

T H E D R O P O U T

John Michael Harper

Sam Lanckton

OCTOBER 2002

FADE IN:

1. EXT. HIGHWAY - EARLY MORNING

An old, beat-up, maroon Volvo tears down the highway, driven by ERNEST "ZERO" CHANCE, a handsome, bedraggled, bleary-eyed twenty year-old. Crumpled coffee cups litter the dashboard; Zero puffs on the nub of a cigarette and nips at a bottle of Jim Beam.

Zero passes the city line of BROOKSTON, and just beyond it, a billboard hawking the re-election campaign of incumbent MAYOR WARREN CHAMBERS, a middle-aged WASP, pictured with his gorgeous daughter, MORNING. There is no mother in the picture.

The slogan reads: "Let's Make Tomorrow Like Yesterday". Behind the billboard in his PIGMOBILE, middle-aged, mustachioed POLICE CHIEF POTIMOTH (pronounced "Potty-mouth") is fast asleep with a bear claw dangling from his mouth.

As Zero's Volvo blows past, Potimoth jolts awake.

2. EXT. THE CHANCE'S HOUSE - DAY

Zero pulls the Volvo into the driveway of a well appointed, white Colonial home with perfectly landscaped shrubbery. He parks the car beside a candy-apple red, 1964 mint condition Alfa Romeo convertible.

3. INT. THE CHANCE'S HOUSE, SOLARIUM - DAY

CHEWIE, a mildly retarded young man, stuffs pennies in his cheeks. He is dressed in Captain America Underoos and wears a blanket for a cape.

Chewie watches the TV news while filling out a Word Jumble incorrectly. On the television, CHARLES HALEY, a fair-haired, square-jawed anchorman, interviews Mayor Warren Chambers on the steps of Brookston City Hall.

Chewie hears the front door open.

HALEY

(on TV)

Your opponent, District Attorney Stan Portnoy, has accused you of shady deals and questionable ethics. How do you respond?

WARREN

First let me say Charles, that's a marvelous suit. It's wonderful to be running for re-election in such a marvelous town, with its well-manicured lawns and its citizens who always look just like you.

(MORE)

WARREN (CONT'D)

Purity in the water, purity in all things. Order, reason, consequence, responsibility and a strong work ethic...these are the pillars of Brookston.

Zero enters, holding a shopping bag in one hand, the bottle in the other.

WARREN

(on TV)

Let's make tomorrow like yesterday.

Chewie turns off the TV.

CHEWIE

Welcome home, Mr. Zero!

ZERO

Hi, Chewie. Are my parents still home?

CHEWIE

Oh, yah. They still super asleep, Mr. Zero.

Zero looks at a poorly drawn picture on the wall.

ZERO

Is this your latest?

CHEWIE

Oh, yah.

Zero regards the picture closely. Chewie excitedly stuffs more pennies in his cheeks.

ZERO

Is that a spaceship?

CHEWIE

No, that's the jungle.

Zero and Chewie stare at each other.

ZERO

So, Chewie, you wanna have a party?

Chewie nods as pennies fleck from his mouth.

4. INT. THE CHANCE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Zero sits at the kitchen table in his underpants, clutching the now half-empty bottle of Jim Beam. Chewie casually crams crayons in his mouth. A banner is draped across the cabinets, reading "Surprise!" A half-eaten cake still bears the writing "Welcome Home, Me!"

We hear footsteps.

Enter BEN CHANCE, a short, wiry, dark-haired executive with the air and polish of a once great athlete, followed by ELLIE, Ben's wife, a faded beauty with long brown hair and the disposition of a nervous bride on her wedding day.

BEN

What the hell is this?

ZERO

Mom, Dad, I've dropped out of college and I've come home to live with you.

CHEWIE

Yippee!

ELLIE

No, Chewie, no yippee.

BEN

Well, obviously you've gone insane.

ELLIE

Don't stigmatize him, Ben. We've always encouraged him to be his own person.

BEN

And look where it's got us, Ellie. We take out a second mortgage to pay his tuition, and he shows up here drunk at eight in the morning, and tells us he's thrown away his future!

ZERO

You guys want some cake?

Ben checks his watch.

BEN

Sober up and get your act together. We'll talk about this when I get home from work.

ELLIE

Come on, Chewie, let's go to art therapy.

5. EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - DAY

Zero drives his car, still with the Jim Beam. He pulls up in front of an old, decaying mansion, GOOD HAVEN. He parks the car and smashes the bottle.

6. INT. GOOD HAVEN, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Four mid-twentysomethings, ROMAN, GENGHIS, BOGART and WESTERLY, lay about in a sprawling living room furnished with Barcaloungers and overstuffed couches. They are the OLDER DROPOUTS (ODs).

The ODs pass a bong between them as they daze out to Battlestar Galactica blaring from a widescreen TV. Zero enters.

ROMAN

What the fuck are you doing here,
freak?

Roman hands Westerly the bong.

ZERO

I, uh, dropped out of college.

WESTERLY

So you've finally regained your sanity.

Westerly lights the bowl.

ZERO

My Dad thinks so.

Westerly exhales and passes Bogart the bong.

BOGART

I bet a limp-dick like you couldn't
score with those sophisticated college
girls.

Bogart lights the bowl.

ZERO

There were girls, sure, but they were
part of the problem.

Bogart exhales and passes Genghis the bong.

GENGHIS

So, what's the dealio, Emilio?

Genghis rips a tube, exhales and passes it to Zero. Zero lights the bong.

ZERO

Everything started falling apart
when....

Zero exhales a huge cloud of smoke, which fills the screen. The smoke dissolves to find Zero in a FLASHBACK...

7. INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Zero lies in bed with a big-breasted hippiechick, LUNA. A mid-term paper he's written, "Reagan's America," lies on his desk, a big red A splashed across the front.

LUNA

I can't believe he liked your paper more than he liked mine.

ZERO

Yours didn't make any sense.

LUNA

Everybody knows that Ronald Reagan is single handedly responsible for the depletion of the ozone layer.

ZERO

That much is true.

LUNA

And it wasn't Grecian formula he put in his hair. It was a highly toxic, CIA concocted chemical spray. I read it in that Ralph Nader position piece.

ZERO

No you didn't. You read it in High Times.

LUNA

High Times is the paper of record.

ZERO

No, dude, that's The New York Times.

LUNA

Whatever. It's bio-debatable.

ZERO

Uh-uh. Sure. Now take your shirt off.

8. INT. OFF-CAMPUS PREPPY APARTMENT - DAY

Zero takes 6-footers with three preppy buddies, TODD, TUCKER and DAFT. Neo-hippie jam music plays on the stereo.

TODD

So, Tucker, are you going on tour this summer?

TUCKER

My Dad bought me season tickets to Phish.

DAFT

I'm never going to another show. Not since I ate that acid and thought I was a Democrat.

Zero is so high he has no idea what they're talking about.

ZERO

Daft, the bowl's kicked.

DAFT

Here's the KB.

Daft tosses Zero the bag. Zero spills bud on the floor, and in trying to clean it up, he tips the binger and spills gallons of bong water on himself.

TODD

Party foul.

TUCKER

Way to go, peg-boy.

DAFT

You're all wet, Z.

The preppies chortle. Zero stews in the bong muck.

TODD

Daft, do you know what a peg-boy is?

DAFT

Sounds like Zero.

TUCKER

Back in pirate days, the peg-boy would sit on a wooden peg all day to keep his asshole loose.

DAFT

Why's that, Tuck?

TUCKER

So the pirates had an easy bitch. Just like we have Zero.

As the preppies laugh, Zero shoots them all an angry look of betrayal.

9. INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Zero attends a lecture, and as he stares absently out the window, PROFESSOR X, a militant black academic with a greying afro and a colorful dashiki, holds forth.

PROFESSOR X

Welcome to Environmental Science. You all may have thought you could sleep your way through this gut course, but wake up!

X slams his hand on the lectern. The classroom jumps. Zero tunes in.

PROFESSOR X

The Earth is dying. We take more than we need. I want you all to ask yourself one question. What sustains you? Big Macs? iMacs? OPECs? Hooded sweatshirts from the GAP? You're living in a consumer's dreamworld, drowning in a vat of media-saturated chocolate-chip cookie dough ice cream. Do you crave your triple-foam latte while you drive your gas-guzzling Landstalker through strip malled, once green America? Do you want fries with that? If you remember nothing else from this class, remember this word: sustainability.

A look of riveted attention comes across Zero's face.

10. EXT. KEGGER - NIGHT

A gaggle of Greeks mill about on a frat porch. An enormous bowl of Purple Vodka Surprise is the party's centerpiece.

Zero downs drink after drink, eyeballing the hot sorority senior triumvirate, TIFFANY, TERRI, and DITZY. The sorority girls stand in a cluster next to Todd, Tucker, and Daft.

TIFFANY

Mumsy's arranged me a summer internship with the SEC. It's a classic bullshit job.

TERRI

Fab, Tiff. I've got to spend the whole season in Panama at Grandpa's stupid compound.

DITZI

At least you won't be surrounded by tourists. Daddy insists I spend the whole summer on Martha's Vineyard.

TIFFANY

There won't be any virgins left in Oak's Bluff, Ditzi, you sexy little bitch.

DITZI

Hey, I'm not the one who let the lacrosse team run a train on me, Tiffany.

TERRI

Whatever. Tiffany won the Student Body election.

DITZI

Shut up, Terri. I think you and Tiffany are in love with each other.

LUNA

(to Zero)

This whole place is absolutely fascist.

Zero sucks down another Vodka Surprise. His face turns green.

ZERO

I think I'm gonna be sick.

Zero starts heaving, then vomits all over the sorority seniors.

LUNA

Right on! Power to the people!

ZERO

Shut the fuck up.

TIFFANY

Oh my god! I'm covered in boot!

Zero staggers about, embarrassed. He flips the bowl of Vodka Surprise in the air, dousing himself and Luna.

DAFT

Strike two, boot-man.

11. INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Zero attends a lecture with DR. TSAI, an impeccably groomed, elderly Asian woman with a youthful glow. As Tsai speaks, Zero writes in huge block letters in his notebook one word: SUSTAINABILITY.

TSAI

This is Eastern Thought. Your life has no meaning. Your relationships are illusions. Your hopes are phantoms, your fears, a reverie.

Zero begins to pay attention.

TSAI

If you are present and disciplined and can celebrate your freedom to choose a path, tolerate the uncertain, and go forth with acceptance, forgiveness and compassion, you may take your first step toward enlightenment. If you want to be given everything, give everything up.

Zero nods his head.

12. INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Zero enters to find his preppy buddies eating Salisbury Steak.

PREPPIES

(to the Batman theme)

Dinna-ninna-ninna-ninna-Bootman!

ZERO

All right, all right. Enough. I've got something to tell you guys.

TUCKER

Did you drown the dean in your boot?

ZERO

No, I've been...thinking.

DAFT

That's a first.

ZERO

Fuck off, Daft. Don't you guys ever wonder what it's all about?

TODD

No. No, we don't. You know something, Zero? You're like a fuzzy little hamster. You're nice to pet and look at, but you should be left at home in your cage.

ZERO

You have no idea what's going on with me. You're not my friends. Go screw.

13. INT. CAFETERIA KITCHEN - NIGHT

The preppies carry Zero in against his will, and hoist him into a huge vat labeled: "Salisbury Steak Droppings". Zero stews in the sauce.

FAT BLACK CAFETERIA LADY

You want fries with that, chump?

14. INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Zero attends another lecture. One-legged PROFESSOR STUMP drones on.

STUMP

Your namby-pamby liberal arts professors have told you that man is defined by ideas. The only thing that defines a man is his bank account. What we do in this life doesn't echo through eternity, it echoes through our 401k's. Equality? Social Darwinism. Liberty? The Free Market. Fraternity? My ass! It's a dog eat dog world, and I'm the big bad wolf. Kill or be killed, my little idiots, kill or be killed. Questions? Comments?

Zero, having listened intently, raises his hand.

STUMP

Mr. Chance?

ZERO

I've got a comment. You suck. You suck so much. You suck so much, you don't even know how much you suck. But I'm here to tell you, you really suck.

Zero stands up and storms out of class.

15. EXT. STUDENT PARKING LOT - DAY

Zero makes a beeline for his Volvo. He flings the car door open, gets in, and turns on the ignition.

16. INT. ZERO'S VOLVO - DAY

Zero floors the gas. As the car accelerates out of the lot, Zero digs into his pocket and pulls out a joint.

Zero lights it, exhales, and as the smoke clears, we're back at...

17. INT. GOOD HAVEN - DUSK

ZERO

So I got in the car and just started driving.

GENGHIS

You've taken your first step into a larger world.

BOGART

Do you have the fear?

ZERO

A little bit. I actually feel exhilarated.

WESTERLY

That's natural. Dropping out is a misnamed form of ecstasy.

BOGART

Everybody's dropping out.

ROMAN

That's right. Look at us. We took society's notion of what we should be and we shot it in the head.

GENGHIS

You've joined a long and proud tradition.

WESTERLY

Jerry Rubin.

BOGART

Abbie Hoffman.

ROMAN

Allen Ginsberg.

GENGHIS

Timothy Leary.

ZERO

Aren't all those guys dead?

WESTERLY

Yes. They are. But when they were alive, they were really alive.

ZERO

So what should I do now?

OLDER DROPOUTS

Go rent a movie.

Zero exits. Westerly picks up a phone and dials.

WESTERLY

(on the phone)

The patsy is in the pocket.

18. INT. CASUAL VIDEO - NIGHT

Zero enters an extensively stocked, privately owned, fiercely independent video store with a homey feel and welcoming atmosphere. Zero grabs the Road Warrior, and goes to the counter. BUDDY, a pot-bellied, techno-geek works the desk.

BUDDY

Road Warrior? That'll be \$4.94, late charges are \$2.75 a day - a \$1.62 credit if you return it the next day.

ZERO

Right on. I'll have it back tomorrow. You'll be seeing a lot of me.

19. INT. CHANCE HOUSEHOLD, ZERO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Zero enters his spotless room with a cup of coffee and the movie. He pops in the video and lies down in bed. His head begins to nod, and after a minute, he drifts off to sleep.

20. INT. CHANCE HOUSEHOLD. ZERO'S ROOM - DUSK

Zero is still asleep. The room is now littered with dirty laundry, coffee cups, pot baggies and other detritus. A stack of rented Mel Gibson movies sits in one corner. Time has passed: days, weeks...maybe even months.

The phone rings, snapping Zero awake. He lets the machine get it.

BUDDY

(on the answering machine)

This is Buddy calling from Casual Video. Just a reminder that you now owe us \$473.73. Have a casual day!

ZERO

Fuck.

We hear from downstairs.

ELLIE

Zero! Dinner!

21. INT. CHANCE HOUSEHOLD, DINING ROOM - DUSK

Zero stumbles in, to find Ben, Ellie and Chewie at the table eating meatloaf.

BEN

Well, if it isn't Mr. No-goodnik.

Zero takes a seat.

ZERO

Hi, Dad. How was your day at the plastics factory?

BEN

You mean at work? Let me tell you something, Zero. A man is only as good as the work he does. Do you understand me?

ZERO

I have no idea what you're talking about.

BEN

Your mother and I have discussed it, and if you wish to continue to live under this roof rent-free, you have to either get a job or go back to school.

ZERO

I think I've got a pretty good thing going on.

BEN

Fine. Move out.

ZERO

(irrationally)

Stop trying to control me, Dad!

ELLIE

Your father and I just want you to have a life of your own. We want you to succeed. Maybe you could try a class at Brookston Community College.

22. EXT. BROOKSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE - DAY

Zero pulls up in his Volvo, looking less than enthusiastic. He stabs a roach out in the ashtray and shuffles inside.

23. INT. CLASSROOM AT BCC - DAY

Zero enters, and takes the only empty seat. It's next to Chewie. MR. CRABTREE, a skinny, disorganized nerd scribbles on a dry erase board. A boombox rests on his lectern.

CHEWIE

Hello, Mr. Zero.

ZERO

Hello, Chewie.

CRABTREE

Good morning, and welcome to the first day of Remedial Law. I'm your instructor, Mr. Crabtree, and before we begin, are there any questions?

CHEWIE

Will this be on the final?

CRABTREE

Will what be on the final?

CHEWIE

What?

Zero looks around at his PINHEAD CLASSMATES, and sees that he's wading in the shallow end of the gene pool.

CRABTREE

All right. Does anybody need a pencil?

Chewie takes a pencil out of his mouth dripping with drool and puts it on Zero's desk. Zero stares at the pencil.

