

Mid Life Showdown

written by

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Made in Highland

EXT. DESERT-LIKE BACK YARD. AFTERNOON.

A wind chime jingles.

JIM, 9, aims a BB gun at a can propped up on a log. He wears a cowboy hat with a horseshoe print on the front.

SUBTITLE FADES IN: 1982

His GRANDPA, 72, stands behind him and coaches. He looks like a man who has lived a full life. His face is covered in laugh lines and he wears faded suspenders and a watch that is way too loose on his shrinking wrist.

Jim squints and holds his breath as he squeezes the trigger. He misses, and lowers the rifle with a frustrated sigh.

Grandpa pats him on the back and gently takes the rifle.

GRANDPA

Let me show ya how it's done.

Grandpa puts on his glasses and aims the rifle with confidence. He squints with one eye. He pulls the trigger.

It misses.

GRANDPA

Hmm. That's strange. It must be jammed.

It clearly isn't.

JIM

I'm pretty sure something came out, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Nope. Here, I'll try again.

He shoots again and hits the can with a satisfying ping. Jim is awestruck.

JIM

Wow grandpa! You got it!

GRANDPA

On the first try, too!

Grandpa quickly moves the rifle out of the way as Jim goes in to hug him.

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JIM

When I grow up, I wanna be just
like you!

Grandpa pats him on the back as they walk over and sit on the
log. His face turns serious as he looks Jim in the eye.

GRANDPA

My hope for you, Jim, is that you
grow up to be just like YOU.

Jim tilts his head.

GRANDPA

This life is too short to do
things that don't make you
excited. It took me long enough to
realize.

(a beat)

You've gotta stand up for yourself
in life, and do what you know will
make YOU happy.

(a beat)

If you remember this, you'll have
a life full of happiness, and you
won't look out the window one day
and wonder where it all went.

He smiles at Jim and hands him a soda. They both crack one open
and begin to drink.

JIM

Grandma says you look out the
window a lot.

GRANDPA

(amused)

Does she?

JIM

(innocently)

She says she always catches you
watching the nurse across the
street get changed.

Grandpa chokes and spits out his soda. He looks at the ground
and clears his throat. His eyes dart around.

GRANDPA

Say, did you see that new cowboy
picture they came out with?

JIM

Yeah! I wish I was a cowboy.

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Grandpa looks relieved that his distraction worked.

GRANDPA
 Be a cowboy then, Jim.
 (beat)
 And don't let anyone stop you.

Jim leans his head onto his grandpa's shoulder as they sit on the log in silence. A tumbleweed drifts by.

INT. JIM'S KITCHEN. MORNING.

Everything is still. Somewhere in the room, a clock ticks.

Jim lives in his grandfather's old house. Several elements, such as the back yard, are recognizable from the flashback.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A framed, faded picture of a young kid wearing a cowboy hat, standing next to his grandfather
- A more modern photo, of two attorneys shaking hands at the opening of their firm
- A piece of toast from the night before with one bite out of it
- An opened letter on the table, labeled "PETITION FOR DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE"
- Outside the window, a construction crew gears up for the day. Their muffled banter can be heard.

A BLUETOOTH SPEAKER makes a WHOOPING noise as it starts up.

SUBTITLE FADES IN: 2020

BLUETOOTH SPEAKER
 Waiting for pairing.

Silence.

BLUETOOTH SPEAKER
 Waiting for pairing.

Someone can be heard coming down the stairs.

BLUETOOTH SPEAKER
 (you guessed it)
 Waiting for pairing.

Jim walks into the room. He is now 47, and graying at the temples. A respectable middle aged attorney with a slight edge. He is wearing suit pants and an undershirt.

His hair is relatively long for his profession, and flowing; no doubt a remnant from the 60's.

He looks like the cool uncle at family events.

He looks at his phone. He squints. He extends his arm to almost full length, and then back to the distance it was before. Better.

Frustratedly, he taps the screen of his phone.

BLUETOOTH SPEAKER
Waiting for pairing.

JIM
Ah, screw it.

He unplugs the bluetooth speaker and switches to his built-in phone speakers.

A grainy live version of "Bat out of Hell" by Meatloaf plays.

A very skippable ad comes on.

ADVERTISEMENT
What does a man with a purpose
wear? Suits. Shirts. Ties ties
TIES! This week only, buy one
suit, and get OUR ENTIRE INVENTORY
free! That's 3000% MORE FABRIC.
Only this week at Menswear
Emporium.

Jim endures the ad, as well as the singer's lengthy intro speech.

The song finally begins.

JIM
(to himself)
The LOAF baby!

The song is interrupted by a phone call from "DAWN."

Jim sighs, then perks himself up and answers the phone.

JIM
Yello.

DAWN
(unenthusiastically)
Hi, Jim.
(beat)
Did you get the papers? The
attorney said they should arrive
by today or tomorrow.

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JIM
Yes'm.

DAWN
Ok. Uhh.

JIM
Listen, sorry about how all this worked out.

