

Cooter Brown
by
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FADE IN:

MONTAGE: Series of old black and white photographs.

A man in a cap and gown is receiving a diploma.

Same man wearing a suit proudly stands in front of a motel.

Another photograph of the man this time bent over a table littered with brandy bottles. A caption on the bottle reads:

"Drunk Ass Cooter Brown."

END MONTAGE.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Summer heat simmers. Block after block of homeless people are asleep on the sidewalk. Some are nestled on top of cardboard boxes; others lie on plain old concrete.

Pedestrians hastily scamper to get to their destinations. They use tactical maneuvers to avoid the homeless.

EXT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER

Crowds of roofless people circle the historic building. A fight breaks out amongst two drunkards, and a guard intervenes.

EXT. FIVE STAR HOTEL DRIVEWAY - DAY

Upper class folks make their way into the majestic tower.

The place is packed. Three stretched limos are parked near the manicured lawn. Bellboys with well-polished luggage carts fight for position.

INT. ANDERSON'S OFFICE

ANDERSON CHRIS (40s, handsome, sad) sits behind a massive oak desk. His desk is devoid of any personal items.

He signs several documents and puts them into folders. He leans back against his chair, then gets up and walks to the window, looking out over the city.

BENARD HEIGHTS (30s, grim, imposing) walks in.

BENARD

You wanted to see me, uncle?

ANDERSON
Benard, sit down.

He continues to look out the window. Benard sits.

ANDERSON
How long have you been my hotel
manager?

BENARD
Twelve years, uncle.

ANDERSON
And how long have you been loyal to
me?

Benard stands.

BENARD
Ummm, I don't know what you are
talking about-

ANDERSON
I know about the skimming...nephew.

BENARD
Look, it's-

ANDERSON
It's exactly what I think.

Benard stops. Anderson turns to him.

ANDERSON
There's nothing you can say to
defend yourself.

Benard glares at his uncle.

BENARD
Well then let me say this. You've
become soft, uncle Anderson. This
hotel has suffered too much because
of you.

ANDERSON
Because of me? What about you?

Benard is silent.

BENARD
I suppose that you'll have me
arrested then.

ANDERSON
No.

BENARD
No?

ANDERSON
I'm going to forgive you.

Benard spits out the coffee he was drinking.

BENARD
Forgive? Do you even know the
meaning of the word?

ANDERSON
Let's just say I've had a change of
heart lately.

BENARD
You have gotten soft. The Anderson
I knew would have-

ANDERSON
You're fired, Benard. Effective
immediately.

Benard stands there quietly.

ANDERSON
Now get out, I have a meeting. I
expect you gone by the end of the
day.

Benard begins to leave. He stops and turns.

ANDERSON
Yes, nephew, you're out of the
will.

Benard leaves. Anderson's intercom buzzes. He answers.

SECRETARY (V.O.)
Mr. Chris, a Mr. Conroy is here to
see you.

ANDERSON
Send him in.

DENNIS CONROY (40) enters.

DENNIS

Hello, Mr. Chris. Dennis Conroy. I understand you are in need of my services.

They sit down at Anderson's desk.

ANDERSON

I am looking for a man named Cooter Brown.

EXT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER - EVENING

Lines of homeless slowly make their way into the shelter. COOTER BROWN (40s, rumpled coat and fedora) hobbles over to the back of the line carrying a large trash bag.

He goes to the man in front of him and takes out a tiny old radio.

COOTER

Hey James, I'll give you this radio if you let me get in your place.

James takes the radio and lets Cooter cut.

He goes to the next person in line, a huge black man covered in piercings and tattoos. Cooter takes out an old teddy bear.

COOTER

Hey Charles.

Charles turns and looks down at Cooter. Cooter nervously holds up a teddy bear. Charles grins and takes the bear. Cooter takes his place.

LATER

Everyone in line has something, books, old cassette tapes, bootleg movies, food or toys. Cooter happily stands at the front of the line.

The door opens, a SHELTER WORKER comes out.

SHELTER WORKER

Sorry, folks, no more beds.

Everyone walks away, dejected. Cooter stands there in shock.

COOTER

Now, I know you kidding.

MAN
 Sorry, Cooter, shoulda got here
 earlier.

Cooter looks around at everyone walking away, each one happily carrying Cooter's trade goods.

A shadow falls over Cooter, he looks up to see Charles. The massive man pouts and offers Cooter the teddy bear back.

COOTER
 Keep it.

Charles grins and skips away happily.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Cooter nestles himself near some boxes on a sidewalk.

COOTER
 (To himself)
 It ain't the Ritz, but it'll do.

He covers himself with a dirty old blanket, takes a swig of brandy and lays down.

THUMP. Cooter hears something from a nearby alley.

Cooter jumps up and peers around the corner.

Halfway down the alley is a large parked Cadillac. Two large GOONS are picking up a large heavy body bag.

GOON 1
 What can I say? The dude's heavy.

GOON 2
 Let's just get him in there,
 already.

Cooter watches in horror as the two men load a bloody body bag into the trunk of the car.

Suddenly, one of Cooter's brandy bottles falls out of a ripped pocked and SMASHES on the ground.

Both men look and see a scared Cooter. He runs.

CHASE SEQUENCE

Cooter runs down the street.

He looks back, no sign of them.

He stops to catch his breath.

Suddenly, the Cadillac SCREAMS out from a side street, headed straight for Cooter.

He runs down a side street, the car follows.

Cooter runs into a narrow alley. The car stops at the end and Goon 1 gets out.

Cooter trips over an old box and stumbles.

Goon 1 gets closer.

Cooter gets up and continues running. He makes it out of the alley and into a nearby store.

INT. SEX SHOP

Cooter barges in the front door. A bored transvestite at the counter doesn't even look up from his *Time* magazine.

Cooter heads through the store and out the back.

EXT. BACK ALLEY

He slams open the metal back door and flees down the alley.

INT. SEX SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

The goons rush in and head for the open back door. The transvestite never even bats an eyelash.

INT. BACK ALLEY

They rush out into the alley and look around. Cooter is gone.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

LANA PERINE (30s, stunning, tired) trudges along towards the run-down apartment complex, carries two battered grocery bags. Several cats run out of the way. She kicks an old shoebox out of her path.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX

Lana lugs her bags up the stairs and past the cracked walls and windows.

She arrives at the door, only to be greeted by an eviction notice.

Lana drops her bags.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE

LOU (50s, sleazy) sits at his desk watching a soap opera on an old black and white TV.

LOU
(To the TV)
Don't take him back, Deborah, the
guy's an asshole.

Lana barges in, carrying her groceries.

LANA
I'm being evicted, Lou?

Lou continues watching his show.

LOU
You're three months behind on your
rent, hot stuff.

LANA
Now, I told you not to call me
that. And I told you I'd get you
everything. It's just been hard to
find work.

LOU
I know, it's hard on everyone right
now but I gotta pay the bills too.

LANA
C'mon, Lou, you know I'm good for
it.

Lou turns his attention to Lana now, smiling lecherously.

LOU
Okay, here's what I can offer. I'm
a man and I have some needs, you
know?

LOU (cont'd)
 I can give you another month or two
 if you're willing to work something-

A tomato hits Lou in the face.

LANA
 I am NOT that kind of woman!

She walks out; Lou follows.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX

Lana continues down the sidewalk. Lou follows, still covered in tomato.

LOU
 I oughta sue you for assault!

He licks some tomato off his face.

LANA
 Go to hell!

LOU
 You think you can talk to me like
 that?

He runs his finger over his face and sucks some tomato off them.

LANA
 Yes! I'll be back to pick up my
 things!

LOU
 Those things are mine now!
 Collateral! And they'll pay my
 hospital bills!

Lana drops the groceries and runs away, crying.

Lou watches her go, licking more tomato off his face.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Cooter lays on a park bench, he is covered in newspapers and snoring loudly. A corner flap of the newspaper rises and falls with each snore.

A shadow falls over the paper-covered Cooter.

MAN (O.S.)
Hey, buddy.

No answer.

MAN (O.S.)
Yo!

Cooter sits up quickly. Newspapers go everywhere.

COOTER
What?

A CONSTRUCTION WORKER stands there.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
You gotta leave. We're taking this
bench.

COOTER
What the hell for?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
They're puttin' in some swing set
or something. You can't be sleeping
here no more.

Cooter gets up.

COOTER
But it's my bed.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
Go find somewhere else to sleep it
off, buddy.

SNAP! Someone takes a photograph of Cooter from a distance.
He has no idea.

Dennis Conroy sits in a parked car in an alley across the
street.

Cooter sits back down on the bench.

COOTER
Well, I ain't goin' nowhere.

SNAP! Another picture is taken.

Dennis chews on a cigar as he aims for another shot.

Cooter sits on the bench and folds his arms in protest.

The construction worker rolls his eyes and turns back to his crew.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
Hey! Tiny! We got a problem here!

Cooter smirks.

COOTER
Tiny, huh?

His eyes widen.

SNAP! Another photograph is taken.

Tiny walks out of the group of snickering construction workers. Tiny is 3'5" and all solid muscle with a crazed look in his one good eye.

Cooter looks down at the man.

COOTER
I don't want no trouble. I'm going.

In the car across the street, Dennis prepares to take another picture.

SNAP! Someone takes a picture of Dennis from a building across the street. Dennis has no idea.

INT. ANDERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Several glossy photos of Cooter Brown arguing with the construction workers plop down onto Anderson's desk.

Anderson flips through the pictures.

ANDERSON
That's him.

He slides a stack of hundreds over to Dennis.

ANDERSON
Good work.

INT. ELROY'S OFFICE - DAY

Several glossy photos of Dennis plop down onto Elroy's desk.

ELROY (50s, massive) flips through the pictures.

The PHOTOGRAPHER sits across from him.

PHOTOGRAPHER

This is the guy taking pictures of that Cooter guy you're lookin' for.

ELROY

Any idea why?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Wasn't my job to ask him. I imagine you got bigger guys for that, no?

ELROY

I do.

He puts the photos in a drawer. He pulls out a gun and SHOTS the photographer dead.

