

THE FISH TANK

Pilot

by

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"THE FISH TANK"

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

A series of CLOSE-UPS -- urbane, sophisticated images of a morning ritual:

-- A razor runs across a face.

-- A coffee grinder blends up some beans.

-- A hand flips the editorial section of the newspaper.

Over this, a teenage voice. This is our hero, Owen Fisher. People call him FISH.

FISH (V.O.)

I used to be an ordinary high school guy, with ordinary high school guy problems.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

We're in a dark parking lot outside a closed convenience store somewhere in the deep suburbs. Empty, except for a lonely Volvo station wagon.

FISH (V.O.)

Like trying to find a place to hook up with my girlfriend.

Inside the car is Fish -- a mature, winning, self-possessed teenager. First one in his crowd to drink coffee, first to drive -- and he actually knows how to get "downtown." Sure, on occasion he'll indulge in a bit of alcohol, but not to get drunk -- more because there are certain cocktails he enjoys.

Currently, he's attempting to make out with his girlfriend, JESSIE. Adorable (think Mary Ann, not Ginger), yet consumed with perfection and straight A's. They kiss for a beat, then she spots someone and pulls back.

JESSIE

Who's that guy?

FISH

Guy? There's no guy. Come on, let's practice that thing we learned about in Sex Ed today.

JESSIE
He's freaking me out.

FISH
He's a zitty dude in a red vest
breaking up boxes.

JESSIE
Seriously, Fish. We're teenagers
alone in a car. This is a horror
movie. They're gonna find me hanging
on a meat hook. I don't want to be
on a meat hook!

He nods, resigned, and turns the key to fire up the engine.

FISH (V.O.)
There was never anywhere to hang out
without parents being all over us.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - DAY

We swoop around Fish and his group of friends, including
girlfriend Jessie; the chubby, over-exuberant GABE; and the
sexy, screwed up VANESSA (more details on them later).

FISH (V.O.)
We tried to make things work at my best
friend Gabe's house next door. But you
know those parents who desperately want
to believe they're the "hip" mom and
dad who kids really like talking to?
That's Ann and Buddy.

Gabe's over-coddling mom, ANN, hovers right over them.

ANN
So, what's the gossip? Who's gittin'
naked with who?

FISH (V.O.)
Plus, Buddy was chronically worried
that someone in his home might need a
beverage.

Helpful BUDDY pops in, dangling a six pack of sodas.

BUDDY
Who needs a beverage?

FISH (V.O.)
And then one day, my whole world
changed.

INT. THE FISH TANK - DAY

We're in the great room (kitchen/family room) of a nice house outside of Philly. Fish's mom, GREER, a fit, sharply dressed, high-powered type calls upstairs.

GREER

Fish, honey, c'mere! We need to talk with you about something.

She goes back to the cantaloupe she's slicing. Fish's dad, JOEL, reads the paper. He's smart and remote, and likes a nice bow tie.

FISH (V.O.)

Greer and Joel. My parents. Very accomplished people. I'm proud of them. Dad's an eye surgeon who heads up a big deal institute in Manhattan, so he has an apartment in the city and comes back on weekends. Mom's a lawyer here in Philly. She tried the stay-at-home-mom thing, until legend has it she flipped out at a Mommy and Me class during a rendition of "Wheels on the Bus," screamed "I can't do this anymore," and applied to law school that afternoon.

Fish bounds down the stairs.

FISH (CONT'D)

What's up, happy people? Sliced cantaloupe. Lovely.

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

My mom has never cooked a meal in her life, but she's constantly chopping cantaloupe.

GREER

Okay, well, you know I interviewed with the Department of Justice down in DC last month. And I got a call yesterday that they want to offer me the job!

JOEL

(not looking up)
Your mother's a superstar.

GREER

Anyway, your father and I have been talking, and we don't want to just yank you away from your friends and everything you love. So the thought occurred to us -- maybe I could commute to Washington, Dad could keep going to New York, and you could... stay here.

Fish is clearly delighted, but plays it cool.

FISH

By myself? Wow. I mean, I'd sure miss you a whole heck of a lot.
(then)
I assume I'll have access to a car.

GREER

Absolutely. Dad's car is still off limits, but the Volvo is yours. We would call you every night. And we'll be back on Saturday, so we can spend the whole weekend together. You know, the only reason we'd even consider this is because you're such a responsible, trustworthy kid.

FISH

And I only got that way because you two are so loving, firm, and fair.

GREER

So. Do you think this might be something you'd possibly consider?

Fish just stares at her. Blinks.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Fish, his mom, and his dad make their way through the bustling 30th Street Station.

GREER

You've got the emergency numbers, the alarm password, the credit card--

FISH

Plus that beautiful bowl of sliced cantaloupe you left me in the fridge -
- thank you for that.

GREER

'Kay. We're just gonna try this out and see if it works.

Greer stops and hugs him big. So does Joel.

GREER (CONT'D)

We love you so much. And, you know,
you can still say the word and I'll
say no to the Department of Justice.

FISH

Hey -- who am I to get in the way of
Justice? Go save the world, you
nutty people.

