

BLACK AND WHITE

written by

Billiam Coronel

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Tom Spriggs
The Coronel Group
(310) 689-7320

ACT ONE

EXT. ERNEST AVE - LAST THURSDAY MORNING

BLACK & WHITE:

NOTE: ALL BLACK AND WHITE FOOTAGE IS SHOT TO RESEMBLE
MOVIETONE NEWSREELS FROM THE 1950s, WHEN LIFE WAS INNOCENT
AND PEOPLE STROVE TO BE GOOD CITIZENS.

A nice residential street in PRESENT DAY America.

NARRATOR

Welcome to Ernest Avenue. Sure is a
nice block, isn't it? Who wouldn't
want to live on this tree-lined
avenue with its manicured lawns and
coats of fresh paint?

The camera stops in front of a two-story house.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

This is the Topper household where
Jack and his wife Sally are raising
their family. No, the Toppers
aren't rich. But Jack wanted an
extra nice house. He knows that
first impressions are important and
shopped around until he found a
qualified licensed realtor who was
able to get them a low rate on a No
Points, Thirty-Year Fixed so they
could afford this one. Let's meet
the family, shall we?

FADE TO COLOR:

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SALLY TOPPER (mid-40s) enters with a large tray of food.
CINDY TOPPER (16) is already seated.

CINDY

I'm not hungry.

SALLY

What do you mean you're not hungry?

CINDY

It means I'm hungry except for the
part about being hungry.

SALLY
 Honey, listen to me. Breakfast is
 the most important meal of the
 day...

As Sally talks the camera looks around the room...

NARRATOR
 Hold on a sec, where's the man of
 the house?

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

JACK TOPPER (40s) shaves in front of the mirror.

NARRATOR
 There he is. At the advertising
 company where Jack's employed,
 beards and unruly hairstyles are
 frowned upon. Jack doesn't mind. He
 knows that appearing well-groomed
 is an investment in himself.
 Promotions to Account Manager come
 quickest to those who look like
 Management material.

INT. DINING ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Jack, dressed in a suit, enters and kisses Sally.

JACK
 Good morning. Yum! Bacon!

SALLY
 (slapping his hand away)
 That's not for you, Mr. 247
 Cholesterol Count.

When Sally looks away Jack sneaks some bacon anyway.

JACK
 (to Cindy)
 How come you're not eating?

CINDY
 Cute boys hate girls who are fat.

SALLY
 (decoding)
 Her school dance is next week.

NARRATOR

Jack's instinct is to tell his daughter to eat but, according to his employer's latest in-house research, Cindy is right. Being a man of logic, Jack goes with the proven.

Jack doesn't say anything.

SALLY

(yelling upstairs)

Billy! Breakfast!

(to Jack)

What can a ten year-old boy possibly do in a bathroom for so long?

(to Cindy)

Run upstairs and get your brother.

CINDY

I'm eating.

BILLY TOPPER (10) finally enters, dressed for school. He sees the large breakfast laid out on the table.

BILLY

Can I have cereal? I only need two more box-tops to get Superman.

SALLY

We don't have money to waste on dolls.

JACK

Don't tell people we don't have money!

SALLY

People? He's our son!

JACK

The first rule of getting ahead is to give the impression you're already ahead. That includes what you say.

SALLY

(again)

He's our son!

BILLY

They're not dolls. They're action figures. And besides, they're free.

SALLY
(knowing)
No shipping and handling?

BILLY
That's for the Post Office! That
doesn't count. Cereal people don't
get anything.

JACK
Don't be naive, Son. They get
something.

BLACK & WHITE:

FOOTAGE of bright-eyed kids eating cereal, smiling mailroom
workers opening envelopes, a cereal factory...whatever fits.

NARRATOR
Jack explains that hundreds of
excited kids send in box-tops with
their names and addresses from
around the country and neighboring
Canada. These are then sold to
other reputable companies so they
can mail out valuable coupons
touting their sugar-filled
products. It's called a marketing
gimmick and it helps the economy
grow. COLOR: BACK TO SCENE

JACK
And the best part is, you already
enjoy the cereal. This marketing
gimmick is a win-win situation all
around!