ELROY

Good work.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Cooter ambles down the street, pushing a shopping cart filled with junk.

He stops and finds an old shoe. He smells it and jerks his head away in utter disgust.

COOTER

That one's a keeper.

He puts it into the shopping cart and keeps going. Suddenly, he sees Goon 1 eating an ice cream cone. Cooter turns around and heads the other way but runs right into...

GOON 2

Where do ya think you're going?

Cooter turns back around, right into...

GOON 1

Yeah, what he said.

COOTER

Come on, guys. That was days ago. Besides, it was too dark for me to even see anything anyway. Can't we just be friends?

INT. ELROY'S OFFICE - EVENING

Goon 1 and Goon 2 drop Cooter onto the floor in front of Elroy's desk. He reluctantly looks around.

The place is a large warehouse filled with thugs and stolen goods. Elroy's desk is in the corner.

Cooter stands and brushes himself off, trying to act tough, but clearly scared.

Elroy stands, Cooter crouches.

ELROY

I've seen you around this neighborhood before. Looks like you saw a little too much the other night.

Elroy comes out from behind his desk. He looms over Cooter.

ELROY

What did you see?

COOTER

I ain't seen nothin'.

ELROY

Ain't seen nothin'?

COOTER

Sir.

ELROY

Well, then I guess we can just let you go, now can't we?

COOTER

Guess so.

Elroy whips out a switchblade knife and puts the blade up against Cooter's eyeball.

ELROY

With one flick of the wrist, I could pop out your eyeballs, then you really won't see nothin.'

Cooter gulps. Elroy puts the knife away.

ELROY (CONT'D)

But I'm not gonna do it.

COOTER
No?

ELROY
Nope. You know why?

COOTER
No.

ELROY
I'm gonna let you owe me instead.

COOTER
Owe you what?

ELROY
Any favor that I ask. Besides, you
look like you could use a little
work.

COOTER
What if I can't do it?

Elroy whips out a gun and holds it to Cooter's head.

COOTER (CONT'D)
Suddenly, I'm inspired.

ELROY
Good.

He puts the gun away.

ELROY
I'll be calling you. Don't go too
far.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT

Lana sits on an old creaking bed, looking around furtively at
the other people there.

She clutches a bag with a few belongings to her chest and
curls up under the covers.

EXT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER - DAY

Anderson sits in a parked Mercedes outside the homeless
shelter.

He sees Cooter hobble into the building.

Anderson stares and smokes a cigarette.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Rain pours down. Lightning flashes and thunder rumbles. A much younger Anderson stands on the edge of a bridge, looking down into the black water below.

Tears run down his face.

Suddenly, he hears the sound of a man urinating. He looks over and sees a younger Cooter Brown standing next to him, urinating into the river below.

Cooter turns to Anderson and gives him a dumb grin.

ANDERSON
What are you doing?

COOTER
Um, do you need a diagram?

Anderson turns back to the river, disgusted.

Cooter finishes and lets out a loud belch.

ANDERSON
Are you done? I kind of wanted to be alone.

COOTER
When you really think about it, you're never really done pissing, are you?

ANDERSON
I guess not -- why are we having this conversation?

COOTER
Hey, you started it.

ANDERSON
No, you're the one who came over here and started pissing into the river when I was trying to...

He stares out at the river.

COOTER
Trying to what?

No answer.

COOTER (CONT'D)
Name's Cooter. Cooter Brown.

ANDERSON
Anderson Chris. Wait, aren't you in
my Business Ethics class?

COOTER
Probably. I'm usually too hung over
to go.

Anderson steps down. They walk down the street.

COOTER
I think this is the beginning of a
great friendship.

INT. ANDERSON'S CAR (PRESENT DAY)

Anderson continues staring at the homeless shelter.

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

Several cars behind Anderson's, Benard sits in his BMW and
watches.

INT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER - DAY

Cooter lays in bed reading *Hamlet*. An OLD PARANOID MAN leans
in close to Cooter's face.

OLD PARANOID MAN
Do you want to know what I think of
the government?

Cooter doesn't look up.

OLD PARANOID MAN
Good, let me tell ya.

Cooter rolls his eyes.

OLD PARANOID MAN
I think the government is run by a
bunch of aliens.

COOTER
Really.

OLD PARANOID MAN
Yeah, really. Why else do you think
they built the Washington Monument?

Cooter isn't biting.

OLD PARANOID MAN

It's an antenna. They beam signals from the Lincoln Memorial right into the Washington Monument and BAM! The signal goes right up to the mother ship.

Cooter continues reading

COOTER

Where's the mother ship?

OLD PARANOID MAN

It's the moon. Don't you watch the news, man?

Cooter pulls out a small bottle of brandy and hands it to the man.

COOTER

Here, you need this more than me.

OLD PARANOID MAN

Thanks.

A man in a suit and carrying a briefcase stands at the door. Someone points to Cooter's bed.

The man begins walking towards Cooter.

Cooter's eyes widen.

COOTER

Shit, they're back.

Cooter grabs his book and his bag and works his way through the crowd.

MAN IN SUIT

Excuse me. Are you Cooter Brown?

COOTER

Nope, just missed him, he went that way.

The man looks to where Cooter was pointing. Cooter starts to flee. He is stopped by an OLD FRIEND.

OLD FRIEND

Hey, Cooter, haven't seen you in awhile.

The man in the suit turns and realizes. He approaches Cooter. Cooter turns and sees the man reach into his coat.

His eyes widen.

The man pulls out an envelope.

MAN IN SUIT

I'm a lawyer for Mr. Anderson
Chris. He requested that I give
this envelope to you.

The homeless man approaches Cooter.

OLD PARANOID MAN

Is it from the aliens?

Cooter looks at the old paranoid man for a moment and snatches the envelope.

MAN IN SUIT

Have a nice day, sir and
congratulations.

Cooter sits down with the envelope. A group of homeless people gathers around him. The man in the suit leaves.

Cooter opens the letter and begins reading.

EXT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - DAY

At the south end of the driveway, Cooter looks up at the beautiful, imposing building. He wears his usual old trench coat and a beat up fedora and totes a brown bag.

A white limo approaches, it passes Cooter then SCREECHES to a halt. Startled, Cooter jumps up and rushes towards it.

The limo goes in reverse. Cooter looks.

The window rolls down, revealing NORMAN CONDORS (30s, regal).

Norman waves Cooter off.

NORMAN

Beat it.

COOTER

Beat it?

NORMAN

Scram, before I call the cops.

Cooter puffs out his chest.

COOTER
Look mister, don't want any
trouble.

Cooter turns away and heads for the hotel.

NORMAN
(To driver)
Follow him.

The limo catches up to Cooter, Cooter stops again.

COOTER
What you want?

NORMAN
You're on my property, buzz off.

Cooter turns to the hotel, looks up, and takes in the massive structure.

COOTER
You run these digs?

NORMAN
Bet your drunk ass I do.

The limo phone BUZZES. Norman looks at it. He hooks back to Cooter then raises a finger.

NORMAN
Just a moment.
(Into phone)
Hello.

Norman ducks into the limo.

NORMAN
Dear, for the last time, I will
take your poodle for her Botox
appointment when I am finished
working for the day. Please, dear,
I'm busy.

Cooter listens in, shakes his head, then lifts the bag and takes a swig.

COOTER
(To himself)
Sucker.

Norman sticks his head back out the window.

NORMAN

Look--

Cooter raises a finger.

COOTER

--you look. First of all, what decade was it when you last got laid? You need to get rid of the Botox poodle monster and get yourself a freak. I know some people--

NORMAN

Just don't loiter in the front.

Cooter scans the driveway.

NORMAN

(To driver)

Pull off.

The driver speeds off, stopping in front of the hotel. Cooter stands there.

The door opens. The driver hops out and opens the rear door. Norman rises from the limo and looks back at Cooter.

Cooter raises the bottle and takes a quick hit.

COOTER

You ain't so tough.

Norman fixes himself and dashes into the hotel.

Cooter smiles and heads into the hotel.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL LOBBY

A beautiful crystal chandelier hangs from the cathedral ceiling. Plush sofas are arranged for relaxation.

There are handcrafted vases on each of the many cherry wood stands throughout the lobby.

Unlike any other hotel, a large glass cabinet filled with stunning silverware sits near the elevator.

FRONT DESK

Norman stands reading a Wall Street Journal. Several stern and nervous workers check people in.

FRONT DOOR

A WEALTHY WOMAN SCREAMS and falls to the floor.

WEALTHY WOMAN
A terrorist!

Everyone looks. Cooter shrugs and steps over the guest and heads into the lobby.

COOTER
Got any vacancies?

Norman scowls and crushes the paper in his hands.

INT. ANDERSON'S OFFICE

Norman opens the door for Cooter; they both enter.

Norman gestures for Cooter to sit. A flat screen television sits before him.

NORMAN
You could have told me who you were first, then we could have avoided the conflict.

COOTER
I just like to screw with people. It's fun.

Norman glares at Cooter for a moment.

NORMAN
Mr. Chris instructed me to show this to you upon your arrival, Mr. Brown.

COOTER
So, where is ole' Andy.

Norman slips a DVD into a player and presses play.

NORMAN
Enjoy.

He leaves.

On TV:

Anderson sits at his desk, looking directly at Cooter.

ANDERSON

(On TV)

Hello Cooter Brown, my old friend,
I'm afraid that by the time you see
this, I will be dead.

Cooter's eyes widen.

COOTER

You're shitting me.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

And no, I'm not shitting you.

Anderson sighs deeply.

ANDERSON

I just can't do it anymore. I
finally had the courage to end it
all. I know that you tried to save
me that night on the bridge and I
don't want you to think that your
efforts are in vain. I just can't
live a lie anymore. This life isn't
for me.

Anderson gestures.

ANDERSON

On my desk, you will see an
envelope. In it you will see
several papers. Once you sign those
papers, this hotel and the life
that comes with it will all be
yours.

Cooter nearly chokes on his drink.

COOTER

Wha-?

ANDERSON

That's right. I know that you've
fallen on hard times, my old
friend, and I want to help you.
Sign those papers and you'll be a
wealthy man. My new manager, Norman
Condors will show you the ropes and
make sure that everything runs
smoothly. That's all I have to say
Cooter.

