

The Importance of Being Ernie
by Dan Fiorella

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INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The computer monitor fills the screen as the words "The End" are typed.

There's the author, KEN TOMASO, a forty-something-ish, bespectacled, balding guy. He sits up sharply and admires his effort on the PC.

He starts the printer.

The pages churn out.

He punches holes into the pages.

He puts in his brads.

He slips the script into an envelope. Return address is 18 Wilder Avenue.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

He drops the envelope in the mailbox. Crosses his fingers and says a brief prayer.

DISSOLVE:

INT. KITCHEN -- EVENING

The Tomaso family kitchen, part of their four room, side door apartment. The family is seated around the kitchen table, dining on meat loaf, macaroni & cheese and some broccoli. ELIZABETH, his wife, a soccer mom with charm to burn. His daughters include the 17-year-old DENISE and the 8-year-old CARLA.

KEN

So, did you read it, honey? Wasn't that some script I wrote?

ELIZABETH

It was cute.

KEN

Cute. It was cute? That's all, cute?

ELIZABETH

No, it was very cute.

KEN

Now I feel better.

CARLA
(examining a spear on
her fork)
Do I like broccoli?

ELIZABETH
You love broccoli.

CARLA
Oh. Okay.

She eats it.

CARLA (CONT'D)
What's this story about, dad? Is it
about me?

KEN
No, sweetie. It's a comedy. What
if Abbott and Costello were put in
charge of a space station.

CARLA
Who?

KEN
Abbott and Costello.

DENISE
The fat guy and the skinny guy?

KEN
Yes.

DENISE
From "The March of the Wooden
Soldiers."

KEN
No, that's Laurel and Hardy! Don't
they teach you kids anything in school
these days?

DENISE
Not if it's in black and white.

KEN
Well, it's a funny script.

CARLA
Are they the guys with the mustache
and the one that didn't talk, daddy?

KEN
No, honey, that's the Marx Brothers.
There were three of them.

DENISE
Moe, Larry and Curly, right?

KEN
You're no daughter of mine. Next time we go to the Blockbuster, I'm renting the films!

DENISE
Mom! You can't let that happen!

ELIZABETH
Don't worry about it. Remember, Blockbuster cut up his card after that whole "Citizen Kane"/"Casablanca" catastrophe.

KEN
They didn't have copies of the two best movies ever made? Morons.

DENISE
Thank goodness for that.

KEN
I'm just trying to broaden your horizons.

DENISE
My horizons are fine, dad, thanks. Mom, can me and the guys hang at the mall tonight?

KEN
By "guys" you mean "girls", right?

DENISE
Girls will be there, too.

ELIZABETH
Who's driving?

DENISE
Not you.

ELIZABETH
Sure, then.

KEN
Isn't this a school night?

CARLA
Dad, it's spring break.

KEN
Oh. Right. Spring break.
(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)

Didn't they extend the school year yet? I keep reading about it all the time.

DENISE

If that happens, just send me to military school.

KEN

Deal.

Door bell.

ELIZABETH

Now, who's that?

DENISE

It's my ride to the mall.

ELIZABETH

The mall I just gave you permission to go to?

DENISE

Oddly, yes. The very one.

ELIZABETH

Imagine that.

DENISE

May I be excused?

KEN

It's not that Debbie girl, is it? The one with the pierced---

DENISE

Nipple?

KEN

I was only aware of her eyebrow and nose.

DENISE

Don't worry. It's not Debbie. And he's got nothing pierced.

CARLA

He?

KEN

It's a guy?

DENISE

No, it's Ernie.

Door bell.

KEN

Ernie? Not for nothing but why are you hanging around with him?

DENISE

Dad.

KEN

He's a goofball. He's out of high school. He's not applying to any colleges. He's not working. He's a loser and you shouldn't be in his company.

DENISE

Dad, he's your nephew.

KEN

Irregardless, he's a buzzhead. I don't know what my sister is thinking when it comes to him.

DENISE

C'mon, Dad. It's only the mall.

KEN

Fine. Let me talk to him.

DENISE

Thanks.

Denise darts down the hall to her bedroom.

INT. FRONT DOOR -- EVENING

Ken gets the door. It's ERNIE, a good-looking 19-year-old slacker dude who's very casual in dress and attitude.

KEN

Hi, Ernie.

ERNIE

What up, Uncle Ken?

KEN

Not a whole lot. Denise is getting ready. She'll be out in a moment.

ERNIE

Cool.

A pause.

KEN

How's your mom?

ERNIE

Good.

A pause.

KEN

So, what's on the agenda for tonight?

ERNIE

Come again?

KEN

What are you up to tonight?

ERNIE

Hanging out. Hooking up. Chillin' out.

KEN

At the mall.

ERNIE

Absolutely.

KEN

Curfew's still in effect here, Ernie.

ERNIE

But it's spring break.

KEN

It's not a seasonal thing.

ERNIE

'Kay. We'll close the mall, then do some pizza.

Denise appears.

DENISE

Hi, Eee.

ERNIE

'Lo, Dee.

DENISE

Don't call me that.

They exit.

DENISE (CONT'D)

Night, Dad.

KEN

Have a groovy time. Curfew's still in effect. I know where you live.

Elizabeth comes over to wave them off.

ELIZABETH

So, what are they up to?

KEN

They're doing the mall and hanging some pizza. I have no idea. Is there anything sadder than watching a suburban kid talk "street"?

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

A MONTAGE OF KEN'S SCRIPT THROUGH THE MAIL.

EXT. MAILBOX -- DAY

A POSTAL CARRIER takes Ken's envelope out of the mailbox and puts it into his bag.

INT. POST OFFICE -- DAY

The mail bag is dumped into a sorting bin.

INT. SORTING -- DAY

The envelope makes its way through the various machines and chutes.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY -- DAY

The mail gets loaded into a plane.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET -- DAY

A POSTMAN enters the agency building.

INT. COLBY AGENCY HALLWAY -- DAY

The MAILBOY, a youth in an expensive suit, wheels the mailcart, with Ken's script, into Mitch Sterling's office.

INT. MITCH'S OFFICE -- DAY

VERA hands the envelope to MITCH.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM -- MORNING

As the sun peeps through the blinds, the alarm goes off. Ken's hand comes out from under the blankets to turn it off.

INT. HALL -- MORNING

Ken is in the hallway in robe waiting for Liz, Denise and Carla to clear the bathroom.

EXT. STREET -- MORNING

Ken exits a coffee shop with a cup to go and a newspaper. He has a canvas book bag slung over his shoulder.

EXT. TRAIN STATION -- MORNING

He hears the train a-coming and starts to hustle to the station.

INT. TRAIN TERMINAL -- MORNING

Commuters exit the train and head into the ferry terminal.

EXT. FERRY -- MORNING

Ferry makes its way across the NY harbor as Ken reads his paper. A breeze comes along and pulls the paper right out of his hands and overboard. Bye-bye, paper.

INT. ELEVATOR LOBBY -- DAY

The elevator opens up. After a moment, Ken exits. He looks around and sighs. You can see the life drain out of him. Then, slowly, begrudgingly, he makes his way to the office door.

INT. CLERICAL DEPT. -- DAY

It's clerical hell; a large room with desks in rows and aisles. The atmosphere is far from formal, though it's largely chaotic. Ken takes his desk situated between:

HARRY, a grumpy old clerk sits behind, blathering away on the phone. In front, there's IRENE and EILEEN, a pair of identical twins, in the midst of one of their never-ending spats. Over there to the side is the chunky BEN, an older, beefy self-proclaimed "ladies man" who's *thisclose* to being cited for harassment.

Harry slams down the phone.

HARRY

Same to you, butthead.

EILEEN

I said coffee.

IRENE

You said tea.

EILEEN

I got news for you: Why would I say
tea when I wanted coffee?

IRENE

Why would I get tea if you said
coffee?

EILEEN

What am I? A mind reader?

IRENE

It's like talking to the dead!

HARRY

Hey, you girls working hard or hardly
working! Ha!

An ATTRACTIVE FEMALE enters to use the copy machine. Ben
leaps into action, saying from his desk:

BEN

Hey, doll, if I told you that you
had a nice body, would you hold it
against me?

Ken can only sigh and shake his head. A CLERK puts some
paper on Harry's desk.

CLERK

They need copies of this.

HARRY

Hey, copy *this*!

BEN

Hey, Sugar, one lap, no waiting!

HARRY

Hey, Ben, what do you think, eh?

BEN

What I'm thinking would be dirty
thoughts!

KEN

(muttering)

Another witty single entendre.

HARRY

I hear ya! Did you hear the weather
report in Mexico? Chili today, hot
tamale!

This cracks up the gang. Ken just sinks into his chair.

HARRY (CONT'D)
 (getting up)
 I'm going for a smoke. If Hollywood
 calls, take a message. Ha!

DISSOLVE:

INT. CLERICAL DEPT. -- AFTERNOON

The clock shows noon-ish.

The office is not much changed. CHARLIE, another clerk,
 walks in.

HARRY
 Hey, Charlie, you working hard, or
 hardly working!

CHARLIE
 They need this faxed.

HARRY
 Hey, fax *this*!

EILEEN
 Did you feed the cat?

IRENE
 I thought you fed the cat.

EILEEN
 I never feed the cat.

IRENE
 Then why do you bother asking me if
 I fed the cat?

EILEEN
 Shut up.

IRENE
 You shut up.

Ken takes out his stapler and holds it to his head as he
 attempts to feebly end it all. The phone rings.

KEN
 Hello, Tomaso here.

MITCH (O.S.)
 Hello, Ken?

INTERCUT:

INT. MITCH'S OFFICE -- MORNING

MITCH STERLING, dapper, Hollywood agent is seated behind his desk. He's sixty-lite. There seem to be more boxes than furnishings, as he's in mid-move. He's holding Ken's script.

KEN

Mitch? Mitch? Is that you?

MITCH

Hi, Ken.

KEN

Please, Mitch, please, I need some good news. Some seriously positive, life-affirming good news.

MITCH

Did I call at a bad time?

KEN

Just another fun day here at the sixth level of Dante's office! I'm stuck here with an annoying jerk who seems to suffer from some sort of Tourette's syndrome which causes him to blurt out the same inane jokes over and over and over. Then there's this pervert who is basically doing stuff around the office that would get a President impeached.

MITCH

I read your script.

KEN

Yes---?

MITCH

I thoroughly enjoyed it. I laughed out loud at parts.

KEN

Great.

MITCH

But---

KEN

But? No, no buts. I'm in need of a but-free discussion here.

MITCH

It's classic comedy. A timeless kind of humor. But it feels like I've seen it before. The studios want something fresh and different.

KEN

Sure they do. That's why I see commercials for "Loony Bin 5" and "The Return of the Curse of the Vampire's Revenge". Part two.

MITCH

Movies today are geared toward the youth market. They are the engine stirring the drink. Seriously, when was the last time you and your wife went out to the movies?

KEN

Well, you know, it's, well...movies talk now, right?

MITCH

That long. Teens goes three, four times a week.

KEN

I know, but not for nothing, I write movies I want to see and enjoy. I can't be the only one who would like it. Oh, please don't let me be the only one.

MITCH

No, Ken, you're not. But teenagers are wagging the momentum. Keep that in mind. There's nothing wrong with being commercial.

KEN

I thought I was. Well, I have some other ideas I want to run by you.

MITCH

That's the other reason I'm calling. I'm packing it in, Ken.

KEN

What?

MITCH

There's been some changes at the agency, so I'm taking this moment to leave.

KEN

You can't do that! How am I going to get another agent? It took me years to get you!

MITCH

I have one of the young turks picking up my people. Gary Johnson. It's time to pass the torch to his baton. I made up some files for him. He'll be all set for you.

KEN

Mitch, you're kicking me when I'm down. You were the guy who got me my first and only screenplay sale. I was counting on you to repeat that.

MITCH

I'm a dinosaur out here. I'm getting out before someone sticks me in a tarpit. Good luck, Ken. Bye.

KEN

If you're a dinosaur, then what am I?

MITCH

It'll happen, Ken. Just not with me. Keep writing.

KEN

That's my curse.

Ken dejectedly hangs up. Boy, is he low.

IRENE

Did you buy the cat food?

EILEEN

Yes, I bought the cat food.

IRENE

You buy the can or the pouch?

EILEEN

The can kind. The cat doesn't like the pouch.

IRENE

Don't be a jerk. I know that.

HARRY

(on phone)

Boy, it's chili today. But it'll be hot tamale! Ha! You get it? It's like chili, like the weather but with a tamale that sounds like tomorrow! Hello?

(hangs up)

Jerk!

(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)
 (getting up)
 I'm going to lunch. If Hollywood
 calls, take a message. Ha!

Ken drops his head on his desk in despair.

INT. MITCH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Mitch takes out some computer disks and files. He buzzes his intercom.

MITCH
 Vera, could you come in here and get
 the last of these files, please?

VERA, an attractive, if disorganized, girl comes in. She carries three cups of coffee and gives one to Mitch.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 Vera, we've worked together for years.
 Through good times and bad. And
 everyday you get three cups of coffee.
 So I have to ask. Why do you always
 get three cups?

VERA
 In case I spill one, silly.

MITCH
 Now I know.

Mitch nods and places the material in a box and slides it over to her.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 Sort them and put them on disk...for
 the new guy.

VERA
 The new guy. Fey!

Mitch gets back on the phone. Vera attempts to balance the two cups and the box as she exits.

INT. RECEPTION AREA -- CONTINUOUS

It looks like Vera's about to make it when the coffees drop into the box.

VERA
 Rats.

MITCH (O.S.)
 What?

VERA

I think I just saw a rat, Mr.
Sterling.

INT. MITCH'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

MITCH

Get used to it, Vera. You'll be
working for one soon enough.

INT. RECEPTION AREA -- CONTINUOUS

Vera attempts to pull out the papers from the box. They're
stained and runny.

MITCH (O.S.)

You know what? Instead of coffee---

She stuffs the papers back into the box, shoves it under the
desk, just as Mitch enters, carrying a bottle of champagne
and two large cups.

VERA

Yes, sir?

MITCH

A farewell drink. I've been saving
this.

He pours out the bubbly and they drink. Vera hiccups.

DISSOLVE:

INT. RECEPTION AREA -- LATER

Vera is drunk. There are a couple of cups laying around and
two empty bottles. Vera is pulling out the damp, stained
paper from the box. She looks at it cross-eyed. She attempts
to smooth it out and put it in her paper holder. It's Ken
Tomaso's file.

