

Danny's Inferno

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FADE IN THE THRUM OF A NIGHTCLUB CROWD.

MICROPHONE FEEDBACK GIVES WAY TO A VOICE SPEAKING OVER A P.A.

VOICE

All right. This last one is for B. I'm
gonna miss you.

A TITLE: "DANNY'S INFERNO"

A shuffling guitar starts up, and a second one joins after
two bars.

As the vocal begins, we cut between CLOSE SHOTS OF WELL-WORN
GEAR faintly illuminated onstage, some vintage, some newer,
all being used as designed...

VOICE (cont'd)

(singing)

Your chair sits in my living room/
With an indentation where your ass sunk
in/ But that's the past it's time to
start, begin...

On the introductory drum fill we...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. INN OF THE BEGINNING - NIGHT

...as a ROCK BAND explodes into their closing number.

[Listen to song #1 - "I'm Not Lonely":
<http://andyliotta.com/music/im-not-lonely/>]

They're a quartet -- two guitars, bass, drums, with one of
the guitar players doubling on vocals. The kickdrum
advertises their name: "FIREWATER."

All four members are deep in their twenties. Soaked in sweat
and wearing T-shirts and jeans, they look like they stepped
out of the audience to play the show. No Hollywood leather or
rock star hair, just regular guys venting their issues at top
volume.

Their music could be called aggressive pop, falling somewhere
between X and Elvis Costello. It's hard, fast, and modern,
with a dash of the Beatles stirred into the mix.

As they slam through the song, we introduce the members:

The DRUMMER attacks his kit with ferocious abandon. His
youthful grin contrasts the bludgeoning aggression.

This guy loves what he's doing. FREEZE FRAME on an elated grimace with the title: "JACK."

The BASSPLAYER occupies the opposite end of the emotional spectrum, pulling off thundering riffs while stalking the stage like a zombie. FREEZE FRAME on a disinterested stoneface: "STU."

The LEAD GUITARIST bounces around on the other side of the stage before digging in for a manic solo. He's handsome and radiates the cool confidence of a seasoned pro. This guy must get all the groupies. FREEZE FRAME as he winks at someone in the front row: "CHAS."

At center stage, the SINGER whacks away at his guitar as he steps up to the microphone for the final verse. His long hair jerks from side to side as he closes his eyes and lets loose an earnest lead vocal. Large block letters on his shirt proclaim "ONCE UPON A DIME..." FREEZE FRAME on an open-mouthed high note: "DANNY."

As the band chugs through their closing number, one thing is clear: They're good at what they do.

The song builds to a climax and stops on a dime.

The CROWD goes wild.

Well, maybe "crowd" is the wrong word, for as we get our first look at the audience, it is immediately apparent that the show is far from sold out.

The audience makes up in enthusiasm what they lack in numbers, showing their appreciation with whoops and hollers and calls for "One more!"

Danny smiles and approaches the mic. He squints into the lights and addresses the back of the club...

DANNY

Is it all right if we do one more?

Death Metal suddenly erupts from the house sound system. His question has been answered.

JACK

Buzz crusher.

The Band reluctantly starts breaking down their gear.

DANNY

With Speedy on the board we're lucky he didn't crank the metal between songs.

The rail-thin SOUNDMAN rushes onstage; his Speedy Gonzalez T-shirt seems entirely appropriate.

SOUNDMAN
How'd it sound?

CHAS
(hostile)
The monitors were raping my ears with midrange.

SOUNDMAN
Cool!

DANNY
(to Soundman)
How'd it sound out front?

SOUNDMAN
Slamming. It was totally slamming...

STU
(aside to Jack)
Not slamming enough for an encore.

SOUNDMAN
...You guys have really improved.

DANNY
(underwhelmed)
Thanks.

Danny wipes the sweat off his guitar -- a 1959 LES PAUL SUNBURST, an electric treasure worth ten sets of eye teeth. Danny treats it with due reverence.

Danny's GIRLFRIEND calls out from the side of the stage. Her full name is Beatrice, but everyone calls her B. She's pretty much one of the guys, dressed in a Giants hat, baggy blue jeans, and a T-shirt with a B on the chest. SHE AND DANNY HAVE BEEN GOING OUT SINCE COLLEGE.

B
That might have been best ever. I can't believe they didn't give you an encore.

The Soundman hurries by for no particular reason. Danny rolls his eyes as he hauls his amplifier offstage.

DANNY
Soundman's in a bit of a hurry.

STU
The soundman is a hurry.

DANNY
 (to B)
 Did you hear the dedication?

B
 You promised not to embarrass me.

DANNY
 Were you embarrassed?

Her smile says she wasn't.

B
 I thought you said you were gonna fuck up
 a bit, so I could feel better about
 leaving you losers behind.

DANNY
 Tell you what, I'll get really drunk and
 abusive later to make up for it.

B
 (excited)
 Promise?

Chas ignores his gear as he talks to a GROUPIE in a tight T-shirt. She's an argument for sex appeal being inversely proportionate to intelligence.

GROUPIE
 That was really great. How long have you
 guys been together?

CHAS
 Forever.

GROUPIE
 It sounds like it, cause that was
 really...
 (searching for the right word)
 ...great!

A woman edges to the side of the Groupie; her name is JANE and she's Chas's girlfriend. She's not happy as she waits for her turn to speak.

GROUPIE (cont'd)
 Have you been playing the guitar for a
 long time?

CHAS
 ("Of course I have")
 No.

GROUPIE

Wow, that's amazing cause that was really great.

JANE

Hey, Chas, I don't think I've met your friend.

CHAS

(to Groupie)
What's your name?

GROUPIE

Jazz.

CHAS

Jazz this is Jane. Jane, Jazz.

JANE

(incredulous)
Jazz?

JAZZ

It's short for Jasmine.

JANE

I'm sure it is.

JAZZ

(to Chas)
Are you guys partying later?

CHAS

Most definitely.

JANE

Yes, we are.

Jazz leans in to Chas.

JAZZ

Let's get together sometime.

Stu, Jack, and Danny struggle to squeeze their equipment past Chas, who just now starts to pack up his guitar.

JANE

Chas and Jazz. That really has a ring to it.

CHAS

Shut up, Jane.

Danny grabs Chas's amp and starts to haul it offstage.

DANNY

(to Chas)

I hate to interrupt you love birds, but could you maybe load some gear? I don't get paid enough to be your roadie.

CHAS

(to Jane)

Now you made me look bad.

JANE

It doesn't take much effort.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. INN OF THE BEGINNING - LATER

Danny and B sit at the bar trying to talk over the din of the closing band.

DANNY

I totally botched the chorus of "Down Again"; I felt like I was playing with my feet.

B

I don't think anyone noticed.

A DRUNKEN FAN interrupts. He's got dyed-black hair and an absurd ponytail sprouting from the top of his head.

DRUNKEN FAN

I admire your shredmanship.

The Drunk folds his hands and offers a martial arts bow.

DANNY

Thanks.

(pointing to the pony tail)

I admire your top-knot.

DRUNKEN FAN

I noticed that you ran your distortion pedal through your chorus and direct to your amp. Did you know that Stevie ran his chorus into his distortion?

DANNY

Stevie Ray Vaughn?

DRUNKEN FAN

(insulted)

No, Stevie Mork, the guitarist in Bitchhouse!

Danny gives B a "Help me!" look.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE BAR...

Chas and Jane wrangle.

JANE
(mimicking Jazz)
"Oh, that was really great..."

CHAS
What did you want me to say? "You're too dumb and pretty; you can't like our band."

JANE
You thought she was pretty?

CHAS
I'm asking what you wanted me to say.

JANE
I just want you to acknowledge my existence.

CHAS
That's a lot of responsibility to give a person.

Jane grabs her beer and walks away in a huff. She passes the Drunken Fan who is performing an airguitar solo for Danny. B is in hysterics.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. INN OF THE BEGINNING - LATE NIGHT

Danny and B wrestle a guitar cabinet through the front door.

B
I'm gonna miss this.

Danny laughs as they load the cabinet into the side door of a BEAT-UP DODGE VAN. Stu and Jack follow with the last of the gear.

STU
Party on 9th and Folsom.

JACK
Be there or be square.

Danny and B look at one another, agreeing...

DANNY
We're gonna pass.

JACK
Oh my god, it's B's last night. I totally spaced it.

Jack gives B a big hug.

JACK (cont'd)
I'm gonna miss you, B.

B
I'll miss you, too, Jack.

STU
Don't read too many books.

B
I'll try, Stu.

Danny and B walk off; Jack watches them go...

JACK
Buzz crusher.

Chas storms out of the club.

CHAS
Somebody stole my fucking gig bag!

Stu pulls a small canvas bag out of the back of the van and shows it to Chas...

STU
It's called loading, Chas, not stealing.

CUT TO:

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

B's Volkswagen Bug pulls to the curb, and Danny and B climb out. B looks around at the surroundings, taking everything in one last time.

It's a typical block in the Haight-Ashbury district. A few people are still out and about, but no one you'd want to strike up a conversation with.

Across the street a wrought-iron fence encloses a cemetery: MEMORIAL GARDENS. Danny doesn't have to ask her what she's thinking as she watches the silent gravestones across the way. He puts a loving arm around her and guides her toward his apartment building.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens and the lights snap on illuminating Danny and B in the doorway of a disaster area: the apartment is a complete wreck. Everything is everywhere; the existence of a floor is only a rumor. Danny hesitates, guitarcase in hand.

DANNY
Shangri-la.

Danny leans the guitar in the corner and wades into the mess. B follows him inside...

B
I'm gonna miss this hovel.

DANNY
You're lucky to escape. You know, the gravitational pull of a black hole is so severe that--

B shuts him up with a kiss.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Danny and B lay in each other's arms on a sagging twin bed. B has tears running down both cheeks...

B
I'm gonna miss you so much.

DANNY
Let's not start missing each other 'til we're apart, okay?

He kisses her tears.

DANNY (cont'd)
(comforting)
It's not like it's forever.

B
It feels like it. It feels like my whole life is coming to an end.

DANNY
And a new life is beginning.

B
We'll be different people when we see each other again. We might not--

DANNY

Or we might. Maybe it'll be better next time.

B

Maybe it won't.

DANNY

I'm proud of you. You're grabbing the world by the balls. You're kicking down doors, you're going after your "thing."

B

You know I hate that term.

DANNY

Sorry. You're finally going after your raison d'etre.

B

What if it sucks?

DANNY

Your "thing" can't suck.

She gives him a shot to the ribs. Danny pulls her close...

DANNY (cont'd)

Remember when you were gonna spend your sophomore year in London? Before you left you cried for three straight weeks. Remember? And then you went to London and had a ball.

B

I had an okay time.

DANNY

You had the time of your life; that whole summer camp feeling, starting over, being anonymous, the possibilities being endless? Grad school'll be a lot like that. Except with a backbreaking syllabus...

B

But when I went to London I had a roundtrip ticket.

DANNY

We're going to Andrew's wedding in a month. We'll see each other then.

B
Promise?

DANNY
Of course. I'd look ridiculous dancing
alone.

She laughs. He holds her tight.

DANNY (cont'd)
Beatrice...

She bristles at her full name...

B
Yes, Daniel?

DANNY
I just want you to know, I'm scared too.

B
No, you're not, you're excited.

Danny thinks about it...

DANNY
Fear is a major component of excitement.

B's laugh says "Give me a break."

DANNY (cont'd)
(selling)
It is.

B
(skeptical)
What are the other components?

DANNY
Enthusiasm. Hope. If you weren't afraid,
it'd be pretty boring.

B
I'm afraid I need some more sex.

DANNY
I'm enthusiastic and hopeful.

Passion ensues...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

B sits at the kitchen table writing a note on a yellow legal pad. She's been crying.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL that the apartment is spotless; she must have spent the night cleaning.

The window is open, letting in the fresh air and the sounds of HEAVY MACHINERY working on a building site somewhere nearby...

She looks the note over one last time, writes "Danny" at the top, and arranges the pad so he'll see it.

She takes a long, last look at Danny's place. Records and CDs dominate the living room, thousands of them, now neatly arranged in wooden shelves; a large poster of John Lennon, *Imagine* years, stares down from the wall; and an Acoustic Guitar leans against the couch -- a bumpersticker on its face reads: "Hang Up and Drive!"

The rest of the apartment showcases B's input: a hip thrift store look, colorful and comfortable. Somehow their two personalities have converged in a warm and welcoming room.

B takes a deep breath, holds it a moment, and lets it go; she's trying to keep her emotions behind the floodgates. She marches to the door where she pauses to straighten a FRAMED PHOTO -- DANNY AND B GOOFING AROUND ON THE BEACH. Her sadness is reflected in the frozen memory. She can't take much more and she's out the door in a hurry.

Danny walks in from the bedroom.

DANNY

B?

As he rubs the sleep from his eyes, he notices that the apartment is spotless. He runs his finger over a table and checks it. He's impressed.

He sees the note on the table and picks it up.

B'S VOICE

I couldn't sleep last night so I figured I'd give you a clean start here. I just can't say good bye again.

Without looking, Danny reaches out and closes the window, stifling the rhythmic sounds of machinery...

B'S VOICE (CONT.) (cont'd)
 I really have to get out the door while
 I'm still able or else I'm never gonna
 go. I'll be thinking of you. Think of me.
 Love.

Danny looks around the sparkling apartment.

DANNY

B?

Danny turns back to his empty apartment, frozen in the center of his living room, sorting through his feelings.

A CAR STARTS UP OUTSIDE.

Danny crosses to the window and looks out. He stands there for a moment as the engine revs and fades into the distance. The CAMERA PUSHES IN over his shoulder, revealing the cemetery across the street. As Memorial Gardens fills the screen we

FADE OUT.

JACK (V.O.)
 So how you doing?

DANNY (V.O.)
 Are you kidding?

A TITLE: "PARADISO"

SMASH CUT TO:

Danny's elated face...

DANNY
 I feel fucking great!

A WIDER ANGLE REVEALS:

INT. BAND VAN - EVENING

Danny's in the driver's seat, wearing a Cheap Trick "On Top of the World" T-shirt. Chas rides shotgun and Jack sits on a milk crate wedged between the captain's chairs. The van is packed full of equipment.

The Who's "I'm Free" cranks on the car stereo. They don't mind shouting over the music...

JACK
 (to Danny)
 Dude, I thought you'd be a wreck. Six
 years is a big bite of life.

DANNY
 (euphoric)
 I can't explain it; the world just
 suddenly seems like one huge possibility.
 It's like anything can happen.

CHAS
 That's the way it is every day.

DANNY
 Not for me. I always felt like I was
 being pulled in two different directions.
 Now everything is simple; I can totally
 one hundred percent focus on the band. I
 finally have all my eggs in one basket.

JACK
 I thought that was supposed to be a bad
 thing.

DANNY
 How can it be bad when it feels so good?

Stu pipes up from somewhere in the back of the van...

STU (O.S.)
 It's called post traumatic stress, my
 friend; you'll be bedridden in a week.

Danny turns the van hard left, cymbals crash as equipment
 falls in the back of the van. Stu howls in pain. Danny yells
 to join him. Jack starts yelling, even Chas lets loose. The
 sound becomes one huge voice yelling as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PARADISE LOUNGE - NIGHT

...and Danny yelling into the microphone...

DANNY
 AAAAAAHHHH!

...wide-eyed and manic. Has he lost his mind? Just as we
 think he may never stop he cracks a crazy grin...

DANNY (cont'd)
 AAAAAAaaand for our final number.

...he snaps his fingers and the band starts on a dime...

DANNY (cont'd)
 (singing)
 It's like I'm starring in a tv show/ It's
 called let's go I'm already gone.../

Firewater tears into high speed punk pop exorcism.

DANNY (cont'd)
 The critics cry there's no suspense/ They
 want more dents, all this happiness is
 sappy/ Can I help it if I'm happy/

[Listen to song #2 - "I'm In Love With Everyone":
<http://andyliotta.com/music/im-in-love-with-everyone/>]

They're confident and enthusiastic and basically unchanged
 from the night before, with one small exception:

DANNY IS POSSESSED.

DANNY (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 Cause I'm in love with everyone/ I'm in
 love with you...

Wearing a maniac's grin, he charges around the stage with the
 enthusiastic fury of a demon revelling in hell. His garish
 exhibition of hard rock footwork features splits, 70s leg
 kicks, and a series of spastic contortions that defy the
 limits of the human skeleton.

Chas and Jack can't stop laughing, which only pushes Danny to
 further heights of mania. He's seriously in danger of popping
 a blood vessel.

The music charges to a staccato conclusion, leaving Danny
 center stage, arms wide, sucking for air.

The Crowd erupts, showing off another difference from the
 night before: THE CLUB IS PACKED.

Danny's face is a portrait of pure elation.

CUT TO:

INT. PARADISE LOUNGE - LATER

Stu and Jack are wedged in at the bar, exchanging drink
 tickets for pints. Danny emerges from the crowd and puts both
 of them in a headlock...

DANNY
 Was that fucking great or what?!

Before they can answer he's gone again, mingling with a vengeance, fielding backslaps and high fives.

STU

The guy's gonna have a heart attack.

JACK

Dude, he should break up before every show.

A NERDY GUY in a loud Hawaiian shirt accosts Jack...

NERDY

(a mile a minute)

Hey, you guys were great. Thanks for letting us open. It's so hard getting shows in San Francisco. It's a complete catch-22, you can't build a draw if you don't get a show, but you can't get a show if you don't have a draw.

Nerdy wears a fez advertising "Shitty Shitty Band Band."

NERDY (cont'd)

You guys were really great.

JACK

Thanks, that was a lot of fun.

NERDY

We should really play together more often. Let me get your guys' number so we can hook up. I think our stuff goes great together.

JACK

You should really talk to our manager, 'cause she sets up all the shows.

Jack points out their manager, LAUREN, who looks totally frazzled as she tries to handle the onslaught of interest in Firewater merchandise.

NERDY

(impressed)

You guys have a manager?

Stu leans into the conversation...

STU

(nodding at the Hawaiian shirt)

That's the ugliest shirt I have ever seen in my life.

NERDY

Thanks. Have a demo.

Nerdy slaps a cassette into Stu's hand and walks off in Lauren's direction.

STU

Another tape for the hall of shame.

He pockets it as Chas steps to the bar.

CHAS

What did he want?

JACK

Shows. Who can blame him?

CHAS

I'd sooner die than play with them again.

STU

Tell that to Don Ho.

Chas thinks about it, downs his beer, and gives chase. He's just about to tap Nerdy on the shoulder when Jane steps in Chas's path. The specifics of their argument are swallowed up by the LEAD SINGER of the closing band:

LEAD SINGER

(he thinks he's Bon Scott)

This song is about whiskey, a bad woman,
and a roll of the dice.

The BAND struts into an uninspired metal riff. They're an 80s throwback: big hair, spandex pants, makeup, and drumstick twirls. Their name is painted on their back drop in six foot ice letters: "ICE."

STU

And now for our next contestants,
Warrant...n't.

JACK

Van Flailin'.

STU

Deaf Leper.

JACK

Guns and Posers.

Danny returns to the bar, idiot grin still firmly in place. He gives the Bartender a drink ticket and turns to his bandmates.

DANNY

(excited)

I was just talking to the drummer from Shitty Shitty Band Band and he said he could get us a killer show with them in Fresno!

Stu and Jack trade a look of disbelief. Danny gets his beer and takes a long swallow. He turns to watch the band.

DANNY (cont'd)

Hey, these guys aren't bad.

Stu eyes Danny with suspicion...

STU

What did you do with Danny?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARADISE LOUNGE - 2 AM

Firewater loads out their gear. They're a well-oiled unit, all working hard, except for Chas who's having difficulty lighting a cigarette in the wind. Danny's still smiling even as he wrestles an awkward load of drum hardware into the Van.

Lauren exits the club with a wad of cash. She wears a bomber jacket and boots -- her tough exterior a cover for her insecurity. Chas is ruthless to her.

LAUREN

Not bad. A hundred and fifty bucks.

CHAS

I thought we were guaranteed two hundred.

LAUREN

We were, but they didn't do too well at the door.

CHAS

They shouldn't call it a guarantee then.

LAUREN

We don't want to make any enemies.

CHAS

With friends like that...

LAUREN

It'll pay off next time.

CHAS
You said that last time.

LAUREN
We gotta be patient, these things take
time. We got on a good bill, didn't we?

CHAS
It wasn't good enough for us to get paid
what they promised.

Danny takes the money...

DANNY
I can't believe we get paid for having so
much fun!

...and helps Jack load his drums.

LAUREN
(to Chas)
Why can't you be more like Danny?

CHAS
You mean deluded?

Lauren walks off shaking her head. Stu struggles to push a
bulky speaker cabinet past Chas.

JACK
Is that the last of it?

STU
It better be.

JACK
I'm gonna do an idiot check.

Jack jogs back inside the club.

CHAS
I'm sorry, am I unclear on the meaning of
"guarantee"?

STU
No, but you're definitely unclear on the
meaning of "loading out."

CHAS
Just give me a second.

He continues his fruitless effort to light his cigarette.
Jack walks out of the club with a guitar under his arm.

JACK
(to Chas)
I believe this is yours.

CHAS
Yeah, be careful with it!

CUT TO:

INT. PRACTICE SPACE - NIGHT

It's a warehouse space, and it's swelling with humanity -- a motley collection of HIPSTERS and HEATHENS at varying levels of intoxication. The only acceptable excuse for not drinking is that you are too busy shouting over the blaring music. Most of the shouting is about drinking.

Danny and his bandmates carry in a couple of cases of Budweiser bottles. He takes in the space as if for the first time, breathing in the toxic party aroma like it was a fine perfume.

DANNY
This is great!

He starts tossing beers to the rabble.

DANNY (cont'd)
Reinforcements!

One of the more outlandish guests runs over howling in a bad tenor. His name is HERB.

HERB
Dudes, where have you been? It's a rager.

Herb is decked out in a heroin chic clown suit: bell-bottom floods, barberpole shirt, and dyed-black hair shellacked to the side of his head at an odd angle. He wears a huge cross decorated with multi-colored lights that pulsate to the rhythm of the music.

Herb's complete lack of self-consciousness makes him oddly charming. Chas is happy to see him; Stu can't stand him.

STU
It's an after-show party, Herb. That means we had a show.

HERB
You guys had a show?

STU

That's why we're hosting an after-show party. Because, it's after the show.

HERB

Well, what took you so long?

Danny opens a Budweiser with a Bottle Opener.

HERB (cont'd)

Dude, they're screw tops.

DANNY

If you treat them like premium, they'll treat you like premium.

He hands Herb the bottle opener, IT'S SHAPED LIKE DARTH VADER. Herb uses it to open his beer. His eyes go wide.

HERB

Cool.

DANNY

The dark side's not all bad.

Danny grabs Darth and heads back out the door.

Jack points to Herb's flashing crucifix.

JACK

Cool cross.

HERB

It's my Musi-fix.

Herb grabs some extra beers...

HERB (cont'd)

Dudes, you guys have to play my eviction party.

CHAS

Your landlord finally wised up?

HERB

No, but if you guys play, I'll get evicted and that's three months rent-free!

Herb staggers off carrying a beer in his hand and two in each pocket.

STU
 How is it that he's never out of drug
 money but he's always out of "be a normal
 fucking human being" money?

CHAS
 Priorities.

Danny carries in Stu's bass cabinet.

DANNY
 Is this great or what?!

Stu gestures toward Danny...

STU
 I'll have what he's having.

A DRUNKEN MAN IN HIS UNDERWEAR approaches, he's having a hard
 time standing up.

UNDERWEAR
 Dudes, I saw you guys are at Slim's next
 week.
 (confidential)
 Slim's is pussy central.

JACK
 We don't have a show at Slim's.

UNDERWEAR
 I saw it in the paper. POO-Say!

Stu fans away Underwear's breath.

STU
 Could you turn down the charm just a
 hair?

JACK
 Dude, our next show is at the Phoenix.

UNDERWEAR
 (confidential)
 Dude, the Phoenix is pussy central.

Danny carries in a duffel bag full of cymbal stands just as
 Underwear staggers away.

STU
 (sarcastic)
 It makes you proud to think that guy
 likes our music.

DANNY
(earnest)
It sure does.

Chas sees Danny putting down the duffel bag.

CHAS
Is there anything else to load in?

DANNY
That's the last of it.

STU
(aside to Jack)
He has an uncanny sense of timing.

CHAS
Anyone know what's the matter with Jane?

STU
Yeah, she's dating you.

Stu disappears into the party.

CHAS
She's completely on the rag.

DANNY
Don't sweat it, it'll all work out for
the best.

CHAS
She's been giving me the warden all
night.

DANNY
The warden?

Chas mimes a tight-lipped kiss.

DANNY (cont'd)
That's not good.

Jazz waves from across the party...

JAZZ
(sexy)
Hey, Chas!

Chas holds up the "just a minute" finger.

CHAS
I can't figure out what she's pissed
about.

DANNY
(happy to help)
She thinks you take her for granted.

CHAS
Why would she think that?

DANNY
Because you take her for granted.

CHAS
But I've always taken her for granted.
Don't I get a few points for consistency?

DANNY
I'm afraid it doesn't work that way.
Just because you like starburst, doesn't
mean you want to eat them three meals a
day.

CHAS
I hate starburst.

DANNY
Okay, how about sweet-tarts?

CHAS
Sweet-tarts are good.

DANNY
But you don't want to eat sweet-tarts all
day long. You'd get sick of them.

Chas looks over at Jazz who eyes him from across the bar.

CHAS
I know exactly what you mean.

He walks off. Danny is content in his wisdom.

JACK
I'm confused: Is Chas supposed to be the
sweet-tarts, or Jane?

Danny looks confused as Stu reappears holding a newspaper.

STU
We have to change our fucking name.

JACK
Why? Don't you like it anymore?

Stu opens the paper to the Slim's nightclub ad which
announces that "Firewater from New York City" is playing.

JACK (cont'd)
So what? Maybe they're nobodies.

Stu turns the page and starts reading.

STU
"Blasting their way out of New York City, Firewater's mercurial rise has taken the nation's college airwaves by storm. Heavy rotation on MTV hasn't hurt their record sales, and their eponymous major label debut is due out on Sony next month..."

Danny looks at the paper.

JACK
Eponymous?

STU
The band's name is the name of the album.

JACK
Why don't they just say self-titled.

STU
Because then you wouldn't know that they're smarter than you.

DANNY
So we change our name. Big deal.

STU
You're kidding, right?

DANNY
I don't know about you guys, but I'm tired of that fucking name. It just shows how generic it is that some other band already had it.

STU
We've worked for years building up that name...

DANNY
So what? We build up another name.

STU
Beginning sucks.

Danny notices a gorgeous REDHEAD watching him from across the room...

JACK
How about "Stinko de Mayo"?

DANNY
That's a good name. I mean, not for our band, but still.

JACK
How about "Jerk"?

The Redhead is still watching...

DANNY
See? Jack's already come up with two names in eight seconds. How hard can it be?

Danny starts to make his way toward the Redhead...

JACK
How about "Ball Point Penguin"?

STU
We've slaved for two years to escape our first fresh start.

DANNY
It'll be great, trust me. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to mingle.

Stu watches him go.

STU
If his outlook gets any sunnier we're all gonna get skin cancer.

JACK
"Skin Cancer"!

Stu stares at him.

JACK (cont'd)
You know, as a band name.

Stu shakes his head and walks off.

Danny marches toward the Redhead; she's excited about it. He clears his throat, swelling with confidence and...

...Jane staggers in his path...

JANE
What did you say to Chas?

She's bordering on drunken hysterics, her "Girls Kick Ass" T-shirt reads like a threat.

DANNY

Excuse me?

JANE

What did you say to Chas?

DANNY

Well, I've said a lot of things to him, we've known each other for like ten years...

JANE

He says you told him to break up with me.

The Redhead doesn't like the sound of this...

DANNY

What?

JANE

He said he was tired of sweet-tarts or some shit like that.

Danny laughs.

DANNY

He got it all wrong. Chas is supposed to be the sweet-tarts and you--

JANE

So you did tell him to break up with me?

DANNY

No, I was trying to--

JANE

Just because your girlfriend left you, you have to go around ruining other people's lives?

Redhead shakes her head in judgment and walks away.

DANNY

B didn't leave me, it was a mutual--

JANE

What the hell's the matter with you?

DANNY

Where is he?

JANE
Who?

DANNY
Chas.

JANE
He's with Jazz.

DANNY
Jazz?

JANE
Don't get me started.

DANNY
(laughing)
Chas and Jazz?

ACROSS THE ROOM...

Herb smokes a joint and pontificates as he stands in line for the bathroom.

HERB
Everyone talks about God. "What is God?";
"What does God think?"; "What size shoes
does God wear?" Shit like that.

Stu withers, a captive audience in the bathroom line.

HERB (cont'd)
Well, I'll tell you. God is what's inside
your head, you know? For you, God is your
brain. For me, God is my brain.

STU
So for you, God doesn't exist.

HERB
(not getting it)
Exactly.

Danny and Jane walk up; Jane accosts Stu...

JANE
Have you seen Chas?

STU
I've seen enough of him. I'm not really
looking.

JANE

(losing it)

He's such a dick. I don't know how many more of these fucking parties I can take. It's always the same thing. I keep waiting for something interesting to happen while Chas gets shitfaced and makes balloon animals with his testicles.

STU

(to Danny)

Has she been drinking?

DANNY

Oh yes.

JANE

I have to go.

DANNY

You want me to call you a cab?

JANE

No, I have to go to the bathroom.

DANNY

As host of this orgy, I will investigate.

Danny bangs on the bathroom door...

DANNY (cont'd)

There are people who have to urinate.

...and the door scoots open...

JANE

When I see that prick I'm gonna give him a piece of my mind.

...revealing Chas engaged with Jazz on the bathroom sink.

HERB

It looks like the prick is already getting a piece.

STU

Now that just oozes class.

JANE

(losing it again)

You've got to be kidding me! You've got to be fucking kidding me! HOW CAN YOU BE SO FUCKING SELFISH?!!

Jane storms out.

STU

Yeah, there are folks out here who really have to go.

DANNY

(to Stu)

Dude, you'd better call her a cab.

Danny jogs after Jane.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRACTICE SPACE - NIGHT

Danny walks outside and looks around. Nothing. After a moment, we hear the sound of vomiting nearby. Danny walks to the side of the building where Jane sits, crying and heaving.

DANNY

I'm going to tell you something that few people in this world know. It's a highly guarded secret. Can you keep a secret?

Jane nods as she wipes her mouth on her shoulder.

DANNY (cont'd)

Chas was a completely different guy in high school. He was a total music nerd, he used to bring his acoustic guitar to school and play Yes songs in the quad. Needless to say he got beat up a lot.

JANE

You were friends back then?

DANNY

Yeah, but I left my guitar at home. Anyway, on grad night he pulls me aside, real serious. He says he's made a life-changing decision. He'd done a lot of thinking and figured there was only one thing standing between him and being cool, or at least, you know, having people not beat him up so often. I figured he was finally going to leave the guitar at home, but that wasn't it. He decided to change his name. High school was over, in the real world no one would be the wiser.

JANE

What did he change it to?

Danny gives her a sideways look.

JANE (cont'd)
He changed his name to Chas?

Danny nods.

JANE (cont'd)
What's his real name?

DANNY
Well, in high school he was Charlie.

JANE
You mean he just changed his own name?
Just like that?

Jane coughs up a bitter laugh.

JANE (cont'd)
That's pretty pathetic.

DANNY
Sort of puts things in perspective, huh?

She thinks it over, spits, straightens her hair.

DANNY (cont'd)
You okay?

She nods...

JANE
Let me ask you something.

DANNY
Shoot.

JANE
Why is it that the second a guy gets comfortable in a relationship, he has to end it?

DANNY
You know what they say, "Comfort kills."

Jane's withering glance kills Danny's grin. When she's satisfied with his complete lack of happiness, she continues...

JANE
You're like spastic little kids when we find you.

(MORE)

JANE (cont'd)

We work our asses off, we spruce you up and tuck you in and of course you don't notice any of it. Then one day you look in the mirror and you think, damn, I got it all together, why am I stuck with this chick? It's funny really, cause you don't get it, you don't get it in any way, shape, or form, we're your muses, WE'RE YOUR FUCKING MUSES!!!

Jane realizes she's screaming. She's embarrassed for half a second, and then continues...

JANE (cont'd)

You think we're holding you back. You actually have the nerve to think we're holding you back. But you know what the reality is?

DANNY

(hesitant)

You're our muses?

JANE

The reality is we're not holding you back, we're holding you up. And you have no idea. No fucking clue. Ignorance is bliss.

DANNY

Don't you think that's a little--

JANE

You just broke up with B, right?

DANNY

Uh, actually it was pretty much a mutual thing--

JANE

(dismissive)

Yeah, right. So how do you feel?

DANNY

Well, so far so--

JANE

'Cause you're gonna have a hard time now that you've lost your muse. You'll see. You can't just kick away the crutches without stumbling. A curse on all men!

DANNY

There's no need to get Shakespearean.

JANE
(at the top of her lungs)
A CURSE ON ALL FUCKING WEASLE-ASS MEN!!!

After the echo dies down...

JANE (cont'd)
(scary soft)
If I were you, I'd be scared shitless.

Danny manages a worried smile.

DANNY
Fear is a major component of excitement.

Jane starts to laugh.

JANE
You don't really believe that, do you?

Danny's discomfort tells her he does, and this only makes her laugh harder.

JANE (cont'd)
Men are so stupid.

Jane is practically doubled over as a taxi pulls to the curb. Jane tries to collect herself.

JANE (cont'd)
Thanks for cheering me up.

She hugs him.

DANNY
Any time.

Jane staggers to the cab and climbs in. She rolls down the window to add something more, but starts laughing all over again.

The taxi pulls away, and Jane's laughter fades into the night. Danny stands there, stupefied.

FADE OUT.

A TITLE: "PURGATORIO"

FADE IN:

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

On the kitchen table stands a large bottle of Advil and a glass. Two ice cubes clink into the glass.

Danny fills the glass half-full with V-8. He cracks a Budweiser with his Darth Vader bottle opener and pours it over the tomato juice. He shakes out five Advil, toasts John Lennon...

DANNY
To paradise...

...and washes them down with the perfect Red-eye.

The SOUND OF HEAVY MACHINERY churns at his window. He closes it without thinking and sits on his couch.

Danny has his acoustic in his lap. He strums the occasional chord on the guitar. Gone is the manic grin and the enthusiasm from the night before. The apartment is already showing signs of mess.

He picks up the legal pad with the note that B left. He reads it over one more time. He strums the guitar and hums and then sings an extemporaneous lyric...

DANNY (cont'd)
(singing)
B, Honey B, where can you be? I said
goodbye, so you'd be free...

He stops strumming. The chord hangs in the air as his eyes fall back to the notepad. Will the tears finally come?

He tears the note from the notepad...

DANNY (cont'd)
That's pretty good.

...and starts scribbling words on a fresh page. The enthusiasm is returning...

DANNY (cont'd)
(as he writes)
...I said goodbye so you'd be free.

He stares at what he's written...

DANNY (cont'd)
That's pretty fucking good.

The manic grin is back.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEMORIAL GARDENS - DAY

Danny squeezes between a pair of bent wrought-iron bars and enters the cemetery. His red eyes and dull grin testify to the soupy nirvana of a tolerable hangover. As he cuts through the graveyard, he passes a small group of MOURNERS laying flowers at a grave.

Danny freezes; his brow furrows like he's forgotten something. He pulls a crumpled piece of yellow paper from his pocket, lays it on a headstone, and scribbles down an idea. His grin widens...

DANNY

This is fucking genius!

When he looks up, he sees the Mourners are staring at him. He swallows his grin and moves on.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAIGHT STREET - A LITTLE LATER

Danny emerges from the cemetery shortcut and jogs down the street and into a small shop. A psychedelic sign is painted above the door: a recasting of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel - Man reaching for the hand of God -- but in this version, God is played by Jerry Garcia and offers Man a flying-V guitar. The name of the store is 'MUSE MUSIC.'

INT. MUSE MUSIC - CONTINUOUS

It's a 60s shrine: incense, beads, tie-dye, and VINTAGE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS. Danny squeezes behind the front counter, where an aging hippie blows the dust off a record. His name is CLEON, and Muse Music is his place.

CLEON

(without looking up)
Daniel, my man.

Cleon puts the record on the turntable of a vintage hi-fi.

DANNY

What's up, Cleon?

CLEON

The sky. And it's a beauty.

DANNY

Indeed.

Danny signs his time card, stares off into space, pulls out his crumpled page of ideas, and scribbles a few more.

As he puts the yellow paper back in his pocket, MUSIC KICKS IN OVER THE SOUND SYSTEM. He looks confused as he recognizes the band -- a complete contrast to the Woodstock atmosphere...

DANNY (cont'd)
Duran Duran?

CLEON
I was cleaning out the closets, can't let anything go without a listen.

DANNY
(surprised)
It's not as bad as I remember.

Danny walks to the main floor and finds a huge cardboard box waiting there. It says "Dean Markley" on the side.

DANNY (cont'd)
What's with the box?

CLEON
Daniel, I got some bitchin' news. Dean Markley is totally flying us a deal. If we restring our guitars with their Blue Steel -- definitely a righteous set of iron -- they'll swing us a killer discount.

DANNY
Cool.

CLEON
I'm afraid it means an ordeal's worth of stringing.

DANNY
You want me to restring the guitars?

Danny looks at the wall behind Cleon: Dozens of guitars hang there waiting...

CLEON
Can you handle it?

DANNY
All the guitars?

We pull back to reveal that all four walls are covered in guitars... There must be hundreds...

CLEON
I know it's a lot of work but--

DANNY

No sweat. In fact, it's just what I need.
It'll give me some time to think. I've
got a killer song coming.

CLEON

Crank it out, my man. Crank it out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MUSE MUSIC - LATER

Danny's head nods back and forth to Duran Duran as he strings an acoustic. He strums the chord, nods his head, pulls out his crumpled ideas, and scribbles away.

DANNY

Fucking brilliant. I should be cursed
every day.

WE PULL BACK SLOWLY to see that the wall of guitars seems to go on forever; a million guitars wait to be restrung...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRACTICE SPACE - EVENING

Danny plays his Les Paul, running through the last few chords of his great idea. The rest of the band sit by their instruments and listen...

DANNY

(singing)
...Where can you be? I said good bye so
you'd be free...

He strums the guitar with a flourish and then stops.

DANNY (cont'd)

(confident)
Well, what d'ya think?

The only sound is the hum of the electric instruments; Stu, Jack, and Chas express varying levels of discomfort.

DANNY (cont'd)

(modest)
It's just an idea I've been kicking
around.

STU

Sounds like it.

JACK
(unconvincing)
That was really...cool, but...

DANNY
But what?

CHAS
I think I liked the original better.

DANNY
The original?

Chas starts playing Danny's idea, but with a subtle change. Stu laughs and starts playing along. Soon, Jack joins in and Danny stares down at his notebook with the chord charts written in it. Stu starts to sing the melody: it's "Hungry Like the Wolf."

Danny tries to smile but he's obviously upset.

Lauren walks in with a backpack and a Kinko's bag full of copies.

LAUREN
Hey, cool, Duran Duran.

CHAS
No, it's one of Danny's.

LAUREN
Weird. Sounds a lot like Duran Duran to me.

Danny tries with all his might to be a good sport. The tune stumbles to a halt as Lauren takes a seat.

LAUREN (cont'd)
I've got great news: Someone at the Weekly committed to doing a review.

CHAS
Finally.

LAUREN
They heard good stuff about us, said they've wanted to write us up for a while.

CHAS
Why didn't they?

LAUREN
They're going to.

CHAS
It's about time.

Chas strums his amplified guitar, ending the conversation.

DANNY
That's cool, Lauren.

LAUREN
I thought so.

Lauren consults her notepad...

LAUREN (cont'd)
I've got five hundred posters for the
Phoenix show. Who's turn is it?

CHAS
Not mine!

STU
I went last time.

Lauren sighs, knowing this will be no fun...

LAUREN
All right, are we going to have to arm
wrestle again?

DANNY
I'll do it.

LAUREN
A volunteer?

DANNY
(the enthusiasm is back)
There's no better way to spend the day
than promoting the band.

STU
That's the attitude that made Duran Duran
famous.

Lauren gives Danny the bag of posters.

LAUREN
Also, it looks like the Paradise is going
to give us a slot on their Gavin
showcase.

JACK
(excited)
We got the Gavin show?

LAUREN

Looks like it. The Gavin convention is supposed to be twice as big as last year. We're talking serious bigwigs.

CHAS

Finally some record people will see us.

LAUREN

On that note, any thoughts about a new name?

STU

Danny suggested Duran Duran.

Stu looks for a reaction from Danny who stares at the bag of posters.

STU (cont'd)

What is it?

DANNY

Wow...

Stu looks at a poster over Danny's shoulder.

STU

Jesus!

Chas has a look...

CHAS

Jumbo? I thought we agreed no more funk shows.

STU

Our name is totally microscopic.

CHAS

No one will be looking at the name.

DANNY

Wow...

LAUREN

We made a deal. They buy, we flier.

STU

How could they misspell "Firewater"?

CHAS

Didn't we say no funk shows?

LAUREN

We saved over a hundred bucks.

DANNY

Wow...

CUT TO:

THE POSTER -- An X-rated cartoon of a woman with immense bare breasts straddling a gun barrel and screaming "Pull the Trigger!" Underneath, "JUMBO" is written in huge bubble letters. There's a fine print addendum: "plus special guests FIREWAITER."

A WIDER ANGLE REVEALS:

EXT. HAIGHT STREET - DAY

Danny holds the poster and Jack is ready with masking tape. They stand at a light pole completely covered with concert posters. They look up and down searching for an opening.

DANNY

There's got to be space somewhere.

Jack points at a poster...

JACK

Check it out! Rump Pumper. That's a cool name!

DANNY

(humoring him)

Too bad they thought of it first.

JACK

They're playing the same night as us, let's cover 'em up.

DANNY

It's bad karma to cover up the competition.

They continue to search the pole.

JACK

We gotta put 'em up somewhere.

DANNY

All right.

(pointing at a poster)

Popsicle Love Sponge is playing Thursday. So that poster's only good for a couple of days.

JACK
Plus they totally suck.

DANNY
We'll cover them. They've probably been
up all week.

JACK
Not to mention the fact that they suck.

They cover the poster. Danny stares at their large-breasted
poster.

DANNY
Is it my imagination, or are they getting
bigger?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT

Danny sits at his kitchen table with a legal pad in front of
him. He strums his Les Paul and lets the chord softly ring.
He closes his eyes and thinks...

Nothing.

He strums another chord, let's it ring, looks up at the
ceiling...

Nothing.

He strums again...

MATCH CUT TO:

DANNY STRUMMING A GUITAR.

Before the strings finish vibrating he cuts them off with a
wire cutter.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. MUSE MUSIC - DAY

...where Danny sits in a pile of used guitar strings. He
slowly removes the cut strings from the guitar.

He pauses, distracted by something. He pulls out his notebook
and writes a quick idea, then another one, and another. He's
finally inspired...

CUT TO:

INT. PRACTICE SPACE - NIGHT

The band members sit with their instruments; they're between songs...

DANNY
I was definitely inspired today. Check
this out.

Danny sits down with his guitar like he's going to play; but instead, he pulls out the notebook, smiles, and speaks...

DANNY (cont'd)
"Blue-Black."

He looks around but his enthusiasm is met with blank stares.

DANNY (cont'd)
You know, as a band name.

No reaction.

DANNY (cont'd)
Okay, "Muddopper."

Again, no response.

DANNY (cont'd)
How about, "Alfalfa Omega."

JACK
It's kind of like "Spanky Christ."

STU
How about "Elvis Christ"?

No response...Danny pushes on...

DANNY
How about "Spaghetti
Western"?..."Spaghetti Eastern"?...

Nothing.

DANNY (cont'd)
Okay, these ones you gotta picture as
stickers. "Oxo." "Ox Eye." No? Okay,
"Splashclatter." "Apocalyptica." "Hulk."

CHAS
How about "Hulk Angry"?

STU
I don't get it.

CHAS
Like the Hulk, but he's angry.

No response.

Trying not to look defeated, Danny continues...

DANNY
Did I mention "Blue-Black"?...Umm,
"Flack"..."Jack".

JACK
Yeah?

DANNY
No, not Jack..."JACK"!

On Danny's disappointment...

MATCH CUT TO:

DANNY'S MOROSE FACE...

...which is suddenly doused with water.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. DANNY'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Danny takes a shower. As he lathers up he starts singing to himself.

DANNY
(bouncy)
Gonna write a song today. Gonna write a
very good song. Gonna be inspired today.
Gonna be inspired and write that song.

He stops lathering himself. His eyes flash.

CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN TABLE...

Danny is soaking wet in a towel. He strums a chord on his Les Paul...

DANNY
(singing)
Gonna write a song today!

Water drips on his guitar.

DANNY (cont'd)

Shit.

He grabs a towel and wipes off the guitar, but more water drips down. He looks panicked...

CUT TO:

A FEW MINUTES LATER

He's dried and dressed as he strums the guitar again...

DANNY (cont'd)

(singing)

Gonna write a song today.

...but something is different.

He strums the guitar and lets it ring...

Nothing...

BACK TO:

THE BATHROOM...

He sits in the bathtub, singing with bathroom reverb...

DANNY

Gonna write a song today...

Nothing...

CUT TO:

EXT. TELEGRAPH AVENUE - DAY

Danny looks tired as he and Jack cover up a Popsicle Love Sponge poster with the Jumbo poster.

DANNY

I feel like a pornographer.

JACK

Dude, people like the poster.

As they turn a corner they run into a TATTOOED ROCKER also putting up posters. He looks like Charles Manson's little brother, beady-eyed and dirty.

ROCKER

Dude, what's happening? It's been a while.

JACK
Yeah. Doing a little promotion.

ROCKER
Same here. Have you seen our fliers?

JACK
Yeah, they're cool. Check this out.

Jack gives the Rocker one of their posters. Rocker nods his approval.

ROCKER
Awesome tits! Hey, don't cover mine and I won't cover yours.

JACK
Deal.

Rocker rounds the corner...

DANNY
Who was that guy?

JACK
I have no idea. But he totally liked the poster.

Danny looks at the poster with newfound admiration.

AROUND THE CORNER...

Rocker stares at a telephone pole; a name is stencilled on the back of his leather jacket: "Popsicle Love Sponge."

He's glares at the Firewater poster...

MATCH CUT TO:

THE POSTER HANGING IN...

INT. MUSE MUSIC STORE

Cleon pretends to be stocking strings but he can't take his eyes off the poster.

At the other end of the store, Danny stares off into space, restringing a guitar without even looking.

JACK (V.O.)
What about "Superbad"?

INT. PRACTICE PAD - NIGHT

CHAS
Sounds like a funk band.

STU
Every band is named "Super this" or
"Super that."

JACK
Well, how about just "Super."

CHAS
What, like a guy who fixes stuff in an
apartment building?

STU
Yeah, like Mister Bookman on *One Day at a
Time*.

DANNY
You're thinking of Snyder.

STU
I thought it was Mister Bookman.

JACK
Buffalo Butt.

DANNY
That was *Good Times*.

JACK
It was?

STU
Snyder, huh?

JACK
How about "Snyder"?

CHAS
Sounds like a funk band.

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Danny strums the acoustic guitar, uninspired.

It's hot and Danny opens the window, hears the rhythmic
machinery and immediately closes it with barely a reaction.

He sits down again, the legal pad is gone and in its place, a COLLEGE CATALOGUE for the University of Oregon. The apartment is even messier. As he strums the guitar, he sings in a monotone...

DANNY

Material engineering...Environmental design...Marine biology with a specialization in aquaculture...

On the wall behind his head hangs the Jumbo poster.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAIGHT STREET - DAY

Danny and Jack cover Popsicle Love Sponge posters. They've gotten a rhythm going. Jack rolls on a skateboard and Danny walks. Danny holds the poster and Jack slaps on the tape.

DANNY

It's hard to believe there are so many bad bands. I mean, you gotta figure that the members of...

(searching a pole for a name)
...let's see...Fart Contest -- now there's a group of over-achievers. You have to figure that the band Fart Contest has a practice space that they rent, and a bunch of gear that they've bought. They practice a couple of times a week, sometimes more. They sit around and talk about their band all the time. They're modest on the surface but deep down they secretly think they're pretty damn good. They don't tell anyone, but they have dreams of making it big and being recognized. So they struggle and toil and dream their dreams and for what? One day they realize that they are going nowhere and they quit and no one remembers them and their music is swallowed up in the void. That's pretty depressing.

JACK

I'll tell you what's depressing.

DANNY

What?

JACK

When Fart Contest puts up posters they say the same thing about us.

As Danny thinks this over...

JACK (cont'd)
Well, that's the last one.

They stare at the poster.

DANNY
Let's get a beer.

They walk inside a bar...

UP THE BLOCK...

The Tattooed Rocker walks from pole to pole, systematically tearing down the Jumbo posters.

DISSOLVE TO:

HOURS LATER

Jack and Danny emerge from the bar. Chas and Stu have joined them in the interim. They're all definitely flammable.

JACK
Okay, how about "The Rhythm Pimps."

DANNY
(less than excited)
"Rhythm Pimps"?

JACK
No, "The Rhythm Pimps."

A LARGE PIECE OF PAPER blows by.

CHAS
Sounds like a funk name.

JACK
You think everything sounds like a funk name.

CHAS
That's cause all you think of are funk names. You secretly want to get hecka funky.

STU
Everyone is called the "Pimps of blah" or the "blah blah Pimps."

ANOTHER PAPER dances by.

JACK

How about we get all post-modern and call ourselves "Superpimp"? It's the name everybody already has.

STU

"Superpimp"?

CHAS

That is the worst name I have ever heard. I'd rather be in a band called "Cumguzzler."

STU

Okay, it's settled. "Cumguzzler."

DANNY

At last, a name befitting our...

He tries to think of something clever, but the best he can come up with is...

DANNY (cont'd)

...whatever.

As they stagger off into the night, one of the Pieces of Paper comes to rest on the sidewalk. A closer look reveals it's a torn Jumbo poster. There are dozens of them rolling down the street like tumbleweeds.

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Danny sits at the kitchen table. He drops two ice cubes in a glass, adds V-8 and Bud. He pours out a handful of advil and chases them with the Red-eye. The sink is full of dishes and TV dinner boxes line the counters.

Across the room, the guitar sits in an open case. Danny walks over to it, shuts the case, and slides the guitar under the couch.

The telephone rings and Danny picks up with little interest...

DANNY

Yeah?

He's suddenly upbeat and enthusiastic...

DANNY (cont'd)

Oh hey B! Yeah, yeah, things are going great, just great.

Danny straightens the apartment as he talks.

DANNY (cont'd)

I've just been on fire creatively. You know how it is when you make a change, my brain is just overflowing. I mean, it's a battle to keep one song from running into the next...Yeah, we've got some excellent shows coming up, everything is great.

As he listens to her talk, the enthusiasm drains from him. He sits down at the kitchen table...

DANNY (cont'd)

(on phone)

Well, of course I miss you...Of course, I think about you...a lot...yeah, I think about you a lot...I'm sorry to hear that...Well, B, it's only been a few weeks...Yeah, well you got to give it a chance, you can't just change your life and think that everything is just going to fall into place, you gotta make some changes in yourself, you gotta get out there and try...

Danny's getting exasperated. He starts going through a pile of unopened mail...

DANNY (cont'd)

I know it's scary...I know...I know... Hey, I'm proud of you...Well I'm sorry you feel that way...Yeah, well I'll see you for Andy's wedding...Yes I promise... Yes, I'm looking forward to it... it's only a couple of weeks...

He comes to a postcard of a smiling Richard Nixon. On the back is written "Sorry I was such a Dick. Love, Jane. P.S. Give me a call sometime. 555-0987."

Danny smiles. He sticks the card to the refrigerator with a banana magnet.

DANNY (cont'd)

(on phone)

Yes, I'm listening...B?...Things may seem bleak now, but they can only get better...

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD OF A BEAUTIFUL HOME

A large crowd of well-off adults encircle a small table of five-year-olds.

ADULTS

Happy Birthday.

The BIRTHDAY BOY is a diminutive tyrant who eyes his colossal stack of gifts with a disinterested air. He blows out the candles on the cake which reads 'Happy 5 1/2' The other children sit around the birthday table smearing ice cream and cake on their faces.

The parents all sit around proudly talking about children and the pros and cons of writing off cocktails at a business lunch.

Danny talks to one of the less interesting people.

DULL

So how is the group going? Are you guys famous yet?

DANNY

We're huge in Japan but we haven't quite caught on in San Francisco yet.

DULL

Really? How did you go about working the foreign market.

DANNY

We didn't, I was just joking.

Dull laughs a little too hard.

DULL

I've got to hand it to you, that seems like such an interesting world.

DANNY

Nothing ever seems that interesting when it's what you do every day.

DULL

I don't know, not a day in my job goes by where something doesn't jump out and bite me on the ass.

There's an uncomfortable pause as Danny doesn't ask for details.

DANNY

Yeah, well, you know, the main thing is patience, you gotta stay patient but not get content.

Dull turns to his ugly toddler.

DULL

You hear that, Roger? Patience. It's the key and then you can be a famous musician in Japan. Yes you can.

As Dull squeezes his son's cheek, Danny sees his opportunity and escapes. He runs into his Father.

DANNY

Hey Pop.

His father sips a beer and nods at the birthday tyrant.

FATHER

Half year birthdays. What'll they think of next? If you ask me these kids are all spoiled rotten.

The 5 1/2 year old opens a huge box containing some deluxe Video arcade worth about a thousand bucks.

The Old people ooh and aw. Danny's Brother leans down to prompt the little ingrate.

BROTHER

Don't you want to thank grampa Carl for the game station?

KID

(sans emotion)
Thanks grampa Carl.

DANNY

Good thing you're not playing into that whole spoiling thing.

FATHER

There's no way I'm gonna let your mother outdo me.

They look across at Danny's mother who stands a bit apart from the others. She waves Danny over. Danny's Father wants to say some more.

FATHER (cont'd)

So how is the act going?

DANNY

It's going great, Pop. Really.

FATHER

Yeah? Have you talked to the other fellows about what we talked about.

DANNY

I told you that it was a bad idea.

FATHER

I don't understand your music. I was in this business a long time and you kids think you know what goes where. I hear your tapes and keep asking myself, 'Where are the songs?' You should try that number I told you about. You remember, the Sinatra.

He hums getting ready to sing. Danny cuts him off.

DANNY

The world is not ready for a hard rock version of 'Stranger's in the Night'.

FATHER

It's not 'Stranger's in the Night'. I'm telling you, it's a twelve bar and it really cooks.

He starts to hum again.

DANNY

Uh huh. So our eight hundred conversations in which I've told you that we don't play show tunes, those didn't really happen.

FATHER

I'm just saying that I don't understand why it is that you don't play songs. All the music sounds the same to me.

DANNY

I hate to break this to you, Pop, but you're not our target audience.

FATHER

I don't know who would listen to it? I don't understand your music.

DANNY

Pop, you're music education ended with The Four Freshmen. Things have changed a bit since then.

FATHER

Then why are you guys having such a hard time?

DANNY

(he's said this before)

It's a Catch-22, in order to get people to the shows they have to hear you and in order for them to hear you...

FATHER

If they heard a Sinatra tune, or that Peggy Lee thing I told you about, you'd knock 'em out. It'd be dynamite. Those songs are timeless.

He starts to hum again. He's picking out the words to the 'Girl Next Door.'

At the table the kid is tearing through gifts at an amazing pace. He comes to a gift wrapped in an old newspaper.

DANNY

That's from me!

Danny leaves his Father in the dust and gets to the table. The kid tears open a small gift, it is a cassette of the Beatles' "Hard Day's Night".

DANNY (cont'd)

Hey that's some music for your new sound system!

We see another box with an adult's stereo inside.

DANNY (cont'd)

It's the Beatles. That was your Uncle Danny's favorite when he was your age.

The kid looks like he's gonna cry. Big Brother bends down.

BROTHER

Don't you want to thank Uncle Danny for the nice gift.

The kid starts to cry. Danny looks mortified.

LATER

Danny sits by the refrigerator drinking a beer. He finishes it, opens the door and grabs another. His MOTHER comes in.

MOTHER

Hey stranger, how's tricks.

DANNY

Hey, Mom. It's fine.

MOTHER

I thought you guys played a terrific show last week. You guys are so talented.

DANNY

Thanks, Mom. I definitely enjoyed myself.

MOTHER

Was your father still going on about those assinine old songs?

DANNY

You read lips?

MOTHER

When you're a mother you have to keep up on all the latest surveillance techniques. Besides, he always gets that foolish look on his face when he's about to sing.

She imitates Carl. Danny laughs.

MOTHER (cont'd)

How is it with Joe? Do you miss her?

DANNY

Of course.

MOTHER

Has she called you?

DANNY

Mom?

MOTHER

Have you called her?

DANNY

It's all going fine. We're doing what we have to do.

MOTHER

I just don't understand the point of throwing away a perfectly good thing just to make things harder on yourself.

DANNY

It's a little more complex than that.

5 1/2 is almost done with the mountain of presents. Big Brother gathers up wrapping paper.

DANNY (cont'd)

Between you and me, if I ever invite you to my child's five and a half year birthday, shoot me.

LATER...

Danny waves to his Brother...

DANNY

Thanks for having me. See you next half year.

Big Brother is an officious guy, but very bright. A Lawyer. The entire time he talks he is preoccupied with the whereabouts of his children in the room.

BIG BROTHER

Hey Dan, between you and me, I think you're on the right path.

Danny is taken aback.

DANNY

You do?

BIG BROTHER

You've gotta do what you do. You gotta go for it. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. You're gonna hear a lot of people telling you the way they want it to be. Fuck 'em. If that's how they want it, let them go do it. You gotta know what you want and just do it. It's as simple as a shoe ad.

DANNY

You're right. You're absolutely right.

BIG BROTHER

No one believes in you but you. That's how it should be.

(MORE)

BIG BROTHER (cont'd)

You've got to carefully define the dream and then carve the steps toward attaining it. It's all about will power, if you got it, then you'll get what you want. Otherwise...

DANNY

That's what I've been trying to tell myself. But it's really hard.

BIG BROTHER

Of course it's hard. Anything worth having is hard work. If it were easy everyone would have it.

DANNY

I got to get going. Thanks for the advice.

BIG BROTHER

Hey at least you wised up and got out of the music business. That's a real sucker bet.

Danny looks like he's been slapped in the face.

OUTSIDE...

Danny heads toward the back gate. He notices something floating in the pool. The Beatles tape. He can't help but smile.

INT. VAN - HEADING TO THE SHOW

Stu drives, Chas is in the passenger seat, and Danny is squeezed between them on the milk crate. Danny's T-shirt says, "Mediocre."

CHRIS

A party for turning Five and half? That kid's not spoiled.

DANNY

My whole family was there. There was no way out. It's a once a year deal.

STU

5 1/2? Sounds more like a twice a year deal.

They drive for a moment in silence.

STU (cont'd)

What do you get a kid for a half-year birthday?

CHRIS

You gotta get him something shitty, or else you'll be rewarding the greed. Give him an old pair of shoes.

STU

Better yet, give him one shoe and tell him he gets the other for his real birthday.

The Van pulls over and Stu looks up at the marquis...

STU (cont'd)

Another fun-filled evening with Dumbo.

Jack chimes in from somewhere in the back of the van...

JACK (O.S.)

Their drummer is totally slamming.

STU

They're the musical equivalent to woodshop.

CHAS

No more funk shows, remember? I told Lauren loud and clear.

They pull up outside the Phoenix Theatre. A Marquee announces "JUMBO - TONIGHT!" There's no mention of Firewater.

STU

At least they didn't misspell our name.

A crowd of THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLDS skateboard and vandalize as they wait for the doors to open.

Danny, Stu, and Jack climb out of the van and start carrying gear into the club. Chas walks in empty-handed.

STU (cont'd)

The inventors of lobotomy rock.
(imitating a moronic stoner)
"Hey, Satan sphincter."

DANNY

They're not that bad.

STU
That's pretty nice coming from "Anal
Danny."

DANNY
They don't call me that.

INT. PHOENIX THEATRE - A LITTLE LATER

The funksters JUMBO are playing a tight jam onstage for a soundcheck. They're a quintet of shirtless stoners. They may look like they're in their early twenties but their development was frozen in early junior high.

JUMBO BASS notices Firewater walking in and shouts into the microphone.

JUMBO BASS
Satanwater!

He spots Danny...

JUMBO BASS (cont'd)
Yo, Anal Danny!

Danny forces a smile and a wave.

A WHILE LATER...

Jumbo packs up their guitars as Danny and the guys drag their equipment onstage for their sound check.

No one is moving the Jumbo drums. It's an immense expensive kit decorated painted with hot rod flames. Jack lays a bass drum in front of the massive toms. He looks around but no one seems to be breaking down the drums.

JUMBO DRUMMER trudges by; he's a fat guy with a sideways Malcolm X cap.

JACK
Hey, bro, do you need a hand moving the
kit?

JUMBO DRUMMER
Nope.

Jumbo Drummer trudges off. The drums stay.

JACK
So I gotta put my stuff in front of your
drums?

Jack stares at the drums. Jumbo Bass figures Jack is admiring the paint job...

JUMBO BASS
Cool flames, huh? My brother painted them. He's like the Mike Angelo of cars.

STU
I wish they were real flames.

JUMBO BASS
(not getting the sarcasm)
That would be hella cool.

Danny sets up his amp nearby. Lauren arrives in the company of a total knockout; her name is SILKY. Danny looks up, tries not to gawk.

LAUREN
Hey, Danny.

DANNY
Check it out, "Firewater featuring Jumbo drumkit."

SILKY
Looks more like "Jumbo drumkit featuring Firewater."

DANNY
Ouch.

LAUREN
I pitched a fit, but it's in their rider. Maybe you could talk to them.

Jumbo Guitar shuffles by.

JUMBO GUITAR
Dude, fucking Satan! What's up Anal Danny?

He gives Danny a complicated handshake, but Danny loses it after the first variation. Jumbo Guitar loses interest and shuffles off.

DANNY
(to Lauren)
I think talking is out.

Danny and Silky look at one another.

LAUREN
Oh, Danny this is Silky. Silky, Danny.

DANNY
How you doing?

Silky smiles at him. Danny smiles back.

LAUREN
Hey, what happened with the posters?

DANNY
I guess I was wrong. People seemed to like them. Go figure.

LAUREN
That's weird. I heard they all got torn down.

Danny's smile falls from his face.

MATCH CUT TO:

DANNY'S MISERY...

...as he stand three inches from Jack's crash cymbal. Jack's drums are pushed all the way to the front leaving Danny, Chas, and Stu jammed on the sides. There is no escaping the cymbals.

DANNY
(Singing)
Today's another perfect day/ to start out
fresh and wipe the tears away...

[Listen to song #3 - "Another Perfect Day":
<http://mondaysongs.com/music/another-perfect-day/>]

Even in adversity, they play their music well, coming to a tight finish. Their efforts are met with silence.

An army of HIGH SCHOOL KIDS pack the club; they whisper among themselves. Herb yells out from the audience.

HERB
We want Jumbo!

Herb laughs as the crowd cheers.

DANNY
(in the mic)
Satan anus.

The crowd cheers.

DANNY (cont'd)
 This next song is called "Anal Cyst Satan
 Felcher."

The crowd cheers louder.

Danny can't help but laugh as he counts in the next number. They break into "I'm Not Lonely" and the Thirteen-year-olds' expectations are dashed: this song doesn't sound anything like "Anus Cyst Satan Felcher."

CUT TO:

INT. SIDESTAGE - LATER

Danny, Stu, and Jack drag their gear offstage, pushing their way through a throng of slutty teenage girls, the JUMBO BIMBOS.

JACK
 That was a serious buzz crusher.

Chas carries his guitar offstage...

CHAS
 Funk shows are always death.

...and immediately starts chatting up one of the more buxom Bimbos, leaving the equipment to the others.

Jumbo prepares for their show: Jumbo Guitarist rips superhuman bong hits while his bandmates discuss their latest conquests.

JUMBO BASS
 If she don't tongue the bung, she ain't
 no fun.

JUMBO KEYBOARD
 Dude, I was totally in the bathtub with
 my girlfriend and I was stroking, dude,
 for like an hour, and I got this huge
 blister. Dude, it was hella sensitive.

Jumbo Bass tries to get the bong away from Jumbo Guitar.

JUMBO BASS
 Dude, you're hogging the crushers.

Jumbo Guitar lets out the smoke from his eighth ripper. He's completely catatonic.

JUMBO GUITAR
This is how stoned I like to get.

He head butts his Stratocaster, grinning...

As Danny finishes moving gear, he is cornered by JUMBO DRUMMER who raps at him, freestyle.

JUMBO DRUMMER

(bad rapping)

Yo, I'm busting the real checkin', check
it out, check it out, no doubt...about...
what it's all about, so I tried it out...

Danny tries to escape, but Jumbo Drummer is huge and blocking his path with hip hop hand gestures...

Stu and Jack sit and watch.

STU

Check out Sir Eats-a-lot. Nothing sadder
than a fat white rapper.

JACK

His rhymes could definitely use some
work.

STU

His belly could use some work. The man
has breasts.

JACK

He can't help that.

STU

He should wear a bra, this isn't the
sixties.

Jumbo Singer struts in wearing only a jock strap.

JUMBO SINGER

Yo homeys, we're up!

Jumbo Drummer stops mid-rap and Danny forces a weak smile to his face.

JUMBO DRUMMER

Yo, that's what I'm all about.

Stu calls out from across the room.

STU

Dude, that was tits. I mean that.

Jumbo Drummer flashes the peace sign.

STU (cont'd)
That was really quite fat.

JUMBO DRUMMER
P-H-A-T.

STU
If you say so.

JUMBO DRUMMER
My Niggaz is Raw!

STU
You said it, Bra.

Danny staggers over in a daze.

DANNY
I think he ate my brain.

Danny grabs a beer out of a hidden ice chest. Herb appears out of nowhere and musters a sad face, begging for a beer.

DANNY (cont'd)
Help yourself.

Herb liberates three beers from their hidden stash.

HERB
Chas tells me you've been musically constipated lately.

DANNY
I didn't realize it was news-worthy.

HERB
Need to pinch the creative loaf?

DANNY
You gotta squeeze something out before you can pinch it.

HERB
You should never squeeze. Nothing ever comes when you're straining.

DANNY
At least straining feels like you're doing something.

HERB
I've got the solution.

Herb holds out his hand, palm up.

DANNY
You want me to read your palm?

HERB
Read between the lines.

A closer look reveals a tiny tab of paper with Ronald Reagan's smiling face on it.

HERB (cont'd)
Mental metamucil. It'll get you regular.

DANNY
I kind of like my brain the way it is.

HERB
The only way to fly is to jump out of the nest. No one ever created anything cool without brushing up against death.

Danny takes the paper...

HERB (cont'd)
No time like the present.

...and puts it in his wallet.

DANNY
I'll have to take your word on that.

HERB
You can't blame a guy for frying.

Jumbo hits the stage: 90s whiteboy funk in all its glory. The Thirteen-Year-Olds love it.

Stu and Jack talk over the din...

JACK
I thought of a cool band name.

STU
Yeah?

JACK
"Anguish as a Second Language."

STU
That's more of an album name than a band name.

JACK
What about "They Might Be Giants"?

STU

There's already a They Might Be Giants.

JACK

I know. I'm just saying, that sounds like an album name but it's a band name.

STU

A bad band name.

JACK

Dude, I come up with all the names and you just shoot them down.

Danny joins them...

DANNY

Not more band names.

STU

It needs to be something meaningful. Something that defines us.

DANNY

Like "Stringchanger"...

STU

I don't think so.

DANNY

...or "Poster Boy"...

STU

That's not bad, if we were, like, a gay band.

DANNY

How about "The Band Namers"?

HERB

You guys still trying to name the band?

STU

(hostile)

No.

HERB

(oblivious)

Dude, it's hella hard. It's like naming a twelve-year-old.

JACK

Yeah, what if we had to rename Herb?

HERB

Yeah.

STU

That's easy. We'd just call you Dick.

Lauren approaches with an A&R GUY in tow. He's going bald, but that hasn't stopped him from wearing his remaining hair in a pony tail.

LAUREN

Guys, I want you to meet Mel--

A&R GUY

(leading with a handshake)

Mel Morris, Immaculate records. You guys have a real interesting thing going here. Very angular. I like that.

STU

Thanks, that's what we're shooting for...Angular.

A&R GUY

I could tell. You guys know how to rock. Not like these kids...

(gesturing toward the stage)

...they're two years ago. I don't want to be the one to tell them, but no one cares about funk anymore.

DANNY

I know what you mean.

Chas walks by, notices A&R's hair.

CHAS

Hey nice 'do.

A&R puts out a hand...

A&R GUY

Mel Morris, how's it hanging.

CHAS

Phil McCracken. About knee length.

A&R laughs a little too hard.

A&R GUY

Good one, Phil. So I'm gonna tell my boss that I think you guys have some possibilities. He'll have to come.

(MORE)

A&R GUY (cont'd)
And then his boss. But the next guy up
makes the decisions.

LAUREN
Mel used to play in Poco.

DANNY
(underwhelmed)
Really?

A&R GUY
I replaced Ronnie.

Danny nods, pretending he understands.

A&R GUY (cont'd)
We did Japan in '82; I could tell you
some stories.

Danny wishes that he wouldn't.

A&R walks off and is swallowed up by the throng of Jumbo
Bimbos.

CHAS
Did you see that 'do?

STU
You mean the don't.

CHAS
What is it with A&R guys? Do they all go
to the same barber?

DANNY
The pattern baldness pony tale: the curse
of the ex-musician.

JACK
The Phantasm.

STU
I mean at least the comb-over makes
sense.

CHAS
(imitating Mel)
"I'm Mel Morris from Immasculated
Records."

LAUREN
I'll tell him we're not interested in his
pathetic record contract because his hair
is funny.

STU

It's not funny. It's sad.

Danny downs a Budweiser and grabs another from their ice chest. He opens it with his Darth Vader bottle opener. When he looks up, Silky is standing there, and she's had a few beers.

SILKY

Hey I forgot my phone number, can I borrow yours?

DANNY

(looking around)
Are you talking to me?

SILKY

No, I'm practicing for when Jumbo finishes.

Silky sits down next to him, close.

SILKY (cont'd)

Can I have a sip?

DANNY

You can have the whole beer.

Silky takes it and puts the bottle a little too far into her mouth before drinking.

Danny pulls another beer from the cooler...

DANNY (cont'd)

(confidential)
It's our private stash.

...and opens it with Darth Vader.

SILKY

Star Wars?

DANNY

What can I say, I'm a nerd at heart.

Danny smiles, and Silky licks his cheek. Slowly.

Jumbo's set finishes and the band rolls backstage. Danny accidentally makes eye contact with Jumbo Singer.

DANNY (cont'd)

(distracted)
Cool set.

JUMBO SINGER

What I could use right now is a big juicy pussy.

He presses his thumbs and forefingers together to provide a visual aid. Danny turns to Silky for moral support. What he gets is...

SILKY

Sounds like a good idea.

Danny is struck dumb. Silky leans in...

SILKY (cont'd)

Would it be too forward to tell you that I think you're sexy and I want to go home with you?

DANNY

I guess that all depends on how we define "too forward."

SILKY

I don't usually do this.

She takes another sexual pull from the bottle of beer.

DANNY

I just have to load some gear and then--

JACK

That's all right, Danny, we got it under control!

His bandmates have been listening to the entire exchange.

CHAS

(to Jack)

What do you mean? We have to carry his shit?

JACK

Are you worried we won't carry yours?

CHAS

I load.

JACK

Dude, you drink and chat up chicks while the rest of us pack.

CHAS

Stu, do I load?

STU
 (incredulous)
 You can't be asking me this. You're not allowed to avoid loading and think that you load. That's totally unfair. It's like having your cake and...not loading it.

Danny is oblivious to the discussion as Silky puts her hand on his leg.

DANNY
 I don't have my car with me.

SILKY
 I'll drive. We'll go to my place.

DANNY
 Cool.

They get up.

DANNY (cont'd)
 (aside to his bandmates)
 He rises from the ashes...

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The radio blasts as Silky weaves through traffic in a pristine '66 Mustang. Danny looks a little nervous: What has he gotten himself into?

Suddenly, "I'm Free" comes on the radio. Danny can't believe his ears -- it must be a sign. He turns to look out the window to hide his enthusiastic grimace. Damn it, he's gonna go for it.

Silky pushes in a cassette, replacing The Who with demonic banshee music -- Diamanda Galas would be perfect. Danny's enthusiasm is swallowed by the fearsome music. His eyes go wide and he looks down to see that Silky's got a hold of his groin.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOENIX THEATRE - NIGHT

Back at the club, Stu and Jack struggle with equipment while Chas drinks beer and chats up a Jumbo Bimbo.

STU
 Ignorance is truly bliss.

JACK
Give me a hand with the bass cab.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Danny and Silky arrive at her apartment. It's a Goth pleasure dungeon; the walls are covered with black-and-white photographs of sad people.

DANNY
Are you a photographer?

SILKY
No.

She begins a striptease. Danny tries not to hyperventilate...

SILKY (cont'd)
Do you like to talk dirty?

DANNY
Oh yessiree, I love to talk dirty.

SILKY
Tell me what you want to do with me.

DANNY
I want to have intercourse with you.

She laughs.

SILKY
Tell me again, but make it dirty.

We PAN SLOWLY away from the coming conquest, showing the scary iconography that adorns the walls lit in thick red candlelight...

STU (V.O.)
No fucking way.

DANNY (V.O.)
I'm telling you, it was incredible. It's like she stepped right out of a one-handed magazine. I'm totally thinking this is the life I've been missing. I was so hard I could cut glass. She even pulls out a condom and slides it on.

STU (V.O.)
She put it on? Damn.

DANNY (V.O.)

She was like a jeweller. I was thinking, this could be the woman that I entertain all my fantasies with.

STU (V.O.)

Totally... So what happened...?

DANNY (V.O.)

It didn't quite work out. We weren't really compatible.

...as the pan completes it's 360 degree turn we find them in bed, post flagrante delecto. Silky looks less than enthused. Apparently the flagrante was not so delecto...

SILKY

Was that your first time?

DANNY

What?

SILKY

Was that your first time, you know, with a woman?

DANNY

Are you kidding? I'm twenty-eight years old.

There's an awkward beat...

SILKY

You didn't answer my question.

DANNY

No, it's not my first time! It's like my one millionth time!

She frowns.

DANNY (cont'd)

I'm sorry if I was a little...over-eager, but I've been in a relationship for years, and she took off about a month ago. So it's the first time, you know, with someone new. But I'm ready for a second assault...now that I'm warmed up.

SILKY

Did you know that habitual masturbation leads to premature ejaculation?

DANNY
(what can you say to that?)
Really?

Silky just stares at him.

DANNY (cont'd)
Did you know that that was, like, the
worst orgasm I've ever had.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP

Danny continues his conversation with Stu and Jack.

STU
Wow.

DANNY
She gave me the yellow pages and I called
a cab.

Danny looks totally destroyed. Stu and Jack look at each other. What's there to say?

Danny checks his watch.

DANNY (cont'd)
I gotta go. I've got strings to change.

He shuffles outside into the deluge.

STU
Post traumatic stress. I completely
called it.

JACK
Has he hit bottom yet?

STU
Not by a long shot.

They sit thinking about this for a minute.

STU (cont'd)
I came up with a band name?

JACK
Yeah?

STU
Yep. It's the perfect name.

JACK
Well? What is it?

STU
I don't want to say yet.

JACK
Why?

STU
I want to wait 'til the right moment and then spring it.

JACK
Dude, tell me and then we'll be a united front.

Stu thinks about.

STU
Okay.
(gesturing like its a banner)
"Zarathruster."

Jack stares at him, nodding.

STU (cont'd)
What?

JACK
I don't get it.

STU
What's not to get? It's "Zarathustra," but with "thruster."

JACK
What's "Zarathustra"?

STU
What do you mean, "What's Zarathustra?" He's the guy who tells everybody that God is Dead.

JACK
Why would he do that? Did he know God?

STU
No, he didn't know God. It's a metaphor.

JACK
People always say things are metaphors when they don't mean anything.

STU
 (doing the banner again)
 "Zarathruster." "Zarathruster"! Z is the
 coolest letter in the alphabet.

JACK
 How about "Butt Thruster"?

On Stu's chagrin

CUT TO:

INT. MUSE MUSIC STORE

Danny puts the last string on a guitar, tunes it up. Perfect.

He stares off for a moment, brain-dead.

He shakes it off, picks up the wire cutters, and cuts the
 brand new set of strings off the guitar...

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Danny sulks in his apartment, which has once again been
 rendered a disaster area.

A message blinks on his answering machine. He pushes the
 button. It's B and she sounds congested...

B
 (over message machine)
 Hey Danny, it's B. I'm sorry about our
 conversation last week, I just wanted to
 let you know that everything is going
 great. I had a major breakthrough and
 well, I'm sorry I was so lame. Anyway,
 I'm actually calling because I'm not
 going to be able to make it down this
 weekend...

DANNY
 That's just perfect.

B
 ...I'm totally ill and I'm up to my ears
 in term papers. I'm sorry to call so
 late, I thought I could pull it off, but
 there's just no way. Anyway, at least you
 can stop worrying about me.
 (she laughs)
 I barely miss you at all. Bye.

Danny puts his head in his hands and rubs his temples.

DANNY

That is totally fucking perfect.

He takes out a glass. V-8 and Bud follow. He opens the freezer and reaches for the ice cubes. Instead he pulls out a small piece of paper. Ronald Reagan.

His expression suddenly changes, despair to enthusiasm. He tosses Ronald back in the freezer, closes the door and searches the refrigerator door until...

Danny frees the Richard Nixon Postcard that he magneted to the fridge.

DANNY (cont'd)

My favorite ex-president.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

Danny drives; he looks stiff in an ill-fitting suit. Jane rides shotgun; she looks gorgeous in a print dress.

JANE

I love weddings.

DANNY

I've known the guy since third grade. You know, one of those old friends that the only thing you still have in common is lego. His name is Andrew, but it was Andy when I knew him. Somehow we've always stayed in touch. He's a doctor and the woman he's marrying just got a Ph.D in Slavic something or other. I basically play the part of the Bohemian drop-out. It makes them all feel like they're still in touch with their wild-and-crazy past.

JANE

Why do you do it?

DANNY

Free food. Actually, I'm looking forward to seeing my old friend Alfie. We played in a band together for years. He hit it big playing sessions in LA. The guy's a total riot.

INT. CONVENTION HALL

A massive room. On the greeting table sit hundreds of folded cards. Danny and Jane stare at the table...

DANNY

Oh no. Assigned seating.

INT. DINING ROOM

Danny checks the seating card as he and Jane scout out their table. They find it right next to the kitchen, a mile from the head table. It's the assigned seating version of Outer Mongolia.

DANNY

Oh my god. We're at the leper colony.

Jane squeezes his hand, trying to be supportive.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Danny and Jane listen to the Bride and Groom exchange vows.

BRIDE

A relationship is a compact.

GROOM

It's a scale that needs balance.

BRIDE

And the balance is compassion...

GROOM

...and understanding.

Danny looks at Jane and sees how beautiful she is. She has a tear in her eye. He smiles and leans over

DANNY

You don't even know them.

JANE

I know. I'm such a girl.

INT. RECEPTION

In a QUICK-CUT MONTAGE we follow Danny around the reception:

Danny holds a beer and chats with a WELL-DRESSED WOMAN.

WELL-DRESSED

I have a private practice now. It's slave work but I'm hanging in there. It's all about endurance. Endurance and tenacity.

DANNY

("I know")

You're talking to a musician.

WELL-DRESSED

You're still playing at music? That's admirable.

LATER...

Danny holds a glass of wine and chats with a WEALTHY GUY and his BROTHER.

WEALTHY GUY

You remember my little brother?

DANNY

Sure, how's it going, Bucky?

BROTHER

No one calls me "Bucky" anymore.

DANNY

Jesus, last time I saw you, you were puking up beer backstage at that tiny place. When was that?

WEALTHY GUY

Bucky just graduated from Stanford med.

DANNY

Really?

BROTHER

I hear you're still playing music.

Danny nods.

BROTHER (cont'd)

That's really admirable.

Danny drinks.

STILL LATER...

Danny holds a glass of scotch...

SKINNY GUY

I think it's really courageous to keep going for it after all this time.

FAT GUY

It's admirable.

Danny drinks.

LATER YET...

Danny orders another scotch. His face brightens as he spots someone across the room...

DANNY

Alfie!!

CUT TO:

ALFIE, who looks about twenty years older than Danny, and fifty pounds heavier. The years have not treated him well. He has a large scotch in his hand.

The WEDDING BAND play a remarkably funk-free version of "Play That Funky Music White Boy." Alfie shakes his head in disgust as the band goes to the bridge.

ALFIE

They totally skipped the sus-eleven chord.

He drinks.

ALFIE (cont'd)

I really miss the days playing in Bash Bash Bash. Things were simpler then.

Danny nods.

ALFIE (cont'd)

LA just sucks the life out of you. Once they cram the business dick up your ass you're as good as dead. It's a horrible, monotonous business. It was either suicide or real estate. I picked suicide.

He laughs a bit too hard. A LITTLE BOY runs up to him.

ALFIE (cont'd)

Hey this is my son, Hendrix. Hendrix, this is Danny.

Hendrix grabs his father's scotch, smashes it on the floor, and runs off. Alfie doesn't bat an eye, reaching inside his coat for a flask.

ALFIE (cont'd)
Hendrix is hyper-active, but I'll be damned if I let them give him drugs.

Alfie takes a long swig off the flask, passes it to Danny who does likewise.

ALFIE (cont'd)
I'm telling you, in LA when they fuck you you know you've been fucked. I mean you stay fucked. So you're still playing, huh? That's really--

DANNY
Admirable. I know...

ALFIE
No. I was gonna say that's really sad.

INT. RECEPTION

Danny sits hunched at the table. If he had three eyes he'd be seeing triple.

Jane makes polite conversation with their table mates, a YOUNG MAN WITH BAD SKIN and YOUNG MAN WITH A LOUD SUIT. An OBNOXIOUS OLDER GUY talks to Danny.

OBNOXIOUS
So what do you do?

DANNY
Oh, me? I'm an Archeologist.

OBNOXIOUS
Really? That sounds interesting.

DANNY
No, it's incredibly dull. In fact, I'm incredibly dull.

OBNOXIOUS
Really?

JANE
Oh yes, he is.

OBNOXIOUS
Really? Well I'm a lawyer.

BAD SKIN

Jesus, Randall, I think everyone here is a lawyer.

DANNY

What do you call a thousand lawyers chained together at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

JANE

(elbowing him)

Danny?

They all stare at him, unamused.

DANNY

A good start.

OBNOXIOUS

Really? I'd call it a tragedy.

DANNY

Yeah, well, I'm an archeologist.

INT. HALL BY BATHROOMS

Danny weaves toward the men's room. He almost knocks over the GROOM.

DANNY

Hey, congratulations, Andy.

GROOM

Hey, Danny Boy. How's it going?

DANNY

Great, great. Nice party.

GROOM

It cost a fortune.

DANNY

I'm sure it did.

GROOM

Where's B?

DANNY

She couldn't make it down from school.

GROOM

Well your date sure is a knockout.

DANNY

She is?

He looks at her from across the room. She is.

INT. BATHROOM

Groom and Danny pee in adjoining urinals.

DANNY

You wanna cross swords?

GROOM

I can't risk dousing the suit. How's the band going?

DANNY

I'm out of the music business. I'm an archeologist.

GROOM

Really? That's admirable.

DANNY

Thanks. I get that a lot.

GROOM

It's too bad you quit playing. I was hoping you'd get to talk to my cousin. We sat you guys together.

DANNY

Which one is he, bad skin or ugly suit?

GROOM

(chuckling)

I guess he would be bad skin.

DANNY

I wanted to commend you on the seating arrangements. Our table is going to have a reunion every five years.

GROOM

I thought you'd like it. Too bad you're out of the biz, you could've pitched your band to Uncle Randall?

DANNY

Why would I do that?

GROOM

Randall Sloan, he's pretty much the biggest music attorney in LA.

INT. RECEPTION - MOMENTS LATER

Danny is still zipping his pants as he rushes to his table. Uncle Randall is nowhere to be seen. Only Bad Skin remains. Jane sits stoically.

DANNY
Where did he go?

BAD SKIN
Who?

DANNY
The lawyer guy.

BAD SKIN
I don't know. I don't think he could stay very long. He's a busy guy.

DANNY
Shit.

CUT TO:

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Danny's car is parked in front of his building.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Jane sits behind the wheel listening to Danny complain.

DANNY
Screw the wedding. So I didn't talk to mister hot shot attorney. So I was rude. Firewater, or whatever we're fucking called, we're going to make it in spite of that windbag.

JANE
And in spite of Green Day's manager.

DANNY
What?

JANE
The guy with the Bad Skin. We were at the table of musical bigwigs.

Danny does not look well.

DANNY
I better get out.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEMORIAL GARDENS - EVENING

Danny wretches behind a gravestone. Jane stands by.

JANE
I figured you had already made such an
ass of yourself, they would probably hate
your band on principle.

Danny stands up. He looks pretty shaky.

DANNY
Suicide is out of the question.

JANE
That's good to hear.

He starts to walk, and she follows.

DANNY
Killing yourself's only cool when you're
a superstar. When Booze McNobody offs
himself, it's just plain pathetic.

Danny stops by a gravestone.

DANNY (cont'd)
Do you know what scares me? Do you know
what wakes me up at four in the morning
and sits on my chest? The knowledge that
if I disappeared tomorrow, no one would
notice.

JANE
That's ridiculous.

DANNY
I mean, three or four friends would be
pretty sad and my parents would
definitely cry but in the grand scheme of
things, all the work I've done up to this
instant would add up to nothing. I mean
if I were to make it playing music, all
the struggles would be worth it, they
would make great stories about stamina
and courage and sticking to it and all
that. But if it never happens... all this
energy, this effort, would add up to
nothing. It's all or nothing.

(MORE)

DANNY (cont'd)

There is no almost, no consolation prize. I mean, you can say its character building or a learning experience or other shit that's supposed to make a failure feel better, but in the big picture it'll be nothing more than a way to pass time, like reading Newsweek in the check-out line, or masturbating. That scares the shit out of me.

Danny looks at the landscaped grave.

JANE

As long as you're not buried in the ground, there's still hope...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Jane climbs in the car, Danny leans in the passenger window.

JANE

I'll bring back your car tomorrow.

DANNY

Thanks.

She starts up the car. Danny doesn't budge. Finally...

DANNY (cont'd)

Do you think you could take the curse off now?

JANE

The curse?

DANNY

Yeah, I think I've learned my lesson.

JANE

I have no idea what you're talking about.

DANNY

Never mind...

He gets up off the car.

JANE

Oh, I almost forgot...

She hands him a folded piece of paper.

DANNY
What's this?

JANE
That's the numbers of those record guys.

Danny can't believe what he's hearing...

JANE (cont'd)
I told them I knew this incredible band.
They were actually very nice. If you
disguise your voice, you might be able to
talk to them.

DANNY
No way!

She blows him a kiss and drives off.

He looks down at the slip of paper.

DANNY (cont'd)
The kid is making a comeback.

INT. STAIRWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Danny dances like a prize fighter as he climbs the stairs to his third floor apartment; the stairway rings with his enthusiastic whisper...

DANNY
The kid is on a roll again.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He arrives at his door...

DANNY
You can't keep the kid down.

...which is ajar.

DANNY (cont'd)
You think you can keep the kid down?

He pushes the door open, we hear the familiar rhythmic sound of machinery. He hits the lights to reveal...

HIS APARTMENT HAS BEEN RANSACKED.

As Danny closes the window, reducing the machine noise, despair spills over Danny's face...

In the middle of the wreckage lays an open guitar case -- HIS LES PAUL IS GONE.

FADE OUT.

A TITLE READS: "INFERNO"

FADE IN:

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Danny sits on the floor, head in hands, staring at the empty guitar case.

A PAIR OF UNIFORMED COPS tally up the damage in pocket notepads. They wade through a pile of scattered record albums: *Kiss Alive II*, *Black Flag's Damage*, *Parliament's Clones of Doctor Funkenstein*.

COP
(aside to his partner)
I guess they stole all the good records.

The phone rings and Danny picks it up.

DANNY
(to phone)
Crime scene...Oh, hi Lauren...No I wasn't joking, my apartment got robbed...

Danny sees a policeman looking in the freezer. He gets nervous.

DANNY (cont'd)
(cupping the phone)
Uh... can I help you?

POLICEMAN
The freezer was open, want to make sure nothing was disturbed.

DANNY
Don't worry yourself. Nothing important in there.

The POLICEMAN moves back to surveying the wreckage and Danny quickly searches the freezer. He looks confused as he can't seem to find what he's looking for...

A muted voice calls out from the phone receiver... Danny puts the phone to his ear...

DANNY (cont'd)

Sorry Lauren, a lot going on... Yep...
The Les Paul has found a new owner...
Yep, all 1959 of it. Umm hmm... The
wedding? If you'd asked me an hour ago I
would've said the wedding sucked, but now
that I have something to compare it to, I
guess it wasn't so bad.

Danny looks over to see the Cop staring at the Jumbo poster
hanging on the wall.

COP

You have any idea why these posters were
blowing all over town last week?

Danny shrugs.

DANNY

(to phone)
My date with Silky?
(a bitter chuckle)
Hmm. Worse than the wedding, better than
grand theft Gibson...
(he chuckles again)
I don't know if she liked the band, the
topic didn't really come up....Why would
she have wanted to interview me?

Danny goes pale...

CUT TO:

AN ARTICLE IN THE SF WEEKLY...

"Firewater Fizzles...by Silky French."

STU (O.S.)

"The performance can be summed up in a
word..."

A WIDER ANGLE REVEALS:

INT. PRACTICE SPACE - AFTERNOON

Stu reads aloud from the Weekly...

STU

"...utterly disappointing."

JACK

That's two words.

DANNY
(to Lauren)
You could have told me.

LAUREN
I thought you knew.

STU
"Firewater showed definite promise taking the stage, but the welcome soon wore off. Their energy and enthusiasm proved to be short-lived as they reached a quick and unsatisfying climax. The rest of the show droned on like an apologetic afterthought."

JACK
Ouch.

DANNY
(searching for a rock to crawl under)
You really should have mentioned--

LAUREN
I really thought I did.

STU
"The blame falls squarely on the shoulders of their singer, Danny Sullivan. A self-described nerd, he shot his wad before he even worked up a sweat. For the rest of the performance, if it can be called that, his melodies just hung there limp, dangling like an empty balloon."

CHAS
It sounds like she saw a completely different show.

STU
"His immaturity was also evident..."

Danny snatches away the review.

STU (cont'd)
Wait. I think I saw the word "flaccid."

Danny stares at the review in horror. Chas gives Lauren the stink-eye.

CHAS
Thanks for getting us the review.

LAUREN
There's no such thing as bad press.

CHAS
An obituary is bad press.

LAUREN
(unconvincing)
She said you showed promise.

STU
Somehow I don't think that'll be the
lasting impression.

Danny moans and crumples up the paper.

LAUREN
It's only the first review. These things
take time.

CHAS
You're like a broken record with that.

LAUREN
It does take time.

CHAS
Yeah, like it took time for Jumbo.

Danny looks up...

DANNY
What about Jumbo?

CHAS
(to Lauren)
You didn't tell him?

LAUREN
I was going to tell you when I called,
but when I heard your news...

STU
One of the Jumbo bimbos smoked Mel
Morris's pole. They were signed the next
day.

DANNY
Jumbo? Signed?

LAUREN
Well, we're not Jumbo.

CHAS

If you did a little less "managing" and a little more pole-smoking--

LAUREN

You guys didn't want anything to do with Mel Morris, remember? You didn't like the way he combed his hair.

STU

If we'd known we were just a measly blow job away from the big time--

LAUREN

No one is a blow job away from the big time.

CHAS

Tell that to Jumbo.

LAUREN

You're not Jumbo!

CHAS

Thanks to you.

LAUREN

This is ridiculous. You hate Jumbo.

CHAS

I hate failure more.

LAUREN

Well if you want to be Jumbo you're going at this all wrong. You gotta spend a lot more time in front of MTV studying what sells, and then copy it.

Chas starts noodling on the guitar, tuning Lauren out.

LAUREN (cont'd)

(pressing on)

That's what they did. The first rule of the record business is that no one knows what'll sell tomorrow, but everyone knows what is selling today. Imitate that and you got a chance of catching the caboose before the train passes by. But the problem Jumbo is gonna have is that by the time they rush their record out, it'll be the flavor of last month. Everyone'll be sick and tired of pistachio fudge ripple and Jumbo will be doling out free scoops.

Since Chas isn't listening, Lauren addresses the other three...

LAUREN (cont'd)

We're trying to build something lasting, and the only way to do that is from the ground up. The labels aren't going to see dollar signs until we show them dollar signs. It takes time, it takes patience. Do you want to be a band who got signed over a blow job? I don't think so. We gotta suck it up...

STU

(aside to Jack)

No pun intended.

LAUREN

...If we get a bad review, fuck 'em. She'll be eating her words one day. If we lose a Gavin showcase, it's their loss, not ours. They could have gotten in on the ground floor, but now they'll have to pay full price when the time comes--

JACK

We lost the Gavin showcase?

Lauren looks at the ground.

LAUREN

They gave the slot to another band.

JACK

Who?

LAUREN

Fart Contest.

DANNY

(floored)

Fart Contest?

LAUREN

They said they wanted a punk band...

DANNY

Fart Contest?!

LAUREN

We'll just--

CHAS

You said that show was a lock.

LAUREN

Well, that's what they told me. I'm only as reliable as my sources.

CHAS

Which are pretty fucking unreliable.

LAUREN

So we suck it up and play somewhere else. I've already lined us up something on campus.

DANNY

(looking sick)

On campus?

LAUREN

Yeah we can do a nooner and--

CHAS

A nooner? A convention means drinking. No one will even be awake at--

LAUREN

I've been making phone calls. We'll get people out to see us.

Danny turns his attention to the ceiling. Maybe something up there will make some sense.

LAUREN (cont'd)

We gotta be patient. There are things we have no control over. We can't let it get us down.

CHAS

What do you mean "us"?

LAUREN

Excuse me?

CHAS

You keep saying "We" and "Us." What fucking "Us"? We're the ones out there putting our asses on the line. We write the tunes. We move the gear...

Stu and Jack look at one another.

CHAS (cont'd)

...while you do god knows what. And then you talk about our music like you really chip in all that much.

(MORE)

CHAS (cont'd)

Maybe you should do something you're good at instead of pretending the stuff you're doing here has some value.

LAUREN

What are you trying to say?

CHAS

I think I'm making myself pretty clear.

LAUREN

You want me out?

CHAS

Nobody's asking you to stay.

DANNY

Wait a minute. let's calm down here.
Nobody said anything about--

CHAS

Fuck that! What the hell has she done for us? Nothing. We're right where we were when we signed on. This is bullshit.

LAUREN

(angry)

You ungrateful... Are you kidding? You really think you put in half the time I do? Even a third of the time?

(trying not to cry)

Nobody's asking? "Lauren, we need a discount on guitar strings." "Lauren, the van needs a tune-up." "Lauren my bottom needs wiping." You've got your little high school cabal pretending that you'd be at the top of the charts if only...

(really trying not to cry)

You know what? Maybe people don't want what you're selling. Cause I'm not standing in your way. As much as you'd love to believe it, I'm not your problem. If you guys want to succeed it takes hard work. I can't remember the last band that got famous by gazing at their belly-buttons. Sometimes I think the only reason you have me is so you can blame it on someone else while you sit on your lazy asses doing nothing. That's such an easy way out. Have some balls, worry about things you can control...

(beat)

(MORE)

LAUREN (cont'd)
 ...which, as of now, is everything,
 because I'll be buried up to my eyeballs
 in dog shit before I lift a fucking
 eyelid to help you ungrateful fucks!

Lauren bursts into tears and storms out of the room.

CHAS
 Well, I think that went pretty well.

Danny can't believe what just happened. He gives Chas a look asking, "What did you just do?" Chas shrugs.

STU
 (sarcastic)
 I guess that makes you the manager now,
 Chas.

CHAS
 Fine. I can do nothing just as well as
 she can.

JACK
 Don't sell yourself short, Chas. You do
 nothing way better than she does.

Chas starts making noise on the guitar, ending the conversation.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRACTICE SPACE - NIGHT

Danny, Stu, and Jack look downtrodden as they march out of the warehouse.

CHAS
 I don't know what you're sulking about;
 we'll be way better off without her.

Chas tries to light a cigarette in the wind. His struggle does not inspire confidence...

A car horn blares "La Cucaracha"; Chas looks up and smiles. It's Herb, AND HE'S DRIVING A HEARSE.

HERB
 What do you think of the new wheels?

STU
 You look good in a hearse.

Chas climbs in...

CHAS

You guys sure you don't want to come?

HERB

We got a quart of 151 and eleven hits of acid!

Jack, Stu, and Danny give variations of "No thanks," and the hearse peels out.

JACK

Now what?

All three look at one another, but no one has a good answer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Danny has made no effort to clean up after the robbery. It's like a bomb went off; everything is everywhere. The empty guitar case yawns in the middle of the room.

Stu and Jack sit on the couch drinking beer and sifting through the detritus. Danny stares at his scattered CD collection; nothing strikes his fancy. When they're not playing music, they don't have much to talk about. Jack fills the silence...

JACK

There's this band in Chico called Amish Rakefight.

STU

So?

JACK

So, that's a totally cool name.

STU

Sounds like it's taken.

JACK

Yeah, but I'm just saying, we should have a name like that one.

STU

Like Amish Rakefight? How can a name be like Amish Rakefight.

DANNY

How about Quaker Hoebattle. Or Mennonite Shovelbrawl... Hindu Cowtussle.

Stu finds the University of Oregon catalog.

STU
What's this?

DANNY
It's nothing. B left it behind.

STU
Check this out, it's like *The Shining*.

He shows Jack: the inside of the front cover is filled with writing -- the same sentence written over and over again, "I am a loser."

Danny grabs the catalogue from him.

DANNY
I've got to get up early tomorrow.

Stu and Jack stand as one, they've been waiting for the reprieve...

JACK
Cool.

STU
No problem.

Danny ushers them out without complaint. After he closes the door, he stares at the inside cover of the catalog. He tosses it in the empty guitar case. With his last ounce of energy, he picks up the phone.

DISSOLVE TO:

A MARQUEE advertising "Bad Lieutenant"; we are

EXT. UC THEATRE - NIGHT

A dour crowd files out of the movie theatre.

Danny and Jane emerge, and they can't stop laughing.

DANNY
You were right, that definitely cheered me up.

JANE
I feel like scoring some crack and masturbating.

DANNY
Me too!

She puts an arm around him.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT

The door opens and Danny and Jane wade into the ruins. Jane is impressed by the wreckage.

JANE
Is there actually an apartment under here?

DANNY
If you dig deep enough.

JANE
Good thing you're an archeologist.

DANNY
Beer?

Jane nods.

In the kitchen, Danny digs through a drawer full of utensils. He can't find what he's looking for...

In the living room Jane discovers the Jumbo poster...

Danny returns with the beers and finds Jane staring at the extreme anatomy on the poster...

DANNY (cont'd)
I couldn't find the opener.

JANE
They're twist off.

Danny tears the Jumbo poster down and crumples it into a ball.

JANE (cont'd)
I've heard great things about that band, Firewaiter.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Danny tunes his acoustic guitar.

JANE
May I?

DANNY
Sure

JANE picks up the guitar, fingers a chord and strums a chord, and sings Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi" pitch perfect.

Danny is speechless.

Jane finishes. Smiles and hands the guitar to Danny.

JANE
You play something...

DANNY
What do you want to hear?

JANE
Do you know any Beatles?

Danny smiles and strums...

DANNY
(singing)
If I fell in love with you/ would you
promise to be true...

Jane blushes at the selection, but when Danny reaches the verse, she contributes the high harmony. Danny's impressed. They giggle between lines, but they sound pretty good. Their version of "If I Fell" continues through the following MONTAGE:

A LITTLE LATER...

Danny and Jane are all over each other, it's hard to tell what belongs to whom; it's a first-rate make out session.

A LITTLE LATER STILL...

As the mashing continues, Jane comes up for air.

JANE
At this rate, we're not gonna get
anywhere.

She pulls her top off; she's not wearing a bra.

JANE (cont'd)
Let's go to the bedroom.

DANNY
Are you sure? I feel kinda funny about
this.

JANE
The only reason you feel funny is 'cause
you still have your pants on.

DANNY

I was just thinking--

She puts a finger on his lips.

JANE

You think too much. Sometimes you don't know if it's right until you do it.

DANNY

Sounds like a plan.

She takes him by the hand...

IN THE BEDROOM...

A trail of clothes leads from the doorway to the bed, where the sheets have been strangled and pulled into a knot. The bed is otherwise empty. On the far side of the bed stands a small table with a glass of water and a clock; it's 2:30.

Jane's hand reaches up from behind the bed, grabs the glass of water, and disappears. A moment later, Danny's hand returns the glass to the bedside table; the glass is empty.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

As "If I Fell" ends with rising harmonies, Danny and Jane lie in each others arms on the bedroom floor. They're wrapped in a comforter, wearing nothing but goofy grins.

DANNY

From now on, no more thinking.

JANE

You gotta learn to relax.

DANNY

I may need a lot of lessons

Their laughter is interrupted by the phone ringing.

They look at one another, "Who would be calling at this hour?" Danny answers it on the third ring.

DANNY (cont'd)

(on phone)

Hello?

He looks at Jane...

DANNY (cont'd)
 (on phone)
 Hi Chas...

...and Jane looks suddenly guilty.

DANNY (cont'd)
 (on phone)
 You're where?!

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY'S CAR - LATE NIGHT

Danny drives. He looks over at Jane; she's staring straight ahead.

DANNY
 I really don't think our having sex made
 Chas go to jail.

No response.

DANNY (cont'd)
 You told me to relax, now I'm telling
 you.
 (beat)
 By the way, I had a really great time.

Still nothing...

DANNY (cont'd)
 Now you're supposed to say, "I had a
 great time, too."

JANE
 I feel like I committed incest.

DANNY
 No, you're supposed to say--

JANE
 I feel like I just did it with my little
 brother.

DANNY
 Your little brother? Thanks a lot, at
 least I could be your big brother.

JANE
 I don't have a big brother.

DANNY

It's the principle of the thing.
(losing his sense of humor)
You see? You should have worried before,
'cause then it's never as bad as you
think. If you go in with an open mind,
you're just setting yourself up for
disappointment.

JANE

What's Chas gonna say?

DANNY

He's not gonna care. He dumped you,
remember?

Jane shoots him an angry glance.

DANNY (cont'd)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be so blunt,
but it's not like you've been seeing him
or anything.

Jane is silent. Danny suddenly looks a lot less confident.

DANNY (cont'd)

It's not like that right?

Jane stares out the window. Danny looks ill...

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - LATE NIGHT

Danny and Jane walk in. Chas sits on a bench. He hasn't
slept, but he already has a hangover.

DANNY

Are you all right?

CHAS

I'll live.

JANE

What happened?

CHAS

What are you doing here?

Jane looks guilty...

DANNY
She was worried about you.
(changing the subject)
So what the hell happened?

CHAS
It's all kind of a blur.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FREEWAY - EARLIER THAT EVENING

THE FLASHBACK IS SHOT BY A DRUNKEN CAMERAMAN:

CHAS (V.O.)
We were headed to Marin to score some
blow...

The hearse speeds across the Golden Gate Bridge, headed north on 101. Chas drives. Herb is trying to get his pants unbuckled. They're both shit-faced.

HERB
Slow down, I gotta take a slash!

Chas laughs, and slows to eighty, Herb has to contort himself to get hips up to the crack in the window.

HERB (cont'd)
Check it out: the golden showers bridge!

Lights flash behind them.

CHAS
Oh shit.

HERB
Don't pull over, I just started.

CHAS
You got to pinch it.

HERB
No way, dude, I'll get a hernia.

THE PICTURE BLURS; WHEN THE FOCUS SHARPENS AGAIN WE ARE:

EXT. SHOULDER OF THE FREEWAY

A HIGHWAY PATROLMAN stands by Chas's window. Chas is remarkably cool considering he's had fifty drinks and is frying on acid.

CHAS

Hello, Officer. What seems to be the problem?

HIGHWAY PATROL

You made an illegal lane change back there. Can I see your license?

CHAS

Sure thing, Officer. I didn't realize there were no lane changes.

As Chas gives the Patrolman his license, Herb giggles. Highway Patrol shines his flashlight on him.

HIGHWAY PATROL

Is your friend all right?

CHAS

Yeah, he's just had a bit too much to drink. I'm sort of the designated driver, you know.

HIGHWAY PATROL

Sort of?

Chas smiles.

POLICEMAN

You want to step out of the car?

HERB

(giggling)
Busted.

THE SHOT BLURS AND REFOCUSES:

MINUTES LATER...

Chas climbs back behind the wheel. The Patrolman leans in...

HIGHWAY PATROL

You get away with a warning this time. Just get your friend home.

CHAS

Sure thing. Thanks, Officer.

Chas turns to Herb...

CHAS (cont'd)

No sweat, dude.

...but Herb's not there. His clothes are laying on his seat as though he melted inside of them...

CHAS (cont'd)

Herb?

Chas checks the back seat. He's starting to panic, when he sees someone out the back window, and all the blood drains from his face...

HERB (O.S.)

You pigs are totally out of control!!

OUTSIDE THE HEARSE...

HERB is standing on one foot, his hands above his head like they were attached to strings. He's in the Karate Kid position; but unlike the Karate Kid, Herb is stark naked.

THE SHOT BLURS AND REFOCUSES...

But Herb is still in that idiotic position, and still naked.

HERB (cont'd)

Come on, Chas, we can take these wusses.

He must be seeing double, because there is only one Highway Patrolman here, and he is reaching for his gun...

Herb suddenly sprints toward the embankment, but he trips and hits the bushes with a girlish shriek. The Highway Patrolman shakes his head and walks toward Herb...

Chas lays his head on the steering wheel, dreading the darkness of his immediate future.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - BACK TO PRESENT

Chas looks cowed for the first time...

CHAS

They made me piss, so I won't be driving the van anytime soon.

DANNY

What about Herb?

CHAS

We got to bail him out.

DANNY

Wait a minute; I'm not going further in the hole because he decided to share his issues with the police.

CHAS

If his Mom finds out about this, he's dead. No trust fund, no nothing. He feels really terrible. This is the wake-up call he's been looking for.

DANNY

What about your wake-up call?

Chas laughs...

CHAS

Hanging around with Herb is my wake up call. It keeps things in perspective. I'll never be that bad off.

DANNY

If you hang around with Jeffrey Dahmer and you only eat a couple of kids, that's still pretty bad off.

CHAS

Come on, Danny, he'd do it for you.

DANNY

Why is it that people who don't have shit always claim that if they did, they'd be helping you out? The reason they don't have shit is because they can't even help themselves out.

The three of them stand there for a minute. Chas looks at Jane.

CHAS

How did you find out so fast?

JANE

Well...

DANNY

(a little too loud)
All right, I'll do it!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - LATER NIGHT

Danny, Chas, and Jane sit together on a bench in the waiting room. Danny and Jane look uncomfortable, Chas just looks tired. Chas leans over to Jane...

CHAS
I'm glad you came.

...and takes her hand. Danny gets up, agitated

DANNY
What's taking him so long?

Herb bounds into the waiting room...

HERB
Can you believe this bullshit? If they want to arrest someone, they should arrest the guy who sold me that acid. That guy totally ripped me off.

Danny rolls his eyes...

DANNY
You're welcome.

...and leaves.

HERB
What's his problem?

The Cop enters with a manila envelope.

COP
I need you to sign for your effects.

HERB
You better not have fucked with them.

The Cop glares at Herb, who instantly withers. His belongings are dumped out on the desk.

AMONG THEM IS A BOTTLE OPENER SHAPED LIKE DARTH VADER.

Chas watches Herb pocket it.

HERB (cont'd)
What do you say we get a drink? I'm buying.

FADE OUT.

CLEON (V.O.)
Inspiration is like a cat.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSE MUSIC STORE

Danny is poised to snip the strings off a beautiful steel guitar. He's listening to Cleon talk to another AGING HIPPIE who stands at the counter; they are both very stoned.

CLEON
If you want a cat to come sit in your lap, you can't chase it around the house.

AGING HIPPIE
Very true.

CLEON
If you catch the cat, it's gonna be pissed. She might sit in your lap for a second, but she'll be all tense, just waiting to bolt. You can pet her all you want, but the second you stop stroking the fur...Zap.

AGING HIPPIE
Zap.

CLEON
Cat's gone.

AGING HIPPIE
Gone daddy gone.

Danny nods at the wisdom. He puts the wire cutters down...

CLEON
You want a cat to come sit in your lap, all you got to do is sit still.

AGING HIPPIE
That's it.

CLEON
You can't even think about the cat, cause the cat's gonna know it. The moment you forget about that cat, there she is, right in your lap, curling up and going to sleep.

AGING HIPPIE
Right on.

Danny fingers a chord on the guitar. Softly strums it and nods in appreciation of its simple beauty...

AGING HIPPIE (cont'd)
 Inspiration is like a pussy. If you want
 to keep it happy, you got to spread it
 wide and lick until your jaw locks.

Cleon explodes in lascivious laughter and the spell is broken. Danny expresses his displeasure with the wire cutters -- ping, ping, ping...

CLEON (O.S.)
 (barely able to breath)
 Exactly, exactly...

On Danny's disappointment we

MATCH CUT TO:

Danny's despair...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

EXT. CAMPUS - NOON

Danny stares at a scratched-up, silver glitter flying-V guitar that must have fallen off Quiet Riot's tour bus.

DANNY
 (concerned)
 That's it?

CHAS
 It's a classic. I used it when I played
 in Sex Luthor.

The guitar is held together by rust. Danny sits in the sliding doorway of the van, parked next to the campus quad. His T-shirt reads "Under Down."

DANNY
 Are the strings all right?

CHAS
 They've only been used once. I've got an
 extra set if you want to change them.

DANNY
 No. Definitely not.

VOICE
 What happened to the Les Paul?

Danny turns around to see a COOL GUY dressed in the late 90s mod outfit: baggy pants and an Ernie and Burt striped shirt. He looks like he stepped out of an ad in Spin magazine.

DANNY
A bad man took it away.

COOL
That sucks.

DANNY
Do I know you?

COOL
Yeah, we played with you guys at the Paradise last month.

DANNY
Oh, yeah...

Danny pretends to recall, but obviously has no idea who this guy is...

COOL
Sony wanted us to change our image. What are you gonna do? They write the checks.

DANNY
I guess they do.

COOL
It's weird having you guys open for us.

DANNY
Don't worry about it.

COOL
We'll make it up to you. When we get back from tour with U2, we'll get you guys something at the Fillmore.

DANNY
("I want to kill you")
That's great.

COOL
What do you think of the new name?

DANNY
New name?

COOL
Superpimp!

Danny can't help but laugh...

DANNY
Superpimp?

COOL
I know. It's so trendy. I wish we could have kept Shitty Shitty Band Band, but you know, they write the checks.

DANNY
Shitty Shitty Band Band?

Indeed, if you squint just right, you can make out the Hawaiian-shirted Nerd from their earlier show.

Danny squints in just that way, but it's not for recognition, it's to hold back the tears.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. UC BERKELEY'S SPROUL PLAZA - NOON

Danny addresses the DISINTERESTED STUDENTS in the quad. They all seem to have better things to do.

DANNY
(monotone)
I graduated from here six years ago; this is my triumphant return. We used to be Firewater. One Two Three Four...

As Danny strikes the first chord of the song a string breaks. He's out of tune, but he fights through it.

[Listen to track #4 - "Stoopid":
<http://andyliotta.com/music/stoopid/>]

DANNY (cont'd)
(singing)
You called me last night to tell me we're through/
Next day you took a rock to break into my bedroom/
You tell me that you're over me, but you want me all over you/
"I hate you, don't leave me" What can I do? You must think I'm Stoopid...

Lauren watches in the crowd. She looks sad, shaking her head before moving on.

As Danny starts the second verse another string breaks, then another.

CUT TO:

EXT. UC BERKELEY'S SPROUL PLAZA - LATER

Danny, Stu, and Jack load their equipment offstage, piling it next to the van. Chas talks to Herb instead. Some wise ass is calling out "Destroy Music Some More!"

Danny puts away the flying-V which has only one string left. It snaps as he lays it in the case.

DANNY
You only used those strings once?

CHAS
Yeah. My last show with Sex Luthor.

DANNY
When was that?

CHAS
I don't know, sixth grade?

DANNY
I need a beer.

EXT. TELEGRAPH AVENUE - DAY

Danny shuffles down the block, head hanging. Jack accompanies him, energetic as usual. Jack's trying to make out words scribbled on the back of his hand.

JACK
Okay, here's the latest. "Go to Your Room."

Danny doesn't respond.

JACK (cont'd)
I also like "Me First."

Nothing.

JACK (cont'd)
How about "Charlie Brown Helmet."

DANNY
(to no one in particular)
You know why people are pessimists?
Because when things go wrong, at least
you can say you were right.

Something catches Danny's eye in a store window. As he stares at it, his face changes...

DANNY (cont'd)
Holy shit.
(beat)
Holy fucking shit!!

His Les Paul hangs in the window of a Pawn Shop...

JACK
Buzz crusher.

INT. PAWN SHOP

DANNY
How long have you had that here?

PAWN BROKER
A guy brought it in a couple a days ago.

DANNY
That guitar was stolen out of my
apartment last week.

PAWN BROKER
Well, you'll need to have a policeman
verify.

DANNY
Can I borrow your phone?

PAWN BROKER
No.

DANNY
Oh, that's beautiful.

PAWN BROKER
I shelled out good money for that guitar.

DANNY
So did I!

PAWN BROKER
I should have known that little punk was
a thief. He tried to hock this flashing
cross, said it was a one of a kind
religious artifact.

DANNY
(realizing)
A flashing cross?

PAWN BROKER
He called it his mueslix.

DANNY
His Musi-fix?

PAWN BROKER
I knew it. One of a kind, my ass. Last
time someone tried to pull one over...

Danny runs out of the store.

CUT TO:

HERB

wearing a goofy grin, and charming a buxom YOUNG COED.

HERB
You know my grandfather totally founded
this place. Have you ever heard of Busby
Berkeley?

Before she can even ask about free tuition, Danny rushes out
of nowhere and punches him in flush on the cheek, knocking
him down. Chas grabs Danny before he can do any more damage.

Herb gets tough now that Chas has a hold of Danny...

HERB (cont'd)
What the fuck was that for?

DANNY
You fucking dick, you stole my fucking
guitar.

HERB
I was just borrowing it.

DANNY
At a pawn shop?

HERB
I was gonna pay you back.

DANNY
You break into my apartment and I fucking
bail you out of jail? I'm not bailing you
out now, you fuck, no matter what your
buddy Chas has to say.

Danny wrestles free of Chas' grasp.

HERB
I told him I was trying to get the thing
back.

DANNY

You told him?

(to Chas)

You fucking knew and you kiss my ass for bail money? What the fuck is wrong with you?

CHAS

I didn't know 'til after, and I figured you'd think I was a total loser if you found out how bad off Herb is, so I thought if we could just get the guitar back, everything would be okay.

DANNY

Okay? Everything okay? Are you fucking joking? Nothing is okay. What kind of fucking chump do you think I am?

HERB

Hey...

CHAS

Shut up, Herb.

(to Danny)

I didn't want you to get the wrong idea--

DANNY

What wrong idea? That he's a thieving little prick? Are you joking? What's the right idea?

Danny starts throwing his gear into the van.

DANNY (cont'd)

He makes you laugh. He's pathetic and immature and you think it's pretty funny. He makes you feel well-adjusted. Well that's just perfect. Really. Fucking perfect.

He throws in his last piece of gear...

DANNY (cont'd)

There. I'm loaded. Why don't you go and sell the rest of my gear and then you can have a binge you can laugh about forever!

...and he storms off.

STU

Chas, you're a fuck up. You're a good guitar player, but in general you're a fuck up.

JACK
 Why am I always the last to hear
 everything?

STU
 It's called bliss my friend.

HERB
 What a baby. I'll get him his fucking
 money.

CHAS
 (threatening)
 I want you to say one more word.

HERB
 Why?

CHAS
 Cause then I'm gonna knock your fucking
 teeth out.

Herb just stands there, mum.

STU
 (to Chas)
 He said 'Why,' doesn't that count as a
 word?

Chas picks up Stu's bass cabinet and loads it into the van.

STU (cont'd)
 (pleading)
 No seriously, you told him to say one
 more word and he did. You have to punch
 him in the face, those were the rules...

Herb walks off.

STU (cont'd)
 He's getting away!

FADE OUT.

CUT TO:

THE FRAMED PHOTO OF DANNY AND B GOOFING AROUND AT THE BEACH

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

Danny staring at the photograph. He lifts a bottle of 409 and
 spritzes the picture, wiping the glass until it sparkles. He
 wears yellow rubber gloves.

PULLING BACK FURTHER reveals that the apartment is spotless. This is the first time the place has been clean since B left.

Danny straightens the photo. His sadness is reflected in the frozen memory.

UPBEAT MUSIC KICKS IN. It's an 80s classic with a shameless optimism that is in complete contrast to Danny's mood: "I'm So Excited" by The Pointer Sisters.

THE MUSIC ACCOMPANIES THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCE...

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY - AFTERNOON

Danny's car speeds north on Interstate 5.

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

Danny grips the steering wheel with purpose; he's deep in thought. His lips move as he carries on a silent conversation. He tries to muster a confident smile but it dies stillborn.

He tries another smile and has a bit more success. He definitely needs some more practice looking happy. He tries again, but the only real enthusiasm is in the soundtrack...

EXT. FREEWAY - EARLY EVENING

As the sun sets on the evergreens, Danny's car passes a road sign: "You are now entering Oregon."

DISSOLVE TO:

A WOMAN CLEANING HER APARTMENT...

as she dances to the Pointer Sisters. She's dressed in flowing satin pajamas and fuzzy pink slippers, and even though she is only seen from the neck down, her joy is undeniable.

On the inside of the front door hangs a black-and-white poster of LOUIS ARMSTRONG; he's also excited. He apparently doesn't mind that a hole has been cut in his chin to make room for the peephole.

Knock Knock.

The Woman dances over to the poster, peeks through Louis' chin, and immediately stops dancing.

Knock Knock.

She reaches over to the stereo and KILLS THE MUSIC.

As she pulls the door open, the elated Louis Armstrong swings in and is replaced by the figure standing at the door: a miserable and dishevelled Danny. He looks like he's been chewed up, swallowed, and excreted. He twists his lips into a clumsy smile...

DANNY
Remember me?

A REVERSE ANGLE reveals that the Woman is B, which means we are

INT. B'S COLLEGE APARTMENT - EVENING

B
Danny... Wow.

She's made a few changes: the baseball cap is gone, her hair is trimmed in a fashionable bob, her pajamas and slippers are further evidence that she's not a tomboy anymore.

DANNY
I made a wrong turn on Telegraph Avenue,
the next thing I knew...

They stand there staring, it's been a long time since they've seen each other. B looks so much better, Danny so much worse.

DANNY (cont'd)
You look great.

B
Thanks.

He doesn't know what to do with his hands so he gives her an awkward hug and then looks at her some more.

DANNY
Nice doorway.

B
(snapping out of it)
Oh, yeah, sorry, come on in.

She steps aside and he enters.

B (cont'd)
I was in the middle of...I wasn't
expecting...Wow.

DANNY
Did I come at a bad time?

B
No, no, not at all.

They stand there for a moment. Then...

B (cont'd)
You look like you could use some coffee.

DANNY
(self-conscious)
I do?

B
No, I mean, uh, you want some coffee?

DANNY
Sure.

She escapes to the kitchen.

Danny looks around. It's a nice place, small and cozy, spartan decor -- a grown-up's dorm. On a table by the phone is a PHOTO OF A GOOD-LOOKING MAN. Danny's smile fades as he sees it.

B returns with the coffee.

B
Sorry if the coffee's a little strong,
it's been simmering for about a week now.
Midterm brew.

She follows his glance to the photo...

B (cont'd)
Oh, that's Layla's ex-boyfriend. We keep
him around to scare off suitors.

DANNY
Does it work?

B
You tell me.

They both laugh a little too hard.

She sits at the kitchen table and sips her coffee. After an awkward silence...

B (cont'd)
So, how was the drive?

DANNY
It was good.

Danny sits down across from her.

DANNY (cont'd)
So how's things?

B
Good. Really good.

DANNY
Good.

He sips the coffee, winces, and recovers...

B
Is the coffee okay?

DANNY
It's good!

B
Good.

They look at one another...

DANNY
You look really good.

B
Thanks...again.

Danny opens his mouth to speak, changes his mind, sips his coffee, winces, smiles. B sips her coffee. Danny looks down at the table; maybe he'll find his speech written there.

As if on cue, a BEAUTIFUL GREY CAT jumps into his lap. Danny can't believe his eyes -- it must be a sign.

B (cont'd)
What is it?

DANNY
A cat.

B
Oh, that's Muscles.

DANNY
Muscles?
(to Cat)
Hi, Muscles.

Danny looks up at his beautiful ex-girlfriend, takes a deep breath, and dives in...

DANNY (cont'd)
You're my muse.

B
Excuse me?

DANNY
You're my muse, my inspiration, and I
need you back.

B
(what do I say to that?)
I'm in grad school.

DANNY
I know, I know, it's an obstacle; but we
can overcome it. The way I see it, I've
got nothing in S.F. I could move up here,
we could get a place...

B
It seems a little--

DANNY
(finishing her sentence)
Rash?! I know. But I've had a long drive
to think about this and I love you and I
know you love me and we've always been
great together and I think, well, I'll
just come out and say it, I think we
should get--

Danny suddenly jumps to his feet screaming...

DANNY (cont'd)
OOOOOWWWW!!

...and Muscles darts away; Danny's coffee falls in his lap.

DANNY (cont'd)
OOWW!! Oh my god, that little bastard
nearly tore my thighs off.

B
(trying not to laugh)
I'm so sorry. She kinda hates people...

DANNY
That's an endearing quality.

B
Are you okay?

DANNY

Fortunately the boiling coffee cauterized the wound.

B

Let's get those pants off.

Danny looks bashful for all of a second, but the coffee and the cat scratches are unbearable. He unbuttons his jeans and pulls them down. A tiny trickle of blood oozes down his thigh.

DANNY

Oh my god, I think he hit an artery.

B

Here, let me help you.

B sits Danny down. He lifts his legs, she pulls, and just as the pants come sliding off...

SEXY VOICE

Is everything all right, Beatrice?

Danny turns his head and is almost blinded by the radiance of B's roommate, LAYLA. She could be a swimsuit model and she's not hiding it, dressed in a long, form-fitting tank top. Danny has forgotten the entire English language.

B

Hey, Layla. This is...

LAYLA

Danny! I recognize you from the tear-stained photos.

B rolls her eyes. Danny holds out a hand...

DANNY

Hi.

...but Layla hugs him instead; she's obviously comfortable with intimacy.

LAYLA

You look like you could use some coffee.

DANNY

(all he can think to say is)
I know.

LAYLA

What happened to your pants?

Danny realizes he's not wearing any and grabs his jeans from B. He holds them over his underwear to hide his bleeding leg and anything else that might pop up.

LAYLA (cont'd)
 (to B)
 Jeez, Beatrice, I can't leave you alone
 for a minute.

Danny watches as Layla goes to the kitchen...

B
 (to Danny)
 Are you all right?

...and reaches up to get a box of rice cakes off the top shelf; her tanktop hikes up revealing thong underwear.

B (cont'd)
 Danny?

As Layla crosses the room Danny makes sure his pants are well-positioned. Layla mouths, "He's cute!" to B and disappears.

Danny looks back at B, dumbfounded.

B (cont'd)
 (uncomfortable)
 I'm sorry. I should have told you.

DANNY
 That's all right...I uh...she's your
 roommate?

B
 Yeah, I should have told you before
 you...

DANNY
 No problem.

B
 I'm sorry if I embarrassed you.

DANNY
 I'm the opposite of embarrassed.

B
 Good.
 (after a moment)
 What's the opposite of embarrassed?

DANNY
 Uh, I have no idea.

Danny has really been thrown but he tries to play it off...

DANNY (cont'd)
So how long have you two been roommates?

B
Since I got here.

DANNY
Wow. Does she date much?

She smiles a strange smile.

B
Not too much. Do you want to ask her out?

DANNY
What?
(snapping out of it)
No, no, not at all. I uh...

B
Why don't you give me those pants.

She grabs them but Danny holds on tight...

DANNY
That's okay. Really. Uh, where was I?

B
You were about to ask me something.

DANNY
I was? Oh, yeah.

He presses his pants down his legs...

DANNY (cont'd)
Will you marry me?

B just stares at him...

DANNY (cont'd)
I know it's kind of out of the blue, but,
well, you're my muse, and I made a huge
mistake, and it took me a while to figure
it out, and now that I have -- figured it
out that is -- I know what I need to do
and--

Layla calls out from her bedroom...

LAYLA (O.S.)
When are you coming to bed?!

Danny and B stare at each other for a long beat.

DANNY
She's not talking to me, is she?

B's strange smile is back, but now it's laced with sympathy.

DANNY (cont'd)
Yeah. Ooh. Okay, now it's a little awkward.

B
I was going to tell you, but I didn't know...

DANNY
No, really, I understand. I mean, this is grad school, right?

She smiles, a little embarrassed. He looks around for a cue. When he doesn't find one...

DANNY (cont'd)
Wow, it was really good seeing you.

He starts to put his pants back on...

DANNY (cont'd)
I've got a long drive ahead of me. I don't want to keep the road waiting. It hates that.

B
Danny...

He's having a hard time getting the wet pants back on...

DANNY
No, no. I'm fine, really. I mean, I'm crushed, but I understand. I might even be more turned on than crushed. To be honest, I'm not even sure which one of you I'm jealous of.

B
You don't have to go. Not just because...

DANNY
Seriously, B. I'm not going to get any sleep on the couch. I'm wide awake. Believe me, I may never sleep again.

He gives up on the pants...

DANNY (cont'd)
Do you think I could use the bathroom?

INT. B'S BATHROOM

Danny stares at himself in the mirror. Now that he's gotten his pants on, he can't think of anything else to do other than stare at himself and wonder how he came to be in this place at this time with absolutely no future outside this tiny room.

INT. B'S APARTMENT

Danny marches toward the front door, eyes forward.

DANNY
It was really good to see you.

B grabs his arm before he can escape. He finally looks at her. He's doing a bad job hiding his desperation.

B
Once, when I was a high school, I wanted to go to the school play, but I was afraid to go by myself. So I talked my dad into going with me. The second I got to the theatre I saw a bunch of friends hanging around, and I was suddenly mortified to be with my dad. I felt terrible, I mean, I wouldn't have gone if he hadn't gone with me, but once I got there, I wanted to be with my friends...

DANNY
So what happened?

B
I told him I wanted to go by myself.

DANNY
And he understood?

B
Yep.

DANNY
Wow. He's a lot nicer than I am.

They stand there looking at one another.

B
I'm not your muse, Danny.

DANNY
You're not?

B
I wasn't your inspiration; I was just the person who made it all right when you weren't inspired.

DANNY
How do you know?

B
Because that's who you were for me.

DANNY
But not any more?

B
Not any more.

Danny lets the truth of this statement flow over him; then he turns and goes...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT - VERY LATE

The Neighborhood is quiet; it's so late it's early. Danny's car pulls up in front of his building. It's a while before the door opens and Danny enters.

He pulls out a glass and pours in tomato and budweiser, throws in a few ice cubes. We momentarily cut in close to reveal

RONALD REAGAN SMILING inside one of the ice cubes...

Danny toasts John Lennon...

DANNY
To your health.

And drinks half in a single go. He starts chewing an ice cube. After a minute a strange expression passes over his face.

He stops chewing, reaches in his mouth and pulls out a small piece of paper. Looking closer, he sees it's Ronald Reagan.

DANNY (cont'd)
This is not good.

Danny looks more closely at the tab of acid, his concern grows. He unfolds it, two Ronald Reagans.

He unfolds it again... FOUR Ronald Reagans.

He unfolds it a third time. And once more.

SIXTEEN Ronald Reagans...

Danny looks up at John Lennon, helpless. The poster John Lennon seems to be smiling...

JOHN
Goo-goog-a-joob...

It's as if a BLACK LIGHT was switched on, and Danny's apartment is now a psychedelic wonderland. A CD starts to play, and the opening Mellotron flutes of "Strawberry Fields Forever" fill the silence with drug-addled sound. Terror and Beauty meet in Danny's living room...

The clock advances an hour in a three seconds, and Danny still listens to Strawberry Fields.

He looks at the clock. Has he been asleep? He looks more closely at the clock. He watches the seconds tick off and he giggles.

He moves through the living room, giggling at what he sees. We start to see the world as he does, ultra colorful, ultra sensitive. He picks up the beat-up guitar and strums the open strings. It sounds like a symphony.

DANNY
Let me take you down. Let me take you
down.

Danny stands there frozen as Strawberry Fields fades out. Danny stares at the towel. All the color has faded away, the room has become very gloomy indeed, no longer colorful and energetic but cold and dark and thirsty.

Strawberry Fields fades back in for the looped mellotron ending and "I buried Paul". Danny turns off the CD and sits down heavily in the middle of the room, an impossible contradiction of pure terror and pure inspiration.

The furniture seems to move in tighter, the walls moving toward him. The lights strobe a bit as he tries to rub the trip out of his eyes.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

He stumbles to the door and steps outside and he is suddenly...

EXT. STREET

...standing alone in front of his building.

For a moment the claustrophobia steps back. He starts to giggle at the silliness of his mood. He smiles and starts to walk down the street. The world brightens around him, as though he was followed by a hidden spotlight. In the distance the moon is sinking down in a colorful farewell.

A person walks past and says something. Danny spins around but the person has continued on. Another person walks by, and says something, the same thing..."I buried Paul"

He looks up as the next person walks toward him, the most haunted hollow face, almost like the walking dead. "Let me take you down..."

Danny starts to run. And he's running and the fearsome faces of the night walkers fly by in diabolical blurs. And he runs faster and the voices are still in his head and he runs and suddenly he is leaning against a wall. Someone taps him on the shoulder.

He turns to see a Policeman. The Policeman smiles at him but Danny looks terrified. It's the same Policeman who talked to him at his apartment, the one who booked Herb.

DANNY

Anything the matter?

POLICEMAN

I asked you if you were doing all right, you seemed a little out of sorts.

DANNY

No, no, just a little flu. You know, that time of year.

POLICEMAN

Yeah? Well, you should be home in bed.

DANNY

Oh, no, you know a little running is the best thing for the flu. My father always said.

POLICEMAN

He did?

DANNY

Yeah. He's uh, he's Scandanavian.

POLICEMAN

Oh.

DANNY

Yeah, well, gotta run. Thanks.

He forces a sickly grin and jogs off. When he rounds the corner he starts to sprint.

Halfway down the block he turns right and enters the graveyard...

EXT. MEMORIAL GARDENS

...and it's pitch black. But he keeps running and now he's out of breath, but he pushes forward.

As he walks he hears the voices repeating "Let me take you down...let me take you down...let me take you down..."

The camera tilts up to reveal a beautiful star filled sky...

DANNY (O.S.)

I'm not Harold Harris.

With the moon gone, the milky way lays splashed across the sky in all its bejewelled glory.

DANNY (O.S) (cont'd)

I'm not Natasha Banks.

The camera tilts back to earth revealing a weathered gravestone. "Harold Harris." And another "Natasha Banks."

Danny moves through the graveyard like a ghost.

Danny stops beside a newer head stone that reads "Paul McCarthur"

DANNY (cont'd)

I'm not Paul MacCarthur.

VOICE (O.S.)

I buried Paul.

Danny looks around. There is only the gnarled tree beside him.

The mantra continues: "Let me take you down... Let me take you down..."

He gathers himself and finds a new gravestone, and a freshly dug grave, apparently awaiting a morning funeral...

DANNY
I'm not Malcolm Woz...Wotjez...Sorry,
Malcolm.

We see the name on the stone: Malcolm Wocjesceiwski...

DANNY (cont'd)
As long as I'm not buried in the ground,
there is still hope.

He stands there a moment... He starts to unbutton his shirt.

VOICE (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Danny spins around again. No one there. Just the tree. After a moment he starts to remove his shirt.

"Let me take you down..."

VOICE (cont'd)
What are you, deaf? I asked you what
you're doing?

Danny surveys his surroundings. The trunk of the gnarled tree looks very unusual. Is that a face?

Danny is frozen in wonder: The face looks oddly familiar. Round wire-rim glasses. The accent is definitely Northern England...

DANNY
What the...?

TREE VOICE
So it's all right for you to talk to me,
but when I talk to you it's some kind of
crime?

Danny squints his eyes to make out the face in the dark.

DANNY
John?

JOHN LENNON
Well it's not Guy Lombardo.

Danny thinks about this, trying to make some sense. Finally...

DANNY
I get it, like "No one I think is in my
tree...?"

JOHN LENNON
Actually, it's your tree.

A moment of stunned silence. Then...

DANNY
You're blowing my mind.

JOHN
I think the LSD might be doing that.

DANNY
Lucy in the sky with diamonds, right?

JOHN
No. That was a picture my daughter made.

DANNY
(conspiritorial)
Come on... It's just us. You can tell me.

JOHN
Look, I'm not an idiot. If she'd named
the picture Herbert in the clouds with
gold dust, I wouldn't have written a song
that day.

DANNY
I knew it...

JOHN
So what are we doing in a graveyard?

Danny looks around at his surroundings and considers the
question.

DANNY
I think I'm dying.

JOHN
Everyone is dying. That's pretty much the
definition of living.

Danny smiles and then looks worried...

DANNY
You're kind of freaking me out.

JOHN
I have that effect on people.

Danny nods for a little too long. Then...

DANNY

Are you really John Lennon?

JOHN LENNON

Of course not. I'm just who you think John Lennon is. That's all I've ever been to anyone. Except Yoko. I mean, I'm dead for chrissakes.

DANNY

Jesus.

JOHN LENNON

No, John. A lot of people make that mistake. I'm just a guy, like anyone else.

Danny shakes his head and laughs, having a hard time believing his situation...

DANNY

Did you ever have one of those days, when everything seemed to be in a conspiracy against you. Not even on purpose or anything, just like events were adding up, trying to drive you nuts?

JOHN LENNON

Are you joking? You're describing status quo. You get used to it after a while. I mean, if you're nuts for long enough, it starts to feel a bit like sanity.

DANNY

I never actually feel nuts. Only average.

JOHN LENNON

Just because you feel average doesn't mean you are. You're just used to being you.

DANNY

That's easy for you to say.

JOHN LENNON

I'm a fucking tree, how easy can it be?

Danny just stares at him, shaking his head.

DANNY

When you were my age you were working on Abbey Road.

JOHN LENNON

Yeah and when Mozart was ten he could play the harpsichord with his prick. Who cares?

DANNY

Come Together, I Want You, Because...

JOHN

Don't remind me. I was writing solo material since Brian died. Before that I was frying pretty much round the clock. For me, the last real Beatles album was Rubber Soul. There's some great stuff after that, but I was riding in the caboose, throwing tomatoes from the cheap seats...

DANNY

But those are great albums.

JOHN

That's all Paul's doing. The man knows how to gift wrap. I mean listen to the bass on "Something." Or "Taxman."

DANNY

Or "Come Together"... Or the intro to "Strawberry Fields" or "Lucy in the -"

JOHN

Yeah, yeah, I was there. No need to play teacher's pet...

DANNY

Still, those songs, those albums... they're genius...

JOHN LENNON

I'll let you in on a little secret. There are a lot fewer geniuses than people think. What there are a lot of are people who work hard and don't quit. People who can hear their inner voice. People with individual taste. When a new album comes out your average braindead consumer thinks it's some act of god. Like we just snapped our fingers, and bang. It's a lot of bloody work.

(MORE)

JOHN LENNON (cont'd)

It's twenty-four hours a day for weeks on end, worrying and working. The Beatles worked every day for years, without a day off. This is before we made it anywhere. People want to believe that it's genius so they can let themselves off the hook for not going after their own dreams, and working dog's hours on a project that's essentially meaningless to them if you strip away the paycheck. No one sees the toil in a good song. But that doesn't mean there wasn't hard work done. It's supposed to look easy...

DANNY

So you're not a genius.

JOHN LENNON

I'm just a guy. Or a tree, or whatever. Anyone who thinks they're a genius, isn't.

DANNY

So then you might be a genius, cause you don't think you are.

The first purplish light of dawn is spilling across the sky.

JOHN LENNON

I just wrote a few songs. I was around at the right time. I was in sync for a while. Then I was out of sync. You get a bit older and look back and you laugh at the kid you once were. You look at choices you made that you'd make differently if you chose today. That's the nature of art. You can't be afraid of being second guessed, even by yourself. You make different choices at different times, you know? You just got to work toward making those choices come from the heart, so when you look back you might think you'd do it differently, but you respect the kid who did it that way. If you would do it different today, it's not because you were wrong, it's because you're not the same person anymore.

Danny sits back. He seems much more relaxed.

DANNY

What's it like being dead?

JOHN LENNON

It's shite. It's nothing. This is just your hallucination, I don't talk to anyone.

DANNY

Do you ever wonder about the songs you would have written, you know if you hadn't...?

JOHN LENNON

I don't wonder anything. Pretty much what being dead is all about.

DANNY

But where are the songs, you know? It always feels like you discover a song.

JOHN LENNON

That's bollocks. Songs are inventions, often times with some craftily stolen parts. They come fast or slow, it can feel like god working through you, but in the end, it's just you.

DANNY

But if you'd lived you would have written songs, they would have existed so there must be these songs...

JOHN LENNON

Would have. Didn't. There's nothing to give. You just drive yourself mad thinking it. It's like, what would I be like if I did such-and-such ten years ago instead of some other thing. Well, the truth is you didn't do it, so you'll never know.

DANNY

Come on, just give me a song.

JOHN LENNON

You're filled with songs. You're just looking in the wrong place. Really, you shouldn't be looking at all. You should be listening. And not with anyone else's ears. But with your own. That's what makes stuff unique, when you satisfy yourself, at least you know someone is happy.

Danny sits and thinks this over.

JOHN LENNON (cont'd)

I used to think all the greats had unshakable courage and self-confidence. Now I think what they actually had an amazingly high tolerance for self-doubt. The trick isn't to be certain, no one is certain. The trick is not letting the uncertainty get to you.

The surroundings have become indeed psychedelic, a hot purple pastiche. The sunrise is making the graveyard look like an easter egg.

Danny looks very excited.

DANNY

This is a trip.

JOHN LENNON

Yes it is. You're finally listening to yourself.

DANNY

You mean I'm you?

JOHN LENNON

No. I'm you.

DANNY

You're me? Like in I am the Walrus? "I am he as you are me as you are - "

JOHN LENNON

No.

DANNY

So I'm just talking to myself? So everything you're telling me I already know, but never could see? This is good acid.

JOHN LENNON

So I'll give you my best acid lyric: "There's nowhere you can be that isn't where you're meant to be..."

DANNY

It's easy...

JOHN

There's no such thing as a mistake. The only failure is quitting. Giving up is dying.

(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)

If you follow your heart, if you listen to your dreams, the world will take care of you, because you'll be taking care of it. It's not two things, it's one thing, It's called compassion. It's not just for other people.

Danny just stares at him. His eyes are filled with tears.

JOHN LENNON

Now it's time for you to get some sleep.

The first rays of dawn sunlight falls on a beautiful brown bed, with a green comforter. Danny looks confused...

JOHN

It was here all along, you just weren't looking...

Danny floats over to it... The comforter lifts and enfolds him. It's like heaven on earth.

DANNY

John...?

He looks, but in the first light of day, the tree is now merely a tree...

As the sunrise illuminates the grounds, Danny relaxes, and tears come to his eyes. After a moment he weeps quietly and closes his eyes.

In the distance we hear the sound of machinery, rhythmically changing. He's been shutting it out, but now he hears it as if for the first time. It's almost music.

After a while Danny opens his eyes and sits up.

HE'S SLEEPING IN THE EMPTY GRAVE.

He looks up to see that there are two men standing over him shaking their heads.

For a moment he's stunned, but he nods his head to the beat of the machinery, which continues to surge and fall, in a heavy metal rhythm.

He looks up at the men above him. Danny's face cracks into the widest grin we've seen to date...

DANNY (cont'd)

Good morning!!

He sits up and crawls out of the grave. He sees that there are a number of folks standing around. The service is about to begin.

DANNY (cont'd)
No worries! I was just warming it up for him!

He dashes across the cemetery grass, toward his apartment building. He's delighted to be alive.

FADE OUT.

We continue to hear the threshing machinery through the following scene...

FADE IN THE THRUM OF A NIGHTCLUB CROWD.

MICROPHONE FEEDBACK GIVES WAY TO DANNY'S VOICE SPEAKING OVER A P.A.

DANNY (cont'd)
(singing)
Well the first time/ That I saw you/ You were crying/ in the trees... And the last time...

The band joins Danny for the second half of the verse, it's the rhythm of the machinery...

[Listen to track #5 - "Psychedelic Boneyard":
<http://andyliotta.com/audio/ayce/12-Psychedelic-Boneyards.mp3>]

DANNY (CONT'D) (cont'd)
That I knew you/ You were flying/ On your knees.... Is it great to feel so good/ Did you ever think you would?/

Then the song borrows the hook from Strawberry Fields...

DANNY (cont'd)
Let me take you down cause I'm going to...

Stops playing the guitar... He finishes the line a cappella.

DANNY (cont'd)
Psychedelic Boneyard.

We push in on the kickdrum head proclaiming the newly christened band name: BUZZCRUSHER.

The band is tight as a drum, and their enthusiasm is palpable.

The audience nods along to the music.

In the crowd, the Lawyer from the Wedding stands beside Lauren. He is smiling and nodding. He leans to Laurne.

LAWYER

That singer looks awfully familiar.

Across the floor, two pattern baldness ponytails watch, nodding their approval. They turn to the Lawyer and give him the thumbs up.

THE SONG PLAYS CONTINUOUSLY OVER A FINAL MONTAGE

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

The band cuts the album with state of the art gear.

In the mixing room, the engineer looks at the Producer, they nod to one another...

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM

A Seven Year Old Girl dances with a doll around while her Pink Barbie Radio plays the song...

INT. BIGGER CLUB

Buzzcrusher performs before an ecstatic audience...

INT. SOUNDSTAGE

As Buzzcrusher lip syncs to the song as they make a video, a crane swoops in to get the action shots...

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S HOUSE

The same Seven Year Old watches their video on television, dancing with the doll...

ROLLING STONE PROCLAIMS: OVERNIGHT SUCCESS

With a Full Color photo of Buzzcrusher looking very cool. Danny wears a t-shirt reading 'Overnight took Ten Years'.

INT. STADIUM

Buzzcrusher rocks in front of Madison Square Garden.

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM

The Little Girl is excited to open a gift at her Eighth birthday party. It's the Buzzcrusher CD "...out of the fire..."

INT. WARNER BROS

They hold aloft their Gold Record...

EXT. YACHT

Buzzcrusher relax in a scenic Marina aboard a yacht with beautiful women. Jane shakes her head at the groupies wearing thongs...

INT. BUDOKAN, JAPAN

The band wows the Japanese audiences as Chas performs the guitar solo.

EXT. RESTAURANT

Chas staggers out of the restaurant with a floozy. Paprazzi attack and Chas fends them off...

EXT. BETTY FORD

Chas walks out, a cured man. He gives the thumbs up as flashbulbs explode...

INT. DAVID LETTERMAN SHOW

These guys are everywhere...

INT. WARNER BROS

They hold aloft a Platinum record...

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM

The Buzzcrusher CD is propping up her doll's car...

INT. RECORD STORE

Someone flips through the used bin. One copy of Buzzcrusher, another and another...

INT. SOUNDSTAGE

Buzzcrusher performs 'Unplugged'...They all look very tired.

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM

She turns off the radio, cutting off the song. She rolls her eyes and leaves...

EXT. PLANET HOLLYWOOD

Danny walks in all alone a reporter puts a microphone in his face.

DANNY
It's been quite a month.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END