

A FISTFUL OF QUARTERS

THE LEGEND OF NOLAN BUSHNELL

by

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First Draft

EXT. PLAYBOY MANSION - DAY

Poolside. A flurry of high-heeled, bikini-clad PLAYMATES wipre across the frame. NOLAN BUSHNELL (32) -- the picture of 70's cool in a black turtleneck, plaid bell-bottoms, and a groovy moustache -- smokes his pipe and tries to appear mellow, but he's distracted. He squints across the pool through red-tinted shades.

Journalist BOB WIEDER (30's) sits opposite Nolan, speaks rapidly, gushing enthusiasm.

BOB WIEDER
Listen, man, I've seen things in my lifetime...

NOLAN'S P.O.V.: A cluster of Playmates under an umbrella, all buoyant breasts and feathered hair. Toned ass cheeks move aside, revealing two freaked-out little girls, ALISSA (7) and BRITTA (4).

BOB WIEDER (CONT'D)
...but the things I heard about
your factory...the women...

Alissa clutches a cage containing a small, gray RAT. Britta gapes at the scantily clad alien beings around her, cries.

BOB WIEDER (CONT'D)
...the debauchery, it's...

NOLAN
...all part of the plan.

BOB WIEDER
A good plan. You're -- what -- 32?

Wieder looks up from his notes to Nolan for confirmation, follows Nolan's uneasy gaze across the pool to Britta.

BOB WIEDER (CONT'D)
Do you want to take a minute...?

Nolan gestures -- *She's fine.*

Two Playmates reach in to console Britta. She recoils, SCREAMS, launches into a massive SHIT FIT.

NOLAN
(to himself)
Ah, Jesus.

Britta's shriek spooks Alissa's rat. It flies around its cage. The Playmates recoil in horror.

Nolan springs up, dangles for a beat with his mouth open.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Britta -- Brit, honey, I'm right
here. Britta, they're nice ladies.

Sobs continue. The Playmates, Nolan and Wieder are clueless.

BOB WIEDER
Beautiful children, Nolan.

A frumpy LATINA HOUSEKEEPER shuffles over to the girls, whispers. The crying dies down. She takes both girls by the hand and walks them towards the mansion, past Nolan.

NOLAN
Thank you! Sorry.

ALISSA
She's giving us chocolate milk.

NOLAN
Oh, okay. Have fun.
(sitting, to Wieder)
Sorry. You were...?

BOB WIEDER
(reading from notes)
...A genius, egomaniac, the Edison
of the New Age, P.T. Barnum of the
Silicon Valley -- these are quotes.
Architect of a revolution. Prophet
of doom who has unleashed this
unholy scourge upon our children.
(looks up)
Do ya want to add anything to that?

Nolan takes a beat, puffs his pipe.

NOLAN
...Saint?

SMASH CUT TO:

SPLASH. We see 8-YEAR-OLD NOLAN plunged under the surface of the water in a baptismal bathtub. His father CLARENCE, standing in the tub, lifts his son to the surface. A wet Nolan wears the traditional white Mormon jumpsuit. FAMILY MEMBERS and CLERGY stand by. Clarence leans close, whispers.

CLARENCE
You understand the significance,
Nolan, what this means?

8-YEAR-OLD NOLAN
Think so.

CLARENCE
Means you don't have to shower
later.

Bing Crosby's "Simple Melody" begins, and we CUT to...

"Utah, 1951"

INT. BUSHNELL HOUSE - DAY

The extended BUSHNELL FAMILY -- uncles, aunts, cousins, Nolan's three sisters, mother DELMA -- still wearing their stiff church clothes, sit silently, barely move.

NOLAN (V.O.)
Pretty much everybody in my family
wanted me to be a priest.

Delma checks her watch.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Not my old man.

EXT. HORSE RACE TRACK - DAY

Nolan and Clarence, also in church clothes but with loosened ties, jump up and down, waving race tickets.

8-YEAR-OLD NOLAN CLARENCE
Come on, Fire Balls! Go, Fire Balls! Go!

INT. BUSHNELL HOUSE - DAY

Clarence and Nolan enter, ties now tightened. An annoyed Delma and all the relatives see them enter.

CLARENCE
...talking to Elder John about the significance of his baptism.

Delma glares at Clarence. He looks away, emasculated.

NOLAN (V.O.)
Dad wasn't real big on domestic life. But he and I did have one escape that thrilled him...

TNT. BUSHNETT HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

CLOSE on a big arm sweeping papers off a table. A CHESS BOARD smacks down. Nolan and Clarence set up the pieces.

NOLAN (V.O.)
Games.

Another arm sweep, and a MONOPOLY BOARD drops in. Another: BACKGAMMON. Nolan marks a point on a game tally chalkboard.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We played 'em all. But there was
one. I wouldn't even call it a
game. It was an obsession.

CLOSE on Clarence's eyes, alive now, reflecting a game board covered with a complex pattern of BLACK AND WHITE STONES.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The Japanese call it "Go", and
legend has it that the samurai
played it to prepare for battle.

DELMA (O.S.)
Clarence!

Clarence studies the board then makes his move.

NOLAN (V.O.)
And in this epic struggle, there is
a single move so devastating that
its name means 'prepare to be
destroyed.' I only got to say it
once, but man did it feel good...

8-YEAR-OLD NOLAN
Atari, Dad.

Little Nolan places a piece. As Clarence proudly offers Nolan his hand, Delma enters the basement. Clarence wilts.

DELMA
You're late for work.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Clarence strains to carry a huge sack of cement on his back. Nolan runs ahead, clears a spot on the ground.

NOLAN (V.O.)
He hated his job. He hated the
fact that he couldn't read. And he
was determined that I wouldn't
follow in his footsteps.

INT. BUSHNELL HOUSE - DAY

Christmas morning. Nolan sits beside the tree.

Clarence hands him a gift. He tears it open. A thick book: "INNOVATIONS IN SCIENCE". Clarence taps the book's cover.

CLARENCE
Go further.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Nolan, NOW 16-YEARS-OLD, holds "THE COMPLETE BOOK OF SPACE TRAVEL" while tamping down concrete with boots. Clarence, looking much older, stands to the side, rubbing his back.

16-YEAR-OLD NOLAN
The puzzle nobody's figured out yet
is the ship's heat shield. But
I've got some ideas. I've got --

ANOTHER DAY. Nolan excitedly shows Clarence a POPULAR SCIENCE magazine while he helps him with a tape measure.

16-YEAR-OLD NOLAN (CONT'D)
-- tons of uses for an
oscilloscope. Some guy figured out
a way to hit a point of light back
and forth. It's --

ANOTHER DAY. Nolan's engrossed in a stack of loose-leaf papers. Clarence struggles and sweats while pouring cement.

16-YEAR-OLD NOLAN (CONT'D)
-- gonna be big. I mean, who's not
gonna want rocket roller skates?

CLARENCE
So what're you waiting for?

INT. BUSHNELL HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Clarence packs his truck for a new day while Nolan solders a model rocket engine to a roller skate in the open garage.

16-YEAR-OLD NOLAN
(calling out)
...thinking a test run by the end
of the day, Dad.

The door from the house opens. Delma's there.

CLARENCE
I know. Late for work.

DELMA
Hurry up, Nolan.

CLARENCE
 No no. He's staying back today.
 He's working on something.

DELMA
 He's working on nonsense. Nolan,
 go to work with your father.

Clarence turns, face reddens, approaches Delma.

CLARENCE
 Why would you say that??

DELMA
 (shocked)
 You're not feeling well. You need
 the help.

CLARENCE
 He is helping me! He's doing
 something he loves and he's gonna
 keep doin' it and the boy's gonna
 change the goddamn world, you
 understand me?

Clarence walks to his truck. Nolan and Delma are silent.

EXT. BUSHNELL HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Nolan crouches over the roller skate in the driveway, making adjustments. Two younger NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS watch. None of them are aware of the POLICE CAR driving up the street.

Nolan lights the wick. The rocket engine flares and spins the skate, sending it flying into the open garage. It crashes into the wall and EXPLODES.

Nolan runs into the garage, grabs an extinguisher and sprays out the flames. Behind him, the police car parks in the driveway. The other kids take off. The POLICEMAN gets out.

16-YEAR-OLD NOLAN
 I, I, I didn't -- there's no --

The noise draws Delma outside. She's shocked to see the cop.

POLICEMAN
 Ma'am.

NOLAN
 -- it was an accident.

POLICEMAN
 Are you Delma Bushnell?

DELMA
 Yes.

POLICEMAN
Something's happened, ma'am. Can we step inside?

DELMA
(face losing color)
What happened?

POLICEMAN
Can we speak in --

DELMA
Tell me what happened!

POLICEMAN
We found your husband at the construction site. Appeared he'd had a heart attack.

Delma covers her mouth with both hands.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

Painful silence. SLOW MOVE IN on Nolan's face as the information washes over him. We hear the echo of children playing in the distance.

INT. BUSHNELL HOUSE - NOLAN'S ROOM - DAY

Shades are drawn. Nolan lays on his bed in the falling gloom. Above him, several MODEL SPACESHIPS dangle from the ceiling. Their shadows play against the wall.

Clipped WHISPERS drift in from another part of the house.

WHISPERS
...a tragedy...there at the site...took on too much...

Nolan turns and peers through his slightly open door. He sees Delma, surrounded by relatives, all wearing black.

ELDER JOHN
Maybe I could get some people together, help finish the job.

DELMA
He was working too hard, that was the problem...spent 3 months on the job. And for what?

Nolan's face grows red. He's heard enough.

QUICK SHOTS: Nolan sheds his black suit, straps on his dad's cement-crusted boots, pulls on his gloves. He marches swiftly past Delma and the relatives.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Nolan strains to finish the job alone. He pours cement, loses grasp, spills it. He tenses in frustration. THE SUN GOES DOWN. He continues.

NOLAN (V.O.)
I spent a week trying to finish
Dad's work.

DAY AGAIN. Nolan is bruised, scratched, exhausted. NIGHT. Rain pours. Nolan frantically tries to cover the job with a tarp. The tarp rips. The job is ruined. Nolan drops to his knees, finally cries.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And then I gave up.

FADE TO BLACK.

The Animals' "House of the Rising Sun" plays over...

INT. PI KAPPA ALPHA FRATERNITY HOUSE - NOLAN'S ROOM - DAY

"University of Utah, 1966"

We PAN the room: a bong, overflowing ashtray, old pizza. We find Nolan, now 23, long-haired, unshaven, sitting on a mattress, reading "PROFITABLE POKER". A knock on the door. Nolan barely opens it. A jittery FRESHMAN stands there, hands over a drivers license and wadded up bills.

FRESHMAN
I, I was thinking 23.

NOLAN
Okay. I'll talk to my guy.

Nolan closes the door and sits down before a TYPEWRITER and an ink stamp of the Utah state seal.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In 1966, you could make a Utah
drivers license on a typewriter. I
made 'em at \$50 a pop.

He lights a joint, and then starts typing.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And in the spring semester, when
 the ID business dried up, I turned
 to my only other source of income.

INT. PI KAPPA ALPHA FRATERNITY HOUSE - NIGHT

Air is thick with smoke. FRAT BOYS are passed out all over. Nolan plays poker against three other GUYS. He looks wired from lack of sleep, hordes a MOUNTAIN OF Winnings.

NOLAN (V.O.)
 I had a good run for awhile...

Nolan holds a queen-high flush. He slides ALL of his winnings into the pot. Two of his opponents fold...

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...but the thing about poker is, as good as you think you are, there's always somebody better.

Third opponent calls. Showdown. King-high flush. Opponent rakes in the massive pot. Nolan slumps in his chair.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 In one hand, my entire college tuition -- gone. I was forced to do the unthinkable: get a job.

EXT. MOTHER GOOSE LAND - CARNIVAL MIDWAY - NIGHT

Next to a bustling PINBALL ARCADE, Nolan stands at a game booth, wearing a carnival barker's skimmer hat and striped jacket, droning apathetically into a megaphone.

NOLAN
 Welcome to Mother Goose Land.
 Three balls for a quarter.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...a job, though, that did teach me one valuable lesson...

QUICK SHOTS of CUTE GIRLS losing Nolan's game. He gives them all carnival prizes anyway.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Give out enough free kewpie dolls to enough Mormon chicks and one of 'em is bound to be appreciative.

The last girl, PAULA, smiles shyly at Nolan, blushes.

EXT. MOTHER GOOSE LAND - NIGHT

In a closed section of the park, Nolan and Paula are passionately kissing in the grass under a roller coaster.

INT. ACADEMIC ADVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

An ACADEMIC ADVISOR (40) consults Nolan's folder.

ACADEMIC ADVISOR
1560 on your boards...first place
in the Westinghouse Science
Search...recommendations from your
high school teachers...and here you
have a 1.9 GPA. What happened?

Nolan shrugs.

ACADEMIC ADVISOR (CONT'D)
Well you need to start going to
class, Nolan. If you flunk, you
know we have a responsibility to
inform the draft board.

INT. ENGINEERING BUILDING LECTURE HALL - DAY

Nolan sits in the last row, scribbling numbers in a poker strategy book, half-listening to DR. EVANS' lecture.

DR. EVANS
...and with the purchase, we've
joined the ranks of MIT and
Stanford as one of only three
schools in the world offering
students access to a computer...

Nolan's pencil slows down.

DR. EVANS (CONT'D)
...and each of you will have time
with this cutting edge machine to
experiment and program.

Nolan's pencil stops, he looks up and listens for a moment.

DR. EVANS (CONT'D)
So far, at MIT, students have
created a variety of programs.
We've seen a text editing program,
a FORTRAN compiler...

Nolan's eyes drift back to his book.

DR. EVANS (CONT'D)
...one student even did an outer
space simulation with rocket ships
flying around...

On that, Nolan's eyes dart up.

DR. EVANS (CONT'D)
Guys, the frontier is wide open.
Who'd like to take a look?

INT. ENGINEERING BUILDING COMPUTER LAB - DAY

The entire class is squeezed into this tight room. Nolan pushes to see through the crowd, only catches glimpses: tape drives, switches, a folding chair. Dr. Evans finishes demonstrating how to use the machine's tape reader.

DR. EVANS
...be sure to wind the tape onto a
spool and store it on the rack.
Sign ups begin next semester...

Dr. Evans' voice trails off as he exits. Nolan searches for a place to hide. The students shuffle out. Nolan drifts back inconspicuously, steps behind a cabinet. A TA shuts off the lights, locks the door.

LATER. Quiet. The whir of a cooling fan. In the dark, Nolan feels around, turns on a small lamp. A pool of light spills onto...

A vision of futuristic beauty: the PDP-1. Nolan stands before the metallic behemoth. He listens for noise in the hallway. All clear.

Determined, Nolan walks to the small metal folding chair before the beast...the captain's chair. He sits, takes a deep breath, and runs his fingertips over the keyboard.

He then glances up at the rack of spooled paper tapes. He stands and searches through their handwritten labels:

"CALCULATOR", "TYPEWRITER", "DEBUGGER". Then..."SPACE WAR".

Following Evans' instructions, Nolan loads the tape, then flips a switch. CLUNK. The tape zips through the reader.

Nolan sits back down and stares ahead, his eyes reflected onto the black screen. And then...a vision. Before him, the cosmos: infinite space filled with bright white pixels, light years away. In the middle of the screen, a small triangle appears: a spaceship. He's in awe. He slides to the edge of his seat and fondles one of two switches on the control

panel. He flips it. The rocket responds. It flies silently in one direction. Nolan's eyes widen. He flips the switch back. The triangle decelerates. He goes back and forth, alternating speeds. The pleasure of sheer response. Then: the second switch. The ship rotates. His innocence reawakens as his eyes gaze in wonder at this tiny ship flying through the galaxy. We hold on his face, then pull back to reveal that he's elsewhere, surrounded by PINBALL MACHINES.

INT. MOTHER GOOSE LAND - PINBALL ARCADE - NIGHT

Nolan is in a daze, sitting on the edge of a stool wearing an arcade attendant's apron and change belt. He's enveloped by the arcade's loud hustle and bustle but barely moves.

We remain on his face as he watches KIDS obsessively pump DIME AFTER DIME into pinball machines. A subtle shift sweeps over his expression. The sounds of the arcade fade away...

NOLAN

...games...

He stands slowly, wanders aimlessly down an aisle. He picks up his pace, suddenly on a mission.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
...on a computer...and I'll charge
people for 'em...

He starts to laugh with joy, moving faster now...

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Fuck pinball!

INT. KAPPA KAPPA GAMMA SORORITY HOUSE - PAULA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Paula sits on her bed while Nolan paces. She's clearly got something on her mind but Nolan's too excited to notice.

NOLAN
And I'll have UFO's flying around
and...and...missiles...guided
missiles, and...

PAULA
Nolan.

NOLAN
...and sound effects of rocket
thrusters and a...and a neat
scoring system that people aren't
gonna believe...and then --

PAULA
Nolan.

NOLAN
...then I'm gonna get an investor
to pay for it. I mean, baby,
nothing's gonna stop me now.

PAULA
I'm pregnant.

NOLAN
(stops pacing)
Except...
(smiles nervously)
...that.

A long pause as Nolan registers the consequences.

PAULA
Nolan?

NOLAN
That's so...neat.

DISSOLVE TO:

"Santa Clara, California (Silicon Valley), 1971"

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - KITCHEN - DUSK

A baby WAILS. Nolan (28) with a buzz cut and wearing a clip-on tie, sits at a table in a cramped kitchen with Paula and his two daughters, ALISSA (3) and the crying BRITTA (3 months). Trying to block out the shrill sound, he stares down at his TV dinner. Alissa throws food at him and laughs.

PAULA
You have to eat your food. Alissa,
eat your food. Nolan, please, tell
her she has to eat her food.

EXT. AMPEX - MORNING

A massive, characterless white building. Out front, white block letters on a blue sign: AMPEX.

Nolan's battered '58 CHEVY coughs out dark smoke as he drives around looking for a parking spot.

MINUTES LATER. Nolan walks through the parking lot carrying his briefcase in the searing heat. In front of the building, he sees several empty parking spots, reserved for VP's.

INT. AMPEX - WORK AREA - MORNING

The office is one huge open room filled with cubicles and workbenches, with exec offices on the periphery.

Nolan punches his timecard, then navigates through the cubicle maze. He passes a hundred sweaty, mid-to-old-aged ENGINEERS, all wearing thick glasses and short-sleeved button-down shirts. They hunch over their benches, smoking, soldering circuit boards. No one speaks.

Nolan reaches his bench, sadly nods to his friend AL "MOOSE" ALCORN (27), a big shaggy fat guy. Moose's cubicle walls are covered with photos of the Berkeley People's Park protests.

INT. AMPEX - CAFETERIA - DAY

Long tables filled with passionless men, shoveling in slop. Nolan, Moose, and their very nerdy friend TED DABNEY (28) stand out. These three guys still have a glimmer of hope.

NOLAN

10 screens would probably...10
might amortize out.

MOOSE

I don't think so.

NOLAN

10 screens at a dime a
game...

TED

You know, I have money, Nolan, and
I can really see this taking off.

A heavyset OLD MAN WITH PROMINENT EAR HAIR sits down.

OLD MAN WITH PROMINENT EAR HAIR

You oughta take the photos down.

MOOSE

This shit again.

TED

Walter, come on.

OLD MAN WITH PROMINENT EAR HAIR

It's a lot of people want 'em down.

MOOSE

I took those pictures, Walt. I was
there. People's Park? I took 'em.

Nolan and Ted have clearly heard this story before.

NOLAN

Game's 3 minutes. 75 times a day.

Another AMPEX VETERAN in his 60's has been eavesdropping.

AMPEX VETERAN
Goddamn hippies. Reagan was right.
You probably threw teargas.

OLD MAN WITH PROMINENT EAR HAIR
I remember when I gave a shit.

MOOSE
18 grand for a PDP-8, 13 grand a
monitor -- it's gonna take you...5
and a half years before you make
one dime.

OLD MAN WITH PROMINENT EAR HAIR
Probably be drafted before then.

A BELL rings. The men gather their trays and stand.

AMPEX VETERAN
Dreamtime's over, Bushnell.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Before Alissa at the dinner table, Nolan stands a CORN ON THE COB on the table with one hand and holds a SWEET POTATO in the air with the other. Paula feeds Britta in the b.q.

NOLAN
The sweet potato is a UFO, okay?
And your spaceship's this corn on
the cob. Now you tell me when
you're gonna shoot at it.

Alissa is wide-eyed. Nolan makes an INTERGALACTIC SOUND while moving the sweet potato in one direction.

ALISSA
Now!

While making a silly shooting noise, Nolan lifts the corn as if it were a missile, completely missing the moving potato.

NOLAN
Ah -- too late, honey. You gotta
be ready for it!

PAULA

NOLAN
(dejected, drops food)
Mom says you have to eat.

INT. AMPEX - WORK AREA -DAY

In a haze of cigarette smoke, the zombies toil away on their circuit boards. In the distance, an office door is slightly ajar. We have a partial view of Nolan, standing, gesturing.

INT. AMPEX - EXECUTIVE OFFICE - DAY

An excited Nolan finishes a presentation to his AMPEX BOSS, mid 50's, a creepy private guy with a little beard and a SELF-PORTRAIT on the wall that's entirely made up of 0's and 1's.

NOLAN
Sir, I'm just saying, if you grant me an opportunity to use one of the company's PDP-8's, I really think this can be something big, maybe even make a lot of money for Ampex.

The boss stares at Nolan as if he's really thinking about it.

AMPEX BOSS
You know something? Hold on.

He immediately gets up, walks to door, talks to secretary.

AMPEX BOSS (CONT'D)
Cheryl, are we doing Tidy Fridays?
'Cause I didn't see it on the schedule and I'm not seeing any clean benches this morning. Let's get that back on the...

