



Band on the Run

by

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Logline: At the height of the Detroit Garage Rock movement in 1999, a wheelchair-bound father, his musician son and his band bond on a raucous road trip as they war with a rival band on the way to the South By Southwest festival in Austin, Texas.

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FADE IN:

INT. A. WINSTON ADVERTISING AGENCY - LATE AFTERNOON

SUPER: Detroit, Michigan. 1999.

A watch tick is the only sound in a quiet, ultra-bright, white viewing room.

Fidgeting and distracted is JESSE GRANT (mid-20s) - a hip looking young man with longish dark hair tucked behind his ears, side burns, wearing an ill-fitting, wrinkled button down shirt tucked into his jeans.

Standing silently next to him are two men, collectively known as THE TWINS (mid-50s) - typical creative director types; Same salt and pepper hair, three day scruff, black turtlenecks, jeans and black-rimmed hipster glasses.

They're not related.

Staring in serious contemplation, they study a hanging print ad for PLANET MUFFLER - though you'd think it was the Mona Lisa.

Jesse sneaks a peek at his watch, taps his toes, when finally, a Twin breaks the silence--

TWIN #1

It's just not speaking to me. The glow from the exhaust pipe needs to be mysterious... curious... *magical*, with maybe just a hint of whimsy.

TWIN #2

Right as always. Your thoughts, Jesse?

JESSE

(distracted)

Uh, sorry - what?

TWIN #2

(annoyed)

Look, if you want to get promoted out of traffic, you're going to need to pay attention. I asked you about the ad - what do you think?

JESSE

I mean, looks great to me - for a muffler--

They ignore him.

TWIN #1  
 (to Twin #1)  
 What if we were to explore the exhaust  
 glow a bit more? Brighten up the  
 yellows and cyan - make it "come  
 alive."

TWIN #2  
 Done and done.

Twin #1 takes the print down, hands it to Jesse.

TWIN #1  
 Get this back to the designer. Have  
 her make that exhaust glow "come  
 alive."

JESSE  
*More alive.* Got it.

TWIN #1  
 No. I said "come alive."

JESSE  
 Isn't that what I just said?

TWIN #2  
 Nooooo, you said "more alive." He said  
 "come alive." There's a difference.  
 More immediate. Get it?

JESSE  
 "Come alive." Yes sir, got it.

TWIN #1  
 Excellent. You have a bright future  
 here at A. Winston, Jesse.

They walk off.

TWIN #2 (V.O)  
 He's going to go far, don't you think?

With a red grease pencil, Jesse circles the exhaust pipe  
 opening and incorrectly writes, "more alive" on the ad and  
 dashes off.

HALLWAY

Jesse walks quickly through the agency hallway, ad print in hand.

JESSE  
(mumbles)  
Muffler whimsy?

He checks his watch again, looks panicked - then picks up the pace.

Now in a maze of cubes, he tosses the ad over the top of a cubicle wall, onto the desk of GWEN MONTEGUE (20s), a stylish, purple-haired creative designer.

Confused at the magically appearing ad flopped upon her desk, she rises above her cube wall in time to catch Jesse hightailing it down the hallway.

They shout to each other.

GWEN  
Hey! When are you playing next?

JESSE  
Next Friday at The Gold Dollar.

GWEN  
Can you put me on the guest list?

JESSE  
C'mon - it's only five bucks!

She watches him continue down the hallway, smiles.

HALLWAY

Farther down, he passes DAVE (early-20s), his sandy-haired, preppy co-worker. Dave pretends to fake punch Jesse in the gut.

DAVE  
Hey woah - almost gotcha there, big fella!

JESSE  
(annoyed)  
Yeah - ya sure did, Dave.

DAVE

Heard you're playing next Friday. I wanna come see you with my lady, but she hates to hang out in The D after hours. Any suburbs shows coming up?

JESSE

Might have one at the Magic Bag next month. I'll let ya know, cool?

DAVE

Sure thing, pal. Hasta see ya later!

Jesse rolls his eyes, continues rushing, turns a corner into his cube.

JESSE'S CUBICLE

His cube is littered with DIY band fliers, haphazardly pinned across it.

Now a whirlwind, he slams off his huge 90s desktop computer, grabs his backpack with drumsticks sticking out, and walk/runs to a busy elevator.

ELEVATOR LOBBY

He impatiently stands next to CRAIG DONNER (early-30s), an arrogant VP Art Director. Stylish, with dark, long and wind-swept '70s Farrah Fawcett hair.

He glances over at Jesse - sizes him up.

CRAIG

Cool shirt.

JESSE

(surprised)

Really?

CRAIG

No.

Embarrassed, Jesse looks down at his shirt, tries to press the wrinkles out.

Then, he ditches the elevator and Craig, flies down the nearest stairwell.

MUSIC CUE: A song like WHITE STRIPES, "FELL IN LOVE WITH A GIRL."

SUPER: Band on the Run.

EXT. DETROIT LARGE STRIP MALL COMPLEX - EARLY EVENING

MUSIC CUE CONTINUES

A dilapidated Big Lots discount store sits at the corner of a rundown strip mall in a seedy part of Northwest Detroit.

A crappy 90s Volkswagen Jetta screeches around a corner and parks in the back next to an overflowing garbage dumpster.

Jesse exits the Jetta and rips off his dress shirt, exposing a Cheap Trick concert t-shirt, and grabs his backpack with drumsticks.

Then, like setting a trap, he gently closes the driver side door - hands up and off - looks happy when the trap doesn't spring.

He runs to an industrial door stuck with hundreds - maybe thousands - of overlapping band stickers. He opens it, stands still in the doorway;

Wailing guitars and screaming singers are heard muffled in the distance.

Eyes closed, a big smile emerges as he takes it all in.

Then, he jumps to tag the broken exit sign above the door, sprints into the building.

MUSIC CUE ENDS

INT. BIG LOTS STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

Jesse runs through the unkept back storage area and makes his way to a huge industrial freight elevator.

A loud KA-THUNK as the elevator lands.

Huge horizontal doors open and two MALE TEENAGERS (17), dressed in vintage 70s hipster clothing emerge, struggling with shitloads of worn musical gear on dollies.

Jesse scrambles to help them push the gear out of the elevator.

MALE TEENAGER #1  
Hey, thanks man.

JESSE

No problem - totally get it. Where you guys playing tonight?

MALE TEENAGER #2

Lili's.

JESSE

Nice. Give her a hug for me.

MALE TEENAGER #2

(chuckles)

We'll see. Depends on what kind of mood she's in.

JESSE

Here's a tip for ya: Keep the stage volume down and she'll be happy. Trust me.

Elevator now empty, Jesse slams the doors shut, pushes the well-worn "up" button.

Another KA-THUNK as the elevator lurches upward.

INT. BIG LOTS STORE - UPSTAIRS - LATE AFTERNOON

Jesse excitedly ducks through the horizontal doors before it's fully open, now in an upstairs loft area.

The muffled sound of what seems to be a thousand bands behind closed doors can be heard.

He walks past two EMO GIRLS (late-teens), dressed in all black, white faces, sitting crisscrossed around a beat-up soda machine, smoking in poses like they were Parisian.

JESSE

Sup?

They don't respond, just slightly nod their heads. One rolls her eyes - he's not wearing any black.

Jesse turns the doorknob on a door covered with even more band stickers and enters.

PRACTICE ROOM

MUSIC CUE: Blasting Garage Rock music from a boombox.

JESSE  
 Sorry I'm late. Got caught up with The  
 Twins again--

Inside are THREE YOUNG MEN (early-20s), standing around a filthy practice room stuffed with musical equipment.

They are his band, called HOT FREAKS. They gather 'round the blasting boombox, ignore his entrance.

He yells to get their attention.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
 Hey!

Someone turns up the music louder. He tries again.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
 Hey! Who is this?!

Guitarist ZAIN (early-20s), a tall, lanky young man with shoulder-length hair and a guitar strapped around his body, angrily shushes him.

ZAIN  
 Shhhhhh!

The music continues to blare as guitars squeal and tribal drums beat into a final frenzy.

Then - silence.

A beat as they look slightly sick to their stomachs.

JESSE  
 (quieter now)  
 Who the hell was that?

ZAIN  
 New Bull Roar CD.

JESSE  
 Wow. Really?

ZAIN  
 Yeah. It's incredibly... good. Ugh.

Jesse grabs the CD on the boombox, studies the cover photo;

The duo, BULL ROAR, pose in front of a damaged brick wall, wearing only black and white clothing.

Their band name, "Bull Roar" and "Detroit, Michigan" is spray painted on the brick wall behind them.

Lead singer/guitarist J.J. (early-20s), thick, wavy jet-black hair, pasty white skin, holds a crappy vintage black guitar.

Drummer MARGARET (early-20s), Asian-American, hair in bangs and ponytails, stands behind a simple vintage black drum set.

They look unapologetically 60s, and very serious - zero retro-irony present.

Jesse becomes annoyed.

JESSE

Who cares about this crap?

ZAIN

Lots of people, man. You're just pissed they're the Detroit hipsters du jour.

JESSE

No, it's because we're way better. They got no three part harmonies, no clever arrangements, just stale blues progressions and a shitty drummer. Not to mention the lead singer's stupid microphone stand gimmick. Who'd sign 'em?

MARK (early-20s), the chunky bass player, wearing a vintage leather coat, a large collar velvet shirt and jeans, chimes in.

MARK

Sympathy for the Record Industry. They're flying out next month to see them at South By Southwest.

JESSE

(stunned)

No shit? South by Southwest?

MARK

No shit.

Jesse ERUPTS.

JESSE

Motherfuckers!--

ZAIN  
 (to Mark)  
 Cue the rant--

JESSE  
 For three years we've been practicing  
 non-stop in this shitty practice room,  
 and for what?!--

MARK  
 (to Zain)  
 He's poppin' that forehead vein. See  
 it?--

JESSE  
 ...These two poseurs come out of  
 nowhere, shit out an album, and the  
 hipsters and labels run to lap it up--

He mimics a lapping dog. Noises included.

ZAIN  
 (to Mark)  
 He is passionate, I will give him  
 that--

Jesse takes the CD, pretends to wipe his ass with it, chucks  
 it against the wall, and plastic explodes everywhere.

Singer Andy (early-20s), short stature, longish greasy brown  
 hair, wearing corduroys and a baseball t-shirt, looks  
 devastated.

ANDY  
 What the shit, man. I just bought  
 that!--

He runs to gather the pieces of the destroyed CD.

JESSE  
 Once again, every band that matters  
 will be in Austin next month for South  
 By to get a record deal, except for  
 us--

ZAIN  
 "South By"? That's what we're calling  
 it now? So pretentious.

MARK

(to Jesse)

Chill, man. There's still a chance we could get in. Our new demos are sweet.

JESSE

No, we won't, Mark. Nobody in Detroit, or Austin for that matter, gives two flying shits about what we're doing here. Face it - we're never getting out of here.

MARK

(confused)

The practice room?

JESSE

No! Detroit, dummy!

A beat as Jesse watches a confused Andy holding the CD plastic shards in his hands, trying to somehow piece them back together.

Outburst over, Jesse now seems contrite. Calmer.

JESSE

(to Andy)

Sorry about the CD, Andy. I'll get you a new one.

(to the band)

And, ummm - sorry about the freak out. Again. It's just...

Things get a little serious.

JESSE (CONT'D)

...Music is the only thing I do even half way decent in life - I suck at everything else...

They nod, relate.

JESSE (CONT'D)

If we don't get a record deal, we're all gonna be stuck in soul-sucking jobs we're shitty at, like advertising. In Detroit. Forever. Screw that.

A beat of heaviness.

Then, Zain flips the mood and conversation, talks baby talk to Jesse - bottom lip protrudes. He goes in for a sarcastic gentle hug.

ZAIN

Get over here, lil buddy - give me some sugar. I know, I know.... You want out of this dump, leave Detroit, become a rock star...

JESSE

Hell yes I do! You guys want that too, right?

Andy goes in for the group hug, too.

ANDY

Of course we do. You think we'd practice our nuts off four days a week in this sweaty shit hole with your neurotic ass if we didn't?

JESSE

Neurotic?--

Andy violently pulls Jesse's head to his chest.

ANDY

Rest your head on my bosom, child. It's gonna be OK. Shhhhhh....

JESSE

(smirking)  
Goddamn you smell.

Finally, Mark brings it in.

MARK

Jesse, you're my hero.

JESSE

(chuckles)  
Fuck you.

A big group hug as they all smile, cracking up as they fall out.

Then, Zain pinches Jesse's cheek like a child.

ZAIN

Maybe a 'lil rock music will make you

feel better. Whadya say?

CUT TO:

Jesse is now behind his drum kit, sticks in hand, while the band dons their instruments, ready to ROCK.

JESSE

One, two, three, four!

...And the band launches into a ROARING power-pop song. It sounds like a modern, late 90s version of Cheap Trick.

MUSIC CUE: Original 90s-Influenced Rock Song.

Andy comes in with soaring vocals, Mark lays down a melodic bass guitar line on stylish Rickenbacker bass guitar, and Zain plays a blistering telecaster guitar with harmony backup vocals.

They are incredibly proficient - and *ROCKING*.

MUSIC CUE FADES OUT

EXT. A SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Jesse pulls into the driveway of his family's small, rundown, suburban ranch home.

He again gently closes the door of his car, but a bit too hard this time - trips its alarm. The horn blares and lights flash:

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

JESSE

C'mon, ya piece of shit!

He opens the car door, hits a few buttons, and the alarm finally stops.

Then, in another attempt, he closes the door ever so slightly - and it goes off AGAIN.

In frustration, he slams the car hood with his fists and... the alarm suddenly stops.