CRABTREE

Good enough. Let's begin with a subject close to my heart, the antiquated French legal system of Brookston. We have only recently begun to update this pro-defendant, libertarian legal code. Some say the French were backwards thinkers. Some say they lay down like sheep. I say this: a hotly debated wrinkle in Brookston remains the likening of a trial to a game, or le jeux. Cheating, or the slightest hint of prosecutorial misconduct, will result in a forfeit, after which charges are dismissed in a ruling of Final Jeopardy.

Crabtree presses a button on the box, and the "Jeopardy" theme song plays.

ZERO

What kind of class is this? What kind of professor are you?

CRABTREE

I'm not a professor, young man. I'm your instructor.

ZERO

Instruct this.

Zero flips him the bird and makes a beeline out the classroom door.

24. INT. CASUAL VIDEO - DAY

Zero enters, grabs Beyond Thunderdome, and heads over to Buddy.

BUDDY

Are you cold?

ZERO

Am I what?

BUDDY

Are you cold? Because I froze your account, bitch.

Enter MORNING CHAMBERS, a gorgeous, young, corporate go-go girl, dressed in a short grey business suit and a silky white blouse. SAM CHAMPION, a seething, blond, blue-eyed, All-American pretty boy, decked out in Dockers from head to toe, follows in after her.

Champion grabs Morning by the arm and spins her around to face him.

CHAMPION

You little tease! You think you live in a perfect world, where you can have everything you want. Snap out of it! I'm the best show in town, baby. I've got the house, I've got the job, and I've got the car. Ding! It's decision time, Morning. Are you going to party with a real man or are you going to spend the rest of your life searching for some dickless loser to come along and ruin you?

MORNING

And you don't want to ruin me? Take away my freedom and my independence and turn me into your indentured housewife whose only way of expressing herself is to bake brownies for the PTA? This is the 21st century, Sam. We don't want you here.

CHAMPION

I'll go. But you'll come back. You always do. Later!

Champion flips her the double L sign and storms out. Morning goes to pick out a video.

ZERO

(to Buddy)

That's the mayor's daughter, isn't it?

BUDDY

She's a sci-fi freak.

Morning comes up to the counter with a copy of Rocket Man.

BUDDY

Good morning, Ms. Chambers.

MORNING

I wish it was. Sam and I just broke up.

Buddy rings up the movie.

BUDDY

Chance, this isn't a social club. Either rent a movie or go do your bad Christian Slater impression somewhere else.

Morning eyes Zero. Zero turns to Morning.

ZERO

Ms. Chambers, picture this. A young man has everything going for him, but then he drops out of college and moves back in with his parents. The only pleasure he finds in his rinky-dink hometown is renting movies here at Casual Video. But this young man has accidentally acquired a few late fees, and Buddy here has frozen his account. Then, an attractive young woman walks in, heartbroken, to rent a movie. So let me ask you something.

MORNING

I'm not going to give you my phone number.

ZERO

Yeah, well I'm not gonna give you mine, either.

Morning laughs.

MORNING

So what do you want?

ZERO

Let me rent this movie on your account.

MORNING

Give me one good reason why I should.

ZERO

Because I attended community college this morning and found myself seated next to my retarded butler.

Morning briefly ponders this image.

MORNING

Sold. I didn't catch your name.

ZERO

I didn't throw it. Zero. Nice to meet you.

They shake hands, and Zero holds hers a little intimately for a moment.

MORNING

Take care of it, Buddy.

BUDDY

Sure thing, Ms. Chambers.

MORNING

All right, Zero. Maybe I'll see you around.

ZERO

Keep your feet on the ground and keep reaching for the stars.

Morning walks out, her mood lightened. Zero turns to Buddy.

ZERO

Who's freezing now, bitch!

25. INT. BREAKFASCIST - DAY

Breakfascist is an unassuming back-alley eatery featuring dishes named after dictators. We see a MENU BOARD that lists their specialties: Osama Bin Lattes, Adolph Hitler's Oven Roasted Potatoes, Castro Crullers, Eggs Mussolini, The D'Eggtator, and The Stalin-One Breakfast.

TOMMY JINGLES is the happy-go-lucky Irish counterman. There are Breakfascist regulars including the Older Dropouts, a Jamaican REGGAE BAND, CHESS PLAYERS, COWBOYS, CZECH BEATNIKS, and lab-coated SCIENTISTS.

Lurking in a nearby corner is CASPER NEWTON, a short, balding, middle-aged man dressed in an expensive suit. Across from him sits his mysterious, art-house, Vietnamese manservant, MR. FUN, as well as MR. BLIVENS, a self-satisfied, bespectacled nimrod.

Zero enters with his movie in hand. Mr. Blivens hastily exits through the back door. Zero plops down next to the ODS.

ZERO

What's up, guys?

ROMAN

Do we know you?

A moment passes, and the ODS laugh.

ZERO

Didn't this used to be a Dunkin' Donuts?

WESTERLY

They went non-smoking and then they
went Chapter 11. This place has a lot
more atmosphere.

A fight breaks out between a JAMAICAN and a CZECH
BEATNIK. They scuffle on the floor as a small crowd
circles them.

CZECH BEATNIK

You have no faith in our way! I will
teach you faith!

The Czech Beatnik whips out a switchblade. From nowhere,
the hand of Mr. Fun grabs the Beatnik's wrist and the
knife falls harmlessly to the floor. Mr. Fun puts both
men into dual Tigertrap headlocks.

Everybody looks at Casper.

CASPER

Nobody messes with no one without my
say so. If you guys want to fight
somebody, fight Mr. Fun. He'll kill
you, and then he'll turn your organs
into his latest art exhibit.

JAMAICAN

Most profound apologies, Casper. I
forgot my morning smoke.

Mr. Fun releases them. The Czech Beatnik hands the
Jamaican a pipe, and they sit down together to smoke the
peace. Mr. Fun returns to Casper's corner.

ZERO

Who are those guys?

BOGART

That's Casper Newton and Mr. Fun.
Casper owns this joint.

GENGHIS

So, whaddya know, Rob Lowe?

ZERO

I did it again. I dropped out of
community college. What are you clowns
up to?

WESTERLY

The usual, plotting world domination.
Why, you got any pot?

ZERO

No, I'm flat. I have to go home and
tell my dad I blew it, and now he's
gonna make me get a job.

ROMAN

Fuck that, dude. Come back to our place, blow tubes, and watch Beyond Thunderdome.

ZERO

I can't do it. I gotta go talk to my dad.

26. INT. GOOD HAVEN, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The ODs and Zero blow tubes and watch Beyond Thunderdome.

27. EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - NIGHT

Zero drives home, from his perspective furiously, from our perspective at 3 mph.

28. INT. CHANCE HOUSEHOLD, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Zero sneaks in, flips on the light, and makes for the fridge, but he's busted. His father's been waiting for him at the kitchen table.

BEN

Listen, son. If you're not going to get educated, you better start earning your keep. And besides, look what you're doing to Chewie.

Chewie, sobbing, looks up at Zero from under the kitchen table.

CHEWIE

You must get a job now, Mr. Zero!

29. INT. PIZZERIA - DAY

Zero slides a screwed-up pizza into an oven. Zero tries to make more pies, but he mangles the pizza dough. Zero tosses a pie in the air and notices that the oven has begun to erupt with smoke. The dough lands on his BOSS' face. Zero gets the boot.

30. INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Zero is a perfume boy. He absentmindedly sprays perfume on OLD WOMEN, but then a PRETTY LADY heads his way, and overexcited, he sprays perfume in her eyes. She whacks him with her purse. Zero gets the boot.

31. INT. SOME WOMAN'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Zero is demonstrating the Supah-Suck Vacuum Cleaner to a HOUSEWIFE. First he accidentally sucks her tablecloth and china in, and then, in attempting to extricate them, spills dirt and filth all over the floor. Zero gets the boot.

32. INT. SPECTRE TEMPS - DAY

A sign on the wall reads "Spectre Temps." Zero is being interviewed by Mr. Blivens, the man who disappeared from Breakfast.

BLIVENS

So tell me a little about yourself.

ZERO

Well, I'm a college, uh, student. Bachelor degree candidate in business administration. I took time off to get some...real life experience. And I also do the Microsoft Word real good.

BLIVENS

Do you have Powerpoint? Or Excel?

ZERO

I know how to surf the Web.

BLIVENS

I think we may have something for you. A chance to see a high-powered business in action.

33. EXT. FLUIDICS CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A huge, non-descript office building. Zero stands outside in shirt and tie, smoking a butt. He crushes it out.

ZERO

Here goes nothing.

34. INT. FLUIDICS - DAY

Zero walks up to the desk of CHANIQUA FEINBERG CHAVEZ GOLDSTEIN, an overweight, Jewish Latina with huge glasses and too much makeup.

ZERO

Hi, I'm the temp.

CHANIQUA

Welcome to Fluidics.

We hear a "BLOOB-BLOOB-BLOOB" SOUND EFFECT every time "Fluidics" is mentioned.

ZERO

What do you do here, anyway?

CHANIQUA

We're in the fluid mechanics racket. It's all very complicated. You'll be working for me, and I work for Mr. Bleeding. Comprende, boychik?

Zero stares at her, then sits at a desk and just starts typing. Chaniqua looks confused.

ZERO

So, what should I do first?

CHANIQUA

Let me show you how the copier works.

She leads Zero to an enormous Xerox machine.

CHANIQUA

Now, this is a very important document and Mr. Bleeding wants a hundred copies. So you put it in here and push this button.

She inserts the paper, and it comes out the other side - shredded.

CHANIQUA

Wait, no, like this.

She pushes another button and a blinding green light flashes in her eyes. Stunned, she twists her body and knocks over the water cooler, spilling water all over the copy machine, which starts billowing smoke.

ZERO

How long have you worked here?

CHANIQUA

Let's go back to our desks.

They return to their seats and out walks MR. BLEEDING, a middle-management doofus in a cheap suit.

BLEEDING

Chaniqua, I've dictated a letter onto this tape, and I'd like you to type it up. Thanks.

Chaniqua pauses until Bleeding walks back into his office.

CHANIQUA

Zero, Mr. Bleeding has dictated a letter onto this tape, and I'd like you to type it up. Gracias.

Zero grabs the tape and furiously types. In record time he's finished.

35. INT. BLEEDING'S OFFICE - DAY

Zero walks in with the letter, and Bleeding looks up.

BLEEDING
Who the hell are you?

ZERO
I'm the temp.

Bleeding takes the letter from Zero.

BLEEDING
You made a change here...Wait, oh, very good. Excellent work.

Chaniqua sidles up to Zero and suspiciously peers over his shoulder into Bleeding's office.

BLEEDING
I've got another task for you. I need you to get this broadcast fax off right away.

CHANIQUA
I can do it, Mr. Bleeding.

BLEEDING
Butt out, Chaniqua. Why don't we let the temp take this one?

Chaniqua looks aghast. She shoots Zero a venomous glare.

36. INT. FLUIDICS FAX ROOM - DAY

Zero works with remarkable efficiency, putting in new paper, changing toner, firing off faxes. He is a model of industry.

37. INT. FLUIDICS, ZERO AND CHANIQUA'S DESKS - DAY

Zero types madly while Chaniqua reads Latin Jew Digest.

Bleeding enters.

BLEEDING
I've been reading your file, temp. I see you attended my alma mater.

ZERO
Oh, yeah. I loved it there.

BLEEDING

With your college background, I'm surprised you're doing secretarial work here.

Chaniqua explodes.

CHANIQUA

Mr. Bleeding! I am a proud graduate of Brookston Community College!

BLEEDING

Relax there, Chavez Goldstein.

CHANIQUA

I cannot continue to work in an environment where I am constantly undermined by this little Ivy League prick.

ZERO

I've been here for two hours.

CHANIQUA

Enough. Puta carumba! Gay kokken offen yam!

Chaniqua grabs her nameplate, flips over her desk, and storms out.

BLEEDING

I expect great things of you, Head Secretary Temp.

Bleeding walks back to his office, and the phone rings. Zero answers.

ROMAN

(over the phone)

Hey Super-Temp, make me a thousand copies of your cakehole!

ZERO

Who is this?

ROMAN

Shut up and come take bong hits.

ZERO

I'll be there in twenty minutes.

Zero hangs up. Bleeding runs back out excitedly.

BLEEDING

Head Secretary, Fluidics has called a meeting of our 29 vice-presidents. I need you to take notes, collate, and prepare a full report.

ZERO
 Sure thing, boss.

38. INT. FLUIDICS, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Zero and Bleeding enter an enormous conference room in which thirty suits yell and scream at the top of their lungs: "Buy! Sell! Invest in money markets!"

Bleeding bangs a gavel.

BLEEDING
 Order! Order! All eyes on the telekrom!

A huge screen descends, and an image appears of THE CEO of Fluidics, an old, wheel-chair bound man who bears a striking resemblance to Colonel Sanders. Zero takes furious notes.

CEO
 Vice-Presidents of Fluidics, I bring grave news. We've always prided ourselves on our hard won success as the leader in our industry. However, it is my sad duty to inform you that our arch-rival, Aquatronics, will purchase a majority share of our company at midnight tonight. As we move forward in this time of transition, we must hold firm to our core philosophy of total fiscal responsibility and transparent accountability to our shareholders. But allow me to remind you that this news will not be announced to our fellow shareholders until noon tomorrow. Are there any questions?

BLEEDING
 Are you suggesting we use this insider information for personal gain?

CEO
 Of course not. You're fired. Clean out your desk tomorrow. Over and out.

The CEO fades away, and pandemonium ensues. Zero checks his watch, and quietly slips out amid the chaos.

39. EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - DUSK

Zero is at a stoplight, and before him walks JERRY GARSHIA, a burnt out, washed up, pony-tailed flower child in his late 30s. Garshia looks at a street map, and after a moment, approaches Zero's car. Garshia speaks in the laconic drawl of the aging hippie.

GARSHIA

Hey, brother, could you tell me how to get to Fluidics? I've got a job interview, man.

ZERO

You know it's 6 o'clock in the evening, right?

GARSHIA

In the evening? Shit.

ZERO

You're running pretty late, huh, dude.

GARSHIA

Yeah, I guess so. Hey, brother, can I get a lift?

ZERO

Sure, hop in.

Garshia begins to walk around the front of Zero's car to the passenger side door.

GARSHIA

(while walking)

Thanks, man. You know, this was the first time in ten years that I was going on a job interview -

As Garshia walks into the intersection, we hear the screeching of brakes as a candy-apple red blur streaks into Garshia, knocking him to the ground. An engine revs, and the blur is gone. Zero jumps out of the car to check on Garshia.

ZERO

Are you all right, dude?

GARSHIA

Why'd you hit me with your car, brother?

ZERO

I didn't, man, this car came out of nowhere and clipped you. Maybe you shouldn't go on job interviews.

GARSHIA

Real funny, brother. I can't move my head.

We hear the squeal of tires and the whine of police sirens. Zero turns his head and sees Potimoth's Pigmobile rope around the corner and head his way. Zero dives into his Volvo and peels off.

40. INT. GOOD HAVEN, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Zero enters, visibly upset. The ODs are watching tapes of Dean Martin's Celebrity Roasts. They barely acknowledge his presence.

ZERO

You guys are not going to believe what just happened to me.

BOGART

You're right, we're not. So shut up.

ZERO

You guys suck.

ROMAN

Oh, yeah. We suck. You got any papers?

ZERO

I think so.

Zero rifles around for rolling papers, but instead drops his Fluidics notes on the ground.

WESTERLY

What do we have here?

Westerly quickly examines the notes and his eyes begin to bug. He passes the notes around and they all let out the war cry.

OLDER DROPOUTS

Money!

41. INT. GOOD HAVEN, OFFICE - NIGHT

Zero watches the ODs spring into action. Bogart punches numbers into an adding machine. Genghis buys Fluidics stock on E-trade.

42. INT. GOOD HAVEN, GARAGE - NIGHT

Roman affixes machine guns to the van, a la B.A. Baracus.

43. INT. GOOD HAVEN, OFFICE - NIGHT

Westerly on the phone.

WESTERLY

Yes, your honor, I have something that may be of interest. (Pause) The usual fee. Yes. (Pause) Fluidics. (Pause) Yes. Fluidics.

Westerly hangs up the phone.

ZERO

Westerly, what are you guys doing?

WESTERLY

Paying the rent. Let me tell you something about money, Zero. Personal wealth is the closest thing to absolute freedom in a capitalist society.

ZERO

That's a pipe dream.

WESTERLY

You wanna hear about a pipe dream? How about the 50 pounds of kind bud that I bought when my Internet startup went public. You know what that pot is? That's a cold, hard commodity.

ZERO

Where is it?

WESTERLY

We smoked it all. So here's what you do. Go in there tomorrow, keep it casual, and gather every scrap of information possible. If you can get us this much in one day, imagine what you'll find in a week.