Vera attempts to type the information into the computer.
It's apparent she's getting it screwed up.

Screen shows her transposing the address for the age.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. KEN'S HOME -- MORNING

He's leaving for work, checking the mailbox. A letter from
the Writers Guild of America. He opens it. The only phrase
he can see is "you have been placed on our Inactive Members
List". Ouch.

INT. BURGER HUTT -- AFTERNOON

Ken and his buddy, JACK, are on line to order their McLunches.

JACK

So, what went wrong?

KEN

(to cashier)

The burger deluxe and upsize it, please.

(to Jack)

Look at me. I'm forty.

JACK

Or so.

KEN

Or so. I have nothing to show for myself.

JACK

You have a wife and family.

KEN

Sure, that. But what about my dreams? You know better than anyone what I wanted to do with my life.

They get their orders and head to a table.

JACK

Famous Hollywood writer. You bet. I still get to be your pool boy when you make it, right?

KEN

Yeah, yeah. If I make it.

JACK

You have to. How else will I achieve my goal of professional houseguest?

KEN

Years working. Years writing. And I'm sitting here in a Burger Hutt. You'd think, at this point in my life, I'd be able to afford a place with cutlery. I mean, seriously, look at this place. They redecorate, go upscale with Tiffany style lamps and stained glass partitions and I'm sitting here eating with my fingers.

JACK

I got a spork with my pie-in-a-box.

KEN

My big meal out. To save money, I brown bag it. I've been brown bagging it for years and what do I have to show for it?

JACK

A lot of brown bags?

KEN

Frankly, you're little help.

JACK

So, what have we learned from this?

KEN

What?

JACK

The agent said you have to market yourself to the youth market.

KEN

What do I know about the youth market?

JACK

You used to be a youth.

KEN

When I was a youth, I went to Marx Brothers festivals dressed as Chico.

JACK

Is that who you were supposed to be?

KEN

You didn't know that?

JACK

Everyone else was Harpo or Groucho.

KEN

Sure. Unoriginal clods.

JACK

Forget your youth. You have kids. They could prove useful.

KEN

I won't let my kid see the movies they make. You want I should ask her to help me write one?

JACK

You're fighting me, Ken. Are you afraid of success?

KEN

No, I'm just weary of rejection.

JACK

Look. You're always observing stuff. You always absorbed things and turned them into scripts. Same thing applies. You just have to get beyond your little rut-like existence.

KEN

Fine talk from the guy in the rut next door.

JACK

You hate me because you know I'm right.

KEN

Exit my rut? Could I do that?

JACK

I said so. And I'll keep saying so.

KEN

Why?

JACK

I believe in the power of positive nagging.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Elizabeth is in the process of hanging a family portrait on the wall. On a narrow bit of wall, from the corner to the room's entrance, are a series of odd hangings; a photocopy of a check, a framed Cracked magazine cartoon, a certificate of some kind, a happy meal box pressed and framed.

Ken comes home, puts down his case.

KEN

Hello, home.

ELIZABETH

Here, honey.

Ken turns and enters and is appalled.

KEN

Liz! What did you do?

ELIZABETH

I finally hung our official family portrait. About time, right? It looks great, no?

KEN

No! I mean, yes, it looks great.
But no, not here. This wall was
reserved.

ELIZABETH

Ken---

KEN

This is my corner. My mementos. My
career. My wall of fame.

ELIZABETH

I know, dear, but---

KEN

My first sale to Cracked Magazine.
Look how they drew my idea.

ELIZABETH

I know, dear.

KEN

And "Space Sheriff". I worked on
that cartoon show right out of
college. We got the down payment on
our car from that show. This kid's
meal box was based on my "Space
Rustlers" episode.

ELIZABETH

Yes. We bought quite a number of
them, didn't we?

KEN

They might be collectables someday.
I'm pretty sure a couple still have
the burgers in them. I still weep
over that great "Space Sheriff" badge
I lost. Not everyone got one of
those. It was a prototype.

ELIZABETH

I know, honey. It was a shame they
canceled it after one season.

KEN

You bet it was. It was ahead of its
time. My very first writing award
from the cable access channel. I
put that show together from scratch.
Not just anyone can be on public
access, you know.

ELIZABETH

Ken, darling, actually they can.

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

That's pretty much the definition of public access television.

KEN

Okay but not everyone won an award.

ELIZABETH

You're right. The certificate of achievement is a rarefied honor.

KEN

Look, my autographed TV Guide. Remember? Years after writing for Yakov Smirnoff, I got him to sign this very copy of TV Guide featuring the ad for the premiere of his "Amazing Facts" TV show.

ELIZABETH

Honey, the wall's been bare for a while now. I know you had your heart set on a poster from that script you sold but it's been several years now.

KEN

A couple of years.

ELIZABETH

It's been ten. Ken, I'm not forbidding you from ever using this wall. This picture can be moved if and when it happens. But I can't leave this empty space where the family should go.

KEN

You said if and when! How supportive is that?

ELIZABETH

When it happens. A poster with a klieg light, just like you planned. As soon as you get it.

KEN

You're right, you're right. It is a great picture. Look at those girls. So beautiful. Beautiful. Young. Their whole lives ahead of them.

ELIZABETH

We do good work.

KEN

Yes, we do. We do.

Smoke alarm goes off.

KEN (CONT'D)
What's burning?

ELIZABETH
Oh, man, dinner's done.

Elizabeth rushes off. Ken stays back and dwells on his mementos, straightening a crooked frame. While he's lost in thought, Denise and Ernie come into the apartment. Denise is wearing a fast food employee uniform, Ernie carries a skateboard.

DENISE
Hi, daddy.

ERNIE
Hey, Uncle K.

KEN
Hi, 'Nisey. Hi, Ernie.

DENISE
Is mom here?

KEN
She's in the kitchen putting out dinner.

DENISE
Oh, okay. I'm going to change.
Dad, me and Ernie are going to go to the movies.

KEN
Check with your mom.

Denise heads in to change. There's an awkward pause between Ken and Ernie.

KEN (CONT'D)
How's your mom?

ERNIE
Good.

KEN
Good. Good. Denise could take awhile, if she's anything like your mother.

ERNIE
Funny. I'll tell her you said so.

KEN

That's okay. I can take her. So,
what do you have penciled in tonight?

ERNIE

Huh?

KEN

What movie are you going to?

ERNIE

Oh. "Totally Bent 2".

KEN

"Totally Bent 2"? What's that?

ERNIE

It's the sequel to "Totally Bent".

KEN

Okay, I missed that one.

ERNIE

Oh, dude, it was a freakin' funny
film.

KEN

"Totally Bent".

ERNIE

Both of them. The second is better
than the first. How many movies can
you say that about?

KEN

Just "The Godfather".

ERNIE

The what?

KEN

"The Godfather Part I" and II and
the lesser III.

ERNIE

Is that the movie they show every
Easter?

KEN

Easter? "The Godfather"? No, that's
"The Ten Commandments".

ERNIE

Oh, right. With that Moses dude.

KEN

Yes, Charlton Heston as that Moses dude. So, wait, you've already seen "Totally Bent 2"?

ERNIE

Word. Saw it last week with my peeps and yesterday with my homies.

KEN

Oh. I didn't know you had both homies and peeps.

ERNIE

Oh, yeah.

KEN

And you're seeing the movie again tonight?

ERNIE

It's that funny. And some of the jokes you don't get the first time.

KEN

What time does the movie start?

ERNIE

Eight.

Denise comes out in home clothes.

KEN

Denise, mind if I tag along?

DENISE

What?

KEN

It's research. It's time for me to get in touch with my inner teen.

(calling)

Liz, I'm going with the kids. See ya later.

DENISE

Mom!

ELIZABETH

Denise, take your father. He needs a night out.

INT. MOVIE THEATER -- EVENING

It's dark. Movie's up. The audience is filled with teens and there in the middle of it all is Denise, Ken and Ernie. Ken is jotting down notes on a pad.

Ernie is laughing and pointing. Denise looks mortified, sharing concerned looks with her girlfriends, who look mortified for her. Ken attempts to share some popcorn with Denise.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

Ernie and Ken are leaning against the minivan. Denise is already in the car. Waiting. Ken is holding a newspaper opened to the movie listings.

KEN

So, what is it? Do you identify with Herbie, the nerdy freshman?

ERNIE

No, man, not really.

KEN

Is it the battle of the underdog vs. the establishment?

ERNIE

Was that in there? It was just an awesome funny film. A bunch of guys having an adventure.

KEN

Let me ask you about these other movies now in release...hmmm, "Chick Magnet".

ERNIE

Oh, very funny. A bunch of guys try to have sex with beautiful girls.

KEN

What's not to like? So, are you living vicariously through these characters? Because they get to do things you don't do...things you had better not be doing if you know what's good for you.

ERNIE

I guess.

KEN

Good. Okay, how about.."Don't Look Under the Bed"?

ERNIE

Excellent movie. Totally gross-out horror. There were guts everywhere.

KEN

Horror is still popular.

ERNIE
Totally. As long as it's scary.

KEN
And by scary, you mean gross.

ERNIE
Exactly.

KEN
How about..."The Secret Princess"?

ERNIE
A chick flick. That's like a movie you go to after you picked the last five and it's her turn or she's mad at you.

KEN
I concur.

Denise beeps the horn.

DENISE
Dad, don't I still have curfew?

INT. VIDEO STORE -- DAY

Ken is looking at various recent teen movies, classic fare like "Midnight Matinee", "Keggars", "Stylin' Part 3", and "Meet the Dude".

Carla is there holding a Disney-type tape. She sees a GIRL with some tattoos.

CARLA
Dad, I think I want a tattoo.

KEN
Sure, honey. It'll make it easier to identify the body.

CARLA
Dad, those aren't black and white movies. What are you doing?

KEN
Selling out, sweetie.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAY

Ken watches as Ernie and his BUDS skateboard off park benches. He's taking notes. Some friends skateboard down the slide, while others shoot off some steps and down the hand railing. Another is videotaping all their moves. Some of them are pretty impressive. Ernie and a friend take a tumble, stagger up, shaking their unhelmeted heads then thump chests.

Ernie joins Ken.

ERNIE
What do you think?

KEN
I don't mind the skateboarding. I don't mind the skateboard parks. I do get annoyed that everything gets turned into a skateboard park.

ERNIE
You have to repress that.

KEN
Yeah, yeah. So, if I'm going to broaden my "youth appeal", I have to nail this "youth speak". You understand?

ERNIE
Word.

KEN
Word?

ERNIE
Word up.

KEN
Very good. Already I can feel my demographics expanding. Any advice thusfar?

ERNIE
Don't use words like "thusfar".

KEN
Avoid words.

ERNIE
Word.

KEN
Indeed.

ERNIE
That word, too.

KEN
What word?

ERNIE
Indeed.

KEN
Indeed?

ERNIE
Word.

KEN
Word is bad.

ERNIE
No, indeed.

KEN
Word.

ERNIE
It's off the hook.

KEN
And that's bad?

ERNIE
Wicked bad.

KEN
I don't know if we want to be that
bad.

ERNIE
Word up.

KEN
Word? It'll be a whole paragraph!

Ken makes a note. Ernie shakes his head.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Elizabeth is reading a book while Ernie is watching one of his videos. He has the remote, pausing and rewinding the tape, making notes.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Ken at his computer in the corner, typing away.

INT. MALL FOOD COURT -- DAY

Denise and friends are sitting talking. Denise glances over and rolls her eyes because she just noticed Ken sitting across the way, talking into a small tape recorder.

EXT. FERRY -- NIGHT

It's late and Ken is alone on the bench reading pages, marking pages and updates. A bunch of TOURISTS come out and plop down next to him, crowding him out, even though the boat is near empty.

INT. CLERICAL DEPT. -- DAY

While Harry and Ben shoot paper clips at each other, Ken is writing away on a legal pad.

HARRY

It's amazing. Nobody does their job around here. I'm tired of dealing with it. I just sit here all day and watch these goldbricks do nothing. They just sit there and talk all day. Just sit and talk and talk and talk. What a bunch of loud mouths.

BEN

I know what you mean. I just took the job to meet girls.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MONTAGE

Ken finishes up on the computer.

The printer is activated and begins printing out the script.

Ken brads it up and puts it into an envelope.

EXT. MAILBOX -- DAY

Ken walks up to the mailbox, carrying his script. As he gets there, the Mail Carrier shows up. Ken hands his script over and moves on.

DISSOLVE:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT (2 WEEKS LATER)

Elizabeth has fallen asleep on the couch. Ken is watching TV. The phone in the kitchen rings. Ken notices it's after 10pm.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Ken gets the phone.

KEN

Hello?

INTERCUT:

INT. GARY'S OFFICE -- EVENING

It's Mitch's old office, but in some freakish, post-modern design. Lording over the new digs is the ultra-slick young Turk, GARY JOHNSON. He's speaking his phone head set. He wears a magnetic copper bracelet. There are multiple jars of candy on his desk. He's shuffling some papers and Ken's script.

GARY
Ken Tomaso, please.

KEN
Speaking.

GARY
Ken, at last we speak. This is Gary Johnson, at Colby Talent Associates.

KEN
Oh, yes, Mr. Johnson. Hi. How are you?

GARY
Right now, I am stoked! I just finished your script and it's gold.

KEN
You liked it?

Elizabeth enters, wiping the sleep from her eyes.

ELIZABETH
Who is it?

KEN
He likes it! He really likes it!

ELIZABETH
That's good. Who?

Gary holds up a sheet of paper. It's a coffee stained print-out that reads "Tomaso, Ken, 18, Wild. 42 John Street."

GARY
I'm sorry for the delay in getting to the material, but this move has been a nightmare. They lost my stuff. A lot of my files went MIA, including Mitch's notes on his people. But he's right, you are one wild 18-year-old.

KEN
Eighteen-year-old? Look, Mr. Johnson---

GARY
Ken, please, Gary. Sure, I know, respect your elders, but I'm not that much more elder than you.

KEN
You're not?

GARY

You are a find. A teen that can write a teen story that will appeal to all teens! "That's Mall" is a new franchise. Hell, I should get you to work on "That's Mall 2" right away.

KEN

Well, actually, I did have---

GARY

But let's cross that bridge when we come to the EZ Pass booth. I'm sending this out to a weekend read-off. I know of three studios that are aching to get a new teen flick up and running. And when they find out I have an 18-year-old in my stable, they're going to go all giddy.