Pleasantly surprised, he walks into the house.

INT. JESSE'S HOME - NIGHT

Jesse walks in the front door as his mother, LYNN (early-50s), administers a syringe of medicine into his skinny and frail Father THOMAS'S (mid-50s) leg, as he sits at the kitchen table in a wheelchair.

Jazz music softly plays on a large, credenza stereo in the background.

LYNN

Speak of the devil.

THOMAS

When are you gonna get that damn car alarm fixed, boy?

JESSE

Just as soon as I magically shit out a few hundred bucks.

LYNN

Tsssk. Jesse!

Jesse starts rifling through a stack of mail on the table.

JESSE

Anything for me?

LYNN

Nothing. What are you looking for?

JESSE

Letter from a music festival in Texas.  
Not a big deal really...

(to Thomas)

How're you feeling?

THOMAS

Oh, you know - the usual.

JESSE

Like shit?

THOMAS

Bingo--

LYNN

Oh stop you two!

THOMAS

(to Jesse)

On the plus side, I haven't fallen in a week. So I got that going for me.

JESSE

Keep up the good work.

Jesse ditches the mail, moves to the kitchen and grabs some food from the fridge.

He puts a chicken leg in his mouth, grabs a Tupperware full of cold tuna-noodle salad and starts down the basement steps.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I'm hitting it - gotta work in the morning. Goodnight.

LYNN

'Night.

Lynn pulls the needle out of Thomas's leg.

THOMAS

Ouch! Jesus Lynn - could you be a little more careful?

She tosses aside the empty syringe onto the kitchen table - both look annoyed with each other.

The Jazz record skips in the background for just a little too long.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Can ya flip the record over, fer Chrissakes?

INT. JESSE'S HOME - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Jesse sits on a cold, tile-floored basement in the dark, stuffing his face and leans back against a twin bed.

He watches MTV's alternative music programming called 120 Minutes. The glow of the TV lights up his wide eyes as Radiohead's "Paranoid Android" animated video plays.

He's riveted.

He finishes the plate of food, throws it aside next to a pile of old plates, a stack of CDs, music magazines and broken drumsticks.

He opens up a magazine called "NME" to an article entitled;  
SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST, 1999 - THE ONES TO WATCH.

There's a profile on the band from earlier, Bull Roar.

JESSE

Oh God.

There's a picture of the band, again dressed only in black and white. Singer/guitarist J.J. holds his infamous "magic" mic stand out toward the camera.

Jesse reads aloud from the article.

JESSE

"...I guess being from Detroit,  
there's nothing but time during the  
winter to practice. It's destitute,  
Ese. Music is the only thing that  
really matters..."

He continues reading, then speaks aloud again.

JESSE (CONT'D)

"...The fact is, me and Margaret work  
harder than any other band in town. No  
gimmicks, just straight up Detroit  
Garage Rock 'n Roll..." No gimmicks?  
What a pile of dog shit.

With that, he throws the magazine into a trash can stacked with other music magazines with Bull Roar on the cover.

He grabs a tape cassette off a large stack of identical duplicated cassettes of his band, Hot Freaks. He puts one in the stereo, pushes play.

Music plays as he lip-syncs under his Star Wars bed sheet. He yawns as his eyes slowly close.

The basement grows darker...

INT. JESSE'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Jesse is in the audience of a packed and rowdy music club watching Bull Roar perform. A banner flies high above them behind the stage. It reads;

Welcome to South By Southwest, 1999.

They put on an electrifying performance of primal Garage Rock and Blues. The crowd bounces up and and down to the beat, now whipped into a frenzy.

THEN - lead singer and guitarist J.J. engages his MAGIC MICROPHONE STAND, in which the microphone boom arm extension, lined with lights, spins around and around, like a propeller.

Somehow, it stops directly at his mouth just before he starts singing. Every time he uses it, the hipster crowd goes absolutely BONKERS.

In a huge crescendo, J.J. goes for the big ending, slides on his knees towards front of stage, and... his pants rip open in the crotch, his hairy balls bulging through.

J.J. looks down, claps his knees shut, runs off stage, mortified.

Drums come to a screeching halt as confused drummer Margaret looks for missing J.J., then also runs off.

THEN, Jesse is magically lifted into the air, transported onto the stage, behind his drum set to his waiting band.

Drumsticks appear in his hands, and Jesse starts pounding the toms. The band kicks into high gear with an incredible performance.

The crowd goes nuts as they finish, chants their name.

CROWD

Hot Freaks, Hot Freaks, Hot Freaks!

BACKSTAGE

Show over, the sweaty band high fives their electric performance.

JESSE

They loved us! South By LOVED US!

ZAIN

You think any label guys witnessed the rock onslaught?

Appearing from the ether, a cheesy-looking HIPSTER MAN (Mid-40s), approaches the band. He has slicked gray hair, soul patch, wears sunglasses, a black leather coat and a t-shirt that says "A&R MAN" in big letters.

HIPSTER MAN  
Fellas, fellas - you guys were fucking  
dynamite - here's a record deal!

The band looks at each other in amazement.

Hipster Man pulls out a record contract from behind his back,  
extends it to Jesse.

HIPSTER MAN (CONT'D)  
Jesse, right?

Mouth agape, Jesse nods.

HIPSTER MAN (CONT'D)  
Sign here.

A huge, shiny GOLD PEN appears in Jesse's hand. But as he  
goes to sign, the room suddenly extends - becomes longer and  
longer.

Hipster Man is now farther away, but still dangles the record  
contract.

Jesse runs to him, then sprints, but Hipster Man moves  
farther away down the ever-expanding hallway.

Finally, Hipster Man vanishes back into the ether.

Backstage fades away as Jesse finds himself alone, standing  
in his home's kitchen next to a table jammed packed with  
vials of his Dad's medicine, stacked to the ceiling.

He looks at his hand - the huge gold pen is now a huge GOLD  
SYRINGE.

He looks confused, and desperately disappointed.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. JESSE'S HOME - BASEMENT - MORNING

An alarm clock blares.

Jesse wakes, rubs his eyes, stops to hear a seething  
conversation coming down the stairwell.

It's his parents fighting again. He covers his ears with his  
pillow.

LYNN (O.S)

...For the last time, Thomas, I hate going to work every morning. But I do it for us - the family--

THOMAS (O.S.)

Ah bullshit. Since I got sick, you can't wait to get the hell outta here, hobnob with your little work friends--

LYNN (O.S)

That's not true! Ya know, maybe if you stopped wallowing in self pity every once in a while, you'd see that people are falling all over themselves trying to help you--

THOMAS

Help me? By leaving me alone every day in this fucking wheelchair?

LYNN

Someone has to work!...

Words trail off as Jesse cranks the TV volume to drown out their conversation.

He dresses, grabs his belongs, when finally the slamming door of his Mother leaving reverberates down to the basement.

KITCHEN

Jesse grabs a brown paper bag lunch from the fridge, walks to the door to leave and hesitates - hears the sound of someone weeping.

He tracks the sound to his parents' bedroom, peeks through the cracked door.

Thomas sits in his wheelchair, sobbing.

Jesse begins to enter but checks his watch - 8:50AM. He backs away, quietly leaves...

INT. A. WINSTON ADVERTISING AGENCY - CUBICLE - MORNING

Late, Jesse rushes into his cubicle and boots up his huge '90s over-sized desktop computer.

On the monitor is a yellow sticky note. It reads;

You're welcome.

XOXO

- Dave

Looking confused, he crumples it up, types a password, pushes enter, and...

A PORNOGRAPHIC image appears as his computer wallpaper; A heavy-set man with a huge erect penis, biting his lip, looking seemingly straight at Jesse.

JESSE

Oh, for fuck's sake. Dave!

He jumps on a chair above the maze of cubes to catch a glimpse of Dave. No sign of him - just his startled co-workers looking up at him.

While on the chair, designer Gwen suddenly enters his cube. Jesse stumbles down and contorts to block the porn with his body. He looks painfully awkward.

GWEN

Is this a bad time? I can come back if you want--

JESSE

No, no - c'mon in. What's, ah, up?

GWEN

Got that Planet Muffler revision. Looks like it needs to be routed for sign-off, ASAP. Goes to the printer tomorrow.

JESSE

No problem, I'm on it.

She extends the ad out to him, but he doesn't budge to grab it. It'll expose the porn on his computer screen.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You can just put it on the desk - over there.

She looks confused and quietly lays it down. He politely smiles and waves as she silently exits.

JESSE  
 (under breath)  
 Fuckin' Dave.

Then he wrenches on the computer power cord, finally releases it from the outlet, falls back hard onto the floor - cord wrapped around his body, neck.

BLOOP. Screen goes black.

Gwen suddenly reappears. He looks up casually at her, arm propping up his head.

JESSE  
 Hey.

GWEN  
 Uh, Hi... forgot to tell you - The Twins are out sick, so Craig needs to sign off on the ad.

JESSE  
 Really? Craig?

She nods, gives him a confused wave as she exits.

JESSE  
 (under breath)  
 Craig. Shit balls.

INT. A. WINSTON ADVERTISING AGENCY - OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Jesse walks into the office of Art Director, Craig Doner, who insulted him the day before at the elevators.

His office is well kept; A tapestry hangs on the wall, pictures of his Pomeranian litter his desk, Von Dutch hats neatly arranged on a credenza.

Jesse stands at the doorway, while Craig studies a design book at his desk.

JESSE  
 Ahhhem.

He ignores Jesse.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
 Hey - Craig.

Slowly, Craig looks over to Jesse with steely eyes.

CRAIG  
What do you want?

JESSE  
The Planet Muffler ad. Needs your  
final sign-off before it goes to  
print.

CRAIG  
Christ. Give it to me.

Jesse hands the print to him, studies it.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Jesus - who wrote this shit?

JESSE  
Ummm - you did.

CRAIG  
Got anything for me to sign off on  
this trash?

JESSE  
Yeah, sure...

Craig holds out his empty hand for a writing utensil, though pens and pencils sit safe and uniform in a holder on his desk.

Jesse grabs the pencil from behind his ear, puts it in Craig's empty, twitching fingers. He signs the ad proof, then THROWS the pencil across the room.

Simmering, Jesse slowly walks to pick up the pencil, begins to exit, but pauses - turns to Craig.

JESSE  
Hey, sorry to bother you - one quick  
question.

CRAIG  
Now what?

JESSE  
Just curious. Do you remember the  
exact moment you gave up on being a  
real writer and sold out for  
advertising?

Craig's eyes widen, nostrils flare. Furious.

SLAM CUT:

INT. A. WINSTON ADVERTISING - ELEVATOR - AFTERNOON

Fired, Jesse stands alone in an elevator, holds a cardboard box full of his belongings.

Muzak softly plays overhead, the instrumental version of "Smells Like Teen Spirit," by Nirvana.

The elevator stops at a floor. Dave, his co-worker saboteur, enters with a huge grin. The elevator closes behind him.

DAVE

How'd ya like that wallpaper image I  
planted for ya?--

Dave then notices the overflowing cardboard box of belongings.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Oh, shit--

The elevator re-opens, Dave runs out, doors close.

Smells like Teen Spirit muzak continues... Jesse shakes his head.

EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON (CONTINUOUS)

Arms full, Jesse walks into a parking structure and disappears into the stacked concrete maze.

Then, loud honking, blinking headlights reflected off the hard concrete structure.

His car alarm goes has gone off.

JESSE (O.S.)

(in frustration)

FUUUUUUUUCKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKK!

INT. JESSE'S HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

Mentally beat, Jesse drops the cardboard box on the kitchen table, looks around; His mother and father are missing from their usual spots at the kitchen table.

He yells for them.

JESSE  
Anyone home?

No response. He paces faster around the house.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Mom? Dad?

Then, a muffled male voice yells from another room.

THOMAS (O.S.)  
In the bedroom!

Jesse runs to him.

BEDROOM

Thomas sits on the floor next to the bed looking disheveled, overheated, exhausted.

JESSE  
Jesus! What the hell are you doing on the floor?

THOMAS  
I was putting on some socks, lost my balance and fell. Couldn't get back up. Been trying - no dice.

JESSE  
How long have you been sitting here?

Jesse tries to help Thomas onto the bed.

THOMAS  
Stop! I can do it myself.

JESSE  
Apparently you can't...  
(finally helps Thomas onto the bed)  
Did you hear me? How long you been on the floor?

THOMAS  
Few hours I think.

JESSE  
Jesus, a few hours? Why didn't you call me? Where's Ma?

He doesn't answer.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Dad - where's Mom?

THOMAS

I guess she left...

Jesse scans the room; Dresser doors are open with Lynn's clothing strewn everywhere.

JESSE

(exasperated)

Another fight?

Thomas nods his head silently, "Yes."

JESSE (CONT'D)

Great. Now what?

THOMAS

Dinner. I'm hungry.

INT. JESSE'S HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

A microwave chimes. Jesse grabs a hot Hungry Man TV dinner from it - burns his fingers - delivers it to Thomas at the kitchen table.

JESSE

Careful. It's hot as hell. And make sure you don't eat the peach cobbler shit in the corner. It mixed with the steak juice. Gross.

Thomas digs in.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You think she's coming back?

THOMAS

I hope not. Fuck her--

JESSE

Fuck her? Are you serious? She's the one who takes care of you. Shit, takes care of US!

A beat as Jesse regains his composure.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Let me ask you a question; Where are your meds?

THOMAS

They're right there in the cabinet--

JESSE

No, they're not. They're in the fridge - gotta keep them cold or they'll go bad. What about your nurse - what day does she come by?

THOMAS

Wednesday. No, no - Thursday - right?

JESSE

Tuesday. You probably don't even know her name.

