

Oh, For the Love of Mike

By

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EXT/INT. BURNING HOUSE - EVENING - TRACKING

A younger looking late thirty something BLACK MALE, MIKE KITCHENS, runs toward a burning house smashing through the front door into an incinerator of smoke and flame.

MIKE (V.O.)

Some people would say runnin inta a
burnin buildin isn't the smartest
thing ta do. In fact, some would
say it's down right stupid...

Mike dashes to the KITCHEN, pulling his HOODY off on the way. He turns on the FAUCET, soaks the hoody down with water, and puts it back on tying the hood tightly over his face.

MIKE (V.O.)

but believe it or not, I've got an
I.Q. over a buck fifty. No
bullshit, I've been tested. Now, if
your thinkin I'm one a those
adrenaline junkies or the hero
type... I'm not.

Mike quickly scans the rooms throughout the smokey first level as he moves toward the staircase. Not finding what he's looking for, he bounds up the steps two at a time.

MIKE (V.O.)

Truth is, I just don't have much of
a flight response. It's been a
problem for me all a my life.
Believe me when I say, I've paid
dearly for it an I've got the scars
ta prove it.

Mike pulls the sleeves of his hoody down over his hands, and checks the first DOOR KNOB he comes to. It appears cool enough, so he opens it and looks around.

MIKE (V.O.)

But for a guy like me, where the
scars tend ta run deepest, is in
the heart. Ya see, It's one thing
ta run into a sorchin inferno...

Mike checks two more rooms the same as the first before arriving at the fourth and final door. He touches his sleeve to the last door knob, it SIZZLES and STEAM rises up from it.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (V.O.)
It's another thing entirely, ta run
headlong inta love.

CLOSE ON Mike's face as he rears back to kick the flaming door in.

MIKE (V.O.)
That's why my closest friends say
I'm the most intelligent idiot they
know...

As Mike kicks the door in, a backflash blows him across the hall and into the adjacent room.

OPENING CREDITS

SUPER ONE MONTH EARLIER

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Mike rises from BED.

TWO SMALL DOGS sleep at the foot of the bed, and under the covers snoring away is Mike's girlfriend JENNIFER. Twenty something, White, pretty.

THE CLOCK reads 7:15.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mike turns on the SHOWER and gets in. While lathering up, he drops the SOAP a couple of times. He reaches for the SHAMPOO BOTTLE and knocks it over. He picks it up and continues on. He finishes up and towels off.

He brushes his teeth dropping his TOOTHBRUSH once, the TOOTHPASTE CAP a couple of times while taking it off, and then again when putting it back on. He finishes brushing his teeth and walks back to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

He starts TO GET DRESSED. Jennifer stirs and looks up at him.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

(groggy)

What are you doing up?

MIKE

(still dressing)

It's a long story an I really don't
wanna get into it.

She puts the pillow over her head.

JENNIFER

Whatever.

MIKE

Okay, I'll tell ya... Ya know how I
wake up every mornin about seven
cause somethin wakes me up, the
dogs barkin, I gotta pee, your
snorin, somethin, an I start tossin
an turnin?

She pulls the pillow from her face, and opens her eyes
again.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I start thinkin about everything,
the pain in my arms an legs, rollin
around tryin ta get back ta sleep,
but it never works. I just keep
thinkin an thinkin, an sometimes I
get some good ideas, but then I
fall back ta sleep finally, an by
the time I wake up I've forgotten
what they were.

She's listening now.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Anyway, when I do fall back asleep,
I'm in that dream, awake sleep. Ya
know, stage one sleep, whatever, an
finally around ten or so when you
get up an take the dogs out I
actually get some real sleep. Next
thing I know, it's two, three in
the afternoon. Then there I am goin
back ta sleep at two in the mornin
an I'm like, "jeez I've only
frickin been up for eleven hours."

She props herself up on one elbow.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

What's this all about?

He's dressed now. He picks up a couple of quarters from the dresser and tries to put them in his pocket, dropping one. He collects it from the floor and turns to look at her...

MIKE

So ya know how I'm writin this thing about Mexico...

He glances at her for acknowledgment, but doesn't wait for it.

MIKE (CONT'D)

...this mornin I get this epiphany... Why not take a page from my brothers down south... SIESTA, right?

JENNIFER

Sure.

MIKE

Ya see, instead a tossin an turnin for three hours, I get up, take a shower, an get goin. Ya know... try not ta waste all that creative energy.

He looks at her for a response. She looks at him sceptically.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Then come afternoon when I get tired, cause I know I'll run outta gas at some point, I take a little siesta.

JENNIFER

Let me see if I've got this straight. Your going to get more done, by taking a nap?

He ignores the sarcasm and continues on.

MIKE

Of course, I'll still go ta bed at two or three in the mornin, but I'll be able ta get some things done durin the day. Ya know?

She lies back down.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

That's good to know. Thanks for
waking me up for that.

He paces back and forth between the bed and the dresser
looking for something that's not there, then plops down on
the bed deliberately.

MIKE

I'm feelin restless... this ain't
me... Like I took a wrong turn, or
ya know, a left turn, an got ta the
end of a dead end street but was
too stubborn to turn around. Now I
just feel stuck.

She sits back up looking more serious. He looks deep into
her eyes.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'm tellin ya. I gotta make
somethin of my writin, or movies,
or songs, I don't care which.

JENNIFER

Seriously, what is this about?

His eyes reflect his uncertainty.

MIKE

I gotta do somethin ta be movin on
with my life... Maybe do some
travelin.

JENNIFER

And where are you going to go?

MIKE

Ole Mexico. Probably headed down
south anyway. I don't know, I gotta
do somethin.

JENNIFER

Is this about what I said last
night? Are you still mad?

He looks at her as if contemplating her question, but then
stands up dismissively and starts pacing again.

MIKE

I'm like that guy in the movies
who's hidin away in the mountains
somewhere in a cabin in Montana, or
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)

Wyoming, or Colorado, escapin his
past. But then a chopper hovers
down blowin the leaves around an
shit while he's teachin his son how
ta whittle or somethin. The old
general jumps out an he's all,
"Wolf we need ya man, we can't do
it without ya, you've gotta come
back ta the department."

He stops pacing and looks at her through the mirror over the
dresser.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Sure... he says a bunch a bull
about how he's threw with that
life, but then the bad guys come an
shoot his dog, kill his family, an
blow up his cabin in the flippin
woods forcing him ta go back ta his
old life... his real life.

He turns dramatically as if trying to emphasize the gravity
of his predicament.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I hear the chopper wings flappin
overhead...

He pauses for effect, but JENNIFER just huffs and buries her
head beneath the blankets.

JENNIFER

Take the dogs out.

He heads out of the bedroom and calls for the dogs.

MIKE

Mellow, Bandit, come on let's go
pee.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE

Mike walks down THE HALL into the LIVING ROOM and let's THE
DOGS out THE FRONT DOOR. Then goes into THE KITCHEN.

INT. KITCHEN

Mike grabs A BAG OF SOME POWDERED HERBAL ENERGY MIX and looks at it skeptically. He drops it, but catches it before it falls to the floor.

He grabs a GLASS and fills it a third of the way up with WATER from THE FILTERED TAP, then gets A SPOON from THE DRAWER and spoons in A HEAPING SPOONFUL OF THE MIX with a twisted smirk.

He stirs it, adds MORE WATER, and stirs again more vigorously before returning to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Mike sits down on the COUCH, takes a big gulp of the green goopy drink making a face while inspecting it, then fumbles a little with it while trying to put it down on the COFFEE TABLE.

He reaches into a DRAWER in the END TABLE and pulls out a WEED TRAY. He retrieves A BAGGY OF WEED which has about one blunt's worth of weed in it.

He looks at it like it will do for now, and commences to roll A BLUNT.

He drops THE BLUNT RAPPER a couple of times but finally finishes rolling it. He fumbles with his LIGHTER but manages to light it okay.

He takes in a long hit, places the blunt in AN ASHTRAY on the coffee table, then sits back and blows out a few smoke rings.

After a moment, he bolts back upright, guzzles down most of the rest of his drink, then walks back to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

Mike pulls back THE COVERS from JENNIFER and kisses her on the cheek, then squeezes her butt.

MIKE
(in a funny voice)
HMMMMM, I love to squeeze it!

Jennifer squirms with her face buried in THE PILLOW and half giggles.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (CONT'D)

Look, I'm goin out ta get some weed.

She opens her eyes, turns her head, and looks at him.

JENNIFER

Okay baby, don't be long...

He gives her ass one more squeeze, she giggles and turns back to her pillow. He puts the covers back up over her and moves toward the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

JENNIFER (O.S.)

Mike! Let the dogs in.

Mike picks up his WALLET and puts it in his back pocket, grabs his HOODY and throws it on, picks up the blunt from the ashtray and walks over to the front door.

He opens the door, let's the dogs in, and steps out onto the porch.

EXT. PORCH

THE PORCH has A PICKET FENCE all the way around it with A BABY GATE at the opening to THE WALKWAY STEPS.

Mike lights the blunt, takes a hit, but then drops it. He's able to catch it fumbling with it trying to keep from burning himself. Once he has it under control, he climbs over the baby gate and heads down the walk to the driveway.

PAN OUT OVER THE HOUSE, THEN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AS HE WALKS OUT ONTO, AND THEN DOWN THE STREET.

EXT. BUS STOP TO SHEETZ - MORNING

Mike walks past the neighborhood SCHOOL BUS STOP. HIGH SCHOOL KIDS get on THE BUS. A WHITE TEENAGER, handsome, cool, avoids getting on and the bus pulls away. The kid sees Mike and catches up to walk beside him.

THE KID

Sup?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Sup?

THE KID

Ya got any weed?

MIKE

What kind a question is that? Do I got any weed. Ya walk up to a total stranger an ask him if he's got any WEED... What if I was the po po?

THE KID

But you ain't da po po.

MIKE

Ya, but you don't know that. I could be a nark or somethin. Undercover.

THE KID

Right... an I'm Wiz Kalifa.

MIKE

How do you know?

THE KID

Cause ya live in North Braddock.

MIKE

So?

THE KID

No po po live in da hood.

MIKE

Your missin the point Wiz. I could be an informant or somethin. The point is ya don't go askin strangers if they've got any weed.

THE KID

But yur smokin a blunt.

MIKE

Good point... dead give away. I see what your sayin kid, but still... don't be askin people ya don't know for weed.

They look at each other.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

What's your name kid?

THE KID

Bernard. What's yurs?

MIKE

Your name is Bernard? Who names a kid Bernard? Your parents mustta been smokin crack namin ya Bernard... What do they call ya at school, Bernie?

BERNARD

Jus Bernard.

MIKE

Other kids call ya Bernard? Are ya kiddin me?

BERNARD

Well, mostly dey call me Nards.

MIKE

Nards! See that's what I'm talkin about. Stupid frickin parents go an name their kid Bernard an now he has ta go through life with other kids callin him Nards. That's messed up.

Bernard looks at Mike.

BERNARD

Don't talk bout my parents like dat. You don't know me.

MIKE

Sorry kid, but why would they do somethin like that. These parents who name their kid Shaniqua or Laquonda. Their just tryin too hard. Now, Keyshawn or Tameka those are nice names. But don't get carried away.

BERNARD

What bout hippies names like Moon Unit?

MIKE

That was just a phase... Ya don't hear names like that anymore. What

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
I'm really talkin about is parents
who name their kids Richard or
Harry... some antiquated name from
way back. It's just wrong.

BERNARD
Why's dat?

MIKE
Why's that? Whatta ya talkin about?
Ya go namin your kid Richard an now
everyone's callin him Dick.
Everybody knows what a dick is. Why
would ya name your kid after a
penis? Did ya know the Steelers had
a quarterback named Richard Shiner?

BERNARD
So?

MIKE
So? Richard Shiner...

Bernard has a blank look on his face.

MIKE (CONT'D)
DICK Shiner!

BERNARD
Never heard a im.

MIKE
He was before Terry Bradshaw.

BERNARD
I heard a Terry Bradshaw.

MIKE
Everybody's heard a Terry Bradshaw,
that's not the point. The point is
who wants ta go around with the
name Dick Shiner? Could ya imagine
growin up with a name like that...
Hey you an him coulda been buddies.
DICK SHINER an NARDS, the WHOLE
package.

Mike laughs. Bernard is not as amused, but he smiles anyway.

MIKE (CONT'D)
It just opens the door for a
lifetime a ridicule.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

Bernard was my grandfatha's name.

MIKE

Seriously... Dude, who gives a crap who it is? If he has a f'd up name, don't be lame enough ta name your kid after him... I knew this girl who's parents named her Robyn when her last name was Hood. Idiots.

Bernard looks over at Mike.

BERNARD

Bro, dat must be some GOOD weed.
Lemme getta hit?

Mike sizes him up first, but then relents and hands him the blunt.

MIKE

How old are ya, Bernard?

BERNARD

Seventeen.

MIKE

Seventeen... Ya gotta girlfriend?

BERNARD

Ya, sorta.

MIKE

Sorta? How can ya sorta have a girlfriend? Do ya mean she's sort of a girl or is she sort of a boy?

BERNARD

She's a girl, I ain't no basket shopper.

MIKE

Alright, alright. Don't get your undies in a bunch, just checkin. Ya never know these days... So what's the deal, why do ya sorta have a girlfriend?

BERNARD

Ya know... we hangout an all.
Sometimes I get wit her.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

You get with her... That's amazin in itself. Personally, I'm shocked anytime ya can get a girl ta look up from her cell phone. If ya can accomplished that ya should be way ahead a the game... So what's the problem?

BERNARD

She don't want me loiterin roun cause she's... ya know, breezy.

MIKE

Breezy? My girl's loiterin in my bed right now with her two little dogs. I don't know if I want her loiterin around, but her ass can loiter all it wants. Like Jay an Silent Bob at the Quick Stop. Know what I'm sayin?

BERNARD

Who's Jay an Silent Bob?

Mike looks at Bernard dumbfounded.

MIKE

Who is Jay an Silent Bob? Bernie, Bernie, Bernie. Are we gonna have ta spend the weekend? Ya might as well a asked me who's Abbott an Costello, or Hope an Crosby, or Dean an Lewis, or Steveo an Knoxville. Who is Jay an Silent Bob? Only the funniest comedy team on the flippin planet.

BERNARD

I don't know who any a doze guys are. I heard a Johnny Knoxville... WAIT, Is Steveo da guy who was bungee jumpin in dat outhouse an got shit all over himself? I saw dat on Youtube!

MIKE

On Youtube? Ya never seen the movie?

BERNARD

Nah, my moms says cable rots yur brain.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Hell, everything rots your brain
kid. Diet Coke rots your brain,
plastic water bottles rot your
brain, Chinese food rots your
brain.

INT. SHEETZ - CONTINUOUS

They arrive at THE SHEETZ and go inside. Mike grabs A
MOUNTAIN DEW out of THE COOLER holding it with both hands as
he walks to THE REGISTER. Bernard stands at THE DOOR.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Your not gettin anything?