The hugs break. Fish's dad walks toward the platform marked
"New York," and Fish's mom walks to the one marked
"Washington, DC," leaving Fish alone. He flips his car keys
around his finger and heads off with a skip in his step.

BACK TO A FEW MORE CLOSE-UP IMAGES:

- A finger pushing a white button.
- Bubbles forming in crystal blue water.
- Sunglasses being slid on.

FISH (V.O.)

You know that part in "Spiderman"
where Tobey Maguire realizes he's
half-man, half-spider, and starts
swinging from building to building
for the first time? I too was
realizing that I had a superpower.

POP WIDE to reveal...

EXT. THE FISH TANK BACKYARD - DAY

It's Fish we've been tracking in these images. He's sitting
in a hot tub in his backyard, sunglasses on, drink in hand.

FISH (V.O.)

I didn't have X-ray vision, or the
gift of flight. What I did have was
what every teenager really wants.
One word: freedom. My name is Owen
Fisher. I'm in high school. And I
have my own house.

As Fish smiles big, we PULL BACK to see his yard, his house,
and the entire suburban neighborhood where he is now clearly
the king. And thus, a teenage superhero is born.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. THE FISH TANK - DAY

Fish and Gabe are lounging on the big wrap-around couch, just taking it all in.

GABE

Okay. Your own house. What to do first...

(beat)

Wanna take off our pants?

FISH (V.O.)

Gabe is sort of caught between being a boy and a man. Like, on his Facebook page, he lists his interests as "hot babes" and "Lego."

FISH (CONT'D)

As much as I love being naked with you in the middle of the afternoon, I'm gonna pass. It's kinda creepy.

GABE

So when Mr. Tom Cruise was given an empty house in a little film called "Risky Business," and the first thing he did was take off his pants, I guess that was "creepy" too. Or did he slide out of his jeans, across the floor, and into America's hearts?!

(then)

I'm doing it.

Gabe kicks off his sneakers and struggles out of his jeans.

FISH

Please don't....wow, underwear, too.

GABE

Okay, that wasn't on purpose, but you know what? It feels great!

With strategically placed shirttails, Gabe runs around the room, jumping, singing, delighted. After a while, his excitement dies down. He stops, and just kinda stands there with no pants. Beat.

FISH

Okay, we've done that.

The doorbell rings. As Gabe puts his pants back on, Fish opens it. It's LEE, leaning on a lawn mower. He's about 30. And he looks pretty bitter.

LEE
I'm just here to pick up my check.

FISH
Oh, hey, Lee. Absolutely.

As Fish grabs a checkbook and starts writing...

FISH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Lee graduated high school like ten years ago, but he still lives with his parents across the street.

EXT. THE FISH TANK FRONT YARD - FLASHBACK

As Fish continues, we see a young, happy-go-lucky, TEN YEAR-OLD Lee mowing the grass.

FISH (V.O.)
When Lee was a kid, he founded a very profitable lawn mowing business, and all the parents would tell their kids: "Look at Lee, he works so hard, he has his own business, why can't you be more like Lee?"

In a quick MONTAGE, as Lee keeps mowing the grass, we see his face grow older and older, and less and less happy-go-lucky, until he becomes the disgruntled 30ish guy we saw.

FISH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Unfortunately, Lee never moved on. And, turns out, mowing neighbors' lawns when you're ten is a lot more impressive than mowing neighbors' lawns when you're thirty.

INT. THE FISH TANK - DAY

We're back. Lee steps inside, as Fish tears out a check.

LEE
So. I hear your parents gave you the run of the place. You must think you really got it made, don't ya?

FISH
(beat)
I have no quarrel with you, Lee.

LEE

(glances down)

Oh, look, I seem to have tracked some freshly cut grass into your hallway. Whoops. What are you gonna do about it?

FISH

(unaffected)

I'll probably just sweep it up later.

GABE

How's living with your parents going, Lee? They gonna throw you a big thirtieth birthday party?

LEE

Shut it, Chubs. We're not having a party, we're just going ice skating with some friends.

(beat)

I gotta go spread a bag of mulch around. Later, losers.

Lee goes.

GABE

So. It's the kick-off week at The Fish Tank!

(off Fish's quizzical look)

That's what I'm calling your house from now on.

FISH

Why's that?

GABE

Your name is Fish. You have an empty house. It's The Fish Tank.

FISH

No, I get it, it's just not something we're gonna be saying out loud ever again.

GABE

Whatever. I say you have a party.

FISH

I'm not gonna have a party my first week alone here. My parents are gonna be all over it to make sure nothing's going wrong.

GABE

Fine. Wanna bring the Slip 'N Slide in and ride it down the stairs?

FISH

(sarcastic)

Or...we could fill this entire room with Jell-o and just sort of float here like we're in space.

GABE

You're joking, but with a simple plastic tarp, we could make that happen.

FISH

You're insane. I was actually just thinking of inviting Jessie to spend the night.

GABE

Oh yeah, you're gonna grab that proud mane of sandy blonde hair and--

FISH

Okay, you know we're not gonna have sex. That's where she draws the line.

