

Tangled Web  
"Pilot"  
by  
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TEASER

EXT. SEATTLE - DAY

A montage of establishment shots:

- The city as seen from Puget Sound
- The Space Needle
- Mount Rainier, as seen from Beacon Hill
- Volunteer Park
- The Fremont Troll
- The statue of Jimi Hendrix on Broadway

We end on a coffeeshop. A young man arrives on bicycle.

INT. COFFEESHOP - CONTINUOUS

Trendy and hip, the cafe is full of 20- and 30-somethings interacting with iPods, cell phones, laptops, etc.

CLAIRE CAMPBELL, 23, in a sunny peasant dress, occupies an armchair in the foreground, facing away from the entrance. She happily types into a laptop on the table in front of her.

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
Mammary Jane strikes again.

In the background, CARTER ALBRIGHT, 26, enters and removes his bicycle helmet. His messenger-bag covered with stickers for local bands.

He queues up. As customers reach the front of the line, the hyperactive BARISTA recites their usual order from memory, showing off.

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
She has conscripted me as her tech support serf, and at least once a day I am summoned to her lair to undo some computer-related catastrophe.

Carter reaches the counter. The barista points to him and falters, at a loss.

BARISTA  
(a little too fast, a  
little too loud)  
Carter, Uhh. Twenty-four ounce  
double tall low-fat latte? With a  
shot of ... vanilla? hazelnut?

Carter hoists his large, battered, plastic mug.

CARTER  
Uh, drip coffee, actually. Black.

BARISTA  
(disgusted with himself)  
Damn it!

Claire continues, absorbed in her writing.

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
I think I'm the only reason M.J.  
hasn't been fired. That and the  
fact that she's sleeping with the  
boss.

Carter receives his coffee, wanders into the heart of the  
coffeeshop, and settles into the vacant armchair across from  
Claire. Opening his messenger bag, he extracts a beat-up  
laptop and sets it on the table back-to-back with Claire's.

Claire, oblivious to Carter's arrival, continues:

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
You'd think she'd be better with  
computers. She contains at least  
as much silicone as they do.

Claire smiles, pleased with her closer. At that moment,  
Carter begins typing.

CARTER (V.O.)  
My barista is jittery and high-  
strung. I find this comforting,  
like a barber with well-coifed  
hair.

Their laptops are squared, the parallel screens a few inches  
from one other. As they review what they have written, it's  
as if they are mirror images on either side of a looking  
glass. They would be gazing into one another's eyes -- were  
it not for the computers between them.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. CALL CENTER - MORNING

A large, nondescript building.

CARTER (V.O.)

(muted)

-- been listening to Puget Sound on  
bitrockr dot com. See you tomorrow  
morning at six.

We hear a muted, alt-rock song, which continues into the next scene.

INT. CALL CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Rows and rows of cubicles occupied by glassy-eyed customer service reps numbly answering phone.

We settle on a cube slightly larger than the rest, with a name plate reading "CLAIRE CAMPBELL, IT SPECIALIST."

CLAIRE wears headphones jacked into the front of her PC and slouches in her chair, typing languidly -- writing her blog on the company's dime.

CLAIRE (V.O.)

My morning horoscope said avoid  
negativity. So today I will focus  
on Mammary Jane's positive  
attributes.

Of course, the way she dresses,  
it's impossible to focus on  
anything but her enormous, positive  
attributes.

She glances up to find CHARLIE (a mousey man in his late-forties) nearby, paralyzed with indecision. Claire shrieks; Charlie jumps, startled in turn. Claire removes her headphones and the music ends abruptly.

CLAIRE

(half-laughing)

You scared the crap out of me!

CHARLIE

Yeah, uh. Sorry.

Clair puts a hand on her rapidly beating heart.

CLAIRE  
I can skip my ten o'clock expresso  
now, though. You just saved me  
four bucks.

CHARLIE  
Listen: I sort of need to speak  
with you like right now.

Claire is caught off guard by the urgency of his request.

CLAIRE  
Oh. Ah, OK. I guess.

Before rising from her chair, Claire quickly grabs the mouse  
and clicks a button on her screen labeled "Post".

INT. CALL CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Claire and Charlie walk briskly.

CLAIRE  
What's going on?

Charlie looks guilty as they arrive at a conference room.

CHARLIE  
I didn't have anything to do with  
this.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie and Claire enter. Sitting at the desk are: TRISHA  
(an unnaturally buxom woman in her late twenties wearing a  
low-cut blouse), CAROLINE (a matronly woman in her forties),  
and ALAN (a smartly dressed man in his thirties).

ALAN  
Claire Campbell?

CLAIRE  
(warily)  
Yessss?

Claire looks at Charlie. Charlie, refusing to meet her gaze,  
closes the conference room door.

ALAN  
Take a seat please.

Claire and Charlie sit at the table.

ALAN  
I'm Alan Medina from legal.  
(gesturing to Caroline)  
This is Caroline Kingwood, from  
Human Resources.

Trisha is not introduced. She glares at Claire contemptuously.

CLAIRE  
(to no one in particular)  
Hi.

Alan hands Claire a sheet of paper. It's a printout of the voiceover we heard at the start of the show, starting with the phrase "Mammary Jane strikes again."

CLAIRE  
Where did this come from?

ALAN  
Are you familiar with the weblog  
Tangled Web?

Oh. Claire glares at Trisha, reclines in her chair, and crosses her arms defiantly.

CLAIRE  
Yes.

ALAN  
Did you write this?

CLAIRE  
You know I did.

ALAN  
We will not tolerate harassment in  
the workplace.

CLAIRE  
Harass- what? I never used any  
names. I didn't even say where I  
worked!

ALAN  
Be that as it may, we have reason  
to believe that the person you  
refer to as "Mammary Jane" is one  
of your coworkers.

A shot of Trisha and her acres of cleavage. Claire studiously refrains from looking in her direction.

CLAIRE  
Well, that's some crackerjack  
detective work, right there.

ALAN  
Ms. Campbell, we are terminating  
your employment, effective  
immediately.

CLAIRE  
You can't fire me for something I  
wrote on my personal site!

Caroline pushes a stack of papers across the table to her.

CAROLINE  
Your network permissions have been  
revoked. Sign these, surrender your  
security badge, and Charlie will  
escort you from the building.

Claire reels, shellshocked.

TRISHA  
(cloying)  
Need a pen?

INT. BITROCKR RECORDING BOOTH - DAY

A seated Carter speaks into a microphone. JEREMY, in the  
background, selects CDs from a shelf.

CARTER  
I'm Carter Albright, you've been  
listening to Puget Sound on  
bitrockr dot com. See you tomorrow  
morning at six.

We hear the first few bars of the song from before, then  
Carter removes his headphones.

JEREMY  
Great show.

CARTER  
Thanks.

JEREMY  
Monica wants to see you.

CARTER  
OK.

As Carter leaves the booth, Jeremy settles into the vacated seat and sets his CDs on the table.