BERNARD

Nah.

MIKE

Ya got any money?

BERNARD

No.

MIKE

How ya gon buy weed if ya ain't got
no money?

BERNARD

I don't know?

MIKE

(incredulous)

Ya don't know? Go get a soda, I got
it.

Bernard gets a DR. PEPPER from the cooler, comes back and
tries to hand it to Mike. Mike points...

MIKE (CONT'D)

Put it on the counter dude.

The cashier scans the two sodas.

CASHIER

That's 2.89.

Mike hands her THREE BUCKS and scoops his CHANGE out of THE
COIN RETURN.

EXT. SHEETS

They walk outside and take a seat at one of THE PATIO TABLES.

MIKE

Dr. Pepper huh. He's a pepper,
she's a pepper. Wouldn't ya like ta
be a pepper too?

Mike points to a CRACKHEAD sitting against the wall down at
the end of the building.

MIKE (CONT'D)

He's a pepper... got hooked on the
stuff, but he couldn't afford his
habit so he had to switch to Mr.
Pibb. Now look at him.

BERNARD

What bout you? Mountain Dew,
EXTREME.

MIKE

Oh ya, do the Dew. Sounds like
anal. (mockingly) "I didn't set out
to be different, I set out to be
me, and that's different." Cause
bein like everybody else is the
only way ta be true ta yourself.
Thanks Lil Wayne. Dude looks like
Rastafarian Gollum.

BERNARD

I like Lil Wayne.

MIKE

I'm sure ya do kid. The point is,
they've got a truth in advertising
law. They should make these
companies be honest. Mountain Dew
this is how we dew... DIABETES.
Taco Bell, you'll shit your pants!
Wal-Mart, when ya can't afford
anything but cheap Chinese crap.

BERNARD

Skittles, makes yur dookie rainbow
colored.

MIKE

Now your gettin it. Obesity, I'M
LOVIN IT. Campbells, mm'mm sodium.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
Energizer, it keeps on goin an goin
an goin ta the landfills an never
leaves.

Bernard starts laughing hysterically, not at Mike so much,
but more at his own thoughts as he blurts them out.

BERNARD
Reese's, "ya got yur penis in my
chocolate!" "you got yur chocolate
on my penis!"

MIKE
See, now your just gettin carried
away. I notice your a little
fixated on fecal matter... Ya smoke
kid?

BERNARD
Ya.

MIKE
Lemme bum a smoke.

Bernard reaches into his HOODY POCKET and retrieves A PACK
OF NEWPORT BOX. He flips up THE TOP and pulls TWO CIGARETTES
out handing one to Mike.

Mike fumbles with the cigarette, but thankfully doesn't drop
it.

MIKE
Menthol, whatta ya tryin ta be
Black?

BERNARD
I like menthol dat's all.

MIKE
Ya know what I hate? Frickin stop
smokin commercials. Especially the
one with the homecoming queen from
the seventies, only now she looks
like an Ethiopian potato bug with a
tube stickin out her neck.

BERNARD
Ya dat's gross.

MIKE
Am I right? If that's how they're
crackin down on cigarette

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
companies, why don't they make
greedy politicians who steal our
tax dollars show that in their
campaign commercials, or make banks
show families gettin thrown outta
their house cause the bank
foreclosed on em? Hypocrites.

EXT. SHEETZ TO SHANE'S HOUSE

Mike gets up and starts walking, Bernard follows.

BERNARD
So whatcha got against Lil Wayne?

MIKE
I don't have anything against Lil
Wayne, per se. I just don't care
for his act, he's tryin too hard ta
be Tupoc... I like hip hop. Ya know
Rapper's Delight, I Like Big
Butt's, Because I Got High... hell,
anything by Afroman.

BERNARD
I never hearda any a dem.

Mike looks at Bernard incredulously.

MIKE
Are you kiddin me? Ya never heard a
Ya Mama, You Gotta Fight, La Di Da,
Parents Just Don't Understand, You
be Illin, Humpty Dance, Just a
Friend?

BERNARD
Sorry dude.

MIKE
Do ya even know who Kid an Play
are?

BERNARD
Who?

MIKE
Well I'll be dipped in Camel shit.
Kids these days... What do ya know?

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

I like ta make my own beats.

MIKE

Beats, do they got any words?

BERNARD

Ya I got some ryhmes.

MIKE

You? Okay Lil Wayne, spit it.

BERNARD

Awight.

Bernard settles himself and starts rapping.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Some people tell me dat I'm outta
my mind, dey got dar way a thinkin
an I got mines. Obama wants us ta
kill Muslims cause dar full a hate,
when I got skinheads in my
neighborhood screamin fourteen
eighty-eight. Ya swastika wearin
fascist creatin dar own terrorist
state, fools wanna heil Hilter but
dar seventy years too late. I got
my beats on, so ya think I ain't
listin, I don't wanna hear dat
dough, cause I ain't trippin.

Bernard looks over at Mike.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Dat's all I got right now. I'm
still workin on it.

MIKE

Not bad, not bad. Keep it up.

BERNARD

What boutchu, Whatchu got?

MIKE

SHIT... I gotta million of em.

Mike starts rappin.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Nasty habits fill my days, smokin,
drinkin, lyin in wait. I keep
fightin against my fate, until dat
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
day at St. Peter's gate. An
argument on da tip a my tongue, I
know he knows jus what I done. I's
jus tryin ta have my fun, but dar
ain't no hidin from da light a the
Son. I know my sins an I feel
guilty, I washed my hands an nar
still filthy, I look inta yur eyes
an nar's no pity. Welcome my son,
ta life... in da city. Makin my
voice heard without becomin
defiant, predictin da future
without becomin clairvoyant,
prostrating my self without becomin
an annoyance, alternatin my
position without becomin
flamboyant. I've done my duty
without resistin, makin suggestions
without insistin. Don't you find
dis all very sickenin? Tell me why
am I existin? I know my sins an I
feel guilty, I've washed my hands
an nar still filthy, I look inta
yur eyes an nar's no pity. Welcome
my son, ta life... in da city. Fill
my hands wit da cup a plenty, make
some sense a dis desire fo money.
Da love dat surrounds me leaves me
feelin empty, I can't clear my
conscious in church on Sunday. An
argument on da tip a my tongue, I
know he knows jus what I done. I's
jus tryin ta have my fun, but dar
ain't no hidin from da light a the
Son. Ya, I know my sins an I feel
guilty, I washed my hands an dar
still filthy, I look inta yur eyes
an dar's no pity. Welcome my son,
ta life... in da city.

BERNARD
DUDE, DAT'S SICK!

MIKE
Word.

EXT. SHANE'S HOUSE

A HOUSE, set back in the woods, is RUNDOWN and the YARD is FULL OF JUNK. Mike and Bernard move toward the front door.

MIKE
This guy's a little different, so
don't say anything.

BERNARD
Why?

MIKE
Cause I said so dude... He ain't
dangerous or nothin, but just be
cool.

Mike knocks on THE DOOR and it swings open. NOISES like someone RATTLING around can be heard.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Shane!

They wait and listen, the NOISES GET LOUDER.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Shane!

SHANE (O.S.)
Who is it?

MIKE
It's Mike!

SHANE (O.S.)
Who?

INT. SHANE'S HOUSE

Mike enters cautiously and Bernard follows. The house looks like A HOARDER'S PARADISE.

MIKE
It's Mike... an I brought a friend.

SHANE (O.S.)
Who? Come in fo chrissakes!

SHANE appears from A BACK ROOM. He's in his late forties, very light skinned, mixed race, scruffy looking with strange reddish hair.

(CONTINUED)

SHANE
Oh, hey man.

Shane looks at Mike, then at Bernard critically.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Who's this guy?

MIKE
This is Bernie. He's cool.

SHANE
Bernie. Ya well...

Shane looks around the floor searching for something.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Have a seat.

Mike and Bernard look around, junk covers everything.

MIKE
Where lookin for some weed.

SHANE
What?

MIKE
Ya man, were lookin for some
fifties.

SHANE
I got SHROOMS.

MIKE
Shrooms?

SHANE
Ya, ya want some SHROOMS.

Shane looks a little wacky, like he's taken some already.

MIKE
No that's cool. Just lookin for
weed.

SHANE
Suit yurself.

Shane returns to looking for whatever it is he's trying to
find.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE
What ya lookin for?

SHANE
My pu shoes

MIKE
Pu shoes? Ya stepped in poo?

SHANE
No, that's what their called, pu shoes.

Mike looks at Bernard puzzled and shrugs his shoulders.

Shane comes up with A BLACK SHOE that looks like a COTTON GRANNY SLIPPER.

SHANE
Pu shoes. Only shoes they had over there sides Ho Chi Mihn scandals til we got there. Everyone of em wearin black p-jammes n nat.

BERNARD
You were in Vietnam?

Shane turns a cocked eye toward Bernard and pauses, as if thinking about it.

SHANE
No, but my father was.

Awkward silence. Shane points to BERNARD'S HOODY.

SHANE (CONT'D)
FUBU. What's that stand for, fornicated up the butt?

BERNARD
No. It stands for "FOR US BY US."

SHANE
For who, by who?

Mike looks at Bernard and steps in sensing where this is going.

MIKE
It's a Black thang.

Shane looks at Mike and then redirects his attention back to Bernard.

(CONTINUED)

SHANE

A Black thang? Who you suppose be,
M&M?

BERNARD

No.

SHANE

(sarcastically)

Well ya look White ta me, so it's
not for you by you. Is it? Whatta
ya feel sorry for em?

BERNARD

What are you, a racist?

MIKE

HEY good question, but we really
gotta be...

SHANE

(ignoring Mike)

No I ain't a racist ya jagoff, I'm
Irish!

BERNARD

I'm Irish too, but dat...

Shane seems to ignore Bernard's declaration.

SHANE

(interrupting)

I thinks it's only natural ta wanna
promote yur group, it's when ya
take a position yur better than
others... that's when ya've crossed
the line. The rest is just
individual opinion, AN IN AMERICA
EVERYONE'S GOTTA RIGHT TA THEIR
OPINION.

MIKE

An opinions are like assholes...
everybody's got one...

SHANE

No, yinz butt pirates need ta hear
this. White people don't have a
right ta their opinion no more.

MIKE

Butt Pirates?

(CONTINUED)

SHANE

What the hell good is it ta have an opinion if ya can't express it without impunity?

BERNARD

Slaves didn't have a right ta dar opinion.

SHANE

First of all M&M, eighty percent a White people in this country ain't descendants a anyone who ever own a slave. Why should they be held responsible?

MIKE

Why indeed... Ya got any beer?

SHANE

Ya... in the fridge there.

Shane points toward THE KITCHEN then turns his attention back to Bernard.

BERNARD

Whatcha talkin bout? It's da consequences a centuries of abuse by White people.

Mike opens the DOOR of a RUSTY OLD FRIDGE and sees an OPEN TWELVE PACK.

While reaching for the beer, he notices a FREEZER BAG full of WEED. His eyes get big.

He quickly grabs a WAL-MART BAG off the COUNTER, DUMPS OUT its CONTENTS, and gets A BIG HAND FULL of weed from the bag in the fridge stuffing it into the Wal-Mart bag.

He pauses a moment, then pulls out THREE TWENTY DOLLAR BILLS and puts them on top of the weed bag in the fridge. He closes the fridge.

He starts to walk back, but seems to realize he's forgotten what he came for. He goes back to the fridge, gets THREE BEERS out, and returns to the living room.

He tosses one can to Shane, who catches it cleanly. Then another to Bernard, a little off target, maybe on purpose.

It smacks Bernard in the head. Bernard scrambles after it.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Oh, uh... sorry dude.

SHANE

Accordin ta who?

BERNARD

Accordin ta history.

SHANE

That's bullshit. Let me give ya a little history lesson. Blacks weren't the only slaves in the world. My ancestors came here durin the Civil War from Ireland. Six brothers an their families, all together at Ellis Island. All six brothers were forced into the war ta fight ta free the BLACK slaves, an all six a their WHITE families were forced into slavery... Only, they called em "indentured servants" so Lincoln could lie an say the North didn't have slaves.

BERNARD

They turned immigrants into slaves?

Mike sighs deeply.

SHANE

It happened ta thousands a immigrants, ya can read all about it on Wikipedia.

MIKE'S CELL PHONE RINGS. He pulls it from HIS POCKET, looks at it, but doesn't answer it.

BERNARD

Ya ain't gon answer dat.

MIKE

It's my girl. I know what she wants.

BERNARD

What's dat?

MIKE

She wants ta know where I'm at. At least that's what she says, but what she really wants ta know is if I'm at my old girlfriend's house.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

If I had a cell phone I'd answer it.

MIKE

Ya don't have a cell phone either?

BERNARD

No.

SHANE

Good for you kid. If yur smart you'll keep it that way.

BERNARD

What? I can't wait ta getta cell phone. I can text, check my facebook...

SHANE

Oh that's smart, typin on the world's smallest friggin typewriter, great invention. Ya know the phone was invented so people could actually talk ta one another.

BERNARD

Ya, but ya get da text in real time.

MIKE

True dat. Only now it's more like an excuse not ta call. Most a my friends won't ring me back even when I'm blowin em up. All they wanna do is text.

BERNARD

It still be cool ta have one.

SHANE

Listen son, yur better off without it. Now they got everybody doin all this stuff on the web, online school. What they gonna do if the web goes down... shutdown the schools?

BERNARD

Dat would be cool.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

All the new cars are hooked up ta the web, my girl can't get two blocks from the house without her GPS. One time the web went down, she got all the way ta Altoona before she realized she was goin the wrong way.

SHANE

Don't get me started on these damn cars.

BERNARD

Now what's wrong wit cars? Wish I had one.

SHANE

Ya better get ready ta cough up a nut. Flippin cars cost more than houses roun here. Hands free electric cars... hell they had electric cars before gas powered cars, THEY AIN'T NEW. All these air bags on the inside blowin up in yur face. If they really wanted ta keep ya safe they'd put the airbag on the outside.

BERNARD

Put da airbag on da outside?

SHANE

Why not? They could put in sensors so if yur about ta get in a wreck the airbag goes off, an now yur in a big ole bubble... Ya just bounce off, wouldn't even need ta getchur car fixed. Hell, ya could sail off a cliff, bounce down the mountain, float across the river, an drive away.

BERNARD

Dat'd never work.

SHANE

Whatta ya mean it'd never work? How would you know M&M, ya ever try it?

BERNARD

(sheepishly)

No... but...

(CONTINUED)

SHANE

Alright, what about bumper cars?
Hell, they've had bumper cars fer a
hundred years. Put big old rubber
bumpers all aroun the cars.
Somebody cuts ya off. It's like,
hey mutha... WHAM! Just plow right
into em. (now in a cops voice)
"Ah... ya we're gonna need some
back up. We gotta five thousand car
pile up on the expressway.

