

Laughing All the Way to the Bank

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY SKYLINE - DAY

(PRESENT)

SUPER: "Long Beach, California"

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

In an elegant dining room, waiters set up for the evening meal.

KITCHEN

is a maelstrom of activity. COOKS and ASSISTANTS feverishly prep food amongst the din of clattering pots and a torrent of yelling.

KLAUS, the burly head chef, oversees the madness, barks commands. He pushes a thin BUSBOY struggling with a heavy crate of produce.

KLAUS

I've seen glaciers move faster.
Move!

BUSBOY

Yes, Chef Klaus.

The busboy moves on.

PREP TABLE

ED CURTIS, a sturdy, young sous chef, skillfully debones a duck carcass. LENNY, an ancient wine steward, looks on, approves.

LENNY

Ed, I've got the perfect wine to
recommend with that duck.

ED

I'm not surprised. How long have
you been a wine steward, Lenny?

Lenny shrugs, briefly looks up, thinks.

LENNY

It feels like a thousand years.

ED

Really? Ever serve Abe Lincoln?

LENNY

Oh, sure, plenty of times. Lousy
tipper. He belongs on a penny.

Ed laughs. Klaus approaches, inspects Ed's work. Klaus scowls, waves off Lenny, who departs.

KLAUS

Curtis, you call that deboning a duck?

ED

That's what they called it at the Culinary Institute and I've had no complaints from the duck.

Klaus, indignant, puffs.

KLAUS

With those knife skills, you'll never win.

Ed pauses at his task.

ED

Win? At what? Is deboning ducks replacing the hot dog eating contest at Coney Island this year?

Reserved TOM REYNOLDS, proprietor, approaches the men, straightens his tailored suit.

REYNOLDS

I'll take it from here, Klaus.

KLAUS

Yes, Mr. Reynolds. (then to Ed) You better not screw up.

Klaus sneers, departs.

REYNOLDS

Ed, lets talk in my office.

INT. OFFICE

Reynolds and Ed enter the small, well-appointed office. Its walls bear numerous framed awards. Reynolds sits on the desk's edge.

ED

What's eating Klaus?

Reynolds smirks, lights a cigarette.

REYNOLDS

Who knows? Something's always eating Klaus. That's what makes him a good head chef -- never satisfied, always on a hair trigger.

ED

Okay, what did 'win' refer to?

REYNOLDS

You familiar with that cable TV program, Pressure Cooker?

ED

Yeah, I saw part of one episode a year or so ago. Competing chefs work against the clock, make dishes of their choice from a limited pantry, sweat like pigs. Not my idea of something to unwind to.

Reynolds extinguishes the cigarette, stands, folds his arms.

REYNOLDS

Well, you're going to be on it, representing Reynolds' Restaurant. It'll have huge promotional value when you win -- and you will win.

ED

Is today April Fool's Day?

REYNOLDS

Look, I can't spare Klaus, plus he's too abrasive. That's not the image I want to convey on national television. I want the audience to view us as a friendly, approachable place for fine dining. And let's face it, you look a lot better than Klaus.

ED

So does the duck I was butchering. Tom, I'm not into competitive cooking and, frankly, I'm just not comfortable with the whole idea.

REYNOLDS

First prize is \$25,000.

Ed's eyes widen.

ED

It's sounding better.

Reynolds takes his seat behind the desk.

REYNOLDS

I'm willing to let you keep ten percent of that.

Ed wilts.

REYNOLDS

Remember, you wouldn't have the opportunity to win even that much,
(MORE)

REYNOLDS (cont'd)
if you weren't working here. It's
in two weeks, filmed in L.A. I'll
text you the particulars.

ED
So, I don't have a choice.

Reynolds looks down, peruses business papers on his desk.

REYNOLDS
You're needed back in the kitchen.

Ed exits the office.

CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OFFICE

Ed plods back towards the kitchen, stops, retrieves his
phone, makes a call, sighs.

INT. AN OFFICE - SECONDS LATER

A large, professional sign on the wall reads: "McGuire Food
Analytics."

CARMEN BADILLO, an attractive Latina in business attire,
sits, holds a clipboard, writes. Her smartphone rings; she
answers.

ED/CARMEN CONVERSATION - INTERCUTTING

ED
Hey, it's me.

CARMEN
You sound awful. What's wrong?

Carmen puts down her clipboard, raises a forkful of chopped,
sauce-laden meat to her nose, sniffs. She winces, eats it,
displays disgust, swallows, forces it down.

ED
Bad news. This is a day
over-nighted straight from hell.

CARMEN
Mine has yours beat.

Carmen attempts a second forkful, can't do it. O.s., a dog
barks. The small pooch jumps on the table, devours the food
off the fork.

ED
They have you counting dog farts
again?

CARMEN

Worse, if that's possible. Now they have me eating dog food, too. But, please, tell me what's wrong with 'your' day.

ED

I'm going to be on TV.

CARMEN

Then I definitely have yours beat. What's so bad about being on TV?

She gives the dog the entire plate of food.

ED

Reynolds is forcing me to be on Pressure Cooker.

CARMEN

The cooking game show?

ED

Right, and he expects me to win. And if I do he'll only give me ten percent of the prize money.

CARMEN

That sucks, but it's not the end of the world. With your skills, you'll nail it. I believe in you, baby.

ED

Thanks, that helps, hearing you say that. I love you, Carmen.

CARMEN

I love you, too, Ed.

O.s., the sound of a squeaky dog fart.

ED

Was that you, or the dog?

CARMEN

Both, bye.

END OF PHONE CONVERSATION

INT. SET OF PRESSURE COOKER - NIGHT (TWO WEEKS LATER)

The red light atop a television camera turns on. Standing to the camera's right, the DIRECTOR point to the show's host, GORDON HOLLOWAY.

GORDON

smiles broadly. Forty, convivial and well-fed, he turns on the charm.

GORDON

Welcome to Pressure Cooker -- let's turn up the heat! Our judges today are renown Southern chef, Stephanie Diggs.

JUDGE'S STATION

STEPHANIE DIGGS, young, black and exuberant, waves to the o.s. cheering crowd.

BACK TO SCENE

GORDON

And-

Booing, jeers, o.s.

GORDON

Former Harvard educated chemist turned food critic extraordinaire, Jeff Cowl.

JUDGE'S STATION

JEFF COWL, portly, gray-haired, wears an ascot, angrily looks over the top of his lowered reading glasses. O.s., the booing intensifies.

BACK TO SCENE

GORDON

And now let's meet our two competing chefs. First, head chef at Cafe El Supremo, in Irvine, California, Alonzo Cadiz. Alonzo, tell us a little about yourself.

TWO COOKING STATIONS, SIDE BY SIDE

ALONZO CADIZ, fifty, tall, confident, gives a quick wave, humble smile.

ALONZO

Thank you, Gordon. I've been head chef for twenty-five years. I pride myself on precision and creativity. Cafe El Supremo is a two-star Michelin restaurant, I am proud to say, because I am driven to succeed.

O.s., audience applause.

BACK TO SCENE

GORDON

Alonzo, your competitor is sous chef Fred Curtis from Reynolds' Restaurant in Long Beach. Tell us about yourself, Fred.

ED

stares into the camera, freezes up, sweats.

GORDON (O.S.)

Fred?... Fred?

Ed can't find the words.

TOM REYNOLDS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Reynolds, glass of scotch in hand, sits in his dark office, glares at the wall-mounted TV.

REYNOLDS

Say something, you idiot! Plug the god-damned restaurant!

BACK TO SCENE

ED

I'm, I'm Ed, not Fred. I'm Ed. Honestly, I really didn't want to-

GORDON (O.S.)

All right then! Let's get started. You have thirty minutes to create an appetizer using the ingredients of your choice from our mystery pantry. Gentlemen, get going -- the pressure cooker is on!

Alonzo races to the pantry, takes a quick glance, pulls ingredients from the shelf. Ed takes two steps, slips, stumbles to the floor, rises. He sprints to the pantry, bumps into Alonzo, who shoulders him into the shelves, knocking one over.

CARMEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Carmen whoops and hollers as she watches TV, jumps up and down, grabs and throws pillows from the couch.

CARMEN

Move that cute tush, Eddie! Do it for me, baby!

Carmen's phone rings. Annoyed, she picks up, listens.

CARMEN

I'm telling you, I paid, you
parasite! Stop calling!

She ends the call.

BACK TO SCENE

COOKING STATIONS

Alonzo chops, mixes, adds spices. Ed's station is vacant.
He finally arrives, drops ingredients on the floor, one of
which breaks. He moans, runs back to the pantry for more.

JUDGE'S STATION - MINUTES LATER

STEPHANIE

Alonzo is moving like a man
possessed. He is focused. Damn!

JEFF

And then there's poor Ed. I was
about to say he looks like the
proverbial deer in the headlights,
but instead I'd say he's already
under the vehicle.

COOKING STATIONS

SUPER: A countdown clock runs down the remaining seconds.

GORDON (O.S.)

Time is slipping away, gentlemen.
The pressure cooker is about to
blow!

Alonzo, cool and methodical, assembles his culinary
masterpieces, adds finishing touches. Ed, settled in, gets
food on the plates as the final seconds tick down. Alonzo,
finished, steps back.

GORDON (O.S.)

Three, two, one-

O.s., the sound of high pressure steam being released,
followed by a siren.

GORDON (O.S.)

Drop whatever that is you're doing,
Fred, and step away.

Ed, as if startled from a dream, looks up, drops his pan and
spoon on the floor.

JUDGES & GORDON

GORDON

Alonzo, present your dishes to the
judges and-

JEFF

Why even bother going through this charade? Gordon, just cut Alonzo a check and call it a wrap. Ed, or Fred, or whatever his name is, is deader than a pickled Brazil nut.

O.s. booing. Jeff gives the audience, the 'up yours' gesture.

GORDON

While both chefs deserve a fighting chance, perhaps it would be best if Fred goes first, so the show at least ends on a high note.

ALONZO

ALONZO

Sure, sure, first or second, I don't care. No way I lose.

BACK TO SCENE

GORDON

Very well, Ed, present your... creation.

Ed approaches the judges, places his appetizer in front of them. Stephanie looks down, evidences pleasant surprise. Jeff purses his lips, shows disdain. Gordon looks on as Stephanie tastes. Jeff hesitates.

GORDON

Ed, please describe your appetizer.

ED (O.S.)

My appetizer is poached claw lobster meat served over polenta infused with-

JEFF

I don't need you to tell me what it is. It is self-evident.

O.s. booing, jeers.

TOM REYNOLD'S OFFICE

REYNOLDS

Oh, shit.

Reynolds lowers his head onto his desk, moans. Klaus enters.

KLAUS

How's Ed doing?

REYNOLDS
Like the Titanic -- get out!

Klaus exits.

BACK TO SCENE

GORDON
Patience, Jeff, please. Stephanie,
your impressions.

Stephanie takes another small bite, smiles, gently lays down
her utensil.

STEPHANIE
Ed, I have to say I held out little
hope for you when this competition
began.

She nods approvingly. Jeff, exasperated, shakes his head.

STEPHANIE
First and foremost, your lobster
is-

JEFF
Tougher than advanced calculus --
anyone with half a brain only has
to look to know.

Stephanie, angered, glares at Jeff.

JEFF
It's awful and you know it,
Stephanie. If I left this slop at
the curb, a starving rat would piss
on it, rather than eat it.

AUDIENCE

Riled audience members stand, make threatening gestures,
yell, throw cups, crumpled paper.

CARMEN'S APARTMENT

She throws pillows at the TV screen.

CARMEN
You're the rat, you over-stuffed
poblano pepper!

Carmen's phone rings again. She looks at it, spits, does
not answer.

BACK TO SCENE

Gordon raises his arms, signals for silence.

JEFF COWL

raises his plate, dumps the contents onto the floor in front of the judge's station, tosses it away.

ED

turns crimson.

ED

You pompous sack of sauteed shit!

Ed rips off his smock, charges the judge's station, dives over it, tackles Jeff, wrestles him to the ground. Stephanie looks on, laughs, take another bite of lobster.

STEPHANIE

It's damn good.

TOM REYNOLD'S OFFICE

Reynolds turns off the TV, starts to pour another glass of scotch from the decanter on his desk. He pauses, puts down the glass, drinks from the decanter.

BACK TO SCENE

Ed pins Jeff down, scoops lobster meat off the floor, jams it into Jeff's mouth.

ED

You really need to taste it before judging, Jeff!

Security guards rush to Jeff's rescue, drag Ed away.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

In a darkened alleyway, a heavy metal door bears a sign: "Studio 16H -- No Admittance." The door bursts open. Security guards throw Ed out, slam the door shut. He stands, dusts off his clothes.

ED

So, did I win?

Ed's phone rings. He sits on a nearby crate, answers it.

REYNOLDS (V.O.)

What the hell got into you?

ED

I-

REYNOLDS (V.O.)

It was a rhetorical question, idiot. You're fired.

ED
I figured as much, Tom.

REYNOLDS (V.O.)
You figured. Did you figure I'm going to sue you for impairing the value of my business and my good name?

Ed gulps.

ED
Um... No.

Call ends. As he puts the phone away it rings again. Ed answers, deep in anger.

ED
You don't have a good name to defend, asshole!

ED/CARMEN PHONE CONVERSATION - INTERCUTTING

CARMEN
I know it went badly, but you don't have to take it out on me, Ed.

Ed slaps himself on the side of his head.

ED
Sorry, Carmen -- God, when things go wrong -- I just got off the phone with Tom Reynolds. He fired me.

CARMEN
That's not too surprising. You're lucky he didn't threaten to sue you.

Ed sighs, hesitates before he responds.

ED
Carmen, this is it for me. I'm done with the culinary world. It's over. I'm poison now; no one will ever hire me.

CARMEN
That sounds a little rash. You've worked so hard at it. Maybe you just need a break.

ED
What I need is a drink, or ten.

CARMEN

Okay then, let's celebrate what comes next -- whatever that might be.

ED

Sure, what the hell. Meet me down at the Long Beach waterfront, the bar district down by Lowlands Bank. You know where I mean.

CARMEN

Give me forty-five minutes. Love you, baby.

ED

I love you, too.

END PHONE CONVERSATION

EXT. LONG BEACH WATERFRONT - NIGHT (ONE HOUR LATER)

Near the waterfront is a branch of Lowlands Bank. Across the street from it is Mirth, a comedy club.

This late-night district is busy with young people milling about. Ed leans against a guard rail, looks out over the water.

ED'S POV

Black water shimmers with reflected moonlight. Across the water, five hundred yards away, office lights are on. There, along the water's edge, a new tourist attraction, the USS Hayes, a 1970s submarine, basks in floodlights.

BACK TO SCENE

Unseen by Ed, Carmen stealthily approaches, places her hand on his shoulder.

CARMEN

Looking for a good time, fella?

Startled, Ed turns around, smiles, kisses Carmen. He points to the sub.

ED

Yeah, baby, my sub just pulled in and I've been at sea for six lonely months. Some of my shipmates were starting to look way too appealing.

CARMEN

Oh, really?

He hugs her, kisses her again.

ED

Uh-huh, so I figured I'd head to the waterfront and look for a loose woman.

CARMEN

Well, sorry to disappoint you, sailor. I'm strictly into fighter pilots.

They both laugh. He briefly looks back at the sub.

ED

The USS Hayes is quite an attraction. Might be fun to take the tour someday.

CARMEN

Thinking of enlisting in the navy? I think you'd look pretty sexy in a uniform.

ED

Not sure I'm the military's type, unless they offer the rank of Coward First Class.

He wraps his arm around Carmen's waist. They walk.

CARMEN

Why don't we check out that comedy club? We could both use a laugh.

ED

I'm out of work. You have any cash?

They cross the street. The front of Lowlands Bank is visible and the empty store next door.