ZERO

Dude, I'm just a temp.

WESTERLY

So was Trotsky.

Westerly feeds a document into the fax machine, and as it comes out the other end...

44. INT. FLUIDICS, ZERO'S DESK - DAY

Zero pulls a document out of the fax machine. The latest edition of the Brookston Street Journal lies on his desk, a huge headline reading "Gadzooks! Fluidics Sold - Fortunes Made - And Lost".

Bleeding walks up to Zero.

BLEEDING

Thirty years down the toilet. If only I'd contributed to my 401k.

ZERO

What's the matter, Mr. Bleeding?

BLEEDING

I gave the best years of my life working as a senior project manager. Do you realize in all that time, they never gave me one project? Do you know where I was when both my beautiful daughters were born? Sitting here in this office, trying to look busy. And now, underqualified, poorly trained, and up to my ears in debt, I have to go tell my wife that we're not going to Barbados ever again.

Bleeding walks out. The fax machine starts beeping uncontrollably. It's out of toner.

45. INT. FLUIDICS, HALLWAY - DAY

Zero walks to the supply closet for a replacement. He notices a folder marked CONFIDENTIAL. After making sure the coast is clear, he looks inside and finds blueprints for a new supercomputer that runs on water.

Zero slips the blueprints into his shorts.

46. INT. FLUIDICS, ZERO'S DESK - DAY

Zero returns and places a phone call.

ZERO

Westerly, I have news. (Pause) I got canned. It's over.

Zero tosses the blueprints in the trash and walks out.

47. INT. CASUAL VIDEO - DAY

Zero walks up to the counter with a copy of Gallipoli in hand.

BUDDY

Well, if it isn't Mr. Freeze.

ZERO

Look, man, I just want to rent a movie.

Chief Potimoth mysteriously rises from behind the counter.

POTIMOTH

Did you know that failure to pay late fees is a punishable offense? I oughta throw you in the clink.

ZERO

Hey Police Chief Potimoth. How does Buddy's dick taste?

Through Casual Video's store window, we see Morning walk by. She peers in.

POTIMOTH

Listen, you pissant, close-minded runt. I don't like the homosexuals, with their gay rock anthems and keen fashion sense. But I'll protect them to the full extent of the law with the power invested in me by the honorable Mayor Warren Chambers. If you say one more word about those flashy little queers, I'll shove this nightstick up your ass!

Morning enters. She's pissed.

ZERO

Hey, Morning, how ya doin'?

MORNING

You've ruined my account, you irresponsible little toad.

ZERO

So I guess you won't rent this for me?

MORNING

Just because I'm a nice girl doesn't mean I'll do whatever you want.

ZERO

So you wanna go out?

MORNING

No. I find you utterly unattractive. You're a self-centered, self-aggrandizing narcissist.

ZERO

I know you are, but what am I?

Morning, disappointed, leaves.

BUDDY

Pretty cool, Vanilla Ice.

Potimoth explodes with laughter. Zero throws Gallipoli at Buddy's face and hits him in the nose. Potimoth laughs even harder.

POTIMOTH

Get out of my sight before I arrest you for depraved indifference in a video store.

48. INT. BREAKFASCIST - DAY

Zero walks up to counterman Tommy Jingles.

TOMMY

What'll it be?

ZERO

I need a job, Tommy. Can I work here?

TOMMY

We don't take your kind, college boy.
But maybe Mr. Newton over there can
help you out. He's been known to
arrange things.

Casper and Mr. Fun sit at their usual seats. Mr. Fun
reads a copy of Garfield Eats It. Casper reads The Art of
War. Zero approaches.

ZERO

Excuse me, Mr. Newton. Tommy said you
might be able to get me a job.

CASPER

You're doing it all wrong, kid. You
want me to give you something, but
you've given me nothing, not even your
name. Now go get me a Castro Cruller
and let's try this again.

Mr. Fun grunts.

Zero gets the cruller and returns.

CASPER

Okay. Good, kid. Now what's your
name?

ZERO

Zero.

CASPER

My name's Casper Newton, and this is my
mysterious, art-house, Vietnamese
manservant Mr. Fun. What's your story?

ZERO

I was an honors student at college, but
then I dropped out and moved back in
with my parents. I need a job,
something where there's no risk of me
getting corrupted.

CASPER

Mr. Fun, pass me the Rolodex.

Mr. Fun produces an enormous Rolodex from nowhere. He
places it before Casper, who rifles through it.

CASPER

How about something outdoors? Fun in
the sun. Get a tan, meet some girls.

ZERO
That sounds do-able.

Casper extracts a solitary business card from the Rolodex and hands it to Zero.

CASPER
Splendid. Mr. Fun will make all the arrangements.

49. INT. CHANCE HOUSEHOLD, FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

Zero bursts in and yells up the stairs.

ZERO
Mom! Dad! I'm a pool boy!

50. EXT. PORTNOY HOUSEHOLD, POOL - DAY

Zero half-assedly cleans a pool in the backyard of a wealthy, suburban household. It is immediately obvious that he has no idea what he's doing.

51. EXT. ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

Potimoth lurks in his Pigmobile, observing Zero through a huge pair of binoculars. A large tape deck records everything.

52. EXT. PORTNOY HOUSEHOLD, POOL - DAY

MACY PORTNOY, an incredibly attractive, 40 year-old sexpot in a gold Lycra bikini and aviator sunglasses, struts out of the house. She floats over to her chaise lounge on her five-inch, fuck-me pump sandals.

MACY
Aren't you a little short for a pool boy?

ZERO
It's my first day. I'll grow, Mrs. Portnoy.

MACY
Call me Macy. Are you Ernie Chance?

ZERO
You can call me Zero.

MACY
Didn't you go to high school with my daughter?

ZERO

Just for freshman year. She transferred to Oakbrook, right?

MACY

Actually, our little Sunset got expelled. Oakbrook was the only private school that would take her. She's a handful - just like her mother.

ZERO

Is that so?

MACY

Oh, you have no idea. I'm very neurotic.

ZERO

You seem all right to me.

MACY

I get by. Listen, Zero, it's so hot out here. Why don't you take your shirt off? Get comfortable. You're going to be here all day.

Zero removes his shirt, in the process losing control of the water hose. It starts spraying everywhere. He wrestles it under control. Macy cracks a smile.

MACY

Zero, would you like some iced tea?

ZERO

That'd be great.

Zero and Macy stare at each other.

MACY

Fetch it from inside, will you?

53. INT. PORTNOY HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Zero enters and grabs a pitcher of iced tea from the fridge. STAN PORTNOY, a fortyish, slick power broker, walks up behind Zero and taps him on the shoulder, startling him.

STAN

What are you doing in my house?

ZERO

Uh, I'm the new pool boy. I'm here to clean your pool.

STAN

Do I know you?

As Zero pours two glasses of iced tea, he casually glances over Stan's shoulder, and notices that outside, Macy is removing her top.

ZERO

I think, maybe, freshman year, when you broke up one of your daughter's keggers, I got stuck trying to escape through the doggie door, and you had to call the fire department to pry me loose with the jaws of life.

Zero pours one of the glasses over the rim, spilling on the linoleum.

STAN

I milked that story for years. You're Ernest, right, Ben Chance's boy? You're lucky, Chance. Now that I'm the D.A., Brookston doesn't tolerate those kind of shenanigans. My office keeps a tight watch on everything that happens in this town. We don't miss a beat. Now, where's my briefcase?

MACY

(from outside)

Zero!

STAN

You better get back to your dead-end job.

Zero makes for the sliding glass doors, drinks in hand, as Stan tears apart the kitchen looking for his briefcase.

ZERO

(under his breath)

Hey, Mr. District Attorney, why don't you make like a dead man and die.

54. EXT. PORTNOY HOUSE, POOL - DAY

Zero hands Macy the glass.

MACY

Is it sweet?

ZERO

Oh, it's sweet. I don't think your husband likes me very much.

Macy takes a long, luscious sip, makes a cute little face, and then hands the glass back to Zero.

MACY

Here, you drink it. It's a little too sweet for me.

Macy hands Zero the glass.

MACY

Don't mind Stan. He'll be gone all day.
I think I'll work on my breaststroke.

ZERO

What?

Macy dives in and starts doing laps. Zero continues to half-assedly clean the pool while gawking at Macy.

55. EXT. PORTNOY HOUSE, POOL - AFTERNOON

Zero still cleans. The silhouetted figure of Macy Portnoy emerges from the pool and brushes past Zero.

MACY

I'm so wet. Fetch me a towel and you can dry me off.

Zero nods his head obediently, walks casually out of her view, and then makes a beeline for the house.

56. INT. PORTNOY HOUSE, LINEN CLOSET - DAY

Zero surveys a wide range of towels, at first grabbing a tiny hand towel. He shakes his head - that won't do. He snatches a large beach towel and darts back outside, passing a picture of the happy Portnoy family: Macy, Stan, and their tawny, surfer-girl daughter.

57. EXT. PORTNOY HOUSE, POOL - AFTERNOON

Zero sprints until almost back in view, then ambles casually over to Macy, who reclines on her stomach.

MACY

Start with my back.

ZERO

I'll start wherever you want me to.

Zero dries her off.

MACY

Zero, would you be a dear and rub that suntan lotion all over me?

Zero reaches for a bottle of Hawaiian Pleasure Cocoa Butter, nervously squeezing a spurt onto his hand. He gingerly rubs it all over Macy.

ZERO

Is there anything else I can do for you?

58. INT. PORTNOY POOLHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Zero and Macy do it standing up, breathing hot and heavy. Zero looks exhilarated and amazed at his luck.

59. EXT. PORTNOY POOLHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Macy's screams of pleasure ring out across the neighborhood.

MACY

Zero! Zero! Zero!

60. INT. PORTNOY POOLHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Zero lies cradled in Macy's arms, smoking a cigarette. A voice rings out from inside the house. It's Sunset Portnoy.

SUNSET

(in the distance)

Mom! I'm home!

MACY

Oh, fuck. Not again. Put your clothes on, sailor. Come back tomorrow and finish up. Your pay is by the front door. Don't breathe a word of this to my daughter.

ZERO

Macy, this was awesome. This was so...awesome. I'll see you tomorrow.

61. INT. PORTNOY HOUSE, FRONT HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Zero walks through the kitchen. We hear a splash in the background as Macy takes a dive into the pool. Zero pads to the front hallway and picks up an envelope. He checks inside, and finds 5 crisp hundred dollar bills.

Zero has a look of shock. A finger reaches out from behind and taps him on the shoulder. Zero jumps. He turns to find SUNSET PORTNOY, the girl from the family photo, holding an enormous pot plant.

SUNSET

Zero, what are you doing here?

ZERO

I'm the new pool boy?

SUNSET

Yeah. You like the job?

ZERO

Oh, I love it.

SUNSET

(knowingly)

I bet you do. So shouldn't you be in college?

ZERO

No. I dropped out. I'm living with my folks and trying to figure out my life.

SUNSET

Hey, me too. Well the dropping out part, anyway. I'm working part-time for my Dad, and I've got my own, uh, business. Listen, we should totally get together sometime, catch up. You want my beeper number?

ZERO

Yeah, sure.

Sunset takes out a business card with a picture of a bud. It reads: "Sunset Portnoy, Pot Dealer."

SUNSET

Maybe you can come over and clean my pool.

Zero can't believe his ears.

ZERO

Maybe I will. I gotta go. You be good.

SUNSET

In your dreams.

Zero goes out the door, and Sunset slams it behind him and goes upstairs.

62. INT. PORTNOY HOUSE, FRONT HALLWAY - MORNING

The doorbell rings. Macy approaches the front door, dried and coiffed, dressed in a fur coat. She opens the door.

It's the next day, and Zero's back bright and early to return to the task at hand. She grabs Zero, pulls him inside and shuts the door.

MACY

Right on time, Zero.

She drops her fur coat to the floor, with nothing on underneath. Zero grabs her in his arms.

63. INT. PORTNOY HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Zero smokes a cigarette as he lies contentedly in bed with Macy. She leans over him. Zero moves to kiss her, but she's just grabbing the remote. She looks at him for a second.

MACY

Do I know you?

They both laugh.

MACY

After I have a lot of sex, I like to lie in bed and watch TV.

ZERO

You are the greatest woman I've ever met.

Macy flicks on the box. She surfs for a couple seconds, then settles on a live campaign speech of Mayor Warren Chambers addressing the Rotary Club. Jerry Garshia, in a neck brace and crutches, stands at the mayor's side.

WARREN

(on TV)

My fellow Rotarians. A great wrong must be righted. Beside me stands Jerry Garshia, Brookston High School Class of 1974. Mr. Garshia was recently struck by a reckless motorist. My opponent, District Attorney Stan Portnoy, would have you believe this brand of malfeasance does not rear its head in our fair city. Yet even an irrelevant cipher like Mr. Garshia cannot walk our streets without fear. I swear that such mayhem will not be -

Macy changes the channel to Brookston Cable Access. We hear the end theme music for the program, "Portnoy's Complaint," hosted by Stan.

STAN

(on TV)

And so we see that the crumbling standards in our educational system will turn out nothing but mindless buffoons addicted to Coca-Cola, Pop Rocks, and failure. Join me next week, when my guest will be local victim Jerry Garshia, and we'll be discussing rampant lawlessness in our community. I'm Stan Portnoy, and remember that on the great menu of life, the truth is on special.

Stan thinks the show has ended, but the cameras still roll.

STAN
 (to the camera crew)
 Now where's my briefcase?

ZERO
 Obviously brains are a la carte, and he
 can't afford an appetizer.

MACY
 Show a little respect. He is my
 husband.

ZERO
 Yeah, you must love him lots.

MACY
 I do. But he neglects me. He's so
 obsessed with trying to change the
 system from within.

ZERO
 Your husband couldn't change a light
 bulb from within.

MACY
 Big talker. What are you doing to make
 the world a better place?

ZERO
 I save the planet one lonely housewife
 at a time.

The phone rings. Macy answers.

MACY
 It's for you.

Zero takes the phone.

ROMAN
 (on the phone)
 Hey, pool boy, can you change the
 chlorine in my cakehole?

ZERO
 Look, I'm kinda busy.

ROMAN
 Fuck that, Private Chance. You're
 coming over here right now to pull
 tubes. That's an order.

ZERO
 (covering the phone)
 It's an emergency. My retarded butler
 is trapped in our washer/dryer.

MACY
 I left your pay by the front door.
 You'll be back tomorrow?

ZERO

Uh, yeah.

MACY

Bright and early?

ZERO

I'll be by in the morning.

Zero walks out, closing the bedroom door behind him. The slightest trace of doubt crosses his face.

64. INT. GOOD HAVEN, LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Zero walks into the smoke-filled living room. The ODs sit around watching tapes of the old Phil Donahue show.

GENGHIS

What are you doing here?

BOGART

Yeah. Get out, fuckface.

ZERO

What's up, guys?

ROMAN

What's up, chilla?

ZERO

I started my new job.

ROMAN

Shut your trap. You got any papers?

ZERO

I think so.

Zero digs around in his pockets, accidentally spilling 10 hundred dollar bills on the floor.

WESTERLY

What is that, our tribute money?

ROMAN

You're a good earner, shitheel.

Zero leans over and clumps the bills together in his fist.

ZERO

Oh, yeah, I got a new job. I started the pool boy gig, but then I kind of turned into a gigolo. I'm having second thoughts about it.

BOGART

Zero. Step into my office. We should have a little talk about the skirts and the sleaze.

65. INT. GOOD HAVEN - SMOKING ROOM

Bogart leads Zero out into a dimly lit, plush smoking room. Two highback leather chairs face a roaring fire, above which hangs a black velvet portrait of Frank Sinatra. Bogart goes to the wet bar and pours two Scotch and sodas. They sit with their drinks.

BOGART

Salut. L'Chaim!

ZERO

To your health.

BOGART

Zero, dealing with women is simple.

ZERO

School me, Bogart. School me.

BOGART

Have you seen Gone with the Wind?

ZERO

Is this going to be some Tao of Steve bullshit?

BOGART

Fuck that. McQueen stole Ali McGraw from Bob Evans. That's no love story. And it's certainly not very Taoist. Now, pay attention. Take Scarlett O'Hara, the biggest bitch that ever lived, and the hottest too. No ordinary man could woo her. Even a set of twins couldn't satisfy her absurd demands. It took an outlaw with bigger things on his mind than a little cooze to take her heart, break her heart, and walk right out the door. His name was Rhett Butler. And this is the Rhett Butler technique.

ZERO

Are you saying that frankly, I shouldn't give a damn?

