

Having Fun Up There

By

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We start with a black screen. John Parker Northrup's song "Robots Do Not Rock" starts. We hear the first line - *Life was good...* - and then an old photo dissolves in. It's Mark. At least 10 years younger, maybe more. He's with some friends at a show. They're smiling, having a blast. It's the Glory Days, the Good Days, the time when the pure joy of playing made everything possible and every day an adventure.

This is followed by an entire collection of similar photos from many other low-level musicians; pictures of the glory days. People a decade ago, maybe even two decades ago, on stage, recording, laughing in dirty dive bars. We see more photos of Mark thrown in there.

Meanwhile, the credits play out over this. We get to the end of the song and end with a final old photo of Mark. It cuts to black rhythmically with the last note of the song and holds as the sound decays. Then...

FADE IN:

EXT. OF SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

2

A birthday party for an 11 year old. The backyard is a well trimmed, decently sized lawn. It's a gorgeous autumn day in New England.

Several CHILDREN LAUGH as they run around and play. A number of ADULTS-- parents and friends -- mingle among them as they talk in smaller groups and drink bottles of craft beer.

A FOOTBALL GAME blares from an iPod/radio dock on a picnic table next to a small pile of wrapped presents.

THOMAS KESSEL flips burgers and dogs on a large, chromed-out gas grill sitting in the corner of the lawn near a sliding door leading to a ranch-style house. He is in his late 30s or early 40s, with dark, short hair and is clean shaven. He wears khaki shorts and a pink polo shirt. He's mostly fit but with a small paunch.

His wife JEN KESSEL, about the same age, sits in a lawn chair next to another WOMAN and laughs. Jen is a handsome, if not pretty woman of average build. Her dirty blond hair is short and styled. There's a townie inside her, but she's tried to make it a little more refined.

In one corner of the yard Thomas' brother MARK KESSEL slumps in a lawn chair with a beer in his hand. There are four empty beer bottles by his feet. Mark is in his mid 30s. He's

(CONTINUED)

of medium height and about 10 to 20 pounds overweight with a pronounced beer gut. His dark hair hasn't been cut in a while and makes an unruly pile on his head; His sideburns need a trim. He is unshaven. He wears a solid black t-shirt, a pair of worn out dark blue jeans and a pair of dirty Keds.

Jen finishes her beer and walks over to her husband and puts the empty in a plastic recycling bin.

The camera focuses on Mark drinking while we hear the following dialogue.

JEN

You want to do presents?

THOMAS

Yeah. I'm just taking the last of the stuff off the grill.

Thomas removes the food from the grill and puts it on a tin-foil covered plate. He wipes his hands on a kitchen towel and then walks toward the picnic table.

THOMAS

Okay, everyone! Neil is going to open his presents.

The children gather around the picnic table. Mark shoves the last bite of a mustard covered hot dog into his mouth, wipes his hand on his jeans and gets to his feet. His eyes are a little puffy from the drinking.

Mark finishes the beer in his hand and grabs another one from a cooler on the way over to the table where the rest of the guests have gathered.

Jen comes out of the house and puts a package behind a large plastic trash barrel.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - LATER

3

NEIL, a young boy of 11 with a dark buzz cut, opens the last of his presents: a video game. The kids react.

NEIL

Ah, nice! The new Call of Anger game!

Thomas smiles as Jen removes the discarded wrapping paper and carries it to the outdoor trash barrel. Mark stands in the back of the crowd drinking his beer.

(CONTINUED)

THOMAS

There's one more present if you want it, Neil.

The guests give a mock surprised GASP.

NEIL

OK.

Jen returns from the trash barrel with a long wrapped package.

JEN

Here you go, honey. Happy birthday!

Neil looks at the package and starts to tear off the wrapping paper. Under it is a cardboard box showing a picture of guitar. Neil gasps and opens the box and takes from it a blue Fender Squire II.

JEN

(to a guest)

He's asked for one ever since he got that Guitar Hero game.

NEIL

(to Thomas)

Wow! This is great! Now I can really play!

The crowd APPLAUDS again and then begins to disperse.

JEN

There'll be cake in a few minutes, Don't wander off too far.

A WOMAN starts to walk away from the table, but then turns back and calls out to Neil.

WOMAN

Once you learn how to play that, you'll be beating the girls off with a stick!

Mark lets out a MANIACAL AND UNSETTLING LAUGH. Neil, Thomas, Jen and the Woman all stare at him.

Mark laughs again, quieter, shaking his head and takes a swig of his beer. He looks at the Woman.

WOMAN

Is there something wrong?

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Any one who told you being in a band would get you laid was either never in a band or chock full of shit.

The Woman looks horrified. Jen puts her hand on her hip and shoots a "not this shit again" look at Mark, who remains oblivious. Thomas comes up behind his wife and rests a hand on her shoulder. He looks right at Mark.

MARK

(to Neil)

Neil? You're good at science, right? Be a scientist! Discover cures for stuff!

NEIL

I want to be a rock star!

Mark looks wide-eyed at Neil.

MARK

The rock star is dead, Neil. Like...well...like Santa. No, not Santa. He wasn't real. Like...Jim Henson? I don't fucking know, I don't speak kid. Anyway, there are no more rock stars. And you know why girls don't like guys in bands?

NEIL

Why?

MARK

Because you spend all your time with a bunch of other dudes in small spaces never bathing. In a shitty rehearsal space. Or in a van. Or in a tiny club. Or sleeping on friends' floors at age 36. And you smell. Bad.

Jen gets visibly angry as Mark talks.

JEN

You're drunk.

MARK

(confused)

And you gave me free beer.

((beat))

Neil, you know that story I read you when you were little about the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARK (cont'd)
boy who finds that magic carpet? It
takes him to wonderful, amazing,
magical places?

Neil nods.

MARK
A guitar is the opposite of a magic
carpet, okay?

JEN
You done making a jackass out of
yourself at a 12 year old's
birthday party?

MARK
I was just kidding with him. It's a
joke!

Mark looks at Neil and we see him mouth the words - "It's
not a joke."

Everyone stands silently for a beat.

ONE OF NEIL'S FRIENDS
Neil's uncle is awesome!

EXT. SKELLER'S CHEESEBURGER KING - NIGHT

4

Skeller's is an old brick restaurant somewhere on the
outskirts of the city. Neon beer signs hang in the two small
windows. Mark walks toward the restaurant and opens the
faded wooden door.

INT. SKELLER'S CHEESEBURGER KING - CONTINUOUS

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Mark enters. A YOUNG MAN sits on a stool next to the
doorway. He's about 10 years younger than Mark and wears a
form-fitting new looking Ramones shirt tucked into tight
jeans with a white belt.

DOORMAN
Seven.

MARK
I should be on the list. Mark
Kessel?

The doorman looks on a clipboard at a sheet of paper.

(CONTINUED)

DOORMAN
What band?

MARK
El Duce Was Pushed.

The doorman continues to look at the list.

DOORMAN
Sorry, dude.

MARK
Really?

DOORMAN
Yup.

Mark takes out a very worn wallet and counts out five wrinkled one dollar bills.

MARK
Fuck.

Mark pays the doorman and crosses into a narrow room with a long bar. The clientele is a mix of TOWNIE DRINKERS and the PEOPLE here to see the bands. The two groups don't interact. There are tables along the walls where people eat cheeseburgers and other bar foods.

There is a room further down at the end of the bar.
INSTRUMENTS TUNE and DRUMS CRASH.

Mark goes to the bar and nods to the bartender. She's middle aged with too much make up. Her skin is like leather and there is a permanently unamused look on her face. She has large, leathery breasts that she displays in an ill-fitting low-cut shirt.

She opens a cooler under the bar. She pulls out a Schlitz tall boy which she puts on the bar. Mark pays her, leaves a one dollar bill on the bar for a tip and walks into the room at the end of the bar.

It's cramped with dirty black and white tiles on the walls, a low ceiling with exposed pipes and a worn wood floor. There's a small CROWD that mills about. They drink and gossip. There is a small stage in the back of the room six inches off the floor. Four MEN in their early 20s stand on the stage where they tune their instruments and adjust amps. The drummer sets up his kit.

Mark stands alone. A group of local musicians bullshit with each other near enough to him so he can hear their conversation.

(CONTINUED)

GUY 1
'It's not my thing, but you guys
are good at what you do!'

GUY 2
'The sound guy didn't really know
what he was doing.'

GUY 1
'You guys had a ton of energy!'

Guy 3 walks up to the two men.

GUY 3
What the fuck are you talking
about?

GUY 1
Things people say after you get off
stage because they're too nice to
say you sucked.

Mark speaks up to the strangers.

MARK
'You guys looked like you were
really having fun up there.'

ALL
OOOOOOOOF!

GUY 2 Notices someone elsewhere in the club.

GUY 2
Catch you later.

GUY 3
Later, dude.

GUY 1
Later.

The GUY 2 walks away.

GUY 1
Who was that?

GUY 3
He's in Feast of Snakes.

GUY 1
They that power metal band?

GUY 3

Naw. It's stoner rock stuff. Like early Fu Manchu...but not good.

GUY 1

(indicating stage)

Who are these douchebags?

GUY 3

Shitty brit-poppers. I'm outta here, I don't need to watch the 60s get pissed on.

Mark laughs.

Mark drinks his beer and stares off into the distance. Suddenly one of the men on stage speaks into the microphone.

SINGER

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen!
We are Hobnail Boots! Thank you for coming out! Let's dance!

The band launches into a simple, not very good POP SONG. The drummer overplays and though the bassist plays rudimentary and simple lines, he grimaces and leaps around the stage wildly. The guitarist joins the singer on vocals attempting to do harmonies but he's flat. The crowd ignores them except for a couple of girls, obviously some band members' girlfriends, who stand in front of the stage and dance without rhythm.

Mark stares at them. He takes a long swig of beer.

FADE OUT/IN:

INT. SKELLER'S CHEESEBURGER KING - LATER

6

Mark sits alone at the bar nursing another can of Shlitz. CARLA, a skinny woman around Mark's age is on stage with a 12-string acoustic. She's wearing a black tank top and dirty looking pair of black jeans. She sits on a chair with a mic in front of her, a couple empty beer bottles on the floor next to her. She looks drunk. She starts playing the introduction to a song, but the crowd continues talking. She continues to play while she yells into the mic.

CARLA

Hey! Shut the fuck up!

The crowd stops talking but there's some nervous laughter.

(CONTINUED)

CARLA
(almost to herself)
Jesus fucking Christ...

Mark smiles and laughs to himself - this girl has guts.

Carla continues playing. We look around at the crowd. No one is really paying attention, but they're not being loud anymore either.

She continues the song and begins singing after the intro. She's got a good voice. The music sounds like what might be the acoustic version of a more rocking song. CARLA plays on. We see her slightly grimace and shake her head after looking into the crowd. She sees Mark at the bar. He's waving his beer can in the air and nodding his head toward her. CARLA smiles and nods.

Mark orders a bottle of whatever cheap beer she had been drinking and brings it over to her as she plays. He sets it down at her feet and while still playing she talks into the mic.

CARLA
Thank God for the kindness of
strangers.

CARLA smiles and nods as Mark nods back and heads back to the bar.

FADE TO

INT. SKELLER'S CHEESEBURGER KING - LATER

7

Mark and Carla sit at the bar talking and drinking.

MARK
Yeah, I recorded there a couple
years back.

CARLA
What band?

MARK
I was filling in for Colonel Kurtz
when their bassist...

