

IT FLOATS

by

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Registered WGAw

FADE IN.

INT. GNU CABLE NETWORK - SCREENING ROOM "A" - DAY

Open on screen. As TV closing theme MUSIC swells, the words "THE END" appear.

The lights come up on MIKE FISHER (white), his half-brother IKE FISHER (black) and TOM LAMBERT, GNU programming chief. Mike's outfit is a study in wrinkles. Ike is dapper.

Mike holds a cup of coffee. Tom sits behind and between Mike and Ike. Tom rubs his eyes and shakes his head. Tom is a pleasant guy when things are going his way.

TOM

I've never seen anything like it.

Mike and Ike smile in anticipation. Mike takes a sip of coffee.

TOM

You hate me, don't you?
You're trying to lose me my job.

Mike chokes on his coffee. Tom doesn't think things are going his way.

TOM

You don't actually expect me to put that piece of shit on the air, do you?

(to Mike)

Mike, I thought you were supposed to be my friend. I don't believe this.

MIKE

(wiping up coffee)

Well... maybe it is a little scattered. We could tighten it up by...

TOM

(interrupting)

A little scattered? It's all over the fucking place. What was I just watching? Tell me, please, I'd like to know. Was it a drama, a comedy, a talk show, what? And what the hell was that song in the middle?

MIKE

I thought...

TOM

Oh Jesus, I can't use this.
What was I thinking? I
trusted you.

MIKE

We didn't...

TOM

(to himself)

Frankfurter's gonna fuckin'
kill me when he gets back from
Gainesville. I should just
quit now and get out of town.

(to Mike and Ike)

For what you spent on this
piece of shit, I could have
gotten a dozen old sitcoms.
What do you think this is, a
public charity? This isn't
PBS.

Ike stands up. Tom has struck a nerve.

IKE

(controlling his
anger)

Hold on a minute...

Tom is unstoppable. He holds up a script. Its title is
visible: "Scraping By."

TOM

No, you hold on, Ike. I'd like
to know what you just showed
me had to do with the script I
bought. Nothing. Nada. Zip.
Zilch. Zero. Not a goddamn
thing!

MIKE

(pleading)

Tom, I'm sure we can...

TOM

We've been friends for a long
time. I never thought that
I'd ever actually say this to
anybody, but you will never
work in this town again.
Never.

Tom presses a button on the arm of his chair.

INT. GNU CABLE NETWORK OFFICES - DAY - RECEPTION AREA

The "GNU" cable network shows reruns of old television shows. Its motto, "Everything Old is GNU" is emblazoned on the wall. A black & white TV silently shows "The Mod Squad." Posters for GNU shows are up in the lobby: "I Spy," "The Flying Nun," "My Little Margie," and the dance show "Jiggle Factory." A framed portrait of scowling network owner B.D. Frankfurter occupies a place of honor.

The receptionist looks up from her Find-A-Word puzzle as two uniformed security guards hustle Mike and Ike out the door.

INT. MIKE'S AND IKE'S CARS (MOVING) - L.A. FREEWAY - DAY

Mike's car might be mistaken for a well-filled recycling bin. A faded copy of a family photo is rubber-banded to the visor. It shows Mike and Ike and their (white) mother. Ike drives a spotless classic auto.

As they drive away from the GNU offices, they speak via cell phone. Mike has trouble staying in his lane as he talks.

IKE

Well, that's it, the end of the line. We're gonna lose everything. If we could have stayed under budget we'd be broke, but least we'd have places to live.

INSERT BANK - LOAN OFFICE - DAY

Bank vice president KAY FLORAL sits behind a big desk and stamps "FORECLOSED" on a document prominently labeled "MORTGAGE."

MIKE (V.O.)

Get a grip. I can handle the bank and I can handle Tom.

RETURN TO SCENE

MIKE

He treats everybody like this. It's a negotiating position. Soon as we get back to the office, I give him a call, we straighten the whole thing out.

IKE

You're insane. Your best friend just had security straighten us right out the front door.

(shifting gears)

It was the damned soundtrack.

Mike has his cell phone in one hand and coffee and the remains of a jelly donut in the other. He steers with his knees.

MIKE

(defensive)

It wasn't just the soundtrack, and anyway, if he doesn't like the music, we can change it.

IKE

The whole thing was a mistake. We never should have tried fiction.

MIKE

Everything's going to be fine. It was just the uniqueness of the concept that threw him. This is ground-breaking stuff. Once he gets used to it...

Ike snorts in disbelief.

MIKE

I know him, he'll come around. Have I ever let you down before?

Ike laughs. This line is not new.

EXT./INT. MIKE'S, IKE'S & KAY'S CARS (MOVING) - L.A. FREEWAY
- DAY

From above, we SEE Mike and Ike's cars tooling down the freeway parallel to one another, separated by an empty lane. Suddenly, they come up on the tail end of stopped traffic and abruptly slow to a crawl.

A brand-new luxury car, tires smoking, screeches into the space between the brothers' cars, just missing the car in front of it. The driver is KAY FLORAL (late 40's), loan officer, actor/director wannabe and total lunatic. She flip/flops between iron lady and sensitive "artiste."

Momentarily rattled, she looks around to see if anyone has noticed her driving. Recognizing Mike to her left, she

covers by going on the attack. She shouts to Mike over the yipping of her little hairless rat-dog.

KAY

So, it's you. What a surprise, I was just thinking about you. You know, the bank's not happy when you don't make your payments and you don't even call. It makes us think you don't like us. Let's see, it's Monday morning. How about this: Either your account is current by Friday, or we foreclose.

MIKE

I was going to call you, Ms. Floral, but things just got out of hand. I don't think you've met my brother and partner, Ike Fisher. Ike, this is Kay Floral, who we were just discussing.

He points with the phone toward Ike.

MIKE

We just screened the pilot of our new show for the network. As soon as the check clears, you'll get your money.

Ike chokes. Kay glances over at him and is instantly smitten. She tries to keep up the tough stuff but is too distracted by her new infatuation. She speaks to Mike but can't tear her eyes away from Ike.

KAY

Yes, well, the source of your funds doesn't interest me. But I'm not unreasonable. Perhaps your brother and I, Ike?, could get together for some private negotiations.

(turning to Mike)

You know, I always thought I'd be successful as an actress. Maybe we can work something out. Let's talk.

As the traffic starts to move, Kay turns back to Ike, winks, and pulls away.

MIKE

A match made in heaven, not to mention the answer to all our problems.

IKE

Sure. When Hell freezes over I can take her to the opening.

He pulls away. On his rear bumper is a Rainbow flag bumper-sticker with an outline of Africa superimposed.

INT. TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

The main office space is central. A lounge with a large pool table is through a door to the rear. Posters for some TIMES TWO documentaries and award plaques are on the walls.

CAROLE FORD is Mike's assistant. She's very direct and is always smoking. Ike's assistant is DESTINY, a gorgeous, Hispanic, 6'2" total realness queen. Destiny is fierce.

The "Scraping By" celebration is gearing up. Destiny puts on some funky music and Carole puts up a streamer reading "Congratulations" at a window. She flicks a cigarette butt out the window and notices Mike's and Ike's cars pulling up outside. She heads to a video camera mounted on a tripod and focuses it on the elevator.

We HEAR the elevator engage. Carole starts the video camera. Mike and Ike step out of the elevator. We SEE Mike and Ike through the video camera viewfinder. They stand in silence, visibly defeated. Destiny kills the music. Carole kills the video camera. The screen goes BLACK.

Our view returns simultaneously with the POP of a champagne bottle.

DESTINY

Oh my dears, what happened to you? If I'd known this was going to be a wake I would have worn black.

She holds glasses out to Mike and Ike, who walk past her to the center of the office. Mike is still trying to salvage things.

MIKE

It's not a complete disaster...

IKE

Stop it! You don't have to lie about it.

Attempting to head off the argument, Carole takes the two glasses of champagne from Destiny and hands them to the brothers.

CAROLE

What happened. Come on, give it up.

Ike collapses into a chair. Before he does, however, he takes a silk handkerchief from his jacket pocket and carefully dusts the seat.

IKE

It was a disaster. Tom Lambert, you know, Mikey's best friend? Mr. "You'll-never-work-in-this-town-again?" Mr. "Do-you-actually-expect-me-to-put-this-piece-of-shit-on-the-air?" Mr. Tom Lambert threw us out of the goddamn building.

DESTINY

You mean, no bonuses?

(beat)

Some of us have medical expenses. Necessary medical expenses.

Cosmetic surgery brochures and promotional videos sit on Destiny's desk.

MIKE

Don't worry, it's just a temporary setback. Once I talk to Tom everything is going to be fine...

IKE

(to Mike; angry)

Everything is not going to be fine. As a matter of fact, it may be completely over.

(to others)

Why don't you all go home.

MIKE

Yeah. Let's all go home. Things'll look better tomorrow.

DESTINY

Tomorrow? What's up with this tomorrow business? You need to work this out today. Now. Don't let some stupid deal get in the way of your family. You gotta deal with it.

IKE

No, I don't think...

MIKE

(simultaneously)
We're not going to get anything...

DESTINY

(definitely)
Yes, you are.

She takes the filled champagne glasses from Mike and Ike.

DESTINY

I love champagne.

She downs both glasses.

DESTINY

I needed that. And if I needed it, you need it more.

She sets the empty champagne glasses on the bar and picks up a bottle of bourbon. She hands it to Mike.

DESTINY

Here. And since you won't be needing this...
(indicating open champagne bottle)
...I think I'll take it with me. Come on, Carole.

She grabs the bottle and they head for the elevator.

DESTINY

You boys do out what you need to do.

She presses the "down" button and the elevator descends. Mike and Ike stand in silence for a moment, nonplused.

Finally, Ike takes the bottle from Mike and a glass from the bar.

IKE
(still angry)
I don't know why I should even
think about talking to you.
Come on.

Ike exits into the lounge.

Mike hesitates, makes up his mind, grabs a glass from the bar
and follows.

INT. LOUNGE - TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - DAY

The wood-paneled lounge is comfortable and somewhat dark. It
is dominated by the pool table.

(Note: The passage of time in this sequence is indicated by
the decreasing level of bourbon in the bottle.)

As they drink, Mike gets sloppier and Ike gets tighter.

BOTTLE 85% FULL

Mike and Ike set up the pool table. Ike breaks but doesn't
sink anything.

Mike lines up a shot, but is unable to actually shoot. Every
time he pulls the cue back, he loses control over the tip.
(See: classic W.C. Fields pool routine.)

IKE
We've got to get some money by
Friday. But whatever happens,
we're going back to the old
system. You produce. I
direct.

MIKE
It's too late for that.

Mike finally shoots and misses. He drinks.

IKE
You said, "Tom will love the
pop culture stuff." Clips
from THE DONNA REED SHOW and
THE BRADY BUNCH in a drama set
during the Depression? I must
have been out of my mind.

Ike shoots, sinking a ball.

BOTTLE 60% FULL

Mike is up. He takes his backswing with the cue and knocks a lab flask containing dried flowers off the table behind him.

MIKE
(laughing)
Oh man, the look on your
face...

He picks the flask up and replaces it on the table.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE LAB - DAY - FLASHBACK

MATCH CUT to flask being put down by MIKE (AGE 15) as door opens. IKE (AGE 18) enters, followed by the science teacher, MR. LA TOUR. Mike has just reached a successful conclusion to a masturbatory episode.

IKE (AGE 18)
Mike, there you...

He stops when he sees what Mike is up to.

MR. LA TOUR
Mr. Fisher, this is totally
inappropriate behavior in a
science lab. What do you
think you're doing?

MIKE (AGE 15)
I'm just doing my assignment,
Mr. La Tour.

MR. LA TOUR
You're supposed to be
preparing a biology exhibit
for the Science Fair.

Mike holds the flask next to a crudely drawn cardboard exhibit labeled, "HOW LIFE BEGINS."

MIKE (AGE 15)
What do you call this?

INT. LOUNGE - TIMES TWO PRODS. - DAY - RETURN TO PRESENT

IKE
The look on my face? You
know, you might have gotten
away with it if Mr. La Tour
hadn't been right behind me.
I thought Mom was going to die
when she got that phone call.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - FLASHBACK

Ike (18) and Mike (15) watch as their mother, HEATHER (late 30's), rolls on the floor helplessly, laughing uproariously, holding her sides.

INT. LOUNGE - TIMES TWO PRODS. - DAY - RETURN TO PRESENT

BOTTLE 45% FULL

Mike and Ike are pretty tight, and have reached that stage where either can say anything. Ike lines up his shot.

IKE

I've been thinking. We could do the "Cats" documentary. PBS is ready to go, and they've got the money. It's perfect.

He shoots and misses. Mike approaches the table and begins one of those wonderful drunken streaks here, knocking in one ball after another.

MIKE

No way, man. That Andrew Lloyd Webber cat makes my skin crawl. There's got to be another way. You could make that date with Kay Floral.

IKE

Step off, buddy. No ding-a-ling, no date. Besides, there's nothing wrong with doing "Cats."

MIKE

You want to do a good documentary about a bad show, but what we should be doing is a bad documentary about a good show. People don't want quality. They want crap.

He makes a tricky combination. Ike drinks.

MIKE

Think about it. There's a direct reward for shoveling shit. It's like that Mel Brooks movie, "The Producers."

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

I bet if you took "Springtime for Hitler" and made it into a series, it would go straight to the top.

IKE

"The Producers"... That was some Zero Mostel movie, right?

MIKE

Yeah, he seduces little old ladies to raise cash to produce a Broadway show.

IKE

I never saw it.

Mike sinks a ball.

MIKE

I don't believe it. It's only one of the greatest movies of all time. Where you been, man, in a cave? It's about how you can make more money with a flop than with a hit.

IKE

Impossible.

MIKE

No no, it's easy. You just raise a lot more money than you need. Then you make sure the show's really, really bad.

IKE

Huh?

MIKE

So then, you close on opening night and you don't have to pay back the investors. You keep the difference between what you raised and what you spent.

Mike sinks another.

MIKE

Now in "The Producers," the problem with "Springtime for Hitler" was that it was so bad that everybody thought it was a comedy, and it became a hit and they go to jail.

IKE

So, what's your point?

MIKE

The point is, shit floats.

Boom. Another ball pocketed.

