

PACK RATS

Stranded abroad, a pampered college grad joins the motley expat crew of a chaotic hostel in hopes of earning enough cash for his ticket home. Based on the lived experiences of the screenwriter.

COLD OPEN

INT. HOTEL MIDAS- RECEPTION AREA

ALEX KNOWLES, 22, breezes through the lobby of a Baltic resort with private school swagger. He tows a suitcase plastered with stickers from European destinations. He saunters up to the marble reception desk, where a RECEPTIONIST gives hushed orders to a BELLHOP.

RECEPTIONIST

Well tell the orphanage it's not their pool anymore. And make sure the fence is charged up tonight.

The bellhop leaves. The receptionist pivots to greet Alex.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Welcome to Hotel Midas, how might I help you today?

ALEX

Checking in for Alex Knowles.

Alex hands him his passport.

RECEPTIONIST

So nice to have you Mr. Knowles, complimentary portrait?

The receptionist gestures to a HOTEL EMPLOYEE, who holds a lavish portrait of Alex; he is depicted exactly as he is currently positioned.

ALEX

Oh, erm, thanks. Where am I supposed to put this?

RECEPTIONIST

Wherever you like! It's complimentary.

The receptionist resumes typing at his computer.

ALEX

Cool, thanks. When was this made-

RECEPTIONIST

Well you are almost set Mr. Knowles, except it seems the card used for the deposit was declined.

Alex senses movement in his pocket. Removing his phone, we see an incoming call: "Mr. Dad." He sends it to voicemail.

ALEX

Really? That's weird.

RECEPTIONIST

It IS weird. Would you like to pay cash?

ALEX,

Oh, sure-

He produces his wallet. It is visibly empty, save for a single U.S. dollar. The receptionist peers over the desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Is there a problem?

ALEX

You know what? I forgot I already talked to reception this morning. We figured it all out.

RECEPTIONIST

I was working this morning. I don't recall us speaking?

ALEX

It was the other guy.

RECEPTIONIST

I am the only receptionist. My shift began yesterday at noon.

ALEX

Pretty sure that's illegal?

RECEPTIONIST

The people of Bravka are famously hard-working. In the 90s the business day was twenty-six hours.

ALEX

Look, I'm a little low on cash. Is there any way you can help me out?

Alex slides the single dollar bill across the counter.

ALEX (CONT'D)

How much is that worth around here?

RECEPTIONIST

In local currency that bill is negative eleven cents. It is essentially a debtor's note.

ALEX

Explains why the cab ran over my bag.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm afraid there is little I can do. But there is a place you can go where they might be able to help.

ALEX

Is it nearby?

RECEPTIONIST

Yes, you can go there, get clean, have a good meal.

ALEX

Is that from "Y.M.C.A."?

RECEPTIONIST

Yes. We are also famous for our humor here. Ricky Gervais briefly served as our ambassador to the United Nations...until that presentation on the Gaza Strip.

ALEX

I'm guessing it wasn't tasteful?

RECEPTIONIST

There's blood on his hands.

ALEX

Alright, well, where's this other place?

CUT TO:

EXT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- LATE AFTERNOON

Alex stands before a ramshackle flat reminiscent of Mad Max. The words "Pack Rats Hostel" dangle precariously above the door. He visibly deflates.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

EXT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- DAY

Alex thumbs the button of a decrepit intercom and waits for a response. His phone chimes again. Brandishing the device, he winces at the alert: a text from his father.

MR.DAD (TEXT)
Call me. Need to talk.

A practiced response issues from the intercom system.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
If you're here about that free
mattress, someone said it "hatched"
so...

ALEX
No, sorry, I was hoping to book a
room. Can someone buzz me in?

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Just walk through the beads.

Alex realizes the door is, in fact, strings of beads painted to resemble a door.

ALEX
Oh. Thanks.

Alex pushes through the curtain.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- RECEPTION AREA

Alex navigates a war zone of beanbag chairs and splintered tables toward the reception desk. HUGH, a charming black Englishman, shines glasses behind a ramshackle bar. DEEJAY, a lovable hazard of a human being, "solves" a Rubik's cube with a red marker nearby. STEPHANIE, a disheveled but assertive grad student-type, aids two GERMAN GUESTS at the desk.

STEPHANIE
-and here is a map with things to
do in town. The guided tour of the
Famine Museum starts at one.

GERMAN GUEST 1
So exciting, we hear everyone at ze
museum iz method actor.

GERMAN GUEST 2

Ja, zey are all like ow I am so
hungry. So classic!

The two Germans exit, giggling. Alex approaches the desk,
having mustered some of his former confidence.

STEPHANIE

Can I help you?

ALEX

What kind of rooms do you have
available? Let's just say for the
indefinite future.

STEPHANIE

We just booked our last double, but
I have space in the 16 bunk.

ALEX

The room has sixteen people?

STEPHANIE

Forty-eight people. It's 16 beds,
hence the discount.

ALEX

Jesus, are you guys running an
animal shelter? Is that my only
option?

STEPHANIE

Well we let folks pitch tents in
the yard but something tells me
you're not a camper.

ALEX

Ahem, I was two-time president of
NYU's outing club.

Stephanie raises her eyebrows in exaggerated awe.

STEPHANIE

Cooooool. You guys must have
really been roughin' it in Times
Square.