DAWN
(sighs)
You're a good guy, Jim. You know I think that... but even now you seem... distant

JIM
Well, I suppose it is what it is at this point.

DAWN
Funny how selective you are at accepting reality... I'm sorry, that was...

Jim begins to saunter outside.

EXT. JIM'S BACK YARD. MORNING.

Jim walks outside and sits on a log. He is still talking with Dawn on the phone. He sees something poking out of the ground, and begins to dig.

DAWN
Are you still there?

JIM
Yeah sorry. Again, sorry about how this ended. If you ever need anything, don't be a stranger.

DAWN
Well...I was married to you. So...

JIM
Great. See you around.

He hangs up the phone as he finishes digging. Out of the dirt, he pulls an old soda can with a hole through it. He chuckles, and stares at it for a moment.

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INT. LAW FIRM. MAIL ROOM. MORNING

Jimmy Buffet's, "A Pirate Looks at Forty" plays softly over the mailroom radio.

Jim walks by his office's mailroom on his way in, catching the attention of a preppy, young INTERN (22). Well groomed. The human personification of LinkedIn.

INTERN

Mr. Lee!

Jim turns around, and attempts to give the kid a fist bump. He seems more familiar with it than the kid does. Oh well.

JIM

Hey there, "dude."

INTERN

Sorry, I don't mean to be out of line . I know you're a partner so you're probably busy.

JIM

No, no. Jim. Call me Jim. How are ya liking it here? Jerry's not giving you a hard time, is he?

INTERN

No, he's not. I just want to thank you for this opportunity.

JIM

Don't mention it. I know kids your age would rather be outside playing football on a day like today.

Jim pauses for a beat with a subtle smile on his face, clearly reminiscing.

JIM

I didn't do any law firm stuff when I was your age.
(jokingly)
I hardly do any now!

INTERN

Oh.

Jim chuckles and rolls his eyes.

JIM

Well good for you.
(MORE)

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JIM (CONT'D)

So this is what you wanna do when you graduate?

INTERN

Oh yeah. One of the things I like best about big firms like these are the benefits. Most people are concerned with high salaries but I'd take a job with good benefits any day.

(beat)

I figure if I'm lucky enough to get a job right out of law school and work hard, I can make pension by 65. That would be my dream.

JIM

That's your dream?

INTERN

Yeah, I know it's a little ambitious.

JIM

I always wanted to be a cowboy.

INTERN

(nervously laughs)

Well, that sounds pretty wild. But obviously I can't do that. Not practical. Anyway, good to meet you.

The Intern stiffens up.

KATE, tall, short haired, and serious marches in. Her brown pantsuit is complemented by a brown shirt.

KATE

Why aren't you with the other interns?

INTERN

I..uh..I.

KATE

Spell it out.

Jim looks at Kate and then back at the Intern.

JIM

I see you've met my secretary?

Kate exaggeratedly looks over her shoulder.

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KATE
Oh, did you just hire one?

JIM
She doesn't like when I call her
that.

He tussles the 22 year old intern's hair.

JIM
Don't forget to smell the roses,
kid.

INT. LAW FIRM. OFFICE. DAY.

Jim reads through a file. Kate looms over his desk.

KATE
You have a conference call at 2:00
with Lakeland...

JIM
And they're set on that being
today?

KATE
...and then at 3:30 you are signed
up for a webinar on "Long-Term
Employee Salary Caps."

JIM
Ok, thanks.

He looks out the window.

Kate turns and walks toward the door.

The junior partner, KEITH, 50, sheepishly knocks and then
begins to walk in. He is in Kate's way.

KATE
Move.

Keith jumps out of the way and curtsies.

JIM
How ya doing Keith?

KEITH
Can't complain. Busy. Jerry's been
badgering me about the Pensinger
case.

(MORE)

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KEITH (CONT'D)

I basically told him to go fuck himself.

JIM

You did?

KEITH

No, I basically did. I just said "I'll make sure to get it done." But I said it really graciously, so he got the message.

JIM

(sarcastically)

Oh yeah I'm sure.

KEITH

Did you read that brief for Thursday yet?

Jim chuckles.

JIM

No.

Keith looks a little nervous and lets out a laugh.

KEITH

Oh. Wow. Cutting it close there.

JIM

...

KEITH

I'm just joking with you. I'm kind of the comedian of the family back home, and sometimes I forget to turn it off when I come into work.

Keith turns an imaginary knob on his head and makes a corresponding sound effect. He is painfully uncool.

JIM

No kidding.

KEITH

Yeah. Like, for instance, I was at dinner the other day, and I said, "You know, it's not drinking alone if the dog is with you." Stuff like that.

JIM

Wow.

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Jim glances at a photo on his desk of a cowboy riding a horse and waving his gun in the air. Free as the wind.

KEITH

Yeah. Hey, speaking of family, the missus wants me to stay home tomorrow, so I'm not gonna be able to go out with the guys.

(beat)

I want to, but... its out of my control. You know how it is.

Jim subtly shakes his head.

JIM

Don't sweat it.

