

THE POWER LUNCH

by Willinsky & Lloyd

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FADE IN:

EXT. CAFE PATIO - STU'S TABLE - LUNCH

PAN the first table of LE GRANDE EGO, a 5-star Beverly Hills Cafe. A Copy of VARIETY and a CELLULAR PHONE lay next to the ELEGANT CHINA and FINE CRYSTAL. Even the SUGAR HOLDER is ridiculously expensive. There's a NEWTON SCRIBBLE COMPUTER, a GLASS OF RED WINE and a GLASS OF MINERAL WATER.

The dialogue is very, very subtle. Everything is subtle -- except this important stage direction.

STU BENSON, 48, is a high-powered Hollywood Studio Chief. Calm and calculating. His assistant, CYNTHIA, 25, is attractive but very unsure of herself. No one is certain whether or not they are having an affair, but rumors fly.

STU

(o.s.)

What do you mean, you didn't close the deal?

CYNTHIA

(o.s.)

His agent's being difficult.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. ALAN'S TABLE

PAN another table. ALAN DENSEMAN, 47, Is Hollywood's maverick Studio Chief, high strung and nervous. Paranoid. Suspicious of everyone -- even his own mother. He nervously taps his glass of GLENLIVET with his KNIFE.

FRANK, 32, is Densemans assistant and sounding board, but Densemans doesn't always like the sounds.

DENSEMAN

(o.s.)

Then get me Leo Dicaprio.

FRANK

(o.s.)

We tried to attach him already.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

PAN POPCYCLE, 25, an up and coming rock star. Axel Rose type. Arms covered with BRACELETS and TATTOOS. DRINK in one hand, DRUM STICK in the other. LEATHER PANTS. RIPPED T-SHIRT.

RAND

(o.s.)

Who needs actors anyway? We've got computer graphics.

RAND, 28, is a music video director. He has the brains of a gnat, but he's using music videos as a vehicle, like everyone else in this town, to someday direct features.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

PAN IRIS, 46, looking in a portable MAKE-UP MIRROR. SHE'S drinking a MARTINI.

IRIS

(o.s.)

It's not enough to sleep with producers anymore. You need dirt; but don't worry, dahling -- this is a very dirty town.

Iris, the old pro (who never made it big), teaches SALLY, 22, the naive newcomer, the ropes of the business. Iris, dressed as gaudy as a whorehouse Madam, is never far from her drink. Sally just got off the bus from Iowa. Wears a simple Midwestern dress. Drinks a VIRGIN PINA COLADA.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

PAN a man wiping his SUNGLASSES. Two cups of ESPRESSO sit on the table next to a PAIR OF CELLULAR PHONES.

MORRIS

(o.s.)

I thought you said the project was funded.

D.J.

(o.s.)

I can get the money. That's not a problem.

MORRIS GREY, 35, is an aggressive agent. He sits with D.J. GORDON, 33, an aggressive female producer. MS. Gordon's hair is very short. Morris has a ponytail. D.J. wears a stately BUSINESS SUIT. Morris has a WHITE SHIRT with LOUD TIE. His JACKET rests on the back of his chair.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

PAN another table with SCRIPTS, YELLOW PADS and a CALCULATOR organized neatly on the top.

ROLAND

(o.s.)

Ten million here. Twenty million there. What's the difference. Let's just get this project off the ground.

PULL BACK to reveal two powerful, independent producers hashing out details. THOMAS, 30, is the visionary. ROLAND, 31, is the businessman. Thomas is more casual, wearing suspenders and a beard. Both are very professional.

THOMAS

It's not going anywhere without a director.

ROLAND

What about De Palma?

THOMAS

Not enough violence.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

A hand dips his FACCACIO BREAD into OIL. Two cups of CAPPUCINO are present.

SERGEI

(o.s.)

I was trying to convey the subtle essence of post-modern deconstructive performance art in a surrealist environment of utter despair.

SERGEI EISENSTEIN, 43, is Hollywood's premiere art film director. Very abstract. His mind has circled the universe several times. HE wears a nice suit JACKET and an expensive SILK SHIRT with FADED JEANS and OLD SNEAKERS.

RAINBOW, 27, a hard-core feminists lost in the sixties -- even though she was born in the seventies. ARMY JACKET, BANDANNA And COMBAT BOOTS. Attitude about everything.

SFX: SLURPING SOUND

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY, 24, slurps down his ICE TEA. Total slob. Faded college SWEATSHIRT. Constantly talks with mouth full. PRESTON, 25, is more refined, wearing a SWEATER and GLASSES.

They worked on the college paper together at Florida University, and think they have the talent to write for Hollywood. Billy is the idea man, Preston specializes in structure. Neither has any talent.

BILLY

(with food in mouth)

Okay, we got these aliens...no, Mohicans!

PRESTON

(stunned)

In New York?

BILLY

Yeah, it's a gang.

PRESTON

Of American Indians?

BILLY

They want Manhattan back.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY, 26, and ELIZABETH, 29, are the wannabe actresses. They were able to get a table because Brandy happens to know the maitre d'. IN fact, she knows almost every guy in town.

Brandy is beautiful. Modest success in B-movies. Anxious to move to bigger projects. Elizabeth is artsy. Theatre background. Roommates as diverse as "The Odd Couple". Brandy is leather and lace. Elizabeth is cotton & wool.

ELIZABETH

(leaning in, whispering)

Soup is more expensive than an entire meal at Chin-Chins.

BRANDY
 (leaning in)
 Of course, it's expensive. Why
 else would anyone eat here?

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

BRUCE, the waiter, 25, is a struggling actor. His attitude is determined in direct proportion to the importance of the customer he's serving. He has no respect for Popcycle.

POPCYCLE
 Bloody Mary soup.

BRUCE
 Our soup du jour is tomato-basil.

POPCYCLE
 Then pour a shot of Stoli in it.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

Sergei is constantly studying objects in a bizarre manner. He is presently looking at his reflection in a SPOON.

RAINBOW
 (scanning menu)
 There's nothing for vegetarians.

SERGEI
 Interesting. Everyone in Hollywood
 is an animal, but we don't eat
 meat.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY
 (stuffing face with bread)
 Wanna split the roasted chicken
 tarragon?

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY
 It's between the Oriental Salad or
 the Alfredo.

IRIS
 (stunned, dropping menu)
 Sweetheart...Alfredo's out.
 Pesto's in. Angel hair or rotelli,
 but never linguini, not in this
 town.

Sally nervously picks up the menu, as we:

CLOSE ON ELEGANT MENU. The cover has the film's title: "The Power Lunch" in bold typestyle. "Dejuener Du Force" is underneath in elegant script.

CLASSICAL MUSIC plays in the b.g. As SALLY'S HAND OPENS THE MENU. SHE scans the entrees with her index finger as we:

ROLL CREDITS

Which are listed like items on the menu.

PAN TO:

A PIECE OF BROCCOLI ON THE FLOOR.

PAN TO:

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN PARKS, 52 (but looking a young 40) stares at the VEGETABLE PLATE in front of him. HE is a very bitter actor. HE used to be Hollywood's hottest star -- now he has trouble getting an infomercial.

ART KINSEY, his agent, 58, nurses a CHIVAS. HE's seen it all, and only puts up with Warren because the commission on his residuals pay his mortgage. Art wears a JACKET, Warren wears a DESIGNER SWEAT SUIT.

WARREN

Do you want my broccoli? I hate broccoli. Why do they put that disgusting crap on my vegetable plate? Are they trying to tell me something, Art?

ART

Everybody loves you, Warren.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH

I hate you. I can't believe you were laughing at me.

BRANDY

It was funny.

ELIZABETH

"The Glass Menagerie" is not a comedy. I was playing a cripple.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

The MENUS are no longer present. They have ordered.

IRIS

You do a few plays, you get a good agent, and pretty soon you'll be as big as....

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

TWO SALADS sit on the table. One SMOKED SALMON. The other CHICKEN CAESAR. Both enjoy fine CHARDONNAY.

ROLAND

...Jack Nicholson?

THOMAS

No, the bastard wants 30 percent of the box. Half of merchandising. And a quarter of video sales.

ROLAND

Jesus. What's wrong with 20 percent across the board. He'll still gross 30 or 40 mil.

THOMAS

He just wants what he's worth.

ROLAND

It's just a lousy cameo.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

Hollywood is a fucking facade. Nobody understands art. I hate this fucking town.

SERGEI

Yeah, I've been thinking about moving to France myself.
(under his breath)
Unless that kid drops the charges.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

Okay...we open at a soccer game... in England...It's raining...people are getting trampled...blood everywhere.

PRESTON
This is a love story?

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH
I don't laugh at your slasher
movies.

BRANDY
Come on, Elizabeth. Let's drop it.
I said I was sorry.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

Bruce takes their order.

BRUCE
But the scallops aren't fresh
today.

DENSEMAN
Fine. Get me a Caesar salad. No
croutons. No cheese. Dressing on
the side.

FRANK
I'll have the roasted Squid Pizza
with rosemary...and another
Peligrino. Make sure it's cold
this time.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

Rainbow is pulling on Bruce's clothing.

RAINBOW
We're ready. I'll take a salad.

BRUCE
Chicken or seafood?

RAINBOW
(indignantlly)
Do I look like a carnivore?

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

D.J.
What about the actors?

MORRIS

I can get the players. That's not a problem. Get some funding and we'll talk.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

Bruce stands at the table, still in a daze.

SERGEI

I'll have the fruit plate.

