



# RINK RAT

by

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Based on the short film  
"REUBEN THE ROLLER ROO"  
written by the same guys

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INT. PRISON - HALLWAY - DAY

We move through a cold CORRECTIONAL FACILITY CORRIDOR toward a room where unseen COMMOTION grows louder and louder.

INT. PRISON - MESS HALL

Tough-as-nails INMATES sit at tables, POUNDING their meaty fists into the tables and CLANGING metal trays.

Their attention is on a convict standing at the front of the room, HOWIE CHASE (40s). He's unassuming and forgettable, with the body of a middle-aged banker or accountant--not one of a criminal who's spent nearly a decade on the inside.

Despite his soft, prosaic appearance, he holds court like a king, with a glint in his eye that'd give hope to a dead man.

A SMALL BIRD is perched on one of his hands and in the other, a HANDKERCHIEF. He drapes it over the bird.

The Inmates' chants pick up in rhythm.

INMATES

Hoo! Ha! Hoo! Ha!

Howie holds his free hand up. The Inmates' chants stop and they're completely frozen in anticipation.

Howie waits, relishes the pause.

HOWIE

Three...two...one!

He rips off the handkerchief and the bird has magically transformed into a size ten SANDAL.

The crowd lets out a collective GASP.

Howie approaches an INMATE in the front row.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Ernesto, is this your flip-flop?

Ernesto looks down at his disgusting feet, one of them is bare. He NODS in disbelief as Howie hands him the sandal.

The other Inmates EXPLODE into UPROARIOUS, APE SHIT APPLAUSE.

Howie smiles confidently and takes a bow.

INT. PRISON - HALLWAY

Howie struts down the corridor surrounded by other inmates patting him on the back and singing his praises.

A SCOWLING INMATE does not participate in the fanfare. He has a cold stare as he approaches Howie.

SCOWLING INMATE  
What kind of witchcraft was that,  
friend?

HOWIE  
It's called an illusion.

SCOWLING INMATE  
I say it's the devil's work.

A gigantic inmate, STAB JOHNSON, steps in-between Howie and the Scowling Inmate with a grunt.

HOWIE  
Sorry you didn't like it. I'm Howie  
Chase and this is my friend, Stab  
Johnson-- what was your name again?

The Scowling Inmate... scowls.

HOWIE (CONT'D)  
...okay, well, it was just innocent  
entertainment. See you around.

Howie starts to turn, but--

SCOWLING INMATE  
Horsefeathers! That power only  
comes from a man who's made a  
bargain with Satan himself. The  
Lord frowns upon you and I must rid  
thee of this plane!

The Scowling Inmate pulls out a SHANK. He swings it at Howie, but Stab grabs his arm and SNAPS it in two. The Scowling Inmate releases a HOWL.

Stab reaches into his prison garb and reveals a LARGE SHANK and STABS the Scowling Inmate in the neck repeatedly.

STAB JOHNSON  
(with each stab)  
Stab! Stab! Stab! Stab! Stab!

Blood SPRAYS out of the Scowling Inmate's neck, drenching Stab and showering everyone within ten feet. It's a good old-fashioned BLOOD TSUNAMI.

Everyone scatters as PRISON GUARDS descend on the scene and beat the shit out of Stab and Scowling Inmate with BATONS.

Howie tries to retreat from the chaos but is unexpectedly CRACKED IN THE HEAD.

CUT TO BLACK.

Several moments of nothing as we hear ping-pongy notes of a COMMERCIAL JINGLE grow louder and we FADE IN on a...

TV SCREEN

The jingle is coming from a cheesy commercial for HIGH ROLLERS ROLLER SKATING RINK. It's grainy. 1970s amateurish production value with shitty graphics.

The footage includes people skating on an expansive wooden rink floor... birthday parties... shots of unhealthy food... people playing pinball... a DJ spinning records... and a person dressed in an elaborate WIZARD COSTUME skating around and dancing with CHILDREN.

It PAUSES on a frame of the Wizard as we bounce out to...

INT. PRISON - INFIRMARY - DAY

Howie, head bandaged, is shackled to a hospital bed.

HOWIE

Well, thanks so much for the trip down memory lane, assholes. Still don't understand what you want.

Across the room stand TWO PEOPLE on either side of a TV affixed to the wall. The woman, IRIS FISCHER, has total attorney vibes. The man, EDUARDO "EDDIE" DIAZ (mid-30s) is well-groomed, hot, stinks of law enforcement.

DIAZ

The same thing we've always wanted. Your cooperation with our ongoing investigation into your old boss and pal, Jack Ripley.

HOWIE

Told you before, I'm not a rat.

DIAZ

Better to be a rat than dead, no?  
How many more close calls do you  
think you can escape in here?

HOWIE

Please. I'm safe as a sardine.

IRIS FISCHER

It's different this time. You help  
us get what we need, the judge will  
commute the rest of your sentence.

She holds up an official looking document.

IRIS FISCHER (CONT'D)

Agent Diaz has already received  
approval to employ you as an  
informant with the federal  
government.

HOWIE

I have two years, three months, and  
five days left. What the fuck makes  
you think I'd have any desire to be  
your stool pigeon at this point?

Diaz pulls a SMALL ENVELOPE from his jacket.

DIAZ

This arrived for you the other day.

Howie warily takes it and removes a CARD.

On the front is a photo of a BLONDE WOMAN (20) and a  
REDHEADED MAN (20s), and the words "You're Invited!"

Howie flips the card open:

"Join us for the wedding celebration of Sandra Diane Chase  
and Kenneth Gail Halvorsen. October 10, 1981 at 3:30pm."

A realization hits Howie hard. He shifts, dizzily.

IRIS FISCHER

Congratulations.

HOWIE

H--how come I'm not hearing about  
this until now? And who is...

(looks at card)

Kenneth Halvorsen?

DIAZ

Who knows and who cares. The headline is you're invited to your daughter's wedding even after all the shit you've put her through. The question is...do you want to attend?

HOWIE

Of course I want to attend!

DIAZ

Can't from in here!

HOWIE

(to Iris)

Wow, this guy is good.

DIAZ

Cut the shit and hear me out. We're gonna release you, temporarily, in order to get your old job back at High Rollers so you can get us intel on Jack's drug supplier. That means you'll be able to attend Sandy's wedding, the reception, and every anniversary party from here until you're deep-sixed

HOWIE

You must be crazy thinking Jack would trust me after all this time.

DIAZ

You're a magician. Make him believe.

Howie studies the wedding invite for a long beat.

HOWIE

Naw. Nope. This heart-strings shit ain't gonna work. I am perfectly content riding out my time.

DIAZ

So you'd rather rot in here instead of getting a head start on patching things up with your daughter and rebuilding your fucking life?

Howie shrugs with a shit-eating grin.

HOWIE

Wish I could help.

DIAZ  
Truly pathetic.

Diaz and Fischer leave the room shaking their heads.

Once gone, Howie's grin turns somber as he stares at the wedding invite.

INT. PRISON - HOWIE'S CELL - NIGHT

Howie sits on his bed digging through a SHOEBOX of keepsakes.

He flips through old POLAROIDs before coming to one of his daughter, Sandy. She's wearing a birthday hat and holding a cake that says: "HAPPY 13TH BIRTHDAY SANDY!!"

From the top of the bunk, a face peeks over. It's Ernesto from the mess hall.

ERNESTO  
Hey, Howie. You seem like you have something on your mind.

HOWIE  
I'm just... worried I made a mistake, Ernesto.

ERNESTO  
You are in prison.

HOWIE  
Right.

ERNESTO  
You want to talk about it?

HOWIE  
No.

ERNESTO  
Why not do, like, a little confession? You know how much that helps me.

HOWIE  
I'm not Catholic.

ERNESTO  
That doesn't matter.

HOWIE  
I have a better idea. You got any more of those Frisco speedballs?

ERNESTO

Really?

Howie nods. Ernesto thinks, then breaks.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

I'll check.

Ernesto hops off his bunk and walks over to the disgusting TOILET in the room. He drops his pants and squats.

Howie looks back at the photo, thinks.

OFF SCREEN we can hear Ernesto straining and grunting, until:

ERNESTO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Bingo!

INT. PRISON - HOWIE'S CELL - NIGHT

Howie tightens a piece of torn bedsheet around his arm and SHOOTs UP with a suspect needle.

He immediately collapses onto the bed with a grin on his face and then a BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT...

EXT. CANAL PARK - DAY - DRUG INDUCED FEVER DREAM

...brings him to a lakeside park. Howie's on his back, in his prison jumpsuit, looking up to the blue sky.

Then, clouds form and turn DARK. Waves crash below.

Howie notices a flicker in the clouded sky. The flicker turns into an 8MM FILM PROJECTION MONTAGE beginning with Howie and his wife, VICKY COLLINS, as new parents happily at a cafe with BABY SANDY in a carriage next to them.

The footage rolls on through milestones in Sandy's life... EARLY BIRTHDAY PARTIES...FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL...YOUTH SPORTS...LEARNING TO DRIVE...but only Vicky is there for her.

Intercut are scenes of Howie's life of crime and deprivation...DEALING DRUGS...DOING DRUGS...DRINKING HEAVILY...BAR FIGHTS...STEALING STUFF...SHAKING PEOPLE DOWN FOR MONEY...GETTING ARRESTED.

And then we're outside a CHURCH looking through a window. Inside, a huge ceremony. Sandy stands at the altar next to red-headed KENNETH HALVORSEN.



Howie becomes ENRAGED at the sight and his anger launches him from the ground, and into the sky, soaring INTO the 8MM projection, breaking through the images and into--

EXT. SKY - DAY - DRUG INDUCED FEVER DREAM

--the OPEN SKY. His momentum hits a peak and he starts falling toward the open water below.

He screams as it approaches and then--

INT. PRISON - HOWIE'S CELL - MORNING

--vomit SPLASHES into the cell toilet.

Howie grips the toilet bowl and heaves some more into it. He falls onto his back, sweating. Ernesto comes to his side.

ERNESTO

Good stuff?

HOWIE

I'm dead.

ERNESTO

Is there anything else I can do to help?

Howie struggles to get to his feet.

HOWIE

I love you Ernesto, but you can't help me do what needs to be done.

He pulls out the Wedding Invite and stares at it.

CUT TO:

**TITLE CARD: "RINK RAT"**

EXT. PRISON - DAY

A massive fortress surrounded by dense forest.

SUPER: "DULUTH, MINNESOTA. 1981."

Howie steps into the sun. He's holding a bag of personal items and is escorted by a GUARD.

Howie surveys the VISITOR PARKING LOT. It's empty.

GUARD  
You got a ride?

HOWIE  
I thought I did.

GUARD  
Bus stop's five miles that way.

HOWIE  
Five miles?! Are you kidding me?

GUARD  
Nope. Good news is that you'll get there faster if you stop bitching.

The Guard waddles back inside as Howie starts walking.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The sun's high. It beats down on Howie as he walks along the edge of the road. Every so often a car whizzes by.

He holds his hand up to the sun, blocks the light from pounding down on him.

He's sweating like a pig. The fatigue is getting to him.

EXT. HIGHWAY BUS STOP - DAY

Howie sits on a bench. He digs through his bag and finds a pack of CIGARETTES and a book of MATCHES.

He notices there's only ONE MATCH left.

He swipes it and quickly raises it to the cig in his mouth, but it BLOWS OUT before he can light it.

EXT. HIGHWAY BUS STOP - DAY

Later. Howie lays on the bench, staring up at the blue sky.

A dijon colored 1979 FORD BRONCO comes squealing to a halt.

A handsome YOUNG GUY (21) leans out of the window.

YOUNG GUY  
Howie?

Howie stands.

YOUNG GUY (CONT'D)

I'm Gary. Jack got your message. He wanted to be here himself, but, well, just setting eyes on a prison sends him into a tizzy.

Gary pushes the passenger door open.

GARY

Hop in.

INT/EXT. BRONCO - DAY

Howie and Gary cruise along a highway surrounded by trees.

HOWIE

You have any water in here?

GARY

No, but I do have piping hot coffee.

HOWIE

It's way too hot for coffee.

GARY

Fair enough. Where can I drop you?

HOWIE

Take me to Jack, please.

GARY

You know, unfortunately, Jack is busy with today being Tuesday and--

HOWIE

--kids skate free day.

GARY

That's right! Of course you'd know.  
(beat)

Anyway, you're probably familiar with all the blood, sweat, and tears that goes into dealing with all those rugrats. But don't worry. I'll do my best to see if Jack can squeeze you in for a lil' pow-wow when we arrive.

He flashes a buzzy smile. Howie can't match his enthusiasm.

INT. HIGH ROLLERS ROLLER SKATING RINK - DAY

CLOSE ON a series of FRAMED PHOTOS on the wall. Various roller-skating events, people, and competitions.

JACK (O.S.)

Yeah, it was almost twenty years ago now. I had just finished rehabilitating my knee after blowing it out during the third annual Reno Roll-Off.

We settle on a photo of a YOUNG MAN in a moment of glory with his arms outstretched holding a large trophy...

INT. RINK FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

MATCH CUT to an older version of the Young Man in the photo, JACK RIPLEY (50s). He stands at the center of a quiet, dimly lit ROLLER RINK FLOOR, addressing an offscreen audience.

JACK

It was a dark time. My career was over. My wife left me. Even my thirty-year-old African Parrot, Captain Flint, died. As far as I was concerned, my life was coming to an abrupt end and I became sold on the idea of wrapping my lips tightly around the barrel of a Remington semi-automatic and pulling the trigger to get that sweet release. But then, by the glory grace of God, I got helplessly hooked on painkillers and personally saw the power that mind altering substances could have over people. It was incredible.

(beat)

When I finally went broke and became completely indebted to my dealer, Handsome Justin, he did something for me I will never forget. He could've broken my legs or cut my throat, but no! He offered me the opportunity of a lifetime.

(beat)

He had just acquired this very roller rink, which was condemned at the time, and asked me, Jack Ripley, to open it up and make it profitable for him.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

He said he liked me. Liked the cut of my jib and believed that I could be a dynamite businessman, maybe one day dine with the elites.