KEITH

Yeah. Gotta pick your battles.

Jim is clearly distracted.

JIM

Yeah.

KEITH

She is very good to me though.

JIM

That's good.

KEITH

Yeah. Like, last week, my tee time went late, and she let me come back at 10 instead of 8.

JIM

That's crazy.

KEITH

Yeah, she's a saint for putting up with my antics. Really helps to keep me in line, you know?

JIM

Yeah.

Jim looks at the photo on his desk again, and begins to daydream.

KEITH

Sometimes I think she's a little too strict with me.

Keith's eye begins to twitch.

Jim is paying no attention whatsoever. Keith's words begin to fade off.

KEITH

She's yelled at me a fair amount over the years. It's taught me lessons, but it also taught me to h...hate.

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS:

-A LIVING ROOM: Jim, as a child, watches a western movie on the black and white TV, captivated by the heroic antics and displays of freedom on the screen.

-A DESERT: A cowboy on a horse speeds across the open plane.

-A HIGHWAY: Jim sits in bumper to bumper traffic behind the wheel of a luxury sedan.

-WESTERN TOWN: A sheriff has a standoff with a menacing, ethnically insensitive, villain.

-BOARDROOM: Jim sits unenthusiastically in a conference room full of other lawyers.

-RODEO: A cowboy waves his hat in the air while bucking around uncontrollably on a bull.

-WEDDING: Jim observes the dance floor, where a bunch of people are acting like they're wild for doing a rather predictable dance when "Twist and Shout" comes on.

-WESTERN TOWN: A lone gunslinger shoots a hole in a barrel, and a villain tumbles out.

-JIM'S OFFICE (IN REAL LIFE): Keith still sits across from him, with a quizzical look on his face, waiting for an answer.

KEITH

What's crazy?

JIM

What?

KEITH

You said 'that's crazy?'

JIM

Oh. Yeah.

KEITH

Well what's crazy? You think Linda's pot roast is crazy?

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JIM
Yeah-uh, no... just life. Life's
crazy.

KEITH
Ah. Yeah.

Keith stands up and nods toward the door.

KEITH
Yeah well. Back to reality I
guess. Duty calls. I'll see ya
around.

Jim gives Keith a playful salute as he walks out. He then turns back to the pictures on his desk. He dusts off a picture of him and Jerry, looking considerably younger, shaking hands in front of their firm.

INT. LAW OFFICE. NIGHT.

SUBTITLE FADES IN: 1999

There is a party going on, and it is becoming too wild for the office space it is being held in. People can be seen moving boxy, beige computers off to the side so they can sit on the desks.

One party guest empties the paper shredder and throws the contents around like confetti.

Jim and his law partner, JERRY, are having conversations with separate groups of people. It is clear that they are in the 90's. Hair is long. Lapels are big. Jerry is around Jim's age, and tall. He is fit, and well put together.

Jim seems entertained. Jerry seems stressed. He examines a flyer makes conversation with several people, including JULIA, an enthusiastic young professional.

JULIA
So?
(beat)
Would you your firm be interested
in coming? It's gonna put the
"FUN" in fundraiser!

Jerry holds up a finger.

JERRY
Of course. I do, however, have
one...constructive criticism.

JULIA tenses up.

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JULIA
Of course!

JERRY
It says here if "we," which I take to mean the participants, raise \$10,000, someone will get "pied in the face."

JULIA
We wanted to spice it up! Do you think it's too much?

JERRY
Oh, no. Just... you and I both know it's just gonna be a tinfoil pan filled with whipped cream...

Catherine looks confused.

JERRY
...as opposed to an actual pie.

JULIA
It gives the same effect.

JERRY
(warmly)
Oh it doesn't bother me.

He smiles pats her on the shoulder.

JERRY
But do you see the discrepancy? As an attorney I have to catch these things.

JULIA
(annoyed)
No, I'll change it. Thanks!

Jerry hands her the flyer. She walks away. Jerry takes a deep breath and looks around the room.

He joins another conversation with DREW, a young, artsy type, EDGAR, a strong looking, middle aged man, and Keith.

DREW
Do you work here?

JERRY
Yes, I am the co-founder.
(MORE)

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JERRY (CONT'D)

(beat)

I say that not to come across as grandiose, only to provide an accurate representation of my profession.

DREW

I'm an actor.

JERRY

Oh, really?

DREW

Yeah. Most people know me from Law & Order.

KEITH

Oh no way? I used to watch that show all the time before it moved to 11:00.

DREW

Always nice to meet a fan.

JERRY

Who did you play?

DREW

Steve Richardson.

KEITH

Ooh, he sounds important. Why am I blanking on who his?

DREW

He is pretty important.

(beat)

His murder investigation ties into the season finale.

JERRY

(diplomatically)

Was he fun to play.

DREW

Pretty. The table was kind of cold, but no one ever said acting was easy!

Jerry turns to Edgar. Keith follows suit.

JERRY

So, you're a carpenter?

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EDGAR
Since I was 17!

A smashing noise comes from somewhere in the room.

