"Clerks."

by

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INT: BEDROOM. EARLY-MORNING HOURS

A DOG sleeps on a neatly made bed.

A CLOCK reads twenty to six.

A SHELF OF BOOKS holds such classics as Dante's Inferno, Beyond Good and Evil, The Catcher in the Rye, and The Dark Knight Returns. A FRAMED DIPLOMA, dusty and unkempt, hangs askew on the wall. A snapshot of a girl is stuck in the corner, and a bra weighs one end down. A PHONE sits quietly atop a bundle of laundry. It suddenly explodes with a resounding ring—once, twice, three times. A CLOSET DOOR swings open, and a half-clad figure falls out. THE PHONE rings yet again, and a hand falls upon the receiver, yanking it off the trash can, O.C. THE RUMPLED FIGURE lays with his back to the camera, phone in hand.

FIGURE
(goggily)
Hello...What?...No, I don't work today...I'm playing hockey at two.

THE DOG yawns and shakes its head.

FIGURE (O.C.)
Why don't you call Randal?...
Because I'm fucking tired....I just closed last night....
(deep sigh)
Jesus...What time are you going to come in?....Twelve...Be there be twelve?....Swear...

A PICTURE OF A GIRL leans against a trophy. The picture is decorated with a Play-Doh beard and mustache.

FIGURE (O.C.)
Swear you'll be in by twelve and I'll do it....Twelve...Twelve or I walk.

THE PHONE RECEIVER slams into the cradle. THE RUMPLED FIGURE
slowly sits up and remains motionless. He musses his hair and stands.

THE DOG stands and wags its tail. A hand pats its head. The Rumpled Figure lays down on the bed. We now see his face. It is the face of DANTE and this is Dante's room; this is Dante's life. DANTE grabs the dog and wrestles it.

DANTE
Next time, I get the bed.

2.

He releases the dog and sits up.

DANTE
(exhausted)
Shit.

CUT TO:

INT: BATHROOM. MINUTES LATER

A steaming shower fills the room. The dog licks water from the toilet.

CUT TO:

INT: KITCHEN. MINUTES LATER

A towel-dressed DANTE opens the fridge and peers inside. He grabs a half-empty gallon of milk and closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT: KITCHEN. SECONDS LATER

Chocolate milk mix is heaped into a tumbler. One scoop, two scoops, three scoops, four scoops.

CUT TO:

INT: BEDROOM. A MINUTE LATER

DANTE gulps his breakfast while feeling inside the closet for some clothes. Some chocolate milk spills on the floor. THE DOG laps at the small puddle of chocolate milk.

CUT TO:
INT: HALLWAY. MINUTES LATER

DANTE'S feet are hastily covered. A hand grabs keys from atop a VCR.

CUT TO:

EXT: DRIVEWAY. MINUTES LATER

A car backs out of the driveway and speeds down the street.

CUT TO:

3.

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

The car pulls up, with a screech. Feet descend to the ground from the open door. Keys jam into a lock and pop it open.

CUT TO:

DANTE lifts the metal shutter revealing the door. He opens it and grabs two bundles of papers, throwing them inside the store.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

A very dark room barely lit by the daylight. Suddenly, the lights flick on, revealing the glorious interior of the convenience store. THE CAT looks at DANTE as he passes the camera quickly. THE PAPER BUNDLE is snapped open with a knife. Newspapers slam into the appropriate racks. One rack remains empty. A coffee filter is placed in a metal pot. Ground coffee follows, and the mix is shoved into place in the coffeemaker. The switch is flicked and the machine comes to life. The empty newspaper rack with the heading ASBURY PARK PRESS seems out of place among all the other stacks of papers. DANTE rubs his chin and stares, puzzled. He rolls his eyes as it occurs to him.

DANTE

Shit.

The register pops open, and a hand extracts a quarter.

CUT TO:
EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

POV: NEWSPAPER MACHINE

Through murky glass and thin metal grating, we see DANTE approach. He stops and drops a quarter in the slot. He pulls the door down, finally allowing us a clear view as he reaches toward the camera.

DANTE pulls a stack of newspapers from the Asbury Park Press vending machine. He struggles to hold them all in one hand as he lets the door slam shut. He turns to walk away, but the sound of the quarter dropping into the change slot stops him. He takes a step back to grab the coin.

CUT TO:

4.

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

The papers drop into the once-empty rack with a resounding flop. The quarter drops back into the register drawer.

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

DANTE tries to jam the key into the window shutter lock. He looks down at it.

DANTE

Shit!

The lock is gummed up with gum or something hard and obtrusive like gum, preventing the key from being inserted. DANTE looks around and kicks the shutter angrily. The car trunk pops open and a hand reaches inside, pulling out a folded white sheet.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

A can of shoe polish is grabbed from the shelf. DANTE dips his fingers into the shoe polish and writes large letters on the unfurled sheet, leaning on the cooler.

CUT TO:
EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

DANTE stands on a garbage can and tucks a corner of the sheet under the awning. He jumps down. The banner reads I ASSURE YOU, WE'RE OPEN. The door sign shifts from CLOSED to OPEN.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

The clock reads 6:20. DANTE leans behind the counter, the morning routine completed. He stares ahead, catatonic, then drops his head in his hands. The day has begun.

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

The store, with its makeshift banner looming in the dim morning hour, just after dawn. A car drives by.

CUT TO:

5.

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

DANTE waits on a customer (ACTIVIST) buying coffee.

DANTE
Thanks. Have a good one.

ACTIVIST
Do you mind if I drink this here?

DANTE
Sure. Go ahead.

The ACTIVIST leans on a briefcase and drinks his coffee. Another CUSTOMER leans in the door.

CUSTOMER
Are you open?

DANTE
Yeah.

CUSTOMER
Pack of cigarettes.
ACTIVIST
Are you sure?

CUSTOMER
Am I sure?

ACTIVIST
Are you sure?

CUSTOMER
Am I sure about what?

ACTIVIST
Do you really want to buy those cigarettes?

CUSTOMER
Are you serious?

ACTIVIST
How long have you been smoking?

CUSTOMER
(to DANTE)
What is this, a poll?

DANTE
Beats me.

ACTIVIST
How long have you been a smoker?

CUSTOMER
Since I was thirteen.

The ACTIVIST lifts his briefcase onto the counter. He opens it and extracts a sickly-looking lung model.

ACTIVIST
I'd say you're about nineteen, twenty, am I right?

CUSTOMER
What the hell is that?

ACTIVIST
That's your lung. By this time,
your lung looks like this.

CUSTOMER
You're shittin' me.

ACTIVIST
You think I'm shitting you...

The ACTIVIST hands him something from the briefcase.

CUSTOMER
What's this?

ACTIVIST
It's a trach ring. It's what they install in your throat when throat cancer takes your voice box. This one came out of a sixty-year-old man.

CUSTOMER
(drops ring)
Unnhh!

ACTIVIST
(picks up the ring)
He smoked until the day he died. Used to put the cigarette in this thing and smoke it that way.

DANTE
Excuse me, but...

7.

ACTIVIST
This is where you're heading. A cruddy lung, smoking through a hole in your throat. Do you really want that?

CUSTOMER
Well, if it's already too late...

ACTIVIST
It's never too late. Give those cigarettes back now, and buy some gum instead.

(grabs nearby pack, reads)
Here. Chewlies Gum. Try this.
CUSTOMER
It's not the same.

ACTIVIST
It's cheaper than cigarettes. And it certainly beats this.

Hands him a picture.

CUSTOMER
Jesus!

ACTIVIST
It's a picture of a cancer-ridden lung. Keep it.

CUSTOMER
(to DANTE)
I'll just take the gum.

DANTE
Fifty-five.

ACTIVIST
You've made a wise choice. Keep up the good work.

The CUSTOMER exits.

DANTE
Maybe you should take that coffee outside.

ACTIVIST
No, I think I'll drink it in here, thanks.

8.

DANTE
If you're going to drink it in here, I'd appreciate it if you'd not bother the customers.

ACTIVIST
Okay. I'm sorry about that.

Another CUSTOMER comes up to the counter.

CUSTOMER
Pack of cigarettes.
   (looks at model)
What's that?

ACTIVIST
This? How long have you been smoking?

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

A blank wall. JAY steps into the frame, followed by SILENT BOB. JAY pulls off his coat and swings it into the arms of SILENT BOB. JAY then throws down with a makeshift slam dance, spinning his arm and fake-hitting SILENT BOB.

JAY
WE NEED SOME TITS AND ASS! YEAH!

SILENT BOB lights a smoke.

JAY
I feel good today, Silent Bob. We're gonna make some money! And then you know what we're going to do? We're going to go to that party and get some pussy! I'm gonna fuck this bitch, that bitch...
   (Blue Velvet Hopper)
   I'LL FUCK ANYTHING THAT MOVES!

SILENT BOB points to something off-screen.

JAY
   (to O.C.)
What you looking at?! I'll kick your fucking ass!
   (to SILENT BOB)
Doesn't that motherfucker still owe me ten bucks?

SILENT BOB nods.

9.

JAY
Tonight, you and me are going off that fucker's head, and take out his fucking soul! Remind me if he tries to buy something from us, to
cut it with leaves and twigs... or
fucking shit in the motherfucker's bag!

Some girls walk past. JAY smiles at them.

JAY
Wa sup sluts?
(to SILENT BOB)
Damn Silent Bob! You one rude motherfucker! But you're cute as hell.
(slowly drops to knees)
I wanna go down on you, and suckle you.
(makes blow job neck-jerks)
And then, I wanna line up three more guys, and make like a circus seal...

JAY makes blow job faces down an imaginary line of guys, looking quite like a performing seal. He throws a little humming sound behind each nod. He then hops up quickly.

JAY
Ewwww! You fucking faggot! I fucking hate guys!
(yelling)
I LOVE WOMEN!
(calmer)
Neh.

A GUY comes up to them.

GUY
You selling?

JAY
(all business)
I got hits, hash, weed, and later on I'll have 'shrooms. We take cash, or stolen MasterCard and Visa.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

A SMALL CROWD gathers around the ACTIVIST as he orates. It has become something of a rally.
ACTIVIST
You're spending what? Twenty, thirty dollars a week on cigarettes.

LISTENER 1
Forty.

LISTENER 2
Fifty-three.

ACTIVIST
Fifty-three dollars. Would you pay someone that much money every week to kill you? Because that's what you're doing now, by paying for the so-called privilege to smoke!

LISTENER 3
We all gotta go sometime...

ACTIVIST
It's that kind of mentality that allows this cancer-producing industry to thrive. Of course we're all going to die someday, but do we have to pay for it? Do we have to actually throw hard-earned dollars on a counter and say, "Please, please, Mister Merchant of Death, sir; please sell me something that will give me bad breath, stink up my clothes, and fry my lungs."

LISTENER 1
It's not that easy to quit.

ACTIVIST
Of course it's not; not when you have people like this mindless cretin so happy and willing to sell you nails for your coffin!

DANTE
Hey, now wait a sec...

ACTIVIST
Now he's going to launch into his rap about how he's just doing his job; following orders.

(MORE)
ACTIVIST (CONT'D)
Friends, let me tell you about another bunch of hate mongers that were just following orders: they were called Nazis, and they practically wiped a nation of people from the Earth...just like cigarettes are doing now! Cigarette smoking is the new Holocaust, and those that partake in the practice of smoking or sell the wares that promote it are the Nazis of the nineties! He doesn't care how many people die from it! He smiles as you pay for your cancer sticks and says, "Have a nice day."

DANTE
I think you'd better leave now.

ACTIVIST
You want me to leave? Why? Because somebody is telling it like it is? Somebody's giving these fine people a wake-up call?!

DANTE
You're loitering in here, and causing a disturbance.

ACTIVIST
You're the disturbance, pal! And here...
   (slaps a dollar on the counter)
I'm buying some...what's this?...Chewlie's Gum. There. I'm no longer loitering. I'm a customer, a customer engaged in a discussion with other customers.

LISTENER 2
   (to DANTE)
Yeah, now shut up so he can speak!

ACTIVIST
Oh, he's scared now! He sees the threat we present! He smells the changes coming, and the loss of
sales when the nonsmokers finally demand satisfaction. We demand the right to breathe cleaner air!

LISTENER 3

Yeah!

ACTIVIST

We'd rather chew our gum than embrace slow death! Let's abolish this heinous practice of sucking poison, and if it means ruffling the feathers of a convenience store idiot, then so be it!

DANTE

That's it, everybody out.

ACTIVIST

We're not moving! We have a right, a constitutional right, to assemble and be heard!

DANTE

Yeah, but not in here.

ACTIVIST

What better place than this? To stamp it out, you gotta start at the source!

DANTE

Like I'm responsible for all the smokers!

ACTIVIST

The ones in this town, yes! You encourage their growth, their habit. You're the source in this area, and we're going to shut you down for good! For good, cancer-merchant!

The small crowd begins to chant and jeer in DANTE's face.

CROWD

Cancer merchant! Cancer merchant!
Cancer merchant!

VERONICA enters and surveys the mess. The CROWD throws
cigarettes at DANTE, pelting him in the face. Suddenly, a loud blast is heard, and white powder explodes over the throng. Everyone turns to face...

VERONICA as she stands in one of the freezer cases, holding a fire extinguisher.

VERONICA
Who's leading this mob?

13.

The CROWD looks among themselves. Someone points to O.C.

SOMEONE
That guy.

The ACTIVIST carries his briefcase surreptitiously toward the door.

VERONICA (O.C.)
Freeze.

VERONICA jumps off the freezer case, training the nozzle of the extinguisher on the ACTIVIST.

VERONICA
Let's see some credentials.

He reaches into his briefcase. She pokes the extinguisher nozzle at him, warningly.

VERONICA
Slowly...

He pulls out a business card and hands it to her. She reads it.

VERONICA
You're a Chewlie's Gum representative?

He nods.

VERONICA
And you're stirring up all this antismoking sentiment to...what?...sell more gum?

He nods again.
VERONICA
(through gritted teeth)
Get out of here.

He quickly flees. She blasts him with more chemical as he exits.

VERONICA
(to the crowd)
And you people: Don't you have jobs
to go to? Get out of here and go
commute.

The CROWD sheepishly exits, one by one, offering apologetic
glances. DANTE tries to regain his composure.

VERONICA watches the crowd disperse, disgusted.

VERONICA
You oughta be ashamed of yourselves.
Easily led automatons. Try thinking
for yourself before you pelt and
innocent man with cigarettes.

The last of the crowd exits. VERONICA sets the fire
extinguisher down next to DANTE. DANTE is sitting on the
floor, head in his folded arms.

VERONICA
It looked like Tiananmen Square in
here for a second.

DANTE is silent.

VERONICA
"Thank you, Veronica; you saved me
from an extremely ugly mob scene."

DANTE remains silent.

VERONICA
(sits beside him)
Okay, champ. What's wrong?

DANTE lifts his head and shoots her a disgusted look.

VERONICA
All right, stupid question. But
don't you think you're taking this
a bit too hard?

**DANTE**
Too hard?! I don't have enough indignities in my life—people start throwing cigarettes at me!

**VERONICA**
At least they weren't lit.

**DANTE**
I hate this fucking place.

**VERONICA**
Then quit. You should be going to school anyway...

**DANTE**
Please, Veronica. Last thing I need is a lecture at this point.

**VERONICA**
All I'm saying is that if you're unhappy you should leave.

**DANTE**
I'm not even supposed to be here today!

**VERONICA**
I know. I stopped by your house and your mom said you left at like six or something.

**DANTE**
The guy got sick and couldn't come in.

**VERONICA**
Don't you have a hockey game at two?

**DANTE**
Yes! And I'm going to play like shit because I didn't get a good night's sleep!

**VERONICA**
Why did you agree to come in then?
DANTE
I'm only here until twelve, then I'm gone. The boss is coming in.

VERONICA
Why don't you open the shutters and get some sunlight in here?

DANTE
Somebody jammed the locks with gum.

VERONICA
You're kidding.

DANTE
Bunch of savages in this town.

VERONICA
You look bushed. What time did you get to bed?

DANTE
I don't know-like two-thirty, three.

VERONICA
What were you doing up so late?

16.

DANTE
(skirting)
Hunhh? Nothing.

VERONICA
(persistent)
What were you doing?

DANTE
Nothing! Jesus! I gotta fight with you now?

VERONICA
Who's fighting? Why are you so defensive?

DANTE
Who's defensive? Just...Would you just hug me?! All right? Your boyfriend was accosted by an angry mob, and he needs to be hugged.
She stares at him.

=DANTE=
What? What is that?

=VERONICA=
She called you, didn't she?

=DANTE=
Oh, be real! Would you...Would you please hug me? I just went through a very traumatic experience and I haven't been having the best day so far. Now come on.