Her focus turns to her computer; she's done humoring him.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

You're the guy from Hotel Midas,
aren't you?

ALEX

How do you know that?

STEPHANIE

Their front desk called, said he was sending someone our way.

Stephanie expertly pops open a beer off the side of the desk.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

He also said you were broke.

ALEX

Would a broke person wear a Limited Edition Cartier-

Alex, cuffing his sleeve, suddenly stops. He looks to his wrist, where a hair tie and an olive have replaced his watch.

ALEX (CONT'D)

-Aaaand someone stole my watch.

Stephanie raises an eyebrow.

STEPHANIE

Nice bling, can it go in the pool?

Alex rubs his temples with the palms of his hands.

ALEX

This can't be happening to me.

STEPHANIE

Listen man, do you want a bed? There's not a ton of spots in this part of town. You could do worse.

ALEX

You guys don't have a door.

STEPHANIE

We do, we're just waiting on whoever stole it to give it back. And anyway it seems like you can't afford *anything* right now, so I wouldn't get hung-up on amenities like doors.

Alex sighs.

ALEX

Can I just hang here to make a call? It'll only take a couple minutes.

STEPHANIE

Fine. If you sit at the bar you can usually steal Wi-fi from the strip club across the street. Look for Putin on the Ritz.

INTERCUT- INT. HOSTEL BAR/INT. KNOWLES RESIDENCE KITCHEN

Alex pleads with his father on his cellphone. It's clear the call is not going the way he'd expected.

ALEX

I just need enough for the flight-

MR. KNOWLES

No, Alex, absolutely not. Your mom and I have topped up your debit card three times since graduation!

ALEX

Dad, Europe is a lot more expensive than when you were my age.

Mr Knowles puts on his glasses and reaches for a piece of paper. He reads off several charges.

MR KNOWLES

Eighty-four dollars for giraffe steak in Antwerp. Two hundred bucks for a sniper range in Moldova-

Alex interjects.

ALEX

For two-fifty they let you kill a guy. Like, zero strings attached.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOLDOVAN SNIPER RANGE - DAY

A MOLDOVAN in camo military gear argues with Alex while hoisting up a kneeling TARGET MAN with zip-tied hands.

ALEX

No no no no, I said do you have moving targets, like ones that slide back and forth!

MOLDOVAN

Da, this one moves. You move, yes?!

The Moldovan shakes the Target Man. The man nods his head and responds between sobs.

TARGET MAN

I move, I move.

CUT BACK TO:

INTERCUT- INT. HOSTEL BAR/INT. KNOWLES RESIDENCE KITCHEN

KNOWLES

Not to mention some pricey dance class in Vienna. Paid to Waltzin' with Waltz?

ALEX

Yeah, it's taught by the guy from the Tarantino movies.

MR. KNOWLES

That's absurd!

ALEX

I know, he's really fallen from grace. I guess he only plays one character-

MR KNOWLES

Twenty thousand dollars Alex, gone! That money wasn't just for your trip, it was for your future! And you expect us to foot another bill?

ALEX

Now hold on, Mom always bails out your bad investments! Remember "board games for pets"?

Mr Knowles, pacing, stops to pick up a box. The cover features a Jack Russell terrier with a tile rack. Above, it reads "Scrabble for Dogs." Mr. Knowles becomes agitated.

MR KNOWLES

People don't understand you have to train them to play young. There's a reason human Monopoly has an age rating-

ALEX

Ok, Dad, yes but-

MR KNOWLES

You're just gonna have to start
forging your own path, son.

ALEX

How am I supposed to do that if I'm
already broke?

At this point, MRS. KNOWLES chimes in from the other room.

MRS. KNOWLES (O.C.)

Get a [bleep] job!

MR. KNOWLES

Your mom says get a job. You know,
maybe if you show us you're putting
in the work this time, we'll meet
you halfway on the price of a
flight home. I know United has some
cheap economy tickets nowadays.

ALEX

Yeah they let some people fly free
with the luggage but they beat you
if you make any sound.

MR. KNOWLES

There you go, you already have your
eye on some deals! Now look, I've
gotta go, we're headed over to the
Connors'.

Alex looks around as the reality of his situation hits him.

MR. KNOWLES (CONT'D)

Believe it or not, I think this
will be good for you.

ALEX

But Dad-

MR. KNOWLES

I love you, son.

Alex sighs.

ALEX

Love you too.

MR. KNOWLES hangs up. After a pause, he shouts to his wife.

MR KNOWLES

Honey, you ready for charades?

MRS KNOWLES (O.C.)
If Carol's on our team again I'm
gonna [bleep] kill myself.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- RECEPTION AREA- BAR

Alex pockets his phone. Hugh hands him a glass of cider from
behind the bar.

HUGH
So you're broke, huh?

ALEX
I prefer the term "post-wealthy."
And, I appreciate the drink but-

HUGH
It's on the house.

Hugh extends a hand.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Hugh.

ALEX
Alex.

HUGH
You Canadian?

ALEX
What makes you think I'm Canadian?

HUGH
The accent. Figured it was American
or Canadian.

ALEX
There's no such thing as an
"American" accent.

Hugh lifts a bar glass. He emphasizes his pronunciation.

HUGH
What would you call this *glass*?

ALEX
A glass?

