CHARACTER SHEET

KEVIN SHORT (29) - White and unassuming. A sweet, likeable, and outwardly jovial man with strong emotional intelligence, but ultimately an introvert who struggles with anxiety. A fear of failure which itself has begotten failure.

MAX McCOURT (34) - Attractive, white. A magnetic personality and sharp wit, he lacks ambition and substance. His relationships provide more self-esteem than fulfillment, but remains a supportive friend. Stubborn, but not unreasonable.

XUI-LI “JULIE” LAH (32) - Asian-American, beautiful. A driven, intelligent woman who values sincerity and integrity. Has a quick temper and is assertive. She lacks a strong sense of empathy and is taking steps to correct it.

EDNA KRUZINSKI (49) - White, womanly. An alcoholic divorcee with biting sarcasm. Appears to be a hardened cynic; in reality, the act weighs on her and will readily let her guard down and show empathy. A bright academic.

JEAN-MARIE DUBOIS (47) - Black, French, a widower. The butt of faculty’s jokes, unassertive but kind. Has learned to let things roll off his back, but they have taken their toll. Inwardly proud but has difficulty earning respect.

IAN FLAHERTY (55) - White and schlubby. Outwardly friendly but a real weasel. Desperate to please, but he’s often forced to be the bad guy. Enjoys petty power.

DEAN BERTRAND (53) - The curt, intimidating president who makes no effort to be deferential or euphemistic. The reputation of the college is tied to his self-worth, which makes for an unhappy man.
ACT ONE

INT. IVY LEAGUE SCHOOL - ORNATE OFFICE - DAY

KEVIN SHORT, 29, a forlorn looking, moderately handsome but unassuming white man is being interviewed by the stern, good-ol’-boy HEAD OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, 60. His office is wood-paneled and a self-portrait hangs above him.

DEPARTMENT HEAD
So, Mr. Short, as I’m sure you’re aware, a professorship here would all but guarantee you a long and fruitful career in academia. So in order to get a sense of your work - your potential - I thought I’d let, er, you describe your dissertation to me.

(He clearly hasn’t read it)

Cut to: Kevin, shaky and visibly nervous.

KEVIN
(Nervously)
Well, uh, you see, in Hamlet, Shakespeare, uhm, Shakespeare is, the creator. Like, THE creator.
Hamlet’s
(Struggling to pronounce "soliloquy")
sol-eye-loqu-eyes are his, uhm, he’s talking to God...

SMASH CUT TO: INT. SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE - OFFICE - DAY

This office is not as luxurious, but it still retains a classy decor and has large windows. Kevin appears even more nervous - beads of sweat collect on his forehead.

KEVIN
-so, uh, Hamlet, or uh, Hammy as I like to call him-

Kevin laughs loudly and nervously.

KEVIN (CONT’D)
-Hammy was just, uhm, just...Well, he never should have talked to those witches in the first place! Oh wait, no, that’s not it-
SMASH CUT TO: INT. THIRD-TIER COLLEGE - OFFICE - DAY

We are now in a shabbier room, although it’s not *comically* bad. A poster of Van Gogh’s starry night hangs frameless from the wall. Kevin’s bangs are damn, he’s on the edge of a panic attack.

**KEVIN**

- and that’s why my summer vacation
  was the best summer vacation ever!

SMASH CUT TO: INT. IVY LEAGUE SCHOOL - ORNATE OFFICE - LATER

The Department head looks at Kevin disapprovingly, we can tell he’s already written Kevin off as a candidate.

**DEPARTMENT HEAD**

So tell me, Kevin: what’s your weakness?

**KEVIN**

(Stuttering)
N-n-n-none. No weaknesses. I’m a big strong man.

SMASH CUT TO: INT. LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE - OFFICE - LATER

Kevin stares blankly, mouth agape.

**KEVIN**

Uhhhhhh...

(Beat)

Uhhhhhh...

(Seriously)

I’m too verbose.

SMASH CUT TO: INT. THIRD-TIER UNIVERSITY - OFFICE - LATER

Kevin is positively drenched in sweat.

**KEVIN**

I tend to, uh, sweat.

EXT. THIRD-TIER UNIVERSITY - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin trudges unsteadily through the melting Maine snow, still soaked in sweat, shivering. He’s speaking, inaudibly, to someone on his cell phone. He heads towards his beat-up, late-model station wagon - the kind with the wood paneling.
He hangs up the phone and struggles with the door handle before stepping into...