(beat)

Fast forward to today and, sure enough, he was right. I ran a tight ship, paid back what I owed, and then inherited it from Handsome Justin after he was shot and killed in Sturgis having been mistaken for a politician who was part of a radical drag troupe.

CUT TO:

A WIDE SHOT revealing that Jack's been telling this story to a bunch of YOUNG KIDS.

JACK (CONT'D)

And THAT, kiddos, is the answer to how I got this place. Any more questions?

They're dumbstruck.

Two roller rink employees, EMMETT (18) and TOBI (16), stand off to the side, hands covering their embarrassed faces.

JACK (CONT'D)

No? Alrighty, back to work for me and back to skating for you. Remember, don't take drugs and stay in school. I'll let Emmett and Tobi take it from here. Have fun!

Emmett and Tobi CLAP for Jack and try to get the kids to do the same. Jack jogs away to a smattering of applause.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS ROLLER SKATING RINK - PARKING LOT - DAY

WIDE ON a warehouse-sized building that's seen better days. It looks more like a factory than a kick-ass roller rink.

Amongst the dozen or so parked cars stands a tall pole with a sign at the top that reads: "HIGH ROLLERS."

The Bronco rumbles into the lot and parks near the entrance.

INT. HIGH ROLLERS - LOBBY

DISCO MUSIC thumps as Gary leads Howie into the building.

GARY

Hang here for a minute and I'll see  
if Jack's available.

He bounds away.

Howie surveys the joint. The dancing lights. The carpeted  
floors. That stale smell. A grin stretches across his face.

ROSE (O.S.)

Skater or spectator?

He turns to find a woman, ROSE (30s/40s), standing behind the  
TICKET COUNTER. She's cool. Confident. Nihilistic. She gives  
him a friendly smile, but there's authority behind her eyes.

ROSE (CONT'D)

*Kids* skate free. Not grandparents.

HOWIE

Um, no. I'm not...old. Not a  
grandparent--

ROSE

Oh! Sorry. With the way the light  
was bouncing off your head your  
hair looked gray.

Howie self-consciously runs his fingers through his hair.

ROSE (CONT'D)

So...are you homeless then? 'Cause  
if you are you have to leave.

HOWIE

No, I'm here to chat with Jack.  
(proudly)  
We go back a long time. I was  
actually *the Roller Wizard*.

ROSE

The roller what?

Howie points to the wall of photos behind her.

CLOSE ON a photo of a KIDS' BIRTHDAY PARTY. Among them stands  
HOWIE on skates, dressed in a ROBE and POINTY HAT.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Oh, right. The *Roller Wizard*. Well,  
welcome back. I'm Rose.

HOWIE

I'm Howie. And what do you do here?

ROSE

I run the ticket office. The event calendar. The financial records. The phones and most of the staff. Basically, anything Jack finds uninteresting.

HOWIE

Sounds like much hasn't changed after eight years.

ROSE

Eight years? What, were you in prison or something?

Howie doesn't say anything.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Oh shit, I'm sorry. I was trying to make a dumb joke.

HOWIE

You got a light by chance?

ROSE

Uh, yeah, somewhere around here...

Rose searches the drawers under the counter. She hands Howie a ZIPPO LIGHTER with a the HIGH ROLLERS LOGO on it.

He lights up and takes a FAT DRAG, relaxes immediately. He tries to hand the lighter back.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Consider it a welcome back gift.

HOWIE

Okay. Thank you.

ROSE

And an apology for the prison joke.

HOWIE

It was probably the best thing that could've happened to me.

Gary, now on ROLLER SKATES, cruises up.

GARY

Jack will see you now. Follow me.

He skates off.

Howie turns to Rose and nods. She waves. He hustles off.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - DAY

Gary leads Howie into a back office. Jack hops up from a cluttered desk.

JACK  
Fuck me running!

He bounds toward Howie.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Howie Chase! As I live and breathe.  
Get over here and give me a hug,  
you silly sack of shit!

Howie and Jack embrace in the middle of an office that's full of roller skates, stuffed toys, stickers, buttons, etc.

HOWIE  
It's good to see you, Jack.

JACK  
You too. Make yourself comfortable.

Jack sits at his desk while Howie looks for a chair.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Christ, Gare. Will you *please* get  
Howie something to sit on?

Gary unearths a stool buried under a pile of merchandise and drops it in front of Howie who sits.

JACK (CONT'D)  
I trust Gare has been taking care  
of you thus far. He get you some of  
that--  
(very offensive accent)  
NACHOS GRRR-ON-DAY?!

GARY  
Not yet, Jack.

JACK  
What the fuck? It's a new menu item  
and it's been selling like hot  
cakes. No one up here is familiar  
with authentic *Meh-he-caan* cuisine.  
Blows their fucking minds. Nimrods  
will pay five, six bucks for that.  
You gotta try 'em.

He grabs a PHONE on his desk. Hits a button.



JACK (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
It's me. Bring back a couple orders  
of nachos grande. On the hop.

He hangs up.

GARY  
(to Howie)  
You're gonna love it.

JACK  
Well, well. What a surprise it was  
to get a message that you were  
coming home so soon.

HOWIE  
It was a surprise to me too.  
Apparently, the prosecuting team  
who tried my case...

Jack immediately tenses up.

HOWIE (CONT'D)  
...got caught tampering with a  
different witness and so the judge  
had to *retroactively* declare a  
mistrial...

Gary gets nervous, tries to intervene.

GARY  
Howie--

HOWIE  
...and I want you to know that the  
entire time I was in prison...

Jack covers his ears with his hands.

HOWIE (CONT'D)  
...I never mentioned anything about  
High Rollers or--

GARY  
Howie, stop!

Howie shuts up. Jack releases his hands from his ears.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Please don't talk about prison or  
the legal system around Jack.  
(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

Hearing about it makes him think about it and thinking about it makes him nervous about it.

HOWIE

Yeah, okay.

JACK

Now that *that's* settled, what do you want? You're here 'cause you want something, right?

HOWIE

I gotta start getting my life back together...so I could use a job and a place to stay.

JACK

Well... you're welcome to sleep here until you get on your feet, but in terms of work, we're fully staffed for the summer.

HOWIE

What about the Roller Wizard? I can dust off the hat and robes and bring him back. I got a bunch of new magic tricks.

Jack and Gary share a glance.

JACK

The Roller Wizard is...retired. We got a new entertainment act that everyone loves.

HOWIE

Okay, what about the Rental counter? Or the snack bar?

JACK

Locked down.

HOWIE

Custodian?

JACK

Pffft, yeah right.

GARY

Actually, Jack, we have been getting complaints about the unsightliness of the restrooms.

JACK

This is the first I've heard of it!

GARY

It's a fairly new problem. I think it's because of the nachos grande. I bet Howie could be a big help to us in that department.

JACK

Well, there we go. You think you can handle that?

Howie shrugs, "sure."

JACK (CONT'D)

Welcome back to High Rollers!

INT/EXT. CAR - DAY

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD we're cruising down a street inside a '69 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL.

JAZZ music plays as HANDS drum the steering wheel.

REVERSE reveals AGENT DIAZ in the drivers seat. He takes a swig from a SODA CAN and tosses it carelessly out the WINDOW.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Lincoln parks alongside a curb.

Diaz gets out and starts marching down the street.

We track with him the entire way as he puts on a REFLECTIVE SAFETY VEST, LEATHER TOOL BELT, and HARDHAT.

At the end of the street he hops a fence and disappears in the backyard of a house.

EXT. ADJACENT RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Diaz approaches a WHITE VAN parked on the side of the road.

He raps on the door and is let in.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - CONTINUOUS

Diaz joins two other FBI AGENTS jammed inside. Both dressed as utility workers. One surveys out of a tinted side window with binoculars.

DIAZ  
Status?

An overworked schlub, THOMPSON (30s), glances at Diaz.

THOMPSON  
He's been in there two, three hours now. Must be going well.

DIAZ  
Or he's dead. But I love your optimism, Thompson.

THOMPSON  
Really?

DIAZ  
Fuck off.

Diaz snatches the binoculars out of his hands and looks.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - ENTRANCE

BINOCULAR POV: The exterior of High Rollers. It's busier now. Cars park and groups of people make their way INSIDE.

DIAZ (O.S.)  
Until we get a bug in there, there's no telling what sort of shit he's up to.

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM

CLOSE ON a truly appalling TOILET covered in a ton of shit from many different human beings.

Howie gags as he cleans.

Behind him, two TEENS roll in and use the URINALS. They occasionally miss and hit the floor.

HOWIE  
Hey, I just cleaned over there.

TEEN 2  
Where? Over here?

Teen 2 pisses directly on the tile.

TEEN 1

Or was it over here?

Howie watches in disgust as Teen 1 also sprays the floor.

The Teens laugh as they zip up and speed out of the restroom.

HOWIE

Didn't even wash their hands.

INT. RINK FLOOR

Music blasts. The rink is crowded with skaters.

INT. RENTAL COUNTER

Howie sweeps up popcorn nearby.

The young employee, Emmett, assists CUSTOMERS with their skate rentals and returns.

A HIPPIE approaches and nonchalantly drops CASH on the countertop.

Howie notices and starts to observe harder.

Emmett hands the Hippie a pair of SKATES. The Hippie dumps one of the skates upside down and a BAG of marijuana drops out. He smiles as he stuffs it back inside and scurries away.

Howie takes note as another CUSTOMER approaches and goes through the same motions.

INT. RINK FLOOR - NIGHT

Closing time. The building is quiet and dimly lit.

The only sound comes from a humming FLOOR SCRUBBER, that Howie pushes across the rink polishing the wood surface.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Gary and Howie stand at the main entrance.

GARY

Good work tonight. I think you're gonna fit right in.

HOWIE

Thanks, Gary. Say, question for you. I've been out of the loop so long. Where is Jack getting our supply these days? We used to get it from an old cajun who moved it up on the Mississippi from the Gulf. Can't recall his name, but I think he--

GARY

Supply of what?

Howie squints. Is Gary being coy?

HOWIE

You know, our supply of...

He mimes smoking a joint.

GARY

Cigarettes? We don't sell cigarettes. You have to go round Spiffy's for those.

HOWIE

No, not smokes. I'm talking about--

GARY

See you bright and early, Howie.

Gary exits and closes the doors behind him.

KEYS jingle from the other side, locking Howie in.

INT. SNACK BAR - NIGHT

All alone in the building, Howie rummages around the kitchen of the snack bar looking for something to eat.

He finds a MINI FROZEN PIZZA in the freezer and tosses it in a TOASTER OVER.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Howie munches on a slice of PIZZA as he snoops around Jack's office. He flips through papers, opens desk drawers...

He tugs on one particular drawer that's locked tight.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - NIGHT

Howie stands over an old COT in a cramped room. It looks like someone was murdered on it. Or gave birth. Maybe both?

HOWIE

I've slept on worse.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - LATER

Howie tosses and turns, trying to get to sleep.

He pulls out the WEDDING INVITE and stares at it longingly.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - SHED - DAY

Gary leads Howie to a large, STORAGE SHED, standing in the grass about fifty yards out back. It's painted the same colors as the main building, resembling a miniature duplicate. There's even a little High Rollers sign.

HOWIE

This is new.

GARY

Jack built it a couple years ago when things really started to boom.

He pulls out a large KEY RING and unlocks the doors.

GARY (CONT'D)

Inside you'll find what you need for outdoor maintenance. And some of the inside stuff too. Pinball machines, skate racks, etcetera.

They walk in.

INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

Overhead fluorescents pop on.

Howie surveys. Ladders, tools, a JOHN DEERE RIDING LAWN MOWER. Cans of gasoline and oil. In the back amongst ARCADE GAMES and PINBALL MACHINES, he spies a PADLOCKED DOOR.

Howie inspects the door from afar until...

GARY (O.S.)

Make sure to check the fluid levels before you fire it up.

Howie turns to him, nods.

HOWIE

Do I get my own set of keys? So I  
can put it back?

GARY

(holds key ring up)  
Only set are these. Let me know  
when you're done.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - DAY

The sun blasts Howie as he rides around mowing the grounds.

INT. SNACK BAR

Howie, with a fresh sunburn, mops the floor as Tobi rushes around him, assisting CUSTOMERS with refreshments.

He spots a BIRTHDAY PARTY happening across the room. It's a bunch of ADULTS all wearing party hats. No kids in sight.

Jack approaches and greets a well dressed BEARDED MAN.

Howie watches from afar, trying to make out what's going on.

The Bearded Man hands Jack an envelope. Jack peeks inside and lights up with a huge smile. They shake hands.

Howie watches intently until:

TOBI (O.S.)

Yo, freakazoid. Take your  
creepiness somewhere else. I'm  
trying to work.

Howie spins around to find Tobi with a tray of SODAS.

HOWIE

Oh! Uh. Sorry. Sorry, Tobi.

He quickly wheels the mop bucket out of her way.

INT. RINK FLOOR

Lights dim. The booming voice of a DJ rings out.



DJ (O.S.)  
 Ladies, gentlemen, boys, and girls!  
 The moment you've all been waiting  
 for...

INT. RINK FLOOR

People gather around the rink.

DJ (O.S.)  
 The one, the only, the marsupial  
 master...Reuben the Roller Roo!!

A powerful THEME SONG kicks in and a BRIGHT SPOTLIGHT turns on at the far end of the rink.

A humanoid creature on roller skates glides onto the floor. It's hard to distinguish exactly what it is.

KIDS start to chase after it. From this distance we see it's someone in a puffy kangaroo costume.

It's REUBEN THE ROLLER ROO! He's wearing a lime-green vest, matching knee-pads, and bright-red Wayfarer sunglasses.

Everyone goes crazy, especially the kids. Reuben tosses kids CANDY from his pouch while doing a majestic dance routine.

INT. SNACK BAR - CONTINUOUS

Howie sits at a table, watching the performance in awe.

