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Hands on a Hardbody

Book

Lyrics

Doug Wright Amanda Green

Music

Trey Anastasio
and Amanda Green

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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ISBN 978-0-573-70181-8

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PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Americans thrive on competition; it's innate in our character. Every summer in Spivey's Corner, North Carolina, they hold the National Hollerin' Contest. On Independence Day, Coney Island plays host to Nathan's Famous hot dog eating challenge. Lawn Mower Racing is an established sport in the South, and the annual Redneck Games in Georgia feature hubcap hurling, toilet seat tosses, and mud-pit belly flopping.

In the mid-1990s, documentarian S.R. Bindler captured the Hands on a Hardbody competition in Longview, Texas. In it, contestants placed their hands on a new Nissan "Hardbody" pick-up truck; the entrant who could stand the longest without removing his or her hand from the vehicle won it. The contest garnered international exposure and launched a host of similar promotions across the country. Filmmaker Bindler's achievement lies in his ability to push past the kitschy, absurd premise of the event and hit on deeper truths about the duality of the American Dream. On one hand, anyone with skill and perseverance can triumph, but beneath that bright promise lies a darker one: Darwin's cruel truth about the survival of the fittest.

Amanda Green, Trey Anastasio and I felt the film was ripe for theatrical adaptation. We believe it's more relevant today than it was upon its release; our recent economic tumult has brought age-old fissures of race, class and income inequality to the fore. The truck brings disparate individuals together, who would otherwise never meet, to confront these issues with a startling directness. Implicit in the contest is the American myth of mobility, embodied by an automobile. The truck offers plenty of metaphors; for one contestant, it's a new lease on life; for another, it's his manhood; for a third, it's her religious faith.

For me, the show is a chance to explore my roots in a state that's simultaneously maddening and exhilarating, punch-drunk on its own rich mythology, tongue-in-cheek braggadocio, abundant good humor and boundless sky. For Amanda and Trey, it's an opportunity to forge a score inspired by doggedly individualistic, real-life people and musical idioms from country ballads to southern rock, Americana, swampy funk, gospel and delta blues. We wrote the play in venues across the nation: a writer's retreat in Wyoming, a barn in Vermont and Interstate 20 between Dallas and Shreveport. It all culminated in a premiere run at San Diego's La Jolla Playhouse in the summer of 2012. It's been a joyous enterprise, and now we're on Broadway. It's our portrait of America; we hope it strikes a chord.

– Doug Wright

HANDS ON A HARDBODY had its Broadway premiere at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre in New York City on March 21, 2013. The performance was directed by Neil Pepe and choreographed by Sergio Trujillo, with sets by Christine Jones, costumes by Susan Hilferty, lighting by Kevin Adams, sound design by Steve Canyon Kennedy, and orchestrations by Trey Anastasio and Don Hart. The Production Stage Manager was Linda Marvel.

The Broadway premiere was originally produced by Broadway Across America: Beth Williams, Barbara Whitman, Latitude Link, Dede Harris, Sharon Karmazin, and Howard & Janet Kagan. Additional producers include John & Claire Caudwell, Rough Edged Souls, Joyce Primm Schweickert, Paula Black, Bruce Long, Off the Aisle Productions, and Freitag-Mishkin.

The cast for the Broadway production was as follows (alphabetical order):

CAST _____

J.D.	Keith Carradine
KELLI	Allison Case
BENNY	Hunter Foster
GREG	Jay Armstrong Johnson
CHRIS	David Larsen
RONALD	Jacob Ming-Trent
HEATHER	Kathleen Elizabeth Monteleone
VIRGINIA	Mary Gordon Murray
MIKE	Jim Newman
CINDY	Connie Ray
JESUS	Jon Rua
NORMA	Keala Settle
JANIS	Dale Soules
FRANK	Scott Wakefield
DON/DR. STOKES	William Youmans

HANDS ON A HARDBODY had its world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse in La Jolla, California on May 12, 2012. The Artistic Director was Christopher Ashley. The Managing Director was Michael S. Rosenberg.

HANDS ON A HARDBODY is based on the Documentary Film by S. R. Bindler and Kevin Morris, HOHB Production, LLC.

CHARACTERS

J.D. DREW – 60, a “good old boy” with pomaded gray hair and a high-wattage grin

KELLI MANGRUM – 22, a pretty brunette with steel ambition

BENNY PERKINS – mid-40s, with a lanky frame, weatherbeaten face, ingratiating grin and lots of homespun philosophy.

GREG WILHOTE – early 20s, a freckled white kid in a baseball cap

CHRIS ALVARO – well-built under his hoodie; a pair of aviator glasses conceal his eyes

RONALD McCOWAN – 35, is a good-natured African-American with a slight Louisiana accent

HEATHER STOVALL – 29, is a flirtatious blonde restaurant hostess

VIRGINIA DREW – J.D. Drew’s wife, a one-time beauty settling into middle-age

MIKE FERRIS – sales manager, late 30s, boyishly handsome, and wears a cheap tie with a Nascar clip

CINDY BARNES – a former Miss Gregg County, still fond of pageant hair and pastels

JESUS PEÑA – a driven Mexican kid in his 20s

NORMA VALVERDE – is a stout Latina woman in tennis shoes and a floral applique t-shirt

JANIS CURTIS – a tough old bird with sun-burnished skin and missing teeth

FRANK NUGENT – a die-hard good ole boy dressed in a Stetson

DON CURTIS – Janis’ husband, wears a cardboard sign on his head that proclaims “I LOVE YOU JANIS, GO BABY GO!”

DR. STOKES – role can be played the actor who plays Don Curtis

SETTING

The Floyd King Nissan dealership, Longview, Texas.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

“Human Drama Kind of Thing”

“If I Had this Truck”

“If She Don’t Sleep”

“My Problem Right There”

“Alone With Me”

“Burn That Bridge”

“I’m Gone”

“Joy of the Lord ”

“Stronger ”

“Hunt With the Big Dogs”

ACT TWO

“Hands on a Hardbody”

“Born in Laredo ”

“Alone With Me” (reprise)

“It’s a Fix”

“Used to Be”

“It’s a Fix” (reprise)

“God Answered My Prayers ”

“Joy of the Lord” (reprise)

“Keep Your Hands On It”

PRODUCTION NOTES

THE TRUCK

The truck is a primary character in *Hands on a Hardbody*. Ideally, it is rendered realistically; it should have corporeality, heft and an alluring, shiny red finish.

For the New York production, we used a Nissan truck frame as the base, and augmented it with various fiberglass pieces. The engine was removed, and the weight stripped down to roughly 1400 pounds. Each corner rested on sixteen moving casters, right behind its four wheels. The actual wheels rested about half an inch off the ground, so the vehicle could roll in any direction with fluidity and grace.

Our truck had an operational horn, hood, tail lights and headlights, but it was in no way motorized; the actors maintained control of its movement at all times. For us, this was essential in our effort to be true to the material; a musical about real people should employ real elbow grease, real muscle, real sweat and no overtly artificial effects.