ANDERSON (cont'd)
You were always a smarter man than
me, I think this will help both you
and the hotel. Goodbye.

The video ends. Cooter sits there in awe.

INT. LOBBY

Cooter walks quickly through the lobby, Norman follows.

NORMAN
Going so soon?

COOTER
I'm gettin' outta here. You people
are crazy.

NORMAN
Good. I always thought Anderson was
a little crazy toward the end.

Cooter stops and turns.

COOTER
That's my old friend you're talking
about.

NORMAN
Well, your old friend is gone and
now the hotel can have a real
owner.

COOTER
It had a real owner, fool.

NORMAN
Anderson started giving money to
people like you.

He looks Cooter up and down with disapproval.

NORMAN
Now the place can go back to
catering to real people. People who
matter.

COOTER
You know what I think?

NORMAN
You think?

COOTER

Yeah. I think I'll keep you on as manager for awhile at least.

Norman scratches his bald spot nervously.

NORMAN

What...what are you talking about?

COOTER

I'm talking about those papers Anderson left me. Let me see 'em.

Norman looks suspicious. Cooter smiles and takes a nip of brandy. He heads back towards the elevator.

COOTER

Never mind. I'll just show myself to ole' Anderson's office.

Norman stands there for a moment, then his eyes widen in terror at what is about to happen.

He runs over to the elevator just as the doors are opening. Norman makes it just in time to block the doors with his body. Cooter just rolls his eyes.

COOTER

Outta the way, limp dick.

NORMAN

You're not going up there.

COOTER

There's, like, a hundred other elevators here. You know that, don't you?

NORMAN

And I'll block every one!

People are beginning to get curious. Cooter takes another nip of brandy, unimpressed.

COOTER

There's also stairs.

NORMAN

I'll trip you.

COOTER

Yeah, well, I may be a drunk but I'm gonna get back up to that office and I'm gonna be runnin' this place. So why don't you do yourself a favor and go home to queen Botox.

Norman sighs and steps into the elevator. Cooter joins him.

INT. ELEVATOR

The doors close. Before Cooter can press the button for the penthouse, Norman runs his hands down the panel, pressing every button. He spins around to Cooter.

NORMAN

Okay Mr. Brown, I'm sure we can work something out here. I have money, or I can give you stock options. I even have friends at some local casinos.

COOTER

You know, I get the feeling that you may not want me to own this hotel.

He belches lightly.

NORMAN

Oh, god.

He covers his nose.

NORMAN

Okay Mr. Brown, I have a proposition for you. In addition to the hotel, you will have access to Anderson's personal finances. At the time of his death, Mr. Chris was worth 6.2 million dollars.

Cooter's jaw drops.

NORMAN

You do not need to run the hotel to have access to his money, Mr. Brown. You can take it and leave.

Cooter thinks for a moment.

COOTER

Why are you just telling me this now?

NORMAN

All you would have done is drink the money away. But if that's what it takes to get rid of you...Ownership can simply be transferred to a board of directors. You'll just have to sign some papers.

Cooter considers.

COOTER

You know, friend, that may just be a good idea.

Norman leans against the wall and slides down, utterly relieved.

COOTER

Nah, I'm just screwing with you.

Norman's eyes widen in horror.

TITLE: SIX MONTHS LATER

EXT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - MORNING

Four taxis and two gangster rides are parked in front of the hotel.

A black limo with 28-inch rims sits on the hotel lawn.

On the driver side door reads: Five Star Hotel.

Music fades.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - COOTER'S ROOM

The room is huge and the decorations are very gaudy.

Empty liquor bottles are everywhere. A naked woman sleeps under the covers in the four-poster bed. Thousand dollar bills lie scattered on the bed.

Cooter looks like hell. He clutches his head as he feebly fixes himself in the mirror, he wears a three-piece suit and has slicked back hair. He still has a 5 o'clock shadow.

COOTER

Looking better and better.

He spits in his hand and slicks back his eyebrows.

Cooter looks at a table on which three miniature bottles sit. He walks over. He lifts grabs a bottle and a bottle, opens it and takes a swig.

COOTER

Best cure for a hangover.

He puts all the three miniatures into his coat pocket. He catches his reflection in the mirror as he does so.

INT. LOBBY

The virtually deserted place looks nothing like it did. Many of the beautiful vases and furniture are either missing or broken. The beautiful chandelier is gone, only a hole remains.

FRONT DESK

A MAN approaches the desk. The nervous and stern clerks have been replaced by JAQUITA SMITH (30, tight outfit), and SEDUCTION TATE (30, a part-time stripper). She wears a mini skirt and matching jacket with nothing underneath. Her boobs stand at attention.

SEDUCTION

Checking in?

The MAN man reaches into his coat pocket.

MAN

I guess.

SEDUCTION

Need a ho?

MAN

A what?

JAQUITA

A ho?, hooker?, prostitute?

Jaquita and Seduction smile and high five.

SEDUCTION

That was good, girl.

The man stands there, shocked.

FRONT DOOR

MR. and MRS. WHITE (very old, very wealthy) enter the hotel with FIFE, their poodle (with hair dyed pink). They stop and stare at the once beautiful lobby.

Jason approaches them.

JASON
Welcome back, Mr. and Mrs. White...
got any luggage?

MR. WHITE
What's going on here?

JASON
New ownership.

MRS. WHITE
Really?

Jason points to Cooter.

JASON
That's him with the suit on.

Mr. and Mrs. White turn and see Cooter checking his nose hairs in a large mirror. Cooter looks over to Jason then back to the...

FRONT DESK

His eyes widen and he rushes over.

COOTER
(To Seduction)
Damn, girl. No!

SEDUCTION
What?

He looks around.

COOTER
Put on something different.

SEDUCTION
What you mean something different?
I wear this to church.

SEDUCTION (cont'd)
 If it's good enough for Jesus, it
 sure as hell good enough for you.

Cooter stares at her breasts.

COOTER
 Your...headlights are showing.

Seduction looks at her boobs and jiggles them. Jaquita quickly glances up then returns to her nails.

JAQUITA
 They are kind of out there, girl.

SEDUCTION
 (To Jaquita)
 Look who's talking.

Jaquita pushes up her bust.

JAQUITA
 Yeah, but damn I look good--

COOTER
 Both of you! Put on some clothes!

He clutches his head in pain and takes a swig. A nearby woman looks and covers her children's eyes and ushers them away from the front desk.

COOTER
 Make me want to take a drink.

He lifts a bottle and takes a hit.

JAQUITA
 You can't just start drinking when
 you want. You got responsibilities
 now, Coot.

COOTER
 This is my hotel.

He takes another hit.

JAQUITA
 This is the first time you've even
 come out of your room in three
 days.

COOTER
 I was busy.

JAQUITA
Right. Did you pay this one?

COOTER
I always--Just straighten that out.

SEDUCTION
Look, you want me to bring in the
johns or not?

COOTER
Johns?

SEDUCTION
Guests. I said guests.

COOTER
Just cover them up, will ya?

Jaquita chuckles.

JAQUITA
Good luck with that. Gonna need
lots of cloth.

Cooter looks at Jaquita.

COOTER
You too.

JAQUITA
Me too what?

Cooter looks at the desk, a salon now.

COOTER
Clear off the desk... all this
fingernail stuff... this ain't the
salon.

Cooter walks off. He heads towards the front door.

FRONT DOOR

Cooter makes his way to Jason.

JASON
Cooter, meet Mr. and Mrs. White...
they're regulars.

Cooter extends his hand.

COOTER
Pleased to meet you.

MR. WHITE
You're the new owner?

COOTER
Sure am.

Mr. White sniffs the air.

MR. WHITE
What's that smell?

JASON
Smells like ripple.

Cooter clears his throat.

Mrs. White scans the lobby.

MRS. WHITE
Was there a shoot-out here? What
happened to the beautiful
chandelier?

Cooter looks up.

COOTER
What chandelier?

Jason looks up.

COOTER
Didn't notice it.

Mr. White scans the lobby.

MR. WHITE
The furnishings?

Mrs. White looks at the vases.

MR. WHITE
At least you kept the vase.

Cooter looks at the vases.

COOTER
Got to get one of those for my
room.

MR. WHITE
Where's the beautiful sofa?

COOTER
Oh, looked better in my room.
(beat)
Let's go, shall we?

EXT. FIVE STAR HOTEL DRIVEWAY - EVENING

A Limo SCREAMS up to the hotel, out comes LANCE JONES, 37. He is dressed as an Indy driver.

He opens the passenger door, a frantic, wild-haired LADY gets out.

LANCE
Did you enjoy yourself?

LADY #1
That was the worst trip I've ever had!

LANCE
(Confused)
Thank you...

She darts off.

Lance helps a MAN out.

LANCE
And you sir, enjoyed it?

MAN #1
Hell no!

The man storms off.

LANCE
Remember, no swearing!

Lance helps another LADY out.

LADY #2
You need to be put away before you kill someone!

She begins to cry then scurries off.

LANCE
So touchy.

Lance helps the last MAN.

LANCE
Last but not least.

MAN #2
Say fellow, don't I know you?

LANCE
Don't know, do you?

MAN #2
What's your name again?

Lance closes the door.

LANCE
Lance Jones.

The man smiles.

MAN #2
The racecar driver.

Lance smiles.

EXT. HOTEL FRONT DOOR

Cooter walks out.

The crying lady passes him.

COOTER
Madam.

LADY #2
That driver of yours is terrible!

COOTER
What happened?

LADY #2
He's terrible!

The lady continues into the hotel, shaken.

The man approaches Cooter.

MAN #2
Good job Cooter. I admire taste,
hiring a legend.

The man enters the hotel. Cooter approaches Lance.

COOTER
What happened?

Lance begins to wipe down the limo.

LANCE
Guess I'm a legend.

Cooter smiles.

COOTER
I heard.

Lance nods.

Cooter exits the hotel, holding a miniature.

COOTER
Oh, and Lance?

LANCE
Yeah chief?

COOTER
Careful with the customers.

LANCE
Not to worry, Chief.

