

# Chasing Balloons

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"CHASING BALLOONS"

FADE IN:

AERIAL P.O.V. RURAL TWO LANE ROAD -- EARLY MORNING

A SONG fades on the radio as an impeccably turned-out, orange '71 Chevelle picks it's way through a mist-shrouded pine forest along a North Carolina country road. Something's not quite right, though. The car is weaving; slowing and speeding up in the pre-dawn gloom. LARRY, the all-night jock talks over the fading music.

LARRY (O.S.)

(radio eq.)

Country 92-7...I'm All-Night Larry. This portion of Up All Night with All-Night Larry is brought to you by Electro-Cute -- smooth away wrinkles electronically. Learn about this amazing process. Go to Electro-Cute.com -- and I guarantee you'll be ready to say "Electro-Cute me!" Okay -- Coming up, it's Vicky Merikan -- and the All Merikan Morning Show -- with Tucker Snodgrass! Today, those two are gonna be ON the air and UP in it -- in a real I'm-not-makin'-this-up-folks hot air balloon! Then, at exactly 7:58, she'll be droppin' coupons for prizes and discount tickets to the Raleigh Bridal Expo -- which opens up at exactly 8 this mornin'! And, let me tell ya', if I didn't have to be here...I'd be there. There's a reason why the All Merikan morning show is number one!

A song starts playing under Larry's voice.

LARRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It don't get no cooler than that.  
I'm All-Night Larry on 92-7.

INT. CHEVELLE -- CONTINUOUS

TUCKER SNODGRASS, an athletic, good-looking 30-year old is behind the wheel. He's wearing a tux. But, instead of a shirt and tie, he's in a beat up T-shirt sporting a big "23." Driving seems to be the least of his concerns. He's trying to fish something out of his pocket without drawing the attention of his passenger, VICKY MERIKAN, a knock-out 28 year-old blonde in a wedding dress. She checks the time and turns down the radio. Oh oh. Is she catching on?

VICKY

Tucker, I've seen you drive faster  
at the drive-thru.

This is true.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Herb will die if we're not flying  
over downtown at exactly two minutes  
before 8 droppin' promotional crap  
outa' that balloon!

TUCKER

Hon, don't worry. We'll get there.

She looks back out the window. It's a chance to dig deeper.  
Ah hah! Found it. He pulls out an engagement ring. Quick  
glance. He can relax. It goes back in the pocket. She  
turns back to him.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Hon', truth is...my daddy and I  
detailed this car yesterday. 'Cause,  
I wanted it to look perfect for you,  
today.

She checks her watch. This better be good.

VICKY

**And**, this is the car he proposed to  
your mom in. Right?

Uh. Yeah. He starts to slide the ring out.

VICKY (CONT'D)

You Southern guys and your cars.  
Babe, if you love me, you'll get us  
there, now.

He loves her. The ring stays in the pocket.

EXT. RURAL TWO LANE ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

The car speeds up, but swerves around wet spots on the road.

VICKY (O.S.)

You'd never make it in New York.

TUCKER (O.S.)

I don't wanna make it in New York.

VICKY (O.S.)

That's why there are so many beige  
cars at home. Beige doesn't show  
the dirt. So, that leads to only  
one conclusion.

The car swerves around a puddle.

VICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
If this car was beige, I wouldn't be  
late. Hit it, Tucker!

EXT. RURAL TWO LANE ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

The car accelerates quickly, roars through a large puddle and disappears into the approaching dawn.

EXT. ANDERSON POINT PARK -- CONTINUOUS

A hot air balloon, with a huge "WRC-FM 92-7" banner around it's inflating midsection, is tethered in the center of a softball field complex. Not far from the balloon is the aging Ford Aerostar "92-7-FM Prize Patrol Van" with its weathered, blaring loud-speakers hanging from homemade brackets near the open cargo doors. A crowd of about 100 mills around in the early morning mist. TIM, the geeky 40 year old Station Engineer, is next to the balloon basket, apparently fixing a pair of headphones. In the balloon basket, ARLO STAGMEIER, the pilot, fidgets. He's an aging hippie-type with long, gray hair pulled into a ponytail, earring, wire-rimmed glasses, a blue work-shirt, dirty jeans and a pair of sandals. He's smoking a hand-rolled cigarette as he checks his watch.

ARLO  
This ain't good, man.

Tim tightens a wire. Arlo's not the kind of guy Tim would hang out with.

ARLO (CONT'D)  
They're late. The wind's gonna  
change. We're gonna be screwed.

He can't pretend the wire's not tightened.

TIM  
I'm just the station engineer.

Yeah. Arlo checks the skies. Tim surveys the balloon pilot.

TIM (CONT'D)  
How long you been flyin' balloons?

ARLO  
Few years. An art student at the  
Community College turned me onto it.

TIM  
You're an art teacher?

ARLO  
No, man. A nude model.

Oh, that's real nice. Let me get this straight.

TIM

At the community college.

Arlo checks some rigging.

ARLO

It was my first job...after I gave up dentistry.

He didn't just say that did he? The LOW RUMBLE of the Chevelle exhaust interrupts.

P.O.V. TIM AND ARLO LOOKING AT THE PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

The car rolls into the lot, right through a puddle.

INT. CHEVELLE -- CONTINUOUS

Vicky reaches into the back seat to grab her veil.

TUCKER

Hon', dirt wasn't the only reason I was driving so slow.

VICKY

We're really late, Tuck.

TUCKER

I was nervous.

VICKY

About a balloon? Oh, come on. We'll be fine.

TUCKER

I know. I just...

Vicky loves this guy...but MY GOD! They're late!

ON ARLO AND TIM

Arlo yanks at the rigging as the two look at the Chevelle.

INT. CHEVELLE -- CONTINUOUS

Vicky internal clock's ticking.

TUCKER

Now, you know, my Daddy proposed to my mom in this car. So, I thought--

VICKY

Tuck, I love your Mom and Dad...and YOU!

(MORE)

VICKY (CONT'D)  
 But, wherever this is goin' it's  
 gonna have to wait 'cause the balloon  
 won't!

He struggles to whip out the ring; but, she's out the door.

EXT. ANDERSON POINT PARK PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

Vicky hauls herself out of the car in that wedding dress and starts running toward the balloon. The crowd cheers.

EXT. ANDERSON POINT PARK -- CONTINUOUS

Tim looks at his watch. The SONG, BLASTING from the speakers on the station van, is starting to fade.

SLOW MOTION -- CONTINUOUS

Vicky is running toward Tim and Arlo -- Tim tosses a headphone mic to the "bride" in a football-like pass. She makes a one-handed grab and slaps them on her head as she reaches the balloon.

REAL TIME -- CONTINUOUS

ARLO  
 Finally.

Arlo tosses away his cigarette. Tim helps put the microphone in place for Vicky. She straightens her hair.

LARRY (O.S.)  
 (PA eq/over fading song)  
 I'm All-Night Larry on 92-7.

TIM  
 He's Arlo.

ARLO  
 I'll be your pilot this morning.

Does she recognize him? Maybe. No time for that now--she nods toward Tucker who is catches a headset and mic from Tim as he approaches.

VICKY  
 That's Tucker.

LARRY (O.S.)  
 (radio/PA eq)  
 Time to go out to Anderson Park...and wake up to the happy sounds of Vicky Merikan and Tucker Snodgrass -- and the All-Merikan Morning Show! Hey, Vicky!

There's a BLAST of FEEDBACK! Ouch! The crowd covers their ears. Tim hurries to the van to turn down the PA amp.

EXT. HERB HARGROVE'S HOME -- MORNING

WRC's owner lives in an older Colonial on a tree-lined, suburban street. Parked across the street, is a purple tow truck with the name "Tovar," in yellow, on the door.

INT. TOW TRUCK -- MORNING

A disheveled Greek in need of a shave, IVAR Tovarkolopolus -- better known as Ivar Tovar -- sips on cold coffee from a styrofoam cup with "Tovar Diner" emblazoned on the side. Ivar is wearing a work shirt with his name on the right breast.

He turns down the radio to soften the BLARING FEEDBACK.

VICKY (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Whoa! That'll clean out your ears!  
Get movin' everybody -- it's an All-  
Merikan Morning on 92.7 I'm Vicky --  
and today we're all out here at  
Anderson Point Park! Say hi guys!

WE HEAR THE CROWD CHEER

VICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's Balloon Day!

Ivar's walkie-talkie cell phone beeps. He turns down the radio.

IVAR

Go.

OMAR (O.S.)

(phone eq)

Ivar! Are you in position? Over to  
you.

IVAR

I'm outside the house, Omar. Are  
you still at the diner? Over.

EXT. THE TOVAR DINER -- MORNING

The "Tovar Diner" is situated on a wide city thoroughfare. The parking lot's full. The diner is directly across the street from "Tovar's Cars" -- a large, used car lot.

OMAR (O.S.)

(phone eq)

The diner. I cannot leave. The new  
cook you hired is not coming in.

INT. THE TOVAR DINER -- MORNING

It's a typical diner with the clash of light and sound. In the kitchen, behind the pass-through where orders are placed for pickup, there's an unshaven, hard-working OMAR TOVAR. He pushes a plate into the pass-thru, grabs a ticket, slaps down next to the plate and bangs on a bell.

OMAR

Order up! Where is he, Ivar -- this cook you hired? Over to you.

Omar grabs a big bowl of pancake batter and starts dripping pancakes on the big griddle in front of him. He's sweating.

IVAR (O.S.)

(phone eq)

I'm not sure I enjoy the tone of your voice. This Arlo that I hired, he seemed very trustworthy. Over to you.

Trustworthy, right.

OMAR

Ivar...

A WAITRESS pokes an order in the pass-thru. Omar grabs it.

WAITRESS

Omar, could you do this one quick?

Omar squints at the order.

OMAR

This is not good.

WAITRESS

I know. But, could you make it anyway?

Omar looks up. "Huh?" The Waitress stares back. "What?"

INT. TOW TRUCK -- MORNING

IVAR

Omar, stay at the diner. This deadbeat I can handle myself. I am over it and out.

Ivar clicks off his cell walkie talkie, looks out toward the house across the street and turns up his truck radio.

We HEAR the crowd HOOT AND HOLLER.

ON HERB HARGROVE'S HOME --

VICKY (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Big day on Country 92-7. I'm a little nervous about goin' up in a balloon -- so, before take off -- I got our good friend, Dr. Ewad Headstrup on the phone!

We HEAR the crowd CHEER.

INT. HERB HARGROVE'S KITCHEN -- MORNING

HERB, a weathered 55 year old in a wrinkled suit stands at the sink, eating a bagel. Watching the radio near the sink like it's a HDTV. With every bite, Herb slathers on cream cheese. His wife, ELAINE, is wearing a robe as she sits at the table sipping coffee and reading the paper. She *might* be listening.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq/German accent)

Good morning Vicky! I know you is very nervous. The thing to remember is this -- there are plenty of reasons why flying in a balloon is absolutely safe --

Herb turns to Elaine, part of a bagel in his mouth.

HERB

Why are they doin' this bit? They gotta take off!

Elaine doesn't look up. She's been through this stuff before.

EXT. ANDERSON POINT PARK -- CONTINUOUS

Vicky is outside the balloon basket. The balloon is bobbing in the breeze, Arlo checks his watch. Tim points to his watch so that Vicky can see.

VICKY

Uh, Doctor? You didn't finish --

INT. CHEVELLE -- CONTINUOUS

On his cell.

TUCKER

(German accent)

Dat's because I can't think of any reasons it would be safe to fly in a bag of hot air. Is you -- NUTS?

EXT. ANDERSON POINT PARK -- CONTINUOUS

The crowd laughs. Vicky winks at Tucker as he steps up beside her.

VICKY

Inspiring. Thanks Doc. Okay, gonna take a break -- and when we come back -- It's take-off time!

INT. HERB HARGROVE'S KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

The radio is playing a commercial.

HERB

She knows how to put on a show, doesn't she?

Elaine doesn't look up. Herb checks the microwave's clock.

HERB (CONT'D)

Jesus! Look at the time!

ELAINE

When are you going to start paying her boyfriend?

Finish up that bagel!

HERB

Hey Tucker's a good kid. He knows about the budget. He's doing it for her -- not me.

Okay, that's it. Elaine folds up the paper. She can't believe she's married to this cheap S.O.B.

HERB (CONT'D)

What? Oh come on. 'Lainey!

EXT. MARVA-PIG FARM & CROP DUSTING SERVICE -- MORNING

The mist hangs low on the Marva-Pig property. A modest, farm house is situated near a two-lane state road. Beside the drive, hanging over the mailbox is a yellow and red sign featuring a happy pig flying a biplane over a stock car displaying the number 23. It reads: "Marva-Pig Pig Farm and Crop Dusting Service. Home of the 'Flying Pig.'" Off to the right is the barn where TOMMY LEE SNODGRASS, a powerfully-built 50 year-old, works on his tractor. A portable radio BLARES Vicky's show. Parked just beyond the barn, sits a perfectly restored PT-27 Stearman biplane; pointed down a gravel runway through Marva-Pig fields. The commercial on the radio ends.

VICKY (O.S.)

(radio eq)

We're back on 92-7. Our pilot, Arlo tells me it's time to fly.

We HEAR the crowd CHEER. We HEAR a screen door SLAM. Tommy Lee looks up. Hey, beautiful!

ON MARVA, his wife -- an attractive, 47 year old in a robe. She walks down the back porch steps toward him with two cups of coffee. It's fun listening to their son and his fiancée on the radio.

MARVA

I brought the phone.

She pulls the phone out of a robe pocket.

TOMMY LEE

Awful early to be callin' New York.

MARVA

Tucker said to call her parents after they get up in the air. Keep 'em clued in.

Tommy Lee takes the phone. Okay. But, he's pretty sure everyone in New York sleeps until noon.

EXT. ANDERSON POINT PARK -- MORNING

The crowd's applause fades. Arlo is inside the basket, helping pull Vicky in. Tucker is outside the basket helping her through the ropes and wires. It's not easy.

VICKY

The All-Merikan Morning Show, I'm Vicky.

TUCKER

I'm Tucker. And, I never thought getting into a balloon basket could be so complicated.

The struggle to get in -- without tearing something continues as Tucker looks at Arlo. There's a brief moment of recognition. Do I know you?

VICKY

(struggling)

Well, most people aren't in a gorgeous and expensive wedding dress loaned just for the occasion by Bitsy's Bridal in downtown Raleigh.

TUCKER

Before we blast off, let's say hi to our fearless pilot. Your name, sir?

ARLO

It's Arlo...Arlo Stegmeier.

TUCKER

Stegmeier! That's weird. When I was, like 10, I went to a dentist named Dr. Stegmeier.

ARLO

Uh huh. That's me!

For a moment, everything stops. Vicky teeters on the edge of the basket. Tucker takes a half step back. Dr. Stegmeier? Arlo leans away. What? A gust of wind -- Vicky falls head first against Arlo -- and that knocks a tethering rope loose. The balloon starts bumping slowly across the field. Arlo swings around to try to catch the rope, knocking Vicky back outside the balloon. She hollers and hangs from the side of the basket as the balloon rises a few feet and moves across the field. Tucker takes off running. Arlo reaches out to hold on to Vicky -- as he waves at Tucker.

ARLO (CONT'D)

Get on, get on, get on!

The pilot hoists Vicky halfway into the balloon basket. She's got her top half in the balloon basket, her legs hanging in the breeze. Tucker runs across the field and catches up in time to hoist Vicky up as Arlo pulls. Together pilot and radio jock tumble inside the basket. The crowd cheers.

INT. HERB HARGROVE'S KITCHEN -- MORNING

Herb looks at his radio.

HERB

What the hell's happening? Somebody talk! It's radio...we don't have pictures!

Elaine looks up from her paper. This sounds serious.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)  
The balloon broke free...I'm running after it.

VICKY (O.S.)

(radio eq)  
Run Tuck! Run!

We HEAR the crowd "OOH" again. Elaine stands and follows Herb as they move closer to the radio.

This doesn't sound good.

EXT. ANDERSON POINT PARK -- MORNING

Tucker is gaining on the basket. But the balloon has nearly reached the trees at the edge of the field. Arlo's got to gain altitude...or crash.

ARLO

I gotta gas it! Jump!

Tucker springs. Arlo yanks a cord to fire the gas burner.

P.O.V. FROM THE CROWD

There's a BLAST of gas and a FLASH of flame. The balloon is headed for the trees. It rises a few feet. Tucker is dangling with his armpit over the top of the balloon basket. The crowd CHEERS.

INT. HERB HARGROVE'S KITCHEN -- MORNING

JUMBLED VOICES of Tucker, Vicky and Arlo pour from the radio.

HERB

Oh, Jesus. I should'a bought insurance.

He locks eyes with Elaine. You didn't?

HERB (CONT'D)

What? It was an extra hundred bucks.

EXT. BALLOON BASKET -- MORNING

With Vicky and Arlo's help, Tucker hauls himself over the lip and into the basket. He adjusts his mic.

VICKY

Are you okay?

TUCKER

We made it. We're up! The All-Merikan morning show is flyin' high on 92-7.

He steps sideways to look over the side. We HEAR a RIP. All three look down. He standing on the hem -- the dress is ripped. No time to worry, though because, that moment, Vicky's delicate, handmade veil floats upward in the breeze as Arlo fires the gas burner. The BLAST is ear-splitting. The flame catches the veil's silky mesh. It flares up. At first, no one notices. Then Tucker sees the smoke coming from Vicky's head. He jumps at her, knocking the veil off her head. The trio looks over the side; watching the smoky trail as the flaming veil falls to Earth.

VICKY

It's not every day that you get to see a handmade, wedding gown accessory going down in flames.

INT. HERB HARGROVE'S KITCHEN -- MORNING

ELAINE

That dress is a loaner from Bitsy.

HERB

Don't worry. I'll take care of it.

That only makes Elaine worry more.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)

We'll be right back!

A COMMERCIAL begins playing on the radio. Herb turns back to the sink and pours out the remaining coffee.

HERB

Okay, they're still alive. I better get to the station.

ELAINE

I saw a Tovar out front.

No!

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Herb, I saw the truck. They want their car.

HERB

Why'd I buy a car from those guys?

ELAINE

I don't think you can say you "bought" it...since you have YET to actually give them any money for it.

Logic. Who needs it? Herb heads for the back door.

HERB

Dick Palmer better come through with that check today.

ELAINE

Yeah...that'll really rock our world.

God, she can be so dry. That hurt. Back to business.

HERB

Plan B?

ELAINE  
What about plan A?

HERB  
We've used plan A twice in a row.

He opens the back door.

HERB (CONT'D)  
Plan B. Please?

He blows a kiss to her and slips out of the back door. For Elaine, this is getting old. She grabs an envelope off the table and walks toward the front door. Plan B sucks.

INT. TOW TRUCK -- MORNING

A COMMERCIAL plays on the radio. Ivar takes another sip of the cold coffee. He quickly rolls down the window and spits it out. The front door of Herb's house opens. Ivar gently pours out the remaining coffee and turns.

EXT. HERB HARGROVE'S HOME -- MORNING

Elaine carries the envelope toward her mailbox. She acts as if she doesn't notice that the hem of her robe is hung in the waistband of her underpants -- exposing her scantily clad rear-end. She opens her mailbox and bends over -- her fanny points directly at Ivar.

EXT. BALLOON BASKET -- MORNING

Arlo is giving a quick tour of the balloon.

ARLO  
Okay, let me explain the basics here.

He grabs a small, overhead dangling rope.

ARLO (CONT'D)  
This is the gas burner control.

When I pull it...we go up. He pulls it. The burner FIRES with a BLAST of sound. Vicky and Tucker recoil. Arlo lets go. He grabs a second cord. He looks up.

ARLO (CONT'D)  
When I pull on this cord, we go down!

It opens a big door in the top. Hot air rushes out.

TUCKER  
That's okay...don't pull that one!

Arlo releases the line. The door closes, the balloon stabilizes. Vicky notices a third line dangling behind Arlo.

VICKY  
What's that one do?

Arlo turns, sees it. Hmm, don't know! He yanks -- WHOMP!

