

Confessions of a High School Bus Driver

"Pilot"

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

RILEY McFADDEN (30), the popular teacher at South Texas High.
Accompanied by DIEGO (17), Riley paces nervously in the hall.

DIEGO
I just want to be clear on the terms.
If you grant me access I owe you ten
free lessons.

RILEY
Tuck in your shirt. And put this on.

Riley produces a tie. Diego examines.

DIEGO
This is a clip-on.

RILEY
It's the best I could do. Act as if.

Diego affixes the tie. It's too short.

DIEGO
I look ridiculous, Riley.

RILEY
No, no, it's perfect. You look like
an Earth Science teacher.

On cue, a TEACHER walks by. It's Riley who acts as if.

RILEY
So I go "Whaddaya get when you combine
the Quadratic Equation, SOHCAHTOA, and
the Pythagorean Theorem?"

TEACHER
(whipping around)
Wait, don't tell me... I know this one.

INT. VAST ROOM - DAY

Diego, mouth agape over posh accommodations.

DIEGO
(Field of Dreams)
Is this heaven?

CUSTODIAN
No... It's the teachers' lounge.

LATER, Riley, Diego and custodian FLORA eat lunch.

FLORA

You think your wife might stay with you if you learn to play the guitar?

RILEY

She's one of those live music, indie rock types. She follows sports and I got drafted by the Cardinals in high school, but like...

DIEGO

She must want a guy who's more of a legitimate professional.

RILEY

I'm a teacher. I am a professional.

DIEGO

That's cute... We just think she may wanna improve her social standing.

RILEY

Thank you, Diego... Can we leave now?

FLORA

No girl grows up saying, "I hope I meet me a *nice, substitute teacher.*"

RILEY

Thank you, Flora. Come on; let's go.

DIEGO

She might want a doctor. Or a lawyer. Actually, you're right; she probably wants to get plowed by a lead singer.

FLORA

Or at least a St. Louis Cardi-nal.

RILEY

(smiling eagerly)
I'm gonna count to three.

A grim-faced TEACHER approaches.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A PRINCIPAL, plus SUITS. Riley, up against a firing squad.

RILEY

The teachers' lounge is sacred ground. I get that. I do. Admittance is not a right, it's a privilege. But this kid Diego is one of the best eggs we have.

(MORE)

RILEY (cont'd)

Things are a little tough for him at home, so I figured offering a little access might...show him that we care.

(beat)

We don't care? Okay, no, that's cool. Tough love. I shouldn't have done it.

PRINCIPAL

That's not why you're here, Riley.

RILEY

Also, he gave me free guitar lessons. That little fucker can shred. Unreal.

Suits, like a jury avoiding eye contact with the defendant.

RILEY

Wait... I've been a substitute teacher here since grad school. Jesus -- I went to this school.

SUIT

Riley, I'm Til Martz. I'm a management consultant. This is hard for all of us.

RILEY

Says some German guy with frosted tips who won't have to swirl his tongue for gas money... Every sub complains about not getting their own desk. I never do.

A Suit rolls her eyes. Riley sees, hurts, delivers.

RILEY

It wasn't a student who took a shit in the salad bar. It was Dr. Li. I'd tell you why, but trust me: For those of us who already know? It'll never help you understand... Mr. Tellio stole the cash from the Coke machine. Spent it on his own coke machine, but hey: Who doesn't love coke? I know you do, Lisa. Finally, Mr. Bell fucked Little Mark Dill in the orchestra pit, penetrating him with the business end of a pen light. He did sterilize it with two -- count 'em -- two alcohol pads first, which, hey: We should all be so lucky as to have such considerate partners. Anyway. I've got direct deposit and a black lawyer. I'll see you in court but for now? Peace out.

A slip of paper. ODDS RILEY CRIES: 10/1. Gets crossed out.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Riley cooks. His gay friend BINU BINGHAVI (30) chops tomatoes.
In the next room, Greta and her brother SPENCER (30) watch TV.

GRETA
Hurry your unemployed, assthefuckup.

BINU
Your wife sucks, Riley.

RILEY
Actually... She doesn't suck at all.
(beat)
My brother-in-law, though? He sucks.