He looks down and notices the limo tires smoking. Lance quickly steps in front of a tire, blocking it from Cooter's view.

LANCE
Driving record's clean as a
whistle.

Four beautiful women exit the hotel. Cooter smiles and squirts some breath spray into his mouth. Lance spots the women.

LANCE
Hey, let me get some of that.

Cooter accidentally squirts Lance right in the eyes.

LANCE
Chief!

Lance scrubs his face. The women approach the Limo. Lance squints at them.

LANCE
Folks need a lift?

Lance opens the door.

LANCE (CONT'D)
Fasten up.

The women get in.

COOTER
Have a nice day.

Cooter walks back towards the hotel. He sniffs the air for a moment and then continues walking.

Behind him, the limo speeds off, destroying two gardens along the way. Several people run for their lives.

INT. DULLARD HOTEL - BENARD'S OFFICE

Benard's face is hidden behind a massive newspaper. He SLAMS the paper down onto the oak desk.

The headline reads: New Ownership at Five Star Hotel.

Benard looms over a news story featuring Cooter Brown. He appears drunk in the picture.

BENARD
Anderson had the nerve to fire me
and bring in this DRUNK?

He crumples up the paper and walks over to the window. He sees the distant rooftop of Five Star Hotel.

BENARD
Anderson Chris has no idea what he
has done to that beautiful hotel.

He balls up the paper in his hands.

BENARD
He has no idea how vengeful Benard
Heights can be.

He walks over to a wet bar and puts the paper into a blender with some water.

BENARD
Who are you Cooter Brown? Who's
your devil?

He punches the blender on.

BENARD

No one messes with my ambitions. No one defeats Benard--

MOTHER (O.S.)

Oh Duplekins!

Benard stops the blender and pours the newspaper concoction into a large glass.

BENARD

Yes mother?

MOTHER

Where's my milkshake?

BENARD

Coming!

He heads for the door.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - LOBBY

Cooter approaches the elevator and stops.

Cooter turns and sees Seduction talking to a guest.

SEDUCTION

Come on, daddy, I got a girl for you.

Seduction walks out from behind the counter. Cooter rushes over to her.

COOTER

Where you going?

SEDUCTION

(Innocently)

Showing this nice gentleman to his room.

The man stands with a huge smile.

COOTER

Sir, you okay with that?

The man nods quickly. Seduction smiles.

SEDUCTION

Come on.

Seduction and the man walk off. Jaquita files away on her nails.

JAQUITA

He's gonna get rocked.

COOTER

This place is turning into a
whorehouse.

JAQUITA

Not as classy as the one I worked
for in Texas, though.

Cooter looks at Jaquita; she stops and slowly turns.

JAQUITA

Sorry, you weren't supposed to know
that.

Cooter shakes his head and takes a drink.

JAQUITA

Oh, almost forgot, you got two
calls earlier.

COOTER

From who?

JAQUITA

Hotel's lawyers.

Cooter's eyes widen.

COOTER

Why didn't you tell me earlier?

JAQUITA

Busy.

COOTER

Doing what?

Jaquita studies her nails.

COOTER

Never mind.

He lays his head down on the front desk. Jaquita gives him a dirty look and moves some of her manicure supplies out of the way.

Cooter holds up his miniature bottle of brandy.

COOTER

(To the brandy)

You used to be so good to me. You used to make me so happy. Why don't you do work anymore?

Jaquita stares at Cooter.

COOTER

(To Jaquita)

What'd the lawyers say?

JAQUITA

Something about the books looking bad, closing the hotel...oh, and you're a total failure.

He slams his head back down on the table.

COOTER

Ow...

JAQUITA

Would have told you earlier but I was busy.

COOTER

Doing what? Don't tell me, your toes?

Jaquita looks at her feet.

JAQUITA

Nope, but they need it, huh?

Jaquita plops her feet onto the counter, right in Cooter's face. He winces.

JAQUITA

(To her toes)

Momma gonna polish you girls right up.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

It is a sterile and colorless room. Cooter sits across the table from 12 serious LAWYERS and ACCOUNTANTS.

ACCOUNTANT

Let's get started, Mr. Brown--

COOTER

Cooter, please.

ACCOUNTANT

Yes, Mr. Brown. So we've been going over the numbers for the hotel and we'd like to speak with you about some issues.

COOTER

Shoot.

The man raises an eyebrow and turns back to the papers.

ACCOUNTANT

Yes, well, I'm afraid we will have to make some cuts in order to survive another fiscal year.

COOTER

What kind of cuts?

ACCOUNTANT

The pay of your entire hotel staff.

Cooter spits out his drink.

COOTER

Wha--?

LAWYER

We're broke, Mr. Brown.

COOTER

How can that be?

ACCOUNTANT

Frankly, I don't exactly know where the money has been going but if I were you I'd consider opening up an investigation.

COOTER

So let me get this straight, we're broke?

ACCOUNTANT

Pretty much.

COOTER

Broke broke?

ACCOUNTANT

Let me put it to you this way, Mr. Brown, you so broke, ho's gotta pay you fo' sex.

Everyone stops for a moment and looks at the accountant in confusion. He clears his throat, embarrassed and shrinks back into his chair.

Cooter gets up and paces back and forth.

COOTER

What can we do?

ACCOUNTANT

If you want to stay in business this hotel needs to bring in sixteen million dollars by the end of next month.

Cooter drops his drink.

EXT. FILTHY ALLEY - NIGHT

Rain drips down from a gutter. Mist drifts out from a street grate. Cooter treads lightly through the area, looking around, scared. He carries a large duffel bag.

He spots an old warehouse with a light on. Edmund and Bartholomew (30s, large bouncers) stand on either side of the door. Both men wear flashy suits and stare ahead dangerously.

Cooter heads for the door. A bouncer holds out his arm to block Cooter. Another bouncer reaches into his coat.

EDMUND

Whoa, whoa, whoa, where do you think you're goin'?

COOTER

I'd like to think I'm going inside.

BARTHOLOMEW
Who wants to know?

Cooter looks confused.

COOTER
Who wants to know what? I just
wanted to go inside.

Edmund looks at Bartholomew in disgust.

EDMUND
We talked about this, I said I'll
do the talking, you just screw it
all up.

BARTHOLOMEW
Sorry. Continue.

COOTER
Look, I just need to get in there
to see Elroy. Tell him Cooter Brown
has something for him.

BARTHOLOMEW
Who wants to know?

Cooter and Edmund look at him.

INT. ELROY'S WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Smoke lingers in the air. The place is filled with loud and rowdy people, screaming and cheering at the underground boxing match.

Hundred dollar bills litter the floor at the feet of the bloody boxers.

Elroy smokes a large cigar as he sits in his office watching the match through a window.

INT. ELROY'S OFFICE

Edmund escorts Cooter in, plopping him down in a chair in front of Elroy.

ELROY
Cooter Brown. Just the man I wanted
to see.

Cooter takes a nip of brandy.

Elroy gets up and goes to the window.

ELROY

You have any idea how much money is
littering that floor right now?

COOTER

Um, no.

ELROY

Nowhere near enough. These
underground games aren't bringing
in what they once were. Used to be
that a guy could make a decent
living watching birds, dogs or even
people fight to the death.

He sits back down and blows a large smoke ring.

ELROY (CONT'D)

Now people can just watch this shit
on Youtube. Don't need me anymore.
You got what I asked?

Cooter puts the duffel bag down.

COOTER

This is getting harder and harder
to do. When are you planning on
ending this job you have for me?

Elroy unzips the bag, it's filled with stacks of money. He
smiles down at the money through his cigar smoke.

ELROY

Right around the time you plan on
dying, Mr. Brown.

He picks up a stack of money and flips through it.

ELROY

Yep, right around then.

Cooter gulps and looks out at the boxing match. A bloody
fighter goes down.

INT. COOTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Cooter sits at Anderson's old desk and looks around the
office.

He goes to the window and looks out at the beautiful view. He sees a family gathering down in front of the hotel, the children look up at the beautiful building in amazement.

Cooter sighs and takes a sip of brandy, looking down at the happy family.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Cooter and Anderson sit on the hood of a car, drinking.

ANDERSON

You know, you've been a great friend to me, Coot.

COOTER

You've been a great drinking buddy to me too, Andy.

ANDERSON

How the hell did you manage to graduate? You came to most of the exams drunk.

COOTER

That's how I do it. Can't think straight when I'm sober.

Anderson laughs.

ANDERSON

Don't ever change, man.

COOTER

Never.

They clink their brandy bottles together.

BACK TO PRESENT

Cooter continues staring out the window. He throws the brandy bottle into the trash.

EXT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER - DAY

The same lines of homeless people stand outside the shelter. The streets are still choked with garbage.

Cooter is dressed in casual clothes as he watches the building from across the street. He takes a deep breath and heads toward it.

INT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER

The place is loud and crowded as homeless people and workers mill about. Cooter walks in and looks around in amazement.

TAYLOR (O.S.)
Cooter?

Cooter turns and sees TAYLOR EDWARDS (60s) standing there.

COOTER
Hey Taylor.

TAYLOR
What brings you around here?

Cooter looks around, unsure.

COOTER
I...Just...

Taylor smiles.

TAYLOR
Come on.

INT. TAYLOR'S OFFICE

The place looks like a hurricane swept through recently. Taylor sits at a desk covered in books, papers, and files. Cooter lounges on the old, cracked leather couch.

TAYLOR
Haven't seen you in awhile.

COOTER
You know, running the hotel isn't easy.

TAYLOR
Thought you done gone and forgot about us, Coot. Forgot where you came from.

Taylor lights up a cigarette.

COOTER
No, could never do that. I loved it here.

TAYLOR
Never heard anyone say that before.

COOTER
Look, T, I'm in a real jam here.

TAYLOR
What is it?

COOTER
The hotel. Someone's been stealing money.

TAYLOR
Stealing? Do you know who?

COOTER
No! 'Course not! How would I know?

Taylor is taken aback by Cooter's overreaction.

COOTER
If something doesn't happen soon,
we're gonna have to close.

TAYLOR
Lord...

Cooter sinks farther down in the couch.