VERONICA stares at him.

=DANTE=
What? What's with that look?! I wasn't talking to anyone, especially her! Look at you, being all sort of...I don't know...stand-offish.

VERONICA looks away.

=DANTE=
Fine. You don't trust me, don't hug me. I see how it is. All right Pissy-pants, you just go on being suspicious and quiet. I don't even want to hug you at this point.

VERONICA looks back at him.

=DANTE=
(pleadingly)
Give you a dollar?

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

A NOTE on the counter next to a small pile of money reads:

PLEASE LEAVE MONEY ON THE COUNTER. TAKE CHANGE WHEN APPLICABLE. BE HONEST.

DANTE and VERONICA are slumped on the floor, behind the counter. VERONICA holds DANTE in her arms, his head on her
chest. Change is heard hitting the counter.

DANTE
(to O.C. customer)
Thanks.

The door is heard opening and closing—a customer leaving.

VERONICA
How much money did you leave up there?

DANTE
Like three dollars in mixed change and a couple of singles. People only get the paper of coffee this time of morning.

VERONICA
You're trusting.

DANTE
Why do you say that?

VERONICA
How do you know they're taking the right amount of change? Or even paying for what they take?

DANTE
Theoretically, people see money on the counter and nobody around, they think they're being watched.

VERONICA
Honesty through paranoia. Why do you smell like shoe polish?

DANTE
I had to use shoe polish to make that sign. The smell won't come off.

VERONICA
Do you think anyone can see us down here?

DANTE
Why? You wanna have sex or something?
VERONICA
(sarcastic)
Ooh! Can we?!

DANTE
Really?

VERONICA
I was kidding.

DANTE
Yeah, right. You can't get enough of me.

VERONICA
Typically male point of view.

DANTE
How do you figure?

VERONICA
You show some bedroom proficiency, and you think you're gods. What about what we do for you?

DANTE
Women? Women, as lovers, are all basically the same: they just have to be there.

VERONICA
"Be there?"

DANTE
Making a male climax is not all that challenging: insert somewhere close and preferably moist; thrust; repeat.

VERONICA
How flattering.

DANTE
Now, making a woman cum...therein lies a challenge.

VERONICA
Oh, you think so?
DANTE
A girl makes a guy cum, it's standard. A guy makes a girl cum, it's talent.

VERONICA
And I actually date you?

DANTE
Something wrong?

VERONICA
I'm insulted. Believe me, Don Juan, it takes more than that to get a guy off. Just "being there"-as you put it-is not enough.

DANTE
I touched a nerve.

VERONICA
I'm astonished to hear you trivialize my role in our sex life.

DANTE
It wasn't directed at you. I was making a broad generalization.

VERONICA
You were making a generalization about "broads!"

DANTE
These are my opinions based on my experiences with the few women who were good enough to sleep with me.

VERONICA
How many?

DANTE
How many what?

VERONICA
How many girls have you slept with?

20.

DANTE
How many different girls? Didn't we already have this discussion once?
VERONICA
We might have; I don't remember.
How many?

DANTE
Including you?

VERONICA
It better be up to and including me.

DANTE
(pause to count)
Twelve.

VERONICA
You've slept with twelve different girls?

DANTE
Including you; yes.

Pause. She slaps him.

DANTE
What the hell was that for?

VERONICA
You're a pig.

DANTE
Why'd you hit me?

VERONICA
Do you know how many different men I've had sex with?

DANTE
Do I get to hit you after you tell me?

VERONICA
Three.

DANTE
Three?

VERONICA
Three including you.
DANTE
You've only had sex with three different people?

VERONICA
I'm not the pig you are.

DANTE
Who?

VERONICA
You!

DANTE
No; who were the three, besides me?

VERONICA
John Franson and Rob Stanslyk.

DANTE
(with true admiration)
Wow. That's great. That's something to be proud of.

VERONICA
I am. And that's why you should feel like a pig. You men make me sick. You'll sleep with anything that says yes.

DANTE
Animal, vegetable, or mineral.

VERONICA
Vegetable meaning paraplegic.

DANTE
They put up the least amount of struggle.

VERONICA
After dropping a bombshell like that, you owe me. Big.

DANTE
All right. Name it.

VERONICA
I want you to come with me on Monday.

DANTE
VERONICA
To school. There's a seminar about getting back into a scholastic program after a lapse in enrollment.

DANTE
Can't we ever have a discussion without that coming up?

VERONICA
It's important to me, Dante. You have so much potential that just goes to waste in this pit. I wish you'd go back to school.

DANTE
Jesus, would you stop? You make my head hurt when you talk about this.

VERONICA stands, letting DANTE'S head hit the floor.

DANTE
Shit! Why are we getting up?

VERONICA
Unlike you, I have a class in forty-five minutes.

A handsome young man (WILLAM) is standing at the counter. VERONICA reacts to him.

VERONICA
(surprised)
Willam!

WILLAM
Ronnie! How are you? You work here now?

VERONICA
(locks arms with DANTE)
No, I'm just visiting my man.
(to DANTE)
Dante, this is Willam Black.
(to WILLAM)
This is Dante Hicks, my boyfriend.
DANTE
How are you? Just the soda?

WILLAM
And a pack of cigarettes.
(to VERONICA; paying)
Are you still going to Seton Hall?

VERONICA
No, I transferred into Monmouth this year. I was tired of missing him.
(squeezes DANTE'S arm)

WILLAM
Do you still talk to Sylvan?

VERONICA
I just talked to her on Monday. We still hang out on weekends.

WILLAM
(leaving)
That's cool. Well—you two lovebirds take it easy, all right?

VERONICA
I will. Take it easy.

WILLAM
Bye.
(exits)

VERONICA
Bye
(to DANTE)
That was Snowball.

DANTE
Why do you call him that?

VERONICA
Sylvan made it up. It's a blow job thing.

DANTE
What do you mean?
VERONICA
After he gets a blow job, he likes to have the cum spit back into his mouth while kissing. It's called snowballing.

DANTE
He requested this?

VERONICA
He gets off on it.

DANTE
Sylvan can be talked into anything.

VERONICA
Why do you say that?

DANTE
Like you said—he snowballed him.

VERONICA
Sylvan? No; I snowballed him.

DANTE
Yeah, right.

VERONICA
I'm serious...

A moment of silence as DANTE'S chuckles fade to comprehension.

DANTE
You sucked that guy's dick?

VERONICA
Yeah. How do you think I know he liked...

DANTE
(panicky)
But...but you said you only had sex with three guys! You never mentioned him!

VERONICA
That's because I never had sex with him!
DANTE
You sucked his dick!

VERONICA
We went out a few times. We didn't have sex, but we fooled around.

DANTE
(massive panic attack)
Oh my God! Why did you tell me you only slept with three guys?

VERONICA
Because I did only sleep with three guys! That doesn't mean I didn't just go with people.

25.

DANTE
Oh my God—I feel so nauseous...

VERONICA
I'm sorry, Dante. I thought you understood.

DANTE
I did understand! I understand that you slept with three different guys, and that's all you said.

VERONICA
Please calm down.

DANTE
How many?

VERONICA
Dante...

DANTE
How many dicks have you sucked?!

VERONICA
Let it go...

DANTE
HOW MANY?

VERONICA
All right! Shut up a second and I'll tell you! Jesus! I didn't freak like this when you told me how many girls you fucked.

DANTE
This is different. This is important. How many?!

She counts silently, using fingers as marks. DANTE waits on a customer in the interim. VERONICA stops counting.

DANTE
Well...?

VERONICA
(half-mumbled)
Something like thirty-six.

DANTE
WHAT? SOMETHING LIKE THIRTY-SIX?

26.

VERONICA
Lower your voice!

DANTE
What the hell is that anyway, "something like thirty-six?" Does that include me?

VERONICA
Um. Thirty-seven.

DANTE
I'M THIRTY-SEVEN?

VERONICA
(walking away)
I'm going to class.

DANTE
Thirty-seven?! (to CUSTOMER)
My girlfriend sucked thirty-seven dicks!

CUSTOMER
In a row?
DANTE chases VERONICA down and grabs her by the door.

DANTE
Hey! Where are you going?!

VERONICA
Hey listen, jerk! Until today you never even knew how many guys I'd slept with, because you never even asked. And then you act all nonchalant about fucking twelve different girls. Well, I never had sex with twelve different guys!

DANTE
No, but you sucked enough dick!

VERONICA
Yeah, I went down on a few guys...

DANTE
A few?

VERONICA
...And one of those guys was you! The last one, I might add, which-if you're too stupid to comprehend-means that I've been faithful to you since we met! All the other guys I went with before I met you, so, if you want to have a complex about it, go ahead! But don't look at me like I'm the town whore, because you were plenty busy yourself, before you met me!

DANTE
(a bit more rational)
Well...why did you have to suck their dicks? Why didn't you just sleep with them, like any decent person?!

VERONICA
Because going down it's a big deal! I used to like a guy, we'd make out, and sooner or later I'd go down on him. But I only had sex with the guys I loved.
DANTE
I feel sick.

VERONICA
(holds him)
I love you. Don't feel sick.

DANTE
Every time I kiss you now I'm going to taste thirty-six other guys.

VERONICA violently lets go of him.

VERONICA
I'm going to school. Maybe later you'll be a bit more rational.

DANTE
(pause)
Thirty-seven. I just can't...

VERONICA
Goodbye, Dante.

She exits in a huff. DANTE stands there in silence for a moment. Then he swings the door open and yells out.

28.

DANTE
Try not to suck any more dicks on your way through the parking lot!

Two men who were walking in the opposite direction outside double back and head in the direction. VERONICA went.

DANTE
HEY! HEY, YOU! GET BACK HERE!

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

A videocassette encased in the customary black box flips repeatedly, held by an impatient grasp. The IMPATIENT CUSTOMER glares at DANTE. Dante studies a copy of Paradise Lost, making a strong attempt at not noticing the glare.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
(pissed off)
I thought that place was supposed to be opened at eleven o'clock? It's twenty after!

DANTE
I called his house twice already. He should be here soon.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
It's not like it's a demanding job. I'd like to get paid to sit on my ass and watch TV. The other day I walked in there and that sonofabitch was sleeping.

DANTE
I'm sure he wasn't sleeping.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
You calling me a liar?

DANTE
No; he was probably just resting his eyes.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
What the hell is that? Resting his eyes! It's not like he's some goddamned air traffic controller!

DANTE
Actually, that's his night job.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
Such a wiseass. But go ahead. Crack wise. That's why you're jockeying a register in some fucking local convenience store instead of doing an honest day's work.

(tosses tape on counter)
I got no more time to bullshit around waiting for that sonofabitch. You make sure this gets back. The number's eight-twelve-Wynarski. And I wanted to get a damn movie, too.

DANTE
If you'll just tell me the title of your rental choice, I'll have him
hold it for you.

**IMPATIENT CUSTOMER**
(storming out)
Don't hurt yourself. I'm going to Big Choice Video instead.

He storms out. Dante lifts a ring of keys from the counter.

**DANTE**
(in a whisper)
You forgot your keys.

The half-filled trash can swallows the ring of keys.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY**

Another VIDEO-ANXIOUS CUSTOMER leans against the video store door. A hapless RANDAL drifts by and stops. He glances at the door, peers inside, and gives the door a tug.

**V.A. CUSTOMER**
The guy ain't here yet.

**RANDAL**
You're kidding. It's almost eleven-thirty!

**V.A. CUSTOMER**
I know. I've been here since eleven.

**RANDAL**
(kicks the door)
Man! I hate it when I can't rent videos!

30.

**V.A. CUSTOMER**
I would've went to Big Choice, but the tape I want is right there on the wall.

**RANDAL**
Which one?

**V.A. CUSTOMER**
Dental School.
RANDAL
You came for that too? That's the movie I came for.

V.A. CUSTOMER
I have first dibs.

RANDAL
Says who?

V.A. CUSTOMER
(suddenly snotty)
Says me. I've been here for half an hour. I'd call that first dibs.

RANDAL
Ain't gonna happen, my friend. I'm getting that tape.

V.A. CUSTOMER
Like hell you are!

RANDAL
I'll bet you twenty bucks you don't get to rent that tape.

V.A. CUSTOMER
Twenty bucks?

RANDAL
Twenty bucks.

V.A. CUSTOMER
All right, asshole, you're on.

RANDAL walks away. The VERY ANXIOUS CUSTOMER stands like a sentry at post. The IMPATIENT CUSTOMER storms up.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
You see a pair of keys lying around here somewhere?

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

RANDAL dances in, attempting a soft-shoe routine. He sees DANTE and stops dead, midshuffle.
DANTE
You're late.

RANDAL
What the hell are you doing here? I thought you were playing hockey at one.

DANTE
The boss called. Arthur fell ill.

RANDAL
Why are the shutters closed?

DANTE
Someone jammed gum in the locks.

RANDAL
Bunch of savages in this town.

DANTE
That's what I said.

RANDAL
Shit, if I'd known you were working, I would've come even later.

A pile of videocassettes is plopped onto the counter, with a single key on top. RANDAL balances the pile of tapes on his head.

RANDAL
What time do you have to stay till?

DANTE
He assured me that he'd be here by twelve.

RANDAL
What smells like shoe polish?

DANTE
Go open the sore.

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

The IMPATIENT CUSTOMER stops RANDAL.
IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
Hey-did you see a set of keys lying around here?

RANDAL
(as Short-round)
No time for love, Doctor Jones!

RANDAL marches off. The IMPATIENT CUSTOMER stares after him.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
Fucking kids.

The VERY ANXIOUS CUSTOMER now sits on the ground, next to the video store door. RANDAL balances his burden and shoves the key into the lock. The VERY ANXIOUS CUSTOMER stares as RANDAL enters the store. The door closes behind him, only to be held ajar in a gentlemanly fashion a few moments later. RANDAL smiles.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

A coffee filter is shoved into the metal pan and someone heaps ground coffee on it. We've seen this same routine before. DANTE crosses back to his post, as RANDAL enters, tossing the key into the air happily and catching it. He picks the cat up.

RANDAL
Some guy just came in refusing to pay late fees. He said the store was closed for two hours yesterday. I tore up his membership.

DANTE
Shocking abuse of authority.

RANDAL
I'm a firm believer in the philosophy of a ruling class, especially since I rule.
(furtively)
Is the Pelican flying?

DANTE
Don't screw with it. It makes us look suspicious.

RANDAL
I can't stand a voyeur. I'll be back.

RANDAL heads toward the walk-in door.

CUT TO:

INT: BACK ROOM. DAY

POV: VCR

A far-away wall is the only thing we see, but mild gruntings give away an ascension of sorts. RANDAL'S head rises into view, as if he's climbing a ladder. He stops and looks into the lens.

POV: RANDAL

The PELICAN is a VCR that's hooked up to a surveillance camera. It records quickly. A hand reaches into the frame and shuts it off.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

RANDAL pulls a soda from the cooler.

RANDAL
Want something to drink? I'm buying.

DANTE (O.C.)
No, thanks.

RANDAL
Who was on your phone this morning at about two-thirty? I was trying to call for a half an hour.

DANTE (O.C.)
Why?

RANDAL
I wanted to use your car.

He walks by a row of snacks and grabs one without looking at it.

RANDAL
Snake cake?
DANTE sits in his seat behind the register. RANDAL grabs a paper and joins him behind the counter.

**DANTE**
You don't want to know.

**RANDAL**
You called Caitlin again?

**DANTE**
She called me.

**RANDAL**
Did you tell Veronica?

**DANTE**
One fight a day with Veronica is about all I can stomach, thanks.

**RANDAL**
What do you two fight about?

**DANTE**
I guess it's not really fighting. She just wants me to leave here, go back to school, get some direction.

**RANDAL**
(opening paper)
I'll bet the most frequent topic of arguments is Caitlin Bree.

**DANTE**
You win.

**RANDAL**
I'm going to offer you some advice, my friend: let the past be the past. Forget Caitlin Bree. You've been with Veronica for how long now?

**DANTE**
Seven months.

**RANDAL**
Chick's nuts about you. How long did you date Caitlin?
DANTE

Five years.

RANDAL

Chick only made you nuts. She cheated on you how many times?

DANTE

Eight and a half.

35.

RANDAL

(looks up from paper)

Eight and a half?

DANTE

Party at John K's-senior year. I get blitzed and pass out in his bedroom. Caitlin comes in and dives all over me.

RANDAL

That's cheating?

DANTE

In the middle of it, she calls me Brad.

RANDAL

She called you Brad?

DANTE

She called me Brad.

RANDAL

That's not cheating. People say crazy shit during sex. One time, I called this girl "Mom."

DANTE

I hit the lights and she freaks. Turns out she thought I was Brad Michaelson.

RANDAL

What do you mean?

