

"OUTSOURCED"

Written by

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. KANSAS CITY - MORNING

We look over the modest skyline of downtown Kansas City.

CUT TO:

INT. MID AMERICA NOVELTIES - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The elevator opens and TODD DONOVAN, a young, all-American guy, exits and starts down the hallway with a bounce in his step. He grins as he passes the familiar sign on the wall proclaiming: "Mid America Novelties."

CUT TO:

INT. MID AMERICA NOVELTIES - CALL CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

TODD enters and is shocked to see the call center is empty and partially vandalized. The only person in the office is his boss, JERRY, who is happily working, even humming to himself. He spots Todd and stands.

JERRY THE BOSS

Todd! You're back! How was the management training?

TODD

Where is everyone? What happened?

JERRY THE BOSS

Oh, we did a little right-sizing. Costs were through the roof. Pensions. Health care. We had to make some cuts, but now we're the right size to move ahead.

TODD

There's no one left.

JERRY THE BOSS

Exactly. Yesterday we outsourced the call center to India.

TODD

India?

JERRY THE BOSS

This is a great move for us, Todd. Things are really looking up for the company.

A brick, thrown from outside, flies through the window, lands, and rolls towards them. Todd sees a note is attached so he picks up the brick to read the note.

TODD  
(reading)  
"You Bastard--"

JERRY THE BOSS  
(chuckling)  
Oh, that's for me.

Jerry takes the brick and tosses it onto a pile of other bricks which have previously been thrown into the office.

TODD  
Jerry, I was supposed to run the call center.

JERRY THE BOSS  
I know--

TODD  
I went through training specifically to run the call center.

JERRY THE BOSS  
I know, I know, but listen, you're our best salesman. We're not gonna lose you. We still want you to run the call center. In India.

Jerry gives him two thumbs up.

TODD  
You want me to go to India?

JERRY THE BOSS  
They don't get our culture. We need an American in charge.

TODD  
But I've never been out of the country before.

JERRY THE BOSS  
This is a killer opportunity for you, Todd. They told me, if you get this right--

Another brick flies in the room and lands closer to them.

TODD  
Should we step back a little?

JERRY THE BOSS

Good idea.

They step back and continue.

JERRY THE BOSS (CONT'D)

They said, if you get this right, they'll bump you up to senior management. Todd Donovan, Vice President of Sales. Huh? How does that sound?

TODD

Vice president... Someday these bricks will be for me.

JERRY THE BOSS

That's the spirit!

TODD

But I've spent my whole life in Kansas City. I'd be leaving everything behind.

JERRY THE BOSS

You're twenty-five. What's your life? Some drinking buddies? An "X-Box" in a shared apartment? A girlfriend you only see on the weekends?

TODD

Hey, I got a lot more going on than that.

(thinks about his  
life, then)

I guess I could take the "X-Box" with me.

JERRY THE BOSS

There you go!

TODD

I mean, this is the time of my life when I should be up for adventure.

JERRY THE BOSS

Exactly!

TODD

Things happen for a reason, right?

JERRY THE BOSS

Yes they do!

TODD

My Dad always said, when a door  
closes, God opens a window.

JERRY THE BOSS

And this window opens onto sunny  
India!

Jerry, in a lame attempt at Bollywood style dancing,  
twists his arms as if he were putting in light bulbs.

JEREMY

(singing)

"BING BING BING BING BING BING."

TODD

You know what? I'm in--

JERRY THE BOSS

Excellent.

TODD

--Assuming we agree on terms.

JERRY THE BOSS

Excuse me?

TODD

If I do this for the company, I  
need a written contract that  
spells out my promotion, my  
salary, everything I get when I  
come back.

JERRY THE BOSS

Todd, you know I can't do that.  
You're gonna have to trust the  
company's word on this.

Todd looks around at all the empty desks.

TODD

Yeah, that's not gonna happen. I  
need it in writing.

Todd picks up a piece of paper and holds it out to Jerry.  
He won't take it.

JERRY THE BOSS

Sorry. It's against policy. My  
hands are tied.

TODD

Are you sure you can't do this for  
me?

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

Because I'm guessing if I don't go to India, they'll need someone else to go. And the only person with experience running a call center is you.

Jerry tries to keep a blank expression. Todd stares back at him. Finally, Jerry gives in, grabs the paper, and sits down to write out Todd's contract.

JERRY THE BOSS

Looks like that management training helped you grow a pair.

TODD

It was great. We spent a whole day on standoffs. The trick is to make the other guy feel good about giving in. But I don't have to do that with you. You're doing such an amazing job without my help.

(over his shoulder)

So, corner office, company car, stock options...

(then, feigning awe)

Is that your natural penmanship? It's beautiful.

JERRY THE BOSS

Thank you.

TODD

Executive assistant, expense account...

As Jerry writes, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. INDIA - CITY STREET - DUSK

Todd is riding in an auto-rickshaw taxi with RAJIIV, the assistant manager. They both have mango-lassis, but can't drink them because of the stop and go traffic. Todd is going over how he wants the office to run.

TODD

...It's also really important how we deal with setbacks. This is the way I see it: all obstacles are opportunities in disguise.

RAJIIV

Then you have come to the right place. This is the land of opportunities.