ROSE (O.S.)  
 Pretty impressive, huh?

Howie turns to see Rose sitting at the table across from him.

HOWIE  
 Yeah, this...Reuben...the--

ROSE  
 --the Roller Roo--

HOWIE  
 --is incredible!

ROSE  
 The way he involves the kids it  
 just...melts my heart.

ON THE RINK Reuben poses with KIDS as PARENTS snap photos.

HOWIE

One of Jack's ideas, I bet.

ROSE

Actually, it was mine.

Howie revels in her poise. This chick is fucking rad.

HOWIE

Wow. That's impressive. You do run this place.

ROSE

I gotta give Gary credit, though. He brought it to life.

HOWIE

Holy shit, that's Gary? Is there anything that guy *can't* do?

ROSE

I know. He has many talents. He's become Jack's golden goose.

HOWIE

Where did he come from?

ROSE

He grew up here, but moved around a bit. I think he was a dancer in a traveling show. Did a few years as a gymnast in a circus. Spent time on a fishing boat in the Bering Sea, and competed internationally in Muay Thai before Jack found him.

The Roller Roo flies around the rink doing amazing jumps and tricks that a normal person would shatter their body doing.

HOWIE

Do you skate?

ROSE

I tried. Once when I was in third grade. I had so many bruises from falling the other kids called me "Purple Arms."

HOWIE

You just need a good teacher.

ROSE

You know of one?

Howie smiles playfully before spotting the Roller Roo join Jack and the Bearded Man at the edge of the rink.

The Bearded Man shakes the Roller Roo's hand and the three of them head off together toward the back hallway.

Howie cranes his neck to try and monitor where they're going. He turns to Rose.

HOWIE

Well, back to work for me.

She smiles as Howie gets up and heads for the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Howie walks cautiously down an empty hall.

On the wall hangs a row of FRAMED PHOTOS. Above them the words "*High Roller of the Month.*"

Several different people are highlighted, with months and dates descending in chronological order.

Howie stops upon finding a photo from March '72. It's an old picture of him. He's thinner and has darker hair.

The two Howies stare at each other for a beat until the REAL ONE sees something in the reflection. He turns.

At the end of the hall Jack's office door is cracked open. We see a glimpse of motion inside and hear unusual noises.

Howie creeps toward the door and peers through the crack.

Inside, he sees the Bearded Man, seated in a chair, smiling with absolute GLEE. We catch glimpses of the Roller Roo gyrating before him, giving a private performance.

Howie inches closer, squinting at the sight not fully comprehending what's happening and then...

JACK (O.S.)

Looking for something?

Howie spins around to find Jack behind him.

HOWIE

Jack! Hey! I was looking for...you.

JACK

And here I am. What do you need?

Jack is holding a plate of steaming hot NACHOS GRANDE.

HOWIE

I need...to know if I can slip out at some point before close. Uh, to run errands. Get some supplies and stuff. A toothbrush maybe.

JACK

The fuck do you need my permission to get a toothbrush? Go during your break.

HOWIE

Good idea. I'll do that. But, uh, I'm a little light...

Jack rolls his eyes. He shoves the plate in Howie's hands.

He pulls out a wad of CASH, flips off two twenties and hands them to Howie.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Oh, thanks. Thanks, Jack.

JACK

No need. I'll deduct it from your paycheck.

Howie starts to leave, but Jack stops him.

JACK (CONT'D)

Uh, Howie?

HOWIE

Yeah?

Jack nods to the nachos. Howie gives them back.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Oops. Sorry. You're right. The nachos do look delic--

Jack slides inside the office and slams the door.

Howie remains, defeated, staring at the office. Muffled, SALACIOUS NOISES come from the other side.

DIAZ (V.O.)

I'm not surprised to hear that, but unfortunately for them, they'll be replaced in no time, and no one will care.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - PAY PHONES - NIGHT

WIDE ON a PHONE BOOTH glowing in the shadowy parking lot.

HOWIE (V.O.)

Rose and Gary are rockstars.  
Critical to the operation. I can't  
see Jack ever getting rid of them.

Howie's inside, phone to his ear.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Neon lights from storefronts illuminate the street.

DIAZ (V.O.)

At Jack's level he's so out-of-  
touch that everyone beneath him is  
expendable. To him, people are just  
magical meat sacks that he  
manipulates to get what he wants.

Howie trots briskly down the sidewalk, maneuvering past  
PEOPLE casually strolling along.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A crowded dive.

We push down a BAR where LOCALS are bellied up. At the end  
sits Howie and Agent Diaz. The BARTENDER drops off a shot.

DIAZ

I guarantee you that one day Jack  
will replace both Rose and Gary and  
the business will keep chugging  
along like nothing ever happened.

HOWIE

Maybe...

DIAZ

Trust me. I see it every day.

Howie stares off at nothing. Diaz realizes he's losing him.

DIAZ (CONT'D)

(clears throat)  
Moving on...what else you got?

HOWIE

Well... when I was full-time, Jack had a notebook. He used to scribble things down during meetings or calls, I assume names or numbers and I remember he'd store it in a locked drawer. There may be info on his supplier in there.

DIAZ

Now *that* sounds like a lead. You think Gary's keys can open it?

Howie nods.

DIAZ (CONT'D)

You need to get those keys.

HOWIE

I'll try.

DIAZ

Trying's not part of our deal. You either find out who Jack's supplier is, or you say goodbye to watching your daughter get hitched.

Diaz pounds the shot.

DIAZ (CONT'D)

Gotta go push urine out of my dick.

He hops off his stool and bumps into a few DRUNKS standing behind him. One of the drunks who is dressed like a punk rocker with tats, piercings and a MOHAWK is instantly pissed.

MOHAWK

What the *fuck*, motherfucker?!

DIAZ

Oops. Sorry. I've had a few.

MOHAWK

Spilled beer all over my leather, fucker!

DIAZ

You're welcome. Now you can throw that cute costume in the trash.

MOHAWK

Motherfucker!

Mohawk PUNCHES Diaz in the face. Diaz stumbles back before Mohawk quickly SLUGS him again, knocking him to the ground.

MOHAWK (CONT'D)  
Motherfucker, fuck you!

Mohawk starts kicking Diaz over and over. Howie jumps up.

HOWIE  
Hey! Stop! Stop!

Mohawk backs off as Howie gets Diaz to his feet. His face is bloody and his eyes are half closed.

DIAZ  
You stupid shit...

Diaz pulls out his FBI BADGE and holds it up.

DIAZ (CONT'D)  
You just assaulted a federal agent!

MOHAWK  
(terrified)  
Oh, motherfucker! A fucking fed! I can't get pinched again!

He and a few other Drunks HAUL ASS out of the bar.

Howie helps Diaz back to his stool.

HOWIE  
Jesus, Diaz. You okay? You want me to call someone? An ambulance?

DIAZ  
Who needs an ambulance when you have *this*?

Diaz grabs a beer off the bar and CHUGS THE ENTIRE THING.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The parking lot is quiet and empty.

Gary is locking up when Howie comes jogging out of nowhere.

HOWIE  
Gary! Hang on!

GARY  
Howie? I thought you were inside already.

HOWIE  
 No, uh, I had to...run out. Glad I  
 caught you.

Gary opens one of the doors.

                          GARY  
 A few minutes later and you'd be  
 sleeping on the street.

                          HOWIE  
                           (chuckles)  
 Wouldn't be the first time!

Gary doesn't say anything, just stares at Howie.

                          HOWIE (CONT'D)  
 Hey, I'm sure you hear it all the  
 time, but you're *really* good at the  
 whole Roller Roo bit.

                          GARY  
 Just doing my part. For the  
 business.

                          HOWIE  
 I mean it. It's more than that.  
 It's above and beyond! You perform  
 three or four times a day, you  
 connect with the kids *and* the  
 parents. Everyone loves you!

                          GARY  
                           (melancholy)  
 It's not me they love.

Gary closes the door and locks it.

INT. RINK FLOOR

Howie pushes the floor scrubber along in deep thought.

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

Howie brushes his teeth while staring at himself in the  
 mirror. He notices his METAL TAIL COMB on the counter.

The skinny pointed handle sparkles in the florescent light.



INT. JACK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Howie jiggers the end of the tail comb into the keyhole of the locked desk drawer. He massages it, gently twisting and prying, trying not to damage anything in the process.

He thinks he feels something give and applies a bit more pressure when...

POP! The comb SNAPS out of the lock and slices Howie's palm.

HOWIE

Dammit!

Blood flows from a small gash. He dabs at it with his shirt and looks around the room for something to wrap it in.

He opens a closet door to reveal the Reuben the Roller Roo costume on a hanger. It's the only thing in there. It glows.

Howie reaches his uninjured hand out and grazes it in awe.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - MORNING

The rising sun beams onto the building.

ROSE (O.S.)

It's never as much as you expect.

INT. TICKET OFFICE - MORNING

CLOSE ON: A bandaged hand holding a PAYCHECK.

Howie scowls at the dollar amount, sighs.

HOWIE

It's a start.

ROSE

Saving for something special?

HOWIE

Uh, my daughter...

ROSE

You have a kid?

HOWIE

Yeah. Sandy. Sandra. She's twenty-one now and getting married in a few months. I haven't seen her in years but still plan to go.

ROSE  
That's really sweet.

HOWIE  
But I need to get my shit together before I try to fix things with her. And get her a really expensive wedding present or something.

ROSE  
Hey, if you need help with either of those, I'm your girl.

HOWIE  
Really?

ROSE  
Oh yeah. Well, maybe not getting your shit together. My life hasn't exactly been a cakewalk. But I could help you find a gift.

HOWIE  
Thanks. I'll take you up on that.

He holds up the check.

HOWIE (CONT'D)  
But it might be a bit before I have enough.

ROSE  
See if Jack can float you.  
(off-look)  
I don't want to overstep, but I'm guessing he owes you.

Howie considers this.

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM

Jack sits on the toilet flipping through a BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS magazine. A knock comes from the stall door.

JACK  
What? I'm busy.

HOWIE (O.S.)  
Say, Jack. You got a sec for me to run something by you?

JACK

Keep it curt and crisp. I'm trying to focus.

Howie stands on the other side of the stall door.

HOWIE

Well, I just want to say thank you for the opportunity so far. I got paid today and it's gonna go a long way in getting me back on my feet.

JACK

But it's not enough?

HOWIE

I just, well I got this thing coming up. My family, see. And I want to make a good impression.

JACK

Whoa, wait a sec. You still trying to win that viper Vicky back?

HOWIE

No, Jack--

JACK

What was the guy's name you caught absolutely pummeling her rear-end on the hood of your Plymouth Barracuda? That six-foot-six monster who--

HOWIE

This isn't about my ex-wife! It's about my daughter. A daughter I hardly know because I was busy working for you...

Howie stops himself with a gasp, knowing he went too far.

Jack pulls up his pants and storms out of the stall.

JACK

Whoa, hold the fuck on! I didn't make you choose between your family and this life. You did that! Plenty of guys can manage both, you know.

Howie drops his head for a long beat, ashamed.

HOWIE

Yep, you're right, Jack, you're right. I just...I want to do more, like I used to.

JACK

You have to prove yourself first.

HOWIE

Haven't I done that?

JACK

You haven't been here a month! What would it look like if I just plopped you into the rental counter? Or gave you Gare's position out of nowhere?

(off-look)

I'd lose respect.

HOWIE

But it's *your* business.

JACK

My point is you don't have to prove yourself to me. You have to prove yourself to *everybody else*.

(beat)

All these cats who work here, this younger generation. They're cutthroat. They have a drive, a competitiveness that I've never seen. If I put you alongside them without you proving you're a winner, they'd lose respect for me and waltz on out of here. And you know I can't have that because finding people I can trust with what we do is a pain in the ass.

HOWIE

Put me in a spot to earn, Jack, and I'll show them I'm a winner.

JACK

Show them by cleaning up the broken glass by the dumpsters before some kid cuts himself and a parent calls the cops. I gotta get back to work.

Jack retreats into the stall and shuts the door. We hear him remove his pants and sit back down on the toilet.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Howie sweeps BROKEN GLASS into a dustpan.

He hears VOICES and peeks around a dumpster.

Against the building is Gary, dressed in the Reuben the Roller Roo costume, no mask on. KIDS that aren't even teenagers yet gather around him.

They discreetly give Gary cash. He pulls out little BAGS OF WEED from the pouch in the costume and distributes.

Howie thinks, then looks down to the dustpan full of glass. He intentionally drops it. It CRASHES loudly on the pavement.

Gary and the Kids look at the dumpster. The Kids scatter.

Gary rushes over to find Howie.

GARY

Howie.

HOWIE

Sorry to interrupt. I was sweeping up glass...

Gary doesn't look happy.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Hey, uh, how old were those kids?

GARY

High schoolers.

HOWIE

Yeah, right.

GARY

Well...customers are customers.

HOWIE

Back in my Roller Wizard days, Jack always said anyone who looked under sixteen was off limits.

GARY

That was back then. Things have changed.

HOWIE

I think I'd like to hear it from the horse's mouth.

GARY

I wouldn't do that. If you talk to Jack, I might have to tell him about how you're underperforming.

HOWIE

How I'm...this place has never been cleaner!

GARY

Says the new guy.

Gary rolls away. Howie remains, disconcerted.

INT. HIGH ROLLERS - STAIRWAY

Rose storms up a flight of STAIRS that lead to the roof.

INT. HIGH ROLLERS - ROOF - DAY

Rose climbs through an ACCESS HATCH and onto the flat surface of the building. She marches to the far end where Jack is DRIVING GOLF BALLS off a tee and into the surrounding woods.

ROSE

Hey! When were you gonna tell me about what happened at Taco Grotto?

Jack ignores her and sends another ball flying.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Jack! I'm talking to you!

He glares over his shoulder, lines up another shot.

JACK

Nothing to tell. I handled it.

ROSE

*Handled* it? You put Big Hugo's head through a buffet sneeze guard! Scared a ton of people! Now we got some police detective calling who wants to speak with you.

