

THE JENNY MILL INN

A musical, or a play with quite a few songs

By Christopher Hoyle

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<< OR >>

Represented by:

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CATFISH, Pete Meyers, 30's

LINDSTROM, Dan Lindstrom, 30's

STEPHANIE, singersongwriter, 18

NUBIA, cafe proprietor, 40

KEVIN, musician open mic host MEL, bartender/cook

SOUL FACE, rootsy singersongwriter ROBERT, inebriated patron

BETHANY, big-boned, attractive, 28

NO M.C, 20's, attractive rapper dude

JACK MCKAY, 50's, radio personality & reporter

GROUND CHUCK/STEEL CASH/THE X-OOM'D

PLUMBER'S CRACK/BRITNEY SCRUFF BAND, 3 "House Band" players

AUDIENCE, A COUPLE, TOUR PATRONS, RADIO CALLERS

SONGS

EVEN IF YOU WALK THE OTHER WAY

LEFT ON LOVE

SOCIETY'S PLIERS

THE MAN IN THE SILVER PICKUP

HOLDING MY OWN ON THE BAR SCENE

OVERWHELMING

BOTO COR DE ROSA

REFUSE TO LOSE MY HEART

UM

DIFFERENT HEAD

ALLAMUCHY IN THE MOONLIGHT

NOT QUITE DEAD YET

PROBABLY STILL WAITING

HUMAN MATING IS A JOKE

HONEY YOU'RE HOME

FEEL THE LOVE

THE PARTY CAN START

SETTINGS

The Jenny Mill Inn

Iron Tomatoe Festival, another club

Nubia's Coffee Roastery

Jenny Mill Inn Parking Lot

The Iron Grape Wine Bar

Jenny Jump State Forest, New Jersey

PRODUCTION NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACT I

SCENE 1

IN THE JENNY MILL INN ROCK/BLUES CLUB, ALLAMUCHY NJ.

PETE "CATFISH" MEYERS, late 30s, walks in dim light from entrance. In club, lights up on KEVIN onstage with a guitar, strumming, muted. Folkie SOUL FACE and hostess BETHANY in standoff, heated discussion, muted. Catfish stops, turns to walk out, stops.

KEVIN

(Sings)

"I'll be here with nothing but love for you,
Even if you walk the other way... Even if you
walk the other way"

Catfish turns and continues in.
Lights up. Kevin plays under:

SOUL FACE

The policy is two for one drinks on open mic
night Bethany! Val said so!

BETHANY

Now it's pay for your drinks so we can stay
open, Mr Soul Face!

SOUL FACE

Why haven't I heard that from Val or Larry?

BETHANY

You're hearin it from me. YOU PAY FOR YOUR
DRINKS. Or you're not playing.

SOUL FACE

You're such a b--

BETHANY

WHAT?!

They move toward each other.

KEVIN

(Sings)

"Even...if you walk...the other way..."

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Catfish!

SOUL FACE

Fish!

BETHANY

Hi Catfish. Condolences for your father.

CATFISH

Thanks. Hey Kev! Bethany, here. Keep the change.

BETHANY

This is a hundred Fish.

CATFISH

I'll have a Corona. Do you need more?

BETHANY

Because you inherited your father's money doesn't mean you should come in here and throw it around. You haven't bought me off.

CATFISH

And Soul Face drinks Sam Adams, if I remember. Not a power trip, just keep it, this time, for putting up with the songsters, please?

BETHANY

Alright.

Bethany starts to get beers.

SOUL FACE

Thanks hon.

BETHANY

I'm not your hon.

SOUL FACE

I meant like Attila.

CATFISH

Face, no! He did not mean that and let's take it easy.

Large bartender MEL appears, comes at Soul Face.

MEL

Face, you just went too damn far.

BETHANY

No baby, I got this.

CATFISH

Mel, please, I'll shut him up! I promise.

BETHANY

(To Mel) Back off, okay? (Holds Mel's hands)

CATFISH

This is my homecoming Mel...

MEL

Okay. (Leaves, points at Soul Face.)

Mel out, Bethany gets beers.

SOUL FACE

Fish get up and play something.

CATFISH

No way. I am dead.

SOUL FACE

Get up there! Take my first slot, use my Strat if you want.

KEVIN

Pete Meyers, a.k.a. Catfish, ladies & germs!
Put your hands together for him!

CATFISH

Alright, alright.

AUDIENCE, mostly open mic
participants, claps, Kevin joins
on drums.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

"LEFT ON LOVE"

I MADE A LEFT ON LOVE
THE DIRECTIONS YOU GAVE
GOT A LITTLE LOST
IN THE TRAFFIC AND RAIN
WENT HERE WHEN I SHOULDA BEEN THERE
NOW I'M DRIVIN EVERYWHERE
WHAT'S NEXT? I TOOK A LEFT ON LOVE

I MADE A RIGHT ON HIGH
WHERE IT TURNS OFFA ELM
THAT PART OF TOWN
IS LIKE A RIDE INTO HELL
HOW OLD IS THE MAP I'M USING?
THESE SIGNS, ARE REALLY CONFUSING
AND DAFT I'M LEFT ON LOVE

I KEEP DRIVING AROUND IN CIRCLES
ALL CARS ARE STEEL GERBLES
I THOUGHT THE TURN WAS COMIN ON
RIGHT AFTER THE EXXON STATION NO OH...

I MADE A LEFT ON LOVE
NOW I'M TOTALLY LOST
THERE'S AN EMPTY LOT

WASN'T THAT YOUR HOUSE?
GOT A BRAND NEW G.P.S.
DOESN'T HELP WITH THE WRONG ADDRESS
I'M ADRIFT TOOK A LEFT ON LOVE
I'M MIFFED & LEFT ON LOVE

Audience claps.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
Thanks guys. Here's hopin' this here Jenny
Mill Inn stays open, 200-plus years of history
& everything...

Catfish drinks, Audience hoots in
between his statements:

CATFISH (CONT'D)
The House that Ruth built. Well, drank in.
Once. Illegally. Maybe.

AUDIENCE
Whoo!

CATFISH
George Washington's rest room was right over
there... Larry & Val are sellin it, I guess,
so... anyone out there buyin?

AUDIENCE
Yeah!

CATFISH
Hope so. Otherwise, another place to play, shot
down by the system. Soul Face is due up for
your open mic pleasure, so stick around. Thanks
again.

Audience applause. Catfish steps
down, Kevin jumps up, Soul Face
steps near stage.

KEVIN
Catfish, ladies & gentlemen! Blackened Catfish,
they call him down south - South Jersey. You
got your band Ground Chuck rehearsing again,
right Fish? Bringing em back here? No? Keep us
posted. Let's hear it again for Catfish! Next
we have-- Bethany, you and Soul Face work out
your little dispute? (Laughs til he's red)

BETHANY
You alright dude?

KEVIN

Moving right along, (laughing) oh it's a tough business, put your hands & heads together for Soul Face, ladies and gentlemen! (To Catfish) Thank you Pete.

Kevin steps down. DAN LINDSTROM, 30s, walks to Catfish's table.

BETHANY

(To Dan) Thanks so much for convincing Val to do this. We make NO money.

Lindstrom shrugs, Bethany gives him a bourbon and a water no ice. Lights dim on the "stage", Soul Face performs his song, muted. Lights up on the tables, as Catfish steps toward his.

CATFISH

She's tough.

LINDSTROM

Fish!

CATFISH

Dan Lindstrom my man! Waddup?

LINDSTROM

Soundin good.

CATFISH

Thank you sir.

LINDSTROM

I wanted to ask you something.

SOUL FACE

"Society's pliers..." (sung softly)

CATFISH

Dan, I don't think I'm up for the Iron Tomato Festival after all.

LINDSTROM

Whoa, you committed to me last Wednesday, and I have built a whole day's schedule around you Fish.

CATFISH

Yeah I'm really sorry.

LINDSTROM

I just finished a truckload of publicity-

CATFISH

Yeah I--

LINDSTROM

And WHY are you pulling out on me exactly?

CATFISH

Because the life that lived is dead.

LINDSTROM

What the f--

CATFISH

Cuz I'm not ready.

LINDSTROM

It's been almost a year since your dad passed away, you have a right to--

CATFISH

Why?

LINDSTROM

Why what?

CATFISH

Why do it? Why do that music anymore?

LINDSTROM

Uh, you enjoy it? You've played Iron Tomato for the last 10 years. Good times?

SOUL FACE

"Society's pliers..."

CATFISH

I see no reason, at this stage of the game.

LINDSTROM

Pete, it's good to grieve the dead, and it's also really good to honor your commitments to the living.

CATFISH

I don't know who that is.

LINDSTROM

Okaay... (Up to leave) I had some other very cool propositions for you but--

CATFISH

Thank you anyway.

LINDSTROM

Urgh!

CATFISH
Dan--

LINDSTROM
What?!

CATFISH
...Nothing.

LINDSTROM
Right! ...Dammit!

CATFISH
I...

Lindstrom turns, tosses water from
a glass, into Catfish's face.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
Danny!!

LINDSTROM
FISH, YOU'RE READY TO PLAY, JUST PULL YOUR
PANTS ON AND DO IT!

CATFISH
...Okay you got it.

LINDSTROM
Whew!

CATFISH
Iron Tomato, on.

LINDSTROM
You're sure?

CATFISH
No. YES! I'm sure. Can you hand me that napkin?

LINDSTROM
(Helps dry him)
Okay. Now that we have that settled, I wanted
to run something by you! Something kind of
exciting.

CATFISH
Shoot. But don't spray.

Dim on Catfish and Lindstrom
talking, Catfish shakes his head.
Lights up on the stage, Bethany
grimaces, as Soul Face sings:

SOUL FACE
"Society's pliers!! Society's pliers!!"

Audience applauds. Lindstrom leaves, Bethany motions to him like "What is this crap?" on his way out.

CATFISH
You rule, Soul Face!

SOUL FACE
You suck, Catfish!

CATFISH
At the teat of the industry!

SOUL FACE
Teat?

Kevin and Bethany are back. Soul Face strums guitar chords, Bethany glares as lights fade during:

KEVIN
Soul Face ladies and gentlemen! ... "Society's Pliers," wow! Mr and Mrs Face would be proud. Bethany doesn't like Society's Pliers, he he he. ... The first single off his third cassette, which I highly recommend. He'll be at Bean Here Now in the Panther Valley Mini Mall next week. All hands on deck, cuz next up is Captain Dave Scheer Esquire & his - sea chantys, according to Bethany's paddle - I mean clipboard. Be sure to tip her, or she will crush you (laughs)...

SCENE 2

IRON TOMATOE FESTIVAL, INSIDE A WEST JERSEY CLUB.

Catfish fronts Ground Chuck on the stage, finishes a song:

CATFISH
"She went with the man in the silver pickup - It pulled away like a ghost in the night... She seemed to go with that silver pickup...and I was not the man who had the ride...I was not the man who had the ride..."

Audience applauds, hoots.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Thank you Frenchtown, New Jersey! By the way there is no way on this earth I can buy the Jenny Mill Inn up the road a piece, but if you're interested, talk to your host Dan "Iron Tomatoe" Lindstrom, cuz it's a great historic venue, the old lady's falling apart actually. Otherwise developers will bulldoze it like they've done to the rest of the damn state! And put up another godforsaken strip mall! Or an insurance office, and God knows we need another one of those!

LINDSTROM

Fish we're gonna be okay! Need to move it along!

CATFISH

See ya! We're Ground Chuck!

LINDSTROM

Catfish, and his Ground Chuck! Whoo! Hang on to your hats cuz in a couple minutes it's Steel Cash -- metal versions of The Man in Black, as the name implies. Formerly Dolly On Acid, get ready for Steel Cash!

Audience applauds. Lindstrom jumps down to tables, joins Catfish. Steel Cash does their setup and sound check during:

LINDSTROM (CONT'D)

No way on this earth, huh?

CATFISH

I just can't Dan, sorry.

LINDSTROM

No problem.

CATFISH

Anyone else look promising?

LINDSTROM

Nah. You know if you own your own club it can be a platform for your music.

CATFISH

Don't think I haven't thought of it.

LINDSTROM

You keep thinking.

CATFISH

My head is clanging with thought.

LINDSTROM

I can hear it.

CATFISH

...Nice job with the Festival.

LINDSTROM

Thanks.

CATFISH

Financially, I just don't think--

LINDSTROM

Hey, I hear ya. Total risk. All the marbles for one dream. The one dream that matters, still, all the marbles.

CATFISH

(Looks off, around.) Yeah...

Steel Cash members, voices rising.

STEEL CASH

Hey! / What the heh--!! / Jerk-off!!

CATFISH

I think Steel Cash needs your help up there.

LINDSTROM

Not again! Urgh! (Stepping to stage.) I'll let you know when the window closes. Larry may be trying to find a buyer for a long time.

CATFISH

Keep me posted.

LINDSTROM

Good set!

CATFISH

Thanks!

While Steel Cash quarrels behind.

LINDSTROM

Steel Cash is having technical difficulties, ladies and gentlemen. Waiting in the wings is Plumber's Crack, whose stage act IS what you think it is, & they have great tunes as well. The most precise choreography I've seen in a West Jersey band, and the most comprehensively bathed before their gigs I might add. Hold on to your seats, because YOU WILL SEE Plumber's Crack!

Audience yells.

AUDIENCE

Steel Cash! / Plumber's Crack!! / Steel Cash!!!

STEEL CASH

You!! / No you did!! / Asshole!!

Lindstrom breaks up the Steel Cash dispute, as Catfish watches.

LINDSTROM

Stop it! I have had it! You guys are out!

STEEL CASH

Hey!!/Urgh!!

LINDSTROM

No! Get your act together, like real performers, and maybe next year!

STEEL CASH

You!

LINDSTROM

Please leave. Leave the Iron Tomatoe Festival now. Or I'm calling security.

Steel Cash shuffles off the stage.
Lindstrom shrugs toward Catfish.

STEEL CASH

Screw you Lindstrom! / So lame! / Urgh!

AUDIENCE

Let's see Steel Cash fight it out!!

LINDSTROM

Steel Cash has left the building. They've fallen into a burning ring of fire. Plumber's Crack is setting up.

AUDIENCE

Steel Cash! Steel Cash now!! Steel Cash! Steel Cash! (Continuing chant...)

LINDSTROM

While Plumber's Crack is getting ready-- Fish could you help me here?

CATFISH

Sure.

LINDSTROM

Catfish and his Ground Chuck are back for the attack!

AUDIENCE

Whooo!!!

Catfish ascends the stage.

LINDSTROM

Thanks dude.

CATFISH

Gotcha. Getting back to my love life here!

AUDIENCE

Wooooo!