INT. MONICA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

MONICA WALL, in her mid forties and "business casual" attire, sits behind a desk reading email. Carter appears in the doorway, raps on the doorframe twice. Monica glances at him briefly, then returns her attention to the monitor.

MONICA

Come in.

Carter takes a few steps into the office. Seconds pass. Finally, Monica looks up.

MONICA

You'd better sit down

He does, and braces himself for what he knows is coming.

MONICA

I'm promo-

CARTER

Nooooooooo ...

MONICA

-ting you -- yes, promoting you --  
to operational manager of BitRockr.

CARTER

No, no, no. I don't want a  
promotion. I don't want to manage.

Monica sighs with impatience.

MONICA

Carter, you already manage. You  
coordinate everything around here.

CARTER

No I don't. I just make  
suggestions.

MONICA

Which people accept, because they  
trust your instincts. But someday  
someone will reject your  
suggestions. And when that  
happens, I want you to have the  
authority to--

Carter visibly recoils at the word "authority".

CARTER

You can't just change my job like this!

MONICA

Actually, as your boss, I can. Fun fact. Learned it in business school.

And, besides, you've managed BitRockr for months, whether you admit it or not. I'm just going to compensate you accordingly.

CARTER

What if I refuse?

MONICA

Refuse to do the same job for more money? Well then, Carter, I guess you'd be an idiot.

Carter slumps back in his chair, defeated.

MONICA

I know you think money is unimportant, or that receiving a salary commensurate with your talent would somehow constitute selling out. But when money does become important to you -- and like it or not, that day will come -- I don't want you wandering off. OK?

CARTER

I'll consider your offer.

MONICA

(laughs)

Okay, but I submitted the paperwork this morning. So I need your answer by close of business yesterday.

CARTER

I just ... Do I have to be manager? Can we call it something else?

MONICA

Whattaya wanna be? Director of something? Czar? Operational Czar?

CARTER  
Anything but manager.

MONICA  
We'll find a way to accommodate  
your misguided principles.

Carter rises.

CARTER  
And don't tell anyone.

MONICA  
Your shameful secret is safe with  
me.

EXT. CALL CENTER - MORNING

Claire and ROSALINDA emerge from the building, each with a box, and load Claire's belongings into a car at the curb.

ROSALINDA  
Come to the Nitelite at six. We're  
throwing you a retirement party.

CLAIRE  
Woo! Sheet cake and awkward  
speeches!

As the two girls embrace, Claire sees that Rosalinda feels bad.

CLAIRE  
Don't feel sorry for me -- you're  
the one who still works there.

ROSALINDA  
(cryptically)  
Yeah ...

INT. RECORDING BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Carter's face appears through the window. STEPHEN CHAO, 25, waves him in, continuing to speak into a microphone.

STEPHEN  
... in rehab again. I bet he keeps  
a spare toothbrush there.

Carter silently enters and seats himself.

STEPHEN

And James Lott will be in Pioneer Square today, filming scenes for Fatal Impact 3. I'll get some exclusive photos for Star Struck. This is Stephen Chao, thanks for listening.

Stephen flips a switch, ending the recording.

CARTER

Didn't that guy just have a kid?

STEPHEN

Lott? Yeah, like two weeks ago. He and Mikki Small.

CARTER

So what's he doing here? Shouldn't he be home with them?

STEPHEN

Why has no one seen the baby since it was born? Why did they name it "Wetland"? We were not meant to understand the mysterious ways of celebrity, Carter.

CARTER

I guess.

(beat)

What were you recording, anyway?

STEPHEN

Podcast for my site.

CARTER

Ah, right. The newest get-rich-by-thirty scheme.

STEPHEN

You laugh, but these celebrity blogs are a gold mine. Just you watch.

There's a banging on the booth's window. Outside, a worried TYLER waves. Stephen waves back and, after a moment's hesitation, Tyler disappears.

CARTER

What was that all about?

STEPHEN  
Probably jealous because we're in  
here talking.

CARTER  
Are you guys dating?

STEPHEN  
A little.

CARTER  
Never date coworkers, that's my  
motto.

STEPHEN  
Oh, really? I thought your motto  
has just "never date."

CARTER  
I date! I go on dates all the  
time!

Stephen snorts.

CARTER  
Thursday I went to the Long Winters  
show with Maggie.

STEPHEN  
And did what? Stood next to her in  
silence for ninety minutes watching  
a band. And afterwards?

CARTER  
Well, you know. I have to go to bed  
early. Because of my show--

STEPHEN  
Stop. You're making me cringe.

CARTER  
So, wait: does Tyler think I'm  
gay?

STEPHEN  
I let all my suitors think you're  
gay. Keeps them on their toes.

CARTER  
Crafty.

EXT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - DAY

A large, suburban McMansion. Carter arrives by bicycle. This couldn't possibly be his home, right?

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Carter enters without knocking.

CARTER

Hello!?

SOPHIA (O.S.)

I'm in the kitchen!

Carter heads in the direction of the voice.

In the kitchen is SOPHIA, 30 years-old, seven months pregnant. Remnants of her prior life as a scenester are visible: a fashionable haircut gone to seed, tattoos on her upper arms. She is in the midst of cooking; two dozen cookies cool on the counter.

Carter appears in the doorway. Upon seeing the cookies he pulls up short, as if stunned.

CARTER

We make snickerdoodles, now?

SOPHIA

As of today, yes.

Carter strides into the room, grabs a cookie off the cooling rack, and keeps moving toward Sophia.

CARTER

Is this a nesting instinct thing?

SOPHIA

No, I wanted to eat two dozen cookies. Now I'll have to do with twenty-three, ya thief.

Carter reaches Sophia and gives her a one-armed side-hug. The relationship between the two is thus far unclear.

SOPHIA

Come on, I'm hugging for two.

Gingerly, he gives her a full embrace.

CARTER  
I don't want to squish my niece.  
Or nephew.

They stop hugging and step apart. Sophia rolls her eyes.

SOPHIA  
Why don't you just let me tell you  
the sex.

CARTER  
I don't want to know. I like  
surprises.

A moment of silence, then:

SOPHIA  
It's a--

CARTER  
(clapping hands to ears)  
Shut up! No spoilers!

Sophia laughs. Carter, grinning, removes his hands. He grabs another cookie and hoists himself onto the counter, where he sits for the remainder of the scene.

SOPHIA  
What's up, baby brother?

CARTER  
Heliotrope is playing Friday night,  
and asked if The Pangs wanted to do  
a few songs.

SOPHIA  
Seriously? We haven't practiced in  
months.

CARTER  
That's why I'm here. We'll call  
Stephen, tell him to bring the  
gear. We rehearse today, again on  
Thursday. We'll do alright.

Sophia looks at Carter mournfully, knowing how much he wants this to happen. But:

SOPHIA  
I think my rock and roll days are  
behind me, Carter. At least for a  
while.

CARTER  
(disappointed)  
Yeah ...

SOPHIA  
And what would Dan say if he came  
home to us jamming in the living  
room?