JACK

Is it Stout? That prick doesn't give a shit. Been up my ass for years. Offer him some dough.

Jack WHACKS a ball that sails away.

ROSE

Jack, you can not fly off the handle like that in public.

JACK

Big Hugo was slinging in our backyard!

ROSE

Big Hugo's a dumb kid!

JACK

Pffft. He knows better. He's working for that disrespectful cocksucker *Tony Pepperoni*.

ROSE

You don't know that.

JACK

Tony is scheming. Trying to snipe my clients. *Our* clients. You know he worked here one summer? I fucking spent time mentoring him. Now look how he treats me.

Jack SHANKS a ball that hits a car in the lot.

ROSE

Tony is small time. What we are doing isn't. You can't go regulate at some fast food joint.

JACK

Did you know Taco Gratto doesn't even *offer* Nachos Grande? Unreal.  
(off look)  
So, what now? I gotta talk to that detective?

ROSE

No. It's taken care of. Just chill. The fuck. Out. Do not engage with Hugo, Tony, or any other flunkies selling bullshit product. Got it?

Jack reluctantly nods. Rose strides away.

INT. RINK FLOOR - DAY

The place is basically dead. Afternoon lull.

Howie tidies up from the previous session. He steps onto the rink and scoops up trash when...

WHAM! He's knocked to the floor by Emmett and Tobi rolling by. All three of them tumble to the ground.

HOWIE

What the hell are you doing?!

EMMETT

Trying to improve our lap time.

HOWIE

Why? So you can deliver nachos faster?

EMMETT

Speed skate trials are in a week.

HOWIE

Good luck with that. You guys are slow as shit.

TOBI

We're faster than you, grandpa.

HOWIE

I was burning up hardwoods when you were gumming your mama's nipples.

TOBI

Oh my god that's nasty.

HOWIE

That's real life.

EMMETT

Bet you can't take Gary.

HOWIE

Gary's a dancer, not a racer.

Emmett waves to Gary across the rink.

EMMETT

(shouts)

Hey! Gary! You down to race? Howie says he can smoke you!

Gary gives a thumbs up and heads toward them. Howie winces.



INT. RINK FLOOR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Emmett, Tobi, Gary, and Howie (now on skates) stand behind a start line designated by ORANGE CONES.

Over the speakers we hear the DJ's voice.

DJ (O.S.)  
One full lap sprint. First one back  
through the cones wins. Last one  
buys a round of Mr. Chillys.

They crouch down and ready themselves.

DJ (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
On your mark...  
(beat)  
Get set...  
(beat)  
SKATE!

Everyone, except for Howie, gets a good jump.

Tobi blasts out to the front. Followed by Emmett, Gary, and Howie bringing up the rear.

Around the first turn, Emmett cuts off Tobi from the inside and takes the lead.

Gary whips around the corner and blows by Tobi.

Howie makes a similar maneuver, leaving Tobi in the dust.

Emmett glances over his shoulder and spots Gary and Howie coming in hot. He drifts in front of Gary, but his skates get tangled up and he crashes to the ground.

Gary gracefully hurdles Emmett, lands back on the ground, and slows in order to catch his balance. Howie takes the lead.

Howie grins at the finish line, only one corner away.

But Gary is suddenly right next to him, neck-in-neck.

Howie smirks at him.

HOWIE  
Here comes the sugar!!

As they enter the final turn, Howie pushes his skates to the max and crouches down to become more aerodynamic.

Gary mimics his move, staying right with him.

They slingshot out of the curve, side by side. Gary shoots a DEMONIC GLARE at Howie.

He then gives Howie the slightest NUDGE with his shoulder, which is just enough to send him off course and...BLAM! Face first straight into the wall.

Gary sails through the finish line, hands in the air.

DJ (O.S.)  
Gary wins!

Howie lies on the ground, fuming with a bloody nose, as Tobi and Emmett cross the finish in front of him.

TOBI  
Alright! Chillys are on Howie. I'll take a cherry.

EMMETT  
Blue raspberry for me!

They laugh as they make for the Snack Bar.

Gary approaches Howie and holds out his hand, Howie hesitates, but then grabs it. Gary lifts him up and brings him close to his face.

GARY  
You know, I used to come here as a kid when you were the Roller Wizard. You were my favorite part. I admired everything about you and dreamt that one day I could be as good as you...  
(beat)  
Now I see that I'm better than you in every single way.

Gary skates off, leaving Howie stunned.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - PARKING LOT - DAY

Jack exits the building and hurries for the lot, when:

HOWIE (O.S.)  
Hey, Jack! Wait up!

Jack turns to see Howie jogging after him.

JACK  
What now? I got places to be.

HOWIE  
It's about Gary.

                  JACK  
Can it wait?

                  HOWIE  
No. It can't. Look, you should be  
aware that Gary is--

The Bronco thunders up, curbside, right in front of them.  
Gary is in the driver's seat, window down.

                  JACK  
                  (to Howie)  
Gary is what? Spit it out.

Howie stares at Gary who glares back.

                  HOWIE  
Uh, nothing. I...forgot.

                  JACK  
Christ. Get back to work.

Jack rushes around to the passenger side and hops in.

As the Bronco drives away, Gary flips Howie the bird.

INT./EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

A series of TIGHT SHOTS of Howie's hands collecting various  
items from around the building...High Rollers t-shirts from  
the display case...cardboard from a dumpster...a HAT from  
lost and found...ROPE from the shed...

INT. COAT ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON: SCISSORS cutting through fabric... A GLUE GUN  
affixing unidentifiable materials together...PAINT being  
applied to CARDBOARD with a brush...

It's unclear what exactly Howie is doing.

INT. RINK FLOOR - DAY

Music blasts. The place is packed.

INT. DJ BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

The music fades as the DJ puts her mouth to the mic.

DJ  
(unenthused)  
If I can direct your attention to  
the center of the rink. We have an,  
uh, unexpected performance...

A CHEESY SONG begins to play.

INT. RINK FLOOR

CHILDREN gather as SOMEONE emerges from the shadows.

DJ (O.S.)  
Ladies, gentlemen, boys and girls,  
it's...Marty the Magic Mouse!

We BOOM UP to reveal Howie dressed in a homemade MOUSE COSTUME. His face is painted with pipe-cleaner WHISKERS glued to his cheeks. Felt EARS attached to a hat on his head. A ROPE TAIL dangling from his butt. Basically a nightmarish, hobo version of Chuck E. Cheese.

The CHILDREN let out a collective gasp.

HOWIE  
(high pitched voice)  
That's right, kids! It's me, the  
Magic Mouse! Here with a magical  
performance not to be missed!!

Howie does several pirouettes while twirling a CANE.

HOWIE (CONT'D)  
Please gather 'round and prepare to  
be dazzled!

The Children remain silent. Looks of disappointment grow across their faces.

Howie, oblivious, continues to gyrate and dance until...

CHILD 1  
What kinda mouse *is that*?

CHILD 2  
Doesn't look like a mouse to me.

CHILD 3  
He looks like a big, fat RAT!

The Children being to laugh.

CHILD 2  
Yeah, a rat!!

They crack up as Howie becomes flustered.

HOWIE  
No, no. Not a rat. I'm a mouse,  
see. A mouse...

He starts dancing to win them back. The Children's laughter is uproarious and drowns out Howie's pleas. They continue to heckle him until:

JACK (O.S.)  
That's enough!! Enough!!

Jack comes running onto the rink.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Stop the music! Stop the music!!

The music stops. Howie quits spinning as Jack approaches.

JACK (CONT'D)  
What are you doing?!

HOWIE  
Showing our customers that there  
are other entertainment options  
*besides Gary.*

JACK  
And you think a retarded roller rat  
is a suitable option?!

Howie looks himself over, embarrassed.

HOWIE  
Yeah?

JACK  
Get off my rink before I can you!

Devastated, Howie skates away. As he does he spots Gary, rink-side, laughing hysterically.

INT. SUPERMARKET - MEAT DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Muzak rings out in a grocery store decorated for 4th of July.

Howie and Agent Diaz nonchalantly peruse prepackaged meats.  
Diaz pushes a shopping cart.

DIAZ  
Gary is a fucking sick *fuck!*

He kicks a display of Ketchup. SHOPPERS glance at him.

HOWIE  
I was so wrong about him.

Diaz angrily grabs packs of BRATS, drops them into his cart.

DIAZ  
Can't believe that deranged asshole  
dealt drugs to twelve-year-olds.

DELI AISLE

Diaz opens a tub of POTATO SALAD, tastes it with his finger.

HOWIE  
I confronted him about it and he  
threatened to get me fired.

DIAZ  
And then he proceeds to absolutely  
kicks your ass in a race.

HOWIE  
No, he cheated!

DIAZ  
Whatever.

Diaz puts the cover back on the potato salad and sets it back  
on the shelf. Howie gives him a look.

PRODUCE SECTION

Diaz grabs a bunch of BANANAS, some fall on the floor.

DIAZ  
I think the moral of the story is  
that we need to take him out.

HOWIE  
I can't kill anybody, Diaz.

DIAZ  
I'm not saying that!

CHECK OUT LANES

CASHIER is ringing Howie up. Diaz waits in line behind him.

DIAZ

You get it? It's just temporary.  
Maybe he's allergic to nuts, you  
just toss a dash of nut dust in the  
kangaroo mask, he swells up a bit,  
and poof he's out of your hair.

HOWIE

He's not allergic to nuts. I see  
him pound Filberts all the time.

DIAZ

Then improvise! Just think...taking  
him out of the picture gets you  
closer to Jack and closer to  
getting us the information we need  
to bust his ass and his supplier.

Howie considers this until the Cashier clears her throat.

He snaps out of it and quickly pays her.

INT. SNACK BAR - NIGHT

Howie sanitizes the countertop. He looks up and sees Gary  
escorting Rose, Emmett, and Tobi through the main doors.

Gary looks back, doesn't say anything. Neither does Howie.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. RINK FLOOR - NIGHT

TOTAL DARKNESS for a beat until...

...the DISCO BALL lights up and starts to rotate, while the  
other COLORFUL LIGHTS above the rink come to life.

INT. DJ BOOTH

CLOSE ON: Hands placing VINYL on a TURNTABLE.

The needle drops and it starts to spin. The BEAT of the  
ROLLER ROO THEME SONG kicks in.

INT. RINK FLOOR

Lights dance around as the song continues.

Howie emerges from the darkness, dragging his COT all the way to the center of the floor.

He lies down and gazes up at the lights, transfixed, while the theme song continues.

There's a glint in his eye like he's onto something.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - ALLEY - DAY

Gary, in costume, deals weed to a group of PRE-TEENS.

GARY

Okay, okay. That's it. I'm out. Get more money and come back tomorrow.

The Pre-Teens disperse as Gary heads inside.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - CONTINUOUS

One of the Pre-Teens, SIMON (11), comes meandering out of the alley when Howie suddenly GRABS him by the shirt and pushes him up against the building.

HOWIE

What the hell do you think you're doing, kid?! Buying drugs?! At your age?! Do you want to go to JAIL?!

Frightened beyond belief, Simon BURSTS into tears.

SIMON

I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I didn't mean ta! It was all Brenton's idea! He said it'd impress the chicks! Please don't call the cops! Please!

Simons sobs uncontrollably, starts pissing his pants.

HOWIE

Oh no, oh no. Stop!

SIMON

Please don't call them!!

Howie softens, suddenly feeling bad for going so hard.



HOWIE  
 There, there. It's okay. It's okay-

                  SIMON  
 --Puh-leeasse!!

Howie scans the area, making sure no one is witnessing this.

                  HOWIE  
 Shhh. Shhhhh. C'mon. Calm down. I'm  
 not calling the cops. Okay? I'm not  
 calling the cops.

Simon starts to relax.

                  SIMON  
 R...Really?

                  HOWIE  
 Yeah, well, I mean *I won't* call the  
 cops if you *promise* to do something  
 for me. Something very important.

Simon nods emphatically.

INT. HIGH ROLLERS - DAY

Busy Saturday. The place is rocking.

INT. LOBBY

A man (late 30s) wearing a polo shirt and SHORT SHORTS enters through the door. He resembles Chevy Chase from Caddyshack, but 95% more intense.

He scans the immediate area.

Rose appears at the nearby ticket window.

                  ROSE  
 Admission for one?

                  SHORT SHORTS  
 I'm not staying.

He storms off with a huff.

INT. RENTAL COUNTER

Emmett helps a couple of YOUNG CUSTOMERS with skates.

Short Shorts approaches, cuts the line.

SHORT SHORTS

Excuse me. My eleven-year-old brought home marijuana the other day. Said he got it off an employee here. Any clue who that is?

EMMETT

I don't know anything about it.

Howie notices the interaction from afar.

SHORT SHORTS

I want to speak to your manager.

EMMETT

Uh...he's not in.

SHORT SHORTS

Sonuvabitch!

Short Shorts slams his fist on the counter and marches away.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Howie pokes his head out the back exit and spots Gary, in the Roller Roo suit, chatting with a group of PRE-TEENS.

He ducks back inside.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - PARKING LOT - DAY

Short Shorts plods toward his car. Howie jogs out of the entrance after him.

HOWIE

Sir! Hey, sir!

Short Shorts turns.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

I'm a concerned parent like yourself. The guy you're looking for is out back selling drugs to kids right now.

SHORT SHORTS

THAT SONUVABITCH!

Short Shorts takes off. Howie follows him.

HOWIE

He's wearing a kangaroo costume.  
Reefer's in the pouch. You can use  
the pay phones over there to call  
the cops and report--

SHORT SHORTS

HE DIES TODAY!

HOWIE

No wait! Hey!

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Short Shorts appears from around the side of the building.

SHORT SHORTS

Hey! Hey, you!

The Pre-teens scatter but Gary stays put.

Short Shorts marches toward him.

SHORT SHORTS (CONT'D)

You sold my son drugs, you piece of  
shit!

Howie peeks around the corner of the building just in time to  
see Short Shorts throw a HUGE PUNCH aimed at Gary's head.