INT. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

...his car, which he is clearly living out of, although it is very neat. A dresser sits across the backseat, with an alarm clock and an old picture of his parents sitting on it. A pressed shirt hangs from the window handle and a guitar case looms in the background. Kevin sighs deeply; he takes off his shirt and wrings it out the window. He turns the radio to NPR:

NPR ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
(Calmly)
Dozens found dead at a Wal-Mart in Brunswick this morning. Authorities suspect that an improperly placed "wet floor sign" is to blame.

Kevin falls asleep.

INT. STATION WAGON - DUSK - LATER

NPR ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
-and so concludes this week’s installment of "American Culture for the Cultural Elite." Now for "The Jazz Hour," going from from Miles Davis to Bill Evans, then back to Davis again.

A knock at the fogged window wakes Kevin up. He rolls it down to reveal AN INDIAN WOMAN, who proceeds to hand Kevin Chinese food. Kevin pays the woman, who then walks towards a CHINESE RESTAURANT at the end of the parking lot. Kevin turns off the radio. Before Kevin can dig into his food, his cell phone rings. It’s MARTHA SHORT, 70, his mother.

KEVIN
(Downtrodden, listless)
Hi, ma. How’s it going?

MARTHA (O.S.)
(Sarcastically)
Oh, fine, fine. They moved me into a corner room; I can see the whole parking lot. Could be a palm tree or a telephone pole at the end of it. Very nice.
(Hopeful in a way that only mothers can be)

(CONTINUED)
Sooo...how did the interview go?

During the conversation, Kevin, ravenous, digs a fortune cookie out of the delivery bag.

KEVIN (V.O.)
I choked. Again. I don’t know what the hell is wrong with me, I mea-

MARTHA (O.S.)
It’s from your father. It’s what got him in the end, you know....

KEVIN
Yeah, ma, that’s one theory. My money’s still on the defective sunglasses.

SMASH CUT TO: EXT. SHORT HOME - FRONT YARD - DAYS

A joyful FATHER SHORT, mid-30s, walks out wearing aviators and suspenders. It’s a pristine day.

FATHER SHORT
(Beaming)
What a beautiful day to be alive!

He looks up at the sky and we immediately hear a burning-hissing noise. Father Short, face transfixed on the sky, yells and grabs his head with both hands as he collapses to his knees.

FATHER SHORT
(Screaming)
WHY?!

INT. STATION WAGON - DUSK

Kevin opens the fortune cookie and eats it.

MARTHA (O.S.)
Let’s not split hairs, honey.
(All business)
Look, You go back to our house in Phippsburg, you get your head together, you-

The fortune reads: "Expect big changes tomorrow!"
KEVIN (Frustrated)
We had to sell the house, remember? To get you set up down there.

MARTHA (O.S.)
Oh, sure, sure...

He flips the fortune cookie over: "DON'T KID YOURSELF. LUCKY NUMBERS: __ __ __ __ __" He angrily crumples up the paper but gingerly puts it into a trash can on the passenger-side seat.

MARTHA (O.S., CONT’D)
Speaking of your father, you know he had a good friend from his graduate days-

KEVIN (Knows what’s coming)
Nope.

MARTHA (O.S.)
-who’s the head of the English department at-

KEVIN
Nope.

MARTHA (O.S.)
Midcoa-

KEVIN
N-

SMASH CUT TO: INT. MIDCOAST MAINE STATE - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Kevin sits in a decrepit main office in wrinkled suit, resume in hand. He checks his watch; he’s a little jumpy. Kevin is the only one in the room, save for a homely RECEPTIONIST. Mounted in a corner of a room is an old TV playing an promotional video for the school on a continuous loop.
ACT TWO

CLOSE ON: TELEVISION. EXT. BATH, ME - KENNEBUNK RIVERFRONT - DAY

An older, large white man with a substantial gut, DEAN BERTRAND, 53, stands in front of a river onlooking a rusted-out bridge with its midsection halfway up and NAVY BATTLESHIP in equal disrepair wedged underneath it. Dean looks directly into the camera; he speaks with a thick Maine accent. Muzak plays throughout.

DEAN
(Stilted)
Hello there. I’m President Dean Bertrand of Midcoast Maine State University, located in historic Bath, Maine.

Dean smiles.

DEAN (CONT’D)
(Beat)
The City-

STAR WIPE TO: STOCK PHOTO OF 17TH CENTURY SAILING SHIPS

DEAN (V.O., CONT’D)
-of Ships!