EXT. BALLOON -- MORNING

The huge "WRC-FM 92-7" banner slides off the side of the balloon and goes into a fluttering free-fall.

EXT. BALLOON BASKET -- MORNING

All three look over the side.

ARLO  
I hope that wasn't important.

EXT. HERB HARGROVE'S HOME -- MORNING

Elaine, her barely-clad derriere aimed at the truck, attempts to kill time by s-l-o-w-l-y placing the envelope in the mailbox. As her butt waves in the wind, she looks over the top of the mailbox, toward the garage behind her house where Herb's Cadillac backs out as quietly as possible.

P.O.V. FROM TOW TRUCK -- MORNING

Ivar is looking at Elaine's rear end, wagging to and fro, as the Cadillac slides away into his back yard. He hasn't noticed.

EXT. HERB HARGROVE'S BACKYARD -- MORNING

The Cadillac drives through a neighbor's yard and disappears.

EXT. HERB HARGROVE'S HOME -- MORNING

Elaine sees that Herb is gone. She stands up, her robe still tucked in her underpants as a neighbor drives by slowly, TOOTS and waves.

OFF ELAINE'S REACTION, WE...

CUT TO:

EXT. BALLOON -- MORNING

It's a gorgeous day high above the North Carolina countryside.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
(radio eq)  
All-Merikan in the mornin'!

VICKY (O.S.)  
(radio eq)  
Ahh! Smell the air! It doesn't get any better than this!

TUCKER (O.S.)

What a view!

CUT TO:

EXT. OVER THE TIP OF LOWER MANHATTAN -- MORNING

We're flying over the tip of Manhattan toward Brooklyn.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Mountains, trees, streams! I think I can see downtown from here, too!

VICKY (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Yeah, and something else that's fantastic is the wedding gown I'm wearing today. It's from Bitsy's Bridal--

Vicky's voice is drowned out by the ROARING BLAST of the balloon's gas burner. We have now crossed the East River and are focused on a Brownstone in Brooklyn Heights, just behind the Promenade.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE KITCHEN -- MORNING

ARTHUR MERIKAN and his wife NAOMI are both grimacing and holding separate wireless phones away from their ears. Arthur is a gray-haired, but well-preserved 50-something stock broker. Naomi is a slightly nervous, friendly and outgoing woman of about the same age as her husband. Arthur is dressed in a suit and tie. Naomi is in a robe.

EXT. MARVA-PIG FARM & CROP DUSTING SERVICE -- MORNING

Marva is holding the phone next to Tommy Lee's portable radio. Tommy Lee is nowhere to be seen. As the blast of burning gas continues, she pulls the phone away from the radio and up to her ear.

MARVA

Sorry ya'll. That's a real nasty noise.

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE KITCHEN -- MORNING

Naomi smooths things over in a perfect Southern dialect.

NAOMI

Oh, don't ya'll pay that noise no nevermind! T'ain't all your all's fault.

Arthur's been down this road before with Naomi. But, it's always shocking to hear her mimic those she talks to.

EXT. MARVA-PIG FARM & CROP DUSTING SERVICE -- MORNING

Marva is looking at her phone. What did I just hear? In the background, Tommy Lee is approaching, wearing a flight suit and carrying a flight helmet.

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE KITCHEN -- MORNING

Arthur now has the phone back to his face. He's looking at Naomi, holding one finger to his lips. Shhh. Naomi looks at her husband. Why?

ARTHUR

Marva, we appreciate the call. But, perhaps we'd better be going.

EXT. MARVA-PIG FARM & CROP DUSTING SERVICE -- MORNING

Tommy Lee kisses his wife on the cheek, pats his helmet and walks off toward his biplane. Marva wants to wish him luck. But, right now, it seems it's more important to keep Vicky's parents on the phone.

MARVA

Tucker said it was real important to call you folks when they took off.

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE KITCHEN -- MORNING

Ah hah!

ARTHUR

Why is she flying in a balloon with your son? It's okay with you? We would never give her permission!

Naomi speaks without a hint of the southern drawl she exhibited moments ago.

NAOMI

Darling, she's an adult. We can't-

MARVA (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
Hey, hey -- quiet ya'll. Vicky's talkin' --

Naomi and Arthur press their phones closer.

EXT. BALLOON BASKET -- MORNING

The balloon floats over the countryside in a clear, blue sky. Tucker has an arm around Vicky. Arlo checks the rigging.

VICKY

We're heading downtown today to open the Raleigh Bridal Expo in a big way. And--

TUCKER

--And, you know what, Vicky, I just had an idea. A really great way to make this day even more special.

Tucker reaches into his pants pocket and, this time without a problem, pulls out the engagement ring.

VICKY

Tucker?

TUCKER

I've had this ring burnin' a hole in my pocket all morning. Would you marry me?

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Arthur and Naomi lock eyes...maybe for the first time in 20 years.

EXT. BALLOON BASKET -- CONTINUOUS

Arlo yanks the cord to fire the burner in a noisy blast. Tucker leans to kiss a startled Vicky.

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

In spite of the noise, Naomi and Arthur keep their phones pressed to their ears. It's painful.

VICKY (O.S.)

(phone/radio eq)

...I said..."yes!"

For Arthur that's even more painful. Naomi SQUEALS with joy.

INT. HERB'S CADILLAC -- MORNING

Herb turns up his radio.

HERB

Well, I'll be! Good for you guys!

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)

We'll let ya'll know the date A-SAP.

EXT. MARVA AND TOMMY LEE'S BACKYARD -- CONTINUOUS

Marva and Tommy Lee knew what was going on, of course.

TOMMY LEE

Good goin' son.

Marva might be a little emotional.

EXT. AN ALLEY IN DOWNTOWN RALEIGH -- DAY

Herb's Cadillac rolls quietly into a downtown alley and stops beside an old concrete block building. He TOOTS the horn, gets out and looks around.

VICKY (O.S.)

Talk about flyin' high.

TUCKER (O.S.)

Yeah, hon' -- and we'll be flyin' over downtown at 8 this morning in this big ol' bag of gas.

VICKY (O.S.)

A very happy big ol' bag of gas. We'll be right back on 92-7.

A COMMERCIAL begins. Herb pulls out his wallet, checks his watch and looks skyward. ZEKE, an older man in greasy coveralls comes out of the building. Herb whips out a 20 and hands it to Zeke who slides into the driver's seat.

HERB

Hide it good. One of the Tovars was hangin' around my house today.

Zeke SLAMS the door and SQUEALS the tires as he takes off.

HERB (CONT'D)

Hey! Careful! That's my car...sorta'.

Herb looks at his watch again, then skyward. He pulls out his cell phone as he walks down the alley to the main street.

EXT. BALLOON BASKET -- DAY

A COMMERCIAL plays through the headsets. Tucker and Vicky look out at the scenery as Arlo idly plays with the rigging and wipes a tear from his eye.

ARLO

One day you're fillin' their teeth, the next thing you know you're watchin' 'em propose.

VICKY

Is that Wiggin Lake?

TUCKER

Yeah! And that's Emerson Mountain  
and the McVicker Farm. When I was a  
kid, I'd play...

Tucker does a double take and looks in the opposite direction.

At that moment we HEAR a cell phone ring. It rings with a  
cartoon "BOING" sound effect.

P.O.V. FROM TUCKER'S PERSPECTIVE

The skyline of Raleigh is fading in the hazy distance.

TUCKER (O.S.)

Arlo! We're goin' the wrong way!

ON ARLO -- Is there a problem?

ON TUCKER AND VICKY -- He snaps open his cell phone.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Turn around! We gotta be over  
downtown in 30 minutes!

INT. BALLOON BASKET -- CONTINUOUS

Arlo's helpless.

ARLO

Tucker, we go where the wind blows.

Tucker finally answers his call.

TUCKER

Yeah?

EXT. A MAIN STREET IN DOWNTOWN RALEIGH -- DAY

Herb steps out of the alley with his cell phone to his ear.  
He's looking upward for some sign of the balloon. Ivar and  
Omar drive by, giving him the evil eye.

HERB

Tucker? Where's Vicky? I don't see  
you guys!

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
Hi Herb. No place in the dress for  
the phone. Hold on.

We HEAR a jumble of noise as Vicky takes the phone.

VICKY (O.S.)

Arlo says it's the wind.

HERB

You gotta be downtown in a half hour.

VICKY (O.S.)

(phone eq)

Didn't I just tell you about the wind?

HERB

The contract says we have to release the passes DOWNTOWN at exactly 7:58... or, we don't get paid.

Is Herb starting to cry?

EXT. BALLOON -- DAY

Vicky and Tucker look at Arlo who is the proverbial deer caught in headlights. Is this a test?

ARLO

Well, uh, we might drop down lower ...maybe find some different winds, down there. Or, something?

Vicky's obviously desperate. Arlo yanks the "down" cord.

ON THE BALLOON. The flap opens. The balloon drops.

EXT. BALLOON BASKET -- CONTINUOUS

Vicky's hair blows straight up. The COMMERCIAL ends. It's not easy, but Vicky ticks it up.

VICKY

92-7! The All-merikan morning show is back on the air and in the air!

The air rushing up her nose, catches her attention.

VICKY (CONT'D)

And -- uh...Tucker are we falling?

TUCKER

Uh, well, it FEELS like it. But, we're not really. Right Arlo?

ARLO

Actually, right now, we ARE, folks!

Holy crap!

ARLO (CONT'D)

Hey! Alls I gotta do is pull this rope again. It'll close the top and we'll level right off. Watch!

He yanks the cord. It SNAPS! Oh oh! Part of the cord is in his hand, the rest dangles uselessly just out of reach inside the balloon's envelope.

EXT. THE MARVA-PIG FARM AND FEEDLOT -- DAY

The balloon's shadow passes across the large white tent.

EXT. BALLOON BASKET -- DAY

They're nearing the ground. Vicky's on Tucker's shoulders -- reaching inside the balloon; grabbing for the dangling cord.

TUCKER

On three. One, two, three.

Tucker jumps, sending Vicky just high enough to grab the cord! She yanks. The flap closes! She loses her balance, nearly falling out -- before Tucker snags her. There's a BLAST as Arlo fires the gas burner. The balloon continues to plummet.

EXT. THE MARVA-PIG FARM AND FEEDLOT -- MORNING

The ROARING, falling balloon passes over the bucolic setting. Tommy Lee and Marva run toward the balloon as it bounces off the barn, slaps a tree and crashes between the barn and the #23 race car.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RBC CENTER -- MORNING

Herb is standing beside DICK PALMER -- a balding man in a blue business suit and loud tie. They're on the steps in front of Raleigh's largest arena. A large crowd mills around on both sides of the street, looking up. The station van is parked on the sidewalk. Tim adjusts the volume on the speakers from TOO LOUD to TOO SOFT. Herb looks uncomfortable.

LARRY (O.S.)

(P.A./radio eq)

All Night Larry -- on WRC-FM 97-2...

He's worked for me for 3-years! Herb grits his teeth.

HERB

92-7!

Dick hasn't seen Herb this upset in a long, long time.

LARRY (O.S.)

(P.A./radio eq)

92-7! We're still waitin' for word from Vicky and Tucker.

(MORE)

LARRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 They were in the balloon...and,  
 well...we ain't heard nothin' for 25  
 minutes. And, uh -- well, here's a  
 song...

A SONG starts. It's playing through the van speakers.

DICK  
 I love these deals you come up with  
 Herb! What a gambler! We don't pay  
 if you don't deliver! This is fun!

Yeah, it's fun. Unless you're desperate for the money.  
 Herb searches the sky. Is he praying? The SONG suddenly  
 cuts out in mid chorus.

LARRY (O.S.)  
 (P.A./radio eq)  
 WRC-FM, 97 -- 92-7! They're alive!  
 Vicky and Tuck -- they're alive,  
 man! Hey, you guys are on!

Most in the muttering crowd turn to look at the 92-7 van.  
 But, we can't hear anything. It's drowned out by the ROAR  
 of an approaching race car. What the hell? Tommy Lee's #23  
 rounds the corner, pulling a trailer carrying the balloon's  
 basket and Tucker, Vicky and a goggled Arlo.

DICK  
 Is that Tommy Lee Snodgrass?

Herb nods, yeah. The crowd CHEERS.

DICK (CONT'D)  
 He's my favorite driver!  
 (yells)  
 Give it the gas Snodgrass!

#23 pulls up next to Herb. Tucker and Vicky - on cell phones  
 wave. Arlo lifts his goggles. Occasionally, people YELL  
 out: GIVE IT THE GAS SNODGRASS!

DICK (CONT'D)  
 Herb, I don't know how you managed  
 it. But, this is even BETTER than  
 the balloon!

ON VICKY who checks her watch.

VICKY  
 (P.A./phone/radio eq)  
 WRC-FM 92-7...The All-Merikan morning  
 show has landed -- in downtown!  
 Countin' down to the release of the  
 free tickets to next week's Bridal  
 Expo! Three, two, one...GO!

Tucker tosses tickets in the air. Dick smiles. Herb wipes the tear away, takes a deep, deep breath and looks skyward one last time. Thanks BIG GUY.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRC-FM STUDIOS -- DAY

The studios are in an older downtown building. The stock car and trailer are out front. Tommy Lee is behind the wheel, Arlo is crouched in the seatless passenger side, goggles down. Herb, leans near the driver-side window.

HERB

You really saved my bacon today!

TOMMY LEE

Sure! That's 'cause, when it comes to bacon...I'm your man!

Tommy Lee LAUGHS. Ah, right. He's a pig farmer! I get it. Herb stands back. Tommy Lee waves at Tucker and Vicky then pops the clutch and #23 roars off. Herb walks over to his two morning stars, pats them on the back and walks them toward the front door of the station.

HERB

Tuck, I think you just earned yourself a pay check. Come on in my office! I got something to show you guys.

As they go inside, the Tovar Brothers drive by, slowly.

CUT TO:

INT. WRC-FM LOBBY -- DAY

The lobby is sparse; consisting of a metal desk for the receptionist and four plastic chairs arranged around an old console-type radio -- which is PLAYING the station softly. As the three enter, we discover the receptionist is Elaine. Herb pulls a check from his pocket and unfolds it in front of Elaine. She grabs it.

ELAINE

The check from Dick Palmer?

HERB

Doggone right...thanks to these two, this whole Bridal Expo deal is gonna pay off -- big time! Wouldn't have a station without 'em.

ELAINE

Hey, big guy! Glad you're finally employed!

TUCKER

Hi Elaine.

Vicky leans over to give Elaine a hug.

VICKY

Hey, Elaine.

ELAINE

You got a call, Sweetie.

Elaine picks up a Post-It and reads from it.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Somebody name of "Stephanie" -- from New York.

Elaine hands Vicky the note. Herb looks at Tucker who shrugs.

TUCKER

Don't look at me. It's her hometown.

VICKY

I have no idea who this is.

Vicky takes out her cell phone, sits in a waiting room chair and punches in the number. Herb opens his office door and motions Tucker inside.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Stephanie Miller, please.

Tucker looks back at Vicky as he closes the office door.

CUT TO:

INT. HERB'S OFFICE -- DAY

The office is cluttered with crap -- including several large, seven-foot long boxes. Herb whips out a small pocket knife and opens the end of one. As he works, he talks to Tucker.

HERB

Great job! You and Vicky were great!

TUCKER

Thanks Herb. And, as usual, you did a great job too! Where'd you come up with that balloon guy...the Yellow Pages under "Dumb Ass?"

HERB

You know, before I hired you -- you could talk to me like that. Now...I guess you still can. I deserve it.

Herb slides something thin out of the box. He spins around to reveal a life-size stand-up cut-out of Vicky with Tucker in the background. Across the top, it reads: "Vicky Merikan and the All-Merikan Morning Show on WRC-FM 92-7!"

TUCKER

Wow!

HERB

Cool, huh?

TUCKER

Where'd you get the picture?

HERB

Your mom. She's a doll.

TUCKER

You planned on hiring me?

Uh no. Uh yes. YES! Sure.

HERB

Uh huh. I went out on a little limb...and had 10-thousand of these made. What do you think?

Vicky and Elaine enter. No knock. They look...shaken.

TUCKER

Vicky? You okay?

HERB

Check it out Vicky! For the Fall rating book!

She walks in. Half smile. Elaine closes the door.

VICKY

Nice.

Just "nice?"

HERB

What's up?

Vicky's not sure where to start. Elaine knows.

ELAINE

Turns out Stephanie is a GM of a station in New York. She wants to talk to Vicky about a job.

Herb looks at 10-thousand posters piled in his office.

VICKY

I told her I couldn't come without you, Tuck. We're booked on a flight for tonight.

Tucker's immobile. Herb still looking at his 10,000 potentially useless posters. He faints.

CUT TO:

P.O.V. LOOKING DOWN ON HERB AS HE WAKES UP

Herb looks pale and confused. Elaine is slapping him.

ELAINE

Herb! Herb, wake up!

She slaps him. He's awake; but, can't defend himself.

VICKY (O.S.)

Elaine, he's waking up.

TUCKER (O.S.)

Yeah, you don't have to slap him.

ELAINE (O.S.)

I don't mind. Really!

She smacks her husband one more time. It hurts.

HERB

Ow.

ON THE GROUP as Herb sits up with help from Tucker.

HERB (CONT'D)

It's okay. You guys gotta do what's best...for you.

VICKY

Herb, don't worry. I said "yes," because it's a free trip to New York to see my parents. It's perfect. Now they can finally meet Tucker!

TUCKER

No, no, no! I met 'em once!

Remember, we did that Webcam deal.

CUT TO:

P.O.V. LOOKING AT A GRAINY, JERKY COMPUTER SCREEN

We see faces that are blurred and unrecognizable.

CUT TO:

INT. HERB'S OFFICE -- DAY

VICKY

That doesn't count.

Why not?

VICKY (CONT'D)

This way, Tucker gets to meet Arthur and Naomi. And, it's free! I don't have to ask my father to pay for it.

ELAINE

Okay. So, you're going on a job interview so Tucker can meet your parents...and NOT to get a job?

Vicky nods. Makes perfect sense...to her.

HERB

What about the bungee at the Bridal Expo?

VICKY

We'll be back in plenty of time!

She looks at the other three non-believers.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Think about it. Why would someone in New York be interested in hiring two numskulls from Raleigh? Besides, we love it here.

ELAINE

Right. Why would you want to live in New York? Eww.

HERB

Elaine! The kids love this place.

ELAINE

Uh huh. What if that Stephanie person offers "the kids" a pile of cash?

Apparently, Vicky hadn't thought that far ahead. Herb sees their reaction. So does Elaine. Oh oh.

HERB  
Well, the kids gotta do what's best...

ELAINE  
Shut up, Herb.

AS TUCKER AND VICKY EYE THE DOOR, WE...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MARVA-PIG FARM AND FEEDLOT -- AFTERNOON

Tucker's Chevelle is parked outside his Mom and Dad's home.

INT. MARVA AND TOMMY LEE'S LIVING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

We move through the neat and tidy, craft-filled living room, into the kitchen as we HEAR Tommy Lee, Tucker and Vicky.

TOMMY LEE (O.S.)  
If she ain't serious about the  
job...ain't it sorta' like stealin'?

TUCKER (O.S.)  
Well--

VICKY (O.S.)  
They asked us to come, Mr. Snodgrass.

TOMMY LEE (O.S.)  
Ah ah, darlin' -- I've told you  
before, call me 'Daddy.'

There's a pause. We've arrived at the three-season porch off the kitchen. Tommy Lee is sitting on a beat-up wicker chaise, Tucker and Vicky are sitting on either side of him on folding, aluminum frame lawn chairs. Tommy Lee squints out through the screen.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
Daddy, we've talked about this.

Vicky doesn't even call her own daddy, "Daddy."

VICKY  
I just call him "Arthur."

Tommy Lee knows this. But, it's hard for him to deal with.

TOMMY LEE  
He's your daddy, honey.

Gee, this is so uncomfortable. Tommy Lee looks beyond Vicky, out into the backyard.

EXT. MARVA AND TOMMY LEE'S BACKYARD -- AFTERNOON

Marva is walking around the perimeter of the huge white tent.

TOMMY LEE (O.S.)  
 Look at that! Momma says the tent  
 she's sewin' for the weddin'  
 reception's almost done.

