

ZOOM

"Pilot"

By  
Carol Kolb

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

EXT. GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

Cars pull in and out of the ZOOM, a big modern gas station / convenience store on a not-so-busy highway. Just a regular day in an average central Wisconsin city.

INT. GAS STATION AISLES

Inside, the store is bright, clean, and spacious with stations for coffee, hot food, and so on.

A woman browses, ignoring a kid yanking at her coat.

A man squeezes mustard onto a hotdog. He looks around to see that no one's looking and licks his fingers.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

A set of cash registers a good view of the gas pumps and the parking lot through the glass front doors.

A group of preteens hang out in front, some leaning on bicycles.

Behind the counter is MIKE, 25, a bit nerdy but cute, sarcastic out of boredom. He CRACKS rolls of coins into a register. Like all employees, he wears a red vest with the ZOOM logo.

Two 11-year-olds girls walk in jabbering.

GIRL 1

Today Ms. Fisker came in the locker room while we were changing. What a lezzie.

GIRL 3, still outside, yells through door:

GIRL 3

(muffled)

COURTNEY! HURRY UP!

Mike WINCES at the yell.

GIRL 1

I'M COMING! GOD!

Regular customer STAN, 40, comes up to the register.

STAN

Pump three.

MIKE

Good pump. Clear getaway. Never get boxed in.

STAN

Huh? Oh, yeah.

MIKE

(checking machine)

Okay, twenty dollars. On the nose.

STAN

Yup.

MIKE

Actually, I've noticed you. You always get it on the nose.

(lowering voice)

A lot of guys come in here a few cents over. More than you would think.

STAN

You must hate that, right? Then you gotta make change.

MIKE

Yeah well, I guess I can't really complain. I mean, I hope someday I'll have some higher purpose in life but at this point making change is basically what I'm here for.

STAN

Yeah? Well, here's 20 dollars. Exactly.

MIKE

(meaningfully)

Thank you.

Mike goes back to cracking rolls of coins into the register.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONEINT. CASH REGISTER AREA - AFTERNOON

Mike stands behind the counter. The afternoon sun is beaming in through the window. He squints into it seeing:

EXT. PARKING LOT

JERRY, 45, a big, friendly, football-loving regular guy with a Wisconsin accent. He's in his manager's outfit, white shirt and black pants.

Jerry talks to a 60-year-old with clipboard in hand, a BUILDING INSPECTOR, who seems to be ignoring him.

CHAD, a 20-year-old in a Zoom vest, sullenly pushes a broom around the parking lot.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

As Jerry walks in the front door as WOMAN is walking out. He holds the door for her.

JERRY

Hi Helen. I see the Silverado out there. You driving Gary's truck now?

WOMAN

Just today, van's in the shop.

JERRY

Again? Aw gees. Well, have a good one.

Mike is fanning himself with a newspaper as Jerry walks up.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You know, Mike, you're only making yourself hotter. The energy you use to fan yourself actually raises your body temperature. It's a scientific fact.

Jerry bends over and rearranges the floor mats, seemingly with some effort.

MIKE

It's just like this until 2:15. Then the sun drops below the dumpster wall.

JERRY

Well, sunlight is good for you. You don't want to get rickets, do you?

MIKE

I don't know. What is it?

JERRY

It's rickets. Didn't you say you went to college?

MIKE

Two years. Look where that got me.

Jerry walks up and starts to pull bags of nuts off a display. He inspects each one looking for the "best one."

JERRY

So, aren't you wondering who that guy out there is?

MIKE

That's Chad. He works here. You can tell by the red vest.

JERRY

Not Chad. The building inspector.

MIKE

Oh, is he a building inspector?

JERRY finds the nuts he likes. He goes behind the counter and sits on a stool-- his stool -- and opens the package.

Mike begins to rehang all the other nuts Jerry left on the counter. Mike does this as a matter of fact. He's used to picking up after Jerry.

JERRY

Yeah, but why?

MIKE

His dad was a building inspector?  
He just fell into it?

As always, Jerry either doesn't get or just ignores Mike's jokes.

JERRY

He says the owner asked for an inspection.

JERRY tosses a nut toward his mouth but fails to catch it. Then a few more. Mike picks them up.

MIKE

I thought you were the owner.

JERRY

I'm the manager. The owner lives in Green Bay. He owns three other Zooms too. A real high roller.

Jerry pours the rest of the nuts into his mouth.

Enter CHAD, 20, a somewhat pudgy skaterish type with dragging pant legs and a face that only registers boredom.

CHAD

Hey Jerry, there's some weird dude feeling up the side of the building.

JERRY

Oh no! Call the police, Chad! You've spotted the building inspector!

Chad stares blankly.

CHAD

Do you really want me to call the police?

JERRY

No. The owner sent him.

CHAD

I thought you were the owner.

JERRY

Well, I'm not.

