

From Malibu Cars Look Like they Can Float
By Don Zolidis

MARTIN, 19, the part time manager of a McDonald's.
JoANNE, 15, the counter girl. White trash.

(A local McDonald's.)

JoANNE
(slurred)

WelcometoMcDonaldsmayItakeyourorderplease...?

(she stares at the ceiling for a second.)

Thatcomestofourninetyseven. Would you like coke with that?

(she looks away)

Hereortogo?

(she holds out her hand to receive money.)

I don't have any pennies.

(she turns her back)

MARTIN

Her name was JoAnne. When we first encounter an employee with what we like to refer to as an "attitude problem," we don't necessarily go out and fire that person immediately. There are a lot of steps to go through.

JoANNE

WelcometoMcDonaldsmayItakeyourorderplease?

(short pause)

Yeah? Sorry we're out of Big Mac buns. You can't have a Big Mac. Pick something else.

(short pause)

Uh. Cry-y. It's not like there's nothing else on the menu.

(to MARTIN)

Do you mind if I smoke?

MARTIN

See, I see someone like JoAnne, and I see potential. I know she's a good kid, you know? And who knows what's going on in her family life.

JoANNE

Well I got this grandpa who lives with me... and he's like a total perv.

MARTIN

And I didn't want to know. When you come to work, you have to put those kind of things behind you. Because you have a job to do. And there are customers who demand good service. They won't stand for anything short of perfection. And maybe at some other McDonald's they get away with treating customers rudely, but not in my store. I take it as a point of personal pride that this store has passed three straight health inspections

without a major infraction—Granted, I had only worked there for five months, and I only became assistant manager two months ago, but still, I think that’s a pretty good track record. And that record was in danger.

(JoANNE drops imaginary food on the floor, she scoops it up and tries to set it back on the tray.)

JoANNE

What? What? Eat it and like it. I’m not making another one.

MARTIN

Being the assistant manager involves a lot of responsibility. The shake machine. Mopping the floors. Cleaning the various play areas. I even have to make sure the women’s bathroom is clean, and believe me, some of the most disturbing things I have ever seen in my life occurred in the women’s bathroom of the Racine Street McDonald’s. But my most important job, was managing. Sometimes, on weekends, the regular manager would be out sick. This happened fairly often actually, as she had some kind of painful skin condition which incapacitated her if the humidity got above seventy percent or so. Apparently, the years of proximity to that much grease had caused this... I guess the only way to describe it would be a fungus... to take root beneath the outer layer of her epidermis, and at certain times it would... um... bloom. We tried not to talk about it. JoAnne... uh... I hate to say it, but I had problems with JoAnne when we closed.

(JoANNE mops in a very annoyed and bored manner.)

JoANNE

Martin, this is really fucking gross over here. Look at it. There are like worms and shit—I’m not even kidding here. Like Eughh...

MARTIN

That’s the fry machine.

JoANNE

Whatever. I’m not touching it. Someone else can fucking do it. I’m gonna go have a smoke.

MARTIN

JoAnne—

JoANNE

This is totally gross—this is totally disgusting, this whole fucking job sucks. Do I need this? No. Okay? Aren’t there like retards who can clean this up?

MARTIN

Fine, fine. Give me the fucking mop.
(she gives him the mop)

JoANNE

All right, I'm gonna have a cigarette.

MARTIN

No you're not.

JoANNE

Fine I'll just stand here doing nothing.

MARTIN

Why don't you go bag the balls?

JoANNE

WHAT?!

MARTIN

The balls, the balls. The sea of balls.

JoANNE

Oh.

(JoANNE shrugs her shoulders. She grabs a big nylon sack, takes off her shoes, and pantomimes crawling into the kids' play area.)

MARTIN

(to audience)

We're one of two McDonald's in the Madison area with a complete children's fun zone. Which includes what is traditionally known as the sea of balls. Once a week we have to wash the balls, which basically entails scooping every single one of them up into bags, and sending them off to the cleaners. Because the kids get in there... they have germs... they urinate... sometimes babies would get lost... we'd find diapers, gum, french fries, who knows what. Point of the story: The balls needed to be washed. Every single fucking one of them. Okay. Imagine a sea of balls.

(A single brightly colored plastic balls drops from the ceiling—or is tossed onto the stage.)

A sea of balls.

(More balls begin appearing on stage.)

Bright colors. Red. Orange. Blue. Green. A whole fucking rainbow.

(MARTIN continues mopping the floor as JoANNE half-heartedly begins placing balls into her sack. MARTIN watches.)