FADE TO: EXT. BATH, ME - KENNEBUNK RIVERFRONT - DAY

DEAN (CONT’D)
Here at Midcoast Maine State, we have a way for you to get-

Dean points to the camera too late.

DEAN (CONT’D)
-for you to get some of the vocational tools you could use to start a career (maybe), no matter what sad hole you’ve found yourself in! We’ve got-
CUT TO: INT. MIDCOAST STATE - CLASSROOM - DAY

Students of varying ages stand around a popsicle-stick model ship floating in a large sink. It begins to take on water.

DEAN (V.O., CONT’D)
Maritime Engineering!

The camera swings around to reveal another corner of the room in which students in Park Ranger gear tend to a pot of dying flowers.

DEAN (V.O., CONT’D)
Parks and Recreation Management!

The camera moves to yet another corner of the same room where students examine a lumpy stuffed possum.

DEAN (V.O., CONT’D)
Wildlife Conservation!

CUT TO: EXT. BATH, ME - KENNEBUNK RIVERFRONT - DAY

DEAN (CONT’D)
And several more!

QUICKLY SCROLLING SUBTITLES: MARITIME NURSING, FISH & GAME WARDEN PROGRAM, GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES

FADE TO: INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Dean stands before large bookshelves, presenting it to the audience. It is clearly a green screen.

DEAN (CONT’D)
We also have a state-class liberal arts college. You want English, History? We’ve got English. We’ve got History. Romance Languages? Sure, why not. We even have New England Studies. (Beat) That’s it. Our faculty is wicked smart - they’re the best the lower midcoast region has to offer!
FADE TO: INT. MIDCOAST STATE - ENGL. DEPT. - DAY

JOHN FISCH, 65, a large, sweet looking man with a mustache, glasses, and a similar accent to Dean sits in front of a large desk. The room looks like it was once a locker room shower. John uses an old 90s era CRT computer

JOHN
(Brightly)
Hello, I’m John Fisch, the head of our Humanities department. Prepare to learn!
(Beat)
Just listen to what our students have to say about Midcoast Maine State.

STAR WIPE TO: EXT. MIDCOAST STATE - LAWN - DAY

A FEMALE STUDENT in her 30s, an NAVY VETERAN in his 40s, and a MALE STUDENT, 20, in a Midcoast State sweatshirt stand adjacent to one another. They all speak slowly and in a forced manner.

FEMALE STUDENT
I became a Maritime engineer as soon as I kicked my meth addiction. Now I’ll be building ships at the Bath Ironworks after graduation!

MALE STUDENT
My folks kicked me out ‘the house after I set it on fire.
(Beat.
By accident. English degree, here I come!

VETERAN
After my dishonorable discharge, I thought I’d never eat like I did when I was enlisted. But our cafeteria uses the Navy cooks stationed at ironworks!

SPLIT SCREEN SHOT: THREE STUDENTS, JOHN, AND DEAN
DEAN, JOHN, MALE STUDENT
WOMAN, VETERAN Screw you, mom and dad!
(Asynchronously)
Midcoast State! Where we put your dreams into perspective!

INT. MIDCOAST MAINE STATE - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

The receptionist is staring straight ahead, mouthing the words to the ad. John Fisch, from the ad, beckons Kevin to the next room.

INT. MID-COAST MAINE STATE - ENGL. DEPT. - LATER

Kevin is sitting before John Fisch on a folding chair in the same room as the video. The office is very run-down - linoleum floors, dirty windows, turquoise tile along the bottom half of the wall. Although John is the only one there at the moment, it’s clear that this room constitutes the offices of the entire department. We are mid-interview.

JOHN
Sure, Mid-Coast Maine State’s English program isn’t yer, uh-

He puts his hands up in an overplayed mock reverence – it’s the better school.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Central Kennebunkport City College.
(Beat. Emphatically)
But it sure beats Southwest Central Piscataquis U, I can tell you that!

KEVIN
(Slightly nervous)
Uh huh.
(Beat.)

JOHN
(Offput by Kevin’s silence)
Go Crawdads! Heh heh.

KEVIN
(Trying to salvage the conversation)
Yeah, I, uh, always wondered about that growing up – aren’t they freshwater fish? I mean, we’re on the ocean.

(CONTINUED)
JOHN
(Sternly)
They’re crustaceans, Kevin.

Kevin lifts his shaking hands off his pants to reveal hand-shaped sweat marks on his thighs. Changing the direction of the conversation, John picks up Kevin’s resume and glances down his bifocals to examine it.