CARTER  
(a beat, then)  
So how are things with Daniel?

Sophia warns him with a look.

SOPHIA  
You know.

CARTER  
He's workin' late tonight?

SOPHIA  
(pissed)  
Knock it off, Carter.

Carter holds up his hand, palms out, a sign of surrender.

CARTER  
I was just askin'.

SOPHIA  
(last word)  
No you weren't.

Sophia makes a visible effort to change the subject.

SOPHIA  
Did you see that Claire got fired?

CARTER  
Who?

SOPHIA  
Claire Campbell, girl who writes  
Tangled Web.

CARTER  
Nuh-uh, haven't read her site in a  
few days. What happened?

SOPHIA  
She got fired for her blog.

CARTER

No way.

SOPHIA

She badmouthed a coworker and they  
canned her.

CARTER

Oh, man.

Sophia gestures to a laptop on the counter.

SOPHIA

Check it out. Now, if you'll  
excuse me, the multi-vitamin-sized  
bladder beckons yet again.

Carter pulls the laptop over to himself and navigates to  
Claire's blog. The top entry is titled "In Which I Get  
Fired."

He reads it quickly. We then see him scroll down to a  
section of the webpage that reads "Post A Comment." In the  
"Name" field he puts "The CyniScribe"; in "URL" he puts  
"cyniscribe.com".

In the comment field, he types (and we see) "I hope somebody  
buys you many, many cocktails."

A review of what he's written, and he clicks "Submit."

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAWN

Carter, on bicycle, blazes through downtown Seattle, occasionally weaving in and out of traffic.

CARTER (V.O.)  
I love riding my bike in the  
morning.

He arrives at the Bitrockr building and pulls into the parking lot. A frustrated JEFF CRAFT is trying to wedge his Hummer into a parking spot that is clearly too small.

CARTER (V.O.)  
By the time I arrive at the office,  
my body is flooded with my three  
favorite substances.

Carter skirts the back end of the vehicle, turns in his seat, and gives Jeff a cheery wave. When he again turns forward, his face is suffused with smug.

CARTER (V.O.)  
Adrenaline, endorphins, and self-  
righteousness.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A bedroom nightstand. The alarm clock clicks over from 6:59 to 7:00 and begins buzzing.

Claire moans unhappily from deep within the blankets of the bed. An arm snakes out and slaps the clock into submission.

She slowly emerges from the covers, sits up, and looks around the room with bleary eyes.

In mid-stretch her eyes settle on two boxes in the corner, the same we saw her carry from her building the day prior. A moment of befuddlement, then realization dawns.

CLAIRE  
Ohhh ... yeah!

Happy, she snuggles down under the blankets again.

CLAIRE  
Awesome.

INT - BITROCKR SERVER ROOM - LATER

Racks against the wall are filled with rows and rows of servers. ANDY TEUBER is plugging multicolored cables into ports.

From outside the door, we hear muffled words, then the beep-beep-beep of someone entering a passcode into a keypad. The door opens and Carter enters.

CARTER  
(to Andy)  
Hey.

LILY, an attractive journalist, enters on Carter's heels. She jots something into a notebook.

CARTER  
Andy, this is Lily, from Circuits Magazine. She's doing a profile of BitRockr.

And this is Andrew Teuber, our IT Guru, keeping our systems humming and our nerd quotient high.

ANDY  
(by way of greeting; in  
robotic voice)  
Klaatu barada nikto!

CARTER  
Yeah, see? I have no idea what he's saying.

Andy resumes his work.

And those are the BitRockr servers, on which we store over a million songs.

LILY  
Rock? Pop?

CARTER  
... Punk, electronica, jazz, folk. You name it.

Visitors to our website assemble tracks from our library into a feed, add their own voiceovers and commentary.

We call them "E-jays," because they basically build their own radio station. Then they make that station available on the web.

With a brief wave to Andy, Carter leads Lily from the room.

INT. BITROCKR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Carter and Lily emerge from the server room, walk-and-talk down the hall.

LILY  
And Puget Sound?

CARTER  
Right. So, the BitRockr staff has its own feed, and Puget Sound is my show.

JEFF CRAFT approaches. Seeing Lily, he begins to swagger.

CARTER  
Ah. This is our Internet Marketing Manager.

JEFF  
(to Lily)  
Jeff Craft. But everyone calls me Crafty-J.

Lily jots something down in her notepad. Jeff stands expectantly for a moment, waiting for her to respond. When it becomes clear that she won't, he turns to Carter.

JEFF  
Excellent show today, Cartman. As usual!

Jeff raises his hand above his head. Carter obligingly high-fives him.

JEFF  
Alright, you kids stay outta trouble.

Jeff continues strutting down the hall. When he is out of earshot:

LILY  
How many people in the marketing department?

CARTER  
Just Jeff.

LILY  
And people call him Crafty-J?

CARTER  
(shaking his head)  
Not to my knowledge.

Lily strikes a line from her notebook.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Claire pads out of her bedroom in pajamas. From the light streaming through the windows it looks to be around noon.

A few moments later she sits at her computer, sets a mug of coffee on the desk beside her, and launches her browser. She visits her blog, Tangled Web. The top-most posting, entitled "In Which I get Fired," runs off the bottom of the screen.

She scrolls down. Beneath the post it says "There are 731 comments". Claire chokes on coffee.

CLAIRE  
Holy cats!

She reads the first dozen or so comments. Most are supportive ("Sorry to hear that. Totally sucks"); a few are pejorative ("what were u expeting, dumass??!"). She shakes her head in disbelief.

She comes across Carter's comment ("I hope somebody buys you many, many drinks"), reads it, clicks on the link to his site. A series of shots of her reading entries on his blog and laughing.

She quickly starts an email, putting Carter's address in the To line, setting the subject to "Drinks." On the screen, we see Claire write: "Why don't you do the honors?"

She clicks send and moves on, not giving it a second thought.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Carter starts at his monitor in slack-jawed wonder.

CARTER  
Huh.

Stephen walks hurriedly past Carter's open door.

CARTER  
Hey, headed to lunch?

STEPHEN  
Uh, kind of.

CARTER  
Cool, I'm coming with you.

STEPHEN  
I, yeah. OK.

Carter takes a last, amazed look at the monitor, jumps to his feet, grabs his jacket, and exits.

INT. SOPHIA'S DEN - DAY

Sophia's in a second-story den, typing on a desktop PC. We hear a door open and close elsewhere in the house.

SOPHIA  
Dan?!

She listens for a moment longer, then levers herself out of the chair.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sophia descends the stairs, stopping halfway as Daniel hurries from the kitchen area, heading for the door.

SOPHIA  
Hi.

DANIEL  
Oh hey. I thought you were sleeping.

SOPHIA  
Writing my blog. What are you doing home?

Daniel holds up a small piece of hardware.

DANIEL  
All the files for my presentation are on this thumb drive, and I forgot it this morning. Dumb.

SOPHIA  
As long as you're here, wanna have lunch?

DANIEL  
Nah, I'll just pick something up on  
the way back.

