

A CASE OF YOU

by

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INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - MORNING

JUSTIN CONRAD (29), dressed nicely, is racing around getting ready to leave for the day. His roommate, ELIOT BURKE (29) a hippy hipster, sits by the window smoking a joint.

JUSTIN
Really Cheech? 9 a.m.?

ELIOT
(mid hit)
Sorry, you gettin a contact high? I can go in my bedroom. Don't want you seizuring out on me.

JUSTIN
I don't get seizures.

ELIOT
Oh, right. What do you call them again?

JUSTIN
Marijuana induced fits. It's a medical condition. Shit, have you seen my bag? I barely have enough time to grab coffee before this book signing.

ELIOT
Yeah, it's right here. What are you doing tonight?

JUSTIN
I don't know. I gotta run. Call me later.

With that, Justin takes off out the door.

EXT. NYC STREET - CONTINUOUS

He walks down the block. His cell phone rings.

JUSTIN
Yo.

We hear the voice on the other end.

ELIOT
Yo. So...what are you doing tonight?

JUSTIN

I don't know. I said call me later.

ELIOT

I know. (Beat) I am. So hey, listen, Ashley and I are going to this Alvin Ailey modern dance thing tonight. Looks really cool. Interested?

JUSTIN

Modern dance? Not exactly what I had in mind for tonight. Or ever.

ELIOT

Okay. Well, we're gonna grab some Indian food at that new place around the corner after if you're down?

JUSTIN

Indian food? I don't know, man.

ELIOT

Might be nice for you to try...

JUSTIN

Doesn't that stuff give you the shits?

ELIOT

No. Not every time at least. How about some live music after?

JUSTIN

Think I might just stick to some Chinese food and --

ELIOT

Video games? Well, if it ain't broke don't fix it, huh?

Justin walks into...

INT. CAFFÈ TAZZA - CONTINUOUS

He immediately stops and stares straight ahead.

JUSTIN

(into phone)

I gotta go.

Hangs up. He continues to stare. Reveal a beautiful girl working behind the counter. This is BIRDIE HAZEL (27), effortlessly cool and exceptionally endearing. Justin walks up.

BIRDIE
Hi! What can I get for you?

JUSTIN
Medium coffee?

Birdie gets the coffee.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Such a beautiful day out there today. So...

Birdie doesn't hear him.

BIRDIE
There ya go.

JUSTIN
Good stuff. Okay. And...there you go.

He pays. Birdie looks to the next person in line. Justin lingers.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Done and done. Cool. Thanks.

He awkwardly leaves.

INT. SMALL AUDITORIUM - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Close in on a large sign that reads: 3rd Annual New York City Vamp-Fest. Justin sits at one of the handful of booths. He signs autographs behind a banner that reads "Teen Vampire." There's a small line of fans waiting patiently in front of the table. A NERDY FANBOY (30) approaches the table.

NERDY FANBOY
Mr. Conrad, it is quite an honor.
The name's David Abbott. I've read
all three of your books.

The nerdy fanboy enthusiastically shakes Justin's hand and hands him his copy of "Teen Vampire."

JUSTIN

Nice to meet you. You can just call me Justin.

Justin quickly signs the inside cover, hands it back to the nerdy fanboy, and looks to the next person in line.

NERDY FANBOY

Sorry, um, Mr. Con--, er, Justin, can you make it out to "Sticky Fingers"? That's my avatar name.

He hands the book back and grazes Justin's hand in the process. Justin signs.

NERDY FANBOY (CONT'D)

What inspired your decision to kill off Tabitha at the end?

JUSTIN

You know, I...

NERDY FANBOY

Because she had broken the sacred code of the Baldroozen nymphs? I guess she had it coming, right?

JUSTIN

Um...actually I was inspired because I was commissioned from the movie studio. You see, the movie was already out, so...that's what I do. I just write down EXACTLY what happened...in the movie. It is what it is.

Hurt, the nerdy fanboy turns to walk away. Justin softens.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Hey, uhh (Justin hesitates) Sticky Fingers?

The nerdy fanboy turns back to Justin.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

You're right. You can't fuck with the Baldroozen nymphs and expect to get away with it...ya know what I mean?

NERDY FANBOY

(utterly confused)

Who are you talking to?

JUSTIN

You, man. You just asked me a question about Tabitha?

NERDY FANBOY

Oh, yeah. Thanks for ruining the end of the movie for me.

The nerdy fanboy walks away. Justin sighs and looks to the next person in line and his jaw drops. He is looking at a very pretty, tall blonde woman, SARAH (29).

JUSTIN

Oh my god.

SARAH

Surprise!

She gives him a hug.

JUSTIN

Sarah Anderson? Holy shit.

SARAH

It's Sarah Kleinberg now.

She shows him her ring finger.

JUSTIN

Wow, that's crazy. Congratulations. I can't believe you're here. I mean, Jesus. (laughs) What the hell ARE you doing here?

Before she can answer the question, he notices a very short, stout man appearing to awkwardly hide behind Sarah.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Who's your friend?

SARAH

Oh, sorry. This is my husband. Joel Kleinberg.

Justin is dumbstruck. JOEL KLEINBERG (33) nervously steps out from behind Sarah and goes to shake Justin's hand.

JOEL

Oh, panic. I can't believe I'm shaking your hand. Justin Conrad, wow. When my wife told me she dated you in high school, I thought she was kidding.

(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)

In fact, I didn't fully believe her until...right now! Right this very moment!

JUSTIN

Nope. Nope. She wasn't kidding.

JOEL

Well, I am certainly proud to walk in your shoes.

Joel points to Sarah and winks at Justin. Strange pause.

SARAH

So, Justin, congratulations on everything. It's so great to see that you followed your dream.

Justin looks at his Teen Vampire book, embarrassed.

JUSTIN

Oh, um...yeah. (beat) I'm planning on writing some better stuff...some of my own stuff....at some point.

SARAH

Oh, yeah?

JUSTIN

(despondent)

Yup.

SARAH

So how are your parents doing?

Justin hesitates.

JUSTIN

They're...they got divorced when I was in college, so it's kinda been awhile since...

SARAH

No! Are you kidding?! Oh. My. Lord. They always seemed like they had the best relationship. Wow. I'm honestly really shocked.

JUSTIN

Yeah. (Beat) So was Dad.

Awkward pause.

SARAH

So, how about you? You have a family? Wife? Kids?

JUSTIN

Um...nope. None of the above.

SARAH

Aw...really? Not even a girlfriend?

JUSTIN

Nope.

SARAH

Aw...well, there's still time to find THE ONE.

JUSTIN

The who?

SARAH

You know, THE ONE. The one you're destined to be with.

JOEL

Tick tock, tick tock. (Laughs)

Sarah nudges Joel and laughs.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I'm just messin' with ya.

SARAH

I found my one. Isn't he the funniest?

Justin smiles politely.

JUSTIN

Well, alright...I should..(gestures to his dwindling fan line)

JOEL

Yup, yup. Well, we'll step out of your limelight now, sir, and head back to our boring, suburban lives! No survivors! Aaaahhhh!!!

Joel plays out a zombie scene that only makes sense in his head and goes on far too long. When he's done, there's no one left in line and the three stand awkwardly.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Real quick, can you write one out to "Joel, Sarah and Chimney"?

JUSTIN

Sure. (As he signs, he pauses at "Chimney") Is that your Avatar name?

JOEL

Oh, no. Chimney's our son's name.

Justin stares at them.

JUSTIN (V.O.)

They were looking at me like I was the saddest piece of shit they'd ever seen. I mean...

INT. BROOKLYN SOCIAL BAR - NYC - LATE NIGHT

Justin is throwing darts. Eliot brings two beers over.

JUSTIN

...The ONE? There's supposed to be one girl out there who's perfect for me? That's insane.

ELIOT

It doesn't have to be THE one, dude. You just need to find A one. You know what I mean?

JUSTIN

I do. And I want that. But I don't want to waste my time anymore. I want the next girl to at least be in the zone of THE ONE.

ELIOT

Amber Benson. What do you say?

JUSTIN

Dude...

ELIOT

C'mon. Do it for me. Please? Ashley won't shut up about it. The girl is desperate.

JUSTIN

Awesome. Why is she desperate again? Could it maybe have something to do with the fact that--

ELIOT

You would've given your left nut to go out with Amber Benson in college.

JUSTIN

You're absolutely right! But unfortunately for me, and her, that was 8 years and 65 pounds ago!

ELIOT

God you're superficial.

JUSTIN

Easy for you to say. Your girlfriend stayed hot after college. Most of em don't.

ELIOT

Okay, so here's a good plan. Why don't you go date a 19 year old, huh? With a 19 year old face and a 19 year old body?

Justin considers this.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

Yeah, I know, sounds great. But guess what you're forgetting, dickhead. A 19 year old brain! You really want that package?

JUSTIN

My very own teen angel, huh?

ELIOT

I'm calling Chris Hansen on you. You're not gonna find a girl if you sit at home every night eating Chinese food, man.

JUSTIN

You have no idea how hard it is to meet girls. Cool girls. Now. It's not like it was in college. Here in the real world, you have two options. Option one: sheer fucking luck.

(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Option two: have the balls to go up to one, unsolicited, at a bar...sorry, a "lounge", and risk complete public humiliation. And most of THEM are waiting for richer, better looking guys with more game.

ELIOT

Why don't you try one of those online dating sites? Doug Steinhauer met his wife on one of those things.

JUSTIN

Steinhauer's out of jail?

Eliot nods.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

There's something so fucking creepy about online dating. Would you want to tell your grandchildren that you met grandma on the internet?

ELIOT

You need a date before you can start talking to your grandchildren.

JUSTIN

Fuck!

Eliot has just hit two bulls-eyes. They are near the end of a close game of cricket.

ELIOT

Holdin on for dear life, son!

JUSTIN

Oh really? Look at the board. We're tied, neden hole. Next bulls wins.

Eliot goes to retrieve his darts from the board.

ELIOT

How about that Caffè Tazza girl?

They keep playing, neither able to hit the final bulls-eye.

JUSTIN

(Clearly knows)

Who?

ELIOT

The girl you go to see every morning that you don't have the balls to talk to.

JUSTIN

Oh, I hadn't even thought about her. She does seem kind of awesome. I don't know. I just hate the idea of getting rejected. It's fucking humiliating. Anyway, she's probably got some fucking amazing, ripped boyfriend who's super successful.

Eliot is concentrating on his throw.

ELIOT

You're successful.

JUSTIN

Yeah, right. (Beat) This guy with a top hat came in the other day and she kept calling him Mr. Peanut under her breath. Just for her own amusement.

ELIOT

Funny.

JUSTIN

And she's cute. How great is it when a girl is cute but she has no idea how cute she is?

ELIOT

Shit, I don't really know, man. I've been outta the game for awhile now.

JUSTIN

Oh really? Just because you're in a relationship you're blind to other girls?

ELIOT

Yup. Colombo-style, son.

JUSTIN

Colombo wasn't blind.

ELIOT

He wasn't? What was wrong with his eye then?

JUSTIN

Too soon. You'll know what I mean
when you see how cool she is. It's
fucking intimidating.

Just then, Eliot hits the winning bulls-eye.

ELIOT

(Yells)

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE! OH MY GOD!
ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE!

He parades around Justin pointing his blessed finger to the
heavens and blowing kisses to his stadium of fake fans.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

Thank you. Thank you. Oh you're
welcome.

Justin hands him a one dollar bill.

JUSTIN

You're a joke.

ELIOT

Anything is possible.

JUSTIN

If anything is possible then stop
doing that.

Eliot has now started singing.

ELIOT

Anything is possible, possible,
possible....

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Justin sits on the couch. Alone. He picks up his phone.

JUSTIN

Hi. Yeah, can I get...ummm...a
large fried rice with no onions.
And also...

He listens.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(Resigned)

Yeah. Yeah. Just the usual.

(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 No, I don't think I'll try anything
 new. Thanks.

He hangs up and looks around the apartment. He contemplates.

INT. CAFFÈ TAZZA - LOWER EAST SIDE - NEXT DAY

Justin is at his laptop with a coffee. He is stumped with his writing but also seems to be nervous. Waiting and watching...

Birdie appears from behind the counter, tying her tea-soaked apron.

Justin takes a deep breath. He looks down at his full coffee, packs up his computer and heads to the bathroom.

INT. CAFFÈ TAZZA BATHROOM

As he's dumping the coffee into the toilet, he hears someone enter so he coughs and slows the pour to mimic a piss.

INT. CAFFÈ TAZZA - CONTINUOUS

He takes a moment outside the bathroom door to stare at Birdie. He moves to her...slowly, awkwardly.

JUSTIN
 Just got in?

BIRDIE
 Hi. (Beat) Sorry?

JUSTIN
 Just got in? To here? I was just
 saying...I think I saw you just got
 in...to work...here.

BIRDIE
 Oh, yeah. Late as always.

An awkward laugh between them.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
 Did you need a refill?

He glances down at the empty cup he holds in front of him.

JUSTIN
 Well, you weren't late on that one!

Another laugh. As she turns to pour he cringes at his comment. He then turns to his table.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Oh shit!

BIRDIE

You okay?!