GABE

Please. You get her into the Jell-o room, and all bets are off.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Jessie, looking super cute in her tennis whites, stretches out before a match. Fish and Gabe sit on the bleachers, watching. Jessie sees Fish and gives an adorable wave.

JESSIE

Hi, sweetie!

FISH

Lookin' good, cupcake!

GABE

God, I love a sport where the tops are the bras.

FISH (V.O.)

Jessie comes from this pressure cooker family -- her Mom and Dad met at Harvard, her three older sisters all went to Harvard. She's also been playing tennis since birth...

Jessie bounces the ball. Her expression changes in an instant from Sweet Young Thing to Intense Tennis Machine. She tosses the ball and crushes a ninety mile-an-hour serve.

JESSIE

UGGHHH!

FISH (V.O.)

...and she's a grunter.

GABE

(offering Fish some candy)
Rollo?

FISH

I'm good.

Vanessa, the fourth in their group of friends, climbs up onto the bleachers. She's a sexy red head (think Ginger, not Mary Ann) who kinda screams bad news. Ad-lib hellos all around.

VANESSA

How's our girl doin'?

FISH

Good. Her first serve just hit that other girl in the leg pretty hard. She's still down.

VANESSA

I got held up 'cause I was breaking up with Darren. He painted this douche-y devil face on the hood of his Camaro, and we had a huge fight because I didn't tell him how "awesome" it was.

FISH

Who'd've thought that dating a twenty-three year-old who refills propane tanks for a living would end badly.

Gabe slides toward Vanessa suavely.

GABE

So. No more Darren, huh? Are you still in your grieving period, or are you looking for a transitional man?

FISH (V.O.)

Gabe's lusted after Vanessa since she was the first girl in elementary school to get booblettes.

VANESSA

Gabe, do we really have to do this dance every time I break up with someone?

GABE

Look, I know we're never gonna be a couple. I get that. But, it's just, you've hooked up with so many guys. Couldn't I at least be one of them?

VANESSA

No.

GABE

Please?

VANESSA

No.

GABE

Please?

VANESSA

No.

GABE

(extending candy)
Rollo?

VANESSA

No.

Gabe nods to himself.

EXT. THE FISH TANK BACKYARD - LATER

Fish and Gabe hold golf clubs, and they're chipping balls into the hot tub. Vanessa's on a lounge chair reading a magazine. Jessie, still in her tennis gear, is studying. Next to her, a giant tennis trophy. As Gabe lines up a shot...

FISH

(whispering like a golf announcer)
He steps up to the ball. Don't let his retainer and man-breasts fool you -- underneath, he is a lithe gazelle with a swing like an angel.

Gabe swings. The ball misses the hot tub, flies wildly into the neighbors' yard, and lands somewhere with a clank.

FISH (CONT'D)

Ohh! Too much club for Tubby.

Fish grabs some tongs and flips a nice piece of tuna on a built-in grill. On the counter next to the grill, chopped heirloom tomatoes, fresh mozzarella cheese, nice olive oil -- he's clearly a gourmet chef.

FISH (CONT'D)

Seared wasabi tuna will be done in a minute.

JESSIE

(staring at her textbook)
Pamplemousse.

FISH

What's that?

JESSIE

Pamplemousse. It just hit me. It's "grapefruit" in French, but of course I forgot so I just left it blank on my vocab test and now there's no way I can get higher than a ninety-six.

FISH

Which would still be an A.

JESSIE

It must be so easy to just not care.

VANESSA

Honey, I love you to pieces, but ohmygod.

FISH

So, Jess... you know this is the first week without my folks.

GABE

At The Fish Tank!

JESSIE

What?

GABE

His house.

VANESSA

You named his house?

GABE

His name is Fish, he lives
alone...it's the Fish Tank!
(beat)
Fish bowl?... Casa del Fish?

FISH

(beat, to Jessie)
Anyway, I was wondering if maybe you
might want to spend the night. I
promise I will make no untoward
moves. It'd just be nice to wake up
together. Watch the morning news
shows. Maybe spoon.

JESSIE

My parents would never let me sleep
at your house when your parents
aren't home.

FISH

(beat, then gently)
Okay, I know this is a foreign idea
to you, but how about this? Don't
tell them where you'll actually be.
(off her blank look)
Lie to them.

JESSIE

Ohhh. Right right right. Yeah, no,
I can't lie to my parents. I mean, I
would, but I signed a contract with
them in ninth grade, so...

FISH

You know, it's kind of a thing.
Teenagers are sort of known for lying
to their parents. Throughout
history.

GABE

What's the big deal? I lie to my
parents all time. I lie about things
that are totally irrelevant. It's
almost just for sport.

VANESSA

Jess, you are so sweet, and good, and
I totally admire that. But your
boyfriend has his own house. You
gotta start lying, dude.

GABE

(to Vanessa)

You know, we really seem to be on the same page about this. Wanna go behind the garage and just do what feels natural?

VANESSA

No.

Gabe nods to himself again.

MUSIC RISES, MAYBE THE COMMODORES' "BRICK HOUSE," AS WE SEE A MONTAGE OF FISH LIVING HIS NEW LIFE:

FISH (V.O.)