CATFISH

"HOLDING MY OWN WHILE TRYING TO FIND LOVE"

SINCE YOU HAVE CAST ME ASIDE
I HAD TO ROLL UP AND HIDE
WENT INTO ISOLATION
PRETTY MUCH STICK TO MY RULE
NEVER TO REACH OUT TO YOU
BUT FRIENDS TELL ME CATFISH MOVE ON HAVE FUN MEET SOMEONE

BUT HOLDING MY OWN WHILE TRYIN TO FIND LOVE ON THE BAR SCENE
IS TOUGH
LOTS OF FINE LADIES YOU KNOW HOW THAT FIRST LINE MEANS
SO MUCH
AND WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO HAVIN THE GOODS NOW DO I BRING
ENOUGH?
HOLDING MY OWN WHILE TRYIN TO FIND LOVE ON THE BAR SCENE
WAS TOUGH

I'M AT THE TOP OF MY GAME
THAT IS WHAT YOU USED TO SAY
WHAT GAME WERE YOU REFERRING TO?
WE BOTH THOUGHT I WAS THE BOMB
NOW I AM HERE AND YOR GONE
I'M LEARNING BOUT WHAT I CAN'T DO AND WHO IS COOL

HOLDING MY OWN WHILE TRYIN TO FIND LOVE ON THE BAR SCENE
IS TOUGH
LOTS OF FINE LADIES YOU KNOW HOW THAT FIRST LINE MEANS
SO MUCH
AND WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO HAVIN THE GOODS NOW DO I BRING
ENOUGH?
HOLDING MY OWN WHILE TRYIN TO FIND LOVE ON THE BAR SCENE
IT'S TOUGH!

Audience applauds. Lindstrom jumps
onstage.

AUDIENCE

Wooooo!!!

LINDSTROM

"Holding my own" with Catfish!! Thank you Pete! Plumbers Crack looks just about ready. Plumber's Crack is BACK -- and a little lower. (To Catfish) You saved my behind.

Catfish acknowledges while leaving the stage.

LINDSTROM (CONT'D)

And now, those wizards of bluejeans and the sciatic nerve, Plumber's Crack!! Thank God they have at least one female in the band. She's a chick right? Plumber's Crack! With their hit, "Got the Drop on You"...

Lights fade. Sound fades as band begins song.

SCENE 3

NUBIA'S COFFEE ROASTERY, LAKE HOPATCONG NJ.

A large arty gold MOBILE adorns the cafe. STEPHANIE, 18, sets up with guitar & mic on cafe stage. Catfish & Lindstrom enter.

CATFISH

Glad your Iron Tomato worked out, despite our best efforts. A little shot of excitement, now I'm back in zombie mode, like it was Zeppelin's 1975 World Tour. I could no more run a music club than lift Mount Rushmore.

LINDSTROM

I just wanted you to see this chick play. I'm thinking of trying to manage her & I wanted the opinion of another ear.

CATFISH

My goal was to leave the house.

LINDSTROM

Hey. There.

CATFISH

Christ, she's just a baby. Your business instincts are right on the money, Mr Lindstrom.

NUBIA, 40, blonde Brazilian woman, wire-rim glasses, approaches.

NUBIA

Can I get you something?

LINDSTROM
Ice mocha venti.

NUBIA
Whipped cream?

LINDSTROM
Yeah.

NUBIA
For you?

CATFISH
Coffee.

NUBIA
Black?

CATFISH
Gray. No, black is fine, thanks.

NUBIA
Coffee black, ice mocha venti. (Exits.)

LINDSTROM
She's got the material is the thing, I think.

CATFISH
Like these spoiled little divas write their own songs.

LINDSTROM
I believe she does write her stuff.

CATFISH
The material does not matter anyway.

LINDSTROM
Come on, it does.

CATFISH
This is a really cool little coffee bar. What is that woman's accent?

LINDSTROM
That's Nubia.

STEPHANIE
Hi guys, I'm Stephanie, thanks for coming to Nubia's. Nubia's closing after this weekend, cuz of the Buckmasters that opened across the street, so this is kind of a farewell concert for me, it's really sad. Hopefully she'll find another location... This is the third coffee bar I've closed. Maybe I'm cursed.

NUBIA
(Offstage) No!

STEPHANIE
Thanks Nubia. Are you like Catfish, from Ground
Chuck?

CATFISH
Like him.

STEPHANIE
Cool. I'm a fan. This is called "Overwhelming."

Nubia delivers coffees.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

"OVERWHELMING"

YOU'RE SO SMOOTH AND BEAUTIFUL AFTER DROPPING A BOMB
HOW IN THE WORLD AM I SUPPOSED TO RESPOND
YOU TURN AWAY FROM ME THE HURT IS EXQUISITE
HOW COULD YOU LEAVE ME HERE TO DEAL WITH IT?

OVERWHELMING OVERWHELMING

JUST WALKING AROUND WITH YOU TURNED INTO THIS BIG DEAL
I BELIEVED YOU FELT THE SAME NOW I DON'T THINK YOU FEEL
YOU TOOK ME PLACES I WAS AFRAID TO GO
NOW I WANT TO LIVE THERE AND YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW

OVERWHELMING OVERWHELMING

MY MOTHER'S CRYSTAL IN A BEAUTIFUL CABINET
IN A VISION I SAW MYSELF PULL IT DOWN AND SMASH IT
YOU GOT CHARISMA YEAH YOU GOT IT TO BURN
YOU TAUGHT ME A LESSON I DO NOT WANT TO LEARN

OVERWHELMING OVERWHELMING OVERWHELMING

Patrons applause.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Thanks. A string broke, gimme a minute to
change it. I know I'm fingerpicking, but -- it
broke. Be right back.

Catfish wipes his eyes.

CATFISH
Manage her, dude. If she'll let you. If her
mommy and daddy will let you.

LINDSTROM
Yeah, I thought you'd like her. She's 18 and
ambitious, plus her folks are supportive.

CATFISH

God bless her.

LINDSTROM

Yeah.

Pause. Steph string sounds.

CATFISH

Let's go ahead and do this Jenny Mill Inn thing.

LINDSTROM

For real?

CATFISH

Let's cough up the money tomorrow so we're in it and it's done.

STEPHANIE

Hey Dan! I didn't see you there.

LINDSTROM

Hey Steph. Catfish and I might be taking over the Jenny Mill Inn, give you a place to play.

STEPHANIE

Nice.

CATFISH

Enjoyed your song.

STEPHANIE

Thanks.

Lights dim on Stephanie.

CATFISH

We gotta make her a star.

Nubia shows up.

LINDSTROM

She'll be playing a bar where she won't be able to drink. Nubia will you be Stephanie's chaperone in our night club?

NUBIA

She's good, right? She has to go to school.

STEPHANIE

Nubia, if you're gonna have a conversation with those guys maybe you should share it with the whole cafe. I'm ready to play here.

NUBIA
Play!

CATFISH/LINDSTROM
Play!

STEPHANIE
Thanks. This one's about my cat. T.J. It's called "T.J."

CATFISH
Dan.

LINDSTROM
Fish.

CATFISH
Thanks.

LINDSTROM
For...?

CATFISH
No drinks in the face.

Chord rings out. Catfish & Lindstrom shake hands. Dim to black.

SCENE 4

CONTINUES, CAFE.

Lights up. Lindstrom and Stephanie gone. Catfish alone.

CATFISH
(Sings softly.) "I'm so glad we had this time together...To have a laugh and sing, a song..."

He picks up a nylon-string guitar, improvises a passionate minor-key melody, puts it down. Nubia approaches.

NUBIA
Anything else?

CATFISH
No I think that'll be it.

NUBIA
You moved my guitar.

CATFISH
I most certainly did not.

NUBIA

Okay.

CATFISH

It's got a nice sound. Well I gotta--

NUBIA

You get a free refill if you put it back where it was.

CATFISH

Right, the interior decor... (Moves guitar.)
Okay I'll see ya--

NUBIA

That's not where it was.

CATFISH

Oh. (He moves.)

NUBIA

But leave it there it's better than before.

CATFISH

Oh thank goodness. (Steps out.) Well have a--

NUBIA

Don't you want your refill?

CATFISH

I really do have to get home to-- rearrange my
sock drawer -- alright, refill sounds good.

NUBIA

Black?

CATFISH

Can you do light and sweet? Like you.

NUBIA

Yes, light and sweet. (Gets coffee.)

CATFISH

"Nubia," I think of an African queen.

NUBIA

I'm a Brazilian queen. Brazilian worker bee.

CATFISH

Did your husband help you finance this cafe?

NUBIA

Yes, but he's not my husband anymore.

CATFISH

How convenient.

NUBIA

What?

CATFISH

I said oh!

NUBIA

I built most of this myself, and I'm taking the losses. (Returns.)

CATFISH

Well I'll give you money so you can keep your project open. Isn't that how the currency works in the "marketplace"?

NUBIA

What? No I'm closing it. That's it. You sound a little mad.

CATFISH

All apologies, I was talking nonsense about the materialistic ways of the world.

NUBIA

Sounded like it.

CATFISH

This place is beautiful, I'm sorry.

NUBIA

It was a terrible location.

CATFISH

Back alleyway of the Hopatcong Municipal Parking lot, I guess so...

Nubia starts putting cafe to bed.

NUBIA

You and Dan really have a nightclub?

CATFISH

We're taking over the Jenny Mill Inn.

NUBIA

You manage nightclubs?

CATFISH

Never. This is the first.

NUBIA

A lot of work.

CATFISH

I believe so.

NUBIA

You like Stephanie?

CATFISH

Who? Oh, the girl who played here. Yeah, I liked her song.

NUBIA

She looks like a model. You like younger girls?

CATFISH

I don't dislike them. I don't tend to ask out 18-year-olds. Does the calculus of sexual politics mean that my newly procured pile provides me the personal power and prestige to preempt the fact that I'm twice her age?

NUBIA

I...don't know.

CATFISH

Ain't askin nobody out these days anyhoo.

NUBIA

Why? When you own your nightclub, you'll have anybody you want.

CATFISH

Hah! You're funny.

NUBIA

Why don't you hire me over at your Jenny House? Otherwise I go back to Brazil and be the maid for my ex-husband.

CATFISH

Are you serious?

NUBIA

I could never live with him again. But I'd have to deal with him.

CATFISH

Do you have kids?

NUBIA

My mother has my daughter in Rio di Janiero. I want to bring her here. Am I being materialistic?

CATFISH

No... ..Would you really want to serve drinks at the Jenny Mill Inn?

NUBIA

I don't know... I was joking.

CATFISH

If we do step in there, we'll need a waitress very soon.

NUBIA

Waitress... Why is it called Jenny Mill Inn? In Awlamoochy right?

CATFISH

Allamuchy, yeah. ..."Alla-muchay!!!" Have you ever heard of Jenny Jump?

NUBIA

The forest over there.

CATFISH

Yeah the State Park. "...Jennay Jjuh-ump!!" Back in Colonial times, young Jenny jumped off the cliff to her death rather than marry some old fart.

NUBIA

Right, I heard about that.

CATFISH

Some say she didn't die in the jump.

NUBIA

Oh?

CATFISH

One legend has it that an evergreen broke her fall, and she tumbled into the arms of a good-looking warrior dude, of the Lenni Lenape community.

NUBIA

Lenni Lenape?

CATFISH

Indians, Native Americans.

NUBIA

Ah.

CATFISH

You know, beautiful bronze people from indigenous tribes, wild and free--

NUBIA

Yes I understand.

CATFISH

The Lenape guy was a prince and a healer, as it turns out. Do you like princes and healers?

NUBIA

I don't dislike them.

CATFISH

He nursed her broken arm, encouraged her to talk openly about sexuality and her relationship issues, and she became an Indian princess.

NUBIA

Very good.

CATFISH

The Jenny Mill Inn was built already, but was called, Stan's Pub or something.

NUBIA

Ah. I've never been there.

CATFISH

You should check it out. Would you want to come work with us when Dan and I take the Jenny Mill over?

NUBIA

Oh...okay. Why not?

CATFISH

Sweet. This is a nice little guitar for a house instrument. You play?

NUBIA

It was my husband's. He played bossa nova, that kind of thing.

CATFISH

May I handle it?

NUBIA

Of course.

He plays it.

NUBIA (CONT'D)

You play some bossa nova too.

CATFISH

I know one chord progression, my guitar teacher taught me.

He plays Jobim-style chords.

NUBIA

What is that called? I've heard that...

CATFISH

Yeah I forget.

NUBIA

"La la, la la la la..." Oh, o nome... Let's call it "Boto Cor de Rosa".

CATFISH

Red Bottle?

NUBIA

I think, "River Dolphin."

CATFISH

That works. (Sings, plays) "Boto... cor de rosa..." Can you la-la the melody?

Catfish plays chords.

NUBIA

(Sings) "La la la...la la..."

NUBIA (CONT'D)

You're Catfish.

CATFISH

Pete Meyers. Catfish.

He offers his hand, she takes it.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

I should move along, let you attend to the crush of your going-out-of-business extravaganza. This was the best cup of coffee I've ever had in my life, by the way. (Pays)

NUBIA

The last ones are free.

CATFISH

Right. But here's a few pictures of George Washington to remind you of your American history lesson. Next is Benjamin Franklin. (Winks, steps to leave.)

NUBIA

Ciao!

Nubia disappears to back. Catfish on the way out, sings to himself.

CATFISH

"Seems we just get started, and before you know it...it's time for us to say, so long..."

SCENE 5

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

Catfish, Lindstrom, Nubia and Stephanie walk into empty club. Catfish carries Nubia's guitar in case.

STEPHANIE

Wow... (Sings note) "Ahhh." Great acoustics.

LINDSTROM

I got you dude. This is OUR ROCKIN CLUB!

Lindstrom and Catfish hi-five.

CATFISH

WE HAVE GOT IT! You're the man.

NUBIA

Pretty nice.

CATFISH

Did you speak to Bethany?

LINDSTROM

Yup.

CATFISH

How did she take it?

LINDSTROM

I'm still not her favorite guy.

STEPHANIE

Excellent!

CATFISH

She'll land on her feet.

LINDSTROM

Mel is comin at three with new bar & kitchen stuff. I should be back by then. Stephanie's doin a couple tunes live on WNJQ.

CATFISH

Jersey Jack's Morning Zoo?

STEPHANIE

Yup.

CATFISH

Ha! Have a great time. Onward and upward.

Lindstrom and Stephanie start out.

LINDSTROM / STEPHANIE

Bye!

STEPHANIE

This place rules, you guys!

Lindstrom and Stephanie out.

CATFISH

I'm so glad you're a part of this.

NUBIA

Me too.

CATFISH

You let me bring your guitar here. That's a big step.

NUBIA

It may as well be here where someone's going to play it.

Catfish puts case on a table,
pulls out her guitar, walks around
looking to hang it on a wall.

CATFISH

Where should it go?

NUBIA

How about in your arms? Play it.

CATFISH

(Plucks string) First pluck under new management.

NUBIA

It echoes.

CATFISH

Will you christen this room with me?

NUBIA

Que?! (Taken aback)

CATFISH

Boto Cor de Rosa? I played around with some words. ...Inspired by...working, with you.

He gives her the lyric sheet, she looks.

NUBIA

Huh...Catfish...

CATFISH
May I?

NUBIA
You better.

CATFISH
Will you help me?

NUBIA
I'll try.

CATFISH
Sing an instrumental break & help me with the verses.