Marva leans next to one of the tent flaps. It's been embroidered with lettering we can't quite read.

TOMMY LEE (CONT'D)  
 She embroidered our entire family  
 tree on one tent flap...

ON THE OPPOSITE TENT FLAP

We can see the name "Merikan" at the top -- but nothing's been embroidered underneath.

VICKY  
 So, obviously, you knew Tucker was  
 gonna ask me.

Tucker and Tommy Lee share a quick glance. Vicky lets them both know it's okay with a quick touch.

MARVA (O.S.)  
 Vicky, honey?

Marva is walking back toward the porch.

MARVA (CONT'D)  
 When you see your mom and dad, would  
 you mind askin' about family history?

Marva walks onto the porch.

MARVA (CONT'D)  
 I haven't been able to find nothin'  
 on-line about your branch of Merikans.

VICKY  
 I'll try. But, Arthur doesn't like  
 to talk about his family, much.

OFF TUCKER, MARVA AND TOMMY LEE'S REACTIONS, WE...

CUT TO:

EXT. NEWARK INTL. AIRPORT TERMINAL A -- NIGHT

It's a misty, drizzly evening. There's the usual confusion as cars drop-off and pick up people. A gaggle of travelers flow in waves into and out of the rows of glass doors. Vicky and Tucker are standing next to a large pillar.

Tucker's got a backpack. Vicky has a carry-on bag on wheels. She's watching and waiting to catch a glimpse of her parent's car.

VICKY

I told Arthur we could catch a cab.

TUCKER

There's no big hurry.

VICKY

Sure, you say that now. But, they might be doing work on the Verrazano.

We've been standing here ten minutes. So, logic says, if we'd taken a cab, we'd be that much closer to home.

TUCKER

You okay?

VICKY

Why?

Well, DUH.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Oh, I don't know. I always get a little uptight when I see my parents.

A little?

VICKY (CONT'D)

Especially Arthur.

TUCKER

You are successful.

You haven't heard Arthur's definition of "success."

VICKY

He's my father. I've always wanted him to be proud of me.

Hard to believe he isn't! Somewhere in the queue of cars, a  
HORN TOOTS.

It's them!

VICKY (CONT'D)

Come on!

Vicky runs off toward a new, black Mercedes S-600. puts on his best smile and follows gamely.

TUCKER

CUT TO:

EXT. STATEN ISLAND EXPRESSWAY -- NIGHT

A black Mercedes S-600 slices back and forth between lanes, using its 500 horsepower to carve past the tight traffic.

INT. MERCEDES -- NIGHT

ARTHUR MERIKAN, Vicky's father, a stiff and officious man is behind the wheel of the high-powered luxury car. He looks focused, yet annoyed as he pushes the limits while mumbling into his cell phone. Oddly, he's dressed in a tuxedo. His wife, NAOMI is also dressed rather elegantly. She's a warm person with a winning smile -- and a rather odd habit. Even though she normally speaks without much of an accent, when nervous, she unconsciously mimics the accents of people nearby. Vicky and Tucker are in the backseat. Tucker leans forward.

TUCKER

You're really drivin' the wheels off  
this thing...

Let's try this one...

TUCKER (CONT'D)

...Dad!

Arthur looks in the rearview mirror and clicks off his phone.

ARTHUR

Tucker, I'd prefer it if you wouldn't  
address me with an endearing name --  
until after the wedding.

Tucker takes a moment to glance at Vicky.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

AND -- after you're married -- do  
not call me "Dad" or "Daddy."

Gee, that wasn't very nice.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Don't take offense. It's just the  
way I like doing things. Ask Vicky.  
Her first word wasn't "Dada." It was  
"Arthur."

Guess that explained it.

TUCKER

Uh...so, what should I call you?

Vicky leans forward. She touches Tucker on the shoulder.

VICKY  
(softly)  
Arthur.

A smile flickers on Arthur's face for a nanosecond before he glares back through at the road to set-up his next pass. Naomi turns sideways so she can see Vicky and Tucker.

NAOMI  
It's so good to finally meet you.  
Vicky, he's so handsome!

Hmm. How do you respond to that? Vicky slides closer.

TUCKER  
Thanks. But, whenever I'm next to Vicky, people usually ain't tellin' me I'm the one who looks good.

NAOMI  
(Southern drawl)  
Aw, that's sweet. But, Tucker, don't you pay them no nevermind. Ya'll must be excited 'bout the interview.

TUCKER  
Are ya'll from the South?

VICKY ARTHUR  
No! No!

NAOMI  
(still Southern)  
Oh my. Am I doin' it again?

Arthur snorts. Yes.

VICKY  
It's one of my mother's little habits. She mimics the dialects of people she's talking to. I think she picked it up when she was studying to be an actress.

NAOMI  
Luckily, Arthur rescued me -- before it went too far.

Arthur swerves the car and blows the horn.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
I apologize.

TUCKER  
No need to apologize, ma'am.

NAOMI

(Southern)

Why thank you. Ya'll are too kind.

Arthur blows his horn and flashes his lights at a car ahead.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE IN BROOKLYN HEIGHTS -- NIGHT

The Mercedes is parked in front of a beautiful brownstone overlooking the Promenade, the East River and the tip of Manhattan. Vicky and Tucker are standing by the front door with their "luggage." Naomi and Arthur are still down at the sidewalk level.

NAOMI

(Southern)

Why don't ya'll go on in.

Arthur clears his throat loudly.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

(correcting herself)

Why don't you go inside. Your father and I are going to take a walk along the river.

VICKY

You two NEVER do that!

ARTHUR

(impatiently)

Just go. It's chilly out here.

Okay, okay. Vicky selects the key, sticks it in the lock and turns it. CLICK. The door opens to darkness. Then -- the lights flash on.

P.O.V. OVER TUCKER AND VICKY'S SHOULDER

The inside of the Brownstone is filled with people. A banner across the top of the room reads: "Welcome Home Vicky!"

GROUP

Surprise!

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - THE PARTY

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE IN BROOKLYN HEIGHTS -- NIGHT

The guests descend on them, encircling Vicky, pushing Tucker to the edge.

Tucker watches Vicky hugging and chatting with her friends, including DONNA MARCONI, a perfectly coifed beauty, PHYLLIS FEICLER, a tanned blonde and NEL NEVINS who may be somewhat less glamorous -- but no less attractive than the other two. Waiters are circulating through the room. One approaches Tucker and extends a tray.

WAITER 1  
Hors d'oeuvre, sir?

Tucker squints down at the odd-looking items on the tray.

TUCKER  
Whatcha' got there?

WAITER 1  
Tuna Tartare on crispy plantain chips  
with cilantro chiffonade.

Tucker's thinking: Is this guy kidding? The waiter's thinking: "Yes, or no? God, what a yutz."

VICKY (O.S.)  
Where's the most handsome man on  
Earth?

Tucker adjusts his sweatshirt. He's been summoned.

ON VICKY -- who is standing with outstretched arms as FERRIS BUCKLER, a handsome dark-haired man in Armani steps in. They hug and kiss. The guests react with a SIGH and APPLAUSE.

ON TUCKER -- He wasn't ready for that.

ON ARTHUR -- who takes a bite of whatever WAITER 2 is serving, then stops chewing and spits it into a napkin.

ARTHUR  
Is this the Ginger Shrimp Croquette  
with Ancho Chile Mayonnaise?

Waiter 2 nods.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
I taste the mayonnaise -- but, I'm  
not getting the ancho.

Arthur puts the napkins he's just spit into on the tray.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Tell the chef, I'll have a word with  
him.

Waiter 2 nods and crosses paths with WAITER 3. We follow #3 as he approaches Tucker who looks suspiciously at the tray.

WAITER 3

Haricot Vert bundles wrapped with prosciutto.

ANGLE ON THE HORS D'OEUVRES

It's green beans wrapped in bacon.

TUCKER (O.S.)

How come you didn't mention the green beans you got there?

WAITER 3

I did. That's the "Haricot Vert."

TUCKER

Where's the bar?

The waiter points and walks away, past Naomi.

ON NAOMI -- who's with a small cluster of women, including HELEN VAN DER POUSSE -- a wealthy socialite from Connecticut -- with a distinctly snooty accent that says: "I'm very rich."

HELEN

Oh my. The traffic was simply dreadful this evening. I told our driver, I don't know why they allow so many people on the roads. Some of us actually have places to go!

Naomi dives into Helen's accent -- full bore.

NAOMI

So many cars, so little concrete.

There's an uncomfortable pause.

VICKY (O.S.)

Tucker! Tucker!

ON VICKY - surrounded by friends, she's waving.

VICKY (CONT'D)

I want you to meet some people!

Tucker walks up to the group and wraps an arm around Vicky.

VICKY (CONT'D)

This is Tucker!

DONNA

My, he IS large, isn't he?

NEL

Oh, Donna, don't.

DONNA

I'm Donna...as in "Donna take me seriously." Nobody else does.

PHYLLIS

It's true! Hi, I'm Phyllis...I've known Vicky since NYU. We all have!

NEL

Nel. I've known Vicky since 4th grade.

PHYLLIS

Oooh, excuse me!

It wasn't meant like that! Oh, you guys! Ferris steps up.

FERRIS

I'm Ferris...Ferris Buckler.

Tucker grimaces slightly as they shake hands.

TUCKER

That's some grip ya' got there.

FERRIS

I'm a masseuse.

Tucker nods. Gee, that went well. Ferris whispers to Vicky.

VICKY

Good idea! Ferris and I are going to go get a drink. Can I bring you anything?

TUCKER

Yeah...a beer -- and a pork chop.

Vicky laughs. Vicky and Ferris head for the bar.

NEL

So, you're from North Carolina!

PHYLLIS

We can't believe Vicky's actually living in the middle of nowhere.

NEL

Phyllis.

TUCKER

It's not exactly "nowhere."

DONNA

Of course not. But, I bet you're glad to move here! Now you can finally make something of yourself!

NEL

Donna!

TUCKER

Actually, we mostly came up here to see her Mom and Daddy.

ON ARTHUR -- across the room, who is chewing out Waiter 1.

DONNA (O.S.)

Oh yes. They're such nice people.

ON THE THREE WOMEN AND TUCKER

TUCKER

Anyway, that's why we came. We're not really plannin' to take the job. It's more like a free trip.

There's a pause as the women look at each other.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

You know... 'cause we really like where we are and all.

DONNA

Sure. Why do something that might change your life!

NEL

Donna!

PHYLLIS

Yes. Wouldn't it be awful to actually get a paycheck you could live on!

Donna and Phyllis giggle.

NEL

Phyllis!

DONNA

Maybe Arthur's right about you.

TUCKER

Right about what?

Donna and Phyllis laugh. Nel can't believe her friends. God, they can be such nasty broads sometimes.

NEL

Tucker, I'm sorry...

Tucker backs toward the front door.

TUCKER

Nice talkin' to you.

Vicky and Ferris come back with the drink orders. Vicky holds up Tucker's beer and sees him slip out the front door.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PROMENADE -- LATER

The cool, misty night is wrapped around Tucker who sits alone on a bench, staring at the tip of Manhattan. An occasional FOG HORN filters through the gloom.

ON TUCKER - who's thinking his way through his situation.

VICKY (O.S.)

Any room for me?

Tucker looks up. A smile's just not in him. He slides over. She sits down beside Tucker.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Nel told me Donna and Phyllis were their usual charming selves. Not to mention my Father.

TUCKER

It's okay. To be honest, it's not bad. Back home, we don't always say exactly what's on our minds. Maybe your friends are right. People don't get chances like this every day.

Vicky looks across the river toward Manhattan.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

How bad can it be to live in New York? You grew up here. You're perfect!

She nuzzles closer. He puts his arm around her.

VICKY

Tucker, except for NASCAR racing, my father has always hated the South.

TUCKER

NASCAR? You should'a told me...my Daddy bein' a racer and all...

VICKY

My mother and I are sworn to secrecy. A stock broker in New York can't be a NASCAR fan...and have serious clients. It's just not cool.

Live and learn!

TUCKER

So, what's this about your Daddy hatin' the South? Why?

VICKY

It has to do with his mother. He can't, or won't, talk about her.

TUCKER

Your grandma?

VICKY

It's too painful, I guess. The story goes, Arthur's mother died on vacation in North Carolina...after eating bad grits.

Vicky stands and walks to the railing. The thought of bad grits makes her emotional. Tucker follows.

TUCKER

I've never heard of anyone dyin' from eatin' grits.

VICKY

Well, actually, she was eating grits ...when she was run down by a semi loaded with pig manure.

Wow, what do you say to that? They look across the water and reflect on grandma's passing.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Maybe you're right, Tucker. Maybe this chance won't come along again. My father says..."Before you can succeed, you must show up."

TUCKER

Your Daddy's right. Let's be fair ...to us!

VICKY

Right! If the offer sounds good. We'll ask them to wait a few days so we can talk it over -- you and me.

TUCKER

Right! Take our time! They don't need an answer right away! This is about us.

Done deal. With Manhattan shimmering in the mist, they kiss.

CUT TO:

INT. WRAT-FM CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Tucker and Vicky are seated across from STEPHANIE MILLER - the station's General Manager -- a tightly-wrapped type in a designer suit -- and G. KENNY WELDON, a gel-haired consultant.

TUCKER/VICKY

We'll take it! We'll take it!

Well, so much for planning! G. Kenny bangs the table. Yeah! Stephanie is a little surprised.

G.KENNY

Good move, guys! Welcome to New York!

STEPHANIE

Don't you want to think about it?

TUCKER

I guess we already thought about it.

VICKY

Yeah, opportunities don't uh...

Vicky turns to Tucker.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Is your Mom gonna be upset when we postpone everything?

The consultant doesn't lie very well.

G. KENNY

Oh, right! I heard somewhere, you were getting married...or something ...in a few weeks, right?

Vicky and Tucker are quietly imagining the scene at Marva-Pig that awaits them when they break the news.

STEPHANIE

Married?

G. KENNY

Steph, does it matter?

She shrugs.

STEPHANIE

G. Kenny has also come up with a promotion called 'Win a Date' -- in which the winner takes Vicky out on the town.

Vicky looks at Tucker. Doesn't sound too risky.

G. KENNY

It's a promotion. No sex...just lunch!

Stephanie's annoyed with G. Kenny. Vicky turns to Tucker.

VICKY

What about your mother and the tent?

TUCKER

What about Arthur and "success?"

VICKY

You're sure?

G. KENNY

I'm tellin' you...everybody in New York will be buzzin' about you guys and the new name I've cooked up for you! Break 'n' Wynd!

Vicky and Tucker look up. Did they just hear....

G. KENNY (CONT'D)

Oh, I didn't tell you? Yeah. It's a play on words -- Wynd -- W-Y-N-D. You guys figure out who's who. But, personally, I like Tucker Break and Vicky Wynd!

VICKY

Break 'n' Wynd?

Stephanie clears her throat.

STEPHANIE

It's part of the job. Take it. Or, leave it.

Tucker and Vicky are at a loss.

G. KENNY

Come on Vicky, your father didn't raise a dummy.

She's thinking...How did he know about the wedding? Hmm.

VICKY

You know Arthur?

Oh oh. Better shut up! Stephanie fills in the dead air.

STEPHANIE

Everybody knows your father.

G. KENNY

Look you two. Something else that comes with the territory. You're gonna be busy here 24-7. You're not gonna have time to get married now. But, a year from now, there'll be plenty of time for all that.

He knows he's got 'em. But, he keeps going.

G. KENNY (CONT'D)

Besides, we can't reschedule the Fall rating book. But, you can reschedule your wedding. You have the rest of your lives to get tied down! Make a few calls. Send a few cards. Postpone it. It's just not that big a deal.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARVA AND TOMMY LEE'S BACKYARD -- DAY

Tucker's Mom and Dad take down the big white, hand-sewn tent. The transistor radio BLARES "The All-Merikan Morning Show's" last hurrah.

TUCKER (O.S.)

WRC-FM 92-7 -- Last time in the morning, here.

VICKY (O.S.)

This is it! Our last show before we head to New York City, baby!

TUCKER (O.S.)

Imagine...us in the Big Apple!

VICKY (O.S.)

The sweet smell of success! Whoeee!

This is painful. Tommy Lee looks away. Marva kicks some dirt on the "Merikan" name she had embroidered so carefully.

INT. WRC-FM STUDIOS -- MORNING

Herb walks in as Vicky and Tucker are packing up their gear.

HERB

You guys about outa' here?

TUCKER

Yeah. Uh Herb, listen. I want you to know we feel bad about leavin' you in the lurch like this.

HERB

The "lurch?" Where's that?

TUCKER

You know what I mean.

HERB

Elaine and I will be fine. Really.

TUCKER

But - the posters an' all...

HERB

Posters? No biggie. They're in the trash can already! Forget it!

They shake hands.

VICKY

Thanks, Herb. You're the best.

To Tucker.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Got a text message from Stephanie. We can't be late for the photo shoot tomorrow for the Win a Date thing.

HERB

Photo shoot! You're goin' big time!

Gee, he's being so supportive.

VICKY

Herb...Tucker and I are so sorry...

HERB

--Stop it! Nothin' to be sorry for. I'm proud of you guys. You'll make me prouder when you kick some New York ass.

The studio door opens a crack. Elaine leans in. Whatever she's there for, it's not good.

IVAR (O.S.)

(distant)

Hey, Herb! Herbert Hargrove!

Herb turns and sees his wife.

OMAR (O.S.)

(distant)

Yes, you deadbeat! Over here, by the window.

Elaine slips inside and points out the studio window beside the door. There, we see Ivar and Omar, each with an arm around Zeke. Ivar holds up a set of car keys, waves them and LAUGHS. Herb knows his car is about to disappear. It hurts. Vicky wants to do something to help the friend she feels like she's deserting. She runs to open the door to reason with the Tovars -- at the same time Ivar throws open the door and slams Vicky in the face. WHOMP. Ivar, not realizing what's happened laughs again and dangles the keys.

IVAR

You lose!

Vicky staggers back, holding her eye and hits the floor.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. WRAT-FM CONFERENCE ROOM -- MORNING

From black to a blur to Stephanie and G. Kenny...not quite believing what they're seeing.

ON VICKY -- and two huge, puffy black eyes.

G. KENNY

You look like you just went 3 rounds with a heavyweight.

TUCKER

We did that one time.

VICKY

Yeah, I didn't look this bad.

STEPHANIE

Would you two give us a moment alone?

Vicky nods causing enough pain to make her wince. Smooth. Tucker helps Vicky out the door. G. Kenny's puzzled. What?

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

They're your hire G.K. You promised me if I let you hire the next morning show, there wouldn't be any problems.

G. KENNY

Steph...there's no problem! She's got a little black eye. No biggie.

STEPHANIE

The photo shoot's today. We need her for the promotion.

G. KENNY

I told you. I need a few weeks until her new partner "Big Cat" gets here.

STEPHANIE

I don't care about the new guy from Philly. Right now, all I have is these two.

G.Kenny's looking for a little softness. He's not getting it.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I've got to make a phone call. Why don't you talk to your wunderkind. Do it out in the hallway. Be sure "Black eyed Vicky" is ready in five minutes.

Chuckle.

G. KENNY

Black-eyed Vicky. That's funny!

STEPHANIE

Jesus, G.K! Get out there!

Stephanie pulls out a cell phone. G.Kenny hurries out.

IN THE HALLWAY -- Tucker and Vicky look at pictures of station personalities. Tucker points at the wall of photos.

TUCKER

All these folks work here?

The consultant looks at the pictures briefly.

G. KENNY

Uh, no. They USED to. In fact, they all did mornings.

TUCKER

No kidding.

G. KENNY

Yeah. That couple there is Mac and Marianne. Stephanie hired them from Albuquerque..."Mac & Marianne's Morning Mayhem." They were great.

VICKY

How long were they here?

G. KENNY

Uh...let me think. Three...I think.

TUCKER

Three years?

G. KENNY

No...months.

Is that shock on these rookies' faces? Hey, these things happen. Take it easy.

G. KENNY (CONT'D)

Look, I'm the reason you're here. If you listen to me you'll last longer than Mac and Marianne who are now in Real Estate.

