

"Clerks."

by

Kevin Smith

INT: BEDROOM. EARLY-MORNING HOURS

A DOG sleeps on a neatly made bed.

A CLOCK reads twenty to six.

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

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

THE DOG yawns and shakes its head.

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

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

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

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

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

DANTE
Next time, I get the bed.

He releases the dog and sits up.

DANTE
(exhausted)
Shit.

CUT TO:

INT: BATHROOM. MINUTES LATER

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

CUT TO:

INT: KITCHEN. MINUTES LATER

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

CUT TO:

INT: KITCHEN. SECONDS LATER

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

CUT TO:

INT: BEDROOM. A MINUTE LATER

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

CUT TO:

INT: HALLWAY. MINUTES LATER

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

CUT TO:

EXT: DRIVEWAY. MINUTES LATER

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

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

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

CUT TO:

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

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

DANTE

Shit.

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

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

POV: NEWSPAPER MACHINE

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

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

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

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

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

DANTE

Shit!

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

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

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING

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

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

DANTE waits on a customer (ACTIVIST) buying coffee.

DANTE

Thanks. Have a good one.

ACTIVIST

Do you mind if I drink this here?

DANTE

Sure. Go ahead.

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

CUSTOMER

Are you open?

DANTE

Yeah.

CUSTOMER

Pack of cigarettes.

ACTIVIST

Are you sure?

CUSTOMER

Am I sure?

ACTIVIST

Are you sure?

CUSTOMER

Am I sure about what?

ACTIVIST
Do you really want to buy those cigarettes?

CUSTOMER
Are you serious?

ACTIVIST
How long have you been smoking?

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

DANTE
Beats me.

ACTIVIST
How long have you been a smoker?

CUSTOMER
Since I was thirteen.

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

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

CUSTOMER
What the hell is that?

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

CUSTOMER
You're shittin' me.

ACTIVIST
You think I'm shitting you...

The ACTIVIST hands him something from the briefcase.

CUSTOMER
What's this?

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

CUSTOMER
(drops ring)
Unnhh!

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

DANTE

Excuse me, but...

ACTIVIST

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

CUSTOMER

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

ACTIVIST

It's never too late. Give those cigarettes back now, and buy some gum instead.
(grabs nearby pack, reads)
Here. Chewlies Gum. Try this.

CUSTOMER

It's not the same.

ACTIVIST

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

Hands him a picture.

CUSTOMER

Jesus!

ACTIVIST

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

CUSTOMER

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

DANTE

Fifty-five.

ACTIVIST

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

The CUSTOMER exits.

DANTE

Maybe you should take that coffee outside.

ACTIVIST

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

DANTE

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

ACTIVIST

Okay. I'm sorry about that.

Another CUSTOMER comes up to the counter.

CUSTOMER

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

ACTIVIST
This? How long have you been smoking?

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

JAY
WE NEED SOME TITS AND ASS! YEAH!

SILENT BOB lights a smoke.

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

SILENT BOB points to something off-screen.

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

SILENT BOB nods.

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

Some girls walk past. JAY smiles at them.

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

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

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

A GUY comes up to them.

GUY
You selling?

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

A SMALL CROWD gathers around the ACTIVIST as he orates. It has become something of a rally.

ACTIVIST
You're spending what? Twenty, thirty
dollars a week on cigarettes.

LISTENER 1
Forty.

LISTENER 2
Fifty-three.

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

LISTENER 3
We all gotta go sometime...

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

LISTENER 1
It's not that easy to quit.

ACTIVIST

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

DANTE

Hey, now wait a sec...

ACTIVIST

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

DANTE

I think you'd better leave now.

ACTIVIST

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

DANTE

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

ACTIVIST

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

LISTENER 2

(to DANTE)

Yeah, now shut up so he can speak!

ACTIVIST

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

LISTENER 3

Yeah!

ACTIVIST

We'd rather chew our gum than embrace slow

death! Let's abolish this heinous practice of sucking poison, and if it means ruffling the feathers of a convenience store idiot, then so be it!

DANTE

That's it, everybody out.

ACTIVIST

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

DANTE

Yeah, but not in here.

ACTIVIST

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

DANTE

Like I'm responsible for all the smokers!

ACTIVIST

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

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

CROWD

Cancer merchant! Cancer merchant! Cancer merchant!

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

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

VERONICA

Who's leading this mob?

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

SOMEONE

That guy.

The ACTIVIST carries his briefcase surreptitiously toward the door.

VERONICA (O.C.)

Freeze.

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

VERONICA

Let's see some credentials.

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

VERONICA
Slowly...

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

VERONICA
You're a Chewlie's Gum representative?

He nods.

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

He nods again.

VERONICA
(through gritted teeth)
Get out of here.

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

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

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

VERONICA watches the crowd disperse, disgusted.

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

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

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

DANTE is silent.

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

DANTE remains silent.

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

DANTE lifts his head and shoots her a disgusted look.

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

At least they weren't lit.

DANTE

I hate this fucking place.

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

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

DANTE

I'm not even supposed to be here today!

VERONICA

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

DANTE

The guy got sick and couldn't come in.

VERONICA

Don't you have a hockey game at two?

DANTE

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

VERONICA

Why did you agree to come in then?

DANTE

I'm only here until twelve, then I'm gone. The boss is coming in.

VERONICA

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

DANTE

Somebody jammed the locks with gum.

VERONICA

You're kidding.

DANTE

Bunch of savages in this town.

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

What were you doing up so late?

DANTE

(skirting)
Hunhh? Nothing.

VERONICA

(persistent)
What were you doing?

DANTE

Nothing! Jesus! I gotta fight with you now?

VERONICA

Who's fighting? Why are you so defensive?

DANTE

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

She stares at him.

DANTE

What? What is that?

VERONICA

She called you, didn't she?

DANTE

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

VERONICA stares at him.

DANTE

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

VERONICA looks away.

DANTE

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

VERONICA looks back at him.

DANTE
(pleadingly)
Give you a dollar?

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

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

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

DANTE
(to O.C. customer)
Thanks.

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

VERONICA
How much money did you leave up there?

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

VERONICA
You're trusting.

DANTE
Why do you say that?

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

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

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

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

VERONICA
Do you think anyone can see us down here?

DANTE
Why? You wanna have sex or something?

VERONICA

(sarcastic)
Ooh! Can we?!

DANTE
Really?

VERONICA
I was kidding.

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

VERONICA
Typically male point of view.

DANTE
How do you figure?

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

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

VERONICA
"Be there?"

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

VERONICA
How flattering.

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

VERONICA
Oh, you think so?

DANTE
A girl makes a guy cum, it's standard. A guy makes a girl cum, it's talent.

VERONICA
And I actually date you?

DANTE
Something wrong?

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

DANTE
I touched a nerve.

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

You were making a generalization about "broads!"

DANTE

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

VERONICA

How many?

DANTE

How many what?

VERONICA

How many girls have you slept with?

DANTE

How many different girls? Didn't we already have this discussion once?

VERONICA

We might have; I don't remember. How many?

DANTE

Including you?

VERONICA

It better be up to and including me.

DANTE

(pause to count)
Twelve.

VERONICA

You've slept with twelve different girls?

DANTE

Including you; yes.

Pause. She slaps him.

DANTE

What the hell was that for?

VERONICA

You're a pig.

DANTE

Why'd you hit me?

VERONICA

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

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

VERONICA
Three.

DANTE
Three?

VERONICA
Three including you.

DANTE
You've only had sex with three different people?

VERONICA
I'm not the pig you are.

DANTE
Who?

VERONICA
You!

DANTE
No; who were the three, besides me?

VERONICA
John Franson and Rob Stanslyk.

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

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

DANTE
Animal, vegetable, or mineral.

VERONICA
Vegetable meaning paraplegic.

DANTE
They put up the least amount of struggle.

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

DANTE
All right. Name it.

VERONICA
I want you to come with me on Monday.

DANTE
Where?

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

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

DANTE

Shit! Why are we getting up?

VERONICA

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

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

VERONICA

(surprised)

Willam!

WILLAM

Ronnie! How are you? You work here now?

VERONICA

(locks arms with DANTE)

No, I'm just visiting my man.

(to DANTE)

Dante, this is Willam Black.

(to WILLAM)

This is Dante Hicks, my boyfriend.

DANTE

How are you? Just the soda?

WILLAM

And a pack of cigarettes.

(to VERONICA; paying)

Are you still going to Seton Hall?

VERONICA

No, I transferred into Monmouth this year.

I was tired of missing him.

(squeezes DANTE'S arm)

WILLAM

Do you still talk to Sylvan?

VERONICA

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

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

VERONICA
I will. Take it easy.

WILLAM
Bye.
(exits)

VERONICA
Bye
(to DANTE)
That was Snowball.

DANTE
Why do you call him that?

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

DANTE
What do you mean?

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

DANTE
He requested this?

VERONICA
He gets off on it.

DANTE
Sylvan can be talked into anything.

VERONICA
Why do you say that?

DANTE
Like you said-she snowballed him.

VERONICA
Sylvan? No; I snowballed him.