NUBIA
Alright.

NUBIA/CATFISH
"BOTO COR DE ROSA"

BOTO...COR...DE ROSA...
RIVER DOLPHINS ROLL IN FROM THE SEA
THEY LOOK LIKE THEY'RE HAVING SO MUCH FUN ALL DAY LONG
COULD THEY BE INSPIRING YOU AND ME?

BOTO COR DE ROSA
NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA
LA
NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA...

BOTO COR DE ROSA
BRIGHTENING MY WORLD WHEN YOU ARRIVE
WHAT IS ON YOUR MIND BEHIND THAT COOL MISCHIEVOUS SMILE?
CAN WE SHARE THE CURRENTS OF OUR LIVES?

BOTO COR DE ROSA...

Nubia moves to Catfish, they kiss.

CATFISH
I'm beside myself that you're here. I...don't want to blow it.

NUBIA
You won't blow it.

CATFISH
It's uncharted territory.

NUBIA
We dive in. (Kisses him again)

Fade.

SCENE 6

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

Lights up. Catfish and Lindstrom,
who looks up above the bar.

LINDSTROM

You actually sprung for the big wood carving of
Jenny, angel wings no less. Beautiful.

CATFISH

No M.C.

LINDSTROM

...I booked a rapper Pete. Yes I booked a
rapper.

CATFISH

I'm in charge of the booking Dan. That is our
deal.

LINDSTROM

I own half of this club and I booked him.

CATFISH

Roots music.

LINDSTROM

Fannies in the seats in the 7 o'clock slot on
Thursday night.

CATFISH

High-schoolers who can't drink and don't spend
any money.

LINDSTROM

It generates buzz, and goodwill over the long
term, so we can make more money.

CATFISH

It dilutes our identity.

LINDSTROM

Northern New Jersey has a lot of different
kinds of music fans.

CATFISH

This is Northwestern Jersey, and the bar-going
live music audience is borderline redneck.

LINDSTROM

A rapper at 7 is not going to turn off the
rednecks at 9.

CATFISH

It's called building our brand.

LINDSTROM

Did you sell insurance or were you global director of strategic marketing?

CATFISH

And our division of labor is in the damn contract.

LINDSTROM

Are you that uptight about running this thing? You musicians, I thought everything was cool.

CATFISH

Because I'm a musician, I have no boundaries?

LINDSTROM

Correct.

CATFISH

Oh. ...You're playing me.

LINDSTROM

I'm not playing you. Are you gonna go into this? Come on dude. Don't make me have to check with you on every little decision. It's just a bunch of kids blowing off some steam when there's nobody else here. ...You-- You are the creative director, I promise you. I'll communicate better. Give me some room to be an impresario too. I don't just order liquor, right?

CATFISH

Yeah. (Pause)

LINDSTROM

This is him.

Lindstrom shows a photo.

CATFISH

This sleek dude stays away from Nubia.

LINDSTROM

Hah! It'll probably make us money anyway.

CATFISH

(Laughs) ...You capitalist pig.

LINDSTROM

Ughgh. (Pig sound.)

They hit hands. Lights dim, lastly
on Jenny sculpture.

SCENE 7

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

Catfish to stage with guitar.
Lights up, early evening. Nubia
waiting tables. Lindstrom sitting,
a few Audience, a COUPLE.

CATFISH

I had not written a lick in a year & a half,
since Dad kicked. I met the young woman who is
serving you this evening, a month or two ago,
went home and wrote this.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

"REFUSE TO LOSE MY HEART"

IT'S TAKEN ME BY SURPRISE... HOW YOU ARE ON MY MIND
REMEMBERING WHEN WE MET THE FEELING IT WAS IMMEDIATE YES

YOU ARE A RENAISSANCE WOMAN OF NUANCE
SLEEK AS A LIONESSE HOW AM I NOT S'POSED TO BE IMPRESSED

YET I REFUSE TO LOSE MY HEART TO THIS WOMAN
AS SHE SITS THERE AND LAUGHS AND DRINKS AND TALKS
YOU REFUSE TO LOSE YOUR HEART TO THIS WOMAN,
DON'T WORRY...
YOU'VE LOST

YOU'VE LIVED A LOT OF LIVES THINKING OF SHARING MINE
TRYIN TO PLAY IT COOL PROBABLY NOT THAT MUCH TO FOOL YOU

BUT I REFUSE TO LOSE MY HEART TO THIS WOMAN
AS SHE SITS THERE AND LAUGHS AND DRINKS AND TALKS
YOU REFUSE TO LOSE YOUR HEART TO THIS WOMAN,
DON'T WORRY...
YOU'VE LOST...

ROCK STAR PARTNERS, ON A RAINBOW CARPET,
ISN'T THAT WHAT WE SHOULD DARE TO DREAM,
IN OUR TIME TO DREAM? *[REPEAT THIS BRIDGE DURING NUBIA:]*

IT'S TAKEN ME BY SURPRISE... HOW YOU ARE ON MY MIND
REMEMBERING WHEN WE MET THE FEELING IT WAS IMMEDIATE YES

OH I REFUSE TO LOSE MY HEART TO THIS WOMAN
AS SHE SITS THERE AND LAUGHS AND DRINKS AND TALKS
YOU REFUSE TO LOSE YOUR HEART TO THIS WOMAN,
DON'T WORRY DON'T WORRY DON'T WORRY...
YOU'VE LOST

Nubia has joined Catfish for the bridge counterpoint, harmony on last chorus. They make out onstage after. Audience applause.

AUDIENCE

Wooo!

CATFISH

So does this mean we're dating?

NUBIA

Where you going to take me on a date?

CATFISH

Jenny Mill Inn?

NUBIA

Pfff!! Okay, for now. (Steps down.)

CATFISH

I'll be your busboy later.

NUBIA

Play.

CATFISH

Gracias, mi amor.

NUBIA

Portuguese, Senor Catfish!

CATFISH

Uh...obri-gado, meu amor.

NUBIA

Muito bom!

CATFISH

The Flora Purim of Allamuchy New Jersey, Nubia, ladies & gentlemen!

Audience clap. Nubia, gets beer tray, serves drinks.

SCENE 8

CONTINUES, IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

CATFISH

Thanks again. Nubia, could you get some of that new absinthe for this couple, on the house, just for being here in this off-hour?

NUBIA

Sure. (She gets bottle and glasses.)

CATFISH

Have you tried this? Normally you do not light absinthe on fire, but this one you do. It's called "Lucero." Are you game?

COUPLE

Sure. / Okayy...

CATFISH

Nubia's setting you up--

Nubia pours, uses lighter to light drinks on fire.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Ahh, up in flame.

COUPLE

Ooo...

CATFISH

You can drink it through the flame or blow it out and drink it. I guess blow it out, if you want to be on the safe side, don't want to burn your mouth.

Couple sip.

COUPLE

Whoa... (Cough, suppressed.)

CATFISH

One little sip and your head is vibrating, right? Too strong?

COUPLE

No it's good. / Licorice, mint, something else.

CATFISH

Yes. Let it simmer in your throat and chest a little before downing it all.

COUPLE

Mmm.

CATFISH

Enjoy. Supposed to be slightly hallucinogenic. And an aphrodisiac.

COUPLE

Oh.

CATFISH

It's legal don't worry. Let me know how it works out for you.

COUPLE

Sure.

CATFISH

Now I'm gonna use a technology I think is totally bogus, but demonstrate it for you as an example of what I stand against.

AUDIENCE

Yay!

CATFISH

Jim DiMarco left his synth sequencer up here, and this miracle machine will repeat my initial riff, and I'll jam on top of it thereafter.

AUDIENCE

Fish!

LINDSTROM

You've really punctured that balloon of artistic hypocrisy!

CATFISH

Yes thanks. Our headliner tonight is Spit Roast Muppet. So "stick" around for that. Danny give me a syllable for this work.

LINDSTROM

Um.

CATFISH

"Um."

Catfish begins mostly instrumental, driving tempo.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

"UM"

UM UM UMMM

During Catfish's background music, Nubia brings Lindstrom a beer.

LINDSTROM

Have a seat, chill.

Nubia sits. They watch Catfish during his pulsing song. The Couple start inappropriate intimacy at their table, fall and roll on the floor. Catfish motions Nubia and Lindstrom to stay seated.

While playing, Catfish gets two snifters, puts them on Lindstrom's table, pours absinthe, lights it on fire, walks away still playing, returns to stage, motions for them to drink. Lindstrom blows out the flame, drinks. Nubia does not.

Couple return to their table, still affectionate.

Lindstrom looks toward Nubia a couple times. After a while, checks his phone.

LINDSTROM (CONT'D)

Oh. I need to get home. For a bit, take care of a couple things. Be back around 10. Can you let him--

NUBIA

Okay. (Steps up quickly.)

LINDSTROM

Thanks. (Steps to leave.)

NUBIA

Yes.

Lindstrom exits. Catfish finishes.

CATFISH

Umm.

Catfish steps down. Audience claps.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

That seemed to do the trick.

COUPLE

Kind of. / I think so!

CATFISH

Cool.

Catfish steps to Nubia.

NUBIA

Did you pour this for you or me?

CATFISH

I have my beer up there.

NUBIA

I don't drink this kind of thing. You blow it out and drink it, if you want to. I don't know why you got this stuff.

Catfish blows out flame, does not drink.

CATFISH

Yeah I don't know. It was just so weird.

NUBIA

That song was something.

CATFISH

Thanks.

NUBIA

You did not like it?

CATFISH

Uhh it was okay. I was just messing around. It's the fakery I don't like, the machine up there.

NUBIA

But you played it anyway.

CATFISH

Yes, I guess I did.

NUBIA

Hm. (Steps to work, stops.) Did we pass the test?

CATFISH

Huh?

NUBIA

Your partner Dan went home to feed his cat or bang his girlfriend rather than sit there and drink that crazy stuff with me. Is that what you wanted?

CATFISH

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

NUBIA

You don't waste any time.

CATFISH

What do you mean?

NUBIA

You're falling in love with jealousy faster than a Latino.

CATFISH

You're talking in riddles now hon.

NUBIA

Some people just came into your club. I will go seat them. I want to love you.

Nubia exits. Catfish sticks his finger in the glass of absinthe, pulls it out and shakes it from burning heat.

SCENE 9

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

Lindstrom standing, typing on a laptop like it's a piano. A glass of bourbon on the table. Catfish is tuning an acoustic guitar.

LINDSTROM

Profitabilitee -- not a problem. Kudos to you for getting your pals the Allmans -- first time in the building in 15 years right?

CATFISH

I believe so.

LINDSTROM

Thanks for getting a band together behind little Stephanie. No mean feat for that sensitive thing. Doesn't like rockers, what the hell?

CATFISH

I kinda knew where she was coming from. And congrats to you for getting WDHA in here every weekend. You're taking care of business. Right?

LINDSTROM

Every day!!

CATFISH

Every way...

Lindstrom bangs the laptop.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Every way... Every which way you can... Every which way but loose.

LINDSTROM

Are those your favorite movies?

CATFISH

While I am busting my behind bringing in bigger and better acts, you are mismanaging the business end, not compensating the artists in a timely fashion, diverting funds for frivolous items like luxury car leases, pharmaceuticals, and God-knows-what-else. Okay while we're making a profit but not best practices for when the lean times come, and believe me they will come!! Dan you're running circles around me and I don't have a clue, and the recycling out there-- I don't think the carting company is actually recycling -- I think they're mixing the damn recycling in with the regular trash. I tried to establish a workable recycling program -- and you're off drinking and drugging -- do you know for sure if Refuse Management is REALLY recycling? Have you spoken to Refuse Management? Have you spoken to Conti? I'm gonna talk to Conti.

LINDSTROM

Don't.

CATFISH

How can we sustain anything if all these resources are getting wasted? Do you know how much shit is piling up in landfills? It's beyond comprehension. How can life sustain itself in a non-open system? Danny this is your purview, as stated in the contract. What about the cardboard and co-mingled solids that we so painstakingly separate for recycling? Can you tell me if it's being handled properly? Dan?

LINDSTROM

...Uh. I. No, I don't think I can.

CATFISH

And the lease on the kitchen equipment, that is not being dealt with promptly, I am sure.

Catfish breaks a string.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

GOD DAMN IT!!!!!!

Catfish puts his fist through a door.

LINDSTROM

Fish.

Catfish quickly gets the guitar off him, holds it like a bat, then puts it on a table, picks it up again as if to break it.

LINDSTROM (CONT'D)

Fish, that's your 3000-dollar Taylor. Please.

Catfish puts it back on the table, paces away, kneels, exhales.

CATFISH

This... This lack of structure. Your whatever... Danny I... I'm having trouble. I don't know if I can... This place is fun, what the hell is wrong with me? I don't feel too well.

Lindstrom brings Catfish up, holding his shoulders.

LINDSTROM

Pete. You're alright. You've got-- to keep-- it-together. Now I need you. You just broke a string. That sets you off. That's understandable.

CATFISH

These are new strings.

LINDSTROM

It happens. It can happen any time, and you're gonna be okay, play through it, and deal. Why don't you have a beer?

CATFISH

Okay... I'm sorry I accused you of dishonesty.

LINDSTROM

I don't know what you accused me of. You broke the door.

CATFISH

I'm sorry.

LINDSTROM

It's okay we'll fix it. These are the fat times so we can afford it. Your stomach is growling like a freight train. Are you eating, dude?

CATFISH

I don't know.

LINDSTROM

(Picks up phone.)

Mel, you got the kitchen open?

(MORE)

LINDSTROM (CONT'D)

Can you knock out a BLT for Fish? And get him a Miller Lite or a Pepsi at the bar? Is there milk? Thanks. Fish, let's go.

CATFISH

Yeah. Let me get my string.

LINDSTROM

Then I'll meet you at the bar.

CATFISH

Right. (Exits, sings.) "Hard livin...Hard lovin
-- what can I tell ya."

Lindstrom pulls a chair up to the laptop table, falls into it. He takes a drink, puts his face in his hands, exhales. Blackout.

SCENE 10

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

Catfish alone, song. Nubia enters, preparing tables during Catfish's practice.

"DIFFERENT HEAD"

DIFFERENT HEAD YOU TURNED ON ME
NOT WHAT I SAID YOU TWISTED IT TOTALLY
DO I HAVE TO WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU SAY

DIFFERENT HEAD THOUGHT YOU GOT ME
AS I BLED YOU SURE SHOCKED ME
EVERY STATEMENT WORDS YOU SAY MEANT TO WOUND

THRU THOSE EYES, THAT LEFT EYE
I WENT IN, TOO FAR IN WAY, TOO FAR, IN

DIFFERENT HEAD TO WHOM AM I SPEAKING?
NOT A THREAT INSIDE FREAKING
I'VE ENTERED BIZARRO WORLD WITH YOU

CATFISH

Can I help you with anything?

NUBIA

No, not much to set up, all done.

CATFISH

I think I was out of line before, with the absinthe and Dan.

NUBIA

Huh?

CATFISH
I apologize. For playing games.

NUBIA
Oh.