BINU
Nope. And it's too bad. I'd like him
a lot more with his dick in my mouth.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Riley and Binu bring food trays to Greta and Spencer.

SPENCER
It's about time, McFadden. You spend
all your time with your boyfriend in
the kitchen when there's football on.

BINU
Spencer, y'ever find your homophobia
at odds with the fact that your life
revolves around muscular, sweaty men
in their 20's, chasing each other in
the grass while wearing tight pants?

RILEY
Sweaty black men in tight pants?

BINU
(still on Spencer)
Less is more, Riley.

Spencer watches a series of NFL ass pats.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Later, Spencer stumbles upon Binu, eating.

SPENCER
Why are you eating McDonald's?

BINU

Because I love McDonald's. It's delicious and it tastes like America.
(understated)

Also, your cunt sister won't let me eat the stuff that her husband made.

SPENCER

Fuck you... Binu.

BINU

Don't say my name like that.

SPENCER

Like what?

BINU

Like it gave you AIDS... And I mean full-blown, 1985-style bath house AIDS, not that pussy HIV shit where it's so undetectable you let your subscription to POZ magazine run out...Spencer.

SPENCER

You're fucking weird, dude.

BINU

That's not what your father thinks.

INT. BACKYARD - DAY

Binu joins Riley. Stares with him into the suburban void.

RILEY

The divorce is almost final... She gets our cash, but I get the house.

BINU

I wish you would've consulted with an attorney. It's what they're there for.

RILEY

(beat)

I can't have kids, Binu. That's why she treats me the way she treats me.

BINU

She treats you that way because she's a bitch, her mother's a bitch, and if you could have kids -- girl or boy -- it'd be a little bitch everyone hates.

RILEY

You don't even know her mother.

BINU
I've seen pictures.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

SHOTS of a placid Binu looking at photos of Greta's mom:
A crotchety sour-puss.
Binu turns to the as-yet-unseen occupant of the couch.

BINU
Fuck you... Spencer.

INT. MAN CAVE - DAY

Riley flips his yearbook. Young Riley with his h.s. baseball team.
In the black and white photo, young Riley makes smiling eyes with the team manager, Sofia Sandoval. For Riley, the one who got away.

RILEY
I'm 30 years old. Seems like three weeks ago I was in Driver's Ed.

BINU
Well whaddaya want out of life? Use this time to discover what you want.

RILEY
I wanna be like you, Binu.

BINU
No, you don't.

RILEY
But I do. I wanna be like you.

BINU
No, you really just don't.

RILEY
I guess you're right.

BINU
Wellllll maybe-a-little-like-me.

RILEY
I want what everyone wants -- I want The American Dream. I wanna be loved; share a connection... Mutual respect.

BINU

Wow. All this time, here I was, little ol' Binu. Thinking I was the sad queer.

RILEY

Well what does anyone want? No one is happy... What do you want out of life?

BINU

Simple -- High school boys and cocaine.
(inhaling)
Mmmm. I can almost taste it. Piles and piles of pure, uncut, high school boys.

RILEY

(beat)

She may be seeing someone. You might know him... He writes graphic novels.

Greta's legs march down the stairs. Riley and Binu tense up.

GRETA

I'm staying with my brother tonight.

BINU

(meekly)

Are you cheating on Riley with a guy who writes graphic novels?

GRETA

Excuse me?

RILEY

I can totally explain.

BINU

... You're cheating on your husband with a guy who writes graphic novels?

GRETA

Riley, what are you telling people?!

RILEY

Nothing!

BINU

Why doesn't he write regular novels?

INT. BAR - DAY

Riley and Binu have a drink.

RILEY

In the short term I need money, but I really wanna be a writer like you.

BINU

Riley, I'm 30 years old and live with my parents. Next week I'm gonna train to drive a yellow school bus. It's by choice to an extent, sure, but...

RILEY

By choice. You're a successful writer. I'm an English sub and there are zero teaching jobs.

BINU

... Do the bus driver thing with me.

RILEY

I'm not driving a bus; I'm a teacher. Plus, what would Greta say? I need a permission slip to wipe my own ass.

