject.

LEON

Fine. All I'm saying is I like
my water to be liquid.

Joe buckles his seatbelt.

LEON (CONT'D)

The Fisherama winner gets a hybrid car.
Them things are spendy. Chicks love
new cars. With a new car, boy, it
would be like Adam and Eve times.

JOE

A new car? I'm a good fisherman. Maybe
I can catch Granddaddy.

LEON

Si, but that's just a myth, no?

Leon continues plucking paint off the roof.

JOE

My Pop hooked his fin once. It
pulled his boat across the lake.

Joe looks annoyed at Leon taking paint flakes from his car.

LEON

That's a mucho big fish. If you
won you could get rid of this old
flakey Cadillac.

Leon flicks another paint flake from the car's roof.

JOE

Leave my car alone, Leon.
This was my grandfather's car.
It almost took us to Disneyland.
It died in Fresno.

LEON

How sad; you never saw Mickey, Donald,
or Goofy. You need a good luck charm.

JOE

My luck is fine.

Leon takes a rabbit's foot from a keychain and gives it to Joe.

LEON

Here, this is bueno loco lucky.

Joe is studying the rabbit's foot wondering if it has power.

JOE

This is kind of gross, Leon.
I mean, it's the foot of a rabbit.
It'd be like someone handing
you a dried human foot.

LEON

Rabbits are just rabbits except
for lucky rabbits' feet, which
they raise in Nevada, I believe.

Joe puts it in his shirt pocket and starts his car.

JOE

Like in Vegas?

LEON

Si, like Las Vegas. Hey, why
don't we party tonight?

JOE

Is there a party?

LEON

It's an expression. It's like
saying you are making love when
you are having sex, you know?

JOE

Well, I seriously HAVE to do laundry.
I've got no clean underwear. And I
have to do karaoke to develop my
confidence as a performer.

LEON

How come you didn't tell me? I'd
like to see you perform.

JOE

I'm not ready for your critique. It
isn't good for my ego. Maybe when I
win a contest.

LEON

Joe, you should have invited Billie.
If you aren't going to date her, do
you mind if I date her?

JOE

You don't have to ask my permission.
But I doubt she'd go out with you.

LEON

Are you trying to steal my thunder?

JOE

You don't have any thunder, dude.

LEON

Ah, so you do like her, huh? I was
testing you to see what your true
intentions were for Billie.

JOE

Who are you, her father?

LEON

Si, you are in love with her.

JOE

You're crazy, Leon. How can I be in
love with her? I don't even know her,
and she doesn't know me.

LEON

Well, you did barf on her van.

INT. MR. CLEAN JEANS LAUNDERETTE — NIGHT

Joe puts his wet clothes into a stack type dryer, and begins
inserting quarters into the machine.

EXT. THE LAUNDERETTE PARKING AREA

Billie parks her van and is surprised to see Joe's car parked
there. She fusses with her hair in the car's vanity mirror, and
is flustered because one strand of hair won't lie down. She
pulls the front of her blouse lower to show a hint of her cleavage,
and then pulls it up again.

BILLIE
God. . .ugh.

She applies lipstick, and then sees she's put too much on, and wipes some of it off on a tissue. She gets out of her van.

INT. THE LAUNDERETTE

Billie enters the launderette and goes to the dollar bill changer and inserts dollars into the slot. She sees Joe is putting quarters into the dryer slot. She fusses with her hair while she's inserting dollars into the machine, sneaking peeks at Joe.

Joe has not noticed Billie. He is still loading quarters into the dryer. He's wearing a white muscle man type tee shirt, boxer shorts, and flip-flops. He doesn't look very attractive but his appearance doesn't turn her off.

A white, middle-aged ALCOHOLIC man in a beat-up cowboy hat is taking his clothes from a washer and putting them in a cart. The alcoholic notices Billie and winks at her several times. Billie ignores his flirtations.

The dollar bill changer tray is too full of quarters and they fall onto the floor. One starts rolling toward Joe and Billie follows it. The alcoholic watches the quarter rolling past him.

ALCOHOLIC
I think you lost one, honey.

The quarter curves around a row of washers and comes to rest against one of Joe's flip-flops.

Joe, not realizing where the coin came from, picks it up and puts it in his dryer's slot. Billie walks up to Joe.

BILLIE
That was MY QUARTER!

Joe is speechless and surprised to see her.

JOE
WHAT?

BILLIE
It rolled from the change machine.

Joe sees that the change machine is at least thirty feet away.

JOE

Oh, REALLY? C'mon, get real. From way over there to here? That's like a million miles away.

BILLIE

Yeah, REALLY. Just ask that guy there.

Joe looks at the alcoholic man and observes that the man is intoxicated and unsteady on his feet.

Joe reaches in his shorts and gives her two dimes and a nickel.

JOE

Whatever. Here you go.

Billie is frustrated and attracted at the same time.

BILLIE

You don't have any quarters? GREAT!

Billie walks away. Joe ogles her shapely bottom.

JOE

Nice tush. . .

Billie glares at him and takes her laundry to a washer.

Joe is listening to music on his iPod, and wearing headphones. He turns and notices Billie watching him bob to the beat of a song. He smiles, and lifts the headphones off his ears.

JOE (CONT'D)

Did you say something to me?

BILLIE

No. What are you doing here, anyway?

JOE

HELLO? My laundry. It is a launderette.

BILLIE

What am I supposed to do with this worthless change you gave me?

JOE

Sorry. . .geez. (MORE)

Joe searches in his pockets and finds another quarter. He walks over and hands her the quarter. She puts it in her pocket, and gives him the change he gave her.

JOE (CONT'D)

Thank you, mademoiselle.

Joe goes back to his machine. Billie follows Joe.

BILLIE

I'm surprised you noticed my tush. I thought you were only interested in Connie's tush.

She picks up a gossip magazine that is lying on a nearby counter.

JOE

SORRY! God made me a man. Men are animals, controlled by lusty desires.

She pours too much detergent into a washer by Joe. Joe laughs.

BILLIE

What's so damn funny? Why do you have to be like every other guy?

JOE

Whoa, mellow out. I was laughing because you just put a ton of detergent in that washer.

She loads the washer, adds money, and starts it.

BILLIE

Oh really? Well, I don't need a paper shredder technician telling me how to do my laundry, thank you.

Joe shrugs and turns his attention to another magazine. She sits with her magazine in a row of chairs opposite Joe, glaring at him.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Or to steal my quarters, or to comment on what I look like.

JOE

Again, I'm sorry. Geez, aren't you late for your anger management class?

BILLIE

I don't have anger issues except,
apparently, when I'm around you.

JOE

Maybe you should go smoke a dube.

BILLIE

I don't smoke DUBES. I have morals.

JOE

Pardon moi. Look, why don't we just
lose this tension, and go out?

BILLIE

Why would I date you? We're like
total opposites. I'm goal oriented,
and you'd be happy to have your
crummy office job for twenty years.

JOE

Whoa, don't judge me. I have GOALS.
I'll quit my lousy job one day.

BILLIE

Good. That's a start. And then what?

JOE

When I figure that out I'll let you
know. Not that it's your business.

BILLIE

Sorry, I'm not normally so mean.

JOE

Look, let's make a deal. If I can
lose twenty pounds by next week,
you have to go out with me.

BILLIE

You don't have to lose weight. The
problem is between your ears, not
in your flab. I'm not that shallow.

JOE

A point well taken. So do we have a
deal or are you too chicken to agree?
Let's shake on it. No hard feelings.

He offers his hand. They shake hands.

BILLIE

Fine; I agree. What day next week?

JOE

How about next Friday by noon?

BILLIE

DEAL! Wanna go for ice cream?

JOE

You don't think I can do it, do you?

BILLIE

Nope. Not in a million years.

He takes his clothes from a dryer.

Billie sits in a nearby chair and opens her magazine. She studies Joe folding clothes in his low riding boxer shorts, and flip-flops. She smiles; even the sight of his butt crack, when he bends over, doesn't turn her off.

CLOSE IN on Joe. He closes his eyes, and has his headphones on. We hear the beginning overture of the song, FUNNY VALENTINE. . .

DISSOLVE TO:

THE LAUNDERETTE is now lit with a disco type globe and heart shapes on the floor. Joe wears a white tuxedo with a red handkerchief in the pocket. He turns and sees BILLIE, who is in a stylish black 1960's era dress and heels. Her hair is up and she wears a strand of pearls. They meet at the center of the room and begin a circular dance in the diffused light of love.

JOE

My funny valentine. . .
 sweet comic valentine. . .
 You make me smile, with my heart. . .
 Your looks are laughable,
 un-photographable. . .
 Yet you're my favorite work of art.

They are twirling slowly, alone on the dance floor.

JOE (CONT'D)

Is your figure less than Greek (MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Is your mouth a little weak. . .
 When you open it to speak, are
 you smart?
 But don't change a hair for me,
 not if you care for me. . .
 Stay, little valentine, stay. . .
 Each day is Valentine's Day.

All seems blissful until. . .

BILLIE

AHHH!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MR. CLEAN JEANS LAUNDERETTE — NIGHT

Joe wakes from his fantasy. He opens his eyes and sees Billie by her washer. Soap suds cascade like a waterfall down the front of the machine. Joe rushes to help her and tries pushing buttons on the washer to get it to stop.

The alcoholic cowboy, who was sleeping, wakes and lifts his hat to see what the noise is about. He goes back to sleep.

JOE

(to Billie)

GET A TOWEL OR SOMETHING!

Billie runs to her laundry basket, but skids on the suds.

BILLIE

OH! WHOA!

She slips on the suds and lands on her butt. Joe stops the suds from coming out by unplugging the machine. He turns and sees that Billie is on the floor covered with suds. He laughs, and slips, and almost falls.

JOE

Whoa. . .I told you. . .
 you put too much detergent
 in this washer.

BILLIE

OW! I bruised my tailbone! Ooh!
 Will you please help me up?

Joe helps Billie up. She leans on him but they fall down together. She is on top of Joe. His right hand rests on her left breast. He realizes where his hand is at, and pulls it away. She slides off of him, stands, and wipes the soap bubbles from her clothes.

BILLIE

Are you happy? You've officially groped me.

JOE

Sorry, it was an accident.

They are standing facing each other, sopping wet.

JOE (CONT'D)

I wasn't trying to grope you.

BILLIE

Yeah. . .well. . .you did anyway.

Joe finds a mop in a closet, but Billie takes it from him.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

I'M FINE. I'll clean it up.

JOE

Are you sure?

She starts mopping.

BILLIE

Yeah, it's cool. Relax.

He picks up his laundry basket, puts his clothes in it, and hesitates before he leaves. He watches Billie mopping.

JOE

For the record, your tush is way cuter than Connie's. And your left boob is not too shabby, either.

He waits for her response but when she doesn't respond, he walks out. She looks up when he has gone, and smiles.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe's small adobe house is set back from a long, empty highway. Joe parks his Cadillac in the driveway.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE — AN HOUR LATER

Joe looks nervous in front of his mirror, checking out how he looks in his glittery red suit, which is too small for him. He sucks in his belly to snap his pants. He can't button the buttons of his jacket.

EXT. JIM-BOB'S KARAOKE LOUNGE IN LAS CRUCES, NM — NIGHT

Joe parks his car and crosses the street to the lounge.

INT. JIM-BOB'S KARAOKE LOUNGE

The lounge is dimly lit except for the stage, which has three multicolored spotlights directed on it. JIM-BOB comes on stage. He wears a big white cowboy hat, boots, and a retro 70's disco style shirt with lots of gold chains around his neck. He puts his reader glasses on to read from a list of competitors.

JIM-BOB

Well, lemme see here. Next up is
Ms. Roberta Smith, singing. . .
what are you singing for us, hon'?

ROBERTA, a conservative looking housewife, in a plain flowered dress, steps onto the stage.

She takes the microphone from Jim-Bob and smiles nervously.

ROBERTA

I'm gonna sing 'Who's That Girl?'

JIM-BOB

All-rightee-then. Let's give a hand
for ROBERTA!

The crowd claps and the music begins.

ROBERTA

Who's that girl. . .?
The language of love
slips from my lover's tongue;
cooler than ice cream
and warmer than the sun. . .

Joe is sitting by himself at a table near the front. He is nervous and sweating in his tight red glittery suit.

A WAITRESS walks near him and he stops her.

JOE
 Could I get a beer?

WAITRESS
 Sure thing, hon'.

The waitress leaves. Joe looks around at the crowd, and at Roberta, still singing up a storm.

ROBERTA
 Who's that girl. . .
 running around with you?
 Tell me. . .who's that girl?
 running around with you? Tell me. . . .

The waitress brings Joe's beer. He takes a big gulp.

When the song ends, JIM-BOB steps onto the stage. He puts his arm around Roberta's waist. The crowd claps politely.

JIM-BOB
 That was uh, well, darlin',
 that was different. Huh?
 (to the crowd)
 She were good, weren't she?

The crowd claps a little, and Roberta sits down.

Joe downs the rest of his beer and burps.

JIM-BOB (CONT'D)
 Okay then, next up is. .
 José Renfro, singing, what?

JOSÉ has come to the stage. He is a young Hispanic farm worker in blue jeans, a white shirt and tie, and a straw cowboy hat.

JOSÉ
 I am singing the theme song from
 Evita, dedicating it to my mother, who
 came here from Argentina via Mexico,
 with only ten pesos in her pocket, but
 who now owns a brand new Chevy pickup.

JIM-BOB
 Evita? What the heck is that?

JOSÉ

You know, ". . .don't cry for me
Argentina?"

JIM-BOB

Shoot, we don't have that, son.
(to Stan)
We got that one, Stan?

STAN, the DJ who sits at the back of the room at a computer,
studies his list of songs.

STAN (O.C.)

We ain't got that one, Jim-Bob.

JIM-BOB

Sorry, son. You got another one?

JOSÉ

How about 'All I Wanna Do,'
by Sheryl Crow?

JIM-BOB

We got that one, Stan?

Stan checks the database and smiles foolishly at Jim-Bob.

STAN

Yeah, we got that one, Jim-Bob.

The music begins.

JOSÉ

This ain't no disco. . .it ain't
no country club either. . .this is
L.A., . . .
. . .All I wanna do is have a
little fun before I die, says the
man next to me, out of nowhere. . .
It's apropos or nothin', he says
his name is William. . .I'm sure he's
Bill or Billie or Mac or Buddy. . . .
And he's plain ugly to me, and
I wonder if he's ever had
a day of fun in his whole life. . .

Joe sucks the last drop of his beer and sets the bottle down. He

looks at the faces of the people in the bar. They appear distorted and disgusting to him. The room spins from his POV.

JOSÉ (CONT'D)

We are drinkin' beer at noon
 on Tuesday, in a bar that faces
 a giant car wash. . .
 And the good people of the world
 are washin' their cars,
 on their lunch breaks, hosing
 and scrubbing as best they can
 in skirts and suits. . .
 To drive their shiny Datsuns
 and Buicks, back to the phone
 company and record store too. .
 But they're nothin' like
 Billy and me. . .'cause
 All I wanna do is have some fun. . . .

Joe lays his head on his arms, and the music fades. . .

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. ON A NEW MEXICO HIGHWAY — FIFTEEN YEARS EARLIER — DAY

Joe is ten-years-old, riding in the back seat of a convertible. In the front seat are his mother and father. His mother, NANCY, has a scarf around her blond hair. Joe's father, DUKE, and Nancy, are smiling. A Sinatra song, ALL THE WAY, plays on the car radio. Joe is blissfully happy; all is right with the world.

Then the scene begins to move in slow motion and we see from Joe's POV, that a farmer on a tractor has pulled onto the highway in front of their car. Joe's father swerves the wheel, but the car skids on the gravel and. . .

END FLASHBACK:

INT. JIM-BOB'S LOUNGE — NIGHT

Joe sits up abruptly and realizes where he is. José's song is over and the crowd is applauding. Joe is sweating in his tight fitting costume, still dazed by his flashback.

Jim-Bob comes onto the stage. He is applauding José's effort.

JIM-BOB

DANG, SON, YOU SUNG THAT GOOD!

José is beaming as he goes off the stage. Jim-Bob studies a list of competitors.

JIM-BOB

Uh, next up is Joe. . .Bloughstein?

The audience of Hispanics, and rednecks, burst into laughter. Joe steps onstage and Jim-Bob hands him a microphone. Suddenly, Joe takes on the persona of a skilled lounge singer.

Stan cues up ALL THE WAY. Billie comes into the lounge and takes a seat in the back. She is wearing sunglasses and an L.A. style cowboy hat. We CLOSE IN on her and see she's falling for Joe.

JOE

When somebody loves you
 it's no good unless he loves you
 all the way. . .
 Happy to be near you. . .
 when you need someone to cheer you. . .
 all the way. . .
 Taller than the tallest trees
 that's how it's got to feel. . .
 Deeper than the deep blue sea is
 that's how deep it goes
 if it's real. . .
 When somebody needs you
 it's no good unless he needs you
 all the way. . .
 Through the good or lean years
 and for all the in-between years
 come what may. . .
 Who knows where the road will lead us
 only a fool would say. . .
 But if you let me love
 it's for sure I'm gonna love you
 all the way. . .
 all the way. . . .

When Joe finishes the song the room is deathly quiet for a moment, and then the crowd gives Joe a standing ovation.

Jim-Bob comes to center stage and pats Joe on the shoulder.

JIM-BOB

DANG — SON! YOU DONE GOOD!
 It felt like 'Old Blue Eyes' was
 right up on this here stage. (MORE)

JIM-BOB (CONT'D)
 (to the audience)
 Shoot. . .I think we got
 ourselves a winner, huh?

The crowd applauds. Jim-Bob hands Joe an oversized check. Joe is beaming. He thinks he sees Billie in the crowd and squints in the glare of the spotlight. Billie slips out of the lounge.

EXT. JIM-BOB'S KARAOKE LOUNGE - FIVE MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Joe comes to the entrance to look for Billie, but she has left.

INT. OF JOE'S CAR - A HALF HOUR LATER - NIGHT

Joe smiles as he drives home, with a \$50 check in hand.

EXT. LOTTABURGER IN LAS CRUCES - SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Joe is cooking burgers remembering the cheers of the crowd at JIM-BOB'S LOUNGE the previous night. His fantasy life takes over. We hear the beginnings of THE LADY IS A TRAMP.

DISSOLVE TO:

The Lottaburger is now aglow with colored spotlights. Joe comes from the kitchen holding a plate with a burger and fries on it.

JOE
 She gets too hungry
 for dinner at eight -
 She likes the theater
 and never comes late -

He sets the plate down in front of a patron.

She never bothers,
 with people she hates. . .

He spins MAGGIE, the 40-something red-haired waitress his dad is dating. He tosses his white cook's hat to DUKE, his sixty-year-old dad, and scampers along the top of the bar.

JOE (CONT'D)
 That's why the lady is a tramp!
 Doesn't like crap games
 with barons or earls -
 Won't go to Harlem. . . (MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
in ermine or pearls. . .

Joe picks up dirty dishes from tables and turns to the kitchen.

Won't dish the dirt -
with the rest of the girls
That's why the lady is a tramp. . .

The patrons dance behind Joe as in a choreographed musical. Joe hands Maggie off to Duke, who spins and dips her. Just when everyone in the restaurant is moving in unison, we hear. . .

SFX: A SMOKE ALARM SOUND

DISSOLVE TO:

We see smoke rising from the grill; the burgers are burning. Duke comes and disables the ceiling alarm with a broom handle.

Joe is leaning against the back wall in a daze.

DUKE
What in hell's bells you doin' to
these poor burgers, son?

JOE
What? Oh. . .sorry pop.