BOGART

Yes, but that's just the end result. You have to convince yourself that you've already won this woman and cast her off before you even speak a word to her.

(MORE)

BOGART (CONT'D)

You've got other things on your mind, like running munitions to the South. You don't play games. You don't have to. You've already won. Now, remember, this isn't a recipe for love. This is a recipe for making whoopee.

ZERO

I'm still a little weirded out by all this sex for money. Do you think I should go back?

BOGART

That's your call. You don't happen to have that business card, do you?

66. INT. POOL BOY VAN - DAY

The ODs drive around, rocking out to a sex funk mix. Zero is not with them.

67. EXT. PORTNOY HOUSEHOLD, POOL - DAY

Macy checks her watch. Where's Zero?

68. EXT. BROOKSTON WOMEN'S WELLNESS CENTER - DAY

The Pool Boy Inc. van pulls up. The ODs bust out and head for the door.

69. INT. BREAKFASCIST - DAY

Mr. Fun sketches a cartoon rendering of Casper. Casper pencils a starkly realistic portrait of Fun. Zero enters and walks up to Tommy Jingles.

ZERO

Can I get a Castro Cruller?

TOMMY

Right away, pool boy.

ZERO

Actually, I just quit that job. Too much work.

TOMMY

Work is work. Business is business. Now get out of my restaurant.

ZERO

What did I do?

TOMMY

Sorry. I forgot to take my pills. One
Castro Cruller coming up.

Tommy hands Zero a cruller. Zero heads over to Casper
and Fun.

CASPER

So you blew it already, huh, kid?

Fun starts chuckling like the Buddha.

ZERO

It's a question of ethics. I was
spending more of my moral currency than
I could afford.

CASPER

You want to be a winner, Zero? First
thing you do, get rid of your morals.

MR. FUN

Second thing, kill the leader.

Fun explodes with maniacal laughter.

ZERO

Anyway, do you know of any other jobs?

CASPER

Let's go in the back and talk in my
office. There's more privacy there.

Zero looks around and sees that Breakfascist is empty.

70. INT. CASPER'S OFFICE - DAY

Casper leads Zero into an office furnished with Asian
heirlooms, rattan furniture, and an ornately carved desk.
A fruit basket rests on a wooden stand in the corner.

Zero glances past the PHOTOS of Casper on the wall:
Casper as a Green Beret in the rice paddies of Vietnam,
Casper and Mr. Fun hanging out with Ravi Shankar in a
sitar circle, Casper next to Ali in the ring after the
Thrilla in Manila, Casper on his wedding day with his
stunning, sensuous, Italian bride, and finally, Casper on
the shores of Cape Cod, his arm around a beaming Mao Tse-
tung.

CASPER

Yeah, I assassinated Mao ten minutes
after that picture was taken. He never
saw it coming.

As Casper speaks with Zero, Mr. Fun silently practices
his martial arts in the corner, attacking various pieces
of fruit.

ZERO

Dude, Mao Tse-tung died in China.

CASPER

Right. And Reagan's mop had nothing to do with that gaping hole in the ozone layer. There's so much that you don't understand.

Mr. Fun karate chops an apple up into the air, and then lightly taps it toward Casper. Casper catches it and hands it to Zero, who takes a big, juicy bite.

ZERO

I know I don't know anything. But at least I know that.

CASPER

That's why I like you, Zero.

MR. FUN

You are like an idiot, your mind is so empty.

CASPER

I want to help, Zero, but I've gone to the mat for you once, and you quit after two days. Before you ask me for any more favors, I'd like to know more about you.

ZERO

I don't hold anything sacred. I don't seek anyone's approval. I don't compare. I don't compete. I'm content to simply be myself.

CASPER

Impressive. Men brave enough to break free from the bonds of conventional society are few. But our numbers are growing.

Mr. Fun smashes a grapefruit with his open fist. Juice and pulp ooze all over the wooden stand.

ZERO

You seem like a cool shit, Mr. Newton. What exactly do you do?

CASPER

I fix things. I solve problems. I resolve disputes, and I dabble in import/export.

ZERO

And you do this all in Brookston?

CASPER

I've only recently returned to the town of my birth. Being here brings back fond memories of the way things used to be, and gives me hope that they could be that way again.

ZERO

Aren't you happy with the way things are?

CASPER

They could always be improved, but I have everything I need - a gorgeous wife, a trusted associate, a profitable storefront, and an even more profitable back door. I'm not afraid to die and I love to be alive.

Mr. Fun whips out a pair of super deadly FUN-CHUK NUN-CHUKS.

MR. FUN

It's Fun-Chuk time!

Mr. Fun twirls his Fun-chuks around a watermelon, and suddenly stops. Nothing happens. Suddenly, the watermelon falls apart into a million pieces. Mr. Fun tosses a chunk in his mouth.

ZERO

Sounds like you've got it made in the shade with a cold glass of lemonade. What's your secret?

CASPER

I'm a slave to my desire, but the master of my fate. Do you feel like you're at ease in your own life?

ZERO

Well, my Dad is obsessed with me finding a job. But I don't like any of the jobs I can do.

CASPER

Jobs where your precious ideals won't be compromised? That's a tall order. Any other demands?

Zero thinks for a moment.

ZERO

I want to work in an environment where I can do as little as possible.

CASPER

I think I have just the thing.

71. INT. CASUAL VIDEO - DAY

Zero stands behind the counter with Buddy, wearing a name tag.

BUDDY
Shaving Ryan's Privates.

ZERO
Irreconcilable Fetishes.

BUDDY
A League of Their Bone.

ZERO
The Cockfather.

BUDDY
Top Gun.

ZERO
Nice one, dude. You win.

BUDDY
I always win.

ZERO
Does anyone ever come in here?

BUDDY
Not really. This is the greatest job ever.

Morning walks in.

ZERO
You might be right.

Morning storms up to the counter.

MORNING
What are you doing behind that counter?

ZERO
Waiting for you to walk through that door.

MORNING
Are you kidding me? Here's the news, Huey Lewis: you're not even on my radar.

ZERO
Well check this out, Amelia Earhart, if you felt that way, how come you keep coming in here to talk to me?

MORNING

I didn't. I came in to talk to Buddy about paying off my account. So stow it in the overhead compartment, take your seat, and pipe down.

ZERO

Listen, Morning. I don't give a damn. My first day on the job I cleaned up your account. You don't owe this place a dime.

MORNING

That's a start.

ZERO

I've also hooked you up with free movies for life.

MORNING

Really?

ZERO

Really. What else do you want from me?

MORNING

How about an apology.

ZERO

I'll do you one better. I'll take you out to dinner wherever you want to go.

MORNING

I'm sure. You couldn't afford the places where I go out to eat.

ZERO

Actually, I've recently come into some money and I'm looking for a way to blow it.

MORNING

What is it, drug money? Are you a drug dealer? Because I don't do drugs.

ZERO

Oh, I don't do drugs either. I get high on life. Want a hit?

MORNING

That doesn't mean anything.

ZERO

Exactly. Now how about we stop playing all these reindeer games and get real. I want to take you out to dinner. You seem to be in here every day renting movies, so you must not have a gratifying social life. What do you stand to lose?

MORNING

I don't know.

BUDDY

Hey, Chambers, get off your high horse and just go out with this guy. He's cool.

MORNING

All right. I'll take a chance.

72. EXT. LA RENARD - NIGHT

LA RENARD is an ultra-high class restaurant catering to the Brookston elite. Zero and Morning pull up in Zero's piece of shit Volvo. PIERRE, the self-important valet, greets them in the ridiculous French accent shared by all the employees at La Renard.

PIERRE

Shall I impound it, sir?

ZERO

Impound away, ass-

MORNING

(interrupting)

Thanks so much, Pierre.

PIERRE

But of course, la belle Morning.

ZERO

(to Morning)

Come here often?

They walk inside.

PIERRE

Peasant.

73. INT. LA RENARD - NIGHT

Zero and Morning enter the main foyer of a traditional 5 star French restaurant.

MORNING

I think I'll freshen up. Get us a table.

Morning walks off. Zero approaches GODARD, the Maitre D', an imperious, tuxedoed Frenchman sporting a huge head of bushy grey hair.

ZERO

Hi. Table for two.

GODARD

Perhaps you do not understand anything.
I am Godard, Maitre D' at La Renard.
You are leaving, yes?

ZERO

No, really, I'd like a table for two.
Non-smoking, if you've got it.

GODARD

Mon dieu. Another American troglodyte.
Let me make this painfully obvious.
You are not eating here now. We are
booked solid.

ZERO

You may not like this American, but
perhaps you know my friend - Ben
Franklin?

Zero hands Godard a hundred.

GODARD

Ah, tres bien. Now, you wait.

ZERO

Well, how long will that take?

Godard folds the hundred and slides it into his pocket.

GODARD

At least one hour. Perhaps apres-midi.

ZERO

Yeah, I'll wait.

GODARD

Then you must wear a jacket. Balzac!

ZERO

I gotta wear a jacket to wait?

GODARD

Fermez la bouche! Balzac! Where are
you with that jacket! Idiot! Vache!

BALZAC, a short, thin, foppish underling minces into the
foyer and hands Zero an atrociously loud sportcoat.

ZERO

(mockingly)

Mercy bow-kue.

GODARD

Merci beaucoup.

ZERO

Yeah, I said, mercy bow-kue.

GODARD

Merci beaucoup!

They start yelling it at each other and begin to strangle each other as Morning returns.

MORNING

Oh, I see you've met Godard.

ZERO

Yeah, what's with this frog? He wants me to wear a jacket.

Godard lets go of Zero and straightens him up. He dusts off Zero's shoulder as he speaks to Morning.

GODARD

Zut alors! Mademoiselle Chambers, la premiere femme de Brookston! Do you know this man?

MORNING

Yes. He's my date. He doesn't have to wear a jacket.

GODARD

Of course. Of course. He doesn't have to wear a jacket. Balzac! Where are you, you lecherous swine! Why did you give me this jacket!

Balzac races to Godard's side. Godard slaps him and throws the jacket over his head.

GODARD

Return to your pen! Tout de suite!

BALZAC

Tres bien. Merci, Monsieur Godard! You are the truly great!

Balzac rushes off.

GODARD

You must forgive my insolence. I throw myself at your mercy.

ZERO

Mercy bow-kue.

GODARD

But of course. Mitterand will seat you now. Mitterand! Where are you, you ignoramus?!

MITTERAND, a paunchy, good-natured headwaiter, races to Godard's side. Godard snaps his fingers in Mitterand's face.

MITTERAND

We have your favorite table,
mademoiselle. You follow me, oui?

Mitterand leads them through the restaurant. Music swells. La Renard's PATRONS whisper and wave to Morning as she glides through the room, with Zero trailing behind. Mitterand seats them.

MITTERAND

And where is Monsieur Champion tonight?

MORNING

Probably off somewhere with a spoon up
his nose.

MITTERAND

Ah, tres bien. Tres bien. Bon
appetit.

Mitterand walks back to the front and we hear yells and a loud slap.

ZERO

You forgot to thank me for bailing you
out back there.

MORNING

You'll have to forgive Godard. He
fought in World War II.

ZERO

Yeah, on whose side?

Zero starts looking at the menu, which is in old French.

MORNING

What looks good to you?

ZERO

Well, you're pretty good-lookin', but I
don't know what's cookin'.

MORNING

Please. I know I look good. From the
menu, tiger.

ZERO

The only thing I recognize on the menu
is the filet mignon. Would you mind
ordering for me? I like it when a
woman takes charge.

MORNING

Garcon!

Balzac comes over.

MORNING

We'll have the chef's tasting menu,
please.

BALZAC

Ah, for a fresh palate waiting to be
dazzled. And to drink?

ZERO

Bring us your most expensive bottle of
champagne.

BALZAC

Bien sur.

Balzac walks away.

74. INT. LA RENARD - NIGHT

Zero and Morning sit with a nouvelle cuisine tasting
plate in front of each of them. Balzac pours the bubbly.

ZERO

This might be the best meal I've ever
had.

MORNING

This is only the third course. Twelve
more to go.

ZERO

So, uh, tell me, Morning, what are you
interested in?

MORNING

What do you mean? You mean what do I
do?

ZERO

No, what are you interested in?

MORNING

It's funny. People usually ask me what
I do.

ZERO

So?

MORNING

Well, I'm a real estate broker.

ZERO

Do you enjoy it?

MORNING

Well, sometimes it seems like it's all
about...

ZERO

Money?

MORNING

No, no. Money's great. That's not the problem. I just have to work with some awful people, and we end up catering to a lot of bourgeois assholes.

ZERO

So what do you actually do all day?

MORNING

I sell people on this idea of how they see themselves, living in some big house, living the good life. It's not so bad, I guess, but sometimes that idea is all these people have. I don't know. I just thought that I'd end up doing something...meaningful with my life.

ZERO

You know what? My mom and dad thought they'd do something meaningful with their lives. They were proto-hippies out in southern California in the late 60's. Flower Power, all that nonsense. They rode a bus for a year, but then they had to get off. And now he's a sell-out executive and she's a bleeding heart liberal. In this life, you have to ask yourself one simple question: are you on the bus, or are you off the bus?

MORNING

I think I got hit by the bus, and I'm lying in the middle of the road waiting for medical assistance.

ZERO

Well, I'm driving that ambulance, and the sirens are blaring, and the lights are flashing, and if you can keep breathing just a little bit longer, I'll kickstart your heart.

MORNING

(laughing with him)

Garcon, 40 ccs of humility, stat.

75. INT. LA RENARD - NIGHT

Balzac plays the violin with a rose in his teeth. Zero pours champagne into Morning's glass. The bottle is half-empty.

MORNING

Believe me, it isn't as glamorous as it seems.

ZERO

So what about the ribbon-cutting ceremonies and the boat christenings? You're a celebrity, dude.

MORNING

Hardly. People like to get near me because my father's the mayor. I can't remember the last time I sold a house without somebody mentioning it. And my father expects me to play the part of the dutiful daughter, supporting him all the time.

ZERO

It's like you're the first lady of Brookston.

MORNING

No, my mother was the first lady of Brookston. I don't know what I am. Sometimes I feel like a robot.

ZERO

That's okay. Sometimes I feel like a monkey, and society is my organ grinder, and I have a banana shoved up my ass.

MORNING

That's disgusting. You are a monkey, Zero.

ZERO

I'm the best. You're good - but I'm better.

MORNING

I'm so glad you asked me out tonight.

76. INT. LA RENARD - NIGHT

Balzac carries a chocolate souffle to the table.

MORNING

All right, track star, enough about me. I want to know what this dropping out business is all about.

ZERO

I dropped out. I work at a video store. You've seen my car.

MORNING

Yeah, you're a player. So what happened?

ZERO

I realized I wasn't doing what I want to do, and even though I'm not doing what I realized I wanted to be doing, I've at least realized I don't want to do what I don't want to do, and there ain't no two ways about it.

MORNING

So did you get on the bus or off of it?

ZERO

Don't bother me with your silly metaphors. Do you know who I am? I'm a ninja. And do you know what kind of ninja?

MORNING

What kind?

ZERO

A super-ninja.

MORNING

Listen, Zero, I know I'm older than you and a lot more successful, and cultured, and pretty, and smart. I realize it took some brass just to ask me out, and I know you're probably still a little scared of me. And you know what? You should be. But you don't have to try to sell me some line of bull about how screwing up your life was really cool. Just tell me what happened.

Zero briefly ponders the idea.

ZERO

I figured blowing 40 grand a year so I could turn into some cookie-cutter corporate kook was a waste of my time and my youthful exuberance. I decided I should devote myself to higher pursuits than getting A's that don't mean anything, smoking bong hits with prep school elitists, and screwing my crunchy, tree-hugging, pseudo-intellectual, hippie girlfriend.

MORNING

So, what have you found?

ZERO

Well, I'm having dinner at the best restaurant in Brookston with the prettiest girl in town. The only problem is, I know this beautiful, smart, worldly woman has a boyfriend.

MORNING

Technically, we're broken up.

ZERO

Yeah? If he finds out I took you here will he technically knock me out? Or will we have some technical difficulties?

MORNING

No, he'll probably just break your nose.

ZERO

Does this cro-magnon have a name?

MORNING

Sam Champion. We're co-workers. We were going out for a year and a half, but then he asked me to move in with him. That afternoon you and I met? He told me that if I wanted to be Mrs. Sam Champion one day, I'd have to take it to the next level. I'd have to get extreme. So I told him I needed some more time to think things through.

ZERO

Breaking up can be tough.

MORNING

So why'd you end things with your hippiechick?

ZERO

She kept quoting articles from High Times. Everything she wore had to be made out of hemp. She ate cardboard for breakfast every morning. And on the weekends, she would protest animal abortion clinics.