HUGH
Exactly. Like when Mark Wahlberg
narrated that nature documentary.

CUT TO:

B-ROLL FOOTAGE FROM NATURE DOCUMENTARY

A NARRATOR with an aggressive Boston accent narrates over
shots of mating flamingos.

NARRATOR
Look at these chowdaheads, dumb
birds don't know how to stand on
two legs. GO SAWKS!

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- RECEPTION AREA- BAR

Hugh returns the glass to a rack above the bar.

HUGH
You know, we could actually use
some extra help around here.
Doesn't pay much, but it's room and
board and we split tips.

Stephanie appears, having overheard the offer.

STEPHANIE
Hugh you can't be serious. Elena
could be back any day!

HUGH
After that streetcar incident? The
doctors said she had "Tetris
spine." In the meantime, we need
another set of hands.

Hugh turns to Alex.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Extra bed is yours if you want it.

Alex gazes at the chaotic space before him. He smirks at
Stephanie before addressing Hugh.

ALEX
You know what, I'll take it. How
hard could it be?

CUT TO:

A guy asleep on a nearby beanbag chair throws up on himself.
Alex winces.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- RECEPTION AREA

Stephanie is giving Alex a tour of the hostel. She rattles off the list of facilities with methodical disinterest.

STEPHANIE

Okaaaaay, this is reception, only place to check in or out.

Stephanie points to a space off-camera.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Showers are on the first floor. There's never been hot water but if anyone asks it'll be fixed tomorrow. Over there is the bar, kind of smells like mold but that's just because of the asbestos. Over here we have the terrace-

Alex follows as she exits through a door to an outdoor patio.

EXT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- TERRACE

Stephanie spots some broken glass from a beer bottle. She picks it up and secures it to the top of the terrace wall, where other shards are similarly arranged. Alex snorts.

ALEX

I don't think you need to worry about keeping people out of here.

STEPHANIE

More like keeping people in. Other side of that wall is the North Korean embassy, they're not exactly fans of drunk folks climbing over to sing them "Wonderwall."

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH KOREAN EMBASSY - BACKYARD

A drunk disheveled man sways while holding a portable speaker above his head blaring "Wonderwall" by Oasis. A spotlight illuminates him as the sounds of dogs barking grow louder.

DRUNK GUY
Kim Jong.....say anything!

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- COMMON ROOM AREA

MIKAELA, an auburn-haired Colombian woman bristling with intensity, slams down a heel on a DVD player. Nearby, DEEJAY unites two halves of a kayak paddle with duct tape. Stephanie and Alex enter.

STEPHANIE
Alex, this is Mikaela. She runs our
trivia and movie nights.

Alex and Mikaela shake hands.

MIKAELA
We have two movies. Don't Mess with
the Zohan and Happy Feet.

ALEX
I like Happy Feet.

MIKAELA
It's an Estonian bootleg. The title
is technically "Tap Tap Bird."

ALEX
Oh well I guess it's more of a
kid's movie anyway.

STEPHANIE
Yes, but Mikaela invented a
drinking game.

MIKAELA
Every time Sergej rallies the
working class penguins, you drink.

ALEX
I'm going to guess he does that a
lot.

Mikaela flashes a devious smile and raises her eyebrows.

MIKAELA
Most people black out.

STEPHANIE
Deejay runs our outdoors trips.

DEEJAY
What's up man!

ALEX
Alex. Where's home for you?

DEEJAY
Grew up in Delhi, but moved here
from Vietnam. I was leading river
cruises over there.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIETNAMESE RIVER DOCK- DAY

Close up of DeeJay using a lot of duct tape. The camera pans
out to show he was taping a motor to a small boat. He waves
to someone off screen.

DEEJAY
Tất cả trên tàu!

SUBTITLE: All aboard!

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- COMMON ROOM AREA

DEEJAY
So what brings you to our humble
digs?

STEPHANIE
He's broke.

DEEJAY
Tale as old as time my man. There
was another guy who came here a few
years back, similar situation.

ALEX
Oh really? How long did he stay?

DEEJAY
Oh he's right there, dude.

DeeJay points to ALPER, a grimy, zombie-like man washing
dishes in a nearby sink.

DEEJAY (CONT'D)
Poor Alper. He's been washing that
same dish for four days.

ALEX
You serious?

Deejay remains stoic for a moment before cracking a smile.

DEEJAY
Just messing with ya man, hahaha!

He abruptly becomes stern again.

DEEJAY (CONT'D)
His passport did expire though so
he's stuck here forever.

Alex looks back to Alper with a shudder.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- BAR

STEPHANIE
You've already met Hugh, he manages
the place.

Hugh gives a casual salute from behind the bar. Alex nods to his left.

ALEX
Who's that?

A mysterious bald gentleman pumps his fist in a dimly-lit corner of the bar area while electronica music throbs around him. He seemingly occupies a different world from the hostel.

STEPHANIE
That's Dom. He runs the pub crawl.

ALEX
Is the music coming from his body?

STEPHANIE
Unclear. He's worked here longer
than anyone on staff.

HUGH
The man is ageless.

Hugh points to a faded yellow photo behind the bar. In it, Dom wears a luau shirt among men dressed in mining attire.

ALEX
Cool. So what am I on? Bar, tours,
reception?