CARLA
... when Jake went out to
California to live with that chick
he met on the internet? No shit! I
was at that session.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

We had such a blast - they were so excited about that record and I psyched to be there. One of those weeks that makes you so god damn happy to be playing music.

((beat))

Why were you there?

CARLA

I dated Steve Moorehouse for like 5 years. I practically lived in that studio.

MARK

Oh, okay! He produced EVERYONE'S album for a while there.

CARLA

Yeah, I was in Time Creep with Steve. We, uh, 'took a break' when we broke up a couple months back.

MARK

Dating a band mate? Bad fucking idea.

CARLA

Yeah, yeah - I heard it all before. Don't shit where you eat, I know.

MARK

Steve was a good guy though. Wait - Time Creep. I saw you guys a few times. You knew Noah from Servo -

CARLA

He and Leon are back.

MARK

(taken aback)

The whole fucking band? For good?

CARLA

Sony dropped them. Moved back last week.

MARK

(beat)

That's a story I'm gonna need to hear.

CARLA laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CARLA
So, basically we're friends.

MARK
(laughing)
Just like that?

CARLA
You know EVERYONE I KNOW. Let's
just skip the formalities here.

MARK
The whole...building trust, seeing
if we actually like each other when
sober, all that boring shit?

CARLA
In for a penny in for a pound.
Let's be BEST friends. Might as
well.

MARK
Clearly the only rational thing to
do at this point.

CARLA
I gotta take a piss...

CARLA gets up to go to the bathroom and stumbles. Mark
reaches out and catches her arm.

CARLA
Fuck! I'm fine, I'm fine.

The BARTENDER notices - she obviously knows CARLA and talks
like this has happened before.

BARTENDER
(cautious, sizing her up)
You gonna be okay Carla?

CARLA
Absolutely. No worries. Mark
- Mark, right?

MARK
Yep .Your best bud, remember?

CARLA
(as she walks away toward the
bathroom)
Get us a couple of beers.

(CONTINUED)

Mark turns to the bartender and shrugs. The BARTENDER looks at CARLA again, but dips into the cooler and comes out with two more beers.

BARTENDER
Be careful, dude.

MARK
What?

BARTENDER
You heard me.

EXT. ROYAL-TEA TEA SHOPPE - DAY (ESTABLISHING) 8

Royal-Tea is a small shop in a busy city shopping square. It's mostly dark wood and brass. ROYAL-TEA TEA SHOPPE stenciled on the glass door.

INT. ROYAL-TEA TEA SHOPPE - DAY 9

The shop is decked out in mostly old looking dark wood. Small copper-topped tables line the space where people sit with pots and cups of tea.

College aged kids and young professionals hang out. They talk and work on laptops. A counter stands a few feet from the wall, attached to a small kitchen. A glass pastry case showcases baked goods.

There's a large old-fashioned cash register that has been fitted with a touch screen. Behind the register is a staircase leading down.

MARK stands in the small kitchen with DAKOTA wiping down counters, putting tea pots in the dishwasher. They wear yellow t-shirts with the store's logo on it and a green apron also adorned with the logo. Mark is pale and his eyes are half closed. It looks like it was a long night.

DAKOTA
Tammy needs to switch a shift with someone Tuesday night. Can you do it?

MARK
Nope.

Dakota looks at him, waiting for an explanation.

MARK

What? I said I can't do it. Do I need a reason?

DAKOTA

I just thought you might want to help Tammy out. I try to be accommodating in the scheduling here, but I can't do anything when people don't help.

MARK ignores this. Silence as they go about their tasks.

DAKOTA

I'm punching out at 3 to go to class, so make sure you count down the second drawer by 7pm and restock the cold cups before you leave.

MARK

Sure.

(beat)

Class? Let me guess: you studying management? Hoping a Fortune 500 company is looking to recruit guys that manage the restocking of cold cups?

DAKOTA

Marketing. I'm one year away from having my MBA. You think I'm going to be managing a tea shop when I'm in my 30s?

A WOMAN a few years younger than Mark approaches the counter. She has on a business suit. She talks on her cell phone as she orders. ANOTHER WOMAN walks up behind her and gets in line.

MARK looks shaken up by DAKOTA's comment, then angry. He says nothing and goes over to the register to help the customers.

MARK

Hi, can I help y-

CUSTOMER

(interrupting, into phone)

Well tell him we can't make any changes this late in the game.

She looks at Mark and speaks in a whisper before going back to her phone call.

(CONTINUED)

CUSTOMER

(to Mark)

Chai tea latte with milk.

(into phone)

Anyway, I'm not going to have anyone change one thing on those mock ups until...

MARK

You just ordered a tea tea milk with milk.

CUSTOMER

(into phone)

Hold on a sec.

(To Mark)

What?

MARK

Chai actually means tea. And latte means milk.

The customer stares at him blankly.

MARK

So. A chai tea latte with milk is tea tea milk with milk.

The customer stares for another couple of seconds and then resumes her phone call.

CUSTOMER

(into phone)

I don't care how much money they're bringing in, they can use another firm if they're going to play these games. I've got people clamoring to use us.

Mark sullenly walks into the kitchen, makes the woman's tea and brings it out to her.

MARK

Two thirty-eight.

The woman totally ignores him.

CUSTOMER

(into phone)

What? Are you kidding me? Unacceptable. She's gone. What? You heard me. Fire her.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Hey, I have other customers here...

She doesn't bat an eyelid in his direction.

MARK

Hey! Human being here! Interaction!
Common courtesy? That kinda stuff?

The woman puts down a couple of crumbled dollar bills and walks away, still totally oblivious to him.

The next customer, early thirties and pretty, steps up. She wears professional attire. She looks at him questioningly.

WOMAN

I'm sorry - you're Mark Kessel?

MARK

I am. And I'm sorry, too.

The woman laughs.

WOMAN

I'm Beth McMillion! We went to high school together! I hung out with Laurie Miller? Dated your buddy Joe Trillo?

MARK

(recognizing her)

Oh, yeah! I remember you. Joe was in that kinda Clash-ish band - played a blue Ibenez? I didn't recognize you without purple hair and a Bauhaus t-shirt.

Beth laughs.

MARK

What are you up to these days?

BETH

I work over at Liberty Mutual as an investment planner.

MARK

Right on. I don't even know what that is, but sounds better than retail.

(CONTINUED)

BETH

So, what are you up to?

MARK

(looking and gesturing around)
Apparently eating shit.

Beth laughs.

MARK

(adding quickly)
I mean, this is how I'm paying
bills but I'm playing a ton of
music, so it's all good.

BETH smiles non-committal-y and nods. (beat)

MARK

So, did you have to go to school
for this investment thingy you do?

BETH

Yeah. I started off going to art
school, but transferred my second
semester after my parents got on my
back about what I was going to do
with my life. Didn't you end up
going to Northeastern?

MARK

For a semester and a half. Too many
late shows. I just kinda bailed
before they could toss me.

BETH

Didn't wanna go back, or?

MARK

Meh. Guess I'm still not ready to
give up late shows.

BETH

Yeah. I mean it's not like I swore
off art after going into finance.
One just kinda affords the other
now, you know? You could always do
that if you wanted.

MARK

I'm a little old, no?

(CONTINUED)

BETH

(kind but dismissive)

Nah. Undergrad is kinda the new high school. I've got a friend who works in Admission at Bunker Hill, she says she gets like, people in their 40s, 50, 60s...

MARK

(playfully epic)

Oh good, I still have time.

BETH

(laughs)

I don't know. Want her number?

MARK

Can I call her and just breathe heavy into the phone?

She laughs and pulls a card out of her purse, writes a number on the back and gives it to Mark. Mark looks taken aback as he takes the card from her and reads it over. He takes a beat up planner from under the counter and puts the card in it.

MARK

Wow. I mean, thanks. You never know...uh, what can I get you in the coffee/tea department?

BETH

Uhhhh...I'll get the Blood Orange Sencha.

MARK

Cool.

Mark begins to assemble the cup of tea. Dakota walks out of the back.

DAKOTA

Where's the name tag, Mark?

Mark doesn't respond.

DAKOTA

I'm gonna need you to find and wear your name tag. It's important to the customers, okay?

Dakota stalks off to the kitchen area. Mark looks back at Beth, rolls his eyes, and mouths, "It's important." She laughs a little uneasily.

(CONTINUED)

Mark completes the cup of tea and puts it on the counter.

BETH
Thanks! What do I owe you?

MARK
(shaking his head)
Nada. It's on me.

BETH
Hey, thanks! So you're still
playing music. Steve was always so
jealous of how good you were.

MARK
(laughing modestly)
Actually, yeah. I'm in a few bands
and we've been...

Dakota comes out of the kitchen and walks by Mark.

DAKOTA
This is a business, Mark. We don't
just give away things.

MARK
Uh...yeah. This is an old friend.

DAKOTA
That's not your tea to give away.

BETH
Oh, yeah, it's no problem, I can -

Beth starts to get her wallet out.

MARK
Jesus Christ, Dakota. It's a
fucking buck fifty cup of tea. Are
you seriously breaking my balls
over this?

DAKOTA
I mean, it's stealing.

BETH
Look, here's the money. I'm sorry.
Mark, it was nice to see you again.
Take care.

Beth puts a dollar fifty down on the counter. She's blushing
with embarrassment for Mark. She snatches her cup of tea and
walks quickly out of the store.

MARK

What the fuck is wrong with you?
Was that necessary? I've seen you
give shit out to people for free
before. What the fuck?

DAKOTA

I've comped people when we've
messed up. I don't just give things
out willy nilly.

MARK

Willy Nilly?

DAKOTA

If I were manager I'd fire you.

MARK

You're a pathetic little man, you
know that?

DAKOTA

And you work for me. Go figure. Any
how, would you mind polishing the
copper? That'd be great. Thanks!

Mark's face tenses up in anger. He's about to say something but then he lets it drop. He stomps past Dakota and goes into the kitchen where he gets the copper polish and a couple of rags. He goes out to the floor and sits at a vacant table and begins to clean the copper.

EXT. STREET -DAY

10

Montage of images done in jump cut:

We see Mark walking down a city street toward Bunker Hill College.

We see him enter the college.

Mark is at a desk with a young woman talking.

Mark at a bar looking over admission materials, drinking a beer. He looks at the time, puts the materials in his bag and leaves for practice.

We see him enter his rehearsal space.

There's a VO of a phone call that took place earlier in the day going over all the images. We hear a phone dialing.

(CONTINUED)

KATHY
(over the phone)
Hello, Bunker Hill College.
Assistant Director of Admission
Kathy Garin speaking.

MARK
Uh. Yeah. Hi.

KATHY
Hello?

MARK
I got your name from Beth
McMillion? She said to talk to you.
I'm kind of...an old student. I
don't mean former, I mean like,
old. Like, I'm old.

KATHY
(laughing)
Okay, why don't you come in and
talk to me sometime. I'm going to
be traveling for a few days, but we
could meet sometime after that.

MARK
Assuming it's a day I wake up on
this side of the ground, sure.

KATHY
(nervous laugh)
Sort of morbid.

MARK
So is being in your 30s and
flirting with being a freshman
again.

KATHY
Okay, well we have a whole program
for what we call "non-traditional
learners."

MARK
That's me all over. I'm downright
avant-garde.

KATHY
(shuffling through papers)
Can you do...the 20th? Say 1pm?
We're having an open house. It's
going to be nuts but I could sit
down with you at say...one?

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Can do. See you then.

EXT. SOUND MUSEUM - NIGHT 11

It's a large old building. From the outside it looks like a warehouse. There are no windows and no signs. Muffled NOISE and MUSIC can be heard. The neighborhood is an industrial park wasteland.