BRUCE

Very well...a fruit plate and...
(condescending)
A bowl of lettuce.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

Bruce walks by the table.

RAND

How about a human sacrifice?

POPCYCLE

No...my videos need something really shocking!

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

Bruce arrives to take their order.

BRANDY

(shocked)
You can't order a sandwich.

ELIZABETH

Why not?

Bruce rolls his eyes.

BRANDY

What if somebody sees you?

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

We'll make it up in international distribution.

CYNTHIA

But we gave both stars a percentage.

STU
 Fudge the numbers.
 (slightly disturbed)
 Didn't they teach you creative
 accounting at USC?

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
 What do you mean, we're in the red?
 That film grossed over 300 mil.

FRANK
 Exactly. We need another 80
 million just to break even.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
 You're not in Kansas anymore.

SALLY
 Iowa.

IRIS
 Whatever. You're in the jungle
 now.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
 (on phone)
 Forget it. We had a deal!

Roland slams down his phone.

THOMAS
 Problem?

ROLAND
 My mother. She wants tickets to
 Streisand...For Free!

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

PRESTON
 It doesn't work like that, Billy.
 We need a story.

BILLY
 We've been in this town, what?
 Three...almost four weeks? And we
 still don't have a deal.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

The violence. The brutality. It's appalling what they're doing to those innocent quadrupeds. Animals are always the victim.

SERGEI

I know. Disney has a track record of that.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA

I thought that script got bad coverage.

STU

(smiling)

It did. I'm bluffing.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

FRANK

Are we making a bid.

DENSEMAN

On that pathetic script?

FRANK

I heard Stu made an offer.

DENSEMAN

Stu Benson? That rat can't even take a shit without studio approval.

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

D.J.

It might help if I had somebody attached.

MORRIS

Look. I need money up front to get the talent. No money, no star. No star, no deal.

EXT. FRONT DESK

TOM STEELE, 28, the popular Pretty Boy actor cuts in front of the line and hands a hundred to PIERRE, 53, the maitre'd and possibly the most powerful man in Hollywood.

PIERRE
 (fake french accent)
 Bon jour, Mr. Steele. Welcome to
 "Le Grande Ego". Your table is
 ready, sir.

TOM
 Thank you, Pierre.

PIERRE escorts TOM to his table. Everyone takes note as Tom walks between tables with the proud strut of a peacock. He wears BLACK PANTS and BOOTS and JACKET with WHITE SHIRT.

CAMERA PULLS BACK for an AERIAL BOOM SHOT to see everyone in the restaurant glancing over toward the FRONT DESK to see Tom Steele enter.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY
 (looking around)
 Is that Tom Steele?

IRIS
 Yeah, that's Tommy. He's got a
 real bad coke problem -- I mean
 real bad. But I love his work.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
 (rising)
 Tom, I saw your dailies this
 morning. Looking good.

TOM
 Who hired that fucking director? I
 hardly got any close-ups.

DENSEMAN
 Don't worry. You're the lead.
 You'll get noticed.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH
 Look who's here.

BRANDY
Elizabeth!
(softly scolding)
Don't ever look at anybody you're
actually looking at.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
(remained seated)
Tommy, you in for "Mission
Control".

TOM
Did you get Megan Fox?

STRU
Nothing in writing, but it's a go.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
(gesturing toward Tom)
Straight out of Faces Inter-
national. That punk has my table!

ART
It's not the end of the world,
Warren.

WARREN
He has no formal training. He's
just another flavor of the month.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY
He's so cute.

IRIS
Keep your distance, honey. I'm
surprised the Virgin Mary hasn't
slapped him with a paternity suit.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH
I thought you knew him.

BRANDY
Well, I do...I mean...I was in his
first big movie.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

SERGEI

It just proves that movies are made
by idiots to be viewed by idiots.

RAINBOW

It's a conspiracy. The studios
want to keep the masses ignorant.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE

What are you saying? I just want a
taco.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

Give me a break. I don't want to
sign Steele to another movie. Too
much baggage. He's an emotional
nightmare.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

Do you think I want to cast him in
"Mission Control?"

CYNTHIA

I'm just saying...

STU

He has a following. What can I do?

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

I don't care how much his movies
gross.

THOMAS

Don't tell me you're backing out on
principle.

ROLAND

Ethics? Me? No! Tom Steele just
won't play ball.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

Tom kicks back, watching the women pass. Reads VARIETY in one hand. Talks on phone with other hand. MINERAL WATER is already present at his table.

TOM

(into phone)

Sandra...I loved your last film. That one scene cracked me up -- when the bus jumped the gap in the freeway...

(beat)

Oh, really. You've done a few pictures since then?

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

ART

Come on, Warren...we got some deals in the fire.

WARREN

Did you see the craft services on my last picture. Corn nuts and Cheetos. This guy's getting sushi.

ART

You don't even like sushi.

WARREN

That's not the point. This punk is taking my parts! My parts, Art! Did you see Stu? He was kissing Tom's ass. Stu used to kiss my ass!

Warren throws a ZUCCHINI in the DIP.

EXT. FRONT DESK

Pierre is yelling at Bruce.

PIERRE

(without accent)

I don't care if he wants Coco Puffs. The customer is always right.

BRUCE

But we don't have any tortillas.

PIERRE

Then go next door, and get some.
This is Hollywood, use your
imagination.

BRUCE

(gestures to busy
restaurant)
But, Pierre...

PIERRE

I don't want to hear it. There are
a lot of other actors who would
love to have your job.

Pierre turns to greet MICHAEL STONE and his associate ROGER.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Bon jour, Mr. Stone. Welcome to
"Le Grande Ego". Your table is
ready, sir.

PIERRE leads them through the restaurant to their table.
It's strategically located in the far corner. Pierre follows
a calculated journey past the other power player.

STONE, 43, is the most powerful agent in Hollywood. HE does
NOT SPEAK TO ANYONE. All contact with him is done through
ROGER, 32, who enters with a HI-TECH TELEPHONE COMPUTER
SYSTEM.

CAMERA PULLS BACK for AERIAL BOOM as everyone takes notice of
the powerful man who has just entered.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY

Who's that?

IRIS

(turning)
Oh...that's God...At least he
thinks so.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH

Is that Michael Stone?

BRANDY

I told you he ate here.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

Warren and Art nod, and get an almost unnoticeable nod in return.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

Stu stands to pay his respects, and reaches out to shake hands with Mr. Stone. Roger, sensing the potential touching of Mr. Stone, quickly intercepts the handshake.

STU

Good afternoon, Mr. Stone.

STONE nods.

STU

(continuing with Roger)

Can we set up a meeting on the Tarantino project?

ROGER

I've got fifteen at three o'clock.
Call to confirm at two thirty.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

Tom, who is on the PHONE, waves to them Hollywood fashion (whatever style that happens to be on the day of filming). Stone and Roger both nod.

This ritual is consistent at the other tables, and the sincerity of each nod is in direct proportion to the importance of the person sitting at the table they pass.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

(looks toward Stone)

Why don't we talk to him?

PRESTON

He's a prick. He hasn't returned any of our calls since we moved to town.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

Denseman stands to shake Mr. Stone's hand, but Mr. Stone walks past him, ignoring his presence.

DENSEMAN
 (whispering to Frank)
 What the fuck is up with the
 Tarantino deal?

FRANK
 (shrugging shoulders)
 Still pending...I guess...

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

Stone and Roger pass Sergei.

SERGEI
 Good day, Michael.

Stone's nod is sincere. Roger stops to speak with Sergei briefly, as Pierre leads Stone to his table in the corner.

ROGER
 Have you considered our offer?

SERGEI
 It's not that I don't appreciate
 your proposal, but I have an
 allegiance to the Writers & Friends
 of Writers Agency since...well...
 Woodstock.

ROGER
 If you change your mind, call me.
 (hands him a card)
 Direct.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

Stone sits at his power table, facing the entire room. Bruce takes the drink order. BAG OF TORTILLAS under his ORDER PAD.

BRUCE
 Good afternoon, Mr. Stone.

Stone nods, as Roger arrives. HE sets up his COMPUTER/PHONE SYSTEM WITH HEAD SET.

ROGER
 Hello, Bruce. We need to rush
 today.

BRUCE
 Important meeting?

ROGER

Yes, Michael here is playing golf with Nelson Mandela. The South African market is opening up.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS

Don't look at him. Don't talk to him. Don't approach him. Don't send him your headshot. Don't invite him to your showcases -- and don't tell anyone you know him. When he wants to talk to you, he'll send his assistant. If you're lucky, you'll get five minutes. That's all. Five minutes. That's your career.

Sally nods nervously.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

BRUCE

(continuing)

...and The Burger du Jour is complimented with a raspberry cabernet sauce topped with Shittake mushrooms and a generous slice of Brie.

Stone nods, impressed.

ROGER

(handing menu back)

Make that two. Blood rare. A side of avocado for Mr. Stone.

BRUCE

A bottle of Chateau Margaux with your meal?

ROGER

Naturally.

CAMERA FOLLOWS BRUCE as he passes.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

Why do you even encourage him. He's pure evil.

SERGEI

He's merely a product of his own environment. Hollywood can sever even the strongest moral fibers.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

He's working me. He knows I want that script.

FRANK

Maybe he didn't see you.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

I can't believe he won't see me.

THOMAS

He's just working us.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA

It looks like a lock. Roger seemed fairly sincere.

STU

That's what worries me.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM

(on phone)
Hold on...
(hand over receiver)
What did Mike order?

BRUCE

Burger du jour.