CHAD

Really? Cause you're always like, "not in my store." And we have to pay for everything we eat, and you never do. And you get to leave whenever you want and we have to punch out. And--

JERRY

Chad. Go mop something.

Chad wanders off.

JERRY (CONT'D)

(to Mike)

I swear I've never seen a person  
move more slowly in my life.  
He should have his thyroid checked.  
I think there's something wrong  
with his metabolism.

MIKE

He is rather sloth-like.

Looking outside:

JERRY

Hey! There he is right now. THAT's  
the owner.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Jerry walks up to the building inspector and MR. SCHULTZ.

JERRY

Mr. Schultz! Hello, sir!

SHULTZ

Oh hi Jerry.

JERRY

What brings you all the way up  
here?

SHULTZ

Well Jerry, I'm selling this place.

JERRY

(shocked)

You are? But... but you just put in  
four new gas pumps last year.

SHULTZ

Yeah, well.

JERRY

How soon?

SHULTZ

ASAP. As soon as the inspection's  
done I'm going to list it.

(as an afterthought)

Oh, but I'll definitely recommend  
you to the new owner. You know, if  
he isn't going to manage it  
himself.

Jerry looks stunned. He might lose his job!

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

Mike leans on the counter, lazily watches two scrawny 13-year-olds, COREY SCHUMACHER, mean looking, and COREY'S FRIEND, who is nicer but dumber. They whisper, holding ENSURE, that medicinal looking nutritional drink that comes in a can.

COREY SCHUMACHER  
(noticing Mike)  
Why are you staring at us?

MIKE  
Because part of my job here is to watch for shoplifters.

COREY SCHUMACHER  
Your job sucks.

MIKE  
It's worse when I catch one. Then I have to cut his hands off. I don't like to do it -- I hate the sight of blood -- but it's in the employee manual. There's diagrams and everything.

Jerry walks in zombie-like.

JERRY  
The owner -- he said he's selling the place.

MIKE  
Really?

JERRY  
It doesn't make any sense. He just put four new pumps in.

Jerry walks off.

MIKE  
Hey Chad.

Chad lopes up, dragging a wet mop behind him.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Did you hear that? Do you think we're gonna lose our jobs?



CHAD

I dunno. But I'm about to quit anyway.

MIKE

I think maybe I've heard this before.

CHAD

But this time I am. My girlfriend is moving to Milwaukee and I'm gonna go with her. She met this girl on Facebook who can get her a job in the sub shop where she works.

MIKE

Sounds like a solid plan. Sorry I doubted you.

CHAD

Yeah. But that'll suck if you get fired. I know you're into this job.

MIKE

What do you mean I'm "into this job?"

CHAD

Well, you know. How you're always like "we should sell orange hats for deer hunting season" or "people don't like these lighters."

MIKE

Listen, that doesn't mean I'm "into" this job. That would be pathetic.

(lowers voice)

I'm not Jerry.

Chad shrugs and ambles off.

Corey Shumacher and Corey's friend bring four cans of Ensure to the counter.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(looking at can)

Why are you guys drinking this? It looks disgusting.

(he shakes can)

It sounds disgusting.

COREY SCHUMACHER  
We don't have to tell you.

COREY'S FRIEND  
JV football starts next week. We  
need to bulk up.

MIKE  
Why don't you eat potato chips?  
It's worked for the rest of  
America.

COREY SCHUMACHER  
We need protein, duh. For muscle.

MIKE  
(looking him up and down)  
Better get drinking.

COREY SCHUMACHER  
Ha ha, for your information, I'm  
gonna make the team no problem.

COREY'S FRIEND  
Corey's brother is Dylan  
Schumacher.

MIKE  
What's a Dylan Schumacher?

COREY'S FRIEND  
He's only like the most important  
person in the whole city of Wausau.  
He's the quarterback for West High.

YOUNG BOY 1  
Yeah, last year Channel 7 came to  
our house and they filmed Dylan  
lifting weights in our basement.

MIKE  
Wow, that sounds really great. I  
can't believe I missed that. Do you  
think they'll ever rerun it?

COREY'S FRIEND  
It's on Youtube.

COREY SCHUMACHER  
He doesn't want to see it. He was  
just being a dink.

MIKE

I doubt that what I'm about to say will even make sense to you, but I actually don't care about sports.

(spooky)

My kind are rare, but they do exist.

COREY'S FRIEND

(not mean, just curious)

When you were in high school did you get beat up all the time?

Mike answers truthfully:

MIKE

Yes. Yes, I did.

Entering as the boys exit is JILL, 35, a plump mom type, cheerful, chatty, always wearing teddy bear sweatshirts and bunny earrings other "cute" things.

JILL

Hellooooo Mike. Beautiful day, isn't it?

Jill pulls a red vest out of her big plastic purse, puts it on, and stashes the purse under the counter.

MIKE

(friendly)

Boy, you're set on "Jill" today.

Jill laughs uproariously. She always laughs WAY TOO LOUDLY at everything, but when it comes down to it, she gets Mike.