Gary instinctively BLOCKS it with one arm and quickly JABS  
Short Shorts in the face.

Short Shorts stumbles back, regains balance and charges, this  
time swinging with a big left.

Gary effortlessly ducks and BLASTS Short Shorts in the gut  
with two punches--pop, pop--and UPPERCUTS him in the chin.

This sends Short Shorts flying to the ground.

Howie's mouth drops open. This is not going as planned.

GARY

Sorry, sir. I don't know what  
you're talking about.

Gary turns and heads back to the side door.

Howie drops his head and is about to leave when...

...Short Shorts pulls himself up and grabs a GLASS BOTTLE  
lying amongst other garbage on the ground.

He stumbles after Gary and SMASHES the bottle over his head.

Gary crumbles to his knees and Short Shorts quickly KICKS him in the back of the head with the sole of his loafer.

Gary slams to the pavement. Short Shorts turns him over and starts POUNDING his face with his fists.

Howie watches from afar as the horrific sounds of SHATTERING FLESH AND BONE ring out in the alleyway.

Short Shorts finally stops punching, looking like a feral animal covered in blood. He catches his breath while adjusting his hair and, yes, shorts.

SHORT SHORTS

What kind of psychopath sells drugs to kids? You're disgusting.

He spits on the ground and leaves.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS PARKING LOT - DUSK

Night falls as PARAMEDICS load Gary on a stretcher into the back of an AMBULANCE.

Several LOITERERS, including Howie, Jack and Rose watch from the main entrance. Jack clutches the KANGAROO SUIT.

JACK

What a sick, cruel world where someone would do that to such a beautiful boy.

HOWIE

He was very beautiful.

JACK

(to Rose)

We're gonna have to cancel tonight.

ROSE

No. There's too much money on the line. This is a big opportunity for us to expand the business.

JACK

But without Gary--

ROSE

Jack! It's not Gary they love. It's Reuben. We just need to put a warm body inside and roll with it.

Rose and Jack both turn to Howie. EPIC DRUMS KICK IN.

EXT. LAKESIDE MANSION - NIGHT

Jack's Bronco pulls up to a VALET in front of an obscenely LARGE AND ORNATE RESIDENCE that sticks out like a sore thumb amongst modest cabin style homes.

JACK (V.O.)  
Lotta a-list clientele at this party. Magnates of industries nobody cares about. Elites of the Midwest they tell me.

Jack and Howie get out of the Bronco. They are greeted warmly by the Bearded Man who wears a sharp tuxedo.

JACK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But there's no business talk amongst these folks tonight. It's all about blowing off steam.

INT. LAKESIDE MANSION - BATHROOM - NIGHT

A modern, gargantuan bathroom.

Howie sits in his underwear on a bench, staring at something.

JACK (V.O.)  
You're going to hear some weird shit and see some even weirder shit, but don't let it affect you. Don't let it affect the *performance*.

We push in on the ROLLER ROO COSTUME, hanging on the back of a door in all its glory. The KANGAROO MASK sits nearby.

JACK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Remain completely professional. Put on an unforgettable show...

Howie smiles to himself.

JACK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...and we will leave here with more fucking dough than Pillsbury.

INT. LAKESIDE MANSION - BALLROOM - NIGHT

MUSIC BLASTS as we enter a swanky gathering of ELITES.

The room is monstrous and modern, everything pure white--the walls, the furniture, light fixtures.

The Elites are dressed in formal attire and wear elaborate ANIMAL MASKS. Each person consumes a mind-altering substance.

On the far side of the room on a wooden dance floor are a group of MASCOTS and CELEBRITY LOOKALIKES doing their own, individual dance routines. A smattering of Elites crowd the floor, cheering them on.

Some mascots include a crotch gyrating ELVIS PRESLEY, PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN, a BREAKDANCING GORILLA, a HORSE doing the salsa with DOLLY PARTON, an overweight MARILYN MONROE, a SMURF, and, you guessed it, REUBEN THE ROLLER ROO.

Through the EYE SLITS in his mask, Howie scans around seeing all sorts of weird, unspeakable shit going down.

Howie notices Jack watching him from a nearby couch. He has a cocktail in hand and nods his head slowly and grins. All he sees are dollar signs.

INT. LAKESIDE MANSION - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jack and Howie stroll down a quiet, dimly lit corridor.

Howie still wears the Roller Roo suit but holds his mask and skates. Jack thumbs through a stack of cash.

JACK

Gatdamn you fucking brought it and then some. Those high society dick turners were eating your shit up!

HOWIE

Ah, thanks but it was a team effort. Everyone was really giving it their all. Hot Dan the Mustard Man lost a little steam during the third set, but overall, I think we pulled it off.

Jack hands Howie half the stack.

JACK

And here is your taste.

Howie stares at the money, mesmerized.

JACK (CONT'D)

Now you're earning.

Howie grins from ear to ear and they trot off down the hall. As they pass by a room, we get a glimpse of the SMURF MASCOT and fake MARILYN MONROE screwing on a sofa.

A fun and epic song kicks in as we transition to...

INT/EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - MONTAGE

Six or seven sequences, INTERCUT, where THE PUREST FORM OF REUBEN THE ROLLER ROO IS BORN...Jack is happy as the BUSINESS BOOMS...juxtaposed with HOWIE REBUILDING HIS LIFE and becoming closer with ROSE...all while DIAZ and THE FEDS SURVEIL from afar. Scenes to include:

-Howie performs as Reuben the Roller Roo on the SKATE FLOOR with tons of KIDS and ADULTS dancing along.

-Howie SELLS DRUGS to ADULTS and "of age" TEENS in the alley.

-Cash ZIPS through a MONEY COUNTING MACHINE in Jack's Office. Jack gives Howie his cut of money.

-Howie and Rose shop for gifts at a department store. Rose points to a HORIZON GOLD CROCKPOT on a shelf. Howie buys it.

-Howie shops for a nice SUIT, Rose gives feedback.

-Rose excitedly opens a box of ROLLER ROO PLUSH TOYS. Shows them off to Jack, Howie and the rest of the staff.

-Rose teaches them how to make holes in the Roller Roo plushies and stuff little bags of weed inside.

-SHADY PEOPLE buy Roller Roo plushies from the pro shop.

-Agent Diaz takes SURVEILLANCE PHOTOS of Howie when he's working and out and about in town.

-Howie has a blast smoking a BONG with Emmett and Tobi.

-Howie pins up Sandy's WEDDING INVITE on the wall.

-Howie teaches Rose how to roller skate.

MONTAGE COMES TO AN END as...

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

...Howie, who now has Gary's KEY RING, locks the main doors. He and Rose walk away from the building.

EXT. CANAL PARK - NIGHT

A lush park on the banks of Lake Superior. A towering LIFT BRIDGE stands on the other side of a canal.

Howie and Rose lay in the grass looking up at the stars.

She drags on a JOINT. Offers it to Howie. He takes a puff.

ROSE

This view never gets old.

HOWIE

Me and my ex, Vicky, used to watch fireworks here on the fourth.

ROSE

You think she still comes?

HOWIE

Maybe...who knows. Haven't stayed in touch much.

ROSE

Ever bring your daughter?

HOWIE

Only a couple times, then...

Beat while Howie fights back some emotion.

ROSE

It's okay. I totally get it. I have a thirteen-year-old.

(off-look)

Yep. Lisa. Lives with her dad in Des Moines.

HOWIE

Oh. I'm sorry.

ROSE

Save it. I'm a mess. You're a mess. We're all a fucking mess. Doesn't mean we love our kids less than anyone else.

HOWIE

Guess I never thought about it like that before.

They sit in silence, letting that thought hang there.



ROSE  
 So, speaking of kids, are you  
 feeling any better about going to  
 Sandy's wedding?

Howie's eyes widen with anxiety.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - NIGHT

Howie hurries up to the front entrance, glances around to  
 make sure nobody is there.

He uses the keys to open the door.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Howie crouches down next to the locked desk drawer. He  
 searches for the appropriate key on the key ring.

He finds one that seems right. He tries it, doesn't work.

He slips another one into the keyhole and...it works!

He OPENS the drawer to reveal one single notebook that's  
 marked "*JACK'S NOTEBOOK - NO TOUCH!*"

Howie flips it open to reveal an actually good DRAWING of  
 Jack's Ford Bronco with a chunk of text below it. He reads  
 the text to himself as we hear Jack's voice:

JACK (V.O.)  
 (reading)  
 "My Bronco."  
 (beat)  
 In the Old West, what makes a man  
 best, is what takes him to and fro.  
 (beat)  
 Most boys ride a quarter, but I  
 prefer less order, and so I chose  
 my Bronco.  
 (beat)  
 The Bronco dislikes me, but it  
 doesn't fright me, for we have  
 struck a deal.  
 (beat)  
 I ride him to impress Candy Jean,  
 then provide him with gasoline, if  
 not he gets my spurred heel.

Howie frantically FLIPS ahead a few pages to see more POEMS  
 with drawings; one about bunnies, another about nachos, and  
 one about a stripper named Candy Jean Mortenson.

Frustrated, Howie THROWS the book back into the drawer.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Gary's laid up in a hospital bed. CASTS all over his body. BANDAGES on his face and hands. He's unrecognizable.

The only part we can see are his EYES, which remain closed.

The EKG and LIFE SUPPORT MACHINES beep at a stable rhythm.

JACK (O.S.)

Maybe I was wrong about the next generation.

REVERSE reveals Jack standing near the bed. Howie looks on from behind holding a bouquet of FLOWERS.

JACK (CONT'D)

As ambitious as they are, these baby boomers are weak as hell.

(to Howie)

Let's roll, babe.

Jack heads for the door as Howie sets the flowers on Gary's chest. He studies Gary's still body for a moment and thinks deeply about what he's going to say until:

HOWIE

Gary...

(beat)

Fuck you.

The EKG machine starts to BEEP more rapidly. Howie gets spooked and hustles out of the room.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Jack's Bronco cruises down a city street.

INT/EXT. BRONCO - DAY

Inside, Howie drives and Jack rides in the passenger seat.

JACK

Left on Railroad street.

Howie nods.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - DAY

The Bronco cruises into a vast parking lot near the HARBOR surrounded by WAREHOUSES and PROCESSING SILOS.

INT/EXT. BRONCO - DAY

Through the windshield, not another car or soul in sight.

JACK  
This is good.

Howie puts the beast in park.

HOWIE  
So, who's this dip that needs  
straightening out?

JACK  
He goes by Tony. Tony Pepperoni.  
Trying to make a name by selling  
his subpar product to my clients.

HOWIE  
Pepperoni? Is he Italian?

JACK  
The fuck should I know? Maybe he  
has a pizza fetish.

Jack glances out the window.

JACK (CONT'D)  
And here he comes now.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - DAY

A beat-up '67 VOLKSWAGEN MICROBUS sputters into the lot. It parks behind Jack's Bronco, some thirty yards away.

The side door SLIDES open and TONY PEPPERONI (30s) steps out. He's tall, blue-eyed, has perfectly quaffed blonde hair, and dressed like a punk. He takes a bite out of a PEPPERONI BEEF STICK, then shoves it back in his pocket.

A handful of other PUNKS exit the vehicle carrying HOCKEY STICKS. They quickly set up NETS and begin playing a game of street hockey not far from the parked cars.

INT/EXT. BRONCO - DAY

Jack hops out. Howie starts to follow suit.

JACK  
Wait. Here.

He reaches under his seat and hands Howie a SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN.

JACK (CONT'D)  
If it goes sideways, spray the fuckers down.

Howie stares at the gun in his hands. His heart races.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - DAY

Jack approaches Tony Pepperoni who watches his Punks play.

JACK  
Tony fuckin' Pepperoni.

TONY  
Jack fuckin' Ripley. Surprised to get your call. This about the thing at Taco Grotto?

JACK  
That among others...

INT. BRONCO - DAY

Howie watches them anxiously through the REAR VIEW MIRROR. His grip tightens on the shotgun.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

Tony lights a smoke, offers one to Jack who declines.

TONY  
Okay then, what if you sell my product? I'll cut you a fantastic deal. Plus it's homegrown!

JACK  
I wouldn't brag about that, Tony. I've seen where you live.

TONY

So you forbid me to sell in town.  
And you refuse to do business with  
me. What the fuck am I supposed to  
do, huh?

JACK

I hear Sears is hiring.

INT. BRONCO - DAY

Howie rolls his window down to try and make out what they're saying. It's impossible.

Scanning around he spots a WHITE VAN parked in the distance.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - DAY

POV of a CAMERA with a TELEPHOTO LENS. We see the Bronco, the Microbus, and Jack and Tony.

The frame SNAPS several times, taking photographs.

INT. BRONCO - DAY

Howie stares at the White Van, concerned, but then OFF-SCREEN SHOUTING grabs his attention.

He looks in the mirror to see Jack screaming ferociously at Tony while pointing a finger in his face. Tony's Punks have stopped playing hockey and converge on the fracas.

Howie looks down to the shotgun, then back up to the mirror, then to the white van, eyes wide, beads of sweat forming on his forehead. Shit's going down.

The screaming from Jack increases in volume.

Howie finally RACKS the gun and opens the door to step out...

...but Jack suddenly hops back in the passenger seat.

JACK

Fuck that! Fucking leech better  
heed my warning. Let's go.

Howie's frozen.

JACK (CONT'D)

I said let's go, goddamnit!

Howie turns the key and the Bronco roars to life.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - DAY

The Bronco screeches out of the lot leaving Tony Pepperoni and the Punks behind.

INT. HIGH ROLLERS - DAY

The place is ROCKING. SKATE FLOOR is packed. There's a line at the RENTAL COUNTER. Every ARCADE MACHINE is taken.

INT. SNACK BAR

Howie leans against the counter. He watches Jack, not far away, slide a stuffed ENVELOPE across a table to an elegantly dressed FANCY WOMAN (50s).

She opens it up and reveals a WAD OF CASH. She smiles.

TOBI (O.S.)