JOHN (CONT’D)
You know, you’ve got a pretty remarkable transcript here...stellar recommendations, excellent grades...I read your dissertation-

Kevin is a little surprised at this – past interviewers seemed to have glanced at the abstract, at most. Naturally, this makes him more nervous, as his life’s work is now under scrutiny. Beads of sweat form on his forehead.

JOHN (CONT’D)
-Shakespeare as an extradiegetic creator, the God that Hamlet questions? A real Modernist take. And with just the right amount of that academese bullshit that those pansies at Kennebunkport love so much.

(Sneering, off on a tangent)
"Multi-metatextual teleology."
"Hetero-dialectical marginalization."
(Spitting it out with contempt)
"Post-modern."
(Beat)
Your father would be proud. How’s Martha holding up these days?

KEVIN
(Defensive without reason)
I had to put her in a home! No choice! What was I going to do, kill her?
(Struggling to pronounce ‘preposterous’)
That’s pr-eye-p-ow-ster-oo-s!

Kevin laughs nervously. The same thing is happening again.
JOHN
Are you alright, son?

KEVIN
(Under his breath, but audible to John)
Oh no. Oh, please no.

As John talks, outside the window, we note that a younger male student was passed out on the side of the road (presumably from the night before). A some of the remaining snow slides off the roof and wakes him. He gets up, dazed and shirtless, dusts himself off and grabs a half-empty 40 oz beer from the ground, and starts to guzzle it.

JOHN (V.O.)
(Getting back on track, but now wary of Kevin)
We should have more candidates like you, but there’s a reason you’re here, no? And I don’t think it’s the ‘state-class’ Romance Languages department.

SMASH CUT TO: INT. MIDCOAST STATE - CLASSROOM - DAY

In the classroom, we see Jean-Marie Dubois, 37, a benign-looking black Frenchman, balding and pudgy, trying to maintain order while students play a drinking game and ignore him. He teaches Spanish in a thick French accent.

JEAN-MARIE
Please, students! Repeat après moi: "Yo soy un gato. Usted es un gato. Nosotros somos-
(Beat. Passionately)
los gatos."

INT. MID-COAST MAINE STATE - ENGL. DEPT.

JOHN (CONT’D)
On paper, you could be damn near well teaching me, for chrissake. But now that we’ve had a chance to, er, talk, as it were-

Kevin is trying to steady himself, he’s really breaking out in sweat now – he’s under the spotlight and floundering.

(CONTINUED)
KEVIN
(To himself)
Maybe I can burn my car for warmth.

JOHN (CONT’D)
(With genuine concern)
What’s your weakness, Kevin?

Looking out the window to avoid John’s gaze, he looks past the student (who has just smashed the beer bottle on the ground) only to see his car being towed. He’s going to be on the streets if he doesn’t nail this interview.

KEVIN
(Stuttering, sweaty, struggling to get it out)
I-I-, uh, uhm, don’t, uh, i-i-interview well.

Beat. He collects himself as sweat drips off his brow. Now, with an intense vigor we didn’t know he had, he stands up and puts his hands down on the desk.

KEVIN (CONT’D)
But I am your man, John!

John is taken aback by this total shift in Kevin.

KEVIN (CONT’D)
(Half-mocking the tone of the ad)

He wipes sweat from his brow.

KEVIN (CONT’D)
Faulkner? You better Faulkin’ believe it.

JOHN
(Chuckling)
Anything outside of the first half of the 20th century?

KEVIN
What, you don’t want Eliot? T.S., ’cause I know Hamlet and His Problems so well I could be his shrink. Yes! I know the transcendentalists, the Romantics,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
KEVIN (cont’d)
even those sorry hacks, the 
post-structuralists. Barthes didn’t 
kill the author. I did.

John likes this attitude. Kevin grabs him by the collar:

KEVIN (CONT’D) 
(Powerfully, convincingly)
I AM YOUR MAN!

He immediately jumps out his window and chases down his car.

JOHN (O.S.)
(Yelling after Kevin)
You’re hired!

EXT. MIDCOAST STATE - PARKING LOT - NEXT DAY

Kevin waits by his car at the run-down campus in Bath. While
waiting, he nervously starts to slap his stomach
rhythmically; he gets into it and begins to sing an
improvised tune:

KEVIN
(Singing)
Well, here I go, just threw away my
career/ This school really blows,
how am I working here?/ ‘cause I
suck, I’m a loser with anxiety/
Never gonna leave, gonna die in
obscurity.