JILL

(looking his magazine)

Reading Cosmo, huh?

MIKE

I read all the magazines here. It's how I stay informed in this ever-changing fast-paced modern world.

(pointing)

Look at this ad for Zentrol, It's just a field full of butterflies. What does this drug even do? How am I supposed to know if I want it or not?

Chad appears, pushing a MOP BUCKET with his foot, splashing water on the floor.

CHAD

Jill's here! Awesome.

(to Mike)

Mike, I'm going on break.

Chad just leans his mop against the nearest shelf and rushes out with uncharacteristic speed.

MIKE

Why is he telling me? I'm not his boss.

JILL

Well, you like to keep track of things.

MIKE

(defensive)

I do not!

JILL

I just know things run a lot better since you started here. Jerry has more time to annoy the customers.

MIKE

Well, I just figure if I'm here I might as well do something. It's not because I care about this crappy job.

INT. BACK OFFICE - AT SAME TIME

Chad grabs his timecard and holds it still just in front of the timeclock punch slot, waiting... waiting... waiting for the clock to advance to the next minute. The TIMECLOCK clicks, Chad punches his card, and rushes out.

JILL

This place isn't so bad. I used to do highway construction.

MIKE

What? I'm sorry, Jill, I just don't see you on a jackhammer.

JILL

I held a flag. At least it's warm in here.

MIKE

You're right, Jill. Thank you for putting things in perspective.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

At least I have a job where I am  
not exposed to the elements.

As he rushes by:

CHAD

See ya. Wouldn't want to be ya.

JILL

I'm gonna go do bakery.

INT. BAKERY STATION - MINUTES LATER

Jill hums happily as she straightens up. She removes BROKEN COOKIES from the trays of baked goods and puts them on a plate. She takes few more unbroken items, looks over her shoulder, crumbles them on the plate.

INT. CHAD'S CAR

Chad sits motionless as SLIPKNOT BLARES.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT

Corey Schumacher and Corey's Friend sit on the curb drinking cans of Ensure. They both WINCE but force it down.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

INSPECTOR enters, all business, still writing on clipboard, walks up to Jerry.

INSPECTOR

Excuse me. Jerry, right? Mr. Shultz  
told me you could provide some  
details about the property.

A bit melodramatic due to news he may lose his job:

JERRY

Yes sir, I can. I've put five years  
of my life into this place. These  
are my customers. This is my  
neighborhood.

Jerry gestures out the back window at a row of identical split-level houses just past the back parking lot and over a field.

EXT. JERRY'S BACKYARD

HEATHER, a pudgy 10-year-old girl, his daughter, running around his deck. Jerry's house has a giant gas grill and a cheap above-ground pool and his yard is scattered with toys.

INTERCUT BETWEEN JERRY AND HIS HOUSE

JERRY

What the heck? Excuse me. That's my daughter out there.

Jerry takes out a cell phone, dials, walks to the back door.

Heather (hearing the phone ring) runs inside the house.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Heather? What are you doing home?  
(pause) Oh yah, the dentist. I forgot all about that. I looked out the window and saw you and I thought "what the heck? That's Heather out there."

Across the way, DONNA, Jerry's wife, kinda pretty, maybe a bit tacky with her highlighted hair and tight shirt, walks out onto the deck and waves. This makes Jerry chuckle.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hey, go put your mother on.

Heather runs out onto the deck and hands Donna the phone.

Inspector stands by waiting as Jerry rambles on.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hi Donna. No, I forgot about the dentist. I looked out the window and saw Heather and I thought "what the heck? That's Heather out there."

Finally Inspector rolls his eyes, annoyed, and walks off.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Actually, Donna, I need to talk to you. I'm gonna hop over there.

Jerry presses his keychain and an SUV BEEPS in the lot.  
(Jerry drives to work rather than walk two minutes.)

JERRY (CONT'D)

Mike, can you keep an eye on things for a bit?

Calling after Jerry as he leaves:

MIKE

I will, but only because I'm here anyway and it's my job.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)  
I'm not doing it out of any special  
concern for the welfare of this  
store.

Inspector walks up.

INSPECTOR  
Did he just leave?!

MIKE  
Yeah, he does that. Whenever the  
mood hits him, really.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

Chad is picking up empty Ensure cans from the parking lot.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

Mike's reading the back of a bag of CHEESY ZOOMERANG CHIPS.  
He looks up to see CHRISTINE, pretty, 25, wearing SCRUBS.

CHRISTINE  
Hi. Just the coffee.

Mike puts down the chips bag to ring up order.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)  
Watching your calories?

MIKE  
Calories are simple. 130 per  
serving, a serving size being  
approximately 15 Cheesy Zoomerangs.  
I was looking at the ingredients.  
Want to test me?

Mike hands her the bag. Christine smiles, intrigued.