DANTE
Yeah, right.

VERONICA
I'm serious...

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

DANTE
You sucked that guy's dick?

VERONICA

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

DANTE

(panicky)

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

VERONICA

That's because I never had sex with him!

DANTE

You sucked his dick!

VERONICA

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

DANTE

(massive panic attack)

Oh my God! Why did you tell me you only slept with three guys?

VERONICA

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

DANTE

Oh my God-I feel so nauseous...

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

Please calm down.

DANTE

How many?

VERONICA

Dante...

DANTE

How many dicks have you sucked?!

VERONICA

Let it go...

DANTE

HOW MANY?

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

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

DANTE
Well...?

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

DANTE
WHAT? SOMETHING LIKE THIRTY-SIX?

VERONICA
Lower your voice!

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

VERONICA
Um. Thirty-seven.

DANTE
I'M THIRTY-SEVEN?

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

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

CUSTOMER
In a row?

DANTE chases VERONICA down and grabs her by the door.

DANTE
Hey! Where are you going?!

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

DANTE
No, but you sucked enough dick!

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

DANTE
A few?

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

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

DANTE

I feel sick.

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA violently lets go of him.

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

Goodbye, Dante.

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

DANTE

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

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

DANTE

HEY! HEY, YOU! GET BACK HERE!

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

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

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

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

DANTE
I'm sure he wasn't sleeping.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
You calling me a liar?

DANTE
No; he was probably just resting his eyes.

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

DANTE
Actually, that's his night job.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
Such a wiseass. But go ahead. Crack wise. That's why you're jockeying a register in some fucking local convenience store instead of doing an honest day's work.
(tosses tape on counter)
I got no more time to bullshit around waiting for that sonofabitch. You make sure this gets back. The number's eight-twelve-Wynarski. And I wanted to get a damn movie, too.

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

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

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

DANTE
(in a whisper)
You forgot your keys.

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

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

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

RANDAL
You're kidding. It's almost eleventhirty!

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

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

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

RANDAL
Which one?

V.A. CUSTOMER
Dental School.

RANDAL
You came for that too? That's the movie I came for.

V.A. CUSTOMER
I have first dibs.

RANDAL
Says who?

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

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

V.A. CUSTOMER
Like hell you are!

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

V.A. CUSTOMER
Twenty bucks?

RANDAL
Twenty bucks.

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

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

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

DANTE
You're late.

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

DANTE
The boss called. Arthur fell ill.

RANDAL
Why are the shutters closed?

DANTE
Someone jammed gum in the locks.

RANDAL
Bunch of savages in this town.

DANTE
That's what I said.

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

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

RANDAL
What time do you have to stay till?

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

RANDAL
What smells like shoe polish?

DANTE

Go open the sore.

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

The IMPATIENT CUSTOMER stops RANDAL.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
Hey-did you see a set of keys lying around here?

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

RANDAL marches off. The IMPATIENT CUSTOMER stares after him.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
Fucking kids.

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

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

DANTE
Shocking abuse of authority.

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

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

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

RANDAL heads toward the walk-in door.

CUT TO:

INT: BACK ROOM. DAY

POV: VCR

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

POV: RANDAL

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

RANDAL pulls a soda from the cooler.

RANDAL
Want something to drink? I'm buying.

DANTE (O.C.)
No, thanks.

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

DANTE (O.C.)
Why?

RANDAL
I wanted to use your car.

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

RANDAL
Snake cake?

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

DANTE
You don't want to know.

RANDAL
You called Caitlin again?

DANTE
She called me.

RANDAL
Did you tell Veronica?

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

RANDAL
What do you two fight about?

DANTE

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

RANDAL

(opening paper)

I'll bet the most frequent topic of arguments is Caitlin Bree.

DANTE

You win.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Seven months.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Five years.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Eight and a half.

RANDAL

(looks up from paper)

Eight and a half?

DANTE

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

RANDAL

That's cheating?

DANTE

In the middle of it, she calls me Brad.

RANDAL

She called you Brad?

DANTE

She called me Brad.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

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

RANDAL

What do you mean?

DANTE

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

RANDAL

Oh, my God.

DANTE

Great story, isn't it?

RANDAL

That girl was vile to you.

DANTE

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

RANDAL

Your mother.

DANTE

Allan Harris.

RANDAL

Chess team Allan Harris?!

DANTE

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

RANDAL

That's frightening.

DANTE

It takes different strokes to move the world.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Because there was a lot of good in our relationship.

RANDAL

Oh yeah.

DANTE

I'm serious. Aside from the cheating, we were a great couple. That's what high

school's all about-algebra, bad lunch, and infidelity.

RANDAL

You think things would be any different now?

DANTE

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

RANDAL

(suddenly recalling)
Oh shit, I've got to place an order.

DANTE

I'm talking to myself here.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

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

RANDAL

What about Veronica?

DANTE

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

RANDAL

Caitlin's on the same wave-length?

DANTE

I think it's safe to say yes.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

All four?

RANDAL

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

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

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. DAY

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

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

A MOTHER and her SMALL CHILD approach the counter.

MOTHER
Excuse me, but do you see videotapes?

RANDAL
What were you looking for?

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

SMALL CHILD
Happy Scrappy!

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

MOTHER
Happy Scrappy-The Hero Pup.

SMALL CHILD
Happy Scrappy!

MOTHER
(more smiling)
She loves the tape.

RANDAL
Obviously.
(to phone)
Yes, hello; this is R.S.T. Video calling.
Customer number fourthree-five-zero-two-
nine. I'd like to place an order...Okay...
(reading from list)
I need one each of the following tapes:
Whisper in the Wind, To Each His Own, Put
it Where It Doesn't Belong, My Pipes Need
Cleaning, All Tit-Fucking, Volume Eight, I
Need Your Cock, Ass-Worshipping RimJobbers,
My Cunt and Eight Shafts, Cum Clean, Cum-
Gargling Naked Sluts, Cum Buns Three,
Cumming in a Sock, Cum on Eileen, Huge
Black Cocks with Pearly White Cum, Slam It
Up My Too-Loose Ass, Ass Blasters in Outer
Space, Blowjob by Betsy, Sucking Cock and
Cunt, Finger My Ass, Play with my Puss,
Three on a Dildo, Girls Who Crave Cock,
Girls Who Crave Cunt, Men Alone Two-The
K.Y. Connection, Pink Pussy Lips, and All
Holes Filled with Hard Cock. Oh, and...
(to MOTHER)
What was the name of that movie?

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

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

Silence. Then...

SMALL CHILD
Cunt!

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

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

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

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

DANTE on the phone:

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

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

DANTE (O.C.)
...Are you sure?...Maybe there's like a vindictive printer working for you...

DANTE on the phone:

DANTE
Meaning like someone who maybe-I don't know-asked her out once and got shot down, and

his revenge is throwing this bogus article
in when the paper went to
press...Hello?...Hello?

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

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

JAY, SILENT BOB and OLAF lean against wall.

JAY

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

TWO GIRLS join them.

JAY

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

GIRL 1

Scumbag. What are you doing?

JAY

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

GIRL 1

(to SILENT BOB)
He's your cousin?

JAY

Check this out, he's from Russia.

GIRL 1

No way.

JAY

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

SILENT BOB shakes his head:

JAY

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

GIRL 2

What part of Russia?

JAY

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

OLAF looks quizzically at SILENT BOB.

SILENT BOB
(in Russian)
Home.

OLAF
(comprehending)
Moscow.

GIRL 1
He only speaks Russian?

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

GIRL 2
Is he staying here?

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

GIRL 1
No way!

JAY
Swear.
(to OLAF)
Olaf, metal!

OLAF makes a metal face.

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

OLAF looks the girls up and down.

OLAF
Skrelnick.

JAY
(laughs)
That's fucked up.

GIRL 1
What did he say?

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

GIRL 2
He really wants to play metal?

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

GIRL 1

That doesn't sound metal.

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

OLAF laughs and shakes his head.

JAY
Come on, man, "Berserker!"

GIRL 2
Does he sing in English or Russian?

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

OLAF
(relents)
Da. Da.

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

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

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

GIRL 1
Did he say "making fuck?"

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

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

OLAF busts a crimson metal sneer and cackles deeply.

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. DAY

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

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. DAY

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

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

DANTE
You hold the counter and I'll pull.

MAN
Usually I just turn the can upside down.

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

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

DANTE
I think it's coming now...

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

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

DANTE
I'll throw this out. Precautionary measure.

MAN
It stings a little.

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

DANTE steps behind the counter.

MAN
Thanks.

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

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

RANDAL
You know what I just watched?

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

RANDAL
Return of the Jedi.

DANTE
Didn't you hear me? Caitlin really is getting married.

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

DANTE
(exasperated)
Empire.

RANDAL
Blasphemy.

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

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

RANDAL follows DANTE as he cleans up around the store.

DANTE
What's that?

RANDAL
All right, Vader's boss...

DANTE
The Emperor.

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

DANTE
How do you mean?

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

DANTE
I guess.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Yeah.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

It would stand to reason, yes.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

More or less.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

I think they were Catholics.

