Risky Business (1983)
Written and Directed by Paul Brickman
Running time: 96min

BASIC SCREENPLAY ANALYSIS

PROTAGONIST: Joel Goodson, an 18 year old high school senior

CHARACTERIZATION/MAIN MISBEHAVIOR: Naivety; guilt

EXTERNAL GOAL: To get laid / To be accepted into Princeton

INTERNAL GOAL: To satisfy his parents’ goals for his future / To make his own decisions

MAIN DRAMATIC CONFLICT: Lana / Joel’s parents

THEME: To get what you want out of life, remove guilt from the chances you take.

CENTRAL DRAMATIC QUESTION: Can Joel overcome his naivety and guilt and blaze his own trail in the world?

ENDING: Joel’s accepted into Princeton.

ARC: Joel goes from a guilt-ridden, naive teenager, to a street-wise young man.

STORY ENGINES

ACT I
As he drops them off at the airport for a week-long vacation, Joel's parents notify him of an admission interview for Princeton University. With his parents gone, Joel calls a prostitute named Lana to his home and loses his virginity.

Act II-A
Lana steals Joel’s mother’s expensive Steuben glass egg, forcing Joel to find her. He brings her back to his home after an altercation turned car chase with her pimp, Guido. Joel is faced with a disaster when he sinks his father’s Porsche into Lake Michigan.

Act II-B
Joel and Lana turn Joel’s house into a brothel for one night to earn enough money to repair the Porsche. Forgetting Princeton, Joel is caught off guard when the admission’s officer shows up. Joel blows the interview, but does so guilt-free. After picking up the Porsche, Joel finds his parents home robbed of all their possessions.

Act III
Guido extorts Joel of all his money to get the possessions back. Racing to restore the home back to normal, Joel barely gets the incident by his parents. Later, Joel’s father congratulates him on his acceptance to Princeton.
FULL SCREENPLAY ANALYSIS

ACT I

1 - OPENING IMAGES: Subway trains.

4 - Joel narrates over a dream. After school, he enters a neighbor’s home and finds a woman in the shower. She calls for him, but he loses her in the thick steam and then...

5 - Finds himself in a college entrance exam that he's nearly three hours late for. So late, in fact, he has no chance finishing the test and getting into college.

6 - Over a poker game, Joel's friends laugh at his story of seduction over the neighbor’s babysitter.

8 - Joel admits the truth about the babysitter to Miles. He hadn’t courage to do anything. The subtext reflects Joel is a still a virgin.

  MILES
  Every now and then, say ‘what the fuck.’ ‘What the fuck’ gives you freedom. Freedom brings opportunity. Opportunity makes your future.

  MILES
  So your folks are going out of town?

  JOEL
  Tomorrow.

  MILES
  You got the place all to yourself?

  JOEL
  Yeah?

  MILES
  What the fuck.

9 - Joel’s father scolds him for messing with the stereo. His mother’s disappointed with his college prep scores.

10 - INCITING INCIDENT: Dropping his parents off at the airport for their vacation, Joel’s father informs Joel of an admission interview with Princeton he setup while they’re out of town.

10 - LAKE MICHIGAN PORSCHE SETUP: Joel’s father insists Joel not mess with the Porsche.

12 - The infamous “Old Time Rock and Roll” bit.
13 - Over lunch with friends, Joel questions the importance of money.

14 - Attending a Future Enterprisers lecture, Joel and Barry discuss their team’s procrastination on a business project.

15 - Glenn comes to Joel’s house with his girlfriend, looking to use a room for sex. Though reluctant, Joel obliges.

17 - Joel and Barry take out the Porsche, impressing ladies and racing.

20 - STRONG MOVEMENT FORWARD: Against Joel’s wishes, Miles leaves a message for a prostitute, giving Joel’s name and address.

21 - Jackie, a black transvestite prostitute, shows up. Frightened, Joel calls Miles, demanding he come over and get rid of him/her. Amused, Miles refuses.

24 - Joel lets Jackie inside to call a cab, where he/she extorts $75 for his/her troubles. Jackie gives Joel a number...

   JACKIE
   Joel, I’m going to give you a number. You ask for Lana. It’s what you want. It’s what every white boy off the lake wants.

25 - Joel fantasizes about having sex with the neighbor’s babysitter. In the fantasy, the police surround the house to stop him. His parents show up, adding to the embarrassment.