He gestures, then goes back into the room, stands by Nolan.

AMPEX BOSS (CONT'D)
Games.
(scratching his neck)
Yeah, I don't know. I gotta...

NOLAN
Sir, I really think...

AMPEX BOSS
...I know you do, you're a thinker, but I know you're busy, too, so why don't ya go back to your bench and I'll get back to you on it.

Nolan stands there, frustrated, then wanders out.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - DUSK

Depressed, Nolan sits slumped in a chair in the family room. *The Brady Bunch* is on. Alissa sits on the floor, half-watching the TV while playing with her LITE BRITE set.

Nolan watches the show. Thoughts envelop his mind. We MOVE IN SLOWLY to his face, lost in thought. He sits there, his eyes darting back and forth until a single thought stops him. He gets up slowly, thinking, concentrating, steps to the TV.

NOLAN

Honey, I need to unplug this for a second, okay?

ALISSA

Why?

NOLAN

One second, okay?

He unplugs it, lifts the TV and runs out of the room with it.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - GARAGE - DUSK

Nolan places the TV screen-down on a table, unscrews the back, examines the inside.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Nolan's Chevy races down the street.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Nolan is outside the main gate, repeatedly buzzing the button next to "AL ALCORN".

MOOSE

(groggy)

Yeah?

NOLAN

It's Nolan. Come down. It's important.

TWO MINUTES LATER. Nolan paces. Moose opens the gate.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Moose. I don't need a computer.

Why do I need 4k?! Think about it.

All I need is one stupid device that's going to play one stupid game...a couple a' fucking logic chips and counters, that's it, man,

(MORE)

NOLAN (CONT'D)
and I can hook that shit up to any
crappy TV set!

MOOSE
(calm, rubbing his eyes)
Look. Even if you could do
this...where are you getting the
parts for this 'stupid' device?
(off Nolan's smile)
No, no. No--

INT. AMPEX - LATE NIGHT

The empty parking lot is barely illuminated by a few lights. Moose and Nolan bust out of the Ampex building, their arms stacked with machine parts. They walk swiftly, looking around as if on a covert operation. They hurry to Nolan's car. Nolan opens his trunk and they put parts inside.

MOOSE
(whispering loudly)
If I get fired from this, I swear
to God, Nolan.

NOLAN
You're not getting fired. We're
just borrowing a few parts.

MOOSE
You're quitting and I'm getting
fired, you're quitting and I'm
getting fired.

NOLAN
And you know what, you're gonna
thank me for it.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - ALISSA'S ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Nolan lifts his sleeping daughter Alissa from her bed, carries her into the living room, puts her on a couch, and tucks her under a blanket. He runs back in, scoops up her FLUFFY UNICORNS and throws them in the corner.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - DAWN

The sun rises behind the house.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - DAY

Alissa slowly wakes up. Paula steps into the living room.

ALISSA
Mommy? Why am I not in my room?

Paula charges into Alissa's room, sees a nest of wires and machine parts everywhere.

PAULA

Um...Nolan? Did you just remove your daughter from her bedroom?

NOLAN

I figured out how to build my game for less than \$300. Less than \$300, Paula.

Alissa enters in a long pink shirt, rubbing her eyes. Paula shoots Nolan an extremely condemning look. Nolan sees his daughter's innocent face stare at him.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Look, I, need the room. What can I get you?

ALISSA

A pony.

NOLAN

A pony??

ALISSA

A cat.

NOLAN

I'm allergic.

ALISSA

A rat.

NOLAN

Fine.

They shake on it and we hear DEAFENING STATIC SOUNDS.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - ALISSA'S ROOM - DAY

Nolan's hunched over a wire wrap board, attempting to create the sound of a rocket ship incinerating a UFO. Alissa's room -- this once sweet refuge of unicorns and rainbows -- has become a testing ground for intergalactic combat.

Alissa approaches the door holding a small GRAY RAT.

ALISSA

I named hi Chuck, Daddy. You want to say hi to Chuck?

NOLAN

Don't come in here, okay?! It's
just not very safe right now.

Paula steps into the doorway while holding a babbling Britta.
Paula speaks calmly as if continuing a previous conversation.

PAULA

...losing \$800 a month...I don't
know. 'Cause, like - the timing on
this, Nolan.

NOLAN

Just give me one hour to show you
something...one hour, okay?

"3 days later"

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Okay!! Paula! Alissa! I want to
show you something!

Paula and Alissa enter. In the center of a TV SCREEN is a tiny, bright, white ROCKET SHIP. It moves to the top of the screen, disappears, reemerges on the bottom, and continues up. Nolan looks proud. Paula and Alissa look nonplussed.

INT. CHICAGO O'HARE HILTON - DAY

"3 months later - Amusement Operators' Convention"

A SEA OF PINBALL MACHINES light up and ding across the massive convention hall. Hundreds of people play. BALLY-MIDWAY, WILLIAMS, and GOTTLIEB banners hang everywhere, claiming ownership of this multi-million dollar industry...

...but far away in the boondocks, between an arm wrestling coin-op game and one that shocks live chickens into dancing, 28-year-old Nolan stands tall, showing off the first coin-op video game known to man:

COMPUTER SPACE

It is a tall, curvy, slick yellow cabinet with a small monitor at its top displaying a rocket ship, flying saucers, and a scoring system: a precursor to Asteroids without the asteroids. Nolan grabs the attention of anyone who walks by.

NOLAN

Control a rocket ship in a space
battle against flying saucers!

A middle-aged man saunters over.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 Step right up, sir. This button
 rotates your rocket, this one
 thrusts you forward, and this one
 fires missiles at the UFO's.

The man gives it a try and gets killed quickly. He looks perplexed. He tries it again and is immediately destroyed. The man tries it one last time.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 You can see it's based on Newton's
 second law of physics...if you push
 twice as...

"Game Over."

MAN
 (stepping away)
 Interesting. I gotta...my wife's
 waiting for me. Interesting,
 though. Good luck with it.

LATER. A sweating fat man in a button-down shirt and tie stands and reads the thick COMPUTER SPACE MANUAL.

NOLAN
 The next chapter talks about the
 hyperspace option.

MAN
 Okay, well, I signed up for a
 Bally's symposium at 1, so, yeah, I
 don't think I can read all the
 instructions now.

NOLAN
 Okay. Yeah, no problem. Tell your
 co-workers. A space battle.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - DAY

A barbecue in a modest backyard. Adults hold drinks and mingle while kids chase each other. By the grill, Nolan stands next to his NEIGHBOR, a burger-flipping schlub.

NOLAN
 I know I've got something here.
 (secretly)
 Paula's been on my case since June
 to get back to work, but I'm...you
 know, I just--

NEIGHBOR

I hear you, man. Jane says if I
don't go back to work by --

JANE

Joe, you're not cooking 'em long
enough!

NEIGHBOR

(submissively)
Medium-rare. I thought I'm
doing them medium-rare.

PAULA

Nolan. This is Francine's
husband, Gerry. Gerry works
at Magnavox...says they have
engineering positions open.

MAGNAVOX EMPLOYEE

Paula says you made a computer
game. That's crazy.

NOLAN

Yeah, yeah. A space battle between
a rocket ship and flying saucers.

(at Paula, guilty)

Maybe...maybe Magnavox might be
interested in looking at it.

MAGNAVOX EMPLOYEE

Well, you know, Magnavox made a
game on a TV, too!

Nolan's face drops.

INT. BURLINGAME AIRPORT MARINA - DAY

RADIOS, PHONOGRAPHS, and TV's are all on display in a large MAGNAVOX SHOW ROOM. Nolan is overwhelmed by the massive display until he spots one little TV in the distance. The image is fuzzy, staticky.

"Burlingame Airport Marina, May 24, 1972"

Nolan storms over to it. On the screen, two vertical lines on opposite sides bat a POINT OF LIGHT back and forth. The screen goes in and out of static. Compared to what he just made, Nolan looks at this crude demonstration in disbelief.

A meek man named RALPH BAER, 50, buttoned down white shirt and tie, shows the game to an interested PASSERBY.

NOLAN

A physicist did this on an
oscilloscope like 15 years ago.

RALPH

Really? I'm not familiar.

NOLAN
You mind if I--

RALPH
Yeah yeah. Go ahead. This is the controller.

Nolan takes it and hits the POINT OF LIGHT with his paddle, opposite the man playing. He then discovers he can move the light up and down after its hit...making the paddle totally inconsequential to how the ball moves. The game doesn't adhere to any real physics, there's no scoring system, and there's no sound -- just an opportunity to move light around.

He looks at the man next to him, his mouth agape as he manipulates the light.

NOLAN
You find this fun?

GUY PLAYING MAGNAVOX GAME
My wife wants me to buy her a refrigerator I can't afford.
What's not more fun?

EXT. AMPEX PARKING LOT - DAY

A vast parking lot in the sweltering heat. It's dead quiet.

We see a frustrated Nolan inside his car, baking in the sun. He taps his finger on the cracked steering wheel. He checks his watch. Noon. Sweat drips down his temples.

A bell RINGS and glum engineers stream out of the building, shuffling to the cafeteria. Nolan sees Moose amongst them.

NOLAN
(calling out)
Moose...Al!

Moose sees Nolan, looks around nervously, walks to him.

MOOSE
What are you doing here, Nolan?

NOLAN
(unlocking door)
Shhh. Just get in, get in.

INT./EXT. ANDY CAPP'S TAVERN - AFTERNOON

A dingy dive bar. Nolan and Moose sip beers. A sliver of bright light fights its way through the cracked front door.

MOOSE

I'm not leaving Ampex, Nolan. I'm not. It's a secure job and I'm making \$1,200 a month.

NOLAN

Look, I get it, man. I get it. But goddamn it, Moose, you're 27. I mean...fuck...look at all those guys: Walt...and Sid...and and and...Larry? All of 'em -- these great engineers who've been ground down into these...these joyless unmotivated cogs, man! You want to be like that?? I don't. I want to inspire people, man. This is our time, Moose. I mean, we could get shipped out any moment...any day our numbers could be called.

MOOSE

(checking watch)

If I don't get back soon, I'm gonna get docked.

NOLAN

(rushing)

Alright alright alright.

(pause, very slowly)

A driving game.

Moose rolls his eyes.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Wait, hold on. The last one was...listen, I get it, nobody wants to read an instruction manual.

Moose gestures to the door, stands and walks.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

We put a steering wheel on this game. One dime and you get to drive a race car on a track! Oil slicks, car wrecks, I'd want to play it, wouldn't you??

Moose opens the door, steps out into the blinding light.

EXT. ANDY CAPP'S TAVERN PARKING LOT - DAY

Moose walks with Nolan back to Nolan's car. Nolan pops open his trunk, revealing a small TV monitor, several computer components, and lots of wires.

NOLAN

Listen, while I'm preselling this thing, I'd like for you to take this stuff and get started.

MOOSE

(nervously laughs)
No, I'm not doing it, Nolan. No.

Moose walks to the passenger door, opens it, gets into the car. Nolan slams the trunk and follows. They both stick to the vinyl seats in the blistering heat.

NOLAN

Moose, you're the best engineer I know, okay? I'm not doing it without you.

Moose looks down, shakes his head.

MOOSE

Even if I was to get involved... what you're describing here: the car, the track? Just to get the collision algorithm right? I wouldn't even know where to begin. Seriously. It's mind-boggling.

(looks at watch)
I gotta get back, man.

NOLAN

Alright. Fine. Here.

He quickly gets a pen and napkin, scribbles a rectangle.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
I just saw this piece-of-shit prototype Magnavox is peddling...

Inside the rectangle, he scribbles two vertical lines on opposite sides and a little dot in the middle.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
...two lines on the sides move on the y axis, square bounces back and forth. That's it. Take a week --
(off Moose shaking head)
Hold on, hold on -- do this for
(MORE)

NOLAN (CONT'D)
practice, nobody's gonna see it...
familiarize yourself with the
process, see what I dealt with on
Computer Space.

MOOSE
Too much of a time
commitment.

NOLAN
And I'm going to pay you.

MOOSE
You're going to pay me.

NOLAN
Yes. I have backers supporting us
and I will pay you for your time.

MOOSE
Backers.

NOLAN
I will...Yes. I will pay you...
Jesus Christ, Moose. You think I'm
gonna start a business without
backers??

CUT TO:

MONTAGE: Nolan emphatically showing his driving game sketches
at different banks, getting rejected: "Too much risk"..."the
economy isn't good"..."TV's in an arcade?" The sequence
spills into...

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

...two WELLS FARGO BANKERS listening to Nolan. The two men
and Nolan are all smoking pipes. Paula is present, thinks
Nolan looks ridiculous.

BANKER
Mr. Bushnell, we decided we're
going to give you a small line of
credit.

NOLAN
Really??? Oh, that's, that's...
(taking Paula's hand)
...you will not regret this, sir.
Thank you.

INT. NOLAN'S CHEVY - NIGHT

NOLAN
What do you mean you're not going
to sign the papers?

PAULA
I'm not going to sign them.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - NIGHT

Nolan follows Paula around the house. They lower their voices every time they pass the sleeping children's rooms.

NOLAN
They're not going to give us credit
if you don't sign the papers.

PAULA
We can lose our house on this,
Nolan.

PAULA (CONT'D)
We have two beautiful
children that hardly see you
as it is.

NOLAN
Paula. This is monumental.
You're not understanding this
thing.

PAULA (CONT'D)
You told me that I didn't
understand the other game, and look
what that one did.

NOLAN
That's because it was
complicated...

PAULA
We have a family now, Nolan.

NOLAN
The driving game is simpler.

PAULA
There are responsibilities...

NOLAN
It'll sell.

PAULA
And if it doesn't? What're you
gonna say to me when it doesn't
sell and we lose everything?

NOLAN
Problem is you don't see it, Paula.

PAULA
You're right, I don't see it. And
the truth is? I've never seen it,
Nolan. The whole thing is pretty
damn silly if you ask me.

Nolan looks at her, hurt, stunned. He grabs his wallet, his keys, and storms out.

PAULA (CONT'D)
Where are you going??

EXT. MOOSE'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Nolan's car screeches up to the front.

INT. MOOSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nolan knocks on Moose's apartment. Moose opens the door holding a half-eaten Ho Ho. An orange cat MEOWS.

The living room is strewn with RIBBON CABLES, CIRCUIT BOARDS, and METAL BOXES. Moose has been getting into this more than even he had imagined.

NOLAN
We're moving on!

MOOSE
(Ho Ho in his mouth)
From what?

NOLAN

MOOSE

Nolan gets a BEER from the fridge, then comes back and plops down on the couch. Moose sets up the game.

MOOSE (CONT'D)

NOLAN
(sipping beer)
...thinking we should add some kind
of foot pedal to accelerate the
car. How neat would --

Moose flicks a switch and the PING PONG game appears. The screen shows large white square numbers indicating: "0 - 0".

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Nice, Moose -- adding a scoring
 system...

Moose flips another switch. The SQUARE BALL is served.
 Moose bats it to Nolan. BOOP. Nolan bats it back. BOOP.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 ...and I like this sound you got.

Nolan misses the ball: "1 - 0"

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 (leaning forward)
 Alright, alright, I got it.

The SECOND BALL comes out. Moose hits it and uses 'English' to spin the ball in a particular direction. Nolan laughs.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 Look at you puttin' 'English' on
 the ball. We can use that when the
 car slides on the -- whoah.

The ball moves twice as fast now.

MOOSE
 Yeah, I got it to double after 4
 volleys. What do ya think?

NOLAN
 (trying to keep up)
 Shit.

Nolan misses the ball. The screen reveals "3-0".

MOOSE
 Three balls. That's it.

NOLAN
 Alright. I get it now. One more.

MOOSE
 Okay. One more.

"36 games later"

Nolan and Moose are glued to the screen, playing the game like excited little children. FIVE EMPTY BEER BOTTLES are on the table with a piece of paper revealing a score: "Nolan 11, Moose 25".

MOOSE
 Ahh!

NOLAN
 Shit!

They're playing at four times the speed. Nolan misses ball.

NOLAN
When you put English on it at that speed, I can't...

Nolan looks for his beer. Moose serves.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
No no no. I wasn't ready! You can't serve when I'm not ready!

MOOSE
I won.

NOLAN
Best out of 60. Best out of 60!

MOOSE
I'm going to sleep.

NOLAN
If we were at an amusement park, we would've spent --
(checking paper)
...at 10 cents a pop...no no...the fun I had...that wasn't 10 cents worth of fun. That was 25 cents worth of fun. 25 cents worth of fun, Moose...which means we would've spent 9 bucks. Five hours a day, 7 days a week: \$245. Guy makes his money back in four weeks. Moose, this is the game! I need you on full time. Let's get a prototype and get it out there.

MOOSE
Nolan, Nolan, you haven't even paid me for part time, how're you gonna pay me full time?

EXT. TED DABNEY'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

DING-DONG. Nolan waits by the door. He glances down and sees a pair of old lady's flip flops. Ted (Nolan's nerdy friend from Ampex) answers, getting dressed for work.

NOLAN
Ted!
TED
Nolan!
DABNEY'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Who's there?!!

DABNEY
I got it, Ma! Good to see you,
Nolan. What're ya doin' here?

INT. TED DABNEY'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Dabney writes a check on Nolan's back. Nolan leans forward.

NOLAN
Thank you, Ted. 150% interest and
a place at the company when you
want it.

EXT. ANDY CAPP'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Moose's teensy '69 TOYOTA COROLLA rolls up with a full-sized RED COIN-OP CABINET strapped to the roof. The game is nearly as big as the car. Nolan and Moose each keep an arm out their windows to steady it from rocking.

INT. ANDY CAPP'S TAVERN - NIGHT

They lug the game inside. The bar's manager, BILL GATTIS, smiles with wry amusement and points them to a spot in the corner behind a POOL TABLE and next to a PINBALL MACHINE. Nolan and Moose put the game down and stand back. Below the screen, a stencilled title: PONG. They order beers, sit at a table, and wait with bated breath.

TWO DRUNKS approach Pong like Neanderthals discovering fire.

DRUNK GUY #1
(reading off machine)
Avoid missing ball for high score.

One guy turns a knob and sees a vertical line go up and down.

DRUNK GUY #2
How does the TV station know I'm
moving this thing here?

One guy puts in a quarter and after the first ball, they figure it out.

NOLAN
(whispering to Moose,
watching)
We'll produce a few more, maybe get
an arcade route, make a few bucks.

The drunks' game ends. #1 victoriously throws up his arms.

DRUNK GUY #2
(searching his pockets)
Alright, no, now I know how to
play. Let's...I'm out of quarters.

Drunk #1 slaps his opponent on the back, walks away.

DRUNK GUY #2 (CONT'D)
Oh, no no. No no no. You're not
done. We're playin' again.
Gattis, I need change.

Gattis shakes his head. Nolan excitedly elbows Moose.

DRUNK GUY #2 (CONT'D)
Anybody got change in here?...
Change??...I need quarters!!

NOLAN
Fuck the arcade route. I'm going
to Chicago.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - BEDROOM - DAY

Nolan hurls clothes into a suitcase. Paula perches on the edge of the bed, head in her hands.

PAULA
It's got to stop, Nolan. This is
your family. We don't see you for
24 hours...and you're buying a
plane ticket??
(shaky)
We can barely afford Alissa's
school right now.

Nolan gets down on his knees to look her in the eyes.

NOLAN
I'm going, Paula. I'm going, and
I'm gonna sell this, and I'm gonna
come back and we will celebrate.

He closes his suitcase, walks to the door.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
You'll see, Paula. Trust me.

EXT. CHICAGO - DAY

The ELEVATED TRAIN in Chicago WHIZZES by on the tracks.

INT. EL TRAIN - DAY

Nolan sits excitedly on the 'El' with a smaller Pong prototype at his feet. A BUM looks it over. Nolan smiles.

EXT. BALLY-MIDWAY MANUFACTURING - DAY

Establish the massive Bally-Midway corporate compound.

INT. BALLY-MIDWAY MANUFACTURING - EXECUTIVE OFFICE - DAY

In this immense office, Nolan and a BALLY EXEC play the game on a corner of the exec's desk. Total silence except for Pong's echoing BOOPS. The exec isn't trying to play, just testing the paddle, accidentally hitting the ball once.

NOLAN

Eventually you really get the hang of it...start doing all kinds of tricks.

The exec's intercom BUZZES.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Sir, you wanted me to remind you about your son's game.

BALLY EXEC

Oh, yes. Yes, thanks.

(packing his briefcase)

Kid's an All-Star three years running, got a 310 batting average.

(stands, points to game)

Why don't you give me your card and I'll give you a call.

The exec leaves the office. Nolan follows him.

NOLAN

You know, a lot of people looking at this thing. Lot of people interested. Gottlieb. Williams.

BALLY EXEC

Don't do that. You don't think I talk to those guys? You pitched them this morning. Same problem as that Magnavox thing...nobody cared.

(aside to secretary)

Help him move that thing without messing up the oak, will ya.

He walks to the elevator. Nolan follows tentatively.

NOLAN

You really don't risk a lot if you put a few out there...and you can see for yourself. I mean really, what's the risk? I mean, can't we give it a trial run, can we try it, just to see? I really think this could be big.

BALLY EXEC

(pushes elevator button,
turns around)

Look, kids go to an arcade, they wanna see things banging into real shit. Pinball games. Kids don't have the patience to sit around watching a blip floatin' on a TV --

The elevator doors open. Exec steps inside.

BALLY EXEC (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, you ain't gonna see kids playin' "video" games.

Elevator closes.

INT. O'HARE AIRPORT - TERMINAL - DAY

Still wearing his suit, Nolan trudges through the terminal, dragging the Pong prototype behind him on a luggage carrier.