KEN

No kidding?

ELIZABETH

Who's kidding?

GARY

Is someone there?

KEN

My...mom.

GARY

She must be very proud of you. I had to let you know. You did your job, I'm off to do mine. Ciao, Kenny.

KEN

Right, ciao.

They hang up.

ELIZABETH

Okay, what was that? And what about your mom?

KEN

That was my new agent.

ELIZABETH

He's the one who loved your script? That teen thing you've been bugging everyone over for months?

KEN

Um...yeah.

ELIZABETH

What's the problem?

KEN

It sounded like there was a mix up with his files. Sounds like he mixed up my age with our address. He thinks I'm 18.

ELIZABETH

That's absurd.

KEN

Of course it is. Patently absurd. But here's the thing; me being 18 is a big selling point of the script. They love the idea that I'm an 18-year-old writing to my peers.

ELIZABETH

Honey, your peers have prostate trouble and trophy wives.

KEN

In a way it's an amazing compliment. I am a good writer. I wrote a script that appeals to the group I was targeting.

ELIZABETH

That's very true. And a valid point to make, once you meet in person. Because once you meet in person, they're going to discover that 18 is a long way back in your rear view mirror, honey.

KEN

Yeah, that could be tricky.

ELIZABETH

How can you even consider it?

KEN

I'm not. Don't be silly. How could I possibly consider anything?

DREAM SCENE:

It's a quick fantasy as:

Ken shampoos with Man's Gray-be-Gone...

Ken puts on a wig...

Ken sprays Hair-in-a-Can on his head...

Wears some oversized jeans and a big tee-shirt with his head in a bandanna, while checking in a mirror.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Ken shakes off the image. Elizabeth is anticipating something.

KEN

Nothing is going to happen. It never does. Once the script makes the rounds and gets rejected by everyone, we'll just move on.

INT. GARY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Gary's working the phone.

GARY

Ken, it's a deal.

INTERCUT:

INT. CLERICAL DEPT. -- DAY

Ken on phone. Usual idiots in action.

KEN

What's a deal?

GARY

"Mall's Well". They love it, they want it.

KEN

"Mall's Well"?

GARY

That's the new title.

KEN

"Mall's Well". Actually, that's pretty good.

GARY

Gimbney Studios loves it. They're set to option.

KEN

You're kidding! Yippee!

Everyone stops and stares at Ken.

KEN (CONT'D)

The new staplers are in. Yippee.

(back to phone)

They're buying my script? Fab-tastic!

GARY

They want to fly you out here, do a meet, run some notes by you for the re-write.

KEN

(suddenly worried)

Fly me in? Do a meet? Like, face to face?

GARY

Fly you out, put you up, rent you a car. It's standard procedure out here in the sunshine state.

KEN

I thought Florida was the sunshine state---never mind. When do they want to meet?

GARY

In the next two weeks.

KEN

Whoa.

GARY

They really want to fast track this and get it out there. The youth market isn't getting any younger.

KEN

Who is?

GARY

Exactly right! They want to get this done and out before you vote in your first election. The fact that you're 18 totally floored everyone!

KEN

You know, it's really against the law for employers to ask your age.

GARY

I know, I know. But if it makes the sale, I have to pull out all the stops. They see the skill, they see the potential, they want to be part of your long career.

KEN

Well, it's about time.

GARY

Ha! Funny guy! I'll get back to you when I have some solids. Ciao.

KEN

Adios.

He's stunned. Then he gets hit in the head by a paper ball.

INT. FERRY -- DAY

Ken is sitting on the ferry, lost in thought.

DREAM SCENE:

Ken in the "hip dude" clothes.

INT. FERRY -- DAY

At the front of the boat is a MIME in action. He takes one TOURIST and stands behind him. He takes the Tourist's arms and pulls them back, then puts his own arms out to act as the Tourist's arms. He waves, tips his hat, goes around shaking hands. Ken notices this.

DREAM SCENE:

Ken in "hip dude" clothes morphs into Ernie.

INT. FERRY -- DAY

Ken takes in this revelation.

INT. KITCHEN -- EVENING

Ken and Elizabeth are doing the dishes.

ELIZABETH

So, you didn't bring up the age thing?

KEN

Why don't you just ask me if I shot myself in the foot?

ELIZABETH

It'll be a lot more painful once that foot is in your mouth.

KEN

No! No! I haven't come this close to have it taken away! I've played by their rules too long and I have diddley to show for it. They want to buy this script, I'll take their money. Carla's going to need braces and I'm not going back to that night job! Do you remember how horrible it was?

FLASHBACK:

INT. CALLING CENTER -- NIGHT

It's a telemarketing set-up, rows of cubicles with computer screens and SERVICE AGENTS manning each, armed only with phone head sets and a script. There's Ken, smack in the middle.

KEN

Yes, hello. This is Ken Tomaso and we're calling on behalf of Webco Industries. We wanted to follow up and make sure you got the proxy materials for the annual shareholders meeting. Hello? Hello?

He clicks on the computer and moves on. New screen comes up.

KEN (CONT'D)

Yes, hello. This is Ken Tomaso and we're calling on behalf of Webco Industries. We wanted to follow up and make sure you got the proxy materials for the annual shareholders meeting.

MAN (O.S.)

I never send those things in. I've got millions invested. Do you know what kind of hassle it is to respond to every one of them?

KEN

That's quite the burden, sir.

He clicks on the computer and moves on. New screen comes up.

KEN (CONT'D)

Yes, hello. May I speak with Rose Jenkins please?

INT. ROSE'S KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Elderly ROSE is on the phone.

ROSE

One moment, please.

She shuffles off. A beat or two. She returns. She picks up the phone and blows an airhorn into it.

INT. CALLING CENTER -- CONTINUOUS

Ken flips back over the chair, throwing off his head set.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. KITCHEN -- EVENING

KEN

That's it. No more! I'm not letting the far-off hotshots dictate my future! I'm going to do something this time. I'm going to soar. I'm going to be a man.

ELIZABETH

What are you going to do?

KEN

I'm going to call my big sister.

He dials the phone. It's busy.

KEN (CONT'D)

Oh, man. Busy. I'm going over there.

ELIZABETH

Say hi.

INT. LINDA'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

LINDA, a sturdy single mom, is up on a stepladder hanging some wallpaper. The room is littered with the tools of necessity. Ken pokes his head in while knocking.

KEN

Linda?

LINDA

Hey, Kenny...good, hand me that brush.

He does so.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Thanks. What are you doing here?

KEN

What, I can't visit my big sister?

LINDA

Not as a rule. Did mom send you over?

KEN

No, mom didn't send me over.

LINDA

Since Brian left me, she's always got somebody spying on me.

KEN

Well, mom didn't send me.

LINDA
I wonder why not?

KEN
I tried to call. Your line's busy.

LINDA
Ernie's on-line. Again. Could you hold the bottom of this, please?

Ken grabs the bottom of the wallpaper.

KEN
Sure. So, Linda, does Ernie have anything in the works?

LINDA
Why? Is he in trouble?

KEN
No!

LINDA
Kenny, I know you never cared much for Ernie. Here, smooth it out with this.

Ken follows directions with the brush.

KEN
What? I never said that.

LINDA
You didn't have to. Look, it's been hard since his dad left. I'm working, trying to keep up the house and home and I'm losing, Ken. Just trim that edge. I know he's been getting into trouble. He's got no direction.

Ken gets a razor and trims.

KEN
I didn't know.

LINDA
And when he's home, it's right to the computer half the night on-line with his chatrooms and games. So when you started taking such an interest in him, it meant a lot to me. He always looked up to you.

KEN
I doubt that.

LINDA

No, he does. You stick it out. You work, you do your writing, you're a dad. That means something to him. I think that's why he hangs out with Denise. At least she's a good influence on him.

KEN

I didn't realize.

LINDA

So, what do you have in mind for the boy?

KEN

Well, I sold a script---

LINDA

Get out! Good for you! About time, too! Man, you've been at this forever, haven't you?

KEN

Tell me about it. I'm going to California and, I was thinking of asking him along as...an assistant.

LINDA

Get out! I don't believe it!

KEN

Okay, how about---

LINDA

He will die, Kenny! He's not doing anything. No college. No classes. No future.

KEN

It'll be good for him.

LINDA

Can I be your assistant, too?

KEN

Sure. You have some fake ID?

INT. ERNIE'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Ernie is busy at his PC. A message comes up. Ernie shakes his head. Ken peeks in.

ERNIE

(typing)
You're insane, man.
(MORE)

ERNIE (CONT'D)

There's no way Tony Soprano could take Michael Corleone. Man, even Fredo could whack him.

Ken knocks.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

(not looking up)

In a minute, mom!

KEN

It's me, Uncle Ken.

ERNIE

Uncle Ken? What are you doing here?

KEN

I have to talk to you...what's that, the internet?

ERNIE

Yeah, I belong to a couple of chatrooms.

KEN

Chatrooms.

ERNIE

It's like hanging out and talking, only with hundreds of people.

KEN

I guess it beats shouting.

Ernie logs off, typing "G2G."

ERNIE

So, what's up?

KEN

Something's come up with my script. So, what are you up to these days? You working?

ERNIE

No. I got a friend who says he can hook me up with a job.

KEN

Not drugs.

ERNIE

No, phone solicitation.

KEN

Oh. Do the drugs.

ERNIE
Okay. So, your script?

KEN
I kind of need you for awhile.

ERNIE
I thought it was finished.

KEN
It is.

ERNIE
What do you need me for?

KEN
To be me.

ERNIE
To be you?

KEN
Yes.

ERNIE
You. Be you.

KEN
Correct.

ERNIE
Why can't you be you?

KEN
I'm too old to be me.

ERNIE
Is this something you and my mom
cooked up? Something to build
character?

KEN
Okay, here it is; I sold the script
but they think I'm 18 years old, so
I need you to be an 18-year-old me.

ERNIE
But I'm 19.

KEN
You'll pass.

ERNIE
Cool. Wait 'til I tell the gang.

KEN

No! You can't tell anyone. Not even your mom.

ERNIE

No one?

KEN

No. You'd be Ken. We go there, meet a couple of people and come home.

ERNIE

Go to where?

KEN

Los Angeles.

ERNIE

Cool.

They shake.

EXT. HOUSE -- DAY

Elizabeth and Ken are unloading groceries from the minivan and bringing them into the sidedoor apartment. In and out.

ELIZABETH

She bought it?

KEN

She thinks Ernie is coming to assist me.

ELIZABETH

She doesn't know Ernie is going to be you?

KEN

No.

ELIZABETH

Kenneth!

KEN

I couldn't. She was so happy that I was showing an interest in Ernie I couldn't very well tell her I was---

ELIZABETH

Exploiting him?

KEN

Not my term. Besides, he's family.

They go to mailbox. Ken takes out all the mail.

KEN (CONT'D)

It's not a big deal. I'll sign the contracts. They want a script by Ken Tomaso, they'll get a script by Ken Tomaso. All legal, all binding. They'll send me a ticket. I'll buy one, same flight and be his agent/mentor/uncle or something.

ELIZABETH

We can't afford a plane trip to LA!

He opens an envelope, displaying a spanking new credit card.

KEN

Hmm, the folks at MasterCard disagree! We're pre-approved!

INT. NEWARK AIRPORT -- DAY

Linda, Liz, Ernie, Ken and Carla in the departure area. A garbled message is announced.

KEN

There's our flight. We'd better get going.

Linda hugs Ernie. Carla and Liz hug Ken.

LINDA

Do good work. Listen to your uncle.

KEN

Do I have permission to hit?

LINDA

Oh, sure.

Linda hugs Ken.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Thank you, Kenny, thank you. Good luck. You knock 'em dead out there.

ELIZABETH

I'll miss you.

KEN

It'll just be a couple of days. You won't even know I'm gone.

ELIZABETH

Are you kidding? The whole bed to myself. I'll know you're gone.

PA (O.S.)
 Flight 972 to Los Angeles now
 boarding. Please proceed to gate
 27.

CARLA
 Oh, that means I get to sleep with
 you now, right, mom?

ELIZABETH
 We'll see, honey. Mommy has some
 serious stretching out to do.

KEN
 You've all been waiting for me to
 leave home forever, haven't you?
 Kiss Denise for me.

ERNIE
 Good-bye, Aunt Liz. Good-bye, squirt.

Further good-byes are exchanged. Ken and Ernie head off to
 the boarding area.

INT. METAL DETECTOR AREA -- DAY

Ken is carrying the script. They walk through, putting their
 cases on the X-ray machine and going through the metal
 detector. Ken sets it off and gets the wand treatment. He
 pulls out a handful of brads from his pocket and smiles. He
 passes through and it goes off again.

KEN
 First thing you have to do, Ernie,
 is read the script. You have to
 know what everyone's talking about.

He hands the script to Ernie and proceeds through the detector
 fine. Ernie starts through, setting off the alarm. Same
 procedure for him. Ernie pulls out a pocket full of
 keychains. No keys, just keychains.

ERNIE
 All these pages?

KEN
 Yes.

ERNIE
 Couldn't I just wait to see the movie?

KEN
 I remind you, hitting is allowed.

INT. BOARDING GATE 27 -- DAY

People mill about. Ernie and Ken approach the FLIGHT ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT

Hello!

KEN

Hi! How are ya?

ERNIE

We're going to California.

ATTENDANT

And we'll be taking you there...just as soon as I see your boarding passes.

They hand them over.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

(to Ernie)

All righty, Mr. Ken Tomaso. You're in first-class. We're pre-boarding you now.

They both step toward the gate.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

(to Ken)

No, Mr. Kelly, you're in super-coach saver. We'll be boarding you in a few minutes.

ERNIE

See you on the plane, Uncle Ernie.

KEN

What are you doing?

ERNIE

I'm pre-boarding.

KEN

You can't pre-board! That's a first-class ticket. That's my first-class ticket.

ERNIE

But I'm you.

ATTENDANT

Is there a problem?

KEN

No, no problem.

(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)
 (aside to Ernie)
 I'm getting first-class on the way
 home.

ERNIE
 Okay, okay.

INT. FIRST-CLASS -- DAY

Ernie is reclined in a first-class seat, with warm towels on his face. His mouth is exposed as he eats a cookie.

INT. COACH CLASS -- DAY

Ken is squeezed between a fat, sweaty guy and a lady with a crying baby. Ken struggles to get a pack of peanuts open.