Stephanie opens a closet sprawling with linens. She grins.

STEPHANIE
Housekeeping.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- GUEST ROOM

Alex struggles to get a sheet onto one of the mattresses.
Holding it aloft, he sees it has three corners.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- BAR

Alex enters and approaches Mikaela.

ALEX
Hey, sorry-

MIKAELA
Mikaela.

ALEX
Yeah, sorry, what's the deal with
these sheets?

MIKAELA
Oh they don't actually fit the
beds. You just kind of look for the
closest match.

Deejay overhears from across the room.

DEEJAY
My advice. Staple gun. There should
be one in the closet.

HUGH (O.S.)
Do not do that.

DEEJAY
Sorry Hugh!

Deejay mouths "staple gun" again, giving a thumbs up.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- LAUNDRY ROOM

Alex tries to decipher the instructions on a bottle of
laundry detergent. The label displays a man cutting fire in
half with scissors, followed by a cat with an umbrella.

He shrugs and carelessly tosses in the sheets, adds detergent
and hits a button. The room turns red as the machine rattles
and blares a nuclear siren. Stephanie pokes her head in.

STEPHANIE (SHOUTING)
That means it's working!

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- BATHROOM

Alex vigorously scrubs the hostel shower. He goes to pull a hair, only to have it continue like a clown's scarves. Fighting his disgust, he gives it a serious tug, causing a very important looking pipe to fly from the drain.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- RECEPTION

Alex hauls a bucket of cleaning supplies onto the reception counter. Stephanie doesn't look up from her screen.

STEPHANIE
All done with the bathrooms?

ALEX
Yep, and even organized the kitchen. Why are all the plates Olympics-themed?

STEPHANIE
Bravka hosted an alternate Olympics in 2002. They were protesting civil rights abuses in the host country.

Alex snorts.

ALEX
Who was hosting that year, Baghdad?

STEPHANIE
Salt Lake City.

ALEX
Ah.

STEPHANIE
Well I'm still handling check-ins but DeeJay can show you to Shangri-La.

ALEX
Shangri-La?

DeeJay joins them at the desk. He jingles a ring of keys.

DEEJAY
Staff quarters, pal. Time to set you up in your new pad!

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- HALLWAY

Alex peeks through a doorway to assess one of the rooms.

ALEX
You know these rooms are actually
pretty nice.

DEEJAY
Oh, that's not where you're
sleepin'.

Deejay opens the opposite door with a foreboding "creak".

DEEJAY (CONT'D)
Welcome to paradise.

Inside, a glorified pantry has been converted into a three person bedroom. A bunk bed and cot meet at the corner, amid a sea of toiletries obscuring any view of the former floor.

ALEX
Um, which one's my bed?

Deejay emerges behind him with planks of wood and a hammer.

DEEJAY
Well we need to build it first!

He shakes his head as if Alex is the dummy, claps him on the back and enters the room. Alex, looking defeated, follows.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- STAFF QUARTERS- NIGHT

The staff has retired for the evening. Mikaela dozes with a sleep mask and heavy metal blasting through large headphones. Deejay snores powerfully, his body spilling off the bed. Alex stares at the ceiling, eyes bloodshot.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- STAFF QUARTERS- NEXT MORNING

Alex is awoken by a musty pillow to the face.

STEPHANIE
Dude get up, I need you to strip
the beds and wipe down the showers.

ALEX
What? I did all that yesterday.

STEPHANIE

And we have people checking in today. Get moving, we need the new rooms ready by one.

Stephanie exits. DeeJay walks past and Alex flags him down.

ALEX

Hey is there anything to eat around here?

DEEJAY

Hell yeah man we have waffles every morning.

ALEX

You guys make waffles every day? That's actually pretty sweet.

DEEJAY

Oh no I mean like we've had a stack sitting in the kitchen since I started. They're totally up for grabs but the color is starting to peel off of 'em.

Alex cringes.

DEEJAY (CONT'D)

Oh, don't forget to save some of your shower water, in case the main shuts off again. Might need it to brush your teeth.

ALEX

Any other rules or rec's I should be aware of? No smoking?

Mikaela, lacing her boots from her bed, interjects.

MIKAELA

No e-cigs, real cigs are kosher though. The owner says vape smoke is, quote, baby cancer, and real men should get real cancer.

ALEX

He sounds like a hardass.

MIKAELA

She is. You'll meet Klaara at some point, if God wants to punish you.

EXT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- TERRACE

Alex slumps in a chipped Adirondack chair, gloved hands limp beside him. DeeJay tunes a guitar in a nearby hammock.

ALEX

Tell me something DeeJay.

DeeJay thumbs a string; a stomach-churning note echos forth. He "fixes" the string with a snip from some bolt cutters.

DEEJAY

What's on your mind dude?

ALEX

Why here? You could work the same gig anywhere, why this dump?

DEEJAY

Me personally? Couldn't really find another place after my last job. Some of my rafters got lost on a float trip.

ALEX

Ever find them?

DEEJAY

Yeah, but that goddamn tiger got there first. I mean, like...allegedly.

Alex doesn't even register the revelation. He's still parsing through the staff.

ALEX

What about Mikaela? She doesn't seem like someone with a lot of patience for all the wear and tear.

DEEJAY

Oh she's been here way longer than me. Spent two years with the Peace Corps before shacking up here *permanente*.