A BLUE-COLLAR MAN half enters the door.

BLUE-COLLAR MAN

Are you open?

DANTE

Yeah. Come in.

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

RANDAL

You know what else I noticed in Jedi?

DANTE

There's more?

RANDAL

So they build another Death Star, right?

DANTE

Yeah.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

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

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Compliments of Lando Calrissian.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

And you figured it out?

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Basically.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

And the second time around...?

RANDAL

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

DANTE

So?

RANDAL

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

DANTE

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

RANDAL

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

DANTE

All right, so even if independent contractors are working on the Death Star, why are you uneasy with its destruction?

RANDAL

All those innocent contractors hired to do a job were killed casualties of a war they had nothing to do with.

(notices Dante's confusion)

All right, look-you're a roofer, and some juicy government contract comes your way; you got the wife and kids and the two-story in suburbia-this is a government contract, which means all sorts of benefits. All of a sudden these left-wing militants blast you with lasers and wipe out everyone within a three-mile radius. You didn't ask for that. You have no personal politics. You're just trying to scrape out a living.

The BLUE-COLLAR MAN joins them.

BLUE-COLLAR MAN

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

RANDAL

The ending of Return of the Jedi.

DANTE

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

BLUE-COLLAR MAN

Well, I'm a contractor myself. I'm a roofer...

(digs into pocket and produces business card)

Dunn and Reddy Home Improvements. And speaking as a roofer, I can say that a roofer's personal politics come heavily into play when choosing jobs.

RANDAL

Like when?

BLUE-COLLAR MAN

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

DANTE

Whose house was it?

BLUE-COLLAR MAN

Dominick Bambino's.

RANDAL
"Babyface" Bambino? The gangster?

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

DANTE
Based on personal politics.

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

RANDAL
No way!

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

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

WOMAN
Is that video store open or not?

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. DAY

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

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

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

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
Are either of these any good?

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

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
Sir!

RANDAL continues to read.

RANDAL
(flatly)
What.

The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER holds up her rental choices.

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

RANDAL, as always, reads on.

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

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

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

RANDAL does his level best to not get involved.

RANDAL
(reading)
No.

The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER challenges him.

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

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

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

RANDAL continues to read his paper, not looking up.

RANDAL
They suck.

The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER smirks smugly at RANDAL and his paper. She has caught him.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
I just held up the same two movies. You're

not even paying attention.

RANDAL
No, I wasn't.

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

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

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
I beg your pardon!

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

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

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

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
You hope what feels good?

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

The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER wears a face that belies utter disbelief in the audacity of this most lackadaisical video clerk. The unmoving newspaper illustrates the total disinterest of the news-hungry RANDAL. The INDECISIVE CUSTOMER shakes her head in disgust and throws the movies back onto the wall.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
(in a huff)
Well this is the last time I ever rent here...

RANDAL
You'll be missed.

INDECISIVE CUSTOMER
(losing it altogether)
Screw you!

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

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

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

RANDAL
Screw me!

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

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

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

RANDAL
(looking around)
She's in here?

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

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

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

RANDAL and DANTE study the O.C. oddity.

RANDAL
What's he looking for?

DANTE
He said he has to find a perfect dozen.

RANDAL
Perfect dozen.

DANTE
Each egg has to be perfect.

RANDAL
The quest isn't going well?

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

The ODD MAN holds an egg up to the light and studies it from

several different angles.

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

DANTE
I told him that and he yelled at me.

RANDAL snickers at his friend.

RANDAL
What did he say?

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

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

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

A SMOKER steps in.

SMOKER
Two packs of cigarettes.

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

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

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

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

DANTE
You know him?

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

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

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

DANTE
Why do you say that?

SMOKER

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

RANDAL

Get out of here.

SMOKER

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

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

SMOKER (O.C.)

He said they always pay for whatever they break and they never bother anybody.

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

DANTE

Why guidance counselors?

SMOKER

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

RANDAL

Come to think of it, my guidance counselor was kind of worthless.

SMOKER

(grabbing matches)
See? It's important to have a job that makes a difference, boys. That's why I kill Chinamen for the railroad.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

POV RANDAL: THE EMPTY COUNTER

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

LITTLE GIRL

(innocently)
Can I have a pack of cigarettes?

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

DANTE

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

RANDAL

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

DANTE

What's a jizz-mopper?

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Nudie booth?

RANDAL

Nudie booth. You've never been in a nudie booth?

DANTE

I guess not.

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

RANDAL

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

DANTE

What kind of show?

RANDAL

Think of the weirdest, craziest shit you'd like to see chicks do. These chicks do it all. They insert things into any opening in their body...any opening.

(to customer)

He's led a very sheltered life.

DANTE

(indicating CUSTOMER)

Can we talk about this later?

RANDAL

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

CUSTOMER

(grabbing her bag, disgusted)

This is the last time I come to this place.

DANTE
Excuse me?

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

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

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

The CUSTOMER stands silently, awaiting something.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DANTE
I'm gonna hear it tomorrow.

RANDAL
You gotta loosen up, my friend. You'd feel
a hell of a lot better if you'd rip into
the occasional customer.

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

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

DANTE
There aren't.

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

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

RANDAL
Let's hear it.

DANTE
(pause)
The milkmaids.

RANDAL
The milkmaids?

INSERT: MILK HANDLER

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

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

END INSERT

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

DANTE
Which ones?

RANDAL
All of them.

MONTAGE INSERT #1/VIDEO JERKS

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

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

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

THIRD
Do you have that one with the guy who was

in that movie that was out last year?

END INSERT

RANDAL

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

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

An identical series of customers finding their ideal choices.

FIRST

Ooooh! Home Alone!

SECOND

Ooooh! Hook!

THIRD

Ooooh! Navy Seals!

END INSERT

RANDAL

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

DANTE

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

MONTAGE INSERT #3/DUMB QUESTIONS

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

FIRST

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

SECOND

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

THIRD

(peeking in door)
Do you sell hubcaps?

END INSERT

RANDAL

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

DANTE

No.

RANDAL

Why not?

DANTE

Because my ex-girlfriend is getting married.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

(jerking head toward door)
Veronica!

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

VERONICA

What happened to home by twelve?

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

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

DANTE

What is it?

VERONICA

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

DANTE

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

VERONICA

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

RANDAL (O.C.)

(exaggeratively impressed)
Thirty-seven!

DANTE

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

RANDAL makes loud slurping noises from O.C.

DANTE

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

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

VERONICA
You had to tell him.

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

VERONICA
What did he say?

DANTE
At least he wasn't thirty-six.

VERONICA
And that made you feel better?

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

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

DANTE
...it isn't there. Yes.

VERONICA
Thank you for being rational.

DANTE
Thank you for the lasagne.

VERONICA
You couldn't get these shutters open?

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

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

DANTE
What time do you get finished?

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

DANTE
Sure.

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

the lasagne.

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

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. DAY

RANDAL is recommending titles to potential customers.

RANDAL

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

CUSTOMER

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

RANDAL

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

DANTE opens the door and leans in.

DANTE

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

RANDAL

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

DANTE

The best Burtless movie ever made.

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

CUSTOMER

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

RANDAL

Lenin's Tomb.

Dolly over to DANTE, on the phone.

DANTE

Hello, is Mr. Synder there? This is Dante...Did he say if he was on his way here?...Here...The convenience store...I know, but the other guy called out this morning and Mr. Synder asked me to cover until he got here. He said he'd be here by

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

(deep sigh)

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

He hangs up. RANDAL joins him.

RANDAL

Vermont?

DANTE

Can you believe this?!

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Not a fucking word! Slippery shit!

RANDAL

So, what-you're stuck here all day?

DANTE

FUCK!

RANDAL

Why'd you apologize?

DANTE

What?

RANDAL

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

DANTE

I know.

RANDAL

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

DANTE

I don't back down.

RANDAL

Yes, you do. You always back down. You
assume blame that isn't yours, you come in

when called as opposed to enjoying your day off, you buckle like a belt.

DANTE
You know what pisses me off the most?

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

DANTE
I'm going to miss the game.

RANDAL
Because you buckled.

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

RANDAL
Don't yell at me, pal.

DANTE
Sorry.

RANDAL
See? There you go again.

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

RANDAL
At least we're stuck here together.

DANTE
You've got a customer.

RANDAL walks away.

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

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

DANTE
(lifting his foot)
Pull my laces tighter.

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

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

RANDAL
No argument here. Insubordination rules.

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

SANFORD skates up and skids to a halt.

SANFORD
Dante, let me grab a Gatorade.

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

SANFORD
So?

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

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

DANTE
I've got a responsibility here. I can't let everybody grab free drinks.

SANFORD
What responsibility? You're closing the fucking store to play hockey.

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

DANTE

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

SANFORD

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

RANDAL

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

SANFORD

Fuckin-A.

DANTE

All right. Jesus, you fuckers are pushy.

SANFORD

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

RANDAL

Design major.

DANTE

Can we not talk about this?

SANFORD

Fine by me. But you're living in denial and suppressing rage.
(skating away; to all)
Dante said we can all drink free Gatorade.