INT. PLANE EXIT -- DAY

The plane has landed and the passengers are "de-planing". Ernie stands by the exit as the PASSENGERS exit. Ken finally makes it up to the exit and they walk out.

ATTENDANT
 Bye-bye.

ERNIE
 That was cool! Thanks!

INT. BOARDING RAMP -- DAY

They walk down the tube leading to the terminal.

INT. LA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT -- DAY

Ernie has his bag as Ken searches the luggage carousel for his.

Ernie notices a CHAUFFEUR holding a sign reading "Ken Tomosa".

ERNIE
 Hey, Uncle Ken, look! Our ride's
 here. I think that's our ride.

KEN
 I've seen it spelled worse. You get
 used to it after awhile.

ERNIE
 If you say so. I haven't been a
 Tomaso that long.

KEN
 Where's my bag? I don't understand
 this.

(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)

If they're going to force me to check my bag, the least they could do is be forced to give it back. All right, let's see about the car.

They head on over to the Chauffeur.

KEN (CONT'D)

Here. Ken Tomaso...that's him right here. I'm his uncle...Ernie Kelly. Ernie Kelly? That's my name? We'll be with you in just a minute. I'm still waiting for my bag.

CHAUFFEUR

I was instructed only to pick up Mr. Ken Tomosa.

KEN

And you shall. With me. I'm his guardian. His uncle. Flesh and blood.

CHAUFFEUR

I'm sorry, sir. But I'm only permitted to pick up Mr. Tomosa.

KEN

I'm going to the same hotel as him. It's a big car. I'm sure I can squeeze in. Same trip. Just wait a second. And it's Tomaso!

CHAUFFEUR

Sir, it's not a matter of squeezing. It's the rates charged, the insurance coverage.

KEN

Fine, fine. Take Mr. Tomasa. I'll get my bag and meet you at the hotel. Go to the desk, tell them your name and Gimbley Studios.

ERNIE

You sure?

KEN

Sure, go. I'll catch up.

The Chauffeur takes Ernie's bag and leads Ernie out. Ken goes back to the baggage claim, now deserted with no luggage in sight.

INT. LIMO -- DAY

Ernie drives through L.A. watching the movie stars, swimming pools, palm trees. Radio is blaring and he opens the sun roof...

EXT. LIMO -- DAY

...to get the full effect of the drive to the hotel.

EXT. LA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT -- DAY

Ken, with a radically damaged bag, awaits a cab. One zooms up, knocking him over.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HOTEL -- DAY

Ernie's limo pulls up. Chauffeur gets out and leads Ernie inside.

INT. SUITE -- DAY

BELLHOP brings Ernie into his room, a beautiful swanky affair with a balcony and a view of the Hollywood sign.

INT. LOBBY -- DAY

Ken makes his frazzled way to the front desk.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

Bellhop leads Ken to a door and opens it. Ken enters. Bellhop runs off. Ken, stunned, steps back and looks for the "vanished" bellhop.

INT. KEN'S ROOM -- DAY

It's a cramped, single bed holding pen. Ken shakes his head. He goes to open a drawer and it falls out. He puts his bag on the bed and the Murphy bed suddenly folds up into the wall.

INT. SUITE HALLWAY -- DAY

Ken comes up to Ernie's suite and knocks. Ernie, in a plush terrycloth robe, opens the door.

ERNIE

Whoa, Uncle Ken, check this out!

KEN

What are you doing?

ERNIE

I'm taking this gi-gunta bubble bath.

They go into the bedroom.

INT. SUITE BEDROOM -- DAY

There's the jacuzzi. It's on and full of bubbles.

ERNIE

Awesome. I had to use a lot of those little soaps to get a decent amount of bubbles going. And check this out.

He pulls a wrapped mint out of his robe pocket.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

They give you candy here! Right on the bed! How cool is that?

KEN

That's very cool. Amazingly cool.

ERNIE

Man, Uncle Ken, I just want to thank you so much for making me you.

He puts out his hand, Ken shakes it, with Ernie pulling him into one of those street/one-arm hugs.

KEN

I'm glad you like it so far. Now, Ernie, first things first. We have to get organized here. We have to check in with Gimbley Studios. Let them know we arrived safely---

Phone rings. Ernie and Ken both go for it.

KEN (CONT'D)

It's for me!

ERNIE

But I'm you. If you answer it, you can't be me.

KEN

Okay, good point. I think. I'll get on the extension and guide you through the call.

Ken runs over to an extension. They count off on three and pick up.

ERNIE

Hello?

INTERCUT:

INT. GAIL'S OFFICE -- DAY

GAIL LEIGHMAN, all business, all the time, is at her desk on the phone. Scripts are stacked nearby and she has a copy of "Mall's Well" opened in front of her.

GAIL
Ken Tomaso, please.

Ken signals Ernie to continue.

ERNIE
What? Oh, speaking. Hi.

GAIL
Mr. Tomaso, you made it in. That's wonderful. How was your flight?

ERNIE
Awesome. They had cookies.

GAIL
I'm glad. I hope the room is to your liking.

ERNIE
Awesomer.

GAIL
Again, I'm glad. We certainly want to make Hollywood's latest discovery comfortable.

Ken mimes "yes!" while Ernie does a silent dance of joy.

ERNIE
I am *so* comfortable.

GAIL
I just want to confirm our meeting for tomorrow morning and I have a surprise for you: Emerson Mylox is going to be joining us.

ERNIE
Emerson Mylox. Excellent.

Ernie and Ken share a "who's that?" shrug.

GAIL
He read the script and has bullied us into him directing it. He's very excited about "Mall's Well That Ends Well."

KEN
(blurting)
What?

Slaps hand over his mouth.

ERNIE
---dude?

GAIL
Oh, yes, the new title. It tested
through the roof. Now, we've got
you scheduled for tomorrow at ten.
We're very excited about this project.

ERNIE
I'm totally stoked.

KEN
(covering phone)
Your uncle. Ask them about your
uncle.

ERNIE
What about my uncle?

GAIL
Your uncle?

KEN
Your guardian has to come along.
You're a minor.

ERNIE
Oh, right...my uncle traveled out
here with me, to keep an eye on me
for my mom.

Ken gives him a thumbs up.

GAIL
Ah, I see. I hadn't realized you
were traveling with someone.
(she makes a note)
You know what? We got you a limo.
What if we send over a rental? Then
your uncle and you can have a car at
your disposal.

ERNIE
Totally rad.

GAIL
Tomorrow then. We'll see you and
your uncle and make a movie.

They hang up.

ERNIE

Great. Now what?

KEN

We have a day to...

(indicating Hollywood
sign)

..go Hollywood. Get dressed, young
Kelly.

Ernie ducks into the bath to change.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HOTEL -- DAY

The Consignor brings them to a hot convertible and hands them the car keys.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREET -- DAY

Ken and Ernie driving down the palm-tree-lined streets.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BLVD. -- DAY

Ken and Ernie walk along, pointing out the various stars on the sidewalk. Heads down, Ken walks into a lamp post.

EXT. MANN'S CHINESE THEATER -- DAY

Ken and Ernie putting their hands and feet in different cement prints like a celebrity game of Twister.

EXT. TAR PITS -- DAY

Ken is looking at everything, explaining it all to Ernie. Ernie doesn't care and walks off. Ken finally realizes Ernie's gone and starts after him, but his shoe is stuck in some tar. He pulls and comes out of his shoe.

EXT. STUDIO TOUR -- DAY

Ken and Ernie on the studio tram. While it idles, a park cast member dressed as the FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER comes up behind Ken and taps him on the shoulder. He turns and jumps in fright. Ernie thinks this is hysterical.

EXT. BEACH BOARDWALK -- DAY

They walk, taking in the length and breath of the place. They watch the beautiful girls skate by. Ken walks into a lamp post.

Ernie drags Ken into a skate rental shop.

EXT. BEACH BOARDWALK -- MOMENTS LATER

Ernie comes rolling out of the shop wearing in-line skates, with Ken in a panic, rolling right behind. Into a lamp post.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY -- NIGHT

They're seated, eating: Ernie, a couple of fast food burgers and fries, Ken is working on a nice steak. They're looking at the lighted Hollywood sign.

ERNIE

Great day.

KEN

It's amazing how much better food tastes up here than back home. It was a great day. I forgot how much fun it is.

ERNIE

What is?

KEN

Los Angeles. Being here on someone else's dime.

ERNIE

You came here before?

KEN

Like 10 years ago. A script I wrote got bought. The studio flew me out. I spent 3 days here. Big shot producers took me to lunch and dinner at the fancy restaurants. Got to see all the stars. I saw Harrison Ford take a swipe at Pee Wee Herman. That wasn't pretty.

ERNIE

I didn't know that. Did you ever tell anybody?

KEN

Are you kidding? 'Til people got sick of it, I told them. But as more and more years passed, well, it just seemed kind of sad. I didn't want to sound all Nora Desmond about it.

ERNIE

Who?

KEN

Never mind.

ERNIE

So, what happened?

KEN

What happened? It was an action comedy. It was so funny. It was this real Arnold Schwarzenegger character getting caught up in a spy plot. So they asked me to make one little change.

ERNIE

What?

KEN

If I could re-write it for Carrot Top. Things didn't much improve from there.

ERNIE

Bummer. I remember once, when I was in this band---

KEN

I didn't know you were in a band.

ERNIE

Yeah. About a year ago.

KEN

What do you play?

ERNIE

Bass.

KEN

I had no idea.

ERNIE

So anyway, I'm with these 3 guys and we called ourselves the Gibson Four, for the street we practiced on, and one day, I go to practice and they're already set up and playing and they told me they changed the name of the group to the Gibson Three.

KEN

Ouch.

ERNIE

Harsh. So much is just luck, you know? No matter how hard you try. No matter how good you are. It's just luck.

KEN

What if you get lucky and stink? If you work at it and get good, then when luck happens, you'll be ready.

ERNIE

Touché.

EXT. GIMBNEY STUDIOS -- DAY

Nice shot of the prosperous old-school studio gates.

INT. GAIL'S RECEPTION AREA -- DAY

A very efficient SALLY holds down the fort from behind the staggeringly complicated desk.

EMERSON MYLOX enters, all Euro-trendy and hanging onto his 30th year for all it's worth.

MYLOX

Sally, darling, is Gail at home?

SALLY

Yes, Mr. Mylox. She's waiting for you.

MYLOX

Thanks, bubbles.

INT. GAIL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Gail is on the speaker phone. She signals Mylox to sit. She continues her phone conversation with Dave, one of her flunkies.

GAIL

So what are you saying, Dave?

DAVE (O.S.)

The actor's union is stonewalling negotiations. They're getting all hard line over the internet stuff. A strike is looming.

GAIL

So, their contract's up in, what, five months?

DAVE (O.S.)

Yes. And we're hearing noises. The craft services union and the crew unions are going to back them.

GAIL

We're getting stuff into the pipeline as we speak. We're not going to be caught without product if the strike happens. In fact, I've got Emerson here to discuss his contribution to the stockpile.

DAVE (O.S.)
Is Emerson there? Hi, Emerson.
Loved "Time of Day".

MYLOX
Thanks.

GAIL
Okay, Dave. Thanks for the update.
Now hurry up back here. I've got
that teen writer here and I'll want
you working with him. Bye-bye.

They disconnect.

MYLOX
Worried, love?

GAIL
Yes. I've got the parent company on
our case about our lack of hit movies.
By hook or by crook, I'll turn out a
hit. And I'm not about to have a
bunch of actors nix that.

MYLOX
Those poor actors. Don't they realize
in a few months they're all going to
be replaced by software?

GAIL
Be that as it may, we need movies
and we need them now. Which brings
us to..."Mall for One".

MYLOX
"Mall for One"?

GAIL
Newer focus group. Skews younger.

MYLOX
No matter. I did have some re-writes
ready.

GAIL
We're going to forego the re-writes
this time, Emerson.

MYLOX
What? Are you insane? I always re-
write the script. It's my way.

GAIL
One, we don't have the time.
(MORE)

GAIL (CONT'D)

Two, we've got a major coup here with the script. It's sound. It's funny. It's solid. And it was written by an 18-year-old. That's our hook. A film for teens, by an actual teen. We can't re-write. It's our gimmick and we have to play it up.

MYLOX

That's crazy talk.

GAIL

Regardless, it's my call. The studio machinery wants it. We're talking up the writer and the script he wrote. I can't muck that up with a vanity re-write.

MYLOX

Gail, you wound me.

GAIL

Tough love, Em. The wonder boy should be here any minute. After this, I want you to meet with Glenda in casting. I'm thinking we can just back a van up to the WB and load up with their teen heartthrobs. Any objections?

MYLOX

Plenty.

GAIL

Look, Emerson, you're arty and flighty. We put up with a lot of it because you put butts in the seats. But "Time of Day"; what were you thinking?

MYLOX

What can I say? When the muse calls---

GAIL

Let the machine pick up, dear. You used to be quick and clean, before you discovered the wonders of budget overages. We need that now.

Intercom buzzes.

SALLY (O.S.)

Ms. Leighman, Ken Tomaso is here.

GAIL
Here we go, Emerson. Big smile.
Send him in, Sally.

Ernie and Ken walk in. Gail is up like a shot to meet them.

GAIL (CONT'D)
Ken, Ken, so happy to meet you.
Where have you been!

ERNIE
Out in the reception area---

GAIL
Your script is astounding.

KEN
Thank you...on behalf of Ken.

GAIL
So, you're the uncle.

KEN
Yes, Ernie Kelly. He's my sister's
kid and I promised to keep an eye on
the lad.

GAIL
That's very nice of you. Will you
be here long?

KEN
Long enough. You see, it's my belief
that what happens to Ken happens to
me. My sister knows I've been out
here before.

GAIL
In Hollywood? Really?

KEN
(whoops)
Really. A vacation. We have a
timeshare. It was the only location
available. I'm a big movie buff.

ERNIE
He's a huge movie buff. He does all
those trivia games to death.

GAIL
Your nephew is a glorious writer.

KEN
Oh, I bet you say that to all the
writers.

MYLOX
You'd win that bet.

GAIL
Emerson.

MYLOX
So, this is our wunderkind.

GAIL
Ken, Ernie, this is your director,
Emerson Mylox.

ERNIE
Hey.

KEN
Good to meet you.

MYLOX
A pleasure.

GAIL
Emerson and I were just getting down
to a discussion of the script. We
want to get it up now. Shoot it as
is.

KEN
As is? Nobody shoots scripts as is!

MYLOX
Tell me about it.