TOM

Hmmm. I don't eat meat, but I better order a sandwich...I wouldn't want the trades to blow things out of proportion...make it a veggie-croissant. Extra artichoke.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
I ate the live rat! Ozzy Osborne
bit the head off the bat.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

Bruce arrives.

WARREN
(pointing towards Tom)
Whatever he's having -- with extra
meat.
(smiling to Art)
That'll send a message to that
little bastard.

BRUCE
He ordered the Veggie-Croissant,
sir.

WARREN
(bitter pause)
Then give me extra eggplant! And
double the cheese!

Warren SLAPS the menu into Bruce's chest.

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS
I don't think you understand. We
need the money to move forward.

D.J.
I can get the money, but first I
need a commitment.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

SERGEI
It's interesting. Everything in
the universe follows a finite
orderly logic, except Hollywood.

HIGH-POWERED, TURBO-CHARGED MONTAGE SEQUENCE (DUMB IDEAS)

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
That's totally insane.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
(on phone)
Utterly stupid.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
Ridiculous.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

PRESTON
Idiotic.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS
Get real.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
I don't believe it.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH
You're kidding.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(on phone)
No way.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
This is a joke, right?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
I wouldn't even do that.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
Bull shit.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
That's the dumbest idea I've ever
heard -- and I've heard some
seriously dumb ideas.

FRANK
So, you want to kill it?

DENSEMAN
You kidding? Attach Bruce Willis
and we can't lose.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
(into phone)
It's a go!

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

SERGEI
Definitely.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY
It's brilliant.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
Give it...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
... the green light.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY
Sure...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
...why not?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY
It couldn't hurt.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(into phone)
Count me in...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
I guess it's better than doing
Dinner Theater.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
It's a done deal. Just send the
paperwork....Hold On.

Roger connects another line.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Roger here, go...Eric, talk to me.
(turns to Mike)
It's Munich. They want 25% of
foreign distribution.

Stone shakes "No!"

ROGER (CONT'D)
(continuing on phone)
Twenty percent or we walk...

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS
What do you want from me? My soul?

D.J.
And a few actors.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH
He was a con man who saved Jews
from the concentration camps.
(Brandy still blank)
Like Robin Hood meets "Fiddler on
the Roof."

BRANDY

Oh, that's sweet...but I thought there'd be a lot more action. It would've been cool if that Schindler guy was played by Steven Seagal?

ELIZABETH

Seagal? Is he still around?

EXT. FRONT DESK

DON JOHNSON approaches with a beautiful FEMALE ESCORT.

JOHNSON

Table for two.

PIERRE

(checking list)

Do you have reservations, sir.

JOHNSON

(subtle shock)

I'm Don Johnson.

(it doesn't register)

Detective Crockett...Miami Vice...

PIERRE

Oh, I am so sorry, but we are filled today.

JOHNSON

(quiet indignation)

I'm a television star!

PIERRE

(turning up nose)

Reruns on Nickelodeon do not impress us. Perhaps you should try Chinois. They may accept you.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM

(on phone)

I'm sorry, Mr. Apatow, you'll have to talk to my agent...

(beat, excited)

Miss December? In that case...

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

ART

Don't get so excited. It's not a problem.

WARREN

Maybe you're the problem, Art. I'm not meeting the right people any more. I haven't seen a decent script since "Godfather Four."

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

What's the latest on the Oliver Stone project?

Bruce enters with SALAD and PASTA. (Stu will never touch his pasta.)

CYNTHIA

It's up in the air.

STU

We should have closed that deal last week.

CYNTHIA

He thinks our accountant is a Chinese spy. When he gets back from Kuala Lumpur, he wants to check her references with his contact at the State Department.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

FRANK

Don't you trust him?

DENSEMAN

I trust no one, not even myself.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS

Denseman's gonna screw us on this one. I can feel it.

ROLAND

We should've learned our lesson with "Dust Bowl"

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(on phone)

Oh, no! We packaged that film when it was "Dust Cloud." If they had kept the name, it would have been a huge hit!

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA

This looks like it could turn into another "Dust Bowl."

STU

That disaster wasn't my fault. Densemán fucked it up.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

Where did you hear that crap! Stu's full of shit!

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

I gave him his big break, and that cocksucker stabbed me in the back.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

He called me in for damage control. That prick set me up.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

He couldn't handle the heat, so he made me look like a fool.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

I took the fall, and saved his sorry ass.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

Who told you that shit anyway?

CYNTHIA

The rumor started in accounting,
then spread through personnel. But
the leak probably came out of
merchandising.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(on phone)

That wasn't our fault. The agency
was restructuring. Roland and
Thomas dropped the ball on "Dust
Bowl." Mr. Stone was still in the
T.V. Department back then.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS

I can't believe he's running a
studio.

ROLAND

Maybe we should walk.

THOMAS

From a Tarantino project?

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

It's fine if we lose Oliver Stone,
but I'll fire you if we lose
Tarantino.

CYNTHIA

I'm doing the best I can.

STU

You don't understand. If Densemman
passes me on the Power Meter, it's
lights out for my career.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

Don't keep me in the dark, Frank.
I want that fucking script.

FRANK

We've tried everything, but we
can't get Stu out of the picture.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
 (on phone)
 Mom! Why did you send my baby
 pictures to "The Enquirer?"
 (beat)
 I don't care if they're cute...
 That could kill my career.

As Tom, throws his head back in disgust, we see another:

HIGH-POWERED, TURBO-CHARGED, MONTAGE SEQUENCE (RUMORS)

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY
 (leaning in)
 I heard "The Enquirer" has some
 naked photos of Tom Steele.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
 He's such an exhibitionist.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
 I can't wait to see his spread in
 "Playgirl".

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
 We'll doctor up his photo...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
 ...and make an erotic thriller...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
...with Tom Steele...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
...and Traci Lords...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY
...in a period piece...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

FRANK
...about a Roman Gladiator...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

SERGEI
...who must sell his body...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA
...to save his daughter's life.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
I don't care if it is soft porn.
They should have asked me first.

ART
They have too much respect for you.

WARREN

Bull shit! They're doing this to piss me off.

ART

I'll call the Playboy Channel in the morning. We'll get you your own show.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

What do we have working in animation anyway?

CYNTHIA

"Bambitron." Half lovable deer, half deadly machine.

EXT. CAFE - OVERHEAD BOOM

PULL BACK to reveal Bruce and a BUSSER exiting the kitchen behind the WRITER'S TABLE.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

ZOOM IN as Bruce places the SALAD in front of Rainbow, and sets a FRUIT PLATE in front of Sergei.

BRUCE

Your salad, ma'am. Sans particles de le mammals...

(to Sergei)

And your fruit plate, sir.

Sergei pierces a piece of fruit with his fork. Studies it intensely.

SERGEI

(admiring fruit)

Ah, the embryo of life.

BRUCE

Anything else?

(glaring at Rainbow)

A side of frog legs in lobster sauce?

Bruce heads back to the kitchen.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
"Bambitron?"

FRANK
It gives the kids the violence they
crave, but it's lovable enough for
the parents.

DENSEMAN
Why don't we have anything cute?

FRANK
You killed "The Flying Nun"
project.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

ART
It just doesn't work like that.
You're more of a character actor
now...

WARREN
(stunned)
Oh...so I'm a character actor.
Thanks for clearing that up. Am I
more of a Billy Barty or an Ed Asner?
(gesturing with hands)
Where do I fall in? I carried this
town, Art. I carried the whole damn
town. Now this punk has my table.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(on phone)
You know my price. Twenty mil is
the minimum - and that's only if I
have a hot co-star.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
Cruelty to animals? It's a
cartoon!

CYNTHIA
I know, but you don't want to
antagonize these animal activists.
They're planning to picket the
film.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY

But it was a classic. I loved the part where Stallone confronts Wesley Snipes in that freezer-like prison chamber.

ELIZABETH

I'd hardly compare "Demolition Man" to a Fellini film.

BRANDY

Who?

INSERT: CELEBRITY REJECTION - FRONT DESK

Another FAMOUS CELEBRITY gets rejected by Pierre, just as he turned away Don Johnson. There will be several short rejection scenes throughout the film, and the celebrities will be selected on the basis of their availability and their willingness to make fun of themselves.

Some examples might include: Clint Eastwood being turned away because "he bought his Oscar"; or Tom Hanks because "It's been a while since your last Oscar:. The possibilities are endless.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY

Does Spike Lee ever eat here?

IRIS

He eats across the street. It's a power thing.

SALLY

I love his movies.

IRIS

(softly)

So do I, Sally.

(leaning closer)

But never admit it.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS

What's wrong? Are you getting cold feet over the next Howard Stern movie? You think it might be too offensive?

ROLAND

No...no...

(reflecting)

Actually, it's not offensive
enough. What if we attached Andrew
Dice Clay.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

They're making movies about every
TV show ever made.

PRESTON

Yeah, but who's going to remember
"My Mother the Car?"

BILLY

That's the scoop. It really....

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE

...really pisses me off.

RAND

So what if it's a Van Damme movie?
It just means that much more
exposure overseas.

POPCYCLE

That's not the point. They only
want to pay me 100 grand a song.
Who can party on that kind of coin?

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

Doesn't your next film come out
next week?

SERGEI

Yes, I call it, "Roses Smell".

RAINBOW

How do you feel about it?

SERGEI

The critics panned it.

(beat)

So it must be good.

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS
 (stunned)
 Wait a minute...you don't even have
 a script?