Eating, Thomas makes a face as though he ate something awful.

THOMAS

This peach cobbler tastes like shit.

Jesse rubs his face aggressively in frustration.

INT. JESSE'S BASEMENT - MORNING - WEEKS LATER

Jesse sleeps in bed, drooling. The clock reads: 2:14PM.

His bedroom looks like a bomb went off; Fast food bags piled up, music magazines stacked in the trash can, along with all his band's demo tape cassettes.

Upstairs, muffled arguing between a man and woman can be heard. Jesse wakes, seems to recognize the voices - runs upstairs.

KITCHEN

Jesse finds Thomas and Lynn arguing.

The kitchen table is cluttered with junk mail, fliers, brochures, etc. Thomas sits in his wheelchair, tosses the mess angrily.

LYNN

...Would you stop? I'm trying to *help* you, Thomas!--

THOMAS

By putting me in a nursing home? Go fuck yourself, Lynn!--

LYNN

It's an assisted living facility!

Jesse grabs and reads a brochure from the table; "Shady Acres Assisted Living and Retirement Community."

JESSE

Whoa, slow down, guys. Let's talk rationally about this--

THOMAS

What about you, boy? How long have you been in on this? Fucking traitor!

JESSE

What? Dad - c'mon--

LYNN

I shouldn't have come back here. Steven warned me...

Steven? All three looked shocked, stare at each other...

THOMAS

Who's Steven?

(no response)

Who's Steven, Lynn? That asshole you work with? Answer me!

Lynn doesn't answer, collects her things, purse...

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You fucking hate me--

LYNN

The only person who hates you is YOU, Thomas!--

THOMAS

Ah, bullshit!

LYNN

It's TRUE! You killed your self-esteem faster than any disease could. You told yourself you were no good, broken - even when I told you - *begged* you - not to listen!

She storms out of the house...

In a rage, Thomas grabs scissors from the table, starts

clumsily cutting up the Shade Acres brochures. Scraps fly everywhere.

Pained, manic, he carelessly cuts his fingers, blood begins to blot the table.

Jesse tries to grab the scissors away from Thomas. They wrestle with them, pointy end to Thomas's chest. Finally, Jesse pulls them away and falls back onto the floor with the them.

Jesse checks himself - no cuts. They both look relieved. Still angry, Thomas rolls away in his wheelchair into his bedroom...

#### KITCHEN

Jesse holds the scissors in his hands, looks to make sure Thomas doesn't see, then hides them high atop the kitchen cabinet.

Rummaging through kitchen drawers, he finds more scissors and knives, also hides them.

THEN, on the messy table, he sees a ripped open envelope under the clippings. The return address: AUSTIN, TX.

He pulls out the letter, reads it out loud.

#### JESSE

"Congratulations. Your band, HOT  
FREAKS, is invited to Austin to play  
South by Southwest."

(a beat)

Holy shit.

He grabs the letter and nursing home brochure, stuffs them in his pocket, and is out the back door.

#### EXT. JESSE'S HOME - DRIVEWAY - MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

Jesse walks to Lynn sitting in her running car, crying.

He sits the in the passenger seat, shows her the acceptance letter.

#### JESSE

Got into that music festival in  
Texas...

LYNN  
Congratulations, honey. You deserve  
it.

JESSE  
Did you open it? Did you know?

LYNN  
Of course not - I would've told you.

JESSE  
I figured. I guess I know who did.

A beat, then--

JESSE  
Who's Steven?

LYNN  
A man I work with. We're in love.

JESSE  
Why Mom? Why did you do this?

LYNN  
Your father - all these years,  
accusing me of having an affair - and  
many other awful things. He was wrong  
you know, he was *everything* to me.

JESSE  
So what changed?

LYNN  
After a while, I guess I just finally  
decided, "screw it." I can't help him,  
so might as well become who he thinks  
I am. Cut to the chase, you know?

JESSE  
How nice of you to oblige--

LYNN  
What the hell was I suppose to do,  
Jesse? The last ten years has been  
hell for all of us. Something had to  
change.

JESSE  
So what am I suppose to do? I can't do  
this by myself.

A beat.

LYNN

I've got to go, I'll call you in a few days.

Jesse quietly exits the car, watches Lynn drive away.

INT. LAGER HOUSE ROCK CLUB - DETROIT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jesse sits alone at a table top at a shitty rock club, looks sad as he sips a beer, casually observing the hipsters milling about.

He sees Zain through the crowd - waves to him. He carries a craft beer bottle and walks over to Jesse.

JESSE

'Sup? Other guys coming?

ZAIN

Yep, they'll be here soon. Not everyday we get into South by.

JESSE

"South By?" Look who's the hipster now.

A chuckle as they study their drinks.

ZAIN

Sorry to hear about your Mom and Dad. And your job. That's rough.

JESSE

Thanks. Been a really weird few weeks.

ZAIN

Sounds like it. What's the plan?

JESSE

No idea. I'm unemployed, broke, living in my disabled dad's basement, making hungry man dinners every night - that I'm almost starting to like...

(holds up acceptance letter)

I was counting on this to get me outta Detroit - get us all out. But with my Mom gone, I'm not sure I should go. If I can go--

ZAIN

Dude, are you crazy? This is everything you've ever wanted. It's your dream--

JESSE

What am I gonna do? I can't leave my Dad alone. He's miserable. Only talks to me when he wants something, or when he's bitching about something that I messed up. Meanwhile, I do everything for the guy, and he could give two flying shits. I'm stuck, man--

Then, Andy and Mark appear. They're excited, beers in hand.

MARK

Sup, fellas - are you geeked?

ANDY

South By in the house, bitches! Let's make a toast!

They raise their beers to cheer, Jesse unenthusiastically, and bottles clink. They drink, but are soon interrupted by loud laughing.

They look over to see Bull Roar's lead singer J.J. in the club, surrounded by hipsters, lapping him up.

JESSE

Look who it is. Hipster king of Detroit.

ZAIN

C'mon, he's just another local band dude hustlin' to bust out of here, too. Seems like a nice enough guy, right?

They study J.J. working the small crowd around him, smiling - laughing - looks friendly.

JESSE

You're probably right. How are you so wise, oh Yoda?

ZAIN

(imitating Yoda)  
Dumbass, you are, mmmhmmmm.

MARK

Let's go talk to him. We're all going to be in Austin. Might as well make nice.

They walk over near J.J holding court. When an opening appears, they beeline to him.

ZAIN

Hey, congrats on the South By gig. I hear Sympathy is gonna be there to check you out.

An unfriendly blank stare from J.J.

J.J.

Do I know you, Amigo?

ZAIN

Uh, not officially. I'm Zain - guitarist in Hot Freaks. This is my drummer Jesse, singer Andy, and bassist Mark.

J.J. gives limp handshakes to all. Then, a spark of recognition as J.J. remembers...

J.J.

...Oh wait - I do know you guys! You're that Cheap Trick rip-off band. And you...

(points to Zain)

You're the dude that fell off stage at Lili's last month and smashed your guitar to shiz...

(laughs)

Let me know if you want to sell it for parts, Homie.

J.J. takes a swig of his Pabst and turns his back on them.

They begin to walk off, but then an angry Jesse taps J.J.'s shoulder.

JESSE

Hey. We're playing South By at La Zona Rosa on the Saturday night bill. You should check us out, see how it's done.

J.J.

Well, this is awkward. We're  
headlining that show, sooooo - I guess  
you're opening for us. Bummer, Broski.  
(to Zain)

Try not to fall off the stage this  
time, Home Skillet.

J.J. laughs and the group of hipsters join in.

Hot Freaks walk off, looking shell shocked at the  
conversation gone sideways.

ZAIN

I was wrong. He's a royal doucher.

JESSE

Fucking fuck that fucking fuck. We're  
gonna blow his ass out of the water in  
Austin.

They all nod in agreement, down their beers in conviction.

EXT. A SUBURBAN STREET - MORNING - WEEKS LATER

Jesse and Thomas, in his wheelchair, wait outside their home  
in the driveway. Two ragged suitcases and an old school red  
and white cooler sit beside them.

Thomas is quiet - brooding.

Jesse scans the neighborhood, checks his watch. He looks  
perturbed.

JESSE

Fuckin' guys. Always late.

Finally, a shitty, rust-infested 70s-era van comes screaming  
around the corner and pulls into the driveway, black smoke  
pouring from behind.

Jesse looks pissed as Mark jumps out of the driver's seat,  
runs to them.

MARK

Pretty cool, right?

JESSE

I guess. Where'd you get it?

MARK

You know Tommy in the band Thick Pickle?

JESSE

How could I forget Thick Pickle?

MARK

Yeah well, they broke up. Rented it to us for cheap. Why?

Jesse adjusts the rusted side mirror - it falls off in his hands.

JESSE

Jesus. You think it'll make it to Austin?

MARK

I mean, he told me it would. Plus...

Mark digs in his pocket - flashes a AAA card to Jesse.

MARK (CONT'D)

...They gave me their triple A card just in case.

THOMAS

Anybody check the fluids on this shit wagon?

Then, Zain gets out, grabs their luggage.

ZAIN

(to Thomas)

Mr. G. - how's it going?

THOMAS

Fuckin' great. Can't wait to be dropped off at Shady Acres to die--

JESSE

Would you stop? It's only a week. Stop being so dramatic.

THOMAS

(under breath)

Should've never had sex with your mother that Christmas. Too many White Russians.

JESSE

Gross.

ZAIN

I hear those places have great ice cream socials. Hot blue hairs, too.

THOMAS

Is this suppose to make me feel better?

JESSE

(to Zain)

Help me get him in the van, will ya?

They grab the wheelchair and load him into the side sliding door.

INT. VAN - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

The side mirror is now duct-taped to the van. Mark drives with Jesse as co-pilot.

Thomas barley fits into the van, somehow wedged between Zain and Andy in the middle row, his cheek pressed firmly against an amplifier.

MARK

Hey, Mr. Grant. How's it goin'?

ANDY

Comfy?

THOMAS

Save it. You're all are co-conspirators as far as I'm concerned.

JESSE

Would you knock it off? The guys have nothing to do with this.

THOMAS

Abandoning a handicapped man. You should all be ashamed!

ON THE ROAD

A quiet ride, until everyone looks like they smell something absolutely awful. No words, but all eyes end up on Thomas.

He looks innocently up in the air, giggles. They put their

shirts over their noses and heads.

JESSE

Really? On-demand revenge farts? God,  
you're such a child.

Windows are rolled down, all heads stick out speeding down  
the roadway.

EXT. SHADY ACRES RETIREMENT HOME - MORNING

The van pulls into the front drop off at Shady Acres.

An ambulance sits out front still running, lights on, no  
siren and back door open.

The band members fall out of the van, still gasping for fresh  
air.

Jesse and Zain get Thomas out of the van in his wheelchair  
and roll him towards the entrance.

He gives the band the finger as he rolls by.

THOMAS

Smell ya later!

INT. SHADY ACRES NURSING HOME - MORNING

Jesse, Zain and Thomas wait at an empty front desk and ring  
the button for check-in.

They notice commotion down the hall from a guest room. Nurses  
walk urgently towards it.

Jesse investigates, walks down the hall.

JESSE

Stay here.

THOMAS

Take your time.

Approaching a guest room, Jesse sees several paramedics and  
nurses surrounding a bed.

An OLD WOMAN (late-70s) lies in bed, seizing, while everyone  
in the room watches, doing nothing to help.

Jesse overhears the conversation.

NURSE #1 (O.S.)  
 ...Signed a Do Not Resuscitate. Not  
 much we can do here...

PARAMEDIC #1 (O.S.)  
 Was her family present when she  
 signed?

NURSE #1 (O.S.)  
 No idea.

PARAMEDIC #2 (O.S.)  
 Happens all the time. What can ya do,  
 ya know?

NURSE #2 (O.S.)  
 Will she die?

PARAMEDIC #1 (O.S.)  
 Maybe. Hard to say.

Jesse listens in horror, then walks-runs back, pushes Thomas quickly back out to the entrance.

Looking confused, Zain catches up to him.

ZAIN  
 Hey, what's going on?

THOMAS  
 The hell you doin', boy?

Jesse doesn't answer, pushes Thomas faster and makes sure no one follows them.

EXT. SHADY ACRES NURSING HOME - MORNING

This time, Jesse lifts Thomas in the wheelchair by himself into the van. ERRRRGGGGG.

JESSE  
 (to Thomas)  
 Watch your head.  
 (points to Zain)  
 Get in the van, man.

They all quickly jump back in.

INT. BAND VAN - MORNING

Thomas is once again shoved into the middle row, face on

amplifiers.

MARK

(to Jesse)

Wait. Is he coming with us?

JESSE

Yep.

MARK

To Texas? Dude, no offense, but your dad anger farts.

ANDY

He's also really old and cranky.  
Smells like mothballs--

THOMAS

I can hear you!

ZAIN

Seriously Jesse, look at him. There's zero room in here for a wheelchair--

JESSE

Don't care. Let's go - now!

THOMAS

Jesse, I--

JESSE

Nope. Don't want to hear it. Just - - shut up for a while and try not to be the usual pain in the ass, OK?

THOMAS

Jesus Christ, all I wanted to know is if someone checked the Goddamn fluids--

JESSE

I said shut up!

Mark screeches off.

In the side mirror, Jesse glances back to see paramedics pushing a draped body on a stretcher into the back of the waiting ambulance.

The van is quiet, until Mark puts a CD in the van stereo and hits play.