Despite the seemingly static nature of the piece – ten characters, all with their hands glued to the truck – we were able to create a vivid movement vocabulary; the cast quite literally danced with the truck. They danced around it, on top of it, while spinning it, often in continual motion. Sometimes, perverse limitations are a choreographer's best friend.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Our choreographer Sergio Trujillo collaborated with our lighting designer Kevin Adams to indicate the passage of time with accelerated light cues (like stop-motion images of the sun passing by overhead) and heightened movement (characters adopting dance-like postures to shield their eyes or wipe sweat from their brows.) These short, striking tableaux let us race forward through a story set in "real time" over ninety-one hours.

A NOTE ON ACTING

Despite their colorful eccentricities and regional turns of phrase, the characters in our story are inspired by very real people. They should not be played broadly, or with an implied "wink". Rather, they should be acted with integrity, with full regard for their ardent hopes, heart-breaking foibles and core decency.

ACT ONE

(A full-throttle guitar riff and a blinding flash and for an instant we see ten people gathered around a shiny new Nissan Hardbody truck, each with a hand planted on it. They've been standing for days, sans sleep, sans decent food. A young man paces furtively back and forth, running his hand up and down the bumper. A Latino kid does painstaking deep-knee bends. An older man sleeps standing-up. The image is ferocious and haunting; ten human beings in extremis. It lingers long enough to sear itself into our consciousness, then one lone soul lets go of the truck and strides forward to address us as the image behind him fades.)

BENNY. Stand here, simple as that. Stand here with your hand on the truck. Last one to take his hand off wins it. Sounds absurd, don't it? Some kind of sideshow. Maybe, maybe not.

(sunrise)

(We're in the dead-end land of discount stores; Walmart, Sam's Club and Best Buy. Among them, FLOYD KING NISSAN, LONGVIEW, TEXAS.)

(In the middle of the parking lot, that shiny, sexy little pick-up.)

(SONG: IT'S A HUMAN DRAMA THING)

BENNY. *(cont.) (spoken)*

EVERYTHING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW,
LEAVE THAT ALL BEHIND.
JUST KEEP ONE HAND ON THE TRUCK
AND TRY NOT TO LOSE YOUR MIND.

THIS IS NOT A CHILD'S GAME –
THIS IS NOT A GAME OF CHANCE –

BENNY. (*cont.*) (*sings*)

IT'S A SHARP HONED SKILL

IT'S A TEST OF WILL

IT'S KEEPING STILL – KEEPING STILL

WHEN THE DEVIL TELLS YOU, "DANCE!"

(*Sales manager MIKE FERRIS opens the lot.*)

MIKE. Lot's open!

(**CONTESTANTS** *storm onto the cement.*)

BENNY.

IT'S MORE THAN A CONTEST

IT'S MORE THAN DUMB LUCK

IT'S MORE THAN EXTRA CASH

IT IS MUCH MORE THAN A TRUCK!

SOMEONE'S GONNA CRY HERE

SOMEONE WILL GO INSANE

SOMEONE WILL BE LAUGHING

AT SOMEONE ELSE'S PAIN

BENNY.

ALL. (*except BENNY*)

SOMEONE'S BOUND FOR

OOOOOOOH

GLORY

THE REST ARE BOUND TO

LOSE

YOU'LL GET A HUNDRED

OOOOOOOHH

DIFFERENT STORIES

WITH A

ALL.

HUNDRED POINT OF VIEWS

BENNY.

EV'RY TEXAN NEEDS A RIDE

AND THIS TRUCK IS BONA FIDE

BUT ONLY ONE CAN GRAB THAT RING

ALL CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA.

AND GOD ALONE KNOWS WHAT HE'LL BRING

BENNY.

IT'S A HUMAN DRAMA KIND OF THING.

(Disc Jockey FRANK NUGENT addresses the crowd:)

FRANK. This is Frank Nugent, KYKX Kicks! 105.7 on your radio dial, coming to you live from the Hands on a Hardbody Contest here at Floyd King Nissan –

(He presses the dealership jingle.)

JINGLE.

FLOYD KING NISSAN

PICK UP AND GO!

FRANK. With me, sales manager Mike Ferris.

MIKE. Morning Frank!

FRANK. That is one slick-lookin', twenty-two thousand dollar truck!

MIKE. And we're giving it away!

FRANK. So anyone with the nerve – the tenacity – can drive away with the American Dream?

MIKE. Catchy ain't it? *Hands...*

(...and mimes placing them on a truck)

...on a Hardbody.

(gesturing toward the real truck)

That's a Hardbody.

BENNY, GREG, JESUS, RONALD, MIKE, FRANK, J.D., VIRGINIA.

SOME ARE ON VACATION

SOME ARE UNEMPLOYED

SOMEONE WILL DRIVE HOME ELATED

SOMEONE WILL WALK HOME DESTROYED

BENNY, HEATHER, NORMA, KELLI, JANIS, DON, MIKE, FRANK.

EVERYBODY'S BROKE HERE

TRYING TO MAKE ENDS MEET

PAY A DEBT BACK, HAD A SET BACK

GOT TO GET BACK ON OUR FEET

BENNY.

SO DON'T MAKE ANY JUDGMENTS

LET THE PLAYERS PLAY

LEAVE THE JUDGING TO THE JUDGE

WHO'LL JUDGE US ALL ON JUDGEMENT DAY!

BENNY, MIKE, FRANK, CINDY.

BRING YOUR FAMILY COME ALONE
GRAB A CORN DOG OR A CONE,
GET YOURSELF A BLEACHER SEAT
IN THE SHADE OUT OF THE HEAT
FOR THIS HUMAN DRAMA KIND OF THING!

CONTESTANTS, DON & VIRGINIA.

IF I WIN THIS TRUCK ALL MY TROUBLES ARE THROUGH
JUST KEEP HOLDING ON
THAT'S WHAT I'M GONNA DO
SOMEONE'S GETTING LUCKY, NOW WHO WILL IT BE?
IT'S ME! IT'S ME!

(**FRANK** *interviews* **CINDY BARNES.**)

FRANK. Folks, here's Cindy Barnes, Public Relations here at
Floyd King. Mornin', Ms. Barnes.

CINDY. Cindy.

FRANK. Today's contestants underwent a grueling screening
process, did they not?

CINDY. We drew their names out of a hat. Business cards or
beer coasters; it's all in the luck of the draw!

BENNY.

I PUT MY NAME IN EARLY
THERE'S TRICKS THAT YOU CAN DO

JESUS.

I SPRINKLED MINE WITH COLA
SO IT STICKS TO YOU LIKE GLUE

NORMA.

I PUT MY FAITH IN JESUS
HE ALWAYS SEES ME THROUGH

KELLI.

I PUT MY NAME IN THIRTY-TWO TIMES, THIRTY-TWO TIMES!