D.J.
 (beat, defensive)
 Well...not on paper.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

PRESTON
 That's not a story.

BILLY
 Who cares? It's funny.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

Bruce presents a bottle of DOM PERIGNOM to Warren.

BRUCE
 Dom Perignon, sir. Compliments of
 Mr. Steele.

Warren looks across and reluctantly nods at Steele, who is still on the PHONE, and returns the nod.

WARREN
 (to Art under breath)
 Is this charity or something? Does
 this kid think he can just send me
 a bottle of Dom out of the blue?
 (to Bruce)
 Send him a bottle of '66 Rothchild.
 (to Art)
 That'll show the little bastard.

ART
 He's just trying to be cordial. He
 really respects you.

WARREN
 Look at this table, Art. We're
 right next to the front door.
 Nobody even noticed me walk in.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

Busser delivers ROASTED CHICKEN that Billy begins to devour immediately; and Preston's PORK CHOPS in a MINT/APPLE SAUCE.

BILLY

We got this family. Classic white trash. The father's still adjusting from Iraq. Mom's in prison. One son got kicked off the football team for drug abuse. The other son is gay, and wants to be a cheerleader. And the 14-year-old daughter is pregnant.

PRESTON

That'll go over well in the Bible Belt.

BILLY

We'll sell it to cable.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

They are preparing to eat. Iris ordered ANGEL HAIR in olive oil. Sally has the ROTELLI with pesto.

IRIS

Sally!
(leaning in, softly)
...the other fork.

Sally embarrassed.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

Brandy enjoys a COBB SALAD. Elizabeth has a TUNA MELT.

BRANDY

Use a knife. I'd like to keep working in this town.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE

Madonna did it.

RAND

It's a little different when a woman takes off her clothes.

POPCYCLE
It's in good taste.

RAND
I just don't know if they'll let us
shoot a music video at the Vatican.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

D.J.
You read the proposal, didn't you?

MORRIS
(stunned)
I'm an agent. I don't read.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
Your last film was so abstract I
didn't understand any of it.

SERGEI
Neither did I...that's the point.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
(in phone)
Get rid of him.
(beat)
I know he was nominated for an
Oscar, but that was three years
ago. What's he done lately.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
Sure, it's garbage, but it'll sell.

THOMAS
Where's the substance? There's no
meat. The dialogue is stale, and
the action sequences are so
contrived.

ROLAND

Yeah, but who are we to criticize Shakespeare. We'll cast DiCaprio as MacBeth, and the teen-age girls will eat it up.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

Beef up the budget, add a couple name actors, and triple the special effects.

FRANK

It's a rural love story. The director wants to remain true to the charm of the small Texas town.

DENSEMAN

Fine. Have a pick-up truck get smashed by a train. I'm not producing another summer release for under fifty million.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

The table is covered with EMPTY GLASSES.

POPCYCLE

(holding empty glass)

Where's our waiter? I need another drink.

SLOW PAN TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

(on phone)

Who's attached?

(beat)

Don't insult me. Get a name director, and we'll talk.

CYNTHIA

Who'd they have?

STU

Tom hanks -- but they don't even have a co-star yet.

CYNTHIA

Jesus! I suppose they want us to package the whole damn thing.

EXT. DENSEMAN

DENSEMAN

Those bastard lied to me. They promised to deliver Jim Carrey.

FRANK

They were expecting Todd Phillips.

DENSEMAN

I never said I'd get him. I said I could.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(in phone)

That's not a loophole. You'll get Russell Crowe. All you've got to do is sign our new kid for a three picture deal.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

So we have an agreement? You lock up the Tarantino project, and I'll make you V.P. of Production.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

What do you mean, you're nervous about getting two thumbs up?

THOMAS

Ebert's getting greedy.

ROLAND

Fifty K isn't enough?

THOMAS

He wants a summer home in Carmel.

ROLAND

You tell that ungrateful son-of-a-bitch, if I don't see his thumb on this one, I'll personally rip it off and cram it up his...

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE

(raising empty glass)
...Asti Spumante, please.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(in phone)
You're not listening. Twenty million up front, twenty more on delivery, and another twenty percent on the back end.

Bruce delivers their BURGER DU JOURS.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

Then buy off Roeper. It's an action film. We only need one thumb.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

Fine, then get me Steve Martin.

FRANK

He passed already.

DENSEMAN

Tell his people we've got Zemeckus on strong avail.

Frank shoots Denselman a curious look.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(in phone)
We're not going for that. We pulled the same trick on you guys last year.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA
Shouldn't we put something in
writing?

STU
We don't need a contract. You can
trust me?

HIGH-POWERED, TURBO-CHARGED MONTAGE SEQUENCE (ART OF LYING)

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
Everyone's full of shit.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
You have to lie in this town.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
(in phone)
Make something up. I don't care.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI TABLE

SERGEI
Sounds too good.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
Who's gonna know?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY
I know funny.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

ART
Would I lie to you?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
I know what I'm doing.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS
(on phone)
I'll get back to you.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BRANDY TABLE

BRANDY
I never borrowed your shirt.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
I don't sleep with talent.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

D.J.
I have investors lined up from here
to Neptune.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
 (in phone)
 Honest, baby. You're the only
 woman in my life.
 (beat)
 Hold on...I got another call.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
 You're full of shit. I can always
 tell when you're full of shit.
 Your nostrils flair.

ART
 (covering nose)
 No, really. We've got some
 projects working.

WARREN
 Bull shit! I'm getting sick of
 sitting around the house waiting
 for my phone to ring, while I watch
 videos with...
 (points to Tom)
 "his" pretty boy face staring back
 at me. He's making my money.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
 (in phone)
 Eleven bedrooms? Isn't that a
 little small...

Bruce walks in with Tom's VEGGIE CROISSANT.

INSERT: CELEBRITY REJECTION - FRONT DESK

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY
 Screw that theater crap. I'm a
 real actress.

ELIZABETH
 "Slaughterhouse 17" isn't exactly
 the work of a true thespian.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN

A play! You want me to do a play?

ART

You have a rich theatre background.
It might be good to get out and
audition.

WARREN

Audition! They're asking me to
audition! Who else is up for the
part? Tom Steele?

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY

What about joining a theatre group?

IRIS

It's a waste of time. You don't
want to end up like Warren Parkes,
do you?

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY

They pay you five dollars a show!

ELIZABETH

I do it for the experience. I mean
it's better than a...

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN

Fucking infomercial!

ART

I'm trying to revive your career.

WARREN

On the psychic hotline?

ART

Warren.

WARREN

What!

ART
I'm only thinking of your best
interests.

WARREN
Bull shit!

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
It's all bull shit.

SALLY
So I shouldn't take acting classes.

IRIS
Sure, you need some on your resume,
but you're not going to learn
anything. They're all taught by
actors who couldn't make it.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
What next? You'll have me teaching
drama at a community theatre? Then
what? Tap dancing on a cruise ship?
Is my career headed out to sea? Am
I some kind of circus freak to you?

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH
I don't see you going out on any
"real" auditions lately.

BRANDY
My guy's talking to some people.

ELIZABETH
Music videos?

BRANDY
It's work.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
I bought you that vacation home in
Maui, Art -- with the commission
you earned off my talent. And this
is how you repay me? A fucking
informercial?

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY

So, how do I get an agent?

IRIS

The same way you attract rats.
Show 'em a little cheese.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH

What else do you have lined up?
Another beach blanket bimbo?

BRANDY

(offended)

No...I'm posing for a "Tire
calendar" next week.

(proudly)

I have the cover.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN

How many cars would you say I've
bought you.

ART

I don't know, Warren. Let's just
eat.

WARREN

Take a guess...three...four?

ART

Probably. I don't know.

WARREN

Try twelve, Art!

(long, bitter pause)

But that was back when I made
movies.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY

What's wrong with "Baywatch"?

ELIZABETH

Nothing. It's as close to Ibsen as
any actress could hope for.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
 (in phone)
 They want me to play Heathcliff in
 "Wuthering Heights"? How can I be
 considered a serious actor playing
 the part of a cat?

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

ART
 Quit worrying. You can live off
 your residuals.

WARREN
 For how long? Ten? Twenty years?
 What then? I don't want to end up
 like Gilligan.

ART
 Warren, the crew of the Minnow
 didn't have it in their contracts.
 Your deals are airtight. You'll be
 making millions even when you're
 dead.

WARREN
 Oh, so now you want to kill me.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
 They all act like children.
 Hollywood is just high school with
 a bigger allowance.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY
 At least my pilot got produced.

ELIZABETH
 "Boy Town" was the dumbest thing
 I've ever seen.

BRANDY
 It was supposed to be stupid. It
 was for television.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN

Don't bring my father into this!

ART

I didn't mean it like that.

WARREN

You know how I feel about that bastard!

EXT. DENSEMAN

DENSEMAN

(on phone)

Steal somebody's script. Lie to the actors. I don't care. Just get the project off the ground!

(hangs up, to Frank)

I don't get it. I pay the idiot five million a year, and he can't even package a deal. One lucky hit, and now he thinks he's Wes Fucking Anderson.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA

He's threatening to walk. He says his office window faces the wrong direction. It's stifling his creativity.

STU

It's the alcohol that stifles his work.

CYNTHIA

What should I tell him?

STU

Give him what he wants. I can't stand his work, but he's the only art film director we have on the lot. It wouldn't look good in the trades if we lost him.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

Does he want to make another three hour movie or something?

THOMAS

His last one was nominated for an Oscar.

ROLAND

So what? It lost money.