TAYLOR
So, what are you gonna do?

COOTER
Close the hotel.

Taylor stands over Cooter.

TAYLOR
Get up, Coot.

Cooter reluctantly gets up. Taylor leads him over to the window looking out into the activities room. The room is filled with the homeless.

TAYLOR
What do you see out there?

COOTER
Buncha guys.

Taylor points to an old man playing cards.

TAYLOR

See him? That's Stan. The guy used to be an investment banker. Lost everything in 9/11.

He points to a woman knitting and watching TV.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

That's Lorraine. She used to have a house and a family. She couldn't stop gambling and she lost it all. Now her kids won't even talk to her.

Cooter stares out at the activities room.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Everyone in there has a story. They all hit rock bottom.

Cooter sits down. Taylor sits down next to him.

TAYLOR

But Cooter, you got a chance they could only dream of. You got to hold onto that chance. You got to fight for it.

Cooter gets back up and looks out into the activities room. A smile slowly forms.

INT. LOBBY

Cooter comes out of the elevator and heads to the desk. Norman is there, reading the Wall Street Journal.

COOTER

Hey Norm.

Norman doesn't look up.

NORMAN

It's Norman, and you know it.

Cooter snatches the paper away. Norman scowls.

COOTER

Good for you, hey I got a question for you. You said that Anderson used to give his money to homeless charities, right?

NORMAN
That's correct.

He reaches for the paper, but Cooter holds it away from him.
Cooter smiles.

COOTER
I got myself an idea.

INT. COOTER'S OFFICE

Cooter paces around the desk in excitement. Jaquita, Seduction, Norman and Lance all sit across from him.

COOTER
Thanks for coming guys. As you guys may or may not know, the hotel's kinda hurting and we need to bring in some money, stat.

NORMAN
What do you propose? A car wash with naked strippers?

Seduction winks at him. He blushes.

COOTER
No, even better...well, almost as good.

He hits play on a Powerpoint presentation.

On screen: Rags to Riches! A homeless talent competition!

COOTER
We hold the competition right here in the hotel. We get sponsors to pay for the whole thing!

SEDUCTION
You finally lost it now, Cooter.

NORMAN
There is no way that I will be participating in this ridiculous plan.

JAQUITA
How the hell this gonna work, Coot?

LANCE

I kinda like the idea.

NORMAN

I'm leaving, this is utterly absurd. No one, and I mean no one will want to see a bunch of homeless losers trying to sing or dance for a few dollars. They can just do that on the street corner.

He begins to leave.

COOTER

Okay, Norm, but if you walk out of there don't expect to have a job tomorrow.

Norman stops.

NORMAN

You're serious about this.

COOTER

As a heart attack. Now if you're in, sit down and let me tell you something.

Norman reluctantly sits.

COOTER

Now you guys don't really know about this but someone's been stealing from the hotel.

Everyone gasps and murmurs amongst themselves.

COOTER

Calm down, calm down.

LANCE

Do you know who it is?

COOTER

I got my suspicions. But don't you guys worry nothing about that now. The main concern here is to save this place.

He looks down for a moment.

COOTER

I owe it to an old friend.

JAQUITA
Sounds like we got some work to do.

Cooter smiles.

INT. TAYLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Cooter sits with Taylor.

TAYLOR
Let's get this straight... you want everyone here to audition for some talent show for the homeless?

COOTER
That's right.

TAYLOR
Who's paying for this? The hotel?

COOTER
Not exactly.

TAYLOR
Who's paying?

COOTER
Don't worry about that.

TAYLOR
Oh, I'm not worried... in fact, I'm delighted.

Taylor stands.

TAYLOR
Look, Cooter.

Cooter stands.

TAYLOR
I'm happy that you want to help the others but...

COOTER
What?

TAYLOR
You got a good thing over there, don't screw it up.

COOTER
If I can't reach back and help, I
lose anyway.

Taylor extends his hand.

TAYLOR
Amazing.

COOTER
What's that?

TAYLOR
Life.

Cooter smiles and shakes Taylor's hand.

COOTER
Sure is.

Cooter lifts the miniatures from his pocket and tosses them
into the trash. Taylor smiles. Cooter turns and leaves.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

A NEWS ANCHOR sits at the news desk, reporting the news.

NEWS ANCHOR
The controversial new owner of the
Five Star Hotel unveiled an
interesting new charity today.

ON SCREEN: Cooter stands before the hotel's front doors,
several microphones are in his face. A large covered sign
stands behind him.

COOTER
In an attempt to raise awareness of
the growing problem with
homelessness in this city, I am
proposing a contest, hosted by Five
Star Hotel. I present to you...

He pulls the sheet off the sign, revealing "Rags to Riches"

COOTER
...Rags to Riches: the homeless
edition of America's Got Talent!

INT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER - SAME TIME

Taylor sits in his office watching it all unfold on TV.

TAYLOR
(smiling)
My God...

ON SCREEN:

REPORTER 1
What kinds of acts are you looking
for in this contest?

COOTER
Anything and everything! We don't
care!

INT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER - ACTIVITIES ROOM - SAME TIME

Several homeless men and women cheer.

ON SCREEN:

REPORTER 2
Why is this only for the homeless?

Cooter hesitates for a moment.

COOTER
They've been forgotten for too
long. A good friend of mine used to
give a lot of money to the homeless
and it's time that we honor his
memory.

REPORTER 3
What will the grand prize be?

COOTER
500,000 dollars! But we need
sponsors, we need advertisements.
Coke, Pepsi, get off your
caffeinated asses and get in on
this!

INT. SOUP KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Lana stands in line, absorbed in the news report.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

The female anchor chuckles.

NEWS ANCHOR

You heard him Pepsi, get off your asses.

She chuckles, slaps her hand lightly again and turns to another camera.

NEWS ANCHOR

Oh, I said a bad word. Next up, is your pet rabbit a secret killer?

INT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER - DAY

The cots have been cleared out of the main room and a line of homeless people slowly wind their way towards the judge's table at the front.

Cooter, Jaquita, Seduction and Lance sit at the table.

A large, ANGRY HOMELESS MAN bears down on them.

ANGRY HOMELESS MAN

What you mean I'm not funny?

COOTER

Sorry sir, but abortion humor just isn't what we're looking for.

ANGRY HOMELESS MAN

But those are the only jokes I know.

COOTER

Well, that kinda scares me.

ANGRY HOMELESS MAN

What? I oughta kick your ass!

Cooter glances at Seduction. She gets up and tries to escort the man away.

SEDUCTION

Come on now, big daddy, don't want no trouble.

ANGRY HOMELESS MAN

Get your hands off me, bitch. I got more jokes to tell!

Seduction rolls her eyes with boredom, then PUNCHES the man in the face, knocking him out cold.

Two large men drag the unconscious man away.

SEDUCTION

Anyone else?

Several people run away.

SEDUCTION

That's what I thought.

She sits back down and winks at Norman who is standing to the side.

He blushes and dabs sweat off his brow.

LATER

The room is empty. Cooter is about to lock up. Suddenly, the door opens, and Lana rushes in.

LANA

Oh my god, I'm so sorry I'm late.
Did I miss it?

Cooter doesn't look at Lana, he cleans up.

COOTER

Sorry miss you're too late. Come back next year.

LANA

C'mon, you gotta at least hear me sing.

COOTER

Miss, it's been a long day, it ain't happening. Now--

Lana starts to sing a beautiful song.

Cooter looks up amazed and sees how beautiful the singer is.

Lana's song ends. Cooter smiles.

COOTER

Hi.

INT. FRONT DESK - NIGHT

A door opens, Jaquita and a Jason come out.

JAQUITA

I think I heard something.

JASON

What?

JAQUITA

I don't know, something.

JASON

Girl, stop playing.

Jason covers her with kisses.

JAQUITA

Let me make sure everything's okay.

She scans the lobby.

Jason unzips his pants; they fall.

Jaquita walks back to the desk. Jason grabs her and hoists her up onto the desk.

JAQUITA

Boy, we can't do it here.

JASON

Why not?

Jason jumps onto the desk.

The lights flash on. Seduction approaches the front desk.

SEDUCTION

Get your ass off that counter,
freak.

JAQUITA

Seduction.

SEDUCTION

All these rooms in this hotel and
you two wanna do it on the counter?

JASON

Yes.

SEDUCTION

You better roll your little ding-a-ling ass on the cart to a room.

Jason hops down from the desk.

Jaquita hops down.

SEDUCTION

And you, hot momma.

Jason grabs Jaquita by the hand and leaves.

Seduction watches as they walk off.

SEDUCTION

Got my eye on you two.

She dims the lights.

A nervous Norman emerges from behind the wall.

Seduction grabs his hand and guides him to the front desk. They hop on top of it.

SEDUCTION

Come on, baby. I'm all yours.

NORMAN

Please be gentle, I went to Harvard.

SEDUCTION

Gentle my ass.

She throws him to the floor. Ripping clothing can be heard.

NORMAN (O.S.)

Ow...do it again...

INT. DULLARD HOTEL - BENARD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Benard sits at his desk and talks on the phone to a Five Star OFFICIAL.

BENARD

I know something is going on over there.

OFFICIAL (V.O.)
Anderson never should have fired
you.

BENARD
I know.

OFFICIAL (V.O.)
Now that Anderson is out of the
picture, the Board wants to handle
this now.

Benard swings around.

BENARD
I think I can help you.

OFFICIAL (V.O.)
Please how?

BENARD
Let me send one of my assistants
over there.

OFFICIAL (V.O.)
What will he do?

BENARD
You know, keep an eye on things.

OFFICIAL (V.O.)
You mean spy on Cooter?

Benard smiles.

BENARD
Exactly.

OFFICIAL (V.O.)
I don't know.

BENARD
He's already got thugs and hookers
over there... who knows what's
next.

OFFICIAL (V.O.)
Let me run it by the others.

Benard takes a small recorder from his desk.

BENARD
In the mean time, I'll send him
over.

OFFICIAL (V.O.)
(Sighs)
Fine.

Benard hangs up the telephone. He smiles and spins in the
chair.