CARMEN

Yeah, just got some. Frigging Lowlands Bank's ATM slipped me a ten, mixed in with four twenties. They are the worst. No way I can prove it, either.

ED

Bastards, I've never heard one good word about them. They once charged me fifty cents for using one of their pens. Let's see what's doing at Mirth.

EXT. MIRTH

The run-down edifice doesn't keep people away. On the contrary, it's a hive of activity. O.s., intermittent laughter emanates from inside.

A podium, outside, is tended by a YOUNG WOMAN collecting cover charges. Ed and Carmen approach.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ten-dollar cover, ladies get half
off their first drink.

ED
(to Carmen)
That's not such a great
deal.

They step aside. ANOTHER COUPLE steps to the podium, pays, enters. A third couple, DAVE and CHERYL, approaches. About to pay, Dave recognizes Ed, points.

DAVE
Cheryl, that's the guy, the crazy
chef. The one I told you about.

Ed, surprised, looks in Dave's direction.

CARMEN
(to Ed)
You know him?

Dave and Cheryl advance to Ed and Carmen.

DAVE
This is the guy who slugged the
food critic on Pressure Cooker.

Curious, a crowd gathers around the foursome. At first uncomfortable, Ed warms up to the attention.

CARMEN
Looks like you've become something
of an instant celebrity.

ED
That's cool. Yeah! Yeah, that's
me. I'm the guy who belted Jeff
Cowl!

Dave loses his smile.

DAVE
Jerk.

ED
Jerk? What do you mean?

DAVE
You blew the twenty-five grand,
dude.

CARMEN
What the hell are you talking
about?

Cheryl chews gum, pauses, blows a bubble, pops it.

CHERYL

Alonzo, the other chef, was disqualified. He used an ingredient that wasn't from the pantry.

CROWD MEMBER

They had video showing him dumping a hidden packet of MSG into his sauce.

DAVE

You would have won, dude, if you just kept your cool.

Cheryl blows and pops another bubble.

CHERYL

Schmuck.

The crowd mumbles, disperses. Ed and Carmen exchange woeful looks.

CARMEN

Hey, at least you didn't have to eat dog food today.

She gives Ed a light punch to the shoulder. He perks up, waves his hand under his nose.

ED

Which reminds me, I meant to say something to you about your breath. What were they serving today, plow horse florentine?

They laugh, take a few steps, stop and look at an A-frame sign set up near the curb.

SIGN

The sign is an advertisement for stand-up comedy classes held at Mirth. It reads: "Taught by Stan Laffer. Six-week class costs \$200.00. Starts noon tomorrow." (there is no photo of Stan)

BACK TO SCENE

ED

Interesting, I haven't heard Stan Laffer's name in a long time.

CARMEN

He used to be on late night talk shows once in a while.

ED

I think he had his own special on
cable about ten years ago.

A PASSERBY stops, reads the sign, makes the muffled sound of
a bomb going off.

PASSERBY

The guy self-destructed.

The passerby moves on.

CARMEN

You're not seriously thinking of-

ED

Sure, why not? It's only \$200.00.
Stand-up comedians make good money
right off the bat. I'm sure of it.

CARMEN

I wish you'd think about it a
little more.

Ed kisses Carmen.

ED

I have. We can get by on your
income. You'll see.

INT. MIRTH - NOON

(THE NEXT DAY)

Ed, coffee in hand, cautiously enters the dingy club, looks
about.

ED'S POV

A raised, semi-circular stage at the back of the room is
three feet above ground level. Its facade has several large
wrought iron gratings, one every six feet.

Tables and chairs are heavily worn.

BACK TO SCENE

Ed sniffs, grimaces at the room's aroma. He sits at a small
round table, a short distance from the stage.

MAGGIE O'ROURKE, a thin, wiry, angry-looking woman, sits
alone at the next table. Two other people are seated
individually: ABNER SWANSON, a husky man in his forties,
and VANESSA KOYAMATSU, a very large Asian woman.

Ed looks in Maggie's direction, weakly smiles. She does not
look up from her paperback book.

ED

Hi, I'm Ed. You here for the
class, too?

Maggie serenely closes her book, slams it down onto the table.

MAGGIE

Why the fuck else would I be sittin' in this stinking gin mill at noon on a fucking weekday, reading fucking Finnegan's Wake? Christ! You must be the fucking most oblivious person on two fucking feet.

ED

No, I'm Ed.

MAGGIE

I'm Maggie O'Rourke and yes, I'm here for the fucking stand-up class.

ED

Well, good luck. Humor seems to come naturally to you.

Maggie grabs her book, resumes reading. Ed sips his coffee, abruptly stops, stares at his shoulder.

SHOULDER

A small orange cat, KIRBY, claws at Ed's knit shirt.

BACK TO SCENE

ED

(to Kirby)

You here for the class, too, little guy, or the mice?

VANESSA (O.S.)

Kirby! Kirby, you stop this instant. How did you get away?

VANESSA'S

floral mumu flutters as she bounds and bounces her way to Ed's table. She plucks Kirby from his shoulder. Ed stands, greets her.

VANESSA

I am just so sorry; I don't know where to begin to apologize. It's not like Kirby to cause trouble, or wander off. We're inseparable.

ED

That's quite all right. I'm Ed Curtis. Pleased to meet you and Kirby.

She grabs Ed's hand, shakes it vigorously.

VANESSA

And I'm Vanessa, Vanessa Koyamatsu.
I'm so excited about starting this
class! My stomach is churning,
feels like it's full of a thousand
butterflies caught in a tornado.

ED

I'm eager to get started, too.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Oh, Jesus Christ, why don't you two
get a room?

O.s., a heavy smoker's cough precedes Abner's
self-introduction. Vanessa and Ed turn, look in Abner's
direction.

ABNER

jowly, with a gray crew cut, is in a full blown flop sweat.
He nervously grins, shows several gold teeth. Abner tightly
grips a paper bag.

BACK TO SCENE

ABNER

Abner Swanson, formerly Seaman
Second Class, US Navy. Nice to
meet you folks. (to Maggie) Same
to you, Miss Maggie; sorry to
interrupt your reading. That
Finnegan's Wake is quite a book.

Maggie, astounded at Abner's remark, stands, joins the
group.

MAGGIE

"Quite a book?" You're familiar
with James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake?

Abner, caught flat-footed, sputters.

ABNER

Uh, I meant it has a lot of pages.
It's quite a 'thick' book.

MAGGIE

Not as thick as your fucking head!

Abner, perturbed, snaps the red suspenders overlaying his
sweat-soaked white shirt, inadvertently sprays a mist of
perspiration. Aghast, repulsed, the others back off, shield
their faces.

VANESSA

Ecch! You got some on Kirby. (to Kirby) That's okay, Kirby, just make believe it's rain -- smelly, salty, greasy rain.

Maggie shudders, shakes off her book. Ed wipes down his shirt, then his hands on his jeans.

ED

Damn! Elton John should do a song about you: Sweaty & the Jets.

Abner's face reddens with embarrassment. He lowers his gaze. A tear rolls down his crimson cheek. Maggie goes to him, produces a tissue, wipes away the tear.

MAGGIE

Oh, such a sensitive soul. Poor lad -- you're fucking doomed in this business! You know that, don't you? The hecklers are going to shred you like fucking cheddar! You blubbering-

ED

Okay, okay, that's enough, Mother Teresa. Perform a miracle, like shutting your trap.

Maggie stomps, returns to her table and book.

ED

So, Abner, what's in the paper bag?

Abner produces a handkerchief from his pocket, wipes his nose, composes himself.

ABNER

I'm not ready to show what I brought just yet. I'd kinda like to wait until Mr. Laffer arrives.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE (O.S.)

Well, your wait has ended. Let's all find out what's in the bag and get this stand-up class started.

ED'S AND OTHER STUDENTS' POV

Standing just inside the doorway to Mirth, the man presumed to be Stan Laffer walks towards and joins the group.

He is short, in his early thirties and has thick, dark, curly hair. He wears a neoprene wetsuit top, shorts and flip-flops.

VANESSA

It's an honor to meet you, Mr. Laffer. (she presents Kirby) This is Kirby, my cat.

"STAN"

Thanks so much. So that's a 'cat.' I've always wondered what they look like.

Ed is perplexed.

ED

You look awfully young to have been on talk shows ten years ago.

"Stan" nervously coughs, takes a few steps back.

"STAN"

Well, there's a very good explanation for that. You see...

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE #2 (O.S.)

And I'd love to hear it!

Everyone stops, looks around.

EVERYONE'S POV

No one at the front entrance, bar or onstage. Suddenly, one of the metal gratings on the stage's facade is kicked off from the inside.

STAN LAFFER, lanky, disheveled, pint of vodka in hand, crawls out from under the stage. A sneer on his angular face, he stands, strides to his imposter.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan goes eye-to-eye with the much shorter man, pokes him in the chest. The remaining students, frightened, step back.

STAN

I liked that -- it was original. What's your name?

The mystery student, MALIBU GREENBERG, breathes a sigh of relief, regains his color.

MALIBU

I'm Malibu Greenberg.

Stan instantly gives Malibu a second, harder, poke in the chest.

STAN

Nev-er do that again!

Stan turns serene, addresses the group.

STAN

All right, let's get down to business. I need a signed check right now, from those of you who want to go through with this insanity.

Everyone but Malibu fumbles, produces a check, hands them over. Malibu points at Kirby.

MALIBU

(to Stan)

Vanessa's cat ate my check.

No one laughs. Stan places his open palm in front of Malibu's face.

STAN

Check.

Malibu reaches into his wetsuit, produces and deposits the check into Stan's hand. He stashes the checks in his filthy jeans.

STAN

Okay then, if you haven't figured it out yet, I am what's left of Stan Laffer -- washed-up stand-up comedian, sometime writer and currently the guy who lives under the stage at Mirth, a second rate comedy club with as little hope for improvement as the Republican Party.

Maggie chuckles.

STAN

No, I'm serious. I live under the goddamn stage. I have a hot plate, a flashlight and a mattress under there.

ED

Why?

Stan paces, stops, gives the question thought while rubbing the back of his neck.

STAN

I could say it's because the new frescoes in my French chalet are still wet, or I could also say it's because living under the stage affords me the opportunity to look up the skirts of aspiring female performers, but... the truth of the matter is that, at the moment, free rent is all I can afford.

Stan takes the cap off his bottle of vodka, takes a long swig, exhales.

STAN

Glad I was able to squeeze in breakfast.

Stan caps the bottle, stashes it in his shirt.

STAN

I'll know better how to conduct this class after I get a little peek at your souls. So I'm going to ask each one of you to individually get up onstage, say a few words about why you decided to go into stand-up, and then do one minute's worth of improvisation, just to see if you can squeeze out a laugh from the rest of us. Okay? Sound like fun?

STAN'S POV

Five stunned student faces.

BACK TO SCENE

Each student will perform. There will be INTERCUTTING between each performer and those observing.

STAN

Perfect! Vanessa, you look primed and ready to go. Get up on the stage. The rest of you, a little sugar for Vanessa! C'mon!

Stan applauds. The other students weakly follow suit. Vanessa clings to Kirby, tentatively ascends three steps, ambles to the mic, her eyes like ping pong balls. Her lips quiver.

STAN

So far so good, Vanessa. I sense greatness. Okay, why'd you decide on stand-up?

VANESSA

turns her head to the left, doubles over, vomits.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan is unfazed; the others recoil, horrified.

MALIBU

Vanessa, were those french fries from Frank's Diner? They're the best.

STAN

Vanessa, I said I wanted a peek into your soul, not your digestive tract. But, seriously, that was, in its own way, awesome, totally unexpected. To the rest of you, a lesson to be learned: the element of surprise is crucial in stand-up. You'll get your best laughs when the audience has no idea what's coming up next.

Vanessa, humiliated, steps away from the mic.

STAN

No, no, Vanessa, back to the mic. You can do this. Take a deep breath and regroup. Believe it or not, puking is the best thing you could have done. It'll only get easier from here.

Vanessa strokes Kirby, goes back to the mic.

VANESSA

I, uh, decided on stand-up because I want to be rich and comedians make a lot of money. When I-

STAN

Off the stage, Vanessa.

Vanessa fights back tears, complies.

STAN

looks around, peruses his pupils, points at Maggie.

STAN

Maggie, sweet Maggie O'Rourke, our fragile flower from the Emerald Isle -- show us what you've got.

Maggie, book in hand, rises from her chair, springs to the steps. O.s., the others clap. Maggie speaks before reaching the mic.

MAGGIE

You can all go fuck yourselves six ways from Sunday.

STAN

That's the spirit, Maggie. Way to win over your audience.

Maggie grabs the mic stand, drags it away from the puke.

MAGGIE

A bit about myself and why I signed up for this class. For the past few years I've been a substitute English literature teacher in L.A. It's a subject that's been near and dear to my heart since-

STAN

Stop! Get to the verb, Maggie. Why stand-up?

MAGGIE

For the fucking money, obviously.

Stan wraps his arms around his head, moans.

STAN

Exit the stage, Maggie.

She grunts, slaps the mic with her book, leaves the stage, joins the others. Malibu puts his arm around her shoulder.

MALIBU

Nice, job, Maggie. Uniquely hilarious.

Maggie savagely elbows Malibu in the gut. He doubles over. Stan applauds. Vanessa high-fives the air, as Maggie refrains.

STAN

(to Malibu)

Okay, hotshot, get your butt onstage.

Malibu gets his wind back, hobbles up two steps, falls to his knees, crawls to the mic.

STAN

Interesting, interesting. Can't say I've seen this before. If you find a quarter, it's mine.

Malibu topples the mic stand, speaks from the floor.

MALIBU

I'm Malibu Greenberg. I live around here, hang out at the beach most of the time. All kinds of cool things wash up here in Long Beach, more so than beaches outside of California. Simply put, we have a better grade of garbage. For example, most of the food packaging that washes up is for stuff that's vegan and non-GMO. That's something to be proud of.

Abner lets out a belly laugh. The others stare at him in disbelief.

ABNER

You gotta admit, that was pretty funny.

MAGGIE

Hey, Greenberg! You lie on the ground like a piece of trash yourself. Is that what makes you an expert on garbage?

Vanessa and Ed laugh.

STAN

Okay, settle down. Malibu, you can stop right there. What's your reason for going into stand-up?

Malibu, still on the floor, speaks as he crawls back to the steps.

MALIBU

Well, after the previous two replies, I didn't want to say I'm doing this for the money. But, after giving it some thought, it doesn't change the fact that, yeah, I'm gonna make a quick million bucks doing stand-up and then head back to the beach.

Malibu slithers down the steps, stands, joins the others. Stan opens his pint of vodka, shakes his head in disgust, drains it.

STAN

And the torture continues. Abner, your turn, big guy. See if you can dissuade me from swallowing a razor blade when this day is over.

Abner gulps, tightens his grip on his paper bag. He goes onstage, rights the mic stand.

ABNER

A waterfall of sweat cascades down Abner's forehead. He turns bright red, fumbles with the bag, pulls out a small, crudely made ventriloquist's dummy depicting a young, busty blonde. Its head and left arm fall off. Abner stoops, retrieves the pieces, reattaches them.

O.s., howls of laughter.

The head back in place, an eyeball pops out.

Stan laughs, wipes away tears.

STAN

Abner, what's the dummy's name?

MALIBU

Hey, Laffer, I saw her first!
She's pretty hot. Abner, what's
her phone number?

MAGGIE

Answer quick, Abner, before all
that's left of you is a fucking
puddle.

Abner momentarily raises the dummy above his head. One leg
falls off.

ABNER

This here is Wee-Tina. She's a
sassy country girl from Guthrie
County, Iowa and not you, Mr.
Malibu, nor anyone else is gonna be
datin' her.

MAGGIE

Too bad, looks like you struck out
again, Greenberg, and she's your
type -- inanimate.