BERNARD

Old man, yur frickin crazy.

SHANE

What's crazy bout it. If they
really cared about people's safety
they'd do somethin that actually
worked.

MIKE

They don't give a shit, their just
out ta collect the fines. (Mike
does his own cop voice over) "Do
you know why I pulled you over?"
"Ah, cause yur an asshole?" "Well,
I am an asshole, but that's beside
the point. You don't have your
seatbelt on, so I'm gonna have to
write you a four hundred dollar
ticket."

SHANE

(pointing at Mike's skin)
That ain't why they pulled YOU
over.

Mike slugs down his beer and grabs Bernard by the COLLAR,
pushing him toward the door.

MIKE

Ha ha, very funny... This has all
been very stimulin, but we gotta
roll Shane. Thanks for the beers.

Mike keeps forcing Bernard toward the door and out onto the
porch.

EXT. SHANE'S HOUSE

Mike and Bernard head down the walk toward the street. Shane stands at the door.

SHANE

Ya sure ya don't want any SHROOMS?

Mike turns to look toward Shane, and gives him a half hearted wave.

MIKE

No thanks, were good. Later!

EXT. SHANE'S HOUSE BACK TO MIKE'S HOUSE

Mike and Bernard walk up North Braddock Heights road

BERNARD

Didn't nat bother you?

MIKE

What?

BERNARD

What Shane was sayin bout slaves an shit.

MIKE

Why should it?

BERNARD

It seemed pretty racist.

MIKE

What was racist about it.

BERNARD

Oh, I don't know... all of it.

MIKE

Why? He's got a right ta his opinion. In a way, I feel the same he does.

BERNARD

What?

MIKE

White people always asking me stupid shit. Just cause I'm Black doesn't mean I give a rat's ass. As

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
far as I know, nobody in my family
was ever a slave. My people came
from England by way of Africa back
in the late 1800s. My great
grandfather was a bare knuckle
boxer, an his father was a college
professor.

BERNARD
Sorry man.

MIKE
Nah, it's cool. Shane's just
frustrated with the loss a freedom
in this country, an I agree with
him.

BERNARD
You agree wit him?

MIKE
Sort of. Every time I turn around
there's another law encroaching on
our freedom. Worst of all is the
damn Patriot Act... what a bunch a
BULLSHIT. Homeland Security is a
joke. Have they stopped even one
terrorist for all the billions a
tax dollars they've spent?

BERNARD
What's da Patriot Act?

MIKE
What's the Patriot Act? Only the
most freedom destroyin law ever!

BERNARD
But I thought da Constitution
guarantees our freedom.

MIKE
Where did ya hear that?

BERNARD
In schoo.

MIKE
You've been ta school?

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

I go ta schoo... occasionally.

MIKE

They still teach the
Constitution huh? What is it, like
the Magna Carta? The history a
irrelevant ancient artifacts.

Mike and Bernard take a right on Wolfe Avenue and head
toward the hood.

BERNARD

So how did dis all happen?

MIKE

The ghost in the machine dude.

BERNARD

Ghost in da machine?

MIKE

That's right, THE BANE OF
BUREAUCRACY.

BERNARD

Bureaucracy?

MIKE

You know bureaucracy, the DMV, the
IRS, the CIA. It goes on an on.
There's hundreds of em.

BERNARD

But what's dat gotta do wit ghosts.

MIKE

Look man, bureaucracy is necessary
but it's full a problems cause the
rules that govern them are made by
humans, an it's hard as hell ta
change the rules. So even if they
figure out somethin's wrong or
obsolete, it takes forever ta fix
it.

Mike pauses to see if Bernard understands.

BERNARD

Go on...

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Anyway, all these rules have ta be enforced, ya know, by cops an nat. It not only costs a ridiculous amount a money, but it drastically reduces individual rights an freedom.

BERNARD

So where's da ghost?

MIKE

I'm gettin there, now shut up an listen. So where was I?

BERNARD

Reduction a freedom.

MIKE

Right, right. Ya see, bureaucracy is the government equivalent of a big corporation, an like a corporation it feeds on capital. The more money it takes in, the more it grows. After awhile, it grows so big it takes on a life of its own.

BERNARD

An dat's da ghost?

MIKE

Dude... it's all the ghost. There's just a shit load a things that can go wrong. That's why it's so screwed up in this country. The Constitution is about guaranteed individual freedoms but instead of a real representative democracy that works for the people an champions individual rights, we got these mindless bureaucracies run by non elected committees who keep pumpin out so many rules they're chokin the life outta us.

BERNARD

So if dar's a ghost, where's da scary part?

MIKE

Are ya kiddin me? Ya want scary? I'll give ya scary. Ninety-nine

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
point nine percent a the people
runnin the bureaucracies are
lawyers. Is that scary enough for
ya?

BERNARD
What's scary bout lawyers?

MIKE
What's scary about lawyers? Their
only the worst, most vile,
scumsuckin, vermin on the planet!

BERNARD
What?

MIKE
Look kid, if man makes a machine
like a rocketship or a machine like
the government, somethin will
inherently go wrong. Before long
the flaws take on a life of their
own like a ghost. The problem is,
when it comes ta machines like
governments, or corporations, or
bureaucracies, lawyers get involved
in order ta capitalize on the money
ta be made off those flaws. They
make the ghost evil by leveragin
the flaws for greed, power, and
ideological corruption.

BERNARD
Ideological corruption?

MIKE
EXACTLY... ya see, laws an rules
are just the practical application
of ideals. The flaws create
loopholes which lawyers use ta
their, or their client's advantage
without technically breaking the
law. Even though they're violating
the spirit a the law, effectively
corruptin the ideology behind the
law... I gotta joke for ya... How
can ya tell if a lawyer is well
hung?

BERNARD
How's dat?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Ya can't get a finger between the rope an his neck!

Bernard laughs hardily along with Mike.

MIKE (CONT'D)

The point is, lawyers are the flippin scourge a the earth. Their like cockroaches, only worse cause their multiplyin in broad daylight.

BERNARD

Ya, but lawyers make a lot a money?

MIKE

Money ain't everything kid. Do ya know one out a every hundred workers in the U.S. is a lawyer, an twenty percent a all lawyers work for the government. Pretty soon, the number a lawyers will double every twenty years. The fact is, lawyers are lawyers, judges are lawyers, politicians are lawyers. Hell, the President an his wife are lawyers, an law schools are pumpin new lawyers out at a biblical rate. These vermin are producin fifty thousand new laws, codes, an rules every year.

BERNARD

So?

MIKE

So! Are ya BLIND? At this rate before long, every man, woman, an child in America will be in the commission of a crime or code violation every wakin second of every minute of our stinkin lives... an the justice system is all too happy ta enforce the laws cause their makin money hand over fist from all the fines they collect. These cops think their storin up for their pension fund, but I got news for those jackals. Some corporate Wall Street lawyer's gonna steal that shit before those jelly donut eatin lackeys can book their ticket to Orlando!

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

Whoa, dat's f'd up.

MIKE

Ya, it's f'd up.

BERNARD

What can we do bout it though?

MIKE

First, we kill all the lawyers.
Which reminds me, I got another
one. If you're stranded on a desert
island with Adolph Hitler, Osama
bin Laden, an a lawyer, an ya have
a gun with only two bullets, what
do ya do?

BERNARD

I don't know, what?

MIKE

Double tap the lawyer!

Mike and Bernard have a good laugh as they arrive in the neighborhood, and walk down Pallas Avenue toward MIKE'S HOUSE.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - POPLAR AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER

Mike leads Bernard into THE GREENWAY next to Mike's house.

They come to A CLEARING. In the clearing there are LAWN CHAIRS with A FIRE PIT in the middle.

BERNARD

Whoa, I didn't even know dis was
here.

MIKE

Ya... my little oasis.

Mike and Bernard take a seat and Mike starts to roll A BLUNT. He has some difficulty but manages to get it rolled.

He gets his LIGHTER from his pocket and drops it.

Bernard picks it up for Mike and hands it to him.

BERNARD

Is dar somethin wrong with yur
hands?

(CONTINUED)

Mike lights the blunt and takes a hit, then hands the blunt to Bernard.

MIKE

Ya noticed that huh?

BERNARD

It's pretty hard ta miss.

MIKE

It's from nerve damage. I've got the same problem with my legs.

BERNARD

What happened?

MIKE

Fuckin doctors. They kept tellin me I was a hypochondriac.

BERNARD

Hypochondriac?

MIKE

A faker. I'd go into the doctor's complainin about my back, an they'd do these useless tests an tell me there was nothin wrong with me. Give me some Motrin and tell me, "it'll go away in a week," but it just kept gettin worse. Before I knew it, I couldn't even walk.

BERNARD

How'd ya hurt yur back?

MIKE

Loadin too many bombs in the Navy. I tried ta tell em I was f'd up, but they wouldn't believe me. I suffered for three years before they finally gave me an MRI. Once I got an MRI, they had me in surgery a week later. But, by then it was too late, the damage was done.

BERNARD

So, is dat what happened ta yur arms?

MIKE

Nah man, my arms are a lot worse. A vertebrae in my neck broke into

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
pieces, an one a the pieces pushed
up on my spinal cord. I'd be walkin
down the street, turn my head real
quick an boom... hit the ground
paralyzed from the neck down. It
would only last a few minutes, but
it was scary as hell.

BERNARD
Holy crap dude! Did they operate on
ya right away?

MIKE
No, believe it or not. The doctors
did the same shit ta me. It took
five years before I could get an
MRI. I lost my job an ended up
homeless. Applied for disability...
was denied. They said I was fakin
it.

BERNARD
Whatta hell is wrong wit yur
doctors?

MIKE
I know, right.

BERNARD
So, how'd ya hurt yur neck?

MIKE
I got hit by a drunk driver in
Cali, The crazy thing is, the po po
were gonna arrest me an let the
drunk lady go.

BERNARD
WHAT?

MIKE
The po po finally let me go, but
they let the drunk lady go too.

BERNARD
Why the hell they do dat?

MIKE
She was a super rich White lady.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

What'd dey try an arrest you fo?

MIKE

Hello... have ya noticed what color I am? Believe me, if ya think the Pittsburgh po po are racist. They're nothin compared to the Newport Beach po po. Newport Beach po po make the Pittsburgh po po look like Martin Luther King.

BERNARD

So what ended up happenin?

MIKE

Like I was sayin before, I got poor enough ta get VA medical benefits. I went ta the VA hospital an the doctors there didn't waste no time. They gave me an MRI an operated on me right away. The surgeon said when he sliced into my neck an opened me up, a piece a my vertebrae popped right out a my neck an into his hand. He couldn't believe it. They got it on film an everything.

BERNARD

No way dude!

MIKE

Word... Now I got shark cartilage in my neck.

BERNARD

You mean lawyer cartilage.

Mike and Bernard have a good laugh.

MIKE

Good one.

BERNARD

So whatcha doin now?

MIKE

I'm tryin my hand at writin.

BERNARD

Oh ya, whatchu write?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Novels, screen plays, songs, mostly songs though.

BERNARD

Have ya had anythin published?

MIKE

Not yet. I've been tryin ta get an agent, but it turns out it's easier ta sell thermal underwear in hell than get an agent.

BERNARD

Dat sucks.

MIKE

Ya, I'd have better odds winnin the lottery an publishin em myself.

A BUS can be HEARD coming up Ridge Avenue.

BERNARD

Sounds like my bus, I betta be goin. Grams be wonderin where I'm at.

MIKE

Alright. It was cool hangin with ya kid.

BERNARD

Ya you too, yur an interestin dude. Maybe we can hangout sometime.

MIKE

Maybe so kid, later.

Bernard heads toward the road.

MIKE

Hey Bernie!

Bernard turns around.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What's the worst part about goin ta law school?

BERNARD

What's dat?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Ya might end up a lawyer.

BERNARD

I gotta getta schoo first!

Mike chuckles and kicks back finishing his blunt, he only drops it once.

Mike gets up and walks to his house.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mike enters, Jennifer is on the couch watching T.V.

She looks up at Mike.

JENNIFER

Where were you?

MIKE

I went ta Shane's ta get some weed.

JENNIFER

You've been gone half the day.

MIKE

I met this kid, Bernard. Lost track a time, I guess.

Jennifer gets up and walks in the kitchen. She grabs a can of DIET PEPSI from THE FRIDGE and walks back to the living room. She pops the top and sits down.

JENNIFER

This is bullshit. I can't do this anymore.

MIKE

Do what?

JENNIFER

This! I know where you've been.

MIKE

Oh really, an where's that?

Jennifer gets up and walks toward him.

JENNIFER

Why do we always have to play this game?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Look, if ya wanna leave, leave. I can't stop ya.

JENNIFER

Do you want me to leave?

MIKE

No, I don't want ya ta leave, but I don't wanna go through this every time I come through the door.

JENNIFER

Ya, well I can't keep wondering where you are. You don't answer your phone when I call. What am I suppose to think?

MIKE

Think what ya want.

Jennifer twists her face up.

JENNIFER

Well, you better tell me something because I'm not staying here one more day like this.

Mike begins to pace.

MIKE

Whatta ya want me ta say?

JENNIFER

(sitting back down)

You wake up talking all crazy, about going to Mexico. Then you waste half the day God knows where.

MIKE

Okay, you wanna know what's wrong with me? Deep down I harbor the belief that I'm unlovable, an it's only a matter a time before ya figure it out.

JENNIFER

Oh right, because it's all about you. Who's going to love poor Mike?

MIKE

Jeez, now ya sound like my mom.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Well, maybe she's right. Did you ever think about that?

MIKE

Look, my adult mind knows it's because I can't conform to monogamy as society dictates that causes love to leave me, but my inner voice is always mockin me sayin, "see, I told ya you were unlovable. Who could love you for who you are? It's the same voice that's constantly evaluatin an judgin any lovin gesture you show me, demandin I question your motives so I don't fool myself.

JENNIFER

Okay, so I should feel sorry for you while you use me. You know... you're delusional.

MIKE

Tell me somethin I don't know.

Jennifer get's up from the couch and goes to the bedroom.
Mike stews for awhile, and then follows after her.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

There's a SUITCASE on the bed and Jennifer is packing CLOTHES into it.

MIKE

Whatta ya doin?

JENNIFER

I'm leaving, I can't stay here like this.

MIKE

Babe, come on... I told ya the truth. I wasn't with anyone. I went to Shane's with this kid Bernard.

JENNIFER

It doesn't matter. So, you didn't go to see her this time, but what about next time.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Listen sweetheart, there ain't
gonna be no next time. I promise.

JENNIFER

I'm sorry, but I just can't take
that chance.

Mike grabs Jennifer up in his arms and looks deep in her
eyes.

MIKE

Baby come on now, ya know how much
I love you.

Jennifer searches Mike's eye's for a moment, but then looks
away.