MORNING

Are there animal abortion clinics?

ZERO

Not if Luna can stop them.

MORNING

Luna?

ZERO

Luna Grossberg. She was everything I hated about college: she was a vapid, malleable parasite leeching off her parents money and my pot.

MORNING

I thought you get high on life.

ZERO

What, are you baked? I smoke grass.

MORNING

I've never gotten high.

ZERO

Check!

Mitterand comes over.

MITTERAND

Your bill has been taken care of by Monsieur Newton.

ZERO

Casper's here? Where?

MITTERAND

La-bas!

Casper waves from across the room. He sits in a booth with GABRIELLE NEWTON, the Italian bride from the photo in Casper's office. She is older, yet somehow even more beautiful. Mr. Fun stands on a little stage singing a jazz standard.

Zero and Morning walk over.

CASPER

Zero, my boy. Allow me to introduce my wife, Gabrielle. Gabrielle, this is Zero Chance. And this, of course, is the lovely Morning Chambers. Morning, you look more like your mother every day.

MORNING

I'm not my mother, Mr. Newton. She suffered from the misguided notion that you were a good man. Zero, I'll meet you at the car.

Morning makes a beeline for the exit.

GABRIELLE

So this is the sexy Zero Chance, illustrious Ivy League video store clerk.

ZERO

Yeah, that's right. You're even more beautiful than you were on your wedding day.

GABRIELLE

And such a honey-tongued devil as well!

ZERO

Aren't you famous?

CASPER

Yes, my wife was a starlet of the Italian cinema.

GABRIELLE

You flatter me, my darling little American husband.

ZERO

I gotta be going. I can't thank you enough for the meal.

With her husband unaware, Gabrielle looks directly at Zero while she runs her tongue around her lips. They purse into an air kiss just for Zero, who watches dumbstruck.

CASPER

Don't give it a thought. Now you be good to that girl. She's a keeper.

Gabrielle winks at Zero.

ZERO

Oh, she's a trapper-keeper.

Zero walks up to Godard and hands him a wad of cash.

ZERO

See to it that they have everything they need.

GODARD

Ah, mais oui. Right away.

Godard claps his hands. Zero flashes Casper the peace sign, and then walks out of La Renard as Mr. Fun belts out a show tune.

77. EXT. PARKER STREET - NIGHT

Parker Street is a tiny side street in Brookston. Zero and Morning sit in Zero's Volvo. The stars are out.

78. INT. ZERO'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Morning puffs on a jibber with one hand while staring at the other.

MORNING

Have you ever, like, really looked at your hand?

ZERO

Yeah. Why?

MORNING

I feel weird. I kind of feel like dancing. I don't think this stuff is working. Am I doing it right?

ZERO

Give me that thing.

Zero takes the joint and inhales deeply. He talks with his breath held in.

ZERO

Just put your lips together and suck.

Zero starts coughing uncontrollably.

MORNING

What was that?

ZERO

What was what?

A quiet, yet haunting "Koo-roo-koo-koo" sound is heard in the distance.

ZERO

That's just some koo-koo bird. Now let's listen to the crazy pot music.

Zero digs a cassette out of the back of the seat and pops it in.

MORNING

Who is this?

ZERO

It's Parliament Funkadelic, so consider yourself spelunkdified.

Another "Koo-roo-koo-koo" sound is heard. It's getting closer.

MORNING

What the hell was that?

ZERO

Just relax, honey. Why don't ya snuggle up a little closer?

MORNING

What?

A piercing, terrifying "Koo-roo-koo-koo" shrieks out right next to the car.

MORNING

We have to find out what that is!

ZERO

Good idea. You go check!

The car starts rocking back and forth. Morning and Zero grab each other and start screaming. Now a chorus of horrifying "Koo-roo-koo-koo" rings out around the car. Zero stares in disbelief and fury at the joint.

ZERO

This isn't pot - this is shit! Those assholes fucked me!

The doors fly open and the ODs pile into the car. Roman grabs the spliff.

ROMAN

What's up, chilla?

Roman takes a long drag and passes it to Westerly.

BOGART

Hey, what's up Morning? What are you doing with this clown?

MORNING

Jesus Christ. I heard at the reunion you were all dead.

ZERO

You know these guys?

MORNING

Yeah, we went to high school together. They ruined the Senior Prom.

GENGHIS

Guys, can you turn the music down? I wanna listen to Kajagoogoo on my headphones.

ROMAN

Fuck that, peg-boy. We didn't take this acid so we could sit around and watch you listening to Captain Kangaroo.

MORNING

You guys are on acid?

BOGART

Those guys are. I'm just crazy.

GENGHIS

Do you mind rolling down the windows?
I'm hot.

BOGART

So what were you guys going to do after
she rejected you, Zero?

ZERO

Well, first I was gonna kick you out of
my car -

BOGART

Fine. Let's go to the movies, boys.

The other ODs start to get out of the car.

MORNING

Really? Is it more fun to go to the
movies when you're stoned?

WESTERLY

You have no idea. It is so much more
fun to go to the movies when you're
stoned.

79. EXT. THE SQUARE CINEMA - NIGHT

It's crowded outside. People mill about. The whole town
has gone out to the movies. The marquee reads "1: Wizard
of Oz (Dark Side Of The Moon) & Koyannasquatsi" "2:
Major League II"

80. INT. SQUARE CINEMA LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby is filled with the ringing of video games, the
slosh of the soda machine, popcorn popping and tickets
ripping. The ODs, Zero, and Morning make their way
through the crowd.

The usher, BEUSCHER, a stubbled, roly-poly fluffhead
stands in a little tan theater suit. His voice booms with
announcements.

BEUSCHER

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls:
motion pictures! The wave of the
future. The Double Feature is almost
sold out, so please buy your tickets
now.

ZERO

I gotta hit the head. Can you guys
grab the tickets?

GENGHIS

Sure. Just give us the money.

Zero digs into his wallet and hands Bogart some cash. He gives some to Morning, too.

ZERO

Get yourself something to eat.

MORNING

Do you want anything?

ZERO

I've got everything I need.

MORNING

You're so stupid.

Morning smiles and walks off into line. Zero heads to the bathroom. The ODS go to get tickets.

81. INT. CINEMA BATHROOM - NIGHT

Zero walks into the bathroom. The only other person there is Chief Potimoth, pissing into one of the urinals. Zero eyes Potimoth uncomfortably, but he can't hold it. Zero walks up to the urinal furthest away. Potimoth finishes pissing, and then goes and stands right in back of Zero as Zero takes a leak.

POTIMOTH

You little punk. You smell like the funny stuff. You goddamn freak. Your kind makes me sick. Sometimes, late at night, I go into this bathroom and wait for little stoner shits like you, with your long hair and your loser friends. I wait here, hour after hour, growing more and more disgusted by the stench of your wasted generation. And I think to myself, one of these days, your ass is gonna be all mine.

Zero finishes up and turns to face him.

ZERO

Did you just say you want my ass?

POTIMOTH

No, no, I'm going to throw your butt in the slammer.

ZERO

You want to butt-slam me?

POTIMOTH

No, I'm gonna lock you up and throw away the key.

ZERO

You're going to turn me into your sex slave?

POTIMOTH

You little fucking kids with your clever wordplay and your holier-than-thou attitude, working on your tan at your daddy's pool, smoking your drugs and listening to your techno-hippie music. This country is falling apart because lazy bums like you don't give a hoot about Uncle Sam. You don't understand what it means to be a patriot. It's assholes like you, not those fucking towelheads over in Kafiristan, who are going to destroy the fabric of our great, our great-

ZERO

Can I hold your gun?

POTIMOTH

Get out of my bathroom, ya beatnik commie pinko fruit.

ZERO

You forgot anarchist revolutionary, pig.

Zero backs away toward the door, flipping Potimoth the double-bird. Zero hits the light switch before exiting, leaving Potimoth in total darkness.

82. EXT. SQUARE CINEMA LOBBY - NIGHT

Zero heads back to meet up with the ODs, who are now beyond the velvet rope.

ZERO

Where's my tickets, guys?

ROMAN

We got the last four. It's sold out, dude!

All the ODs cheer.

ZERO

What about my money?

WESTERLY

What about it?

BOGART

We rule!

Roman, Westerly and Bogart walk off into the theater. Genghis shuffles slowly along behind, staring at the carpet. They enter, and we hear the strains of Pink Floyd as the audience goes wild.

Morning comes up alongside Zero, munching on an enormous Milky Way Bar.

MORNING

Should we go in?

ZERO

There's a little problem.

BEUSCHER

Tickets for both shows have sold out. There are no remaining seats for our Double Feature, or for our showing of Major League II. Thank you for playing. Goodbye, and have a lovely day.

Sam Champion strides across the floor with his HORRIBLE FRIENDS, high-fiving. He holds four tickets up in the air.

CHAMPION

The last tickets to ML Deuce. Who's got goosebumps?

MORNING

Oh, Jesus Christ. I cannot deal.

Champion walks up to them.

CHAMPION

Hey, Morning, sorry I didn't call. I had to go see, uh...
(wipes his nose)
Charlie. Who's the limp-dick?

MORNING

This is Zero, and we're leaving.

CHAMPION

You're not going anywhere.

ZERO

You're late for your movie.

CHAMPION

Guys, we're late for the movie. Wait a sec...

Champion realizes he's being mindtricked.

CHAMPION

Are you saying you want to throw down?
Let's go. Let's throw down.

ZERO

Okay, rock, paper, scissors. One, two,
three, shoot!

Champion plays along. Zero wins, scissors to paper.

ZERO

I win! Go see your movie.

CHAMPION

All right guys, let's go. Wait a sec...
Fuck this. Let's fight.

ZERO

Can't we resolve our differences
through me running out of here with
Morning?

CHAMPION

I'm going to kick your ass from here to
eternity.

Champion convulses and drops to the ground. Potimoth
stands over him with a taser.

POTIMOTH

Stop right there. Ms. Chambers, is
everything all right?

MORNING

Everything's fine, Chief. Sam and his
friends were just going into the movie.
Weren't you, Sam?

Champion's horrible friends help him to his feet.

CHAMPION

Yeah, that's right. We'll finish this
later.

Sam and his friends disappear into the theater.

MORNING

Let's get out of here.

ZERO

This is not working out as planned.

MORNING

Well, the night shouldn't end here. I
want to take you somewhere.

83. EXT. BROOKSTON PLANETARIUM - NIGHT

A huge, domed structure, with a marquee reading "When Worlds Collide."

84. INT. PLANETARIUM THEATER - NIGHT

The Reggae Band from Breakfascist sits in the front seats laughing stonedly. Zero and Morning sit near the back. Images of space and beyond hurtle across the screen along with a booming narrative. Zero regards Morning with confusion and lust.

NARRATOR

Coldest, blackest space. In the far reaches of the cosmos, in the darkest corners of the known universe, in a place beyond all human conception, interstellar bodies spin through the ether bound only by gravity and mass. For millennia they shift and move without connecting. But once every eon, worlds collide. I'm Billy Baldwin, and this is, "When Worlds Collide." Brought to you by Skittles. Taste the rainbow of fruit flavor - Skittles.

ZERO

You said we were going to the Led Zeppelin laser show.

MORNING

I just said we were going to the Planetarium.

ZERO

Yeah, well where's Uranus?

NARRATOR

Though modern man has believed ad infinitum that our universe is continually expanding, he is woefully mistaken. Every day more planets collapse into each other in a chain reaction of destruction and chaos ultimately leading to inverse genesis. Entropy. The end of reality as we know it.

Images of interplanetary destruction explode across the screen.

ZERO

This movie's cool.

MORNING

I've seen it 400 times.

ZERO

You're kidding, right?

NARRATOR

With heavenly bodies rent asunder, new worlds are formed. From the ashes of cosmic incineration, glorious unions of strange energies configure themselves anew and emerge like a phoenix rising. Radically stronger, blazing with heat, and infinitely more complex.

MORNING

My mother used to take me here all the time.

ZERO

I can see why.

MORNING

Back then there was only one thing I wanted to do.

ZERO

What's that?

MORNING

Go to Space Camp.

ZERO

Are you still high?

MORNING

No. I've always secretly harbored dreams of space exploration.

ZERO

That is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard.

MORNING

I knew you wouldn't understand. Maybe we should go.

ZERO

No, no, no. I'm sorry I said it was ridiculous. I mean, I do think it's ridiculous, but I also believe that every girl needs to find her place in this crazy universe, and if you belong up there in the stars, then-

MORNING

Then what?

ZERO

I'll take you.

Zero leans in to kiss her, but the show is over and the lights come up. Morning pulls back.

ZERO
So where were we?

MORNING
We were leaving.

85. EXT. THE MAYOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

Zero and Morning pull up to the Mayor's Mansion, a white, opulent, Grecian structure. Zero walks her to the front door.

MORNING
I had a good time getting to know you.

ZERO
There's more to you than meets the eye, Morning Chambers.

MORNING
You should see me naked.

ZERO
Yeah, I should.

They're smiling nervously. This is it. Zero leans in to kiss her. The front door flies open, and out storms Warren Chambers.

WARREN
What the hell is going on out here? Is this man accosting you?

MORNING
No, Daddy, he's my date. This is Zero.

WARREN
You can say that again.

ZERO
It's good to meet you, Mr. Mayor.

Zero reaches out to shake hands with Warren, but Warren just stares at him.

WARREN
So, Zero, what do you do?

ZERO
You mean what am I interested in?

WARREN
No. What do you do for a living?

ZERO
Well, I dropped out of college and I work in a video store.

WARREN

Morning, could I speak to you for a minute?

Warren pulls Morning inside and slams the door in Zero's face. We hear Warren loudly chastising Morning from within. Zero calmly rolls up the "Welcome" mat and sets it on fire. He returns to his car and drives away.

86. INT. MAYOR'S MANSION, FOYER - NIGHT

Warren chews Morning out.

WARREN

Do you really want to waste your time with some slacker who works a minimum-wage job, squandering the most important years of his life? When I was his age, I could have desecrated my youth chasing after impossible dreams, but I came to the conclusion that I had to be a responsible adult if I wanted to make my way in the world. Let the mud people work in the video stores, young lady. We're here to rule the planet.

MORNING

Dad, you've got to stop with the world domination talk.

WARREN

I'm only thinking about your future. If you want to run around like some gutter whore with the local riff-raff, I'll disown you. I'll not allow my reputation to be sullied by the likes of that...that dropout. (sniffing) Is something burning?

MORNING

I know you only want what's best for me, Dad, but sometimes you can be a real jerk. I like Zero, and I think he likes me, too.

87. INT. ZERO'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Zero is parked with Sunset Portnoy. They're making out as his hands are up her shirt. Sunset pulls back.

SUNSET

Wait a minute. I gotta get my proper swerve on.

She whips out a sticky joint, lights it, and inhales. She passes it to Zero.

SUNSET

You ever smoke the Peter Lorre Bud?

ZERO

No. Why Peter Lorre?

SUNSET

(in a Peter Lorre voice)

Because it's creepy.

Zero begins to speak, growing ever more discombobulated.

ZERO

You want to know who's creepy, chilla? Mayor Warren fuckin' Chambers. That guy's a fascist. He put the "tick" in politician. He'd sell his daughter to the Klan if he had his druthers. I'm telling you, this Chambers character, he's out of control. But he's in control. He's gonna condescend to me, I'll kick his ass. And I'd do it, too. 'Cause I'm the fucking shit. Yeah, that's right. Nobody's gonna fuck with me. I'm too busy running munitions to the South. I'm Zero Chance, and frankly, I don't give a damn.

SUNSET

That's right, cheeba monkey. I told you it was the creeper. You think Warren Chambers is creepy, you should meet my dad.

ZERO

I did meet your dad. He freaked me out.

SUNSET

He's not even the Mayor - he's the goddamned Mayor Wannabe. He's a massive, impotent failure, and I almost hate him as much as I hate the government, technology and people.

ZERO

Who pissed in your cornflakes?

SUNSET

Technology is evil, dude. It allows us a level of efficiency that we don't need. The media has tricked us into thinking that these toys are a substitute for self-awareness.

Sunset takes a hit.

SUNSET

I don't want a cell phone. I don't want to turn into some squawker who pollutes public spaces with inane jabber. C'mon, I'm no Luddite. Without my pager, I couldn't sell pot. But on the whole, interconnectivity is useless if there's no one worth connecting to.

ZERO

You think people are worthless?

SUNSET

No. People aren't inherently worthless. It's what they do along the way, dude. Greed, arrogance, envy and lust perverts them into zombified lemmings who wander mindlessly toward the sea of futility.

ZERO

Dude, I know some people who do their own thing. Let their freak flags fly.