JUSTIN

No...fuck! I think someone stole my computer. Shit. I just...had it... then I went to the bathroom...

BIRDIE

You have another?

JUSTIN

What?!

BIRDIE

Besides that one?

Looks to his side. Relieved.

JUSTIN

Nope. Nope. Just this one actually. Thanks.

BIRDIE

That would've been devastating if you'd lost your masterpiece... there'd be no reason to go on.

JUSTIN

Yeah, well, fortunately it's just two pages of bad haikus and dirty limericks.

BIRDIE

You're a poet?

JUSTIN

No, I was...just joking.

BIRDIE

Oh, so you're a comedian.

JUSTIN

Ha ha, no. I write novellas.

BIRDIE

Oooh...also a doodle-ist I see.

She points to the notebook he's holding. It's covered with little drawings and doodles.

JUSTIN

Sort of.

BIRDIE

I dabble in the doodles myself.

JUSTIN

Really?

BIRDIE

Yeah, I draw caricatures down at the boardwalk.

JUSTIN

No shit. That's awesome.

BIRDIE

Well, it's always nice to meet a fellow "doodle-ist".

JUSTIN

Is "doodle-ist" a word?

BIRDIE

I don't know. You're the "novella-ist."

He laughs. She takes a closer look at his doodles.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

These are awesome. Is that Gorbachev?

JUSTIN

No, just a creepy old man I saw in here the other day.

BIRDIE

Too bad. I'm a huge Gorbachev fan.

Justin takes his pen and awkwardly makes a tiny birthmark on the old man's head.

JUSTIN

Now it's Gorbachev.

BIRDIE

That's amazing.

JUSTIN
Well, I just added his little
stain.

BIRDIE
(laughs)
It's really good.

JUSTIN
Thanks...

BIRDIE
Birdie.

JUSTIN
Birdie indeed.

BIRDIE
What? No, my name is Birdie. What
did you think I meant?

JUSTIN
No, just that that's a cool name.

BIRDIE
Okay...

He grabs his coffee and pulls out money.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
First one's on the house.

JUSTIN
Actually you've served me before...
or not served, like you're a
servant like "yessa, mastah, here's
coffee for you!" I'm not racist,
it's all the coffee I guess, so
technically it's your fault. Sorry.
But I'm gonna take you up on it
regardless.

They laugh. He walks off prematurely, while laughing. As soon
as he gets back to his table he turns and walks back. A
BITCHY LADY gets in line behind him.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Justin.

BIRDIE
No, I said it was Birdie. I thought
we've been over this.

JUSTIN

Ha ha. No, my name is Justin. It's like Dustin with a J.

BIRDIE

Or like Jeremy with an "ustin."

JUSTIN

Wouldn't that be Jeremy-ustin?

They smile and stare at each other. The bitchy lady in line coughs loudly as other customers start to line up.

BIRDIE

Oh, man. I'd love to continue this, but I should probably...(gestures to the customers in line.)

JUSTIN

Oh, absolutely.

The bitchy lady pushes forward. Justin stands to the side.

BITCHY LADY

Medium latte. Soy milk. Extra foam.

BIRDIE

Ok, great. What's the name?

BITCHY LADY

Emily. It's like Jemily...(then bitchy to Justin)...without the J.

JUSTIN

Jemily is actually with a "G."

Birdie stifles a laugh as she hands over the lady's coffee. Then turns back to Justin.

BIRDIE

Was there something else, Jeremy-ustin?

JUSTIN

Oh, I thought you wanted to continue...or, no. Actually I was just looking for the new Harry Connick, Jr. compact disc...

He grabs the CD right in front of him, holds it up.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Nevermind. Here it is.

She laughs.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Um, actually I just wanted
your...(beat) Sugar?

BIRDIE
I got all the suga you need,
massah!

She hands it over. He stands. Blank.

JUSTIN
Thanks. Do you also have...(Beat)
A tip jar?

She smiles and points to a giant jar with "TIPS" written on
the front.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Great.

He reaches into his pocket and finds change. Just a bunch of
coins and pocket lint. He awkwardly drops it all into the jar
as it makes an insanely loud clinking noise. He hops back to
his table with a whole new light. Birdie watches him go and
smiles.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Justin, with a towel wrapped around his waste, walks up to
Eliot's bedroom. He knocks once and enters.

JUSTIN
Hey, do you have any toothpa--ahh.
Shit! Really?!

Eliot sits in front of his computer and quickly pulls his
pants up. He's embarrassed, but not as much as he should be.

ELIOT
Sorry.

JUSTIN
Lock your door when you're doing
that, alright?

ELIOT
(defensively)
I didn't think you were home!

Justin notices the computer screen and looks closer.

JUSTIN
Is that...Princess Leia?

ELIOT
Yeah...it's Carrie Fisher.

JUSTIN
Are you seriously doing that?

ELIOT
Seriously doing what?

JUSTIN
Seriously jerking off to current pictures of Carrie Fisher?

ELIOT
Yeah, I am. So? Remember when we were kids? Correct me if I'm wrong, but you were pretty obsessed with her too.

JUSTIN
(laughing)
Yeah, I WAS obsessed with her. When she was in Star Wars. How old is she, 60?

ELIOT
She's 54, dick. And how old am I, 12? You really expect me to pleasure myself to fucking Star Wars?!

JUSTIN
What are you talking about? You can get older, and she can stay the same age...in picture form.

ELIOT
I'm not a kid anymore, dude, and neither is she. Women, like men, grow up. Everybody ages. It's just a fact of life.

JUSTIN
Right, but you're not dating her, you're "jerking off to her". The same rules don't apply...right?

ELIOT
 (not convinced)
 Right...

JUSTIN
 It's a fantasy, weirdo.

ELIOT
 Yeah...doesn't mean part of the
 fantasy can't involve respecting
 women and the beauty of the aging
 process.

JUSTIN
 I...just lock your door next time,
 please. It's disgusting.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFFÈ TAZZA - NEXT DAY

C/U of a gooey Cinnabon as it releases white frosting on the corners of a mouth. The mouth belongs to GERARD (30's) working behind the counter. He is a portly, effeminate man, with a tight white T shirt, suspenders, capri pants and a camouflage boonie hat. Justin approaches.

GERARD
 (Bitchy)
 Yes?

JUSTIN
 Just a medium...coffee.

As Gerard makes it...

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Hey, do you by any chance know what
 time Birdie...or it might be
 Berty...is working?

GERARD
 It's Birdie. Like "Caw, Caw." You a
 friend of her's?

JUSTIN
 No. Sort of.

GERARD
 She's done.

JUSTIN
Really? Like done with work? Or...

GERARD
She got canned.

JUSTIN
Oh. That's...crazy. What happened?

GERARD
She was late.

JUSTIN
Oh. For work?

GERARD
No, for her fucking period!

Awkward Pause.

JUSTIN
Listen, maybe we got off on the
wrong foot. I'm Justin, by the way.

Extends hand.

GERARD
Okay.

JUSTIN
And your name is... ?

GERARD
(mumbles)
Gerat.

JUSTIN
Gerat?!

GERARD
GERARD!

JUSTIN
Okay, Gerard, I'm just curious what
happened with Birdie.

GERARD
I already told you. She was late.

Long pause.

JUSTIN

But...just late for work, right?
Not late for...her period...or
whatever?

GERARD

Gross. I have no idea if she was
riding the cotton pony. Sicko.
Although, the last thing that girl
needs is another kid.

JUSTIN

She has kids?!

GERARD

I'm fucking with you again. Let me
spell it out for you. The. Manager.
Couldn't. Tolerate. Her. Constant.
Tardiness. So I fired her.

JUSTIN

Oh, you fired her?

GERARD

The manager did.

JUSTIN

He did? You? Wait, who's the
manager?

GERARD

(overly sarcastic)
Yeah, I'm the manager!

JUSTIN

Are you?

Gerard stares blankly.

GERARD

Looks like the fly has enticed the
spider to the web.

Justin is completely lost.

GERARD (CONT'D)

(Back to bitchy)
Anything else, Inspector Watson?

JUSTIN

No, that's it. Thanks for clearing
that up.

(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Watson wasn't a detective actually.
 He was just a doctor. The sidekick.

As he pays...

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Do you think she'll be in to grab
 her paycheck at any point?

GERARD
 I don't know. Why don't you just
 stalk her online?

No response. Justin stares.

GERARD (CONT'D)
 Birdie Hazel.

JUSTIN
 Thanks, Gerard.

GERARD
 It's Gerard!

They oddly stare at each other for a beat.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Okay, well. Thank you...Sir.

GERARD
 Nice pants.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eliot and ASHLEY (28), pretty but domesticated, sit on the sofa watching TV, cuddling. Justin opens his computer to A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE. Types in B-I-R-D-I-E H-A-Z-E-L.

Her profile pops up. "A Case Of You" by Joni Mitchell plays. Her picture is adorable as she sits on a dock dipping her feet from her sundress into a peaceful lake.

The lists on her profile are endless. Everything from favorite Woody Allen movies to favorite Keanu Reeves movies. Books from Nabokov to Don't Hassle the Hoff. Concerts witnessed in chronological order, 101 things that make her happy, obscure youtube favorites, posters of Harold and Maude in 9 different languages, Comments, and Interests and Heroes and.....STATUS: SINGLE.

JUSTIN

C'mon, man. I talked to her the other day. She's fucking amazing. Super funny. You never know, she could be THE ONE.

ELIOT

Okay. You need to stop it with that "THE ONE" shit. I'm serious.

JUSTIN

I'm almost fucking 30, man.

ELIOT

I know. But these things don't happen when you try to force it. Just write her a message saying you want to see her.

JUSTIN

Should I? Is that weird? Fuck. This is probably stupid. She's probably not even interested. Besides, I don't know anything about her.

ELIOT

Yeah you do, retard. That's the beauty of looking at her profile. You can get four dates worth of information from that shit.

JUSTIN

That's true.

ELIOT

Hell, you can become the man of her dreams if you wanted. I just hope for your sake her favorite musician isn't Bruno Mars.

JUSTIN

I don't really mind Bruno Mars.

Eliot stares at Justin incredulously.

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Baby, we gotta go! The van's outside.

JUSTIN

Oh, is Jim Jones picking you guys up?

ELIOT

See ya when I get back, playa. Good luck with that.

They exit. As soon as the door closes, Justin pulls up Birdie's profile. He writes down various hobbies, interests, etc. of hers on a piece of paper. He tears it off and takes off out the door.

INT. WORD BOOKSTORE - BROOKLYN

He is being guided down an aisle by RUTH, a bohemian, motherly, gray-haired African American woman (60's).

She pulls RULE OF THE BONE by Russell Banks from the shelf.

JUSTIN

Great.

RUTH

Enjoy it! Now, what were the others?

Justin looks down at his ripped piece of paper. They continue walking.

JUSTIN

Ummm...Dancing Naked in the Mind Field by Dr. Kary Mullis and The Teachings of Don Juan by Carlos Castenada.

RUTH

Oh, boy. You've got some hip titles here, young man.

JUSTIN

Really?

RUTH

I mean that in the best way possible. Unless you have a bad trip. Ya know what I mean?

JUSTIN

Yes and no. Mostly no.

She grabs DON JUAN off the shelf and reads the back cover. As she reads she gets more and more emotional.

RUTH

The teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui
Way of Knowledge. "For me there is
only the traveling on paths that
have heart. There I travel, and the
only worthwhile challenge is to
traverse its full length."

She starts sobbing.

RUTH (CONT'D)

"And there I travel, looking,
looking, breathlessly."

She's almost hyperventilating. He puts his arm around her.

JUSTIN

It's...okay.

RUTH

No. I'm not sad. I'm crying because
it's just so...beautiful.

JUSTIN

Yes, it is. It is. I'm sorry, I'm
kind of in a hurry. Could you ring
me up?

She's still crying.

RUTH

(through tears)
Honey, I don't work here.

Justin is left wondering how to retrieve the book, cradled
tightly against her substantial cleavage.

JUSTIN

Could I just...do you mind...if...

RUTH

(whispers)
Do it.

EXT. TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK

He reads and highlights passages in his (or Birdie's) new
books under the shade of a tree.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT

On his computer screen, Justin notices a new addition to Birdie's profile: "I LOVE JUDO!"

INT. MANHATTAN JUDO DOJO

Justin gets flipped in a crazy judo move. He gets up and limps off. A LITTLE BOY (8) turns to his friend.

LITTLE BOY
I'm so glad that guy's not my dad.

INT. EATALY COOKING CLASS

Justin pulls some shrimp out of an oven and wows the class.

JUSTIN
And now for the best part!

He puts a shrimp in his mouth, still piping hot.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Fu...fu..fu..fuck...hot, hot hot
hot, hot!!!!!!

INT. CAFFE TAZZA

He drinks coffee as he doodles around his writing in his notebook. He looks up and sees Birdie walking in! He scampers to hide himself. She heads to Gerard at the counter.

BIRDIE
Hey Gerard.

GERARD
Mmmm.

BIRDIE
How are you? Just picking up my
last pay check.

GERARD
Someone stole it.

BIRDIE
What?