Sally can't help but smile. Jack sure is smart.

JACK (CONT'D)
(checking watch)
Oh my! New car leaves in one
minute.

They gather their stuff to leave...

SALLY
What about breakfast? There's kids
starving in China.

JACK
Honey, come promotion time,
Management will give more weight to
my on-time record than how many
Chinese I saved.

Sally can't argue with that.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Billy and Jack cross to the car. Next door is JOHN SMITH (55,
dark-haired, very Italian) in a robe, watering his lawn.

BILLY
Hi, Mister Smith.

John waves back.

NARRATOR
That's neighbor John Smith.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
He recently moved here in the
middle of the night and found a job
as a nighttime businessman. This
leaves his days free to do the
things he enjoys, like watering his
lawn and driving to the corner to
make phone calls.

Sally waves as Jack and Billy back down the driveway.

SALLY
Good luck with your presentation to
Mr. Anderson! Knock him dead!

INT. JACK'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Billy plays with the windows as Jack drives.

BILLY
Dad, how come Mom hates this new
car?

JACK
She doesn't hate it, Billy. Mom
just feels I should've waited to
lease it until after I got a
promotion. Normally she's a smart
woman but when it comes to
purchasing leverage your old man
knows better.

BLACK & WHITE:

FOOTAGE of a car lot with colored flag banners, hungry salesmen, "LOW MILEAGE" on windshields...

NARRATOR

Jack explains that automotive dealerships dump inventory at the end of the year to make room for new models. By taking advantage of this trade secret, informed consumers like Jack can save money. Lots of money. It has to do with something called inventory flow...

COLOR: BACK TO SCENE - WIDE SHOT

We see the car drive past.

BILLY (V.O.)

Gee Dad, you sure know about cars.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Cindy is walking to school with her friend STACY.

STACY

I made a list of cute guys we should try and be seen with at the dance.

CINDY

(looking)

Nobody in our grade?

STACY

You don't dance with guys from your own grade!

CINDY

(beat)

I knew that. I was kidding.

STACY

Oh, about lunch--only three Tic-Tacs from now 'til the dance. No more. And no less either. Otherwise there won't be enough in your stomach when you throw up.

Cindy nods and listens intently to her "coach."

EXT. MUTSON AND SLOAN PARKING LOT - SHORT TIME LATER

Jack, now minus Billy, pulls into the parking lot.

BLACK & WHITE:
 FOOTAGE of offices, people holding meetings, publicity
 photos...

NARRATOR

This is where Jack works -- Mutson
 & Sloan Advertising Worldwide,
 where men of Science help
 responsible corporations sell an
 ever-widening range of goods to the
 informed consumer. Psst. Wanna know
 a secret? The company isn't
 worldwide. They just put that on
 the letterhead so John and Joan Q
 Public will perceive them as such.
 And what's wrong with that? This is
 Advertising. Impressions are
 everything. COLOR:

INT. MUTSON & SLOAN HALLWAY- SHORT TIME LATER

Jack walks down the busy hall, waving to co-workers.

JACK

Whatdoya know, Larry?.. Hey Sam,
 how's everything in Personnel?

NARRATOR

Yes sir, Jack knows everyone and
 everyone knows Jack. He always
 finds time to connect with his co-
 workers.

The co-worker says something and they both laugh.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Sharing a laugh lets people know
 you find them witty and enjoy their
 company.

Jack reaches his outer office, passing by ELLEN (25 and big-
 breasted) wearing a tight top.

JACK

Good morning, Ellen.

NARRATOR

Ellen is Jack's helpful and yes,
 well- endowed, secretary. Few
 employers hire buxom assistants
 anymore for fear that talk around
 the water-cooler would suggest they
 were hired for reasons other than
 skills in the steno pool.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jack is now in his office, settling in.

NARRATOR

But not Jack. He hired Ellen because he felt sorry for her, being a potential victim of reverse discrimination.

Jack peeks though the door-crack at Ellen's chest. He then catches himself. He shouldn't be eyeing her like that and forces himself to turn away.