Rajiv gestures out to the overwhelming chaos that is the Indian street. Todd, not sure if Rajiv is being ironic, glances outside. The taxi abruptly stops and BEGGARS approach. Todd turns and sees a SADHU (an old man wearing only a loin cloth) just outside the window, extending his hand to Todd.

TODD

(turning away)

Okay, thanks for that visual.

(then)

You know, I'd give him money if he promised to buy a robe.

RAJIV

Actually, he is a Sadhu.

TODD

A what?

RAJIV

A Sadhu, a self-professed holy man. They give up all material possessions and wander the earth living on the handouts of strangers. Do you have Sadhus in America?

TODD

Yeah. We call them homeless.

The taxi lurches forward again.

RAJIV

Oh, before we arrive, I took the liberty of having name tags made.

Rajiv takes out two name tags labeled "MID AMERICA CALL CENTER." Printed below is their name and title.

TODD

Look at that. "TODD DONOVAN: MANAGER." Thank you, Rajiv. Thank you very much.

RAJIV

My pleasure, sir.

Todd notices that Rajiv's tag reads "RAJIV GIDWANI: MANAGER."

TODD

Yours says manager too.

RAJIIV

(laughing)

You are most perceptive. I can see that I will not be pulling the wool over your eyes, unless you are very cold and ask me to.

TODD

Why does yours say manager too?

RAJIIV

I am simply planning ahead. You see, after you return to America, I will become the manager of the call center. I thought to myself, why print a name-tag which says "Assistant Manager" when it is only a matter of time before you triumph here and make a glorious homecoming.

TODD

You got it all planned out, huh?

RAJIIV

Indeed, I do. When I become manager, my salary will increase enough so that I will be able to move out of my parents' house and finally marry Vimi.

TODD

Wait. You still live with your parents?

RAJIIV

This is not America. We do not all have deluxe apartments in the sky.

TODD

No way. You get "The Jeffersons" over here?

(half singing)

"WELL WE'RE MOVING ON UP, TO THE SKY. TO A DELUXE APARTMENT...

(with less commitment  
due to Rajiiv's look  
of confusion)

...in the sky-aye-aye." Never mind.

RAJIIV

Things are different here. Children live with their parents until they marry.

(MORE)



RAJIIV (CONT'D)

And I cannot marry Vimi until I am a manager. Her family is most prestigious.

TODD

Let me get this straight; you can't move out of your parents' house or get married until I get promoted back to America?

RAJIIV

It seems our fates are tied, sir. Your triumphs are my triumphs. Your victories are my victories.

(then)

We need a victory!

Rajiiv meant this to be inspirational, but it came off as desperation. Rajiiv and Todd look away and try to sip their lassi drinks. The taxi abruptly comes to a stop again and beggars approach. Todd turns to see a Sadhu just outside the window holding out his hand.

TODD

Is that the same guy?

RAJIIV

Sir, it would be offensive to imply that all Indians looked alike simply because we--

(realizing)

Oh no, that's the same guy. He's fast.

CUT TO:

INT. CALL CENTER/BULLPEN - LATER THAT EVENING

The WORKERS are chatting amongst themselves in English. MANMEET, a young, sweet guy (and would-be Lothario) is crossing through the cubicles when he's approached by GUPTA, a heavysset man with sad, needy eyes. Gupta's the kind of guy you avoid at a party.

GUPTA

Did you read the paper?

MANMEET

No.

Manmeet tries to walk away, but Gupta pursues.

GUPTA

There was a fascinating article about humming birds. They're not as nice as they seem.

Manmeet, trailed by Gupta, crosses by ASHA and MIDORI and we stay with them. Asha is a smart, confident and striking woman. Midori, on the other hand, is a wallflower who suffers from extreme shyness. We catch them mid-conversation as Asha tries to calm Midori while they flip through a Mid-America novelty catalogue.

ASHA

...I wouldn't worry about it. The products may be different, but the work is the same.

Midori is embarrassed to reveal:

MIDORI

But I've never worked at a call center before.

ASHA

Oh, okay. Well, sit next to me. I'll show you how it's done. You'll be fine. You'd be surprised, Americans are not that different from us.

Asha flips the page and they see the novelties for sale include an American flag Snuggie, a wallet made from bacon, and a "fanny-bank" where the coin slot is between the buttocks. Asha and Midori look up at each other.

ASHA (CONT'D)

Maybe they're a little different.

Todd and Rajiiv enter. Rajiiv claps at the workers and shouts.

RAJIIV

Come now! You are paid to work, not to sit around doing chit-chat!  
(suddenly polite)  
It is my great pleasure to introduce Mr. Todd Donovan.

TODD

Hello, everyone.

In the back, a very large Sikh (with a long beard and his hair bound up in a turban) named AJEET quickly stands. He seems disturbed by Todd's presence and quickly exits. Todd glances back to Rajiiv who shrugs.

RAJIIV

Potty break?

TODD  
 (continuing)  
 I'm excited to get started. I  
 look forward to working with all  
 of you as your manager...

Todd happens to glance back and see Rajiiv putting on his name tag which also says "Manager." Rajiiv avoids Todd's eye and pretends to look out at the employees.

TODD (CONT'D)  
 ...And I'm gonna give this a shot.  
 (taking out a piece  
 of paper)  
 I had fifteen hours on the flight  
 to memorize this, so here goes...

Todd glances at the paper, then speaks in mangled Hindi.

TODD (CONT'D)  
 (IN SUBTITLES)  
 Welcome office success donkey  
 today!