SUNSET

But none of them have any power whatsoever. Our elected officials could not care less about us. Their pork-lined pockets bulge with soft money donations from special interest groups lobbying for more cigarettes, more handguns, more oil, more ineffective social programs and more jails to confine harmless drug-users. Look at my Dad, the D.A. I temp in his office sometimes. I see what goes on. He's so blind, I manage to sell weed right under his nose.

ZERO

You'd rather he caught you?

SUNSET

No. I just wish he paid more attention to me and my mom and less attention to his hollow quest for power. I don't want my Dad to turn into this puppet for the machine. Now take your shirt off.

88. INT. CASUAL VIDEO - DAY

Zero stocks the European Adult section, noticing that movie after movie stars Gabrielle Newton. Stan and Macy Portnoy enter Casual Video. While Stan browses, Macy walks up to Zero.

MACY

So this is where you've been hiding yourself - in the European Adult Section.

ZERO

That's right. I feel at home here.

MACY

I thought we had a good thing going. Wasn't my sugar sweet enough?

ZERO

Macy, we had a blast. But I'm trying to keep my nose clean.

MACY

I preferred your nose when it was between my legs.

Stan, holding a copy of All the President's Men, emerges behind Zero and slaps him on the back.

STAN

Looks like you're moving up in the world. Maybe someday you'll get to work with french fries.

ZERO

I'm at ease in my own life. Are you?

STAN

I am so fed up with you spoiled brats. You're just like Sunset. You've been given everything, but you still don't understand anything.

ZERO

I like what I do and I have what I need.

STAN

Sounds like you're writing checks with your mouth that your body can't cash. Do you really think that's a defensible position?

ZERO

Well, of course, there are lots of positions. Ask your wife.

MACY

I don't know what you're talking about.

ZERO

My argument is irrefutable.

STAN

You want a chance to prove that? Take your best shot. Come on my show and tell the world about your existential lament, and see how it stands up against truth, justice, and the American way.

ZERO

Fine. I'm there. Totally.

STAN

Totally?

ZERO

Totally.

STAN

Keep using big words like that, and you'll be exposed for the phony that you are. Macy, we're going.

Stan stomps off. Macy leans in close to Zero.

MACY

By the way, Sunset says you're the best.

Macy walks off, and Zero, titillated and aghast, ogles her finely toned butt.

89. INT. ICE CREAM YOU SCREAM - DAY

Zero lies on a patient's couch while Morning sits in an analyst's chair. They are eating cones at Ice Cream You Scream, a New Wave, psychologically aware soda fountain.

Rorschach tests decorate the walls, and ice cream is served at a med dispensary window by a teenage SCOOP-GIRL, dressed in a nurse's uniform. DR. MILQUESHAK, a collegiate goof-off in scrubs, supervises.

Zero practices a mantra.

ZERO

I am not a phony. I am not a phony. I am not a phony.

MORNING

Your ice cream's melting.

ZERO

Oh, yeah. Right. It figures. I have no idea what I'm going to say. I never thought there was any point in over-analyzing what I was doing. I thought it would defeat the purpose of the whole thing.

MORNING

What are you doing?

ZERO

Let's see. I'm, uh, I'm procrastinating. I'm trying to avoid facing my future. I'm just worried about my future.

MORNING

Really?

ZERO

Not at all. That would be such a cop-out.

MORNING

That's exactly what my dad said you're doing.

ZERO

Obviously, your dad's insane. Okay, if it's not the fear, what's my motivation? Maybe I just wanted to party all the time, to disconnect from reality and plug into a drug-filled wonderland.

MORNING

Is that it?

ZERO

Sort of. But that's not all of it. If I really had to boil it down, I dropped out just to...drop out.

MORNING

I've been kind of thinking about dropping out myself.

ZERO

What are you, nuts? I live with my parents. I work at a video store. It sucks.

MORNING

I thought you'd be more supportive.

ZERO

I've got your back - just don't front. You know I can't decide for you.

MORNING

My hands are covered with Rocky Road. I'm going to freshen up.

Morning walks off just as Sunset enters I Scream You Scream. Sunset walks up to Zero.

SUNSET

If it isn't Mr. Big Shot TV Celebrity Bitch.

ZERO

Nice to see you too, Sunset. My nipples are still sore.

SUNSET

So what are you gonna say on my father's stupid show?

ZERO

I was actually just talking that over with a friend.

SUNSET

Does your friend have a penis?

ZERO

Uh, no.

SUNSET

Should I be going?

ZERO

Uh, yeah.

Morning returns.

SUNSET

Hey, Morning.

MORNING

Hey, Sunset.

SUNSET

(jokingly)

My dad's gonna kick your dad's ass in the election.

ZERO

I thought you hated your dad.

MORNING

Well, I hate my father, too. But I still love him. And how do you two know each other?

ZERO

I used to clean her mother's pool.

SUNSET

He did a bang-up job, too.

ZERO

So, Sunset, you taking off?

SUNSET

Oh, yeah. Yeah. I gotta go make some soap. Good to see ya.

Sunset exits.

MORNING

Is there something going on here I should know about?

ZERO

No, Sunset's just a mixed-up kid.

MORNING

How so?

ZERO

She got bounced out of college, and now she just bad-mouths the system as she wanders contentedly around Brookston without a care in the world.

Realization jolts across Zero's face.

90. EXT. BROOKSTON CABLE ACCESS STATION - NIGHT

A non-descript public building.

91. INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

A bare bones shitty talk show set - three folding chairs on a velour carpet. A phone console with a dozen lights rests on a coffee table.

Stan is seated in the middle with Jerry Garshia to his left. The other chair is empty. Garshia wears a neck brace and a look of tremendous pain.

STAN

Once again, my guest is Jerry Garshia, local victim, and we're here today to discuss the rampant lawlessness in Brookston. Mr. Garshia was on his way to his first job interview in over a decade when a sportscar clipped him, rendering him unable to find gainful employment and perform his conjugal duties.

GARSHIA

I thought we weren't gonna talk about that, Stan.

STAN

Don't worry. It's all privileged information. Why don't you give us an update, Jerry?

GARSHIA

The police are still trying to figure out who hit me. Meanwhile, I can't work and I can't sleep.

STAN

And there's trouble in the bedroom. Rest assured, fellow citizens, an indictment is imminent, and justice will reign supreme. Let's go to the phones and see what you have to say, Brookston.

A lone phone line lights up.

STAN

Caller, you're on the air.

ROMAN

(over the phone)

Hey, Captain Cakehole, can I talk to Judge Wapner?

We hear a dial tone. Stan has hung up.

STAN

It's that kind of anarchic behavior that disrupts the peaceful veneer of my format. Let's move on to our next guest. He used to go to college and have a future, but then realized his time would be better spent working in a video store and wasting his life. Ladies and gentlemen, Zero Chance.

Zero enters and takes the empty seat.

ZERO

Mr. Portnoy, thank you for having me. Mr. Garshia, a pleasure to see you again.

GARSHIA

Have we met before?

ZERO

No we haven't.

GARSHIA

No, we haven't.

STAN

So, Zero, tell us about your "struggle" to maintain an empty existence.

ZERO

I'm not so concerned with any particular struggle. I'm mostly into concepts. In fact, I may not even exist. I'm not so sure about Garshia over there, either.

STAN

Well, tell us, Zero, what are these so-called concepts?

ZERO

Since I've been home, I've developed a theory that should be of great interest to the younger citizens of Brookston, or at least the young at heart.

GARSHIA

I think I exist.

STAN

What is this theory?

ZERO

It goes by many names, but I call it Post High-School Suburban Malaise or, PHISM. It's the creeping sensation that this is not your life, manifested in a backwards desire to sabotage your well-being, to avoid genuine engagement with reality. But there is a way out, and I'm going to tell you what it is.

A solitary phone line begins to blink. Zero notices, and becomes even more animated.

ZERO

First you must forgive yourself. Then, blame everyone else. Sure, part of it's your fault, but don't forget that you've been fed a line of bull since day one. Absurd expectations have been heaped upon your shoulders by your parents, your teachers, your friends, the movies you watch, the songs you hear, and the constant bombardment of hypnotic images that promise a life of instant self-gratification.

GARSHIA

Right on, brother.

The phone board starts to light up. Zero goes for the slam dunk.

ZERO

Unearth yourself from this avalanche of false ideals and start getting real. Do your own thing and keep it casual. Take solace in the cleansing power of ironic detachment. Irony is your one true friend. Never apologize for who you are. If other people don't understand you, then patiently allow your work to speak for itself. If you listen to your desires and persist in your actions, you may find happiness, but more importantly, you'll find yourself.

The phone board goes berserk. Sparks and smoke fly out of the phone console.

ZERO

Peace, Brookston!

Zero flashes the double peace sign and walks off. Garshia rises to his feet.

GARSHIA

(to Zero as he leaves)

Can I come with you?

STAN

That was Mr. Zero Chance with his apologia for a useless generation. I'm Stan Portnoy, and this has been Portnoy's Complaint. Remember, in the great bowling alley of life, the truth is a 7/10 split.

92. EXT. BREAKFASCIST - DAY

Zero walks toward the restaurant, with DENIZENS of Brookston congratulating him on a stellar performance.

93. INT. BREAKFASCIST - DAY

Zero enters, and the Breakfascist crew bursts out in applause and cheers. Zero is their hero.

ZERO

Thank you, thank you. There are so many people I'd like to thank. I'd like to thank my parents for not believing in me. I'd like to thank those older dropouts for screwing up my life. Most of all, I'd like to thank Mr. Fun for being a mysterious art house weirdo.

Gabrielle and Mr. Fun walk up to Zero. Mr. Fun hands Zero an origami flamingo.

MR. FUN

In my country, the flamingo is a sign
of virility.

Gabrielle plants a big, wet, luscious kiss on Zero. The
Breakfascists converge on them, breaking the embrace, and
they begin to shake Zero's hand and pat him on the back.
Casper, lurking, breaks up the scene.

CASPER

Listen up, Breakfascists. Food is on
me. Tommy, give us the Stalin-One
Breakfast!

Casper takes Zero aside.

CASPER

Don't let this praise go to your head.
They love you today, but if you aren't
careful, they'll hate you tomorrow. I
used to be respectable. Now look at
me. I'm on the fringe. Enjoy your
time in the spotlight - you are the
man. But don't forget to keep your eye
on the man behind the man.

ZERO

And who's that?

CASPER

Oh, I don't know. Get some breakfast.

Zero gets in line behind the ODs, who are all getting the
same shitty Stalin-One Breakfast from Jerry Garshia, now
a line cook at Breakfascist.

GARSHIA

Hey, Zero, you changed my life, man. I
finally got a gig, brother.

WESTERLY

Shut the fuck up and give me some hash
browns, ya hippie.

BOGART

(to Zero)

Nice job, freak.

ROMAN

Yeah, you finally managed to do
something right.

WESTERLY

Imagine what you could do with your own
show.

ZERO

My own show? How would I do that?

ROMAN

It's rudimentary. Just use the four Ds: detect, determine, destroy, and disappear. Detect; locate the target. Determine; figure out what is necessary to eliminate it. Destroy; blow that mother sky high. Disappear; then get the fuck out of Dodge. You can achieve whatever you want so long as you have a plan and the will to power.

ZERO

Thanks, Roman. But that doesn't get me my own TV show.

ROMAN

No, it doesn't. But I went down this morning and I had a little talk with the program director at the station, and it only took a few dollars to convince him to give you your own show.

ZERO

You mean you paid a membership fee?

ROMAN

Let me sweat the details, you pacifist little Mary.

WESTERLY

You know who your first guests are gonna be?

ZERO

Who?

OLDER DROPOUTS

Us!

94. INT. CHANCE HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Zero bursts in. His parents are in the dining room, looking forlorn.

ZERO

Mom, Dad, I got my own TV show! It's gonna be on tomorrow night!

BEN

That's terrific, Zero. We've been getting calls all day congratulating us on what a great do-nothing son we have.

ELLIE

Can't you be proud of him, just for a minute? You have to forgive your father. He's got a lot on his mind.

ZERO
What's wrong, Dad?

ELLIE
Your father is being prosecuted for
vehicular assault.

BEN
This Garshia says I hit him with the
car. Obviously that screw-up is making
a mountain out of a molehill. Sure, I
brushed by him, but it made no impact.
In this absurdly litigious society, all
you have to do is sneeze on someone, or
hit him with your car, and you get sued
for a million bucks!

ZERO
I thought that was you. What was the
hurry?

BEN
I was running late to meet your mother
for dinner. I always drive fast when
I'm late to meet your mother.

ZERO
So what's gonna happen?

BEN
The trial starts next week-

ZERO
No, what's gonna happen to the house?

BEN
Very funny, Zero. Your mother and I
have to talk. Go be a smart-ass
somewhere else.

ZERO
Where's Chewie?

ELLIE
He's in the solarium watching TV and
filling out his jumbles.

95. INT. CHANCE HOUSEHOLD, SOLARIUM - DAY

Chewie watches the news and incorrectly fills out a word
puzzle. Zero enters.

ZERO
Hey, Chewie. What's up?

CHEWIE
Hey, Mr. Zero. You're on the picture
box.

ZERO

You mean I'm on the television? I was just coming in tell you about my show.

CHEWIE

No, you're on the picture box.

Zero sits down to watch newscaster CHARLES HALEY.

HALEY

(on TV)

Last night Brookston was stunned by a deliriously insightful cable access appearance by local dropout Zero Chance. Zero waxed poetic on the nature of the modern youth, and his clever musings, along with a \$25 membership fee, have earned him his own show on Brookston Cable Access. We all brim with anticipation for the debut episode of Zero Gravity.

CHEWIE

Nice one, Mr. Zero.

HALEY

Looking back on on our top story, election day is just around the corner, and with the polls showing Mayor Warren Chambers and District Attorney Stan Portnoy in a statistical dead heat, they were both out today shaking hands and kissing babies.

A split screen shot is shown of Stan and Warren both holding babies while shaking hands.

HALEY

The race remains too close to call. I'm Charles Haley. Good night.

96. INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

The premiere of Zero Gravity. The ODs are on a couch onstage. Zero stands just offstage talking to Morning.

MORNING

Are you gonna forget me now that you're famous?

ZERO

What? How do I look?

MORNING

Like a Cable Access Ninja. Go get 'em, tiger.

Morning leans in to kiss Zero, but Roman interrupts.

ROMAN

Hey, fuckhead! We got a show to do!

ZERO

I gotta go.

Zero walks onstage and sits down behind a desk. The theme music swells, and Beuscher, the announcer, announces.

BEUSCHER

This is Zero Gravity. And here's your host, the people's choice, the voice of free America, Captain Chaos himself, a man who needs no introduction - Zero Chance!

ZERO

Hello, fellow freaks. Welcome to the House of Pain, otherwise known as Zero Gravity. This is our first show, and I promise, it's a doozy. If you really dug my message the other night, then you'll love these guys. Let me introduce my friends and mentors, the Older Dropouts.

BOGART

I would like to announce at this time that we will be henceforth known as the Phismics.

ZERO

Thanks, guys.

BOGART

Shut up.

ZERO

Tonight we take a closer look at the Dropout phenomenon. Who would like to start off our roundtable discussion?

WESTERLY

I think it might be useful to begin with a quick slide show history of the Dropout.

The lights dim, and a screen descends behind them, with only the word "DROPOUT".

GENGHIS

First, let's look at one of the great Italian dropouts.

A slide of the United States.

GENGHIS

Christopher Columbus.

A slide of Gerard Depardieu in "1492."

GENGHIS

Columbus was just some wannabe explorer suffering from the delusion that the world was round. His Dad kicked him out of Italy for being molte embarassmentio. Columbus had to scam the Spanish crown into funding his three-hour tour. But along with small pox, the dude had moxie, and paved the way for other Dropouts, like Amerigo Vespucci and Balboa and, uh-

ROMAN

And consequently ushered in the destruction of Native America. However, that genocide did introduce us white boys to such cool cats as Geronimo, Sitting Bull, Tonto, Squanto and Pocahontas. But who was the first dropout? Some might say, Siddhartha -

A slide of Keanu Reeves in "Little Buddha."

ROMAN

But please, get real. You could make a case for Lao-Tzu -

A slide of Mr. Fun.

ROMAN

But who knows if he even existed. And besides, those guys were Asian and we'll never be that cool. So who was the first western Dropout? It's so obvious.

A slide of Jesus.

ROMAN

Jesus. Think about it. He had a profitable carpentry business, but he turned his back on material wealth to lead a bunch of hippie freaks through the badlands. Water into wine? Whatever. They were buggin' out on mushrooms in the Gobi desert and challenging the system. And in the end, he was executed for his Dropout ways.