DANTE

She was supposed to meet Brad Michaelson in a bedroom. She picked
the wrong one. She had no idea I was even at the party.

RANDAL
Oh, my God.

DANTE
Great story, isn't it?

RANDAL
That girl was vile to you.

DANTE
Interesting postscript to that story: Do you know who wound up going with Brad Michaelson in the other dark bedroom?

RANDAL
Your mother.

DANTE
Allan Harris.

RANDAL
Chess team Allan Harris?!

DANTE
The two moved to Idaho together after graduation. They raise sheep.

RANDAL
That's frightening.

DANTE
It takes different strokes to move the world.

RANDAL
In light of this lurid tale, I don't see how you could even romanticize your relationship with Caitlin—she broke your heart and inadvertently drove men to deviant lifestyles.

DANTE
Because there was a lot of good in our relationship.
RANDAL

Oh yeah.

DANTE

I'm serious. Aside from the cheating, we were a great couple. That's what high school's all about-algebra, bad lunch, and infidelity.

RANDAL

You think things would be any different now?

DANTE

They are. When she calls me now, she's a different person-she's frightened and vulnerable. She's about to finish college and enter the real world. That's got to be scary for anyone.

RANDAL

(suddenly recalling)

Oh shit, I've got to place an order.

DANTE

I'm talking to myself here.

RANDAL

No, no, I'm listening. She's leaving college, and...?

DANTE

...and she's looking to me for support. And I think that this is leading our relationship to a new level.

RANDAL

What about Veronica?

DANTE

I think the arguments Veronica and I are having are some kind of manifestation of a subconscious desire to break away from her so that I can pursue the possibility
of a more meaningful relationship with Caitlin.

RANDAL
Caitlin's on the same wave-length?

DANTE
I think it's safe to say yes.

RANDAL
Then I think all four of you had better sit down and talk it over.

DANTE
All four?

RANDAL
You, Veronica, Caitlin...
(lays paper flat)
...and Caitlin's fiancé.

38.

THE HEADLINE of the engagement announcement reads, BREE TO WED ASIAN DESIGN MAJOR.

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. DAY

RANDAL dials the phone. He holds a list in his hand.

RANDAL
Yes, I'd like to place an order, please...Thank you.

A MOTHER and her SMALL CHILD approach the counter.

MOTHER
Excuse me, but do you see videotapes?

RANDAL
What were you looking for?

MOTHER
(smiling)
It's called Happy Scrappy-The Hero Pup.

SMALL CHILD
Happy Scrappy!
RANDAL
I'm on the phone with the
distribution house now. Let me make
sure they have it. What's it called
again?

MOTHER
Happy Scrappy-The Hero Pup.

SMALL CHILD
Happy Scrappy!

MOTHER
(more smiling)
She loves the tape.

RANDAL
Obviously.
(to phone)
Yes, hello; this is R.S.T. Video
calling. Customer number four-
three-five-zero-two-nine. I'd like
to place an order...Okay...

(MORE)

RANDAL (CONT'D)
(reading from list)
I need one each of the following
tapes: Whisper in the Wind, To Each
His Own, Put it Where It Doesn't
Belong, My Pipes Need Cleaning, All
Tit-Fucking, Volume Eight, I Need
Your Cock, Ass-Worshipping Rim-
Jobbers, My Cunt and Eight Shafts,
Cum Clean, Cum-Gargling Naked
Sluts, Cum Buns Three, Cumming in a
Sock, Cum on Eileen, Huge Black
Cocks with Pearly White Cum, Slam
It Up My Too-Loose Ass, Ass Blasters
in Outer Space, Blowjobs by Betsy,
Sucking Cock and Cunt, Finger My
Ass, Play with my Puss, Three on a
Dildo, Girls Who Crave Cock, Girls
Who Crave Cunt, Men Alone Two-The
K.Y. Connection, Pink Pussy Lips,
and All Holes Filled with Hard Cock.
Oh, and...

(to MOTHER)
What was the name of that movie?

MOTHER
(nearly dazed)
Happy Scrappy-The Hero Pup.

RANDAL
(on phone)
And a copy of Happy Scrappy-The Hero Pup...Okay, thanks.
(hangs up; to MOTHER)
Sixteen forty-nine. It'll be here Monday.

Silence. Then...

SMALL CHILD
Cunt!

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

DANTE carries a litter box to be dumped. He pauses midstrike and lays it on the ice cream chest. DANTE picks up the phone and looks at the paper. He dials and waits.

--

DANTE
Yes, I'd like to check on a misprint in today's edition...Today's edition...It says "Bree to Wed Asian Design Major...No, no; everything's spelled fine. I just wanted to know if the piece was a misprint...I don't know, like a typographical error or something...

A CUSTOMER comes to the counter and waits. He looks at the litter box. A black cat suddenly jumps into it and starts pawing around.

DANTE (O.C.)
Maybe it's supposed to be Caitlin Bray, or Caitlin Bre, with one e...I'm a curious party...A curious party...

DANTE on the phone:
DANTE

...I'm an ex-boyfriend...Well, it's just that we talk all the time, and she never mentioned this engagement, which is why I'm thinking maybe it's a misprint...

The CUSTOMER watches as the cat takes a huge dump, leaning on its haunches to accommodate the stinky load.

DANTE (O.C.)

...Are you sure?...Maybe there's like a vindictive printer working for you...

DANTE on the phone:

DANTE

Meaning like someone who maybe-I don't know-asked her out once and got shot down, and his revenge is throwing this bogus article in when the paper went to press...Hello?...Hello?

DANTE hangs up. He looks at the paper ruefully, shaking his head. He then sniffs the air.

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

JAY, SILENT BOB and OLAF lean against wall.

JAY

"Not in me." That's what she says. I gotta pull out and spank it to get it on. So I blow a nut on her belly, and I get out of there, just as my uncle walks in. It was such a close call. I tell you what, though, I don't care if she is my cousin, I'm gonna knock those boots again tonight.

TWO GIRLS join them.

JAY

Oh shit, look who it is. The human
vacuum.

**GIRL 1**
Scumbag. What are you doing?

**JAY**
Nothing. Just hanging out with Silent Bob and his cousin.

**GIRL 1**
(to SILENT BOB)
He's your cousin?

**JAY**
Check this out, he's from Russia.

**GIRL 1**
No way.

**JAY**
I swear to God. Silent Bob, am I lying?

SILENT BOB shakes his head:

**JAY**
See? And Silent Bob never told a lie in his life.

**GIRL 2**
What part of Russia?

42.

**JAY**
I don't fucking know. What am I, his biographer?
(to OLAF)
Olaf, what part of Russia are you from?

OLAF looks quizzically at SILENT BOB.

**SILENT BOB**
(in Russian)
Home.

**OLAF**
(comprehending)
Moscow.
GIRL 1
He only speaks Russian?

JAY
He knows some English, but he can't not speak it good like we do.

GIRL 2
Is he staying here?

JAY
He's moving to the big city next week. He wants to be a metal singer.

GIRL 1
No way!

JAY
Swear.
(to OLAF)
Olaf, metal!

OLAF makes a metal face.

JAY
That's his fucking metal face.
(to OLAF)
Olaf, girls nice?

OLAF looks the girls up and down.

OLAF
Skrelnick.

JAY
(laughs)
That's fucked up.

GIRL 1
What did he say?

JAY
I don't know, man. He's a fucking character.

GIRL 2
He really wants to play metal?

JAY
He's got his own band in Moscow. It's called "Fuck Your Yankee Blue Jeans" or something like that.

GIRL 1
That doesn't sound metal.

JAY
You gotta hear him sing.
(to OLAFF) Olaf, "Berserker!"

OLAF laughs and shakes his head.

JAY
Come on, man, "Berserker!"

GIRL 2
Does he sing in English or Russian?

JAY
English.
(to OLAFF)
Come on, "Berserker!" Girls think sexy.

OLAF
(relents)
Da. Da.

JAY
He's gonna sing it. This is too funny.

OLAF
(in broken English)
MY LOVE FOR YOU IS LIKE A TRUCK BERSEKER! WOULD YOU LIKE SOME MAKING FUCK? BERSEKER!

JAY
(laughing)
That's fucking funny, man!

44.

GIRL 1
Did he say "making fuck?"

JAY
Wait, there's more.
(to OLAF)
Olaf: sing...
(makes pot-smoking face)

OLAF
(nods in understanding)
MY LOVE FOR YOU IS LIKE A ROCK
BERSERKER!WOULD YOU LIKE TO SMOKE
SOME POT? BERSERKER!

OLAF busts a crimson metal sneer and cackles deeply.

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. DAY

RANDAL leans back in his chair, staring up at the TV. The theme to Star Wars plays. He stands, points the remote, clicks the TV off, and ponders.

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. DAY

RANDAL locks the door and walks away, while OLAF sings for the small crowd.

OLAF
MY LOVE FOR YOU IS TICKING CLOCK
BERSERKER!WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUCK MY COCK? BERSERKER!

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

DANTE is tugging at a can of Pringles potato chips. The can is stuck on a MAN'S hand.

DANTE
You hold the counter and I'll pull.

MAN
Usually I just turn the can upside down.

DANTE
(pulling)
Maybe we should soap your hand or something.

**MAN**
(straining)
The oughta put some kind of warning on these cans, like they do with cigarettes.

**DANTE**
I think it's coming now...

The can pops off and DANTE staggers back a few steps. The man rubs his hand.

**MAN**
Thanks. I thought I was gonna have to go to the hospital.

**DANTE**
I'll throw this out. Precautionary measure.

**MAN**
It stings a little.

**DANTE**
A word of advice: Sometimes it's best to let those hard to reach chips go.

DANTE steps behind the counter.

**MAN**
Thanks.

The MAN exits as RANDAL enters. DANTE throws the canister away.

**DANTE**
Do you know that article is accurate? Caitlin's really getting married!

**RANDAL**
You know what I just watched?

**DANTE**
Me pulling a can off some moron's fist.

**RANDAL**
Return of the Jedi.
DANTE
Didn't you hear me? Caitlin really is getting married.

RANDAL
Which did you like better: Jedi or The Empire Strikes Back.

DANTE
(exasperated)
Empire.

RANDAL
Blasphemy.

DANTE
Empire had the better ending: Luke gets his hand cut off, and finds out Vader's his father; Han gets frozen and taken away by Boba Fett. It ends on such a down note. And that's life—a series of down endings. All Jedi had was a bunch of Muppets.

RANDAL
There was something else going on in Jedi. I never noticed it until today.

RANDAL follows DANTE as he cleans up around the store.

DANTE
What's that?

RANDAL
All right, Vader's boss...

DANTE
The Emperor.

RANDAL
Right, the Emperor. Now the Emperor is kind of a spiritual figure, yes?

DANTE
How do you mean?
RANDAL
Well, he's like the pope for the dark side of the Force. He's a holy man; a shaman, kind of, albeit an evil one.

DANTE
I guess.

RANDAL
Now, he's in charge of the Empire. The Imperial government is under his control. And the entire galaxy is under Imperial rule.

DANTE
Yeah.

RANDAL
Then wouldn't that logically mean that it's a theocracy? If the head of the Empire is a priest of some sort, then it stands to reason that the government is therefore one based on religion.

DANTE
It would stand to reason, yes.

RANDAL
Hence, the Empire was a fascist theocracy, and the rebel forces were therefore battling religious persecution.

DANTE
More or less.

RANDAL
The only problem is that at no point in the series did I ever hear Leia or any of the rebels declare a particular religious belief.

DANTE
I think they were Catholics.

A BLUE-COLLAR MAN half enters the door.
BLUE-COLLAR MAN

Are you open?

DANTE

Yeah. Come in.

He goes to the coffee machine and makes a cup of joe.

RANDAL

You know what else I noticed in Jedi?

DANTE

There's more?

RANDAL

So they build another Death Star, right?

DANTE

Yeah.

RANDAL

Now the first one they built was completed and fully operational before the Rebels destroyed it.

DANTE

Luke blew it up. Give credit where it's due.

RANDAL

And the second one was still being built when they blew it up.

DANTE

Compliments of Lando Calrissian.

RANDAL

Something just never sat right with me the second time they destroyed it. I could never put my finger on it—something just wasn't right.

DANTE

And you figured it out?

RANDAL

Well, the thing is, the first Death Star was manned by the Imperial
army-storm troopers, dignitaries-the only people onboard were Imperials.

DANTE
Basically.

RANDAL
So when they blew it up, no prob. Evil is punished.

DANTE
And the second time around...?

RANDAL
The second time around, it wasn't even finished yet. They were still under construction.

DANTE
So?

RANDAL
A construction job of that magnitude would require a helluva lot more manpower than the Imperial army had to offer. I'll bet there were independent contractors working on that thing: plumbers, aluminum siders, roofers.

DANTE
Not just Imperials, is what you're getting at.

RANDAL
Exactly. In order to get it built quickly and quietly they'd hire anybody who could do the job. Do you think the average storm trooper knows how to install a toilet main? All they know is killing and white uniforms.

DANTE
All right, so even if independent contractors are working on the Death Star, why are you uneasy with its destruction?
RANDAL
All those innocent contractors
hired to do a job were killed-
casualties of a war they had
nothing to do with.

(notices Dante's confusion)
All right, look-you're a roofer,
and some juicy government contract
comes your way; you got the wife
and kids and the two-story in
suburbia-this is a government
contract, which means all sorts of
benefits. All of a sudden these
left-wing militants blast you with
lasers and wipe out everyone within
a three-mile radius.

(MORE)

RANDAL (CONT'D)
You didn't ask for that. You have
no personal politics. You're just
trying to scrape out a living.

The BLUE-COLLAR MAN joins them.

BLUE-COLLAR MAN
Excuse me. I don't mean to
interrupt, but what were you
talking about?

RANDAL
The ending of Return of the Jedi.

DANTE
My friend is trying to convince me
that any contractors working on the
uncompleted Death Star were innocent
victims when the space station was
destroyed by the rebels.

BLUE-COLLAR MAN
Well, I'm a contractor myself. I'm
a roofer...

(digs into pocket and
produces business card)
Dunn and Reddy Home Improvements.
And speaking as a roofer, I can say
that a roofer's personal politics
come heavily into play when choosing jobs.

RANDAL
Like when?

BLUE-COLLAR MAN
Three months ago I was offered a job up in the hills. A beautiful house with tons of property. It was a simple reshingling job, but I was told that if it was finished within a day, my price would be doubled. Then I realized whose house it was.

DANTE
Whose house was it?

BLUE-COLLAR MAN
Dominick Bambino's.

RANDAL
"Babyface" Bambino? The gangster?

BLUE-COLLAR MAN
The same. The money was right, but the risk was too big. I knew who he was, and based on that, I passed the job on to a friend of mine.

DANTE
Based on personal politics.

BLUE-COLLAR MAN
Right. And that week, the Foresci family put a hit on Babyface's house. My friend was shot and killed. He wasn't even finished shingling.

RANDAL
No way!

BLUE-COLLAR MAN
(paying for coffee)
I'm alive because I knew there were risks involved taking on that particular client. My friend wasn't so lucky.
(pauses to reflect)
You know, any contractor willing to
work on that Death Star knew the
risks. If they were killed, it was
their own fault. A roofer listens
to this...
(taps his heart)
not his wallet.

The BLUE-COLLAR MAN exits. DANTE and RANDAL remain
respectfully quiet for a moment. An angry WOMAN opens the
door and pokes her head in.

WOMAN
Is that video store open or not?

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. DAY

RANDAL reads a newspaper. An INDECISIVE CUSTOMER studies the
two rental choices she holds. She looks from one movie to
the other repeatedly.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
(attempting a solicit help)
They say so much, but they never
tell you if it's any good.

RANDAL hardly stirs and continues to read his paper. The
INDECISIVE CUSTOMER half turns to see if her comment was
even heard. She tries again, but this time with a different
approach.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
Are either of these any good?

RANDAL continues to read. The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER tries
harder, then louder and more direct:

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
Sir!

RANDAL continues to read.

RANDAL
(flately)
What.
The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER holds up her rental choices.

    INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
    (politely)
    Are either of these any good?

RANDAL, as always, reads on.

    RANDAL
    (again, flatly)
    I don't watch movies.

The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER is a tad flabbergasted, but not put off.

    INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
    Well, have you heard anything about either of them?

RANDAL does his level best to not get involved.

    RANDAL
    (reading)
    No.

The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER challenges him.

    INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
    (in disbelief)
    You've never heard anybody say anything about either movie?

    RANDAL (O.C.)
    I find it's best to stay out of other people's affairs.

    INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
    (with a new determination)
    Well, how about these two movies?
    (holds up the same two)

RANDAL continues to read his paper, not looking up.

    RANDAL
    They suck.