MUSIC CUE: A song like SURRENDER - by CHEAP TRICK

EXT. DETROIT - MORNING

They all peer at buildings racing by, architecture reflected in the glass of the van's windshield;

- Main highway Woodward Avenue shops and buildings.
- The Joe Louis Fist sculpture.
- The Renaissance Center on the Detroit river.
- Motown Hitsville U.S.A. house.
- Dilapidated, broken down car factories.
- New, modern car factories.

Thomas looks as though he hasn't seen the landmarks in years,  
- if ever.

A longing and excitement in his eyes...

The van rolls south down the I-75 freeway, past Detroit and into Indiana, passing Farmers plowing their fields.

INT. BAND VAN - MID-AFTERNOON

MUSIC CUE ENDS

The road drones on while the afternoon sun slightly lowers over the cornfields. Jesse turns down the radio.

JESSE

I gotta piss. Anybody else?

THOMAS

Stopping - already? Go in a soda bottle for Chrissakes!

JESSE

Since when have you ever pissed in a pop bottle?

THOMAS

What - you think this is my first road trip?

JESSE

Considering I have not once been on a

road trip with you, EVER - yes.

ZAIN  
Eh, I could whiz.

MARK  
Me too.

ANDY  
Ditto.

THOMAS  
(under breath)  
Pussies.

Suddenly, the van veers to the right as Mark quickly swerves off the highway to take the next exit.

MUSIC CUE ENDS

EXT. INDIANA RURAL GAS STATION - MID-AFTERNOON

TITLE OVERLAY: Indianapolis, Indiana.

They gas up, and all enter the gas station convenience store.

As they do, another van with Michigan license plates pulls into the far side of the gas station.

It is a newer, windowless panel stretch Econoline van, painted only black and white with large magnetic signs on both sides that read;

BULL ROAR, DETROIT MI.

It also has both band member's pale, serious faces on it.

They park, and J.J. gasses up. Margaret opens the pump-facing sliding side door to throw trash away.

She gets back into the van, opens a book and starts reading... with the sliding door LEFT OPEN.

J.J. walks to the convenience store and through to the bathroom.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

BATHROOM STALL

Jesse pushes Thomas into the handicap stall and attempts to

lift him onto the toilet.

THOMAS

(angry)

What are you doing, boy?

JESSE

Helping you take a piss, give you your shot--

THOMAS

I don't need your help!

JESSE

C'mon...

Jesse unbuckles Thomas's belt and his pants drop to his knees, tries to lift him again.

THOMAS

Goddammit, Jesse - I said stop!

A short struggle as Thomas pushes him off and Jesse falls onto the bathroom floor.

JESSE

Fine. Do it yourself.

Jesse opens the old school cooler, takes out the hypodermic needle, hands it to Thomas and leaves the stall.

Thomas sits in his wheelchair, pants still at his ankles, lifts up a butt cheek up, and--

REVEAL:

Huge, red, inflamed BEDSORES litter his buttocks. He winces in pain, then clumsily sticks the needle in his leg.

BATHROOM STAND UP URINALS

Jesse pees in a stand up urinal.

JESSE

(mutters)

What a disaster. Should've left you at Shady Acres--

THOMAS (O.S.)

Again, I can hear you!

Jesse scowls, stares straight ahead at the wall as he pees.

Then, J.J. walks into the bathroom, stands next to Jesse and starts peeing, looks straight ahead.

Jesse casually glances to the side, SHOCKED as he recognizes J.J. standing next to him.

J.J. feels the gaze and looks back at him.

JESSE

'Sup?

J.J.

Do I know you, guy?

J.J. strategically moves his junk out of Jesse's sight line.

Jesse sees J.J.'s defensive tactic, then accidentally looks down at J.J.'s package - then quickly back up at him - mortified.

Jesse bolts out the bathroom as J.J., weirded out, continues to pee.

EXT. INDIANA RURAL GAS STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

The band lazily exits the convenience store, while Jesse pushes Thomas quickly past them in the wheelchair to the van. Zain catches up.

ZAIN

(to Jesse)

Dude, what's the hurry?

Jesse points to the Bull Roar van on the other side of the gas station court.

JESSE

Looks like we're not the only band on the road to Austin today.

Now back at the van, Hot Freaks gawk over at the impressive Bull Roar van.

ZAIN

Sweet ride. Fuckers.

ANDY

That's some hot shit.

MARK  
Should we say hi?

JESSE  
C'mon man.

A beat as they continue to stare at the clean band van.

THOMAS  
So what's the deal here?

JESSE  
Another band from Detroit pulled in.  
Lead singer thinks his dick is bigger  
than everyone else's.  
(casually)  
It's not.

Thomas cranes his neck over to see their band van - studies it.

THOMAS  
On the douche-o-meter from one to ten,  
where's he comin' in at?

JESSE  
Eleven.

THOMAS  
HMMMMMM. Wanna have a little innocent  
"road trip" fun?

Devilish smiles.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Yeah? OK - here's what we should do...

Jesse looks dubious at Thomas's suggestion, yet curious.

SLAM CUT:

EXT. INDIANA RURAL GAS STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

While Margaret sits in the passenger seat of the van, Jesse and Zain sneak to the driver's side.

Careful not to be seen, they peel off the Bull Roar magnetic sign.

PING!, as it releases from the metal side.

Margaret looks up from her book, "How to Win Friends and Influence People," looks around.

Nothing. Continues reading...

#### CONVENIENCE STORE

J.J. checks out at the register, buys a load of goodies - Slim Jims, Hostess Snowballs, Ho-Hos, Fresca soda and a Juggs Magazine - which he sticks in his back pants to hide, pays and walks out.

#### GAS STATION

Magnet sign now rolled up and under Jesse's arm, they carefully make their way back to their van, ducking as they go.

Suddenly, they see J.J. walking out, checking out the Juggs magazine centerfold.

Heist almost blown, they duck out of sight and move to the front grille - just out of eyeline.

J.J. opens the driver door and puts the grocery bag on the seat. Starts handing items to Margaret.

J.J.  
Got your Ho-Hos and Snowballs. But  
don't even think about touching my  
Slim Jims - capeesh?

Getting ready to leave, J.J. notices the sliding door still open.

J.J.  
The door Margie, you gotta close the  
door. Sheesh!

He goes to close it, while Jesse and Zain quickly duck under the passenger window, past the open sliding door.

That's when they see it:

THE MAGIC MICROPHONE STAND - it glistens in the sun, lying unprotected in the open sliding door.

In a blur of action, Jesse SNAGS the magic mic stand as they run to the rear of the van to hide.

J.J. slams the side door closed, gets back in and roars away.

Just behind where the van was parked, Jesse and Zain stand FROZEN - holding tight onto the Bull Roar sign and magic microphone stand.

Opening just one eye, they see the Bull Roar van gone, then run and slap the BULL ROAR SIGN onto the side of their van and hop in with the goods.

INTERIOR OF THE VAN

A beat as they are quiet, then - they burst out laughing with high fives all around.

They inspect the coveted magic mic stand, almost like the holy grail, careful not to damage it.

ANDY

Doesn't look magical.

MARK

Be careful with it, man. It's all fun and games until we fuck it up.

Jesse grabs the mic stand and carelessly tosses it onto the back van floor - CLANK!

It's now slightly bent.

JESSE

Oopsie.

INT. HOT FREAKS BAND VAN - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

On the road, the band naps in the back, snoring, while the low volume of FM rock radio drones.

Jesse drives with Thomas in the passenger seat, who shifts uncomfortably in the chair - private pain from his bedsores. He looks sweaty and unhealthy.

Then, they pass a sign that reads, "St. Louis, 11 Miles." Off to the distance, the Mississippi river is in view.

THOMAS

(quietly to himself)

"We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft..."

JESSE

Huh?

THOMAS

From Huckleberry Finn.  
(points to the river in the  
distance)  
Never seen the Mississippi before -  
always wanted to.

JESSE

Cool. It's a first for both of us I  
guess.

THOMAS

Did you know it's over 2,340 miles  
long? Takes a drop of rain 90 days to  
flow all the way through to the ocean.

JESSE

Huh. Who knew?

THOMAS

Me.  
(a beat)  
I always thought it'd be cool to take  
a raft down it one day, like the old  
timers. It's on my bucket list--

JESSE

Didn't know you had a bucket list.

THOMAS

Hell yes I do - a long one...

JESSE

Yeah? What else is on it?

THOMAS

Eh - stupid stuff.

JESSE

C'mon. Like what?

THOMAS

I dunno. Thought it might cool to see  
the Northern Lights one day. Maybe the  
Grand Canyon. Taj Mahal. Would be nice  
to maybe walk again someday, too...

Silence.

Then - the van begins to sputter, starts slowing down, steam  
from the under the hood blowing back onto the wind shield.

JESSE

Ah, Christ...  
 (pounds steering wheel)  
 Fucking Thick Pickle.

THOMAS

Did anyone check the Goddamned  
 fluids?!

Awoken from their nap, the band rises from the back, as Mark proudly holds up a card - shows to all.

MARK

Triple A to the rescue, my dudes.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. LOUIS REST STOP - LATE AFTERNOON

A tow truck sits parked with the shitty van in tow, Bull Roar sign still attached to the side.

The band and Thomas stand watching the Tow Truck Driver lower the truck, then add coolant to the radiator.

Completed, Thomas rolls to the TOW TRUCK DRIVER (50s), who hands him an invoice; \$250. Thomas hands him a credit card.

THOMAS

Much appreciated...

TOW TRUCK DRIVER

No problemo. Glad you knew what was  
 goin' on - might've taken a lot longer  
 without the heads up about the fluids.  
 Give me a few to run the card.

The Tow Truck Driver goes back to his truck.

JESSE

(to Thomas)

Thanks Dad. You saved our ass.

ZAIN

Yeah, thanks Mr. G. We'll pay you  
 back.

THOMAS

How? You boys don't have a pot to pee  
 in, do ya? Ya know, at some point, you  
 need to establish credit--

The truck driver returns.

TOW TRUCK DRIVER  
Sorry, your card was declined.

THOMAS  
You sure?

TOW TRUCK DRIVER  
Yes, sir. Tried it twice. Got  
somethin' else?

THOMAS  
Give me a second, will ya?

Thomas and the band convene away from the Tow Truck Driver.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
You boys have any cash?

They pull out their pocketed waded cash, coins fall to the ground. Jesse collects it, counts it.

JESSE  
Looks like we got about two hundred  
bucks or so.

THOMAS  
Christ - that's not gonna cover it.  
Better start digging in the seats for  
change.

Zain opens the side door of the van and the MIC STAND falls out.

CLANK! - onto the concrete. Now it's even more twisted and bent.

They start digging in the seats for change...

Suddenly, they're interrupted by a beat-up car full of PRETTY GIRLS (20s), pulling into the space next to the them.

They exit and run to them.

PRETTY GIRL #1  
Oh my god, I can't believe it!

The band looks frozen, say nothing as they choke on the attention.

Thomas sits in his wheelchair, smirks, watches it unfold. The Tow Truck Driver does the same.

PRETTY GIRL #2  
(to Jesse)  
Bull Roar, right? I love you guys!

JESSE  
Uh... what?

She points to the magnet on the side of the van.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Well, actually--

THOMAS  
Why yes, they sure are little lady!

The girls jump in giddy excitement. The band winces.

PRETTY GIRL #3  
Oh my God, you guys are the best!--

THOMAS  
You girls want an autograph?

PRETTY GIRL #4  
Could we?

THOMAS  
They'd love to - right boys?

Thomas nods his head dramatically to the band - "YES" - but they look pained.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
How 'bout a picture, too? You have a camera?

The girls explode in excitement, run to their car. Jesse bends down to Thomas's ear.

JESSE  
(teeth clenched)  
Knock it off, will ya?

The girls return, shove papers and pens in the band's faces. They sign as the girls start asking quick-fire questions.

PRETTY GIRL #1  
Where are you guys headed to?

ANDY  
South by Southwest--

PRETTY GIRL #2  
What's that?

ZAIN  
Big music festival in Texas--

PRETTY GIRL #3  
What state is Texas in again?

ZAIN  
Ahhhhh.....

Girl #4 points to the Bull Roar magnet.

GIRL #4  
(to Jesse)  
Which one are you?--

The band photo looks nothing like anyone in the band (one is a girl AND Asian American).

JESSE  
Ummmm--

THOMAS  
OK, girls. Let's get a picture!

One girl hands Thomas a digital camera, then runs to pose in front of the van, where the Bull Roar sign is.

Thomas tries to aim the camera.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
OK everybody - say "Bull Roar!"

Jesse grits his teeth.

GROUP  
BULL ROAR!

Thomas takes the picture. He's shaky - hands the camera back.

THEY DON'T NOTICE THE TWISTED MIC STAND WAS AT THEIR FEET.

THOMAS  
You're gonna love it!  
(a beat)  
That'll be a hundred bucks. Cash is

preferred.

SLAM CUT:

INT. BAND VAN - AFTERNOON - LATER

The band is back on the road.

THOMAS

Well? Anybody get any phone numbers?

The band looks at each other, say nothing.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Nobody? Four good lookin' young fellas  
- musicians for God's sake - and not  
one phone number? Goddamn disgrace is  
what that is.

JESSE

(defensive)

It's kinda hard when you charged them  
a hundo for a picture.

THOMAS

So what? I was just havin' fun. And  
shit - we're a back on the road,  
right?

They nod, agree...

THOMAS

(mumbles)

At least one of ya could've gotten a  
hand job in the back of the van--

JESSE

Dad, stop!

THOMAS

I'm serious, your game needs some  
serious work, fellas. Should've pulled  
out a Ross Jefferies line or two.

ZAIN

Ross Jefferies? Who's that?

JESSE

Please don't egg him on.

THOMAS

(sputtering)

Who's Ross Jefferies? Only the trailblazer of the subliminal speed seduction game.