JERRY
That's very nice. The prospect of being able to construct something from start to finish seems very fulfilling.

EDGAR
Yeah. It's kept me around for a while.

Jerry nods.

EDGAR
But its not a job for people who can't take ball busting.

Keith looks at the ground.

JERRY
Is that so?

EDGAR
Yeah. Guys will always yell stuff like "Hey dickhead, you forgot your hammer!"

Jerry chuckles.

JERRY
I doubt that.

EDGAR
Well, they say it all the time.

JERRY
No, I agree with your assertion that guys say stuff of that nature, I just mean that the phrase "hey dickhead," specifically, seems to be rather antiquated and not commonly used. At least I have never heard it in conversation.

EDGAR
You'd be surprised.

An INTOXICATED WOMAN leans in to Jerry, who looks quite flustered.

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INTOXICATED WOMAN
So... how big is it?

JERRY
(distractedly)
Slightly above average but
disappointing compared to my
height. Sorry, I have to go.

Jerry walks over and yanks Jim out of his conversation.

JERRY
You said A FEW people.

JIM
Yeah. Relax.

JERRY
This is a few to you? 'A few' is
defined as-

JIM
Chill, buddy. It's New Years and
we just opened our own firm! It's
time to celebrate!

Jerry takes a breath and looks around. An INTOXICATED MAN opens the photocopier glass, throws up inside, and then closes it. It is unclear what benefit throwing up in the copier provided.

JERRY
And the firm we just opened is
getting destroyed!

The intoxicated man is now printing out copies. A smashing noise is heard from somewhere else in the room.

JERRY
(outraged)
I don't mean to be crass, but this
is, quite frankly, inappropriate
for a professional setting.

JIM
(sighs)
Alright. Give it like another half
hour and then-

A loud CRASH interrupts their conversation. They both turn their heads to see a LARGE MAN pumping his fist in the air after throwing something out of the window.

JERRY
(mouths)
Who is that?

Jim shrugs. Jerry turns to the man.

JERRY
(indignant)
What did you just throw out the
window?

LARGE MAN
A computer!

He goes to pick up another one.

LARGE MAN
You're not gonna be needing these
after Y2K!

Jerry and Jim look in horror as they see about 15 empty desks
which used to have computers on them.

Jerry is stunned.

JIM
(loudly)
Alright everybody out! We had a
good thing going but some of you
had to ruin it! Happy fuckin' New
Years!

The room quiets down and people begin to file out.

KEITH walks out, speaking on a huge, goofy, cellphone. The
antenna droops slightly. He looks anxious.

KEITH
I'm sorry dear. I just wanted to
make a cool first impression on
the guests.
(beat)
I didn't know you needed the Mini
Cooper.

Jim turns to Jerry and gestures toward the phone.

JIM
Can't those things only call home
and 9-11?

JERRY
I believe so.

JIM
Well it sounds like he might need
it.

JERRY
That was funny.

EXT. LAW FIRM PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

The party guests are gone and the night has quieted down. The sound of the sharp wind is occasionally interrupted by cars driving over sleet in the distance.

Jim and Jerry stand outside of the front door, looking exhausted. They slowly make their way over to the pile of cracked manila computers beneath the window.

It begins to snow lightly, but does not stick.

Jerry looks down at the computers. Jim looks up at the sky, and gazes for a minute at the few stars that aren't obstructed by clouds.

An amber colored street light flickers on.

JIM
See, I'm electromagnetic!

JERRY
That's unlikely.

They both lean up against the pile of computers. Jim fumbles for a cigarette and lights it. Jerry leans away and is visibly uncomfortable near the smoke. He breathes shallowly to avoid inhaling too much.

JIM
Cigarette?

JERRY
No. No thank you.

Jim puts the lighter away and takes a drag. He coughs several times, and then frowns and tosses the cigarette onto the ground and stomps it out.

JERRY
I didn't think you smoked.

Jim exhales, his breath made visible by the cold air.

JIM
What if the world WAS ending?

JERRY
It's not.

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JIM

Would you be happy with the life
you lived?

Jerry pauses for a minute, then nods.

JERRY

Yes. I would. The consideration of
alternative possibilities will
drive you crazy if you let it.

(beat)

I believe failure to consider all
aspects of the unknown leads to a
sort of grass is greener effect.

(beat)

However, what I DO know is that
I've gotten to help a lot of
people, and afforded myself a nice
lifestyle along the way.

(a beat)

I assume your asking me suggests
that you wouldn't?

JIM

Am I that easy to read?

JERRY

You smoked a cigarette for
dramatic effect...

JIM

I don't know, Jerry. I don't know.

A computer in the heap flickers on.

JERRY

Well the good news is that the
world isn't ending tomorrow. We're
gonna wake up and go about our
lives like any other day.

(beat)

That's the beauty.

JIM

That's the problem.

The computer flickers off again.

JERRY

How so?

JIM

I don't know. I feel like nothing
ever happens. Nothing ever REALLY
happens.

