

THE KARAOKE KID

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The lyrics mentioned in the following pages can be substituted at the Production Company's request.

The band name *Pictures of Charlotte* is purely fictitious. Original lyrics & music will be written at a future date.

INT. ROCKIN' BON JOVI CONCERT - 1989

TEENAGED RUSSELL GRAHAM [the embodiment of 1980's style, rocking an 80s-feathered mop of hair].

A spotlight stops: on Russell, pulled toward the stage as the band sings *Living On A Prayer*. He trips up the steps.

BON JOVI

*We've got to hold on to what we've got.  
It doesn't make a difference if we make  
it or not...*

P.O.V. BON JOVI

Russell stumbles towards him, off-balance.

BON JOVI (CONT'D)

*Oh, we're half way there!*

The Crowd joins in:

CROWD, RUSSELL & BON JOVI

*Oh! Living on a prayer!*

Russell tries to regain his balance. Can't. Rockets towards Jon.

CRASH!

Bon Jovi's on his ass. The jolt sets off a pyrotechnic display. And yet, the CROWD keeps singing. Die-hards.

Bon Jovi's signature hair is ON FIRE. RICHIE SAMBORA tackles Bon Jovi, smothering his hair, taking out a STAGE HAND, who falls into a metal light beam, which causes a crash of lights to the stage. The crash of lights sets off the smoke machine.

CROWD

*Living on a prayer --*

As Sambora snuffs out Bon Jovi's hair, they tumble offstage, extinguished by a FIRE MARSHALL. Foamed.

That does it: The CROWD, the Band, the auditorium, silenced. The stage is in ruin. Smoky. Sparkey. Stunned.

All eyes in the stadium on Russell, standing center stage:

*RUSSELL*  
*(voice cracks)*  
*Oh, living... on a... prayer.*

The amp squeals, piercing the silence of the stadium.

INT. RUSSELL GRAHAM'S BEDROOM - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

Hundreds of cassette tapes. VHS cassettes labelled *BEST OF MTV*. Framed posters of 80's ROCK BANDS.

A RINGING ALARM: 7 A.M.

Body buried by covers, an arm flails out from under them and expertly silences it.

7:01 A.M., another ALARM. A CHIME from a TRACFONE PREPAID CELL PHONE. Empty prepaid cards scattered nearby. The buried arm re-emerges searching for the Snooze. Snoozed.

7:02 A.M., a loud CLOCK RADIO cuts through the quiet.

RADIO JOCKEY (V.O.)  
 ...back to a straight set of ten in a row  
 on 88.1: "The Home of the 80's". Here's a  
 little *Yes* to get your day started.

The drums and electric guitar do nothing to move the comforter-covered body. Then the back beat begins. Hands reach from under the covers, mimicking drum playing:

*YES*  
*Move yourself. You always live your life*  
*never thinking of the future.*

The covers of the bed are thrown back. GROWN-UP RUSSELL GRAHAM [30s, a baby-faced everyman] sits up, singing:

*RUSSELL*  
*Prove yourself, you are the move you*  
*make. Take your chances, win or loser.*

-- to his knees. He's into it, and he can sing.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*  
*See yourself. You are the steps you*  
*take.*

-- he jumps out of bed, getting caught up in his blankets. He stumbles, falls, but never stops singing:

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*  
*You and you - and that's the only way*  
*...Shake, shake yourself. You're every*  
*move you make.*

He extends his arm dramatically.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*  
*So the story goes!*

MUSIC CONTINUES OVER:

INT. RUSSELL'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Soapy Russell is in the shower, still singing. A bar soap is the mic. He closes his eyes and:

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION:

He's still naked, but the shower's become a replica of *Yes!'s* video for *OWNER OF A LONELY HEART*.

*RUSSELL*  
*Owner of a lonely heart! Owner of a*  
*lonely heart!*

He toss-flips the soap bar and catches it! Awesome! But it rockets through his grasp and slams to the tub floor.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*  
*Much better than an owner of a broken*  
*heart!*

He pulls back the shower curtain... to reveal a stage-like atmosphere, facing the backs of the band members of *Yes!* singing to a cheering audience.

*YES!*  
*Owner of a lonely heart!*

Naked Russell searches for an ounce of his naked self respect. He slides the curtain closed.

BACK TO REALITY.

The stage goes away.

INT. RUSSELL'S LIVING ROOM

It's furnished with ugly 80's furniture, including the floor model tv (like your grandma's) & remote attached by a cord.

With coiffed 80s hair-band hair, Russell enters and flips on the tv:

*On TV: A 2009-styled morning show ANCHOR-team.*

ANCHOR (ON TV)  
-- to local news, now.

She glances at her co-anchor.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)  
-- is this news?

Her co-anchor laughs.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)  
The International Karaoke Championship is on the hunt to select two talented singers to participate in this year's International Karaoke Competition from the lot of our local talent.

CO-ANCHOR  
What could you possibly win that would possess you to --

ANCHOR  
\$250,000?

The co-anchor mock-falls out of his chair.

*ON TV: A cloud icon appears in the corner with 67F. That's what he was waiting for. CLICK! TV Off. On go his Aviator Sunglasses and he's out the door.*

EXT. STREET - MORNING

A NERDY YOUNG KID runs by Russell at full speed, accidentally kicking a discarded soda can on the sidewalk. It wasn't empty and soda splatters Russell.

And then he's almost tackled by THREE BIGGER KIDS who chase the Nerdy Young Kid down the sidewalk.

EXT. BUS STOP - MOMENTS LATER

The Nerdy Young Kid rushes to board the bus. Pales. No fare. The Three Bigger Kids near. From his pocket Russell's got just enough coin.

RUSSELL

I got it covered.

The kid smiles at Russell then his eyes grow wide as the bus doors close:

NERDY YOUNG KID

Run like hell!

RUSSELL

*Pink Floyd! The Wall.* Singled in 1979.

Russell looks over his shoulder - oh, shit! ...the Three Bigger Kids. They saw what Russell did and they aren't happy.

BIG KID

Get him!

Chased by the Three Bigger Kids, he takes off, a middle-aged dude running full speed down the sidewalk.

INT. "88.1 FM: THE HOME OF THE 80'S" STUDIO - MORNING

Russell's in a tiny PLEXIGLAS BOOTH covered with 80s band posters. *Twisted Sister's I WANNA ROCK* plays.

RUSSELL

*I wanna rock!*

He air drums.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*I wanna rock!*

And the song finishes. MUTE BUTTON OFF:

RADIO VOICE RUSSELL

That was Twisted Sister on 88.1. I've got two tickets for the B-52s in concert and I'll take caller number 1... Up next, we'll be speaking with Charley Cooke of *Pictures of Charlotte*, followed by another long-set of straight music.

MUTE BUTTON ON: *Pictures of Charlotte's 80s power ballad* begins. Russell watches the phone lines. Nothing.

He nervously organizes his desk. ERIC, [a chubby hipster in his mid-30s] enters.

ERIC

Dude, she was the Madonna of 1986 and she's entered the building.

RUSSELL

Wasn't Madonna, the Madonna of 1986?

ERIC

Are you nervous?

RUSSELL

No.

(beat)

Yes.

He flops his head to the desk. The phone RINGS. Russell hits "record":

RADIO VOICE RUSSELL

This is 88.1 and congratulations! You're caller number 1!

There's SILENCE on the phone.

CALLER (V.O.)

(surprise)

Oh. Uh.

(beat)

Can you play something by Justin Bieber?

Exasperated, Russell hangs up the phone and hands two tickets to Eric:

RUSSELL

B-52s?

ERIC

So tired of *Love Shack*.

PETER [an uptight guy, in a cheap business suit], KNOCKS and enters. He ushers in CHARLEY COOKE [late 30s, scantily clad, wearing a bar apron and Aviator Sunglasses, like Russell's].

Eric and Russell chivalrously stand, staring at her barely covered boobs.

PETER

Ms. Cooke, this is Russell Graham. He'll be interviewing you today.

Charley gives him a disapproving once-over.

CHARLEY

You sound way cooler on the radio.

Ouch.

PETER

Russell, Eric? Staff meeting in my office after the interview.

Peter exits, and Eric offers Russell a thumbs up in the door frame before closing the door.

Charley takes a seat, tossing her Aviators on Russell's desk. She expertly slips on the headphones and repositions the mic. Something catches her eye:

A framed Billboard Magazine cover. Two photos, one of YOUNGER CHARLEY and one of a hard, edgy acid-wash-wearing female [this is MONA]: Pictures of Charlotte versus Mona Maniac.

CHARLEY

You'll need to take that down.

Russell looks to the wall. Sees the magazine cover and rips it off the wall. Sends it flying.

Seeing her glasses, he shows her his. The same! He places them next to hers:

RUSSELL

Great minds think alike.

She grimaces.

CHARLEY

(snaps into work-mode)

Look, we're gonna keep it quick. Stuff that's off limits:

(she counts on her fingers)

My Grammy loss, my fade into oblivion, my battle with internal demons in the 90s.

(she thinks and continues)

Also, my current career, anything about my love life, past or present. Uh -

(still thinking)

Oh, and no mention of Mona.

(MORE)

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

I can't stand that bitch. Or my Eighties hairstyle. And don't ask me about my future plans. Got it?

Russell looks to his sheet of prepared questions. Crosses most of them out. She can't help but stare at his appearance. His hair. His outfit. With biting sarcasm:

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

That's a real style you've got rockin', huh?

Russell looks to his outfit, then to hers. Her only bite of the 80s: she's wearing neon snap bracelets (the ones that were banned).

RUSSELL

I've been looking for snap bracelets forever.

CHARLEY

Can we get this show on the road? I have to open the bar in an hour.

The song continues. Awkward silence. Charley bounces one leg crossed over the other. She looks to the control panel. Motions to hurry it up.

RUSSELL

I have to wait for your song to end.

She leans over Russell's control panel, fades down the music and hits the mute button. And the song ends. MUTE BUTTON OFF. Russell panics, then recovers:

RADIO VOICE RUSSELL

That was - most of - *Pictures of Charlotte*, and with me is Charley Cooke. Thanks for being here, Charley.

CHARLEY

Sure.

RADIO VOICE RUSSELL

What was it like, being an Eighties icon?

Charley leans into the mic, and with a heavy, serious voice:

CHARLEY

Awful.

Silence. Not the answer he was expecting. He looks around the room for help from some unseen force, but Charley soldiers on:

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

And pointless. The Eighties are proof everything's impermanent.

RUSSELL

But, some things are permanent, like your legions of dedicated fans --

CHARLEY

-- who are all crazy. Every single one of them.

RUSSELL

They're probably listening...

CHARLEY

I'm not telling them anything they don't know, already.

RUSSELL

Touring, though. Filling stadiums? Fun?

No answer. He looks to his sheet of prepared questions: everything's crossed out. He stares into her eyes. She stares back.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*When I look in your eyes, I go crazy.  
Fevers hot with the lights down low.  
Take me over the edge, make me lose  
control.*

CHARLEY

Did you just have a stroke?

RUSSELL

No.

CHARLEY

Why did you just sing Eric Carmen?

RUSSELL

I gotta thing for you --  
(corrects himself)  
-- lyrics. I like lyrics.

CHARLEY

(dubiously)  
Right.

(MORE)

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

(beat)

Look -- it was a decade when image won over reality. The music was bad and the fashion was worse. People create icons and lucky me, I happened to be one of them.

(a beat)

Fuck --

Russell dives to cover Charley's microphone:

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

-- sometimes, I just wish the 80s had never happened.

She reaches across the desk and drinks out of Russell's bottle of water. Covering her mic with her hand --

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

We good?

Russell slams his head to the desk.

RUSSELL

(muffled)

Rockin'.

Before she goes:

CHARLEY

Don't forget to stop by Jack & Diane's for the city's best karaoke.

Charley stands and takes off her headphones, grabs a pair of Aviators and sticks them in her purse, then exits the studio.

INT. 88.1 CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Russell exits his Plexiglas studio, dejected. He's rejoined by Eric.

ERIC

So, are you coming tonight?...

(Russell's clueless)

To my birthday?... Rock Band at Media Castle? Remember?

Absolutely doesn't.

RUSSELL

(unconvincing)

Yes. Of course I remembered! Happy --

Russell looks around the corridor for a gift - nothing - then pulls a Styrofoam promotional guitar off of the wall. He hands it to a shocked Eric:

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

-- Birthday.

Eric stares at his present.

ERIC

Come on: Me, Lyle, Steve, Billie Jean.

RUSSELL

The chick from 97.2? Are you guys...? --

ERIC

Billie Jean is not my lover.

Eric tries to stick the guitar back on the wall.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Come on, there are a bunch bands on the set list.

(beat)

Wilco?

No recognition.

ERIC (CONT'D)

The Flaming Lips? Radiohead?

Nothing.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Come on, Russell. Everyone knows Radiohead.

RUSSELL

I usually set aside Tuesday nights for debilitating self-pity.

Russell makes a face. Co-worker after co-worker join them as they walk.

ERIC

We're never going to win the 1,000,000 Point Challenge without you.

They're joined by co-workers STEVE (gives RUN-D.M.C. a run for their money), and LYLE (favors the Glam Metal look. A Twisted Sister tattoo over his eyes).

Together they form an over-the-hill pack of too much pleather, skinny jeans, and hair.

STEVE

Come on, man. When are we going to hear you sing?

RUSSELL

I work in radio. I'm invisible for a reason.

... and Russell reaches for the handle of the door.

INT. ROOM AT THE END OF THE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

A sombre Russell sits at a huge conference table with his COWORKERS. Everyone's quiet. Peter enters with a file in hand.

PETER

Fifty percent of the population has Satellite radio, the rest can go on the internet and listen to one of a million internet radio options. iPods have taken over the ears of pedestrians and the play-lists at workplaces. Ad revenue is non-existent. If that's not bad enough, our sets are killing us. The Go-Gos, Air Supply, Christopher Cross?

Peter slaps a file folder on the conference table. It startles a handful of people.

PETER (CONT'D)

The station's dying.

Frustrated, Peter holds his head in his hands.

PETER (CONT'D)

Who in this room can name the Number One Selling Artist in 2009?

Blank stares. Peter holds up a glossy photo of Taylor Swift from the Grammy's.

PETER (CONT'D)

Meet Taylor Swift.

RUSSELL

(to Eric)

I live in fear of accidentally hearing a Taylor Swift song, and liking it.

He tacks the photo to the wall.

PETER

The Eighties comeback had its heyday during the Boy Band fiasco of the Nineties. Head-to-head, Foreigner trumps the Backstreet Boys any day of the week, but we both know they can't compete with the likes of Lady Gaga. We're going under, and unless I can pull in a boatload of money in the next six weeks, we're done for.

Russell leans back in his chair - as if he needs more distance between he and Peter. A slime-ball businessman enters the room - this is RICH.

PETER (CONT'D)

Guys, meet Rich, the new interim owner of 88.1.

Jaws drop.

PETER (CONT'D)

Rich has a bid to take over 88.1's FCC License.

Rich smiles a slimy smile.

PETER (CONT'D)

Unless we can come up with a \$125,000 by April 1st, 88.1's on the chopping block.

RICH

In an effort to increase ad revenues before April 1st, Peter has signed over temporary control of all station business matters.

PETER

Rich owns 100.1.

ERIC

Isn't that... pop?

PETER

He's taking the station in a new direction.

Peter takes a seat in the chair at the end of the table - a mile away from his employees.