ANDY

Subliminal seduction? Tell me more.

JESSE

Sounds creepy.

THOMAS

Not creepy at all - a skill. Here's an example; Let's say you're at the bar, chatting up a young gal - could be about anything. You respond to a comment with something like, "I'd be below me to question you..."

Confused faces.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Get it?

MARK

Nope.

THOMAS

*Below me?*

More confused faces.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

BLOW-ME?

ZAIN

(laughing)

Jesus, Mr. G. That's awful!--

THOMAS

It works - I've used it!

JESSE

Christ - when?--

THOMAS

I'm trying to help you guys here!--

JESSE

Well, stop!

THOMAS

Just sayin' - you all really need to  
go in a new direction...

(blank faces)

*New direction?*

(still blank faces)

NUDE ERECTION?

More loud laughs as Thomas chuckles along with them.

Driving, Jesse puts in a CD, pushes play...

MUSIC CUE: A song like, IN THE MEANTIME by SPACE HOG

Jesse pounds on the steering wheel with rhythm of the song.  
Zain plays air guitar. Andy lips syncs. Thomas almost smiles  
in the passenger seat, looking out the window.

The low, early-evening sunlight shines across the passing  
landscapes...

Jesse looks over to Thomas. Who is this guy?

INT. A GIRL'S MESSY BEDROOM - EVENING (LATER)

MUSIC CUE CONTINUES

Pretty Girl #1 from the rest stop downloads the band picture  
from her camera. It's the picture Thomas took. It's awful;  
Lopsided, ill composed, heads cut off.

BUT - the mangled magic mic stand lays twisted at their feet.

She's now on the Bull Roar website message board, uploads the  
picture, types...

"Oh my God, so great meeting you guys today! Sorry for the  
bad picture! Good luck at South By Southwest! Best hundred  
dollars I've ever spent! xoxo - Luv, Brandi."

Comments populate immediately under her message board post:

"That's not Bull Roar!"

"Nooooo! The Magic Mic Stand!"

"What the fuck is going on here?"

She reads the comment strings, looks increasingly confused.

MUSIC CUE ENDS

INT. BULL ROAR BAND VAN - EVENING

The pristine Bull Roar van rolls down the highway as J.J. drives, sips on a Fresca and chows down on a Slim Jim.

Drummer Margaret now reads the book, "Chicken Soup for the Soul."

Shuffling through radio stations, J.J. lands on an easy listening station. A song like Air Supply's, "I'm All Out of Love" plays. He looks to see if Margaret's paying attention. She's not.

J.J.  
 (silently singing)  
 I'm all out of love, what am I without  
 you?...

Margaret finally recognizes the song, looks repulsed at J.J.'s song choice. He notices.

J.J. (CONT'D)  
 You say one thing to anyone, I swear I  
 will cut a bizatch. Got it,  
 girlfriend?

She shrugs it off, goes back to reading.

Then his cell phone rings. It's his road manager, GOOSE (Male, 20s).

He turns off the radio and compulsively checks again and again to make sure Air Supply has stopped...

J.J. (CONT'D)  
 Talk to me, Goose...  
 (listens - gets animated)  
 You saw what on our website?...  
 (listens)  
 Impossible - the mic stand is right  
 here, in the van...  
 (listens)  
 A hundred bucks?!...

He looks to the sliding door where he keeps the magic mic stand - IT'S NOT THERE.

In a panic, the van swerves across lanes, narrowly avoids an accident. He puts the phone back to his face...

J.J. (CONT'D)  
 You're right - some schmuck stole it!  
 (listens)  
 No way - Hot Freaks? You sure it's  
 them?...  
 (listens, seethes, thinks)  
 I thought I recognized that dork  
 checking out my jimmy while takin' a  
 piss. The drummer - what's his  
 face?...  
 (listens)  
 Jesse? You know him? Send me his phone  
 number ASAP...  
 (listens)  
 Thanks Goose. J.J. OUT.

He slams his flip phone shut, furious.

J.J. (CONT'D)  
 (angry)  
 The door Margie - always shut the gosh  
 darned door!

She then shoves a pink Hostess Snowball cake into her mouth,  
 pink whipped cream and coconut in the corners of her mouth.

MARGARET  
 (mouth full)  
 Sorry.

INT. HOT FREAKS BAND VAN - EVENING

Music blares as the band sings at the top of their lungs to a  
 song like "No Diggity" by Blackstreet.

As they sing, Jesse's phone rings.

JESSE  
 Hold up, let me answer this.

Music turned down, he answers...

JESSE (CONT'D)  
 Go for Jesse.

J.J. (O.S.)  
 Is this the turd from Hot Freaks - or  
 whatever your stupid freaking band  
 name is?

JESSE (O.S.)

Uh, yeah. Who's this?

J.J.

J.J. from Bull Roar. Word on the street is you a-holes are somehow in possession my mic stand. True or false?

Shocked, Jesse covers the mouth piece.

JESSE

Fuuuuuuck. He knows we have his mic stand.

ZAIN

How?

JESSE

I don't know! What should I say?--

J.J. (O.S.)

(shouting)

True or false, Kimosabe?!

THOMAS

Hang some balls on it, will ya? Tell him to go fuck himself.

JESSE

(to J.J.,)

Don't know what you're talkin' about, man.

A beat.

J.J.

(zen)

Is that's how it's going to be, Homie? OK then. Listen to me very, very carefully... You defile my magic mic stand in any way whatsoever, and I'll wreck whatever little street cred you think you and your pathetic band might have...

Jesse turns white.

J.J. (CONT'D)

...Not sure if you saw the recent article about Moi in NME, but I have

the ear of every Indie music  
journalist in the entire world...

Jesse holds the receiver a little farther from his ear--

J.J. (CONT'D)  
(even louder)  
...So don't think I won't wreck you  
cunts in a heartbeat - comprende,  
Muchacha?

MARGARET  
(quietly)  
Muchacho.

J.J. slams his flip phone shut, then snaps authoritatively  
into a Slim Jim.

Unimpressed, Margaret shakes her head.

HOT FREAKS VAN

JESSE  
Maybe this was a bad idea.

ZAIN  
What should we do?

THOMAS  
Stop being pussies, that's what you  
do. Own it. Flip it.

EXT. BAND VAN - SOMEWHERE IN MISSOURI - EVENING

Off an exit, standing in front of the Bull Roar sign on their  
van, Jesse holds the mangled magic microphone stand and  
points it up to Zain, who is holding a digital camera.

JESSE  
You ready?

ZAIN  
Ready.

Then, Jesse lowers the magic mic stand to his crotch. It  
sticks out his zipper like a large, twisted metal penis.

He flips off the camera with his other hand. A click of the  
camera, as Thomas watches and revels in the shenanigans.

JESSE

Let's get that loaded to their  
guestbook.

ZAIN

Just gotta get to a phone line real  
quick.

JESSE

I saw a gas station when we pulled off  
the freeway...

Thomas finally smiles.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - AUSTIN - LATE EVENING

A smart-looking young woman, MARA (early 30s), horn-rimmed glasses, dark hair with hipster bangs, reads the Bull Roar website message board and the activity from Pretty Girl #1.

As she does, a new entry appears:

It's the image of Jesse, holding the beloved mic stand through his jean zipper like a long, crooked metal penis - giving the finger.

The caption reads;

"We found this thing. Anyone know what it does? xoxo, Hot Freaks."

User comments start quickly populating;

"Nooooo! J.J.'s magic mic stand!"

"Ooooooooooh - band fight!"

"Who's the band that has your mic stand hostage?"

"I hope you have it back for your show tomorrow night!"

She looks intrigued, then uses Yahoo! search - types "Hot Freaks."

The band's website loads, she clicks on the "contact us" tab...

INT. BAND VAN - NIGHT

Zain is late-night driving with Thomas in the passenger seat, and Jesse behind him in the back. The others snore loudly.

Thomas roams through radio stations, lands on a Jazz station playing a song like "So What?" off the classic Miles Davis album, "A Kind of Blue."

JESSE

Ugh. Boring Jazz. Turn this shit.

THOMAS

Boy, please tell me you've heard this song before.

JESSE

I guess?

THOMAS

You guess? This is arguably the best track of the era - Miles Davis - "So What." Ring a bell?

ZAIN

Never heard it.

THOMAS

Ah, Christ. You two knuckleheads.

Thomas turns up the music a little more.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You hear that lead trumpet line? It's iconic - a hook - a lick - right? Pop guys stole that shit and ran with it. The Beatles probably wouldn't be The Beatles without Miles Davis. Hell, your band probably wouldn't exist.

JESSE

That's kinda an overstatement, don't you think?

THOMAS

It's true. Listen to it.

A beat as they listen.

ZAIN

Hmmm. Yeah - I can hear that. Cool.

JESSE

Dude, I keep tell you. Stop egging him on.

THOMAS

Played this number in my jazz combo in the late 60s.

JESSE

(shocked)

What the hell are you talking about?

THOMAS

Just what I said. I played this song in in my Jazz combo on that little Ludwig trap kit we have in the basement. We did the Detroit circuit for years. Baker's Keyboard lounge, The Rhino - all the old school joints...

JESSE

I knew you dabbled on the kit, but you never told me that. Seems kinda important, don't ya think?

THOMAS

(shrugs)

These...

(holds up his hands)

...They don't work so good anymore. Haven't since I was diagnosed. I guess there was just nothin' more to say about it.

Jesse and Zain seems tongue tied.

Thomas stares out at the dark landscape...

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You guys - your band. You're really lucky. Young and healthy, playin' the clubs. Best time of your lives.

JESSE

Best times of our lives? Are you shitting me? We barely cover gas at the end of a gig, let alone play to ten people - who are usually our friends, by the way. A record deal is my - I mean our - only way out. All this other shit is a means to an end.

THOMAS

Wow. Is that what you think this is

all about? A record deal? Ah hell -  
you got it all wrong, boy. This...

(looks around the van littered  
with instruments)

This is what it's all about. Gettin'  
out there in the van, settin' up,  
playing music to people who wish, with  
everything they got, that they were up  
there doing what you're doing. You got  
it all - you just don't know it yet.  
So stop being such a selfish dumb ass--

JESSE

(angry)

You know what? It's that shit right  
there. You wanna know why I want a  
record deal so bad? Why I want out?  
Why MOM wanted out--

THOMAS

Can't wait. Enlighten me, ya little  
shit--

ZAIN

Hold up. Let's all chill, OK?  
(to Jesse)

I'm waking your ass up in two hours to  
drive, so better get some sleep.

A beat as Thomas turns up the Jazz station a bit. Zain starts  
tapping the steering wheel to it.

Simmering, Jesse looks out the side window, watches the  
blurred yellow lines of the road speed by.

He closes his eyes, soon falls asleep...

INT. BAND VAN - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

The reoccurring dream starts as before;

A banner flies high behind the stage of a crowded music club.  
It reads;

South By Southwest, 1999.

Hot Freaks bow together in front of an adoring crowd chanting  
their name.

CROWD  
Hot Freaks, Hot Freaks, Hot Freaks!!

BACKSTAGE

Show over, the band hugs each other. Then, the Hipster Man reappears from the ether.

HIPSTER MAN  
Fellas, fellas! You guys were fucking  
great - here's a record deal!

Again, Hipster Man pulls out a record contract and extends it to Jesse.

HIPSTER MAN (CONT'D)  
Sign here, Jesse.

The huge, shiny gold pen reappears in Jesse's hand. BUT, as he goes to sign it...

The end of J.J.'s magic microphone stand is THRUST through his chest cavity from the back - sticks out his ribcage - lights flashing, dripping with blood.

Jesse grabs the end sticking out, looks to see J.J. smiling, holding the other end of the mic stand as a spear, impaling and mortally wounding him.

Jesse stands slain, as J.J. steals the gold pen from him and signs the record contract.

Hipster Man pats J.J. on the back, walks him out of the club and magically into a waiting, opulent, Mercedes Benz.

J.J.  
Later, Home Skillet!

They screech off as J.J. waves to an impaled, confused, dying Jesse.

INT. BAND VAN - EARLY MORNING

ZAIN (V.O.)  
Jesse. Jesse! Get up dummy. Time to  
drive.

Jesse violently wakes, sees all in the van peeing in soda bottles.

They cap them off, hide them under the van seats. Bathroom

break complete, they stretch as they wake up.

JESSE  
(yawning)  
Where are we?

ZAIN  
Arkansas. Should be in Texas in a few  
hours.

MARK  
I'm hungry. Anybody down with Waffle  
House?

ZAIN  
I'm down.

ANDY  
I could eat.

JESSE  
Me too.

THOMAS  
Again with the stopping! Eat a fruit  
roll up, ya pussies!

He throws box of rollups at the band. They duck.

Then, Jesse's cell phone rings. It's a 212 number he doesn't  
recognize.

JESSE  
Yo - shut it! It's a 212 - New York.  
(he answers)  
Go for Jesse.

MARA  
Hi, good morning. My name is Mara and  
I'm looking for someone from the band  
Hot Freaks.

JESSE  
You got 'em. This is the drummer,  
Jesse.

MARA (O.S.)  
Oh perfect! My name is Mara, I'm a  
producer from MTV. I was reading about  
the stuff that's happening with you  
guys and Bull Roar on their website.

Super funny!--

JESSE

You're from MTV? And you think it's funny?

Jesse looks wide eyed to the band - can't believe it's MTV.

MARA (O.S.)

Yes, people are loving it! That picture with the mic stand sticking out like a - a---

JESSE

Dick?

MARA (O.S.)

Hilarious! J.J. - he worships that silly thing. I bet he's freaking out right now.