MIKE (CONT'D),  
Okay. (very quickly) Wheat flour,  
coconut oil, whey, cornstarch,  
partially hydrogenated soybean oil,  
whey protein concentrate. (slower)  
Sodium phosphate, lactic acid,  
yellow #5 and #6. And... Um...

CHRISTINE  
Sssss...

MIKE  
(struggling)  
Sssss...

CHRISTINE

Soy...

MIKE

Soy lechitin!

CHRISTINE

(laughing, handing him  
money)

Nice. But why?

MIKE

Just trying to keep my brain from  
atrophying.

CHRISTINE

Well, I'll leave you to your  
reading.

Mike watches her leave, smitten.

Jill walks up munching on her plate of broken baked goods.

JILL

Were you just chatting on a girl?

MIKE

I think she works at that nursing  
home across the street.

JILL

You should hit that.

MIKE

Jill, where did you learn this mode  
of speech?

JILL

My kids. So, you gonna ask her out?

MIKE

Yeah, I'm sure a girl that pretty  
would be thrilled to date the guy  
who sells her gas. Maybe she just  
broke up with her paperboy.

JILL

Mike, you need to get out more,  
make some friends. It just makes me  
sad to think of you at home all  
alone doing... whatever it is that  
you do all night.



MIKE  
Jill! Was that a reference to  
masturbation?

JILL  
No!

MIKE  
Sweet innocent Jill, I'm shocked.

JILL  
Listen, I'm serious. Why don't you  
come over some night and spend some  
time with me and Doug?

MIKE  
Oh my God, Jill! You're inviting me  
to a three way with you and your  
husband?!

JILL  
Stop it. You could watch a movie  
with us and the kids.

MIKE  
*A movie? Your kids? Now it's  
getting really sick.*

ELDERLY WOMAN (O.C.)  
I NEED some HELP back here!

Jill and Mike look at each other.

INT. GAS STATION AISLES

Mike walks up to a loud and demanding ELDERLY WOMAN and a  
nice middle-aged MAN WITH SICK WIFE.

ELDERLY WOMAN  
Do you work here?

Mike points to the ZOOM LOGO on his red vest and smiles a  
"may I help you?" smile.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)  
I need some Vanilla Ensure. Va-nil-  
la.

MIKE  
(looking)  
Sorry, looks like we're out.

MAN WITH SICK WIFE

Oh darn. I need some too. For my wife. She's very sick. (lower) She can't keep anything down. It's like a faucet.

Mike grimaces -- too much information.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Well, do you have more in the back?

MIKE

No, but we get a delivery at 5.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Well, aren't you going to go and check?!

MIKE

Listen, I know we don't have any so honestly, I'd just be walking back to the storeroom, standing there as I count to 20, then walking back out here again. Would you like me to do that for you?

ELDERLY WOMAN

So I came down here for nothing then?! Do you know what gas costs these days?

MIKE

You do know where I work, right?

Elderly woman stomps off. Mike shrugs apologetically to Man With Sick Wife.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

Mike returns to the register as Jerry walks in, beaming.

JERRY

Mike, I've got big news. Donna and I are thinking of buying the store.

MIKE

Really?

JERRY

(acting like a big shot)  
Yeah, I figure why not. Donna and I have a little chunk of change in the bank. Last year was a real good year for us-- real good.

MIKE

Oh yeah, Donna's dad died, right?

JERRY

Yeah.

(rolling right past that)

I know Mike, you probably look at me and see I have a nice house, a big TV, a top of the line Weber grill and you think I'm content to just coast. But I'm not. It's like Robin Williams said in that movie, sometimes you just gotta Carpe Diem.

MIKE

Well, good luck.

JERRY

Mike, I promise you this: when I own this gas station, it's gonna be someplace you'll be proud to work.

MIKE

Jerry, I know for a fact that's wrong, but it's a nice sentiment.

JERRY

I'm serious. If this works out, I'd like to make you manager.

MIKE

What? No. I'm not old enough. I've only been here for a year--

JERRY

Hey, Jerry Leudtke's gas station isn't going to play by the rules.

MIKE

I'm just not sure it's a good idea--

JERRY

Don't be silly. You've earned it. Sometimes I think you're the only other employee besides me who cares about this place.

Mike looks HORRIFIED.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

Jerry is on his stool. Mike pages through a magazine.

In walks KEN, 55, cocky, cheap suit, hair dyed monochrome black, a big fish in a small pond.

JERRY

Ken! Nice to see you? How's everything across the street?

KEN

Brutal day. I've been meeting with contractors all morning. We're adding 20 more beds. They never stop making old people, do they? Ah, well, I can't complain. It's good for business.

Mike glances up from his magazine, at Ken with contempt.

JERRY

Speaking of business, I have some news. I'm buying the Zoom.

Browsing newspapers, barely listening.

KEN

You don't say?

JERRY

Yeah, it's a great opportunity. I figure I'll start with this one and then maybe open a few more down the line. Who know? Might end up owning the whole chain.