MARTIN

Doing it that way's not gonna get us out of here any faster.

JoANNE

Whatever.

(JoANNE rests and takes out a cigarette.)

MARTIN
Don't smoke in there.

JoANNE
We're cleaning the fucking balls, who cares?

MARTIN
JoAnne—

JoANNE
(mimicking him)
Martin—I'm tired.

MARTIN
You just started.

JoANNE
(whining)
I need help.

MARTIN
You have to learn to do it yourself.

JoANNE
Nooooo... Please help me.
(JoANNE tries to move and falls over.)
I'm stuck. I'm stuck. Martin—

MARTIN
JoAnne—

JoANNE
This sucks. Please help me.

MARTIN
Fine.
(MARTIN takes off his shoes and gets into the imaginary sea of balls.)
Here let me hold the bag. You scoop.
(He holds the bag open and she begins scooping imaginary balls into it.)

JoANNE
So I got this grandpa living with me who's like a total perv.
(No response from MARTIN.)
So I got this grandpa who's like a total perv?

MARTIN

I heard you the first time.

JoANNE

He is.

MARTIN

Great.

JoANNE

Like, seriously, he tries to like come in the shower and shit.

MARTIN

Really?

JoANNE

Yeah, but I lock the door so it's not a problem, but I can hear him scratching out there, you know? Like a dog. Not a big dog cause he doesn't do it loud, but like a little dog, you know? Like a chihuahua. Or a schnauzer.

MARTIN

Wow.

JoANNE

You know I don't mind living in a trailer, cause people are always like, oh, you're trailer trash and shit, but that doesn't bother me. Cause, fuck them, you know? Who asked them? Like it's my fault I was born in a trailer? Well I wasn't born in the trailer, I was born in the hospital, but like, right afterwards, I came back to the trailer.

MARTIN

Aren't you afraid of tornadoes?

JoANNE

Oh. Yeah. Every March we move out of the trailer park and stay in a motel for a couple of weeks. Just, you know, till it passes over. Cause my Mom actually got caught in a tornado once—

MARTIN

Really?

JoANNE

Seriously. She can like smell em coming now. Her hair stands up and everything, and then she bugs out. And then we move to the motel. Which is bad cause it means I can't lock my door, so my Grandpa can get in, so I usually have to keep a frying pan near the bed. So I can whack him with it, you know? Does that freak you out?

MARTIN

What?

JoANNE

That I have a frying pan next to my bed?

MARTIN

A little bit.

JoANNE

I don't actually use it. It's like a security blanket thing. My grandpa's really harmless, he's just a perv.

MARTIN

Oh.

JoANNE

You know I've never been able to talk to anyone like I can talk to you.

MARTIN

Really?

(Back to the audience)

And I don't know if it was the fluorescent light reflecting off the multicolored balls, or the way her skin had gotten a kind of a shine on account of the grease, but at that moment, she was the most beautiful fifteen year-old girl I had ever seen in a McDonald's uniform. And I knew it was wrong, but I think the blame can be placed squarely on God, because he made some fifteen year-old girls really hot.

(Back to her)

You know something?

JoANNE

What?

MARTIN

You're really hot.

(She rips off her McDonald's hat and hairnet and lunges at him. She knocks him on his back and straddles him, kissing him passionately.)

Ow. Wait. Wait. Hold on.

JoANNE

What?

MARTIN

I got a ball stuck in my back, hold on.

(MARTIN reaches behind him and produces a ball. He throws it away.)

Okay.

(They begin kissing again. Pause. JoANNE freezes in tableau, MARTIN speaks back to the audience from beneath her.)
 So with the balls rolling around back and forth sounding just like waves crashing on the beach, we made love right there in the plastic sea.
(Another rain of balls from off-stage.)
 Ow. Ow. Ow.
(He gets up gimpily and tosses balls out of his way.)

JoANNE
 Are you okay?

MARTIN
 That was really a lot more uncomfortable than I imagined.

JoANNE
 I'm sorry.

MARTIN
 No no, it's not your fault.
(Pause. They look at each other. JoANNE begins to adjust her hair.)
 You know something?

JoANNE
 What?

MARTIN
 That was my first time.
(She laughs)
 No. I'm serious.

JoANNE
 No way.

MARTIN
 I guess you couldn't tell then. Cool.

JoANNE
 Huh.

MARTIN
 So, uh... was it um... your... first...?

JoANNE
 God no.

MARTIN

Well that's fine.

