

THE HIGH LIFE

"Living Arrangements"

by
Lee A. Chrimes

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

1

Another glorious day in the LA sunshine. At least, it would be, if it wasn't for the heavy cloud of doom and gloom currently cast over the kitchen itself.

Standing at various points around the kitchen are LEE, IAN, EMMA, CLAIRE and CHRIS, all up and ready to start their first day at work. Lee, Ian and Claire are all smartly dressed, while Emma and Chris wear the colours of the oppressors they now serve - a black shirt with a cinema logo for Emma and a red and yellow shirt for Chris' coffee house.

They each hold a mug of coffee, but each stares into space, not touching their drinks.

LEE

So.

IAN

Yup.

LEE

Our first days at work.

CHRIS

That's the rumour.

LEE

We're officially grown ups, now.
Standing on our own two feet.
Working to support ourselves, far
from the protection of our parents
and our homes.

A beat. Everyone slowly turns to glare at Lee.

LEE (cont'd)

I'm not helping, am I?

EMMA

You're really, really not.

LEE

Look, guys and girls, all I'm
saying is... Actually, I have no
idea what I'm saying.

IAN

You know, I tend to notice that
with you a lot.

(CONTINUED)

LEE

(eyes him)

I'm not going to launch into another Buffy-inspired motivational speech, don't worry. I guess all I'm trying to say is...

CLAIRE

Good luck?

LEE

No, it was 'how the hell did all of you find paying jobs in, like, a day, and I'm still working for nothing?'

CLAIRE

To be fair, your job is probably the most interesting out of all of us.

CHRIS

Hey, don't say that, being a teacher can be pretty rewarding!

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm sure it will be.

A beat as Claire sips her drink. Lee and Chris exchange a glance, picking up on what Claire isn't saying.

LEE

(prompts)

But...

CLAIRE

(quickly)

Oh, God, I'm terrified! All those kids? Looking up at me, wanting me to teach them things? I'll have to work to lesson plans, discipline naughty children, go to meetings and conferences, and... and... and now I'm hyperventilating.

Emma dutifully reaches over to the bin and grabs an empty brown paper bag, passing it to Claire who takes a few deep, sucking breaths through it, Emma massaging her shoulders as she does so.

LEE

Well, borderline panic attacks, aside, how's everyone else coping so far?

CHRIS

Dude, I'm working in a coffee house. I may as well carve a pentagram onto my chest and start buying Slayer albums.

LEE

Fair enough. Ian?

IAN

I plan to work on James Bonding every hot female who passes their goods beneath my stamp.

A beat. Nobody quite knows whether that was a double entendre or not.

IAN (cont'd)

By which I mean I'll be working dilligently and dutifully all day long, and most definitely not checking out any of the ladies who I meet, or I'll probably end up getting maced and having security guys rooting round inside my trousers again.

(beat)

Come to think of it, how many libraries have security guards anyway?

LEE

(quickly changing subject)

Emma?

EMMA

I get to spend all day watching other people go and see the films that I can't afford to watch. And maybe, if I'm really lucky, I can stand in and watch the same last ten minutes of the same film about twenty times.

Claire comes up for air from the paper bag.

CLAIRE

I mean, it's not that I'm not looking forward to it, and I'm sure I'll find the whole experience very stimulating and rewarding, like Chris said, but then I remember that I lied on my careers survey and that's what got me the job, so maybe I'm not qualified after all, and then they'll find out and...

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (3)

1

Back to the bag. Lee sips his coffee.

LEE

Well, I guess we'd better make our
final checks for launch and head
for the-

Everyone else clears out of the kitchen in a second.

LEE (cont'd)

... bathroom.

He sighs, finishes his coffee and walks on into:

2 INT. APARTMENT - OUTSIDE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

2

Everyone is standing outside the bathroom door, which is closed and has a homemade sign hanging from the handle. It reads, simply, 'Fat Man In Session. Come Back Later.'

LEE

What's going on?

CHRIS

Waylon's taken up his seat of
office.

IAN

And given the sounds coming out of
there, it's going to be a long
term.

WAYLON (O.S.)

You noisy bastards left me no
choice! I was trying to sleep in
and all I could hear was you guys,
whining on about having to go to
work!

Lee raps his knuckles on the bathroom door.

LEE

Come on, Waylon, you're the only
one of us with nowhere to go this
morning, do you want to hurry it up
in there?

WAYLON (O.S.)

Screw off! I've got more to do in
here than the rest of you, so
you're just gonna have to wait.

CLAIRE

'More to do'? How, exactly?

(CONTINUED)

EMMA
(grimaces)
Now there's an image I didn't
need...

LEE
Waylon!

WAYLON (O.S.)
What?

LEE
Are you going to hurry up?

WAYLON (O.S.)
No!

LEE
Why not?

WAYLON (O.S.)
(beat)
I'm fat and from the South.

Everyone exchanges a look - and realises that by Waylon's twisted logic, that means nobody's getting into the bathroom any time soon.

With a resigned sigh, the group turn away from the door, which we push in on.

WAYLON (O.S.) (cont'd)
Damn right...

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3

EXT. LA - STREET - EARLY EVENING

3

Lee walks down the street leading up to the apartment, looking pretty darn worn out after a hard day's graft. His backpack looks heavily loaded, with folders and papers sticking out from inside.

He's holding a newspaper in one hand and a coffee mug in the other, looking up as Chris walks into frame, also on his way home from work.

CHRIS

(off coffee)

Sleeping with the enemy?

LEE

They were open and on the way. It's nothing personal.

CHRIS

Hell yeah, it is, I take that as a personal attack! You could have taken a left on 32nd and spent your dollar ninety-five hopefully increasing my wages, but no, you had to go sign your soul away to the other side, didn't you?

LEE

(eyes him)

You're just messing around, aren't you?

CHRIS

(cracks a grin)

That I am.

LEE

Sorry, it's just been a long day. I'm experiencing first hand what it's like to work in the editing department of a television production company - and a hideously disorganised one at that! I swear, I could run the place myself and I've only been there five minutes.

CHRIS

Isn't that the plan? You know, start small, then work your way up to having a Mini-Me and a silver suit within the next six months?

(CONTINUED)

LEE
 (smirks)
 All in good time.

CHRIS
 I mean, at the rate your hairline
 is going you'll have the whole Dr.
 Evil thing going on in a few years
 anyway, so...

Lee shoots Chris a dark look, and he chuckles to himself as they spot Emma slouching up the street towards them.

CHRIS (cont'd)
 Well, hey there.

EMMA
 (sighs)
 I hate the cinema.

LEE
 That bad?

EMMA
 I mean it! I think I've managed to
 ruin one of the few places I still
 enjoyed going in just one day. I
 also found a new level of respect
 for cinema ushers. They have to put
 up with a lot of crap that nobody
 realises, you know!