Howie. Someone's asking for you.

Howie glances at Tobi, confused.

TOBI (CONT'D)

He's over pumping quarters into  
Bazooka Palooka.

He hesitates a moment before finally heading that way.

INT. ARCADE

Howie cautiously approaches a GUY furiously smashing arcade buttons. He's dressed like Hunter S. Thompson.

HOWIE

Uh, can I help you?

The Guy turns, lowers his shades. It's Agent Diaz.

DIAZ

Heya, Howie!

Howie jumps.

HOWIE

(discreetly)

Diaz. The fuck you doing here?

DIAZ  
Thought I'd swing by since you  
haven't been returning my calls.

HOWIE  
Uh, I've been Busy. Got a bit of  
a...promotion...

DIAZ  
Guess we have catching up to do.

HOWIE  
Okay, fine, but not here.

Diaz WHACKS the side of the arcade.

DIAZ  
Game over anyway. Hewett's on  
fifth. Twenty minutes.

Howie nods emphatically.

DIAZ (CONT'D)  
And bring the kangaroo suit.

Diaz strides away.

INT. HEWETT'S DINER - DAY

CLOSE ON several BLACK AND WHITE, 8x10, SURVEILLANCE PHOTOS  
of Howie doing various activities, both personally with Rose  
and professionally outside of High Rollers

A photo of Jack and Tony Pepperoni at the Industrial Park  
gets dropped on top.

DIAZ (O.S.)  
What the hell is Jack doing with  
scum like Toni Pepperoni?

We bounce out to reveal Diaz and Howie sitting in a booth.

HOWIE  
He's dealing on Jack's turf and  
Jack didn't like it. Hey, why do  
they call him Pepperoni? He doesn't  
look Italian.

DIAZ  
His name is Anthony Larson. Half  
Italian, half Norski or some shit.

HOWIE

But why *pepperoni*?

DIAZ

Doesn't matter! Are you positive Jack isn't dealing Pepperoni's product? If so that would be--

HOWIE

There's no way. His weed is dank. This was about Jack reminding him of the rules.

DIAZ

What about the notebook?

HOWIE

Junk. No information on sources.

DIAZ

Dead end after dead end.

HOWIE

(thinks)

A woman has been hanging around. Always dressed to the nines. Jack gave her an envelope of cash.

DIAZ

Hmm. She could be the bag man. The go-between. Keep an eye on her. You bring the suit?

Howie holds up an overstuffed GARBAGE BAG.

DIAZ (CONT'D)

Crackerjack. Follow me.

EXT. HEWETT'S DINER - PARKING LOT - DAY

Howie hustles to keep up with Diaz who marches across the parking lot toward a MOTEL that sits on the other end.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Diaz approaches a door. He KNOCKS on it in a distinct way. It swings wide and Diaz and Howie enter.



INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Howie follows Diaz inside, but instead of a normal motel set-up, it's the WAR ROOM for an investigation into High Rollers.

MEN IN SUITS hustle around with papers. Every inch of surface cluttered with RECORDING DEVICES, CCTV SCREENS, FIREARMS.

The walls are plastered with MAPS, photos of LOCATIONS, FLOOR PLANS, PEOPLE, etc. Lots of pictures of Howie. It's a sensory overload of activity and information.

Diaz waves Howie over to the far corner of the room.

Howie joins him in front of a CORK BOARD with the org chart of Jack's organization. Rose's pic is on there. Emmett, Tobi, and Gary too. Several OTHERS Howie doesn't even recognize. Jack is pinned at the top, but above him is a QUESTION MARK PHOTO for an unknown person.

HOWIE

Judas. Fucking. Priest.

DIAZ

What? This circumstantial horse piss? We have a lot pieced together, sure, but we need more.

Diaz grabs the garbage bag out of Howie's hand and enters...

INT. ADJOINING MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...a dimly lit room outfitted with a bunch of 1970s/1980s investigator tech and AGENT EILEEN WHISPERS (30s).

DIAZ

(nods)  
Agent Whispers.

Agent Whispers whispers something unintelligible as Diaz hands her the bag.

She takes it over to a TOOL BENCH and pulls out the suit. She starts removing the stitching on the inside.

HOWIE

Whoa! What are you doing?

Whispers whispers something again.

DIAZ

She says "relax, faggot."

Howie is so confused but watches Whispers work.

DIAZ (CONT'D)

She's going to seal a transmitter in the pouch and add a small microphone in the collar. Whenever you're wearing this suit, I want the transmitter on, understand?

HOWIE

Hold on. Hold on. That's like a whole new level of treacherous spy shit. Jack is a relatively sweet man, but if he caught me--

DIAZ

We're running out of time. Having more ears is going to speed this up. We need you to get somebody to say something, *anything*, about the identity of Jack's source so we can sink this whole fucking ship.

Howie watches anxiously as Whispers works on the suit.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Howie hastens down a busy sidewalk with the suit in its bag.

His eyes dart between PASSERSBY and the overflowing fur in the bag. He's paranoid, advancing like he's in possession of a ticking time bomb.

Suddenly the bag RIPS and the suit spills onto the ground. Howie drops and scrambles to stuff it back in.

He eyes people as they cruise past, trying to remain cool.

He's finally able to collect the whole mess and pull it into his chest with a bearhug.

He stands and sees, for the first time, an epic CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL towering over him.

Flustered and disoriented, he ducks inside.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Howie steps into the empty, cavernous sanctuary, his every motion echoes.

A few PEOPLE sitting in the pews eye him suspiciously.

He spots a CONFESSION BOX and hurries for it.

INT. CONFESSION BOX - DAY

Howie kneels down on a pedestal and faces the wall.

A wood panel slides open to reveal the face of FATHER ZHANG (late 70s) through the latticed opening.

FATHER ZHANG

Greetings, my child.

HOWIE

Hi, uh, bless me Father, for I have sinned. It's been...too long since my last confessional.

FATHER ZHANG

And yet, the Lord is elated that you've come here this day. You may begin.

HOWIE

Okay, uh...well, I swear sometimes, um...there's people I don't like...uh...

(beat)

I do drugs, I work for a place that sells drugs to people, I intentionally got a guy's shit kicked in and now he's in the hospital, every day for the past few weeks I've been lying to an old friend, I screwed up my chance to be a father and abandoned my wife and daughter and chose a criminal life. Oh, and I killed a bird and her babies a while back.

FATHER ZHANG

I see...

HOWIE

But the big one for me is that I was recently given the opportunity to right my wrongs from my past, to make good on so many things I screwed up.

(beat)

(MORE)

HOWIE (CONT'D)

But I feel like I'm being pulled back into my old ways...I worry that I'll end up being the bad guy again and I'll just never be able to be who I know I should be.

FATHER ZHANG

First, the path to redemption has many peaks and valleys. You must be relentless to complete your journey. And second, I'll use myself as an example. I am a Catholic priest, but I have done, what some may deem, "bad" things. So, does this make me wholly bad?

HOWIE

I...it depends on how bad those things are, I guess.

FATHER ZHANG

Let us dream for a moment that I am a pig. A respected adult pig in the pig community and I choose to have sex with much, *much* younger pigs. Does that make me bad?

HOWIE

Yes, obviously!

FATHER ZHANG

But what if--

HOWIE

Never mind! This was a bad idea!

Howie motions to exit, but--

FATHER ZHANG

Now wait, wait!

Howie stops, kneels back down.

FATHER ZHANG (CONT'D)

What I'm trying to say is that things are not so black and white in our world. Good and bad exist in each and every person simultaneously. We are imperfect. Fluid in our thoughts, beliefs, and actions so to label yourself as "the bad guy" is false. You are "the good guy" at times, correct?

HOWIE

Yes.

FATHER ZHANG

So then, two things can be true.

Howie thinks. Something clicks.

INT. RENTAL COUNTER - NIGHT

Howie, in the Roller Roo costume, rolls through High Rollers.

EMMETT (O.S.)

Hey Howie, get over here!

Howie spots Emmett by the busy counter and heads over.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

I'm running out of stuffed the  
Roller Roos. By close we'll be too  
low for tomorrow. Any chance you  
can grab more and refill them?

HOWIE

No problem. But where do I...?

EMMETT

Check with Rose?

Howie nods, rolls away.

INT. SNACK BAR - NIGHT

Howie spies the Fancy Woman next to Jack, getting a new envelope of cash. She kisses him, then leaves.

Howie reaches into his pouch, flips on the transmitter and approaches Jack.

HOWIE

(nods to Fancy Woman)

What a fox. She from around here?

JACK

You think someone who dresses like  
*that* is from around here?

HOWIE

Looked like a lot of cash you gave  
her. Must be a pro.

Jack raises an eyebrow, wary.

JACK  
Hey, what's the deal?

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - STREET - NIGHT

The WHITE SURVEILLANCE VAN is parked nearby.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - CONTINUOUS

Agent Diaz and two other AGENTS sit cramped inside, all wearing headphones, listening very closely to the conversation with Jack unfold.

HOWIE (V.O.)  
Wha...I'm just asking--

INT. HIGH ROLLERS - CONTINUOUS

Jack moves closer to Howie and jabs his finger in his chest.

JACK  
You think I have to pay for that?  
(off-look)  
Jack Ripley has no trouble dipping his tip whenever he wants, so you can stop accusing me of hiring some fancy whore to satisfy my nearly insatiable sex drive. She's not who you think she is.

HOWIE  
Then who is she?

JACK  
She just happens to be--

DJ (O.S.)  
Ladies and gentlemen, it's that time again for your favorite marsupial master!

They both look to the rink floor.

JACK  
You're up.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - CONTINUOUS

Diaz rips his headphones off and CHUCKS them.

INT. RINK FLOOR

Reuben the Roller Roo takes the floor and starts the usual performance as SOME KIDS dance with him.

But also a large GROUP OF ADULTS are dancing with him too. And they're LOVING it. They start getting a little rowdy. Throwing their heavy bodies around, grinding on Howie.

The experience is different this time. Aggressive. Messy. Almost like a mosh pit and he struggles to keep composure.

Through his mask EYE HOLES we see beyond the rink Jack pacing back and forth. Watching Howie suspiciously.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - ALLEY - NIGHT

Howie, still in his suit, shares a HUGE JOINT with Rose.

He takes two big puffs, passes it to her.

HOWIE

I'm melting. If I smoke anymore I'm gonna pass out.

ROSE

So let's get out of here.

HOWIE

No, I need to stay and replenish the stuffed Roller Roos for tomorrow. By the way, where do we keep the extras?

She nods to the shed over his shoulder.

ROSE

You check the closet in there? They should be locked up with the excess gonja.

HOWIE

Excess...gonja?

ROSE

Gonja. Weed. Dope. Pot. The hundreds of pounds of marijuana we obviously can't keep in the building. Ring a bell?

HOWIE

Ooooh, right.

(beat)

(MORE)

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Hey. About that. Where do we even get our ganja in the first place? Like, who is our mysterious supplier?

ROSE

(serious)

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Hang on.

Rose studies him, suspiciously, for a long moment before unleashing a HUGE SMILE.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Who is this new Howie Chase talking to me? You've never been this interested in the business before.

HOWIE

Just been thinking more about it, you know? Like how I can...help.

ROSE

Hmm. Well, lemme talk to Jack. I'm sure there's more for you to do.

Rose gives his hand a gentle squeeze and strolls off.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Howie enters and shuffles past the riding lawn mower and tools, toward the PADLOCKED DOOR at the back.

He fumbles with the keys trying to find one for the padlock. He finally does and pulls the doors open.

He yanks on a hanging pull-string. A few overhead fluorescents pop on revealing...

SHELVES AND SHELVES AND SHELVES of PACKAGED MARIJUANA.

Howie stares at the sight in awe, then TRIPS on something and falls to the ground.

He looks near his feet to see a SPILLED TUB of Reuben the Roller Roo plushies. They stare back at him, smiling, seemingly taunting him.

INT. SNACK BAR - NIGHT

A phone RINGS and RINGS behind the counter. Howie ignores it as he hurriedly stuffs BAGS OF WEED into the Roller Roo toys.



He finally gets fed up and stomps over to answer.

HOWIE  
 (into phone)  
 Hey, we're closed so you can stop--

DIAZ (O.S.)  
 --It's Diaz. Get over to the motel  
 A-S-A-P.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens. Howie enters and looks around.

The room is alive with celebration. Music plays on the radio. Agents dance around cracking beers and pouring drinks.

Diaz skips up to Howie holding a large COCKTAIL.

DIAZ  
 Howie! What took you so long?  
 McCauley's pouring Blue Lagoons.  
 Come with me.

Howie is weirded out by all of the stifflets letting loose.

HOWIE  
 Uh...what's the occasion?

DIAZ  
 I told HQ about what we recorded  
 your gal pal Rose saying and by the  
 sounds of it, that shed has enough  
 hard evidence to lock Jack and his  
 crew up for good.

HOWIE  
 I thought we were after his  
 supplier?

DIAZ  
 This bust should satisfy Uncle Sam.  
 Once Jack's in custody we'll grill  
 his ass to give up his source. Easy  
 game.

Howie's stupefied. Diaz notices his lack of enthusiasm.

DIAZ (CONT'D)  
 Howie, you did it! Your hard work  
 is actually going to pay off!

Howie forces a smile.

DIAZ (CONT'D)

This also means I'll be promoted  
and get *the fuck* out of Duluth. A  
great night all around! Thompson's  
working on a warrant as we speak.

Diaz glances behind him, sees Thompson passed out at his desk  
with a beer can resting on his gut. He kicks Thompson's chair  
startling him awake.

DIAZ (CONT'D)

We're raiding the shed at first  
light to seize all the product.  
Gonna kick off the Fourth of July  
with a fucking bang, baby!  
(loudly chants)  
U-S-A! U-S-A! U-S-A!

Other Agents drunkenly chant U-S-A along with him.

HOWIE

What'll happen to everyone?

DIAZ

Arrested and detained! Even you!  
*But that'll be theatrics so just  
pretend like you don't know me.*

CHAMPAGNE POPS somewhere in the room causing Howie to jump.