JANIS.

I GOT SIX MOUTHS TO FEED AND THESE ARE

CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA.

TROUBLING TIMES!

HEATHER.

I RODE MY BIKE HERE EVERY DAY!

J.D.

THAT PILE OF BILLS WON'T GO AWAY

RONALD.

I DRIVE A CAR AIN'T GOT NO BRAKES

CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA.

AND I'LL DO ANYTHING IT TAKES!

I NEVER WON NOTHING, I CAME ALL THE SAME.

I THOUGHT I WOULD DIE WHEN THEY CALLED OUT MY
NAME.

I PRAYED FOR A CHANGE TO COME YEAR AFTER YEAR,
IT'S HERE! IT'S HERE! IT'S HERE!

BENNY.

**CONTESTANTS, DON,
VIRGINIA.**

LIKE THE GREAT ALI DID
WHEN HE CHANGED HIS
NAME FROM CASSIUS

MMMMMMM
OOOOOOHHHHH

EVERYBODY'S HOPING TO
RISE

MMMMMM

ONCE MORE FROM THE
ASHES!

OOOHHH

NORMA.

O LORD – IT'S BEEN A REAL TOUGH YEAR
THANK YOU FOR THIS CHANCE RIGHT HERE
I'M SHAKING AND I'M SICK WITH FEAR, BUT

(add:)

JESUS, HEATHER, J.D., GREG, JANIS.

CAN I BEND YOUR EAR A MINUTE?
LOOK AT ALL THESE PEOPLE IN IT

ALL CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA.

JESUS I JUST GOT TO WIN
THIS TRUCK
THIS TRUCK

THIS TRUCK THIS TRUCK THIS TRUCK!

CINDY. The rules! One time, and one time only!

MIKE. Breaks are fifteen minutes once every six hours.

CINDY. You may not lean, squat or rest your legs.

MIKE. At no time may you remove your hand from the truck.

CINDY. And that hand must be covered! We got cotton gloves here, courtesy of True Value Hardware –

(She waves a glove in the air.)

MIKE. No guns. No profanity.

CINDY. No alcohol or drugs.

ALL.

DON'T MAKE ANY JUDGMENTS
LET THE PLAYERS PLAY
LEAVE THE JUDGING TO THE JUDGE
WHO'LL JUDGE US ALL ON JUDGMENT DAY!

CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA.

THIS COULD BE MY TICKET OUT
LONG AS I JUST STICK IT OUT

ALL.

GET A GOOD SEAT IN THE STANDS

ALL. *(except CINDY)*

FOR THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

(CINDY dispenses the gloves to the CONTESTANTS.)

CINDY. Gloves on!

(Eagerly, the CONTESTANTS pull them on.)

FRANK, BENNY, MIKE.

IT'S A HUMAN DRAMA KIND OF THING!

CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA.

I'LL STAND HERE FOR DAYS IN THE CROWDS AND THE HEAT

JANIS, J.D., NORMA, KELLI, GREG, HEATHER, CHRIS.

I AIN'T GIVIN' UP

KELLI, J.D., GREG, RONALD.

– I'M THE COWBOY TO BEAT!

ALL CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA. *(no BENNY)*

SOMEONE'S GETTING LUCKY, NOW WHO WILL IT BE?

IT'S ME!

IT'S ME!

CHRIS.

I'VE BEEN FEELING KIND
OF LOW

BENNY.

IT'S A HUMAN DRAMA KIND
OF THING

GREG.

NO WORK SINCE TWO
YEARS AGO

BENNY.

IT'S A HUMAN DRAMA KIND
OF THING

JESUS.

GUESS WHO'S DRIVING
HOME THIS TRUCK?

ALL CONTESTANTS, DON.

IT'S ME!

BENNY.

I'M LITTLE BUT I THINK I'M BIG.
GONNA GET ALL RAMBO ON THIS RIG!

CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA, CINDY.

HERE'S REDEMPTION, NO TAX EXEMPTION
BUT TRANSPORTATION AND INSPIRATION
IF I JUST STAND AND I KEEP MY HAND ON THIS THING!

BENNY.

IT'S A HUMAN DRAMA KIND OF THING!

CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA, CINDY.

I'LL HONK MY HORN AGAIN, BE REBORN AGAIN
BUSTED FLAT, NOW I'M UP TO BAT AND I SWING!

BENNY.

THE WAY IT'S LOOKING HERE TO ME
THE WINNER'S GONNA HAVE TO BE – BENNY!

CONTESTANTS, DON, VIRGINIA.

A BODY'S GOT TO FEEL HIS WORTH
REASON FOR HIS TIME ON EARTH
GUESS WHOSE DRIVING
HOME THIS TRUCK

NORMA, CHRIS, KELLI,

JESUS, JANIS, DON.

CAN I BEND YOUR EAR A
MINUTE?

HEATHER, VIRGINIA, BENNY,

GREG, RONALD, J.D.

IT'S ME!

MIKE. Okay people, let's start this puppy!

NORMA, CHRIS, KELLI,

JESUS, JANIS, DON.

WON'T YOU LET ME DRIVE
HOME IN IT!

HEATHER, VIRGINIA, BENNY,

GREG, RONALD, J.D.

ME!

CINDY. Ten seconds!

NORMA, CHRIS, KELLI,

JESUS, JANIS, DON.

JESUS, I JUST GOT TO WIN
THIS

HEATHER, VIRGINIA, BENNY,

GREG, RONALD, J.D.

ME!

CINDY. Five!

ALL but CINDY, MIKE, FRANK.

TRUCK, THIS TRUCK, THIS TRUCK!

CINDY. Start the clock!

MIKE & CINDY.

HANDS ON!

*(The CONTESTANTS places their hands on the truck.
They size one another up, warily. No one says a word for
a long time.)*

(a vast, empty, gaping length of time)

(finally:)

KELLI. So this is it? Game on?

(RONALD tosses a question out:)

RONALD. How hot it 'sposed to get today?

JANIS. I heard a hundred and seven.

BENNY. With this asphalt, maybe hundred and twelve,
hundred and fifteen.

RONALD. That's no problem for me; I love heat. You afraid
of heat, you better not live in Texas! *Come on, heat,*

let's get it on! (a beat) Now rain. I don't like no rain. Thunder. Lightning. Storm comes, now that could be a problem right there.

(**HEATHER** takes note of the strapping young **CHRIS**.)

HEATHER. We can't take baths. Or showers. But I got six bottles of Mango Temptation body splash. I start to stink, I'll just slap on more of that.

(*Behind his sunglasses, CHRIS is inscrutable; HEATHER deflates.*)

(*Meanwhile, JANIS draws a line in the sand with GREG:*)

JANIS. I stay on the fender; you stay on the gate. And we'll be fine.

GREG. Yes, ma'am.

(*GREG turns to KELLI for sympathy; why did he get stuck next to the cantankerous old broad?*)

Hey. Greg Wilhote.

KELLI. Kelli Mangrum. You see that guy there?

GREG. Benny Perkins?

KELLI. He already won two years ago! It's somebody else's turn.

GREG. He won't have the endurance; he must be forty years old.

(*BENNY admires the truck and says pointedly.*)

BENNY. Aztec red. She'll sure look nice next to the midnight blue one I already got.

KELLI. (*to GREG*) I'll drop on the floor and *die* before I let him win.

(*NORMA listens to her mp3 player.*)

NORMA. (*humming*)

I FEEL THE JOY

I FEEL THE JOY...

RONALD. She one smart lady; she brought herself some music.

JESUS. *Orale, música religiosa.*

RONALD. *(to NORMA, loudly)* That'll keep you awake, won't it?

NORMA. *(pulling an earphone aside)* Is it too loud? Some people think it's annoying.

RONALD. No! *Fortifyin'*. My daddy always told me, you live long enough, you gonna see problems only prayer can solve.

NORMA. Amen. My husband and I been praying for a truck, and I believe that this is what God wants me to do.

RONALD. Your husband? Where's he?

NORMA. Ramon? Over at unemployment.

RONALD. How come he send a lady to do a man's work?

NORMA. I think waiting there's worse than waiting here. Then he's gotta pick up our kids from school.

RONALD. You must be lonely without them kids.

NORMA. Oh, I'm not alone. I don't got people with me, but I got their prayers. Over at our church, they made a prayer chain for me. About a hundred families asking God to let me win. My brother in San Antonio, he started a chain at his church, too, so that's another six hundred or so. And my cousin in Waco, she goes to one of them Mega-Churches, they call 'em "Prayer Warriors" down there, must be two thousand. So every day, the Lord's got almost three thousand people prayin' "Give Norma that truck!" So I feel real blessed.

RONALD. Me, it's about glucose. When I was training back in high school, training for track, I used to eat an orange and a Snicker and that would carry me through the day.

(NORMA smiles at RONALD sweetly, and replaces her earphone. JESUS turns to HEATHER:)

JESUS. Oye, Miss. *A Toda Madre!* Nice truck, eh?

HEATHER. *(best hostess smile)* I'm so sorry; I don't *habla español*.

(**JANIS** glares at **HEATHER**; *she's not better than JESUS!*)

JANIS. (to **JESUS**) *Buenos Dias.* You here to win today?

JESUS. Texas A&M, they have this school for veterinarians. They give me tuition, but the books, the housing, *mucho dinero.* I sell this truck, I go. (*a beat*) You?

JANIS. Got six reasons I'm here: Tolbert, Anne Marie, John Earl, John Franklin, John David and our youngest, Bev-Sue. (*with gravity*) And believe you me, I finish whatever I start.

BENNY. (to **KELLI**) Pretty girl like you, what you need with a truck?

KELLI. (*snapping back*) You won before, what you need with two?

BENNY. (*maintaining his cool*) No disrespect, little lady, but if anybody's gonna beat me...*if that person's truly out there...*it'd have to be someone with the conditioning. Somebody, say, fresh outta the Marine Corps. My son was a Marine. (*a beat*) I'll admit, that person could possibly beat me.

(**CHRIS** strips off his hoodie to reveal a camouflage t-shirt, emblazoned with USMC.)

(**BENNY** swallows hard. **KELLI** and **GREG** stifle giggles. Even **J.D.** breaks into a grin.)

(*Over in the pit, an enthusiastic DON turns to VIRGINIA.*)

DON. You somebody's pit crew?

VIRGINIA. I guess I am.

DON. See that lady there? That's my wife, Janis. You tell her she can't do something, she's gonna do it. I told her, "Baby, you can't win," just to give her an edge. You got a horse in this race?

VIRGINIA. He's got no business being here. Six months ago, the man was strung up in a hospital in traction.

DON. No joke?

VIRGINIA. Doc says he shouldn't even be climbing stairs.

(Back at the truck, RONALD effuses to NORMA:)

RONALD. – a car's gonna git you there, but a truck? A truck change your life. I win, I start my own landscape business. "McCowan and Sons." (with a wink) First I get the truck, then I get to work on the sons.

KELLI. (to GREG) You ever owned a truck before?

GREG. I wish.

KELLI. What you driving now?

GREG. (blushing) It don't matter...

BENNY. I'd like to know too, son. We're all curious, ain't we?

HEATHER. Kinda, yeah.

BENNY. What is it? Corvette? Mustang, maybe? Dual quads and a six pack –

GREG. Come on, dawg –

BENNY. Go ahead, Junior. Impress the lady.

GREG. (to KELLI, an agonized whisper) Promise you won't laugh?

(KELLI nods solemnly.)

A VW Bug. My Mama's.

(KELLI can't help cracking a smile.)

HEATHER. Oh, I love those! My sorority sister had one! Candy white with a daisy decal on the hood – !

J.D. Son, this town, you're lucky you're still alive.

GREG. (to KELLI) I get this new truck, I oughtta fit right in.

(SONG: IF I HAD THIS TRUCK)

J.D.

A TRUCK TO A TEXAN
IS JUST LIKE HIS HAT

BENNY.

YOU DON'T FEEL COMPLETE
IF YOU AIN'T GOT THAT

RONALD.

A TRUCK IS A MARKER
A PART OF THE PLAN
THAT SAYS YOU'RE GROWN UP
THAT SAYS YOU'RE A MAN

GREG.

IF YOU LIVE IN THE NORTH, YOU CAN DRIVE A SEDAN

JESUS.

BUT IF YOU LIVE IN TEXAS
AND YOU AIN'T GOT NO TRUCK
BUDDY YOU'RE STUCK

ALL MALE CONTESTANTS, DON.

BUDDY YOU'RE STUCK.

IF I HAD THIS TRUCK
I'D HAVE A PIECE OF THE PIE
IF I HAD THIS TRUCK
AND A DROP OF GOOD LUCK
I MIGHT GET BY

HEATHER.

DADDY WISHED HE'D HAD A BOY
HE RAISED ME TO BE TOUGH
HE AND MAMA ALWAYS FOUGHT
AND WHEN HE'D HAD ENOUGH
HE'D GRAB HIS HAT AND COAT
AND THOUGH I WAS ONLY FIVE
HE'D SAY COME WITH ME LITTLE GIRL
I'M GONNA TEACH YOU HOW TO DRIVE

AND HE'D LET THE ENGINE WARM UP
AND HE'D SAY 'YOUR COACH AWAITS'
AND HE'D LIFT ME IN THAT DUSTY TRUCK
WITH THE RUSTY LICENSE PLATES.
THERE WAS NO HEAT IN THE CAB
AND FOUR DIFFERENT KIND OF WHEELS
AND I THOUGHT, MAN
NOW I KNOW HOW CINDERELLA FEELS

IF I HAD THIS TRUCK
I'D BE OKAY ON MY OWN

NO MORE RIDING MY BIKE
 COME AND GO AS I LIKE
 JUST ME ALONE.

KELLI.

IF I HAD THIS TRUCK
 MAN THAT WOULD BE HOT
 I'D FLIP FOLKS THE BIRD
 AS I PEEL OUT THE LOT

NORMA.

WHEN I WIN THIS TRUCK
 I'LL GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD
 TILL THE DAY THAT I GO
 TO MY PROPER REWARD

JANIS.

IF YOU LIVE IN THE SOUTH
 YOU CAN DRIVE AN ACCORD

NORMA.

BUT IF YOU LIVE IN TEXAS
 AND YOU AIN'T GOT NO TRUCK
 HONEY YOU'RE STUCK

ALL WOMEN CONTESTANTS.

HONEY YOU'RE STUCK

ALL CONTESTANTS, DON.

IF I HAD THIS TRUCK
 I'D HAVE A PIECE OF THE PIE

KELLI, NORMA, GREG, BENNY, HEATHER, JANIS, J.D.,

RONALD.

DON.

IF I HAD THIS TRUCK

AAAAAHHH

KELLI, NORMA, GREG, CHRIS, HEATHER, JANIS, DON, J.D.,

JESUS.

BENNY, RONALD.

I'D HOLD MY HEAD UP
 HIGH

HEAD UP HIGH

BENNY.

NO, I WON'T LEAVE 'TIL I WIN

GREG.

AND MY LIFE CAN BEGIN

HEATHER.

SWEET JESUS, I HATE MY SCHWINN

NORMA.

I KNOW TO COVET'S A SIN

ALL.

BUT PICTURE ME DRIVING IN

...MY BRAND NEW TRUCK!

MY BRAND NEW TRUCK.

RONALD.

CAR DON'T MAKE MONEY

TRUCK – MAKE MONEY.

(**FRANK** *corners* **CINDY.**)

FRANK. Crowd just keeps growing, Cindy. I've seen license plates from Louisiana and Arkansas. What can foreign visitors expect to find here in Longview?

(**CINDY** *does her damndest to be a worthy community booster:*)

CINDY. Longview is a commercial hub here in East Texas, right near the Piney Woods. Originally, the town was called Earpville. But our founders, Mr. Methvin and Mr. Whaley, stood atop a hill one day and remarked to one another, "What a *long view*." Hence, our name today. Famous residents include Karen Silkwood, because they made a movie about her, and... (*turning bright red*) ...Matthew McConaughey; he was *The Sexiest Man Alive* in the year 2005, and don't say I told you so, but here at *Floyd King Nissan*, we got that *People Magazine* cover hanging up in the ladies' lounge.

FRANK. You hear that, ladies?

CINDY. (*with a heavy heart*) Of course, foreclosures in Gregg county are running about a hundred a month and what with that toxic spill down at Lake Cherokee –

(**FRANK** *whispers in CINDY's ear:*)

CINDY. (*taking FRANK's save*) Oh, but we're still a shopper's paradise! Not one but three Walmart Super Centers – !

(the piercing sound of a whistle)

MIKE. All right, people, this is fifteen! Take fifteen!

(The CONTESTANTS let go, shaking out their hands and feet. They disperse to their "pit stations," lawn chairs and picnic baskets.)

(J.D. heads toward VIRGINIA, a crick in his step.)

VIRGINIA. What's a matter, sweetie? It giving you pain already?

J.D. Hush up. You want the whole world to know? I'm the oldest one here; that's bad enough.

VIRGINIA. Baby, calm down.

J.D. Mexican kid; he's strong. And that girl on the tailgate, she's hell-bent 'n ready –

VIRGINIA. We gotta keep this leg elevated much as we can –

(She places a cooler so he can use it as a stool, and tries raising his leg on top of it. He resists.)

J.D. Damn it! This ain't the ICU.

VIRGINIA. You know what happens when you stand too long.

J.D. Only one thing giving me a pain right now.

VIRGINIA. *(stung)* What in God's name do we need with a truck?

J.D. *What do we need with a truck?* We got no money –

VIRGINIA. Well, if you'd let me take that job at the Walmart –

J.D. For a hundred and eighty-six dollars in take-home? And no benefits?

VIRGINIA. What's comin' in now, baby? Answer me that.

J.D. *Why the hell you think I'm here?*

VIRGINIA. You might as well drive to Shreveport, play the casinos. A blackjack table, at least you'd be sittin' down.

(VIRGINIA tends to his leg, rolling up his trousers to tighten the brace on it.)

VIRGINIA. (*cont.*) You're supposed to *stay off this*, so the bones can fuse. All those months flat on your back, woozy from the meds, talking like a crazy person... (*affectionately*) ...I can't do it again, never mind you. Here, baby, here's your juice box.

(*She hands J.D. some apple juice, then feels his forehead.*)

Oh, you're on fire.

(*She takes out a pink washcloth with an embroidered edge, wets it with bottled water and drapes it over his head.*)

You sit pretty. I'm goin' to the K Mart, get you more sun-screen.

(**BENNY** notices **J.D.**, looking miserable with the juice box in hand and the rag on his head. He approaches. Distracted, **J.D.** pulls out a pack of cigarettes, and slides one out.)

BENNY. Nice hat.

(**J.D.** grabs the cloth off his head and throws it onto the ground. **BENNY** offers him a light.)

Little lady's got you wrapped, tight.

J.D. She's just worried 'bout me.

BENNY. How come?

J.D. I fell off a rig.

BENNY. Sun Petroleum?

J.D. Lone Star Fuel.

BENNY. What they do for ya?

J.D. Fired me so I lost my pension, then sent me a basket of grapefruit. (*a mordant sigh*) Got more pins in me than a bowling alley.

BENNY. No offense, Old Timer, but I'll be surprised if you're still here come nightfall.

(**J.D.** gives **BENNY** the once-over then observes drily.)

J.D. You're past the draft, too, looks like.

(**BENNY** nods toward **KELLI**.)

BENNY. Goddamn kids. Half of 'em don't even look old enough to drive. (*bristling*) *I put my name in, same as anybody. Nothing and nobody says I can't.*

J.D. Amen, friend. You got every right.

BENNY. (*defensively flaring*) What you say?

J.D. (*admiringly*) They're scared, that's all. You're a proven entity.

(**BENNY's** found a friend. He grins and extends his hand.)

BENNY. Benny Perkins.

J.D. J.D. Drew. Where's your better half?

BENNY. My wife, she couldn't make it.

J.D. Why not?

BENNY. That truck I won two years ago? Last February, she loaded it up with her suitcases and her Mary Kay and she drove off. I been driving a '96 Impala ever since. (*a beat*) Old dogs like us, we got to stick together.

J.D. You're the man with the know-how. The *experience*.

BENNY. I am indeed.

J.D. Reckon I could use a little of what you got.

BENNY. You askin'?

J.D. You givin'?

BENNY. You ever study tae kwon do with a Master?