No one knows what to say. Rajiiv starts to applaud and scowls at the workers until they join in applauding.

TODD (CONT'D)  
 Oh no, not necessary. Thanks.  
 (aside to Rajiiv)  
 That wasn't really an applause  
 moment.

RAJIIV  
 You underestimate your charisma.  
 Such a light within you.

Todd steps forward and greets the employees one by one until he comes to Midori, who is so shy she avoids his eye as she shakes his hand.

TODD  
 Hello. You are...?

MIDORI  
 (almost inaudible)  
 Midori.

TODD  
 Excuse me?

MIDORI  
 (barely louder)  
 Midori.

TODD  
One more time.

MIDORI  
(barely louder)  
Midori.

TODD  
I'm sorry, I'm not...

RAJIIV  
(leading Todd away)  
Moving on.

TODD  
(aside to Rajiiv)  
She works the phones? Really?

Todd comes to Manmeet who extends his hand.

MANMEET  
Hello, I am Manmeet.

TODD  
Man-meat?

MANMEET  
Yes, Manmeet.

TODD  
You're name is Man-meat? Wow.  
That doesn't leave a lot of room  
for a crazy nickname. What do the  
ladies call you? Steve.  
(chuckles, then off  
his blank look)  
See 'cause normally your name  
would be Steve, and then Manmeet--  
Okay, we'll talk later.

Todd steps away and reaches Asha.

ASHA  
Hello, I'm Asha.

TODD  
Nice to meet you, Asha. That's a  
pretty name.

ASHA  
Thank you. It means "hope."

TODD  
Really? In that case, I "Asha" to  
get to know you better. ...Hope  
to get to know you.

ASHA

Yes, I understand.

Asha smiles but looks away, a little uncomfortable with the attention. Todd realizes he's been lingering and everyone is watching. He calls out:

TODD

Okay, I will meet the rest of you throughout the day. Now, the phones are switching over later tonight. We've been down for two days so there's going to be a lot of pent up demand for novelties. I want everyone ready. I don't know what religion you are, but this is your new bible.

Todd holds up the catalogue, the cover of which features an array of novelties from a beer drinking helmet (with the beer cans mounted on the side,) to a battery powered stuffed animal called "Dirty Dog" which humps your leg.

TODD (CONT'D)

The first commandment: know thy catalogue.

(off their confusion)

Just, learn it. Thanks.

RAJIIV

(aside)

Applause?

TODD

(shaking his head)

I'll let you know when.

The employees take a copy of the catalogue to study it.

RAJIIV

Now, if I may, I would like to show you to our offices in the executive suite. Please follow me.

Rajiiv leads Todd up three steps and stops.

RAJIIV (CONT'D)

Here we are.

Todd sees their "executive suite" is really just two more cubicles which have been elevated so that they can look down on the other cubicles.

RAJIIV (CONT'D)

Out of respect for your seniority,  
I have given you the cubicle with  
the view.

Rajiiv gestures to a nearby window. At the moment, there  
is a giant cow outside looking in the window.

TODD

You've got to be kidding me.

RAJIIV

Sir?

TODD

There's a cow outside the window.

RAJIIV

Yes, the cow is considered sacred.  
It can go where it pleases.

TODD

Really? Well, maybe that's a good  
thing. We won't have to go far  
for creamer.

Todd laughs and mimes reaching out the window to milk the  
cow directly into a coffee mug. Rajiiv does not laugh.

RAJIIV

Please do not touch the cow.

TODD

Of course not.

RAJIIV

I know this must be difficult for  
Americans to understand, since you  
eat hamburgers morning, noon, and  
night--

TODD

Not really true.

RAJIIV

(continuing)  
--You're so wealthy you  
practically bathe in meat--

TODD

Seems exaggerated.

RAJIIV

(continuing)  
--But for Hindus, a cow is not a  
source of meat.

(MORE)

RAJIIV (CONT'D)

It is sacred because of the milk it gives, the prosperity it represents. Muslims and Jews do not eat pigs, we do not eat cows. Is it so crazy--

TODD

Rajiiiv, Rajiiiv, I get it. It's a holy thing. The cow is not a source of meat. I totally get it. It's your country. I'm gonna respect your traditions.

They each settle into their desks to work. Todd can't help but glance back out at the cow, thinking, then:

TODD (CONT'D)

So, what time is lunch?

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMISSARY - NIGHT

A large commissary is filled with CALL CENTER EMPLOYEES sitting at several tables. Todd, with a tray, is making his way down the food line. Following him on the other side of the counter is an Indian LUNCH-MAN. As Todd eyes a particular food, the Lunch-Man dips in his ladle. When Todd changes his mind and moves on, the Lunch-Man removes the ladle and moves on as well.

TODD

(mumbling to himself)  
 Don't know what that is.  
 (then)  
 Don't know what that is.  
 (then)  
 A little scared of that.  
 (up to the Lunch-Man)  
 Soupy. Everything's soupy.  
 (off the Lunch-Man's blank expression)  
 Okay. You know what? I'm gonna be in India a while. I don't know what's what but I gotta learn somehow, right? So, just give me some of...that.

Todd points at a tray of soupy food and the Lunch-Man starts to ladle it onto Todd's plate.

LUNCH-MAN

(in Hindi)  
 Mirchi ka salan.