CHRIS
 'They' including 'you,' now, don't
 forget.

EMMA
 And the mess! The ungodly, filthy
 mess they leave behind! You ever
 wonder why it takes so long to
 clean a cinema out after each
 showing of a film?

LEE
 Nope, but I can say right now that
 I don't think I want to.

The trio walk on in exhausted silence for a few moments.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
 Guys! Wait up!

They turn as Claire, still beaming and looking fresh and full of energy, bounds up the street towards them, as the bus that dropped her off rolls on round the corner.

CHRIS

Well, check out Perky Girl!

LEE

Did you actually go to work today?

CLAIRE

Of course I did! And I don't know what I was worried about, the whole day was just fantastic. Everyone at the school is really helpful and nice, and the kids, well, the kids are just adorable!

Lee, Chris and Emma exchange curious glances.

LEE

This was at a school, right?

EMMA

'Cause 'adorable' wasn't a word I used a lot when I was at school.

CHRIS

More like 'scalding.'

CLAIRE

(shrugs)

Doesn't matter. I've found my vocation and I intend to stick to it!

LEE

Until we become famous.

CLAIRE

Oh, yeah, then I'm out of that place like a rocket.

They chuckle as they reach the ground floor entrance to the apartment block, Lee opening the door.

The group make their way up the stairs to their floor.

LEE

I managed to sneak off at lunch time and do a little exploring.

EMMA

Find much?

LEE

A bunch of likely looking companies that we could start sending our work to when it's done, they're a dime a dozen round by the production house I'm working for.

CLAIRE

And here was me thinking you'd have taken that place over by now!

LEE

Why Claire, are you daring to imply that I may be just a tiny bit motivated?

CHRIS

Dude, I've seen worker ants take more holidays than you.

LEE

Let's stop for a moment and consider what I left behind. A band that hadn't played a gig or practiced in nine months. A loving family and a nice house, admittedly, but a job that redefined the word 'dull' and probably broke several international slave labour laws along the way.

The group veer off the staircase, into:

INT. APARTMENT - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

They're heading down towards the apartment's front door.

LEE

All things considered, I wouldn't want to think for a minute that I wasn't achieving something every day out here.

EMMA

That'll only lead to you popping a blood vessel, you know.

CHRIS

Yeah, I hear that kills a lot of people who don't sleep and work too hard.

LEE

(defensively)
I sleep!

5 CONTINUED:

5

CLAIRE

Then why were you still awake at
4am and up again at eight?

They pause outside the apartment door as Lee fishes out his keys, trying to think up an excuse.

LEE

Sometimes, there just aren't enough
hours in the day. And anyway, they
have all the TV I didn't get to see
back home on over here, twenty-four
hours a day! No way I'm missing
'Alias' Season Four this time...

He opens the door, and they step into:

6 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

6

Lee shrugs off his backpack and drops it by the coatstand, as the others take off their jackets and hang them up.

Surprise, surprise, WAYLON is sitting on the couch, a huge bag of Cheetos in his lap as he hops through the channels. The sofa looks moulded to his body by now.

WAYLON

What's up, mah niggers?

LEE

You'll get arrested for saying
that, you know.

WAYLON

(shrugs)

Hey, I'm all about equal
opportunities.

CHRIS

What'd you get up to today then,
dude?

WAYLON

You're looking at it.

CLAIRE

(blinks)

You made a new sofa?

EMMA

He means he sat on his arse and
watched TV all day. Right?

WAYLON

(grins)

Damn right.

(CONTINUED)

LEE

Well, isn't that just marvellous.
You're as true to form as always.

WAYLON

Hey, we only met the other day, how
do you know I'm always like this?

LEE

Oh, I don't know, I picked up a few
things from the year or so we spent
talking before we all shipped out
here that implied you might be just
a tiny bit of a slacker.

WAYLON

You're just jealous because I have
the best plan.

CHRIS

Which is?

WAYLON

Once again, you're looking at it.

Lee rolls his eyes and heads into the kitchen, as Emma and
Chris take up station either side of the sofa.

EMMA

What are we watching?

WAYLON

I'm gonna stick my neck out and go
with 'crap.' But there's still over
a hundred channels of it. God bless
America.

CHRIS

(reaches for remote)
Hey, let me see if-

Waylon snatches his remote-holding hand away from Chris.

WAYLON

No! Can't take the precious!

But Emma just grabs it while Waylon isn't looking.

EMMA

Ha!

WAYLON

Hey! Damn it!

CHRIS

She's a superior being, Waylon,
deal with it.

WAYLON

(grumbles)

Alright, fine. So what does Little
Miss Superior Being want to watch?

Emma concentrates as she flips through a bunch of channels
settling on one with a smile.

TV ANNOUNCER

And now on UKSPN, live soccer
coverage of today's Premiership
matches!

WAYLON

(disbelief)

Soccer?!?

EMMA

Bloody right! You think I'm letting
being in another country keep me
away from my footie?

WAYLON

It's just... it's unnatural, is
what it is! They can't even use
their hands or bodyslam another
player into the ground! What kind
of a pussy whipped sport punishes
you for full contact?

CHRIS

(shrugs)

I kinda like it.

Chris settles down to watch, and a defeated Waylon finally
uproots himself from the sofa.

The front door SLAMS shut as Ian walks in, looking as tired
as the others. He yawns and stretches as Lee emerges from the
kitchen holding a hastily-prepared sandwich.

LEE

Ah, good, you're back.

IAN

What's that about my back?

Ian tries to tilt his neck round to look at his back.

LEE

No, I mean you're back here.

IAN
 (still looking)
 Where?

LEE
 Here in the apartment!

IAN
 (beat)
 What?

LEE
 (sighs)
 Never mind. How was your day?

IAN
 Let's see. I checked some books
 out, put some back on the shelves,
 and... no, wait, that's actually
 all I did. I'm a librarian, Lee,
 not an international playboy!

EMMA
 That's not what you told that girl
 who -

IAN
 (points)
Silencio!

Emma smirks and turns her attention back to the TV.

LEE
 Looks like we all had pretty tough
 first days, so...

Lee pauses as Ian scoops the sandwich from his hands and
 bites into it.

IAN
 And then, then she says, oh, you
 just wait, she says to me, 'Ian,'
 she says, 'why don't you go and
 check if we have any copies in the
 storeroom?' Like I know where the
 storeroom is!

Leaving his sandwich to its fate, Lee steps back and ducks
 into the girls' bedroom.

The door is ajar, and Lee knocks on it as he leans inside.

LEE
 Claire?

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Yeah?

LEE

Ah, are you decent?

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Yes, yes, come on in. Don't worry, I'm not about to let any of you lot see me in my underwear any time soon.

(beat)

Or, in fact, ever. Some lines shouldn't even be drawn, let alone crossed.

Lee steps inside and shuts the door behind him as Claire emerges from behind the cover of the wardrobe door, already changed into more casual clothes.