Ken hands Mike money for his paper. Mike picks it up with the tips of his fingers, as if Ken's money is dirty. This goes unnoticed by Jerry and Ken.

KEN

Well, good thinking.  
(getting an idea)  
Heeeey, I'm having coffee with the WABA president down at the Whitetail Inn later this afternoon. You should come with me.

MIKE

What's wabba?

KEN  
Wausau Area Business Association.  
It's a great place to meet lonely  
real estate agents.

Mike makes a GAGGING sound. When Ken and Jerry turn:

MIKE  
(knocking chest)  
Sorry. Chicken bone.

JERRY  
I'd love to! If I'm going to be a  
business owner here in Wausau, I'll  
definitely want to give back to the  
community.

KEN  
Sure sure. I'll swing by and pick  
you up at 3. We can go in the  
Stang.

Ken walks out.

MIKE  
(disgusted)  
Stang?

JERRY  
(amazed)  
Wabba.

Inspector walks up.

INSPECTOR  
Jerry. There you are. Can I ask you  
those questions now?

JERRY  
(happy)  
Absolutely. And in fact, I have  
some questions for you.

INT. BACK OFFICE

Jerry and Inspector sit in back office. Inspector pages  
through his papers on clipboard.

INSPECTOR  
All right. Firstly, does the  
business maintain to the street or  
to the sidewalk?

JERRY  
 (not sure)  
 Uh... definitely the street.

INSPECTOR  
 How often are the gutters and  
 downspouts cleaned?

JERRY  
 Once a week. Twice a week.

Inspector glances up, not believing this.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
 So tell me, how is the building?  
 Solid right? I mean, I do quarterly  
 visual inspections so...

INSPECTOR  
 I can only give those details to  
 Mr. Shultz.

JERRY  
 But I'm thinking of buying it.

INSPECTOR  
 That's even more reason I can only  
 tell Mr. Shultz. Have you ever  
 owned a retail property before?

JERRY  
 Well, my brother and I owned a  
 rootbeer stand up by the dam, but  
 uh, that didn't work out.

INSPECTOR  
 (looks up, warming up for  
 first time)  
 Oh really? Whereabouts by the dam?

JERRY  
 Right there where Highway C turns  
 into V.

INSPECTOR  
 (softening)  
 No kidding. I'm from Granton.

JERRY  
 Oh really? I'm from Abbotsford. Go  
 Falcons.

INSPECTOR  
 Did you play?

JERRY

Oh, you bet.

INSPECTOR

You probably had games against my son. He's about your age.

JERRY

Oh, those Greyhounds were tough.

INSPECTOR

(chuckling)

Yep.

(deciding to help Jerry)

Well, like I said, I can only give the details to Mr. Shultz but as manager you're probably aware of the *major issues with the building*.

Inspector looks meaningfully at Jerry -- a look that says "there are big problems." But Jerry doesn't really catch on.

JERRY

Oh sure, I know this place real well.

INSPECTOR

So then even if I am not legally allowed to tell you, you would know that there are structural problems that could result in *extremely costly repairs in the next several years*.

Jerry finally catches on. His FACE FALLS.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Mike at counter waves goodbye to the muscular DELIVERY MAN, studly in a mulleted country music singer sorta way.

MIKE

Thanks, Rick. See you Monday.

Jerry walks up, grumpy, mulling the news about the building.

There are four cans of Ensure on the counter.

JERRY

What's this about?

MIKE

Some guy asked me to put some of this stuff behind the counter for him.

JERRY

We don't do layaways.

MIKE

But his wife's sick -- I won't go into details -- and it's been selling out.

JERRY

Sorry, Mike, but this is a free market society. If we put things behind the counter, we might as well resort to socialism.

(calling out)

Chad! Come reshelve these cans.

Chad walks up slowly and takes them, slowly, one at a time.

JERRY grabs the UPC price scanner gun from under the counter, punches some numbers.

MIKE

What are you doing?

JERRY

I'm raising the price to adjust for increased demand.

(handing sticker to Chad)

Chad! New sticker.

MIKE

There's a name for this. It's called price gouging.

JERRY

It's called good business. Mike, I CAN be trusted to make wise business decisions. I can't help it that no one appreciates rootbeer anymore.

Mike doesn't know what he's talking about.

A MUSTANG pulls up right outside the front door and HONKS.

JERRY (CONT'D)

(looks at watch)

Oh Jeez.

(MORE)



JERRY (CONT'D)

Listen, I'll be back in an hour. If Donna comes, tell her... don't tell her anything.

MIKE

Sounds easy enough.

Jill walks up.

JILL

What was that about?

MIKE

I don't know. Jerry wants to buy the store. Maybe that.

JILL

(critical of Donna)  
Donna's going to let him? Even though it's "her money."

MIKE

Meow... Rarr.

Mike mimes a cat clawing and then a cat ripping an animal apart and eating it violently.