The newly-hireds are shaken. "What the Hell have we done?"

G. KENNY (CONT'D)

This is cake. The first thing I want you two to focus on is the word "change." I can't stress enough how important it is that when "Break 'n' Wynd" hit the air on Monday...you will have completely changed who you are on the air.

A little pause for G.Kenny to survey his troops. Okay. Seems to be a problem here.

VICKY

But, you hired us because we ARE who we ARE. Right?

G. KENNY

Don't get me wrong. I like your show. I like who you are.

TUCKER

Good! So, if you like us--

G. KENNY

Guys...it's not what I like...it's what the research says I should like.

Ah! Well, you can't argue with that.

G. KENNY (CONT'D)

Believe me, if you want to get to the next level in this biz, you're going to have to be like somebody else... somebody you're not right now.

TUCKER

How do we do that?

G. KENNY

Easy! I've got a lot of stuff for you to listen to -- jocks with real talent in other cities. All you have to do is listen and copy.

Oh oh. This is bad. Before either can respond, the conference room door opens. Stephanie walks out with her briefcase.

STEPHANIE

Are we about ready? I've got to get Vicky to the photo shoot! Let's go!

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN -- DAY

The four step out into the busy midtown morning. G. Kenny hurries to the curb to hail a cab.

G. KENNY

I'll be listening Monday morning!

A cab stops. He opens the door.

G. KENNY (CONT'D)

Remember. "Not Yourselves!" 'Luck!

He hops in. The cab leaves.

STEPHANIE

Great. We're late. We need a cab. He takes it.

TUCKER

No problem!

Tucker leaps off the curb, puts his hand in the air and WHISTLES loudly. A cab SCREECHES to a halt in front of him, HORN BLOWING. An ANGRY PAKISTANI leans out.

ANGRY PAKISTANI

(yelling)

What are you? A crazy person to be jumping into the street like a...a crazy person?

THE PASSENGER rolls down the right side rear seat window and sticks his head out.

THE PASSENGER

What's going on here? Get out of the way! This is my taxi!

Tucker steps back on the sidewalk.

ANGRY PAKISTANI

You must not to be from around here!  
Crazy man.

The car's tires SQUEAL as the taxi slips into gear. It moves about 20 feet and stops. The Passenger gets out and hurries into the building our heroes just left.

STEPHANIE (O.S.)

Vicky! Come on!

We turn. Stephanie is beside a cab with the rear door open. Vicky hops in. Steph stops Tucker, as he tries to get in.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I just need Vicky. You're not in the picture.

Stephanie slides into the cab. Vicky looks out.

VICKY

Maybe you should try to get us an apartment.

Stephanie slams the door. The cab moves into a tangled web of HONKING horns and SQUEALING tires. It narrowly avoids several accidents as it disappears down the block. Tucker suddenly looks very small in the big city.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAKE COUNTY SPEEDWAY -- AFTERNOON

Stock cars SQUEAL and BANG into turn one. In the pack is #23, the Marva-Pig Special driven by Tommy Lee.

CUT TO:

INT. TOMMY LEE'S STOCK CAR

Tommy Lee works the steering wheel amid the ROAR of his Chevy.

EXT. WAKE COUNTY SPEEDWAY -- CONTINUOUS

The cars THUNDER past the grand stand. In the last row, there's Marva -- with her laptop computer.

ON MARVA -- who is focused on her computer. We HEAR the tires SCREECH as a car slides into the wall with a METALLIC CRUNCH. Marva doesn't look up. She's seen this stuff many times before. The crowd stands and GASPS. Meanwhile, she GASPS at what she sees on her computer screen.

ON THE TRACK, a car has hit the wall and stopped. It's not a bad wreck. The racing engines die down to a RUMBLE as they slow for the yellow flag.

TRACK ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(P.A. eq)

Yellow flag! Yellow Flag, folks, for number 34, Turk Dinsmore's spin in turn one. Tommy Lee Snodgrass is in the lead...with 10 laps to go. Come on folks! Let's cheer 'em all on!

ON MARVA -- The standing crowd around Marva WHOOPS and HOLLERS as the cars rumble past under the yellow flag.

SOMEONE IN THE CROWD (O.S.)

Give it the gas, Snodgrass!

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN -- where we see a picture with the heading: "Southport High School Auto Mechanics Club 1971."

In the picture we can see a young Tommy Lee in the front row. There's a kid grinning wildly and holding up two fingers behind Tommy Lee's head. As she scans the roster of names in the picture, one reaches out and grabs her. Arthur Merikan. He's that kid. We HEAR the racing engine's rev up. She checks the picture more closely.

TRACK ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(P.A. eq)

Okay. We're gettin' ready to go back to green!

The kid in the picture looks a lot like Vicky. Hmmm.

TRACK ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

(P.A. eq)

Green Flag! Green, green, green!

EXT. WAKE COUNTY SPEEDWAY -- CONTINUOUS

The stock cars REV, BANG and SQUEAL into the first turn with Tommy Lee in the #23 out in front.

CUT TO:

MUSIC MONTAGE -- the photo-shoot/Tucker's apartment search.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHER'S STUDIO -- AFTERNOON

ON VICKY --who's wearing a skirt that would make a porn star blush. She's uncomfortable.

REMY (O.S.)

Hold it!

REMY, the photographer is wearing an outfit that would look good on the crew of the HMS Pinafore. Vicky blinks as Remy clicks the shutter and the lights flash.

VICKY

Is this promotion called "Win a Date"  
or "Win an Out-Call Massage?"

REMY (O.S.)

I can't work like this!

ON THE GROUP -- Stephanie is just behind Remy.

STEPHANIE

You look fabulous, Vicky. Besides,  
it's like Remy says...the eye make-  
up and the black eye look great  
together.

PHOTOGRAPHER/REMY

Quiet please! Stephanie...I can't  
stay here forever. I told you...I  
have a bat mitzvah in three hours!

EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN -- AFTERNOON

Houston Street near Avenue A. Tucker's standing near a busy  
bodega as LOWELL AHORN, a tired, jaded Realtor approaches.

LOWELL

Snodgrass?

Hey, somebody knows my name! Tucker extends his hand. Lowell  
does likewise, but, instead of shaking hands, he hands him a  
dog-eared real estate contract.

LOWELL (CONT'D)

Lowell Ahorn. Realtor. Sign this.

Sign what?

LOWELL (CONT'D)

The contract!

Contract?

LOWELL (CONT'D)

It's standard. It just says you pay  
me 15 percent of the annual rent  
when I find you find a place.

TUCKER

15-percent? A whole year?

LOWELL

You're not from around here, are  
you?

What are you gonna do? Tucker signs the contract against a  
wall.

LOWELL (CONT'D)

Good, good. Now, based the salary you mentioned, you're sort of at an entry-level situation.

Entry level? Tucker turns to hand Lowell the contract and sees Lowell is standing at a doorway next to the bodega entrance which leads up a narrow stairway

LOWELL (CONT'D)

Let's go...or somebody might rent it right out from under you!

He slips up the narrow, dirty stairs. Tucker shuffles behind.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHER'S STUDIO -- AFTERNOON

Vicky's hair has been styled to swoop over her black eye. Not good. An Assistant holds a drink with a straw near Vicky's face. She reaches for the straw.

REMY

No! Don't touch it! Are you mad? You'll muss yourself.

So close to a sip -- yet, so far away

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT #1 HALLWAY -- AFTERNOON

Dim light, peeling paint. Someone next door is enjoying woodwork-rattling SALSA MUSIC. Lowell sticks in the key, jiggles the lock, then leans against the door to force it open with a LOUD SQUEAK. Inside, roaches scamper for cover across the bare wood floor. Tucker's not sure he just saw what he saw.

LOWELL

The roaches? Don't worry. They're not from the apartment! They come from the bodega downstairs!

Lowell walks inside. Nice, huh? The entry way is also the kitchen. Lowell is standing next to the focal point: A bathtub.

TUCKER

There's a bathtub in the kitchen.

Yeah?

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Where are the rest of the...uh...facilities?

LOWELL

Toilet? That's down the hall...It's  
a "community situation."

Down the hall? A LARGE MAN, in boxer shorts, with a newspaper under his arm, walks out of his apartment and strolls to the bathroom. He nods as he passes and enters the "community situation."

INT. PHOTOGRAPHER'S STUDIO -- AFTERNOON

Vicky is trying to look seductive as she poses with one hand over her injured eye. The shutter clicks and lights flash.

REMY

Am I seeing sweat?

ON VICKY -- we see a small drop of sweat on her forehead.

REMY (CONT'D)

This is what I get for working with  
amateurs!

INT. APARTMENT #2 -- AFTERNOON

Another small studio apartment. Tucker looks around.

TUCKER

There's no kitchen.

Lowell points to a two-burner hot-plate with a frayed cord on the floor in a corner. Tucker turns and walks out. Lowell's losing patience.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHER'S STUDIO -- AFTERNOON

Vicky has a patch over her bruised eye. The lights flash.

REMY

Beautiful! Gorgeous!

Vicky takes off the eye patch.

VICKY

Stupid. Idiotic.

REMY

Stephanie!

VICKY

It looks tacky.

STEPHANIE

You're in radio, darling.

Remy checks the watch/medallion around his neck.

REMY  
Ohmigod, the bat mitzvah! Turn off  
the lights when you leave!

He grabs a camera and runs out.

INT. APARTMENT #3 -- LATE AFTERNOON

A studio apartment -- this one featuring a large hole in the wall, under a window, where an air conditioner should go.

TUCKER  
There's a hole in the wall.

LOWELL  
It's for the air conditioner.

TUCKER  
Where IS the air conditioner?

LOWELL  
You mean you don't own a window unit?

OFF TUCKER'S REACTION, WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE LOWER EAST SIDE OFF FIRST AVENUE -- AFTERNOON

Tucker's on his cell as he walks the streets alone.

INT. A DARKENED ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

A weathered hand reaches toward an OLD ROTARY PHONE.

EXT. RURAL TWO LANE ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

The "Marva-Pig" truck, towing the trailer and race car passes.

INT. TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

Tommy Lee is driving. Marva is on her cell phone.

TOMMY LEE  
I can't believe that Vicky is the  
daughter of Artie Merikan.

MARVA  
We don't know that for sure...yet.

TOMMY LEE  
Why'd he change his name?

MARVA  
Artie to Arthur? That's a name  
change?

Okay, maybe I'm overreacting.

TOMMY LEE

Didn't Vicky say her grandma had passed?

MARVA

Shush now!  
(to phone)  
Hello!

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Vicky has just picked up the phone.

VICKY

Merikan residence, Vicky speaking.

INT. A DARKENED ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

EMMIE MERIKAN is sitting in her rocker with the phone to her ear. She might appear to be a pleasant-looking grandma-type...if she didn't look so silly thanks to the sleeping mask/blindfold she's wearing. As she speaks, she slides the blindfold up to her forehead, like a pair of goggles. Then, she opens the venetian blinds to reveal a bright and pleasant living room.

EMMIE

Yes, this is Emmie. Who's this?

MARVA (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
Uh, my name is Marva Snodgrass from up Raleigh way.

EMMIE

You related to Tommy Lee?

MARVA (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
Why yes! He's my husband.

EMMIE

Give it the gas Snodgrass! This mean I won the Gas 'n' Go contest?

MARVA (O.S.)

Uh, no. You see Ms. Merikan...I've been doing some genealogy work lately--

INT. TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

MARVA

And, uh, well. Ma'am, I think your granddaughter is engaged to my son.

(MORE)

MARVA (CONT'D)

(pause)  
Hello? Ohmigod!

Tommy Lee turns quickly. What?!

MARVA (CONT'D)

I think I killed her!

EXT. THE LOWER EAST SIDE OFF FIRST AVENUE -- CONTINUOUS

Tucker's on the corner, phone to his ear, newspaper in hand.

TUCKER

How'd the photo shoot go?

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE -- CONTINUOUS

Vicky looks at her reflection in the chrome handle on the stainless steel Sub-Zero refrigerator.

VICKY

Sucked. Your apartment search?

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
Equally Sucked. The Realtor dumped me.

He what?

VICKY

Dumped you?

EXT. THE LOWER EAST SIDE OFF FIRST AVENUE -- CONTINUOUS

Tucker crosses the street, heading toward a corner bar, "O'Fanigan's Pub."

TUCKER

Said I needed to "get real" with my expectations. So far, though, all I got is "the 'real' creeps."

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE IN BROOKLYN HEIGHTS -- CONTINUOUS

Vicky walks to a window to take in the gorgeous view.

VICKY

Why don't we plan on spending a little time here at my parents' place?

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
Naw. We'll be happier on our own!

The view IS lovely.

TUCKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Besides, between your Daddy and that  
 love seat I'm sleepin' on, I'm not  
 feelin' all that welcome in Brooklyn.

Vicky looks around the brownstone. She's home.

EXT. THE LOWER EAST SIDE OFF FIRST AVENUE -- AFTERNOON

Tucker's right outside O'Fanigan's.

TUCKER  
 Think I'll grab a beer and check the  
 paper. Maybe I can find something  
 on my own. Love you!

VICKY (O.S.)  
 Love you, too.

He closes his phone and enters.

INT. O'FANIGAN'S PUB -- LATE AFTERNOON

The pub has booths on the two walls with windows that look out on the street. Tables and chairs fill the center. A large, ornately-carved mahogany bar takes up the entire back wall. Along the other windowless wall, is a raised bandstand with a drum set. Tucker sits down at the bar. MIMI, a cute, very athletic-looking bartender approaches.

MIMI  
 Whatcha' drinkin'?

TUCKER  
 Beer...whatever's cold.

Mimi grabs a glass and starts filling it with a draught. Tucker unfolds the paper to the classifieds. Mimi slides the beer over.

MIMI  
 Need a job?

TUCKER  
 No...apartment.

He takes a sip.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
 Ahh! Budweiser!

Finally! Someone he can trust! He lifts his glass to toast Mimi. She accepts. He takes a sip and looks at the paper.

MIMI  
 So, do you have a Realtor?

TUCKER

I did...until about 10 minutes ago.

Tucker takes a sip, pulls a pen out and circles an ad.

MIMI

What are you looking for?

TUCKER

Oh, I don't know...two bedrooms,  
bath and a half...maybe a deck with  
a view...nice kitchen. You know...

Right. Cute. He drains his beer. Thirstier than he thought.  
She takes his glass, and refills it and hands it back.

MIMI

Not from around here, are you?

TUCKER

I've been gettin' that all day. Is  
it that obvious?

MIMI

I might be able to help you get a  
place. Might not be all you want --  
but, it's affordable.

Is that hope in Tucker's eyes?

CUT TO:

EXT. O'FANIGAN'S PUB -- NIGHT

The Bar Band pounds out a home-brewed tune. We can see a  
light in the window of an apartment above the pub.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCKER'S STUDIO APARTMENT ABOVE THE PUB -- NIGHT

A quick tour of the one-room studio: small efficiency kitchen,  
tiny -- but, enclosed -- bathroom -- which is where the light  
is coming from. Nice -- except for the THUMPING BASS which  
pounds through the floor and walls. The Murphy bed, which  
takes up a good portion of the space, contains two people.  
Vicky, wearing a WRC-FM 92-7 T-shirt, is sitting on the edge  
of the bed, pulling on her socks. She checks her watch.

VICKY

It's midnight. They'll never stop.

She gets out of bed and slips into her jeans and shoes and  
turns on a light.

VICKY (CONT'D)

I'm going home. Back to my parents'.  
I gotta get some sleep. You coming?

TUCKER

No. This is our place. I like it.

He's kidding, right? She grabs her jacket off the microwave.  
Okay, he's not kidding.

VICKY

Suit yourself. I gotta get some  
sleep. See you at the station in  
the morning -- Don't be late.

TUCKER

Love you.

Small wave. She's out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOVAR'S USED CARS -- MORNING

A City Bus stops. Herb gets off and is engulfed in a dark plume of diesel smoke as the bus pulls away. He heads toward the small "Sales and Service Center" in the middle of the used car lot. Nearing the office door, he walks past his former car with a sign painted in yellow across the windshield that reads: "Cream Puff Once Driven by Radio Bigwig." Oh, that's nice. Herb steels himself and opens the door.

CUT TO:

INT. TOVAR'S CARS -- MORNING

Ivar is sitting at a metal desk in a sport coat and tie. He looks up from some paperwork as Herb enters.

IVAR

If you don't have the money, you  
can't have it back.

HERB

Now, take it easy Ivar.

IVAR

How many times have I been hearing  
you say "Take it easy, Ivar?"

No good answer for that one.

IVAR (CONT'D)

And, when I "take it easy," you do  
not pay. And, it becomes very hard  
for me to "take it easy."

HERB

You're right, Ivar. Uh...I've been thinking about the proposal you and your brother made a while back.

Ivar puts his hand in the air to stop Herb. He picks up the phone and punches the intercom button.

IVAR

(P.A. reverb)

Omar Tovar to the front office.  
Omar Tovar, please.

INT. TOVAR GARAGE AREA -- CONTINUOUS

Omar is the only one in the garage. He looks around, and heads for the door.

INT. TOVAR'S CARS -- CONTINUOUS

Omar comes in through the door from the shop. He's wearing coveralls with his name embroidered on his chest. He sees Herb and suddenly throws his hands up as if making fists. Is he going to fight? No...Omar simply grabs the top of his coveralls and yanks open the snaps to reveal he's wearing a sport coat that's identical to his brother's.

IVAR

Herb is wanting to talk about our offer.

OMAR

We are to become radio moguls, then?

Omar high-fives Ivar. They laugh and celebrate. Herb watches.

HERB

Yeah...and I'm about to become a used car salesman.

CUT TO:

INT. HERB HARGROVE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

In the darkened room (we can't tell where we are at the moment), a clock radio clicks 5 a.m. The clock radio comes on and the volume fades up.

IVAR (O.S.)

(radio eq)

And, so we are saying to you, goodbye.

OMAR (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Until it is tomorrow night at midnight!

IVAR (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Tonight, Omar. Tonight at midnight  
we are to return.

OMAR (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Ahh, yes. It is as you say. I beg  
a thousand pardons.

Herb rolls over in the dim light and finds himself eyeball  
to eyeball with Elaine.

ELAINE

Gee, they're great!

HERB

Make fun if you want. But, I got my  
car back!

CUT TO:

INT. TUCKER'S STUDIO APARTMENT ABOVE THE PUB -- DAWN

In the gray light, Tucker is on the floor...asleep in his  
clothes: Torn jeans, untied basketball shoes, green, tattered  
92.7 sweatshirt. His head is wedged in the apartment's tiny  
closet. His cell phone TWEETS. He stirs. It TWEETS again.  
He sits upright, bangs his head on the doorknob. The door  
wobbles open. Ow. He unfolds his phone.

TUCKER

Yeah. I'm up. No problem!

INT. WRAT-FM STUDIO -- EARLY MORNING

We HEAR music and see an Anonymous Jock in a T-shirt at the  
control console. Vicky's near the door, on the phone.

VICKY

Tucker where are you?

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)

I just woke up.

VICKY

You're late! We're on in 10 minutes!

CUT TO:

EXT. O'FANIGAN'S PUB -- EARLY MORNING

Tucker stumbles out the door and onto the sidewalk, narrowly  
missing Mimi, who's closing up the pub.

MIMI

Hey! Tucker! You okay?

TUCKER

I'm late for work. First day. But,  
it's okay. My car's right there.

Tucker points. We PAN across to see his car plastered with orange stickers from the Parking Authority.

MIMI

You didn't read the signs.

TUCKER

What signs?

MIMI

Alternate side of the street parking.

Tucker looks at a nearby sign.

ON THE SIGN -- reading "Alternate Side Parking" etc.

TUCKER

What's that mean?

MIMI

You're not from around here, are  
you?

A car stops at the curb and TOOTS.

MIMI (CONT'D)

My ride.

Mimi gets in the car. As it pulls away, Tucker trots across the street toward his Chevelle -- just as a tow truck stops beside it. He breaks into a run.

TUCKER

Hey, wait!

CUT TO:

P.O.V. OVER MIDTOWN MANHATTAN -- SUNRISE

The sunrise paints a spectacular picture of color, stone and steel over Manhattan. Note: All of the audio in this scene should be processed as if we're listening to it on the radio.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The satisfying way to wake up! Break  
'n' Wynd in the morning! On the RAT!