LEE

Just looking for somewhere to hide. I can already tell that our time here is going to involve a lot of trying to sneak away for five minutes.

CLAIRE

Oh, it's not that bad. We're just older than any of that lot, they haven't had the chance to get as jaded by the working world.

LEE

Heh, guess not.

There's a beat as Lee peers round the room, checking everything out. Claire watches him.

CLAIRE

Is everything alright?

LEE

(distracted)

Huh? Oh, yeah, it's -

CLAIRE

And don't say 'fine' either. I'm quite good at seeing right through people when they don't say what's on their mind.

Lee takes a breath, running a hand through his hair.

LEE

Just getting The Fear a bit, that's all.

CLAIRE

'The Fear'? Not in the Hunter S. Thompson sense, I hope? Because if any one of us didn't need a drug habit to make them any crazier, it'd be you.

LEE

No, it's nothing like that. I just get a little... I guess 'anxious' is the word, sometimes. Like, even when things around me are going well, I get a knot in my stomach and suddenly all my admittedly limited self-confidence just evaporates, quicker than the milk does when Waylon gets thirsty.

CLAIRE

You'll be fine. This is kind of daunting for all of us, even if nobody's actually saying it.

She offers him a warm smile, which he returns. Lee opens his mouth to speak again, when a piercing SHRIEK sounds from the living room.

With an alarmed look, Lee throws the door open.

Lee and Claire dash out of the girls' room to see Ian doubled up in pain on the floor, with Emma looking like she's trying to literally pull something out of his ass, as Waylon cradles a broken fishing rod.

LEE

What the -

IAN

Get it out! Get it out!

EMMA

I'm trying! Stay still!

IAN

I can't! It hurts!

WAYLON

You dumb English bastard, look what you did!

EMMA

Waylon! Not helping!

CLAIRE

What happened?

Emma grimaces as she pulls at something that seems to be stuck in Ian's ass, which finally detaches with a loud POP.

She stands, catching her breath, and holds the offending article up for the others to see.

It's a small, and now bloodstained FISH HOOK.

EMMA

Seems Ian found where Waylon's lost fishing rod got to.

WAYLON

'Found'? He sat on it! Look at what he did!

Waylon holds the two broken pieces of the rod up to Lee, who looks remarkably unsympathetic.

LEE

Are you going to leave us more traps like this?

CLAIRE

I think somebody's seen 'Tomb Raider' a few too many times...

WAYLON

(getting angry)

It wasn't a trap, I just lost the damn thing!

IAN

(woozy)

Spots... Vision... Blurry...

EMMA

Oh, stop overreacting. It was just a scratch.

IAN

(to Waylon)

Where the hell were you going to go fishing round here, anyway?

WAYLON

(shrugs)

They have lakes in LA, right?

IAN

They built the city in the middle of the bloody desert! They had to bring the trees in from other places, you think they brought in lakes and a plentiful supply of freshwater fish as well?

WAYLON

(beat)
Yes.

LEE

(stepping in)
Alright, it was just an accident. No harm done, except possibly to Ian's pride.

IAN

And arse.

LEE

Emma, why don't you go and use that fake ID of yours and bring in some beers, see if we can't all just chill out for the rest of the night.

EMMA

I'm on it!

LEE

I think we should spend tonight getting our heads round why we're actually here.

CHRIS

The chicks?

Claire hits him on the arm, as Lee shakes his head, walking over to his backpack and bringing out six white folders.

WAYLON

What the shit is this?

LEE

The reason we all moved out here.
(beat; grins)
The project.

As the others look at the folders, then each other, we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

9

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

9

It's now a few hours later. Lee has set up a white board in front of the TV - much to everyone's obvious annoyance - and is busy scribbling things on it, adding to an already complex diagram of arrows, stick figures and words underlined in red.

He finishes writing a last line across the top of it, the squeak of his white board pen echoing around the apartment, before turning proudly to the others - although Emma is still absent.

LEE

Right.

CHRIS

Uh... it's a horse.

CLAIRE

No, I'm thinking some kind of fish.

CHRIS

A mammal, maybe?

CLAIRE

Ooh, is it a whale?

LEE

We're not playing 'Pictionary'!

WAYLON

Really? 'Cause if not, you've missed your calling in life. That's a damn good octopus you've drawn there.

LEE

(off board)

This isn't anything - at least, it's not an animal.

IAN

Oh, I get it! It's...

(beat)

No, I've got nothing.

LEE

(irritated)

It's a map of our path to stardom, isn't it!

IAN

Is it?

(CONTINUED)

WAYLON

I'm still going with octopus.

LEE

Quiet!

Everyone stares blankly back at Lee, who takes a beat to calm back down. He points to a circle in the centre of the board, surrounded by arrows.

LEE (cont'd)

This bit represents our goal.

IAN

Which is? Just to clarify things for the newbies, that is.

LEE

Our own production company. Money. Stardom. DVD boxsets. And, most importantly-

WAYLON

(interrupts)
Royalties?

CHRIS

Chicks?

LEE

I was aiming for 'a sense of achievement and knowing that we've left our mark on this world,' but...

WAYLON

(smirks)
Yeah, we get it. Chicks and money. So what's Phase One, Man With The Plan?

Lee points in turn to a series of arrows, that all head into the circle.

LEE

Well, phase one is to start writing. We've got the project outlined, along with who needs to work on what.

He turns to everyone, and they all raise their white folders obediently.

CLAIRE

I'm starting to get an idea of how my kids felt today...

CHRIS

You did this to them? Man, they must think you suck.

LEE

So, we just need to get cracking. Once we've got a certain amount of basic writing, plotting, planning and preparation done, we can move onto Phase Two.

WAYLON

Lunch?

Everyone sniggers, and Lee sighs irritatedly.

LEE

Try to keep up, okay?

WAYLON

Sorry, Dad.

LEE

Phase Two involves early meetings with the seemingly infinite amount of production companies in this town. We need to get some interest, so that as we get more work done, people are actually looking forward to what we're doing.

CHRIS

Yeah, because I'd hate all this work to be for nothing. I mean, think of the bills in white board pens alone!

LEE

(ignores him)

By this point, we get to Phase Three. We hijack a director and some actors, which are as ten a penny as production companies, film a few scenes from the project to help showcase it, then use that to go to Phase Four.

CLAIRE

Right, I think I'm getting this now - is Phase Four where we throw the project and the film at the people we hopefully won over earlier on, to see if any of them will give us the money to film what we're doing!

LEE

Excelsior!

A beat. Lee deflates a little.

LEE (cont'd)

That means 'yes.' Come on, I know I'm not the only one who reads comics round here!

WAYLON

Great! Now let's get back to that 'chilling out' thing we were all looking forward to. With beer.

CLAIRE

Yeah, what's taking Emma so long?