HOWIE

Can...can you leave Rose out of it?  
You know, she didn't really--

DIAZ

Who gives a shit about those  
dirtbags! A little paperwork and  
you'll be free! You get to mend  
things with Sandy and her husband.  
Maybe even meet your granddaughter!

Howie is suddenly frozen by his words.

HOWIE

Wait, what did you just say?

Diaz winces, realizing he fucked up.

DIAZ

Aw shit, um...not sure how to break  
this to you, but...  
(beat)  
Sandy and Ken got married a few  
years ago. They have a daughter.

HOWIE  
(floored)  
What?!

DIAZ  
I needed to give you a reason to  
fully commit to the job, so I had  
the invitation forged.

Howie is seething, his blood boiling.

DIAZ (CONT'D)  
C'mon. You know she would've never  
*really* invited her jailbird dad to  
her wedding anyway.

HOWIE  
(explodes)  
You fucking dick!

Howie lunges at Diaz and grabs him by the shirt. Two AGENTS quickly step in and restrain him.

DIAZ  
What the fuck, man? You're killing  
the vibe!

Howie struggles to break free and attack Diaz again, but the Agents drive him back through the door and out on his ass.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Diaz approaches Howie on the ground.

DIAZ  
Lots of emotions going on right  
now. I get it. But you need to keep  
it together. The only thing you  
should be thinking about is your  
freedom. So, proceed as if  
nothing's changed and do not fuck  
tomorrow's bust up.

Diaz glides back inside.

Howie sits alone for a beat. His look of despair disappears. He hops up and hurries off.

INT. HIGH ROLLERS - SNACK BAR - NIGHT

Howie takes out a small FROZEN PIZZA from the fridge. He rips the box open and plops it in the TOASTER OVEN.

He cranks the TIMER NOB around. A rhythmic TICK, TICK, TICK sound RINGS OUT through the quiet building.

CLOSE ON the CHEESE AND SAUCE as it starts to bubble in a bath of NEON RED LIGHT.

INTERCUT the ECU of the PIZZA COOKING and the SOUND of the TICKING TIMER with the following scene...

INT. SHED - NIGHT

CLOSE ON...

-A BROOM sweeping Roller Roo plushies into a pile.

-The transmitter, microphone, and wires from the Roller Roo suit getting dumped onto the plushies.

-Several PACKAGES OF MARIJUANA get added.

-GASOLINE from a can gets poured on top.

-Gas is doused on the shelves of marijuana.

Howie studies the (fake) WEDDING INVITATION. He pulls out the HIGH ROLLERS LIGHTER he got from Rose. He rolls it in his hand for a moment before lighting the Invitation on fire.

He tosses it onto the pile. WHOOSH! It ignites immediately.

The TICK, TICK, TICK comes to an end with a loud DING--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SHED - NIGHT

FLAMES ROARING in the dark.

The SHED is completely engulfed in RED-HOT FIRE. Smoke billows into the night sky.

A safe distance away, Howie sits calmly on the overturned plastic tub, watching the fire and eating a slice of PIZZA.

EXT. SHED - DAWN

The early morning sun illuminates the discouraged face of Diaz and a dozen other FBI and LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.

Reverse reveals a SMOLDERING SHED. Only a portion of the structure's frame remains standing.

Piles of black smoking ash and debris lay beneath with nothing identifiable except the charred John Deere.

DIAZ  
Goddamn fucking Roller Roo.

He storms off.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

On the door is a HANDWRITTEN SIGN that reads:

*"Sessions closed - temporarily. Sorry! Check back later."*

INT. SNACK BAR

Waiting anxiously at a table are Emmett, Tobi, Rose, and Howie. They are silent, occasionally looking around the room but trying not to make eye contact. The tension is high.

The front entrance door SLAMS open and Jack tromps in. He's a powder keg. He talks as he walks toward them.

JACK  
As you fucking know, our property out back was *intentionally* burned to the ground. But I've convinced the arson investigators that this was *accidental*, most likely caused by negligence with the mower, leaky gas, and maybe a cigarette butt.

He pauses so this sinks in for everyone.

JACK (CONT'D)  
So, can we all agree right now that THAT is in fact what happened?

Everyone looks around at each other, noncommittal.

JACK (CONT'D)  
If they know what I know they can connect it back to us. With motive.

Jack slaps half of an old, cold PIZZA on the table. It has only a few bites taken out and is covered in grass.

It's the PIZZA that Howie was eating after burning the shed.

JACK (CONT'D)

Tony fucking Pepperoni took out our supply as a warning! A warning for me to get with his program or else.

Howie's jaw drops. He didn't see this coming.

JACK (CONT'D)

And now we have nothing to sell on one of our busiest days of the year. That rotten fuck fucked us!

Jack grabs a chair and THROWS IT ACROSS the room. Everybody ducks. He grabs another one and THROWS IT ONTO THE RINK.

ROSE

Jack!

He grabs *another* chair, but Rose stops him.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I have an idea. Will you listen?

JACK

Yeah, okay.

ROSE

We lost roughly five hundred pounds of our inventory, right?

JACK

Sounds right.

ROSE

Which nets out to approximately four hundred grand. Sixty percent of that is \$240,000 that we need to pay back to our suppliers.

Jack's thinking.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Tony sells his dope for, what, maybe half of our retail price? So, what we should do is go to Tony--

JACK

No!

ROSE

Jack--

JACK

Fuck the Pep!

He motions to throw the chair, but Rose sits down on it.

ROSE

We go to Tony and agree to partner with him to sell some of his product. We buy it at his cost but mark it up for our customers so we can earn enough to make good with our suppliers.

Jack's silent, considering this. He lets go of the chair.

JACK

What would I do without you?

ROSE

Shrivel and die.

JACK

No doubt. I'll get the deal going. In the meantime, let's open up. Business as usual.

They all respond at once.

ALL

Business as usual.

INT. RINK FLOOR - LATER

Howie interacts with a GROUP OF KIDS. He doles out candy as they politely thank and hug him.

THROUGH THE EYE HOLES: little smiling faces beam up at him, in wonder and reverence.

One of them, a SMALL GIRL, shakes his hand and then skates off the rink and into the arms of her MOTHER and FATHER.

Everything goes SOFT FOCUS for Howie as he zeros in on the young family full of love and happiness. They wave to him, appreciative. Their day absolutely made.

But their faces go sour as a CLOUD OF SMOKE engulfs them.

Howie looks over to find a group of STONERS getting high at a nearby table. Disgusted, the young family hurries away, towards the daylight pouring through the lobby doors.

Beautiful moment ruined.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Howie, in costume, chain smokes out back.

A few TEENS slowly approach, looking to buy.

HOWIE

(yells)

Not today!!

The Teens scatter.

The side door SLAMS OPEN and Jack blasts out.

JACK

Howie! You cut your performance short. What the shit's going on?

HOWIE

Sorry. I...

JACK

Forget about it. Right now, I need you to go meet Tony Pepperoni. I struck a deal with him but I want you to make the exchange. Rose will go with and back you up.

Jack holds up a HIGH ROLLERS GIFT BAG.

JACK (CONT'D)

Payment. I shouldn't have to say this, but make sure you see the stuff *before* you hand it over.

HOWIE

You know, my head's just all foggy right now. I think I should pass.

JACK

Excuse me, what? No. Not today, my friend. Not to-fucking-day. You came to me, yeah? Wanted to be back in this shit. To earn, to party, to get respect. You do not have the *luxury* to pass when the work suddenly gets hard. Understand?

Howie drops his head, shouldn't have said anything.



JACK (CONT'D)

You cannot have it both ways so do everyone a favor and expel that whimsy from your broken brain right this second and get your ass moving. Okay?

Howie can barely look at Jack. He's fucking stuck.

HOWIE

(quietly)

Yeah. Okay.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - PARKING LOT

Defeated, Howie comes trodding around the side of the building, still in costume. The gift bag of loot in one hand, his mask in the other.

Across the lot... Rose leans against the Bronco, ready to go.

She looks fucking fantastic standing in this shithole of a place. Her hair blows in the breeze as she unleashes the warmest goddamn smile Howie has ever seen.

His pace slows, his posture straightens and he smiles back. Maybe things are going to be okay...

...but he suddenly remembers the task at hand, glances down at the gift bag, and the trance is broken. Fuck.

He looks over at the PAY PHONES near the entry.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Diaz and other glum Agents are cleaning, packing, loading up BANKERS BOXES-- bringing the investigation to a close.

Somewhere in the room an Agent answers a buzzing PHONE.

AGENT

Diaz. Howie Chase is on the line.

Diaz grabs the phone with an eye roll.

DIAZ

(into phone)

What is it, you two-faced fuck?

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - PAY PHONES - DAY

Howie has the receiver to his ear.

HOWIE

(into phone)

Diaz. Listen to me carefully. I got new information. Information on a big deal that's about to go down...

INTERCUT PHONE CONVO BETWEEN DIAZ AND HOWIE.

DIAZ

Look who's suddenly interested in playing for the good guys again.

HOWIE

...but if I give it to you I want a guarantee that Rose won't be implicated in any of it.

DIAZ

You're unbelievable, you know that?

HOWIE

Jack is gonna make a buy from Tony Pepperoni-- to make the money to pay back his supplier for the stuff that was destroyed in the fire.

DIAZ

Tony? I don't give a shiny shit about that window licker!

HOWIE

I'm still in this, Diaz. I can help you bring it all down. I'll hold up my end of the deal, but--

DIAZ

The deal? The deal is dead! We gave you a chance and you blew it!

HOWIE

Hang on. Hear me out, Diaz--

DIAZ

You could've helped us make a difference. Drugs off the street, criminals behind bars, and restart your life in the process. But no. And for what? Rose? Jack? Reuben the fucking Roller Roo??

Howie is speechless.

DIAZ (CONT'D)

I'll give you the night to say your goodbyes. Tomorrow morning I want you here, so we can get you back in the system and wrap this cluster up. Do not make me come find you.

Howie slams the phone down.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

The Bronco cruises north along a tree lined road.

INT. BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: Cash in the GIFT BAG.

Howie sits in the passenger seat with the bag between his legs. Rose drives. They ride in silence until:

ROSE

The exit is coming up.

HOWIE

We should keep driving.

ROSE

Oh yeah? To where?

HOWIE

Anywhere. It doesn't matter. Fuck Jack. Fuck High Rollers. Fuck it! Let's get to Thunder Bay and start a new life together.

(beat)

Seriously, the best part about the last month has been you.

ROSE

But Sandy's wedding is in a few--

HOWIE

It's not happening. I found out they went to Italy and eloped.

ROSE

Shit. I'm sorry. I know you were really looking forward to it.

They sit in silence for a beat then.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I think we really need to see this deal through.

HOWIE

Do we though?

ROSE

Yes, because *somebody* burnt the shed down!

She glares at him. He shuts up.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Look, Howie, you might have forgotten about this while you were...away. But a lot of people depend on Jack and the money his business provides. Yes, you and I have been having fun, but we really need to fix this. Understand?

Howie is silenced by his shame and regret.

INT/EXT. BRONCO - DIRT ROAD - DAY

The Bronco hits a bumpy road leading into a DENSE FOREST.

Howie and Rose scan the area through the windows.

EXT. TONY'S CAMP - DAY

The Bronco slows as it enters a CLEARING and parks.

The Microbus sits next to a makeshift campsite--a small fire smolders surrounded by a few lawn chairs and a table.

Tony watches THREE THUGS whip hockey pucks into a net.

Howie and Rose get out of the Bronco and approach.

TONY

Welcome, new partners! I'm thrilled to see Jack has come to his senses.

THUG 1 starts laughing at the site of Howie's suit.

THUG 1

What the hell is he wearing?!

THUG 2 joins in.

THUG 2

Holy shit! What the fuck is that?

They howl with laughter.

THUG 3, who has a distinctive mohawk and wears a GOALIE MASK ala Jason from FRIDAY THE 13th, DOES NOT join in on the laughter. He tilts his head suspiciously at Howie.

TONY

Okay! Okay! Enough, guys!  
 (to Howie, Rose)  
 You bring the cash?

Howie pulls out a stack of cash from the gift bag.

HOWIE

Just point us in the direction of  
 the weed and it's yours.

Tony nods to Thug 1 who opens the REAR DOORS on the Microbus revealing bricks of marijuana.

TONY

Have at it.

Howie hands the gift bag to Tony who dumps the cash out on the table and starts counting.

Howie follows Rose to get an armload of weed.

BEHIND THE BRONCO

They load up marijuana and head for more.

MICROBUS

As they return, Thug 3 watches Howie closely. Howie senses it, turns and they lock eyes.

The Thug slides the goalie mask up off his face and Howie suddenly realizes who it is. It's MOHAWK-- the punk who kicked the shit out of Diaz in the bar weeks ago!

Howie breaks eye contact, tries to act casual.

He follows Rose to grab another arm load as Mohawk strides over to Thug 1 and whispers something.

They approach Tony as he loads cash BACK into the gift bag.

Howie picks up his pace heading back to the Bronco.

Tony and Thug 1 have a quiet convo. Mohawk eyes Howie.

BEHIND THE BRONCO

Rose organizes the stack. Howie plops a load on the tailgate.

ROSE  
That should be it, yeah?

HOWIE  
Let's go.

Howie grabs the Roller Roo mask from the tailgate and heads to the driver's side. Before he gets in, Tony waves him over.

TONY  
Heya, pal! Come here a second.

Howie hesitates.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Come on! We don't bite.

Howie trudges over as the Thugs surround him like wolves.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Arthur here says he's seen you with  
a fed before. You a rat?

HOWIE  
What?

Tony motions to Thug 2 who STRIKES Howie in the BACK with his hockey stick. Howie grunts, drops to his knees.

Tony pulls out a REVOLVER from his waistband.

TONY  
I'm gonna ask again. Are you a rat?

HOWIE  
No! I'm a...roller roo.

Howie holds up the KANGAROO MASK. Tony is confused.