CATFISH
I was probably playing...the temperamental rock
star. Which I am not. It was stupid.

NUBIA
Okay. I accept.

CATFISH
Thanks.

Pause.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
I'm gonna get you.

NUBIA
What?

CATFISH
I'm gonna get you, grab you, take you, and I'm
gonna have you.

NUBIA
You have to catch me first.

Catfish chases Nubia around the
empty club. Nubia evades his
grasp. He catches her, picks her
up in in his arms, growls, kisses
her.

CATFISH
Oops!

NUBIA
Ah!!

Catfish pretends to have lost her,
sets her down gently, faux-slips
on his face.

CATFISH
Aughh!

NUBIA
You alright?

She runs to him. He lifts his
head.

CATFISH

Ha ha!!

Nubia puts her foot on his back;
Catfish pretends to be pinned.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Aughhh!!

Catfish rolls away, Nubia jumps on
him, pins his hands, kisses him.
Looks down at Catfish, they sing
softly:

NUBIA

"Boto...cor...de rosa... In the river, and
down into the sea...Your life looks so perfect
like what everyone would want...But it is
really not so easy..."

CATFISH

"En la playa..."

NUBIA

(Spoken) A praia. On the beach: na praia.

CATFISH/NUBIA

"Na praia".../"Boto dor de rosa..."

After their harmony, they kiss
again. Nubia gets up, then helps
Catfish up.

NUBIA

Praia. Your new word for the day.

CATFISH

Sim.

Catfish gathers himself, sees
something a few yards away, walks
toward it, hesitates, then jumps
to grab something from the air.

NUBIA

Catfiish... What was that?

CATFISH

Dust.

NUBIA

I didn't see anything.

CATFISH

It was a floating dustbunny. Probably full of
dustmites. I got it.

NUBIA

You have good eyesight.

CATFISH

Too good.

NUBIA

There's a lot of stuff in the air we don't see.
We can't keep track of it all.

CATFISH

You are right. I have an ionizer over there in
the corner, does an okay job of cleaning the
atmosphere.

Catfish goes to ionizer and shows
it off game-show style.

NUBIA

Yes I saw that. You must have spent a lot of
money on it. It--

Nubia walks to punched door.

CATFISH

Did Dan tell you I punched the door?

NUBIA

No I just assumed.

CATFISH

Never assume. You make an ass out of U and me.

NUBIA

What?

CATFISH

He could have done it.

NUBIA

Did he?

CATFISH

I broke a string at the wrong time, & it set me
off.

NUBIA

We'll fix the door.

CATFISH

You do not care for what I was playing before.
Not exactly na praia in Rio. Not in your
groove, right?

NUBIA

It's okay. It's not my favorite style for you.

CATFISH

Yeah the song sucks. Sucks wind.

NUBIA

Noo...that's not what I said.

CATFISH

I should be processing the budget and perusing Beverage Trade Monthly. Maybe they have some new snifters. It's alternative bullshit. I'm really indie. Independent of what? Clive Davis? BMG Universal? You like civilized music, "smooth jazz."

NUBIA

No, I like some rock.

CATFISH

Anyway, you just criticized my material.

NUBIA

I'm not getting into this.

CATFISH

I'm just teasing. You like what you like. No big deal.

NUBIA

Right.

CATFISH

I am going to grab your ass.

NUBIA

When?

Catfish stands, then falls forward down. Nubia walks away. Fade.

SCENE 11

IN THE JENNY MILL INN, NIGHT

MEL, bartender, cleans the bar.
ROBERT, 50-something patron,
drunk, sits at the bar.

ROBERT

They think we're weak.

Mel cleans.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

We should bomb them in to the stone age.

MEL

I'm puttin on the Mets game Robert.

ROBERT

Do what you need to do. The terrorists have a religion that has war at its very root, but when those battle groups come outa Norfolk-News to meet the sword of the enemy in earnest -- BAM! They shall be smite from the earth! Wiped off the map!! Another dry Bombay martini straight up Mel, if you please.

MEL

I really think you've had enough. And we're closing soon.

ROBERT

You're open for another hour, Mad Mel, and you don't cut me off!

MEL

Give me a break Robert. This is clearly when I should cut you off, and I will not give you a sixth martini.

ROBERT

You call yourself a bartender? Aren't you supposed to be a professional? This is completely UN-professional, and you're pathetic.

MEL

And I ask that you stay here for a little while before you try to drive home, or I'll call you a cab.

ROBERT

I'm a cab!! I'm not a cab! Look...you are so messed up and deluded -- it's a symptom of what is wrong with this country!

Catfish enters.

CATFISH

Come on Robert. Mel's giving you a seltzer.

ROBERT

I don't want a seltzer. I want a martini.

CATFISH

You know we can't do that at this point.

ROBERT

Fiiish..."We can't do that at this point."
Screw you. You don't give a damn about me. You don't care about me. You don't love me.

CATFISH

We do care about you.

ROBERT

Where is my polo shirt? You promised me six months ago you'd get me a Jenny Mill Inn polo shirt with my name embroidered on it just like the staff. Where is it? You little liar!

CATFISH

Did I promise you that? I don't even remember talking about it. Sure, we'll get you a polo shirt with "Robert" stitched on, no problem.

ROBERT

No problem? All the hundreds and thousands of dollars I pour into this rathole and it's no problem!! You hardly ever buy me a drink. Mel hardly ever offers me a bonus drink. That's stupid business. Stupid business Fish. You guys think you're gonna be legends with the shitty acts you bring in here. Ha! Give me a break!

CATFISH

We buy you plenty of drinks.

ROBERT

Where's my shirt, tightwad?

CATFISH

Robert--

ROBERT

And why don't you stop playing your lame-ass music while we're at it? Your music sucks. People should throw tomatoes at you. I'm serious.

CATFISH

Because you have a steel plate in your head from a "war" injury means you can come in here and insult everyone?

ROBERT

Don't go there little man...

CATFISH

It's not a combat injury.

ROBERT

It was a truck accident not my fault in the line of duty, y'little pig!!

CATFISH

You probably dropped a typewriter on your head on your way to your desk job.

Robert jumps at Catfish.

ROBERT
I will kill you man.

Catfish grabs Robert, restrains
him, they struggle around bar.

MEL
I'm calling the police, Fish.

CATFISH
(Restraining Robert)
Oh, Robert. It's so weird -- a stupid moth got
in the office today, and I was such a wimp, I
cupped the guy in my hands and took the trouble
to escort this nameless creature outdoors.
Marveling at the miracle of its life. Silly,
right?

ROBERT
Let go of me Catfish.

CATFISH
But right now, threatened by you or what you
stand for, I would gladly kill your
disrespectful ass, and accept the endless hell
of prison with the satisfaction of knowing I'd
accomplished something by snuffing you out. Ah
me. What's WITH that? I do love you. A very
general kind of love, but why don't we call it
love, for the sake of argument? It's probably
hate, but what's in a label?

ROBERT
Dammit Fish let go of mee! I'll sue your ass
off!! Urgghh!! (Really hurt)

CATFISH
(Sings strong bluesman voice loud in his ear)
"Luuuv..." There's my shitty music at its most
basic. (Laughs) Dance lessons, music lessons,
you get so much for your money here. How about
math? "Loove..."

ROBERT
Urgh! (Struggles)

Lindstrom enters.

LINDSTROM
Fish, can you let him go?

Catfish does.

LINDSTROM (CONT'D)

Robert, Officer Lopez is here to take you home.
Leave the bar. Now.

Robert slowly leaves.

CATFISH

Try the Black Horse Grille, will you Robert?
They have a great 2-for-1 happy hour, & no
metal detector.

Robert jerks, Lindstrom steps
between them.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Oh and tonight's on the house.

Robert flips the bird.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

I'll check on that polo shirt!

Robert slams the door, out.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Oh boy. And tomorrow he'll be back at 6PM like
none of this ever happened.

SCENE 12

CONTINUES, JENNY MILL INN, NIGHT, INT/EXT.

LINDSTROM

Fish, why don't we step outside?

CATFISH

You'll knock me out in the first round. Sure.

They step outdoors, Catfish brings
guitar.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Are you gonna tell me how I botched that
situation?

LINDSTROM

No, he provoked you. Whatever. I just think you
spend so much time in the club it's not good
for you... Uh... You wouldn't really kill some
dumbass customer would you?

CATFISH

Kill them softly, with my song.

LINDSTROM

For real -- you know the thing to do is get Fred Lopez in here, or Mel when he's at the door.

CATFISH

Yeah, but I didn't think I had the time, or the need, to call in reserves tonight.

LINDSTROM

No I hear ya. I just don't want people hurt, I don't want lawsuits, I don't want to have to be worrying all the time--

CATFISH

So I did screw it up tonight, in your opinion--

LINDSTROM

I don't know man! It's not easy dealing with a bar situation -- and we'll learn more better as we go. Can we agree on that? Fish?

CATFISH

Yeah, we'll all fall in love. Yes.

LINDSTROM

We don't strike them, we don't insult them--

CATFISH

Got it. You got it.

LINDSTROM

Thank you. ...I had no idea we'd get some of the angry ignorant crowd in here -- I'm sorry.

CATFISH

Yeah why'd you invite those relatives of yours? Hey it's not your fault. It's my fault for voting against the education bonds, now look at our citizenry.

LINDSTROM

I'm depending on you here. Fish, sometimes--

CATFISH

Courtesy, professionalism, respect -- shall be the code that I live and breathe.

LINDSTROM

You don't need to go that far... (Exhale) See how beautiful it is out here? I'm gonna smoke if you don't mind.

CATFISH

I do mind. But you look like such a Hollywood rebel I'll let you light up this time.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

"ALLAMUCHY IN THE MOONLIGHT"

ALLAMUCHY, IN DA MOONLIGHT
NEAR JENNY JUMP STATE FOREST
AND SHADES OF DEATH ROAD

THE JERSEY DEVIL WAS HEAD OVER HEELS IN LOVE
HAD HEATED WORDS WITH HIS GARGOYLE LADY FRIEND
HE FLEW IN SEARCH OVER TREES AND CEMETERIES
LAUGHING HARD BUT FEARING ABANDONMENT

ALLAMUCHY NJ, IN THE MOONLIGHT
NEAR JENNY JUMP FOREST
AND SHADES OF DEATH ROAD AND FLEMINGTON FURS...

JERSEY DEVIL CHOMPS HIS STOGIE & MAKES HIS PLAN
GONNA LEAVE THOSE PINE BARRENS, BE HER ALLAMUCHY MAN!
SO IF YOU AND YOUR BABY HAVE A KNOCK-DOWN-DRAG-OUT FIGHT
TAKE AN EVENING STROLL THRU ALLAMUCHY IN DA MOONLIGHT

LINDSTROM
Gee, that's pretty.

CATFISH
I just made it up. For you.

LINDSTROM
Thank you.

Pause.

LINDSTROM (CONT'D)
Fish...are you gay?

CATFISH
Yes.

LINDSTROM
What?

CATFISH
In the sense that I'm part of a besieged
minority that is the inherent target of
derision from the mainstream culture, and I
appear vulnerable and open to false accusations
of lacking some sort of courage, yes I'm gay.

LINDSTROM
Uh boy. And which besieged minority are you a
member of?

CATFISH
The aging singer-songwriter, guy with a guitar.
The detested scum of the earth.

LINDSTROM

After the open mic nights here, I'm with you on that. But you're not into guys.

CATFISH

Not really.

LINDSTROM

Not really?

CATFISH

One time, when I lived in Boston back in the day, I wound up with a transvestite, I was so horny, I guess lonely...

LINDSTROM

And?

CATFISH

And...this...person, looked amazing -- gold reflective dress outfit. I was really down...

LINDSTROM

Did you--

CATFISH

What we did was, not, deep or anything -- but what we did do was actually okay. Imagining her as this hot thing. There you have it.

LINDSTROM

Wow. ...I can relate. I never took action like that, but...my ex-wife Kim and I, honeymooned in Vegas, we ended up at a tranny club, and there was this copper-skinned babe in fishnet stockings playing pool, with great legs just a little too cut, I looked at Kim and she was staring at this guy, we both wanted to devour -- her.

CATFISH

You didn't--

LINDSTROM

Not quite hardly!

CATFISH

Oh. Maybe we should head into the bar and watch sports to prove we're men.

LINDSTROM

The Mets were one run ahead in the ninth & the Phillies had the bases loaded and one out. I will not enter that bar. I just can't take it.

CATFISH

I told you we should try to hold out getting
TV's in the bar.

LINDSTROM

That's against the law dude.

CATFISH

Yeah I forgot about that.

Pause.

LINDSTROM

I got some of that absinthe.

CATFISH

In your coat? Man...

LINDSTROM

Try it.

CATFISH

I've tried it. You're supposed to prep it, add
a little sugar--

LINDSTROM

Ah come on, just a sip. It is what it is.
"Lucero."

CATFISH

Urghhh...

LINDSTROM

To...

CATFISH

The Mets?

LINDSTROM

To Nubia. And you.

CATFISH

To Jenny!

LINDSTROM

To Jenny!

They drink from the bottle in
turns.

CATFISH

There she's flying out of the chimney into the
moonlight now!

SCENE 13

CONTINUES, OUTSIDE THE JENNY MILL INN

Nubia approaches them.

NUBIA
You guys alright?

CATFISH
I blew it with--

LINDSTROM
No. I helped Fish get rid of Robert.

NUBIA
I hate that guy.

CATFISH
Me?

NUBIA
Robert. Can one of you take Mel's register,
close it out for the night?

LINDSTROM
I will. Lemme go. (He leaves quickly)

NUBIA
Obrigado.

Lindstrom out. Pause.

CATFISH
Beautiful night.

NUBIA
Sim.

CATFISH
I...

NUBIA
Are you okay?

CATFISH
A little shaken up by Robert, then Danny
telling me...how I could've handled it, better.

Nubia moves to Catfish, kisses
him.

NUBIA
There's a clean blanket in the office. We could
grab it & go out in the back and do it before
the mosquitos get us.

CATFISH

That sounds cool. Buut--

NUBIA

What is your fucking problem? Oh forget it. Probably too uncomfortable or dangerous or something. Why, why can't you jump on the opportunity?

CATFISH

No I'd love to. But...people, go back there.

NUBIA

People? Who goes back in the woods behind the back yard? No one.

CATFISH

Sometimes...authorities, are in the area around here.

NUBIA

What?

CATFISH

The Drug Enforcement Administration combs the area for-- pot growers, & stuff.

NUBIA

If you're not really attracted to me you can just admit it.

CATFISH

People are in the these woods!! At all hours! I found a dead squirrel the other day. ...It wasn't a squirrel.

NUBIA

Catfish--

CATFISH

Yes, it was some sort of device--

NUBIA

No--

CATFISH

That's what it was! It was what it was, and that's what it was.

NUBIA

No, baby, don't tell me this.

CATFISH

I'm sorry...

NUBIA

Okay-- instead of having sex with me outside on a beautiful summer night, why don't you tell me what you did with this...robot squirrel, put here by the CIA to spy on us?

CATFISH

I...let it go. & it's the DEA, not the CIA.