GAIL
Well, we are. We have certain time
considerations.

ERNIE
There's a deadline?

KEN
Oh, right. The actors may be striking
soon. I read about that. You think
you can do this?

GAIL
The script is ready. It's tight,
it's fresh and nary a dinosaur or
alien creature in sight. Easy on
the eyes, easy on the budget.

MYLOX
So, how did you manage to come up
with this marvelous idea?

(MORE)

MYLOX (CONT'D)

A mall murder mystery being solved by some mall rats during a teeny bopper concert? How did you think to combine those elements?

ERNIE

I dunno.

KEN

True story...Ken and I are hanging out at the mall---

GAIL

You were hanging out at the mall with Ken?

KEN

Well, yes.

MYLOX

Whatever for?

KEN

I've got two girls...so with a wife...well, there's not a whole lot of male bonding going on there.

GAIL

Ah, married.

KEN

I'll say. With all girls. Don't get me started; the minute my youngest hits puberty, I'm moving into the minivan.

MYLOX

Minivan, that's so...suburban.

KEN

That whole toilet seat issue is moot. It stays down and I've learned to improve my aim---

ERNIE

Uncle Ernie...you're doing shtick.

KEN

Sorry. Anyhoo, sometimes it's nice to hang out with one of the guys.

ERNIE

I guess.

KEN

So, we're sitting there and talking about books and I mention the Hardy Boys and Ken here looks at me like I'm morphing into a raptor. I tell him about the Hardy Boys and the mysteries they solved.

ERNIE

They're a lot like Scooby-doo.

KEN

Okay. And we're in the mall and one thing leads to another and Ken here starts riffing out scenes about a mall murder mystery. I told him he should write it down and so he did.

MYLOX

You've got quite a gift there, young man.

ERNIE

I guess.

GAIL

Did you write a lot in school? Join the drama club? Perform in school plays?

ERNIE

No way.

KEN

Ken's not much of a joiner.

GAIL

Any courses? I mean, the writing is mature and steady.

MYLOX

Remarkably so.

KEN

Just some stuff he found on the internet.

GAIL

Amazing. Simply amazing. You're a prodigy.

MYLOX

(muttering)
Idiot savant.

GAIL

Excuse me?

MYLOX

I love this stuff.

GAIL

Yes, and we're so lucky to discover your gift now, instead of wasting your life away as a clerk or something.

ERNIE

Lucky.

KEN

Real lucky.

INT. GAIL'S RECEPTION AREA -- DAY

Gail directs Mylox, Ernie and Ken out. Emerson and Ernie head out, Ken and Gail hold back.

GAIL

It was a pleasure meeting you. That is such a selfless gesture, traveling out here with Ken.

KEN

Hey, don't kid yourself. The kid hits big, he's buying me a new car! One of those convertible minivans. No, really. My sister's raising him alone. It's the least I could do. I consider it a favor, him getting me here.

GAIL

We have a lot of big ideas for your nephew.

KEN

Excuse me?

GAIL

We're going to be featuring Ernie as our hot new find.

KEN

But he's a writer. Hollywood doesn't feature writers. People think the actors make this stuff up.

GAIL

Normally, yes. But it's a great gimmick, a kid writer.

KEN

I was counting on that whole "anonymous writer" thing.

Catching up to Ernie and Mylox...

ERNIE

So, you're not worried about the actor's strike?

MYLOX

Those poor actors. Don't they realize in a few months they're all going to be replaced by software?

ERNIE

Then won't you be replaced by a programmer?

This gets Mylox miffed.

GAIL

We're going to introduce Ernie to the press when we start principle photography.

KEN

No, you can't.

GAIL

Can't?

KEN

No. Can't.

GAIL

Why not?

KEN

Because he's just a kid.

GAIL

That's the whole point.

KEN

He's my nephew and I'll be protecting him from being exploited. That's why I'm here.

GAIL

Right. Well, we'll just have to address that then.

Ken and Ernie reach the elevators as Gail and Mylox hang back.

GAIL (CONT'D)

Terrific.

MYLOX

What?

GAIL
They're the damn Brady bunch.

MYLOX
What are you talking about?

GAIL
We're pulling together all these plans for Ken and his uncle won't let him participate.

MYLOX
What plans?

GAIL
Promoting the kid as the next big thing.

MYLOX
Are you mad? He's just the writer! What's that got to do with anything?

GAIL
Maybe if he was distracted.

MYLOX
I really must protest. I don't want my "film by" credit diluted by any writer hype.

GAIL
You had your day in the sun, Em.

INT. MYLOX'S BUNGALOW -- DAY

Mylox comes in, rather testily. His assistant, SIDNEY, is manning the desk. He's got a top-flight PC hooked up.

MYLOX
Sidney, you're supposed to be a whiz with that infernal device. What can you find out about our latest scribe, Ken Tomaso? Who is this juvenile delinquent?

Sidney types into the PC.

SIDNEY
Hmm, okay. He's in the Writers Guild and his agent is Gary Johnson over at Colby Talent.

MYLOX
That's it?

SIDNEY
Spur of the moment and all.

MYLOX

Let me talk to this Colby gent and see if the brat's legitimate. I sense he's a phony. I'm good at that kind of thing.

SIDNEY

The best.

INT. SUITE -- DAY

Ken and Ernie walk in. Phone rings.

KEN

Hello.

INTERCUT:

INT. GARY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Gary, on the phone, files shuffling.

GARY

Hello, Ken Tomaso, please.

KEN

Speaking.

GARY

Well, hello, little Willie Shakespeare. I gotta tell you, I just got off the phone with Leighman at Gimbney. She loves you. But you may want to lose the uncle.

KEN

Lose him?

GARY

I told her she wouldn't be sorry. She had to call me to say how right I was.

KEN

This is great...dude.

GARY

I was hoping to get together for a face-to-face while you're in town, if you don't mind.

KEN

Sure. You want we should come to your office?

GARY

That works. What's good? Is four good? Four's good for me.

KEN

Four it is.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL -- DAY

Mylox is at a table looking at head shots of actors with GLENDA CUMMINGS, a sharp casting director.

MYLOX

Yes, these will do. They're all fairly interchangeable at this point, no?

GLENDA

You're the auteur.

MYLOX

Bloody right. Oh, what I could do with this script.

GLENDA

I read it. It seemed like a winner to me.

MYLOX

Love, you just herd the talent, I'll brand them. All these young pups, no star-wonks to muddy up the job. Oh, it would have been such a Mylox motion picture.

Cellphone rings.

GLENDA

You're ringing, honey.

MYLOX

Ah, yes, my Tashako. It's the latest technology. The smallest, lightest, most compact cellphone on the market. Over fifteen hundred to buy and there's only five of us which own one.

He's searching around his person, attempting to locate the phone.

MYLOX (CONT'D)

No more bulky bulges for Emerson. It's practically virtual. So small and light...Where the hell is the little bugger?

He finally manages to fish a teeny-tiny phone, practically a length of wire, out of a pocket.

MYLOX (CONT'D)

And, action.

INTERCUT:

INT. MYLOX'S BUNGALOW -- DAY

It's Sidney on the phone and PC.

SIDNEY

Hello, boss.

MYLOX

Yes, yes, what is it?

SIDNEY

Got some more info on Tomaso.

MYLOX

Jolly good. What do you have?

SIDNEY

He has 14 scripts registered at the Writer's Guild. He's won a couple of screenplay contests in the last seven years. He's no fluke.

MYLOX

Fourteen scripts and awards? When was this kid doing all this, in uterus?

SIDNEY

Probably not.

MYLOX

There's something rotten in the state of Denmark, says I.

SIDNEY

Shakespeare said it first.

MYLOX

Just another schmuck with a quill.

SIDNEY

N.B.D.

MYLOX

What?

SIDNEY

No big deal. You got a script.

(MORE)

SIDNEY (CONT'D)

Shoot the script. And a grateful studio awaits.

MYLOX

Ken Tomaso...prodigy. I'm going to see his agent.

(to Glenda)

Get those people a contract ASAP. We're playing beat the clock here.

EXT. COLBY TALENT ASSOCIATES -- DAY

Ken and Ernie walk into the glass & steel headquarters.

INT. GARY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Gary is straightening his tie as Ken and Ernie walk in. Gary's up like a shot and goes right to Ernie.

GARY

Ken, my boy. I'm just thrilled to meet you! Thrilled!

ERNIE

Good to meet you, too.

GARY

And you must be Uncle Ernie.

KEN

So far. Nice to meet you.

GARY

So, what to you think of La-La-Land?

ERNIE

La-La-Land? Did we go there yet?

KEN

He means Los Angeles. It's a nickname.

ERNIE

Oh. It's cool.

GARY

You have a cold, Kenny? You sound different over the phone.

KEN

Puberty. His voice is still changing. Comes and goes.

ERNIE

Yeah, that's it...

Ken nudges him.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

...dude.

GARY

Please, please, sit. Can I get you anything? Soda? Bottled water?

Ernie sits and sees the candy jars on Gary's desk. He grabs a bunch of candy.

ERNIE

Hollywood has candy everywhere. No wonder everyone wants to come here.

GARY

Help yourself. That's why it's there. I have to tell you, Ken, you've got buzz.

ERNIE

I do? I didn't mean to.

GARY

No, buzz; good. Word is getting around about you and your script. The fast track green light. Your age. You, my friend, have a lot of new friends in Hollywood.

Ernie is looking at Gary's bracelet.

ERNIE

What's that?

GARY

Oh, this is my magnetic bracelet. Helps maintain my body's aura. Keeps the humours circulating properly. Want to see it?

He takes it off and hands it to Ernie, who begins attracting paper clips with it.

GARY (CONT'D)

I'll get you one. Hell, I'll get you two, one for each wrist.

ERNIE

(trying it on)
Cool.

GARY

As I was saying, there are a lot of people who want to get into bed with you.

KEN

Work with you, Ken, work with you.
 (to Gary)
 What kind of people?

GARY

I've had calls from all the major studios. They want to know what else young Tomaso has.

ERNIE

Do I have anything else?

GARY

Word is out, son, about your fourteen scripts. You are a prolific S.O.B. I've got execs chomping at the bit to see any one of them.

KEN

The scripts? They know about the other scripts?

GARY

It's all over the grapevine, Uncle Ernie. Good thing, too. I still don't have your records.

Secretary ALICE knocks and enters. She carries a computer floppy disk.

ALICE

Gary, I finally got it. The computer geeks were able to retrieve Mitch's files!

GARY

About time! I was just mentioning that to Ken here. Thank you. I don't even know what that old coot was doing with a computer.

Gary takes the disk. Alice leaves.

KEN

Mitch's files?

GARY

Oh yeah. As I told you Ken, when Mitch left the agency, a lot of his files got lost in the transition. All kinds of notes and things about his clients that I'd be working with. Including you.

KEN

Amazing. Ken's all on there?

GARY

Yup.

Gary puts the disk on the desk.

GARY (CONT'D)

So, have you boys eaten?

ERNIE

No...dude.

KEN

Not yet.

GARY

How about I take you to Canlon's?
It's the hottest hot spot.

ERNIE

Cool.

KEN

Groovy.

GARY

Alrighty then. But first---

KEN

First?

GARY

The contracts. Gimbney sent them
over PDQ. We're double the minimum,
we've got all re-writes. It's a
golden deal, especially for a
newcomer.

Ken takes the contract.

KEN

Did we get points?

GARY

Monkey points.

KEN

Oh, well.

ERNIE

Huh?

KEN

It's just make-believe money that
they pretend to give away.

ERNIE

Oh. Am I happy I got it or mad it doesn't exist?

KEN

You're just resigned to it.

ERNIE

I can do resigned.

GARY

All we need is the Hollywood Kid to sign the bottom.

Buzzer sounds. It's Alice.

ALICE (O.S.)

Mr. Johnson, it's Emerson Mylox. He insists on seeing you.

GARY

The director? Does he know I'm with Tomaso?

ALICE (O.S.)

Yes. That's when he began insisting.

Gary goes to the door.

GARY

Let's see what this is about.

As Gary opens the door, Ken quickly signs the contract. He then rapidly grabs Ernie's wrist with the bracelet and rubs it on the computer disk. He hands the contract and pen to Ernie as Gary and Mylox enter. He leaps back to his place.

GARY (CONT'D)

He was just about to sign. Why?

MYLOX

I just wanted to witness this historic moment.

ERNIE

All signed.

GARY

Great.

MYLOX

I thought you said he just got the contract.

KEN

We're a trusting family.

MYLOX
Hollywood will eat you alive.

GARY
We were just about to hit Canlon's.
Care to join us?

They walk out of the office.

MYLOX
Oh, I'd love to, but I do have to
dash back. Casting, pre-production,
all that rot.

INT. ELEVATOR LOBBY -- DAY

Gary pushes the button.

GARY
Shame you can't make it. Well,
there's always the wrap party, I
suppose.

MYLOX
Yes, the wrap party.

Mylox steps into the elevator.

ALICE
(calling)
Gary, wait a moment.

GARY
You go. We'll get the next one.

Alice comes up with some papers.

ALICE
I forgot. Here are the print-outs
of the files. Simpson, Permutter
and Tomaso.

The doors shut just as Mylox hears Tomaso. But he's gone.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You want it?

KEN
Can I fax a copy of that to the
studio? They said something about
P.R.

ERNIE
Why do they have to fax it to Puerto
Rico?

GARY

Go right ahead.

Ken follows Alice back to the reception area.

INT. RECEPTION AREA -- DAY

Alice's domain. There is a fax machine beside the paper shredder. Alice gets the file and hands it to Ken.

KEN

The studio gave me a fax number, so just point the way.

ALICE

I'd be happy to do it.

KEN

No, no, not necessary.

ALICE

All right. I've just got to run down to the mail room. The fax machine's right there, next to the paper shredder. Don't get them mixed up!

(laughs)

Ken feebly joins in. He approaches the machines. He fires up the shredder and starts feeding the paper in.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUITE BEDROOM -- EVENING

Ken, in a robe on the bed, flipping through the channels while he talks on the phone.

KEN

So, what am I missing back there in reality land?

INTERCUT:

INT. JACK'S KITCHEN -- EVENING

Jack at sink helping his WIFE with the dishes. He's on the phone, the wire hitting her as he moves about.

JACK

Oh, the usual exciting stuff. So what are you doing, Mr. Show Biz?

KEN

I'm having someone come up and massage my aura later.

JACK
Kinky. Be careful. Your aura ain't
what it used to be.