INT. SOUND MUSEUM - NIGHT 12

LOUD MUSIC as well as TUNING can be heard from behind most of the doors. It creates a cacophony of different styles of music and noise. Small groups of PEOPLE, mostly men but there are women too. They hang out in the hallways where they drink cheap beer and smoke cigarettes.

Most are in their late 20s and 30s, some older, some younger. Most wear jeans, worn t-shirts and sneakers. There are no leather pants or spiked wrist-bands; these are not the rock icons we see on MTV. They have bad skin and crooked teeth. They aren't pretty or handsome. Beer guts are everywhere.

A few bulletin boards are covered with fliers for upcoming shows and ads for musicians seeking musicians, equipment being sold and people looking to share practice spaces.

There are several large plastic garbage cans that overflow with beer cans and empty 40 oz. bottles, broken drumsticks, empty guitar string envelopes, fast food containers and other garbage.

INT. SOUND MUSEUM PRACTICE ROOM - NIGHT 13

This is a lived-in practice space. There is a thin wall to wall rug that is so stained that the color is difficult to discern. The walls are covered in a wide variety of band posters as well as fliers for old shows.

There are two drum kits, each in its own corner.

A wall is lined with different amps - a Marshall half-stack, a Mesaboogie, a couple of old Fender Twins and a Sunn full stack. There's a rack with different guitars and basses.

A large loft-shelf has been built far up on the wall. It's full of odds and ends of all kinds of music equipment. An old desk lies in another corner where an older generation computer sits connected to a small mixing board.

(CONTINUED)

Mark's band practices. The MUSIC is a kind of rootsy rock with a punk edge to it. It's not pre-recorded. We actually listen to the band practice, with all the flubs and imbalances that comes with it.

Mark sweats as he plays a dinged up FENDER P BASS. He looks transformed. He's in his element.

Gowell plays a BLACK GIBSON SG. GEOFF is behind one of the drum kits. He sweats as he bashes away. JOHNNY also plays guitar - a Fender Telecaster - and sings into a mic.

We get to watch them practice for a bit - they stop and start, talk about how to fix parts, etc. The music carries over through the next scene, fading out at the beginning of the EXT OLD HOUSE.

INT. SOUND MUSEUM - LATER

14

The band breaks down equipment and packs up.

MARK

We just have to set something regular, otherwise we all go MIA for two months.

GEOFF

Yeah, exactly.

MARK

So what always works, Fridays?

JOHNNY

Nope. Fridays suck. I think I can normally do like a quick Tuesday at 3pm, most of the time.

MARK

Nobody on the planet is available Tuesdays at 3pm.

Carla knocks on the door softly and gingerly walks in. She gives Mark a quick peck on the cheek and helps him break stuff down.

JOHNNY

You are.

MARK

(to Carla)

He was giving me shit. Fuck him up.

Carla politely fake laughs.

(CONTINUED)

GEOFF

(looking at a shitty little
planner)

If Tuesdays are good for everyone,
I don't want to screw that up, I
can do Tuesday the 18th for a
couple hours.

MARK

No one except for Piss Flaps over
there said Tuesdays were good.

Johnny shrugs indignantly.

MARK

And the 18th is like 5 weeks from
now. Gowell, quit playing with your
dick, help us nail down a date.

GOWELL

(looks up, almost confused)
I don't have a set schedule for my
new job.

Mark is a bit speechless.

MARK

(sarcastic)

That's it, that's the end of the
band right there, Gowell is
indefinitely unavailable.

GOWELL

(a little pissed)

I just can't give you anything for
a few weeks.

The room is awkwardly quiet.

MARK

Should...we try rehearsing over the
phone?

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

15

Carla and Mark are at the bus stop. Carla sits in the
waiting box nursing a small bottle of Smirnoff, Mark stands
and sometimes paces a bit. He fucks with a little bouncy
ball as they wait.

(CONTINUED)

CARLA

Sometimes I'm like, maybe I should hook back up with some friends, do the band thing.

MARK

Tonight scare you off?

CARLA

Yep. Except I'd probably be the flaky one. I think I work better quietly anyway, I never learned how to talk about what I want to do.

MARK

Bah, I've known these fucks since I was dick high. When we gel, we really gel.

CARLA

You just never see them. Maybe write something on your own and bring it to them?

MARK

(lights cigarette, laughs a little)

I know I won't do that.

Quiet (but not uncomfortable) beat.

CARLA

So when do *I* get to hear stuff?

MARK

You'll get to hear the first thing that doesn't blow. I have an image to protect.

Carla laughs. She jumps up and gives him a noogie and attacks his stomach and armpits with her fingers.

CARLA

(while fucking with him)

I know, look at this image, look at all this image, we've got to uphold his image, he's got an image to preserve!

Mark puts her in a playful headlock.

(CONTINUED)

CARLA
(muffled)
I heard he's getting his Ph.D and
shit.

Mark let's go of her.

CARLA
Which is retarded. What do you even
want to study?

MARK
I don't know. A degree in
having-a-degree. I'm just so
fucking sick of it being a thing.

CARLA
I would think you'd be over it by
now.
(beat)
If you think you can't make time
for gigs and rehearsal now, just
wait until mid-terms and fuckin',
double-spaced papers, and -

MARK
Where did you say Noah was living?

EXT. OLD HOUSE - NIGHT

16

An old triple decker house has been converted into
apartments. There's a few steps that lead up to a front
porch with a wrought iron railing and three door bells.

Mark walks up the steps and looks at the numbers next to the
doorway and pushes one. He waits a little while and then we
hear FOOTFALLS ON A STAIRCASE and the door opens.

NOAH WYKES stands in the doorway. He's a slight man in his
late 20s with glasses and moppish dark hair. He wears a
tight blue hooded sweatshirt and a nice pair of newer jeans.
He grins and shakes Mark's hand and gives him half a hug.

MARK
Heard you got fucking shit-canned.

NOAH
(smiling)
Come on up.

Noah leads Mark inside and the door shuts.

INT. NOAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 17

A typical Boston area apartment with cheap rugs and wood paneling. There are pictures of professional athletes on the walls and pennants for Boston sports teams.

Noah leads Mark through the living room where a MAN in a Boston Red Sox jersey sits on the couch watching Monday Night Football. Noah and the man totally ignore each other.

Mark and Noah walk down a hall and into Noah's room.

INT. NOAH'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 18

It's a sparse room. The walls are blank. A couple of large duffel bags containing clothes are over next to a small closet. A mattress sits in the corner with a single pillow and a sleeping bag.

There is an empty case of bar beer bottles on the floor. On it rests an old Tascam 4 Track machine. Hooked to it is a small digital drum machine. The floor around it is littered with cords and wires.

There are a couple of different microphones on small stands. An acoustic guitar lays faced down. A nice looking Gibson Les Paul is leaned up against the only chair in the room.

There are two empty cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon and four full ones still in the plastic rings. Noah pulls a beer off and hands it to Mark who takes it without comment. They both sit on the floor.

MARK

How's the roommate?

Noah shrugs.

NOAH

I answered his ad. The room's cheap. He basically just works, comes home and watches sports and then goes into his room and beats it to Asian porn he thinks I can't hear.

Noah takes a beer for himself and opens it.

MARK

(motions to the four track)
What are you working on here?

(CONTINUED)

NOAH

Everything, I guess. I've been on the road playing the same damn songs for two years. I've got a huge backlog of stuff I want to get down on tape.

MARK

Servo stuff or solo?

NOAH

Who knows. We're taking a break right now so anything I write is mine, but it's all potential music for the band I guess.

MARK

So...yeah. What happened?

NOAH

(smiling)

We ain't working for the boss man no more.

MARK

Did you...do something?

NOAH

It's more what we didn't do. We had a two album deal. They wanted the new record to sound more like Nickleback or some shit.

MARK

Your stuff like Nickleback? The guy who created a band called Canobie Lake Holocaust?

NOAH

(laughs)

See, you know. We need execs like you.

MARK

So that was it? You just refused?

NOAH

We got the feeling they just didn't want to put out the second record and knew we'd refuse they bullshit they were suggesting. We might not have been fired out-right, but they made sure there wasn't much of a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NOAH (cont'd)

choice. Anyway, it was all bullshit anyway. You think the next level is going to be awesome, but it was really just a fucking headache.

Beat.

MARK

Was it really so bad? I mean being out there touring - making a living.

NOAH

Well, there was -

MARK

I'll tell you what, dude, after years of the hot beverage industry I probably would have fallen in line like a good boy and played Steve Miller covers on an accordion if they asked. Can't be more humiliating than what I do to pay the rent.

Noah laughs.

NOAH

Bullshit you would.

(beat)

Two years on the road and most of it still living in vans. Aside from the equipment they bought us, I'm pretty much broke. I have to start looking for a job tomorrow. But I don't have to hear about our "demographic" or "market research" anymore, halla-fucking-lleuja.

Mark nods his head and drinks his beer.

MARK

No magic carpet I guess. Well, at least you did something, you know? You got a chance.

NOAH

Christ. You sound like this asshole I just met...

(CONTINUED)

MARK

No, no, I'm the asshole you already know...

NOAH

Check this bullshit out. So, we get our walking papers, I call my brother to borrow some money for a cheap flight back. I'm at the airport and this kid comes up to me. Couldn't have been more than 20. And he starts flipping out cause he saw me on MTV2 and he's a guitar player and he has a band and he likes our last record, etc. Great, it's nice to meet a fan, it means someones been listening, right? Normally, I love this stuff. But, I just got shitcanned, so I'm not really feeling the whole meet n' greet thing at that particular moment. And right off he asks me, "How do I make a living off my band?" I mean first off: he's asking the wrong guy. I'm on my way home on borrowed money wondering if I can still get my bartending job back. Next of all, I have to say to him, "You're asking the wrong question, dude." I tell him that if he's really interested in music, that that's gotta be the concern, yeah? Figure out what kind of songs you want to write, get your rig to sound exactly like you want it to, and have fun for chrissake. If you're worried about a career - and I say this in all sincerity - go to law school or something that you actually have a fighting chance of paying your bills with. I say, "Do you love it? WOULD you do it for free anyway? 'Cause that's got to be enough. It better fucking be. Because this is worse than the lottery." I think I'm giving some sound advice here - you know, have some fun, enjoy it, love it. This kid acts like I just smacked him across the face with my cock. He's telling me I'm a fucking defeatist and this that and the other thing and THEN he tells me, "You're just

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NOAH (cont'd)

jaded 'cause you hit it big. You know, the rest of us, we all have to start somewhere." So now it's his big moment and he's gonna go be a rockstar apparently to spite me for the very fucking sincere advice I just gave him. He's gonna go out there and make sure he's a huge star because...what? Because I told him to enjoy playing?

(makes jerk-off motion)

The worst part is, I wasn't being defeatist! It's true, every last word and why is that so terrible? The first thing I did when I got home was set up my four track cause I wanted to record songs. That's where the joy is at.

Beat.

MARK

You're not bummed out to be back here?

NOAH

It was a fun ride, no doubt, but it's not like they take away your guitar and your voice when you're not on a label anymore.

Mark ponders this for a moment.

MARK

You want to show me what you're working on?

NOAH

I got hours of shit dude. Where do you want to start?

Noah hands a pair of headphones to Mark and starts to manipulate the four track. They smile - this is the fun stuff.

FADE OUT/IN

INT. ROYAL-TEA TEA SHOPPE OFFICE - NIGHT

19

Mark is in his Royal-Tea uniform. He sits at a desk in the basement office of the shop. A half eaten sandwich lies next to him. He's on the store's phone. He's leafing through a folder of material from the college he visited.