NUBIA

It-- ran away.

CATFISH

It went away.

NUBIA

...Do you grow-- marijuana? Around here?

CATFISH

I do not. But some local losers do.

NUBIA

(Near tears)

I see.

CATFISH

Could we go do it in the upstairs stock room?

NUBIA

Maybe some other time baby.

CATFISH

You don't believe me.

NUBIA

I think you could be mistaken.

CATFISH

Ugghhh... *come, on--*

NUBIA

Come on what?

CATFISH

Alright there's no radio transmitter squirrels. Let's go out in the back--

NUBIA

I can't now. Besides there's bears.

CATFISH

Oh.

Catfish puts his arm around Nubia, leads her back to the club, sings a capella.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

"Allamuchy...in the moonlight...by Jenny Jump
State Forest...and Shades, of Death...Road..."

They disappear into the Jenny Mill
Inn, fade to darkness.

SCENE 14

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

One year later. Lindstrom at a
table with laptop. Nubia enters.

LINDSTROM
You're here early.

NUBIA
So are you.

LINDSTROM
You & Fish, one year together. Where'd you go?

NUBIA
Black Horse Grill.

LINDSTROM
Excellent food.

NUBIA
Sure.

LINDSTROM
They have a New York Strip Steak to die for--

NUBIA
I just had chicken. It was fine.

LINDSTROM
You recovered quickly. Reporting to work hours
ahead of time.

NUBIA
I'm not feeling too well...

LINDSTROM
Oh...physically?

NUBIA
I love Catfish, but I don't want to be with
him.

LINDSTROM
I know the feeling. That sucks.

NUBIA

(Choked up) And I can't live without you guys.

LINDSTROM

Guys -- you can't live with em--

NUBIA

I'm serious Danny. I'm trapped here.

LINDSTROM

You're not trapped here. If you need to work somewhere else, we'll help you get a good restaurant job -- I'll help you.

NUBIA

I don't want to go anywhere else -- even if I can make more money.

LINDSTROM

Wha-- um... You addicted to live acoustic rock & blues?

NUBIA

It's okay...

LINDSTROM

Then I don't get--

Lindstrom paces around.

NUBIA

He's got such a beautiful soul...I don't want to hurt him.

Nubia cries again. Lindstrom steps to comfort her. She hugs him.

LINDSTROM

The beautiful soul scares me.

NUBIA

What?

LINDSTROM

Nothing.

They separate. Pause.

NUBIA

Do you love me?

LINDSTROM

I think you're the most amazing, attractive, intensely desirable woman I've ever known.

NUBIA

Do you love me?

LINDSTROM

That depends on how you define--

NUBIA

I asked you do you love me?

LINDSTROM

How you define "want to live with you for the rest of my life and make love to you as often as humanly possible, have your picture there on top of the dresser, deal with kids, driving them from pillar to post, go on vacation & stuff like that..." -- is that what you're talking about?

Pause.

LINDSTROM (CONT'D)

Yes.

Pause.

NUBIA

I don't know what to do.

LINDSTROM

I do. But I can't do it right now.

NUBIA

I know.

He extends his hand. She takes it, he pulls it to him and kisses her hand. Fade to black.

SCENE 15

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

The BRITNEY SCRUFF BAND onstage, finish a song. Lindstrom is seated watching, Nubia is hostessing.

BRITNEY SCRUFF BAND

Let's bring it home... "I lost my friend... I got the funeral home blues..."

Audience applause, Catfish steps up to the microphone in front of the band.

CATFISH

Yes, let's hear it for the Britney Scruff Band, ladies & gentlemen!! We are so glad to have them here, even with the passing of their famous front man, Big Lloyd, this last year. We miss him terribly. A dear friend of mine, the Mayor of the North Jersey music scene...

Catfish stops, choked up.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Oh man. "Accountability and Good Vibes." Lloyd's buzzword. (To band) I know you guys could fight like newlyweds -- Big Lloyd had very definite opinions about musical direction et cetera. But Furious Fred here, valiantly taking vocals since Lloyd's gone, has kindly allowed me to sing on this bitter pill that Lloyd wrote, with me in mind. Or was it you Fred? Probably both, and more, with love, and paranoia. And I in turn dedicate this to you guys. (Motions toward Lindstrom, Nubia) Big Lloyd -- we miss you. Deceased...but not, quite, dead...yet. (To band) The song's the thing to catch the conscience of these ding-dongs. One-two-three and...

CATFISH (CONT'D)

"NOT QUITE DEAD YET"

THEY'RE DANCIN AT MY FUNERAL
BUT I'M NOT QUITE DEAD YET
MY BABY'S POURING CHAMPAGNE
IN THE MOUTH OF MY BEST FRIEND
EVERYTHING I SAW BEFORE IS COMING TRUE IN SPADES
HOPEFULLY THEY'LL SETTLE THE ESTATE
IN A TIME -LY WAY
I'M NEAR THE END & MAY NOT LOOK MY BEST
BUT I'M NOT QUITE...DEAD...YET

THEY'RE MAKIN THE ARRANGEMENTS
THO I'M NOT QUITE DEAD YET
IT'S OKAY I DON'T FEEL
THAT DISRESPECTED
HERE'S TO YOU AND ALL THE PLANS THAT YOU GOT PLOTTED OUT
PUT THAT NEW ADDITION ON THE HOUSE
YOU CAN BUY A BLOUSE
I'M HAPPY AS A CLAM THE DATE IS SET
BUT TECHNICALLY... I'M NOT QUITE DEAD... YET

THEY'RE JOKIN AT MY HEADSTONE
& I'M NOT QUITE DEAD YET
THE TWO OF YOU CARRY ON
LIKE YOU'RE REALLY UPSET
BABY I CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU SEE IN HIM

HAVE THE COURTESY TO GO BEHIND THE SCRIM
WHEN YR FRENCH KISS-INNN
THERE'S OTHER PEOPLE WAITING FOR THIS BED
BUT YOU KNOW I... THINK I'M... NOT QUITE, DEAD...

NOT QUITE DEAD YET

Near end of song, Lindstrom storms
out. Nubia leaves abruptly on the
other side of the stage.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Britney Scruff! Good night everybody! Happy
motoring! (To himself) Happy frickin motoring.
(Back to audience) Get home safe!

Audience applause. Fade.

END ACT ONE

ACT II

SCENE 1

IN THE JENNY MILL INN, LATE MORNING.

Catfish sits at the bar, drinking. Guitar is broken on the floor around him. He pretends to smash his head on the bar, twice. Lights up on Lindstrom and Nubia, seated at a table behind Catfish. Catfish talks without looking at them.

CATFISH

I spoke with Dave Scheer this morning. ...I'm keeping this shit.

LINDSTROM

The club?

CATFISH

Hit the road.

Lindstrom gets up, walks out, puts his fist through a door en route.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

See you in court.

Lindstrom out.

NUBIA

Why are you doing this?

Catfish takes a crumpled piece of paper out of his pocket, reads.

CATFISH

I really feel we should move to another phase and explore the friendship aspect of our relationship, focusing just on that. And ease off other aspects -- like the emphasis on proximity. Physical intimacy. Demands of possessive control, et cetera. I think that would be best for both of us, to grow as people in our journey along the road.

Nubia cries, steps away, pulls herself together.

NUBIA

You're... Are you gonna be alright?

CATFISH

What? (Slow motion fake headbutt toward bar, stops himself) Why don't you go make love to Dan, or open a health food restaurant, full of whole grain goodness? Or serve dolphins, there you go.

Nubia begins exit.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Oh, this paper is blank!

Catfish rips sheet.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Oops, I ripped it.

NUBIA

Will you call me, or Dan, or someone for help, if you need it?

Catfish stares at her.

CATFISH

No honey, I won't. Will you please go away from me, Nubia!??

Nubia out. Catfish stares.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ! ...Mel! MELL!! Oh, I don't want to get up & go behind the bar to get more Dewars! Do er die!

Catfish grabs a large knife from the bar, turns and plunges it into a piece of guitar. Steps back, slumps his head on the bar.

SCENE 2

IN THE JENNY MILL INN, CONTINUES.

Stephanie enters with guitar, heads to stage. Catfish jumps up, puts knife back on bar, steps to the stage area, away from his broken guitar.

STEPHANIE

Yo Fish!

CATFISH

Hey Steph.

STEPHANIE

Is that somebody's busted guitar over there?

CATFISH

Britney Scruff put on quite a show.

STEPHANIE

Wow. Looks like a good guitar though.

CATFISH

It's not. We just haven't cleaned it up yet.

STEPHANIE

Oh. I'm working on something, & I might even need a co-writer. Wanna hear it?

Catfish freezes, steps back slowly.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

If you're not feeling well, maybe later.

CATFISH

No, play it. Please.

STEPHANIE

Okay. It's-- urgh let me just play it.

CATFISH

Yeah.

STEPHANIE

Uhhh- I'm thinking it may need a bridge, to make it more marketable.

CATFISH

Some songs call for a bridge and some really don't. I tend to like your writing. You got a copy of the chords & lyrics?

STEPHANIE

Yeah. (Hands it to Catfish.)

CATFISH

This is your baby, any contribution from me, you're the writer and take or leave what my fat head comes up with.

STEPHANIE

Thanks. I've learned so much from your stuff. Okay...

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

"PROBABLY STILL WAITING"

WHAT N THE WORLD, IS GOING ON WITH YOU, I HAVE NO CLUE
STILL I'M BLOWN AWAY, BY
ALL THE PHENOMENA WE HAD IN COMMON
YOU SEEMED TO STEP, FROM THE MISTS OF TIME, LIKE I KNEW YOU
FROM SOME, PAST LIFE, YOU'RE RUN, -NING LATE
I'LL HANG IN THE SUMMER RAIN

AND I WILL PROBABLY STILL, BE WAITING
THO IT'S WRONG, TO EXPECT, YOU TO CHANGE
THE LIGHT OF THE SUN, WILL HAVE FADED
AND I'LL PROBABLY STILL, BE WAITING FOR YOU

YOU KEEP A COOL, AIR OF MYSTERY, OR MAYBE I'M
JUST A DRAG, AND
YOU WERE INDULGING A FOOL FOR A WHILE
I WANDER 'ROUND, TO THE CORNER STORE, WATCH THE WORLD GO BY
I'LL LET, YOU GO, I SURE, HOPE SO
JUST WHEN WILL YOU LEAVE MY BRAIN?

AND I WILL PROBABLY STILL, BE WAITING
THO IT'S WRONG, TO EXPECT, YOU TO CHANGE
THE LIGHT OF THE SUN, WILL HAVE FADED
AND I'LL PROBABLY STILL, BE WAITING FOR YOU

FOR YOU

Stephanie stares hard at Catfish,
who holds her stare, then looks
down at the lyrics.

CATFISH

It... sounds complete to me. Maybe repeat the
chorus at the end, give it some instrumental
space in the middle. Can I hold on to the
lyrics, in case a bridge idea comes to me, I
doubt that it will. ...I should probably not
touch it.

STEPHANIE

Sure. Sarah McLachlan is giving a songwriting
circle in New Hope Friday if you want to go
together. It's pretty expensive -- I don't know
if I can actually swing it myself.

CATFISH

You make an old bum feel honored.

STEPHANIE

It doesn't have to be a date.

CATFISH

No of course not. (Pause) Nubia and I were
pretty serious, she moved in--

STEPHANIE

Oh I really had no idea you two were--

CATFISH

And we broke up, like, today.

STEPHANIE

Wow...

CATFISH

(Half to himself)

And whatever age I am, I'm feeling too damn old to do a rebound right this second.

STEPHANIE

Sure. No, I wasn't thinking about anything-- You've got to love yourself before you can love someone else.

CATFISH

Well that's bullshit. No, it's true, whatever it actually means.

STEPHANIE

I think so.

CATFISH

And Friday, I'm busy-- killing myself or something.

An ice cream truck song plays outside the club. Catfish reaches in his pocket, gets money.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

There's the music business for ya. Look, can you get me a chocolate éclair? And get yourself a strawberry shortcake.

STEPHANIE

How did you know I liked that?

CATFISH

Your mom told me at the parent-teacher conference.

STEPHANIE

Screw you.

CATFISH

I just think of those two-- (He drifts upset) those two together. (Brings himself back) Lucky guess.

STEPHANIE

Oh. Here. Keep your money. This ice cream's on me.

CATFISH

Oh. Thanks.

She steps out to get ice cream.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

(To himself) If you're gonna do a music-industry seduction, try somebody who matters.

STEPHANIE

(Offstage) I heard that! Dickhead.

CATFISH

Oh. Man, you can't win around here.

Catfish steps to the bar area, looks around, leans on bar.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Oh, Dan... (Looks up) Jenny, I can't do this...

Ice cream truck music down.
Catfish picks up mess. Fade.

SCENE 3

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

Catfish seated at a table with laptop. BETHANY enters.

CATFISH

Oh, Bethany, great to see you. I am SOO sorry about how things went down last year.

BETHANY

Hey no problem.

CATFISH

Dan kinda drove what we did, and how we did it.

BETHANY

It was handled pretty shitty, but I get what you guys were trying to do now.

CATFISH

Well since Dan left I'm thinking about handling things differently.

BETHANY

Really?

CATFISH

More along the lines of how you operated.

BETHANY

And that was?

CATFISH

More business-oriented, since the Jenny Mill is a business after all.

BETHANY

That it is. How do you specifically plan to make it more business-oriented?

CATFISH

Open mic night is out. Beer Pong Night is in.

BETHANY

Good start.

CATFISH

I have Jim DiMarco coming in and programming a Dave Matthews bot, that will play Dave Matthews songs but then answer questions from the audience as Dave Matthews actually would.

BETHANY

Oh!

CATFISH

& Jim is creating a Dave Matthews interactive Flash animation for the new hi-def wide screen we got. This is gonna be instead of the Jazz Jam Thursday nights.

BETHANY

Hm!

CATFISH

And I'm working on getting stand-up comedy in here -- oh and pro wrestling, I'm serious. And a little swimming pool where the fish tank is.

BETHANY

Wow.

CATFISH

The Conti Organization is helping me with those connections -- and they showed me how the recycling is actually getting recycled.

BETHANY

Sounds great. You really got all the bases covered. So that's how I operated. Y'know, I didn't think you liked me very much.

CATFISH

I never not liked you. I was caught up in my songs & getting stage time -- I didn't see you clearly.

BETHANY

(Laughs) And what do you see now?

CATFISH

Uhhh...

BETHANY

Or, what do you want?

CATFISH

Would you come back here & help me out?

BETHANY

Your buddy Dan is gone for real?

CATFISH

Yeah.

BETHANY

Wow, your wonderful partnership was legendary.

CATFISH

We had creative differences.

BETHANY

That's interesting... (Sighs) Uh, okay. The other thing, I don't want to be butting heads with Mel--

CATFISH

Mel's dating a stripper, so he's pretty mellow at the club.

BETHANY

Good for him. Yeah, alright, sounds good Fish. Tomorrow morning?