SOPHIA  
You sure? I mean, we've got--

DANIEL  
(abruptly)  
Soph, come on. They need me back  
at the office.

Sophia's mood darkens.

SOPHIA  
It won't kill you to spend ten  
minutes at home once in a while.

DANIEL  
I'm taking next month off, Soph.  
That's what this presentation is  
about. I am presenting to the guys  
who are filling in for me.

Icy silence.

DANIEL  
As soon as the baby is born I'll be  
here full-time.

Sophia tromps sullenly back up the stairs.

SOPHIA  
Yeah, we'll see.

Daniel watches with an incredulous, "what did I do?"  
expression. Then, with a sigh of exasperation, he turns and  
exits.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALKS - DAY

Carter and Stephen walk briskly. It's a sunny spring day.

STEPHEN  
I dunno, man. Blind dates are  
chancy.

CARTER  
It wouldn't be a blind date. It  
would be drinks with a stranger I  
met online.

STEPHEN  
Completely different!

CARTER  
Seriously, though: her blog is very candid and I've read it for years. So even though we've never met, I feel like we've got an intimate connection.

Stephen ponders, puzzled. Then:

STEPHEN  
Oh, I get it. She also posts photos of herself.

CARTER  
Yeah ...

STEPHEN  
And she's hot.

CARTER  
(emphatically)  
Oh yeah.

STEPHEN  
That's some intimate connection.

CARTER  
(shrugs)  
Close as you get on the Internet.

STEPHEN  
Is this because I mocked your inability to date?

CARTER  
If things go horribly wrong I will be blaming you, yes.

A moment passes as the two continue walking.

CARTER  
Where are we going?

STEPHEN  
Uhh, Pioneer Square.

CARTER  
Why didn't we go to the sub shop on third?

Stephen doesn't reply. Carter finally notices the camera.

CARTER

Ohhh ... We're not going to gawk at  
James Lott are we?

STEPHEN

I'm going to gawk at James Lott.  
You're tagging along uninvited.

CARTER

I thought we were going to lunch!

STEPHEN

We'll get lunch. I just want to  
scout out the scene.

MIKKI SMALL, wearing a head scarf and sunglasses, pushing a stroller, approaches Carter and Stephen. Two large men trail in her wake.

STEPHEN

After work I'm coming back down to--

Stephen glances at Mikki's face, then does a double take, breaking off in mid-sentence. As she passes, the two bodyguards eye Stephen with suspicion, wondering if he's recognized the actress.

As soon as the bodyguards pass, Stephen stops motionless in the middle of the sidewalk. Carter also stops, but doesn't notice that he is now being ignored.

CARTER

Stephen, look. We've been friends  
forever. But I'm tired of your  
harebrained schemes--

Stephen turns and sprints after Mikki.

CARTER

-- to make, uhh-?

As Mikki and her bodyguards reach the crosswalk, the sign turns red.

Half a block behind, Stephen quickly crabwalks his way toward the corner, keeping his body flattened against the sides of the buildings. When he gets 20 feet from Mikki he ducks into a doorway and unslings his camera.

While waiting for the light to change, Mikki takes the baby out of the carriage and puts it over her shoulder. The baby's face is clearly visible to those behind the actress.

Back in the alcove, Stephen finishes attaching a zoom lens to his camera just as Carter appears.

CARTER

The hell?

Stephen seizes Carter's coat and yanks him into the alcove.

STEPHEN

That's her! Mikki Small!

CARTER

The actress?

STEPHEN

And the baby. That no one has seen.

Stephen leaps into the sidewalk and snaps a series of photos, barely aiming. We see them on screen; each is blurry and/or doesn't have Mikki in the frame. After a few, a bodyguard starts to turn. Stephen lunges back into the alcove.

STEPHEN

(panting)

I thought she was still in Hollywood. But she must be in town with Lott. Incognito.

Stephen jumps out and snaps another series of shots. He is taking photos the same way an action hero would shoot at an enemy while pinned down by fire.

He rejoins Carter and hurriedly previews the photos via the digital display on the back of his camera.

CARTER

This is a grotesque invasion of pri-

STEPHEN

Damn it! These all suck!

Stephen peers around the corner in time to see the stoplight for cross traffic turn yellow. He takes a deep breath.

STEPHEN

It's now or never. Cover me.

Stephen jumps out into the middle of the sidewalk and carefully aims his camera. Through the lens we see him slowly zoom in until the baby and Mikki's back are perfectly framed. In the background, the crosswalk light turns green.

Just before Stephen pushes the button, Mikki abruptly turns around, as if someone has notified her of Stephen's presence. The baby is turned as well, such that Mikki's face and the baby's face are visible, side-by-side. We see the three perfect shots Stephen takes in a row.

Stephen lowers the camera, only to discover that the two bodyguards are a few feet away from him and approaching rapidly.

STEPHEN

Run!

Stephen pivots and dashes down the street.

Carter's alcove darkens, as the two burly men appear in its entrance, blotting out the sun.

CARTER

Whoa, hey. I don't even know that guy.

(beat)

What guy?

INT. BITROCKR RECEPTION AREA - EVENING

Carter stalks in looking roughed-up and angry. Behind the reception desk, pretty SAMANTHA BURGOS is torn between horror and laughter.

SAMANTHA

What happened to you?!

CARTER

Is Stephen here?

SAMANTHA

He left after lunch, said he wasn't feeling well.

CARTER

He won't be, soon.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Carter enters, flops into his chair, pulls up his email, contemplates. A reverse reveals that he is pondering Claire's message.

Finally, decision made, he replies: "Palmer's, Friday at 8:00. I'll be in the poncho and stovepipe hat. -- Carter"

He clicks send and reclines in his chair, his mood immeasurably improved.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. CITY SIDEWALKS - MORNING

A vacant hill, seen from a distance.

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
I hate getting up early. And I'm  
no fan of exercise either.

Claire and Rosalinda crest the hill from the far side,  
jogging. They chat, but we are too far away to eavesdrop.

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
But I will do both, to spend time  
with Rosalinda.

She's my closest friend, one who  
always stands by me, and supports  
me wholeheartedly in whatever I do.

Close in on the girls.

ROSALINDA  
This is your all-time stupidest  
idea.

CLAIRE  
(innocently)  
What?

ROSALINDA  
People who go out with men from the  
Internet are later found in duffle  
bags by the side of the road.

CLAIRE  
It'll be fine. We're meeting at a  
public place. I'll arrive a little  
late and, if he looks like a creep,  
just go home.

ROSALINDA  
Omigod, you don't even know what he  
looks like?! Well, he'll be easy  
to identify. Look for the 50-year-  
old obese man with spaghetti sauce  
in his beard.

CLAIRE  
He graduated from college four  
years ago. That makes him, what?  
Twenty-six?

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

And he rides his bike everywhere -- doesn't even own a car. Could have a beard, though. That's a wild card.

ROSALINDA

Dial 9-1-1 on your cell before you arrive and keep your thumb on "send" throughout the evening. That's all I'm saying.