Interrupting him is IAN FLAHERTY, 55, a meek looking,
nervous man with a lisp, who rushes out to greet him.

IAN
(Brightly)
You must be Mr. Short. Absolute
pleasure to meet you. Absolute.
Pleasure.

KEVIN
Uh, thanks, Mr.-

IAN
Ian Flaherty, I’m an English
professor. Absolute pleasure to
have you on board. Shall we?

They shake hands.
INT. MIDCOAST STATE - FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is ugly and dingy. Fluorescent lights flicker as Kevin and Ian walk down the hall.

IAN
-the English department shares its offices with History and Wildlife Conservation. We have a fun time together. We run a real tight ship.

POV: KEVIN - INT. MIDCOAST STATE - CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Looking through a classroom window, Kevin sees several students sleeping and others very attentive. On the board we see the heading "Maine’s role in the American Revolution." XUI-LI "JULIE" LAH, 32, an attractive Asian-American woman, writes beneath the heading on the board "Providing lobster to troops," "Not much else."

JULIE
The first battleship, the S.S. Clam, was completed here, in Bath, by 1801. By then, of course, the war was over. The Clam sank almost immediately after its christening.

Julie turns to look out at the camera (that is, Kevin), and smiles.

IAN (V.O., CONT’D)
Because of the shipyard, get it?

INT. MID-COAST MAINE STATE - FACULTY LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Inside the cramped, dirty faulty lounge, we see EDNA KRUZINSKI, 49, a hard-faced woman with a slyness about her, staving away a hangover by massaging her temples while hunched over what appears to be a bar.

IAN
Fancy a drink?

From behind the bar appears a 10-YEAR-OLD BOY,

IAN (CONT’D)
I’ll have a Bloody Shirley Temple.

KEVIN
(Indignant)
I’m sorry, but, what the hell?

(CONTINUED)
Dean Bertrand, the president from the ad, enters.

DEAN
It’s Frenchie’s kid. He home
schools him on his off time.
(Disdainful)
We’re about that close to a goddamn
elementary school anyway.

IAN
Wife’s passed away. Dean-

Dean gives Ian a stern look.

IAN (CONT’D)
(Correcting himself)
er, we said it was alright as long
as his son manned the bar.

DEAN
The scamp loves it though. Ain’t
that right?

The boy smiles widely and genuinely.

DEAN (CONT’D)
I’ll have a scotch. Neat.
(Beat)
So what’s the deal with the party
tonight?

KEVIN
(Overhearing, assuming it is
in his honor)
Oh, a party? Really?

IAN
(Cheerful)
Why yes, of course you’re invited!
(To both of them)
It’s tonight at 8 at The Bath Home
for The Uselessly Old.
(To Kevin)
This is President Dean, by the way.
(To Dean)
Dean, this is Kevin. The new hire.

DEAN
Good to know you. I’ll have you
know we run a real tight ship
around here.

Dean chuckles, Kevin responds in kind. Dean exits.
IAN
(Annoyed, somewhat hurt)
Even funnier the second time, huh?

KEVIN
(Sincerely)
Oh, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean anything by it-

IAN
(Accepting the apology)
Your first class is in five minutes, by the way.

KEVIN
I know. I’m ready.
(Beat)
Whatever happened to the last guy, by the way? My predecessor?

Ian mumbles something inaudible while he guzzles down his drink, then rushes off. Out of Kevin’s sight, Edna pantomimes hanging herself in response to the question.

INT. MIDCOAST STATE - CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nervously standing in front of his class freshman, Kevin begins to sweat profusely. He closes his eyes and attempts to compose himself.

KEVIN
So where are we, then? Where’d your last professor leave off?

A long beat - the students are in their own worlds, for the most part. Kevin fidgets. A YOUNG WOMAN responds:

WOMAN
We were just talking about how Hamlet shouldn’t have ever talked to those witches.

Kevin smiles to himself.

KEVIN
(Now more grounded)
Well, you see, that’s not really it. Interestingly enough, that’s, uh, Macbeth, in fact.
(Beat)
What’s really interesting, though, is that this class is called
(MORE)
KEVIN (cont’d)
Contemporary American Literature.
Can anyone explain to me why we’re studying Shakespeare?

WOMAN
(Incredulous)
Uh, ’cause he was an American, duh?
He sure as heck wrote in American.

KEVIN
(Taken aback)
Well, you see, no. Not at all, actually.

Kevin sits and puts his head in his hands. He’s got his work cut out for him.