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JERRY

I guess. But that's reality. If extraordinary things happened all the time you'd just get used to them too. It's all a matter of perspective. The extraordinary wouldn't stand out without the ordinary.

JIM

But the extraordinary never shows up.

JERRY slowly gestures toward the heap of broken computers.

JERRY

This is, to some extent, extraordinary.

JIM

Yeah. You could say it is.
(beat)
Goodnight, Jerry.

JERRY

Goodnight, Jim. See you tomorrow.

They part ways and walk to their cars.

INT. JIM'S OFFICE. DAY.

SUBTITLE FADES IN: PRESENT

Jim stares at the picture for a few seconds in silence. He slowly nods.

Sunlight streams through his window. Dust falls, breaking the stillness. It's flight path ends by his office plants. Agave, yucca, prickly pear.

He sits in silence. Agonizing silence. Finally, he slams his fist on the desk.

He checks his itinerary for the day, which details a lot of obligations and meetings. There is very little blank space.

He sighs, then clears off the papers from his desk in one motion, and pulls up Google on his computer. In typical boomer fashion, he does so by entering 'www.google.com' rather than just using the browser's built-in search bar.

He searches for 'Cowboy hats for sale.'

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An exciting amount of options appear.

Jim sees a picture of one that catches his interest. He clicks on it and pulls out his credit card.

The name of the product reads: SHENZEN MENS WOMENS SOMBRERO JAZZ-CAPS GENTLEMAN FOR DAD LADY SIZE 58CM XXL

Never mind.

He shuts his laptop and hastily puts on his coat and packs his things. He leaves his itinerary and files, but packs the cowboy picture, and walks out the door.

It shuts behind him, causing the picture of him and Jerry to wobble. Dramatically wobble. Foreshadowing!

EXT. DESERT. SUNSET.

A cowboy rides his horse off into the distance, continuing toward the horizon until he disappears.

(Fade to black)

EXT. GARAGE. NIGHT.

"God's Gonna Cut You Down" by Johnny Cash plays.

After the instrumental portion, it becomes obvious that it's a cover. Oh well. It'll have to do.

Jim furiously hammers away at something in a poorly lit garage. There is a bonfire fire burning in the driveway which occasionally illuminates Jim's work station, revealing a cowboy hat and holsters, along with several other items.

Jim sets down the hammer, and picks up what he has been working on. It is a homemade branding iron, fashioned out of a stainless steel marshmallow roaster, and shaped like a crude horseshoe.

He picks it up, and walks over to the fire. The flickering flames illuminate his determined face.

He tosses in a Duraflame™ log, and the fire roars. He shoves the branding iron in.

He puts on the belt, and practices his draw out of the holsters.

The cover artist gets a little too fancy with a verse, and it doesn't work. Jim shakes his head, then pulls the red hot branding iron out of the coals and brands his hat.

He puts out the fire with his garden hose.

(cut to black)

EXT. PARKING CHECK IN. MORNING

A Security Guard, MARLA, sits in her booth, perpetually unamused.

She is working on a crossword puzzle. Occasionally, she gets frustrated that a word doesn't fit and just writes it anyway.

She then hears the clanking of hooves. She looks up, shakes her head, and looks back down at her crossword.

Jim, dressed in full cowboy gear, pulls up to the booth on a HORSE.

JIM

Howdy!

MARLA

(Sighs)

I.D. Please

After checking JIM's I.D, she raises the road block and JIM rides in to the parking deck.

INT. PARKING DECK. MORNING.

Jim brings his horse to a halt, and experiments with several different ways of tying it up.

Another LAWYER parks his brand new BMW 5 SERIES and looks over at the spectacle.

The horse takes a shit.

The lawyer pulls back out of the parking spot and drives away.

Jim ties the horse's reins to a small stop sign, then walks into the building.

INT. MAIL ROOM. MORNING.

The intern is hunched over organizing files.

The sound of heavy footsteps and spurs grows increasingly loud, causing the intern to look up. He sees Jim, but does not seem to recognize him.

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JIM

Howdy.

INTERN

Hello sir. Do I know you?

Recognition suddenly flashes across the INTERN's face.

INTERN

(Shocked)

What the fuck?

Jim tips his hat and keeps walking.

INT. WESTERN SALOON. MORNING.

A COWBOY kicks in the doors of a saloon. Heads turn as he walks by. The saloon is filled with beautiful, rustic townspeople, who clap when they see him.

Everyone in the bar is merrily exchanging stories and having a good time. One person playfully practices their draw on someone, who laughs and raises their hands.

The BARTENDER winks at the cowboy and slides a mug of beer toward him.

BARTENDER

This one's on me, sheriff. You've done enough for this town.

INT. CORPORATE PARK FOOD COURT. MORNING.

Jim theatrically opens the doors to the food court, and proudly makes his way toward the coffee kiosk. No one seems to notice. He looks to his left.

A BURLY GRANDMOTHER waddles along with a tray of food and begins to scold her GRANDCHILD.

BURLY GRANDMOTHER

I told you not to pick a booth!