The two arrive at Claire's apartment and stop running.

CLAIRE

You wanna come in?

ROSALINDA

Sure.

CLAIRE

It's like nine o'clock. Won't you be late to work?

ROSALINDA

"What are they going to do, fire me?"

(off Claire's blank look)  
I quit.

CLAIRE

Quit what? Your job?! When?!

ROSALINDA

Day you got fired. I told them I was outraged and gave my two weeks.

CLAIRE

Why didn't you tell me?

ROSALINDA

Because ... well, I was outraged, you know. But that wasn't why I quit.

(bites the bullet)  
I got accepted to U Mass. I'm going to Boston in May.

CLAIRE

Ack! No, no, no, no.

ROSELINDA

Yeah. I'm sorry..

CLAIRE

No, don't be sorry. It's good news. It's just that you're like my last friend here, Rose. Everyone else went to Portland and San Diego and -- Boston.

ROSELINDA

So come with me! We'll get an apartment, you could find work no problem.

Claire looks dubious.

ROSALINDA

What's keeping you here? You got no job, no family. You dumped Craig last month and this date tonight is going to be a debacle.

CLAIRE

I'm not sure this is helping.

ROSALINDA

I'm not trying to help. I'm trying to crush your self-esteem so you'll follow me to Boston.

CLAIRE

Aw, that's sweet.

INT. STEPHEN'S OFFICE - LATER

Carter and Stephen are in mid-argument.

STEPHEN

I apologized!

CARTER

"Sorry you're a slow runner" is not an apology.

STEPHEN

Whatever. You'll stop bellyaching when you get your share.

CARTER

Share of what?

STEPHEN

Of what PEOPLE Magazine offered for the baby pics.

CARTER  
(exasperated)  
Stephen, I don't want--

STEPHEN  
Thirty-six thousand dollars.

Carter is floored.

CARTER  
Thirty-six grand for twelve  
photos?!

STEPHEN  
Seventy-two grand. Thirty-six is  
your half. And it's only three  
photos, the rest were unusable.  
Wanna see them?

CARTER  
Not especially.

Stephen wheels in his chair and launches his browser.

STEPHEN  
Let me bring up my site.

CARTER  
You put them on your blog?! Won't  
someone steal them?

STEPHEN  
No. My site only has like 10  
readers, you know. And, anyway,  
I'm storing the images as BLOBS in  
a relational database and using a  
flash-based GUI interface to  
prevent users from right-click  
saving.

CARTER  
Tell you what: I'll pretend I  
understood that, and you can  
pretend I'm impressed.

STEPHEN  
Done and done. Point is, the pics  
are safe as houses.

CARTER  
Who says "safe as houses" anymore?

STEPHEN  
I dunno. Grandparents.

The browser gives a "Time out" error.

STEPHEN  
Huh. Either my blog's down or it's  
getting hammered with visitors.  
(a beat; his eyes widen)  
Oh, crap!

Stephen types furiously.

STEPHEN  
I gotta take those pictures down  
...

A few seconds later, TOM SCHRAMM sticks his head in the office.

TOM  
Uh, hey Stephen.

STEPHEN  
Can't talk, Tom. Working.

TOM  
Yeah, but you're probably going to  
want to see this.

STEPHEN  
Super busy, here. Send me an  
email.

TOM  
It's just that ... you are on TV.

Stephen freezes. He remains completely motionless for a moment, then spins 180 degrees in his chair.

STEPHEN  
What did you say?

TOM  
On TV? Something about a wetland?  
ENN just showed a picture of you.

Stephen and Carter exchange glances. Stephen leaps out of his chair and hurries down to the lunchroom; Carter and Tom follow.

INT. BITROCKR LUNCHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A dozen or so employees watch ENN, the Entertainment News Network, on a huge flatscreen television.

ENN ANCHOR

--first glimpse of Wetland Small,  
daughter of James Lott and Academy-  
Award winning actress Mikki Small.

Meredith Pola is our Internet  
correspondent. Meredith?

MEREDITH stands in front of an enormous computer monitor. On  
the monitor is Stephen's blog.

MEREDITH

As you see, the photos appear on  
the weblog Starstruck dot com.

The camera zooms in until the first photo, embedded in  
Stephen's webpage, fills the screen.

CARTER

Ha! Safe as houses!

STEPHEN

I did not think of that.

MEREDITH

The blogger, Stephen Chao of  
Seattle, posted the--

Monica appears in the break room doorway.

MONICA

What the hell is going on?!

TOM

Stephen is on TV.

MONICA

What is going on in the parking  
lot?!

Everyone rushes to the lunchroom window. Outside two local  
news stations have already set up shop; a third news van  
screeches into the parking lot.

Tom changes the TV station to a local network. On screen, an  
LOCAL ANCHOR speaks in front of the BitRockr building. The  
upper-left corner says "LIVE"

LOCAL ANCHOR

Local blogger preserves Wetland ...  
On film! We'll have an exclusive  
interview, next.

An ruckus can be heard in the reception area. Monica turns, scowls at the commotion, and disappears from view. Stephen and Carter drift to the door and peer out into the reception area.

A reporter is arguing with Samantha. Monica strides over to them and joins in the quarrel.

We hear the ding of an elevator. A moment later three more reporters burst into the reception area and enter the fray.

Stephen looks distraught; Carter, disgusted.

CARTER

So, how does it feel to have your  
privacy invaded?

Stephen smiles brightly. He couldn't be happier.

STEPHEN

Fantastic!

INT. PALMERS BAR - EVENING

Claire enters and scans the room. Her eyes snag on a few single men, but none match her mental image of Carter. Then, in the back, she sees a fat older man with a bedraggled beard, sitting by himself.

CLAIRE

Rats.

As she turns to leave, she hears a voice from off to the side.

CARTER (O.S.)

Claire, uh, Campbell?

Carter is in a booth next to the entrance. On the table is a bicycle helmet, confirming his identity.

CLAIRE.

Oh. Oh hey! Carter, right?

CARTER

Yeah.

Claire sits at the table across from Carter.

CLAIRE  
I didn't recognize you without your  
poncho.

CARTER  
(stilted)  
It's, um, in the shop. Hundred  
thousand mile tune up.

Claire tilts her head.

CLAIRE  
Wow, was that like a pre-planned  
joke?

CARTER  
(embarrassed)  
Uh, yeah. Except I thought you'd  
ask about the stovepipe hat.

CLAIRE  
(gentle teasing)  
Anything else I should ask about?  
I want to hear the whole routine.

CARTER  
I have some hilarious observations  
about yogurt all queued up. So if  
you could mention dairy products at  
some point, that would be great.

CLAIRE  
(laughs)  
Stick to improv, it's your forte.  
  
Now say "See you tomorrow morning  
at six."

Carter laughs. He knows where this is going.

CARTER  
"See you tomorrow morning at six."

CLAIRE  
You're Carter Albright from  
BitRockr.

CARTER  
Yeah.