STAN

So, does Wee-Tina talk, or is she
just with you for moral support?

Abner reattaches the leg, struggles to insert his hand into
the dummy's back.

VANESSA

Congratulations, Abner, you're
almost inside your first woman.

Abner fights to ignore the insult.

ABNER

Of course she talks, but it's
really me doin' it. I just change
my voice.

Abner is amused by his revelation.

STAN

Amazing. Let's hear from Wee-Tina.

Abner clears his throat, arches his eyebrows, takes on a
shrill voice.

ABNER

(as Wee-Tina)

My name is Wee-Tina. Abner based
my looks on his high school

(MORE)

ABNER (cont'd)
sweetheart. Truth is though, she
jilted him at our senior prom and
went with his best friend instead.

ABNER
Wee-Tina, she did what?

Wee-Tina stares at Abner.

ABNER
(as Wee-Tina))
You didn't know? She lied to you
about having cooties on prom night.
She went with Lester Schultz.

Abner, livid, pulls out his hand, slams the dummy on the
ground. It fractures into a dozen pieces.

STAN & THE OTHER STUDENTS

are mouth-open astonished.

Abner hyperventilates, drips sweat as he retrieves the
pieces, deposits them in the bag. He steps to the mic,
takes a deep breath.

ABNER
I, uh, forgot to mention -- and I
know you don't want to hear this,
Mr. Laffer, but I'm in this for the
money, as well.

END INTERCUTTING

BACK TO SCENE

Stan shrieks, falls backward in his chair, explodes with
maniacal laughter. Ed and Malibu rush to his aid. Stan
waves them off, crawls, laughs.

Exhausted, he pulls himself back up, turns serious, picks up
and throws a chair. He motions to Abner to step off the
stage, rejoin the group.

Surrounded by his students, Stan draws them in close.

STAN
I'll give you all one more chance.
How many of you maniacs are in this
for the money?

STAN'S POV

Abner's hand slowly goes up, followed by Vanessa's, Maggie's
and Malibu's.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan turns to Ed.

STAN

You, the Conor McGregor of cooking,
you in this strictly for the bucks,
too?

Ed nods. Stan silently assesses, shakes his head.

STAN

I'd give you all your money back,
if I didn't need it for crack.

Maggie cackles.

STAN

If you intend to stick with
stand-up, get the dollar signs out
of your heads, people. You want a
steady paycheck, go work for
Amazon.

ED

Don't I get a chance to go onstage?

STAN

Unfortunately, my blood vessels
aren't made of Kevlar, so no. You
can go first at the next class.

ED

That's not fair; I paid my money.
I deserve a chance.

Stan ignores Ed, stands on a nearby chair, raises his arms.

STAN

This class is over. At our next
meeting be prepared with two
minutes of material -- and I want
you to come up with an original
character. You will do your two
minutes as that character.
Goodbye.

The displeased students mumble as they disperse.

MAGGIE

What a fucking dick. (to Stan) I
meant that in a nice way.

Vanessa pets Kirby, holds him up, looks into his eyes.

VANESSA

This was worse than work, Kirby.

Abner opens his bag, peers in.

ABNER

Sorry, Wee-Tina. But really,
Lester Schultz? For Christ's sake,
he's got a homemade glass eye.

MALIBU

(to Vanessa)

I think I nailed it. Wasn't I the
best?

VANESSA

You ranked highest in body odor,
Greenberg, that's all.

They all depart, except for Ed, who looks at Stan, still
upon the chair. Ed, silent, lowers his gaze.

STAN

You want to be in this business,
you better develop a thick skin,
Ed, otherwise you won't last a
month.

Ed turns, leaves.

O.s., a deep male voice. It belongs to BORIS RODMAN, owner
of Mirth.

BORIS

Quite a group of losers you have
there, Laffer. You've got your
work cut out for you.

Stan steps back, tilts the chair until it tips, strikes the
floor. He turns, faces his boss.

STAN'S POV

Boris Rodman, bald, built like a wrestler, is dressed in
black, wears an abundance of gold jewelry.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan converses as he approaches Boris.

STAN

Most of them belong in straight
jackets, Boris, not comedy.

Boris mockingly laughs, points at Stan.

BORIS

Look who's talking. How many times
have you been sent to the funny
farm?

Stan reflects, silently counts on his fingers, shrugs.

BORIS

That last guy -- I was sure he was going to slug you.

STAN

Yeah, he really took the bait.

Boris toys with one of his showy rings.

BORIS

Bait?

STAN

I intentionally pissed him off. Just a hunch, but that guy may have something going for him. The time to test his resolve is now.

After a moment's reverie Stan regains focus.

STAN

I'd like to talk to you in your office. Got a minute?

BORIS

Barely. Make it quick.

The two men head for the nearby hallway.

INT. BORIS RODMAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Boris enters the darkened room first, followed by Stan. Boris opens the blinds, turns on the desk lamp.

The room is a large, paneled square. All the walls, except for the one behind the massive desk are decorated like a hunter's trophy room. Stuffed heads of a variety of large beasts silently oversee what transpires.

Boris takes his seat, quickly flips the pages of an automobile brochure. Stan notices, leans in for a closer look.

BORIS

I'd offer you a place to sit, but the chairs are being reupholstered with alligator hide. You sober enough to stand?

Stan briefly stands on one foot, nods, looks at the brochure again.

STAN

Maserati, nice.

BORIS

This is their top of the line. I need something for weekends.

STAN

I completely understand. Driving a Mercedes seven days a week can get awfully monotonous. And you just took delivery on the new yacht, right?

BORIS

Uh-huh, it's moored out by the Hayes.

STAN

Business must be good.

BORIS

Some of my businesses are doing better than others. I can't say much for this place, but then again, I only purchased it for the operating losses it would provide at tax time.

Boris checks his wristwatch.

BORIS

Look, I'm expecting a delivery. You obviously have something on your mind -- spill it.

STAN

It's money, of course, and not just for myself.

Stan picks up the stuffed raven from the desk, gives it a cursory look, makes the sign of the cross. Boris rocks in his seat, motions for him to set it down. He does.

STAN

First, I would like an extra ten percent of the comedy class tuition.

Boris shakes his head.

STAN

And I'm also asking you to start paying a token amount to the comics who come in for open-mic night. They could use a few bucks to help make ends meet and stay motivated. You know, an incentive.

Boris opens his desk drawer, pulls out a small jewelry box. He opens it, removes and admires a ring, puts it on, leans forward.

BORIS

Not a chance in hell, Stan. You think I'm going to pay these bozo wannabes even one dollar, to line up and make fools of themselves in front of a bunch of half-drunk strangers? That's a crock of shit and it's not going to happen.

Stan, subdued, taps the raven's head.

STAN

So your answer is: "Never more."

BORIS

What? I don't get it.

STAN

I'm not surprised.

Stan exits Boris' office.

EXT. MIRTH - CONTINUOUS

Stan casually exits the building, stops, lights a cigarette, displays no urgency to move on. A tap on his shoulder startles him. He turns in its direction.

STAN'S POV

Ed, still bitter, is the source.

ED AND STAN

Stan steps back, leery of Ed's intent. He clenches his fists.

STAN

If you plan on doing to me what you did to Jeff Cowl on Pressure Cooker, I think it's only fair to warn you that I'm skilled in the art of Fung Ku.

Ed waves Stan off, gives a weak smile. Stan relaxes his fists.

ED

You saw it, too? I don't know if I'm ever going to be able to live that down.

STAN

You may not want the public to forget it. Cowl's a scumbag, belligerent and affected. Most people hate him. You took him down -- that makes you a hero to a lot of people.

Ed displays ambivalence.

STAN

Okay, so if you weren't waiting out here to crack my skull open, why were you?

ED

It wasn't to piss and moan about you passing over me today.

STAN

Good to hear. If you started in on that shit again, I was going to pop you one.

ED

What's on my mind is the uncertainty of making the transition from one profession to another. I worked like a dog at the Culinary Institute and at every cooking job I got afterwards. I had to prove my worth by working twelve-hour days for months without a single day off.

Stan listens attentively, slowly works his way to the curb. Ed follows.

ED

The point of all this is, by the time I got to be number two at Reynolds I knew who I was, professionally. I knew I had earned my stripes. I knew I was a chef. How am I going to know when I'm a comedian?

Stan simultaneously grabs Ed's shirt and with his free hand hails down a nearby taxi. He opens the car door, slides in, pulls in Ed.

INT. CAB

BACK SEAT

Ed, stunned, is silent as Stan speaks with the o.s. CABBIE.

CABBIE (O.S.)

Where to?

STAN

Pacific Avenue, Wrigley neighborhood. You know where that is?

STAN'S POV

The bearded cabbie briefly shows his face, is tense.

CABBIE

I do, but I don't like going there,
even during the day.

BACK TO SCENE

STAN

Near the corner of 27th Street and
Pacific is a bar, Blake's -- that's
where we're headed.

ED

What the-

Stan raises an index finger, silences Ed.

CABBIE (O.S.)

Just not my day.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE OF BLAKE'S - MINUTES LATER

The taxi comes to a halt outside of Blake's, a dingy bar
with rusty steel grating over the front window. Several
staggering PATRONS exit, one of which flushes his sinus into
a nearby trash can, before stumbling on.

Ed and Stan exit the cab. Ed gives the neighborhood a look,
shudders. O.s., a gunshot and siren.

ED

How is getting murdered going to
answer my question?

Stan, silent, resolute, heads for the entrance, Ed in tow.

INT. BLAKE'S

The filthy, dim establishment is crowded. At the ancient,
wooden bar, tough blue-collar workers, elbow to elbow, pour
down bottled beer and shots of whiskey.

Gray plumes of cigarette smoke waft upward, hover overhead
in a thick cloud. Behind the bar, TONY, Blake's formidable
bartender, chews furiously while keeping glasses full.

ED AND STAN

a few steps in, gingerly step over a sleeping German
shepherd.

BACK TO SCENE

Without saying a word to Ed, Stan squeezes in between two gruff patrons, grabs the bar's brass rail, vaults himself onto the bar.

A few murmurs, then the bar quiets down. Everyone is focused on Stan.

TONY

bottle in hand, takes a step back, casually spits on the floor.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan coolly peruses the patrons, opens his denim jacket, speaks.

STAN

Aren't any of you investment
bankers due back at the office?

Laughter erupts. Stan's enthusiasm builds, his eyes widen. He jumps up and down on the bar twice.

STAN

C'mon, c'mon! You bankers can't
very well dream up new ways to
screw over the public if you're
sponging up the sauce at Blake's.

PATRON WEARING KNIT CAP

downs a shot of whiskey, laughs, coughs.

KNIT CAP PATRON

We're entitled to a three-martini
lunch, you know. It's in our
contract.

ED

laughs, reacts with amazement. O.s. patrons add to the laughter.

THE GERMAN SHEPHERD

stirs, stands, barks.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan takes a step, nods, then shows disgust, waves his hand in front of his nose.

STAN

Hey, Tony, it's pretty ripe in
here. Is Blake still using
shit-scented Swiffers?

TONY

nods, laughs.

ROW OF PATRONS

laughing, pounding the bar with fists, beer bottles.

BACK TO SCENE

STAN

I don't see any of you guys wearing Covid masks, but I get it. That fucking virus couldn't survive ten seconds in this toilet. Ever see the kitchen in this place? No? Neither has the city health inspector.

O.s. laughter builds. Stan bends, picks up a plate with a partially eaten sandwich on it, inspects.

STAN

Speaking of toilets, this lunch meat looks the same going in as it does coming out. They don't give you napkins with it -- they give you toilet paper. But that's okay, I hear the cook is adhering to new cleanliness standards -- he only spits on the hamburgers once.

O.s. laughter fills the room, crests. Stan, pleased, gives a quick wave.

STAN

Thanks, guys, I appreciate it. And remember, if you drink, don't drive on the sidewalk.

Stan jumps down from the bar, is patted on the back by customers. One hands him a shot, which he throws down. Stan approaches Ed, who applauds with the others.

Stan signals Ed to head to the door. They exit.

EXT. BLAKE'S - CONTINUOUS

Out in front of the bar, Ed approaches Stan, who fusses with his jacket.

ED

That was-

Stan instantly turns serious.

STAN

-what you have to learn to do! And
when you can do that, without
hesitating, then you are a
comedian.

Stan retrieves his phone, looks at it. Ed silently
acknowledges the lesson learned. O.s. sirens blare.

STAN

We need to get out of here -- right
away.

ED

You said it.

STAN

Not for the reason you think.

Stan opens his jacket, pulls out a bottle of rum.

STAN

I stole this from the bar.

Tony exits the bar, shakes his fist.

TONY

Laffer, give me back that bottle!

Ed and Stan run. Tony pursues.

EXT. LONG BEACH - THE SAME AFTERNOON

A small office building has a sign near its entrance. It
reads: "McGuire Food Analytics."

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Carmen storms out of one of the doors. A gray-haired,
suited man, in his forties, JACK MCGUIRE, promptly follows,
attempts to catch up.

MCGUIRE

You better not start spreading
false rumors, Carmen. I will
defend McGuire Food Analytics until
I draw my last breath.

Carmen stops, turns to face McGuire. He catches up.

CARMEN/MCGUIRE - INTERCUTTING

CARMEN

Mr. McGuire, that day can't come
soon enough. How could you do such
a thing?

MCGUIRE

Nothing happened!... It wasn't intentional.

CARMEN

You can't have it both ways, Jack. Which is it: a non-event or unintentional?

McGuire, exhausted, slouches.

MCGUIRE

Unintentional, sort of.

CARMEN

There's nothing unintentional about sneaking dog food into the cafeteria's entrees and secretly filming employees' reactions. That's sick!

MCGUIRE

It's your word against mine, Carmen. You have no tangible proof.

END INTERCUTTING

Carmen walks away from McGuire, speaks. McGuire follows.

CARMEN

I eat dog food, I'm embarrassed to say, as part of my job. I know the smell, I know the taste -- and it was in the chicken tetrazzini. The cafeteria is filmed and bugged. That's common knowledge.

McGuire stops, Carmen keeps walking, reaches the building's exit door, pauses.

MCGUIRE

No need to pause, Ms. Badillo. You can keep walking. You're fired. You come back on the premises, I'll have you arrested.

Carmen opens the door, turns, faces McGuire.

CARMEN

I'd tell you to eat shit, Jack, but your breath tells me you already do.

Jack, surprised, checks his breath as Carmen exits.

INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

KITCHEN

Ed sits at the table, writes hunched over an open notebook. He pauses, picks up a sandwich, sets it back down, checks the time. O.s. the sound of the door opening and closing. Ed stands, walks to the living room.

LIVING ROOM

Carmen tosses down her purse, flops onto the couch, buries a fist into the cushion. She stares off into space.

ED

Another stellar day at McGuire?

CARMEN

A real gem. How about yours? Your stand-up class go well? You sign a multi-year contract to headline at the Wynn?

Ed sits down next to her.

ED

It's an interesting... unusual group, four other students besides me. Stan Laffer is a real piece of work: intense, emotional, you never know what he'll say or do next. And to answer your question, no, I was not offered a contract by the Wynn, or anyone else. It's going to be a while for this to pay off. Until it does, at least we can count on your horrible job.

Carmen stands, goes to the window, peers out through the blinds.

ED

I forgot to mention: Laffer is a bit eccentric. He actually lives under the stage at Mirth. Can you believe that?

CARMEN

Awesome. Has he got room for two more?

ED

Huh?

CARMEN

Nothing. Ed, you sure you want to completely give up the restaurant business for stand-up? You worked
(MORE)

CARMEN (cont'd)
so hard at it. Why not do
something part time? You know,
just to have some cash coming in.

She steps away from the window, goes to the close-by bar
cart, pours a glass of wine.

ED
It's crossed my mind, but I really
believe I should fully commit to
just one career at a time.