JENNIFER

I love you too Mike, but I just
need some time to think. We both
need some time...

MIKE

Think about what?

Jennifer pulls away from Mike in frustration.

JENNIFER

To think about what we're doing
here. To think about whether we
really want this. I just need time
to THINK... and I can't do it here.
Not like this.

Jennifer returns to packing her things.

Mike looks at her dejected.

Jennifer finishes packing and heads toward the living room
with her bags.

Mike follows.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jennifer starts out the door.

MIKE

So your really gonna leave?

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER
Goodbye Mike.

She gathers up her TWO LITTLE DOGS and walks out the door.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE

Mike stands in the doorway watching her drive away. After she's out of the driveway and headed down the street, he yells out...

MIKE
GOOD! I was sick a you anyway! Now
I can finally get some writin done
without you buggin me all the time!
By the way, you SNORE! Did ya know
that? Like FRED FORNICATING
FLINTSTONE!

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - SEVERAL DAYS - MONTAGE

-Days go by...

-Mike goes through the routine of trying to write on his
COMPUTER, getting frustrated, basically getting nowhere.

-He alternates from trying to write, playing CALL OF DUTY,
masturbating with no relief.

-He starts to look disheveled the place slowly becomes a
mess.

-He appears in a bad way, disgusted with everything.

-He tosses and turns at night.

END MONTAGE

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mike sits in a BEAN BAG CHAIR, a GAME CONTROLLER in hand.
CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS II plays on the TV. He has A HEADSET
on and he's talking to ONLINE GAMERS.

MIKE
Ya well, I just blew your ass up
PLAYA. Next time ya should team up
with your mom, at least she'll care
enough ta help keep your dumbass
alive!

(CONTINUED)

Some sounds come over the headset.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Go ahead use your S12... if ya can
find it in the closet under all
your gay porn.

There's a knock on the door.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Who is it?

BERNARD (O.S.)
It's Bernard!

MIKE
Come in.

The door jiggles, but it's locked.

Mike reluctantly gets up and opens it. He returns to the game without acknowledging Bernard.

Bernard enters and looks around at THE MESS.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Dude! I just went over ta open the
door for a second! Ya shot me at
point blank range with a SWAM? You
DICK!

Some more sounds over the headset.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Ya well, your momma's so fat when I
blew her ass away I gotta double
kill score!

Mike yanks off the headset and tosses it across the room.

BERNARD
Sorry man, I didn't mean ta getcha
killed.

MIKE
It's cool, I was sick a that battle
anyway. I can't wait til "Advanced
Warfare" comes out. So whatta ya up
to?

BERNARD
Not much, how boutcho?

Mike looks around sheepishly.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Just workin on my writin.

BERNARD

That's cool.

MIKE

So what brings ya over.

BERNARD

Nothin really, just wanted ta ask
yur advice bout somethin.

MIKE

Oh ya, what's that?

BERNARD

Well... dar's dis girl in my
theater class. I'm thinkin bout
askin her ta da prom.

MIKE

The breezy one?

BERNARD

No not her. Dis girl's different.
She's chill an I like her... I like
her a lot actually.

MIKE

That sucks.

BERNARD

What?

MIKE

Look man, don't get too attached to
em. They'll just rip your heart out
an shit all over it.

BERNARD

Sounds a lil cynical.

MIKE

Your young, ya haven't had time ta
get ta know em like I have.

BERNARD

But dis girl's special.

Mike mocks Bernard in a whinny voice...

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

OH SHE'S SPECIAL. Look man, pump em
an dump em! That's my philosophy.
Two jerks, one spurt, an I'M GOWN.

Bernard turns toward the door...

BERNARD

Okay well, thanks fo da sage
advice.

Some awkward silence...

MIKE

I'm sorry man, but I'm really not
the guy ya should be askin for
advice... My girl left me.

Bernard turns around...

BERNARD

Dude, I'm sorry ta hear dat.

MIKE

It's cool, it's not your fault.

BERNARD

What happened?

MIKE

I don't know, let's just say that
time makes hypocrites of us all.

BERNARD

So she caught ya messin roun?

MIKE

Yes an no.

BERNARD

So whatchu gon do?

MIKE

I don't know... She's hot. Great in
the sack, but she's a little high
maintenance... probably better off.

BERNARD

But what?

MIKE

I guess I'm too much like my
father, not that he was around
much.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

Ya know what dey say... where dar's
a will...

MIKE

There's an old dead guy?

BERNARD

Very funny, ya know what I'm
sayin..

MIKE

Ya, I know kid... Hey, you want
somethin to drink?

BERNARD

Sure, whatcha got?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mike walks to the kitchen and opens the fridge.

MIKE

We got water... and beer.

BERNARD (O.S.)

I'll take some water.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Mike returns with a GLASS OF WATER and A CAN OF BEER. He
hands the water to Bernard.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

So, ya at least gittin some writin
done?

Mike cracks open the beer and begins pacing back and forth
across the living room floor.

MIKE

Not really... I did write a new
rap. It's dark, brooding. Tryin ta
excercise some of my demons I
guess.

BERNARD

Dat's what's up, let me hear it.

Mike feigns protest slightly, but then goes right into it.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Nick knack, patty whack, give a dog bone, this ole man came rollin home. Like a heroin addict on methadone, just ain't much left ta my soul. Like a roarin lion seekin ta devour someone, the devil's come aroun ta cast me down. Ya know the devil's come aroun ta cast me down. I never meant ta make my momma cry, but now ya know dat she was just the first in line. The ghosts a my heart keep troublin my mind, you can see da sadness behind my eyes. The accuser a the brothren's just bidden his time, cause the devil's come aroun ta make me pay for my crime. Ya, the devil's come aroun ta make me pay for my crime. The lies I've told they are my curse, the sins a my hands only make it worse. I guess I shoulda thought about dat first, so I drink Jack Daniels but it won't quench my thirst. Gonna keep on drinkin til the levy bursts. Let the devil lay me down in da back a dat Hurst. Ya, let the devil lay me down in da back dat Hurst. Ashes ta ashes an dust ta dust, seven deadly sins all begin with lust. But, ya can't take yur money says "in God we trust," so I'm headed down ta hell on a Greyhound bus. Saint Peter stepped in but it wasn't enough, the devil spoke up an said, "he's with us." Ya, the devil spoke up an said, "he's with us!" Ya... the devil spoke up an said, "HE'S WITH US!"

Bernard waits until Mike is finished and looking at Bernard for a reaction. As Mike does, Bernard bursts into applause.

BERNARD

DUDE... yur right. Dat is DARK. But DAMN.

MIKE

Ya like it?

BERNARD

Hell ya, Dat was MAD DOPE.

Mike takes Bernards praise graciously, and smiles broadly.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

So Bernie, what's the deal with this girl?

BERNARD

Her names Michele, she's in my theatre class.

MIKE

Theatre huh, would'a never figured you for a thespian. So, what's goin on? Tell me about it.

BERNARD

Well, we're doin dis play called "Westside Story" an I got da part a dis dude named Tony...

MIKE

(interrupting)

And let me guess, this girl... Michele, she's playin Maria?

BERNARD

How'd you know?

MIKE

Lucky guess.

BERNARD

Dat's why I came over here. Teacher said we could put in our own jams fo dis thang.

MIKE

No kiddin, that's cool.

BERNARD

Ya, Miss Sisk is mad chill, whatever. So, ya think ya can help me out.

MIKE

Sure, why not. I wasn't doin nothin but mopin aroun here anyway. Bring the script by tomorrow, an we'll see what we can do.

BERNARD

NO BULLSHIT? Dat's awesome!

Bernard jumps up excitedly and grabs Mike up in a bear hug.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD(CONT'D)
I'll be here right afta schoo
tomorra.

Bernard bursts out the door unable to contain his
enthusiasm.

BERNARD (O.S.)
Whoo hoo!

Mike shakes his head and smiles.

MIKE
Go get em kid.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Bernard and Mike sit on the couch with a SCRIPT spread out
on the COFFEE TABLE. Mike holds a PEN and a PAD OF PAPER in
his hand.

MIKE
This guy Tony... he's cocky, right?

BERNARD
Right.

MIKE
But... he's gotta be perfectly
cocky. Cause if he's not perfectly
cocky he's an asshole, and nobody
like's an asshole. Now, WOMEN love
cocky, but men hate it. When a
guy's cocky, other men just wanna
beat it outta him. But if a guy is
perfectly cocky, an they try an
kick his ass... they're the
asshole. Ya see what I mean?

BERNARD
I think I get it.

MIKE
Ya gotta remember that when your
deliverin his lines... So, Tony's
first song is what?

BERNARD
"Somethin's comin."

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Right, "Something's comin." What's it about?

BERNARD

I don't know.

MIKE

Ya don't know. Come on. Read the words. What's MIKE tryin to say?

Bernard mumbles a few lines to himself.

BERNARD

The dude thinks somethin's comin, somethin good I guess.

MIKE

Okay, somethin good is comin his way. He's excited, expectin this good thing ta happen ta him. When?

Bernard reads a little more.

BERNARD

Tonight.

MIKE

And what's tonight?

BERNARD

The dance.

MIKE

Right, the dance. So, he's expectin ta hook up tonight at the dance. Now what song reminds ya a somethin like that?

Bernard's eyes light up.

BERNARD

Daft Punk baby, Pharrell
WEYUMS...(singing) Up all night ta
get some, I'm up all night ta get
lucky!

Mike starts singing along...

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD
She's up all night ta get
sun, I'm up all night ta
get some. We're up all
night ta get lucky, we're
up all night ta get lucky.

MIKE
She's up all night ta get
sun, I'm up all night ta
get some. We're up all
night ta get lucky, we're
up all night ta get lucky.

Mike and Bernard high five laughing together.

MIKE
That's my jam right there BOY!

The joyful co-writer's work into the night, molding and
shaping Bernard's character, with laughter and
celebration...

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Bernard shows up at Mike's house just as Mike is walking out
the door...

MIKE
Hey Pharrell, ya wanna get some
KFC. I'm buyin...

INT. KFC - DAY

Mike holds THE DOOR for Bernard and they enter the KFC. They
get in line and wait to order.

BERNARD
KFC artery sticken good.

They have a laugh. THE CASHIER is a large middle-aged woman,
kind of greasy looking.

CASHIER
Can I take your order?

MIKE
Ya, I'll have a two piece meal
with, dark meat, mac n chesse, an
mashed potatoes.

CASHIER
Anything to drink?

MIKE
Ya, a large Mountain Dew.

(CONTINUED)

CASHIER
Anything else?

MIKE
Whatever he's havin.

Mike points to Bernard and steps out of the way. Bernard steps up to order.

BERNARD
I'll have da same, wit a Doctor
Pepper.

Mike leans in toward Bernard and nods toward the cashier.

MIKE
She's a pepper.

BERNARD
Dude.

CASHIER
Okay, that comes to 10.48.

Mike hands her ELEVEN DOLLARS and collects his CHANGE. He drops a few coins as he tries to put them in his pocket. He ignores them.

They take their MEALS and head toward A BOOTH.

On the way to the table, Mike drops his TRAY and THE MEAL BOX slides across the floor. Startled he begins to fumble with HIS DRINK.

Mike gets his drink steady, as he and Bernard collect his tray and his lunch box.

Once at the table, Mike and Bernard take a seat and dig in.

MIKE
Remember the Double Down?

BERNARD
Da chicken breast sandwich wit
bacon an swiss, no bun... best
thang dey had up in here.

MIKE
Right. Loved it. Unfortunately, so
many do gooders were supposedly so
concerned about our health they
pressured KFC into takin it off the
menu.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

I heard dat. Ain't dat some
bullshit?

MIKE

The thing is, it turns out the
Double Down had less calories an
grams a fat than half the chicken
sandwiches at other fast food
joints... an less than most
burgers.

BERNARD

What da hell?

MIKE

Exactly. It just kills me that
there's people out there who got
nothin better ta do with their
lives than fudge it up for
everybody else.

BERNARD

If dey don't like it dey don't
hafta eat it.

MIKE

Exactly. It's like that idiot that
ate nothin but supersized McDonalds
for a month straight an made a
movie talkin shit on Mickey Ds.

BERNARD

I know, I hate dat dude. I loved ta
supersize it.

MIKE

I'll bet you did kid. My point is,
dude never once ordered a salad, or
a milk, or an orange juice, or a
fruit parfait, or anything from the
dollar menu. Nobody was forcin him
ta supersize it. After that movie
they started makin a huge deal
outta fast food, politicians
started gettin involved an before
ya know it... moms can't get their
kids fries or a coke with their
happy meal.

BERNARD

Apple wedges an milk. What da hell?
I can eat dat at da crib.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

What pisses me off, is it's none a their business what I do. If I wanna supersize my meal, that's my business. I'm sick a these pricks havin power over my choices.

BERNARD

No shit. If I wanted ta eat healthy I sure as hell wouldn't be at McDonalds.

MIKE

I blame the people who control the media. Their the one's that put whatever these people are sayin all in our face.

BERNARD

I don't get it.

MIKE

Look, it's all about public opinion.

BERNARD

Public opinion?

MIKE

Right. About fifty percent a people believe most everything they hear from the media. It's just human behavior.

BERNARD

Why?

MIKE

It's cause most people have somethin inside them that can't deal with anomalies.

BERNARD

Anomalies?

MIKE

Ya know, exceptions ta the rule. Like if ya look in the sky an see somethin that looks like a bird ya just naturally assume it's a bird. Right?

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

Okay.

MIKE

But, maybe it's not a bird. Maybe it's a drone that looks like a bird. Only most people don't stand there an look at it until their sure it's a bird. They just take it for granted that it was a bird an move on.

BERNARD

I get it. One time I was watchin dis movie with my friend an dis dude in da movie called another guy a jackoff. But I thought he said jagoff cause that's how we say it in da Burgh.

MIKE

Okay.

BERNARD

So I said, "dat guy must be from da Burgh," an my friend was like, "how ya know dat?" So, I'm all, "cause he said jagoff." But my friend says, "no, he said jackoff." Then I'm like, "dude, he said jagoff," and he's like, "no he didn't." So we played it back, an sure nough he said jackoff. But, I coulda swore I heard him say jagoff.

MIKE

RIGHT... So a lot a people can't deal with the anomaly that the media would lie ta them. They think the media just reports the facts like we're still in the days a Walter Cronkite or Edward R. Morrow.

BERNARD

Walter Cronkite an who?

MIKE

They were the last honest reporters. They're dead now. The point is, the people that control the media know that it only takes about fifty percent a these kinda

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
people ta agree with whatever
they're sayin in order ta control
the rest of us.

BERNARD
How's dat.

MIKE
Just like the people who believe
everything they hear, there's about
five percent a people that don't
believe anything they hear cause
they think everything's a
conspiracy. Only most a those kinda
people are friggin nuts.

BERNARD
Like Mel Gibson.