JESSE

Yeah, you could say that--

ZAIN

(to Jesse)

Put it on speaker, man!

Jesse hits the speaker button and holds up the phone. They hang on every word - except Thomas.

MARA

So, let me get to it; I'd love to interview your band for an MTV reality show called "Bands on the Run." It's a reality show where we take unsigned bands and follow them on the tour. Have you seen it?

They shrug shoulders - never seen it.

JESSE

Totally! We love it--

Out of nowhere, Thomas SLAPS the phone out of Jesse's hands. It skids across the van floor, as the van now skids across the highway.

Mark and Andy scramble to grab it, but fumble it around the van.

Mara hears the commotion on the other end, looks confused...

MARA (O.S.)

Hello?

JESSE

Uhhhhh... Hold please... Ah....

Finally, Andy grabs and pitches the phone to Jesse. He grabs it midair, then to back to his face.

JESSE

...Never miss an episode.

He gives Thomas a dirty look, mouths to him "What the fuck?"

MARA (O.S.)

OK, great! So, I'm in Austin for South By, and if you're interested, I'd love to interview the band later today--

JESSE

Absolutely!

MARA (O.S.)

Great! The crew and I are staying at the Hyatt downtown. Let's meet there at 4pm, cool?

JESSE

Cool, cool. See you then.

MARA

Oh - and bring the magic mic stand too. Gonna need to see the star of the show.

Jesse closes his flip phone--

JESSE

(angry to Thomas)

What the F! Why would you do that? This is HUGE. It's MTV!

THOMAS

MTV sucks. You don't want to get involved in that crap - trust me.

JESSE

How would you even know that?

THOMAS

'Cause it's gonna turn you into a bunch of corporate whores. Is that who you boys want to be? A bunch of grovelin' hos?--

ALL

(together)

Yes!

THOMAS

Jesus Christ in a chicken basket. You boys have no idea what you're getting yourselves into here. They're gonna video tape every stupid thing you do and put it together to make you look like you're the frickin' Monkees.

MARK

I love the Monkees.

THOMAS

Forget it. Let's pull over.

The van is quiet while Jesse again simmers.

Zain seemingly ponders Thomas' advice....

SMASH CUT:

INT. ARKANSAS WAFFLE HOUSE - MORNING

The Waffle House is busy.

The band sits at a booth with a table full of breakfast food, talking intensely. Thomas is missing.

Then, some uproarious laughing can be heard from the kitchen.

Distracted, they peer in the direction, then continue...

JESSE

...The guy is so selfish. Doesn't give a crap what he says or does - how it might affect other people.

(a beat, thinks)

Is it too late to get him on a bus back to Detroit?

ZAIN

I dunno. Maybe he has a point. MTV

does kinda suck these days.

JESSE

Don't you get it? He's trying to get into our heads - derail this whole thing. If there's no record deal, there's no way I'm leaving Detroit.

ZAIN

Maybe the guy wants the best for you. Have you ever thought about that?

JESSE

Yeah, just like he wanted the best for my Ma. He made her life miserable, now he's dead set on doing the same to me. Well guess what? I'm not gonna let him--

More loud laughing from the kitchen. Jesse gets up from the table.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Guess I'll see what he's dismantling this time.

Jesse walks around to the kitchen.

Mark looks at Andy's plate of food, points closely at it - finger tip ALMOST grazing the top of his egg yolk.

MARK

You gonna eat that?

Disgusted, Andy pushes the plate to Mark, who happily digs in.

ARKANSAS INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Jesse walks in to see Thomas taking pictures of a short-order cook MANUEL (late 60s), at a flattop.

He's posing with the magic microphone stand with a huge METAL SPATULA duct-taped to the end of it - ready to flip an enormous pancake.

Jesse shakes his head.

THOMAS

OK, Manny - one more time. Big smile.

MANUEL  
 (broken english)  
 How's dees?

THOMAS  
 Perfecto! Say "Bull Roar!"

MANUEL  
 Rugido de Toro!

Thomas takes the picture as Manuel flips the giant pancake with the mic-stand-spatula.

It splatters everywhere - batter all over the mic stand, all over Thomas.

THOMAS  
 Gracias, Manny - hasta see ya later!

MANUEL  
 Si, Tomas!

He hands the mic stand back to Jesse.

THOMAS  
 (to Jesse)  
 How 'bout wheelin' me to el banyo?

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

Jesse wheels Thomas into the handicap stall, and Thomas latches the door behind him.

Locked out and annoyed, Jesse stands outside it, hears Thomas struggling with his belt buckle.

Jesse looks concerned, hesitates and almost knocks, but shakes his head, goes to walk out.

BUT, he turns back around, puts his ear against the stall door...

JESSE  
 Hey - you OK in there?

THOMAS (O.S.)  
 (frustrated)  
 We're not doing this again, boy. I told you, I can do it myself!

JESSE

OK, OK--

Jesse sticks around, washes his hands with an eye toward the stall.

More struggling noises from Thomas.

Finally, Jesse goes to the stall door and peeks in between the stall slats.

He sees Thomas moving from the wheelchair to toilet, pants down to ankles, buttocks showing.

REVEAL:

Thomas's severe BEDSORES are exposed.

Inflamed, full of pus, covering his butt - everywhere. Blood soaked underwear and secretions running down his legs.

Jesse steps back, looks aghast, sick to his stomach.

Then, he quickly exists the bathroom...

EXT. WAFFLE HOUSE - PARKING LOT - MORNING

In the alley next to the Waffle House, Jesse vomits.

Continuously retching, he eventually leans against the brick wall and wipes the spittle away from his mouth.

Finally, a sickly looking Thomas rolls out of the Waffle House. Jesse sees him, gets behind the wheelchair to push.

Jesse leans down to his ear...

JESSE

How bad is it?

THOMAS

What are you talkin' about, boy?

JESSE

Knock it off. I saw you in the stall.  
I'm going to ask you one more time -  
your ass - how bad is it?

A long beat as Jesse stops pushing the wheelchair.

THOMAS

It's pretty bad...

JESSE

(explodes)

Jesus Christ, Dad! Why are you doing this to yourself? It's like you have this sick desire to punish yourself - and everyone around you - over and over again, until something - SOMEONE - finally breaks.

THOMAS

You're crazy--

JESSE

Oh, am I? What was that shit all about in the van with MTV? You're hell bent on derailing my life and music career!

THOMAS

What music career? You're just a little shit from the suburbs of Detroit thinking a "record deal" is gonna save you from your "miserable" life. Well guess what? Life IS miserable, so maybe you should start enjoying what you already got, instead of what you'll never have!

A beat as Jesse pulls back. The hurt settles in across his face.

JESSE

(now calm, hurt)

I'm done with you. Gonna get you on the next bus back to Detroit.

Jesse starts pushing Thomas back quickly towards the band van.

THOMAS

Jesus, Jessie. I didn't mean that--

JESSE

Save it.

Jesse pushes the wheelchair faster towards the van...

THOMAS

Jesse, please...

Faster...

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Stop!

Finally, Jesse grinds the wheelchair to a halt.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I'm having the time of my life out here with you boys. I'll shut up. Promise.

Jesse seems to consider the weight of Thomas' words. After a pause, he begins pushing towards the van again.

The band fidgets, are quiet - they heard everything.

They load up Thomas into the van, and Jesse walks across the parking lot to the Rite-Aid drug store.

INT. BAND VAN - MORNING - LATER

Jesse opens the side door of the van with a full bag of items from Rite Aid.

He jumps in, tosses the bag to Mark in the back seat.

Thomas sees the bag full of medicine, gauze, accessories.

JESSE

(to Thomas)

C'mon. Drop your drawers. We need to take care of this before we go any further.

THOMAS

What are you talkin' about?

JESSE

We're gonna need to bandage and clean you up if we're gonna get to Austin by this afternoon.

THOMAS

In here? Oh hell no! That's not gonna happen!--

JESSE

Knock it off, will ya? We've been peeing in bottles with our dorks out because of you. You think anyone cares

about seeing your ugly ass?

A beat.

Thomas clumsily shimmies out of his pants.

JESSE

(to the band)

Andy, hand me the gauze. Zain, start cutting strips of the medical tape.

Mark, start blowing up the inflatable doughnut.

Activity as they follow Jesse's direction.

Mark pulls out the inflatable doughnut - looks confused at it. Finally, he finds the blow hole, starts blowing.

Cheeks full of air, face red - almost looks like he's going to faint.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - AUSTIN - MORNING

Mara sits in front of her computer, drinking coffee. She's back on the Bull Roar website looking through the guestbook.

A new picture on the message board loads;

It's Manuel the cook, smiling, mid-flip of the gigantic pancake with J.J.'s precious mic stand/spatula. It's covered in pancake batter.

The caption;

"Delicious, every time. xoxo - Hot Freaks."

She looks amused, reads the comments;

- "Are you guys going to throw down at South By?"

- "BEAT THIER ASSES, J.J.!"

- "Hello from London! Can't wait to see how this ends!"

SMASH CUT:

INT. BULL ROAR BAND VAN - MORNING

A cell phone is at J.J.'s ear while driving.

J.J.  
 (angry)  
 ...The Waffle House? Flipping a gosh-darned pancake with my mic stand?  
 (listens)  
 Sick bastards...

Margaret looks at him, eats a Ho-Ho this time. Chocolate is all over her face.

J.J. (CONT'D)  
 This is war, Goose--  
 (listens - looks shocked)  
 Wait - what?  
 (listens)  
 Are you sure? Over two hundred comments on the guestbook entry?

J.J. looks amazed.

INT. BAND VAN - AFTERNOON - LATER

The band is back on the road.

The radio is blaring - a song like Helter Skeleter, by The Beatles.

Thomas's old man underwear is duct taped to the end of the magic mic stand, sticking out the van window - violently fluttering in the wind.

Sunglasses on, Thomas is in his wheelchair sitting on the plastic doughnut.

He looks better - still sweaty, but more comfortable. Bops just a little to the music.

The band is in a fierce debate.

ANDY  
 (to Mark)  
 ...Wait. So, you're saying McCartney's solo albums are inferior to Lennon's? Do I have that right?

MARK  
 Correct. No question.

ANDY  
 Really? Venus and Mars - inferior to that awful Plastic Ono Band shit?

(imitates high-pitch primal  
screeching ala Yoko Ono.)  
Eiiiiiiiiiiiiieeeeeeee!

Everyone covers their ears.

MARK  
Yes, and stop it!

ANDY  
God you're dumb--

THOMAS  
You both do know that Ringo had more  
number one post-Beatles hits than  
McCartney and Lennon, right?

MARK  
How is that even possible Mr. G.?  
Ringo's the worst Beatle by far--

JESSE  
You watch your goddamned mouth, Mark.

THOMAS  
I'm just telling you the facts, boys.

Driving, Zain sees the Austin city sign ahead as they race  
towards it.

Approaching it, he quickly extends his other arm far into the  
front windshield, just as they race past it.

ZAIN  
First in Austin, bitchhhhheeeees!

Whooping and hollering occurs.

They band peers at the seedy part of Austin around them;

Broken out store fronts, homeless, prostitutes. Then, Thomas  
suddenly shouts.

THOMAS  
Here! Stop here!

ZAIN  
Whoa, what?

JESSE  
C'mon! You promised you'd keep quiet.

THOMAS

This is gonna be worth it, I promise.  
Pull over.

Zain pulls off to a corner with a female PROSTITUTE (late 30s), standing.

Jesse, in the passenger front seat, awkwardly looks at her standing directly in front of his closed window.

THOMAS

Jesse - roll down the window.

JESSE

What?

THOMAS

I said roll down the window!

JESSE

Ugh.

Jesse reluctantly rolls it down. Thomas leans over and yells from the back.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Hi there, young lady!

The prostitute smiles, then leans far into Jesse's window. He leans away from her - looks scared.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Are you on the clock?

PROSTITUTE

Sure am, darlin' - what can I help you with?

THOMAS

Well - uh. I got ten bucks...

He reaches for his wallet.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEEDY PART OF AUSTIN - AFTERNOON - MINUTES LATER

The van sits in the same seedy street, engine still running.

Then, from between two store fronts, Jesse emerges, whistling.

He has a digital camera in one hand and the magic mic stand over his shoulder.

The prostitute walks behind him, puts cash in her pocket.

Jesse waves goodbye to her.

JESSE

Thanks for your help, Debbie!

PROSTITUTE

You're welcome, Jess. Always lookin' to help a band in need. Have fun at South by!

THOMAS

Bye, Deb!

STREET

The Bull Roar van rolls down the same Austin thoroughfare as Hot Freaks is parked on.

J.J. is on the phone yelling at Goose, when Margaret looks out the window while they drive past Debbie the prostitute - just as she waves goodbye to Jesse.

Margaret double-takes;

Was that the magic mic stand?

But she keeps driving, smiles a devilish smile.

CUT TO:

INT. BAND VAN - AFTERNOON

Jesse jumps back in and they take off down the road.

THOMAS

Get what you need?

JESSE

You know I did...

He hands the mic stand to Mark - he grabs the end of it.

Then Jesse looks at the camera display, twists it to look at the images.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
 She put it right in the 'ol \*whistle\*  
 \*whistle\*.

MARK  
 (mortified)  
 She put it in her - her...?

JESSE  
 Vagina. Yeah--

MARK  
 Gross!

He drops the mic stand.

JESSE  
 What?! It was her idea!

SLAM CUT:

INT. MOTEL 6 HOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Luggage is strewn about in a small motel room.

Zain hooks his camera into a laptop - pushes buttons.

Meanwhile, Jesse helps Thomas onto the bed. Thomas immediately closes his eyes, looks exhausted.

JESSE  
 Take a load off old man.