The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER smirks smugly at RANDAL and his paper. She has caught him.
INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
I just held up the same two movies. You're not even paying attention.

RANDAL
No, I wasn't.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
I don't think your manager would appreciate...

RANDAL
(turning the page)
I don't appreciate your ruse, ma'am.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
I beg your pardon!

RANDAL
(reading on)
Your ruse. Your cunning attempt to trick me.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
(defending herself)
I only pointed out that you weren't paying any attention to what I was saying.

RANDAL
(turning page and reading)
I hope it feels good.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
You hope what feels good?

RANDAL
I hope it feels so good to be right. There is nothing more exhilarating than pointing out the shortcomings of others, is there?

The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER wears a face that belies utter disbelief in the audacity of this most lackadaisical video clerk. The unmoveing newspaper illustrates the total disinterest of the news-hungry RANDAL. The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER shakes her head in disgust and throws the movies back onto the wall.
INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
(in a huff)
Well this is the last time I ever rent here...

RANDAL
You'll be missed.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
(losing it altogether)
Screw you!

She storms out. RANDAL is offended. He hops over the counter and whips the door open.

RANDAL
(calling after her)
You're not allowed to rent here anymore!

RANDAL closes the door and stands there, momentarily, totally appalled by her exiting remark, then shakes his head.

RANDAL
Screw me!

He reaches behind the counter and grabs a ring of keys. Exiting, he locks the door behind him from the outside, gives it a tug to ensure its security, and storms off in the opposite direction from the woman.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

DANTE is staring, open-mouthed, at something O.C. RANDAL hurls the door open and immediately launches into his tirade.

RANDAL
You'll never believe what this unruly customer just said...

DANTE
(a hand up to urge him to hush)
Wait.

RANDAL
(looking around)
She's in here?

**DANTE**
This guy is going through all of the eggs. Look.

An **ODD MAN** sits on the floor, surrounded by cartons of eggs, all opened. He grabs a carton from the cooler case, pops it open, and examines each egg carefully.

**DANTE (O.C.)**
This has been going on for twenty minutes.

**RANDAL and DANTE** study the O.C. oddity.

**RANDAL**
What's he looking for?

**DANTE**
He said he has to find a perfect dozen.

**RANDAL**
Perfect dozen.

**DANTE**
Each egg has to be perfect.

**RANDAL**
The quest isn't going well?

**DANTE**
Obviously not. Look at all the cartons that didn't make the grade.

The **ODD MAN** holds an egg up to the light and studies it from several different angles.

**RANDAL (O.C.)**
Why doesn't he just mix and match?

**DANTE**
I told him that and he yelled at me.

**RANDAL** snickers at his friend.

56.

**RANDAL**
What did he say?

**DANTE**
He said it was important to have standards. He said nobody has pride anymore.

**RANDAL**
It's not like you laid the eggs yourself.

**DANTE**
I'll give him five more minutes then I'm calling the cops. I don't need this, man. I'm not even supposed to be here today.

A SMOKER steps in.

**SMOKER**
Two packs of cigarettes.

Dante manages to break his study of the O.C. oddity and searches for the smokes. The smoker glances at RANDAL and then at the O.C. oddity.

The ODD MAN is spinning an egg on the floor. The SMOKER looks at RANDAL.

**RANDAL**
(still staring at the ODD MAN)
I'm as puzzled as you.

**SMOKER**
(paying DANTE)
I've actually seen it before.

**DANTE**
You know him?

**SMOKER**
No, I've seen that behavior before. Looking for the perfect carton of eggs, right?

**RANDAL**
(a bit astonished)
Yeah. How'd you know?

**SMOKER**
I'll bet you a million bucks that
the guy's a guidance counselor.

DANTE
Why do you say that?

SMOKER
I was in the Food City last year when the same thing happened, different guy though. Stock boy told me that the guy had been looking through the eggs for like half an hour, doing all sorts of endurance tests and shit. I ask the kid how come nobody called the manager, and he says it happens twice a week, sometimes more.

RANDAL
Get out of here.

SMOKER
I kid you not. They call it Shell Shock. Only happens with guidance counselors for some reason. The kid said they used to make a big deal about it, but there's no point.

The ODD MAN places a handkerchief over an egg on the floor. He quickly whisks the handkerchief away to reveal the egg still sitting on the floor.

SMOKER (O.C.)
He said they always pay for whatever they break and they never bother anybody.

DANTE, RANDAL and the SMOKER stare at the O.C. man.

DANTE
Why guidance counselors?

SMOKER
If your job served as little purpose as theirs, wouldn't you lose it, too?

RANDAL
Come to think of it, my guidance counselor was kind of worthless.
SMOKER
(grabbing matches)
See? It's important to have a job
that makes a difference, boys.
That's why I kill Chinamen for the
railroad.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

POV RANDAL: THE EMPTY COUNTER

And then a LITTLE GIRL comes into view, smiling and holding
money. She can't be any more than five.

LITTLE GIRL
(innocently)
Can I have a pack of cigarettes?

RANDAL, without looking up from his magazine, completes the
transaction. THE LITTLE GIRL puts a cigarette in her mouth.
RANDAL hands her matches. DANTE returns to the counter as
the girl skips away. Dante holds a price gun.

DANTE
Did you ever notice all the prices
end in nine? Damn, that's eerie.

RANDAL
You know how much money the average
jizz-mopper make per hour?

DANTE
What's a jizz-mopper?

RANDAL
He's the guy in those nudie-booth
joints who cleans up after each guy
that jerks off.

DANTE
Nudie booth?

RANDAL
Nudie booth. You've never been in a
nudie booth?
DANTE
I guess not.

A female CUSTOMER pops items onto the counter. DANTE rings her up.

RANDAL
Oh, it's great. You step into this little booth and there's this window between you and this naked woman, and she puts on this little show for like ten bucks.

DANTE
What kind of show?

RANDAL
Think of the weirdest, craziest shit you'd like to see chicks do. These chicks do it all. They insert things into any opening in their body...any opening.
(to customer)
He's led a very sheltered life.

DANTE
(indicating CUSTOMER)
Can we talk about this later?

RANDAL
The jizz-mopper's job is to clean up the booths afterward, because practically everybody shoots a load against the window, and I don't know if you know or not, but cum leaves streaks if you don't clean it right away.

CUSTOMER
(grabbing her bag, disgusted)
This is the last time I come to this place.

DANTE
Excuse me?

CUSTOMER
Using filthy language in front of the customers...you should both get
fired.

**DANTE**
We're sorry, ma'am. We got a little carried away.

**CUSTOMER**
Well, I don't know if sorry can make up for it. I found your remarks highly offensive.

The CUSTOMER stands silently, awaiting something.

**RANDAL**
Well, you think that's offensive...

RANDAL flips open the magazine's centerfold—a graphic picture of a woman with her vaginal lips and anus spread wide open.

60.

**RANDAL**
...then check this out. I think you can see her kidneys.

RANDAL checks out the centerfold wistfully. DANTE frantically apologizes to the rapidly exiting CUSTOMER.

**DANTE**
Ma'am, ma'am, I'm sorry! Please, wait a second, ma'am...

The CUSTOMER is gone. DANTE'S pursuit stops at the counter. DANTE turns on RANDAL.

**DANTE**
Why do you do things like that? You know she's going to come back and tell the boss.

**RANDAL**
Who cares? That lady's an asshole. Everybody that comes in here is way too uptight. This job would be great if it wasn't for the fucking customers.

**DANTE**
I'm gonna hear it tomorrow.
RANDAL
You gotta loosen up, my friend. You'd feel a hell of a lot better if you'd rip into the occasional customer.

DANTE
What for? They don't bother me if I don't bother them.

RANDAL
Liar! Tell me there aren't customers that annoy the piss out of you on a daily basis.

DANTE
There aren't.

RANDAL
How can you lie like that? Why don't you vent? Vent your frustration. Come on, who pisses you off?

DANTE (reluctantly)
It's not really anyone per se, it's more of separate groupings.

RANDAL
Let's hear it.

DANTE (pause)
The milkmaids.

RANDAL
The milkmaids?

INSERT: MILK HANDLER
A WOMAN pulls out gallon after gallon, looking deep into the cooler for that perfect container of milk.

DANTE (O.C.)
The women that go through every gallon of milk looking for a later date. As if somewhere—beyond all the other gallons—is a container of
milk that won't go bad for like a decade.

END INSERT

RANDAL
You know who I can do without? I could do without the people in the video store.

DANTE
Which ones?

RANDAL
All of them.

MONTAGE INSERT #1/VIDEO JERKS

A series of people addressing the camera, asking the dumb questions.

FIRST
What would you get for a six-year-old boy who chronically wets his bed?

SECOND
(in front of stocked new release shelf)
Do you have any new movies in?

62.

THIRD
Do you have that one with the guy who was in that movie that was out last year?

END INSERT

RANDAL
And they never rent quality flicks; they always pick the most intellectually devoid movie on the rack.

MONTAGE INSERT #2/"Ooooh!..."

An identical series of customers finding their ideal choices.

FIRST
Ooooh! Home Alone!
SECOND
Ooooh! Hook!

THIRD
Ooooh! Navy Seals!

END INSERT

RANDAL

It's like in order to join, they have to have an IQ less than their shoe size.

DANTE

You think you get stupid questions? You should hear the barrage of stupid questions I get.

MONTAGE INSERT #3/DUMB QUESTIONS

A series of people standing in various locations throughout the convenience store, asking truly dumb questions.

FIRST
(holding coffee)
What do you mean there's no ice? You mean I've gotta drink this coffee hot?!

SECOND
(holding up item from clearly marked $.99 display)
How much? 63.

THIRD
(peeking in door)
Do you sell hubcaps?

END INSERT

RANDAL
See? You vented. Don't you feel better now?

DANTE
No.

RANDAL
Why not?

**DANTE**
Because my ex-girlfriend is getting married.

**RANDAL**
Jesus, you got a one-track mind. 
It's always Caitlin, Caitlin, Caitlin...

**DANTE**
(jerking head toward door)
Veronica!

DANTE gives RANDAL a shove to shut him up. VERONICA enters the store, carrying books and something covered with aluminum foil.

**VERONICA**
What happened to home by twelve?

DANTE is suddenly by her side, taking the books from under her arm.

**DANTE**
He still hasn't shown up. Why aren't you in class?

**VERONICA**
Lit 101 got canceled, so I stopped home and brought you some lunch.

**DANTE**
What is it?

**VERONICA**
Peanut butter and jelly with the crusts cut off. What do you think it is? It's lasagne.

**DANTE**
Really?
(kisses her forehead)
You're the best.

**VERONICA**
I'm glad you've calmed down a bit.
(to RANDAL)
Hi, Randal.

RANDAL (O.C.)
(exaggerately impressed)
Thirty-seven!

DANTE
(to O.C.)
Shut up!
(to VERONICA)
Yes, I've calmed down, I'm still not happy about it, but I've been able to deal.

RANDAL makes loud slurping noises from O.C.

DANTE
(to O.C.)
Why don't you go back to the video store?

RANDAL walks past the two, and pats VERONICA on the head. He exits.

VERONICA
You had to tell him.

DANTE
I had to tell someone. He put it into perspective.

VERONICA
What did he say?

DANTE
At least he wasn't thirty-six.

VERONICA
And that made you feel better?

DANTE
And he said most of them are college guys, I've never met or seen.

VERONICA
The ostrich syndrome: if you don't see it...

DANTE

65.
...it isn't there. Yes.

**VERONICA**
Thank you for being rational.

**DANTE**
Thank you for the lasagne.

**VERONICA**
You couldn't get these shutters open?

**DANTE**
I called a locksmith and he said the earliest he could get here it tomorrow.

**VERONICA**
Bummer, Well, I've gotta head back for the one-thirty class.

**DANTE**
What time do you get finished?

**VERONICA**
Eight. But I have a sorority meeting till nine, so I'll be back before you close. Can we go out and get some coffee?

**DANTE**
Sure.

**VERONICA**
Good. (kisses him) I'll see you when you close, then. Enjoy the lasagne.

She exits. DANTE leans against the magazine rack with his lasagne, contemplative. RANDAL pops his head in and makes the loud slurping noise again.

**CUT TO:**

**INT: VIDEO STORE. DAY**

RANDAL is recommending titles to potential customers.  

**RANDAL**
All right, now if you're really feeling dangerous tonight, then Smokey and the Bandit Three is the movie you must rent.

CUSTOMER
(studying box)
This doesn't even have Burt Reynolds in it.

RANDAL
Hey, neither did ET; but that was a great movie, right?

DANTE opens the door and leans in.

DANTE
Can you come next door? I gotta make a phone call.

RANDAL
(to DANTE)
Smokey Three: thumbs up, am I right?

DANTE
The best Burtless movie ever made.

DANTE exits. RANDAL gives his customers the what-did-I-tell-you look.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

THE CAT lies on the counter. Pull back to reveal RANDAL as he rings up an order. The CUSTOMER pets the cat, smiling.

CUSTOMER
Awww, he's so cute. What's his name?

RANDAL
Lenin's Tomb.

Dolly over to DANTE, on the phone.

DANTE
Hello, is Mr. Synder there? This is Dante...Did he say if he was on his way here?...Here...The convenience store...I know, but the other guy called out this morning and Mr.

(MORE)
DANTE (CONT'D)
Synder asked me to cover until he got here. He said he'd be here by noon, but it's one-thirty now, so I... Excuse me... Vermont?!... No, that can't be; I talked to him this morning... He left at what time?... He really went to Vermont?... When the hell was someone going to tell me?... He promised he was coming by noon!... Jesus... When does he get back?... TUESDAY!... You've gotta be fucking kidding me!... I've got a hockey game at two, and the fucking shutters are jammed closed, and he's in Vermont?... I'm not even supposed to be here today!!

(deep sigh)
So I'm stuck here till closing?... This is just great... I just can't believe... I'm sorry, I didn't mean to yell at you... No... No, I'll be all right... Well, that's all I can do, right?... Thanks.

He hangs up. RANDAL joins him.

RANDAL
Vermont?

DANTE
Can you believe this?!

RANDAL
He didn't mention it when he called you this morning?

DANTE
Not a fucking word! Slippery shit!

RANDAL
So, what—you're stuck here all day?

DANTE
FUCK!

RANDAL
Why'd you apologize?

DANTE

What?

RANDAL
I heard you apologize. Why? You have every right in the world to be mad.

DANTE
I know.

RANDAL
That seems to be the leitmotif in your life; ever backing down.

DANTE
I don't back down.

RANDAL
Yes, you do. You always back down. You assume blame that isn't yours, you come in when called as opposed to enjoying your day off, you buckle like a belt.

DANTE
You know what pisses me off the most?

RANDAL
The fact that I'm right about your buckling?

DANTE
I'm going to miss the game.

RANDAL
Because you buckled.

DANTE
Would you shut the hell up with that shit? It's not helping.

RANDAL
Don't yell at me, pal.

DANTE
Sorry.
RANDAL
See? There you go again.

DANTE
I can't believe I'm going to miss the game!

RANDAL
At least we're stuck here together.

DANTE
You've got a customer.

RANDAL walks away.

RANDAL (O.C.)
What? What do you want?!

DANTE shakes his head in frustration and picks up the phone again.

DANTE
Sanford? Dante...I can't play today...I'm stuck at work...I know I'm not scheduled, but-just forget it. I can't play...Neither can Randal...He's working too...

RANDAL comes back. DANTE rolls his eyes to the ceiling.

DANTE
(getting an idea)
Wait a second. Do we have to play at the park?...Hold on...
(to RANDAL)
Do you feel limber?

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

TAPE is rolled around the top of a stick. Laces are pulled tightly. An orange ball is slapped back and forth by a blade. The HOCKEY PLAYERS fill the convenience store. Some sit on the floor or lean against the coolers, but all are either preparing or practicing. RANDAL enters, wearing his equipment. DANTE skates to his side.
DANTE
(lifting his foot)
Pull my laces tighter.

RANDAL
(drops mitt and pulls laces)
I've gotta tell you, my friend:
this is one of the ballsiest moves
I've ever been privy to. I never
would have thought you capable of
such blatant disregard of store
policy.

DANTE
I told him I had a game today. It's
his own fault.

70.

RANDAL
No argument here. Insubordination
rules.

DANTE
I just want to play hockey like I
was scheduled to.

SANFORD skates up and skids to a halt.

SANFORD
Dante, let me grab a Gatorade.

DANTE
If you grab a Gatorade, then
everybody's going to grab one.

SANFORD
So?

DANTE
So? So nobody's going to want to
pay for these Gatorades.

SANFORD
What do you care? Hey, what smells
like shoe polish?

DANTE
I've got a responsibility here. I
can't let everybody grab free drinks.
SANFORD
What responsibility? You're closing the fucking store to play hockey.