MIKE
Precisely... Anyway, The next group
are the followers. They're people
who will go along with anything the
majority says cause they can't or
won't think for themselves.

BERNARD
Dat's my sister. She's so afraid of
bein thought a as uncool, she'll
agree wit anythin anyone says...
Except me.

MIKE
I don't know your sister, but she
sounds like she's in the next group
a people. They're the people who
just go along with the majority
cause they don't want anybody
thinkin their uncool.

BERNARD
Dat's her.

MIKE
Now it's these two groups that the
people who control the media use ta
achieve a majority. Mostly by
convincin em if they don't agree
then they must be stupid, uncool,
or a conspiracy wacko.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

What bout da minority?

MIKE

The minority remember, are not just people who are smart enough ta know bullshit when they hear it, but they're also people who just don't give a shit. Either way, neither of em really matter.

BERNARD

Why's dat?

MIKE

Because... Once they got a majority, it's over. They can create policy, an anyone who disagrees just has ta live with it. Over time, their new agenda becomes the new normal.

BERNARD

Dat's f'd up. Why can't da people who disagree fight back?

MIKE

They can try, but the media will just make em look like wackos. Believe me, the people who control the media ain't screwin aroun. If a public backlash ta one a their money makin policies gets up any momentum, they'll come up with some crafty bullshit ta stifle that noise.

BERNARD

Like what?

MIKE

Like their doin right now with Fox News. Fox News is suppose ta be the voice a the opposition ta the new normal, but all they put on the air are the crazy right wing lunatics. Seriously, psycho babblin brain dead morons.

BERNARD

My gramma watches dat channel all day long.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

I thought ya didn't have cable?

BERNARD

We don't, but grams does. We go ta her house after school til Moms gets home.

MIKE

Gotcha. Anyway, they only put the psychos on so they can make fun of em on all the other channels.

BERNARD

Ya, like da Comedy channel.

MIKE

Precisely. They love to use comedy to brainwash people. Cause everyone likes ta laugh, an comedians like ta make fun a shit. So they make sure the comedians makin fun a who or what they want ridiculed are always on the air.

BERNARD

So if da media is lyin, how da ya know who ta believe?

MIKE

That's a good question, but I think it's more important ta have the freedom ta believe whatever ya wanna believe an the right ta discuss it without bein labeled a wacko, or a racist, or whatever.

Mike and Bernard finish their meal and get up to leave. Mike reaches for his drink and knocks it over. He grabs it and throws it away with the rest of his trash.

Mike and Bernard walk out of the KFC.

EXT. KFC - CONTINUOUS

MIKE

I need ta roll over ta my nigga's crib an grab some weed, ya down?

Bernard says nothing but makes a gesture as if to say, lead the way.

EXT. GUTTER'S HOUSE - LOBINGER STREET - AN HOUR LATER

They arrive at A HOUSE on Lobinger Street. A YOUNG WHITE MALE about twenty-five sits on the porch drinking a 40 and smoking a BLUNT.

BERNARD
Gutter... my Niggah!

GUTTER
Nards! Whassup homeboy.

BERNARD
Ya know, jus chillin.

GUTTER
Mikey! I know why yur here foo.

MIKE
Sup Gutter, ya know this cat?

GUTTER
Hell ya, we go way back. Taught him
everythang he knows.

Gutter, Mike, and Bernard exchange formalities.

GUTTER
Ya lookin fo loud or fifties.

MIKE
Fifties, if ya got any.

GUTTER
Ya know I do. Wait here.

Gutter grabs THE MAIL from THE MAILBOX next to THE DOOR and walks into the house.

Gutter's friend D-BONE, a pimped out Black man in his late forties, is sitting down at the other end of the porch freestylin with a few NEIGHBORHOOD THUGS.

Mike and Bernard walk on over.

Mike rolls A BLUNT, fumbling with it considerably, but manages to finish rolling it. He lights it up, takes a hit, and passes it around.

MIKE
Ya mind if I jump in witcha?

(CONTINUED)

D-BONE

Cool wit me, spit it youngblood.

Mike needs no more invitation and busts it loud...

MIKE

(animated)

Six blind riders on horses a steel,
computer chip minds navigate their
will. The ghost in da machine has
set their path, hell's fury has
smitten these dogs a wrath... an
the voices a those who were slain
cry out... fo da blood. The
preacher screams from da pulpit a
the damned, as birds a the field
pluck da eyes from their heads. Da
six blind riders take position at
da gates, da harlot an da beast
have sealed their fate... an da
voices a those who were slain
cryout... fo da blood. Da seven
headed beast raises his blood
strained hands, fo da six ta take
charge a the armies a the damned,
They call da Son a God ta come down
from heaven, ta wage war on da
fields a Armaggedon... an da voices
a those who were slain cry out...
fo da blood. Now all da dead in
hell await this redemption story,
fo da lamb who was slain ta return
in all his glory. Fo heaven an
earth ta give up the living an the
dead, ta account fo themselves when
da book a life is read. But, until
then... da voices a those who were
slain cry out... fo da blood. The
voices a those who were slain cry
out... fo da blood.

The young thugs show their approval hooting and hollering
with high fives and fist pumps all around.

D-BONE

Dat's some dark SHIT right there
youngblood. Sounds like you been
droppin tabs.

The blunt goes around as they make small talk.

Gutter steps out on the porch. He slips Mike A UNIT OF
FIFTIES (one ounce of Mexican marijuana) and Mike slips
Gutter SIXTY DOLLARS in the exchange.

(CONTINUED)

Gutter, Mike, and Bernard exchange bro hugs.

Mike and Bernard say their goodbye's to the rest of the guys on the porch and walk out onto Lobinger Street.

EXT. PRICE AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER

Mike sees A NORTH BRADDOCK COP CAR coming up the street.

MIKE

Dude! This way.

BERNARD

What da fuck...

Mike grabs Bernard by his hoody and pulls him up the street.

EXT. PRICE AVENUE TO THE GREENWAY - CONTINUOUS

They start running up hill through THE HOUSES crossing over Cherry Way and through more HOUSES before crossing Stokes Avenue. They dash out onto Earl Street and up past Grove Avenue into THE GREENWAY along the Monongahela Cemetery. Once they're some distance from the road, they stop to catch their breath. Mike looks down through THE TREES to see if the cop car has turned up Earl Street, but he can see now that it's turned down Coalmont Street. He watches until the cops head left on Hawkins Avenue, and let's out a sigh of relief.

BERNARD

What da hell was dat all about?

MIKE

Friggin po po, I cannot afford ta get busted right now.

BERNARD

I ain't fraid a no Po Po.

MIKE

Why should ya be, you ain't Black.

BERNARD

What's dat gotta do wit it?

MIKE

What's that gotta do with it? Man, you've got a lot ta learn kid.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

Like what?

MIKE

Life dude. How the real world works.

BERNARD

An how's dat?

MIKE

I can tell ya one thing, it ain't like no bullshit gangster rap shit. The po po are for real. If your Black an not afraid a the po po, your either Barrack Obama or a complete flippin idiot.

EXT. GREENWAY THROUGH THE MONONGAHELA CEMETERY

BERNARD

Yur tellin me yur afraid a da po po?

MIKE

HELL YA I'm afraid a the po po. I'm on state probation, if I get stopped for anything I'll do five years in a Texas prison before I'm even eligible for parole.

BERNARD

Holy shit. What for?

MIKE

Some bullshit I got caught up in down there a few years ago. Did ya know in Texas they don't have any air conditionin in the prison wards? No bullshit. Do ya know how hot is in Texas in the summer time?

BERNARD

Dat's messed up.

MIKE

Tell me about it... If I get stopped for any reason I could get violated, I gotta enough problems without havin ta deal with these jagoffs.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

What happened ta ya dahn in Texas?

MIKE

It's a long story an I really don't wanna get into it.

BERNARD

Really... What else were ya doin?

MIKE

Well, it's just an f'd up story all the way around.

BERNARD

It can't be anymore messed up than da rest a da weirdness I heard today.

MIKE

Oh it is, trust me.

BERNARD

Are ya shitin me?

MIKE

Hey I wouldn't shit you, your my favorite turd.

BERNARD

Ha ha, very funny. So, dat's why yur hidin in da Burgh?

MIKE

Not really, I moved here from L.A.

BERNARD

You left Cali ta come ta da Burgh? What da hell fo?

MIKE

Ya know everyone here asks me that. Pittsburgh's a great place. People here just don't appreciate it.

BERNARD

What's so great bout it?

MIKE

The Steelers for one! I've been a Steeler fan all my life, an they've won two superbowls since I've been here. Not ta mention the Penguins

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
bein in two Stanley Cups an winnin
one. It's the City a Champions
baby!

BERNARD
Yur tellin me ya moved from da West
Coast ta Pittsburgh cause a da
Steelers?

MIKE
Well, it wasn't the only reason,
but it was a big part a the reason.

BERNARD
Come on, spill it.

MIKE
Okay, I met this chick from
Pittsburgh on a cruise ta Cabo, an
we kinda hit it off. So she invited
me ta come out an visit her.

BERNARD
I knew it, ya moved here fo sum
pussy.

MIKE
No, I came ta visit for some pussy,
but I stayed because a the
Steelers... an the people.

BERNARD
Now I know dat's bullshit.

MIKE
Why does everybody here always say
that? Listen, Pittsburghers are good
people.

BERNARD
How's dat?

MIKE
In Pittsburgh, when ya walk past
someone here they rarely look up at
ya, an it's even more rare for them
ta say hello. .

BERNARD
Ya, unfriendly.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

No, their pragmatic, about their business. They don't wanna be bothered with superficial courtesy.

BERNARD

Like I said, unfriendly.

MIKE

No dude. Listen, in California, at least along the coast, people are all courteous on the street, waving hello and smiling at ya. Basically being all superficially friendly right.

BERNARD

Aright.

MIKE

Only in Cali, when ya go indoors, whether it's at work, or a house party, the bar, the club, whatever, they're all into their cliques, looking at ya, judging everything ya do. If ya try to talk to em, they give ya the stink eye and get rude.

BERNARD

Dat's messed up.

MIKE

Exactly, but here when ya go indoors, wherever ya go, people are happy to see ya. You can strike up a conversation with anyone, and everybody accepts ya no matter who ya are or how much money ya have.

BERNARD

Not everybody.

MIKE

Well, maybe not the po po or a few snooty A holes from the North Hills, but that's how rich snobs are everywhere ya go. In Cali everyone acts like a rich snob, even the friggin bums.

BERNARD

Even da bums?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

I'm not bullshittin. You've never
felt rejection til you've been
rejected by the Hollywood homeless
clique.

BERNARD

What?

MIKE

Ya, like I just wasn't cool enough
ta sit under the overpass while
they shot up n shit.

BERNARD,

That's a... a really terrible
story.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Mike and Bernard are working on Tony's next song, "Maria."

Mike is pacing back and forth looking perplexed.

BERNARD

(aware)

Love songs suck...

MIKE

How so?

BERNARD

All emotion, no reality.

MIKE

That's what break up songs are for.

BERNARD

I wouldn't know.

MIKE

Let's hope ya don't have ta
know... I'm jones'n dude.

BERNARD

(sympathetically)

Not ta change da subject, but...
Moms says she wants ta meetcha.

MIKE

What... no I...

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

Ya... she's spectin us fo dinner ta night.

MIKE

Why does she wanna meet me? Man I can't...

BERNARD

If ya knew Moms, ya'd know dar ain't no way of avoidin it. Best ta getta meal outta da deal.

MIKE

I don't think it's such a good idea.

BERNARD

Look man, she says I can't be comin over here if she don't know who ya are. I'm supried she ain't come roun kickin yur door in... She gets a lil over protective sometimes.

Mike is looking a little desperate to change the conversation, and points to the script on the table...

MIKE

Back ta the matter at hand... What Tony's experiencin here is new love, or at least fresh infatuation. What's the first song that hit ya after Michele got her hooks in ya?

BERNARD

Dat's easy. "Latch" by Disclosure.

MIKE

Those little White techno geeks?

BERNARD

What, ya don't like techno either?

MIKE

I didn't say that... give me some a the lines.

BERNARD

(singing, a little embarrassed)

"Ya lift my heart up when da rest a me is down. You, ya enchant me even

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD (cont'd)
when yur not roun. If dar are
boundries I will try ta knock em
down. I'm latchin on babe now I
know what I have foun."

MIKE
(chuckling)
Bernie my boy, you got it BAD...
So, what's your mom cookin?

Mike tosses Bernard's hair playfully. Bernard blushes, yet his excitement at what sounds like an affirmative reply to his earlier invite has him rising up off the couch.

BERNARD
Yur comin ta dinner?

MIKE
(grinning)
Well, it's been awhile since I had
a home cooked meal.

BERNARD
YES. Ya won't be dissappointed.
Moms can cook. I'm tellin ya.

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mike and Bernard approach Bernard's house. It's a little nicer than Mike's, but the yard needs work. Two cars are in the driveway.

BERNARD
Grams is here. She's cool.

Bernard opens the door.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Bienviendo, a mi casa...

Mike looks at him a little cross eyed.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Spanish class.

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Although simple brick and siding adorn the outside, the inside of the house is carefully decorated with obvious loving care. The assortment of SMARTLY FRAMED FAMILY PHOTOS leading from the entry way on down the hall to the dining room Bernard is leading Mike through, tells a story rich with affectionate warmth and laughter.

The DINNER TABLE is set as impressively as any IKEA showroom display.

A handsome ELDERLY WOMAN of perhaps sixty-five, aids a YOUNGER VERSION of herself, thirty years gone by, put the final touches on a WHIP CREAM TOPPED STRAWBERRY PIE.

BERNARD

Hey Grams, how's it hangin?

GRAMS

A little to the left.

YOUNGER VERSION

BERNARD JOSEPH LEONE, that is no way to talk to your grandmother... And don't you be encouraging him... Come over here and give your mother a kiss.

BERNARD

MOM.

MOM

What, are you getting to old to kiss your mother now?

Bernard leaves Mike standing next to the table as he schleps boyishly over to kiss his mom on the cheek before giving his grandmother an appropriately measured hug.

MOM (CONT'D)

(nodding toward Mike)

Are you going to introduce us to your guest?

BERNARD

RIGHT... Mom, Grams, dis is Mike... or is it Michael?

MIKE

(stepping forward)

Mike will due.

(CONTINUED)

MOM
(reaching out her hand)
Oh, I think Michael is so much
nicer... Hi, I'm Dawn... and this
is my mother, Donna Mae Leone.

Mike extends his hand awkwardly.

MIKE
Nice ta meet ya... Misses Leone.

DAWN
Your a little older than I
expected.

Dawn and Mike's eyes meet, and Mike smiles flirtatiously.

MIKE
Your a little younger than I
expected.

DONNA MAE
So, are ya one a them gays?

MOM! DAWN GRAMS! BERNARD

DONNA MAE
What? An unmarried middle aged man
hanging out with a teenage boy...
he ain't Batman.