INT. BILLY'S SCHOOL HALLWAY - BETWEEN CLASSES

Billy and his friend ROBERT stand by Robert's locker.

ROBERT

So you know how all concert albums are in stereo?

A CUTE GIRL walks by grabbing Billy's attention...

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Check this out -- I found it a The Record Barn. U2 in Dolby Digital Surround. It must be an import-- Hello?

BILLY

(refocusing)

What? I'm listening.

ROBERT

Why don't you just marry her?

BILLY

Why don't you?

ROBERT

If you really liked her you'd pull her hair. That's how you show a girl you like her.

BILLY

My dad said pulling hair is wrong.

ROBERT

Fraidy-cat.

Robert closes his locker and exits.

INT. DEN - LATER THAT MORNING

Sally sits in front of the family computer.

NARRATOR

Thanks to the miracle of Plastics, the breakfast leftovers are safely stored away leaving Sally time for some personal reflection. Although Jack is a good husband, Sally feels he's usually so busy figuring out how to impress others that he sometimes takes her for granted. Luckily there's Ebay.

BLACK & WHITE:

FOOTAGE of people using computers at home.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The Internet's premiere auction site, Ebay allows computer savvy housewives, agoraphobics and shut-ins to shop at home. Knowing neglected homemakers would be a among their users, Ebay's forward-thinking creators made it so other parties can leave feedback. COLOR: BACK TO PRESENT

Sally browses her feedback and smiles proudly.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Currently Sally's feedback file contains thirty-four entries. All positive! Go ahead and smile, Sally. People really do appreciate you.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - ONE HOUR LATER

Jack just finished practicing his presentation in front of PETER, a co-worker.

PETER

It's great. But you know what I'd do? I'd add in this slide at the end.

Peter puts in a slide of a sexy woman in a bikini.

PETER (CONT'D)

Tell Anderson you'll give him one digit of her phone number for each new order.

They both LAUGH when suddenly the boss enters.

JACK
Mr. Mutson!

MUTSON
Hello, Jack. Peter. The Anderson
presentation starts in ten minutes.
Just stopped by to wish you luck.
(noticing slide; shocked)
Hey!! That's my sister!!

Jack and Peter freeze! Beat.

MUTSON (CONT'D)
Gotcha!!

Mutson and Peter LAUGH. Jack joins in.

NARRATOR
The joke was on him but Jack laughs
also. He wants Mutson to know he
finds him witty and enjoys his
company.

MUTSON
That slide is great. You should
say, "Oops! How'd that get in?"
Anderson's gonna love it.

JACK
We were just fooling around. I'm
not gonna include that in the
presentation.

MUTSON
Why not? It's funny. Leave it in.

JACK
(uh oh)
Uh..well...I'm not sure it would be
appropriate in a business
environment.

MUTSON
(exiting)
I'm the boss but you know better.
Okay, fine. Your call.

Jack is worried. He has to put it in now, right?

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - AFTER LUNCH

Billy is seated in front of the Principal's desk.

NARRATOR

Uh oh! Looks like Billy took the wrong moral path and earned his way to the Principal's office.

PRINCIPAL

Pulling hair is a serious offense, Son. I have no choice but to expel you.

BILLY

What?!

PRINCIPAL

Touching a girl in any way can be seen as sexual harassment.

BILLY

But I didn't hurt her!

PRINCIPAL

It's not what you did, Son, it's what you might do now. Every rapist once pulled a girl's hair. We have a zero tolerance policy so we have to do what we said we'd do even when it's obviously wrong. Rules are rules.

The principal stands. This meeting is over.

NARRATOR

Sorry Billy, but in a representative republic, all citizens must follow the rules. I guess we learned a lesson today, didn't we?

INT. OFFICE MEETING ROOM - MOMENT'S LATER

Jack is ending of his presentation.

JACK

(hesitant)

And finally, for each order you place...

Jack goes to the next slide. Ellen suddenly enters.

ELLEN

Mr. Topper? The school just called. Your son's kicked out for sexual harassment!

Silence. Anderson's face registers disgust. He then sees the bikini slide. He's now more disgusted.

JACK
(weak chuckle)
Oops. How'd that get in there?