He passes a young COUPLE kissing, about to part...a little GIRL with a doll, chasing her dad...a smiling FATHER greeting his son as he gets off the plane. Nolan slows to watch. The father and son bear hug.

FATHER IN AIRPORT

So proud of you, son.

Nolan wistfully watches them through the intermittent passing of travelers.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - DAY

Nolan stands outside the door. He looks dejected, ashamed, humiliated. He rubs his face, takes a deep breath.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - DAY

Nolan enters. Paula sees him. It's clear his trip was not successful. They don't say anything to each other. There's nothing left. Nolan walks around in a daze, collects clothes and puts them in a suitcase.

Excruciating silence before Alissa comes out, sees Nolan, runs over to give him a hug.

ALISSA
Daddy's home!!!

NOLAN
(hugging her)
Hi, honey. Unfortunately, Daddy has to go again.

ALISSA
What do you mean?? You just got here!

NOLAN
Daddy's getting another place. For work. A whole 'nother place.

Paula observes the scene, her eyes well up.

ALISSA
What do you mean? You're not staying here?

NOLAN
I can't stay here right now, honey, but I'm going to see you a lot, okay? I'm going to see you on weekends and you can have me all to yourself, okay? And -- I'll, you know -- I'm gonna still be there for you, okay?

ALISSA
No, I don't want you to go. Mommy, tell Daddy that he should stay.

Paula wipes tears from her eyes and walks into the kitchen.

EXT. MOOSE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Outside Moose's apartment, Nolan sits in his parked car. He suppresses tears, rubs his eyes, spontaneously bangs his fist into the roof.

INT. MOOSE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nolan, now with 5 o'clock shadow and bed-head, sinks into the couch, dejected. Moose shares the couch with him, wearing tighty-whities and a wife-beater. They're both watching "H.R. Pufnstuf" on TV. Moose digs his hand into a box of Lucky Charms, picks out the multicolored, stiff marshmallows.

MOOSE

Just...whatever, man. You'll get a job at Lockheed. Or the phone company. You can start at a thousand a month. Just to, you know, get back on your feet. Things could be a lot worse, Nolan.

The phone RINGS.

MOOSE (CONT'D)

Hello?

INT. ANDY CAPP'S TAVERN/MOOSE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Bill Gattis speaks into a phone at the bar.

BILL GATTIS

It's Gattis. Your game's broken. Can you please just get it out of here 'cause it's causing problems.

MOOSE

Yeah. Yeah. Of course. We'll be right there.

(hanging up)

Andy Capp's. The game's broken and they want it out of there. See, Nolan? I told you things could be worse.

INT. MOOSE'S COROLLA - DAY

Moose and Nolan drive in stark silence. The sultry rhythm of Steely Dan's "Do It Again" plays over Moose's tinny car stereo, bleeds into...

INT. ANDY CAPP'S TAVERN - DAY

In SLOW-MO, Nolan and Moose stride into the dark bar. Nolan looks sweaty, burned out. Few patrons abound. Two guys play pool in the back. It's an ordinary day.

BILL GATTIS

Thanks, guys. Thing's dead. I need it outta here.

"September 17, 1972"

Nolan and Moose walk to the out-of-order machine. Blank screen. Moose sits down, unlocks the coin door to see what's wrong. He can't get it to open. He pulls, but it's jammed. He jiggles the door...YANKS harder...until...it busts open:

1,631 QUARTERS GUSH OUT. An endless waterfall.

Nolan watches as they spill onto the floor, pile over his ragged sneakers. Gattis and the pool players turn to watch.

NOLAN (V.O.)
That day: Pong was not broken. No.
It was jammed with too much money.
Each quarter -- a single, sparkling
fragment of validation.

The last quarter drops. Moose's eyes rise to meet Nolan's.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...and that was that.

EXT. ANDY CAPP'S TAVERN - DAY

Nolan charges down the sidewalk, a TRASH BAG bulging with quarters is slung over his shoulder. Moose lags behind, lugging another jingling trash bag.

MOOSE
Where are you going?!

NOLAN
We're moving ahead, man!

MOOSE
Where? Back to Bally?

NOLAN
Bally?? You kidding me? Fuck
Bally! We're makin' 'em ourselves!

MOOSE
What are you talking about?

NOLAN
You heard me. We'll make 100 a
day! We'll be bigger than Bally.

MOOSE
Yeah, right. You're not gonna go
into manufacturing. What are your
backers gonna say? 'Yeah, get a
factory!'

NOLAN
Don't freak when I tell you this,
okay, but there are no backers.

MOOSE
What do you mean no backers?

NOLAN
I got money from Dabney.

MOOSE
Dabney????!

On that, Al's bag snags a tree branch and tears open.
QUARTERS pour all over the sidewalk.

INT. NOLAN'S CHEVY - DAY

Nolan's car screeches up to a parking spot before a huge government office building. Moose looks pissed.

MOOSE
How can you ask me to quit when you
don't even have real backers?

NOLAN
'Cause I'll get the money.

INT. CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT BUILDING - DAY

Nolan and Moose wait at a public counter, two people behind them. A sign: Business Entities. Nolan fills out a form.

NOLAN
"Name of corporation". Help me
think of something...renegade.

MOOSE
What?? These are huge decisions,
Nolan, and you're just...

MOOSE (CONT'D)
...rushing through.

NOLAN
A warning to the whole world,
man, like: 'Here we are.
Brace yourself!'

They reach the front of the line. A CLERK waits.

MOOSE (CONT'D)
You know you can't just bounce back
after something like this. I mean,
if you make a move like this, you
better be sure it's a kill shot.

Nolan thinks...and then: eureka, chills. He scribbles down a name, turns the paper around for the clerk to see.

We ZOOM swiftly into it:

ATARI

EXT. STAR SKATE ROLLER RINK - MORNING

A neglected building with a slumping terra-cotta roof. A sign: "STAR SKATE". Underneath: "For Rent". Nolan's beater and a rusted Lebaron are alone in a big weed-infested lot.

INT. STAR SKATE ROLLER RINK - MORNING

A male REALTOR (50's) with a long ponytail and tight shorts that intersect his balls shows Nolan and Moose around.

Floor is caked in dust, littered with rat droppings. A disco ball hangs overhead. Nolan looks around like he's in heaven.

NOLAN
We're home, Moose.

EXT. SMALL OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Nolan and Moose approach the building.

NOLAN
What's so complicated? We need
workers, they need work.

MOOSE
I've just never heard of anyone
doing this before.

PAN UP to reveal a sign: "CALIFORNIA EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT." Nolan throws open the door, stands before a hodgepodge of middle-aged DRUG ADDICTS, HOMELESS GUYS, and BIKERS.

NOLAN
Alright! Who wants a job for \$1.75
an hour?

EXT. SANTA CLARA - STREET - DAY

Nolan's Chevy zooms by, followed by a cacophonous convoy of CHOPPERS, LOWRIDERS, and HARLEYS with raccoon tails flailing in the wind.

INT. NOLAN'S MOVING CHEVY - DAY

Nolan looks alive, looks in his rear view mirror. Moose turns his head, anxiously looking behind.

INT. STAR SKATE ROLLER RINK - DAY

It's chaos. One FAT BIKER has his motorcycle inside and spins donuts on the dusty floor. The other 18 DERELICTS stand around laughing and hooting.

Moose looks scared. Nolan looks like a kid next to these men. He lights his pipe, steps before the group, APPLAUDS the bike trick. He puts a hand in the air.

NOLAN

Okay. Gentlemen, gentlemen...
listen up. Shhh...I want you to
forget everything you've ever
learned about working for 'the
man', alright?

FAT BIKER

Yeah. 'Cause, fuck -- now we
workin' for the boy.

Fat Biker gets a laugh from the group.

NOLAN

Alright, alright --
(lifting his hand)
You know, for a man who's still
riding around with Amal carbs on
his bike, you might want to pay
attention...

Everyone laughs derisively...points to Fat biker.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Now, I don't care where you worked
before, who your friends are, if
you smell...we're all the same
here...all that matters is that
everyday we get this shit done.
Now -- over the next couple days,
Moose and I will be teaching you
how to build computer games: an
intense process that requires
serious focus and absolute
precision.

Black Sabbath's "Paranoid" fiercely rips to life as we...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STAR SKATE ROLLER RINK - DAY

A JOINT protrudes from a shaggy beard and is inhaled deeply. The joint gets passed from one greasy hand to the next.

NOLAN (V.O.)

...and so...with Black Sabbath
blasting through the roller rink
speakers, Moose and I taught these
derelicts how to make the games...

It's chaos. Amongst metal shelves, wires, TV sets, and yellow paint cans, we see 19 long-haired, tattoo-covered hoodlums attempting to stuff circuit boards. They're clueless, looking at each other's work, but nobody knows what they're doing. An uneasy Moose tries to help them. Fat biker attempts to close the YELLOW CABINET on a finished machine but it won't fit.

MOOSE

No, no! The power supply's not seated --

Fat biker WHACKS the cabinet with a MALLET. It closes.

NOLAN (V.O.)

...but with perseverance, we made 10 in the first week...

In QUICK SUCCESSION, Nolan plugs in 4 machines. None work. Finally, the 5th turns on.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The next week? 20. And with each one, bars flooded with patrons waiting their turn to play...

INT. BARS (SERIES) - NIGHT

QUICK SHOTS of various bars with groups of eager PLAYERS hovering around Pong machines.

NOLAN (V.O.)
...sometimes lining up outside before these bars even opened...

EXT. BAR - DAWN

PEOPLE wait in a line. An EMPLOYEE lifts the METAL GATE.

NOLAN (V.O.)
...and no matter how old or how young you were, everyone wanted a chance to hit that ball...

INT. PROSPECT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Before a class of opened-mouthed 5-YEAR-OLDS, Alissa stands on a step stool and plays Pong against her dad. Nolan looks and smiles at the hot TEACHER. The teacher smiles back.

NOLAN (V.O.)
Of course, on career day...I was bigger than Big Bird...

INT. BARS (SERIES) - DAY

QUICK SHOTS of BAR MANAGERS taking out the change boxes, counting quarters.

NOLAN (V.O.)

...and when bars got wind that Pongs brought in 400 bucks a week, we started selling them at \$1000 a pop...fast...

EXT. STAR SKATE ROLLER RINK - DAY

Bikers wheel PONGS onto a truck. The side of the truck which once read "Atom Furniture" has the word "Furniture" X-ed out and replaced with a spray-painted "HEART MOTHER FUCKER", a nod to the Pink Floyd album: "Atom Heart Mother."

NOLAN (V.O.)

...and even though we started shipping 400 Pongs a week, we could barely keep up with our bills or the demand...

EXT. STAR SKATE ROLLER RINK - DAY

A nervous Ted Dabney steps out of his CADILLAC DeVILLE and sees greasy men everywhere. He walks into the factory, squinting from the smell and the haze.

INT. STAR SKATE ROLLER RINK - NOLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ted sits before Nolan's desk.

NOLAN

Look, Ted -- you can cash out now at \$375, or you can have an equity stake at the company. Your choice.

Phone rings off the hook. Nolan picks up.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Atari?...Yeah, I know, I'm sorry.
You're actually next on the list.

He walks to the door. On the factory floor, we see row after row of Pong machines, and Moose marching around, frazzled.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Moose! Moose! We need more machines!

MOOSE
(storming over, not
seeing Ted)

Nolan! We got a guy in the
bathroom shooting heroin right now,
okay? The pot smoke in here is so
goddamn thick I can barely see, and
I just caught two guys in the
parking lot pawning off picture
tubes!

NOLAN
Say hi to Ted.

MOOSE
(walking out)
Ted.

TED
You know what? I think I'm just
gonna cash out here.

A frightened Ted takes his check and scurries out. The phone RINGS and RINGS.

NOLAN
Hello? Atari. Please hold.
Hello? Atari, please hold.

EXT. BARS AND OTHER LOCATIONS (SERIES)

QUICK SHOTS: PONGS BEING WHEELED INTO ALL KINDS OF PLACES.
We see shots of each location that corresponds with the V.O.

NOLAN (V.O.)
...and it wasn't just bars, either:
colleges, hotels, banks, country
clubs, doctor's offices. Places
that wouldn't even allow Pinball.

EXT. BALLY-MIDWAY MANUFACTURING - DAY

The behemoth office compound.

INT. BALLY-MIDWAY MANUFACTURING - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The Bally exec (from earlier) sits at the head of a long conference table before a dozen EMPLOYEES, all in suits. He rubs his face in great anguish, not knowing how to begin.

BALLY EXEC
5,000 units they shipped. Our
pins, on a good run? 3,000. A
good run. What the hell am I
(MORE)

BALLY EXEC (CONT'D)
 paying you guys for? I pay you to
 be on top of this shit. Hal,
 you're an engineer, make me some.

INT. STAR SKATE ROLLER RINK - NOLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Distressed, Nolan pores over a stack of unpaid bills. Moose sits at a side table working an adding machine.

NOLAN (V.O.)
 ...and right about then, I learned
 one valuable business lesson: never
ever forget to file a patent.

The phone rings. Nolan answers.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 Atari?...Wait...what??

Moose gestures for Nolan to share what's going on. Nolan listens...squints with confusion.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 ...messing with police radios? We
 don't have that many Pongs in
 Nevada.

EXT. SILVER NUGGET CASINO - DAY

Broad daylight in the desert. A small casino against the barren Nevada backdrop. Nolan's Chevy is parked in the lot.

INT. SILVER NUGGET CASINO - DAY

Amongst dozens of DINGING slot machines, amongst lifeless leathery-faced, cigarette-smoking ELDERS playing them, Nolan and Moose stand side-by-side in the darkened casino and stare at a fixed point -- stunned. Their POV reveals:

A row of machines practically identical to Pong, called PLAYTIME by Bally-Midway.

INT. STAR SKATE ROLLER RINK - NOLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

On a chalkboard, a frustrated Nolan draws up a schematic for a new game with four paddles. Moose contributes.

NOLAN (V.O.)
 And of course...because we couldn't
 compete with these jerk-offs -- we
 slapped together a 4-player version
 of the game...

INT. ARCADE - DAY

Nolan and Moose enter an arcade. They pass pinball machines and find: PRO-TENNIS: a 4-player rip-off by Williams.

NOLAN (V.O.)
...but it took the schmucks three weeks to rip that off, too.

CLOSE on Nolan and Moose, staring, seething.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
By the time we were up to 6 paddles...?

In the reverse shot, we see Nolan and Moose staring at...

INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

...one machine: PRO MATCH: Pong with 6 paddles by Fun Games.

NOLAN (V.O.)
...we were losin' market share... by the minute.

Nolan stamps on the ground. Behind he and Moose, several LAUNDROMAT DRYERS spin socks and underwear.

INT. BALLY-MIDWAY MANUFACTURING - ENGINEERING LAB - DAY

The Bally engineer from the staff meeting tinkers inside a dismantled Pong machine. He gives a gentle tug, removes a CIRCUIT BOARD, holds it up to the light.

NOLAN (V.O.)
In the end...

QUICK SHOT: Exact duplicates of the Pong circuit board zip down a conveyor belt. They're packed into BOXES.

INT. RIP-OFF FACTORIES (SERIES) - DAY

In work spaces ranging from a high tech BALLY-MIDWAY FACTORY to a warehouse CHOP SHOP, WORKERS build game cabinets. In each location we see boxes of the duplicate circuit boards.

NOLAN (V.O.)
...41 freakin' companies made 41 freakin' rip-offs.

FAST SHOTS of several PONG RIP-OFFS in different environments: GYRO-PONG, ELEPONG, PADDLE BATTLE, PONG-TRON...

INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

As if reacting to this dizzying sequence, Nolan and Moose look exhausted, slumped on plastic chairs in the middle of the laundromat, both staring at the spinning laundry.

NOLAN (V.O.)

Isaac Newton once said: a body in motion maintains its direction until a bunch a' assholes get in the way.

Nolan spontaneously stands and leaves.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Nolan reclines in the front seat of his car with his door open and his eyes closed. Moose slowly paces in front of the strip mall, kicking pebbles, not wanting to go near Nolan.

NOLAN

...whole new direction. New technology. Stuff they can't just copy with off-the-shelf parts...
(lifts head slightly)
Custom chips.

MOOSE

Custom?

NOLAN

We keep it in-house.

MOOSE

Nolan -- we don't know how to design semiconductor chips...

NOLAN

So we hire new guys, new engineers who do know.

Moose rubs his mouth, thinking. He paces again, faster now.

MOOSE

Stanford has a program...guys comin' out of there know semiconductors.

NOLAN

Stanford. The best of the best.

MOOSE

Berkeley's pushin' thick film arrays, so those guys would be...

NOLAN

I want guys who can melt steel with
their minds. And not just, you
know, smart. We need guys who are
up for the fight, you hearin' me?

MOOSE

I'm hearin' you, man.

NOLAN

Tough sons of bitches we want in
our foxhole. Hard core --

MOOSE

Soldiers!

NOLAN

Soldiers!

INT. ANDY CAPP'S TAVERN - DAY

Six frail, trembling DORKS in their mid-20's are squeezed into a booth with Nolan and Moose. Nolan stares at these guys, turns to Moose, then turns back to the guys. Amongst the group is a scared guy with his eyes bugging out like a chihuahua, a few runny noses, a guy with an Abraham Lincoln beard, a thin dude with big puffy hair like a Q-Tip.

NOLAN

Fellas? You've been handpicked as
members of an elite team. The
journey ahead will be
exhilarating...but I ain't gonna
sugarcoat it...it's gonna be a
bitch. The competition will be
fierce. The work's gonna get out
of control. But I make you this
promise: we stick together here,
and we're gonna create stuff
that'll blur the line between 'the
possible' and 'the impossible'.
You guys ready for that? You guys
ready to work harder than you've
ever worked in your entire lives??

EXT. PAJARO DUNES CONDO - NIGHT

The scared new recruits sit in a bubbling hot tub, book-ended by two topless STRIPPERS.

"Atari Company Retreat, Pajaro Dunes Resort"

The engineers sit as low as possible, not knowing where to look. Chihuahua Guy stares directly at the breasts. Nolan and Moose sit across from them.

NOLAN

Just let the ideas flow, guys.
Don't filter anything. It's all
compost, you know? The door is
wide open...Moose.

MOOSE

The driving game. I can do it now.
Car and track on discreet ROM
chips. Thinkin' we use Pong's
potentiometer config, mount a
steering wheel on that sucker.

NOLAN

Awesome. Anyone else? Anyone?

He sees Chihuahua Guy totally mesmerized by the boobs.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

(politely)

Um, girls...do you mind heading
back into the condo and we'll meet
you back there?

The strippers stand to leave, their slippery asses right at the new guys' eye level. Half the guys practically sprain their eyeballs trying not to look.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

We've all got to regress a bit --
back to when we were kids, before
we learned that the pursuit of fun
was something to be ashamed of. We
give people what they want, not
what they need. We do that, and
mark my words, fellas, very soon
Atari will be synonymous with the
future of video games.

INT. CHICAGO O'HARE HILTON - DAY

In this crowded convention hall, Nolan, Moose, and the new posse stare at a sign: "3:30PM -- THE FUTURE OF VIDEO GAMES." Beneath, the list of speakers includes representatives from Bally-Midway, Williams, Taito, Ramtek, and Sega. No Atari.

*"Amusement Operators Convention, Chicago O'Hare Hilton,
November 1973"*

Embarrassed and infuriated, Nolan subtly turns to Moose, whispers harshly for only Moose to hear.

NOLAN

Are you kidding??

NOLAN

Are you fucking kidding??

MOOSE

That's wrong. No.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

(whispering harshly)

We invented this goddamn industry.
Future of video games?! We started
it. These guys weren't -- Bally?
Bally?? They were -- no. No.

INT. CHICAGO O'HARE HILTON - BALLROOM - DAY

A CROWD of 400 attend the symposium. Nolan and the others sit in back. Nolan's leg shakes with suppressed rage.

On the dais, EXECS from the six companies, men in their 40s and 50s, ramble on in a breezy, self-satisfied manner. The Bally exec from before is on the stage.

BALLY EXEC

Of course it came as no surprise.
It was just a matter of the
technology catching up and, as
always, who got to market first.

MODERATOR

Okay, we have time for one more...

Nolan's hand flies up, along with many others. The MODERATOR looks like he's might pick someone up front. Nolan jumps up.

MOOSE

Nolan.

Nolan charges into the aisle, marches to the MICROPHONE with his hand in the air.

NOLAN

Yeah, hi, I have something.

The room quiets. As Nolan nears the dais, the Bally exec gets a better look.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Hi. How are you?

The Bally exec forces a tense smile, and nods. Friendly.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

It's really, it's a privilege to
sit here and listen to you all
predict the future of video games.

(clapping earnestly)

Thanks for sharing your knowledge.

Back at his seat, Moose watches through his fingers.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

I know that, um...every time we
design a new game at Atari, you
guys have a remarkable ability to
predict your next game.

A MUMBLE rolls through the crowd -- "Atari?"..."Bushnell?"

NOLAN (CONT'D)

So, while imitation is the
sincerest form of flattery, your
rip-offs, um -- suck...

(turns to face crowd,
engaging them fully)

And my fellow gamers? Every
quarter you give these assholes up
here...

Laughter through the audience. Onstage, the execs'
expressions range from straight anger to mock amusement.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

...you're keeping Atari from making
new games that you're gonna really
love that actually represent the
future of video games!!!

Nolan ends the speech with a pumped fist in the air. The
crowd loves it, bursts into raucous APPLAUSE. Moose stands
up, cheers even louder. In a second, everyone's on their
feet. People rush up to shake Nolan's hand. He loves it.

EXT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

NOLAN (V.O.)

After that...nothing was the same
again.