[illegible]

MIKE
(to Bernard good naturedly)
So... your not the Boy Wonder? I
don't know what ta say, Misses
Leone, I guess we've both been
misled.

Mike smiles dismissively.

DAWN
Mom behave yourself. Shall we eat.

MIKE
(graciously relieved)
Yes, I'm starvin. Where do ya want
me?

(CONTINUED)

Dawn directs Mike to the head of the table while her and Donna Mae finish putting FULL SERVING DISHES on the table.

Once finished, Donna Mae takes a seat next to Mike on his right, Bernard sits on his left, and Dawn sits directly across. She begins passing around the serving dishes.

Mike politely waits until all the dishes have gone around, though Bernard is not so inclined, already digging in.

Dawn gracefully scoops up a bit of mac'n'chesse on her fork, pausing...

DAWN

I'm curious Michael... how did you get my son to take such a renewed interest in his education?

MIKE

I doubt it was anything I did.

DAWN

No need to be modest, he credits you with helping him get an A on his Political Science paper.

MIKE

What?

BERNARD

Ya, I did my papah on bureaucracy. Ya know, bout all dat stuff ya told me.

MIKE

No kiddin, an ya got an A for that?

DONNA MAE

Maybe you could teach him how to speak english?

DAWN

MOM.

BERNARD

GRAMS.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Mike helps Dawn clear the table while Bernard gobbles down his third slice of pie. He does his best not to drop anything.

(CONTINUED)

Donna Mae sips tea with both hands, like a church mouse, peering at Mike and her daughter's playful interaction over the steamy mug with particular interest.

DAWN

I'm glad you we're able to join us,
it's nice to have the company. Most
nights it's just Bernard and I.

MIKE

Are ya kiddin me, it was my
pleasure. I can't remember the last
time I ate a dinner that didn't
come outta the microwave... What I
mean ta say is dinner was
delicious, an that dessert was
incredible.

DAWN

(pointing to Mike's shirt)
Is that why you've decided to take
some home with you?

Mike looks down to see a whip cream trail descending the length of his shirt.

MIKE

Unbelievable, I can't take me
anywhere.

Mike searches with his eyes for a napkin...

DAWN

Here, let me get it.

Dawn takes a sponge and wets it under the faucet. She leans in and dabs at Mike's shirt, deliberate at first, but quickly distracted. Mike follows her with his eyes, she becomes aware of her actions and blushes. The moment is palpable.

DAWN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, been awhile since I've
experienced the scent of a man.

MIKE

Not too unpleasant I hope.

Dawn steps back and turns abruptly to the sink without commenting further. She starts washing the dishes.

Puzzled, Mike sniffs his pits. Donna Mae snickers drawing Mike's attention.

(CONTINUED)

Donna Mae directs Mike with her chin back in the direction of Dawn, feigning impatience.

Catching on, Mike acknowledges her with a shrug of his shoulders, but steps up beside Dawn at the sink.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Can I help dry?

Dawn turns her face toward the DISH TOWEL, and nods yes feebly. Her continence ebbing.

Mike quickly grabs a FLOWER PATTERNED APRON hanging from the BASEMENT DOOR, throws it on flamboyantly, and nudges Dawn playfully aside drawing a cleverly earned smile from her.

Mike continues his antics, summoning his best Julia Childs impression.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I find that dishes, especially fine
china are dried best with creamier
butter, I prefer drawn French
butter from the Guernsey.

Dawn bursts out laughing and flicks foamy dish water toward Mike, who promptly returns the volley. Soon, the two of them have splashed and laughed their way into an infatuation.

Neither of them are yet aware Bernard has been taking it all in a bit perplexed. He rises from his chair.

BERNARD

Whatcha doin Moms?

Donna Mae reaches out and grabs a hand full of Bernard's shirt.

DONNA MAE

Sweetie, I need your help getting my
things to the car.

Bernard turns back toward his grandmother looking confused.

BERNARD

Are ya seein dis?

Donna Mae pulls Bernard along, as she heads to the frontdoor.

DONNA MAE

I can see just fine. (now O.S.)
Goodnight all, thanks for the grub!

(CONTINUED)

DAWN
Goodnight Mom, love you,
pleasant dreams, God watch
over you!

MIKE
Goodnight Misses Leone, it
was nice meetin ya!

Dawn gives Mike a coy glance, and the two of them send one more little splash each other's way.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The dishes done, Mike and Dawn sit across from one another at the kitchen table sharing a cup of tea.

MIKE
I have ta ask, I mean... ya look
far too young ta have a son
Bernie's age, let alone an older
daughter?

DAWN
Mom wasn't one to discuss birth
control. Emily came at sixteen, and
I popped out Bernard just before my
eighteenth birthday.

MIKE
Where's their father, if ya don't
mind my askin?

DAWN
Left for college, and never came
back. His parents convinced him I
somehow sabotaged his future with
my irresponsible behavior. He took
off and never looked back.

MIKE
I'm sorry ta hesr that.

DAWN
Don't be, he left me with the
greatest two gifts I could have
ever asked for. Those kids are the
best thing to ever happened to me.

MIKE
Was their ever anyone else?

DAWN
Oh, there's been the occasional
hotrod, but it seems nothing repels
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAWN (cont'd)
men like a single mother with
children.

MIKE
My mom raised us boys on her own.
She caught my father cheatin when
she was pregnant with me. Turns out
I've got three half siblings out
there somewhere, all about my age.
I guess she did alright though.

DAWN
What about you, ever married?

MIKE
Once. She left me for a nineteen
year old. Fourteen years down the
tubes just like that. But, I was as
much to blame as she was. always
chasin the next wave.

DAWN
Your a surfer?

MIKE
(unnaturally serious)
Is it that hard ta believe a Black
man can surf?

DAWN
No... I...

MIKE
(chuckling)
Don't sweat it, I was just playin.
Growin up in HB, I never realized
most brothers can't swim. Funniest
thing watchin em sink ta the bottom
like stones during water survival
training. I gotta tell ya though,
it was priceless watchin my CO's
face at the end a the fifty meter
dash when I hopped outta the deep
end ten meters ahead a all the
White boys.

DAWN
Some Army recruiters were visiting
Bernard's school awhile back, it's
all he talked about for weeks.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Well, it's good he's doin better in school, he'll need the grades to get in.

DAWN

His grades are improving, thanks to your help.

MIKE

I'm not sure I deserve any a the credit, but I recommend he goes ta college, maybe get into an ROTC program. That way, if he doesn't make it, at least he has a college degree ta fall back on.

DAWN

Is that what you did?

MIKE

I wish. I was enlisted. Didn't go ta college til I got out.

DAWN

Really, what was your major.

MIKE

Psychology. A waste a time and money really. I should've gone with computer science or chemistry.

DAWN

Psychology seems like a suitable degree.

MIKE

Perhaps, but sadly it turns out I don't actually care much for other people's problems. Unfortunately, "shut up and get over yourself" isn't a very helpful counseling method.

Dawn laughs along with Mike.

DAWN

So what are you doing now?

MIKE

I was an electrician until my neck surgery. They use ta call me Sparky.

(CONTINUED)

DAWN

Sparky?

MIKE

They say a cat has nine lives, I've got ninety-nine lives an countin. By the time I was ten I'd been in an outta the emergency room at least twenty times.

DAWN

My goodness your poor mother. What for?

MIKE

Double pneumonia the firet time, when I was six months old. I was given last rites an everything. When I was two, our babysitter let her boyfriend use me for satanic rituals.

DAWN

What!

MIKE

Crazy huh, really messed my brother up. He was like five, an they made him watch.

DAWN

That's awful.

MIKE

Tell me about it. So then when I was six, I was showin off for the girls nextdoor tightrope walkin the top of a little princess swing set with pointy spirals on the end. I nearly made it though.

DAWN

Boys... What happened to you?

MIKE

Fell an landed on my head. Wasn't the worst part however. Woke up from a coma ta find the nurse examinin my private parts... with my mother in the room. I was mortified. Two women starin at my goodies, which were five times their normal size by the way. Almost fell back into a coma.

(CONTINUED)

Dawn laughs...

DAWN

Oh my God, I don't believe it.

MIKE

Believe it. At seven, I contracted spinal meningitis, almost died for the fourth time, last rites for the second time. Funny thing, I was in a fever induced coma, but I could hear the doctor tellin my mom I wasn't gonna make it through the night, an even if I did I'd have severe brain damage.

DAWN

I knew there was something wrong with you.

MIKE

LOL... I could hear them talkin an my mom cryin. Tried desperately ta tell her I was gonna live, but no words were coming out. The next day the fever broke an I was fine after that. Ta this day... I've never been back ta the doctor for an illness. Now injuries, that's a whole nother story.

DAWN

(pointing)

Those scars on your head, are they from falling off the swing set?

MIKE

One of em, this one here.

Mike indicates A LONG VERTICAL SCAR on his forehead.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I've had stitches over forty times somewhere on my head alone, not countin all the scars an broken bones on the rest a my body.

Mike shows Dawn A LONG SCAR on his knee and then pulls up his shirt to reveal A LONGER SCAR on his lower spine.

DAWN

Your a modern day Frankenstein.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Funny, my CO used to call me that.

Dawn shifts in her seat and stares off momentarily as if contemplating all Mike has shared with her.

DAWN

What was bootcamp like? Was it difficult?

MIKE

It was easy for me, but not for everyone... My Company Commander was Chief Oakman, an we had these two guys... the chief called em Bird an Storm. He'd yell out...

Mike uses A ROUGH VOICE to imitate his company commander.

MIKE (CONT'D)

"Bird! Storm! Get yur butts over here! Look at you maggots! Shit Bird an Shit Storm!"(now normal)
Those guys were always screwin up. Then he'd yell out, (gruff again)
"Frankenstein, I wantcha ta get these two retards squared away or it's yur ass!"

DAWN

How was it your responsibility?

MIKE

I was the Recruit Company Commander, responsible for the whole company. It was cool though. I got promoted, received the Navy League Award, an my whole family got ta sit in the Admiral's Box for Graduation and Parade Review. I never seen my mom so proud.

DAWN

That's a great story... You're quite an interesting character Mister Michael...

MIKE

Kitchens.

DAWN

Mister Michael Kitchens.

Dawn looks up at the CLOCK on the wall.

(CONTINUED)

DAWN (CONT'D)

Oh, my goodness, it's one o'clock in the morning. I have to get up for work in five hours.

MIKE

In five hours, I'm terribly sorry, an here I am talkin your ear off.

DAWN

No, no, it's quite alright. I've enjoyed listening to you very much. Maybe you can come by again sometime?

MIKE

I'd like that.

Mike rises, and Dawn walks him to the front door. Mike opens it. They linger, gazing into each other's twinkling eyes. For a moment, it seems as if they will kiss...

MIKE (CONT'D)

Goodnight, an thanks again for everything.

DAWN

Your welcome Michael, be safe.

Mike turns and walks out the door. Dawn watches him walk down the driveway before shutting the door and locking it.

EXT. POPLAR STREET - CONTINUOUS

Mike walks up the street and finds himself whistling a familiar song. "Latch," by Disclosure.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Mike and Bernard are on the couch, going over Bernard's script.

MIKE

Come on Bern, concentrate. We've been over this. What's this song about?

BERNARD

It's bout you an Moms, dude...
GROSS.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE
(jumping up)
WHAT?

BERNARD
I saw ya, don't try an deny it. I
ain't blind.

MIKE
(now pacing)
Don't be ridiculous, we we're just
talkin. What's wrong with that?

BERNARD
Whatever dude, cougar up.

MIKE
Cougar up, your mom's notta cougar.
She's the same age as I am.

BERNARD
No way. How old are ya?

MIKE
Don't worry bout how old I am, I'm
old enough.

BERNARD
Do we need ta getcha some Viagra
ole man?

MIKE
Whatta ya talkin about? It's you
young punks that buy up all the
Viagra, ya buncha one minute
wonders.

BERNARD
I gotta better idea. Put a spring
in yur junk. (hand gestures)Folds
down in your pants, but when ya
release dat puppy... BOING.

MIKE
(laughing)
You are one twisted little hombre,
but I like where your heads at. We
just have ta figure out how ta
market it.

BERNARD
The Stinky Pink Slinky... it's fun
for a girl an a boy.

(CONTINUED)

Bernard and Mike fallout laughing.

After a moment, Bernard meets Mike's eyes.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Seriously, Moms looked happier than
I seen her in a long time. It's
cool wit me if yinz hook up.

MIKE

(earnestly)

I appreciate it man, means a lot ta
me. But, let's not get ahead a
ourselves. I don't even know if she
likes me.

BERNARD

DUDE, she's hasn't shut up boutcha.

MIKE

I don't know...

BERNARD

Trust me, yur in.

MIKE

Alright, enough about that... back
ta Tony an Maria's romance. Ya ever
heard the song "Perfect Love," by
Peaches an Herb?

Mike and Bernard continue working on Bernard's versus.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - LATER

Mike and Bernard finish up for the day.

BERNARD

Say Mike, let me get a nick a
fitties?

MIKE

I don't know dude...

BERNARD

Come on man, I just needa couple
blunts worth.

Mike contemplates Bernard's request for a few moments.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

It's against my better judgment,
but...

Mike reaches under the couch and pulls out his weed tray. He puts a dime bag together, and tosses it to Bernard.

INT. DAWN'S CAR - DAY

Dawn is driving with Mike in the passenger seat, while Bernard and MICHELE ride in the back seat.

MIKE

It's pretty cool of ya ta invite me
an your moms along.

Bernard looks at Michele and smiles.

BERNARD

It was Michele's idea. She said ta
invite summa my friends, an yinz
are da best friends I got.

Mike looks at Dawn with a crooked grin.

DAWN

I told you he was a sweet kid.

They pull into the KENNYWOOD AMUSEMENT PARK parking lot, and after paying, follow the PARKING ATTENDENTS to the space they're directed to.

EXT. KENNYWOOD AMUSEMENT PARK - CONTINUOUS

The foursome head toward the TICKET BOOTH. They get in line, and slowly make their way to the TICKET WINDOW. Mike purchases TWO TICKETS and hands one to Dawn. Bernard does the same, handing A TICKET to Michele.

As they enter the interior of the park through the tunnel, Mike reaches out and gently slides his hand across Dawn's. She takes his hand and smiles.

Bernard notices and takes Michele's hand, although not quite as smooth. Nonetheless, Michele appears equally pleased.

Mike and Dawn emerge from the tunnel first, but Bernard races past pulling Michele along, pushing Mike friendly as he goes by.

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

Last one to Black Widow, buys the
Potato Patch fries!

Mike stumbles, but regains himself quickly and leads Dawn in hot pursuit.

Mike arrives dead last, bending over to catch his breath. Fortunately, the line is plenty long enough to accommodate his recovery.