CARMEN
You could work for my Uncle Steven.
He's doing well, always looking for
part-time help.

Ed stands, goes to Carmen.

ED
It's not exactly fine dining,
Carmen. He owns three cotton candy
stands.

CARMEN
And he's doing okay, better than
us. Is that job beneath you?

O.s., hard knocks at the door. Ed goes to answer it.

ED
It's not that. It's just that I
don't want stand-up to become a
hobby.

Ed opens the door.

ED'S POV

HARVEY DEUTSCH, a slovenly man in his late twenties, brushes
a remnant of cole slaw from his jacket's lapel, chews on a
cheap pen. He flashes his business card.

HARVEY
The name's Harvey Deutsch. I'm
with Scorpion Collection Agency.
Not surprisingly, it's a division
of Lowlands Bank, and not a
customer friendly one, either.

BACK TO SCENE

ED
Well, that's your problem. What do
you want?

HARVEY

It's not you I'm looking for, pal.
It's Carmen Badillo. May I come in
for a second?

Without waiting for a reply, Harvey enters.

LIVING ROOM

Carmen pounds her glass onto the bar, approaches Harvey and
confused Ed.

CARMEN

You've called three times in the
past twenty-four hours. Now you
invade my home. What is it with
you people?

Harvey chuckles, pokes himself in the chest, takes the pen
out of his mouth.

HARVEY

You think I like hounding you,
lady? Well, to be truthful, I
actually do. You run up all kinds
of bills and-

ED

"All kinds of bills?" What the
hell are you talking about? (to
Carmen) What's going on?

Carmen swallows hard, toys with the end of a long strand of
her black hair, looks away.

HARVEY

Oh, I see. It's time for the
classic 'big revelation.' I
absolutely love these. Go ahead,
Carmen, bring your boyfriend here
up to speed.

ED

I don't like your attitude,
Deutsch.

HARVEY

Nobody does; that's how I got this
fucking job. Please continue,
Carmen.

Harvey jams the pen back into his mouth, chews away.

CARMEN

A lot of the bills are for gifts,
for family, friends... Uh, then
there's... others.

ED

Tell me about the others.

Carmen squints, looks for the right words.

CARMEN

I get cash advances on my credit cards and, um, use the money to buy lottery tickets, lots of lottery tickets.

Harvey, jubilant, raises his arms.

HARVEY

You gotta be in it to win it, baby!

ED

Tone it down, Deutsch. (to Carmen)
How much are you in debt for?

HARVEY

Brace yourself.

CARMEN

Thirty-seven.

ED

Hundred? Thirty-seven hundred?

HARVEY

Large. Thirty-seven large, bro.

ED

(to Carmen)

Thirty-seven thousand?

Carmen nods, sits on the couch, grabs a large pillow, squishes it into her face. Muffled crying is heard. Harvey pulls folded papers from the inside breast pocket of his sweat-stained sports jacket. He gives them a quick look, smells them, grimaces.

HARVEY

Sorry about the smell and the sweat stains on these documents. They've been in my pocket all day and I run kinda hot.

Carmen lowers the pillow, sniffs, wipes her eyes.

HARVEY

I'll save you from asking what these docs are all about. Basically, until the debts are paid off in full -- at 21% interest -- we own you from scalp to heel, lady. There's a payment schedule included. I highly suggest you stick to it.

Carmen raises the pillow back to her face.

ED

What a bunch of blood-sucking bastards.

HARVEY

What do you expect? The agency's name is Scorpion, not Daffodil.

ED

If you're done, get the fuck out of here.

HARVEY

Sure.

Harvey starts for the door, stops, turns and faces Ed and Carmen.

HARVEY

Oh, I almost forgot. As a division of Lowlands Bank, they require me to recite their jingle. Pardon my singing voice. "Low-lands Bank -- we're up, up, up... for you!"

ED

Isn't it really: "We're up, up, up -- fuck you?"

Harvey giggles, takes the pen out of his mouth.

HARVEY

Y'know, actually that's the way we sing it at the office.

Harvey tips his hat, exits. Ed closes the door, heads back to the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Ed takes his seat, resumes writing. Carmen enters.

CARMEN

What are you writing?

Ed looks up.

ED

Material for Thursday's class.

CARMEN

At a time like this?

Ed lowers his head, continues writing. Carmen fumes, leaves the kitchen. O.s. the sound of the door opening, slamming shut.

INT. MIRTH - NOON

(TWO DAYS LATER)

In the otherwise empty club, Maggie and Ed sit at the same table, await the others and Stan. Maggie reads her book. Ed shuffles through his notes, sets them down.

ED

Come up with an interesting character for today's class, Maggie?

Maggie closes her book, stares at Ed.

MAGGIE

Do you teach this fucking class?...
Do you?

ED

I was just-

MAGGIE

What?! What were you fucking doing? I know what you're fucking doing. You're trying to steal my fucking material, that's what.

ED

I had no intention of stealing anything. It was a simple- I was just making conversation, damn it. You don't have to jump down my throat.

Ed stands, gathers his papers. Maggie reopens her book, laughs, looks up at Ed, grins.

MAGGIE

Gotcha. Have a seat, you gullible bastard.

Ed smirks, sits back down.

MAGGIE

I think I've got the whole bitchy Irish character down at this point. Wouldn't you agree?

ED

You own it.

MAGGIE

Thanks, but I still won't tell you the new one I've come up with. I will tell you that I showed up here last night for open-mic night.

ED

That's great! Good for you. How'd it go?

Maggie rolls her eyes, closes the book.

MAGGIE'S FLASHBACK

INT. MIRTH - THE PREVIOUS NIGHT

STAGE

The club's MC, drunk, sways at the mic, shuffles through index cards bearing stand-up's names, pulls one out, drops others. O.s., the room is noisy with patron chatter, background music, assorted barroom noises.

MC

Okay, our next victim (he burps),
excuse me, our next aspiring
comedic talent, is from right here
in Long Beach. She's a
cabbage-eating harpy who, at the
age of five, kicked Ronald McDonald
in the balls, just to see him grab
his McNuggets. Let's have a round
of apathetic applause for (snorts,
looks at the card again) Maggie
O'Rourke.

O.s., weak applause is drowned out by the club's ambient noise. Maggie, holding her book, approaches the mic, which is set far too high.

She wedges the book into her armpit, tries to adjust the height, but can't. Repeated attempts fail. The audience's patience ends; the heckling starts.

HECKLER #1 (O.S.)

Come back when you grow six inches!

HECKLER #2 (O.S.)

Next time bring a ladder and a
wrench!

HECKLER #3 (O.S.)

The circus is in town. Why don't
you run over and see if they'll
lend you some stilts?

Maggie turns pale, frantic, looks in the MC's direction, the book still wedged in her armpit.

MAGGIE'S POV

The MC talks to a cocktail waitress, glances in Maggie's direction, shrugs, resumes conversation with the waitress.

BACK TO SCENE

HECKLER #1 (O.S.)
Maggie, is that short for maggot?

HECKLER #2 (O.S.)
Hey, if that book of yours didn't
stink before, it does now.

HECKLER #3 (O.S.)
What's that you're reading, The
Pits and the Pendulum?

Maggie gives the audience the finger, storms off the stage.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. MIRTH - CONTINUOUS

ED
So, otherwise it went well?

MAGGIE
A performance nearly as bad as my
ex-husband's on our wedding night.

Ed shakes his head.

ED
Not exactly a confidence builder.

Ed and Maggie look about.

ED AND MAGGIE'S POV

Standing close-by, Vanessa, Abner and Stan have been
listening.

VANESSA
That's shocking; I had to cover
Kirby's ears.

ABNER
You got me sweatin' just listenin'.

STAN
I've heard worse open-mic stories,
but kudos to you for having the
guts to try.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan looks around the room.

STAN
We seem to be down a man. Mr.
Malibu appears to be MIA. Screw
him, let's get started.

Vanessa grabs a chair, starts to sit down. Stan notices.

STAN

Don't get comfortable, Vanessa. Up onstage. Show us the character you came up with and give us a few minutes of material.

Vanessa takes a deep breath, pets Kirby vigorously, silently works her way onto the stage, proceeds to the mic.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

And don't puke!

VANESSA

bends her knees, straightens up, repeats the motion, fully extends her arms, with Kirby on her shoulder. Her mouth open, eyes wide, she appears to float in air, then spins around several times.

MAGGIE

leans back in her chair.

MAGGIE

What the fuck is she doing?

STAN

places his hands on either side of his face, rests his elbows on the table, is incredulous.

STAN

Vanessa, this is stand-up. Ballet is taught six doors down from here. Give us a clue, sweetheart.

BACK TO SCENE

VANESSA

I'm aboard the International Space Station. I'm Captain Debbie Bright. In my six months on board, I've gained forty pounds -- nervous eating, you know. Now my space suit doesn't fit. NASA says I can't come back until I lose the weight. I'm the first fat-assed astronaut.

STAN (O.S.)

Keep going with this Vanessa. See where you can take it.

VANESSA

It started with the dehydrated space chili. I couldn't get

(MORE)

VANESSA (cont'd)
enough! At first I added water,
like you're supposed to. Then I
found myself just ripping open the
bags and eating it dry. It's nice
and crunchy.

ED, MAGGIE AND ABNER

grow fascinated with Vanessa's performance.

BACK TO SCENE

VANESSA
Well, that was just the start. I
stole food from the other
astronauts while they slept. The
Japanese guy had dehydrated sushi
-- not the best -- it kept
unraveling in zero-g. But we had
an Italian astronaut, who brought
fettucine alfredo that was to die
for -- and I nearly did when he
caught me.

STAN (O.S.)
You're fading, Vanessa. Get back
to funny.

Flustered, Vanessa steps away from the mic, is at a loss for words.

STAN (O.S.)
C'mon, Vanessa. The fettucine?
You found a hair in it, a curly
one. You had your Italian friend
contact the restaurant from
space... run with that.

Vanessa shakes her head, walks off, joins the others. Stan goes to her, pats her on the back.

STAN
You're getting there, but you can't
freeze up like that in front of an
audience. You'll never get them
back.

MALIBU (O.S.)
So the restaurant owner says
they'll replace the fettucine, no
charge, but the delivery fee is
\$800 million.

Malibu joins the group, is proud of his remark. Stan is stone-faced.

MALIBU

Pardon me for being fashionably late. Can I be next?

STAN

Sure, of course, go right up there. Let's see what you've got, tiger.

ED

disappointed, lowers his head, crumples his notes.

ED

Jesus H. Christ.

BACK TO SCENE

Malibu strides to the stage's edge, vaults up onto it. He pulls the mic from its stand.

MALIBU

My character happens to be an astronaut, too. And he's got this eating problem. He-

STAN (O.S.)

Stop!

STAN

runs to the stage, jumps onto it, bolts to Malibu. He pulls the mic from his hand, drops it, shoves Greenberg. O.s., applause from the rest of the class.

STAN AND MALIBU

STAN

You piece of shit. You come in here late and then blatantly steal Vanessa's idea?!

MALIBU

Sorry about being late, but I can't do anything about traffic, Stan. As far as the character goes, I just wanted to give my version of it.

STAN

Get the hell out of my class.

Malibu starts to reply, but before he gets a word out, Stan tackles him, stands, drags Malibu to the stage's edge by his bare foot.

BACK TO SCENE

Ed joins the combatants, pulls Stan off Malibu.

MALIBU

I paid like everyone else. I have
a right to be here.

STAN

Subject to my rules, first and
foremost of which is, if I don't
like your fucking attitude, you're
out -- so you're out!

Stan pulls away from Ed, jumps off the stage, grabs and
throws a chair at Malibu, misses. Malibu huffs, clenches
his fists, jumps off the stage, too. He marches towards the
club's front door.

FRONT DOOR

As Malibu reaches out to push open the door, it opens. He
stumbles. Boris enters, gives Malibu a condescending look,
as he departs. Boris steps to one side, quietly observes.

BORIS' POV

Stan dusts himself off. The others take their seats.

BACK TO SCENE

STAN

Ed, your turn. It better be good.

Ed takes one last look at his notes, head for the stage.
Boris approaches, stands behind Stan, quietly makes his
presence known.

STAGE

Ed picks up the mic from the floor, places the stand behind
himself, smiles.

ED

Hi, I'm Ed Curtis. How are you all
doing today?

STAN

pounds the nearby table with his open hand.

STAN

Never open that way, Ed. You've
just walked on, you've got your
audience focused on you, and you
ask them how they are? What's
funny about that? Are you a
comedian, or from the fucking World
Health Organization?

BACK TO SCENE

Ed steps back, composes himself, steps forward, hunches over, takes on the the facial expression and voice of an old man.

ED

Please to meet you, I'm Lenny, the oldest wine steward in the world. I'm so old I once served wine to Jesus Christ. He drank half, turned the rest into water and claimed he didn't owe anything for it.

O.s. laughter.

ED

Abe Lincoln was someone else I served. Lousiest tipper ever -- the man deserves to be on a penny. Speaking of cheap-

STAN (O.S.)

You're rushing, Ed, slow it down. It's not a hundred-yard dash. Go at a pace where you think you're going too slowly -- and then slow it down more.

Ed acknowledges the suggestion.

ED

Speaking of cheap-

BORIS (O.S.)

Hold up there, guy.

ED

What the hell is it now?

BORIS AND STAN

BORIS

Stan, your little class is going to end early.

STAN

Why?

BORIS

Scheduling conflict. I arranged for the place to be fumigated weeks ago, so clear out.

STAN

That's what I like about you, Boris. You treat everyone the same -- like shit. I want you to see something.

Stan turns to his students.

STAN

By a show of hands, how many of you
think comics should be paid
something for open-mic night?

STAN'S POV

All four immediately raise their hands.

BACK TO SCENE

STAN

(to Boris)

What do you think of that?

BORIS

If your goal was to humiliate me,
it failed. If it was to piss me
off, you succeeded.

Boris steps away from Stan, plays with one of his rings,
defiantly points at the class.

BORIS

You four, plus any future students
of Stan Laffer are officially
blacklisted from performing here on
open-mic night and, as an added
bonus, I'm going to contact other
comedy clubs in Long Beach and get
you all blacklisted there, too.
Now clear the hell out of my club.

The students silently assemble their belongings, start to
file out. Stan approaches Boris, pats him on the shoulder.

STAN

It's a shame you didn't go into
banking, Boris. You've got the
perfect personality for foreclosing
mortgages on widows and orphans.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MIRTH - MINUTES LATER

Abner, Vanessa, Maggie and Ed mill about. Stan exits Mirth,
motions for them to gather.

STAN

Fumigation. He needs it more than
the building.

ABNER

Sounds like we're finished as
comedians before we even got
started.

Maggie pulls a face at Abner's remark, pokes him.

MAGGIE

You best be careful, Abner. If you quit, that little wooden sperm bank of your might run out on you.

ED

Yeah, she might leave you for a bigger dummy.

Abner chokes up, reddens. Vanessa comforts him.

STAN

Nobody's quitting -- that's bullshit. Boris blows his stack more than the Queen Mary. We're scheduled to meet in two days and that's exactly what we're going to do.

VANESSA

Kirby and I don't feel comfortable with Boris around. He's got it in for us now.

ABNER

No way we'll ever get on his good side.

STAN

He doesn't have one. Look, look across the street.

Stan points.

EVERYONE'S POV

Next to the corner location of Lowlands Bank is an empty storefront.

BACK TO SCENE

ABNER

A bank? We're going to meet in a bank? They won't like that.

MAGGIE

Fucking wake up, Abner. He means the empty store next door.

STAN

That's where we'll meet in two days. I knew the owner. It was a bookstore. I used to help him out on holidays. Anyway, Lowlands Bank called in his inventory loan two weeks before Christmas. They put him out of business, gouged out his eyes on his birthday, too.

ED AND OTHERS

What?!