JILL

I'm sorry, I just find her a bit condescending with her nails and her job at the hair salon in the mall and her "Hi Jill. Your earrings are so fun." If someone doesn't respect me, I don't respect them.

Jill angrily tidies the lighters in a LIGHTER DISPLAY for a few seconds until she's calmer.

MIKE

Jerry said if he does buy this place, he wants to make me manager.

JILL

Well, great! You almost do that job anyway. You deserve it.

MIKE

Oh no! Please don't say I deserve this. I don't deserve this!

JILL

Mike, what is it with you today?

MIKE

I don't know. I just... I need to figure out what I want to do with my life. Ugh, I sound like such a cliché! God, I'm gonna go stick my head in the Hot & Fresh oven.

JILL

(that reminds her)  
Oh! I forgot to wipe out the oven!

She grabs a towel but before she goes:

JILL (CONT'D)

Well, what are you thinking you want to do?

MIKE

I guess maybe I'll go back to school. Maybe not fail at it this time. Start with a class or two.

JILL

Well... if you're manager you'll be making the schedule. That'd be convenient.

MIKE

And I'd be making more money. I could use it for tuition.

JILL

Mike, just because you're good at one thing doesn't mean you can't be good at something else too. People don't get just one chance.

Jill leaves. Mike considers this.

INT. THE WHITETAIL INN

The nicest restaurant in this small town, mostly empty at this time of day. There is a big mural of a deer on the wall.

Ken enters with Jerry, who looks EXCITED.

GINA SCHUMACHER, a fairly attractive soccer mom type, walks up.

GINA

Ken, you made it. I was starting to think you were avoiding me.

KEN

I brought a friend with me. Jerry Leudtke, Gina Schumacher.

JERRY

You're Dylan's mom, aren't you?

GINA

(too proudly)

Sometimes I can't believe it myself.

They all sit down at a table.

KEN

Gina and her husband own this place.

JERRY

I hear you have a great Friday fish fry.

GINA

Yes, well the Whitetail is our *other* pride and joy.

KEN

Gina, Jerry is buying a chain of gas stations. I thought we could bring him into WABA.

JERRY

Well, not a chain. One store. A Zoom. Actually your husband comes into my store a lot. He likes his Leinenkugel's, huh?

Jerry, a beer drinker himself, means it positively but Gina FROWNS.

KEN

I was thinking Jerry would be perfect to replace me as head of the Art Fair On The Square Committee.

GINA

Oh, is that so?

JERRY

Or I could do Bratfest. That's probably a bit more up my alley.

GINA  
 (laughing)  
 Bratfest! A brand-new member on the  
 bratfest committee!

JERRY  
 Oh sure, well, then I'd love to do  
 the... whatever you called it. The  
 Art thing.

KEN  
 Well, great then! Gina, put his  
 name down.

JERRY  
 (nervous)  
 I mean, IF I end up buying the  
 store. It might not happen. It's  
 not for sure. There was this  
 inspection. I just don't know.

GINA  
 Oh, so you're not *currently* a  
 Wausau area business owner?  
 (looks to Ken)

KEN  
 Come on, Gina. Let's not quibble.

JERRY  
 No, she's right. Gina, Ken, thanks  
 for having me but I think I should  
 go. I need to think this whole  
 thing over. I'll let you know if it  
 works out.

Jerry heads for the door. Ken follows.

KEN  
 (whispering)  
 What's the problem? Is it about the  
 Art Fair on the Square? Listen,  
 I've been stuck with it for three  
 years. If I see one more painting  
 of a barn--

JERRY  
 I'm just not sure. It's Donna's  
 money, you know. From her dad. I  
 don't want to make a bad decision.

GINA (O.S.)  
 Ken?

KEN

Jerry, come on. WABA needs you.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA - AT SAME TIME

MIKE

Hey, Jill, I'm gonna run home for my break. I forgot to feed Lewis and Clark this morning.

JILL

Oooo, tell them hi from Aunt Jill! Scritch their little ears for me!

EXT. STREETS OF WAUSAU

Mike's car drives, passing more gas stations and chain stores. The city is too big to be quaint but still too small to be exceptional. He passes by a SIGN that says, "Wausau, the city with "USA" in the middle."

INT. MIKE'S APARTMENT

Mike walks into a sparsely furnished apartment. There are a lot of stacks of DVDs and a few books. There's some random interesting pictures taped to the wall, a knight, an Andy Warhol print of a gun, an explosion, etc.

Two CATS swarm Mike's legs. He pours food into a BOWL.

MIKE

Okay, okay. I know this is the only reason you care about me but try to hide it a little.

Mike grabs a box of cereal, sits down at his old iMac, brings up a search engine.

His HANDS hover over the keyboard for a long time. Finally he types:

MIKE (CONT'D (CONT'D)

(as he types)

What... to... do... with my... life.

He hits return and a list of results pop up.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(reading screen)

Play free games and have fun at what to do dot com. (beat) Huh, that was simple.