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ATTORNEY

Let's see if I've been paying attention. Your son allegedly pulled someone's hair.

JACK

Right. A girl in his class.

ATTORNEY

Alleged girl. And that's it? He's kicked out for sexual harassment?

JACK

Exactly. The punishment's way out of proportion to the crime.

SALLY

We were hoping you can make 'em reconsider. Write a letter or something.

ATTORNEY

Sure. I could write a letter, get your son back in.

CLOSE UP on their shiny new car outside the window.

CLOSE UP of the Topper's fancy address on notepad.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

But then what? The next "Billy" suffers the same fate. We need to sue the entire school system. Rebalance the basic fairness of American education.

(grabbing paper)

I'm going to write down a number. This is only an estimate. The final cost will definitely be more.

The Toppers look - their eyes bug out!

SALLY

We better go with just the letter. Money is a bit of an issue.

Jack shoots her a look -- don't tell strangers our personal finances!

JACK
(damage control)
It's not that we don't have money.
We do. Lots. It's just--

ATTORNEY
(playing him)
You want to spend it wisely. Being
that you already have so much.

JACK
Exactly.

ATTORNEY
Better go the letter route. This
other way could get you promoted
and you'd have even more money to
worry about.

JACK
How's that?

SALLY
Jack...

JACK
Honey! We should hear him out.

ATTORNEY
Well, I imagine your boss reads the
newspaper. Maybe there's a story on
the front page: "Jack Topper, proud
employee of..
(checks notepad)
Mutson and Sloan. Mr. Topper
could've taken the easy route to
help his son but instead this
dedicated employee of Mutson and
Sloan decided to fight for
everyone."

ZOOM INTO JACK'S THOUGHTS...

INT. MUTSON & SLOAN HALLWAY

Mutson and Jack stand in front of his new door: "Jack Topper
- Accounts Manager / Hero"

MUTSON
Topper, you did the company proud.
How could I not promote you?

BACK TO SCENE

JACK
(shaking attorney's hand)
Sue the school system.

Sally shakes her head in frustration.

INT. MUTSON & SLOAN HALLWAY - NEXT MORNING

Jack walks toward Mutson's office as we hear...

NARRATOR
Is that a spring in Jack's step?
You bet it is! Last night Sally
suggested via the withholding of
her wifely duties that Jack ask his
boss for a promotion straight out.
It's their only option to somehow
pay the lawyer Jack insisted on
hiring. So why's Jack so happy?
Because it's not easy to get a
meeting with Mr. Mutson on short
notice. But get this -- there was a
message on Jack's desk this morning
that Mutson wished to see him
immediately. How convenient! Things
certainly have a way of working
out.

INT. MUTSON'S OUTER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack enters. The SECRETARY waves him through.

SECRETARY
He's expecting you.

Before entering...

NARRATOR
Jack checks his breath. He knows
employees prefer to interact with
those who exhibit good oral
hygiene. Although this in-house
research was done on salaried
employees, Jack assumes the human
nature of Management is no
exception.

INT. MUTSON'S OFFICE - MOMENT LATER

Jack enters. Mutson is in a bad mood so Jack decides to
lighten up the mood...

JACK
 'Morning Sir. I heard a good joke
 on the way over. Why'd the chicken
 cross the road? To prove he wasn't
 chicken.

Jack laughs but Mutson just stares, totally unamused.

NARRATOR
 Sharing a laugh lets people know
 you find them witty and enjoy their
 company.

MUTSON
 We lost the Anderson Account.

JACK
 What?!

MUTSON
 He says he won't do business with
 companies that employ perverts.

JACK
 Perverts?! We're not--

MUTSON
 He also took offense to that girlie
 slide. What were you thinking
 there?

JACK
 (flabbergasted)
 You told me to do that!

MUTSON
 I said it was your call. Jeez,
 Topper! Take some responsibility.
 Fix this. You hear me? You fix
 this!

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - SHORT TIME LATER

JACK
 (into phone)
 Jack Topper calling for Mr.
 Anderson...

ELLEN
 Wow! He was our most valuable
 client. And now he's gone, all
 because of you?