STAN

Well, not the last part, but they
did put him out of business. I
still have a key. Thursday, 8 p.m.
Use the alleyway door.

O.s., a noisy truck engine draws everyone's attention.

EVERYONE'S POV

A large, black panel truck bearing the name "A to Z
Fumigation" rolls past, turns into the alley on the side of
Mirth.

BACK TO SCENE

STAN

There's the fumigators. They must
be giving away those black panel
trucks. That's the third service
Boris uses that's driving them.

ABNER

So what's our assignment for
Thursday?

STAN

Come up with... Come up with, um,
three to five minutes of...
observational material.

Stan saddens, becomes apathetic.

STAN

Yeah, that or whatever else you
feel like. Anything.

Stan sulks, walks away. Discouraged, Abner, Vanessa and
Maggie quietly go their own ways. Ed follows Stan.

Malibu steps out from the alley alongside Mirth.

MALIBU

Thursday, 8 p.m. Okay.

EXT. BAR - DAY

(THIRTY MINUTES LATER)

Stan throws open the door of a dive bar, enters. Ed sneaks
to the bar's front window, peers in.

ED'S POV

Stan takes a seat in the empty, dreary place, pulls crumpled
bills from his back pocket, slams them on the bar. He
shouts something unintelligible.

A middle-aged, haggard female BARKEEP, bottle and glass in hand, approaches. She fills the glass to the brim. Stan grabs it from her, downs the contents in three sloppy gulps. She refills the glass, grabs the cash.

BACK TO SCENE

Ed goes to the door, enters.

INT. DIVE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Ed takes the seat next to Stan, who only takes a quick glance, then focuses on his glass.

STAN

I'd offer to buy you a drink, but then there'd be less for me.

ED

Don't want one. But I would like to know the reason why you stood up for us in front of Boris, gave us hope inside the club, and then, outside, showed complete apathy and let everyone down.

Stan takes a swig, shrugs.

ED

Did you see the expression on everyone's faces?

Stan reaches for the glass. Ed swipes it away, throws it on the ground. Stan turns to Ed.

STAN

No, I did not see everyone's expressions. And I don't need to because I fucking know what they look like. I've been through this scenario many times -- and from both sides, teacher and student.

The barkeep arrives, sets up another glass, fills it.

BARKEEP

Two bucks for the glass. The next one you break, you eat.

Barkeep departs.

STAN

This profession, it bolts from one extreme to the other, back and forth, like some crazy metronome, between being glorious and
(MORE)

STAN (cont'd)
catastrophic. And it eats me up
that I'm encouraging naive hopefuls
to expose themselves to it.

Stan pounds the bar top.

ED
And you do it with such
lightheartedness.

Stan snickers; they both laugh.

STAN
When I think back about how things
were ten years ago... I mean, I'm
blown away, completely staggered
that it came crashing down so hard,
so fast.

ED
And who was to blame for that?

Stan taps his forehead.

STAN
I can't deny my own role. I
couldn't handle the money, the
pace, pressure. The money made
everything I knew was bad,
accessible. And I was weak.

ED
Human.

STAN
Thanks, Mr. Spock.

Barkeep returns.

BARKEEP
(to Ed)
You're taking up a seat. Order
something.

ED
I'll have a beer. Do you have-

Barkeep pounds a bottle onto the bar, twists off the cap
with a dirty rag she pulls from her cleavage, departs.

STAN
Getting back to the money. When
things got a little tight, some VP
from Lowlands Bank, who liked my
act, said they could lend me enough
to finance my lifestyle against
future earnings.

ED

And you took the bait?

STAN

Like a great white shark coming off
Weight Watchers.

ED

Let me guess, it ended badly.

STAN

All you have to do is look at me
once to know.

Ed gives Stan a long, hard look from head to toe.

ED

Total devastation.

Stan and Ed sip their drinks.

ED

Y'know it's a strange thing, almost
everyone I meet has some horrible
story to tell about Lowlands Bank.

STAN

"Almost?" Try to find someone who
doesn't. I'll show you. (to
Barkeep) Mabel, come on over.

The barkeep will now be called MABEL. She walks over, picks
her teeth with the edge of a matchbook cover.

MABEL

Yeah?

STAN

Mabel, ever have trouble with
Lowlands Bank?

Mabel picks up Stan's empty glass, smashes it on the floor.

STAN

You owe yourself two bucks for the
glass.

MABEL

Lowlands Bank. God-damned bunch of
suit-wearing donkey fuckers.

She grabs two more glasses from behind the bar, smashes them
on the floor.

MABEL

They repossessed my car at my mom's
funeral. Tow truck comes right
into the cemetery. (breaks more
(MORE)

MABEL (cont'd)
 glasses) Everyone's head turns to
 watch, including the guys lowering
 the coffin. They drop it! It
 cracks open. Mom flops out, into
 the mud. (throws a bottle) I
 finally get home, check the mail
 -- there's a fucking ad from
 Lowlands telling me I qualify for a
 car loan! (smashes a tray of
 glasses)

Mabel opens a beer for herself, wanders off, mutters.

MABEL
 Lowlands Bank... fuckers.

STAN
 (to Ed)
 Another satisfied customer.

ED
 Yeah, nobody would shed a tear if
 Lowlands was robbed.

STAN
 Long Beach would probably throw a
 parade.

ED
 Could be a subject for all of us to
 work on, as a group. Some sort of
 sketch comedy project.

STAN
 Keep going with that. What do you
 have in mind?

Ed thinks a minute, finishes off his beer. Stan lights a
 cigarette.

ED
 A sketch where a group of stand-up
 comedy students rob Lowlands Bank.
 Vanessa with her cat, Abner with
 that fall apart dummy of his.
 Might be a good way for all of us
 to...

ED'S POV

Stan, lost in thought, looks straight ahead.

BACK TO SCENE

ED
 You don't seem to be listening.

Stan turns to Ed.

STAN

I heard every fucking beautiful word. I bet we could pull that off.

ED

So you think it would be a good sketch?

STAN

Fuck no, not a sketch -- that blows. I'm talking about a real heist.

ED

What?! What do you mean?

Stan grabs Ed's sleeve, pulls him close.

STAN

Do you have money problems?

Ed nods.

STAN

So do I. So does everyone in the class. And we've all been fucked over by Lowlands Bank. Ed, it's time to make an unauthorized withdrawal.

ED

We're not professional criminals. We've got no experience robbing banks. We hardly even know each other.

Stan releases Ed's sleeve, takes a drag on his cigarette.

STAN

You're neglecting the biggest thing we've got in our favor.

ED

Which is?

STAN

Beginner's luck.

ED

Oh, yeah, beginner's luck. How could I have overlooked the most powerful force in the universe?

STAN

Okay then, let's bring the idea up at Thursday's class. We'll put it to a vote.

ED
Democracy at work.

INT. OFFICE - DAY (THE NEXT MORNING - WEDNESDAY)

In a small, well-lit modern office, FRANK KLOTZ, a thin man wearing an ugly suit, reads aloud from a handwritten note.

FRANK
"And so, Mr. Klotz, with my husband now permanently disabled and both of my children in intensive care, I ask that you please consider waiving the \$800.00 in penalties and additional interest I was charged for being one day late in paying my \$32.00 credit card balance."

He pauses, looks around the room, straightens his necktie, sneers, looks back at the note.

FRANK
Crybaby. Request denied.

He stamps the note with a rubber stamp, presses the button on his intercom.

FRANK
Suzie, come in here.

SUZIE enters. Frank hands her the note.

FRANK
Turn this over to Harvey Deutsch in Collections. He's going to love this one. Tell him not to drool on it.

SUZIE
Yes, Mr. Klotz.

FRANK
Oh, and send it whats-her-name.

Suzie nods, exits. Carmen, dressed in business attire, enters, stands before Klotz. He looks up from his computer screen, likes what he sees, motions for her to take a seat.

FRANK
Very nice to meet you, Ms. Badillo.

CARMEN
Likewise, Mr. Klotz.

FRANK
I glanced at your resume... So, how does taste testing dog food
(MORE)

FRANK (cont'd)
prepare you for working at Lowlands
Bank?

CARMEN
It made me good at swallowing crap
and not complain about it.

Frank, thunderstruck, bursts out laughing. He slaps the top
of his desk, spins his seat completely around.

FRANK
I like that, Carmen. May I call
you Carmen? I like that a lot.
You've got the right attitude. You
are Lowlands Bank material. I can
tell.

CARMEN
Awesome, when can I start?

FRANK
This weekend.

CARMEN
This weekend?

FRANK
Uh-huh. Weekends, evenings.
You're going to have shit hours and
lots of them. It's our way of
saying welcome to Lowlands Bank.

CARMEN
And what exactly will I be doing,
initially?

FRANK
Sending out fines, processing
complaints. I'll go over it in
detail, personally, when we start
on Saturday night.

CARMEN
So, I'll be working directly under
you?

Frank lasciviously licks his lips.

FRANK
I like your choice of words. Yes,
you'll be directly under me, Ms.
Badillo, at our waterfront branch.
We'll bang away at things all night
if we have to.

CARMEN
And this is across from Mirth, the
comedy club?

FRANK
Precisely, at 11 p.m. See you
then, and wear that same outfit...
and perfume.

EXT. LOWLANDS OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Carmen exits the building, shudders.

CARMEN
I need a shower.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT (THURSDAY)

Maggie and Abner silently acknowledge each other as they
approach the alley door of the empty store next to Lowlands
Bank from opposite sides.

ABNER
Should I knock?

MAGGIE
No, lick the fucking doorknob.

ABNER
How would-

Maggie gives the door three solid raps, stews.

ROOF OF EMPTY BUILDING

Malibu crouches at the flat roof's edge, peers down over the
side.

MALIBU'S POV

Maggie raps again, kicks the door.

BACK TO SCENE

The door opens. Ed motions for Maggie and Abner to enter.

INT. EMPTY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Abner and Maggie cautiously follow Ed through the dim room.
He leads them to a lit storeroom where Stan and Vanessa sit
on two of five folding chairs. Ed, Maggie and Abner join
them.

ABNER
I'd like to go first tonight,
Mr.Laffer. I wrote some really-

STAN
Abner, chill. There's something we
need to discuss first. Ed's come
up with an idea for a group project
and we wanted to run it by all of
you.

ROOF

Malibu finds an air conditioning duct, pulls off a panel. He climbs inside, lights a small flashlight, puts in his mouth.

INT. DUCT

A tight squeeze, Malibu struggles, forces his way through ductwork. He pauses, listens. O.s., muffled voices are audible.

ROOF

Three rats enter the same opening.

STOREROOM

STAN

Go ahead, Ed.

Ed stands. About to speak, he and everyone else look up at the ceiling.

CEILING

Rumbling emanates from exposed ductwork.

BACK TO SCENE

The noise ceases; attention returns to Ed.

ED

What I'm going to talk to you about started out as an idea for a sketch we could all work on.

MAGGIE

Fuck working in groups. Some asshole always does less than his share.

STAN

(to Maggie)

Thank you, Peter F. Drucker -- now hear Ed out.

KIRBY

meows, becomes restless in Vanessa's lap.

VANESSA

Calm down, Kirby. There's no mice or rats here -- at least I hope not.

ED

So, it's a sketch about robbing a bank, specifically, Lowlands Bank.

ABNER

That's not bad, could be fun. It's actually a fantasy of mine.

MAGGIE

Try not to get a boner over it, Abner. Look, as long as it involves robbing fucking Lowlands, I'm interested. Those pricks signed me up for twenty-six credit cards without my permission.

VANESSA

I hate them, too. They won't let me bring Kirby in. He only peed on a teller one time.

Stan, encouraged, stands, joins Ed.

STAN

And how would you all feel about it, if it was for real, not a sketch?

INT. DUCT/INT. STOREROOM - INTERCUTTING

Malibu's eyes widen at the revelation.

RATS

scurry through the duct.

Vanessa, Maggie and Abner rise from their seats. Abner pulls Wee-Tina from a paper bag, hoists her in the air.

ABNER

(as Wee-Tina)

Fuck yeah! Me and Abner, we're in!

MAGGIE

I'm on board! Try to fucking stop me!

Vanessa, overwhelmed, resists puking, nods that she's in.

MALIBU

Holy shit, they're going to rob Lowlands.

The rats catch up with Malibu, jump onto him. He shrieks, drops the flashlight, flops and tumbles.

The aspiring bank robbers look back up at the ductwork.

END INTERCUTTING

DUCTWORK

rumbles, buckles. Screams pour from within it.

STAN (O.S.)
 Sounds like we have company and I
 think I know who it is.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
 It isn't fucking Mike Rowe.

The ductwork breaks open. Malibu slides out, grabs the duct's edge, dangles with rats clinging to his clothes. He lets go, falls to the floor. The rats scatter.

BACK TO SCENE

Vanessa fights to hold onto Kirby.

VANTESSA
 Oh, my god, rats!

ED
 Two-legged and four-legged.

Stan and the students run to dazed Malibu, who swats his clothes despite the rats' departure. Stan grabs him, gives Malibu a hard shake.

STAN
 How much did you hear?

Malibu settles down. Stan releases him.

MALIBU
 Enough, I know what you're
 planning.

Ed laughs.

ED
 What we're planning? You got here
 late, Malibu. We were rehearsing a
 sketch about a group of stand-ups
 who get an idea for a sketch to rob
 a bank.

STAN
 That's right, a sketch within a
 sketch.

ABNER
 You just happened along at the
 wrong time, Mr. Greenberg.

Malibu stands, weighs the explanation, shakes his head.

MALIBU
 Even a dope like me knows that's
 complete bullshit.

Maggie pokes Malibu's shoulder, produces and opens a switchblade knife drawn from her sleeve.

MAGGIE

Then we'll just have to to kill the fucker right now and leave him here. The rats will eat him in a week.

Ed and Stan restrain her, take away and close the blade.

STAN

No! No! No! No one's killing anyone -- not yet, anyway.

Malibu cowers; Stan pats him on the back.

STAN

Just kidding, Malibu. Relax, we wouldn't do anything so crude.

MAGGIE

That's right, we'd be more creative. Like maybe kill you with a Navage filled with battery acid.

ABNER

Ooh, that'll clear your sinuses.

ED

(to Malibu)

What's it going to take to keep you quiet?

MALIBU

I want back in. Let me be a part of it. I hate Lowlands as much as any of you.

STAN

Yeah? What's your horror story?

MALIBU

They signed me up for twenty-six credit cards without my permission.

Maggie kicks Malibu in the groin. He doubles over.

MAGGIE

That's my fucking story! You did it again! I don't fucking believe it!

STAN

All right, all right. Listen, Malibu, we all hate you and you're the stupidest fuck I ever met, but we're going to let you be a part of this because you're a persistent dumb shit and there's something positive to be said for that.

MALIBU

Thanks.

Maggie shakes her head in disgust.

ABNER

So what's the plan, Ed?

Ed gulps; Stan buries his hands in his pockets, looks away.

ED

We don't really have one right now.
That's why we're all here.

The other students moan. Abner kicks a chair leg.

MAGGIE

Willie fucking Sutton is turning
over in his fucking grave.

STAN

Hey! We're here for input,
suggestions. You're all creative
types, sort of. Tap into that and
come up with something that won't
put us in the electric chair for
fifty years. Brainstorm. Go
ahead, Vanessa.

Vanessa flops into her chair, strokes Kirby, thinks. The
others take their seats. Malibu sits on the floor.

VANESSA

How about this?

VANESSA'S IMAGINED ROBBERY - MONTAGE

INT. LOWLANDS BANK - DAY

-- The busy branch is interrupted when Vanessa and the
others, in bakeshop garb, enter carrying boxes marked
'donuts.' Patrons and staff are drawn to them, eager to get
one.

-- One box, opened, contains hundreds of frantic roaches
that instantly disperse. All the other boxes are opened
with the same results.

