

"sUBText"

sitcom pilot by

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Log line: Several semi-retired sitcom writers
shake up their local fast-food emporium.

Synopsis: Have you noticed how the old farts in any
given neighborhood tend to gather around a table
at their local McDonald's in the early morning,
drinking coffee and shooting the sh*t?
Have you ever wondered what they discuss?
Could it really be sex and Visigoths?

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"sUBTeXT"

TEASER

Scene A

FADE IN:

INT. MCDOWELL'S RESTAURANT - JUST BEFORE DAWN

SAGUARO CACTUS SILHOUETTES LOOM OUTSIDE THE WINDOWS OF THIS FAST-FOOD EMPORIUM, ALONG WITH A FLASHING "MCDOWELL'S SUBS" NEON SIGN, SITTING ATOP A TOTEM POLE. RUSS, A STILL-REASONABLY-HANDSOME MAN IN HIS GREYING FORTIES, SITS AT ONE OF THE TABLES. HE WEARS FRENCH CUFFS AND A CROUPIER'S VEST. LEE, SLIGHTLY OLDER, SITS ACROSS FROM HIM, WEARING MOTORCYCLE DUDS. BOTH MEN SIP COFFEE AND READ NEWSPAPERS.

RUSS

We are privileged to be witnessing the
decline and fall of the American empire.

LEE

Remember Rome in the fifth century?

RUSS

Like it was yesterday.

LEE

I have one word for for you: Visigoths.

RUSS

Visigoths?

LEE

We need to watch out for Visigoths.

RUSS

Surely you jest.

LEE

Plus other barbarians, of course.

Pillaging. Plundering. Looting. (PAUSE)

And don't call me Shirley.

RUSS

But the Visigoths are all dead.

LEE

No, they're not. They just call themselves Republicans now.

RUSS

I'm not... (PAUSE) Damn, you may be right!

LEE

Have you looked closely at Sarah Palin?

LEE SHOWS A NEWSPAPER PHOTO TO RUSS.

RUSS

She's got a little Visigoth around the eyes, doesn't she?

LEE

Thank you.

HEADLIGHTS APPEAR IN THE PARKING LOT. RUSS PEERS OUTSIDE, NERVOUSLY.

RUSS

Is that Illy?

LEE

Relax, Russ. It's just Poof, in his
taxi.

POOF ENTERS. HE'S BALD AND HEAVYSET, AROUND LEE'S AGE.

POOF

Lee, what is that thing on your head?

LEE

Good morning to you, too. If you must
know, it's a do-rag. Many motorcyclists
wear them.

RUSS

Umm...

LEE

Question, Russ?

RUSS

Yes please. Is there such a thing as a
"don't-rag"?

LEE

Check your local pharmacy, in the
section marked "feminine products."

END TEASER

ACT ONE

Scene B

INT. MCDOWELL'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

RUSS AND LEE STILL SIT AT THE TABLE. POOF WALKS OVER TO LEE AND TURNS AROUND.

POOF

Sniff my shirt.

RUSS

Poof, isn't it a little early for the
kinky stuff?

LEE SMELLS THE BACK OF POOF'S SHIRT.

LEE

(SPANISH ACCENT) Cilantro from
Meh-hee-ko.

POOF WALKS OVER TO RUSS AND OFFERS HIS BACK.

RUSS

Can I be arrested for this?

POOF

Just sniff, smartass.

RUSS SMELLS ANOTHER PART OF POOF'S SHIRT, AND PONDERES FOR A MOMENT.

RUSS

(INDIAN ACCENT) Curry from Calcutta,
sahib.

POOF

Try another section, Lee.

LEE SMELLS A THIRD PART OF POOF'S SHIRT.

LEE

Hai Karate?

POOF

That's my aftershave, you idiot.

LEE

You still wear Hai Karate? What are
you, sixteen?

POOF

I found it under the sink this morning.

RUSS

I found some Tidy Bowl under my sink,
but you don't see any blue rings around
my neck. Have you no taste, Poof?
You're turning into a barbarian.

LEE

(TO RUSS) He may already be a Visigoth.

(TO POOF) Show him your eyes.

POOF

The point is, these taxi driver seats stink. When you lift heavy luggage out of the trunk in this heat, you sweat.

RUSS

Inevitable, I suppose.

POOF

And when you jump back into the cab, that's the exact moment you realize the time-honored baton has been passed along to you.