BENARD
Got you now Cooter Brown.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - FRONT DESK - DAY

Seduction and Jaquita are at the front desk.

JAQUITA
Someone got rocked last night.

Seduction looks at Jaquita.

SEDUCTION
What you talking about?

JAQUITA
I saw you.

SEDUCTION
When?

Jaquita grabs a roll of paper towels and a bottle of spray
and wipes the counter off.

SEDUCTION
Peeping tom.

Jason approaches with a guest, he looks at Jaquita and
smiles.

JAQUITA
Hi Jason.

Jason winks.

SEDUCTION
Girl, that boy a bellboy.

JAQUITA
A cute bellboy.

Jaquita smiles.

SEDUCTION

You better get somebody with some money.

JAQUITA

Money ain't everything.

Seduction looks at Jaquita.

SEDUCTION

No, it's all things.

Cooter approaches the front desk.

COOTER

Where's the vase that was here?

SEDUCTION

Man, you know everything is disappearing around here.

He accidentally hits Jaquita's hand, she spills fingernail polish on the counter.

JAQUITA

Fool, you gonna pay me for that.

INT. BALL ROOM - DAY

People are everywhere. Workers set up lights on a makeshift stage. Cooter worms his way through the crowd. A throng of reporters follows him. He is loving the attention.

COOTER

Yeah, so we've got this big, beautiful stage, lights everywhere. It's gonna be as big as American Idol. Except, you know, a little smaller.

A REPORTER steps forward.

REPORTER

How are you financing all of this?

COOTER

We've got some independent financiers in place. Not to worry.

REPORTER

What do you say to those people out there that think you're exploiting the homeless?

COOTER

I say look, what have you all done for the homeless lately? We're giving them a chance to become rich. So back off!

The reporters look at each other nervously.

COOTER

Oh, not you guys.

They look relieved.

REPORTER

So it looks like the homeless have already arrived at the hotel, where will they be staying.

COOTER

What do you mean they've already arrived?

The reporter points to a homeless, bearded man at the other end of the room.

COOTER

'Scuse me a minute.

He heads over to the man. The man suddenly disappears into a nearby hallway.

HALLWAY

Cooter runs into the hall. The homeless man is fleeing down the hall.

COOTER

Hey! Get back here!

He starts running. The man disappears around the corner.

Cooter rounds the corner and looks down the hall; the man is gone.

INT. FRONT DESK - MORNING

A crowd of people advance upon the front desk. Clearly, they are from the shelter. They wear tattered clothing, carry large backpacks or trash bags filled with belongings. One woman even wears a hat made of aluminum foil.

Mr. and Mrs. White duck under a couch. Fife sits atop the couch, barking at the interlopers.

Jason holds onto the bell cart for safety. They are both knocked over by the crowd.

The lobby erupts in chatter.

Cooter, Jaquita, and Seduction stand behind the front desk, watching the chaos with dropped jaws.

Homeless people mill about everywhere. Some of the homeless begin to set up camp right in the lobby.

SEDUCTION

Where did they come from?

COOTER

The streets.

JAQUITA

The streets?

COOTER

Yup. They're the contestants for the show. We're holding them here until it's over.

JAQUITA

Hotel's gonna be full now.

COOTER

Good.

SEDUCTION

Good my ass, what about my johns...I mean guests?

COOTER

Johns?

SEDUCTION

Guests! I said guests!

COOTER
Guess they got to find another
hotel.

Norman enters the hotel and sees the crowd. He rushes over
to the front desk.

NORMAN
What the hell is going on here?

COOTER
New guests.

Norman scans the room. A kid tosses a beer bottle; Norman
sees it and ducks. The bottle flies across and misses him.

NORMAN
These are the contestants?

Norman rises.

SEDUCTION
Yeah, and they're moving in.

NORMAN
Who ordered this?

COOTER
I did.

Norman approaches Cooter.

NORMAN
I think you better get rid of
these...people at once, are--

Cooter looks at Norman.

COOTER
I'm still the owner.

Norman storms out.

COOTER
Jaquita, go and get all the room
keys.

JAQUITA
For what?

COOTER
Do it.

Jaquita walks into the back room.

SEDUCTION

Cooter, are you serious?

COOTER

Serious as a heart attack.

SEDUCTION

That's what the lawyers gonna have
when they see this.

Jaquita returns with the keys, and lays them on the counter.

Jason approaches, covered in bruises.

JAQUITA

A madhouse.

Cooter gives the keys to Jason.

JASON

What am I supposed to do?

COOTER

Your job. Check them in.

JASON

You're serious?

SEDUCTION

As a heart attack.

INT. BENARD'S OFFICE - LATER

Benard is sitting at his desk. There's a knock at the door.

BENARD

Come in.

The door opens. We cannot see the MAN speaking to Benard.

MAN

Cooter has gone mad.

BENARD

What's he done now?

MAN

He's filling the hotel with bums
from the shelter. They are the
idiots from the competition.

Benard rises.

BENARD
What an idiot.

Benard paces.

BENARD
Go back over there.

MAN
No way.

BENARD
You want to keep your job?

MAN
Of course.

Benard sits.

BENARD
Then get over there, now!

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - HALLWAY - EVENING

Cooter is walking down the hall. Suddenly a nearby room door opens and Lana comes running out, she runs right into Cooter.

LANA
Oh my lord. I'm so sorry.

She looks up at him.

LANA
Oh it's you, Mr. Brown.

Cooter looks away shyly.

LANA
I never had a chance to thank you
for this chance and the chance to
stay at this lovely hotel.

Cooter can't look her in the eye.

COOTER
Yeah, well, I guess I...yeah...

LANA
Mr. Brown, are you all right?

Cooter walks away quickly.

COOTER
I'm fine, yeah, I'll talk to you
later, Miss Perine.

He disappears around the corner.

Lana stares in confusion.

Around the corner, Cooter has his back up against the wall.
He wipes away the sweat and breathes heavily.

COOTER
(Whispering to himself)
Yeah, I'm fine. I'll talk to you
later. What the hell are you doing
Cooter Brown? You're supposed to be
suave and slick. You're the mack
daddy with the ladies. You're the
hipster of hipsters.

He starts pacing around in circles, berating himself quietly.

COOTER
But you can't even talk to this one
good girl, can you? No, I'll answer
that one for you, the answer is a
bit fat N-

He turns and sees Lana standing at the corner staring at him
and smiling.

COOTER
...Oh...

LANA
Sorry to interrupt, but you dropped
this.

She hands him a small bottle of brandy. Cooter just stares in
utter humiliation.

LANA
I'll just slip it in here.

She slips it into Cooter's jacket pocket and walks away.

He continues to stare.

INT. FRONT DESK - LATER

Jaquita works on her nails. Cooter runs up.

COOTER
Jackie, I need your help.

She looks Cooter up and down and smiles.

JAQUITA
'Bout time. I been waiting to hear
that since the day I met you.

She calls into the back.

JAQUITA
Yo! Seduction. It's finally time
for code red!

Seduction comes out carrying a red satin box.

SEDUCTION
Finally.

She plops it down onto the desk.

COOTER
What's all this?

JAQUITA
We took the liberty of making you
up a little makeover kit.

SEDUCTION
Time to make that little lady
notice what a fine piece you are.

INT. LOBBY - EVENING

Lana sits on a beautiful couch in the lobby reading a book.

Cooter comes out of his office. He wears a brand new 3-piece Armani suit. He is clean-shaven and his hair is cut short and neatly styled. Jaquita starts to cry a little.

JAQUITA
My baby's all grown up.

Jaquita and Seduction hug each other.

COOTER
Okay, enough. Where is she?

Seduction points.

SEDUCTION
Right over there Romeo.

Cooter takes a deep breath.

COOTER
Wish me luck.

MOMENTS LATER

He approaches Lana and clears his throat.

Lana is still engrossed in her book.

Cooter clears his throat again.

Lana still doesn't look up.

He clears his throat louder, then begins to cough uncontrollably.

Lana jumps up.

LANA
Oh my god sir. Are you all right?

Cooter holds up his hand and continues coughing.

LANA
Would you like some water?

He shakes his head as he continues coughing. Slowly, the coughs die down.

COOTER
Sorry about that.

LANA
Are you all right sir?

COOTER
I'll be fine. Look, Miss Perine, I--

LANA
I'm sorry, do I know you?

COOTER

Um, it's me. Cooter, the owner?

Lana's eyes widen.

LANA

Oh, oh my god I'm so sorry Mr. Brown. I-I didn't recognize you. You look so...so...

COOTER

Thanks. Okay, I wanted to ask you a question.

He looks back at Jaquita and Seduction, they have already covered their eyes.

He sits down.

COOTER

So, I was wondering if you, maybe would...

LANA

Yes?

COOTER

Well, you know, people get hungry sometimes and I was thinking...so that we won't be hungry...maybe you'd like to...

Lana stares at Cooter, confused.

COOTER

You know what? Not important.

He gets up and heads towards the front desk.

COOTER

Sorry to bother you, never mind, Miss Perine.

Lana still looks confused.

Cooter stops and turns back around.

COOTER

Aw screw it, would you like to have dinner with me tomorrow night?

Lana smiles.

LANA
I'd be delighted.

Cooter smiles.

COOTER
Would be you? I mean, you would be?
Well...so would I...I mean...

LANA
I'll meet you here tomorrow.

COOTER
I'll be there...here...I'll see you
then.

He backs up into the side of a chair and flips over onto the floor. Lana comes rushing over. Cooter just laughs.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The gray steel door opens. Cooter leads Lana out onto the rooftop. Both are dressed formally.

Lana's eyes widen in amazement when she sees what he had done.

The rooftop has been converted into a beautiful outdoor restaurant.

LANA
Oh my Lord, Mr. Brown--

COOTER
Cooter.

LANA
Sorry, Cooter. You did all this for
me?

COOTER
Sure did.

He pulls out her chair for her. Lana sits.

LANA
Thank you.

Lance comes over with a bottle of wine. Lana giggles. Cooter smiles.

MONTAGE

--Cooter and Lana share a fancy meal

--Cooter tells a joke; Lana laughs

--Music plays. Cooter and Lana slow dance

--Cooter and Lana sit on recliners and look out over the sparkling city

END MONTAGE

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Cooter walks Lana back to her room. She puts the key in the door and turns back to Cooter.