GERARD

I'm joking. Jesus. "Whhhhaattt?!"
Don't get your boy shorts in a
panty bundle. How would someone
possibly steal it and cash it?

BIRDIE

I don't know.

GERARD

Exactly, genius. I stole it and
tried to cash it. It didn't work.

He hands over her paycheck from his pocket.

BIRDIE

(confused)

Oh, ok great. Thanks. Just glad
it's still here.

She starts to leave.

GERARD

How's your Laotian boy?

BIRDIE

Who, what?

GERARD

That half Asian guy. He's right
there...

He points to the table where Justin sat, but it's deserted.

GERARD

Hmmm. He can run, but he can't
hide. When you're done with him,
give him my digits.

BIRDIE

(utterly confused)

Umm...okay.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT

Justin is on the computer searching Birdie's profile.
Grasping more and more information. It says: new goal - LEARN
TO PLAY THE GUITAR.

INT. GUITAR STUDIO

A hippy guitar teacher, GARY (mid 40's) leather face, stares at Justin.

GARY

Play a G.

JUSTIN

Not sure if I got that one.

GARY

What do ya mean, "got it?" 'Course you got it, stallion. Bend it.

JUSTIN

Bend it?

GARY

Just play the fuckin' note.

JUSTIN

I...I wasn't lying...I've never played before. I literally don't know what...

GARY

What? What. Here's the G, partner.

Gary aggressively snatches the guitar and plucks a G.

JUSTIN

Oh, so the ring finger goes... on...is that called a "fret?"

GARY

Maybe if you stop with the 'tude and condescending shit, I can... music is about opening...your generation is....it's...just cuz you got my number off a telephone pole, doesn't mean I'm not ferocious on the axe. I played fuckin' Woodstock, man.

JUSTIN

Woodstock, really? That's kinda... cuz you don't really seem...

GARY

Woodstock '99, Captain. So you wanna fuck with that?

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

I played back-up with the fucking Spin Doctors, bro-rometer.

JUSTIN

Wow, really?

GARY

Yeah, wow. I didn't technically play back up but I was backing them up from my choice seat backstage. I'm pretty tight with Chris Barron's brother.

JUSTIN

Is he in The Spin Doctors?

GARY

Are you effing fucking with me?! Who doesn't know Chris Barron?! He's the original Doc! He hooked me up with backstage passes and we did enough "K" to date rape a horse.

JUSTIN

What's "K"?

GARY

What's "K"? And you want to be a rock star? Without "K" the Spin Doctors would be Spin Nurses. It's a fuckin' horse tranquilizer, champion.

JUSTIN

Listen, Gary, I truly appreciate your musical prowess and I would just love for you to teach me the guitar.

GARY

Yeah? Why?

JUSTIN

I just want to learn.

GARY

Nobody "just wants to learn." You either want money, pussy or fame...so which one is it, huh?

JUSTIN

Uh...I really just want to learn...

GARY
Which one is it?!

JUSTIN
Uh...well, there is a girl...so...

GARY
So "pussy."

JUSTIN
Yeah, I guess, fine.

GARY
Well, does she have a pussy?

JUSTIN
Can you just tell me where the G
chord is?

GARY
Right above the clit, inside the
pussy.

JUSTIN
Jesus Christ!

GARY
If you'll listen and stop fucking
around, Dr. Gary Garren will teach
you a thing or three.

He wiggles his fingers in a sexual manner.

GARY (CONT'D)
G!

Gary breaks into a bad acoustic version of Spin Doctors' "Two Princes" while Justin watches for an awkwardly long time.

JUSTIN
Uh huh. Wow. Shit...that's awesome.
Do you think you could teach me
some Joni Mitchell?

Gary keeps playing and staring.

GARY
I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear
that.

EXT. EGG CAFE - WILLIAMSBURG - NEXT MORNING

Justin eats and writes. His phone vibrates.

JUSTIN

Hello?

Cut back and forth between Justin and his publisher, ALAN PERLMAN (late 30's) crude but oddly likable, pacing underneath a big sign that reads, "Jacobi/Perlman Publishing House."

ALAN

Conrad!

JUSTIN

Hey Alan.

ALAN

Hey bud. Domination! Teen Vampire continues to command the book shelves!

JUSTIN

Quantity over quality, that's what I've always said.

ALAN

Yeah, I hear that! So listen, the movie studios have a few more films they'd like you to consider turning into novels.

JUSTIN

I don't know, man.

Alan reads off a sheet of paper.

ALAN

First one is an action adventure flick. Looks sick. Saw the trailer the other day. Check it out online. Type in Doom Tomb: Alien Womb. All one word. Dot net I think.

JUSTIN

Ummm...

ALAN

Yeah, I feel you there. Okay, next one is a romantic comedy called Sherpa.

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

It's about a woman who climbs Everest but in the process she finds the biggest discovery of her life: love with her Sherpa guide.

Silence.

ALAN (CONT'D)

"Guide." I think that's supposed to say "guide" not guide. Maybe not. Sounds interesting either way.

Justin is silent.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Look, I know they're not boner inducing, Justin. I think if you crank out a couple more of these bad boys...

JUSTIN

I'm working on something else.

ALAN

I totally understand.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry man, but this stuff...I just wanna write something with a few more layers, ya know?

ALAN

Yeah, I get it. Lay it on me. What's the synopsis?

JUSTIN

Not sure yet. See I met this girl, Birdie, and...

ALAN

Bertie? Are you sure this is a woman?

JUSTIN

Alan...I...

ALAN

Oh! Like Bertie and Ern?

JUSTIN

You mean Burt and Ernie? No, it's Birdie. Like a...bird.

ALAN
"Cock-a-doodle-do!"

JUSTIN
That's a rooster.

ALAN
A rooster's a bird. (Beat) Hold on,
I'll look it up on my iphone.

JUSTIN
No...Alan?...Alan? It's ok. Listen,
I'm gonna take a little time off
and start writing this thing.

ALAN
Enough said, pal. I get it.
Sometimes, you need to build those
building blocks back to find a
sense of yourself. But for the
record, no one ever called you a
hack writer.

JUSTIN
What? Hack writer?

ALAN
I'm psyched, my man. Send me pages
as soon as you can.

Justin opens his computer and researches Birdie's profile, as
he zones out.

ALAN (CONT'D)
I'll send that soul searching shit
off to my wife's friends so they
can finger-bang themselves to it at
their book club. I'm kidding.

JUSTIN
Uh-huh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GUITAR STUDIO

Justin tries to get the guitar from Gary. No luck.

ALAN (V.O.)
Passion is a great thing. I'm
really proud of you for doing that
kind of stuff.

INT. RECORD STORE

Justin buys Joni Mitchell's BLUE on LP, and a record player.

JUSTIN (V.O.)
Yeah, I gotta go, Alan.

ALAN (V.O.)
What you got going on this eve? I
haven't seen you forever.

INT. JUDO DOJO

The 8yr old boy flips Justin in a bone crushing move.

JUSTIN (V.O.)
I, uh, I just need to go do some
research.

INT. GUITAR STUDIO

Justin applauds Gary and tries to take the guitar. Gary starts into another song.

ALAN (V.O.)
You're like my little Salman
Rushdie.

INT. COOKING CLASS

Justin puts the finishing touches on a lamb roast.

JUSTIN (V.O.)
Uh-huh. Just gotta immerse myself
in some things for a while.

INT. GUITAR STUDIO

Finally, Gary gives Justin the guitar. Justin goes to tune it and one of the strings snaps. Gary doesn't look pleased.

ALAN (V.O.)
Marinate in it. I get it. I
certainly don't wanna disturb the
artist from his canvas. Do your
thing, pal.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK

Justin finishes one of Birdie's books. He looks at the sky and smiles.

JUSTIN (V.O.)
Thanks Alan. I think I'm on to something. Talk soon.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT

Justin sits with his guitar, playing a G chord over and over. Eliot comes home, slightly disheveled, with camping bags.

ELIOT
What up, playa?

JUSTIN
Welcome home!

ELIOT
What is that?!

JUSTIN
A gee-tar.

ELIOT
Not that, Hendrix. (In disbelief)
Are you cooking?!

JUSTIN
You best believe it. Shit, gotta flip the Mahi.

He prances into the kitchen. Eliot is frozen. A second later Justin reappears wearing really girly oven mitts and a chef hat as he drizzles sauce over their Mahi steaks at the table. Eliot sits, uneasy.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Oh shit! Wait!

Justin runs over to the stereo and hits "play." Joni Mitchell's "A Case Of You" starts blaring.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Can't eat without some tunes! All right, well, bon appetite!

Takes off his chef hat...

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

A true chef always separates the preparation from the pleasure. (Mid-chew, looks up) Don't let your Mahi get cold.

Justin excitedly chows down. Eliot stares at him.

ELIOT

What...is...this?!

JUSTIN

You don't like Mahi?

ELIOT

No man! I mean, yeah...I do like Mahi...that's not the point...

JUSTIN

Cause I made the Mahi for you. They had a sale on Mahi.

ELIOT

Stop saying "Mahi!" The guitar, the crazed little spring in your step, that creepy smile...your new "War Is Not the Answer" shirt?

JUSTIN

What, you think war is the answer?

ELIOT

Depends on the question. What is going...I'm sorry...can I shut this off please?

He turns off the stereo.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

Since when do you like Joni Mitchell?

JUSTIN

I found some inspiration.

ELIOT

Cocaine?

JUSTIN

Ha, ha. No. Let's just say a little Bird helped me out.

Beat. Eliot slowly smiles.

ELIOT
Get the fuck outta here! Birdie?!

JUSTIN
Uh-huh.

ELIOT
You son of a bitch! Come here.

They hug.

ELIOT (CONT'D)
Tell me...tell me. What's up? When
did you see her?

JUSTIN
Haven't yet.

ELIOT
Oh, ok. Just a little phone banter?

JUSTIN
Nope.

ELIOT
Internet?

JUSTIN
Almost.

ELIOT
Almost. Okay, getting creeped out
again. Tell me she's not bound and
gagged in your bedroom.

JUSTIN
I'm becoming the man of her dreams.

ELIOT
Well, I'm happy about that. I am.
It's just...this is not what I
meant....at all.

Justin scampers over to the computer, Eliot follows.

JUSTIN
Check this out. I've been prepping
for the moment to arise. I'm
visualizing it, man.

ELIOT
How about this...visualize writing her a message. But then literally do it. Right now.

JUSTIN
Okay, yes. Good. What should I write?

ELIOT
How about "I've been playing the guitar for six days, wanna fuck?"

JUSTIN
C'mon.

ELIOT
P.S. "I can cook too, NOW do you wanna fuck?"

JUSTIN
Dude. Please.

ELIOT
Okay, okay, well you wanna say something that's gonna pique her interest obviously.

JUSTIN
Oh, oh, I got it! "Leaves of Grass." I can open with a Walt Whitman quote. Birdie loves Whitman.

ELIOT
Yeah, that won't be weird at all.

Eliot takes control of the mouse and scans the profile.

ELIOT (CONT'D)
Alright, here we go...who's Jackie?

JUSTIN
They went to high school together. She's an aspiring actress, and their parents are good friends. Why?

ELIOT
Okay, it's really disturbing you know that. Look what she wrote your girl.

JUSTIN

"Hey babe...I hope you're still coming to my show on Tuesday! ROFLAPMP."

ELIOT

What does that mean?

JUSTIN

"Rolling on the Floor Laughing and Peeing My Pants."

ELIOT

Fuck me. I hesitate to ask, but do you happen to know what show she's talking about?

JUSTIN

Uh, yeah (obviously). She does improv shows at the UCB theatre.

ELIOT

Jackpot.

JUSTIN

Yeah, right. What, I'm gonna sit through some shitty improv show so I can stare at her in the audience?

ELIOT

Why do you think you're not good enough for this girl?

Justin pauses. He doesn't know the answer.

JUSTIN

It's just so much easier to track her online.

ELIOT

Will you listen to yourself? "Track her online?!" You have to actually see this girl to make it happen. Man up and get yourself to that show on Tuesday.

INT. UCB THEATRE - NIGHT

Justin scans the audience before the show. He spots Birdie, sitting by herself in a sea of improv geeks. He sits.

INT. UCB THEATER

Quick cuts of terrible UCB show in progress. It's really bad.

INT. UCB THEATER

The improv comes to an end. Birdie gathers her stuff and is about to leave.

JUSTIN
(under his breath)
That was painful.

She doesn't hear him. He panics.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
(Masked through a loud cough)
Birdie!

Some improv nerds turn and stare at him. He gets embarrassed and turns to leave the opposite way.

BIRDIE
Hey!

He turns.

JUSTIN
Hmmm?

BIRDIE
Do you ever go to Caffè Tazza?

JUSTIN
You know, I'm not quite sure.
Where's...

BIRDIE
Oh my god. Gorbachev!

JUSTIN
No, it's Justin.

She laughs.

JUSTIN
Birdie?

BIRDIE
Birdie.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Right! Birdie. Justin.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Well, listen, next time I go in to Tazza, I expect the Joni Mitchell fan discount.

BIRDIE

That might be a little tough...I got fired.

JUSTIN

I know. Now. Now I know. That sucks. You were by far the best coffee drink server there.

BIRDIE

Barista.