LEE

I assume you're heading into one of your rants?

POOF

Exactly. (GETTING WORKED UP) You feel... for lack of a better word, let's use "proud"... to join the long line of cabbies who have embedded enormous amounts of their DNA in the already-fragrant upholstery of the driver's seat!

RUSS

Don't make such a stink, Poof.

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POOF

Go ahead, laugh... but yesterday, I had
a seat that smelled like piss. You know
what the fucking dispatcher told me?

POOF/LEE/RUSS

(SIMULTANEOUSLY) "Urine luck!"

CUT TO:

Scene C

INT. MCDOWELL'S BALL PIT - CONTINUOUS

TAYLOR IS A THIN, FIFTYISH, GAY MAN WHO SITS IN THE PIT OF SMALL MULTICOLORED PLASTIC BALLS. NEXT TO HIM IS EDIE, A CHUNKY, SLIGHTLY OLDER WOMAN WHO LOOKS LIKE EVERYBODY'S MOM OR GRANDMOM. TAYLOR STRETCHES OUT HIS ARMS LUXURIOUSLY, ALONG THE EDGE OF THE PIT, AS IF HE'S SOAKING IN A HOT TUB. EDIE STRUGGLES, TRYING TO AVOID GOING UNDER THE SURFACE. SHE DOG-PADDLES, BACKSTROKES, HOLDS HER NOSE, ETC.

TAYLOR

(BLISSFUL) I like to do performance reviews in the pit.

EDIE

(STRUGGLING) I can see that.

TAYLOR

I find it to be relaxing.

EDIE

(ALARMED) Something just brushed against my leg.

TAYLOR CLOSES HIS EYES, SAVORING THE PIT.

TAYLOR

I love balls. Can't get enough of 'em. They put the employees at ease, too.

EDIE DREDGES UP A WHITE CLOTH OBJECT.

EDIE

It's a diaper.

TAYLOR BRIEFLY EXAMINES THE DIAPER, THEN TOSSES IT
ASIDE NEGLIGENTLY.

TAYLOR

Only slightly used.

EDIE

(STILL FLAILING) Nothing to worry
about, then.

TAYLOR

Edie, how long have you been with
McDowell's?

EDIE

Two years, Mr. Taylor.

TAYLOR

Please, call me Taylor.

EDIE

Okay, Mr. Taylor.

TAYLOR

And I have been in this restaurant only
two weeks, yet I'm the one wearing the
"Manager" name tag.

EDIE

You certainly are.

TAYLOR

Edie, your current job requires you to wear a "Team Member" name tag.

EDIE

What's your point?

TAYLOR

Don't you ever feel that your career has taken a wrong turn?

EDIE

Only every minute of every day.

TAYLOR

Do you have any ambitions, any aspirations, any hopes?

EDIE

(THINKS A BIT) I hope to avoid getting spattered with cooking grease.

CUT TO:

Scene D

INT. MCDOWELL'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

RUSS, LEE AND POOF SIT AT THE TABLE.

RUSS

I'm thinking about giving up sex.

POOF

I left that behind years ago.

LEE

Which behind?

POOF

Your wife's.

LEE

That reminds me. She asked me to thank
you.

POOF

For what?

LEE

For leaving her behind. (TO RUSS) Have
you had any sex since the divorce?

RUSS

Not much.

POOF

(TO LEE) You're asking the wrong question.

LEE

(TO RUSS) Have you had sex with *other people*?

RUSS

No.

POOF

(MOCK-WHISPERING, TO LEE) He carries a wallet photo of his right hand.

LEE

(TO RUSS) According to the TV, there are lots of enhancers you can take.

RUSS

What, so I can look like this guy?

(MUGS A BIG, LOOPY SMILE) But I'm not sure getting back in the saddle is a good idea. It's way too messy.

POOF

What?! You don't want to resurrect the ol' custard launcher? (THE OTHER TWO LOOK AT HIM QUIZZICALLY) I open all my spam. Religiously.

RUSS

Maybe it's time to let sleeping dogs
lie.

LEE

That's un-American.

POOF

Yeah Russ, be patriotic. You're still
young. You have years of skirt chasing
ahead of you.

LEE

Plus, we need to live vicariously
through your lusty sexual exploits.

RUSS

Guys, I would love to feed your
fantasies, but I think it's time for me
to become the newest member of the
Blunt Instrument Club.