-- Panic ensues as staff and patrons flee, many covered with
the crawling bugs.

-- The robbers clean out cash drawers, depart.

END VANESSA'S IMAGINED ROBBERY

INT. STOREROOM

STAN

That's incredibly gross, Vanessa.
I'll be sleeping with the lights on
for the next month, no thanks to
you.

ABNER

The roaches would crawl all over
us, too. I got the willies just
thinkin' about it.

Abner scratches himself with both hands, writhes, cringes.

MALIBU

I know where I can get a hundred
thousand roaches, no problem.

MAGGIE

Yeah, your girlfriend's panties.

STAN

Stop it! Stop it already! We need
something bold, not gross. Think
bold. Malibu, you're so eager to
be in on this. What's your idea?

ED

And keep in mind we're not in this
for drawer cash. We're after vault
money.

MALIBU

Okay, here's my plan.

MALIBU'S IMAGINED ROBBERY

INT. LOWLANDS BANK - DAY

-- The busy branch is interrupted when Malibu and the
others, dressed as pizza deliverers, enter, carrying stacks
of pizza boxes. Everyone present approaches to get a slice.

-- One box, opened, contains bees, which instantly take
flight in every direction.

-- Panic ensues. Patrons, staff scream, head for the exit.

END OF MALIBU'S IMAGINED ROBBERY

INT. STOREROOM

EVERYONE EXCEPT MALIBU

is dumbfounded. Malibu is baffled by their response.

STAN
 (to Malibu)
 Are you completely incapable of an original thought?

MALIBU
 It's original -- I thought of bees instead of roaches.

ED
 Bees, roaches, it's the same approach and neither one will work. We want the public's praise for sticking it to Lowlands. If we harm any animals we'll be denounced by the Radical Animal Movement. Half of Long Beach belongs to it.

STAN
 You're right about that. Those R.A.M. members would defend the rights of a tapeworm.

VANESSA
 We certainly would! I'm a member.

STAN
 Okay, so no animals. Abner, you're up, dude. What's your idea? And remember -- bold!

Abner thinks, puts Wee-Tina to his ear, listens.

MAGGIE
 Jesus, somebody get a fucking straight jacket.

Abner nods to Wee-Tina, gives her a light kiss on the head, addresses the group.

ABNER
 As I mentioned on day one, I was in the navy, Seaman Second Class.

MALIBU
 Why brag about having second-rate semen?

STAN
 Malibu, seaman, as in 'man who sails the sea,' not jizz, dipshit.

MALIBU
 Oh, I see, man.

ED
 Go on, Abner.

ABNER

I served on a submarine, an old one, just like the USS Hayes.

ED

The one tied up here.

ABNER

Yep. I served as a gunner's mate. And as a gunner's mate I know every last thing about the five-inch gun sittin' on its deck.

STAN

That's a good start, Abner. Give me more. Be bold.

The rest of the class, attentive, moves closer to Abner.

ABNER

Well, that there five-inch gun would blow open the biggest bank vault, except for maybe the one at Fort Knox. It would just take one direct hit.

MAGGIE

So you're proposing to use the one on the Hayes? How do you know it even works?

ABNER

Oh, I know. I'm a member of the navy veterans group that's going to be firing it.

STAN

Firing it? When?

ABNER

Yeah, firing it in a public demonstration on Sunday afternoon. It won't be a live round, of course. It's a blank. Lots of smoke and noise for the tourists, but no projectile.

VANESSA

But if it's firing blanks it's useless.

MAGGIE

Thank you, General Patton, for stating the fucking obvious.

ABNER

There's also live ammunition aboard. I've seen it.

A long, silent pause in the room. Vanessa covers Kirby's ears.

VANESSA
That's fucking bold.

ED
There's one big problem, though.
The Hayes is out of position.
There's no direct line of sight
between it and the bank.

Abner sighs, stands, sticks his free hand deep into his pants pocket.

MAGGIE
Jerking off won't solve the
problem, Abner.

He rolls his eyes, pulls out a set of keys, raises and jingles them.

ABNER
Even a sub has keys. These are the
ones to the Hayes. We move her
into position and we're good to go.

MALIBU
Holy fucking shit. It's not a
sketch! Right?

MAGGIE
(to Malibu)
Keep running it through that eight
kilobyte brain of yours, Einstein.
You'll figure it out, eventually.

STAN
We'll need a practice run. We
can't just do it cold. Can you
show us what has to be done in one
night?

ABNER
Yep. They design and build these
things for idiots.

MALIBU
That's us!

Everyone scrutinizes everyone else.

VANESSA
I'm bringing Kirby.

MAGGIE
You gotta be fucking kidding. That
gun goes off, he's going to crap
out a turd longer than your arm.

VANESSA

He's good luck. I won't be able to concentrate without him.

STAN

In the name of grand larceny, please don't bring him.

VANESSA

Oh, all right.

STAN

We'll need to do our dry run tomorrow, late.

ABNER

That'll do just fine.

STAN

Good, that will sync with your next assignment, people.

MAGGIE

What the fuck are you talking about?

Stan stands.

STAN

It's still a stand-up comedy class. Just because we're planning on stealing a submarine to blow up a bank vault, doesn't mean there won't be homework.

Collective moans arise.

STAN

I've arranged for you aspiring comedians to do a few minutes at an open-mic night at Corcoran's.

VANESSA

Didn't Mr. Rodman say he's blacklisting us everywhere?

STAN

Not Corcoran's. The owner hates Boris' guts. Be there at 11 p.m., tomorrow. When we're done, we'll head over to the Hayes for a crash course in submarine operations. Right, Abner?

Abner salutes with the hand holding Wee-Tina. The dummy's head falls off.

ABNER

Aye, aye, captain.

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

(ONE HOUR LATER)

A U.S. Navy supply ship pulls up alongside the Hayes.
SAILORS fling ropes, tie on.

SHIP'S BRIDGE

An OFFICER approaches the ship's CAPTAIN, salutes.

OFFICER

We're tied on, sir. Ready to
unload the tactical nukes. They'll
be put in storage, below, with the
other ordnance. Shouldn't take
long.

CAPTAIN

Very good, I'll notify the USS
Ronald Reagan. They'll pick them
up Monday.

CRANE

Sailors operate a crane carrying two projectiles towards the
Hayes.

PROJECTILES

The two tactical nukes have tips painted in yellow.

BELOW DECKS

The nukes are placed next to the Hayes' other shells, which
have red tips.

EXT. CORCORAN'S - 11 P.M.

(FRIDAY NIGHT)

The neon sign on the building marquee flashes erratically.

INT. CORCORAN'S - CONTINUOUS

Stan, Vanessa, Abner, Malibu and Maggie solemnly sit at one
table crowded with empty beer bottles and shot glasses.
O.s., the noise level from patrons in the packed room is
deafening.

STAGE

Ed stands at the mic, ducks as a half-full mug of beer
streaks over his head.

BACK TO SCENE

STAN

That's zero-for-three.

MALIBU

But they're getting closer.

Abner rubs a black eye.

ABNER

Wish my set went as well.

VANESSA

(to Stan)

Why did you bring us here?

STAN

Mostly for the ambience.

Maggie wiggles a tooth, pulls it out, inspects.

MAGGIE

Never thought a lemon slice could
knock out a tooth.

STAN

It was thrown hard enough.

ED

still at the mic, cautiously looks around, composes himself,
takes the mic from the stand. O.s. crowd noise is at full
blast.

ED

If you're going throw beer at me,
at least make it an import.

The crowd quiets down.

ED

At first, I was disappointed about
coming on last, but since you got
most of your aggression out on the
previous sets, maybe it was for the
best. I started out as a chef at a
fancy restaurant, before going into
comedy. What a racket -- they put
ten cents worth of lettuce on a
plate, splash it with vinegar, give
it a fancy name and charge you
fifteen bucks for it. My brother
went to prison for ten years for
less of a con job.

STUDENTS' TABLE

Malibu tries to say something to Stan, who is focused on Ed.
Without altering his gaze, Stan pours his beer into Malibu's
lap.

BACK TO SCENE

ED

I went to a well-known culinary school for three years to prepare for working in a fine restaurant. Three very expensive years learning to prepare complicated dishes with exotic ingredients. Got out, my first job... slicing onions for hamburgers at Jack in the Box. They told me, if I lasted six months they'd move me up to slicing pickles.

O.s. some laughter erupts, draws Ed's attention. A large, angry man, CORCORAN, approaches Ed from the opposite direction, takes away the mic.

ED

Jeez, am I ever going to get to finish a set?

STAN

jumps to his feet, points at Corcoran.

STAN

Corcoran, what the hell are you doing?

BACK TO SCENE

Corcoran replies, aggressively points back at Stan.

CORCORAN

I'll tell you what the hell I'm doing, Stan. I'm kicking you and the rest of your no-talent crew out of here! Your boss, Rodman, let me know about your demand for pay for amateurs. Now get the fuck out.

STAN

leaps from his chair, charges the stage.

STAGE

A melee ensues between Stan, Corcoran, Ed and two BOUNCERS. Malibu, Abner, Vanessa and Maggie join in. Assorted debris thrown by the o.s. crowd pelts everyone.

EXT. CORCORAN'S - MINUTES LATER

Stand and his students hobble away from Corcoran's, stop at a bench, nurse their assorted minor wounds.

MAGGIE

(to Stan))

I thought you said Corcoran was a friend of yours.

STAN

He is -- this is the nicest he's ever been to me.

ABNER

We best be gettin' over to the Hayes, everybody. Time is a-wastin'.

EXT. PIER - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Stan and the others cautiously walk to the long ramp that descends down to the Hayes. A single street light illuminates the sub.

Ed proceeds to the thin chain that blocks the ramp, undoes the simple hook.

ED

Whew! Security's really tight around here.

MALIBU

If this is how the navy protects its ships, maybe we should hijack something bigger. You know, like an aircraft carrier.

MAGGIE

Brilliant, Malibu, you go do that -- it's a one-idiot job.

ABNER

I assure you all, this sub is all we need.

Abner steps in front of Ed, leads everyone down the ramp.

DECK

As they wander about, inspecting and touching, Vanessa steps too close to the edge, loses her balance. Ed reaches out with both hands, grabs her butt, pulls her to safety. She turns to Ed, hugs him.

VANESSA

Thank you, thank you, Ed! I can't swim a stroke.

MALIBU

Since you brought it up, neither can I.

MAGGIE

Same here; I swim like a fucking anvil.

STAN

You three want to sign up for swimming lessons, too?

Abner pulls Wee-Tina from his backpack, holds her high.

ABNER

(as Wee-Tina)

Everyone, please be careful and follow Abner forward to the deck gun.

DECK GUN

All stand at the gun's breech, stare quizzically at Abner, who still holds Wee-Tina.

STAN

Abner, I think we're all going to feel a lot more comfortable with this gun demo if it comes from you, instead of a puppet whose head falls off.

ABNER

(as Wee-Tina))

Really? How do you all feel-

EVERYONE

Do it as Abner!

Abner sighs, lowers the puppet.

ABNER

Well, shucks. All right, then -- let's all learn about this here pigboat.

MONTAGE - ABNER DEMOS THE GUN, GIVES TOUR

-- Abner points out the shell feed, a lever on the deck. He mimics, shows how when it is foot-pressed, a shell will be sent up from below that must be caught.

-- Abner opens the breech, shows where the shell would be inserted, closes the breech.

-- Next, he shows Malibu and Ed how to raise, lower and swivel the gun. Abner points out the firing lever, mimics an explosion.

-- In the conning tower, Abner points out the features of the steering mechanism and engine controls to Vanessa, Malibu and Maggie.

-- Below decks, Abner points out the engine room and the ammunition room. He explains MOS how to feed a shell into the feeder. Yellow-tip shells are shown next to red-tipped ones.

END MONTAGE

DECK - MINUTES LATER

ABNER

And that's all there is to it,
everybody. You're now qualified as
gunner's mates. Welcome to the
United States Navy.

MALIBU

How long till I start collecting my
pension?

Stan gives Malibu a light shove. The beam of a flashlight suddenly focuses on them, moves to the others.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

Who are you people? What are you
doing aboard the Hayes?

Stan turns, looks in the direction of the light's source.

STAN'S POV

An OLD MAN with fishing gear stands in his small motorboat.

OLD MAN

You folks rehearsing for the firing
demonstration on Sunday?

BACK TO SCENE

ED

(quietly to his friends)
Don't you just love it when someone
provides an answer to their own
question, when you don't have one?

STAN

(to the old man)
Right you are, sir. We are
rehearsing. Very observant of you.

ABNER

How's the fishin'?"

OLD MAN

sits, lays down his fishing rod. He lifts the lid of an ice chest, pulls out and opens a beer, takes a gulp.

OLD MAN

Fishing? That's what I tell the wife. I come out here to get plastered. Who'd you folks say you are? The cast of Hamilton?

He finishes his beer, tosses the can, opens another, stands and stumbles.

OLD MAN

(to someone imaginary)

I do have a fishing license, officer. It's on the night table, next to my C-PAP machine. I'll go get it. You wait here with your dolphin.

He sits, starts the motor, sputters into the darkness.

BACK TO SCENE

STAN

Beginner's luck.

Everyone ascends the ramp, assembles on the pier. Stan looks to his right, points.

STAN'S POV

The aft section of a large yacht bears the name 'AVARICE.'

BACK TO SCENE

STAN

If you're all wondering, that's where the open-mic-night money that you don't get ends up.

Everyone turns, looks.

STAN

The Avarice, that's Boris' new yacht.

VANESSA

What happened to the old one?

MALIBU

The sails got wrinkled.

Ed raises his hand, gets everyone's attention.

ED

Let's decide on a time for the firing.

STAN

It's got to be late, when nobody's around the waterfront.

MAGGIE

Not even Malibu's mom, the insatiable, toothless two-dollar hooker?

STAN

I'd say, 2 a.m. Sunday morning. Everybody okay with that?

Heads nod.

STAN

All right, that should do it. We'll meet here at 1:45 a.m. See you all then.

They start to disperse. Maggie stops, raises both fists over head, shouts, stamps her foot.

MAGGIE

Stop! Everyone wait a fucking second!

VANESSA

Why? What?

MAGGIE

Think! The gun goes off, hits Lowlands' vault, blows it open.

MALIBU

Yeah, your point?

MAGGIE

Shit-for-brains Greenberg, the money is there, we're here. Who's gonna take the fucking money and run?

Abner scratches his ear.

ABNER

The getaway. Ooh, yeah, hadn't thought of that. That's pretty important.

ED

Maggie O'Rourke, criminal mastermind. You should have business cards made.

STAN

Boris... Boris has an SUV back behind Mirth, rarely uses the thing. He's let me borrow it once or twice. The jerk keeps a key in the center console.

ED

So that'll be our getaway.

STAN

Right. Malibu, you move the SUV out, have it on the street, ready to go before we fire. Bring some trash bags.

MALIBU

Biodegradable?

STAN

...Sure, sure, bio-whatever. When the vault is blown, load up as much cash as you can in three minutes and take off.

MALIBU

For where, back here at the pier?

Maggie kicks Malibu in the butt.

MAGGIE

No, you fucking paint-chip-eater. The entire Long Beach police force will be here.

STAN

Take it back to my apartment. Ninety Midland Avenue, apartment twelve. Here's a key.

Stan produces a keychain, pulls off a key, tosses it to Malibu. He bobbles it, drops it.

KEY

bounces off concrete, falls into the water.

BACK TO SCENE

Collective moans. Maggie points to Malibu.

MAGGIE

Let's strangle this fucker right now and leave his body for the pelicans. They'll eat him by morning.

VANESSA

Pelicans?

Stan calmly raises his hands, silences Maggie.

STAN

I'll leave the door unlocked. There's never anyone around anyway.

(MORE)

STAN (cont'd)
Lock it when you go inside and wait
for us.