GRANDCHILD

(groans)
Why?

BURLY GRANDMOTHER

I can't get in and out of
'em!

Jim looks to his right. A GUY in a Dave Matthews band t-shirt and flannel jacket walks up to a GIRL sitting at a table.

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GUY
 (innocently)
 Hey, I think I follow you on
 Instagram! You look a
 lot...uh...different than your
 profile pic though.

GIRL
 I haven't seen your profile pic,
 because I don't follow you, but I
 bet it's like a picture of your
 dog or a beer bottle or something.
 Loser.

The guy looks surprised and puts his hands up in a "don't shoot" fashion.

Jim turns away and looks down at his boots. His spurs clink on the tile as he saunters up to the coffee kiosk.

The hairy BARISTA standing across from Jim looks unamused. He has very prominent eyebrows and gauge earrings.

JIM
 (jokingly)
 This here's a hold up.

BARISTA
 Is it, like, Halloween or
 something already?

JIM
 Hahaha. No, partner. Just the
 first day of the rest of my life.

BARISTA
 (mockingly)
 Where's your horse?

JIM
 In the parking deck.

The barista raises said eyebrows.

BARISTA
 Right on man!

JIM
 This has always been my dream. You
 know, life's too short to not do
 what you're passionate about.
 Don't let anyone tell you
 differently.

The barista sarcastically nods.

BARISTA

Yeah, and how could I have a passion for serving coffee, right?

JIM

Oh... no. I didn't mean it like that, I'm just saying that I haven't been living my-

BARISTA

Nah, I'm just joking around with you, man. I get it. Your just a man pursuing his dreams.

JIM

Yeah, exac-

BARISTA

And I'm a piece of shit.

The hairy barista glares at Jim.

JIM

(mutters)
Alright then.

BARISTA

I'm just kidding with you man.

JIM

Sure thang, "dude."

Jim fist bumps him.

BARISTA

I'm totally joking.

He hands Jim his coffee.

JIM

Much obliged.

BARISTA

Yeah man. Just walk away now that I've served my purpose to you.

JIM

Ok...have a nice day.

Jim takes his coffee and puts his change in the tip jar. He walks away. The barista looks crazed. His eyebrows are still raised. He cups his hands around his mouth and calls after Jim.

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BARISTA
 Have fun living it up for us low
 lifes! You're an INSPIRATION,
 "partner!"

Jim shakes his head and exhales.

INT. OFFICE. AFTERNOON.

Many people are typing or making calls in the cubicles that span across the room. An ordinary work day.

Keith is talking on the phone, clearly distressed.

KEITH
 Honey, I want to keep it. Can we
 at least talk about it?
 (beat)
 I like that bobble head though.
 (beat)
 What do you mean tasteless-its
 Elmer Fudd!
 (beat)
 You know what, you're right. No,
 no, you're right. That was pretty
 selfish of me. I-

Jim, dressed in full cowboy attire, enters the room. Several CONSTRUCTION WORKERS file in behind him, carrying what appear to be antique saloon doors. Keith's jaw drops.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
 Where do you want these, buddy?

JIM
 Just replace my office door. Tha-
 much obliged.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
 You got it.

Keith is still awestruck.

KEITH
 Jim, are those assless chaps?

Keith's wife, LINDA is now audible. She is not on speaker phone, but it sounds like she is.

LINDA
 What?! Who are you talking to?

KEITH
 What's going on, Jim?

JIM
I had a bit of a revelation this
afternoon.

KEITH
What?

LINDA
What? Hello?

Another construction worker walks by and cups his hands around
his mouth.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2
Hey dickhead! You forgot your
hammer!

JIM
Keith, I've been taking shit for
my entire life.
(beat)
I've spent all of it trying to
please everyone else, and I can't
tell you why I've put up with it
for so long.
(beat)
So I decided, today is the day I
start doing what I want, for no
other reason than the fact that I
want to do it...and you know what?
I want to be a cowboy!

KEITH
Wow, that's so cool.

Keith points to his phone and rolls his eyes.

KEITH
(mouths)
I envy you.

JIM
Then do something about it Keith!

KEITH
You know I can't.

JIM
You think you can't! You can do
anything!

Keith begins to nod along. A CROWD of other workers starts to
form, captivated by Jim's message.

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JIM

Keith- heck, all of you- I'm 47 years old. I've existed for 47 years, but I feel like I haven't lived in the last 30! What are we doing in life if we don't enjoy it?

The crowd begins to cheer and clap.

JIM

Keith, you seem to respond to strong leadership. I'm ordering you, right now, to stand up for yourself. You want to keep that bobblehead? You fucking tell her!

KEITH

You know what Jim? You're right!

Keith raises his phone to his ear. The crowd watches in anticipation.

KEITH

Honey?

(Beat.)

(Weakly.)

May I please keep the bobblehead?

Keith quickly turns away from the phone and winces in fear.

LINDA

No.

The crowd is silent, waiting for Keith's next move. His face transitions from fearful to confident as he lifts the phone again.