JUSTIN

She couldn't have been any better than you.

BIRDIE

(Laughs) No, that's the name of a person who makes coffee drinks. A barista. I was a barista.

JUSTIN

Oh. Okay. Yeah. Well...

BIRDIE

I'm glad we ran into each other.

JUSTIN

Yeah, me too.

Just then JACKIE (30's) overbearing, pops her head out from backstage.

JACKIE

Hey! Be out in a sec.

BIRDIE

Okay!

JUSTIN

Hey, Jackie!

BIRDIE

You know Jackie?!

JUSTIN

Just from the headshots out in the hall.

BIRDIE
 (sotto)
 She's really sweet. Just can be...a
 bit much sometimes.

JUSTIN
 What?! I didn't pick that up at all
 from her Queen Laqueefa sketch.

Birdie laughs. Jackie arrives.

JACKIE
 (to Birdie)
 Hey, hey, hey! Thanks for comin',
 girl. Literally, you couldn't have
 picked a better night. Except for
 that skank who kept cutting me off.
 Honestly, right now, I could
 literally kill that girl.

BIRDIE
 Yeah. Jackie, this is Justin.

JUSTIN
 Hey!

BIRDIE
 Justin was just saying something
 about the show. What was it that
 you were saying?

JUSTIN
 Oh, man. I...we were just laughing
 and saying that we'll never forget
 this night.

JACKIE
 Literally? Thanks. Do you know
 someone in the troupe?

JUSTIN
 Ah. Nope. Just love the art form.

JACKIE
 (Genuinely)
 Art form?! Wow. Thank you, Justin.
 Literally, no one ever seems to
 believe that what I do is art.
 Thank you, Justin. (Aside to
 Birdie) Dibs!

Justin clearly overhears this and smiles awkwardly.

INT. BROOKLYN SOCIAL BAR - NIGHT

Ashley, Justin, and Eliot drink. Justin sketches on a coaster as he talks.

ASHLEY

What are you going to cook?

JUSTIN

Umm...

ELIOT

Yeah, Rachael Ray, what's on the menu?

JUSTIN

I was thinking scallops in a pesto sauce but I just saw on her profile that she's allergic to pinenuts, so...

ELIOT

Uh oh. Might have to stick to your front runner...a crudités of bumblebee tuna in a can followed by a savory bowl of Count Chocula.

ASHLEY

Don't make fun of him.

ELIOT

Dude! Invite her to the next retreat!

JUSTIN

Not a chance.

ELIOT

This one's only one night. Gonna be awesome. Baby, you have that brochure in your bag? Try this on for size, bitch.

Ashley grabs it from her bag. Eliot tosses Justin the retreat brochure. He opens it up.

JUSTIN

"You are invited to transform your life." Oh man. "Immerse yourself in a private retreat to heal your body, mind and soul." This is hilarious. "

(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Refresh your spirit in the abundant
peace and quiet of our sanctuary."
(Laughing) Are you serious?

ASHLEY

They're kind of a nightmare. You're
not allowed to use toilet paper in
the eco-friendly bathrooms.

ELIOT

It's good for the environment.

JUSTIN

(laughs)

That's one of the most disgusting
things I've ever heard. So you
leave your poo tickets in the same
trash bin, in the same room? How
spiritual.

ASHLEY

Oh not just the two of us. They're
communal bathrooms.

ELIOT

"Part of our responsibility towards
others is to ensure that the world
we pass on is as healthy, if not
healthier than we found it." - Dali
Llama. (Beat) People shit. Some
more than others. (Gestures to
Ashley)

ASHLEY

(Sternly)

Eliot.

JUSTIN

Well, I've never seen anything on
her profile that suggests retreats
so I guarantee she won't be into
it.

Justin casually takes a swig of his drink but almost gags.

ELIOT

Are you drinking whiskey?

JUSTIN

(can barely mutter the word)
Bourbon.

ELIOT
You hate bourbon. What are you
doing?

JUSTIN
Gotta start working up an immunity.
It's her favorite.

Eliot and Ashley stare at him. Justin goes back to drawing on his coaster. Reveal an amazing sketch portrait of Birdie.

INT. MANHATTAN JUDO DOJO

Justin sparring with his teacher, he's getting better but still gets his ass handed to him.

INT. NATURAL ROOTS WELLNESS STORE

The store is full of homeopathic remedies and spiritual trinkets. Eliot works behind the counter. He hands Justin an armful of incense sticks.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT

Justin redecorates the apartment with Birdie-esque qualities.

INT. GUITAR STUDIO

Justin watches Gary play. Every time he motions to let him try, Gary resists.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT

Unpacking groceries and beginning to cook.

INT. WORD BOOKSTORE

Justin picks out The Origin of Species from the shelf. He glances down the aisle and sees Ruth helping another unsuspecting customer.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT

Justin takes a look around the apartment to make sure everything is in place. He's nervous and lights WAY too many incense sticks.

He sees his copy of The Origin of Species on the coffee table. It looks too new so he dog ears some pages and bangs it around a bit.

One more quick glance around. He suddenly sees a frame on his bookshelf, scampers over, takes it away and shoves it under the couch. It read, "NYU A CAPPELLA."

RING. RING. He checks himself in the mirror and opens the door. He's almost speechless, she is so beautiful.

JUSTIN

Hey! Come on in.

Birdie enters into a cloud of incense.

BIRDIE

Thanks. Oh, wow. Love the place.
Smells...really intense.

JUSTIN

Thank you. Been cooking all day.

BIRDIE

(laughs)

I meant the incense.

JUSTIN

Oh, right! Yeah. I just really love
lavender. Can't get enough.

BIRDIE

Ha ha. No...I'm pretty sure you got
enough.

Birdie smiles. Awkward beat.

JUSTIN

You want a drink?

BIRDIE

Yeah. What ya got?

JUSTIN

Water...oj...umm...bourbon?

BIRDIE

A man after my own heart. My
favorite.

JUSTIN

Mine too.

BIRDIE
Double it up!

JUSTIN
Let's get crazy.

He jogs to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

He makes the drinks. But also peeks back in to see her checking out his belongings. From the other room...

BIRDIE
Oh my god!

He runs back into the room, cradling four glasses of bourbon.

JUSTIN
What's that?!

She turns.

BIRDIE
Grand Theft Auto?

He's frozen.

JUSTIN
It's my roommate's.

BIRDIE
I used to be addicted to this game.

JUSTIN
Really?

BIRDIE
Yeah, I see a brutal car jacking in your future. And possibly a rape.

He still holds four glasses.

JUSTIN
Don't go there!

BIRDIE
Oh, okay, 1998. Where are we going, sloppy town? Four drinks?

JUSTIN
Ask, and you shall receive.

BIRDIE
(laughs)
I said double it up, dummy. Like one for each of us! But I like your style.

JUSTIN
Right. I'm an idiot. The good news is, I only roofied two of them.

BIRDIE
Yum. What flavor roofies?

He laughs. She picks one up. They clink, he's about to drink.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
Wait! Always give eye contact. Bad luck otherwise.

She knocks on the closest wooden table then knocks on his head and then her own.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
"Skål Ta me fan." It's a Swedish cheer. Means, "May the devil take me."

JUSTIN
Well, "Skull tummy fuck" back at ya.

They smile and stare into each other's eyes before drinking again. Justin doesn't take it as well as the smooth Birdie.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Holy shit! That's smooth.

BIRDIE
You okay?

JUSTIN
(sickly)
Yeah, I'm more than okay. It's just...so smooth. Oh my god. So unbelievably smooth.

He takes an awkwardly long time to recover.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
(still sickly)
Ah, dinner?

BIRDIE
The lady still has a drink to
finish.

She looks down at their two remaining shots. He sighs but musters a smile. They clink again and make eye contact. Just then, smoke starts billowing out of the kitchen!

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
Ummm....

She points.

JUSTIN
Holy shit!

He sprints into the kitchen and starts waving the smoke down with a dish rag.

BIRDIE
Do you need help?

He returns, still waving the smoke.

JUSTIN
Do you like Chinese food?

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

They laugh and walk, holding Chinese take out bags.

BIRDIE
The only sketchy thing is my
drawing space is right between
Jimmy the crackhead tambourine
player and the Russian father/son
contortionist duo.

JUSTIN
I cannot wait to see that. What
time should I come tomorrow?

BIRDIE
Whenever! I usually show up in the
early afternoon. One of the perks
of not having a boss, ya know? No
penalty for lateness.

JUSTIN
So you have a real time thing, huh?
Not into wearing a watch?

BIRDIE

It's not that. I just think time is bullshit. Keeping track of it, I mean. It's just a man-made construct anyway. Not my cup of tea.

JUSTIN

Right...

Justin looks a little weary.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

So lemme get this straight...you wrote a novel based on a movie that already exists?

JUSTIN

I've written three, but yeah, one of them was...um, Teen Vampire?

BIRDIE

Are you serious?! That movie was huge.

JUSTIN

Yeah, it wasn't even out in theatres before I finished writing it.

BIRDIE

Oh man, I'd love to read that.

JUSTIN

You might just want to rent the movie. It's way less wordy.

BIRDIE

Oh, c'mon.

JUSTIN

No, honestly, I'd rather you hold out and read this new thing I've been working on.

BIRDIE

Oh yeah?

JUSTIN

Yeah. Definitely the best stuff I've ever written. I think. I hope.

BIRDIE

Well, I'll read it...as long as I'm on the cover.

JUSTIN

Oh my god, of course. But it's gonna be, like, classic, cheesy romantic novel cover art.

BIRDIE

Done. Just give me a heads up so I can pick up the appropriate medieval times blouse.

Just then, a bus drives by with a giant billboard on its side. It's for the movie SHERPA. Justin sees it and laughs.

BIRDIE

What is it?

JUSTIN

Nothing.

BIRDIE

What?

Beat.

JUSTIN

Just glad I met you, that's all.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They laugh and sit Indian style, on the floor, surrounded by empty cartons of Chinese food. They crack fortune cookies.

JUSTIN

Okay, you ready? I got....
(reads fortune cookie)
I think this is an ancient Buddhist adage, it says: "You just ate cat."

She laughs and holds her fortune.

BIRDIE

Perfect. Mine is directions to the nearest hospital!

JUSTIN

Great! We can carpool.

They laugh. A strange lull in the conversation. Birdie stares at Justin, smitten.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Yeah. You wanna watch a movie?

BIRDIE

I'd love to. But...

JUSTIN

Great.

He goes to the shelf but deliberately puts a stack of DVD's down on the table as he searches.

BIRDIE

Is that what I think it is?
Strictly Ballroom, are you kidding?

JUSTIN

Oh shoot. You weren't supposed to see all of these.

She goes through the stack as he weakly objects.

BIRDIE

Dirty Dancing, Dance with Me
and Shall We Dance???

JUSTIN

Oh man. This is embarrassing.
I am so busted!

BIRDIE

Wait, but where's Havana Nights?

JUSTIN

Which one?

BIRDIE

Havana Nights. The creme de la
cheese of all dance flicks.

JUSTIN

Ha ha. Right. Of course. Havana
Nights. I should have it in here
somewhere. When they do that dance?
That's so cheesy.

He mildly mimics an unknown dance. She laughs.

BIRDIE

You dance?

JUSTIN

I do actually. Ballroom. Yeah,
strictly ballroom.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
Hi, I'm Birdie.

ASHLEY
We know. Heard all about you. Hi.

They all shake hands.

ELIOT
Hey, I'm Eliot. Feel like I know you already. He won't stop talkin about you.

BIRDIE
Uh-oh. Stalker alert!

JUSTIN
Ha!..what?..no...that is...that's not what I'm doing.

ELIOT
Okay, well, we're just gonna watch a movie in my room, don't let us...

BIRDIE
No, it's fine. I actually have to wake up early, so...

ASHLEY
Oh, really?

BIRDIE
Yeah, it's too bad too, cuz I was looking forward to playing Grand Theft Auto.

Ashley laughs.

ASHLEY
Awful, right? The only difference between men and boys is the price of their toys.

BIRDIE
I actually love it. But don't listen to me...when I was a kid I picked Thunder Cats over My Little Pony.

ASHLEY
Oh.

ELIOT

Wow. Awesome. Thunder Cats-Ho! Oh,
hey, did you mention the thing?

Blank look from Justin.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

The Sacred Spirit retreat?

ASHLEY

They're not gonna want to go to
that, Eliot.

Eliot throws a look at Ashley.

BIRDIE

What's this...Sacred Spirit?

ELIOT

It's pretty cool. Just a nightly
camp to gather your thoughts.

JUSTIN

Retarded.

BIRDIE

That sounds right up my alley.

JUSTIN

Retardedly fun. For sure. You wanna
plan on that, Birdie?

BIRDIE

Yeah, that sounds great!

ELIOT

Perfect. I'll keep you guys posted.
It was nice to meet you, Birdie.

BIRDIE

Nice to meet both of you. Put faces
to the names.

ELIOT

Likewise.

They all wave as Eliot and Ashley go to their room. Eliot
throws Justin a subtle thumbs up.

BIRDIE

I should probably go. Sucks.

JUSTIN
It's okay. I have Judo in the
morning anyway, so...