RANDAL
He's blunt, but he's got a point.

DANTE
At least let me maintain some semblance of managerial control here.

SANFORD
All I'm saying is if you're going to be insubordinate, you should go the full nine and not pussy out when it comes to free refreshments.

RANDAL
He's right. As if we're suddenly gonna have a run on Gatorade.

SANFORD
Fuckin-A.

DANTE
All right. Jesus, you fuckers are pushy.

SANFORD
Hey man, I hear Caitlin's marrying an Asian drum major.

RANDAL
Design major.

DANTE
Can we not talk about this?

SANFORD
Fine by me. But you're living in denial and suppressing rage.

(skating away; to all)
Dante said we can all drink free Gatorade.

A laid-back hurrah is heard.

RANDAL
Are you gonna lock the store?
DANTE
I don't know. You going to lock the video store?

RANDAL
Look who you're asking here. How're we gonna block off the street?

DANTE
We're not playing in the street.

RANDAL
Then where're we gonna play?

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

The sign on the door reads:

TEMPORARILY CLOSED. BE OPEN AFTER FIRST PERIOD.

The PLAYERS ascend a ladder adjacent to the door, one by one. ON THE ROOF they jump off the ladder and skate around. More players join them.

From across the street we get the full, odd perspective: a store with many men gliding around on the roof.

On the roof DANTE skates and passes with another player. REDDING stretches, leaning against the sign. RANDAL pulls his mask on and slaps his glove, urging a shot. SANFORD skates in and takes a shot, which RANDAL blocks. JAY and SILENT BOB deal to a player: he drops money over the ledge and JAY throws up a dime bag. DANTE holds a ball in the center of the court.

DANTE
Ready?

PLAYERS take positions. SANFORD comes to the center and holds the ball in drop position. DANTE and REDDING face off, and the ball is in play.

The game begins as the players engage in a savage ballet. Faces are smashed with sticks, slide tackles are made, shots are taken, CU's of various players included.
INACTIVE PLAYERS call out encouragement and slander from the sidelines. More game playing including both goalies getting scored on and more face-offs.

Below, a CUSTOMER tugs on the convenience store door. He reads the sign and then backs up into the street, attempting to peer over the ledge. Above, the game continues.

Below, the CUSTOMER shifts from one foot to the other impatiently. He grabs the ladder and quickly ascends.

Above, from over the ledge of the roof, we see the head of the customer peek. Skating feet pass rapidly before him, and he watches for a moment before calling out.

CUSTOMER
When's this period over?

SOMEONE (O.C.)
Eight more minutes!

CUSTOMER
Are you shitting me? I want to get cigarettes!

DANTE skids to the sidelines.

DANTE
(out of breath)
If you can just wait a few more minutes.

CUSTOMER
Fuck that! I'm gonna break my crazy neck on this ladder!

SOMEONE (O.C.)
Dante! Where are you?!

CUSTOMER
He's busy!

DANTE starts to skate away.

DANTE
I'll be right back. It's almost over.

He jumps back into the game.
CUSTOMER
What the fuck is this?! I want some service!

DANTE (O.C.)
In a second!

CUSTOMER
Fuck in a second! This is...Look at you! You can't even pass!

DANTE (O.C.)
I can pass!

CUSTOMER
How 'bout covering point!? You suck!

DANTE skids back to the sidelines to address the CUSTOMER.

DANTE
Who are you to make assessments?

CUSTOMER
I'll assess all I want!

SOMEONE (O.C.)
DANTE! ARE YOU IN OR OUT!

CUSTOMER
(to O.C. SOMEONE)
Don't pass to this guy! He sucks!
(to DANTE)
You suck!

DANTE
Like you're better!

CUSTOMER
I can whip your ass.

Below, a WOMAN pulls at the door. She peers into the store, face against the glass.

DANTE (O.C.)
That's easy to say from over here.

CUSTOMER (O.C.)
Give me a stick, pretty boy! I'll knock your fucking teeth out and
pass all over your ass.

The WOMAN backs up and, shielding her eyes, looks toward the roof.

**WOMAN**
Is the convenience store open?

Above, DANTE and the CUSTOMER shout down at the O.C. WOMAN.

**DANTE AND CUSTOMER**
(simultaneously)

**NO!**

**DANTE**
(to CUSTOMER)
There's a stick over there. You're shooting against the goal.

(to the court)
**REDDING! COME OFF AND LET THIS FUCK ON!**

A new face-off pits DANTE against the CUSTOMER. The ball drops between the two and DANTE gets flattened. The CUSTOMER winds up and takes a hard shot. The ball sails off the court, through the air, and into a faraway yard. DANTE calls to the sidelines.

**DANTE**
Give me another ball.

**SOMEONE (O.C.)**
There are no more.

**DANTE**
What the fuck are you talking about?
How many balls did you bring?

SANFORD skates up to him.

**SANFORD**
(counting)
There was the orange ball...and the orange ball.

DANTE scrambles to the edge and calls over.

**DANTE**
Are there any balls down there?!
JAY (O.C.)
'Bout the biggest pair you ever seen! NYNNE!!

DANTE looks around, hyperventilating.

DANTE
You only brought one ball?!

SANFORD
I thought Redding had like three balls!

REDDING (O.C.)
I thought Dante had the balls.

DANTE
Nobody has another ball?

SANFORD
Shit!

DANTE
We get...what...twelve minutes of game, and it's over? Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!!
(pause; rubs head)
I'm not even supposed to be here today!

DANTE skates off.

SANFORD
We still get free Gatorade, right?

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

DANTE standing on a ladder, replaces a fluorescent light. An OLD MAN joins him at the foot of the ladder.

OLD MAN
Be careful.

DANTE
I'm trying.
OLD MAN
You know the insides of those are filled with stuff that gives you cancer.

DANTE
So I'm told.

OLD MAN
I had a friend that used to chew glass for a living. In the circus.

The light in place, DANTE descends the ladder and closes it.

DANTE
And he got cancer by chewing fluorescent bulb glass...?

OLD MAN
No, he got hit by a bus.

DANTE
(confused)
Oh...Can I help you?

OLD MAN
Well, that depends. Do you have a bathroom?

DANTE
Um...yeah, but it's for employees only.

OLD MAN
I understand, but can I use it. I'm not that young anymore, so I'm kind of...you know...incontinent.

DANTE
Uh...sure. Go ahead. It's back through the cooler.

OLD MAN
Thanks son. Say-what kind of toilet paper you got back there?

DANTE
The white kind.
OLD MAN
I'm not asking about the color. I mean is it rough or cottony?

DANTE
Actually, it is kind of rough.

OLD MAN
Rough, eh? Oh, that stuff rips hell out of my hemorrhoids. Say, would you mind if I took a roll of the soft stuff back there. I see you sell the soft stuff.

DANTE
Yeah, but...

OLD MAN
Aw, c'mon boy. What's the difference? You said yourself the stuff that's there now is rough.

DANTE
Yeah, okay. Go ahead.

OLD MAN
Thanks son, you're a lifesaver.

The OLD MAN walks off. DANTE heads back to the counter. The OLD MAN returns.

OLD MAN
Say, young fella, you know I hate to bother you again, but can I take a paper or something back there...to read? It usually takes me a while, and I like to read while it's going on.

DANTE
Jesus...go ahead.

OLD MAN
Thanks, young man. You've got a heart of gold.

The OLD MAN sifts through some papers and a few magazines. He comes back to the counter.

DANTE
You know, you probably could've been home, already, in the time
it's taken you to get in there.

OLD MAN
Can I trouble you for one of those magazines?

DANTE
I said go ahead.

OLD MAN
No, I mean the ones there. Behind the counter.

DANTE glances over and reacts.

DANTE
The porno mags?

OLD MAN
Yeah. I like the cartoons. They make me laugh. They draw the biggest titties.

DANTE
(hands one to him)
Here. Now leave me alone.

OLD MAN
Uh, can I have the other one. The one below this one. They show more in that one.

DANTE makes the switch.

OLD MAN
Thanks son. I appreciate this.

The OLD MAN walks off. We hear the back door open and close, then the front door does the same. RANDAL joins DANTE.

RANDAL
Helluva game!

DANTE
One ball!! They come all the way here...I close the damn store...for one ball!

RANDAL
Hockey's hockey. At least we got to play.

**DANTE**
Randal, twelve minutes is not a game! Jesus, it's barely a warm-up!

**RANDAL**
Bitch, bitch, bitch. You want something to drink?
(walking away)

**DANTE**
Gatorade.

Pause. Then...

**RANDAL (O.C.)**
What happened to all the Gatorade?

**DANTE**
Exactly. They drank it all.

**RANDAL (O.C.)**
After an exhausting game like that I can believe it.

**DANTE**
(as RANDAL)
"It's not like we're gonna sell out."

RANDAL comes back with drinks.

**RANDAL**
You know what Sanford told me?
(offering drink)

**DANTE**
I still can't believe Caitlin's getting married.

**RANDAL**
Julie Dwyer died.

**DANTE**
Yeah, right.
RANDAL

No, I'm serious.

DANTE is visibly taken aback.

DANTE

Oh, my god.

RANDAL

Sanford's brother dates her cousin. He found out this morning.

DANTE

How? When?

RANDAL

Embolism in her brain. Yesterday.

DANTE

Jesus.

RANDAL

She was swimming at the YMCA pool when it happened. Died midbackstroke.

DANTE

I haven't seen her in almost two years.

RANDAL

Correct me if I'm wrong, but wasn't she one of the illustrious twelve?

DANTE

Number six.

RANDAL

You've had sex with a dead person.

DANTE

I'm gonna go to her wake.

RANDAL

No, you're not.

DANTE

Why not?
RANDAL
It's today.

DANTE
What!?

RANDAL
Paulsen's Funeral Parlor. The next show is at four.

DANTE
Shit. What about tomorrow?

RANDAL
One night only. She's buried in the morning.

DANTE
You've gotta watch the store. I have to go to this.

RANDAL
Wait, wait, wait. Has it occurred to you that I might bereaved as well?

DANTE
You hardly knew her!

RANDAL
True, but do you know how many people are going to be there? All of our old classmates, to say the least.

DANTE
Stop it. This is beneath even you.

RANDAL
I'm not missing what's probably going to be the social event of the season.

DANTE
You hate people.

RANDAL
But I love gatherings. Isn't it ironic?
DANTE
Don't be an asshole. Somebody has to stay with the store.

RANDAL
If you go, I go.

DANTE
She meant nothing to you!

RANDAL
She meant nothing to you either until I told you she died.

DANTE
I'm not taking you to this funeral.

RANDAL
I'm going with you.

DANTE
I can't close the store.

RANDAL
You just closed the store to play hockey on the roof!

DANTE
Exactly, which means I can't close it for another hour so we can both go to a wake.

CUT TO:

INT CAR: DAY

DANTE drives with passenger RANDAL, their backs to the camera.

RANDAL
You were saying?

DANTE
Thanks for putting me in a tough spot. You're a good friend.

Silence. Then...

RANDAL
She was pretty young, hunhh?
DANTE
Twenty-two; same as us.

RANDAL
An embolism in a pool.

DANTE
An embarrassing way to die.

RANDAL
That's nothing compared to how my cousin Walter died.

DANTE
How'd he die?

RANDAL
Broke his neck.

DANTE
That's embarrassing?

RANDAL
He broke his neck trying to suck his own dick.

Absolute silence. Then...

DANTE
Shut the hell up.

RANDAL
Bible truth.

DANTE
Stop it.

RANDAL
I swear.

DANTE
Oh, my god.

RANDAL
Come on. Haven't you ever tried to suck your own dick?

DANTE
No!

**RANDAL**
Yeah sure. You're so repressed.

**DANTE**
Because I never tried to suck my own dick?

**RANDAL**
No, because you won't admit to it. As if a guy's a fucking pervert because he tries to go down on himself. You're as curious as the rest of us, pal. You've tried it.

**DANTE**
Who found him?

**RANDAL**
My cousin? My aunt found him. On his bed, doubled over himself with his legs on top. Dick in his mouth. My aunt freaked out. It was a mess.

**DANTE**
His dick was in his mouth?

**RANDAL**
Balls resting on his lips.

**DANTE**
He made it, hunnh?

**RANDAL**
Yeah, but at what a price.

Silence. Then...

**DANTE**
I could never reach.

**RANDAL**
Reach what?

**DANTE**
You know.

**RANDAL**
What, your dick?

DANTE
Yeah. Like you said, you know. I guess everyone tries it, sooner or later.

RANDAL
I never tried it.

DANTE glares at RANDAL. Silence. Then...

RANDAL
Fucking pervert.

CUT TO:

EXT: FUNERAL PARLOR. DAY

DANTE and RANDAL walk up the path to the funeral parlor.

DANTE
I know it was a bad idea to close the store.

RANDAL
Listen to you.

DANTE
I can't help it. At least when we were playing hockey outside, I could see if anyone wanted to go in.

RANDAL
Nobody's there. It's four o'clock on a Saturday. How many people ever come to the store at four on a Saturday?

CUT TO:

85.

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

A MASSIVE CROWD is outside the store.

CUT TO:

EXT: FUNERAL PARLOR. DAY
DANTE and RANDAL run from the front door, closely chased by a small crowd of angry mourners. Car locks are slammed down. The car screams away. The pursuing crowd stands in the middle of the street, shaking their fists, throwing things.

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

The car pulls up and RANDAL and DANTE get out. Absolutely nobody is outside.

DANTE
(furious)
I can't fucking believe you!!

RANDAL
I'm telling you, it wasn't my fault!

DANTE
You knocked the fucking casket over, for Chrissakes!

RANDAL
I was just leaning on it! It was an accident!

DANTE
Does anyone ever knock over a casket on purpose?

RANDAL
So the casket fell over! Big deal!

DANTE
Her fucking body fell out!

RANDAL
So they'll put her back in! It's not like it's gonna matter if she breaks something!

DANTE
(opening door)
Just...go! Go open the video store.

JAY (O.C.)
(mimicking)
Yeah! Open the video store!!
RANDAL
(to O.C.)
Shut the fuck up, junkie!

JAY enters the frame, right next to RANDAL. He aims his butt at him and farts. RANDAL lunges for him. DANTE grabs RANDAL.

DANTE
(to RANDAL)
Go open the video store.

JAY
Yeah, you cock-smoking clerk.

DANTE
(to JAY)
How many times I gotta tell you not to deal outside the store.

JAY
I'm not dealing.

A KID tugs at JAY'S shirt.

KID
You got anything, man?

JAY
Yeah, what do you want?

RANDAL heads to the video store. DANTE enters the convenience store and slides the sign to OPEN. After a few seconds, the IMPATIENT CUSTOMER (guy who lost his keys) appears, flashlight in hand, scanning the ground.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
(to JAY)
Hey, did you see a set of keys lying around here somewhere?

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

DANTE rearranges the milk. RANDAL joins him.

RANDAL
Let me borrow your car.
DANTE
I don't want to talk to you.

RANDAL
Fine. Just lend me your car.

DANTE
Why should I loan you my car?

RANDAL
I want to rent a movie.

DANTE
(pause)
You want to rent a movie.

DANTE walks away, shaking his head.

RANDAL
What's that for?

DANTE
You work in a video store!

They head back to the counter.

RANDAL
I work in a shitty video store. I want to go to a good video store so I can rent a good movie.

CUSTOMER
Are you open?

DANTE AND RANDAL
(simultaneously)
YES!

The CUSTOMER comes to the counter.

CUSTOMER
Pack of cigarettes.
(pets cat)
Cute cat. What's its name?

RANDAL
Annoying Customer.

The CUSTOMER lets it sink in, and then leaves in a huff. DANTE puts up cigarettes.
DANTE
Can you imagine being halfway
decent to the customers at least
some of the time?

RANDAL
Let me borrow your car.

DANTE
(calmer)
May I be blunt with you?

RANDAL
If you must.

DANTE
We are employees of Quick Stop
Convenience and RST video,
respectively. As such, we have
certain responsibilities which-
though it may seem cruel and
unusual—does include manning our
posts until closing.

RANDAL
I see. So playing hockey and
attending wakes—these practices are
standard operating procedure.

DANTE
There's a difference. Those were
obligations. Obligations that could
not have been met at any later date.
Now renting videos—that’s just
gratuitous, not to mention
illogical, considering you work in
a video store.

Another CUSTOMER leans in.

CUSTOMER
Are you open?

DANTE
(rolls his eyes)
Yes.

RANDAL
You know what? I don't think I care
for you rationale.

DANTE
It's going to have to do for now, considering that it's my car that's up for request.
(to CUSTOMER)
Can I help you?

CUSTOMER
Pack of cigarettes.

RANAL
What's your point?

DANTE
My point is that you're a clerk, paid to do a job. You can't just do anything you want while you're working.