TODD

Oh yeah, of course. My Mom used to make the best mirchi ka sa-lamalama-dingdong.

Todd chuckles. The Lunch-man just stares back at him. Todd steps away to find a seat. As he walks among the tables, Todd faces the high school cafeteria dilemma of where to sit. He comes upon a table of his employees. (They are chatting in English except for Midori, who studies the catalogue as she eats.) There is an empty seat among them. Their conversation stops and they look at Todd, neither inviting him nor shunning him, just wondering whether he's going to join them. Todd spots another table nearby that's empty except for one big, sweaty American, CHARLIE DAVIES.

CHARLIE

You American?

TODD

Yeah.

CHARLIE

(nodding to a seat)  
Then saddle up.

TODD

Oh, thanks. Thanks a lot.

Todd takes a seat across from Charlie. Todd's employees register this and go back to their conversations.

CHARLIE

Charlie Davies. I run the call center for Orvis.

TODD

Todd Donovan. I'm running the call center for Mid America Novelty. Just started today.

CHARLIE

(off Todd's food,  
disapproving)  
Yeah, that's what I figured.

TODD

What?

Charlie looks at Todd's food and shakes his head.

TODD (CONT'D)

What?



CHARLIE  
You got the pepper thing.

TODD  
So?

CHARLIE  
Do you hate your own ass?

TODD  
Really? Is it that spicy?

CHARLIE  
If you eat that, you will be  
crapping yourself for five days.  
Not two days. Not three days.  
Not four days and some...  
(sound effects of  
small farts)  
I'm talking...  
(holding up his hand,  
extending five  
fingers)  
Five full days.

TODD  
Okay.

CHARLIE  
That's a hate crime against your  
pooper.

TODD  
Got it.

Todd pushes his plate away. Charlie offers him half of  
his sandwich.

CHARLIE  
Here, take half.

TODD  
Peanut butter and jelly?

CHARLIE  
Jiffy peanut butter and Smucker's  
grape jelly. And check this out:  
(re: his food)  
Cheetos, Dill pickles, a Hostess  
cupcake, and my back-up sandwich,  
Honey-Glazed ham and good old  
American cheese. As far as I'm  
concerned, you're not a world  
power until you have a cheese  
named after your country.

TODD

So, the superpowers are us, the Swiss, and...?

CHARLIE

I'm not into politics, okay?

TODD

Okay. Where did you buy all this stuff?

CHARLIE

I have it shipped from home. If I'm gonna be sentenced to this sweat-box of a country, I'll be damned if I'm eating their Mickey-Mouse food.

They eat for a beat. Todd glances over at his employees.

TODD

Hey, can I ask something about my workers?

CHARLIE

Shoot.

TODD

My budget isn't that big, but still, my guys don't exactly seem like the cream of the crop.

Charlie looks over Todd's employees.

CHARLIE

Yeah, they probably don't know squat about America. Probably never been outside the city. Looks like you got the "B" team, my friend.

TODD

How can you tell?

CHARLIE

Because that's the "A" team over there.

Charlie indicates a group of sharply dressed Indians sitting down to lunch.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Those guys work for Intell's call center. They've all been to America. They've even studied all our different accents.

TODD

No way.

An "A" team Indian crosses by to purchase a drink.

CHARLIE

Hey, you.

"A" TEAM INDIAN

(with his usual  
Indian accent)

Yes, what is it?

CHARLIE

Tell me something. Do you know  
what grits are?

"A" TEAM INDIAN

(in a perfect  
southern accent)

Well, grits is just ground up  
corn. I tell you what, my Momma  
used to make the best grits.

CHARLIE

Alright.

"A" TEAM INDIAN

(continuing in the  
southern accent)

I'd be settin' on the porch with  
my hound dog "Freedom"--

CHARLIE

Alright, enough.

(waving him off)

It's creepy, isn't it? Like  
they're pod people or something.

TONYA, an athletic, statuesque blonde, enters. Todd  
can't help but watch as she moves down the commissary  
line. Charlie notices this and nods.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's Tonya. She runs the  
Quantas call center. That's some  
grade "A" Aussie right there.

TODD

She's...

CHARLIE

I'm with you on that, my friend.  
They got that accent and they're  
all so big and outdoorsy; God I  
love Australian women!

Tonya turns to find a place to sit. She notices Todd staring at her and he turns away.

TODD

So what's her story?

CHARLIE

Don't waste your time, man. I've seen her here for eight months and she hasn't said two words to me.

Todd looks up, surprised to see that Tonya has approached him. He's even more surprised by her affable demeanor.

TONYA

I'm guessing you're a new bloke.

TODD

Yeah, first day actually. Todd.

TONYA

I'm Tonya. Just thought I'd say hi. I'm a bit of a yabber, so drop by Quantas if you want. You need all the mates you can find out here in Woop woop.

TODD

Woop woop?

TONYA

Sorry, that's Aussie for out in the middle of nowhere. I think you Yanks say out in the sticks.

TODD

I like woop woop better. It's fun to say. Woop woop.

TONYA

Right. Cheers.

Tonya smiles and walks away to sit with her workers. Charlie has watched this exchange and is speechless and dying inside. When Todd turns back from watching Tonya walk away, he notices Asha looking at him. Evidently, she watched Todd and Tonya speaking. But before Todd can get a read on Asha's expression, she looks away.