BINU

Does she check to see if you did a good a job?

RILEY

Not anymore... We're over soon, but I still feel like I gotta answer to her.

Binu slides money to the BARTENDER. Riley slides the tip. Comely Bartender, in turn, slides Riley her phone number. He discreetly shreds. Marriage over, he's still faithful.

BINU

Look, Greta's disapproval is the best reason why you should be a bus driver.

RILEY

Yeah. It's kinda funny how guys spend their entire lives trying to run away from the meddling and prying of their moms, but then you have four years of freedom in college, and suddenly boom -- it's this race to go right back to having your dick owned by a woman who has no interest in stroking it.

BINU

In fairness, I read plenty of Jezebel, suck plenty of cock, and dudes are no picnic either.

(beat)

I dunno what to say. I'm sorry, Riley.

RILEY

Don't worry about me. I'll find a job.

BINU
I was referring to your barren
ejaculate, but yeah, that too.

INT. BEDROOM - WEEKS LATER

In front of the mirror, Riley straightens a tie, pats down a suit.

BINU
As someone who spent their 20s trying
to get hired without a college degree,
the worst part isn't really rejection,
it's the lack of a reason.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Riley, with an OLD ANDROID H.R. woman. Her dour face prompts:

RILEY
I have no chance at this job, do I?
(beat)
And I'm never getting a reason why.

OLD ANDROID
What silly little monkey told you that?
I'll give you a reason. You're too old.

RILEY
I'm only 30.

OLD ANDROID
You're closer to 40 than you are 20.
(beat)
Go ahead. Let that sink in a moment.

A MONTAGE of Riley being summarily rejected by more H.R. Androids.

ANDROID 2
You're too inexperienced.

ANDROID 3
You're too over-qualified.

ANDROID 4
You're too male. And way too white.

Finally, Riley interviews with the great KEITH DAVID.

KEITH
You're not white enough.
(beat)
It's kinda fucked, right?

RILEY
It's kinda racist too.

KEITH

Here's the deal: I need a lily white salesman to work rough neighborhoods. It's a novelty, see. Sales skyrocket.

RILEY

Sales skyrocket. It's not dangerous?

KEITH

Nah. Affable white dude with a bounce in his step? Brothers fall back. They think a Charlie Brown or...Linus-type muthafucka, they're so white that it's almost endearing. And if Charlie Brown or that boy Schroeder catches static, any young buck with some sense knows the po-lice will roll in. Now you look like a teacher, one living in the hood with us, so you're fair game. But a Charlie Brown/Archie Andrews? Or that nigga who owns Garfield? Jon? Brothas fall back. Them cats is almost...cute.

(beat, typing)

Look here. Your name's Riley McFadden. Irish as soap. Y'know who this boy is?

Riley's expression: "Of course I know. That's JFK Jr."

KEITH

JFK Jr. He wasn't white enough either. Look at that hairline: That's a black man's hairline. John-John was blacker than Colin Powell. Babe Ruth. Blacker than... I got Jordan stuck in my head.

RILEY

Well that's the last guy: JFK Jr. was in no way blacker than Michael Jordan.

KEITH DAVID

He couldn't fly like Jordan, neither.

Keith adjusts his glasses.

KEITH DAVID

Lookit this résumé: Born and raised in Brownsville. University of Texas at Brownsville, and for the Masters. Then home to teach for 16 years. 30 years of school? Whaddaya scared of?

RILEY

Nothing. Nothing. Sometimes my wife; nothing. Wait-what was the question?

KEITH DAVID

You've been living in the same town
for some 30 years. Prolly living in
the same house. Get outta here, son.
(beat)

Drive away, keep driving, and don't
stop driving. Explore the open road.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Early morning. The sun, yet to have its coffee.
A little BOY and a backpack. A dull roar rises.
A big yellow school bus appears on the horizon.
It's moving way too fast. As it passes the boy:
He takes a step back. Up and onto the sidewalk.
The beast slows for a Napoleonic, besuited man.
This is ORDELL BARRETT IV (60).

INT. BUS - DAY

Mr. Barrett makes his way through the empty bus.
At the back sits his assistant, ST. CLAIRE (40).