MARK

(into phone)

Greg? It's Mark. Got your message.
What's up?

GREG (V.O.)

You know that Oktoberfest street party in Allston on the 20th?

MARK

Yeah, they close down the roads, you can drink outside...

GREG

We're having 6 bands play outside the club and one just ditched. You go on at 1pm.

Dakota comes down stairs.

DAKOTA

Your break was over five minutes ago. And that better not be long distance.

Mark ignores him.

MARK

(into phone while getting out his date book)

Who else is on the bill?

GREG (V.O.)

The A-Bombs from Philly, Blood Money from New York, and some local dudes.

DAKOTA

Mark. Get off the phone. We have customers upstairs.

MARK

(to Dakota, after a beat)

They'd rather be served by you than me.

(into phone)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARK (cont'd)

Cash?

GREG (V.O.)

(laughs)

Some drink tickets is the best I can do. Any money is going to the out-of-towners.

Dakota stares angrily at Mark before turning and heading up the stairs.

DAKOTA

20 seconds or else.

Dakota walks up the stairs.

GREG (V.O.)

You still there?

MARK

Yeah. Let me check my calender.

Mark rifles through the planner and opens it to the date.

Cut in on the date book: He's scrawled "Bunker Hill Open House, Kathy 1pm."

GREG (V.O.)

(annoyed)

You in or what? You're not the only band in the world, guy.

Mark crosses out the meeting in his book.

MARK

We're there, man.

FADE OUT

A MONTH PASSES.

INT. PRECINCT - NIGHT

20

It's a weeknight, end of the night band-wise. Mark, Gowell, GEOFF and JOHNNY are picking up their equipment on stage amid the beer bottles, wrapping up cables, breaking down drums. They all look defeated. A quick glance around the room shows a very, very sparse crowd.

(CONTINUED)

The stage is approached by KERRY WATKINS. She's 20, younger than anyone in the band and looks it. She has an average build, isn't traditionally pretty and has much more of a "college" look to her than the rest.

KERRY

Hey, I...really enjoyed your set.

JOHNNY grimaces, Mark ignores her. GEOFF and Gowell give quiet thank yous. KERRY stands there awkwardly before realizing no one is going to say anything else and then disappears into the dark of the club.

JOHNNY takes a swig of his beer and looks at the rest of the band.

JOHNNY

Well, that fucking sucked.

GEOFF

It wasn't THAT bad, dude.

JOHNNY

Bullshit.

Gowell and Mark look at each other. Gowell shrugs. Mark grimaces and turns his back, taking the strap off his bass.

GEOFF

I couldn't hear shit through the monitors.

JOHNNY roll his eyes.

GOWELL

I thought it had good energy, at least...

MARK

(turning back from his amp)
Fuck energy. It was sloppy as all hell. We should maybe pick a tempo and stick to it, right? Maybe if we practiced more than once a fucking month.

Mark looks at Johnny.

MARK

Every other Tuesday on the full moon one hour after the fucking sun sets...

Mark turns back to his amp, they all continue breaking down.

INT. PRECINCT - LATER

21

JOHNNY, Mark and GEOFF are loading up Johnny's shitty truck through the doorway. They're silent as they do so. Gowell comes walking in with a white envelope.

MARK
(to Gowell)
Well?

GOWELL
12 bucks.

JOHNNY
Don't know why. We really fuckin'
packed 'em in tonight.

Cut out to reveal an empty crowd, save Kerry and a few stragglers.

GEOFF
At least we got some beer...

MARK
Two cans of shnitz a piece. Next
time let's stay home - I'll buy you
a six pack.

JOHNNY
Look, I'm not too into wasting time
to be humiliated publicly. We need
to recharge our batteries. Maybe
get back together in six months, we
all have a ton of ideas, we can
make a new record and take it from
there.

Silence.

GOWELL
(looking apologetic)
It's not the worst plan.

Silence.

MARK
(defeated)
Sure. I'm with Johnny. What's the
fucking point at this stage? We're
just punching air.

(CONTINUED)

GEOFF

If that's what you dudes want...

MARK

No. It's not what I want. But something has to change.

Silence.

MARK

I'm going back in for a beer.
Johnny - take the twelve bucks for gas. I'll talk to you all later.

Mark walks back into the bar.

FADE INTO/TIME PASSES

INT. PRECINCT - SAME NIGHT

22

Mark sits alone at a table listening to the juke box and occasionally looking at the TV in the corner, drinking beer and whiskey.

KERRY sidles up to his table.

KERRY

Hey.

MARK

Hey yourself.

Awkward silence.

KERRY

Uh. Are you Mark Kessel?

MARK

Not something I usually like to admit in public but, uh, yeah. Do I know you?

KERRY

No. I just like your records.

MARK

Huh?

KERRY

You were in Crankshaft, right?

(CONTINUED)

MARK

(clearly happy someone remembers his band)
Haha - jesus, we broke up like 12 years ago! You were like two!

KERRY

My older brother had all the records you guys put out on Sandy Handy records.

MARK

(good naturedly)
Fucking jerk-off distributor. They did give us a sandy handy. What, you have all three of 'em?

KERRY

Two LPs and the Your Drinking Ruined Mom's Birthday EP. He also had some demos.

MARK

HA! No one has that fucking EP. I don't even know if I have a copy.

KERRY

Oh, I have two. My brother's and one I found at In Your Ear in the used locals.

MARK

No shit? Hey, sit down. You want a beer?

KERRY

Uh...I really shouldn't.

MARK

Why?

KERRY

I'm kind here on a fake ID.

MARK

(suddenly wary)
How old ARE you?

KERRY

I'll be 21 in two months. I got a fake ID when I moved to city so I could hear more music.

(CONTINUED)

MARK
(jokingly)
THAT'S why you got a fake ID.
(turns to the depressing bar
and shouts sarcastically)
All the perks of being an adult!
((turns back))
Well, sit down and have a...I
dunno...a Shirley Temple?

KERRY
(letting her personality
through for the first time)
A "Shirley Temple"? What are, you
80?

MARK
(amused)
Yeah. I'm going to have a phosphate
and soda after this. So what brings
you to this waiting room of the
damned?

KERRY
(sitting down)
Someone at school had heard of
Crankshaft and when we got to
talking, he said their bassist
was in Fallout now. I saw you guys
were playing and came down.

MARK
Christ, I'm responsible.

KERRY
I seriously listen to the
Crankshaft records weekly. That
stuff was so fucking good.

MARK
(sarcastically)
Oh yeah, we were HUGE.
(beat)
What school do you go to?

KERRY
(a little embarrassed)
Berklee.

MARK
Hahahaah. SO, how many Berklee
students does it take to screw in a
light bulb?

(CONTINUED)

KERRY

(sighs)

One to screw it in and 40 to say
they could have done it better.

MARK

(laughs)

I was going to say, 'One. He just
holds it and the world revolves
around him. What do you play? Wait,
why am I even asking? How do you
like being a guitarist?

KERRY

You don't know that.

(beat)

I like it fine.

Mark smiles.

MARK

Well, I'm sorry you had to come see
this fucking carnage tonight.

KERRY

(kind, but easy to see
through)

It was good. Seriously. I
mean...you had a lot of energy.

MARK

Oh fuck my face.

KERRY

I'm sure you'll be better next
time. When do you play next?

MARK

We are on hiatus as of...

(looks up at clock)

...34 minutes ago.

KERRY

Well, everyone needs a break.
What's up in the meantime?

MARK

I dunno. Continue my shitty job,
record some bullshit on my
four-track no one will ever hear.

(CONTINUED)

KERRY
(sarcastic)
That's the spirit.

MARK
(shrugging)
Well, who knows. Anyhow, can I get
a copy of that EP?

KERRY
I'll do you one better. Give me a
burned CD of everything you have
from Crankshaft and you can have
one of the copies for yourself.

MARK
Right on! Sounds good. Only how do
you burn a CD?

KERRY
(taking out a small book and a
pen)
What's your e-mail?

Mark tries to remember and can't. He pulls out his wallet
and fishes for a crumpled slip of paper and squints at it.

MARK
Uh, it's M-a-r-k period
K-e-s-s-l-e- and then that little a
sign, A-O-L period C-O-M

KERRY
(deadpan)
I'm guessing that means I shouldn't
even bother looking you up on
Facebook?

MARK
I sort of suck at computers.

KERRY
You don't check that very often, do
you? Here, write down your phone
number.

Mark does so.

KERRY
It was really cool to run into you.
I'll be in touch really soon!
Thanks!

MARK

For what?

KERRY

(looks a bit embarrassed)

Uh, I dunno, for talking.

MARK

Cool. Talk to you later.

KERRY

Bye!

KERRY leaves, Mark returns to drinking and the jukebox listening.

INT. ROYAL-TEA TEA SHOPPE OFFICE - NIGHT

23

Mark stares ahead.

MARK

I didn't actually think it was possible to get shit-canned from a tea-shop.

Mark sits across from MARY, who is in her 50s, a former biker mama with bleached blond hair. She's big - but solid, not so much fat. Her face is weathered - she's seen some action in her days - but friendly. She smiles sadly at Mark.

MARY

Dare to dream, I guess.

MARK

Should I bother asking why?

MARY

If you mean is it because you're kind of a fuck-up well...that's not really the direct reason.

MARK

Just sort of a 'contributing factor?'

MARY

It comes down to Dakota.

MARK

That little shit...

(CONTINUED)

MARY

Couldn't agree more. But unfortunately for you, he's a little shit that comes in on time and works his ass off. I need him. And he doesn't want to be here anymore if you're here.

MARK

You don't have to -

MARY

I kind of do, Mark. Look, you want to keep playing music, you don't have time for my bullshit. But Dakota does, and I can't do without him.

Mark opens his mouth to talk, stops, closes it and nods.

MARY

Sucks to come down to this but, that's how it is.

Mark nods again.

MARK

I get it. I don't blame you.

Silence.

MARY

So. What's next?

MARK

(ironically)

Guess I'll jet-set a bit, go backpack around Europe, think it all over and try to find myself.

MARY

You can't even afford a fucking bus pass.

Mark tries to look angry and just smiles.

MARY

Speaking of which - if you need a couple hundred as a loan to get you through the week...

MARK
(anxiously)
No, no. I mean...thanks. I
really...thanks. I mean that. But
you got a kid. No reason to be
starting the Scumbag Scholarship
Award over here. Thanks though.

Mary nods and drops it.

MARY
You got a reference from me
anytime, if you ever wanna break
back into tea.

MARK
(confused)
Why?

MARY
(smiling)
Go to work for one of our
competitors! Fuck 'em up from the
inside.

Mark and MARY both stand, MARY walks around the desk and gives Mark a motherly hug.

MARY
Good luck, Mark.

MARK
You too.

INT. ROYAL-TEA TEA SHOPPE FLOOR - NIGHT

24

DAKOTA stands behind the counter watching Mark walk out with utter satisfaction.

DAKOTA
I guess I can finally say it. Blow
me, queer.

Dakota laughs. Mark continues walking toward the door as he talks, loud enough for DAKOTA to hear him.

MARK
That's it, Dakota, as long as HE'S
the one sucking YOUR dick, HE'S the
queer. Bravo.

MARY is heard laughing from the office.

Mark walks out into the night.

INT. APARTMENT/CONDO -NIGHT

25

We are inside a pretty nice looking modern condo. The lights are out, but light comes in from the street through the windows. We hear someone trying to open the door with a key and failing a few times. Finally the lock turns and a drunk Mark comes through the door. He's trying very hard to be quite as he closes the door.

We follow him down the hall to a door near the end. He goes into the room and closes the door, the camera staying outside.

A few seconds pass.

The door opens again and Mark comes out, looking slightly guilty. He walks back down the hall and into a nice kitchen where he carefully, as quietly as possible, opens the refrigerator. After scanning it, he pulls out two bottles of good BEER - his roommate's - looks at the labels, makes an impressed face, closes the fridge and sneaks back to his room.

INT. APARTMENT/CONDO (MARK'S ROOM) -NIGHT

26

It's a small room. Mark's possessions are mostly all in BOXES as if he had just put them in here and left. There are a couple TRASH-BAGS with CLOTHES in them, a beat up ACOUSTIC GUITAR and many milk crates with RECORDS in them. There's a TWIN MATTRESS in the corner with no sheets on top of a tilting box-spring.

Mark puts one of the beers on the floor and opens the other one with a lighter he pulls out of his pocket. He looks around at the boxes and the rest and sighs. He downs half the beer in a swallow before putting it down.

Mark pulls a stack of records out of one of the milk-crates and then puts the milk-crate face down at the foot of the mattress. He then goes over to a SMALL COMBO VCR/TELEVISION that sits next to one of the trash bags, puts it on the milk-crate and plugs it in. He picks up his beer and finishes it in a swallow before returning the empty bottle to the ground.

Mark produces a RATTY BLANKET and PILLOW from one of the trash bags and spreads them on the bed.

(CONTINUED)

Mark fishes through a box and comes out with a VHS TAPE. He turns on the TV and pushes the cassette into the VHS. The tape starts automatically and George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* springs to life on the screen. The scene is where the house-dwellers have gotten the TV working and are listening to the incoming news about the dead returning to life.

Mark turns off the lights, the room now only lit by the TV. He strips down to his boxers, balling up his clothes and leaving them on the floor. In the TV's light we see he's pale, out of shape, hunched over.

Mark opens the last beer, lies down on the bed and watches the TV as he drinks.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. MARK'S ROOM - MORNING

27

Mark is asleep, still clothed, on top of his mattress. The door is cracked open and we see a SHAPE go by - one of his mysterious roommates. The SOUNDS OF PEOPLE GETTING READY FOR WORK are heard outside the room.

Mark's phone rings.

CUT IN: PHONE-- the screen reads "Number Blocked". Mark sits up, sees it, smiles and answers it.

MARK

Yeah?

CARLA (V.O.)

(ecstatic to be talking to
him)

Hi!!!

MARK

Little Miss Carla sounds high on
life.

CARLA

(good naturedly)

Fuck you.

MARK

(genuinely)

How are you?

(CONTINUED)

CARLA

I'm...good.

MARK

You sound good. I mean...healthy.
You sound strong.

CARLA

(in a terrible fake Russian
accent)

Strong like moose!

(back to herself)

I'm getting there. I still can't
sleep and my meth addict roommate
has some kind of deviated septum
thing that makes her sound like
Darth Vader eating someone's ass
whenever she sleeps so that doesn't
help.

MARK

Don't they give you sleep meds or
anything?

CARLA

(sarcastically)

Yeah. They gives us all kinds of
pills here. Awesome idea.

MARK

Oh. Right.

(beat)

So when do you get out?

CARLA

They call it "graduation." One week
from tonight. Pretty fucking dumb
if you ask me. You gonna come visit
me again?

MARK

Yeah. I'll have lots of time to do
that now.

CARLA

Uh-oh.

MARK

Shocking, right?

CARLA

You knew it was coming babe. So
what now?

(CONTINUED)

MARK

I really feel like...well, with you getting your shit together in there that I need to do the same.

CARLA

Yeah?

MARK

Yeah. Start being a grownup.

Carla laughs.

MARK

Well, within reason, I mean.

((beat, trying to be serious))

I had a lot of fun the night before you went in there.

CARLA

Hadn't gotten any in a while, huh?

MARK

Oh, no - the chicks are all over you when you're a doughy bassist with minimal employment.

We hear a voice in the background on Carla's end.

MAN

Carla, time's up. You got group.

CARLA

(to MAN)

Okay, okay. Gimme a second.

MAN

Time's up.

CARLA

(to Mark)

I gotta go. It's nice to hear your voice. Come by soon.

MARK

I miss you.

MAN

Carla!

CARLA

(yelling kind of cartoon/childlike)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CARLA (cont'd)

OK!!!!

(to Mark)

Bye, babe.

MARK

Bye.

Mark pushes the hang-up button and sighs.

INT. MARK'S BROTHERS HOUSE - NIGHT

28

Mark is sitting at a desktop computer in his brother's nice house. On the desk next to him is a large pile of different crumbled papers - W2s from various jobs, receipts, etc.

THOMAS sits on the couch with his feet up, plucking a mandolin. He's not bad. Jen sits at a nearby table painting a WOODEN FLOWER.

MARK

So...is a deduction just like... a lie?

THOMAS and Jen look at each other.

MARK

It's asking me to make up a number about what I spent on "job-related items".

JEN

It's not asking you to make up a number, Mark...

THOMAS

When was the last time you even did your taxes?

(to Jen)

He's got like 12 1099s over there.

MARK

I'm current. I think. I did them four years ago.

JEN

This isn't the Olympics. You have to do these things every year.

MARK

Are you serious?

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARK (cont'd)

Oh, what the fuck - you have to do them for the state too!? This is bullshit.

JEN

(looking through his documents)

I...are we helping you with the taxes you were supposed to have filed for years, or the ones for this upcoming year?

Mark gets up, walks off screen, comes back with a beer and flops down next his brother.

MARK

(looking at the mandolin)

What's next, a banjo? You going to start a shitty Americana band?

(beat)

What's the tuning on that thing?

THOMAS

G-D-A-E.

They watch TV in silence a bit.

MARK

Look, Jen. I know I haven't seen you since Neil's party. I'm sorry. It was fucked.

JEN

(not looking up)

No skin off my back - you're the one who looked like an asshole.

MARK

I suppose that's fair.

JEN

It's funny, I didn't think I'd have to tell you that a little kid's birthday party wasn't about you and playing music, but there we are.

MARK

I was just having a bad day...

THOMAS

You've had a lot of those recently.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

I'm trying to get my shit together.

JEN

And what, exactly, does that entail? Doing your taxes?

MARK

I guess. I mean, I got some temp jobs lined up for the next few weeks and I'm going to try to find something better this time for a long term job.

JEN

As long as you don't have to commit to anything that may stop you from taking a show, yeah?

Mark is silent. He takes a long pull from his beer.

JEN

(indicating the flower she's painting)

Do you know what this is?

MARK

A wooden flower.

JEN

Yes. I made it. It's art. And do you know what art is?

(beat)

It's those things you create that bring you joy. And in most cases, what you do when the work that keeps you fed and clothed is done.

Silence.

THOMAS

I think what she's saying is get a fucking job.

EXT. MARATHON - DAY

29

Mark stands on the sidewalk as a road race is being run on the main street. He's under a PAVILION with a sign that reads ADALLA ORGANIC NUTRIENTS BARS. He's wearing a shirt with the Adalla logo on it, standing at a small card table featuring the Adalla product. Another ADALLA EMPLOYEE - who looks eerily similar to Mark - is at another small table a couple yards next to him.

(CONTINUED)

SPECTATORS walk past the pavilion as he tries to hawk his wares.

MARK
(enthusiastically)
Adalla Organic Nutrients bars! Made with real figs. Try 'em out! Chocolate, chocolate-banana, chocolate-peanut butter and chocolate-cherry!

The spectators ignore him. Mark pulls a piece of paper that is on the table closer to him and squints at it.

MARK
(unsure, still trying to be enthusiastic)
Fortified...with...niacin? And containing essential salts and...
(turns to ADALLA EMPLOYEE who is in the middle of talking to a customer)
What the fuck is an 'essential salt?'

The ADALLA EMPLOYEE ignores him.

A MAN stops by.

MAN
I'll try one. What's good?

MARK
They're all spectacular.

MAN
What's your favorite flavor?

MARK
They're all equally good. I mean...they all taste like cherry, basically. So if you like cherry, you're going to love whatever you have.

MAN
They ALL taste like cherry? Even the chocolate-peanut butter?

MARK
Possibly the most cherry-ish.

(CONTINUED)

MAN

Which tastes...the least like
cherry?

MARK

I'd say that this is definitely a
product for the cherry enthused
among us, you know?

The man walks off. Mark swears under his breath. He looks
over at the ADALLA EMPLOYEE. The EMPLOYEE is talking to a
POTENTIAL CUSTOMER.

ADALLA EMPLOYEE

(to his potential customer)
...cause, like, I'm a musician,
right? So I'm always juggling a lot
of balls, the job, the art, the
lady. And sometimes I just need
that quick ROCK OUT energy boost.

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER

Thanks.

The customer brushes by Mark.

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER

(to Mark)
Your buddy is such a loser.

The customer walks away. Mark is left speechless for a beat.

MARK

He's juggling a lot of balls!

The Adalla employee turns to Mark, confused.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

30

This is a small indie record store. Mark looks through a
stack of records. KERRY approaches him with a couple Kinks
records in her hands.

KERRY

Kinks. Which one?

MARK

(not looking up)
Do you have any Kinks records at
all?

(CONTINUED)

KERRY
I've got Come Dancing...

MARK
Best of. Doesn't count.

KERRY
Why?

MARK
Good records are assembled in a very specific way in terms of song order and -

KERRY
Never mind. Then no, I have no Kinks records.

MARK
Something Else, Village Green Preservation and Lola vs Powerman are essentials. Get them all, you fucking savage.

KERRY smiles and puts the two records in a pile she's made. She reaches toward the bottom of the pile and pulls out a SEVEN INCH and hands it to Mark.

KERRY
Bringing back memories?

MARK
(looking up at the record, he takes it)
Oh holy fucking shit. What trash can did you find this at the bottom of?

KERRY
Black Santa. Pre-Crankshaft, right?

MARK
Yeah, it was basically the same line-up, different drummer. We released this ourselves. I think we only pressed like 100 of them and 80 are probably still in the singer's mom's basement. Oh, shit - this record sucks.

KERRY
I very much doubt that.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

If it's more than a quarter you're getting ripped off. We wanted to call the record Cancer Loser, but then the drummer's old man got lymphoma, so he kinda pussied out and it was just self-titled.

KERRY

It's two bucks and I'm buying it.

MARK

Knock yourself out.

KERRY

What kind of stuff were you guys trying to play then?

MARK

I think I was listening to a lot of Dead Boys and Subhumans at the time. It's got that lo-fi punk simplicity, but still plays like rock n' roll. But, you know, shitty. There's a reason we got a new drummer for Crankshaft.

KERRY

First guy couldn't count to four enough times in a row?

MARK

Oh, he could - he'd just drop a beat while trying to do a line between every 2 and 3.

KERRY sees a record and grabs it.

KERRY

Holy shit! The Grinch!

She holds up a battered copy of How the Grinch Stole Christmas .

KERRY

We used to listen to this every Christmas when I was growing up.

MARK

The Grinch totally sells out in that story. I hate those fucking Whos so much...

(CONTINUED)

KERRY

It was cool - something we did just during a certain time of the year. I loved the winter so much as a kid.

MARK

Why? It 's cold and miserable.

KERRY

Well...what about snow days?

MARK

(smiling a bit)

Okay. Yeah. Snow days were awesome, I have to admit.

KERRY

I can't think of an adult equivalent. The anticipation, listening to the radio, waiting for your school to be called - and then the moment you knew for sure: NO FUCKING SCHOOL!

MARK

Shit, you're right. That was just pure unbridled joy.

A LOCAL HIPSTER walks by MARK and notices his aged THIN LIZZY T-SHIRT.

LOCAL HIPSTER

(ironically amused)

Ha! That shirt is awesome.

MARK

(a little confused)

Uh, thanks.

LOCAL HIPSTER

(wants to make sure Mark knows he "gets the joke")

Haha...yeah. THIN LIZZY.

MARK

Ha. Yup.

LOCAL HIPSTER

(goofy singing voice)

The boys are back in town!
Hilaaaarious.

(CONTINUED)

MARK
(sighing, tired)
You do understand I actually LIKE
Thin Lizzy right? Like...I like
them.

The hipster nods, trying to understand. He awkwardly and slowly walks away, confused and a little pissed.

INT. MUSIC STORE - DAY - LATER THAT DAY

31

KERRY and Mark are in a second-hand music store. It's a mom and pop place, a lot of vintage instruments. Old posters for drum and guitar companies line the wall next to framed band posters and a few signed black and white headshots of local celebs. Kerry is trying out a guitar while Mark sits on an amp wearing a pair of ear buds and looking puzzled at KERRY's Smart Phone.

MARK
Why the fuck would I want to listen
to music on this thing?

KERRY
This is how people interact with
music now, Mark.

MARK
It sounds like shit. It's
compressed to hell.

KERRY
The point isn't for the highest
fidelity here - it's just to
browse. You're window shopping. You
put your stuff up on a site, spread
the link around and hope someone
bites. You can try to sell them the
high end version later.

MARK
I want to die.
(puts headphones around his
neck)
So do you have all your songs on
this thing?

KERRY
Mostly just the newest ones. But
people archive almost everything.
You'd be surprised. Here...

(CONTINUED)

KERRY takes the smart phone, accidentally pulling Mark as he's attached via headphones. She manipulates the controls, presses a play button and hands it back to Mark, smiling. We here something loud and aggressive, but it's just the sound that's escaping the headphones. Mark is shocked.

KERRY

Some dude has the album up on his website - found it the other night. How old were you when you recorded it?

MARK

You're like an archeologist of all things I've put in my rear view. This was when I was like...18.
(beat)
Is this just how it is now?

KERRY

What do you mean?

MARK

I mean, this was stuff I recorded when I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I assumed it was dead. But here it is - living forever on some guy's website? This stuff wasn't really supposed to see the light of day.

KERRY

It was once though, wasn't it?

MARK

Huh?

KERRY

This guy got a copy. You must have been trying to do SOMETHING with the recording.

MARK

We made about 50 tapes, handed them out to friends, tried to sell them at shows. I think we got rid of 30 of them. I just assumed it would...kind of die.

KERRY

The internet is kinda forever.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Seriously, I don't get why people hold on to this shit.

KERRY

(sincerely)

Well, I'm glad I got to hear it.

There's a beat here, where Mark is internally acknowledging that this is how Kerry found him in the first place.

MARK

Weird shit, man.

KERRY

So. Why don't you write stuff like this anymore?

MARK

I'm not 18.

MONTAGE - NIGHT INTO DAY

32

Shot 1: Night, interior. We see Mark in his room, sitting on the floor, playing a catchy bass line. He's recording into an analog 4 track. We can't hear anything but the bass. The audio persists through the whole montage. Sometime he messes up, stops tape, and starts to record again.

Shot 2: Same night, interior, C/U on Mark's phone. Number blocked. He picks it up and smiles and we see him talking into the phone.

Shot 3: Same night, exterior. Mark leaves apartment.

Shot 4: Same night, interior. Mark in grocery store. He's picking out things he sees as "healthy." We see him get a couple bottles of flavored tonic water, some vitamins, yogurt, etc.

Shot 5: Next morning, Mark in his room, cleaning up. We see shots of him straightening up his piles of movies and records, making his pathetic little bed, swiffering the floor, etc.

Shot 6: A passage of time. Mark is waiting. Checking the time. Looking at his phone. A couple hours pass and before we know it, it's 2pm when...

INT. MARK'S ROOM - DAY

33

Mark is lying on his back on the floor when his phone rings. The call read-out says "Skeller's Cheese Burger King".

Mark sighs deeply and picks up the phone, knowing who it is.

MARK
(into phone)
Yeah?

There's a brief silence.

MARK
Yeah?

CARLA
(over phone)
Okay, I kinda fucked up.

Mark says nothing.

CARLA
(over phone)
Don't be mad.

MARK
You got out when?

CARLA
(over phone, beat)
10.

MARK
And went RIGHT to Skeller's.

CARLA
(over phone)
You know they don't open until 11.
I got a coffee first.

There's a silence.

CARLA
(over phone)
Look, it's a lot to deal with right now. I'm supposed to be starting my life over. I had to think things out. I'm sorry I didn't just come over like I said.

Mark is tongue tied. He doesn't know what to do or say.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

You sound like you're already half
in the bag.

CARLA

Are you going to come here or not?

MARK

(beat)

You know how fucked up it is for me
to come drink with you right now?

CARLA

Dude, drinking alone? I heard
that's the indication of...a
problem.

Mark tries not to laugh over the joke.

MARK

Fuck.

INT. SKELLER'S CHEESEBURGER KING - DAY

34

Mark walks in. Carla is sitting on a stool at the bar. The
place is mostly empty. Carla's talking to the bartender.

Carla looks better than she did. The month away agreed with
her. Not as pale.

In front of her on the bar is an open notebook and a pen.

She turns as Mark walks up and looks sincerely over-joyed to
see him. She jumps up and hugs him. Mark, who was trying to
keep a somber scowl on his face can't help but smile.

The bartender nods to Mark.

BARTENDER

(snidely)

Come to celebrate?

The smile falls off Mark's face.

MARK

Shlitz, please.

He and Carla both sit down.

CARLA

So.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Yeah. So.

CARLA

You want to be misery or company today?

Mark smiles wryly.

MARK

Considering how quickly you just failed, I'll go ahead and let you be misery today.

(beat, indicating notebook)

What's this?

CARLA

Look, I know this is a little setback, but seriously - I'm just getting all my shit together. This is a list of places I can apply to for a job tomorrow. I gotta get my guitar from my sister's place, and I already called Don over at the Silver Lounge to see about a solo gig and left a message.

Mark nods noncommittally. The bartender puts his beer down, not making eye-contact with him.

CARLA

I'm serious! You have no idea what it's like to just be away from everything for weeks. It's not a nice place in there. You don't go to Betty Ford when you have no money. Those state places are no fucking joke. Seriously, I'm just decompressing. Tomorrow I start over again. I got all my plans made.

Mark is silent again.

Carla raises her beer.

CARLA

To knocking off my bullshit!

MARK

Great start...

INT. SKELLER'S CHEESEBURGER KING - MONTAGE - DAY 35

Sequence one: We see Carla and Mark drinking together. The sound is ambient barroom sound, but we don't hear them talking, even though they clearly are. In a series of jump cuts, their mood lightens. We see them laughing, we see them good-naturedly arguing, we see them looking somewhat serious. It's an afternoon of good times. Eventually, the bartender, with little drama, cuts Carla off since she's practically falling off her stool. They shrug, pay their tab and walk out arm in arm.

EXT. BUS STOP - EVENING 36

The light is fading. Carla and Mark wait at the bus stop. The camera is across the street. Again, ambient noise for the scene, but we don't hear them talking. All at once Carla turns to Mark and says something. Mark's eyes widen. Carla nods seriously.

INT. PHARMACY - NIGHT 37

A pharmacy, the place terribly lit with green florescent lights. We hear a DING as the automatic doors open and Carla and Mark walk in together. They're drunk and look like the living dead. They walk mechanically through the aisles and the camera follows them. They end up in the Family Planning section where they spend very little time selecting a pregnancy test - the cheapest. We follow them as they walk up to the counter.

POV shot: We're looking from the cashier's point of view. Carla and Mark look haggard under the florescent lights. Carla tries to pay with a credit card, which is declined. Mark uses a bank card and it's accepted.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT 38

Carla and Mark are at the register, paying for a large jug of cheap Carlo Rossi wine with some crumbled ones. They're counting change.

INT. MARK'S ROOM - NIGHT 39

A single shot. We see Mark in the foreground, the door to the room opened in the background. Mark is looking through his records. He finds an old delta blues album, and puts it on. He sits on the floor and takes the jug of wine and takes a long pull.

(CONTINUED)

Carla enters the room. She's carrying a pregnancy test stick - a drop of urine falls off it onto the floor. She puts it on a milk crate and sits down next to Mark. He automatically passes her the jug and she takes a pull. They wait.

After a moment, they pick it up to see the negative sign.

CARLA
Oh thank Christ.

FADE TO BLACK

A MONTH PASSES

INT. ALLSTON APARTMENT BASEMENT

40

This is obviously a band rehearsal space - a DRUM KIT, some AMPS and INSTRUMENTS are all around. Kerry and Mark sit in chairs by their amps, strumming their instruments and looking bored.

On the floor on the other side of the room there is a VINTAGE COUCH on which sit BILLY BRECHT, HURRICANE JODI and CONNIE CLIT. They are all Kerry's age and wear various degrees of thrift-store "Rock and Roll" costumes. BILLY would look at home in the Dresden Dolls, while JODI and CONNIE have a plastic and polished punk-rock thing going on.

BILLY BRECHT
(speaking only to JODI and
CONNIE)
So I made our Facebook, Twitter and
LinkedIn accounts and as of
yesterday we have 200 people
following us.

CONNIE
That's great, we're gonna want to
keep up that 100 people every 6
hours steam, that's a good goal.

HURRICANE JODI
Well then whenever we post, it
should automatically publish to a
Tumblr. Is it 200, all of them
combined, or?

MARK
(whispering)
Who are these clowns? What the fuck
are all these words?

(CONTINUED)

KERRY

(whispering)

They put up a flyer outside of my school...

MARK

You guys realize you haven't played a note yet tonight, right?

The three look at him, disinterested.

BILLY BRECHT

(slowly, half-politely)

Mhmm.

MARK

You know. You guys being a band. And all that shit. I thought maybe some...music?

Silence.

MARK

Maybe I'm just old?

HURRICANE JODI

Well, it's just that we should really be talking about branding right now.

MARK

Like...a horse?

BILLY BRECHT

(good-humored about Mark's joke)

Like, no, so, okay, punk rock may be dead, but that punk attitude coupled with the electronica sound? And an anime meets steam punk look? Futuristic.

(gesturing at themselves)

That's a brand, right there, that stands out, that gets Twitter followers.

There's an awkward silence while MARK stares at them, blinking.

MARK

(very mumbled and mind-boggled)

Or you could write some good songs. Whichever.

(CONTINUED)

(nice and clearly)
No drummer, huh?

CONNIE

Mmm. Don't need one. Smaller bands with newer instrumentation is much more interesting. I just bought a lute, too, and I'm getting pretty good.

MARK

A lute. Huzzah. We're going to fuckin' tear it up on the Ren faire circuit.

KERRY

(claps, trying to diffuse the situation)
So. What kind of music? If you had to describe?

CONNIE

Well see...
(straining for the right words, like it's so hard to describe)
...it's much more of an *attitude*?

MARK

Got it. "Music to Preen By."

Kerry shoots him a half dirty, half amused look.

BILLY BRECHT

We should probably show them *Un Chien Andalou*?

Connie turns up the keyboard, starts the drum machine and begins hitting one note in rapid 16th note rhythm.

CONNIE

(pointing to the drum machine, pleased)
Hey Mark, there's your drummer.

Connie winks at Mark. Billy and Jodi bob their heads and then begin singing a three note pattern of "Oooooohs" over it.

KERRY

Wow.

They continue playing as Jodi talks over them.

(CONTINUED)

HURRICANE JODI

The song, or the "attitude," is really about my quarter life crisis. The pressures on an artist to just find a job and become part of the 9 to 5 machine. That demographic is very within our reach, very hot right now.

MARK

You went to like, a LOT of college, didn't you?

The song ends.

CONNIE

(obviously not listening to Mark)

So I think with that frame work, you guys should be able to write a pretty good song.

KERRY

Wait. You just want people to write your songs for you?

Uncomfortable silence.

BILLY BRECHT

We're really more sort of IDEA people, you know?

INT. RESTAURANT/BAR - LATER

41

Kerry and Mark sit at a table. Mark drinks a beer while he scratches off some SCRATCH TICKETS. Kerry is eating some fries and drinking a coke.

KERRY

You want some?

MARK

Nah. Eating with Carla later. Assuming the the milk in my fridge isn't too rotten to make Kraft dinner with.

Mark continues scratching tickets.

KERRY

Probably best I didn't tell them I just made \$400 bucks playing in a cover band the other night.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

I'm sure their heads would implode if you told them you made money and didn't even have to play dress up. Or follow the tweeter or whatever the fuck.

(beat)

You really made that kind of money?

KERRY

You'd fucking hate it. You wanna play Brown-eyed Girl and Mustang Sally three sets a night?

Mark makes a shuddering, disgusted noise.

MARK

How do you do that?

KERRY

Do what? Play my guitar and make money?

MARK

Sit through playing that tired crap?

KERRY

Let me get this straight - you handed out cereal bars while wearing a dopey t-shirt for a paycheck and I'm the one who should feel ashamed here?

MARK

I'm just saying, there's work and then there's music. I can't see crossing the streams. Deadly, you know?

KERRY

Is that a Ghostbusters reference?

MARK

Were you even born when that came out?

KERRY

You can make both art and commerce with your instrument, Mark. It's not a hard concept.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Sure.

(beat)

Why do I even buy these fucking things?

(indicating tickets)

I blew my last five bucks on these and the beer and - aw, kick fuckin' ass! I got 3 apples! Life's pretty cool sometimes, man.

INT. MARK'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

42

Mark and CARLA sit on the floor. The movie KILLERS FROM OUTER SPACE plays on the tiny TV (it's public domain). Camera pans to reveal a whole spread of CHINESE FOOD on the floor. There are also BOTTLES OF GOOD BEER and a bottle of GOOD WHISKEY, the price tags still on them.

CARLA is listening to something via HEADPHONES on the FOUR TRACK. Mark sips his beer and watches the movie.

CARLA

(removing headphones)

That's not bad. And I usually have to lie about that kinda shit when I'm sleeping with someone but I actually mean it this time.

MARK

It's been a slow process, but I like it so far. I think there could be more layers to it...

CARLA

That lead during the chorus is too busy. Cut it.

MARK

You think so? I kinda like it.

CARLA

You're having Johnny do vocals, right? It's going to step all over him when he's trying to sing.

Mark shrugs.

CARLA

So did you knock over a 7-11? Where did this whole spread come from? I didn't even know they still made whiskey in glass bottles.

(CONTINUED)

MARK
Walked the Fens.

CARLA
Isn't that where you usually
perform analingus for a bag of
glue?

MARK
(laughs)
I hit on a scratch ticket - can you
believe it?

CARLA
I can't believe you waste your
money on those things. Fuckin'
degenerate.

MARK
Returned some empties today, bought
some tickets after I did that band
try out thing.

CARLA
How'd that go?

MARK
My own personal Vietnam. I'm going
to be having PTSD flashbacks about
thrift store clothes and marketing.

CARLA
(good naturedly, not jealous)
How'd you end up in that shit show?
Berkleeeee Girl?

MARK
(sort of embarrassed)
Yes, *Berkleeeeeee Girl*.

CARLA
I looked her up on Facebook. She's
pretty.

MARK
I hadn't noticed.

CARLA
Queer.

MARK
Me? You're the one who's on
Facebook.

(CONTINUED)

CARLA
How much did you get?

MARK
Two hundred bucks.

CARLA
Holy SHIT. Forget everything I said about you being a loser for buying scratchies and playing Keno.

Mark laughs.

MARK
You woulda tried to claw the keyboard player's eyes out within 3 minutes. Guaranteed.

CARLA
Ugh. *Keyboard* player?

MARK
That's what you call someone with a Casio who can sometimes hit two notes at once, right?

CARLA
And this banquet here is what you did with the money?

MARK
I paid my roommates some bill money, bought a bus pass, but, yeah - this is mostly it.

CARLA
Seeing how the other side lives, huh?

At this point, the audio for this scene continues, but we cut to a flash-forward. We see Carla walking down a side street and up to a front door. She looks a little neater than usual, as if she's bothered to put at least a couple minutes into how she looks. She's carrying her guitar.

The front door opens and a good looking guy answers the door - Carla's ex-boyfriend/bandmate. He's neater and cleaner than Mark, seems better off. But he's not a square. In fact, he looks pretty cool. They smile at each other.

(CONTINUED)

We see the two of them having dinner at a kitchen table. It's a "grown up" kitchen. The guy has obviously cooked something and they're eating off plates. They are having what looks like an important conversation. Carla's face eventually melts into a smile, the man smiles back.

We see the two of them on a couch, playing their instruments, rehearsing something.

We see Carla on the couch with a blanket, wrapped up with him. They peck kisses and transition into full-on makeout.

MARK

Something like that. So what's up tomorrow. You wanna go play some pool or something?

CARLA

Can't. Meeting up with some old friends - dudes I used to play with.

MARK

Where you guys going?

CARLA

Not sure yet. Might just hang out at someone's house.

MARK

Let me know if you need to stay here.

CARLA

Nah, I'll probably crash at one of their houses. I'm sure we'll be shooting the shit all night.

MARK

Beers and gossip?

CARLA

It's the rocker's way...

THREE WEEKS PASS

EXT. CANOBIE LAKE PARK GATE - DAY

43

KERRY and Mark are buying TICKETS to get into the park.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

You've lived in New England your entire life.

KERRY

Are we going through this again?

MARK

Yes. I'm sorry. This is the most fucked up thing I've ever heard.

KERRY

Yes. I've lived in New England my entire life.

MARK

And you have never. Not once. Been to Canobie Lake Park?

KERRY

I think we've established this.

MARK

So, what? Your parents were...Hitler?

KERRY

Both of them. Yes.

MARK

Yankee Cannonball?

KERRY

I don't know what that means.

MARK

It's like talking to one of those abused kids who was locked in a closet until they were 12.

EXT. CANOBIE LAKE PARK - SAME DAY

44

We get a montage of the rides for a passage time.

EXT. CANOBIE LAKE PARK - PICNIC TABLES

45

MARK and KERRY sit at a table and talk, Mark is drinking a beer.

(CONTINUED)

KERRY

So. Three weeks since you've heard from her?

MARK

Yup.

KERRY

You haven't heard from her in three weeks?

MARK

Neither hide nor hair.

KERRY

What the fuck did you do?

MARK

Why's it gotta be my fault?

KERRY

Tradition.

MARK

Fuck you.

Kerry laughs.

KERRY

Either way...

MARK

Either way I need to shut up and get over it. Yeah. That seems to be the general consensus.

KERRY

It's probably for the best...

MARK

I don't need to hear this again.

KERRY

Fine, fine.

MARK

Seriously. Fuck it anyway. That girl is a huge lush, too.

MARK takes a pull off his beer.

INT. ARCADE - LATER THAT DAY

46

Inside the arcade. Mark and Kerry finish playing air hockey. They're laughing and talking bullshit. They go over to the KISS pinball machine.

MARK

Holy fuck - I forgot they had this one.

KERRY

It's just a pinball machine.

MARK

This is Bally's 1979 Space Invaders! they legally can't make this machine anymore..

KERRY

Huh?

MARK

They got sued because the alien on the glass looks an awful lot like the alien...from the movie Aliens.

KERRY

Why do you know such useless stuff?

MARK

It's all that really interests me.

Mark drops a quarter in and pulls back the lever.

Silence.

KERRY

So, I'm going to L.A. After the New Year.

Long beat while Mark tries to look undistracted, playing pinball.

MARK

Fuck - that's like springing "I have cancer" on someone. How long do you have?

KERRY

(ignoring his joke)
I'm serious. I got a job.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Yeah?

KERRY

A friend of mine from school - his dad works at a big record label out there. They're about to push this new guy who used to be in some huge boy band. They hired me to play on the record and then there's a tour.

Mark stays quiet.

KERRY

It's kind of an amazing opportunity.

MARK

To do what? Play shitty music?

Mark loses the ball. One life down. We hear the LOSING NOISE. Kerry's face goes hard - annoyed and a bit angry.

MARK

My streams would be so fucking crossed if I took that.

Mark pulls back the lever and starts again.

KERRY

Oddly enough, this isn't actually about you.

Mark tries to act unaffected.

MARK

When do you go?

KERRY

End of the month. Going to stay with my friend's family until I get situated.

MARK

Sounds good.

KERRY

You don't seem like it "sounds good."

MARK

It's a waste of your talent.

Kerry rolls her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

KERRY

Says the guy works shitty job after
shitty job.

Silence. Mark is still trying to play cool.

MARK

(nonchalantly)

Stay here. We'll start a band.

Kerry looks at him skeptically.

MARK

I'm serious. Think about it. I've
started writing some really cool
stuff I don't think is going to fit
in with my old band. We can get the
drummer from Crankshaft - he's not
doing shit these days.

KERRY

(parental)

Mark...

Another lost ball. LOSING SOUND.

MARK

You're going to disappear out
there, man.

KERRY

I need a job, Mark. And I don't
want to bag groceries. I'm a
guitarist. I want to play my
guitar.

MARK

(angry)

Then play your guitar! No one says
it has to feed you.

Silence.

KERRY

I'm trying, Mark, cause I have a
lot of respect for you. But I just
don't fucking get you sometimes.

Silence.

MARK

You know, when you started digging
up old my EPs and albums, it was

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARK (cont'd)
 kind of a big deal for me. My shit,
 past and present, had hit with a
 total stranger. It mattered to you.
 (beat)
 But whatever. I didn't get into
 this to impress strangers.

KERRY
 Someone's gotta listen to it, too.
 This stuff doesn't exist in a
 vacuum.

MARK
 Maybe for a second they will, then
 they move on. They've got a lot of
 obscure MP3s to get through.

KERRY
 I'll still be listening. It's
 just...this stuff isn't as
 complicated as you make it out to
 be. Record what you want. Play what
 you want. Find a job that you can
 pay the bills with. Hope someone
 listens.

MARK
 It's never been that simple. And
 I've been at it for a long time.
 (beat)
 So, no hope for our new band?

KERRY
 Maybe a few months ago but...not
 now. But I'm looking forward to
 your next record.

Silence between them. The bells and whistles play on. Mark
 takes a deep breath and stops playing. He looks at her and
 walks away from the machine with the ball still in play.

MARK
 This car ride is going to be so
 awkward.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

47

JOHNNY is in front of a microphone wearing headphones,
 belting out a harmony track for a recording. There are no
 lyrics, just simple oohs and aaahs. Mark sits at the
 controls of his four track.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY finishes, Mark looks up.

MARK
That's the take, man.

JOHNNY
Yeah?

MARK
Yup. Thank you.

JOHNNY reaches into his bag and opens another beer.

JOHNNY
It's pretty fucking good dude. I like the lyrics. The backups are fun as hell. The new drum tracks sound solid. What's this for?

MARK
Me.

JOHNNY
No shot of us playing this in our band?

MARK
We'd sort of have to be playing for that to happen.

JOHNNY
Yeah.
(beat)
So whaddya been up to?

MARK
Trying to find another job, listening to records and beating the shit out of my liver. And this song.

A KNOCK is heard on the door.

MARK
It's open!

The door opens and NOAH enters.

NOAH
What up, dirt bags.

MARK

Hey.

JOHNNY

Look at this fuckin' guy.

NOAH

You guys wanna smoke?

JOHNNY

Absolutely.

NOAH closes the door, removes a bag from his pocket with a PIPE and a SMALL TIN. He opens the TIN and begins loading the PIPE.

We see a jump cut montage of the three of them smoking, having a couple of beers, talking, laughing, etc.

We hear snatches of conversation, like a radio tuning. Then we hear... [conversation continued over next scene]

EXT. MARK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

48

Mark is drunk. He's smoking a cigarette and pacing outside of the apartment. He has his cell phone in one hand and he keeps looking at it.

DONE AS VO

NOAH

You guys hear Time Creep got back together?

JOHNNY

No shit? Isn't that chick Carla in that band, Mark?

MARK

What?

NOAH

Yeah, Steve is taking a break from recording. I guess their last record started getting some airplay at colleges out west - enough so that he was getting phone calls. He got the band back together and booked a 4 week tour - mid-west and left coast.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Where did you hear this?

NOAH

From Steve. Saw him at a Grumbles show last night. I guess him and - is it Carla? - got back together and they're leaving to tour next week.

Mark finally turns on his phone. He removes a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket and dials the number on it.

The phone rings, and a sleepy male voice answers eventually. All dialogue is from Mark's perspective only - we don't see STEVE'S APARTMENT.

STEVE

Hello?

MARK

Can I talk to Carla?

STEVE

Who is this?

MARK

Let me talk to her.

We hear Carla's voice in the background.

CARLA

Who is it?

STEVE

(to Carla)

Some dude. It's for you.

We hear him handing the phone to her.

CARLA

Who the fuck is it?

MARK

Me. It's me.

CARLA

You gonna be a little more specific?

MARK

You fucking cunt.

(CONTINUED)

CARLA

Oh.

MARK

You just fucking cut and run like that? I don't hear from you for weeks, I gotta find out from a friend?

CARLA

Dude, it's like 4 in the morning.

MARK

I don't care!

CARLA

This is some serious 8th grade bullshit. Calling me here at 4 in the morning?

MARK

Why did you do this?

CARLA

I'm not talking about this now.

MARK

Why? Cause HE'S there?

CARLA

Well...yeah. Exactly.

(beat)

Fuck.

(beat)

Meet me at Skeller's tomorrow at like 2.

Mark is silent.

CARLA

Are you there?

MARK

Yeah.

CARLA

Skeller's tomorrow, okay?

MARK

I can't fucking believe you.

(CONTINUED)

CARLA

I gotta go.

CARLA's end beeps out as Mark holds onto the phone and stares out into space.

INT. SKELLER'S CHEESEBURGER KING - DAY

49

Mark enters the bar. It's mostly empty. CARLA sits at one of the stools. She's been awake most of the night and is obviously half in the bag. She looks nervous and haggard.

Mark walks up and sits down next to her. He orders a beer. The two of them sit and drink their beers in silence for a bit.

CARLA

Misery or company?

MARK

Knock that shit off.

More silence.

MARK

So were you just going to go on tour and that was that?

More silence.

CARLA

I didn't plan it this way, you know.

MARK

I was there for you.

CARLA

I'm trying to knock off my bullshit Mark. Steve has his shit together.

MARK

What, you think there's some kind of osmosis to being SANE?

They're silent again.

CARLA

And I can tour again, and I'm making music and I have a place to stay.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

And all you have to do is fuck him!

CARLA looks at him angrily.

CARLA

You wanna hear all about that? I'd be happy to give you every last detail.

MARK

SHUT UP!

Silence.

CARLA

Douche.

Silence.

MARK

You're talking like he's a company that made you a better offer.

CARLA

I need to help myself right now and get back on track. This tour is important.

MARK

You know you could have done the tour and NOT went back to him.

Carla looks in her beer and shrugs, sighing deeply.

CARLA

I love him. I never stopped.

MARK

And me?

CARLA

(beat)

I like you.

(beat, while it sinks in)

Look, Mark - I fuck up a lot. I've hurt Steve in the past. I mean really hurt him. Over and over again. I owe it to him to try. To make him happy. Steve has never been anything but good to everyone - me included, and I pissed in his face. I have a chance to make it right.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Do you know how fucked up you
sound?

Carla finishes her beer in a gulp. She takes out a handful of crumpled bills and puts them on the counter and stands up. She looks at Mark, genuinely sorry.

CARLA

It's the best I can do right now.

Mark looks at her, a combination of horror, anger, and love.

CARLA walks out of the bar.

A COUPLE WEEKS PASS

INT. MARK'S ROOM - MORNING

50

Mark's room is cluttered and dirty. He sits on his bed, blearily, hungover, looking out into space - obviously anxious.

As if making a decision, he picks up the phone and calls Kerry. We then see scenes from the previous evening. The sound is just ambiance from his room in the morning. Birds, traffic outside, etc.

KERRY

(over phone, toneless)

Hey, Mark.

We see Mark opening the door to the apartment he lives in and seeing Kerry there. She has a bag of records and smiles.

MARK

Uh...hey.

Mark and Kerry sit in his room listening to records. Mark is drinking beer, Kerry has a coke.

MARK

What are you up to?

KERRY

Just packing up my stuff, getting
ready for the flight.

It's later; Mark and Kerry are lying on the bed. Mark's tipping back a bottle of whiskey. They're both laughing.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Yeah. I just wanted to say goodbye
I guess.

KERRY

(in a teasing sort of way)
You did that last night. But I'm
guessing you don't remember.

Mark is still on the bed - obviously very drunk. KERRY is changing the record. Mark gets to his feet and clumsily turns off the lights and plugs in some CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

MARK

I wasn't that drunk.

KERRY

Yeah, you were.

MARK

Okay. Still. I...

Mark and KERRY are on the bed again. Mark seems to be getting emotional about something - angry. He sits up and is sort of ranting. KERRY looks bored.

Mark stands and is flailing his arms - speaking about something that's angering him. He knocks a lamp over by accident. Kerry sighs.

Mark is trying to clean it up, but tips over his bottle onto the floor, which makes him angry again as the whiskey pours out. He slaps the bottle out of frustration and sends it across the floor. He collapses onto the bed like an indignant child.

Kerry has had enough. She stands, says something with a cold expression on her face, shaking her head. She walks past Mark and out the door, we see her lips says, "Later" as she passes him.

KERRY

Mark?

MARK

Yeah?

Mark sits up - he looks regretful. Dramatically so, in that drunken stupor way. Kerry's body language is saying it's okay, but it's late and she needs to go. She gives him a hug, takes her things and walks toward the door. She slips out, and we see her shape fade out of focus through the crack in the door, as she looks like one of Mark's roommates from earlier.

(CONTINUED)

KERRY

We're cool. Don't worry.

MARK

Yeah?

KERRY

Yeah.

MARK

Look, I really didn't mean -

KERRY

I know. Look. I'm glad we met.

Mark, alone on bed, looks like he knows he fucked up but just passes out.

MARK

(pause, realizing he just has
to live with it)

Okay. Yeah. I'll talk to you soon.

The call ends. We're back in real time. Mark sits on the side of his bed and stares out into space.

MARK MONTAGE

51

This is a series of images of quiet vignettes of Mark. In the background, we hear him recording the finishing touches of his song. We hear guitar tracks that start and stop-- complete with mistakes, sometimes Mark swearing under his breath as he stops that tape, rewinds and starts again.

This is the cinematographer's (Cyle Gage's) time to shine and I leave it largely up to him and you what to shoot. In my mind it's not tragic, it's not upbeat, it's just really beautiful shots of Mark doing the mundane. He sleeps. He records. He fills out job applications. We see him giving his nephew a guitar lesson. Life is pretty much going on as it did. But I think a juxtaposition of striking images of the everyday (and yeah, I know how vague "striking" images sounds) is what needs to be conveyed here. We see Carla on the road mixed in with the other images - at one point she's obviously drunk and is a mess on stage, much to the chagrin of her bandmates. We eventually see her band mates dropping her off at a bus station with a ticket - she looks terrible; hungover, ill and sad.

Near the end we see Mark talking to a manager at SKELLER'S. They shake hands. He has a job.

(CONTINUED)

At the end of the montage, Mark comes home. CARLA sits on the front porch. They don't say anything to each other at first. Mark just stares at her. Through a series of jump cuts we see their body language tell the story: She tries to be cute; he's angry; she's angry back; they argue; she lightens the mood; he falls for it; she tries to be cute again; it works; he sighs - knowing this is a mistake - and unlocks the front door and lets her follow him inside. This part really needs to be portrayed in a way that the audience can get that this is not by any stretch a "happy ending" resolution. Mark is sort of just being a sucker at this point.

FADE OUT

INT. SKELLER'S CHEESEBURGER KING - NIGHT

52

It's after closing. Mark has worked all night as a bar-back. The KITCHEN STAFF are dragging leaking bags of trash in their white aprons across the floor, out the door. The MANAGER counts the nights take in a booth. A young BARTENDER- 22, hipster, affecting the "worldly-seen-it-all" veneer, counts out her tips.

BARTENDER

Did you replace the Hops Devil IPA keg?

MARK

Yup. Just gotta mop up.

BARTENDER

(handing Mark his share of her tips)

Survived your first shift?

MARK

My back is going to be PISSED at me tomorrow, but yeah.

(beat)

Big plans tonight?

BARTENDER

Nah. Gonna go home and drink with my girlfriend. You?

MARK

Gonna try to get some work done.

BARTENDER

Work?

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Had another song in my head, I want to start recording it before it goes away.

BARTENDER

(unimpressed)
Musician, huh?

MARK

Yeah, too many of us, right?

BARTENDER

(turning around to dust bottles, not actually interested)
What kind of stuff do you play?

MARK

Uh. I dunno. It's kind of...I mean, it's poppy, but...

BARTENDER'S eyes start to glaze over.

Mark babbles for another second before...

MARK

You know what?

Mark reaches behind the bar and pulls out his BAG. He opens the BAG and produces a PORTABLE CD PLAYER. He turns it on and hands it to the BARTENDER

BARTENDER

(sarcastic)
A fucking DISKMAN? Wow. Old school.

She puts on the headphones.

MARK

I play music like this.

Mark pushes a button on the PORTABLE CD PLAYER and we hear the song, SNOW DAY, loud and clear - not through the headphones, but as a soundtrack. It's got a great poppy hook, but the instruments are fuzzy and low-fi. It's catchy but not sterile and overly polished. The BARTENDER finds herself settling into the rhythm despite herself.

BARTENDER

This is actually...really fucking good.

(CONTINUED)

Mark smiles. He takes his apron off, turns around, and wheels a MOP BUCKET and MOP from out of the kitchen and starts to mop the floor. We see he's wearing the THIN LIZZY shirt. He continues working as we finally hear SNOW DAY featured prominently over the foley and dialogue.

THE END