News of my newfound powers spread quickly.

--AT SCHOOL, Fish walks confidently down the hallway in slow MOTION. KIDS and some TEACHERS whisper, point, and pat him on the back as he goes by. A JANITOR gives him a thumbs up, and Fish does that snap-gun-point thing with his hand back at him.

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

And like any new superhero, I tested the limits of my powers.

--AT HOME, Fish is on the couch. He has brought every TV in the house into the family room, and is watching two basketball games, a reality show, "The Shawshank Redemption," and CNBC.

--AT THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE, the garage door opens. Fish is looking at the Volvo wagon we saw earlier, and his dad's convertible Alpha Romero Spider. He smiles mischievously.

--OUTSIDE SCHOOL, The Volvo wagon roars up and comes to a stop, and Fish steps out, oozing confidence, wearing some super cool, potentially iconic sunglasses.

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

Dad's sports car was too easy. The bigger challenge was to make a Volvo wagon cool.

A few POPULAR JOCKS pass by.

POPULAR JOCK

Heard about your house. We're all unbelievably psyched. Hot wagon, by the way.

FISH
(modestly)
It gets me from point A to point B.

--ON THE STREET in front of the houses, Gabe's dad, Buddy, strolls to the curb in his robe with a mug of coffee to get the paper. We then reveal Fish, getting his paper in his robe with his mug of coffee too. Fish gives a neighborly wave.

FISH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Bottom line, life was good.

We follow Buddy as he heads back into...

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - DAY

Ann's making breakfast, as a robe-clad Buddy enters.

ANN
I'm very upset about what's going on with Fish. Did he say anything to you out there? Is he lonely?

BUDDY
Actually, he looked fantastic. His skin was glowing like he had just done some sort of salt rub.

ANN
I'm gonna invite him over for dinner.

BUDDY
Ooh, not tonight I hope. My bike club is going for a ride. That reminds me -
- I need to stop at Whole Foods and pick up some more Energy Goo.

Ann clanks her spoon down, annoyed. Buddy, unaware of her frustration, goes. We ANGLE ON Gabe, on the couch, working on an elaborate Lego project, and talking on the phone.

GABE
(into phone)
Please?

VANESSA (O.S.)
(through phone)
No.

GABE
(into phone)
Come on, Vanessa! It would help me so much more than it would hurt you!

VANESSA (O.S.)
(through phone)
Okay, you know what? If it will shut
you up -- fine.

GABE
(into phone)
Fine?
(holding his arms up in
victory)
She said fine!

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gabe is on the couch with a big smile on his face. Fish sits
at their upright piano, casually playing some jazz.

FISH
So break this down for me again.
Vanessa really said yes to you?

GABE
Actually, she said "fine," but I'll
take it. Oh, man, she does not know
what's coming for her. Señor Nasty's
gonna show her the bid'ness.

FISH
So she said "fine."

GABE
(proudly)
Yup.

FISH
So you're kinda an object of pity?

GABE
Yeah I am!
(raises hand for a high-five)
Up high! Now let's talk about which
room you're gonna give me.

Fish considers for a beat, then...

FISH
You know what? I can't believe I'm
about to say this, but I'm sorry.
You can't have a room.

GABE
What?

FISH

"Fine" isn't good enough. You should have more self-worth than that.

GABE

Self-worth? I'm five foot four, chubby and I have no facial hair. People have mistaken me for a lesbian! And not the hot good kind!

FISH

Okay, fine -- you might not be "tall" or "buff," and sure, your lack of "facial" or "armpit" hair is getting a little weird at your age...

GABE

Are you going somewhere with this?

FISH

I thought I was.

GABE

Fish!

FISH

My point is, none of that matters. You're better than this. And your first time should be at least a little bit meaningful.

GABE

Oh, should it, Mr. Jazz Piano? Don't judge me just because your relationship is based on mutual respect and love. That's weird! You're the weird one!

FISH

Look, you're gonna regret it unless you wait to do it with someone you truly love.

GABE

You shut up! You take that back! This is a total double standard. Your girlfriend's staying over at your house, why can't mine?!

FISH

Because she's not your girlfriend! I'm in a two year relationship. You're a single dude who still plays with Lego.

GABE

It's a perfectly viable hobby!
You're totally ignorant! There's a
very hip Lego culture you know
nothing about!

FISH

(beat, gently)
Is there?

GABE

Yes! Lego, comics, retro Chewbacca t-
shirts. It's called Nerd Chic.
Trust me, I'm working something!

FISH

(beat, again gently)
Are you?

Ann crosses in, wearing oven mitts.

ANN

What's all the yelling about?

GABE

Nothing.

ANN

Well, don't get too worked up. You
know what happens when you get over-
excited, Gabe. You get sick.
Remember when you threw up before
your production of "Sound of Music"?
We had to improvise a whole new Nazi
uniform for you.

(then)

Your father's finally home from his
ride, so come sit down for dinner.

Ann exits. As Gabe and Fish head for the table...

GABE

You have violated everything The Fish
Tank was supposed to be about.

