

BANK ON ME

by

Michael Kuser

WGAW Registration Number: 1572051
Tel. +90 532 761 6466
michael.kuser@gmail.com

FADE IN:

Credits roll as we see a

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A. Ax chops into tree, bird flies away at sound.
- B. Tall white pine falls in the forest.
- C. Section of tree goes through buzz saw at lumber mill.
- D. Hands set chunks of wood in pick-up truck.
- E. Woodworker at lathe works small piece of wood into gavel shape.
- F. Woodworker taps handle into gavel.
- G. Postal worker places box addressed to U.S. JUDGE LANGSTON ROPER into postal truck.
- H. Postal truck rides into New York on FDR Drive.
- I. Box goes through scanner at Moynihan courthouse service and delivery entrance.
- J. Mailroom clerk sorts mail, hefts box as if guessing at contents, tosses into mail cart with canvas sides. Stenciled on canvas: U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.
- K. LAW CLERK opens package, pulls out handsome gavel.

INT. FEDERAL COURTROOM - DAY

Great Trust Bank CEO JACK SHAMES and former equity desk head TOM ROBSON sit with defense counsel at their trial in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Jack Shames looks cool and confident, but not cocky. He's been trained well. Tom sweats and fidgets, then sees pigeon land on window ledge and strut back and forth. Tom watches as pigeon turns ass over ledge and lets go some bird shit.

COURTROOM CLERK enters through chambers door to left of bench and places new gavel on judge's bench.

Clerk opens door to right of bench and ushers JURY FOREMAN and jury members into jury box.

JUDGE ROPER enters through door to left of bench.

COURTROOM CLERK

All rise! This court is in session,
the honorable Langston Roper
presiding.

Judge Roper arranges robe and sits, motions people to sit, RAPS gavel.

JUDGE ROPER

Jury foreman, has the jury
reached a verdict?

JURY FOREMAN

We have, your honor.

Courtroom clerk takes a piece of paper from jury foreman and hands it to Judge Langston Roper. Judge nods to clerk.

COURTROOM CLERK

Will the defendants please rise.

JUDGE ROPER

In the case of United States versus
Great Trust Bank, the jury finds
Great Trust Bank and its defendant
representatives guilty of criminal
fraud and negligent misrepresentation
for having sold billions of dollars
of worthless mortgage-backed securities
to teacher pension funds. I hereby
set date for levying of fines and
penalties and or sentencing for one
week from today.

Clock in courtroom with tick, tick second hand segues to clock in chambers with smooth movement second hand.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Judge Roper sits at desk and uses mini guillotine to clip cigar in half, then uses it to clip end off first half while male law clerk looks on. Judge steps over to wall, cracks open window, lights tiny cigar and blows smoke out window.

JUDGE ROPER

Find out which state teacher pension fund lost most in these shenanigans, what school district in that state is in worst financial shape, and what town in the district is suffering most.

LAW CLERK

How shall I quantify suffering, sir?

JUDGE ROPER

Hmm, good point... Find out which town has the lowest ratio of working teachers to retired ones, that should do it.

LAW CLERK

We already know which state lost most, among the least able to afford it, or so I imagine... West Virginia.

Law clerk looks at judge for response.

JUDGE ROPER

Well don't just stand there, run your numbers.

Law clerk sits down with laptop while Judge Roper smokes out window. Judge tries to blow a smoke ring but the wind rips it to shreds. The sky is darkening with a summer storm. He sees a seagull glide by.

JUDGE ROPER

Better get on home, big bird.

Law clerk jumps up with laptop.

LAW CLERK

I got it!

JUDGE ROPER

Calm down, son.

LAW CLERK

Yes, sir. Bunton, West Virginia. This town lost over half its manufacturing jobs in recent years, so people are moving away. Bunton has only 21 teachers working now against 117 retired, a more than 5 to 1 ratio.

JUDGE ROPER

Remote place, Appalachian Mountains?

LAW CLERK

I think the way they put it, sir, is...

(in hick accent)

You cain't get thar from here.

JUDGE ROPER

Great!

Judge tosses cigar butt out window and it flies in the wind...

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

A TOURIST in I LOVE NY T-shirt reads a city map. Cigar butt WHACKS into map. Tourist drops map and looks up, flinches at passing seagull. Looks down. Seagull shit SPLATS on smoldering cigar butt.

TOURIST

(looks up,
in hick accent)

Lucky shot, or a volunteer firefighter, like me.

Storm wind picks map up, up, up and we go spinning in thunderstorm sky with the scrap of paper, through clouds into blue sky, higher than an airplane. We arc and turn earthward, descend across Pennsylvania and into West Virginia...

EXT. BUNTON - DAY

We glide into outskirts of town, see two punks walking by old factory, one throws his cola bottle through a window.

We float into town and past Bunton Savings and Loan, past the Bunton County Courthouse, come to beautiful Victorian house with guest house on side lot, go between houses and see elderly GINNY TATE weeding her garden.

We jump another block and see REVEREND DAWSON as he places plastic letters into sign box on lawn to advertise Wednesday evening's sermon:

Ecclesiastes 9:11
The race is not to the swift,
nor the battle to the strong,
neither yet bread to the wise,
nor yet riches to men of...

We ease through the church parking lot past handicapped parking spot and onto football field, see coach with a dozen boys, only three of whom look like real players. A pass bounces off the helmet of a scrawny receiver.

We pull round to front of rundown Bunton High School, where sign board reads: Bunton School Board Meeting - 4:30 p.m Tuesday.

INT. BUNTON HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

We move into school, down hallways and into gym, where the board meeting has broken for coffee. Board president JIM RALEIGH is presiding, seated behind center intersection of two tables set together on creaky parquet floor basketball court. A refreshments table is to the side.

We see many townsfolk who will appear later in the story. School cook ICY DUNCAN sets out tray of doughnuts next to coffee urn. Parents, teachers and other board members get coffee.

School secretary HOLLY BIBB takes coffee and doughnuts to president and to SHERIFF MILNER. West Virginia property taxes go to board of education and are paid to the sheriff of each county, so he's a big wig on the school board.

Teacher LUCY BURGESS, 29, a real beauty, picks a doughnut and grabs a bite before putting it on her paper plate.

LUCY BURGESS

Oh, Mrs. Duncan, you've outdone yourself.

ICY DUNCAN

Honey, you're a teacher now, old enough to call me Icy.

LUCY BURGESS

But you were cook when I went here...
hard to think of you as anything
but Mrs. Duncan...Icy.

Jim Raleigh bangs gavel to bring meeting back to order. Other board members join him at table, PRINCIPAL FINK to his right, as parents and teachers resume seats on a couple dozen folding chairs. One parent is local mechanic, EARL GUMP.

JIM RALEIGH

We saved the most difficult for last, a motion to close the high school. Any comments? As if I have to ask.

DARLENE SIMPKINS raises her hand, mayor's wife, member of school board. Raleigh nods permission to speak.

DARLENE

Well, I'm against closing, but my boy Jimmy wants to play football, and coach says he's having trouble filling the roster this year.

SHERIFF MILNER

Any school that can't field a
football team deserves to die.

LUCY BURGESS

Only an idiot would say the issue
is football...

JIM RALEIGH

(bangs gavel)

Order! You will ask permission to
speak.

Lucy raises hand, Raleigh nods.

LUCY BURGESS

Excuse me, sir. Sorry, Sheriff.

SHERIFF MILNER

That's all right.

JIM RALEIGH

(to Lucy)

You come from a long line of hothea...
um, it ain't your fault, Lucy.

LUCY BURGESS

What I mean to say is, we should
do anything and everything to
keep Bunton High open. You want
to bus your kids to Thrace High
School? It's 12 miles away.

MAYOR BOB SIMPKINS raises his hand.

JIM RALEIGH

Mayor?

MAYOR SIMPKINS

Thrace is already the commercial
capital of this county - close our
high school and you watch, they'll
push through a referendum to take
the county seat from Bunton.

LUCY

What we need is a new business to fill the old factory.

JIM RALEIGH

That's another issue, Lucy.

FINK

We're just in a slump.

ELMER GUMP

Yeah, a 30-year slump.

Jim Raleigh bangs gavel, slams shut agenda book.

JIM RALEIGH

All right, all right, I see we're not getting anywhere with this now. I table this motion...

ELMER GUMP

You gotta vote on it!

JIM RALEIGH

Oh, can it, Elmer. Meeting adjourned. We're not gonna go out of business tomorrow, so let's keep our options open.

INT. GT BANK CEO OFFICE - DAY

Executive assistant ushers Tom Robson into palatial corner office. CEO Jack Shames stands up from desk, waves off assistant.

TOM

Jack, you've been my mentor since I joined the bank, so I figure who better to discuss my options with...

Jack opens case file on desk...

TOM (CONT'D)

No wait, first give it to me straight, am I the fall guy here?

JACK

Our lawyers say the bank will bear the larger guilt, institutionally, and we'll just have to see what the judge says. Of course you can't go back to trading from a felony conviction.

TOM

But will they hang me out to...

JACK

No one's abandoning...

TOM

I've lost the pulse of the bank since I've been sitting in London for two years. I mean, running the European sovereign debt desk, c'mon Jack, you know I've been too busy to even think about New York politics.

JACK

Tom, the main thing is to keep your seat on the gravy train....You can go into corporate management...

TOM

I'm a rainmaker, not a manager...

JACK

Or do private equity without federal oversight requirements...Look at me, I have to leave the Vineyard for this court date. Not only inconvenient, it's embarrassing.

TOM

But you're still on the gravy train.

JACK

We both are, just hold on...the board is going to discuss this matter today.

(looks at watch)

In fact I gotta go.

INT. GREAT TRUST BANK BOARDROOM - DAY

Steam locomotive made of gold sits in center of board table, along with gold replica of power plant and gold replica of dam. The art reflects the history of the bank, which grew on the formation of huge industrial trusts.

Chairman LLOYD RANKIN taps gavel.

LLOYD RANKIN

Our first order of business is this federal case, which I believe our general counsel can outline better than I.

Great Trust Bank General Counsel DILL FOSTER stands to address the board.

DILL FOSTER

No individual has ever gone to prison in the mortgage-backed securities...for the trillions of dollars fiasco...until now. If you want to imagine a game of musical chairs, well, Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns lost big time, no seats left, but now the game's changed.

LLOYD RANKIN

Cut to the chase, Dill. We know your ass is safe.

DILL FOSTER

Likely scenario is \$5 - 7 billion in fines, Tom does some time in a country club prison camp and the CEO is reprimanded.

LLOYD RANKIN

I move that the board vote to set aside \$8 billion for fines and related costs.

BOARD MEMBER

I second the motion. C'mon, we made three times that much on the free loan from Uncle Sam...

LLOYD RANKIN

Vote. Yeas?

All hands go up.

LLOYD RANKIN

The motion passes.

JACK

I'll take Tom off the European
sovereign debt desk in London,
effective immediately...

Outside the window a pigeon flutters around as if examining
site for nest, suddenly a peregrine falcon smashes into it
and all we see are a few feathers swirling round.

BOARD MEMBER

Did you see that?

JACK

Yeah, we take down pigeons every
day here.

LLOYD RANKIN

We're hunters, but city hunters.
We prefer the easy mark, the
sitting duck.

EXT. BUNTON HILLSIDE - DAY

Lucy is walking in woods with her father, HECK BURGESS.
They stop by a small pond on the hillside and look down on
the closed factory that used to employ him and 600 other
men and women.

A wood duck flaps up into a hole in a tree, sticks out its
classic iridescent head.

LUCY

I remember you telling me that the
wood duck makes its home from an
old woodpecker nest.

HECK

That duck is smarter than most of us, just find a house that someone else built and move in.

LUCY

Oh Daddy, you don't mean that.

HECK

Look at me, line foreman... assistant plant manager...now the factory's a ghost town and I can only stumble around the woods like a blind bear...

LUCY

Things'll turn around, Daddy, you watch.

HECK

Been waitin' five years...

They come to fence line and Lucy opens rusted gate...

INT. HOTEL PIERRE - DAY

Tom opens door to luxury suite in Hotel Pierre, welcomes part-time girlfriend AISHA TURNER. She is a gorgeous black Antigua native, posh English accent, and director of Great Trust Bank media relations.

AISHA

Hello, lovey.

(light kiss
on cheek)

Sorry about meeting here, but the management team thinks it will be better for all concerned if we keep our media training off-site.

Aisha waves in two assistants carrying cameras and tape recorders.

TOM

Better for all concerned, but better for some than for others, eh?

AISHA

Who said life was fair? Now let's get right to it, just a refresher course...only because the spotlight will likely fall on you at the sentencing.

TOM

As the one actually being sentenced.

AISHA

As the one nominally in charge of our equity derivatives at the time... now, to acclimate you to flash bulbs...