BIRDIE
Really?

JUSTIN
Yeah, I love Judo. Deep into Judo.

Birdie laughs. Justin sort of joins her.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Yeah.

She keeps laughing.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
What's so funny?

BIRDIE
Sorry, it's nothing. My parents'
dog's name is Judo. Just sounded
funny. I'm an infant.

Justin is crushed.

JUSTIN
Your parents' dog's name is Judo?!
Oh! So no "unarmed combat to train
the body and mind" for you, huh?

BIRDIE
Sounds fun. I'm game.

JUSTIN
No, it sucks...a lot. Think I'm
quitting momentarily.

Birdie moves to the door.

BIRDIE
Well, I'll see you tomorrow. This
was great.

JUSTIN
Yeah.

She smiles and approaches him. They pause. She gives him a
short but sweet kiss.

BIRDIE
Well...goodnight, Justin.

JUSTIN
Goodnight, Birdie.

She leaves. Eliot's door bursts open and he hugs Justin.

ELIOT
Yeah, playa! Well done. Sacred
Spirit retreat...gonna be awesome.

JUSTIN
(Sarcastic)
Yeah, really well done. I can't
believe I didn't have Havana
Nights. Fuck! I've gotta step my
game up.

ELIOT
Are you being serious? She seemed
really into you.

JUSTIN
She is...for now. You shoulda heard
half the shit that came out of my
mouth. I sounded like such an
idiot. I really like her, I just
don't wanna fuck this up.

ELIOT
You're fine. You wanna grab
breakfast tomorrow morning or you
got Judo?

JUSTIN
Shut up.

ELIOT
Sorry. Goodnight, Daniel-son.

INT. CAFFÈ TAZZA - NEXT DAY

Justin writes, smiling, but pauses, frozen on a word. He
pulls out his ipod earbuds and sees Gerard staring at him as
he weirdly, seductively wipes down a table.

JUSTIN
Hey, Gerard, what's another word
for "smitten?"

GERARD
I don't know...gloves?

JUSTIN
No...smitten...like...in love!

Beat.

GERARD
Horny!

EXT. CONEY ISLAND BOARDWALK - LATER

Justin watches as Birdie is finishing up drawing a couple of tourists. She's finished the woman, LILLY, 23 and is half-way through drawing her husband, KYLE, 25. He has a uni-brow and an extreme over-bite. Birdie has kindly neglected both of those features in her rendering.

LILLY
I do! I wish I could draw. I think
it's such a dope talent.

BIRDIE
(points to Justin)
I agree. This one is quite the
talented artist.

JUSTIN
Oh yeah right. I'm really not. I'm
not nearly as...dope as she is.

They all laugh except for Kyle who looks horribly bored. Lilly doesn't quite seem to know what the joke is.

LILLY
That's so funny. Oh my god. So,
sorry if this sounds retarded, but
do you have like a time frame to
"make it" doing drawing or
whatever?

BIRDIE
That's not retarded at all. I guess
I've just never really equated what
I love to do with success or
ambition or some "time-related"
eventuality, ya know?

Justin is intrigued. Lilly is confused.

LILLY
What if you could become like a
really loaded artist?

BIRDIE

Loaded?

LILLY

Yeah, like, rich or super successful or whatever.

BIRDIE

But successful to whom? You know what I mean?

She doesn't. Birdie continues to draw. Justin leans in.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Like do I want some big gala at the Louvre then one day cut my ear off? Not really. I don't have those aspirations.

LILLY

WTF.

JUSTIN

Yeah, but there has to be something you're working towards?

LILLY

Yeah. Exactly. That's what I was saying.

Kyle throws a glance at Lilly.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Sorry.

BIRDIE

This. This brings me happiness. Maybe next week or two years from now it won't...so then I'll move on to something that does. We only get to live once, I think, and I don't want to spend that precious time being anxious about not conforming to someone else's construct of what success is. Like, when we're done with all of this...

(she gestures around her)

....all that will matter is how and who we loved. Success is a myth. The only true currency is love.

Lilly and Justin are a bit speechless. Justin may have just fallen in love for real...same with Lilly. Kyle has not been paying attention and is becoming impatient.

LILLY
You're gonna be, like, super famous.

BIRDIE
(finishing up)
And....we're done!

Kyle groans and gets up.

KYLE
(under his breath)
Finally, it's about time...

Birdie stops and considers.

BIRDIE
Wait, hold on real quick.

She hastily draws in his uni-brow and adds buck teeth.

KYLE
I thought you just said you were done.

Lilly gives Birdie an apologetic look.

BIRDIE
Okay, now I'm done. I just overlooked something.

Justin gives Birdie a knowing look. She returns it and beams. Lilly looks at the picture.

LILLY
You two are such a rad couple. You both draw and stuff. So cool. I remember when Kyle first...

KYLE
Let's go!

LILLY
Sorry.

She looks at them.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Good luck.

As they walk off Lilly looks at the picture.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Oh my god! It's so good. Babe, she got you perfectly.

KYLE

Fuck.

Justin and Birdie watch them go, smiling.

BIRDIE

We still on for tonight?

JUSTIN

For...tonight?

BIRDIE

The ballroom dancing class.

He freezes.

JUSTIN

I honestly haven't done it since I was really, really young, but...

She looks at him. Beat.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Okay. What the hell. Let me dust off the old...steel tips.

BIRDIE

Steel tip ballroom shoes? Ouch. That's amazing.

JUSTIN

They won't fit anymore because I was literally just a toddler last time I danced but...I'll find something snazzy to wear.

EXT. BIRDIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Birdie waits outside her apartment. A gypsy cab pulls up and Justin gets out to open her door. He wears an extremely tight, black deep vee neck, lace sleeved dance shirt and bejeweled, satin Latin pants. She breaks out laughing. He holds out a rose.

INT. GYPSY CAB - NIGHT

They pull up outside the dance studio. Birdie is still laughing. Justin is not.

JUSTIN
I'm gonna go put on a different shirt.

BIRDIE
No, please don't. I'm sorry, I promise I won't laugh anymore.

JUSTIN
How much do we owe you?

CAB DRIVER
Maliksea felicht tachiini
scheold...

JUSTIN
Sorry?

Justin looks at the driver's identification.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
...Durlap Shwaarksting.

The CAB DRIVER gestures to his earpiece to indicate he's on the phone.

CAB DRIVER
(louder and laughing)
Chrestingcio wondoweinfo
felleja....gandegorr!

JUSTIN
Mr. Shwaarksting...

CAB DRIVER
(into his phone in perfect English)
Sorry Roger, yeah...yeah...haha.
Yeah, he's about to pay. Not yet, hold on.
(he glances at Justin)
Um...about five foot ten, I think.
(pause)
Haha....okay I will...

The cab driver turns with his iphone and takes a picture of Justin in the back seat.

JUSTIN
Please, Mr Shw...

CAB DRIVER
Eight dollar and five cent.

JUSTIN hands him a ten.

JUSTIN
(finally with a sigh)
Ok, keep the change, I guess.

CAB DRIVER
Thank you so much.
(back to his friend)
Gweoarge chrenfoeldko cjeowsl DOE
EIGHT DOLLARS AND FIVE CENT...
hahaha...CENT...ffhreedko lsdoinef.

As Justin puts his wallet back into his pocket, the coaster with Birdie's picture on it from the bar, falls out. She picks it up from the cab floor.

BIRDIE
Oh my god, Justin. This is...

JUSTIN
Oh man.

BIRDIE
This is incredible. Can I have it?
Do you mind?

JUSTIN
Yeah, if you want it. Absolutely.

She kisses him. She glances at the coaster again. The cab driver has turned and is taking a video of Justin.

CAB DRIVER
You're on cash cab, just kidding!

JUSTIN
Please...don't do that. (to Birdie)
Hey, listen, my ankle is kind of
hurting so I'm not sure...

BIRDIE
Nope. No way. I don't think so.

She drags him out of the cab.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

Birdie and Justin walk in hand in hand. There are 20 or so people stretching...most of whom are 75 years or older. Two of the dancers, HARRIET (78) and HENRY (83) approach them.

HARRIET
Birdie! What have we here?

BIRDIE
Hi Harriet. Henry.

They embrace.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
This is Justin, my new recruit.

HARRIET
Raymond's not gonna be pleased.

Reveal RAYMOND, an adorable 90 year old man in the corner wearing a bow tie, staring daggers at Justin.

BIRDIE
He'll be fine.

HENRY
Well, we're just delighted to see you finally brought someone. Harriet was 100% convinced you were a twat bandit.

JUSTIN
Oh my god.

<p>HARRIET Well...she never mentioned anyone.</p>	<p>HENRY I never thought so.</p>
---	--------------------------------------

HARRIET
Jury's still out for me, to be honest. None of my business what you do with your personal life. You're still our favorite little bird.

HENRY
(to Justin)
This one looks a little light in the loafers.

HARRIET

Good Lord. Henry, give the boy some space.

HENRY

Just enjoy the launch. All down hill from there.

HARRIET

That's enough, prune face.

HENRY

Let's agree to agree, Old Fartress, I'm right.

They kiss.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I am going to make you the happiest woman in the world.

HARRIET

Well, I'll miss you.

Justin and Birdie look on, totally amused. The DANCE TEACHER (50's) steps out. She's a peppy, super-positive woman.

DANCE TEACHER

Everybody line up! Now before we begin tonight, I want to remind everyone who hasn't yet done so to sign up for our semi-annual recital! I know your family and friends can't wait to watch the progress you all have made!

Justin scoffs to himself, and then whispers to Birdie.

JUSTIN

(sarcastic)

Where do I sign up?

Birdie looks at him, smiles, and squeezes his hand. She then points to a huge sheet taped to the wall that reads "RECITAL SIGN-UPS."

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Oh fff...antastic. I can't wait to...

The dance teacher looks up at Justin, and with a smile...

DANCE TEACHER

Excuse me, young man? You don't know this, because you're one of our newcomers, but here at the Holly Oak Senior Ballroom Society, we speak with our feet, and not with our mouths! Okay? Super!

Justin looks like he's made the biggest mistake of his life.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - LATER

Justin and Birdie dance amongst the older couples. Justin has never danced before and it's obvious.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - SAME NIGHT

Justin enters, noticeably limping. Still wearing his ridiculous outfit.

ELIOT

(laughing)

What happened, Baryshnikov? Pulled a hammy?

JUSTIN

Do you happen to remember where I stashed that loaded pistol?

ELIOT

Uh oh. Ballroom not your genre?

JUSTIN

Birdie and I are officially signed up for the annual geezer dance recital in March. Anything will do at this point, a knife, a fork, a thin piece of wire.

Justin collapses on the couch.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I have so much research to do. I'm fucking exhausted.

ELIOT

Research for what?

JUSTIN

Our dates, numb nuts. I can't go in blind.

He pulls out his laptop.

ELIOT

Oh yeah, that would be horrible if you had to be yourself! Honestly, I think it's time you gave up the whole charade. You know what I mean? What do you have to lose?

JUSTIN

Her.

ELIOT

Jesus. You got the girl, man. Just relax. You are totally worthy of her. You do know that, right?

Justin looks dubious. He freezes as he looks at his screen.

JUSTIN

Oh no.

He puts his face in his hands.

ELIOT

What?

JUSTIN

You've gotta be kidding me. She keeps adding shit to her profile.

INT. CLIMBING WALL - CHELSEA PIERS - DAY

Justin, with full rock-climbing gear on, is clutching on to the side of a climbing wall for dear life. Birdie, also in full rock-climbing gear, is next to him.

BIRDIE

It's all coming back to you, huh?

Justin musters a sickly smile.

JUSTIN

Yup. You were right. Just like riding a bike.

INT. YOGURTLAND - DAY

Birdie laughs as she makes an insane concoction. Justin looks on as he eats a cone with plain vanilla soft serve.

BIRDIE
Sure you don't want a bite of mine?

JUSTIN
Aw, no thanks. I'm actually...
allergic to that exact...
combination of toppings.

EXT. HAND BALL COURTS

Ashley, Eliot, Birdie and Justin play hand ball. Terribly.

INT. MANICURE/PEDICURE SALON

Justin and Birdie sit side by side getting a pedicure.

BIRDIE
Ya know, you're the first guy I've
ever met who likes doing this.

Justin smiles.

EXT. LIFE CAN BE RUFF - POUND - DAY

At the pound, they wear blue volunteer jumpsuits. Justin is surrounded by big, angry dogs jumping on him. Birdie laughs. Justin looks terrified.

INT. DANCE STUDIO

They dance and get ready for the recital. Justin's dancing is getting better.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

Justin, lays out some clothes and camping equipment. He walks up to Eliot's bedroom door.

JUSTIN
Can I borrow that duffel bag?

He tries to open the door. It's locked.

ELIOT
Yeah. Give me a minute.

Justin knows what the locked door means.

JUSTIN
What are you doing?

ELIOT
Vanna White.

JUSTIN
(laughing)
Oh my god. Vanna White? Is she
still alive?

ELIOT
Don't worry about it.

JUSTIN
(still laughing)
Isn't it hard to get Pat Sajak out
of the frame?

ELIOT
I'm not watching Wheel Of Fortune.
That's creepy. She did a spread in
Better Homes and Gardens.