The Who's "Long Live Rock" kicks in with a vengeance.
For the first time, we see the classic ATARI "MT. FUJI" LOGO
soaring on a sign above a NEW FACTORY.

"New Atari Factory, Los Gatos, California, 1975"

INT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

Nolan walks with a hip stride through the new Atari factory while puffing his pipe. He wears a pimped-out long-sleeved checkered shirt with a wide collar and walks past a HUNDRED EMPLOYEES tending to GRAN TRAK 10 machines (the driving game) moving swiftly down an assembly line.

NOLAN (V.O.)

Anything that didn't make sense to us was out. Anything that did... was in. Assigned parking spots...?

Fat Biker, who has now upgraded to a thunderous HARLEY, rolls up to an empty parking spot close to the building.

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

...out. Time clocks...?

Surrounded by his engineers, Nolan drops a TIME CLOCK off the factory's rooftop. On the ground, the engineer with the Abraham Lincoln beard films the crash with a Super 8 camera.

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

...out. Dress codes...?

THREE HOT GIRLS in BIKINI TOPS and DAISY DUKES walk past Nolan on the factory floor.

THREE HOT GIRLS

(flirtatiously)

Hi Nolan.

He smiles at them, then turns back to look at six supple ASS CHEEKS leaking out from their short-shorts.

NOLAN (V.O.)

...in. 'The Atarian Philosophy'.

Seated on the assembly line, a HIPPIE GUY deeply massages the neck of a cute HIPPIE GIRL next to him. She rolls her head in ecstasy with a joint hanging out of her mouth.

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

The dawning of a new era... 'Work' for execution... but 'leisure' man.. 'leisure' for perspective...

EXT. VASONA PARK - DAY

An ELECTRIC CHORD crackles through an amp on a grassy field. A young BLACK ASSEMBLY WORKER with a headband and shades sits on a folding chair and plays his ELECTRIC GUITAR to several employees sitting on blankets, drinking, playing frisbee.

NOLAN (V.O.)
 And everybody got into it. From
 the line workers to the engineers.
 We were all inspired, and for seven
 days a week...

Nolan and his engineers sit on a picnic table, looking at a SCHEMATIC of a new game. They drink beers, discussing it.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...we worked when we played...and
 we played when we worked...

INT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - NOLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

His feet up, Nolan sits back in a big chair, lights his pipe and puffs. The office is filled with CARNIVAL PARAPHERNALIA and VIDEO GAMES. Moose draws a SCHEMATIC on a CHALKBOARD while a couple engineers play GRAN TRAK 20, each one with their own steering wheel and gearshift.

NOLAN (V.O.)
 ...We had no idea what we were
 doing. We had no reserve,
 everything on credit...one mistake
 and we were done. If things got
 too tight, Moose and I didn't cash
 our paychecks that week...

Nolan sifts through the mail and finds his PAYCHECK. He opens a drawer and throws it atop a stack of other PAYCHECKS.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...If we couldn't pay the vendors,
 we begged for more time.

INT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - LOBBY - DAY

A BUSTY RECEPTIONIST answers the phone non-stop, pressing one BLINKING LIGHT after another.

NOLAN
 Atari was small, but we squeaked
 by, and to keep up, we came out
 with a new game every month...

INT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

TANK machines speed down the line...then other video games:
 SHARK JAWS, QWAK!, TOUCH ME, HI-WAY...

NOLAN (V.O.)
 ...400 machines a day. 2,000
 machines a week. Nobody saw these
 (MORE)

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
numbers coming..and for a little
start-up like ours, it was...
(pause)
...well...it was pretty damn neat.

Van McCoy's classic "The Hustle" begins, plays into...

INT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - NOLAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A RED SIREN LIGHT swirls on the desk as Nolan (barefoot, checkered pants, and a half-tucked-in, half-unbuttoned shirt) attempts "The Hustle" line-dance amidst five drunk, half-naked employees: three girls and two guys. Nolan watches their feet and tries to stay in step. People enter the room and walk past him, lining up to pump beer from a KEG.

NOLAN (V.O.)
Eventually...

EXT. HEWLETT PACKARD COMPOUND - MORNING

In a parking lot, balding old conservatively-dressed HEWLETT PACKARD GUYS with their COFFEE MUGS and BRIEFCASES walk like zombies to the front of their building.

NOLAN (V.O.)
...we were makin' cracks in the
Silicon Valley foundation like the
biggest goddamn earthquake these
poor bastards had ever seen.

In SLOW-MO, the lifeless men turn their heads in unison to the noise across the street. Their POV reveals...

EXT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - MORNING

A cluster of excited young guys and girls stumbling out of the impromptu discotheque, shielding their eyes from the morning light. Nolan exits last, his arms around TWO CUTE GIRLS, the three of them parading euphorically to the CAMERA.

NOLAN (V.O.)
Soon enough, "The Valley" started
payin' attention.

CHEESY VIDEO GRAPHICS revealing the local TV show: "People are Talking in the Afternoon." A CAMERA SWEEPS past a STUDIO AUDIENCE of robotically-clapping, grinning women with big hair and gaudy 70's-colored clothing.

The IMAGE WIPES to a stage where Nolan sits before the audience, interviewed by an eager 60-YEAR-OLD WOMAN and a tall effeminate MALE CO-HOST with an enormous Adam's apple.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
I would stay in my room and invent
things. Of course, that was before
I discovered girls.

The audience laughs like they're being tickle-tortured.

NOLAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Atari was everything to me. It was
my home. It was my job. It was my
family.

INT. NOLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Nolan's in his office, on the phone. He looks at a CALENDAR with a WEEKEND circled and "Alissa & Britta" written inside.

NOLAN
(in tone as if talking
to a little child)
I promise, okay, Pumpkin? I'm not
gonna forget this time. Okay?...
Alright, I love you, too, honey.

He hangs up. Nolan's hot SECRETARY stands in the doorway.

NOLAN'S SECRETARY
Nolan -- you have the Oui interview
this weekend.

NOLAN
I don't even know what that is.
Let's cancel.

NOLAN'S SECRETARY
Oui is Playboy. They wanted to
interview you this weekend at the
mansion for a 9-page spread.

Turning pale, Nolan stares at his secretary. He
painstakingly picks up the phone and dials.

NOLAN
(into phone, guiltily)
Paula? I think I might have
to...no no...of course I'm not...
can-cel-ling...
(to himself)
Shhhit.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE IN SANTA CLARA - DAY

Nolan's new BLUE DATSUN 240Z drives up to his old house.
Alissa and Britta sit on the doorstep. Nolan, dressed in the

plaid bell-bottoms and black turtleneck (from opening scene), exits and hurries to them to get their bags. He sees Alissa holding CHUCK'S CAGE.

NOLAN
Wait, honey, you're bringing Chuck?

ALISSA
Well I thought you wanted to spend time with him.

Nolan looks at her innocent, hopeful face.

NOLAN
Yeah, yeah. Good idea. Bring him.

INT. NOLAN'S MOVING DATSUN 240Z - DAY

Alissa sits up front with the CAGE on her lap. Britta sits on a PILLOW between the seats...a tight squeeze.

NOLAN
We're going to, um...well...it's kind of like a...like a funhouse!

INT. PLAYBOY MANSION - DAY

Poolside. Oiled-up abs and tight asses abound. Nolan's interview with Bob Wieder winds down. In the b.g., a PHOTOGRAPHER preps for a photo shoot.

Alissa and Britta are in their seats across the pool. Britta's calm now, drinking from a tall glass of chocolate milk. Alissa's still uneasy, her arms wound tight atop Chuck's cage. The Latina housekeeper sits with them.

BOB WIEDER
(finishing the notes
from Nolan's interview)
...a fucking inspiration...you know
that, man? Some great stuff here.

NOLAN
(gestures to daughters)
Great, well, I'm gonna...

Nolan walks over to the girls.

ALISSA
Daddy, can we go?

NOLAN
Soon, honey. Probably.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)
Ready for you, Nolan.

NOLAN
 (to housekeeper)
 Would you mind watching them for a
 little...

LATER. In the lush garden, Nolan awkwardly poses for photos with an AMMUNITION BELT loaded with QUARTERS instead of BULLETS across his chest. A female ASSISTANT stands by with a bucket of QUARTERS. Nolan puts out his hands and she puts MOUNDS OF QUARTERS in his palms, then scurries away.

PHOTOGRAPHER
 (snapping photos)
 C'mon! You're a fucking outlaw!

Nolan smiles eagerly as quarters fall between the cracks of his fingers. The camera SNAPS several photos in succession.

EXT. PLAYBOY MANSION - NIGHT

A few dozen WEALTHY-LOOKING MIDDLE-AGED MEN drink martinis and ogle PLAYMATES who walk around in sexy evening wear. The men, a few with PERMS, huddle around Nolan with questions about the video game industry. Nolan looks uncomfortable in this environment. He steals a moment to check his watch.

Bob Wieder approaches Nolan.

NOLAN
 (quietly)
 Bob, I think I have to go here.

BOB WIEDER
 Hold on, hold on. One more guy.

NOLAN
 Actually--

Wieder brings over MANNY GERARD, 45, a no-nonsense New York businessman, short, horn-rimmed glasses.

BOB WIEDER
 Nolan. This is Manny Gerard -- VP
 of Warner's Entertainment Division.

NOLAN
 (shaking hands)
 How's it going?

MANNY
 Mr. Ross took his kids to
 Disneyland and they got hooked on
 your driving game. Piqued his
 interest...video games. Whole new
 (MORE)

MANNY (CONT'D)
 frontier, right?
 (picking an hors d'oeuvre
 from a passing tray)
 What kinds of new projects you
 workin' on?

A PLAYMATE walks by, leading a CREEPY RICH MAN by his hand.

NOLAN
 Well, we're, um -- we're putting
 Pong on a chip about the size of a
 watch and we're gonna introduce it
 for the home.

MANNY
 You did that before, no?

An awkward pause. Nolan looks almost taken aback.

NOLAN
 Well this is for the home. And
 it's on a microchip.

MANNY
 Ahh. Go back to the well, suck it
 dry. Why not, right?
 (hands card to Nolan)
 We should talk some time. Who
 knows? Warner and Atari. Your
 brain and our resources -- see what
 kind of damage we could do.

INT. PLAYBOY MANSION - NIGHT

Nolan quickly enters the house. He walks down a hallway, passes a RICH GUY and a PLAYMATE talking closely, his hands on her hips. Nolan enters the KITCHEN, finds a SERVER.

NOLAN
 Hi. The woman who was out there
 today, wearing a, uh, like a
 uniform. Where do I find her?

SERVER
 Marisol? She's gone for the day.

NOLAN
 When did she leave?

QUICK SHOTS: Nolan paces swiftly through a series of empty rooms, his concern intensifying with each one. He approaches a room where a few middle-aged men sit on a couch, drinking champagne, watching a BLONDE do a striptease.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Have you guys seen two little kids,
they're, uh, 7 and...4?

MAN WATCHING STRIPEASE
(laughing)
You brought your kids here?

Nolan's in the KITCHEN again, sweating. He speaks to a CHEF.

NOLAN
She was supposed to be watching my
kids and I don't -- I need to call
her. I need her number.

QUICK SHOTS: Panicked, Nolan knocks on door after door.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
I'm looking for my daughters.

He knocks on a door and opens it. It's dark inside. A SCREENING ROOM. Disney's "Peter Pan" is projected onto the screen. In the half-light, he can make out Alissa and Britta sitting next to a lingerie-wearing, fake-breasted Playboy Bunny. Britta's asleep. Nolan's visibly relieved.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
(to Alissa)
C'mon, sweetie. We have to go.
(to Playboy Bunny)
Thank you.

Nolan picks up his sleeping daughter, takes Alissa's hand.

INT. CHATEAU MARMONT - NIGHT

Nolan tucks Alissa in. Britta is fast asleep next to her with her thumb in her mouth. Nolan runs his fingers through Alissa's hair, brushing her hair away from her eyes.

NOLAN
I'm sorry. I promise I'll make it
up to you. Okay?

ALISSA
Don't worry. I know. You're a
very important person and you're
doing very important things.

She makes Nolan smile. He kisses the top of her head.

INT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

A large stack of OUI MAGAZINES slam down. On the cover is a half-nude model wearing a nurse uniform. Employees' hands enter the frame and grab them one at a time.

EXT. LOS GATOS FERN BAR - NIGHT

Establish strip mall tavern "KHARTOUM" and a banner indicating "Grand Opening".

INT. LOS GATOS FERN BAR - NIGHT

The place is jam-packed with ATARI EMPLOYEES. Amongst the crowd, we see a DOZEN OUI MAGAZINES being read. Several engineers, line workers, and groupies excitedly read from the 9-page feature, comparing Bushnell to "*Disney and Hefner*"... calling him "*Lawrence of Los Gatos*"...and "*young enough to evolve into a Howard Johnson, sowing the land with uniformity like a demented Johnny Appleseed*."

Nolan is at the center of it all, drinking and laughing with employees who razz him about the article. GIRLS hang all over him; some pull him by the hand to the bar so they can order more drinks.

NANCY NINO (23), a beautiful young server, tries to keep up. She's overwhelmed but puts on a placating smile. She tells a COUPLE GIRLS the cost of their drinks and they respond with a chorus of: "*Put it on Nolan's tab!*" Nolan spots Nancy looking a little frazzled and leans over to talk to her.

NOLAN

Sorry, sorry. How much?

NANCY

(indicating other girls)

They said you're covering them,
too.

NOLAN

Well, anybody that says I'm paying,
just charge it to me. That's fine.

Nancy takes his card, smiles politely, and keeps moving.

LATER. Nolan keeps looking at Nancy from afar. He can't keep his eyes off her. Something about her: the self-assuredness, the lightness, the fun rapport she has with the customers. He slowly blocks out the sounds as he starts to casually approach her through the crowd.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
I'm Nolan. I didn't get your name before.

NANCY
Nancy. Hi. Nice to meet you.

NOLAN
(laughing nervously)
We're partying now 'cause we just got into our first national magazine, so...

NANCY
Yeah. I've been hearing about it.

NOLAN
9 page feature...thought I'd get the whole company to celebrate at the...at the "new pub."

NANCY
That's cool. Congratulations.

Nolan opens the Oui magazine and awkwardly gestures to himself posing below the title: "A Fistful of Quarters."

NOLAN
(nervously laughing)
You get a chance to see this thing...or...

NANCY
(smiling, embarrassed)
Well -- let's just say I'm probably not -- you know -- a fan of magazines like that. But that's, you know, I completely respect that this is a big deal for you guys.

NOLAN
Uh oh, do I sense a women's libber?

NANCY
(keeping it jovial)
Ummmm...probably best not to go there.

NOLAN
The pictures in here offend you?

She looks at some of her checks, asks the BARTENDER for a particular drink. She places finished DRINKS on her tray and moves through the crowd, serving them all. Nolan follows.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

'Cause, you know, there happens to be a lot of quality journalism in this. There's an interview with Francois Truffaut in here, there's--

Her hands free now, she turns, immediately takes the magazine from him and deliberately starts thumbing through it to get to a specific section she saw before, stopping on a particular page that shows a provocative SCULPTOR'S WORKS.

NANCY

A naked woman in bondage on all fours with a glass tabletop on her back...called 'Table Sculpture.'

NOLAN

Satire. Ironic commentary on what offends people.

NANCY

Women in bondage depicted as furniture. I'm sure a lot of guys are buying this to research their thesis papers.

NOLAN

C'mon, I don't control what's in this magazine.

NANCY

(smiling, pointing)

No, no, no! You can't -- no...you can't disavow the magazine's content when you're on 9 pages of it. Let's just...congratulations on being in...

(turns to see cover)

"OUI" magazine. Now I have to go and serve the rest of your harem, okay?

She smiles at him, walks off. Nolan stands there in absolute awe, watching her slink away into the crowd, almost frozen by this ridiculously cute, personable, intelligent woman.

EXT. LOS GATOS FERN BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

A cluster of Atarians exit the bar at the same time. Nolan steps out with a BLONDE BIMBO and a BRUNETTE BIMBO on his arms. Once he gets to his car with the women, he sees Nancy walking over to the DUMPSTER to take out the trash.

Nolan opens the car for the girls. They squeeze inside and giggle. One girl pulls down the visor and applies LIPSTICK.

NOLAN
I'll be right back, okay?

Humbly, Nolan walks over to Nancy.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
What would you say if -- in a professional manner -- I offered you a job at my company...like a secretarial position or something, and I give everyone stock options, which you know, might be worth something some--

Nolan's car HONKS for a long duration in the background. Nolan turns to look. GIGGLES echo through the lot. Embarrassed, Nolan gestures a 'one second' with his finger. Nancy tries to hide her annoyance.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Sorry. I'm just saying that maybe you can make more in a week with me than what you might make in a month at a dive like this.

NANCY
Wow. You are just a very confident guy, aren't you?

Nolan looks at her, smiles nervously, imperceptibly shakes his head 'no'.

NANCY (CONT'D)
My father owns this dive, and I happen to like working with him.

NOLAN
(stammering)
....said it with 'affection'...I frequent bars like this. I --

NANCY
Where does your arrogance come from? You make Pong...and it got you into a magazine that boys masturbate to.

Nolan nods, embarrassed. Nancy shuts the dumpster.

NANCY (CONT'D)
It's not like you're changing the
world here...

She offers him a pathetic smile and walks back inside.

INT. NOLAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The living room of this modest 2-bedroom apartment is teeming with ATARI EMPLOYEES drinking and talking over Pink Floyd's "Welcome to the Machine", blaring from a HI-FI SYSTEM. Fat Biker flips through Nolan's CASSETTE COLLECTION.

A depressed-looking Nolan sits low on a couch watching TWO GUYS on his floor play HOME PONG on his TV. With a BOTTLE OF WHISKEY on his lap, he sits between Brunette Bimbo and Blonde Bimbo, both gossiping about inane shit back and forth.

Nolan stares at the TV and the FAMILIAR WHITE BLIP as it drifts monotonously back and forth. In his mind, the OLD BOOPS echo louder than the party noises. Nolan snaps out of his daze, takes a swig of whiskey, and gets up. He gestures to the girls that he'll be back, walks down his hall, sees...

A COUPLE OF THE NERDY ENGINEERS clustered in his bathroom, getting instructions on how to snort COCAINE from a YOUNG SLICK GUY with an open shirt and a medallion.

INT. NOLAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nolan drops onto his WATERBED, his body undulating from the waves. It's quiet here, only the muffled sound of MUSIC and VOICES from behind the closed door. He shuts his eyes.

DELMA (O.S.)
He's working on nonsense. Nolan --
go to work with your father.

He turns his head, opens his eyes. He daydreams his parents in the shadows of his room.

DELMA (CONT'D)
...You're not well, Clarence. You
need his help.

CLARENCE
He is helping me...doing somethin'
he loves...boy's gonna change the
goddamn world!

Nolan stares back up at the ceiling, then closes his eyes with frustration. After a beat, Nolan pops up, storms out.

INT. NOLAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

ANGLE ON MOOSE standing by the door, looking at ATARI'S RECEPTIONIST sitting by the pool, alone, smoking a cigarette. Moose swigs his Stoli, puts down the glass, and takes a step.

NOLAN

Moose. What are we accomplishing here?

MOOSE

Ah shit. This again?

Moose looks over at the receptionist, sees another guy approach her and sit with her. Moose looks annoyed.

NOLAN

Just tell me what we're doing...

MOOSE

A lot...almost too much...

NOLAN

Nothing.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

We have some of the greatest minds ever assembled.

MOOSE

Nolan, Nolan, I'm driving a car that's got two working gears: first and reverse. I'm the vice president of Atari and I can only go slowly or backwards. I would like to make some money for a change, wouldn't you?

NOLAN

Of course! Problem is...

MOOSE

We keep spreading ourselves too thin...that's the problem.

NOLAN

No no no, problem is we're too complacent, man. We've got a microprocessor that's running in people's homes...

MOOSE

NOLAN (CONT'D) ...and we're using it for...Pong??

You'll spend us to death, Nolan.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 You know what, man? The real problem? The real problem is you're afraid of risk. That's always been your problem.

MOOSE
 Right, right, that's why I followed you when I was making \$1,500...!
 (shifting gears)
 ...you know what?? Fuck you, Nolan.

He puts up his arms in a gesture of resignation, and he walks to the parking lot.

NOLAN
 (calling out)
 How much of this Pong shit are we gonna shove down people's throats?! Home Pong?? It's like a...like a goddamn hi-fi that only plays one song. It's 1976, man. People want variety.

He starts pacing around by the pool, rubs his face in frustration, kicks a chair.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 Fuck!

He plops on a lounge chair by the pool, gazes into his apartment across the water, and sees a YOUNG GUY approach the cassette deck. The guy ejects the tape and puts in a Led Zeppelin tape. Fat Biker gets pissed: "What are you doing?" "People want to hear Zeppelin, man." GIRLS walk over: "Put on some Eagles." ANOTHER GUY: "Eagles suck. Let's get some Dead going on here."

From afar, Nolan watches several Atarians fight over the next cassette. In familiar Nolan fashion, thoughts slowly envelop his mind. We SLOWLY MOVE IN on his face. He sits in stillness, his eyes darting back and forth until one single thought stops him. He turns.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 Moose!
 (getting up, running)
 Moose!!!

He gets up, runs past the pool, past several apartments and into the parking lot.

EXT. NOLAN'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Nolan stops a red-faced Moose as he slowly reverses out of a parking spot, his tires crunching the gravel below.

MOOSE

(through opened window,
while slowly reversing)

No, man. I'm tired of this whole
thing. I'm tired of you trying to--

NOLAN

A console...

MOOSE

...I'm going home.

NOLAN

An external ROM slot...

The car slows to a stop. Moose looks annoyed, inconvenienced.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

ROMs on cartridges that people have
to buy -- separately. A consumer
computer that plays games...
hundreds of 'em!

An expressionless Moose stares at Nolan through the opened window. After a few beats, Moose's car slowly pulls forward, the tires crunching the gravel again. He parks. Moose gets out, slams the door behind him, lowers his head in anguish and puts his thumb and forefinger on his temples as if suffering from a serious migraine. Agonizingly long pause.

MOOSE

(squinting, head down)

...like an MOS-6502 chip...go 8-
bit...?

NOLAN

(blossoming smile)

Admit it, man. Right? Admit it.
This is...c'mon...

Nolan moves over to Moose and tries to bear-hug him but Moose fights him off.

MOOSE

No. No. I don't have to admit
anything 'cause you don't have a
clue how much something like that
would cost. You don't have a clue.

NOLAN
We'll get the money. We'll get it.

MOOSE
See? You don't know, do you??
Nolan, you have no idea what you're
doing. This isn't like piddly
shit money, man. This is a lot of
money. A lot of money.

Nolan thinks, looks Moose straight in the eyes.

INT. NEW YORK YACHT CLUB - GRILL ROOM - NIGHT

"New York Yacht Club, September 7, 1976"

Like two ignored children at a family dinner, Nolan and Moose sit wedged in between a dozen older WARNER COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVES in the dining room of this old money gentlemen's club. Next to Nolan sits Manny Gerard (from the Playboy party).

Nolan, wearing the leisure suit from his Pong-pitching days, and Moose, stuffed into a threadbare 3-piece suit that might have fit him 10 years and 30 pounds ago, quietly chew their steaks and listen to the execs talk POLITICS.

MANNY

WARNER EXEC #1
...gonna bring some of that California weather with you.

Nolan smiles politely, chews his steak. The political discussion carries on.

MOOSE
(sotto voce, to Nolan)
Do these people even know why we're here?

NOLAN
I thought I was pretty clear.

INT. NEW YORK YACHT CLUB - TAP ROOM - NIGHT

Nolan speaks privately with Manny Gerard in a corner of this wood-paneled lounge. A JAZZ BAND plays in the background.

The Warner execs sit in green leather chairs, drinking and talking. Moose is amongst them, looking bored.

MANNY
Entertainment, kid. The only...
(catching waitress)
Can I get a Chardonnay, doll?

Nolan pulls out his pipe and packs it with tobacco.

MANNY (CONT'D)
(lighting cigarette)
...the only industry unscathed by
the Great Depression. You know
that? Recession-proof. Nothing
will ever get in the way of people
wantin' their fun.

NOLAN
Well...to push the boundaries --
having more resources could
certainly...you know...be helpful.

MANNY
Helpful? Monumental.

NOLAN
'Cause I have a lot more projects I
want to explore, brand new
technologies, new gadgets...

MANNY
Listen -- I'm gonna be honest with
you. We think this cassette game
is gonna be big. We looked at the
numbers and we're prepared to join
forces with you. We're offering 25
million in cash and debentures.

Nolan casually lights his pipe, takes a few puffs. Manny is surprised by Nolan's lack of excitement.

MANNY (CONT'D)
Now -- this comes directly from
Ross, it's not our first offer:
it's our only offer. So, that's...

NOLAN
Let me...discuss with my associate.

MANNY
'Cause 25 mil, in this economy?

Nolan nods, casually walks over to Moose, puffing a little more than he needs to. He gestures for Moose to step away. They huddle next to the fireplace. The execs eye them.

NOLAN

(sotto voce)

Okay. Um. Do not -- just -- don't react when I tell you what I'm about to tell you. Okay? They offered 25 million in cash and debentures. Just frown, alright?

MOOSE

(not moving face)

Ho-ly shit. Nolan. Ho-ly. Shit.

NOLAN

(barely moving mouth)

Can you picture the guys when they hear what their options are gonna be worth?

MOOSE

What are debentures?

NOLAN

No fucking clue. But I think I can get him to 27.

MOOSE

Are you...? No. Don't fuck around here. You don't know business.

NOLAN

You're right. I don't.

(beat)

I know games.

Nolan saunters back to Manny.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

I discussed with my associate.

We're passing.

Manny stares at Nolan for a beat, checking in.

MANNY

Okay. I think you're making a mistake, but...good luck.

Nolan walks back to Moose, subtly shakes his head. Moose dips his head in exasperation.

MANNY (CONT'D)
Nolan!

Nolan winks at Moose.

MANNY (CONT'D)
(walks over, quietly)
Who are you talking to? Is it
Disney?

NOLAN
I can't really...

MANNY
We'll give you 28.

NOLAN
(puts out hand)
Deal.

They shake. We hear the sound of a PLANE LANDING.

INT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

Camera TRACKS into Nolan and Moose entering the busy factory.

NOLAN
(over the noise)
Listen up, folks! We have an
announcement to make!
(factory quiets)
Has anyone read the news this
morning?
(not a peep)
Okay -- well we just merged with
Warner Communications -- which
means those stock options everyone
thought were bullshit...? Well,
they're no longer bullshit...
(workers still confused)
...which means we're taking the day
off to drink beer!

The FACTORY WORKERS CHEER as DELIVERY GUYS march in with BEER KEGS and Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music" blasts through the factory's speakers. The music bleeds into...

EXT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

Nolan exiting the building and rushing toward the nearby STRIP MALL with the familiar fern bar. He carries a WALL STREET JOURNAL under his arm.

INT. LOS GATOS FERN BAR - DAY

He enters the bar and eagerly scans the lunch crowd.

Nancy watches him search the room. She averts her eyes, trying to avoid his. When she glances up, his eyes catch hers. He waves. She smiles weakly and waves back.

Nolan saunters to the bar counter. Nancy avoids him until she has to fill a glass at the beer tap next to him.

NANCY
(without eye contact)
What's up, Pong Guy?

NOLAN
Crazy stuff goin' on. You see this in the, uh...in the Wall Street Journal? Not a lot of teen boys masturbatin' to this one.

He puts the newspaper on the bar. She looks at it. Headline reads: "WARNER TO BUY ATARI" with a PICTURE OF NOLAN.

NANCY
(sincere)
Wow. Look at you. That's big time, huh?

NOLAN
Well, you know, it's an opportunity to do things I've always wanted to do...and eventually, you know, make an impact--

NANCY
That's cool. That's cool. Did you, um, want a drink, or...?

NOLAN
Um...yeah, yeah. Uhhh...Lowenbrau?
(beat)
...chance to inspire people is, y'know, what's it's all about, right?

Nancy nods diplomatically while pouring Nolan's beer.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
What I really hope people take away from...when they look at my, what I've done, is that this kind of success is possible, you know, if you follow--

Nancy places the beer mug on NOLAN'S HEAD IN THE PICTURE. He quickly picks up the mug.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
What're you doing?

NANCY
Well, I just figured your head's so big, I could use it as a coaster.

She pats his hand and walks away to serve other customers. He follows, passing NANCY'S FATHER, the bar's owner.

NOLAN
Listen, go out with me one night.
What do you say? Let me take you out one night...

NANCY
Nnnn...concentrating on grad school right now, not really in that place...but, you know, thanks for the ego boost.

She moves on to other customers.

NANCY'S FATHER
My daughter -- believe me, you're not the only one.

NOLAN
'Cause I was just, I was excited.
Big day for me.

Nolan shows Nancy's father the newspaper. He skims it over, sees Nolan's picture and "\$28 MILLION".

NANCY'S FATHER
Holy shit.

NOLAN
Just wanted to share the news...you know, I love comin' in here...

NANCY'S FATHER
Yeah, of course, yeah.

NOLAN
...bringin' in the whole company all the time.

NANCY'S FATHER
You know what, lemme talk to her.

NOLAN

Nah, I don't wanna...

NANCY'S FATHER

No, no -- I'll smooth it over.

NOLAN

'Cause I was thinking your bar
would be a great testing site for
new games, if that's...

NANCY'S FATHER

(patting Nolan on back)
She'll listen to me. Trust me.

INT. LOS GATOS FERN BAR - LATER

Nolan's gone. Nancy stands with her arms crossed while her father makes drinks.

NANCY

No way.

NANCY'S FATHER

One date. What could be so bad?

NANCY

He's not my type, Dad!

Nancy's father looks at the article Nolan left behind.

NANCY'S FATHER

(eyeing "28 million")

He just seems like such a nice boy.

INT. NOLAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

We see a passed-out Nolan and three familiar bimbos entangled in bed together. Wine bottles, cigarette burns, panties, and a Home Pong set are strewn about. An alarm clock softly BUZZES under a pile of clothing.

EXT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - MORNING

The sun burns intensely upon Atari's EMPTY parking lot.

It's quiet. We hear only the distant CHIRPING of birds...and the MURMURS of Manny Gerard and SIX OTHER IRRITATED, SUIT-WEARING WARNER EXECUTIVES waiting outside the locked factory.

INT. NOLAN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

PHONE RINGS. Nolan's eyes creak open. RING. The girls stir. Nolan rummages for the phone, groggily answers.

NOLAN

Hello?...

(suddenly awake)

Oh, hi -- yeah, no, no -- I'll be --
I'll be right there.

Nolan immediately springs into action. He throws on pants and the first clean shirt he can find, a shirt emblazoned with a large MARIJUANA LEAF.

INT. NOLAN'S DATSUN 240Z - MORNING

Nolan jumps in, starts the car, throws it in reverse.

NOLAN

Shit -- shit -- shit!

EXT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

Nolan's Datsun screeches into the parking lot, and he hops out. The seven businessmen see this wild-haired, unshaven young guy wearing flip-flops and an inappropriate T-shirt -- a guy they're about to make one of the richest 33-year-olds in the world. Nolan runs to the door.

NOLAN

(fumbling for the key)

Sorry. Sorry. Alarm clock
didn't...don't you hate that?

The execs stare at him. He opens the door.

INT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

They step inside, see BEER KEGS, PLASTIC CUPS, PIZZA BOXES, ROACH CLIPS.

NOLAN

Little partying last night, of
course celebrating...

(gesturing to them)

...the sale. People are excited.

They see a BLOW-UP DOLL laying face-down on the factory conveyer belt with the word "WARNER" written on the back of its head and a JOYSTICK shoved up its ass.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

(laughing it off,
pulling out joystick)

Great, great sense of humor, the
guys who work here...

Manny forces a pained smile, steals a look at his cohorts.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 Anyway, welcome. Let me show you
 around...show you some of the stuff
 we're gonna present at the CES.

The execs follow Nolan, scrutinizing the factory. A LAWYER trails behind with a BRIEFCASE.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 We've got so many great projects.
 We're working on a controller
 that's operated by brainwaves, a
 programmable computer for the
 home...we've got this carnival-
restaurant idea that's gonna...

MANNY
 (catching up to Nolan,
 sotto voce)
 Nolan. Nolan. Just focus on the
 games for now.

NOLAN
 Yeah, yeah, of course.

He takes the executives to a closed door and unlocks it.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 Gentlemen, I'd like to introduce
 you to a new generation of fun.

He opens the door and reveals a METAL CONSOLE about the size of a toaster with exposed wiring and two ribbon cables leading to a pair of PROTOTYPE JOYSTICKS.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 (turns on TV)
 "The Atari Video Computer System"
 or what we're calling "the VCS".
 An endless variety of games...

Nolan inserts a 2-inch ROM chip into the console.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 'Mommy, can I be a jet pilot for
 Christmas?'

He grabs a JOYSTICK for himself and hands the other to Manny.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 'Well son, maybe Grandpa will stuff
 your stocking with..
 (flicking switch)
 Atari's Combat cartridge.'

Suddenly, Nolan and Manny are flying FIGHTER JETS and shooting MISSILES at one other. Manny fires a round of missiles, then subtly shifts his eyes to look at his cohorts' expressions. They all look very amused.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
'And if you're really good, Johnny,
maybe Uncle Bob will plunk down
another 30 bucks for Street Racer'!

Nolan replaces the Combat chip with another. On the screen, Nolan and Manny now control low-res race cars.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Hell -- run a decathlon in Video
Olympics, be a gambler in
Blackjack...master arithmetic with
Basic Math!

The executives clap: "They're gonna go nuts at CES."
"...can milk this thing for years." "...huge profit margin."

The lawyer opens his briefcase, hands Nolan a pen and gestures for him to sign on some lines.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
(while casually signing)
Honestly, guys -- seeing your
excitement and knowing how much fun
this is going to bring people...
(finishes signature)
...it's not so much about the money
for me...

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DUSK

Nolan's brand new blue ROLLS ROYCE SILVER SHADOW drives up swiftly and smashes into a garbage can. His GUCCI ALLIGATOR SHOES step out. We TILT UP and see his PLAID PANTS. He struts up to Nancy's house. As we tilt up to his face, we see one final new addition: a PERM.

INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DUSK

Nancy peeks out the window of her second floor bedroom.

NANCY
Oh. My. God.

NANCY'S FATHER (O.S.)
Nancy!

NANCY
Tell him I'm sick!

NANCY'S FATHER (O.S.)
He's here!

Doorbell RINGS. We CUT to Nancy's dad answering the door.

NANCY'S FATHER (CONT'D)
Heeey!

Nolan shakes his hand and warmly brings in his left hand as well.

NOLAN
How are you? This is a nice place
you have here.

NANCY'S FATHER
Thank you. Been here 25 years.

Nancy's MOM walks in.

NANCY'S MOM
Well, hello! It's so nice to
finally meet you.

NOLAN
Thank you. You raised a terrific
daughter there.

NANCY'S MOM
Well...she has her moments.

Nervous laughter across the board, then uncomfortable
silence, until...

NANCY'S FATHER & NANCY'S MOTHER
Nancy!!!

NANCY
(walking down stairs)
Coming! I'm coming. Don't panic.

Nolan smiles at her. She gives a cute smile back.

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DUSK

Nolan walks her to his car and reaches to open the passenger
side, but Nancy immediately reaches for it herself.

NANCY
No no. I got it. Thank you.

Nancy opens the car for herself and closes the door. Nolan
walks around to the driver's side with a grin.

INT. NOLAN'S ROLLS ROYCE - MOVING - DUSK

Nolan drives. Nancy has her arms crossed, closed off. Awkward silence. Desperate to fill the void, Nolan glances down at his new CAR PHONE -- a white, AT&T Princess-style phone, complete with a rotary dial wheel and a coiled cord.

NOLAN

Not sure about this thing yet.
Supposed to be for work, but...

NANCY

...I'm noticing you got a...a perm.

NOLAN

Yeah...

(picking up phone)
...puts out, like, 25 watts VHF, so
you gotta be pretty close to one of
the towers, so...yeah...

EXT. WOODED ROADS - DUSK

The ROLLS ROYCE curves around a tree-lined bend.

INT. NOLAN'S ROLLS ROYCE - DUSK

NANCY

So where are we going for dinner,
anyway?

NOLAN

My place.

NANCY

(cringing a bit)
No, really? Your place? Why, you
cooked something?

NOLAN

Well, not exactly.

EXT. WOODSIDE MANSION - DRIVEWAY - DUSK

The Rolls pulls up to a MASSIVE GATE. Behind it is a 15,000 square foot MANSION amidst 16 acres of redwood forest.

NOLAN

(into security box)

It's Nolan.

The gate slowly opens. Nolan pulls in. Nancy looks dumbfounded at the colossal home in front of her.

NANCY
This is your place.

NOLAN
 (acting unemotional)
 Yup. Just got it. Bought it from
 Peter Folger, the, uh -- the coffee
 guy. What do you think?

INT. WOODSIDE MANSION - FOYER - DUSK

They enter through 12-foot wrought iron double doors. A massive chandelier hangs above. The floor is marble. The house is mostly unfurnished. Nolan has his hands in his pockets, pretending to be nonchalant about the whole thing.

NOLAN
 37 rooms on 16 acres...got a good
 deal...needs some work, though.

EXT. WOOSIDE MANSION - KNOLL OVERLOOKING HOUSE - DUSK

Nolan and Nancy stand atop a hillside overlooking the massive home and an adjacent tennis court. STONE STEPS lead further up the hill to a glade, nestled amongst a forest of trees.

NOLAN
 Greenhouse, got a pool up there,
 tennis court, stable...

NANCY
 (dubiously)
 A stable. For horses. You're
 going to have horses.

NOLAN
 Couple Shetland ponies maybe.
 Thinkin' Clydesdales. Maybe a
 thoroughbred. My father was into
 horses, so...

Nancy nods, slightly bewildered by all this.

INT. WOODSIDE MANSION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Nolan sits at the head of a 25-foot oak table. Nancy sits close to him, catty-corner. They both eat salads.

NANCY
 I think as early as three I'd kind
 of hold court in the house, you
 know...outline all kinds of
 punishments for my brothers..

NOLAN
So that's when it started...

NANCY
(laughing)
Pretty much. I think that was when
my dad sort of put the idea of
going to law school in my
head...and you know, political
science always interested me, so...

A BUTLER enters and pours red wine into their glasses.

NOLAN
Thanks, man.

He exits back to the kitchen. Nolan sips his wine.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
That's cool...doesn't seem like
enough women go that route. I
applaud you for taking...

NOLAN (CONT'D)
...the initiative...

What do you mean? NANCY

NANCY

NOLAN

NANCY
I happen to know a lot of women who
are very into politics. The
National Organization for Women
alone -- which all my friends are
members of -- has over 100,000
women in California alone.

NOLAN
Okay. Well we should probably...change the subject.

Nancy sips her wine tensely. Awkward pause.

NANCY

It...it...it just...it boggles my
mind to hear you make statements
about women you know nothing about.

NOLAN

If you walk down the street and ask
the average woman who the Vice
President is -- honestly...

NANCY

(stands up, walks away)

Okay. Okay. That's enough.

NOLAN

(laughing nervously)

What? You don't think that's true?

Nancy is in the other room now. Nolan holds an insecure
grin...waiting for a response. Long pause.

NANCY (O.S.)

I think I should go home. This
isn't--

NOLAN

What?? C'mon. You're being silly
now. Why are you taking this
personally?

NANCY

(re-entering)

Because you're a jackass, okay?

NOLAN

C'mon...

NANCY

Look, I really tried to come here
with an open mind, I did, but...

NOLAN

Hold on, hold on...

Nolan RINGS the dinner bell. Nolan's butler enters with a
SILVER PLATTER holding two ROLLED JOINTS. Nolan takes one of
the joints and offers it to Nancy.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

C'mon. I got these for us.

Let's not take things so seriously.

NANCY
Honestly. Thank you for the meal,
but...

NANCY (CONT'D) NOLAN
...I would appreciate it if We didn't even have the meal.
you took me home.

NOLAN

NANCY
No, really -- I'm actually really tired right now and I think I'm coming down with something anyway.
(off Nolan's stare)
I think it's just better if I go home...seriously.

An awkward moment. Nancy heads to the front door. Nolan shakes his head, frustrated with himself.

EXT. WOODED ROAD - NIGHT

The Rolls Royce zooms down the road.

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nolan pulls up to the house. She opens the door, steps out.

NOLAN

NANCY
That's 'cause they're all on your
payroll.

DOOR SLAMS. She walks angrily to her front door. The father opens the door and lets Nancy in.

NANCY'S FATHER
(waving gleefully)

Nolan smiles a pained smile as we hear the amplified sound of a LIVE 70's ROCK BAND.

EXT. SANTA CLARA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - DAY

FOUR NEEDY BIMBOS "on the payroll" literally hang all over Nolan at a huge Warner-Atari sponsored outdoor concert-picnic event. As Nolan shakes hands with NEW RECRUITS, he gently

tries to shake these girls off him. One BIMBO WITH BIG BOOBS runs and jumps on his back, demanding a piggyback ride.

NOLAN

Girls, please...not...come on...

The girls respond flirtatiously, slurring: "Uh-oh, are you getting too big for us now? "Nolan's changing."

A banner reading "ATARI WELCOMES YOU" soars above a stage where the band "Stoneground" jams. The scene is a miniature Woodstock: mud everywhere, shirtless sweaty guys, glistening girls in wet T-shirts and short-shorts.

Nolan makes his way through the crowd to THE OLD ENGINEERS who hang out with a half-dozen NEW ENGINEERS, including one BUDDHIST GUY with long greasy hair and a Ho Chi Minh beard.

The original six, now in CROTCH-HUGGING POLYESTER PANTS, try acting cool in front of their new subordinates. The engineer who looks like a Q-Tip wears bell bottoms, a half unbuttoned silk shirt and a large medallion.

Nolan shakes hands with the new engineers until he gets to Buddhist Guy who bows and then looks Nolan in the eyes.

BUDDHIST GUY

(slow, reverently)

Mr. Bushnell. The spirit in
me...meets the spirit in you.

NOLAN

Yeah yeah, groovy, man...you know
we got hot dogs if any of you--

Something catches Nolan's eyes. Through the dense crowd, Nolan spots a man in a perfectly-tailored, dark THREE-PIECE SUIT slinking his way through the mob of sweaty shirtless hippies. His name is RAY KASSAR (49). Nolan watches the man reluctantly step through the muddy grass with his WING TIPPED SHOES. He's got perfectly-coiffed gray hair and large designer sunglasses. Nolan meanders over to him.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

(extending his hand)

Hi! Nolan Bushnell.

RAY

(shaking hands)

Ray Kassar. Great to meet you.

NOLAN

Did you come from New York, or...?

RAY

Yeah, just flew in. Manny told you I was coming today, right?

NOLAN

I don't remember, but hey -- welcome. It's great for you to be here and celebrate with us.

RAY

Thank you. Yeah. Excited to dig in and help us prepare for the...

(starts sniffing)

...prepare for the VCS launch --

NOLAN

Oh, 'cause, yeah, Manny didn't--

RAY

(sniffs again)

Gee, I don't want to alarm you, but you smell that?

(worried)

I think it's marijuana.

NOLAN

Um...I...I don't, um...

(big fake smile)

How long are you in town for, Ray?

RAY

Well -- from what I understand, I'm taking an office tomorrow.

NOLAN

You're...you're taking an office?

RAY

I thought -- I'm sorry. I thought Manny told you. I've been brought on as the executive liaison between Warner and...

(sniffing, sotto voce)

...I definitely think that's marijuana, Nolan.

(looking around)

...'cause, yeah, I think we might need to be careful here -- this being, you know, a company event.

As Nolan watches Ray crane his neck to look for the source of the smell, Nolan smiles nervously with a dawning realization that things might be a' changing.

INT. NOLAN'S PARKED ROLLS ROYCE - MOMENTS LATER

With his windows closed, Nolan speaks on his car phone in the parking lot. The rock concert is muffled in the b.g.

NOLAN
(into phone)
Manny, Manny, I'm telling you,
this guy is not gonna fit in here,
I'm tell--I can't...I can't hear
you. Manny? Hel--Okay...Right,
but I...no I didn't realize he was
staying...!

Through the windshield, we now see the massive scope of this Warner-Atari picnic, about 850 people in all.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
...no no, I'm not worried, I just
don't know why we need a
babysitter...

Nolan glances over. TWO YOUNG ATARIANS are having sex in a Volkswagen Beetle.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
(rubs his temples)
I heard you. Observing. I just
don't want him interfering, that's
all... Alright...alright, fine.

INT. SANTA CLARA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - LATER

His eyes affixed to Ray's DARK SUIT moving in the distance amongst a sea of sweaty, gyrating flesh, Nolan walks towards a MUD PIT where a BLONDE BIMBO chases kids around. ALISSA (now 8 1/2) sits by herself on a PICNIC TABLE nearby, making a PLASTIC LANYARD. Nolan turns from the suit to look at BRITTA (now 6) running in the mud with the other kids. Britta immediately runs up to hug Nolan.

BRITTA
Daddy.

NOLAN
(playfully)
Aaaaa. You got mud all over me!

Britta laughs. Alissa sees her father and walks up to him.

ALISSA
Dad -- this lady says she's your
girlfriend.

NOLAN
No no...no. Definitely not.

ALISSA
'Cause she's really stupid, Dad.
She said she doesn't believe people
came from monkeys.

NOLAN
Well she's not my girlfriend.
Look, we're gonna be here for
another half hour and then we're
gonna go, okay?

Nolan puts his arm around her. He then walks on, eyeing Ray in the distance greeting the new engineers. Nolan marches over to MOOSE who stands awkwardly next to the ATARI RECEPTIONIST. The two nurse beers, watch the band, and nod their heads to the music. Nolan taps him.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Moose. They're putting a Warner
guy in the engineering building.

Moose doesn't want to be diverted from the receptionist.

MOOSE
Let's talk about it later.

As Moose turns back, TWO DRUNK GIRLS run up to Nolan and jump on him. "Nolan!"

NOLAN
(peeling them off)
Girls, girls...please...there's a
lot of stuff going on here.

They drunkenly prance away, running to another male victim.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
(tapping Moose again)
Moose. Moose.

Moose turns to him again, looking slightly annoyed.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
You think these girls only like me
because I'm paying them?

MOOSE
Nolan. This is the first girl
who's talking to me in 5 years.
Please. Don't ruin it for me.

NOLAN
'Cause I'm thinking about
transitioning to a new caliber of
women.

Moose stares at him blankly.

INT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - LOBBY - DAY

A large 45-year-old WOMAN with short hair, a PIN-STRIPED BUSINESS SUIT, and a LARGE BUTTON reading "E.R.A." pinned to her lapel, walks up to the RECEPTION DESK.

WOMAN WITH SHORT HAIR
Hello, I'm Barbara Rosenfarb with
the National Organization for
Women, here to see Nolan Bushnell.

INT. NEW ATARI ENGINEERING BLDG. - DAY

The NEW BUILDING is alive with excitement. ENGINEERS and their ASSISTANTS scurry about, engrossed in their work. An exhilarated Nolan walks briskly to the front entrance, passing Ray who stands in the doorway of his new office, instructing MOVING GUYS where to put BOXES and a large PLANT.

RAY
(to a passing Nolan)
Nolan. I noticed when I came in,
there was no security...

NOLAN
(quickly passing him)
Yeah, Ray, we don't --

He walks over to the main lobby and spots the receptionist escorting Barbara Rosenfarb into the building.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Barbara? Nolan. What a pleasure
it is to meet you.

BARBARA
Well thank you for inviting me.

Ray walks over to them with a big phony smile.

NOLAN
Of course, of course...kind of
nutty around here with all the
stuff we're trying to do. If you
want, you know, I can give you a
tour...

RAY
Hi. I'm Ray Kassar.

Nolan is unnerved that Ray is interfering.

RAY (CONT'D)
You know, I haven't even had an
opportunity to look around yet.
You mind if I tag along?

INT. NEW ATARI ENGINEERING BLDG. - MAIN HALLWAY - DAY

Nolan walks next to Barbara. Ray is a step behind, holding a CLIPBOARD with a stack of papers clipped to it.

NOLAN
...just moved in here a few months
ago. 36 engineers working on the
neatest--
(playfully)
Watch out, Barbara!

Barbara almost steps on a ROBOTIC CAT which rolls by,
followed by a few NEW ENGINEERS with a remote.

BARBARA
Oh -- that's adorable.

They keep walking. Ray keeps turning back to look at the
engineers operating a robotic cat. He's very confused.

NOLAN
(gesturing to room)
Alright, Barbara -- now you can't
tell anyone what you're about to
witness here, okay? This is the
first consumer product of its kind:
a computer for the home.

He opens a door to a COMPUTER LAB. BUDDHISM GUY, sweaty with
long greasy hair stuck to his face, sits before a monitor,
laughing hysterically, staring at FLASHING COLORS on the
screen.

Again, Ray is baffled, consults with papers on his clipboard.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
(whispering to Barbara)
Yeah...yeah best not to break his
concentration.

Nolan moves to leave, lets the other two out first, then
whispers to Buddhism Guy.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
No acid tomorrow, man.

Nolan joins Barbara and Ray in the hall, and brings them to another lab where several new engineers are working on a TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICE.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
...and I can't wait to play with
this next one -- people are gonna
be able to play video games against
each other over a phone line.

BARBARA
How about that.

RAY
Huh. I'm--

RAY
...Manny said you had some pet
projects, but, gee -- I didn't
realize the extent of it.

NOLAN
Well, I wouldn't say they're 'pet'
projects, Ray...

RAY
I didn't mean...
NOLAN
...they're major
innovations...

RAY
Oh yeah, yeah -- no no I'm sure.
(to Barbara)
I'm, I'm sorry...
(to Nolan)
Can I see where your guys are
working on the VCS? 'Cause I know
that's the priority.

NOLAN
(feigning patience)
Of course you can, Ray.

RAY
(following Nolan)
'Cause with CES coming up...

Nolan leads them to a room full of VCS prototypes on workbenches. No engineers in sight. Ray looks concerned, gestures toward the benches.

NOLAN
They're in a private strategy
session right now, so they'll be
back soon.

RAY
I'm sorry, Barbara...
(quietly to Nolan)
...you know, I think it's best if I
sat in on that, 'cause you know,
with Warner committing...
(sucking in air, looking
concerned)
...2 million for the launch...
they're...understandably...

Nolan looks at Ray, thinks for a moment, then...

NOLAN
Barbara, I'll be right back.

Nolan immediately leads Ray down a particular hallway.

RAY
Yeah, it's good for me to sit in on
this...'cause this way I can report
to Manny how hard they're working.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BLDG. - EMPLOYEE SPA - MOMENTS LATER

Nolan enters with Ray. The air is thick with smoke and steam. Through the haze, they see a bubbling HOT TUB filled with the original engineers and girls in bikinis, all drinking wine and smoking pot. Ray looks shocked. Nolan grabs a TOWEL from a rack and tosses it to Ray.

NOLAN
Guys, scoot over. Ray's sittin' in.

Nolan gives Ray a firm smack on the back and then steps out.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BLDG. - NOLAN'S OFFICE - LATER

Seated at his desk, Nolan writes a check in the amount of "\$10,000" to "The National Organization for Women". Barbara sits across from him.

NOLAN
(writing)
...'cause, personally, Barbara, I
can't think of a worthier cause
than equal rights for women.

Nolan hands her the check.

BARBARA
This is very special, Nolan. Thank
you. I mean -- not only are we
grateful to you for the
(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)
 contribution, but, I mean, for you
 to open up your estate to us for
 the next fund-raiser...we just wish
 more men were like you.

EXT. WOODSIDE MANSION - DUSK

On the lawn, a STRING QUARTET practices Vivaldi's "Spring Concerto". A staff of WAITERS (no waitresses) prepare for a party, smoothing out tablecloths and lighting candles.

INT. NANCY'S FRIEND'S FORD PINTO - DUSK

Nancy and THREE FEMALE FRIENDS (in their 20's) drive down a meandering, tree-lined road. They look for a house.

FRIEND #1
 If this guy is contributing \$10,000
 to the organization and we're
 spending \$50 a plate, why are we
 paying dues?

NANCY
 Oh my God. You know who lives in
 this neighborhood? That jerk.

FRIEND #2
 King Pong lives around here?

The car pulls up to NOLAN'S GATE. Nancy's face turns white.

NANCY
 Um...wait...

She quickly checks the home address: "3860", then checks the fund-raiser invitation: "3860".

NANCY (CONT'D)
 (connecting the dots,
 quietly smiling)
 That son of a bitch.

EXT. WOODSIDE MANSION - DUSK

Nancy stands amongst 80 WOMEN of all shapes and sizes. Nancy pretends to be engaged in a serious conversation, but she's clearly looking around for Nolan.

When she spots him in the crowd, he's charming a CIRCLE OF WOMEN. Nolan makes eye contact with Nancy, gives her a wink. She shakes her head, slightly amused. *Touche*.

LATER. It's night now. Outdoor heaters glow. Lights twinkle in the trees. The women sit at tables, eating SALADS as Nolan addresses the group.

NOLAN

I want to thank you and especially Barbara Rosenfarb for granting me the privilege of hosting your chapter's fund-raiser tonight. This is a big step for me. For most of my life, I've been blinded by my own outdated ideals...and while at first I was inspired to do this in the hopes of winning the heart of a strong and brilliant woman...

The women at Nancy's table look at her. She turns red with embarrassment.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

...it is inevitable that the residual effect of my involvement with the organization has inspired me to change my ways. I also have two more special reasons to support your organization, and their names are Alissa and Britta, my 6-year-old and 8-year old daughters, the most amazing women in my life.

The feminists melt. Nancy gulps her wine.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

And I hope -- no...I demand that my girls have the opportunity to grow and thrive in a world in which every woman is guaranteed equal rights under the Constitution of the United States of America.

The feminists love this guy.

LATER. Nancy talks quietly with Nolan. Guests are leaving.

NANCY

You are insane, you know that?

NOLAN

It's a worthy cause.

NANCY

What is? The Equal Rights Amendment or getting into my pants?

Nancy's friends approach.

FRIEND #1
Sorry...we're taking off, but you
guys are talking --

NOLAN
I'll drive her home.

NANCY
No no, I'm gonna, Nolan, this was
great. Thank you.

Nancy gives Nolan a quick hug, turns, and walks towards her friend's car. The girlfriends speak under their breath.

FRIEND #1
No. You are not getting in my car.

FRIEND #2
He's a find. You're nuts.

FRIEND #3
Jesus Christ, Nancy. Open your
eyes. He's open to changing.

The girls get into the car, shut the doors quickly, and wave at Nancy who stands on the driveway before Nolan. Nancy turns to Nolan and smiles weakly.

NANCY
Great. Well. You won. Now what?

INT. WOODSIDE MANSION - GAME ROOM - DUSK

Nolan and Nancy turn their steering wheels to maneuver their RACE CARS around a track in the game SPRINT 2.

NANCY
...out of my way.

NOLAN
Not a chance.

Nancy's car passes Nolan. Nolan swerves to avoid an oil slick and crashes into the side of the road.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Shit.

Nolan's car gets back on the road.

NANCY

You made this game and you just
wiped out. Do your daughters beat
you at this, too?

NOLAN

I was going to tell you about 'em.

NANCY

Really. When?

NOLAN

Well, after you called me a
jackass, there wasn't exactly a
huge window of time...

Nolan's car creeps up to hers. Nancy swerves and blocks him.

NANCY

What's it like for them to have a
father who's probably a lot more
immature then they are.

NOLAN

I think they've come to terms with
it...

(passing Nancy's car)

...see ya.

NANCY

Oh no...no no no...you're
goin'...no...

In a photo finish, Nolan's car passes hers and wins.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Okay. Fine. Fine. You won.

With his arm up in victory, Nolan exits the room.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Where you going?

NOLAN (O.S.)

Popping open a bottle of champagne.
Of course.

NANCY

(quietly to herself)

Oh, God.

EXT. WOODSIDE MANSION - POOL - NIGHT

A beautifully lit pool is nestled amongst surrounding redwoods. There's a waterfall and a slide. It's quiet.

Holding glasses of champagne, Nolan and Nancy recline back on adjacent chaise lounges and stare up at the galaxy of stars.

NANCY

So is this like your standard move...take women out here to drink and stare up at the stars?

NOLAN

(smiling, staring up)

No, no...God...the last time I did this with anyone...honestly, I think it was with my dad -- we spent this whole night once looking for Sputnik to go by. That was a long time ago...

(remembering clearly)

And my mom...she wasn't thrilled about us stayin' out like this -- but my dad...

(laughing)

...he just -- he grabbed this huge bag of pretzels and a couple a' sleeping bags...and we just marched out there into the backyard with this little Pathfinder telescope I had, and we just stayed out there -- two guys lyin' back on a couple a' pillows, waitin' to catch it. We never saw it, but, man, we had so much fun that night.

NANCY

Are you still close?

NOLAN

He had a heart attack when I was 16. He was a cement contractor and I was supposed to go to work with him that day. He wasn't feeling well, but he insisted I stay back and work on this stupid invention I was making. He just -- you know...

(long pause, Nolan's eyes subtly tear up)

...he really -- he loved me very very much, my dad.

With compassionate eyes, Nancy turns to look at Nolan. She stays focused on him, then slowly puts her hand on top of his and gently squeezes. After a moment, Nolan eases his hand back, embarrassed to be showing this kind of vulnerability. He wipes his eyes dry.

Very long pause with both of them having nothing to say.

NANCY
You want to go swimming?

NOLAN
You're gonna need a bathing suit,
right?

Nancy stands up and strips down to her BRA and PANTIES. Nolan looks at her, exhales a breath that feels like the end of a cry and start of a laugh. She then jumps into the pool.

NANCY
Oh my God! It's freezing.

She crosses her arms and shivers. She looks at Nolan.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Jump in, you wuss!

Nolan smiles and springs up. He takes off his clothes, strips down to his underwear, and jumps in as well.

NOLAN
(shivering)
Jesus Christ!

They look at one another, shivering, about three feet apart. A few beats.

NANCY
I don't know if this is such a good idea, Nolan.

NOLAN
(wading very slowly toward her)
I know it's not.

NANCY
It might be a mistake if we rush into this...if we don't take our time.

They look into each other's eyes, their faces inches apart.

NOLAN
 Albert Einstein said..."Time has
 no...

Nancy shuts him up with a kiss. Nolan wraps his arms around her, then she wraps her arms around him. We stay with them for several beats as their kiss grows more and more passionate.

A dramatic ORCHESTRAL SCORE, full of excitement and energy, builds under the kiss. Music CRESCENDOES as we cut to:

"Consumer Electronics Show, Chicago, Illinois, June 1977"

INT. McCORMICK PLACE CONVENTION CENTER - THEATER - DAY

Darkness. The anticipatory BUZZING of the CROWD. Then, suddenly, a huge, multi-colored ATARI LOGO illuminates above the stage and Nolan steps out from the wings to the CHEERS of 1,000 overzealous ELECTRONICS ENTHUSIASTS.

NOLAN
 Welcome to the new Atari!
 (CHEERS intensify)
 I am here to announce that the
 future begins TODAY!

On 'today', a TOWERING SCREEN lights up behind Nolan with an image of the ATARI VCS -- the icon of a generation. Black console, faux wood front, stocky rubber JOYSTICKS with one red button. Above the VCS, a TV displays AIR-SEA BATTLE.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 The Video Computer System -- a virtual arcade in your very own living room. We've got 9 game cartridges ready to go, 90 more in the works, and, with the possibility of thousands more to come, this baby changes everything.

Graphics reveal GAME BOX COVERS flying out from the VCS. The audience applauds this electronic river of fun. Nolan prowls the stage, feeding off the crowd's energy.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 And guys, believe me, the changes do not stop here.
 (checking in with Manny and Ray in the wings)
 Games are just the beginning.
 (seeing Manny's frustrated reaction)
 What do you think about an Atari
 (MORE)

NOLAN (CONT'D)
personal computer? How 'bout Atari
telecommunications? Well, today in
our labs, my friends, we are
defining the future!

INT. CHICAGO CONRAD HOTEL - MANNY'S HOTEL SUITE - DUSK

Nolan and Ray sit stiffly in chairs. Manny is standing.

MANNY
Because people are stupid, Nolan.
They're easily confused. And when
we spend 80 million dollars...

MANNY (CONT'D) NOLAN
...developing a product... Nobody's gonna be confused.

MANNY (CONT'D)
...the last thing we can afford is
confusion, okay? You agree.

NOLAN
It's not gonna hurt the VCS.

MANNY
You feed 'em one thing at a time or
they choke on it, Nolan. You
launch the product.

NOLAN
And -- I'm sorry -- we should plant
seeds, too.

Nolan tensely walks over to a bowl of fruit, spears a cantaloupe piece with a toothpick and eats it. Manny glances at Ray and subtly shakes his head. Ray matches Manny's exasperation and subtly shakes his head as well.

Manny rubs his eyes, then shuts them tightly as if he's thinking hard.

MANNY
Nolan, we bought a brand. A brand
that means games.

NOLAN
(his back to Manny,
spearing more fruit)
And you knew from day one...

MANNY NOLAN
Yes. ...that Atari...

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 (turning around)
 ...was gonna branch into new areas.
 That we weren't just...

NOLAN (CONT'D) MANNY
 ...gonna be doing games... Okay.

MANNY
 We didn't know, though, that you
 were gonna burn through your entire
 R&D budget in...

RAY
 ...four months.

NOLAN
 These are big projects and you're
 gonna thank me.

MANNY
 Nolan...we spent 80 million dollars
 developing the VCS. We did that
 for you, Nolan. 80 before the
 first VCS leaves the factory...and
 you're...you're asking us to bank
 on...on...on...a, a home computer??
 Who the fuck's gonna use a home
computer? A family of goddamn
mathematicians? There are
 boundaries, Nolan...and the bottom
 line is, we have to accept them.

NOLAN
 (shuffles to the door)
 Well. I'm...I'm gonna...I'm gonna
 keep going with them, so...

Nolan looks at Manny and Ray. With his hands in his pockets,
 he subtly nods his head, then saunters out. We stay inside
 the room as the heavy door shuts loudly.

Manny and Ray sit for a beat, neither speaking.

INT. CHICAGO CONRAD HOTEL - NOLAN'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A calmer Nolan cradles the phone with his shoulder, lying on
 his back on a still-made bed. While wearing his clothing
 from the presentation, he kicks off his shoes. He speaks in
 a playful, intimate tone and fidgets with his wooden pipe.

NOLAN
 (on phone)
 Of course they're gonna like you --
 (MORE)

NOLAN (CONT'D)
well, wait, hold on now, this is
important -- how many times can you
sit through the Tiki Birds?...uh-
oh, you don't know the talking
birds? Okay, well we'll definitely
have to school you then. That was
Alissa's favorite when she was a
baby...

While listening to her response, he traces his finger along
the rounded edge of the pipe.

NOLAN (CONT'D (CONT'D)
(smiling)
...Okay, well, when are you free?
We'll put it together. I think
they've got some days off school,
so we could all go then...I'll miss
work. No big deal.

ESTABLISHING SHOTS:

-WIDE SHOT across the vast surface of the Silicon Valley.
Several large-scale construction projects pepper the city.

-BEHIND THE ATARI FACTORY, a forklift loads pallets stacked
high with VCS BOXES into the back of a SEMI.

-IN FRONT OF THE FACTORY, the semi drives by in the
background while a MAN in a dark suit exits a rented Lincoln
Continental and walks sternly toward the building.

EXT. SILICON VALLEY - STREET - DAY

Nolan's Rolls Royce drives down a modest suburban street.

INT. NOLAN'S ROLLS ROYCE - DAY

Nolan is driving. Britta sits in the passenger seat. Alissa
sits in the back.

ALISSA
Dad...seriously. What if I don't
like her.

NOLAN
You're going to like her.

ALISSA
You're not going to hold her hand
or anything, are you?

NOLAN
No. I will not hold her hand.

BRITTA
Daddy, I'm hungry!

NOLAN
Listen, guys. Don't talk about the crazy house I brought you to in Los Angeles, okay?

ALISSA
Why not? 'Cause of all those prostitutes?

NOLAN
What?? Who told you that -- your mother? I thought we weren't going to say anything to Mom about that!

Pause. Alissa and Britta look guilty.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Just don't say anything about it today, okay?
(pause)
Okay?

ALISSA
Okay.

NOLAN
Britta??

BRITTA
I have to pee.

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nolan's car pulls up. The windows are down. Nancy comes out with shades on her head, a T-shirt, shorts, and carrying a small overnight bag. She has a big smile.

NANCY
Hi!!

Alissa and Britta look skeptical, nervous.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Hi, guys.

Nolan steps out. Alissa and Britta get out as well and stand behind him.

NOLAN
This is Alissa and this is Britta.

ALISSA AND BRITTA
(in unison, no emotion)

Hi.

NANCY

We're gonna have some fun today. I
heard this is your second time at
Disneyland...

ALISSA

Yeah. Britta was too small the
first time, though.

NOLAN

Well, Britta's seen pictures,
right?

Nolan's interrupted by his ringing CAR PHONE.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Um...

BRITTA

Can I get it?

NOLAN

Let me just, hold on.

Nolan gets into the car, picks it up quickly. Nolan, Alissa, and Britta make small talk outside. Nancy has a nurturing way with them that they respond to positively.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hello?...

(listening)

I can't -- hold on, Moose, Moose, I
can barely...what??

(covers other ear,
smiles at Nancy, holds
up a finger)

Wait, whoah, whoah, slow down, I
missed the beginning of...Who
did?...what guy?? Just...just
calm...I can't -- hello? Moose?

Al, Al...

(phone dies)

Shit.

He hangs up, takes a deep breath, looks at Nancy and his kids laughing together.

Nolan gets out of the car.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
That was work.

ALISSA
No, Dad.

NOLAN
No, no, I'm just gonna, it's ten minutes away. There's something -- I don't know, my partner... apparently, he needs me to -- something. I'm just gonna run over real quick.

The kids are downcast. Nancy subtly checks her watch.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
I'm really sorry. We'll leave in an hour. Is that...? Maybe an hour and a half, tops?

NANCY
Do you wanna just use my phone?

NOLAN
I should just...let me just find out -- one hour.

Nolan runs back to his car, almost forgets his kids.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
And I'll just, girls -- I'll take them, right? They'll come with me. You guys can play some new games.

Nancy opens the car door for the girls and they reluctantly climb back in. Nancy feels badly for them. As Nolan reverses out of the driveway, Nancy smiles at him, taps her watch. He nods, waves.

INT. NOLAN'S ROLLS ROYCE - DAY

Nolan speeds down the San Tomas Expressway with the girls.

NOLAN
(on phone)
I don't understand. Hold on -- let me -- hold on -- who exactly?... Well tell me what you do know...
(listening)
No, no, nobody's, nobody's, he can't just -- tell them not to leave -- I'll be there in five minutes. Tell them not to leave!

EXT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

Nolan storms through the parking lot with his two kids behind him. He sees a couple of ENGINEERS walking out of the Engineering Building, looking shell shocked, each with a box of their personal belongings.

NOLAN

Go back inside. Put your stuff away. You still work here.

Nolan charges on, enters...

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BLDG. - DAY

More dazed ENGINEERS stand around with boxes.

NOLAN

No -- no.

(loud)

Everybody relax. Nobody's been fired. This is my problem. I'm gonna fix it.

Nolan rushes through the building. Alissa and Britta run to keep up. Nolan looks into his office, sees his secretary.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Have you seen Al?

MOOSE (O.S.)

Nolan!

Nolan turns to see a harried Moose scuttling over.

NOLAN

(to daughters)

Guys, why don't you play some Starship, okay??

Nolan nudges them into his office to play.

MOOSE

(whisper, out of breath)

...lawyer, Warner lawyer, comes in, just walks in, pink slips all the new engineers.

Nolan takes a beat, shaking his head slightly -- then spontaneously SMACKS a wall, startling Alissa and Britta.

He marches to Ray's office and barges in. RAY'S SECRETARY, a woman in her 50's with gray hair in a bun, jumps up.

RAY'S SECRETARY
Mr. Kassar's in New York until
Monday.

Nolan takes a breath, gathers his cool.

NOLAN
Could you possibly get him on the
phone for me?

RAY'S SECRETARY
He's in a meeting now, and tomorrow
he'll be tied up from...
(checking calendar)
...11am through, looks like most of
the day for a budget meeting at
corporate...Would you like me to
give him a message?

NOLAN
No no, I'll give it to him myself.
(exiting, walking back)
Moose, pack your shit and meet me
at the airport in an hour. We're
goin' to New York.

Nolan pops his head into his office.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Girls...time to go now...
(to secretary, quiet)
Please call Nancy Nino. Her
number's in my book. Tell her...I
had to go. Tell her I'm very
sorry. And I'll call her.

EXT. SILICON VALLEY STREET - DAY

The Rolls Royce barrels down an upscale suburban street,
pulls into the driveway of a large, NEW HOUSE. An angry
Britta gets out, runs to the door, repeatedly rings the bell.

INT. NOLAN'S ROLLS ROYCE - DAY

With the car idling, a guilty and rushed-looking Nolan sees
Paula open the door for Britta who runs inside. Paula burns
a long look at Nolan, then follows Britta inside.

NOLAN
Alis, we'll do it another time,
okay, honey, I'm sorry,

ALISSA
Whatever. I don't care.
(opening car door)
Just don't miss my birthday, okay?

NOLAN
No no...Hey! What if I have games delivered here and we can make it like an arcade party. Wouldn't that be cool?...Bring in Qwak?
(off Alissa's smile)
Right?? Qwak??
(poking her)
Space Race?? You love Space Race.

ALISSA
Breakout?

NOLAN
Absolutely! Tell your friends...
I'll bring games for all of 'em.

ALISSA
(smiling big now)
Okay. It'll be an arcade party.

They hug and she gets out.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - DUSK

A plane lifts off the tarmac.

EXT. WARNER COMMUNICATIONS BUILDING - DAY

The Warner Communications Building stands tall. Yellow cabs and cars are stuck in gridlock before it.

INT. WARNER COMMUNICATIONS BUILDING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Brass elevator doors open and two baggy-eyed partners-in-crime, Nolan and Moose, step out in their familiar NY suits, carrying TRAVEL BAGS. They are hopped up on coffee, determined, and walk to the executive reception area where a LADY RECEPTIONIST (60) sits.

NOLAN
Hi, I'm Nolan Bushnell, president of Atari -- here for the budget meeting.

RECEPTIONIST
(checking list)
Are they expecting you?

NOLAN
Yes.

RECEPTIONIST
Okay. Let me...hold on, sir.

She jots his name down and walks down the hall. A few yards behind, Nolan follows. Moose lags behind. The receptionist quietly KNOCKS on a door, then partially opens it and whispers. Through the crack, Nolan sees SEVERAL FAMILIAR EXECUTIVES in their suits...and spots Manny amongst them.

NOLAN
(calling out)
Manny! I'd like to come in please!

Manny rubs his face in anguish. Inside, at the head, is the distinguished WARNER CEO STEVE ROSS (50). He looks at Manny. Ray is there, looking pale. Mr. Ross awkwardly gestures to the receptionist who then steps aside and motions for Nolan to enter. Nolan and Moose enter with their bags.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
So, whose idea was it to fire every guy we need to ensure the future of the company?

The executives look extremely uncomfortable. Mr. Ross stands up, extends his hand and smiles cordially.

STEVE ROSS
Mr. Bushnell. Steve Ross. I've heard a lot of wonderful things.

Nolan stumbles briefly, surprised by the Warner CEO's presence. Nolan drops his bag and steps forward to shake Mr. Ross's hand.

NOLAN
Likewise, Mr. Ross. And this is Al Alcorn. Vice president of Atari.

STEVE ROSS
Mr. Alcorn. Steve Ross.

NOLAN
Mr. Ross -- I don't know if you're aware or not but most of my engineers were fired without my knowledge.

MANNY
(calm, irritated)
He's aware, Nolan.

Moose finds a seat in the back and slowly sits down.

NOLAN

Well, um, with all due respect, sir...I don't know if Manny has fully explained the extent to which...cause it basically, that act...it essentially kills the chance of success after the VCS. You can't fire these people.

MANNY

(calm, arrogant)

Steve. Steve. 80 million's been sunk into the VCS already. He burned --

NOLAN

It's not about the VCS.

MANNY

He burned through...

MANNY (CONT'D)

...his entire year's R&D budget in four months, so yes, I did a little shuffling of resources to stop a little of the bleeding.

NOLAN

It's not, these projects -- the VCS, Manny? Bleeding?? Come on!

MANNY

Right now? Yeah.

NOLAN

These projects are all...

NOLAN (CONT'D)

...gonna be very successful. And, trust me --

MANNY

...coming from a man who has yet to turn a profit at Atari since he started the company.

NOLAN

Okay. That's -- see...that's -- what Manny is completely incapable of understanding is that the VCS...I'm sorry...it's already a dinosaur, okay?

Mr. Ross shifts uncomfortably hearing this, looks at Manny. Nolan realizes maybe he shouldn't have said that.

MANNY

(nervous laughing)

You're telling the CEO of Warner...

NOLAN

I'm not -- no, no...

MANNY

...the man who authorized the
shipment of...

MANNY (CONT'D)

...400,000 of these goddamn things.

NOLAN

...I'm not, sir, I'm not saying
people won't be excited by it, I'm
saying that in a couple of years --
people are gonna want the next
thing and the other products we're
developing are the next thing...
like, like, Mr. Ross, we've got a
personal computer and Atari has the
edge. If you allow us to develop
it properly...? Sir, we can put a
computer in every home in America!

Mr. Ross looks at everybody in the room. They don't quite
know what to make of this outlandish prediction.

STEVE ROSS

Mr. Bushnell -- I'm confident we're
going to find a middle ground,
okay? You flying here shows
tremendous commitment to Atari, and
obviously that goes a long way in
my book.

NOLAN

Thank you, Mr. Ross. Atari is my
life, sir.

STEVE ROSS

Of course it is, and don't worry.
I have no doubt that we're going to
find a solution here.

Mr. Ross gets up and extends his hand, indicating Nolan's
time is done. Nolan gets up and shakes it. Everyone watches
Nolan and Moose pick up their bags and then exit the room.

Mr. Ross nods to Manny that he'd like to talk to him alone.

INT. WARNER COMMUNICATIONS BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Manny and Mr. Ross speak privately in the hall.

MANNY

(sotto voce)

Look, Atari has never shown a profit with him running it. The kid is all over the map here -- video phones, computers, robots, restaurants. I think for now we just focus on marketing the VCS -- that's it...and personally...

(conspiratorially)

...we bump up the pay of his original guys, we buy some loyalty. If Nolan doesn't step in line...

STEVE ROSS

...he's out.

CUT TO BLACK.

ESTABLISHING SHOTS:

-LOW, ASHEN CLOUDS roll in over the Valley, blanketing the Santa Cruz Mountain range.

-In NOLAN'S BACKYARD, a layer of fallen LEAVES drift across the neglected swimming pool.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BLDG. - NOLAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Nolan moves aimlessly around his office, absently adjusting objects. As he speaks, he periodically walks to the door, checks the hall. Moose sits on the couch, his leg bouncing.

NOLAN

I'll compromise -- one guy on telecom, one on the computer...I mean, look -- it's not gonna be a growth scenario but it'll keep us breathing here at least.

Nolan checks the hallway again.

MOOSE

They're still at the bar, Nolan.
They're gonna be there all day.

Nolan stops pacing, looks at Moose.

MOOSE (CONT'D)

There's confusion. Nobody knows what they're supposed to be working on, so they're not...

(loud DRONING sound

(MORE)

MOOSE (CONT'D)
outside)
...not motivated to...

The sound grows to a RUMBLE that can't be ignored. Nolan and Moose walk to the window, look out quizzically.

Wind whips around the courtyard behind the building. Several factory employees on their cigarette breaks are pelted by swirling dirt. Everyone squints up at the sky.

EXT. ATARI ENGINEERING BLDG. - DAY

Nolan and Moose hurry outside. More employees have gathered now, shielding their eyes from the dust as a HELICOPTER slowly descends onto a vacant FIELD behind the building.

As the chopper lands, Nolan approaches, holding his hair down. The helicopter blades slow and Ray climbs out with a team of THREE LACKEYS IN SUITS, all holding CLIPBOARDS.

NOLAN
(calling out)
Ray!

Ray and the three guys walk towards Nolan...

RAY
Nolan.

...then right past him, heading for the ENGINEERING BUILDING. From the way the guys in suits ignore Nolan, it's clear they've been warned about him. Nolan stands for a moment. Moose catches up. They share a look then follow Ray.

NOLAN
Ray...Ray! What is this?

RAY
Changes, Nolan.

Ray pauses at the building's front door, points above it.

RAY (CONT'D)
A security camera at the entry.

Lackey #1 writes down information.

NOLAN
Wait...no...what??

RAY
If you have a problem, talk to
Manny.

RAY
 (tapping wall)
 Employee ID card reader... NOLAN
 Talk to Manny? Talk to
Manny?

Lackey #1 jots this down.

NOLAN
 I'm talking to you, Ray.

Ray steps aside with Nolan as the rest of the group enters the building.

RAY
 Listen, I've been authorized to
 make changes here, and I'm not, you
 know, like I said, if you have a
 problem, talk to Manny.

Ray quickly enters the building. Nolan follows.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BUILDING - DAY

It's quiet, mostly empty. Ray points to a door.

RAY
 There's a hot tub in there that
 needs to be drained...

RAY (CONT'D) NOLAN
 ...It's a major liability. No. The hot tub's staying.

Lackey #2 writes down the note. Nolan points to what he's writing.

NOLAN
 We're not getting rid of the hot
 tub.

Ray peeks into a specific ENGINEERING LAB. It's empty.

RAY
 (to Moose, checking his
 watch)
 Where are the engineers? It's
 2:30.

MOOSE
 (feigning ignorance)
 The engineers?

RAY
 Can you please find them? I'd like
 to have a meeting.

NOLAN
What kind of meeting?

RAY

What goals?

RAY
Just please find the engineers.

Ray continues down the hall with his guys.

NOLAN
(sotto voce)

INT. LOS GATOS FERN BAR - DAY

Nolan enters the bar. Moose is right behind him. Nolan spots the six engineers. He walks to them while glancing around for Nancy. She's not around. Four of the engineers are at a table, drinking. The other two play DARTS a few feet away.

NOLAN

Nolan pulls up a chair. Moose sits as well. The guys playing darts walk over and stand behind the other four.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Guys, guys, everything's gonna be fine. It's all gonna be good, alright? I'm gonna fix it, okay? Just...listen...Ray wants to meet with us...

"About what?" "What's...?" "We still have jobs?"

NOLAN (CONT'D)
...they're gonna start proposing things I'm not gonna be happy about, okay, but, look, we have the advantage. They don't know what they're doing...and the way out -- we band together as a team, as a tight-knit, single-minded unit.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
...They can't...

ENGINEER #1

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 ...do anything without us.

ENGINEER #1
 ...we want to keep our jobs, right?

NOLAN
 Guys, guys, Ray needs us. You
 think he's gonna --

Sunlight flashes into the room and Nolan turns to see NANCY walking in. They make very brief eye contact and she looks away, continues to the bar, puts on an apron.

Nolan looks to his guys, back at Nancy, torn.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 He can't -- he doesn't know...we
 have to stick tog--

Nolan sees Nancy walking over to a nearby table.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 (to engineers)
 Hold on -- I'm sorry -- one
 second...

He walks to her, gesturing to the guys that he's coming back.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 Nancy. Nancy.

She looks up, acknowledges him, then walks away. He follows.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 You're angry and I'm, I'm sorry. I
 want to explain everything now, but
 I'm in the middle of a crisis with
 my company and --

NANCY
 I didn't ask you to come over here.

She walks back to the bar, deals with a CUSTOMER. Nolan hesitantly returns to his group, speaks to them with a body position indicating he's going back to Nancy.

NOLAN
 (quickly, intensely)
 Guys -- together, we have the
 power. We call the shots, alright?
 Can I count on you guys that we're
 sticking together?

"Yeah." "Sure, Nolan." "I'm in."

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Okay! I'll bring you another round here...just--

(walking away, gesturing a 'one moment' to them)

I'll be--

He goes back to Nancy. Before he can speak --

NANCY

Don't bother. I don't care. Go back to your business.

NOT AN

Nancy. Please. I'm sorry.

NANCY

Just...leave. It was a mistake...

NANCY

...and honestly...

NOT AN

T should have --

NANCY (CONT'D)

...it' not just about me -- the
disrespect -- saying you were
coming back in an hour --

NOLAN

My secretary was supposed --

NANCY

-- and having your secretary give me the news. Or that I haven't heard from you in almost a week. It's also that you're just a really shitty father.

A beat. An ashen-faced Nolan suddenly stands up. He digs his fingers into his hair, stunned.

He immediately turns and runs out.

EXT. LOS GATOS FERN BAR - DUSK

We stay CLOSE on Nolan, sprinting as fast as he can, only the sounds of his HEAVY BREATHING heard, running through the parking lot and over to the Atari parking lot.

EXT. PAULA'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Nolan's Rolls Royce zooms down the street and skids to a halt in front of the house. No other cars are parked. Nolan

jumps out, passing a poster board on the door that reads "ALISSA'S ARCADE PARTY".

INT. PAULA'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Nolan enters, out of breath, discovers the remnants of the party -- half-hanging streamers, torn wrapping paper, low-hoovering helium balloons. In the b.g., Paula cleans up trash while Britta watches TV. Paula sees Nolan and approaches him. Nolan avoids eye contact. Long beat of total silence.

PAULA

35 kids, all asking your daughter,
'Where are the video games you
promised?'

(beat)

I warned her not to get her hopes
up, but she listens to you.

Nolan nods sheepishly. He forces a weak smile for Britta, then walks slowly down the hall to Alissa's room, enters.

Alissa sits on her bed with her back against the wall, holding Chuck in her lap. She looks up with red eyes, sees Nolan, immediately looks away.

NOLAN

I am so sorry, honey.

She doesn't respond, pets Chuck.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

...Chuck doing okay?

She quickly puts Chuck into his cage then lies on her stomach in bed, her face in her pillow. Nolan slowly walks over, sits on the bed. Alissa contracts away from him.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

I'm just so, so sorry about what
I've done to you. I messed
everything up so badly.

He places his hand on her back and she shakes him off.

ALISSA

(into pillow)

Don't touch me! Leave me alone!
You're a liar and I hate you.

PAULA

(in doorway)

Just go.

Nolan hesitantly reaches to touch Alissa again, then pulls his hand back. He sits for a moment listening to Alissa sniffle, his own eyes dampening.

NOLAN

I know you have no reason to believe me but I'm gonna make it up to you, okay?...I love you, okay?

PAULA

Go, Nolan.

He slowly stands and shuffles out in shame.

EXT. PAULA'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Nolan gets into his Rolls, sits for a moment. Then he starts the car and violently reverses out of the driveway, tires spinning.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BUILDING - DUSK

Nolan stalks down the hall, enters his office.

NOLAN

(to secretary)

Where's Ray?

Without waiting for a response, Nolan barrels on, approaches a glass-walled CONFERENCE ROOM. He halts to witness the scene inside: Ray stands before the six engineers, Moose, and the three guys in suits, all sitting around a long table. Next to Ray is an easel displaying: 'FUTURE VCS GAME TITLES'. Moose sees Nolan outside the glass. Moose subtly shakes his head in a resigned fashion.

Nolan enters, clearly on edge. Ray pauses the meeting.

RAY

Nolan, we've been going over some of the goals that Warner has set out for us...

While slowly sitting down, a sweating Nolan squints with displeasure while reading the game titles: BASKETBALL, FOOTBALL, HOME RUN, ROCK FIGHT, CANYON BOMBER, SHOPPING.

RAY (CONT'D)

...and these are the next six titles we're going to be producing for the --

NOLAN

What's 'Shopping'?

Ray takes a breath, ready for a confrontation.

RAY

As I've been telling your coworkers here, these titles have all been thoroughly market-tested to appeal to specific demographics. Females responded well to 'Shopping'.

NOLAN

But what's the game?

RAY

(patronizing)

Well, Warner's come up with the titles. It's gonna be your job to come up with the games. 'Shopping' is a vast arena from which you can draw inspiration. Now as I was saying before, each of you will be assigned a title and you'll have 3 months to produce the game. We're estimating --

NOLAN

(nervously laughing)

No -- no. First of all, you can't make a good game in 3 months. That's first of all...

RAY

Well, we'll just have to --

NOLAN

You can make a piece of shit, if that's what you're shooting for.

RAY

Okay. This isn't going to be a debate. We will make the best games we can in 3 months and we will stay on schedule. Enough.

Ray turns around to flip to the next page on his easel.

NOLAN

When you say 'we', what exactly do you mean, Ray? Was I somehow...

NOLAN (CONT'D)
...not aware of your
engineering background?

RAY
Look, you can be in these
meetings, or...

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 'Cause it seems to me you don't
 have a fucking clue what you're...

NOLAN (CONT'D) RAY
 ...talking about... Alright, you need to leave.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 ...and none of us are going to
 sacrifice the quality of Atari's
 games so that we can keep to some
 idiotic schedule. None of us.

Ray is practically vibrating with anger and embarrassment.
 He pulls it together.

RAY
 Let's get some air, Nolan. Shall
 we? Excuse us, please.

Ray opens the door and gestures for Nolan to step out. It's
 very uncomfortable. Moose buries his head in his hands. A
 red-faced Nolan steps out, gesturing to the guys like he'll
 take care of this. Ray follows him.

EXT. ATARI ENGINEERING BUILDING - DUSK

Door opens. Nolan and Ray walk out.

NOLAN
 (exiting the building)
 I'm trying to help you, Ray. I'm
 trying to help you do your job.

Employees standing outside watch this with great discomfort.

RAY
 (under his breath)
 You talk to me away from the
 building.

Ray walks quickly around the side of the building, stepping
 on the grass. In the background, a putrid, mosquito-infested
 drainage ditch buzzes and shimmers in the afternoon heat.

NOLAN
 'Cause we've been doing this for
 awhile, you know, and --

RAY
 (suddenly turning to
 face Nolan)
 You are a child, Nolan. A child.

RAY (CONT'D) NOLAN
Stomping around here... Right, because I...

RAY (CONT'D)
...so outraged that anything's
changed like you had nothing to do
with this...

NOLAN
...because I actually care about
the quality?

RAY
Because this isn't a hippie
commune, Nolan. Because it's a
place of business now. And every
employee has to do their job or
they lose their job. Every
employee.

NOLAN
You think you can run this place
without me?

RAY
If I have to.

NOLAN
You think you can run this place
without any of us? Because we act
as a team, Ray, and if I go --

RAY
If I have to, I will. If I have
to. I'd rather not. But anyone
who refuses...

RAY (CONT'D) NOLAN
...to do their job... You need us, Ray.

NOLAN
What're you gonna tell Steve Ross?
"Hey, I fired every single guy who
knows how to..."

RAY
Try me, Nolan. Test it. See how
your friends feel about losing
their \$35,000 paychecks. See if I
can't find guys to replace them.
Roll the dice.

A tense beat. Only the buzz of insects. Nolan laughs
nervously at the absurdity of his predicament.

RAY (CONT'D)
Atari, Nolan.

NOLAN
What?

RAY
You know what it means.

Ray stares Nolan down for a moment, waiting for a response. Nolan has none. He stands there, considering his dwindling options, as Ray walks back to the building.

Nolan gazes out for a few beats, his eyes lingering on the stagnant canal, the unthinkable endgame becoming a reality in his mind. He subtly wilts, takes a deep breath, plods back.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BUILDING - DUSK

Nolan walks slowly down the hall, stops outside the glass-walled conference room, looking at Moose and the engineers.

Nolan enters. He rubs his temples with this forefinger and thumb. Ray waits anxiously.

NOLAN
(still looking down)
I'm gonna go...I'm sorry, guys...

Everyone in the room, including Ray, is taken aback. Nolan smiles wistfully at his guys, exits.

LONG SHOT of Nolan resignedly walking towards the fading daylight at the building's exit. At the door, he looks back one last time, then goes.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. WOODSIDE MANSION - DINING ROOM - DAY

WIDE on Nolan, all alone, humbly collating papers on the massive dining room table while wearing a white terry cloth cabana set. He tries to staple the papers, finds the stapler empty.

SEVERAL SHOTS of the former president of Atari starting to rush around the house in search of staples. He becomes slightly frantic and nervously looks out a window.

NOLAN'S POV: Moose, the six engineers, and all their GIRLFRIENDS partying in the pool and hot tub.

Nolan rummages through drawers, doesn't find staples, and just shoves the papers into FOLDERS. He quickly checks a mirror, adjusts his lapel.

EXT. WOODSIDE MANSION - POOL - DAY

He steps out of the house with the folders, all smiles now.

NOLAN

Hey!

The engineers and their girlfriends turn and shout greetings back to him. *"There he is!"* *"Looking good, man!"*

LATER. Nolan sits at a table with Moose and the engineers. In the b.g., the women frolic drunkenly in the pool. There's an uneasy dynamic at the table. The guys glance nervously at Nolan's folders.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Listen, I gotta say, in the end, I think it was the best thing that's ever happened to me.

Anxiously: *"Right on, Nolan"* *"Sure."* *"...for the best."*

NOLAN (CONT'D)

It just feels so good to be free.
And what I've got here, guys...
(taps folders)
...is an escape plan for all of
you, too.

The engineers subtly squirm.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Alright, check it out: in the game
of Go, there is only --

GIRLFRIEND #1

Watch this!

The girl tries to do a handstand on the bottom of the pool. In her inebriated state, her exposed legs flop over. The engineers clap and holler, thrilled by the interruption.

"Very impressive!" *"Try it again!"*

Nolan waits a beat for the guys to settle. Then, smiling...

NOLAN

In Go, there's only one move that
can overtake an Atari, and it's
called...Sente.

Nolan dramatically spreads the folders across the table like a hand of cards. On their covers: "Sente Technologies".

NOLAN (CONT'D)

The player who has 'sente' controls the game. And that's exactly what we're gonna do. But I don't wanna just beat 'em -- I wanna punish 'em, you understand? Sente is gonna be what Atari was supposed to be. We'll do it right this time. And we'll do it together...

The guys are politely enthusiastic, nodding and feigning interest. A few of the engineers glance towards the pool, hoping for another exhibition. The others look to Moose.

MOOSE

Ray told us there was a non-compete agreement...in your contract? Is that...I mean, is that gonna conflict...or...have you...?

Nolan stares at Moose, not expecting to hear that. He recovers with a nervous, pathetic laugh.

NOLAN

Wait, is that...? Guys, forget about it. I'll call my lawyer, work out a deal. Let me worry about that. No no, Sente is gonna happen. It is definitely gonna happen.

One of the engineers looks guiltily at his cohorts.

ENGINEER #2

Cool. So...how far along are you on the, uh, the plan, you know, the funding?

NOLAN

I've already -- it looks like -- is that what this is about? Money? Guys, this is me here --

Right then, an engineer is bonked in the head by a wet beach ball. Water sprays on some of Nolan's folders. He wipes them with his shirt. The provoked engineer uses the opportunity to get up and jump in the pool to exact revenge.

Other engineers stand and offer Nolan perfunctory acknowledgments. "It's interesting, man." "We should keep talking about it." They all head over to the pool.

Nolan looks bewildered. Moose waits a while before speaking.

MOOSE

You should know...Ray offered us
raises. Ten grand extra a year.

A few women, now topless, come flying down the hill on a 120 foot water slide, splashing into the pool. Nolan watches helplessly as the party he created goes on without him.

EXT. WOODSIDE MANSION - DRIVEWAY - LATER

Nolan stands in the driveway waving weakly as his old team drives off in their cars -- Porsches, Ferraris, Aston Martins. Moose hasn't left, puts a hand on Nolan's shoulder.

MOOSE

We're taking off.

Moose gestures to the ATARI RECEPTIONIST who waits next to his '65 Shelby AC Cobra. There's an awkward moment between Nolan and Moose.

MOOSE (CONT'D)

Sorry about...
(gestures to pool)

Nolan gives a gracious wave -- *Don't worry about it.*

MOOSE (CONT'D)

Ya know I wish I was more like you,
Nolan...to move on and just -- I
don't know...but, like...you know
me, Nolan. Right? I...
(almost embarrassed)
I like stability...and...

NOLAN

I get it. It's not for you.
Things are good for you right now.
(looks over at the girl
and the car)

Right?

MOOSE

(smiling shyly)

Yeah.

NOLAN

I just want you to be happy.

Nolan reaches to shake Moose's hand. Instead, Moose gives Nolan a tight hug. Nolan hugs him back.

MOOSE
You gonna be alright?

NOLAN
(ending the hug)
Get outta here. I'll be fine.
I'll figure it out.

MOOSE
Of course you will. You always do.

Moose pats him affectionately on the shoulder and walks back to his car. He and the receptionist get inside. Moose salutes Nolan then drives away.

Alone, Nolan stands in front of his mansion and watches the car disappear down the road.

INT. WOODSIDE MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE on typed words on paper: "EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT, entered into and effective as of between Warner Communications..."
The pages flip by and we reveal...

Nolan sitting on the couch, digging through the document. He stops, reads a page...then flings the contract away and falls back onto the couch. He's totally still for a few beats.

A WIDE SHOT reveals that the enormous room is basically empty besides the couch and a 6-foot projection TV. Nolan leans over and picks up the phone off the floor. Dials.

NOLAN
Hi. Is, um -- hi...how are you?...
I'm okay...Is Alissa around?...I'd
love to talk to her if...still?
Okay...well, when she's, you know,
when she's ready, I'd love to talk
to her, so...okay. Thanks...

He hangs up...lies back, depressed, dials again...waits, fidgety. Through the receiver, we hear Nancy's voice and the BEEP of an answering machine.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Hi. It's Nolan. I'd love to be
able to...to talk to you...and, um,
you know -- explain some things --
(long beat, not knowing
what to say)

After a while, he just hangs up slowly. The house is dead silent.

EXT. WOODSIDE MANSION - POOL - NIGHT

In total darkness, we see a LIT MATCH make contact with the BURNING ASHES of a pipe. Nolan lies back on a chaise lounge, smoking, gazing into the infinity of space.

INT. WOODSIDE MANSION - GAME ROOM - NIGHT

WIDE ANGLE on a completely dark game room. At the far end, we see Nolan's silhouette against a flickering glow, the only light in this vast room of a dozen unplugged arcade games.

CLOSE on Nolan's face. In his eyes, we see the reflection of the hypnotic NIGHT DRIVER game -- a first-person view careening down a pitch-black road with only the roadside reflectors marking the twisting path ahead.

INT. WOODSIDE MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nolan is sprawled on the couch in a bathrobe with a two-week-old beard and matted, greasy hair. Food wrappers, beer cans, and random trash are piled on the floor before him.

He's motionless except for the occasional blink and thumb-click of the remote. He stops on a channel. On the 6-foot TV, RONALD REAGAN delivers a speech promising the coming of a new era.

RONALD REAGAN
...the time has come...

The phone RINGS. Nolan doesn't move to pick it up.

RONALD REAGAN (CONT'D)
...to start acting to bring about
the great conservative majority
party we know is waiting to be
created...

As Reagan continues, we barely hear the BEEP of Nolan's answering machine pick up, and then...a WEAK, LITTLE VOICE. Nolan lowers the TV volume slightly.

ALISSA (ON MACHINE)
(crying)
...wanted to talk to you...

Nolan drops to the floor to scramble for the phone amongst his trash. He hits it, picks it up.

NOLAN
Heeeeey. What's wrong??
(his expression shifting
to concern)
(MORE)

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 ...Oh no -- I'm...I'm sorry.
 (listening)
 I'm so sorry, honey. When did that
 -- of course I can...you want me to
 come over?

EXT. PARK - DAY

Under a tree, Nolan crouches with an arm around Alissa while she holds onto him tightly, sniffling into his shoulder. His hands are dirty. Before them, a shoebox rests in a freshly dug hole.

NOLAN
 You want to say anything before...?

She turns and looks at the box, can't do it, shakes her head. She looks to Nolan to say something.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 Okay...um...
 (beat)
 I don't think that anyone has ever
 loved a pet more than Alissa loved
 you. She's told me how special you
 were to her, and...How old was he?

Alissa holds up six fingers.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
 (quiet)
 ...Six years...
 (contemplates)
 I regret that I let those years
 slip by without being part of your
 life...and I can't get them
 back...but you will not be
 forgotten.

Nolan gently pushes the dirt over the box. Alissa helps him, still clinging to him with her other arm.

EXT. PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

They stroll back to Nolan's car. Nolan opens the door for her, then gets into the driver's seat, takes out his keys.

NOLAN
 I'd like to take you out to dinner
 tonight -- you and Britta...if
 you're not, you know, if you're not
 busy.

ALISSA

Where's Nancy?

NOLAN

Nancy?

ALISSA

You should tell her to come with us.

NOLAN

Oh, yeah, I don't, I don't think she wants to talk to me.

ALISSA

Why, because she didn't get to go to Disneyland?

NOLAN

Well, that's part of it, and she also wasn't too happy with the way I let you guys down.

ALISSA

Well she's not gonna be mad if I asked her to come.

Nolan looks at her.

ALISSA (CONT'D)

Dad -- just call her. Trust me.

Nolan smiles at her, then hesitantly picks up the phone.

NOLAN

Okay. Fine.

(he dials, waits for the BEEP, looks at Alissa)

Hi Nancy....it's Nolan....I'm....I'm here with Alissa under her surveillance. She asked to see you....and....of course, you know, I'd....I'd like to see you, too....and, so--

(putting his hand on Alissa's hand)

...we were thinking of going out to dinner tonight and we wanted to know--

(Nancy picks up)

...heeeeey -- how are you? I'm -- well, no, I'm...what? She's -- yeah, she's right here. Okay.

With a curious smile, Nolan gives the phone to Alissa.

ALISSA

Hello? Hi. I'm good. We...
yeah...we were going to dinner and
we wanted to know if you wanted to
come with us...

(listening for a few
beats, smiling)

Okay...

(to Nolan)

She's only going to come with us
because I asked her.

NOLAN

(smiling)

Okay. Fine.

ALISSA

(on phone)

I don't know. Do you like pizza?

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD PIZZA PLACE - NIGHT

A typical family dive. Wooden booths, filthy carpet, cracked plastic pitchers of Coke. A group of RAMBUNCTIOUS LITTLE LEAGUE PLAYERS run around the room while their MOTHERS yell.

Nolan, Nancy, Alissa, and Britta sit in one of the booths. Nolan sits next to Nancy. They all eat pepperoni pizza, except for Britta, who has her arms crossed.

NOLAN

(while picking
pepperonis off a slice)

...I guess the upside here is that
I won't have any secrets, right?

ALISSA

(to Nancy)

'Alissa, I need your room to build
my game. Let's make a deal.'

Nancy laughs and shakes her head at Nolan.

NOLAN

I was hoping you'd forget this
stuff by now.

(gives slice to Britta)

Here you go. Not a pepperoni to be
found, okay?

Britta inspects the slice.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Did I miss anything?

ALISSA
Here's, okay -- this is what he --

ALISSA (CONT'D) BRITTA
-- doesn't know -- (taking a bite)
Thanks, Daddy.

ALISSA (CONT'D)
-- the deal, I didn't really care
about my room. I just wanted a
pet.

NOLAN
Nicely played.

NANCY
Sounds like you had a really good
friend there, Alissa.

ALISSA
Well, life, you know...it's hard.

Nolan takes Alissa's hand to comfort her. Nancy witnesses this quiet gesture. Out of the corner of his eye, Nolan sees Nancy smiling at him.

NOLAN
(touching his face)
...do I have...is there cheese?

Nancy shakes her head, still smiling at him. The two of them gaze at each other for a beat, then they're distracted by the sound of a kid singing.

A couple Little Leaguers have hopped up onto a raised platform and they're using it as a stage. An aggravated mom hurries over, pulls her kid down. The kid leaves the stage with mock surprise, as if he's being yanked off with a hook.

Britta and Alissa laugh. Nolan looks at his daughters and Nancy. He takes a beat to enjoy the warmth of the moment.

With that feeling, Nolan turns and glances around the restaurant. Near the door, a group of kids SMACK on the glass of a CLAW PRIZE MACHINE...other kids bang knives and forks on their table, chanting -- "We want food!"

We MOVE IN SLOWLY on Nolan's face. The sound begins to drop out as his eyes dart back and forth, watching all these kids desperately trying to pass the time before the pizza arrives.

Nolan's eyes stop.

EXT. LOS GATOS ATARI FACTORY - DAY

With a determined expression, Nolan gets out of his car holding a MANILA ENVELOPE and walks with purpose through the Atari parking lot.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BUILDING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

A HALF DOZEN YOUNG MEN IN SUITS with briefcases wait in the reception area. Nolan storms in, walks past a DOWDY RECEPTIONIST and is stopped by a SECURITY DOOR which he tries to open with no luck.

NOLAN

I need to see Ray.

DOWDY RECEPTIONIST

Um, excuse me, is Mr. Kassar
expecting you?

NOLAN

It's Nolan.

DOWDY RECEPTIONIST

(sing-songy, trying to
get a last name)

Nolan...?

NOLAN

(impatiently handing her
folder)

Here. Just give this to him.
He'll see me.

Nolan plops down in a seat amongst the GQ poster boys. Upon seeing a sign that reads 'NO SMOKING', he takes out his PIPE and lights up. Flustered by this rebel, the dowdy receptionist hastily uses her MAGNETIC ID CARD to open the security door, and walks with Nolan's envelope down the hall.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

The receptionist walks past rows of NEW CUBICLES. It's like a morgue in here. Everyone is wearing SUITS and communicates in a hushed tone. The receptionist KNOCKS softly on Ray's office door. Ray looks up from his desk.

DOWDY RECEPTIONIST

Sir? I'm sorry to bother you but a
man named 'Nolan' wanted me to give
this to you...

A concerned-looking Ray stands up, takes the envelope, peeks down the hall.

RAY

He's...here? In the building?

DOWDY RECEPTIONIST

Yes. And he's smoking.

The receptionist stands with her arms crossed. Ray opens the envelope.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BUILDING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Puffing repeatedly on his pipe, Nolan sits there with no expression. The young suits around him shift uncomfortably from the smoke.

INT. ATARI ENGINEERING BUILDING - OFFICE - DAY

Ray and a FEW SUITED LAWYERS huddle together in an office, speaking conspiratorially about the situation.

LAWYER #1

(looking at the papers)

He wants this restaurant idea??

LAWYER #2

He wants what??

LAWYER #3

Guy's losing his mind.

INT. ENGINEERING BUILDING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

While waiting, Nolan spots Buddhism Guy enter the building, now completely bald and wearing an orange Tibetan robe. Buddhism Guy walks to the receptionist. Nolan watches with wry amusement.

BUDDHISM GUY

(in businesslike tone)

Hi. I used to work here and I

still haven't gotten --

(surprised to see Nolan)

Mr. Bushnell!

With the pipe clenched between his teeth, Nolan offers a cursory salute. Buddhism Guy interprets that as an invitation to walk over and sit right next to him.

BUDDHISM GUY (CONT'D)

(sotto voce)

These assholes...firing you...they

have no idea, man. None. I want

you to know you've inspired me.

I'm starting my own company, and

(MORE)

BUDDHISM GUY (CONT'D)
we're gonna make computers. We're
looking for investors. You
interested?

NOLAN
Got this 7-year non-compete thing
with these jerk-offs, so...

BUDDHISM GUY
Jesus. Wow. That sucks.
(gives him card)
Well here's my card, man. Call me
anytime, alright?

Nolan takes the card. For the first time we see Buddhist
Guy's name: "STEVE JOBS". Nolan looks at it.

NOLAN
(nonchalant)
Cool. Well -- carry the torch, Mr.
Jobs.

As Nolan and Steve shake hands, the phone rings. The
receptionist picks it up.

DOWDY RECEPTIONIST
Mr. Bushnell, he's ready for you.

INT. ATARI BUILDING - KASSAR'S OFFICE - DAY

It's Nolan's old office, but now sterile and virtually empty
except for expensive furniture.

Seated before Ray, Nolan looks like a lowlife bad-ass as he
stares emotionless at the new president of Atari, enveloped
in a cloud of pipe smoke. Kassar pretends to read the
document again.

KASSAR
(nervous laugh)
Nolan. Nolan. We're, um...we're --
yeah, we're gonna let you have your
carnival-restaurant, okay? But can
I-- can I give you some advice...?

Nolan raises his eyebrows subtly.

KASSAR (CONT'D)
Before you lose your shirt on this
thing, do yourself a favor, will
ya? Do your homework. Market
analysis. Sales projections.
Consumer testing. Don't just jump
(MORE)

KASSAR (CONT'D)
into something simply because you
think it's "cool".

Nolan just stares at Kassar. Kassar looks back at Nolan. A stalemate until Kassar breaks the awkwardness and signs the document, dropping it in front of Nolan.

KASSAR (CONT'D)
(sympathetically)
Well. Good luck to you.

CUT TO:

TWO SPOTLIGHTS swirl around a RED VELVET CURTAIN.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
(overly excited)
And now...drumroll...please...

CUE DRUMROLL.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen, it's Alissa's
10th birthday, so put your hands
together for everybody's favorite
party animal! Chuck...

The RED CURTAINS part swiftly.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...E...Cheese!

A derby-wearing RAT stands center stage, holding a mic, singing the Beatles' "Birthday", backed by his ANIMATRONIC ROCK BAND of a hillbilly hound, a big-moustachioed Italian guy, and a purple monster.

"You say it's your birthday...It's my birthday, too, yeah!"

We PULL BACK to see ALISSA with 30 of her friends. They're celebrating: eating pizza, dancing in their seats, boys tapping on girls and running away, others mesmerized by the band. Alissa laughs hysterically at a hammy boy who pulls up his red sweatpants to his chin and swings his hips around.

The place is packed with parents and their kids. In the b.g. we see an indoor carnival: kids playing video games, going on rides, redeeming tickets at a prize booth.

Sitting in the middle of the celebration, we find

NOLAN,

the quiet center, the brains behind it all, surveying his latest vision with a peaceful grin. NANCY sits next to him, holding their INFANT SON. BRITTA sits on the other side of Nancy, clapping the baby's hands to the beat.

We MOVE IN on Nolan's face, now lost in thought...

...dreaming of the next...big...thing.

CUT TO BLACK.

"Birthday" continues as the EPILOGUE FADES IN:

"Under Ray's leadership, Atari stayed exclusively with the VCS, abandoning development of nearly all new products. When Space Invaders was released on the VCS, the console became a worldwide phenomenon. In 1982, Atari accounted for 70% of Warner's income and controlled 80% of the video game business."

"By the next year, exactly as Nolan predicted, consumers wearied of the outdated system and the company hit a wall. Atari lost \$536 million in less than a year. 6 million VCS cartridges were buried in a New Mexico landfill, and the company dropped from 10,000 employees to 200."

"Amidst the devastation, 23 minutes before Warner announced their losses, Ray Kassar sold 5,000 shares of his Warner stock. By the next day, the stock dropped 33%. Kassar was charged with insider trading and he resigned his post as CEO."

"In 1983, as a result of Warner's losses, the entire video game industry crashed, and Warner sold off what was left of Atari. This left the door wide open for the Japanese to enter the market and dominate from that point forward."

"Since the huge success of Chuck E. Cheese, Nolan has been responsible for the development of automobile navigation systems, high-definition monitors, and online shopping, and this year, with their 6 children by their side, he and his wife Nancy celebrate their 30-year anniversary."