MIKE

It floats.

IKE

Oh, really? Then what about "Scraping By"? If your theory were correct, we should be sitting on top of the world right now.

MIKE

That only proves my point. The show is good. That's why it had to go down. It's ahead of its time, that's all.

Mike shoots the cue ball hard. It hits the far cushion and caroms UP, hitting him square in the middle of the forehead.

BOTTLE 30% FULL

Mike has a circular cue-ball sized bruise in the center of his forehead. As Mike shoots, Ike examines a framed award on the wall.

IKE

(wobbling slightly)

Our first project together. Nobody believed we could do it. We weren't even sure we could do it. But we did. And we'll do it again, too.

MIKE

Yeah yeah, sure sure. But not with any damn "Cats" documentary.

Mike misses his shot and grabs an open bag of pork rinds from a table. He pops one in his mouth and holds the bag out to Ike. Then he pulls it back.

MIKE

Oh, I forgot. No soul food for you.

IKE

I never could shmooze like you. Mom. Girls. Marty Rockmore; that was the night you joined the Schmoozoisie.

EXT. MARTY ROCKMORE'S YACHT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A black-tie cocktail party. Media mogul MARTY ROCKMORE holds forth from the center of a crowd. The onlookers are hanging on every word. Mike and Ike watch from the fringes.

MARTY ROCKMORE

(finishing story)

Wrecked 'em? Damn near killed 'em!

The sycophants laugh. Drink in hand, Mike shoulders his way through the crowd.

MIKE

Marty Rockmore, I presume.
(holds out his hand)
It wasn't hard to tell.
You've got the only nose on the boat not covered in fertilizer.

Dead silence. Everyone waits for Marty's response.

Slowly, he smiles, pats Mike on the back and begins to laugh. The flunkies all join in.

INT. LOUNGE - TIMES TWO PRODS. - DAY - RETURN TO PRESENT

BOTTLE 15% FULL

The guys are pretty damned drunk. Ike has removed his tie, Mike his shoes. Ike sets up a number of small green plastic army men on the pool table as if they were bowling pins. Mike is sprawled on a chair.

IKE
(half-joking)
You're right. I hate to admit
it, but you are absolutely
right. The worse the show,
the bigger the hit.

Ike rolls a ball, which knocks down two of the toys.

IKE
"Sea Quest," "The A-Team,"
"Designing Women," for
crissakes! We could easily
make a show that bad. Hey,
how's this: Let's make the
worst show of all time. We'll
make it the most violent,
racist, sexist, homophobic,
fucked-up shit that ever
graced the little blue screen.

Mike pours himself a drink.

MIKE
Huh? I thought you wanted to
make that "Cats" thing.

IKE
I do, but we can do this
first. It'd be fun. We'll
make a show so fucked up it
can't fail. We make our own
"Springtime for Hitler."

MIKE
You want to make the worst TV
show of all time.

IKE
No, I want to make the most
mediocre show of all time.
The most trite hack-work the
world has ever seen. Video
junk food: All calories, no
nutrition.

Ike rolls another ball down the table, missing the waiting
soldiers this time.

IKE
We'll do "Cats" later. Right
now, we need a hit. We need
to make the lousiest show of
all time... and if anybody can
do it, we can.

MIKE

You are a genius. I've been waiting years to hear you say that. The worst show of all time -- it's a jillion dollar idea. It's almost perfect. It just needs one little thing to nail it down.

(beat)

It's got to be a remake of some show, something, ah, what could it be...

IKE

(excited)

Yes, yes, exactly. It needs to be both familiar and new at the same time. Something that everybody knows but they've all forgotten.

Ike rolls a ball which takes down one of the army men.

MIKE

Well, what shows have we forgotten? Sunday night there was "Hogan's Heroes," Monday night, "Laugh-In," Tuesday night...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The boys' mother, HEATHER (early 30's), has set aside some mending to put a band-aid on MIKE'S (AGE 8) knee. A first aid kit sits beside her on the couch. IKE (AGE 11) lays in front of the BLARING television set, watching an episode of "Julia." Even at this early age, Mike is a slob, his clothes torn and stained. Ike is the picture of neatness.

Almost immediately the show is interrupted. A title card reading "News Bulletin" appears. The kids groan.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We interrupt this program for a special report. A fire has broken out at the downtown office of the Selective Service Board. Timothy King has a live report.

On the T.V., the draft board building is going up in flames. The building is surrounded by spectators. One of them is ABE FISHER, Mike's father. He's wearing a tie-dyed t-shirt, peace medallion and headband. He's taken several hits of

LSD, and is really enjoying the light show. His pupils are the size of half-dollars.

As Heather catches sight of Abe, she jumps up and a pincushion on her lap hits the floor and rolls to a stop next to Ike.

TIMOTHY KING (ON SCREEN)

As you can see, this is a tremendous blaze, and... oh, wait, I see that the police are taking someone into custody. Here they come.

The police drag Abe out of the crowd toward a waiting squad car. Timothy King sticks a microphone in Abe's face.

TIMOTHY KING (ON SCREEN)

Excuse me, sir? Did you do it? Do you know who did it? Do you have any statement at all?

ABE (ON SCREEN)

(a man possessed)

Yes, I do. It's critically important that the full story behind the madness be told at once. The fascist war machine must be stopped before it's too late. There isn't much time. The message from the people of Saturn is that we must stop destroying ourselves or they will finish the job for us. Freedom is an illusion. We must remember the total interdependence of all creatures of the omniverse...

The police throw him into the squad car and drive off.

MIKE (AGE 8)

Dad. Oh, Dad.

Ike slowly turns away from the set.

IKE (AGE 11)

I thought he was going out for milk.

Heather pulls on a jacket and heads for the door.

HEATHER

Oh my God. Ike, you take care
of your brother while I go
bail out Abe.

She exits. Mike starts to cry. Ike puts his arm around his
brother.

MIKE (AGE 8)

He's gone. He's gone.

IKE (AGE 11)

Don't cry, I won't let
anything happen to you.
Brothers take care of each
other, right?

MIKE (AGE 8)

(sniffling)

I guess so. But everybody
says we're half-brothers.

Ike pulls a needle from the pincushion on the floor. He
takes a clean, white handkerchief from his pocket and uses
some alcohol from the first aid kit to sterilize the needle.
Silently, he jabs his thumb and shows the drop of blood that
forms on it to Mike. Slowly, Mike offers his hand to Ike,
who jabs the needle into his brother's thumb. They press
their thumbs together.

INT. LOUNGE - TIMES TWO PRODS. - DAY - RETURN TO PRESENT

IKE

And he stayed in jail until
that nutcase fugitive turned
herself in after fifteen
years. Fifteen years...

MIKE

At least he learned a trade.
License plate making is a
skill that travels. Anyway,
how about remaking "Julia"?
Nobody remembers that.

IKE

No, it wasn't mainstream
enough. We need something
whiter.

MIKE

How about "The Courtship of
Eddie's Father"? You don't
get much whiter than that.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

(beat)

No? Well, how about
"Batman," yeah, "Batman."

IKE

No no, not "Batman." How can
you parody something that's
already camp? But it should
be a cop show, though, so it
can be really violent. But
what...?

(inspiration)

I got it. I got it.

(pause for effect)

"The Mod Squad."

MIKE

(savoring the idea)

"The Mod Squad." That's good,
man, that's very good. I
never would have thought of
that in a million years.

IKE

Three hippies recruited by the
police to be undercover cops.
Pete, Linc and Julie; white
guy, black guy, blonde chick.

MIKE

Right. Now the question is,
how do we take a bad show and
make it really, really
terrible?

IKE

It's updated, right? The
disaffected youth of Seattle.

MIKE

Yeah yeah, Seattle.

IKE

Now, let's see. The first
thing is, Julie's sleeping
with Pete. She's post-
feminist, right? Totally fem
and non-assertive.

MIKE

That's great. And Pete is a
muscle-bound hero-type, and
Linc is a sexless comic-relief
sidekick. Real Stepin
Fetchit.

IKE
They're in a band. What's it
called?
(snaps his fingers)
"X-Patrol."

Ike's final ball takes out the rest of the army men.

MIKE
(awestruck)
That is fucking great. You've
done it. You've solved all
our problems. We're rich.
We're gonna be rich.

BOTTLE EMPTY

Ike sleeps curled up on the pool table.

Mike is in a lounge chair, empty bottle cradled in his arms.

He snores loudly, drool running down his chin.

INT. TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

The next morning. Destiny ascends in the elevator, bopping
hard to the sounds on her walkman headphones.

She shimmies over to the stereo, pops the tape out of her
walkman and into the cassette deck.

Mike and Ike, awakened by the sound of the elevator, stumble
out of the lounge at the exact instant Destiny hits "play"
and turns from the stereo. Contemporary Latin music ROCKS
the office. Ike grabs his ears; Mike rubs his eyes. Destiny
jumps.

DESTINY
Oh my God! You scared the
living shit out me! What are
you doing here? Look at you,
you look like shit! You
should be ashamed of
yourselves, both of you,
scaring me like that.

IKE
(in great pain)
Please turn that music off.
Please.

DESTINY

(turns off music)

Look at you, you look drunk!
You're wearing the same
clothes you had on yesterday.
Didn't you go home?

(sniffing)

I guess not. You guys go
clean yourselves up. I'll get
you something that'll make you
feel better.

Destiny exits to the kitchen. As the brothers exit to the washroom, the elevator arrives with Carole. She looks around the empty office and checks her watch.

She shrugs and notices that none of the party decorations have been removed. She systematically begins to take them down.

As Carole cleans, Destiny enters with two glasses of water and some Alka-Seltzer. She plops tablets into glasses.

DESTINY

Hi Carole. Hey, you know what happened? Our noble leaders spent the night in a heavy-duty brainstorming session... and now they're a little bit washed out.

CAROLE

You mean they got trashed. Alright, they've had twenty-four hours; now it's time to get back to work. Mike's got a 12:00 with Marty Rockmore. We'd better get him cleaned up.

DESTINY

Girl, you are so strict. Damn. They're in hangover city right now...

(handing Carole a glass)

...so I suggest you put on your Hush Puppies.

INT. TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - IKE'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Ike's office is as neat and precise as everything else about him. A framed copy of the family photo that Mike's got in his car sits on a shelf.

Ike enters slowly, followed by Mike. Before collapsing into his chair, he dusts it with his handkerchief.

Although Mike has attempted to clean himself up, he still looks like shit. He's excited. He sets his empty glass down HARD on Ike's desk. Ike moans.

MIKE

I'm having lunch with Marty. We should go over "X-Patrol" so I'll know exactly how to pitch him.

IKE

"X-Patrol"?

MIKE

You remember, man. "The Mod Squad" remake? Three hippies recruited by the police?

IKE

You're kidding. That was a joke.

MIKE

A joke? It's a fully realized concept.

IKE

We were fucking around. You can't believe it was serious.

MIKE

We agreed on this.

IKE

We didn't agree on anything. The whole idea was to make the worst show of all time. I'm not going to put my name on the worst show of all time. We just got our asses kicked and now you want it to happen again?

MIKE

This is different. That was a mistake and this will be on purpose.

IKE

You're the one making the mistake. We're going back to documentaries. You raise the money, I direct, just like before.

MIKE

If you didn't want things to change, you should never have let me get involved in "Scraping By."

(beat)

I know why you don't want to do this. You're afraid. You don't want to share the power.

IKE

You begged me to let you in on "Scraping By." Against my better judgment, I let you. You took us a hundred thousand dollars over budget, and what did you come back with? A heavy metal version of "We're In The Money."

(plays air guitar
and sings)

"We're in the money. Kraaang!"
And now we're about to lose everything. How misguided can you get?

MIKE

That's not important. What's important is that we can make this show, and people will like it. What's wrong with that? People do it all the time.

IKE

Yes, people like Tom.

MIKE

Yeah, people like Tom. And people like us. Look. You're my older brother. I respect you because you went to film school and all that, but the truth is, we fucked up, royally. But that doesn't mean it's all over. We can learn from this. We can make nice, popular, successful shows.

IKE

What do you mean, "we"? "We" are not going to do anything of the sort. We should do the "Cats" project, because we can get the money right away.

Mike rises and goes to the door.

MIKE

Let's see how easy it is for you to get the money without me, because I'm going to make "X-Patrol." Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to be late for my meeting with Marty.

Mike tries to open the door, which is stuck. It opens suddenly and smacks him on the nose. He exits.

INT. TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Mike rubs his nose as he enters the main office. Carole hangs up the phone and waves her cigarette at him.

CAROLE

Mike! Marty's office called. They canceled lunch.

Mike walks over to Carole's desk.

CAROLE

Also, Sandy called from Tom's office and canceled your 3 o'clock. Suddenly, you're about as popular as a flea circus at the kennels.

MIKE

That's not important. We've got something new to work on and I've got to talk to Tom right away. Look, do me a favor. You went out with Sandy for a while. Call her and see if you can get hold of him for me.

Ike enters during Mike's speech, which he hears.

CAROLE

I don't know, Mike...

MIKE

Please, don't make me beg. I will if I have to, but please don't make me. You're my only hope.

CAROLE

Yeah, right.

(beat; she ponders)

Alright, but you owe me. You know I hate to work this way.

MIKE

Anything you want. You know I'd never ask you to do this unless it was super-critical. Buzz me the second you get anything.

Carole picks up the phone and dials.

IKE

Tom Lambert is never going to talk to you again. Forget about this Mod Squad thing, Mike. Everything's in place for "Cats," and we only have until Friday before Kay Floral slams our dicks in a car door.

MIKE

This company is going to make "X-Patrol," the worst television program of all time, and the most successful.

At this, all activity in the office stops.

DESTINY

The **worst** program of all time? Oh, my. I'm scared of that...

IKE

(to Destiny)

Call Hutch Whitbread at CPB. Tell him "Cats" is a green light.

MIKE

You've been bossing me around for a long time and I'm sick of it. I'm going ahead with "X-Patrol," and you'd better stay the hell out of my way!

IKE

You are acting like a big baby! Why don't you just grow up? I don't give a shit what you do, but don't come crying to me when the shit hits the fan. I'm doing "Cats." We'll see who gets the money first.

Mike and Ike storm into their respective offices. Carole (on the phone) and Destiny (on the phone) slowly exchange glances and a shrug of solidarity.

INT. TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - MIKE'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Mike's office is a mess. It looks a lot like his apartment, except there are fewer dirty clothes lying around.

Mike enters and slams the door behind him. Seething, he goes to the desk and sits. For a moment he tries to figure out what to do first. Suddenly, a revelation. He picks up the phone and hits "speed dial."

MIKE

Kay Floral, please.

(beat)

She is? Could you take a message?

Kay's secretary tries to put Mike on hold to take another call.

MIKE

No, I don't wanna hold, this'll only take a second. Just tell her that Mr. Fisher called to set up those "private negotiations" she mentioned. I'll call back later.

(beat)

That's it. Thanks.

He hangs up and smiles.

INT. TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - IKE'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Ike is calling Kay Floral, just a few seconds after Mike. When Mike doesn't let Kay's secretary put him on hold, Ike is bumped to voice mail. We HEAR the end of the outgoing message.

KAY (V.O.)

...please leave a message at the tone and I'll get back to you.

The phone beeps. Ike disguises his voice.

IKE

Ms. Floral, this is Mr. Fisher's assistant. He's got a big part for you in his next project. Someone will call you back soon to check your availability. Thank you, goodbye.

He hangs up and laughs. The intercom BUZZES.

DESTINY

You not gonna believe this. Whitbread flew in from D.C. this mornin'. He wants to meet you for dinner tonight at 6:30 at that new place, what's it called, "Otto"?, an' I think he wants to make a deal.

IKE

That's perfect. It gives me time to go to the gym and work myself out of this ugly mood. Get the address for me, will you? Thanks.

INT. TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - MIKE'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Mike sits at his computer, typing up the "X-Patrol" treatment. The intercom BUZZES.

CAROLE

Mike? I found him, but it's going to cost you a weekend for two in San Francisco.

MIKE

(laughing)

Yeah, right. Where is he?

CAROLE

No, I'm serious. I had no idea how big a torch that girl was carrying for me.

(MORE)

CAROLE (CONT'D)

(begins to sing)

I left my heart, in San
Francisco...

(stops singing)

I could use a little romance
in my life, you know? Drinks
at Café St. Marcos, a little
dancing at The G Spot...

MIKE

Hello, Carole? You there?

CAROLE

You said anything. Sandy and
I are going to the St.
Francis.

MIKE

Okay, you got it. Now, give.

CAROLE

He's at Z Gym. Probably
wearing a mask.

MIKE

I'm on my way. And so are
you, as soon as I get this
deal happening.

CAROLE

I'm going to hold you to that.

INT. "Z" GYM - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Z Gym is an ultra-hip, ultra-modern glass, chrome and steel
workout center. At the counter, a SALES REP is talking to a
PROSPECTIVE MEMBER, a really obese nerd dressed in polyester.
Mike approaches the desk.

PROSPECTIVE MEMBER

...I've been working out for a
little while now but I think I
can really reach my full
potential at Z Gym.

SALES REP

(phony French
accent)

To be frank, sir, we have very
strict standards for
membership, and you are far
too fat to become a member of
Z Gym. Perhaps you should try
ze YMCA. Good day.

The crestfallen Prospective Member exits and the Sales Rep turns to Mike. He holds a towel out of Mike's reach.

SALES REP

Ah, Mr. Fisher, bon jour. We have not seen you for quite some time, eh? It appears as if your membership is in danger, too. We must maintain our standards, you know. Ha ha ha.

Mike snatches the towel and grits his teeth.

INT. Z GYM - CARDIO ROOM - DAY

The busy cardio room is filled with exercise equipment. Each machine has its own telephone. Most of the exercising members are chatting away, making deals as they work out. All members are dressed in the hippest workout clothes; the women are all made up and wear jewelry.

Tom Lambert, with a towel over his head, is running on a treadmill. Mike enters, wearing last year's gymwear, and checks out several people before recognizing Tom. He gets on the treadmill next to Tom's and hits buttons at random. It tilts up and starts going very fast. Without looking down, he steps on the belt and is immediately thrown backward onto the floor. Tom hears the THUD and turns around.

TOM

Don't you have any self-respect at all? What are you doing here?

Mike gets up and manages to get on the treadmill. He jogs at about half Tom's speed.

MIKE

Hey buddy, what a surprise running into you here. It's great to see you. Hey, listen, I've got an idea that's gonna kill you.

TOM

You already had an idea that killed me. What are you trying to do now, bury me? Does this look like the morgue to you? Why don't you just get out of here.

MIKE

Look, Tom, I know we had a little glitch yesterday, but this new idea is going to make you forget all about that.

TOM

I don't want to hear any of your new ideas. What we do at GNU is old. It's reruns.

MIKE

This idea is old. We take an old show and we make a new version of it. It's perfect for GNU. What's your motto? "Everything old is new again," right? We take an old show and make it new.

TOM

I don't care what your fucking idea is. I'm not interested. You cost me a shitload of money.

MIKE

This is gonna make your money back, and more. Just give me one minute and I'll go away.

TOM

All right, but only because I've known you for a long time. You've got sixty seconds. After that, I'm calling security.

MIKE

All right, check this out: An X-Generation version of "The Mod Squad." "X-Patrol."

TOM

(doubtful)

Mmm-hm.

MIKE

It's set in Seattle. They're in a band.

TOM

Mmm-hm.

MIKE

White guy, black guy, blonde chick.

TOM

(interested despite himself)

Mmm-hm. Pretty good. But frankly, it doesn't matter how good it is. There's no way in hell anything with the Times Two name on it is going to get made.

MIKE

I don't care whose name goes on it. This is going to make us a million bucks.

(panting)

I'm gonna die if I don't get off this thing. Can we stop, please?

Mike grabs the handle in front of him. His feet are dragged out from under him and he falls on his face.

TOM

Yeah, all right. Let's hit the steam.

Tom exits the treadmill gracefully. Mike gets up and we FOLLOW them as they head toward the locker room. Tom leads by three or four paces.

TOM

I don't know, it might work. But I'm not sure... What about...

Mike is accosted by Kay Floral as Tom exits into the locker room. Kay is dripping with costume jewelry and carrying a cell phone and her yapping rat-dog. She has not yet gotten her messages. Mike is anxious to follow Tom and nail down the deal.

KAY

What are you doing here? It seems rather lax for someone who's about to lose his entire business. Shouldn't you be out selling lemonade on the street or something to raise money?

MIKE

I'm working on a very big deal. You'll get your money.

KAY

Well, we'll see about that. It was so nice to meet your brother; he's so unlike you. I really need to get to know him better.

MIKE

Anything's possible.

KAY

I know it is. You don't think I'm going to be at the bank for my whole life, do you? I've got plans. Big plans. It's all mapped out. First, I'll be a star; I've always wanted to act. Then, I move into the director's chair. I wrote this story, it's called "Stricken," You'll love it. It would make a great feature...

Somewhere towards the end of this rant, Mike can't stand it anymore and goes off to find Tom. Kay doesn't notice at first, but finally looks up for Mike's response.

When she realizes she's talking to herself, she's annoyed, then she checks to see if anyone has noticed. Someone has.

She bangs the cell phone into her palm and blows into it as if it's defective. She walks off talking into it, pretending that someone's on the other end.

KAY

Oh, thank goodness, darling, I thought I'd lost you. We really should talk in person, darling. Cezanne's, 6:30? Oh, you're brilliant, darling. I'll see you there, bye darling.

INT. Z GYM - STEAM ROOM

Mike and Tom sit and sweat. Another figure, with a towel over his head, sits in the corner. We join them toward the end of their conversation. Tom is now excited about the idea.

TOM

Don't worry about the rights.
I know somebody over at
Spelling.

(beat)

What about Ike?

MIKE

This is not Ike's deal. It's
mine. Ike has nothing to do
with it.

TOM

I thought he was your partner.

MIKE

He's doesn't want anything to
do with the project.

TOM

Okay. But then, who's going
to direct?

Mike hasn't really thought this through, but he tries to
sneak it by.

MIKE

Uh,... I am.

TOM

(laughing)

No fuckin' way, man. Really,
who?

MIKE

I'm serious.

TOM

So am I. It's going to be
hard enough to put this thing
together with you involved at
all. I'll fax you a list of
directors and writers. You
pick one of each, okay?

(beat)

You know, just between us, I'm
glad Ike's not going to be
around. Don't get me wrong,
he's a genius and all, but
he's spent way too much time
doing that PBS shit. He
doesn't understand the way
things work in the real world.
Think about it.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

A heavy-metal version of
"We're in the Money"? How
misguided can you get?

(beat)

Let's get out of here. I hope
I don't live to regret this,
but it looks like we've got a
deal.

They exit. The figure in the corner pulls the towel from
over his head and wipes his face with it. It's Ike.

EXT. "OTTO" RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Otto is a fabulously trendy, exclusive and expensive
restaurant. The design is Japanese modern and all the
employees are Japanese.

Ike approaches the front door, which is held open by a neatly
uniformed attendant.

IKE

(to himself)

Hm. Sushi. Cool.

INT. "OTTO" RESTAURANT - FOYER/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ike approaches the MAITRE D'.

MAITRE D'

Good evening.

IKE

Good evening. My name is Ike
Fisher. I have a 6:30
reservation...

MAITRE D'

Oh yes, Mr. Fisher. Mr.
Whitbread and Miss Alwhite
have already arrived. Please
follow me.

Ike follows the maitre d' into the dining room. Seated at a
table are HUTCHINSON WHITBRED and ALISON ALWHITE, public
television executives. Alison and Hutch are friendly, but
nervous around "Negroes."

Hutch and Alison rise to shake Ike's hand.

HUTCH

Ike, what a pleasure to finally meet you in person. I'm glad you were able to join us on such short notice. This is Alison Alwhite, our Director of Corporate Finance.

ALISON

Mr. Fisher.

Hutch and Alison retake their seats. Ike sits, but not before dusting his chair with his silk handkerchief.

IKE

The pleasure is all mine.

ALISON

Otto is a friend from D.C. and this is his new place. He's always working on some new delicacy, so we have him send out whatever he likes. I hope that's all right.

IKE

That's fine. I love surprises.

HUTCH

You know what we loved. We loved that documentary you did about Rosa Parks. It's so important that people not forget the history of the civil rights movement. Especially now that she's gone.

IKE

(tactfully)

You mean that she's not very active any more, right? She's not in the public eye much any more, but she still has the fire.

HUTCH

(embarrassed)

Of course, of course.

IKE

(smoothly)

You know, what I really liked
was how you placed it right
after that show on the touring
big bands of the 30's.

A waiter arrives with the appetizer: an unidentifiable leafy
green vegetable presented with a garnish of curled carrot
strips.

IKE

It created a wonderful
context, not to mention that
it's my favorite kind of
music.

Hutch and Alison dig in. Ike looks down at his plate and
gives a sniff. He can't quite place the odor. He takes a
big forkful and sticks it in his mouth, and his face freezes.
He makes a supreme effort and swallows.

IKE

(confused)

This tastes almost like
collard greens.

ALISON

We told you Otto was a genius.

Ike's face registers a mixture of apprehension and distaste.

HUTCH

I'll get right to the point,
Ike. We need you, and here's
why. We're on the verge of
something momentous. Our goal
is simple: to restore public
trust in television, and in
artists like yourself. Alison
and I, with the help of a few
other visionaries, are going
to revolutionize public TV.

Ike slowly pushes his plate away.

HUTCH

As you know, continued
government funding makes it
virtually impossible for us to
fulfill our mission of
bringing quality TV to the
masses.

(MORE)

HUTCH (CONT'D)

We're attacked from the right for being too liberal and from the left for bowing to censorship. The only way for us to survive is to declare our independence.

ALISON

The conditions which inspired the creation of public television no longer even exist. We live in a 500-channel universe now, and public TV simply can't compete. Our aim is to combine the traditional quality of public television with the efficiency of modern business techniques.

IKE

(kidding)

It sounds like you want to take public television private.

ALISON

That's exactly what we're going to do.

Ike freezes.

ALISON

We're going to sell public television. We need to level the playing field; the only way to do it is through privatization. We've got agreements pending with the nation's top corporations, and the beauty part is, we'll only have to increase pledge break time by thirty-eight percent.

HUTCH

It'll be great. And, as part of the restructuring process, we want to build the first season's line-up around your project.

IKE

We're talking about a two-hour documentary here.

HUTCH

Not any more, we're not. We want to take "Cats" and expand it from a single show into a whole season.

IKE

A whole season?

The main course arrives: Nouvelle Soul Food. Tiny portions, attractively presented. Alison gets chitlins, Hutch a beef rib served with a quarter-sized dollop of potato salad and a piece of white bread with the crust cut off. Ike gets two pig's feet served with four black-eyed peas surrounded by six grains of rice. A scallion is draped across the plate.

The conversation continues. Ike is too caught up in it to notice what he's been served.

HUTCH

We're convinced that "Cats" is the perfect project to showcase our new independence. People love cats. I have one.

ALISON

I have two.

HUTCH

It's foolproof. There's no way anyone will be offended, or threaten to cut off our funding. And, assuming all goes well, we're already thinking about doing a follow-up series next year.

(beat)

Dogs. Just think about it.

IKE

I don't know what to say.

HUTCH

Say "yes." Say you'll be ready to roll as soon as we get the corporate people lined up. It could be any day now.

IKE

This is all, ah, a little... overwhelming.

ALISON

Of course, the budget will be quite a bit larger than we originally discussed. We can talk numbers later. I think you've got the basic outlines of the deal here. Let's eat.

Ike looks down.

IKE

(pained)

Pig's feet.

INT. MIKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mike enters, reading "Daily Variety." His phone machine is blinking. He presses "play."

KAY (V.O.)

I was so angry with you for walking away, until I got your message. I'm delighted, and I'm ready to go to work right away. Don't worry about Friday; we'll work something out. Call me.

MIKE

What the hell is she talking about? She's even nuttier than I thought. Well, as long as I don't have to have the money by Friday.

The phone RINGS and the fax machine spits out paper. Mike trips over some dirty clothes on the floor in his rush to get to the machine. He gets up and grabs the fax.

It's Tom's choices for writers and directors for "X-Patrol." The cover sheet says, "Mike, take a look at these names and call me as soon as possible. I'll be working late tonight. Tom."

Directors include: Justin Thyme, Vladimir Ilyich Yodaiken, Jojo Branner, Loon Welles, Emily Ann Maranczyk, and Cliff Barrows.

Writers: Rudolfo Crumhorn, Thornton Bayshore, Sam Mateo, Stephanie Voss, Bernard Rottenburg, and Larry Steger. Mike looks over the list, crossing out names with a pencil.

MIKE

Too good... too good... too good.... Hm, Loon Welles, he's bad, what did he do? Oh yeah, "In The Box."

INT. WHITE, FEATURELESS BACKGROUND - DAY - FLASHBACK

A title card reads, "Loon Welles' 'In The Box.'" Then a quick shot from the movie, Loon's masterpiece from the late 60's. A large, wooden crate is rocking back and forth. There are BANGING sounds. Over spooky synthesizer music, we hear hushed VOICES.

VOICE 1

Do you think he can get out?

VOICE 2

Who cares?

A lone loon slowly flaps past the box.

INT. MIKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - RETURN TO PRESENT

Mike circles Loon's name.

MIKE

Perfect.

He begins to look over the writers. Once again, he crosses names off.

MIKE

No, no, no, they're all too good. I can't use any of these people.

He calls Tom.

MIKE

Hi, Tom, I got the list. I think Loon Welles would be perfect. He's done great work.

(beat)

No, I didn't see "The Incredibly Amazing Fantastic Discoveries."

(beat)

An infomercial, no kidding? No, I missed that one, but I loved, "In The Box."

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

(beat)

An art picture from the 60's--
but don't hold that against
him; his work's much more
commercial now. He'll be
great.

(beat)

The writer? Well, I...

He glances down at the Variety on the desk. An item catches his eye. It details the sale of "Sea Cages -- America's Floating Women's Prisons." The writer: Henri Cochon.

MIKE

I... I looked over your list,
but I think I've got someone
even better.

EXT. HENRI COCHON'S HOUSE - DAY

Mike's car pulls into the driveway of the Laurel Canyon home of HENRI COCHON. It looks like a castle.

Mike walks up to the dark medieval-style door, which has a pig's head door-knocker. He reaches up to grab the knocker; the door slowly swings open. He cautiously steps inside.

INT. HENRI COCHON'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

The entryway is all dark wood and brass wall-mounted candle sconces. Framed posters for some of Henri's early projects line the walls: "Weirdos From Beneath," "Pleasure Island," "The Sardine Killers," and "Snowbound Sea Monkeys." From the rear of the house, we HEAR what sounds like someone being savagely beaten. Mike slowly makes his way toward the sounds.

MIKE

Henri? Are you there? Henri?

The SOUNDS get louder.

MIKE

It's Mike. I'm sorry I'm
late. I can come back later
if this is a bad time...

The door at the end of the hallway is ajar. Mike carefully gives it a little push. As the door opens, Henri flies past, several feet off the ground.

INT. HENRI COCHON'S HOUSE - EXERCISE ROOM/DUNGEON - DAY

This room is the center of Henri's world. A medieval rack sits in one corner. In the opposite corner is a four-poster bed with white lace canopy and fluffy pillows. Next to the bed is a small table and a couple of chairs. A half-eaten cheesecake sits on the table, next to a small timer and a copy of the "X-Patrol" treatment.

Mike sticks his head in through the door, and slowly looks around. He SEES SU-MOON LI, Henri's beautiful, 6'2" martial arts instructor. She wears what appears to be a cross between a traditional karate outfit and contemporary dominatrix drag. She sees Mike and immediately assumes a defensive posture. She grins nastily.

Mike looks to the left and SEES Henri, upside-down, propped against the wall. He's short, fat, balding and sweaty. All he has on are Italian bicycle shorts. His eyes are closed.

MIKE

Henri? Are you all right?

Henri's eyes pop open.

HENRI

(heavy French
accent)

Mike! I am so glad you are
here.

Henri rights himself and waddles over to Mike.

HENRI

I was finishing up with my
workout. Let me introduce you
to Su-Moon Li.

MIKE

How do you do?

Su-Moon snarls.

HENRI

She gets so worked up. Can I
offer you something? Some
absinthe, perhaps, or some
cheesecake?

MIKE

No, thanks.

Henri leads Mike over to the table. Henri begins to eat. Su-Moon does karate exercises on the other side of the room.

HENRI

(mouth full)

I can't believe it. My doctor says I have to lose some weight.

MIKE

Yeah sure, Henri, but perhaps we could talk about the project?

HENRI

Of course, do not let me bore you with my little problems. I read the treatment. C'est magnifique.

MIKE

Thanks, Henri. You're the man who can bring "X-Patrol" to life. We want you to work the same magic you used on "Sea Cage."

HENRI

(fearful)

How could you see it? The deal was only for international. A pity that this is such a Puritan country.

MIKE

I didn't actually **see** it, but "Variety" says it did great business overseas.

HENRI

Oui. It is too sad that no one here will ever see it. Such archaic laws you have in this country.

He picks up the treatment and flips through it.

HENRI

But, on a happier topic, I was thinking about the Captain Justice character. The middle-aged white man, so boring. Why not, I say to myself, we make the captain the black woman? Femme noir...

MIKE

That could work.

HENRI

Wait, that is not all. That has been done. It is so boring. I say, we make Captain Justice the black woman in the wheelchair.

MIKE

Henri, you have surpassed even yourself. Get to work.

The timer emits a short beep. Instantly, Su-Moon's hands come down on Henri's shoulders and drag him out of his chair.

HENRI

(midair once again)

As soon as the workout is over.

INT. LE SPA HEALTH CLUB - STEAM ROOM - DAY

Le Spa is a decrepit men's health club. The ancient white-tiled steam room contains three or four steam cabinets, the kind where only the user's head sticks out. One of the them is occupied by LOON WELLES, English director in his 60's.

Loon has tiny black pads covering his eyes, and his face is bathed by a sunlamp. He's wearing headphones and we HEAR the CHANTING of Buddhist monks. A wooden bench is opposite the cabinets.

Mike enters.

MIKE

Mr. Welles?

Mike clears his throat. No response.

MIKE

(more loudly)

Mr. Welles?

No response. Mike waves his hand in front of Loon's face. Nothing. Mike backs away from Loon and KNOCKS over a towel rack, which falls with a CLATTER. Still no reaction.

Mike takes a small mirror from the bench and holds it under Loon's nose, to see if there's any breath. He leans in close. Loon sneezes, his head jerks back, his eyes open, and the little protective pads fall onto the mirror. The headphones go flying off backwards.

LOON

Can I help you?

Mike jumps back.

MIKE

Mr. Welles?

Loon nods. Mike sits on the bench.

MIKE

I'm Mike Fisher... We talked on the phone about "X-Patrol"...

LOON

(no help)

Yes.

MIKE

I could tell you weren't a hundred percent sure about the project. I thought if we spoke in person I might be able to...

LOON

You're wasting your time, Mr. Fisher. As I told you, I've retired from television.

MIKE

Mr. Welles, hear me out.

LOON

Oh, for heaven's sakes. Are you deaf, or is it that you're congenitally retarded?

MIKE

You're the only man who can do justice to this project. We want the man responsible for "In The Box" and "The Little Blue Suitcase." We also know you directed several episodes of the original "Mod Squad." It seems only appropriate for you to direct this new version.

LOON

That was twenty-five years ago.

(beat)

Cop shows. I hate cop shows. I did cop shows until they came out of my ears.

Mike hasn't expected so much resistance from this out-of-work director. He begins to flounder.

MIKE

"X-Patrol" isn't just another cop show. It's a parable, yeah, that's what it is, a parable of good and evil. It, uh, holds up a... a mirror, a dark mirror to society.

LOON

Young man, spare me your inane platitudes. We are talking about television here. The only mirror television holds up to society reflects the vacuous, slack-jawed faces of cretinous morons sitting on their pimpled asses waiting for the next commercial. I'm done with it.

MIKE

Sir, I'm generally not in the business of begging, but I'm willing to make an exception in this case. Please. I'm begging you. You have to do it. You'll have the same kind of freedom you had with "Little Blue Suitcase," but with a bigger budget.

INSERT - "LITTLE BLUE SUITCASE"

Loon's homage to "Potemkin." An open small blue suitcase, with a small dog sitting in it, cascades down a huge granite staircase.

RETURN TO SCENE

Loon's eyes grow misty at the thought of his greatest triumph.

LOON

"Little Blue Suitcase" was an epic, and epics demand the scale of a large screen.

MIKE

But what about "Reluctant Messiah"? That was a television breakthrough. It ushered in the Golden Age of television. With "X-Patrol," you can do it again.

LOON

(softening)

There is one condition under which I might consider taking on the project.

MIKE

Try me.

LOON

I see the whole thing as very noir, very 40's. It needs that kind of look.

MIKE

Hold on. You want to make a 90's remake of a 60's show with a 40's look? That is stunning.

LOON

It is, isn't it?

MIKE

If that's your only condition, we're in business.

LOON

(backpedaling)

I don't know, I swore there wasn't enough money in the world to drag me back.

Mike takes out a pen and small pad, writes down a figure and holds it in front of Loon's face.

LOON

Well, maybe I could go back to television. After all, promises were made to be broken. Young man, I know that a handshake doesn't mean much in this town any more, not that it ever did, but I believe in the old traditions. Let's shake on it.

Loon steps out into the light, and holds out his hand. Mike, however, is too busy looking at Loon's outfit. It's a full neon-pink dayglo wetsuit. After a moment, Loon realizes the problem.

LOON

One can't be too careful. At my age, the skin tends to wrinkle.

MIKE

(taking Loon's hand)

You're right, Mr. Welles. One can't be too careful.

INT. MENS' ROOM - TIMES TWO OFFICES - DAY

Mike stands at a urinal. Ike enters and takes up a position next to his brother. For a moment, we HEAR them pissing. Finally, Ike speaks.

IKE

That Kay Floral woman keeps calling me to set up some kind of "private negotiations." I don't know how to get rid of her.

MIKE

She's bugging you too, huh? She keeps calling me about some big part she thinks I offered her.

A pause, as they realize what's happened.

MIKE & IKE

(simultaneously)

You called her, didn't you?

Their anger turns to laughter as they realize what's happened. From this point on, their competition is more friendly than adversarial.

IKE

So that's why she let us miss the payment deadline.

MIKE

You know, X-Patrol is going gangbusters. Tom's promised me an advance any day now. Things just don't feel right without you. Why don't you come back and work with me.

IKE

I don't think so. "Cats" is right on track. As a matter of fact, they want to turn it into a series. They're going to build their whole Fall season around it.

MIKE

They what?!

As he speaks, Mike swings to face Ike. The SOUND of urine on porcelain STOPS. After a beat, Ike looks down and grimaces. He looks back up at Mike.

INT. MIKE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mike enters and turns on the lights. He walks to the desk where the answering machine is BLINKING. He punches the button. We HEAR the tape rewind as he walks into the kitchen, visible through an open doorway.

He opens the refrigerator as the machine BEEPS and playback begins. (Action is continuous as he listens.)

KAY (V.O.)

(annoyed)

Michael, this is Kay. Is this some kind of joke? I let you renege on your responsibility to pay your debts on time and this is how you repay me? Call me when get this message.

MIKE

I don't think so.

He pulls a takeout Chinese food container from the refrigerator, opens it and gives it a sniff. It smells so bad the top of his head almost comes off. With his head turned to the side, he holds the container at arm's length and drops it in the trash.

The machine BEEPS.

TOM (V.O.)

Mike, buddy, it's Tom. Good news. We made a foreign distribution deal. That means we're already in the black. B.D. is fuckin' pickled, man.

Mike is pleased to hear this. He goes back to the refrigerator and starts rooting around again.

TOM (V.O.)

And hey, did you see the story
in the "Hollywood Reporter"?
I gotta hand it to you man,
snagging Hideo Bushururu to do
the soundtrack was brilliant
Talk to you later, man. Bye.

MIKE

Hideo who?

Mike pulls out some bologna and gives it a sniff. He puts it
on the table and pulls some bread from a bag. It's bright
green, so old it's practically evolved legs. He drops the
bread and bag into the trash and puts the bologna back in the
refrigerator.

The machine BEEPS.

KAY (V.O.)

(curt)

Michael, it's Kay. Call me
within the next half-hour...

MIKE

(over Kay's message)

The next half-hour from when?

KAY (V.O.)

...I must speak to you.

Mike opens the ice-encrusted freezer. After a struggle, he
manages to pull out a Swanson Fried Chicken and Mashed Potato
TV Dinner. He takes it out of the box and shoves it into the
microwave oven and turns it on.

The machine BEEPS.

CAROLE (V.O.)

Hi Mike. Good news: Hideo
Bushururu called; he wants to
talk about doing the
soundtrack...

MIKE

Hideo who?

The machine BEEPS TWICE. The tape rewinds.

MIKE

Who the hell is Hideo
Bushururu?

The microwave oven's bell DINGS. Mike opens the door and
grabs the dinner, burning his fingers. He drops it on the
floor, upside down.

MIKE

Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, OWOWOWOW.

He rushes to the sink and runs cold water over his fingers. After a few seconds he shuts the water off. Using a towel he picks up the TV dinner and places it on the table. The phone RINGS.

MIKE

Godammit!

He picks up the phone.

MIKE

What is it?

It's Kay. During her tirade, Mike struggles in vain to get a word in edgewise, to defend himself as best he can.

KAY

(full-on rant)

How dare you? We had a deal; your behavior in this matter is completely unprofessional. Where's that big part you promised me? And besides, how could you possibly hire Loon Welles to direct "X-Patrol"? That hack couldn't direct his way out of a wooden box. I really should be producing anyway! This is a small town, and people know me here. After what you've done, I can never work with you again, and no one I know will ever work with you, either. You should be ashamed of yourself, and I expect your loan payment by tomorrow at noon.

Kay SLAMS the phone down. He slams the phone down. He finds her home number in his address book, picks up the phone and dials.

MIKE

(to himself)

I can't fucking stand it when someone hangs up on me, but there's no way I can pay her by noon tomorrow. Okay, Mike baby, time to turn on the ol' charm.

(she picks up on the first ring)

Kay, I...

KAY

How dare you call me back!?
How dare you? I suppose you
want to apologize for your
unforgivable behavior. Well,
I'm afraid it's a little too
late for that. Don't you ever
call me at home again, do you
hear me? Ever!

She HANGS UP. Mike is flabbergasted, but not ready to give up. He flips the receiver hook and presses "re-dial." The phone rings once, and Kay picks up. This time, Mike doesn't even get a word in.

KAY

You must be demented to call me again. You're sick, you know that, really sick. You need professional help. I suggest you get some, and stop calling me. I hope you're in therapy, young man, because in addition to being an artist you have to have an integrated personality.

She HANGS UP, but her answering machine has accidentally engaged. We HEAR the end of her outgoing message.

KAY (ON TAPE)

...so, darling, don't be shy.
Leave your message at the
tone, and as soon as we're
done enjoying this beautiful
day, someone will get back to
you.

Kay's machine BEEPS. In a calming gesture, Mike takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly.

MIKE

Kay, this is Mike. If you
won't speak to me directly, at
least I can leave you a
message. I'm sorry about the
misunderstanding, but I don't
remember ever discussing
anything other than the loan.
But anyway, I do have a part
that I think would be perfect
for you. Let's talk soon.

He HANGS UP.

INT. MIKE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mike's in bed, sound asleep, completely wrapped up in the sheets like a mummy.

The phone RINGS. No response.

It RINGS again. His eyes open slowly, and he struggles to free his arms from the sheets. He manages to get a hand free and grabs the alarm clock and throws it across the room, where it lands with a CRASH.

One last RING. He realizes that it wasn't the alarm clock, after all, and picks up the receiver. His voice has that early morning, octave-lower-than-usual rasp.

MIKE

He...hello?

KAY

(almost rational)

Michael, darling, did I wake you?

MIKE

That's alright, I had to get up to answer the phone anyway.

KAY

I was delighted to get your message. You must have called while I was out.

Mike sits up, still half-asleep.

MIKE

Actually, I called right after you hung up on me for the third time.

KAY

(beat)

Well, of course I reacted emotionally. Like all highly gifted artists, I'm a very emotional person.

MIKE

Don't I know it. I'm glad we're friends again. Why don't you come down to the office and we'll talk about the part.

KAY
That's wonderful, darling,
I'll be there at 10:30. This
is so exciting. See you
later.

She hangs up.

MIKE
Yeah, much later. Let's see,
10:30? I should be teeing off
the seventh hole.

INT. IKE'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Ike sits at his desk, working on the PBS deal.

Kay bursts into the room, wearing a raincoat. Destiny
follows closely, trying to stop her. Ike holds up a hand.

IKE
It's all right, Destiny, this
is Kay Floral from the bank.

Destiny "hmmphs" and goes out. Kay sits on the edge of the
desk, too close to Ike.

KAY
You've been avoiding me, just
like that brother of yours.
He was supposed to meet me.

IKE
Well, I...

KAY
But, how can I stay mad when
you're so near. I've been
trying to deny it to myself,
too. But there's really no
need. It's destiny; we're
meant to be together.

She rips off the raincoat, revealing nothing but a teddy
underneath. Ike shrinks into his chair.

IKE
Kay, I don't...

KAY
I've been dreaming of this
moment ever since we met.
(MORE)

KAY (CONT'D)

I never believed in love at first sight before, but when I got your message I knew you must feel as I do. I'm here to prove my love. Take me.

Ike pushes his chair back from the desk. She sinks to her knees between his legs and puts her hands on his thighs.

KAY

We were meant to be together.
It's destiny.

Destiny bursts into the room like an avenging angel.

DESTINY

You better believe it, girlie!
What the fuck are you doing
with your hands on my man?

Ike and Kay both jump. Kay gets up and grabs her coat. She's like a startled deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming semi. Ike immediately grasps the situation and plays along. He gets up, takes Kay by the arm and moves her toward the door.

IKE

(to Destiny)

I'm sorry dear, I don't know
what came over me, I know we
can work this out.

(aside to Kay)

We can't talk now. Later.

DESTINY

You better get that bitch out
of here. Tell that whore
to...

Kay leaves. Ike closes the door behind her and slumps with his back against it. After a beat, he and Destiny both start laughing.

DESTINY

This is not part of my job
description. Face it. If
you'd just make up with your
brother you wouldn't have to
sink so low.

IKE

It's not that simple.

DESTINY

Yes, it is. You guys, you're partners, you're brothers, you're brothers, you're partners. Don't you get it? Your pigheaded pride is going to destroy your partnership, your family, and worst of all, my chance to have a nose like Lena Horne's. You should be ashamed of yourself.

INT. PLASTER CASTING - DAY

Loon and Mike sit in a room with a video camera. Piles of headshots and résumés litter the table, as do many empty cardboard coffee cups. A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT runs the camera.

Loon briefs POTENTIAL PETE #1 and POTENTIAL LINC #1 with a speech he's obviously given too many times. (Except where noted, all auditioners are in their early 20's.)

LOON

Okay. Consider: You've been arrested and this Captain Justice character has offered you a deal. If you take it, you go free, but you must work for the police. If you don't take it, you go to prison for an extremely long time, where your nubile young bodies will be continually pawed over by the large, greasy, sociopathic long-term residents. That's the situation. Go.

P.L.#1 and P.P.#1 stand on their mark, dressed as typical Gen-X'ers. Physically, they bear striking resemblances to Clarence Williams III and Michael Cole from the original "Mod Squad." When they begin to speak, however, the differences are apparent.

POTENTIAL LINC #1

(totally wooden)

Hey, you call this a deal, man? It's blackmail, plain and simple. Can you imagine me a cop? No way man, uh-uh, I don't think so.

POTENTIAL PETE #1
(over the top)
Yeah, so it's blackmail, so
what? What choice do we have?

POTENTIAL LINC #1
I don't know what kind of
choice we got. I know we
ain't talked to no lawyer yet.

POTENTIAL PETE #1
And we ain't gonna get to talk
to no lawyer, either, man. I
don't think we're gettin' out
of here 'til we give her an
answer. This sucks.

CUT to POTENTIAL PETE #2 AND POTENTIAL LINC #2 (JEREMY MONK).
P.P.#2 is a human pincushion, with piercings sprouting from
every conceivable place. Jeremy will eventually be chosen to
play Linc.

POTENTIAL PETE #2
(shouting)
...This sucks.

POTENTIAL LINC #2
(stoned Rasta)
We didn't know that car was
stolen. And we sure as hell
didn't know nothin' 'bout no
Indo in the glove box. This
is a set-up, man.

POTENTIAL PETE #2
A set-up? Are you sayin'
somebody deliberately messed
with our van, so we'd have to
borrow that piece of shit
Volvo from Eddie? And then,
somebody put out the taillight
so we'd get pulled over?

POTENTIAL LINC #2
Why not? It could happen.
Look, I don't how it happened,
but we're here, ain't we?
Shit.

CUT to POTENTIAL PETE #3 AND POTENTIAL LINC #3. P.L.#3 looks
like a criminal. Somebody has taught him not to stay in one
place while acting, so he wanders aimlessly around the room,
to P.P.#3's growing dismay.

POTENTIAL LINC #3
(mumbles)
...Shit.

POTENTIAL PETE #3
(questioning)
Yeah, we're here. So, what
choices we got? What are they
askin' us to do?

POTENTIAL LINC #3
They're askin' us to spy on
our friends, man, so we can
send 'em to jail. I don't
play that shit.

POTENTIAL PETE #3
Then it's you and me who are
goin' to jail, for something
we didn't even do? I don't
know, maybe we should talk to
'em?

SWITCH to POTENTIAL PETE #4 (DIRK MANLEY) AND POTENTIAL LINC
#4. Dirk Manley will be hired for his looks. He's gorgeous,
with large muscles and dark hair and a brain the size of a
pea. P.L.#4 is a good actor. Unfortunately for him, he
weighs 350 pounds.

POTENTIAL PETE #4
...maybe we should talk to
'em.

POTENTIAL LINC #4
About what?

POTENTIAL PETE #4
Listen up. Maybe we do have a
little wiggle room. They said
they just wanna bust the big
guys, right?

POTENTIAL LINC #4
Yeah, but I don't trust 'em.

POTENTIAL PETE #4
I don't trust 'em either, but
at least this way we'll be on
the outside, and if they jam
us up, we'll break. I say we
do it.

POTENTIAL LINC #4
Okay.

CUT TO:

POTENTIAL LINC #3

Okay.

CUT TO:

POTENTIAL LINC #2

Okay.

CUT TO:

POTENTIAL LINC #1

Okay.

CUT directly to the POTENTIAL JULIES: a single monologue pieced together from a number of auditions. The auditioning actresses are all blonde. Their acting skills span a wide range.

POTENTIAL JULIE #1

Let these people go. They haven't done anything to hurt you. I'm the one you want.

POTENTIAL JULIE #2

If you need a hostage, take me. But you've to let them go. Come on, please. Come on.

POTENTIAL JULIE #3

Mrs. Gomez, she's just the cleaning lady, and she has a heart condition. She's got to get out of here. She's got to get to her medicine.

POTENTIAL JULIE #4

If she doesn't, she'll die. Do you really want that? I don't think so.

POTENTIAL JULIE #5

I'm the one you're mad at. You've already killed two people, and where has it gotten you?

POTENTIAL JULIE #6

The police are on their way.

POTENTIAL JULIE #7

If you let the other hostages go, it'll go easier on you.

POTENTIAL JULIE #8
I'll tell Captain Justice that
you could have killed us
all...

POTENTIAL JULIE #9
...but you only killed two.
That'll be much better.

POTENTIAL JULIE #10
Look, you don't need to kill
anybody.

POTENTIAL JULIE #11
You're in control, here.

POTENTIAL JULIE #12
None of us...

POTENTIAL JULIE #13
...are going anywhere.

POTENTIAL JULIE #14
We aren't...

POTENTIAL JULIE #15
...a threat...

POTENTIAL JULIE #16
Let her go.

POTENTIAL JULIE #17
She's completely innocent.

INT. TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Carole and Destiny sit at their desks. Mike enters, carrying a golf bag.

CAROLE
Nice of you to show up.
Didn't you used to work here?
You know, I finally got a
chance to read the script.

MIKE
What'd you think?

CAROLE

(sarcastic)

Very impressive. Fourteen
stiffs, four sex acts, two of
them in public, titties
jiggling all over the place.
You've got a lot to be proud
of, young man.

MIKE

As a matter of fact, I am
proud. I happen to think the
script is very exciting.

CAROLE

You think the sight of a
teenage boy nailing his baby
sister's feet to the floor,
just so he won't have to
babysit, is exciting?

MIKE

Don't prejudge. It'll be shot
very tastefully.

CAROLE

And why are all the women
dressed out of the Frederick's
of Hollywood catalog? I
suppose that'll be tasteful
too.

MIKE

Yeah, it will. You know, **some**
people like looking at women's
bodies.

CAROLE

Yeah, well, okay, I do. But,
what the hell is going on with
the Linc character? I thought
slavery was outlawed. You're
taking a show from the 70's
into the 90's, but all the
attitudes are right out of the
50's. What is it? Is it just
the money?

MIKE

Excuse me--Is there something
wrong with money? Of course,
I'm doing it for the money.
But that's not the only
reason.

CAROLE

Yeah, right. You know, shit
by any other name smells just
as bad.

INT. MENS' ROOM - TIMES TWO OFFICES - DAY

Mike stands at the urinal.

Ike enters.

Their eyes meet.

Ike turns on his heel and walks out.

INT. ART MUSEUM LOBBY - NIGHT

A banner celebrates the merger of ConGlomCo and PBS and the deal between Ike and PBS. The huge space is filled with cat art: Cat sculptures, cat photos, and cat paintings. A string quartet saws away in a corner.

Waiters with champagne circulate through the large crowd.

Hutch and Alison are introducing Ike to a corporate bigshot, JOE PURCHASE. They are standing next to a huge water sculpture of a cat, whose whiskers are streams of water.

HUTCH

This is Ike Fisher, the man
behind the jewel of the
Privatized Broadcasting
System's premiere season.
Ike, meet Joe Purchase,
director of corporate public
relations for our primary
sponsor, ConGlomCo.

JOE

Nice to meet you, Ike.

IKE

I'm glad we could tie in the
announcement of the series
with this exhibit.

JOE

That's what we like to call
synchronicity. Things come
together pretty easily when
the pet food division of a big
company like ours sponsors
both projects.

ALISON

In the old days, when the government was involved, this would have been impossible.

JOE

If you want the music from that Andrew Lloyd What's-his-name show for the soundtrack to "Nine Lives," we shouldn't have any trouble.

A couple of REPORTERS survey the scene.

REPORTER #1

The champagne is much better at movie parties.

REPORTER #2

(munching on a cracker)

Yeah, and this paté tastes like cat food.

Hutch continues to chat with Ike.

HUTCH

I've got to hand it to you, a two-hour episode for each of a cat's nine lives. What a brilliant concept. And if "Nine Lives" is half as successful as we're sure it's going to be, "Bow Wow Wow" will be even bigger.

A couple of Destiny's PARTY-GOER FRIENDS dish some dirt.

PARTY-GOER #1

This party is so tired.

PARTY-GOER #2

(indicating Joe Purchase)

Yeah, look at Mr. Polyester over there. Look at him, he must be trying to bring it back.

Destiny, wearing a stunning Catwoman outfit, saunters up to Ike and Joe Purchase.

IKE
I've wanted to do "Nine Lives"
for a long time, but there
were problems with my former
partner. Eventually, I had to
get rid of him.

DESTINY
(hissing like Eartha
Kitt)
Meow... Ike, there's a cat-
astrophe that needs dealing
with. Right now.

She grabs Ike by the arm.

IKE
Excuse me. I'll be right
back...

Destiny drags Ike to a corner. They stand under a huge
painting of two cats with arched backs, hissing and spitting.

IKE
I hope this is important.

DESTINY
(totally pissed off)
Important, my ass, honey.
What is going on with you? "I
had to rid of him"? That is
so cold.

IKE
Now wait a minute. What'd I...

DESTINY
Don't you act like you don't
know what I'm talkin' about.
What is this? You're so
independent? You're so purr-
fect that you don't need
nobody no more? You don't
need your brother? Don't you
forget where you come from.
You better hope this project
comes off, because otherwise
you're gonna need more than
nine lives to cover the
damage, honey.

INT. GNU CABLE NETWORK - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A TV-monitor plays the title sequence for "X-Patrol":

Gray sky. The Space Needle proclaims: This is Seattle. In a dark alleyway, misty rain falls. From the distance, a figure runs toward the camera.

The words "X-Patrol" appear in tiny letters, and quickly zoom up to fill the whole screen.

PETE (DIRK MANLEY) approaches, splashing water as he runs. He wears a flannel shirt and carries a beat-up electric guitar.

"Starring" appears at the bottom of the screen, and disappears as Pete's figure fills the frame, which FREEZES. The words "DIRK MANLEY as Pete Cochran" appear under his face. The frame UNFREEZES and he continues to run.

LINC (JEREMY MONK) steps through a warehouse door into the alley. His hair is in dreadlocks and he, too, wears a flannel shirt.

He looks back and then forward as the frame FREEZES, and the words "JEREMY MONK as Lincoln Hayes" appear at the bottom of the screen. The frame UNFREEZES and Linc joins Pete.

JU LI (formerly "Julie") (SU-MOON LI) appears from the shadows behind a warehouse and steps into the alley. Flannel looks good on her, too.

The frame FREEZES as the title "SU-MOON LI as Ju Li" identifies her, and UNFREEZES as she stumbles into the arms of Pete and gives him a big, sloppy wet kiss. She has to bend down to do this, since she's a good head taller than either of her co-stars.

We CUT to a door in the alley being pushed open by the motorized wheelchair piloted by CAPTAIN JUSTICE (ALTHEA DORA). The frame FREEZES as the words "and also starring" appear above the name "ALTHEA DORA as Captain Justice."

We CUT to the X-Patrol running down the alley toward the camera. Pete and Linc each have hold of one of Ju Li's elbows, which makes it hard to run since she's so much taller than they are. The frame FREEZES one last time on the three as the theme music builds to a CLIMAX and ends.

As the music ends, the lights come up. Seated at the table are Mike, Loon, Henri, Dirk Manley, Jeremy Monk, Su-Moon, Althea Dora, and JULIO BERNSTEIN, who plays the bad guy, JUAN CALAVERAS. They all have scripts.

Althea is putting an elegant little flask to her lips. She freezes for a second, then shrugs and takes a big gulp. She caps the flask and wipes her lips.

ALTHEA
Momma gotta have her medicine.

MIKE

Henri has finished the rewrites and we're ready to go. I'd like to welcome our two newest cast members, AlThea Dora, who will be playing crotchety-yet-lovable Captain Justice, and Julio Bernstein, the evil drug lord germ freak, Juan Calaveras.

Greetings are AD-LIBBED around the table.

LOON

Before we begin the reading, here's a brief update on the script changes. As you know, you three...

(indicating Dirk,
Jeremy and Su-Moon)

...are members of "The Alchemists," a contemporary musical group recruited by the police to be undercover agents.

Although Jeremy's audition was total Rastaman, he's a well-educated and highly trained actor. His background is upper-class Jamaican.

JEREMY

Excuse me, Loon? I was wondering how Linc could be a police officer, since he's so clearly not an American. Wouldn't he have to be a U.S. citizen?

LOON

Good point, Jeremy. Henri?

HENRI

(improvising)

Linc's parents were, uh, successful investment executives, working in the offshore banking business.

JEREMY

Oh, okay, and he ran away to be a musician. That works.

LOON

Your first case begins with a rash of weirdly violent crimes which strike Seattle.

All of Dirk's DNA was used up making him pretty, so there wasn't much left over for brains.

DIRK

Are we going to shoot in Seattle? I've never been to Idaho, you know, and I really love lobster.

JEREMY

Ah, Dirk, I think Seattle is in Washington, not Idaho.

DIRK

That's great, I've always wanted to see the White House.

LOON

Gentlemen, if we could continue this fascinating travelogue at some later date? Now, Captain Justice has discovered a connection between these crimes and a dance club run by you, Julio.

Julio had a Jewish father and a Hispanic mother. He looks mean, but is actually quite gentle.

JULIO

(N.Y. accent)

I'm stepping up in the world. I usually play Puerto Rican street punks, and now I got my own place.

ALTHEA

You know, that reminds me of the time when I was touring with the Count, you know, Count Basie? We were in this club in Memphis, and the owner, this guy named Red, he had a sister, see, and boy...

LOON

(over AlThea)

AlThea?

ALTHEA

...that girl was skinny as a stringbean. She didn't have nothin' to grab onto, poor child... well, anyway, she...

LOON

AlThea!

ALTHEA

Oh, I'm sorry, I'll tell ya'll later. But she was skinny, though.

LOON

Anyway, X-Patrol discovers that Juan Calaveras knows that XLNT is dangerous. Before you have a chance to arrest him one of his sleazy henchmen sees Ju Li with Captain Justice. Juan Calaveras immediately takes her hostage.

SU-MOON

(matter-of-fact)

I break his neck.

LOON

I'm afraid not.

SU-MOON

(to Henri;
threatening)

I don't break his neck?

HENRI

Not in this episode, my dear.

SU-MOON

I want to break his neck.

LOON

Linc attempts to save you and is also captured. But, Pete arrives in the nick of time to save the day. Right, now that we know how this epic drama unfolds, let's give it a read, shall we?

They open their scripts and begin.

LOON

(reading stage
directions)

Nighttime in the drizzly city of Seattle. The Alchemists: Pete, Linc and Ju Li, place their instruments in a battered old van, get in and drive away. Before they've gone a block there's the muffled sound of an explosion and smoke pours out from under the hood. The van pulls over and our three heroes get out.

PETE (DIRK)

(to Linc)

Didn't I tell you to check the oil, man?

LINC (JEREMY)

(Rasta accent)

It was fine, mon, I checked it yesterday.

PETE (DIRK)

Why don't you walk back to the club and see if you can borrow Eddie's Volvo, huh? We'll stay here and watch the equipment, if you know what I mean.

LOON

(reading)

As Linc walks away, Pete grabs Ju Li and starts kissing her and fondling her humongous breasts.

SU-MOON

I break his neck.

EXT. SEATTLE STREET - NIGHT

Loon's noir masterpiece begins shooting. Electricians run power lines. Wardrobe people dust off actors. Lighting technicians hang instruments. The soundman checks levels. The show camera is moved into position on tracks.

Loon and the X-Patrollers sit in directors' chairs going over their scripts. Mike hovers nearby.

A beat-up '65 Volvo, parked by the side of the road, is the focus of the crew's attention. The back seat is filled with

musical gear. A p.a. sprays water on the asphalt under the car to make it shine.

The activity dies down and the X-patrol members take their places in the Volvo. Pete sits at the wheel, Ju Li is in the middle and Linc is at the passenger door side.

Loon takes his position near the show camera tracks. The CAMERA OPERATOR makes last-minute adjustments.

LOON

Okay everybody, this is it.
Quiet, please! Alright, roll
sound.

SOUND TECHNICIAN

Speed.

LOON

Roll camera.

The SOUND TECHNICIAN nods to the boom operator and checks his recorder.

CAMERA OPERATOR

Rolling.

A P.A. steps in front of the show camera with an electronic slate board.

P.A.

Scene three, take one.

LOON

Action!

A police car with an insanely flashing light strip SCREECHES to a halt behind the Volvo. It contains two policemen. The driver (POLICEMAN #1) gets on the public address speaker. His partner opens the cruiser's passenger door. He gets out with gun drawn, and uses the door as a shield.

POLICEMAN #1 (ON P.A.)

Stay in your vehicle and don't
make any sudden movements.

Policeman #1 gets out of the cruiser and draws his gun, pointing it upwards. He walks slowly toward the Volvo. As he does, production assistants push the show camera along its tracks behind him. As he reaches the driver's side of the Volvo we SEE the show camera looking over his shoulder into the window.

POLICEMAN #1

Can I see your license and
registration, please?

CUT to the show camera's P.O.V., now looking directly at Pete (Dirk), over the policeman's shoulder.

PETE (DIRK)

(dripping sarcasm)

I can't imagine what the problem could be, officer. I'm sure I wasn't speeding, although I can't see the speedometer because the dashboard lights are out...

LOON

Cut! Dirk, my young friend, I believe I requested "smarm," not sarcasm. You do know the difference, don't you? Think Eddie Haskell from "Leave it to Beaver."

DIRK

Yeah, sure, I got it, Loon, sorry.

LOON

We'll take it from your line. Roll 'em.

SOUND TECHNICIAN

Speed.

CAMERA OPERATOR

Rolling.

LOON

Action.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The knick-knack filled living room of FLORENCE BUTTERFIELD, cat-lover. Doilies abound, as do dozens of pussycats.

Cats are everywhere, on the floor, on the furniture, draped on Florence (who sits on the sofa facing the camera), and even on Ike, who stands facing Florence next to his camera operator and soundman.

FLORENCE

Smell? What smell?

EXT. SEATTLE STREET - NIGHT

PETE (DIRK)
(doing a really good
Eddie Haskell
impersonation)

I can't imagine what the
problem could be, officer.
I'm sure I wasn't speeding,
although...

LOON (O.S.)
Cut! Dirk, Dirk, Dirk, that
was great, really great,
you've really got the idea.
Let's try it one more time,
only this time, you do it as
Pete being smarmy, not Eddie.

DIRK
Oh, sure. Let's do it.

LOON (O.S.)
All right, let's try it again.
Roll camera.

CAMERA OPERATOR (O.S.)
Rolling.

SOUND TECHNICIAN (O.S.)
Speed.

LOON (O.S.)
Dear God, let us please have
some action.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The knick-knack filled living room of MARY CHIN, cat-lover. Mary's living room is a variation on the theme established by Florence Butterfield, above. In addition to her live pets, Mary collects porcelain statues of cats and collector plates with cats painted on them. Cats are everywhere, on the floor, on the furniture, draped on Mary (who sits on the sofa facing the camera), and even on Ike, who stands next to his crew, filming Mary.

MARY
Smell? What smell?

EXT. SEATTLE STREET - NIGHT

PETE (DIRK)

(Mr. Smarm)

I can't imagine what the problem could be, officer. I'm sure I wasn't speeding, although I can't see the speedometer because the dashboard lights are out...

Continue the scene, in final edited form, to its end.

POLICEMAN #1

Don't get smart with me, buddy. Out of the car, all of you.

Doors open and Pete, Linc and Ju Li clamber out of the Volvo.

POLICEMAN #1

All right, hands on the hood. You cover 'em, Charlie, I'll check the car.

The three young people assume the position and Policeman #1 enters the car through the driver's door, reaches over and opens the glove compartment. He backs out of the car and stands upright, holding a plastic baggie filled with what appears to be marijuana.

POLICEMAN #1

Can't imagine what the problem could be, huh? Looks like we've got ourselves a little problem, right here.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

The bust comes to an end. PULL BACK to reveal that we've been watching a rough edit of the scene with Mike and Loon.

MIKE

It's great, but at this rate, we'll never finish. It was only supposed to take half a day to shoot and it took three.

LOON

You can thank the boy wonder for that. I think he's had his brain surgically replaced with cottage cheese.

MIKE

Yeah, I know. Dirk Manley:
Body by Nautilus, Mind by
Mattel. But we've got to make
up some time somehow.

LOON

We've already picked up a day.
Take a look at this.
(presses intercom)
Emil, please run the next
section.

They turn their attention back to the screen.

INT. KITCHEN - "ALCHEMISTS" HOUSE - NIGHT

Capt. Justice, in her wheelchair, sits with Pete, Linc and Ju Li around their kitchen table. Their communal home is a dingy mess.

CAPT. JUSTICE

My house has a ramp. Where
the hell's your ramp?

PETE

Why don't you get the city to
pay for one?

CAPT. JUSTICE

Fat chance. All right, this
is your first mission. All
the kids involved in these
crimes went to all-night
parties at a dance club called
"Calculus."

LINC

They're called "raves," mon.

CAPT. JUSTICE

Whatever. Calculus sells
"smart drugs," and there's a
new one called X-L-N-T.

LINC

It's called "Excellent," mon.

CAPT. JUSTICE

Yeah, whatever. Anyway, this
"excellent" stuff ain't so
excellent. It's addictive and
rots your brain.

LINC

That's not what I heard, mon.

CAPT. JUSTICE

I don't give a damn what you heard. You're going to get me some hard facts about Calculus and the slimeball who runs the place, Juan Calaveras. We know he's dirty, but we've never been able to pin anything on him.

Pete is still unhappy about his new job.

PETE

And that's where we come in. We set him up and you knock him down.

CAPT. JUSTICE

That's the way it works, pal. But watch out for this guy, he's a total nutcase. He's obsessed with germs and disease. He even wears surgical gloves to protect himself from infection.

PETE

What's up with that?

CAPT. JUSTICE

What do I look like, some kind of pointy-headed psychologist? Don't worry about that. You get a gig at Calculus, and find me the evidence connecting Calaveras, XLNT and this crime wave.

EXT./INT. FAIRGROUND TENT - NIGHT

Crowds stream down the midway of a county fair. A gaudily painted sign above the tent entrance reads, "The Amazing Rudolfo and his Trained Felines." As the BARKER beckons the suckers, we MOVE into the tent.

BARKER

Ladies and gentlemen, step right up. The Amazing Rudolfo and his pusillanimous pussycats will delight and astound you...

Inside, spectators sit on bleachers. Ike and his crew record the proceedings.

THE AMAZING RUDOLFO begins his act. He stands at a table which has ten transparent boxes, each containing a live cat. Each cat's tail protrudes from the back of the box.

THE AMAZING RUDOLFO

Thank you ladies and gentlemen
and children of all ages. I'm
sure you're all familiar with
our first number, "How Dry I
Am."

He begins. Each cat has been trained to howl a specific tone when its tail is pulled. The screeching begins.

Ike is appalled, and he's not alone. At first come grumbles, and then shouts from the crowd. As the first angry customers reach the stage, we MOVE IN on the cat who screeching the last note of the song, a sustained caterwaul.

INT. SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CROSSFADE sound to the SCREECHING of five-year-old girl. PULL BACK to reveal her long-haired, flannel-wearing, goatee-sporting XLNT-crazed teenage BROTHER nailing her feet to the floor.

BROTHER

You don't need a babysitter,
Ashley, you'll be fine here
all by yourself. You just
stand there and watch
television, and I'll be off to
the party, and that will be
most excellent. Don't cry.

He turns on the TV to "Beavis and Butthead" and walks out of the room as his sister whimpers.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

The end of the previous scene is frozen on a monitor. Loon grins. Mike's jaw drops.

LOON

It's pretty impressive, I
know. And that's just the
beginning.

MIKE

For the first time in my life,
I don't know what to say.

LOON

How about, "Loon, you're a genius."

MIKE

The whole thing has been so abstract until now. This is so... real.

LOON

You bet your ass it's real, sonny boy, and there's plenty more where that came from. Oh, and we'd better order some more of that raspberry jam we've been using for blood; Dirk keeps eating it.

INT. COLLEGE PROFESSOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The book-lined shelves behind PROF. PAUL KATZENJAMMER attest to his status as eminent cat historian. Ike and his crew capture the doctor's thoughts.

PROF. KATZENJAMMER

Cats occupy a unique position in history. Almost everyone knows that the ancient Egyptians held cats sacred. Few are aware, however, of the fact that in the fourth dynasty of the Akkadian Empire, a cat named "Ha Choo," or as we would put it, "Dave," was actually made high priest of the cult of vermin.

INT. CALCULUS NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Calculus is a cavernous converted warehouse. A dozen mirror-balls create a kaleidoscope of light. A four-foot stage is at one end of the room.

Onstage, Juan Calaveras is slick in his sharkskin suit and latex gloves.

JUAN CALAVERAS (JULIO)

Welcome, my smart young friends, to another night of fun at Calculus, the club that brought you XLNT.

(MORE)

JUAN CALAVERAS (JULIO) (CONT.)

Now Calculus brings you "The Alchemists." The two are one, and one is all. Let's give it up for Pete, Linc and Ju Li!

The crowd explodes with love for The Alchemists.

Ju Li plays electronic drums and sequencer. Linc plays a reggae bass line and Pete flails away with a grunge guitar sound. The resulting hybrid is something that any Gen X-er would listen to and say, "They got it all wrong."

The crowd consists of about 500 teenagers. The only thing that distinguishes them is how many piercings they have and where they're located.

There are several booths in the back, under a sign that says "Juice & Things." There's a long line at the booth. The music weaves its hypnotic spell.

As the crowd gets deeper into the music, clothing starts hitting the floor and young pierced nipples are everywhere.

Sweaty bodies writhe, heave and grind together to the beat.

Juan Calaveras sits under a canopy at a table, drinking it all in. His retinue consists of several beautiful young boy sex workers, all half his age, dressed as nurses. The African-American sex worker has long blonde hair and a pierced nose. Juan Calaveras nods to a henchman, who heads downstairs to the basement.

Pete notices the henchman leaving, and nods to Linc. Linc nods back.

The crowd, clearly intoxicated, throbs with the music.

The henchman reappears carrying a tray loaded with those little white cardboard meds cups you see in hospitals. Each cup contains XLNT.

Linc notices the henchman, who takes his tray back to the booth. The line has grown.

The dance party is transforming into a pansexual orgy. Boys and girls, boys and boys, girls and girls, threesomes, whatever. One helluva good time is being had by all.

Juan Calaveras sits back and smiles. Things at his table are heating up. He nods to a flunky who presses a button. Cloth walls descend from the canopy creating a tent, shielding the private debauch within. Suggestive shadows play on the tent walls.

As the music reaches a climax, so do many in the crowd. The music ends.

On a crane high above the crowd, Loon sits with the camera and its operator.

LOON

Cut!

The crane swoops down behind the action area, next to Mike, who mops his brow.

LOON

Not bad, eh?

MIKE

You've got them fucking on the floor.

LOON

Of course, where else would I have them fucking?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The knick-knack filled living room of MAX BLITZSTEIN, cat-lover. Max's living room is a variation on the theme established by Flo and Mary. Max likes to bake things in shape of cats, and sits with a cat-shaped challah bread in his lap. Cats are everywhere, on the floor, on the furniture, draped on Max (who sits on the sofa facing the camera), and even on Ike, who stands next to his crew, filming Max.

MAX

Smell? What smell?

INT. "CALCULUS OFFICE"/SOUND STAGE - NIGHT

A take is in progress. Juan Calaveras has captured Ju Li and Linc and tied them up by a window. He's also taken another hostage, Mrs. Gomez, a maintenance worker. Juan Calaveras sits at the desk, holding an Uzi. Near the camera, Mike stands next to Loon.

JUAN CALAVERAS (JULIO)

...it was lucky for me that I caught you first. What's up with you? You treated me like an idiot, like some dumb pansy! Do I look like an idiot? Do you think I'm filth?

(MORE)

JUAN CALAVERAS (JULIO) (CONT'D)

I trusted you and this is how
you repay me. I think I'll
kill you now.

He gets up and walks over to the hostages.

JUAN CALAVERAS (JULIO)

You are nothing but a germ, a
virus.

He puts the Uzi to Mrs. Gomez' temple.

JUAN CALAVERAS (JULIO)

Time to disinfect.

Pete comes CRASHING through the window behind Juan Calaveras,
swinging on a rope, and knocks the Uzi out of his hands. The
two fight fiercely, knocking over furniture and struggling
for the gun. Quickly, Pete knocks Juan Calaveras out.

He takes a large hunting knife from a sheath at his belt and
cuts the ropes holding Linc, Ju Li and Mrs. Gomez. He takes
Ju Li in his arms.

PETE (DIRK)

I couldn't let him kill you,
baby. You know hard it is to
find a good drummer.

They kiss passionately as Linc and Mrs. Gomez look on. The
door to the office bursts open and in rolls Captain Justice,
gun drawn. She sees there's no danger and holsters her
weapon.

CAPTAIN JUSTICE (ALTHEA)

Looks like y'all don't need me
after all. Good work, gang.
You know, this could be the
beginning of a beautiful
partnership.

(to Pete and Ju Li)

Why don't you two get a room?

LOON

Cut! Good.

MIKE

So, we're done, right?

LOON

No, wait, I have an idea.

(to crew)

Reset for another take,
please.

The crew replaces the smashed window and puts the furniture back into position. The actors go to their places. Loon talks quietly to Julio Bernstein for a moment, and then walks back to his chair.

LOON

Let's try one more, shall we?
Ju Li, let's take it from the
end of your monologue.

Su-Moon nods from her tied-up position.

LOON

Roll 'em.

SOUND TECHNICIAN

Speed.

CAMERA OPERATOR

Rolling.

LOON

Action.

JU LI (SU-MOON)

None of us are going anywhere.
We aren't a threat.

(referring to Mrs.
Gomez)

Let her go. She's completely
innocent.

JUAN CALAVERAS (JULIO)

(pacing)

I don't think so. We caught
her coming out of the lab.
Where I come from, being in
the wrong place at the wrong
time is a capital offense.

He walks over to his desk. Before he sits he pulls a silk handkerchief from his jacket pocket and carefully dusts off the seat.

JUAN CALAVERAS (JULIO)

After all I did for you, you
turn out to be cops. I can't
believe it. It could have
been disastrous for my whole
operation. But lucky for
me...

As Juan Calaveras continues under, Mike flashes on a MENTAL IMAGE.

INT. - IKE'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

The morning after the brothers' drinking spree. Ike enters followed by Mike. Before collapsing into his chair, Ike carefully dusts it off with his silk handkerchief.

INT. "CALCULUS OFFICE"/SOUND STAGE - NIGHT - RETURN TO PRESENT

The memory puts Mike into a cold sweat.

INT. IKE'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Ike sits at his desk. The phone RINGS and he picks it up.

IKE
Hi, this is Ike.

HUTCH
Ike, I'm glad I caught you.
It's Hutch.

IKE
I was just on my way over to
show you the new footage.
Wait 'til you see this
carnival stuff, it's
unbelievable.

HUTCH
Yeah, that's what I wanted to
talk to you about. I'm afraid
I've got some bad news.

IKE
What kind of bad news?

HUTCH
All funding for the project
has been de-accessed.

IKE
De-accessed?

HUTCH
PBS has been spun off to a
Dutch multinational.
ConGlomCo calculated that
without the merchandising
rights to Barney and Sesame
Street, they couldn't make a
profit. PBS has been sold.

IKE

Sold to who?

HUTCH

A Dutch multinational called SysComNet, and they're moving the entire operation down to Mexico. They figure they can generate product for a fraction of the U.S. cost. I'm really sorry.

IKE

If I don't get the money you promised me, the bank's going to close down the whole company.

HUTCH

I tried to take the project with me, but everything's a mess. I'll see what I can do for you when I get down to Mexico City. For now, there's not much I can do. Submit your expenses to Alison, but you'd better hurry. I'll be in touch. You take care of yourself, okay?

IKE

Okay.

The phone CLICKS. Ike slowly replaces the receiver.

IKE

There's gotta be some way out. Gotta think. Gotta think. Gotta think.

The door opens and Mike enters, carrying coffee.

MIKE

(cheerful)

Hey, stranger. Long time no see.

Mike puts the cups DOWN on Ike's desk, spilling coffee all over everything.

MIKE

I brought you some coffee. It's just how you like it... oh, Goddammit!

He takes a coffee-soaked napkin and tries to clean up the mess.

IKE

Let me do that.

He takes a clean towel out of his desk and starts mopping it up.

MIKE

I came by to see how you're doing. We used to talk about everything. I really miss you, man.

Ike looks up for a second and goes back to wiping the desk.

IKE

I've been busy. "Nine Lives" is really taking off. Things couldn't be better.

MIKE

That's great. I'm really happy for you.

IKE

(he knows)

Happy for me? Something's gone wrong with X-Patrol, and you're here to ask me to fix it. Just what I expected. Well, well, well.

MIKE

I never could get anything past you. The whole damn thing's falling apart... It seemed so cool when it was just an idea. But it's not just an idea any more. It's real and it sucks and I can't be responsible for it. Shit may float, but I'm sinking like a stone.

IKE

You got yourself into this mess. Give me one good reason why I should help you.

MIKE

What do you want from me? To say I'm sorry? All right, I'm sorry. You've gotta help me.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT.)

I'll cancel X-Patrol and do whatever you want on "Cats." At least that will bring in the money for the bank.

(relieved)

Oh, I feel better already. I'll call Tom and tell him to stick it. You and I'll be partners again.

At this, Destiny bursts into the room, totally distraught. She's fanning herself with a fax.

DESTINY

O, Dio mio! Let me sit down! I'm gonna faint.

She collapses into a chair, still fanning herself, and notices Mike.

DESTINY

Oh, Mike, it's so good to see you here. I knew you'd come. I knew you'd come through for your brother.

Mike is confused. Ike gets up and tries to pry Destiny loose and move her out the door.

IKE

Destiny, this can wait until later.

DESTINY

Look at you, trying to be so strong. I'm so proud of you. How could they do this to you? You know, I never trusted that Hutchinson Parkway guy, anyway. His eyes are too close together.

MIKE

Hutchinson Parkway? I thought his name was Whitebread or something.

DESTINY

He gotta lotta nerve! How dare he cancel the entire project, just like that!? Who does he think he is? How dare he!?

MIKE

Canceled the entire project,
huh?

(beat; to Ike)

You were saying?

IKE

(smiling)

Hey, I'm you're big brother.
torturing you is what I do
best. But now, we're back in
business.

(inspiration)

I've got it!

Behind, for perhaps for the first time, we SEE Heather's
pincushion sitting on a shelf.

INT. TIMES TWO LOUNGE - DAY - M.O.S.

A jazz version of the "X-Patrol" theme runs throughout this
scene.

Mike and Ike, clean and alert, spread script pages on the
pool table.

Mike sips his coffee, which is too hot, so he spills it. Ike
crosses out some words on a page and holds it up to Mike, who
nods.

Ike writes in a couple of new words and holds it up to Mike,
who laughs and nods.

A little later: Mike and Ike aren't quite so fresh. Their
pencils are shorter and their coffee cups are half-full.

As Mike writes, Ike talks on the phone to CHARLIE, the video
editor.

Time passes. Script pages are everywhere. Lots of them are
on the floor. Empty coffee cups line the edge of the table.
Mike looks horrendous, and even Ike is a little wilted.

Ike takes one of the piles of pages and straightens it out,
evening the edges on the top and sides.

He hands the completed script to Mike.

INT. TIMES TWO PRODUCTIONS - MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT - M.O.S.

Ike hands a marked-up script to Destiny.

Carole sits at a computer, smoking. Destiny stands over her
shoulder, holding the script.

They both laugh as they read.

On the screen, Carole highlights the name, "PETE" and presses a few keys. The highlighted name changes to "LINC."

Pages emerge from a laser printer. The first one reads, "X-Patrol - Final Revision."

INT. "CALCULUS OFFICE"/SOUND STAGE - NIGHT - M.O.S.

This is the same set as used earlier, but with a tiny crew. Loon is not present.

Ike directs a new scene.

Juan Calaveras (Julio Bernstein) is on the phone. He waves his gun around and gesticulates wildly as he delivers his lines.

INT. VIDEO EDITING SUITE - NIGHT

Ike sits next to CHARLIE, the editor. On the monitor, the X-Patrollers are getting busted. We HEAR the end of the scene.

POLICEMAN #1 (ON MONITOR)

...think we've got ourselves a little problem, right here.

CHARLIE

That does it. Let's take a look.

IKE

Hey Mike, come over here.

Mike comes up to the console. Charlie hits a button. On the monitor, we SEE the scene as originally shot: Policeman #1 opens the glove compartment, backs out and stands up holding a plastic baggie..

POLICEMAN #1 (ON MONITOR)

Can't imagine what the problem could be, huh? I think we've got ourselves a little problem, right here.

The scene FREEZES.

CHARLIE

Now, let's take a little walk on the wild side.

Charlie hits a button and the new scene plays. It's almost identical. After Policeman #1 opens the glove compartment,

his hand moves to his breast pocket and pulls out the bag of pot, which he palms. This replaces the shot of him backing out of the car. The scene cuts to him standing upright and holding up the baggie.

POLICEMAN #1 (ON MONITOR)

Can't imagine what the problem could be, huh? I think we've got ourselves a little problem, right here.

The scene FREEZES.

MIKE

(mock horror)

I'm shocked, shocked, I tell you, that you think the police would actually set people up for arrest. Why, that's outrageous!

They break up laughing.

Later, Mike sleeps on the couch as Ike and Charlie work.

A still frame of Dirk (as Pete) is on the monitor. Charlie pulls a lever and Pete morphs into Linc.

Still later, Mike sleeps on the floor, snoring loudly.

On the monitor, Captain Justice rolls through the door of Juan Calaveras' office and delivers the final line of the movie.

CAPTAIN JUSTICE (ON MONITOR)

Why don't you two get a room?

The monitor fades to black.

CHARLIE

I've been waiting a long time for this. You **can** polish shit.

IKE

Let's go over this one more time. All the dubs will be struck off the "A" tape, but when they send for the broadcast master, you deliver the "B" version, right?

CHARLIE

You got it.

MONTAGE

- A) Spinning newspaper stops to reveal trade mag headline: "GNU to premier "X-Patrol" on 400 outlets."
- B) Video technician puts tapes in boxes labeled, "Reviewer's Advance Copy - "X Patrol."
- C) Dirk Manley (Pete) being interviewed on "Entertainment Tonight."
- D) Newspaper review headline: "X-Patrol panders to lowest common denominator."
- E) Jeremy Moon (Linc) being interviewed on "Larry King."
- F) Spinning newspaper stops to reveal trade mag headline: "Traditional Family Coalition Denounces 'X-Patrol.'"
- G) A Seven-Eleven plastered with life-size images of Pete, Linc and Ju Li. Kids walk out drinking Slurpees from "X-Patrol" cups.
- H) The cover of "TV Guide" with the 3 X-Patrollers. Headline reads: "At last we discover - X-Patrol: Hype or Tripe?"

EXT. CHAUNCEY HOTEL - NIGHT

A limo pulls up in front of the Chauncey Hotel. The chauffeur opens the car door. Mike and Ike emerge.

Ike straightens the handkerchief in his jacket pocket and the brothers exit into the hotel.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

It's a combination party and screening. Tables are set up oriented toward a huge screen. Above the screen is an "X-Patrol" logo. Larger-than-life-size cutouts of the "X-Patrol" cast flank the screen. Music from the show blares from large speakers.

People circulate: crew from the shoot, press, and party-goers all mix and match. It's an industry bash.

Seated at the "power" table (#1) are GNU owner, B.D. FRANKFURTER, Tom and a companion, and Loon Welles.

At the next table (#2) are the "X-Patrol" principals: Jeremy, Dirk, Su-Moon, AlThea, and Julio. All have dates. Su-Moon is attended by Henri.

Seated at table (#3) (on the other side of table #1) are: Carole and SANDY (Tom's assistant), and Destiny and friends (including Party-Goers #1 & #2 from the "Cats" party).

Mike and Ike walk up to table #1 and are greeted by all. Tom jumps up.

TOM

(to Frankfurter)

B.D., I want you to meet the man responsible for "X-Patrol," Mike Fisher. Mike, B.D. Frankfurter.

Frankfurter is enormously fat, and eats continuously. He speaks while chewing.

FRANKFURTER

I don't even know why we're here. The GNU network is about reruns. I like reruns, people like reruns, and reruns make us a lot of money.

(to Mike)

Are you going to make us a lot of money?

MIKE

I certainly hope so, sir, and it's a pleasure to meet you, too, Mr. Frankfurter.

Mike, Ike and Tom all take their seats. Mike is next to Tom. Before he sits, Ike carefully dusts his seat with his silk hankie.

TOM

Ike, long time no see. Como esta?

IKE

(noncommittal)

I've been busy.

The house lights dim, the screen lights up and the "X-Patrol" theme begins. The hubbub quiets to a dull roar. Everyone waits expectantly.

FRANKFURTER

This had better be good.

(Note: During the screening, the party continues, with people conversing, walking around, watching the screen for a while, etc.)

As the title music ends, we SEE the opening of the show, as we heard at the script meeting.

INSERT - SEATTLE STREET - NIGHT

Nighttime in the drizzly city of Seattle. Pete, Linc and Ju Li, place their instruments in a battered old van, get in and drive away. Almost immediately there's the muffled sound of an explosion and smoke pours from under the hood. The van pulls over and they get out.

PETE

(to Linc)

Didn't I tell you to check the oil, man?

RETURN TO SCENE

At table #1, Tom leans over to Ike.

TOM

Keeping busy, huh?

IKE

I get around.

TOM

Oh, then I guess you'll be heading down south of the border.

IKE

What do you mean?

TOM

Come on, man, you know. "Los Gatos del Mundo."

Ike starts to speak, but Mike holds up his hand.

MIKE

Let's just enjoy the show.

INSERT - SEATTLE STREET - NIGHT

On the screen, we see Policeman #1 planting the bag of pot.

POLICEMAN #1

Can't imagine what the problem could be, huh? Looks like we've got ourselves a little problem, right here.

RETURN TO SCENE

Tom and Loon look up in puzzlement.

LOON & TOM
(simultaneously)
What...?

They swing their heads toward Mike.

MIKE
(laughing nervously)
A few little changes.

Tom and Loon quickly swivel back toward the screen to see what else has changed. Frankfurter picks up on their uneasiness and grunts menacingly at Tom.

INSERT - HIGH SCHOOL METAL SHOP - DAY

Three long-haired, flannel-wearing, tattoo-toting, goatee-sporting XLNT-crazed teens hold their wildly flailing shop teacher's head under a drill press. As they start to lower the bit into his temple, they taunt him.

TEEN #1
Is this tight enough, Mr.
Gelfand?

TEEN #2
Wait, Brad, you're not wearing
safety goggles. Somebody
might get hurt.

TEEN #3
Why does everything I make
turn into an ashtray?

RETURN TO SCENE

At Table #1, Tom turns to Frankfurter.

TOM
I know it seems excessive, but
the kids really love it.

FRANKFURTER
Well, they'd better love it.
Either way, my pals down at
the Family Values Coalition
are gonna have my butt for
breakfast. At least if I make
some money on the deal it'll
be worth it.

INSERT - SUBURBAN BATHROOM - NIGHT

As Mom lounges in the tub, her long-haired, flannel-wearing, nose-ring-sporting XLNT-crazed DAUGHTER gleefully drops a plugged-in hair dryer into the water. As the sparks fly, and so does Mom, she says goodbye.

DAUGHTER

Oh mother, you're such a drag.
Just get over yourself, okay?

RETURN TO SCENE

Glasses are empty, no one talks, all eyes are glued to the screen.

INSERT - CALCULUS NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

The orgy scene. We discover that the mysterious booth is staffed by Kay Floral, dressed head-to-toe in black latex.

A patron gives her ten dollars and follows her inside. He bends over a table, and his pants hit the floor. Kay reaches for an XLNT suppository. His face registers pain, and then bliss.

Kay straightens up, removes her latex examination gloves and puts on a fresh pair.

RETURN TO SCENE

Kay makes a grand entrance and sits herself down next to Ike. Julio Bernstein has moved from Table #2 and sits at Ike's other elbow.

KAY

So, Ike, I don't see your
"friend" around.

She picks up a napkin from the table and drops it to the floor between Ike's legs. She starts to move under the table to "pick it up." Before she disappears, Julio puts his arm around Ike's shoulders. Ike gives him a peck on the cheek.

JULIO

(to Kay)

I don't believe we've been
introduced.

Kay looks up from between Ike's legs.

KAY

Oh, you're... I knew that.

Kay jumps to her feet and brushes herself off. She holds her hand out for Julio to kiss.

KAY

Kay Floral.

Julio bends down to kiss her hand and she coyly turns her head away. Her gaze lands on another, and once again she's instantly smitten. She snatches her hand away from Julio and moves toward Frankfurter.

INSERT - "CALCULUS OFFICE" - NIGHT

This is the scene we saw Ike shooting earlier. Juan Calaveras is talking on the phone, gleefully waving his Uzi around.

JUAN CALAVERAS

...running like clockwork, Mr. Secretary. As per your orders, we've substituted the Z-3 for the XLNT these stupid kids think they're buying.

(beat)

Soon, we'll leak the news that all the recent violence was caused by kids strung out on XLNT. The war on drugs can continue as planned. No one will ever know that XLNT is actually good for you.

(beat)

Some undercover local cops have been snooping around. We've got one on ice already, and we'll have the others soon.

(beat)

No sir, there'll be nothing to connect their disappearance to the department.

He hangs up.

RETURN TO SCENE

Loon sputters with anger. Tom shoots daggers with his eyes at Mike, and draws his finger across his throat. He keeps the gesture hidden from Frankfurter, who is busy fending off Kay.

At table #2, confusion reigns.

ALTHEA

Looks like they changed the whole damn show. You know, that reminds me of the time...

At table #3, a party mood prevails.

PARTY-GOER #2

You see, Miss Thing, I told you she was dirty.

PARTY-GOER #1

You're right. You know, this is good. I thought it was going to suck.

DESTINY

Suck badly? Mmm-mm, girl. No way.

Still later. The final climax: It's not the one we saw earlier, but it's similar.

INSERT - "CALCULUS OFFICE" - NIGHT

Juan Calaveras has captured Ju Li and **Pete** and tied them up. Also tied up is Mrs. Gomez. Ju Li plays for time.

JU LI

The police are on their way. Let Mrs. Gomez go, it'll go easier on you. I'll tell Captain Justice that you could have killed us all but you didn't. Look, you don't need to kill anybody. You're in control here. We aren't a threat to you.

(indicating Mrs. Gomez)

Let her go. She's innocent.

JUAN CALAVERAS

(pacing)

We caught her coming out of the lab. Where I come from, being in the wrong place at the wrong time is a capital offense.

He walks over to his desk and pulls the chair out. Before sitting, he dusts his seat with a silk handkerchief.

JUAN CALAVERAS

After all I did for you, you turn out to be cops. Too bad for you that you had to interfere with government business. You're cops, you should be helping me, not fighting me. I trusted you and this is how you repay me. I think I'll kill you now.

He gets up and walks over to the hostages.

JUAN CALAVERAS

You are nothing but a germ, a virus.

He puts the Uzi to Mrs. Gomez' temple.

JUAN CALAVERAS

Time to disinfect.

At this, **Linc** comes crashing through the window behind Juan Calaveras, swinging on a rope, and knocks the Uzi out of his arms. The two fight fiercely. Quickly, Linc knocks Juan Calaveras out. He takes out his knife and cuts the ropes holding Pete, Ju Li and Mrs. Gomez.

He takes Pete in his arms.

LINC

I couldn't let him kill you, baby. You know hard it is to find a good guitar player.

They kiss passionately.

The door to the office bursts open and Captain Justice rolls in, gun drawn.

CAPTAIN JUSTICE

Looks like ya'll don't need me after all. Good work, gang. You know, this could be the beginning of a beautiful partnership.

(to Pete and Linc)

Why don't you two get a room?

RETURN TO SCENE

Back at the power table, all hell is breaking loose. Loon faints.

FRANKFURTER

You mean they're homos!? And
I paid for it?! Lambert,
you've got some quick
explaining to do!

At table #3, cheers. Destiny cries with happiness.

At table #1, Ike gets up.

IKE

(saluting Tom)

Hasta la vista, baby.

He steps over to table #3, where he's met with whoops and
cheers.

At table #2, no one can quite figure out what's going on.

DIRK

You mean I'm a homo?

At table #1, Tom is shaking. He stands.

TOM

I brought you back from the
dead, and you killed me. I'm
ruined. I can't believe it.
How could you do this?

(it dawns on him)

You couldn't do this. Not by
yourself. You're not smart
enough.

He looks over at table #3. Ike is smiling and laughing.

TOM

Ike. Ike did this.

MIKE

Well, he helped. Did a pretty
good job, too.

TOM

Don't get funny with me. You
were supposed to deliver a
show based on the script I
approved. I did not approve
this... thing. You are guilty
of criminal fraud, and I won't
rest until your ass, both your
asses, are rotting in jail.

Ike comes back over to table #1.

TOM

You, you son of a bitch,
you're responsible for this.
I'll kill you!

Tom lunges for Ike. He's restrained by Jeremy and Julio.
Tom continues to struggle.

IKE

That won't do you much good
now, will it?

TOM

You smug bastard, I'll have
your ass in a sling so fast
that...

Tom's rant is interrupted by SANDY, who carries a fax. She's
elated.

SANDY

Tom...

Tom keeps ranting.

SANDY

Tom!

TOM

What? Can't you see I'm busy?

SANDY

I think you'll want to see
this. The East Coast numbers
are in. We got a fifty-eight
share and the phone calls are
pouring in.

TOM

We're going get lynched. It's
a fucking nightmare.

SANDY

No. The phone calls are
running 10 to 1 in favor.
They loved it; it's a hit!

TOM

What?

SANDY

I'm saying, it's a hit. "X-
Patrol" is a hit!

At this point, Tom stops struggling and looks confused. Mike
grabs Ike and hugs him.

FRANKFURTER

(figuring)

Fifty-eight share... forty million people. Ten-to-one in favor. So, they're homos. Well, who **cares** if they're homos?

BEGIN CLOSING CREDITS

EXT. ROLLER COASTER (MOVING) - WALT DISNEY WORLD - DAY

Kay and Frankfurter, strapped into their seats, go screaming down a long slope.

EXT. SEATTLE SPACE NEEDLE - DAY

Mike, Ike and Loon at a shoot with the "X-Patrol" cast and crew, at the base of the Space Needle. They're choreographing a fight scene involving Ju Li.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NOB HILL - DAY

Carole and Sandy, arm in arm, enjoy the view of the San Francisco Bay.

EXT. MEDICAL CLINIC - DAY

Destiny, dressed like a goddess, emerges from the front door of the clinic. We see her from behind as she waves goodbye to the people inside. As she turns around, we SEE that she's got a big bandage on her nose.

EXT. SEATTLE SPACE NEEDLE - DAY

Ju Li flips a bad guy over her head. He lands on his back and she plants a spiked heel in his chest. He's got a swastika tattooed on his forehead. She grabs him by the throat with one hand and is about to chop him in the neck with the other when the scene FREEZES.

FADE OUT.

THE END