KEITH

Honey. I'm keeping the bobblehead.

The crowd erupts in applause. Jim jumps in the air, clicks his heels, and gives him two thumbs up.

Keith now has a devious smile on his face, like a kid who just learned a new curse word and can't get enough.

KEITH

I'm keeping the fucking bobblehead, dear, and there is not a force from hell, yourself included, who can pry it out of my hands.

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JIM
 (nervously)
 Alllrighty there Keith, you got
 what you wanted. Put the phone
 down.

Keith doesn't seem to notice.

KEITH
 No, no, honey, you listen to me.
 Unlike you, that bobblehead brings
 a shimmer of joy to my life.

The crowd begins to cringe, and Jim violently motions to Keith
 to stop talking. Keith cannot be interrupted.

KEITH
 Guess what? That bobblehead has
 never come home concerningly late
 from Yoga class, or told me 'that
 I will never be like Eric from the
 Tesla dealership.' Nor does it
 know the location of a suspicious
 amount of highway rest stops. No,
 it accepts me for who I am!

Jim flails his arms in the air.

JIM
 Keith, hang up the phone! This was
 about a bobblehead!

Keith suddenly snaps out of it, and realizes what he's done. A
 look of horror spreads across his face, and he frantically
 hangs up the phone.

KEITH
 What did I just do, Jim?

JIM
 I, I'm not sure.

CROWD MEMBER
 You stood up for yourself!

The rest of the crowd begins to clap and cheer.

Jim, capitalizing on this energy, begins to speak again.

JIM
 And now I'm gonna stand up for
 myself. I'm gonna march in there
 and tell Jerry I'm resigning!

The crowd erupts in applause, seemingly moving on from the fact that KEITH may have just ruined his marriage.

Jim straightens up his posture, tilts his cowboy hat to look more intimidating, and marches over to Jerry's door.

INT. JERRY'S OFFICE. AFTERNOON.

JERRY, 48, sits at his desk. His office decor is well organized and relatively bare. Aside from several degrees, the only wall decoration is a framed photo of the office he currently works in.

He meticulously tends to a small office plant on his desk. He trims off several flowers that are past their prime.

He hears a knock on the door.

JERRY

Enter.

Jim walks in, as if he is about to engage in a showdown.

Jerry is still reading paperwork, and does not look up.

JERRY

Do you know what all of that fuss was outside? People seem excited about something.

Jerry looks up at at Jim.

JERRY

Oh.

He sighs, and motions for Jim to sit down.

JERRY

(calmly)

You know, Jim.

(beat)

Mid life crises are... not uncommon at our age.

(beat)

As a side note, and I say this not to deride but to inform you, that mark burned into the front of your hat looks concerningly phallic.

Jerry straightens up for a second.

JERRY

Wait those aren't real guns on you, are they?

JIM

...maybe.

Jerry sits up in his chair and peers over at the toy guns. He then returns to his relaxed position.

JERRY

Listen Jim, maybe you're feeling stressed or overworked. It's perfectly normal at this point in our lives to question whether we went down the right paths.

(beat)

But I'd encourage you to do so with reason as opposed to spiraling into psychosis.

JIM

I quit.

Jerry sits up again and looks startled.

JERRY

What? Surely you can't be serious!

JIM

I am serious. And don't call me-

JERRY

-Shirley. Yeah yeah I've seen airplane. Save the comedy for Keith. You know, he told me the funniest joke about dogs the other day-

JIM

I mean it. I'm leaving, whether you like it or not, and, since I am a partner, I want my share of the company equity in cash.

Jerry pauses for a minute, and furrows his brow.

JERRY

(muttering)

I didn't realize how severe this was.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

(beat)

How about we agree to raise your health insurance benefits and send you to a mental hospital.

JIM

I'm not joking.

JERRY

Jim, we've been partners for over 20 years.

JIM

A standoff between partners.

JERRY

Of a Law Firm.

(beat)

Do you have any idea how long that process would take, and how many decisions would have to be made about the future of the company? How many documents we would have to draft? Not to mention having to project and divide up the firm's profits from cases not even settled yet?

Jerry glances over at the door, then leans in. He lowers his voice.

JERRY

Plus, I don't want to work exclusively with Keith. Don't make me do that. He is, quite frankly...unpleasant to deal with for long periods of time.

JIM

(sighs)

I know, Jerry. But I've waited too long as it is.

JERRY

(very worked up)

Well you're gonna have to.

(beat)

In fact, I want you to look in that mirror, make your case again, and see if you would listen to yourself. You're dressed like a male stripper for crying out loud! You're an attorney!

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INT. OFFICE. MORNING.

Keith has isolated himself from the crowd, and is speaking on the phone.

KEITH

Yes, I anticipated having to sleep on the couch tonight.

(Beat.)

Oh the couch is outside now? And so is the bobble head? Oh PART of the bobble head is outside? Ok. Love you dear.

Suddenly, Jerry's office doors burst open as Jerry tackles Jim to the ground. Everyone in the office is shocked to see Jerry exhibiting emotions.

A circle forms around Jim and Jerry as they roll around on the floor. Jerry's shirt becomes untucked. Jim's hat gets knocked off.

A PARALEGAL runs up to the mayhem.

PARALEGAL

ENOUGH!

The fighting ceases. Jim and Jerry, pink and out of breath, look up at her. Everyone, including the intern from earlier, watches.

The INTERN removes his experience at this firm from his LinkedIn.

PARALEGAL

We're trying to WORK here! If you wanna settle this like cowboys, settle it with a duel and be done with it!

Jim nods and straightens himself up. He puts on his hat and creates distance between himself and Jerry.

JERRY

(breathlessly)

Fine.

JIM

A duel it is.

They stare each other down. JIM pulls out his phone and opens up iTunes. He finds a song called "Western Duel Music" and presses PLAY. The song begins.

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His phone's "LTE" symbol disappears. It is replaced by "No Service"

One of the free U2 songs plays. The album cover reads, "Songs of Innocence."

JIM
Oh come on!

KATE
There's no escaping these stupid things!

JIM
Well, I guess we're gonna have to make do.

Jerry and Jim assume their positions. They stand across from each other, motionless. Jim turns to the intern and points at a cubicle

JIM
Kid, you might wanna go inside. Things are gonna get ugly.

INTERN
I'm 22.

Jim turns to Jerry. They stare each other down.

CROWD MEMBER
Can you turn the music up a little bit? It's loud enough not to be quiet but I don't feel that it's a sufficient volume.

JIM
I don't know how to. These assholes in California act like its simple but it really isn't.

INTERN
(mutters)
It is.

The crowd is tense. People peer over desks, as Jim and Jerry circle each other like hawks, never taking their eyes off of one another. The U2 song continues to play.

BONO
[Use funny lyric from one of the songs here, maybe with a double meaning.]

Jerry and Jim continue to stare each other down.

JERRY

You know, this song is actually pretty nice. I guess I just didn't perceive it to have any value because it just showed up in my library for free.

He resumes his serious stance. Jim cracks his thumbs.

Suddenly, they erupt.

JERRY

You're wearing spurs! There would be no reason to do so even if you were a cowboy since you don't encounter any roads with a speed limit over 25 mph on your way to work.

JIM

As a partner, I have as much say in the company as you do.
(beat)
Regarding your comment about speed limits, those statutes only apply to motor vehicles, of which a horse does not fall into the category!

JERRY

Yes but according to local ordinance 597 the only permissible instance which would allow a citizen to ride a horse on public roads-

JIM

-would be if I were to register said horse with the municipality's historical society as a demonstration horse-

JERRY

-for which your case for approval would be mediocre at best and would require you to participate in tours and other such historical demonstrations.

JIM

Maybe I will

JERRY

(beat)
It would be extremely selfish to just up and leave.

JIM

But you can't stop me.

They both run out of breath, and begin to sweat.

JERRY

Let's take a walk.

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EXT. LAW FIRM PARKING LOT. MORNING.

Jim and Jerry stand outside the front door, looking exhausted. This time, there is no huge pile of computers.

JERRY

I can offer you a \$10,000
incentive to stay.

JIM

It's not about the money, its
about being a hero.

JERRY

(sighs)

What if you can wear the uniform
on Fridays. This way you can be a
hero on Fridays.

JIM

I don't know, Jerry. It's still
just an office.

Jerry pinches his brow.

JERRY

I know I'm gonna regret this. What
if we ALL dress up like Western
characters on Fridays? The entire
office.

(beat)

Including me.

They stand in silence. Both look up at the sky; Jim with a smile, Jerry with a grimace.

JERRY

Will you stay?

JIM

(beat)

Yeah.

JERRY

That constitutes a verbal
contract.

JIM

I'll stay.

A long pause.

JERRY

Back to out offices?

JIM
Back to our offices.

Jerry opens the door for Jim, and they walk inside.

JIM
The life of a drifter isn't easy,
Jerry.

JERRY
I imagine it's not, Jim.

JIM
After a while it takes a toll on
you.

JERRY
I imagine it does.

The door closes.

EXT. SECURITY CHECK IN- SUNSET.

Work has now ended, and people are heading home.

Victorious sounding cowboy music plays.

Jim walks into the parking deck, and tips his hat to the people in the office. He continues on, and begins to mount his horse.

Marla sits at her booth, still working on the crossword puzzle. She looks stumped.

She hears the scraping of metal, and looks up to see Jim on his horse, the severed stop sign dragging behind them.

Marla presses a button and the gate lifts up. Jim and his horse proceed to trot onwards.

She watches him leave, then shakes her head and returns to her crossword puzzle.

She pauses for a second, then writes, "MID LIFE CRISIS" in the boxes.

Jim rides his horse further and further into the distance.

Keith's Mini Cooper drives by. Linda is driving, and the person in the passenger seat looks more like the intern than Keith.

Jim rides past a 25mph sign. Jim kicks the horse with the spurs, and they speed off toward the setting sun.

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END

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