EXT. STONE TABLE

ROGER

(to Michael)

They want ten.

Stone is eating his burger with his knife and fork. He reflects and chews his meal deliberately. He takes a sip of WINE, the nods, "No!" He won't budge on this one.

ROGER

(in phone)

No dice. The market's falling.

We'll give you eight.

(beat)

That's too much. I know it's a mint condition Mickey Mantel rookie card, but eight grand is our final offer.

(beat)

Fine. Then I guess Mike's son will just have to suffer.

INSERT: CELEBRITY REJECTION - FRONT DESK

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS

No! Our agency has a reputation.

If we give in, we'll look weak.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN

I didn't hate my mother. She hated herself. That's what caused the psychosis.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

Does the criticism ever bother you?

SERGEI

Not really. Fifty percent of everything you hear in this town is nothing more than opinion... and the other half is pure speculation.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE

You call that a concept?

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

PRESTON

Aristotle was pretty clear in "Poetica". Every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

BILLY

Screw Aristotle. That was two thousand years ago. Don't you think his ideas are a little outdated?

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN

What's she bitching about? Arthritis? I'm giving my mother fifty percent off rent. Each month! A lot of people in this town aren't that generous.

ART

Warren, let's drop it.

WARREN

No, I don't want to drop it. Did I complain when she put me on Broadway? Did I cry because I had to feed seven brothers and sisters? I was eight years old, Art. I carried my whole fucking family on my back. She's only 63! It's not like she can't find another job!

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

Let's just write something.

PRESTON

We don't even have an outline. We need a story.

BILLY

Well, excuse me. I didn't know you were the new head writer on "The David Letterman Show."

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM

(on phone)

She's cute and all... but how's it going to look in the trades? I mean, she's just a TV actress.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY

I'm sick of being typecast.

ELIZABETH

Your headshots don't exactly make you look like someone who wants to do art films.

BRANDY

Why would I want to do that? Art films are just low budget movies that nobody understands.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS

I say we go with the first girl.

ROLAND

She can barely act.

THOMAS

Who cares? Think about the foreign audience. They love American breasts in Indonesia.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

That prick gets all the glory. Even when we worked in the mail room at Universal, Stu had the upper hand.

(MORE)

DENSEMAN (cont'd)
 No matter what time I showed up, he
 was already there - packing the
 mail for the black tower. I think
 he slept in the fucking closet.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA
 That's what John said. He slept
 with Densemans' secretary, and he
 heard something about...

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
 My wife? You want to know the
 story about my wife?

FRANK
 Maybe we should just forget it.

EXT. STONE TABLE

Roger pushes CONTRACTS and other PAPERS in front of Stone.

ROGER
 This is the Paramount deal. Ten
 mil up front. Five percent of the
 gross.

Stone nods and signs.

ROGER (CONT'D)
 This is the three picture deal with
 Warner Brothers. Completely
 packaged for sixty-three mil.

Stone nods and signs.

ROGER (CONT'D)
 This is the paperwork on the Heidi
 Fliess matter.

Stone looks up, disturbed.

ROGER (CONT'D)
 (hold up hands)
 Don't worry. You're not mentioned.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
 We have to consider our image at
 Rawhide Studios.

THOMAS

That's what I'm talking about. We need to film the world's kinkiest sex scene to get any respect.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

What do you mean you can't meet me in Cabo?

CYNTHIA

You said we should see other people.

STU

But not an agent.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

Stu set me up with that hooker.

FRANK

So it's true.

DENSEMAN

If I wasn't dirty, I wouldn't be successful.

EXT. STONE TABLE

ROGER

(into phone)

You don't understand. Michael wears the saddle. You whip him like a wild mule.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA

I won't be treated like an animal.

STU

You know I'm married.

CYNTHIA

Is that why you don't show any affection in public?

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
I try. I just don't want the
rumors flying all over town.

THOMAS
Everybody knows we sleep together.

EXT. STONE TABLE

ROGER
(into phone)
We don't want it to get out of
hand. Bondage is fine. He enjoys
a little S&M, but absolutely no
body piercing.

Stone winces.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
Of course, I slept with her. She
was free.

FRANK
And your wife found the video?

DENSEMAN
You mean my ex?

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
She doesn't mean anything to me
anymore.

CYNTHIA
Then why don't you leave her?

STU
Our kids are fucked up enough.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS
You can be such a bitch sometimes.

ROLAND
That's what keeps Rawhide running.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

I didn't know Stu was setting me up.

FRANK

Wasn't that in the middle of the "Dust Bowl" disaster? You must've suspected something.

DENSEMAN

(smiling)

What's the point of living in Disneyland if you can't ride the rides?

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN

How does that shit get into the press! We were poor. We shared the same bed. Of course, I slept with my sisters -- but I didn't screw 'em!!

ART

Don't worry about it. I'll call your publicist, and put a spin on it. It's nothing. Rob Lowe overcame the video incident. Woody Allen is making pictures again. And Michael Jackson got back on the pop charts.

WARREN

You don't understand. I was a BIG star.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

A pair of what?

PRESTON

A paradigm.

BILLY

Screw Sid Field. Why does a sitcom need a story? If people wanted to be bored to death, they could watch re-runs of "The Little House on the Prairie".

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

SERGEI

I don't think I was obscure enough
in "Porcelian Snails".

RAINBOW

I don't know. I had to watch it
three times before I caught the
bestiality reference.

SERGEI

What reference?

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS

Let me explain it to you one more
time...I need the money!

D.J.

I understand. Just work with me
here...

(leaning in)

I need the actors!

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

RAND

Come on, Popcycle, this idea is
dynamite.

(leaning in, smiling)

Imagine the babes we'll meet just
casting this damn thing.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

I've got it! This is beautiful.
It's a story about an old
gunfighter who comes back from the
dead to torment the grandchildren
of the lawman that saw him hang.

PRESTON

Billy, what studio is going to buy
any script that stupid? A
reincarnated vigilante cowboy?

BILLY

Not so loud. Somebody might steal
it.

As Preston shakes his head, we see another
 HIGH-POWERED, TURBO-CHARGED MONTAGE SEQUENCE (ORIGINALITY)
 EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS
 (holding up script)
 This one's hot. "Die Hard" meets
 "Tombstone".

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA
 A gunslinger comes back from the
 dead...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

FRANK
 ...and stalks the family of the
 lawman who brought him to
 justice...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE TABLE

ROGER
 ...kind of a Jesse James slash
 "Death Wish" feel.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
 Antonio Banderas?

THOMAS
 Bigger.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
Sean Penn as the outlaw...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE TABLE

ROGER
(in phone)
...and Gene Hackman as the
sheriff...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
I'll get you a meeting with De
Niro's people. They're doing...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY
...some futuristic western thing...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE TABLE

ROGER
...with Schwarzenegger.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
(leaning in)
Let's make sure nobody...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
 (leaning in)
 ...finds out until we're in
 production...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
 (totally impressed)
 That's the most original concept
 you've ever developed.

SERGEI
 I see it as a surrealistic
 nightmare mixed with a morbid
 fantasy floating precariously
 through a dream that's caught
 between the absurdity of life
 and..."The apocalypse".

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
 So all I'm saying here is a lot of
 smoke, a ton of quick cuts,
 different angles on the musicians,
 and me singing against a blue
 screen.

RAND
 With lots of babes.

POPCYCLE
 Awesome, dude.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY
 Okay, it's "Driving Miss Daisy"
 meets "In the Line of Fire" with a
 touch of "Dave" and a hint of "Die
 Hard" mixed with a tablespoon of
 "Lethal Weapon" and a dash or two
 of "Curly Sue".

PRESTON
 "Guarding Tess"

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

So what's your next project?

SERGEI

Imagine a man standing on a balcony
the entire film, contemplating
suicide. Three hours and two
pigeon droppings later, he goes
back inside for a glass of...
"plain" ...tap water, then dies a
horrific death in a violent
earthquake. I'll call it either
"The Paradox of Life" or "Life's
Paradox". I haven't decided which
title is more confusing.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

Pierre leads BOB, the entertainment lawyer, to the table.

RAND

Oh, Bob. I'm glad you could make
it.

BOB

My pleasure, Rand. Is this the man
with all the cash?

RAND

Yes. I'm sorry. Bob, meet
Popcycle, the hottest rock star in
the country...

POPCYCLE

The world.

RAND

Bob is going to help you with your
legal problem. He's the biggest
entertainment attorney in
Hollywood...

BOB

The world.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

"Old Yeller" meets "Aliens".

PRESTON
 "E.T."

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
 Your films are always so
 brilliantly brutal.

SERGEI
 I believe it's a director's job to
 recreate Hell.

RAINBOW
 To give everyone a common reference
 point?

SERGEI
 No, so the distributors will get
 excited and pick up the film.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

Bob is now seated.

BOB
 Have you been in trouble with the
 law before?

POPCYCLE
 Ever since I was four.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY
 "The Marathon Man" meets "Witness".

PRESTON
 "The Client".

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
 ...then there was drinking
 underage... embezzlement at the
 school fair... fire crackers in the
 principal's office... oh, and
 statutory rape...

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

I heard they're going to screen your short film, "Excrement" at the Cannes Film Festival.

SERGEI

Yes, but they've shown so much crap there over the years that I can't get too excited.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

"Rainman" meets "The All-American".

PRESTON

"Forest Gump".

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

SERGEI

Awards merely dilute the essence of their splendor.

RAINBOW

Yeah... It's all bull shit.