CUT TO:

INT. CALL CENTER HALLWAY/OFFICE - LATER

Todd is heading back to the call center bullpen when he passes an open office and sees Ajeet (aka The Big Sikh) with his feet up on the desk, eating pakoras and watching TV. Ajeet, about to pop a pakora in his mouth, sees Todd out of the corner of his eye and covertly nudges the door with his foot. Todd has just enough time to register how nice this office is compared to his cubicle before the door shuts.

CUT TO:

INT. CALL CENTER/BULLPEN - MOMENTS LATER

Todd cuts through the bullpen on his way to his office. He passes Asha in her cubicle just as she's opening a wrapped present which turns out to be a picture of a man in a suit. Todd stops to say hello, surprising Asha.

TODD

Hey, what you got there?

ASHA

My fiance sent me a picture of himself.

TODD

Oh, your fiance. What's his name?

ASHA

(momentarily drawing  
a blank)

...uh.

TODD

Don't tell me Indian names are hard for you too?

Todd laughs, and Asha recovers.

ASHA

Pradeep. His name is Pradeep Puri. I couldn't think for a second.

TODD

Where'd you guys meet?

ASHA

We haven't met yet.

TODD

Really? Then how... We're gonna be starting so...

ASHA

Of course.

Todd crosses away. Asha puts the picture on her desk and considers her fiancé. Then she grabs the picture again, puts it in her desk drawer, and closes the drawer.

CUT TO:

INT. CALL CENTER/KITCHEN-BREAK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Todd enters and sees Manmeet getting a cup of tea. Todd nods hello. He opens the pantry and is checking out the snacks when he hears:

MANMEET

(under his breath)

Oh no, please don't come in here.

Todd follows Manmeet's gaze and sees Gupta entering the bullpen, looking around for someone to talk to.

TODD

What's the matter with him?

MANMEET

He won't stop talking. Believe me, you don't want to get stuck with Gupta.

TODD

Yeah, we had a guy like that back in my old office. Ed Millner. He'd never shut up. If you got stuck with him in the break room, forget it. You couldn't shake him.

Todd and Manmeet look up to see that Gupta is approaching the kitchen. In a matter of seconds, he will round the corner and see them. Manmeet turns to Todd.

MANMEET

So how did you handle it?

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER:

Gupta rounds the corner and enters the kitchen. No one is there. Gupta looks around, surprised. He could have sworn he saw someone in here a second ago.

REVEAL: Todd and Manmeet are hiding in the pantry with the door closed. It's a little tight, so Todd feels the need to explain:

TODD

Back home, we had a bigger pantry.

Manmeet nods that he understands. They watch Gupta through the crack between the doors. Unfortunately for them, Gupta lingers, sipping his tea, just waiting for someone to talk to. Now they can't leave because it would be obvious they were hiding in the pantry. After a beat, Manmeet turns to Todd:

MANMEET

Do you know any redheads?

TODD

Excuse me?

MANMEET

I'm looking for a wife. I like redheads. And blondes. Dark hair too.

TODD

So, all women?

MANMEET

(sheepishly  
conceding)  
Yes, all of them.

TODD

Well, actually, my ex-girlfriend was kind of a redhead--

MANMEET

Ex-girlfriend? Did she say "no?"

TODD

Not usually. Wait, say "no" to what?

MANMEET

When you asked her to marry you?

TODD

Oh, I didn't ask her to marry me. We were just dating.

MANMEET

Dating until you get married, yes?

TODD

No, you see, Manmeet -- gotta get used to saying that -- things are different in America. You date someone for a while before you decide if you want to get married.

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

And some people aren't looking to get married anyway. It's called serial monogamy. You date a woman, if it doesn't work out, you date another woman, and then another woman, and so on.

(off Manmeet's incredulity)

Okay, I realize that sounds kind of meaningless--

MANMEET

(joyously)

It sounds wonderful.

Todd can't help but smile at Manmeet's glee. Then, through the crack between the doors, they see Midori enter the kitchen. She freezes when she realizes she's alone with Gupta. Gupta, however, perks up.

GUPTA

Did you read the paper today?

MIDORI

No.

Midori turns and exits, but it's too late. Gupta follows, talking over her shoulder as he follows her.

GUPTA

They discovered a vegetarian spider, first one in nature. I believe it was in Costa Rica...

Todd and Manmeet emerge from the pantry and watch Gupta trailing Midori through the office.

TODD

May God have mercy on her soul.

Manmeet nods.

CUT TO:

INT. CALL CENTER/BULLPEN - MINUTES LATER

Todd and Rajiiv enter carrying a box of novelties. (In the background, Gupta is still talking to Midori who is miserable.)

TODD

Okay, everyone--

Rajiiv interrupts by clapping at the employees.



RAJIIV

Stop what you're doing! It's time to work!

(politely, to Todd)

You have the floor.

TODD

Time for a little pop quiz. You've had all morning to study the catalogue, now let's see how good you are at "add-ons."

(off their looks)

You know what "add-ons" are, right? Someone calls to buy a product, and you suggest another related product for them to buy as an "add-on."

(then)

Okay, let's say someone orders a "we're #1" finger.

Todd takes a giant foam hand from the box which extends one finger as if to say, "we're #1."

TODD (CONT'D)

Now, what would you suggest as an "add-on?"

(off their silence)

I'll give you a hint. Notice the finger is green and gold, huh? Green Bay Packer's colors.