Aisha nods to assistants, who start camera flashes, click click click.

TOM

(puts up hand
to block light)
And I don't react...

EXT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

News photographers flash intensely as defense team hustles Tom and Jack into courthouse.

INT. FEDERAL COURTROOM (2) - DAY

Scene is much as before. Jack and Tom sit with defense LAWYER, no jury present, and court is already in session. We catch the judge in the middle of his remarks.

JUDGE ROPER

...and usually the man with his hand on the wheel gets convicted and the top man goes away with a slap on the wrist, or on the firm's wrist. This time we're going to reverse that practice.

CEO Jack's eyes widen, he pulls handkerchief from jacket pocket and wipes brow.

JUDGE ROPER (CONT'D)

First of all, I'm levying a fine of \$7 billion on Great Trust Bank, a sum that goes some way toward redressing the wrong done in this case. Now as for the individuals...

Judge nods to Courtroom Clerk

COURTROOM CLERK

Jack Shames, please rise.

JUDGE ROPER

Mister Shames, the court finds you guilty of criminal fraud and your series 7 and series 24 licenses are hereby revoked, effective immediately. I hereby sentence you to two years in a federal penitentiary. You will report to the federal prison camp at Otisville, New York by noon on August 31 to begin serving your sentence. Do you understand, sir?

JACK

Yes, your honor.

JUDGE ROPER

You may sit.

Judge nods again to clerk.

COURTROOM CLERK

Mister Robson, please rise.

JUDGE ROPER

Mister Robson, the court finds you guilty of negligent misrepresentation and your series 7, series 55 and series 63 licenses are hereby suspended for one year, effective immediately. For your part in the fraudulent securities trading instigated by top management at GT Bank, I am sentencing you to a term of community service.

TOM

Yes, your honor.

JUDGE ROPER

You will teach one full academic year at the public high school in Bunton, West Virginia, under a supervisor to be appointed by local school authorities. If you fail to complete your assignment or are fired by the school for any reason, you will be required to report back to this court for additional sentencing at the court's discretion, such sentencing not to exceed that handed down today. Do you understand?

TOM

Yes, your honor. Negligent misrepresentation... uh, that's not a felony, correct, sir?

JUDGE ROPER

This court is not in the habit of sentencing convicted felons to community service, Mister Robson.

TOM

Thank you, your honor.

LAWYER

Your honor, is there any precedent to sentence a man to community service teaching one year in a school in a distant state?

JUDGE ROPER

There is now.

INT. BLOOMBERG TV NEWS STUDIO - DAY

ANCHOR

The Supreme Court today denied consideration of the Great Trust Bank ruling, just two days after the federal court of appeals affirmed Judge Roper's ruling, a rare incident of swift action by the highest court in the land.

INT. BHS OFFICE - DAY

The room is a standard school office with old furniture, old filing cabinets, 10-year-old computer and printer and copier. School secretary Holly Bibb puts down a romance novel as Lucy enters.

HOLLY

He's waiting for you, plans to name you our community service officer, if you know what I mean.

LUCY

I think the whole country knows what you mean.

INT. PRINCIPAL FINK'S OFFICE - DAY

BHS Principal Clyde Fink sits behind desk flanked by West Virginia flag on one side and U.S. flag on the other. He stands as Lucy enters.

FINK

Now before you go off, Lucy, let me tell you, this is a rare opportunity for our students, a banker from New York teaching here. We should avail ourselves of this man's expertise.

LUCY

In what, negligent misrepresentation?

INT. FANCY NEW YORK RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Tom sits alone at a spacious corner booth table for five, stands as Aisha enters alone. She carries two gifts, a corn cob pipe and banjo. They kiss on cheek.

AISHA

The others couldn't make it. Sorry, but your mildly radioactive.

(hands him gifts)

Doesn't mean we can't have a good time here, warming you up for your new life. Teach and learn. I understand some of those hillbillies speak in dialect from Elizabethan times.

Tom groans.

AISHA

Come now. How many hillbillies does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

Tom looks blank.

AISHA

None. They have moonshine.

Tom laughs, but half-heartedly.

AISHA

Look Tom, the bank is still with you, only low profile for now. And your Blackberry has been locked down, nothing personal. Also the management team wants you to have one more behavioral training, but from a consultant. It's a case of corporate containment, again, nothing personal.

TOM

Spare me the PR session, I think I can handle a year of high school without the bank's guidance.

AISHA

They would prefer you to leave the racy BMW in New York, have you lease a boring sedan for the rubes, or better yet, buy yourself an old pick-up.

TOM

Now you're my personal poverty trainer?

AISHA

People will be watching you, including the media. You put Bunton on the map. Speaking of which...

(digs out
iPhone)

look on the bright side, real estate is cheap there.

(shows picture
of Ginny Tate's
house)

This one's even got a separate guest apartment. Imagine, you can get a beautiful old Victorian house in Bunton for less than the price of my bathroom in Manhattan.

INT. BURGESS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lucy in pajamas brushes her hair in the upstairs bathroom of her parents' home while mother AMANDA stands in doorway.

AMANDA

There's still time for you to get out of Bunton while the getting is good.

LUCY

Oh, mom.

AMANDA

What? Look at you, beautiful, and still young enough to find a beau in the big city, maybe Cincinnati or Charlotte.

LUCY

Some city-slicker from London is buying Granny's house and she's kicking me out. Is that what it is, you don't want the baby bird back in the nest?

AMANDA

Really, child.

LUCY

And whoever heard of a British person moving to Bunton? But the real question is where am I going to live?

AMANDA

No, the real question is where's Granny going to live.

LUCY

Granny says the buyer may let her stay on in the guest house.

AMANDA

Why does my mother tell you more than she does me, her own daughter?

LUCY

She likes your garden, but I don't think she wants to watch Dad sitting in a coma in front of The Young and the Restless.

AMANDA

He calls it The Young and the Rest of Us.

EXT. BUNTON STREET - DAY

Lucy walks toward beautiful Victorian house of her Nana and sees Tom take off from the house in his racy BMW...

EXT. BUNTON SAVINGS BANK - DAY

Tom slides BMW into parking space, locks car with zapper, enters bank.

INT. BUNTON SAVINGS BANK - DAY

Tom sits in office of Bunton Savings Bank president Jim Raleigh, who lays sales contract in front of his out of town client. Tom pulls checkbook from inside breast pocket of sports coat.

JIM RALEIGH

Cash on the barrel head, highly irregular these days, or any day. No law against it, of course...

Tom signs check and signs again on dotted line of contract.

TOM

I've agreed to let Mrs. Tate stay on in the guest house.

JIM RALEIGH

Neighbors will love you for that, son. Ginny's an institution. And the furnishings go with, except what her daughter and granddaughter Lucy get, listed here as...

(eyes contract)

the grandfather clock in the hall, the four-poster mahogany bed, the cherry wood secretary, the bird's eye maple dresser, the Chippendale sofa, and the Persian carpets. Oh, and the framed picture of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Agreed?

TOM

You saw me sign.

JIM RALEIGH

Congratulations.

(stands to shake hands)

It is one of the most beautiful homes in Bunton, and has the very best garden...Don't tell my wife I said that.

EXT. TATE GUEST HOUSE - DAY

Ginny Tate carries basket of cut jasmine and crepe myrtle flowers from garden to the guest house, now her home. She meets granddaughter Lucy at the door. They pause to make way for housepainter carrying in paint cans and dropcloth.

GINNY

Isn't it wonderful? That nice gentleman accepted my offer to drop \$10,000 off the asking price, is letting me live here. And keep enjoying my garden.

Ginny and Lucy enter the small house.

INT. TATE GUEST HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Ginny begins arranging flowers in a couple vases on the kitchen table.

GINNY

Last winter almost killed my crepe myrtle, but it came back. Just look at the pink...

LUCY

You said he was from London, but he's from New York. He's that banker everyone's talking about.

GINNY

Course I have to pay him \$10,000 a year after that, as long as I live, if I live so long.

LUCY

Nana, now don't go talking like that.

GINNY

It's easy when you're 86.

LUCY

But how could you mix up London and New York?

GINNY

What? Oh that. He said he was living in London.

LUCY

Couldn't you hear his accent?

GINNY

Different, isn't it? Good thing we cleaned out the attic in the big house last spring or the good Lord knows how we'd manage in this heat.

Ginny sets one vase on counter, steps back, then turns the vase half a turn.

GINNY (CONT'D)

My little pink and whites like the heat, though, don't you darlings?

(kisses flowers)

Now that it's all settled I want you to come and stay with me, you can have cousin Fred's old room after the painters are done.

LUCY

You do know I have to work with this guy, Nana?

GINNY

Seems quite a decent young man.

LUCY

Decent? He's a criminal.

GINNY

Now, now, dear, everyone makes mistakes, and the court only found him guilty of a misdemeanor.

LUCY

He's too clever by half, paying cash and all. Probably expects you to do his ironing.

GINNY

Oh, I don't mind a little ironing...
course if you're offering to help...

INT. TATE HOUSE - DAY

Tom sits on stairs in hallway lacing up new construction boots to do some work outside. He's starting on the second boot when the movers come down steps with mahogany posts to four-poster bed.

Tom stands up to make way for the movers, goes to open door for them when doorbell rings, DING DONG.

Tom opens door and there stand Darlene Simpkins, Holly Bibb and BETTY-LOU HAWLEY, a teacher at BHS. Darlene holds a basket of fruit and nuts with a banner saying Welcome Wagon.

Betty-Lou carries a decorative gift, a hideous basket of pine cones glued together in the shape of a building. Holly carries a plate of cookies.

DARLENE

Welcome to Bunton, Mr. Robson...
May we come in?

TOM

Tom, please. Yes, certainly,
forgive me, just let these men
out with the last of Ginny's
furniture.

The women stand to the side as men carry pieces by.

HOLLY

That's one big bed.

TOM

Miss Lucy's, actually. Now come
on in ladies.

DARLENE

Thank you. I'm Darlene Simpkins, wife of the mayor. This gift of fruit and nuts native to the region is meant to symbolize the generous spirit of your new friends and neighbors. And these are two of your new colleagues, Betty-Lou Hawley, a teacher at Bunton High, and Holly Bibb, the school secretary.

TOM

Nice to meet you all.

BETTY-LOU

And this pine cone replica of the Bunton County Courthouse...

HOLLY BIBB

Is meant to keep Darlene's gift shop in business...

(on Darlene's look)

An inside joke.

TOM

I'd offer you ladies some coffee, but I was just about to do some yard work - Can't tell you how long it's been since I had a real backyard.

HOLLY

But a man needs energy for hard work. Here, try a homemade chocolate chip cookie.

(puts one in
his mouth)

Tell you my secret, grated orange rind and pecans.

DARLENE

Imagine, buying Ginny Tate's big place, and you not even married yet.

Holly Bibb steps on Darlene's toe.

HOLLY

I suppose Lucy, good girl that she is, will be visiting her grandmother every single day!

Tom sits back on stair to finish lacing second boot.

TOM

Better do this before I trip and break my neck. I understand Miss Lucy's to live next door, but I haven't met her yet. Have to tomorrow, she's my new boss.

HOLLY

Get out!

BETTY-LOU

No, it's true. She told me.

DARLENE

And you in this half-furnished house...

TOM

My stuff won't get here until October, coming from London.

HOLLY

By boat?

TOM

Yes, being shipped.
(chewing cookie,
to Holly)
Mr. Bibb is a very lucky man.

HOLLY

Why Tom, you rascal you, I gave up looking for Mr. Bibb about 10 years ago. But I'm always ready to make a man feel lucky.

DARLENE

All right, Holly Bibb, don't scare the man off before he's even settled in.

(to Tom)

Again, welcome to Bunton. We'll be on our way now.

TOM

Thank you so much for stopping by, next time we'll make it a real party.

The ladies leave and Tom closes the door. He looks at hideous dried pine cone basket, looks outside at trash can at end of driveway. Tom picks up the basket, opens the door and stops, shakes head no. He gets an idea. He leaves the door open.

Tom carries the pine cone display upstairs, sets it on floor in hallway and reaches up for a chain running through a small hole in the ceiling. Stairs come down via chain and pulley on a very strong spring - like a fire escape on a building in New York.

The folded stairway descends halfway, and clicks, and Tom unfolds it to the floor. He picks up the basket and climbs the steep staircase. At top in dark, halfway through trapdoor, he slides the basket to one side and gropes for a light chain.

Tom finds the string and pulls, a low watt bulb comes on and he sees two squirrels looking at him and chattering. One squirrel charges him, misses as he moves aside, and the squirrel runs down the stairs.

Tom turns around on stairs and sees squirrel looking at him. He waves his hands, thinking the squirrel was trying to escape.

TOM

Keep going, amigo, the front door's wide open.