CATFISH

Sure. Do you have any time tonight -- I was thinking of the Tower Motel Diner, just to get out of here & pull some thoughts together. How bout we make it a "business meeting"?

BETHANY

Yeah, alright. I'm all business, so why not?

CATFISH

Cool. I look forward to working with you.

BETHANY

And I you, Catfish.

They begin exit.

SCENE 4

JENNY MILL INN, CONTINUES.

Enter Stephanie and Soul Face.

CATFISH

Hey Steph!

STEPHANIE

Why didn't you tell me you divorced Danny in addition to Nubia?

CATFISH

What does that matter to you?

STEPHANIE

What does it matter?! You guys were my managers, or Dan was my manager and you were like my, creative "mentor", which is a total joke now.

CATFISH

Steph--

STEPHANIE

You cancel Soul Face's gig and you're replacing it with karaoke?

CATFISH

We're trying different things! Face was cool.

STEPHANIE

No Fish he's not.

SOUL FACE

Fish--

STEPHANIE

Wait! I don't know what's happened between you & Danny, or you & Nubia, or you & your imaginary teddy bear, but if you're canceling Soul Face then you're canceling me.

CATFISH

I'm not canceling you--

STEPHANIE

And the fact that you're standing here with Bethany ices it. You can hire a cover band or a television for my gig Friday night. I'm out.

CATFISH

Steph--

STEPHANIE

No Catfish. This is ridiculous. Bye. Oh and those lyrics -- if you steal any of my material, I will sue you. My dad's a lawyer.

Stephanie exits.

SOUL FACE

We're just questioning this direction--

CATFISH

Yeah I get it!

STEPHANIE

(Offstage) Face, come on!

Soul Face exits.

BETHANY

You created a monster out of that little bitch.

STEPHANIE

(Offstage) I heard that, bruiser!

BETHANY

Urghhh.

CATFISH

She's got that teen hearing.

BETHANY

She's going nowhere. Good riddance! I think these changes are the right way to go. Temperamental, egotistical musicians, I don't see as a cash cow, I'm sorry.

CATFISH

I don't have an imaginary teddy bear. I thought he was real actually. Just kidding. Naw, we'll try different things, it's entertainment. Have some fun, make a living. Is that such a damn crime?

BETHANY

Exactly.

CATFISH

That's what Danny & I set out to do. And that's what WE'RE gonna do.

BETHANY

I'm with you. All the way.

CATFISH

I want to have sex with you so bad right now.

BETHANY
Come on. We're using a condom.

CATFISH
Yeah fine.

BETHANY
We'll get a burger, then we'll get a room.

CATFISH
I think you can rent adult movies at the Tower Motel.

BETHANY
Free continental breakfast til 10AM. Come on baby. This is on you.

CATFISH
Sure.

Bethany leads Catfish out.

SCENE 5

JENNY MILL INN.

Catfish on stage, Band behind him.
Long-sleeved black t-shirts.
Audience present, Bethany hostess.

CATFISH
Hi gang, we do still have music at the Jenny Mill Inn, & I'd like to introduce you to my new band, The Exhumed. That's X-dash-O-O-M apostrophe D. The Exhumed. Get it?

AUDIENCE
Hoo!

CATFISH
Ground Chuck is done. Back from the dead, we are, and I hope you like it.

Catfish turns, still on mic.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
Okay. Kevin, if you do not lose the gated reverb on the distortion and bring the volume down a bit, I will cut you. Do you understand?

KEVIN
Just do it.

CATFISH
Down. Bethany, that ionizer is not doing a damn thing. Can you recalibrate it?
(MORE)

CATFISH (CONT'D)

It's humid in here and the dust is out of control, I can see it through that spotlight. Kick it if you have to. No don't kick it.

BETHANY

Got it dude! (She kicks it)

CATFISH

This is about my relationship with my friend May. May Ting.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

"HUMAN MATING IS A JOKE"

IT'S A BIG DEAL! IT'S A BIG DEAL!
IT'S A BIG WHEEL! IT'S A BIG BEEFY WHEEL

HUMAN MATING IS LIKE LIFE AND DEATH!
THAT IS TO SAY, IT'S A JOKE!
HUMAN MATING IS LIKE LIFE AND DEATH!
THAT IS TO SAY, IT'S A JOKE!
HA HA HA HA GET IT? GET IT? GET IT!

NO BIG DEAL IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL!
KEEPIN IT REAL OH MY GOSH IT'S SO REAL!

HUMAN MATING IS LIKE LIFE AND DEATH!
THAT IS TO SAY, IT'S A JOKE!
HUMAN MATING IS LIKE LIFE AND DEATH!
THAT IS TO SAY, IT'S A JOKE!
HA HA HA HA GET IT? GET IT? GET IT!

TWO HUMANS WALK INTO A BAR
TWO HUMANS GO SHOP FOR A CAR
ONE HUMAN GETS KICKED TO THE CURB
THE OTHER ONE JUST CAN'T FIND THE WORDS AND MOVES ON

HUMAN MATING IS LIKE LIFE AND DEATH!
THAT IS TO SAY, IT'S A JOKE!
HUMAN MATING IS LIKE LIFE AND DEATH!
THAT IS TO SAY, IT'S A JOKE!
HA HA HA HA GET IT? GET IT? GET IT!

Big clown production. Applause.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

You did not put a lid on the gated reverb Kevin, and you're still way too loud. You're out. Get out of the club.

KEVIN

I turned it down genius! It's rock, I GUESS!
Get a mondolin if you're gonna play soft, Fish!

CATFISH

Even rock, this venue (motions out) does not go for guitar monsters. You're leaving right?

KEVIN

I gotta play for the next--

CATFISH

Alright fine. Don't come back tomorrow.

KEVIN

Are you serious? You're an idiot.

CATFISH

The Exhumed, ladies & gentlemen, excuse our onstage implosion. Onward & upward. The ionizer is doing wonders. No, it takes 20 minutes or so. Next we got- who do we got Bethany?

BETHANY

No M.C.

CATFISH

My good friend No M.C. is up next, & I guess this dick is backing him on guitar -- the way real rappers always have a metalhead guitar with gated reverb distortion behind em. Really we're just kidding. No M.C, y'all! Kissass, I mean kickass North Jersey rapper. No he's great. Lays down freestyle like a pro.

NO M.C. approaches stage. Audience goes crazy.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

No, you good with what we talked about?

NO MC

Yeah Fish, give it a try.

CATFISH

Cool. No M.C, ladies & gentlemen!

Blackout, they stay put.

SCENE 6

THE IRON GRAPE WINE BAR, HOPATCONG NJ.

Smallish wine bar cafe. Nubia puts flowers on tables, Lindstrom moves wine crates behind a wine bar.

LINDSTROM

I'd like to hear you sing "The Iron Grape Wine Bar Theme Song."

NUBIA

You will not hear that.

Stephanie and Soul Face enter.

LINDSTROM

Steph, Nubia is still insisting on this acoustic originals thing, so you got anything special to baptize us with?

STEPHANIE

Wow, I'm afraid I haven't yet written, uh "Behold the Iron Grape" or anything. (To Nubia) Look, we're here for you, I don't care if it's background to sell your glasses of wine, it's professional & we're cool, right Face?

SOUL FACE

Totally.

NUBIA

I like it loud, contrary to what some people say.

STEPHANIE

Alright...uhh...I think it would be sweet for Nubia to sing the first song here--

LINDSTROM

See? What did I tell you? (To Steph) You're psychic I was just saying that.

STEPHANIE

I mean, it would be so right, & we would accompany you, right Face?

SOUL FACE

Absolutely.

NUBIA

You two are in mind-connection against me, I'm getting paranoid. My new word lately.

STEPHANIE

I have this song, we can play it, I think you know it -- you've sung along with me at the Coffee Roastery -- this one? (Shows to Nubia)

NUBIA

Oh yeah--

LINDSTROM

You gotta do it--

NUBIA

It would feel weird though, that thing that Catfish did--

LINDSTROM

No way hon. Because he can be good at landing zingers doesn't mean he's right.

STEPHANIE

Yeah Nubia. That's the past, and it's over.

LINDSTROM

Come on baby. Will you sing this for me?

NUBIA

Mmmm...

STEPHANIE

If you need a different key, we can transpose this one on the fly. Right Face?

SOUL FACE

Indubitably!

NUBIA

(Laughs) I wouldn't know what key to change it to...buut...yes alright, let's do a quick song to start it off. I'm always giving everything to the singer-songwriters, I'll put my mouth where my-- mouth is, for a change.

LINDSTROM

Thank you, Nubia.

STEPHANIE

Alright... (Looks to Soul Face)

Nubia, ascends little stage,
Stephanie and Soul Face follow,
begin chords.

NUBIA

You can play louder than that. I want to hear you.

STEPHANIE

You got it. (Ups volume on guitar a bit)

LINDSTROM

(Jumps onstage) Welcome to the Iron Grape, my friends. I'd like to introduce you to the Astrid Gilberto of Lake Hopatcong New Jersey, Nubia! (Jumps down)

NUBIA

Thank you sir! This is dedicated to...my man
Danny here, my business side, my partner.

Patrons enter during song,
Lindstrom serves them. Stephanie
joins harmony. Face solos.

NUBIA (CONT'D)

"HONEY YOU'RE HOME"

YOU WALKED IN HERE LIKE A WAYFARING STRANGER
AFTER YEARS BEING OUT ON THE ROAD
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME AND THERE'S STILL THIS DISTANCE
AND I KNOW YOU'VE SURVIVED ON YOUR OWN
NOW GIVE ME YOUR COAT AND JUST TAKE A DEEP BREATH
CUZ YOU KNOW WHAT, HONEY YOU'RE HOME HONEY YOU'RE HOME

WE'VE LIVED THRU STORIES THAT WOULD FILL UP A NOVEL
THEN I STAYED HERE AND YOU HAD TO GO
THOSE BRIGHT EYES OF YOURS PROMISE BRAND NEW ADVENTURES
AND I AND YOUR FANS WANT TO KNOW
AND AFTER YOU BRING US UP TO SPEED
JUST KICK BACK CUZ HONEY YOU'RE HOME HONEY YOU'RE HOME

I...HAVE A FEW TALES OF MY OWN TO TELL
ONE OF THEM BEING GRATITUDE THAT YOU'RE HERE ALIVE AND WELL
& LET ME SEE WHAT ELSE...

YOU HAVE A KEY AND YOU KNOW YOU ARE WELCOME
IT'S ALWAYS FUN WHEN YOU SHOW
AFTERNOON, MORNING OR WAY AFTER MIDNIGHT
THE LIGHT WILL BE ON ABOVE THE STOVE
WE STILL KEEP THE COOKIE JAR HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT
BUT YOU KNOW THAT CUZ HONEY YOU'RE HOME HONEY YOU ARE HOME

Audience applause, whistle. Nubia
kiss with Lindstrom. Blackout.

SCENE 7

BACK AT THE JENNY MILL INN, CONTINUES FROM PREVIOUS.

No MC raps "Feel the Love".
Bethany and another female jump
onstage as his babes. Catfish
enters during rap, jumps onstage
in a pimp hat, mock challenges No
MC, tries to take his women. No MC
thrashes Catfish around the stage
and the club, loud sound effects.
In stage combat, Catfish really
risking getting hurt. Audience
screams approval.

NO MC

"FEEL THE LOVE"

FEEL THE LOVE, THIS IS THE LOVE, IT'S ABOUT THE LOVE
CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE?

YOU PLAYIN ME FOOL, 1-2-3 MANY TIMES
NOW I'M GONNA RIDDLE YOU WITH BULLETS OF RHYMES
I'M BLACK & I'M WHITE BUT YOU LOOK LIKE A GHOST
I OPEN UP THE JAM, GONNA POP YOU LIKE TOAST
NOW I GOT YOU PINNED LIKE A BUG ON CORK
YOU COME IN LIKE A PLAYER, NOW YOU LOOK LIKE A DORK
YA KNOWN AS THE JOKER OF DISRESPECT
NOW THE TABLES ARE TURNED, ARE YOU HAVIN FUN YET?

FEEL THE LOVE, THIS IS THE LOVE, IT'S ABOUT THE LOVE
CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE?

YOU-LOOK-AT-ME LIKE I'M AROUND TO DO YOUR LAUNDRY
I'LL PUT YOU IN THE WASHER THEN WE'LL SET SOME BOUNDARIES
YOU SEE A SHORTY HERE AND YOU THINK YOU BE BOFFIN HER
I'LL THROW U IN THE DRYER WI DA FABRIC SOFTENER
YR STEAMY DREAMS ARE RE-SET COLD WATER COLD
YA THINK Y'A HI ROLLER BUT YA TUMBLE DRY LOW
YA NEVER COME CLEAN AN YA STAININ MY WAUSH
NOW YA SWIRLIN DOWN THE DRAIN, GET DA FREAK OUT OF MY HOUSE!

BUT FEEL THE LOVE, THIS IS THE LOVE, IT'S ABOUT THE LOVE
CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE?
FEEL THE LOVE, THIS IS THE LOVE, IT'S ABOUT THE LOVE
CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE?

Catfish spurts fake blood in
gushes. Near end of song, Robert
enters and tosses No MC.

NO MC (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?!

ROBERT

This is my friend, and violence is not
acceptable!

NO MC

It was a show! It was fake!

CATFISH

Robert it's okay, it was a stage fight we're
trying.

ROBERT

Oh I'm sorry.

NO MC

And it was bullshit Fish, makin me look like a damn clown!

CATFISH

I thought it worked.

NO MC

Not for me.

Two Audience approach, angry.

AUDIENCE 1

Finish him off No!

AUDIENCE 2

You had it goin & this shmoe breaks it up?

They go at Catfish and Robert respectively. Bethany grabs both.

BETHANY

Goodbye losers!!

Bethany tosses both of them aside, gets them out.

AUDIENCE

(Exiting duo) Great job Fish!! / Brilliant!!

NO MC

No this didn't work man. I need a break.

CATFISH

The rest of your set--

NO MC

You look like a mess, I don't know if you're filled with fake or real blood, and I'm not a wrestling cartoon character. I play with words, even if you don't really respect what I do.

CATFISH

No I do. I absolutely do.

NO MC

Get yourself cleaned up, club-man, I'm takin five & I guess I'll be back to finish the set.

CATFISH

No--

No MC exits. More Audience step up angry.

AUDIENCE

No MC! No MC! No MC!

Catfish crumples to the floor.
Bethany pulls him up. Mel tosses
two more Audience out.

BETHANY

Come on.

ROBERT

Fish I'm really sorry--

CATFISH

Thank you man it's okay. We should have made it
clearer it was a show.

KEVIN

Quite a show mack-daddy!! (Exits laughing)

CATFISH

Shut up ratface!

KEVIN

(Offstage) Ha ha ha!!

ROBERT

Do you want me to--

CATFISH

These pink-headed 30-something bald guys! No,
Robert! I do really appreciate your help since
that night I sang in your ear.

ROBERT

You did? I don't remember-- You sure you
don't have head issues buddy?

CATFISH

Hm.

ROBERT

I love your music, except for this rap stuff.
And you're the only establishment to follow
through & give me an official shirt.