MIKE

(looking up at Bernard)
Ya tryin ta kill me kid? I need ta
get in shape.

DAWN

(coyly)
I've got a workout for you old man.

BERNARD

JEEZ MOMS, I can hear you.

Bernard glances at Michele and rolls his eyes while dramatically displaying a finger down the throat gesture.

DAWN

(winking at Mike)
What? I meant pilates.

BERNARD

Sure ya did, an I was jus showin
Michele my tonsils.

EXT. KENNYWOOD - BLACK WIDOW RIDE - MONTAGE

-Bernard and Michele racing to get in the front seats.

-Mike and Dawn taking the seats behind them.

-Watching the couples' reactions, together, and separately. Observing the varied emotions of trepidation, surprise, fear, exhilaration, and joy interspersed with their interpersonal connection individually, in pairs, and as a group.

-The ride coming to an end, their debarkation, and exit of the ride.

-The group moving from ride to ride, on the rides, sharing their experience.

-The day turning into night.

END MONTAGE

EXT. KENNYWOOD - FOOD COURT - LATER

The happy couples arrive at the Potato Patch fries BOOTH.

Mike approaches the window with Bernard while Dawn and Michele take seats at a table.

MIKE

Ya, I'll take four large orders, an
four sweet teas.

The order arrives at the window, and Bernard helps Mike deliver the Pittsburgh favorites to the table.

DAWN

Thank you, kind sir.

MICHELE

I love these fries. Thank you so
much.

MIKE

Wouldn't be Kennywood without em.

BERNARD

Don't thank him, thank you's fo
winners. Thank me fo winnin da bet.

MICHELE

I don't care who I thank, I'm just
thankful for Potato Patch fries.

They eat away. Dawn feeds a fry to Mike, and he returns the sentiment.

Michele holds out a fry for Bernard, but as he goes to eat it, she pulls it away and gobbles it down giggling.

Bernard quickly reaches over and steals one of her fries in retaliation. Michele begins to guard her fries with a miserly glare.

MICHELE

Did you know your son is a thief,
Miss Dawn?

BERNARD

I can't help it, dar addictin.

(CONTINUED)

DAWN

Oh, I know. Among other things, he stole my girlish figure. You know, I was once the Prom Queen.

MIKE

You know what's addictin? Girl Scout cookies.

DAWN

So true.

MIKE

They sent one a those little pushers aroun ta my door. Got me hooked on Somoas. Kept comin back three four weeks in row, by the fourth week I'm buyin em by the case; forty-eight bucks a pop.

DAWN

You do have a problem... We may need to hold an intervention.

MIKE

Oh, ya don't know the half of it. My dealer quits showin up in like December, so I go over ta her house.

BERNARD

Ya went over ta a girl scouts crib? Dat's jus wrong.

MIKE

Nah, listen ta me, I had it bad. So, she says she can get me a few boxes in February. I'm like "February!" That's when her dad, or her pimp I don't know which, peers aroun the corner at me. I pump my brakes a little. "No, no that's good kid, real good, that'll be fine." So, I give her a hundred bucks, maybe two hundred, and I wait.

DAWN

Oh, you did not.

MIKE

I swear on my mother's grave. Anyway, over two months goes by, an
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)
she finally shows up with the
product. Ya know, I'm in the
corner... shiverin. I'm all, "when
will I see ya again? She says,
"Maybe I can get some in April."
APRIL.

MICHELE
Cookie catch up sales, but that's
it until October.

MIKE
Your one a them! I knew there was
somethin maniacally evil about ya.
(pointing) Look there, it's behind
her eyes.

MICHELE
I'm an Ambassador.

MIKE
That's what your callin it. More
like Ambassador a despair. So, now
I'm like a hoarder, rationin my
stash. I get two more cases at the
end a April sometime, an then the
little drug lord drops the bomb on
me.

MICHELE
No more cookies until October.

MIKE
(more animated)
Look! Look how she says it with a
gleam in her eye, I told ya!
OCTOBER, what the hell's up with
that? I tried ta make em last, but
by then I had like a three box a
day habit. I was dry by the end a
the month. I'm at her door
everyday, sleepin on her lawn. Her
pimp comes out an tries ta get me
ta leave. I'm like, "I'm sick man,
ya gotta help me."

Dawn, Bernard, and Michele are laughing hysterically at
Mike's antics.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Ya think it's funny? I had ta turn
ta the black market. I was payin
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
like twenty dollars a box online.
Meetin shady characters in dark
alleys. In an outta rehab for
years. It's not funny.

DAWN
Maybe not Mister Kitchens, but you
are a riot.

Dawn rises and plants a kiss on Mike's forehead.

Bernard and Michele get up and toss their trash.

BERNARD
Me an Michele are gonna head over
ta Noah's Ark. How bout we meet
back here in an hour.

DAWN
I don't know...

MIKE
(winking at Bernard)
Hey that's cool, I'm not a big fan
a Noah's Ark anyway. Why don't ya
kids run along. Ya need any money?

DAWN
But...

BERNARD
No, I'm cool, see ya in an hour.

Bernard doesn't hesitate. Taking Michele by the hand, the
two head off in a hurry.

MICHELE
Thanks for the fries!

Dawn watches them go with a look that only a mother watching
her little man being not so little anymore might have.

MIKE
They grow up so fast don't they?

Dawn shivers a little, and Mike takes his hoody and wraps it
around her without a word. He looks in her eyes tenderly.

Dawn puts on a smile.

(CONTINUED)

DAWN

Thank you.

MIKE

Let's head over to the Penny
Arcade, maybe I can win ya a teddy
bear or somethin.

Mike holds out his arm like a gentleman. Dawn takes it, and they walk arm in arm over to the Penny Arcade area.

EXT. KENNYWOOD - PENNY ARCADE - CONTINUOUS

Mike and Dawn stroll over to the RING TOSS. Mike steps up and hands the VENDOR a FIVE DOLLAR BILL.

The vendor hands Mike TEN RINGS.

Mike almost immediately drops them all. Dawn helps him pick them up.

MIKE

Why don't ya hold on to those for
me, maybe rub em for good luck.

Mike plucks one of the rings from Dawn's hand, blows on it and let's it fly. The ring bounces around a few times and falls between the bottles to the table below.

The following eight rings take similar journeys as Mike and Dawn go through the usual gauntlet of emotion. First determination, followed by anticipation, hopeful enthusiasm, disappointment, until coming full circle back to renewed determination. The latter waning ever so slightly with each subsequent miss.

Dawn rubs the last ring for luck, and says a little prayer before handing it to Mike who performs an incantation of his own.

Taking careful aim, he tosses the ring as flatly as possible with just a slight spin to the left. One bounce, two bounces, a third bounce, and as improbable as it is unbelievable, the tenth and final ring rattles around and down on the neck of a bottle dead center in the middle of them all.

Mike and Dawn pause for a moment in stunned silence...

VENDOR

We have a winner!

(CONTINUED)

And with the vendor's announcement, Dawn and Mike erupt in jubilation. Dawn jumps into Mike's arms and plants one on him.

VENDOR (CONT'D)
Whatta ya like little lady?
Giraffe, maybe a lion, or the
traditional teddy bear, take your
pick.

Mike looks the vendor's way, but clearly Dawn is not yet satiated. Mike gives up, gives in, and enjoys the ride.

EXT. KENNYWOOD - LOG JAMMER RIDE - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Not many folks are riding this particular ride at present, the night's can still get chilly this time of year, and as everyone knows, it's impossible to stay dry on the Log Jammer. Consequently, Bernard and Michele get a raft all to themselves.

Bernard takes a seat and Michele nestles in beside him. The ride twists and turns toward the back of the park where the lights are at their dimmest.

MICHELE
Could you put your arm around me?
It's kinda cold out.

BERNARD
Oh ya, sure. Here...

Bernard hurriedly pulls his hoody off and awkwardly wraps it around her. Their faces are now ever so close. Michele closes her eyes.

Nervously, Bernard slides back into his seat. He rolls his eyes at himself, but rebounds quickly, mustering the courage to slip his arm around Michele. She coos ever so quietly, he notices.

The next turn is the darkest, and Bernard steels his nerve. However, Michele beats him to it and moves right in with a beautiful wet kiss; a kiss for the ages. Bernard melts.

EXT. KENNYWOOD - FOOD COURT - LATER

Dawn and Mike arrive at the rendezvous point, Bernard and Michele are not far behind.

(CONTINUED)

Dawn and Michele exchange glances noticing that Mike and Bernard's lips are covered in shades of pink and cherry red respectively. Together, the ladies burst into laughter.

MIKE
What?

BERNARD
What?

Dawn pulls a couple tissues from her purse and hands one to Michele. Both proceed to clean up their men.

MIKE
That's a nice shade on you.

BERNARD
You'll hafta loan me yurs sometime.

MIKE
I keep it right here in my purse.

Mike holds out his arm, Bernard obliges, and together they sashay off toward the exit.

The girls are loving it, and follow them out giggling all the while.

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - LATER

The car pulls into the driveway, and the four companions exit the vehicle.

BERNARD
I'm gonna walk Michele home.
(jovially) Don't wait up.

Michele pushes him playfully away.

DAWN
Goodnight Michele. Bernard, you be careful.

MICHELE
Goodnight Miss Dawn, Goodnight Mike.

MIKE
Goodnight Michele. Watch out for that one.

BERNARD
Got dat right.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Not you pussy cat, I'm talkin bout
her.

Dawn and Mike watch them as they head down the street with
the night's meloncholy hanging in the air. As they lose
sight of them, they turn to look at each other.

MIKE

(sensitively)

They'll be alright.

DAWN

Oh I know, but a mother always
worries. It's our job.

Dawn looks at Mike for a moment contemplatively.

MIKE

Well, I guess I should be...

DAWN

(interrupting)

Would you like to come in for a
nightcap.

MIKE

Are ya sure?

DAWN

No, but if you kiss me long enough,
I can be persuaded.

Well alright then, I'll do my best.

They embrace one another and kiss passionately, then walk
into the house.

EXT. MICHELE'S HOUSE - A BIT LATER

Out front of Michele's house, Bernard pulls her in close.

BERNARD

I got a lil somethin, somethin fo
us.

MICHELE

Shh... my dad will hear you. Let's
go around back.

Bernard reaches into his pocket coming up empty. He fumbles
from pocket to pocket, becoming ever more frantic as the
realization that whatever he's searching for is missing.

(CONTINUED)

Bernard looks up at Michele like he's been caught with both hands elbow deep in the cookie jar.

BERNARD

I gotta go.

MICHELE

What's wrong, what's the matter.

BERNARD

I'll explain later...

Bernard starts off, but quickly turns and kisses Michele before running off into the night.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

I'll hit ya up tomorrow!

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mike and Dawn walk down the hall to the kitchen.

DAWN

How about some Irish coffee?

MIKE

Sounds good.

DAWN

I'll put on the kettle, it'll only take a minute. The whiskey's just there.

Dawn points to one of the upper cupboards. She fills the KETTLE with water from the tap and places it on the stove, turning up the burner.

DAWN (CONT'D)

If you don't mind, I'm just going to throw in a load of laundry while we're waiting.

MIKE

No, I don't mind. Go ahead, do what ya have ta do.

Dawn walks out the back of the kitchen.

DAWN (O.S.

(calling out)

Bernard goes through so many clothes, I can hardly keep up.

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - LAUNDRY ROOM

Dawn pulls a PAIR OF JEANS from a HAMPER, and casually goes through the pockets. In the little change pocket she feels something, digs in, and pulls out a DIME BAG OF WEED.

She might be a mother out of touch, but she knows exactly what this is. The agonizing truth of it forms on her bewildered face.

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Dawn enters the kitchen holding out the dime bag as if it were a dead mouse.

Mike recognizes it instantly, but shows he's clueless as to what it means to Dawn.

MIKE

Alright now. Ya want me ta roll
that up for ya?

DAWN

What?

MIKE

Do want me ta roll a blunt?

DAWN

No I don't want you to roll a
blunt! I just found this in
Bernard's pants pocket!

EXT/INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE

Bernard runs up the steps to his house and bursts through the door. He reaches the kitchen only to find he's too late.

Dawn's eyes lock on him immediately.

DAWN

(holding out the weed)
Do you want to explain this?

BERNARD

(breathing heavily)
It's jus some fifties...

DAWN

Just some what? I don't care what
you call it. It's still drugs,
plain and simple!

(CONTINUED)

BERNARD

But Mom...

DAWN

But nothing! You brought drugs into
my house! Where did you get this?

Bernard stammers and fidgets for what seems like an eternity
while Dawn's eyes burn proverbial holes right through him.

MIKE

He got it from me.

DAWN

What!

MIKE

The weed... he got it from me.

Mike and Bernard hang their heads in unison. The silent
pause is deafening.

DAWN

Bernard, go to your room.

BERNARD

Mom, it's not...

DAWN

Now!

Bernard feigns reluctance, but can't hide the relief of
getting out from under his mother's accusing dagger like
glare.

Dawn watches Bernard leave, waiting long enough to hear his
bedroom door SHUT.

DAWN

(turning to Mike)

I want you to stay away from my
son.

MIKE

Come on, don't make more outta this
than it is.

DAWN

Are you serious right now? Do you
have any idea how hard it is to
raise a son on your own? To keep
him safe from this sort of thing.
To protect him... from people like
you.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE
People like me...

DAWN
You need to just leave.

Mike hesitates.

DAWN (CONT'D)
Leave now!

MIKE
I...

Dawn turns away.

Mike gives up and heads toward the door, but turns back for a moment.

MIKE (CONT'D)
For what it's worth... I'm sorry.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Mike is sitting in his bean bag chair in front of the television, game controller in hand, headset on. Call of Duty Blacks Ops plays on the TV.

CLOSE ON Mike's character getting killed on SCREEN.

FELLOW GAMER (O.S.)
What's the matter with you man...
I've never seen you get your ass
handed to you like this?

MIKE
Blindsided again dude, in more ways
than one.

FELLOW GAMER (O.S.)
Look at the brightside... now you
can finally come outta the closet.

MIKE
Ha Ha very funny.

FELLOW GAMER (O.S.)
(Sean Connery accent)
What, just figured with your lack a
skills you were a bit of a poofteer.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE
(Austin Powers accent)
Who you callin a poofter? Ya bloody wanker.

FELLOW GAMER (O.S.)
(accent cont'd)
You, ya filthy bugger.

MIKE
(accent cont'd)
Oh sod off.

Mike gets up and tosses his headset to the ground.

FELLOW GAMER (O.S.)
(coming from the headset)
Was it something I said?

There's a KNOCK at the door. Mike's looks over disgusted.

MIKE
Who is it?

BERNARD (O.S.)
It's me.

MIKE
Me who?

BERNARD
It's Bernard.

Mike's walks over and opens the door, letting Bernard in.

MIKE
What's up man, didn't expect to see you.

BERNARD
Ya... Moms would kill me if she knew I was here.

MIKE
How is she?

BERNARD
She stills pissed. More wit me I think, but yur's is da name dat shall not be uttered. If ya know what I mean.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

So what brings ya to the dark side?

Bernard pulls a FOLDED FLYER from his back pocket, and holds it out for Mike.

BERNARD

Da play's comin up next week... I
was kinda hopin you'd be dar.

Mike looks the flyer over, and tries to give it back to Bernard.

MIKE

Ain't your mom gonna be there?

BERNARD

Ya, da whole fam's comin.

MIKE

I don't know dude, I don't think
it's a good idea... all things
considered.

BERNARD

Thought bout dat, I could getchu in
through da stage door. She'd neva
see ya.

MIKE

(contemplative)

I'll think it over, but I ain't
makin any promises.

BERNARD

Dat's all I'm askin fo... Well,
betta get rollin.

Bernard heads to the door, and pauses...

BERNARD (CONT'D)

(emotional)

If I don't see ya, thanks... fo
everythang.

The two share a bro hug.

MIKE

(jovially)

For what? Ya tryin ta get me all
choked up kid? Now go on, get the
hell outta here.

Mike sees Bernard out the door.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Mike is pacing back and forth, CELL PHONE in hand. He's obviously of two minds on whether to make a call.

Finally, he dials a number. The RINGING turns to VOICEMAIL.

DAWN (V.O.)
You have reach Dawn Leone, I'm...

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dawn and Donna Mae are sitting at the kitchen table. A CELL PHONE VIBRATES on the table.

CLOSE ON the phone. It reads MIKE.

DONNA MAE
You should talk to him.

DAWN
Are you mad? I have nothing to say to him.

DONNA MAE
Why?

DAWN
Why! How could you ask me that? He gave drugs to your grand son!

DONNA MAE
I think your overreacting. It was a little weed.

DAWN
Overreacting, today's it's a little weed, tomorrow it's something worse.

DONNA MAE
Listen honey, me and your father we're high on tie stick when you were concieved.

DAWN
I can't beleive we're having this conversation right now!

Dawn gets up and storms out the back door.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE

Mike looks at the phone and SIGHS desperately, and throws it on the couch.

INT. WOODLAND HILLS HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM

HIGH SCHOOLERS are busy with pre opening preparations, setting props in place, filling in the orchestra pit, actors nervously going over their lines.

Bernard and Michele are working on each other's make-up.

Miss Sisk walks out to the middle of the stage.

MISS SISK
Alright people, thirty minutes to
show time!

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mike sits on the couch in his BOXERS, BEER in hand.

Bernard's flyer sits on the coffee table.

He scratches indiscriminately.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

The auditorium is filling up, the curtain is closed now, and the student actors are finding their marks.

MISS SISK
Listen for your cues. If you forget
your lines don't panic... your
seconds will be right there in your
ear. Remember, the key is to just
relax and have fun. Oh... and break
a leg.

Bernard heads back stage. He finds KURT the prop boss.

BERNARD
Hey Kirk, my buddy Mike is comin an
I told him he could get back stage.

(CONTINUED)

KURT

So?

BERNARD

So if he knocks on da door, let him
in.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mike reaches for the flyer and looks it over. He rises and
begins pacing.

MIKE

Oh, ta hell with it. What do I have
ta loose?

He dashes back to the bedroom.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

The last few members of the opening night audience take
their seats.

Miss Sisk gives the signal, and the orchestra begins to
play.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A taxi pulls up out front, and the DRIVER honks the horn.

Mike races across the porch and down the driveway. He hops
in the backseat.

MIKE

Woodlands Hills High School, an
there's an extra saw buck in it for
ya if ya step on it.

DRIVER

A saw buck?

MIKE

I don't know, I've just always
wanted ta say that. Ya know, a ten
spot... now hurry!

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

The curtain rises. A YOUNG MAN tags a PROP WALL with a CAN OF SPRAY PAINT. A SECOND YOUTH enters from stage left on a MOTO-CROSS BIKE performing trick moves. A THIRD from stage right on a SKATEBOARD, and pulls an OLLIE over a FIRE HYDRANT. A FOURTH bounces in from stage left on a POGO-STICK, and performs a BACKFLIP. TWO MORE advance from backstage and begin to BREAK DANCE. All of them are wearing BLUE BANDANAS.

The group circle up at center stage. They begin rapping.

THE YOUNG MEN
(Gangs by Gucci Mane)
Gangs, geah, geah, geah, geah.
Gangs... let's start a gang.
E'rybody say they wanna join a
gang...

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - BACK STAGE

A CUTE GIRL walks up to Kurt, and coos up to him.

They slip off to a closet and start to make out.

CUT TO:

EXT. AUDITORIUM

The taxi pulls up outside the back door of the auditorium.

Mike jumps out and tosses the cabby a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL.

MIKE
Keep the change.

Mike hurries over to the back door and tries to open it.
It's locked. He KNOCKS.

Nothing... Impatiently, he KNOCKS harder. Still nothing.

Frustrated, he runs around and enters through the front door.

INT. AUDITORIUM - FOYER

Mike rushes over to the inner door of the auditorium, but is stopped by a STUDENT.

STUDENT
Ticket please.

MIKE
I'm a guest of one of the actors...
Tony.

STUDENT
I'm sorry, but you still need a
ticket.

MIKE
Okay, let me have a ticket.

The student points toward the ticket booth.

INT. AUDITORIUM

On Stage, twelve RIVAL GANG MEMBERS wearing RED BANDANAS are pounding the Skateboarder.

The gang wearing blue bandanas rush on stage coming to their homeboy's rescue.

As the battle rages, two MEN enter from stage left. One UNIFORM COP, and one DETECTIVE TYPE.

The Uniform Cop blows a WHISTLE, FWEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

UNIFORM COP
Knock it off! Settle down!

The men move in to break things up.

DETECTIVE
You can kill each other if you
want, but you ain't doin it on my
beat!

LEADER OF THE BLUES
If it isn't Lt. Schrank!

REST OF THE BLUES
How's it hangin? Officer Krupke!

Mike comes through the door casting LIGHT from the foyer across a few back rows of the auditorium.

(CONTINUED)

Several heads turn, including Dawn and Donna Mae. Dawn's daughter EMILY is with them.

Dawn looking upset, quickly turns her head. Donna Mae, however, waves Mike over.

DAWN
What are you doing?

DONNA MAE
What?

Mike moves to take a seat next to Donna Mae.

Back up on stage...

LT. SCHRANK
Don't Mister Po Po me, Action! I
got news for ya, you hood rats
don't own the streets. There's been
too much gang bangin between the
Crips and Bloods. Alright...
Bernardo, get your trash outta
here...

CUT TO:

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

A CURLING IRON sits still plugged in on the VANITY TOP,
GLOWING RED. A HAND TOWEL slides off the TOWEL RACK onto the
curling iron.

The towel begins to SMOULDER, and the tip catches FIRE.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

Bernard and Michele are on stage...

TONY
You're not thinking I'm someone
else?

MARIA
I know your not.

TONY
Or that we've met before?

(CONTINUED)

MARIA
I know we have not.

TONY
I felt... I knew something never
before was gonna happen... had ta
happen, but this is...

MARIA
(interrupting)
My hands are cold.

He takes them in his.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Yours too.

He moves her hands to his face.

MARIA (CONT'D)
So warm.

She moves his hands to her face.

TONY
Yours too.

MARIA
But of course, they are the same.

TONY
It's so much to believe... your not
playin me?

MARIA
I haven't learn how to play that
way yet. I think now, I never will.

Impulsively, he stops to kiss her hands; then tenderly,
innocently, her lips.

Dawn and Donna Mae are wiping away tears. Mike is a little
choked up as well, but tries to hide it.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

The hand towel is now burning, and the flames rise up
catching a larger BATH TOWEL on fire.

Once completely ablaze, the CURTAINS catch fire.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

Bernard is center stage dancing and singing...

TONY

Like the legend of the Phoenix,
all ends with beginnings. What
keeps the planets spinning, the
force from the beginning. We've
come too far
to give up who we are, so let's
raise the bar... and our cups to
the stars. She's up all night till
the sun, I'm up all night to get
some.
She's up all night for good fun,
I'm up all night to get lucky.
We're up all night till the sun,
we're up all night to get some.
We're up all night for good fun,
we're up all night to get lucky.

Mike and several others in the audience are singing along...

TONY

We're up all night to get lucky,
we're up all night to get lucky,
we're up all night to get...

CUT TO:

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

The vanity is now engulfed in flames.

One after another, BATHROOM ITEMS catch fire.

The BATHROOM WINDOW gets so hot it blows out.

CUT TO:

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE

SMOKE pours out the bathroom window.

No one is around, the fire gets bigger.

INT. AUDITORIUM - ONE HOUR LATER

The stage is filled with almost the FULL CAST. It's the finale.

Michele is seated on the floor, center stage, with Bernard lying across her lap. She's holding him tenderly, helplessly.

MARIA
(singing)
Hold my hand, and we're halfway
there.

Tony joins in. Maria sings harder as if to urge him back to life...

MARIA
Hold my hand and I'll take
you there, somehow.

TONY
Hold my hand and I'll take
you there, somehow.

Tony's voice falters...

MARIA
Someday...

Maria stops, Tony's body quiets in her arms.

The orchestra plays the last bars of the song.

Maria lightly touches his lips with her fingers.

Dawn, Donna Mae, and even Mike are openly weeping.

CUT TO:

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE

Part of the roof is now on fire, as flames rise up from the bathroom window.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

The whole bathroom is burning out of control, and the bathroom door is ablaze.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

The audience is on their feet cheering wildly.

The cast is bowing in unison.

They race off stage in jubilation, but it's clear the audience is not yet reached their peak.

The cast rushes back out for a curtain call, and the audience erupts.

CUT TO:

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE

The back section of the roof is now fully engaged, and more windows in the rear of the house blow out.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

Cast members are uniting with their family and friends.

Dawn, Emily and Donna Mae are hugging and loving on Bernard. He looks over at Michele who's parents are doing the same, and gives her a big, knowing, smile.

Bernard sees Mike and pulls away from Dawn to go over to him.

BERNARD

Ya made it!

MIKE

Wouldn't have missed it for the world kid!

They share a bro hug.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You were great by the way... you and Michele.

BERNARD

Thanks man... I couldn't have done it without ya.

MIKE

I don't know about all that now.

Donna Mae starts walking over to them, and pulls Dawn along. She resists, but Donna Mae is insistent.

(CONTINUED)

DONNA MAE
Wasn't he something!

MIKE
I know, he was awesome!

DONNA MAE
We're having a little celebration
over at the house. Why don't you
come along?

MIKE
I Don't know... I took a cab over
and...

DONNA MAE
Nonsense, I'll give you a lift.

Dawn looks at her mother as if she has lost her mind.

Mike tries to object further, but Donna mae is having none
of it.

They all start moving toward the door.

BERNARD
I need to say goodbye to Michele.

Dawn strays behind Bernard.

Donna Mae grabs Mike's arm so he can't slip away.

DONNA MAE
This is my grand-daughter, Emily...

CUT TO:

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - DUSK

The roof is now engaged and flames are licking up from every
upstairs window. Smoke fills the air.

People have gathered around outside and a MAN is calling on
his CELL PHONE.

MAN
There's a fire over here on Poplar
Avenue... I don't know, but ya
better get somebody over here
quick.

EXT. POPLAR STREET - MINUTES LATER

Dawn and Bernard drive up the street and pull up to the house.

People are blocking their driveway.

Dawn jumps out of the car and runs toward the house. Bernard chases after her.

He catches up to her. Just as Donna Mae, Mike, and Emily are pulling up behind Dawn's car.

Mike jumps out and races toward the house.

Dawn is trying desperately to pull free from Bernard's grasp.

BERNARD

Mom, you can't... there's too much smoke!

DAWN

(sobbing)

But, my pictures! All your baby things! My jewelry!

EXT/INT. BURNING HOUSE - EVENING - TRACKING

Mike races right by them, smashing through the frontdoor into the house now an incinerator of smoke and flame.

MIKE (V.O.)

As I was saying, some people would say runnin into a burnin buildin isn't the smartest thing ta do. In fact, some would say it's down right stupid..

Mike dashes to the kitchen, pulling his hoody off on the way. He turns on the faucet, soaks the hoody down with water, and puts it back on tying the hood tightly over his face.

MIKE (V.O.)

but believe it or not, I've got an I.Q. over a buck fifty. No bullshit, I've been tested. Now, if your thinkin I'm one a those adrenaline junkies or the hero type... I'm not.

(CONTINUED)

Mike quickly scans the rooms throughout the smokey first level as he moves toward the staircase. Not finding what he's looking for, he bounds up the steps two at a time.

MIKE (V.O.)

Truth is, I just don't have much of a flight response. It's been a problem for me all a my life. Believe me when I say, I've paid dearly for it, an I've got the scars ta prove it.

Mike pulls the sleeves of his hoody down over his hands, and checks the first BEDROOM DOOR KNOB he comes to. It appears cool enough, so he opens it and looks around.

MIKE (V.O.)

But for a guy like me, where the scars tend ta run deepest, is in the heart. Ya see, It's one thing ta run into a sorchin inferno..

Mike checks TWO MORE BEDROOMS the same as the first before arriving at the fourth and final door. He touches his sleeve to the last door knob, it SIZZLES and STEAM rises up from it.

MIKE (V.O.)

It's another thing entirely, ta run headlong inta love.

CLOSE ON Mike's face as he rears back to kick the flaming door in.

MIKE (V.O.)

That's why my closest friends say I'm the most intelligent idiot they know...

As Mike kicks the door in, a backflash blows him across the hall and into the adjacent room.

Moments later Mike emerges holding the teddy bear he had won for Dawn at the fair, and a gym bag.

MIKE (V.O.)

So I've made a few mistakes, taken a few too many chances. Bet on some long shots.

He races through the hall pulling down ever PICTURE he can find, before bounding down the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (V.O.)

But, if I had it to do over again,
I'd take the same risks, play the
same odds. Cause there's one thing
I've learned...

He begins taking more PICTURES down from the downstairs
walls.

MIKE (V.O.)

Like the military, when it comes to
love... It's easier to get
forgiveness than it is to get
permission.

He grabs one last HEIRLOOM off the COFFEE TABLE, and runs
for the front door as the roof collapses.

Mike hands Dawn the teddy bear with a strained smile, places
the bag full of items at her feet, and doubles over
coughing, exhausted.

FIRE TRUCKS arrive amidst a HAIL OF SIRENS. FIREMAN rush out
with HOSES.

People looking, talking, gasping in dismay.

Dawn, Bernard, Donna Mae, and Emily gather around Mike as
the scene slowly fades.

THE CAMERA PANS OUT OVER THE HOUSE SHOWING THE FLAMES RISING
HIGH INTO THE AIR.

CLOSING CREDITS role through the rising flames.

CLOSING CREDITS