TONY  
Wait. Is that supposed to be a  
kangaroo?

THUG 2  
Don't they say kangaroos are the  
rats of Australia?

Tony and the Thugs laugh.

TONY

Oh, boy! That's funny. Fuck. Put it on. Put that mask on your head and I'll blow your brains out. I've killed a rat before, but not a kangaroo! Hahahaha!

Howie slowly puts the mask on. They all laugh harder.

THUG 1

Now dance!

THUG 2

Dance, roller roo!

TONY

Yeah, get up and dance!

Howie starts to dance, humming the Roller Roo theme song to himself. It's a sad sight.

TONY (CONT'D)

*This is entertainment!*

THROUGH THE MASK'S EYE HOLES Howie sees the Thugs dancing around having the time of their lives when...

BLAM!! Thug 1 is knocked off his feet by a SHOTGUN BLAST.

They all turn to see ROSE holding Jack's SHOTGUN.

She fires again and BLOWS Thug 2's head CLEAN OFF.

Tony quickly dives to the ground and RETURNS FIRE as Rose spins behind a tree.

ROSE

Howie! Grab the money and run!

She pops back out and indiscriminately sprays the area.

Howie grabs the GIFT BAG and SPRINTS for the tree line.

TONY

That's my money! Arthur, c'mon!

He fires at Rose before he and Mohawk take off after Howie.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Howie sprints through the woods in FULL ROLLER ROO COSTUME.

This colorful, joyous icon, plodding as fast as it can through dense brush and trees. The ears on the mask flopping. The tail bouncing around. It's a majestic sight.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Howie hits the deck as bullets zip overhead. He scrambles to his feet and keeps running.

In the distance, Tony and Mohawk hurdle after him.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Howie emerges from the forest where he finds a STATE HIGHWAY.

Heavy holiday traffic stops him from proceeding.

He peeks back at the tree line, no sign of the thugs...yet.

Checking both directions he dashes onto the highway-- starting and stopping trying to avoid being hit by a CAR.

Horns honk. People yell out their windows. Howie gets to the other side just as Tony and Mohawk make it out of the woods.

He scrambles up a hill and at the top finds--

EXT. FIREWORKS SUPER STORE - CONTINUOUS

--an enormous structure with the words "BIG BOOM CITY" painted in huge, cherry red letters on the front.

Howie bolts for the entrance.

He tries to yank open the door, but it's locked. He takes off his mask and studies a sign that reads:

*"Closed for the 4th of July. Happy Birthday America!"*

Howie yanks on the door again. He glances over his shoulder.

Tony and Mohawk crest the hill.

Howie dashes around the corner of the building.

EXT. FIREWORKS SUPER STORE - SIDE OF BUILDING

Howie finds another DOOR. It's locked but has a WINDOW.

He BREAKS the glass, slicing his (previously injured) hand.



HOWIE

Dammit!

He reaches in, unlocks the door, and opens it.

INT. FIREWORKS SUPER STORE - CONTINUOUS

Howie races through the aisles, looking for a place to hide.

Tony and Mohawk barge through the side entrance. They split up and start stalking him.

Howie crouches behind a large display of FIREWORKS. He peeks around the corner but doesn't see anything.

A loud CRASH from the distance startles him and he ducks.

He looks up to a SECURITY MIRROR in the corner of the ceiling that gives a wide-angle view of the place.

Tony and Mohawk are closing in. Mohawk is WHACKING products off shelves with his hockey stick.

TONY

(Australian accent)

Aye, kangaroo mate! Where ya be at?

WHACK!

TONY (CONT'D)

(Australian accent)

We're gonna getcha sooner or later, mate! Might as well save us all the time so we can go enjoy ye olde Independence Day.

WHACK!

Howie is trembling, unsure what to do. He digs through his pouch. Pulls out some bags of WEED, a pack of SMOKES, and...

THE HIGH ROLLERS LIGHTER.

He grabs a bag of SMOKE BOMBS, RIPS it open, and lights multiple.

Tony sees the PURPLE, GREEN, RED, AND YELLOW PLUMES OF SMOKE appear at the end of an aisle. Tony aims his gun toward it.

Then MULTIPLE CATHERINE WHEELS slice through the colorful smoke screen and soar toward Tony like frisbees.

He jukes out of the way as they all crash into a display of TNT FOUNTAINS that explode into BRIGHT COLORFUL FIRE.

Tony covers his ears as the explosions rock him.

Howie DUCKS out the back exit.

EXT. FIREWORKS SUPER STORE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Tony and Mohawk stumble out the exit in a cloud of smoke.

They quickly spot a fresh trail of blood that leads to a set of DUMPSTERS. They glance at each other. Too easy.

They proceed forward when suddenly a RED HOT STREAK WIZZES THROUGH THE AIR and explodes behind them.

Tony and Mohawk look up to see Howie, having emerged from behind a dumpster, wielding DUAL ROMAN CANDLES.

They dive to the ground as more FLAMING SHELLS zip past. Tony fires his revolver at Howie who takes cover.

Mohawk darts to the far side of the lot to flank him.

BEHIND THE DUMPSTER

With the Roman Candles now spent, Howie starts lighting M80s and tossing them over the dumpster in Tony's direction.

The exploding M80s don't come close to connecting, but they're enough to keep Tony at bay.

Meanwhile, Mohawk has slipped through the brush behind Howie and is quietly approaching.

Howie pulls out his last M80 with a sigh. End of the road.

He lights it and is about to throw when Mohawk hooks him on the shoulder with his hockey stick and spins him around...

MOHAWK

Got you, roll-er-roooo--

...Howie instinctively SHOVES the lit M80 into Mohawk's mouth and pushes him back...

KA-BOOM!! Mohawk's jaw BLOWS CLEAN OFF.

Howie watches, shocked and amazed, as Mohawk collapses to the ground, withering as life escapes him.

He's quickly interrupted as BULLETS riddle the dumpster.

TONY  
Arthur! Nooooooo!!

Howie ducks as Tony fires rapidly until he's out. He reloads, aims again, but hears an engine REVVING.

He turns to see the BRONCO barreling toward him.

He FIRES OFF a couple rounds before the front end of the Bronco SMASHES his body into the dumpster.

A pepperoni link falls from his breast pocket onto the hood of the Bronco. Blood from his mouth drips onto it.

Howie rushes to the driver's side, opens the door to find Rose bleeding out with multiple gunshot wounds to her chest.

ROSE  
(whispers)  
Shoulda done Thunder Bay...

She goes still.

Howie moves closer.

HOWIE  
Rose?

He shakes her.

HOWIE (CONT'D)  
Rose!?

Nothing.

INT. BRONCO - DAY

Howie, covered in blood, drives as tears roll down his face.

Rose's body is in the passenger seat.

In the back is the bag of cash and all of the marijuana.

EXT. HIGH ROLLERS - PARKING LOT - DUSK

The place is closed and the lot is empty.

The Bronco squeals up to the front of the building. Jack, Emmett and Tobi are outside waiting.

Howie slides out of the car, still in complete shock.

JACK  
Jesus, Howie. What happened?

Howie motions toward the Bronco. Jack looks inside.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Oh, shit! Rose! Fuck! Is she--

Jack leans into the car, checks her pulse. He starts to panic, but then glances in the back, sees the weed and money.

He hugs Howie who starts to cry.

JACK (CONT'D)  
It's okay, Howie. Everything is going to be okay. We're going take care of this.

He looks over his shoulder at Emmett and Tobi.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Get the money and dope in my office. Now.

They quickly go to the backend of the Bronco and open it up.

Jack gently shakes Howie.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Come on, babe. Look at me. You have to get it together. We can fix this, but we need to move fast.

Howie wipes his eyes and tries to focus.

JACK (CONT'D)  
There's a scrapyard about fifty miles south. Right outside of Barnes, Wisconsin.  
(beat)  
You're going to drive Rose and the Bronco straight there. Do not stop. Cliffy Copenhagen runs the joint. Tell him I sent you. Give him this.

Jack pulls out a wad of cash. Rolls off six TWENTIES and stuffs them in Howie's hand.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Once he gets it in the compactor, head into town.  
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Post up at Georgia's Bar-n-Grill,  
order some breakfast, and wait for  
me to call.

Howie studies the money, then looks to Rose's body. The gravity of what Jack is asking starts dawning on him.

JACK (CONT'D)

But first, let's get you inside and  
cleaned up quick, okay?

Howie stares at Rose, silently. Jack snaps his fingers.

JACK (CONT'D)

Yo! Howie? Are you spacing?

He looks back at Jack, drops the cash to the ground, and starts to back away.

JACK (CONT'D)

Don't crack up on me now. It's  
going to be okay. Jack's going to  
take care of everything.

Jack tries to embrace him again, but Howie shoves him off. He's taken aback by Howie's outburst, then approaches.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm upset too, but we have to stick  
together--

Howie DECKS JACK IN THE FACE. Jack drops to a knee.

Emmett and Tobi stop in their tracks with a gasp.

HOWIE

You have fucked me over for the  
last time, Jack! I am out!

JACK

You ungrateful piece of shit. After  
all I've done for you?

HOWIE

No, after all I've done for you! I  
took the fall for you and wasted  
away in prison for years. Yeah,  
prison, prison, PRISON!!

Jack gets up and scampers away while Howie harangues him.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

You, Jack, are the ungrateful piece  
of shit!

(MORE)

HOWIE (CONT'D)

I've had so many opportunities to give you and this shithole up, but I couldn't do it. I let you run roughshod up and down my life. Shit, I was locked up and still couldn't get away from you.

Jack gets to the Bronco, ducks inside, emerges with the SHOTGUN. He cocks it and aims at Howie.

JACK

You done?

Frightened, Howie turns and sprints away as Jack FIRES haphazardly in his direction.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Howie ducks as he runs and eventually makes it out of the parking lot, around a corner, and out of sight.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Howie, still in the blood-soaked costume, aimlessly plods down the street. People give him weird looks and keep their distance. He's too fucked up to care about what they think.

EXT. CANAL PARK - NIGHT

Howie rounds a corner and finds himself at the lakeside park where he brought Rose.

This time the grass is crowded with GROUPS OF PEOPLE participating in the Fourth of July Festivities.

He wanders through the crowds.

Suddenly, he recognizes a GROUP across the way.

It's clearly his daughter SANDY and her ginger husband KENNETH showing a LITTLE GIRL how to play with sparklers.

HOWIE

(under breath)

Holy shit...

Howie blinks hard, unsure if this is a dream or reality.

VICKY (O.S.)

Howie?

Howie spins around to find his ex-wife VICKY (40s), epic feathered hair, still youthful, holding two ice cream cones.

HOWIE

Vicky?

VICKY

What the hell are you doing here--  
oh my god, is that blood?

HOWIE

All of this is a really long story.  
(off-look)  
Do you want to hear it?

VICKY

Not particularly.

HOWIE

Why didn't you tell me about Sandy?

VICKY

Are you fucking serious?

Howie looks back to Sandy, Kenneth, and the Little Girl.

VICKY (CONT'D)

That's their daughter.  
Your...granddaughter. Hazel.

Howie smiles for the first time in forever as he watches Hazel giggle and play with sparklers.

HOWIE

Can I meet her?

VICKY

Uh, maybe some other time.

HOWIE

It'll probably be a while. I'm  
going back to prison.

VICKY

I was wondering about that.

HOWIE

Yeah, I was released temporarily to  
help with...again, a lot's  
happened.

VICKY

Well, I hope it was worth it.

Howie, beaming, continues to watch Hazel run around and play.  
Vicky forces a smile and walks past him toward her family.

HOWIE

Vicky.

She turns around as a firework LAUNCHES into the sky.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

I always gave a shit. I know it  
didn't seem like it...but I did.

The firework EXPLODES and a vibrant pink chrysanthemum  
appears high-above Vicky. She raises an eyebrow and a smile  
forms on her face. Then she continues on her path.

Howie takes in the image for a few seconds, then heads in the  
opposite direction, carrying the Roller Roo mask as more  
fireworks EXPLODE in the sky.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

MATCH CUT to FIREWORKS over the motel. Howie appears from the  
shadows and slogs toward it to surrender.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. PRISON - MESS HALL - DAY

SUPER: "A FEW MONTHS LATER."

A handful of INMATES are scattered about at different tables  
playing board games and other mindless activities.

Howie sits at a table doing CLOSE-UP MAGIC with his old pals,  
ERNESTO and STAB JOHNSON. He looks very content.

A TELEVISION blares in the corner.

ON SCREEN:

*A SOAP OPERA cuts to commercial break and a SPOT for HIGH  
ROLLERS ROLLER SKATING RINK comes on.*

*An ugly title GRAPHIC transitions to JACK standing on the  
rink floor surrounded by ELATED PATRONS.*



JACK

(enthusiastically yelling)  
I'm legendary skate performer, Jack Ripley! And I know a thing or two about providing an entertaining experience!

As he talks, we see B-ROLL SHOTS of what he's describing.

JACK (V.O.)

At High Rollers, we have a huge inventory of flawless skates. A gorgeous--and newly resurfaced--wooden rink floor. The latest pinball and arcade games. Gourmet food, like our best-selling nachos grrrr-ande. And some of the best vinyl you will ever hear in the Twin Ports.

(beat)

But the special sauce that makes High Rollers great is the loyal staff who work here to make it all happen...

Shots of staff happily working. Emmett, Tobi, a NEW WOMAN at the ticket office, and BANDAGED GARY mopping the restroom.

Back to Jack as a person skates onto the floor behind him wearing a new and improved REUBEN THE ROLLER ROO COSTUME.

JACK

So, what are you waiting for? Come visit us and see for yourself. We've really got it all here. And of course...

Jack and the Patrons in unison...

ALL

Everyone! Loves! Reuben!

They CHEER and CLAP as the ROLLER ROO THEME SONG is blasted.

PRISON - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We dolly back, out of the room and into the prison corridor, as Howie continues to hang with Ernesto and Stab, ignoring the ad on the TV. He's fine without it.

CUT TO BLACK.