KEN
Whose is?

JACK
So, they are completely in the dark
about this still?

KEN
Still. But it's because they want
to believe it so bad. They're going
nuts over the fact that I'm 18.

JACK
You be careful, man. As I recall,
18 wasn't much of a treat for us the
first time around.

KEN
Never mind that. You just start
picking out some garish Hawaiian
shirts for your pool side services.
I'm gonna call Liz now. Phone's
been busy so far. See ya later,
Darth Vader.

JACK
After while, Gomer Pyle.

Ken hangs up and dials out.

INTERCUT:

INT. TOMASO BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Phone rings a couple of times. A light comes on. It's
Elizabeth, groggy, with Carla sleeping on top of her. She
struggles to reach the phone, trying to slide out from under
Carla. She finally makes it.

ELIZABETH
Hello?

KEN
Honey, it's me!

ELIZABETH
Ken? What time is it?

KEN
It's 8 here.

*

ELIZABETH

Oh, yeah. I was lying down with
Carla...everything okay?

KEN

Great, great.

There's a knock at the door.

KEN (CONT'D)

That's weird. Someone's at the door.

ELIZABETH

Not a crazed psycho killer, is it?

KEN

I'll find out.
(calling out)
Who is it?

GAIL (O.S.)

It's Gail Leighman.

KEN

Oh, one second!
(on phone)
It's the head of the studio. I'd
better go.

ELIZABETH

Good luck. I'm glad it's not a psycho
killer.

Ken hangs up and opens the door. It's Gail, but unlike any
Gail we've seen before. Carrying a bottle of champagne,
she's in a hot little number.

GAIL

Hello, Uncle Ernie.

KEN

Hello, Ms. Leighman. Do I know you?

GAIL

Gail, please.

KEN

Sure. What's up?

GAIL

I just wanted to welcome you in a
more informal manner.

KEN

That's mighty friendly of you.
Mighty, mighty friendly.

GAIL

Since you are a civilian, I just don't want you to feel left out.

KEN

Oh, I don't. It's a great experience for Ken.

GAIL

It's a little hard to tell.

KEN

True. He's very low key. Which is probably why it's best to not make a big deal about him.

GAIL

You're probably right.

KEN

I'm not the writer.

GAIL

I said you're probably right.

KEN

Oh, yes. Yes, I probably am.

GAIL

So, where is Ken?

KEN

He wandered into the bathroom and I haven't seen him since..

GAIL

The studio is really hot on this picture. It's been fast-tracked. We're producing it, Ernie.

KEN

That's amazing. I didn't think you could get it up and running.

GAIL

Oh, I can get lots of things up and running. So, is Ken's schedule clear?

KEN

Clear?

GAIL

We want him to hang around the next couple of weeks. We'd like him to be on the set during production.

KEN

I'm pretty sure he's free for that.

GAIL

And I just want to assure you that we'll be taking the best of care of him.

KEN

That's good.

GAIL

So there's no need to worry yourself when you go.

KEN

Go?

GAIL

Go.

KEN

I'm not going.

GAIL

But it's okay. I have people who do this kind of stuff.

KEN

I'm sure you do. But he's my responsibility. I'm not about to abandon him.

GAIL

Of course. But I'm sure that there must be pressing matters in your little life that require your attention.

KEN

Fortunately, I don't have many pressing matters pressing.

GAIL

Oh. Well, I have to warn you that I might not be able to get the authorization for the studio to put you up here.

KEN

I'll, er, stay on my own dime. I could even take Ken with me to another hotel, if that's a problem.

GAIL

Oh, no need for that. I'll have to talk to Accounting.

Ernie comes out in a robe, wet again.

ERNIE

What's going on, Uncle Ken?

GAIL

Huh?

Ken goes over to Ernie and snaps his fingers in Ernie's face.

KEN

Wake up, Ken. Wake up.

(to Gail)

Sleep walking. He's been doing it since he's five.

ERNIE

Okay, okay. I'm awake.

KEN

Another reason I have to stay with him. Once he walked into a supermarket and kept scanning his library card at the cash register. He said he liked the beeping sounds.

GAIL

Perhaps I should leave.

KEN

If you wouldn't mind. I'm sorry. It was very nice of you to stop by.

GAIL

We'll talk in the morning.

KEN

You bet.

Gail leaves.

ERNIE

Did I really walk in my sleep?

KEN

No, no. Your mom used to wander around in her sleep. Our dad once caught her trying to get a sled out onto the roof.

ERNIE

Weird. So, why was the studio lady here?

KEN

We're being produced.

They high five.

EXT. GIMBNEY STUDIOS -- MORNING

Ken and Ernie drive up to the gate, all excited, pointing and looking. Ernie's got a disposable camera and is clicking away. They stop and the gate and begin happily punching each other as the GUARD asks their names and clears them through.

INT. MALL SET -- DAY

The crew is setting up. Mylox is the man in charge. He's standing in front of his director's van, a hi-tech trailer with all the equipment he needs to direct the movie.

A group of YOUNG ACTORS are milling about drinking bottled water and comparing tattoos.

A pretty script girl, MISTY RUIZ, 18, is carrying a clipboard and touching base with several groups of people. She pulls out a cellphone/walkie talkie.

MISTY

Yes, I need that sent to Miller.
Hank Miller. Miller. M-I-L-L-E-R.
Matrix, Iceland, Leprechaun,
Leprechaun, Eden, Ricochet; Miller.

A door opens. Gail walks in with Ernie and Ken. They approach Mylox's group.

MYLOX

Everyone, look alert! The boss lady
is here!

GAIL

Emerson, how are you?

MYLOX

What brings you here, my dear?

GAIL

I just wanted to come over and wish
you all luck. And show our young
scribe what he's created.

MYLOX

Yes, he did do a wonderful job
creating all this, didn't he?

ERNIE

Thanks.

GAIL

Let me show you around.

Gail takes Ken's arm and they wander off. Misty comes over, not watching as she talks.

MYLOX

If you'll excuse me, Junior, I have a movie to make.

MISTY

(on phone)

To my attention. Misty Ruiz. Ruiz. Rebate, Umbrella, Idaho, Zeppelin...

Mylox walks off, entering his van. Misty walks into Ernie. He's smitten.

MISTY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Oh, hi.

ERNIE

Hi.

MISTY

You're the writer, aren't you?

ERNIE

Yes. Yes, I am.

MISTY

I just have to say "hi" then. I read the script. It's really good.

ERNIE

Thanks.

MISTY

I'm Misty Ruiz.

ERNIE

Hi, I'm--

MISTY

Oh, we all know who you are, Mr. Tomaso.

ERNIE

Oh, right, Tomaso. Well, you can call me...Eee.

MISTY

Eee?

ERNIE

My...nick name; Ken-Eee. So, what do you do here?

MISTY

I'm the assistant script girl.

ERNIE
How old are you?

MISTY
Same as you.

ERNIE
Get out! And you're working on a
big time movie?

MISTY
I'm an intern. As openings go, it's
pretty lame but I just have to work
here. I love the movies. Isn't
this the best?

ERNIE
I guess.

MISTY
And you got to meet Gail Leighman.
What's she like?

ERNIE
She's pretty cool. Kinda pushy.

MISTY
Oh, well. She's the boss. You should
hear the interns buzzing about this
project. Here we are, all scrambling
to get our foot in the door and you
come in and blow the door off its
hinges. They would die if they saw
me talking to you.

ERNIE
Oh, come on. It's only a movie.

MISTY
I know but it's our dream. Beats
flipping burgers. To be out here,
part of the creative process. It's
exhilarating. But look who I'm
telling.

ERNIE
You really get that jazzed about
this?

MISTY
Of course!

ERNIE
It's just so weird seeing everyone
psyched up over something most people
go to, to make out during.

MISTY

You're a little young to be so
cynical, aren't you?

Ernie shrugs. He sees Mylox exit the director's van.

ERNIE

What's up with that? Mylox gets two
trailers?

MISTY

That's Emerson's director mobile.

ERNIE

What?

MISTY

He directs all his movies from inside
that van.

ERNIE

No way.

MISTY

Yes, way.

They walk over to the van.

INT. DIRECTOR'S VAN -- CONTINUOUS

They look inside. It is a high tech video/audio nerve center.
A large screen TV is the centerpiece with Mylox's director
chair set up before a microphone.

MISTY

Since he went all digital, he directs
the movie from here. No one ever
sees him and he barks his commands
over the PA or to his assistants.
It's all very Doctor Mabuse.

ERNIE

Dr. who?

MISTY

No, not Dr. Who. Dr. Mabuse.
"Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse"? Fritz
Lang?

ERNIE

Sorry.

MISTY

It's an old movie.

ERNIE

So you're really into old movies?

MISTY

Like anything else you like, you
tend to learn all you can about it,
no?

ERNIE

I dunno. I guess I never liked
anything enough.

MISTY

Not even your writing?

ERNIE

My scripts just kind of come to me.

MISTY

Like they write themselves.

ERNIE

It's not like I write them, that's
for sure.

MISTY

It's a gift.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE CRAFT SERVICES -- DAY

Gail is getting some coffee while Ken takes a bagel...after
putting a few in his pocket. DAVE, her phone flunky, comes
up.

DAVE

Gail, I made it!

GAIL

Dave, great. Excellent job on the
actor's strike talks, by the way.
Now, I need you talk to Ken, while I
talk things over with Mr. Kelly.

Dave nods and hustles off. Gail goes into full flirt mode
on Ken.

GAIL (CONT'D)

You must be very proud of your nephew.

KEN

Oh, sure. Proud.

GAIL

And we certainly appreciate you taking
the time to bring him here to the
set.

KEN

Just doing my job, ma'am.

(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)

And thank you for letting us stay in the hotel. And the breathing room.

GAIL

Trying to keep our commodity happy. How about you? What do you think about all of this?

KEN

Me? You want my opinion?

GAIL

I don't get to talk to many civilians. Everyone is either in the business or a wannabe. They leech off all my energy. So, what do you do?

KEN

Oh, well, I'm a clerk. A brokerage firm on Wall Street. I clerk stuff.

GAIL

Good, honest work.

KEN

The checks clear, if that's what you mean.

GAIL

And that's it for you?

KEN

What do you mean?

GAIL

No grand dreams?

KEN

Oh, you mean some inner longing, to break free of my rut, to burst forth from my mundane life of responsibilities and duties, to simply escape the humdrum and work-a-day to pursue fame and glory?

GAIL

Yes.

KEN

No.

GAIL

You're either a liar or a saint, Mr. Kelly.

KEN
It's possible to be both.

GAIL
We have the press snooping around
the boy. People want to hear about
him.

KEN
(cavalier)
People.

Off in the distance, Dave corners Ernie. Gail sees that Ernie is now distracted so she turns up the heat on Ken.

GAIL
You're an intriguing man, Mr. Kelly.

KEN
No, I'm not.

GAIL
Yes, you are.

KEN
That's kind of you to say.

GAIL
Are you doing anything tonight?

KEN
No, not really.

GAIL
I should take you out. On the studio.
To show our appreciation.

KEN
You should?

GAIL
Shouldn't I?

KEN
Sure, why not?

GAIL
All right then.

INT. MALL SET -- DAY

Ernie meeting the BEAUTIFUL CAST MEMBERS. DAVE, and some other studio flunkies make their way over to Ernie and lead him off.

INT. DIRECTOR'S VAN -- DAY

Mylox is in his control seat.

INT. STOCKROOM SET -- DAY

A scene where a KILLER wearing a welder's mask looms up behind TWO ACTORS making out. The Actors stop to look up at a speaker on the van, Mylox's voice barking out directions.

MYLOX (O.S.)
Cut, cut! I'm not feeling this,
people!

EXT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Gail and Ken enter an eatery as paparazzi take their pictures.

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Gail and Ken are at a table. WAITER brings over their meal and presents it. They look. It's a fancy-schmancy doo-dad of a meal that barely covers the center of the plate.

Gail picks up a fork to eat. Ken rolls his eyes and begins snickering. He then pretends to cough, to cover the laugh.

INT. FAST FOOD JOINT -- NIGHT

Misty and Ernie sit down to some burgers and fries. Dave and a studio guy are with them, gingerly poking at their meals.

INT. MALL SET -- DAY

Being filmed: A crowd scene with a concert going on. The camera pans and we see Ernie and Ken making a cameo, trying not to look at the camera too much.

EXT. GIMBNEY STUDIOS -- MORNING

Ernie is driving the car now, with Ken shooting pictures. The Guard waves them in, smiles all around.

INT. STUDIO -- DAY

Ken, Ernie and Misty talk as a set is broken down around them. Gail comes over and leads Ken off. Misty then gets a call on her cellphone and walks off. Dave and the studio guys appear to talk with Ernie.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Gail driving Ken around in her fancy convertible.

INT. MYLOX'S BUNGALOW -- EVENING

Mylox is hovering over Sidney's shoulder, watching him work the computer.

EXT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Ernie and Dave exit a restaurant with paparazzi in action.

EXT. LA ROAD -- DAY

Now Ken is behind the wheel of the convertible. Gail looks annoyed. Ken is steering like he knows what he's doing. He then takes one hand off the wheel and holds it up. Then the second. Gail just looks. Then we notice the car is being towed and the front fender is banged up. Ken looks to Gail, who puts on a happy face.

INT. COMMISSARY -- DAY

Dave introduces Ernie around to a table of BIG SHOTS.

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

We see Ken driving the convertible. His cellphone rings. He answers it.

It's Ernie calling on his new cellphone.

We then see that it's Ernie calling from the passenger seat next to Ken. They laugh.

INT. DIRECTOR'S VAN -- DAY

Mylox is watching the cast on his monitors. He's on the phone.

MYLOX

Look, darling, I know the script was supposed to be shot as-is, but this scene in the yogurt shop isn't working. If you're not going to let me fix it, could you at least get wonder boy to do it? That's why he's here, isn't it?

INTERCUT:

INT. GAIL'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Gail on phone, shuffling papers.

GAIL

Of course that's one of the reasons he's here. I'll set him up in one of the writer bungalows. He'll be at your beck and call.

MYLOX
Bloody marvelous.

INT. WRITER'S BUNGALOW -- DAY

It's a nicely furnished office with big windows and the shades wide open. There's a PC sitting on a old-fashioned wooden desk.

Ernie is pacing the floor. Suddenly, Ken comes hurrying into the room.

KEN
What happened?