LEE POINTS AT THE TWO TEENAGERS BEHIND THE ORDERING
COUNTER.

LEE

Maybe they can help us out with some of
the vicarious stuff.

THE THREE OLDER GUYS LOOK ACROSS THE RESTAURANT, AT
THE TWO YOUNGSTERS.

POOF

Ah, to be that age again.

RUSS

Life for them must be so bright, so
full of promise.

LEE

So full of vicarious delights.

CUT TO:

Scene E

INT. MCDOWELL'S ORDERING COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

JENNIFER IS IN HER LATE TEENS, WITH LIBRARIAN GLASSES AND DARK HAIR TIED UP IN A BUN. NICCOLI IS NEARLY THE SAME AGE, A LONG-HAIRED BLOND STONER WITH A NASCENT MUSTACHE. EACH WEARS A MCDOWELL'S UNIFORM AND LEANS ON THE COUNTER, HEAD IN HANDS, STARING INTO THE CAMERA.

NICCOLI

I can't handle the existential angst of day-to-day living.

JENNIFER

Wasn't it Camus who wrote that life is meaningless?

NICCOLI

Or maybe Kierkegaard.

JENNIFER

I watch young couples come in here, all lovey-dovey, and I think...

JENNIFER/NICCOLI

(SIMULTANEOUSLY) "Suckers."

JENNIFER

They bought into that whole romance-reproduction myth. The only reason why people are on this Earth is to create the next generation of mouths to feed.

NICCOLI

But the planet is already overpopulated.

JENNIFER

And we're using up our natural resources at a catastrophic rate.

NICCOLI

While the older generation saddles us with a crushing debt to repay.

JENNIFER/NICCOLI

(SIMULTANEOUSLY) Bastards.

JENNIFER

(PAUSE, GLANCES AT NICCOLI) Hey, that's the first time you've strung together more than two sentences without using the word "dude."

NICCOLI

(GLANCES AT JENNIFER) I've adopted the "stoner" persona only as protective coloration.

JENNIFER

Protective coloration? Against what?

NICCOLI

To fit in with my peers and survive the drama-filled hell that is adolescence.

JENNIFER

I see. Good point.

NICCOLI

What about you? You're cute, but you never dated, all the way through high school.

JENNIFER

Not worth the trouble. Too messy. This world will end soon, anyway.

NICCOLI

If you meet me in the storage closet, I could change your whole outlook...

JENNIFER

(SINCERELY) Thanks. But I'll pass.

NICCOLI

Okay. But if you ever change your mind...

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JENNIFER

...you'll be the first to know.

CUT TO:

Scene H

INT. MCDOWELL'S BALL PIT - CONTINUOUS

TAYLOR IS STILL RELAXED, WHILE EDIE STILL STRUGGLES TO STAY AFLOAT.

TAYLOR

Edie, what do your grandkids think of you working here?

EDIE

They're glad I have money to buy them trinkets.

TAYLOR

Oh, good.

EDIE

Small trinkets.

TAYLOR

Of course.

EDIE

Incredibly cheap trinkets.

TAYLOR

It goes without saying.

EDIE

And their parents are glad they don't have to support me... yet.

TAYLOR

Are you angling for a raise? That's so cute.

EDIE

Mr. Taylor, my paycheck buys twenty percent less than it did two years ago. I can't live on these wages.

TAYLOR

Sure you can. (HE TICKLES HER TUMMY) In fact, you've been putting on a few pounds, haven't you?

EDIE

Why, I never...

TAYLOR

Isn't the company smart? Letting the recession undercut the actual value of your paycheck?

EDIE

What?!

TAYLOR

And lower costs prop up the stock price for shareholders. Brilliant strategy! I'm so happy I bought this franchise!

EDIE

You **bought** this restaurant?!

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TAYLOR COVERS HIS MOUTH AND LOOKS HORRIFIED.

TAYLOR

Oops. Don't tell anybody.

EDIE SHAKES HIS HAND.

EDIE

It was a pleasure negotiating with you,
Mr. Taylor. I assume my raise will be
retroactive to the end of last week.

EDIE CRAWLS OUT OF THE BALL PIT.

CUT TO:

Scene J

INT. MCDOWELL'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

RUSS, LEE AND POOF ARE STILL SITTING AT THE TABLE.
RUSS TAKES A SHEAF OF PAPERS OUT OF A FOLDER.

RUSS

Okay, where were we?