Claire glances at the clock, and we cut to:

10

INT. RAKESH'S 7-11 - NIGHT

10

With tinny bhangra music echoing round the small and well-stocked convenience store, Emma pops into view, peering nervously over the shelves.

She's looking over towards RAKESH, the bulky, pretty hairy West Indian guy who owns this fine establishment. He's idly watching a small black and white TV on the shop counter, not noticing Emma at all.

Emma is over in the drinks section, a wealth of alcoholic goodness laid out on the shelves before her. It seems that having gotten this far, she's finding taking that last step into breaking the law a little tricky.

She takes a deep breath and closes her eyes, psyching herself up for the mission.

EMMA

(to herself)

Alright, Emma, you can do this. You're just breaking the law in a foreign country, there's no need to panic. All you're going to do is pick up a bunch of beers, pay for them and walk right out of here, back to the apartment. Simple.

She opens her eyes again, scoops up the basket by her feet and fills it with beer cans, making sure to aim for the ones labelled 'Special Offer.'

She walks smoothly out of the aisle and over to the counter, placing the basket gently down.

(CONTINUED)

Rakesh eyes over the beers, then looks at Emma, his deadpan expression giving nothing away.

EMMA (cont'd)
 (brightly)
 Hi! I'm just, you know, buying some
 beer. Legally. Because I'm, uh,
 legal. You know. For beer.

Rakesh stares blankly back at her, and Emma starts to fidget nervously.

After a beat, Rakesh starts to swipe the beers past the scanner set into the counter, taking an agonisingly long time to do so.

With each 'blip' that the scanner makes, Emma gets a little more edgy.

One can doesn't want to be scanned. Rakesh sweeps it back and forth a few times, then sighs and starts tapping in a serial number.

Emma is still fidgeting, then hears a JINGLE from behind her as the shop door opens.

It's two COPS, in full uniform, their radios crackling with police band traffic as they start to nose casually round the shop.

Emma looks petrified, and turns back to Rakesh, who is still typing in the number for the can that didn't scan.

Finally, he finishes it, and takes the next can from Emma's basket - which, of course, also fails to earn the required 'bip' from the scanner.

As Rakesh starts typing numbers in again, Emma looks about ready to scream as the two cops wander round to the aisle just behind her, close enough to hear them talk.

COP #1
 So then, this kid's all like, 'you
 can't arrest me, I'm not even
 American!' And I laugh and say
 'since when does that mean you can
 break the law?'

COP #2
 So what did you do?

COP #1
 (chuckles)
 Oh, it was a classic.
 (MORE)

COP #1 (cont'd)

I booked the kid and brought her in to the cells, left her in there with a bunch of the stinkiest winos we'd pulled up that night while I made a personal phone call, all the way back to her family in England.

COP #2

(laughs)

Oh, that is harsh!

Emma is visibly shaking with nerves now as Rakesh continues his torturously slow check out of the beers.

COP #1

Next thing I know, someone from the British Embassy shows up to take the kid home! I tell ya, that was one holiday she won't forget in a hurry.

The two cops laugh - and then round the corner of the aisle to stand right behind Emma!

She tries to keep her cool as Rakesh punches up a total.

RAKESH

Seventeen-fifty, please.

Emma digs in her pocket and brings out a mess of green notes. She blinks at them - it's all green money, and she can't tell which notes are which.

EMMA

Uh, just give me a second.

Rakesh's attention drifts to the two officers as Emma frantically tries to work out which notes she needs.

RAKESH

Good evening, sirs! The usual, yes?

COP #1

Not while we're on duty, Mr. Poselay. We're just in for gum and some sodas for the road.

RAKESH

Ah, yes! Not a problem, I'll get them right away!

Emma finally has the money ready - just as Rakesh trots off to get the gum and drinks for the two cops. Her eyes flit from side to side, trying not to look over her shoulder as the two cops stand patiently in line behind her.

The bell over the door rings again, and Emma glances over to the CCTV monitor sitting on the counter - and two more COPS have just walked in!

Emma closes her eyes and GULPS loudly as the two new cops join the ones stood right behind her.

COP #3

Bill! Tim! How are you, guys?

COP #1

Oh, hey, we're good. Just getting some supplies.

COP #3

Yeah, yeah, us too. Hey, what's this I hear about you getting some English chick deported for jaywalking?

COP #2

(laughs)

News travels fast, huh?

COP #1

Well, I don't like to boast, you know, but...

The cops share a group laugh as Rakesh finally reappears, his hands full of packets of chewing gum and small bottles of soda.

RAKESH

Now then, officers, here are- oh, you have more friends! Gum and soda for you too?

COP #3

No, we're good. Just serve the little lady there so she can get out of here.

Emma turns and catches Cop #3's eye - and he WINKS back at her. She manages a half smile and quickly turns back round.

RAKESH

Now then, what was it?

EMMA

(quickly)

Seventeen-fifty! Here!

She stuffs the notes into Rakesh's hands, scoops up the plastic bag with the booze and starts to head for the door - but Rakesh calls after her.

RAKESH

Your change, miss?

Emma closes her eyes and curses silently, then fixes on an innocent look, turns and heads back to the counter.

All four cops are watching as she gets her fifty cents change and then turns away again - but not before Cop #3 grins at her again - and she finally reaches the door.

But just as she opens it:

COP #1

Uh, excuse me, miss?

Emma freezes, then slowly turns round.

EMMA

Yeah?

COP #1

That's a lot of booze you've got there. You having a party?

EMMA

What? Oh, no, this is just a 'we all survived our first day of work' thing for me and my housemates. I'm, uh, not drinking.

COP #1

Oh, okay.

Emma turns to go, but the Cop calls out again.

COP #1 (cont'd)

Do you happen to have any I.D. On you, miss?

Emma turns slowly back round - and then tries to look as innocent as she can.

As Cop #1 raises an eyebrow, we cut to:

The boys are squashed onto the couch, sucking up some TV, when we hear a muffled phone RINGING.

They exchange glances - where the heck is the phone?

LEE

Waylon, did you hide the phone again?

WAYLON

What? No! You Limeys whined so much last time, I figured I'd find something new to hide next time.

IAN

Sounds like it's coming from over here...

They all push themselves up from the couch, rooting through the apartment - lifting furniture, empty food cartons, magazines, anything else in sight - until Claire strolls in from the girl's room, hears the phone ringing, and without missing a beat lifts up one of the couch cushions to pick it up and answer it.

CLAIRE

(into phone)
Hello?

EMMA

(filtered; through phone)
Claire? Oh, thank God!

CLAIRE

Emma? What's the matter?

This gets the boy's attention, and Claire frowns and sits on the edge of the couch.

EMMA

Well, it's like this. We're not getting any beer tonight.

CLAIRE

Oh. Oh, well, never mind, we can always-

EMMA

And unless you guys know how to go about bailing somebody out of jail, I think I'm going to get deported.