ERNIE
What happened? What happened? A couple of studio dudes picked me up and brought me here! They said I have to fix the yogurt scene! I didn't even know there was a yogurt scene!

KEN
Fix it? Did they give you notes?

ERNIE
Notes?

KEN
Did they tell you how they wanted you to fix the scene?

ERNIE
Oh, notes!

He runs to the desk and gets a badly weathered sheet of paper.

ERNIE (CONT'D)
Yes, yes. They said it had to be thirty percent scarier. They needed to see more to the character arc and the B story was weak. This is gibberish, Uncle Ken! What does it mean?

KEN
It means we power up the word processor. We'll do this now. Don't worry. It's an old saying, "Writers don't write, they rewrite."

ERNIE
Then what do producers do?

KEN
I guess they reproduce.

DISSOLVE:

INT. WRITER'S BUNGALOW -- LATER

Ken hovers over the keyboard while Ernie is on the couch, tossing wadded up paper into a wastebasket.

KEN
Okay, so we have the hero, Lance,
and he wants to say "This girl was
great!".

ERNIE
He wouldn't say it like that, Uncle
Ken.

KEN
Okay, how would he say it?

ERNIE
He'd say, "She was stoopid and bad!".

KEN
No. Lance likes the girl.

ERNIE
Right.

KEN
But you just called her stupid.

ERNIE
Stoopid is good.

KEN
Stoopid is good?

ERNIE
Yes. It's dope.

KEN
Dope is good? I thought dope was
bad.

ERNIE
It is!

KEN
Then what is bad?

ERNIE
Bad is good.

KEN

It is?

ERNIE

Word. Or Lance could say she was
"phat".

KEN

So you meet a girl you like and tell
her she's fat and stupid?

ERNIE

Yes.

KEN

No wonder you don't date much.

ERNIE

Dope.

KEN

(gives thumbs up)
Excellent!

Ken starts typing.

EXT. WRITER'S BUNGALOW -- DAY

Mylox and Gail are in a golf cart, Gail driving. They drive
by the bungalow.

Mylox happens to glance over. Through the window, he sees
Ken at the keyboard typing.

MYLOX

Stop, wait, go back!

GAIL

What?

MYLOX

I want to see Tomaso!

Gail pulls a U-turn and pulls up to the bungalow. Mylox
hustles over and opens the door. There's Ernie at the
keyboard with Ken on the couch.

GAIL

Oh, there you are, Ken. Hello, Ernie.

Ernie and Ken wave back.

MYLOX

Er, how's that scene coming?

ERNIE

Just finishing it now.

KEN

He'll bring it over in a little bit.

MYLOX

Ah. Very good. We'll see you then.

Gail looks at them and shrugs.

GAIL

How's it look?

KEN

Dopey.

ERNIE

He means dope.

Gail nods as she and Mylox head off and drive away. Ken peeks out the door to watch them go.

KEN

Coast's clear.

INT. WRITER'S BUNGALOW -- DAY

KEN

Now, where were we?

ERNIE

I'm just finishing the cop's speech.

Ken looks at the screen.

KEN

Okay, see, now you can't spell "though" t-h-o, you can't put in FWIW or LOL. And no emoticons. We're not on-line now. Spelling counts.

ERNIE

My bad.

INT. SUITE -- EVENING

Ken on phone.

INT. BEDROOM -- EVENING

Elizabeth talking on phone. She hands it to Denise. Carla tugs on Denise, grabbing for phone. Denise hands it over. Carla takes it and screams into it.

INT. SUITE -- EVENING

Ken pulls the phone away from his good ear.

INT. WRITER'S BUNGALOW -- DAY

Ken and Ernie working on script.

INT. MALL SET -- DAY

Ernie is in front of the "Sporting Goods" store front and sees a skateboard in the window display.

In a flash, he's skateboarding all over the set, doing his moves for Misty and the crew.

INT. MALL SET -- DAY

Ernie hands the pages to Misty, who hands them out to the Actors.

INT. LIMO -- EVENING

Gail and Ken in the back of a limousine, talking and laughing. Ken is dressing a bit more "LA" now.

INT. MALL SET -- DAY

Ernie and Misty are at a table talking, going over pages. Ernie is making notes and changes as they talk. Misty calls over another PA and hands them the new pages.

INT. WRITER'S BUNGALOW -- NIGHT

Ernie leads Misty into the Bungalow.

MISTY

So, this is creative central.

ERNIE

Where we put it all down on paper.

MISTY

It's been great working on your picture, Mr. Tomaso.

ERNIE

It's been great being worked on, Ms. Ruiz.

They kiss. The phone rings. Ernie reluctantly pulls away and hits the speaker phone.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

Hello, already.

INTERCUT:

INT. LINDA'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Linda's at the kitchen table, staining some wicker chairs over the newspapers.

LINDA
Ernie?

Ernie lunges to the receiver and picks up.

ERNIE
Hi there!

LINDA
Hi, honey. I wasn't sure that was you.

ERNIE
It's one of those speaker phones. I don't like 'em.

LINDA
How's everything going?

MISTY
Everything all right, E-boy?

ERNIE
Fine, fine.
(to Linda)
Hiya, mo---ma'am.

LINDA
Ma'am? Who ever thought Hollywood would make you polite? How's Uncle Ken?

ERNIE
Uncle's fine. Keeping busy. He's been spending a lot of time with the studio lady.

LINDA
Studio lady? What's a studio lady?

MISTY
Is this business? Should I be going?

ERNIE
No, it's my...Linda from home.

MISTY
Linda?

LINDA
Linda? I liked "ma'am" better. Am I interrupting something, I hope?

ERNIE
 (covering phone)
 Aunt Linda. Uncle Ernie's wife.

MISTY
 Oh.

LINDA
 Is your uncle there?

ERNIE
 No, he's out of the office. Some
 business he had to talk over with
 the head of the studio.

Ken and Gail traipse in. They are dressed up and a little
 giddy from champagne.

ERNIE (CONT'D)
 Oh, man.

Ken and Gail are embarrassed when they see the kids.

GAIL
 Hello, Ken.

KEN
 What's up, Ken?

ERNIE
 Aunt Linda's on the phone.

KEN
 Aunt Linda?

ERNIE
 Your wife.

KEN
 Ah, my wife, Aunt Linda, the little
 woman. No doubt checking up on me.
 (suddenly awkward at
 this phrase)

GAIL
 I'm sure she just misses you. I
 thought you said her name was
 Elizabeth?

KEN
 Linda's a nickname for Elizabeth.

GAIL
 No, it's not.

KEN

That's what she told me. A fine thing to find out after 20 years of marriage.

MISTY

Your family's really into nicknames, isn't it, Eee?

KEN & ERNIE

Yes.

KEN

Let me take this.

(on phone)

Hi, Linda, honey, darling, sweetheart.

LINDA

Ken?

KEN

Yes, snookums.

LINDA

Are you on some Hollywood drugs?

I'm gonna tell mom.

The second line rings.

KEN

Hold on, hold on. My other line is ringing. Stay there.

INTERCUT:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Elizabeth in on the couch, curled up with a cup of tea and the phone.

ELIZABETH

Hiya, honey.

KEN

Oh, momma!

GAIL

What is it?

KEN

(covering phone)

It's my momma!

ERNIE

It's grandma?

ELIZABETH
Is everything all right?

KEN
It's beyond all right. Hang on, I
have another call.

He punches up Linda.

LINDA
Ken, you there?

KEN
I'm here.

LINDA
The phone has pretty bad hold music.

KEN
Don't blame me. I'm just the writer.

MISTY
Excuse me?

KEN
I mean, I only work here.

GAIL
Is there a problem?

KEN
No, wait...Just give me a minute.

LINDA
Can I talk to Ernie, please?

KEN
He's kind of on a date, Lin.

Ernie gives him a thumbs up and he and Misty duck out.

LINDA
He is? Nice girl?

KEN
Yes. Very. Reminds me a lot of
Denise.

LINDA
All right, I guess. As long as you're
out there with him, making sure he
behaves. You watch out for him,
Ken.

KEN
I will. You know I will. I have to
go. I have a call on the other line.

LINDA
Oh, of course, go.

KEN
Later. Bye-bye.

He punches up Elizabeth.

KEN (CONT'D)
Hello?

ELIZABETH
Is this a bad time?

KEN
No, no. I'm with the head of the studio, is all. So, what's up?

ELIZABETH
I saw Ernie on the E channel. They're repeating the story now. Have you seen it? Why did you do that?

KEN
Do what?

Ken looks around and gets the remote control. He flips on the TV. It's the Entertainment Channel and, lo and behold, it is Ernie, Dave and some executives holding a contract.

KEN (CONT'D)
Holy crap!

ELIZABETH
Oh, I guess you see it.

KEN
I'm on TV. I mean he's on TV!

He gets the remote and punches up the sound.

TV HOST
So who says TV isn't child's play? Gimbney Studios has just signed the hot, hot, hot kid writer of "Mall or Nothing" to one exclusive TV deal. Ken Tomaso's deal is to recreate and produce series for the Gimbney TV network.

He looks at Gail, who does, actually, look uncomfortable.

KEN
Oh my god, oh my god.

ELIZABETH

This is out of control, Ken. You can't do that. Can you?

KEN

I have to go.

He hangs up.

KEN (CONT'D)

What is that? When did this happen?
(suddenly dawning)

While I was being wined and dined.
I'm such a boob. If you ever want to give up being an executive, you should get a job acting in one of your pictures. You're very good.

GAIL

Ernie, I'm sorry. But Ken is a hot commodity. The studio doesn't want him to get away. He's good, Ernie. You can't get in his way.

She leaves.

KEN

"Mall or Nothing"?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUITE -- DAY

Ken on phone, back in his robe. He's sitting at the writing desk, looking forlorn.

KEN

The bloom is off this rose, my friend.

INTERCUT:

INT. JACK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jack at a busy desk, clicking away on his keyboard and shuffling papers.

JACK

What happened, Droopy Dog?

KEN

I feel so cheap.

JACK

But you said nothing happened.

KEN

Technically.

JACK
I knew you couldn't.

KEN
I didn't say I couldn't, I said I didn't.

JACK
You said you didn't because you couldn't.

KEN
I coulda.

JACK
Excuse me. I was with you with your blind prom date, remember?

KEN
Yeah, but that was years ago.

JACK
Oh, please. In the sexual scene, you were the designated celibate.

KEN
You're missing the point. I was a patsy. I got my head turned all around. I lapped it up.

JACK
But you're forgetting one thing.

KEN
What?

JACK
You're conning them.

KEN
Oh, right.

JACK
So while they're busy distracting you, it's distracting them from the fact that they're being distracted.

KEN
Well, sure, when you put it like that. That's the problem; what kind of example did I set for Ernie?

Ernie comes in.

ERNIE
Hey, unck!

KEN
Gotta go. Later.

Ken hangs up.

ERNIE
It was so great. They wanted my
input on songs for the soundtrack.

KEN
Of course. The soundtrack's almost
as important as the script. I know
I often go to the movies and pay
nine dollars so I can hear a three
minute song they're playing on the
radio for free.

ERNIE
Oh, yeah. And tomorrow is the last
day of shooting! We're invited to
the wrap party!

KEN
About that...maybe we should get
going. Home, I mean.

ERNIE
What? But we're not done.

KEN
Look, Ernie. We did want we had to
do. And now it's gotten out of hand.

ERNIE
No! Don't screw this up for me now!

KEN
I don't like how they lied and tricked
us.

ERNIE
Why? 'Cause they lie and trick better
than you?

KEN
Exactly...no, that's not it. It's
over. It's out of control and it's
time to pull the plug. Sure, we
scammed them, but now we're entering
the realm of fraud with this TV thing.

ERNIE
Oh, with the TV show, I was thinking
about doing this show about these
teens who are, like, wise beyond
their years---

KEN
There's no show.

ERNIE
No show?

KEN
No show. The deal is off.

ERNIE
Why?

KEN
Why? Because I say so, that's why.
Are you out of your mind? Are you
completely deluded?

ERNIE
You can't do this to me!

KEN
Oh, yes, I can. And more! Remember,
your mom gave me the hitting power.

ERNIE
That's just a family joke.

KEN
Oh, it's very real. My uncles and
aunts always had the hitting rule.
It was the entire family's duty to
look out for the kids. All of them.

ERNIE
So, where have you been for the last
eighteen years? Where were you when
my mom needed help looking out for
me?

KEN
I was there. Whenever she asked, I
was there. I have my own family,
and did my best. I'm not your dad.

ERNIE
No, you're not. So stop pulling
your authority trip on me.

KEN
Do you realize what you've done?

ERNIE
I got us a great gig.

KEN
Us? There is no "us".

ERNIE

What is me and you then?

KEN

We're here to be me. We're here to do a movie, that's it.

ERNIE

They made us a great deal. Gary said so. Doing a TV show! I love TV!

KEN

They made you an offer. It's fraud. You can't deliver on that.

ERNIE

I delivered on the movie.

KEN

It was different. I wrote it, I signed the contracts. You're just a facade. A front. It's me they want. It's just you they think they want.

ERNIE

They want me.

KEN

They want the talent. You don't have the talent.

ERNIE

Oh, and you do? You weren't writing anything until you started hanging around with me. You copied my life and my friends and you call that talent!

KEN

Don't you wish your life was that interesting! That'd be a real interesting movie, watching you waste your life away down at the mall. What obstacles! What a quest!

ERNIE

Great, now it's out; the whole family hates me, because I just don't measure up. Maybe what I want just doesn't matter to you!

KEN

Oh, and why should it? You think I'm just futzing around all day waiting for you to get it together? Huh?

Ernie storms off to the bedroom, slamming the door. Ken goes to a cupboard and slaps that a few times, but it's just not the same.

EXT. GIMBNEY STUDIOS -- MORNING

Ken and Ernie in the car, pulling up to the gate. There's a stony silence evident as the Guard waves them in.

INT. MALL SET -- DAY

Ken and Ernie walk in, Ernie walks over to join Misty. Ken starts to head to the food set-up when he sees Mylox leaning against the director van. Mylox motions for Ken to come over, then he walks into the van.

Ken hesitates, then grabs a doughnut, then one for good luck, and heads over to the van.

INT. DIRECTOR'S VAN -- DAY

Mylox occupies his chair in grand style, drinking a formosa and looking generally pleased with himself. There's a knock.

MYLOX

Enter!

Ken pokes his head in.

KEN

You wanted to see me?

MYLOX

Yes, Ernie. Thank you for coming.

KEN

You're welcome. So, what's up?