ST. CLAIRE

Good morning, Mr. Barrett.

MR. BARRETT

Is it?

Mr. Barrett thumbs through the newspaper.

MR. BARRETT

Famine, poverty...ethnic strife...
How are housing starts, St. Claire?
Down. How are green shoots? Wilted.
The consumer price index? Stagnant.
(beat)

I want good news. Tell me gay men can
be married in Utah. Tell me girls can
go to school in Kabul... No, I'm just
being facetious --- Tell me Sean Penn
contracted cholera in Haiti.

Mr. Barrett is a horrible amalgamation of C. Montgomery Burns,
Darth Vader, Ebenezer Scrooge, Lex Luthor and Cruella de Vil.

He stands, files the newspapers out the slat window. They fly.

ST. CLAIRE

Well, there is some good news, Sir.

MR. BARRETT

Continue...

ST. CLAIRE

The autumn crop has been harvested.

(beat)

There are five of them, Mr. Barrett.

MR. BARRETT

D'tails, man. Names.

ST. CLAIRE

Sir: Their names are Riley McFadden, Binu Binghamvi and Antonio Lampasona, plus Sherlan Greeves and Hank Fat.

MR. BARRETT

God Bless America. We'll certainly be issued government subsidies, even for the Irishman and Italian. Tell me more.

INT. APT - DAY

Our man Riley, downtrodden, plays poker with Binu, Diego, Flora.

INTERCUT with Mr. Barrett and St. Claire at the back of the bus.

ST. CLAIRE

First is Riley McFadden. After taxes were raised, he was deemed too young for tenure, too costly for employment.

MR. BARRETT

Taxes, you say? What are...taxes?

Mr. Barrett laughs an over-the-top laugh. St. Claire matches it.

ST. CLAIRE

Good one, Sir!

MR. BARRETT

(quickly stops)

No one likes a yes man, St. Claire.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Binu, in a circle with BOOK CLUBBERS. His book-of-the-month club.

ST. CLAIRE

Next, we have Binu Bingham. Binu was summarily dismissed from university a number of years ago, assuredly due to petty crime and drug abuse. Bingham later actualized, however, publishing a poorly-received, poor-selling novel. Given this, the lack of a degree from university has cost Bingham.

MR. BARRETT

Don't say "university," St. Claire. It makes you sound like an asshole.

BOOK CLUBBER

I have to ask you, Binu... Do you know Michael Chabon by any chance?

As Binu answers, we INTERCUT with him leaving his room, and going downstairs to his family's business. He/his parents live upstairs.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

MR. BINGHAVI and MRS. BINGHAVI argue with a CUSTOMER.

BINU

I mean...I'm friendly with his agent, but Michael Chabon is a major author, he's married to another major author, and every Saturday night they have dinner with 15 other major authors.

(then)

I don't live in that world. Saturday nights I'm watching "Real Housewives" reruns and eating ice cream for dinner.

Binu leaves, heads one store over to a Chinese restaurant.

INT. "CHINESE FOODIE" - DAY

Binu sits. His meal, waiting for him. Nods at our new friend...

HANK FAT (18) prepares several dishes while PARENTS berate him.

ST. CLAIRE

Our third is our youngest: Hank Fat.

MR. BARRETT

Does he have a green card?

INT. GYM - DAY

Hank executes ping-pong drills. Gets screamed at by ASIAN COACH.

ST. CLAIRE

Well no, Sir. He was born in Ameri --

MR. BARRETT

I see your usual strategy at work, St. Claire, and I like it. He is a shadow. He does not exist. In addition to tax breaks and subsidies, we also save --

ST. CLAIRE

Mr. Barrett, Hank Fat a U.S. citizen.

MR. BARRETT

Mmmm. An anchor baby, you say? Keep an eye open. No pun intended. Keep an eye open, for if we take his patriotism as a given, the next thing you know he'll be selling blueprints and launch codes to the Israelis.

Hank sends a winner down the line with terrific force.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

SHERLAN GREEVES (30), fed through an MRI.