CATFISH

We got polo shirts up the ass, if you want to
take a few more.

ROBERT

Don't mind if I do. Thanks, & get yourself
washed up.

Robert out, Bethany jumps onstage.

BETHANY

No MC will be back momentarily folks! (Jumps down)

AUDIENCE

Wooo!!

CATFISH

Did I do something wrong or what?

BETHANY

You did it all right. Screw No MC. If he doesn't want to play ball we'll just stick to the real wrestlers -- mudwrestling, women, men whatever.

CATFISH

Uh.

BETHANY

Come on, let's get this ketchup off you, maybe get busy in da Jenny Mill bathroom!

CATFISH

Uh, regarding the wrestlers, hon, I don't think I want them yet.

BETHANY

What? I called Conti today, and set up three months of Fridays, **as you directed me to do.**

CATFISH

Well I'll call him and unbook them.

BETHANY

I suggest you sleep on that brilliant decision, because you'll be damaging a relationship that can make you mucho buckos!

CATFISH

I sure will!!

BETHANY

You don't need to get snippy with me, little man. You're gonna go back to progressive folk? This is pissing me off.

CATFISH

I am the sole proprietor of the Jenny Mill Inn!

BETHANY

You want real blood to go with your fake blood? I just wanna -- throttle you!

CATFISH

Do it right if you're gonna do it.

BETHANY

Don't talk like that, weirdo!! Don't **ever** talk like that! You're still depressed about that Brazilian bimbo? Well I'm not Latina, I'm not petite, I'm not blonde, alright!? Agh, you--

CATFISH

I miss them, yeah, and I'm missing you right now! I blew it with them, and I may not want professional wrestling in MY club after all!

BETHANY

"Them." You know if your man Dan comes back here, I am out.

CATFISH

I understand that. I don't want him back. Nor her. Definitely not her.

BETHANY

Hm.

CATFISH

We'll keep the wrestlers. What the hell.

BETHANY

I don't want to if you don't want to.

CATFISH

If I lose Conti, then I gotta train another company to actually recycle.

BETHANY

Huh?

CATFISH

Then those female mudwrestlers, rolling around naked.

BETHANY

They are wearing bikinis. At least.

CATFISH

I wanna get busy in da bathroom wit you.

BETHANY

I see.

CATFISH

Am I really a little man?

BETHANY

Definitely not. You know, sometimes you are. I've never experienced such variation in my life. It is bizarre.

She cleans him up.

CATFISH
I would rather you didn't leave me.

BETHANY
I don't know if I can.

They kiss, separate. There's fake
blood on her.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
If you drive me crazy enough, I guess I can
leave you.

CATFISH
That's the spirit!

They handshake arm-wrestle style.

BETHANY
Can I clean you up?

CATFISH
I doubt it.

Bethany leads Catfish off as No MC
and Kevin return, various
disapproval on their faces.

BETHANY
Intro yourselves.

Kevin jumps up.

KEVIN
Now, to fulfill our contractual obligation at
the historic Jenny Mill Inn, No MC, ladies &
gentlemen!

Audience screams.

NO MC
We're layin down the real deal this time.

Audience goes ape. Catfish &
Bethany exit. One beat from drums,
blackout.

SCENE 8

WNJQ RADIO STATION STUDIOS, PARSIPPANY NJ.

JACK MCKAY, 50s, wearing rumpled
sport jacket, sits at a table with
two mikes. Catfish enters during:

JACK

This is Jersey Jack McKay and welcome to WNJQ's Jersey JackTalk. We have a good friend in the studio as our guest today (waves Catfish in), Catfish Meyers, solo owner of the Jenny Mill Inn over in Allamuchy, and we're gonna talk a little bit about what's goin on over there, what's new with Fish, the person not the swimming creatures, and then we'll take your calls & you can talk to Catfish & put in your two cents. Catfish, great to have you back.

CATFISH

Thank you Jack, great to be back.

JACK

Now you and your former business partner Dan Lindstrom, Mr Iron Tomato, went your separate ways, and you've carried on with the Jenny Mill Inn. You guys were known as a team -- is it harder to run the historic music club on your own? Is it better?

CATFISH

...It's about the same, Jack, really. Dan wanted to branch out with Iron Tomato and I wanted to try some new things, so we dealt with it. We have tripled our profit in the last six months, so we've been able to rehabilitate the run-down wing of the building where the old bedrooms were, and the carriage house in the back--

JACK

But a big ol lawsuit is dragging on, getting coverage in the press, and a soap-opera quality is emerging, rightly or wrongly. But it is really a no-fault separation.

CATFISH

Oh definitely. The court case is just a formality -- and thanks for bringing it up Jack, I thought we were gonna talk about the pool we put in the middle of the place -- this is a far cry from when I'd bring my guitar to your morning show on DHA & I'd do an acoustic set in the studio, huh? Best cup of coffee I ever had.

JACK

Great times for sure Fish. We're technically not supposed to mention other stations on WNJQ, but there I've said it. WDHA. WDHA.

CATFISH

Jack you are your own man, always have been.

JACK

Well thank you Fish, and now let's go to the phones & let you our listeners tangle with Catfish Meyers. Jersey JackTalk you're on the air.

CALLER ONE

Yeah I just think it's really sad how there's hardly any live music at the Jenny Mill Inn anymore. There's so few places to see good bands now, it's just a shame. Is there any way you can bring back more live music, Catfish?

CATFISH

We are working on that -- when the economy tanked it just got so hard to make the same, uh, economies, viable. But we had No MC last night, and we've got some great music on the horizon -- the Nerds are coming back next week, uh--

JACK

Thanks. Jersey JackTalk you're on the air.

CRAZED CALLER

I'm gonna kill you you ss--

JACK

Jersey JackTalk you're on the air.

CALLER TWO

Hi Catfish I have to agree with that other guy, the direction the Jenny Mill has taken, it breaks my heart, it used to be so great to see great acts there. I wrote this song that sums up my sadness about it "Wha--"

JACK

Jersey JackTalk you're on the air.

CRAZED CALLER

YOU ARE FFF--- (Growling maniacally)

JACK

Jersey JackTalk you're on the air.

CATFISH

Don't you have a tape delay or something, Jack?

JACK

No it's on order.

CALLER THREE

Hello?

JACK

Jersey JackTalk you're on the air.

CALLER THREE

Yeah, I also am really upset that you guys couldn't work it out, keep the Jenny Mill as a real music club, and instead you have a run-of-the-mill sports bar, like we need another one of those, and the occasional freakshow -- you guys are selfish, greedy mercenaries, you're just another cog in the system shooting down anything cool in this state -- you Catfish -- IT IS A TRAVESTY AND AN ABOMINATION, that's all!

CATFISH

(Upset, softly) ...What can you say to that?

JACK

Jersey JackTalk you're on the air.

CRAZED CALLER

DIIEE!!--

Catfish up, crumples on the floor.

JACK

Jersey JackTalk you're on the air.

Jack puts Fish in his chair.

LINDSTROM

(Voice disguised) Yes, I'd like to give Catfish some slack with the Jenny Mill Inn, and these critics should get off his back and let him try what he's trying. There's different kinds of acts, activities, and it could actually end up helping the community and preserve this historic landmark building if you think about it.

CATFISH

Thanks. You sound...like you got marbles in your mouth dude. Uh...Danny?

JACK

Could this be the peacemaking of Catfish & Dan Lind--?

LINDSTROM

No, but I think there's more to life than--

CATFISH

I'm gonna drop--

JACK

I'm sorry we're running out of time--

CATFISH

The lawsuit.

JACK

We lost the call, but it wasn't Dan, he said so.

CATFISH

I think it was. Whatever.

JACK

That's today's Jersey JackTalk, I'm Jersey Jack McKay. Next is Weather, on this steel-gray wind-advisory day. Stay tuned to WNJQ, where talk lives. (Off the air, gets up)

CATFISH

(Distant) Thank you Jack.

JACK

You alright Fish?

CATFISH

Yeah, I should've been ready for this--

JACK

(Helps Catfish up) Y'know, that one guy mentioned different activities, and not being married to bands & so forth -- I can bring in a group to the Jenny Mill Inn who would pay just to be there. During the day-- I mean it's found money. Would you be interested in that kind of thing?

CATFISH

I think Bethany would go for it. You're not Jersey Jacking me around, are you?

JACK

No sir. Wanna step downstairs for coffee?

CATFISH

I could use a special coffee right now. Very special.

JACK

I can help you with that too. (Shows mini-bottles in his jacket)

CATFISH

As usual, you are hooked up.

JACK

Down we go.

They begin stepping out.

CATFISH

The carpeting in these places is always so nice. Cool design, always vacuumed. I've always found.

JACK

Uh, yeah, they vacuum a helluva lot more than I do. What I'm thinking is-- well I should save it til we're downstairs. Have you tried that chocolate coffee vodka with caffeine? Named after Picasso, you're into that artistic life.

CATFISH

Yeah, trying different things. You're sure that wasn't Dan? Iron Tomato Dan?

JACK

I don't think soo...

CATFISH

I see, Greeks or Romans in this carpet.

JACK

Abstract. Are you with me here Fish? Alright -- what I want to do is-- have you heard of the North Jersey--

Ding of elevator. Blackout.

SCENE 9

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

Catfish alone on "stage", with electric guitar. Lights up on Jenny woodcut, which he speaks to.

CATFISH

Jenny...that Allamuchy song, I'm thinking about this as the opening verse. Yes, I know, great use of my time, songs about the Jersey Devil are in such high demand. We're set for life.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

"ALLAMUCHY IN THE MOONLIGHT"

ALLAMUCHY, IN DA MOONLIGHT
NEAR JENNY JUMP STATE FOREST
AND SHADES OF DEATH ROAD

THE JERSEY DEVIL FLIES TO ALLAMUCHY
PUT OUT HIS CIGAR ON THE JENNY MILL INN
SAID "I'M LOOKIN FOR MY ALLAMUCHY HOOTCHIE
AND THIS IS WHERE I KNOW MY BABY'S BEEN"

Jack leads a group of 4-5 GHOST
HUNTERS into the space. Bethany,
in spider web body stocking,
brings refreshments to a set
table, leaves.

JACK

So those bedrooms upstairs have been recently
restored by Catfish here, to how they looked in
poor Jenny's time. The colonial-era
appointments are obviously re-creations, but
you say you detected genuine spirit activity on
your electromagnetic field monitor up in
Jenny's room.

GHOST HUNTER ONE

Clearly, and this EMF device is showing it was
definitely from the 1700's.

JACK

Remember, Jenny's father chained her up in that
room, so she wouldn't run away from the
arranged marriage to the old judge.

GHOST HUNTER ONE

The meter registered severe spiritual distress.
Jenny is here.

Meter clicks. Sound of chains,
wind slamming into the building.

CATFISH

Bethany's loading beer into the fridge, and
this old place creaks. (Doodles on guitar)

JACK

Exactly. This space was the dining room of the
house at that time -- can you not play the
guitar while I'm conducting this investigation?

CATFISH

Sure. Sorry.

JACK

From where Jenny bolted from the dinner table
out the front door on All-Hallows Eve.

Sound of door flying open, wind.

CATFISH

Bethany, can you close and lock that door?

BETHANY

(Offstage) Sure!

CATFISH

That throwback oak door is a problem. (Doodles)

JACK

Jenny's father chased her, couldn't catch her, then organized a posse -- Fish please! -- organized a torch-wielding posse to hunt her down in the forest, while the so-called "Jenny Jump" ran to the precipice we visited this morning in the woods. I see the table's ready for the seance, as we try to--

CATFISH

Jenny never lived here.

Jack freezes.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Jenny Jump, or Jenny Hollyfield, did not live in this building. If she lived at all.

JACK

You are mistaken, and maybe you shouldn't be a part of this invest--

CATFISH

What's interesting is that the building started as a stagecoach stop for the Pony Express--

JACK

Catfish! What are you--

CATFISH

And if you go down that corridor with no lights on, and you take the black felt off that frame hanging next to the rest room, you'll see this was also a boatmen's hotel along the Morris Canal, then the house of the guy operating the grist mill on the river, then a post office in Andrew Jackson's time, then a speakeasy when Babe Ruth stopped by, the DuPont family had a scion who lived here, it was an old man bar, then a music club starting in 1965. The dead in here were the working stiffs dying slowly of boredom and disappointment, but who wants to investigate that?

JACK

You're a complete ass.

GHOST HUNTER ONE

I figured this was another Jersey Jack flim-flam. This chicanery is endemic to---

CATFISH

There are ghosts in here. There's my dad who died a year ago who no one remembers, there's Big Lloyd who died too young, who no one remembers, there's my mother who sits around doing nothing, who I can barely remember when I'm talking to her -- regular ghosts who don't leave any traces on a ghostometer, because the material world is an illusion and there is no reality in it or behind it.

JACK

Give me the money.

Catfish produces the check.

CATFISH

My father developed a paid-provider health benefits program for the West Coast Division of Crumb Insurance, for which he was named District Manager of the Year. But he smoked. Big Lloyd smoked.

Chains sound goes off. Catfish addresses empty space.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

That's why you should stop smoking, DAN! Oh he's not here. My bad!

JACK

Hand me that check. (To Ghost Hunters) You'll be reimbursed in full.

Bethany enters.

CATFISH

If you put DSM-4 facing DSM-5, arbitrary diagnoses of psychiatric disorders, and have two mirrors behind the books, also facing each other, then you will encounter ghosts.

JACK

We don't care about your personal issues. Hand me our money, now.

Catfish tosses the check to Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)

You cannot count on my support going forward, you're aware of that.

CATFISH

You are a ghost. And I am a hologram.

JACK

Thanks for destroying Jenny Jump.

Jack and Ghost Hunters begin exit.

BETHANY

There is Henry Hump.

JACK

(Stops) What?

BETHANY

Henry Hump was a state park ranger in the 1930's, who lived here, and one day he was making love with his fiancée on a picnic table in the woods when a lightning bolt hit her at just the right time -- but it killed her and Henry stayed in the woods, right back here, never left, and now when couples stroll up there they get inexplicably horny and often feel the electric presence of a third party joining in, and they say it's Henry Hump.

Wind bangs building. Pause.

JACK

Goodbye Fish.

Jack & Ghost Hunters exit, during:

GHOSTER HUNTER TWO

Henry Hump! What a load of malarky!

GHOST HUNTER ONE

We should sue you Jack!

JACK

Let's go! I'll reimburse you on the bus.

GHOST HUNTER ONE

I really detected something on the meter tho.

GHOSTER HUNTER THREE

Maybe that Henry guy was real.

GHOST HUNTER ONE

Is that your hand?

They are out, fade. Catfish and Bethany still for a moment.

CATFISH

Henry Hump?

BETHANY

If you're gonna blow a good thing, might as well have fun doing it, no pun intended.

CATFISH

Real good thing.

BETHANY

You were getting so heavy, I thought I'd try to lighten up the Ghost Hunters.

CATFISH

I really didn't want the Ghost Hunters here.

BETHANY

That's obvious.