THOMAS  
 Just gonna take a little nap right  
 here, boy. Don't mind me...

JESSE  
 Feel free to chill out. We'll be back  
 after the MTV interview.

THOMAS  
 Jesus, yer still gonna do that?--

JESSE  
 Dad!

THOMAS  
 OK, OK.

Thomas seems to quickly fall asleep and Jesse leans in as

Zain works away on the computer.

ZAIN

Gonna send this one directly to his  
email. Might be too much for the kids  
on the guestbook.

Zain loads the pornographic mic stand image into an email to  
J.J., hits enter.

Zain looks troubled.

ZAIN

Did we go too far?

JESSE

God, I hope so.

Thomas apparently hears this, and with eyes closed, a slow  
smile spreads across his face.

INT. AUSTIN HOTEL LOBBY - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

J.J. and Margaret sit in a hotel lobby in front of his open  
computer, mobbed by fans.

They sign posters and CDs, while fans chirp about his magic  
mic stand taken hostage.

FAN #1

You know the band that stole your  
magic mic stand?

J.J.

Yeah, some lame power pop band from  
Detroit. Really cheeses me off.

Then - \*DING\* - his computer chimes for an incoming email.

J.J.

Sorry, hold on a sec.

J.J. clicks into his email and the picture loads;

THE END OF HIS MIC STAND IS IN DEBBIE'S VAGINA.

He slams the computer shut, but fans around him saw it - or  
did they?

J.J. looks stunned, runs off, phone to ear. But, maybe a  
microscopic lip curl of a smile on his face?

INT. HYATT DOWNTOWN AUSTIN - DAY

Hot Freaks sit in the fancy lobby of the Hyatt Regency. Mark holds the twisted metal mic stand over his shoulder.

The buzz of SXSW swirls around them;

Hipster bands in pretentious, well-calculated Rock and Roll clothing, including indoor wearing Ray Ban sunglasses, walk everywhere.

Hot Freaks notice the high hipness quotient and begin to look self-conscious in their simple Detroit-style jeans and ripped t-shirts.

Finally, Mara from MTV appears with a camera crew of three CAMERA MEN (30s), with video cameras on their shoulders.

A BOOM MIC OPERATOR (20s), hangs the mic overhead as they walk. Mara approaches the band as they film.

MARA

You must be Hot Freaks.

Zain stands up. Looks troubled.

ZAIN

What's with the camera crew?

MARA

What do you mean? It's reality TV, right? Besides, I wouldn't do anything to embarrass you guys.

Jesse pushes Zain aside with a warm smile, extended hand.

JESSE

You must be Mara.

MARA

That's me. Great to meet you.

She sees Mark and Andy on the couch with the mangled magic microphone monstrosity propped next to them.

MARA (CONT'D)

Oh, that poor, poor thing.

Jesse and Mara engage in conversation...

But then, in the corner of the lobby, J.J. EMERGES from the

corner of the room, where he was just signing pictures for fans.

EUREKA MOMENT:

BOTH BANDS ARE IN THE SAME HOTEL LOBBY, TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME - BUT DON'T KNOW IT.

J.J. angrily dials his cell phone, then Jesse's cell phone rings as he banters with Mara.

He recognizes the number.

JESSE

Sorry - give me one sec...

He breaks away from the group, answers.

JESSE

Hey Home Chicken! Como esta?! Can I interest you in any pancakes? Maybe a tuna fish sandwich?--

J.J.

Listen here, Amigo. In about five minutes, every indie journalist in Austin is going to get a glimpse at your depraved, sick-ass stunt...

As he berates Jesse, J.J. looks across the lobby at the camera crew commotion and recognizes Jesse on the phone - with HIM.

Gobsmacked, J.J. seems to put the pieces together, yells across the lobby.

J.J.

Hey! A-hole!

The lobby screeches to a halt.

Everyone; Mara, camera crew, Hot Freaks, the multitude of hipsters - swivel to J.J. shouting.

J.J. (CONT'D)

Where's my freaking mic stand?!

Jesse swivels to see J.J.

JESSE  
(quietly)  
Oh, it's on.

MARA  
(to camera crew)  
Make sure you guys get this.

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE.

MUSIC CUE: A song like SABOTAGE by the BEASTIE BOYS

HIPSTERS  
(yelling)  
Band fight!

J.J. tears through the lobby towards Jesse and dodges hipsters left and right.

Jesse sees him rushing towards him, yells to Mark.

JESSE  
Throw me the mic stand!

Mark chucks it to Jesse.

WOOSH - it flies through the air, end over end.

Jesse grabs it out of the air with one hand, just as J.J. is about to tackle him. Then, he uses the stand to check J.J.

They struggle for the mic stand - pulling it back and forth. Finally, it bends in the middle.

The camera crew and hipsters surround them, egg them on as the two grapple for control.

Then, Jesse suddenly lets go, and J.J. falls back into a group of hipsters, now holding TWO PIECES of the mic stand in his hands.

J.J. looks crushed.

Hot Freaks seizes the opportunity, book out of the hotel, back to their band van parked out front.

FRONT OF HOTEL

The band flies into the van like a Starsky and Hutch episode - across the hood and through an open window.

Then Jesse screeches off, as Mara and the camera crew hustle to the street corner.

MARA  
 (yelling to van)  
 Hey - hold up!

They watch the van tear through the crowded streets of Austin and out of sight. The cameras follow it roar away...

MARA (CONT'D)  
 (to camera crew)  
 Please tell me you got that.

BAND VAN:

Silent, Hot Freaks look at each other and again, explode in laughter.

END MUSIC CUE

EXT. MOTEL 6 HOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Seemingly buzzed from the confrontation with J.J., the band comes crashing out of the band van...

JESSE  
 Did you see J.J.'s face when he  
 figured out we were in the lobby?

MARK  
 Priceless!

ANDY  
 My dude was PISSSSSSSEEDDDDD!

ZAIN  
I'm still pissed about the camera crew  
 and what's her name ambushing us.

JESSE  
 Her name is Mara, and how did she  
 ambush us? We agreed to meet her.

ZAIN  
 Your Dad was right. Gonna make us look  
 like the Monkees.

MARK  
 Seriously, what's so bad about the  
 Monkees?

JESSE

(to Zain)

Who cares? They're not gonna air any of that stuff.

(a beat as he wonders)

Will they?

ZAIN

Hell yeah they are.

INT. MOTEL 6 HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

The band quietly walks into the hotel room as Jesse checks on Thomas.

JESSE

Dad. Hey. You awake?

No response, apparently he's sleeping.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Should've seen with us at the hotel. Ran into that dipshit J.J. It was epic.

Still, nothing from Thomas.

Concerned, Jesse turns Thomas toward him.

He's soaked in sweat, foaming at the mouth - unresponsive.

Jesse feels his head.

JESSE (CONT'D)

He's on fire! We gotta get to the hospital. Help me get him into the van!

The band jumps into action and all grab Thomas in the sheets, carry him towards the door.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Be careful with him!

They tote him out and load him into the van.

INT. AUSTIN DELL SETON MEDICAL CENTER - EARLY MORNING - LATER

The band sits uncomfortably in cheap plastic chairs in a Hospital waiting room. A TV mounted at the top of the room quietly drones on.

Mark and Andy lean into the floor, bobbing, trying not to fall asleep. Zain lounges, head to the ceiling, eyes closed.

Jesse, tired but alert, watches TV with a remote control in hand.

He clicks through channels and finally lands on MTV while a news segment is playing.

KURT LODER (30s) and TABITHA SOREN (20s), MTV's news correspondents, sit at a news desk, reporting.

KURT LODER

...And of course, Spring has sprung, which means South By Southwest is in full swing in Austin, Texas...

TABITHA SOREN

That's right, Kurt. The hottest bands from around the world convene on Austin in hopes of the getting the ever elusive record deal...

Footage of SXSW appears in the corner screen as they talk. Jesse turns up the volume.

KURT LODER

Every year the festival seems more and more corporate, so indie bands work overtime to make themselves known...

Footage in the corner overlay changes. It's footage of the Bull Roar and Hot Freaks fight from the Hyatt hotel lobby from earlier in the day.

JESSE

(under breath)

Oh, sweet Jesus.

The rest of the band takes notice, starts watching...

KURT LODER

And speaking of indie bands; Detroit darlings, Bull Roar, and their charismatic guitarist and singer J.J., threw down with fellow Detroiters and power-pop band, Hot Freaks, in the lobby of the Austin Hyatt this afternoon...

TABITHA SOREN

...The result? J.J.'s famous "magical-twirling mic stand" was broken in half during the scrum by Hot Freaks drummer, Jesse Grant...

The footage shows J.J. and Jesse manically struggling with his magic mic stand.

Footage cuts to J.J. on the floor, atop a pile of hipsters, staring brokenheartedly at his beloved mic stand, now in two pieces.

Jesse runs off screen.

KURT LODER

...Was J.J. able to recover? Well, we ran into him and asked him about it...

Mara interviews J.J. at the Hyatt.

MARA

Can you tell me what happened to your infamous microphone stand today?

J.J.

What happened, sister? Maybe I'll just show you--

J.J. grabs his computer, shows the Debbie vagina mic stand picture. The image is blurred out, pixilated.

Then he holds up the two pieces of the broken mic stand.

J.J.

Then, he broke it. I'm devastated.

To the side, drummer Margaret hides a smile.

BLOOP.

Jesse turns the TV off. Silence, until...

MARK

Balls.

ANDY

Well that fuckin' sucks.

JESSE

(dumbfounded)

She said she wouldn't make us look stupid. I trusted her.

ZAIN

(angry)

Trusted her? A producer from MTV? What the fuck did you think she was gonna do?

ANDY

Take it easy, Zain--

ZAIN

(to Jesse, angrier)

You willingly threw your band to the fucking wolves!

MARK

Stop!--

ZAIN

No, man - I'm sick of this! You took your sick dad across the country without considering for a second if he was healthy enough to make the trip - for what? *Maybe* a record deal? Not sure if you're in the loop, but he might die!--

JESSE

You better watch the next thing that comes out of your mouth, Zain--

ZAIN

The truth is, you constantly rail against gimmicks - selling out - but you're the fucking sell out--

Chairs screech as Jesse and Zain shove each other in rage.

Andy and Mark attempt to pull them apart, but Zain gets a right hook to Jesse's jaw.

Jesse grabs his jaw in pain, and backs off.

Silence as they all look surprised at the line crossed. Then, Zain seems contrite...

ZAIN (CONT'D)  
Jesus, Jesse - I'm sorry--

Then, a NURSE (late 30s), enters.

NURSE  
Jesse Grant?

JESSE  
That's me. What's going on with my  
Dad?

She sees his bandmates.

NURSE  
Do you want to talk in the other room?

He looks over at the band, Zain included.

JESSE  
No. They can listen. We're a band.

NURSE  
OK, well... Your Father is very ill.  
His bed sores were infected, led to  
sepsis. Do you know what that is?

Jesse nods his head.

The band moves together, arms around each other.

JESSE  
Is he... is he gonna make it?

NURSE  
He's on a course of very strong  
antibiotics. We'll know more soon.

Jesse nods and the Nurse leaves. The band are near tears.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
I'll call the club. Cancel the gig.

A beat as they look at each other.

ZAIN  
You really think your Dad would want  
that? After everything?

JESSE  
I really don't know what to think

anymore, Zain. Everything is so fucked up.

ANDY

I think the Old Man would want us to play. We came all this way.

MARK

Hell yeah he would.

There's a group hug...

INT. BAND VAN - LATE AFTERNOON

MUSIC CUE: A song like "Hold On Hope" by Guided By Voices.

NO AMBIENT SCENE AUDIO.

The music softly plays as the band sits stoic in the band van as they drive down the road.

Jesse sits in the passenger seat, looks far off in an unfocused gaze, listens to the music.

Lyrics singing:

*"Every street is dark and folding*

*Out mysteriously*

*Where lies the chance we take*

*To be always working, reaching out for*

*A hand that we can't see*

*Everybody's gotta hold on hope*

*It's the last thing that's holding me..."*

Thomas's empty wheelchair sits in the back seat, jostling as the van hits bumps in the road.

The van heads toward the Austin skyline.

END MUSIC CUE:

INT. CLUB LA ZONA ROSA - DRESSING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

The band sits in sad silence in the club's dressing room.

Music from another band on stage is muffled in the distance, and the slight buzz of a crowd can be heard backstage.

Jesse, with drumsticks in hand, hits the practice pad, over and over. His eyes unblinking, on the verge of crying.

Zain strums his Fender Telecaster guitar.

Mark tunes his Rickenbacker bass guitar.

Andy paces and hums a song.

Then, a MALE STAGE HAND (30s), sticks his head into the dressing room door.

MALE STAGE HAND

You're on in five. You guys ready?

JESSE

No. Not really.

MALE STAGE HAND

Well, you're going on anyway. Have a great show.

He leaves.

The band looks nervous as they gather their instruments and walk out the dressing room into the backstage area.

BACKSTAGE

SLOW MOTION:

They walk out of the dressing room and through the backstage area, looking sad, but determined.

They fidget, crack their knuckles, necks. Jesse's drumsticks slowly twirl.

Then, out of nowhere - A deep voice can be heard yelling in slow motion down the hallway at them.

It's J.J.'s.

J.J. (O.S.)

Heyyyyyyyyyy - A-hollllllesssssss!

Startled, the band turns to face him. They look to be in no mood for J.J.'s bullshit.

A Western movie-like standoff occurs;

Silence.

Eyes squint.

Slowly and silently, J.J. walks toward the band.

Jesse stands first toward J.J.

They are almost face to face, nose to nose.