LANA

It was an amazing night.

Cooter smiles. They kiss awkwardly.

LANA

I should probably go.

Cooter still smiles dumbly.

COOTER

It was fun.

LANA

Good night Cooter.

COOTER

'Night.

Lana goes into her room and closes the door.

Cooter strides down the hall.

COOTER

I still got it. Oh yeah, I still
gots it--

Suddenly, someone grabs Cooter and pulls him into a nearby room.

INT. ROOM

Cooter is thrown to the floor. Edmund and Bartholomew stand over him. Edmund puts a gun to the back of Cooter's head.

COOTER
Hey guys. Nice night huh?

BARTHOLOMEW
Well, it's a little cloudy, but
there's a nice breeze--don't change
the subject!

COOTER
What is the subject, anyway?

EDMUND
You're late on your payment.

COOTER
Got a little caught up in some
stuff, but I'll get to him in a few
days--

EDMUND
You got 24 hours.

The other thug KICKS Cooter in the ribs. They leave.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - FRONT DESK - DAY

Jason and Jaquita are making out at the front desk. Cooter
walks over.

COOTER
Knock it off, you two.

JAQUITA
What's wrong with you? I thought
Lana had--

COOTER
Just knock it off!

He walks quickly towards the office. Jaquita watches him go.

GREG (30s, huge, many piercings and tattoos) enters and looks
around. Cooter notices him.

COOTER
Who's that guy?

JAQUITA
Where?

COOTER
At the door.

Greg sees Jaquita and Jason, his eyes widen in rage. Jaquita sees him.

JAQUITA
Shit, Greg.

JASON
Greg? Where?

JAQUITA
Run.

JASON
You told me he was locked up.

COOTER
Oh, your ass in trouble.

Greg reaches the front desk, Jason runs. Jaquita tries to comfort him.

JAQUITA
Baby, when you get out?

GREG
Last month... who's that?

JAQUITA
No one... he's just a friend.

GREG
Your friend's dead!

Greg runs after Jason who makes it to the front door. Jason runs out the hotel with Greg in pursuit.

INT. COOTER'S OFFICE - LATER

Stacks of money cover Cooter's desk, he frantically arranges them in neat stacks. He glances at his watch and wipes sweat off his brow.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

It's late. The place is nearly empty and full of shadows. Cooter heads to his car, carrying a duffle bag. He glances around.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

A light rain falls as Cooter trudges down the alley towards Elroy's warehouse. As Cooter walks by the mysterious homeless man rises up from behind a dumpster and watches Cooter.

INT. BENARD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The phone rings. Benard crawls towards it and answers.

BENARD
(Sleepy)
This better be good.

MAN (V.O.)
I got some pictures of Cooter Brown
you may want to see.

Benard smiles.

BENARD
Tell me more.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

The hotel lobby is filled with the homeless. Reporters wait to enter the ballroom.

Music fades out.

COOTER
My god.

LANCE
Hotel is full.

Seduction approaches Cooter and points to the front desk.

SEDUCTION
Jaquita is swamped.

Cooter looks at the front desk.

COOTER
Come on, Seduction.

Seduction follows Cooter, they reach the desk.

JAQUITA
Cooter, you back.

COOTER
Where's Lana?

Cooter turns and sees Jaquita with Jason; he approaches them.

COOTER
You two got it together?

JASON
We're getting married.

Jaquita looks at Jason. She smiles and hugs him.

Cooter smiles but sees Greg approaching.

COOTER
What does he think?

JASON
Who?

Cooter points to Greg who's quickly approaching, Jason sees him and runs.

JASON
Help me!

JAQUITA
Baby!

Greg reaches Jaquita.

GREG
Baby huh?

Greg takes off after Jason, and he disappears into the crowd.

INT. BALL ROOM - DAY

The place is crowded with reporters. Cooter stands on stage, the contestants of Rags to Riches stand behind him.

Cooter glances back at Lana - she smiles.

He steps up to the podium. Cameras FLASH.

COOTER
Hey everybody.

REPORTERS
Hey Cooter!

COOTER

Thanks for coming today. Just wanted to show my face to your cameras and introduce you to our new show. The first ever...

A sign lights up above the stage: RAGS TO RICHES

COOTER

Rags to Riches!

Everyone applauds. Cameras flash.

COOTER

Now, I'll take some questions, as long as they're easy. I didn't study.

Chuckles. REPORTER 1 (40s, male) stands up.

REPORTER 1

What will you be doing with the proceeds?

COOTER

Well, that one's easy...

Cooter looks across the room and spots Benard standing in the doorway, smiling evilly. Cooter snaps his attention back to the reporter.

COOTER

...Yeah, in addition to going to Five Star Hotel, the proceeds will go to several homeless shelters...

Across the room, several men in suits and sunglasses approach the stage. REPORTER 2 (30s, female) stands up, concerned.

REPORTER 2

Sir? Are you alright?

COOTER

Course I'm alright. Now, as I was saying...

Several men in suits and sunglasses step up onto the stage.

Lana looks around, then back at Cooter, confused.

Cooter starts to sweat.

One of the men, an FBI AGENT (40s, stoic) steps forward.

FBI AGENT 1
Cooter Brown, you need to come with
us.

COOTER
I ain't going anywhere unless I'm
being arrested.

FBI AGENT 1
You are.

COOTER
Well when you put it that way...

Lana steps forward.

LANA
Excuse me, what's going on here?

FBI AGENT 2
Step back miss.

He pushes her back.

COOTER
Hey! Don't touch her!

The reporters go wild. Cameras FLASH.

The FBI agents drag Cooter away.

LANA
Cooter!

COOTER
Lana!

Benard smiles.

Cooter is dragged out. Benard steps in front of the cameras.

BENARD
I'll be happy to answer your
questions.

REPORTER 1
What just happened? What was Mr.
Brown arrested?

BENARD

Cooter Brown was arrested because the FBI has evidence against him that he was laundering money from the hotel.

The reporters go wild with questions. Benard tries to calm people down, smiling the entire time.

BENARD

Please, one question at a time. We also have evidence suggesting that the money has been going to a local crime lord. We believe that Cooter has been working for this man for quite some time.

Suddenly, Seduction leaps onto Benard and starts beating him.

BENARD

Get her off me! Get her off me!

The reporters just watch. Some clap.

INT. LANA'S ROOM - EVENING

Lana watches the news in tears.

ON TV:

ANCHOR 1 reports.

ANCHOR 1

Chaos erupted at Five Star Hotel today as the local celebrity Cooter Brown was taken by the FBI.

Footage of the incident.

ANCHOR 1

Dullard Hotel manager, Benard Heights stated that Cooter Brown has been working with top underworld criminals for some time now.

Footage of Seduction attacking Benard.

ANCHOR 1

Soon after Heights' comments, he was attacked by what appeared to be a rabid stripper.

Lana turns off the television.

EXT./INT. CAR - NIGHT

Seduction and Cooter ride down the freeway.

COOTER
Thanks for bailing me out.

SEDUCTION
I didn't bail you out. Don't know
who did.

COOTER
Well, thanks for the ride at least.

SEDUCTION
Is it true what Benard said?

Cooter doesn't answer.

SEDUCTION
Well, I still don't regret kicking
his ass.

Cooter gazes down at a brandy bottle in his hand; Seduction notices.

SEDUCTION
Just can't stop it huh?

COOTER
I tried, guess not.

Seduction looks at Cooter.

SEDUCTION
You can do anything Cooter.

Cooter looks at her, then turns his gaze out the window.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL LOBBY - LATER

Cooter slinks in behind Seduction. The lobby is busy but many stop to glare at Cooter. He hangs his head and rushes to the elevator.

INT. COOTER'S ROOM - LATER

The beautiful lights of the downtown buildings twinkle in the night.

Cooter looks out his large window at the buildings. He looks down at the bottle of scotch in his hand.

COOTER
(To himself)
You screwed up, Cooter. You really
screwed up bad this time.

MAN (O.S.)
You sure did.

Cooter spins around and clutches his chest.

COOTER
Holy shit!

The homeless man steps out of the shadows.

COOTER
It's you! You were Benard's spy.

MAN
No, that was actually one of the
show's production assistants. But I
have been watching you.

COOTER
Who are you?

The man steps forward and pulls off a fake beard - it's Anderson.

COOTER
Anderson?

Anderson sits down in a chair.

ANDERSON
Yeah it's me.

COOTER
You're supposed to be dead.

ANDERSON
I tried. I really did. In the end,
I just couldn't do it.

COOTER
You've been watching me this whole
time? Why?

ANDERSON

I gave you everything, you're whole life back. I wanted to see what you would do with it. How you would handle it.

COOTER

How I would handle it? Well as you can see I'm not handling it well.

ANDERSON

I know about you and Elroy.

COOTER

Oh great. So you've been watching me sell out your hotel.

ANDERSON

It's your hotel now.

COOTER

Get out.

ANDERSON

Cooter, let me help you.

COOTER

I said get out!

Anderson points to the bottle in Cooter's hand.

ANDERSON

I thought you quit drinking.

COOTER

Yeah well it turns out that this is the only friend I got left.

Anderson takes his beard and leaves.

EXT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER - DAY

Cooter, looking more disheveled, approaches his old homeless shelter.

INT. OUTREACH HOMELESS SHELTER

He walks through the doors and looks around furtively. Several homeless people walk by.

COOTER

Hey guys.

One woman hisses at him; Cooter backs away.

He walks into Taylor's office.

INT. TAYOR'S OFFICE

Cooter walks in and knocks on the door jam. Taylor sits at his desk; he looks up.

TAYLOR

Cooter.

COOTER

Got a few minutes?

TAYLOR

Actually I--

Cooter sits down.

COOTER

I guess I really screwed up huh?

TAYLOR

Guess you did.

COOTER

You've always been the smart one.
What should I do?

Taylor gets up and looks out the door, to the rest of the shelter.

TAYLOR

Cooter I can't keep cleaning up
your messes for you.

COOTER

Just this last time--

Taylor turns to Cooter.