WESTERLY

(as the slides progress)

There was the Marquis de Sade, Martin Luther, Mark Twain, Mahatma Gandhi, and Malcolm X. Walt Whitman liberated the soul. Wonder Woman turned her back on her Amazonian roots. Kerouac left Columbia for the road and Bill Gates never finished Harvard.

(MORE)

WESTERLY (CONT'D)

Schneider and Wopat broke their contracts with The Dukes of Hazzard, and that leads us to the modern day paragon of dropping out, Zero Chance.

BOGART

But the problem with our Modern Dropouts -

A slide of a STONED SUBURBAN PUNK.

BOGART

Is that they lack any real political motivation. And why should they feel motivated? Zero, who's the greatest political icon of our generation?

ZERO

Chelsea Clinton?

BOGART

Hardly.

A slide of Monica Lewinsky.

BOGART

It's Monica Lewinsky. And we all know where her political skills lay.

Roman lights a cigar.

ROMAN

But fear not, youth of America. A new voice has emerged. A new way has been revealed. Beware the coming good times. And so we ask you, please, come celebrate with us at our decrepit mansion, Good Haven, for a party to end all parties, and to start the new revolution.

A slide of Good Haven, which dissolves into...

97. EXT. GOOD HAVEN - NIGHT

A raging party.

98. INT. GOOD HAVEN - NIGHT

Everybody's there: FREAKS, GEEKS, NEO-SQUARES, JOCKS, PUNKS, PREPPIES, and ALTERNA-KIDS. The music blares and the people dance.

Zero cuts a rug with Morning. Everybody cheers Zero's name and sings his praises.

Zero takes Morning by the hand and leads her through the house, past Genghis, who is in the kitchen scamming a hit off a joint. Zero and Morning walk out to...

99. EXT. GOOD HAVEN, BACKYARD - NIGHT

The Phismics, minus Genghis, recline in deck chairs. Tiki torches illuminate the swimming pool behind them as the Phismics' newfound YOUTH DISCIPLES listen at their feet. A joint circulates.

Zero and Morning join the circle and stand nearby the kitchen window, toward the back of the group.

BOGART

Cable Access Television is one of the great grass-root failures of American Society. For less than you pay for a tank of gas, you can have your own TV show. Everybody wants to be on TV, but they suffer from the crackpot notion that making it big requires you to move out to LA and start sucking ass. You don't need studio execs telling you what kind of commercial bullshit you need to create. You don't even need networks, with their dirty money.

100. INT. GOOD HAVEN, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Somebody gives Genghis a handful of pills. He washes them down with a big belt of whiskey.

101. EXT. GOOD HAVEN, BACKYARD - NIGHT

WESTERLY

Cable Access has also failed because no one ever knows when anything is on. And why would we want to watch anyway? We're a generation of alienated, unrelated, disaffected and disrespected youth who can't manage to pay their credit card bills on time, much less organize into a cohesive, positive force that could obliterate the hypocrisy and cruelty that cripples us.

BUCK-TOOTHED GEEK

You mean in Brookston?

WESTERLY

I mean in our fucking country, junior.

102. INT. GOOD HAVEN, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Genghis sucks on a nitrous balloon.

103. EXT. GOOD HAVEN, BACKYARD - NIGHT

ROMAN

Fear not, my little chickadees. You've finally got a chance. Zero has kicked open the door. Now it's up to you. But whatever you do, don't confuse the message with the medium. Just remember, Zero is only an errand boy sent by grocery clerks. Ironic detachment isn't the key to self-awareness. You find yourself through genuine compassion, acceptance, and forgiveness.

Zero takes on the joint and passes it to Morning. She is about to take a hit when Sam Champion enters.

CHAMPION

Morning, what the hell are you doing?

Morning inhales.

MORNING

I'm hanging out with my friends.

CHAMPION

These aren't your real friends. These are a bunch of lower-class, socialist losers, and this chump Zero is the biggest loser of them all.

MORNING

You know what, Sam? You put the "suck" in success.

Everybody laughs at Champion. He turns bright red.

ZERO

Hey, Champion, nobody likes you here and I've got your woman, so why don't you go ruin your life somewhere else. I hear Coke is on special at the Smart Mart.

Champion starts pushing Zero, who eggs him on deeper into the backyard. Champion takes a swing at Zero, who ducks, and then flips Champion into the pool. Champion tries to come up for air, and Zero pushes his head back down.

CROWD

Zero! Zero! Zero!

Champion's buddies yank him out of the pool and they shuffle away in shame.

ROMAN

Give our regards to the Third Reich!

Zero is surrounded by 3 HOTTIES. HOTTIES #1 + #2 take him by each arm, and HOTTIE #3 grabs him by the front of his shirt.

HOTTIE #1

Zero! We're all so proud of you.

HOTTIE #2

Proud, proud, proud, proud, proud.

Morning, away from the action, looks on in amusement and disgust. Genghis stumbles outside with a crazed look on his face. He grabs Morning by the arm.

GENGHIS

Morning, be a sweetheart and ferret me out some paint thinner. I must converse with Zero.

MORNING

Keep your eye on him for me.

Morning goes inside.

HOTTIE #3

(to Zero)

So, Zero, what are you going to do now?

ZERO

I was going to go look for my date.

HOTTIE #3

No - I meant with your future.

HOTTIE #2

With your life.

Genghis appears behind Zero.

GENGHIS

Zero!

ZERO

(to the ladies)

Excuse me.

The ladies disperse.

GENGHIS

Zero.

ZERO

Genghis.

GENGHIS

Zero.

104. EXT. GOOD HAVEN, PATIO - NIGHT

Genghis leads Zero by the arm. The pool is eerily lit. PARTYGOERS stand around, talking with drinks in their hands.

GENGHIS
Zero, I just want to say one word to you. Just one word.

ZERO
Yes, Genghis.

GENGHIS
Are you listening?

ZERO
Yes I am.

GENGHIS
(gravely)
Multimedia.

They look at each other for a moment.

ZERO
Exactly how do you mean?

GENGHIS
There is a great future in multimedia. Think about it. Will you think about it?

ZERO
Yes, I will.

GENGHIS
Okay. Enough said. That's a deal.

Genghis turns and walks back toward the house. The Hotties wave from across the pool. They now wear bikinis.

HOTTIE #1
There he is. Come on over, Zero.

ZERO
I'll be right there, ladies.

Zero sees Morning. She hands Genghis his paint thinner, and approaches.

ZERO
Oh, hey, Morning.

105. EXT. GOOD HAVEN, POOLSIDE - NIGHT

The party has thinned out and the music has quieted. Morning and Zero sit with their shoes off and their feet dangling in the pool.

MORNING

It was amazing what you did back there.
You really are a ninja.

ZERO

What did I tell you?

MORNING

I can't express how much these past few
weeks have meant to me.

ZERO

Is that so?

MORNING

Yes. You've inspired me. I've decided
to quit my job and go to Space Camp.

ZERO

Morning, that's terrific. Send me a
postcard from Mars.

MORNING

Zero, be serious. If I go to Cape
Canaveral, what will become of us?

ZERO

Us? There's no us? I'm not together
with anybody, baby.

MORNING

Then what are we doing?

ZERO

We're just having a good time. We're
keeping it casual. It's my scene, man.
It's my happening, and I'm freaking
out.

MORNING

Zero, I really thought that we were on
the verge of something great.

ZERO

Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.

Morning slaps Zero across the face.

MORNING

Go freak out by yourself. This
"happening" of yours will have to
happen without me. Zero, I thought you
were different, but I guess you're just
another immature arrogant prick who
cares only about himself. You are too
cool for school. Enjoy the party,
dropout.

Morning, head held high, walks gracefully away. Zero looks around to see that the party's dead, and only the real losers are left. He gets up to leave.

106. EXT. PORTNOY HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Zero staggers up to the yard, clutching a bottle of Jim Beam, and throws pebbles at Sunset's window. Sunset leans out.

ZERO

Hey, Sunset, I want to hit it and quit it.

SUNSET

Listen, Zero, I don't just have a hole for you to put your dick in when Morning's not around.

ZERO

No, you've got three.

SUNSET

Zero, you're drunk, and you've turned yourself into a plaything for the man, just like my dad. He only brought you on the show to get the youth vote. Look, I've moved on. Maybe you should, too.

She slams the window shut.

107. EXT. BROOKSTON STREETS - NIGHT

Zero ambles drunkenly, clutching the bottle. He drains the dregs and tosses it in the air. As it smashes on the street, a Ferrari convertible pulls up. Gabrielle Newton sits alone behind the wheel.

GABRIELLE

Good evening, Zero. Are you lost?

ZERO

Maybe just a little. It's been a long night.

GABRIELLE

Jump in. I will take you home.

Zero gets in, and the car roars away.

108. EXT. NEWTON HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

The Ferrari pulls up and Gabrielle turns off the engine. Mr. Fun waits outside a split-level modern home, and opens the door for Gabrielle.

ZERO

This isn't my house.

GABRIELLE

No. It's mine. Come in for a moment.
Mr. Fun will fix us a nightcap.

109. INT. NEWTON HOUSEHOLD, THE LOUNGE - NIGHT

Zero and Gabrielle sit at a small bar behind which Mr. Fun fixes their drinks. He pours two cappuccinos, and then adds sugar and another white powder to both. He hands Zero and Gabrielle their drinks.

MR. FUN

Your Hot Mollies. Have a magical evening.

Mr. Fun bows and retreats.

ZERO

Who is Mr. Fun, anyway?

GABRIELLE

When Casper ran the psychological operations in Vietnam, he saved Mr. Fun's life. Since then he's become Casper's confidant, mixologist, bodyguard, and personal attache.

ZERO

Where's Casper now?

GABRIELLE

It's of no consequence. Let us drink a toast to the moment. Salut.

They toast and then sip their Hot Mollies.

GABRIELLE

From the moment I laid eyes on you, I sensed a kindred spirit. You reminded me of my first lover, Sergio, who gave me some of the sweetest physical pleasure of my young girlhood.

ZERO

Oh, yeah?

GABRIELLE

Do you feel the ecstasy working?

ZERO

What are you talking about?

GABRIELLE

Hot Mollies. Powdered ecstasy and cappuccino.

ZERO

You just dosed me?

GABRIELLE

Do not be upset. Relax, and surrender yourself to the here and now.

ZERO

No, no. I can't do that. I think...I think...I think you are so hot. You are without a doubt the sexiest woman I've ever met. I can't believe I'm sitting, here next to you in this incredible bar, with these amazing drinks, on this auspicious occasion. You are a love goddess. And this hot mollie,

(drains the rest of it)

the sweetest nectar. This room is so groovy. I feel like...like...

Gabrielle grabs his face and kisses him passionately. Coitus Awesome-itis. They screw their way through every room in the house, finishing in the bedroom, where they ultimately pass out from exhaustion as the sun rises.

110. INT. NEWTON HOUSEHOLD, BEDROOM - DAY

Zero is splayed unconscious across a king-size waterbed as Gabrielle flips through channels on the TV. Gabrielle rouses him.

GABRIELLE

Wake up, Zero. Your father is on the television.

On the TV, Ben and Ellie push through a mob of reporters and into the courthouse. Charles Haley comes on screen.

HALEY

(on TV)

And so, plastics executive Benjamin Chance's trial will begin in just an hour, as the swift hand of justice descends from the arm of District Attorney Stan Portnoy, mayoral candidate and cable access personality, representing the state on behalf of Jerry Garshia. Mr. Chance will represent himself, aided by his legal consultant, Chewie.

ZERO

I gotta get down there.

Zero hops out of bed, clad only in his boxers. Casper walks into the room.

CASPER

Hey, Zero. Mr. Fun told me I'd find you here.

ZERO

Casper, I...I don't know what to say.

Zero begins to freak out, but Casper remains ice cool.

CASPER

How about good morning, for starters.

ZERO

Casper, please, let me apologize.

CASPER

For what?

ZERO

For...for...for sleeping with your wife.

CASPER

Don't give it a thought.

GABRIELLE

What's his is yours.

ZERO

You two are freaks.

CASPER

Who you calling freak, freak?

ZERO

I gotta go.

CASPER

No, no, let's all have breakfast-

Zero races out clutching his clothes to his stomach.

111. EXT. BROOKSTON STREETS - DAY

Zero hauls ass.

112. EXT. BROOKSTON COURTHOUSE - DAY

An enormous, imposing hall of justice. Zero races in.

113. INT. BROOKSTON COURTHOUSE - DAY

Ben and Chewie sit at the defendants' table discussing legal strategy, while Garshia and Portnoy confer nearby. Zero dashes in and takes a seat next to his mom in the gallery.

STAN

Don't worry, all the proof we need is in my briefcase.

GARSHIA

So. Where is it?

STAN

I forgot it at home. It'll be here in a moment.

Sunset appears behind him with the briefcase.

SUNSET

Here you go, Dad. It's all in there.

STAN

Sunset, you're reliable to a fault.

The bailiff steps forward to begin the trial.

BAILIFF

Hear ye, hear ye. The Brookston County Court is now in session. Docket number 1964: the People vs. Benjamin Chance. The charge is vehicular assault and reckless endangerment. All rise for the Honorable Judge George W. Graft.

GRAFT, a balding, bearded, boisterous man enters the court and takes his seat.

GRAFT

Good morning, or should I say, good afternoon. Before we begin, I'll give my usual spiel. Justice is a cruel and unusual mistress, and even though she likes to wear the blindfold, never forget who's licking her boots. In my courtroom, everyone gets a turn with Justice. Remember, there are no small cases, only small people. That means you, Mr. Portnoy. Begin your opening remarks.

STAN

Your honor, if it please the court: this trial will expose the dark underbelly of the American psyche. Ben Chance would have you believe that he is a decent, law-abiding member of our community, that he acts responsibly, and always has. I intend to show a pattern of moral turpitude and disregard for society's values stretching back over thirty years. I have in my briefcase incontrovertible evidence which will establish beyond a reasonable doubt who is guilty.

(MORE)

STAN (CONT'D)

I would like to enter exhibit A into the record.

Stan opens his briefcase, and it's full of pot. Buds scatter all over the floor. The courtroom erupts in a collective gasp of shock and horror.

OLD LADY

The drugs! He's got the drugs!

The bailiff tackles Portnoy and wrestles him to the ground. Cops storm in and slap the cuffs on him.

GRAFT

Place Stan Portnoy under arrest. I declare an immediate mistrial. For the first time in a generation, I must invoke the laws of Les Jeux Sont Fait, and render a decision of Final Jeopardy. Case dismissed!

The Jeopardy theme song plays. Graft bangs the gavel. Flashbulbs pop. Ben turns to kiss Ellie, and shakes hands with Zero. Chewie starts sniffing the pot. All is well.

114. INT. CHANCE HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Zero, Ellie, and Ben hold glasses in the air.

BEN

I propose a toast. To my wife, who took a risk on an aimless rebel who became the man she needed, and to my son, who has proved a greater rebel than I ever could have been.

They clink glasses.

We hear the muffled noise of the television drifting in from the solarium.

115. INT - CHANCE HOUSE, SOLARIUM - NIGHT

Chewie fills out another word jumble while watching Charles Haley on the evening news.

HALEY

(on TV)

All charges have been dropped against hit-and-run driver Benjamin Chance, while District Attorney and mayoral candidate Stan Portnoy has been arrested with intent to sell inside a courtroom. Meanwhile, on the eve of the election, the S.E.C.

(MORE)

HALEY (CONT'D)

has announced they have received information conclusively naming the incumbent Mayor Warren Chambers as a major figure in the Fluidics insider trading scandal, and have levied a fine that will most certainly bankrupt him. Even his most ardent supporters are jumping ship, and with the polls opening in less than twelve hours, the question is, will anyone show up to vote?

Haley is handed a piece of paper.

HALEY

This just in - Police Chief James Earl Potimoth has put out an APB for the capture of rising cable access star Ernest "Zero" Chance. Chance has been linked to both a male prostitution ring and corporate espionage. In addition, sources say that Chance was involved in deviant sexual relations with Portnoy's wife, Macy, and his daughter, Sunset. Most shocking, Chance, a video store employee, still owes over \$400 in late fees.

Chewie runs out of the room, screaming.

CHEWIE

Mr. Zero! Mr. Zero! You must flee!

116. INT. CHANCE HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

ELLIE

And believe me, I was all set to marry this other guy, but at the last minute, your father...

The front door explodes open and a SWAT TEAM charges into the house, weapons drawn. Chewie tries to turn himself into a human shield, but Ellie holds him back. The barrel of every gun points at Zero. Potimoth enters, breathing heavily.

POTIMOTH

You're busted, druggie. I've got you right where I want you. Will you come quietly?

ZERO

I'm gonna come all over your face.