CUSTOMER
(reading tabloid)
"Space Alien Revealed as Head of Time Warner; Reports Stock Increase."
(to DANTE and RANAL)
They print any kind of shit in these papers.

DANTE
They certainly do. Two fifty-five.

RANAL
So your argument is that title dictates behavior?

DANTE
What?

RANAL
The reasons you won't let me borrow your care is because I have a title and a job description, and I'm supposed to follow it, right?

DANTE
Exactly.
CUSTOMER
(interjecting)
I saw one, one time, that said the world was ending the next week.
(MORE)

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)
Then in the next week's paper, they said we were miraculously saved at the zero hour by a Koala-fish mutant bird. Crazy shit.

RANDAL
(eyes the CUSTOMER, annoyed)
So I'm no more responsible for my own decisions while I'm here at work than, say, the Death Squad soldiers in Bosnia?

DANTE
That's stretching it. You're not being asked to slay children or anything.

RANDAL
Not yet.
(sips water)

CUSTOMER
(again with the interjections)
And I remember this one time the damn paper said...

RANDAL spits a mist of water at the customer, drenching him. The man reacts violently, attempting to grab RANDAL from over the counter. RANDAL makes no move, but remains untouched. DANTE plays block.

CUSTOMER
I'M GONNA BREAK YOUR FUCKING HEAD!
YOU FUCKING JERKOFF!

DANTE
Sir! Sir, I'm sorry! He didn't mean it! He was trying to get me.

CUSTOMER
Well, he missed!
DANTE
I know. I'm sorry. Let me refund your cigarette money, and we'll call it even.

CUSTOMER
(considerably calmer; takes money)
This is the last time I ever come here.
(to RANDAL)
And if I ever see you again, I'm gonna break your fucking head open!

The CUSTOMER leaves, wiping water from his face. RANDAL salutes him.

DANTE
(angrily)
What the fuck did you do that for?

RANDAL
Two reasons: one, I hate when the people can't shut up about the stupid tabloid headlines.

DANTE
Jesus!

RANDAL
And two, to make a point: title does not dictate behavior.

DANTE
What?

RANDAL
If title dictated my behavior, as a clerk serving the public, I wouldn't be allowed to spit a mouthful of water at that guy. But I did, so my point is that people dictate their own behavior. Hence, even though I'm a clerk in this video store, I choose to go rent videos at Big Choice.
(extends opened palm)
Agreed?
DANTE
(shakes his head; hands over keys)
You're a danger to both the dead and the living.

RANDAL
I like to think I'm a master of my own destiny.

DANTE
Please, get the hell out of here.

RANDAL
I know I'm your hero.

RANDAL exits.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

DANTE waits on a customer (TRAINER). He lifts the gallon of milk into a paper bag, letting out a slight grunt.

TRAINER
Sounds to me like somebody needs to hit the gym.

DANTE
Excuse me?

TRAINER
I heard you strain when you put the milk in the bag. That milk only weighs about seven pounds.

DANTE
I didn't strain. I sighed.

TRAINER
I don't think so. That was a grunt; a deep inhalation of oxygen to aid in the stretching of muscles. I'm a trainer. I know what that sound signifies: you're out of shape.

DANTE
I don't think so.

**TRAINER**
Oh, I do. You made the same noise when you reached across the counter for my cash. Your muscles are thin and sadly underutilized.

**DANTE**
They are not.

**TRAINER**
Yes, they are. You're out of shape.

**DANTE**
What are you talking about? There's no fat on this body.

**TRAINER**
No fat, but no tone either. You don't get enough exercise.

A female customer (HEATHER) leans in the doorway.

**HEATHER**
Are you open?

**DANTE**
Yes.

**HEATHER**
(grabs a paper)
Just the paper.

**DANTE**
(to HEATHER)
Thirty-fire.

**TRAINER**
(to HEATHER)
Let me ask you a question: Do you think this guy's out of shape?

**HEATHER**
(studies DANTE)
I don't know. I can't really tell from here.

**TRAINER**
He is.

DANTE
I am not.

TRAINER
How much can you bench?

DANTE
I don't know.

HEATHER
(studying DANTE)
I'd say about sixty, seventy-tops.

DANTE
I know I can bench more than that!

TRAINER
I think the lady called it.

HEATHER
My ex-boyfriend was about his height, but he was much bulkier. He could bench two-fifty, three hundred easy.

TRAINER
I do about three-fifty, four.

HEATHER
No way!

TRAINER
(rolling up sleeve)
Feel that.

HEATHER
That's tight. Solid.

TRAINER
Now feel his.
(to DANTE)
Roll up your sleeve, chief.

DANTE
Oh for God's sake!

TRAINER
See? You're ashamed. You know you're out of shape. Take my card. I can help you tone that body up in no time. Get you on an aerobics and free-weights program.

A SUITED MAN carrying a notebook comes to the counter.

SUITED MAN
You open?

DANTE
(to MAN)
Yes.
(to TRAINER)
I'm not out of shape.

SUITED MAN
Excuse me, but have you been here all day?

DANTE
What?

HEATHER
(still studying DANTE)
He's got those love handles.

DANTE
(to HEATHER)
I don't have love handles.

SUITED MAN
Were you working here at about four o'clock?

DANTE
I've been here since six o'clock this morning. Why?

TRAINER
(to HEATHER)
It's probably from being around all this food every day.

HEATHER
Oh, I know. If I had to work here all day, I'd be bloated and out of shape, too.
DANTE
I'm not out of shape!

SUITED MAN
Can I have your name please?

DANTE
Dante Hicks. Why? What is this about?

The SUITED MAN scribbles in his notebook.

HEATHER
You're Dante Hicks? Oh my God! I didn't even recognize you!

TRAINER
Because he's out of shape.

DANTE
Do I know you?

HEATHER
You remember Alyssa Jones? She hung out with...

DANTE
Caitlin Bree. Yeah?

HEATHER
I'm her sister.

DANTE
You're Alyssa's sister? Heather?

HEATHER
Yep. I remember you got caught in my parents' room with Caitlin once.

TRAINER
Did you say Caitlin Bree?

DANTE
Yeah.

TRAINER
Pretty girl, about this girl's height-dark hair-gorgeous body?
DANTE
Yeah?

TRAINER
And your name is Dante Hicks? You went to high school with her? You played hockey?

DANTE
How do you know that?

TRAINER
Oh man! Hey, you still going out with her?

DANTE
No, she's getting married.

TRAINER
To you?

HEATHER
To an Asian design major.

TRAINER
Shit!
(to DANTE)
Don't take this the wrong way, but I used to fuck her.

DANTE
What?

TRAINER
While you two were dating in high school. We're talking four, five years ago, back when I drove a Trans-Am.

HEATHER
Oh my God! You're Rick Derris?

TRAINER
Yeah!

DANTE
You know him?

HEATHER

Caitlin used to talk about him all the time.

**TRAINER**
Really?

**HEATHER**
Oh yeah. You were the built older guy with the black Trans and the big...

**DANTE**
Wait a second!  
(to TRAINER)  
You used to sleep with Caitlin Bree? While I was dating her?

**TRAINER**
All the time. That girl was like a rabbit.

**DANTE**
I...I don't believe this...

**HEATHER**
(to TRAINER)  
I still remember Caitlin telling us about that time you two went to that motel-the one with the mirrors and the hot tub in the room.

**DANTE**
THE GLADES MOTEL?

98.

**TRAINER**
Holy shit! She told you about that!  
(to DANTE)  
Buddy of mine worked there. Said he watched the whole thing. They used to film people at that hotel; nobody knew about it.

**HEATHER**
She said one time you set up a tent on the beach and you guys did it in the middle of this big rainstorm.

**DANTE**
What? When? When did all this shit
happen?

TRAINER
Hey man, that was a long time ago. Don't let it get to you.

HEATHER
I'm surprised you never found out about it, Dante. Everybody in school knew—even in my class.

DANTE
Jesus Christ, what next?

The SUITED MAN rips a piece of paper out of his notebook and hands it to DANTE.

SUITED MAN
Here you go.

DANTE
What's this?

SUITED MAN
A fine, for five hundred dollars.

DANTE
WHAT?

TRAINER
Five hundred bucks? What for?

SUITED MAN
For violation of New Jersey Statute Section Two A, number one-seventy slash fifty-one: Any person who sells or makes available tobacco or tobacco-related products to persons under the age of eighteen is regarded as disorderly.

DANTE
What are you talking about?

SUITED MAN
According to the NJAC—the New Jersey Administrative Code, section eighteen, five, slash twelve point five—a fine of no less than two
hundred and fifty dollars is to be leveled against any person reported selling cigarettes to a minor.

**DANTE**

I didn't do that!

**SUITED MAN**

You said you were here all day?

**DANTE**

Yeah, but I didn't sell cigarettes to any kids!

**SUITED MAN**

An angry mother called the state division of taxation and complained that the man working at Quick Stop Convenience sold her five-year-old daughter cigarettes today at around four o'clock. Division of taxation calls the State Board of Health, and they send me down here to issue a fine. You say you were working all day, hence the fine is yours. It's doubled due to the incredibly young age of the child.

**DANTE**

But I didn't sell cigarettes to any kid!

**TRAINER**

To a five-year-old kid? What a scumbag!

**HEATHER**

That's sick, Dante.

**DANTE**

I didn't sell cigarettes to any kids! I swear!

**SUITED MAN**

The due date is on the bottom. This summons cannot be contested in any court of law. Failure to remit before the due date will result in a charge of criminal negligence,
and a warrant will be issued for your arrest. Have a nice day.

The SUITED MAN exits, with DANTE trying to follow.

    DANTE
    But I didn't sell cigarettes to any kids! Hey!

    TRAINER
    (takes back the card)
    Forget it. I don't want to deal with a guy that sells cigarettes to a five-year-old.
    (to HEATHER)
    Can I offer you a ride somewhere?

    HEATHER
    Sure. How about the beach?

    TRAINER
    I like the way you think.

The two exit. DANTE, alone, studies his summons. He rubs his forehead.

    DANTE
    Jesus! What next?

    VOICE (O.C.)
    Dante?

DANTE spins, angrily.

    DANTE
    What?

His expression softens.

    DANTE
    Caitlin?

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

JAY deals with a customer as SILENT BOB looks on.
That's the price, my brother.

JOHN
Yo, I don't have that kind of cash.

JAY
For this kind of hash, you need that kind of cash.

JOHN
How long you gonna be here?

JAY
Till ten. Then I'm going to John K's party.

JOHN
You're gonna be at John K's party?

JAY
(to SILENT BOB)
My man is deaf.
(yelling)
I'M GOING TO JOHN K'S PARTY!
(qieter)
Neh.

JOHN
Yo, don't sell all that. 'Cause I'm gonna get the cash and buy it from you at John K's. You're gonna bring it, right?

JAY
The only place I don't bring my drugs is church. And that ain't till Sunday morning.

JOHN
Yo. I'll see you at that party.
(puts his hand up to be slapped)
I'll see you there?

JAY
(reluctantly slapping hands)
I'll see you there.

JOHN leaves. JAY turns to SILENT BOB.

102.
JAY
It's motherfuckers like that who give recreational drug users a bag name.
(suddenly spotting someone O.C.)
HEY BABY! YOU EVER HAD YOUR ASSHOLE LICKED?

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

DANTE and CAITLIN are embracing very tightly. We hold on for a few seconds, just to let it sink in. Then...

DANTE
When did you get back?

CAITLIN
Just now.

DANTE
My God. I haven't seen you since...
(he hugs her again)

CAITLIN
Dante. You've got a customer.

DANTE hops behind the counter. A customer pays for something while DANTE continues to talk.

CAITLIN
I just saw Alyssa's little sister outside. She was with Rick Derris.

DANTE
Let's not talk about that. How'd you get home?

CAITLIN
Train. It took eight hours.

DANTE
I can't believe you're here.

Another customer comes to the counter.

CUSTOMER
Excuse me, do you have...
DANTE  
(to CUSTOMER)  
To the back, above the oil.  
(to CAITLIN)  
How long are you staying?

CAITLIN  
Until Monday. Then I have to take the train back.

Yet another customer comes to the counter.

CUSTOMER  
Pack of cigarettes.  
(to CAITLIN)  
Congratulations. I saw that announcement in today's paper.  
(to DANTE)  
She's marrying an Asian design major.

DANTE  
So I'm told.

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT  

JAY and SILENT BOB lean against the wall.

JAY  
Man, it's fucking slow.

SILENT BOB walks out of the frame, leaving JAY alone against the wall. He comes back a few seconds later, carrying a mini-Walkman with ten-watt speakers. He sets it down on the ground and turns it on. House music starts playing. Jay-possessed by the beat-breaks into an impromptu dance, in which he makes suggestive and often lewd moves. SILENT BOB leans against the wall.

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT  

On counter.

CAITLIN  
You're just going to lock the store
like that?

**DANTE**
I want to talk to you about something, and I don't want to be disturbed.

**CAITLIN**
You saw it?

**DANTE**
Very dramatic, I thought.

**CAITLIN**
It's not what you think.

**DANTE**
What, it's worse? You're pregnant with an Asian design major's child?

**CAITLIN**
I'm not pregnant.

**DANTE**
Were you going to tell me or just send me an invitation?

**CAITLIN**
I was going to tell you. But then we were getting along so well, I didn't want to mess it up.

**DANTE**
You could've broke it to me gently, you know; at least started by telling me you had a boyfriend. I told you I have a girlfriend.

**CAITLIN**
I know, I'm sorry. But when we started talking...it's like I forgot I had a boyfriend. And then he proposed last month...

**DANTE**
And you said yes?

**CAITLIN**
Well...kind of, sort of?
DANTE
Is that what they teach you at that school of yours? Kind of, sort of? Everyone knows about this except me! Do you know how humiliating that is?

CAITLIN
I would've told you, and you would have stopped calling, like a baby.

105.

DANTE
How do you know that?

CAITLIN
Because I know you. You prefer drastic measures to rational ones.

DANTE
So you're really getting married?

CAITLIN
No.

DANTE
No, you're not really getting married?

CAITLIN
The story goes like this: He proposed, and I told him I had to think about it, and he insisted I wear the ring anyway. Then my mother told the paper we were engaged.

DANTE
How like her.

CAITLIN
Then my mother called me this morning and told me the announcement was in the paper. That's when I hopped the train to come back here, because I knew you'd be a wreck.

DANTE
Thanks for the vote of confidence.
CAITLIN
Was I right?

DANTE
Wreck is a harsh term. Disturbed is more like it. Mildly disturbed even.

CAITLIN
I love a macho façade. It's such a turn-on.
(sniffing air)
What smells like shoe polish?

DANTE
And you came here to what? To comfort me?

CAITLIN
The last thing I needed was for you to think I was hiding something from you.

DANTE
But you were.

CAITLIN
No, I wasn't. Not really. I told you'd I'd been seeing other people.

DANTE
Yeah, but not seriously. Christ, you're ready to walk down the aisle—I'd say that constitutes something more than just seeing somebody.

CAITLIN
I'm giving him his ring back.

DANTE
What?

CAITLIN
I don't want to marry him. I don't want to get married now. I'm on the verge of graduation. I want to go to grad school after this. And then I want to start a career. I don't want to be a wife first, and then
have to worry about when I'm going
to fit in all of the other stuff.
I've come way too far and studied
too hard to let my education go to
waste as a housewife. And I know
that's what I'd become. Sang's
already signed with a major firm,
and he's going to be pulling a huge
salary, which would give me no
reason to work, and he's so
traditional anyway...

DANTE
Sang? His name is a past tense?

CAITLIN
Stop it. He's a nice guy.

DANTE
If he's so nice, why aren't you
going to marry him?

CAITLIN
I just told you.

DANTE
There's more, isn't there?

CAITLIN
Why, Mr. Hicks-whatever do you mean?

DANTE
Tell me I don't have something to
do with it.

CAITLIN
You don't have anything to do with it.

DANTE
You lie.

CAITLIN
Look how full of yourself you are.

DANTE
I just believe in giving credit
where credit is due. And I believe
that I'm the impetus behind your
failure to wed.

**CAITLIN**
If I'm so nuts about you, then why am I having sex with an Asian design major?

**DANTE**
Jesus, you're caustic.

**CAITLIN**
I had to bring you down from that cloud you were floating on. When I say I don't want to get married, I mean just that. I don't want to marry anybody. Not for years.

**DANTE**
So who's asking? I don't want to marry you.

**CAITLIN**
Good. Stay in that frame of mind.

**DANTE**
Buy can we date?

**CAITLIN**
I'm sure Sang and-Veronica?-would like that.

**DANTE**
We could introduce them. They might hit it off.

**CAITLIN**
You're serious. You want to date again.

**DANTE**
I would like to be your boyfriend, yes.

**CAITLIN**
It's just the shock of seeing me after three years. Believe me, you'll get over it.

**DANTE**
Give me a bit more credit. I think it's time we got back together, you know. I'm more mature, you're more mature, you're finishing college, I'm already in the job market...