He shoots her a look.

NARRATOR

Proper etiquette states it's never acceptable to hit a woman. Even one who interrupts important meetings with damaging news of a sexual nature.

ELLEN

This is definitely gonna be a black mark on your record here.

NARRATOR

And then unwittingly pours gas on the resulting fire. Many bosses would dismiss their assistants for this. But not Jack.

CLOSE UP on Ellen's tightly-sweatered breasts.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Being a man with compassion, he finds it in his heart to let her stay.

JACK

(then; into phone)

I know he doesn't want to talk to me. That's why I'm calling...
Hello?

Jack slams down the phone.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well, there goes my promotion. This sucks! We can barely afford our car. How are we supposed to pay for a big legal defense on top of that?

ELLEN

Maybe the lawyer will lower his fee.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

We see the lawyer on the phone, LAUGHING wildly.

INT. TOPPER KITCHEN - THAT EVENING

Sally prepares dinner.

NARRATOR

Do you know dinner is the second most important meal of the day?
Sally does.

BLACK & WHITE:

GRAPHIC OF FOOD PYRAMID

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Nourishing meals are constructed by
rules illustrated in the
Nutritional Food Pyramid. At the
base are whole grains--

SFX: DOOR SLAM

COLOR:

SLAM CUT BACK TO SCENE

Jack enters and stares at Sally.

SALLY

(excited)

How'd it go with Mutson?

JACK

Our savings account is almost
empty. Know anything about that?

SALLY

I bought a couple hats on Ebay.
Why?

JACK

How can you empty our savings
account without telling me?

SALLY

There wasn't a lot in it--
(realizing)
He said no, didn't he? There's no
promotion?

(before Jack can speak)

Great work, Jack. I knew your
spending was gonna catch up to us.
First a house we can't afford, then
a car--

JACK

Those are investments--

SALLY

Yeah, yeah, I know. They tell the
world we're a family of winners.
When they go looking for Account
Manager material we better hope
they're sniffing around Bankruptcy
Court.

JACK

Can we stay on topic? How are we gonna pay for the lawyer now that you've drained our savings?

SALLY

You mean the lawyer you shouldn't have hired in the first place? You know your problem, Jack? You think we have a unlimited line of credit. "Once I get the promotion. Once I get the promotion..." Well guess what, Jack? The bill's now due and there's no promotion. We're screwed and it's your fault. Your little plan hasn't worked, has it?--

JACK

I got it!! Okay? I got the promotion.

Beat. Suddenly it's all better.

NARRATOR

Jack knows fibbery is wrong but experts in problem resolution suggest it's best to deal with one issue at a time. Jack makes a mental note to clarify the exact status of his promotion at a later date.

SALLY

Why didn't say that before?

JACK

It's gonna take a while before it clicks in. Some..accounting thing so I didn't want to say anything.

SALLY

This is great! How much?

JACK

I..don't remember.
(off her look)
There was a lot of excitement, okay? All I remember is they said it could take weeks. Maybe months. Right now we should just worry about the lawyer.

SALLY

We can borrow from our IRAs. Pay it back when the raise comes.

BLACK & WHITE:

Banks, people depositing money...

NARRATOR

Individual Retirement Accounts, are government sanctioned savings vehicles that accrue interest tax-free until retirement age. Unfortunately they carry a large penalty for early withdrawal. For this reason, Congress approved a variation called the ROTH IRA which does allow for penalty-free borrowing. COLOR: BACK TO SCENE

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Good thing Jack converted their IRAs to Roths like Sally told him to.

Jack looks worried.

INT. CINDY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cindy lies on her bed reading.

NARRATOR

Knowing education is the key to success, Cindy busies herself with homework.

She flips the page. It's a magazine.

SFX: PHONE RINGS

INTERCUT with STACY at the mall.

STACY

Get over here. There's like a ton of guys in the mall parking lot. If they don't see you hang out they'll think you don't like hanging out.

CINDY

I have to study.

STACY

You think Gordon Tetterman's gonna ask you to dance 'cause you did well on the English midterm? He needs to see how hot you look.

Cindy considers this.

CINDY

I'll be right there.