ST. CLAIRE

Fourth is Sherlan Greeves. Sherlan comes to us after 9 injury-plagued seasons with the Jets and Patriots.

Later, Sherlan examines his CT scan with DOCTORS.

DOCTOR

I can see why they say you were the brains behind Bill Belichick and Tom Brady's success... What's Brady like?

SHERLAN

Well, let's put it this way: You know how they say stars are regular people, just like you 'n me? Well they're not. That's what makes them stars.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

TONY LAMPASONA (25) and his baby COUSIN play paintball.

Lampasona is a knock-off of Pauly D. from Jersey Shore.

ST. CLAIRE

Our last man is Antonio Lampasona.

MR. BARRETT

Ah. The Italiano who served with the
Army Rangers for two tours in Arabia.

A truck's gate rises: floor-to-ceiling cartons of hot cigarettes.

Moments later, squad cars barrel into the driveway. COPS fan out.

Since Lampasona has a paintball gun and his MOB UNCLES appear to be harmless, chubby dads, it's Lampasona who the officers tackle.

ST. CLAIRE

Tony Lampasona's commitment to the military and his pursuit of legitimate employment with us, it stands in stark contrast to his Mafia upbringing. Note if you will, one correction: Lampasona wasn't an Army Ranger. He's a Navy man.

MR. BARRETT

And calls himself a soldier? The Navy means "Never Again Volunteer Yourself."

ST. CLAIRE

I've heard fine things about the Navy.

MR. BARRETT

Oh, I'm sure you have St. Claire.
(beat)
I'm sure you have.

INT. BUS - DAY

Back with Mr. Barrett, St. Claire. They pull into a bus depot.

A sign: Barrett Bus. They commute to work in one of their own.

Barrett and St. Claire step off. They admire a fleet of buses.

ST. CLAIRE

I believe them to be fine candidates,
Sir. Without exception, without fail.

MR. BARRETT

I trust they'll make a top-shop crew.
(beat)
Have they passed their drug tests?

INT. QUEST LABS - DAY

A cup of yellow pee. Lined up in hospital gowns are Riley, Binu, Lampasona, Hank, Sherlan. They wait...staring at the cup o' pee.

LAMPASONA

I have to go to G.N.C.

SHERLAN

Okay, me too.

INT. FOOD COURT - DAY

Opposite G.N.C, the motley crew bonds while eating at the mall.

SHERLAN

(to Binu)

So you wrote a book, brother?

BINU

I wrote one book. Any idiot can write one book. It takes a special kind of idiot to write two.

SHERLAN

You got a deal for two?

BINU

I was hoping to, but they passed.

HANK FAT

How does that work?

BINU

Knopf, that's the publisher, they set me up with this Indian editor...Sonny Mehta. I was nervous, becuz I thought maybe it was like they do at NYU with the dorms freshman year. They put all the white kids with white kids, stick the darkies with darkies. I got stuck with this Filipino kid -- Timothy Ong. I knew I was in for a bad year when I asked Timothy what kinda music he dug, thinking he'd be into like, Pearl Jam or Stone Temple Pilots or shit that'd communicate he was upper-middle class and uninspiring like me...but no dice.

INT. DORM (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Binu and TIMOTHY ONG (18) sit on the edge of their beds.

YOUNG BINU

What kind of music do you like?

TIMOTHY ONG

I dunno. I like R & B... Slow jams...

INT. FOOD COURT - DAY

Back with the bus drivers.

BINU

Slow jams. Kid didn't even mean it in an ironic way... And it was never any of the good stuff like Johnny Gill or Ginuwine. You probably like slow jams too, Sherlan, but it's different.

SHERLAN

It was your first experience with an Indian or Asian kid who got his cues from urban life. Instead of suburban.

BINU

Yeah. I thought my meeting with Sonny was like they do it at NYU with dorms, but it turns out that Sonny Mehta was not just some Indian dude they hooked me up with to feel comfortable, Sonny Mehta is the Editor-in-Chief of Knopf.

INT. KNOPF (INTERCUT) - DAY

Binu sits with SONNY MEHTA (68) in a well-appointed office.

BINU

So I'm in his office, after I sold the one book, and he says to me...