SERGEI

The beauty of art is to conceal art.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE

Come on, I was only twelve. I had just reached puberty, and I was hornier than a TV evangelist in Vegas for a book tour. Besides, she said she was eighteen.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

You gotta like this one. You ready? It's "A Wonderful Life" meets... get this... "The Twilight Zone".

PRESTON

"Groundhog Day".

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

SERGEI

It reveals the untold truth of
man's deepest frustrations.

RAINBOW

I thought it really brought out the
tangled roots of the feminist
movement. The double standards.
The hypocrisy.

SERGEI

But I was trying to show the male
as the victim of his own sexuality.

RAINBOW

(confused)

Oh, no...no... I didn't get that at
all.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

BOB

So what are the details surrounding
your case?

POPCYCLE

What's to tell? I'm guilty.

BOB

That doesn't matter. I'm a lawyer.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

(getting depressed)

"Dragnet" meets "Dr. Doolittle"?

PRESTON

"Pet Detective".

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

That's so sexist.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE

I don't know. I was thinking about
paying them off.

BOB

Forget it. You're the victim here. I'm going to rewrite the Constitution for you. That's what I do for a living. I distort facts.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

Okay, fine. "Rookie of the Year" meets...

(excited)

..."Damn Yankees!"

PRESTON

"Angels in the Outfield".

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

There's nothing but sex in the movies anymore. Sex. Sex. Sex. Even the art films are perverted.

SERGEI

(smiling)

I know. Isn't it wonderful?

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH

Maybe you're just scared. You might actually have to memorize some meaningful dialogue.

BRANDY

Don't be so snotty. I mean, I could do "Hamlet", if I wanted to.

ELIZABETH

I'm sure you could. You've done everybody else in this town.

Brandy's mouth drops. Shoots a look at Elizabeth.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

This one you're gonna love. It offends everybody. "My Dinner with Andre" meets "The Player" on steroids.

PRESTON
 "The Power Lunch". Come on, Billy,
 give me something original.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
 It doesn't even involve them. If
 this gets in the press, it's not
 going to help our deal with Sony.

CYNTHIA
 Should I have publicity draft a
 letter of denial?

STU
 No, if we do that, everyone will
 know it's true.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
 You're missing the point. I don't
 want my name roasted across the
 front page of "Variety".

FRANK
 It'll blow over soon enough.
 People in this town have short
 memories.

DENSEMAN
 They may not remember your
 successes, but they sure as hell
 never forget your failures.

EXT. STONE TABLE

ROGER
 (on phone)
 If Nicholson backs out, we're
 dumping the project.
 (beat)
 No Nicholson. No deal.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
 (on phone)
 We're going to need you in Montana
 on the fifteenth to shoot the rock
 climbing scene.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
Get the make-up girl from the last
shoot. She really liked me.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
The revisions are final, and your
changes have been made to the
script. They're brilliant. You'll
even get sole writing credit.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(on phone)
I'm also going to need a first
class ticket for Miki Yusuko, my
sushi bartender. He'll make all
the arrangements for the spread.
Make sure he has a blank check.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
(on phone)
Sushi sounds good, Tom.

EXT. CAFE PATIO

PULLS BACK for a wide shot of the entire cafe to reveal that
Roland has been talking to Tom. They wave to each other.

TOM
(on phone)
Great. We'll see you guys on the
fifteenth.

Roland and Tom hang up simultaneously.

ZOOM IN

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
(under breath)
Asshole.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(under breath)
Prick.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
Look at that. The kid already
closed a deal, and he's not even on
dessert yet. That's my table, Art.
My fucking table.

ART
I know, Warren. I know.

WARREN
Are all the deals being made by
phone these days?
(pounding phone)
Why isn't my phone ringing? Is it
broken, Art? Do I need new
batteries. Or maybe I need a new
agent? Somebody who works for me.
Maybe you need to be recharged?

ART
Take it easy. We've got some big
projects coming up.

WARREN
Yeah, maybe there's a part for me
in Tom Steele's new movie...
(bitter pause)
As an extra!

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY
I got it. The majority of movie-
goers are kids, right?

PRESTON
So?

BILLY
We do a coming of age movie.
Centered around a school. It's
brilliant.

PRESTON
 (very bored)
 "Animal House", "Fast Times at
 Ridgemont High", "Clueless",
 "Porky's", "American Pie", "Van
 Wilder"...

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
 First, they throw you a bone, and
 watch you crawl over broken glass
 and burning coals. Then -- when
 your project is ready for pro-
 duction, they change directors, and
 you're back at Jerry's Deli working
 the graveyard shift.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY
 Jesus! I didn't sleep with him.
 (holds up one finger)
 I went out with him one time to get
 the part.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

PRESTON
 ..."Summer of '42", "Heathers",
 "Valley Girls"....

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
 But it's so blatant. That show
 degrades women.

SERGEI
 "Jeopardy?"

RAINBOW
 Why couldn't the host be a woman?

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS
 (deep breath)
 Let's re-focus here. Negotiating
 is defined as the act of settling
 differences through bargaining. I
 don't feel like you're giving me
 any concessions here.

D.J.
I think we're making progress...

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

BOB
Do you have any documentation?

POPCYCLE
None.

BOB
Do they have any tangible proof?

POPCYCLE
You kidding? They got a book on me. Ten or twenty chapters.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY
At least I don't sleep with writers.

ELIZABETH
What's wrong with Brandon? He's very sensitive.

BRANDY
Yeah, like a writer can really help your career.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

PRESTON
"High School High", "Dazed and Confused", "Varsity Blues"...

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
Now that's original.

FRANK
I thought it stood out.

DENSEMAN
It's so unique, I've only heard it three or four other time.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

That sucks. Just when you think you've got something original... Bam! Three hundred people have already done it.

INSERT: CELEBRITY REJECTION - FRONT DESK

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY

Pierre? Why would I sleep with him? He's not even a producer.

ELIZABETH

Then how did we get this table?

BRANDY

(offended)
He's just a friend.

ELIZABETH

Like that director that took you to Cancun?

BRANDY

I thought we weren't going to bring that up anymore!

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

(on phone)
No! Don't stop shooting. We'll fix it in post.

(hanging up, then to Thomas)
The lead actor died after three scenes.

THOMAS

He's still under contract, isn't he?

ROLAND

Naturally. When we take an actor's blood, we also buy his soul.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
 (on phone)
 Fax me at the office...
 (beat)
 Okay, fine, page me at home...
 (beat)
 E-mail's okay...
 (beat)
 Jesus, Harry, do you even live in
 the twenty-first century.

SFX: CELL PHONES BEEPING

PULL BACK

As everyone is in a frenzy to check their CELL PHONES. AS everyone returns to their meals, we ZOOM IN:

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
 (on phone)
 I gotta go, sweetheart. I'm
 getting another call.
 (beat, excited)
 Priscilla! When are we going to do
 one of those "Naked Guns" movies
 together?

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
 What about that Nicholson project?

ART
 (hesitant)
 It's been cast.

WARREN
 (pointing)
 Steele?

Art nods slowly.

WARREN
 (pounding fist)
 Son-of-a-bitch!

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

BOB

Were there any witnesses?

POPCYCLE

Oh, yeah, a ton of people saw me do it.

BOB

That's fine. We'll simply challenge their credibility in court.

RAND

That's his specialty.

POPCYCLE

That's going to be tough. I did it in front of a convent.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS

Bruce, another double.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

We'll get it to Dreamworks. My father knows Spielberg.

PRESTON

Billy, he played golf with somebody who knew his agent's eight grade teacher.

BILLY

This town is all about nepotism. It got us this table, didn't it?

PRESTON

Next to the bus stand.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

Why the hell should I care about the Korean crisis?

FRANK

It could cut into our foreign market.

DENSEMAN

You're right. Call the White House.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

(offended)

Not now. Time is money. One minute on the phone with me is more valuable than a three day Summit with the President of the United States.

CYNTHIA

(in phone)

I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Spacey, but Stu's in a meeting right now.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(on phone)

If we wanted Pamela Anderson to play Snow White, don't you think we would have approached her by now?

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

(to waiter)

Bruce. Get rid of this.

(to Thomas)

I can't believe an agent would actually send us this crap.

Roland hands Bruce a SCRIPT.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

Of course, they'll read it. It's not like they're going to throw it away or something.

Bruce puts SCRIPT into the BUS TUB. CAMERA ZOOMS IN to read the title, "Cancer Sucks." Billy and Preston slowly bleed out of frame.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(o.s.)

They know the sacrifices a writer makes to finish a script. They're not complete assholes.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN

The Mr. Whipple story! The toilet paper guy!

ART

It's a role, Warren. These people are big. They could revive your career.

WARREN

It shouldn't need reviving, Art. I was an icon. There was a time when everybody wrote scripts for me. Warren T. Parkes. Now they give those bones to some "No talent pretty boy" with his cute, little Pepsodent smile -- and I'm stuck playing the toilet paper man.

(concerned)

Am I going bald? Is that why they want me?

(feeling hair)

I used to be a sex symbol. Now you want to castrate me!

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

FRANK

Why don't we cut Stu's balls off?

DENSEMAN

(raising hand)

We have to be careful. He knows about that thing.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(in phone)

It's like a cancer. If that thing ever gets in the press, we're ruined.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA

I thought that thing was buried.

STU

It is. In a huge pile of dirty laundry.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

How are we going to make that thing go away.

THOMAS

Ignore it.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

FRANK

Are you sure it's the same thing?

DENSEMAN

I don't know, but I don't want to take any chances.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA

Is Denselman's going to hold that thing over your head forever.

STU

I would.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(in phone)

It's a good thing we got something on him.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS

You're just being paranoid.

ROLAND

If they find out I slept with a woman, it could ruin my career.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

FRANK
Nobody's going to find out.

DENSEMAN
That's what you said about "Dust
Bowl".

Frank cowers. A little embarrassed.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
This thing's getting out of hand.

CYNTHIA
Let's leak it to "The Hollywood
Reporter".

STU
And cut my own throat? He could
ruin me with that thing.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
(in phone)
All you need is one incriminating
thing on everybody -- that's power.

HIGH-POWERED, TURBO-CHARGED MONTAGE SEQUENCE (PUBLICITY)

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY
Of course, it's true. I heard it
on the Glen Beck show.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY
Would Larry King lie?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA
Oprah did a piece on it last week.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
Ricki Lake is such a tramp.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
Regis said what?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY
They did a three page spread in...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
"The Enquirer!"

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
Sure, Larry Flynt...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

D.J.
...told me personality.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS
You say you...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(in phone)
...heard it on "TMZ?"

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
I can't believe she's spreading
those rumors. She's supposed to be
a trusted employee. If it ever
gets out that I dated a trans-
vestite hockey player, I'll be the
laughing stock of Hollywood.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS
That's hysterical.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
Priceless.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
Too funny.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

RAND
Classic.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

SERGEI
Quite amusing.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
Stop. You're killing me.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(on phone)
Don't worry, mom. Hollywood won't
turn me into another...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS
Warren Parkes!?

D.J.
He still has a following.

MORRIS
On video!

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
(in phone)
Fine. Have her send her pic and
resume, and we'll get back to her
if there's room for her type at our
agency.

Stone looks up, as if to say, "Who was that?"

ROGER (CONT'D)
 (to Stone)
 Meryl Streep.

Stone shrugs his shoulders, as if to say, "I don't know."

INSERT: CELEBRITY REJECTION - FRONT DESK

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY
 You know Robert Redford!

IRIS
 Oh, sure...I know Bobby...we go
 skiing all the time at Sundance.
 (leans in)
 But don't tell his wife. The women
 in this town get very jealous when I
 rub elbows with their husbands. I
 can give them the intellectual
 stimulation they can't find at home.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
 And what about all the sexism in
 cartoons? What kind of message are
 they sending our kids? Minnie
 Mouse is so repressed. That skirt
 is from the fifties. And what's
 with that ribbon in her hair?
 She's so submissive -- even for a
 rodent!

SERGEI
 Goofy doesn't exactly put males in
 a favorable light.

RAINBOW
 (indignant)
 That's different!

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

Warren motions for Bruce.

WARREN
 Bruce! You have a light?

BRUCE
 I'm sorry, Mr. Parkes. There's no
 smoking in the restaurant.

WARREN

No smoking? No smoking! I'm having a great day. I can't get a part to save my ass. The kid who stole my career sends me a bottle of Dom...from my table! And now you tell me I can't have a cigarette!

BRUCE

I'm sorry, sir. It is the law.

WARREN

Is there a law against having a cigarette dangling from my mouth? Is that going to offend anyone!!

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

(in phone)

What's in it for us?

(beat)

Forget the fairy tales. This is Hollywood.

(beat)

I don't care if it is for charity. What's the point of making a donation unless we get a tangible return on our investment.

Roland hangs up, turns to Thomas with a laugh.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

The neighbor's kid. She wants me to buy some Girl Scout cookies.

THOMAS

Leeches!

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

Damn it! I thought we had a deal!

(beat)

No! Don't give me any of this bull shit! You do the laundry. I do the dishes.

(short beat)

Fine. Then leave. I'll find another struggling actress to drive the Mercedes I leased for you by the end of the week!

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

Billy tries to find something in his pockets.

BILLY
I got the idea jotted down
somewhere.

Billy finds a note written on a CANDY WRAPPER.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Here it is.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
What about "Beauty and the Beast?"

SERGEI
I think you're missing the point.

RAINBOW
It makes women look like they can't
do anything for themselves.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

Preston tries to decipher Billy's note.

PRESTON
(trouble reading)
Matt Damon bubbles...

BILLY
Battles.

PRESTON
The gum...or nut...

BILLY
Government.

PRESTON
(clearly)
Over knuckle testing.

BILLY
No...No...
(checks paper)
That's an "A-R"

PRESTON
 (not impressed)
 Nuclear testing?

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
 Stu hasn't touched his pasta.

FRANK
 Maybe he's not hungry.

DENSEMAN
 No. He's working the deal.
 Something big is going down.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
 I can't think about this right now.
 I need another drink.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

CYNTHIA
 What's wrong with your meal?

STU
 Nothing. It's an old producer's
 trick. I'm trying to bait Denseman
 to tip his hand.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

Iris hands Sally her drink.

SALLY
 (sipping)
 Hmmmm. This is really good.

IRIS
 (leaning in)
 There's only one way to go through
 Hollywood, honey. Drunk.

Iris starts laughing, an apparent symptom of the alcohol she's been drinking -- for the last twenty years!

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
 (in phone)
 Just fax it!
 (MORE)

ROGER (cont'd)

(beat)

Let me worry about NBC. I can guarantee they won't tell Michael Stone to "shove it!"

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

How did that serpent ever slither his way to power anyway? I Remember when he was a temp for Aaron Spelling. I had to teach him how to work the copy machine.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

I can't believe Stone is playing games with me. I bought his first project when he was a skinny little junior agent at some tiny, little obscure agency in the valley.

FRANK

Yeah, but you passed on "Dr. Cop."

DENSEMAN

"He's a doctor, he's a cop." How did I know that pitch would launch his agency into the stratosphere?

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

I made him. Now he's making me bid for Tarantino.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS

We used to ignore his phone calls. Now he ignores ours.

ROLAND

He's totally disrespectful -- even for an agent.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(in phone)

I want it to be just like "Jurassic Park" only completely different.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

He better come around. I need that script!

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU

I've never read it, no one's seen it, but I'll bet my career it's the best damn script ever written.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

If Tarantino wants the most out of his projects, he needs to get in bed with Rawhide Studios.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(in phone)

What's the confusion?

(beat)

You know... "Jurassic Park?"

(beat)

You know... "completely different?"

(beat)

Great. You're fired.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

SALLY

He looks like a busy man. Maybe he hasn't gotten around to calling you.

IRIS

For twenty years! That's bull shit! I taught him how to use a computer. Now he runs his empire on the internet. Michael Stone is the bastard son of Satan. We're just doormats at his palace of sin.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

AMBER, a young BEAUTIFUL FEMALE FAN, has approached Tom.

TOM
 (taking pen and paper)
 I'd be honored. Who should I make
 it out to?

ALANNA
 (nervously)
 Alanna.

TOM
 That's such a beautiful name.

Alanna blushes and giggles.

TOM (CONT'D)
 (scanning her body)
 Do you have a boyfriend?

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH
 Okay...I'm sorry, Brandy.

BRANDY
 Me, too, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
 Hey, why don't we go shopping along
 Venice after lunch?

BRANDY
 Venice? Why not Rodeo?

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
 (calmly sipping wine)
 We'll make him sweat. He knows I
 know, but he doesn't know what I
 know. But we'll know what he
 knows, when he thinks he knows what
 I know. Because he really won't
 know. He'll only think he knows,
 and even if he knew he wouldn't
 know exactly what he knew or why he
 knew it.

CYNTHIA
 I know.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
(nervously)
What the hell is going on?

FRANK
I don't know.

DENSEMAN
Call the office. See if Becky
knows.

FRANK
Do you want to talk to her?

DENSEMAN
Jesus, no! If I use the phone,
people will think I'm running
scared. If you call, it'll look
like you're cutting a deal.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
Try not to burn too many bridges.
Hollywood is a small town.

SALLY
With small town morals?

Iris shoots Sally a look.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
(reflecting, but bitter)
This town is a joke. We're all
prostitutes. There's no morality
here. We're bought and sold like
commodities on the Stock Exchange.
When we lose a little ground...drop
a few points...people panic. Then
some dot-com actor comes along and
everyone gets all excited. They
forget who laid the foundation.
Who set the standards. Art, I'm a
blue chip stock. He's a fucking
junk bond!

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(on phone)
Yeah, I got a friend at Disney
setting me up with a sweet, little
actress named Jessica.
(beat, then laugh)
Tell me you're kidding, mom. I
thought Rabbit was her last name.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
What's the real difference between
the Oscars and the Miss America
Pageant? It's all just a
popularity contest.

SERGEI
And the most superficial people are
always the most popular.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
Does Densen look a little more
nervous than usual?

THOMAS
(smiling)
You know...I think he does.

Roland picks up his PHONE and starts dialing.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

BOB
You've got nothing to worry about.
I know how to work a jury. O.J.
came to me first.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW
You mean those hypocrites are going
to give you a Lifetime Achievement
Award?
(slight beat)
You aren't going to accept the
fucking thing, are you?

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS

Let's look at this from a whole new perspective. Follow me here...

(slow and condescending)

I need the money.

D.J.

I can work with that. But let's address one more issue.

(equally condescending)

I need a commitment.

Morris leans back and takes a deep breath of frustration, then snaps his fingers for the waiter.

MORRIS

Bruce...two more double espressos!

HIGH-POWERED, TURBO-CHARGED MONTAGE SEQUENCE (DEAL MAKING)

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

EXTREME CLOSE UP of Denseman "BLINKING".

EXT. STU'S TABLE

Cynthia catches a glimpse of Denseman blinking through the mirror in her make-up kit.

CYNTHIA

Denseman blinked

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

Something's going down.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

Call the office.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
It must be big.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
I'll call you back.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY
What's it mean?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
He's closing a deal.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN
You think he'll consider me?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
(on phone now)
Cancel my meetings.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER
(on phone now)
Keep me posted.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS
(on phone)
I'm not sure.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

SERGEI
Who said?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
I need another drink.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
I'm the first to know.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

FRANK
What's wrong?

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Densemán rubbing his eyes.

DENSEMAN
Nothing. I just have something in
my eye.

FRANK
Be careful. Somebody might think
you're closing a deal.

DENSEMAN
Calm down. You're more paranoid
than I am.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

Cynthia close MAKE-UP CASE, and picks up the PHONE.

CYNTHIA

Do you want me to call Michael Stone?

STU

(subtle but frantic)

Not in front of Densemman! Don't embarrass me like that.

(regaining composure)

We already have a meeting with Roger at three.

CYNTHIA

What if Densemman has a meeting at two?

STU

Good point.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN

Damn! That pisses me off. He's going to score right under my nose.

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

(on phone)

Hold on, Don. We've got a feeding frenzy on our hands. Mike and I are going in for the kill.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS

(on phone)

Has Stu or Densemman actually talked to Mr. Stone about the Tarantino project?

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM

(on phone - upset)

What do you mean the deal fell through with Quentin?

(beat)

I don't care about the money. I had a steamy love scene with Megan Fox -- and you let them pull the plug?

(beat)

(MORE)

TOM (cont'd)
 You're supposed to be the hottest
 agency in town. Don't you have any
 contacts.

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
 (plastered)
 The problem with this town is that
 everybody thinks Hollywood revolves
 around them. They're wrong. It
 revolves around Jack...
 (holds up fist)
 This is Nicholson...
 (circles fist with other
 hand)
 This is the rest of us...trying to
 land on Planet Jack.

SALLY
 (very impressed)
 Do you know Jack.

Iris nods with an intoxicated smile.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
 I don't know what Stu's up to, but
 let's not jeopardize this project.
 (looking at watch)
 When Stone leaves, follow them to
 the parking lot. We'll cut the
 deal there with Roger.
 (smiling)
 I'll send Stu dessert as a decoy.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

STU
 Let's make this discrete. Call the
 office and have Susan send two
 tickets to Mr. Stone for the
 "Bolshoi Ballet."

CYNTHIA
 (taking notes)
 I didn't know he liked the ballet.

STU
 He doesn't, but he likes grand
 gestures.

Cynthia nods.

STU

Make sure the messenger waits for them when they arrive at their office, and have him call us immediately upon delivery.

CYNTHIA

(still taking notes)
From the office?

STU

Then put a tail on Densenman. If he gets within half a mile of their agency, call Roger to confirm receipt of the tickets. This will create an opportunity for you and Roger to discuss Tarantino and negotiate a deal.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

THOMAS

What about Warren Parkes in the Tarantino project?

ROLAND

(laughing)
Are you kidding? Look at his table. Pretty soon he'll be eating in the kitchen!

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

WARREN

I don't need to sit here and take this crap!

Warren stands up abruptly.

ART

Warren. Relax.

WARREN

I am relaxed! I'm just going to have a cigarette. It that okay, Art? Do you mind if I go out and smoke a fucking cigarette?

Warren doesn't wait for an answer. He storms off, passing by Pierre at the front desk.

INSERT: CELEBRITY REJECTION - FRONT DESK

In the first of three "Non Verbal" celebrity encounters, a star approaches the front desk and holds up TWO FINGERS, indicating that they would like a table for two.

Pierre simply shakes his head, indicating that "Le Grande Ego" cannot accommodate them.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

Art leans back in his chair. Makes sure Warren is out of view. Then he picks up his phone.

CLOSE UP

As Art's FINGER presses the numbers: 1-310-555-STUD

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(on phone)
Mom, I don't want to talk about it.
They dropped the ball. It's that
simple. Hold on. I got another
call.
(flatly)
What!
(beat, surprised)
Arthur Kinsey?

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

ART
(on phone)
I heard about your deal falling
through, Tom
(beat)
Let's just say I'm well-connected.
(beat)
Well...let's cut to the chase...
(looking off stage where
Warren exited)
I think we may have an opening at
our agency.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM
(on phone)
Really? What can you guys offer
me?

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

ART

(on phone - smiling)
I don't know...Why don't you come
by our office after lunch and take
a look at our portfolio of
actresses? I'm sure you'll find a
few good reasons to sign with us.

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM

(on phone - smiling)
Arty...you speak my language.

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

ART

(on phone)
Well, sex is the universal language
...especially in Hollywood.

INSERT: CELEBRITY REJECTION - FRONT DESK

In the second "non-verbal" encounter. Pierre simply turns
his nose up as a star approaches for a table.

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

I'm getting sick of all the
commercialism in this business.

SERGEI

Agreed. Nobody's in it for the art
anymore.

RAINBOW

No shit!

SERGEI

Say, why don't you join me tomorrow
for our monthly meeting of DOGS:
"Directors and Others Guiding
Society."

RAINBOW

I'd love to, but I have a call back
for that Texaco spot.

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE

All right, I'll make a stand.
Fight the charges. How much is
this gonna cost me?

BOB

My rates are one thousand dollars
an hour. I bill in six second
increments.

Popcycle almost chokes on his drink.

POPCYCLE

Holy shit! It's just a fucking
traffic ticket!

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS

It's obvious we're not going to get
anything done today. Why don't we
finish tonight when we get home?

D.J.

(shaking head)

We've got a meeting with Tommy's
teacher at eight.

MORRIS

Oh, that's right.

(smiling)

Then we'll just have to spend the
weekend in Palm Springs.

(leaning in)

I'm sure we'll come up with some
kind of amicable agreement.

D.J. Leans in until they are nose-to-nose.

D.J.

God, you're so sexy when you play
hardball.

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

(glancing at watch)

We better wrap it up. I gotta get
ready for my dinner shift at
Gladstone's.

PRESTON

I think we got a lot accomplished today.

BILLY

Yeah, we're moving along.
 (stands, searches pockets)
 You got a couple bucks for a tip?

HIGH-POWERED, TURBO-CHARGED MONTAGE SEQUENCE (TAX RECEIPTS)

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

ROGER

Bruce...Check please.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND

Could I get...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WRITER'S TABLE

BILLY

...a receipt?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

BRANDY

Me, too.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. SERGEI'S TABLE

RAINBOW

Where's our check!

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TOM'S TABLE

TOM

Bruce...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. WARREN'S TABLE

ART
...I need a...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. MORRIS TABLE

MORRIS
...receipt...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. IRIS' TABLE

IRIS
Could I get...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. POPCYCLE'S TABLE

POPCYCLE
...another drink...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. STONE'S TABLE

Roger packs up his TELE-COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT. As he and Mr. Stone head for the door, we see:

QUICK CUTS

Of all the players glancing up and trying to act nonchalant, but actually appearing as obvious as a horny twelve-year-old in a strip joint.

EXT. BRANDY'S TABLE

ELIZABETH
Well...they're leaving. It looks like we blew fifty bucks for nothing.

BRANDY
Elizabeth, lunch is never wasted.
(leaning in)
We've been seen.

EXT. THOMAS TABLE

ROLAND
I don't like this. It's not
looking good. Densemán is too
nervous, and Stu's too calm.

THOMAS
They're going to cut us out of the
fucking deal.

EXT. DENSEMAN'S TABLE

DENSEMAN
He's making his move. Let's play
ball. Wait until they get to the
front desk, then follow them...Now!

Densemán gives Frank a subtle nudge under the table.

EXT. CAFE - OVERHEAD BOOM

Frank springs up, and heads toward the door, following
closely behind Roger and Stone. Frank makes a head fake
toward the restroom, but turns back to follow Roger and
Stone.

Frank tries not to appear too anxious, but the old pros know
they have a whopper on the line. As they walk past the front
desk, we see the final:

INSERT: CELEBRITY REJECTION - FRONT DESK

KATO KALEIN discretely offers a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL to Pierre
who turns away. Kato digs out a HANDFUL of ONE DOLLAR BILLS
from his WALLET. Pierre looks around, then takes the money.

PIERRE
Seat yourself inside...by the
kitchen.

Kato smiles and enters.

EXT. STU'S TABLE

Stu starts to get up, as Bruce sets a CHEESECAKE in front of
him.

BRUCE
Compliments of Mr. Densemán.

Stu calmly sits back down.

STU
(softly)
Ahh...veteran move.

CYNTHIA
(frantic)
What's wrong?

STU
The old dessert stall. That rotten
bastard got me with the infamous
cheesecake maneuver. I suspect his
assistant is cutting the deal out
in the parking lot.

CYNTHIA
Oh, my God. What are we going to
do?

STU
Relax. Densemán's staring at us
right now. Act very calm, and head
to the ladies room. Call Luis at
valet, and have him find out what
sort of offer Densemán made. Then
contact Roger with our counter
before he gets to the office.
(beat)
I'm going to sit here and enjoy my
cheesecake.

Stu turns slowly to acknowledge Densemán. They smile at each other. Each one thinking they have outsmarted the other.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Cynthia heading for the ladies room as everyone else starts clearing out.

ZOOM IN on the CHEESECAKE, as Stu's FORK begins to slice a piece.

FREEZE FRAME

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