Cindy puts on her shoes and sneaks out the window.

INT. DEN - EARLY EVENING

Jack sits at the table covered with papers. He's on the phone.

PHONE (O.S.)

If you're calling about our five cents a minute rate, press one.

Jack presses one and waits.

NARRATOR

Jack pours over the family budget looking to pare down expenses. Caring husbands are willing to take these secretive steps to save their wives from financial worry. Not finding any savings in the gas or electric bill, Jack has moved on to the telephone.

BLACK & WHITE:

SIMPLE MATH GRAPHIC:

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

A few cents savings isn't much but, according to the laws of Addition and Subtraction, small amounts when added together become large amounts. COLOR: BACK TO SCENE

PHONE (V.O.)

If you live in America, press one.

Jack does and continues to wait.

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

If you want your bill printed on yellow paper, press one.

Jack, impatient and frustrated, does and waits.

INT. DINING ROOM - DINNER TIME

The entire family is eating dinner in silence.

NARRATOR

The evening meal is a time for members of the family to reconnect and discuss group concerns and interests. Perhaps debate current events.

Still no talking. Finally...

JACK

Okay, here's the deal. We need to pay the lawyer so, starting now, no more spending money on anything until further notice.

SALLY

(realizing)

You didn't convert the IRAS, did you?

Jack doesn't answer.

CINDY

I need a new dress for the dance.

(Jack shrugs)

That's not fair? I have to suffer 'cause of Billy? Can't we just sell his kidneys or something?

BILLY

How about we sell your stupid head?

CINDY

Good one.

JACK

We're a family. Family members make sacrifices. Let's remember that Billy's not to blame here. The real culprit is today's litigious society. Our sacrifices to hire this lawyer are not only to protect Billy's rights but that rights of all Americans.

SALLY
 (knowing)
 And not because it might get us in
 the paper?

JACK
 Fine. Be cynical.

After a beat...

SALLY
 (getting idea)
 I know what we can do.

JACK
 I already said what we're gonna do.

SALLY
 We only need enough cash to pay the
 lawyer's retainer until your raise
 kicks in, right?

JACK
 Who knows when that's gonna be?
 What with the paperwork.. Could be
 months--

SALLY
 I say we do what white people in
 need of quick cash have done for
 decades.

JACK
 Kidnap some rich kid?

CINDY / BILLY
 (realizing)
 Garage sale!!

SALLY
 We can finally clean out that
 garage. Get rid of some of those
 lawn mowers, that old motorcycle--

JACK
 Whoa! We're not selling that!

SALLY
 When was the last time you even
 rode that thing? Five years ago?

JACK
 That's not the point. It's a
 classic--

SALLY

What happened to sacrificing for family?

JACK

Honey, they only made eight-thousand of those models--

SALLY

Jack! You want a motorcycle when your raise gets here, we'll buy you a new one. In the meantime, we're gonna have a little fun.

(to kids)

Garage sale this weekend.

The kids jump up and down excitedly as Jack mopes at the situation he's gotten himself into.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

BLACK & WHITE:

FOOTAGE of upbeat, crowded garage sales around the country...

NARRATOR

The garage sale! Is any event more American? Aside from county fairs, beauty pageants and pancake breakfasts.

FOOTAGE of people making signs and hanging them.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Using nontoxic markers, family members and recruited friends create attention- getting signs readable from vehicles moving at the standard speed of 35 miles per hour. Check with your local Department of Motor Vehicles for speed limits in your area.

FOOTAGE of various garage sales in progress.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Once buyers arrive the work isn't over. Uncomfortable situations arise when browsers are quoted different amounts for the same item. The goal is to create a pleasant experience so some families find it helpful to elect a Price Captain whose decision is final. COLOR:

INT. TOPPER FRONT LAWN AND DRIVEWAY

People are buying and browsing at the Toppers.

NARRATOR

Some items go fast--Sally's old non-stick cookware and Jack's classic 1972 motorcycle.

Jack weeps as a buyer pays Sally a few hundred dollars and rolls the cycle away. Then Jack notices.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
 Not to mention his stack of
 collector Playboys, years 83 thru
 87.