27 - END OF ACT ONE TURN: Using the name Ralph, Joel calls Lana, soliciting her services.

29 - Lana lets herself into the house, waking Joel from his sleep.

30 - DECISION: Joel loses his virginity to Lana. They fuck all over the house: in the living room, on the stairs, and in front of a TV broadcasting an image of an American flag.
ACT II-A

32 - The next morning, Lana demands $300 for services rendered, but Joel doesn’t have the money. He leaves to cash a bond at the bank. As he leaves, Lana insists she’s not patient.

32 - Joel cashes a savings bond given to him in 1966 from his grandparents.

33 - Joel comes home to find both Lana and his mother’s expensive Steuben glass egg missing.

35 - Following a tip from Jackie, Joel and Miles find Lana at The Drake Hotel.

36 - Outside, Lana approaches Joel, asking for ride. In the car, Lana begs Joel to drive away, but Joel wants to talk about the Steuben egg. Guido, Lana’s pimp, approaches the car, demanding Lana get out. When he pulls a gun, Joel speeds away.

38 - FIRST TRIAL: Guido chases after them. The car chase begins...

MILES
I don’t believe this. I’ve got a trig mid-term tomorrow and I’m being chased by Guido the killer pimp.

40 - With some fancy driving, Joel loses Guido.

45 - COMBAT: Lana cooks Joel breakfast. She talks about her debt to Guido and her hospital stay from stress. Guido has her locked out her apartment. Joel begs her to give the glass egg back and leave, but she’s too persuasive.

JOEL
Don’t steal anything. If I come back here and I find anything missing, I’m going straight to the police. I’m not joking!

LANA
Joel, go to school. Go learn something.

46 - Lana prowls the house, inspecting their most prized possessions, and eventually finds the Porsche key.

48 - Joel finds Miles and Glenn outside his home. Joel is suspicious Glenn had sex with Lana, but he assures Joel he didn’t. Vicki, however, is a different story...

49 - Vicki attempts to give Joel his cut for services rendered to Glenn, but he refuses it and kicks both Lana and Vicki out of the house.
51 - After witnessing a struggle with Lana and Vicki, Joel confronts Guido outside his home. From inside the home, Lana screams at Guido that she works for Joel now.

GUIDO
In a sluggish economy, never ever fuck with a with another man’s livelihood. Now, if you’re smart like I hope you are, you’re not gonna make me come back here.

52 - Joel agrees to let Lana and Vicki stay for one night.

53 - Joel discusses his school business project with Lana.

JOEL
We make a product and we try to market it.

LANA
Do you make a lot of money?

JOEL
No, not really.

55 - Lana and Vicki take Joel and Barry out to get ice cream. At a park, they get high.

56 - Lana approaches Joel about getting his friends together with her friends and make some real money, but Joel refuses.

58 - While removing her purse, Lana accidentally knocks the Porsche out of gear. Sitting on the hood, she opens up to Joel about the step father she had to escape, but they don’t find common ground.

LANA
I’m really trying to be friends with you, but I’d appreciate you’d stop laying these little judgments on me while you’re leaning on your daddy’s forty thousand dollar car.

60 - MIDPOINT & LAKE MICHIGAN PORSCHE PAYOFF: Lana walks away. As Joel goes after her, the Porsche rolls down the hill and into Lake Michigan.
ACT II-B

62 - Joel begs the school nurse for an excused absence, but she refuses. If Joel doesn’t get an excused absence, he fails two mid-terms. Desperate, he grabs her by the shirt...

       JOEL
       Let me put it this way: I have spent the last four years of my life busting my butt in this shit-hole. I’m sorry, but I don’t think I can leave until I get a little bit of compassion.

63 - Joel gets suspended from school for five days.

65 - Joel takes the train to downtown Chicago; seeks comfort from Lana.

67 - Joel agrees to Lana’s plan and Lana works out all the details.

       JOEL’S VOICE
       It was great the way her mind worked. No guilt, no doubts, no fear. None of my specialties. Just this shameless pursuit of immediate material gratification. What a capitalist.

67 - Lana gives Joel the Steuben glass egg back.

       JOEL
       She told me I can make more money in one night than I’d make all year. Enough to pay for my father’s car. She told me she’d be my girlfriend. She told me a lot of things. I believe them all. So, she introduced me to her friends....

67 - Barry lets prostitute after prostitute into Joel’s home with a shit-eating grin on his face.

67 - Joel’s friends cash bonds at the bank.

68 - Over a burger and fries, Joel sells a fat friend on the cost/benefit of a prostitute.

70 - At Joel’s house, business is a boomin’...

72 - Bill Rutherford, the Princeton admission’s officer, shows up for Joel’s interview.
75 - ASSUMPTION OF POWER: The interview with Rutherford doesn’t go well. Joel lets go of his Ivy League aspirations...

JOEL
You know, Bill, there's one thing I've learned in all my years. Sometimes you gotta say, ‘what the fuck.’

78 - Lana finds Joel in the basement playing with his toy train set. She lifts his spirits, notifying him that Rutherford is “talking” with some girls. Joel receives a call from his father while Lana whispers in his ear, “you ever made love on a real train?”

79 - The evening wraps up. Rutherford takes a girl home. Barry pays the ladies. Joel and Lana board the subway.

80 - Lana instructs Joel to be patient and wait for the train to empty.

82 - Joel and Lana make love on the train.

84 - Joel picks up the Porsche.

85 - END OF ACT TWO TURN: After picking up the Porsche, Joel finds his home robbed, empty of furniture. He calls Lana’s apartment and Guido answers.

Note: The decision happens off-camera. Act Three begins as if Joel has accepted Guido’s proposition.
ACT III

87 - Joel negotiates with Guido (and Vicki) to buy back the contents of his home.

88 - Joel’s parents are forced to take a cab home from the airport.

88 - POINT OF NO RETURN: The last item on Guido’s truck is Joel’s mother’s Steuben glass egg. Knowing Joel only has $40 dollars left, Guido sets a firm price at $340. He agrees to “loan” Joel the $300 difference. Joel accepts and finds himself in debt with Guido the Killer Pimp.

89 - Joel and Barry rush to put everything back into the home.

90 - Joel’s parents come home and find everything in place, except...

91 - Joel’s mother finds a crack in her glass egg. Joel is scolded, forced to pay for a new egg.

94 - CLIMAX: Joel’s father notifies him he’s been accepted to Princeton.

   JOEL’S FATHER
   Haven’t I been telling you that every once
   and awhile you just gotta say ‘what the heck’
   and take some chances?

EPILOGUE

95 - Joel meets Lana for lunch. He asks if it was all a setup from the start. She assures him it wasn’t, but Joel believes otherwise.

96 - Joel and Lana walk through a park at night. They won’t be seeing each other again. Lana asks Joel if he wants to spend the evening together. Joel jokes, “how much you got on ‘ya?”

   JOEL’S VOICE
   My name is Joel Goodson. I deal in human
   fulfillment. I grossed over eight thousand
   dollars in one night. Time of your life,
   huh, kid?

96 - THE END.
A note from the author:

Written analysis of film is a crucial step for any screenwriter. I’ve found no better way to learn the craft than breaking down my favorite films and discovering what makes them tick. If you’ve never completed analysis of a film and/or screenplay, I recommend using this method with your favorites. Get detailed. Put in the hours. You’ll be glad you did.

The analysis you’ve just read is based on Daniel P. Calvisi’s *Story Maps: How to Write a GREAT Screenplay*. After reading a great number of books on screenwriting, Dan’s *Story Maps* method helped bring it all together. With thorough commentary on concept and theme, his structure paradigm is easy to understand and apply. *Story Maps* is an insightful look at the craft of screenwriting, a must read for the aspiring screenwriter.

About the book:

Learn the secrets to writing a GREAT screenplay from a major movie studio Story Analyst who will show you how to BLOW AWAY THE READER! Master the structure and principles used by 95% of commercial movies by studying detailed breakdowns, or “Story Maps,” of several recent hit movies in all different genres, including *The Dark Knight, The Wrestler, How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days, Drag Me To Hell* and the classics *As Good As It Gets* and *Sunset Boulevard*.

The book cites examples from hundreds of films, several television series and includes samples from actual produced screenplays to show you HOW TO DO IT. The book provides detailed lessons on format, capturing voice and tone on the script page and developing great characters with powerful dialogue.

You can purchase Dan’s book from [Amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or the [iTunes Store](http://itunes.com).

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“A person who won’t read has no advantage over one who can’t read.”

~Mark Twain