CLAIRE  
I kinda figured. How many Carters  
can there be in Seattle? I listen  
to your show all the time.

CARTER  
Well, I read your blog all the  
time. And my sister is like your  
biggest fan. She talks about you  
like you're a personal friend.

A waiter arrives and takes their order. Off his departure:

CLAIRE  
So now what do we do?

CARTER  
Date-wise? I think we say  
(affecting a voice)  
"So: tell me a little bit about  
yourself."

CLAIRE  
I could. But I read your entire  
site on Wednesday and know your  
life story.

CARTER  
(mock skepticism)  
Is that so?

CLAIRE  
Born and raised in Seattle, have a  
sister and brother. Majored in  
communications, spent a year and a  
half in Bolivia with the Peace  
Corps ...

Claire falters. She'd meant for this to be funny, but Carter  
looks a little freaked out.

CLAIRE  
(trailing off)  
... currently reading a biography  
of Nirvana ...

CARTER  
Yeah, that about covers it.

An uncomfortable moment. Feeling bad, Claire attempts to  
revive the conversation.

CLAIRE  
Never been to Bolivia, but I went  
to Costa Rica last summer.

Unaware that he's repeating Claire's blunder:

CARTER  
Oh yeah, with your boyfriend Craig.  
It was cool how you blogged the  
whole trip. I enjoyed reading it.

CLAIRE  
Ex-boyfriend Craig.

CARTER  
Right. I saw you broke up.

Stymied. What do they have to talk about? Claire looks  
around the room listlessly; Carter skims the drink menu.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Childbirth class in a local hospital. People sit on mats,  
arranged in a circle around an instructor. All are couples,  
except for Sophia.

INSTRUCTOR (O.S.)  
--pair up and we'll practice timing  
contractions. I have stopwatches--

Sophia's cell phone rings. She fishes it out of her bag and  
scowls at the display, which reads "DANIEL GOTTMAN."  
Annoyed, she answers.

SOPHIA  
(flat)  
What.  
(pause)  
Of course you are.  
(pause)  
Don't even bother, there's only ten  
minutes left.  
(pause; then, very angry)  
These classes are not important "to  
me," Daniel. They are important.  
Period!

With a jab of her thumb Sophia disconnects. She shoves the  
phone back into her bag.

INSTRUCTOR  
OK, so who doesn't have a partner?

Sophia looks around glumly and raises her hand.

INT. PALMERS BAR - NIGHT

Carter and Claire are on their second round, and clearly enjoying each other's company. The attraction between them is palpable.

CARTER  
So how did you become a techie?

CLAIRE  
Just kind of stumbled into it.

CARTER  
Studied computer science?

CLAIRE  
Botany. But I have a knack for technology.

CARTER  
Maybe you can fix my cell phone.

CLAIRE  
Sure, where is it?

CARTER  
Oh, no. I was just joking.

CLAIRE  
Fork it over, funnyman.

Carter pulls the cell from his pocket and hands it over.

CARTER  
I toggled some setting and now all the letters are question marks. And since I can't read the menus, I can't undo it.

Claire examines the display and tinkers with the keypad.

CLAIRE  
(quietly; to the cell)  
OK, so what's wrong with you?  
(a moment later)  
Yeah, it's rendering the characters in ASCII instead of Unicode.

She types furiously. After a few seconds Carter intercedes.

CARTER  
Don't worry about it. It's--

CLAIRE  
I already fixed it. Now I'm  
sending a text message to my cell.  
(slowly; as she types)  
"Dear Claire, you are awesome.  
XOXO, Carter."

Claire's phone beeps from within her purse, acknowledging receipt of the message.

CLAIRE  
There. Now I have your cell phone  
number, and you have mine.

She holds the cell at arm's length and uses it to take her own picture. A few more keystrokes and she hands it back.

CLAIRE  
All set.

CARTER  
I've been trying to fix that thing  
for a month.

CLAIRE  
Yeah. It's a gift.

A little agog, Carter puts his cell away.

CARTER  
You should apply to BitRockr.  
We're always looking for IT folks.

CLAIRE  
That would be cool. I might do  
that, if I don't get my old job  
back.

CARTER  
How are you going to get your old  
job back?

CLAIRE  
Hire a lawyer, sue 'em for wrongful  
termination.

CARTER  
Seriously?

CLAIRE

Sure, why not? They can't fire me for something I wrote on my personal blog.

CARTER

Well, I mean ... technically, I think they can.

CLAIRE

What about freedom of speech?

Carter hesitates. He knows should keep his mouth shut, but:

CARTER

Well, you had your freedom of speech, you know. No one prevented you from writing what you did.

CLAIRE

But they punished me for it.

CARTER

True, but that's not a freedom of speech issue. You're talking about freedom from consequences.

Taken aback, Claire's temper kicks in.

CLAIRE

What if you got fired for something you wrote on your site?

CARTER

I blog anonymously. That way, if I write anything stupid--

CLAIRE

I didn't write anything stupid! I was honestly expressing my feelings.

CARTER

I didn't say you wrote anything stupid. But you have to admit that your post was, uh  
(he wracks his brain)  
ill-advised.

CLAIRE

Pff. That's just a synonym for "stupid". Nice try, Roget.

Claire impulsively rises, whips her coat off the back of the chair, starts to put it on.

CLAIRE  
Do you provide a free lecture on  
every date, or just the first?

CARTER  
(miserable)  
Hard to say. I don't get a lot of  
second dates.

Claire is caught off guard by the humility. For a moment she reconsiders leaving. But it's been a shitty week, and she's committed to this "storming out."

Then, seemingly off-hand, but with a tinge of remorse:

CLAIRE  
Well, thanks for the cocktails.

CARTER  
Oh. Yeah, sure.

Carter half rises out of his chair, pauses for a split-second of indecision, then extends his hand. Claire stares at it. "A handshake? While I'm trying to make my dramatic exit?"

She reaches out and gives it a quick grasp; as she does so, much of her anger seems to evaporate.

CLAIRE  
(sincerely)  
It ... was nice meeting you.

CARTER  
You too.

They look at each other for a moment, wishing it hadn't come to this. Then Claire turns and heads for the exit.

Carter opens his mouth, as if to call after her, but she departs. He drops into his seat and lets his head fall forward. There is an audible "clunk" and the glasses jump as his forehead makes contact with the table.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. PALMER'S - NIGHT

CARTER (V.O.)  
Music hath charms to sooth a savage  
breast.

Carter emerges from the bar.

CARTER (V.O.)  
Or so they say. My breast is  
pretty docile, so I can't verify  
the claim.

He unlocks his bike, leans it against the building.

CARTER (V.O.)  
But I do know one thing ...

He pulls a media player from his pocket, fits the headphones  
into his ears, selects an album.

CARTER (V.O.)  
A pinch of Dylan is worth a pound  
of anti-depressants.

We hear: opening chords of "Like a Rolling Stone." Carter  
grabs his bike and walks it down the sidewalk.

INT. NITELITE - NIGHT

A dim bar. Claire flounces into a booth and fishes a cell  
phone out of her purse. We watch over her shoulder as she  
cycles through her contacts, selects Rosalinda, thumb-types:  
"date was dud. meet me @ nitelite"

INT. SHOWBOX - NIGHT

A medium-sized venue. Heliotrope is on stage. Stephen is in  
the back, leaning against the bar, chatting with a few folks.

Carter enters, looks around, spots Stephen. Stephen sees him  
approach and cranes to see if anyone follows.

STEPHEN  
I thought you were on a date.

CARTER  
I was.

STEPHEN  
And now you're not on a date.

CARTER  
That's correct.

STEPHEN  
How did we get from A to B?

CARTER  
I'm not sure. Things were going great, and then we started discussing the right of free speech versus ...

STEPHEN  
Whoa, whoa! The who of the what? First date, dude: chit-chat and small talk. We went over this.

CARTER  
Ugh. I hate that crap. It's all so artificial.

STEPHEN  
Do you know what your problem is?

CARTER  
Yes. I take everything too seriously. Music, work. Dating. Myself.

STEPHEN  
I was going to say you're an insufferable pain in the ass. But six of one, half a dozen of the other ...

INT. SOPHIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sophia is in bed, reading a pregnancy book. The front door opens and closes elsewhere in the cavernous house.

Footsteps on the stairs, and Daniel enters the room. Sophia makes a point of not looking at him. When she finally does, she sees that he's as angry as she is, if not more so.

SOPHIA  
What are you mad about? I'm the one the got stood up.

Daniel ignores Sophia for a few moments, sets his attaché case down, removes his coat, marshals his thoughts.

DANIEL

Since my work was done and you didn't want me to come to the class, I decided to read your blog.

Daniel lets that sink in, expecting Sophia to intuit the significance of the statement. Instead:

SOPHIA

And?

DANIEL

And I can't believe the stuff you write! About me, our marriage. Your depression.

Sophia waits for the revelation.

DANIEL

I work too much, you're going to be a "single parent." Jesus Christ, Soph.

Sophia finally gets it.

SOPHIA

Is this like the first time you've ever read my blog? Because I've been writing that for years.

DANIEL

Well here's a thought: maybe instead of putting it on the Internet, you could try telling me this stuff in private.

SOPHIA

Are you kidding? I have been telling you. It's not my fault you don't listen.

But thanks for confirming what I've always suspected: you won't pay attention to anything unless it on your computer at work.

DANIEL

It could be on any computer at work! I don't need my colleagues reading about my personal life!

Sophia's anger boils over. She whips off the covers, gets out of bed, and walks over to confront Daniel face-to-face. An oversized t-shirt from a rock show serves as a nightgown.

SOPHIA  
And here I thought we were talking  
about you and me. But, no: we're  
talking about you and your job. As  
always.

She walks over to the dresser and begins rummaging through it. She produces a pair of maternity pants and begins putting them on.

DANIEL  
Where are you going?

SOPHIA  
To a show.

Sophia fastens the pants, and pulls a pair of socks from a drawer.

DANIEL  
(boggled)  
You're seven months pregnant.

SOPHIA  
It's a night of revelations for  
you, isn't it?

Socks in hand she starts to exit the room, then stops and turns around:

SOPHIA  
And for future reference: if your  
work is done on a Friday night, and  
you have a pregnant wife waiting,  
you don't surf the web. You go  
home.

With that she leaves.

INT. SHOWBOX - LATER

Carter and Stephen continue to chat at the bar.

CARTER  
How goes your new career as a  
paparazzi, uh, ist.

STEPHEN  
PEOPLE rescinded their offer. No one wants photos that everyone on Earth has seen, apparently.

CARTER  
Hang on while I try to feel sorry for you.

Carter grits his teeth and makes straining noises.

STEPHEN  
Don't bother. I got a ton of exposure, and that's what matters.

Stephen notices something over Carter's shoulder.

STEPHEN  
Hey, it's Sophie.

Carter turns and sees his sister walking determinedly through the crowd. She wears a leather jacket over the oversized t-shirt, and strides across the room in stylish boots. The perfect rock-and-rock ensemble, were it not for the maternity pants

CARTER  
Let's not tell her about my date.

STEPHEN  
Yeah, I'd be embarrassed too.

Sophia arrives, shucks off her jacket, drapes it over an empty barstool, and, ignoring Carter and Stephen for the moment, addresses the BARTENDER.

SOPHIA  
Do you serve martinis.

The bartender glances at Sophia's belly.

BARTENDER  
Uh, I can't serve alcohol--

SOPHIA  
Don't want alcohol, want the olives. Green olives, a bowl of 'em. Orange juice if you got it.

BARTENDER  
Yes ma'am.

SOPHIA  
And if you call me ma'am again, I  
will stab you to death with a  
cocktail umbrella.

BARTENDER  
Understood.

Sophia turns her attention to Carter and Stephen.

SOPHIA  
Evening, boys.

CARTER  
Rough night?

SOPHIA  
Don't wanna talk about it.  
(beat)  
Thought you were on a date.

Carter darts a glance at Stephen.

STEPHEN  
What, you think I told her  
telepathically?

CARTER  
How did you know?

SOPHIA  
Claire Campbell mentioned it on her  
blog. Said she was going out with  
"The Cyniscribe," the secret  
identity of whom I happen to know.

CARTER  
Ah, jeeze.

The bartender sets a bowl of olives and a pint glass of OJ  
next to Sophia. Sophia nods at Carter and Stephen.

SOPHIA  
Put it their table. They owe me  
for years of underage beer runs.

Sophia hoists her glass of orange juice.

STEPHEN  
What are we drinking to?

SOPHIA  
To the fact that this lousy day is  
almost over.

CARTER  
Here, here.

The three clink glasses.

INT. NITELITE - NIGHT

Claire and ROSALINDA sit in the booth of a bar, nursing  
drinks. Rosalinda looks confused.

ROSALINDA  
So ... you liked him.

CLAIRE  
Yeah. He was cool. And funny.

ROSALINDA  
And hideous.

CLAIRE  
No, really cute, actually.

ROSELINDA  
But you walked out on him.

Claire shrugs and takes a drink.

CLAIRE  
He was being a jerk.

ROSALINDA  
All guys are a jerks, Claire. This  
guy's just bad at hiding it.

CLAIRE  
Oh, well.

ROSALINDA  
Are you going to see him again?

CLAIRE  
Why bother? I'm going to Boston  
with you.

ROSALINDA  
You are? Since when?

CLAIRE  
Since right now.

ROSALINDA

Shouldn't you, you know, think it over a bit? It's not a spur-of-the-moment kind of decision.

CLAIRE

I'm spontaneous.

ROSALINDA

Which is why I like you. But there's a fine line between spontaneity and impulsiveness, and I think you've crossed it.

CLAIRE

(irked)

I thought you wanted me to go.

ROSALINDA

Of course I do, Claire. But I don't want you to walk out on Seattle and then regret it later, like you did with this guy.

