

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAWN.**

The desolate expanse of the Mojave Desert. Sun-baked cracked red soil, pink sky, a burning sun beginning to rise above the horizon. Otherworldly -- we could be on Mars.

Suddenly, a NAKED MAN runs across the frame and out of shot.

Moments later, a NAKED WOMAN follows. She stops, catches her breath. Calls out.

NAKED WOMAN  
Charlie! It's okay! It happens!

Getting no response, she begins to run again.

Further ahead, the naked man -- CHARLIE HEDDON (40) -- crouches down behind a cluster of bushes.

The woman catches up, clearly aware that he's hiding behind the only bit of foliage for miles around.

NAKED WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Hmm, where could he be?

From behind the bushes:

CHARLIE  
Go away.

NAKED WOMAN  
Honey, it's okay. You're under a lot of stress.

CHARLIE  
Scram!

NAKED WOMAN  
I will not scam! You got me out here -- sneaking around in the middle of the night -- running after you naked as sin -- the fuck's wrong with me? I'm a beautiful woman in the prime of my life --

She continues in this vein.

As she carries on, Charlie looks over at a rock sitting by his feet. He reaches over cautiously and picks it up.

As he does so, the sound of Captain Beefheart's Frownland -- as if performed by a tiny invisible band hidden beneath it -- begins to play.

THE TINY INVISIBLE BAND UNDER THE  
ROCK

*My smile is stuck  
I cannot go back to your Frownland*

Spooked, Charlie replaces the rock. The music stops. In the background, the woman's still ranting.

Entranced, Charlie lifts the rock again.

THE TINY INVISIBLE BAND UNDER THE  
ROCK (CONT'D)

*My spirit's made up of the ocean  
And the sky 'n' the sun 'n' the  
moon  
'n' all my eyes can see  
I cannot go back to your land of  
gloom  
Where black jagged shadows  
Remind me of the coming of your  
doom  
I want my own land*

As Frownland continues to play, Charlie begins to laugh, amazed at this tiny invisible band performing just for him in the middle of the desert.

Behind him, the woman gives up and storms off.

Charlie suddenly glances over to his side, and sees a TURTLE crawling towards him. As he does so, the music abruptly stops.

The turtle waddles past. Stops. Turns and looks Charlie in the eye. Then, with the voice of a wizened old man, speaks:

TURTLE

Houston, we have a problem.

The turtle turns its gaze to Charlie's flaccid penis. Charlie is stunned. The turtle moves off.

Charlie lifts up the rock, but no music plays. The tiny invisible band is gone. Dejected, he lets his head fall.

But then the music begins to rise again, this time playing in his head.

THE TINY INVISIBLE BAND NOW PLAYING  
IN CHARLIE'S HEAD

*Take my hand and come with me  
It's not too late for you  
It's not too late for me  
To find my homeland*

Charlie stands up, a new sense of purpose clearly visible on his face.

He emerges from behind the bushes and turns to face his fate...

A few hundred yards away, a massive SPACE ROCKET rises up from the desert, gleaming white in the rays of the new day's sun.

Charlie gazes at this gorgeous, monstrous symbol of fire and futurism. He raises his hands like he's praying to a god.

He screws his eyes shut as the Beefheart track rages in his mind, clenches every part of his body as if willing his unresponsive penis to stand as proud as the huge phallic metallic beast in the distance.

And just as he looks ready to explode --

**INT. CASSIOPEIA SPACEPORT, RESTAURANT - DAY.**

A sad, insipid spurt of mustard sauce lands on a meagre hotdog that's trapped between two giant dry buns.

DUKE TWOMEY (60s), a big bulbous billionaire Texan, regards the hotdog with disdain.

DUKE

Will you look at that. You can send me to the moon, but you can't get a decent spread of mustard on my dog.

Duke is sitting at a table in the restaurant of the Cassiopeia Spaceport, a sleek place of perfect curves, high windows and incredibly expensive cutlery.

Across from him sit --

JACOB KNOX (35), Chief Engineer, a skinny brainiac who would rather be writing code than -- well, than anything basically --

-- and SCARLETT LAING (28), Head of Comms, a well-dressed spike of barely contained energy.

JACOB

You're not going to the moon.

Duke shakes the mustard violently.

DUKE

I know, I know. "Low earth orbit".

He shoots a tsunami of mustard over his hotdog.

DUKE (CONT'D)  
More like it.

He grabs the dog and takes a gargantuan bite. While still chewing --

DUKE (CONT'D)  
A gander at the great state of Texas in all its glory, then back to reality.

SCARLETT  
Plus you get to be weightless.

Both Scarlett and Jacob find it hard not to gaze at Duke's fulsome belly in response to this comment. Duke notices. He shoves more hotdog into his big gaping mouth.

Scarlett turns to Jacob and whispers.

SCARLETT (CONT'D)  
Where's Charlie?

JACOB  
Checking the vibrations, communing with Quetzalcoatl, I dunno...

Duke hears this.

DUKE  
What's that?

JACOB  
What's what?

DUKE  
You got Mexicans here?

JACOB  
I think -- there's, uh --

SCARLETT  
The sous chef, maybe.

DUKE  
Sous chef?

SCARLETT  
Don't worry, he doesn't do the kids' menu.

Duke can taste her disdain. He wipes his mouth, his Texan bonhomie gone.

DUKE  
You see that out there?

Duke points out the window at the Mojave desert beyond.

DUKE (CONT'D)  
Two hundred years ago that was all Mexican territory. And what did they do with it? Put up temples to goddamn mythological beasts that ain't mentioned in none of the scriptures. When we took over --

SCARLETT  
Stole it.

DUKE  
Excuse me?

Duke glares at Scarlett. Against her urges, Scarlett backs down.

SCARLETT  
I'm sorry. Continue.

DUKE  
When we took over, you know what we did with this place?

JACOB  
Built casinos.

DUKE  
Sure we did. And employed thousands of people to work 'em. But more'n that. We built planes. We built rockets. We broke the sound barrier. We took men off the earth and conquered space. It started here. And it's gonna continue here. Thanks to us. Everyone's gonna get a shot at space.

SCARLETT  
Not everyone.

DUKE  
Huh?

SCARLETT  
Your ticket cost \$100,000.

DUKE

Well sure -- but I worked goddamn hard to make that money, sweetie.

JACOB

Making -- sorry, what is it you make again?

DUKE

Deals, son. I make deals. You got a problem with that?

Before this gets ugly, from behind --

CHARLIE

Duke!

Charlie approaches, looking like he hasn't slept all night -- which he hasn't. Eyes wild, pupils dilated, grin like a thousand watt bulb.

Jacob uses this opportunity to jump up and leave. As he passes Charlie --

JACOB

Anyone but him.

Jacob heads off.

DUKE

What he say?

CHARLIE

(covering)

He said... you think you're gonna be weightless up there, you're crazy, you fat fucking bastard.

Duke looks at Charlie -- initially we think he's pissed off. Scarlett holds her breath.

Then Duke explodes in laughter.