Claire blinks and turns to Lee, who throws back a 'what's wrong?' look before we cut to:

Emma is using a rickety old payphone, a burly COP standing beside her.

Behind her we can see into the cell that she's currently calling home, with a fine selection of the stinkiest winos known to humanity inside.

EMMA

See, here's the thing. I went out to get the drinks and got busted. And now, I'm in jail, in a small cell full of people who smell like they've been pickled, and I think I'm going to get sent back to England unless you can figure out how to get me out of here!

CLAIRE

(filtered; through phone)
Don't panic, Emma. Lee's here, he'll think of something.

LEE

(filtered; through phone)
What? Why do I have to think of something?

CLAIRE

Well, you did tell me you got yourself arrested once.

LEE

That was one time! I was racing shopping trolleys down a bus lane at 3am, it's a bit different to breaking an actual law in a different country!

EMMA

(frustrated)
Guys! Can you stop arguing and figure something out? I only had fifty cents for the phone, so I'm about to-

Click. The call cuts off - Emma is out of cash.

EMMA (cont'd)

Hello? Hello!

The Cop reaches over and takes the receiver out of her hands, replacing it on the payphone.

EMMA (cont'd)

(distracted)
But... but...

COP #4

Sorry, but that's your one phone call.

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

The Cop steps over to the cell door, and with a jangle of his keys unlocks it, pushing the door open and motioning for Emma to step inside.

As Emma looks ready to burst into tears, we cut back to:

13 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

13

Claire and Lee are pulling on their jackets as the other boys watch them.

LEE

We'll have to figure something out on the way, we can't leave Em in the slammer for any longer than absolutely necessary.

IAN

The 'slammer'? Since when did you start talking like Dick Tracy?

CLAIRE

Ian! This is no time for jokes!

WAYLON

Emma gets busted trying to buy us booze? I think this is a great time for jokes.

CHRIS

Dude, she could get deported!

Waylon thinks about this for a beat.

WAYLON

Well, okay, yeah, that part would suck, but at least we'd have a funny story to tell about it.

CHRIS

Why are only you two going? Shouldn't we all go?

LEE

I want at least one of you here to keep an eye on the phone in case somebody rings us about her. And given Ian's uncanny ability to get frisked by security guards...

IAN

Hey!

LEE

... and the fact that Waylon almost certainly has a criminal record...

(CONTINUED)

WAYLON

Hey! Don't- no, actually, he's right. But not in this state.

LEE

... means that Chris, you have to stay here while Claire and I do the International Rescue thing.

Lee and Claire hustle over to the door as Waylon calls after them.

WAYLON

Don't be gone long, Ellen!

The apartment door closes with a SLAM, leaving the three boys on the couch.

There's a beat, as they try to work out what they should be doing next.

WAYLON (cont'd)

So... anyone else feel like going out for beers?

Chris rolls his eyes, and we cut back to:

14 INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT.

14

The barred cell door closes with a CLANG, and a dejected Emma stares out towards us.

She doesn't react as a wrinkled and probably stinky WINO hobbles over to her, squinting at her.

WINO

That you, Martha? You smell kinda funny. D'you take a bath or somethin'?

Emma SIGHS heavily, and we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

15 INT. JAIL - OUTSIDE CELLS - NIGHT

15

Lee and Claire stand outside the cell that Emma is trapped inside, Claire casting glances over to the miserable-looking Emma as Lee tries to negotiate with the Cop on duty.

LEE

So you see, officer, by rights she shouldn't even have been there buying the booze in the first place. I'm over twenty-one, so I should have gone. I'll take full responsibility for this.

COP #1

It's not a question of taking responsibility, son, it's the simple fact that your friend in there broke the law!

LEE

Isn't there anything I can do to help? I'm afraid I'm not up on how this works, last time I got arrested it was...

Lee trails off as he realises the Cop is eyeing him, wondering where this story is going. Lee quickly backpedals.

LEE (cont'd)

(quickly)

... actually not that interesting a story and all worked out in the end. Point is...

Lee glances over to Claire and Emma, then steps closer to the Cop, lowering his voice.

LEE (cont'd)

You see, the thing is, I promised her parents I'd look after her when we all came over here.

COP #1

'We' being this house full of wannabe writers you mentioned earlier, right?

LEE

That's right. Emma's a very talented young girl, and she's only ended up in this situation because of my negligence.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LEE (cont'd)
I'm sure you can appreciate how
awful I feel about this.

COP #1
(cynical)
I'll bet.

LEE
(protesting)
I do, actually! In fact, I-

CLAIRE
Lee, let me handle this.

Claire steps in and gently nudges Lee out of the way. As the Cop's eyes fall on Claire, being someone he'd much rather be looking at, he visibly softens up, puffing out his chest a little.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
(sweetly)
I know she's been bad, but there's
no need to drag her parents into
all of this, is there?

COP #1
Hey, I wish I could help, but the
law's the law.

CLAIRE
Yes, that's what I thought you'd
say.

Claire bites her lip and looks coquettishly up at the cop - she's in full on flirt mode here, and the Cop looks like he's buying it.

He glances over to Emma, then back at Claire with her big puppy dog eyes, then sighs and nods.

COP #1
Alright, alright. She's just a kid,
she hasn't given us any trouble,
she's a non-American citizen and
it's her first offence, so I guess
we can let her off with a written
warning this time.

CLAIRE
(beams)
Thank you!

COP #1
On one condition.

CLAIRE

Anything. Name your price.

(quickly)

Not that I'm trying to imply you
can be bribed or anything!

COP #1

(grins)

Don't worry, no offence taken. I'll
let the girl go - if you go out for
a drink with me.

CLAIRE

That sounds-

(double takes)

I'm sorry, what?

Claire opens her mouth to speak again but Lee quickly steps
in front of her.

LEE

She'd love to. Wouldn't you,
Claire?

Lee turns and fixes her with a glare, and Claire's look
darkens for just a beat, before she plasters on a fake smile
and beams back up at the cop.

CLAIRE

Sounds like a plan!

COP #1

Okay, great! Uh, I just need one of
you to fill in some paperwork, then
she's free to go. Oh, and this is
for you.

He hands a card to Claire.

COP #1 (cont'd)

That's my number. You give me a
call tomorrow sometime, we'll set
something up. Alright?

CLAIRE

(fake enthusiasm)

Sounds... lovely. Would you excuse
me for just a moment?

Claire sidesteps over to Emma as Lee begins filling in the
forms the Cop passes him.

Emma is waiting at the edge of the cell as Claire steps over.

EMMA

Well? Am I going home, or home
home, as in Liverpool?

CLAIRE

You're free to go, don't worry.

EMMA

(relieved)

Oh, Claire!

Thankyouthankyouthankyou! How did
you sort it out?

Claire glares over towards Lee and sighs.

CLAIRE

By selling my soul, apparently.

She turns back to Emma, who blinks, not understanding.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Never mind. Come on, let's get you
back to the apartment. I'm sure the
rest of the boys are worried sick
about you at the moment.

Emma grins, and we cut back to:

16 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

16

Back with the boys - and as Chris and Ian cheer him on,
Waylon is seeing how many soda cans he can balance on his
chin.

As he loses his balance at four and the cans clatter to the
ground, the boys all CHEER and we cut back to:

17 INT. JAIL - OUTSIDE CELLS - NIGHT

17

Emma is free as a bird, pulling on her jacket and waiting by
the exit with Lee, as they wait for Claire to finish talking
to the amorous Cop.

COP #1

Are you three good to get back
home? I mean, I can always borrow a
squad car to-

CLAIRE

(quickly)

No!

(beat)

I mean, no thank you. That's a very
kind offer, but I think Emma's seen
enough of the police for one night.

(CONTINUED)

COP #1

I, ah, hope the same doesn't go for you?

Claire manages that smile again.

CLAIRE

Me? Oh, I'm sure I'll be fine. So I'll, uhm, speak to you tomorrow then, okay?

COP #1

Looking forward to it.

Claire turns and hurries back over to the other two.

LEE

Everything alright?

CLAIRE

(hisses)

You are in trouble when we get home.

She barges past him and outside. Lee hesitates, a little thrown, and Emma pats him on the arm.

EMMA

She'll get over it.

LEE

Did I do something wrong?

EMMA

Well, you did kind of make Claire use herself as bait to get me out of jail. That does kind of count as 'wrong.'

LEE

Oh.

(beat; groans)

Oh, monkfish, she hates me now, doesn't she?

Emma shrugs, then exits. After a beat, Lee follows.

The boys have a new game - see who can balance a full and open can of soda on their forehead the longest.

It's a dead heat until the door opens and Lee, Claire and Emma enter, and when Claire shuts the door with a SLAM, all three soda cans drop and spill, leaving Ian, Chris and Waylon all in last place.

WAYLON
 (to Claire)
 Jesus, woman, can't you see we were
 in the middle of something?

Claire glares at them as she stalks into her room and shuts the door with a loud BANG, and Waylon turns to see Emma glaring at him too.

WAYLON (cont'd)
 What?

Chris nudges him, and Waylon finally catches up.

WAYLON (cont'd)
 Uh, I mean - hey, Emma, we're glad
 you're all right.

Emma shakes her head wearily and heads into the kitchen, and Lee follows.

Emma opens the fridge, looking for something to drink.

EMMA
 Where have all the cans we had in
 here gone?

Waylon BELCHES from the living room, and Emma mutters again.

EMMA (cont'd)
 Never mind...

She grabs a glass and starts to fill it with tap water, glancing over her shoulder and noticing Lee leaning against the counter, nervously chewing his nails.

EMMA (cont'd)
 What's the matter with you? I was
 the one who almost got deported
 tonight, remember?

LEE
 (distracted)
 Huh?

Emma wanders over and raps her knuckles lightly against his forehead.

EMMA
 Hello, McFly?

LEE
 Sorry, I'm just...
 (sighs)
 (MORE)

LEE (cont'd)

This hasn't been a very successful day all round, really, has it? All of us except Claire had pretty rubbish first days at work, and then when we get home, try to chill out and get our heads round some actual work, you go out for some beers and get arrested, and then I make Claire go on a blind date with some random cop just to get you out of prison, and...

(sighs again)

I'm going to bed. That way, it'll be tomorrow quicker and I can try and forget any of today ever happened.

Lee turns and wanders back into the living room. Emma watches him go, a thoughtful look on her face before we cut to:

Lee joins the boys at the sofa as they watch the TV. Waylon raises an eyebrow as Lee slumps into the closest chair.

WAYLON

Alright, Fearless Leader, who peed on your fries?

LEE

It's 'piss on your chips,' Waylon. If you're going to attempt English slang, at least try and get it right.

WAYLON

(salutes)
Yes, masta.

LEE

So what have I missed while I was busy making another girl I know hate the sight of me?

CHRIS

Waylon found out he can balance three soda cans on his chin.

WAYLON

(proudly)
It's true.

CHRIS

Ian was in the middle of telling us another story about his day at the library.

IAN

That's right, I was-

WAYLON

(interrupts)

Bout nobody really gave a crap. We were just trying to find something to watch when you came back in.

(beat; looks around)

Wait a minute! Where's our beer?

Emma walks back in from the kitchen and slaps Waylon across the back of the head.

EMMA

Enough with the crazy talk! I almost got sent back to England because I tried to get you some beer, so you can get it your bloody self next time!

WAYLON

Jeez, woman, what's the matter with you?

EMMA

I got arrested!

WAYLON

Did they press charges?

EMMA

(beat)

Well... no.

WAYLON

Do you have a criminal record?

EMMA

No.

WAYLON

Do you have to get deported back to England?

EMMA

No, but -

WAYLON

Well then. Things could be a whole hell of a lot worse!

LEE

He's got a p -

EMMA

Lee, I swear, if you end that sentence with the word 'point,' you are going out that window.

LEE

Uh, right. I'll be shutting up and trying to apologise to Claire again, then.

Lee stands and heads over to the girls' room, knocking on the door and stepping inside.

CHRIS

(changing channel)

This sucks. Back in Canada we have plenty of actual TV to watch, you know? None of this recycled reality TV crap.

WAYLON

Maybe, but 'The Simple Life' does provide an important service to modern society?

EMMA

Which is what, exactly?

IAN

That Paris Hilton is a skanky ho?

WAYLON

No, that even stupid people can get their own TV show.

(beat)

And that British people should never attempt high-level US phrases like 'skanky ho.'

Emma chuckles as an advert on the TV catches everyone's attention.

TV (FEMALE)

Looking for the perfect way to ease away the tension of a hard day at work? Maybe try to add a little sexual healing back into your day?

WAYLON

Hell yeah!

TV (FEMALE)

Then swing by the Femme Fatale gentleman's club on Lexington Avenue - this week only, all first time visitors get in absolutely free!

Waylon's face lights up like Charlie clutching the deeds to the Chocolate Factory.

WAYLON

Oh, my God... there she is, Garth. Excalibur!

CHRIS

You want to go to that place?

IAN

Why would they let us in? We're not 'gentlemen,' are we?

Waylon bounces an empty can off Ian's head.

WAYLON

It's a strip club, stupid!

IAN

Oh...

EMMA

Oo, that sounds like a plan, actually, I've always wanted to see what one of those was like.

Emma realises all three boys are staring incredulously at her. She shrugs innocently.

EMMA (cont'd)

What? I have! I mean, I am the Pole Dancing Princess, or did we forget that little nickname?