(then)

Oh come on.

(pulling a cheese head from the box)

A cheese head! This is basic.

RAJIIV

What is a cheese head?

TODD

You put this on when you root for the Packers.

Todd puts on the cheese head. The employees just stare at him.

TODD (CONT'D)

Are any of you taking this job seriously?

Asha inadvertently chuckles at this sight but quickly covers her mouth and turns away. Todd takes off the hat.

TODD (CONT'D)

Guys, we have to be ready. The phones have switched over. We're live. There are 300 million Americans who could be calling in for a novelty any minute now.

Todd gestures to the silent phones.

TODD (CONT'D)

...You never know when someone's gonna need a novelty.

ASHA

Sir?

TODD

Todd.

ASHA

Todd. I think the problem we're having is that even if we memorize the catalogue, what we are memorizing makes no sense to us.

TODD

What do you mean, it doesn't make sense?

ASHA

(off the catalogue)  
Well, for example, here is this mistletoe novelty. Even if I memorize the order number, that won't help me because I don't know what a mistletoe is.

TODD

Okay. Mistletoe is something you put up at a Christmas party--

MANMEET

What is a Christmas party?

TODD

What's a Christmas party? Really? Oh, man. Okay, a Christmas party is a party to celebrate the birth of Jesus, who was the son of God.

RAJIIV

Which God?

TODD

Which God? The God, the real one.  
(noticing a reaction  
and moving on)

Anyway, mistletoe is like a shrub  
and you hang it in a door way and  
wait till a hot woman comes along.  
I'm talking a woman who's out of  
your league, she'd never even talk  
to you, but you surprise her by  
standing next to her under the  
mistletoe, and it's awkward, but  
she has to kiss you. By law.

Confused, Asha holds up the catalogue and indicates the  
product that prompted her original question.

ASHA

Then what is this?

Todd leans in. INSERT CLOSE UP of a mistletoe belt-  
buckle, a novelty belt buckle with a small mistletoe  
branch extending from the top of the buckle.

TODD

That's...that's actually pretty  
clever. You're supposed to kiss  
under the mistletoe. So, if you  
wore that, someone would have to  
kiss you...down there.

ASHA

This is how you celebrate the  
birthday of the son of God?

TODD

See, the thing is, Americans can  
be holy, and have fun at the same  
time. Next question.

MANMEET

Why do Americans need these  
things?

TODD

We don't.

ASHA

Then what is the purpose?

TODD

The purpose? There is no purpose.  
There doesn't have to be a purpose  
in America. You can do what you  
want. That's what's so great  
about my country.

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

You have the freedom to pursue your dream, whatever it is. You can be president, or a scientist, or you can invent novelties like...

Todd reaches in the box and pulls out a novelty, but he instantly regrets his choice. The novelty is a small model of a woman's torso in a red dress.

MANMEET

What is that?

TODD

(committing to it)  
This is exactly what I'm talking about. Maybe no one needs this, but in America, no one can stop you from making it. This is the definition of freedom. This is "jingle jugs."

Todd presses a button on the back. As the torso plays "Jingle Bells," the breasts swing in different directions. The Indians don't know what to say. A phone rings. Manmeet is closest and he answers. Todd puts on a headset to hear the caller and fumbles to turn off the "jingle jugs."

MANMEET

Thank you for calling Mid America Novelty. How can I help you?

AMERICAN CALLER (V.O.)

Yeah, I want that mug on page six.

MANMEET

Of course. Can I please have the order number?

Manmeet looks to Todd who nods, "So far, so good."

AMERICAN CALLER (V.O.)

Uh, let's see. It's uh...256-KPR.

MANMEET

That's 256, "K" as in Krishna, "P" and in Punjabi, "R" as in Ramayana.

Todd grimaces.

AMERICAN CALLER (V.O.)

Rama-what? Where am I calling?  
Is this India?

MANMEET

...No.

AMERICAN CALLER (V.O.)

Am I calling freakin' India to order a mug that says "America's #1?!"

MANMEET

(off a cheat-sheet)

No, we are in Detroit, city of motors and black people.

The Caller hangs up. Todd, frustrated, turns to Rajiiv.

TODD

Are you sure these are the best workers you could find?

RAJIIV

Sir, are you suggesting I hired lesser employees to make you look bad?

TODD

No, of course not. Why would you do that? As you said, our fates our tied. If I can't make this office work, they'll get rid of me.

(realizing, eyeing Rajiiv suspiciously)

In which case, they'll need a new manager.

RAJIIV

Perhaps they'll try a local.

TODD

Rajiiv, I thought you were on my side. I thought "My success is your success."

RAJIIV

It is. But also, your failure is my success. Either way, I'm rooting for you.

Rajiiv steps away. As Todd looks out and considers his employees, we...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. INDIAN CITY - THE NEXT EVENING

MUSIC PLAYS as we look over a massive city which spreads as far as the eye can see. The MUSIC FADES as we...

CUT TO:

INT. CALL CENTER/BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

It's the start of the work day. Gupta wanders with his tea. No one else appears to be in yet.

GUPTA  
(muttering)  
He said to come in early.

Gupta strolls into the kitchen.

GUPTA (CONT'D)  
Where is everyone?

Gupta lingers, sipping his tea.