KEVIN
So, American Lit. Let’s start from the beginning, alright?

WOMAN
Like I said: Shakespeare.

A VETERAN, the one from the video, pipes up.

VETERAN
Dammit, Donna, you aren’t even in this class. Go back to Romance Languages, why don’t you?
(To Kevin)
I’m sorry for that, sir. We were just discussing the impact of Huck Finn on, well, everything.

KEVIN
Good. Everything is a good place to start.

INT. MID-COAST MAINE STATE - FACULTY LOUNGE - LATER

Kevin, sitting alone at the end of the lunch table, eats a sloppily made PB&J. He reads a note he wrote to himself in his lunchbox, “Have a great first day of school! Love, Kevin.” He is joined by Julie and MAX MCCOURT, 34, a very attractive and immaculately dressed man.

MAX
Hey, new guy, heard you really wowed those kids today.

Julie elbows Kevin playfully – they’re clearly a couple.

(CONTINUED)
KEVIN
(Flustered)
Well, I mean, I-

JULIE
He’s screwing with you. I’m Julie. This is Max.

KEVIN
Kevin.

Kevin reaches out to shake their hands, realizes there’s peanut butter on his thumb, and licks it off. He puts his hand down.

KEVIN (CONT’D)
Yeah it’s, uh-

MAX
Not what you expected?

SMASH CUT TO: INT. MIDCOAST STATE - CLASSROOM - EARLIER

Kevin presides over a different set of students. One student, asleep and leaning back in his chair, falls backwards. This event creates a domino effect, knocking over three other students behind him.

KEVIN (V.O)
Well, yes and no. I’m from around here, and Midcoast State was always-

INT. MID-COAST MAINE STATE - FACULTY LOUNGE

JULIE
-a safety school.

SMASH CUT TO: MIDCOAST STATE PROMOTIONAL ADVERTISEMENT

KEVIN (V.O.)
(Graciously)
Uh, sure. Why not.

ADMINISTRATOR
Midcoast Maine State’s Tuition Prices will Blow you away!

The Administrator blows in a downwards direction towards a superimposed picture of the 17th century sailing ship from before, moving it across the screen. It’s very low-tech.
INT. MID-COAST MAINE STATE - FACULTY LOUNGE - LATER

MAX
Look. Midcoast has smart, well... maybe not smart, but driven, well...maybe not driven...

JULIE
It has students that are capable of learning.

KEVIN
Sure. Okay. (Trying to get the scoop) So this party tonight-

JULIE
We’re going.

Jean-Marie sits at the other end of the table. He begins to eat his pizza with a knife and fork.

MAX
(Mockingly chastising) Hey, Frenchie! You’re in America! We eat pizza with our hands!

Everyone laughs pleasantly, even Jean-Marie: he’s learned to take these little jabs in stride.

KEVIN
(Hoping to ingratiate himself) Yeah, you want some goat cheese on that pizza?

Nobody laughs. Jean-Marie looks down at his pizza, dejectedly. His son, the bartender from before, has just come over with a drink. He shakes his head at Kevin. Julie, with work to do, gets up to leave and plants a kiss on Max’s cheek. Max pinches her bum and she slaps it away playfully.

MAX
You done for the day, champ? Let’s go for a little strolly-stroll.

INT. MIDCOAST STATE - STAIRCASE - LATER

MAX
-I mean, I’ve been at this glorified driving school coming up on 5 years now. You do the work, and you find the joy when you can...
EXT. MIDCOAST STATE - ROOF OF A BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

We have a beautiful view of Bath, the shipyard, and the ocean.

MAX
...plus, the students really admire you, you know? They eat up everything you say - and believe me, I’m mostly bullshit. I remember when I was back in college I was always questioning my professors. Thought they were damn know-it-alls.

KEVIN
I know what you mean, but, I dunno. I always deferred to their experience. Figured that if they dedicated their lives to something, that they probably knew more than I did.

MAX
Yeah, but look at us. We’re the professors now.

KEVIN
And we know jack shit.

MAX
Exactly.

We notice some of the younger students lingering around the school courtyard below, listless.

KEVIN
It looks like these kids really need some...guidance.

MAX
Yeah, to the bottom of a lake. God knows why they’re here. You couldn’t trade a Midcoast degree for a ride out of this godforsaken town.

KEVIN
Really? I mean, maybe they’re just, you know, trying to better themselves? And what is it with you guys and freshwater? The ocean’s right there.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
Go crawdads.