He pours himself some cereal and we hear COMPUTER GAME SOUNDS as he starts to play.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

Jerry walks in.

Inspector walks up with a manila envelope.

INSPECTOR

Jerry? Mr. Shultz asked me to leave this with you. He'll be in later tonight. I wouldn't normally leave this *private information about the condition of this building* with anyone but the owner but he asked me to.

JERRY

Oh? Oh!  
(to Jill)  
Jill, I'll be in the back.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA - LATER

Donna walks in. Jill is at the register.

DONNA

Hi Jill. How's it going?

JILL

(coldly)  
Donna. Hello.

Donna doesn't notice the chill. This is a one-sided feud.

DONNA

I'm making homemade hot wings and I ran out of ketchup. Do you guys have that?

JILL

(coldly)  
I believe so. Aisle two.

DONNA

Thanks. Where's Jer?

INT. BACK OFFICE

Jerry is paging through the inspection report. Donna walks in. Jerry JUMPS and tries to hide the papers.

DONNA  
What's that?

JERRY  
Nothing. Delivery, er, mail.  
Receipts.

DONNA  
(trying to grab them)  
Let me see. Jerry, come on. Jerry!

JERRY  
(finally handing them  
over)  
It's the inspection report.

DONNA  
And?

JERRY  
There are some issues. The roof...  
the walls... the floors... some  
other things.

Jerry looks sad.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mike walks in front door. Jill rushes up, frazzled.

JILL  
Mike! That old woman is back and  
she's fa-reaking out. Can you go  
talk to her?

INT. GAS STATION AISLES - CONTINUOUS

To Mike as he enters:

ELDERLY WOMAN 1  
This has to be the wrong price. It  
says six dollars.

MIKE  
Yeah, my manager raised the price.

ELDERLY WOMAN  
That's highway robbery. It's two  
dollars over at the ValueMart.

MIKE  
Well, sure, that place has "value"  
right in the name. You know, why  
don't you just get it over there?  
(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

I would. Things are way overpriced here.

ELDERLY WOMAN

I can't drive all the way across town. It'll be dark in two hours!

Corey Schumacher and Corey's Friend enter the crowded aisle and grab cans of Ensure.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)

What do you two think you're doing?

COREY SCHUMACHER

(actually scared for once)  
What? Nothing.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Have you been buying all the Ensure? Is that why they raised the price?

COREY'S FRIEND

(terrified)  
I... I don't know. Who... who are you?

ELDERLY WOMAN

I want a Vanilla Ensure -- Va-nil-la -- and I'm not going to pay six dollars for it!

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BACK OFFICE

MIKE

(knocking)  
Jerry, uh, I need you. Code Crazy Lady.

INT. BACK OFFICE

JERRY

Be there in a minute.

Jerry looks at Donna, full of emotion.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Donna, I want to buy this gas station. I know it and I know the people who come in here and I know we could get another gas station but I want *this* gas station.



INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

The owner walks in. He shakes his head because there's no one at the register and heads to the back.

## INT. BACK OFFICE

MR. SHULTZ (O.S.)  
Hello? Jerry?

Jerry quickly rearranges the inspection papers and shoves them in the envelope.

JERRY  
Come in!

Mr. Shultz enters.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Mr. Shultz. The inspector left something for you. Here.

Hands him the envelope.

Jerry notices another page on the floor and hands him that, too.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Oh, and here.

MR. SHULTZ  
Thanks. Well, I'll be in touch. There may be some people coming through here to look at the store.

JERRY  
(sadly)  
Okay. I can show them around.

MR. SHULTZ  
Oh no, I wouldn't something like that for you to handle. You're just the manager here. I'll come back up.

Donna stares at Mr. Schultz.

DONNA  
(angry)  
What does that mean, "JUST the manager?"

MR. SHULTZ  
Well, that's what he is.

DONNA

Excuse me, but this store is Jerry's life. And the people who come in here are his life. Even on his days off, he's over here, checking to make sure everything is okay. You say he's JUST the manager? Well, not anymore. Mr. Schultz, we'd would like to make you an offer for this property.

MR. SHULTZ

Is she serious?

Jerry nods.

DONNA

Now, Jerry knows this place better than anyone -- so he happens to know there are a few issues with the building. But if you name a fair price that takes that into account, we can do this without a broker and save us both some money.

Jerry looks at Donna, impressed.

Mr. Shultz pauses a moment, taking this in.

MR. SHULTZ

(shrugging)

Well, okay then. Let me read through this report and we'll talk.

JERRY

(whispers to Donna)

Thank you.

DONNA

(to Jerry in a whisper)

Oh, for heaven's sake, Jerry. No one talks to you that way. This is your store.

INT. GAS STATION AISLES - CONTINUOUS

Man With Sick Wife walks up to the already crowded aisle.

MAN WITH SICK WIFE

(to Mike)

Hi. I spoke to you earlier about putting some Ensure behind the counter?