The squirrel has no intention of leaving the house. It leaps back up the stairs at him and bites onto his heavy leather boot. Tom is standing backwards on the stairs and jumps up to escape, to get his elbows above the trapdoor, but his heel catches a rung and lifts the ladder.

The contraption snaps shut on Tom's boots and tries to close into the ceiling, but on resistance the spring drops it vertical, pulling Tom out of the attic.

Tom falls so that he's got his hands on the floor. He looks up and sees the squirrel in the hallway readying for another attack.

Suddenly the spring reactivates and claps the ladder into the ceiling as far as to where his boots block it, lifting Tom upside down and completely off the floor. The squirrel runs down the stairs and out the front door.

Tom hangs upside down with his boot caught in the ladder. He looks up at chain and thinks, tries to do an upside-down sit-up to reach it, but it's hopeless. He hangs there.

TOM

Mrs. Tate! Mrs. Tate!

Ginny is out in the garden and can't hear him. Tom wiggles and checks his jeans, pulls out cell phone and looks up Ginny's number, presses call button. Ginny in garden pulls ringing phone from smock, pulls off one glove and answers.

GINNY

Hello?

TOM

Mrs. Tate, come upstairs and help me, please. I've got my feet stuck in the drop-ladder and can't move.

GINNY

I always told my late husband he put too strong a spring in that contraption. I can't lift that...

TOM

No, you only have to pull the...

GINNY

I'll call Lucy, she's just over to
the bank now...

TOM

No, don't call her...

Ginny hangs up and dials Lucy.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Tom hangs upside down while Ginny looks on.

GINNY

My late husband built these
drop-stairs with a pulley so that
even a child could operate it, but
he wanted the spring extra extra
strong. He just hated things that
didn't work properly.

TOM

Just pull the chain before...

GINNY

No, I'm afraid I'll break your
leg. Lucy will be here in...

Lucy shouts from front door as she bounds upstairs.

LUCY

Nana, are you all right?

GINNY

I'm fine, honey, it's Tom what's
in a bind.

TOM

Nice to meet you.

LUCY

Jiminy Crickets! We've been using
those stairs for twenty years and
nobody ever did that.

GINNY

Squirrel attacked him. I suspected we had a varmint up there, but the mover said no.

TOM

Could you please pull the chain before I pass out?

Lucy pulls chain and Tom's weight helps bring stairway to halfway mark. It clicks, and contraption opens enough for Tom's feet to come out. He sits up on floor and rubs his ankles.

LUCY

This would make a good headline in the Bugle: Squirrel traps man.

GINNY

That's pretty good, Lucers.

LUCY

How in the world...

TOM

We have squirrels in Manhattan, but they stay in the park where they belong. I believe I will purchase a firearm.

GINNY

Bunton has a dog catcher...

LUCY

It's the county actually, animal control unit.

GINNY

And it's free.

TOM

Lucky me.

INT. PRINCIPAL FINK'S OFFICE (2) - DAY

Principal Clyde Fink and Tom both stand up as Lucy enters the office.

FINK

I believe you know Lucy Burgess.

TOM

Yes, we've met.

LUCY

I'm his tenant.

FINK

You and Ginny fine in the guest apartment? Must be a change after living in the big house.

TOM

About the curriculum, do you think I'm qualified to teach? I never studied teaching.

FINK

Don't worry, the kids never studied being students either.

LUCY

Has Principal Fink gone over the main course load with you? We offer a basic curriculum...

FINK

And every student has to take a foreign language, either French or Spanish, every single year.

TOM

How about Chinese, Russian? Arabic? These are the languages you want to be teaching.

LUCY

And we offer advanced placement electives - we don't have the luxury of all those languages, but we do teach economics, and a criminal law technology prep course.

TOM

Oooh, criminal law technology... I bet Police Sergeant Pokey must fingerprint at least two suspects a year...

FINK

It's Sheriff Milner, and listen here, we don't need the small town jokes. Lucy's your supervisor, but I'm the boss.

(picks up folder)

Tom, I'm assigning you to teach West Virginia history, English lit, Algebra 1 and 2, Civics, with Lucy, and one elective: Economics and Global Trade.

LUCY

Why do I have to share my civics class with him?

FINK

Cause I say so. The man's worked in a foreign country, Lucy, c'mon.

(to Tom)

Every teacher also has to pull some administrative duty - Lucy for example is liaison to the state school inspector. Tom, you will be this year's school and town library coordinator.

TOM

I don't know anything about li...

FINK

(slams folder)

Class dismissed.

Tom and Lucy leave Fink's office.

INT. BHS HALLWAY - DAY

Tom and Lucy stop to talk in hallway.

LUCY

I take my civics class seriously,
use the opportunity to shape our
young people into good citizens.

TOM

Good, bad, what's the difference?
The system is geared against them
in this town...but OK, we'll do it
your way, arm our little soldiers
for the eternal fight of good
against evil.

LUCY

We'll go halvesies, I do the good,
you do the evil.

TOM

What? A person can believe in good
and evil at the same time. I do.

LUCY

I like to think that good outweighs
bad in the world, maybe only by a
chip of eggshell, but good
predominates.

TOM

I think that evil is king and that
it's only dumb luck if good gets
the upper hand now and again.

LUCY

Did you acquire that enlightened
view of the world at your bank?
Don't you believe in progress?

TOM

I see you're caught up in the myth of progress, believing in the inevitability of human progress.

LUCY

Human nature evolves, doesn't it?

TOM

Human nature does not change, does not evolve. We still run on the same instincts that drove people a thousand years ago, two, three thousand years ago.

LUCY

Tell you what, Mister Darwin, just follow the book and see if we can stay out of each other's way.

INT. BUNTON CAFÉ & LUNCHEONETTE - DAY

A few townsfolk are enjoying food at the main street café, some at counter stools and others in booths. The sky is dark and cloudy. Tom sits at a booth by himself, waitress RUTHIE comes to take order.

RUTHIE

Today's special, the Bunton Burger... 100 percent USDA sub-prime beef.

TOM

What? Oh, OK, I get it. How many people here got hurt?

RUTHIE

Dunno exactly...there's plenty what owes more on their mortgages than the place is worth. Some were stupid, some unlucky.

TOM

Credit is a dangerous thing in the wrong hands...

RUTHIE

Yeah, and Mae West said you'll see a lot more than traffic if you look both ways when crossing the street.

TOM

I'll have the burger...and a Coke.

EXT. BUNTON MAIN STREET - DAY

Mayor Simpkins walks along the street, admiring the buildings, admiring his realm. He looks across the street at a TV REPORTER and camera operator in front of the county courthouse.

EXT. BUNTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

The TV news team is taping reportage for a spot on Tom, the banker sentenced to teach in a rural high school.

TV REPORTER

Here is the county courthouse in Bunton, West Virginia, a far cry from the skyscrapers of Wall Street banking...

INT. BUNTON CAFÉ & LUNCHEONETTE (2) - DAY

Mayor Simpkins enters, sees Tom sitting alone and goes over. Tom is finishing burger, wipes mouth on napkin, rises.

MAYOR SIMPKINS

No, no, please. May I?

(sits down,

points out window)

We have a vibrant downtown only because we're too tiny to have attracted a mall.

TOM

I don't know that I'd say vibrant,
but you do have a nice hardware
store.

MAYOR SIMPKINS

You don't understand, this kind of
downtown scene is a rarity. We got
a fine bakery, the bank...the five
and dime closed after the factory
went, but we're thinking, maybe a
youth rec center there.

The mayor's voice goes background as Tom is distracted by
Lucy and Ginny entering. They take the booth next to Tom
and the mayor. Tom snaps out of his haze.

TOM

Sorry, you were saying something
about a youth rec center?

MAYOR SIMPKINS

Yes, maybe a ping-pong table,
and inspirational speakers, local
business leaders and such. So many
of our young people feel they have
to leave Bunton...

(points out window)

Pains me to see that town clock in
need of repair. A man of your means
might make a nice gesture...

TOM

I think any decent human being
should run away from home.

Lucy turns round in her booth.

LUCY

Did you?

TOM

Excuse me, didn't realize I was
talking on a party line.

LUCY

I'm sure at the next board meeting we can count on your vote to close the school.

TOM

After what Principal Fink told me, I ran a cost-benefit analysis that shows the impossibility of running the school for a declining demographic.

LUCY

I don't dispute the logic of your number-crunching, I just say...I just ask, why give up? The town doesn't have to quit.

MAYOR SIMPKINS

We're also exploring the idea of turning the old factory into a casino...

LUCY

Ka-ching! We have a winner!

TOM

(lays \$10 on
table, stands)

Well, guess I better be going...

EXT. LUNCHEONETTE - DAY

Tom steps out of diner and three news photographers take pictures, flash, flash, flash. One REPORTER shouts a question as HIRAM WINKLER, editor of the Bunton Bugle, takes pictures of the visiting journalists.

REPORTER

Mr. Robson, is it true that you're going to be teaching Civics to students here in Bunton. Do you feel qualified to teach civics when you've been convicted of a felony misdemeanor?

TOM

I feel qualified to teach you -
there is no such thing as a
felony misdemeanor.

REPORTER

How do you feel about having a
younger woman appointed as your
supervisor?

TOM

I like young women...

REPORTER

Does that mean you might date a
student?

WINKLER

(grabs Tom's
elbow)

That's enough, this press
conference is over. You can read
more about it in the Bugle.

REPORTER

The Bugle?

WINKLER

(points across
street to office)

The Bunton Bugle - everybody
subscribes, or practically
everybody.

REPORTER

But...

Winkler leads Tom across street into his office, turns back
for the last word.

WINKLER

Twice weekly, Monday and
Thursday.

INT. BUNTON BUGLE - DAY

Winkler shuts door behind Tom and shakes hands, introduces himself.

WINKLER

Hiram Winkler, editor of the
Bunton Bugle. People call me
Inkler - get it? Ha ha ha -
ink-stained wretch and all that.
Ha ha ha.

TOM

Thank you for rescuing me...but
I'm not ready to give the Bugle
an exclusive, least not yet.

Tom goes to door and looks out, prepares to leave.

TOM (CONT'D)

Why were you taking pictures of
those reporters?

WINKLER

News, man. They're news. You'll
be here all year, but we never
had city reporters stake out a
resident of Bunton.

TOM

Guess I am at that.
(opens door)
See you round, Inkler.

INT. TATE HOUSE - EVENING

Tom sits with his laptop open on the dining room table,
trying to talk to Aisha in New York via Skype. The video
keeps freezing, and the audio is choppy. We split back and
forth between NY and Bunton.

TOM

I'll try you on your cell.

AISHA

(inaudible)

Tom calls her on his cell.

TOM

Can you hear me? Hello?

(waves phone
for signal)

It works OK in town, but when the
signal has to go outside it has...
I don't know, maybe the hills or
something.

AISHA

I can just barely hear you.

TOM

(shouts)

I'll call you on the land line.

Tom stands up and goes to phone on kitchen wall, dials
number from his cell phone directory.

AISHA

(on regular phone)

There we are. I knew you were
in the boonies, but really!

TOM

Hey, there's a lot to be said for
the simple life. You wouldn't
believe how beautiful the garden
is right now...

AISHA

I saw the photos on the real
estate ad.

TOM

Yeah, but no picture can show you
how tasty those peaches are...

AISHA

Let me guess, the girl next door is
a corn-fed beauty in cutoff jeans,
and you can't decide which peaches
to pick first.

TOM

Well, the peaches finished last week, but there is one girl...

AISHA

Oh, Thomas, you shouldn't have much trouble getting her into bed, but do you really need to get involved with a local yokel?

In the guest house, Lucy picks up the party line to make a call and overhears Tom play off Aisha's words.

TOM

Oh sure, I can get her into bed, and maybe I need to get involved with a local yokel...

Lucy eases phone down, but Tom hears the click.

TOM

(grimaces,
imagines worst)
Hello, hello?

AISHA

I'm here.

INT. CIVICS CLASS - DAY

Tom faces a dozen students, holds a copy of Caro's biography of LBJ in his hands. Holly's daughter, CELIA BIBB, sits up front, clearly has a crush on the new teacher.

TOM

You all may think of our political process as voting, and then the elected officials do what they will. But as with most things, there's an inside view and an outside view.

CELIA BIBB

Will you vote in this year's election? Earl's daddy is running for sheriff again.

TOM

Is that right, Earl? Your daddy sheriff?

EARL

Yes, sir.

TOM

Well I sure will vote, early and often, as the saying goes.

CELIA

But you can only vote once.

TOM

It's a joke, Celia. As I'm trying to show you with the excerpts from this book, private individuals have always tried to influence elections, and to get the person they want in office, someone who will help them, especially with their business, such as passing favorable legislation.

EARL

Sheriff can't do that.

TOM

No, law enforcement is another area of public affairs. Now look at the first paragraph of your handouts. See the quotation: if you buy a governor or congressman or senator you want to get your money's worth, and the secret is to give big and give early. Now who can tell me what the quoted person means?

INT. CIVICS CLASS (2) - DAY

Lucy is going over the same subject with the students, but from a different angle.

LUCY

Now you see how we trace our right to vote, our right to representation, to the Magna Carta. The king must listen to his subjects.

CELIA

Mr. Robson told us that if you buy a congressman you want to get your money's worth, and the secret is to give big and give early. He didn't say nothing about buying no king.

EARL

He said you could put it another way, that money talks, and shit walks.

LUCY

Earl Milner, you will go to the principal's office right this minute.

EARL

Mr. Robson said it, not me.

LUCY

This minute!

INT. FINK'S OFFICE - DAY

Principal Fink stands by the window, runs his hand down the American flag. SHERIFF MILNER in uniform stands with his hands on hips, waiting for an answer.

FINK

Tom told me, Sheriff, explained, was reading from a Pulitzer prize winning biography of LBJ. I think your boy can handle that. He can hear worse language in the hallway any day.

INT. BHS SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Holly Bibb is on the phone when strait-laced state SCHOOL INSPECTOR knocks gently on open door. Holly puts hand over receiver.

HOLLY
Can I help you?

SCHOOL INSPECTOR
I'm from the state board of
education, school inspector,
looking for your liaison officer,
Lucy Burgess.

Holly leafs through class schedule on wall...

HOLLY
She's off for the next 20 minutes,
try the teachers lounge,
(points)
just down the hall, at the end on
the right.

INT. TEACHERS LOUNGE - DAY

Lucy is pouring hot water into a cup of herbal tea as Tom enters.

TOM
Howdy, neighbor.

LUCY
Aw shucks, you be getting that
small town act down pretty good,
Tom.

Lucy heads for door as if to leave it, and him, at that.

TOM
Say, what do you do for fun around
here anyway?

Lucy stops at doorway, sets cup of tea down on table, turns to Tom. She's baited for bear, really frustrated with him.

Lucy
 Aw you know, go out, maybe yodel
 ma cousin up from the hilltop.

State school inspector approaches doorway behind Lucy,
 hesitates to interrupt.

LUCY
 Yodelaydehaydehaydehooo! Bubba!
 Bubba-Rayyyyyyy!

Tom does not tell her they have company.

TOM
 Anything more social than standing
 by yourself on top of a mountain?

LUCY
 Social? Lawdy me, why I do likes a
 good hog-calling contest, drive a
 hunnert miles for a prize one.
 Soooooey! Soooooooooooooey! Here
 piggy piggy piggy piggy. Oink
 Oink Oink!

Lucy grunts and roots around in a circle like a pig, bumps
 into state school inspector's knees. Bolts upright.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR
 Miss Burgess? Practicing for the
 school play are you?

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Tom is walking past Bunton library when he passes school
 cook Icy Duncan, who nods to him.

TOM
 Morning, Icy.

Icy continues on her way but Tom stops her.

TOM

Just a minute, I've been meaning to tell you, the macaroni and cheese you make on Wednesdays is out of this world. You could make a fortune on that in a restaurant in New York.

ICY

Thank you, Tom. Secret is some extra sharp cheese I get from a dairy in Thrace. The kids love it, if I do say so myself.

TOM

Speaking of restaurants, where does a body go out for a fine meal around here? The diner seems to be the only place in town.

ICY

It is, but then you got the dining room of the Highway Inn on the interstate, kind of pricey, or you waits for Edith Caterlin to put on one of her dinners to the firehouse, raising funds for the library.

(points to library)

Edith is town librarian and runs the Friends of Bunton Public Library.

TOM

Oh gosh, I'm supposed to work with her.

ICY

Course I helps her with the dinners. Otherwise you drive out of town, either up to the mountain resort or really hit the road, drive to Charlotte.

TOM

Folks go over 200 miles for dinner?

ICY

Keep her at 85 you're there in no time.

Icy walks on her way. Tom checks his watch, looks at the library and decides to begin fulfilling his administrative duty.

EXT. BUNTON PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

The library is housed in an old Tudor-style house donated to the county as a library in the 18th century by a prominent Bunton citizen.

A wrought-iron gate opens to a flagstone walk, but you have to walk around a small ornamental fountain with goldfish in its pool.

Ivy covers the front porch, but there is plenty of space around the big door. A bronze plaque honors the donors, and a small glass-fronted box holds schedule of hours.

INT. BUNTON PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

EDITH CATERLIN stands at the front desk gluing a check-out card on the inside back cover of a book. She's 77 years old. Tom approaches.

TOM

Miss Caterlin? I'm Tom Robson, new teacher at Bunton High. Principal Fink appointed me to work with you as school library coordinator.

EDITH

Nice to meet you. Maybe you'd like to start by getting a library membership.

TOM

That'd be swell.

EDITH

I'm more accustomed to using swell as a verb, but there's no law against free speech.

TOM
Least not yet...

Edith stoppers her glue and fills out an index card, writing his name, address and telephone number.

EDITH
Just sign here and you're in.

TOM
But how did you know...

EDITH
You bought Ginny Tate's place, stands to reason I'd know the details since she's been living there since before I became librarian, and that's 55 years back.

TOM
You've been librarian for 55 years? Why, you don't look a day over 60.

EDITH
(smiles)
I heard you were quite the charmer... now get along and find yourself some useful literature, keep out of trouble.

TOM
But how are we going to work together? Icy Duncan was just telling me about your fundraising dinners at the firehouse...

EDITH
(waves him off)
Time enough...

Tom casually browses the stacks, picks a three-volume set from a shelf. It is a very old copy of Jane Austen's classic, *Pride and Prejudice*. Tom opens the cover and see that it says 1813 - the book must be a first edition.

Tom returns to Edith to check out the book.

TOM

This copy of *Pride and Prejudice* is in very good shape for such an old book, and a library book at that.

Edith takes the book and writes the checkout date on the card in back.

EDITH

Kids get that one assigned in tenth grade and read school copies, but I do insist that cardholders treat our books with care, that's why I use these special velvet sacks for each and every checkout.

(slips book
into sack)

If I appreciate the value of our books, the library users follow suit. I have to give one of my predecessors credit for the velvet sack, Mrs. Tomlin, in 1867.

TOM

Does everyone last 55 years? How many librarians have there been?

EDITH

I'm the longest-serving so far, but the others worked 30, 40 years. We've had five town librarians since opening in 1851.

TOM

Wow! You're the living history of this town.

(takes book)

Thank you.

(starts to leave)

Don't I get a card?

EDITH

Your card stays here...that way it doesn't get lost.

TOM

Say, how much did you clear on
your last firehouse dinner?

Edith straightens her spine with pride.

EDITH

Total? Two hundred and forty-seven
dollars.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE (2) - DAY

Lucy sits at Holly's desk looking on the computer. Holly
and Betty-Lou sit on leather couch for visitors and
students, Holly putting on fingernail polish and Betty-Lou
looking at screen.

LUCY

Here it is, the governor's business
development office, director a man
by the name of Byrd Terrill.

BETTY-LOU

How do you know it's a man?

LUCY

He's that rich guy, built the mall
in Thrace.

HOLLY

What's a man like that doing in
Charleston working for the governor?

LUCY

Public service, Holly. And of
course developing his own business
at the same time.

BETTY-LOU

Like he's got time for little old
Bunton...

LUCY

C'mon, we have an industrial site,
good water, good people...

BETTY-LOU

Tell me again how you put down the
big-city banker...

LUCY

Didn't work out like I thought...
Mr. Money Walks, he just breezes
through this life...

HOLLY

I could fan myself all day with a
wad of hundred-dollar bills...

EXT. SCHOOL DUMPSTERS - DAY

CAL the janitor is tossing bags of trash in a dumpster when
Tom pulls up in his fancy car, the trunk tied halfway
closed on a bunch of plastic trash bags.

TOM

Hi Cal. OK if I use the big
dumpster for some household trash?

CAL

Don't bother me...

Tom whips the bags into a second dumpster in no time.

TOM

Married, Cal?

CAL

Nope.

TOM

Then you're the man to ask. What's
a single guy do for fun around this
town?

CAL

Wail, they's the honky-tonk, you
know, the Roadkill Café. The more
righteous look down on it, of course.

TOM

You mean church-going folk...

CAL

Them and others. Friday night is the big night, most everybody goes to watch the Panthers play football.

TOM

In North Carolina, you drive to Charlotte?

CAL

Naw, Friday night, high school ball, the Bunton Panthers. Big game next week, playing Thrace High, in Thrace. Gonna get whipped, too.

INT. GINNY'S KITCHEN - SATURDAY NIGHT

Lucy is ironing her Nana's blouse for church while Ginny pours hot water on herbal tea.

GINNY

(holding kettle)

Iron need toppin' up?

LUCY

You don't put boiling water in an iron.

GINNY

Why ever not?

LUCY

You just don't, that's all.

GINNY

How bout we fill it with jasmine tea?

(makes sound
of iron steaming)

Pshh...pssshhhh. Make our clothes smell purty.

LUCY

The word is pretty, Nana. Pretty.

GINNY

Pretty...pretty crossy, pretty miss bossy. Ever wonder what you're doing, ironing your Nana's church-goin' outfit on a Saturday night?

LUCY

I went to the football game last night...

GINNY

With Betty-Lou...you know the man is not radioactive. Most eligible bachelor in Bunton living right next door and you act as if...

LUCY

Yeah, living in what used to be our house, which is why I'm ironing in this kitchen instead of in the old laundry room.

GINNY

His check was good, I got the money don't I?

LUCY

Oh, you and him make a real pair.

GINNY

The proper way to say that would be you and he make a great pair.

(sees Lucy crying)

Oh, honey, what's wrong?

LUCY

Am I the only one in this town who sees Tom for what he is?

A fast-buck artist who...

GINNY

I know what. I'll make us some popcorn and we can watch a movie on the TV...see if I can find us a real tear-jerker...you'll feel better after a good cry.

LUCY

Find a movie that's set in
New York.

EXT. ROADKILL CAFÉ - SATURDAY NIGHT

Tom wheels into gravel parking lot of honky-tonk. Sign says Roadkill Café, From Your Grille to Ours. Live Music Thurs. Fri. Sat.

INT. ROADKILL CAFÉ - NIGHT

The layout is traditional honky-tonk: a long bar with stools, an area of tables, a juke box by the wall, a pool table in a side room and a stage against the far wall. The bar is three-quarters full at nine o'clock.

Tom slides on to a barstool, orders a Bud. His student, Celia Bibb, looking hotter than a Playboy foldout, steps up on bar rail, leans over bar and whispers to bartender.

Celia sits a stool away from Tom, who looks at her quickly without recognizing her. He is distracted by a squawk from a man testing the sound equipment onstage.

CELIA

(to bartender)

Give me a martini, dry.

The band comes on stage and Tom looks at them fiddle with their equipment and instruments.

Bartender brings martini. Celia drinks half and coughs...Tom looks.

CELIA

Ach, not so dry, Jimbo.

Bartender tops it up with vermouth and a splash of gin. Celia sips, gives the OK sign with left hand...winks at Tom, slides over to stool next to him.

CELIA

I got one and a half drinks for
the price of one.

TOM

What's the drinking age in West Virginia, Miss Bibb?

CELIA

21, same as everywhere.

TOM

Then how come he's serving you?

CELIA

Cause a teacher is considered a legal guardian in the absence of a parent.

Tom pushes the martini back to bartender.

TOM

Give her a coke.

Band starts to play London Homesick Blues, we get through a verse or two and Tom slaps a twenty on the bar. Celia jumps off stool to join him and Tom lifts her back up on stool.

TOM

However you got here is the way you're going home, and I recommend you do it soon, only after I leave.

INT. GINNY'S LIVING ROOM - SATURDAY NIGHT

Ginny and Lucy sit curled up on the sofa, munching popcorn and watching a movie. We see on the screen teary-eyed Meg Ryan in the final scene of *You've Got Mail*, where her character learns that her Internet lover is the character played by Tom Hanks.

They both hear Tom's car pull in the driveway.

GINNY

Must miss the excitement of the big city.

Lucy wipes away a tear.

LUCY
I'm not sure...

INT. TATE HOUSE DINING ROOM - SATURDAY NIGHT

A laptop sits open on the dining room table. Tom checks the lights on his new wireless Internet router and sits down.

We see over his shoulder as he Google searches:

Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen
first edition, London, 1813

Tom clicks on page link and we see photo of cover and the price - \$75,000. Tom whistles.

EXT. TATE HOUSE - SUNDAY MORNING

Tom steps out of the big house, dressed in suit and tie, just as Ginny and Lucy step out of the guest house. Ginny is dolled up for church but Lucy is in jeans and a checked flannel shirt.

LUCY
Trying to show me up, Mr. Robson?

TOM
No, just trying to back away from hell. Your grandmother told me...

GINNY
I said you have to go to church, otherwise folks'll think you're in league with Satan.

TOM
C'mon Ginny, I'll drive.

GINNY
It's only two blocks...

TOM
(opens passenger door)
You're wearing heels.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - SUNDAY MORNING

Tom turns into the church. Ginny waves out window to friends walking toward church or getting out of their cars.

TOM

The kids are brighter, more mature,
even more creative than Lucy gives
them credit for.

GINNY

We all live in the real world, she
knows life is not all just book
learning.

Tom pulls up next to the handicapped parking spot. Some kid has vandalized the spot, painted a halo around the wheelchair stick figure's head and stenciled the word 'spiritually' above the word handicapped on the pavement.

Tom sees it and laughs, shows it to Ginny.

TOM

What did I tell you? This is not
mindless vandalism.

GINNY

Maybe not, but Reverend Dawson
still has to fix it.

INT. BUNTON CHURCH - DAY

Reverend Dawson's voice is background, delivering sermon. Tom sits next to Ginny. Lucy enters church late and slides into pew opposite Tom and Ginny.

EXT. CHURCH STEPS (2) - SUNDAY MORNING

Reverend Dawson shakes hands with departing congregation, saying a few words to various folks. We catch his words to Tom and Ginny, with Lucy standing behind them to leave.

REVEREND DAWSON

(to Ginny,
glancing at Lucy)

Well, looks like your new neighbor's
exerting a positive influence on the
neighborhood...

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT (2) - SUNDAY MORNING

Tom, Ginny and Lucy walk to his car and see Editor Winkler
shooing kids away as Sheriff Milner wheels up in his patrol
car.

A pig's head rests on the hood of Tom's car, blood running
down to the fender. Painted in red on the windshield are
the words: CAPITALIST PIG!

LUCY

I'm sorry, Tom.

TOM

Whew, almost scarier than the
squirrel. Remind me to buy that
firearm.

WINKLER

Sorry, Tom. We all just found
this, no one wanted to touch it
before the sheriff got here.
Bunton has its dark side...

TOM

Well, it is prime weather for
slaughtering pigs...

INT. FINK'S OFFICE - DAY

Principal Fink sits at his desk. Tom sits in one of two
guest chairs but Lucy is standing, arms folded.

FINK

Take a seat, Lucy, please.

LUCY

I prefer to stand.

FINK

And I prefer not to get a crick
in my neck.

Lucy adjusts chair, moving it an inch or two farther from
Tom, and sits.

FINK

Good news for you two. There's a
tiny bit of cash in the state
discretionary fund and I'm happy
to say your Civics students are
going to enjoy a three-day trip
to our nation's capital.

(reads file)

That's 22 students, you two as
chaperones, bus service, two nights
at the Easy Z's Hotel on the ring
road in Alexandria, Virginia...

TOM

But who's going to chaperone us?

FINK

Pardon me?

TOM

Well, I'm single, Lucy's single...

LUCY

Ha-ha.

FINK

Lucy turns 30 tomorrow, so uh,
technically, she'll be an old maid
by the time you...

LUCY

Thank God for those state-mandated
gender awareness classes, otherwise
I'd take that comment as sexual
harassment, and the one before it...

FINK

Sexual...

LUCY

Now I just chalk them up to
fossilized ignorance.

FINK

How about a thank-you, Principal
Fink, for finding the money for
our class field trip...

INT. ROADKILL CAFÉ - THURSDAY NIGHT

Lucy is celebrating her 30th birthday with friends Betty-
Lou and Holly. The remains of a small cake sit on the
table, same local band is playing...

BETTY-LOU

Your average woman will marry any
old stray dog, thinking she'll
train him over time, but I say
housebreak that hound before you
let him indoors.

HOLLY

Tom is 40, so is that the new 30?

LUCY

What's he got to do with anything?

HOLLY

Hello?...Duh?

BETTY-LOU

If 50 is the new 40, and 40 is
the new 30, what is 30?

HOLLY

30 is the old 30.

LUCY

That sounds bad.

BETTY-LOU

(to Holly)

Did she tell you that Fink called
her an old maid?

HOLLY

I heard it straight from the
horse's ass...

EXT. TATE HOUSE DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Tom gets out of his car as Lucy is coming up the walking
path from the sidewalk.

TOM

Hi Lucy.

Lucy nods.

TOM (CONT'D)

Now Miss Burgess, seeing as how
we're going to be traveling
together, don't you think it's
time we got to know each other a
little better?

LUCY

Oh, I think I know you well enough.

TOM

What's wrong with me?

LUCY

Let me count the ways...how about
your casual approach to law and
ethics, your contempt for the
people who live here, your lack
of appreciation for community
values...

Bird shit from the tree above lands on Tom's jacket
shoulder, which interrupts Lucy. Tom pulls out a
handkerchief and starts to wipe the mess.

TOM

Did you train the bird to do that?

LUCY

People around here say it's supposed
to be good luck, but I guess you
prefer to manufacture your own...

TOM

I can understand being skeptical of your fellow man, but for such a young woman to be so...

LUCY

Cynical? Is that something only city-slickers are allowed to indulge in? Here in Bunton we...

TOM

Oh I see. Small towns are the only place you can find real morality. Give me a break. Let's not make heroes of the little people here - more than half of them would sell your ass down the river in a second.

LUCY

Sounds pretty cynical to me, Mr. Robson...now if you'll excuse me, I have to replace the lining in my Nana's kitchen garbage pail.

Lucy walks toward guest house.

TOM

All I wanted was to ask you to the game on Friday.

Lucy does not even turn to face him.

LUCY

I already have a ride.

INT. BUNTON PUBLIC LIBRARY (2) - DAY

Edith is dusting the stacks with a big feather-duster as Tom enters. He waves and heads for the area where he found *Pride and Prejudice*.

He pulls down a copy of *Moby Dick* or *The Whale*, an old one, and we see over his shoulder as he opens the book. There it is, clear as day, published in 1851...another rare first edition.

Edith follows Tom to the check-out counter. She writes the date on the card.

EDITH

A man after the classics, very
good to see in a teacher.

Edith slips the book into a velvet bag and hands it to Tom.

TOM

Thank you. I never realized what
a rich and noble calling it is...

INT. LUCY'S CIVICS CLASS (2)- AFTERNOON

Students file out but PATTI stays behind to talk to Lucy. Patti looks pretty but is very plainly dressed in hand-me-downs. She approaches desk with piece of paper in her hand.

PATTI

Ms. Burgess, kin I talk to you
about this trip to Warshington?

LUCY

You may, Patti.

PATTI

Wail, says here, on this here
'tinerary...

LUCY

I-tinerary, Patti.

PATTI

Yes'm. Says here that we have to
go to the United States Senate...

LUCY

Sure, probably the highlight of
our trip, that or the Air and Space
Museum.

PATTI

Well ma'am, it's like this. I don't think I have a nice enough dress for to go inside the Capitol building, and they ain't no way my daddy can afford to get me one, so I ain't asking.

LUCY

You're not asking...we've been telling you about not saying ain't since first grade, how come you keep at it?

Patti starts to tear up...

PATTI

You don't unnerstan...

Lucy embraces the sobbing girl...

LUCY

There, there, honey, don't go cryin' on me.

(holds her by
shoulders)

Look, we're about the same size. Tell ya what. I'll loan you one of my nice dresses, pretty as can be. You come into class early on Monday and it'll be sitting right here. No one need ever know, less you tell 'em yourself.

PATTI

Thank you, Ms. Burgess. I knew I could count on you.

EXT. BUNTON-THRACE ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

Tom is cruising fast on a two-lane country road in his BMW when the car's COMPUTER speaks to him.

COMPUTER

Warning, your oil pressure is low. Your oil pressure is low. Please stop and get it checked as soon as possible.

Tom looks at dash, sees the oil gauge needle at far left in the red zone. And the engine cuts out. Tom pulls over to the shoulder.

TOM

It's your oil pressure, not mine. Or the oil pressure, but it's really cheesy to cut and run when trouble hits.

Tom pops the hood, gets out and looks inside. Hopeless.

Sheriff Milner pulls over on the opposite shoulder in his brown and white - the colors of Bunton County Sheriff's Department. He rolls down the window.

SHERIFF

Need some help?

TOM

Thanks, the dang thing lost...

SHERIFF

Oh, it's Mr. Money Talks...should have recognized the out-of-state plates.

TOM

Oil pressure.

SHERIFF

Guess this is a case where shit walks...

Sheriff starts moving his car...

TOM

But I have money, and by the way, your son Earl is doing real well in Civics.

SHERIFF

You tryin' to bribe an officer of
the law, son?

TOM

No, sir, I just...

SHERIFF

Just joking. And you can drop that
sir shit. Name's Wiley. We're a
small community here.

TOM

Yes, sir.

SHERIFF

I'll just call Elmer Gump, he'll
have his tow truck out here in no
time.

TOM

Damn, I'm gonna miss the game in
Thrace.

SHERIFF

Naw, Elmer'll give you a loaner.
I'd take you there myself, but
have to get to Bunton.

TOM

Thanks...

SHERIFF

That fancy car of yours ain't
gonna be fixed tonight, but hey,
Elmer's got a cherry pick-up,
toot sweet '54 Chevy. You buy
that off him and I guarantee,
you'll be the coolest dude in
the parking lot at Thrace High.

EXT. THRACE HIGH STADIUM PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Tom spins into the lot in the beautiful old pick-up, cherry
red. He turns off the radio, The Band playing The Weight,
and we hear cheers from the stadium. The game has started.

EXT. THRACE HIGH STADIUM STANDS - NIGHT

Tom carries a cardboard tray with coke, hotdog and fries... climbs up, up, up. Lucy sees Tom coming and straightens her hair...Tom sees Lucy and Betty-Lou, eyes the empty spot next to Lucy, sits down without asking.

LUCY

It's free, since you asked.

TOM

Who all's here with you?

LUCY

No one, just us local yokels.

TOM

So it was you on the phone.

Cheers from local crowd as Panthers field goal attempt hits goalpost.

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

Lucy and Mayor Simpkins escort governor's business development rep BYRD TERRILL around old factory site.

MAYOR SIMPKINS

But the town owns this factory outright, twenty-seven acres and the buildings, why should we offer tax breaks before we know what they're going to make here or how much...I still think a casino would be...

BYRD

Just remember, North Carolina has sites, Michigan, New York, Massachusetts, Alabama...and they all offer incentives.

LUCY

But this good site, good water, good people - why should we have to bribe a company to do business here?

BYRD

It's competition, young lady. Next week I'm going on a roadshow to Korea, India, China...it's a long process. These emerging markets, from Brazil to Turkey. all of 'em are in a position to invest overseas.

LUCY

Don't Americans make things anymore?

BYRD

The world just ain't like it used to be.

INT. TATE HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom sits at the table, his laptop open to a web site showing a first edition of Moby Dick on sale for \$84,000.

Tom uses a kitchen knife to peel off the Bunton Public Library card sleeve from the inside back cover of his copy of Moby Dick.

Tom sets book aside and web searches Easy Z's Hotel - clicks onto website with photos. We see the cheap rooms, and words writ large: On I-495, only 40 minutes from the Capitol. Tom shakes his head.

TOM

No way...

INT. BHS SCHOOL OFFICE (3) - DAY

Holly Bibb is leafing through an Avon catalogue when Tom sticks his head in the doorway.

TOM

Does the school get a special rate on FedEx? Can you arrange a pick-up for me?

HOLLY

Puh! Where you been living? You
Can drive over to Thrace, but the
post office is it round here.
Express mail for them what's in
a hurry.

INT. GINNY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ginny is ironing clothes for Lucy's field trip to
Washington.

LUCY

I only need the one dress, Nana.
It's perfectly all right for a
teacher these days to wear blue
jeans to a museum...

INT. TOM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom is packing for trip to Washington, his suitcase folded
open on the bed. He places the rare first editions safely
in middle of bag on top of folded pants, then lays nice
soft shirts on top.

He lifts the shirts and tucks some balled socks in between
the books, then lays the shirts back down. Sees the lumps
made by socks, lifts shirts and pushes socks into corners,
lays shirts down again.

Tom lifts the shirts again, unballs one pair of socks and
stretches them out between the two books, replaces shirts.

EXT. INTERSTATE - EARLY MORNING

A tour bus heads East on I-64 on a sunny morning in West
Virginia, riding through hills of brilliant fall foliage.

INT. TOUR BUS - EARLY MORNING

The BHS Civics class is on a big tour bus headed for
Washington, D.C. Twenty-two students, plus Tom, Lucy and
the driver.