Malibu gives the thumbs up.

STAN
Now let's get out of here.

The group disperses.

INT. CARMEN AND ED'S APARTMENT - ONE HOUR LATER

BEDROOM

Carmen fills open luggage on the bed. She pauses at the sound of the entrance door opening and closing o.s.

CARMEN
It's about time you got back; I'm
in here.

Harvey Deutsch, chewing a pen, enters. Carmen folds clothes, doesn't notice.

HARVEY
Nice of you to invite me in, but it
ain't gonna help you none.

Carmen looks up, releases a short, sharp yell.

CARMEN
You piece of shit! I didn't invite
you in. Get the fuck out.

She throws a shirt, reaches for the nightstand lamp. They both stop at the sound of the entrance door opening and closing o.s.

ED (O.S.)
Carmen?

CARMEN
In the bedroom.

Ed enters, is stunned at the sight of Deutsch.

ED
What's he doing here?
(he notices the luggage)
And what are you doing?

HARVEY
This is a really complicated
situation, ain't it?

CARMEN

(to Ed))

I was in here. I heard the door open and close, just before you arrived. I assumed it was you, not jerk off.

Harvey straightens up, sticks his chest out.

HARVEY

Mr. Jerk Off to you. Now to business. First off, the super let me in, that's the how. Why I'm here? Your credit card account with Lowlands is still delinquent and I'm here to collect.

CARMEN

It's after fucking midnight.

HARVEY

As I've mentioned, I work for a division of Lowlands, and like a shark, Lowlands never rests.

CARMEN

So I've learned. I start tomorrow night -- the graveyard shift.

HARVEY

You, a fellow Lowlander? Come here, baby, give old Harvey a hug.

Harvey spreads his arms, approaches Carmen. Ed grabs him by the collar.

ED

You took a job with fucking Lowlands Bank? Why?

Ed, still holding Deutsch, leaves the bedroom, proceeds towards the apartment's entrance. Carmen speaks as she follows. Harvey struggles to no avail.

CARMEN

I got fired; I needed a new job, right away. I couldn't be choosy and I saw the sign in Lowlands' window. Unlike you, I recognize the need for a regular paycheck.

HARVEY

Ooh, she's really letting you have it, pal. Boom! Right in the nads.

Ed reaches the door, opens it, looks Harvey in the eye.

ED

Next time I see you in here,
Deutsch, I'm going to let you have
it, and not just in the nads.

Ed tosses Harvey out, slams the door shut.

HARVEY (O.S.)

In case you didn't figure it out,
pal, her last comment also explains
why she's packing.

ED

(to Carmen)

You're really leaving? You're
walking out on me?

Carmen storms back to the bedroom; Ed follows. She resumes
packing.

CARMEN

Obviously. Unless you give up this
ridiculous idea about becoming the
next Jim Gaffigan.

She pauses, waits for Ed's reply, waits some more.

CARMEN

Your silence says it all.

She closes the luggage pieces, grabs them, exits the
bedroom, reaches the door. Ed grabs the doorknob, blocks
Carmen's exit.

ED

I can't accept this as the way it
ends for us, Carmen. I love you.

He places his other hand on her shoulder. She fights back
tears, looks away.

ED

I can't prevent you from going, if
that's what you want, but please --
please do me one small favor:
change your hours, or call in sick
tomorrow night.

She looks back at Ed.

CARMEN

Why?

ED

It's... it's an unlucky date. The
famous Roman emperor, uh...
Contiguous the Great, was
assassinated on that date.

CARMEN

What?!

ED

I can't go in details. Trust me,
it's important.

CARMEN

It's my first night, Ed. Mr. Klotz
would fire me.

Ed takes his hand from Carmen's shoulder, releases the
doorknob. Carmen opens the door, takes two steps, stops.
She speaks without looking at Ed.

CARMEN

All right, I'll find a way.

Carmen leaves, closes the door.

ED

(quietly, to himself)
I don't believe you.

Ed pulls out his phone, makes a call.

ED

Stan, it's Ed. Are you at your
apartment?... Good, stay there,
I'll be right over.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

(TWENTY MINUTES LATER)

STAIRWELL

Ed comes to the top of the landing, stops, grimaces.

ED

This place must get its air piped
in from Blake's.

Ed proceeds down the hallway, passes doors. A dog's
barking, o.s., comes from one. The bray of a donkey, o.s.,
emanates from a second, causes Ed to pause, question what he
heard. He continues.

DOOR TO APARTMENT 12

Ed notices the door is slightly open; he enters.

INT. APARTMENT

A complete shambles, the gloomy room is the city dump with
four walls and a dirty bare window. Eyes closed, Stan lies
in a broken bathtub in the middle of the living room.

The tub is half-full with empty beer cans. Stan opens one
eye, sees Ed.

STAN

Pardon the mess, the cleaning lady stepped out for a nervous breakdown.

ED

When, in 1987?

Stan laughs, clumsily extricates himself from the tub, wobbles.

STAN

Can I get you something?

Ed looks the place over.

ED

A haz-mat suit and some penicillin.

Stan opens a beer, pulls a joint from his shirt pocket, lights it.

STAN

I'm not much of a housekeeper. I guess that's why my girlfriend left me.

ED

Are you sure she's gone? She might be under one of these piles of garbage.

Ed kicks a nearby pile of garbage bags and damaged bicycle tires.

ED

Stan, listen, we can't do the job tomorrow night. We've got to re-schedule it or think of some other way.

Stan puffs.

STAN

You finally said something funny.

ED

I mean it. We haven't spent enough time planning. It needs refining.

Stan stumbles his way to Ed, pokes his nose.

STAN

You're killing the beginner's luck vibe with your negative attitude, Ed. I won't let you fuck this up. The last ten years of my life have been hell, unmitigated hell. Now
(MORE)

STAN (cont'd)
something finally comes along that
can change all that and...

ED
And?

Stan searches for the words in vain, takes a step back,
falls into the tub.

STAN
Lost my train of...

ED
Thought. You need the money right
away -- you, the guy who tells
people to get the dollar signs out
of their eyes.. That's what you
were going to say.

STAN
We all need it. Be there.

Ed turns and leaves, closes the door.

HALLWAY

Ed takes a few steps, stops.

ED
I can't let this happen.

INT. LOWLANDS BANK - SATURDAY NIGHT (11:00 P.M.)

OFFICE

Frank Klotz obsessively primps, prepares for Carmen's
arrival. He opens a desk drawer, produces a bottle of
cologne, sprays himself once, twice, pauses and thinks, then
a third time, below the waist.

He opens a closet in which sits a champagne bucket filled
with ice and a bottle. He rotates the bottle, gloats. An
o.s. knock on the door disturbs his reverie. He closes the
closet door, briskly exits his office.

BANK'S FRONT DOOR

Carmen, outside, knocks again just as Frank arrives. She
forces a weak smile. He lets her in, grins, glances at his
watch.

FRANK
Welcome, Ms. Badillo. I admire
your punctuality. Shall we get
started?

She catches a whiff of his cologne, coughs, gulps.

CARMEN
Absolutely, lead the way.

Frank leads Carmen past the massive vault door, which is wide open. She takes notice, stops.

CARMEN
Should this be open?

Frank takes notice, is disgruntled.

FRANK
Everything gets left for Frank.

He closes the vault, locks it. They proceed to a cubicle across from his office.

INT. CUBICLE

Two chairs occupy the cramped space. A computer monitor and keyboard are on the desk, along with a tall stack of documents. They sit. Franks moves his chair closer still.

FRANK
Like two yolks in the same egg, ay,
Ms. Badillo?

Carmen looks at the stack of paper, fans the top few inches.

CARMEN
What are these?

FRANK
Oh, letters of complaint from some
of our 'fussier' clients.

CARMEN
From the last year?

Embarrassed, Frank clears his throat.

FRANK
From the last week.

CARMEN
Am I to work on solving their
problems?

Frank's eyes light up. He lets out a sharp laugh.

FRANK
Shit no! You newbies slay me!

Frank turns on the computer monitor.

FRANK

You'll be using our in-house, proprietary program, which is very user friendly, to track down the complainant's other creditors.

CARMEN

And...

FRANK

And notify them as to whom the troublemakers are. Jointly, we see to it that their credit ratings are permanently impaired.

CARMEN

Oh.

He points to the screen.

FRANK

Do you like bears?

CARMEN

Sure, I suppose.

FRANK

Great. There's a brief tutorial hosted by an adorable cartoon bear I'm sure you'll love. Run through it and then start on the stack. You'll see -- it's fun.

Frank stands, straightens his tie.

FRANK

I'll be in my office. I'll leave the door open. Stop over during your break, in a few hours. We'll chat.

Frank grins, exits the cubicle.

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

(1:45 A.M., SUNDAY)

Abner, Stan, Ed and Maggie, all dressed in black, assemble at the scheduled time. Vanessa, wearing a floral mumu, joins them, garners stares.

ABNER

Vanessa, you headed to a luau afterwards?

VANESSA

Stan didn't say what to wear.

STAN

All you had to do was Google 'bank heist attire.'

A mewling sounds comes from her backpack.

MAGGIE

The cat. She brought the fucking
fur ball. I knew it.

VANESSA

I couldn't find a sitter on short-

STAN

Everyone, shut up! We're wasting
time.

Stan lights a joint.

ED

(to Stan)

You better call Malibu and let him
know he should get the SUV into
position.

MALIBU (O.S.)

No need to call, I'm right here.

All heads turn in the voice's direction.

EVERYONE'S POV

Malibu, in black, casually approaches, waves, smiles, joins
the group.

MAGGIE

What a great fucking start we're
off to. We should have let the
fucking cat drive the getaway.

ED

Malibu! You're supposed to get the
SUV.

Malibu blushes, looks down, rubs his toe on the pavement.

MALIBU

I just... I just wanted to show you
guys that I wouldn't run out on
you.

Stan grabs Malibu, shakes him.

STAN

Run! Run, damn it -- like you've
got six legs, or we really will
kill you.

MAGGIE

Now you're talking!

STAN

Run and get to that SUV. You can get there in fifteen minutes if you start now. Now!

MALIBU

Okay, okay, I'll call you when I'm there. And just to be clear, this isn't a sketch, right?

Stan pushes Malibu in the right direction. He runs, waves.

ABNER

Let's get aboard.

ABOARD THE USS HAYES - MINUTES LATER

CONNING TOWER

Abner and Stan look over the controls, as the surprisingly quiet engine comes to life. Stan turns on a flood light, points straight ahead, gets Abner's attention.

ABNER

Oh, no.

Stan takes a hit on his joint.

STAN

Didn't figure on that.

ABNER AND STAN'S POV

Avarice, Boris' yacht, has drifted back, blocks the Hayes. On its rear deck, his new Maserati sits on display.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan laughs.

ABNER

What do we do?

STAN

Ram the shit out of it.

ABNER

Mr. Rodman will be pissed.

STAN

That's the whole idea.

ABNER

This is the damndest stand-up comedy class.

THE HAYES

lunges forward, splits the back of the Avarice. The Maserati spills into the water.

DECK GUN

Maggie and Ed hold on at impact.

THE AVARICE

partially sinks. O.s., everyone's cheers are heard.

MALIBU/USS HAYES/LOWLANDS BANK - INTERCUTTING

Winded Malibu pushes on along the waterfront path, comes to a secured, self-serve bicycle rental stand. He tries to shake one loose.

His phone rings; he ignores it, finally frees a bike. He gets on the seat, peddles. The front tire falls off. Malibu dismounts, yells, drags the bike, flings it into the water.

Malibu resumes running, doesn't notice when his phone falls out of his pocket.

CARMEN

bored, watches the animated tutorial, checks her watch, sighs, checks it again. O.s. soft music gets her attention.

THE HAYES

now with room, moves, angles away from the pier.

CONNING TOWER

Abner speaks into the command phone.

ABNER

Vanessa, count to ten, then bring her to a full stop. Next, insert two shells into the feeder, just like I showed you.

VANESSA (V.O.)

Okey-dokey. (cat mewing follows)

BELOW DECK

Kirby on her shoulder, Vanessa counts to ten on her fingers, shifts gear to full stop.

AMMUNITION BAY

Vanessa looks over the row of four-foot-long projectiles.

VANESSA

Hmm, red and yellow. Let's do one of each. Which color first, Kirby?

Kirby mews twice.

VANESSA

Red it is.

Vanessa grunts, loads the red-tipped shell into the feeder. She picks up the nuclear, second shell, bobbles it, nearly drops it, finally loads it.

VANESSA

Almost dropped it on my foot, Kirby. Might've ruined my nice new pedicure. C'mon, let's join the others.

MALIBU

hyperventilates, stops, catches his breath, looks up.

MALIBU'S POV

Still a long way to go.

BACK TO SCENE

Malibu walks, holds his lower back.

CARMEN

grabs the top document from the stack, silently reads it, pauses.

CARMEN

That poor old woman. How could a Lowlands vice president authorize repossession of a heart-lung machine during her operation? Insensitive prick.

FRANK (O.S.)

Were you addressing me?

Carmen, startled, looks up at Frank.

CARMEN'S POV

Frank wears a red paisley silk robe, holds two glasses of champagne.

BACK TO SCENE

CARMEN

No, no, not at all, Mr. Klotz. Insensitive prick -- that's a new (MORE)

CARMEN (cont'd)
popular cocktail made with prickly
pear juice. Could sure go for one.

Frank enters the cubicle.

FRANK
Well, Ms. Badillo, sadly I am all
out of prickly pear juice at the
moment. All I can offer you is
vintage champagne.

He hands her a glass. She hesitantly accepts it.

FRANK
It's awfully cramped in here. How
about joining me in my office?

CONNING TOWER

Vanessa joins Abner and Stan.

ABNER
Are the two shells in the feeder?

VANESSA
Loaded and ready, one of each: a
red-tip and a yellow-tip.

Abner, perplexed, scratches his scalp.

STAN
Okay, Vanessa, join Ed and Maggie
at the deck gun.

Vanessa exits the conning tower.

ABNER
You can join them, too, Stan. I'll
come down in a minute.

STAN
I noticed you didn't bring
Wee-Tina.

ABNER
Yeah, she got her period.

STAN
That's got to be a load off your
mind.

ABNER
You said it, brother. She missed
last month.

Stan exits the tower. Abner, still perplexed over the shells, looks off into the distance.

ABNER'S POV

A clear line of sight to Lowlands Bank.

ABNER
Red-tipped... yellow-tipped...

ED (O.S.)
Abner! Get down here; we need you.

ABNER
On my way.

WATERFRONT

Malibu, exhausted, gasps, pauses at the alleyway next to Mirth, looks to its rear.

MALIBU'S POV

No SUV in sight.

BACK TO SCENE

MALIBU
Shit! Where is it?

He runs, stumbles to the alley's back. Malibu turns the corner, sees and embraces the SUV's bumper. He gets to his feet, searches for his phone, realizes it's lost.

MALIBU
Must have dropped my phone. Maybe
I should retrace my steps.

Unsure of himself, he takes a few steps, stops, despairs, tugs his hair.

HAYES' DECK GUN

ABNER
All right, all right, I'll go over
it again.

Abner reviews the gun operation with accompanying gestures.

ABNER
A step on the deck's feed lever
brings up a shell. The breech is
opened. The shell is loaded. The
breech closes, trips the safety.
The gun is fired by hittin' this
here firing lever.

STAN

Got it. Okay, everyone, this is it. Time to kick Lowlands in the love spuds.

Stan air-kicks. Ed breathes heavily, looks tense.

ABNER

I gotta aim the damn thing first.

MAGGIE

Go to it, second-class semen.

Abner gives Maggie a dirty look, starts his task.

ED

(to Stan)

Hey, what about Malibu? We haven't heard from that pinhead. We can't do this if he's not ready.