ELDERLY WOMAN

So it was YOU who's been HOARDING  
the Ensure.

MAN WITH SICK WIFE

Hoarding? My wife is very sick. She  
can't keep anything down. It's like  
a faucet.

Mike grimaces.

ELDERLY WOMAN

And I'm not? Ever since my doctor  
put me on Zenetrol everything  
tastes like chalk to me.

MIKE

So that's what Zenetrol does! It  
makes everything taste like chalk.

ELDERLY WOMAN

(indignant)

My medical matters are none of your  
business!

COREY SCHUMACHER

We don't want this stuff anymore.  
You can have it all.

Corey and Corey's friend run out.

JERRY enters.

MIKE

Ah! THIS is Jerry, the manager!

ELDERLY WOMAN

Are you the one who raised the  
price of the Ensure?

In background, Man With Sick Wife is grabbing cans of Ensure  
from the shelf.

JERRY

(to Mike)

I believe you mean owner!

MIKE

You're buying the gas station?  
Congratulations!

JERRY

We're going to dedicate to the memory of Donna's father. Make a plaque and everything.

MIKE

Well there you go.

Mike leaves.

SHOPPER follows with big armful of Ensure.

ELDERLY WOMAN

So YOU own this store now?

JERRY

Not only am I the new owner of this gas station, but at this very moment my wife is making hot wings! All in one day!

Jerry walks out rubbing his hands and saying "mm."

Elderly woman is left standing there alone.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Did you just walk out?

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA - CONTINUOUS

Jerry is on his way out.

MIKE

Hey Jerry, I hope you don't mind but I made a managerial decision to lower the price of the Ensure. I don't want rioting over the stuff. And that nice guy was buying like 20 cans of it.

JERRY

(in a good mood)  
Sure sure, what the heck. So you decided to take the manager job?

MIKE

Yeah, I don't think I'm gonna be here forever but yeah, I can do the paperwork and the invoices and all that stuff, no problem. So sure. I mean, sometimes you just gotta Carpe Diem.

JERRY

Great! Well, hold down the fort  
until Steve gets in.

Jerry leaves, pressing his keychain to make his SUV BEEP.

MIKE

Holding.

INT. GAS STATION AISLES

The elderly woman mutters as she sorts through the cans of  
Ensure on the shelf.

ELDERLY WOMAN

What is even going on here?

Man With Sick Wife enters, holding up a heavy bag.

MAN WITH SICK WIFE

Hey lady. Are you looking for  
Vanilla Ensure? Well you won't find  
it. I just bought every last can.  
Just to spite you.

INT. CASH REGISTER AREA

Mike leans on the counter. Christine walks in. Mike stands up  
straight quickly.

MIKE

Hi there. Gas?

CHRISTINE

Yup... and... this.

Grabs some gum.

MIKE

Good choice. The Juicy Fruit is  
excellent today.  
(looking at register)  
Okay, your total is 34.43.

CHRISTINE

Wow. The price of gum these days.

She hands Mike a credit card.

MIKE

I know. This country should invade  
wherever the gum trees come from.

CHRISTINE  
Central America. It comes from  
chicle trees.

MIKE  
Chicle as in Chiclets?

CHRISTINE  
You got it.

MIKE  
(liking this fact)  
Hm.

Handing back her credit card:

MIKE (CONT'D)  
And here you go, Christine.  
(suddenly self conscious)  
I'm sorry. I used the credit card  
name. Is that creepy? It is, isn't  
it? I'm sorry. Here's your credit  
card, anonymous woman whose name I  
don't know.

CHRISTINE  
No, it's okay. Really. I come in  
here like every day. It's nice to  
meet you. I'm Christine.

MIKE  
I'm sorry, what did you say?  
Karsteen...? Christhamine?

CHRISTINE  
Christine.

MIKE  
Oh, *Christine!* Well hello, I'm  
Mike.

They shake hands. She smiles. He smiles.

CHRISTINE  
Well, see you tomorrow.

MIKE  
I'll be here.

Mike watches her go. Could a girl like that ever like him?

END OF ACT 2

TAGINT. BACK OFFICE

Mike takes off his red vest and grabs his time card. His shift is over.

Chad enters.

MIKE

Hey Chad. What're you doing here?

CHAD

Gotta check the schedule. See if I'm off for Bratfest.

MIKE

So you're not moving to Milwaukee with your girlfriend?

CHAD

Oh that. We broke up. So that would've be weird moving there together.

MIKE

Oh, I'm sorry. You've been dating quite a while.

CHAD

Yeah, since Mastadon played the fairgrounds. But then I took her to Olive Garden and we made up again.

MIKE

But you're still not going to move?

CHAD

(not following)

Listen, I gotta go. Alicia's waiting in the car. I don't want to make her mad at me again.

Chad leaves.

MIKE

(quietly, to self)

See ya. Wouldn't want to be ya.

Mike inserts his TIME CARD and punches it with a CLUNK.

END OF SHOW