

WHAT LOVE INSPIRES

Written by
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Depictions, descriptions, and dialogue are true...unfortunately.

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by Lawrence Whitener

FADE IN:

CAPTION: "When two hearts become one, it cannot be undone." -
Charlene M. Martin

EXT. AERIAL OF WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

HISTORICAL SITES MONTAGE: Washington Monument, White House, U.S. Capitol, etc, then where the full moon reflects off the Kennedy Center's Potomac River. Party noise comes from its neighboring Watergate Complex and a penthouse balcony.

CAPTION: Washington, D.C. - 1977

EXT. WATERGATE PENTHOUSE BALCONY - IMMEDIATELY

STEPHAN ALLEN, 25, Caucasian, baby blue eyes, long strawberry-blond hair, is a bodybuilder. Looking like a red-headed *Fabio* meets *Robert Redford*, he is impeccably dressed in a blue smoking jacket with paisley ascot. He leans over the balcony's railing lost in thought holding a full wine glass.

INT. SAME WATERGATE PENTHOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Its living room has 1970's bright, but cold, stainless-steel furnishings. A deco-mirrored wall, an *Andy Warhol* painting, useless glassless end-tables. Its FM-radio plays 1977 music.

PARTYGOERS, 20s-50s, wear 1977 evening wear, men in leisure suits, women in *Jackie O* dresses, network with crystal-stemware drinks and fake-laughing. One looks out of place.

PAULA SANTANA, Hispanic, 24, skinny, childhood-acne pock-marked face with a huge nose, wears a plain summer dress. She stands alone looking out the balcony's sliding door at Stephan. She draws a deep breath then slides open glass door.

EXT. WATERGATE PENTHOUSE BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Paula enters nervous and walks up behind Stephan playful.

PAULA
Don't fall.

Stephan spins surprised *sloshing* his drink onto her dress. Paula jumps back also spilling her own drink on her dress.

STEPHAN
You first.

Both *laugh*. Stephan pulls a stylish silk handkerchief out of breast-pocket and begins blotting her dress. She offers him her hand, so he puts down his empty glass and shakes it.

PAULA

Paula Santana, I'm ...

STEPHAN

I know who you are.

Paula stops talking to look down. Stephan looks down. He's blotting her breasts. Stephan hands her his handkerchief.

STEPHAN

Sorry.

PAULA

I'm not.

Paula continues blotting and sticks out her tongue playfully.

Stephan notices the tip of her tongue is not round and smooth, but squared with large bumps all over its surface.

PAULA

Going to the Convention?

STEPHAN

In Miami? Hadn't planned on it.

PAULA

Our Whip just cancelled.

STEPHAN

What does a --

(makes *whip-snap* sound)
wtcht, "whip" do?

PAULA

Like an executive secretary. Keeps a calendar of our Caucus Meetings, makes sure we get to them, takes roll to prove we did, hands out agendas. Tells us we're important.

STEPHAN

Tells you you're what?!

Her *laugh* is so genuine, warm, kind, and infectious.

PAULA

Only kidding. But its overall purpose is important. Would your job let you take off this sudden?

CAROL MARCUS, Caucasian, 24, long blonde hair, green eyes, buxomly in a low-cut evening dress, lets a long leg enter first out the sliding door. She's a "10" and knows it.

CAROL
Who are you hiding from us, Paula?

PAULA
Carol Marcus, this is Stephan Allen, our newest club member. I'm recruiting him to be our Whip.

Carol extends a hand. She and Stephan shake professional, but she drags her fingers across his palm sexy as they break.

CAROL
Wanna' --come?

STEPHAN
Where would I stay?

PAULA
We're booked four to a room to keep costs down, so if you liked living in a college dorm --?

CAROL
We had a room cancelation. Join us. You'll love it.

Stephan tries to ignore Carol's beauty but isn't succeeding.

STEPHAN
Sure, sounds like fun.

CAROL
I'll go make the changes.

Carol exits back inside sashaying exaggerated.

PAULA
How will you get there?

Stephan is distracted watching Carol's hips exit.

STEPHAN
Huh, where, to Miami? Uh --drive?

PAULA
Want help paying for gas?

STEPHAN
Sure, sounds like fun. When do we leave?

PAULA

Tomorrow.

STEPHAN

"Tomorrow?" Tomorrow, tomorrow?!

PAULA

Pick me up at five.

STEPHAN

In the morning?! --This, morning?

Paula nods. D.J. *announces* over the living room's radio.

RADIO D.J. (FILTERED)

It's Midnight, the witching hour!
Watch out for that "Devil Woman!"

Radio *plays* the same title's top-ten song. Partygoers inside begin dancing. Paula *sings* along with the radio. Nice voice.

PAULA/RADIO

"I've had nothing but bad luck,
since the day I saw the cat at my
door."

Stephan sets Paula's drink on the railing to lean-in singing hypnotic into her eyes. He is, a well-rehearsed Casanova.

STEPHAN/RADIO

"So I came here to you, sweet lady,
answering your mystical call."

PAULA

Caliente.

Stephan turns Paula's palm upright to begin *Gomez Addams* kissing animated from her wrist up her arm.

STEPHAN

Ahh Tish, cuando hablas español.

Paula fakes swooning with back of her hand moving to her forehead. Stephan pushes so she falls back and catches to cradle her in one muscled arm warning in a Spanish accent.

STEPHAN

Must warn you though, señorita. I
am, a film fanático.

INT. WATERGATE PENTHOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Radio's same *song* continues. Partygoers dance and *laugh*.

Carol stands arms folded watching through the glass door as Stephan holds Paula. She *sings* along with the song's chorus.

CAROL/RADIO

"She's just a devil woman,
with evil on her mind."

Race car *speeding-by* sound-effect on radio. The song *replays*.

EXT. I-95 SOMEWHERE IN THE SOUTHEAST - NEXT MORNING

Perfect driving day, beautiful blue sky and billowy clouds.

A White Porsche 914 speeds along with a CB-radio antennae on its engine lid and luggage strapped to its rear trunk-rack.

INT. STEPHAN'S PORSHCE - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan drives wearing leather gloves and *Easy Rider* yellow sunglasses dressed in jeans and original *Star Wars* t-shirt.

Paula sits sideways as passenger wearing huge square purple sunglasses watching Stephan reenact a *Star Wars* scene.

Stephan drives one-handed to place free hand around his own throat then use a strained voice like he's being choked.

STEPHAN

"This is a consular ship, we're on
a dip-lo-mat-ic mission."

Stephan moves same hand out to another imaginary-throat and tightens grip. His voice becomes deep like SCUBA-breathing.

STEPHAN

"If this is a consular ship, then
where is the Ambassador?"

Stephan makes his free hand throw away its empty air.

Paula pulls sunglasses down to nose-tip to look over them.

PAULA

Really into this whole space-flick
phenom, huh?

STEPHAN

You kidding me? I was one of the
first five hundred at its D.C.
Premier. Stayed and saw it twice.

Stephan turns his chest to proudly point at a blue star-field promo-button reading, "*May The Force Be With You.*"

PAULA

Not a fan of Sci-Fi, thank you.
 (points to car's CB)
 What's that?

STEPAN

"That" is a fully licensed F.C.C.
 communication device.

PAULA

Communicating what to whom?

Stephan turns on the CB and *keys* its microphone.

STEPHAN

Breaker, Breaker.

TRUCKER (FILTERED)

Five-by-five, good buddy.

STEPHAN

Smokies on the prowl?

TRUCKER (FILTERED)

That's a big negatory. We're free
 a' bear-traps. What's yer handle?

STEPHAN

Read for yourself, Bulldog, I'm
 passing your back door now.

Stephan down-shifts and accelerates past a *Mack* truck ahead.

TRUCKER (FILTERED)

Mill, Mill --alumeenum falcon?

STEPAN

(turns off CB)
 Close enough.

PAULA

What'd you get your degree in?

STEPHAN

(in perfect Latin)
 Ex nihilo nihil fit.

PAULA

"Nothing comes from nothing?" --
 Like the Billy Preston song?

STEPHAN

Close enough.

Stephan pops in a cassette. Billy Preston's 1974 hit "Nothing from nothing" plays.

EXT. AERIAL OF PORSCHE ON SOUTH I-95 - CONTINUOUS

Stephan downshifts and Porsche weaves in and out of traffic.

MUSIC-MONTAGE of Porsche traveling Southbound through states.

PAULA

You sound chaste enough to have taken Poli-Sci. Tell me more.

STEPHAN

Thought you didn't like Sci-Fi?

PAULA

I don't. Wait, what does ...?

STEPHAN

Because it has a *Black Hole*. We just call it, "The Black Box." And you, what's your degree in?

PAULA

Nineteenth Century English Lit.

STEPHAN

"She had thought how his armor would blaze in the sun, as he rode like a prince to claim his bride. In the sweet dim light of the falling night, She found him not at her side."

PAULA

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, "Love's Coming." But why did you add "not?"

STEPHAN

I'm a romantic. Hungry?

PAULA

I don't eat that much. You can stop if you want.

STEPHAN

Nah, we'll keep going. Wanna' see if I can set a record driving time.

Stephan downshifts and Porsche takes off weaving through traffic like at NASCAR. The Sun is now setting to striking purple and red hues in their horizon's sky.

EXT. UNKNOWN BACKWOODS TWO-LANE ROAD - NOW MIDNIGHT

Dark, so countryside is not seen. Stephan's Porsche stops for a red light at a T-intersection in the middle of nowhere.

INT. STEPHAN'S PORSCHE - CONTINUOUS

Paula is asleep. Stephan, sunglasses off, sits staring ahead. He looks up through windshield, then cocks his head confused.

STEPHAN

When did they put a traffic light,
on the Interstate?

Stephan turns his head to blank-stare out his open window.

A loud Redneck muscle-car with its windows down pulls up beside. Its engine *roars* repeatedly. Stephan smiles sleepy.

TWO REDNECKS, Caucasians, 20s, crew-cuts, sit in front seat drinking beer. REDNECK TWO, passenger, sees Stephan staring.

REDNECK TWO

What you lookin' at hippy-freak?!

Stephan uses both thumbs to pull his eyebrows up high while rolling his eyes down into their lower lids so only their whites show. He makes the sound of a Star Wars *Jawa*.

STEPHAN

Utinni!

REDNECK ONE, the driver, also watching, becomes alarmed.

REDNECK ONE

He's freakin' whacko, man!

Redneck One stomps on his accelerator and *burns rubber* to run the red light. Redneck Two flips *The Bird* as they drive away.

Paula wakes up, stretches, but doesn't recognize the area.

PAULA

Where are we?

Stephan is loopy-tired and *raspberries*, then slur-speaks.

STEPHAN

Doe kno'?

PAULA

What time is it?

Stephan brings his diver's wristwatch inches from an eye.

STEPHAN

Twee?

PAULA

"Twee?" Three --in the morning?!
 You've been driving this whole
 time? Thought I was going to, why
 didn't you wake me?

STEPHAN

Only Tarzan --
 (*thumps chest*)
 fly Falcon.

Paula sees Stephan is now in *Bye-Bye Land* and squints into the darkness. Her eyebrows go up as she points.

PAULA

Listen ape-man, you're exhausted.
 I'll pay for a motel. The sign says
 there's one up there.

Stephan's head bobs like it's on a spring.

STEPHAN

Okie, dokie.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF PORSCHE - IMMEDIATELY

Light turns green. Porsche jerks forward twice. Engine *dies*.

PAULA

Only you drive, huh?

STEPHAN

(in perfect *Peter Cushing*)
 "Now witness the power of this
 fully operational battle station."

Porsche's engine restarts, then *burns rubber* fishtailing.

PAULA

I'm not afraid.

STEPHAN

(in perfect *Yoda*)
 "You will be. You, will, be."

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mustard-yellow wallpaper with matching swag carpet and one double-bed. A metal key unlocks the door and it opens.

Paula enters and turns the light *on*. She carries a night-case and goes directly into the bathroom closing its door.

Stephan enters carrying his trunk-rack luggage while holding its bungee cords in his mouth. He spits them out surprised.

STEPHAN

One bed?

PAULA (O.S.)

All they had. Get in, Dopey.

Paula now opens bathroom door with its light on wearing a flowered cotton nightgown. She's back lit, so her body-outline shows. Not bad. Stephan raises an eyebrow. Paula turns off its light and gets in bed. She begins *snoring*.

STEPHAN

You sure about this?

Paula releases a cute baby-fart making Stephan *snort-chuckle*.

STEPHAN

Guess so.

Stephan "heels-off" his shoes, pulls off t-shirt, and drops his pants revealing bikini-briefs and a rippling six-pack. He is *Arnold*. He shuffles to turn off overhead light, then falls face-first onto the bed passing out with pants around ankles.

CAPTION: *Based on their true-love story.*

EXT/INT. PORSCHE - HOURS LATER SAME MORNING

Stephan drives wearing a too-tight mesh t-shirt so nipples poke through. Paula finger-flicks one. He *slaps* her hand.

STEPHAN

Hey-a?!

PAULA

Quite a sight to wake up to. You always drool that much?

Stephan grabs a *Star Wars* tape. Paula *slaps* his hand.

PAULA

"Hey-a?!" Talk to me.

STEPHAN

About what, your Princessness?

PAULA

Anything, everything. Why are you so secretive?

STEPHAN

"Watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you, because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places."

PAULA

Roald Dahl. Stop deflecting.

STEPHAN

"Deflecting?!" Whom, me?

PAULA

Stop it!

STEPAN

Trying to.

PAULA

I love to learn about people. But with you, I keep picking up on some kind of weird self-defense.

STEPHAN

Been a psychic long?

PAULA

What are you hiding from?!

STEPHAN

(in Latin)
Quidvis.

PAULA

"Anything and everything?"

STEPHAN

This our exit?

Paula unfolds her paper highway map to study it.

PAULA

Uhhh, sí, take this one.

EXT. AERIAL OF I-95 RAMP HEADED FOR MIAMI - IMMEDIATELY

Porsche exits on I-95's infamous huge cloverleaf to Miami.

PAULA

Well --?

STEPHAN

Deep subject.

Porsche's 6-cylinder 5-speed excelerates fast and, because it was designed to hold turns at high speed, it does.

EXT. DEAUVILLE BEACHFRONT HOTEL IN MIAMI - MOMENTS LATER

Half-moon high-rise hotel with a pool in back. Past it is the ocean. Host of *The Beatles* second appearance on Ed Sullivan.

Porsche parks in its check-in driveway. TWO CUBAN VALETS in hotel blazers run to it. VALET ONE opens Paula's door. She exits. VALET TWO opens Stephan's door. He exits. Valet Two has a thick Cuban accent and holds a hand out for car's key.

VALET TWO

Welcome to Miami, señor.

Stephan balls his Porsche's key-fob in a protective fist.

PAULA

He won't hurt your baby --baby.

Stephan drops his key in Valet Two's hand who runs to rear luggage rack and releases one bungee cord. It's hook *snaps* back onto the car's rear window. Stephan clutches at heart, then unhooks and pockets straps to grab its two suitcases.

Valet Two opens car's trunk to grab a canvas duffle-bag with a SCUBA-diver flag-patch. He yanks it out, but bag bends him over with his arm straight down onto the ground with a *clank*.

STEPHAN

You're doing this on purpose.

Stephan puts suitcases and duffle bag on the cart with ease.

PAULA

What's in your big bad bag?

STEPHAN

Wet suit, masks, fins, snorkel, B.C., and a weight belt --with extra weights of course.

PAULA

"Of course."

Stephan reaches into driver's compartment to pull on a T-handle. The hood *pops* open. Its gas tank is mounted here.

Valet One lifts lid, pulls out Paula's overnight bag, then slams the lid too hard to a loud metal *bam*. Stephan grabs his chest like having a heart attack and angry-grabs back his key-fob. He jumps in, *starts car*, and drives over curb-less walk to park against hotel's side wall. He gets out pocketing key-fob angry-pointing in Spanish to Porsche, *Do not touch*.

STEPHAN

No Tocar!

Both Valets begin to protest. Stephan does earlier *Jawa-look*. Both Valets step back *murmuring* in unintelligible Cuban.

PAULA

You certainly know how to make a
"way-out" impression, Skywalker.

Paula enters hotel. Stephan pulls out imaginary light-saber to slash at Paula's back making sound effect as he follows.

STEPHAN

Zuu, Zuu, Zuu.

Valet One and Valet Two flip a coin. Valet Two loses. He *curse*s in Cuban as he follows pushing their luggage cart in.

INT. MIAMI'S DEAUVILLE HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Paula, Stephan, and Valet Two pushing their cart, enter.

A huge banner hangs reading, "Welcome Young Democrats"

Paula goes to a check-in table signed, "Delegate Check In"

DELEGATES of both sexes and all races, in their early 20s, began partying which seems to be their ultimate purpose.

STEPHAN

"The Love Boat Animal-House" style.

DOMINO JEFFERSON, African-American, 20s, cute, tight blouse, sits behind its long table wearing a "Registration" name tag.

DOMINO

Hi, Paula. Flight late?

PAULA

I flew alright.
(thumb-points behind)
With that.

Domino sees Stephan walking to her with his pecs bouncing.

DOMINO

Who's Mr. America?

PAULA

Whip.

Stephan arrives and smiles. Domino smiles back imagining.

DOMINO

I wish. --Name?

Overhead Muzak *plays* the movie theme of a famous British spy.

Stephan hears music and pretends to adjust imaginary sleeves while imitating the same British spy's Scottish accent.

STEPHAN

Allen --Stephan Allen.

Domino writes distracted on two name badges in the shape of *Virginia* state, then hands them out.

Paula sticks her's on reading *PAULA SANTANA - CLUB PRESIDENT.*

Stephan sticks his on reading, *ALLEN STEPHAN - ME WHIP.*

Paula shakes her head, then pulls Stephan to the Front Desk.

PAULA

Come on, double-o.

Stephan pulls her back to him whispering.

STEPHAN

What are we doing here?

PAULA

I said at the club's last meeting?

(no response, *sighs*)

Founded in 1932, the Young Democrats of America's mission is to elect Democrats, advocate progressive issues, and train the next generation of our leaders.

(no response, gets angry)

Do you even listen to me?!

(no response, *raspberries*)

Annual convention for four days to discuss, rewrite if necessary, then vote on our National Charter and Standing Rules ongoing.

Stephan's perplexed look goes all the way to pathetic.

Paula pulls on his hand to the elevators quoting *Lee Marvin* from "The Dirty Dozen."

PAULA

"Just walk slow, act dumb, and look stupid."

Stephan perks up smile-nodding animated. This he can do.

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

One large room of 1970's multi-color stripe-patterned foil wallpaper and thick purple swag carpet with two double beds.

Door opens. Stephan enters carrying SCUBA-bag. He's followed by Valet Two carrying his two suitcases who lays both on bed.

Stephan hands a \$20 bill to Valet Two requesting in Spanish.

STEPHAN

Proteger Porsche, por favor.

Valet Two nods appreciative looking at his tip as he exits.

Stephan goes to his room's only tall narrow window and looks out, then straight down. His room is on the eighteenth floor. He jumps back like electrocuted. Stunned, he peers out the window again cautious, only to jump back even further.

STEPHAN

Qué Diablos?!

Stephan lays down on a bed, gets comfortable, closes his eyes, *exhales* relaxed, then *low-snores*.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. FALLING IN THE POTOMAC RIVER AS A CHILD - MANY YEARS AGO

POV: LITTLE BOY dress shoes slip off the wet cement retaining wall surrounding the Potomac River and into its murky water. Little Boy goes underwater, then surfaces wearing an Easter suit flailing. He can see Cherry Blossom trees, then goes underwater again. An African-American MALE HAND reaches under to grab the back of Little Boy's suit collar lifting him out. The angry African-American MALE, in Easter Suit, chastises.

ANGRY MALE

Where's your mama, boy?!

LITTLE BOY (O.S.)

(shivering, stuttering)

Sh-sh-she, l-l-left, m-m-me.

African-American Male softens, then takes Little Boy's hand.

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE HOTEL ROOM - IMMEDIATELY

Stephan comes straight out of bed *hyperventilating*. He stands shivering, then steps right, left, can't decide, and freezes.

CLOCK INSERT: Dial on the nightstand's clock reads 4:00 p.m. Its big hand circles around to 5:00 p.m. He never moves.

Door opens. Carol enters with Valet Two carrying her two suitcases who sets them on the second bed. She tips Valet Two who exits then she *pops* open a suitcase.

CAROL
Hey, roomie.

Stephan step-falls forward like coming out of a trance.

STEPHAN
We're --sleeping together?

CAROL
(finger to lips)
Don't tell my husband.

STEPHAN
Your "husband" --The County Chair?!

CAROL
Tell me something, I don't want to know. He was our Whip, now you are. We booked this room with another couple. They here yet?

STEPHAN
"Another couple?!" But there's only two beds?! Am I sleeping with you?

Stephan steps back alarmed, turns to see the window behind him, and jumps away, all the way, into opposite corner.

Carol holds up a finger, *Wait*, picks up the rotary receiver, and *dials* Operator then waits. Other person is not heard.

CAROL
Room eighteen-eighteen. Would you send up that portable bed with pillows and linen now, please?
(hangs up)
I need a shower. Wanna' join me?

Stephan's mouth falls open making *guttural* protest noises.

Phone *rings*. Carol answers. Paula is not heard.

CAROL
 For dinner, silly. --Hello?
 (listens)
 Sounds good, see you there.
 (hangs up, explains)
 Paula found a restaurant across the
 street. She wants to meet in an
 hour. Wanna' eat us?

Carol pulls off her blouse to a *Frederick's of Hollywood* bra and opens her suitcase to take out fresh undies.

Stephan begins spasming.

CAROL
 Sorry, I meant --eat with us.

STEPHAN
 (checks his neck pulse)
 No! Yes. Wait?! You're undress --?
 I'll wait outside till you're ...

Too late. Carol drops her slacks to reveal matching panties.

CAROL
 What, ready? I'm always "ready."

Carol kicks off her shoes, grabs fresh bra and panties out of suitcase, then skips into the bathroom closing its door.

Knock at door. Stephan walks stiff-legged with arms out like *Wile E. Coyote* after falling a thousand feet and opens door.

Valet Two wheels-in a fold-up bed.

Shower water in the bathroom turns on.

CAROL (O.S.)
 You Coming?!

Valet Two smiles giving two thumbs-up to Stephan as he exits.

STEPHAN
 No! --Wait, to dinner?! Yes!

Stephan backs up near window again, glances out, then sets a new broad jump record to recover as *Rod Serling*.

STEPHAN
 "There's a signpost up ahead. Next
 stop, your Twilight Zone."

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rollaway now open and jammed between corner wall and second double-bed with linens on. Stephan sits on its end in a silk paisley shirt and new bell-bottom jeans *slapping* both hands nervous on his thighs. Their "slap" is a little too sensual.

Carol exits bathroom with a bath-towel draped around her.

CAROL

Come yet?

Stephan jumps up guilty with an open-mouth horrified look.

STEPHAN

I wasn't ...!

CAROL

The other couple, numb-nuts.

Carol drops her towel. Her damp body glistens sexy wearing new bra and panties. Stephan stammers trying not to ogle.

STEPHAN

N-n-no, not yet. Should I, get out?

Carol pulls on new pants and a shirt, then drops a hip sexy while buttoning her blouse.

CAROL

Of what --your clothes?

Door opens. JOSEZ and CARMELLA SANTIAGO, both Hispanic, 20s, wearing jeans and t-shirts, enter in silly-love.

CAROL

There they are! The newlyweds.

STEPHAN

"Newlyweds?!" You're honeymooning here, with us, at a convention?

Josez extends a hand. Stephan stands frozen. Josez reaches down and grabs Stephan's limp hand to lift and shake it.

JOSEZ

Hola. Josez Santiago. And this --
(releases to point at her)
lovely, beautiful, wonderful
criatura --is my brand new wife.

STEPHAN

What happened to the old one?

All *laugh* except Stephan who doesn't get his own joke.

Carmella raises to shake Stephan's limp hand, then releases.

CARMELLA

Carmella. Pleased to meet you.

CAROL

Paula called, wants us to meet her across the street for dinner.

JOSEZ

You two go. We want to, *uh*, get acquainted. --And take your time!

Josez *slaps* Stephan's back and winks at him. All laugh except Stephan who furrows his brow clueless smiling, *Heh-heh-heh?*

INT. DINER ACROSS FROM THE DEAUVILLE HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Small American restaurant. A few DINERS are scattered about.

Carol and Stephan enter. Paula sits alone, sees them, and waves. Carol waves back and sits. Stephan follows her to sit.

PAULA

They here?

CAROL

Right after you called, but they wanted "alone time."

PAULA

Will make for interesting sleeping arrangements. What'd you buy them?

STEPHAN

Didn't know I was supposed to ...?!

Carol waves Stephan off pointing to herself.

CAROL

Me, dummy. --A useful gag gift.
(leans-in to Paula)
Did you get it?

Paula shakes her head embarrassed.

CAROL

How many times does that make you've been passed over?

STEPHAN

"Passed over?" --For promotion?

PAULA

Three strikes.

STEPAN

(makes umpire *Out* sign)

You're, Out!

Stephan thought he was being clever, but Carol and Paula glare at him. MILF WAITRESS, tall, older, with deep tan wrinkles, comes over to begin with Stephan's order.

MILF WAITRESS

Whatta' ya' havin', short, albino,
and wish-you-were-mine?

All laugh except Stephan who open-mouth pantomimes, *Huh?*

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE HOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Door opens. Stephan enters followed by Carol. First double-bed looks like a cyclone hit it. Shower water is *running*.

STEPHAN

Looks like they consummated.

CAROL

Long as she's not, constipated.

Carol bends over and points at her butt then jumps standing on the bed playing air-guitar. Phone *rings*. Stephan looks from Carol to messy bed to bathroom door and answers.

STEPHAN

"Hotel California."

PAULA (FILTERED)

How're your roommates?

Carol plays air-guitar gyrating hips. Bathroom door opens. Josez and Carmella enter, hair wet, in bathrobes with big smiles. They join-in playing air-guitar and dancing wild.

Stephan answers as *Charlton Heston* from "Planet of the Apes."

STEPHAN

"It's a madhouse."

PAULA (FILTERED)

Disco Night in the bar.

STEPHAN

(regular voice)

Sure, sounds like fun.

Stephan hangs up as Carol jumps down to put her arms over Josez and Carmella's shoulders. All Three *Rockettes* kick-dance to end with a big end, *Ta-Da*.

STEPHAN

(again as *Charlton Heston*)

"A, maaad, houussse."

INT. DEAUVILLE HOTEL BAR - LATER SAME NIGHT

Long counter has tall stools. Large round tables with chairs are between it and a huge square dancefloor with Disco Ball.

Carol and Carmella enter wearing *Charlie's Angels* jumpsuits. Josez enters in a patterned-shirt with bell-bottoms and Pimp hat. Stephan enters in a tight jean vest-suit with a wide-collar shirt unbuttoned to the middle of his hairless chest.

Paula, dressed plain, wearing glasses, waves from a table.

Her Four strut to Paula's table with Stephan being last.

Delegates, in Disco wear, sit at bar drinking and *laughing*.

Domino stands by the bar fending off advances from a sitting Caucasian DRUNK GUY who puts an arm around Domino's waist and pulls her in. She pushes against him trying to escape.

Stephan grabs Drunk Guy's same wrist never breaking stride to twist Drunk's arm who spins off chair causing a commotion.

Paula watches Stephan wide-eyed with mouth open until her Four arrive to sit at her table.

Domino walks behind Stephan with two drinks back to her table stopping only to peck-kiss his cheek, then continues on.

CAROL

What was that for?

PAULA

Some guy was bothering Domino.
Stephan threw him to the floor.

CARMELLA

When?

PAULA

While you were walking over.

JOSEZ

When?!

HOTEL DJ *plays* Disco music. Disco Ball reflects lights.

DANCING COUPLES step on the dance floor discoing.

Josez stands offering a hand to Carmella. They go to dance.

Carol stands and grabs Stephan's hand pulling him up.

STEPHAN

What about Paula?

CAROL

She never dances.

Carol pulls Stephan onto the dance floor and dances hot.

Paula puts elbow on table, cups her chin, and *sighs* watching.

INT. DEAUVILLE HOTEL BAR - LATER SAME NIGHT

Paula now has two empty umbrella drinks in front of her.

Her Four fall into their chairs perspiring and *laughing*.

Hotel DJ plays *Meco's* disco-version of "Star Wars Cantina."
Strobe lights and Disco Ball flash. Dance floor gets crowded.

Stephan jumps up eager and offers a hand child-like to Paula.

PAULA

You gotta' be kidding?

Stephan yanks-out Paula's chair and grabs her hand pulling.

INT. DEAUVILLE NIGHTCLUB DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Stephan pulls Paula on the dance floor with Dancing Couples and snaps into a famous Disco-pose. Paula shakes her head and tries to leave. Stephan blocks her way *yelling* over the din.

STEPHAN

What's Wrong?!

PAULA

Can't Dance!

Stephan takes off to pocket her glasses inside his vest. He takes her right hand in his left, places right hand in the small of her back, and assumes the correct Ball Room dance-form. He violently jerks her in to him close. Paula *gasps*.

STEPHAN

Not --yet!

DANCE SEQUENCE: Stephan fast circular-Waltzes holding Paula tight. They dance in a widening circle. Dancing Couples back away to watch. Stephan uses back-hand to pivot behind Paula forcing her to look over her shoulder at him. He raises and spins her hand above her head to twist her in circles as he steps around making her spin-in-place. On crescendo, he dips her back low and holds the pose. Paula is breathless. Dancing Couples *clap* while dispersing. Stephan re-stands Paula, bows, then kisses the back of her hand.

STEPHAN

"Methinks the lady doth protest"
too, too much."

PAULA

(as *Mae West*)

Me thinks, "Is that a pickle in
your pocket, or are ya' glad to see
me" too, too much?"

Stephan is puzzled. Paula points down. He looks down. His pants inseam shows a huge bulge. Stephan takes off his vest, hands Paula back her glasses, and holds vest low in front.

STEPHAN

Hot in here.

PAULA

I'll say.

INT. PAULA'S DEAUVILLE BAR TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

Carmella and Josez *clap* impressed. Carol doesn't.

Stephan pulls out Paula's chair. She sits, then he does.

CARMELLA

When did you take disco lessons?

STEPHAN

I --took Cotillion. Disco is a fast
Waltz or Box-Step with hand-control
to tell your Partner what to do.

CAROL

(leans forward on elbows)

Tell me, "what to do."

STEPHAN

When is your first caucus meeting?

CAROL

Oh, uh, eight a.m. Why?

Stephan stands and *claps* hands loud indicating, *Stand up.*

STEPHAN

Time for bed. Move it, move it!

His Four stand. Stephan herds them out like a shepherd.

INT. DOMINO'S TABLE - SIMULTANEOUS

AMERICA WALKER, African-American, 20s, BBBW-attractive, is spilling-out of her dress top. She and Domino watch Stephan.

AMERICA

Who --is that?

DOMINO

Virginia's Whip.

Domino and Diamond look at each, then toast-*clink.*

DOMINO/AMERICA

Anytime.

INT. HALLWAYS OUTSIDE DEAUVILLE MEETING ROOMS - ALL NEXT DAY

FIRST MONTAGE: Paula, Carol, Josez, and Carmella each enter, exit, then enter different conference rooms in the hallways.

INT. INSIDE DEAUVILLE MEETING ROOMS - ALL SAME DAY

SECOND MONTAGE: During each meeting, Stephan enters carrying trays of water pitchers with buckets of ice and plastic cups to His Four in their separate meetings. He leaves tray, hands them agendas for next meeting, and exits. Delegates are, *WTF?*

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Carol, Josez, and Carmella enter exhausted. All Three freeze.

Stephan lies face-up suspended between two chairs with the back of his head on one seat and heels on the other. His arms are crossed across his chest. He never opens his eyes.

STEPHAN

Yoga Shavasana or "Corpse Pose."

JOSEZ

Yeah, that would kill me, too?

CARMELLA

How do you keep your stomach muscles so tight?

STEPHAN

Don't. Complete relaxation. You must detach --from your body.

JOSEZ

Detach from your mind, you mean?

STEPHAN

Stand on my stomach.

Carmella steps up on his stomach, stands in awe, then steps off. Carol steps on and begins dancing. His eyelids grimace.

STEPHAN

Bedtime, ballerina.

Carol steps off *giggling* and high-fives Carmella.

Stephan cups both hands over mouth, breathes deep, puts both fists down behind him on floor, puts one foot flat, then the other on floor, and stands. He opens his eyes, they narrow.

STEPHAN

Bed --now.

His Three get ready for bed *grumbling*. Stepan's brow furrows.

STEPHAN

Remember, what?

INT. STEPHAN'S ROLLAWAY BED - NOW MIDNIGHT

Lights are off. Josez and Carmella are trying to be discreet, but can't. Their bed *squeaks* to an increasing steady rhythm.

Stephan is asleep. Carol's hand touches his exposed arm. Stephan's eyes snap open. Carol's hand pushes him to, *Move over*. Stephan backs-up sideways in his bed. Carol eases down into his bed and under the covers, then whispers back to him.

CAROL

Too close, just sleep.

Stephan closes his eyes. Carol, sideways, backs her butt into him. His eyes pop open again. She reaches back to grab his top hand and pulls his arm over her shoulder, then whispers.

CAROL

Just sleep.

Carol grinds her butt into Stephan's crotch. He makes a face.

STEPHAN

Too close.

INT. DEAUVILLE MEETING ROOMS - ALL NEXT DAY

THIRD MONTAGE: Stephan herds His Four into various meetings, then brings them trays with individual juice bottles and plates of cut-up fruits having toothpick-cheeses as hors d'oeuvres, hands out agendas, exits. Delegates get jealous.

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Stephan meditates same lying between chairs with eyes closed.

Door opens. His Three roommates enter then sigh, *Not again.*

STEPHAN

Just in time, for bedtime.

His Three protest-moan as they go in bathroom to brush teeth.

Stephan's eyelids squeeze tight, then open. He holds up a hand and stares at it. It trembles.

STEPHAN

Remember? --Why?

INT. DEAUVILLE MEETING ROOMS - ALL NEXT MORNING

FOURTH MONTAGE: Early meetings for his Four. Stephan now delivers them trays of coffee, hot chocolate, Danish, and donuts. Delegates throw their arms up, *Come On!*

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE BEDROOM - THAT EVENING

Stephan meditates same between his chairs with eyes closed.

Door opens. His Four enter. First Three throw-up hands. Paula tilts her head sideways to watch him. His eyes remain closed.

STEPHAN

Found a club today.

(no response)

Who wants to go?

The Other Three tilt their heads at him to match Paula's.

STEPHAN

I'll drive.

Paula exits room running. His Three rush into the bathroom.

Stephan's abdomen waivers, then his butt hits the floor and his head and feet fall off both chairs. He lays there flat.

STEPHAN

I don't want to remember.

EXT. MIAMI'S INFAMOUS 'THE CLOCK CLUB' - THAT NIGHT

Porsche's hardtop was removed and stored in its rear trunk.

Stephan drives. Josez is passenger. Carol, Carmella, and Paula stand on floor behind both seats leaning back against roll-bar. All are dressed in bright-colored Disco clothing.

TWO DRUNKS, Rednecks, short hair, 20s, sit on a steel W-beam guardrail outside the parking lot drinking from a paper bag.

As Porsche enters, Two Drunks *whistle* cat-calls at Carol and Carmella, then see Paula and hurl rude obscenities at her.

TWO DRUNKS

Hey Good lookin's! --Jesus, X#@%?!

Stephan looks in his side-mirror to see Two Drunks *laugh* and point. He adjusts his rear-view mirror to see Paula is hurt. Stephan tightens his grip on the steering wheel *cracking* all eight knuckles. Both eyes go to slits. A reckoning is coming.

Parking lot is full. Stephan pulls up to club's entrance.

STEPHAN

Get a table, I'll park.

Stephan watches Paula wipe away a tear as she exits his car. He watches his Four enter the club, then snap-looks back to the Two Drunks and now speaks as *Obi-Wan*.

STEPHAN

"You will never find a more wretched hive, of scum and villainy."

BOUNCER, huge, muscled, dressed in all black, walks over.

INT. THE CLOCK CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Open building of half-round booths with tables. Each table has several small round wooden-ball knockers-on-sticks.

CLUB-PATRONS *beat* their knockers on table-tops to the music.

A sparkling Disco-Ball with a large dance floor has CLUB-DANCERS, dressed-to-the-nines, dancing and *clapping*.

Josez, Carmella, Carol, and Paula sit in a booth watching.

CLUB DISC JOCKEY, 30s, balding with very long thin hair, works his turntable and begins playing the theme from the just-released Kung Fu movie, *Enter The Dragon*, with *Kia's*.

EXT. THE CLOCK CLUB ENTRYWAY WITH SAME MUSIC - SIMULTANEOUS

Two Drunks still sit on their guardrail drinking from paper bag *yelling* cat-calls and obscenities at cars entering and leaving. Their portable radio *plays* Club DJ's same music.

STEPHAN (O.S.)

Say you're sorry.

Two Drunks react, *WTF?*, then throw their bagged-bottle at Stephan, miss, and *laugh*. Stephan steps-in puffing chest out.

STEPHAN

Say --you're sorry.

INT. PAULA'S CLOCK CLUB BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

Same movie-theme continues. They have to *yell* over the music.

PAULA

We should check on him!

JOSEZ

He's a big boy!

Carol holds two knockers on her head like antennae *giggling*.

Josez and Marcella go to dance floor and join Club-Dancers.

Paula looks over the booth's back. Stephan slides into booth beside her and grabs two knockers *tapping* them on the table. Paula spins to him. He leans over so only she can hear him.

STEPHAN

They said --they're sorry!

EXT. CLOCK CLUB ENTRYWAY WITH SAME MUSIC - IMMEDIATELY

The Two Drunks are gone.

FIRST DRUNK's hand reaches up from the culvert to grab handrail, then his other hand grabs on. He climbs over the guardrail to fall onto the ground now dirty and bruised.

SECOND DRUNK does same looking same. Both lie on their backs.

FIRST DRUNK

Apologize for what, man?

SECOND DRUNK

Don't know, man? But glad you did.

INT. CLOCK CLUB BOOTH - SIMULTANEOUS

Enter The Dragon music ends. Disc Jockey *plays* a new song.

Stephan offers hand. Paula accepts. They go to dance floor.

Carol is hurt, then sees an ATTRACTIVE MAN at the bar raise his glass to her toasting. She sashays slow and sexy to him.

EXT. THE CLOCK CLUB ENTRANCE - LATER SAME NIGHT

All Five exit. Stephan is not drunk. His Four are. He wiggles his little-finger inside an ear trying to "clear" it.

STEPHAN

Man, that was loud!

His Four react, *What?* Stephan walks to his Porsche now parked against the building. Bouncer stands *Parade Rest* by it. They shake hands. Stephan palms Bouncer a \$20 bill. Paula sees.

PAULA

WHY?!

His Four are deaf, so Other Three yell in turn at each other.

CAROL

WHAT?!

MARCELLA

WHAT?!

JOSEZ

WHEN?!

Stephan shakes his head getting in to drive. His Four get in his car waiting for someone to answer.

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE BED - MIDNIGHT

Room is dark. Josez and Carmella are going "at it" again.

Stephan is sound asleep when his eyes jolt open. He listens and hears Josez and Carmella. No, that's not it? He furrows his brow, then throws back covers.

Carol is giving him a blowjob. Stephan grabs her head to stop. Carol gets double wrist-control to hold his hands down. She looks up smiling. She's a Pro. Stephan's eyes cross, then he acquiesces to hormones and closes his eyes smiling.

Josez and Carmella's headboard *crashes* against their wall.

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Stephan opens his eyes, then throws back covers. No one.

STEPHAN
Best dream, I never had.

His bed has no sideroom, so he has to scoot to the end to get off. He scans and listens. He's alone. He tosses his t-shirt to stand only in his pajama pants. He flexes looking in the full-view wall mirror. His biceps bulge. He is a muscle-mass.

MIRROR IMAGE: Earlier Little Boy is LITTLE STEPHAN, 10, crew-cut, in dirty BVDs, no shirt on, obese with multiple rolls of fat, stressed and unhappy. He stares back at Adult Stephan.

Adult Stephan is disgusted and does Martial Arts Kata Forms angry. He finishes, coils down, then snap front-kicks the ceiling denting its drywall. He lands to stand sweating.

Door *bursts* open. Carol enters in a pantsuit winded and *slams* door sliding on its chain-lock. She spins falling back against the door with a Vampire-look.

CAROL
I, want, more!

Carol pushes Stephan to fall back on his bed and yanks down his pajamas to *Morning Wood*. She smacks lips possessed, then goes down on him like a cannibal who hasn't eaten in years.

Stephan is on his elbows watching her frenzied head-movement.

STEPHAN
Uh --*morning?*

INT. HOTEL DEAUVILLE BALLROOM - NEXT EVENING

Room is packed with Delegates, men in suit and tie, women in business-professional, who sit around the convention floor at large round tables with their state flags centered on each.

Carol and Paula in pantsuits, sit at the Panelist Table up on the stage with other high-ranking NATIONAL LEADERS.

BARRY STAPLES, late-20s, fat, balding, in a three-piece suit, quiets the room holding up both hands, then tests microphone with a *thump* causing feedback. Audience *murmurs* complaints.

Stephan enters wearing a suit, sees his table, and sits.

STEPHAN

Who's that?

JOSEZ

Barry Staples, National President.

STAPLES (FILTERED)

Thank you for our best National
Convention E-V-E-R!

All *applaud* except Stephan. Staples waves for All to settle.

STAPLES (FILTERED)

I heard your concerns, saw your
hard work, read your memorandums.
(milks the moment)
We have --Our Platform!

Room *erupts*. All stand for ovation except Stephan who sits looking at everyone as cult followers. Staples *yells*.

STAPLES (FILTERED)

Sit!

All sit as one in complete silence like eerie robots.

STAPLES (FILTERED)

Now, who wants to join me --
(like a gameshow host)
in the fab-u-lous Ba-ham-aaaaas!

Standing ovation. Stephan remains seated *clapping* by sliding one hand off the other upwards like a sloppy Nazi salute.

STEPHAN

Sieg Heil.

Carmella heard Stephan say something and looks down at him.

Stephan jumps up to *clap* hard with false enthusiasm.

STEPHAN

Say Hell, Hell yes!

Carmella nods looking back at Staples. Stephan grins fake.

STEPHAN

Careful, remember your "Plan."

EXT. DEAUVILLE SWIMMING POOL - NEXT MORNING

Large cement pool near ocean. BATHERS sit and sun, *talking*.

Carol and Carmella are in bikinis well-oiled. Paula wears a one-piece. All lie on stomachs in lounge chairs tanning.

Josez, in swim-trunks, enters juggling three umbrella drinks.

Carol, Carmella, and Paula, flip as one pulling their chair-backs upright to take their drinks.

CARMELLA

I could get used to this.

CAROL

Forget it, honey. "This" passes.

All Three Girls mouths fall open. Josez follows their gaze.

JOSEZ

Dios mío, Adonis.

Stephan, wearing a *Speedo*, walks carrying two sets of masks, snorkels, and swim-fins. He worked-out so biceps now bulge and leg-muscles expanded. His skin is shiny with suntan oil.

STEPHAN

Who'd like to learn how ...?

Carol, Carmella, and Paula, jump-up together raising hands.

STEPHAN

Enthusiastic bunch. You first.

Stephan tosses one set of mask-fins-snorkel to Carol while walking towards the beach. She skip-follows after him.

Carmella watches Stephan's tight butt-cheeks dance, then looks at Josez and licks her lips. Josez pulls her over a shoulder to carry her back to their room. She fake-protests.

Paula watches Stephan's firm butt disappear into the ocean.

PAULA

All brawn and no brains. --*But still?*

EXT. SWIMMING IN DEAUVILLE'S OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

SOMEONE on the beach turns on their portable radio. It *plays* the popular famous-mustache Hawaiian TV-Detective theme.

MUSIC-MONTAGE: Stephan teaches Carol to "pop" her snorkel, clear mask underwater, and jack-knife dive with her butt up in the air. She keeps re-adjusting her bikini-top nip-slips. Ends with his hands under her abs holding her as she straight-leg kicks with fins wearing her mask with face in the water. Stephan looks at her tight rear-end, then rolls his eyes up.

EXT. DEAUVILLE SWIMMING POOL AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Carol and Stephan run to Paula, both wet and carrying gear, *laughing*, then fall into their chairs dripping. Carol scans.

CAROL
Where're the lovebirds?

PAULA
Loving.

Carol gets a mischievous look and stands to leave.

STEPHAN
If you're going back to our room,
mind taking all the gear?

Carol smiles, puts on a mask to breathe through its snorkel, then takes all gear from Stephan and exits. Paula's crushed.

PAULA
What about my lessons?

STEPHAN
This morning took its toll.
(no response, explains)
Running in the sand is hard enough,
but jumping over seawalls?

PAULA
You could teach me in the Bahamas?

STEPHAN
What, when, how? I'm not going?

PAULA
Then we can drive back home.

STEPHAN
I thought you'd hitch a ride back?

Paula looks up at him with sad wide kitten-eyes. He *sighs*.

STEPHAN
Sure, sounds like fun.

INT. AIRLINER CABIN, MIAMI AIRPORT - LOADING NEXT DAY

Paula and Stephan walk down their plane's aisle. She looks at her ticket, confirms seat, and sits by a window. DELEGATE-PASSENGERS sit. Stephan's Three Roommates are not coming.

Plane is full. Stephan sits in aisle seat. He smiles looking around. He loves flying. STEWARDESS closes door to mechanical-sound. Stephan snaps his head to door as it *hisses* sealing.

FLASHBACK INSERT: A closet door slams shut in Little Boy Stephan's face. Crying, his hands beat on it in the darkness.

PAULA (O.S.)
Someone said you're a pilot?

Blind fear hits Adult Stephan. He's trapped again. He looks left, right, then death-grips both armrests sweating profuse.

STEPHAN
Huh, what?

PAULA
Pilot?

STEPHAN
Oh. Single-engine fixed-wing and glider. Also certified Skydiver.

PAULA
Have a death wish?

Plane jolts forward taxiing. Stephan goes ram-rod in seat.

STEPHAN
Do now.

Plane tilts taking off. Stephan's eyes snap wide open as his hands go white-knuckle on arm-rests. He *mutter-prays*.

PAULA
Say something?

STEPHAN
No! But you can. Talk, just talk. Talk about anything, everything, even yourself.

PAULA
Me? You sure?

Paula takes Stephan's frantic nod as true interest, it's not. Paula launches into a self-exposé. Stephan barely hears her. Stephan's hands fatigue from gripping his arm-rests so tight.

Time becomes a blur. Cabin speaker clicks on. Paula stops.

CAPTAIN (FILTERED)
Folks, we picked up a Tailwind and
just set a new record. Miami to
Freeport --in fifteen minutes!

Delegates *applaud*. Stephan looks up at the ceiling.

STEPHAN
Thank you.

PAULA
You're welcome.

EXT. PLANE'S LANDING ON FREEPORT RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jet lowers to nape-of-the-earth flying in over the ocean. Water is so clear, you can see the sand-bottom with large exotic fish swimming. Jet flies in over its beach to land.

STEPHAN
Huh, what? Oh --you, too.

INT. AIRLINER CABIN NOW IN BAHAMAS - MOMENTS LATER

Plane taxis and jolts to a stop. Stewardess opens door.

Stephan snaps his head to door's *hiss-release*. His unknown fear vanishes. He shakes his head puzzled as he flips his sore hands to get them loose. He takes a slow deep breath.

STEPHAN
That was interesting?

PAULA
Say what?

STEPHAN
This should be --interesting.

Delegate-Passengers stand. Stephan nods and smiles back at America and Domino. Everything is right with his world again.

EXT. XANADU PRINCESS HOTEL - LATER SAME DAY

Twenty-acre, 215-room, five-star hotel, on the ocean front with a private marina off to its side.

CAB parks in check-in lane. Paula and Stephan exit back seat.

TWO ISLANDER ATTENDANTS, dressed in bright red uniforms with gold epaulets, remove their luggage from the Cab's trunk to include Stephan's SCUBA duffle bag which appears lighter.

PAULA

Too bad the airline made you leave
all your weight-belt stuff behind.

STEPHAN

Along with my B.C.'s compressed-air
cartridges. That's okay, I'll rent
here, then pick them up back there.

Paula and Stephan look up and up at hotel's towering Tower.

STEPHAN

Billionaire Howard Hughes lived in
its Penthouse until he died last
year. Bet no one's in it now.

PAULA

Think they'll give it to you?

Both laugh, *Right*, as they enter hotel. The Two Islander Attendants follow carrying their luggage as Cab exits.

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Door opens into a a small dining area with a separate full kitchen. Beyond that is a living room with TV-Entertainment Center, bar, couch and two chairs that open onto a balcony.

XANADU BELLBOY, in a red uniform, enters carrying Stephan's luggage and exits to the bedroom. Stephan enters, scans, then re-checks his room-key number to the door's outside number.

The ocean breeze *blows* the balcony's curtains apart. Stephan is moth-to-flame as he goes to exit between them.

EXT. STEPHAN'S XANADU SUITE BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Huge balcony overlooks the ocean. Waves *crash*. A portable bar is against the wall between a second sliding-door to bedroom.

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Two full-size beds. One is turned-down with a famous chocolate on pillow. The room has expensive oak furniture.

Stephan enters in awe and opens a large free-standing cabinet. A TV and stereo are inside it. He turns to Xanadu Bellboy pointing to them with a little boy's excitement.

STEPHAN

Two T.V.s and two stereos?! What am I, the freakin' President?

Xanadu Bellboy rolls his eyes, then opens Stephan's suitcases on a bed to stand back with his white-gloved hand held out.

Stephan goes to shake it, then pulls back embarrassed, and gets out his wallet. He hands Xanadu Bellboy a \$20 bill who exits. Stephan enters the bathroom then hums *Hail To The Chief* "relieving" himself. Both *echo*.

STEPHAN (O.S.)

Da, da, da-da, da, da-da, da-da, da-da, daaaaaaaah --. (*flush*)

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan walks through dining area and enters kitchen. Sound of him opening the refrigerator door. Silence, then he closes refrigerator and re-enters living room to *pop* off the lift-tab on a beer can. He drops the tab into the can.

STEPHAN

Now this, is an f'n hotel room!

Phone *rings* on end table. Stephan sips beer, then answers.

STEPHAN

Howard Hughes Suite.

PAULA (FILTERED)

Very funny. Small aren't they?

STEPHAN

(scans room puzzled)
You're high maintenance.

PAULA (FILTERED)

How's Barry Staples as a roommate?

STEPHAN

Who? Oh, now I get it. Nope, haven't seen him.

PAULA (FILTERED)

Raincheck?

STEPHAN

Shouldn't dive for twenty-four hours after flying pressurized. Nitrogen bubbles need time to be reabsorbed from muscles or one gets nitrogen narcosis. But one should also rehydrate. How about a drink?

PAULA (FILTERED)

And dinner. Meet you in the restaurant in thirty minutes.

STEPHAN

Sure, sounds like fun.

Stephan hangs up, toasts the room with can, then guzzles smiling. He suddenly *spits* beer angry across the room.

STEPHAN

Remember what, god damn it?!

INT. XANADU HOTEL LOBBY - LATER THAT DAY

Ornate Lobby, everything first-class. Elevator *dings*, opens.

Stephan in all-white linen suit exits and goes to Front Desk.

XANADU MANAGER, Caucasian, 40s, with suit, voice, and manners most impeccable, is impeccably unhappy with his lot in life.

STEPHAN

Hi, I'm in Barry Staples' suite. Do you know his check-in time?

MANAGER

He was called back, so he will not be joining us this trip.

STEPHAN

"This trip?" He come here often?

MANAGER

Several times a year, especially during Bazaar Week.

STEPHAN

When's that?

MANAGER

Last week. The whole island is now on vacation. All shops are closed.

STEPHAN

So that's why our low-low rate. What about horseback, tennis, golf, and those new Jet-ski thingies?

MANAGER

Reservations booked months ago.

STEPHAN

I'm SCUBA certified, brought my gear. Can I at least rent a tank?

MANAGER

How is your room?

STEPHAN

Great.

(remembers its opulence)

Wait, know what, this whole trip is great! Love your hotel, thanks.

MANAGER

Are you dining-in with us, sir?

Stephan nods animated. Manager *dings* counter-bell. Earlier Xanadu Bellboy steps up.

MANAGER

Please escort our guest to the Veranda. Ask the chef to prepare something special for --?

STEPHAN

Two. Myself and a real lady.

MANAGER

For two --V.I.P.'s.

Stephan does his best *Elvis Presley* impression with hip drop.

STEPHAN

"Thank you, thank you very much."

Stephan follows Xanadu Bellboy. Manager pulls out embroidered handkerchief to wipe-down the counter where Stephan leaned.

MANAGER

Everyone's a V.I.P. here, sir. --
Very Ignorant Peasant.

INT. XANADU'S RESTAURANT VERANDA - MOMENTS LATER

Ground floor glassed-in dining area overlooking hotel's pool.

Stephan sits at a precisely-set table of linen tablecloth, sterling silverware, china plates, and crystal goblets.

Paula enters in a silk low-cut white evening gown that hugs her figure. No glasses and heavy make-up hides her "craters."

Stephan tilts his head at her like a dog who doesn't understand something, then stands and pulls out her chair.

PAULA

I just realized what you do for a living.

Paula sits smiling. Stephan sits frowning.

PAULA
You're the "Good Humor Man."

STEPHAN
What? Oh, the white suit. *Ha-ha.*

THREE WAITERS, Islanders, in different red uniforms, attack. FIRST sets two salad plates topped with exotic fruits. SECOND sets a basket of warm rolls while First Waiter fluffs their napkins onto their laps. THIRD presents a wine bottle to Stephan who nods, then uses a Sterling silver corkscrew to open it and hands its cork to Stephan who *sniffs*. Stephan makes a face, then hands the cork back.

STEPHAN
What are we --peasants?

Third Waiter smells cork, then exits fast with wine bottle.

PAULA
Was it bad?

STEPHAN
Don't know, don't care. Always wanted to do that though.

Manager hurries over with a bottle of champagne apologetic.

MANAGER
Sir, please accept my full apology,
and this bottle of Dom Pérignon.

Manager *pops* bottle open and pours most apologetic.

MANAGER
Dinner is on the hotel. May I ask
how you knew the wine had turned?

Stephan cranes his neck doing his famous British-spy accent.

STEPHAN
"Indifferently blended, ole' boy."

Manager nods in agreement as he *buckets* bottle, then exits.

Stephan, still as the famous British-spy, raises his glass.

STEPHAN
Off to the Casino to --Miss Money?

Pool's cabana-bar has been serving drinks to Delegate-Guests, in shorts, who *laugh* drunk. PILOT pushes plane's Stewardess into the pool. Her *splash* make Stephan and Paula look out.

All Delegate-Guests now jump in the pool. Domino and America wave giddy at Stephan and Paula, then jump in.

PAULA

Wanna go for a dip?

Stephan grabs table shiver-remembering drowning in Potomac River as a child and *gasps* for air. He becomes aware of being stared at by Paula. He clears his throat embarrassed.

STEPHAN

Thirty minutes --remember?

EXT. BAHAMA'S EL CASINO - THAT NIGHT

Mosque-like building with a huge neon-lit sign, *El Casino*.

DIFFERENT CAB parks in front. Stephan exits front passenger door now in a Tuxedo and holds open rear door for his THREE GIRLS. Domino and America, hair still wet, are now in evening gowns, with Paula dressed same, who exit the cab's back seat.

They enter Casino's huge double-doors as Different Cab exits.

INT. EL CASINO - CONTINUOUS

Giant single-floor with Teller Cage in far corner. A hundred slot machines stand on one side, Center has Roulette Wheels and Crap tables. Other side has Poker, 21-Tables and Cashier.

STEPHAN

You girls go have fun.

PAULA

Where are you going?

STEPHAN

Fact-finding mission.

Domino and Diamond pull Paula away to the 21-Tables where his Three Girls drink, whoop, and have fun losing money.

Overhead Muzak *plays* his British spy's original movie theme.

MUSIC-MONTAGE: Stephan walks along all the rows of slot machines like a "General on Review" as their OPERATORS lose money. He studies, then smiles. He moves to stand arms folded with an intense starewatching Blackjack PLAYERS at 21-Tables until he sees his opportunity.

INT. CASINO BLACKJACK TABLE MUSIC/MONTAGE - CONTINUOUS

DEALER breaks a new double-deck. BETTER at last chair exits. Stephan sits and lays chips as a bet. OTHER BETTERS lose, but Stephan never does. He Splits, Draws 21 many times with multiple Five-Card Charlies to always beat the Dealer.

PLAYER-CROWD forms behind Stephan *clapping* and doing side-bets. Stephan sweats concentrating. He's "Card Counting." He doubles-down on each hand and chips pile up. Paula, Domino and Diamond join Player-Crowd. Dealer finishes his two decks.

PIT BOSS, Italian, 50s, broken nose, in a shiny silk suit, steps-in to tap Dealer on the shoulder. Dealer exits and a NEW DEALER steps in with two new decks and *shuffles*.

Stephan pulls all his chips back except one. New Dealer deals. Stephan loses first hand and puts in a second chip. He loses again. He stands to collect all his chips. He exits the table sliding a finger off the side of his nose at Pit Boss.

INT. CASINO'S TELLER CAGE - MOMENTS LATER - MUSIC CONTINUES

Stephan dumps his chips on the TELLER'S counter. She counts cash back pressing an under-counter button. Overhead *flash*.

STILL CUT INSERT: A picture develops of Stephan looking up at the camera lens sliding a finger off the side of his nose.

Stephan wags same finger back-and-forth at Teller, pockets cash, and walks away adjusting cuffs. Pit Boss watches him.

ON CRESCENDO, MUSIC ENDS.

INT. EL CASINO FRONT DOORS - MOMENTS LATER

Paula, Domino and America huddle-stand. Stephan goes to them.

PAULA

I lost everything, but had a lot of fun doing it. You were amazing.

Stephan lifts the 1962 dog-eared paperback from inside his lapel, *Beat The Dealer*, then drops it back in.

STEPHAN

Read it in Miami, but felt like work, didn't have fun doing it.

Stephan walks to slots and motions his Three Girls to follow.

Overhead Muzak now *plays* the Brazilian Jazz version of the famous TV-show's impossible mission theme.

INT. CASINO SLOT MACHINES MONTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

MUSIC-MONTAGE: Stephan locks hands behind his back and walks looking at slot machines searching for clue he saw earlier. His Three Girls follow. Stephan stops. His Three Girls bump into him. He points at a machine. Paula drops in a coin and pulls handle. It *dings* and four coins drop out. She *shrieks*. Stephan goes *Sherlock Holmes* again searching. His Three Girls follow. He stops and points at a machine. Domino plays a coin. Nothing. Stephan finger-circles, *Again*. She plays and machine *dings* as eight coins drop out. Domino almost faints. Stephan searches, points repeatedly, and His Three Girls each pull slot-handles. Only a couple of pulls before each Girl wins. They *scream* scooping winnings in their purses. Stephan leads his Three Girls playing until they've walked the entire area and are back where they started at the front doors.

Pit Boss has been watching them squinting the entire time.

INT. EL CASINO FRONT DOORS - CONTINUOUS

Stephan's Three Girls are silly-giggling. Their purses are so heavy with coin, they all lean to that side.

PAULA

Greatest night, ever!

DOMINO

I've got goosebumps.

AMERICA

I'm wet!

PAULA/DOMINO

What?!

AMERICA

I mean, I'm excited.

PAULA/DOMINO/AMERICA

(all to Stephan)

How?

STEPHAN

Noticed earlier their machines fall right to left and when the last two windows are the same, the first one matches within a couple of pulls.

Stephan opens door and bows sweeping arm palm-up. His Three Girls exit hoity-toity with wrists up and bent. Pit Boss glares at them. Stephan fires a finger-gun at him.

MUSIC ENDS.

EXT. EL CASINO ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Stephan and his Three Girls exit. ORANGE CAB, 1950's American car, pulls up. CABBIE, grizzled Islander, 50s, with a deep Bahamian accent, wears a torn plaid shirt. Stephan's Three Girls get in the back. Stephan gets in as front passenger.

INT. ORANGE CAB - MOMENTS LATER

His Three Girls in back talk and snicker like little girls.

STEPHAN

Know of a nightclub, not the usual place, you know --different?

CABBIE

Take you some place special, mon.

Cabbie smiles way too big with blackened teeth. Uh, oh.

EXT. AERIAL OF CASINO - CONTINUOUS

Orange Cab exits Casino's circular driveway. Cabbie imitates the famous Caribbean soft-drink spokesman's laughter.

CABBIE

Ahh --hah, hah, hah, haaah!

INT. ORANGE CAB - LATER SAME EVENING

Cab drives on a one-lane tree-covered road. Stephan's worried looking out his window. His Three Girls *chatter* in back.

STEPHAN

Looks like the middle of nowhere, mon? Sure there's a club out here?

Cabbie points ahead to a small Rambler house on the beach.

EXT. BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Nightclub on the beach is in the middle of nowhere. Its paved unstriped parking lot in front is full of old American cars.

Orange Cab stops by old wooden stairs leading up to its door.

All Four exit closing doors. Stephan bends to pay Cabbie.

STEPHAN

Would you mind wait ...?

Cabbie drives away fast using earlier Caribbean laugh.

CABBIE

Ahh --hah, hah, hah, haaah!

INT. BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Its few red and U.V. lights do not illuminate very well. Party-commotion and music waft down its long hallway.

Stephan holds metal front door open for his Three Girls. All Four enter. Door closes behind with a metal cell-door *clang*. Stephan snaps his head to it as his Three Girls pay their Cover Fee with *El Casino* coin winnings.

CLUB CASHIER, 30s, rough-looking Islander wearing a shoulder-holster gun, is not happy to be counting coin. Stephan's eyes adjust and sees the gun, *gulps*, then pays with dollar bills.

All Four walk down the dark hallway lined on both sides with MALE ISLANDERS of all ages. Stephan follows his Three Girls getting shoulder-bumped from both sides repeatedly.

STEPHAN

Sorry ...Uh, sorry ...Sorry, etc.

INT. BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB GREAT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

All Four step into a home-made Islander retreat with booths across back walls under regular house-windows. A REGGAE BAND plays at the front for a dancefloor next to its bamboo bar.

Stephan ushers his Three Girls past ISLAND REVELERS, of all ages and both sexes, to sit in a wall-booth under a partially open window. Stephan scans the room, he's the only Caucasian.

BAHAMIAN ONE and BAHAMIAN TWO, tall large males, 30s, come to their table. Each hold out huge hands to Domino and America. Stephan motions, *Go*. Both girls go with them to dance.

Stephan takes Paula's hand pulling her to follow Domino and America to the dance floor as a chaperone. All Four dance.

MUSIC-DANCE MONTAGE: Reggae music changes to nonexistent beat as Islanders keep dancing smoothly. Stephan, Paula, Domino, and America stumble when there's no beat. Music returns to a beat. All Four dance regular. Non-beat music-goof recurs. Each time, Stephan gets more uncoordinated but his Three Girls adapt as BAHAMIAN THREE, 30s, fit, cuts-in with Paula.

BAHAMIAN THREE

Mind, *mon?*

Stephan gives up willingly to sit in his booth relieved.

BAHAMIAN FOUR, 40s, thicker accent, slides in beside him.

BAHAMIAN FOUR
Buy mee drink, mon?

Bahamian Four's coat opens as he adjusts. He has a gun tucked in his waistband. Stephan sees pistol and reacts with nervous laughter as he waves for service. Islander WAITRESS arrives.

STEPHAN
Whatever "he" wants, mon.

Bahamian Four nods. Waitress leaves. Bahamian Four smiles big with two shiny gold front teeth at Stephan.

BAHAMIAN FOUR
Why you here, mon?

Before Stephan can answer, Bahamian One, Two and Three arrive with his Three Girls. All Six sit. Bahamian Three threatens.

BAHAMIAN THREE
You should be leavin' us soon.
Doncha think, mon?

Stephan gives a nervous *laugh* while placing an arm behind Bahamian Four like they're lifelong friends. Stephan is really trying to lift open the window behind them.

BAHAMIAN FOUR
Why you messing wit' mee friend?

Bahamian Four puts an arm around Stephan's head hugging too tight. Stephan, being choked, manages to force-smile.

DREAM INSERT: Stephan throws open window, jumps out, and sprints up the beach arms flailing.

BAHAMIAN FOUR
He cool. Bought mee drink, mon.

Bahamian Two leans in to Stephan. His is not a question.

BAHAMIAN TWO
Buy mee drink too, mon.

Stephan jumps up with arms out imitating his Islanders.

STEPHAN
Beers all around! On mee, mon!

EXT. BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB ENTRANCE - LATER SAME NIGHT

Stephan exits running and pulling Paula who's holding up her skirt. Both run into the parking lot to catch their breath.

PAULA
Nice place.

Stephan looks at Paula, *WTF?*, then head-counts.

STEPHAN
Where are ...?

PAULA
Said they'd find their own rides.

Stephan drops his head shaking it, then looks up.

Earlier Orange Cab approaches. Stephan throws hands up in the air, *STOP*. He ushers Paula into the back and *yells* at Cabbie.

STEPHAN
Stay!

Stephan inhales, then enters club. Moments later, the door *bursts* open as Domino and America exit being pushed by him.

STEPHAN
Because I said so!

He pushes Domino and America into backseat with Paula. The club's door bursts open again as same Five Bahamians exit upset. Stephan jumps in the front passenger seat *clapping*.

STEPHAN
Go Mon, Go!

Five Bahamians run after the Orange Cab as it drives away.

EXT. AERIAL OF BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB - CONTINUOUS

Stephan mimics Cabbie's earlier famous Caribbean laugh.

STEPHAN
Ahhh, hah, hah, hah, hah --Hah!

EXT. XANADU HOTEL BEACH - NEXT BRIGHT MORNING

Beautiful white sand behind the hotel has its own Cabana Bar.

Delegate-Passengers, in various swimsuits, play along the beach both in and out of the ocean. It is, Nirvana.

Two sand-chairs sit side-by-side on the beach. Stephan sits in one checking his two sets of skin-diving gear. He looks up as the bar's radio *plays* the instrumental Ipanema-girl song.

TIME LAPSE:

Paula walks to him in a white linen beach shirt unbuttoned with a matching floppy sun-hat and white-framed sunglasses. An ocean breeze blows open her shirt to reveal a white low-cut bikini. Stephan's mouth falls open as he drops his gear.

TIME LAPSE ENDS.

STEPHAN

Who are --where, did you get that?

PAULA

(model-twirls)

Bought it in the hotel's gift shop.

(sits in chair)

Thank you so much for last night.

It was just what my doctor ordered.

STEPHAN

"Doctor?"

PAULA

I have a Thyroid condition. He said that's what gave me a bumpy tongue. It also gave me a lisp as a child so all the kids made fun of me. The school put me in a speech class.

STEPHAN

That's so, I mean, I had a speech impediment, too! Couldn't say my R's. Sounded like Elmer Fudd.

Paula and Stephan lean into each other. For the first time, Stephan is interested in what she is saying.

STEPHAN

My mom used to make me talk in front of her friends so they could laugh at me. Before my dad died, he hired a speech tutor who taught me to pronounce each word in my head before I say it. I still do.

PAULA

Remember their big tape recorders?

STEPHAN

They were huge! Remember the first time you heard your own voice?

PAULA

We don't sound like we think.

STEPHAN

Yeah, freaked me out. Then I read about a famous actor who overcame his stutter so that's why I talk --
(imitates *James Earl Jones*)
like, this.

BEACH WAITER, Bahamian, 20s, in same restaurant red costume, but with shorts, stands before them with a slight stutter.

BEACH WAITER

D-d-drinks, mon?

STEPHAN

(imitates *James Earl Jones*)
Banana daiquiri, kind sir.

PAULA

Oh yes! I want one too, please.

Waiter exits. Stephan and Paula look at each other different now. Both smile. Their romance switches have flipped on.

STEPHAN

Raincheck?

Stephan snaps his head to jet engines going to *full-thrust* take-off at the nearby airport. He shudders, then recovers.

PAULA

Why are always so nervous?

STEPHAN

With you, I'm not. Come on!

Stephan pulls Paula to the ocean. They run in *laughing*.

Cabana bar's radio plays the Hawaiian TV cop show again.

MUSIC MONTAGE: They play in the ocean, then break for drinks. He teaches her to use his gear. They break for drinks again. They swim underwater sightseeing the exotic fish, then break for drinks. Ends with Paula floating face-down in her mask kicking fins with Stephan supporting her abs. He looks at her rear, but doesn't roll his eyes up this time. Sun is setting behind them as they run in the hotel with gear holding hands.

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU SUITE - NOW SUNSET

Footsteps and commotion out in the hallway. Both are tipsy.

STEPHAN (O.S.)

Don't know why you wanted to see my room. They're all the same, right?

Door opens and Stephan enters dropping his gear.

Paula enters and drops her gear, then scans the room.

PAULA

Mine sure ain't like this?!

STEPHAN

Manager said Staples stays here a lot, but got called back.

PAULA

For embezzlement.

STEPHAN

Would you like a hotel robe?

PAULA

May I take a shower first?

STEPHAN

Bathroom's in the bedroom.

Paula enters bedroom then bathroom. Her voice now echoes.

PAULA (O.S.)

HOLY SHIT!

Sound of the shower-water turning on.

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Greek-style ornate bathroom, double-sink counter, wall-length mirror above it and opaque glass-door sealing a huge bathtub.

Paula's silhouette is seen through glass door. Light knock.

STEPHAN (O.S.)

Okay, if I hang your robe inside? I won't look.

PAULA

Why not?

Silence, then Stephan laughs *nervous* and stammers.

STEPHAN (O.S.)

I, I'll just leave it on the bed.

PAULA

Don't be a prude, my suit's on.

Sound of him knocking something metal over and it *clanging*.

STEPHAN (O.S.)
Look Paula. I really like having
you as a friend. You're --nice.

PAULA
You always talk to your "nice"
friends through doors?

Bathroom door opens slow. Stephan enters eyes-closed trying
to hang up the robe, can't, is frustrated, and opens eyes.

Paula's silhouette is behind the glass. She flips her wet
hair back thrusting out her chest. Stephan drops the robe.

STEPHAN
Holy shit.

INT. BATHROOM SHOWER BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Paula showers, then athroom light turns off. Sound of shower
door *sliding* open, then closed. Both are never seen. They
bump together. Paula responds imitating a parrot.

PAULA
El'lo?

STEPHAN
Thought in the dark, maybe we
could, you know, just --touch?

Fumbling noises.

PAULA
Here, I'll do it.

STEPHAN
Wow, you have really big --. May I?

PAULA
What? Oh! Oh my, that feels --neat.

STEPHAN
"Neat," huh? Your turn.

PAULA
You have really tiny --. May I?

STEPHAN
What? Oh! Oh my, that feels --neat.

PAULA
Uuuu, nice six-pack, strong hips,
tight ass, and, *uh* --? What's that?

STEPHAN

"What's that?" Funny girl. What are you, a virgin?

PAULA

Yes.

Shower *slides* open and Stephan is gone. Bathroom door opens and closes. Paula stands alone in dark with water *running*.

PAULA

Hmmmmmmmm?

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan enters pacing back and forth in a hip-wrapped towel.

STEPHAN

I can't, can't be someone's first again. Uh-uh, no way, not again.

Paula enters wearing the hotel's luxurious white robe.

PAULA

I'll leave.

Stephan jumps back *knocking* something over and stammers.

STEPHAN

Yes, no, wait. You don't know the pressure that puts on a guy?!

PAULA

I'll be the one being squashed?

STEPHAN

There was this girl, in high school. I didn't know, feelings come with that act, but I was a jerk, didn't mean to, but I hurt --

Stephan holds his head like its going to explode and exits.

EXT. STEPHAN'S XANADU BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Sun is setting, orange sky, fluffy clouds, ocean waves *crash*.

Stephan paces mumbling to himself. Paula enters head down.

PAULA

Would you be my --first kiss then?

STEPHAN

You're what? Oh, that's different.

Stephan turns on mini-bar's radio. Same Ipanema music *plays*.

Stephan moves in slow to cradle the back of her head in one hand as he kisses her long and passionate, then steps back.

Paula swoons eyes-closed, then opens them swaying dreamy.

PAULA

That, wow, that was just like in my
romance novels.

(launches like a missile)

Yeah, Baby!

Paula grabs his head as she throws her legs up around his hips locking her ankles. She smash-kisses Stephan who stumbles backwards then catches his balance mumble-kissing.

PAULA

Shaaad ap.

Paula becomes an animal kissing and groping Stephan. He capitulates and swings her into his arms, then carries her in the bedroom's sliding-door as they keep kissing passionate.

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU BEDROOM - LATER SAME NIGHT

A tornado hit. Both beds are torn apart, nightstand lamp on floor, items knocked off bureau, and pictures askew on walls.

Stephan lies on propped-up pillows. Paula has her head on his chest stroking it with eyes closed. Both are under a sheet.

PAULA

Everything but --.

STEPHAN

(euphoric smile)

"But" still.

PAULA

Didn't know someone could do that
with their mouth?

STEPHAN

Back atcha'.

PAULA

My tongue-bumps aren't --gross?

STEPHAN

Sweetheart, when word gets out how
good those feel down there, guys'll
be lined-up twenty-four seven.

Paula disappears under the covers. Stephan goes cross-eyed. Knock at front door. Stephan flies out of bed taking the top sheet with him. Paula lays nude on her stomach then puts her chin in a hand.

PAULA

Men.

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan enters wearing the sheet like a toga and opens the door. Xanadu Bellboy pushes in a serving cart with multiple metal covered plates and a bottle of champagne.

STEPHAN

Balcony, please.

Xanadu Bellboy pushes food cart onto the balcony.

Stephan closes his eyes, hears ocean waves, and inhales deep with arms outstretched palms-up. He holds his breath, then turns palms-down, exhales full, and opens his eyes at peace.

VOICE OVER INSERT: His Mother's shrill voice yells at him.

STEPHAN'S MOTHER (V.O.)

"You'll always be a loser! You don't deserve to be happy!"

STEPHAN

Wait! Back in here, please.

Xanadu Bellboy pulls cart back in.

STEPHAN

Close the door and curtains also.

Xanadu Bellboy points to the beautiful moon, shrugs, closes door, then drapes. Stephan signs his check and Bellboy exits.

Stephan lifts a dish-lid, sees french fries, grabs one, and tries to put in his mouth. He drops it and lid jumping back.

FLASHBACK INSERT: A wet bar of soap is shoved into Little Boy Stephan's mouth repeatedly. His hands fight to push it away.

STEPHAN

Stop It!

Paula enters wearing the hotels luxurious white robe.

PAULA

Stop what?

Paula grabs a fry and bites off half, then offers the rest to Stephan. He opens a bird-mouth and she puts it in. He closes his eyes and chews orgasmic, then his eyes snap open.

STEPHAN

Let's feed each other.

PAULA

(eats half a new fry)

Carol said you have a motorcycle.

Stephan nods as he bird-snatches rest of fry out of her hand.

PAULA

I found a place that rents scooters. Would you take me for a ride before we leave?

She bites another fry and offers him the rest. He snatches it with teeth to chew nodding while eagle-eyeing her next fry.

STEPHAN

Sure, sounds like fun.

EXT. BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE DIVIDED HIGHWAY - NEXT MORNING

A scooter *hums* by with two riders.

Stephan drives. Paula is passenger hugging tight. They don't wear helmets, just sunglasses. Both *yell* over wind noise.

PAULA

Wanted something bigger!

Stephan enters an intersection and goes the Wrong Way into oncoming lanes. Oncoming cars *beep*. Stephan drives across median into correct lane. Paula hangs on for dear life.

PAULA

I don't want to die a virgin!

EXT. AERIAL SHOT BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY - IMMEDIATELY

Their scooter veers across all lanes. Cars *beep* and steer around them. Stephan regains control in right lane.

EXT. BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE DIVIDED HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paula's sunglasses almost fell off. She re-positions them.

STEPHAN

Where did that --?! Where do you want to go?!

PAULA

All the way ...!

EXT. AERIAL SHOT BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY - IMMEDIATELY

Their scooter veers across all lanes again. Cars *beep*.

EXT. BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE DIVIDED HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Stephan regains control to stare ahead ashen-faced.

PAULA

to the end!

Stephan nods relieved. Paula hugs him tight. She's in love.

EXT. FREEPORT'S INDUSTRIAL REFINERY - LATER SAME DAY

Dirt and gravel road runs between huge oil tanks. Large wharf is at its far end. No trucks, no ships, it's still a holiday.

Stephan and Paula enter riding scooter. He's lost and sees a *Bar* sign on a thatched bamboo hut in the middle of refinery.

INT. REFINERY'S BAMBOO BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Dirty, dark, dank, bamboo hut with two-person round tables.

No customers. BARTENDER, 50s, frazzled beard, in torn shirt, rests chin in palm with elbow on bar and eyes glazed-over.

Stephan holds door for Paula. Both enter to sit at a table.

PAULA

Nice place.

Stephan reacts, *Where?* They wait. No service. He waves at Bartender. No response. Stephan goes to Bartender who stands staring at Paula as he wipes a glass with a dirty dish towel.

STEPHAN

Hot out there. Glad you're open being it's still a holiday and all.

Bartender keeps his blank stare at Paula. Stephan smiles.

STEPHAN

What kind of beer do you have?

Bartender thumb-points behind at a wooden hand-carved sign that reads "One Kind, Don't Ask."

STEPHAN

And two glasses.

Bartender *spits* into his glass and wipes it out, then places it in front of Stephan.

STEPHAN

Just the bottle.

Bartender opens beer bottle by holding cap to edge of bar and hitting its top with his other palm. He puts the bottle down hard so its foam overflows. He never stops looking at Paula.

Stephan takes bottle. Paula is looking around wide-eyed innocent. She loves everything and everyone. Stephan sits across from her and raises the beer bottle to his lips.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MOTHER'S TOWNHOUSE KITCHEN - YEARS AGO

Stephan, just out of college, opens the refrigerator. He opens a carton of orange juice and drinks. He spits it out into the sink, then looks at carton's expiration date. He pours it out in sink, then checks all other item's dates.

He pours out a gallon of milk. It flows like buttermilk. He yanks his head away at its stink and turns on the faucet. Fruit with mold growing, lettuce almost liquified, cheese furry-black, all go in trashcan. Refrigerator is now empty.

He opens a cupboard and pulls out cans that have bowed out at both ends with salmonella. He tosses them in the trashcan.

MOTHER (O.S.)

What's wrong with you?! We were having those for supper!

RETURN TO.

INT. BAHAMA REFINERY BAMBOO BAR - PRESENT

Stephan jerks head away, then slides beer bottle to Paula.

PAULA

Tell me about yourself.

STEPHAN

Nothing to tell.

PAULA

Even after last night?

STEPHAN

I graduated, tried to get a job on The Hill, but no openings. I passed their typing test, but the only offer was from their Credit Union. Its Manager said something about Congressmen always being overdrawn. Sounded dishonest, didn't take it.

PAULA

So what do you do for money? I mean, you seem to have it, and the way you took off from work ...

STEPHAN

Whatever it takes. What do you do?

PAULA

Me? I work for a car club. You know, we bring you gas, change a flat, tow it when you break down.

STEPHAN

Where you aren't promoted. Why?

PAULA

I see other girls move up. I think it's because they're pretty.

STEPHAN

People see what they want.

PAULA

What do you see?

Stephan sees the Bartender lick his lips creepy.

STEPHAN

That it's time to go.

PAULA

Wait, what about your family?

STEPHAN

Me again? Fine, Dad died when I was a kid, Mom earlier this year.

PAULA

I'm so sorry. How did she die?

STEPHAN

Alone. Yours?

PAULA

Mine are in South America. I came here on a foreign scholarship. Got involved in politics on campus, been in it ever since. What are you going to do? Do you have a plan?

Paula tries to sip more beer. Stephan puts her bottle down.

STEPHAN

Run for Office. Let's go.

Stephan stands and pulls out Paula's chair. Both exit.

Bartender goes to their table and grabs their almost full bottle, then goes to window and uses his towel to wipe a circle clean. He stares forlorn out, then licks bottle's rim.

INT. AIRLINE CABIN LOADING IN BAHAMAS - LATER THAT DAY

Same Passenger-Delegates sit as before and talk hung-over.

Paula and Stephan walk down the aisle wearing "I Survived The Bahamas" t-shirts. Paula checks ticket and sits by a window. Stephan sits beside her. Both smile. She puts a hand on his.

PAULA

This trip --was like a dream.

Stewardess closes the door to same air-lock *hiss*. Stephan snaps his head to it, then pushes back in his seat as his body goes rigid. Both hands go white-knuckle on armrests.

STEPHAN

More like a nightmare.

PAULA

What's wrong?

STEPHAN

I --don't know?

Stephan recalls their earlier flight and closes his eyes.

STEPHAN

Talk, just talk. Don't stop.

Paula spews animated about their trip. Stephan goes into survival mode, tries to listen, but can only hear his own heart *beating* faster and faster. Time blurs, then he does. He grabs Paula's near hand. She smiles thinking he loves her.

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY - ONE WEEK LATER

Ground-floor single-bedroom Garden Apartment. Great Room is wood-paneled with vinyl-tile flooring and efficiency kitchen.

Door opens. Stephan, followed by Paula enter, both in suits, carrying grocery bags. They talk while putting away food.

PAULA

Didn't mean to upset you, but we've been back a week, and you still won't talk about it.

STEPHAN

Look, "it" happened. I don't know why, but I can't fly anymore. Just drop it, okay. How was your day?

PAULA

Usual. Meetings, minutes, and memos. Must have killed a forest.

Wall phone *rings*. Stephan answers. Other voice is not heard.

STEPHAN

Stephan Allen ...Yes ...Really?
...Understood ...Thank you.

Stephan hangs-up to put away groceries. Paula stares at him.

STEPHAN

Boyfriend.

Paula hits Stephan with their new paper towel roll.

PAULA

Who was it?

STEPHAN

Senator.

Paula hits Stephan with paper towel roll harder. He grabs it.

STEPHAN

He called to say it was nice to meet me but, you know, sometimes folks just don't match up.

PAULA

Oh, I'm so sorry Stephan. I know you had your heart set on ...

STEPHAN

Except in this case, we did.

PAULA

No?! Are you, which is it?

Stephan hugs the paper towel roll and nods. Paula *shrieks*.

PAULA

The Honorable Allen Stephan,
Senator's Aide.

STEPHAN

Just the General Assembly level.

PAULA

Do you know how many doors this will open for you?

STEPHAN

(as *James Cagney*)

Nah Baby, es-splains it to me.

Paula unzips his fly and drops down. Stephan remains *Cagney*.

STEPHAN

You dirty rat, that's not a door.

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

Paula exits bedroom down hallway with hair disheveled putting on her suit jacket. Stephan follows wearing the Xanadu robe.

PAULA

You know this is a long session.

STEPHAN

Forty-five days?

PAULA

Special Session, ninety days.

STEPHAN

Three months, huh? No, didn't know.

PAULA

State will put you up at a hotel.
Parking Pass for the Capitol,
parties, contacts, all the perks.

Stephan opens the front door. Paula kisses his cheek.

PAULA
See you tomorrow.

STEPHAN
Sorry, have to leave early.

Paula's crushed, then recovers a professional loser.

PAULA
Don't bother calling, I know how
busy you'll be. You don't, but I
do. See you --whenever.

Paula kisses his cheek again quickly and exits.

Stephan holds the door open watching her leave. He wants to say something, but doesn't. He closes the door and stands thinking. There is a *Knock*. He nods smiling, then opens it.

STEPHAN
Glad you came back, I wanted ...

Carol stands outside with a bottle of champagne.

CAROL
Thought she'd never leave.

She pushes Stephan inside and closes the door behind her.

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Carol goes into the kitchen, *Pop*, and gets two glasses.

STEPHAN
Stop.

CAROL
What, drinking?

Carol comes to Stephan with two full glasses *giggling*.

STEPHAN
No, us! She'll get hurt.

Stephan takes her two glasses and sets them down. Carol locks her hands around his neck *sexy*.

CAROL
I can think of a better way to end
this.

STEPHAN

You need to leave.

CAROL

I'm not looking for a relationship.

STEPHAN

"Relationship?!" We went the wrong way down your one-way street, baby.

Carol grabs Stephan's crotch and squeezes. Stephan flinches.

CAROL

Big head may be saying no, but the little head is saying go, go, go.

Stephan grabs her offending wrist to throw it away.

STEPHAN

You --"go."

Stephan opens his door. Carol's laugh almost goes to a *Wicked Witch of the West* cackle as she exits out backwards.

CAROL

I'll visit you in Richmond.

STEPHAN

Please, don't.

Stephan *slams* the door.

INT. PAULA'S CAR IN STEPHAN'S PARKING LOT - IMMEDIATELY

Paula watches Carol skip down the sidewalk still a tease.

Paula *starts* her car paraphrasing the newly released book "A Course in Miracles" by *Helen Schucman*.

PAULA

"What you see reflects your thinking, and your thinking reflects what you want to see."

(wipes away a tear)

What do you see --with me?

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT AT MIDNIGHT

Queen-size bed with nightstand light, bureau and mirror. Room is dark. Stephan is sound asleep.

Stephan's DAD, 50s, obese, in only an athletic-shirt with its bottom tucked to hide his privates, appears in the doorway.

DAD
It'll be okay, son.

Stephan *Superman-flies* out of bed wearing bikini-briefs. No Dad? Stephan stumbles down the hallway bumping off its walls.

STEPHAN
Dad? What's going to be okay?

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT GREAT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephan turns on all the lights, the TV, and stereo's radio.

STEPHAN
Had to be a dream?
(looks around to be sure)
Dad?

Stephan goes to kitchen, gets a glass of water, goes to drink, but drops it. The glass *shatters* on the floor.

STEPHAN
REMEMBER WHAT?!

Stephan freezes with the same blank stare from Miami hotel.

TIME LAPSE:

Sun rises. Stephan's shadow grows as he remains frozen.

TIME LAPSE ENDS.

Wall phone *rings*. Stephan steps forward dazed, then answers.

STEPHAN
Here?

PAULA (FILTERED)
Wanted to wish you all the best.
You deserve it. I'm proud of you.

Stephan reacts like someone threw cold water in his face.

STEPHAN
Thanks, gotta' go.

He hangs up and shades his eyes from the Sun puzzled. He looks at the wall clock and is shocked, then rushes to get ready for his life-altering first day towards his "Plan."

INT. RICHMOND HOTEL LOBBY - LATER SAME MORNING

Large modern hotel. EMPLOYEES wear hotel-blazers. GUESTS check in and out.

Stephan enters in suit carrying luggage and presents his Driver's License to ASSISTANT MANAGER at front desk wearing the same hotel-blazer who smiles professional.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
Morning, Mr. Allen. Your room is ready. Have a pleasant flight?

STEPHAN
I flew alright.
(jiggles Porsche keys)
Fifty-nine minutes flat.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
From D.C.? That's 120 miles?!

Stephan drops his luggage to take his room key.

STEPHAN
Have these taken to my room, please. I have to get to my office.
(raises chin high)
At The State Capitol.

INT. VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Pre-cast stone and plate-glass high-rise. Administrative Offices for all state elected officials and their staff.

Stephan enters Lobby, goes to and presents Driver's I.D. to GUARD, in uniform, and receives a *Senate Badge* (no picture) and *Senate Parking Pass* for his car, then gets in elevator.

STEPHAN
I'm home.

He smiles as both doors close.

INT. SENATOR MCCOMBS OUTER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan enters Outer Office, looks at his empty desk, smiles, then looks through the inner-door into its adjoining office. SENATOR MCCOMBS, 40s, fit-for-age, in suit, sits behind his huge ornate desk leaning back reading the local newspaper.

STEPHAN
Morning, Senator.

MCCOMBS
(doesn't look up)
You're late.

INT. SENATOR MCCOMBS GAB INNER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Large executive office with wood furniture and his name plate on desk. Awards, plaques, and certificates, line the walls.

Stephan enters and sits looking at multiple pictures of the Senator with dignitaries. McCombs lifts a box onto his desk, opens it, and pulls out an expensive crystal pitcher. He talks like the cartoon character, *Foghorn Leghorn*.

MCCOMBS
Bought this as a wedding present,
boy. But the happy couple got two,
I say, two. So I went to exchange
it where I bought it the next day.
Unopened with the friggin' receipt.
Know what they said then, boy?

Stephan goes to answer, but McCombs cuts him off.

MCCOMBS
Refused to take it back! Even after
I said who I was. You believe that?

Stephan goes to answer, but McCombs cuts him off.

MCCOMBS
Turns out there's no state law
regarding merchant returns. Will be
after this Session. Right, boy?

Stephan goes to answer, but McCombs cuts him off.

MCCOMBS
Impressed me at our interview, boy.
Struck me as a real go-getter. So
go get supplies from downstairs,
set up your office, then get back
in here. We've got work to do, boy!

McCombs goes back to reading shooping Stephan away who exits.

INT. GAB ELEVATOR - LATER THAT DAY

Stephan stands holding an overflowing box of office supplies.

Elevator *dings* and door opens. Domino enters holding same box of supplies. Door closes. They put down their boxes to hug.

STEPHAN

Haven't seen you since the Bahamas!

DOMINO

That was crazy fun! Good to see you. Who are you working for?

STEPHAN

McCombs.

DOMINO

Heard he's a Task Master, brings in a new Aide each Session and burns them out running them all over.

STEPHAN

"Heard" that too. But he Chairs all the important Standing Committees. Great reference, if I earn it. What are you doing here?

DOMINO

Carol got me a job working for Delegate Stevens to get experience for The Hill. How's Paula?

STEPHAN

Carol? Is she here?!

DOMINO

No? You staying at the hotel?

Stephan nods distracted lost in worried thought about Carol.

DOMINO

Happy Hour's at five in the Lounge. Wanna' get drunk and tell tales?

STEPHAN

Kinda' tired, didn't sleep.

Elevator door *dings* and opens. Domino exits with her box.

DOMINO

Raincheck then. We're here for three months. Great seeing you, say hello to Paula. You two dating?

Doors close before Stephan can make up a lie.

Elevator jerk-stalls. Stephan drops his box on the floor to fall back into a corner. Moment, then elevator continues on. His heart beats faster, he can't breathe, so loosens his tie.

FLASHBACK INSERT: Bed pillow is held over Young Stephan's face by Mother's hands. His feet kick fighting for breath.

MOTHER

I said, don't leave your light on!
You gonna pay our electric bill?

Stephan spins 360° touching all three walls of his elevator, then all eight fingernails try to pry the doors open.

Door *dings* and opens. A FEMALE AIDE steps in carrying same type of box and smiles. Stephan jumps out. Female Aide looks at Stephan's box on the floor, then at him. Door closes.

INT. GAB HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Stephan falls against wall holding hands on his heart. It beats too hard. He can't catch his breath. Something's wrong.

STEPHAN

What is happening to me?

Elevator *dings* and opens. Stephan steps to enter, jumps back.

STEPHAN

Stop It! Figure this out.
(*snaps fingers*)
Heart Attack!

He sees a sign, *Stairs*, runs to its door, and exits.

INT. RICHMOND MEDICAL COLLEGE EXAM ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Emergency room patient area, exam gurney, and wall equipment.

Stephan stands buttoning his shirt up as curtains are parted by a DOCTOR, Indian, 30s, in lab coat, carrying a clipboard.

STEPHAN

Heart attack?

DOCTOR

Panic attack.

STEPHAN

What?! No way, man. I had chest pains, couldn't breathe. You're wrong. I want a second opinion.

DOCTOR

All your tests came back normal.

STEPHAN

And I'm telling you, that much pain is not normal. It was awful.

DOCTOR

I'm sure it was. And your reaction to my diagnosis is also normal. You need to relax. I can prescribe some medica ...

STEPHAN

Bull shit! I eat right, exercise. I'm only twenty-five!

DOCTOR

People have panic attacks every day. It's not that uncommon. But there is always a reason. I can give you the name of a psychia ...

STEPHAN

A shrink?! Look, I'm fine, just need some sleep. I have a Plan and that's enough. Thanks for nothing.

Stephan turns his back on Doctor to tighten his tie angry.

INT. SENATOR MCCOMBS INNER OFFICE - LATER SAME DAY

Stephan sits across from McCombs with legs crossed and hands in lap. His earlier supply-box now sits on McCombs desk.

MCCOMBS

Hell of a way to start your first day, boy. I can't find you. Then some Assistant brings me your box. Then I get a call from the hospital. What's it all about, boy? Elucidate!

STEPHAN

Sir, you just called me last night. I didn't get any sleep. The Doctor said I had a --
(*fake-coughs*)
have, the Flu.

MCCOMBS

"Go, I say go away boy, you bother me." Go back to your hotel, get some sleep. But be here at nine a.m. sharp, fully functional or I'll get someone else. Understood?

Stephan stands, gives a salute, about-faces, and exits.

MCCOMBS

Boy's gotta mouth like a cannon --
always shootin' it off.

INT. RICHMOND HOTEL UNDERGROUND PARKING - LATE THAT DAY

Stephan parks. He walks to the elevators and pushes a button. Doors *ding* and open. He enters exhausted, doors close.

INT. INSIDE HOTEL ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Stephan leans against a wall and closes his eyes.

FLASHBACK INSERT: His Mother's hand *slaps* Young Stephan's face three times with each word.

STEPHAN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Stupid --ugly --failure!

Stephan's eyes snap open as arms go straight out sideways holding walls. He bounces off all four walls, tries to pry the doors open again, then pushes the *Call Button* frantic.

STEPHAN

I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER!

Doors *ding* and open. He jumps out into hallway. Doors close.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE HOTEL ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Stephan stands holding a hand over his chest *breathing* hard.

STEPHAN

What the hell is going on?
(taps foot, *snaps* fingers)
Elevators! Simple, don't ride
elevators. Damn things get stuck
all the time. Use the stairs.

Stephan imitates "Three Stooges" *Curly* triple *snapping* both hands into each other then three-finger *thumping* his cheek.

STEPHAN

Nyuck, nyuck, nyuck.

Stephan sees the *Stairs* sign and enters stairwell *humming*.

Door *slams* behind him. His happy whistling *echoes* inside.

INT. GAB SENATE COMMITTEE ROOM - ONE WEEK LATER

Large *Hearing Room*. Raised meeting-counter with microphones and name plates having multiple theater-type audience seats.

Sitting at a table is COMMITTEE CLERK for Aides to sign-in.

Stephan enters in a three-piece suit carrying a briefcase. His suit hangs a little loose as he's lost some weight.

STEPHAN

Stephan Allen for Senator McCombs.

Clerk checks Stephan's name off her Roster and hands him the meeting's Agenda. He sits in the front row.

Domino enters in a business suit, checks-in, sees, then goes to Stephan. He stands. Both hug, then sit.

DOMINO

Well you've been staying busy. This is the first I've seen you.

STEPHAN

You were right about McCombs. I'm going to two cocktail functions a night and speaking for him at week-end parties. I'm really getting noticed --and really really tired.

DOMINO

My guy gives me nights off. He's not a wheeler-dealer like yours.

STEPHAN

Lucky you. Reporting for yours?

DOMINO

Yeah, he can't make it. You?

STEPHAN

Mine's chairing Judicial, so I'll present his Abstentia Ballot.

DOMINO

Uuuuuu, moving up in the world.

SENATORS file-in to sit behind their raised podium.

AIDES, in their 20s, mostly females, all attractive, in professional-young suits, enter, check-in, and sit.

Domino leans over. She and Stephan whisper.

DOMINO

Happy Hour at the hotel tonight?

STEPHAN

*It's my first night off. Sure,
sounds like fun.*

COMMITTEE CHAIR *strikes* his gavel. All Aides open briefcases, get out pens and legal pads, then use briefcases as desks.

INT. RICHMOND HOTEL RESTAURANT LOUNGE - THAT NIGHT

Hotel's nightclub is in a corner on an upper floor. Heating pans are on tables with trays of hors d'oeuvres. Senators, in earlier suits, stand, eat, and "hit on" their Female Aides.

Stephan enters dressed same and looks for Domino.

Carol steps in front of Stephan in a slutty cocktail dress.

CAROL

Don't call, don't write --what's a girl to think?

STEPHAN

That the guy's not interested!

Carol puts the cherry from her drink in her mouth then pulls out just the stem tied in a knot.

CAROL

Your room or mine?

STEPHAN

Your room --by yourself. I don't have affairs with married women.

CAROL

Coulda' fooled me. And why not? You don't have a girlfriend. Paula said she hasn't heard from you.

STEPHAN

Leave her out of this. Wait, you talked to Paula, when?

CAROL

Before I left, I think she's got --

Carol slides a mini-frank in and out of her pursed-lips.

CAROL
the hots for youuuuu. Whatever
would she think --
(bites frank in half)
if she knew about us?

STEPHAN
There is no "us!"

Carol gulps the rest of mini-frank to explain nonchalant.

CAROL
My marriage is out of political
necessity. My husband is connected,
but duller than a boring spoon.

STEPHAN
And that's why you've slept with
every elected official in his
Cabinet? No guy is that brain dead.

Stephan's eyes narrow. Carol holds his crotch discreet.

CAROL
Doesn't feel as big. Losing weight?

Stephan knocks her hand away furious and makes a scene.

STEPHAN
Go fuck-up someone else's life,
lady! Mine's fucked-up enough!

Stephan storms out. Carol *laughs* heartless, then socializes.

Domino has been watching them. She starts to follow Stephan
when a SENATOR taps her on the shoulder, she turns to him.

INT. STEPHAN'S RICHMOND HOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Small hotel room with a double-bed and a low dresser with TV.

Stephan sits writing at its desk in suit. *Knock* on the door.

BELLHOP (O.S.)
Room Service.

Stephan opens door, pulls in cart, signs check, then closes
door on Bellhop. Stephan lifts a lid to see french fries. He
takes one, then drops it and lid jumping back afraid.

STEPHAN
Danger?! What danger?

Shocked at his inner voice's answer.

STEPHAN

Someone wants to kill me?
(paces then *claps* hands)
God damn right Carol's the type!
(surprised by his answer)
"Type" to do --what?
(*snaps* fingers)
Mary Ann Cotton, Britain's first
female serial killer! Four
husbands, two lovers, eleven
children --poisoned them all.
(throws a fist satisfied)
I knew taking English history would
pay off!
(looks around suspicious)
But I have to stay here to stay on
target, so I have to stay safe. But
safe from --what?
(hits palm on forehead)
Not what, how! So freakin' simple.

Stephan picks up the lid, puts it on cart, then wheels cart back into the hall. He closes and slides chain-lock on door.

STEPHAN

Only eat what I prepare, so don't
eat while I'm down here. I'll go
home on week-ends, and eat then.

Stephan nods satisfied then exits into the bathroom and closes door. His happy whistling *echoes* inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STEPHAN'S SAME RICHMOND HOTEL ROOM - TWO MONTHS LATER

Toilet *flushes* and bathroom door opens. Stephan shuffles-out emaciated and weak. His suit now hangs on mere skin and bones. His face is pallor with eyes sunken and discolored.

Room is now a mess. Re-capped almost-full water bottles lie all over. Used underwear and t-shirts hang on furniture.

Stephan walks past the front door "trying" to remember why, then *snaps* fingers, and opens the door hanging its *Do Not Clean Room* sign out. He closes door, throws deadbolt, then puts on its chain-lock. He stumbles over to a case of water, opens a new bottle, tries to drink, but jumps back and spits the water onto the rug. He caps the bottle and tosses it at trashcan, but misses. It lies on the floor with the others.

STEPHAN

Least I got --some.

Stephan shuffles to, then falls face-first onto the bed which is in shambles. He begins to *snore*, then snap-pushes off bed.

STEPHAN

I don't want to remember!

He stands resolute, turns left, then right, then freezes.

The nightstand clock reads 6:00 p.m.

Fast *knocking* on the door. Stephan stumbles forward blinking his eyes coming back to life. He squints at the clock.

Nightstand clock now reads 11:00 p.m.

He doesn't understand how, and no longer cares. Faster *knocking* on the door. He *grumbles* like a hibernating bear. He shuffles to look out door's peephole, hesitates, then releases dead-bolt, slides off chain-lock, and steps back.

Paula enters and closes door. She sees his physical condition, then scans the filthy room, and tears-up.

PAULA

Oh Stephan, I've been knocking for ten minutes. Domino called me. She told me no one noticed what was happening to you. She didn't until she hugged you today. What's wrong?

(dials *Room Service*)

This is Eighteen, eighteen. Soup, whatever you have hot, and bread, and crackers. Hurry, please!

(hangs up, remembers)

Remember when you ran the table at *El Casino*? I tell everyone that story. Domino always talks about the slot machines. Carmella called, they're fine. We laughed about riding on top of your car. Remember when you taught me to dance? I do. It was magical. And when we first kissed, and then ...

She takes his hand and kisses it. He's zombie-unresponsive.

Knock on the door. She opens, signs check, takes tray from Bellboy, and shuts door. She sits beside Stephan and tries to feed him. He goes tight-lipped. She eats a little soup off the spoon and offers again. He *slurps*. She repeats, crying.

INT. MEDICAL COLLEGE OF VIRGINIA PSYCH WARD - NOW MIDNIGHT

Hallways looks haunted. Overhead fluorescent lights flicker. Wall's paint is peeling. Jail-like metal doors are on patient rooms. CRAZIES *scream* inside them. This is a true --madhouse.

Paula and Stephan sit on torn chairs. She holds his hand.

PSYCHOLOGIST, same age and size as Stephan, wearing a lab coat, comes around the hall corner reading his clipboard.

PSYCHOLOGIST

You're in luck, we have an opening.

Paula helps Stephan stand and both follow Psychologist who opens a room's door. Its rusty hinges *creak*.

INT. MCV PSYCH WARD PATIENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bare Cinderblock walls have multiple unreadable scribblings. Floor tiles are chipped. Three metal beds are against the walls. One is empty. Other two beds have CRAZIES hand-cuffed to the bed rails who *rant* and *drool*.

Stephan and Paula enter and look. Paula *gasps*. Psychologist hands Stephan his clipboard.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Sign here.

Stephan backs-out looking at Paula with eyes pleading.

PAULA

I'll drive him back to D.C.

PSYCHOLOGIST

We're all the same. Besides, it'll be a long time before he's ever able to go "back" home.

STEPHAN

"H-h-home?"

PAULA

(kisses back of his hand)
Almost sweetie, almost.

INT. NORTHERN VIRGINIA MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITAL - NEXT MORNING

Exam Room looks more like an office with freshly painted Cinderblock walls, exam table, and a desk in its middle.

Stephan and Paula, in same clothes, sit in chairs waiting. Paula holds his hand fighting back tears. Stephan is "gone."

PSYCHIATRIST, 40s, enters wearing a lab coat, and sits at the empty desk. She reads Stephan's file, then *clears* her throat.

PSYCHIATRIST

Mr. Allen, do you know what a Paranoid Schizophrenic is?

(no response, explains)

Good, because you're not one. But I have to classify you as something in order to admit you. I must ask, can you take care of yourself?

Stephan looks bewildered at Paula who shakes her head.

PSYCHIATRIST

(slides across a form)

You must sign committing yourself. If you do, you give up all legal right to leave this hospital until both doctors and staff certify you as cleared. Do you understand?

STEPHAN

(nods zombie-like)

Must, come, back.

PSYCHIATRIST

Where?

STEPHAN

Any, where.

Paula kisses his hand, then squeezes it. He stares blank, then signs form without taking his eyes off Paula.

INT. NOVA MENTAL WARD GENERAL POPULACE - NEXT DAY

Great Room is painted cinderblock and windowless with vinyl settees and lounge chairs. TV mounted on wall is always on.

PATIENTS, all ethnics and adult ages, wear their own street clothes. Some stand or shuffle aimless, but most watch TV.

Stephan, now in a hospital gown with scrub pants, shuffles-in stooped over. He stops, then tries to stand up straight, but can't. He *sighs*, then continues shuffling-on stooped over.

Speaker clicks on as NURSE, 30s, in starched white uniform, announces over P.A. in an emotionless but siren-like voice.

NURSE (FILTERED)
Medication Time. Medication Time.

A dutch-door is on one wall. Its top half opens. Nurse stands on other side by a cart of tiny throw-away cups. All Patients stand as automatons to line-up in a single-file. Each Patient steps up to receive two cups, one of pills, second of water.

When Stephan's turn, he stares inside his mini-cup. It holds six different colored pills and capsules. Stephan tries to return-to-sender but Nurse holds a hand up refusing.

NURSE
Doctor said I must watch you take
all of them.

Nurse hands Stephan his paper cup of water. He hesitates.

STEPHAN
Would you take a sip, please?

She *clears* her throat and answers professionally detached.

NURSE
If you don't take them, I'll have
to inform your doctor immediately.

Stephan stares at his water cup, then swallows his pills dry and *chokes*. An ORDERLY, African-American, 30s, a giant, *slaps* Stephan on his back so he swallows. Orderly takes Stephan's empty cup and full water cup to throw both in a round metal trashcan. He holds Stephan's elbow to lead him away.

ORDERLY
Time for group therapy, sport.

Patients who have already taken their pills, sit zombie-like watching a famous TV junk-yard Sit-Com. No one joins-in with the show's *laugh-track* except the Orderly as they walk by it.

INT. GROUP THERAPY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bright-painted cinderblock walls with a shiny tile floor.

Door opens. Stephan enters. Orderly stands by door's frame.

Padded chairs are formed in a circle for TEN SUFFERERS, all sexes and adult ages, sitting in clothes of various disarray.

All look deadpan at their GROUP THERAPIST, 30s, in a white lab coat with a clipboard. She seems so young and innocent. She sees Stephan and beckons him.

THERAPIST

Stephan! Welcome, please sit.

Stephan sits in the only chair next to MOLLY, Caucasian, 20s, obese, in light-gray stained sweat-clothes. She rests her hand on Stephan's thigh. She is very scared so *taps* a foot.

THERAPIST

Who would like to go first?

BRANDY, African-American, 20s, attractive but angry, scowls.

BRANDY

I'm not crazy, you know that! And you all know exactly why I'm here. It's "The Establishment!" They put me here. Don't want a Black woman to be successful, uh-uh. I want out, ain't nuthin' wrong with me!

Brandy stands. Orderly moves fast to re-seat her.

THERAPIST

Now Brandy, remember what happened the last time. Please stay with us.

Brandy shakes shoulders from Orderly to fold her arms angry.

BRANDY

Uh-huh. I know what you're doing, giving me L.S.D. FBI's watching me. I had a great Government job, till they took it away. It's all a big conspiracy, but I'll show them.

Group Therapist writes, then turns to Molly and smiles.

THERAPIST

Molly, would you like to share today? We've never heard your voice. I bet it's pretty.

A wet spot grows in Molly's crotch.

THERAPIST

Oh, Molly, it's okay.

Orderly hand-motions outside the door. Nurse enters. Orderly points at Molly. Nurse escorts Molly out. Therapist writes.

BRANDY

There she goes again, literally. See?! She deserves to be in here. Not me, uh-uh, no sir, not me!

GROUP THERAPIST

Stephan, since you're new here, do you feel comfortable sharing something with us today?

Drugs make it hard to think, so he can't say his "R"s again.

STEPHAN

I don't wanna' be hewa' eithaw.

Brandy *claps* her hands pointing to Stephan, *See?!*

STEPHAN

But I have to be. Don't know what is scaw'ing me. Don't know if want to. Do want to get betta'. But it's hawd. I'll twy.

Group Therapist nods her head as she writes in his file.

EXT. NOVA HEALTH COMPLEX COMMON AREA - THAT AFTERNOON

Park area of fixed tables with benches, walkways, and trees.

Paula is wearing a skirt-suit sitting on a two-person bench. She starts *dry-coughing* holding her throat like it's sore.

Building's side-door is opened by Orderly. Stephan exits and reacts to sunlight by shielding his eyes. He sits by Paula.

PAULA

How was your day?

STEPHAN

Huh, what, today? A blur. Drugs make it hard to, *uh*, concentrate.

PAULA

I'm opening your mail and writing checks on your bank account to pay bills like you asked.

STEPHAN

Huh, what? Oh yeah, thanks. Their medication makes sunlight really hurt my eyes. Thanks for coming.
(stands, steps, turns)
What were we talking about?

Stephan stumbles like a zombie to re-enter the same door.

Paula cries, then *coughs* hard holding her throat.

INT. NOVA MENTAL WARD HALLWAY - ONE MONTH LATER

Stephan, in clean white jeans and t-shirt, shuffles with shoulders drooped. He stops, breathes deep, pushes shoulders back, stands upright, then walks normal with purpose.

STEPHAN

You can do this, you have to.

INT. MENTAL WARD SNACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Break-room for Visitors. Vending machines line both walls.

Stephan enters to stare at a food-machine. He drops in coin, pushes button, and package drops. His hand shakes as he opens it. He takes a tiny bite, waits, then chews with eyes-closed.

VISITOR, male, enters, drops coin and retrieves a package.

VISITOR

Where's Ward B?

STEPHAN

To the right, all the way down.

VISITOR

Orderly?

STEPHAN

Patient.

VISITOR

Don't look it.

Visitor exits. Stephan stares into vending machine's glass. His reflection is distorted. He looks at pastry's filling.

STEPHAN

It's what's --on the inside.

Stephan takes another bite and *swallows*. Orderly enters.

ORDERLY

Playtime sport, arts-n-crafts.

STEPHAN

Basket weaving? Oh yeah, now there's a mindless activity.

ORDERLY

That's the goal, sports-fans.

Stephan throws his food away and exits. Orderly follows.

EXT. NOVA HEALTH COMPLEX COMMON AREA - THAT AFTERNOON

Paula, in a different skirt-suit, sits on same two-person bench. She *coughs* holding her throat, then takes a lozenge.

Building's side-door is opened by Orderly. Stephan exits and reacts to sunlight by shielding his eyes. He sits by Paula.

PAULA

How was your day?

Stephan presents her with a small multi-colored straw basket.

STEPHAN

Don't ask.

PAULA

Have they said ...?

STEPHAN

Won't tell.

They sit silent staring at the building. Paula takes his hand. Stephan doesn't notice. He doesn't "notice" anything.

INT. NOVA MENTAL WARD EXAM ROOM - TWO MONTHS LATER

Psychiatrist sits behind her desk writing. Her door opens.

Stephan enters in different jeans and his *Star Wars* t-shirt, then sits. He's pale, but put on weight and looks healthier.

PSYCHIATRIST

Good morning, Stephan. Do you know how long you've been with us?

STEPHAN

Three months, two days, four hours.
(looks at his bare wrist)
But who's counting?

PSYCHIATRIST

Know why we kept you here this long?

STEPHAN

My roommate committed suicide.

PSYCHIATRIST

How do you feel about that?

STEPHAN

He told me this was his third time in, said it was the only place he felt safe. He called it "home." It's many things, but never that.

PSYCHIATRIST

Think you're ready to go outside?

STEPHAN

Your medication makes me light-sensitive. Sunlight hurts my eyes.

PSYCHIATRIST

Thioridazine has that side-affect. Any more black-outs?

STEPHAN

I never "blacked-out," just wanted to be a good son and not remember the horrible things my mother did to me. My conscious made me stand still till my subconscious gave up. Makes sense, in my own crazy way.

PSYCHIATRIST

Do bad memories, still scare you?

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SAME EXAM ROOM - ONE MONTH EARLIER

Stephan and Psychiatrist both in different clothes sit same.

PSYCHIATRIST

Did your mother --hate you?

Stephan tries to answer, but can't, he's being choked.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. YOUNG STEPHAN IN CHILDHOOD BASEMENT - AGE 10

Young Stephan, more obese, sits cross-legged on the basement floor eating snacks watching a vintage metal box-frame TV.

His Mother's feet rush down the stairs. Only her shoes and legs are seen under her 1960's skirt. Her hands clamp around his throat to begin strangling pulling him away from the TV.

MOTHER (O.S.)
I said, don't sit, so close, to the
T. V.! It'll ruin your eyes!

RETURN TO.

INT. SAME EXAM ROOM - ONE MONTH EARLIER

Psychiatrist observes Stephan appearing to be choking.

STEPHAN
Can't, breathe.

PSYCHIATRIST
You can breathe. Memory recall is
trapped in your body. Your muscles
physically react now as they did
then. Stay with me, go through
this, try to get to the other side.

Stephan pushes back in chair and grabs at throat, no air.

PSYCHIATRIST
You're safe.

STEPHAN
Never, "safe."

Stephan jumps-up knocking chair over. Psychiatrist stands.

PSYCHIATRIST
Stephan, it's okay, you're okay.
Remember. What do you remember?

Stephan is shaking as he picks-up, then sits back in chair.

STEPHAN
She was yelling at me again.

PSYCHIATRIST
(re-sits)
What was "she" yelling?

STEPHAN
The day after my dad died, my mom
yelled I was the cause of all the
trouble in their relationship.
(eyes get misty)
My own mother choked me screaming,
"I wish you were never born."

PSYCHIATRIST
Did you fight back?

STEPHAN

Man's not supposed to hit a woman,
least of all his mother.

PSYCHIATRIST

How long did your abuse last?

STEPHAN

Forever.

PSYCHIATRIST

Your dad was your protector, with
him gone, you became --vulnerable.

Stephan is "drifting." Psychiatrist *snaps* her fingers, then
points to her own eyes. Stephan fights to focus on her.

PSYCHIATRIST

Thoughts, all thoughts, when
coupled with emotions, become
beliefs. Beliefs, enacted upon long
enough, become habits. And as we
all know, habits are hard to break.
Do these memories, still scare you?

RETURN TO.

INT. NOVA EXAM ROOM - PRESENT DAY SESSION

Psychiatrist and Stephan sit same. He tears-up.

STEPHAN

Do memories that my own mother
hated me, abused me, scared me all
the time, still scare me? She-it,
that'd scare anybody.

PSYCHIATRIST

Free-floating anxiety is stressful.
That's why people assign their
unknown fears to almost anything.

STEPHAN

Yeah? Well at least I didn't attach
mine to plumbing or compulsive hand-
washing --just eating.

(snort-laugh)

What could go wrong doing that?

PSYCHIATRIST

The D.M.V. suggests your P.A.'s
were caused by P.T.S.D. which led
to O.C.D.

STEPHAN

Do you get paid by the initial?

PSYCHIATRIST

Every time your subconscious wanted to remember overwhelming memories of physical danger, your conscious sought to escape them by standing still. Hence, your Agoraphobia.

STEPHAN

(quotes D.M.V.)

"The fear of being caught in a place where escape would not be easy or could be embarrassing if panic disorder occurs."

PSYCHIATRIST

You read the brochure, good. People can become bodybuilders to feel strong enough to physically protect themselves. Is that what you did?

STEPHAN

And take Karate? Sure, makes sense.

PSYCHIATRIST

All the activities you've done in the past two years, rock climbing, flying, skydiving, motorcycle racing, did you have a death wish?

STEPHAN

Life wish. Didn't think I'd make it past thirty. Every time I felt good about myself, I'd hear mom's voice yelling not to, so I'd screw up on purpose. And boy did I, a lot.

Psychiatrist writes in Stephan's file and looks up smiling.

PSYCHIATRIST

I believe your passive-aggressive conflict is where you can cope with it now. You've done extremely well.

STEPHAN

Thanks, but no one could go through this much crap alone. I had help.

PSYCHIATRIST

Does your girlfriend still visit?

STEPHAN

Just, "friend." And yes, everyday.

PSYCHIATRIST

But no other friends, no family?

STEPHAN

Apparently just visiting this place makes everyone afraid they'll have to face their own demons.

PSYCHIATRIST

Do you love your "friend?"

STEPHAN

How can you not "love" someone for saving your life?

PSYCHIATRIST

I believe you're ready to leave us, but not ready to stay by yourself.

STEPHAN

I'll discuss options with her.

PSYCHIATRIST

You're lucky to have "her."

STEPHAN

Anyone would be. She's my --best friend.

EXT. NOVA HEALTH COMPLEX PICNIC AREA - THAT AFTERNOON

OTHER PATIENTS with their FAMILIES walk down its trails.

Paula is wearing another suit sitting on the two-person bench. She *dry-coughs* rasping covering her mouth with a hankie. She pulls handkerchief away. It has blood on it.

Building's side-door is opened by Orderly. Stephan exits and reacts to sunlight by shielding his eyes. He sits by Paula.

PAULA

How was your day?

STEPHAN

Usual. Meetings, memories, medications. Musta' killed a pharmacy.

PAULA

The Doctor said you're ready.

STEPHAN

But doesn't want me to stay alone,
not yet.

Stephan snaps head to the sound of a motorcycle *passing* by.

STEPHAN

Can't wait to ride my bike!

PAULA

We, we haven't talked about your
finances since that first time.

STEPHAN

I trust you, that's why I gave you
my keys and Power of Attorney.

PAULA

Good, because I read the letters
from Worker's Compensation.

STEPHAN

Good, so no more secrets. The only
full-time job I could get right out
of college was as a grocery night
stocker. Great benefits, but I
threw my back out throwing fifty-
pound dog food bags. Company doctor
wouldn't return me to full-duty, so
their mandatory sick-leave kicked-
in with full pay.

PAULA

That's how you could go to Miami
and always have money.

Stephan nods. Paula gets serious.

PAULA

The medical coverage ended last
month so the company let you go.

Stephan is not paying attention, he's watching a butterfly.

PAULA

I paid your rent with their last
check. But it wasn't enough to --.

Paula turns away, this is hard for her.

Stephan watches butterfly flit away, then notices her
silence.

STEPHAN

Best thing I learned in here, just say whatever it is. Never as bad as you think, once said out-loud.

PAULA

You're broke.

STEPHAN

Then again?

PAULA

Your car and bike were repossessed.

Stephan pulls a dandelion and talks to it as a microphone.

STEPHAN

Guuuuuuud Morn-ning, Amer-i-ca! We interrupt for a special bulletin.

(now in German accent)

Stephan's "plan" iz kaput, ya?!

(now in Japanese accent)

No car, no money, no job, no tickee, but got good mental health.

PAULA

You still have your sense of humor.

STEPHAN

Trade ya'. When it rains, it pours, huh? So I have to start all over.

(imitates an interview)

Thank you for seeing me. I have mommy issues. Any openings?

PAULA

You do have a job, if you want it.

Drugs still make it hard for Stephan to think, so he drifts.

STEPHAN

One week more, just one. Could have made it through a forty-five day Session. Think McCombs will ever understand? Most people won't.

(just catches up)

Wait?! Job, what job?

PAULA

In our mailroom. Pretty easy, with good pay and immediate benefits.

STEPHAN

Work with you?! I don't want to embarrass you. I'm still loopy from all the drugs, plus I don't have any way to get there?

PAULA

I could stay with you, drive you.

STEPHAN

Right. Wait, "stay with" me?! I mean, why would you want to?

PAULA

Because I love you.

Stephan jumps up angry *yelling* stabbing a finger at her.

STEPHAN

Don't ever say that to me in here!

Paula breaks down. Stephan sits in remorse.

STEPHAN

No, I didn't mean, it's just --you deserve so much better than me.

PAULA

For "better" or worse.

STEPHAN

I got "worse" covered.

PAULA

You'll get "better."

STEPHAN

Don't know what I did to deserve you, but --you sure about this?

He stares in disbelief. Paula kisses the back of his hands.

PAULA

Sure, sounds like fun.

EXT. PAULA'S WORKPLACE PARKING LOT - ONE WEEK LATER

High-rise modern building in a huge business complex.

Paula and Stephan park in her old clunker. Both exit in business clothes and walk to the building. Stephan stops.

STEPHAN

I don't know --if I can do this?

PAULA

(takes his hand)

I do. I'm right upstairs. Any problems, call me.

STEPHAN

(looks straight up)

Thank you.

PAULA

For what?

STEPHAN

Wasn't talking to you. Never thought I was worthy of --.

PAULA

Of what?

STEPHAN

Finding someone that --loves, me.

PAULA

Now you do.

Paula *pecks* his cheek, then pulls him inside.

INT. PAULA'S WORKPLACE MAILROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Huge open-space basement with rolling mail carts. Large cubbyhole-shelves for each office is along one wall.

Stephan enters, sits at a small desk, and begins rubber-stamping "*Return To Sender*" on unopened envelopes, then tosses them into a white plastic mail-tote.

SUPERVISOR, 30s, balding, small paunch, in shirt/tie, enters.

SUPERVISOR

Catch!

Supervisor tosses a package to Stephan who fumble-catches.

SUPERVISOR

Run that up to the eighteenth floor, stat.

STEPHAN

But I, I don't deliver?

SUPERVISOR

News flash, ace, you do whatever I
tell you. Go!

Stephan panics, calms down, dials intercom. It clicks on.

PAULA (FILTERED)

Paula Santana.

STEPHAN

Paula, uh, could you run something
up to the eighteenth floor for me?

PAULA (FILTERED)

Now? Right now? I don't, uh, sure.

STEPHAN

Great, just take the elevator to
the Lobby, I'll give it to you.

Stephan jogs with package to the Stairs past Supervisor.

SUPERVISOR

Boy's, got real git-up and go. I
told him to go, and he git.

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT - ONE WEEK LATER

Paula, in shorts and t-shirt, prepares salad in the kitchen.
She winces in pain, gets some ice out of the freezer, wraps
it in a dish-towel, and holds it on her *Adams Apple*.

Door opens. Stephan enters carrying a grocery bag.

Paula puts her dish-towel of ice in the sink.

PAULA

Where'd you go for the cheese,
Wisconsin?

Stephan puts bag on counter and kisses back of Paula's neck.

PAULA

Wherever it was, go there again.

Stephan turns her around, kisses her long and passionate,
then picks her up to carry her down the hall to the bedroom.

INT. STEPHAN'S DINING AREA - LATER THAT NIGHT

Stephan and Paula sit at the dining table eating spaghetti.
Stephan wears an old bathrobe. Paula wears the *Xanadu* robe.

PAULA

Everything but. Not that I'm complaining. What brought that on?

STEPHAN

"That" day when you had to deliver a package for me, that scared me.

PAULA

Uuuu, get scared again.

STEPHAN

Ha, ha. Point is, I do get scared, and worried. People just don't accept someone who's --different. I don't want to jeopardize your job by you covering for me, so I don't think we should work together.

PAULA

I don't mind, I like helping you.

STEPHAN

And I appreciate that, but if I'm going to disappoint someone, I'd rather it be a stranger. The reason it took me so long to come back tonight is, I got a new job.

PAULA

What?! Where?

STEPHAN

Next door shopping center. Figured, I don't need a car if I can walk to work. So I talked to a store manager. Once I told him about being an experienced stocker, boom, I'm hired. When he heard about my college degree, he told me about their manager-training program.

PAULA

When do you start?

STEPHAN

Monday. I'll give notice tomorrow and finish the week at your place so you don't catch too much grief.
(puts down fork)
Uh, Paula, if the new job works out I should try --staying by myself.

Paula drops fork and goes to sit on couch. Stephan follows.

STEPHAN

I don't want to, I need to.

Stephan gets on knees in front of Paula and takes her hands.

STEPHAN

Baby, my wiring's so screwed up,
it'll take years to re-wire it. I
just want to make you proud of me.

PAULA

Always have been.

Stephan closes his eyes. This is still too new to him.

INT. STEPHAN'S LIVING ROOM - TWO WEEKS LATER AT NIGHT

Stephan opens his eyes. Paula has moved out. He is dressed for bed in pajamas and paces nervous in his living room.

STEPHAN

Listen knucklehead, go lie down and
close your eyes. You can do this.

Stephan *exhales* long, then checks his front door locks and turns out lights. He walks down the hallway to bedroom.

STEPHAN

Nothing scary is gonna' happen. If
you have a bad memory, it's just
that. No pain, no --ahh, shaaad ap.

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephan enters, gets under covers, sits up on pillows wide eyed. Phone *rings*. He's startled, recovers, then answers it.

STEPHAN

Hotel California.

PAULA (FILTERED)

How are you doing?

STEPHAN

Little creepy. How's your
apartment?

PAULA (FILTERED)

"Little creepy." Smelled like
something died in the refrigerator.

STEPHAN

Probably did. What's up?

PAULA (FILTERED)

Remember when I talked to you on the plane?

STEPHAN

Not really.

PAULA (FILTERED)

Since this is your first night alone, thought I might, you know, talk you to sleep.

STEPHAN

Telling me about your workday usually works.

PAULA (FILTERED)

Okay smart-ass, lay down and cradle the phone. I'll keep talking until I hear you snoring. I'll leave my phone off the hook so it doesn't go to that awful beeping.

Stephan snuggles down. Paula starts rambling about her day.

PAULA (FILTERED)

Well, you know how our copier, etc.

STEPHAN

(drifts-off)

Works every friggin' time.

INT. STEPHAN'S KITCHEN - TWO WEEKS LATER - NIGHT

Paula cooks dinner in the kitchen. She gets a *racking cough* and has to hold onto the kitchen counter until it subsides.

Door opens. Stephan enters in a dress shirt pulling off his tie. Paula recovers and goes back to cooking unfazed.

PAULA

How was your day?

Stephen kisses the back of her neck as he cups her breasts.

PAULA

Uuuuuu, musta' been scary.

Stephan turns her around and kisses her slow and passionate, then stands back, hesitates, and holds up a single condom.

PAULA

Only one? You're not the only one
with a plan, Einstein. I've been on
"The Pill" for months.

STEPHAN

So you want to --*with me?*

PAULA

Always have.

STEPHAN

(bows head ashamed)
Supposed to be special.

PAULA

(lifts his chin)
It will be.

STEPHAN

I was promoted to their training
program today.

Paula *shrieks* then hugs his neck.

PAULA

Well then, promote me!

Stephan scoops her up carrying her to the bedroom.

PAULA

Yeah, Baby!

Paula hits the wall-switch with her elbow. The lights go out
followed by the sound of her head *hitting* a door-frame.

PAULA (O.S.)

Ow!

STEPHAN (O.S.)

Don't hurt the door.

They both *giggle* the laughter of two people in silly-love.

INT. STEPHAN'S KITCHEN - TWO WEEKS LATER - DAY

Door opens. Stephan enters in a different tie and shirt
pulling the tie over his head, but freezes with mouth open.
His tie now looks like a head-band with a tail.

Paula stands in kitchen doorway "modeling" a store-chain's
black lingerie with matching see-through black robe.

PAULA
See anything ya' like, sailor?

STEPHAN
Only have leave for an hour, ma'am.

PAULA
Multi-task.

STEPHAN
I sure let the genie out of her
bottle.

Paula folds her arms on chest and wrinkles a *Genie*-nose.

PAULA
Be happy, master. I am.

STEPHAN
I'm glad, you're glad, but wow,
where haven't we done it?

Paula points at empty dining table. Stephan pushes her back
onto it flat, pulls tie off head, then undoes his belt.

PAULA
I have a physical this Monday
morning. Can you drive me?

STEPHAN
What, drive you where, why?

PAULA
Doctor wants me to see a
specialist, said they might give me
a sedative for some tests.

STEPHAN
"Tests?!" Is something wrong?

Paula reaches down inside Stephan's pants.

PAULA
Nope, everything feels fine.

STEPHAN
I close on Monday, so I guess,
sure. You sure everything's okay?

Paula, hand still in pants, squeezes. Stephan's eyes cross.

PAULA
Turn your head and cough.

Stephan pushes back an imaginary hat and imitates *John Wayne*.

STEPHAN
I'll ride ya', lil' filly.

Paula spreads her legs. He bends to kiss her, then stands up.

STEPHAN
I --I love you, Paula.

PAULA
That's, that's the first time
you've ever said ...

STEPHAN
Won't be the last.

In the history of kissing, many have been rated as the most passionate, the most pure. This one leaves them all behind.

EXT. NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH ENTRANCE - THAT MONDAY

Paula's car drives up to lobby of the Bethesda Campus.

STEPHAN
I'll drop you off, park, then wait
in the Lobby.

INT. PAULA'S CAR - IMMEDIATELY

Stephan stops. Paula is passenger. Both in casual clothes.

PAULA
Might be a couple of hours.

STEPHAN
I'll take a nap.

Paula gives him a *peck* on his cheek and exits. Stephan watches her, then speaks in an affectionate Asian accent.

STEPHAN
Luv you longtime, baby.

INT. N.I.H. MAIN LOBBY - LATER THAT DAY

Large hospital lobby, couches, chairs, and Information Desk.

Stephan lies sprawled in an armchair asleep. He jerks awake, looks for and sees wall clock, then goes to Information Desk.

VOLUNTEER, 60s, wearing a hospital vest with *Volunteer* name badge, hangs up the phone behind her semi-circle desk.

VOLUNTEER

May I help you?

STEPHAN

Been waiting for a friend for four hours. I have to go to work soon. Any way to find out where she is?

VOLUNTEER

Do you know what building or department she went to?

STEPHAN

No.

VOLUNTEER

What's her doctor's name?

STEPHAN

Don't know that either.

VOLUNTEER

Then I have no way of finding her.

STEPHAN

Do you have change for the phone, I have to call off at work.

VOLUNTEER

"Change" --in the Gift Shop.

Volunteer points. Stephan walks away concerned.

INT. N.I.H. MAIN LOBBY - LATER SAME DAY

Stephan sits upright in same chair now holding a *Smiley* balloon. He goes back to the Information Center.

STEPHAN

I've been here five hours. Is there a supervisor I can speak with?

VOLUNTEER

Administrative Office is straight down that hall.

Volunteer points. Stephan stuts down hallway on a mission.

INT. N.I.H. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Small office area with cubicles. Stephan enters protecting his balloon and walks to its RECEPTIONIST, 30s, sitting in her front desk cubicle, writing.

STEPHAN

Brought a friend here this morning,
no one can tell me where she is.

RECEPTIONIST

Name and department?

STEPHAN

Paula Santana and, no, I don't know
where she is or who her doctor is.

RECEPTIONIST

Takes twenty-four hours to manually
input patient files, so I can't --

Receptionist looks up to see Stephan's concern and softens.

RECEPTIONIST

I can --go try and find where she
went from the appointment log. What
time did she sign-in?

STEPHAN

Nine.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh my, yes. I'll see if I can find
where she went. Wait here.

Receptionist exits. Stephan sits hugging his balloon.

INT. N.I.H. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Receptionist enters. Stephan paces holding balloon and spins.

RECEPTIONIST

Please sit down, Mister --?

STEPHAN

Allen, why do I have to sit?!

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Allen, please --sit.

Receptionist sits and pats chair beside her. Stephan sits.

RECEPTIONIST

She's been Admitted. She's having surgery tomorrow.

STEPHAN

What?! Why? Where is she?

RECEPTIONIST

N.C.I. Tower.

STEPHAN

"N.C.I.?" What's that?

RECEPTIONIST

National Cancer Institute.

He jumps up letting balloon go. It floats to ceiling, *pops*.

STEPHAN

But she said she was just having tests, that's what she said?

RECEPTIONIST

She did. They found --something.

STEPHAN

What the hell does that mean?!
What'd "they" find?

RECEPTIONIST

I'm not allowed to say. Her doctor may be able to. Are you family?

STEPHAN

Her family's out of country. I'm, she's --my girlfriend.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry and, I am, so so sorry. Doctor Thompson is up there now.

STEPHAN

"Up, there?"

RECEPTIONIST

Eighteenth floor of The Tower. Room eighteen eighteen.

She points out the window. Stephan sees *The Tower* and *gasps*.

EXT. N.C.I. TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Tower looks like a huge barn-silo attached to a high-rise.

Stephan stands outside its only fire-exit door.

STEPHAN

Only lousy stinking stairwell is
locked. Somebody has to exit soon.

Stephan pulls out a prescription bottle, "pops" a pill dry,
and chokes swallowing it. Stairwell door opens. FIRST PERSON
exits. Stephan catches the door and enters.

INT. N.C.I. TOWER'S CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Circular cement staircase is like a lighthouse with cement
core and wood hand-railing around both sides. He looks up.

STEPHAN

Are you f'n kidding me?
(earlier Asian accent)
Longtime, baby.

Stephan begins climbing his stairwell to hell.

INT. INSIDE CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan still climbs. SECOND PERSON exits a floor and passes
him going down. Stephan looks at door's number, *9th Floor*.

INT. INSIDE CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan continues climbing breathing harder, feels his chest,
turns, turns back, then uses handrail as a rope to pull
himself up. THIRD PERSON exits that floor and passes him
going down. Stephan looks at its door's number, *16th Floor*.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Stairwell door is next to double elevator-doors that open
into a wide hallway. Stairwell and elevators are at hall's
dead-end. Their hallway curves so other end cannot be seen.

Stephan exits from stairwell door winded and sees hallway.

STEPHAN

Ahhh man, can it get any worse?

He catches his breath, then walks slowly down the hallway
with one hand sliding along the wall for emotional support.

INT. N.I.C. TOWER ONCOLOGY WING - MOMENTS LATER

Individual patient rooms have an all-glass front wall so everything is visible in the room. Lots of medical equipment.

Stephan sees Paula in hospital bed, now in gown, I.V. in wrist, airline-tubing in nose. She looks fragile and unhappy. She sees him and holds her free hand out trying to smile.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. TEEN STEPHAN'S BASEMENT HOME - NOW AGE 18

TEEN STEPHAN, high-and-tight, grown out of baby-fat, now a beginning bodybuilder, stands above his Dad, in a suit, who lies on his back in front of the T.V. Dad had a massive heart attack. Teen Stephan falls on his knees trying to administer C.P.R. It is obvious he doesn't know how. He begins *sobbing*.

His Mother's feet run down the stairs to stop in fear.

Exhausted, Teen Stephan stops his chest compressions.

Dad gives a *death-exhale*, then all color leaves his face.

MOTHER

You killed him! I wish you were never born!

RETURN TO.

INT. N.C.I. TOWER ONCOLOGY WING - PRESENT

Panic Attack! Stephan reaches out to Paula. She reaches more. His hand clenches into a fist. He steps forward, then steps back. He is fighting hard, stomps a foot forward again, but can't control his fear, and spins to sprint down the hall.

INT. N.I.C. TOWER CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Door *bursts* open. Stephan enters to run down the stairs pushing STAIR-PEOPLE out of his way. They complain, *Hey-a!*

EXT. N.I.C. TOWER'S CIRCULAR STAIRWELL EXIT - MOMENTS LATER

Fire-door *bursts* open. Stephan exits, bends over catching his breath, then falls onto both knees cursing.

STEPHAN

God damn you to hell, Mother!

Stephan pounds his fist on the grass three times yelling.

STEPHAN
"Stupid, Ugly, Failure!" You
pounded that into me every --
(pounds ground again)
God --damn --day!

Stephan sits back on his ankles and looks up at sky crying.

STEPHAN
I'm worthless, I know that. So
please, take me, not her. *Not her.*

Stephan looks back at Tower sadly and stumbles away *weeping*.

INT. N.I.H. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Receptionist sits behind her desk on the phone. Door opens.

Stephan stumbles-in like a drunkard and falls into chair.

RECEPTIONIST
Call you back.

Stephan is distraught. Receptionist goes to sit by him.

STEPHAN
I tried, she saw me, I couldn't --

RECEPTIONIST
You saw her, you were up there?

STEPHAN
I have True Claustrophobia, so I
had to take the stairs.

RECEPTIONIST
You walked up to the 18th floor?
Why didn't you take the elevator?

Stephan tilts his head looking at her incredulous.

STEPHAN
I can't, okay? But I need to know
what's going on. P-l-e-a-s-e.

Receptionist goes to water-cooler, fills a paper cup, and hands it to Stephan.

RECEPTIONIST
I'll see if her surgeon will talk
to you. What's her name again?

STEPHAN

Paula, Paula Santana. She's my --

He breaks down. Receptionist exits. Stephan tries to drink, can't, and empties cup in cooler's trough, then crumples it.

STEPHAN

true love.

INT. NIH TOWER LOBBY - LATER THAT DAY

Lobby of Tower building is an open area with backless padded benches. Stephan sits on one. Elevator *dings*. Its door opens.

DOCTOR THOMPSON, 40s, stethoscope around neck over a labcoat, exits elevator. He's in a hurry, scans angry, sees Stephan.

DR. THOMPSON

You Paula's "so-called" boyfriend?

Stephan goes to him with hand out to shake. Thompson refuses.

DR. THOMPSON

What's this about you not wanting to see her?!

Stephan's taken aback and drops his hand, then head ashamed.

STEPHAN

I have a problem with heights.

DR. THOMPSON

Then best get your act together, mister, she keeps asking for you.

Thompson turns to exit. Stephan's had enough.

STEPHAN

Hey, I just got out of Woodburn, okay?! Sorry I don't measure up to your standards. What's going on?

DR. THOMPSON

(turns back a professional)
Paula has Stage 4 C Hürthle cell that was misdiagnosed by her primary physician. We have no Systemic Chemotherapy Trials for her disease yet, so removing her Thyroid is our only option. Surely you've noticed she's in pain?

STEPHAN

"She's in pain?!" She never said, I didn't --*oh, Paula*. You said, disease?"

DR. THOMPSON

A rare form of Thyroid Cancer where we only now recognize a square bumpy tongue as a symptom.

STEPHAN

Will surgery get it all?

DR. THOMPSON

You need to find a way to see her.

Elevator *dings* and door opens. Thompson enters and turns.

DR. THOMPSON

Hurry.

Elevator door closes. Stephan's world explodes.

INT. STEPHAN'S KITCHEN - THAT NIGHT

Stephan, dressed same, enters his kitchen. He sees Paula's apron hanging off a drawer and slides down the wall to sit on the floor. Wall phone above him *rings*. He punches-up knocking its receiver into the air and catches it.

TOWER NURSE (FILTERED)

This is N.I.C. Oncology Ward. A Miss Paula wanted us to call you?

STEPHAN

Paula? Yes, yes, is she okay?!

TOWER NURSE (FILTERED)

She's a nervous about surgery tomorrow, so we gave her a sedative. She can't talk, but wants to know if you would ...

(hand on phone, comes back)

"talk her to sleep?"

STEPHAN

"Talk her --?" Yes, yes, thank you.

TOWER NURSE (FILTERED)

Okay, I'm putting the phone next to her ear, start talking in a moment.

Stephan shakes torso like a beast trying to fling water off.

STEPHAN

Paula? Oh Paula, I'm so sorry I'm not stronger for you, I ...

PAULA (FILTERED)

Unintelligible speech.

STEPHAN

No sweetie, let me do the talking.
 (tries to compose himself)
 I have so much, I can finally tell you. I love you, baby, so very very much. And I want to take care of you when you get out, like you did me. Okay? So close your eyes my love and go to sleep.

PAULA (FILTERED)

(labored breathing)

STEPHAN

It'll be okay, sweetie, I love you. I'll keep talking until ...

TOWER NURSE (FILTERED)

(whispering)

Hello sir, she's asleep now. Her surgery is at eight a.m.

Tower Nurse hangs up. Stephan sits holding the receiver until dial-tone clicks on, then it goes to that horrible *beeping* sound. He calmly stands, then rips entire phone off the wall.

INT. PAULA'S N.I.C. PATIENT ROOM - NEXT EVENING

Paula lies in bed with Frankenstein-sutures around the front of her neck with a breathing tube in middle. She can't talk.

Stephan enters *breathing* hard and sees Paula's neck stitches.

DREAM INSERT: Paula's head falls off backwards tearing her sutures wide open and leaving her head dangling behind.

Stephan almost loses it. He jams a palm over a chair's torn back-support. This kind of pain he can deal with.

STEPHAN

Hey there, good lookin'.

Gurgle *sounds* come out of her neck-tube as she tries to talk.

Stephan's face goes bloodless. He fights back tears, reaches in a pocket, and opens a small jewelry case so she can see.

Inside is a small engagement ring. Its tiny stone *sparkles*.

STEPHAN

Can you, will you --marry me?

Paula's eyes open wide. Stephan puts ring on Paula's finger. She holds her trembling hand up to look at it and *gurgles*.

Doctor Thompson enters, sees Stephan, and gets angry again.

DR. THOMPSON

About time!

Paula holds up her ring finger. Thompson sees the ring and calms down, then checks her Vitals.

Paula and Stephan stare lovingly into each other's eyes. Stephan strokes her dirty hair. She tries to talk, *gurgles*. He *shushes* her. She smiles, then nods head. Stephan gets a huge smile and kisses her forehead. He grins up at Thompson.

STEPHAN

She said, yes!

Thompson sees their love, bites lower lip, and shakes head.

Too much, Stephan's world crumbles, he backs out lying.

STEPHAN

NO! No, I, I've got to go, for a moment, but I'll be back.

Paula reaches for him. Stephan reaches for her continuing to back up. Paula drops her outstretched hand on bed and tears.

STEPHAN

Forgive me.

Paula nods. Stephan begins ducking repeatedly like someone is beating him. He is in searing pain and cries out childlike.

STEPHAN

No, stop, m-m-mommy!

He runs down the hallway to staircase *screaming* and ducking.

STEPHAN

P-p-pleasssssseeee!

INT. N.I.C. TOWER CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Stephan *bursts* through its door and freezes in disbelief.

He tries to walk down the stairs normal, but his legs give out. He uses handrail to support all his weight dragging his feet down each step *sobbing*. This is his *Via Dolorosa*.

Stair-People walking both ways in stairwell go up and down ignoring and stepping around him without offering to help.

INT. STEPHAN'S KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Stephan walks down hallway in shirt and tie, then freezes.

Kitchen phone now hangs from its hole in the wall by a clothes-hanger. It *rings*. Stephan reaches for, hesitates. It *rings* again. He clutches his chest, then answers resigned.

STEPHAN

I know.

DOMINO (FILTERED)

No one could find you last night.
She put me down as a contact, so
they --Paula, she, she's gone.

Stephan falls against the wall with no emotion.

DOMINO (FILTERED)

It all happened so fast, she, she
kept trying to say your name.

Stephan slides down the wall onto floor with no emotion.

DOMINO (FILTERED)

Her parents fly in tonight. They
want to take her back to their
country. We convinced them to have
a viewing here tomorrow night.

Stephan's legs stretch out on the floor still emotionless.

STEPHAN

When?

DOMINO (FILTERED)

Six p.m. at the funeral home on
Route 50. Do you know it?

STEPHAN

(emotionless)
I'll find it.

DOMINO (FILTERED)

Stephan, I'm so sorry. I know how
much she loved you.

Stephan pushes disconnect button on receiver and sits there quiet, then hits the back of his head on the wall. He hits wall harder and harder until the drywall dents to each word.

STEPHAN

"I, wish, you, were, never, born."

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - NEXT EVENING

Stephan sits on edge of bed wearing a black suit. He goes to closet and pulls a shoebox off a top shelf, then sits on bed again. He dumps the box onto bed. Small paper targets, ammo, cleaning kit, and a handgun fall out. He ejects gun's clip, loads one bullet in it, slides clip into handle, then racks gun's slide. He hears Paula's *laughter* and turns to pillows.

DREAM INSERT: Paula appears naked under the covers pulled up to her chin, smiling, laughing, and finger-motioning to him.

Stephan puts the gun's barrel to his temple nodding.

STEPHAN

"Yeah, baby."

EXT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT PARKING LOT - IMMEDIATELY

Car drives by in front of Stephan's building and *backfires*.

INT. PAULA'S FUNERAL HOME LOBBY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Plush carpeting, big pictures on walls, and small tables with large flowers in vases. Lobby area has stairs that lead up to the *Viewing Area*. Paula's profile is seen in her open casket.

PAULA'S PARENTS, Latinos, 60s, greying, in black clothes, sit by Paula's coffin.

Domino, America, Carol, Carmella, Josez, and Virginia's Miami-Delegates, stand around the coffin consoling each other.

Front door opens. Stephan enters wearing a black overcoat and sees mourners, then Paula's profile. He takes off his coat to step inside a walk-in closet where he completely *loses* it.

OTHER MOURNERS arrive ignoring him to hang up their coats.

INT. SAME FUNERAL HOME CLOSET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Stephan is still *crying* uncontrollable in the closet that is now over-filled with coats. Carmella enters.

CARMELLA

Paula's parents said you can have
her car to thank you for being
there for her.

Stephan *wails* in guilt and turns away *sobbing*.

Domino appears in closet doorway and puts hands on her chest.

DOMINO

None of us really knew how much you
both cared for each other till we
saw her ring. Is there anything we
can do to help?

STEPHAN

Clear, room.

CARMELLA

You want us to make room for you?

STEPHAN

Have to, talk to, her alone.

Carmella and Domino look at each other, then exit.

INT. PAULA'S VIEWING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Viewing room is now empty. Parents chairs are next to coffin.

Stephan walks up the stairs, sees Paula's face in casket and
tilts head, *Awwww*, putting hands over his heart. He sits and
sees his ring on her finger. Tears flow as he talks to her.

STEPHAN

I asked them to clear the room so I
could tell you, I'm still here,
because of you. Your spirit kept me
alive when my own died. Your love
of life showed me, just how great
life can be. Your love for me
taught me, I could love, and I do
sweetheart. I love you dear, with
all my heart, I always will. So
tonight, I made a pact with God,
that to honor your life, I give you
mine. No matter how bad things get
or how scared I get, I won't give
up. If I get close, like I did
tonight, I will remember your face,
your smile, your kiss, and I will
go on. I will make you proud of me.

Stephan reaches in to put his hand over her crossed hands.

STEPHAN

Because I am so very very proud, to
have been loved --by you.

Stephan squeezes her lifeless hands, then leans back *crying*.

PAULA (V.O.)

Stephan never loved again. Still single, he followed his childhood dream of moving to Los Angeles and going into Show Business. He has appeared in over 90 productions winning ten Best Actor awards. He trained under a Yale university screenwriting professor then wrote 25 feature screenplays and 15 short scripts directing 12 of those into SAG-Aftra short films. All earned him over 400 awards on IMDb. He uses his daily incessant writing to fight through bouts of depression. He wrote our love story to remind everyone how important it is to always be someone's --best friend.

STEPHAN (V.O.)

We lived and loved an entire lifetime, in just one year. This is dedicated to the real Paula. I am still here, because of you.

FADE OUT.

SUGGESTED END CREDIT SIDEBAR:

Pictures of the 1977 Miami trip and General Assembly Session.