Beat.

ELIOT (CONT'D)
Great. Now, I'm not in the mood.
Thanks a lot.

Eliot pops his head out the door.

ELIOT (CONT'D)
You pumped for the retreat?

JUSTIN
"Pumped"? Ummm...no.

EXT. DRIVING

Birdie dips her head out the window to let her long hair soar in the wind. Justin writes in a little moleskin book. Eliot drives, and Ashley reads "Better Homes and Gardens" with Vanna White on the cover.

EXT. SACRED SPIRIT RETREAT - UPSTATE NY - DUSK

They pull in and start setting up their tents among the other crunchy, tree hugger groups. There are maybe 25 people total.

EXT. SACRED SPIRIT RETREAT - NIGHT

In the distance by the fire, a chubby, tattooed, olive skinned woman with dreadlocks and a very revealing sundress does a bizarre dance as she chants.

The two couples sit on logs in a little clearing. Eliot lights a joint. Starts passing it around.

BIRDIE

I don't smoke much, but what the hell.

JUSTIN

Yeah, I'm not exactly Woody Harrelson either, but as they say, "when at retreats..."

ELIOT

(Aside to Justin)
Dude, you sure?

JUSTIN

(Louder so Birdie can hear)
Yeah, I'll light the ol' Christmas tree whenever I get the urge.

ELIOT

(In "stoned guy" voice)
Like when I'm jamming to Phish, or when there's a good hack circle going on.

BIRDIE

(In "stoned girl" voice)
Or when I'm hacking DURING a Phish jam!

ELIOT

Totally DUDE!

JUSTIN

(In "stoned guy" voice)
Or when I take my bong...and...
(losing steam on his joke)...I don't know.

Everybody bursts into great fits of stoned laughter.

BIRDIE

Now, that's a good "stoner guy" impression.

JUSTIN

(In "stoned guy" voice)
I don't even know...dude. Heh, heh.
I'm so stoned.

BIRDIE

Are you?

JUSTIN

Oh no, I was just...saying...still
doing that joke...

They laugh as the joint continues to be passed around.

ASHLEY

I'm freezing.

Ashley gets up from her seat next to Justin and makes her way to the fire. Justin takes a hit.

ELIOT

Birdie. Is that a nickname or...?

BIRDIE

I was hatched from an egg.

Eliot laughs.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

No. My parents were free-lovin'
hippies. Felt like the world was
caging us in, so they wanted their
little girl to fly free. Birdie.

Someone takes Ashley's place next to Justin in the circle and holds out a hand for the joint. Justin inhales, staring at an appreciative Birdie, basking in the moment, then he turns...and sees it's...Gary, the guitar instructor!

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

AAAHHH!

Justin thinks the cherry from the joint drops on his leg and starts frantically patting himself down. In reality it drops on the ground and Gary picks it up.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Oh fuck, oh fuck. Where is it?

GARY

(after an inhale)
It's in me, man. It's in me. Is
that cool?

Gary, bug-eyed, stares at Justin.

GARY (CONT'D)
Holy shit, man. It might be the mushrooms talking but I think you teach me guitar.

JUSTIN
It's the mushrooms.

Justin scampers off.

EXT. SACRED SPIRIT RETREAT - CAMP FIRE - CONTINUOUS

ASHLEY
Do we have marshmallows? Justin...?

She snaps in his face and finally gets his attention.

JUSTIN
Huh?

ASHLEY
You okay? You flat-lined there for a second.

JUSTIN
I'm chillin'?

BIRDIE (O.C.)
Hey guys, get over here! This mantra's not going to chant itself!

JUSTIN
(To Ashley) Oh Jesus, your boyfriend's killing me with this retreat! I was doing so well, it was happening, it was flowing. Now I'm fucked. I'll be completely exposed.

He starts manically shoving marshmallows in his mouth. He begins to hyperventilate.

ASHLEY
What?

JUSTIN
Oh, eating helps calm me down when I get stressed...Mmmm...these are disgusting.

But he continues manically eating them.

ASHLEY

No, what are you talking about?
You'll be "completely exposed?"

JUSTIN

Oh, come on Ash, look at her. Look
at this place...it's a perfect fit.
I can't do this shit. It's not me.
What am I doing here?

ASHLEY

The same thing I'm doing here. It's
called compromise. Eliot isn't the
biggest fan of wine tasting but he
took me to the Finger Lakes last
summer and I had a great time
because he knew I always wanted to
do that. I'm not crazy about this
spiritual retreat mumbo jumbo. You
don't have to love doing it but you
do have to at least make an attempt
to do it for the sake of your
partner.

Justin is listening intently, chewing the remainder of his
mouthful of marshmallows.

JUSTIN

You're right.

ASHLEY

Eyes on the prize, soldier.

JUSTIN

Eyes on the prize...eyes on the
prize...

He stands up and readies himself for battle, still holding
the bag of marshmallows, still nervously chewing. His eyes
are now completely blood shot.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Thanks, Ash.

He grabs some chocolate that she'd been holding for her
"smares" and shoves it in his mouth before heading over to
the dance.

ASHLEY

(calling out to Justin)
Here, take a napkin.

JUSTIN

Nah, I'm good.

He has chocolate lining his mouth like some odd shade of lipstick as he approaches Birdie and Eliot dancing and chanting. Justin breaks into an odd krump-style dance.

Birdie and Eliot stop for a second, then they all break into massive laughter and follow Justin's movements and all start chanting his mantra that he says over and over...

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Eyes on the prize...Eyes on the prize.

BIRDIE

EYES ON THE PRIZE...!!!

ELIOT

EYES ON THE PRIZE...!!!

Pan over into the night through the sparks of the fire to find Gary sitting on a log, tripping hard. He stares at the three of them and weirdly mutters the lyrics to The Spin Doctors' "Two Princes."

GARY

"One, two, princes kneel before you
(that's what I said, now)
Princes, princes who adore you
(just go ahead, now)
One has diamonds in his pockets
(that sounds great, now)
This one, said he wants to buy you
loquets
(ain't in his head, now.)"

EXT. SACRED SPIRIT RETREAT - NIGHT

Justin and Birdie walk through the woods.

BIRDIE

Anywhere in the world...where would you go?

JUSTIN

Umm...Orlando. Definitely. I've always wanted to go to Orlando.

She laughs.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

No. I wish I travelled more. I've never left the states.

BIRDIE

Really?!

His defenses go back up.

JUSTIN

You know where I'd love to go? The Galapagos Islands. Kind of obsessed actually.

BIRDIE

You are?

JUSTIN

Obsessed. I have this book...

BIRDIE

That's bizarre. That's the one place on earth I don't want to go.

Justin winces and braces for his defense.

JUSTIN

Are you kidding? I thought...

BIRDIE

No, don't get me wrong, I'm in love with the place. I'm in love with what it represents but to actually go there would mean the end of what makes it what it is. This isolated, untouched corner of the earth with these incredible animals that can't be found anywhere else roaming freely. It's just overflowing with this natural perfection.

JUSTIN

Sounds kind of nice, actually.

BIRDIE

Yeah, but we'll find a way to fuck it up. Selfishly, of course, I'd love to see it and experience it. But if we got to go so would people who don't respect our world. Bloated pasty tourists who just want an exotic honeymoon. No thanks.

Beat.

JUSTIN
That's the way I feel about
Orlando.

INT. SACRED SPIRIT RETREAT - TENT - NIGHT

Justin and Birdie in their tent. Justin is still a little stoned but mellow. They cuddle.

BIRDIE
My parents would love this.

JUSTIN
They must be the ultimate hippies.
Super hippies.

BIRDIE
Let me put it this way, they had a
band in college called "Hemp, Hemp,
Hooray!"

Justin laughs.

JUSTIN
That's amazing. Where are they now?

BIRDIE
Oregon. Yeah. Healthy and fat in
Porkland. And you? What about your
parents?

JUSTIN
Umm...My dad's fine. He lives a
quiet life in Vermont. Retired
columnist. Very heady.

BIRDIE
Uh huh.

Awkward beat.

JUSTIN
And, uh, my mom and I had sort of
an...up and down relationship.
Mainly down.

BIRDIE
Oh, man. I didn't mean to...

JUSTIN
No, no, it's not your fault. I
didn't mean to make it weird.

(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Sorry. It's just...she left my dad for someone else who she thought was better, I guess, and kind of stopped talking to me in the process. She just cut all ties. Was hard for my dad.

BIRDIE

Jesus. And you, I'd imagine.

JUSTIN

I guess.

BIRDIE

So you guys still don't talk at all?

JUSTIN

No. I got a card in the mail about 3 years ago. No actually, 4 years ago now. Wow. It was from her new husband saying that she had passed away.

Justin gets very skirmish.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

But I hadn't talked to her in like 5 years so it didn't make much difference anyway.

Birdie doesn't know what to say.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Ya know, I, uh...I kinda do hate talking about it to be honest.

BIRDIE

Oh, god, I'm so sorry.

JUSTIN

It's okay.

He's still. She picks up on it and slides over to him.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Are you stoned at all?

BIRDIE

A little.

JUSTIN

Oh, great. I've had diarrhea of the mouth here for the last few minutes and you're sober. This is great.

BIRDIE

I love this stuff. I love learning about you. I think you are who you are when you're with the people who make you feel alive. And I feel very alive right now.

Long beat.

BIRDIE

I guess I am still stoned. Sorry.

She slides right up beside him and becomes very flirtatious.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

This is so nice.

JUSTIN

What? The incessant crickets or the twigs jabbing me through the floor?

BIRDIE

I know. I have a root jabbing me.

JUSTIN

I'll jab you with a root.

Awkward pause.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Just kidding.

BIRDIE

Oh? Too bad, I love dirty nature double entendres.

JUSTIN

Try to say that ten times fast.
Dirty double tandr..dirty nater
double nature...it can't be done.
It's too hard.

She takes off her top and reveals a sexy little bra. She gets on top of him. Starts kissing his neck.

BIRDIE

Mmm. Dirty, (kiss) nature (kiss)
double (kiss) entendres. (kiss)

They go at it.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SACRED SPIRIT RETREAT - MORNING

Ashley sits in the car. Birdie packs some bags into the back of the car. Justin stands in the morning light with Eliot.

BIRDIE

Good to go.

JUSTIN

Great. Just gotta grab the tent.

She kisses Justin, passionately. Birdie gets in the car. Justin and Eliot grab the tent and start folding. Justin seems extremely anxious. Eliot is smoking a bowl.

ELIOT

That was fun, dude.

Silence.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

Or...not.

JUSTIN

I think I made a fool of myself.

ELIOT

Listen, man. You gotta...just...why are tents like crazy hard to roll up?

JUSTIN

I brought up my mom. My fucking mom. Oh my god. Such a fucking idiot. And The Galapagos Islands? That back fired.

ELIOT

I wish I could help you, man...

Eliot takes a hit of a bowl.

JUSTIN

Mark my words. That girl is gonna leave me, like, any second now. I can feel it.

(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

She's acting all cool right now,
but I guarantee she's putting the
pieces together and realizing that
I'm some fucking scam artist twat.
Aahh. It sucks, I really like her.

Eliot takes another huge hit of the bowl.

ELIOT

Well...I think you're pretty
awesome. You just sound...
(exhales)...confused. And to be
totally honest with you right
now...

Eliot zones out and stares at the ground before he can finish
his thought. Long beat as Justin waits.

JUSTIN

Are you driving?

ELIOT

Well...not at the moment...but I'm
about to.

JUSTIN

Gimme the keys.

ELIOT

Do you know how to drive?

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

Justin looks tired as he writes on his laptop. His phone
rings.

JUSTIN

Hello?

Cut back and forth to Alan, in a Bakery, on his blu tooth ear
piece, stuffing his face with a pastry.

ALAN

I love it, my man! I really like
where this is going.

JUSTIN

You do? That's...that's great. I'm
really glad you're into it.

ALAN

More than into it. And forget about my wife's friends...they can't stop creaming in their mom jeans.

JUSTIN

Oh, that's...awful.

ALAN

I'm just saying. No one will ever accuse you of being a hack writer again!

JUSTIN

Okay, wait. Who keeps accusing me of being a hack writer?

ALAN

(Aside) No, that one sweetheart. The one behind it. Nope. Well, now you just touched both of them so bag em both up. (Back to phone) Keep doing what you're doing, bud! Send over more when you have it. Gotta take this call. Love ya pal.

Eliot enters the apartment.

JUSTIN

Love...you too.

He hangs up.

ELIOT

Was that Birdie?

JUSTIN

What? No. It was Alan.

ELIOT

Oh. (Beat) Fag.

JUSTIN

(stressed)

You gotta help me come up with a date for Birdie today. I've gone through everything on her profile. She's hasn't updated it forever.

ELIOT

Why don't you take her where you like to go for a change? You know, something from your profile.

JUSTIN

It just has to be up her alley.

ELIOT

You're up her alley, douche. How about that thrift store on the lower east side.

JUSTIN

Oh my god. What the hell would we do there?

ELIOT

Shop. Talk. Not be obsessed with being someone else.

Justin sighs.

JUSTIN

Just doesn't seem like enough.