REVEAL: Todd, Manmeet, and now Midori are hiding in the pantry to avoid Gupta. They are trapped again by Gupta's lingering. Manmeet turns to Midori to explain:

MANMEET  
In America, they have bigger pantries.

Midori nods that she understands. Just then, through the crack between the doors, they see Asha enter the kitchen. She spots Gupta and grimaces to herself. Gupta perks up.

GUPTA  
Asha, did--

ASHA  
(crossing to the pantry)  
Yes, Gupta I read the paper. But I'm getting a migraine so I'm sorry but I need absolute quiet. Perhaps we can talk later.

GUPTA  
(sotto)  
Oh, okay. Perhaps later.

Asha opens the pantry door and sees Todd, Manmeet, and Midori.

(The pantry door opens out so Gupta is unable to see past the door into the pantry.) Todd shakes his head as if to say, "please don't give us up." Asha considers them, then shuts the door.

ASHA

Actually, Gupta, I'm feeling better, why don't we chat at my desk.

GUPTA

Really?!

Asha leads Gupta out, back into the bullpen.

ASHA

Yes. Did you read that story about the tiger who attacked the farmers?

(loud enough for  
Todd/Manmeet/Midori  
to hear)

One farmer threw herself at the tiger, sacrificing herself so that her three co-workers could live. They really owed her after that.

GUPTA

(as they exit)

I missed that one. Did you read about the inchworms that are both male and female?

ASHA

No.

(it hurts to say)  
Please tell me about it.

Asha exits with Gupta. Another EMPLOYEE enters to make a cup of tea and is surprised when Todd, Manmeet, and Midori come out of the pantry, and, without an explanation, pass her and exit.

CUT TO:

INT. CALL CENTER/BULLPEN - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

Todd and Rajiiv look over the bullpen and see that the employees are familiarizing themselves with the products. Asha is examining a fake deer head which can be mounted on the wall. While she does this, Gupta talks her ear off. Todd meets her eye and mouths "Thank you." Asha nods, then accidentally turns on the deer and it starts to sing "Sweet Home Alabama," startling her and Gupta.

RAJIIV

(off a chart)

These sales numbers from  
yesterday, as you Americans say:  
"Yikes."

TODD

I know. That's why I want to  
light a fire under everyone today.

RAJIIV

I have a thought. Why don't you  
pick one employee...

Rajiiv gestures to Midori who, at that moment, is trying  
on a novelty baseball cap with a built in mullet wig.

RAJIIV (CONT'D)

...and fire them. That will scare  
the others into working harder.

TODD

I don't want to fire someone just  
to make a point.

RAJIIV

She doesn't belong here anyway.  
She is a lower caste.

TODD

I think I'll try my way first. If  
it doesn't work, I'm sure I can  
find someone to fire.

Todd smiles and Rajiiv smiles back. However, Rajiiv's  
smile fades as he realizes Todd might be speaking about  
him.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER:

All the employees have gathered and Todd addresses them.

TODD

Alright, everyone, thank you for  
coming in so early.

A novelty garden gnome Manmeet is trying to figure out  
makes a farting sound. Manmeet chuckles.

MANMEET

It is a farting garden gnome.



TODD

I know, pretty cool, huh?  
(to everyone)

Okay, here's the deal. Asha was right. Even if you guys memorize the catalogue, you're not getting the cultural stuff, and that's what we're selling. So it's time you learned about America.

Todd holds up several DVD's and CD's.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER:

Rajiv stands in front of Todd and the workers.

RAJIV

A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice chianti.

Rajiv's Hannibal Lector impersonation is a little too good and everyone is uncomfortable.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER:

Asha, standing in front of everyone, looks down at what she's written on a piece of paper and inadvertently giggles at what she's about to say.

TODD

Please, some respect. This is a classic.

Asha takes a breath, then attempts "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugar Hill Gang.

ASHA

I said a hip, hop, the hippie, the hippie dibby hip hop hop and you don't stop to rock it to the bang bang boogie--

Asha breaks down laughing. Todd and the others laugh with her.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER:

Manmeet is giving an over-wrought performance.

MANMEET

"Put. That coffee. Down!  
Coffee's for closers only."

(then, pretending to  
accept an Oscar)

I would like to thank the Academy,  
and of course my wife, Mrs. Halle  
Berry-Shukla.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER:

Midori, mortified to be the center of attention, is  
performing so quietly everyone has to lean in to hear.

MIDORI

(in a half whisper)

You talking to me? You talking to  
me? Well I'm the only one here.  
Who the "naughty word" do you  
think you're talking to?

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER:

Gupta stands before everyone, humming an indecipherable  
tune. There is a foreboding air of anticipation. Then:

GUPTA

"I'M BRINGING SEXY BACK--"

Collectively, the group recoils and cuts Gupta off before  
he can sing another verse.

MOST OF THE WORKERS

No!

GUPTA

What? What?

Gupta and the others turn to Todd for a "ruling."

TODD

(to Gupta)

Just, no.

Gupta hangs his head.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER:

Todd is standing at the front, addressing everyone.

TODD

...These phones are gonna start ringing soon, and we have to do better than yesterday. We have to start pushing the add-ons, that's our bread and butter. Look, we may not be the cream of the crop, we're more like the "Bad News Bears"...

(off their blank looks)

No one knows who the "Bad News Bears" were?

RAJIIV

(raising his hand)

Sir, I would venture to say that they are bears, who, when they come to town, it is very bad news indeed.