RICH

Cutting costs. Cutting salaries.  
Changing play lists: continually looped  
music current to today's listening  
demands. Eighties stations have a 0.1%  
share of the listening demographic. You  
know what other station got a 0.1% share?

No response from anyone.

RICH (CONT'D)

Spanish Oldies.

(beat)

Kids want Jay-Z, not ZZ Top.

He dramatically opens it and in walk an equal number of  
YOUNG, HIP, MULTICULTURED TWENTY-SOMETHINGS.

RICH (CONT'D)

Meet the new 88.1.

THE NEW 88.1 take seats across from their "counterparts".

Updated hip adult-contemporary GUY.

Updated R&B GUY.

Updated Rocker GUY.

Updated POP MUSIC GIRL, [25, gorgeous]. She sits across  
from Russell with a sexy Cheshire Cat smile.

RICH (CONT'D)

I trust you will help make the transition  
a seamless one. I'll have your pink  
slips mailed to you by week's end.  
Thanks for your hard work.

Shock. Everyone but Russell, Peter and Rich exit.

RUSSELL

Are we fired?

PETER

Unless you have \$125,000 --

RICH

-- think of these guys as quality  
control.

(a beat)

And you've just hit your expiration date.

INT. "88.1 FM: THE HOME OF THE 80'S" STUDIO - LATER

Russell and Addie enter RUSSELL'S OFFICE. Pop Music Girl looks around, aghast.

POP MUSIC GIRL

Time warp.

She gapes at the posters, awards, framed autographed photos, as Russell takes them off the wall.

A glance to Russell's desk: 80's paraphernalia.

POP MUSIC GIRL (CONT'D)

(re: a framed photo)

Who are these guys?

Russell's dumbfounded:

RUSSELL

That's Pat Benetar.

Pop Music Girl is clueless.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*Heartbreaker? We Belong?*

Still nothing.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*Hit me with your Best Shot?*

She moves on to another photo: Madonna as Material Girl.

POP MUSIC GIRL

Hey! Lady Gaga!?

He stares at her, so unimpressed with life. Russell holds a box to the side of his desk and in one swoop, clears off his desk top.

He grabs his Aviators, shoves them in his pocket, exits the office.

INT. 88.1 CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

A JANITOR takes down a poster that says: "88.1 FM The Home of the 80's" and replaces it with "88.1 FM: Picks of The Next Generation".

Carrying the small box, Russell brushes by the Styrofoam guitar (from before) and it falls to the floor.

He tries to stick it back to the wall. Success. Takes two more steps forward and it falls, again.

In a fit of anger and very "rock-star-like", he grabs hold of the guitar neck and smashes it. It explodes, sending Styrofoam everywhere.

EXT. 88.1 FM STUDIO

Russell sits on the curb, staring into space. Eric joins him, broken Styrofoam guitar in hand.

ERIC

Hey, Ozzy Osbourne? Think you forgot this.

With it, he mimics guitar-playing, then hands him the piece of Styrofoam.

RUSSELL

Ozzy didn't break guitars. Peter Townshend did.

ERIC

Peter said he just needs \$125,000. Maybe if we pool our savings --

Russell looks into his wallet - pulls out a \$10, a \$5, and a few singles and tosses them at Eric.

Across the street, a Bus nears the BUS STOP.

ERIC (CONT'D)

At least she's hot.

Russell stands, grabs his box of personal items and walks toward the bus.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

*ON TV: A muted infomercial for bands of the 80s. A list of songs scrolls up the screen. Album Covers. One of PICTURES OF CHARLOTTE.*

Russell's in front of his computer, checking e-mail. SPAM E-MAIL pops up from Karaoke Haven web site. He opens the e-mail and clicks on the link.

It takes him to a web site promoting internet karaoke on the site: "sing yourself to five stars". He scans it and turns off his computer. Grabs the remote.

*CLICK!* Flips to a commercial for Rock Band on sale at Media Castle.

*CLICK!* Flips to The Game Show *DON'T FORGET THE LYRICS*.

TV goes OFF. With a sigh, Russell stands from his recliner. Grabs his Aviators, holds them up to the light, cleans them with his shirt, then tests them.

P.O.V. RUSSELL

The room is blurry. They're Prescription. Not his.

RUSSELL

Damn it.

EXT. JACK & DIANE'S KARAOKE BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

The street is empty save for a dilapidated bar. A 1989 DeTomaso is the only car parked on the street.

INT. JACK & DIANE'S - CONTINUOUS

The inside is in dire need of a makeover. It looks like every tiny-ass hole in the wall.

There are three people left, excluding the help, and two of them are in a loud argument about whether *Duran Duran* could make a comeback. The other GUY is murdering *Lady Gaga's BAD ROMANCE*.

Russell grabs a seat at the bar.

JACK [mid 50s, unimpressed with life], enters from a BACK ROOM, ignoring Russell.

RUSSELL

(to Jack)

Just like American Idol?

Jack's mood changes. Whoops. Wrong comparison.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

(retreating)

-- or, maybe it's nothing like that, at all.

Jack motions to the IKC BANNER above the bar.

JACK

This ain't no 'America Votes' TV show.  
The International Karaoke Competition is  
the Best of the best. You have to gig.  
You have to game. You got game?

Jack slides a GIGANTIC BINDER towards Russell. Russell  
pulls out the Aviators.

RUSSELL

No, but I do have Charley Cooke's  
sunglasses.

Jack motions towards a flight of stairs with a sign  
marked "The Cooler".

JACK

She's downstairs.

RUSSELL

In "The Cooler"?

JACK

They're in competition down there. Be  
quick.

Russell exits through the worn door, down the rickety  
stairs to:

A HUGE WALK-IN COOLER

Shelved cold goods and alcohol everywhere. *MUFFLED*  
*SINGING*. Another door. He opens it to:

INT. PRIVATE KARAOKE CLUB - CONTINUOUS

A busy private bar, the size of a small Taco Bell. An  
*IKC Circuit* banner.

A KARAOKE SINGER sings *Lady Gaga's BAD ROMANCE* on a teeny  
stage. He's fucking awesome.

He suggestively pumps his hips:

*KARAOKE SINGER*

*...I want your love.*

Charley's behind the bar (wearing the same risqué outfit & apron). She fills drinks with a soda-gun, mouthing along with the back track.

KARAOKE SINGER (CONT'D)  
(mouthing the words)  
You know that I want you and you know  
that I need you. I want it bad. Your  
bad romance.

The CROWD cheers. The SINGER unleashes:

KARAOKE SINGER (CONT'D)  
*I want your love and I want your revenge.  
You and me could write a bad romance!*

Russell approaches Charley (*who's doing the choreographed Bad Romance "monster" dance from Gaga's video.*)

A greasy BOOKER with a ponytail, black tapered jeans and a dirty Aerosmith tee intercepts.

BOOKER  
Should I put you down for *White Snake*?

Sees a table of JUDGES near the stage.

RUSSELL  
What is this place?

The booker breathes in a pronounced inhale.

BOOKER  
You know what that smell is?

Russell inhales... makes a face.

RUSSELL  
Gym socks?

BOOKER  
Karaoke!

Charley interrupts.

CHARLEY  
Why are you here?

Russell hands her the Aviators.

RUSSELL  
I can't see a thing out of yours.

Without thanks, she exchanges his for hers and she's on to another customer. He info-dumps:

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I lost my job. They're going to shut down the station. They're switching to Pop. The 80s are officially dead.

CHARLEY

Honey, I don't do sob stories. I've got enough of my own.

And Charley moves to the other end of the bar. Russell looks over to the Booker handing The Karaoke Singer a wad of cash.

BACK UPSTAIRS, IN JACK & DIANE'S

Russell reenters - it's now really busy with the dregs of karaoke's flotsam crammed along the back wall. Someone's singing and the crowd joins.

Mid-song:

BLACKOUT. SILENCE, then CHEERS! The Booker's shouts into the microphone, speaking over current song's track.

BOOKER

Ok, all my Jack & Diane's... you know what this means!

The crowd CHEERS louder! A spot light circles the crowd.

BOOKER (CONT'D)

Duuuuuuuu-et off!

*FLASHBACK: A spotlight panning the Bon Jovi audience. END FLASHBACK.*

Russell does his best to hide behind a group of eager PATRONS, annnnd STOP! The light shines on...

Not Russell.

He breathes a sigh of relief, but catches his breath as the contestant takes the stage: ADDIE DAVIS, [the 25 year old guy every girl wants].

BOOKER (CONT'D)

If she can sing as good as she looks, then it's time to find our loser!

She bows, loves the attention. BLACKOUT, again!

Russell heads towards the door as the spotlight pans the audience once again. He reaches for the handle when, BAM!

His shadow lit up on the wall in front of him. Russell's hand is on the handle. In one move he could be out the door. The crowd begins to chant:

CROWD  
Du-et! Du-et! Du-et!

It sounds like "Do it".

LIGHTS ON.

Addie sees Russell. Into the mic:

ADDIE  
(seductively)  
Come here, Mullet man!

Russell slowly turns to see Charley standing by the bar. Watching. Waiting. He forces a meek smile and takes the stage.

The backtrack to *Queen & Bowie's* duet *UNDER PRESSURE* starts: *Ba-ba-ba-ba-de-bum-bum, Ba-ba-ba-ba-de-bum-bum.*

Russell wipes his sweaty brow. Pats down his clammy hands.

BOOKER  
(over the intro music)  
You know how it works! We throw these two victims a song selection from one of our favorites. Votes go by how loud you cheer for your favorite singer.

The intro fades. Addie motions for Russell to start it off. His voice cracks with:

RUSSELL  
*Pressure! Pushing down on me. Pushing down on you. No man ask for...*

The Audience cracks up. Russell can hit the notes but he's too nervous to sing.

ADDIE  
*Under pressure! That burns a building down. Splits a family in two! Puts people on street. Um ba ba be!*

Russell's turn. He misses his cue, timing thrown.

*RUSSELL*  
 (tries to catch up)  
*Um ba ba be.*

*ADDIE*  
*De day da. Ee day day. It's the terror*  
*of knowing what this world is about.*  
*Watching some good friends screaming ...*

Honestly & spoken:

*RUSSELL*  
 ... Let me out!

Elbow on the bar top, Charley holds her chin in her hand, watching Russell fail.

EXT. JACK & DIANE'S - MOMENTS LATER

Russell exits the bar in a daze.

*CHARLEY*  
 Hey, Bowie?!

Russell freezes.

*CHARLEY (CONT'D)*  
 You ever consider signing up for the IKC?

*RUSSELL*  
 Nice. Kick me while I'm down.

Ashamed, Russell looks to his feet.

*CHARLEY*  
 I'm serious. \$250,000 to the winner.  
 That's a lot of fucking duets.

*RUSSELL*  
 I think I just proved quite adequately  
 that I can't sing.

*CHARLEY*  
 You *can* sing. I heard you.

Russell turns towards the Bus Stop. She hesitates, then:

*CHARLEY (CONT'D)*  
 But I can help you sing better.

RUSSELL

Why do you care?

Charley shrugs.

CHARLEY

Maybe it's because of the outfit? Maybe it's because of the sunglasses? Maybe it's because I see you and I think of me or maybe it's because I've officially lost it?

RUSSELL

Maybe it's because of my hair?

CHARLEY

It's definitely not because of your hair.

(beat)

Let's just say I got my reasons. We split the purse. Sixty-forty.

She turns around and before reentering the bar she shouts over her shoulder:

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

By the time you're done, you'll be a rock star. I could teach a chihuahua how to sing.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE OF JACK & DIANE'S - MOMENTS LATER

Russell takes a seat at the bus stop. A HOMELESS MAN stares at him. Reaches out and touches him.

HOMELESS MAN

Are you a hallucination?

Russell shies away. The Homeless Man pokes Russell. Russell looks at the Homeless Man's outfit. He's wearing the same clothing he wore back in 1985.

RUSSELL

Rock on, Man.

The Homeless Man pulls at his oversized *The Smiths* tee:

HOMELESS MAN

Save them.

RUSSELL

*The Smiths*? They're long past salvation.

HOMELESS MAN

No. Save them! All of them. You can do it.

RUSSELL

I don't know what you're --

The Homeless Man gets in front of Russell's face. With freaky blue-grey eyes and horrible breath:

HOMELESS MAN

Save the 80s.

Poignant words hit home. And then Russell realizes the Homeless Man is sitting on his lap. Animatedly, he sings and cackles:

*HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)*

*Is it just my imagination running away  
from me? Tell me is it just my  
imagination... running away from me...*

RUSSELL

That's the 70s!

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Russell's exchanging his cassettes for cash, but he keeps snatching his favorites back from the pile - unable to part with them.

Eventually he's got all of his cassettes back in his possession. Hands full, he exits the store.

INT. UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE - DAY

Russell stands opposite a stone-faced UNEMPLOYMENT WORKER. A long line snakes behind him. Stamp, stamp, stamp on his documents and she hands them back.

RUSSELL

When will I get my first check?

UNEMPLOYMENT WORKER

Four-to-six weeks.

RUSSELL

What do I do until then?

UNEMPLOYMENT WORKER

Find a flavor of Ramen Noodles you like  
and buy in bulk.

(over Russell's shoulder)

Next!?

INT. EMPLOYMENT OFFICE - DAY

Russell sits at a desk across from an UPTIGHT WOMAN who  
stares at his resume.

UPTIGHT WOMAN

You've got one job on here.

Russell nods.

UPTIGHT WOMAN (CONT'D)

One job? As a DJ?

RUSSELL

At an 80s Radio Station. It should say  
that.

Like that means anything to the Uptight Woman.

UPTIGHT WOMAN

How fast can you type?

RUSSELL

Depends on how quickly I want to find the  
porn.

She's not impressed.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I'm just kidding. I don't look at porn.  
I mean, I look at porn, I'm a guy, but  
not at work or anything. That would  
be... bad. And inappropriate. And  
anyway, my kind of porn is old 80s rock  
stars. Well, not old. And girls. Not --  
not guys. Not that there's anything  
wrong with guys. But not naked. Well  
sometimes almost naked, but on stage -  
singing.

The woman is speechless.

INT. BUS - EVENING

Russell stares out the bus window, listening to *80s music* on his headphones. The bus stops in front of a BUS SHELTER. A gigantic poster displaying the IKC.

The bus passes Karaoke Bar after Karaoke Bar: *Shangri-La-La-La, Octave-ia's, Note-Ed's, Solo's*.

It passes a billboard for 88.1's "New Generation".

The bus stops and a crowd of 80's-esque hipsters board.

The song ends. SILENCE, then, a catchy beat. *John Mellencamp's JACK & DIANE* on his cassette player. He fast forwards to the next song.

Another catchy beat, but mid-song (stupid, inaccurate tape deck). *Pictures of Charlotte*. Really!? He throws his head back in angst.

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Russell sits watching Eric, Lyle, Steve and BILLIE JEAN play Rock Band at an elaborate display. A gigantic banner: ROCKBAND 1,000,000 POINT CHALLENGE.

ERIC

It's \$250G's.

(to Lyle on drums)

Dude, you missed that beat.

Russell is transfixed.

STEVE

Riddle me this. I understand that scissors can beat paper, and I get how rock can beat scissors, but there's no freaking way paper can beat rock. Paper is supposed to magically wrap around rock leaving it immobile?

Everyone sort of just stares at him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What!?

RUSSELL

I died on stage last night. Died.

BILLIE JEAN  
Charley Cooke had four number one singles  
in ten months.

The crew continues to play silently:

RUSSELL  
It's suicide.

ERIC  
But you're a Kamikaze, Russell. Sure,  
you may die, but you'll die with honor.

LYLE  
What happened to her career, anyway?

Russell shrugs.

RUSSELL  
She just... went away.

LYLE  
Abruptly.

RUSSELL  
Bands break up. Artists fall from #1 to  
#100 in a week. It happens.

LYLE  
I smell scandal.

ERIC  
That's not scandal you smell, Lyle. It's  
you.

Focus back to the four quadrants. One is without video.

RUSSELL  
Why's that one empty?

Steve hands him a mic. Russell waves it off. Steve does  
an "I told you so" sort of face.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
What do you win?

STEVE  
Fame. Worldwide fame.

ERIC  
We're already at a disadvantage without a  
lead and we're never going to get enough  
points to even come close --

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 (turns to Steve)  
 -- if you don't stop missing that beat!  
 Steve!  
 (back to Russell)  
 At least she's a legend.

RUSSELL  
 Legends don't work in karaoke bars.

STEVE  
 Washed up singers who work in karaoke  
 bars can help you save the station.

RUSSELL  
 ...And the 80s.

Russell slumps in the chair as he watches his friends  
 come close to 300,000 POINTS.

EXT. JACK & DIANE'S - LATER

Charley exits the locked-up bar and heads towards her  
 1989 DeTomaso. She digs in her bag for her car keys.  
 Pulls out a piece of paper. Opens it.

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE, JACK & DIANE'S, \$150,000

A huge sigh. She crumples the paper back in her purse  
 and starts her car. It roars in a puff of smoke. She  
 coughs.

LATER

Windows down. A red light on a quiet street. She turns  
 on the radio to break the silence.

It's the *Pictures of Charlotte* ballad (as heard on 88.1).  
 The song hits the chorus and she BELTS IT OUT.

Charlotte Cooke singing her own song on the radio, like  
 nobody's listening... except for the car beside her.

INSIDE THE OTHER CAR

With the window down, two DUDES are in the car beside  
 her. Hearing Charley, their heads slowly turn.

BACK TO CHARLEY'S CAR

She grips the wheel, closes her eyes, lost in song, then  
 looks up and sees the Thugs staring at her in disbelief.

Embarrassed, she rolls up the windows of her car and burns rubber when the light turns green.

INSIDE THE OTHER CAR

DUDE 1

I used to have a poster of her on my wall. Tiffany right "there". Charley Cooke right "there".

Dude 2's reaction says it all.

INT. JACK & DIANE'S - DAY

Charley and Russell are in a PRIVATE ROOM. Russell's got a balloon between his teeth.

CHARLEY

(instructing him)

In through your nose. Use your diaphragm to blow out. Keep your shoulders down. Neck up.

He blows. She fixes his posture. Extends his neck.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Breathing is a fundamental of singing.

She busies herself with errands around the bar.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

So what part of the Midwest are you from?

Talking with the balloon between his teeth:

RUSSELL

How'd you know I'm from the South?

CHARLEY

Russell, there are two types of music geeks: Conflicted, awkward, teenaged boy loners from the bible belt who secretly yearned to rock but lacked the self-confidence to let'er loose, and slightly promiscuous small-town girls with big hair and bigger dreams that their overprotective parents just didn't understand.

(pointing at his chest)

And though you can try to confuse me with those sexy man boobs of yours, you are the former.

(MORE)

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
 (instructing)  
 In through your nose --

She pushes his back out - his chest rises.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
 Karaoke's all about knowing your  
 audience. You might own one genre.  
 (she yanks his mullet)  
 But you've got to know them all.

RUSSELL  
 I know every lyric in every 80s song ever  
 written. It's like my superpower.

CHARLEY  
 (dubious)  
 Right.

RUSSELL  
 Try me. Pick a lyric. Any song.

She thinks, then:

CHARLEY  
*I never dreamed there'd be someone to  
 hold me, until you told me...*

RUSSELL  
 Child's play: Even The Nights Are Better,  
 Air Supply, charted in 1981.

The balloon inflates/deflates.

CHARLEY  
*I was kissing Valentino by a crystal blue  
 Italian Stream.*

RUSSELL  
 Manic Monday, The Bangles, charted in  
 1986.

CHARLEY  
 You're strange. You know that?

He blows out. The balloon fills. She moves closer:  
 inches away.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
 Inflate it so it touches my nose.

He can't. Her hand gently rests on his chest. Hard to  
 control himself. He moves from his spot - pacing the  
 room, changing the subject.

RUSSELL

When I sing by myself, I'm not half bad.  
It's just me rocking out in a music  
video. I sing *SISTER CHRISTIAN*, it's me  
and *Night Ranger*. I sing *ARTHUR'S THEME*,  
it's me and *Christopher Cross*.

Charley's wide-eyed. This mo-fo is nuts-o.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

It's like... my superpower.

CHARLEY

What, you have multiple superpowers?

Balloon between his teeth, Russell nods.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

100,000 sperm, and you were the fastest?

A car engine outside and Charley darts away from Russell.  
It startles Russell and he lets go of the balloon. It  
flits around the room.

She tosses him a rag and grabs her broom. Jack enters.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

You're early.

JACK

I'm early? Your shift doesn't start for  
another three hours.

He looks at Russell.

JACK (CONT'D)

What's he doing here?

CHARLEY

He's... uh...

RUSSELL

I'm her Intern.

Jack stares at Charley, unimpressed.

JACK

Uh-huh.

And he exits through A DOOR BEHIND THE BAR.

CHARLEY

Intern?

Russell shrugs as wipes down the tables. She's moved on to wiping down the karaoke remotes.

She accidentally punches in some numbers and words of a song pop up over top of TWO JAPANESE KARAOKE-VIDEO ACTORS ON A BOARDWALK.

RUSSELL

So why don't you sing anymore?

Charley climbs on the bar top and wipes down the screen as the JAPANESE ACTORS reenact a scene from TOP GUN. The video is ridiculous.

CHARLEY

Who said I stopped singing?

RUSSELL

Did you lose your artistic vision, or something?

Now the JAPANESE ACTORS are on the GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE. Charley whips around and stares at Russell.

CHARLEY

People's stars fade, Russell. We get 15 minutes. I had mine.

Screen clean, she hops down from the bar top and gets a splinter in her hand.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Shit.

She looks at the bar top, then at Russell. An idea! She exits DOWN THE HALL and returns seconds later. She plops two pieces of sandpaper in Russell's hands.

Russell stares at the sandpaper.

RUSSELL

And this relates to karaoke how?

She places her hands on top of his, and demonstrates how to sand the bar top.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

You're kidding me, right?

She looks expectantly at him.

CHARLEY

Breathe in one stroke - out the other.  
Keep the beat as you sand: 4/quarter time  
on the right hand, 6/8ths on the left.

RUSSELL

What?

She pulls his right hand back and forth in 4/quarter  
time.

CHARLEY

One, two, three, four.

Then to his left hand:

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

(faster)

One-and-two-and-three-and-four-and-five-  
and-six-and-seven-and-eight.

RUSSELL

Ralph Macchio teach you this?

CHARLEY

A song that's originally composed in a  
120 beats per minute tempo with an Ab-mid  
C range, written in the key of A7 can  
easily and mistakenly be altered to a 98  
beats per minute tempo with a range of G-  
B rewritten in A.

Russell's speechless.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Variables can be changed during the  
studio arrangements of popular karaoke  
songs, and you never know what it's going  
to be until it pops up on screen. If you  
can find the beat, you can sing it, no  
matter what.

And with that, she walks away. Russell watches her go.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Stop staring at my ass and start sanding.

(beat)

Intern.

Busted.

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Russell stares at the application. Looks up to the  
MANAGER:

RUSSELL  
(to Manager)  
Can I specify which department I'd like  
to work in?

The Manager, half his age, looks unimpressed.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
I used to be a DJ.

The Manager's eyes brighten.

MANAGER  
What station?

RADIO VOICE RUSSELL  
88.1...

The Manager shrugs.

RADIO VOICE RUSSELL  
(CONT'D)  
"The Home of the 80's."

MANAGER  
Never heard of it.

RUSSELL  
We played 80s.

The Manager looks at Russell's outfit.

MANAGER  
They let you keep the uniform, huh?

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - LATER

Russell wears a Media Castle golf shirt. He stops to  
sort through some of the cds in the large cd case.

RUSSELL  
Where's your older stuff?

MANAGER  
What older stuff?

RUSSELL  
Classic Rock?

MANAGER  
*AC/DC's* over in that bin. We have some  
*Metallica...*

He indicates the "J" in the bin.

RUSSELL  
No *Journey*?

The Manager leans into cd case.

MANAGER  
Self help's over there.

Russell's in awe.

RUSSELL  
*Journey!?* *Don't Stop Believin'?*  
Billboard charted in 1984.

MANAGER  
In 1984, I was negative-eight years old.  
(beat)  
Come on, let me show you the video game  
section.

The Manager moves on. In the B/G, Russell hears  
*BULLETPROOF* by *LaRoux*. They follow the music to:

ROCK BAND SET UP

There's Addie and two GUY FRIENDS, belting out the song.  
God, she's amazing.

ADDIE  
*Tick tick tick tick on the watch and  
life's too short for me to stop. Oh  
baby, your time is running out.*

So many points racking up on screen. Intimidated,  
Russell backs away. Addie notices Russell and  
approaches, abandoning the song.

ADDIE (CONT'D)  
Rematch?

RUSSELL  
No, thanks.

ADDIE  
Are you afraid?

RUSSELL  
No.

ADDIE  
(forcefully)  
Then sing.

She's inches away from him. He's DYING.

So much sexual tension. Russell turns around and crashes into the cardboard Rock Band display. It, and Russell, topple to the ground.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

He's in his boxers. Lounging. Watching VH1. A KNOCK at his door: it's the UPS MAN.

UPS MAN  
Russell Graham?

He nods.

UPS MAN (CONT'D)  
Sign here.

He does and the UPS Man hands him over a box. Russell closes the door on the dude.

Opening the box: a note from Charley: "LEARN THEM ALL".

Inside, an iPod.

INT. JACK & DIANE'S KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

It's slow. A KARAOKE SINGER singing on stage. Charley's watching him. Analyzing his every move. Taking notes. Watching him work the stage.

A MAN IN A BUSINESS SUIT takes a seat at the bar. This is MITCH.

CHARLEY  
What can I get you?

MITCH  
Club soda.

They watch the KARAOKE SINGER on stage.

MITCH (CONT'D)

He's great.

CHARLEY

You have a good ear.

He hands her his business card. Mitch Saunders, Record Exec.

MITCH

I'm a big fan.

CHARLEY

Of what? My pour?

She hands him back his card.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Thanks, anyway.

MITCH

Keep it. Just in case.

He grabs his club soda, exits. Charley opens a drawer behind the bar.

She tosses the card on top of a pile of other business cards: agents, record companies, producers. She stares at the pile and closes the drawer.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Russell's at his computer, surfing *Google* for "Charley Cooke". Nothing.

He's multi-tasking, opening up bills requiring payment. A pile forming.

He changes his search term to "Pictures of Charlotte".

*On his TV: the Original KARATE KID in the b/g.*

*Google: Photos of 80s-Charley. Pictures of Charlotte fan sites. Ebay items. He googles "Karaoke".*

*Karaoke Haven (the web site from before) pops up:*

Hundreds of thousands of uploaded amateur karaoke videos. He watches a couple of horrible-sounding videos.

He begins to create a profile. Stuck on a User Name.  
Can't think of one.

Distracted by TV: *Daniel LaRusso is practicing his crane kick on the edge of the small row boat.*

He creates a profile - user name: THE KARAOKE KID.

A couple of clicks and he's on a small screen on his monitor. He types in: *YOU'RE THE BEST AROUND* by Joe Esposito. The back track starts. He hits record.

*RUSSELL*

*Try to be best, cause you're only a man  
and man's gotta learn to take it.*

He's being a goof as he sings. Karate Kid on TV in the B/G.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Try to believe though the going gets  
rough, that you gotta hang tough to make  
it.*

He spins, trips. Falls and pops back up.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*History repeats itself. Try and you'll  
succeed. Never doubt that you're the one  
and you can have your dreams!*

He crane kicks, slips and falls to his back. The camera on his computer screen is now just recording the Karate Kid on his tv. The back track of the chorus fills the room.

EXT. JACK & DIANE'S - THE NEXT DAY

Russell sits outside the locked bar. As Charley's car sputters into a parking spot. She hops out and -

*CHARLEY*

*Singing isn't just about hitting the  
right notes. It's about conditioning.  
Being ready for anything the audience  
throws at you - literally.*

- throws a sponge at him. It hits him in the head. She hands him a bucket.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Get started.

(she bangs on the bar window)

Big circles with your right hand; big  
circles with your left hand.

She demonstrates using huge circles -

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Right hand! Left hand! Right hand!  
Left hand!

Her instructions continue & fade as she enters the bar.

RUSSELL

(shouting)

You know, if I squint, you look like an  
80 year old Karate teacher from Okinawa.

The door slams shut.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

(shouting)

You are validating my inherent mistrust  
of strangers!

(even louder)

Will I get to kiss Elizabeth Shue?

INT/EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS: TRAINING RUSSELL - DAY/NIGHT

In each shot, Charley's Aviators are present.

AT JACK & DIANE'S

Russell lifts the karaoke binders. Charley oversees.

CHARLEY (V.O.)

With a good song, you can win without  
being perfect as long as you have timing -

Charley swings the hand of a metronome back and forth.  
Takes his hand, hits her chest with the beat.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Endurance.

Russell runs along the empty street, listening to his  
music on his headphones.

CHARLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Performance.

Charley teaches Russell how to hold the mic. She strokes it - unintentionally sexual - Russell has to look away.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Confidence.

On the street outside Jack & Diane's, Charley pulls Russell towards the Smith's wearing Homeless Man. She hands him a mic and Russell clams up.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

What about singing?

CHARLEY (V.O.)

Darlin', that's not a fundamental. That's requirement. Finding a song's the easy part. Making it unique is impossible. You want to sing *Livin' On A Prayer*? Fine. It'll bring the house down, but only if you make it your own. Nobody wants to hear you try to sound like Bon Jovi.

Charley teaches Russell basic dance steps. He falls into her and she catches him. An awkward embrace.

Charley tosses tennis balls at Russell, often hitting him. He's not fast enough to get out of the way.

RUSSELL

What the hell does this have to do with it?

Russell in his apartment, recording himself on Karaoke Haven, singing his heart out.

CHARLEY (V.O.)

Everything.

Charley plays the board game MEMORY with Russell. He loses.

AT A KARAOKE BAR

CHARLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The Circuit is cut-throat.

A CONTESTANT takes a swing of water - spits it out. Sees a bottle of Tabasco Sauce on the table nearby.

CHARLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

They will take you out.

ANOTHER CONTESTANT singing. A bucket of water falls from the ceiling.

CHARLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Beyond surviving, you need good music.

RUSSELL (V.O.)  
Good song. Joan Jett & the Blackhearts,  
1986.

CHARLEY (V.O.)  
Is your weirdness involuntary?

AT JACK & DIANE'S

Russell practices. Charley pulls out the electrical cord, the Karaoke System goes OFF, but he keeps singing.

CHARLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The Qualifier - that's child's play. The  
real test comes in Kyoto.

RUSSELL (V.O.)  
What's in Kyoto?...

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. JACK & DIANE'S - CONTINUOUS

Russell and Charley are in the Private Room, working on dance steps. On TV is Charley, twenty years younger, pulling off her signature move. Russell's wearing the *80's-ist-looking Tiger-Face t-shirt possible*.

CHARLEY  
\$250,000 and a sushi plate full of glory.

RUSSELL  
Wait - I thought you got \$250,000 for  
winning the Qualifier?

She scoffs.

CHARLEY  
The Qualifier gets you a plane ticket to  
the Nationals. Winning the Nationals  
gets you a plane ticket to Japan. Win  
Japan, you get the \$250K's.  
(she imitates)  
One, two, three, four, cross-over and --

He tries to copy but fails horribly, falling into her.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Come on! It's not that difficult!

(beat)

65% of the points awarded are based on ability, 10% based on level of difficulty, that leaves 25% of your points based on Presentation...

RUSSELL

Presentation, my ass. You won't help with song selection, so who knows what I can sing - and you can forget the level of difficulty, considering I get hives just thinking about being on stage.

Charley stares at him for a moment, and -

CHARLEY

Then let's get out of here?

INT. THE MUSIC BOX LESBIAN BAR - NIGHT

Russell nervously follows Charley into the lesbian bar. It's empty. A FEMALE KARAOKE SINGER is finishing up.

RUSSELL

Is this a? --

CHARLEY

Honey, if you can win over a room of lesbians, you can win over the world.

Russell looks around the room.

RUSSELL

All seven of them?

CHARLEY

You don't start in the Majors.

She tosses her coat on a nearby empty table and approaches the Karaoke DJ (MOS). To the bartender:

RUSSELL

Tequila Sunrise.

BARTENDER

You singing tonight?

A nod. The Bartender turns his back, pours the drink, hands it to Russell. Charley knocks it to the floor.

CHARLEY

Never drink anything you didn't pour.  
Rufies, tabasco sauce - God knows who's  
been paid off around these places.

(beat)

And, a Tequila Sunrise? What are you, a  
23 year old girl?

Mocking his shirt:

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Go get'em, Tiger.

*WE BUILT THIS CITY* by Starship begins. Russell misses the  
cue. Charley's confused.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Restart!

The song restarts. He misses his cue again. He's  
paralyzed with fear.

The song restarts again. This time the DJ doesn't stop.  
He misses his cue and the lesbians boo.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Oh, you've got to be kidding me!?

Charley flops her head to the tabletop. Her Aviators  
fall to the tabletop. An idea!

She rushes to the stage in SLOW MOTION, Charley's voice  
distorted, and heard only by Russell, she tosses her  
Aviators at him:

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Put them on!

He looks at them. The spotlight hits them: shining.  
Glowing. Sent from heaven.

RUSSELL

I told you, when nobody's watching, I'm  
not half-bad.

CHARLEY

Honey, it's karaoke. Everybody's  
watching.

He slips on her Aviators.

RUSSELL'S POV: distortion. But the crowd is  
indistinguishable. He closes his eyes and, BOOM!

## RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

Nothing's distinguishable and he rocks out:

RUSSELL

*Marconi plays the mambo! Listen to the  
radio! Don't you remember when --*

He moves across the stage. The bar is silenced by Russell's talent.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*We built this city!*

Moving closer and closer to the edge. It's dizzying.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*We built this city on rock and...*

He turns to his left: *shadows of Starship members* singing backup.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*Roll!*

BACK TO REALITY.

... and THUD!

He falls off stage. The song's cut. The entire bar stares at Charley. Well, all seven lesbians, at least.

She helps Russell up from the floor just as Charley's rival MONA [from the photo in Russell's office, she's older, but still Mona], and Addie enter the bar.

They see Russell & Charley. Addie whispers to Mona. Mona approaches.

MONA

Charley!

Charley turns her head to the sound of her name. She sees Mona. Frozen.

INSERT:

1) 1980s MAGAZINE COVER: YOUNGER CHARLEY and YOUNGER MONA  
- "Ones To Watch"

2) 1980s MAGAZINE COVER: YOUNGER CHARLEY and YOUNGER MONA  
- "Chart Toppers"

3) 1980s MAGAZINE COVER: YOUNGER CHARLEY and YOUNGER MONA  
- "Chart Rivals"

4) 1980s MAGAZINE COVER: YOUNGER MONA - "Chart Champion"  
(on the sidebar: YOUNGER CHARLEY - "Fall from Grace").

END INSERT.

MONA (CONT'D)

What are you doing here? You know they  
don't let washed up chart toppers compete  
in the International Karaoke Circuit.

(reassuringly to Addie)

Don't worry, you could take her.

Everyone's waiting on her answer. There's so much washed-  
up-rockstar in the room. Someone takes a photo.

CHARLEY

(she points to Russell)

The competition's right here.

Russell chokes on his drink - his coughs echo in the  
large room.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

-- And he's good.

Mona dubiously looks Russell up-and-down.

MONA

(dubious)

Him?

(she laughs)

Proof you can teach anyone nowadays to be  
a Rock Star.

Pointing to the stage:

MONA (CONT'D)

Why don't we engage in a little friendly  
competition, then?

(she nods to Russell)

You. Addie. Little one-on-one. Battle  
for the song. Right here. Right now.  
Just like the old days, Charley! You can  
even name the song. What do you say?

Russell might die. Right now. Holy shit.

CHARLEY

We meet at the Qualifier. There, and  
only there.

Charley wraps her arm around Russell. Russell loses his breath at her touch. Addie takes note.

MONA

Just like the old days, huh? I love a little rivalry.

Charley practically pulls Russell out of the bar.

INT. JACK & DIANE'S KARAOKE BAR - THE NEXT DAY

Arms folded, Charley stares at Russell, unimpressed and in a bad mood.

CHARLEY

You do realize how screwed we are, right?

Charley watches as he combines a bunch of different liquors. Gross.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

That blonde bimbo's got pipes like I've never heard before.

RUSSELL

And legs that just don't quit.

He adds a lemon to the highball glass.

CHARLEY

Who's team are you on, anyway?

RUSSELL

Oh, well.

CHARLEY

"Oh, well?" That's all you've got to say? Oh, well? I've got a bit more riding on this than an "Oh, well".

(can't help but ask)

What are you doing?

RUSSELL

Can't DJ. Can't sing. Figure I better work on my bartending skills. What do you have riding on this?

CHARLEY

Nothing. Forget it.

Russell takes a sip of his concoction and spits it out.

RUSSELL  
So do you ever think of singing again?

CHARLEY  
I haven't stopped singing.

RUSSELL  
You know what I mean.

CHARLEY  
Nobody wants to listen to me anymore.

RUSSELL  
A good song's a good song. All I'm  
saying is --

CHARLEY  
-- let it go, Russell.

OK.

She hands him broken karaoke remotes and black electrical  
tape: he stares at a remote.

RUSSELL  
What's that button do?

Charley's stymied.

CHARLEY  
That's like Batman not knowing how to  
read the Bat Signal.

Pointing out the buttons.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
Skip, repeat, fast forward, rewind...

She looks at it.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
Tempo! Most important button on there.  
Your secret weapon. With this button, you  
can reinvent any song. The opportunities  
are endless, but you've only got one shot  
before it gets old.

He starts ripping tape, taping the backs of the remotes  
closed. He's not paying attention to her demonstration.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
Hey! This is important.

Up pops *MANEATER* by *Hall & Oates* at normal tempo. Then, a few presses of the button and the tempo slows by 50%. She sings in the slow tempo:

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
*So many have paid to see what you're  
 think you're getting for free.*

She turns around, cleaning the bar as she sings -

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
*The woman is wild, a she-cat tamed by the  
 purr of a jaguar.*

Russell is busy with the tape, but --

RUSSELL  
 Meow.

CHARLEY  
*Money's the matter, if you're in it for  
 love, you ain't gonna get too far...*

She turns around to see Russell has jokingly taped his eyes shut.

INT. JACK & DIANE'S - DAY

Charley and Russell sit a table covered with lined-paper and scribbled notes, photos of KARAOKE SINGERS, Billboard chart lists, and karaoke song binders.

A plan of attack:

CHARLEY  
 Time to get serious. We're going to hit  
 the big ones.

She points to a makeshift map.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
 These three bars have purses, which is  
 great because dead presidents in your  
 pocket mean you're good enough. More  
 importantly, these bars have judges. I'm  
 not sure whether it's a pro or a con, but  
 there are only a finite number of  
 qualified judges in the city.

RUSSELL  
 What makes a judge qualified?

CHARLEY

They show up.

(she points to the calendar)

You need ten points to secure a place in the final round of the Qualifiers.

RUSSELL

To secure -- ?

CHARLEY

You don't secure, then it's tournament play. Round Robin style. You'd never make it.

Russell stands up from his chair and starts to pace.

RUSSELL

Thanks for the vote of confidence.

CHARLEY

First place is 5 points, second is 4, third is 3.

RUSSELL

Wait, wait... three bars, 10 points? That means I can't score less than third... ever.

CHARLEY

Two thirds and a second place, minimum.

Russell goes pale.

RUSSELL

Nothing's worse than expectation.

CHARLEY

How about failure?

She points to the calendar: March 12.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

The Qualifier's in two weeks. The Regionals are in three, the Championships in four. I want you singing five days a week. Every beat -- have you been listening your iPod?

RUSSELL

Yes. Sort of. Ish.

(beat)

No.

CHARLEY  
Every song. Every word.

Russell looks at his watch.

RUSSELL  
I have to get to work.

CHARLEY  
You don't have time to work.

RUSSELL  
I don't have money not to.

And Russell exits the bar.

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE: STOCK ROOM - DAY

Russell's piling cd's on a cart. Each time he sees a cd, he sings a song from the track title list.

MALE VOICE (ON SPEAKER)  
Russell to the Registers.

Russell pushes the cart up the aisles. A GRANDFATHERLY-TYPE wearing polyester and looking like an old, 1970's Burt Reynolds approaches and taps him on the shoulder. He's got a cart full of coffee makers:

GRANDFATHERLY-TYPE  
I need a new coffee maker - all these makes and models - I feel like I'm two steps behind.

RUSSELL  
Def Leppard, 1993.

Grandfatherly-type stares: Weirdo.

GRANDFATHERLY-TYPE  
Can you help?

RUSSELL  
Sure. Drip, espresso, french press --

GRANDFATHERLY-TYPE  
Coffee. I want to make coffee.

Russell hands him one. A BUSINESS MAN approaches.

BUSINESS MAN  
 (entitled; snaps his fingers)  
 Bluetooth! Bluetooth! Bluetooth!

RUSSELL  
 Aisle 14.

A DOWDY WOMAN rushes Russell.

DOWDY WOMAN  
 Is this 30% off coupon for regular priced  
 sale items or regular-regular priced  
 items.

He takes the coupon from her, reading it --

RUSSELL  
 Did you draw this?

She walks away. Russell pauses in front of a Rock Band  
display.

The THREE BIGGER KIDS (from before) eagerly play it,  
 killing a *Led Zeppelin* song. Russell pauses, in awe.  
 They're freaking amazing. A PRETTY LADY carrying a set of  
 headphones interrupts:

PRETTY LADY  
 Do you know how much these are?

He scans the box with the scanner gun attached to his  
 belt.

RUSSELL  
 \$75.

PRETTY LADY  
 \$75!? What are they made of? Gold!?

RUSSELL  
 Titanium.

Russell steps up to an empty Register.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
 How can I --

Mona approaches and cuts him off, lifting a large box to  
 the counter. A Rock Band box. Then pauses, recognizing.

MONA  
 Well, well, well, it's Mr. lesbian  
 serenade!

Russell's unimpressed.

RUSSELL  
How can I help you, ma'am?

MONA  
Oh, baby, you can call me Mona. I'm on a first name basis with the world.

RUSSELL  
Really?

Russell motions to the GUY IN LINE behind Mona.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
S'cuse me? You recognize her?

He looks her up and down and shrugs. Mona's feathers are officially ruffled.

MONA  
I need a refund.

Russell looks disparagingly at the huge box. It's sealed with orange duct tape.

RUSSELL  
I'm sorry, I'm unable to process a refund on an opened item.

Indicating the tape:

MONA  
It's unopened.

RUSSELL  
Ma'am, manufacturers don't use duct tape to seal their boxes.

He points to a sign: "No refunds on opened merchandise"

MONA  
I need to speak with the manager --

Deadpan, he picks up the phone.

RUSSELL  
Ted to Register 2... for a Refund.

And after the most uncomfortable beat in the world, the Manager storms toward the registers. Staring at Mona:

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

She said she didn't open it.

The Manager's a skeptic.

MANAGER

Ma'am, as my associate has pointed out,  
store policy dictates we cannot issue  
refunds on opened --

Mona slams her fist to the counter. The Manager and  
Russell jump. Silence. Everyone in the store freezes.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

(totally afraid)

Ok, I'm going to go ahead and process a  
return.

Undermined, Russell throws his hands up in annoyance and  
abandons his post. Mona grabs his arm and pulls him in.  
Seductively she whispers:

MONA

(whisper)

You're a loser in ugly jeans.

(beat)

And you're dead. You just haven't  
fallen, yet.

She tosses him away from her as his Manager looks on.

Shaken, Russell rushes up the aisle toward the stock  
room, bumping into Eric and The Gang at the Rock Band  
display.

ERIC

Dude! Nice uniform! Where've you been?

Russell just shakes his head.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Check it out.

They fire up the Video Game & Log In. They're in 1st  
Place with 675,000. The Zeppelin-singing BIGGER KIDS  
trail. Russell just can't find the excitement.

RUSSELL

(flat)

That's great.

Russell storms up the aisle, leaving Eric & The Gang  
standing at the display.

Then he pauses, catching a reflection in a nearby window. Looks down at his jeans. At his hair.

He contemplatively returns to his friends.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Eric?

Eric looks up.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Where do you go shopping?

Eric looks to his 80s infused hipster wardrobe. A smile spreads across his face.

INT. CHARLEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Charley's digging through boxes in her closet. All are marked *Pictures of Charlotte*.

She's looking for something. Takes out awards, press clippings, audio tapes, album covers... her entire past squirreled away in three dilapidated cardboard boxes.

On to the next box. Filled with CLOTHING.

She pulls out some recognizable articles of clothing (from photos and videos we've seen) and participates in a modeling show of memories: A jean skirt. A tube top. Gigantic hair bows. Lots of spandex.

And then at the bottom of the box. A leather jacket. Jackpot.

INT. TRUCK STOP KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

This bar is less dive-bar than the last. More people, too.

Russell's at the bar. A KARAOKE SINGER on stage, singing a *Bananarama* song.

Charley enters and finds him. She's opted to wear some of her signature 80's pieces.

He, on the other hand, could be Eric's older, slightly less cool hipster-twin.

They're both taken aback by each other's look.

CHARLEY  
You look... different.

RUSSELL  
Yeah. Uh. You too.

She hands him the leather jacket. It's emblazoned with a *BON JOVI* logo. Eyes wide, he drops it to the floor.

CHARLEY  
What are you doing?

She picks it up and dresses him in it. He tries to shrug out of it.

RUSSELL  
I can't --

CHARLEY  
What is your problem?

And she forces it back on him.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
Put on the damn jacket.

RUSSELL  
I had a bad Bon Jovi concert experience.

CHARLEY  
Get over it. And here.

She hands him Aviators.

RUSSELL  
After what happened last time?

CHARLEY  
Try them on.

RUSSELL  
I still can't see anything.

CHARLEY  
Just shut up and sing.

Russell sticks the glasses in his pocket. Charley looks at the Judges table. The DJ calls out Russell's name.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
Go impress them.

She instinctively leans in and gives Russell a kiss. He's in total shock. So's she.

Three or four claps just as the SCORES OF MOTORCYCLES pull up out outside the bar. The bar's doors open and it's flooded with a HUGE GANG OF BIKERS.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Shit.

Russell pushes through the crowd, trips up the stage stairs, adjusts the mic.

The intro to *MAN IN MOTION* by John Parr begins. You can barely hear it over the bikers' revelry.

RUSSELL

(weakly, watching the crowd)

*Growing up, you don't see the writing on the wall.*

He motions for the DJ to turn it up. FOUR DOZEN BIKERS IN LEATHER stare at him, unimpressed.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*...Soldier on. Only you can do what must be done.*

Stuck at the back of the bar, Charley tries to shout over the music.

CHARLEY

Russell!!

Screaming at the top of her lungs. There's a break in the song:

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Put on your damn shades!!

The entire bar heard and now everyone's wearing their shades. Even Russell.

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

BLACKOUT. And then, blurry vision and Russell's in a replica of the *Man In Motion* music video.

RUSSELL

*You know in some way, you're a lot like me. You're just a prisoner, and you're tryin' to break free!*

He kills it!

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*I can see a new horizon underneath the  
blazin' sky. I'll be where the eagle's  
flying higher and higher!*

Awesome!

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Gonna be a man in motion, all I need is a  
pair of wheels.*

At the word "wheels", the entire bar CHEERS.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Take me where my future's lyin', St.  
Elmo's Fire!*

He's joined in his music video by SINGING BIKERS FROM THE BAR. Fake smoke. A full-on band with synthesizer.

And the song begins to skip. The same line. It trips Russell up. The bikers in his music video stare at him.

BACK TO REALITY.

The same bikers are staring at him.

He rips off his Aviators. AC/DC music fills the room. The Bikers cheer, CLINK beer glasses.

A glance to the Judges. A "2". Well, shit. 3rd place.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Defeated, Russell approaches Charley.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*What happened?*

*CHARLEY*

*You're only as good as your sound system.  
Come on - I've got something to show you.*

INT. JAPANESE KARAOKE BAR - LATER

Charley and Russell enter the Karaoke Bar. Even this late, the authentic Japanese Karaoke Club is busy. Mostly JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN.

Everyone politely listens to the KARAOKE SINGER who sings *Sukiyaki*. It's all very civil.

CHARLEY

Jamamoto. Only place in town for real karaoke. My favorite place. There's one in Kyoto, too.

Russell and Charley take a seat at a table in the back of the club. The JAPANESE WAITRESS approaches with menus.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Two spicy tuna rolls, inside out. An eel and avocado roll, a dragon roll, and an order of edamame.

(to Russell)

They have this exact same bar in Kyoto. My favorite place in the whole city.

They watch the JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN pour his heart and soul into the *song*.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Since the dawn of Japanese partying, guests have been expected to show another side of them... you know, dancing, magic... or singing.

(beat)

Voila. Karaoke is born.

The Karaoke Singer's voice isn't half-bad. He starts dancing with the Karaoke Waitress while he sings.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

The formal rules are pretty straightforward. Never sing two songs in succession. Never sing the same song as someone else and --

The Karaoke Singer finishes a verse - the Audience CLAPS.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

-- you've got to applaud between verses and the end of the song. It's all about decorum... well. It was.

The Waitress brings them their food. Russell makes a face. The dragon roll has eyes.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

But then came the Ultimate Hitokara.

She pops a sushi roll into her mouth - the one with eyes.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

You know Mona's hunky nephew is going to go for broke. And she'll do anything to win.

(reflective)

Mona always had an eye for opportunity. I'd be envious if we weren't both at the same place, now:

She looks to Russell.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Has-beens.

RUSSELL

You're not a has-been.

CHARLEY

It's ok, Russell. People's stars fade. I made some bad career choices.

(beat)

Some I couldn't take back. It was easier just to give it up.

A *Pictures of Charlotte* song. Charley turns to see everyone looking at her, grinning ear-to-ear.

WAITRESS

(offering her the mic)

For you!?

Charley politely waves it off.

CHARLEY

(to Russell)

Follow me.

A PRIVATE ROOM (with Kanji Symbol for "4"). Russell stares at the symbol.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

"Shi". Four.

RUSSELL

You speak Japanese?

CHARLEY

I loved Japan.

Russell starts flipping through the binder as Charley sets up the Karaoke System.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
Remember *Star Search*?

RUSSELL  
Who doesn't?

CHARLEY  
Anybody under the age of about 33.  
Remember *me* on *Star Search*?

RUSSELL  
No.

CHARLEY  
That's because I stunk. Two Stars for  
Presentation. Two!?

Russell continues to write song choices on paper - a crowd of JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN collect outside the large Plexiglas window, looking into the Private Room.

She pushes the coffee table against the wall.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
Get up --

He stands from the couch. She moves it out of the way, making space, then punches numbers into the remote. An *80s* song with a fast beat fills the room.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
Time to learn how to dance.

She pulls her Aviators from his pocket and places them over his eyes.

RUSSELL  
How am I going to dance if I can't see?

CHARLEY  
I'm gonna teach you. Footwork. Let's  
bust a move.

She hands him a mic.

RUSSELL  
Good song. *Young MC*, #7, 1989.

CHARLEY  
Shut up and sing.

And she closes the blinds of the room.

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - NIGHT

Closing time. Most of the fluorescent overhead lights have been turned off and almost all of the employees have left for the day.

Russell's in the CD section, flipping through CDs, testing himself. He's looking at a *Rihanna* CD as his Manager approaches.

MANAGER

Burning the midnight oil?

Russell looks at his watch.

RUSSELL

It's 10:15.

MANAGER

You know, we appreciate your dedication. One day they're going to make me Senior Manager. Keep working like this, and you could be me.

Russell tries to hold in his vomit-face.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

\$4.75 more an hour. Commission based on department sales.

(beat)

Keep it up, Sir.

The "Sir" stings like a knife. With a wink and a finger pistol of congratulations, the Manager exits.

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - LATER

Ready to leave, Russell walks down the aisle and stops in front of the Rock Band display: a glowing beacon.

He looks around. Everyone's gone. He moves in front of the machine. Turns it on. Eric & The Gang are still #1.

Russell logs in using the handle KARAOKE KID. Chooses a song: *WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU* by *The Romantics*. He picks up the plastic guitar and slings it around his torso.

The back track starts and Russell hesitantly starts to sing & play the notes.

*RUSSELL*

*What I like about you, you really know  
how to dance.*

Meh. He's not *that* awesome. He looks over his shoulder.  
Absolutely nobody's in the store.

A GULP of hopeful confidence. He pats down his shirt.  
Finds Charley's Aviators. Slips them on to --

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

It's a stage. A smoke machine. He is the star of his  
own Music Video. It's on.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*When you go up, down, jump around think  
about true romance, yeah!*

Head banging.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*You are whispering in my ear. Tell me  
all the things that I wanna hear, 'cause  
that's true!*

A high-five to a mirror image of himself - this clone's  
playing the Rock Band drum set. A nod to the side of the  
stage to the other clone playing the Rock Band piano.  
He's a one-man-fucking-awesome band.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*That's what I like about you! That's  
what I like about you! That's what I  
like about you! Wahh!*

Russell's TracFone rings, interrupting his Imagination.

BACK TO REALITY.

Russell answers.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

Hello?  
(beat)  
You're where?

EXT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - NIGHT

Charley's DeTomaso's idling at the curb. Russell exits,  
locks up, and jumps in the front seat.

They've officially swapped looks.

CHARLEY

Let's DeTomaso the night away.

She turns up the radio - *Kenny Loggins' MR. NIGHT.*

INT. SWANKY CLUB - NIGHT

Ladies night at a swanky club. Inflated beach balls bounce around the College-aged, jam-packed audience.

Russell watches the KARAOKE SINGER on stage. He's good.

A look to the Judges table. Their reaction? Poker faces. The Karaoke Singer finishes.

CHARLEY

Get up there.

Russell rushes the steps, trips and stumbles. The crazy intro to *Cyndi Lauper's GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN* begins.

The CROWD takes pause - then freaks out!

RUSSELL'S POV

The crowd's dancing wildly.

RUSSELL

*...I come home in the morning light, my  
mother says when you gonna live your life  
right?*

He tries singing without the Aviators. It's not bad. But not rocking.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*Oh mother dear we're not the fortunate  
ones...*

It's time. On go the sunglasses.

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION:

The AUDIENCE IS GONE. The bar is empty. It's just him and the *indiscernible shadow of Cyndi Lauper.*

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*And girls they want to have fun. Oh,  
girls just want to have fun!*

The Stage becomes a SCENE FROM CYNDI'S 80s MUSIC VIDEO.

BACK TO REALITY

The beach balls bounce around - some float on stage, hitting Russell - but he's in another world.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*  
*Some boys take a beautiful girl and hide her away from the rest of the world. I want to be the one to walk in the sun...*

He can't see them and flinches when they touch him.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*  
*Oh, girls just want to have fun!*

The CROWD jumps around. Tucked at a table in the corner of the room are Mona and Addie.

MONA  
 (to Addie)  
 Find a way to stop him.

A beach ball is headed towards Mona - defensively, Addie stands to spike the beach ball - instead she bumps it into the crowd. Beach balls everywhere, then out of nowhere:

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION:

He's rocking out, Cyndi's back to him. Suddenly Cyndi ducks and SMACK! A volleyball knocks Russell in the head. He's out cold.

The Judges hold up a score card. 4 points. Hand him a wad of cash. Only 3 left to go.

INT. CHARLEY'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

The door to her apartment opens and Charley and Russell enter. His eye is swollen.

CHARLEY  
 Come on in.

He doesn't have much choice...

RUSSELL  
 I'm fine.

She sits him down on the couch. He pulls the wad of cash from his pocket.

CHARLEY  
\$100, huh?

RUSSELL  
Only \$124,900 more to go.

He looks around her apartment.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
You do ok in tips, huh?

CHARLEY  
This? This is what four gold records in three years buys you.

She attempts to clean up - a bit.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
I haven't had time to clean up in the last... 10 or 15 years.  
(beat)  
Or... anyone to clean it up for.

RUSSELL  
You don't date?

CHARLEY  
Honey, I'm one bad relationship away from having 30 cats.

Charley disappears into THE KITCHEN (O.S.)

A guitar, amp and scattered sheet music. Boxes of sifted-through clothing.

IN THE KITCHEN

Charley's filling up a plastic bag with ice cubes.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)  
No singing for a few days.

RUSSELL (O.S.)  
Why?

CHARLEY  
I don't want you getting vocal strain.

Charley enters the LIVING ROOM.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

I think you're going to do great.

Russell completely distracted by an end-table covered in framed photographs: in every photograph, Charley is standing next to a recognizable 80s band or performer.

RUSSELL

(he picks up a frame)

Is this --?

He's in awe. REVEAL: a photo of *Charley and Steve Winwood* from back in the day. He picks up another frame. Eyes wide.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

This is the holy grail of end tables.

Mouth gaping, he picks up a photograph in particular: *Charley with Bon Jovi*. He points, speechless.

CHARLEY

I didn't buy the jacket at a thrift store.

RUSSELL

He hates me.

CHARLEY

This was the bad concert experience?

RUSSELL

When I was a kid, I got chosen to go on stage and sing a song with them. And then --

*FLASHBACK: Teenaged Russell stumbling toward Bon Jovi* END  
*FLASHBACK*

Russell's in a daze.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Bon Jovi went off the grid for a while, and came back with a new hairstyle. And new music.

(beat)

I single-handedly reinvented Bon Jovi. By mistake.

She buries her head into his shoulder, heaving with glee. Then she stops. Silence for a beat.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Thanks.

CHARLEY

For what? Getting you knocked out?

RUSSELL

Other stuff, too.

She pulls his hand (and the ice pack he holds) away from his eye. A concerned smile. A smooch on his eye. She pulls back. It's awkward.

Russell moves in for the kiss.

Charley's hesitant at first, then gives in. They start to make out on the couch. Russell's not really sure how to go at it. Sort of teenage-boy-ish. He shifts his weight. His knee hits a remote (on the cushion of the couch).

The STEREO COMES ON:

*HALL & OATES*

*Because your kiss, your kiss is on my list. Because your kiss, your kiss is on my list!*

CHARLEY

Damn it!

Still kissing, Charley fumbles with the remote - hits a button hoping to turn the system OFF, but instead changes the song to another song:

*JEFFERSON STARSHIP*

*And we can build this dream together!  
Standing strong forever! Nothing's gonna stop us now!*

RUSSELL

I can't believe I'm making out to a compilation CD.

CHARLEY

For the love of God, just kiss me.

Russell starts to sing between the kisses.

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

The make-out continues into full-blown sex as Russell and Charley become a part of *Jefferson Starship's* music video to *NOTHING'S GONNA STOP US NOW*.

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

At the large display, Eric, Lyle, Steve and Billie Jean play Rock Band. Russell watches from the couch. His eye's swollen. He's dressed in his Media Castle shirt, but off-duty.

ERIC

I can't believe you did it with a Rock Star.

(beat)

Steve, you totally missed that note. We will never get a million points if you miss every orange note and we will die, unemployed, miserable losers, surrounded by nothing but our Rock Band paraphernalia and dreams of what could have been. Do not miss the note.

STEVE

Sorry.

(to Russell)

So does that make you a groupie?

Russell shrugs.

BILLIE JEAN

It's all so cheap and cliched.

They're scoring mega points.

ERIC

Billie, when you have the opportunity to sleep with a Rock Star, you do it.

STEVE

Don't get involved with her, Russell. *Making Love (Out Of Nothing At All)? I Just Died In Your Arms Tonight? Heartbreak Boulevard?* Every Genesis song from the 1980s? I mean, lyrics don't write themselves...

ERIC

What about *Love Machine? Love Shack? I Was Made For Loving You?*

LYLE

*Bang Bang?*

Everyone stares at Lyle.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
I'm just saying?!

They finish the song. Now #2. They've been replaced by the Led Zeppelin-singing kids.

ERIC  
Damn it, man! So close.

RUSSELL  
Aren't you first place, already?

ERIC  
Some douchebag kids are ahead of us.  
Anyway, it's the Million Point Challenge.  
First Place is great. But get a Million  
Points? Different ball game.  
(re: Rock Band)  
You sure you don't want to try it?

Russell stares at it, considering.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Come on. Best of both worlds.

RUSSELL  
Good song. *Van Halen*, 1986.

Eric offers the mic to Russell, just as Addie and her FRIENDS saunter up.

ADDIE  
Hey, Time Warp. How's the eye?

Addie uses her sex. She weaves in and around Russell and his friends. Billie Jean is not impressed.

ADDIE (CONT'D)  
What do you say?

She motions toward the game.

ADDIE (CONT'D)  
A little vocal head-to-head? One-on-one?

Addie and his friends pony-up and grab more instruments for head-to-head competition.

ADDIE (CONT'D)  
Did you forget your bifocals, or are you just afraid to fail?

Russell rolls up his sleeves, like he's ready to fight.  
He marches up to Addie --

RUSSELL

I got the glasses, and I'll have you  
know, failure is my middle name.

-- and snatches the mic out of her hand.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

It's on.

Addie chooses *FINAL COUNTDOWN* by *Europe*. Lyle tosses his iPhone to Billie Jean and grabs an instrument. Billie Jean starts recording this on his iPhone. OTHERS look on. The synthesized intro begins:

ADDIE

Ready to go down in flames?

Russell pulls at his Media Castle golf shirt:

RUSSELL

(with attitude)

Unfortunately for you, this is fire  
retardant.

Eric and Steve pick up the Rock Band instruments. Ready.

ADDIE

Hope you've practiced --

STEVE

(to Eric, concerned)

Eric, we're still logged in on the  
game...

Eric's eyes go wide, realizing. Too late. Russell exhales. Aviators on. BLACKOUT.

A SERIES OF SHOTS DURING INSTRUMENTAL:

- 1) Russell inflates balloons quickly and with proper posture.
- 2) Russell cleans the bathroom, rocking out (MOS) using the mop as a mic.
- 3) Russell lifts and stacks the Karaoke Binders in perfect timing.
- 4) Russell's running - fast - and being chased by the Three Big Kids.

- 5) Russell in his living room, perfecting dance moves.
- 6) Charley tosses tennis balls at him - he dodges them successfully. Every single one.
- 7) They play memory. He wins.
- 8) Russell sits at his computer, watching Charley's old *Pictures of Charlotte* performances on YouTube.
- 9) Russell's practicing, listening to all the compilation CDs, recording himself on Karaoke Haven. He has 4 votes stars!
- 10) Jack & Diane's has been hit with graffiti: You suck! Washed Up!, etc. Russell and Charley wash it off the walls.

BACK TO MEDIA CASTLE

*ADDIE*

*We're leaving together, but it's still  
farewell. And maybe we'll come back to  
Earth. Who can tell?*

P.E.R.F.E.C.T. A gazillion points. Russell taps his foot to the beat, predicting when to start the next verse.

*RUSSELL*

*I guess there is no one to blame. We're  
leaving ground (ERIC: leaving ground).  
Will things ever be the same again?*

Just as many points as Addie.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*It's the final countdown!*

*ADDIE*

*It's the final countdown!*

Still equal.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*The final countdown!*

An AUDIENCE is collecting - and like a flipped switch:

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

Instead of Eric and Addie's friend, members of the band *Europe* play the Rock Band instruments.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Oh, we're heading for Venus (EUROPE: Venus), and still we stand tall. Cause maybe they've seen us. And welcome us all, yeah.*

*ADDIE*

*With so many light years to go and things to be found (ADDIE'S FRIENDS: to be found). I'm sure that we'll all miss her so.*

*(beat, music)*

*It's the final countdown.*

*RUSSELL*

*It's the final countdown.*

BACK TO REALITY.

A huge CROWD has gathered. Point totals keep spinning up and up as Eric rocks the instrumental.

A SERIES OF SHOTS DURING INSTRUMENTAL:

- 1) Charley sits in her room, acoustic guitar in her lap, song writing.
- 2) Charley opens the drawer of business cards. She pulls one out. Looks at it. Sticks it in her pocket and closes the drawer.
- 3) POV Charley on stage at The Cooler. Nobody's there. Stage and audience to herself. Practice.
- 4) Charley singing into a mic, playing guitar, a makeshift recording studio in her apartment.

BACK TO MEDIA CASTLE

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*The final countdown.*

*ADDIE*

*The final countdown (RUSSELL: Final countdown)*

Russell's echo scores him 1 more point as the song ends. Addie's shocked. Russell tosses the mic at Addie and walks away, trailed by Eric, Steve, Billie Jean and Lyle.

INT. CHARLEY'S 1989 DETOMASO - AFTERNOON

*As the song ends...*

Charley's driving down the HIGHWAY. Listening to the radio. Dressed very retro-80s.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Russell's at his computer. *American Idol* on TV. He's checking his e-mail.

JUDGE (ON TV)

This isn't a karaoke competition.

Russell rolls his eyes. An e-mail from Lyle. SUBJECT: MEDIA CASTLE. It's the video of the head-to-head battle. He logs in to *KARAOKE HAVEN* and uploads it to his profile.

CLICK! *Flips to VH1: There's Charley in a Behind The Music special.*

A head-over-heels sigh. He flops against his chair. Flips the channel. The News:

Holy hell, it's a grainy clip of him at Media Castle, rocking it out with Addie cut with stock photos of Charley and Mona.

Shock.

INT. CASINO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Charley sits at a quiet table, looking over a contract. She looks up to Mitch (the guy who gave her the business card, from before). Staring at her very-80s clothing choice.

MITCH

I like the look.

CLOSE UP: Contract Dates

CHARLEY

I can't do this.

MITCH

You called me, remember? There's no negotiation.

Their meal arrives. A beat and --

CHARLEY

I'm coaching someone to --

He's stuffing his face with pasta. She makes eye contact with him, but doesn't notice the TV above his head, playing The News. She misses the clip of Russell & Addie at Media Castle.

She hesitates, staring at the contract.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Come on, Charley, don't go playing diva on me. You either want the money, or you don't.

She leans back in her chair. She pulls out the Foreclosure Notice (from before).

MITCH

You need the money.

Stares at the dotted line. Can't do it. A head shake.

CHARLEY

Not this way.

She pushes her chair away and exits.

INT. MODERN KARAOKE CLUB - NIGHT

Russell, Eric & The Gang pace inside the packed club.

STEVE

Where is she?

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

Stuck in a line of traffic on her way back to the city, Charley's road-raging.

INT. MODERN KARAOKE CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Russell looks at his watch.

RUSSELL

I have to register.

LYLE

Let me get you a drink.

Lyle walks to the bar, nods at the BARTENDER.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Hey, can you hook my singing-friend up?

The Bartender smiles and begins to pour.

LATER

A KARAOKE SINGER finishes on stage.

Russell and his Friends sit at a table. Russell's hammered. They're trying to sober him up with coffee. It's sort of working.

ERIC

What did you order him!?

LYLE

I dunno. The Bartender said it would loosen him up.

BILLIE JEAN

Where is this chick?

RUSSELL

*(slurring Careless Whisper)*  
I'm never going to dance again, guilty  
feet have got no rhythm.

STEVE

Oh, god. He's singing George Michael.  
He's more drunk than I thought.

*(beat)*

Russell? What were you going to sing?

Russell digs in his pocket - presents a piece of paper.

BILLIE JEAN

I can't sing that, sober.

C/U on paper: *SEPARATE WAYS (WORLDS APART)* by Journey.

KARAOKE DJ

Russell Graham, please take the stage.

Russell stands. Sways. Billie Jean and Lyle lead him to the stage.

ERIC  
 (to DJ)  
 We need a song change?

KARAOKE DJ  
 Can't do it.

ERIC  
 I'll give you \$20.

KARAOKE DJ  
 That's bribery.  
 (hushed)  
 And it starts at \$500.

Eric notices the Karaoke DJ is wearing a Bon Jovi tee.  
 He looks at Russell's jacket.

ON STAGE, MOMENTS LATER

Russell's jacket-less. Wearing his aviators. The room  
 is spinning. *KYRIE* by *Mr. Mister* begins.

IN THE AUDIENCE

ERIC  
 Have you ever listened to the words? I  
 think Mr. Mister was drunk when they  
 recorded it.

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

He's in a music video, but it's spinning. Russell slurs  
 the words, but it fits with the song. Nobody can tell.  
 He nails the chorus.

*RUSSELL*  
*Kyrie Eleison down the road that I must  
 travel...*

With drunk confidence, he rips off his Aviators.

IN THE AUDIENCE

ERIC  
 Did he just say 'Carry a Laser'?

LYLE  
 Those aren't the words?

BACK ON STAGE

The Audience is blurry with his inebriated eyes. As he approaches the second verse... the MONITOR shuts off.

*RUSSELL*

*Kyrie Eleison through the darkness of the night!*

No words. Doesn't matter. He keeps going. Starts to dance during the bridge.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Charley rushes into the bar, sees Russell on stage and remains at the entrance while he finishes the song. A smile.

The Booker (from before) walks up to Charley.

BOOKER

Karaoke Kid, huh?

CHARLEY

What's Karaoke Kid?

BOOKER

Google him.

(beat)

You really outdid yourself.

CLOSER TO THE STAGE:

Mona watches drunk Russell kill the song.

MONA

Shit.

Addie sees Charley watching Russell.

ADDIE

Don't worry. I got this.

INT. PRIVATE KARAOKE CLUB - LATER

Russell and his friends head towards the door of the club. Jovial, excited. Addie intercepts.

ADDIE

Russell, can I talk to you for a minute?

His friends urge him out the door. Russell relents.

RUSSELL  
It's ok, guys. I'll meet you out there.

Mr. Serious:

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
What?

ADDIE  
I just wanted to tell you that you were  
awesome, tonight.

Russell doesn't flinch.

ADDIE (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry that we got off on the wrong  
foot. And that this blew up into what it  
is.

Still listening. Not reacting.

ADDIE (CONT'D)  
I think you're great.

She shimmies closer to him. Coy. Flirty.

ADDIE (CONT'D)  
Maybe we can... get a drink some time?

Russell doesn't have time for this - he looks outside the  
window at his waiting friends.

RUSSELL  
I don't think that's a good idea.

ADDIE  
No, no ...I think you're a genius. I  
can't quite get the playlist mix right.  
Maybe you could come by the station and --

Over Russell's shoulder, Charley approaches with the  
leather jacket in hand. She's far enough away for her to  
be out of the conversation.

Addie seizes the opportunity, leans in and plants a huge  
kiss on Russell. He doesn't kiss back, but Charley can't  
see the participation.

She just sees the kiss. She freezes. Turns around and  
exits.

Russell pulls back.

RUSSELL  
Are you kidding me!?

He wipes his mouth. Tries to get the taste of her kiss out of his mouth. Scarred.

EXT. PRIVATE KARAOKE CLUB - NIGHT

Charley's outside, leaning against the building. Infuriated. Holding the leather jacket.

Russell exits. Shaken.

CHARLEY  
You know, if you're going to cheat, at least do a good job at it.

Russell stops. She hands him back the jacket.

RUSSELL  
That was Eric.  
(beat)  
Where were you?

Matter-of-fact:

CHARLEY  
Oh, don't worry. I saw everything.

He pulls the wad of cash from his pocket and fans it for her:

RUSSELL  
Four points, baby! That makes ten! I'm in! March 12, here we come!

Cold, cold stare.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
I missed you tonight.

Dubious:

CHARLEY  
Really?

Now Russell's getting annoyed.

RUSSELL  
Yeah, really. What's wrong with you?

CHARLEY

I booked a tour. I'm opening for Dr.  
Hook & The Medicine Show. I leave  
tomorrow.

The news hits him like a piano falling out of the sky.

RUSSELL

What am I going to do?

CHARLEY

You seem to have it handled.

RUSSELL

I can't do this without you.

CHARLEY

What about tonight!?

RUSSELL

That was luck.

CHARLEY

It's all luck, Russell. Every damn bit  
of it. Right place, right time, right  
song. I mean, come on. It's karaoke.

(beat)

Give me back my glasses.

He hands her back her glasses and she storms off.

RUSSELL

I thought we were in this, together?

CHARLEY

(over her shoulder)

Yeah, so did I.

What the fuck just happened?

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dejected, Russell enters, greeted by piles of cds in  
front of him. He kicks the piles over and storms through  
his living room. He reaches for his phone and dials.

TRACFONE RECORDING

I'm sorry, you are out of minutes.  
Please purchase a prepaid Tracfone card  
available in various dollar amounts to --

Russell launches his Tracfone across the room: breaks.

He walks by his computer - the monitor's on - he doesn't pay attention. It's the *KARAOKE HAVEN* website. The Karaoke Kid is ranked #1, with 5 gold stars.

INT. ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Wearing a Media Castle golf shirt, Russell stands sorting CDs. He grabs for a pile off of his cart - *Pictures of Charlotte*. One-by-one, he tosses them over his shoulder, to the floor.

Out of the corner of his eye - there's Eric, Steve and Lyle, and Billie playing Rock Band. They wave him over -

ERIC

Russell!

He ignores them and walks away.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Russell stares blankly at *I SURVIVED A JAPANESE GAME SHOW*.

*CLICK! The local news: Media Castle 1,000,000 POINT Challenge announced tomorrow.*

*CLICK! The News: a piece on Addie and Mona versus the Qualifier*

TV OFF.

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Russell's at MEDIA CASTLE. In the STOCK ROOM. A indistinguishable LOUDSPEAKER.

He's sorting stuff. His Manager pops his head in the door.

MANAGER

They're about to announce it.

Russell barely acknowledges him. The Manager exits.

INT. ELECTRONICS STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Still in the STOCK ROOM. An INDISTINGUISHABLE LOUDSPEAKER. CHEERING.

MORE INDISTINGUISHABLE LOUDSPEAKER. CROWD GOES WILD.  
Russell's curious. He follows the CHEERS to the

ROCK BAND DISPLAY

Eric, Lyle, Billie Jean and Steve stand out in the HUGE  
CROWD. Sad, sad, sad.

RUSSELL

What's going on?

From out of nowhere, Lyle punches Russell square in the  
jaw. Russell goes flying into a display stand.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

What the hell!?

Lyle dives for him. Russell screams like a girl. Eric  
and Steve rush to Lyle, pulling him off.

LYLE

You screwed us over, man!

Russell massages his jaw:

RUSSELL

What are you talking about?

Steve and Eric hold Lyle back. Russell scurries to his  
feet, backing as far away from Lyle as he can.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Would somebody please tell me what's  
going on?

Lyle regains composure. Storms off.

BILLIE JEAN

When we sang against Addie...

RUSSELL

*Final Countdown.*

ERIC

We were disqualified. Every song we  
sung. D-fucking-Q'd.

(beat)

You were a Media Castle employee.

STEVE

Thanks, Man.

(beat)

Loser.

Steve can't make eye contact with Russell. Eric brushes by him. Billie sympathetically grabs his arm but Russell pulls away.

Russell watches as the *Led-Zeppelin-singing* BIGGER KIDS flip out. They won!

And his friends desert him.

*SOLITAIRE* by *The Carpenters* begins.

INT. CASINO STAGE - NIGHT

Charley's on stage, singing *SOLITAIRE* by *The Carpenters*. It's just practice. Nobody in the audience. The stage is lit.

CHARLEY

*A little hope goes up in smoke. Just how it goes, goes without saying.*

She stares into the audience. Totally depressing song.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

*There was a man. A lonely man. Who would command the hand he's playing.*

The percussion builds to:

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

He's at the computer. Staring at the screen, playing... it's... yes...:

CHARLEY (V.O.)

*And Solitaire's the only game in town.*

Solitaire. He's losing.

INT. STREET - DAY

CHARLEY (V.O.)

*And every road that takes him, takes him down.*

There goes Russell, running full speed from the Three Big Kids.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - DAY

*CHARLEY (V.O.)  
And by himself it's easy to pretend he'll  
never love again.*

Russell grabs his coat from the closet. Sees the Bon Jovi jacket. Sadness.

INT. JAPANESE KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

*CHARLEY (V.O.)  
And keeping to himself he plays the game.  
Without her love it always ends the same.*

Russell sits at the bar, listening to a Japanese business man (MOS).

INT. JACK & DIANE'S KARAOKE BAR : QUALIFIER - NIGHT

Russell takes the stage. Everyone's staring. He's got the jacket on, and aviators.

POV RUSSELL: They're his own aviators. He can see fine.

He closes his eyes. Takes a breath. Into the crowd, sees his friends. Anticipation. People psyched.

*CHARLEY (V.O.)  
While life goes on around him everywhere,  
he's playing...*

Qualifier banners everywhere. Feedback from the amp. He leans into the mic. Opens his mouth. Nothing. He can't do it. Can't sing. Looks at Addie & Mona. They're satisfied. Narrowed eyes at him. They've won.

The music is MOS, but the words slide up on the screen. He misses his mark. They restart the words. He misses again. The audience waits not-so-patiently.

*INSERT FLASHBACK: everyone at the Bon Jovi concert  
staring at Russell. END FLASHBACK.*

RUSSELL  
I'm sorry. I... I can't do this.

INT. JACK & DIANE'S KARAOKE BAR : QUALIFIER - LATER

Addie's on stage, accepting her award. Mona's signing autographs.

CHARLEY (V.O.)

*Solitaire.*

INT. TOUR BUS - NIGHT

Charley's on the bus. Sees a billboard advertising the IKC. Stares out the window.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE

The News: a piece on Addie & Mona attending the Nationals.

Russell CLICKS off the tv.

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Russell's taking down the Rock Band display. Something in him snaps, and he loses it, attacking the cardboard. Demolishing the display. His Manager looks on, none-too-pleased.

MANAGER

Russell?

Russell storms down the aisle, rips off his Media Castle shirt and tosses it to the floor.

Kicks it. Misses. Kicks it again: contact. The shirt goes flying.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Russell's draped over his chair. Spent. His TV is on but muted. His computer screen glows. A message alert. He stares at the screen from across the room. Somehow finds the energy to check his mail:

A video message from Karaoke Haven.

JAPANESE MAN

Hello, Mr. Karaoke Kid. I am Yamada Taro calling from Karaoke Haven website.

(MORE)

JAPANESE MAN (CONT'D)  
 Congratulations! Based on your high score, you have been chosen by fans to represent Karaoke Haven at the International Karaoke Competition in Kyoto, Japan. Please call me at 011.81.75.332.8974 as soon as you can.

He searches for his Tracfone. It's broken-dot-com. He rushes for his coat and hurries out the door!

EXT. JACK & DIANE'S - DAY

Wearing his aviators, Russell hops off the bus. Approaches the bar. Jack's outside, smoking, wrapping some wires to the building with black electrical tape.

JACK  
 You know she's not here. Don't know why she bothered. Need more than \$150,000 to save this dump. Place is falling to shit.

RUSSELL  
 What are you talking about?

JACK  
 Bank's got her by the balls, Russell. They're gonna foreclose on the bar if she doesn't pony up some cash.  
 (beat)  
 I can't decide if she's trying to prove she can save this place or just trying to prove something to herself.

Jack puffs his cigarette.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 You know about that, don't you?

No answer from Russell. That hit home.

RUSSELL  
 I thought you owned this place?

JACK  
 Me? Nah. I'm just an old drunk who likes listening to people murder Madonna songs.  
 (beat)  
 You broke her heart, you know.

RUSSELL  
 I??... I broke *her* heart!?

Russell takes off his glasses and sets them atop his head.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Look - can you give her a message for me?

Jack leans the black electrical tape against the window sill and looks at his half-assed taping job.

JACK

Give her your own message.

Jack takes another puff, tosses his cigarette butt and enters his bar. Russell stares at the electrical tape. It rolls off the window sill --

-- and falls to the ground. He leans to pick it up and his glasses fall from his head. Next to the tape.

A beat. An idea. He picks up the tape and the glasses just as a bus drives by, blocking Russell in front of the bar.

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. KYOTO STREET - DAY

A similar Japanese bus drives by, blocking the camera view. It slides out of frame revealing RUSSELL, dressed as modern as he's looked, yet, wearing the Jack & Diane's t-shirt & Bon Jovi jacket. He's still stymied.

On a gigantic billboard, a clip from Russell's uploaded performance as *The Karaoke Kid* from the website advertising IKC's Ultimate Hitokara.

Speechless, he snaps a photo of himself on the billboard. Across the street is:

EXT. KYOTO STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Plastered with banners: IKC ULTIMATE HITOKARA & ROCK BAND WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS.

A group of JAPANESE REPORTERS swarm him. Everyone's rocking the retro-80's look.

INT. KYOTO STADIUM - MOMENTS LATER

It's a MELEE OF SINGING - nothing distinguishable.  
Different rings set up around the huge arena floor.

Makeshift rooms of glass have been built around each  
stage, muffling the MUSIC.

An Electronic Billboard provides Registration Numbers and  
their Ring Allocation - and then.... the MAIN STAGE.

Russell follows a crowd of CONTESTANTS. As he walks, he  
tries to pin his Registration Number to his shirt.

Two CONTESTANTS are shouting at one another:

CONTESTANT 1

I'm going to take you down! You're dead  
meat! Do you hear me? Dead meat!

CONTESTANT 2

*Aerosmith? Kanye? What-chu-got!?*

Somehow Russell's in the middle. A REFEREE pulls the two  
apart. Russell's amassing a crowd of FOLLOWERS & FANS.

Like a school of fish, they're filtered towards TWO OPEN  
DOORS leading into a Plexiglas'd-in Ring.

REFEREE

(thick Japanese accent)

Go! Go! Go!

RUSSELL

Where!?

The Referee pushes towards the doors.

REFEREE

Single elimination!

He throws Russell inside the ring. The crowd erupts at  
his nickname.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

Survive!

Russell's on stage. The lights go OUT. A single SPOT.

He turns around to BLEACHERS FILLED WITH AUDIENCE MEMBERS  
and THREE JAPANESE JUDGES.

The monitor glows: *MANIAC* by *Michael Sembello*.

Prepares himself. Reaches for his black-electrical-taped-Aviators in his pocket. Makes sure that the black tape on the inside of the aviators fully covers the lenses. Yup. It does.

He shields his eyes and boom, it's:

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

He finds the rhythm of the song. Nails the first verse. This is easy. When suddenly --

PHUMP!

The sound of something whizzing by his head. Except he can't see it. It grazes his cheek. Holy hell! He rips off his glasses --

BACK TO REALITY.

He looks over his shoulder realizing it was a tennis ball, just as PHUMP! Another tennis ball to his right. The hazy shadow of *Michael Sembello* dodges them too!

Russell dives to his left, dropping his Aviators:

*RUSSELL*

*Locking rhythms to the beat of her heart,  
changing woman into life...*

Another PHUMP! Oh my God! A tennis ball to his right.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*She has danced into the danger zone, when  
a dancer becomes a dance.*

PHUMP! PHUMP! PHUMP! Are you kidding? He dodges them. the CROWD chants his nickname.

The balls are being fired out by an automatic serving machine squared on him.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*It can cut you like a knife, if the gift  
becomes the fire. On a wire between will  
and what will be...*

Diving for his Aviators. He tries to slip them on - can't. Rolling to avoid as more tennis balls fly.

To his left. His right. He pulls to his feet. Glasses on:

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

Now it's Charley throwing the tennis balls at him, like in practice. Evil Charley. A complex dance move to avoid them. Exhausted.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*She's a maniac, maniac on the floor! And she's dancing like she's --*

PHUMP! PHUMP! PHUMP! PHUMP! PHUMP! She's behind the firing machine, doing the FLASHDANCE DANCE. He can't keep up. Smack in the head, down for the count.

BACK TO REALITY.

A HORN. The lights go on revealing Addie, who takes the stage. She's mad as hell. Mona sticks out her foot as Russell walks by. Trip.

JUDGE

(thick Japanese Accent)

Next Round!

Out of breath, he's pulled into a different arena. A giant monitor glows: *SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO* by *The Clash*.

RUSSELL

What do I do!?

REFEREE

Sing!

Without lyrics. The music starts - Russell slides his Aviators over his eyes:

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

BLACKOUT. There's Imaginary Charley, stone-faced, sitting directly in the middle of the audience.

*RUSSELL*

*Darling you gotta let me know. Should I stay or should I go?*

The points tally. A good run. Imaginary Charley stares menacingly at Russell. Unnerving him. He loses time.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*If you say that you are mine... I'll be  
here til the end of time.*

BACK TO REALITY.

Russell lifts up his Aviators to the Judges frantically making notes. Slides them back over his eyes.

RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*So you got to let me know. Should I stay  
or should I go?*

Imaginary Charley, glaring bullets.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*...So you gotta let me know. Should I  
stay or should I...*

From behind her chair, Imaginary Charley pulls out a box, rushes the stage and hurls it at Russell. He dives to the stage floor, avoiding hundreds of Pictures of Charlotte cassette tapes.

BACK TO REALITY.

Russell rips off his Aviators and hits the deck.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

...go!

There are no cassettes. The Audience is cracking up but the Judges aren't smiling. Russell looks at his Aviators. He tosses them offstage to ONE OF HIS FANS.

JUDGE

Good for next round!

Russell takes off through the crowd and into the Holding Area. He looks up at the electronic billboard. He's due in Ring 4.

RUSSELL

Ring 4? Anybody?

Then he sees the Kanji Symbol for "4" (like at the Japanese Karaoke Club).

He steps inside.

ANOTHER STAGE

It's set up as a gigantic game of *SIMON* (the 80's handheld rhythm-light game).

A center spot, surrounded by four lighted platforms: RED, BLUE: YELLOW: GREEN. They flash in succession, lighting up the room.

In Japanese, the MC announces the rules to the AUDIENCE, then hands Russell a mic.

MC  
(in thick Japanese Accent)  
Russell Graham!

Spotlight on him. The REFEREES direct him to the start position. *JUMP* by Van Halen begins. A deep, anxiety-releasing breath.

*RUSSELL*  
*I get up, and nothing gets me down.*  
*You've got it tough. I've seen the*  
*toughest around.*

GREEN LIGHT.

MC  
Go, Russell Graham! Go!

The MC suggests the GREEN LIGHT. With trepidation, walks to it. The AUDIENCE waits patiently.

MC (CONT'D)  
Jump, Russell Graham! Jump!

*RUSSELL*  
*I might as well Jump!*

Russell jumps on the platform in sync with the beat of the song. It lights up as he hits the chorus.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*  
*Jump!*

The Audience claps. GREEN LIGHT. RED LIGHT. Jump. Run. Jump. Still singing! More APPLAUSE. Back to the center.

GREEN LIGHT. RED LIGHT. RED LIGHT. BLUE LIGHT.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*  
*So can't you see me standing here? I've*  
*got my back against the record machine!*  
(MORE)

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*I ain't the worst that you seen! Oh, can you see what I mean!?*

Jump, run, jump, run, jump, run, jump. SING!

IN AUDIENCE:

Mona and Addie watch Russell rock the Simon, and Mona's pissed!

MONA

Take him out.

ADDIE

But, Mona? I'll get disqualified.

MONA

Do you want to win?  
(a beat, then)  
Out of commission.

She stares at Addie, then turns on her heels, disappears into the CROWD.

BACK TO RUSSELL:

Russell's tiring. More APPLAUSE. Back to the center.

GREEN. RED. RED. BLUE. RED. YELLOW.

Russell runs around the stage, jumping on the colors as they light up, always back to the center.

He's up to a sequence of 9. And then he jumps to: YELLOW! Whoops. That was supposed to be BLUE.

A LOUD HORN. He falls to his knees, totally spent.

MC

Next round!

INT. ULTIMATE HITOKARA CHAMPIONSHIP HALL - MOMENTS LATER

With a gigantic bruise on his head, and drenched in sweat, Russell enters a LARGE ROOM filled with CONTESTANTS.

A REFEREE monitors a padlocked cooler filled with bottled water. He hands a bottle to Russell.

Russell takes a seat in a chair beside a PETITE ASIAN FEMALE. She smiles politely at him as he gulps a long drink of water. He places bottle on the floor.

A WAITRESS approaches with a tray of sushi rolls. So many to choose from. So many colors.

RUSSELL  
What kind is this?

A perma-smile:

WAITRESS  
(thick Japanese Accent)  
Shake Ikura.

RUSSELL  
No salmon, right?

Her smile doesn't change.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
Salmon?

No response. He analyses the roll and pops it back just as FANS rush him for his Autographs. One FAN wears his Aviators.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
Watch out for those things... they're ... broken, I think.

Addie takes a seat next to him.

ADDIE  
Time w--!

RUSSELL  
Just... shut up. Please.

Addie places her bottle of water next to Russell's bottle of water.

ADDIE  
You know, everything aside, I'm really inspired by you.

Russell sneers at Addie as Addie extends her hand.

ADDIE (CONT'D)  
No hard feelings?

Russell just stares at it. Addie shrugs.

ADDIE (CONT'D)  
Whatever.

Russell reaches down to grab his bottle of water. He brings it up to his lips when he stops --

-- looks to the floor. There's another one. Which one was his? He picks up the second. Debate. Sniffs each one. Indistinguishable. Holds them up into the light. Shit.

Looks to the Referee guarding the padlocked cooler -- then to Addie, talking to Mona.

He abandons both bottles.

INT. ROCK BAND CHAMPIONSHIP HALL - LATER

It's a cool, electrified version of the Karaoke Hall. Russell peeks through the window of the double doors leading into the Stadium.

The Led-Zepplin-singing BIGGER KIDS are on stage. And they're rocking the fucking house. So many points.

The song ends; they high-five and exit the stadium bumping into Russell.

INT. AMERICAN CHAIN HOTEL IN KYOTO - NIGHT

Russell's sound asleep. The PHONE RINGS.

RUSSELL

Hello?

INT. MEDIA CASTLE ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Eric and the gang are now playing a Wii Set-up: a banner hailing *Mario Kart World Championships*. Their fake instruments have been replaced by fake steering wheels.

Eric's voice is weak. Unenthusiastic.

ERIC (ON PHONE)

Hey - how's it going?

He rounds a curve on the game.

INTERCUT ERIC & RUSSELL

RUSSELL  
 Eric? It's 3 A.M.  
 (beat)  
 How'd you know I was here?

ERIC (ON PHONE)  
 Google.

Russell can't figure it out.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Dude, look outside your window.

Russell stands. Opens the shades to LEGIONS OF FANS and TV CREWS.

BACK TO MEDIA CASTLE:

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 You're sort of big in Japan...

RUSSELL (ON PHONE)  
 What's wrong?

A beat.

ERIC  
 They sold the station, Russell.

And he crashes his car into Lyle's.

BACK TO JAPAN:

Russell sits down on the bed, unable to process - or stand.

RUSSELL  
 No, we have another week.

ERIC  
 It's over, man. I'm sorry. You tried.  
 (he offers)  
 But, uh - have fun in Japan, hey? We'll be here. Waiting.

Russell tosses the phone to a nearby chair and collapses on the bed.

INT. KYOTO HOTEL - NIGHT

Russell exits his hotel room. In the hall the Led-Zepplin-singing bigger kids are playing hockey in the hallway. Loud. Sort of obnoxious.

RUSSELL  
Did you guys win?

LED ZEPPLIN KID #1  
No.  
(beat)  
You?

RUSSELL  
No.

A JAPANESE MAN pokes his head out a hotel room.

JAPANESE MAN  
You're all a bunch of losers.

And he slams the door closed.

EXT. KYOTO STREET - LATER

Wandering the desolate Kyoto street, Russell pauses in front of a building that rises like a Phoenix on the empty street:

It's JAMAMOTO; Charley's favorite Kyoto Karaoke Club.

INT. AFTER HOURS KARAOKE CLUB - CONTINUOUS

It's a live band, playing the same instruments as Rock Band. A sign: THE HUMAN KARAOKE EXPERIENCE.

A FEMALE VOICE sings *Whitesnake*:

FEMALE VOICE  
*Here I go again on my own! Going down  
the only road I've ever known!*

Russell is frozen - staring at the stage. It's:

RUSSELL  
Charley.

The crowd loves her. She is 100% eighties - hair, makeup, clothing.

CHARLEY

*Like a drifter I was born to walk alone.*

She spots Russell in the crowd.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

*'Cause I know what it means...*

A small, sheepish smile.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

*...to walk along the lonely street of  
dreams!*

Russell smiles back. She hands the mic off to a crowd member who rocks the song.

Charley walks off stage and towards Russell. Mimicking her from before:

RUSSELL

(re: her outfit)

That's a real style you've got, rockin',  
huh?

She brushes by him.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Charley, I have to talk to you.

CHARLEY

What's to say?

She keeps walking - he trails.

RUSSELL

It wasn't what you think it was.

She stops dead in her tracks and turns:

CHARLEY

Really? Because it looked liked you  
kissed her!?

RUSSELL

No, I didn't kiss her.

CHARLEY

It sure looked like a kiss to me.

RUSSELL

I had your glasses!? How the hell do you  
even know what you saw?

Touche.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

She did it on purpose. She knew you were there.

(beat)

You think a 25 year old girl is gonna want...

(he grips his man-boobs)

...these?

Charley can't contain her smile (she tries damn hard to, though).

CHARLEY

At this very minute, I barely remember why I hated you.

RUSSELL

What can I say? I'm a karaoke star. I have that effect on women.

CHARLEY

Heard you kicked ass today. Can I be your groupie, tomorrow?

RUSSELL

(resolved)

I'm going home.

She's reacts like "huh"? Here comes his laundry list of reasons:

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

They sold the station. And let's face it. There's no way I can beat Addie... and the glasses-thing doesn't seem to work anymore.

CHARLEY

You don't need to hide your talent behind the damn glasses, Russell.

RUSSELL

Coming from you, someone who's spent the better half of her life hiding behind a karaoke bar.

Charley shuts up.

CHARLEY

Ok, I deserved that.

(sarcastic)

(MORE)

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Russell, don't give up on the dreams you never had!

He can't help but smile.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

(now serious)

You quit now and you become a washed-up, self-destructing forty-year old bartender. I can't let that happen to you --

Beat.

RUSSELL

Why not?

CHARLEY

Because that's my job.

(beat)

And because we both know you couldn't mix a drink if your life depended on it.

They look into each other's eyes, and exchange smiles.

RUSSELL

What happened to Dr. Hook?

CHARLEY

One of the geezers threw out a hamstring between Bangkok and Beijing. Figured since I was in the neighborhood, I'd stop by.

RUSSELL

Jack told me about the bar.

CHARLEY

Jack's got a big mouth.

(beat)

I'll figure something out. I always do.

(beat)

The person I was isn't who I am now...

(she pulls at her outfit)

...and this is outfit's sort of scratchy.

RUSSELL

And really out of style.

CHARLEY

(mocking)

Yeah, and I'd go to you for style tips.

Russell smiles, gives her the rocker sign with his hands & sticks his tongue out, Kiss-style.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Being away from you has given me clarity on how insane you actually are.

RUSSELL

You love it.

(beat)

When are you coming back?

Charley shrugs.

CHARLEY

Make you a deal. You sing tomorrow and win, and I go home with you.

RUSSELL

What happens if I lose?

Charley shrugs.

CHARLEY

Better learn Japanese.

She grabs her coat and bag and motions to the door of the club.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

You pick out your Juhachiban, yet?

RUSSELL

Asian-linguist-fancy-pants.

CHARLEY

Juhachiban! The Japanese closer. Brings the house down.

Russell's in a trance, staring over Charley's shoulder. She turns around: Mona and Addie, strutting towards them. Mona's got a microphone in hand.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

You've got to be kidd--??

Mona just starts to laugh, shaking her head. Music starts up in the background. It's Mona's *hit 1990s song*. She sings the first verse.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Let's get out of here --

Charley is rushed a microphone. Human Karaoke Experience Band mixes in the music from her hit *1980s* song.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

I can't do it.

Russell takes her Aviators, slips them over her eyes. He leads her up the stairs and on to the stage.

RUSSELL

Shut up and sing.

It's a mash up. Mona and Charley's song mixed together. The crowd is going nuts.

*[intermix song lyrics to be written]*

Charley is winning the battle and the crowd. She belts out her last note - overshadowing Mona's, and Mona storms off the stage.

RUSSELL

Come on. Time to figure out my  
(he murders it)  
Jugigibond...

CHARLEY

My ears just cried.

INT. ULTIMATE HITOKARA CHAMPIONSHIP HALL - THE NEXT EVE

Charley massages Russell's shoulders, off-stage.

CHARLEY

It's a round robin competition until the final two.

RUSSELL

I'm a goner.

CHARLEY

Then the two top scorers go head-to-head. The winner takes on Aika Geinin.

RUSSELL

Who's Aika Geinin?

CHARLEY

She's won the last 5 years running. Her name *actually translates* to "love song performer".

Russell glares at his competition: an overweight Russian, mid-20s, ending his song. He was great.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

You can do this.

She gives him a passionate kiss, leaving him stunned. He trips up the stage.

RUSSELL POV

All eyes on him. He scans the room and sees: Charley. She points to her eyes. He locks in on her gaze.

*The Buggles VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR* begins: he starts strong. Stays strong. Never takes his eyes off Charley.

RUSSELL

*I heard you on the wireless back in fifty two. Lying awake intent at tuning in on you.*

SONG CONTINUES OVER:

MONTAGE OF RUSSELL'S IMAGINATION:

A BLACKOUT. SPOTLIGHTS on Russell and Charley.

RUSSELL

*If I was young it didn't stop you coming through. (Oh-a-oh).*

He wins!

Another Competition. Russell still only sees Charley, but the lights in the place are a bit brighter.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*They took the credit for your second symphony. Rewritten by machine and new technology. And now I understand the problems you can see.*

He's moved up the round-robin. Six left.

Another Competition. Russell still looks at Charley, but the room is brighter, still. More AUDIENCE visible.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

*(Oh-a-oh!) I met your children. (Oh-a-oh!) What did you tell them?*

Even more of the AUDIENCE is lit. He wins again.

Another Competition. Now everything but the Judges' Table is lit.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Video killed the radio star. Video  
killed the radio star. Pictures came and  
broke your heart (Oh-a-a-a-oh!)*

Russell points to Charley:

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*And now we meet in an abandoned studio.  
We hear the playback and it seems so long  
ago. And you remember the jingles used  
to go.*

He holds the mic to the crowd.

*CROWD*

*(Oh-a-oh!)*

*RUSSELL*

*You were the first one.*

*CROWD*

*(Oh-a-oh!)*

*RUSSELL*

*You were the last one! Video killed the  
radio star. Video killed the radio star.  
In my mind and in my car. We can't  
rewind we've come to far!*

Awesome.

INT. ULTIMATE HITOKARA CHAMPIONSHIP HALL - NIGHT

Russell sits, calm. Two names left on the electronic billboard: His and Addie's. Charley approaches.

Addie starts to sing *INXS's I NEED YOU TONIGHT.*

*CHARLEY*

*You ready?*

As they walk towards the stage, there's AIKA, (the petite Asian from before). She's got an ENTOURAGE. And Mona, singing along like a Stage Mom.

AIKA  
(thick Japanese Accent)  
Good luck to you.

RUSSELL  
Aika Geinin?

Charley nods.

CHARLEY  
Highest score wins. Surprise them with  
the first song. Wow them with the  
second.

He spiffs himself up - looks modern; stylish.

Lights Out on the Audience.

Russell trips up the stage. He calls for the Karaoke  
remote. A RUNNER rushes the stage with it - he presses a  
few buttons.

The *song* begins. It's *Pictures Of Charlotte's* familiar  
melody.

Charley's face falls. She starts to shake her head,  
"no". The tempo is faster than usual. Upbeat. Modern.

RUSSELL'S POV

He's staring at Charley. Sees her panic. It doesn't  
faze him. He's modified the song.

[*lyrics TBA*]

...and the audience loves it.

CHARLEY'S POV

She's mystified by the audience's reaction to the  
different take on her song.

ON STAGE

Russell hits the musical bridge and he pulls off  
Charley's signature dance move - he nails it!

The CROWD goes nuts. You'd think he'd done the Moon  
Walk. The Cheer Meter is off the hook.

INT. ULTIMATE HITOKARA CHAMPIONSHIP HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The Judges Table still dark. Charley and Russell stand together, nervous. Waiting. Addie takes the stage.

The *song* begins. It's AC/DC's *SHOOK ME ALL NIGHT LONG*.

ADDIE

*She was a fast machine. She kept her motor clean.*

(his voice cracks)

*She was the best damn woman I had ever seen.*

RUSSELL

I'm screwed.

CHARLEY

You have a very strong grasp of the obvious.

ADDIE

*She had the sightless eyes, telling me no lies.*

(her voice cracks again)

*Knockin' me out with those American Thighs.*

The AUDIENCE is going nuts.

ADDIE (CONT'D)

*Taking more than her share!*

She moves his mouth but nothing comes out. The AUDIENCE is stunned silent.

MONA

No - no - no!

RUSSELL

What's going on?

CHARLEY

Vocal strain.

Mona rushes the stage. Grabs the mic from Addie.

MONA

*Taking more than her share! Had me fighting for air!*

It's pathetic.

MONA (CONT'D)

(frantic)

*She told me to come but I was already  
there! This is mine! It's my comeback!*  
(into the mic)

Mine!

Addie's grabbing her throat. The REFEREES storm the stage. Mona's dragged out. Addie follows like a wounded puppy dog. A big "DQ" appears by her name. News Crews follow them out.

CHARLEY

Welcome to the IKC.

INT. ULTIMATE HITOKARA CHAMPIONSHIP HALL - MOMENTS LATER

AIKA'S POV ON STAGE

She's poised. Ready. Stares out into the darkened Audience. The *music* starts. It's *Eminem's WE MADE YOU*.

AIKA'S IMAGINATION

The entire AUDIENCE is filled with 1000 images of Eminem.

AIKA

*When you walked through the door it was  
clear to me, you're the one they adore,  
who they came to see. You're a rock  
star, everybody wants you. Player! Who  
could really blame you? We're the ones  
who made you.*

She clears her throat and then:

AIKA (CONT'D)

(rapping)

Back by popular demand. Now pop a little  
Zantac or antacid if you can, you're  
ready to tackle any task that is at hand.  
How does it feel? Is it fantastic, is it  
grand?

For an Asian chick, she's one hell of a white rapper.

IN THE AUDIENCE

AIKA (CONT'D)

*Well look at all the massive masses in the stands. Shady man, no don't massacre the fans!*

Aika's incredible. The Audience is speechless. In awe. Holy crap.

RUSSELL

You ready for my  
(and, murders it again)  
Jube-jube bean?

CHARLEY

Darlin', I love ya, but it's going to take more than a closer to beat her.

RUSSELL

She's just standing up there. You said it yourself: Presentation is worth 25%. I'm going to present the socks off of them.

Russell leaves Charley standing alone.

INT. ULTIMATE HITOKARA CHAMPIONSHIP HALL - MOMENTS LATER  
ON STAGE

A red curtain hides the audience.

MC (O.S.)

Russell Graham!

The curtain draws... revealing:

Russell's back to the stage. He's facing the Led-Zepplin-singing three bigger kids, on their Rock Band equipment.

The music starts. Synthesized. Building keyboard. The recognizable back-beat. Then the drums. It's *Livin' On A Prayer*.

*FLASHBACK: Teenaged Russell stares into the audience END FLASHBACK.*

The gigantic screen behind them is filled with video from *Rock Band*.

*RUSSELL*

*Tommy used to work on the docks. Union's been on strike, he's down on his luck. It's tough. So tough.*

Russell spins around. Faces the audience. Finds Charley. Sings only to her.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Gina works the diner all day. Working for her man, she brings home her pay for love. For love.*

The bigger kids hit every virtual note.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*She says we've got to hold on to what we've got. It doesn't make a difference if we make it, or not! We've got each other and that's a lot.*

He points to Charley.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*For love, we'll give it a shot!*

*(covers the stage)*

*Oh! We're half-way there! Oh! Livin' on a Prayer!*

Extends his hand. A true, middle-aged rocker, in all his sweaty glory. The Audience is insane.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Take my hand, we'll make I swear, oh! Livin' on a Prayer!*

Russell and the bigger kids complete the song as the Audience flips their shit.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP FROM BLACK.

Russell's in the Audience next to his POSSE. Aika's just down from him, with her Entourage. The MC is on stage, *speaking in Japanese*, holding a trophy. ANOTHER MAN holds a huge check: \$250,000.

MC

And the winner is!...

He opens the envelope with pause. A spotlight searches the audience. The spotlight stops on him as:

MC (CONT'D)  
Russell Graham!

The entire place goes bezerk! Russell's paralysed. His posse celebrates for him. He fumbles towards the stage. As he approaches:

MC (CONT'D)  
(Japanese, then)  
Celebrity judge, Mr. Bon Jovi!

Jon Bon Jovi appears on stage with Sambora and the band. At the sound of his name, Russell trips up the steps of the stage and falls into the MC.

The MC drops the trophy on Sambora's foot. Sambora stumbles into an amp and falls into Bon Jovi who is knocked to the ground.

The Man with the huge check flies backwards and into the large screen that falls from its hanging wire. It crashes to the ground behind him.

The force of the tv shorts the wires of the microphone which explode into a shower of sparks that hit Bon Jovi.

He doesn't realize it as he pulls himself to his feet - his hair's on fire. Sambora points - Russell jumps from the stage floor, ripping off his leather Bon Jovi jacket. He throws it over Bon Jovi's head, smothering the fire.

Jon and Russell fall into the audience, at Charley's feet.

CHARLEY  
(to Russell)  
Yeah. He hates you.

FADE TO:

EXT. JACK & DIANE'S KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

A big sign outside the bar: Grand Reopening! A line up to get in.

INT. JACK & DIANE'S - NIGHT

The place is hopping. All the recognizable faces. Even the three bigger kids are there, playing Rock Band instruments for Charley & Russell.

*The Human League's DON'T YOU WANT ME BABY* plays.

Charley, rocking her 80s look and Russell, Mr. Modern, duet the song. The bar becomes a live Music Video. Smoke. Lights. This isn't his Imagination:

*RUSSELL*

*You were workin' as a waitress in a cocktail bar when I met you. I picked you out, I shook you up and turned you around. Turned you into someone new.*

He's confident. Sings with authority. Hits the notes.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Now five years later on you've got the world at your feet. Success has been so easy for you.*

A seductive dance move. Really stupid. Really funny.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*But don't forget, it's me who put you where you are now, and I can put you back down, too.*

He brushes against her. Blows in her ear.

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Don't, don't you want me? You know I can't believe it when I hear that you won't see me.*

He points at her, then him as:

*RUSSELL (CONT'D)*

*Don't, don't you want me? You know I don't believe you when you say that you don't need me.*

He accidentally trips and falls into Charley. She catches him and grabs a second mic.

*CHARLEY*

*I was working as a waitress in a cocktail bar. That much is true.*

(MORE)

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

*But, even then I knew I'd find a much better place. Either with or without you.*

It's her turn to weave in and out around him.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

*The five years we have had have been such good times. I still love you. But, now I think it's time I live my life on my own. I guess it's just what I must do.*

During a break in the song:

RUSSELL

You know, you should sing it an octave lower... you know, throatier.

CHARLEY

Shut up and sing.

A smile.

FADE OUT.