TAYLOR

Cooter you can't keep doing this.
People don't even want to give this
shelter funding after what you did.
They know you was affiliated with
this place.

Cooter stands.

COOTER
I guess I understand.

He heads for the door.

TAYLOR
Take care Cooter.

Cooter leaves.

INT. LANA'S ROOM

Cooter nervously knocks on the door to Lana's room. He holds a dozen roses.

Lana opens the door.

LANA
Cooter.

She leaves the door open and walks in; Cooter enters. Lana angrily packs her suitcase.

COOTER
Lana--

LANA
Save it Cooter.

She has tears in her eyes as she packs.

COOTER
I came to say that I'm sorry.

LANA
Oh you're sorry. Well, I guess that just solves everything.

She walks to the bathroom. Cooter follows.

COOTER
I'll fix this, Lana. I can fix this!

LANA
You ruined everything, Cooter. You and your selfishness. I had dreams! Now I got nowhere else to live! I'm homeless again Cooter!

COOTER

I can help. I know people that can help. They can get you a job, set you up in someplace nice.

Lana slaps him across the face.

LANA

I don't want no help from that crime boss of yours. Shame on you.

COOTER

I wish I could tell you who I was really talking about, but I can't.

Lana continues packing.

LANA

You can keep the flowers. Please, just leave. You've done enough damage.

Cooter walks out.

INT. BENARD'S OFFICE - LATER

Benard sits at his desk watching the footage of Cooter getting arrested. He smiles.

COOTER (O.S.)

Glad you're happy.

Benard spins around, frightened.

BENARD

You made bail. I thought you were broke.

COOTER

I guess someone still likes me.

BENARD

You're going to kill me now aren't you?

COOTER

Why'd you do it? What did I ever do to you?

Benard stands.

BENARD

Nothing. Don't you get it? It's not about you. It never was. Anderson fired me for stealing from the hotel.

COOTER

Well were you stealing?

BENARD

Of course I was! And I'd do it again!

COOTER

It was about revenge.

He turns off the television.

BENARD

You just got in the way.

COOTER

So Anderson committing suicide wasn't enough for you--

BENARD

I had nothing to do with that.

COOTER

But you had to destroy his legacy too?

BENARD

It turns out that I didn't have to do much, now did I? You took care of that all on your own.

COOTER

Hey! I didn't ask for this! I didn't ask for Elroy! I didn't ask for the hotel!

BENARD

But you had it and you lost it! Uncle Anderson used to tell me about you. You were always a drunk! Once a drunk, always a drunk.

COOTER

Hey, I remember you. You're Anderson's snot-nosed little nephew. You used to tag along whenever I came over the house.

BENARD

Shut up.

COOTER

Weren't you the one that was still
a virgin when he was 28?

BENARD

I'm warning you.

COOTER

Do you still live with your mother?

BENARD

Of course not!

ANDERSON (O.S.)

Yes he does.

They turn and see Anderson. He wears an expensive suit.

BENARD

Uncle?

ANDERSON

Nephew.

BENARD

How?

ANDERSON

You've caused a lot of trouble for
all of us, Benard.

BENARD

No! He's responsible! He drank away
all of your money! Ruined your
hotel! Gave money to that scumbag!

ELROY (O.S.)

You mean me?

BENARD

Yes you! Wait...

Everyone looks. Elroy is there with Edmund and Bartholomew.

COOTER

Oh, shit...

BENARD

Why does everyone keep walking into
my office?

ELROY
I was looking for Mr. Brown.

COOTER
I ain't got no more money for you,
Elroy.

ELROY
Oh, I know.

He pulls out a gun with a silencer.

ELROY
It's about time for you to be dying
now, Mr. Brown.

He aims the gun and pulls the trigger.

Click.

Elroy tries it a few more times, utterly confused.

ELROY
Why isn't my favorite gun loaded?

Edmund aims his own gun at Elroy. Bartholomew approaches
Elroy and brandishes a badge.

BARTHOLOMEW
Elroy Robinson, FBI.

ELROY
You son of a...I took you in when
you had no home! I gave you a job!

BARTHOLOMEW
Yeah, I don't think you understand
the concept of an undercover agent,
sir. Come quietly.

BENARD
What?

Cooter smiles.

COOTER
Yeah, forgot to mention that little
tidbit. Turns out that those thugs
are actually undercover agents
building a case against Elroy.

ANDERSON

(to Benard)

They've also been building a case
against you, nephew.

Cooter opens his jacket, revealing a wire.

Suddenly Elroy pulls a knife and stabs Cooter in the stomach.

Cooter screams and falls to the floor.

Elroy is tackled by both thugs.

Benard looks down at Cooter, sees blood, and faints.

Several more FBI agents enter and handcuff an unconscious
Benard.

Anderson cradles Cooter's head. Cooter drifts into and out of
consciousness.

ANDERSON

Somebody call and ambulance!

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Anderson sits across from Lance.

LANCE

So, you and Cooter were in on it
the whole time?

ANDERSON

He didn't know I was alive. I was
going after Benard and Cooter
contacted the FBI as soon as he
realized the hotel was going broke.
Eventually, our paths crossed.

JAQUITA

So there never was going to be a
Rags to Riches contest?

ANDERSON

It was all a ruse. He had to keep
it up to corner Elroy.

NORMAN

The man is actually smart...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Cooter lays in bed, hooked up to a variety of machines. A large bandage covers his abdomen.

Lana and Taylor stand in the doorway looking at Cooter. Lana has tears in her eyes. Taylor puts his arm around her to console her.

A nurse comes in to check Cooter's vitals. She turns to them.

NURSE

He's in a deep coma. I honestly don't know what to say.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Cooter sits on the edge of the bridge looking out over the dark water. He clutches a bottle of brandy.

COOTER

(to himself)

You really did it now, Coot. Got yourself killed and everything.

A limo pulls up behind Cooter. Anderson gets out and sits down next to him.

COOTER

You're not really Anderson. He's still alive.

ANDERSON

True. But it's your mind.

COOTER

You come to take me away?

ANDERSON

Yup.

COOTER

Where my going?

ANDERSON

That's entirely up to you Mr. Brown.

COOTER

I screwed up everything. I had a girl, I had money, a chance for a real life. I lost it all.

Anderson sits down next to Cooter and takes a swig of brandy.

ANDERSON

You're getting your words confused. You risked it all to help bring down Elroy. You didn't lose it all. Not yet anyway.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Lana sits down by Cooter's bed. She takes his hand.

LANA

Cooter, if you can hear me, I'm so sorry I doubted you.

EXT. BRIDGE

Cooter looks down at the black water, then back at the bottle of brandy in Anderson's hand.

COOTER

I've always been a failure and a drunk.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Lana takes Cooter's hand.

LANA

I-I never had a chance to really get to know you.

EXT. BRIDGE

Cooter takes the bottle of brandy and stares at it, raising it to his lips.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Lana squeezes Cooter's hand.

LANA

But you're a good man, Cooter
Brown.

EXT. BRIDGE

Cooter stops. He lowers the bottle and looks around.

COOTER

You hear that?

Anderson smiles.

ANDERSON

I suspect that was only for you to
hear.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Taylor has joined Lana. Lance, Jaquita, Seduction, Norman,
and Anderson all stand in the room.

LANA

The world needs you. Don't give up.

EXT. BRIDGE

Cooter looks around.

COOTER

I heard it again.

Anderson gets up.

ANDERSON

Would you like to go for a ride Mr.
Brown? Find where that voice is
coming from?

COOTER

Yeah. Yeah I would.

They get up. Anderson heads for the limo. Cooter hesitates
for a moment.

He looks at the bottle of brandy, then down into the black
water. He tosses the brandy down into the water and heads for
the limo.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

The machines begin a steady beeping sound. Everyone looks up, confused.

JAQUITA
Is that good?

Seduction runs out into the hall.

SEDUCTION
(to the doctors)
Get your scrawny white asses in
here! The man's beeping!

Cooter slowly opens his eyes. He looks at Lana and smiles weakly.

COOTER
Hi...

Lana bursts out in tears. Everyone cheers.

EXT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - NIGHT

The tall, sparking building has been restored to its former glory. Cars line the driveway; valets pull up and drive off.

Two large spotlights rotate on the hotel's rooftop, shining lights up into the night sky.

INT. LOBBY

Beautiful chandeliers hang from the lavish ceiling. Plush couches and chairs adorn the massive room.

Jaquita leads group of people on a tour of the hotel.

JAQUITA
So, if you guys all look around
you, you'll all see a bunch of
bellboys, some security,
custodians, and some valets. Most
of them got something in common -
they were all homeless.

The tourists look around, surprised.

JAQUITA

Yup, see, Anderson and Cooter decided to give the homeless some jobs and advancement. Get 'em off the streets. Give 'em some dignity. They work here and they get to live here.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT

The place has been turned into a massive concert hall. Well-dressed guests and homeless sit side by side, all cheering. Spotlights illuminate the stage. Music plays.

Seduction comes out on stage, dressed in a beautiful evening gown.

SEDUCTION

You guys ready for some action?

The crowd cheers.

Cooter and Anderson step out onto the stage. The crowd goes wild.

COOTER

Settle down, everybody, settle down.

The audience quiets down.

COOTER

I'd like to welcome you all to the grand re-opening of Five Star Hotel!

Cheers erupt.

ANDERSON

As part of the restructuring of the hotel, we've made a few changes to the place.

COOTER

The place caters exclusively to the homeless! For free!

Cheers.

ANDERSON

And we have a house band made up
entirely of formerly homeless
people! Give it up for Rags to
Riches!

The crowd is on its feet.

Rags to Riches, a pop band lead by Lana struts on stage. She gives Cooter a kiss and the music starts. Cooter and Anderson walk off stage and the performance begins.

Lana and several back-up dancers begin their song dressed in rags.

As the song takes off, the lights come up and they rip off the rags, revealing sexy, stylish outfits underneath. Back-up dancers leap into action.

Lana is amazing; she commands the stage and the crowd with her presence and voice.

BACK STAGE

Cooter and Anderson watch the performance proudly.

FADE TO BLACK.