Jack will not have this! He grabs them away from a customer,
 puts them back into the box and defiantly heads to store them
 away again, Sally be damned.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
 Other items are slower to start
 bidding wars such as Billy's box of
 dirt rocks. A good Price Captain
 will notice these dips in consumer
 interest and lower prices
 according. But not too much!
 Wouldn't want to sell something for
 less than it's worth.

We see Cindy and a BOY return from the backyard. He hands her
 a dollar. She keeps her hand out waiting for more. The boy
 hands over an additional dollar and exits.

REVEAL a line of boys. The next one takes Cindy's hand and
 goes with her into the backyard.

INT. DRIVEWAY - END OF DAY

The sale is over. Sally counts the day's take.

SALLY
 (told you so; to Jack)
 Seven hundred and forty-five
 dollars. More than enough.

Jack forces a smile.

EXT. CAR DEALERSHIP - LATER

Jack pulls up in the new car. He parks and walks across the
 lot toward the showroom. A SALESPERSON intercepts him.

SALESMAN
 Welcome to EZ Auto Sales. Will this
 car be for you or a loved on?

Jack ignores him and keeps walking.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)
 Perhaps you'd like to hear about
 our factory options and available
 financing?

Jack keeps walking.

INT. SALES FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Jack walks up to the RECEPTIONIST.

JACK
Is the manager around?

RECEPTIONIST
I'll call him. There's coffee and donuts over there while you wait.

BLACK AND WHITE:
The busy sales floors of various car dealerships

NARRATOR
By offering refreshments, a receptionist does her part to help create a carefree, relaxed atmosphere. When all the members of the employment roster do their part, customers are more susceptible to high-profit add-ons such as rust proofing and extended tire warranties.

COLOR:

BACK TO SCENE

MANAGER
Hello, Sir. What can I do for you?

NARRATOR
Notice how polite the manager is? He knows that customers who are treated politely are more apt to return to purchase additional quality vehicles in the future.

JACK
I leased a car here last week. I'd like to exchange it for a cheaper one.

MANAGER
Yo no entiendo lo que usted dice.

JACK
Excuse me? I don't speak Spanish.

MANAGER
Yo no entiendo lo que usted dice.

Confused, Jack turns to the receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST

Schauen Sie mich nicht an. Ich kann Ihnen nicht helfen.

JACK

What is that, German? Oh, I get it. Suddenly nobody here speaks English. Is that it?

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Jack walks back to his car examining the small print in his lease contract. He's obviously pissed.

NARRATOR

Jack feels no animosity toward the dealership. Rules are rules after all. The lease clearly states the vehicle must be kept three years and, sure enough, nowhere is it specified they couldn't change languages.

INT. BAR - A FEW HOURS LATER

Jack is shit-faced drunk.

JACK

(to bartender)
Hit me again.

NARRATOR

Uh oh. Looks like Jack accidentally wandered into a saloon and allowed his blood alcohol to rise above the point- oh-eight legal limit. Unfortunately, as much as he'd like to return home, Jack now has the obligation to stay put.

The BARTENDER brings Jack another drink. At the door to the back room we see JOHN SMITH, the Topper's neighbor take an envelope from the owner. He enters and sees Jack.

JOHN

Little early to drink, isn't it Jack?

JACK

(very drunk)
John! Johnnie! John, John! Drink with me. Drink with you old neighbor buddy pal guy next store guy.

JOHN

Let me give you a ride home, Jack.

INT. JOHN'S CADILLAC - SHORT TIME LATER

Jack is still very drunk. He rubs his cheeks on the upholstery as John drives.

JACK

(rambling)

I love this car. I'd marry it. But Sally won't let me. Noooooo. She never lets me marry cars...

JOHN

So I heard about what you guys are going through. You know, I got some friends in the business world. Maybe I'll have 'em put in a good word with the principal and this Anderson guy.

JACK

I have an idea! I have an idea! Okay. Here it is. Ready? Loan money to me.

JOHN

You don't wanna borrow money from me.

JACK

Right. Dumb idea. Dumb dumb dumb dumb dumb-- Wait! I know! I know! You can loan us money.