J.D. Huh?

BENNY. You willing to pledge yourself to me the way a young Korean warrior pledges himself to his *Saseong*?

J.D. His who?

BENNY. The way you pledge yourself to your Sherpa, 'fore you climb Everest? "I will eat your *shyakpa*. I will follow in the footsteps of your sacred yak."

(**J.D.** balks at **BENNY**.)

J.D. You're talkin' crazy now.

BENNY. Crazy? I'll tell you what's crazy. *Vanity*. Vanity that says, "I can get through this alone." Oh, you're fine

six hours in, but by day three, you're gonna want somebody in the foxhole with you. Who's it gonna be? V.W. Bug Boy? Church Lady? Little missus on the sidelines, givin' you juice boxes and sorrowful looks?

(J.D.'s cheeks turn red.)

BENNY. Me, I'd want the one man who could be my brother.

(BENNY spits in his palm, then holds it out for J.D. to shake.)

What do you say?

(A final moment of consideration, and J.D. takes BENNY's proffered hand.)

J.D. All right, my brother.

BENNY. Now, I'm gonna give you a code word. I'll use this word when my mind starts to free fall. That gives you permission to punch me, slap me, kick me – whatever it takes.

J.D. Okay then.

BENNY. That word is...“Cuervo.” Ready? Set. Go. *Cuervo!*

(J.D. slaps him.)

Harder. *Cuervo!*

(J.D. gives him a second, more vigorous slap.)

Ow.

J.D. You'll do the same for me?

BENNY. Absolutely.

(BENNY offers J.D. a fist bump.)

You and me, final two?

J.D. Final two.

(Their deal is sealed.)

(CINDY blows her whistle: The **CONTESTANTS** reassemble and pull their gloves on.)

CINDY. Five...four...three...two...one...hands on!

(And they place their hands back on the truck. There's a commotion in the pit:)

DON. Getting sleepy, ain't you baby? Your head's gettin' heavy – ?

JANIS. I'm wide awake, fool.

DON. Your knees about to buckle, ain't they?

JANIS. *Hush! My knees is fine –*

(GREG can't help himself; even crusty old JANIS doesn't deserve this treatment.)

GREG. Whoa, Mister, what you doin'?

DON. *(beaming)* Reverse psychology. Works like a charm.

(JANIS enthusiastically concurs, offering a cheerful nod:)

JANIS. Yup.

(FRANK intercedes.)

FRANK. You, sir! Yes you! Sounds like you've got someone special in the contest today.

DON. My name is Don Curtis, and I'm here to support my wife Janis.

(SONG: IF SHE DON'T SLEEP)

(sings)

YOU TRY TO FIND A JOB THAT PAYS

WAIT AROUND FOR BETTER DAYS

LIFE CAN WEAR YOU DOWN

AND THAT'S A FACT

BUT WE ALWAYS COME UP FIGHTIN'

AND LIFE IS PLAIN EXCITIN'

CAUSE HER AND ME

WE GOT THIS LITTLE PACT.

IF SHE DON'T SLEEP, THEN I DON'T SLEEP

JANIS.

IF HE DON'T EAT, THEN I DON'T EAT

DON.

AND LIFE IS SWEET, WITH SIX KIDS ALMOST GROWN

JANIS.

IT'S TRUE WE MAY NOT HAVE A LOT

DON.

IF I GOT SQUAT, THEN SHE GOT SQUAT

BOTH.

BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH IT ALONE.

DON.

IF YOU WRITE HER OFF THEN YOU'LL REGRET IT
YOU DON'T SEE THE WOMAN THAT I SEE
SHE'S STRONGER THAN MOST PEOPLE GIVE HER CREDIT
PLUS SHE'S GOT HER SECRET WEAPON – ME!

(spoken)

I told her, “Janis, you got to get used to long hours in the heat. You been sittin’ under the air conditioner.” She’s spoiled on accounta I got a twenty-ton unit on my home.

FRANK. You have a what?

DON. Most people’s is three tons at the most. But me? I got a twenty.

JANIS & DON.

20 TONS OF AIR
THE BIGGEST THING YOU’VE EVER SEEN!

DON.

IT USED TO COOL A KMART
THAT WENT BUST IN ABILENE

JANIS & DON.

IT BRINGS OUR HOUSE TO TWELVE BELOW
AND YOU CAN SEE YOUR BREATH!

JANIS.

AND WE FOUND OUT PRETTY QUICKLY
IT WILL FREEZE A PET TO DEATH.

DON.

I COULDN'T PASS THE UNIT UP
IT WAS TOO GOOD A BUY
BUT UNLESS SHE GOT USED TO THIS HEAT
I KNEW JANIS WOULD DIE.

JANIS.

HE KNEW THAT I WOULD DIE.

DON.

EVERY TIME SHE STEPPED OUTSIDE
SHE GOT RED AS A TURNIP
SO I HAD TO TURN THE UNIT OFF
SO SHE WOULDN'T BURN UP!

DON.

IF SHE AIN'T COOL

JANIS.

IF HE AIN'T COOL

THEN I AIN'T COOL

THEN I AIN'T COOL

BOTH.

YOU'D BE A FOOL TO DO THIS ON YOUR OWN

DON.

IF SHE DON'T CRY, THEN I DON'T CRY
LONG AS SHE'S HAPPY, SO AM I
AND SHE DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH THIS ALONE

BOTH.

OH, WE DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH THIS ALONE.

(DON winks affectionately at his wife and recedes to the pit.)

(From inside the climate-controlled, fluorescent office, MIKE surveys the scene:)

MIKE. So far, not a single man down.

CINDY. That Mangrum girl's got the edge. Eatin' bananas for potassium. And look, she's got sneakers with those big waffle bottoms.

MIKE. Longer we milk this thing, the more foot traffic.

CINDY. We're gettin' run-off from the interstate, thanks to that new Sam's Club. And did you see our promo last night on KLTV –

MIKE. Hell yes.

(MIKE picks up his sunglasses to use as a mirror.)

That teeth bleach paid off.

CINDY. They picked it up and ran it as far away as Houston

—

MIKE. (*gleeful*) Hee-hee! (*then derisively*) Dan Frankel in Tennessee, he says to me, “What the hell kinda Big Ass order is this? Last six months, you ain’t made quota

—”

CINDY. He is such a donkey dick, I swear —

MIKE. — and I told him, “You don’t understand, Dan, my man. Last summer, Hands on a Hardbody, I moved twelve Maximas, eight Pathfinders, and six Altima Coupes. You tell me one dealership in East Texas that had a better July. Now I want the same units this year.”

CINDY. We fall behind but we sure as hell catch up —

MIKE. “We’ll be watching,” he says to me, “from Tennessee all the way to Tokyo. We’ll be watching.”

(*self-satisfied*) “You’ll be watching,” I tell him, “to see how it’s done.”

(*musings to himself*) You give ‘em a circus, they buy souvenirs.

CINDY. I saw Mrs. Ferris at the Kroger. She said you was lookin’ at Tuscan marble for your new kitchen.

MIKE. Nothing wrong with wanting nice things. That’s what makes the world spin. Hell, that’s patriotism.

CINDY. I’ll see you at sun up!

(CINDY makes for the door and exits.)

(*Time passes. Light darkens to night; the hum of floodlights, the chirping of cicadas.*)

(MIKE steps onto the lot, bullhorn in hand:)

MIKE. Buenos noches, people!

(*He retreats inside.*)

RONALD. Mosquitos out fierce tonight. I don’t mind that, I can handle that. But chiggers? Chiggers could be a problem right there.

JESUS. Somebody’s gonna fall soon.

JANIS. Nobody wants to be the first one.

HEATHER. I got me some Baby Wipes, fresh me right up.

JANIS. First one falls off, they'll start dropping like flies.

(BENNY says to J.D. sotto voce.)

BENNY. One thing you don't want? That's goin' numb.

When you go numb, you'd better start worrying.

J.D. You got a strategy for that?

BENNY. No strategy. You go numb, you're goin' down.

(A nauseous RONALD turns to NORMA, clutching his stomach.)

RONALD. What number Snicker bar was that?

NORMA. Fifteen, maybe?

RONALD. Man, that last one didn't go down so good. This clock-work got me all messed up. We been here sixteen hours?

BENNY. *(to J.D.)* His trouble? He's got no plan.

RONALD. What'd he just say?

BENNY. *(to RONALD)* I said, *you didn't think it through.* You underestimated the effort here today, and you did not prepare.

RONALD. Hey. Hey, hey. *(staring BENNY down)* You from Longview? I'm from Marshall. Longview got three post offices; Marshall got one. Longview got a twelve story building; Marshall got none. But that don't matter *today.* I'm goin' the distance here *today.*

KELLI. You tell him, Ronald!

HEATHER. Whoo-hoo! Ronnie! Whoo!

RONALD. Today, I get me a page in the history books!

JANIS. That's right!

RONALD. Plan? Oh, I got a plan!

KELLI. 'Course you do!

(SONG: MY PROBLEM RIGHT THERE)

RONALD. I got no problems, except for this one problem.

BENNY. Just one, huh?

RONALD. Yeah, just the one.

KELLI. You tell him, Ronnie!

RONALD. (*sings*)

I DIDN'T GET NO SLEEP LAST NIGHT

I WAS THINKING ABOUT TODAY

TRY TO KEEP THINGS SIMPLE

BUT MY BRAIN GETS IN THE WAY.

I SAID, 'YOU NEED TO REST NOW'

BUT MY BIG HEAD DON'T CARE

NOW I CAN SEE, THAT THAT'S GONNA BE

MY PROBLEM RIGHT THERE.

MY PROBLEM RIGHT THERE

MY PROBLEM RIGHT THERE

MY POWERFUL MIND

THAT'S MY PROBLEM RIGHT THERE

I GOT NO OTHER PROBLEMS

OF WHICH I'M AWARE

I'M JUST TOO DAMN SMART

RONALD, KELLI, HEATHER, NORMA.

THAT'S MY/HIS PROBLEM RIGHT THERE.

(*RONALD's cell phone rings.*)

Hello? Oh, hey Peaches...no, no, I'm YOUR boo, Baby. Don't go around believing all the tattoos you read. Look, I'm in the middle of something; I'll check you later.

RONALD.

GIRLS.

THAT'S PEACHES FROM

TULSA

O000-O0000

CALLING AGAIN

CALLED YOU UP

THERE ONCE WAS A TIME

I WENT HOME WITH HER

FRIEND

NO NO

NOW THEY BOTH SAY
THEY'RE COMING

UH OH!

TO BE BY MY SIDE,
AIN'T NO ROOM IN THIS
TRUCK
TO TAKE THREE FOR A
RIDE!

AIN'T NO ROOM

MY PROBLEM RIGHT THERE
MY PROBLEM RIGHT THERE

BEEP BEEP!
HIS PROBLEM,
HIS PROBLEM RIGHT
THERE. OOH

THESE WOMEN ROUND
HERE
ARE MY PROBLEM RIGHT
THERE

I COULD HANDLE THEM
ALL
BUT THEY DON'T LIKE TO
SHARE

OOOOOOOOHHHH

OOOOHHHH YA YA!

I GOT TOO MUCH LOVE!
THAT'S MY PROBLEM
RIGHT THERE.

THAT'S HIS PROBLEM
THAT'S HIS PROBLEM
RIGHT THERE.

RONALD. (to **GREG**) You know what I'm talking about boy!
GIRLS.

LIKE YOUR DAYS RUNNING TRACK
YOU WON'T QUIT TIL YOU'VE WON

RONALD.

GIRLS.

NO WAY!
AND I'LL RUN THROUGH
THE PAIN
AND THAT FIERCE PRAIRIE
SUN
BUT IF IT STARTS TO RAIN
RONALD OUT! I DON'T
CARE!

OOOOOOOOHHHH

(*There's a crack of thunder; RONALD ducks.*)

RONALD.

NOW *THAT'S* GONNA BE MY PROBLEM RIGHT THERE!

GIRLS.

HIS PROBLEM RIGHT THERE.

THAT'S HIS PROBLEM RIGHT THERE.

BRAINS, WOMEN AND RAIN

ARE HIS PROBLEM RIGHT THERE

RONALD.

AND JUST LOOK WHAT THIS CAP

HAS DONE DONE TO MY HAIR!

BENNY.

LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT

ONE MORE PROBLEM RIGHT THERE.

RONALD. Ooh, Lord!

....MAN THE HEAT AND THE SWEET

FROM MY FIFTEENTH SNICKER

ARE WORKING ON ME

LIKE MY DADDY'S CORN LIQUOR

AND THE CORNS ON MY FEET

GETTIN' SWEATY AND SLICKER

FEEL THE CANDY REPEAT

AND IT MAKES ME FEEL SICKER

HEATHER, NORMA & KELLI.

BUT YOU'VE GOT NO OTHER PROBLEMS

OF WHICH YOU'RE AWARE

RONALD.

EXCEPT I THINK I'M GONNA LOSE

AND I DON'T REALLY CARE.

(The sugar intake, heatstroke and sour tummy get the better of RONALD. His hand slides off the truck. He stares at it, marveling.)

RONALD. *(cont.)*

LOOKY HERE! I'M LETTING GO

I'M HOLDING ON TO AIR.

(The OTHERS gasp.)

YES SIREE

THAT'LL HAVE TO BE
 THAT'S GONNA HAVE TO BE
 MY BIGGEST PROBLEM –

HEATHER, KELLI, NORMA.

NO!

RONALD

RIGHT –

HEATHER, KELLI, NORMA.

NO!

RONALD.

– THERE.

HEATHER, KELLI, NORMA.

NO, NO RONALD! DON'T

GO!

(RONALD faints.)

BENNY. First man down!

(FRANK cues the jingle, a tradition whenever a contestant drops off the truck.)

JINGLE.

FLOYD KING NISSAN

PICK UP AND GO!

FRANK. Mr. Ronald McCowan. Always hurts to be the first.

BENNY. Yes! Ya feel it? Breathe it in, people!

(MIKE pats RONALD's cheeks until he comes back to consciousness.)

RONALD. What jus' happened? Lord, don't tell me. It's over. Am I over?

(RONALD is bewildered, like a wild animal that's been sedated. MIKE pulls him up and guides him off the lot.)

(BENNY mocks his demise.)

BENNY.

KILLED BY CANDY

KILLED BY CANDY.

OH LORD, KILLED BY CANDY.

(to J.D.) Big surprise, he's first to go.

NORMA. (*leaping to RONALD's defense*) What's that supposed to mean?

BENNY. Wasn't talking to you.

JANIS. Low blood sugar; that's what done it.

BENNY. (*all innocence now*) Yes, mam, that's all I meant. (*to J.D. with indignation*) What she think I was saying?

NORMA. *Shame on you.* (*with empathy for RONALD*) He's already down. He's lost. He's a good man, and he's not coming back.

(*BENNY imparts more sotto voce wisdom to J.D.*)

BENNY. She won't last. Too soft. (*nodding toward JESUS*) Now Tex Mex over there, he could be the man to beat. Wants it somethin' fierce. Fit six of his buddies in the back, no one's the wiser.

JANIS. (*to JESUS*) Pay him no mind; he's a low-down dog.

JESUS. Please, *Senora*. Don't insult the dog.

BENNY. (*still confidentially to J.D.*) "If you know your enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt." Fella named Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*.

MIKE. (*blows his whistle*) Break time, people! Shake 'em and stretch 'em!

(*The CONTESTANTS disperse. VIRGINIA calls to J.D.*)

VIRGINIA. Baby, you want your pain pills?

J.D. No'm.

(*J.D. and BENNY lock eyes for a beat.*)

VIRGINIA. I got extras, right here in my bag. Got your anti-inflammatories, too, and that calcium drink you like –

J.D. (*sharply*) Quit! Just QUIT!

(*VIRGINIA's taken aback, but J.D. keeps right on going:*)

How'm I 'sposed to get back on my feet if you won't let me? Hovering over me the way you do, fussing all the time, pushing and poking, treating me like an overgrown child – *I'm telling you, I can't take it –*

VIRGINIA. (*wounded but covering it*) Well alright.

J.D. That...ah...that's not what I meant.

VIRGINIA. Isn't it?

(*SONG: ALONE WITH ME*)

(*sings*)

WHEN I WAS SEVENTEEN AND YOU WERE TWENTY-THREE,
YOU COULDN'T WAIT TO BE ALONE WITH ME.
WE SHARED A PRIVATE LITTLE WORLD ALL OUR OWN
THEN THE KIDS CAME – NO PRIVACY
THE JOB TOOK YOU AWAY FROM ME
STILL, WE'D NEVER MISS
OUR GOODNIGHT KISS ON THE PHONE.

REMEMBER HOW WE'D WHISPER DEAR
AND DREAM ABOUT THE DAY
WHEN IT WOULD BE THE TWO OF US
AND YOU'D BE HOME TO STAY?

NOW YOU JUST WANT TO WIN THIS TRUCK
SO YOU CAN DRIVE AWAY
TO HUNT WITH THE BOYS
AND MAKE YOU FEEL FREE
YOU'D DO ANYTHING
TO KEEP FROM BEING ALONE WITH ME.

VIRGINIA.

J.D.

YOU'RE TIRED OF THE	I'M JUST TIRED
GROWING BILLS	
THE SIDE EFFECTS FROM	ALL THE TIME
THE LITTLE PILLS	
AND THE HOSPITALS	
WHERE	

BOTH.

THEY JUST WON'T LET YOU/ME BE.

VIRGINIA.

I THOUGHT THAT YOU'D BE HAPPY NOW
HOME WITH THE ONE YOU LOVE
BUT IT TURNS OUT I'M ONE MORE THING
YOU'VE GOTTEN TIRED OF.

I TRY TO TALK,

J.D.

I DON'T WANT TO TALK

VIRGINIA.

YOU TURN UP THE TV.

J.D.

JUST LET ME BE

VIRGINIA.

YOU USED TO LIKE BEING –

J.D.

I CAN'T STAND BEING –

BOTH.

ALONE WITH ME.

VIRGINIA.

AFTER THIRTY YEARS,
YOU GUESS SOME LOVE WILL WEAR AWAY
THE SAME FACE ON YOUR PILLOW
STARING AT YOU EVERY DAY

BOTH.

AFRAID THAT YOU'LL DISCOVER
YOU HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO SAY.

VIRGINIA.

I WISH I KNEW
WHAT I COULD DO
TO MAKE MYSELF ENOUGH FOR YOU
THE WAY THAT YOU'RE ENOUGH FOR ME.

J.D. (*regretfully*) Aw, Ginny.

VIRGINIA.

BUT I CAN'T WATCH YOU KILL YOURSELF
IT'S KILLING ME
YOU'D DO ANYTHING
TO KEEP FROM BEING ALONE WITH ME.

(**VIRGINIA** exits. **J.D.** looks after her, discomfitted.)

(Meanwhile, **MIKE** approaches **HEATHER**, who's milling
about in hopes of using the restroom on her break.)

MIKE. That's a mighty long line for the Port-A-Potty.

HEATHER. I'll say.

MIKE. You wanna use the executive washroom? It's nice and cool in there.

HEATHER. Am I allowed – ?

MIKE. *(under his breath)* What you waitin' for, an engraved invitation?

(HEATHER glances furtively about, then follows MIKE into the office.)

(Once safely inside, they drop all pretense. These two aren't what you'd call strangers. In fact, they shoot sparks.)

MIKE. *(cont.)* So, pretty lady, you in or you out?

HEATHER. I don't know –

MIKE. Honey, we are down to the wire –

HEATHER. I ain't cheated since algebra.

MIKE. You're sure gonna look sweet in the ad campaign, sitting on the hood of a brand new Hardbody.

HEATHER. But I'm asleep on my feet! I got this charley-horse, too, working itself up my leg –

MIKE. Whoa, angel! Don't lose the dream! You like riding your bike eight miles every day to the Rib Shack and back?

HEATHER. I got no choice. That Indian giver at the bank, he took back my Honda –

MIKE. All the more reason, baby.

(HEATHER squirms and bites her lip.)

HEATHER. I'm a good girl; I swear.

MIKE. Sometimes "good" don't get the job done.

*(SONG: **BURN THAT BRIDGE**)*

HEATHER. *(sings)*

TRouble seems to follow me
like a lost and lonely dog
I can't shake it – no matter how I run
and you know and I know
this heat ain't coming from the sun

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