CLAIRE

I don't regret walking out on Carter.

ROSALINDA

Yes you do. You just don't realize it yet.

INT. SHOWBOX - NIGHT

Heliotrope concludes a song. Tyler leaves the stage and makes his way through the crowd to Stephen, Carter, and Sophia, still at the bar chatting.

Tyler kisses Stephen briefly. He shoots Carter a look of triumph; then, almost as a consolation prize:

TYLER

You playing?

CARTER

What?

TYLER

The Pangs. You guys gonna play?

Carter realizes that the band is all present. But he glances at Sophia and, recalling her demurral, says:

CARTER

Ah, well. We haven't practiced in months--

SOPHIA

You know what? I think that's exactly what I need right now.

TYLER

Cool.

Carter and Stephen take swigs from their beers; Sophia palms a handful of olives. The three follow Tyler to the stage.

Once there, Carter and Sophia strap on guitars; it takes Sophia a moment to figure out how to hold it so that it doesn't rest on her bulge. Stephen settles in behind the drums.

TYLER

(to the crowd)

Alright, gotta treat for ya. Those of you who follow the Seattle music scene will recognize this band--

Carter takes a few steps towards Sophia and, in a low voice:

CARTER

Fast or slow?

SOPHIA

Let's tear it up.

Carter walks back and says a few words into Stephen's ear, who nods in acknowledgement. Carter then positions himself a few feet back from the main mic.

TYLER

-- haven't done a show in like a year. But, here they are!

Sophia to the mic.

SOPHIA

Hi. We're The Pangs.

Carter and Stephen start up simultaneously. A few bars later, Sophia joins on led vocals.

The trio jams through a brief but energetic punk-indie anthem. The experience is clearly cathartic for Sophia and Carter, who belt out the lyrics with gusto.

As the final chord sounds, the crowd roars with approval. Sophia closes her eyes and basks in the adoration. Off Sophia with her eyes closed, savoring the moment, we cut to:

INT. SHOWBOX - LATER

Carter, Stephen, and Sophia make their way from the stage, as patrons slap them on the back and congratulate them on their performance.

As they reach the bar, the bartender extends two pints of beer.

BARTENDER  
Nice work, gentlemen.

Carter and Stephen accept the beer. The bartender produces a pint glass full of green olives as Sophia arrives.

BARTENDER  
And for you ...

Sophia laughs but waves it away.

SOPHIA  
Thanks, but I'm driving

CARTER  
Taking off?

SOPHIA  
Yeah, I've raged against the machine enough for one night. At midnight I turn back into a suburban housewife.

CARTER  
I'm glad you came.

SOPHIA  
Me too.

CARTER  
Surprised you didn't ask how my date went, though.

SOPHIA  
No need. Claire said she would report on it tonight. I'm going home and check her site now.

CARTER  
Oh, god. Prepare to be--

Grinning, Sophia claps her hands over her ears.

SOPHIA  
No spoilers!

She removes her hands and slugs Carter on the shoulder.

SOPHIA  
See ya, twerp.

CARTER  
Bye.

She wishes Stephen goodbye and takes her leave. As soon as she walks through the door, Carter turns to Stephen.

CARTER  
Well, I should probably get going too.

Stephen shakes his head sadly.

STEPHEN  
Leaving the bar early to go home alone, sit in front of a computer, and read about his own date.

CARTER  
Yeah. Modern romance is dumb.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The living area of Carter's apartment, while not untidy, is cluttered with the accoutrements of his various interests: a second bicycle half disassembled on a drop cloth; a wall of CDs surrounding a state of the art stereo; two guitars, one electric, one acoustic, leaning against an armchair.

The door opens. Carter wheels in his bike and leans it against a wall. He hurries to his computer.

He sits down and pulls up Claire's blog from his bookmarks. Alas, there's nothing new -- only the post Sophia cited, in which Claire says she's going out with The Cynaicribe, and promises to provide an update later. Carter deflates.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire sits at her computer. Her blog software is on the screen, the title set to "The Date", an empty text field below taunting her.

She navigates to another browser window containing Carter's blog, and clicks "Refresh." The page flickers but remains unchanged.

CLAIRE

Damn.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

MUSIC UP

Carter calls up his own blog software. In the title field he types "Modern Romance"

He thinks for a moment, and then types:

CARTER (V.O.)

I spent two years in South America,  
but never got good at Spanish. It  
was frustrating: knowing what I  
wanted to say, but having to  
convert everything into an  
unfamiliar dialect.

INT CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

She checks Carter's page again. Nothing new. With a sigh, she begins typing.

CLAIRE (V.O.)

I promised you an update, so here  
you go. The date was

She pauses for a moment. On the screen we see her type "fun," backspace it out, then type "brief," and delete that as well. Finally:

CLAIRE (V.O.)

a disaster, unfortunately. Mostly  
of my own making.

INTERCUT - CARTER / CLAIRE

Each alternates between writing his or her own blog entry, and refreshing the other's site to see if the other has posed.

CARTER (V.O.)

Sometimes dating feels the same.  
You can't just say what you feel;  
you must first translate everything  
into the inscrutable language of  
flirt.

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
Everything was going great, until  
he said something I didn't want to  
hear. And I overreacted big time.

CARTER (V.O.)  
Tonight I met someone special. But  
instead of speaking in the native  
tongue, I behaved like a typical  
tourist: bellowing everything in  
my own language at twice the normal  
volume.

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
I could blame it on the bad week  
I've had. But, truth be told, I  
think I just panicked. Because  
what I wanted, more than anything,  
was --

Claire stops, at an impasse.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

CARTER (V.O.)  
But I hope she knows that what I  
was trying to say was --

What? What was he trying to say? Carter's not sure. He  
stops typing and sighs.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Claire thinks for a moment longer. Then, in an instant,  
highlights everything she has written, hits delete, and  
starts anew. She sets the title to "Private to C" and types:

CLAIRE (V.O.)  
Let's do it again soon. I had a  
wonderful time.

Then, without a second thought, she clicks post.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Carter is still stuck.

In the browser window with Claire's blog, he hit refresh.  
Her most recent post appears. Carter reads it eagerly and  
barks out a laugh.

He highlights what he has written in his own blog entry and hits delete. It vanishes. He also sets his post title to "Private to C." and types.

CARTER (V.O.)

As did I. Next Friday, same place  
and time?

He rereads what he's written, hesitates for a moment longer, and clicks post.

Carter leans back in his chair, grinning. A few seconds later, the cell phone in his pocket makes a noise.

He pulls it out. On the display is the picture his phone associates with Claire's phone number: the photo Claire took of herself in Palmer's. It also says "Claire Campbell" on the top and "Text message received" at the bottom.

He hits a button and the message fills the screen. It is three letters long: "yes".

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Claire is holding her cell phone, having just sent the text message.

She snaps it shut, places it on the desk next to the computer. After a moment, she reaches out and presses the power button on her monitor. As she does so we:

CUT TO BLACK

END OF SHOW