CAITLIN
You work in a market, all right.

DANTE
Cute. Tell me you wouldn't want to go out again. After all the talking we've been doing.

CAITLIN
The key word here is talk, Dante. I think the idea, the conception of us dating is more idyllic than what actually happens when we date.

DANTE
So...what? So we should just make pretend over the phone that we're dating?

CAITLIN
I don't know. Maybe we should just see what happens.

DANTE
Let me take you out tonight.

CAITLIN
You mean, on a date?

DANTE
Yes. A real date. Dinner and a movie.

CAITLIN
The Dante Hicks Dinner and a Movie Date. I think I've been on that one before.

DANTE
You have a better suggestion?

CAITLIN
How about the Caitlin Bree Walk on the Boardwalk, Then Get Naked
Somewhere Kind of Private Date?

DANTE
I hear that's a rather popular date.

CAITLIN
(hits him)
Jerk. Here I am, throwing myself at you, succumbing to your wily charms, and you call me a slut, in so many words.

DANTE
What about Sing?

CAITLIN
Sang.

DANTE
Sang.

CAITLIN
He's not invited.

DANTE
He's your fiancé.

CAITLIN
I offer you my body and you offer me semantics? He's just a boyfriend, Dante, and in case you haven't gotten the drift of why I came all the way here from Ohio, I'm about to become single again.

(MORE)

CAITLIN (CONT'D)
And yes-let me placate your ego-you are the inspiration for this bold and momentous decision, for which I'll probably be ostracized at both school and home. You ask me who I choose, I choose you.

DANTE
So what are you saying?

CAITLIN
You're such an asshole.
DANTE
I'm just kidding.

CAITLIN
I can already tell this isn't going to work.

DANTE
I'll ask Randal to close up for me- when he gets back.

CAITLIN
Where'd he go? I'd have thought he'd be at your side, like an obedient lapdog.

DANTE
He went to rent a movie, but he hasn't gotten back yet. Ah, screw it; I'll just lock the store up and leave him a note.

CAITLIN
You're too responsible. But no. I have to go home first. They don't even know I left school. And I should break the disengagement news to my mother, which is going to cause quite a row, considering she loves Sang.

DANTE
Who doesn't?

CAITLIN
Well, me I guess.

   (gathering herself to go)
So, I shall take my leave of you, but I will return in a little while, at which time-yes-I would love to go for dinner and a movie with you.

DANTE
What happened to the walk and the nakedness?

CAITLIN
I'm easy, but I'm not that easy.
   (she kisses his cheek)
See you later, handsome.

DANTE watches her leave. He then explodes in jubilation.

    DANTE
    YES!

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

DANTE looks ahead, dreamily, half-spinning in his chair.
RANDAL enters carrying videos.

    RANDAL
    Get to work.

    DANTE
    (takes videos)
    What'd you rent?
    (reads)
    Best of Both Worlds?

    RANDAL
    Hermaphroditic porn. Starlets with both organs. You should see the box: Beautiful women with dicks that put mine to shame.

    DANTE
    And this is what you rented?

    RANDAL
    I like to expand my horizons.

    DANTE
    I got fined for selling cigarettes to a minor.

    RANDAL
    No way!

    DANTE
    Five hundred dollars.

    RANDAL
    You're bullshitting.
DANTE hands him the summons. RANDAL reads it.

RANDAL
I didn't think they even enforced this.

DANTE
(points to himself)
Living proof.

RANDAL
I thought you never sold cigarettes to kids.

DANTE
I don't; you did.

RANDAL
(pause)
Really?

DANTE
Little girl. Maybe five years old?

RANDAL
(taken aback)
Holy shit. That girl?

DANTE
As opposed to the hundreds of other children you let buy cigarettes whenever you work here.

RANDAL
Then how come you got the fine?

DANTE
Because I'm here.

RANDAL
(incredulous)
You're lying.

DANTE
I swear. I couldn't make this kind of hell up.

RANDAL
Then why aren't you like screaming at me right now?
DANTE
Because I'm happy.

RANDAL
You're happy?

DANTE
I'm happy.

RANDAL
You're happy to get a fine?

DANTE
No. I'm happy because Caitlin came to see me.

RANDAL
Now I know you're lying.

DANTE
I'm not. She just left.

RANDAL
What did she say?

DANTE
She's not going to marry that guy. She went home to tell her mother.

RANDAL
You're kidding.

DANTE
I'm not.

RANDAL
(takes it in for a moment)
Wow. You've had quite an evening.

DANTE
She went home, she's getting ready, and we're going out.

RANDAL
I feel so ineffectual. Is there anything I can do for you?

DANTE
Watch the store while I go home and
RANDAL
What happened to title dictates behavior?

DANTE
This is my way of spitting water at life.

RANDAL
(suddenly aware)
Hey, what about Veronica?

DANTE
No! Don't bring it up. I don't want to think about that now. Let me enjoy this hour of bliss. I'll think about all of that later. In the meantime, nobody mentions the V word.

RANDAL
You're a snake.

DANTE
In my absence, try not to sell cigarettes to any newborns.

RANDAL
You want me to bring the VCR over here so we can watch this?

DANTE
I might be leaving early to go out with Caitlin, in which case you'll have to close the store tonight.

RANDAL
All right, but you're missing out. Chicks with dicks.

DANTE
(puts cats on counter)
I'll read the book.

DANTE exits. A CUSTOMER comes back to the counter. He pets the cat.
CUSTOMER
Cute cat. What's his name.

RANDAL
Peptic ulcer.

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

JAY and SILENT BOB watch as DANTE passes. A small group of burners are poised around the store door. JAY carefully writes on a large piece of paper, using a thick marker. SILENT BOB hands him the scissors. JAY slowly cuts the large piece of paper. SILENT BOB hands him the tape. JAY snaps off a few pieces, and plasters the sign to the convenience store door. It is a large word balloon, and it reads I EAT COCK! Once in place, he raps on the window. RANDAL looks out, his face adjacent to the word balloon, making it appear as if he is saying he eats cock. The small group laughs hysterically.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

CAITLIN enters, carrying an overnight bag. RANDAL is watching his porno. The porno is loud and lewd. CAITLIN stares.

CAITLIN
Randal Graves—scourge of the video renter.

RANDAL
Ladies and gentleman, Mrs. Asian Design Major herself: Caitlin Bree!

CAITLIN
You saw that article? God, isn't it awful? My mother sent that in.

RANDAL
I take it she likes the guy.

CAITLIN
You'd think she was marrying him. What are you watching?

RANDAL
Children's programming. What did
your mom say when you told her you weren't engaged anymore?

CAITLIN
She said not to come home until graduation.

RANDAL
Wow, you got thrown out? For Dante?

CAITLIN
What can I say? He does weird things to me.

RANDAL
Can I watch?

CAITLIN
You can hold me down.

RANDAL
Can I join in?

CAITLIN
You might be let down. I'm not a hermaphrodite.

RANDAL
Few are. So what makes you think you can maintain a relationship with Dante this time around?

CAITLIN
A woman's intuition. Something in me says it's time to give the old boy a serious try.

RANDAL
Wow. Hey, I was just about to order some dinner. You eat Chinese, right?

CAITLIN
Dick.

RANDAL
Exactly.

CAITLIN
So where is he?
RANDAL
He went home to change for the big date.

CAITLIN
God, isn't he great?

RANDAL
(indicating TV)
No, this is great.

CAITLIN
Can I use the bathroom?

RANDAL
There's no light back there.

CAITLIN
Why aren't there any lights?

RANDAL
Well, there are, but for some reason they stop working at five-fourteen every night.

CAITLIN
You're kidding.

RANDAL
Nobody can figure it out. And the boss doesn't want to pay the electrician to fix it, because the electrician owes money to the video store.

CAITLIN
Such a sordid state of affair.

RANDAL
And I'm caught in the middle—torn between my loyalty for the boss, and my desire to piss with the light on.

CAITLIN
I'll try to manage.

She heads toward the back.
RANDAL
Hey Caitlin...
   (cautionary)
Break his heart again this time,
and I'll kill you. Nothing personal.

CAITLIN
You're very protective of him,
Randal. You always have been.

RANDAL
Territoriality. He was mine first.

CAITLIN
   (rubs his head)
Awww. That was so cute.

She kisses his forehead and walks away. The MOTHER and SMALL CHILD (Happy Scrappy) come to the counter.

118.

MOTHER
   (oblivious of the TV)
A pack of cigarettes.

The SMALL CHILD points at the TV screen.

SMALL CHILD
Cunt!

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

RANDAL studies the I EAT COCK word balloon. DANTE enters.

DANTE
Who eats cock?

RANDAL
Bunch of savages in this town.
   (recalling)
Hey, Caitlin's in the back. You
might want to see if she's okay;
she's been back there a long time.

DANTE
There's no lights back there.
RANDAL
I told her that. She said she
didn't need any. Why don't you join
her, man. Make a little bathroom
bam-bam.

DANTE
I love your sexy talk. It's
so...kindergarten: Poo-poo; wee-wee.

RANDAL
Fuck you.

The cooler down is heard opening. CAITLIN walks lazily down
the convenience store aisle. She looks very satisfied. DANTE
and RANDAL regard her curiously. She joins them, latching on
to DANTE's arm, lovingly.

CAITLIN
How'd you get here so fast?

DANTE
I left like an hour ago.

CAITLIN
(regards him curiously)
Do you always talk weird after you
violate women?

RANDAL and DANTE stare at CAITLIN, confused.

RANDAL
Maybe the Asian design major
slipped her some opium?

DANTE
Could be.

CAITLIN
(hugging DANTE)
Promise me it'll always be like that.

DANTE
Like what?

CAITLIN
When you just lie perfectly still
and let me do everything.
DANTE
Um...okay.

RANDAL
Am I missing something here?

CAITLIN
I went back there, and Dante was already waiting for me.

RANDAL
He was?

CAITLIN
It was so cool. He didn't say a word. He was just...ready, you know? And we didn't kiss or talk or anything. He just sat there and let me do all the work.

RANDAL
(to DANTE)
You dog! I didn't see you go back there.

DANTE is bewildered.

CAITLIN
And the fact that there weren't any lights made it so...
    (she lets out a growl and hugs DANTE)
God! That was so great!

DANTE
(qiety)
It wasn't me.

CAITLIN
(laughing it off)
Yeah, right. Who was it: Randal?

DANTE
(to RANDAL)
Was it you?

RANDAL
I was here the whole time.
CAITLIN
(half-laughing)
You two better quit it.

DANTE
I'm serious.

CAITLIN
(beat)
We didn't just have sex in the bathroom?

DANTE
No.

Everyone is silent. Then...

CAITLIN
Stop this. This isn't funny.

DANTE
I'm not kidding. I just got back from outside.

CAITLIN
(covering her chest)
This isn't fucking funny, Dante!

DANTE
I'm not fooling around!
(to RANDAL)
Who went back there?

121.

RANDAL
Nobody! I swear!

CAITLIN
I feel nauseous.

DANTE
Are you sure somebody was back there?

CAITLIN
(hits DANTE)
I didn't just fuck myself! Jesus, I'm going to be sick!

RANDAL
You just fucked a total stranger?
DANTE
Shut the fuck up!

CAITLIN
I can't believe this! I feel faint...

DANTE
(to RANDAL)
Call the police.

RANDAL
Why?

CAITLIN
No, don't!

DANTE
There's a strange man in our bathroom, and he just raped Caitlin!

CAITLIN
(weakly)
Oh God...

RANDAL
She said she did all the work.

DANTE
WOULD YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP?
(pause)
WHO THE FUCK IS IN THE BATHROOM?

CUT TO:

122.

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. LATER

THE OLD MAN'S FACE is serene, almost happy, as he lies on a stretcher. (Same OLD MAN who took a porn mag to the bathroom.)

CORONER (O.C.)
Who is he?

The body bag zipper is pulled closed. DANTE, the CORONER, and RANDAL stand around the stretcher-bound body bag. The CORONER takes notes.

DANTE
I don't know. He just came in and
asked to use the bathroom.

CORONER
What time was this?

DANTE
Um...I don't know.
   (to RANDAL)
What time did hockey end?

RANDAL
Around three or something.

DANTE
What time did we go to the funeral?

RANDAL
I think four.

CORONER
Wait a second? Who was working here today?

DANTE
Just me.

CORONER
I thought you just said you played hockey and went to a funeral.

DANTE
We did.

CORONER
Then who operated the store?

DANTE
Nobody. It was closed.

123.

CORONER
With this guy locked in?

DANTE
Everything happened at once. I guess I forgot he was back there.

Ambulance attendants join them.

ATTENDANT 1
Can we take this now?

CORONER
Go ahead.

The stretcher is wheeled out. Midway down the body bag, something protrudes, pushing the bag up. It is an erection. RANDAL stares at it.

DANTE
Was he alive when...Caitlin...

CORONER
No. I place the time of death at about three-twenty.

RANDAL
Then how could she...you know...

CORONER
The body can maintain an erection after expiration. Sometimes for hours. Did he have the adult magazine when he came in?

DANTE
No. I gave it to him.

RANDAL and the CORONER stare in disbelief.

DANTE
Well he asked me for it!

CORONER
(continuing)
I can't say for certain until we get him back to the lab, but my guess is he was masturbating, his heart seized and he died. That's when the girl found him.

(sniffing the air)
Something smells like shoe polish.

124.

RANDAL
(to CORONER)
This has gotta be the weirdest thing you've ever been called in on.

CORONER
Actually, I once had to tag a kid that broke his neck trying to put his mouth on his penis.

RANDAL looks down, anonymously.

DANTE
What about Caitlin?

CORONER
Shock trauma. She's going to need years of therapy after this. My question is, How did she come to have sex with the dead man?

DANTE
She thought it was me.

The CORONER stares at DANTE.

CORONER
What kind of convenience store do you run here?

He exits. DANTE and RANDAL stare at the floor.

RANDAL
(beat)
Do you think he was talking about my cousin?

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

CAITLIN sits in the back of the ambulance, a blanket draped over her shoulders. An attendant takes her blood pressure. The doors are closed and the vehicle speeds away. JAY and SILENT BOB lean against the wall. JAY eats sugar out of a box.

JAY
I knew one of those motherfuckers was gonna kill somebody one day.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT
A jar of salsa is invaded by a large corn chip. Once in the condiment, the corn chip resembles a surfacing shark fin. Fingers poke at it, bringing it to life—swimming menacingly to and fro across the jar.

**RANDAL (O.C.)**
(mumbling Jaws theme)
Da-dum! Da-dum! Da-dum! DA-DUM! DA-DUM!

DANTE and RANDAL are on a freezer case. RANDAL pushes this chip around the jar of salsa. DANTE stares up at the ceiling, oblivious.

**RANDAL**
Salsa shark.

DANTE says nothing.

**RANDAL**
(as Brody)
"We're gonna need a bigger boat."

DANTE says even less than nothing.

**RANDAL**
(as Quint)
"Man goes into the cage; cage goes into the salsa; shark's in the salsa; our shark."

DANTE...you know.

**RANDAL**
(angry)
What? What's with you? You haven't said anything for like twenty minutes. What the hell is your problem?

**DANTE**
This life.

**RANDAL**
This life?

**DANTE**
Why do I have this life?

**RANDAL**
Have some chips; you'll feel better.
DANTE
I'm stuck in this pit, earning less than slave wages, working on my day off, dealing with every backward fuck on the planet, the goddam steel shutters are locked all day, I smell like shoe polish, I've got an ex-girlfriend who's catatonic after fucking a dead guy, and my present girlfriend has sucked thirty-six dicks.

RANDAL
Thirty-seven.

DANTE
My life is in the shitter right about now, so if you don't mind, I'd like to stew a bit.

CUSTOMER (O.C.)
You open?

RANDAL
Yeah.

RANDAL hops off the freezer case and steps O.C.

RANDAL (O.C.)
That's all bullshit. You know what the real problem here is?

DANTE
I was born.

RANDAL comes back.

RANDAL
You should shit or get off the pot.

DANTE
I should shit or get off the pot.

RANDAL
Yeah, you should shit or get off the pot.

DANTE
What are you talking about?
RANDAL
I'm talking about this thing you have...this inability to improve your situation in life.

DANTE
Fuck you.

RANDAL
It's true. You'll sit there and blame life for dealing a cruddy hand, never once accepting the responsibility for the way your situation is.

DANTE
What responsibility?

RANDAL
All right, if you hate this job and the people, and the fact that you have to come in on your day off, then quit.