ALEX

Mikaela? She was in the Peace Corps?

Alex peers into the hostel from the terrace.

CUT TO:

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- LOBBY

Mikaela sits with her hand splayed on a card table. Several HOSTEL GUESTS watch as she stabs a knife between her fingers with increasing speed.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- TERRACE

DEEJAY

Yep, she was staying here before shipping back to the States when Hugh asked her to stick around.

Mikaela is suddenly camped right behind Alex's chair.

MIKAELA

Good times.

Alex recoils in surprise at her ghost-like appearance.

MIKAELA (CONT'D)

Also thought I'd finish my degree in town. Almost enrolled in the same program as Steph.

Alex scoffs.

ALEX

There's a college? What's their claim to fame, sheep-herding?

MIKAELA

Molecular biology.

Stephanie saunters over and joins the trio. She coolly leans against the doorway, staring Alex down.

STEPHANIE

Best program in Europe, actually. What'd you major in, by the way?

ALEX

...business.

STEPHANIE

Cool! Do you think you could business some pillowcases upstairs for me?

His ego checked, Alex awkwardly rises and heads inside.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL - UPSTAIRS ROOM

Alex fluffs a pillow when he overhears the conversation continue out on the terrace.

MIKAELA (O.C.)

Do you think his dog has a wallet?

The group laughs.

DEEJAY (O.C.)

Or, or, or, do you think he owns some niche crypto like Flavorcoin?

EXT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- OUTDOOR TERRACE

Deejay proceeds to do his best "wealthy socialite" imitation.

DEEJAY (CONT'D)

It's from Guy Fieri, runs on the Saucechain.

HUGH

Oh come on, the guy isn't some cartoon oil baron. Everyone ought to play nice.

STEPHANIE

Well clearly he's already offered Hugh his plus one to Martin Shkreli's sex treehouse.

The rest of the staff laugh.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- UPSTAIRS ROOM

Alex, crestfallen, lays the pillow on the bed and exits.

EXT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- OUTDOOR TERRACE

STEPHANIE

You know, I left Hong Kong to get away from guys like that? Bougie boy jetsetters who fly to Paris just to piss on the Notre Dame.

HUGH

Who's to say that's all there is to this guy? I mean he's here, isn't he, as opposed to say, Paris or Rome?

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

Maybe there's a part of him with
some good old fashioned wanderlust-

STEPHANIE

Oh yeah, I'm sure he'd booked a
real grassroots experience at Hotel
Midas. You know they charge an
uncorking fee for shampoo-

HUGH

-so this wasn't the brand of
adventure he had in mind! But give
the kid an honest shot. One day you
might be running this place, and
you'll need to make calls on who
someone could be in the right
company, not just on their own.

STEPHANIE

I give him a week.

HUGH

Maybe so. Or, maybe he'll take a
liking to this side of paradise. I
mean, look at Alper!

They turn to look over at Alper, who is standing in a corner
facing the wall in complete silence. DeeJay shakes his head.

DEEJAY

Poor Alper.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- RECEPTION AREA

Alex walks past the entryway with a mop and pail. Stephanie
calls after him.

STEPHANIE

Did you finish downstairs with the
beds?

Alex backpedals to the doorway.

ALEX

Yeah, why?

STEPHANIE

Because all of the sheets are
stapled to the mattresses.

ALEX

So they weren't fitting right but then DeeJay loaned me his staple gun.

DeeJay gives a thumbs up on the other side of the lobby.

STEPHANIE

Great, I'll just go fix all of those then. DeeJ, can you watch reception?

DEEJAY

Can't, I'm taking a group to Matricide Canyon. What about Mikaela?

Mikaela jerks a thumb toward the entryway.

MIKAELA

Hugh asked me to look for a new door. Someone hurled a bottle through the beads this morning.

STEPHANIE

And where's Hugh?

DeeJay shakes his head.

DEEJAY

Hospital. Poor Alper never saw that bottle coming...

ALEX

I mean I can just fix the sheets-

Stephanie wheels to face him.

STEPHANIE

No- just stay and watch reception. Do *not* check *anyone* in. If someone comes just have them wait and I'll handle them when I get back.

Stephanie, Mikaela and DeeJay all leave. Alex takes a spot behind the desk. He swivels in the chair, instantly bored. Moments later, LARS, a lanky Australian, enters the hostel.

LARS

How's it goin' mate, this the spot to check in?

ALEX

Yessir! Well, actually-

Alex peers around for Stephanie, then decides she won't be coming back soon. He opts to take matters into his own hands.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Yes, it is. How can I help you?

LARS

Sweet. Well my mates and I don't have a reservation, any chance you can squeeze us in tonight?

ALEX

I think that should be ok, let me just, uh....how many are you?

Lars hesitantly proposes a number.

LARS

Uh, eleven?

ALEX

Eleven, wow, big group. I know we have a big room that wasn't all booked yesterday-

LARS (HASTILY)

16-bunker right? Hundred twenty quid for the lot?

Alex consults a sheet of paper taped to the computer.

ALEX

Uh yeah, that sounds spot on-

Lars hands Alex the exact amount, a bit too readily.

LARS

Wow man, thanks so much. Most hostels don't allow bachelor parties. Alright lads!

At this call, ten athletic Australian men rush the lobby, replete with beer bong, floaties, coolers and all matter of drinking paraphernalia. Alex realizes he's made a huge error.

ALEX

Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

The hostel is under siege. DeeJay watches in horror as a BALD AUSTRALIAN snaps the "repaired" kayak paddle over his knee. Hugh plays bartender whack-a-mole, each beer downed as soon as it's been served. Mikaela's trivia night is derailed by chants of "AUSSY AUSSY AUSSY OI OI OI!" Stephanie is fuming.

STEPHANIE

You booked a stag party?!

ALEX

I mean it's just a few rowdy guys, right?

STEPHANIE

One, these aren't just some "rowdy guys". These are AUSSIES. The only way to survive a country where everything wants to kill you is to drink enough that you don't give a rat's ass. And two, we *NEVER* allow bachelor parties. It's cheaper for these dudes to destroy a hostel than it is to book a hotel.

She surveys the reception area with utter exasperation.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Why didn't you just do what I asked!

ALEX

I wanted to help. And how about a thank you, they paid in cash.

STEPHANIE

Yeah stellar job. Did you happen to count the change, by the way?

Stephanie produces the "fee" Alex collected from Lars.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Eleven euros, a coupon for a "thruple's massage," and three McDonald's monopoly properties.

She thrusts them into Alex's hand. Alex looks them over.

ALEX

Yeah but two of them are Boardwalks so if anything we kind of played these guys?

Stephanie does not laugh.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Look, I was just trying to help-

STEPHANIE
Well you can help build up this
hostel from the ground floor
tomorrow morning.

She turns to go, then pivots back.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
You know what, no. You're fired.
Either that or I quit, I'll let
Hugh decide.

ALEX
Stephanie-

STEPHANIE
I get that this isn't luxury for
you. But people don't come here
because we try less or cut corners,
like we have some.... lower ceiling
for success. We built a way to see
the world that's not just for the
rich kids. And if you're not going
to just knuckle down and put in the
work, maybe find some other place
that will fan your ego.

Stephanie storms out. Deejay walks over and joins Alex.

DEEJAY
Tough break man. Hey, you mind if I
steal some wood from your bed, need
some to fix my guitar.

ALEX
Whatever, man.

Lars joins them and slaps Alex's shoulder.

LARS
Oi, thanks again for the hook-up
mate, best hostel ever. Quick
confession, one of the guys may
have put a hole in the roof but we
stretched a condom over it, should
hold.

He gives Alex another shoulder tap before returning to the
fray.

Alex and DeeJay watch as one of the German Guests removes his shoe, which the Australians proceed to fill with beer from a pint glass.

AUSTRALIANS (IN UNISON)
Shoo-ey! Shoo-ey! Shoo-ey!

ALEX
What are they doing now?

DEEJAY
Shooey. If one of them issues the challenge, you have to chug a beer out of your shoe.

The duo watch as the German guest completes the challenge, to raucous applause from the mob. Mikaela approaches Alex and DeeJay in a huff.

MIKAELA
This is bad. Saw a bunch of guests scrolling AirBnB. We're gonna lose the reservations.

Alex furrows his brow in thought, before clenching his fists.

ALEX
Well, not like I have anything left to lose.

With quick purposeful strides, Alex crosses the room to Lars.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Hey man, you know this is my first day and I actually wasn't supposed to check anybody in. I can get you guys a refund but I'm afraid we can't host you guys.

LARS
Well we don't want a refund. We like it here just fine.

The Australians suddenly become menacing as they stop partying and focus on Alex. The music stops, drawing the attention of Stephanie, Hugh, Mikaela and DeeJay.

ALEX
Alright... how about I make you a deal?

LARS
What did you have in mind?

ALEX

If you guys look for somewhere else to stay, you get your refund, and I'll do a shooley.

BALD AUSTRALIAN

A shooley? Mate, we do shooleys for laughs!

ALEX

A vodka shooley.

LARS

You? With a vodka shooley?

The Australians laugh and whisper at the disastrous idea. They confer amongst themselves before nodding in approval.

LARS (CONT'D)

Alright then. If you down a *full vodka shooley*, we'll take our party elsewhere. But no yakking, yeah?

The Australian and Alex shake hands on the deal. Alex goes to remove his shoe, to which the Australians protest.

LARS (CONT'D)

-Aaaaand we provide the shoe.

Alex surveys the Australians' shoes. They are all wearing flip flops or some form of sandals. He flashes a smug grin.

ALEX

Fine.

LARS

Stan? Your welly.

The Aussies part to reveal a Thor-like man who delivers a boot that has trekked through countless foul terrains. It is discolored and sutured throughout. Alex accepts the boot with disgust and DeeJay begins to fill it with vodka.

MIKAELA

I think it's breathing.

DEEJAY

You sure you want to do this?

ALEX

I think I have to do this.

The Australians begin chanting as Alex raises the boot to his mouth. A bead of sweat drips down his temple.

A close-up of the shoe suggests it *is*, in fact, breathing. He closes his eyes; the crowd's chants fade away. The suspense is unbearable. Just as he tips back the shoe, Hugh makes an announcement from the entryway.

HUGH

Rugby game's on down the street.

The Australians shout and scramble over one another in a rush out the door to catch the game. After, a very long beat.

MIKAELA

Honestly, we came out of that way
better than expected. Basically
zero casualties.

There's a thud as Alex hits the floor from the boot of vodka.

INT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- COMMON ROOM AREA

Alex blearily stirs awake. The hostel staff is assembled around him, looking on with concern.

ALEX

What happened?

STEPHANIE

You chugged a quart of vodka from a
man's boot and passed out.

ALEX

Well at least I didn't throw up.

STEPHANIE

Oh you did. Everywhere.

DEEJAY

That was eight hours ago.

STEPHANIE

But, on the bright side, the
Aussies ended up passing out at the
pub down the road. When they woke
up they took their stuff to a
hotel.

ALEX

So I did good?

STEPHANIE

No you messed up and got alcohol
poisoning for it. But you "almost"
helped to "sort of" fix things.

(MORE)

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
More importantly....you took one
for the team.

ALEX
I'll take it.

Hugh arrives to check up on Alex.

HUGH
The Canadian lives.

He shakes Alex's hand.

HUGH (CONT'D)
So I technically have to fire you
for blacking out on the job. And
you did almost as much damage as
the Aussies, what with the... clean-
up.

Alex blows a raspberry and leans back in defeat.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Buuut, Stephanie and I were talking
and we thought maybe she could
train you to work reception.

ALEX
Thanks guys. Really appreciate it.

HUGH
You're also gonna have to pay for
that vodka. You killed more than
half the bottle.

ALEX
Oof, how much is it gonna cost me?

Hugh does some mental math.

HUGH
In USD, should set you back... thirty
five cents.

ALEX
Yep, I can live here.

The group laughs in cliché fashion as the camera pans out.

EXT. PACK RATS HOSTEL- MORNING

HUGH (V.O.)
Actually though it's like a hundred
dollars.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. HOTEL MIDAS- RECEPTION AREA

The Receptionist checks-in an unseen client at Hotel Midas. With a final click, he smiles and addresses the guest.

RECEPTIONIST

And you are all set sir! You know normally we wouldn't take full payment in advance, but as it seems your business conference was in such a pickle our staff was happy to oblige.

The mystery guest is revealed: it's Lars, poorly disguised in a suit, plus a bucket hat. He shifts his weight with eager impatience.

LARS

So, everything's booked? Non-refundable?

RECEPTIONIST

Yes sir, you and your co-workers are officially guests of the Hotel Midas.

LARS

Excellent. Oi, lads!

Lars whistles cartoonishly, summoning the Australians camped just beyond the lobby. They stream through the reception area, boomboxes thumping and chugging beers.

RECEPTIONIST

Dear God-

The Receptionist turns to the bellboy. He's panicking.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Get Mikhail. It's the Hemsworth wedding all over again.

END OF EPISODE

SETTING

In the most general sense, *Hostel* takes place in "Eastern-ish Europe"; no, we can't get more specific than that. The language is different, the transit system unfamiliar, the street signs illegible. But this strangeness is relative to our characters; not to the people who live there. The city and its inhabitants move around the hostel crew; Alex's misunderstandings of its structure are attributable to his own alienness, not some innate unintelligibility of that environment. If the vague geography of *The Simpsons'* Springfield allows us to map our own hometowns onto its structures, the abstract borders within which the hostel sits allow us to focus on broader themes of finding ourselves culturally "out of the loop," and overcoming helplessness through humility. This, as opposed to other-ing the space in which we are the other. Whereas past "fish out of water" sitcoms fixate on the oddities of the world that greet the protagonist, the aim of *Pack Rats* is to suggest the fish is weird for expecting more water outside of the bowl.

CHARACTER LIST

Alex Knowles - Alex is your average prep school pretty boy, but more by circumstance than by choice. As a recent graduate from a "prestigious" university, he is used to being praised and unused to being challenged. His sense of worth relative to local culture is not snooty by intention; he's simply never been exposed to those so unlike him, let alone as their lesser. Financially stranded at the hostel, his casual superiority will erode in favor of a reliance on the hostel staff to help maneuver a city and culture that completely makes sense, just not to him. As the good-hearted goofball of *Pack Rats*, DeeJay quickly hits it off with Alex, as someone he sees as a willing partner in all manner of shenanigans. Though initially fearful of Mikaela, Alex grows to appreciate her mysteriousness and the two bond over conspiracy theories about Dom, the pub crawl leader. Alex can't stand being disliked, and so Stephanie's misgivings toward him motivate him to earn her favor through invitations to join DeeJay and his ill-fated hijinks, and even by offering to pick up some extra hours. He has a good heart, he's just learning how to use it.

Stephanie Yao - An accomplished academic, Stephanie moved from Hong Kong to attend the local university, taking a job at *Pack Rats* for housing. She exhibits the most professionalism of the staff, though often appears disheveled from putting out various fires. Smart, savvy and practical, she understands the hostel better than anyone save Hugh, who sees her as a potential successor. While relatively distant from Mikaela, the two bond over a shared distaste for the more raucous guests.

She expresses limited patience for DeeJay's antics, as he can prove as destructive as any guest, and sees Alex as yet another problem she'll have to solve.

Hugh Armstrong - Hugh is the epitome of class, a black James Bond if 007 wore tight fitting t-shirts and chose Mai-Tais over martinis. He typically delegates the day-to-day to Stephanie, as he loves tending bar, but we'll see him take point on larger scale crises as they emerge. He maintains a sort of hesitant friendship with Klaara, the hostel owner, who blows hot and cold on his management style. He has a disproportionate tolerance for DeeJay's gaffes, placing him at odds with Stephanie, tasked with cleaning up said gaffes. Hugh's strongest staff ties are with Mikaela; awaiting her flight home from the Peace Corps, to two bonded to such an extent Hugh asked her to stay and work the hostel with him.

Mikaela Rojas- An intense, auburn-haired Argentinian who's not much for talking, Mikaela is perfect for running the hostel's chaotic drink-filled movie nights, and unemotionally condemning mistakes at trivia night. Though not immediately visible, she is trans, a facet of her identity that is only known to Hugh and DeeJay. Her LGBT+ identity belies a bond with DeeJay that is sibling-esque, but rooted in difficulties of sharing those identities abroad. A Peace Corps volunteer before working at the hostel, she enjoyed the anonymity in the countryside, and quietly avoids leaving the hostel for fear of being targeted for her identity. DeeJay acts as her confidant, encouraging her to explore beyond the hostel and attempting to play cupid, to comic effect. (A trans woman of color must play this role)

Dheeraj "DeeJay" Chakrabarti - A golden retriever forever tripping on its tail, DeeJay handles the hostel's outdoor excursions. Despite a history of "accidents," he is the only staff member formally certified to lead such activities. DeeJay and Mikaela enjoy a sibling-like friendship, stemming from shared experience; as someone gay, he sympathizes to an extent with Mikaela's difficult past, and the two have served as wing-person for one another at various occasions. He immediately warms to Alex, and the two display a camaraderie that didn't exist previously in DeeJay's life, but their hijinks often push them from Stephanie's good graces.

RECURRING CHARACTERS:

Elena Gamal - The hostel's beloved walking tour guide, Elena's family emigrated from Cairo, nomadically traipsing Europe before settling in Bravka. She is in constant motion, her gestures and dialogue spasmodic in behavior, and yet the coolest, most unfazed person on staff.

As a practicing Muslim she does not drink or smoke, and yet handily tops her co-workers' energies. Her overwhelming popularity among the staff rankles Alex upon her arrival, as he was the staff's former object of fascination.

Dominic "Dom" Dominic - A man detached from time, Dom leads the hostel pub crawl. Details about his history are practically non-existent; the only certainty is that he predates Hugh's time as manager, and that he has been friends with Klaara for many years. He rarely speaks, and facilitates transitions between bars with impossible precision (Example: Alex asks "when do we go to the next bar?" Steph responds "we're already there," and the camera reveals they've changed venues mid conversation, Dom's nearby dancing unfazed).

Klaara Saviciute - Klaara owns Pack Rats Hostel, having granted Hugh general stewardship over things while she travels elsewhere. Her personality treads both European hippie and shrewd business magnate, waxing between the two without warning. When a competing hostel begins to siphon away clients, it's revealed Klaara opened the competitor to recapture Pack Rats' disgruntled guests.

Thomas and Melinda Knowles - As Alex's parents, the Knowles are proof opposites attract. Melinda handily brings home the bread as an intense film director with workaholic tendencies; Thomas, on the other hand, is a dopey but well-meaning entrepreneur, whose ill-exploits are often financed by Mel's patience and sympathy (and most importantly, her cash.)

Damian and Taylor Pritchett- A brother and sister influencer duo, the Pritchetts practice a kind of travel martyrdom. They document every moment of their time amid the hostel's "squalor," only exiting their screen to offer a backhanded compliment or ask a patronizing question about local culture.

PROSPECTIVE EPISODE LIST

1. Pilot: Alex Knowles, a pampered college grad, must work the other side of a hostel reception desk after going broke. To adapt, he'll need help from the hostel's motley crew of expats.
2. Alex neglects the hostel's quiet hours on the terrace, incurring the wrath of their next door neighbor, Magda. Hugh and Mikaela try to think up a signature cocktail for the bar.
3. The hostel owner visits to assess Hugh's performance as manager. The staff panics when she tells Hugh to fire someone to save cash.
4. A checkout from the upstairs "private" room offers an alluring escape from the hostel's disarray. Competing use by staff members leads to chaos as secret appointments collide.
5. An ailing Alex swears off help from local physicians in favor of an "American Clinic" outside town. He quickly learns "American" doesn't always mean "better." Stephanie escorts him. Meanwhile, DeeJay, Mikaela and Hugh try to write a song for a local contest.
6. The arrival of a super suave guest leaves Alex smitten, but Stephanie and Mikaela try to prove his friend crush is not what he seems. Hugh evaluates DeeJay on a float trip that gets them both stranded.
7. A pub crawl with Dom leaves the group piecing together events from their chaotic night at the city discotheque.
8. The staff discovers a rival hostel has opened nearby, poaching their clientele. They decide to go undercover for a night to see what makes the place so "hip".
9. Elena returns, directing spotlight away from Alex for the first time since his arrival. Alex pretends to return to the States early, only to be arrested for not having a visa. The group concocts an elaborate scheme to exonerate him.
10. With the abrupt engagement of Alex's sibling, his parents call to pay the remainder of his flight home for the wedding. Alex struggles to choose between going home and staying with his newfound friends.