FISH

Okay, you're gonna have to stop
calling it "The Fish Tank." It's not
gonna be a thing. Let it go.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - LATER

Dinner's over, and the group is on to dessert. Gabe is
sulking, barely looking at Fish.

GABE

Can I be excused?

ANN

Well, no, your friend's still--

But Gabe has already jumped up and left, throwing a glare at Fish on his way out.

BUDDY

Wow, he barely touched his pudding.

(then)

Okay, think I'll go too. Gary turned me on to an amazing new reflector I need to go mount on my helmet. Good to see you, Fish.

With that, Buddy exits. As Ann watches him go, a look of disappointment crosses her face. Fish notices.

FISH

Let me help you clear.

As they bring the dishes into the kitchen...

ANN

So you really doing alright, honey, with your parents away?

FISH

I'm hanging in there, Ann.

(then)

I hope I'm not stepping out of bounds here, but are you and Buddy okay?

Ann just starts spilling.

ANN

He's just doing something with that bike every single night. It's gotta be greased, or lubed -- and don't get me started on his riding club. Seven soft-spoken middle aged men in spandex. Stopping for mineral water and gabbing about whose calves are more developed. I'm gonna slash all their tires, I swear I'm gonna do it!

(beat)

I'm sorry. We're talking about you.

FISH

No, it's okay. I'm so sorry you're feeling this way.

ANN

It wasn't always like this. I think he used to find me interesting. I mean, did you know in my twenties I lived in Japan?

FISH

I did not know that.

ANN

For two weeks, but the Asian sensibility had a very profound impact on my world view. You've seen the sushi magnets on my fridge.

FISH

Look, I've known you guys since I was two. Gabe and I used to take baths here together -- I'm not proud of it, but it happened. My point is, I know you and Buddy really well, and I think there's a real deep love there.

ANN

You do?

FISH

Absolutely. Sometimes, with busy jobs, and kids, people get out of synch. You just need to find some time alone to reconnect.

ANN

I think you're right. Thanks, Fish.
(then quickly)
But you're doing okay though?

Fish nods.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Fish sits, happily munching on some fries. Jessie is across from him, her brown bag lunch spread out before her. She's staring at her cell phone.

JESSIE

Okay. I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna lie to my parents. I'm gonna betray the people who raised me. And gave me life. And packed me this celery.
(beat, she dials)
Here we go. It's ringing.

She starts blowing air out of her mouth rapidly.

FISH

Easy... There's a big cookie in it
for ya if you pull this off.

JESSIE

(into phone)

Hey Mom, it's me. I was wondering if
I could sleep over Vanessa's tonight?
She's just really upset about
breaking up with her boyfriend and
could use some girl time...I can?
Great. Okay, I love you. Bye.

She slowly removes the phone from her ear, as if she's just
ordered a mafia hit.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

(an intense whisper)

It's done.

EXT. THE FISH TANK - DAY

The Volvo station wagon pulls up to the curb, and Fish hops
out with some grocery bags and a fresh baguette. As he heads
for his door, a voice comes out of nowhere.

LEE

Pretty happy with yourself,
aren'tcha? Think you're on top of
the world.

Fish turns to see Lee, holding a leaf blower.

FISH

Hi, Lee. I'm actually just trying to
enter my house.

LEE

Oh, your house. You have your own
house! We get it. We hear ya. Loud
and clear, pal! You may have your
own house, but let me ask you this:
Do you have cable in your room?

FISH

Yeah, I do.
(gestures to his lip)
You got a little something here. It
might be mustard.

LEE

(wipes his mouth)
I had a soft pretzel earlier.

(MORE)

LEE (CONT'D)

I should tell you that you're not the only one with a house to yourself. On Friday, my parents are sleeping on my dad's work friend's boat. So, looks like we'll both be flying solo.

FISH

(sincerely)

I'm sure you're gonna have an awesome night.

LEE

Damn straight. It's gonna be electric.

With that, Lee fires up his leaf blower and heads off.

INT. THE FISH TANK - NIGHT

After dinner. Fish and Jessie are on the couch next to a crackling fire, kissing. They are adorable together.

FISH

Who'd have thought that I could fall so in love with a girl who went to my rival, enemy junior high?

JESSIE

I think that's what drew you to me. I was the unknown. I lived almost three miles away. And that made me dangerous.

FISH

You might be right.

JESSIE

If you were so into me, why'd you wait until the field trip to the Betsy Ross House to make your move?

FISH

I don't know. Something about being away from school...seeing that weird old actress knitting the flag. I had to have you.

They start kissing again. After a beat, Jessie pulls back.

JESSIE

I think I'm ready to make love.

Fish blinks. He doesn't quite know what to say.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
(to clear up any confusion)
With you.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

We're in the same dark parking lot we saw earlier. This time it's empty except for Gabe's mom's Mazda. Inside the car, Gabe and Vanessa are sitting there. Just as his mom predicted, Gabe looks pretty sick.

GABE
Alright! Let's get this party starte-

Before he can finish, he erupts in a coughing fit. Vanessa is kinda grossed out. When the coughing subsides, Gabe takes a Kleenex from his jeans, blows his nose, then turns to her.

GABE (CONT'D)
Where were we?

VANESSA
Are you okay?

GABE
I'm great.

VANESSA
You're totally sweating.

GABE
This is fun, isn't it? This is good.
Doing this in a car should be fun,
right?

VANESSA
Just to be clear, I'm only here
because I feel sorry for you.

GABE
You know, you could be a little nicer!

VANESSA
(softening)
You're right. I'm sorry. You're a
good friend, you've begged me a lot,
and this is a super sexy situation.

GABE
Thank you. Now. Prepare to be
delighted.

He leans over and they start to kiss. She tries to lie down -- as much as she can in the front seat of a Mazda.

VANESSA

Ow.

GABE

Am I too strong? Am I hurting you?

VANESSA

No, something's digging into my back.

She reaches behind her and pulls out a small piece of plastic.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Is this a piece of your Lego?

GABE

(trying to spin it well)
Uh, yeah. That's m'Lego. It's actually pretty cool, I was doing this huge re-creation of Evel Knievel's jump over the Grand Canyon, and I think this is part of his ramp.

VANESSA

(beat)
I gotta go.

GABE

But you said "fine"!

VANESSA

Love ya, but it's back to "no."

She opens the door and gets out. He starts coughing again, as Vanessa spots a few LIGHTLY MUSTACHED TWENTYSOMETHING GUYS sitting on upside down plastic crates outside the closed store. They're just her type. She approaches them flirtatiously.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Hey, does anyone have any gum?

As the guys happily let Vanessa into their circle, and they start to chat, Gabe slumps in his seat, in despair.

INT. THE FISH TANK - NIGHT

Back in front of the fire, Fish and Jessie are still on the couch, but are now both staring forward.

JESSIE

Fish? Hell-o? "Doing it" is officially on the table.

FISH

Yeah, I...I don't think I can.

JESSIE

What?

FISH

I'm not sure I'm ready.

JESSIE

But...I was the one who said we should wait. You wanted to do it! What high school guy turns down sex?!

Fish is starting to become a bit unhinged -- less cool than we've seen him.

FISH

I don't know! I'm confused. Maybe it's this house. Or living alone, or something. I don't know!

JESSIE

So you don't want to have sex because you have an empty house, which is the very thing any teenager needs in order to have sex? Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

FISH

(muttering to himself)
What am I doing? I'm a teenage guy and I'm turning down sex. This is what it's all about. This is what I've been training for! Good Lord, I'm a mess!

JESSIE

Obviously, you're not ready to take our relationship to the next level. It's fine. It's great. I'm totally humiliated, and I can't go home 'cause I lied to my parents, so I'm trapped here, and I have a pre-Calc quiz tomorrow that I'm totally unprepared for!

She grabs some math flashcards from her purse and starts studying. Fish looks on, feeling terrible.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - DAY

Gabe is lying on the couch, watching cartoons on TV, still kinda sick. Fish raps on the door and enters.

FISH
Hey. Whaddya watching?

GABE
Thundercats.

FISH
So how'd it go with Vanessa?

GABE
I had a hundred-and-two fever, we were in a compact Japanese sedan, and she walked out on me before I could even get under sweater, over bra.

FISH
Look, I'm sorry. I should've just given you a room.

GABE
No, don't worry about it. I don't know why I even thought I had a chance with her.

FISH
If it makes you feel any better, my night with Jessie didn't go much better. We had a huge fight.

GABE
Oh, man. I'm sorry. What happened?

FISH
Well, she finally said she was ready to sleep with me. But, I, uh...I turned her down.

GABE
You did what, now?

FISH
I realized I'm not ready.

GABE
You turned down sex?

FISH

Yeah.

GABE

You turned down sex?!

FISH

You're getting kind of red.

GABE

Are you that freakin' evolved?! Sex is all I want. It's is all I think about! Then it's just handed to you and you say no?! She pulls a big freakin' silver top off a tray of freakin' lobster, and you just bat it out of her hands?! How dare you, sir! HOW DARE YOU!

FISH

But-

GABE

You know who they should've given your empty house to? My grandmother! Because she'd be having more fun in it than you are!

FISH

I'm having fun!

GABE

You're searing tuna, chipping golf balls, and driving a Volvo! What's next, you gonna blow the roof off the place and get a pet bird?! You're an embarrassment. The fact that no one is having sex at your house is a travesty. I can't look at you right now.

FISH

Look, it's very easy for you to tell me about all the fun I should be having. But my parents aren't around, I have no rules -- it's just me. I'm in charge. And all I can do is what I think is right. I find cooking relaxing, the Volvo is surprisingly zippy for a family car, and sex is a huge deal. I will do it when it feels right. But right now, it feels like my life is moving too fast as it is. Okay?

GABE
Whatever dude. Go marinate some
freakin' flank steak.

Gabe storms upstairs. Ann and Buddy enter. They're in mid-conversation and they don't notice Fish.

ANN
So what should we have for dinner?

BUDDY
I thought I'd grab some granola and
work on my bike. I'm getting some
chain slap that's really messing with
my ride.

ANN
(tensely)
Yeah, I bet chain slap's a real bitch.

BUDDY
I'm sorry, did I say something wrong?

ANN
No. You said nothing wrong. I get
it. You love your bike. But let me
just say one thing. If you talked
about me for one second with the
passion that you talk about your
bike, then maybe we'd have a
relationship! I lived in Japan!

FISH (V.O.)
At that moment, I realized that in a
way, Gabe was right. Somebody should
be having relations in my empty
house.

Fish stands up.

FISH (CONT'D)
Obviously, this is a very awkward
time for me to reveal my presence in
the room. But, uh...what are you
guys doing tonight?

INT. THE FISH TANK - NIGHT

It's Friday night. In the kitchen, Fish is pulling an impressive souffle out of the oven, as he leaves a message.

FISH
(into phone)
Jessie, me again.
(MORE)

FISH (CONT'D)

I just want to say I love you. I'm really sorry that sex had to become something awkward and ugly between us. And I really hope I'm leaving this message on your cell and not your family's voice mail, but if I am, hello, Mrs. Kleinman.

We ANGLE ON Ann and Buddy, who are smiling and chatting, finishing up dinner at a candlelit table, finally connecting, as Fish approaches and presents them with the dessert.

BUDDY

My God, what's that?

FISH

Oh, nothing, it's just a bittersweet chocolate souffle with a vanilla bean custard sauce.

ANN

Thanks for this, Fish. Seriously.

She takes Buddy's hand.

FISH

Alright, you two crazy kids, I'm gonna clear out. You got the house alone to yourselves. Get the fire back. Explore the upstairs rooms, and do not worry about Gabe -- he completely bought your Atlantic City story. I'm gonna go over there and make him a French bread pizza.

He picks up a duffel bag, and heads for the door.

INT. GABE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Fish raps on Gabe's door. Gabe opens it. He's wearing a nice black shirt.

FISH

Hey, man. So are we over this thing? We got a whole night with your parents away and I don't want to spend it in a fight with my best friend.

GABE

(adjusting his collar in the mirror)
We are great.

FISH
You look kinda dressy.

GABE
That's because I'm going out.

FISH
Where?

GABE
Your place. After our fight, I went to my room and posted a party on Facebook. Nine o'clock at The Fish Tank -- yeah, I'm sticking with the name. Deal with it.

Fish's eyes grow wide.

FISH
A party?! My parents are coming back tomorrow. If anything goes wrong, this whole thing could go away!

GABE
I'm sorry, man! You made me take my one shot at Vanessa in a Mazda! I was angry, I lashed out. I love you.

Gabe hugs Fish. Over Gabe's shoulder, Fish looks out the window and sees cars pulling up to his house. Unseen by Gabe, we see next door, as Buddy -- glasses off and hair a little messy now -- opens up the front door and cluelessly looks on, as some kids file past him. Fish sprints out the door.

INT. THE FISH TANK - NIGHT

Fish runs into his house. Some kids are making themselves at home, kicking back on the sofas. More people are arriving. Fish comes upon a confused Ann and Buddy, standing at the base of the stairs, not quite sure what's happening. He quickly throws his arms around both of them and escorts them up.

FISH
There was a small miscommunication about tonight. Don't worry, this whole thing's gonna disappear.

BUDDY
Maybe we should just--

FISH
Absolutely not.
(shooing them upstairs)
Get back up there. Scoot!

He dashes back downstairs to deal with the growing party.
Gabe approaches.

GABE
Did I just see my mom?

FISH
What?! No! That was Emily Snitzer.
She's just shaped like your mom. Not
that I'm looking.

INT. THE FISH TANK BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ann and Buddy rush in and slam the door. They're both wired.

BUDDY
Did I just see Gabe?!

ANN
Yes! We're running around hiding
from our teenage son!

BUDDY
Think we need to stop this party?

ANN
Fish said he would handle it.

BUDDY
I know, I know. This is all actually
kind of exciting. Like a good
interval training ride with lot of
peaks and valleys.

ANN
Honey, shh. No bikes. Just me.

They collapse onto the bed, kind of exhilarated.

INT. THE FISH TANK - NIGHT

Downstairs, the party is growing. Gabe is fiddling with the
stereo, as Vanessa comes over. She's arm in arm with GUS, one
of the twentysomething dudes from the convenience store who's
now her new boyfriend.

VANESSA
Hey Gabe. This is Gus.

GUS
'Sup.

GABE

Hi.
(studies him)
Wait, are you my mailman?

VANESSA

Look, uh...I really didn't mean to walk out on you. I hope we can still be friends.

GABE

Come on, we're always gonna be friends.

She smiles. So does he. A nice moment. The DOORBELL RINGS. Fish opens it. Standing there -- Lee. He's not happy.

LEE

Oh hello, Fish.

FISH

Lee.

LEE

Quite a party you've got going here. I actually put out a few feelers for a party at my place as well. The response was not overwhelming.

FISH

Sorry to hear that.

LEE

I can see you're busy, so I'll get to the point. Because my party didn't quite work out, I figured I'd eat my cookies and get to bed early. Unfortunately, the noise from your house is keeping me up. Now. I'd hate to have to call the cops. And I won't...
(kinda vulnerable)
...if I could maybe come in and hang.

FISH

You know what, Lee? I've got an even better idea.
(calling out)
Hello?! Everybody?!

He hops up onto a chair as the room quiets down.

FISH (CONT'D)

Can I just say something for a sec?
Hi. I just want to tell everyone
that while I'm thrilled you're all
having a good time, the real party is
over at Lee's house.

Everyone's a bit confused. From the crowd, a voice...

RANDOM KID

Lee sucks!

FISH

No. Lee doesn't suck. When Lee was
our age, he started a business. He
didn't work for the man at a video
store or a tart yogurt place. He
represented everything that's great
about this country. He started with
one lawn mower. And now he has...two
lawn mowers. The point is, how many
lazy Saturday afternoons have you all
hung out at the mall, or played
Nintendo, instead of being forced by
your parents to mow the lawn? You
know who made that possible? Lee.
Sure, things haven't worked out
perfectly for him. Sure, he still
lives with his parents and hangs
around the high school football
games, making us all a little
uncomfortable. But we all grow up at
different paces.

Fish takes a beat. He's now kind of talking about himself.

FISH (CONT'D)

Some of us are forced to grow up too
fast. Some of us...take a little
more time. Like all of us, Lee is on
a journey. And we should honor and
respect his journey. I know I do.

Despite himself, Lee is touched. So is the crowd. Finally, a
chant. It starts small, then grows...

CROWD

Lee! Lee! Lee! Lee!

The kids start filing out the door, across the street, and
over to Lee's. Lee approaches Fish.

LEE

Why would you do this for me?

FISH

I told you -- I have no quarrel with you, Lee.

Lee is confused. He studies Fish's face for some kind of ulterior motive, but can find nothing. Finally...

LEE

Okay. Thanks.
(starts to go, turns back)
You won't tell my parents, right?

FISH

Never.

Lee goes. Fish steps onto his front stoop, as the last party-goers (including Gabe and Vanessa) file out past him. The crowd finally clears to reveal...

Jessie. Standing there. Holding a bouquet of roses.

JESSIE

Is it weird for a girl to bring a guy flowers?

FISH

Is it weird for a guy to say, "they're so pretty" and mean it?

She smiles and hands them to him.

JESSIE

I'm sorry I got mad. You don't have to do anything you're not ready for. I'm here, I love you, and I'm gonna wait as long as it takes.

(beat)

But if we haven't done it by the prom, I'm gonna assume you're gay and move on.

FISH

Fair enough.

(beat)

Okay, I'm gonna put these roses down, because they're pretty thorny, and then I'm gonna kiss you good.

He sets the flowers down, puts his arms around her, and they kiss.

INT. THE FISH TANK HALLWAY/BEDROOM - DAY

Fish approaches the bedroom and opens the door a crack to see Ann and Buddy sleeping soundly, peacefully -- they clearly had a great night. He heads in and gently shakes them.

FISH

Wake up, sleepy heads. I'm going to get my parents in a few, so you should probably head out.

BUDDY

Fish, we don't know how to thank you.

FISH

Hey -- the looks on your adorable faces are all the thanks I need.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Fish is waiting on a bench, doing the New York Times crossword puzzle. After a beat, Greer emerges from a stairway, and Joel appears at another. Fish spots them, smiles, and holds up a cardboard tray with two cups of Starbucks for them.

They reach Fish and hug him big.

INT./EXT. THE FISH TANK - DAY

A bit later. Greer and Joel are on the couch reading the paper. She feels something under her, and pulls out a folded piece of paper that was wedged between the cushions.

She unfolds it. It's a print-out of a Mapquest map, with directions to Fish's house, represented by a little star. Someone has scrawled "PARTY" on the top in Sharpie.

GREER

Look at this.

Fish is about to come bounding downstairs when he overhears...

JOEL

He had a party?

Fish stops in his tracks, and listens. He's dying inside.

JOEL (CONT'D)

That's not good. Whaddya want to do?

GREER

I don't know. I mean...we kind of need this arrangement to work.

Fish cocks his head, intrigued to hear where this is going.

JOEL

Maybe it was more of a gathering.

GREER

A gathering. Exactly. He should be allowed to have a gathering.

JOEL

Absolutely.

GREER

So...we'll keep this to ourselves?

JOEL

Far as I'm concerned, it never happened.

Greer quietly crumples the paper up and throws it away. Up on the landing, Fish just stands there, kind of in shock. He heads downstairs, opens the front door and steps outside.

FISH (V.O.)

Yeah, you heard right. I got caught having a party, and my parents hid it from me. That's when I realized I had more power than I ever imagined. I was, in a way, invincible. Sure, life was simpler before all this happened. And sometimes I wish I could be normal again. But most of the time, I cherish what's been given to me. I'm living the dream. My name is Owen Fisher. I'm in high school. And I have my own house.

Fish turns to face his house. He breathes in deep, and ponders the seemingly limitless possibilities, as we...

FADE OUT.

THE END