HEADLIGHTS APPEAR OUTSIDE THE RESTAURANT. ILLEANA
ENTERS AND WALKS OVER TO THE TABLE. SHE'S SLIGHTLY
YOUNGER THAN RUSS.

ILLEANA

You were getting them to work on the
script without me, weren't you? Putz.

RUSS

(SIGHS) Marriages may come and go, but
writing teams are forever.

ILLEANA

We were just starting the sex scene,
no? That reminds me, I have a bone to
pick with you.

RUSS

Me?

ILLEANA

All of you. Why do you males spend your
teen years trying to rub up against us
with that tentpole in your pants...

NICCOLI APPROACHES, FROM THE COUNTER. WHEN HE
OVERHEARS ILLEANA, HE TRIES TO TURN AWAY
INCONSPICUOUSLY. RUSS POINTS HIM OUT TO ILLEANA.

RUSS

Illy, the kid wants to talk to you.

NICCOLI TURNS BACK TO THE TABLE.

NICCOLI

Miss, we found these after you left
yesterday. I think they're yours.

NICCOLI HANDS HER A PAIR OF SUNGLASSES.

ILLEANA

(INTERRUPTS RANT, TURNS ON THE CHARM)

Oh, yes they are. Thank you!

NICCOLI

And if you ever want somebody to rub up
against you, I'm always eager for a new
challenge.

ILLEANA LOOKS HIM UP AND DOWN.

ILLEANA

I'll bet you are. (PAUSES, THEN STARTS RANTING AGAIN, TO RUSS/POOF/LEE) Is this what my life has become? Thinking that a... a... *child* could fulfill my sexual needs?

NICCOLI HEADS BACK TO THE COUNTER, DEJECTED.

RUSS/LEE/POOF

(SIMULTANEOUSLY) Aww.

ILLEANA

You're right. That's the best offer I've had all year. (PAUSE) Where was I?

RUSS

Tentpoles.

ILLEANA

(RANTING AGAIN) Oh right... those teenage tentpoles suddenly turn into middle-aged limp noodles, when *we* gals finally get interested.

RUSS

Bad date?

ILLEANA

Horrible.

RUSS

Remember what the therapist said about
emasculatation?

ILLEANA

Don't start with me. I'll have your
balls for lunch.

RUSS

That reminds me. I'm overdue for
breakfast.

RUSS STANDS UP AND WALKS OVER TO THE COUNTER.

CUT TO:

Scene K

INT. MCDOWELL'S ORDERING COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

RUSS APPROACHES JENNIFER AND NICCOLI, WHO ARE LEANING ON THEIR HANDS BEHIND THE COUNTER. RUSS GAZES UP AT THE MENU BOARD.

RUSS

I'd like a... uh... large coffee.

JENNIFER RAISES HER HEAD FROM HER HANDS AND LOOKS RUSS UP AND DOWN... THEN TAKES OFF HER GLASSES AND INSERTS ONE END IN HER MOUTH, IN A COQUETTISH WAY.

JENNIFER

Would you like that with creeeam and

sugarrrr? (PURRS LAST WORDS OBSCENELY)

RUSS CONTINUES LOOKING UP AT THE MENU BOARD, OBLIVIOUS.

RUSS

No, just black. And a... uh... bran

muffin.

JENNIFER LOOSENS HER BUN, REVEALING A CASCADE OF LUXURIOUS HAIR.

JENNIFER

Excellent choice. A bran muffin for a

stud muffin. (SEDUCTION MODE) Would you

like that with melt-in-your-mouth

butter, or shall I slaaaather it up

with jelly?

RUSS IS STILL STARING UP AT THE MENU BOARD.

RUSS

No, that's too messy. And a... uh...

orange juice.

RUSS FINISHES HIS ORDER, PULLS OUT A CREDIT CARD, AND FINALLY LOOKS AT JENNIFER, WHO IS SLOWLY UNBUTTONING THE TOP OF HER UNIFORM. SHE LEANS OVER THE COUNTER.

JENNIFER

(WHISPERING) Would you like to see me

naked with that?

RUSS IS NEARLY DUMBSTRUCK, TRANSFIXED BY HER AMPLE CLEAVAGE.

RUSS

(WHISPERING) Yes please.

JENNIFER SWIPES HIS CARD AND HANDS OVER A RECEIPT.

JENNIFER

Then come with me.

SHE BECKONS RUSS TOWARDS THE STORAGE CLOSET.