SONNY MEHTA

I feel you're near the league of top Indian writers. I would like to give you a deal for a second novel. Ideas?

BINU

Well I know how Quirk publishing did that mash-up book, *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies*, so I was thinking...maybe I could do something like... *Emerson versus Thoreau*. And when they do the movie adaptation, they could dumb it down real simple-like, call it RALPH VERSUS HENRY. It would be a romantic comedy, starring Matt Damon as Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Ben Affleck as Henry David Thoreau. Casey could be Hawthorne. It's a comedy of manners, see, a comedy about slavery. Boston Mass in the 1880s. Or 1830s, rather.

(beat)

I have to check when they lived, but it would definitely be Matt penciled in as Emerson, Ben as Thoreau...each trying to abolish slavery, all while vying for the affections of Louisa May Alcott, played by Chloë Moretz.

Sonny smiles.

LAMPASONA

So what happened?

BINU

Honestly? I have no idea.

Sonny folds a 250K check, places it in his pocket.

INT. GNC - DAY

The bus drivers, gathered around a Dr. Detox bottle.

SHERLAN

This won't work. We need to find The Whizzinator. It's a fake Johnson you strap on and it comes with clean pee.

RILEY

What made you guys think you can be high for this job? All ya need is a driver's license, to not smoke weed, and to not touch little girls.

BINU

(to himself)

Or boys.

HANK FAT

... We need a driver's license?

INT. CAR - DAY

Of all people, Hank is the one driving.

SHERLAN

Didn't you think to get one first?

HANK FAT

I thought it'd be part of training!

RILEY

... Why is Hank driving the car?

SHERLAN

But why don't you have one already?

HANK FAT

I'm Asian. I come from a long line of terrible Asian drivers. You should be celebrating me: By not having one I'm doing the rest of the country a favor.

LAMPASONA

Look, you know what the best fake ID's are? Real ID's. My Uncle has connections at the DMV. We'll get Hank a legit ID from DMV printers.

RILEY

... Why is Hank driving the car?

SHERLAN

Hang a left right here.

Hank makes an abrupt right turn that is lacking in grace.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - DAY

The bus drivers approach the South Asian OWNER.

RILEY

Do you carry The Whizzinator?

OWNER

Mister. No.

SHERLAN

It's for novelty purposes only.

OWNER

Mister. Sorry.

Binu steps forward.

BINU

Namaste.

The Owner casually reaches for the shelf that's behind him. He puts a Whizzinator on the counter, followed by two more.

LAMPASONA

Oh, cool. They come in different colors, yo. Like dolls for girls.

RILEY

White...

SHERLAN

Black...

BINU

(box: "Tan")

And Mexican. This is too light for me.

LAMPASONA

Do they come in cut and uncut?

BINU

See, Riley? You can't write about being a substitute teacher, but you can write about stuff like this.

RILEY

Nah. No one can write about this.

HANK FAT

I was having a hard time finding an artificial penis in the right color. Most penile-related quandaries overly concern themselves with the requisite questions of size: length and width, or lack thereof... In this instance, the penis problem drew parallels to the selection of a diamond engagement ring: "Color" and "Cut" were the only variables of import, and they were proving to be elusive. I needed to pass an employment dependent drug test, we all did, and a prosthetic known as The Whizzinator promised to deliver pure urea under the watchful eye of an administrator.

Riley & Binu, dwarfed by Hank's skill. Lampasona says to Owner:

LAMPASONA

You sell Powerball, my dude?

A "Bus Drivers" series will end with the gang winning Powerball, and the fun victory montage that accompanies that sort of thing.

EXT. DMV - DAY

The five approach the building entrance.

LAMPASONA

A few of the veteran bus drivers are having a drink at Biker Bar later on. After the diversity/minority seminar.

HANK FAT

Do we need ID?

SHERLAN

Y'know...I've heard some things about St. Claire and minorities.

RILEY

Like what?

SHERLAN

I hear they get tax credits on us, like 50%.

(MORE)

SHERLAN (cont'd)

But he gets 100 when he can replace drivers with not just minorities, but foreign born ones.

BINU

He does seem a bit too excited about us. He came up to me at registration like, Binu, I had some Chicken Tikka Masala last night... American people do that constantly, like they're all proud of themselves. I don't ever go, Guess what, Richard? My daughter got a C- in Biology. Eh? Eh?

HANK FAT

Maybe they're just being nice 'cause they know Indian guys have li'l ones.

BINU

This is true. But you wouldn't know much about that, now would you Hank?

HANK FAT

No, I wouldn't... They don't call me Hank Fat because it's my name.

INT. DMV OFFICE - DAY

The bus drivers negotiate with Lampasona's EMPLOYEE connection.

EMPLOYEE

How do I know he's not a terrorist?

BINU

I can vouch for him.

EMPLOYEE

That's not comforting.

BINU

That's sorta the joke.

LAMPASONA

Ma'am, Hank here, he doesn't always get respect from our fellow patriot brothers. But he's an American, too.

Hank nods his head.

SHERLAN

He just wants to be recognized as a real American...with a real license.

Hank nods his head.

RILEY
His family's Chinese restaurant
feeds our families.

Hank nods his head.

LAMPASONA
They've put down roots.

Hank nods his head.

SHERLAN
They've served in war.

Hank nods his head.

RILEY
And they pay their taxes.

Hank shakes his head.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Hank Fat's brand new license gets examined by a BOUNCER.

Diego, the kid from the teacher's lounge, exits the bar.

DIEGO
Riley!

RILEY
Diego?

DIEGO
How've you been?

RILEY
What are you doing here? You're 17.

DIEGO
Well my mom doesn't mind me having a
couple of beers as long as she knows
about it. I've gotta go, but call me.

The bus drivers enter the bar.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Our five boys sit at a booth and survey the joint.

BINU
You know, Riley, when we were talking
back at your house about getting laid
off, I never... Do you need any money?

RILEY

Nah. I don't wanna be borrowing money.

With Riley looking away, Binu wipes his brow with the back of his hand and puckers his lips as if to say "Phew." He dodged a bullet.

RILEY

(to Lampasona)

I thought you said the veteran bus drivers were getting together. All I see are families and... Sofia?

FLASH

Riley's yearbook. Young Riley, with his high school baseball team.

In the black and white photo, young Riley makes smiling eyes with the team manager, Sofia Sandoval. For Riley, the one who got away.

LAMPASONA

Who's Sofia?

RILEY

The one who got away... Sofia told me I should go for my dream and sign the contract with the St. Louis Cardinals.

(beat)

But I also grew up with my soon-to-be ex-wife, Greta. It was Greta who said I should go to college instead.

HANK FAT

Go talk to her.

RILEY

Well yeah, but what do I say?

HANK FAT

Just be yourself.

SHERLAN

Yeah, just be yourself. Hey, I used to be a substitute teacher, but now I'm training to be a bus driver. If it's okay with my wife, you want to have dinner sometime?

RILEY

Exactly. I'm not lying.

LAMPASONA

Hank Fat makes a good point, Riley. Women wear makeup and Spanx.

RILEY

That's the same thing? I don't lie.

LATER

Sofia Sandoval talks with a FRIEND.

FRIEND

How do you know if a man is cheating?

SOFIA

Well...late at night, have you ever caught your boyfriend watching porn?

FRIEND

No.

SOFIA

That means he's cheating.

Riley and Binu saddle up. Friend slips away.

SOFIA

Riley?

RILEY

Riley McFadden. You remember me?

SOFIA

Of course! What are you doing here?!

RILEY

I still live in town! How 'bout you?!

SOFIA

I moved back a couple years ago!
What are you up to?! Whaddaya do?!

RILEY

I'm an AP Physics and an AP Chem and
an AP Bio teacher! I'm also a writer!

BINU

He's also a bus driver.

RILEY

I'm also a bus driver! I'm working on
a little undercover assignment at the
moment...looking for a child molester.

SOFIA

Wow, a child molester? Really, Riley?

BINU

Wow, a child molester? Really, Riley?

RILEY

How about you? Are you married?

SOFIA

No, not married.

RILEY

Ugh. Sorry for asking, as if marriage is the end-all-and-be-all-for a woman.