INT. SUV

MALIBU

This can't be a sketch... Where did Stan say the keys are?

He frantically searches, finds them in the center console, starts the vehicle up, drives.

ALLEYWAY

The SUV advances, scrapes the wall, moves to the street. As the SUV reaches its position outside Lowlands, it hits a pothole.

SUV'S FRONT WHEEL

The chrome wheel cover pops off, rolls down the empty street.

BACK TO SCENE

Malibu exits the SUV, notices the wheel cover's path, gives chase.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE

Carmen and Frank enter; he turns, faces her.

FRANK

Let's toast new beginnings, shall we?

They clink glasses, sip.

FRANK

Do you enjoy dancing, Ms. Badillo?

CARMEN

Uh, no, not really. I have two left feet, the coordination of a drunk with the bends. Plus, my ankles are as fragile as Venetian glass -- I once broke one just putting on a sock and-

Frank puts his index finger to Carmen's lips, silences her.

FRANK

Well, you are in luck, Ms. Badillo. For years I've taught ballroom dancing on Tuesday nights. I'm exceptionally proficient and gentle. There's plenty of floor space out near the vault. Let's head out there and I'll teach you a few things.

She cringes. He takes her hand, guides her out of the office.

DECK GUN

Abner looks away from the aiming mechanism.

ABNER

She's all lined up.

Stan looks through the view finder.

STAN'S POV

Crosshairs on Lowlands' darkened glass window.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan puffs his joint.

STAN

You sure that lines up with the vault door.

Abner nods.

ABNER

Absolutely, been in there a hundred times.

MAGGIE

Abner, you're not sweating.

ABNER

Robbing banks relaxes me, I guess.

ED

We still haven't heard from Malibu!
There's no point doing this if he's
not there to grab the money.

Stan takes hold of the front of Ed's shirt.

STAN

What's the real problem?

MAGGIE

waves her hand in disgust over the bickering, stomps on the
deck's shell feed lever. The red-tipped projectile jumps up
with unexpected speed.

BACK TO SCENE

Everyone else's attention is drawn to her act.

EVERYONE'S POV

Frail Maggie grabs it mid-air, holds it close, tries to
maintain her footing, stumbles about. She loses her grip,
drops the shell. It hits the deck, rolls off into the
water.

BACK TO SCENE

Jaws agape, dumbfounded, everyone's eyes bulge.

STAN

What the fuck just happened?

ED

That's it! It's over! We're done!

Stan, enraged, spins Ed towards himself, belts him in the
jaw. Ed, unconscious, slumps to the deck.

ABNER

What'd you go and do that for?

STAN

He wasn't going to sign up for my
advanced class.

ABNER

I'm in.

MAGGIE & VANESSA

(together)

I'm in.

Stan charges to the deck's feed lever, stomps it. The yellow-tipped shell pops up. Stan deftly grabs it. Abner, brow knitted, tugs his earlobe.

ABNER

Yellow tip, yellow tip.

Stan jams the shell into the open breech. It closes, engages the safety.

MALIBU

finds the hubcap on the desolate street.

MALIBU

Got it. Don't want Mr. Rodman to think something happened to his SUV.

Malibu turns, walks back to the vehicle.

THE DECK OF THE HAYES

STAN

So, who gets the honor of firing?

Ed stirs, groans.

OLD MAN IN HIS MOTORBOAT

Asleep, the old man's boat gently makes contact with the Hayes' hull.

BACK TO SCENE

MAGGIE

This isn't a fucking testimonial!
Just shoot the fucking thing!

CARMEN

observes as Frank, outside the vault door, prances about, does a solo demonstration of ballroom dance moves.

FRANK

My, my, it's getting warm in here.

Carmen feigns being impressed.

END INTERCUTTING

EXT. DECK OF THE HAYES - CONTINUOUS

Maggie, pissed, rolls up her sleeves, moves toward the firing lever. Abner grabs her.

ABNER

No! Wait! That's a yellow tip!

MAGGIE

So!

ABNER

It's a nuke! A tactical nuke! I
finally remembered.

Groggy Ed gets to his feet.

STAN

So what!

Vanessa moves to the gun's breech, blocks access to the
firing lever.

VANESSA

So what?! Don't you understand?
It's a nuke. It'll blow up the
whole city. Kill thousands.

STAN

You make that sound like a bad
thing. This fucking world's done
nothing but shit on us all our
lives.

He charges the gun, plows into Vanessa. Everyone, including
Ed, piles on to restrain maniacal Stan. The mass of
humanity knocks into the gun's positioning controls.

DECK GUN

swivels completely around twice, is misaligned.

BACK TO SCENE

Flailing arms and legs accompany grunts, cursing.

VANESSA'S BACKPACK

Kirby's head emerges. He mews, completely extricates
himself, leaps.

BACK TO SCENE

Kirby's leap draws everyone's attention. They freeze, watch
in horror.

VANESSA

Kirby! No!

Kirby lands on the firing lever. The deck gun booms, fires
its projectile.

OLD MAN'S MOTORBOAT

The old man snores, rolls over, snores some more.

BACK TO SCENE

MONTAGE - THE SHELL'S TRAJECTORY

-- INT. LOWLANDS BANK - NIGHT -- Ballroom music plays. Frank, robe off, in his undies, holds the silk garment to his side like a matador's cape.

The shell instantly shatters the building's plate glass window, produces a three-foot-wide fiery hole in the robe, exits the plate glass window on the room's other side. Frank petrifies, Carmen screams.

-- EXT. BORIS' SUV - CONTINUOUS -- Smiling Malibu, wheel cover in hand, is within twenty feet of the SUV when the projectile smashes through its door glass and exits the opposite site. The vehicle blazes.

-- EXT. MIRTH - CONTINUOUS -- The shell blasts through the club's front door.

-- INT. MIRTH - CONTINUOUS -- The projectile screams through the club, demolishes the door to Boris' office.

-- INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS -- It hits the back wall behind Rodman's desk, explodes.

END MONTAGE

EXT. DECK OF THE HAYES - SECONDS LATER

Amid billowy smoke, everyone lies on the deck. Kirby jumps off the gun, rubs against Vanessa.

MAGGIE

Are we dead? I think we're all
fucking dead. You guys are decent,
but I wasn't planning on spending
fucking eternity with you.

They all rise, stir, look around.

VANESSA

This can't be heaven, they don't
let you say 'fuck' in heaven.

ED

Abner, what happened? You said it
was a nuke.

Abner dusts himself off, looks towards the bank.

ABNER

It was. It contains a conventional
explosive, which went off, plus the
nuclear part. The conventional one
is supposed to trigger the other.
The nuke part must have been a dud.

STAN
So much for military quality
control.

OLD MAN (O.S.)
Say, are you folks the cast of
Hamilton?

MAGGIE
The old drunk in the boat is back.

STAN
(to everyone on deck)
Look, we don't know if Malibu was
there to grab the cash. The old
guy's got a motorboat. We can be
there in two minutes.

They all run to the side of the sub, pile in.

INT. MOTORBOAT

ED
Yes! We're the cast of Hamilton
and we're late for a command
performance. (He points.) General
Washington, get us across at once!

OLD MAN
Happy to be of service, Mr.
Hamilton. I've always been a fan
of the theater.

The old man stands, poses like George Washington crossing
the Delaware, guns the engine, takes off.

EXT. PIER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The motorboat reaches the pier. Ed shakes the old man's
hand.

ED
Thank you, general.

Everyone piles out, runs to the bank, looks in through the
smashed window.

EVERYONE'S POV

Frank, dazed, stands like a statue, still holds the
smoldering remnant of his robe. Carmen sees Ed, glows with
joy.

CARMEN
Ed?... Ed!

She runs to the window frame, steps through.

BACK TO SCENE

Ed and Carmen embrace, kiss.

MAGGIE
Who the fuck is she?

ABNER
Who cares? Look at the vault -- we missed!

ABNER'S POV

The vault is untouched.

BACK TO SCENE

VANESSA
We all saw an explosion. What'd we hit?

Everyone's head turns in unison.

EVERYONE'S POV

The smoking charred remains of the SUV crackle.

BACK TO SCENE

MAGGIE
At least we managed to take out Rodman's SUV.

ABNER
Mr. Rodman is not having a good day.

VANESSA
Oh, no -- Malibu!

STAN
Hey, it's a Cadillac. Not a bad way to go.

Ed looks off in a different direction.

ED
You're all missing something.
Check out what's left of Mirth.

MIRTH

is demolished.

BACK TO SCENE

MAGGIE
Let's get the fuck out of here!

STAN

Why? We haven't done anything illegal.

POLICE CHIEF (O.S.)

We beg to differ.

Everyone takes a sweeping look around themselves.

EVERYONE'S POV

Guns drawn, police, SWAT teams, firemen, military police, a Boy Scout troop, banner-carrying members of the Radical Animal Movement and the old man surround the robbers.

A black Mercedes joins the first responders, comes to a screeching halt. Boris Rodman jumps out, surveys the wreckage, is stunned.

BACK TO SCENE

The police chief, Boris and the old man, holding a can of beer, approach Stan and his students.

CHIEF

You're all under arrest for... (he looks about) a crime beyond description.

BORIS

Oh, I can describe it, chief. That charred SUV is mine. That smoking rubble -- that used to be the club I owned. As for the bank, I'm on the board of directors.

ED

There's a shocker.

STAN

You left out your yacht, Boris.

ED

And your Maserati, parked on its deck. It's now an aquarium.

Ed points in the yacht's direction.

BORIS

What?!

Boris looks in the indicated direction.

BORIS' POV

The aft section of the yacht and the car's rear stick out of the water.

BACK TO SCENE

Boris lunges at Stan and Ed, is held back by the chief.

BORIS

God damn it! You bastards -- you ruined me! I'll have you all ground into chop meat!

OLD MAN

I'm not so sure they're guilty, chief.

BORIS

What the hell do you know, you fucking derelict?

CHIEF

That's no way to talk to Mayor Palmer. Apologize.

The old man will now be referred to as Mayor Palmer.

MAYOR PALMER

That's okay, chief, no need for an apology. I'll just consider the source.

The mayor finishes his can of beer, flattens the empty can against Boris' bald head.

MAYOR PALMER

Chief, I gave them a ride over here from the sub in my boat. They were very polite. Did you know they're the cast of Hamilton?

Ed, Stan and the other students snicker.

STAN

We may have exaggerated a bit, Your Honor, though we are, so to speak, in show business.

A military police officer (M.P.) steps forward, joins the group.

M.P.

So then you admit you were on the Hayes. A shot was fired from it -- there's still smoke coming from the barrel of the deck gun.

ABNER

About that -- I am Abner Swanson, sir and-

MAGGIE

He has second-class semen.

Vanessa places her hand over Maggie's mouth.

ABNER

And we were onboard the Hayes. I was formerly in the navy and was giving my classmates here a tour, prior to tomorrow's public demonstration.

MAYOR PALMER

They couldn't possibly have fired the gun. My boat was right along side and I didn't hear it go off. It must have been someone else.

CHIEF

(to the M.P.)

Well, if the mayor is willing to vouch for these people-

Livid Boris screams, jumps up and down.

BORIS

Somebody has to be guilty of something!

MALIBU (O.S.)

Oh, there's no doubt about that.

All heads turn in Malibu's direction.

EVERYONE'S POV

Holding the wheel cover in one hand and a rhino horn close to his chest with the other, Malibu emerges from what's left of Mirth, joins the others.

BACK TO SCENE

Malibu hands Boris the wheel cover.

MALIBU

I was able to save part of your SUV, Mr. Rodman.

Stupefied, he accepts it, anxiously eyes the rhino horn.

A blonde middle-aged woman, DAWN, carrying a R.A.M. sign, joins the group. She points to the horn, tears flow.

DAWN

That's a baby white rhino horn. They're nearly extinct and they are expressly forbidden in this country.

Vanessa puts her arm around Dawn. Dawn pets Kirby.

VANESSA

Hi, Dawn. Sorry I couldn't join the rest of you this morning for the walkabout. I had a... prior commitment.

DAWN

That's all right, Vanessa.

CHIEF

So both of you ladies, I take it, are members of the Radical Animal Movement.

DAWN

That's true, chief. We go out very early on weekends looking for stray or injured animals. We carry the signs to get the word out about who we are and what we do.

CHIEF

I know all about it; my wife joined last week.

MAYOR PALMER

I'm a member, too, I think.

STAN

All this begs the question: where'd you find it, Malibu?

MALIBU

A secret room in Mr. Rodman's office. The shell blew it open. It's loaded with animal parts. C'mon, I'll show you.

INT. BORIS RODMAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The chief, mayor, Boris, Dawn, Stan and the gang stand inside the blown-open secret room. Some rummage through horns, heads and other parts of endangered species.

STAN

(to Boris)

This explains why you constantly canceled my classes on short notice, and all those deliveries. You were filling orders, you miserable fart swallower.

BORIS

Mirth couldn't pay my bills. The sale of one tusk brought in more than the club did in six months.

DAWN

Well, the fines for owning these
will be in the millions, to say
nothing of the jail time you'll do.

ED

Yeah, you'll be smuggling bones of
a different type in prison, Rodman.

MAYOR PALMER

Chief, get him out of my sight. I
need a beer.

The mayor wanders off. The chief cuffs Boris, takes him
away. The first responders and other onlookers disperse,
leaving Carmen, Stan and his students. Carmen and Ed kiss.
They all walk together, slowly.

STAN

(to ED)

Beginner's luck.

MALIBU

(to Stan)

Was it all just a sketch? I gotta
know.

Stan smirks, shrugs.

ED

So, did we all graduate?

MAGGIE

Yeah, are we all now professional
fucking stand-up comedians?

Stan nods.

STAN

It's official. Sorry, but with all
the excitement, I forgot to bring
the diplomas.

ABNER

We passed, but we're still
blacklisted.

MALIBU

And no one will hire us, either.

Maggie taps Malibu's head.

MAGGIE

That's what blacklisted means,
Captain Idiot.

MALIBU

Cool. Thanks.

VANESSA

And we still don't have any money.

They come to a stop, look over their shoulders.

EVERYONE'S POV

What's left of Mirth.

BACK TO SCENE

ED

That's one place we're not
blacklisted, now that Boris is
gone.

MAGGIE

Uh, did you not hear the part about
us not having any money?

CARMEN

(to Maggie)

Ever hear of crowd funding? Micro
loans?

ABNER

Who'd give us money?

VANESSA

Plenty of people. We exposed a
scumbag animal parts dealer.

MAGGIE

And we blew up a branch of fucking
Lowlands.

MALIBU

Holy crap -- we're double heroes.

VANESSA

I'll ask Dawn to get the word out
to everyone at R.A.M. Plus, she
knows a lot of influential media
people.

EXT. MIRTH - NIGHT

Customers file into the rebuilt club. A sign out front
reads: "Grand Reopening, Now Under Humane Management"

SUPER: "SIX MONTHS LATER"

INT. MIRTH - CONTINUOUS

The club is packed, noisy with applause.

STAGE

Vanessa holds Kirby, bows.

VANESSA

Thank you, thank you, you've been a wonderful audience. I know that because you didn't make me puke.

O.s. laughter.

VANESSA

Next I'd like to introduce Ed Curtis. Ed is the former chef who, you may remember, appeared on the TV show Pressure Cooker, where he introduced the judges to his pig's knuckles -- and his bare knuckles.

More o.s. laughter.

BAR

Carmen, Ed and Stan stand at the end of the crowded bar. Malibu, Maggie and Abner approach, pat Ed on the back. Ed, ready to perform, kisses Carmen.

CARMEN

I'd wish you luck, but you don't need it. You'll do great.

STAN

(to Ed)

You better, we've got 1,834 creditors.

ED

What happens if we can't pay them?

STAN

There's other banks in Long Beach.

Ed laughs, runs to the stage.

FADE OUT:

THE END