DUKE
GEEZ Louise, you cook the hell
out of a Lottaburger and what do
you have? Not a whole hell of
a lot left, that's what!

Duke cleans the grill and tosses hamburger paddies on it.

Duke flips burgers while Joe watches. Duke puts a burger on a bun that is sitting on a plate. He sets it on a counter.

DUKE (CONT'D)
(to Maggie)
ORDER UP!
(to Joe)
What in hell's bells you doin'?
You're so spaced out - I swear you
were out last night waiting for
the aliens at the Spaceport.

JOE
WHAT? No. What are you doing, Pop?

Duke sniffs Joe's shirt. Joe has a guilty look on his face.

DUKE
Are you smokin' reefer again?

JOE
No. I don't smoke it anymore.

DUKE
You better not be, son.

Duke scrapes the grill clean. He is more relaxed now.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Maggie and I went out to the
Space Port last night. She thinks
aliens are comin' for us. . .

He uses a hamburger bun to imitate a hovering UFO.

DUKE (CONT'D)
. . .to abduct us, and all that
Burning Man stuff. I think it's a
load of hooey.

He leans out the counter to spot Maggie.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Besides, we didn't see nothin' but
a missile from White Sands. And
that was probably a passenger jet.

Duke leans out and sees MAGGIE flirting with a trucker.

DUKE (CONT'D)
MAGGIE! FOR PETE'S SAKE! ORDER UP!

Maggie turns from the trucker and gives Duke a "I'm not your Lottaburger whore" kind of look. Duke turns to Joe, who is flipping more burgers. Joe puts a burger on a bun and Duke puts condiments on it and sets it on the metal pick-up counter.

DUKE (CONT'D)
GET THESE DANG ORDERS BEFORE
THEY GET FROSTBITE!

Maggie comes to the window, smiles, and picks up the plates.

MAGGIE

GEEZ, Duke, I ain't your dog.

(To Joe)

Listen, honey, don't take after your old man. He's the original nut-job.

Joe nods his head and waves as she turns to go.

JOE

Don't worry, I won't.

DUKE

Don't flirt with my girlfriend.

JOE IS COOKING FRIES. Duke comes to supervise him.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Careful with that. One time I stuck my hand right in the oil and had blisters for weeks.

Joe puts more French fries into the deep oil fryer.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Hell, I know what's eatin' you, son. You're thinkin' about that gal dang Fisherama. You want to go fishin' with those yay-hoos. Am I right?

JOE

I, uh. . .I thought I might catch Old Granddaddy. . . .

DUKE

GEEZ-Louise, son. You ain't gonna catch that walleye. He's too damn smart.

Joe flips a burger. Duke takes a plate that has buns on it and Joe places the burger on a bun, and adds a pile of French fries.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I oughta know, I been trying for years.

JOE

I could win a hybrid car.

DUKE

What are you gonna do with one
of them hybrid environmental cars?
It'll probably smell like French
fry oil or something.

Joe looks a little despondent and Duke relents.

DUKE (CONT'D)

You think you can catch Granddaddy?

Joe shrugs.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I thought you were into karaoke?

JOE

You know about that?

DUKE

Exactly! It ain't a national secret.
Maggie said you weren't half bad. Of
course, I'm not into it, but a man has
to have some kind of hobby to keep out of
trouble. So when's this fishin' contest?

JOE

Sunday of next week, at Lake Caballo.

DUKE

All right. You can use my boat.
You should use a minnow rig if
you're up there this time of day.

JOE

Thanks Pop.

DUKE

Son, I swear you are the spittin'
image of your mother. Not physically.
Physically, Maggie looks like your
mother, except she has bigger boobs.

Maggie has come to the counter to pick up an order. She smiles.

MAGGIE

That's noteworthy.

She turns away with the plates of food in her hands.

DUKE

Hey, can't a man speak his mind
without a woman listenin' in?

MAGGIE

(from across the room)
We just want to be sure we're
not being disrespected.

AN HOUR LATER

Billie enters the diner and sits at the counter. Joe, who is busing a table, comes and stops by her. She turns on her stool to face him, a menu in her hand.

Their eyes are locked in sexual tension and attraction.

JOE

What are you doing here?

BILLIE

I'm hungry. This is a restaurant.

JOE

I thought you were a vegan?

BILLIE

Do you make salads?

JOE

We have one with bacon bits.

BILLIE

Then take the bacon bits out, please.

Joe shrugs, goes into the kitchen, and begins making the salad. Maggie comes from behind the counter to take Billie's order.

MAGGIE

You decide what you want, hon'?

BILLIE

Yeah. I mean, Joe took my order. (MORE)

She glances at Joe overly long. Joe glances up at her.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
But thanks for asking.

Maggie notes Billie's interest in Joe.

MAGGIE
Are you a friend of Joe's?

BILLIE
We work at the same real estate office.

MAGGIE
He's a nice kid. Nothin' like his dad.

BILLIE
He knows nothing about recycling.

MAGGIE
Maybe you could teach him.

BILLIE
He's actually kind of annoying.

BILLIE
You must really like him, huh?

Billie is surprised she understands, and looks at her.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Why do you say that?

MAGGIE
I been in love a time or two
hon'. You have all the signs.

BILLIE
I'm certainly not in love with him.

MAGGIE
Then why are you blushing?

Maggie smiles and goes to serve other customers.

Billie considers that Maggie might be right. Joe brings her salad,
but she won't look in his eyes.

Joe waits for Billie to look up, but when she doesn't, he turns and
begins to walk away. She looks up and decides to take a risk.

BILLIE

Hey, Joe, I was wondering, do you want to go rock climbing?

Joe stops and comes back to her.

JOE

So you're talking to me now?

BILLIE

I never was not talking to you.

JOE

Okay. . .does it involve ropes?

BILLIE

It's just a sport.

JOE

Are you asking me out?

BILLIE

No, I'm asking you to go climbing.

JOE

So it's not a date?

BILLIE

No.

JOE

Did Leon ask you out?

BILLIE

Leon? He left a crazy voicemail.

JOE

Did you phone him back?

BILLIE

Why do you care whether I did or I didn't phone him? Are you jealous?

JOE

No. You can go out with whoever you want.

BILLIE

Good, because I told him we were going out.

JOE

Rock climbing is not going out. Going to a movie, or dinner is going out. You usually don't die on normal dates.

BILLIE

All I'm asking you to do is go rock climbing. It's safe.

JOE

How'd you even know I would go?

BILLIE

Do you want to go?

JOE

Only if you use ropes.

BILLIE

Climbing isn't sexual, Joe.

JOE

To you maybe. It gets me hot. Like, rock climbing with a virgin.

BILLIE

I'm not a virgin. I just like the Virgin Mary. She rocks.

JOE

Well, I like Virgin Mary's, so we have that in common. Okay, we can go climbing. If I die, promise me I'll go to Heaven.

BILLIE

Fine; I promise you you'll go to Heaven. See you Sunday, at nine? We can meet here and take separate cars.

JOE

Cool. I'll meet you here at nine.

EXT. THE BASE OF A ROCK CLIFF — SUNDAY — DAY

Billie rappels down the rock face. She attaches a rope to Joe's harness in order to belay him. Joe smiles as she attaches the rope to his harness, putting her arms around his waist.

BILLIE

There you go. Are you ready?
Don't be nervous.

JOE

You expect me to climb up there?

BILLIE

That's why it's called "rock climbing."

JOE

If I had known I had to climb cliffs
I wouldn't have come.

BILLIE

Why, what's wrong?

Joe holds up his big thumb.

JOE

You have to ask?

BILLIE

Just look for handholds, and
footholds, and go up.

JOE

Wouldn't it be easier if we both
stayed down here and had sex?

BILLIE

We're not having sex, Joe.
Don't ruin our first date.

Joe begins climbing the cliff. He looks down and is dizzy.
He moves slowly and carefully. He's sweating profusely.

JOE

Ah, so this is a date.

She smiles. Joe continues halfway up the cliff.

BILLIE

YOU'RE DOING GREAT! DON'T LOOK DOWN!

JOE

IF I GET TO THE TOP WE DO IT, RIGHT?

BILLIE
DEFINITELY NOT!

Joe looks down and has vertigo. He inhales and exhales slowly and continues climbing. He is sweating profusely.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
YOU'RE DOING GREAT!

Joe slips and slides down a few feet.

JOE
I DON'T THINK I CAN DO THIS!

BILLIE
YOU CAN DO IT! KEEP GOING!
YOU'RE HALFWAY THERE!

Joe reaches the top and collapses on the ground. He is lying on his back, panting.

A minute later Billie arrives and sits next to him. She is not at all winded, and appears fresh, and beautiful.

JOE
How did you do that?

BILLIE
I've done this a lot.

JOE
Hopefully this is my last time.

BILLIE
It's easier to go down.

JOE
That's a comfort. Whoa.
(beat)
My god, you are so pretty.
Most people look like crap
in the daylight, but you
look like a cover model of
Mother Earth magazine, or
Whole Earth something.

They are silent taking in the view of the countryside.

BILLIE

Thanks, that's sweet.

JOE

I'm all sweaty and gross and you look like that. Why would you want to do anything with me?

BILLIE

Maybe I see you as a bad boy. They say girls like bad boys. Do you have any bad tattoos?

JOE

I smell bad, that's as bad as I get. Why did you move to New Mexico?

BILLIE

It's sunnier than Oregon.

JOE

Doesn't your family miss you?

BILLIE

My parents died two years ago.

JOE

Oh. . .I'm sorry.

BILLIE

They died in a car wreck.

JOE

Whoa. My mom died in a car wreck.

BILLIE

Really? What was her name?

JOE

Nancy.

BILLIE

That's a nice name.

Billie moves next to Joe, leans over, and kisses him.

JOE

I didn't even think you liked me.

BILLIE
I've liked you even when you were
yacking on the highway.

JOE
Yeah?

BILLIE
And you sing nice.

JOE
When have you ever heard me sing?

BILLIE
At Jim-Bob's the other night.

Joe doesn't know what to say.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
I put the ad about the karaoke
contest in your in mail slot.

JOE
OH GOD, I am the biggest loser.
I thought I saw you there. Why
didn't you stay? I won! We could
have hung out and stuff.

BILLIE
I was shy. I left early.

They kiss again.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
You were great. Really. You should
try to sing your own songs.

EXT. A VIEW FROM THE BASE OF THE CLIFF

JOE (O.C.)
Maybe. Now can we have sex?

BILLIE (O.C.)
NO. We have to rappel down now.

EXT. BILLIE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Billie's house is bigger than Joe's house, and also in the Spanish architectural style. It has steps leading up to the front door.

Joe pulls his Cadillac next to Billie's van. Joe gets out of his car and he and Billie walk to the front door.

JOE
Whoa. . .nice house.

BILLIE
You want to come in for tea?

JOE
Sure.

INT. THE FOYER OF BILLIE'S HOUSE

BILLIE
Thanks, I had fun today.

JOE
Me too. Sorry if I came on too strong.

BILLIE
You know you're not getting any.

JOE
I know. I'm playing with your head.

INT. BILLIE'S LIVING ROOM

Joe and Billie enter the room through a bead curtain archway.

JOE (CONT'D)
Whoa. . .mondo retro.

BILLIE
My boyfriend was a hippie dude.

Joe looks at posters of 1960's icons on the walls. Billie's photos are displayed on the walls and Joe stops to look at them.

JOE
I like this photo. Did you take it?
It reminds me of the work of Ansel Adams.

BILLIE
I love photography.

JOE
You ought to sell in a gallery.

BILLIE
Maybe one day. That would be cool.

Billie goes into the kitchen, Joe sits on the couch. Billie leans her head out and holds up one box of tea.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Sorry, I only have licorice root tea.

JOE
That's cool. I like licorice.

Moments later Billie comes with the tea, two saucers, and a plate of greenish tinted brownies. Joe picks up a brownie, and takes a bite. He smiles as he is eating it.

JOE (CONT'D)
Whoa, this brownie is awesome! It's slightly green colored. Weird, huh? Did you put kale in them or something?

BILLIE
Yeah, they're special brownies.

Joe doesn't get her meaning immediately.

JOE
Oh. . .you mean they're "special" brownies. Then I'd better eat all of them, huh? I thought you didn't smoke reefer?

He picks up the serving plate and feigns to chow down on them. He puts two brownies on his saucer.

BILLIE
I don't smoke it. I bake with it, sometimes. It's pretty harmless.
(beat)
Joe, have you ever had a serious relationship with a woman before?

JOE
No, but I've had dating site misadventures.

Joe takes a big bite of brownie. He is smiling more.

BILLIE

Like what kind of misadventures?
Did you date someone who had a
goat or something?

JOE

(laughs)

Yeah, like a house goat. And it
would stand on top of the couch
and stare at me with it's strange
square irises, like a demon.

BILLIE

Really?

JOE

Nah, I'm jiving you.

(beat)

Um, last year I met a Russian
woman who looked just like that
sexy blonde from that film, 'Young
Frankenstein.' Terri something.

BILLIE

Yeah, Terri Garr, the "Do you want
to roll in zee hay?" girl.

JOE

Yeah. Heh, heh. What was I saying?

BILLIE

About the Russian woman, and how
she looked like a young Terri Garr.

JOE

So, like, she showed up forty-five
minutes late for our date. And she
walks in with like, every dead animal
pelt hanging off her, Doctor Zhivago like.
She said white people like me, from
Nordic lands, shouldn't eat mangoes,
just root vegetables. Like turnips.

Billie is eating a brownie, smiling at how high Joe is.

BILLIE

Sounds like a nut job. Do you really like my brownies?

Joe picks up another one and eats it in two bites.

JOE

God, yeah, I could eat them all.

BILLIE

You'd be so high you wouldn't be able to drive home.

JOE

Are you saying I'm a lightweight?

BILLIE

You totally are. So what other dates?

JOE

Once I met a professor of geology who was like, way tall. She played ping-pong like a pro, and had huge hands and feet. Huge guy hands!

BILLIE

(laughs)

Yeah? Whoa.

JOE

Yeah, she stalked me on a dating site for over a year, and convinced me to take tango lessons with her. So we went on like five dates to this private studio, and were taught tango by this way hot blonde.

(beat)

So, like we're dancing, right? and her sweat smells like a dude, but it hadn't clicked on in my head that she was a dude.

(beat)

So, like, I had her over to my house for fish tacos. I mean, I made sure the toilet seat was down before she came over, you know? And after dinner she tells me she used to be a DUDE! I was horrified!

BILLIE

(laughs)

NO! UGH! GROSS!

JOE

She said she was born in the wrong body,
and that if we'd have made love I would
not have known the difference between
her pocket pizza and the real deal.

(beat)

I mean, I didn't realize she was a dude!
It made me wonder what was wrong with
me that I totally missed that. Whoa!

Joe puts two brownie's in his mouth at once.

BILLIE

(laughs)

That's enough brownies for you, mister.

Joe's mouth is full. He playfully bops her with a pillow and they
have a pillow fight, which ends with a kiss.

JOE

I am so stoned right now!

BILLIE

Yeah. Joe, I was wondering. . .
do you ever write your own songs?

JOE

Yeah, I've written a dozen or so.
most of them suck, but a few don't.

BILLIE

I'd like to hear them. I have a guitar
in my bedroom. Will you play me one?

JOE

In your bedroom? Are you trying to
seduce me, babe? Because if you are
that is totally okay with me.

She smiles, and shakes her head 'no.' She takes his hand and leads
him down a hallway. They pass through another bead curtain.

JOE (CONT'D)

Whoa, I'm having a bead flashback.

INT. BILLIE'S BEDROOM

They enter the bedroom and sit on the bed. Billie hands him her guitar and he tunes it. He begins playing a melody.

BILLIE

It was my dad's guitar.

JOE

So, do you play guitar?

BILLIE

A little. That's nice. Does it have words?

JOE

(sings)

Smile – let me take your picture
 I will try to capture –
 your pretty face
 Here – in this magic hour,
 I feel the power, of our embrace
 Bop-bah-dah-bop-bah
 Bop-bah-dah-bop-bah, bah-dop
 Smile – look into the camera
 No one understands ya –
 just like I do
 You – shining just like sunshine
 and I'm feeling so fine –
 being with you. . .
 Bop-bah-dah-bop-bah. . . .

Joe stops and smiles at her.

BILLIE

I love it. Is there more?

JOE

Yeah, but I forgot the next lines.

She kisses him and Joe lays back and closes his eyes. In just seconds he is sound asleep. Billie nudges Joe but he is out.

AN HOUR LATER.

Billie has taken a shower. She is combing her wet hair, while seated at her 1930s style wardrobe, that has a round mirror. She wears a silk bathrobe. She glances at Joe while she combs her hair. Joe wakes, rolls over and smiles proudly at Billie, certain they've made love. Billie is amused by Joe's silly, proud expression.

BILLIE

Hi, did you have a nice sleep?

JOE

Oh yeah. It was awesome.
Hey. . .babe, that was hot.

BILLIE

What was hot, 'BABE'?

JOE

Our shagilicious soiree; our tryst,
like, when I parted your Red Sea, and
entered the Promised Land.

BILLIE

Do you seriously think we MADE LOVE?
You just ate too many brownies.

JOE

You're saying we didn't do it?

BILLIE

You fell asleep, Joe. Nothing happened.

JOE

Do the math! We added the bed, subtracted
clothes, and hopefully we didn't multiply.

BILLIE

We didn't do anything, Joe.

JOE

That's too bad because I might be falling
in love with you. I've never made love to
someone I actually loved. How sad is that?

BILLIE

You love me?

JOE

Really, I think I'm in like with you.

BILLIE

I've liked you from when you yacked on my
van. But my boyfriend broke my heart, so
we're going to take it slow.

JOE

Yeah, cool. But, are you ever going to you know, sleep with me?

BILLIE

I don't sleep with guys on the first, second, or third date. I was raised with morals. I'm a good girl. How many girls have you known with murals of the Virgin Mary inside their vans?

JOE

None. So, okay, let's take it slow. That takes all the pressure off.

BILLIE

I'm in no hurry to get my heart broken.

JOE

Me either. That would suck.

Joe gets out of bed and goes to Billie. They kiss.

JOE (CONT'D)

You're extremely awesome.

BILLIE

You too. But I'm not sure why, yet.

She laughs, and begins tickling him.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

And don't forget about our bet.

JOE

But we already went on a date, so it's totally null and void.

BILLIE

What's the matter, are you wussing out?

INT. HARGROVE & SVENSON — MONDAY MORNING

Joe is at his desk shredding paper.

WAYNE HARGROVE walks by, and Joe catches up with him. Hargrove glances at Joe and Joe smiles in a silly way.

JOE
Excuse me. . .Mister Hargrove?

Wayne Hargrove stops and turns to Joe.

HARGROVE
Yes? What is it?

JOE
Uh. . .I was speaking with. . .
I mean, I was just wondering
if this company recycles. . .

HARGROVE
Recycles?

JOE
Yeah, I mean I shred a lot of
paper and. . . .

HARGROVE
Hmm. . .I don't remember you.
What did you say your name is again?

JOE
Joe. . .Joe Bloughstein. I work in that
gray cubicle over there.

Hargrove starts walking again and Joe follows alongside him.

HARGROVE
And how long have you been here, Joe?

JOE
Uh. . .almost two years, sir.

HARGROVE
Ah. We've never recycled, and we've
got along just fine. Okay?

JOE
Yes sir, but I was thinking if we could
recycle, we could save a lot of money.
We could even get a couple electric cars.

They arrive at the stairs that lead to Hargrove's office. Connie stands at the bottom of the stairs with a steno pad in hand.

HARGROVE

Son. . .you just keep on thinking.
We always need thinkers around here.
(to Connie)

Good morning, Connie! Did we hear
back from the development committee
on that new addition proposal?

CONNIE

Yes, Wayne, uh, sir. A letter
arrived from them today.

Hargrove leaves Joe behind, and he and Connie ascend the stairs.
Hargrove slides his hand across her bum and she giggles.

Joe watches them for a moment and walks back to his desk. He looks
frustrated. Billie comes alongside him.

BILLIE

Hi Joe! How are you?

JOE

Oh, hi Billie. I'm fine.

BILLIE

Did you have fun this weekend?

JOE

Totally. Even the rock climbing.

They have arrived at Joe's desk. Joe and Billie stop momentarily.
They are standing close to each other.

BILLIE

I thought you would phone me.

JOE

Uh, it's been like one day since our
date. Is it a rule to phone after a date?

BILLIE

It's not a hard and fast rule, Joe.
Are you mad we didn't make love?

JOE

No, I'm just lousy about relationships.
The last regular girlfriend I had dumped
me. I don't deal with rejection very well.

BILLIE

Are we in a relationship?

JOE

I don't know. I'm no expert.

She backs away from him.

BILLIE

Look, I like you, okay? I thought we were boyfriend-girlfriend. You think about that and get back to me.

She turns and walks toward her cubicle. Joe follows her and goes into her cubicle. She is sitting down, typing on her computer keyboard, not looking at him. She stops when she realizes he is just standing there looking at her.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

WHAT?

JOE

I'm not the sharpest tool in the shed. I'm getting a vibe like you're pissed. So what's up with that?

BILLIE

I'm not pissed. It's fine. Go chase some loose chick, and satisfy your urges. But if you do don't expect me to hang around.

JOE

Whoa, settle down, Billie. Geez. Take a chill pill. Mellow out.

BILLIE

Don't you have work to do?

JOE

I totally do, but I wanted to ask you if you were going to the office party this Friday.

BILLIE

Friday? You didn't return my texts, so I figured you weren't into me.

JOE

Oh, geez; sorry. So, do you want to go or not? I'll be totally cool. I won't even try to feel your boobs.

BILLIE

(laughs)

Well, you don't have to sugar coat it.

JOE

Pay no attention to the dude you were just talking to. He's kind of an insensitive jerk sometimes.

BILLIE

(laughs)

You are kind of a jerk. Okay, sure, I'll give you another shot.

JOE

Great. I'll totally see you at seven. And, like, you can text me, and like, I'll totally friend you on Facebook.

She smiles, and he returns to his cubicle.

Leon comes to Joe's desk and sets a box of paper on it.

LEON

Did you go out with Billie?

JOE

Yeah. Not that it's any of your business, dude.

LEON

Did you get nooky?

JOE

(whispers tersely)

DUDE! THAT IS SO UNCOOL TO ASK THAT.

LEON

Sorry. Did you make love?

JOE

Like I would tell you, dude. Some things you just don't talk about.

LEON

Don't you want to boast? Like,
it's okay if you want to. I won't
judge you. I would boast.

JOE

We just went climbing.

LEON

Did you get your rocks off?
Did you climb her mountain?

JOE

DUDE! NO! We rappelled.

LEON

Did she use ropes?

JOE

Of course, you have to.

LEON

That's so hot, like habaneras.

Leon hands Joe a section of the local newspaper.

LEON (CONT'D)

Hey, Joe, there's a karaoke contest at
Jim-Bob's on Friday. The winner gets five-
hundred dollars and a trip to Albuquerque.

Joe reads the ad about the karaoke contest with interest.

JOE

WHOA. . .AWESOME!

EXT. THE HIGHWAY BY JOE'S HOUSE — EARLY TUESDAY MORNING

MUSIC: A 'ROCKY' TYPE OF THEME SONG

Joe comes from his house. He wears lime green running shoes,
headband, sweatshirt, and gray sweatpants. He tries to stretch but
he is obviously out of shape and stiff. He has his work clothes in
the backpack. He begins jogging to work. He jogs for about a
hundred yards and has to stop to catch his breath.

JOE

Frickin-A!

He goes back to his house and gets his old red bicycle. As he peddles, he repeats a mantra.

JOE (CONT'D)

I am. . .going. . .to lose. . .
 twenty pounds. . .by. . .Friday.
 I am. . .going. . .to lose. . .
 twenty pounds. . .by. . .Friday.

INT. AT JOE'S DESK AT WORK - MORNING

Joe sweats heavily. His office clothes are drenched. Leon comes by with a stack of paper, and sets it on Joe's desk.

LEON

Whoa, buddy! Are you sick?

JOE

Totally. I rode my bike to work.

LEON

You biked? It's fifteen miles from your house to here. Are you trying to be Lance Armstrong?

JOE

Nobody wants to be Lance Armstrong anymore, dude. I have a bet with Billie to lose twenty pounds.

Billie sees Joe and Leon, and comes up to them.

BILLIE

God, Joe, what happened?

JOE

Nothing happened. I'm just sweating. I am on the fast track to change.

BILLIE

You should change. You stink.

JOE

Not my B.O., Billie. My life. I need to get serious. I need to change my diet, and set goals.

BILLIE

Is this about the bet?

JOE

That's right, sister. I am losing that twenty pounds.

BILLIE

It's no big deal. Forget it.

JOE

No, no. I want to change. You're right. I'm a slacker. Listen, can you give me a list of all the food I should be eating? I'm serious. I mean that organic food.

LEON

(to Billie)

Whoa, sure. My god, you are trying. Won't you miss all that red meat?

JOE

The new Joe has left the old Joe behind. You'll like me even better. And I'll be a little thinner.

INT. JOE'S CAR – FRIDAY NIGHT

Joe and Leon are driving to Billie's house.

LEON

You look good. You even fit in your sparkling red suit. You have inspired me, but I miss the old Joe. Who am I supposed to eat junk food with now?

JOE

Life is all about change. I've had my epiphany.

LEON

Does your epiphany include getting Billie as your girlfriend?

JOE

I suppose so. I have no idea.

LEON

You have no idea because you have
amnesia from falling off a cliff?

JOE

DUDE, you're annoying.

LEON

Si, it's a gift, just like your thumb.

JOE

Don't mention my thumb.

LEON

You dropped twenty pounds but your
thumb looks the same size. Weird.

EXT. BILLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Billie comes from her house and Leon opens the passenger door for
her. She sits in the front seat and he closes the door.

BILLIE

Thank you kind sir.

LEON

Your dress is lovely. You look
like a beautiful desert flower
I saw once when I was a boy.

BILLIE

You're such a gentleman, Leon.
You should have a date. Why don't
you have a sweet senorita?

LEON

I will find one. It is my destiny.

Joe pulls away from Billie's house. Leon nudges his shoulder.

JOE

Uh, you look awesome, Billie.

BILLIE

Thanks. I just bought this dress after
work. It only cost ten bucks at a thrift
store in downtown. Pretty swanky, huh?
Hey, Joe, I really like your red jacket.

JOE

Thanks. You look seriously fine too.

LEON

Billie, you are like a fairy princess,
and we are the enchanted toads.

BILLIE

Toads? Really? Toads?

LEON

Si, you look good enough to eat, just
like Cinderella in that fairy tale.

JOE

Dude, nobody ate Cinderella.

LEON

I would eat her, and she would taste
like the Mexican pastries my mom used
to make. So deliciously sweet my taste
buds would have an all-night party.

Joe and Billie crack up laughing.

INT. WAYNE HARGROVE'S MANSION - NIGHT

Hargrove's mansion is a contemporary Spanish style villa. We hear the sounds of a live band playing cover songs. DICK SVENSON and Wayne Hargrove smile at Joe, Billie, and Leon as they enter. Svenson is about eighty years of age, and tall and thin.

BILLIE

I'll get us some drinks.

Billie goes to the bar and Joe and Leon watch the dancers.

JOE

Leon, I don't want to stay too
long. . .I'm going to Jim-Bob's
karaoke competition tonight.

LEON

No problem, give me your keys.
I'll be your dedicated driver.

JOE

That's 'designated' driver.

LEON

That's what I said.

Leon shrugs. Joe drops his keys in Leon's outstretched hand.

AT THE BAR

Dick Svenson is sitting alone on a barstool, obviously tipsy. He smiles in a flirtatious way at Billie.

A BARTENDER comes to take Billie's order.

BARTENDER

What can I get you, miss?

BILLIE

Two martinis, and a Bloody Mary, please.

The bartender nods and Billie turns to Svenson.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Hello, Mister Svenson.

SVENSON

Hello dear. You look fresh as a daisy. I have a mind to pick you.

He suddenly grabs her butt and she jumps back.

SVENSON

(laughs)

Yup. . .fresh as a daisy!

Billie gets the drinks and rushes back to Joe and Leon.

BILLIE

Svenson's a dirty old man!

They look at him and he is smiling, and waving to Billie.

LEON

Si, he has lost his marbles, and they cannot be found. I saw him speaking to a plant at work.

BILLIE

He grabbed my butt a second ago!

LEON

He's a cute old guy! And he's
completely lost his mind.
(he waves at Svenson)
He's going to be locked up soon
in a retirement home.

TEN MINUTES LATER

Joe, Billie, and Leon are dancing on the dance floor.

AN HOUR LATER

EXT. ON THE PATIO

Joe sits at a table on the patio. The patio overlooks a large swimming pool and a half-dozen people are in the pool. Billie walks unsteadily from the house, and sits at Joe's table.

BILLIE

Are you going to be a party pooper?
You just wandered away.

JOE

Look, I know if I hang out by the bar
I'll never make it to the karaoke gig.
I can't get boozed up like I used to.
I have to get psyched up for singing.

BILLIE

Don't worry; you'll do fine. I'll keep you
sober, and we'll all go to the contest
together. You don't have to leave for an
hour. C'mon, loosen up! You look so nice
in your sparkly red suit. And thinner.
I might even do you later, handsome.

JOE

No, you go ahead. Dance with Leon. I'll
be there in a minute.

BILLIE

Okay, but don't be long or I'll come
get you and make you skinny dip. Hah!

She smiles in a tipsy sort of way, and goes inside. He lights up a joint and takes a few tokes. He is smiling and feeling good.

DICK SVENSON comes from the house and sits at his table. Joe tries to hide the joint, and his thumb, and uses his left hand.

SVENSON
How about a toke, sonny?

JOE
WHAT?

SVENSON
Don't worry, I won't nark on you.

Joe shrugs and hands him the joint.

SVENSON
I toke all the time. I have a card for it. It helps my glaucoma, and PTSD from Korea and Vietnam.
(beat)
Reefer in Vietnam was a whole hell of lot stronger than here. You could be higher than a kite after two tokes, singing Hendrix songs, not caring you were being shot at.

INT. INSIDE THE HOUSE

Joe wanders inside the house. He is feeling no pain. Billie is dancing with Leon, and she waves at Joe. He smiles and waves back. Joe goes up a flight of stairs to the second floor.

He hears a woman crying nearby and goes into a darkly lit room to investigate.

IN AN UPSTAIRS MUSIC ROOM

Joe enters and sees Connie sitting alone at a grand piano. There is a bottle of brandy sitting on the piano next to her.

CONNIE
(raises a glass to him)
Cheers.

JOE
Hi Connie. What's up?

Connie wipes her eyes and looks up at him.

CONNIE

I'm drowning in my sorrows.
Care to throw me a lifejacket?
(lifts the brandy bottle)
I don't know if I can finish this
all by myself. Where's your glass?

JOE

No thanks. Booze isn't the answer.
You should try exercise. I rode my
bike to work all week. I feel great!

CONNIE

God, I hate exercise! Ugh! But you
do look thinner. Wow. And I love
that suit. Gee. Hey, tell me something -
am I pretty? Tell me the truth.

Joe sits on the piano bench beside her.

JOE

Are you kidding? You're amazing.
You're beautiful, Connie! You're
the prettiest woman in Las Cruces.

CONNIE

Really? So, why won't Wayne, um,
Mr. Hargrove, marry me? Is my ass
too big? Are my tits too big? Why?

She fills her glass and takes a drink. She leans against Joe and he
puts his arm around her.

JOE

Why? Because he's an idiot!

He takes her bottle and sets it on the floor.

JOE (CONT'D)

He doesn't appreciate you.

CONNIE

He said he doesn't love me.
Can you imagine? I've had sex
with him a thousand times!

JOE

Whoa, he's obviously insane.

CONNIE
 (laughs)
 Yeah. . .he is.

Joe starts toying with the keys on the piano. He plays a simple version of Sinatra's hit, ONE MORE FOR THE ROAD.

JOE
 It's quarter 'til three
 There's no one in the place
 'cept you and me. . .
 So set 'em up Joe
 I've got a little story. . .
 I think you should know. .
 We're drinkin' my friend, to the end
 of a brief episode. . .
 Make it one for my baby
 and one more for the road. . .

CONNIE
 You have a nice voice. Wow.

JOE
 Yeah, a little rough, but. . .

CONNIE
 You're cute. I like that big old
 thumb of yours. It's sens. . .sensual.

Connie takes Joe's thumb and sucks it. Joe pulls his hand back and stands. Connie gets up and stumbles a bit. Joe steadies her. Connie takes Joe by his hand. She opens a bedroom door and pulls him in with her. Joe glances back, terrified and thrilled by the situation. He shuts the door.

INT. THE BEDROOM

There is a large mirror over the enormous bed. The room is decorated with heavy Spanish colonial style furniture, and gaudy chandeliers.

Connie pulls Joe to the bed, and they fall into it. They lay momentarily on their backs. Joe notices the mirror.

JOE
 Whoa, that is one big mirror. This
 mirror is bigger than my bedroom.
 It's almost bigger than my house! (MORE)

Connie smiles and gets on top of Joe. Joe pulls her dress away from his face so he can breathe. She leans down and kisses him on the mouth. Joe is a bit uncomfortable, and tries to sit up.

JOE (CONT'D)

Connie, let me up. We are so going to get busted.

CONNIE

Don't worry about it. Nobody knows we are up here. And we'll. . .shhhh. . .be quiet. So. . .let's get you out of those clothes, and get this party started. Hmm?

She begins to pull off Joe's jacket, and unbuttons his shirt. Joe rolls her off of him and she giggles.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Oh, so you like it rough. . .whee!

Connie passes out.

JOE

Connie? CONNIE?

She wakes up and wraps her arms around his neck and kisses him.

CONNIE

Make love to me, Joe. . .

JOE

No, I can't, I've got to go. . .

CONNIE

Right here, on this bouncy thingy.

She rubs his chest. He is flustered and is trying to pull away when Billie comes into the room and sees them. She comes near the bed.

BILLIE

JOE? What are you doing in here?

Joe is on top of Connie. Connie smiles at Billie.

CONNIE

Hey! How you doin'? Wanna join us?
The more the merrier! Come on!
You can fit right here beside us!

BILLIE
NO THANKS! Have fun, Joe!

Billie turns to leave and Joe slides off the end of the bed.

JOE
Billie? Where are you goin'?

BILLIE
I'm leaving you with Connie.

JOE
I was just playing her a song,
and things got out of hand.

BILLIE
Looks like you played me too.

Joe comes to the edge of the stairs and watches her go. Connie comes to the doorway and holds onto it for support.

CONNIE
Is she your girlfriend or something?
Whoa, she is so frickin' uptight.

JOE
Tell me about it.

Connie comes from behind Joe and wraps her arms around him. We hear a little snap and she holds up her bra in front of him.

CONNIE
Forget her; we've got us. . .mister.

She takes Joe by the hand and he is unable to resist her. She pulls him back into the bedroom.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR MOMENTS LATER

Billie comes up to Leon, who is dancing with three women.

LEON
HEY BILLIE! This music is hot, hot,
no? The chicks all love me. Sober chicks
never love me. Booze is the love drug.

BILLIE
I WANT TO GO HOME NOW!

LEON

NOW? But the music is so enormously good,
and retro. Uh. . .where's Joe?

BILLIE

Joe's busy with Connie. C'mon. Let's get
out of here before I drink myself to death.

She pulls Leon by the hand and he waves goodbye to the women he is
dancing with. Billie and Leon go to the front door.

LEON

We should say goodbye to somebody or
something. It is impolite to simply
leave without saying something to
somebody.

BILLIE

SCREW THEM ALL!

EXT. BY JOE'S CAR

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Do you have Joe's keys?

LEON

(holds up keys)

Si, I'm his denigrated driver.

BILLIE

GOOD — LET'S GO!

They get in the car. Leon is at the wheel.

LEON

Is Joe coming?

BILLIE

He's busy doing Connie!

She points to a bedroom window. From their POV we can see the
silhouettes of Connie and Joe in the bedroom window.

LEON

Oh. . .buddy. . .how could
you do this to Billie? Whoa.

INT. THE UPSTAIRS BEDROOM IN HARGROVE'S HOUSE

Joe and Connie are on the bed. She kisses him and he goes along with it, but then he stops and rests his head against her chest.

CONNIE

Joe? Hey, c'mon babe. Joe?

JOE

I can't; I'm sorry.

CONNIE

Sure, just take off your shorts. . .
and, god, let me touch that thumb!
Oh! My god. . .it's so BIG!

JOE

Sorry; I'd be thinking about Billie.

Connie wraps her legs around his waist. He struggles to get away.

CONNIE

That's cool. Just give it to me!
You can call me Billie, tonight. Whee!

JOE

Connie? C'mon, let go of me.

CONNIE

Just do me, you big thumbed
piano man!

Joe breaks loose and stands. He is struggling to put his pants on.

Connie, thinking he is teasing her, goes on all fours to the foot of the bed and grabs one of his legs.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I love your legs. Agh. . . .
I love your gigantic thumb.
Oh GOD, it's so FRICKING HUGE . . .

She is licking the back of his bare leg.

JOE

(laughs)

Stop! That tickles. . .CONNIE?

He is making his way to the door, dragging her behind him.

CONNIE

Where are you GOING, JOE?
I NEED YOU! I WANT YOU!

JOE

Connie, CONNIE. . .you are
a VERY sexy woman. . .but. . .

CONNIE

But what? Just tell me what you
want me to do and I'll do it!
Whatever you like, baby. Just
get back in bed. . .or we can start
right here on the carpet. . .YEAH!

She tries to pull down his boxers, and he is holding them up.

JOE

NO! STOP! You're drunk, you'll
hate yourself in the morning!
Besides, I love Billie!

He pulls loose and opens the door. He pulls up his pants.

CONNIE

What's love got to do with it?

He buttons his shirt and tucks it in. She still clings to him.

JOE

EVERYTHING!

Joe shakes free and exits the bedroom.

CONNIE

UGH! MEN SUCK! Whew. . .

She sits at the foot of the bed, obviously frustrated.

EXT. THE FRONT LAWN OF HARGROVE'S HOUSE

Joe runs from the house and sees his car is gone. Wayne
Hargrove comes and stands at the threshold of the front door.

HARGROVE

IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

JOE

UH, YES SIR. I left my cell phone in my car. And my ride just left. May I use your phone to call a taxi?

HARGROVE

Certainly. Here, use my cell phone.

EXT. JIM-BOB'S KARAOKE LOUNGE – NIGHT

A taxicab pulls up and lets Joe out. He pays the driver and the cab pulls away. He tucks in his shirt, and enters the lounge.

INT. JIM-BOB'S KARAOKE LOUNGE

The karaoke competition is starting. The room is packed. A curly haired teenage boy, DARRELL, with braces, dressed in a McDonald's uniform, has just taken the microphone from Jim-Bob. Joe smiles, certain he will win. He goes to a woman to put his name on the list of contestants. The song, CRAZY, by Gnarls Barkley, begins. Darrell begins singing, and he is not that bad.

DARRELL

I remember when, I remember,
I remember when I lost my mind –
There was something so pleasant
about that place
Even your emotions have an echo
in so much space
And when you're out there without
care, yeah I was out of touch
But it wasn't because I didn't know
enough, I just knew too much
Does that make me crazy
Does that make me crazy, possibly. . . .

Joe sits in the back. He is blown away by the kid's ability. He has ordered a beer and is drowning in self-pity. The song concludes and Jim-Bob comes onstage. The crowd is applauding.

JIM-BOB

SHOOT! I don't know that one.
You got yourself a fine singin' voice.
(to the crowd)
HOW ABOUT DARRELL, HUH?

The crowd continues clapping as Darrell leaves the stage.

JIM-BOB (CONT'D)

We got a few more contestants, so
save your clapping folks. Next up is
Lou. . .Jones. . .?

LOU JONES, a handsome Black cowboy, comes onstage.

JIM-BOB (CONT'D)

All rightee. . .so Lou, what are
you gonna sing for us tonight?

LOU

I'm gonna sing, 'Ring of Fire.'

JIM-BOB

Well, shoot, there's one I know!

The music begins, and Lou has a nice voice.

LOU

Love, is a burning thing
And it makes a fiery ring
Bound by wild desire
I fell into the ring of fire
I fell into a burning ring of fire
I went down, down, down
And the flames went higher
And it burns, burns, burns
The ring of fire
The ring of fire. . . .

AT JOE'S TABLE

Joe is dismayed at how well Lou can sing. He chugs his beer in one
gulp and signals the waitress for another beer.

THE AUDIENCE GIVES LOU A STANDING OVATION.

Lou bows to the audience and Jim-Bob comes onstage.

JIM-BOB

BOY HOWDY! AIN'T THAT A HUMDINGER?
Oh my goodness. . .Whee-ooh.

The audience gives Lou a long applause. Lou tips his hat and
leaves the stage. Joe is chugging another beer.

JIM-BOB (CONT'D)

Settle down now, we got more contestants.

Joe lays his head down on the table and closes his eyes.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. A WRESTLING ARENA — NIGHT

Joe stands in one corner, dressed in a spandex wrestling costume, complete with cape. A BIG THUMB icon is emblazoned on his costume. In the opposite corner stands a tiny old lady, also dressed in spandex. She's holding an old lady type purse. A RING ANNOUNCER stands at the center of the ring.

RING ANNOUNCER
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN — IT'S TIME FOR
THE MAIN EVENT. IN THIS CORNER, WEIGHING
A WHOPPING TWO-HUNDRED POUNDS. . .THE
WORLD CHAMPION, JOE BLOUGHSTEIN!

THE CROWD CHEERS. . .

RING ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
AND HIS OPPONENT, WEIGHING IN AT JUST
EIGHTY-POUNDS DRIPPING WET; TERRIBLE
TESSIE FROM TULSA!

THE CROWD CHEERS. . .

Joe looks at the old lady and smiles, confident of victory. Joe notices, to his amazement, her fingers are extremely long. He and the old lady come to the center of the ring.

RING ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
(to Tessie and Joe)
We want a nice clean fight, eh? They'll be
no gouging, punching, or kicks in the jewels.

A man sets a little round table, and two chairs, in the center of the ring. Joe and Tessie sit and lock their right hands. Joe cannot pin her ridiculously long thumb. She cackles and pins Joe. Joe cannot believe it. We hear JIM-BOB's voice.

JIM-BOB (O.C.)
And next up is JOE BLOUGHSTEIN.
Is JOE BLOUGHSTEIN WITH US TONIGHT?
JOE BLOUGHSTEIN? JOE BLOUGHSTEIN?

END DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. JIM-BOB'S LOUNGE — NIGHT

Joe awakens and realizes it is his turn to perform. He staggers to the stage, smiles foolishly, and stands at the microphone.

He is too inebriated to sing, and he knows it.

JIM-BOB (CONT'D)

Steady there fella.

(to the crowd)

Let's give a warm welcome to Joe everybody! He won last week, and let me tell ya, he's one hell of a singer!

(to Joe)

Give it your best shot, son! Win this and you'll go to Albuquerque!

THE CROWD CHEERS.

JIM-BOB (CONT'D)

So what you gonna sing tonight?

JOE

Umm. . . 'Someone To Watch Over Me.'

The music begins. Joe does a drunken rendition of the song.

JOE (CONT'D)

There's somebody I'm longing to see
I hope that she, turns out to be
someone who'll watch over me. . .
I'm a little lamb who's lost
in the woods. . . I know I could,
could always be good, to one
who'll watch over me. . . .

Joe stops singing and pukes. The crowd boos Joe.

EXT. BILLIE'S HOUSE — NIGHT

INT. JOE'S CAR

Leon and Billie are parked in front of her house drinking beers.

BILLIE

I don't see what he sees in that bimbo.
It makes me sick to think about Joe
being with her. What does she have I don't?

LEON

Men like bimbos. It's a fun word. Bimbo.

BILLIE

Sure, she has a killer body. And she's blonde, and has perfect teeth, but so what?

(beat)

You know, there are some women who would have hate revenge sex over this.

LEON

That would be a really dumb thing to do.

BILLIE

I bet he slept with her. I'd like to grab her by her scrawny little neck and twist it like a pretzel, and. . .

LEON

If you mean it, I will get the mud.

BILLIE

. . . kick her in her perfect little hinny, and rip out her perfect hairdo.

LEON

I have seen some wet tee shirts that would fit you two.

BILLIE

What are you talking about?

LEON

Just the hottest idea ever. Don't stop, what were you saying? I found it so invigorating. It is perhaps the most wonderful idea I have ever heard.

BILLIE

You're talking about mud wresting?

LEON

It might get your mind off of Joe.

BILLIE

UGH! YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK? (MORE)

She gets out of the car and stops to point at Leon.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
MEN ARE PIGS! FILTHY, DIRTY PIGS!

INT. JIM-BOB'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Leon walks into the mostly empty lounge. Joe is sitting alone at his table, with a pitcher of beer in front of him.

LEON
How's it going? Did you win?

Joe is very drunk, and looks up at Leon and smiles.

JOE
NO, I SUCKED! COME HAVE A DRINK
WITH ME, AMIGO! I LOST!

LEON
YOU LOST? HOW? Was it rigged?

JOE
NO. I PUKED ONSTAGE!

LEON
YOU PUKED? WHOA!

JOE
SCREW KARAOKE! HEY! I have good
teeth, don't I? HUH?

Joe shows him his teeth. They are pretty nice.

LEON
Si; they're white as doves.

JOE
RIGHT ON! AND MY OUTFIT ROCKS!
I mean except for the barf.
(beat)
This is my lucky red suit I'd should have
KICKED ASS! I lost weight; I was doing
so good. WHY AM I SUCH A LOSER?

LEON
Beats me. Did you have the lucky rabbit's
foot? I put it in your car.

JOE
YOU STOLE MY CAR, DUDE!

LEON
No, your estranged lover stole it.

JOE
Did Billie make you, dude?
I frickin' love her!

LEON
Si. She said men are like pigs.
She made me drive like the Devil,
and she wore the Prada. All the
while she kept going on about men
being pigs. Are all men, pigs, Joe?

JOE
We are. We totally are. WE'RE PIGS!

LEON
Shh, shh. I tried to get her to
mud wrestle Connie. I thought it
would relieve her tension, but she
would not. She's totally selfish.

JOE
Dude; let me tell you something:
She's a total babe, and the hottest
chick I've ever almost slept with.
I mean, Billie, not Connie.

LEON
You need sexual healing. Let's go
find a juicy whore right now.

JOE
DUDE, I totally want to marry Billie.
I just realized I'm in love with her.

LEON
Whoa. Well, if you all move to Utah,
you can marry Connie AND BILLIE!
(beat)
Oh, here's your cell phone. You left
it in the car.

Joe looks at his cell phone. He sees there is a voicemail from Wayne Hargrove. He listens to the message.

VOICEMAIL MESSAGE
 JOE! THIS IS WAYNE HARGROVE. PLEASE
 PHONE ME TONIGHT!

Joe dials Hargrove's number. We hear Hargrove's phone ringing.

INT. WAYNE HARGROVES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Wayne Hargrove and Connie are in bed. Connie is stroking his sideburns. She kisses his neck as he is on the phone.

HARGROVE
 Hello?

INT. JIM-BOB'S LOUNGE

JOE
 This is Joe. Why did you phone me? Hmm?

INT. WAYNE HARGROVES' BEDROOM

HARGROVE
 This is your boss, WAYNE HARGROVE, you
 drunk little twit. Connie Bonita just
 told me you tried to seduce her!

Connie keeps nibbling on his neck and he sits up to concentrate.

JOE (O.C.)
 WHOA, SIR. . .it wasn't me who. . .

HARGROVE
 ARE YOU CALLING CONNIE A LIAR?

JOE (O.C.)
 Well . . .YEAH! TOTALLY! She's a . . .
 . . .a liar, liar, pants on fire.

HARGROVE
 You just kissed your career at
 Hargrove and Svenson goodbye,
 because. . .YOU'RE FIRED!

Hargrove hangs up the phone. Connie snuggles with him.

INT. JIM-BOB'S LOUNGE

JOE
MISTER HARGROVE? HELLO?

Joe stares at his cell phone, as he realizes what has happened.

LEON
What did that old bastard want?

JOE
I'M FIRED! That bimbo lied to Hargrove.

LEON
I am losing all respect for bimbos.

EXT. HARGROVE & SVENSON BUILDING — SATURDAY MORNING

Billie passes Joe's cubicle and sees Leon cleaning it out.

BILLIE
Where's Joe?

LEON
Mister Hargrove fired him because
he humped Connie. Such a petty thing!
What kind of country is this when you
can't screw the boss's girl?

BILLIE
Did he?

LEON
Mmm. . .Connie said he did, but I think
she lied. That's not Joe's style. Plus,
she is in another league from Joe. Maybe
even in another galaxy.

BILLIE
THAT BITCH!

LEON
Si; and to think we could have fixed
everything with a wet tee-shirt contest,
and some mud. It blows my mind.

Billie goes up the stairs to Mr. Hargrove's office. She comes to
Connie's desk and it is empty. She hears giggling in Hargrove's

office and sees that the door is shut. Billie goes in.

Wayne Hargrove sits at his desk, and Connie is sitting on his lap. At the sight of Billie, Connie gets off Hargrove, and straightens her skirt. Hargrove stands and glares at Billie.

HARGROVE

Didn't anyone teach you to knock,
young lady?

BILLIE

DID YOU FIRE JOE BLOUGHSTEIN?

HARGROVE

DAMN STRAIGHT I DID!

CONNIE

YEAH, AND KNOCK THE NEXT TIME YOU
BARGE IN HERE!

BILLIE

SCREW YOU — YOU WHORE! JOE IS
A DECENT GUY!

Connie comes around the desk, takes hold of Billie's arm, and starts to lead her out.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME!

They struggle, knock over a potted palm, and begin whaling on each other. They go out the open door, and tumble down the stairs. The office staff comes to see what is going on.

Leon gets up from his desk and runs to see the chick fight.

LEON

WAIT, WAIT! I'LL GET THE MUD!
DOES ANYBODY HAVE A CAMERA?

Leon is beside himself with excitement. He goes to the water cooler for a cup of water and scoops dirt from a potted plant. Billie and Connie are wrestling on the carpet. Mr. Hargrove has come down the stairs and is trying to separate Billie and Connie.

Leon has mixed a big batch of mud in a waste can and he dumps it on all three of them. He is smiling, thinking it is great fun. They are shocked and stop to wipe the mud off their faces.

CONNIE
AGH! MY HAIR! AHHH!

BILLIE
UGH!

INT. THE LOTTABURGER – LATE SATURDAY MORNING

The diner is mostly empty. Joe and Leon are sitting at the counter. They have glum expressions. Maggie brings two coffees for them. Duke, a towel draped over his shoulder, sits down on a stool next to Joe.

DUKE
Well, buck up, what's done is done.
No use cryin' over spilled milk.

LEON
I am crying over spilled mud. It could have been so hot, hot. Now, Joe, Billie, and me are unemployed.

DUKE
(to Leon)
You are one strange duck.
(pats Joe's back)
Cheer up, son, you have many more years left to screw up your life. Don't let this derail you. Those A-holes at Hargrove and Svenson are thick as barn doors.

LEON
Si, tell it Mister D!

DUKE
You two better get ready for tomorrow.

JOE
Tomorrow?

DUKE
I got the boat hitched up, and all the bait you need in the fridge.

JOE
I don't feel like fishing. I need to grow the balls to phone Billie.

DUKE

Come on now, I can't have you
two sulking around here all day
tomorrow. Fishin' will help you
sort everything out.

EXT. CABALLO LAKE — SUNDAY MORNING

Joe is in his dad's aluminum boat on the far side of the lake, away from the hundreds of other fishermen. At the boat dock is a banner that reads: "12th Annual Caballo Lake Fisherama." Leon is fishing in a boat about thirty feet away.

LEON

Joe, you are my best friend.
I don't care if we the car or
not. But if I win it, only I
get to drive it.

JOE

Ditto, dude. Every man for himself.

LEON

Bueno. Well, if we're gonna fish,
we should drink beer. I may go
on a beer diet for a month.

Leon rows over and hands Joe two six packs of beer.

JOE

You're trying to get me drunk
so you'll win aren't you?

LEON

You're pretty paranoid. You got
the rabbit's foot?

Joe holds it up for Leon to see.

LEON (CONT'D)

Good; you'll need it, buddy.
Now that you and me and Billie
are fired, I was thinking. . .

JOE

Does it involve mud?

LEON

No, nothing like that. I am thinking we should start our own company. Screw looking for a job.

JOE

What kind of company?

LEON

A record company.

JOE

That's a dumb ass idea.

LEON

I would manage our website. I would be the producer, and Billie could do the promotional stuff.

JOE

Leon, I've got five hundred bucks in the bank. You have maybe a hundred. We barely have enough to buy gas.

LEON

And Billie, don't forget Billie.

JOE

She hates my guts. I sent her a million emails and voicemails since Friday, and she never replied. It's fricking over.

LEON

It's over, unless you catch Granddaddy. Then all your dreams can come true, just like in Bible times with fishes, loaves, and water to wine. Besides, I prayed to the Virgin Mary last night. She is the helper of all fishermen.

LEON

Dude, the Virgin Mary? What has she got to do with fishermen?

LEON

Didn't she live on the Sea of Galilee? And her son's buddies - weren't they fishermen? (MORE)

LEON (CONT'D)

And what about when Jesus did that magic trick with the coin in the mouth of the fish? He was in the business of making fishers of men. Right?

JOE

Okay, you got me there, dude.

LEON

That's what I'm talkin' about. So, fish.

Leon rows a short distance away. Joe opens a beer and chugs it. He casts his line and clamps the pole with a C-clamp to the rail of the boat.

SEVERAL HOURS LATER

Bottles of beer line the edge of Joe's boat. He is half-drunk and lies on his back in the boat and imagines. . .

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A FANTASY TROPICAL CABALLO LAKE

From a POV above the boat, we see Joe is in a tux. The boat has a neon railing; the water is Caribbean blue. Connie, Billie, and six other attractive office girls, are mermaids. They are surrounding the boat and move around it in a choreographed style, like a water ballet team. Joe sings, COME FLY WITH ME.

JOE

Come fly with me, let's fly,
let's fly away
If you can use some exotic booze
there's a bar in far Bombay
Come fly with me, let's fly,
let's fly away!
Come fly with me, let's float down
to Peru
In llama land there's a one-man band
and he'll toot his flute for you. . .
Come fly with me, let's take off
in the blue!

We are now high above the boat, and Joe is flying holding Billie's hand. All seems blissful until. . .

SFX: THE SOUND OF FISHING LINE GOING OUT

DISSOLVE TO:

JOE'S BOAT ON CABALLO LAKE

Joe awakens from his fantasy. The fish is zigzagging in the water, and tangles the line around the propeller. The boat is being slowly towed by Granddaddy, the monster walleye.

JOE
WHOA — LEON! I GOT GRANDDADDY!

Joe, half-drunk, repeatedly pulls on the outboard starter rope to get it to turn over. He reaches to untangle the line.

Leon is rowing his boat toward Joe. He makes the sign of the cross.

LEON
OH BLESSED VIRGIN! HOLD ON!

EXT. IN THE WATER BY JOE'S BOAT

As Joe tries to untangle the line the motor kicks over and the propeller blade SLICES OFF HIS BIG THUMB and the fishing line. Granddaddy takes off. From the fish's POV, we see a blurry image of Joe's thumb tumbling in the air. Granddaddy leaps high in the air to swallow the thumb, which it mistakes for a huge insect.

We see SLO-MO FOOTAGE of the fish in mid-air, it's glistening greenish body twisting, and of Joe staring at his wounded hand.

JOE
AHHHHH!

Granddaddy lands in Joe's boat, as Joe is passing out. At that moment, Leon swoops his net over it, as Joe falls unconscious on his back in the boat. We CLOSE IN on Joe's face and. . .

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM IN LAS CRUCES, NM — THE NEXT MORNING

Joe is waking up. From his POV we see Billie leaning over him.

JOE
BILLIE? Am I in Heaven?

BILLIE

No, you're in a hospital.

JOE

Whoa, I had a terrible dream.
I dreamt I lost my thumb.

BILLIE

Oh. . .you did. . .but you were
lucky. They were able to sew it
back on because it was so big.
Though it's a bit smaller now.

Joe looks at his thumb, now swathed in bandages.

JOE

You mean I. . .

Leon and Duke enter the room.

LEON

The rabbit's foot did its magic!

JOE

So what you're saying is. . .

Duke dangles the keys to the hybrid car in front of Joe.

DUKE

SON — YOU CAUGHT GRANDDADDY!
YOU WON THE DANG CAR!

Leon holds up the front page of a Las Cruces newspaper that
features a photo of Granddaddy, the monster walleye.

BILLIE

Leon told me about his idea.
I mean about us starting a record
company. It's an awesome idea!

JOE

You're either in love or insane.
I thought you thought I'd, you
know, did it with Connie? I didn't
do it. She wanted me to but I
couldn't. I LOVE YOU. I texted you
a million times, but you didn't reply!
I thought you hated my guts again!

BILLIE

You love me?

JOE

I TOTALLY LOVE YOU.

Billie and Joe kiss. It is a long romantic kiss.

BILLIE

I love you too, Joe. You're so not the sort of guy I normally fall for. I can't explain it.

JOE

Billie, how can we start a record company? Where would we have it? Besides, Pop wants me to take over the Lottaburger one day.

DUKE

You've no talent for flippin' burgers.

JOE

Billie, what about selling real estate?

BILLIE

I can do that on the side.

JOE

I think we should make our record company at my place because your place is too cool to change.

LEON

I've got a hot, hot idea for the name of our record company.

CG: TWO MONTHS LATER

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE — DUSK

Joe's house has been expanded and now has a sign on it that reads: BIG THUMB RECORDS.

Joe and Billie come down the front steps dressed in traditional wedding clothes. Leon, Duke, Maggie, and other guests, stand at the entrance, and begin tossing rice on them. Joe and Billie get into the hybrid car Joe won in the Fisherama, and drive off.

From a POV next to the car we see the THUMBS UP RECORDS logo on the front door.

MUSIC TRACK: We hear the opening refrain of I'VE GOT THE WORLD ON A STRING, sung by Frank Sinatra.

MUSIC TRACK

I've got the world on a string
sittin' on a rainbow. . .

The hybrid car passes us by, and heads down the long, straight highway, toward the gorgeous sunset, as the credits roll.

FADE OUT

THE END