We HEAR an ELECTRONIC SWOOSH.

VICKY (O.S.)  
'Morning, New York! I'm Vicky Wynd...

TUCKER (O.S.)  
(phone eq)  
And, I'm Tucker...uh...Brake! Runnin'  
a little late for work today -  
literally.

We tilt down and start a SLOW ZOOM on Fifth Avenue below.

VICKY (O.S.)  
Our FIRST day on a new job, Tucker.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
I'm sorry Vicky! I'd a made it on  
time -- but the numskulls in the  
Parking Authority towed my car.

We begin to focus on a lone figure...running down the street.  
It's Tucker, running -- cell phone to his ear.

VICKY (O.S.)  
Let me guess: Alternate side of the  
street parking?

TUCKER  
How come nobody told me about this?

VICKY (O.S.)  
So, who's REALLY the numskull?

TUCKER  
Hey!

VICKY (O.S.)  
Those orange stickers don't come off  
your windows, you know.

We're at street level, just behind Tucker. As he runs, he  
has to dodge around cars turning right, people sleeping on  
the walk, vendors pulling their carts out for the day, etc.

TUCKER  
It's not funny to tease a man who's  
out of time and short of breath.

VICKY (O.S.)  
I've got a caller on the phone from  
Queens, right now. Say hi to Mario.

TUCKER  
Hey, Mario!

MARIO (O.S.)  
Break 'n' Wynd. I get it. It's like  
a fart.

TUCKER (O.S.)

No, it's like...our names, man.

MARIO (O.S.)

Oh, yeah. I'm believin' that. It would make more sense...if her name was "Dust" and yours was "Buster." 'Cause you guys suck...bigtime!

CLICK.

TUCKER

Good one, Mario! If you ever get your own radio show, you can call it "Break 'n' Balls!"

VICKY (O.S.)

James! You're on The RAT!

JAMES (O.S.)

Hey! Good show...good names.

TUCKER

Hey! A New Yorker with taste!

JAMES (O.S.)

Hey, Tucker, question: How would you describe yourself?

VICKY (O.S.)

Aside from "breathless?"

TUCKER

Very funny. Uh, I'm about 6-2 with rakish good looks --

JAMES (O.S.)

Cut to the chase, man. You wearin' a pair of jeans and a green sweatshirt?

Tucker looks down.

VICKY (O.S.)

You're wearing that crappy thing on our first day?

TUCKER

Gimme a break. I slept in it. Uh, yeah, James. How'd you know?

JAMES

Who cares? You want a ride, or not?

A motorcycle pulls up beside Tucker. JAMES is a biker on a cell phone. He nods at Tucker. Get on.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MARVA-PIG FARM AND FEEDLOT -- MORNING

The rock song fades as Tommy Lee and Marva walk out to the pick-up truck. She gets in the passenger side. He gets in. She slams the door as Tommy Lee gets in.

INT. TRUCK -- MORNING

Tommy Lee starts the engine and revs it a couple times.

TOMMY LEE

We oughta' be there in two hours.

MARVA

That's okay. I told Mrs. Merikan it'd be lunchtime before we got in.

She turns on the radio. A country version of the rock song we just heard is fading.

LARRY (O.S.)

(radio eq)

97-2...uh - 92-SEVEN. It's the All Night Larry in the Morning Show! I'm all night Larry...and this is the morning...show.

Tommy Lee reaches over and snaps off the radio.

TOMMY LEE

Poor Herb.

CUT TO:

INT. WRAT-FM BUILDING IN MIDTOWN -- MORNING

MUSIC plays. Steph, wearing a Walkman, waits for the elevator. Outside the doors, James rides as Tucker bursts through the front doors at a gallop. He spots the GM and turns away quickly. What do I do? I'M SO FREAKIN' LATE! She spots Tucker's reflection in a window. Caught. The elevator doors open. He tries to be casual and walks on with her. Stephanie eyes him; takes off her headphones.

STEPHANIE

I can't believe this.

Uh-oh, here it comes.

TUCKER

I know, I know.

STEPHANIE

What a great bit! Funny. Inventive.  
Great way to get the show on the  
streets the first day. Bravo.

Whew!

INT. WRAT-FM STUDIO -- MORNING

Vicky is at the console, headphones on.

VICKY

Break 'n' Wynd in the morning on the  
Rat and --

Vicky looks up and sees Tucker and Steph enter. She throws  
headset mic either to -- or at -- him. You be the judge.  
He slips on the mic.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Tucker's finally made it in. And our  
General Manager, Stephanie Miller is  
here, too. Here to give us notice?

TUCKER

She's smiling. Guess our job's safe.

STEPHANIE

Hi guys. Yeah, you're safe. Today.  
I want you guys -- I want everybody  
to pay attention when you go outside  
today -- watch for the banners and  
posters all over the City...for the  
"Win-a-Date with Vicky" contest!

Stephanie points out the window. Across the street, workmen  
are unfurling a contest banner.

VICKY

Wow! The great unveiling of ME on  
the side of a building.

TUCKER

I can't wait to see this!

P.O.V. FROM THE RAT STUDIO TO THE BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET

Workers on the roof unroll a huge banner on the side of the  
building. As it unfurls, we see: "Win-a-Date with Vicky!  
Listen to Break 'n' Wynd on RAT-FM." The picture of Vicky  
is heavily air-brushed, her boobs have been enlarged and her  
hair seems to have been drawn-on. She wearing the eye-patch.

TUCKER

You look like a pirate.

What? What'd I say?

CUT TO:

INT. WRAT-FM CONFERENCE ROOM -- LATER

Tucker, Vicky and G.Kenny are on opposite sides of the WRAT FM conference table. Outside it's raining.

G. KENNY  
Steph liked it. I didn't. Too much  
"you." Not enough "Win an Date."

There's an uncomfortable pause. The consultant doesn't have to explain. But he loves to hear himself talk.

G. KENNY (CONT'D)  
This station wants 18-34 males.  
You're the key here, Ms. Wynd .

VICKY  
Could you just call me Vicky.

TUCKER  
Are you saying I'm not important?

Oh oh. Some attitude, here. Back to basics, G!

G. KENNY  
Look. Forget the petty stuff. You  
guys should focus on one word: Unreal.

He didn't just say that, did he?

G. KENNY (CONT'D)  
You're both way too real. Too much  
like...real people. Research shows  
people have too much reality in their  
lives! They don't need more reality.  
You want to make it? You gotta be  
unreal. NOT yourselves!

Okay. Sure. But we don't understand.

TUCKER  
You mean like when you said: "Be  
somebody else."

VICKY  
Anybody but us.

G. KENNY  
Bingo!

And, this is only the first day.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRAT-FM BUILDING IN MIDTOWN -- AFTERNOON

It's drizzling as Vicky and Tucker walk out of the radio station building. A "Date" billboard is visible in the background.

TUCKER

I feel strange...not like myself.

VICKY

Well, according to our consultant, that's a good thing.

TUCKER

You know what I could go for right now? Some good ol' hot 'n' spicy chicken from Petey's Pit back home!

An UMBRELLA GUY comes down the street past them.

UMBRELLA GUY

Umbrellas, 5-dollars. Umbrellas!

Vicky stops the guy, hands him a 5 and takes an umbrella. The Umbrella Guy walks off. Tucker watches as Vicky pushes the "auto open" button. The umbrella pops open - as a gust of wind hits it - and turns it inside out.

CUT TO:

EXT. NC RTE 17 IN SOUTHPORT -- AFTERNOON

The Marva-Pig pick-up truck rolls past a "Welcome to Southport, NC" sign. It turns off Rte 17 and onto a street filled with vintage homes, shaded by huge Live-Oak trees.

INT. TRUCK -- AFTERNOON

The bucolic scene has calmed the frayed nerves.

TOMMY LEE

Boy, I know this place!

MARVA

So, this is where Artie Merikan lived?

TOMMY LEE

Damn straight!

P.O.V. THRU THE WINDSHIELD AT A PICTURE-PERFECT VINTAGE CAPE

Emmie, a pleasant "grandma" type, stands and waves from the porch.

TOMMY LEE (O.S.)  
And THAT'S definitely his momma!

CUT TO:

INT. INDIAN RESTAURANT -- AFTERNOON

We HEAR SITAR MUSIC. Vicky and Tucker are at a window table of an Indian Restaurant. Tucker looks at a plate of something unidentifiable. A "Date" poster is in view, outside.

VICKY  
Don't be a baby! You said you wanted  
some hot and spicy chicken!

TUCKER  
I was thinkin' barbecue. Not...this.

VICKY  
You'll try anything on the show.

TUCKER  
Yeah...but this is my lunch.

How do you reason with a numskull? She looks away, out the window, just as her friend, Ferris, walks by.

VICKY  
Ohmigod! Ferris!

Vicky jumps up and runs out of the restaurant to catch Ferris. Tucker watches her run to the doorway.

TUCKER  
Oh great...the old boyfriend. Another  
thing I didn't need at lunch.

Vicky comes back to the table, dragging Ferris by the hand.

VICKY  
Tucker! You remember Ferris!

Tucker nods to Ferris.

FERRIS  
I'm sorry to interrupt.

VICKY  
Don't be silly! You're not  
interrupting! Sit down!

Ferris takes a chair from a nearby table and slides between Vicky and Tucker. He looks at Tucker's plate.

FERRIS  
Oh, Murgh Nargisi! My favorite.

He looks around and spots a lithe, young Indian waiter.

FERRIS (CONT'D)  
Gajendra! Another plate of Murgh  
Nargisi, if you please. And tell  
Prabir not to spare the coriander!

Just what the waiter wants to hear. He hurries to the kitchen.

VICKY  
This is so great. Isn't it Tucker?

What? Yeah. Great. Food I can't eat. A guy I can't stand.

FERRIS  
I'm so glad I ran into you two. I'm  
having a party at my place tonight.  
You've just got to come.

VICKY  
We'd love to.

FERRIS  
Wonderful.

TUCKER  
I don't think we should, Vicky. We  
have to get some sleep before the  
midnight show starts.

VICKY  
Oh, right. I forgot. That's why  
I'm staying with my parents.

Was that necessary? Ferris looks back to Vicky. What are you talking about?

VICKY (CONT'D)  
Our new apartment's on the lower  
East side...above a bar. I couldn't  
sleep there...had to move back.

FERRIS  
(to Tucker)  
Must be quite an adjustment for you.

TUCKER  
It's just for the time being.

The waiter shows up with a plate of food for Ferris.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
Right?

They start eating in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. HERB'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Herb, Elaine and Larry are eating carry-out and cutting and pasting Larry's face over Tucker's face on the All-Merikan Morning Show stand-up displays. Elaine runs the printer, Herb cuts out the face, Larry uses rubber cement to glue on the bad idea.

HERB

Look, Larry, I didn't say you stink.

ELAINE

He could have said it...but he didn't.

Is Larry about to cry?

HERB

Elaine, please. Larry, all I'm sayin' is you need to work a little harder.

LARRY

I know. But, there's so much pressure in the morning.

HERB

It's the same thing. You're doing the same show -- only at a different time.

LARRY

It's morning drive -- people are actually LISTENING!

Elaine's had enough. She walks out. Herb looks at his watch.

HERB

Look, the Tovar Diner Donut promotion isn't going well.

LARRY

I like donuts.

Their eyes meet. Are they finally communicating?

HERB

Aw, hell. I gotta go, too.

Herb grabs a name tag off his desk that reads: "Tovar Cars: Herb Hargrove." He looks at it briefly.

HERB (CONT'D)

Keep the faith, Larry.

Herb pins the name tag on his sport coat and walks out.  
Larry glues his face over Tucker's one more time.

CUT TO:

INT. WRAT-FM CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Tucker, Vicky, Stephanie and G.Kenny are at the table.

STEPHANIE

I'm just saying "Win a Date" isn't working. That's all.

G. KENNY

Well, it's not my fault. It worked great in Cleveland when Andy and Sandy did it.

TUCKER

We're not Andy and Sandy.

G. KENNY

No...you're not.

VICKY

What's that supposed to mean?

G. KENNY

Come to think of it...Jill and Bill in Tampa did great with it, too.

STEPHANIE

Stop it. That's not helping.

Stephanie looks across the table to Tucker and Vicky.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

The problem is, it's coming down to the wire...and we don't have enough entries for the sponsor.

The consultant's done.

G. KENNY

It's hopeless.

Nice attitude.

TUCKER

You know, maybe we've been spending a little too much time trying to be Andy and Sandy and not enough time just being ourselves -- Vicky Merikan and Tucker Snodgrass.

G. KENNY

Oh, brother.

Steph glances at G.Kenny.

STEPHANIE  
Go on. I'm listening.

CUT TO:

INT. TOVAR'S CARS -- AFTERNOON

Herb walks in. Ivar and Omar are sharing a gyro.

HERB  
I'm here.

OMAR  
Partner!

Ivar walks over to shake hands.

IVAR  
Is so good to own a radio station!

HERB  
It's good for me, too guys. I get someone to share the expenses, a car...and someone to work overnights.

OMAR  
And, we are getting the five-hour infomercial every day!

IVAR  
Night...we are on at night, Omar.

OMAR  
Ah, yes. It is as you say.

Ivar pats Herb on the back, then checks his greasy hand, wipes it on a napkin -- and shows Herb to his desk.

IVAR  
Partner, this is your desk.

The sign on the desk says "Herb Hargrove Sales Assistant."

HERB  
I thought my title was "Sales Associate."

IVAR  
Assistant...Associate...all the same thing. Right, Omar?

Omar agrees and hands Ivar a crumpled piece of note paper -- which he hands to Herb. What's this?

IVAR (CONT'D)  
Is a letter. You are the new  
Assistant. Type it.

OFF HERB'S REACTION...WE,

CUT TO:

MUSIC MONTAGE -- Time passes. All voices are radio eq.

INT. VICKY'S BEDROOM IN THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

Vicky sleeps quietly in the soft moonlight of her childhood  
bedroom. Arthur is peeking in on her. He smiles.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
Break 'n' Wynd in the mornin'

VICKY (O.S.)  
Ridin' the RAT 'til 10!

TUCKER (O.S.)  
You sound like you're in a good mood.

VICKY (O.S.)  
Sure! So many guys are stoked to win  
a date with me -- Vicky Wynd!

TUCKER (O.S.)  
Win an Extreme Date with Vicky...  
sponsored by Dutchman Paints.

VICKY (O.S.)  
Exactly! Extreme Dates and Dutchman  
Paints go together like oil and water.

TUCKER  
Oil and Water-based Latex paints, of  
course, from Dutchman!

INT. HERB HARGROVE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The moonlight highlight's Elaine's peaceful, sleeping face.

But, Herb tosses fitfully.

IVAR (O.S.)  
You are listening to 92-7! The Country  
Music you are craving...

OMAR (O.S.)  
...And the Tovar Brothers with our  
witty banter...

IVAR (O.S.)  
...The best deals on used cars you  
can find in all of Wake County...

OMAR (O.S.)  
 ...And coupons for breakfast sandwich  
 from the fabulous...The Tovar Diner!

IVAR (O.S.)  
 Stop Omar! You are making me so  
 hungry...for good deals!

INT. O'FANIGAN'S PUB -- NIGHT

A big, noisy crowd is on hand for the house band. Tucker  
 sips coffee at the bar, talking and laughing with Mimi.

CALLER 2 (O.S.)  
 Want you guys to know...I just entered  
 the contest for the date!

VICKY (O.S.)  
 Great! Good luck!

CALLER 2 (O.S.)  
 The guy who needs the luck is Tucker.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
 Oh? Why's that?

CALLER 2 (O.S.)  
 You don't go on a date with the Big  
 Deano...without some face-sucking.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
 Face-sucking?

VICKY (O.S.)  
 He means "osculation."

CALLER 2  
 Yeah! We could do that, too!

CLICK

TUCKER (O.S.)  
 Sorry Big Deano...we got cut off.

EXT. BROOKLYN SIDEWALK -- EARLY MORNING

Vicky walks toward a subway entrance.

VICKY (O.S.)  
 You are jealous.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
 No. I'm thinkin' about cold sores.

VICKY  
 (squeals)

EXT. THE MARVA-PIG FARM AND FEEDLOT -- EARLY MORNING

Tommy Lee is standing outside a pen full of squealing pigs.

LARRY (O.S.)  
 All-Night Larry in the Morning...  
 reminding you to join the 92-7 All  
 Night Morning Wake Up Club.

The beat up WRC-FM 92-7 Aerostar van, with Tim behind the wheel, pulls up next to Tommy Lee.

LARRY (CONT'D)  
 Our Prize Patrol Van is out there,  
 filled with All Night Morning  
 Merchandise.

Tommy Lee walks to the van, opens the side doors, revealing bags of stale donuts from Tovar's Diner.

LARRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Send us a card and tell us you can't  
 wake up without All-Night Larry in  
 the Morning Wake Up Club specials...  
 and we'll deliver them right to your  
 door.

Tommy Lee grabs some bags and dumps the Tovar donuts into the pen full of pigs.

EXT. O'FANIGAN'S PUB -- EARLY MORNING

Tucker and Mimi walk out the pub's front door. He says something. She laughs as she locks-up. They walk toward his sticker-plastered Chevelle. A "Date" billboard is visible.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
 So, now that we've added a big, wet,  
 sloppy kiss, is that sponsored by  
 Dutchman Paint, too?

VICKY (O.S.)  
 Absolutely. In order to get them to  
 sponsor this deal, I had to go over  
 to their offices and do a lap-dance  
 for the President of the company!

INT. HERB HARGROVE'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Herb navigates into his kitchen, lighted only by LED read outs from clocks on various appliances. He opens a cabinet, fumbles around and pulls out a bottle of something. As he turns around, we see he's sipping the PINK STUFF.

IVAR (O.S.)  
 Omar! Tell me, and all our loyal  
 friends on the radio, you are joking.

OMAR (O.S.)

Ivar. A Tovar is a lot of things.  
But, we are not joking...unless we  
are kidding...and I am not kidding.

IVAR (O.S.)

So, you are not joking.

OMAR (O.S.)

Am not. The numbers are not lying.  
We are doing this show two months  
and the diner, the used cars, the  
towing. They are all the same.  
This radio is not making business to  
be better.

IVAR (O.S.)

But, my brother, our business is no  
longer cars and food. Now, we are  
in the show business!

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE IN BROOKLYN HEIGHTS -- MORNING

Arthur and Naomi are eating breakfast in their kitchen. The  
radio has their uncomfortable attention.

TUCKER (O.S.)

So, you're going to give our contest  
winner a tongue-wagging lip-lock...

VICKY (O.S.)

No tongues! Just a little pucker.

TUCKER (O.S.)

A what?!

VICKY (O.S.)

I said "PUCKER."

OFF ARTHUR AND NAOMI'S REACTIONS, WE...

CUT TO:

EXT. WRC-FM -- DAY

It's another day in downtown Raleigh.

HERB (O.S.)

Larry, I'm not sayin' you're bad.  
But, we're not movin' the Tovar  
Donuts...

A phone RINGS.

INT. HERB'S OFFICE -- DAY

Herb's at his desk. Larry is sitting opposite Herb, next to a stand-up display. Beside Larry's pasted-on face, there's another change: A message above Vicky reads: "Vicky Merikan says: 'I Love All Night Larry in the Morning!'"

HERB

Herb Hargrove...

(pause)

Tucker! How's the Big Apple?

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN -- DAY

The Chevelle moves slowly through Midtown traffic. Big pieces of the Parking Authority stickers are still stuck to the windshield and side windows.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)

I guess, if it was goin' great, I wouldn't be calling. I wouldn't have time.

INT. CHEVY CHEVELLE -- DAY

Tucker's cell phone is plugged into a hands-free device.

HERB (O.S.)

(speaker phone eq)

Oh oh. What's wrong?

TUCKER

Between my work and my love-life?  
Just about everything.

HERB (O.S.)

You and Vicky reset the wedding yet?

TUCKER

Uh, no. No, we haven't.

HERB (O.S.)

(speaker phone eq)

That's not good.

TUCKER

Tell me about it.

INT. HERB'S OFFICE -- DAY

Larry picks up the scissors off Herb's desk and starts trimming his fingernails with them.

HERB

How's she doin'? Is she happy?

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
That's just it. I don't know. Except  
for the show, we haven't really talked  
for a couple of weeks.

HERB

Couple of weeks? That's bad.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
I know.

HERB

You're too important to each other.  
You gotta get out in front of this!

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
Out in front.

HERB

Yeah! Think of something!

INT. CHEVY CHEVELLE -- DAY

It's great talking to a real friend, again.

TUCKER

Well, maybe I could call her up and  
ask her out on a date. You think?

HERB (O.S.)

(speaker phone eq)  
It's that bad, huh?

Tucker TOOTS his horn at a car ahead...50 HORNS respond.

TUCKER

Yeah. And speakin' of bad...you  
should meet our consultant.

INT. HERB'S OFFICE -- DAY

Herb sits forward in his chair, grabs a pen and paper. He  
glances at Larry who is completely focused on nail trimming.

HERB

Why? What's he telling you?

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)  
For starters? "Don't be yourself.  
Listen to other guys on the radio  
and be like them."

He writes something on the pad.

HERB

Yeah? What else?...Yeah...Uh huh.

As Herb writes furiously on his note pad we focus in on Larry as he trims a fingernail...then CROSSFADE to a similar shot, only now he's trimming a toenail.

HERB (CONT'D)

Uh huh...Well, try workin' with him.  
Maybe he's not as dumb as he sounds.

Herb's had enough of toenail clipping. He reaches across the desk and yanks the scissors away from Larry who is surprised anyone else is in the room. Larry puts his sock back on.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)

Okay. So to sum it all up: Get ahead of the situation with Vicky. And maybe he's not as dumb as I think.

HERB

Words to live by!

TUCKER (O.S.)

So, how's it goin' at the old 92.7?

HERB

Terrific! You kiddin'? Great! No problemo!

TUCKER (O.S.)

(phone eq)

Good. Glad to hear it. Herb, thanks.

HERB

Bye, Tucker.

LARRY

Wow. It's good to hear I'm doin' great!

Numskull! Herb slides a note pad and pen across the desk to his morning man who catches them.

HERB

Listen, Larry...I've got a few things I want you to do. Write this down... Try not to be yourself.

Larry starts writing furiously.

HERB (CONT'D)

Try to be like somebody successful...

CUT TO:

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

Vicky walks in the front door. Arthur is sitting in a leather chair, reading. Naomi is dozing on a couch by the fireplace.

VICKY

I'm home.

Arthur puts down the book.

ARTHUR

I never get tired of hearing you say that. How was dinner with Nel?

God, it feels like high school! She hangs her coat on the hall tree. Naomi wakes up...groggily.

VICKY

I was supposed to be married five weeks ago. Things are all screwed up. Tucker and I don't even talk to each other anymore...except at work.

Arthur tries not to act pleased by the news.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Nel's right. I need to do something!

NAOMI

(Southern accent)  
Arthur, did ya'll tell Vicky that Tucker called?

He glances over. Why couldn't she just keep sleeping?

ARTHUR

Uh...no. Not yet.

VICKY

Tucker called?

Ignore the question and focus on Naomi!

ARTHUR

Why are you talking like that?

NAOMI

Am I doing it again?

Uh...yes.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
 (Southern accent)  
 I was dreamin' we were all from North  
 Carolina.

Arthur stands and walks away toward the kitchen.

ARTHUR  
 Wasn't a dream. That was a nightmare.

Arthur disappears into the kitchen. Vicky looks at Naomi.

VICKY  
 What did Tucker say?

NAOMI  
 (Southern)  
 Well, darlin' girl, as I can recall --

VICKY  
 Mother...Arthur's right. Stop it.

NAOMI  
 Sorry. He wants to meet you for  
 breakfast at an all-night diner on  
 the Lower East Side.

VICKY  
 The Kiev!

Arthur calls out from behind the door.

ARTHUR (O.S.)  
 It figures. Southerners and greasy  
 spoons...you can't keep 'em apart.

NAOMI  
 I think it's romantic.

Arthur comes back out of the kitchen into the conversation.

ARTHUR  
 It's run by Russians. When was Russia  
 ever romantic?

NAOMI  
 I'm thinking Dr. Zhivago...maybe?

That one hurt.

VICKY  
 I'm not gonna go there to meet him.

Arthur's thinking, "That's my girl!" Naomi's disappointed.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
 I'll surprise him! I'll be waiting  
 in front of his place tomorrow morning  
 when he walks out to go meet me!

Naomi's relieved. Arthur's wounded.

CUT TO:

EXT. TUCKER'S STUDIO APARTMENT ABOVE THE PUB -- NIGHT

The street is silent. Vicky surfaces from a subway exit near O'Fanigan's. She's about to start across the street when the door to the pub opens and Tucker and Mimi step out. They're laughing, enjoying the other's company. She watches briefly and turns around to leave. As Vicky slips back into the subway...we,

CUT TO:

EXT. OVER MIDTOWN MANHATTAN -- MORNING

Traffic, people, sirens, horns. A typical day in midtown unfolds. We HEAR a TYMPANI roll. The entire segment for the Announcer, Tucker and Vicky is in a radio eq.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
 Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for  
 starting your work day the right way  
 ...with Break 'n' Wynd from The RAT!

We HEAR a small rat SQUEAK and FART.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
 Ahhh! Feel better, Vicky?

VICKY (O.S.)  
 Bite me, Tucker. I saw what I saw.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
 I wasn't with another woman!

VICKY (O.S.)  
 She sure looked like a female...a  
 cute one, too.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
 I'd like to settle this once and for  
 all. But, right now, we've got some  
 business to take care of. Time to  
 announce the name of the lucky guy  
 who just might get lucky...after he  
 wins an Extreme Date with Vicky Wynd!

VICKY (O.S.)  
 The way I'm feelin' right now. He  
 could get REAL lucky.

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE KITCHEN -- MORNING

The radio is on. Arthur's eating some kind of nasty-looking bran cereal, Naomi is sipping some tea and eating a muffin.

TUCKER (O.S.)

Okay, you heard it guys! The lady is pissed! And, that could make you an even bigger winner!

VICKY (O.S.)

One thing's for sure, you couldn't be a bigger A-hole.

Arthur and Naomi would have turned off the radio long ago -- if that wasn't their daughter.

TUCKER (O.S.)

We were supposed to meet at the Kiev.

VICKY (O.S.)

Yeah? Well, I wanted to surprise you -- so, I went to your apartment. That's where I saw you with that woman.

ARTHUR

Gotcha...ya' Southern Fried rat bastard!

CUT TO:

INT. A BEDROOM -- MORNING

The light in the bedroom is dim as Stephanie pulls the covers back from over her face and looks at her clock radio.

STEPHANIE

Are you hearing this?

She looks under the covers. Someone starts working their way to the top of the bed.

TUCKER (O.S.)

Okay. Let's just get on with it. The winner of the Extreme Date with Vicky is...Stan Mastrone of Carroll Gardens.

VICKY (O.S.)

Stanley! You just might get REAL lucky tomorrow.

TUCKER

Since the date ends with lunch -- are we talkin' about a "nooner?"

A SONG starts. G.Kenny pokes out from under the covers.

G. KENNY  
They're disc jockeys. They're born  
like that.

VICKY (O.S.)  
Break 'n' Wynd music...on The RAT.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
Why are you playing a song?

VICKY (O.S.)  
'Cause we gotta talk!

The VOCAL begins. G.Kenny starts to sink beneath the covers  
again. Stephanie slaps his head.

STEPHANIE  
Look, you insisted -- God knows why --  
on hiring these two. You assured me  
they were perfect.

G. KENNY  
She is. She's perfect.

STEPHANIE  
Right. That's why you're still talking  
to the guy in Philadelphia.

G. KENNY  
Big Cat.

STEPHANIE  
Whatever. Look, I have bosses, too.

They have a general rule. You get to fire one...and hire  
one. The consultant wakes up. Are we having this discussion  
in bed?

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
You fired Mac & Marianne...and you  
hired Break 'n' Wynd.

G. KENNY  
What are you trying to say?

STEPHANIE  
Your job is on the line, G.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- MORNING

A small crowd hovers near the RAT SUV on a frosty morning.  
In the crowd: Steph, G. Kenny, Mimi, Nel, Donna, Phyllis,  
Ferris, Naomi and 60 folks from Dutchman Paint wearing yellow  
sweatshirts with a logo that reads: "Dutchman Paints We Go  
To Extremes."

Tucker, who's also wearing one of the sweatshirts, is about to start the show, when Steph comes forward with GLEN FRYBAUM -- the balding, chubby 39 year old East Coast Regional Marketing Director from Dutchman Paints. He's wearing a suit and tie, with the yellow sweatshirt under his suit jacket.

STEPHANIE

Tucker! Someone I want you to meet.

Tucker checks his watch.

TUCKER

Less than a minute to air!

STEPHANIE

Tucker, this is Glen Frybaum...he's the East Coast Regional Marketing Director from Dutchman Paints. They've got 60 people here to watch you guys!

Tucker and Glen shake hands. Stephanie stands to the side smiling during the "conversation."

GLEN

You guys are great!

Always feels nice to get a compliment!

GLEN (CONT'D)

I haven't heard you. I listen to Satellite Radio. But, I've heard all about you. And, I've stared at the billboard of Vicky so much, I feel like I know her intimately. Any chance of meeting her?

Hmm. Glen's losing Tucker -- tries to reconnect.

GLEN (CONT'D)

You know, when I was a kid, I used to listen to the station when Bubba O'Reilly was there. Remember him?

TUCKER

No, I'm not from here --

GLEN

--He used to do a bit...

Glen pauses to reminisce with himself. He laughs.

GLEN (CONT'D)

God! Nobody will ever top that!

Tucker checks his watch.

TUCKER

Uh, gotta go, Mr. Frybaum!

They shake hands. Stephanie pats Glen on the back.

GLEN

Call me "Glen." And, tell Vicky to do that, too!

Ick. Stephanie and Glen step aside. Tucker adjusts his mic and headset and turns to the crowd.

TUCKER

(PA eq)

It's time for Break 'n' Wynd on an Extreme Date with Vicky -- here on the RAT! Ya'll ready? Come on!

Let's hear it for 'em! The small crowd HOLLERS. Vicky and the contest winner STAN MASTRONE get out of the RAT SUV in luge-racing suits and full-face helmets. Vicky looks gorgeous in the skin-tight suit.

Stan looks like 20 pounds of potatoes stuffed in a 10-pound sack. He's 40-something and extraordinarily hairy. So, hairy, in fact, body hair is poking through his skintight suit.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Extreme dating! Street Luge racing!

The crowd CHEERS. Vicky and Stan wave.

STAN

How 'bout a kiss for luck?

VICKY

Don't get ahead of yourself Stanley.

Vicky waves again and runs to her street luge.

STAN

The name's Stan!

Stan shrugs and goes to his luge.

TUCKER

No secret. The hills in the Park aren't too steep. No real street luge challenges here. That's why we've added horsepower to the luges!

Two carriages are quickly roped to the luges. Tucker jumps into the carriage tied to Vicky's luge. The crowd CHEERS.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Let the Extreme Date begin! Giddyup!

The horses trot away, yanking their SCREAMING human, supine cargo along behind.

MUSIC MONTAGE -- The luges slide wide in turns, as the carriages race around the park. Vicky and Stan are having fun...until--

ON THE HORSE'S HIND QUARTERS -- Yep...it's HORSE POOP!

EXT. TRUMP TOWER -- DAY

Establishing shot of the famous building during rush hour.

INT. TRUMP TOWER ATRIUM -- DAY

We're level with the top of the 70-foot waterfall.

ON A LEGAL DOCUMENT: "Waiver of Injury or Death."

Vicky signs it, then hands it to...DONALD TRUMP, wearing a "Dutchman Paints" ball cap. He checks the signatures, smiles and directs them to a scaffold - erected across the void between the railing and the waterfall. Below, the crowd has grown...as a nervous Naomi leans on Ferris for support.

INT. TRUMP TOWER WATERFALL -- DAY

Vicky and a nervous Stan, in rappelling gear, lean out from the top of the waterfall. Vicky nods at Stan. She pushes off in a controlled fall. Stan doesn't move. As she returns to the wall the first time, she finds Tucker broadcasting on the ledge next to her.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE AT 59TH -- DAY

Vicky and Stan ride across the huge intersection on BMX bikes. They're wearing bike helmets, knee and elbow pads. In Central Park, they're joined by BMX Stunt Riders who perform tricks over benches, etc. Just as it's getting interesting, Tucker rides in, does a wheelie and falls on his butt.

ON VICKY -- who's not impressed by the antics.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK GREAT LAWN -- LATER

A two-seat ultra-light aircraft idles at the edge of the large grassy area. The crowd is now several hundred strong. Vicky and Stan are already strapped in their seats.

STAN

I'm hate flyin'. I'm gonna be sick.

VICKY

Stan! After this, we go to lunch.

He woofs his cookies. She pulls out a Tic Tac and hands it to Stan. Then, she yanks her seatbelts tighter. He BURPS.

TUCKER

(PA eq/over crowd)

Great way to end a date! So romantic!  
Airsick, strapped in and ready to  
fly with someone who just recently  
learned how.

The crowd LAUGHS. Stan jerks around to look at Vicky. She lowers her goggles into position and guns the engine. The ultra-light rolls across the grass, bounces a couple of times and gets airborne. The crowd "OOH'S!"

TUCKER (CONT'D)

They're up -- they're flying.. But--

The fun's suddenly gone from his voice.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

That engine's got an odd sound to  
it.

Tucker picks up a walkie-talkie.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Vicky, everything okay? The engine  
sounds weird.

EXT. THE ULTRA-LIGHT -- EARLY MORNING

Vicky's fine. The funny HIGH PITCHED WHINE is Stan...who's SCREAMING at the top of his lungs.

VICKY

The Engine's fine. The funny sound  
is Stan. He's losin' it. I'm turnin'  
around. Now!

She makes a tight 180° turn and heads back to The Great Lawn.

ON STAN -- he's panicking! He reaches for his safety harness.

STAN

I gotta get down!

He pops his harness, slides sideways, out of the seat, toward Earth -- but, somehow, grabs the landing gear -- still SCREAMING. Vicky struggles for control. The little plane dips and rises, with Stan dangling underneath.

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE -- MORNING

Arthur's at the breakfast table. A half-chewed bite of something falls out of his mouth.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Stan's hanging off the landing gear!

(calling off)

Don't let him fall into the propeller!

EXT. THE ULTRA-LIGHT -- EARLY MORNING

Stan dangles...the plane wobbles.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Bring him toward me. I'll grab him.

I'm in the yellow shirt!

We turn forward, toward the Great Lawn. Oh oh! Stan's about to clip the top of Cleopatra's Needle.

VICKY (O.S.)

Pull your feet up, Stan!

EXT. THE GREAT LAWN IN CENTRAL PARK -- EARLY MORNING

The crowd SCREAMS as the ultra-light wings over with Stan's feet barely missing the top of the landmark. Vicky's now on final for the field. But, where's Tucker?

VICKY (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Jesus! Is everybody in a yellow shirt?

Which one's you?

Tucker looks around at all the Dutchman Paint employees in their yellow shirts. Oh, crap! He struggles to take off his sweatshirt.

TUCKER

I'm taking off the yellow shirt.

I've got a red one underneath. Low

and slow, hon'. Low and slow. Hang

on.

He gets tangled in his shirt and headphone-mic and can't see. He stumbles, wrestling himself inside his shirt.

EXT. THE ULTRA-LIGHT -- MORNING

Vicky modulates the throttle, fighting to control the unbalanced little plane in at low speed.

VICKY

Tucker! I don't see you!

EXT. THE GREAT LAWN IN CENTRAL PARK -- MORNING

Tucker has his shirt up over his head, arms in the air. He's struggling to take off the shirt; but, it ain't workin'.

TUCKER

I'm stuck in this damn shirt!

He turns the OPPOSITE way. Now, his back is toward the descending plane; and, it's about to hit him! At that moment, Ferris leaps out of the crowd, catches Stan's ankles and grabs him off the plane's undercarriage. They crash to the ground. The sudden jerk on the ultra-light causes the plane to change direction and fly toward the crowd. SCREAMS. They duck. Vicky regains control, misses everyone by inches, and skids to a landing.

ON STEPHANIE AND G.KENNY -- She looks grim.

G. KENNY

Don't worry. I've got the name of a great lawyer.

Yeah. Right.

ON FERRIS AND STAN -- Ferris is on top of Stan. Tucker topples over the two and lands on top of them.

STAN

Hey!

Stan punches Tucker, still tangled in his shirt. WHOP!

TUCKER

Ow! Hey!

Tucker and Ferris roll off Stan. Ferris helps Tucker untangle his shirt and headphone cord. As he re-emerges, Tucker can't believe he's looking at Ferris. Stan gets up, counting body parts. Tucker adjusts his headset and gets back on the air.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

So, Stan! Great date, huh?

STAN

Yeah, I made an ass of myself in front of a bunch of strangers. And, nearly died, ya' putz!

Stan turns to Ferris who is just standing up.

STAN (CONT'D)

This guy here? He's a man's man!

Thanks pal. You're the real deal. He and Ferris exchange high fives. Stan walks off.

TUCKER

Where you goin', Stanley?

STAN

Don't call me Stanley! And, keep  
your hands to yourself.

He disappears into the crowd.

TUCKER

Oh oh. Looks like Stanley has left  
the building!

Vicky runs in from the airplane.

VICKY

You did it! You were amazing!

Tucker reaches out to Vicky as she -- passes right by him  
and gives Ferris a hug and a kiss on the cheek. Tucker's  
sucks it up. Gotta perform on the air.

TUCKER

Looks like Break 'n' Wynd's Extreme  
Date with Vicky did end with a kiss!

VICKY

A kiss for the real hero of the day.

The crowd CHEERS.

VICKY (CONT'D)

I'd like to introduce everyone to  
Mr. Ferris Buckler!

The crowd APPLAUDS AND CHEERS.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TAVERN ON THE GREEN -- DAY

Establishing shot of the famous restaurant on a Fall day.

INT. TAVERN ON THE GREEN -- DAY

Stephanie, G.Kenny, Ferris and Vicky are having lunch. Tucker  
is at a separate table -- still broadcasting.

TUCKER

The Break 'n' Wynd Extreme Date with  
Vicky -- sponsored by Dutchman Paints  
is wrapping up right here -- in the  
world-famous Tavern on the Green.

Vicky leans across the aisle.

VICKY

Just because Ferris is the hero and  
stole your thunder, doesn't mean you  
have to sit by yourself, Tucker.

TUCKER

That's okay. I'm waiting for my guests.

Guests? Just then, Naomi, Mimi and MARGO -- a 40ish blonde with close-cropped hair and square shoulders -- are led to Tucker's table. Vicky smiles but...why are they here?

INT. ARTHUR'S PRIVATE OFFICE -- DAY

Arthur listening to his radio. He's seldom this happy.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Why are you having lunch with your old boyfriend?

VICKY

Ferris is a friend. She is a girlfriend!

ARTHUR

(to the radio)

Bye bye, Tucker!

INT. TAVERN ON THE GREEN -- DAY

Vicky and Tucker are standing toe to toe.

TUCKER

She is a girl. And she is a friend. But, she's not my girlfriend.

Vicky slides closer to Ferris. Oh yeah? Prove it.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Her name is Mimi.

Mimi gives a little wave.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

I asked her here so, you don't make a big mistake with your old boyfriend.

VICKY

Tucker, this is so ridiculous.

TUCKER

You're right, Vicky. It is! Go on, Mimi. Tell her!

Mimi hesitates. Naomi takes on a mannish demeanor and stands.

NAOMI

Don't be afraid, Mimi. You've got friends here.

Naomi looks at her daughter and points at Mimi.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
She's a lesbian...you got a problem  
with that?

Naomi suddenly realizes she's taken on a masculine aura.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
Oh my. Did I do it again?

Vicky nods. Naomi reverts, walks to Vicky and pats her hand.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
She's gay, dear.

Margo puts an arm around Mimi. Vicky understands her mistake. But, it's a bit too early for Tucker to walk away the winner.

VICKY  
So is Ferris!

Huh?

Ferris smiles at a nearby WAITER...who returns the favor.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE RIVER CAFE -- NIGHT

Above the restaurant on the banks of the East River, the Brooklyn Bridge glitters in a pouring rain. Outside the private entrance to the Terrace Room is a rain-smearing sign: "Snodgrass/Merikan Re-Engagement Party."

INT. THE RIVER CAFE'S TERRACE ROOM -- NIGHT

Guests fill the room. Tucker talks with Herb, Ferris and the Waiter from Tavern on the Green. Vicky's with Elaine, Naomi, Mimi and Margo. Arthur is...distracted. Or, is he nervous? A waiter walks up and says something. Arthur responds loudly enough for everyone to hear.

ARTHUR  
No, don't start serving yet. We have  
a couple guests who are more than a  
little fashionably late.

The waiter nods. The chef won't like this. He leaves.

ON VICKY, ELAINE, NAOMI, MIMI AND MARGO -- who's in a tux.

ELAINE  
Vicky, we miss you, Honey. But, the  
station's doin' fine. Really.

NAOMI

(to Vicky)

See, there? You didn't hurt anyone when you left them high and dry!

(to Elaine/Southern)

She's been so all-fired worried 'bout ya'll.

ON TUCKER, HERB, FERRIS AND HIS WAITER FRIEND --

HERB

Seriously Tucker, you and Vicky have nothing to feel bad about. It's working out great! All-Night Larry has really kicked it up a notch!

Herb takes a sip from his drink to cover the fact that he's lying. Ferris takes the opportunity to lean toward Herb.

FERRIS

After the party, Marvin and I would love to show you the town.

Hmm. Where's Elaine? He looks around. Just then, the door flies open and rain beats inside.

ON THE DOORWAY. Tommy Lee and Marva hurry in. Tommy Lee, in a wrinkled tan suit, whips off his red baseball hat, spraying water like a big yellow dog. Marva takes off her raincoat.

TOMMY LEE

Whooee...it's wetter than a toilet seat at a beer drinkin' contest!

Tucker and Herb are relieved to have a reason to excuse themselves. They hurry to greet the newcomers.

TUCKER

Ya'll made it...a little late.

Marva hugs Tucker. Tommy Lee shakes his son's hand and nods at Herb. They both seem uncomfortable and unusually tense.

TOMMY LEE

We missed an exit.

MARVA

We missed twelve exits. That's how we ended up in Connecticut.

Tucker takes the wet hat and raincoat.

TUCKER

Connecticut?

MARVA

Two hours out of our way.

TOMMY LEE

Wasn't two hours...hour-45 at most.

TUCKER

Let me introduce ya'll.

(loudly)

Excuse me! Hello!

The group "hushes."

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Everybody, this is my Mom and Dad...

His parents acknowledge the group's LIGHT APPLAUSE.

ON ARTHUR -- whose fears have been confirmed.

ARTHUR

(to himself)

Oh God. It IS him.

He looks away; not wanting Tommy Lee to see him. Tucker puts his arm around his Dad's shoulder.

TUCKER

My Dad's a race car driver...and a shrimp lover. So, word of advice, if you're anywhere near the waiter with the shrimp -- get ready to trade paint!

Marva laughs loudly. But, few in the group have any idea what Tucker's saying. Naomi walks up.

NAOMI

(Southern Accent)

I'm Naomi Merikan...Vicky's momma.

Why is she talking like that?

TUCKER

Naomi tends to pick up accents.

NAOMI

Shut my mouth! Am I doing it again?

Just then, Emmie enters inside. She stands, dripping, in the doorway behind Tucker, Marva, Tommy Lee and Naomi trying to get her bearings and adjust to the light.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Who's this? Did ya'll bring along Tucker's grandma?

Marva looks at Tommy Lee. We did it; now, what do we say? Emmie steps forward and extends her hand. Naomi takes it.

EMMIE

I'm Vicky's granny...your mother-in-law.

You're WHO? It's a joke, right?

NAOMI

Tucker, you bad boy! But...no! That would make you Arthur's momma! Uh...  
(drops the accent)  
Mother.

EMMIE

His name ain't Arthur. It's Artie. Artie Merikan. Was when he was born. Still is, I reckon.

Vicky slides into the awkward grouping. She hugs a silent Tucker.

VICKY

Everybody gettin' to know each other?

OFF NAOMI'S REACTION, WE...

CUT TO:

INT. THE RIVER CAFE'S TERRACE ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

VICKY

Arthur!

NAOMI

Arthur!

ON ARTHUR -- wipes sweat from his brow and looks nervous.

EMMIE (O.S.)

Artie? Where are you, boy?

In a monumental case of bad acting, Arthur grabs his head, spins crazily, and, being careful not to hurt himself or his suit, "falls" to the floor. Guests rush to his side.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE RIVER CAFE'S TERRACE ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Arthur is spread-eagle on the floor. Tucker, Marva and Emmie hover just behind Vicky and Naomi who are slapping Arthur's face -- hard. Are they reviving him or punishing him? Tommy Lee pushes out of the crowd with a shrimp in his hand.

TOMMY LEE

It's O.K., I know mouth-to-mouth!

He kneels over Arthur as Vicky and Naomi lean away. He bends his face toward Arthur whose eyes flicker open quickly. Tommy Lee is practically nose to nose with him.

TOMMY LEE (CONT'D)  
Hello, Artie.

Shrimp sauce drips off the shrimp onto Arthur's nose.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RIVER CAFE -- NIGHT

The rain continues to fall outside on this late-Fall night. Arthur speaks reflectively into a P.A. mic to the group.

ARTHUR (O.S.)  
(small room reverb)  
And, so, when my eyes flashed open  
an hour, or so, ago...I was complete  
again. Complete, after so many years  
of not knowing my past.

EMMIE  
Praise the Lord!

Polite applause follow from a subdued crowd.

CUT TO:

INT. THE RIVER CAFE'S TERRACE ROOM -- NIGHT

The wait staff clears plates. As the scene unfolds, dessert trays of pastries are brought to the tables. Arthur, who's drunk, paces, with a mic, behind the head table. Also at the head table, Naomi, Vicky, Tucker, Tommy Lee, Marva and Emmie -- who's been stuck in an extra chair at one end.

ARTHUR  
Now, it's all clear to me what  
happened. Memories are flowing back!  
But, how tragic that, somehow years  
ago, I forgot where I lived...my own  
name...my mother. Everything.

A voice calls out from the back of the room.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Could you forget I ever asked you to  
buy that last IPO, Arthur?

There's some LAUGHTER. Arthur smiles.

ARTHUR  
No, Andrew...I said I had amnesia.  
I didn't say I had Alzheimers.

LAUGHTER. Arthur turns introspective again. He approaches Emmie, trying to work up a tear. It won't come. But, he keeps trying as he talks.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
But, tonight, thanks to Marva and  
Tommy Lee Snodgrass...

His attempt at a smile looks more like a snarl.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Thanks to these fine folks, my mother  
is back in my life! Mother, please.  
Take a bow!

The group rises for a STANDING OVATION as Emmie stands.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Even though I had amnesia for 30  
years, somewhere deep inside, I never  
forgot this wonderful, loving woman.

He kisses the top of her head, gets a hair in his mouth and tries to pull it out. The audience says, "AWWW." More APPLAUSE. Emmie grabs the mic away from Arthur. Oh oh.

EMMIE  
ARTIE, I want to help you. I want  
you to get all your memory back.

Some APPLAUSE.

EMMIE (CONT'D)  
So, why don't I tell you why you  
left town so long ago?

ARTHUR  
Not now, Mother.

EMMIE  
Nonsense! Ya'll want to know, right?

The group APPLAUDS and WHISTLES. She waits for it to quiet.

EMMIE (CONT'D)  
He ran away 'cause he was afraid.

GASPS.

EMMIE (CONT'D)  
He was 18. He ran away from a match  
race on the main drag in our hometown.  
Everybody was there; the whole town.  
Even the cops had money bet on the  
race...Right Tommy Lee?

Tommy Lee nods from behind a plate-full of empty shrimp tails.

EMMIE (CONT'D)

Tommy Lee remembers. He can't forget.  
Neither can I! He was the one Artie  
was supposed to be racin'!

The room GASPS. Are Tucker and Vicky now blood enemies?

EMMIE (CONT'D)

Everybody was there, linin' Howe  
Avenue...watchin' the traffic light  
at 9th Street go from green to yellow  
to red, over and over 'til one in  
the mornin'. But Artie didn't show.

ARTHUR

I had amnesia, Mother. I must have  
gotten hit on the head while I was  
checking the throttle linkage. You  
remember how the hood had a tendency  
to slam shut unexpectedly?

Arthur holds his hand out for the mic. Emmie takes a moment --  
but hands it over.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

The important thing right now is...I  
found my Mother. I have my memory  
back. And, my daughter is about to  
become a...Snodgrass! So, I propose  
a toast...several toasts, really.  
First, a toast to Tucker's mother  
Marva.

He lifts a glass of wine. The guests stand.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

A toast to her inquisitiveness.  
Some might call it a complete lack  
of concern for the privacy and  
happiness of others. To Marva!

The guests take a quiet sip as Arthur raises his glass again.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Tommy Lee!

TOMMY LEE

Oh Lord.

Naomi tugs at her husband's coat.

NAOMI

Arthur!

ARTHUR

He made this whole night possible!  
(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

You could say he made my whole life possible. Tommy Lee Snodgrass! He's the one who, even after we agreed NOT to change rear-end gears...DID.

Tommy Lee stands and looks at Arthur.

TOMMY LEE

That's a damn lie, Artie!

Vicky and Tucker stand up to intervene. They go to their fathers' sides.

ARTHUR

Your best friend, Bubba Humphries told me you changed that gear.

TOMMY LEE

I didn't change nothin'! Bubba was probably tryin' to psyche you out! He had a lot of money ridin' on me!

ARTHUR

I knew I'd be a laughing stock if you beat me. I had to leave town.

TUCKER

Wait a second, I thought you left town 'cause you had amnesia!

VICKY

Tucker!

TUCKER

Well, that's what he said, isn't it?

MARVA

That's right. Said amnesia made him do it...not your daddy. He's changin' his story.

Naomi storms over toward Marva.

NAOMI

The poor man's confused. Dazed.

The group in the room is becoming restive.

ARTHUR

I might be dazed and confused. But, I haven't forgotten how thankful I am that I came to New York City... where I met my wonderful wife, Naomi.

Naomi isn't used to niceties from Arthur. Arthur raises his glass. Vicky and Tucker relax.

NAOMI

Arthur, that's so sweet.

ARTHUR

To Naomi and New York City...

Even Tommy Lee and Marva take a sip.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Thank God, I'm here -- and not in that backwoods, third-world country I used to call home.

Tommy Lee spits out the wine.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Thank God, I got my daughter back here...so I don't have to worry about her spending weekends on a stinkin' pig farm or at the goddamn race track.

Tommy Lee rips off his coat. Tucker tries to restrain him.

TOMMY LEE

My pig farm don't stink.....much.

Arthur gives Tommy Lee the finger. That does it! Tommy Lee throws his coat on the floor and loosens his tie.

TOMMY LEE (CONT'D)

Come on Artie. Let's go!

Arthur pretends he wants to mix it up, but uses his wife and daughter as a shield. Meanwhile, Tucker and Marva struggle to hold Tommy Lee back. Emmie watches...enjoying the fracas.

VICKY

Tucker tell your loud-mouth father to sit down.

TUCKER

What about your Daddy...the asshole?

GASPS. What did he say?!

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Vicky, come on! He ran away and hid for 30 years! He changed his name.

VICKY

From Artie to Arthur. That's hardly an "alias" -- plus -- he had amnesia...you asshole.

Vicky slaps Tucker's face.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
It's off! The wedding's off!

She runs to the door. Tucker calls after her.

TUCKER  
I'm proud of my Daddy! I'm proud of  
growin' up on a pig farm. I'm GLAD  
I'm from North Carolina.

NAOMI  
Arthur -- do something!

Arthur nods, picks up a cream puff from the dessert tray. Tommy Lee, who's watching Vicky, never sees Arthur THROW the pastry - which hits Marva in the face. After a shocked pause, Tommy Lee picks up a slice of Key Lime pie and hurls it down the table. Arthur ducks -- and it hits Emmie. That does it. A FOOD FIGHT breaks out in the exclusive setting.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TUCKER'S STUDIO APARTMENT ABOVE THE PUB -- LATER

The rain falls. As people walk outside the pub, their breath exhales in foggy clouds. It's getting colder. The bar band BASS pounds the night air.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
You sure ya'll can't stay tonight?

MARVA (O.S.)  
No, son. It's a nice place n' all.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCKER'S STUDIO APARTMENT ABOVE THE PUB -- CONTINUOUS

Tommy Lee has a black eye. He and Marva are at the door, coats on. Marva looks around at the bouncing pictures.

MARVA  
But, your Daddy and I gotta get back.

TOMMY LEE  
Yeah, where we can get some sleep.

Don't hurt the boy's feelin's.

TUCKER  
After a while...you get used to it.

His parents are trying to understand how that's possible.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
I don't know how I'm gonna make it  
without Vicky.

TOMMY LEE (O.S.)  
 She'll come back. They always do,  
 son.

Tucker looks at his dad. Are they sharing a special moment?

TUCKER  
 Uh, you still got pie in your hair.

Tommy Lee feels around for the pie, works it out of his part...and eats it as Marva speaks.

MARVA  
 You know, both of you Snodgrass men  
 stink with relationships. That girl  
 ain't really mad at you, Tucker, she  
 was just defendin' her Daddy. But,  
 I don't see her comin' around anytime  
 soon.

Tommy Lee feels around for more pie on his cranium, gives up, and pats Tucker on the shoulder. Be strong.

TUCKER  
 I ain't givin' up on her.

MARVA  
 That's for later. Right now, you  
 oughta' be more worried about what  
 Artie was yellin' when they dragged  
 him out tonight. What was it? "Enjoy  
 your trip back to the sticks?"

TOMMY LEE  
 I thought he was sayin' "Bon Voyage"  
 to us two.

MARVA  
 Maybe. But, when he said it...he  
 was lookin' square at Tucker.

OFF TUCKER'S REACTION, WE...

CUT TO:

INT. THE MERIKAN BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

Rain pelts the window. Arthur, nurses a swollen cheek and dabs a damp towel on his head, Naomi, Vicky and Emmie sit in front of a warming fire in the living room.

ARTHUR  
 I can't believe he dumped the Bananas  
 Foster on my head. They were flaming!

NAOMI

You started it Arthur. You put the Tiramisu down his pants. Besides, you insulted his heritage.

EMMIE

You insulted YOUR heritage.

VICKY

Tucker's parents are good people. That's what I thought he was.

NAOMI

Vicky, don't say that. He's not upset with you -- he was just watchin' out for his mom and dad.

ARTHUR

It's not about those three. It's about my only daughter living in...

EMMIE

Go on...say it: livin' in North Carolina.

ARTHUR

I was going to say "Hell."

EMMIE

Artie, you're a mess.

VICKY

But, we're not living there. We're in New York.

ARTHUR

Sure. Thanks to me.

VICKY

What?

Oops. Time to clam up.

ARTHUR

Nothing.

VICKY

What did you say?

ARTHUR

Nothing. Really. Maybe the Bananas Foster went to my head!

Funny. Right? Vicky's not laughing. She's figuring it out. Quick direction change for Arthur.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Where's Momma gonna sleep tonight?

Vicky stares down her Dad.

VICKY  
She can have my room. I'll go to a  
hotel. I'm not sleeping here.

Vicky goes to the door. Emmie stands up and follows Vicky.

EMMIE  
Mind if I go with ya'll? I'd like  
to get to know my granddaughter.

VICKY  
Sure, Grandma! I'd like that!

Emmie and Vicky grab their coat off the hall tree.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
'Night Mother.

The door slams. They're gone. Arthur looks into the fire.

NAOMI  
Arthur, sit down. For a change...I'm  
gonna talk. You're gonna listen.

OFF ARTHUR'S REACTION, WE...

CUT TO:

EXT. WRAT-FM BUILDING IN MIDTOWN -- MORNING

The rain has turned to an icy drizzle. The city moves at a  
snail's pace. Ice coats everything. We HEAR a TYMPANI ROLL.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
(radio eq/reverb)  
The sound New York can't flush out  
of its ears...Break 'n' Wynd...on  
the RAT!

CYMBAL. Vicky sounds upset.

VICKY (O.S.)  
(radio eq)  
Break 'n' Wynd weather...in a word...  
crappy. Really crappy. Ice and  
freezing rain all day.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
(radio eq)  
Sounds like a day to stay inside  
with someone you love!

VICKY (O.S.)

(radio eq)

So, I guess that means you'll be going outside shortly?

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)

You'd like that, wouldn't you?

INT. WRAT-FM STUDIO -- MORNING

Vicky operates the audio board. Tucker wears a headset mic... allowing him to move freely around the studio.

VICKY

Yes...yes, I would!

TUCKER

If you haven't heard...Vicky and I were gonna get married. But, after last night's re-engagement party, it's safe to say, "it's off."

VICKY

Um hmm. And, another thing it's safe to say is that I can't stand being in the same room with you.

Tucker bolts for the door. He'll show her!

TUCKER

Fine. I'm outa' here.

What?

VICKY

Oh, please! We've got a show to do!

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Right. That's why I'm on the elevator right now...headed for the roof.

INT. ELEVATOR -- CONTINUOUS

Tucker is watching the lights click up to the top.

VICKY (O.S.)

(radio eq)

Tucker, you're already a jackass. Don't make it worse.

The doors open onto a small glassed-in area, leading to the roof of the building. Sleet bounces off the plexiglas.

TUCKER

Don't worry! I'll be down -- soon!

He walks out into the howling mess.

INT. WRAT-FM STUDIOS -- MORNING

Stephanie comes into the studio. She's concerned.

VICKY

Look, it was just a figure of speech,  
Tucker, I didn't really want you to  
go outside. It's bad out there.

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)  
Too late...I'm comin' down!

VICKY

God, you're such a...boy! Grow up!

TUCKER (O.S.)

(radio eq)  
Okay, calm down. I'm back!

Vicky doesn't see anything right away. Stephanie, lets out  
a YELP. Vicky looks at Steph, who points. There's Tucker,  
hanging outside the studio window on a window-washing rig.  
Ice is already forming on his hair. Vicky SCREAMS.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

(radio eq)  
Calm down girls...it's just Ol' Tuck  
doin' my thang!

STEPHANIE

Tucker get back on the roof! We're  
not insured for this!

TUCKER

Okay! You're the boss.

He pushes a button - nothing happens. This isn't funny. He  
keeps jabbing at the button without success.

VICKY

Okay, Break 'n' Wynders...if you're  
just joining us: Tucker is outside  
the RAT studio window, 30 stories up  
on a window washing rig...in the  
middle of one of the worst ice storms  
in the city's history...wearing a  
sweatshirt and a pair of jeans.

STEPHANIE

Why is he doing this?

VICKY

You haven't been listening?

STEPHANIE

No. I've been listening to Satellite Radio.

(to the window)

That's enough Tucker...get back in here right now.

EXT. WINDOW WASHING RIG -- MORNING

Tucker jabs the control again. Suddenly, only the left side rises. He's thrown sideways as the platform clunks against the window. For a moment, he's perched on the icy railing with his face unceremoniously pressed against the studio window.

INT. WRAT-FM STUDIO -- MORNING

Tucker is delicately balanced...trying not to move - or worse slip off the icy, teetering platform.

TUCKER

(radio eq)

Uh, little help.

The rig shakes and bumps against the window. Tucker slips out of sight. Steph and Vicky run in circles, screaming.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

(radio eq/grunting)

It's okay. I'm--I'm still here.

EXT. WINDOW WASHING RIG -- MORNING

Tucker dangles in mid-air, hanging by his armpit -- just as he did on the side of the balloon in the opening sequence.

TUCKER

Uh, it might be a good idea to try calling 9-1-1.