Jack falls asleep.

INT. BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Jack is in bed, staring at the ceiling, defeated.

NARRATOR

Jack can't sleep. Having spent the afternoon napping face-down on his neighbor's lawn, that's no surprise. But there's another reason. The man of the house provides for his family and in this regard Jack has failed. For all his efforts trying to impress others, what has it got him? A hangover and a mouthful of grass shavings. Sally was right.

Jack checks that Sally is asleep and won't see this..

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The odds of a miracle happening by itself being against him, Jack decides to hedge his bet and offer a deal to the alleged Almighty -- Get him out of this jam and he'll stop focusing on trying to impress others and instead will redouble his efforts to live by the straight and narrow.

Jack forces himself into a quick prayer. Then..

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

With that taken care of, he decides to wake Sally and confess his failures.

FADE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY NEXT MORNING

Exactly as before. Jack was up all night. Finally, he nudges Sally but she continues to sleep. He nudges her again. Nothing. Finally he hits her.

JACK

Oh, you're awake. I have to tell you something--

SALLY

(half asleep)
You just hit me.

JACK

Listen--

SALLY

Why would you hit me when I'm sleeping?

SFX: PHONE RING

SALLY (CONT'D)

(answering phone)
Hello?.. Great. I'll tell him.
(hanging up)
That was the lawyer. The Principal reconsidered. Billy can stay in school.

JACK
Really? That's great!

SALLY
Now why'd you wake me?

JACK
(beat)
'Cause you snore. Quit it.

INT. JACK'S CAR - LATER THAT MORNING

Jack is smiling as he drops Billy off at school. Billy kisses his dad, jumps out and runs to meet up with his friends. Jack starts to drive away when he notices the principal, MR. COWEN.

JACK
Mr. Cowen!

The principal has his arm in a sling and a black eye. Jack navigates his car to the curb and rolls down the passenger window but the principal sees Jack and quickly runs away.

JACK (CONT'D)
Wait! I wanted to say thanks.
(to himself)
Must be late to a meeting.

INT. HALLWAY - MUTSON AND SLOAN - LATER

Jack walks down the hall towards his office.

NARRATOR
With the lawyer's retainer no longer a concern, Jack can now focus on rebuilding his reputation at the company.

Just then Mr. Anderson comes around the corner on crutches, spots Jack and quickly hightails it in the other direction.

Before Jack can say anything, Mutson crosses in.

MUTSON
Jack! I was just coming to see you.

JACK
(confused)
Was that Anderson? What happened?

MUTSON

Terrible accident. Tripped on his yacht or something. Anyway, he's back. Whatever you said to him worked.

Jack is confused but holds his tongue.

NARRATOR

One of the traits of a good-mannered individual is their ability to accept a compliment gracefully.

MUTSON

I think it's time we gave you a promotion. We'll talk more tomorrow when you move into your bigger office.

Mutson slaps Jack on the back and crosses out.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - SHORT TIME LATER

Jack drives home, smiling broadly.

NARRATOR

It seems that Jack's prayer has been answered. So why is he smiling? Sure, he got his promotion but doesn't this mystical answering of a prayer go against everything a man of logic holds dear? Not for Jack. True, he can't explain how it works but, bottom line, it did indeed work. He made a promise and got rewarded -- cause and effect. We don't know how aspirin works. Should a man of logic not take aspirin?

As Jack's car rounds the corner...

SLOW FADE INTO

BLACK & WHITE:

EXT. ERNEST AVE - CONTINUOUS

We're now in front of the Topper house -- the same shot at the start of the show.

BILLY and ROBERT, in swim trunks, play in the sprinklers. THE MAILMAN delivers a packages for Cindy -- a new, low-cut dress.

Jack parks, exits the car and hands flowers to Sally. They kiss.

NARRATOR

So there you have it. Jack Topper has decided to give up trying to impress others to get ahead in this modern world. He has a new system now. A better system -- live by the straight and narrow and have faith that someone, somewhere, unseen will look out for you.

PAN next door--John is watering the lawn in his robe.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It all seems pretty black and white.

FADE OUT

END OF SHOW