WAYLON

(quietly; to Chris)

Not while she keeps reminding us about it...

IAN

Alright, I'm game. Just let me get the spare few hundred dollars I'll inevitably spend in there.

CHRIS

Say what?

EMMA

Ignore him, he's got no willpower.

WAYLON

Hey, if the girls in there are half as hot as the ones on the advert, I think I'd better go mug a few rich housewives first to get enough cash!

CHRIS

Shall we ask Lee and Claire?

EMMA

(shakes head)

I think Lee's feeling too guilty to appreciate a naked chick rubbing herself against him, and Claire'll be too mad.

WAYLON

More for us, right boys?

Emma clears her throat, and Waylon rolls his eyes.

WAYLON (cont'd)

Boys and girl, I mean.

The boys stand from the sofa and head over to the door to grab their coats, and in a few moments they've all stepped outside and left.

A beat later, the door to the girls' room opens, and Lee and Claire step out. Lee frowns as he registers the empty apartment.

LEE

Where'd everybody go?

CLAIRE

Maybe they wanted to give us some room to fight?

LEE

Then they reckoned without my legendary grovelling skills!

CLAIRE

(pats him on the head)

It's sweet when you get down on one knee. The tears were a bit much, though.

LEE

What can I say, I've got a guilty conscience. I think it all started back when I-

CLAIRE

(interrupts)

Anyway.

(beat)

Shall we get some booze?

LEE

Oh, God, yes.

Claire grins and reaches for her coat, still thrown over the back of the sofa, as we cut to:

Ian leads Waylon, Chris and Emma as they make their way along the busy central Hollywood street.

WAYLON

You know, I'm thinking that cab driver didn't know where the hell he was going.

EMMA

You reckon?

WAYLON

Last time I checked, you don't take a shortcut past the Charlie Chaplin studios by driving through them.

CHRIS

Yeah, but at least that security guard was a bad shot, right?

EMMA

(calls out)

Ian? Are you sure you know where this place is?

IAN

Absolutely! I have an eidetic memory.

WAYLON

A what?

IAN

I can remember any image I've studied with near photographic recollection.

CHRIS

That advert was on for about
fifteen seconds, how could you have
studied that enough?

IAN

(confidently)
Because I'm that good.
(looks up)
And here we are?

The group look up to the sign outside the plain, innocuous building they're standing before. The sign reads 'Fudou Fatale,' and the building itself blends quietly in with the restaurants and bars either side of it.

EMMA

(suspicious)
I'm not sure...

WAYLON

It wasn't called that... was it?

IAN

Course it was! Come on!

Ian strides boldly inside, and with hesitant glances, the others follow him in.

It's only once they're inside that we push in a little closer to the building, and make out the rest of the text beneath the sign: 'Fudou Fatale - LA's Premier Transgender Gentleman's Club.'

Uh oh.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

22

INT. FUDOU FATALE - NIGHT

22

A set of curved swing doors open as Ian, Waylon, Chris and Emma step into the club. A set of steps lead down towards a large podium in the centre of the high-ceilinged room, with a bar to one side, a balcony floor for the VIP area and two dozen smaller tables dotted around the floor.

Ian rubs his hands together, as Waylon and Chris exchange mischevious looks.

WAYLON

Oh, I think we're going to be
naughty little vampire gods
tonight...

EMMA

Hmm. I thought it'd be fuller than
this at this time of night.

She's got a point - only a handful of the tables are occupied by the usual strip club crowd - nervous-looking men in their twenties and more disillusioned men in their forties - and a quick count gives us five girls working the floor.

IAN

All the more for us, eh?

Ian heads down towards the nearest table for four, as Waylon nods towards the bar.

WAYLON

Drinks?

EMMA

Only if you get them. I think
getting carded twice in one night
might be pushing my luck a bit.

Waylon heads over to the bar as Emma and Chris join Ian at the table. Two scantily-clad girls wander past, flashing expensively-dentured smiles at them, as Emma still looks a little suspect of the whole thing.

EMMA (cont'd)

Something's not quite right about
this place, boys.

CHRIS

I'm seeing dancing girls and beer.

IAN

Yeah, no downside there!

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

Hmm...

Waylon arrives at the table with three bottles of beer - and a Coke for Emma. She lifts it up questioningly.

EMMA (cont'd)

Where's my drink?

WAYLON

You said it yourself, Em - you didn't want to push your luck.

EMMA

(sulkily)

Well, this sucks.

Ian, Chris and Waylon clink their bottles together and settle back to watch the girls, as we cut to:

23 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

23

Claire and Lee are sitting on the floor in front of the sofa, a pack of cards in each hand and Lee's trusty fedora sitting upside down on the far side of the room.

Scattered playing cards around the hat tell us they're doing the old 'flick the cards into the hat' game, and the empty bottles around them tell us they're not going to get any better at it any time soon.

LEE

See, the trick is to get the wrist action just right.

Claire snorts with laughter, and Lee blinks innocently.

LEE (cont'd)

What?

CLAIRE

(stifles giggles)

Nothing, nothing. Just your use of the phrase 'wrist action,' is all.

LEE

(gets it)

Oh, yeah...

He flicks a card - and misses. Claire flicks - and lands it.

CLAIRE

Woo!

LEE

Alright, that's something like fifty-seven to nothing so far. Are you sure you're not using your woman's powers on me?

CLAIRE

(swigs beer)

No, I just think you're a terrible card flicker type person.

They try again. Lee misses, Claire hits the target.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

You were never picked for the team on sports day, were you?

LEE

(swigs beer)

They used to ask me not to come at all, actually.

Claire chuckles again as Lee flicks a card - and misfires, somehow flicking it back up and into his face. Howls of laughter from Claire once again.

LEE (cont'd)

I wonder where the others got to?

CLAIRE

Oh, let the go out and have some fun. I needed to cool off anyway.

LEE

And you don't mind me being here?

CLAIRE

(shrugs)

I can think of worse people.

Lee grins as Claire hits the target yet again, and we cut back over to the:

The boys now have a girl each sat next to them, busily trying to win over their business. Emma sits alone, still not looking comfortable with whatever it is that's setting off her Spidey Sense.

After a few beats, each girl takes their mark by the hand and leads them away to the dancing rooms, and soon Emma is left at the table by herself. She sips her Coke, frowning.

EMMA

Something is definitely not right
with this place.

We cut from her look to:

25 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

25

Lee is lying on his back on the sofa, strumming the beaten up, five-stringed acoustic guitar he brought along with him while Claire is curled up in one of the armchairs, flicking through the TV channels.

LEE

So.

CLAIRE

Yes?

LEE

Still think we made the right call
coming out here?

CLAIRE

So far, yes. I mean, in a few weeks
we've already seen arrests,
threats, jobs, bribery, more guy
humour than I think I'll ever need
to see in this life and several
afterwards, but so far... yes.

LEE

See, that's why I need you.