We HEAR a distant siren. Tucker looks down.

P.O.V. TUCKER LOOKING DOWN TOWARD THE GROUND -- CONTINUOUS

We see a fire truck pull up. Firemen scurry off.

TUCKER (O.S.)

Nevermind. They're here.

INT. WRAT-FM CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

A light snow blows by the conference room windows. Tucker sits at one end of the conference table, wrapped in an FDNY blanket. Vicky sits next to Stephanie and G. Kenny.

G. KENNY

I could go on and on. This was a bad stunt. I mean, come on! Ask yourself: Would Ben and Bonnie have done this?

Tucker wipes his nose on the blanket.

TUCKER

I doubt it. They're in Houston.

Oooh. He's askin' for it. This is gonna be fun.

G. KENNY

Okay, look. Let's cut to the chase, here. It doesn't matter if the stunt was any good or not. Because...

He looks at Stephanie.

G. KENNY (CONT'D)

...Because, this is the end.

The end?

G. KENNY (CONT'D)

Guys...let's be real, here.

TUCKER

Now, you wanna be "real?"

G. KENNY

Cool it Snodgrass! You were always a fill-in while we talked to the other guy.

Stephanie turns to G.Kenny. Who was talking to him?

VICKY

We haven't really had a chance.

G. KENNY

Let's not get off the track, here. This isn't about you, Vicky. You can relax. You're "grandfathered."

VICKY

You don't mean "grandfathered." It's more like "fathered," right? Arthur's behind this isn't he?

STEPHANIE

What?

Oh oh! Keep moving G! He turns to Tucker.

G. KENNY

Here's the deal. Vicky's stays to work with Big Cat Jerkins from Philadelphia. He starts tomorrow.

(chuckles)

The Cat...on the RAT! Get it?

STEPHANIE

What does A. Merikan Associates have to do with programming my radio station?

G. Kenny waves "bye bye" to Tucker.

G. KENNY

Bye bye, Tucker.

STEPHANIE

G...go home. I'll take it from here.

G. Kenny pats Vicky on the shoulder.

G. KENNY

A star is born! You'll sound great with Big Cat!

He walks out the conference room, whistling. The door closes. Stephanie faces Tucker and Vicky.

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry. Before I met you guys, I made a deal with G. It was his call.

Nice. Thoughtful. Thanks.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

But, Tucker, I don't want you to leave. I'll find a way to keep you.

Is this a way out? Maybe

TUCKER

Thanks Steph...I appreciate it. But, I thought I knew what I wanted. I thought it had everything to do with being here with Vicky.

Vicky's touched.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

I was wrong. What's happened in the last few days has made me see it -- finally. I belong at home.

He looks to Vicky. Come with me? She can't find any words.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

When it ain't right. It ain't right.

He turns and walks out the door. No one follows.

EXT. WRAT-FM BUILDING IN MIDTOWN -- DAY

An icy mix covers the sidewalk. Tucker slips as he walks out of the RAT for the last time. He slides around the corner toward a nearby outdoor parking lot where, a crowd is watching a large tow-truck pull a city bus out of the lot. He pulls out his parking ticket and walks up to the attendant. The Parking Attendant nods toward the RAT Building.

PARKING ATTENDANT

Little while ago, man, somebody was, like, hangin' off the side of the building, up there?

He points at the RAT building.

PARKING ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

And, like, the driver, she was lookin' up to see what's goin' on, you know?

Tucker looks up to see where he was just a few minutes ago.

PARKING ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

An d, the bus, like, slides on the ice and BLAM. It ran right over that orange car.

Tucker's attention turns back to the lot...where he sees his crushed, orange Chevelle under the City Bus.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRAT-FM BUILDING IN MIDTOWN -- DAY

Vicky walks out, pulls up her coat collar and hails a cab as a Greyhound Bus passes. Tucker is visible in a bus window.

INT. ARTHUR'S PRIVATE OFFICE -- DAY

Vicky opens the door. G. Kenny is in the office with Arthur. She enters. No stunt ever had her heart beating this fast. Arthur's dry-mouthed; the consultant -- unfazed.

VICKY

Arthur! What the hell have you done?

G. Kenny stands and picks up a large envelope from the desk.

G. KENNY

Nice doing business with you. Quality time is very important between a dad and his kid.

He looks at Vicky as he walks to the door.

G. KENNY (CONT'D)  
You're gonna be great tomorrow! The  
Big Cat...on the RAT!

He chuckles as he closes the door. Vicky doesn't move.

VICKY  
How could you do this?

Arthur wants to explain: "I did it for you!" He stands and reaches for his daughter. She takes a step backward.

ARTHUR  
Mr. Weldon is a client. One day, I  
mentioned you were in radio. That's  
when he told me he was a consultant.

VICKY  
This whole thing was -- was all fake.

ARTHUR  
I just wanted the best for you. I  
didn't want you living...down there.

VICKY  
I was happy. WE were happy...down  
there.

Come on! Let me explain! Vicky backs-up a step.

ARTHUR  
He said he had a station here that  
lost its morning show and needed a  
fill-in while he negotiated with a  
guy in Philadelphia. We made a deal.

How could he do this?

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Your job is safe. G. Kenny promised  
that. It was part of the deal.

VICKY  
And we had to change our name to  
Break 'n' Wynd? God! What happens  
to Tucker?

Hey! That's the good news! Tell her!

ARTHUR  
G told me he might be able to wiggle  
him into a station...in California!

Bad thing to say. She walks out and slams the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WRAT-FM STUDIO -- MORNING

Meet BIG CAT JERKINS! Big Cat is a big guy. Maybe "fat" would be a better way to describe him. He's dressed in an old radio station T-Shirt from one of the 35 he's worked at in his checkered career. He's running the audio board, Vicky's not. The words flow out of Big Cat's bearded face loudly, with a South Philly accent.

BIG CAT

You got The Big Cat...on the RAT!  
Oh yeah, baby! Hey, I'm lookin' at  
Vicky Wynd. Wake up little Vicky!  
Big Cat got his cat-eyes focused on  
one fine chick with on nice rack!  
Baby, you and me are gonna make bee-  
yootiful music together!

Big Cat pauses for Vicky to speak. She says nothing.

BIG CAT (CONT'D)

Vicky's not talkin'. Know why?  
'Cause baby, the Big Cat's got her  
tongue!

He laughs. A SONG starts. He talks-up the intro.

BIG CAT (CONT'D)

Wakin' up with the Big Cat...on the  
RAT...Ooh, I love sayin' that! Oh  
yeah!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOVAR'S CARS -- MORNING

The Marva-Pig pick-up pulls to the curb. Herb's beside a used car, talking to two teenagers. When he sees the truck, he flips the keys to the kids. They jump in the car, drive over the curb into traffic, and nearly cause an accident. Herb's oblivious, he squints as he approaches the truck.

HERB

Tucker? What are you doing here?

TUCKER

Elaine told me you work here, now.

Herb nods. He's been caught. Painful.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

You just sold that car?

HERB

I wish. Just a test drive.

CUT TO:

INT. WRC-FM LOBBY -- MORNING

A SONG plays. Stephanie and G. Kenny get off the elevator.

STEPHANIE

It's a disaster. He's awful! I liked Break 'n' Wynd a lot more.

G. KENNY

Steph, we had a deal.

STEPHANIE

That was before.

G. KENNY

Before what?

STEPHANIE

Before Bill Waxall called me at six this morning.

G. KENNY

The CEO called?

STEPHANIE

At six. He wanted to know what was going on. So, I told him the truth: This is all your idea.

Oh oh. This doesn't look good.

G. KENNY

Don't worry! I'll make it Okay. I'll work with 'em to make 'em sound like Herk and the Turk in Fresno.

G.Kenny finds himself alone. Steph is already way down the hall.

INT. WRAT-FM STUDIO -- MORNING

Big Cat takes off his headphones and looks at Vicky, who's staring out the window.

BIG CAT

Hey, you oughta' come to my hotel room after the show. We could, uh, work on it...if you know what I mean.

Vicky gets up.

VICKY

I'm goin' to the bathroom...either  
to pee or throw up. Maybe both.

BIG CAT

Hey, save the funny stuff for when  
we're on the air!

She heads for the door. Big Cat chuckles.

BIG CAT (CONT'D)

Pee and puke. She's good! I'm gonna  
write that one down.

He makes a note to himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE TOVAR DINER -- MORNING

The Tovar Diner is right across the street from Tovar's Cars.  
Amid the clatter of dishes, Tucker and Herb are talking.

HERB (O.S.)

I'm sorry to hear about Vicky.

TUCKER

Yeah, well. Maybe it's for the best.

INT. THE TOVAR DINER -- MORNING

They are, in a booth, looking out toward the used car lot.  
Near the door is one of Herb's modified stand-up displays.  
In the back, Omar cooks at the grill.

HERB

The best? Are you kiddin'? Look,  
I'm not an expert on this stuff...

He absently taps on his Tovar Cars name tag.

HERB (CONT'D)

...But, I DO know if you really want  
something...you gotta do whatever it  
takes to keep it.

Tucker notices, the stand-up display. What the hell?

TUCKER

You stuck Larry's face on my body?

Pay attention, kid!

HERB

When we lost you guys, we knew we  
were in trouble. But, Elaine and me  
love radio...

Elaine LOVES radio?

HERB (CONT'D)

Well, I love it anyway. But, the point is: I had to do whatever it took to keep it. So, I cut my salary, and took on the Tovar Brothers as partners.

TUCKER

And put Larry on in the morning.

HERB

Yeah, well, two out of three...Tucker, here's something it took me 50 years to get: The secret to life is real simple. Know what you want...then, go get it.

He looks at his Tovar Cars name tag.

HERB (CONT'D)

And, don't let anything stop you.

Outside, in the background, Ivar drives by in the tow truck with the car the teens just took out for a "test drive" on the hook. The kids are in the dented, smoking car.

HERB (CONT'D)

I'm a terrible car salesman.

TUCKER

Maybe I can help.

Herb looks up. How?

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Can I come back to work for you?

Herb is stunned. Oh God...are those tears in his eyes?

TUCKER (CONT'D)

You okay? I mean, if you don't want me to come back...

HERB

No, it's not that. I just don't know how I'm going to get the Tovar brothers off overnights.

In the background, Omar dings the bell for a waitress

INT. WRAT-FM -- MORNING

Stephanie unlocks her office door and is followed closely by G.Kenny.

G. KENNY  
Mickey and Finn in Des Monies! Cat  
and Vicky can copy them!

She's not listening, just unlocking. Oh oh, here comes Vicky.

G. KENNY (CONT'D)  
Ahh! Vicky!

Stephanie turns.

G. KENNY (CONT'D)  
We were just talking about you and  
Big Cat! Great job this morning!

Vicky ignores the butthead and looks at the GM.

VICKY  
I quit.

She turns and walks away. G. Kenny's heard this stuff before.

G. KENNY  
Okay. Whatever. Steph, there's a  
female in Muncie we could get who--

STEPHANIE  
Vicky! Wait!

Vicky stops, turns and shakes her head.

VICKY  
I can't stay. This is all wrong.

Stephanie gets it. It IS all wrong. Vicky walks out.

G. KENNY  
Don't panic. I know what to do!

Stephanie steps behind her desk.

STEPHANIE  
Me, too.

G is ready to hear the great idea.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
You're fired.

OFF G.KENNY'S REACTION, WE...

CUT TO:

EXT. WRAT-FM BUILDING IN MIDTOWN -- MORNING

Vicky walks out onto the sidewalk. She's out of a job,  
separated from her fiancée, estranged from her family.

ARTHUR (O.S.)

Vicky!

Is that who she thinks it is?

CUT TO:

EXT. COFFEE SHOP IN BROOKLYN HEIGHTS -- MORNING

Arthur and Vicky are in a booth, looking out the window onto the busy street.

VICKY

Your name...your heritage -- your mother! You lied to yourself. You lied to Naomi...to me. And then, you screwed up my life!

He can't argue facts. Vicky starts to get up to leave.

VICKY (CONT'D)

There's no point to this.

Arthur touches her hand. Wow! He's never done that before!

ARTHUR

No! Stay! Please.

She looks at her father's hand on hers...and sits.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Okay...she's staying. Now, what the hell do you say, Artie?

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I did it -- because, I wanted the best for you. I always thought I knew what that was. Now, I'm not sure what's best...for anybody.

A guy walks by the window with a boom box playing RAT-FM. Arthur watches the guy pass.

BIG CAT (O.S.)

(boom box eq)

You got the Big Cat...on the RAT, baby! It rhymes, I love it!

The Big Cat's LAUGH fades as the boom box guy moves away.

ARTHUR

But, I'm pretty sure that's not it.

VICKY

I never knew how you felt.

(MORE)

VICKY (CONT'D)

It was always like you had a wall  
around you.

Well, I did.

VICKY (CONT'D)

I thought it was me. I always wanted  
to break through...find a way to  
make you proud of me. You know?

This is really painful...for both of them.

VICKY (CONT'D)

I guess I thought if I went somewhere  
and made it -- on my own. You'd  
give me a hug...or something.

He never knew how much he needed a hug...until now.

VICKY (CONT'D)

So, I was out there...tryin'! I  
knew you didn't approve. But, then,  
Steph called...and, I thought: Okay!  
Now, my father is gonna be proud.  
I'm going to be happy.

The guy with the boom box walks by in the opposite direction.

BIG CAT (O.S.)

(boom box)

It's a marriage made in heaven...the  
Big Cat...on the RAT! FM - Baby!

The LAUGHING Big Cat fades as the boom box moves away.

VICKY

But, I'm not happy. And, you and  
Naomi aren't proud. And

NAOMI AREN'T PROUD. AND, I-

ARTHUR

--Call her "Mom."

What did he just say?

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

She's always wished you'd call her  
"Mom." I was the one who wanted you  
to use her given name.

A pause to reflect on stupidity.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

And she's proud of you. She always  
has been.

What is Arthur saying?

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
And, let's end all the confusion  
about me. Am I Arthur? Am I Artie?

Sip some coffee. The suspense is killing me! Who are you?

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Think you could ever call me..."Dad?"

She'd have been happy with "Art." Arthur gets up and swings  
around to sit next to his daughter. This is very different.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
I talked to your mother last night.

Or, more precisely, your mom talked to me. She's right.  
It's all in the open now. I'm free. I can finally relax...be  
myself.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
(deep breath)  
I AM proud of you. And, I've always  
loved you. I know I messed up things.  
I will never meddle again. But,  
I'll always be here to help. It's  
your life. Not mine.

Vicky's wishing this guy had been around when she was a kid.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
I hope you and Tucker can get things  
back together...if that's what you  
want.

VICKY  
I do. But, I don't know, Arthur, I--

ARTHUR  
Please..."Dad."

The last time he brought a tear to her eye, she was 8 and he  
bought her cotton candy at the circus.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
The key to life is pretty simple.  
Know what you want...and go get it.

They sit quietly for a moment enjoying a feeling they've  
never experienced: Togetherness. He pulls an airline ticket  
out of his coat pocket and hands it to her.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)  
Non-stop to Raleigh.

She takes the ticket.

VICKY  
Thanks...Dad.

Wow! Neither knew one word could make them both feel so good!

DISSOLVE TO:

AERIAL SHOT OF SOUTHPORT, NC -- AFTERNOON

Flying over Howe Street, the Cape Fear River and Atlantic Ocean are ahead. Swinging to the left, we fly over homes near the water's edge. There's Emmie's house -- with a large white tent in the backyard. Cars are parked everywhere.

EXT. EMMIE'S BACKYARD -- AFTERNOON

Guests watch the outdoor wedding ceremony quietly as Vicky and her Dad complete the walk down the grassy aisle beside the white tent, set up for the reception. On one panel of the tent is the embroidered Snodgrass family tree. On the other is a hurriedly sketched family tree for Merikan - in magic marker.

In the front row are Tommy Lee and Marva, Naomi, Emmie, Omar, Ferris, his new Waiter friend, Elaine and Stephanie.

STEPHANIE  
(to Elaine)  
I love those two.

ELAINE  
They're great together.

STEPHANIE  
That's why I'm wondering if you and your husband would consider allowing me to invest in your radio station.

Elaine's day just got MUCH happier. Up front are: The bridesmaids: Nel, Donna, Phyllis and Mimi -- Ivar in a clerics collar -- and Tucker and his best man, Herb. Arthur and Bride get to the end of the aisle. Dad lifts his daughter's veil, and gives her a kiss. Then, he shakes hands with Tucker and takes his seat next to Naomi.

IVAR  
And, we are beginning!

Tucker and Vicky move together and stand before Ivar.

IVAR (CONT'D)  
I am saying.  
(MORE)

IVAR (CONT'D)

Dearly beloved, are we not gathered  
today to put together Vicky  
Merikan...and Tucker Snodgrass?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EMMIE'S BACKYARD -- LATER

As the ceremony continues, Naomi leans over to Omar.

NAOMI

(Tovar accent)

He is so good, your brother, with  
the wedding he is doing! No?

OFF OMAR'S REACTION, WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EMMIE'S BACKYARD -- LATER

The ceremony continues.

IVAR

May I have Herb to produce the ring!

Did Herb lose it?. He pats his pockets desperately. Then,  
he stops, reaches inside his coat, and pulls it out. He  
exaggeratedly wipes his forehead. Whew!

ON ELAINE -- Yeah. Funny. Real smooth Herb.

A gust blows through. Ivar grabs the ring. There's a BLAST  
of gas from a balloon burner. Everyone looks toward the  
noise.

ON THE BALLOON -- which is inflated and swaying in the breeze  
on a tethering rope attached to the Tovar's Tow Truck. Arlo,  
the pilot salutes everyone.

ARLO

(distant)

No big deal. Keep on a-goin'.

Ivar gives Tucker the ring. He places it on Vicky's finger.

IVAR

Are you, Vicky taking Tucker to be--

Another gust. Another BLAST of gas.

ARLO (O.S.)

I'M LOSIN' IT!

Ivar turns back to Vicky.

IVAR

Vicky, you must say it -- quickly!

VICKY

I do?

IVAR

And, are you Tucker taking Vicky to  
be--

TUCKER

I do.

The fresh breeze off the Ocean is dragging the balloon and  
the tow-truck.

IVAR

Done. You are now the man and the  
wife!

APPLAUSE. Tucker sweeps Vicky into his arms and runs toward  
the balloon. They kiss. Everyone follows. Tucker trips  
slightly and unceremoniously dumps Vicky in the basket with  
a BUMP and a RIP. He's about to hop in when all four parents  
run up to congratulate the couple. Tommy Lee and Marva lean  
in the basket and look down at Vicky -- her feet sticking  
up.

MARVA

You look beautiful!

TOMMY LEE

You're a Snodgrass now, darlin'!

They help Vicky to her feet. Meanwhile, Arthur shakes hands  
with Tucker as Naomi kisses his cheek.

ARTHUR

Welcome to the Merikan family, son!

TUCKER

Thanks...Dad.

The rope slips, the balloon bounces across the yard. Arlo  
falls to the bottom of the basket. Tucker runs, jumps and  
ends up dangling off the side by his armpit as it rises,  
barely clearing some trees.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Talk about deja-vu!

Vicky helps Tucker in. They kiss and as they part to take in  
the view, Arlo rises from the bottom of the basket.

ARLO

How ya'll doin'?

Tucker pushes Arlo back down inside the basket.

VICKY

What a perfect wedding!

P.O.V. LOOKING DOWN ON EMMIE'S HOME -- AFTERNOON

The guests are gathering near the road. Tommy Lee's #23 RUMBLES onto the pavement...followed by Arthur's Mercedes.

TUCKER (O.S.)

Yeah...absolutely perfect.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMMIE'S HOME IN SOUTHPORT, NC -- AFTERNOON

The engines REV. Emmie stands between the Chevy and the S600, holding a handkerchief high. She points to the Chevy.

Tommy Lee nods. He's ready. She points at Arthur. He wipes sweat off his forehead. Yeah. Ready. She looks at her son.

EMMIE

Winnin' ain't everything. Sometimes,  
showin' up is what really matters.

She drops the handkerchief. The cars ROAR away and disappear into a big cloud of tire smoke. Looks like the party's finally started.

FADE TO BLACK