A laid-back hurrah is heard.

RANDAL

Are you gonna lock the store?

DANTE

I don't know. You going to lock the video store?

RANDAL

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

DANTE

We're not playing in the street.

RANDAL

Then where're we gonna play?

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

The sign on the door reads:

TEMPORARILY CLOSED. BE OPEN AFTER FIRST PERIOD.

The PLAYERS ascend a ladder adjacent to the door, one by one.

ON THE ROOF they jump off the ladder and skate around. More players join them.

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

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

DANTE
Ready?

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

The game begins as the players engage in a savage ballet. Faces are smashed with sticks, slide tackles are made, shots are taken, CU's of various players included.

INACTIVE PLAYERS call out encouragement and slander from the sidelines. More game playing including both goalies getting scored on and more face-offs.

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

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

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

CUSTOMER
When's this period over?

SOMEONE (O.C.)
Eight more minutes!

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

DANTE skids to the sidelines.

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

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

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

CUSTOMER

He's busy!

DANTE starts to skate away.

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

He jumps back into the game.

CUSTOMER
What the fuck is this?! I want some
service!

DANTE (O.C.)
In a second!

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

DANTE (O.C.)
I can pass!

CUSTOMER
How 'bout covering point!? You suck!

DANTE skids back to the sidelines to address the CUSTOMER.

DANTE
Who are you to make assessments?

CUSTOMER
I'll assess all I want!

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

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

DANTE
Like you're better!

CUSTOMER
I can whip your ass.

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

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

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

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

WOMAN

Is the convenience store open?

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

DANTE AND CUSTOMER

(simultaneously)

NO!

DANTE

(to CUSTOMER)

There's a stick over there. You're shooting
against the goal.

(to the court)

REDDING! COME OFF AND LET THIS FUCK ON!

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

DANTE

Give me another ball.

SOMEONE (O.C.)

There are no more.

DANTE

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

SANFORD skates up to him.

SANFORD

(counting)

There was the orange ball...and the orange
ball.

DANTE scrambles to the edge and calls over.

DANTE

Are there any balls down there?!

JAY (O.C.)

'Bout the biggest pair you ever seen!
NYNNE!!

DANTE looks around, hyperventilating.

DANTE

You only brought one ball?!

SANFORD

I thought Redding had like three balls!

REDDING (O.C.)

I thought Dante had the balls.

DANTE

Nobody has another ball?

SANFORD

Shit!

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

DANTE skates off.

SANFORD
We still get free Gatorade, right?

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

OLD MAN
Be careful.

DANTE
I'm trying.

OLD MAN
You know the insides of those are filled
with stuff that gives you cancer.

DANTE
So I'm told.

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

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

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

OLD MAN
No, he got hit by a bus.

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

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

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

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

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

OLD MAN

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

DANTE

The white kind.

OLD MAN

I'm not asking about the color. I mean is it rough or cottony?

DANTE

Actually, it is kind of rough.

OLD MAN

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

DANTE

Yeah, but...

OLD MAN

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

DANTE

Yeah, okay. Go ahead.

OLD MAN

Thanks son, you're a lifesaver.

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

OLD MAN

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

DANTE

Jesus...go ahead.

OLD MAN

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

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

DANTE

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

OLD MAN

Can I trouble you for one of those magazines?

DANTE
I said go ahead.

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

DANTE glances over and reacts.

DANTE
The porno mags?

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

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

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

DANTE makes the switch.

OLD MAN
Thanks son. I appreciate this.

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

RANDAL
Helluva game!

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

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

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

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

DANTE
Gatorade.

Pause. Then...

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

DANTE
Exactly. They drank it all.

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

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

RANDAL comes back with drinks.

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

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

RANDAL
Julie Dwyer died.

DANTE
Yeah, right.

RANDAL
No, I'm serious.

DANTE is visibly taken aback.

DANTE
Oh, my god.

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

DANTE
How? When?

RANDAL
Embolism in her brain. Yesterday.

DANTE
Jesus.

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

DANTE
I haven't seen her in almost two years.

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

DANTE
Number six.

RANDAL
You've had sex with a dead person.

DANTE

I'm gonna go to her wake.

RANDAL
No, you're not.

DANTE
Why not?

RANDAL
It's today.

DANTE
What!?

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

DANTE
Shit. What about tomorrow?

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

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

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

DANTE
You hardly knew her!

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

DANTE
Stop it. This is beneath even you.

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

DANTE
You hate people.

RANDAL
But I love gatherings. Isn't it ironic?

DANTE
Don't be an asshole. Somebody has to stay
with the store.

RANDAL
If you go, I go.

DANTE
She meant nothing to you!

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

DANTE
I'm not taking you to this funeral.

RANDAL
I'm going with you.

DANTE
I can't close the store.

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

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

CUT TO:

INT CAR: DAY

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

RANDAL
You were saying?

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

Silence. Then...

RANDAL
She was pretty young, hunhh?

DANTE
Twenty-two; same as us.

RANDAL
An embolism in a pool.

DANTE
An embarrassing way to die.

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

DANTE
How'd he die?

RANDAL
Broke his neck.

DANTE
That's embarrassing?

RANDAL

He broke his neck trying to suck his own dick.

Absolute silence. Then...

DANTE
Shut the hell up.

RANDAL
Bible truth.

DANTE
Stop it.

RANDAL
I swear.

DANTE
Oh, my god.

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

DANTE
No!

RANDAL
Yeah sure. You're so repressed.

DANTE
Because I never tried to suck my own dick?

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

DANTE
Who found him?

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

DANTE
His dick was in his mouth?

RANDAL
Balls resting on his lips.

DANTE
He made it, hunhh?

RANDAL
Yeah, but at what a price.

Silence. Then...

DANTE

I could never reach.

RANDAL
Reach what?

DANTE
You know.

RANDAL
What, your dick?

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

RANDAL
I never tried it.

DANTE glares at RANDAL. Silence. Then...

RANDAL
Fucking pervert.

CUT TO:

EXT: FUNERAL PARLOR. DAY

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

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

RANDAL
Listen to you.

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

A MASSIVE CROWD is outside the store.

CUT TO:

EXT: FUNERAL PARLOR. DAY

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

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

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

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

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

DANTE
You knocked the fucking casket over, for Chrissakes!

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

DANTE
Does anyone ever knock over a casket on purpose?

RANDAL
So the casket fell over! Big deal!

DANTE
Her fucking body fell out!

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

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

JAY (O.C.)
(mimicking)
Yeah! Open the video store!!

RANDAL
(to O.C.)
Shut the fuck up, junkie!

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

DANTE
(to RANDAL)
Go open the video store.

JAY
Yeah, you cock-smoking clerk.

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

JAY
I'm not dealing.

A KID tugs at JAY'S shirt.

KID
You got anything, man?

JAY
Yeah, what do you want?

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

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

DANTE rearranges the milk. RANDAL joins him.

RANDAL
Let me borrow your car.

DANTE
I don't want to talk to you.

RANDAL
Fine. Just lend me your car.

DANTE
Why should I loan you my car?

RANDAL
I want to rent a movie.

DANTE
(pause)
You want to rent a movie.

DANTE walks away, shaking his head.

RANDAL
What's that for?

DANTE
You work in a video store!

They head back to the counter.

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

CUSTOMER
Are you open?

DANTE AND RANDAL

(simultaneously)
YES!

The CUSTOMER comes to the counter.

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

RANDAL
Annoying Customer.

The CUSTOMER lets it sink in, and then leaves in a huff. DANTE puts up cigarettes.

DANTE
Can you imagine being halfway decent to the customers at least some of the time?

RANDAL
Let me borrow your car.

DANTE
(calmer)
May I be blunt with you?

RANDAL
If you must.

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

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

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

Another CUSTOMER leans in.

CUSTOMER
Are you open?

DANTE
(rolls his eyes)
Yes.

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

DANTE

It's going to have to do for now,
considering that it's my car that's up for
request.

(to CUSTOMER)

Can I help you?

CUSTOMER

Pack of cigarettes.

RANDAL

What's your point?

DANTE

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

CUSTOMER

(reading tabloid)

"Space Alien Revealed as Head of Time
Warner; Reports Stock Increase."

(to DANTE and RANDAL)

They print any kind of shit in these
papers.

DANTE

They certainly do. Two fifty-five.

RANDAL

So your argument is that title dictates
behavior?

DANTE

What?

RANDAL

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

DANTE

Exactly.

CUSTOMER

(interjecting)

I saw one, one time, that said the world
was ending the next week. Then in the next
week's paper, they said we were
miraculously saved at the zero hour by a
Koala-fish mutant bird. Crazy shit.

RANDAL

(eyes the CUSTOMER, annoyed)

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

DANTE

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

RANDAL
Not yet.
(sips water)

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

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

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

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

CUSTOMER
Well, he missed!

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

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

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

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

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

DANTE
Jesus!

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

DANTE
What?