CLAIRE

(blinks)

Sorry?

LEE

(quickly)

I mean, that's why I need you
around here. You're the voice of
reason.

CLAIRE

Oh, I see. Never really thought of
myself like that before!

LEE

It's true. I'm the stress monkey,
Waylon's the jerk, Ian's the crazy
one, Emma's the youngster and Chris
is the rich kid. We're all
fulfilling one of the recognised
stereotypes of modern living.
You're the sensible one.

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE

Don't make it sound so unappealing!

LEE

You know what I mean. When I'm rocking back and forth in the corner with my head in my hands, Ian's running around saying 'penguin' in every sentence and Waylon's busy throwing bricks at kids on the street, you'll be the one hitting us all with the Silly Stick and dragging us back to reality.

CLAIRE

Don't forget the kicking and screaming part. I think Ian and Waylon are easily the two people furthest removed from reality I've ever met!

LEE

Heh, I guess so.

Claire turns to look at Lee, who is staring thoughtfully up at the ceiling as he strums something downbeat and Nick Cave-sounding on the guitar.

CLAIRE

You could learn a few things off them, though.

LEE

Such as? Waylon can belch the national anthem, that's considered a talent at some university frat houses, so I hear.

CLAIRE

I mean how much they love life. You never see them staying in while everyone else is out, playing 'Red Right Hand' and looking like somebody just gave them a puppy and then ran it over.

LEE

I don't do that!

Lee realises that's the song he's playing, and quickly puts the guitar down as Claire grins and turns back to the TV.

LEE (cont'd)

Alright, point taken. I was a goth
in my younger days, cut me a little
slack.

CLAIRE

You were?

LEE

(nods)

Got the PVC trousers and records to
prove it.

CLAIRE

What made you change?

LEE

Bad experiences.

CLAIRE

Ah, so that'd be 'girls,' then.

LEE

(eyes her)

How the hell do you know me so
well?

CLAIRE

It's nothing personal. You're just
easy to read, that's all.

LEE

Hmm. Well, I hope the others
managed to have a good night out.
At least we sorted things out.

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm still mad at you.

LEE

(surprised)

You are? But I thought -

CLAIRE

I've just calmed down. I'm saving
up the anger for an appropriate
moment.

(turns to him; grins
evilly)

Just when you least expect it.

Lee GULPS, and Claire reaches for her last remaining beer.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Anyway, I'm sure the boys and Emma have been off having all kinds of fun without us.

We cut from Claire back to:

Emma looks up as first Chris, then Ian and finally Waylon arrive back at the table. Each one of them looks pale and shellshocked, and a confused Emma waits for them to speak. When no-one does, she starts the conversation herself.

EMMA

So? How was it? None of the girls came near me while you were gone, so I'm thinking-

IAN

(dazed)
The horror...

CHRIS

I mean, just...

WAYLON

They had...

EMMA

What's the matter with you lot? Anybody would think this was a-

The penny drops. Emma looks round at the few 'girls' still working the floor, especially the one currently climbing the tall pole in the middle of the dancing podium.

It's the Adam's Apple that gives it away. Emma turns back to the boys with a gleeful smirk.

EMMA (cont'd)

I get it...

WAYLON

(still shocked)
Emma, this is a very, very frightening place for us to be now. I think you should take us all home. Now.

EMMA

(teasing)
Aw, what's wrong? Did the ladies not shake their thangs enough for you?

WAYLON

There was a bit too god damn much
'thang' as far as I could see!

CHRIS

Did your girls have deep voices as
well?

WAYLON

(nods)

Gentleman, I think we have just
discovered a previously unknown
level of Hell.

(to Emma)

Why didn't somebody tell me there
were clubs for these sorts of...
girls?

EMMA

Because they knew one day I'd need
to see the looks on all your faces
to cheer me up after a bad day,
that's why.

She finishes her drinks and stands.

EMMA (cont'd)

Come on, boys, I think you've all
seen enough action for one night.

IAN

(puts head in hands)

The horror...

Emma chuckles as Waylon and Chris stand, obediently following
her as she heads for the exit. Ian looks up, drains a full
bottle of beer in one gulp and then races after them, as we
cut to:

The living room is dark as the door opens and the gang file
back in. Emma looks around - Lee and Claire have left the
evidence of their card-flicking, beer-swilling evening out.

WAYLON

What the hell were the odds of that
place running a 'new guests get in
free' night as well?

CHRIS

It's not right, is what it is.

EMMA

I think Lee and Claire made up.

CHRIS

How do you know?

Emma points to the array of empty bottles.

EMMA

Well, either that or Lee drank enough for two people!

WAYLON

I wouldn't put it past him.

EMMA

Anyway. Bedtime. So no more scary transsexual dancers can get you.

IAN

The horror...

EMMA

Yeah, so you said. Good night, boys.

Emma heads for the girls' room, opens the door and steps inside, leaving the boys to flop back down on the couch.

WAYLON

I don't want to close my eyes, I'm afraid I'll see them again... dancing.

CHRIS

(shudders)
Damn straight.

IAN

I did tip mine, though.

Waylon and Chris shoot him a look, and he shrugs.

IAN (cont'd)

What? She was a good dancer!

WAYLON

Dude, you are a very strange little man.

CHRIS

Amen.

IAN

I just believe in the importance of tipping, that's all.

WAYLON

Sure you weren't just scared that you'd get your ass kicked by the bouncers if you didn't look grateful for having what was until fairly recently a guy rub themselves up against you?

IAN

(beat)
Shut up.

Waylon chuckles as Ian gets up and heads into the kitchen in a huff.

WAYLON

So... reckon Lee and Claire 'made up,' then?

He waggles his eyebrows, and Chris throws him a surprised look.

CHRIS

You think they...

WAYLON

(laughs)
Naah. Lee wouldn't ever dream of making a move on either of the girls. He's too British.

CHRIS

They'd kick his ass, anyway.

WAYLON

Heh, yeah, they would. Maybe we should make him do it just to see what happens?

CHRIS

What, convince Lee he has a chance with one of them, just so we get ringside seats when they pull him apart? That is harsh.

WAYLON

It sure is.

CHRIS

I'm in.

They shake hands to seal the deal, and we dissolve to:

28

EXT. OUTSIDE APARTMENT - NIGHT

28

Lee is actually outside, taking a stroll round the block to walk off the booze before bed.

He looks around the streets of downtown Los Angeles around him - a few late night pedestrians stroll by, the odd car rolls past, and the big city lights fight for his attention against the stars overhead.

A distant busker plays 'Hell Ain't A Bad Place To Be' by AC/DC, and Lee allows himself a grin.

LEE

You know... this could work out quite nicely after all.

He turns and heads back towards the apartment, leaving the busker's scratchy guitar and even scratchier voice echoing around the streets as we crane up and away for a few beats, before we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF SHOW