Max retrieves two golf clubs from a storage closet and hits a ball off the roof, which causes some damage in the shipyard. Kevin takes a club; on the backswing, he breaks a freestanding lamp.

KEVIN
Now who the hell put that there?
ACT THREE

INT. BATH BOARDING HOUSE – HALLWAY – LATER, EVENING

Kevin enters the hallway from his room in a 70s style polyester suit, clashing paisley shirt, and a floral tie. He runs into Edna, who is in a cocktail dress and who seems to have already begun drinking, although she masks it well.

EDNA
You look like my ex-husband at our senior prom.

She laughs jubilantly.

EDNA (CONT’D)
I’m Edna, by the way. You’re the new English department hire, correct? What’s your focus?

KEVIN
That’s right. I’m a Modern lit scholar, although it looks like I’ll be wearing a lot of different hats here.

EDNA
(Happily surprised)
No kidding! Same here! And yeah, they’ll do that to you. I’m teaching a New England Studies course right now. Whatever the hell that is.

Edna peers into Kevin’s room through the open doorway, noting a guitar.

EDNA (CONT’D)
Oh, you play?

KEVIN
(Sheepish)
Well, uh, yes.
(Coming clean)
Not in front of other people, though.

EDNA
Well, that’s a shame. Let’s hope you warm up to me eventually. Need a ride to this thing, by the way?
SMASH CUT TO: INT. KEVIN’S CAR

The dressed remains in the back seat with the photo and alarm clock atop it. We also note several pillows and a blanket neatly made in the front seat.

INT. BATH BOARDING HOUSE – HALLWAY

KEVIN
(Hastily)
Yes.

INT. OLD FOLKS’ HOME – MAIN ROOM – NIGHT

A large “Welcome to the English, History, and Wildlife Conservation Dept.” banner hangs over a center stage as faculty and staff mill about the stale, floral room in eveningwear. Very elderly people in nighties and bathrobes serve food and drinks and play at a piano. Kevin enters with Edna.

KEVIN
Why do all the waitstaff look like they’re ready for bed?

A younger HOST appears, as if from no where.

HOST
The caterers canceled so we rousted the old folk’s out of bed!

Dean, accompanied by John, appears and gawks at Kevin.

DEAN
(Disturbed)
Just what are you wearing?

KEVIN
(Defensive)
I thought it’d be funny. You know, an ice-breaker.

As Dean walks away:

DEAN
Well, it’s not.

JOHN
(To Kevin, warm)
I think it’s funny. Glad to have you aboard, son.

(CONTINUED)
At the bar, Kevin makes a drink order to an ELDERLY GENTLEMAN.

KEVIN
White Russian, please.

Kevin chokes down the drink as he muses aloud:

KEVIN (CONT’D)
You know, I can’t tell if I like this place or I hate it yet.

Kevin looks up to see that the GENTLEMAN has fallen asleep while standing up. Julie and Max arrive and greet Kevin with raucous laughter at his ensemble. The two help themselves to drinks.

MAX
You get one of these fogies to dress you?

JULIE
Please tell me you dressed like that on purpose. As in, knowing you look like a clown.

KEVIN
(Somberly)
It was my father’s. He died in a tragic accident some years ago.

Kevin breaks a smile and they all laugh.

SMASH CUT TO: EXT. SHORT HOME - FRONT YARD - DAYS
Kevin’s father screams on the lawn in agony.

INT. OLD FOLKS’ HOME - MAIN ROOM

KEVIN (CONT’D)
He is dead, though.
(Beat, loudly, so as to wake the bartender)
A cosmopolitan, please.
INT. OLD FOLKS’ HOME - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Cosmo in hand, Kevin finishes urinating and leaves his fly open, which will remain that way for the remainder of the night. He runs into Jean-Marie.

KEVIN
Hey, uh, sorry about that joke earlier, guy. I’m Kevin.

Kevin extends his hand. Jean-Marie takes it.

JEAN-MARIE
It’s quite alright. No feelings hard, eh? I am Jean-Marie.

Jean-Marie enters the stall.

KEVIN
(To himself, giggling)
*Snort* Mary...

Angle on: Jean-Marie, who overhears and looks down at his crotch sadly.

INT. OLD FOLKS’ HOME - MAIN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin sits next to Edna at the bar.

KEVIN
-So I’m not sure what I imagined Midcoast would be like...but I don’t think it was like this. I appreciate this gala and all, but I’m worried about how I’m going to make it through here for the other days of the year, you know?

EDNA
Two words, kid: hard liquor.