DANTE
As if it's that easy.

RANDAL
It is. You just up and quit. There are other jobs, and they pay better money. You're bound to be qualified for at least one of them. So what's stopping you?

DANTE
Leave me alone.

RANDAL
You're comfortable. This is a life of convenience for you, and any attempt to change it would shatter the pathetic microcosm you've fashioned for yourself.

DANTE
Oh, like your life's any better?

RANDAL
I'm satisfied with my situation for now. You don't hear me bitching. You, on the other hand, have been bitching all day.

DANTE
Thank you. Why don't you go back to the video store?

RANDAL
It's the same thing with Veronica.

DANTE
Leave her out of this.

RANDAL
You date Veronica because she's low maintenance and because it's convenient. Meanwhile, all you ever do is talk about Caitlin. You carry a torch for a girl you dated in high school—in high school for God's sake! You're twenty-two!

DANTE
Leave me alone.

RANDAL
If you want Caitlin, then face Veronica, tell her, and be with Caitlin. If you want Veronica, be with Veronica. But don't pine for one and fuck the other. Man, if you weren't such a fucking coward...

DANTE
...If I wasn't such a fucking coward.
   (chuckles)
   It must be so great to be able to simplify everything the way you do.

RANDAL
Am I right or what?

DANTE
You're wrong. Things happened today, okay? Things that probably ruined my chances with Caitlin.
RANDAL
What? The dead guy? She'll get over fucking the dead guy. Shit, my mom's been fucking a dead guy for thirty years; I call him Dad.

DANTE
Caitlin and I can't be together. It's impossible.

RANDAL
Melodrama coming from you seems about as natural as an oral bowel movement.

DANTE
What do you want me to say? Yes, I suppose some of the things you're saying may be true. But that's the way things are; it's not going to change.

RANDAL
Make them change.

DANTE
I can't, all right! Jesus, would you leave me alone? I can't make changes like that in my life. If I could, I would—but I don't have the ability to risk comfortable situations on the big money and the fabulous prizes.

RANDAL
Who're you kidding? You can so.

DANTE
Jesus H. Christ, I can't!

RANDAL
So you'll continue being miserable all the time, just because you don't have the guts to face change?

DANTE
(sadly)
My mother told me once that when I
as three, my potty lid was closed, and instead of lifting it, I chose to shit my pants.

**RANDAL**

Lovely story.

**DANTE**

Point is—I'm not the kind of person that disrupts things in order to shit comfortably.

DANTE crosses O.C. RANDAL appears contemplative.

**CUT TO:**

**INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT**

DANTE repairs ripped dollar bills, taping them back together. JAY enters with SILENT BOB and claps his hands.

130.

**JAY**

(singing)
Noinch, noinch, noinch-smoking weed, smoking weed! Doing coke!
Drinking beers!
(to DANTE)
A pack of wraps, my good man. It's time to kick back, drink some beers, and smoke some weed!

**DANTE**

Done poisoning the youth for the day?

**JAY**

Hell yes, whatever that means. Now I'm gonna head over to Atlantic, drink some beers, get ripped, and please God-get laid.
(pulls out money)
E-Z Wider, one-and-a-halfs.

**DANTE**

One seventy-nine.

**JAY**

(to SILENT BOB)
Pay the good man.
(to DANTE)
Don't you close soon?

**DANTE**

A half hour.

**JAY**

We get off about the same time every night. We should hang out. You get high?

**DANTE**

I should start.

**JAY**

Wanna come to this party tonight? There's gonna be some pussy there, man!

**DANTE**

With you? I don't think so.

**JAY**

Listen to you. Oh shit. "Oh, I don't hang out with drug dealers."

**DANTE**

Nothing personal.

SILENT BOB hands weed to JAY.

**JAY**

I work, just like you. You're more of a crook than I am, dude.

**DANTE**

How do you figure...HEY! You can't roll a joint in here!

**JAY**

(rolling a joint)

Relax brother. What I mean is that you sell the stuff in this store at the highest prices around. A dollar seventy-nine for wraps—what's that shit?

**DANTE**

It's not my store.
JAY
And these aren't my drugs—I just sell them.

DANTE
The difference is you exploit a weakness.

JAY
What's that mean?

DANTE
You sell to people that can't stay away from an addiction.

JAY
All right. How much is Pepsi here?

DANTE
A dollar sixty-nine, plus tax.

JAY
At Food City it's ninety-nine cents, plus tax.

DANTE
So.

JAY
So why do you sell it for so much more? I'll tell you why—because people come here and they're like "A dollar eighty for soda? I should get it at Food City. But I don't feel like driving there. I'll just buy it here so I don't have to drive up there." That's exploiting a weakness, too, isn't it?

DANTE
I can't believe you just rolled a joint in here.

JAY
Hey, man, what happened with that old guy?

DANTE
He died in the bathroom.
JAY
That's fucked up. Yo, I heard he was jerkin' off.

DANTE
I don't know. I wasn't watching.

JAY
Probably saw that Caitlin chick. I know I felt like beatin' it when I saw her.
(pantomimes sex)
Come here, bitch! You like this? Is this what you want? Hunhh?

DANTE
Knock it off. That used to be my girlfriend.

JAY
You used to go out with her?

DANTE
We were going to start again, I think.

JAY
Don't you already have a girlfriend?

DANTE
Veronica.

JAY
Is she that girl who's down here all the time? She came here today carrying a plate of food.

DANTE
Lasagne.

JAY
And what— you were gonna dump her to date that Caitlin chick?

DANTE
Maybe.

JAY
I don't know dude. That Caitlin chick's nice. But I see that Veronica girl doing shit for you all the time. She brings you food, she rubs your back...Didn't I see her change your tire one day?

DANTE
I jacked the car up. All she did was loosen the nuts and put the tire on.

JAY
Damn. She sure goes out of her way.

DANTE
She's my girlfriend.

JAY
I've had girlfriends, but all they wanted from me was weed and shit.

(beat)
Shit, my grandma used to say, "Which is better: a good plate with nothing on it..." No, wait. I fucked up. She said "What's a good-looking plate with nothing on it?"

DANTE
Meaning?

JAY
I don't know. She was senile and shit. Used to piss herself all the time. C'mon Silent Bob.

Exit JAY. SILENT BOB stands there.

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SILENT BOB
You know, there's a million fine-looking women in the world, but they don't all bring you lasagne at work. Most of them just cheat on you.

SILENT BOB leaves. DANTE shuts his eyes tightly and rubs the bridge of his nose with his thumb and forefinger, as if in deep concentration. He suddenly snaps his eyes open.

DANTE
(nearly surprised)
He's right. I love her.

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

RANDAL has a heart-to-heart with VERONICA.

RANDAL
So that's it. He doesn't love you anymore. He loves Caitlin.

VERONICA stares, dumbfounded.

VERONICA
And...he told you all of this?

RANDAL
Pretty much. All except the latent homosexuality part—that's just my theory.

VERONICA
I...I don't know what to say.

RANDAL
Don't hold it against him. He just never got Caitlin out of his system. It's not your fault. It's Dante.
(beat)
I don't know thing one about chicks. Do you want to cry or something? I can leave.

VERONICA
I'm not sad.

RANDAL
You're not?

VERONICA
No, I'm more furious. I'm pissed off. I feel like he's been killing time while he tries to grow the balls to tell me how he really feels, and then he can't even do it! He has his friend do it for him!
RANDAL
He didn't ask me to...

VERONICA
After all that I've done for that fuck! And he wants to be with that slut? Fine! He can have his slut!

RANDAL
Um, do you think you can give me a lift home tonight?

VERONICA
(oblivious of RANDAL)
I'm going to have a word with that asshole.

VERONICA storms out.

RANDAL
Wait! Veronica...I don't think...

RANDAL stares after her. A customer stands nearby.

RANDAL
(to customer)
What am I worried about? He'll probably be glad I started the ball rolling. All he ever did was complain about her anyway. I'm just looking out for his best interests. I mean, that's what a friend does, am I right? I did him a favor.

CUSTOMER
(sees box on counter)
Oooh! Navy Seals!

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

DANTE is on the ground holding his knee. VERONICA stands above him.

DANTE
What the fuck did you do that for?

VERONICA
If you didn't want to go out with me anymore, why didn't you just say it? Instead, you pussyfoot around and see that slut behind my back!

**DANTE**
What're you talking about?

**VERONICA**
(kicks him)
You've been talking to her on the phone for weeks!

**DANTE**
It was only a few times...

**VERONICA**
And then you pull that shit this morning, freaking out because I've gone down on a couple guys!

**DANTE**
A couple...?

**VERONICA**
(throws purse at him)
I'm not the one trying to patch things up with my ex, sneaking around behind your back! And if you think that thirty-seven dicks are a lot, then just wait, mister: I'm going to put the hookers in Times Square to shame with all the guys I go down on now!

**DANTE**
Would you let me explain...

**VERONICA**
Explain what? How you were waiting until the time was right, and then you were going to dump me for her?

**DANTE**
(getting up)
Veronica...I...it's not like that anymore...I mean, it was never really like that...
VERONICA kicks him in the other leg. DANTE goes down, yelling in pain.

VERONICA
You're damn right it's not like that! Because I won't let it be like that! You want your slut? Fine! The slut is yours!

DANTE
I don't want Caitlin...

VERONICA
You don't know what you want, but I'm not going to sit here anymore holding your hand until you figure it out! I've encouraged you to get out of this fucking dump and go back to school, to take charge of your life and find direction. I even transferred so maybe you would be more inclined to go back to college if I was with you. Everyone said it was a stupid move, but I didn't care because I loved you and wanted to see you pull yourself out of this senseless funk you've been in since that whore dumped you, oh so many years ago. And now you want to go back to her so she can fuck you over some more?

DANTE
I don't want to go back with her...

VERONICA
Of course not; not now! You're caught, and now you're trying to snake out of doing what you wanted to do. Well, I won't let you. I want you to follow through on this, just so you can find out what a fucking idiot you are. And when she dumps you again—and she will, Dante, I promise you that—when she dumps you again, I want to laugh at you, right in your face, just so you realize that that was what you gave up our relationship for! (grabs her purse) I'm just glad Randal had the balls to tell me, since you couldn't.
DANTE
(weakly)
Randal...?

VERONICA
And having him tell me...that was just the weakest move ever. You're spineless.

DANTE
Veronica, I love you...

VERONICA
Fuck you.

VERONICA exits. DANTE lies on the floor alone.

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

RANDAL exits and locks the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

Tight on RANDAL'S face as he steps inside.

RANDAL
Dante?

Hands clasp around his throat and yank him out of the frame. DANTE throttles RANDAL, choking him to the ground. RANDAL throws his fists into DANTE'S midriff, throwing him back into the magazine rack. RANDAL jumps to his feet as DANTE comes at him again. RANDAL tumbles into the cakes as Entenman's products scatter beneath and around him. He grabs a pound cake and hits DANTE in the head with it, using the opportunity to scurry down the middle aisle. DANTE leaps at his feet, and RANDAL grabs the shelves, knocking aspirin over until RANDAL-shrieking-sprays something in DANTE'S face. DANTE paws at his eyes. RANDAL grabs Italian bread and smacks it into DANTE'S face as he rushes him blindly. DANTE chases him out of the frame. M&M's scatter wildly across the empty floor, and the ruckus is heard O.C.

CUT TO:
DANTE and RANDAL later, out of breath, on the floor. RANDAL sits up against the candy rack, rubbing his neck. DANTE lies on the floor, bacon held against a sort of crushed cookies, ripped-open candies, broken bread, and other damaged goods.

RANDAL
How's your eye?

DANTE
(reluctantly)
The swelling's not so bad. But the FDS stings.
(then)
How's your neck?

RANDAL
It's hard to swallow.

They are both silent. Then...

RANDAL
You didn't have to choke me.

DANTE
Why the fuck did you tell Veronica that I was going to dump her for Caitlin?

RANDAL
I thought I was doing you a favor.

DANTE
Thanks.

RANDAL
You were saying how you couldn't initiate change yourself, so I figured I'd help you out.

DANTE
Jesus.

Silence. Then...

RANDAL
You still didn't have to choke me.

DANTE
Oh please! I'm surprised I didn't kill you.

RANDAL
Why do you say that?

DANTE
Why do I say that? Randal...forget it.

RANDAL
No, really. What did I do that was so wrong?

DANTE
What don't you do? Randal, sometimes it seems like the only reason you come to work is to make my life miserable.

RANDAL
How do you figure?

DANTE
What time did you get to work today?

RANDAL
Like ten after.

DANTE
You were over half an hour late. Then all you do is come over here.

RANDAL
To talk to you.

DANTE
Which means the video store is ostensibly closed.

RANDAL
It's not like I'm miles away.

DANTE
Unless you're out renting videos at other video stores.

RANDAL
Hermaphrodites! I rented it so we
could watch it together!

**DANTE**
You get my slapped with a fine, you fight with the customers and I have to patch everything up. You get us chased out of a funeral by violating a corpse. To top it all off, you ruin my relationship. What's your encore? Do you anally rape my mother while pouring sugar in my gas tank?

**(MORE)**

**DANTE (CONT'D)**

(sighs)
You know what the real tragedy is? I'm not even supposed to be here today!

**RANDAL**

(suddenly outraged)
Fuck you. Fuck you, pal. Listen to you trying to pass the buck again. I'm the source of all your misery. Who closed the store to play hockey? Who closed the store to attend a wake? Who tried to win back an ex-girlfriend without even discussing how he felt with his present one? You wanna blame somebody, blame yourself.

(beat, as DANTE)
"I'm not even supposed to be here today."

(whips stuff at DANTE)
You sound like an asshole. Whose choice was it to be here today? Nobody twisted your arm. You're here today of your own violation, my friend. But you'd like to believe that the weight of the world rests on your shoulders—that the store would crumble if Dante wasn't here. Well, I got news for you, jerk: This store would survive without you. Without me either. All you do is overcompensate for having what's basically a monkey's job:
You push fucking buttons. Any moron can waltz in here and do our jobs, but you're obsessed with making it seem so much more fucking important, so much more epic than it really is. You work in a convenience store, Dante. And badly, I might add. And I work in a shitty video store. Badly, as well.

(beat)

You know, that guy Jay's got it right—he has no delusions about what he does. Us? We like to make ourselves seem so much better than the people that come in here, just looking to pick up a paper or—God forbid—cigarettes. We look down on them, as if we're so advanced. Well, if we're so fucking advanced, then what are we doing working here?

RANDAL gets up, leaving DANTE to contemplate his strong words alone.

CUT TO:

DANTE and RANDAL silently clean up, backs to each other.

CUT TO:

DANTE places a mop in the corner. RANDAL pulls on his coat.

RANDAL
I threw out the stuff that got broken. The floor looks clean.

DANTE
You need a ride?

RANDAL
(looks out door)
Got one. Just pulled up.

They stand in silence. Then...

DANTE
Do you work tomorrow?

RANDAL
Same time. What about you?

**DANTE**
I'm calling out. Going to hit the hospital—see how Caitlin is. Then try to see Veronica.

**RANDAL**
You wanna grab something to eat tomorrow night...after I get out of here?

**DANTE**
I'll call you. Let you know.

**RANDAL**
All right. Good luck with Veronica. If you want, I can talk to her, you know, and explain...

**DANTE**
No thanks. I'll take care of it. We've got a lot of shit to talk about.

**RANDAL**
Helluva day.

**DANTE**
To say the least.

**RANDAL**
Do you need a hug or something? 'Cause I would have no hang-ups about hugging you...you know, you being a guy and all. Just don't knead my ass when you do it.

**DANTE**
Get the fuck outta here already.

**RANDAL**
I'm gone. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

RANDAL exits. A second later, he reenters and tosses DANTE the sheet-sign.

**RANDAL**
You're closed.
He exits. DANTE pushes the sign over from Open to Closed.

DANTE climbs behind the counter. He pops the register open and starts counting the drawer out. The door is heard opening.

POV JOHN: DANTE counting out the register, not looking up.

DANTE
What'd you forget something?
(looks up, surprised)
Oh. I'm sorry, we're closed.

A gunshot blasts out. DANTE flies back, his chest exploding. He stares ahead and slumps to the floor.

JOHN walks behind the counter, stepping over DANTE'S body on the floor, and takes the money out of the register. He grabs a paper bag and jams the money in it. He grabs handfuls of change, shoves it in his pocket, and then quickly exits the frame. DANTE continues to lie on the floor.

CREDITS

Credits end, and the door is heard opening. A customer comes to the counter and stands there. He waits, looks around for a clerk, looks down the aisles.

CUSTOMER
Hello? Little help?

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No reply. He looks around again, and glances at the door to make sure nobody's coming in. Then he reaches behind the counter and grabs a pack of cigarettes. He leaves.