RANDAL
If title dictated my behavior, as a clerk
serving the public, I wouldn't be allowed
to spit a mouthful of water at that guy.
But I did, so my point is that people

dictate their own behavior. Hence, even though I'm a clerk in this video store, I choose to go rent videos at Big Choice. (extends opened palm)
Agreed?

DANTE
(shakes his head; hands over keys)
You're a danger to both the dead and the living.

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

DANTE
Please, get the hell out of here.

RANDAL
I know I'm your hero.

RANDAL exits.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. DAY

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

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

DANTE
Excuse me?

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

DANTE
I didn't strain. I sighed.

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

DANTE
I don't think so.

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

DANTE
They are not.

TRAINER

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

DANTE

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

TRAINER

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

A female customer (HEATHER) leans in the doorway.

HEATHER

Are you open?

DANTE

Yes.

HEATHER

(grabs a paper)
Just the paper.

DANTE

(to HEATHER)
Thirty-fire.

TRAINER

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

HEATHER

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

TRAINER

He is.

DANTE

I am not.

TRAINER

How much can you bench?

DANTE

I don't know.

HEATHER

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

DANTE

I know I can bench more than that!

TRAINER

I think the lady called it.

HEATHER

My ex-boyfriend was about his height, but he was much bulkier. He could bench two-

fifty, three hundred easy.

TRAINER
I do about three-fifty, four.

HEATHER
No way!

TRAINER
(rolling up sleeve)
Feel that.

HEATHER
That's tight. Solid.

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

DANTE
Oh for God's sake!

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

A SUITED MAN carrying a notebook comes to the counter.

SUITED MAN
You open?

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

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

DANTE
What?

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

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

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

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

TRAINER

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

HEATHER
Oh, I know. If I had to work here all day,
I'd be bloated and out of shape, too.

DANTE
I'm not out of shape!

SUITED MAN
Can I have your name please?

DANTE
Dante Hicks. Why? What is this about?

The SUITED MAN scribbles in his notebook.

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

TRAINER
Because he's out of shape.

DANTE
Do I know you?

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

DANTE
Caitlin Bree. Yeah?

HEATHER
I'm her sister.

DANTE
You're Alyssa's sister? Heather?

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

TRAINER
Did you say Caitlin Bree?

DANTE
Yeah.

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

DANTE
Yeah?

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

DANTE
How do you know that?

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

DANTE
No, she's getting married.

TRAINER
To you?

HEATHER
To an Asian design major.

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

DANTE
What?

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

HEATHER
Oh my God! You're Rick Derris?

TRAINER
Yeah!

DANTE
You know him?

HEATHER
Caitlin used to talk about him all the
time.

TRAINER
Really?

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

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

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

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

HEATHER
(to TRAINER)

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

DANTE
THE GLADES MOTEL?

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

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

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

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

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

DANTE
Jesus Christ, what next?

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

SUITED MAN
Here you go.

DANTE
What's this?

SUITED MAN
A fine, for five hundred dollars.

DANTE
WHAT?

TRAINER
Five hundred bucks? What for?

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

DANTE
What are you talking about?

SUITED MAN

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

DANTE

I didn't do that!

SUITED MAN

You said you were here all day?

DANTE

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

SUITED MAN

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

DANTE

But I didn't sell cigarettes to any kid!

TRAINER

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

HEATHER

That's sick, Dante.

DANTE

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

SUITED MAN

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

The SUITED MAN exits, with DANTE trying to follow.

DANTE

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

TRAINER

(takes back the card)
Forget it. I don't want to deal with a guy that sells cigarettes to a five-year-old.
(to HEATHER)

Can I offer you a ride somewhere?

HEATHER

Sure. How about the beach?

TRAINER

I like the way you think.

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

DANTE

Jesus! What next?

VOICE (O.C.)

Dante?

DANTE spins, angrily.

DANTE

What?

His expression softens.

DANTE

Caitlin?

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

JAY deals with a customer as SILENT BOB looks on.

JAY

That's the price, my brother.

JOHN

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

JAY

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

JOHN

How long you gonna be here?

JAY

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

JOHN

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

JAY

(to SILENT BOB)

My man is deaf.

(yelling)

I'M GOING TO JOHN K'S PARTY!

(quieter)

Neh.

JOHN

Yo, don't sell all that. 'Cause I'm gonna get the cash and buy it from you at John

K's. You're gonna bring it, right?

JAY

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

JOHN

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

JAY

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

JOHN leaves. JAY turns to SILENT BOB.

JAY

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

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

DANTE

When did you get back?

CAITLIN

Just now.

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

Dante. You've got a customer.

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

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

Train. It took eight hours.

DANTE

I can't believe you're here.

Another customer comes to the counter.

CUSTOMER

Excuse me, do you have...

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

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

Yet another customer comes to the counter.

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

DANTE
So I'm told.

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

JAY and SILENT BOB lean against the wall.

JAY
Man, it's fucking slow.

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

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

On counter.

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

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

CAITLIN
You saw it?

DANTE
Very dramatic, I thought.

CAITLIN

It's not what you think.

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

I'm not pregnant.

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

And you said yes?

CAITLIN

Well...kind of, sort of?

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

How do you know that?

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

So you're really getting married?

CAITLIN

No.

DANTE

No, you're not really getting married?

CAITLIN

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

DANTE
How like her.

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

DANTE
Thanks for the vote of confidence.

CAITLIN
Was I right?

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

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

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

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

DANTE
But you were.

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

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

CAITLIN
I'm giving him his ring back.

DANTE
What?

CAITLIN
I don't want to marry him. I don't want to get married now. I'm on the verge of graduation. I want to go to grad school after this. And then I want to start a career. I don't want to be a wife first, and then have to worry about when I'm going to fit in all of the other stuff. I've come

way too far and studied too hard to let my education go to waste as a housewife. And I know that's what I'd become. Sang's already signed with a major firm, and he's going to be pulling a huge salary, which would give me no reason to work, and he's so traditional anyway...

DANTE

Sang? His name is a past tense?

CAITLIN

Stop it. He's a nice guy.

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

I just told you.

DANTE

There's more, isn't there?

CAITLIN

Why, Mr. Hicks-whatever do you mean?

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

You don't have anything to do with it.

DANTE

You lie.

CAITLIN

Look how full of yourself you are.

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

Jesus, you're caustic.

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

Good. Stay in that frame of mind.

DANTE

Buy can we date?

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

We could introduce them. They might hit it off.

CAITLIN

You're serious. You want to date again.

DANTE

I would like to be your boyfriend, yes.

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

You work in a market, all right.

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

Let me take you out tonight.

CAITLIN

You mean, on a date?

DANTE

Yes. A real date. Dinner and a movie.

CAITLIN

The Dante Hicks Dinner and a Movie Date. I

think I've been on that one before.

DANTE

You have a better suggestion?

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

I hear that's a rather popular date.

CAITLIN

(hits him)

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

DANTE

What about Sing?

CAITLIN

Sang.

DANTE

Sang.

CAITLIN

He's not invited.

DANTE

He's your fiancé.

CAITLIN

I offer you my body and you offer me semantics? He's just a boyfriend, Dante, and in case you haven't gotten the drift of why I came all the way here from Ohio, I'm about to become single again. And yes-let me placate your ego-you are the inspiration for this bold and momentous decision, for which I'll probably be ostracized at both school and home. You ask me who I choose, I choose you.

DANTE

So what are you saying?

CAITLIN

You're such an asshole.

DANTE

I'm just kidding.

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

I'll ask Randal to close up for mewhen he gets back.

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

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

CAITLIN

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

DANTE

Who doesn't?

CAITLIN

Well, me I guess.

(gathering herself to go)

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

DANTE

What happened to the walk and the nakedness?

CAITLIN

I'm easy, but I'm not that easy.

(she kisses his cheek)

See you later, handsome.

DANTE watches her leave. He then explodes in jubilation.

DANTE

YES!

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

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

RANDAL

Get to work.

DANTE

(takes videos)

What'd you rent?

(reads)

Best of Both Worlds?

RANDAL

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

DANTE
And this is what you rented?

RANDAL
I like to expand my horizons.

DANTE
I got fined for selling cigarettes to a
minor.

RANDAL
No way!

DANTE
Five hundred dollars.

RANDAL
You're bullshitting.

DANTE hands him the summons. RANDAL reads it.

RANDAL
I didn't think they even enforced this.

DANTE
(points to himself)
Living proof.

RANDAL
I thought you never sold cigarettes to
kids.

DANTE
I don't; you did.

RANDAL
(pause)
Really?

DANTE
Little girl. Maybe five years old?

RANDAL
(taken aback)
Holy shit. That girl?

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

RANDAL
Then how come you got the fine?

DANTE
Because I'm here.

RANDAL
(incredulous)
You're lying.

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

up.

RANDAL
Then why aren't you like screaming at me
right now?

DANTE
Because I'm happy.

RANDAL
You're happy?

DANTE
I'm happy.

RANDAL
You're happy to get a fine?

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

RANDAL
Now I know you're lying.

DANTE
I'm not. She just left.

RANDAL
What did she say?

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

RANDAL
You're kidding.

DANTE
I'm not.

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

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

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

DANTE
Watch the store while I go home and change.

RANDAL
What happened to title dictates behavior?

DANTE
This is my way of spitting water at life.

RANDAL

(suddenly aware)
Hey, what about Veronica?

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

RANDAL
You're a snake.

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

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

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

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

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

DANTE exits. A CUSTOMER comes back to the counter. He pets the cat.

CUSTOMER
Cute cat. What's his name.

RANDAL
Peptic ulcer.

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

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

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

CAITLIN enters, carrying an overnight bag. RANDAL is watching

his porno. The porno is loud and lewd. CAITLIN stares.

CAITLIN

Randal Graves-scourge of the video renter.

RANDAL

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

CAITLIN

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

RANDAL

I take it she likes the guy.

CAITLIN

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

RANDAL

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

CAITLIN

She said not to come home until graduation.

RANDAL

Wow, you got thrown out? For Dante?

CAITLIN

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

RANDAL

Can I watch?

CAITLIN

You can hold me down.

RANDAL

Can I join in?

CAITLIN

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

RANDAL

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

CAITLIN

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

RANDAL

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

CAITLIN

Dick.

RANDAL
Exactly.

CAITLIN
So where is he?

RANDAL
He went home to change for the big date.

CAITLIN
God, isn't he great?

RANDAL
(indicating TV)
No, this is great.

CAITLIN
Can I use the bathroom?

RANDAL
There's no light back there.

CAITLIN
Why aren't there any lights?

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

CAITLIN
You're kidding.

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

CAITLIN
Such a sordid state of affair.

RANDAL
And I'm caught in the middle-torn between
my loyalty for the boss, and my desire to
piss with the light on.

CAITLIN
I'll try to manage.

She heads toward the back.

RANDAL
Hey Caitlin...
(cautionary)
Break his heart again this time, and I'll
kill you. Nothing personal.

CAITLIN
You're very protective of him, Randal. You
always have been.

RANDAL

Territoriality. He was mine first.

CAITLIN
(rubs his head)
Awww. That was so cute.

She kisses his forehead and walks away. The MOTHER and SMALL CHILD (Happy Scrappy) come to the counter.

MOTHER
(oblivious of the TV)
A pack of cigarettes.

The SMALL CHILD points at the TV screen.

SMALL CHILD
Cunt!

CUT TO:

EXT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

RANDAL studies the I EAT COCK word balloon. DANTE enters.

DANTE
Who eats cock?

RANDAL
Bunch of savages in this town.
(recalling)
Hey, Caitlin's in the back. You might want to see if she's okay; she's been back there a long time.

DANTE
There's no lights back there.

RANDAL
I told her that. She said she didn't need any. Why don't you join her, man. Make a little bathroom bam-bam.

DANTE
I love your sexy talk. It's so...kindergarten: Poo-poo; wee-wee.

RANDAL
Fuck you.

The cooler door is heard opening. CAITLIN walks lazily down the convenience store aisle. She looks very satisfied. DANTE and RANDAL regard her curiously. She joins them, latching on to DANTE's arm, lovingly.

CAITLIN
How'd you get here so fast?

DANTE
I left like an hour ago.

CAITLIN
(regards him curiously)
Do you always talk weird after you violate

women?

RANDAL and DANTE stare at CAITLIN, confused.

RANDAL
Maybe the Asian design major slipped her
some opium?

DANTE
Could be.

CAITLIN
(hugging DANTE)
Promise me it'll always be like that.

DANTE
Like what?

CAITLIN
When you just lie perfectly still and let
me do everything.

DANTE
Um...okay.

RANDAL
Am I missing something here?

CAITLIN
I went back there, and Dante was already
waiting for me.

RANDAL
He was?

CAITLIN
It was so cool. He didn't say a word. He
was just...ready, you know? And we didn't
kiss or talk or anything. He just sat there
and let me do all the work.

RANDAL
(to DANTE)
You dog! I didn't see you go back there.

DANTE is bewildered.

CAITLIN
And the fact that there weren't any lights
made it so...
(she lets out a growl and hugs
DANTE)
God! That was so great!

DANTE
(quietly)
It wasn't me.

CAITLIN
(laughing it off)
Yeah, right. Who was it: Randal?

DANTE

(to RANDAL)
Was it you?

RANDAL
I was here the whole time.

CAITLIN
(half-laughing)
You two better quit it.

DANTE
I'm serious.

CAITLIN
(beat)
We didn't just have sex in the bathroom?

DANTE
No.

Everyone is silent. Then...

CAITLIN
Stop this. This isn't funny.

DANTE
I'm not kidding. I just got back from
outside.

CAITLIN
(covering her chest)
This isn't fucking funny, Dante!

DANTE
I'm not fooling around!
(to RANDAL)
Who went back there?

RANDAL
Nobody! I swear!

CAITLIN
I feel nauseous.

DANTE
Are you sure somebody was back there?

CAITLIN
(hits DANTE)
I didn't just fuck myself! Jesus, I'm going
to be sick!

RANDAL
You just fucked a total stranger?

DANTE
Shut the fuck up!

CAITLIN
I can't believe this! I feel faint...

DANTE
(to RANDAL)

Call the police.

RANDAL
Why?

CAITLIN
No, don't!

DANTE
There's a strange man in our bathroom, and
he just raped Caitlin!

CAITLIN
(weakly)
Oh God...

RANDAL
She said she did all the work.

DANTE
WOULD YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP?
(pause)
WHO THE FUCK IS IN THE BATHROOM?

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. LATER

THE OLD MAN'S FACE is serene, almost happy, as he lies on a
stretcher. (Same OLD MAN who took a porn mag to the bathroom.)

CORONER (O.C.)
Who is he?

The body bag zipper is pulled closed. DANTE, the CORONER, and
RANDAL stand around the stretcher-bound body bag. The CORONER
takes notes.

DANTE
I don't know. He just came in and asked to
use the bathroom.

CORONER
What time was this?

DANTE
Um...I don't know.
(to RANDAL)
What time did hockey end?

RANDAL
Around three or something.

DANTE
What time did we go to the funeral?

RANDAL
I think four.

CORONER
Wait a second? Who was working here today?

DANTE

Just me.

CORONER
I thought you just said you played hockey
and went to a funeral.

DANTE
We did.

CORONER
Then who operated the store?

DANTE
Nobody. It was closed.

CORONER
With this guy locked in?

DANTE
Everything happened at once. I guess I
forgot he was back there.

Ambulance attendants join them.

ATTENDANT 1
Can we take this now?

CORONER
Go ahead.

The stretcher is wheeled out. Midway down the body bag,
something protrudes, pushing the bag up. It is an erection.
RANDAL stares at it.

DANTE
Was he alive when...Caitlin...

CORONER
No. I place the time of death at about
three-twenty.

RANDAL
Then how could she...you know...

CORONER
The body can maintain an erection after
expiration. Sometimes for hours. Did he
have the adult magazine when he came in?

DANTE
No. I gave it to him.

RANDAL and the CORONER stare in disbelief.

DANTE
Well he asked me for it!

CORONER
(continuing)
I can't say for certain until we get him
back to the lab, but my guess is he was
masturbating, his heart seized and he died.
That's when the girl found him.

(sniffing the air)
Something smells like shoe polish.

RANDAL
(to CORONER)
This has gotta be the weirdest thing you've
ever been called in on.

CORONER
(writing)
Actually, I once had to tag a kid that
broke his neck trying to put his mouth on
his penis.

RANDAL looks down, anonymously.

DANTE
What about Caitlin?

CORONER
Shock trauma. She's going to need years of
therapy after this. My question is, How did
she come to have sex with the dead man?

DANTE
She thought it was me.

The CORONER stares at DANTE.

CORONER
What kind of convenience store do you run
here?

He exits. DANTE and RANDAL stare at the floor.

RANDAL
(beat)
Do you think he was talking about my
cousin?

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

CAITLIN sits in the back of the ambulance, a blanket draped
over her shoulders. An attendant takes her blood pressure. The
doors are closed and the vehicle speeds away. JAY and SILENT
BOB lean against the wall. JAY eats sugar out of a box.

JAY
I knew one of those motherfuckers was gonna
kill somebody one day.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

A jar of salsa is invaded by a large corn chip. Once in the
condiment, the corn chip resembles a surfacing shark fin.
Fingers poke at it, bringing it to life-swimming menacingly to
and fro across the jar.

RANDAL (O.C.)

(mumbling Jaws theme)
Da-dum! Da-dum! Da-dum! DA-DUM! DADUM! DA-DUM!

DANTE and RANDAL are on a freezer case. RANDAL pushes this chip around the jar of salsa. DANTE stares up at the ceiling, oblivious.

RANDAL
Salsa shark.

DANTE says nothing.

RANDAL
(as Brody)
"We're gonna need a bigger boat."

DANTE says even less than nothing.

RANDAL
(as Quint)
"Man goes into the cage; cage goes into the salsa; shark's in the salsa; our shark."

DANTE...you know.

RANDAL
(angry)
What? What's with you? You haven't said anything for like twenty minutes. What the hell is your problem?

DANTE
This life.

RANDAL
This life?

DANTE
Why do I have this life?

RANDAL
Have some chips; you'll feel better.

DANTE
I'm stuck in this pit, earning less than slave wages, working on my day off, dealing with every backward fuck on the planet, the goddam steel shutters are locked all day, I smell like shoe polish, I've got an ex-girlfriend who's catatonic after fucking a dead guy, and my present girlfriend has sucked thirty-six dicks.

RANDAL
Thirty-seven.

DANTE
My life is in the shitter right about now, so if you don't mind, I'd like to stew a bit.

CUSTOMER (O.C.)

You open?

RANDAL
Yeah.

RANDAL hops off the freezer case and steps O.C.

RANDAL (O.C.)
That's all bullshit. You know what the real
problem here is?

DANTE
I was born.

RANDAL comes back.

RANDAL
You should shit or get off the pot.

DANTE
I should shit or get off the pot.

RANDAL
Yeah, you should shit or get off the pot.

DANTE
What are you talking about?

RANDAL
I'm talking about this thing you
have...this inability to improve your
situation in life.

DANTE
Fuck you.

RANDAL
It's true. You'll sit there and blame life
for dealing a cruddy hand, never once
accepting the responsibility for the way
your situation is.

DANTE
What responsibility?

RANDAL
All right, if you hate this job and the
people, and the fact that you have to come
in on your day off, then quit.

DANTE
As if it's that easy.

RANDAL
It is. You just up and quit. There are
other jobs, and they pay better money.
You're bound to be qualified for at least
one of them. So what's stopping you?

DANTE
Leave me alone.

RANDAL

You're comfortable. This is a life of convenience for you, and any attempt to change it would shatter the pathetic microcosm you've fashioned for yourself.

DANTE

Oh, like your life's any better?

RANDAL

I'm satisfied with my situation for now. You don't hear me bitching. You, on the other hand, have been bitching all day.

DANTE

Thank you. Why don't you go back to the video store?

RANDAL

It's the same thing with Veronica.

DANTE

Leave her out of this.

RANDAL

You date Veronica because she's low maintenance and because it's convenient. Meanwhile, all you ever do is talk about Caitlin. You carry a torch for a girl you dated in high school-in high school for God's sake! You're twenty-two!

DANTE

Leave me alone.

RANDAL

If you want Caitlin, then face Veronica, tell her, and be with Caitlin. If you want Veronica, be with Veronica. But don't pine for one and fuck the other. Man, if you weren't such a fucking coward...

DANTE

...If I wasn't such a fucking coward.
(chuckles)

It must be so great to be able to simplify everything the way you do.

RANDAL

Am I right or what?

DANTE

You're wrong. Things happened today, okay? Things that probably ruined my chances with Caitlin.

RANDAL

What? The dead guy? She'll get over fucking the dead guy. Shit, my mom's been fucking a dead guy for thirty years; I call him Dad.

DANTE

Caitlin and I can't be together. It's impossible.

RANDAL

Melodrama coming from you seems about as natural as an oral bowel movement.

DANTE

What do you want me to say? Yes, I suppose some of the things you're saying may be true. But that's the way things are; it's not going to change.

RANDAL

Make them change.

DANTE

I can't, all right! Jesus, would you leave me alone? I can't make changes like that in my life. If I could, I would-but I don't have the ability to risk comfortable situations on the big money and the fabulous prizes.

RANDAL

Who're you kidding? You can so.

DANTE

Jesus H. Christ, I can't!

RANDAL

So you'll continue being miserable all the time, just because you don't have the guts to face change?

DANTE

(sadly)

My mother told me once that when I was three, my potty lid was closed, and instead of lifting it, I chose to shit my pants.

RANDAL

Lovely story.

DANTE

Point is-I'm not the kind of person that disrupts things in order to shit comfortably.

DANTE crosses O.C. RANDAL appears contemplative.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

DANTE repairs ripped dollar bills, taping them back together. JAY enters with SILENT BOB and claps his hands.

JAY

(singing)

Noinch, noinch, noinch-smoking weed,
smoking weed! Doing coke! Drinking beers!

(to DANTE)

A pack of wraps, my good man. It's time to kick back, drink some beers, and smoke some

weed!

DANTE

Done poisoning the youth for the day?

JAY

Hell yes, whatever that means. Now I'm gonna head over to Atlantic, drink some beers, get ripped, and please God-get laid. (pulls out money)
E-Z Wider, one-and-a-halves.

DANTE

One seventy-nine.

JAY

(to SILENT BOB)
Pay the good man.
(to DANTE)
Don't you close soon?

DANTE

A half hour.

JAY

We get off about the same time every night. We should hang out. You get high?

DANTE

I should start.

JAY

Wanna come to this party tonight? There's gonna be some pussy there, man!

DANTE

With you? I don't think so.

JAY

Listen to you. Oh shit. "Oh, I don't hang out with drug dealers."

DANTE

Nothing personal.

SILENT BOB hands weed to JAY.

JAY

I work, just like you. You're more of a crook than I am, dude.

DANTE

How do you figure...HEY! You can't roll a joint in here!

JAY

(rolling a joint)
Relax brother. What I mean is that you sell the stuff in this store at the highest prices around. A dollar seventy-nine for wraps-what's that shit?

DANTE

It's not my store.

JAY

And these aren't my drugs-I just sell them.

DANTE

The difference is you exploit a weakness.

JAY

What's that mean?

DANTE

You sell to people that can't stay away from an addiction.

JAY

All right. How much is Pepsi here?

DANTE

A dollar sixty-nine, plus tax.

JAY

At Food City it's ninety-nine cents, plus tax.

DANTE

So.

JAY

So why do you sell it for so much more? I'll tell you why-because people come here and they're like "A dollar eighty for soda? I should get it at Food City. But I don't feel like driving there. I'll just buy it here so I don't have to drive up there." That's exploiting a weakness, too, isn't it?

DANTE

I can't believe you just rolled a joint in here.

JAY

Hey, man, what happened with that old guy?

DANTE

He died in the bathroom.

JAY

That's fucked up. Yo, I heard he was jerkin' off.

DANTE

I don't know. I wasn't watching.

JAY

Probably saw that Caitlin chick. I know I felt like beatin' it when I saw her. (pantomimes sex) Come here, bitch! You like this? Is this what you want? Hunhh?

DANTE

Knock it off. That used to be my girlfriend.

JAY
You used to go out with her?

DANTE
We were going to start again, I think.

JAY
Don't you already have a girlfriend?

DANTE
Veronica.

JAY
Is she that girl who's down here all the time? She came here today carrying a plate of food.

DANTE
Lasagne.

JAY
And what-you were gonna dump her to date that Caitlin chick?

DANTE
Maybe.

JAY
I don't know dude. That Caitlin chick's nice. But I see that Veronica girl doing shit for you all the time. She brings you food, she rubs your back...Didn't I see her change your tire one day?

DANTE
I jacked the car up. All she did was loosen the nuts and put the tire on.

JAY
Damn. She sure goes out of her way.

DANTE
She's my girlfriend.

JAY
I've had girlfriends, but all they wanted from me was weed and shit.
(beat)
Shit, my grandma used to say, "Which is better: a good plate with nothing on it..."
No, wait. I fucked up. She said "What's a goodlooking plate with nothing on it?"

DANTE
Meaning?

JAY
I don't know. She was senile and shit. Used to piss herself all the time. C'mon Silent Bob.

Exit JAY. SILENT BOB stands there.

SILENT BOB

You know, there's a million finelooking women in the world, but they don't all bring you lasagne at work. Most of them just cheat on you.

SILENT BOB leaves. DANTE shuts his eyes tightly and rubs the bridge of his nose with his thumb and forefinger, as if in deep concentration. He suddenly snaps his eyes open.

DANTE

(nearly surprised)
He's right. I love her.

CUT TO:

INT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

RANDAL has a heart-to-heart with VERONICA.

RANDAL

So that's it. He doesn't love you anymore. He loves Caitlin.

VERONICA stares, dumbfounded.

VERONICA

And...he told you all of this?

RANDAL

Pretty much. All except the latent homosexuality part-that's just my theory.

VERONICA

I...I don't know what to say.

RANDAL

Don't hold it against him. He just never got Caitlin out of his system. It's not your fault. It's Dante.

(beat)

I don't know thing one about chicks. Do you want to cry or something? I can leave.

VERONICA

I'm not sad.

RANDAL

You're not?

VERONICA

No, I'm more furious. I'm pissed off. I feel like he's been killing time while he tries to grow the balls to tell me how he really feels, and then he can't even do it! He has his friend do it for him!

RANDAL

He didn't ask me to...

VERONICA

After all that I've done for that fuck! And he wants to be with that slut? Fine! He can have his slut!

RANDAL

Um, do you think you can give me a lift home tonight?

VERONICA

(oblivious of RANDAL)

I'm going to have a word with that asshole.

VERONICA storms out.

RANDAL

Wait! Veronica...I don't think...

RANDAL stares after her. A customer stands nearby.

RANDAL

(to customer)

What am I worried about? He'll probably be glad I started the ball rolling. All he ever did was complain about her anyway. I'm just looking out for his best interests. I mean, that's what a friend does, am I right? I did him a favor.

CUSTOMER

(sees box on counter)

Oooh! Navy Seals!

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

DANTE is on the ground holding his knee. VERONICA stands above him.

DANTE

What the fuck did you do that for?

VERONICA

If you didn't want to go out with me anymore, why didn't you just say it? Instead, you pussyfoot around and see that slut behind my back!

DANTE

What're you talking about?

VERONICA

(kicks him)

You've been talking to her on the phone for weeks!

DANTE

It was only a few times...

VERONICA

And then you pull that shit this morning, freaking out because I've gone down on a

couple guys!

DANTE

A couple...?

VERONICA

(throws purse at him)

I'm not the one trying to patch things up with my ex, sneaking around behind your back! And if you think that thirty-seven dicks are a lot, then just wait, mister: I'm going to put the hookers in Times Square to shame with all the guys I go down on now!

DANTE

Would you let me explain...

VERONICA

Explain what? How you were waiting until the time was right, and then you were going to dump me for her?

DANTE

(getting up)

Veronica...I...it's not like that anymore...I mean, it was never really like that...

VERONICA kicks him in the other leg. DANTE goes down, yelling in pain.

VERONICA

You're damn right it's not like that! Because I won't let it be like that! You want your slut? Fine! The slut is yours!

DANTE

I don't want Caitlin...

VERONICA

You don't know what you want, but I'm not going to sit here anymore holding your hand until you figure it out! I've encouraged you to get out of this fucking dump and go back to school, to take charge of your life and find direction. I even transferred so maybe you would be more inclined to go back to college if I was with you. Everyone said it was a stupid move, but I didn't care because I loved you and wanted to see you pull yourself out of this senseless funk you've been in since that whore dumped you, oh so many years ago. And now you want to go back to her so she can fuck you over some more?

DANTE

I don't want to go back with her...

VERONICA

Of course not; not now! You're caught, and now you're trying to snake out of doing

what you wanted to do. Well, I won't let you. I want you to follow through on this, just so you can find out what a fucking idiot you are. And when she dumps you again- and she will, Dante, I promise you that- when she dumps you again, I want to laugh at you, right in your face, just so you realize that that was what you gave up our relationship for!
(grabs her purse)
I'm just glad Randal had the balls to tell me, since you couldn't.

DANTE
(weakly)
Randal...?

VERONICA
And having him tell me...that was just the weakest move ever. You're spineless.

DANTE
Veronica, I love you...

VERONICA
Fuck you.

VERONICA exits. DANTE lies on the floor alone.

CUT TO:

EXT: VIDEO STORE. NIGHT

RANDAL exits and locks the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE. NIGHT

Tight on RANDAL'S face as he steps inside.

RANDAL
Dante?

Hands clasp around his throat and yank him out of the frame. DANTE throttles RANDAL, choking him to the ground. RANDAL throws his fists into DANTE'S midriff, throwing him back into the magazine rack. RANDAL jumps to his feet as DANTE comes at him again. RANDAL tumbles into the cakes as Entenman's products scatter beneath and around him. He grabs a pound cake and hits DANTE in the head with it, using the opportunity to scurry down the middle aisle. DANTE leaps at his feet, and RANDAL grabs the shelves, knocking aspirin over until RANDAL-shrieking-sprays something in DANTE'S face. DANTE paws at his eyes. RANDAL grabs Italian bread and smacks it into DANTE'S face as he rushes him blindly. DANTE chases him out of the frame. M&M's scatter wildly across the empty floor, and the ruckus is heard O.C.

CUT TO:

DANTE and RANDAL later, out of breath, on the floor. RANDAL sits up against the candy rack, rubbing his neck. DANTE lies on the floor, bacon held against a sort of crushed cookies, ripped-

open candies, broken bread, and other damaged goods.

RANDAL
How's your eye?

DANTE
(reluctantly)
The swelling's not so bad. But the FDS
stings.
(then)
How's your neck?

RANDAL
It's hard to swallow.

They are both silent. Then...

RANDAL
You didn't have to choke me.

DANTE
Why the fuck did you tell Veronica that I
was going to dump her for Caitlin?

RANDAL
I thought I was doing you a favor.

DANTE
Thanks.

RANDAL
You were saying how you couldn't initiate
change yourself, so I figured I'd help you
out.

DANTE
Jesus.

Silence. Then...

RANDAL
You still didn't have to choke me.

DANTE
Oh please! I'm surprised I didn't kill you.

RANDAL
Why do you say that?

DANTE
Why do I say that? Randal...forget it.

RANDAL
No, really. What did I do that was so
wrong?

DANTE
What don't you do? Randal, sometimes it
seems like the only reason you come to work
is to make my life miserable.

RANDAL
How do you figure?

DANTE

What time did you get to work today?

RANDAL

Like ten after.

DANTE

You were over half an hour late. Then all you do is come over here.

RANDAL

To talk to you.

DANTE

Which means the video store is ostensibly closed.

RANDAL

It's not like I'm miles away.

DANTE

Unless you're out renting videos at other video stores.

RANDAL

Hermaphrodites! I rented it so we could watch it together!

DANTE

You get my slapped with a fine, you fight with the customers and I have to patch everything up. You get us chased out of a funeral by violating a corpse. To top it all off, you ruin my relationship. What's your encore? Do you anally rape my mother while pouring sugar in my gas tank?
(sighs)

You know what the real tragedy is? I'm not even supposed to be here today!

RANDAL

(suddenly outraged)

Fuck you. Fuck you, pal. Listen to you trying to pass the buck again. I'm the source of all your misery. Who closed the store to play hockey? Who closed the store to attend a wake? Who tried to win back an exgirlfriend without even discussing how he felt with his present one? You wanna blame somebody, blame yourself.

(beat, as DANTE)

"I'm not even supposed to be here today."

(whips stuff at DANTE)

You sound like an asshole. Whose choice was it to be here today? Nobody twisted your arm. You're here today of your own violation, my friend. But you'd like to believe that the weight of the world rests on your shoulders-that the store would crumble if Dante wasn't here. Well, I got news for you, jerk: This store would survive without you. Without me either. All

you do is overcompensate for having what's basically a monkey's job: You push fucking buttons. Any moron can waltz in here and do our jobs, but you're obsessed with making it seem so much more fucking important, so much more epic than it really is. You work in a convenience store, Dante. And badly, I might add. And I work in a shitty video store. Badly, as well.

(beat)

You know, that guy Jay's got it right-he has no delusions about what he does. Us? We like to make ourselves seem so much better than the people that come in here, just looking to pick up a paper or-God forbid-cigarettes. We look down on them, as it we're so advanced. Well, if we're so fucking advanced, then what are we doing working here?

RANDAL gets up, leaving DANTE to contemplate his strong words alone.

CUT TO:

DANTE and RANDAL silently clean up, backs to each other.

CUT TO:

DANTE places a mop in the corner. RANDAL pulls on his coat.

RANDAL

I threw out the stuff that got broken. The floor looks clean.

DANTE

You need a ride?

RANDAL

(looks out door)
Got one. Just pulled up.

They stand in silence. Then...

DANTE

Do you work tomorrow?

RANDAL

Same time. What about you?

DANTE

I'm calling out. Going to hit the hospital-see how Caitlin is. Then try to see Veronica.

RANDAL

You wanna grab something to eat tomorrow night...after I get out of here?

DANTE

I'll call you. Let you know.

RANDAL

All right. Good luck with Veronica. If you want, I can talk to her, you know, and explain...

DANTE

No thanks. I'll take care of it. We've got a lot of shit to talk about.

RANDAL

Helluva day.

DANTE

To say the least.

RANDAL

Do you need a hug or something? 'Cause I would have no hang-ups about hugging you...you know, you being a guy and all. Just don't knead my ass when you do it.

DANTE

Get the fuck outta here already.

RANDAL

I'm gone. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

RANDAL exits. A second later, he reenters and tosses DANTE the sheet-sign.

RANDAL

You're closed.

He exits. DANTE pushes the sign over from Open to Closed.

DANTE climbs behind the counter. He pops the register open and starts counting the drawer out. The door is heard opening.

POV JOHN: DANTE counting out the register, not looking up.

DANTE

What'd you forget something?
(looks up, surprised)
Oh. I'm sorry, we're closed.

A gunshot blasts out. DANTE flies back, his chest exploding. He stares ahead and slumps to the floor.

JOHN walks behind the counter, stepping over DANTE'S body on the floor, and takes the money out of the register. He grabs a paper bag and jams the money in it. He grabs handfuls of change, shoves it in his pocket, and then quickly exits the frame. DANTE continues to lie on the floor.

CREDITS

Credits end, and the door is heard opening. A customer comes to the counter and stands there. He waits, looks around for a clerk, looks down the aisles.

CUSTOMER

Hello? Little help?

No reply. He looks around again, and glances at the door to

make sure nobody's coming in. Then he reaches behind the counter and grabs a pack of cigarettes. He leaves.