(off Todd shaking his head in frustration)

...Because they are bears.

(turning to the others for support)

Who wants a bear in your village?

TODD

It was a movie about a baseball team with a bunch of losers--

ASHA

Are we the losers in this story?

TODD

Yes, well, no, because my point is, everyone thought they were losers, until they proved people wrong.

ASHA

Who are we proving wrong?

TODD

Just people.

(sneaking a glance at Rajiiv)

So by the end of the month, I want everyone selling ten add-ons a day. By the end of this week, five a day. And by the end of today, I want everyone, and I mean everyone, to sell one add-on.

Midori looks around, nervous.

RAJIIV

Or what?

TODD

There is no "Or What," because I believe you're gonna do it. Look, this is my first time as a manager. Some guys might be scared to tell you that, but I'm not because I believe in myself. Sales is about confidence. Do you believe in yourself?

MANMEET

(to himself)

Coffee is for closers.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER THAT MORNING:

Todd walks the floor with a headset and a switcher that allows him to eavesdrop on any call. He switches to Manmeet's call as he finishes a sale.

MANMEET

Let me read that item number back to you. That's 732-GRF. 732, "G" as in "Good Fellas," "R" as in "Raging Bull," and "F" as in...

(almost an Italian  
accent)

Forgetaboutit.

Manmeet smiles at Todd who nods.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER THAT MORNING:

Todd walks past Asha and clicks over to her call.

ASHA

...Many of our customers who bought confederate flag shot glasses also purchased a deer head which you can mount on the wall.

CALLER (V.O.)

(in a Southern  
accent)

Why would I mount a deer I didn't shoot?

ASHA  
Because this deer sings "Sweet  
Home Alabama."

CALLER (V.O.)  
(interested)  
Okay, now that's funny.

Both Todd and Asha grin.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER THAT MORNING:

Todd is pacing the floor. At the moment, no one is on a call, all the employees are waiting. Then a phone rings.

TODD  
(before anyone can  
answer)  
Wait, who hasn't sold an add-on  
yet?

All the employees turn to look at Midori. She almost wilts under the scrutiny. Todd gestures at the ringing phone until Midori answers it.

MIDORI  
(into phone, sotto)  
Mid America Novelty, how can I  
help you?

CALLER (V.O.)  
Hello?

MIDORI  
(slightly louder but  
still way too soft)  
How can I help you?

CALLER (V.O.)  
Hello? Is anyone there?

Rajiv shakes his head and makes a throat slitting gesture regarding Midori.

CALLER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Hello?

Todd, thinking fast, reaches down and turns up the volume on Midori's side of the call. There is a lot of static on her end, but, finally, Midori has a voice.

MIDORI  
How can I help you?

CALLER (V.O.)  
I wanna order the fake dog poo.

MIDORI  
Wonderful choice.

CALLER (V.O.)  
Yeah, my roommate's getting on my nerves. I wanna freak him out.

MIDORI  
(without consulting a catalogue)  
In that case, could I also interest you in our fake vomit on page 23, lower left hand of the page?

CALLER (V.O.)  
This vomit, does it look real?

MIDORI  
Well, it makes me sick to look at it.

CALLER (V.O.)  
Yeah, alright, I'll get the vomit too.

TODD  
(taking off his headset, to the room)  
Okay, that's everyone.

The others (except for Rajiiv) applaud for Midori and she beams shyly...until she hears the caller in her ear:

CALLER (V.O.)  
Why are people clapping?

TODD  
(sotto to Midori)  
Get the credit card info.

MIDORI  
Oh.

As Midori rejoins the call to get the credit card information, Todd sidles up to Rajiiv for an aside.

TODD  
You were hoping I would succeed or fail, but there's one outcome you didn't anticipate: my modest but slowly improving just okay-ness.  
(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

And that's something I'm mighty  
good at. Looks like you  
underestimated me...and  
overestimated me.

As Todd walks away, and Rajiiv looks on baffled, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMISSARY - NIGHT (LUNCHTIME)

The tables are filled with call center employees. Todd is paying for his food when Tonya passes by.

TONYA

So you survived another day.

TODD

Yeah. Looks like you're stuck  
with me for a while.

Tonya smiles and leaves to join her crew. Todd turns with his tray and scans the tables for a place to sit. He meets eyes with Charlie, who's by himself again. He also sees a table of his workers (without Rajiiv). This time, however, they are pleased to see him and Asha waves for him to join them. Todd grins. He crosses by Charlie and nods to indicate he's going to sit with his workers.

TODD (CONT'D)

Just for morale, you know.

CHARLIE

Go for it.

Todd crosses to sit with his workers but we stay behind. From Charlie's POV, we see Todd chatting, happy to be with his people. MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY and it feels like the end of the episode. Manmeet slides a plate of food towards Todd and Todd takes a bite. The MUSIC ABRUPTLY STOPS. Todd looks up to see Charlie staring at him, shaking his head. Charlie holds up his hand just like he did in the previous commissary scene, extending all five fingers. Todd gets his meaning and glances down to see he's been eating the mirchi ka salan. SFX: AN UPSET STOMACH GROWLING. MUSIC RESUMES OVER THE CREDITS, BUT OCCASIONALLY PAUSES FOR THE SOUND OF AN INCREASINGLY DISTRESSED STOMACH.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO