

I had, HAVE...a Dream

Written by

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Based on my own true story.

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FADE IN:

EXT. AERIAL OF DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY, 2022

MONTAGE: Shots of Disney, Warner Bros, Paramount, Sony, Fox, and Universal Studios. EMPLOYEES scurry about their lots. I-110 traffic is stopped. Motorcycles white-line between its cars. Ends on U.S.C. campus and its shared-housing units.

INT. LOS ANGELES SHARED-LIVING HOUSE - SAME

8' x 10' room with a 3' x 6' bathroom. Twin bed, recliner, TV on a plastic egg-crate, and Mac on a student desk. A vintage sash-window behind the computer overlooks a back parking lot.

Live Mariachi Band begins *playing* outside in the parking lot. Hispanic PARTYGOERS begin *singing* cumpleaños. They and their band need more practice. A Neighbor's Dog joins in their fray *howling*. All these noises set off car *alarms* everywhere. A true cacophony of calls of the wild...streets.

LAWRENCE, Caucasian, 70s, very long red hair and a full Santa beard, obese, is wearing black shorts and a t-shirt having white lettering printed "Homeless-Hippy Mountain-Man Biker-Viking Santa." He is *typing* away on his Mac as usual.

LAWRENCE

Imagine being told everyday as a child that you are stupid, ugly, and will always be a failure.

An LAPD police *siren* wails by. Even more car *alarms* go off. Lawrence puts on sound earmuffs then keeps typing.

LAWRENCE

Now imagine that's your mother speaking. Add a childhood speech impediment-t, and you strive to be an obedient son by living down to the low expectations forever scrawled upon your blank desiderata by later getting fired from job after job after college. You marry late in life, and for three decades harbor a dream you can't sail into any significant sunset because your significantly obtuse other just doesn't "get" or like, the movies.

LAPD helicopter *flies* low overhead. He waits for it to pass, pulls away one cup, listens, takes off mufflers, and types.

LAWRENCE

Then on one fateful day you get the only disease no school system wants their students to see, a teacher fall over. You are unceremoniously herded far out into the partial retirement pasture on early medical leave losing your full pay. Well, what do you do when your well-planned dream becomes an unplanned nightmare? --Follow your real dream, finally.

CAPTION: All *Depictions, Descriptions, and Dialogue are true.*

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ANTIQUE COURTHOUSE AS A MOVIE SET - A DECADE AGO

Vintage courtroom with all types of movie equipment set up.

EXTRAS, in 1930's costumes, sit in pews *chatting*. Its Jury Box is in front of the Judge's Bench with ACTORS in proper dress sitting and primping. PRINCIPALS sit at Defense and Prosecution tables with HAIR and MAKE-UP doing *Last Looks*.

Standing against the wall near the Judge's Bench is Lawrence, now **60**, with long hair and beard half as in L.A. He wears a 1930 Sheriff's costume with a .38 pistol and billy club.

African-American Hollywood Director DARNELL MARTIN is talking to her CREW, then *claps*. Her Crew rush to their stations.

MARTIN

Camera's Up! --Background!

Extras begin pantomime-talking silent in their pews.

MARTIN

Action!

JOSH LUCAS stands from behind his lawyer's table and hooks both thumbs in his suit-vest's pockets. EVERYONE freezes.

LAWRENCE

The year is 2012 and we are shooting in the historic Courtroom located in Giles County, Virginia.

Lawrence steps away to walk throughout the Set reminiscing.

LAWRENCE

Here is when I finally understood why it took a year of self-training, and self-loathing, to learn how to live with an illness I was convinced was God's retribution for squandering a mediocre life.

Lawrence walks to Jury Box and leans on its railing thumbing to a young clean-cut clean-shaven male playing JURY FOREMAN.

LAWRENCE

That's me. Or rather, that's the part "me" was cast for. "We find for Southern Valley!" That's it. One Line. Hired as what is called Featured Background. No SAG-Aftra Waiver, no Day Actor pay, no Screen Credit. Just another low-flying wanna-be aiming for the stars. Then I show up to Set, and the Wardrobe Department hands me this.

(models his costume)

"This is wrong," I say. "I'm Jury Foreman, not Fred the Bailiff." Department Head quips, "Foreman, Bailiff, what's the difference?" Of course the young man wearing the tweed suit is half his size. Oh my, once the gravity of their mistake weighed in, all wanted to rocket far away from Mother Earth.

(walks to witness stand)

I had to "show-and-tell" Darnell.

(grabs a booster-seat)

With my long hair and beard, she could have "re-cast" me. That's Show Biz speak for "You're fired" leading to my career's quick and not-so-happy ending. But to her credit and mine, she said it was their fault, not mine, annnnd --

Set now comes alive with "Action." Lawrence sets his booster-seat on the witness chair then lifts Mackenzie Foy, 12, in a period country dress, up onto it, swears her in, then goes back to his *Position One* against the wall. Josh Lucas begins questioning cute-as-a-button soon-to-be-a-star Mackenzie.

INT. JURY ROOM IN SAME COURTHOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Jury Room has been converted into a Production Office with several monitors playing what has been previously recorded.

Lawrence reads a paperback book in one of the twelve chairs.

LAWRENCE
"Wish You Well" by David Baldacci.
Iconic and ironic, all at once.

DAVID BALDACCI, its author, 51, Caucasian, wearing a color-coordinated tennis outfit enters. He is impeccably tan.

Baldacci and Lawrence make eye-contact. Lawrence looks at his book's back cover. Its *Author Picture* is of Baldacci posed elbow-on-knee wearing the exact same outfit.

LAWRENCE
Thank you for writing this.

BALDACCI
Thank you for being in this. I've seen the Dailies, you're selling the scene. Been doing it long?

LAWRENCE
Just got back from Pittsburgh auditioning for Bennett Miller's "Foxcatcher."
(Breaks The Fourth Wall)
No one outside of college wrestling knows what that title means so imagine my surprise when ...

BALDACCI
You wrestled in college?

LAWRENCE
Virginia Commonwealth University.

BALDACCI
No?! Who was your coach?

LAWRENCE
Tommy Legge.

BALDACCI
(little boy excited)
I wrestled for Tommy!

LAWRENCE
No?! What was your Major?

BALDACCI
Political Science.

Lawrence jumps up little boy excited.

LAWRENCE
I was the first poli-sci class!

They shake hands like long lost Frat Brothers.

BALDACCI
Then went to U.V.A. to study law.

LAWRENCE
Noooo --? Me, too. What field?

BALDACCI
Corporate.

LAWRENCE
Constitutional!

They go to high-five each other, but miss on purpose.

LAWRENCE
Where do you live now?

BALDACCI
(stalker-wary)
Near --*Saratoga Animal Hospital*?

LAWRENCE
No, way! I've been taking all our
pound-dogs there for thirty years.

BALDACCI
Me, too!

They grab-to-hold each other's triceps like Roman warriors.

Lawrence's face drops in self-realization as he blurts out.

LAWRENCE
"Well shit David, if you can do
it!"
(no response, explains)
I always wanted to be a writer.

BALDACCI
Me, too! What happened?

LAWRENCE
Life. Rejection letters don't pay
bills. So like a lot of day
dreamers, I woke up a day laborer.

BALDACCI
What brought you here?

LAWRENCE

There. Job didn't pay enough, so I went to work in the school system.

BALDACCI

I meant, what brought you to film?

LAWRENCE

Oh. Meniere's Disease.

BALDACCI

Vertigo? Like in Hitchcock's?

LAWRENCE

(rolls eyes)

Jimmy Stewart had acrophobia. It took a year before a neurologist taught me "a hard stare" because one of its symptoms is your eyes actually vibrate which causes the awful trademark nausea.

BALDACCI

So if you just stare "hard" enough at something long enough, you force your eyes to focus and settle down?

LAWRENCE

Yep. Had to retrain my body, too. I can't bend to pick something up, turn around fast, look straight up, or fly due to my "dry" crystals.

BALDACCI

"Crystals?"

LAWRENCE

Microscopic. They're supposed to remain separated in a gel in the inner ear and only touch to send equilibrium messages to your brain.

BALDACCI

Jesus.

LAWRENCE

Tried Him, too. Growing up, I had an uncle who was an actor. He would call saying what show I could watch him on. Put the acting bug in me I guess. He played the blacksmith in *The Rifleman* series then *The Dodge Sheriff* in the 1970's Chrysler car commercials. He died last year.

Lawrence models his costume again.

LAWRENCE

So to honor his memory, I said,
"I'll be in just one movie." And
now look, my uniform matches his.

BALDACCI

Full circle. What kind of writing?

LAWRENCE

Short stories, articles, novels,
novelettes, not very novel.

BALDACCI

Description, dialogue, and action,
are all different medium methods.
What are you passionate about?

He and Baldacci look at a monitor playing the recent scene of Lawrence lifting Mackenzie, then back to each other.

LAWRENCE/BALDACCI

Screenwriting!

INT. MARYLAND CONDO'S COMMUNITY ROOM - MONTHS LATER

Large open meeting room with long tables and folding chairs.

A teaching seminar just ended by Yale Screenwriting PROFESSOR MARC LAPADULA, 40s, tall, distinguished, in a tweed smoker with long unkept curly hair. He stands at the front of the room talking to all-ages STUDENTS who are buying Xeroxed copies of different feature scripts from him, then exit.

Professor goes to Lawrence, **60**, and hands him a copy of the program, *Final Draft 9*. Lawrence hands Professor a check.

PROFESSOR

Seen you here before.

LAWRENCE

Third time's a charm.

PROFESSOR

Why do you come "here?"

LAWRENCE

Can't afford to go there, to Yale.

PROFESSOR

No. What brings you to writing?

LAWRENCE

Oh. David Baldacci. We talked on the set of his last film and he motivated me to follow my dream of becoming a writer.

PROFESSOR

Where do you live?

LAWRENCE

Just outside D.C.

PROFESSOR

I'm pretty good at judging talent, and for some reason, I see it in you. I teach a small private class on Sundays. Interested?

LAWRENCE

I can't drive to Connecticut?!

PROFESSOR

Can you drive --"just outside D.C?"

LAWRENCE

(Breaks The Fourth Wall)

Now exactly how many planets had to align for me to 1) get the only malady that retires me out early, so 2) my dead uncle's spirit can channel me to become a Principal through a wardrobe mistake, 3) whose Reverse Shot allows the game-changer conversation with my Corsican-twin, 4) who motivates me to follow my dream of becoming a writer, so 5) fate can have me hook-up with the only Hollywood screenwriting professor who just happens to live twenty minutes from my house?

Lawrence holds up five outstretched fingers, then rotates his hand front-to-back like a referee making the call.

INT. VIRGINIA CONDOMINIUM'S PARTY ROOM - MONTHS LATER

Large entertainment room having a kitchen with high counter.

Lawrence, still **60**, and **TEN OLDER-AGE STUDENTS** sit in lounge chairs facing Professor. All are holding ten script pages.

PROFESSOR

Well --?

ANNABELLE, 70, a retired federal employee, small but feisty, talks like *Harvey Fierstein*.

ANNABELLE

Moving, absolutely moving.

DORIS, 65, a retired school librarian, takes off her reading glasses and lets them drop on their lanyard around her neck.

DORIS

Yes, and powerful.

SETH, 50, Jewish, who never talks about himself so no one knows what he really does, chews on his glasses's earpiece.

SETH

Found it --touching.

PROFESSOR

Tell them why you wrote it.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. A NORTHERN VIRGINIA RESTAURANT - 24 HOURS EARLIER

Typical large diner with booths, tables, and a FEW CUSTOMERS.

Lawrence, 60s, in jeans and t-shirt, sits at a table in back.

His brother, ROBERT, 68, stooped over, anorexic-thin, balding grey hair, dressed in a shirt and tie enters. Lawrence stands concerned. They shake hands and sit across from each other.

LAWRENCE

Are you okay?

ROBERT

What are you working on?

LAWRENCE

"On" or in?

ROBERT

What's the difference?

LAWRENCE

"In" is someone else's project.

"On" is my own.

ROBERT

Really into this shit aren't you?

LAWRENCE

"This shit" being the film
industry? Uh, yeah?

MONTAGE: They order, chit-chat, food is brought. The two brothers eat, laugh, eat, and laugh till it "hurts good." Both try to catch their breath from all the guffawing.

LAWRENCE

*Oh my God --I forgot --why you're --
my favorite brother.*

ROBERT

I'm --your only --brother.

WAITRESS brings their check. Lawrence reaches for his wallet. Robert hands her his credit card. She takes it and leaves.

ROBERT

Thanks, I needed this.

LAWRENCE

When can we do "this" again?

ROBERT

"We" can't.

Something about the way he said it.

LAWRENCE

You called last night saying we
"had to get together." You're
always traveling so any get
together has to be planned in
advance. Looks like there's
something going on physically?

ROBERT

Can you say thirteen syllables? I
can't. I have cancer of the bone
marrow. Incurable, so don't have
long. One of its symptoms is you
lose your mind like Alzheimers.

LAWRENCE

I'm so, I don't, what can I ...?

ROBERT

Keep your promise.

LAWRENCE

What, "promise?"

ROBERT

That you won't visit.

LAWRENCE

What, who, you?! You can't ask ...!

ROBERT

Sure I can, that's why I asked.

LAWRENCE

That doesn't make any, don't visit
you?! Ever? And your wife agrees?

ROBERT

My wife doesn't need to know. This
is between you and me.

LAWRENCE

I, but, what, no! Why would you --?

ROBERT

Because I won't know who you are
and I don't want "you" to remember
me as a drooling vegetable.

Waitress brings Robert his card and bill, then exits. He adds a tip, signs the receipt, and stands resolute.

ROBERT

I am sorry, for not being there for
you.

LAWRENCE

When?

ROBERT

You know when.

(holds out a hand)

Deal?

Lawrence stands discombobulated and they shake. Robert's big brother smile says "good-bye" as he *slaps* Lawrence hard on the back and exits strong like an actor's last curtain call.

Lawrence stands there sad with his hand still held out.

LAWRENCE

House always wins.

RETURN TO.

INT. SAME VIRGINIA CONDOMINIUM ROOM - YALE CLASS CONTINUES

The Ten Older-Age Students sit waiting for Lawrence's answer.

LAWRENCE
To honor my dying brother.

DORIS
You're dedicating this to him?

LAWRENCE
And its short.

ANNABELLE
You're filming it?!

LAWRENCE
Based on your reactions, yes.

SETH
Will it have your "House always
wins" Line?

LAWRENCE
And his "thirteen syllables." You
can't write better than Life.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA HOME - ONE YEAR LATER

Finished basement with an entertainment center built around a bookcase-wall full of DVDs. An L-shaped glass computer desk is across from it sits in front of the basement's only bay window. Lawrence sits there typing on his Mac, as always.

Desk office-phone beside him *rings*. Lawrence, now **61**, still looking same, checks phone-screen's readout screen, gets a worried look, *clears* throat, then hits its speaker-button.

LAWRENCE
Can be there in twenty minutes.

BROTHER'S WIFE (FILTERED)
Don't bother.

LAWRENCE
"Don't --?" Then why, how's he ...?

BROTHER'S WIFE (FILTERED)
"He" died.

LAWRENCE
(drops head sad)
When's the funeral?

BROTHER'S WIFE (FILTERED)
Monday.

Something about the way she said it.

LAWRENCE
I don't --? This past, "Monday?"

Brother's Wife starts *screaming* and never stops.

BROTHER'S WIFE (FILTERED)
What do you care?!

LAWRENCE
I never stopped!

BROTHER'S WIFE (FILTERED)
"Never stopped" by!

LAWRENCE
Because he ...

ROBERT'S BROTHER'S WIFE (FILTERED)
"He" kept waiting for you!

LAWRENCE
"I" kept waiting for you!

BROTHER'S WIFE (FILTERED)
Why did you send us that awful,
whatever?! He didn't understand it,
or why you dedicated "it" to him?!

LAWRENCE
"Whatever?!" That film has twenty
freakin' awards and is streaming on
Amazon with his dedication! If film
is forever, now my brother is, too.

BROTHER'S WIFE (FILTERED)
Well, you're not welcome in his
family, forever! And good luck with
your --
(dripping sarcasm)
movie career.

Sound of her receiver *slamming*. Lawrence stares at the phone
until its dial tone comes *on*, then stares out the window.

LAWRENCE
One definition of the word coward
is "a person who lacks the courage
to endure unpleasant things." Was I
a coward --a second time?

Lawrence turns numb in his office chair towards his big screen T.V. A *Time-Life* commercial plays muted about their "Best Of Robin Williams" DVD-set. He leans to it intent.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RICHMOND VIRGINIA VINTAGE THEATRE - SEPTEMBER, 2021

The Byrd Theater in Richmond, Virginia was built in 1928. Its antique calliope organ is being played by ORGANIST in a long-tail tuxedo as both are lowered by a platform-elevator under the stage. A trap-door closes over them. Music fades.

ATTENDEES are wearing masks because of the ongoing Pandemic.

Festival's SHOWRUNNER, tall blonde female, 40s, in a skirt-suit, carries a hand-microphone and walks onto the stage.

SHOWRUNNER (FILTERED)
Thank you for coming to the 2021
Richmond International Film
Festival! Let's bring all our
winners to the front for Q & A.

VARIOUS FILMMAKERS, all ages and ethnics, walk to the front and line up with their backs against the raised stage. Lawrence, now **70**, so his hair and beard is long as in L.A., limps to the front using a medical cane and joins at the end.

MONTAGE: One by one, Filmmakers answer AUDIENCE questions.

Lawrence is last to answer and leans forward off the stage.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1
Why did you make "Saving Robin
Williams?"

LAWRENCE
Because I didn't understand why he
killed himself and realized others
wondered the same.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2
The dialogue was so real. You
really captured his essence.

LAWRENCE
That's because all of its dialogue
are Robin's own real-life quotes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3
Why did Robin commit suicide?

LAWRENCE

As our film shows, and his wife believes, because "he" didn't want you to remember him as a drooling vegetable.

SHOWRUNNER

Future plans?

LAWRENCE

I literally drive from here straight through to Los Angeles.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4

To be --?

LAWRENCE

"Or not to be."

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN, NEW YORK - DAY, 2013

A NYC CREW is set up for filming in a parking lot outside an abandoned fast-food restaurant.

A fake police Cruiser has its doors and hood off laying on the pavement with fake smoke coming from under its engine.

BACKGROUND ACTORS in police officer costumes or biker gear all lay strewn about "bullet-ridden" with faces fake-bloody.

Actor DELROY LINDO uses a flame-thrower to burn the police cruiser as actor ED HARRIS fires an AK-47 with blanks at it.

A squib roll explodes across the Cruiser's windshield as POLICE OFFICER EXTRAS inside it jerk about as if shot.

Director MICHAEL ALMEREYDA, short, huge mane of white hair, stands arms-folded under a canopy watching with dead-pan stare all of the Action on his big-screen monitor. He nods to his female FIRST A.D. who never needs a megaphone.

FIRST A.D.

Cut! Circle Print! Strike Set!

NYC Crew rush in. SOME remove smoke-blocks from under the cruiser while OTHERS use fire extinguishers on them. MORE use portable tools to bolt its missing doors and hood on laying around the asphalt. It looks like a giant Indy Pit Crew.

A glass-repair truck pulls up and TWO GLASS REPAIR GUYS begin replacing cruiser's damaged front windshield with a new one.

ARMORERS take the gun from Harris and try to take the flame-thrower from Lindo who doesn't want to give it up quite yet.

ALL Bloody Background Actors stand up high-fiving each other.

Across the street, REAL NYC POLICE OFFICERS hold back a crowd of NYC SPECTATORS who stand *cheering*.

NYC SPECTATORS
"We love you, Ed!"

Ed gives his trademark deadpan response with a half-wave.

ED HARRIS
"Yeah, yeah."

Behind Director Almereyda stands Lawrence, again **61**, so his hair and beard are half as in L.A.. He is dressed as a Biker wearing full leathers with all types and sizes of knives.

Standing next to Lawrence is actor ETHAN HAWKE with *bruised* make-up and one arm in a sling having fake blood on it. He turns to Lawrence with a huge boyish grin.

ETHAN HAWKE
"I love doing this shit!"

Ethan runs little-boy excited to congratulate fellow Leads.

LAWRENCE
The year is now 2013 on the set of "Cymbeline" shot in Brooklyn. It is my second film and second time as a Principal thanks to "Wish You Well" --which obviously did.

Almereyda now sits in his director's chair in the shade reading a book, not his own script. Lawrence smiles at him.

LAWRENCE
For my audition, I wore my own biker gear and private collection of knives. Michael pointed to me, "What's your name?" I smiled back, "Whatever you wanna call me." He nodded to all --"Knifey."

The now fully repaired Cruiser drives off up the street.

Armorers pack all the guns and flame-thrower in their truck.

FIRST A.D.
Lunch!

NYC Crew goes to a Craft Services van parked on the street.

Harris goes to lay under some shade by himself with arms behind his head. First A.D. brings him a plate of fruit.

Bearded actor, MAURICIO OVALLE, 30s, also dressed as a Biker, walks past Lawrence to the food truck and "thumbs-up" at him.

LAWRENCE

That's "Fu Manchu," Ed Harris's consigliere. Nice guy, good actor. He's moving to L.A. to follow his dream, so you'll meet him again.

Lawrence walks into the abandoned restaurant Set.

INT. ABANDONED RESTAURANT SET - CONTINUOUS

Food machinery and stainless-steel tables were left behind.

Talking on his cell is actor JOHN LEGUIZAMO, also dressed as a biker. Leguizamo ends his call and nods to Lawrence.

LAWRENCE

Do you remember the first time you let yourself believe you might actually make it in this Business?

Leguizamo breaks into a wonderful ear-to-ear grin. Lawrence points at own chest, then to the ground. Lawrence gets out a flip-phone. Leguizamo steps beside him for a selfie. *Click.*

STILL CUT: Lawrence has a "mean" look holding his Bowie knife menacing while Leguizamo threw up a two-finger peace-sign.

DISSOLVE TO.

INT. VEGAN RESTAURANT IN LOS ANGELES - 2022 AGAIN

One of the many all-vegetarian small restaurants in L.A.

Lawrence enters with Mauricio Ovalle, now 9 years older with longer hair and a full black beard having whispers of grey. Both wear surgical-masks and sit in a booth. They take off their masks to peruse two menus.

MAURICIO

Vegetarian, huh? Don't know if I could do that full-time.

WAITRESS steps to take their order wearing a mask. Mauricio points on the menu. Lawrence points. Waitress exits.

LAWRENCE

Pain is a great motivator. Two years ago my feet swelled up like a circus clown's. I couldn't walk, literally. Doctors tested for Diabetes, Gout --nope. One said other patients improved after becoming vegetarians, soooo --.

MAURICIO

So you can't eat meat at all?

LAWRENCE

Sure I can. If I don't want to walk, sleep, act, or write.

Waitress brings their plates and exits. Both meals are very colorful. They dig in. Mauricio smiles.

MAURICIO

Hey, this is pretty good.
(eats more, wonders)
Does fish count?

LAWRENCE

Anything with eyes.

MAURICIO

Potatoes have "eyes."

LAWRENCE

Ha-Ha.

MAURICIO

Married?

LAWRENCE

(puts down fork somber)
The person I was married to for thirty-five years --died six years before we divorced.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. "THEIR" VIRGINIA HOME OF THIRTY YEARS - SIX YEARS AGO

Door opens and Lawrence, now **64**, so hair and beard is much shorter, wears gym-shorts and a t-shirt saying "*I Do My Own Stunts.*" He hobbles in on crutches, then down bedroom-hall.

His wife of 30 years, DEZI, 56, long solid brunette hair, is over-weight and frumpy. She enters carrying a hospital bag and throws it angry watching Lawrence go into his bedroom.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bureau, dresser, and king-size bed take up most of the room.

Lawrence enters, stands crutches against wall, then gets into bed. He gets a puzzled look, reaches under t-shirt, and pulls off two *EKG* electrode self-stick pads to toss in a trashcan.

LAWRENCE

They always forget at least two.

Dezi enters fuming without his hospital bag and grabs both his crutches like *Cinderella's Evil Stepsister*.

DEZI

"I'm tired of you getting old and always having surgeries! I have my own problems you know! I'm never taking care of you again!"

Dezi unplugs and takes the phone off his nightstand, then exits with both crutches and phone *slamming* the door.

LAWRENCE

And I love you, too!

Lawrence stares at the door puzzled, then passes out.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Lawrence awakes, tries to get out of bed, but can't.

LAWRENCE

What the --? I'm paralyzed?!
(panics, remembers)

Okay, easy, surgeon said my lower back could spasm since it's the second time in the same location.

Lawrence has to fight to turn on his night-stand lamp. He lays there recovering, then gets a wide-eyed worried look.

LAWRENCE

Hey, Honey?! Would you bring me the hospital bag, please?!
(no response, desperate)
I can't get up and need to go to the bathroom!

He waits. No response. He gets a panicked-look, rolls onto side, bunches the bedspread into a pile, and urinates into it. He rolls onto his back exhausted and passes out again.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BEDROOM - THREE DAYS AFTER SURGERY

Lawrence, still on his back with hair and beard now unkempt, is miserable. His t-shirt is wrinkled and filthy. He's lost weight. The earlier bunched bedspread now looks saturated.

LAWRENCE

Three days. Three! No food, no water, no phone. No more.

Lawrence rolls carefully out of his bed knees-first down onto the carpeted floor still wearing his shorts which look damp.

LAWRENCE

No time to figure this shit out.

He lays down, crawls on side to the door, fights to reach up turning its knob, then crawls on his side out the open door.

EXT. MCDONALD'S DRIVE-THRU LANE - LATER SAME MORNING

Lawrence sits same in his car waiting at a drive-thru window.

LAWRENCE

Her bedroom door is locked. She doesn't answer, but I can hear her moving around inside. What the fuck happened to my real wife?

ATTENDANT, female Hispanic teenager with acne, hands out a large cup of orange juice. Lawrence gulps it down like a desert survivor hand-circling, *Another*. Attendant disappears.

LAWRENCE

So I crawled out to my car, still fragile, but now at least mo-bile, and drove straight here. When I get home, I'll scoot down the stairs, go on-line and get a maid service to come out and change my bed.

Attendant re-appears and hands down a bag with another juice.

Lawrence rips open the bag and one wrapping like *Tom Hank's "Castaway"* and crams half its *McMuffin* into his mouth. His eyes close as he chews cheeks bulging. He smiles as if having an orgasm, then opens them glassy-eyed to Window Attendant.

LAWRENCE

Best "all fluff and no real substance" --I ever had.

Attendant slides her glass window-door closed wary.

RETURN TO.

INT. EARLIER LOS ANGELES VEGAN RESTAURANT - STILL 2022

Mauricio sits shocked with his mouth open, then closes it.

MAURICIO
Sorry for your loss, man.

LAWRENCE
So was I --twice.

Lawrence takes another big bite, chews, and rolls his eyes.

MAURICIO
You're really into this shit.

LAWRENCE
If by "this shit" you mean giving
up everyone and everything known
and comfortable to follow some
crazy dream, yes. It's all about
choices you know, so always --
(*Indiana Jones, Knight*)
"Choose wisely."
(back to regular voice)
Which I didn't most of my life.
Which is why I got here so late.

MAURICIO
How did you get "here?"

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. VIRGINIA ITALIAN RESTAURANT - ELECTION NIGHT 2016

Typical small neighborhood restaurant with lots of red-checkered tablecloths packed with AMERICAN PATRONS.

Lawrence, now **64**, holds door open for Dezi, **56**, not as big, but definitely as dour. He wears a suit and she a muumuu dress as she is now always self-conscious about her girth.

Lawrence pulls out a chair for Dezi. She sits herself in a different one. He furrows his brow, then sits himself in it.

ITALIAN WAITER brings them two glasses of iced water.

ITALIAN WAITER
Usual?

Lawrence rubs palms together fast nodding. Waiter leaves.

Lawrence looks up at a muted wall-mounted T.V. with running captions showing the day's Presidential election tallies.

CAPTION ROLLS ACROSS SCREEN: *The Beginning ...of the End...*

LAWRENCE

I can't believe he believes he can
say such outrageous, rude, nasty,
and untrue things --and expect to
get away with all those lies.

DEZI

That's because they're not true.

LAWRENCE

Excuse me?

DEZI

It's all Fake News.

LAWRENCE

It's what?! How? They C.G.I. him?
(looks around joking)
Where's my real wife?

DEZI

Your realistic wife is here. I
really listened and he spoke to me.

LAWRENCE

As what, the pied piper of poison?

Dezi looks at the T.V. with orange-stars in her eyes.

LAWRENCE

Oh my God, he is "The Pied Pooper."

DEZI

She should go to prison.

LAWRENCE

What? Who? Wait. Does this mean --?

DEZI

Yes. I couldn't vote for a liar.

LAWRENCE

Which one?! But we talked about
this, we've always voted the same?

DEZI

He's our country's savior.

LAWRENCE
He's the frickin' Anti-Christ!

DEZI
He'll "drain the swamp."

LAWRENCE
He is the swamp!

Dezi *slams* both fists hard on the table shaking it as their meal arrives. Dezi digs-in regurgitating the Country's new-45's false embellishments. Lawrence pushes his plate away.

A *Michael & Son* commercial comes on the T.V. In it, Lawrence in bib-overalls scratches his butt, then works on a faucet.

FEMALE DINER, 50s, at nearby table, sees it, and leans over.

FEMALE DINER
Excuse me, but are you "The
Plumber, I don't want?"

Lawrence nods smiling and hands her his actor business card.

And just like that, any love Dezi once had, changes to hate.

DEZI
He's the husband, I don't want.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BASEMENT OFFICE - NEXT MORNING

Lawrence sits in a bathrobe at his Mac-keyboard typing.

Dezi walks down the stairs one step at a time like to a coronation. Her sour soul soars as her taunts auger in.

DEZI
I was right, see, huh, see?! Bet
you change sides now, right?

LAWRENCE
Wrong. And I won't be watching his
fake news, for the next four years.

Dezi folds her arms like a kid ready to tantrum.

DEZI
How long have we been married?

LAWRENCE
Three *wonderful* decades.

DEZI

And you still want to go to L.A.?

LAWRENCE

Don't "want" to, need to, just for a year. You know my professor says it's the only way to sell a script.

DEZI

If you go, you won't come back.

LAWRENCE

What? When? Why would you think that, let alone say that?

BROTHER'S WIFE

Because I know you.

LAWRENCE

Apparently not.

BROTHER'S WIFE

They'll corrupt you.

LAWRENCE

Who? What will --? *Excuse me?*

DEZI

No, I won't, ever again. Hollywood is evil and I forbid you to go!

Lawrence stops typing to look mouthing, "*Excuse me?*"

DEZI

Stop asking, 'cause you won't get it. You can't go and that's final!

Dezi storms back up the stairs angry *slamming* its door. He stares at it, detaches confused, then goes back to typing.

LAWRENCE

She'll come around.

(stops typing, sad)

But you already know the answer to that. Don't you?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHURCH AS A MOVIE SET - ONE YEAR LATER

MOURNER ACTORS, mature men and women dressed all-in-black, mill about the courtyard as a NETFLIX CREW sets up a tracking dolly with track while a BACKGROUND MILITARY BAND *practices*.

Lawrence, again **65** so hair and beard half as in L.A., stands wearing a black suit with a military black beret having a *U.S. Army Ranger* flash on it. He looks around, then speaks like "Sergeant Friday" from the television series *Dragnet*.

LAWRENCE

It's August, 2017. It's hot, damn hot. I'm playing a Vet, a Vietnam Vet. I carry a card.

(holds up SAG-Aftra card)

A union card. My partner is Kevin Spacey. We're working the "House of Cards" day shift out of Baltimore.

(back to regular voice)

This is the sixth time I've been on this series, but the first time --

(sings as *Marilyn Monroe*)

"Mis-ter Pres-i-dent" --

(back to regular voice)

kept us all waiting for six hours.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT, 20's male, holds a finger to one ear.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Arriving!

H.O.C. DIRECTOR

Camera's Up! Rolling, Rolling!
Background, annnnd Action!

A presidential limousine pulls up to the curb and stops.

BACKGROUND MARINE CORPS snap to attention. ACTOR SECRET SERVICE gets out of the passenger door to open back door.

KEVIN SPACEY, 58, grey pinstripe suit, presidential lapel pin, exits. Something is different about Spacey this time. Is he drunk with power, just drunk, or both?

Lawrence snaps back to reality, then to attention, holding a perfect salute.

H.O.C. D.P.'s camera tracks Spacey as he walks to, then stops directly in front of Lawrence with his back to the camera.

Lawrence smiles inside because he knows he's now "On Camera" and looks over Spacey's shoulder: *Never Stare At The Talent*.

Something catches his eye and Lawrence glances at Spacey who is eyeing him up and down like some creepy pedophile uncle.

Spacey meets his gaze, then winks, but not friendly, sexual.

Some of Lawrence's brain cells actually explode, *WTF?*

Spacey smiles back sexy-evil, then moves on.

H.O.C. DIRECTOR
CUT! Back to One!

SPACEY
"Let's skip back!"

Lawrence is deer-in-the-headlights: *Never Touch The Talent.*

Spacey shrugs, then skips back to his limousine and gets in.

H.O.C. DIRECTOR
Stand By! Going Again!

H.O.C. DP runs to stand behind a fixed camera in a corner for an over-the-shoulder shot of Spacey still on Lawrence.

H.O.C. DIRECTOR
Camera's Up! Rolling, Rolling!
Background, annnnd Action!

Background Marine Corps snap to attention. Actor Secret Service Agent gets out the front of car to open back door.

H.O.C. D.P.'s camera tracks Spacey as he walks to stop in front of Lawrence again with his back slightly to the camera.

Lawrence doesn't have to Snap-To, he's never been *At Ease*. He tries not to, then has to, glance at Spacey, who plays his best *Caligula* with tongue repeatedly wetting both lips. Any healthy brain-cells left in Lawrence now go terminal as he *Eww-eww-ewwwww*'s at Spacey's slimy snaky-tongue.

Spacey's smile goes beyond chilling as he struts away a very powerful man in Show Business. Untouchable --so he believes.

H.O.C. DIRECTOR
And, Cut! Lunch!

Cast and Crew cross the parking lot to a Craft Services tent.

Lawrence remains at his Post, boots in bête noire.

ACTRESS ONE walks past Lawrence whispering aside.

ACTRESS ONE
"If Kevin's assistant asks if you
want to go to a private party later
--don't go."

Actress One proceeds on nonchalantly to Craft Services.

ACTRESS TWO also sees Lawrence's distress, and stops in front of him talking to, but not at him, like in a spy movie.

ACTRESS TWO
You didn't know?

Lawrence stares straight ahead still holding his salute.

LAWRENCE
Know what?

ACTRESS TWO
"Kevin trolls during the show."

Actress Two now exits across to the Craft Services tent.

Lawrence's bushy eyebrows move like two fuzzy caterpillars as the only person left On Set comes to him.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
You don't remember me do you?
(no response, explains)
You were Lead in my student film.

This memory snaps Lawrence out of his stupor.

LAWRENCE
"Red Pill Radio" Towson University.
You're on Crew here? Congrats.

They shake hands.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Yeah, pretty sweet gig, except --
(looks down ashamed)
he does it to everyone.

LAWRENCE
And "everyone" looks away?

Production Assistant looks away.

LAWRENCE
Would you mind getting the Set
Medic, please? I am literally, sick
to my stomach.

Production Assistant exits. Lawrence *sighs* remembering.

LAWRENCE
I signed the union's required Sick
Report and walked off the Set.

Lawrence removes his beret and wrings it in his hands.

LAWRENCE

For two months, I refused all auditions thinking maybe I should just quit if this kind of behavior is enabled by all cast and crew. Then *Harvey Weinstein* hit, and two weeks later, *Spacey's* past caught up with him. I was afraid to tell anyone at the time because Kevin was so powerful. It's all about control you know. But then the *Me Too* movement took off so "me too" could finally post on Facebook. Every female actor friend sent me condolences saying, "Sorry you had to go through that." Male actors emailed back jokes --bad ones. If you watch that episode, it Jump Cuts when he's in front of me.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BASEMENT NOW AS A SET - 2018

Fake walls with matching paint were built to close-in and cover the DVD bookcases making the room look like an efficiency. The bottom of the stairs has been closed-off with a matching piece of painted drywall with a fake door. Commercial carpeting pieces cover the floor's linoleum. This Set has a bed, table, refrigerator, and microwave.

Lawrence, still **65**, sits in a wheelchair wearing a t-shirt saying "*To Quote Hamlet, Act III, Scene III - NO.*"

LAWRENCE

Cut! That's a Wrap.

MALE ACTOR and FEMALE ACTOR hug. The INDIE CREW high-five.

CINEMATOGRAPHER, 50, going bald, breaks down his 4X-camera.

CINEMATOGRAPHER

How's the back?

LAWRENCE

Still back there.

CINEMATOGRAPHER

I'll upload video and audio files to a hard-drive and drop it off tomorrow. Need help Striking Set?

Actors and Crew pack up to exit the basement's outside door.

LAWRENCE

Nah, I'm already sitting down.

Lawrence breaks-down the fake walls with a hammer and pulls them down to him while rolling his wheelchair backwards.

DEZI

"You're wasting time and money.
No one's ever going to see any of
your short films or buy a script."

Dezi came in through the basement door and stands hands-on-hips wearing a *MAGA* hat. Her face contorts in pure loathing.

LAWRENCE

It's like acting. If you're in it
for the money --change careers.

DEZI

It's not a job!

Lawrence pulls on a fake-wall and it falls towards him. He catches it *oof-laughing* while rolling backwards.

LAWRENCE

Sure feels like one.

DEZI

I don't understand you?

LAWRENCE

Obviously. Look, the first time you walk off a Set, you already know if you're walking onto a second one. You either love it --or you don't.

DEZI

I, don't.

LAWRENCE

And I get that. But I also appreciate you letting me do this.

DEZI

Do what, waste time?

LAWRENCE

At least I get paid to waste it.

DEZI

Half, half-wit! You were supposed to retire with full pay then lay around taking care of me.

LAWRENCE

Now that, would be a waste.

Dezi spins angry and *rips* the drywall fake-cover off the stairwell entrance, then *stomps* up, one stair at a time.

Lawrence rolls up the floor's carpet pieces with his feet.

LAWRENCE

Thank you for your support.

Door now *slams*. Lawrence slaps both hands over his mouth.

RETURN TO.

INT. SAME LOS ANGELES VEGAN RESTAURANT - STILL IN 2022

Mauricio and Lawrence finished their meal. Waitress appears.

Lawrence reaches for his wallet. Mauricio holds up a hand.

MAURICIO

I got this. If, you finish your Odyssey, Odysseus.

LAWRENCE

Ulysses. Homer versus Tennyson. Who described Ulysses as "an old man."

MAURICIO

Now I understand why your "old lady" threw you out.

This is the first time we see Lawrence's emotions, he's mad.

Mauricio makes the circling hand-gesture, *Continue*.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BEDROOM - AFTER HIS BACK SURGERY

Lawrence, 65 again, is recovered from surgery and asleep near one edge of his huge mattress breathing on a CPAP machine.

His closed door is thrown open and overhead light snaps on.

He sits up, but is yanked back by his air-hose. He tries to talk, but negative air pressure sucks his words back in. His eyes adjust to see Dezi standing above him wearing sweats.

DEZI

Take me to the hospital.

INT. NORTHERN VIRGINIA INOVA HOSPITAL - LATER SAME NIGHT

Emergency Room waiting area has red lights rotating outside its huge wall of glass as a new ambulance arrives.

Lawrence sits watching and studying everyone and everything as an actor: *Observe, observe, always observe.*

DEZI'S PSYCHIATRIST, female, 40s, in lab coat, approaches.

Lawrence fights to get out of the too-low chair.

DEZI'S PSYCHIATRIST

She had passive-aggressive urges.

LAWRENCE

She wanted --to hurt herself?

DEZI'S PSYCHIATRIST

Has she been under a lot stress?

LAWRENCE

Her parents died recently leaving her a large inheritance. Her small attorney's office has a "Three's a crowd" interplay. I've been trying to get her to quit, but says she can't, "the money's too good."

DEZI'S PSYCHIATRIST

I admitted her. Go home. We'll call if things change.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Lawrence is asleep wearing his CPAP mask. Phone rings. He grabs its receiver yanking his mask off with other hand. Machine's air-flow hisses as he clears his throat coughing.

LAWRENCE

Hell --Hello?

DEZI'S NURSE (FILTERED)

Visiting hours are 5 to 7. Bring proper I.D.

LAWRENCE

Huh? What? Is she coming home?

DEZI'S NURSE (FILTERED)
"She" wants clean clothes and her laptop. But first, I need to ask you a personal question.

LAWRENCE
Shoot.

DEZI'S NURSE (FILTERED)
Do you own a gun?

LAWRENCE
Uh --yes, a small automatic?

DEZI'S NURSE (FILTERED)
Can you give it to someone, or at least hide it well?

LAWRENCE
She wanted to --? Yes, of course!

The phone *disconnects*. He doesn't hang up staring at it.

INT. DEZI'S PSYCHIATRIC WING CHECK-IN - THAT NIGHT

Elevator doors *ding*, then open. Lawrence exits carrying a floral overnight bag. There is a line of VISITORS looking like airport boarding. Lawrence waits last in line at a Security Desk with uniformed SECURITY guard. One-by-one, a Visitor is escorted through a secure door by a VOLUNTEER.

Lawrence waits his turn, then hands over driver's license.

SECURITY
Bag on table.

LAWRENCE
(mimics same timber)
No its not.

Lawrence smiles. Security does not. Lawrence *coughs* and puts "bag on table." Security goes through it, then hands back license to Lawrence while handing the bag to Dezi's Nurse.

DEZI'S NURSE
Walk this way.

Dezi's Nurse uses a key-card to open secure door. It *buzzes* open. Both walk through it. It *slams* shut like a jail-cell.

INT. DEZI'S PSYCHIATRIC WING - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence follows Dezi's Nurse who leads him down long halls.

As they pass rooms, Lawrence looks inside their open doors to see PATIENTS who appear drugged, detached, and desolate.

Both arrive at a closed door. Dezi's Nurse enters announcing.

DEZI'S NURSE
"It's here."

Lawrence follows Nurse inside pantomiming her words puzzled?

INT. DEZI'S PSYCHIATRIC ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dezi's Nurse sets overnight bag on a tall dresser and exits.

Dezi sits on a regular double-bed blank-staring, sedated.

Lawrence looks around the room to see full drapes, a bureau, large paintings, and a big-screen TV mounted on far wall.

LAWRENCE
Wow, looks like a hotel room. Know
when you're coming home?

DEZI
I am --"home."

Lawrence steps back shocked, then closes his eyes tight.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL'S ORIGINAL STAND-ALONE PSYCHIATRIC WING - DAY

Brick building with tall rectangular windows. No parking lot, only a u-shaped driveway with park benches within its grass.

CAPTION: *Northern Virginia Mental Health Center, 1977*

INT. NORTHERN VIRGINIA MENTAL HEALTH CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Exam room looks more like an office with freshly painted cinderblock walls, exam table, and a desk in the middle.

Lawrence, before his legal name change, was born **LARRY, 25**, with a five o'clock reddish-beard shadow and short messy strawberry-blonde hair. His face is pallor and his expensive business suit hangs off mere skin and bones at 90 pounds.

His brother Robert, now **33**, is tall, strong, vibrant, a bear of a man. He sits beside Larry *tapping* a foot nervous.

LARRY'S PSYCHIATRIST, 40s female, enters wearing a lab coat and sits at the clean empty desk. She opens Larry's file.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
Can you take care of yourself?

Larry looks bewildered, lost. Robert shakes his head sad.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
Your brother co-signed our papers, but you must also sign them. If you do, you give up all legal right to leave this facility until both doctors and staff certify you as Cleared. Do you understand?

She slides the forms across her desk. Larry answers robotic.

LARRY
Must, come, back.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
Where?

LARRY
Any "where" --
(signs without looking)
but here.

RETURN TO.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA HOME - AFTER DEZI'S HOSPITAL RELEASE

Door opens and Lawrence, still **65**, enters carrying earlier overnight bag followed by Dezi, **58**, wearing different sweats.

LAWRENCE
How can I help you?

Dezi elbows hard past him and down the hall into her room *slamming* its door. Lawrence follows tilting his head.

INT. DEZI'S VIRGINIA BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Her room is beyond a mess. She's now a Hoarder. Trash and unopened delivery boxes are literally everywhere. Her double-bed has no sheets, just a dirty throw blanket. Room's only window has full boxes stacked in front of it with clothes over them obscuring any outside view. (*no embellishment*)

Dezi lays flat on her back using a cell phone perched on her protruding belly as an arched-shelf playing on-line games.

Lawrence opens her door, then yanks his head away hit by the stench of her pigsty. He drops her bag holding his breath.

LAWRENCE

*"Had to bring an exterminator in,
mice were under your carpet."*

Time's up, he has to breathe. As a result, he coughs.

LAWRENCE

You wouldn't let me clean up while you were away. But now that you're back, can I at least throw out all your old garbage? I have to hold my breath when I walk by your room.

DEZI

Stop exaggerating!

LAWRENCE

I'm not. And you're not going back to your hostile workplace that caused all this.

(no response, explains)

I went to your office and told your boss you were not coming back. I told him he could have prevented this so is responsible for your medical insurance through the end of the year and your salary through the end of this month. I made him an offer, I wouldn't let him refuse.

He waits for some sign of gratitude. None coming. He sighs.

She looks up with eyes dilated on major drugs. She has the same exact zombie-stare Larry had forty years ago.

DEZI

Shut the door on your way out.

LAWRENCE

You've been shutting the world and me out for years. We need to talk about the fact you are now a hoarder and on-line shopaholic. You completely changed when you got your Parent's inheritance check.

She keeps playing her game not paying attention to him.

DEZI

"I don't need you anymore."

Lawrence steps back in shock, then grins at her "joke."

LAWRENCE

Didn't know you were supposed to
"need" me, thought you were
supposed to "want" me.

DEZI

I can afford to hire anyone I want
to do anything to my house now.

LAWRENCE

"Our" house.

(no response)

Look, you locked yourself in here
years ago and locked me out there.
We never talk anymore. Why?

(no response, sighs)

I really do know what you're going
through. I also know you've been
sick a long time so it will take a
much longer time for you to get
well. If, you want to. Do you?

(no response, points)

I went to Social Security and got
you Disability forms. Fill them out
and I'll sign as witness.

She ignores him. Lawrence drops the envelope on her bed and exits closing the door. She yells from inside.

DEZI (O.S.)

"I'm not a hoarder!"

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

He's asleep on his *CPAP* machine. Its *breathing* is rhythmic.

Door *bursts* open and overhead light *snaps on*.

Lawrence sits upright then yanked back by his air-hose. He pulls his mask off shielding his eyes as hose's air *hisses*.

Dezi stands in the open doorway backlit, an imposing sight.

DEZI

"YOU NEED TO MOVE OUT!"

Dezi exits *slamming* the door while leaving overhead light on, then sound of her own bedroom door *slamming*.

Lawrence puts *CPAP* machine on pause, turns off light, and gets back in bed. Sound of snoring, then he chokes *coughing*.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. NORTHERN VIRGINIA MENTAL HEALTH CENTER - 1977 CONT'D

Larry, 25 again, put on healthy weight and is clean shaven. He's sitting in a chair across from His Psychiatrist and appears to be *choking*.

LARRY
Can't, breathe.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
You can breathe. Memory recall is trapped in your muscles. Breathe.

Larry pushes back in his chair and grabs at throat. No air, still can't breathe. He jumps-up *knocking* his chair over.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
It's okay, you're okay. What did you remember?

LARRY
(picks up chair, sits)
She --was choking me.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
"She?" Your mother. Why?

LARRY
The day after my dad died ...

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
When you were eighteen.

LARRY
(nods sad)
She yelled I was the cause of all the trouble in their relationship.
My own mother choked me screaming,
(hands imitate strangling)
"I wish you were never born!"

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
Did you fight back?

LARRY
Man's not supposed to hit a woman, let alone his own mother?

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
How long did your abuse last?

LARRY
Forever.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
Your dad was your protector. With
him gone, you became --vulnerable.

RETURN TO.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BASEMENT - AFTER DEZI'S RELEASE

Lawrence, again **65**, sits staring at Mac's screen remembering Dezi bursting into his bedroom screaming the night before. He becomes aware he is being watched and looks up the stairs.

Dezi stands in the open doorway, hands-on-hips, backlit.

LAWRENCE
May I --*help* you?

DEZI
Just making sure you're still
alive.

LAWRENCE
Wishful thinking?

DEZI
"Same as when I come into your
bedroom at night watching you to
check if you're still breathing."

LAWRENCE
You come into my bedroom, while I'm
asleep, to stand over me, watching?
(no response)
Want to talk about last night?

DEZI
What about "last night?"

LAWRENCE
When you came into my room ...

DEZI
"I never came into your room!"

LAWRENCE
Screaming, "You need to move out?"

DEZI

"Why would you lie like that?"

Dezi stomps up the stairs angry *slamming* its door closed.

Lawrence stares at it wondering if he's going crazy, again.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Asleep on his *CPAP* machine, its *breathing* is rhythmic.

Door *bursts* open and overhead light *snaps on*.

Lawrence sits upright being yanked back by air-hose. He pulls his mask off shielding his eyes. Its air *hisses*.

Dezi stands in his doorway backlit, now a terrifying sight.

DEZI

"YOU'RE NOT GIVING ME WHAT I NEED!"

LAWRENCE

Huh, what? What do you need?

DEZI

"For you to tell me I'm right, even when you know I'm wrong!"

LAWRENCE

Do you have any idea how crazy that sounds?

DEZI

"THIS ISN'T WORKING OUT! YOU NEED TO FIND ANOTHER PLACE TO LIVE!"

Dezi exits *slamming* his door but leaving overhead light on, then sound of her own bedroom door *slamming*.

Lawrence puts *CPAP* machine on pause, stealths to his door, silently turns its lock, *click*, then turns off the light. Sound of him getting back in bed and *CPAP* machine breathing again. Machine's rhythmic breathing *skips* like an LP-record.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. NORTHERN VIRGINIA MENTAL HEALTH CENTER - 1977 CONT'D

Larry, 25 again, and His Psychiatrist sit same. He tears-up.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
Do these memories still scare you?

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

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

LARRY
Yeah? Well, least I didn't attach
mine to plumbing or compulsive hand-
washing --just eating.
(laugh-snorts)
What could go wrong with that?

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

LARRY
Do you get paid by the initial?

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
Every time your subconscious wanted
to remember overwhelming memories,
your conscious sought to escape
them. Hence, your panic attacks.

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

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
You read the brochure, good. People
can become bodybuilders to feel
strong enough to physically protect
themselves. Is that what you did?

LARRY
And take Karate? Sure, makes sense.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST
Mountain climbing, motorcycle
racing, SCUBA diving, skydiving.
Did you have a death wish?

LARRY

Life wish. Didn't think I'd make it past thirty because every time I felt good about myself, I'd hear my mom's voice yelling not to. So I'd screw up on purpose, and boy did I, a lot.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST

Know why we kept you in here this long?

LARRY

Because my roommate killed himself. One night he told me this was his third time in, said he felt safe here, said it was his "home." It's many things, but never that.

His Psychiatrist writes in his file, then looks up.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST

I believe your passive-aggressive conflict is where you can cope with it now. You've done well.

LARRY

Thanks. But no one could go through this much crap alone. I had help.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST

It's unfortunate your brother's wife wouldn't let him visit you.

LARRY

She has her own problems.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST

Does your girlfriend still visit?

LARRY

Just, friend. And yes, everyday.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST

Do you love her?

LARRY

I don't know what that word means.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST

Do you have feelings for her?

LARRY

How can you not have feelings for
someone who stands by you while
other so-called friends run away?

HIS PSYCHIATRIST

(closes his file)

I believe you're ready to leave us,
but not ready to stay by yourself.

LARRY

I'll discuss options with her.

HIS PSYCHIATRIST

You're lucky to have her. How did
you two meet?

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. WATERGATE HOTEL PENTHOUSE BALCONY - NIGHT

Penthouse of the infamous hotel at 2650 Virginia Ave NW
overlooks *The Kennedy Center*. Hotel's U-shaped bright-light
reflection is mirrored in its *Potomac River* below.

CAPTION: *Watergate Hotel, Washington DC, 1977*

Larry, 25, is a beefcake bodybuilder wearing a smoking jacket
with ascot. He looks like a strawberry-blonde *Robert Redford*.
He leans on the railing lost in thought holding a wine glass.

Inside the apartment, PARTYGOERS, 20s-50s, in 1977 evening
wear, men in leisure suits, women in *Jackie O* dresses, hold
crystal-stemware and laugh. One of them looks out of place.

PAULA SANTANA, Hispanic, 24, skinny, childhood-acne pock-
marked face, has a huge nose holding up big glasses. She
wears a simple floral summer dress. She draws a deep breath,
slides door open, then walks out and up behind Larry foxing.

PAULA

Don't fall.

Larry spins surprised *sloshing* his drink onto her dress.

Awkward silence, then their eyes meet and both *laugh*.

LARRY

You first.

Larry pulls a stylish silk handkerchief out of breast-pocket
and begins blotting her dress. Paula looks down surprised. He
looks down to see he is blotting her breasts. He *coughs*.

LARRY

Sorry.

PAULA

I'm not.

Paula sticks out her tongue playfully. Larry notices the tip of her tongue is not rounded or smooth, but squared with large bumps all over its top surface.

PAULA

Going to our Convention?

Larry is still distracted by Paula's misshapen tongue.

LARRY

In Miami? Hadn't planned on it.

PAULA

Our Whip just cancelled. 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 of the sliding door. She's a "10" and knows it.

CAROL

Who are you hiding out here?

PAULA

Recruiting. Our newest member, to be the Convention Whip.

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

CAROL

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

LARRY

Sure, sounds like fun. When?

CAROL

I'll go change the reservations.

Carol exits back inside sashaying exaggerated. Larry watches her buttocks move back and forth like an automaton.

PAULA

How will you get there?

LARRY

Huh, where? Oh, uh --drive?

PAULA

Want help paying for gas tomorrow?

LARRY

Sure, sounds like fun.

(snaps back to reality)

Wait?! Tomorrow-tomorrow?

PAULA

Pick me up at five.

LARRY

"Five?!" In the morning?!

(points to floor)

This morning?

EXT. INTERSTATE 95 IN THE DEEP SOUTH - NEXT MORNING

Perfect driving day, beautiful blue sky and billowy clouds.

A 1975 Porsche 914 speeds along with a CB-radio antennae on its engine lid and luggage strapped to rear lid's trunk-rack.

INT. LARRY'S PORSCHE - MOMENTS LATER

Larry drives in jeans and a *Star Wars* t-shirt wearing white leather driving gloves and *Easy Rider* yellow-tint sunglasses. He drives one-handed reaching his free hand out to grab an imaginary throat. His voice imitates *James Earl Jones*.

LARRY

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

Paula sits sideways as passenger with huge purple sunglasses. She pulls her glasses down onto her nose-tip to look overtop.

Larry makes his free hand throw away empty air then turns his chest to proudly point at a blue star-field promo-button on his t-shirt reading "*May The Force Be With You.*"

LARRY

First 500 to see it in D.C.! Seen
it eight times since. Great movie.

Paula's not impressed. Larry smiles becoming *Peter Cushing*.

LARRY

"Now witness, the power of this
fully operational battle station."

Larry downshifts and Porsche takes off. Paula holds on.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF PORSCHE ON INTERSTATE 95 - CONTINUOUS

Porsche weaves through traffic speeding like at *NASCAR*.

PAULA

I'm not afraid.

LARRY

(as *Yoda*)

"You will be. --You, will, be."

INT. LARRY'S MIAMI HOTEL ROOM - ARRIVAL NEXT MORNING

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

Door opens. Larry enters carrying a heavy duffle bag with "SCUBA" printed on it. He's followed by a CUBAN VALET in a red vest with two suitcases who lays both on second double-bed. Larry hands a \$20.00 bill to Valet who smiles and exits.

Larry goes to the room's only tall narrow window and looks out, then straight down. His room is on the eighteenth floor. He smiles, then jumps back like tasered. Stunned, he peers out again cautious, only to jump back even further. He lays down on the empty bed, gets comfortable, and closes his eyes. He exhales tired, snores, then jumps up hyperventilating.

LARRY

Remember What?!

He steps right then left, can't decide, and freezes.

TIME-LAPSE CLOCK: Dial on nightstand's clock reads 10:00 a.m. Its big hand circles around twice to now show 12:00 noon.

Door re-opens and Carol enters with same Cuban Valet now carrying her two suitcases who lays both on the first bed. Carol tips Valet who exits. She pops open a suitcase.

CAROL

Hey, roomie.

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

LARRY
We're sleeping --together?

CAROL
Shhh, don't tell my husband.

LARRY
Your "husband?" The County Chair?!

CAROL
Tell me something, I don't want to
know. He was our Whip, now you are.
All the other rooms are booked.
Don't worry, I don't bite --
(unbuttons blouse)
unless asked.

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

LARRY
You're undress--?! Wait! I, I'll
wait outside till you're ...

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

CAROL
What? Ready? I'm always ready. I
need a shower. Wanna' join me?

Carol kicks off her shoes and skips into the bathroom with
new undies in hand closing its door.

CAROL (O.S.)
I meant for dinner!

Larry absentmindedly backs up near the window, glances out,
and sets a new broad jump record. He recovers as *Rod Serling*.

LARRY
"That's the signpost up ahead. Your
next stop, the Twilight Zone."

INT. LARRY'S MIAMI HOTEL ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Room is dark. Larry is asleep on his back in second bed,
snoring. He stirs, *mumbles* happy, then smiles.

Both eyes jolt open. He throws back covers to discover Carol
is giving him a blowjob. He grabs her head, but she gets
double wrist-control to hold his hands down while looking up
smiling as best she can. She is a Pro. His eyes cross as he
acquiesces to hormones, then slow-closes both eyes smiling.

INT. LARRY'S MIAMI HOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

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

LARRY

Best dream, I never had.

He tosses his t-shirt to stand in just pajama pants. He flexes all his muscles looking in a full-view wall mirror.

MIRROR IMAGE: What stares back is LITTLE LARRY, 8 years old with a crew-cut, no shirt, obese, having multiple fat rolls. Little Larry's face is flushed looking stressed and unhappy.

Adult Larry is disgusted and does Martial Arts Kata Forms angry. He finishes, coils down, then jumps up front-snap kicking the ceiling denting its drywall. He lands perspiring.

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

CAROL

I, want, more!

Carol pushes Larry back onto bed. She yanks down his pajamas then goes down like a cannibal who hasn't eaten in years. Larry is on his elbows watching her maniacal head-movements.

LARRY

Uh --morning?

RETURN TO.

INT. MARRIAGE COUNSELOR OFFICE - AFTER DEZI'S RELEASE, 2020

Small office with desk and a manager's leather chair. A long couch has two end tables each with its own box of Kleenex.

COUNSELOR, 60s, in business suit, granny glasses on a neck lanyard, sits at desk writing. She looks up at wall clock, drops her glasses, puts on a face mask, and opens the door.

Lawrence, 66, longer hair, and Dezi, 58, now with a huge purple butterfly tattoo inside one forearm had her greying hair high-lighted purple. Both enter wearing surgical masks. Lawrence sits on one end of the couch. Dezi sits on opposite end. They lean away from each other. Body languages speak.

Counselor sits in her chair with a legal pad and pen.

All Three sit silent as the wall clock ticks.

COUNSELOR

Pretty tattoo. "New beginnings?"

(no response)

You've been married for --?

LAWRENCE

I don't drink, smoke, and try not to curse. I never hit her or had an affair, but now after thirty years, she wants me to move out.

DEZI

"Only said it once!"

LAWRENCE

Actually --twice.

COUNSELOR

Where is he supposed to go?

DEZI

"He won't give me what I need!"

COUNSELOR

Which is --?

No response. Clock ticks waiting. Counselor coughs.

DEZI

"He Won't Kiss Me!"

LAWRENCE

Honey, you stopped taking showers and brushing your teeth. And then there's always --frickin' Covid!

COUNSELOR

What else caused your detachment?

DEZI

"I stayed late at my office after everyone left! It was the only time I could get any work done! When I finally got home, I was exhausted, so I crashed on week-ends!"

LAWRENCE

It didn't matter how nice I tried to be, you've always snapped at me. It almost seems you believe I am the cause of all your problems.

DEZI

Shopping relaxed me, I have money!
(angry to Lawrence)
"Then you started refusing my
deliveries! I needed them!"

COUNSELOR

Are you aware you're yelling?
(no response, clock ticks)
When your husband made this
appointment, he said you've slept
in separate bedrooms for years.

DEZI

Because he snores!

COUNSELOR

Has he been tested for sleep apnea
and/or been prescribed a CPAP?

DEZI

Yes, yes, and yes! But now he looks
and sounds like a fighter pilot!

COUNSELOR

When was the last time you had sex?

Dezi starts *crying*. Lawrence hands her his Kleenex box but
she grabs a tissue angry from her own box.

LAWRENCE

Decade.

DEZI

"Because I'm fat!"

LAWRENCE

It's more than that, honey.

COUNSELOR

Like what for instance?

LAWRENCE

Other than cutting off her boobs?

Dezi folds her arms angry and turns her back to Lawrence.

DEZI

"I had breast reduction, big deal!
It cost more to sew my nipples back
on, but they wouldn't have any
feeling, so I left them off!
(to Counselor)
I saved money!"

COUNSELOR
And your husband agreed?

DEZI
"Didn't tell him, didn't need to!"

LAWRENCE
After her parents died, she had a personality change when she got their large inheritance check.

DEZI
"I'm not a failure!"

LAWRENCE
Her mother taught her wealth is the only sign of true success.

DEZI
"He is!"

COUNSELOR
What?

DEZI
"A failure! He spends all his retirement money on stupid movies!"

COUNSELOR
He buys them?

DEZI
"He makes them!"

LAWRENCE
I shoot short films to get my writings noticed by entering them into festivals to win awards.

COUNSELOR
How many Shorts have you made?

LAWRENCE
Eight.

COUNSELOR
How many awards?

LAWRENCE
Two hundred.

COUNSELOR
Aren't you proud of your husband?

DEZI

"Why, no one's going to buy one?!"

COUNSELOR

Have you seen "one?"

DEZI

Why?! No one's going to buy ...!

COUNSELOR

Because he's your husband?

DEZI

"Who's supposed to take care of me by doing whatever I want whenever I need it however I say it!"

COUNSELOR

Is there any common ground you two could meet on?

DEZI

"Where?! He spends all day everyday working on his stupid screenplays!"

LAWRENCE

Writing is like breathing to me. I have to do it. And apparently, I do it very well.

DEZI

"Ask him how many awards his stupid scripts have earned, go on, ask! He'll tell you, he tells everyone!"

Counselor raises an eyebrow at Lawrence who mumbles.

LAWRENCE

Hundred.

DEZI

See?!

COUNSELOR

How many have you read?

DEZI

"I don't like how he writes."

LAWRENCE

How would you know?

DEZI

"They're all sinners!"

LAWRENCE

She believes Hollywood is evil.

DEZI

"Who should burn in Hell which is
why they have those forest fires!"

LAWRENCE

Honey, you know my professor says
I'm one of his best students and I
need to go to L.A.. I'm that good.
Don't you understand? The only
thing I don't want on my epitaph
is, "He never even tried."

COUNSELOR

Would you consider letting him
visit there for just a month?

DEZI

"Absolutely Not!"

LAWRENCE

She believes I won't come back.

DEZI

He won't, because he'll have to
drive there! He, Can't, Fly!

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. AIRLINE CABIN AT MIAMI AIRPORT - 1977 CONT'D

Plane is full of DELEGATES from their Miami Convention.

Paula and Larry, 25, walk down the plane's aisle. She sits by
a window and he sits beside her smiling. He loves flying.

LARRY

Thanks for telling me about the
Convention's vacation special.

STEWARDESS closes door to its mechanical *locking*-sound.

Larry snaps his head to the door as it *hisses* shut.

FLASHBACK MEMORY: A closet door *slams* shut in Little Larry's
face. Crying, his tiny hands beat on it in the darkness.

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

PAULA

Someone said you're a pilot?

LARRY

Huh, what? Oh, single-engine fixed-wing and glider. Also a skydiver.

PAULA

Have a death wish?

Plane jolts forward taxiing. Larry goes ram-rod in his seat.

LARRY

Do now.

Cabin tilts back as their plane takes off.

Larry's hands go white-knuckle gripping his armrests.

LARRY

Talk. Talk to me. Say something, anything, nothing, everything -- even about yourself. Talk!

PAULA

Me? You sure?

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

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LARRY'S MIAMI HOTEL ROOM - THAT MORNING

Larry and Carol are dressed and ready to leave Miami.

Same Cuban Valet loads their luggage on a cart and exits.

CAROL

Sorry, hubby needs me back home for a political dinner. After a week in bed with you, I'd rather fly away to your Bahamas get-away.

Larry *slams* the door and spins to her angry.

LARRY

When?!

CAROL

Whenever you get back, silly.

Carol walks fingers up between his pecs. He *slaps* it away.

LARRY

You're not going to leave your husband are you?!

CAROL

Not that simple, beefcake.

LARRY

Yes, it is. I don't have affairs!

Larry yanks the door open and pushes Carol outside.

LARRY

Good --Bye!

Larry *slams* the door shut and nods satisfied, then goes to look out the window. He jumps clear across the room angry.

LARRY

I don't want to remember!

He exits. The door *thuds* closed behind him like a coffin lid.

RETURN TO.

INT. LARRY'S PLANE FLIGHT TO THE BAHAMAS - 1977 CONT'D

Plane's cabin speaker clicks on. Paula stops talking.

CAPTAIN (FILTERED)

"Folks, we picked up a tailwind and just set a new record, Miami to Freeport in fifteen minutes."

Passengers *applaud*. Larry looks straight up grateful.

LARRY

Thank you.

EXT. FREEPORT RUNWAY, THEIR PLANE LANDS - CONTINUOUS

Jet lowers to nape-of-the-earth flying in over the ocean.

Water is so clear all can see its sand bottom with large exotic fish swimming. Jet flies in over its beach to land.

PAULA (O.S.)

You're welcome.

EXT. XANADU HOTEL'S BEACH IN THE BAHAMAS - LATER SAME DAY

Beautiful white sand behind the *Howard Hugh's* hotel with its own Cabana Bar. Miami Delegates, in various 1977 swimsuits, play along the beach both in and out of its ocean.

Two sand-chairs sit side-by-side on the beach. Larry sits in one wearing American-flag *Speedo* trunks and checking two sets of snorkeling gear. His morning workout left him pumped.

SLOW MOTION: Paula cross-ankle model-walks in an unbuttoned white linen beach shirt with a matching floppy sun-hat and white-framed sunglasses. An ocean breeze blows open her shirt to reveal a white low-cut bikini. She is thin, but curvy.

Larry looks up and his mouth falls open. He drops his gear.

PAULA
Like my outfit?
(model-twirls)
Bought it in the hotel's gift shop.

She takes off her shirt to sit in the second chair. She put on suntan oil earlier so her dark skin glistens. Larry hands her a banana daiquiri. They *clink-toast*, then sip.

PAULA
Ahhh, just what my doctor ordered.

LARRY
"Doctor?"

PAULA
He monitors my Thyroid condition.
He said that's what gave me a bumpy tongue. It also gave me a lisp as a child. The kids made fun of me, so my school put me in speech class.

LARRY
(spit-takes)
Really?! That's so, I mean, I had a speech impediment! I couldn't say my R's, stuttered like Elmer Fudd. My mom made me talk in front of her friends so they could laugh at me. I spent five years in speech therapy every day for one hour after elementary school learning to pronounce each and every word in my head before I say them. I still do.

PAULA
Remember the tape recorders?

LARRY

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

PAULA

We don't sound like we think.

Larry's head snaps to jet engines going *full-thrust* take-off at the nearby airport. He shudders, then recovers, grabs his gear, and pulls Paula to the ocean. They run-in *laughing*.

Cabana Bar's radio plays the original *Magnum, P.I.* TV-theme.

MUSIC MONTAGE: Larry teaches Paula to use his gear. She floats face-down in mask and snorkel kicking fins with Larry supporting her abs. He looks at her butt, but unlike the T.V. version, he doesn't roll his eyes. An orange sun sets behind them as they run *laughing* into the hotel holding their gear.

INT. LARRY'S BAHAMAS SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Footsteps out in the hallway. Fumbling of a metal key in the door until it opens. Larry and Paula enter and drop all their gear. Both are tipsy.

LARRY

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

They now stand in a small dining area with a separate full kitchen. Beyond it is a living room with a TV-Entertainment Center, bar, couch and two chairs. All opens onto a balcony.

PAULA

Mine sure ain't like this! Who's your assigned roommate, Mondale?

LARRY

Was supposed to be your National Chairman, but he got called back to his home state at the last moment.

PAULA

Probably for embezzlement.

An ocean breeze *blows* the balcony's curtains apart. Sun is setting with a reddish sky. Fluffy clouds float as ocean waves *crash*. Larry is drawn to them like a moth to flame.

EXT. LARRY'S BAHAMA HOTEL BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER

Balcony has its own mini-bar and radio. Larry enters out.

Paula enters behind him with her head down embarrassed.

PAULA
Would you --be my --first kiss?

LARRY
(spins laughing)
"First kiss?!" Yeah right, that's a
good one. What are you --a virgin?

Paula nods sad. Larry tries to take it all back.

LARRY
No! I didn't mean to make fun of --

Paula looks up with kitten eyes.

Larry turns on mini-bar's radio. *Girl from Ipanema* music plays. He moves in slow to cradle the back of Paula's head with one hand as he pulls her in close with his other. He smiles warm, kisses her gentle, long, and passionate, then steps back. Her eyes remain closed as she sways dreamy.

PAULA
Just like in --my romance novels.
(eyes snap open)
Yeah, Baby!

Paula grabs his head as she throws her legs up around his hips locking ankles. She smash-kisses. He stumbles backwards catching his balance while mumble-kissing resistance.

PAULA
Shaaad appp.

Larry swings her into his muscled-arms and carries Paula into the bedroom's separate sliding-door as both kiss frantic.

INT. LARRY'S BAHAMA HOTEL BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Their hurricane hit. Beds are torn apart, nightstand lamp on floor, items knocked off bureau, pictures askew on walls.

Larry's head lies propped-up on pillows. Paula has her head on his chest stroking his pecs. Both are under a sheet.

PAULA
My tongue-bumps aren't --gross?

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

Paula smiles disappearing under the covers. Larry goes cross-eyed. Knock at the front door. He leaps from the bed taking the sheet with him. Paula lies nude on her stomach watching him exit. She cradles her chin in a palm.

PAULA
Men.

INT. LARRY'S BAHAMA LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Larry enters now wearing the bedsheet as a Toga and opens the front door. XANADU BELLBOY, older Islander, pushes in a serving cart with cloche-hat covered plates and a bottle of champagne. Larry signs his check. Xanadu Bellboy exits.

Larry lifts a dish-lid, sees its french fries, grabs one, and goes to put in his mouth.

FLASHBACK MEMORY: A wet bar of soap is shoved into Little Larry's mouth repeatedly. His hands fight it being choked.

Adult Larry spits french fry out and drops lid jumping back.

LARRY
Why do I have to remember?!
(surprised, then paces)
Come on, figure this out.
(snaps fingers)
Only eat --what I prepare.

Larry pushes the cart outside and locks the door.

PAULA (O.S.)
Who are you talking to?

LARRY
Wrong order, sent it back!

PAULA (O.S.)
What am I supposed to munch on?!

Larry side-shuffle-dances into the bedroom smiling.

LARRY
I'll think of something!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA BASEMENT WORKSTATION - NOW 2021

Lawrence, 70, looking like L.A., sits at his computer typing.

Dezi, 62, so obese her forearm butterfly-tattoo stretched, wears a dirty t-shirt and sweatpants. Her silvery hair is cut shorter with even brighter purple streaks added. She waddles down the stairs as her swollen feet hurt all the time now.

DEZI

"What you do does not interest me."

And just like that, what love he had left for her is gone.

LAWRENCE

"Oh you know that's going in a script."

DEZI

I think we've gone as far as we can go. I want a grey divorce.

LAWRENCE

Too late, your hair's purple.

No response. Lawrence looks at Dezi. She's serious. He holds a key down. A string of "?????" stream across his screen.

LAWRENCE

What?! No you don't? You can't! I mean, after thirty-five years?

DEZI

I've thought about this a lot, and --I don't want you anymore.

LAWRENCE

But a divorce? Now? I mean, did I do something wrong? Did I not do something right?

DEZI

To the house, yes. To me, no.

LAWRENCE

Have you found someone else?

DEZI

Doesn't matter.

LAWRENCE

Does to me! Is it your money? I don't want it!

DEZI

I can't list specifics.

LAWRENCE
T-r-y!

DEZI
Don't want to.

LAWRENCE
Hey, I think I deserve, no, I
believe you owe me, after this many
pretty god damn good years of
marriage, a solid reason!

DEZI
(pure revulsion)
Because when I see you eat, when I
watch you sleep, when I look at you
--I want to smash your face in!

Dezi spins to angry-toddle up the stairs one-at-a-time.

LAWRENCE
Yeah?! Okay --don't watch me sleep!

Basement door *slams* shut. Lawrence glares up at it.

LAWRENCE
Being trapped for a year in this
hell-hole with you, living in our
basement during a Pandemic --felt
like I was in a God Damn prison!

INT. LAWRENCE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS AS A DREAM FANTASY

Lawrence rushes upstairs and grabs a butcher knife in the kitchen to stab, blade up, into Dezi's gut. He yanks up on it disemboweling her. Dezi glares pure hate, then *spits* in his face. Lawrence pulls it out and studies his bloody blade.

LAWRENCE
I really did fantasize about
murdering her. I yelled after the
stabbing, "I would rather die in
prison, than live with you!" That
is, until one day ---.

INT. HIS PRISON CELL - DREAM FANTASY CONTINUES

Lawrence, now in orange *B.O.P.* uniform, sits in a jail cell smiling and typing on a vintage typewriter. A GUARD enters and takes his typewriter away. Lawrence is crushed.

RETURN TO.

INT. SAME LOS ANGELES VEGAN RESTAURANT - 2022 AGAIN

Lawrence, 70, shudders. Mauricio stares at him.

MAURICIO

Did you love her?

LAWRENCE

Which one?

MAURICIO

Your Ex! Wait? Were you married
more than once? Or just in love?

LAWRENCE

You can't love someone else until
you love yourself first. I don't
think, she ever learned either.

MAURICIO

How did you propose?

LAWRENCE

Which time?

MAURICIO

To your, wait. You proposed, twice?

LAWRENCE

Second time was under a full moon,
in front of the Kennedy Center
fountain, overlooking the Potomac
River, after dinner, and a limo
ride around Washington.

MAURICIO

Bet you got down on bended knee.

LAWRENCE

Both times.

Mauricio stops laughing, *What?*

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH ONCOLOGY WARD - 1977 CONT'D

Stairwell's exit door is next to double elevators that open
into a wide hallway. Stairwell and elevators are at hall's
dead-end. Hallway curves away so opposite end cannot be seen.

Larry, still **25**, released months ago from NoVa Health Center, is healthier looking, but lost all his muscle mass never to recover it. He exits the stairwell severely winded.

Elevator doors *ding* and open. ELEVATOR RIDER, female, in a lab smock with hospital badge on, sees Larry and puts a hand on elevator door's seal to hold it open.

Larry shakes his head trying to catch his breath.

LARRY

Can't ride -- elevators.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. U.S. CAPITOL ELEVATOR - BEFORE HOSPITAL STAY IN 1977

Muzak *plays* a mindless melody in the large modern elevator.

Larry, 25, in suit, muscle-bound as in Miami, stands holding an overflowing box of office supplies and *humming* happy.

Elevator doors *ding* and open.

DOMINO, African-American, early 20s, model-attractive, in a business suit, enters holding his same box of supplies. Doors close. Both put down their boxes to hug.

LARRY

Haven't seen you since Miami!

DOMINO

*That was crazy fun in the Bahamas.
Remember you running the 21-table
at El Casino? How'd you do that?*

LARRY

*Card Counting. Read a book during
the convention. Too much like work
though, but did pay for the trip.*

DOMINO

*Can you believe this is our first
day here. Who are you working for?*

LARRY

Senator McCombs.

DOMINO

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

LARRY

"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 as an Intern.
How's Paula?

LARRY

Carol? Is she here?!

Elevator doors *ding* and open. Domino exits with her box.

DOMINO

Why would she? Great seeing you.
Let's do lunch. Say hello to Paula.
You two dating?

Elevator doors close before Larry can make-up a lie.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LARRY'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO

Little Larry, 8, fell asleep with the overhead light on.

Mother, in nightgown, red hair beyond frizzed, yanks pillow out from under his tiny head and holds it over his face. He fights kicking with legs for his right to live.

MOTHER

Stop leaving your light on!

She throws the pillow on him and exits turning off the light.

Little Larry is frozen in fear, then sucks his thumb, hard.

RETURN TO:

INT. U.S. CAPITOL ELEVATOR - 1977 CONT'D

Elevator *jerk-stalls*. Larry *gasps* and jumps back into a corner with arms splayed. Elevator continues on. His heart beats faster. He can't breathe. A strange metal noise *bangs* outside in the elevator shaft. Larry spins 360° touching all four walls repeatedly, then tries to pry the doors open.

Doors *ding* and open. Larry jumps back. A FEMALE AIDE steps in carrying same box of supplies. Larry jumps out. Female Aide looks at his box on the floor, then at him. Doors close.

INT. U.S. CAPITOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Larry falls against a wall holding both hands over his heart. It beats too hard. It hurts. He can't catch his breath.

LARRY
What is happening to me?!

Second elevator *dings* and opens. Larry steps to enter, then jumps back further. Elevator doors close.

LARRY
Don't Succeed!

His brow furrows confused. He shrugs, closes both eyes, holds arms out to the side palms up, breathes in deep, turns both palms down, and lowers arms *exhaling slow*. He opens his eyes to see a sign marked "Stairs." He *snaps* his fingers smiling.

LARRY
Don't ride elevators. Simple.

He walks to sign's same door *whistling* and exits. Metal fire-door *bangs* closed sounding like a ship's hatch slamming shut.

RETURN TO.

INT. N.I.H. ONCOLOGY FLOOR - AFTER LARRY'S RELEASE, 1977

Elevator Rider tilts her head at Larry, **25**, *breathing hard*.

ELEVATOR RIDER
You walked up --nineteen floors?

LARRY
Have to see --my true love.

Elevator Rider shakes her head as her elevator doors close.

Larry look down the curved hallway but can't see its end.

LARRY
Can it get any worse?

He *sighs* exhausted, then baby-steps down the hall with one hand sliding along its curved wall for emotional support.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAURICIO'S CAR IN LOS ANGELES - 2022 AGAIN

Small older two-door with a "LYFT" sticker in a corner of its rear windshield.

Both doors open and Mauricio gets in as driver and Lawrence, **70**, long hair and beard, as passenger. They *slam* their doors and buckle up. Mauricio *starts* car. Lawrence *claps* his hands.

LAWRENCE

I married my mother!

MAURICIO

You did what?!

LAWRENCE

I mean, my Ex. She was, is, as fucked-up as my mom is, was. That's why I married her. Don't you see?

MAURICIO

I see --that anyone can have an emotional relationship with someone other than their current partner. You never stopped loving the first one, did you?

LAWRENCE

"Never" stood a chance.

MAURICIO

Which?

LAWRENCE

All three of us. --When we get to my place, I'll give you the DVDs of my short films we talked about.

INT. LAWRENCE'S LOS ANGELES ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Door opens and Lawrence enters followed by Mauricio who opens the bathroom door and is surprised at its down-sizing.

MAURICIO

Bet you have to turn sideways to get in and out of your shower?

LAWRENCE

Yes.

MAURICIO

(closes bathroom door)
How do you like having housemates?

Lawrence is going through a tall pile of labeled boxes.

LAWRENCE
Feels like I'm back in college.
(freezes, snaps fingers)
"Santa Goes To College!"

MAURICIO
Who the what?

Lawrence grabs a piece of printer paper and scribbles notes.

LAWRENCE
Old man loses everything in bitter divorce. He goes back to U.S.C. to finish his film degree, but has no money, so has to move into student living. He teaches his roommates about life, they teach him about living again.

MAURICIO
Oh, yeah. Okay? --What's that?

Lawrence looks where Mauricio is pointing. A wrestling "Thank You, Coach" plaque has a photograph in it. In that picture, Lawrence, 50, beginning of a paunch, short hair with mustache only, smiles wearing a suit. Dezi, twenty years slimmer, 42, hair coiffed, attractive, wears a dress. Their adopted SON, African, 17, 103 lbs, wears a high school letter jacket holding up a gold wrestling trophy with a huge white smile.

LAWRENCE
My son.

MAURICIO
You have a kid?!

Mauricio steps closer to exam picture and is surprised.

MAURICIO
Wait, isn't he --? Did you adopt?

LAWRENCE
From my last high school team.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LAWRENCE'S COACHING CAR - TWO DECADES AGO

Lawrence, now 50 as in the picture, wears a *Head Wrestling Coach* t-shirt and drives a huge vintage pink Cadillac.

Sitting beside him is his, not yet Son, 17.

LAWRENCE
I think you'll win Districts.

SON
Zii.

LAWRENCE
"Zii?" No?! Why not?

SON
Being deported on Saturday.

They drive in silence. Lawrence's eyebrows move up and down. as forehead furrows. His head tilts back and forth like he's having a conversation. He shakes "no" twice, then *groans*.

LAWRENCE
Would you like to stay?

SON
Here? In America?! Who wouldn't. I always wanted to be a Champion, at something, but now --?

Lawrence mumble-growls like a grizzly as he looks up through his front windshield with an "Are you kidding me?" stare.

INT. LAWRENCE'S VIRGINIA LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dezi, 42, overweight but still sexy and attractive, wears a robe while reading a book in a wing-chair.

Lawrence enters to sit in second wing-chair lost in thought.

DEZI
How was Practice, and the kids?

LAWRENCE
Huh? Oh, fine, fine. They're all fine. *I'm not.*

DEZI
How's that one kid doing?

LAWRENCE
Told him he'd win Districts.

DEZI
Was he excited?

LAWRENCE
"Zii."

DEZI
No?! Why the hell not?

LAWRENCE
Said he has to go back.

DEZI
Back-back, to his home country?
That's awful. He has potential.

LAWRENCE
Yeah, I know. That's our problem.

DEZI
"Our?"

LAWRENCE
Uh, sweetie, this is kind of hard
to explain, but I, you, we, uh --
we're supposed to take him in.

DEZI
Take who "in?" Wait, the one that
keeps getting put in detention?!

LAWRENCE
He's lost, just not found.

DEZI
Have you lost your mind? But you
said ...?

LAWRENCE
Yeah, I know, that ...

DEZI
That we could never have children
of our own. That you were afraid!
(slams book closed)
Because of what your mother did to
you! "Afraid" you might do the same
to --that's what you said?!

LAWRENCE
I know, but ...

DEZI
"But" what?! You suddenly have some
kind of epiphany?

LAWRENCE

Well yeah, actually --my first.

DEZI

What? Wait. Are you serious?

LAWRENCE

Hey, I didn't ask for it. All I can tell you is, we were told to help.

DEZI

"Told to help?" By whom?

Lawrence looks away, then slowly points straight up.

DEZI

Why are you point --? Oh, come on!

LAWRENCE

Hey, I'm not making this shit up.

DEZI

Gonna' build a baseball diamond?

LAWRENCE

Now you're just being mean.

DEZI

We hardly go to church, I don't --?

LAWRENCE

If I knew the answer, honey, I'd tell ya'. All I know is, I heard a voice, it was not my own, and we're "supposed to" do this. Okay?

DEZI

No. I'm not okay. --Are you?

Lawrence takes Dezi's hand and squeezes. She yanks it away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SON'S HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - END OF SCHOOL YEAR

Hanging banner above stage reads, *1995 Winter Sports Awards*.

News Channel 8 CAMERAMAN films the AUDIENCE of PARENTS and STUDENTS, all dressed-up, sitting in the packed seats.

Lawrence, 51, and Son, now 18, both wear shirts and ties. Dezi, 43, wears a slinky dress. She "looks" like a happy mom, that's her secret. All Three sit with the Audience smiling.

Cameraman turns. His camera's light lights-up the stage.

School ADMINISTRATOR, in a suit, steps to podium. He *thunks* his microphone causing feedback. Audience *complains*.

ADMINISTRATOR (FILTERED)

Sorry. Most of you know our star athlete who was both District and Regional wrestling champion while remaining on our Honor Roll.

Administrator beckons to Son who hops up onto the stage.

ADMINISTRATOR (FILTERED)

Our Booster Club has voted you, Most Valuable Player!

Administrator hands Son a plaque. They shake. Flash bulbs go off. Both wait for Audience's *clapping* to die down.

ADMINISTRATOR (FILTERED)

And they will also be paying your -- (like a Game Show Host) First semester's college tuition!

Administrator hands Son a large ornamental check. They shake again. Flashes go off. Audience jumps to standing *ovation*.

Cameraman zooms-in on Son who has an ear-to-ear grin holding the plaque and check. Lawrence and Dezi step into the aisle. Son runs to them for a group hug. Cameraman zooms-in on them.

DISSOLVE TO.

INT. LAWRENCE'S LOS ANGELES APARTMENT - IN 2022

Lawrence, 70, long hair and beard, beams proud as any father.

LAWRENCE

First in his family line on both sides to ever graduate high school, then college. He's now a General Contractor, married with eight kids, owns a four-story home, and drives a Mercedes and a Porsche.

MAURICIO

Made a difference in his life, huh?

LAWRENCE

Gave him opportunity and support to succeed that all kids should have.

MAURICIO

How'd he take your divorce?

LAWRENCE

Moved to Egypt.

MAURICIO

Living in de-Nile, huh?

LAWRENCE

Believes we're just, "taking a break."

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LAWRENCE'S L.A. APARTMENT - THAT MORNING IN 2022

Lawrence is typing on his Mac as always. *FaceTime* goes off and a pop-up screen shows his Son is now a 27-year old with a *Dad Bod*, thirty pounds heavier. His head is shaved bald.

SON (FILTERED)

Hey, Dad.

Son is pushing a shopping cart in a store holding his cell.

LAWRENCE

Morning. Home Depot?

SON (FILTERED)

Yeah. How's everything out there?

LAWRENCE

All my Pitch Meetings end the same, "Great story! Hey, know what you should do? Make it yourself." Like they read it from a teleprompter.

SON (FILTERED)

How are you and Mom doing?

LAWRENCE

"Doing?!" Uh --we, don't?

SON (FILTERED)

Thought you didn't believe in divorce?

LAWRENCE

Don't. Her idea. All I wanted was to move to L.A. for one year.

SON (FILTERED)
Takes two to fuck a relationship.

LAWRENCE
What'd you just say to me?

SON (FILTERED)
Do you --hate her?

LAWRENCE
The true opposite of love is not
hate, it's indifference.

SON (FILTERED)
And me?

LAWRENCE
Stop! Stop it, I mean it!

Son stops walking and brings his phone closer to his face.

LAWRENCE
What you and I have goes beyond
love, it's true respect. She lost
that for me long ago. Got it?

Son nods reluctant and continues walking.

LAWRENCE
So how are the kids?

SON (FILTERED)
Oldest girl went out for
cheerleading. The twins joined
little league wrestling.

LAWRENCE
Gonna help coach their team?

SON (FILTERED)
Probably.

LAWRENCE
And your wife?

SON (FILTERED)
She started a home business.

LAWRENCE
Helps to have your In-Laws live
across the street for free
babysitting, huh?

Son waves to an unseen employee.

SON (FILTERED)
Hold a minute. --Gotta go, Dad.

LAWRENCE
Take care, love to the family.

Their FaceTime screen signs off. Lawrence smiles at it.

LAWRENCE
You --made me a better man.

RETURN TO.

INT. LAWRENCE'S L.A. APARTMENT WITH MAURICIO - THAT DAY

MAURICIO
What's that?

Mauricio now looks at an old yellowed map of Colorado framed and hanging with a red frayed shoulder-patch reading "C-Bar-T." He points to a red squiggled line drawn across the map.

LAWRENCE
My first life changing event. We rode horseback five hundred miles from Denver to Grand Junction, Colorado for two months. Crossed the Continental Divide five times -- lost a hat each time. We then became roommates in college.

MAURICIO
"We?"

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. C-BAR-T TRAIL RANCH - DAY - HALF A CENTURY AGO

A pick-up truck and its trailer with *C-Bar-T Trail Ranch* painted on its side drives under *C-Bar-T* wood sign, then past a large horse corral with THIRTY-FIVE HORSES and TWO BURROWS.

CAPTION: C-Bar-T, Colorado, 1970

Truck and trailer park by a single-story brick Rambler with a dirt yard in the middle of nowhere. Three large piedmont hills with birch trees are in its background. Two small storage buildings are at the foot of the center hill.

PHILONEUS ABLE, Caucasian, mid-40s, tall, rugged-fit, crew-cut with a craggy tan-weathered face, talks like the famous rooster cartoon character. He exits his truck's driver-side to unlock trailer's rear gate. It falls as a ramp, *boom*.

PHILONEUS

I say --tent, duffle, and sleepin'
bag are yer only personals on this
here walk-about, tenderfeets!

THIRTY RIDERS, 15-16, both sexes, all ethnics, looking like U.N. refugees, exit in just-bought denim C-Bar-T uniforms, wearing new straw cowboy hats and each carrying different types of "city" luggage, all Riders exit shading their eyes.

ADOLESCENT LARRY, 15, is obese with short bright red hair.

Philoneus puts a finger against one nostril and blows mucus out his other onto the ground.

JOHN BENNETT, Jewish, 15, thin, short black hair, Larry's childhood friend, talks like *Marvin the Depressed Robot*.

BENNETT

It's the people you meet in this
world that really get you down.

PHILONEUS

So go in the Tack Room and say good-bye to whatever you once thought you was. You're in my cavalry now. Stretch your legs, walk around my ranch, and go on top of that hill -- (points to a hill) to pick you out a sleepin' patch.

LARRY

You bring a C-Bar-T language guide?

BENNETT

I'd give you advice, but you wouldn't listen. No one ever does.

LARRY

Welcome to my world. My dad loves all things cowboy, that's why he sent me here. I think he wants to relive his childhood through me.

BENNETT

You think you've got problems? No, don't answer that. I'm fifty times more intelligent than you, and even I don't know the answer.

EXT. OUTSIDE C-BAR-T CORRAL - NEXT MORNING

All Thirty Riders sit in their *C-Bar-T* Outfits of blue-jean shirts and matching pants with shoulder patches, on saddled horses having sleeping bags tied to saddle's back-housing.

KEVINA, Philoneus's daughter, 15, sits same wearing chaps, a thick vest, leather work gloves, and leads the FEMALE RIDERS.

DROVER ONE and DROVER TWO, 20s, sit same holding halters of Two Burrows now with cross-packs of water, food, supplies.

Philoneus sits on a black stallion, same, now in a brown leather slicker with a *Winchester* rifle in a saddle-sling. A bullwhip is coiled around the rifle. He trots to the truck.

DROVER THREE, thirties, drives the truck now without trailer. Thirty duffle-bags have Rider's names written on the outside and are tied in its bed along with two large Oat barrels.

PHILONEUS

Trails marked on your map. Meet us at sunset at the first red circle. If not there, double-back to blue one, son. These greenhorns might not make it ten mile the first day.

Drover Three nods. Bennett overhears and *sighs*.

BENNETT

This will all end in tears, I just know it.

PHILONEUS

Move Out ya' bunch a' city sissies!

The Thirty Riders spur horses to follow Kevina and Philoneus.

At the rear, Drovers Two and Three pull the Two Pack-burrows.

Drover Three drives, then turns on truck's radio. It begins playing the 1970 hit "In The Summertime" by *Mungo Jerry*.

Riders and their horses sway in unison to the music as they ride over a hill while pick-up truck stays on its dirt road.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL NOW IN TALL GRASS - DAYS LATER

Riders single-file ride through a huge field of hip-high grass in the middle of nowhere to loud summer-insect sounds.

Bennett and Larry ride at the back with Drovers Two and Three who still pull-lead the Two Burrows.

PHILONEUS
Hold Up!

Same command is repeated down *The Line* as All Riders stop.

RIDERS
Hold up! ...Hold up! ...etc.

BENNETT
I think you ought to know, I'm
feeling very depressed.

Philoneus looks through binoculars at a large black cloud approaching then gives the military overhead sign *Circle Up*.

Drovers Two and Three hand their burrow-leads to Bennett and Larry, then ride hard with Kevina to Philoneus. The Four talk, then turn and gallop back to the Riders. Philoneus talks to front group, Kevina to second, and Drover One to third group. Drover Two talks to the fourth group.

BENNETT
Black Death?

DROVER TWO
Close. Brown locust.

BENNETT
I only have to talk to somebody,
and they begin to hate me.

DROVER TWO
Open your sleeping bags, drape them
over your horse's head, then get
under and hold on tight to both!

Organized chaos as everyone dismounts, open sleeping bags, and pull them over their horse's head to squat underneath.

EXT. LARRY UNDER SLEEPING BAG WITH HORSE - MOMENTS LATER

Larry is on his knees under his horse's head holding onto their draped sleeping bag and onto both reins tight.

All insect sounds outside stop, then a high *wind* approaches.

LARRY
What'd ya' think?!

BENNETT (O.S.)
I could calculate your chance of
survival, but you won't like it!

LARRY

Talk to your horse, keep her calm!

BENNETT (O.S.)

Don't pretend you want to talk to
me, I know you hate me!

Larry hears the frontline horses *whinny* as "The Swarm" hits, then his horse tries to bolt so he pulls down on its bridle.

LARRY

Easy boy, easy.

Loud *hissing* sound. Larry can feel grasshoppers hit his back. Several grasshoppers get under and jump. He ignores them.

BENNETT (O.S.)

Life, loath it or ignore it, but
you can't like it!

LARRY

Ignore them, talk to your horse!

(talks soothing to his)

Easy boy, you're doing fine. I'm
not --you are.

Loud moments pass, then *hissing* fades until all is quiet.

PHILONEUS (O.S.)

CLEAR!

Larry stands putting his forehead between horse's eyes.

LARRY

Thanks --for your support.

Larry pulls the sleeping bag off them.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL AFTER ARMAGEDDON - CONTINUOUS

Field is now scalped down to grass-stubble in eerie silence.

LARRY

Sci-Fi shit.

Some Male Riders lost their horses and sit crying. Female Riders hold theirs. Drovers lost both Burrows. Stray horses *whinny* and Two Burrows *bray* as they run away in the distance.

Larry leads his horse over to Bennett whose horse ran away. Bennett's sleeping bag is draped over him like a small tent. Larry pulls it off. Bennett sits cross-legged, head in hands, elbows on knees. He looks nonplussed.

BENNETT

My capacity for happiness, you
could fit in a matchbox, without
taking out the matches.

LARRY

Come on, cheer up. Did you ever
think we'd experience anything like
this? It was fan-freakin-tastic!

BENNETT

It gives me a headache, just trying
to think down to your level.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ON THE TRAIL ON A MOUNTAINTOP - TWO MONTHS LATER

Riders come up on a mountaintop. All stop amazed at the view.
As far as the eye can see, is an endless sea of mountains.

Larry rides up over same crest pulling the First Burrow. He
has lost thirty pounds and grown two inches with skin leather-
tan. He lost his hat, so his red hair is now sun-bleached
blonde. His biceps bulge from pulling Burrow for two months.

Bennett rides up pulling the Second Burrow with shirt tied
around his waist. He's strong and tanned with sun-faded
brownish hair. He sees nature's infinity ahead and sighs.

BENNETT

"Is there no end to this escalation
of desire?"

PHILONEUS

Marya Mannes. A bit caustic, but
insightful. Night's comin' on fast,
so get out your fuzzy-warms ladies!
We's sleepin' in High Country!

BENNETT

Funny how just when you think life
can't possibly get any worse, it
suddenly does.

PHILONEUS

That's why they call it "life" son.
And if it's comin' straight at ya',
you're in the wrong lane.

EXT. CLEARING FURTHER DOWN THE MOUNTAIN - NOW SUNSET

A large plateau part-way down the mountain is mostly grass.

A sheer wall rises on one side of it with a ledge dropping off its other. Higher mountains are all around it.

Their camp is set. A fire burns with a cast-iron pot cooking. Kevina stirs its contents with a huge wooden spoon.

Larry stands near edge of the clearing taking pictures. He sees something. His eyes open wide. He yells to his friend.

LARRY

Over here!

Bennett goes to him. Larry points up to a mountain cliff.

Snow-runoff pours out of a cave below the top of a mountain creating a long waterfall down its side. The falling water sparkles creating a rainbow gleaming kaleidoscope of colors.

LARRY

Only way to see that, is to be standing precisely here, at this exact time of day. Karma.

Sun sets behind mountain. Both watch the straight line of black night creep down mountain's wall to envelope them.

BENNETT (O.S.)

And in the beginning, the universe was created. It has been widely regarded as a bad move.

DISSOLVE TO.

INT. LAWRENCE'S LOS ANGELES APARTMENT - 2022 AGAIN

Mauricio is gone. Lawrence, 70, sits dressed same, typing.

LAWRENCE

Bennett and I became roommates in college, graduated together, and remained best friends until his death during The Pandemic. So here I sit, now in L.A. No a/c, no heat, no marriage, no money. Hoping against hype Hollywood and Life notices me someday.

(imitates Bennett perfect)
"Life? Don't talk to me about Life."

EXT. LAWRENCE AT A LOS ANGELES BISTRO - DAYS LATER

Restaurant bar has an exterior terrace with picnic tables.

INTERESTING PEOPLE, mostly young adults, sit and stand in various garb, some with unique colored hair. It's the monthly networking event for just-arrived Hollywood wanna-be's.

Lawrence parks a 1993 Volvo 850 at the curb. On his driver and passenger doors are large magnetic signs that read "Actor, Director, Screenwriter - 300 Awards on IMDb."

INT. LAWRENCE'S CLUNKER - IMMEDIATELY

Lawrence, long hair now professionally ponytailed with his beard sharpened, checks his actor business-card case is full.

LAWRENCE

I drove my new van 3,500 miles to
get here. Then I called my car
insurance company of forty years.

Lawrence makes a hand into a phone-sign with thumb and little finger holding it to an ear.

LAWRENCE

My premium is going to quadruple?!
(listens, repeats)
L.A. has the highest accident rate.
Okay, but I could buy a used
clunker for that much. Seriously,
how can my premium stay the same?
(listens, repeats)
"Buy a used clunker for that much."

EXT. LAWRENCE'S USED CLUNKER FOR THAT MUCH - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence turns his car off and exits. Its engine continues to run, then dies with a *bang*. Blue smoke belches out tailpipe. Lawrence walks out of the smoke cloud. ALL look at him.

LAWRENCE

Always --make an entrance.

EXT. LOS ANGELES RESTAURANT TERRACE - MOMENTS LATER

Lawrence stands talking to SOME LADY with orange-green hair.

A thin effeminate hand taps Lawrence on a shoulder. He turns.

KYLE LANGDON-WEYRICH, Caucasian, 21, thin, short, hair died platinum, is dressed stylishly foppy. He is, a pretty-boy.

KYLE

"Hi, I'm an international model."

LAWRENCE

Of course you are, dear.

Kyle extends his small hand like an English Duke. They shake and break. Lawrence examines the hand he shook with. Kyle offers him a card. Lawrence takes his card to look at same.

KYLE

"I'm a beginning Producer. Are you working on anything?"

LAWRENCE

Just moved to L.A. and don't have any money, so the only way I can shoot another short is if its cast and crew work for IMDb award only.

KYLE

"Send your script to me.
(points on his card)
But not to that email, it doesn't go anywhere. Send it to that one."

Kyle holds same hand up. Lawrence holds onto Kyle's fingertips like on a Victorian date. Kyle sees someone and exits.

KYLE

Have to network, toodles.

INT. LAWRENCE'S LOS ANGELES ROOM - WEEKS LATER

Lawrence sits at his Mac typing. Its email alert *sounds*. He reads the email, tilts head, then re-reads it aloud.

LAWRENCE

"Hi, this is Kyle. Casting Call went well, over 70 responded."
(looks around room)
What Casting Call?
(continues reading aloud)
"Attached is a spread sheet with their names and info. Let me know who you pick. All Cast and Crew agreed to work for free. Toodles!"
There is not one single day, that at some point I don't say, "Only in L.A." It is never a compliment.

INT. A CALIFORNIA HOUSE IN SANTA ANA - WEEKS LATER

House is now a movie Set with equipment and their hard cases open. Craft Services card-table has snacks and drinks on it.

Female African-American MAKE-UP ARTIST is brushing the face of a 20s-something ASIAN ACTRESS.

MALE ACTOR, 25, wearing a robe and using a British accent is talking with an AFRICAN-AMERICAN ACTRESS, 21.

CALIFORNIA CREW, male and female, in their 20s, are moving lights and gear like worker ants.

Lawrence wears a t-shirt with "*The Handler II Crew*" printed on the back and is talking to Kyle who has a sweater tied stylish around neck. They shake hands, then Kyle fast-claps.

LAWRENCE

Director Michael Almereyda taught me, "A Director's job is to bring all the right people together, then let them --make your movie." Thank you, for making this, my ninth one.

KYLE

Especially considering our original D.P., A.C., Sound Tech, and our Male Lead, all tested Positive for Covid yesterday morning.

Lawrence points to his young NEW MALE LEAD.

LAWRENCE

As his Understudy, thank you for driving in last minute and being Off Book. You, are a "real" actor.

New Male Lead bows. Lawrence turns to L.A. D.P., a female Hispanic, wearing a kerchief as a head-band.

LAWRENCE

Stepping in at the last minute without an assistant to rack your own focus was a huge challenge. Thank you for accepting it so well.

L.A. D.P. waves packing up her gear. Lawrence turns to SOUND.

LAWRENCE

To go from Key Grip to learn Sound by watching YouTube videos while Producer went to rent equipment? That doesn't happen. Thank you.

SOUND still has his headphones on checking Room Tone on control box hanging around his neck, so doesn't respond.

LAWRENCE

(bows to both Actresses)

Ladies, both of you showing up Off Book allowed us to shoot your final scene as one continuous shot. Which means --it's a Wrap for the Actors!

Two Female Actresses hug, then both hug New Male Lead who is trying to change back into his street clothes asap.

LAWRENCE

All Crew back here at 7 a.m. tomorrow to shoot Inserts. Only the D.P. and I need go to the Second Location next week for B-Roll.

All L.A. Crew and Actors shake hands as Lawrence becomes a great Shakespearian actor, so of course, over-acts.

LAWRENCE

"All the world's a stage, And all the men and women, merely players.

He bows deep and wide with one leg stretched-out behind him, then sweeps same leg up and over with hands held out like he's riding a motorcycle then twists his throttle-grip hand.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. LAWRENCE IN WEST VIRGINIA - DAY - TWENTY YEARS AGO

Lawrence, 50 again, short hair with a pornstar mustache, rides a *Honda Goldwing* around a narrow mountain road with a sheer drop-off. He is wearing fully-padded safety motorcycle gear so looks like a futuristic football player. He narrates.

LAWRENCE

This is my Roots Ride! I'm on a two-part fact-finding tour to find out why my mom treated me so bad!

(helmeted-head shakes)

I had to wait until she died to finally be free enough from her lies, to seek out my own truth!

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. A WEST VIRGINIA CABIN - LARRY'S 1977 HOSPITAL RELEASE

Built with his Father's life insurance money, it's a one-bedroom rustic log cabin like his Mother grew up in.

Mother sits in a shawl wearing granny-glasses knitting in front of a huge stone fireplace. An antique wall clock, seen earlier in Lawrence's Virginia living room, pendulum-ticks.

Larry, 25, released from NOVA Health Center a month ago, is healthy, but thin and unmuscled. He sits on a quilt-covered couch crying and hugging himself.

His Mother keeps knitting detached and ignoring him.

MOTHER

I'm sorry you believe I said and
did any of those things to you, but
(examines her work stoic)
I really don't know what you're
talking about.

Larry's head actually vibrates. Did he make it all up?

RETURN TO.

EXT. LAWRENCE'S ROOTS RIDE - TWENTY FIVE YEARS LATER

Lawrence, 50, spits, then revs his motorcycle engine.

LAWRENCE

How did she die you ask?!
(speeds away leaning)
Alone!

EXT. A BECKLEY, WEST VIRGINIA HOME - THAT NIGHT

Small in-need-of-repairs rambler off an unmarked state road.

Lawrence pulls up, puts side-stand down, and gets off.

LAWRENCE

Welcome to bum-fuck. What the fuck,
is this bum doing?
(hangs helmet on mirror)
This is Beckley, West V, A. "Coal
Mining Capitol of the World!" And
my mother's hometown. It is two
hours from anything resembling
civilization. So as you might
expect, incest, racism, and
alcoholism, are not unknown here.

Lawrence looks around searching for something.

LAWRENCE
Wonder if they still use that old
out-house?
(looks around more)
Bet you think I'm kidding.

EXT. BECKLEY HOME BACK PORCH - LATER THAT NIGHT

SEVEN ADULTS sit in cheap web chairs. Someone said something inappropriate and all are *guffawing*, except Lawrence.

UNCLES JOE, JIMMY, and JACK, all in their 70s, have three Redneck younger TROPHY WIVES who make *Tammy Baker* look like she's not wearing enough. The Three Uncles are plastered. Their Three Kabuki-Wives are not.

Lawrence sits between his cousins JANE ANNE and BUTCH, both his age and overweight, who are drunk. Lawrence is not.

LAWRENCE
Okay, these are mom's three younger brothers. You have no idea how they are going to react your questions.
(clears throat)
"Why did your only sister hate me?"

The Three Uncles slur their answers in thick W.Va. accents.

UNCLE JIMMY
"Don't know --?"

UNCLE JOE
"But sure as hell did!"

His Three Uncles high-five. Lawrence's mouth falls open.

UNCLE JACK
"Remember when Grammy would come back from visitin' them and cryin',
"It breaks my heart in two, to see her mistreat them two."

LAWRENCE
Calm down. Remember, it was a different time back then. Folks didn't get involved in how others raised their kids --or their own.
(to Three Wives)
Would any of you care for a drink?

UNCLE JIMMY

"Oh, they don't drink."

UNCLE JOE

"Someone has to drive us home!"

Three Uncles pop new beer cans and hold them up for a toast.

Lawrence decides his Three Uncles are three-sheets-to-the-wind enough, clears throat again, then leaps without faith.

LAWRENCE

"Was your sister abused?"

He may have crossed their line as ALL go silent, then ...

UNCLE JOE

"Bein' so much older, she had to leave school and work to help support us after Daddy run oft."

LAWRENCE

Why'd he "run oft" --uh, leave?

UNCLE JIMMY

Momma never said outright, other than she threw him out one night.

UNCLE JACK

Sis, your mom, took it real hard.

UNCLE JOE

Wouldn't come out of her room for days cryin' so forlorn.

LAWRENCE

Where'd he go?

UNCLE JIMMY

Throw a rock.

LAWRENCE

He stayed in Beckley?! How long?

UNCLE JOE

Till the end.

UNCLE JACK

Always with a new strumpet on-arm.

UNCLE JIMMY

And preggo.

UNCLE JOE

"Hell boy, you got half-cousins you
ain't never met yet!"

Jane Anne slides a hand inside Lawrence's thigh and squeezes.

JANE ANNE

"I luv youuuuuuuuuuuuuuu."

LAWRENCE

(Breaks Fourth Wall slow)
And you thought --I was kidding.

EXT. RIDING THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY - NEXT MORNING

Winding small two-lane national park road through dense forests. A beautiful day, perfect for motorcycle touring.

Lawrence weaves his bike in s-curves in and out of shadows then through a covered bridge. His voice *echoes* inside.

LAWRENCE (O.S.)

"I luv youuuuuuuuuuuuuuu."

His air-horns *echo* as he exits other side. He quick-stops for deer crossing, and talks to them in a North Carolina accent.

LAWRENCE

On my way to Hickory, North
Care-line-eee, thankee kindly.
"Furniture Capitol of the World!"

Deer disappear into the woods. He waves "bye-bye" to them.

LAWRENCE

My dad's hometown. I'm visiting my favorite aunt. Well, she's not really my "aunt." At least that's what I was told. But don't worry, you'll understand.

(speeds off)

You will! I won't --ever!

INT. RETIREMENT HOME IN HICKORY, N.C. - THAT NIGHT

Assisted-living unit with a mechanical bed, tiny kitchenette, bathroom with soaking tub, and an old couch with easy chair in front of a vintage portable T.V. on a metal rolling stand.

Door opens. AUNT INEZ, 90s, white hair glued into a permanent by industrial-strength hair spray, looks like *Mrs. Doubtfire*.

She shuffles severely stooped-over from arthritis with a cane to slowly sit in the only deep worn spot on her couch.

Lawrence, in shirt and tie, closes door and rushes to help.

LAWRENCE

Let me help you, Aunt Inez.

Too late, gravity took over. She has a thick N.C. accent.

AUNT INEZ

Thank you for the surprise visit. I haven't been out to eat in years.

LAWRENCE

You were always so kind to me as a boy, that's why I rented a car.

AUNT INEZ

You t'weren't no bother. Always a pleasure havin' you around.

LAWRENCE

I can't believe I'm going to tell you this but, I've always wished -- you were my real aunt.

AUNT INEZ

Excuse me?

LAWRENCE

It's okay. I know we're not supposed to speak of it since it was the family shame and all.

AUNT INEZ

What are you blathering about?

LAWRENCE

That I know my dad was a homeless orphan and no one would take him in till yours did out of charity.

(whispers "The Secret")

It's okay, I know you're not really his sister.

If Darth Vader had a sibling, she would sound like this.

AUNT INEZ

I am --his sister.

Time stands still for Lawrence, then he *chortles* nervous.

LAWRENCE

Yeah, sure, right. I even confirmed it with my brother before he died.

AUNT INEZ

Who told him?

LAWRENCE

Same person that told me? Mom?

AUNT INEZ

Lord have mercy, why would she say such a thing?

LAWRENCE

Wait, Dad's father was the town drunk and drove into a telephone pole killing himself. Right?

AUNT INEZ

Our father was the town minister, killed by a drunk driver after his Sunday Sermon while walking home.

Lawrence is having a hard time wrapping his head around this.

LAWRENCE

So everyone I ever met here, who said they were my relatives --are?

AUNT INEZ

Of course. I was his only sister, and he was my favorite brother.

Lawrence has to walk this out pacing like *Columbo*.

LAWRENCE

Ahh, just one more thing. So all these "Uncles" --really are?

Aunt Inez nods. Lawrence has to sit down.

AUNT INEZ

Why didn't you just ask me?

LAWRENCE

Because I was told not to!

(jumps up realizing)

Split personality! That's how she could be so nice to strangers while terrorizing me. It was always about being in control of her own past.

AUNT INEZ

Who, what was?

LAWRENCE

Her way of dealing with abuse.

AUNT INEZ

Whose abuse?

LAWRENCE

My mom, me, both of us. I mean, I always knew she hated men, but never knew why until I visited her brothers yesterday.

AUNT INEZ

Don't know about them, but I do remember crying when you all left after visiting me, at the way your Mom treated my brother, and you.

LAWRENCE

(jumps up and down)

That's what her brothers said!
Their mother would visit us and come home upset, too!

(spins in circles)

Thank You!

Lawrence stops spinning, and so does his world finally.

AUNT INEZ

For what?

LAWRENCE

For closure! She did have two personalities. I was, am not crazy.

Lawrence clears his throat, then holds out a hand.

LAWRENCE

Pleasure to finally make your acquaintance --my real Aunt Inez.

Inez hesitates, then shakes. He sits with an arm around her.

LAWRENCE

I'll be coming down to visit on a regular basis. We have a lot of catching up to do so I can fill in the potholes on my life's highway.

Lawrence smiles-the-smile of someone who's finally shooed away the grey cloud that has hung over their head forever.

LAWRENCE

You are the mom, I should have had.

She smiles.

DISSOLVE TO.

INT. LAWRENCE'S LOS ANGELES ROOM - NOW 2023

CAPTION: *When in doubt, re-in-vent.*

Lawrence, still **70**, sits at his Mac typing as usual, but his hair is now cut short with white beard trimmed down around jawline. He gets a concerned look, then repeatedly *pounds* a fist on his desk. He grabs both edges holding on for dear life to do "a hard stare" at a dot on the wall. He recovers.

LAWRENCE

God, Damn, Vertigo.

(goes back to typing)

For ten years, my long hair and beard got me noticed and work by New York Central Casting. But after moving here and discovering L.A. Central Casting hires their city's real homeless ...

(shakes head groaning)

Never use that word here! They are --"unhoused." Either way, problem here is bad. Real bad, damn bad, out-of-control bad.

(goes back to typing)

Yet, when I try to talk about it, Angelenos only response is a shrug with "Always been this way."

(finger-circles face)

Would you believe, seventy-two hours after cutting everything off, Disney cast me as "Wheels, unhoused in a wheelchair" on *Grownish*?

(throws hands in air)

"Only in L.A."

(goes back to typing)

Only good thing to come out of the Pandemic in Hollywood is that Studio Execs discovered Zoom and Skype. With the traffic now so bad, they'll never go back to in-person interviews. Why should they? Now they don't have to wear pants.

Lawrence slaps a thigh hard. He made himself laugh, then goes back to typing. He makes an animal sound remembering.

LAWRENCE

Last week, I Zoomed with Max Timm of the *International Screenwriters Association*. He looked me up on IMDb and tched-tched announcing, "You have too many awards!" I asked if I should give some back. Mad Max shook his head, "You're never going to get a Literary Manager because everyone's going to wonder why you don't already have one." I quipped, "Maybe it's because all of my awards are in just the past six years, back on the east coast, and I just got to L.A.?" He signed-off.
(sniffs air like a wolf)
But there is something palatable in this city's air, you can feel it.

Lawrence coughs then tilts his head back to put in eye-drops.

LAWRENCE

Besides its desert dust and dryness. It's called --hope.

His Mac's email alert sounds. He reads it and is shocked.

LAWRENCE

What?! Noooo! My Yale screenwriting professor of ten years just died with no warning of a heart attack?!
(little boy lost again)
He was eight years my younger, fit, healthy. I don't understand --? Why would the universe rip away my only champion? Now my Jeffersonian starship has no helmsman. I'll drift aimless through space never landing on friendly terra firma.

Both arms flail like the Robot in "Lost in Space."

LAWRENCE

"Danger, Will Robinson, Danger!"

He now shadow-boxes imitating *Sylvester Stallone's* drawl.

LAWRENCE

Stallone said, "Nobody works in this town till sumbody writes sumthin'." I am, "sumbody." Yo.

Lawrence goes back to typing. His cell phone's Text Message dings. He reads it, then comments.

LAWRENCE

It's official. My actor's union is going on strike and expects it to last six months. No acting gigs.

His cell phone's Text Message *dings* again. He reads it.

LAWRENCE

Writers Guild is joining SAG, so now I can't submit screenplays to contests until both strikes end.

His cell phone's Text Message *dings* again. He reads it.

LAWRENCE

Landlord wants to break my lease so he can rent my room for more money. Says he'll give me back my full \$2,000 security deposit if I'm out the end of this month.

(looks straight up)

You're not real subtle are you?

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEATH ONCOLOGY WARD - 1977 CONT'D

Individual patient rooms have glass front walls so everything is visible in their room. Lots of medical equipment.

Larry, 25, walks down the hall and sees Paula in a hospital bed, wearing a gown, with I.V. in a wrist. She's asleep. He turns around, takes two steps, stops, and *stomps* a foot. He sees his reflection in a glass wall and his face contorts in self-loathing. He turns back possessed.

INT. PAULA'S N.I.H. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Larry enters, then sees Frankenstein-like sutures around the front of Paula's neck with a breathing tube in their middle.

DREAM FANTASY: Paula sits up and her head falls off backwards tearing sutures wide open leaving her head dangling behind.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LARRY'S TEEN HOME - 1970

His Parent's Master Bedroom has a king-size bed and bureau.

Mother, 50s, wrinkled, in nightgown, hair a mess from sex, sits up cowering with covers pulled up to her chin *crying*.

Larry's FATHER, 50s, obese, half-way under same bed covers, is unconscious on his back from a heart attack.

TEEN LARRY, 18, beginning bodybuilder, short hair, in shorts, straddles Father *crying* and trying to do chest compressions. It is obvious he does not know how. Larry stops exhausted.

Father gives a *death-exhale* and all color leaves his face.

MOTHER
"You killed him!"

RETURN TO.

INT. PAULA'S N.I.H. HOSPITAL ROOM - 1977 CONT'D

Adult Larry, 25 again, thin, is about to lose it. He tries to sit, can't, so rocks back-forth from one foot to the other trying not to think. He turns to leave, then jams a palm over a chair's torn back-support. He stares at his bleeding hand.

Paula opens her eyes and tries to talk. Only *gurgles* come from her neck-tube.

Larry's face goes bloodless. He fists a Kleenex in his hurt hand, then lays a handkerchief on the floor. He kneels on it and reaches in a pocket with his good hand to pull out and open a small jewelry case so she can see. Inside his box is a small engagement ring. Its tiny stone sparkles.

LARRY
Can you, will you --marry me?

Paula's eyes open wide as more *gurgle-sounds* come from her neck-tube. Larry stands and puts the ring on her finger.

Paula's SURGEON enters, sees Larry, and gets angry.

SURGEON
About time you showed up!

Paula holds up her ring-finger. Surgeon sees it, then Larry's bloody Kleenex, and calms down. Surgeon checks her vitals.

Paula and Larry stare lovingly into each other's eyes as he strokes her dirty hair. She tries to talk, but only *gurgles*. Larry *shushes* her. She nods. Larry grins at Surgeon.

LARRY
She said, Yes!

Surgeon sees their love, bites lower lip, then shakes head.

Too, too much. Larry's world explodes. He backs up lying.

LARRY

No! No. I, I've got to go, for just
a moment, but I'll be back.

Paula reaches for him. He reaches for her still backing up.

LARRY

Forgive me.

Paula drops her outstretched hand onto bed tearing and nods.

Larry begins ducking repeatedly like someone is beating him.

LARRY

P-p-please, s-s-stop --!

Paula and Surgeon watch Larry through the glass wall running down the hallway yelling and ducking as his screams echo.

LARRY

M-m-mommy!

EXT. N.I.H. TOWER STAIRWELL OUTSIDE EXIT - MOMENTS LATER

Fire-door bursts open. Larry exits, bends over catching his breath, then falls onto both knees cursing.

LARRY

God damn you to hell, Mother! You
made me into a coward!

His fingers dig in to pull out two large chunks of sod that he throws in disgust, then shakes his fist at the heavens.

LARRY

"Stupid, Ugly, Failure!" You
pounded that into me every --
(pounds ground 3 times)
God, Damn, Day!

INT. LARRY'S VIRGINIA APARTMENT BEDROOM - THE NEXT NIGHT

Larry sits on edge of his double-bed wearing a black suit. He goes to the closet and pulls a shoebox off its top shelf.

He dumps the box's contents on his bed. Small paper targets, ammo, a cleaning kit, and a handgun fall out.

He ejects gun's clip, loads a bullet, slides clip into handle, racks gun's slide. He hears laughter and turns.

DREAM FANTASY: Paula appears naked under his bed covers, smiling, laughing, and finger-beckoning to him.

Larry smiles at her putting gun's barrel to a temple.

LARRY

"Yeah, baby."

EXT. LARRY'S APARTMENT PARKING LOT - IMMEDIATELY

Older car drives by in front of his building and *backfires*.

INT. PAULA'S FUNERAL HOME LOBBY - LATER SAME NIGHT

Plush carpeting, big pictures on walls, and small tables with large flowers in vases. Lobby area has stairs that lead up to a 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 *sniffling* and holding hands.

MOURNERS, Virginia Delegates including Carol, stand around Paula's coffin consoling each other and Paula's Parents.

Front door opens. Larry enters dressed same, but now in a black overcoat. He sees Carol, then Paula's casket-profile.

He takes off his coat calmly and steps inside the walk-in closet where he completely loses it *balling inconsolable*.

MORE MOURNERS arrive to hang up their coats ignoring him until closet is packed with coats. Larry still *sobs*.

Domino enters in a black dress with hands clasped to chest.

DOMINO

None of us knew how much you cared
for each other until we saw her
ring. Is there anything we can do?

LARRY

(gulps air between sobs)
Have to --talk to --her alone.

INT. PAULA'S OPEN CASKET - MOMENTS LATER

Viewing room now empty. Parents chairs sit next to coffin.

Larry walks up the stairs, sees Paula's profile in her casket and tilts head, *Awwwww*, putting both hands over his heart. He sits down ramrod straight beside her coffin staring ahead.

LARRY

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, how great life can be. Your love for me taught me, I could love, and I do sweetheart, I love you with all my heart. I always will.

He sees his engagement ring on her finger and puts a hand over hers. Tears flow as he confesses his eternal love.

LAWRENCE

So tonight, I made a pact with God that to honor your life --I give you mine. No matter how bad things are 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 my love, because I am so very proud to have been loved --by you.

RETURN TO.

EXT. AERIAL OF A SENIOR RETIREMENT COMPLEX - NOW IN 2025

Beautifully landscaped collection of individual units of single-floor Ramblers surrounded by lush trees, grass, relatively empty parking spaces, and private garden plots.

CAPTION: Blacksburg, Virginia, 2025

INT. ONE OF THE COMPLEX'S UNITS - MOMENTS LATER

Spacious carpeted one-bedroom suite with a full kitchen, own washer-dryer, hot-water heater and furnace, master bedroom with a huge bathroom and --there is so much closet space!

Pictures of short-haired L.A. Lawrence smiling with actors; *Gary Oldman*, *Greg Kinnear*, *Adam Scott*, *Eddie Redmayne*, and Producers *Gary W. Goldstein*, *Brian Hershkowitz*, hang above shelves holding his twelve short film DVDs with multiple award statues, statuettes, and trophies, in front of them.

Lawrence, now clean-shaven, high-and-tight, is still fat, but fit. He sits at his Mac typing as usual. Except now, he actually looks "content" for the very first time.

LAWRENCE

Before I left L.A., I shot my 11th short film about their "unhoused" problem in a *Twilight Zone* theme.

His computer's email alert *dings*. He reads it and smiles.

LAWRENCE

"In-Closure" screened again last night at TCL Chinese Theaters on the *Walk of Stars*. It was the only film to receive a standing ovation. Its Lead, G. Larry Butler, won his first Best Actor award in over 267 films. Add that fact to the three "Trades" that ran stories about my career, and it seems I had to leave L.A., before getting noticed there.

(goes back to typing)

So I took my Landlord's refund, sold my clunker, rented a van, and headed for Atlanta's "Southern Hollywood" not knowing where this "Yellow Brick Road" would take me.

(shakes head, smiles big)

What are the odds, while searching Georgia apartments every night in my hotel rooms, a senior complex in Virginia suddenly pops up? I see it is in the Blue Ridge mountains, the rent is far less than Atlanta, has its own gym, and the town provides free shuttle bus service for its seniors. So I think, "Really?" And now, there is not one single day, that at some point I don't say --

(looks straight up)

"Thank you."

(goes back to typing)

So to prove I can do it anywhere, I shot my 12th short film here in the "Black Hole" of the film industry. It is based on the true story actor Geoffrey Blake told me about his best friend's suicide in L.A. I got Brian Anthony Wilson to star in it. Our "It's All Good...not" got Brian his very first Best Actor award in over 232 films. Sound familiar?

Lawrence looks at its DVD case proudly, then types more.

LAWRENCE

Bottomline, everything in life happens for a reason. We may not like it, definitely not agree with it, but if we just go along with it, we may find ourselves exactly -- where we are supposed to truly be.

(email dings, he reads)

I now have over 450 Awards on IMDb.

(explosive laugh)

That mean absolutely nothing in Hollyweird! And since "all the world is a stage," always know where all the fire exits are.

(goes back to typing)

"Growing old is mandatory. Growing up, is optional." How true, Uncle Walt, how true.

(sings as *Jiminy Cricket*)

"When you wish upon a star, Makes no difference who you are. Anything your heart desires, Will come, to, you."

HE SMILES.

SUGGESTED END CREDITS SIDE-BAR SCREENS

Real Set Pictures and Screen Captures of Lawrence in various costumes with; *David Baldacci* shaking hands on "Wish You Well," *Ed Harris*, *Ethan Hawke*, *John Leguizamo*, and *Mauricio Ovalle* on "Cymbeline," then with *Roger Kabler* on "Saving Robin Williams" Set. Ends on the picture of Lawrence holding three scripts and shaking hands with *Yale Professor Lapadula*.

CAPTION: "Saving Robin Williams" and "RevelationZ" are streaming on Amazon Video.

DEDICATION: *To my riding partner John Patrick Bennett, you always made me laugh. Especially when I didn't want to.*

FADE OUT.