(They sit awkwardly, not looking at each other. After a pause)

JoANNE

You're the best manager I've ever had.

MARTIN

(to audience)

I wasn't sure how to take that.

(back to her)

Um... how many... other... managers have there been? Wait. Don't answer that. I don't wanna know.

JoANNE

Okay.

MARTIN

So um... what's your last name?

(MARTIN stands back up triumphantly and addresses the audience.)

JoAnne Adler was her name. We began a torrid affair, and for the first time in the five months I had worked at the Racine Street McDonald's, we failed a major health inspection.

(A fake rat is thrown on the stage from the wings. JoANNE shrieks and attacks it with a mop.)

JoAnne's attitude problem became worse.

JoANNE

Welcome to McDonald's may I take your order please?

(she stares forward, picking at her hair.)

What the hell do I care if you want a Fillet-O-Fish? Yeah? So? So? So? Blow me. What are you gonna do about it? You gonna call the manager? Suck my dick.

(MARTIN walks over.)

MARTIN

Can I help you?

JoANNE

This guy called me a slut. You wanna see a slut? You wanna see a slut?

(She takes off her shirt.)

MARTIN

I didn't really help the situation much.

(MARTIN grabs JoANNE and picks her up. They start making out.)

JoANNE

(in the middle of making out)

Why don't you go to Burger King, asshole? They actually flame-broil the shit. We just fry our burgers!

(MARTIN sets her down. JoANNE addresses a new customer.)

Next customer please. WelcometoMcDonald'smayItakeyourorderplease?

(Short pause)

You might not want that after I tell you what's in it. Uh-huh, that's nice. We're allowed to use ten percent filler in our—

(she makes the little quote sign)

“meat.” You know what that means? Sawdust, rat, whatever we can find. Oh yeah, sure. Totally true. And you know what else? We're like totally destroying the rain forest. Just for fun. But also for our cows. For our genetically engineered McDonald's super-cows. Sure. We've like single-handedly dispossessed like a hundred Indian tribes in the Amazon. What do you think happened to those Indians, huh? Let me give you a clue. You figure there's a lot of cows there, right? More than ten times as many cows as there were Indians. Ten percent, that's what I'm saying. That's right, “filler.” All ground up. There's this giant grinding machine,

(makes a buzzsaw-type noise)

Hamburger. Did you know eating human flesh causes constipation? Where are you going? C'mon, don't you want an Indian burger? That's all right, you can't get away from us. There are McDonald's everywhere, Bitch! Every country in the world! You can't escape us! We run the show! WE RUN THE SHOW!!!

(She screams in Sam Kinnison fashion, then does a little victory dance. She pauses for a second, taking a deep breath.)

Next customer please.

MARTIN

I uh... I actually took JoAnne off the counter for a little while. It was stressing her out. So in the back I got to learn all kinds of new stuff about her.

JoANNE

So I've got this grandpa and he's like a total perv.

MARTIN

I learned other stuff too. Besides that.

JoANNE

I have double-jointed hips.

MARTIN

I love you.

JoANNE

See, if I really want I can put like, one foot behind my neck, and then I can hop on the other foot. Here watch.

(She attempts to do this and fails miserably.)

Ow.

MARTIN

(to her)

It's okay.

(to audience)

Sometimes it's difficult for your dreams to live up to reality. But those were good times. And every night after work I would drive her home in my 1973 Malibu Cruiser. Aqua Blue. With Tailfins.

(JoANNE begins assembling the Malibu Cruiser.)

First, let me say that I wasn't the biggest fan of the Malibu Cruiser—I got it for a dollar from a friend of my Dad's who was running from the police. And it was ugly as hell, but it still kinda worked. I thought it looked like a hideous aquatic beast that evolved wheels instead of feet and rolled up out of the ocean. And when I drove it, it disgorged a cloud of bluish green smoke, which sometimes came out as exhaust, but more often than not came out of the hood. Everything about the car was blue. It was like being underwater.

(All the lights shift to blue, as they sit in the underwater world of the car.)

But when I drove JoAnne home, I discovered the one advantage of the Malibu Cruiser. It was huge.

(They mess up their hair crazily to indicate just having had sex. Maybe someone throws another multicolored ball at them from off-stage. JoANNE lights a cigarette in the afterglow.)

I'm getting better at that, huh?

JoANNE

Huh?

MARTIN

Um... never mind.

JoANNE

Okay.

(They sit awkwardly for a second.)

You wanna like do it again?

MARTIN

Nah.

JoANNE

Okay.