END SLOW MOTION:

Just before all hell seems to break loose, a BIG GRIN emerges from J.J. He hugs Jesse, who looks absolutely shocked.

J.J.

This has been an absolute riot, Chief!

J.J. then goes to each member, joyfully grabs their hand, shakes it vigorously. The band looks perplexed.

JESSE

Wait - what's happening right now?

J.J.

I'll tell you what's happening, El Capitan. I don't give a flying PB&J about that prop - the mic stand - it's a schtick! I'll come up with something else for the Indie crowd to obsess about. Maybe pretend Margie's my sister, er something.

JESSE

So we're good?

J.J.

Duh! Yeah, we're good, fella! It's been a hell of a time - not to mention great publicity. Didn't you see MTV this morning?

ZAIN

Yeah, we did. Great publicity - *for you.*

J.J.

Say again, friend? Did you not see the line out the front door tonight?

The band looks confused at each other.

J.J. (CONT'D)  
The club is packed - to see you  
jokers. Take a look.

The band peaks behind the front curtain.

It's true - the club is packed. Hipsters and industry looking  
folks are everywhere, waiting for the band to perform.

ZAIN  
Hole-lee-shit.

JESSE  
(to Zain)  
Dude....

J.J. extends his hand to Jesse.

J.J.  
Agree to bury the hatchet, Homie?

A beat as he considers. Then, finally--

JESSE  
I'd be BLOW ME to decline your offer.

ZAIN  
(whispers to Jesse)  
Not sure that was the context Ross  
Jefferies had in mind.

Smiles and hands shake.

J.J. walks away and down the hall, turns around to shout back  
at them.

J.J.  
...That pancake photo? Fuuudge -  
cracked me up!  
(more serious)  
...But that vag shot - that was some  
DEPRAVED shit. Someone might want to  
see a shrink...

A beat as Zain and Jesse watch J.J. finally disappear down  
the hall.

A beat.

ZAIN

Hey, sorry about losing my shit. That was fucked up.

JESSE

Don't be. I deserved it - I've been a selfish asshole.

ZAIN

Yeah, you have. But at least you're a *passionate* selfish asshole.

Then, Mark and Andy walk up to them, ready to go on stage.

The Male Stage Hand, near the stage curtain, signals to them.

MALE STAGE HAND

You're on.

JESSE

(to the band)

Any last words?

ZAIN

Yeah. Let's do it for Mr. G.

Jesse chokes up. All hands go in.

ALL

(shout)

Mr. G!

The Male Stage Hand opens the curtain and Hot Freaks walks onto the stage.

The crowd erupts - roaring, whistling, clapping. The band looks surprised at the response, waves to the crowd, takes their places on stage.

Jesse, now behind the drum kit, signals to the band with a drum stick twirl.

Mark and Andy nod back. Zain, looking determined, turns to Jesse, mouths, "Let's do this."

Then Jesse clicks his drum sticks and counts off.

JESSE

One, two, three, four!

The sound of;

A barre chord being violently struck...

A distorted guitar rings out...

...And the band kicks into a roaring power pop song. The crowd jumps up and down in a huge rolling wave along to it.

Swooping melodies, layered harmonies and driving distorted guitars and drums rock the audience.

They are amazing.

#### FRONT OF STAGE

Jesse looks out, spots J.J. and MARGARET at the front of the stage - smiling, cheering them on as Hot Freaks continues their sonic assault on the welcoming South by Southwest crowd.

Then, Zain extends his hand out to J.J., pulls him up on stage.

Mark extends his hand to Margaret, pulls her up on stage as well.

The crowd goes BANANAS as Bull Roar joins them on stage!

#### ON STAGE

A roadie straps J.J.'s vintage guitar around him, as he begins to play along to the Hot Freaks song.

Margaret goes around to the drum set behind Jesse and they expertly exchange drum sticks while both playing.

Slowly, they exchange places and she's now playing the drum set where Jesse sat. Jesse stands next to her, grabs another stick, and bashes a cymbal as they play along together.

The music becomes more raucous, tempo kicks up, the club shakes from the volume - the crowd is close to tearing the place down, when J.J. nods his head to the band - and the music comes to crashing STOP.

Except...

J.J. holds out one single distorted note on his guitar...

While the note continues, he extends his right arm and open hand into the air, when the Stage Hand tosses the duct-taped magic mic stand into his waiting open hand.

In a deliberate display, J.J. BEATS the mic stand onto the stage floor, over and over again, until it begins to distort, bend and twist.

To finish it off, Jesse runs and grabs the remnants and chucks them into the crowd, as they go BONKERS!

Finally, Jesse grabs J.J.'s hand and lifts it triumphantly into the air, like J.J. has won a title fight.

More energetic screaming from the crowd!

AUDIENCE

The suits in the back nod their heads approvingly.

Mara, there with the MTV video crew, smiles as they tape.

Far back in the club, A MAN (50s), graying dark hair, three-day old beard and hip glasses, looks intrigued at the performance.

SCENE MUSIC FADES OUT

EXT. CLUB LA ZONA ROSA - REAR OF BUILDING - LATER THAT NIGHT

In the rear building loading area, the Hot Freaks and Bull Roar vans are backed in next to each other.

Hot Freaks are still sweaty from their performance and silently pack up their equipment into the van, while eaves dropping on the conversation coming from behind the Bull Roar van.

J.J. talks to HIPSTER MAN (30s), wearing a "Sympathy for the Record Industry" T-shirt.

HIPSTER MAN

...I'll have the lawyer send the contract over when you get back to Detroit. So excited to have you on board!...

They shake hands, then both walk back into the club.

ANDY

(disappointed)

Well, there ya go. One of us is going home with a record deal.

MARK  
Such bullshit.

Jesse turns to them...

JESSE  
It pains me to say this fellas, it really does. But the truth is, those guys are really fucking good - gimmicks or not. They're probably the best band in Detroit right now - maybe the country. They deserve it.

The band reluctantly nods in silent agreement.

Then, Jesse's phone rings, he looks at the number.

JESSE  
It's the hospital!

He answers it, the band listens in...

JESSE  
(hurriedly)  
Hello?  
(listens, looks relieved)  
He's awake? Thank God.  
(listens, smiles)  
Yeah, he's always that cranky...  
(listens)  
OK, we'll be in ASAP. Thank you...

He hangs up.

JESSE  
(to the band)  
He's gonna be OK.

The band hugs each other.

As they do, THE MAN from the crowd walks around the back to where they're loading their equipment.

MAN  
Hope I'm not interrupting anything.

JESSE  
(wiping tears)  
Nope, no. We're good. All good...

MAN  
Hot Freaks, right?

ZAIN  
Yes, sir. That's us.

MAN  
Great set. You guys were really,  
really good.

JESSE  
Shoot, thanks.

MAN  
So what's next for you? More band  
fights with Bull Roar?

JESSE  
(chuckles)  
Nah - we're done with that stuff. What  
we're really looking for is a record  
deal. Know anybody?

The Man smiles.

MAN  
I might be able to help with that. My  
name is Brian, I work for RCA records.  
Got a second to talk?

Jesse swallows hard. The band is speechless.

CUT TO:

EXT. MISSOURI - MORNING - A WEEK LATER

MUSIC CUE: DREAM POLICE by CHEAP TRICK

The band van barrels northbound up the freeway, past a sign  
that says "Welcome to St. Louis."

The Gateway Arch can be seen off in the far distance.

INT. BAND VAN - LATE AFTERNOON

MUSIC CUE CONTINUES FROM RADIO - QUIETER

Jesse drives as the band shouts of the music...

ANDY  
...No! It was just before the MTV crew

showed up. I was chatting that cute Goth girl up, dropped the line, and she didn't fall for it.

ZAIN

Are you sure you said it right?

ANDY

Yes! I said, and I quote, "The band is going in a NUDE ERECTION..."

ZAIN

And nothin'?

ANDY

Didn't bat an eye.

Then, a BOOMING voice from the back seat - it's Thomas's.

THOMAS

Then you did it wrong, boy. Ross Jefferies is a genius.

He looks healthier, sitting on an inflatable doughnut in his wheelchair. His hair is neatly combed, more color in his face - happy.

JESSE

Ross Jefferies is straight up bullshit.

Suddenly, Jesse violently turns the wheel and the van does a last-second beeline for an exit.

MARK

What the heck, man!

JESSE

Sorry, one last pit stop. Hold on.

The band van careens to the exit as traffic horns honk.

EXT. GATEWAY MISSISSIPPI RIVER BOAT TOUR - AFTERNOON

The band van enters a river boat tour area and parks the van.

They bound out and take Thomas out in his wheelchair.

Jesse pushes him to a Mississippi boat tour shed, and board an old-fashioned river paddle boat.

## RIVER BOAT

Jesse and Thomas sit on the paddle boat bench, the rest of the band sits behind them.

WHOOOOOOOOOOOT, WHOOOOOOOOOOOT...

The boat blows its loud whistle, jolts free from the dock and begins to float down the river.

Thomas looks awestruck at the beautiful sight, fulfilling a check on his bucket list.

THOMAS

"We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all--"

JESSE

"--You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft..."

A beat as Thomas and Jesse look off into the distance. Then...

JESSE

You were right. About MTV. About everything.

THOMAS

Yeah. I know.

Small smiles.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Even so, I hate that you boys left Austin empty-handed.

JESSE

Yeah, well. We didn't.

THOMAS

What are you talkin' about?

JESSE

After the show, we had a nice conversation with a dude from RCA. He offered us a demo deal. We took it.

Thomas looks confused.

JESSE (CONT'D)

It's where the label give us some dough to record some songs, and we see if they like 'em enough to sign us.

THOMAS

I'll be damned... You tell your Mother about this yet?

JESSE

Yep. She's really happy for me. Said she'll help around the house when I'm gone or the nurses aren't there. She seems in a really good place--

THOMAS

(tweaked)

You know what? She can go f--

JESSE

Stop! We'll work all of this out when we get back to The D, OK?

THOMAS

Uh huh, sure.

JESSE

Knock it off, will ya? You think I'd leave you hanging after this trip?

Jesse smiles and puts his arm around Thomas as they continue to watch the sun set on the Mississippi.

Behind them, Zain and the band gaze upon the beautiful scenery as another loud boat whistle rings out.

Then the river boat floats farther down the Mississippi and out of sight...

SONG CUE: DREAM POLICE by CHEAP TRICK.

FADE OUT:

INT. A. WINSTON ADVERTISING - AFTERNOON - WEEKS LATER

FADE IN:

SUPER: Three Weeks Later.

Jesse is back at A. Winston Adverting, walking down the hallway, carrying a laptop computer.

He walks covertly toward Gwen, the pretty young designer from earlier, who carries another laptop computer.

They talk quietly.

GWEN

Glad you're back.

JESSE

Glad to be back. What happened to Craig?

GWEN

Got caught boning an intern. Of course, The Twins wanted you back immediately.

JESSE

It's nice to be wanted for a change.

She lifts an eyebrow.

JESSE (CONT'D)

(with computer)

This has the presentation?

GWEN

Sure does. Tell him not to skip any slides.

She winks at him as they quickly SWAP computers.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Good luck.

She gives him a quick peck on the cheek. He blushes.

They walk away in opposite directions down the agency hallway.

She turns back around...

GWEN (CONT'D)

Hey - make sure I'm on the guest list tonight.

JESSE

C'mon - it's only five bucks!

Smiles...

CONFERENCE ROOM:

Jesse enters a glass-walled conference room doorway and hands off the swapped computer to his co-worker, Dave, who earlier put the pornographic image on Jesse's computer.

There's a room full of professional looking men, so they talk softly.

Dave looks nervous.

JESSE

Here ya go. Creative did a bang up job on the new campaign slides, so don't skip any.

DAVE

I won't.

(a beat)

I'm nervous. These Planet Muffler clients are brutal.

JESSE

Nah, don't be. Let the presentation, you know, "come alive."

DAVE

"Come alive" - will do.

Jesse puts a comforting hand on Dave's shoulder.

JESSE

Good luck, man.

Jesse walks off, then ducks behind a cube wall, spies on the meeting room.

He watches as Dave connects the computer and begins the presentation to a group of BALDING OLD MEN IN SUITS (50s).

The presentation appears on the back wall screen. The first slide;

"A. WINSTON ADVERTISING - ADVERTISING EXPERTS, 100 YEARS YOUNG."

He pushes the button to the next slide, then...

A PORNOGRAPHIC image appears, the one from months before;

The same heavy-set man with a huge erect penis, biting his

lip, looking straight at the camera.

But this time, it animates with sound, with his arm stroking his penis up and down - "Ohhhhh, ahhhhh..."

Dave SCREAMS--

DAVE

Jesse!

He tries to turn the computer off, but fumbles, the image still animating, over and over again, onto the wall.

The Balding Old Men in Suits harrumph, look angry at each other as they begin yelling at Dave.

Jesse runs to the presentation glass door wall and reveals himself to Dave and the room.

He taps on the glass wall, waves, gives them the finger, and runs off to the nearest stairwell.

EXT. A. WINSTON ADVERTISING BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Jesse runs out the agency's street level double doors, out onto the street, and jumps into a waiting band van.

It's Bull Roar's old van - but now it has "Hot Freaks, Detroit, MI" on a magnetic sign on the side.

The band, including Thomas wearing a "Merch Guy" T-shirt, is waiting for him.

JESSE

Van looks great!

MARK

Not as cool as Bull Roar's new bus, but yeah, it's dope. Got Triple A, too.

ZAIN

You guys ready to rock tonight?

ANDY

Hell yeah.

THOMAS

Let's do this!

The band van screeches off down a narrow Detroit roadway, and

disappears into the jagged skyline.

FINAL END CREDITS

FADE OUT: