

EGGPLANT

Written by

Jarred Hodgdon

Based on, Man Seeking Woman

COLD OPEN

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

In the hectic morning bustle, PEDESTRIANS are bundled against the cold. **JOSH**(28), awkward type, walks happily down the sidewalk with coffee in hand.

Josh stops near his CAR. Smile drops - coffee drops, explodes and splashes on his leg. YELP! Steam comes off his wet pants.

JOSH
Aw, jeez. Not again!

He notices then yanks a parking ticket off the windshield.

JOSH (CONT'D)
No,no,no. Street sweeping!?

Josh frantically looks up at the street sign with an array of confusing, complicated parking restrictions.

CLOSE ON - One of the signs reads:

NO PARKING TUESDAYS - 8 AM - 11 AM - STREET SWEEPING

JOSH (CONT'D)
Darn it.

He looks down the street.

JOSH'S POV - Through a crowd of PEOPLE Josh see's **MERCY DODGE**(25), a Parking Enforcement Officer for the city. She is a hundred feet away, slides a ticket into another cars windshield. She hops into her tiny PARKING ENFORCEMENT VEHICLE and takes off.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Wait!

Josh pursues on foot. He spins around to avoid an OLD LADY carrying an EGGPLANT..

A MANHOLE opens up and a ORANGE HELMET WORKER pops out. Josh hops over him. Worker sets an eggplant in the street.

A HAIRY DUDE pushes a CART OF EGGPLANTS into the street. Josh slides on his heels but collides with it and falls into a pile of eggplants.

HAIRY DUDE
Hey! MY EGGSPLANTS!

JOSH
Sorry, mister!

HAIRY DUDE
(to himself)
The eggplants must be delivered as instructed.

Josh gets up and dusts himself off, he's covered in purple stains. He wipes his pants, getting purple goosh on his hands. He smiles, smells and licks his finger.

JOSH
Mmmm, eggplant.

A thick crowd ahead obscures Mercy from view. Josh fights his way through a crowd, Mercy's back comes into view.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Hey!

Josh grabs hold of her shoulder, spins the Officer around.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Oh, snaps!

Enchantment overcomes Josh. His eyes are large and shimmery light twinkles around him. Mercy looks similarly enchanted as they connect eyes. Neither seems able to speak.

JOSH (CONT'D)
What is happening right now?

MERCY
It feels like love right?

Mercy seems to have a change of heart and shakes the love spell off. She spins around and throws a parking ticket on a NEARBY CAR'S windshield - runs away.

JOSH
Wait! I never got your name!

Mercy hops into her tiny vehicle and takes off, driving right through the CROWD of people crossing the street. Folks SCREAM and dive out of the way.

JOSH (CONT'D)
I love her!? But I only just met her. It's love at first sight!
(flabbergasted)
Love at first sight? What's that!?

Josh - horrified by the ramifications.

ACT I

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

LOUD KNOCK at the door. Josh enters and walks in.

Reveal **MIKE** (27), Josh's gonzo/slacker best friend, ass out and humping into his couch. He's fully outfitted in OCULUS RIFT gear - headset, headphones and holding controls.

JOSH
Oh God, no!

Josh recoils in disgust.

MIKE
Oh yeah. Grease it you little minx!

JOSH
Mike! Mike!

MIKE
Flip it over. Flip it over!

Josh yanks the headphones off Mike. Mike freaks out, he flips over revealing his groin region, sheathed in an eggplant.

MIKE (CONT'D)
YEAUGH! YEAUGH! This is private,
this is OUR creperie!

Mike swipes at the air.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Where are you, you pervert?!

Josh dodges the blows.

JOSH
Hey! Mike it's me!

Josh pulls off Mike's headset.

MIKE
YEUGH! YEEAAA!

Mike flails. His eyes crossed.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Josh is that you?! I'm cyber-
thizzing, bro!

Mike topples onto the coffee table and has a SEIZURE.

Josh looks about with worry. He looks at the VR headset in his hands, holds it up and peers inside.

JOSH

ACK!

INSERT VR VIEW - A SEXY BIKINI LADY and SEXY SHIRTLESS MAN dollop whipped cream over a large crepe.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sitting on the couch, Josh avoids looking at Mike. Mike - still naked - holds a hot water bottle over his head.

MIKE

It's like deep sea diving. You can't just pop out at the surface right back into reality.

JOSH

Sorry.

MIKE

Now I got the cyber-bends.

JOSH

That's a new one for you... food porn, eh?

MIKE

At least I'm baking with flavors other than vanilla, dude.

Mike struggles to stand, rises and sits on the couch.

JOSH

Actually I came over to talk to you about a little kink all my own. An odd thing that happened by happenstance to happen with a female.

MIKE

Yeah?

Mike buddy-punches Josh.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Ah, ah, ah. You dirty dog.

Mike smiles expectantly. Josh stands.

JOSH
(conspiratorially)
She was a parking cop. And we had
a... special thing.

Mike bites his lower lip - *anticipating*.

MIKE
Mmm hmm?

JOSH
Love. At first sight.

Mike jumps off the couch and SHRIEKS in shock. The eggplant
falls off his junk again.

MIKE
No! Not you. It's not supposed to
happen to you!

JOSH
Wait. You've heard of love at first
sight? I thought you'd be happy.

MIKE
Happy?! It's disgusting.

JOSH
Since when are you opposed to
gawking over strange women?

MIKE
I objectify and sexualize
strangers.
(pointing a finger)
You said love. Love is the worst
STD there is and you're telling me
you caught love without even
engaging in gland-to-gland combat!

JOSH
I'm a hopeless romantic.

MIKE
So you saw a cute señora. Big deal.
You don't have to invent some idea
like touchless love.

JOSH
It was a feeling... and I had it.

Mike and Josh cross their arms.

MIKE

Forget about her and never see her again. You have to trust me.

JOSH

I'll never forget her, but you just might get your way. She fled and I don't know how to find her.

MIKE

So you love someone, you didn't even stack your pancakes together AND you don't know where she is!?

Josh holds up his ticket.

JOSH

Right here! She wrote her name right here! Mercy Dodge!

Mike grabs the ticket in frustration and checks it out.

MIKE

You don't deserve this for being so stupid but I'm gonna help you. If only so you'll forget this crazy idea of love at first sight.

Mike snatches up his Oculus Rift.

JOSH

Oh no. What're you gonna do?

Mike's gearing up and slipping into his tech.

MIKE

Plug that ethernet cable into the port.

Josh complies -- WHIRR. Mike fires up his gear, he jolts, his arms outstretch.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'm in.

Mike starts moving his hands in a jerking off motion.

JOSH

In where?

MIKE

In through the back door. That's my way.

JOSH
Okay. I'm gonna leave.

MIKE
No. Look.

Mike does a swiping motion and a hologram appears in the center of the room. A wire light grid of city buildings. Mike swipes and jerks all around.

MIKE (CONT'D)
I'm tapped into the world wide web by the slicked bum end of a DHS server. From there I did a back door search of all the Dodge's in the city and I cross searched that with civil servants.

JOSH
Like Parking Enforcement Officers.

MIKE
You got it, pal. Now that got me a few hits, but only one in the Parking Division.

The holographic simulation swirls all around- zooming into the buildings, honing in on a location.

MIKE (CONT'D)
That narrowed the field to one hit and BOOM here we go. Backdoor... Can't get in if you don't knock.

SHLOOMP. The visualization zooms into a fourth floor apartment window - wire-frame imagery becomes zoomed in satellite imagery. A HAIRY SHIRTLESS man, dances the lambada.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Lambada, the forbidden dance. Now I see how this Jezebel snared you in. She's a beaut!

Josh flinches, grossed out.

JOSH
Well that's not her so I'll probably just go to the police.

MIKE
No!

Mike pulls off his headgear - BRRZP - the hologram disappears. He sways and shakes his head - *dazed*.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Just wait. Don't go to the police...or City Hall. I've heard stories, man. If you ever want to see her again that's the last thing you should do.

JOSH

You're trying to stop me from meeting the girl that might be the love of my life!

MIKE

Just forget about her. Bong hit?

Mike hoists up a giant bong. Josh pushes him aside.

JOSH

See you later.

Josh crosses and exits.

Mike looks about worriedly. He raises his cell phone up to his head and dials. Pacing, he waits for the call to answer. He walks to the window, parts the blinds and looks out.

MIKE

(in phone)

I don't know what you got me into. I just saw Josh. He's peeling the onion back and it could mean tears for everyone.

MIKE'S POV - We see Josh outside, look both ways and run across the street.

INT. LIZ'S OFFICE - DAY

LIZ (30), lawyer/Josh's sister, works at her desk. She peers down her nose and over her glasses to address Josh.

LIZ

I'm on company time, do you know what I cost?

JOSH

I'll talk really fast.

Liz reaches over and SHLOOP -- pulls the lever to run an old school style taxi meter. The dollar signs start immediately going up.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Ack!

(then fast)

I got a ticket for a street sweeping violation and I think it is pretty bunk and I'm afraid to go to traffic court and kick it up to the next level when I think if I just had a shot of explaining it to the Parking Enforcement Officer she might be understandi--

LIZ

She?

JOSH

(Micro Machine Guy fast)

Yes she's a she so I did have a chance to briefly catch a glimpse of her but not for long enough to actually get a word in or register a protest so I suppose that my question is, could you somehow look up records and find this particular Officer for me so I could catch her at a good time, maybe when she's getting off of work so that I could just have my day in court to ask her out - er, I mean explain to her why maybe I shouldn't have to pay the ticket?

LIZ

So you like her?

JOSH

It's a purely legal thing of me trying to fight this ticket and get off on her- I mean it!

Josh raises a finger, about to explain but Liz plugs his mouth with her finger.

Josh's eyes travel over to look at the rapidly escalating meter which is in the thousands of dollars. He MERUMPHS from under the sibling finger.

LIZ

If it's legal advice, the clock keeps running. You want my take on you stalking a cute meter maid? That comes free.

JOSH
(breaking)
Oh God she's so cute. Fine!

BANG Liz stops the meter...at \$7460.00. A thin paper ticket prints out. Liz rips and pockets it.

LIZ
We'll add it to the I.O.U's.
(smiles)
Why didn't you just tell me that?
We can usually talk about this stuff.

Josh scratches his head.

JOSH
It's just the circumstances this time... are different.

LIZ
Circumstances?

JOSH
She's more than cute...it's love.
Love at first sight.

LIZ
Shit... Josh are you crazy?

JOSH
So you've heard of it?

LIZ
Yeah. I'm familiar with the hypothesis. It's something we debated and theorized about as green, first year law students. We did a rigged civil trial simulation based around a love at first sight defense. I understand the legislative appeal of the concept, but it doesn't stand to scrutiny.

JOSH
I really felt it. She did too, I could tell.

Liz SIGHS. She gets up and grabs books off her bookshelf. She HEAPS the heavy volumes onto her desk.

LIZ
State. Federal. Criminal. Civil.
Maritime.

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

You name it, a love at first sight argument has been tried in every type of court in every type of law and has never worked.

JOSH

Well what's that got to do with me?

Liz rips open a book and slams her finger into it.

LIZ

Even the Hague! The ICJ dismissed a case between Iceland and the The U.K. over a disputed fishery, solely on the basis of a love at first sight argument and stated, (reading) "the argument doesn't hold water and smells malodorously fishy".

JOSH

Okay. So I won't subpoena her. Any idea how I could just find her?

Liz takes off her glasses, looks at her brother with concern.

LIZ

What you're talking about goes against all the social mores and conventions of dating, leaping like at least twenty steps.

(grimly)

What you are trying to do goes against the whole system.

JOSH

I can't be slowed down anymore. I'm just going to the precinct house.

Liz thinks twice.

LIZ

No! Just grow some balls. Find a dick.

JOSH

Huh?

LIZ

Get a private eye. But they better be versed in Aesop's fables for the yarn you're peddling.

JOSH
A P.I.. And you can't help me?

LIZ
You just had to bring your crazy
problem here. I have a reputation
at this firm.

JOSH
(rhetorical)
So it's Brother V. Your Career, eh?

LIZ
My corner, your paint.

Josh begins to walk out but takes notice of a bouquet of eggplants, set in a basket on a table near the door.

JOSH
Hey, mind if I...?

Josh points at the eggplants.

LIZ
Go for it. Someone at City Hall is
cozying up with us for some reason
and dropped them off... Gross.

Josh grabs one and bites into it as he exits.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. PRIVATE EYE OFFICE - DAY

A dingy one room office. Stacks of dishes rival stacks of paper on the desk. **SALLY VAUGHN** (27), dressed in a old-timey, smart, and professional getup, removes a pot of eggs from a hot plate.

She SLAMS an egg down on her desk, freeing the food from the shell. Begins to pick up and eat pieces of it.

Determined, frantic, pensive - her eyes dart as she thinks.

SALLY
Hard-boiled sulfur and the bitter
sludge of devils milk. This racket
is killing me.

Her eyes are glued to the door as she downs the last of her egg.

SALLY (CONT'D)

I SWEAR I'll hoof and heel it and hang up my hat if the next Jasper who walks through that door ain't on the level! I'm tired of this city and it's streets paved with crooked angles.

A KNOCK at the door. Sally composes herself.

SALLY (CONT'D)

IT'S OPEN.

The knob jiggles, but it doesn't open.

SALLY (CONT'D)

C'mon! Push harder!

A SHOVE behind the door, it opens. Josh enters.

Josh and Sally connect eyes, freezing for a moment of magic as light sparkles around them. Struck by love at first sight.

Josh shakes his head to get rid of the feeling and avoids further eye contact. Sally smacks the side of her head, then smells her coffee suspiciously.

JOSH

The door... sticks when it's cold out, huh?

SALLY

Maybe. But it's seventy degrees out there, kid.

JOSH

Just sticks then overall I guess.

SALLY

No. It don't.

Sally curiously eyes Josh.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Have a seat.

JOSH

Okay, sure.

Josh tries to clear a little spot amongst the rubble on a chaise lounge at the far end of the room. He makes a little edge and sits down. Sally looks him up and down.

SALLY

I ain't Freud, just squat in the chair next time.

Sally indicates to the wood chair across her desk. She rounds the desk, drags it close to Josh, sits in it herself and looks him in the eyes.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Now. What bothers you, sweetheart?

JOSH

Um. I need to find a girl, er, woman.

Josh can't bear the close quarter conversation, he stands and crosses to the center of the room. This annoys Sally.

SALLY

A cute fella like you? The old lady hiding out?

Josh blushes.

JOSH

N-no! It's not like that.

Sally spins, her back is now to Josh.

SALLY

(sotto, to herself)

A pussycat of a man, seeking a woman out of purposes of plain chivalry? No. There's a souring coming to this milk.

Sally spins back round to face Josh.

SALLY (CONT'D)

I don't do lovers quarrels.

JOSH

Sh-She's a Parking Enforcement Officer. I have to find her... cause of a parking thing.

SALLY

Ah. She's got your ticket for an infraction of the heart you might say.

JOSH

Just a parking ticket! I want a shot at talking my way out of it.

Sally's demeanor turns, she crosses to the door, opens it and shows Josh the way out.

SALLY

Traffic court is across the tracks
in the business side of town.

Josh exits but stops in the hall, his back to Sally.

JOSH

It's another damn ticket for street
sweeping violation. They never even
sweep my street! It just seems like
a racket maybe? A shakedown?

Sally's eyes go wide. She grabs Josh's shoulder and yanks him into the room. Sally SLAMS the door shut and throws Josh against it.

SALLY

Street sweeping violation!? You're
talking City Hall here, Buster. You
gonna take them on?! Huh!?

Finger to Josh's face --

SALLY (CONT'D)

Who sent you?!

JOSH

The yellow pages. I found you in
the yellow pages!

SALLY

No one uses the yellow pages
anymore! The coppers send you?!

JOSH

No! Fine, it was Yelp! I found you
on Yelp!

SALLY

Yeah?

Sally softens.

SALLY (CONT'D)

I. I got some bum reviews on there.

JOSH

I don't trust the stars. I read the
reviews. Try to put them in
context.

SALLY
A grain of salt.

JOSH
Yeah.

SALLY
Takes a million grains to bake a ham.

Josh is perplexed. Sally studies his eyes.

JOSH
I'm not sure I--

SALLY
--Maybe you're on the level, but I can't help you, rosy cheeks. I'll do tail jobs, but in a business climate like this a Shamus like myself can't afford to cross the blue line.

She opens the door behind Josh. A faint sound of TRUMPETS can be heard in the hall. Sally guides Josh out.

JOSH
What if it was about the girl?

She shoves Josh out. The SAD TRUMPET music grows.

SALLY
Maybe it is about that parking princess after all and maybe I don't like that ya lied to me. Either way the dice fall, spells craps for you.

Before he can beg, Josh is swarmed by three suited JAZZ TRUMPETERS who pass by and enter the room, playing sad MUSIC.

SALLY (CONT'D)
My three o'clock jazz combo. C'mon in boys.

Sally SLAMS the door on Josh's shocked face. TRUMPET MUSIC.

SALLY (CONT'D)
(sing-talky)
The connection of two souls. It ain't logical, or even biological. Every cog in every machine the world over hums in the spirit of our beating humanity.
(MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)

The world breaths off our fruitless
dreams of the death of loneliness.

Sally grabs up her trumpet and starts playing SAD JAZZ MUSIC with her crew. She parts the blinds with her free hand and looks out her second floor window to see Josh cross the street.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE VAUGHN DETECTIVE AGENCY - DAY

Outside looking in, Sally peeks through the blinds of her office. Josh is at the curb - looks both ways and crosses the street. As he crosses he navigates around garbage.

JOSH

Get it together, Josh. What's wrong with you? Now you like dick too? I mean the P.I. I'm trying to convince myself I had love at first sight and now I have a second love at first sight? I just gotta forget that ever happened and find Mercy.

Josh stops and looks up see's a sign for CHUBBY BEEF - a hamburger restaurant.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Might as well stress eat.

He moves to enter. BOOM! A MAN IN TRENCH COAT rushes out the door and bumps into Josh.

INT. CHUBBY BEEF - CONTINUOUS

A few DINERS take note of Josh as he enters. At one table a plate with a hamburger on it is quickly switched with a grilled eggplant.

Josh sidles up to a barstool seat across from the **GREASY GRILL-COOK(45)**.

A wall sign shows a big eggplant and reads:

ALL BEEF PATTIES NOW SERVED WITH EGGPLANT

JOSH

Alright! You guys are on the
eggplant wagon-train too!

Greasy beams a big smile, showcasing his gold tooth.

GREASY
Sure is, feller.

JOSH
I'll take a double. I'm starved.

GREASY
You betcha.

Greasy flips two eggplant patties off the grill and onto a bun then slides the hot plate down the counter to Josh. It looks like a double cheeseburger, but with purple eggplant looking patties. Josh digs right in and takes a big bite.

JOSH
Mmm. I always loved eggplant but didn't think many other people did.

GREASY
(through a tight grin)
Everyone loves it. Just eat up.

As Josh chows down, everyone watches him conspiratorially.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A busy storefront street in a hip neighborhood. Sally hustles down the sidewalk. Her mind races - she looks at the trash filled gutter.

SALLY
(to herself)
Every question has two answers,
they may both be incorrect but one
of 'ems closer to the mark.

She looks both ways. She see's another STREET SWEEPING VIOLATION sign.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Either the street sweeping
violation is bunk or the whole
operation stinks worse.

She stops at a parking meter, runs her hand over it's head.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Why'm I still thinkin' bout that
kid? A pretty puss and the Geiger
counter I call judgement is all
outta whack.

An idea strikes, she smirks and whips out her cell phone. SNAP, she gets a shot of a trash pile. SNAP she gets a shot of the corner street signs - corner of Cross and Mulwray - she gets a shot of the NO PARKING sign. She frantically starts dialing then puts the phone to her ear.

SALLY (CONT'D)

(in phone)

Hey. It's me. I need intel. Can you get me satellite imagery of the corner of Cross and Mulwray between eight to ten, every Tuesday for the last month?

Waiting, she kicks a can into a curb.

SALLY (CONT'D)

No. I'm talking streaming video or at least high res jpegs of every minute. Full coverage. If it happened on this street on a Tuesday I gotta know it, buster!

She kicks a dead pigeon into the gutter.

SALLY (CONT'D)

I know it's a big job! CAN YOU DO IT?

She calms.

SALLY (CONT'D)

That's what I wanted to hear.

Sally looks down towards the gutter, notices something odd.

SALLY (CONT'D)

(distracted)

Yeah. Thanks...Bye.

She turns off her phone.

SALLY (CONT'D)

What are you doing there?

She slowly walks to the gutter, stoops to grab something.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Just like I thought. It's a plant.

In the gutter is an eggplant. Sally brushes off a newspaper and picks it up - inspects it.

SALLY (CONT'D)
 What's your story you disgusting
 fruit or vegetable or whatever?

The P.I.'s mind reels as she connects dots.

INT. MYSTERIOUS ROOM - DAY

Mike sits across a metal table in a dark room. He is talking to TWO FIGURES, hidden from view. Mike appears weary.

MIKE
 I'm out. I can't keep this up.

SHADOWY MAN
 It's too late now. You know far too
 much.

MIKE
 When you told me this love at first
 sight scheme I thought it was
 impossible. And I didn't know you'd
 go after my best buddy!

Shadowy Man bangs on the table.

SHADOWY MAN
 So! You don't want him to have
 love?

MIKE
 Not like this! Love at first sight?
 C'mon, man! Love is in God's hands.

Shadowy Man leans forward and is revealed in the dim light. He is **COUNCILMAN STOLIE** (58), a slimy politician. The woman next to him is still in shadow.

Stolie extends his hand out, holding an eggplant.

COUNCILMAN STOLIE
 God's hands are in my hands now.

Stolie hands the eggplant to Mike.

COUNCILMAN STOLIE (CONT'D)
 And now yours. Do you feel him
 throbbing?

Stolie throw his head back - LAUGHING.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

IN SOMEONE'S POV -- Josh's back is up ahead. He fights through a crowd as the police station comes into view.

A hand reaches out and grabs his shoulder just as he is about to enter the station. Josh spins around.

POP OUT OF POV -- reveal Sally following him.

SALLY

You got stupid written all over your face, kid. You gonna take this to the Blue Klux Klan?

JOSH

What else can I do? How can I live?!

SALLY

It's the fuzz, dummy! They don't go for malarkey. If it can't be noted in the blotter they put it down for the bat-shit crazy column.

JOSH

So!?

SALLY

You'll be run up to the nut house is so!

Josh swats his hand in the air - *not having it*.

JOSH

Maybe I belong there, I believe in love at first sight after all.

Josh turns and enters the station leaving Sally alone outside.

SALLY

Maybe you ain't the only one.

The detective is forlorn. She wonders what to do.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Josh is being roughed up by **TWO ROTUND COPS**. His hands are cuffed behind his back.

JOSH

Police brutality! Someone take a cell phone video!

Sally rushes up and intervenes, pulling Josh away.

SALLY

Hey you blue-backed gorillas! What are you doing to this guy?!

ROTUND COP ONE

Look who it is! Sally Vaughn, the would be cop what got kicked out the academy.

ROTUND COP TWO

Here to rescue your boyfriend or something?!

SALLY

I quit the academy! It's not my style to keep company with a bunch of Cro-Magnon's with Magnums...and he ain't my boyfriend.

ROTUND COP ONE

That's good see cause he was here mumbling about love at first sight with one of our Parking Officers.

ROTUND COP TWO

We was fixing to take him in on a forty-eight hour mental health hold, but he got all physical on us.

Rotund Cop One grabs Josh's face and makes a kissy gesture.

ROTUND COP ONE

Maybe the wittle boy just "loved at first sighted" us too.

Sally shoves the Officers back.

SALLY

No need for you two to bother. He's my client, I'll get him outta here.

ROTUND COP TWO

Yeah? On who's authority?

SALLY

How bout on the authority that I
call you fella's wives and tell
them what I saw youse two up to
when I tailed ya last week.

The Rotund Cops share a worried look.

ROTUND COP ONE
Hey, we was just keeping him clean
for ya.

Rotund Cop One neatens Josh's shirt.

ROTUND COP TWO
Don't lose your shirt, here's your
little boy toy.

The cops nudge Josh towards Sally.

SALLY
(to Josh)
C'mon, sugar cheeks, before they
change their tune. I got somethin'
I need to show you.

Sally drags Josh away.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - LATER

Sally drags Josh by the hand and reveals a GIANT VEHICLE.

SALLY
See!

JOSH
So?

SALLY
So. That's the street sweepin'
conveyance which doesn't seem to be
gettin' much action these days.

JOSH
How can you tell?

Sally bends down and picks up an eggplant from under a wheel.

SALLY
I laid an eggplant under the tire.
Planted it so as to see if this
thing moved.

JOSH

And?

She holds up the perfect and firm eggplant.

SALLY

This thing look scrambled? The streets set to be swept today got nothin' but filthier.

JOSH

Why the eggplant? I've been seeing a lot of these lately.

SALLY

(points to her head)

My thinking factory is spinnin' the same gears.

JOSH

How'd you find this thing?

SALLY

Had a guy pull the operating license. Looks like it's owned by a... Mike.

JOSH

Mike?! I know him.

SALLY

You know where to find him?

JOSH

C'mon!

Josh breaks for it, they run about twenty paces away to the back door of --

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Josh KNOCKS on the door. No answer. Josh KNOCKS again.

SALLY

Maybe he don't wanna see you?

JOSH

No. Mike always wants to kick it.

With that Josh rears back his foot and KICKS the door. Wood CRACKS and it swings open. Josh and Sally rush inside.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They rush into the empty living room.

SALLY
Vacated. Maybe he went to buy milk?

JOSH
He's in trouble.

SALLY
Whatta ya got, kid? Explain.

JOSH
I can't smell the reek of fresh
cooked fish sticks and he hasn't
even watered his bong.

Josh holds up and turns over the bong - no water pours out.

SALLY
So iff'n he's in trouble, what's the
brand of his worries?

Josh looks about with concern.

JOSH
I dunno... Wait! The nanny cam!

SALLY
Nanny cam? Oh no. Don't tell me a
babies involved in all this.

JOSH
No, nothing crazy like that. He's
into role playing.

Josh climbs on a chair and pulls a memory card out of a
camera in the corner. He pops it into a laptop.

SALLY
Role playing? Sounds like a square.

JOSH
Well?

Josh plays the video from the cam on the laptop,

INSERT VIDEO - Mike is dressed as a baby, in a diaper with a
giant pacifier in his mouth. **NANNY** (45), a large bearded man
dressed as Mary Poppins, enters and starts spanking Mike.

Josh GIGGLES and starts to fast-forward.

SALLY

He ain't a square. Your friend is
all obtuse angles.

JOSH

Let's just see what's next.

INSERT VIDEO - Many seconds of fast-forwarded spanking video
goes by. Nanny leaves, Mike sucks his thumb and naps.

SALLY

This ain't goin anywhere. Dead end.

JOSH

Wait! Look!

INSERT VIDEO - Councilman Stolie enters. He throws a black
sack over Mike's head and tazes him.

Josh and Sally recoil with a GASP.

SALLY

Freeze the video! Now zoom in.

Josh complies to reveal the blown up face of Stolie.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Stolie! He's a City Stooge.

JOSH

Okay. That could be a lead.

SALLY

A lead!? This is mark X on the
donkey's ass! Stolie runs the
fourth district, owns a abandoned
canning factory down there.

JOSH

(suspicious)

Yeah? You seem to know a lot.

SALLY

Went down there for some gala event
he threw a few years back. A ribbon
cutting for a new homeless shelter.

JOSH

Hmmmm.

SALLY

If I was going to hide a bong
bopping beatnik, that's where I'd
do it.

Josh looks upon the paused image of Mike on the laptop and considers.

ACT THREE

EXT. DESERTED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Josh and Sally run to the entrance of a giant warehouse.

SALLY
Here it is.

Sally GRUNTS as she heaves open a giant rolling door.

SALLY (CONT'D)
He didn't bother to lock up.

JOSH
I don't see any sign of hobos.

SALLY
Stolie's altruism was just a front
to keep the scent off...this STINK.

INT. WAREHOUSE -DAY

Sally plugs her nose.

Josh and Sally run into the center of the giant room. We see their shock and then turn around to reveal:

Giant piles of eggplants!

SALLY
Smells like rotten eggs-plants in
here!

Sally turns up her nose but Josh doesn't quite mind.

JOSH
I like the smell.

Sally looks suspicious of Josh's smile.

SALLY
Maybe that's what Stolie was
counting on.

Josh looks confused.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Lemme egg-splain. Smell it out
for, ya.

Josh is all ears.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Everywhere I go, there's just one
thing on your tail and that's
plants of the egg. This plant has
something to do with the lack of
regular street sweepery which got
something to do with the recent
abundance of purple nightshade.

JOSH
But why me?

SALLY
Dunno, sweet-cheeks. Let's dig a
little deeper, eh?

Sally leads the way through the huge piles of eggplant.

A faint sound of GRUNTING appears.

SALLY (CONT'D)
This way!

They rush through the maze of eggplants and find Mike. He's geared up in his Oculus Rift, suspended in the air and attached to sophisticated machinery. There is a miniature greenhouse with eggplants being fed by Bunsen beakers and tubes. Monitors display moving lines and shapes that appear like fibrous molecules. Mike is naked except for the eggplant he is sheathed in. Sally notices and grimaces.

SALLY (CONT'D)
God.

The eggplant falls off and SPLATS on the floor.

JOSH
Mike!

SALLY
Look on the monitor. Your friends
brain is being used to remap the
eggplant genome.

Josh notices Mike's eyes, they are open and flash from green to pure white.

JOSH
What's up with his eyes?

SALLY
He's rifting. Fusing with the
techno-grid plane. Like The Matrix.

JOSH
Like holographic universe theory.

SALLY
Or like the Matrix.

The sound of approaching FOOTSTEPS.

Sally indicates for Josh to hide - they jump behind a stack of eggplants.

An unseen **YOUNG WOMAN** and Councilman Stolie appear and start working some of the machinery around the eggplant greenhouse.

COUNCILMAN STOLIE
Where are my results? Eggplants all
over this city. You said the last
strain was perfect and yet no love!

Sally is peeking over and observing as Josh cowers. We see Young Woman's back and can't make out her features.

YOUNG WOMAN
I told you, he can be complicated.
Very malleable yet slow to observe
what is right in front of him.

JOSH
(to himself)
I know that voice.

SALLY
(whisper, to Josh)
Hush, puppy-boy. They're hangin' up
all the dirty laundry.

COUNCILMAN STOLIE
Once the recipes perfect we wheel
the Eggplant Program out on the
whole city! Imagine every citizen
falling in love at first sight.
They'll all be putty in my hands.

REVEAL - It is **MAGGIE** (27), Josh's ex-girlfriend, that Stolie is talking to. She looks glum as she goes about the work.

MAGGIE

I just want Josh to move on and find happiness. Oh, and of course progress science.

JOSH

(realizing)

Maggie?!

Josh pops up knocking over piles of eggplants! Inexplicably this sounds like FALLING GLASS BOTTLES.

Maggie and Stolie shock and turn to see Josh and Sally.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Maggie. What is all this?

MAGGIE

Josh! It was supposed to be simple. I don't know why it hasn't worked.

Stolie yanks out a gun and aims it right at Josh.

COUNCILMAN STOLIE

You were to have fallen in love immediately with the young lady writing tickets and incite romance, but you failed to find her attractive at all!

JOSH

But I did! It was love at first sight but she ran away from me.

Maggie and Stolie look at each other, surprised.

COUNCILMAN STOLIE

No! See, she told us there was no spark between the two of you?!

JOSH

That's not true! It was all dazzling sparkles and it felt like time slowed down to a standstill. It was magic!

A Parking Enforcement Vehicle pulls up and Mercy hops out.

MERCY

I couldn't go through with it. We made eye contact. I pretended to feel love, but then it just felt gross and wrong so I ran away... I'm sorry, Josh.

Josh looks forlorn towards Mercy. Sally looks towards Josh.

COUNCILMAN STOLIE
 Sorry, Josh!? You fudged the
 results because you felt sorry for
 this loser?! This could have all
 ended already but you blew it.

MERCY
 You're mad. You have to be stopped!

Stolie turns his gun, FIRES and kills Mercy on the spot.

JOSH
 NOOOOOO!

COUNCILMAN STOLIE
 The genome sequence is ready. Now
 we just map it to something people
 actually eat, like tomatoes, then
 we unleash it upon the public!

Evil revealed, everyone looks with fear at Stolie.

MAGGIE
 But you said--

COUNCILMAN STOLIE
 --Now I don't need any of you!

Stolie pivots his gun towards Maggie.

SALLY
 Wait!

Everyone turns expectantly towards Sally.

SALLY (CONT'D)
 (re: Mike)
 What about this guy? He hasn't
 heard a peep what with this getup.

GRUNT SOUNDS. Reveal that Mike is still naked and still
 remapping eggplant genes in the Oculus Rift.

COUNCILMAN STOLIE
 He was good as dead as soon as I
 laid eyes on him.

Stolie moves his gun towards Mike and BAM - fires.

START SLO-MO TIME

Josh dives towards Mike and knocks him out of the machinery towards the ground. The bullet ripples through space and just misses them.

Mike is out of the Oculus Rift and starts cyber-thizzing.

Shaking, Mike SCREAMS as light shoots out of his eyes.

SALLY

The cyber-tech realm is inside him!

BAM - Stolie fires another bullet.

Getting his bearing, Mike turns to see the bullet coming towards his crotch, rippling space.

Mike thrusts his pelvic region out, stopping the bullet dead in the air.

Maggie elbows Stolie in the ribs, he doubles over.

Mike pivots his groin in a circle, thrusting the bullet back. The bullet pierces Stolie's head with a SPLOOSH. The Councilman falls dead.

END SLO-MO TIME

Mike smiles, he now speaks with a DEEP ETHEREAL VOICE.

MIKE

Baddass. Did you see that? I just
downed the evil guy.

JOSH

It kinda looks like we just
murdered a prominent politician.

SALLY

I'll parrot that. We better make
dust, and quick.

Sad, Josh looks upon the dead body of Mercy. He rushes over and kneels at her side.

JOSH

Everyone was right. There's no such
thing as love at first sight.

Sally approaches and puts a consoling hand on his shoulder.

SALLY

You're a good kid. Don't give up.

A tear falls down Josh's cheek.

JOSH
Just go please.

Sally thinks of protesting, but gives up and walks away.

As she is departing she stops next to Mike who gleefully looks around.

SALLY
(sotto/ to Mike)
What's it like?

MIKE
So beautiful. It's like two worlds.
One laid over the other. Perfect.

MIKE'S POV - We see the warehouse - eggplants, Josh crying over Mercy, Maggie looking upon Josh, Stolie lying dead...but over it all there are also glowing half/naked people wearing swimsuits and lathering creme on top of crepes.

SNAP OUT OF POV

Mike licks his lips. Sally takes his arm and guides him out.

SALLY
Let's go.

Sally and Mike exit.

Josh looks up tearfully at Maggie.

JOSH
How could you do this?

Josh rises and tries to flee but Maggie takes him by the shoulders to force a confrontation.

MAGGIE
It wasn't supposed to be like this,
we thought we were helping you.

JOSH
You brought my best friend in to
perfect the betrayal.

MAGGIE
That was Stolie's idea. Mike
brought the access to you. He was
easy to buy off. One sweet V.R. rig
and a street sweeper. I told Mike
he'd be helping you, he had no
reason to believe otherwise.

JOSH

He didn't tell me the truth! He's never lied to me before.

MAGGIE

Mike tried to back out. He saw the kind of man Stolie was before I did.

JOSH

Why me?

MAGGIE

Can't you see?! Isn't it plain?!

JOSH

Maybe...I mean. I think it makes sense. I need to hear you say it.

MAGGIE

Like any politician, duplicity, graft and some measure of criminality is expected of a Councilmember. Stolie knew that, and knew he had to show some dirt on his hands in order to fit into the club. The street sweeping scheme was the perfect cover for his true crimes. Pay someone like Mike to not clean the streets and pocket the funding that would have gone to a normal city service contract.

Josh tries to take a bite of eggplant, Maggie swats it away.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

This scheme provided cover for his more nefarious activity, and also served to embroil Mike in further.

Josh nods his head. He tries to take a bite of eggplant, Maggie swats it away. Josh makes a "duh" expression.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Mike got us inside access to your whereabouts so we could plant eggplants directly in your path. His talents as a gamer helped advance my research into mutating eggplant genes to create dopamine spikes which the brain would interpret as falling in love.

JOSH

That's all obvious but why would you do this?

MAGGIE

It's important to me that you find happiness. It's hard to go forward in my marriage, knowing that I left you behind. Also, of course, scientific curiosity. Once Stolie proposed the scheme, I just had to know if it could be done. We chose eggplants as the delivery system because you are the only man I've ever known to eat them.

Josh tries to take a bit of eggplant again, Maggie swats it away.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Stop trying to eat it! Do you want to have love at first sight again?!

JOSH

Sorry! It's just so tasty.

Josh tosses the eggplant over his shoulder.

JOSH (CONT'D)

What I don't get is that lots of people like eggplants!

MAGGIE

No, they don't. They pretend to enjoy them to seem adult. They'll take a few bites out of social expectations, but then they leave most of it on the plate or push it all around, spread it out, to make it look like more of it was eaten than it really was.

JOSH

Why would Stolie even care if I fall in love?

MAGGIE

Once he rolled out the GMO love seed upon the whole population, you'd have a city full of people falling in love. What's easier to control than a populace that is constantly feeling the rush of new love? Duh.

JOSH
Yeah. That's what I figured.

Josh pats his legs and motions to depart.

JOSH (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Whelp. You've really helped a lot
and I'll be leaving now. You suck.

Josh walks away.

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

Josh glumly walks down the pier towards home. A dark figure approaches. As she steps into the light we can see it's Sally.

JOSH
You came back?

Sally puts a consoling hand on Josh's cheek.

JOSH (CONT'D)
I get it. You just want to be brought up to speed. Well, Stolie had a street sweeping scheme goin' to obfuscate his real crimes which was a program to create a genome strain that could make people fall in love so that they'd be malleable and easy to manipulate.

SALLY
I figured, kid. That's the only way to iron out the balance sheet.

JOSH
If you pieced it together already. Then why'd you come back?

SALLY
A case ain't done for me till a client is satisfied.

JOSH
It's done. The woman I used to love betrayed me and the one I could've loved came up dead. Oh! And we were able to prove that love at first sight isn't real.

Sally catches Josh's eyes with a furtive glance.

SALLY
Is that what you think?

JOSH
Yeah.

SALLY
Okay, kid. Maybe we'll cross paths
one day and you can take me for
coffee and scrambled eggplant.

JOSH
Sure.

The two go their separate ways. Sally lonesomely walks down
the pier and into the moonlight. Sad TRUMPETEERS arrive to
follow behind her.

SALLY (V.O)
One look at his sweet puss and I
knew the kid was trouble from the
jump. Can I put this case in the
aces column? Well, I figure we
proved love-at-first-sight ain't
biological. But did we really? I'll
just say this... I never ate the
eggplant.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF SHOW