Tom is seated up front on the passenger side by the driver, the seat opposite is empty. Lucy is back in the middle of the pack to keep an eye on students.

Tom stands up, steps down to driver's area and picks up microphone. He turns it on and taps the mike, BONK, BONK BONK.

TOM

Good morning ladies and germs...
excuse me, ladies and gentlemen.
My name is Tom Robson and I will
be your guide for the next three
days, or at least the next two and
a half hours. Can anyone tell me
where we are?

STUDENT

West Virginia!

STUDENT 2

I-64!

TOM

Correcto-mundo on both counts. We
have just departed lovely downtown
Bunton, gateway to the Appalachians,
and are headed east to our nation's
capital, Washington, D.C. Can anyone
tell me what the letters D.C. stand
for?

STUDENT

Dairy Queen!

Laughter.

TOM

Nice try...

STUDENT 2

District of Columbia!

TOM

Very good. Now, some of you yokels may never have left your hometown, so let me point out some of the sights.

To their left is a beautiful valley dotted with small farms, and set back on the right is a modern office park.

TOM (CONT'D)

To our left we have the lovely Inbred Valley, and to our right, unholy coincidence, the National Center for Genetic Research...

Laughter...some boos.

LUCY

Mr. Robson, I don't know where you got the material for your stand-up routine, but some people round here do not appreciate hillbilly jokes.

TOM

Oh, don't get me started...how many hillbillies does it take to screw in a lightbulb? ... None. They got moonshine!

Nervous laughter, more boos.

TOM (CONT'D)

Let me tell you a little something about myself, kids. I grew up with hillbilly jokes, being considered a hick. See if you can believe the name of the town I grew up in. Hicksville. That's right, Hicksville, New York. So don't go thinking that West Virginia or Kentucky have a monopoly on, uh, let's say, the less sophisticated aspects of rural living.

LUCY

You kids know the reputation
Appalachia has...it's your job to
break that stereotype.

CELIA

In Silence of the Lambs, Jodie
Foster's character came from West
Virginia.

EARL MILNER

Father was a policeman.

CELIA

And she became an FBI agent...

Lucy walks to front of bus, grabs mike.

LUCY

As long as we're talking about the
FBI, let me take this opportunity
to once more lay down the law about
behavior and consequences on this
field trip. What's my policy?

SEVERAL STUDENTS

Zero tolerance!

LUCY

That's right. And zero tolerance
means that if I catch any of you
breaking curfew or running off
at any time...you'll be on the
next bus home.

EXT. WASHINGTON HIGHWAY - LATE MORNING

Our tour bus turns onto the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial
Bridge over the Potomac River into Washington, D.C. The
Lincoln Memorial and Washington's Monument are visible to
the south.

INT. TOUR BUS - EARLY MORNING

The students are excited to realize they are entering D.C. Some point to the Lincoln Memorial, others peer to find the Capitol. Lucy gets up from her seat in the middle of the bus and approaches the DRIVER.

LUCY

What are we doing here? We're supposed to go to the hotel first.

DRIVER

That's what we're doing...
(points to
manifest)
Dupont Circle Hotel...

LUCY

But we're staying outside...

TOM

Sorry, Lucy, I forgot to tell you, an anonymous benefactor has agreed to put us up in Georgetown. All the parents have the new address and phone...

LUCY

But I don't, and I'm one of the...

TOM

Thought I'd surprise you.

LUCY

I don't like surprises.

INT. DUPONT CIRCLE HOTEL RECEPTION - MORNING

Students sit and stand in lounge area as Tom and Lucy talk with HOTEL MANAGER about rooms for the group.

HOTEL MANAGER

Great Trust Bank's a valued client, but it was still a miracle we could fit you. I have the whole group on the fifth floor, that's two students per room in 11 rooms, Mr. Robson the chaperone in the 12th room, and since we had nothing more available on the lower floors we have put Ms. Burgess in a luxury suite on Level Nine.

LUCY

So in other words, you don't have the whole group on...

HOTEL MANAGER

I'm sure you'll be very happy with our luxury...

LUCY

I'm after control, not...

TOM

Oooh, you should go into banking.

LUCY

Did you set this up? Right, like I have to ask. Anonymous benefactor...

TOM

How would it look if I put myself in the luxury suite? Don't worry so much - I'll watch the kids.

LUCY

Right...

TOM

And how did you think you were gonna keep the leash tight at the sleaze-bag motel on the freeway?

HOTEL MANAGER

(to Tom)

Here are the keys for the students
and a printout of who goes where,
one key per student.

(to Lucy)

And per Mr. Robson's instructions, I
had all alcoholic beverages removed
from their mini-bars.

TOM

(hands keys
to Lucy)

Here, you go deal with the kids, I
have a bit more business with...

(looks at
name tag)

Linda.

Lucy sighs and takes keys, goes to group of kids.

HOTEL MANAGER

How may we be of assistance, sir?

Tom shakes her hand and slips a hundred dollar bill onto
her palm.

TOM

You already have, Linda. I just
want to be absolutely clear that
if there is any trouble whatsoever
with any of our students, you be
sure to call me first, and only me.

(puts card
on desk)

Here's my cell, too.

HOTEL MANAGER

(slips money
away)

We're always grateful for extra
clarity on who's responsible for
our minor guests.

Tom walks over to group.

TOM

OK kids, 20 minutes to settle in,
then we meet for lunch in the
restaurant downstairs. Bus leaves
at 1:15 for the United States
Capitol and our special tour of
the Senate...

INT. LUXURY SUITE - MIDDAY

Bellhop shows Lucy her suite, places bag on stand, hands
her an iPad, opens curtains to balcony and view over DuPont
Circle.

INT. GIRLS ROOM - MIDDAY

Patti puts old suitcase on stand and opens it, picks up
Lucy's dress. Roommate Celia jumps on the bed.

CELIA

Oh, man, we're in the big city
now! ...What would your parents
say if they knew you was rooming
with the school slut?

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

INT. SENATE VISITORS GALLERY - DAY

The group stands at rail looking down at the floor of the
Senate. A Senate page taps Tom on the shoulder and whispers
to him. Tom shakes hands with Senator Williamson, then
turns to kids.

TOM

Allow me to introduce Senator
Ralph Williamson, Republican of
Utah. Senator Williamson has very
kindly agreed to meet us today and
say a few words about the Senate.
Sorry he's not from West Virginia,
but the senator just happens to be
chairman of the Senate Finance
Committee...
(winks at
Lucy)
in charge of all banking regulation.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A1 Group eats dinner in a nice restaurant.
- B1 Group returns to hotel.
- C1 Celia and Patti sneak out of hotel service entrance
after 11 pm curfew...
- D1 DC Police catch Celia and Patti smoking a joint in
Rock Creek Park at 1:30 in the morning...
- E1 Night manager's call wakes up Tom...
- F1 Tom takes taxi to police station

INT. DISTRICT 208 POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Tom is standing by the reception desk as DC Metro Police
SGT. WAYLON brings girls out from holding cell. Celia holds
head high, defiant, but Patti has her head down, contrite.

SGT. WAYLON

These girls don't know how lucky
they are. Why, even hardened
criminals hesitate to go into Rock
Creek Park after midnight, 'less
they're in a group, and I mean at
least three.

TOM

Thank you, officer. I'll try to
drum it into her...
(points to Celia)
the troublemaker.

CELIA

Don't shave your ass in my mirror...

SGT. WAYLON

That's a new one...

TOM

(to Celia)
One more word and I'll have them
press charges: possession,
delinquency, disturbing the peace...
annoying the piss out of me...

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - MORNING

The restaurant is running at full tilt for breakfast,
included with room for all guests. Lucy sits at a table
with three students and eyes the rest. Celia and Patti sit
at the table just behind Lucy.

Tom enters last, stops by Lucy's table.

TOM

Sorry I'm late. How's the food?
(eyes plates)
Oooh, eggs benedict, Belgian
waffles...love 'em.

Tom can't stifle a big yawn.

LUCY

Out late? Try to save the clubbing
until we're not responsible for 22
students...

Tom sees Patti looking guilty and worried, winks at her.

TOM

I needed a little practice flying
for today's trip to the Air and
Space Museum...

EXT. AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

INT. AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM - DAY

In the Air and Space Museum, the class stands at mezzanine railing above main exhibit hall, the Milestones of Flight Gallery. Hanging from ceiling near glass wall at front of museum is the Bell X-1.

LUCY

There she is boys and girls, the Bell X-1 in which Chuck Yeager, a West Virginia native, broke the sound barrier in 1947. You can see painted on the side of the nose there, Glamorous Glennis...

EARL

He named the plane after his wife.

PATTI

(reading)

Says here the speed of sound varies depending on altitude and weather conditions.

CELIA

Everybody in West Virginia knows about Chuck Yeager...

TOM

Yes, Celia, but not everybody has seen his airplane.

LUCY

Now who can tell me what the speed of sound is at sea level?

STUDENT 2

Mach 1!

LUCY

Well, I was thinking more...

TOM

Can't exactly say he's wrong...

Just behind Lucy, student Earl Milner is leaning over the railing with a camera to get a good shot of the Glamorous Glennis emblem on the X-1.

CELIA

You're gonna fall, Earl.

EARL

Am not...

Earl is now showing off to Celia, but he is trying too hard and starts to go over, grabs railing but is flipping head over heels. Kids gasp.

Tom shoots past Lucy and grabs Earl's nylon backpack just as the kid's weight breaks his hold on the railing. Tom is holding him in the air.

It's a long way down - Earl looks and pees his pants. Tom pulls the boy over the railing and the kid slumps to the floor. A security guard runs up.

TOM

Are you all right, Earl?

Earl slowly stands up and everybody sees his wet pants. Some kids start to laugh.

TOM

Judge not, lest ye be judged,
you little fuckwits.

Kids stop laughing. Tom takes off his windbreaker and wraps it around front of Earl, uses the sleeves in back to tie it off.

TOM (CONT'D)

(to Lucy)

Here, you watch the kids, I'll take Earl back to the hotel for a change of clothes and meet you...

(looks at watch)

at 12:30 at the McDonald's here.

CELIA

It's called McCafé...

TOM
 Whatever...

Lucy watches Tom escort Earl down the escalator. A look of admiration comes to her face...

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A3 The group, including Tom and Earl, eat lunch at McCafé in museum.

B3 Group walks on national mall in afternoon, Lucy points to Washington Monument, telling its story.

C3 Group walks into their hotel.

INT. TOM'S HOTEL ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Tom looks at watch and picks up phone, calls Lucy.

TOM
 Hi, can you come down to my room for a while?

LUCY (O.S.)
 Right. Just cause I told you I admired your quick thinking and...

TOM
 No, I have an errand to run, only a couple blocks away, but one of us should be down here on the kids' floor.

LUCY (O.S.)
 Pshh, all right...but I'm gonna leave your door open the whole time... let's not give 'em something to talk about.

TOM
 Boy, you Bunton folks got nothing but sex on your minds.

LUCY (O.S.)

That's it...

TOM

No, no, c'mon now...I'll owe you.

Tom places rare books in a bag, checks address of rare book dealer in Georgetown on map. Lucy knocks on door, Tom opens it. Lucy enters and goes to desk.

TOM

C'mon in, make yourself at home.

Door closes by itself, as hotel doors do.

LUCY

Hurry up...and I...

Lucy begins wheeling chair toward door.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Just need to make the door stay open.

TOM

Are you serious? Here, let me help you out there.

LUCY

It's on wheels...if you could open the door...

TOM

Some hotels give you a little rubber doorstopper...

Tom opens the door and looks at top and hinges on side.

TOM (CONT'D)

Or there's a gizmo that locks it open...

Lucy wheels chair and bumps behind Tom's knee, causing him to lose his balance for a second.

LUCY

Sorry.

Tom steps into hall and Lucy pulls back chair at same time.
Door closes. Patti and Celia approach from their room.

CELIA

Mr. Robson? It's OK for us to walk
around the neighborhood, right?

Lucy opens door.

TOM

Sure girls.

CELIA

(to Tom)

I thought this was your room.

LUCY

It is, I'm just...

Patti starts giggling.

TOM

(walking away)

Now don't make a fuss, we're all
grown-ups here, more or less. I'll
be back before you can blink, Lucers.

LUCY

(to Patti)

Stop that giggling. I'm only here
to cover the floor for Mister Robson
while he runs an errand.

CELIA

Lucers...never heard that one
before, Ms. Burgess.

EXT. RARE BOOK DEALER - LATE AFTERNOON - ESTABLISHING SHOT

Tom walks into shop.

INT. RARE BOOK DEALER - LATE AFTERNOON

Interior is full of old books and library-type antiques, such as an old globe. Tom stands at counter as DEALER looks at his copies of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Moby Dick*.

DEALER

Oh, this London edition of *Moby Dick* is rare indeed, in fact I've never seen one. And in good condition, too.

TOM

What about the Jane Austen?

DEALER

Less rare, but still very desirable. The rise of e-books has not dampened collectors' interest in real books, thank God.

TOM

Are you interested?

DEALER

What can you tell me of their provenance? I see they once had library cards in back, both books, and in the same place, inside back cover.

(uses magnifying
glass)

And looks like the same glue residue.

TOM

Guess my grandfather must have bought them at the same time, maybe from a library...

Dealer looks on computer next to him, taps a few keys.

DEALER

Antiquarian database shows no record of these titles stolen or missing... I can offer you \$60,000 for the Jane Austen, and...\$75,000 for the *Moby Dick*.

TOM

Sold.

DEALER

Right. I'll just cut you a check.

INT. HOTEL BAR/RESTAURANT - EVENING

Lucy sits at a table by herself, looking a bit haggard, holds a menu but is not reading it. Some kids are having soft drinks at the bar and others begin to take seats.

Two students stand with cokes at hotel bar and look at Celia Bibb at table.

STUDENT 1

That Celia Bibb sure is hot...

STUDENT 2

Why is a Bibb lettuce called a Bibb lettuce?

STUDENT 1

My ma calls it butterhead...

STUDENT 2

Because it opens at a touch.

Patti approaches Lucy's table, gestures to seat. Lucy nods of course. Patti is grateful for the dress, guilty about the trouble with the police, wants to help Lucy.

PATTI

I hate to see you looking so blue, Ms Burgess.

LUCY

I don't know what it is...

PATTI

Why don't you find yourself a good man and get married? Someone like Mr. Robson...

LUCY

Now Patti, just because a woman
looks sad...

Tom walks up behind Lucy, overhears...

LUCY

...doesn't mean she needs a...and
Tom Robson is practically the last
man on earth...

TOM

Practically, but not quite -
means I have a chance...

LUCY

Let's keep our relationship
professional, Mr. Robson, and see
if you can teach the full year.

TOM

Excuse me...I'll just dine with
more welcoming company...

Tom walks over and sits down at Celia's table.

PATTI

You know Ms. Burgess, Mr. Robson
ain't bad the way you think...

LUCY

Yeah, I'm sure he's got ways I
can't even imagine...maybe I
did go overboard with my comment
on his, uh, on his...

PATTI

Integrity?

EXT. INTERSTATE (2) - LATE AFTERNOON

The tour bus heads west on I-64 through same hills of
brilliant fall foliage.

INT. TOUR BUS (2) - LATE AFTERNOON

This time Lucy sits up front and Tom in back. Bus passes sign: Welcome to West Virginia, the Mountain State.

EARL

Almost home.

MANY STUDENTS

Almost heaven!

Tom looks out window as Roy Orbison sings Bono's song, Mystery Girl.

Tom recalls various scenes with Lucy: her meeting him hanging upside down from the drop-ladder, her turning round in the diner booth, her oinking like a pig in the teachers lounge.

EXT. BHS PARKING LOT - EVENING

Tour bus pulls into parking lot. A dozen parents are waiting and others arrive by car. Sheriff Milner wheels in and pulls up to Principal Fink and Editor Winkler standing by Tom's pickup.

Tom leaves the bus with Earl and walks over to his car. Sheriff Milner rubs his son's head and shakes Tom's hand, slaps him on the back.

SHERIFF MILNER

Earl told me over the phone what you did, Tom. I can't thank you enough. Earl here's my only child.

TOM

Aw, sheriff, you'd have done the same.

SHERIFF MILNER

If I'd been there, maybe, but, uh, gee...

TOM

Is this good for one of those get-out-of-jail-free cards?

SHERIFF MILNER

You don't even go into jail, boy...

EXT. TATE HOUSE GARDEN - MORNING

Crisp fall morning, Tom is raking leaves in the backyard while Ginny sits on a little stool, using pruning shears to cut back a rosebush. She wears gardening gloves.

GINNY

...told me how you were quite the hero in Washington, saving that Milner boy...

TOM

Oh, anyone would have done the same...

GINNY

Ask me, I think she's ashamed of having seen you wrong...that girl has always had a habit of speaking her mind...would rather be right than happy. Doesn't like to compromise, you know.

TOM

I hear folks say she gets it from her mother's side...and that sometimes these peculiar character traits skip a generation...

GINNY

Ha! Oh, Tom, you rascal...

(puts back of
hand to head)

Think I oughta sit down, blood pressure feels low...

Tom drops rake and runs over, puts hand on her shoulder.

TOM

You are sitting...you feeling all right, Ms. Tate?

GINNY

Just bring that stepladder close,
let me rest my head.

Tom brings stepladder from nearby dogwood tree, Ginny puts her head down on one arm, still holding shears to rosebush.

GINNY (CONT'D)

Maybe a sip of water...

Tom runs into kitchen, runs back out with a small glass of water.

TOM

Here you go.

Ginny does not react. Tom puts his palm to her neck, then tries to take her pulse on the wrist of her hand holding shears, realizes she is dead. Tom steps back.

TOM

God bless you, Ms. Tate.

Tom walks to little house, knocks on door. Lucy opens the door.

TOM (CONT'D)

I don't know how to tell you
this, but...

LUCY

Don't even go there, Tom...

TOM

Stop Lucy, it's your Nana...

EXT. BUNTON CEMETERY - DAY

Mourners, many of them old ladies, surround Ginny's gravesite on an overcast November day with light snow on the ground. Lucy is up front with her parents, Reverend Dawson officiating. Tom stands to the back, next to Edith.

REVEREND DAWSON

(reads from
Bible)

...and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets...

Reverend's voice goes background as we move to Tom and Edith.

EDITH

(to Tom)
Ecclesiastes, her favorite.

Tom nods understanding.

REVEREND DAWSON

...of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

EDITH

Speaking of which, your books are overdue, at 25 cents per day...

Tom nods, reluctant to talk, looks away...

REVEREND DAWSON

For as much as it has pleased Almighty God to take out of this world the soul of Ginny Tate, we therefore commit her body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust...

EDITH

(rubs fingers
together)
It adds up...

The casket is lowered into the grave and mourners begin to break ranks...

EXT. BUNTON PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Tom meets Edith on the sidewalk in front of the library.

TOM

Hi, Ms. Caterlin, I was just coming to see you.

EDITH

I don't see you carrying any books...

TOM

I'm afraid I have the worst possible news...

INT. BUNTON PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Edith stands behind the counter, tapping into the computer and looking miffed.

TOM

Before we get started on books... your dinner still on at the firehouse Thursday night?

EDITH

Twenty-five dollars a ticket, but at the Elks Lodge. Don't use the firehouse in winter.

TOM

I'll take two.

Edith slides over two tickets and Tom lay fifty dollars on the counter. Edith focuses on her search for replacement books.

EDITH

It's not usually our adult members who report loaned-out books as missing, lost or stolen...

TOM

Like I said, I...

EDITH

And you're going to have to pay the full retail replacement cost, hardcover editions. We don't buy enough here to get the wholesale rate...

TOM

Couldn't cost that much...

EDITH

You'd be surprised...

Edith takes off her reading glasses, finds a slip of paper in a cubbyhole, takes a sharpened No. 2 pencil from a cup. She puts her glasses back on and writes figures, adds them.

EDITH (CONT'D)

I have the printer here, but it saves money to do it by hand.

Edith adds final sum and underlines it twice, places the slip of paper on counter for Tom to read.

TOM

So that's the cost of carelessness.

EDITH

That it is, young man. Thirty-nine dollars and sixty-four cents.

TOM

I suppose you accept personal checks?

EDITH

Is it on the Bunton Savings and Loan?

TOM

No, I don't have a...it's on my account in New York.

EDITH

Out of state? And how long do you think that'll take to clear?

TOM

I can get Jim Raleigh to give me
a cashier's check...

EDITH

Never mind that, go ahead and
write it out, payable to Bunton
Public Library.

Tom takes checkbook out of jacket's inside breast pocket,
opens it on counter.

TOM

Thirty-nine, sixty-four. Should
I round it up to forty?

EDITH

Oh no, that wouldn't do at all.

TOM

All right, you're the boss.

We see over his shoulder as Tom writes check, payable to
Bunton Public Library...in the amount of \$135,039.64. Tom
hands check to Edith, who looks at it and begins to put the
check in her drawer, then does a double-take.

EDITH

Is this your idea of a banker's
joke?

TOM

Let me explain...

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Cal the janitor is using a big metal snip to cut the
padlock off a student locker. Lucy walks by and does a
double-take.

LUCY

Is that Jimmy Simpkins's locker?
Did he forget his combination
again?

CAL

Yup, and him the mayor's son.
Not the brightest bulb in the
chandelier...

LUCY

Hush now, Cal. Someone might
hear you.

CAL

More like a nightlight.

Lucy walks down hall and turns into teachers lounge.

INT. BHS TEACHERS LOUNGE (3) - DAY

Tom is sitting at a table looking at some papers. TEACHER ONE and TEACHER TWO are on their way out as Lucy enters.

TEACHER ONE

Man, it was raining so hard, like
a cow pissing on a flat rock.

TEACHER TWO

So what'd you do?

Teachers leave the lounge.

TOM

What does that mean, like a cow
pissing on a flat rock?

LUCY

You know, raining every which way.

TOM

Have you ever seen a cow pissing
on a flat rock?

LUCY

I can understand how you haven't...
I looked up Hicksville, New York
and learned it's anything but the
boondocks. A quaint suburb of New
York City...with median household
income around \$80,000...

TOM

Used to be farmland, back in the day. People did joke about the name...I mean, when I was in college...

LUCY

And you misled the students because...?

TOM

For the greater moral good. You believe in that don't you? Say, you going to the library dinner? I have tickets...

LUCY

Don't know, maybe, uh...hey, you change the subject pretty fast. Just when I begin to think you might have an ounce of decency...

Lucy starts to leave, turns at the door.

LUCY (CONT'D)

We might see each other at the Elks Lodge...
 Meanwhile why don't you try sitting in a field of cows until you see one pissing on a flat rock... maybe the splash will put out the fire of your smoldering...
 aw forget it.

Lucy leaves. Tom makes a talking puppet of his hand, holds fist up to his face, uses it to mouth his words.

TOM

(in puppet voice)

I don't think she likes you, Tommy.

EXT. ELKS LODGE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING SHOT

A few couples enter under a worn banner hung over the entrance: Friends of Bunton Public Library.

INT. ELKS LODGE - NIGHT

A hundred people or so are taking seats at tables and getting food from the buffet line. Tom enters and Mayor Simpkins dashes over and grabs him by the elbow.

MAYOR SIMPKINS

Come to my table, young man.
I insist.

Mayor leads Tom to table by bandstand at the front of the room. Already seated are Lucy, Darlene the mayor's wife, banker Jim Raleigh, and his wife, local realtor BARBARA RALEIGH.

Mayor pulls out chair for Tom between Lucy and his own place. Lucy smiles and Tom is slightly flustered. Musicians on stage above their heads play piano, cello and violin - Beethoven's Piano Trio No. 7, Op. 97.

DARLENE

We were just talking about you...

TOM

Lucky me. Or was it Lucy talking?

DARLENE

No, we were saying how interesting that you lived in London, England...

BARBARA

Did you rent or own?

TOM

The bank leased a place for me...

LUCY

How much was the rent?

MAYOR SIMPKINS

Now Lucy...

TOM

It's all right. Let me see, it was 8,000 pounds...about 12 or 13,000 dollars at the time.

DARLENE

Per year?

TOM

Gosh no, per month.

JIM RALEIGH

My Lord, I had no idea anyone could pay that much rent, why that's a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year.

TOM

It's a different world. London's very expensive, and I had to entertain clients...

LUCY

Why, Bunton must seem the backside of nowhere.

TOM

Actually it's quite refreshing to be in the normal world. Say, what's with this music? How's anyone gonna dance to this?

DARLENE

Edith loves classical.

TOM

Is there another band coming on?

MAYOR SIMPKINS

This is it.

TOM

It is high-toned, but gee, I think we could raise more money with a bit of fun, a real hootenanny.

MAYOR SIMPKINS

Speaking of money, what do you think of my idea for turning part of the old factory into a casino? Legalized gambling has helped many a poor region turn around.

JIM RALEIGH

Lucy's still talking to the governor's man about getting a real business in here, aren't you, Lucy?

LUCY

Byrd Terrill, yes, But he says these things take time. He's in Brazil now trying to sell West Virginia...

TOM

Gambling does not generate true wealth, per se, at least not along classical lines. It more or less churns the same money in a pot and redistributes it, with very low added value.

LUCY

I understand that your brand of New York banker knows about more than subtracting value. But why don't you just come out and say it? Gambling is a social evil.

TOM

The schools need sustainable revenue, but the town needs to add value, that's where profit and wealth come from, and the more there is, the more it spreads around.

LUCY

Read much, do you?

DARLENE

People are talking about you two.

LUCY

(raises fists,
to Tom)

C'mon, let's give them something to talk about.

Two tables away Edith clinks glass with spoon, stands up.

EDITH

Thank you all for coming tonight. Many of you are regulars at these little get-togethers, true friends of the Bunton Public Library. As you know, we usually bring in two-three hundred dollars after expenses. I want to take this opportunity to announce a huge windfall, all thanks to Tom Robson. Tom sold two of our older books, rare books, for a total of one hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars.

Crowd roars hooray and claps.

EDITH (CONT'D)

And Tom is now going through the collection with me, separating books that are too valuable to be out on loan in a public library. So far we estimate that we will be able to raise nearly half a million dollars for the library, all thanks to Tom's genius.

LUCY

That's putting it a bit strong...
(to Tom)
Sorry, I didn't mean that. But is this your idea of sustainable revenue?

TOM

They're two separate things...

LUCY

Why don't you try saving more than the library? I know it's hard to choose between the gravy train on Wall Street and barbecued ribs at the Elks Lodge on a Thursday night...

JIM RALEIGH

All right, that's enough young lady. The poor man is helping Bunton...

DARLENE

(to Tom)

I think she likes you, Tommy...

EXT. BHS DUMPSTERS (2) - DAY

Janitor Cal is struggling to drag a beat-up old sofa to the dumpsters as Tom pulls in his truck. Tom gets out and lifts one end.

TOM

Where'd this piece of crap come from?

CAL

Drama club. They did Waiting for Godot last year and never threw the thing out.

The two men easily carry the sofa and set it next to the dumpsters.

TOM

Looks like what you might see at a crack house in New York.

CAL

Still have those? I thought the losers were all doing Ecstasy and crystal meth these days.

TOM

Can't say I'm an expert...Sheriff Milner was telling me about...he said they've always had problems, that after the economy went south, after the factory closed, it's not like there were more incidents of drunk driving or domestic violence than before...

CAL

Lots of people just packed up and left.

TOM

But where?

CAL

Out of these hills, somewhere you can at least see the horizon, maybe know what's comin'.

TOM

But this is beautiful country.

CAL

Almost heaven, so they say.

TOM

Sheriff told me of bustin' a meth lab, said they buried that place so deep in the hollow you have to pipe sunshine in.

CAL

That's an old saying. Where was that?

TOM

Dunno, guess a fur piece from...

CAL

We don't even say a fur piece round here, least not for a hunnert years. But you're almost local... having trouble with your girl I hear.

TOM

Might be my girl if she wasn't made of nettles. Why does she have to be so headstrong?

CAL

Well, it's up to you to choose... but these situations usually work out all right in the end...

Tom puts his foot up on the ragged arm of the sofa.

TOM

Gravy train, Lucy - Lucy, gravy train. Save the whole blinking town or go back to New York, all or nothing...what kind of a choice is that?

CAL

I don't see it so cut and dry, Tom. Why not combine the two, use your Wall Street connections to get a real business in here instead of this lousy casino idea of the mayor's? Then you'll be working high finance and saving Bunton.

TOM

(snaps fingers)

Like it's so easy to whip up a new business to employ hundreds of people.

CAL

You don't seem like a fellow who'd shy from a little hard work...

Tom takes his foot off the sofa, stands up straight, kicks the sofa and watches dust waft up. Waves it away with his hand.

TOM

Tell you what, Cal. I get a big company in here and I'll see you made head of maintenance.

CAL

(extends hand)

It's a deal.

INT. AISHA'S GT BANK OFFICE - DAY

Aisha sits in her New York office, back to the midtown view. She is on the phone with the corporate travel department.

AISHA

No, comfort class is not the same as business class. I refuse to fly all the way to Hong Kong in comfort...

Phone blinks with incoming call...

AISHA (CONT'D)

Can you hold?

She presses button for other call.

TOM (O.S.)

Any interesting M&A deals lately... anything in manufacturing?

AISHA

Are we really beyond the small talk?

TOM (O.S.)

C'mon, Aisha, don't hold out on me.

AISHA

Hmmm, this is very hush-hush, but we're helping King Associates close on a \$23 billion leveraged buyout of Bigg Corp.

TOM (O.S.)

Any factories they're looking to sell or move or build?

AISHA

One little piece of the puzzle is a new ball bearing plant set for Argentina - I understand management thinks they might be able to do better here.

TOM (O.S.)

Here? As in the U.S.?

AISHA

Yes, they're thinking of a couple sites, one in California and the other in...Massachusetts.

TOM (O.S.)

Can you get me a meeting?

AISHA

But no one's supposed to know.

TOM (O.S.)

Pleeeeeeease...

EXT. BHS ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

Lucy is leaning against the brick sidewall to steps and talking to student Patti.

LUCY

...and he came and got you out of the police station at three in the morning?

PATTI

That's what I meant when I said he isn't like you see him.

LUCY

But why didn't he tell me?

Patti looks at Lucy as if Lucy should know.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Hmm. Well, good thing for you he didn't, eh?

INT. BHS SCHOOL OFFICE (4) - AFTERNOON

Holly Bibb is filing her nails when Tom comes in. He points to Fink's office and she waves him in.

INT. PRINCIPAL FINK'S OFFICE (3) - AFTERNOON

Principal Fink pulls his shoes off the desk and rises to greet Tom. They shake hands and Fink gestures for Tom to take a seat, which he does.

FINK

I'm hearing good things about
your global trade class.

TOM

Thank you. The kids are very sharp,
but I'm here to request a few days
leave.

FINK

Leave? But Christmas break is
only a few weeks away.

Fink taps a few keys, calls up Tom's records on his
computer.

FINK (CONT'D)

You haven't missed a day...you're
allowed to get sick, but not to
leave.

TOM

It's my family...a family situation.

FINK

Serious?

TOM

Well, I'm the only son...two days
should do it.

FINK

Sounds like a weekend to me...

TOM

It's not a weekend situation.

INT. BUNTON CAFÉ & LUNCHEONETTE (3) - DAY

Tom stands at counter as waitress Ruth brings him a cup of
coffee. She enters the purchase - cash register DINGS and
displays \$1.99.

TOM

A dollar ninety-nine? Why not
just make it two bucks? Is anyone
really fooled by that trick anymore?

RUTH

It's a political statement.

TOM

What kind of...? Oh, I get it,
1 percent versus the 99.

RUTH

Said you're quick, day we met.
Maybe that's how you got in the
One per...

TOM

Hey, I'm a high school teacher.

Tom hands over two dollars, fishes a quarter out of his pocket and drops it in the tip jar. Turns around and bumps into Lucy.

LUCY

I hear your father is ill...

TOM

Well...uh...he'll be OK.

Lucy guesses he may be fiddling the facts.

LUCY

You know, we've got 14 teachers
for 124 students...

TOM

An excellent ratio...

LUCY

Except I have to cover two of
your classes next week, which
means I'll be teaching...

TOM

I'll make it up to you, I promise.

Lucy looks doubtful.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey, you can bank on me.

LUCY

I should not find that reassuring.

EXT. GREAT TRUST BANK HQ - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

INT. GREAT TRUST BANK CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

People from King Associates have come to hear Tom's pitch. Bank lawyer Dill Foster sits with arms folded, a referee, on one side of Tom, and Aisha flanks him on the other side.

Across the table sit King Associates president PHIL KING and his new CEO of Bigg Corp., MICHELLE BENNETT, and their lawyer.

PHIL

We've all read this report about the abandoned factory in your little town of...Benton?

MICHELLE

Bunton, sir.

PHIL

Right, Bunton.

TOM

I'm operating on the assumption that you're seriously considering opening a new ball bearing plant in the U.S....

PHIL

But we want to pay low wages and no benefits. If the United States wants to compete globally, then workers have to face up to the new world order, have to go head-to-head with workers in China and...

TOM

You can have the old factory site for nothing, and this little town of Bunton has good water, good people, the old B&O Railroad, the interstate...

MICHELLE

What's the B&O?

TOM

The Baltimore and Ohio...

PHIL

But it doesn't exist...most lines down there are CSX now.

TOM

People like to remember...and they remember the days of the company store in mining towns, company towns, so you can't ask these folks to compete with slave labor or prison labor at three dollars a day...

PHIL

The consumer goes for the cheapest price...and your people ought to be grateful for a factory that will employ...

(to Michelle)

How many?

MICHELLE

(wiggles hand,
palm down)

Nine hundred, more or less.

TOM

What's the use of a cheap product if no one can afford to buy it at any price? People in West Virginia have a long history in the labor movement. The unions there...

AISHA

Have you gone over to the dark side?

TOM

Let me put it this way. I ran a cost/benefit analysis...

(puts up

Powerpoint slide)

Here you see that the company could pay decent wages and benefits if it shaved a point off its quarterly IRR target, and cut five percent off management bonuses.

(winks at Aisha)

And it's good PR.

Tom wraps with a final slide: Thinking Bigg - Investing in America

PHIL

Hmmm.

MICHELLE

I like the sound of that.

TOM

Thought you would...and if you go for it, I have some names of people...

PHIL

OK, you sold me. We'll put the new plant in Bunton, but on one condition...

MICHELLE

(to Tom)

You oversee the project.

TOM

I'm not a manager.

PHIL

Sure fooled us, boy.

INT. BHS SCHOOL OFFICE (5) - DAY

Lucy sits at Holly's desk looking on the computer. Holly and Betty-Lou sit on the leather couch. Holly reads the new issue of West Virginia Living magazine and Betty-Lou watches Lucy's monitor.

BETTY-LOU

(leans forward)

There it is, you skipped it.

LUCY

What?

BETTY-LOU

Go back a page...there, see?

(points)

Teach in New York. Click on it,
go ahead.

LUCY

But I don't want to teach in
New York.

BETTY-LOU

You gonna let this man get away?
He lives in New York...

LUCY

So now I'm a female stalker...

HOLLY

(looks up)

Women have always been hunters.

BETTY-LOU

What was that movie where the
woman near drove the man crazy?

HOLLY

Killed him, right? That uh...what's
her name...?

LUCY

Am I looking to marry the fellow
or murder him?

BETTY-LOU

If he doesn't marry you, I'll
murder him.

LUCY

I'm glad you two got it all
figured out, but I'm not teaching
in New York, and I've never so
much as kissed Tom Robson...

EXT. TIFFANY'S ON 5TH AVENUE - EVENING

New York is in full holiday mode as Tom walks up 5th
Avenue. Big snowflake decorations hang above the street and
crowds throng the sidewalks.

Tom stops and worms his way to front of crowd before
Tiffany's window. Tom sees wedding ring on display in ice-
themed window.

EXT. FAO SCHWARZ ON 5TH AVENUE - EVENING

Tom stops in front of FAO Schwarz window, which is even
more crowded than Tiffany's. He pushes up front and sees a
toy gray squirrel clashing cymbals.

INT. HOTEL PIERRE ROOM - MORNING

Tom sits on the settee in his luxury room, phone in hand.
He takes a sip of coffee from his cup on the table in front
of him as we hear phone RING on the line. A voice comes on.

AMANDA (O.S.)

Hello?

TOM

Good morning, Mrs. Burgess. This
is Tom Robson. May I speak to Heck,
please?

AMANDA (O.S.)

Just a minute, dear.

HECK

Hi Tom, what can I do for you?

TOM (O.S.)

A lot, Heck. I'm bringing in a new plant, ball bearing manufacturer, and need an experienced plant manager.

HECK

No kidding. How many people we need?

TOM (O.S.)

Nine hundred.

HECK

(whistles)

Wow.

EXT. BURGESS BACKYARD - MORNING

Heck Burgess walks in his backyard, ax in hand, begins chopping wood. We see wife Amanda looking on from window, a tear in her eye.

EXT. TATE GUEST HOUSE - DAY

Tom steps quietly out of his house with the toy squirrel in hand. Tied around its neck is the distinctive blue Tiffany's ring box.

Tom walks over to Lucy's doorstep, turns on the toy and sets the squirrel down. The squirrel starts clashing tiny cymbals. Tom presses the doorbell and slips round corner of house to watch.

Lucy opens door, picks up squirrel. She turns it off. She looks to side and sees Tom's head flash behind the corner.

LUCY

Is it true? The factory?

Tom steps out and walks up to her.

TOM

It's all because of you, for you...

Lucy holds up little blue box.

LUCY

Is this what I think it is?

Lucy begins opening box. Tom shuffles his feet, stares at the ground, suddenly shy. He looks up with a grin.

TOM

Say yes and I'll let you sleep in
the big house.

Lucy holds up the beautiful diamond ring, smiles.

LUCY

Keep it up and I'll let you sleep
in the big bed.

They kiss.

THE END