NICCOLI

Break?

JENNIFER

Oh yeah.

RUSS LOOKS AT NICCOLI WITH STUNNED SURPRISE.

RUSS

Is she eighteen?

NICCOLI

Nineteen, actually. Still a cherry.

But--I'm guessing--not for long.

RUSS

Why me?

JENNIFER YANKS RUSS AROUND THE CORNER AND INTO THE CLOSET.

NICCOLI

(SIGHS, SPEAKS TO NOBODY IN PARTICULAR)

Coz some guys are just *way* too

fuckin' lucky. Dude.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene M

INT. MCDOWELL'S TABLE - 30 MINUTES LATER

LEE AND POOF STILL SIT AT THE TABLE. ILLEANA AND RUSS ARE STANDING BETWEEN THE TABLE AND THE DOOR.

ILLEANA

You screwed that teenage slut? What the fuck is wrong with you?

RUSS

This, from the whore who's itching for a mustache ride from the surfer dude?

ILLEANA

I've had enough of your shit.

ILLEANA STORMS OUT THROUGH THE RESTAURANT'S DOOR. JENNIFER AND NICCOLI RUSH OVER FROM THE ORDERING COUNTER, IN SHOCK. THEY'VE BEEN EAVESDROPPING.

RUSS

And...

ILLEANA RE-ENTERS THE RESTAURANT AND BOWS.

ILLEANA

...scene.

LEE AND POOF APPLAUD. JENNIFER AND NICCOLI JOIN THE APPLAUSE HALFHEARTEDLY, BUT THEY'RE CONFUSED. THE TEENAGERS EXIT.

LEE

Now we need to add The Funny.

POOF

That "mustache ride" was a good start.

ILLEANA

A mustache ride is **always** a good start.

RUSS

But let's remember that these characters should be mad at each other, even if only for a half-page.

ILLEANA

Yeah, they used to be The Bickersons.

RUSS

Afterwards, he could say: "I just had a shower and shave to smooth out my aerodynamic surfaces."

ILLEANA

Then I could respond... or rather **she** could respond: "So removing the accumulated whiskers and crud will speed up your writing process?"

POOF

There ya go. And we have to spice up the upcoming radical rant with some physical comedy, so it has a chance to get some laughs.

LEE

I have one word for for you...

POOF

You always have one word for us. Do you think one word will solve this script's problems?

LEE

...pie.

RUSS

Ooo. Pie. He may be right.

LEE

A pie in the face is money in the bank.

CUT TO:

Scene P

INT. MCDOWELL'S BALL PIT - CONTINUOUS

TAYLOR AND NICCOLI BOTH STRETCH OUT THEIR ARMS LUXURIOUSLY, ALONG THE EDGE OF THE PIT.

TAYLOR

Niccoli, do you have any ambitions, any aspirations, any hopes?

NICCOLI

I hope to get laid someday.

TAYLOR IS INSTANTLY INTERESTED.

TAYLOR

I'm sure you won't have any trouble.

NICCOLI

I just got shot down twice, and it's not even seven o'clock. What would you do in a situation like this?

TAYLOR

I'd sing along with Streisand.

NICCOLI

Streisand? Really?

TAYLOR

She's very insightful about matters of the heart.

NICCOLI

Huh. Maybe I should try it.

TAYLOR

I'll bring in some CD's.

NICCOLI

But... I just can't imagine myself
singing along with Streisand.

TAYLOR

Trust me. Your heart gets broken once
too often, and you'll try *many*
different things.

NICCOLI

It would be really gnarly if that older
woman could teach me a few moves.

TAYLOR

You think you have a shot with her?

NICCOLI

She'll never sleep with me. Nobody will
ever sleep with me.

TAYLOR

Don't be too sure about that.

TAYLOR AND NICCOLI EXIT FROM THE BALL PIT AREA...

CUT TO:

Scene R

INT. MCDOWELL'S TABLE AREA - CONTINUOUS

...AND TAYLOR AND NICCOLI ENTER FROM THE BALL PIT AREA. RUSS, LEE, ILLEANA AND POOF STAND NEXT TO THEIR TABLE, READING FROM THE BACKS OF TRAY LINERS.

RUSS

(READS) "Don't be too sure about that."

TAYLOR

(CONCERNED) Hey, were you spying on us?

POOF

It's a fictionalization, Taylor. We're writing a sitcom. And Art often imitates Life.