SOFIA

Well I'm unhappy enough as it is, I'm not sure if I see the value in adding marriage to the equation. Plus...it's slim pickings out there. A lot of men like to say they're divorced as a way of roping you in, but then you figure out they're still with their wives.

BINU

Men... Don't trust a word they say. Right, Riley?

RILEY

Oh, Sofia -- this is my best friend from college: Binu Binghavi.

SOFIA

Nice to meet you, Binu. How are you?

BINU

Good, good. Was just asking Riley how he plans on catching that molester.

SOFIA

Yeah, it sounds very Kindergarten Cop.

RILEY

Kindergarten Cop. Exactly. Totally.

He pets Binu's hair and says in a thick Austrian accent:

RILEY

This is my ferret.

Binu smacks Riley's hand away.

INT. BARRETT BUS CO. - NEXT DAY

Our boys in a classroom. Mr. Barrett and St. Claire address them.

ST. CLAIRE

Men... Welcome to the American Dream.

(beat)

Riley McFadden... What is your dream?

RILEY

Well... I guess it's a job, a house, a wife, and maybe some kids.

(MORE)

RILEY (cont'd)

I live in the house I grew up in, so now I look around, and I don't have squat.

ST. CLAIRE

And Mr. Binu Bingham... Your dream?

BINU

I want to keep being a writer. If --

ST. CLAIRE

And we're happy to have you, Bingham. I had some terrific paneer last night.

Binu, confused.

HANK FAT

I wanna get outta my parents' Chinese food restaurant. And I want people to acknowledge me as an American.

LAMPASONA

I'm a full American; I served in Iraq. But I never saw real action. I wanted to come home a hero.

SHERLAN

I saw plenty of action, and have been in some real wars, but not a real war. I'm talking about the NFL... Plus, in my last game, I dropped a pass that would have sent us to the Super Bowl. So you're a true hero, Lampasona.

LAMPASONA

Thanks, man. But I didn't see action.

MR. BARRETT

Do read *The Red Badge of Courage*, son. A Navy man like yourself might relate to the main character.

Binu squints. He's pretty sure *The Red Badge* is about a coward.

ST. CLAIRE

Bus Drivers... Your golden path to the American Dream is a road well-traveled. Three years ago one of our top drivers sat in these very chairs. Gentlemen, I present to you... Ms. Sofia Sandoval.

Sofia, part of the veteran driver crew from last night, enters.

HANK FAT

Holy cow... This is like Top Gun.

SHERLAN

This is like Top Gun. It's like when they're at the bar 'n Maverick sings to that lady, and then she turns out to be their flight instructor.

BINU

Hey Sofia!

SOFIA

Hi, Binu... Morning Riley. How's the search for your child molester going?

HANK FAT

Sherlan, you're Merlin... I'm Goose.

LAMPASONA

No, you be Iceman, yo. Goose dies.

SOFIA

Yeah, bro, Goose dies... And then he goes bald and plays second fiddle to George Clooney for six years. Nuh-uh.
(beat)

Anyway. Time to hit the road.

INT. BUS - DAY

Riley sits right behind the BUS DRIVER. About to learn the ropes.

Riley looks out the window. Adjacent to his bus is one driven by Sofia, with Hank Fat sitting behind her, also learning the ropes.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Riley's bus pulls up, ready to pick up kids at the end of the day.

Riley sees Diego, his kid/buddy from the teacher's lounge and bar.

RILEY

Hey, man... I know that kid. Mind if I hop out for a second and say hello?

LATER

Riley and Diego catch up.

DIEGO

So did your wife move out yet?

RILEY

Not soon enough... I actually met someone last night, not that it's what I'm focusing on right now.

DIEGO

Still, that's awesome. You fuck her?

RILEY

I'm not really that kinda guy. I actually knew her in high school.

DIEGO

Cool, man. What's her name?

RILEY

Sofia.

Diego chuckles.

RILEY

What's funny?

DIEGO

Nothing, just... That's my mom's name.

CUT TO BLACK

CONFESSIONS OF A HIGH SCHOOL BUS DRIVER