SCENE 10

CONTINUES IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

CATFISH

Sorry.

BETHANY

Don't apologize to me. Mind if I change out of this monkey suit?

CATFISH

Go ahead. You look great in it.

BETHANY

Thanks.

She begins changing into jeans and t-shirt.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Uhhh--

CATFISH

You're leaving.

BETHANY

I do have an offer from Fabio's to become their executive manager.

CATFISH

Go for it. Knock yourself out.

BETHANY

I haven't taken it yet, but--

CATFISH

We should really investigate emphasizing other facets of our r---

BETHANY

You don't want to go down this path you laid out to me, at this club. It's just business.

CATFISH

Yeah well I'm sure you and Mel--

BETHANY

Whoa stop right there Pete! Are you accusing me of getting back together with Mel? Are you accusing me of even flirting with him? I know you can see things that are not there, we all can, but can you point out any evidence at all that there's been anything between me and Mel since I've come back here? Catfish, I want to hear it. I want facts. Have you noticed anything? Have you? Think very, very hard...

CATFISH

No.

BETHANY

Right answer. Do you believe it?

CATFISH

...I do.

BETHANY

I sure hope so. Catfish...I am here for you.

CATFISH

Wow. So, even if you go take a "normal" job over there, you might still want to stay in the r--, r--

BETHANY

Relay--

CATFISH

The good ship relation.

BETHANY

Yeah maybe.

CATFISH

Why?

BETHANY

Your original singer-songwriter material.

CATFISH

I thought you didn't like that.

BETHANY

I never not liked YOUR stuff.

CATFISH

Oh. Not for my money.

BETHANY

Ha! You're making more money, but your renovations to this building & stuff have you just about in the red, in terms of your cash in hand. You've lost your pile.

CATFISH

Oh. I haven't checked the overall--

BETHANY

But that happens in business. Tighten the reins for a while, you'll make it back I'm sure.

CATFISH

Mm. I could see you thriving at Fabio's. The food over there though--

BETHANY

Sky-high prices for unsatisfying Northern Italian cuisine--

CATFISH

You got it. Those heavy white sauces. Ygch.

BETHANY

People love that stuff. The chef will make me red sauce pasta special.

CATFISH

Are you romantically involved with Chef Red Sauce?

BETHANY

I'm gonna--

CATFISH

I didn't mean it! Just kidding!

BETHANY

Man!

CATFISH

I want you to go there, do well, work hard and have a good time. Mangia!

BETHANY

Alright I will.

They kiss.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Keep the Jenny Mill Inn?

CATFISH

...Yeah.

BETHANY

And let yourself perform like you used to.

CATFISH

I'm dismantling The Exhumed.

BETHANY

Good. Never exhume. You make an ex out of you and me.

CATFISH

You're on a comedy tear here. How long have you been saving that gem?

BETHANY

That band was not my favorite style for you.

CATFISH

I see. If you're heading over there to accept that position, which you should do sooner rather than later, you'll have to change again.

Catfish retrieves a new gown from a chair. Black, multicolor print?

BETHANY

Catfish that is beautiful!

CATFISH

If you need to leave me, or stay with me -- this is you. Too.

BETHANY

Ohmigosh. That design is cool.

CATFISH

Thank you for trying this new direction.

BETHANY

I'll have to go try this on now.

CATFISH

Can't you change into it right here?

BETHANY

The staff is due in.

CATFISH

So?

BETHANY

You're crazy. Thank you so much.

She shows dress on her, kisses him, exits.

CATFISH
My pleasure.

He cleans seance table.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
"Jenny..." (Sung)

Chains rattle.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
Hm.

Steps to bar, hits a recorder.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
Stop, chains. Thank you. "Jenny..."

Wind & trees rustle. Bethany emerges in gown.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
Ooo... You...

Bethany kisses Catfish.

BETHANY
You're alright with me working there?

CATFISH
I am. And I'm your guy.

BETHANY
You are. Wish me luck!

CATFISH
Luck! See you...tonight.

BETHANY
Yup!

Bethany exits.

SCENE 11

CONTINUES IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

CATFISH
(Sings) "Jenny..."

He cleans. Fist-rammed door visible. Oak door creaks.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
Jenny? Mel?

Sound of steps.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
Mel, I think we gotta order some more
Jagermeister for--

Lindstrom enters.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
Halloween.

LINDSTROM
Fish.

CATFISH
Hi Dan.

LINDSTROM
Good to see you.

CATFISH
Good to see you too.

LINDSTROM
Saw Bethany out there, looking like a vision.

CATFISH
Try not to seduce her if you don't mind.

LINDSTROM
(Breath intake, then:)
I...really thought you wanted me to take Nubia
off your hands.

CATFISH
NOT QUITE!

Pause.

CATFISH (CONT'D)
(Slowly) Do you think I pushed her away?

LINDSTROM
Yeah.

CATFISH
Why?

LINDSTROM
I don't know man. I'm not your shrink. You lost
your Dad, a couple friends not long after...

CATFISH

Maybe I didn't think she could really be into me. I thought it was the club, or -- I don't know, I thought maybe everyone was a bunch of leeches and vultures circling me.

LINDSTROM

Are you serious? Like me?

CATFISH

Well maybe not that so much. I thought I didn't have enough something to hold her, and it turns out I didn't.

LINDSTROM

I don't know about that. Hats off to you for trying to figure it out.

CATFISH

(Imitates song)

"AND I BLAME YOU!" ...Not. I don't blame you.

LINDSTROM

You should blame me, a little.

CATFISH

You make a good couple.

LINDSTROM

I appreciate you laying off the lawsuit.

CATFISH

My pleasure. Yeah, it was stupid, we worked it out. In lieu of the remaining legal fees, I'm letting Dave Scheer play here. Sea songs.

LINDSTROM

Ah. Well you got the pool there. You haven't fixed the door.

CATFISH

It shall not be moved. It's part of my museum. I got this one too.

Catfish shows door he broke.

LINDSTROM

(Laughs) Cool. Similar smashes.

CATFISH

I...probably owe you an apology. Several. And I do apologize. Several times.

LINDSTROM

Thanks. I'm just glad to see you keeping the club going strong, taking care of yourself.

CATFISH

Everything okay at the Iron Grape Wine Bar?

LINDSTROM

Sure.

CATFISH

Iron Tomato Festival comin up?

LINDSTROM

Yup.

CATFISH

A lot of iron.

LINDSTROM

Steeped in the Jersey Hills.

CATFISH

Iron men with iron wills.

LINDSTROM

Yessir. Yeah, everything's cool.

CATFISH

That is great.

LINDSTROM

You're welcomed to play at Iron Tomato.

CATFISH

Aw thanks. I am really busy here--

LINDSTROM

Yeah I figured.

CATFISH

And with Bethany elsewhere I...will be pretty swamped.

LINDSTROM

You think you'll be alright? Stress-wise?

CATFISH

Yeah. Oh yeah. Bethany, is still there.

LINDSTROM

It's great that you've got that support.

CATFISH

...Would you be at all interested, in?

LINDSTROM

This old lady? Uh, Fish... I liked working with you, much of the time.

CATFISH

All the marbles for the one dream that matters.

LINDSTROM

Shut up. Oh, man -- she's no longer falling apart.

CATFISH

Yeah I spent too much money.

LINDSTROM

I'm sure you did. I-- I would need some time...

CATFISH

Sure. The window is open. The door is open. The recycling program is going gangbusters.

LINDSTROM

Thank goodness.

CATFISH

The door is so open I think I'll put the two doors we smashed as the entrance to the place.

LINDSTROM

One of the things about doors is that they provide a solid barrier to the elements. Maybe somewhere inside & inconsequential--

CATFISH

Like the restrooms--

LINDSTROM

Exactly. ...Fish it's not you so much as Jenny up there, she seems to be beckoning me...

CATFISH

It's a sculpture Dan. Are you sure **you've** got it all together?

LINDSTROM

I wonder...maybe I could look in on you once in a while over here, and see if you can--

CATFISH

Deal?

LINDSTROM

With my eccentricities, and we can book some of the people we like, and get the death threats to ease up.

CATFISH

Cool. (Steps to bar) Absinthe?

LINDSTROM
Lucero. Let's drink.

They drink.

LINDSTROM (CONT'D)
Yow!

CATFISH
I wish I could invite Nubia, but I'm just not ready.

LINDSTROM
Hey I understand.

CATFISH
In fact, this is my problem I know, but I will not speak to her except through you. It's just-- the way it has to be. For now.

LINDSTROM
Wha--? Uh, alright, whatever works for you.

CATFISH
Thanks man.

They drink. Fade.

SCENE 12

JENNY JUMP STATE FOREST, JENNY JUMP.

Nubia strolls. Wind, trees rustle.
She looks over precipice.

NUBIA
Hey Jenny...

Lights up on Catfish, near her.

CATFISH
So...

NUBIA
Here we are. We finally made it to Jenny Jump State Forest.

CATFISH
Yeah...

NUBIA
After you sing a song about me dancing on your grave.

(MORE)

NUBIA (CONT'D)

(She turns on him, yells) After I, change my WHOLE LIFE FOR YOU and you, get weird, like you don't really want me or maybe you do or you did, but you push me away then you insult me, DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THAT HURT ME??!! Do you have any idea?? Oh, why am I here? (Back to herself)

CATFISH

...I really really messed up.

NUBIA

You sure did. You absolutely did. I loved you.

CATFISH

...Thanks for comin up here.

NUBIA

Yeah, was it such a good idea? I don't know.

CATFISH

I...brought you together with Danny...

NUBIA

I don't understand you.

CATFISH

I'm all mixed up. But I know he's probably better for you than I am.

NUBIA

That's not the point. And not for you to say.

CATFISH

Oh.

NUBIA

I gotta--

CATFISH

I am begging you guys not to hate me.

NUBIA

We don't hate you. We love you. But--

CATFISH

If you, the two of you, would visit the club, or even participate there when it's convenient or fun for you, I wouldn't even need to be there. I mean you are welcomed any time at just about any level of involvement--

NUBIA

I'm going to go in there and run the Jenny Mill Inn with you not there? And that's supposed to be fun? Catfish--

CATFISH

Well I would be so happy if you showed up, is all I'm saying. You and Dan. All very safe. You know what I mean?

NUBIA

I think so.

CATFISH

Danny and I communicated, and he is open to that.

NUBIA

I'm not surprised. ...If Dan goes, I'm fine with visiting. As long as you are alright.

CATFISH

Cool. Like Fleetwood Mac--

NUBIA

We're NOT Fleetwood Mac--

CATFISH

Oh. ...Uh, one thing, I may not be able to speak verbally to Dan in person -- except through you, for a while. It's a strange quirk I sometimes have after a falling-out. I'm sorry to be neurotic, but that's how it, might have to be.

NUBIA

Uh...no, no problem. We love you. I'm glad Danny's going to be back & try to work with you -- it takes time.

CATFISH

And, you don't need to worry about me. I'm good with Bethany, and everything is cool and under control. I know that Brazilians are very passionate and sensual people--

NUBIA

Be quiet! I'm not ready to joke like that Fish. I'm sorry.

Pause. He acknowledges.

CATFISH

(Softly) Again, I'm sorry I hurt you. (Pause) I have an idea for a song--

NUBIA

Let's get going before I jump.

CATFISH

Yeah good idea.

They start back.

CATFISH (CONT'D)

Did you know that the Lenni Lenape made stone arrows in the same serrated style as the Falstaff people of neolithic New Mexico? That means the Lenape must have been way more advanced than they originally thought.

NUBIA

No, I can't say I knew that. You seemed more upset about Danny than me.

CATFISH

Not true. If he was a better kisser than you it would be close--

NUBIA

Ah-- (Raises her hand "Stop")

CATFISH

It must have taken the arrow maker, the fletcher we call them today, a dog's age to make one arrow.

NUBIA

People work hard.

SCENE 13

IN THE JENNY MILL INN.

Catfish seated with paperwork. Lindstrom enters from one side, Nubia from the other, approach him, stop, speak simultaneously, realize quickly and continue.

LINDSTROM

Nubia -- thinks -- you should get rid of the purple & yellow lights and put current holiday colors on the windows instead.

NUBIA

Danny -- was able -- to talk to Bethany and convince her that he's not the devil and she'll deal with him for you.

Catfish turns, bunches his shoulders.

CATFISH

Hey guys. How ya doin?

NUBIA / LINDSTROM

VERY FUNNY!

CATFISH

Hey I'm sorry, I was gonna straighten it out--

LINDSTROM
NO PROBLEM!

He gestures to Nubia, as one:

NUBIA / LINDSTROM
YOU, LOOK, HOT. MAYBE, YOU SHOULD TAKE A DIP,
IN, THE, POOL.

They take Catfish in his chair.

CATFISH
No!

NUBIA / LINDSTROM
JUMP!

They toss Catfish offstage. Pool splash.

CATFISH
Augghhh!

Bethany enters. Catfish emerges soaked.

BETHANY
You look good. Don't pick up the electric.
Stick to that acoustic roots music for the time being.

CATFISH
Thanks.

Bethany gets towel, dries Catfish. Lindstrom produces a large tomato, gives it to Catfish.

LINDSTROM
Here. Get me back. You can throw this at me.

Fish taps it, makes solid sound.

CATFISH
Iron.

He makes like he'll throw it at Lindstrom, tosses it into the audience. Lights up on Jenny above the bar, then Stephanie, Soul Face & band onstage.

STEPHANIE
We're playing tonight. Try to dance to this, gang.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

"THE PARTY CAN START"

I HEAR THERE'S A GET-TOGETHER
I'M HERE - THE PARTY CAN START
THIS AIN'T THE MUSEUM OF ART
ME YOU, PARTY START
I'M HERE - THE PARTY CAN START

I'VE ENTERED THE BUILDING, I'VE ENTERED THE ROOM
THIS IS A PARTY, NOT A TOMB
YOU KNOW YOU GUYS ARE REALLY SOMETHIN
STANDIN AROUND, DOIN NOTHIN
GET YOUR BODY, ALL AROUND THE SPACE
THERE'LL BE TIME LATER, FOR SUCKIN FACE

I HEAR THERE'S A GET-TOGETHER
I'M HERE - THE PARTY CAN START
THIS AIN'T THE MUSEUM OF ART
ME YOU, PARTY START
I'M HERE - THE PARTY CAN START

YOU BREAK IT DOWN NOW, AND LOOSEN IT UP
I DON'T CARE IF YOUR RHYTHM SUCKS
FORGET ABOUT TRYIN TO SCORE TONIGHT
FEEL THE MUSIC AND LIVE YOUR LIFE
THE DEEJAY, HAS TO DANCE ALONE
BEFORE THE MAID OF HONOR JUMPS HIS BONES

I HEAR THERE'S A GET-TOGETHER
I'M HERE - THE PARTY CAN START
THIS AIN'T THE MUSEUM OF ART
ME YOU, PARTY START
I'M HERE - THE PARTY CAN START

THE PARTY CAN START! YOU'RE HERE, NOW WE CAN START!
ME-YOU, PARTY START!

AT THE JENNY MILL INN

THE END