TAYLOR

(OUTRAGED) You **were** spying on us!

Okay, out. All of you! **Out*!!*

RUSS

Taylor, wait a minute. Imagine, if you will, a writers' strike.

RUSS POINTS UP IN THE AIR, AT AN IMAGINARY SCENE. TAYLOR LOOKS UP IN THE AIR OBEDIENTLY, EXPECTANTLY. BUT HE DOESN'T SEE ANYTHING.

LEE

Imagine unscripted reality shows
squeezing out programs that used to
hire writers.

LEE AND RUSS LINE UP ON EACH SIDE OF TAYLOR, AND
SQUEEZE TOGETHER. TAYLOR LIKEE.

POOF

Imagine a 401K that's stolen by Bernie
Madoff.

RUSS GRABS THE TRAY LINER SHEET OUT OF POOF'S HAND,
AND STARTS TO RUN AWAY.

ILLEANA

Imagine a bunch of rich, greedy war
criminals running the economy into
bankruptcy.

POOF AND LEE TURN THEIR PANT POCKETS INSIDE OUT, AND
ONE OR TWO COINS FALL TO THE FLOOR.

RUSS

Imagine a house that's suddenly worth
about half of what you owe on it.

ILLEANA RIPS HER TRAY LINER SHEET IN HALF.

POOF

Imagine no income and a foreclosure.

POOF AND LEE THINK FOR A MOMENT, THEN TURN THEIR PANT
POCKETS INSIDE OUT AGAIN. THIS TIME, NO COINS FALL TO
THE FLOOR.

ILLEANA

Imagine facing retirement with no
assets at all.

POOF AND LEE THINK FOR ANOTHER MOMENT, THEN PUT THEIR
PANT POCKETS BACK INSIDE THEIR PANTS. AFTER A FEW
SECONDS, THEY TURN THEIR PANT POCKETS INSIDE OUT, FOR
THE THIRD TIME.

LEE

Imagine re-entering a job market that
has no jobs that use your talents.

ILLEANA OFFERS HER HALF TRAY LINER SHEET TO POOF, WHO
WADS IT UP INTO A BALL AND THROWS IT AWAY.

RUSS

Imagine dealing faro at an Indian
casino.

RUSS MIMES DEALING CARDS AND QUICK-DRAWING A GUN.

ILLEANA

Imagine waitressing at a Fifties theme
diner.

ILLEANA HOLDS UP AN IMAGINARY TRAY AND DROPS IT. A
CRASH FROM THE KITCHEN AREA OCCURS AT EXACTLY THE SAME
MOMENT. WEIRD.

POOF

Imagine driving a stink-mobile.

POOF MIMES DRIVING A CAR WHILE HOLDING HIS NOSE.

LEE

These are all hypotheticals, of course.

RUSS

We still believe that Americans want a happy ending.

POOF

And we want to *write* them a happy ending.

ILLEANA

But we especially want to write a happy ending to our own lives.

TAYLOR CONSIDERS ALL THIS, FOR A LONG MOMENT.

TAYLOR

Okay, but you've got to keep the noise level down.

LEE/RUSS/POOF/ILLEANA

(WHISPERING) Done.

TAYLOR

And can I assume that you will buy things while you're doing all this?

RUSS, ILLEANA, POOF AND LEE ALL RAISE THEIR CUPS OF COFFEE.

LEE/RUSS/POOF/ILLEANA

(WHISPERING) Done.

TAYLOR

Oh, all right then. But the next time
you steal one of my lines, punch it up,
dammit.

CUT TO:

Scene T

EXT. MCDOWELL'S PARKING LOT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

RUSS AND ILLEANA LEAN AGAINST POOF'S TAXI AND LEE'S MOTORCYCLE.

ILLEANA

Why are we writing this sitcom?

RUSS

It's what we've always done. It's what we're trained to do.

ILLEANA

Like dancing poodles. But maybe we're no good anymore. The young writers...

RUSS

Fuck the young writers. They haven't tasted life like we have. Age and cunning beat youth and strength every time.

ILLEANA

But what about youth and wit? Age and cunning is no match for that.

RUSS

You may be right. Especially when the studios won't hire anyone who has a five o'clock shadow.

ILLEANA

You feel like quitting?

RUSS

Listen, you're slingin' hash, and I haven't turned up any friendly cards in a looooong time. What else have we got?

ILLEANA

My new retirement plan involves buying lottery tickets.

RUSS

Lots of lottery tickets.

ILLEANA

So we'll write ourselves out of this mess?

RUSS

We'll try.

ILLEANA AND RUSS HEAD BACK INSIDE.

CUT TO:

Scene W

INT. MCDOWELL'S TABLE AREA - CONTINUOUS

ILLEANA AND RUSS ENTER FROM THE PARKING AREA. LEE AND POOF HAVE CORRALED TWO CUSTOMERS, JOE AND BOB, WHO ARE READING LINES WRITTEN ON NAPKINS.

JOE

(READING) "Sniff my shirt."

BOB

(READING) "Isn't it a little early for
the kinky stuff?"

LEE

Joe has to be facing away from you,
when you deliver that line.

LEE REPOSITIONS JOE, SO THAT HIS BACK IS TOWARDS BOB.

BOB

But what's my motivation?

POOF

Bob, are you sure you've never had any
acting experience?

BOB MISSES THE IRONY IN POOF'S QUESTION, AND TAKES IT AS A COMPLIMENT. POOF AND LEE SECRETLY ROLL THEIR EYES AT EACH OTHER.

JOE

I hate being typecast.

LEE

(MYSTIFIED) Meaning?

JOE

People smell my shirt all the time.

LEE

Really?

JOE

And I don't even have to ask them.

LEE

Really? What do you do for a living?

JOE

I work in the stable up yonder.

LEE

Well, we can switch parts for the next rehearsal. Here, go get some coffee.

LEE HANDS SOME MONEY TO JOE AND BOB, AND COLLECTS THEIR SCRIPT/NAPKINS. JOE AND BOB EXIT TO THE ORDERING COUNTER. RUSS GRABS ANOTHER NAPKIN FROM THE TABLE, AND SCRIBBLES SOMETHING ON IT.

RUSS

Illy just came up with a good line, out in the parking lot.

RUSS HANDS THE NAPKIN TO LEE.

LEE

(READING) "Did you see that chuckwalla?

He was a fat little sucka."

POOF AND LEE CONSIDER THE LINE FOR A SECOND.

POOF

Ooo yeah, it has a nice rhythm.

LEE

And funny plosive consonants.

TWO MORE CUSTOMERS ENTER, FROM THE PARKING LOT.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Did you see that chuckwalla? He was a
fat little sucka.

ILLEANA TAKES THE NAPKIN FROM RUSS AND TOSSES IT IN
THE GARBAGE.

ILLEANA

Is that a *standard* reaction to fat
chuckwallas?

POOF AND LEE GATHER THEIR THINGS AND GET READY TO
LEAVE. RUSS AND ILLEANA HUG THEM WARMLY.

RUSS

Drive safely, you two.

POOF AND LEE EXIT. ILLEANA STARES OVER AT NICCOLI,
BEHIND THE ORDERING COUNTER. RUSS RAISES HIS EYEBROWS.

ILLEANA

Well, he is kinda cute. But really...
is this what my life has become?

RUSS PICKS UP HIS NEWSPAPER AND PECKS ILLEANA ON THE
CHEEK. RUSS EXITS.

END ACT TWO

TAG

Scene X

INT. MCDOWELL'S TABLE AREA - CONTINUOUS

ILLEANA PICKS UP HER SUNGLASSES, PUTS THEM ON, AND GETS READY TO LEAVE. NICCOLI ENTERS FROM THE ORDERING COUNTER. HE HAS A SMALL RUCKSACK ON HIS SHOULDER.

NICCOLI

I'm getting off now.

ILLEANA

Oh God, I wish that were my line.

NICCOLI

It can be, in twenty minutes.

ILLEANA

Big talk.

NICCOLI POINTS DOWNWARD.

NICCOLI

Big feet.

ILLEANA

(CHUCKLES) Twenty minutes, huh? Do I need to worry about getting arrested?

NICCOLI SHOWS HER HIS DRIVING LICENSE.

NICCOLI

I'm in my fifth year. Last fall, I was
suspended for being a liberal humanist.

ILLEANA

You were kicked out of school for being
a liberal humanist?!

NICCOLI SHRUGS.

NICCOLI

We live in Arizona.

ILLEANA

Ah. Point taken. (TO NOBODY IN
PARTICULAR) I guess this *is* what my
life has become.

NICCOLI AND ILLEANA EXIT, TOGETHER.

THE END