INT. BILLY'S ANTIQUES & PROPS - DAY

Justin and Birdie walk the aisles. It's like a Goodwill from 1952. Justin puts on an old-fashioned button-up tan army shirt and army hat.

JUSTIN

Ah, this brings me back.

BIRDIE

Ha, to what? Your tour of duty in Iwo Jima?

Off Justin's look.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Too soon?

JUSTIN

Uh, yeah. No, the Boy Scout days.

BIRDIE

You were a Boy Scout? How long were you gonna wait to drop that one on me?

They walk down the aisles, trying on items as they go.

JUSTIN

Eagle scout, actually. Did I just voluntarily castrate myself?

BIRDIE

No! I think it's totally sexy that you were an eagle scout. Plus, everyone is allowed one nerdy skeleton in their closet.

JUSTIN

Just one?

BIRDIE

You can have as many nerdy skeletons as you can fit in your closet.

JUSTIN

Well, good. I'm gonna need an industrial sized walk-in closet then. I was in a band.

BIRDIE

Seriously? Wait, what's nerdy about that? Were you a new kid on the block or something?

JUSTIN

Yeah. I'm the lost Wahlberg brother. McHumphrey Wahlberg. Stage name. Didn't I tell you that?

BIRDIE

That's right. Sorry. You did tell me that.

JUSTIN

Umm, you're actually not far off.

BIRDIE

Oh I forgot! You play guitar!

JUSTIN

Um...right. But in this particular band I...did...bass.

BIRDIE

(Laughing)

Yeah? You "did" it? Either that's an expression I've never heard or you were in an a cappella group.

JUSTIN

It was a band. A...band group.

Birdie is laughing uncontrollably.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Alright. Very funny. It wasn't just any a cappella group, it was an ALL-MALE a cappella group. A man band. Get it straight.

BIRDIE

(Still laughing)

Sounds like you couldn't get it very "straight!"

She puts a sailor's cap on him.

JUSTIN

Ha ha. Well done. Yep, I followed my illustrious boy scout career up with a four year stint in my college's a cappella...band. It's a wonder I ever got laid.

Birdie pulls Justin in and slowly kisses him. They continue walking. Birdie eyes a gas mask on the wall. She grabs it.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Oh no.

She puts it on and charges him. He runs through the store as she chases him breathing heavily.

INT. TOMOE SUSHI - WEST VILLAGE - NIGHT

Justin, Birdie, Eliot and Ashley eat sushi and drink. Ashley is drunk. They laugh.

ELIOT

I swear. Look it up! Google that shit. Third century Japan is when they invented the California roll AND the Rock n' Roll special.

ASHLEY

(agreeing)

Yeah, yeah, yeah...I'm sure they were also yelling, "SAKE BOMB, SAKE BOMB, SAKE BOMB!!"

She yells a little too loud as some of the staff glance over.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I gotta tinkle.

ELIOT
Uuugghh.

ASHLEY
What?

ELIOT
You know how much I despise that
word.

ASHLEY
Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle.

ELIOT
Please don't.

BIRDIE
I don't have to pee, but I DO have
to puke.

JUSTIN
Well, you know the rules...you
puke, you pay.

BIRDIE
Well in that case, might as well
get my money's worth. One more
round of bourbon!!

ASHLEY
Fuck yes, girl!!

ELIOT
Ookay.

Birdie laughs, grabs Ashley and leads her to the bathroom.

ELIOT (CONT'D)
Ashley hasn't been this shit-faced
in like 2 years.

Justin turns to make sure the girls are gone.

JUSTIN
Who drinks bourbon with sushi?

Eliot laughs.

ELIOT
Get whatever you want, man.

JUSTIN

When did you and Ashley have your first fight?

ELIOT

Our first fight? I have no idea.

JUSTIN

I feel like we're never gonna have ours. Everything's just so "fun" all the time.

ELIOT

It's supposed to be "fun" all the time. What the hell is going on with you, dude?

JUSTIN

I kind of want to fight. I want to have differences, compromises.

ELIOT

She doesn't need the theatrics all the time. You just...you got yourself in a little tangle, that's all...by doing some shit that she posted on her profile...

JUSTIN

Exactly!

ELIOT

Right. But, dude, it's always been YOU doing it. I gotta say, man, I think a lot of this shit is in your head. You practically finish each others' sentences at this point. You know how rare that is?

JUSTIN

You don't get it. Girls like her need fireworks. They don't want to go from filet mignon to meatloaf.

ELIOT

I like meatloaf.

JUSTIN

You know what I mean.

ELIOT
 Yeah, I also like filet mignon.
 Doesn't have to be so black and
 white, man.

The girls come back.

ASHLEY
 Honey, I'm spinning.

The guys stand.

ELIOT
 Alrighty...bedtime for drunk.

ASHLEY
 I'm spinning!

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Justin is awakened by yelling and a slammed door. He walks out of his bedroom and finds Eliot looking shell-shocked.

JUSTIN
 What was that?

ELIOT
 She found my file.

JUSTIN
 Your what?

Eliot gives Justin a knowing look.

ELIOT
 My file?

JUSTIN
 Your...oh. Oh shit!

ELIOT
 Yeah, she saw them all. Jamie Lee
 Curtis, Christie Brinkley, Kathleen
 Turner. All of them.

JUSTIN
 How'd you...wait. Kathleen Turner?
 Really?

Eliot stares at Justin. He's not in the mood.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Sorry. How'd you guys leave it?

ELIOT

She gave me an ultimatum. Either the file goes, or she goes. So... she went.

JUSTIN

Wait a second. You're talking about...a bunch of photos of old celebrities that you jerk-off to or your girlfriend. And you picked your photos?

ELIOT

It's not...Look, keeping that file doesn't mean I love her any less.

JUSTIN

Right, but why don't you just do what makes her happy? Or, at least, like, lie to her and say you threw them out.

ELIOT

Then that's just another thing I'd be compromising on. I can't do it anymore. This is just the tip of, like, a giant iceberg. It's not just about the stupid pictures. How much of myself, of what makes me who I am, can I just erase or "throw out"? I like who I am. I don't want to miss that guy in a few years. Sorry to wake you up.

Eliot goes back into his bedroom and shuts the door.

INT. CAFFÈ TAZZA - DAY

Justin writes. He glances up and notices Gerard is glaring at him and suspiciously moving his hand underneath the counter. It's very disturbing.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

They dance. Justin is becoming very good, but his exhaustion is showing more and more.

BIRDIE

So...I have a special surprise for
the dance recital this Friday!

JUSTIN

Oh man. You are just full of
surprises.

BIRDIE

My parents are coming into town!

Beat. He let's that soak in.

JUSTIN

That's...insane.

BIRDIE

No pressure at all. They're super
mellow.

She pulls him closer. His face shows that he's petrified.

EXT. BIRDIE'S PLACE - A LITTLE LATER

Justin and Birdie walk up to Birdie's building.

BIRDIE

You want to come in for a nightcap?

JUSTIN

(laughs)

A nightcap? What year is this?

BIRDIE

Shut up! I assumed you knew
nightcap was a euphemism for sexy
time.

JUSTIN

Ah, nope. Never heard that before.
I'd love to come in and...nightcap
you, but unfortunately the
Ethiopian food and dance moves
aren't really joining each other in
perfect harmony.

BIRDIE

Oh no! Aww, I'm sorry. Is there
anything I can do?

JUSTIN

Nope.

BIRDIE
Okay, well, call if you need
anything.

JUSTIN
I will.

BIRDIE
You don't look good.

He's on autopilot. This comes out of nowhere...

JUSTIN
Well..."your beauty makes this
vault a feasting presence full of
light." (Beat) Romeo and Juliet.

BIRDIE
I know.

She smiles and embraces him. She sits back and stares at him.

JUSTIN
What?

BIRDIE
(a little embarrassed)
It's nothing.

JUSTIN
(panicked)
What? What is it?

BIRDIE
It's just...I...think I'm...falling
in love with you.

Beat. Justin is clearly not expecting this.

JUSTIN
Oh. (forced smile) You...too.

INT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT

Justin bursts in, infuriated. Eliot is playing Wii fit
skiing.

JUSTIN
Holy shit! She said I love you! I
can't believe it. I can't fucking
believe it!

Eliot gets off the Wii fit board.

ELIOT

She did?

JUSTIN

How could she possibly say that and mean it? It's insane! And she wants me to meet her parents on Friday! She doesn't even know me!

ELIOT

Well, have you shown her...

JUSTIN

I mean, doesn't she get it?

ELIOT

To tell you the truth, man...

JUSTIN

I hate dancing. I hate small Korean women touching my feet. And I hate fucking bourbon!

ELIOT

Look, dude...

JUSTIN

I'm quoting Romeo and Juliet for fuck's sake! If she thinks that's the real me, she's in for a rude awakening. I...I gotta write. Be in my room if you need me.

Justin storms into his room and slams the door.

ELIOT

(to himself)

How are you doin, Eliot? Oh, thanks for askin. Not great, actually. Ash and I haven't talked in several days. Well let's grab a beer and talk about it. So anyway...

INT. JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Justin lies on his bed and writes on his laptop.

INT. JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Justin, in bed, with closed laptop on stomach, is awakened by his phone. Cut back and forth to Alan, also in bed.

JUSTIN

Hello?

ALAN

Good morning, sunshine.

JUSTIN

Alan. Hey. What...time is it?

ALAN

It's early, buddy. Couldn't wait. Got the pages you e-mailed over last night.

JUSTIN

Oh. Cool. You likey?

ALAN

Me likey very much. Me likey long time. I want to set a meeting to throw some ideas around for your ending. How's Friday at 6?

JUSTIN

Yeah, yeah...Friday is...actually, I've got this dance thing I'm supposed to go to...

ALAN

(laughs)

Good one. Seriously, so Friday?

JUSTIN

Umm...yeah. You know what? Friday's great. I'll be there.

ALAN

It's on. What's cookin tonight? Let me buy my boy a beer.

JUSTIN

I'd love to man, but I can't. My...this girl I've been...seeing has some...surprise planned for us.

ALAN

Still dating her? What's her name?
Rooster?

JUSTIN

Yep. Okay man, gotta run. See ya
Friday.

ALAN

Beautiful. Let me know if anything
comes up. I'm psyched. Love ya,
pal.

JUSTIN

Love you too.

INT. SMALL ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Original Andrew Wyeth paintings and sketches adorn the walls.
In the middle of the floor is a picnic blanket with a basket
and some candles. Birdie turns on the lights.

BIRDIE

Surprise!

JUSTIN

(underwhelmed)

Wow.

She kisses him.

BIRDIE

My friend Sammy works here. I only
had to promise my first born child
to get the keys. What do you think?

JUSTIN

They're all...Andrew Wyeth's.

BIRDIE

He's my favorite artist.

JUSTIN

Yeah, I know.

BIRDIE

No way. Really?

JUSTIN

Yup. Do you know who my favorite
artist is?

BIRDIE

No.

Beat.

JUSTIN

I don't have one.

Justin looks around the gallery.

BIRDIE

Bourbon?

Justin grimaces.

JUSTIN

Nah, I'm good.

BIRDIE

Oh, alright. Really, just a toast?

JUSTIN

To what?

BIRDIE

I don't know. To us?

JUSTIN

You have anything besides bourbon?

BIRDIE

No, just this.

JUSTIN

Yeah, no, I'm good.

Justin walks around and takes a closer look at the art. He sees one of Andrew Wyeth's "Helga pictures," a beautiful profile of a woman wearing a turtleneck and staring off, sullenly.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

That's...crazy. My mom used to wear her hair in braids just like this.

Justin is mesmerized by the paintings. He can see his mom staring back at him.

BIRDIE

Really?

JUSTIN

Yeah.

He stares at the painting. Silence.

BIRDIE

They call these the Helga paintings. Andrew Wyeth's wife walked into his studio and found 240 paintings he had done of this other woman. His neighbor, Helga.

JUSTIN

Huh. Life's a bitch.

Birdie stands awkwardly.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I wish I could paint like this.

BIRDIE

I bet you could. You're so talented.

Justin scoffs.

JUSTIN

Okay.

He turns and gives a look of "what's next?"

BIRDIE

Are you hungry?

Out of the basket, she unravels french bread and brie cheese.

JUSTIN

Oh. I just ate.

BIRDIE

Justin. What's going on?

JUSTIN

What?

BIRDIE

Do you wanna be here?

JUSTIN

Yeah.

BIRDIE

Okay. I just feel like I'm some annoying girl you just met that you're trying to get rid of.

JUSTIN

No. I...I just have a lot of shit on my mind. I'm making really good headway with my writing.

BIRDIE

That's great. Congratulations.
Teen Vampire 2?

No laugh.

JUSTIN

I'm not just a hack writer, ya know.

BIRDIE

Hey. I didn't mean it like that.
Sorry.

She goes to kiss him but stops. Stares at him for a beat.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Is this because I said I was falling in love with you the other night?

He doesn't know how to respond, so this comes out instead...

JUSTIN

It's just a little weird don't ya think? You take me to a private viewing of your favorite artist's paintings with your favorite liquor and your favorite bread and your favorite cheese.

BIRDIE

I'm sorry. Are you not into it?

JUSTIN

I...I get it. You're trying to tell me that I'm meatloaf and you want fucking filet mignon.

BIRDIE

What?! What are you talking about?

JUSTIN

I'm exhausted. The rock climbing, the cooking, the guitar...

BIRDIE

The guitar?

JUSTIN

Just forget it. I'm just trying to keep up with you.

BIRDIE

I don't want you to keep up with me. I don't care about that stuff.

JUSTIN

I just think you'd be better with someone else.

Long beat. Birdie processes this.

BIRDIE

Are you serious? That's ridiculous.

JUSTIN

Is it? Who's my favorite author?

BIRDIE

I...don't know.

JUSTIN

Huh. What's my favorite dessert?

BIRDIE

I don't know. What is it?

JUSTIN

You don't find it strange that you don't know that stuff about me?

BIRDIE

No! Honestly, no. There's plenty of things that you don't know about me either.

JUSTIN

What's the point? We're too different, you and me. There's too many things. Like, I've barely travelled at all and you're like a fucking peace corps veteran.

BIRDIE

Why are you...

JUSTIN

What do you see in me? Huh? And what's to say that you won't up and leave whenever you want. I mean, that's your philosophy, right?

(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

When life throws you something better, just up and leave the other shit-pile behind.

BIRDIE

So you think I'm just hanging around until I find something better?

JUSTIN

You tell me.

Beat.

BIRDIE

Do you know that that's the first time I've ever told a guy I loved him and meant it? And do you wanna know how shitty it was to get the reply that I got from you?

JUSTIN

So, why are you here?

BIRDIE

Because, Idiot, I like you. Whether you believe it or not. But if you don't think that I "know" you or that it's going to be a problem because I don't know what your fucking favorite dessert is, then please tell me now so that I can stop imagining that this might actually go somewhere.

Long Beat. They stand in silence.

INT. TAXI CAB - NIGHT

Birdie and Justin are both silent in the back of the cab.

INT. TAXI CAB - NIGHT

They pull up to Justin's apartment. He gets out. And almost instantly, as the taxi pulls away, Birdie starts crying.

INT. NATURAL ROOTS WELLNESS STORE - THE NEXT DAY

Eliot stocks shelves. The door bells jingle. Birdie enters.

ELIOT
You're unbelievable.

JUSTIN
Thanks?

ELIOT
You constantly talk about finding a great girl, being in a great relationship. Well, guess what? You had it. Except now, you just pissed it all away.

JUSTIN
Are you drunk?

ELIOT
Get over your shit. Or don't. But just don't fuck over other people in the process.

JUSTIN
Did you see her?

ELIOT
Yeah. We just had a drink.

JUSTIN
Or 12? How is she?

ELIOT
Do you really care?

JUSTIN
Yeah, I care. What is this all about?

ELIOT
Just admit it.

JUSTIN
Admit what?

ELIOT
That you think you're a disappointment.

JUSTIN
What are you talking about, man?

ELIOT
You think you're not worthy of love.

JUSTIN

So?

ELIOT

So...it's a selfish fucking act, man. You just pulled Birdie in because you're a great fucking guy, but you were so obsessed with the "fact" that you weren't...so now you've lost her. I mean, how retarded is that?

JUSTIN

Why the fuck do you care so much?

ELIOT

Because I know how rare those good ones are, man. And believe me right now when I tell you, you'll miss them when they're gone.

Justin starts to walk to his room.

JUSTIN

I think you need to sleep it off.

ELIOT

You can change your path, man. You don't have to be like your mom.

Justin re-enters.

JUSTIN

Don't talk about my mom.

ELIOT

Oh, yeah. God forbid we talk about the woman who taught you such great life lessons as: shutting down and how to abandon.

JUSTIN

Wow! Really?! I had no idea that going to quasi-spiritual-self-help retreats and smoking a lot of weed qualified you to sum up my life's problems in such a neat little package. How much do I owe you, doctor?

ELIOT

I really don't know what to say to you anymore.

JUSTIN

I don't need you to say anything, man. I never "needed" you to say anything. In fact, it might be good for you to tone it down with all your fucking advice.

Beat. Eliot looks at Justin.

ELIOT

Okay.

Eliot starts to walk out, but turns.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

Oh, and don't worry, I didn't tell her about the online profile and how you're a completely different guy who was never present while she was around. Your facade is still intact.

Eliot walks out and closes the door behind him. Justin watches him go. He stands, alone.

EXT. JUSTIN AND ELIOT'S APARTMENT - NEXT DAY - FRIDAY

The sun rises. Justin gets into a cab. He's dressed nicely but looks very tired.

EXT. BIRDIE'S PLACE

Birdie gets into a cab. She's also dressed nicely.

EXT. ROAD

SPLIT SCREEN: Justin/Birdie ride in their cabs.

INT. JACOBI/PERLMAN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Justin walks in and is greeted by Alan's ASSISTANT who walks him into a board room. Inside is Alan, and his partner, SCOTT JACOBI (40's) bookish.

ALAN

There he is! The writing machine!

He grabs Justin's hands and fingers.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Nope, he hasn't quite worked them down to little nubs just yet.

The publishers both laugh as he gives him a hug.

SCOTT

We think you have the bones of something really great here.

JUSTIN

Okay.

ALAN

Just some minor notes to help you find your ending. Come on. Come in. Sit, sit, sit. You want some water or something?

They slide some notes across the table to Justin.

INT. DANCE STUDIO

Birdie walks in and sees everyone dancing. She scans the crowd. Harriet and Henry wave from across the room. An ANCIENT COUPLE finish dancing. They shuffle off with their walkers as the crowd halfheartedly applauds.

CHEESY ANNOUNCER

(Over the PA system)

That was insane! Ya'll better hold on to your oxygen tanks, cuz up next we have Mildred and Oscar. Bring in the paramedics up in this piece, cuz they're about to kill it!

Raymond (90 yr old from earlier) creeps up to Birdie. He holds out a corsage. She smiles.

INT. JACOBI/PERLMAN PUBLISHING HOUSE

SCOTT

On a general note, the stream-of-consciousness narration works really well. I mean, it's terrifyingly clear that this guy is beyond lost and has no idea what the course of his actions are.

JUSTIN
(not agreeing)
Well...

SCOTT
He doesn't understand the world
around him. He's too scared to show
who he really is, but quite
frankly, that's his own undoing.

JUSTIN
I don't think...

SCOTT
Sure, he's a child wandering in the
woods, lost in the ether of his own
neurosis. It's really powerful.

ALAN
Well, let's call a spade a spade.
He's a pussy.

JUSTIN
A pussy?! That's not really what...

SCOTT
Around chapter 12, sorry to
interrupt, that's where I started
siding with the girl.

JUSTIN
Are you serious?

SCOTT
Yeah. It may be a little obvious,
but he's such a spineless,
pathetic...

ALAN
Bitch...

SCOTT
...yes, thanks Alan, that by this
point there's no possible way that
he'd be redeemable in this girl's
eyes.

JUSTIN
With all due respect, that...wasn't
my intention.

SCOTT
How so?

JUSTIN

Well, she's the one who got carried away. She gets too heavy, too serious. Ya know what I mean? It's not his fault. They never had that real connection.

SCOTT

Hmm...See, I read it quite the opposite. He did. He found love but he was never cognizant of it.

ALAN

Right. She always accepted him for the pussy that he truly is.

JUSTIN

Are you serious?

SCOTT

Yeah. He had it and didn't even know it. The guy has driven her so far away with his fear.

JUSTIN

I can't believe that's the way you read it.

SCOTT

Well, that's the way you wrote it.

ALAN

Haha. I love it! He doesn't even know what he wrote! He's an idiot genius!

SCOTT

An idiot savant. Right. I think that by the end, you really need to make it so he's destined to be alone. It's really nice stuff.

This is all starting to hit Justin.

JUSTIN

So, he's just alone?

SCOTT

Yeah. He's cut everyone out. And he'll continue to cut everyone out. Unless he figures out his issues, you know, with the mom and all that, and does something about it.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

But that's not entirely believable unless he does something about it pronto.

ALAN

Yeah, because she's gonna be banging half of Manhattan by the time he gets his head out of his ass. It's so depressing!

Alan laughs. Justin turns pale. The sound drowns out.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Justin? Buddy?

JUSTIN

I, uh...

He stands.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I just need a minute outside.

ALAN

You okay?

JUSTIN

Yeah, I just...I just realized something I should have done earlier.

ALAN

Do your thing. We'll be here. Take as long as you need, buddy.

SCOTT

It's powerful stuff, Justin.

Justin heads to the door.

EXT. PUBLISHER BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Justin sprints out of the building and is off like a maniac.

INT. DANCE STUDIO

Old couples continue to dance. Birdie ties her shoes. Raymond looks on adoringly. Just then, a couple that we can't make out, approach Birdie. She looks up, ecstatic, and hugs them.

CHEESY ANNOUNCER
 (Over the PA system)
 Ladies and germs, we only have 3
 couples left! Then we'll have our
 grand prize drawing for free entry
 to the mahjong tournament next week
 in Puerto Vallarta! ARRIBA!!!

EXT. DANCE STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Justin is sweating and out of breath as he reaches the dance studio. He flies inside.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Justin dashes in and feverishly looks for Birdie. Just then, Eliot and Ashley appear in front of him.

JUSTIN
 (Out of breath)
 Holy shit!

They're shocked.

ELIOT
 Holy shit is right.

ASHLEY
 Oh my god.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 What are you guys doing here?!

ELIOT
 I could ask you the same thing.

JUSTIN
 Where is she?

ELIOT
 What's going on, man?

ASHLEY
 She was over there in the corner.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 (to Eliot)
 I, uh...I'm sorry, El. For yesterday and for...

ELIOT
 No, I'm sorry, man. I said some pretty hurtful things.

JUSTIN
 No no no. I needed it.

He finally spots Birdie across the room.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
I gotta...

ELIOT
Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

He starts to run off, but turns back to them.

JUSTIN
And you guys? You guys good?

Ashley and Eliot smile. He puts his arm around her.

ELIOT
Yeah. We're, uh...we're
compromising.

Justin smiles and bolts over to Birdie. She looks up, surprised, but not entirely thrilled.

JUSTIN
Hey.

BIRDIE
Hi.

Justin awkwardly looks around and notices the elderly couples eavesdropping on their conversation.

JUSTIN
You look amazing. Is there maybe
somewhere we can go to...talk for a
second. I just...I need to...

BIRDIE
Tell me.

JUSTIN
Yeah. I...I want to say something
to you.

Birdie looks at him. Beat.

BIRDIE
What is it?

JUSTIN
I love you.

The elderly couples are captivated.

BIRDIE

Don't. Please don't do this again.

JUSTIN

I do. I fucking love you. Oh man. That actually feels really good to say. I want to tell you that I... was not sure I knew. But I know that...now. Um...Does that make any sense?

BIRDIE

Not at all.

JUSTIN

Okay, um...the guy...the guy you fell in love with?

BIRDIE

You.

JUSTIN

Well, yeah. But...no. Um...The guy who plays guitar. And cooks. And likes pedicures, and frozen yogurt? That wasn't entirely me. I was...(this is hard for him to get out) just basing everything off of your online profile to become your ideal guy.

Gasps from the old crowd. But then murmurs of "What's an online profile?" Long beat on Birdie.

BIRDIE

I know.

JUSTIN

You what?

BIRDIE

I know. I've known for awhile. You're not the most subtle guy in the world, Justin.

JUSTIN

(minor relief)

Oh Jesus.

BIRDIE

You really think I thought you read The Origin of Species?! Or liked half the weird shit I like?

JUSTIN

I...tried.

BIRDIE

I know. That's one of the things I fell in love with. Your ability to try to please.

JUSTIN

I just didn't want to put myself out there and not have a connection. But it's already there. I'm connected. (Beat) Can we just start over?

BIRDIE

No. (Long Beat) Can we just pick up from where we left off?

He nods. They kiss. The oldies are excited.

JUSTIN

I can't believe you knew about the profile thing and didn't tell me.

BIRDIE

Well...actually, I put some of that stuff on there, like the rock climbing, just to see if you would actually do it.

JUSTIN

Haha. Okay, well, I told you I was in an a capella group just to see if you'd believe that one too.

BIRDIE

Nice try.

They laugh and kiss again.

CHEESY ANNOUNCER

Next up on the dance floor, put your bifocals on and put your hands together for Justin and Birdie!

The Cheesy Announcer follows this introduction with a weird bird call. Birdie rolls her eyes. Raymond walks up.

RAYMOND

What the fuck?

JUSTIN

Oh, man. I'm so sorry Raymond. My girlfriend didn't think I was coming so...

RAYMOND

Oh, okay, Chinaman. You better watch out. If you ever leave her side again, I'm swooping in.

JUSTIN

Oh. Alright. Noted.

Justin and Birdie laugh as he leads her out onto the dance floor. "A Case Of You" by Joni Mitchell begins to play. Justin and Birdie dance to the song.

BIRDIE

So...your book is finally done, huh?

Justin smiles.

JUSTIN

Almost. The ending is about to totally change.

They continue to dance, joined on the dance floor by Harriet and Henry, and Eliot and Ashley.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.