Potimoth cracks Zero in the noggin, and Zero crumples to the ground.

ELLIE

Zero, are you all right?

Blackness.

117. INT. POTIMOTH'S PIGMOBILE - NIGHT

Zero wakes up. He is handcuffed in the backseat. Potimoth drives.

ZERO

So you've finally got my sweet virgin ass, Potimoth.

POTIMOTH

Let me tell you something, ya louse. I've been watching you since the day you got back into town, and I've seen you act like a hot-headed hooligan, but even worse, I've seen you act like an insensitive jerk. You've abused and mistreated almost everyone in your life, and you've never gone out of your way to help a single soul. And where does it get ya? Handcuffed in the back of some Pigmobile, with a psychotic cop who's trying to decide if he should drive you to jail or just shoot you in the head and leave you lying in a ditch.

ZERO

You wouldn't really do that, would you?

POTIMOTH

I've done it before. As you prepare to reap the whirlwind, you better screw your head on straight and figure out who the hell you are. Your bullshit little theories can't protect you now. Unless you figure out a way to save your sorry ass, trust me, when you're withering away in the prison you've created for yourself, you'll think back on this time in your life and you'll realize: it all added up to Zero.

118. EXT. BROOKSTON CITY HALL - AFTERNOON

Charles Haley stands with a microphone in front of a camera on the steps of City Hall. The wind rustles through the empty streets.

HALEY

Due to the scandals uncovered in the last twenty-four hours, faith has been hopelessly lost. With confidence eroded, and less than an hour to go in the election, the polls remain empty. Not a single vote has been cast. Will Brookston find itself without a mayor? Stay tuned.

In the distance, we see a CROWD approaching, led by Casper in a tuxedo. Among the assemblage are Tommy Jingles, The Phismics, The Breakfascists, The Cable Access Crew, Sunset, the La Renard waitstaff, Beuscher and the Square Cinema staff, Buddy, Blivens, Bleeding arm-in-arm with Chaniqua, and finally, Mr. Fun playing a New Orleans rag on a trumpet. They enter City Hall.

119. INT. CITY HALL VOTING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Casper walks up to the ELECTION OFFICIAL.

CASPER

Excuse me. May I have a write-in ballot?

Casper takes the ballot, writes his own name in flowing cursive, and stuffs it in the ballot box.

We see one write-in ballot after another for Casper Newton. Mr. Fun comes up last and votes for himself.

120. INT. BROOKSTON POLICE STATION - AFTERNOON

Zero and Portnoy sit in separate cells. Potimoth reclines with his feet up on his desk watching local news.

The Phismics enter with Sunset. She approaches Stan, while they walk up to Zero.

BOGART

What's up, freak? We're here to set you free.

STAN

Sunset, why'd you do it? You ruined my campaign.

SUNSET

I didn't want you to become just another stooge, Dad. I love you. And Mom loves you.

STAN

I love you guys, too...Sitting in this cell, I thought about where I should really be. I don't belong in the mayor's office. I belong with you and your mother. Only now do I realize the need for an open-minded leader who can tear down the system and build it anew. I've got bigger things on my mind. I want us to be a family again. Unfortunately, thanks to a law that I helped pass, the punishment for my crime will keep me in lock-up for the next twenty years.

Potimoth watches Charles Haley interview Casper on television.

HALEY

(on TV)

In a shocking upset, Casper Newton, local businessman, has been elected mayor of Brookston, and was sworn in moments ago by Judge George W. Graft. Mr. Newton, is there anything you'd like to say to your new constituents?

CASPER

(on TV)

Vengeance is mine.

ROMAN

All right, Potimoth. Let's get 'em out of here.

POTIMOTH

Right away, boys.

Potimoth walks over to Stan's cell and opens the door.

POTIMOTH

You're free to leave, courtesy of Mayor Newton. Go home. I hear your wife is looking for you.

STAN

This is a blessing. This is a sign. I've been given a second chance. From now on, I will devote myself to my wife and daughter. Sunset, before I leave, I want you to know that I'll pay for your Outward Bound trip.

SUNSET

Thanks, Dad.

Stan bolts for the exit, raising his arms in triumph.

STAN

I'm a free man!

Stan leaves.

ZERO

What the fuck is going on?

WESTERLY

Casper pardoned your ass.

ROMAN

And he's hired us to run the Department
of Public Works.

Potimoth walks over to Zero's cell and lets him out.

POTIMOTH

Come on, kid. I'm giving you a police
escort over to City Hall. Mayor Newton
wants to see you pronto.

They all walk outside.

121. EXT. BROOKSTON POLICE STATION - DUSK

They stand on the steps.

BOGART

Zero, it's been a wild ride. We always
knew this moment would come.

WESTERLY

You're moving up in the world.

ROMAN

For a long time, we've treated you as
our lesser.

GENGHIS

And we thought now maybe we'd treat you
with some dignity and respect.

BOGART

But we're not gonna do it.

WESTERLY

We're gonna take your girlfriend.

ROMAN

And get the hell out of here.

GENGHIS

Keep it casual, freak.

The Phismics walk away as a glorious sunset stretches
across the Brookston sky.

ZERO

So, Sunset. This is it.

SUNSET

Sorry, Zero. You were a blast. But I think I've found something a little more...meaningful.

Sunset kisses Zero on the cheek, and then calls out to the Phismics.

SUNSET

Guys, wait up!

Sunset runs up to the Phismics, and they all hop into a Brookston D.P.W. monster truck and take off.

POTIMOTH

All right, Zero. It's time to meet your maker.

They get in the Pigmobile. Zero rides shotgun.

122. EXT. BROOKSTON CITY HALL - NIGHT

The Pigmobile pulls up in front of the main entrance.

123. INT. PIGMOBILE - NIGHT

Zero is about to get out on the passenger side. He hesitates.

ZERO

You know, Chief, I've been thinking about what you said -

POTIMOTH

Hold it a second. Take a breath. No matter what happens from here on in, you're on your own. Just do what you feel is right. I've always known that underneath your counterculture psycho-babble, you're a good kid. Now get out of my car. The mayor's waiting for you.

Zero steps out of the car and walks up the steps of Brookston City Hall as the Pigmobile pulls away.

124. INT. BROOKSTON CITY HALL, LOBBY - NIGHT

Mr. Fun greets Zero.

MR. FUN

Welcome to the New Society. His honor will see you now.

Mr. Fun leads Zero into an elevator.

125. INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Mr. Fun and Zero face each other on opposite sides of the elevator.

MR. FUN

At last you are ready.

ZERO

Are you guys gonna kill me?

MR. FUN

We'll see.

126. INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mr. Fun leads Zero into an office. Casper, decked out in a white leisure suit, flanked by super-hot THAI SECRETARIES, sits behind his desk with his feet up, smoking a Cuban. One secretary gives him a manicure, while the other massages his neck.

Behind the desk is a big bay window. In a corner of the office, an American flag hangs on a pole.

Casper shoos the secretaries away and gets up to greet Zero. Mr. Fun sits down on a leather couch and begins to read the latest issue of "Art World." Casper hugs Zero, and whispers in his ear.

CASPER

Welcome, Deputy Mayor Chance.

Zero breaks the embrace.

ZERO

Casper, I'm still in the dark.

CASPER

Not for long. What do you want to know?

ZERO

I want to know how Potimoth caught wind of everything. I want to know why my name has been dragged through the mud, why I've spent the last twenty-four hours in jail, and how the hell you became Mayor!

CASPER

Everything that has transpired has done so according to my design. I love you like a son, but in this affair, you have been but a pawn in a much larger game.

ZERO

But why?

CASPER

Back in the 60s, when I was in high school, Warren Chambers was my best friend. We formed a folk rock singing duo called Chambers & Newton, and we wrote a song called "Tunnel Under Shaky Ground."

127. EXT. BROOKSTON CITY HALL - DAY

The year is 1969. A teenage, clean-cut Chambers strums a guitar while a hippiefied teenage Casper sings their song at an anti-war rally on the steps of City Hall.

CASPER

(V.O.)

One night, we both took acid and decided to drop out and go to Canada. But at the last minute, Chambers flaked...

128. EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

CASPER

(V.O.)

He went to college, and was granted a student exemption from the war.

A slightly older Warren Chambers, in cap and gown, strides gleefully past a Selective Service Office.

129. EXT. CANADIAN BORDER - DAY

A slightly older Casper Newton attempts to sneak across the border and is tackled by a flock of CANADIAN MOUNTIES.

CASPER

(V.O.)

...I got nabbed for draft dodging.

130. EXT. VIETNAMESE RICE PADDY - DAY

CASPER

(V.O.)

And then they sent me over to the shit and turned me into a killer.

Casper stands waist-deep in mud, dressed in tattered Army fatigues, blood spattered across his face. He unleashes an unholy scream as he fires round after round from his assault rifle.

131. INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CASPER

Ever since, I have plotted to rob Warren Chambers of that which he holds most dear and take it for myself. And now, I hold all the keys.

ZERO

But how did you...

132. INT. PIGMOBILE - DAY

Casper sits with Potimoth in the front seat. Potimoth hands Casper a dossier labeled, "The Zero File."

CASPER

(V.O.)

It was I who ordered Potimoth to follow you around and record your every move.

133. INT. BREAKFASCISTS - DAY

CASPER

(V.O.)

I instructed your friends to sell the Fluidics information to Warren Chambers, and then, to dime him out.

Casper sits in Breakfascists with the Phismics who burst out laughing.

134. EXT. BROOKSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE, PARKING LOT - DAY

Mr. Fun hands Sunset a bale of pot.

CASPER

(V.O.)

I supplied Sunset with her never-ending source of pot.

135. EXT. PORTNOY HOUSEHOLD, POOL - DAY

CASPER

(V.O.)

I arranged your jobs. I set in motion your criminal endeavors. I orchestrated your sexual escapades.

Casper hands Macy Portnoy an envelope stuffed with cash.

136. INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

ZERO

Even with your wife?

CASPER

No, that was just for Fun.

ZERO

What do you mean for fun?

CASPER

I mean for Mr. Fun. He likes to watch behind a two-way mirror.

Mr. Fun chuckles.

CASPER

It was I who leaked your story to the press. With both candidates out of the race, and with you, Brookston's favorite son, scandalized and safely tucked away in jail, I was able to seize control of this petty little town. Now, I will turn it inside out.

ZERO

What's wrong with you? You have no moral compass, you take what you want, and you play with people's lives! Don't you have any concept of trust or loyalty?

CASPER

None to speak of. But are you any better, my young protegee?

ZERO

Maybe I am. I'll never join you.

CASPER

Then you will die.

Mr. Fun moves his thumb from the cover of his magazine, revealing that he's been reading "Fart World." Ceremonially, he puts down his magazine, stands up and reaches into his jacket. With a grin, Mr. Fun unleashes his Fun-chuk Nun-chuks.

MR. FUN

It's Fun-chuk time!

Mr. Fun wildly swings his Fun-chuks behind his back and around his body. Mr. Fun hits Zero hard in the stomach and Zero crumples to the ground. Zero scrambles for cover behind Casper's desk.

Zero cowers at Casper's feet. Casper, amused, looms ominously over Zero. Mr. Fun, cackling, advances toward Zero to finish him once and for all.

CASPER

Are you at ease in your own life now, Zero?

Mr. Fun's Fun-chuks twirl even faster as he bears down on Zero. Zero's eyes fill with dread.

Shards of glass fly through the office as Chewie, now in full costume as SUPER-CHEWIE, rappels through the bay window. He wears a mask and dishwashing gloves.

SUPER-CHEWIE
Super-Chewie to the rescue!

Super-Chewie tackles Mr. Fun and they begin to wrestle around the room. As their battle escalates, they both begin to scream. Locked in a wild pirouette, they sprawl toward the window and tumble out of the building.

SUPER-CHEWIE
(from outside)
I'm okay, Mr. Zero!

Casper reaches into the desk drawer and pulls out a pearl-handled .22 caliber pistol.

ZERO
Casper, no! Stop!

CASPER
It's too late!

ZERO
Not for me!

As Casper takes aim, Zero grabs the American flag, and knocks the gun from Casper's hand. Zero waves the flag, holding Casper at bay while he retreats to the door.

Zero stares Casper in the eye long and hard, and then walks out of the office.

137. INT. CITY HALL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Zero slams the doors shut to the mayor's office. He rams the flag between the door handles, locking Casper in.

138. EXT. BROOKSTON STREETS - NIGHT

Zero hauls ass once again.

139. EXT. CHAMBERS HOUSE - NIGHT

Warren Chambers, disheveled and broken, sits on his front steps, a bottle of Wild Turkey in one hand, and in the other, a .357 Magnum pressed against his temple. He mutters incomprehensibly. Zero runs up. Warren sees Zero, and turns the gun on him.

WARREN

You! You've ruined my life, and now I'm going to kill us both!

ZERO

Wait! Wait! I know about you and Casper. I know about your lost dreams. Everybody has a dream. I wanted to drop out. Morning wanted to be an astronaut. And you've always wanted to sing. You didn't want to be mayor. You just wanted to sing. But I've learned something today, and that's that it's never too late. It's never too late for any of us.

Warren considers this, and softens.

WARREN

You're right, Zero. When I couldn't summon the nerve to drop out with Casper, something died inside of me. I wrote a song about it once, and...

ZERO

That's great. Where's Morning?

WARREN

She's at the Planetarium. I think I was wrong about you Zero. I see now that you're a good person. Maybe I can write a song about it, and...

ZERO

Yeah. Can I borrow your car?

WARREN

Sure. Sure. Keep it. Go in peace.

Chambers tosses him the keys to his Buick, and as Zero drives away he can hear Chambers strumming on his guitar for the first time in years.

140. EXT. BROOKSTON PLANETARIUM - NIGHT

The Planetarium empties out into the plaza. Zero searches desperately through the crowd. He sees Morning, her eyes red from crying. He approaches her.

ZERO

Morning. Morning, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

MORNING

Sorry just doesn't cut it. You've been sleeping with Sunset and her mother. You've been an insider trader and a male prostitute. You've ruined the Portnoy family and my father's career, and you never paid your late video fees. I bet you never even fixed my account.

ZERO

Morning, I nearly died tonight. I realize now how many mistakes I've made. The biggest one was pushing you away. I'm not going to try and sum up all my experiences and everything I've learned like some sap. Listen, ya little space cadet: I'm over the moon for you. There's nowhere in the universe I'd rather be than by your side. You wanna go to the stars, Morning? When I'm with you, I feel like I'm already there.

Morning's eyes light up.

MORNING

You're so goddamned infuriating.

ZERO

(smiling)

I know. And I'm all yours.

MORNING

Don't you ever forget it, Zero.

ZERO

Not a chance. Call me Ernest.

They kiss. Finally.

141. EXT. BROOKSTON CITY HALL - NIGHT

Fireworks explode and the CITIZENS of Brookston dance in the streets. Music blares from inside.

142. INT. CITY HALL CORRIDORS - NIGHT

The Phismics and Sunset skateboard through the halls.

143. INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Casper is all alone. He rips the town charter off the wall and rolls up a fatty.

144. INT. CITY HALL, THE GREAT CHAMBER - NIGHT

The Phismics and Sunset skate into the Great Chamber, a massive ballroom. People are everywhere. The Reggae Band rushes out onto the stage, and the all-out, blow-out jam begins.

145. EXT. PLANETARIUM - NIGHT

Zero and Morning still kiss. They pull back a bit and look in each other's eyes.

ZERO

What happens now?

MORNING

(snuggling a little closer)

Do you wanna rent a movie? I'll let you use my account.

ZERO

Maybe we should drop out for awhile.
Let's go for a drive.

146. EXT. HIGHWAYS - NIGHT

Zero and Morning drive and drive and drive, having the time of their lives. Night turns into dawn.

147. EXT. SPACE CAMP - DAY

The happy couple pulls up outside. The sign reads, "SPACE CAMP: Welcome to the Future." They drive victoriously through the gates.

FADE OUT:

ROLL END CREDITS

FADE BACK IN:

148. INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Epilogue: "Six Months Later"

We see a new cable access show, "Cooking with Chewie and Mr. Fun." Chewie stir fries vegetables in a wok as Mr. Fun looks on.

MR. FUN

We welcome our worldwide audience to our first show on the Ultimate Cable Access Network. I'm Mr. Fun, and this is my new friend, Chewie. And today, we will be cooking "Global Surprise."

We pull back to reveal the Phismics, Sunset, and Zero, floating in the background. Morning sits behind a control panel.

149. EXT. OUTER SPACE - NIGHT

They are all aboard the U.C.A.N. spaceship, a gleaming silver vessel, and as we see it orbiting our majestic planet we...

FADE OUT:

THE END