MYLOX

Here it is, last day of shooting.

KEN

Yes, sir. It's here.

MYLOX

The last six weeks have been a lot of hard work.

KEN

Not for me.

MYLOX

Really. I would think that maintaining this charade would be quite the drain.

KEN
 (playing on
 pronunciation)
 Charod? Oh, you mean charade.

MYLOX
 You almost pulled it off. But I
 finally managed to get hold of the
 smoking gun, as it were.

Mylox holds up some print-outs which have been shredded,
 then taped back together.

KEN
 Looks like someone pasted linguini
 together.

MYLOX
 It's a curriculum vitae for Kenneth
 Tomaso. Apparently he has 15 scripts
 registered with the Writers Guild.
 He's been a member for 10 years.
 So, unless Ken here joined at the
 age of eight, you have some explaining
 to do.

KEN
 Nothing to explain. The studio bought
 a script by Ken Tomaso. They got a
 script by Ken Tomaso.

MYLOX
 It's just that little Kenny isn't
 Ken Tomaso. I knew it! An eighteen-
 year-old couldn't do this.
 (picks up script)
 He just couldn't capture the humanity
 of a teen that well. The uncertainty,
 the brashness, the swagger, the angst---

KEN
 Ironic, no?

MYLOX
 I hope the studio thinks so.

KEN
 You're going to tell them? What
 for?

MYLOX
 Because I can. I've been a prisoner
 of this script and you will pay for
 that.

KEN

What are you talking about? You just said you liked the script.

MYLOX

But it's not my script.

Mylox gets up. Ken blocks the door.

KEN

Where are you going?

MYLOX

To tell Gail.

KEN

Wait, wait. Not so fast. You said it yourself. It's the last day of shooting. We just finish this up and go home. What's the point?

MYLOX

Because this film is going to be credited as "a film by Emerson Mylox" and I happen to take my vanity credit very seriously, Mr. Tomaso. I'm not about to have my thunder co-opted by some middle-aged adolescent. You're exposed as a fraud, I get to save the film. Everyone's happy.

KEN

I'm not happy.

MYLOX

Everyone that matters is happy.

KEN

Hey.

Mylox attempts to shove by Ken, who shoves back. This goes back and forth until Mylox stumbles and crashes against the wall. A shelf above comes loose and a couple of Mylox's Golden Globe awards slide off and hit him on the head, knocking him unconscious.

A buzzer sounds. Ken locks the door. He goes to the console. There's a flashing button. He clicks it.

KEN (CONT'D)

Yes, yes, what is it?

PA (O.S.)

We're in place for the first take.

KEN

First take? First take?

He flips the switch. He looks over the console, reviewing all the monitors. The cast in position. He looks panicked. He looks around. He grabs a paper bag and begins exhaling into it.

INTERCUT:

INT. MALL SET -- CONTINUOUS

The PA and crew are standing, the PA staring at his walkie-talkie.

PA

Mr. Mylox, are you there?

INT. DIRECTOR'S VAN -- CONTINUOUS

Yes, he can do this. He knows the story. The actors. How hard can it be? He hits the switch.

KEN

Yes, sorry. Okay. Wait, wait. I need the camera lower. I want the characters looming in the foreground.

PA (O.S.)

Okay, you're the boss. Give us a minute to reposition.

KEN

Fine. I'm just going to speak to the actors...

Ken switches on the loudspeaker.

KEN (CONT'D)

Well, everyone, last day. To the cast, I just want you to get the mood. At the beginning of this picture, you were children. You were going to your playground, the mall. Instead of indulging yourself, you found yourself in a life and death struggle. You faced danger. You overcame many obstacles. But you were able to face adversity head on. You were children, boys and girls, at the start of this movie, and now your characters are adults. It's been a trial by fire and you've earned the right to be grown-ups.

The cast is now stoked. Ernie is listening with intent.

KEN (CONT'D)

Places, please. And action.

INT. DIRECTOR'S VAN -- DAY

Ken looking the clipboard and punching some buttons.

INT. MALL SET -- DAY

Cast acting out a final struggle with the crazed killer on the upper floor of the mall.

INT. DIRECTOR'S VAN -- DAY

Ken speaking into the mike, watching the image on the viewer, lines up a shot.

The PA breaks in over the speaker.

PA (O.S.)

Emerson.

KEN

Yes?

PA (O.S.)

We're ready to do the new pages.

KEN

New pages? I didn't write, er, ask for new pages. Did I?

He finds the script and flips through it.

PA (O.S.)

The new ending after they kill the monster. Ken brought them over.

Ken locates and scans them.

KEN

Okay, yes. Here they are. These are pretty good, actually.

PA (O.S.)

We a go?

KEN

We're a go.

Ken punches up some buttons.

INT. MALL SET -- DAY

The Leads embrace as the comic sidekick looks on.

KEN (O.S.)

And cut! Print it. People, that is a wrap. Good job!

The cast and crew let out a cheer.

INT. DIRECTOR'S VAN -- CONTINUOUS

Kens looks proud and relieved. He turns in his chair and sighs. Then he notices Mylox, still out cold. Forgot about him there for a minute, didn't we?

KEN
Oh! Yeah, right.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE -- DAY

Ken bursts out of the director van.

KEN
Somebody call a doctor! Emerson's
been hurt!

DISSOLVE:

INT. SOUNDSTAGE -- LATER

The unconscious Mylox is being taken away by the Paramedics. Flunky Dave is also there.

KEN
He was trying to show me his trophies
and the shelf came down. And his
Golden Globe hit him right on the
head.

MISTY
Good thing he didn't win any bowling
balls.

ERNIE
Or anvils.

DAVE
Poor Emerson's going to miss the
wrap party.

KEN
Us, too, I'm afraid.

ERNIE
What?

MISTY
You're not going?

ERNIE
It figures. Thanks for screwing
this up, too, Uncle Ernie.

Ken takes in his surroundings. The set, the crew, the equipment. Ernie and Misty together. This is a good thing. He wants this, too.

KEN

You know, screw it. It really doesn't matter at this point. Let's go to the wrap party.

The studio doors open up and a fleet of catering trucks enter. The crew lets out a cheer.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE -- LATER

The party's in full swing, with enough food and drink for all.

There's a group of STUNT MEN having stunt fights, showing Ernie some moves. Ken wanders over, and a Stunt Guy breaks a balsa chair over his back. Ken does a slow take, then drops to the floor. Everyone laughs.

Misty is on her phone.

MISTY

Yes, send the tapes to Mr. Dezmond.
That's Danger, Enigma, Zygot, Mammal---

Later:

Ernie pulls out a skate board and shows the Stunt men a couple of moves. He hands it to a Stunt Man, who gets on it, only to have it roll out from under him and he does a huge pratfall. This gets a laugh.

Ken is off to the side, taking it all in. Ernie excuses himself and joins Ken.

ERNIE

Hey.

KEN

You.

ERNIE

It's "yo."

KEN

Right. Yo. Where's Misty?

ERNIE

Screening room. The rushes came in for today's shooting.

KEN

She's nice.

ERNIE

Yeah. This is really something,
Unck. You did it.

KEN

No, we did it. Thanks. You helped
me when I needed help.

ERNIE

To finally get to do what you want.

KEN

I'm sorry, Ken. I mean, Ernie. I
didn't mean to use you. I didn't
mean to come down on you. It's just
that here, for the first time in a
long, long time there was a big break.
I had to do something. I couldn't
let it slip by. I have such umbrella
luck.

ERNIE

Umbrella luck?

KEN

You know, when they say it's going
to rain, you remember to bring your
umbrella and it doesn't rain. Then
the first time you forget your
umbrella---

ERNIE

And it pours.

KEN

Exactly. And I got caught up in it.
Sorry.

ERNIE

Now what?

KEN

Enjoy the moment, then back to
reality.

ERNIE

Why don't you stay?

KEN

As soon as they find out what we
did..what I did...I won't be able to
see a movie in this town, never mind
make one.

ERNIE

Maybe they won't find out.

Just then, Mylox walks in. His head is bandaged. He's holding the shredded file. Gail and Dave are in tow. They make their way to Ernie and Ken.

MYLOX

You fraud!

KEN

I bet they do.

GAIL

Is it true?

KEN

Probably. What?

GAIL

You're Ken Tomaso?

KEN

Big twist ending, huh?

MYLOX

Arrest him! Call security!

GAIL

We've spent the last month wooing the wrong person.

KEN

I guess the woo's on the other foot now.

GAIL

Ernie, I mean, Ken, just what are you trying to pull?

KEN

I was just trying to sell a script.

GAIL

I thought you were a regular guy. You're just another wannabe.

KEN

It's possible to be both.

GAIL

And that's it. You wrote it, not Ken. I mean him.

KEN

He's really Ernie.

MYLOX

Get them out of here. I have a movie to finish.

KEN

We kinda finished without you.

MYLOX

What? I never shot the ending!

GAIL

What do you mean?

ERNIE

We filmed the ending. I was an extra!

MYLOX

Who directed?

Everyone looks around. Ken slowly raises his hand.

MYLOX (CONT'D)

Security!

EXT. AIRPORT -- DAY

A cab pulls up. Ernie and Ken get out and get their luggage. They schlep into the terminal.

INT. AIRPORT -- DAY

They make their way to the counter. Misty is at the ticket counter talking to the TICKET AGENT.

MISTY

I'm looking for a Ken Tomaso, going to New York. Has he checked in? Tomaso. Turtle-Ocelot-Muezzin-Anthill-Semaphore-Ocelot.

As the Agent looks it up, she sees Ken and Ernie come up, bags in hand. They put the stuff down.

MISTY (CONT'D)

Never mind!

KEN

I'll get the tickets.

Ken heads for the counter, while Misty circles around and reaches Ernie.

MISTY

Kenny?

ERNIE

Misty?

MISTY

Is it true?

ERNIE

Is what true?

MISTY

You didn't write the script?

ERNIE

Oh, yeah. That's true.

MISTY

Kenny, how could you?

ERNIE

It was a chance to do something exciting. It was a chance not to be me. I took it.

MISTY

How could you do that? You come here, misrepresent yourself and make a mockery of Hollywood's ethics and morality! You deceived these show people and abused their trust!

(beat)

Did I just say that?

ERNIE

Yes, you did.

MISTY

You scammed Hollywood.

ERNIE

I guess so.

MISTY

That is so cool.

ERNIE

You're not mad?

MISTY

I thought I was but really, who cares? Unless, I mean, is there anything else I should know?

ERNIE

Well, my name's really Ernie Kelly. And that's pretty much it.

MISTY

Nice to meet you, Ernie Kelly.

ERNIE

Maybe what I did was wrong, but I only have one regret.

MISTY

What?

ERNIE

That I didn't do it sooner. Then I would have met you sooner.

She hugs and kisses him.

MISTY

What are you going to do?

Ernie ponders. Ken joins them, carrying the tickets.

KEN

Okay, our tickets have been downgraded. I supposed we're lucky not to be strapped to the wings.

MISTY

So, I guess you're Ken Tomaso.

KEN

Yeah, well, somebody has to be.

MISTY

I just wanted you to know, I loved your script. So, you're going?

KEN

When they run you outta town, it's the logical thing to do.

MISTY

Goodbye.

She kisses Ken. Ken heads for the gates, realizes he's alone and calls back:

KEN

C'mon, Ernie. While I'm young. Or less older, anyway.

Ernie trots up to Ken.

ERNIE

I'm going to stay.

KEN

Stay? Stay where?

ERNIE

Here.

KEN

Where here? Here here?

ERNIE

I was talking to the stunt guys,
about my skateboarding. They think
I might get work doing that.

KEN

You're going to have to ask your mom
about that. My authority only goes
so far as hitting.

ERNIE

I can stay with Misty. I'll make
the rounds and see if I can get a
job.

KEN

A job? Misty!

She comes over.

MISTY

Strictly a career move, Mr. Tomaso.
I'll make sure of it.

Ken doesn't know what to say or do. He hugs them both
goodbye.

KEN

(to Ernie)

I hope your mom doesn't kill me.

ERNIE

You can take her.

KEN

And when you become a big stunt man,
I have this guy who'll clean your
pool.

Ken leaves for the plane.

INT. COACH CLASS -- DAY

Ken sits between a big, fat GUY and some noisy kids.

INT. NEWARK AIRPORT -- NIGHT

Ken gets off and is greeted by Elizabeth, Denise and Carla.
They hug and kiss and stuff.

ELIZABETH

How was tinsel town?

KEN

Great. I brought home some real
tinsel!

He pulls Christmas tinsel out of his pocket. Everyone laughs.

KEN (CONT'D)

Did you talk to Linda?

ELIZABETH

Yes. Is that all on the level?

KEN

We'll see.

Then a cellphone rings. They all look at Ken, who starts searching himself for the phone.

ELIZABETH

A cellphone? Mr. "I hope they all get brain cancer" owns a cellphone?

KEN

It was a gift, what can I say?

He finds the phone and answers.

INTERCUT:

EXT. POOL SIDE -- DAY

It's Mitch reading a stack of scripts. His girl, Vera, is on the chaise lounge beside him, sunning herself.

MITCH

Ken, my boy, that was some stunt you pulled.

KEN

What? Who is this? Mitch?

MITCH

Mitch it is. I'm back in the saddle again.

KEN

What are you talking about?

MITCH

I got a lot of people looking to talk to you. I got studios trying to buy "Mall Murder Mystery" from Gimbley.

KEN

"Mall Murder Mystery"?

MITCH

I got one publisher wants you to write about what you did to Hollywood

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

and I got a studio all set to option the book. I got people who want to look at what else you have. I have people very impressed with your demo reel.

KEN

What demo reel?

MITCH

The last part of the Mall movie. Someone edited your footage together. People are coming at me from every direction about you.

KEN

No, really, who is this? And what dimension did you mean to call? Is this one of those bad cellphone connections like I see on the commercials?

MITCH

Your ship has just pulled into the station, my boy. We have to get busy with a capital "buzz". When can you get out here?

KEN

I just got back from there.

MITCH

Don't be all day about it. We have to seize the iron while it's hot. Later, babe.

Mitch hangs up.

ELIZABETH

Who called?

KEN

Hollywood.

They hug.

DISSOLVE:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Elizabeth and brood watch as Ken hangs a poster on his wall of fame. It hangs next to the family portrait. It's the poster for the movie, "The Importance of Being Ernie", showing a "Ken" character and an "Ernie" character, each with a pencil behind their ears.

THE END