At that moment, a loud crash is heard as a drunk professor leans back in his chair and falls over.

EDNA (CONT’D)
Four more: And lots of it.
(Beat)
Look, kid: Some of our students come from the old Air Force base, or are coming here so they can get trained for the ironworks. They try. They’ll make you try.

(CONTINUED)
(Beat)
But then you got yer young kids who
think that they "have to go to
college." No love of learning.
They’re, uh...They’re real
shitheads, Kevin. And they’re gonna
try to break you down.

KEVIN
Thanks. For the advice, I mean.

EDNA
That’s why they pay me the big
bucks.

KEVIN
We make $19,000 a year.

Edna laughs sweetly.

EDNA
I some of myself in you. When I got
here, anyway...They say it’s
"publish or perish" in academia.
Here, it’s "get the hell out...
(Beat, thinking)
...or it’s hell you’ll get.

Edna laughs at her own joke.

EDNA (CONT’D)
Your new friend there, Max? He’s
already feeling it. This place just
eats away at you. And he’ll drag
that poor Julie down with him.

KEVIN
What about Ian? He seems like a
swell guy.

EDNA
‘Swell’?

Edna checks her watch.

EDNA (CONT’D)
Oh, look at the time. It’s way past
my bedtime.

MAX
It’s only nine-thirty.
EDNA
(Endeared by his innocence)
I’m drunk, sweetie. I’m going to pass out if I don’t get to bed.
You’ll get home okay?

Edna leaves and is replaced by Max, who pours himself a Manhattan from behind the bar, working around the sleeping bartender.

MAX
That Edna’s a real piece of work, ain’t she?

KEVIN
I dunno. She seems nice enough-

MAX
(Ironic)
—to bang? You hound!

KEVIN
(Disgusted)
Who are you?

MAX
(Sincere)
I’m sorry, man. I still couldn’t get a read on you - sometimes I just revert to that frat boy shtick as a male bonding kinda thing.

KEVIN
You know what? I get it. Where’s Julie?

MAX
Gone home to grade papers.

There’s silence in the room. Kevin just has a sudden realization, and begins to sweat.

KEVIN
(Very nervous)
So, uh, do I have to make a speech?

A microphone is tapped on stage. Angle on: John, who stands at a podium.

JOHN
Good evening, friends. I’d like to welcome-

Kevin stands.

(CONTINUED)
Contiuned:

JOHN
you all to the annual department
gala!

KEVIN
(To Max, dejected)
Wait...this isn’t for me?

Smash Cut To: Midcoast State - Lounge - Earlier

IAN
(Embarrassed at neglecting
Kevin)
Why, yes! Of course! You’re
invited!

Int. Old Folks’ Home - Main Room

JOHN
It’s an exciting year for us all.
I’ve got big things planned. Big
things! Not to mention our new star
professor -

Angle on: Max and Kevin

MAX
(To Kevin)
You know, as shit as this school
is, John’s the real deal. The day
he retires, we’ll be worse off than
Northern Sagadahoc Community.

At that very moment, John drops dead. The thud causes a
second banner to unfold from beneath the first. It now reads
"Welcome to the English, History, and Wildlife Conservation
Dept." and below it "62nd Annual Gala!"

Int. Local College Bar - Later

The traditional dive bar is relatively crowded with
students. Max is now visibly drunk. Everyone raises their
glasses in a toast:

EVERYONE
To Professor Fisch!

MAX
I can’t believe it. And to think
that little weasel Flaherty is next
in line as head of the department.

(Continued)
KEVIN
Is he really that bad?

MAX
Sneakier than a wet fart on a hot day. I just can’t believe it. It’s all gone to shit.

KEVIN
Me neither. Not that I knew if he had heart trouble or not. Just like, he was close with my dad when he was still around. Was kind of hoping he’d be a sort of father figure type, you know?

MAX
(Sweet)
I’ll be your dad, Kev.
(Beat)
Now walk me home.

INTERCUT: EXT. BATH, ME STREETS - NIGHT

Kevin trudges home with Max slug over his arm as they walk past the ironworks.

INTERCUT: INT. BATH BOARDING HOUSE - KEVIN’S ROOM - DAWN

Kevin looks out over the city and the ironworks at the rising sun as he plays his guitar, beautifully, singing:

KEVIN
(Singing, slowly)
Well, here I go, I just started my career/ This school kinda blows, is it bad working here?/ Must establ’sh academic notoriety/ Or I’ll never leave and die in obscurity.