

WHAT LOVE INSPIRES

Written by
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My own life experiences. Everything is true. Unfortunately.

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FADE IN:

CAPTION: *"When two hearts become one, it cannot be undone."
Eternal Love by Charlene M. Martin*

INT. NOVA PSYCHIATRIC WING SMALL INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

STEPHAN ALLEN, 25, long unruly strawberry-blonde hair with five o'clock stubble, looks anorexic. He weighs 95 pounds so his skin is pallor with cheeks sunken. He wears a white t-shirt and faded blue jeans. He sits appearing to be choking.

PSYCHIATRIST, female, lab coat, clipboard and pen, looking too young to be a doctor, sits across watching him concerned.

PSYCHIATRIST

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

Stephan pushes back in chair grabbing at throat. No air.

PSYCHIATRIST

You're safe.

STEPHAN

Never, "safe."

Stephan sucks-in air to jump up knocking his chair over.

PSYCHIATRIST

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

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

STEPHAN

She --was yelling at me.

PSYCHIATRIST

"She," your mother. What was she yelling?

STEPHAN

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

Stephan's eyes get watery. He breathes in gulps.

PSYCHIATRIST

Did you fight back?

STEPHAN

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

PSYCHIATRIST

How long did your abuse last?

STEPHAN

Forever.

PSYCHIATRIST

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

Stephan is "drifting" so Psychiatrist *snaps* her fingers.

PSYCHIATRIST

Thoughts, coupled with emotions,
become beliefs. Beliefs, held long
enough, become habits. And as we
know, habits --are hard to break.
Do these memories still scare you?

EXT. AERIAL OF WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

HISTORICAL SITES MONTAGE: Washington Monument, White House, U.S. Capitol, etc, down to where a full moon reflects The Kennedy Center in its Potomac River. Party *noises* come from the neighboring Watergate Complex and a penthouse balcony.

CAPTION: *Six months earlier*

EXT. WATERGATE PENTHOUSE BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan, still 25, clean shaven, with hair medium length windswept, is a full-fledged bodybuilder. Looking like *Arnold* meets *Robert Redford*, he is impeccably dressed in a blue smoking jacket to match his baby-blue eyes. He leans over balcony's railing lost in thought holding a full wine glass.

INT. SAME WATERGATE PENTHOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Living room has 1970's bright, but lonely-cold, stainless-steel furnishings. Deco-mirrored wall, *Andy Warhol* painting, useless glassless end-tables. An FM-radio *plays* 1977 music.

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

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

EXT. WATERGATE PENTHOUSE BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Paula enters nervous and walks up behind Stephan playful.

PAULA
Don't fall.

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

Paula jumps back also spilling her own drink on her dress.

STEPHAN
You first.

Both *laugh*. Stephan pulls his matching paisley silk ascot from around his neck and begins blotting her dress. She offers him her hand. He puts down his glass to shake it.

PAULA
Paula Santana, I'm ...

STEPHAN
Everyone --knows who you are.

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

STEPHAN
Sorry.

PAULA
I'm not.

Paula continues blotting sticking out her tongue playfully.

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

PAULA
Going to the Convention?

Stephan cannot stop staring at her misshapen tongue.

STEPHAN
In Miami? Hadn't planned on it.

PAULA
Our Whip just cancelled.

STEPHAN
Really? What does a convention --.
(makes *whip-snap* sound)
Wtcht! "Whip" do?

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

STEPHAN
Tells you you're what?!

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

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

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

CAROL
Who are you hiding from us, Paula?

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

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

CAROL
Wanna' come?

STEPHAN
Sure, sounds like fun. Where would
I stay?

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

CAROL
Had a last minute cancelation. Join
us. You'll love it. I guar-an-tee.

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

CAROL

Good. I'll go make the change.

Carol exits back inside sashaying exaggerated. Stephan is mesmerized watching her hips exit individually.

PAULA

How will you get there?

STEPHAN

Huh, where, Miami? Uh --*drive*?

PAULA

Want help paying for gas?

STEPHAN

Sure, sounds like fun. When do we leave?

PAULA

Tomorrow.

STEPHAN

Fine.

(actually double-takes)

Wait?! Tomorrow-tomorrow?

PAULA

Pick me up at five.

STEPHAN

In the morning?! This, morning?

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

RADIO D.J. (FILTERED)

It's Midnight! The witching hour!

Watch out for that "Devil Woman!"

Radio *plays* that title's song. Paula *sings* along with it.

PAULA/RADIO

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

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

STEPHAN/RADIO

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

Paula fans her flushed face in Spanish.

PAULA

Caliente.

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

STEPHAN

Ahhh, Tish. Cuando hablas español.

Paula fakes swooning with back of her hand going to her forehead. Stephan pushes so she falls back to catch her cradling in one muscled arm warning in a Spanish accent.

STEPHAN

Must warn you though, señorita. Soy un fanático del cine. Mucho macho.

Stephan spins her to standing then tap-dances *Zapateado*. *Olé!*

Paula doesn't quite know what to think of this manly man-boy.

INT. WATERGATE PENTHOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

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

Carol stands arms folded watching through the glass door at Stephan's flamenco. She now *sings* along with song's chorus.

CAROL/RADIO

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

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

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

Perfect driving day, beautiful blue sky and billowy clouds.

A 1975 White Porsche 914 rare 6-cylinder speeds along with a CB-radio antennae on its engine lid and two pieces of luggage strapped to its rear trunk-rack.

INT. STEPHAN'S PORSCHE - MOMENTS LATER

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

Paula sits sideways as passenger wearing huge square purple sunglasses watching Stephan. She is not impressed.

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

STEPHAN

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

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

STEPHAN

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

Stephan makes his free hand throw away empty air.

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

PAULA

Really into this whole space-flick
phenom, huh?

STEPHAN

First five hundred to see its D.C.
Premier! Got the button to prove
it.

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

PAULA

Not a big fan of Sci-Fi, thank you.

Stephan turns on car's underdash CB and grabs its microphone.

PAULA

What's that?

STEPHAN

That Princess, is a fully licensed
F.C.C. communication device.

(keys on mike)

Breaker, Breaker.

TRUCKER (FILTERED)

Five-by-five, good buddy.

STEPHAN

Smokies on the prowl?

TRUCKER (FILTERED)

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

STEPHAN

Read my bumper sticker, Bulldog.
I'm passing your back door now.

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

TRUCKER (FILTERED)

Mill, Mill --alumeenum falcon?

STEPHAN

(turns off CB)
Close enough.

PAULA

What'd you get your degree in?

STEPHAN

Ex nihilo nihil fit.

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

Close enough.

EXT. AERIAL PORSCHE ON SOUTH I-95 - CONTINUOUS

MUSIC-MONTAGE: Car's Blaupunkt radio *booms* Billy Preston's 1974 song "*Nothing from Nothing*" as Porsche rockets ahead weaving in and out of traffic like at Nascar.

INT. PORSCHE - MOMENTS LATER

Paula turns off the stereo *wincing* from its volume.

PAULA

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

Stephen puts a fist sideways to his mouth playing a muted horn and *sings* Billie Holiday's 1940 song, "*Tell Me More*."

STEPHAN

"Tell me more and more and then
some, you know what I long to
hear."

Paula nails Billie Holiday's sad and fragile upper range.

PAULA

"I want more and more and then
some, of that *I Love You Only*
Dear."

STEPHAN

Thought you didn't like Sci-Fi?

PAULA

I don't. Wait? What does ...?

STEPHAN

Because Politics also has a *Black*
Hole. We just call it, "The Black
Box." What's your degree in?

PAULA

Nineteenth Century English Lit.

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

Because I'm a realist. Hungry?

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

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

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

Stephan downshifts again and Porsche excelerates fast weaving
through interstate traffic like *Formula 1* driver Niki Lauda.

Sun is setting to striking purple and red hues in their
horizon's sky.

PAULA

I'm not afraid.

STEPHAN
(a perfect Yoda)
"You will be. You, will, be."

INT./EXT. BACKWOODS TWO-LANE ROAD INTERSECTION - NOW MIDNIGHT

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

Paula is asleep. Stephan, sunglasses now off, sits staring straight ahead like a zombie. He looks up through his windshield at the red light, then cocks head confused.

STEPHAN
Why did they put a traffic light --
on the Interstate?

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

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

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

REDNECK TWO
What you lookin' at hippy-freak?!

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

STEPHAN
Utinni!

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

REDNECK ONE
He's freakin' whacko, man!

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

PAULA
Where are we?

STEPHAN
Here-ah, there-ah, eveywhere-ah.

PAULA
Why are you suddenly slurring?
(stretches waking fully)
What time is it?

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

STEPHAN

Twee.

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

(grunts as *Tarzan*)
Only Han --fly Falcon.

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

PAULA

Listen, space cadet, you're
exhausted. I'll pay for a motel.
Sign says there's one up there.

STEPHAN

(head spring-bobs)
Okie, dokie.

EXT. AERIAL OF PORSCHE AT INTERSECTION - IMMEDIATELY

Light turns green. Porsche jerks forward twice, then its engine *dies*. It sits in silence.

PAULA

Only Tarzan drive, huh?

STEPHAN

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

Porsche's engine restarts, then *burns rubber* fishtailing to rocket up the road into the night.

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

STEPHAN
Only one bed, Snow White?

PAULA (O.S.)
All they had, Dopey!

Paula opens bathroom door with its light still on wearing a flowered cotton nightgown. She's back lit so see-through.

Stephan raises an eyebrow as Paula turns off bathroom light and gets into bed. He stands confused. Paula now *snores*.

STEPHAN
You sure about this?

Paula lets out a cute *baby-fart*. Stephan *snort-chuckles*.

STEPHAN
Guess so.

Stephan "heels-off" shoes, pulls off t-shirt, and drops his pants revealing tight-ass bikini-briefs and a rippling six-pack. He turns off overhead light to fall face-first onto bed passing out with pants still around his ankles.

CAPTION: *Based on their true-love story*

EXT/INT. PORSCHE - HOURS LATER, SAME MORNING

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

STEPHAN
Hey-a?!

PAULA
That was quite a sight to wake up to. You always drool that much?

STEPHAN
"Watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden,
(finger to lips, *Shhhh*)
in the most unlikely places."

PAULA
Roald Dahl. Stop deflecting.

STEPHAN
"Deflecting?!" Me? Myself? Or I?

PAULA

Stop it!

STEPHAN

Trying to.

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

Uuu, and psychic psychologist, too.

PAULA

What feelings are you hiding from?

STEPHAN

Quidvis.

PAULA

"Anything and everything?" Really can't talk about you, can you?

STEPHAN

This our exit?

Paula looks at her huge paper map, reads it, and nods.

PAULA

Uh, sí. Take this one.

EXT. AERIAL OF THEIR SOUTH I-95 RAMP TO MIAMI - IMMEDIATELY

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

PAULA

Well --?

STEPHAN

Deep subject.

Porsche's 5-speed accelerates again and because it was designed to hold turns at high speed, does so very well.

EXT. AERIAL OF DEAUVILLE HOTEL IN MIAMI - MOMENTS LATER

Half-moon high-rise beach front hotel with a pool in back. Past pool is the ocean. Hotel hosted "*The Beatles*" second Ed Sullivan appearance. Porsche *screeches* to a stop in its check-in driveway. TWO CUBAN VALETS in hotel blazers run to it.

EXT. DEAUVILLE HOTEL FRONT ENTRANCE - IMMEDIATELY

VALET ONE opens Paula's door. She exits. VALET TWO opens Stephan's door who exits. Valet Two has thick Cuban accent and holds a hand out for Stephan's car's key.

VALET TWO
Welcome to Miami, señor.

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

PAULA
He won't hurt your baby. --Baby.

Stephan drops his key in Valet Two's hand who runs to rear luggage rack and releases one bungee cord. Hook *snaps* back onto car's flat rear window. Stephan clutches his heart, unhooks to pocket both straps, and grabs its two suitcases.

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

STEPHAN
You're doing this on purpose.

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

PAULA
What's in your big bad bag? More secrets?

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

PAULA
Of course.

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

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

STEPHAN
No Tocar!

Both Valets begin to protest. Stephan does earlier *Jawa*-look.

Both Valets jump back *murmuring* in unintelligible Cuban.

PAULA
Certainly know how to make a "way-
out" impression, Skywalker.

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

STEPHAN
Zuuu, Zuuu, Zuuu.

Valet One and Valet Two flip a coin. Valet Two loses who curses in Cuban as he follows pushing their luggage cart in.

INT. MIAMI'S DEAUVILLE HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

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

A huge banner hangs reading, "Welcome 1977 Young Democrats."

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

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

STEPHAN
"Love Boat, Animal-House" style.

DOMINO JEFFERSON, African-American, 20s, cute, in too-tight blouse, sits alone behind a long fold-up table wearing a "Registration" name tag.

DOMINO
Hi, Paula. Flight late?

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

Domino sees Stephan walking to her with his pecs bouncing.

DOMINO
Who's "The Terminator?"

PAULA
Whip.

Stephan arrives and smiles. Domino smiles back imagining.

DOMINO
I wish. --Name?

Overhead Muzak plays movie theme of the famous British spy.

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

STEPHAN
Allen, Stephan Allen.

Domino writes distracted on two "name" stick-on badges in the shape of the *Virginia* state, then hands both out.

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

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

Paula shakes her head and pulls Stephan to the Front Desk.

PAULA
Come on, double-o.

Stephan yanks her hand back whispering.

STEPHAN
What is going on?

Paula makes an irritated guttural *grunt*, then explains.

PAULA
Founded in 1932, Young Democrats of America's mission is to elect Democrats, advocate progressive issues, and train our next generation of leaders. I said all this in our last meeting.
(no response, gets angry)
Do you even listen to me?!

Stephan looks like a spanked puppy. Paula *raspberries*.

PAULA (CONT'D)
Our every two-year convention for four days is to discuss, rewrite if necessary, and vote on The National Charter and Standing Rules ongoing.

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

Paula pulls Stephan's hand to the elevators quoting *Lee Marvin* from "The Dirty Dozen."

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

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

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Large room of multi-color stripe-patterned foil wallpaper. Its thick purple swag carpet has two double beds.

Door opens. Stephan enters carrying SCUBA-bag. He's followed by Valet Two carrying his suitcase who lays it on second bed.

Stephan swings his duffel onto second bed then hands a \$20 bill to Valet Two requesting in Spanish.

STEPHAN

Proteger Porsche, por favor.

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

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

STEPHAN

Qué Diablos?

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

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. FALLING INTO POTOMAC RIVER AS A CHILD - YEARS AGO

POV: FAT LITTLE WHITE BOY's dress shoes slip off the wet cement retaining wall surrounding the Potomac River. Fat Little Boy wearing an Easter suit goes under its murky water. Moment, then he surfaces arms flailing. He can see the Cherry Blossom trees blooming, then goes underwater again.

An African-American MALE HAND reaches underwater to grab the back of Little Boy's suit collar lifting him out. Angry African-American MALE in a black Easter Suit chastises.

ANGRY MALE

Where's your mama, boy?!

Fat Little Boy is really Stephan, 8 years old, bright red hair, obese, who spits out water shivering and stuttering.

LITTLE STEPHAN

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

ANGRY MALE

(softens)

Let's go find your daddy, son.

LITTLE STEPHAN
H-h-he's, n-n-never, h-h-home.

RETURN TO.

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE HOTEL ROOM IN MIAMI - PRESENT

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

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

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

CAROL
Hey, roomie.

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

STEPHAN
We --? We're sleeping together?

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

STEPHAN
Your "husband?" The County Chair?!

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

STEPHAN
"Another couple?!" But there's only two beds?

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

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

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

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

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

Carol pulls off her blouse to a *Frederick's of Hollywood* bra.

Stephan stares at her bra-cleavage and begins spasming, then two-finger checks his neck's *Carotid Artery* pulse.

CAROL
Sorry. Meant, eat with us.

STEPHAN
No! Yes. Wait? You're undress --?
I'll wait outside till you're ...

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

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

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

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

Valet Two wheels-in a fold-up bed.

Shower water in the bathroom turns on.

CAROL (O.S.)
You coming?!

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

STEPHAN
No! --Wait? To dinner?! Yes!

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

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

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rollaway is now open and jammed between corner wall and second double-bed with linens on. Stephan sits on its end in a nylon paisley shirt and bell-bottom jeans *tapping* one of his stylish negative-heel "Earth Shoes."

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

CAROL

Come yet?

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

CAROL

The other couple.

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

STEPHAN

N-n-not yet. Should I g-g-get out?

Carol pulls on new pants and shirt then buttons her blouse.

CAROL

Of what, your clothes? And stop
stammering, it's rude.

Stephan tilts his head. He's heard that command before.

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

CAROL

There they are! The Newlyweds.

STEPHAN

"Newlyweds?!" You're honeymooning
here, with us, at The Convention?

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

JOSEZ

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

STEPHAN

What happened to the old one?

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

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

CARMELLA

Carmella. Mucho gusto.

CAROL

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

JOSEZ

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

Josez *slaps* Stephan's back and winks at him. All *laugh* except Stephan whose eyebrows move like two woolly caterpillars.

INT. DINER ACROSS FROM DEAUVILLE HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Small American restaurant. A few DINERS scattered about.

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

PAULA

They here?

CAROL

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

PAULA

What'd you buy them?

STEPHAN

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

CAROL

Me, numb-nuts. A useful gag gift.

(leans in to Paula)

Did you get it?

(no response)

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

STEPHAN

"Passed over?" As in, promotion?

PAULA

Three strikes.

Stephan draws back an elbow making the Umpire's "out signal."

STEPHAN

You're, Out!

Stephan wanted to be clever. Carol and Paula glare at him.

MILF WAITRESS, very tall, older, Platinum hair and deep tan wrinkles, comes over to begin with Stephan's order.

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

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

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

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

STEPHAN
Looks like they consummated.

CAROL
Long as she's not, constipated.

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

STEPHAN
Hotel California.

PAULA (FILTERED)
How're your roommates?

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

STEPHAN
(*Planet of the Apes*)
"It's a mad-house."

PAULA (FILTERED)
Disco Night in the bar.

STEPHAN
Sure, sounds like fun.

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

STEPHAN
(again as *Heston*)
"A, maaad, houussse."

INT. DEAUVILLE'S HOTEL BAR - LATER SAME NIGHT

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

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

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

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

Domino stands at the bar fending off advances from a sitting Caucasian DRUNK GUY who puts an arm around Domino's waist and pulls her in. She pushes against him trying to escape. Last in line following, Stephan grabs Drunk Guy's offending wrist to twist Drunk's arm who spins off his chair onto the floor.

Paula watches wide-eyed with mouth open. Her Four then sit.

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

CAROL
What was that for?

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

CARMELLA
When?

PAULA
While you were walking over.

JOSEZ
When?!

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

DANCING COUPLES step on the dance floor discoing.

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

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

STEPHAN
What about Paula?

CAROL
She never dances.

Carol pulls Stephan onto the dance floor and dances hot.

Paula puts elbow on table, cups her chin, and motions to WAITRESS, "Another round. Waitress nods. Paula *sighs*.

INT. DEAUVILLE HOTEL BAR - LATER SAME NIGHT

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

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

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

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

PAULA
You gotta' be kidding?

INT. DEAUVILLE NIGHTCLUB DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Stephan pulls Paula onto the dance floor amid Dancing Couples then snaps into John Travolta's famous Disco-pose.

Paula shakes her head and tries to leave. Stephan blocks her way *yelling* over the din.

STEPHAN
What's Wrong?!

PAULA
Can't Dance!

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

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

Dancing Couples *clap* while dispersing. Stephan re-stands Paula, bows, then kisses the back of her hand.

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

PAULA
(a perfect Mae West)
Me thinks, "Is that a pickle in
your pocket, or are ya' glad to see
me" too, too much?

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

STEPHAN
Hot in here.

PAULA
I'll say.

INT. PAULA'S DEAUVILLE BAR TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

Carmella and Josez *clap* impressed. Carol doesn't react.
Stephan pulls out Paula's chair. She sits, then he does.

CARMELLA
When did you take disco lessons?

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

CAROL
(leans forward)
Tell me, "what to do."

STEPHAN
When is your first caucus meeting?

CAROL
Oh, uh, eight a.m. Why?

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

STEPHAN
Time for bed. Move it, move it!

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

INT. DOMINO'S TABLE - SIMULTANEOUS

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

AMERICA
Who --is that?

DOMINO
Virginia's Whip.

Both look at each other and smile wicked.

AMERICA/DOMINO
Anytime.

American and Domino toast "clink," drink, then *laugh*.

INT. HALLWAYS OUTSIDE DEAUVILLE MEETING ROOMS - NEXT DAY

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

INT. INSIDE THEIR DEAUVILLE MEETING ROOMS - SAME DAY

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

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE ROOM - THAT NIGHT

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

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

STEPHAN
Yoga Shavasana or "Corpse Pose."

JOSEZ
Yeah, that would kill me, too.

CARMELLA
How do you keep your stomach muscles so tight?

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

JOSEZ
Detach from your mind you mean?

STEPHAN
Stand on my stomach.

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

STEPHAN
Bedtime, ballerina.

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

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

STEPHAN
Bed. Now.

The Three get ready for bed *grumbling*. His brow furrows.

STEPHAN
Remember --What?

INT. STEPHAN'S ROLLAWAY BED - NOW MIDNIGHT

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

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

CAROL
Too close, just sleep.

Stephan closes his eyes. Carol, on her side, backs butt into his crotch. His eyes pop open. She reaches back to grab his top hand and pulls his arm over her shoulder whispering.

CAROL
Just sleep.

Carol grinds her butt into Stephan's crotch like any tease.

STEPHAN
Too close.

INT. DEAUVILLE MEETING ROOMS - ALL NEXT DAY

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

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Stephan meditates same lying between chairs with eyes closed.

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

STEPHAN

Just in time --for bedtime.

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

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

STEPHAN

Why do I have to remember?

INT. DEAUVILLE MEETING ROOMS - ALL NEXT MORNING

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

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE BEDROOM - THAT EVENING

Stephan meditates same between his chairs with eyes closed.

Door opens. His Four enter. First Three throw-up their hands.

Paula tilts head sideways to watch. His eyes remain closed.

STEPHAN

Found a nightclub today while
shopping for your refreshments.

(no response)

Who wants to go?

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

STEPHAN

I'll drive.

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

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

STEPHAN

But I don't want to remember?

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

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

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

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

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

TWO DRUNKS

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

Stephan looks in his side-mirror to see Two Drunks *laugh* and point. He adjusts his rearview mirror to see Paula is hurt.

Stephan tightens his grip on steering wheel *cracking* all eight knuckles. His eyes go to slits. A reckoning is coming.

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

STEPHAN

Get a table while I park.

Stephan watches Paula wipe away a tear as she exits his car.

Stephan watches his Four enter the club, then snap-looks back towards Two Drunks and speaks as Alec Guinness's *Obi-Wan*.

STEPHAN

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

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

INT. THE CLOCK CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

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

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

EXT. CLOCK CLUB ENTRYWAY WITH SAME MUSIC - SIMULTANEOUS

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

STEPHAN (O.S.)

Say you're sorry.

Two Drunks react *WTF?* then throw bagged-bottle at Stephan in the shadows. Stephan steps to them puffing his chest out.

STEPHAN

Say --**you're sorry.**

INT. PAULA'S CLOCK CLUB BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

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

PAULA

Someone should check on him!

JOSEZ

He's a big boy!

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

Paula looks over her booth's back. Stephan slides into booth beside her and grabs two knockers *tapping* them on the table.

Paula spins to him. He leans over so only she can hear him.

STEPHAN

They said --they're sorry!

EXT. CLOCK CLUB ENTRYWAY WITH SAME MUSIC - IMMEDIATELY

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

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

FIRST DRUNK

Apologize for what, man?

SECOND DRUNK

Don't know? But glad you did.

MUSIC ENDS.

INT. CLOCK CLUB BOOTH - SIMULTANEOUS

Club Disc Jockey *plays* a new song.

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

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

EXT. CLOCK CLUB ENTRANCE - LATER SAME NIGHT

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

STEPHAN

Loud!

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

PAULA

WHY?!

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

CAROL

WHO?!

MARCELLA

WHAT?!

JOSEZ

WHEN?!

Stephan shakes his head getting in to drive. His Four get in as before waiting for someone to answer their ringing phones.

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE BED - MIDNIGHT

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

Stephan is sound asleep when his eyes jolt open. He listens and hears Josez and Carmella. No, that's not it? He furrows his brow, then throws back covers. Carol is giving him a blowjob. Stephan grabs her head to stop. Carol gets double wrist-control to hold his hands down. She looks up smiling as best she can. She is a Pro. Stephan's eyes cross, then he acquiesces to hormones and closes his eyes smiling.

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

INT. STEPHAN'S DEAUVILLE ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Stephan eyes snap open. He throws back his covers. No one.

STEPHAN

Best dream, I never had.

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

MIRROR IMAGE: LITTLE STEPHAN, now 10, red crew-cut, in dirty BVDs, no shirt, stares back obese with multiple rolls of fat.

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

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

CAROL

I, want, more!

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

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

STEPHAN

Uh? --Morning.

INT. HOTEL DEAUVILLE BALLROOM - NEXT EVENING

Room is packed with Delegates sitting at round tables.

Individual state flags are centered on each table. Delegate Men wear suit and tie. Women are in business-professional.

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

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

Stephan enters wearing a suit, sees *Virginia* table, and sits.

STEPHAN

Who's that?

JOSEZ

Barry Staples, National President.

STAPLES (FILTERED)

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

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

STAPLES (FILTERED)

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

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

STAPLES (FILTERED)

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

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

STEPHAN

Sieg Heil.

Carmella heard Stephan say something and looks down at him.

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

STEPHAN

Say Hell, Hell yes!

Carmella nods looking back at Staples. Stephan grins fake.

STEPHAN

Careful. Remember your "Plan."

EXT. DEAUVILLE SWIMMING POOL - NEXT MORNING

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

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

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

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

CARMELLA

I could get used to this.

CAROL

Forget it, honey. "This" passes.

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

JOSEZ

Dios mío. Adonis.

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

STEPHAN

Who'd like to learn ...?

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

STEPHAN

Enthusiastic bunch. You first.

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

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

Paula studies Stephan's moving back muscles detached.

PAULA

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

EXT. SWIMMING IN DEAUVILLE'S OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

EXT. DEAUVILLE SWIMMING POOL AREA - MOMENTS LATER

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

CAROL

Where're the lovebirds?

PAULA

Loving.

Carol gets a mischievous look and stands to leave.

STEPHAN

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

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

PAULA

What about my lessons?

STEPHAN

This morning took its toll.

(no response)

Running in the sand is hard enough,
but jumping over seawalls, too?

PAULA

You could teach me in the Bahamas?

STEPHAN

What? How? I'm driving home?

PAULA

I bought you a ticket.

STEPHAN

And I thought you'd hitch a ride
back?

Paula looks up with sad kitten-eyes. Stephan *sighs*.

STEPHAN

Sure, sounds like fun.

INT. AIRLINER CABIN LOADING, MIAMI AIRPORT - NEXT DAY

Plane is full. DELEGATE-PASSENGERS talk excited. Paula and Stephan walk down the plane's aisle as their Three Friends already flew back home. Paula looks at her ticket, confirms seat, and sits by a window. Stephan sits next to her in the aisle seat. He smiles looking around. He loves flying.

STEWARDESS closes door to a mechanical locking-sound. Stephan snaps his head to the door as it *hisses* sealing.

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

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

PAULA

Someone said you're a pilot?

STEPHAN

Huh, what?

PAULA

You're a pilot?

STEPHAN

Yeah. Single-engine fixed-wing and glider. Also certified Skydiver.

PAULA

Have a death wish?

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

STEPHAN

Do now.

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

PAULA

Say something?

STEPHAN

No, but you can. Talk, just talk. Talk about anything, everything, nothing --yourself.

PAULA

Me? You sure?

Paula takes Stephan's frantic nod as true interest. It's not.

Paula launches into a self-exposé. Stephan barely hears her as his hands fatigue from gripping the arm-rests so tight. Time becomes a blur. Cabin speaker clicks on. Paula stops.

CAPTAIN (FILTERED)

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

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

STEPHAN

Thank you.

EXT. PLANE'S LANDING ON FREEPORT RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

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

PAULA

You're welcome.

STEPHAN

Huh, what? Oh. Uh. You, too.

INT. AIRLINER CABIN NOW IN BAHAMAS - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

STEPHAN

That was interesting?

PAULA

Say what?

STEPHAN

This should be interesting.

Delegate-Passengers stand. Stephan nods and smiles back at America and Domino. Everything is right in his world again. Whatever just happened is forgiven and forgotten.

EXT. XANADU PRINCESS HOTEL - LATER SAME DAY

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

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

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

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

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

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

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

Think they'll give it to you?

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

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

EXT. STEPHAN'S XANADU SUITE BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

STEPHAN

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

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

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

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan walks through dining area and enters kitchen. Sound of him opening refrigerator door. He closes refrigerator and re-enters living room to *pop* off brand new cutting-edge lift-tab on a beer can. He drops the metal tab into its can.

STEPHAN
Now this, is a hotel.

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

STEPHAN
Howard Hughes suite.

PAULA (FILTERED)
Very funny. Small aren't they?

STEPHAN
(scans room puzzled)
You're high maintenance.

PAULA (FILTERED)
How's Barry Staples as a roommate?

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

PAULA (FILTERED)
Raincheck?

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

PAULA (FILTERED)
And dinner. Meet you in the
restaurant in thirty minutes.

STEPHAN
Sure, sounds like fun.

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

STEPHAN
Remember what, god damn it?!

INT. XANADU HOTEL LOBBY - LATER THAT DAY

Ornate Lobby. Everything first-class. Elevator *dings*, opens. Stephan in all-white linen suit exits and goes to Front Desk.

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

STEPHAN

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

MANAGER

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

STEPHAN

"This trip?" He come here often?

MANAGER

Several times a year, especially
during Bazaar Week.

STEPHAN

When's that?

MANAGER

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

STEPHAN

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

MANAGER

All reservations booked months ago.

STEPHAN

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

MANAGER

No. How is your room?

STEPHAN

Great.

(remembers its opulence)
Wait. Know what? This whole trip is
great! Love my room. Thanks.

MANAGER

Are you dining-in with us, sir?

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

MANAGER

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

STEPHAN

Two. Myself, and a real lady.

MANAGER

For two V.I.P.'s.

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

STEPHAN

"Thank you, thank you very much."

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

MANAGER

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

INT. XANADU'S RESTAURANT VERANDA - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

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

PAULA

I just realized what you do.

Paula sits smiling. Stephan sits frowning.

PAULA

You're -- "The Good Humor Man."

STEPHAN

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

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

Stephan makes a face and hands the cork back.

STEPHAN

Do we look like peasants?

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

PAULA

Was it bad?

STEPHAN

Don't know. Don't care. Always
wanted to do that.

Manager hurries over with a bottle of champagne apologetic.

MANAGER

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

Manager pops bottle open and pours some most apologetic.

MANAGER

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

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

STEPHAN

"Indifferently blended, ole' boy."

Manager nods in agreement as he *buckets* bottle and exits.

Pool's cabana-bar has been serving drinks to Delegate-Guests,
in shorts, who *laugh* drunk.

PILOT pushes plane's Stewardess into the pool. Her *splash*
make Stephan and Paula look out.

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

PAULA

Wanna go for a swim?

Stephan grabs onto table's sides shiver-remembering his near-
drowning in the Potomac River as a child and *gasps* for air.
He becomes aware of being stared at by Paula. He *coughs*, then
raises his glass becoming his famous British spy again.

STEPHAN

Off to the Casino to Miss Money --
Penny?

EXT. BAHAMA'S EL CASINO - THAT NIGHT

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

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

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

INT. EL CASINO - CONTINUOUS

One giant single-floor with a Teller Cage in the far corner. Slot machines stand on one side. Center has Roulette Wheels and Crap tables. Opposite side has Poker and 21-Tables.

STEPHAN

You girls go have fun.

PAULA

What are you doing?

STEPHAN

Exploring.

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

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

MUSIC-MONTAGE: Stephan walks along the rows of slot machines like a "General on Review" as their OPERATORS lose money. He studies the machines, sees what he needed, and smiles.

INT. CASINO BLACKJACK TABLE MUSIC/MONTAGE - CONTINUOUS

He moves to stand arms folded with an intense stare watching Blackjack PLAYERS at 21-Tables until he sees his opportunity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INT. EL CASINO FRONT DOORS - MOMENTS LATER

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

PAULA

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

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

STEPHAN

Read it in Miami. Too much like work. Didn't have fun doing it.

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

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

INT. CASINO SLOT MACHINES MONTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

MUSIC-MONTAGE: Stephan locks hands behind his back and walks looking at slot machines searching for clue he saw earlier. His Three Girls follow. Stephan stops. His Three Girls bump into him. He points to a machine. Paula drops in a coin and pulls handle. It *dings* and four coins drop out. She *shrieks*. Stephan goes *Sherlock Holmes* again searching. His Three Girls follow. He stops and points to a machine. Domino plays a coin. Nothing. Stephan finger-circles, *Again*. She plays and machine *dings* as eight coins drop out. Domino almost faints. Stephan searches, points repeatedly, and His Three Girls each pull those slot-handles. Couple of pulls till each Girl wins. They *scream* scooping winnings into their purses.

Stephan leads his Three Girls till they've played the area and are now back where they started at the huge front doors.

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

PAULA
Greatest night, ever!

DOMINO
I've got goosebumps.

AMERICA
I'm wet!

PAULA/DOMINO
What?!

AMERICA
I'm *excited*?

PAULA/DOMINO/AMERICA
(Three spin to Stephan)
How?!

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

Stephan opens door and bows arm-sweeping palm-up. His Three Girls exit hoity-toity with wrists up and bent.

Pit Boss glares. Stephan fires a finger-gun at Boss, *pow*.

EXT. EL CASINO ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. ORANGE CAB - MOMENTS LATER

His Three Girls in back *snicker* like little girls.

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

CABBIE
Take you some place special, mon.

EXT. AERIAL OF CASINO - CONTINUOUS

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

CABBIE

Ahh --hah, hah, hah, haaah!

INT. ORANGE CAB - LATER SAME EVENING

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

STEPHAN

Sure there's a club out here?

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

EXT. BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

House on stilts on the beach is in the middle of nowhere. Its paved unstriped parking lot in front holds old American cars.

Orange Cab stops at weathered wooden stairs up to a door.

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

STEPHAN

Would you mind wait ...?

Cabbie drives away fast using same earlier Caribbean laugh.

CABBIE

Ahh --hah, hah, hah, haaah!

INT. BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

A few red and black lights do not illuminate well on purpose.

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

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

Caribbean music wafts down the long hall. It is lined on both sides with MALE ISLANDERS of all ages. Stephan follows his Three Girls getting shoulder-bumped hard from both sides.

STEPHAN

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

INT. BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB GREAT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

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

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

BAHAMIAN THREE

Mind, mon?

Stephan gives up willingly to sit in his booth relieved.

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

BAHAMIAN FOUR

Buy mee drink, mon.

Bahamian Four's coat opens. He has a gun in his waistband. Stephan sees the pistol and waves frantic for service.

Islander WAITRESS, once pretty, now hard by life, arrives.

STEPHAN

Whatever "he" wants, mon.

Bahamian Four nods at her. Waitress nods back and leaves. Bahamian Four smiles big with two shiny gold front teeth.

BAHAMIAN FOUR

Why you here, mon?

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

BAHAMIAN THREE

You should be leavin' soon, doncha'
tink, mon?

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

BAHAMIAN FOUR

Why you messin' wit' mee friend?

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

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

BAHAMIAN FOUR

He cool. Bought mee drink, mon.

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

BAHAMIAN TWO

Buy mee drink too, mon.

Stephan jumps up with arms out imitating his Islanders.

STEPHAN

Beers on mee! We par-tee!

EXT. BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB ENTRANCE - LATER THAT NIGHT

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

PAULA

Nice place.

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

STEPHAN

Wait? Where are ...?

PAULA

Said they'd find their own rides.

Stephan drops his head shaking it, then looks up *mumbling*.

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

STEPHAN

Stay!

Stephan inhales, then enters club. Moment later, door *bursts* open as Domino and America exit being pushed by Stephan. He pushes Domino and America into Cab's backseat with Paula.

Club's door bursts open again as same Five Bahamians exit upset. Stephan jumps in the front passenger seat *clapping*.

STEPHAN

Go Mon, Go!

EXT. AERIAL OF BAHAMA BEACH NIGHTCLUB - CONTINUOUS

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

Stephan mimics Cabbie's earlier famous Caribbean laugh.

STEPHAN

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

EXT. XANADU HOTEL BEACH - NEXT BRIGHT SUNNY MORNING

Beautiful white sand behind the hotel has its own Cabana Bar. Delegate-Passengers, in various swimsuits, play along the beach both in and out of the ocean. It is, Tropical Nirvana.

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

SLO-MOTION: Paula walks model-cross-stepping in unbuttoned white linen beach shirt with matching floppy sun-hat and white-framed sunglasses. Ocean breeze opens her shirt to reveal a white low-cut bikini. She sits crossing a knee.

STEPHAN

Who are -? Where, did you get that?

PAULA

Like it? Bought in the hotel's gift shop. You should visit. Thank you so much for last night. It was just what my doctor ordered.

STEPHAN

"Doctor?"

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

That's so, I mean? I had a speech impediment, too! Couldn't say my R's. Stuttered like Elmer Fudd. My mom used to make me talk in front of her friends so they could laugh at me. Before my dad died, he hired a speech tutor who taught me to pronounce every word in my head before I say it. I still do.

PAULA

Remember their big tape recorders?

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

We don't sound like we think.

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

STEPHAN

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

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

BEACH WAITER

D-d-drinks, m-m-mon?

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

Oh yes! I want one too, please.

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

PAULA

Raincheck?

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

PAULA

Why do you get so nervous?

STEPHAN

With you, I don't. Come on!

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

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

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

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU SUITE - NOW SUNSET

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

STEPHAN (O.S.)

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

Door opens and Stephan enters dropping his gear. Paula enters behind and drops her gear scanning the room in amazement.

PAULA

Wrong! Mine sure ain't like this.

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

For embezzlement probably. May I take a shower?

STEPHAN

Bathroom's in the bedroom.

Paula enters bedroom then bathroom. Her voice *echoes*.

PAULA (O.S.)

HOLY SHIT!

Sound of its shower-water turning *on*.

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Greek-style ornate bathroom, double-sink counter, wall-length mirror above it and full opaque glass-door sealing its huge bathtub so it can be used as a steam-shower.

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

STEPHAN (O.S.)
Okay, if I hang your hotel robe
inside? I won't look.

PAULA
Why not?

Silence, then Stephan laughs *nervous* and stammers outside.

STEPHAN (O.S.)
I, I'll l-l-leave it on the bed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEPHAN
Holy shit.

INT. STEAM-SHOWER BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Paula still showers with bikini on. Bathroom light turns off. Sound of shower door *sliding* open then closed. Both are not seen. They bump. Paula responds imitating a parrot.

PAULA
El'lo?

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

Fumbling noises.

PAULA
Here, I'll do it.

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

What? Oh! Oh my. That feels --neat.

STEPHAN

"Neat," huh? Your turn.

PAULA

You have really hard --. May I?

STEPHAN

What? Oh? Oh! That does feel neat.

PAULA

Uuuu, nice six-pack, strong hips, tight cheeks. All four. And, *uh* --? What's that?

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

Yes.

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

PAULA

Hmmmmmmmm?

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan enters pacing back and forth in hip-wrapped towel. His muscled six-pack is taut and shimmering wet.

STEPHAN

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

Paula enters wearing Xanadu's luxurious white robe.

PAULA

I'll leave.

Stephan jumps back *knocking* something over and stammers.

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

How? I'll be the one squashed.

STEPHAN

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

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

EXT. STEPHAN'S XANADU BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

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

Stephan paces mumbling to himself. Paula enters head down.

PAULA

Would you be --*my first kiss?*

STEPHAN

You're what?! --Oh.

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

STEPHAN

It should be special then.

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

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

PAULA

That --. Wow. That was just like in my romance novels.
(launches like a missile)
Yeah, Baby!

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

PAULA

Shaaad app.

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

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU BEDROOM - LATER SAME NIGHT

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

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

STEPHAN
Everything but --.

PAULA
But still --.
(euphoric smile)
Didn't know someone could do that
with their mouth?

STEPHAN
Back atcha'.

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

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

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

PAULA
Men.

INT. STEPHAN'S XANADU LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

STEPHAN
Balcony, please.

Xanadu Bellboy pushes food cart through balcony curtains.

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

STEPHAN'S MOTHER (V.O.)
"You'll always be a loser! You
don't deserve to be happy!"

Stephan falls back against the door. His world collapses.

STEPHAN
Hold on? Wait. In here, please.

Xanadu Bellboy doesn't understand but pulls cart back in.

STEPHAN

Close its door --and curtains.

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

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

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

STEPHAN

Stop It!

Paula enters wearing white robe smiling a satisfied woman.

PAULA

"Stop" what?

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

STEPHAN

Let's feed each other.

PAULA

Carol said you drive a motorcycle.

Paula eats half a new fry waiting for his answer. Stephan nods as he bird-snatches the rest of the fry out of her hand.

PAULA

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

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

STEPHAN

Sure, sounds like fun.

EXT. BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE DIVIDED HIGHWAY - NEXT MORNING

Their scooter *hums* by with Stephan driving and Paula as passenger holding onto his hips. They don't wear helmets, just sunglasses. Both yell over the wind noise.

PAULA

Wanted something bigger!

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

PAULA

I don't want to die a virgin!

EXT. SAME BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY AERIAL - IMMEDIATELY

Their scooter veers across all lanes. Cars *beep* and steer around them. Stephan regains control back into left lane.

EXT. BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE DIVIDED HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

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

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

All the way ...!

EXT. SAME BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY AERIAL - IMMEDIATELY

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

EXT. BAHAMIAN FOUR-LANE DIVIDED HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Stephan regains control to stare ahead ashen-faced.

PAULA

To the end!

Stephan nods relieved. Paula hugs tighter. She's in love.

EXT. FREEPORT'S INDUSTRIAL REFINERY - LATER SAME DAY

Dirt and gravel road runs between huge oil tanks. Large wharf is at far end. No crew, trucks, or ships, still on Holiday.

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

INT. REFINERY'S BAMBOO BAR - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

PAULA

Nice place.

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

STEPHAN

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

Bartender keeps his blank stare at Paula. Stephan smiles.

STEPHAN

What kind of beer do you have?

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

STEPHAN

And two glasses.

Bartender *spits* into his glass and wipes it out.

STEPHAN

Uh, make that one bottle.

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

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

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MOTHER'S TOWNHOUSE KITCHEN - YEARS AGO

Stephan, just out of college wrestling so triathlete fit, opens refrigerator. He grabs a carton of orange juice and guzzles then spits it into the sink. He looks at carton's expiration date. He pours it out in sink. It has yellowed.

He pours out a gallon of milk clumping like buttermilk. He yanks his head away at its stink and turns on faucet. Moldy fruit, liquified lettuce, furry cheese, go in the trashcan.

He opens a cupboard and pulls out cans that have bowed out at both ends from salmonella. He opens the counter's Bread Box. It's half-loaf is moldy-green. He tosses all in the trashcan.

MOTHER (O.S.)

We were having that for supper!

RETURN TO.

INT. BAHAMA REFINERY BAMBOO BAR - PRESENT

Stephan jerks his head away and slides beer bottle to Paula.

PAULA

Tell me about yourself.

Stephan becomes British spy with accent from "Goldfinger."

STEPHAN

"Do you expect me to talk?"

Paula's figured Stephan out a little by now and answers with voice-over Michael Collins's accent as "Goldfinger" himself.

PAULA

"No, Mister Allen, I expect you to lie."

Stephan nods smiling *"Oh, I like this one."*

STEPHAN

Graduated in V.C.U.'s first Poly-Sci class and tried to get a job on The Hill but no openings. I passed the Senate's typing test, but only offer came from their Credit Union. Manager said something about Congressmen always being overdrawn. Sounded dishonest, didn't take it.

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

Whatever it takes. What do you do?

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

Where you aren't promoted. Why?

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

People see what they want.

PAULA

What do you see?

Stephan sees the Bartender lick his lips creepy.

STEPHAN

That it's time to go.

PAULA

Wait. What about your family?

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

I'm so sorry. How did she die?

STEPHAN

Alone.

PAULA

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

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

STEPHAN

Run for Office.

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

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

INT. AIRLINE CABIN LOADING IN BAHAMAS - LATER THAT DAY

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

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

PAULA

This trip --was like a dream.

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

STEPHAN

More like --a nightmare.

PAULA

What's wrong?

STEPHAN

I don't know?

Stephan recalls earlier flight and closes his eyes.

STEPHAN

Talk, just talk. Don't stop.

Paula spews animated. Stephan goes into survival mode only hearing his own heart *beating* faster and faster. Time blurs, then he does. He squeezes Paula's hand. She smiles thinking he loves her. Stephan hasn't a clue what that word means.

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY - WEEKS LATER

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

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

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

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

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

STEPHAN

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

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

STEPHAN

Old girlfriend.

Paula hits Stephan with a new paper towel roll.

STEPHAN

The Senator.

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

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

Except in this case, we did.

PAULA

No?! Are you? Which is it?

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

PAULA

The Honorable Allen Stephan, Senate
Aide.

STEPHAN

Only at the General Assembly level.

PAULA

Yes, but do you know how many doors
this will open for you?

STEPHAN

(as *James Cagney*)

Nah Baby, es-splains it to me.

Paula drops down to her knees and unzips his fly. Stephan
cranes his neck in a circle with Cagney's shoulder-shrug.

STEPHAN

You dirty rat. That's not a door.

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

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

PAULA

You know this is a long session.

STEPHAN

Forty-five days ain't that long.

PAULA

Special Session, ninety days.

STEPHAN

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

PAULA

The State will put you up at a hotel with a Capitol parking pass. Parties, politics, all the perks.

Stephan opens the front door. Paula kisses his cheek.

PAULA

See you tomorrow.

STEPHAN

Sorry, have to leave early.

Paula's crushed, then recovers a professional loser.

PAULA

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

Paula kisses his cheek again quickly and exits.

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

STEPHAN

Glad you came back, I wanted ...

Carol stands outside with a bottle of champagne.

CAROL

Thought she'd never leave.

Carol pushes Stephan inside and goes into his kitchen. Her champagne cork *pops* and she exits with two full wine goblets.

STEPHAN

We have to stop.

CAROL

What? Drinking?

STEPHAN

No. Us. She'll get hurt.

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

CAROL

Can think of a better way to end.

STEPHAN

You need to leave.

CAROL

I'm not looking for a relationship.

STEPHAN

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

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

CAROL

Little head may be saying no, but big head is saying go, go, go.

Stephan grabs her offending wrist to throw it away.

STEPHAN

No! You "go."

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

CAROL

See you in Richmond. --Lover.

Stephan *slams* his door.

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

Paula watches Carol skip down the sidewalk still a tease.

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

PAULA

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

(wipes away a tear)

What do you see --in me?

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

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

Mother's antique pendulum wall clock in the living room strikes Midnight, *dong, dong*, ten more times.

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

DAD

It'll be okay, son.

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

STEPHAN

Dad! What's going to be okay? *Dad?*

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT GREAT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

STEPHAN

That had to be a dream?

(scans to be sure)

Dad?

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

STEPHAN

REMEMBER WHAT?!

Stephan freezes with same blank stare in the Miami hotel.

TIME LAPSE:

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

TIME LAPSE ENDS.

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

STEPHAN

Yeah?

PAULA (FILTERED)

I wanted to wish you all the best.
You deserve it. I'm proud of you.

Stephan reacts like someone threw cold water in his face.

STEPHAN

Sure, gotta' go.

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

INT. RICHMOND HOTEL LOBBY - LATER SAME MORNING

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

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

ASSISTANT MANAGER

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

Stephan smiles holding up and jingling his Porsche keys.

STEPHAN

I "flew" alright, in sixty-nine
minutes flat.

ASSISTANT MANAGER

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

Stephan drops his luggage to grab his room key.

STEPHAN

Have these taken to my room,
please. I have to get to my office
at --The State Capitol.

INT. VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

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

Stephan enters Lobby, goes to and presents Driver's I.D. to GUARD, in uniform, and receives a *Senate Badge* (no picture) and *Senate Parking Pass* for his car. He gets in elevator. He smiles as both doors close. He's finally on his way up.

INT. SENATOR MCCOMBS OUTER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan enters Outer Office, looks at his empty desk, smiles, then looks through inner-door to its adjoining office.

SENATOR MCCOMBS, 40s, fit-for-age, in suit, sits behind his huge ornate desk leaning back reading the local newspaper.

STEPHAN
Morning, Senator.

McCombs turns a page never looking up. He talks like the cartoon character *Foghorn Leghorn*.

MCCOMBS
You're late, boy.

INT. SENATOR MCCOMBS GAB INNER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

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

Stephan enters and sits looking at multiple pictures of the Senator with dignitaries. McCombs lifts a box onto his desk, opens it, and pulls out an expensive crystal pitcher.

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

Stephan goes to answer but McCombs cuts him off.

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

Stephan goes to answer but McCombs cuts him off.

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

Stephan goes to answer but McCombs cuts him off.

MCCOMBS

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

McCombs goes back to reading shooin Stephan away who exits.

INT. GAB ELEVATOR - LATER THAT DAY

Stephan stands holding an overflowing box of office supplies.

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

STEPHAN

Haven't seen you since the Bahamas!

DOMINO

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

STEPHAN

McCombs.

DOMINO

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

STEPHAN

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

DOMINO

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

STEPHAN

Carol? Is she here?!

DOMINO

No, why would she? You staying at
the hotel?

Stephan nods distracted lost in worried thought about Carol.

DOMINO

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

STEPHAN

Kinda' tired, haven't slept.

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

DOMINO

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

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

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

STEPHAN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Stupid! --Ugly! --Failure!

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

STEPHAN

DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER!

Doors *ding* and open. A FEMALE AIDE steps in carrying same type of box and smiles.

Stephan jumps out. Female Aide looks at Stephan's box on the floor, then at him. Doors close.

INT. SAME GAB HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

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

STEPHAN

What is happening to me?

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

STEPHAN

Elevators! Don't ride elevators.
Damn things get stuck all the time.
Use the stairs from now on. Simple.

He sees a sign "*Stairs*" and runs to its door, then exits.
Door *slams* behind him sounding like a jail door locking.

INT. RICHMOND MEDICAL COLLEGE EXAM ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

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

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

STEPHAN
Heart attack, right?

DOCTOR
Wrong. Panic attack.

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

DOCTOR
All your tests came back normal.

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

DOCTOR
I'm sure it was. And your reaction to my diagnosis is also normal.

STEPHAN
Bull shit! I eat right, exercise. I'm fuckin' young, man.

DOCTOR
People have panic attacks every day. It is not that uncommon, but there is always a reason. You need to relax. I can prescribe some medication and give you the name of a psychia ...

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

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

INT. SENATOR MCCOMBS INNER OFFICE - LATER SAME DAY

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

MCCOMBS

Hell of a way to start your first day, boy. I can't find you. Then some Assistant brings me your box. Hospital calls me. Elucidate, boy!

STEPHAN

Sir, you just hired me last night. I didn't get any sleep. The Doctor said I had a --.

(fake-coughs)

Have, the Flu.

MCCOMBS

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

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

MCCOMBS

*Boy's gotta mouth like a cannon.
Always shootin' it off.*

INT. GAB SENATE COMMITTEE ROOM - WEEKS LATER

Large *Hearing Room*. Raised semi-circle dais with microphones and name plates having multiple theater-type audience seats.

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

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

STEPHAN

Stephan Allen for Senator McCombs.

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

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

DOMINO

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

STEPHAN

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

DOMINO

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

STEPHAN

Lucky you. Reporting for yours?

DOMINO

Yeah, he can't make it. You?

STEPHAN

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

DOMINO

Uuuuuu, moving up in the world.

SENATORS file-in to sit behind their raised podium.

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

Domino leans over. She and Stephan whisper.

DOMINO

Happy Hour at the hotel tonight.

STEPHAN

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

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

INT. RICHMOND HOTEL RESTAURANT LOUNGE - THAT NIGHT

Hotel's nightclub is in a corner of its restaurant. Heating pans are on tables with trays of hors d'oeuvres. Senators, in earlier suits, stand, eat, and "hit on" the Female Aides. All you've ever heard about local politics being seedy is true.

Stephan enters dressed same and looks for Domino.

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

CAROL

Don't call, don't write. What's a girl to think?

STEPHAN

That the guy's not interested!

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

CAROL

Your room or mine?

STEPHAN

I don't have affairs!

CAROL

Why not? Don't have a girlfriend. Paula said she hasn't heard from you since you came down.

STEPHAN

Leave her out of this. Wait? You talked to Paula? When?

CAROL

Before I left. I think she's got the hots for youuuuu. Whatever would she think --?

Carol slides a mini-frank in and out of her pursed-lips then bites it in half.

CAROL (CONT'D)

If she knew about us?

STEPHAN

There is no "us!"

Carol swallows mini-frank to explain nonchalant.

CAROL

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

STEPHAN

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

CAROL

(grabs his crotch)

Doesn't feel as big. Losing weight?

Stephan knocks her hand away furious and makes a scene.

STEPHAN

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

Stephan storms out. Carol *laughs* heartless.

CAROL

Somebody's got mommy issues.

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

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

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

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

BELLHOP (O.S.)

Room Service.

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

STEPHAN

God damn right Carol's the type!

Stephan is surprised by both by his anger and statement.

STEPHAN (CONT'D)

Type to do what? Poison me? Okay.
Sure. But I have to stay here to
stay on target so I have to stay
safe. Safe from --what?

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

STEPHAN

Not what, how! Only consume what I
prepare. Don't eat or drink while
I'm down here. Go home on week-ends
and chow down. Simple. Perfect.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

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

Toilet *flushes* and bathroom door opens. Stephan shuffles-out emaciated and weak. His suit hangs on mere skin and bones.

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

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

STEPHAN

Least I wet my lips.

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

STEPHAN

FUCK YOU!

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

The nightstand clock reads 6:00 p.m.

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

Nightstand clock now reads 11:00 p.m.

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

Paula enters closing door, sees his condition, and tears-up.

PAULA

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

(dials *Room Service*)

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

(hangs up)

Remember when you ran the table at *El Casino*?

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

PAULA (CONT'D)

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

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

INT. MEDICAL COLLEGE OF VIRGINIA PSYCH WARD - NOW MIDNIGHT

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

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

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

PSYCHOLOGIST

You're in luck, we have an opening.

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

INT. MCV PSYCH WARD PATIENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bare Cinderblock walls with multiple unreadable scribblings. Floor tiles are chipped. Three metal spring beds in a U.

One bed is empty. The other two beds have CRAZIES hand-cuffed to their bed rails who *rant* and *drool*.

Stephan and Paula enter. Paula *gasps*. Psychologist presents his clipboard with a form.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Sign here.

Stephan backs-out looking at Paula with eyes pleading.

PAULA

I'll drive us back to D.C.

PSYCHOLOGIST

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

STEPHAN

"H-h-home?"

PAULA

Almost sweetie, almost.

CAPTION: *All depictions, descriptions, and dialogue true.*

INT. NORTHERN VIRGINIA MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITAL - NEXT MORNING

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

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

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

PSYCHIATRIST

Mister Allen, do you know what a
Paranoid Schizophrenic is?

(no response)

Good, because you're not one. But I
have to classify you as something
in order to admit you.

(slides a typed form over)

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

STEPHAN

Must, come, back.

PSYCHIATRIST

Where?

STEPHAN

Any, where. --But here.

Paula kisses his hand, then squeezes it.

Stephan signs the form without taking his eyes off Paula.

INT. NOVA MENTAL WARD GENERAL POPULACE - NEXT DAY

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

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

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

Speaker clicks on as NURSE, 30s, in starched white uniform who might actually be related to *Nurse Ratched* from "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest" announces over the echoing P.A. in an emotionless but siren-like voice.

NURSE (FILTERED)

Medication Time. Medication Time.

A dutch-door is on one wall. Its top half opens. Nurse stands behind with a stainless-steel cart of tiny throw-away cups.

Patients stand as automatons and line-up in single-file at her door. Each Patient steps up to receive two cups, one of pills and second of water.

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

NURSE

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

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

STEPHAN

Would you take a sip, please?

She *clears* her throat and answers professionally detached.

NURSE

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

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

ORDERLY

Time for group therapy, sport.

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

INT. GROUP THERAPY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bright-painted cinderblock walls with a shiny tile floor.

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

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

GROUP THERAPIST, 20s, white lab coat with a clipboard, seems too young and innocent. She sees Stephan and beckons him.

THERAPIST

Stephan! Welcome. Please sit.

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

THERAPIST

Who wants to go first?

BRANDY, African-American, 20s, pretty, but hostile, scowls.

BRANDY

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

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

THERAPIST

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

Brandy shakes her shoulders from Orderly to fold arms angry.

BRANDY

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

Group Therapist writes, then turns to Molly and smiles.

THERAPIST

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

A wet spot grows in Molly's crotch.

THERAPIST

Oh, Molly. It's okay.

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

BRANDY

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

GROUP THERAPIST

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

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

STEPHAN

Don't wanna' be hewa' eithaw.

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

STEPHAN

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

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

EXT. NOVA HEALTH COMPLEX COMMON AREA - THAT AFTERNOON

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

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

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

PAULA

How was your day?

STEPHAN

Blurry. Drugs make it hard to con, con, con-cen-trate.

PAULA

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

STEPHAN

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

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

Paula cries then *coughs* hard holding her throat in pain.

INT. NOVA MENTAL WARD HALLWAY - ONE MONTH LATER

Stephan, in clean white jeans and t-shirt, has put on weight. He shuffles with shoulders drooped, stops, pushes shoulders back, stands upright, then walks normal with fake purpose.

STEPHAN

You can do this. You have to.

INT. MENTAL WARD'S SNACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

VISITOR

Where's Ward B?

STEPHAN

To the right, all the way down.

VISITOR

Orderly?

STEPHAN

Patient.

VISITOR

Don't look it.

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

STEPHAN

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

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

ORDERLY

Playtime, sport. Arts-n-crafts.

STEPHAN

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

ORDERLY

That's the goal, sports-fans.

Stephan throws his food away and exits. Orderly follows.

EXT. NOVA HEALTH COMPLEX COMMON AREA - THAT AFTERNOON

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

Building's side-door is opened by Orderly. Stephan exits and shields his eyes. He's put on more weight. He sits by Paula.

PAULA

How was your day?

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

STEPHAN

Don't ask.

PAULA

Have they said when?

STEPHAN

Won't tell.

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

INT. NOVA MENTAL WARD EXAM ROOM - TWO MONTHS LATER

Psychiatrist sits behind her desk writing. Her door opens.

Stephan enters in different jeans and his *Star Wars* t-shirt, then sits. He put on more weight. He looks healthier, almost normal, but lost all his muscle mass forever.

PSYCHIATRIST

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

STEPHAN

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

PSYCHIATRIST

Do you know why we've kept you here this long?

STEPHAN

Because my only roommate committed suicide.

PSYCHIATRIST

How do you feel about that?

STEPHAN

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

PSYCHIATRIST

Are you ready to go outside?

STEPHAN

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

PSYCHIATRIST

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

STEPHAN

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

PSYCHIATRIST

Do bad memories, still scare you?

Stephan feels a cold chill go up his spine and shakes head.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. YOUNG STEPHAN IN CHILDHOOD BASEMENT - AGE 11

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

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

MOTHER (O.S.)

I said, Don't sit, So close, To the
T. V.! It'll hurt your eyes!

RETURN TO:

INT. NOVA EXAM ROOM - PRESENT DAY SESSION

Psychiatrist and Stephan still sit same. He tears-up.

STEPHAN

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

PSYCHIATRIST

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

STEPHAN

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

(snort-laughs)

What could possible go wrong with
that?

PSYCHIATRIST

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

STEPHAN

Do you get paid by the initial?

PSYCHIATRIST

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

STEPHAN

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

PSYCHIATRIST

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

STEPHAN

And take Karate? Sure, makes sense.

PSYCHIATRIST

All the activities you've done in the past two years, rock climbing, flying, skydiving, motorcycle racing, did you have a death wish?

STEPHAN

Life Wish. Didn't think I'd make it past thirty. Every time I felt good about myself, I'd hear Mom's voice yelling not to. So I'd screw up on purpose. And boy did I, a lot.

Psychiatrist writes in Stephan's file and looks up smiling.

PSYCHIATRIST

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

STEPHAN

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

PSYCHIATRIST

Does your girlfriend still visit?

STEPHAN

Just, "friend." And yes, everyday.

PSYCHIATRIST

But no other friends, no family?

STEPHAN

Nope. Everyone's superstitious. The thought of just visiting this place is scary. They're afraid they might have to face their own demons.

PSYCHIATRIST

Do you love your "friend?"

STEPHAN

How can you not have feelings for
someone who saved your life?

PSYCHIATRIST

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

STEPHAN

I'll discuss options with her.

PSYCHIATRIST

You're lucky to have "her."

STEPHAN

Anyone would be. She's --my best
friend.**EXT. NOVA HEALTH COMPLEX PICNIC AREA - THAT AFTERNOON**

OTHER PATIENTS with their FAMILIES walk down its trails.

Paula is wearing another suit sitting on the two-person
bench. She *dry-coughs* rasping covering her mouth with a
hankie. She pulls handkerchief away. It has blood on it.Building's side-door is opened by Orderly. Stephan exits and
reacts to sunlight by shielding his eyes. He sits by Paula.

PAULA

How was your day?

STEPHAN

Usual. Meetings, memories,
medications. Killed a pharmacy.

PAULA

Doctor said you're ready to leave.

STEPHAN

But doesn't want me to stay alone.

Stephan snaps head to the sound of a motorcycle *passing* by.

STEPHAN

Can't wait to ride my bike.

PAULA

We, we haven't talked about your
finances since that first time.

STEPHAN

I trust you, that's why I gave you
all my keys and Power of Attorney.

PAULA

Good, because I read your letters
from Worker's Compensation.

STEPHAN

Good, so no more secrets. The only
good-paying full-time job I could
get out of college was as a grocery
store night stocker.

PAULA

You were a clerk?

STEPHAN

Stocker, after the store closed.
Great benefits but I threw my back
out throwing fifty-pound dog food.
Company doctor wouldn't return me
to full-duty so their mandatory
sick-leave kicked-in with full pay.

PAULA

That's how you could go to Miami
and always have money! Is that why
you wouldn't tell anyone what you
did? Were you ashamed?

Stephan is not paying attention, he's watching a butterfly.

PAULA

Your medical coverage ended last
month so your company let you go.
I paid your rent with their last
check but it wasn't enough to --.

Paula turns away, this is hard for her.

Stephan watches butterfly flit away, then notices silence.

STEPHAN

Best thing I learned in here, just
say whatever it is. Never as bad as
you think once said out-loud.

PAULA

You're broke.

STEPHAN

Then again?

PAULA

Your car and bike were repossessed.

Stephan pulls a dandelion and talks to it as a microphone.

STEPHAN

Guuuuuuud Morn-ning, Amer-i-ca! We interrupt for a special bulletin.

(now in German accent)

Stephan's "Plan" iz kaput, ya?!

(now in Japanese accent)

No car, no money, no job, no tickee. But got good mental health.

PAULA

Still have your sense of humor.

STEPHAN

Trade ya'. When it rains, it pours, huh? So I have to start all over.

(imitates an interview)

Thank you for seeing me. I have serious mental issues. When can I start?

PAULA

You do have a job, if you want it.

STEPHAN

One week more, just one. Would have made it through a forty-five day Session. Think McCombs will ever understand? Most people won't.

(just catches up)

Wait? "Job?" What job?

PAULA

In our mailroom. Pretty easy with good pay and immediate benefits.

STEPHAN

Work with you? I don't want to embarrass you? I'm still loopy from all the drugs plus I don't have any way to get there?

PAULA

I could stay with you?

STEPHAN

Live with me? Me? Like this? I mean, why would anyone want to?

PAULA
Because I love you.

Stephan jumps up angry *yelling* stabbing a finger at her.

STEPHAN
Don't ever say that to me in here!

Paula breaks down. Stephan sits in remorse.

STEPHAN
No, I didn't mean, it's just, every
one deserves much better than me.

PAULA
For better or worse.

STEPHAN
I got "worse" covered.

PAULA
You'll get "better."

STEPHAN
Don't know what I did to deserve
you, but --? You sure about this?

He stares in disbelief. Paula kisses the back of his hands.

PAULA
Sure, sounds like fun.

EXT. PAULA'S WORKPLACE PARKING LOT - ONE WEEK LATER

High-rise modern building in a huge business complex.

Paula and Stephan park in her old clunker. Both exit in
business clothes and walk to the building. Stephan stops.

STEPHAN
Don't know if I can do this?

PAULA
I do. I'm right upstairs. Any
problems, call me.

Paula takes his hand. Stephan looks down kicking an in-step.

STEPHAN
Thank you.

PAULA
For what?

STEPHAN

Never thought I was worthy of --.

PAULA

What?

STEPHAN

Finding someone that would actually
--love --me.

INT. PAULA'S WORKPLACE MAILROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Huge open-space basement with rolling mail carts. Large cubbyhole-shelves for each office is along one wall.

Stephan enters, sits at a small desk, then begins rubber-stamping "*Return To Sender*" on unopened envelopes and tossing them into a white plastic mail-tote.

SUPERVISOR, 30s, balding, small paunch, in shirt/tie, enters.

SUPERVISOR

Catch!

Supervisor tosses a package to Stephan who fumble-catches.

SUPERVISOR

Run that up to the eighteenth
floor, stat.

STEPHAN

But I, I don't deliver?

SUPERVISOR

News flash, ace. You do whatever I
tell you. Go!

Stephan panics, calms down, dials intercom. It clicks on.

PAULA (FILTERED)

Paula Santana.

STEPHAN

Could you run something up to the
eighteenth floor for me?

PAULA (FILTERED)

Now? Right now? I don't, *uh*, sure.

STEPHAN

Great! Just take the elevator to
the Lobby. I'll give it to you.

Stephan jogs with package to the Stairs past Supervisor.

SUPERVISOR

Boy's got real git-up and go. I
told him to go, and he git.

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT - ONE WEEK LATER

Lots of potted plants now. The sliding glass door has frilly curtains. There are tufted pillows on the chair and couch.

Paula, in shorts and t-shirt, prepares salad in the kitchen. She winces in pain, gets some ice out of the freezer, wraps it in a dish-towel, and holds it on her *Adams Apple*.

Door opens. Stephan enters carrying a grocery bag.

Paula puts her dish-towel of ice in the sink.

PAULA

Where'd you go for the cheese,
Wisconsin?

Stephan puts bag on counter and kisses back of Paula's neck.

PAULA

Wherever it was, go there again.

Stephan turns her around, kisses her long and passionate, then picks her up to carry her down the hall to the bedroom.

INT. STEPHAN'S DINING AREA - LATER THAT NIGHT

Stephan and Paula sit at the dining table eating spaghetti.

Stephan wears a blue bathrobe. Paula wears the *Xanadu* robe.

PAULA

What brought that on?

STEPHAN

At work when you had to deliver a
package for me, that scared me.

PAULA

Uuuu, get scared again.

STEPHAN

Ha, ha. Point is, I do get scared,
and worried. People just don't
accept someone who's --different.

PAULA

I don't mind, I like helping you.

STEPHAN

And I appreciate that, but if I'm going to disappoint someone, I'd rather it be a stranger. The real reason it took me so long to come back tonight is, I got a new job.

PAULA

What? Where?

STEPHAN

At the shopping center. I don't need a car if I can walk to work. So I asked for the store manager. Once I told him about my experience as a stocker, boom, I'm hired. When he heard about my college degree, he told me about their manager-training program.

PAULA

When do you start?

STEPHAN

Monday. I'll give notice tomorrow and finish the week at your place so you don't catch too much grief. Uh, Paula, if this new job works out I should try staying by myself.

Paula drops fork and goes to sit on couch. Stephan follows.

STEPHAN

I don't want to, I need to.
(covers her hands with his)
Baby, my wiring's so screwed up,
it'll take years to re-wire it. I
just want to make you proud of me.

PAULA

Always have been.

Stephan closes his eyes. Love is still too new to him.

INT. STEPHAN'S LIVING ROOM - TWO WEEKS LATER AT NIGHT

Stephan opens his eyes. Paula has moved out. He is dressed for bed in pajamas and paces nervous in his living room.

STEPHAN

Listen knucklehead, go lie down and close your eyes. You can do this.

Stephan exhales long, then checks his front door locks and turns out lights. He walks down the hallway to bedroom.

STEPHAN

Nothing scary is gonna' happen. If you have a bad memory, it's just that. No pain, no --ah, *shaaad app*.

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephan gets under the covers and sits up on pillows wide eyed. Phone *rings*. He's startled, recovers, then answers it.

STEPHAN

Hotel California.

PAULA (FILTERED)

How are you doing?

STEPHAN

Little creeped out. How's your apartment?

PAULA (FILTERED)

"Little creeped out." Smelled like something died in the refrigerator.

STEPHAN

Probably did. What's up?

PAULA (FILTERED)

Remember when I talked to you on our airplane flights?

STEPHAN

Not really.

PAULA (FILTERED)

Since this is your first night alone, thought I might, you know, talk you to sleep.

STEPHAN

Telling me about your workday usually works.

PAULA (FILTERED)

Okay smart-ass, lay down and cradle the phone.

Stephan snuggles down. Paula starts rambling about her day.

PAULA (FILTERED)
Well, you know how our copier, etc.

STEPHAN
(drifts-off)
Works every friggin' time.

INT. STEPHAN'S KITCHEN - TWO WEEKS LATER - NIGHT

Paula cooks dinner in the kitchen. She gets a *racking cough* and has to hold onto the kitchen counter until it subsides.

Door opens. Stephan enters in a dress shirt pulling off his tie. Paula recovers and goes back to cooking unfazed.

PAULA
How was your day?

Stephen kisses the back of her neck as he cups her breasts.

PAULA
Uuuuuu, musta' been scary.

Stephan turns her around and kisses her slow and passionate, stands back, hesitates, then holds up a colored condom.

PAULA
Only one? You're not the only one
with a plan, Einstein. I've been on
"The Pill" for months.

STEPHAN
So you want to --*with me*?
(bows head ashamed)
Supposed to be special.

PAULA
It will be.
(lifts his chin)
What happened today?

STEPHAN
Promoted to their training program.

Paula *shrieks* then hugs his neck.

PAULA
Well then, promote me!

Stephan scoops her up carrying her to the bedroom.

PAULA

Yeah, Baby!

Paula hits the wall-switch with her elbow. The lights go out followed by the sound of her head *hitting* a door-frame.

PAULA (O.S.)

Ow!

STEPHAN (O.S.)

Don't hurt the door!

They both *giggle* the laughter of two people in silly-love.

INT. STEPHAN'S KITCHEN - TWO WEEKS LATER - DAY

Door opens. Stephan enters in a different tie and shirt pulling the tie over his head but freezes with mouth open. His tie now looks like a head-band with a tail.

Paula stands in kitchen doorway "modeling" a store-chain's black lingerie set with matching see-through black robe.

PAULA

See anything ya' like, sailor?

STEPHAN

Only have shore leave for an hour,
ma'am.

PAULA

Multi-task.

STEPHAN

I sure let the genie out of her
bottle.

Paula folds her arms on chest and wrinkles a *Genie*-nose.

PAULA

Be happy, master. I am.

STEPHAN

I'm glad, you're glad, but wow.
Where haven't we done it?

Paula points at empty dining table. Stephan pushes her back onto it flat, pulls tie off his head and undoes his belt.

PAULA

I have a physical this Monday
morning. Can you drive me?

STEPHAN

What? Drive you where? Why?

PAULA

My Doctor wants me to see a specialist. He said they might give me a sedative for some tests.

STEPHAN

"Tests?!" Is something wrong?

Paula reaches down inside Stephan's pants.

PAULA

Everything feels fine to me.

STEPHAN

I close on Monday so, I guess.
Sure. Just a physical?

Paula, hand in his pants, squeezes. Stephan's eyes cross.

PAULA

Turn your head and cough.

Stephan turns his head and *coughs*. Paula gets bug-eyes.

PAULA

Now put your feet in the stirrups.

Stephan pushes back an imaginary hat and becomes *John Wayne*.

STEPHAN

I'll ride ya', lil' filly.

Paula spreads her legs. He bends to kiss her, then stands.

STEPHAN

I --I love you, Paula.

PAULA

That's, that's the first time
you've ever said that to me.

STEPHAN

Won't be the last.

In the history of kissing, many have been rated as the most passionate, the most pure. Theirs leaves them all behind.

EXT. NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, MARYLAND - NOW MONDAY

75 buildings within 300 acres made up of 27 different Institutes and Centers. Each has its own specific research agenda focusing on particular diseases or body systems. 80% of its research activities are conducted by scientists working in every state and country around the world.

Paula's car drives up to the lobby of its Bethesda Campus.

INT. PAULA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Stephan drives. Paula is passenger. Both in casual clothes.

STEPHAN

I'll drop you off, park, then wait
in the Main Lobby.

PAULA

Might be a couple of hours.

STEPHAN

I'll take a nap.

Paula gives him a peck on his cheek and exits. Stephan watches her, then speaks in an affectionate Asian accent.

STEPHAN

Luv you longtime, baby.

INT. N.I.H. MAIN LOBBY - LATER THAT DAY

Large hospital lobby, couches, chairs, and Information Desk.

Stephan lies sprawled in an armchair asleep. He jerks awake, looks for and sees wall clock, then goes to Information Desk.

VOLUNTEER, 60s, wearing a hospital vest with *Volunteer* name badge, hangs up the phone behind her semi-circle desk.

VOLUNTEER

How may I help you?

STEPHAN

Been waiting for a friend for four
hours. I have to go to work soon.
Any way to find out where she is?

VOLUNTEER

Building, doctor, or department?
(no response)
Then I have no way of finding her.

STEPHAN

Do you have change for the phone, I
have to call off from work.

VOLUNTEER

"Change" is in the Gift Shop.

Volunteer points. Stephan walks away concerned.

INT. N.I.H. MAIN LOBBY - LATER SAME DAY

Stephan sits upright in same chair now holding a *Smiley*
balloon. He goes back to the Information Center.

STEPHAN

I've been here five hours now. Is
there a supervisor available?

VOLUNTEER

Administrative Office down that
hall.

Volunteer points. Stephan walks down hallway on a mission.

INT. N.I.H. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Small office area with high privacy cubicles. Stephan enters
protecting his balloon and walks to RECEPTIONIST, 30s, at a
front desk cubicle, writing.

STEPHAN

Brought a friend here this morning,
no one can tell me where she is.

RECEPTIONIST

Name, doctor, and department?

STEPHAN

Paula Santana and, no, I don't know
where she is or who her doctor is.

RECEPTIONIST

Takes twenty-four hours to manually
input patient files so I can't --.

Receptionist looks up to see Stephan's concern and softens.

RECEPTIONIST

I can go try and find where she
went from the appointment log. What
time did she sign-in?

STEPHAN

Nine.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh my, yes. I'll see if I can find
where she went. Wait here.

Receptionist exits. Stephan sits hugging his balloon.

INT. N.I.H. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Receptionist enters. Stephan paces holding balloon and spins.

RECEPTIONIST

Please sit down, Mister --?

STEPHAN

Allen. Why do I have to sit?!

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Allen, please --sit.

Receptionist sits and pats chair beside her. Stephan sits.

RECEPTIONIST

She's been Admitted. She's having
surgery tomorrow.

STEPHAN

What?! Why? Where is she?

RECEPTIONIST

N.C.I. Tower.

STEPHAN

"N.C.I.?"

RECEPTIONIST

National Cancer Institute.

He jumps up letting balloon go. It floats to ceiling, *pops*.

STEPHAN

But she said she was just having
tests! That's what she said?

RECEPTIONIST

She did. They found something.

STEPHAN

What the hell does that mean?!
What'd "they" find?

RECEPTIONIST

I'm not allowed to say. Her doctor
may be able to. Are you family?

STEPHAN

Her family's out of the country.
I'm, she --she's my girlfriend.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry and, I am, so so sorry.
Doctor Thompson is up there now.

STEPHAN

"Up, there?"

RECEPTIONIST

Eighteenth floor of The Tower. Room
eighteen eighteen.

She points out the window. Stephan sees *The Tower* and gasps.

EXT. N.C.I. TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Tower looks like a huge barn-silo attached to a high-rise.

Stephan stands outside its only fire-exit door.

STEPHAN

Only stinking stairwell is locked.
Somebody has to exit eventually.

Stephan pulls out a prescription bottle, "pops" a pill dry,
and chokes swallowing it.

Stairwell door opens. FIRST PERSON exits. Stephan catches
their door and enters.

INT. N.C.I. TOWER'S CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Circular cement staircase is like a lighthouse with cement
core and wood hand-railing around both sides. He looks up.

STEPHAN

Are you f'n kidding me?
(earlier Asian accent)
Longtime, baby.

Stephan begins climbing his personal stairway to hell.

INT. INSIDE CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan still climbs. SECOND PERSON exits a floor and passes him going down. Stephan looks at door's number, *9th Floor*.

STEPHAN

Don't think. Do, not, think.

INT. INSIDE CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Stephan continues climbing *breathing* harder, feels his chest, turns, turns back, then uses handrail as a rope to pull himself up. THIRD PERSON exits that floor and passes him going down. Stephan looks at its door's number, *16th Floor*.

STEPHAN

Don't stop. Do, not, stop.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Stairwell door is next to double elevator-doors that open into a wide hallway. Stairwell and elevators are at hall's dead-end. Their hallway curves so other end cannot be seen.

Stephan exits from stairwell door winded and sees hallway.

STEPHAN

Ahhh man, can it get any worse?

He catches his breath, then walks slowly down the hallway with one hand sliding along the wall for emotional support.

INT. N.I.C. TOWER ONCOLOGY WING - MOMENTS LATER

Individual patient rooms have an all-glass front wall so everything is visible in the room. Lots of medical equipment.

Stephan sees Paula in hospital bed, now in gown, I.V. in wrist, airline-tubing in nose. She looks fragile and unhappy. She sees him and holds her free hand out trying to smile.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. TEEN STEPHAN'S BASEMENT HOME - NOW AGE 18

TEEN STEPHAN, high-and-tight, a ripped high school wrestler and beginning bodybuilder, stands above his Dad, in a suit, who lies on his back in front of the T.V. He's had a massive heart attack. Teen Stephan falls on knees trying to do C.P.R. He is pressing down on his dad's stomach. He begins *sobbing*.

His Mother's feet run down the stairs to stop in horror.
Exhausted, Teen Stephan stops his incorrect compressions.
Dad gives a *death-exhale*, then all color leaves his face.

MOTHER
You killed him!

RETURN TO.

INT. N.C.I. TOWER ONCOLOGY WING - PRESENT

Panic Attack! Stephan reaches out to Paula. She reaches more. His hand clenches into a fist. He steps forward, then steps back. He is fighting hard, *stomps* a foot forward again. What now? He can't breathe. He has to flee. Now! He can't control his mind-numbing fear and spins to sprint down the hall.

Paula drops her extended hand remembering his poem's recital.

STEPHAN (V.O.)
"She found him not at her side."

INT. N.I.C. TOWER CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Door *bangs* open. Stephan runs down the stairs pushing STAIR-PEOPLE out of his way. They complain, *Hey-a!*

EXT. N.I.C. TOWER'S CIRCULAR STAIRWELL EXIT - MOMENTS LATER

Fire-door *bursts* open. Stephan exits, bends over catching his breath, then falls onto both knees cursing.

STEPHAN
God damn you to hell, Mother!

His fingers dig into the ground ripping out grass.

STEPHAN (CONT'D)
"Stupid, Ugly, Failure!" You
pounded that into me every --.
(pounds ground 3 times)
God --Damn --Day!
(looks up at sky crying)
I'm worthless, I know that. So
please, take me. Not her. Not *her*.

Stephan looks back at Tower sadly and stumbles away *weeping*.

INT. N.I.H. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Receptionist sits behind her desk on the phone. Door opens.

Stephan stumbles-in like a drunkard and falls into chair.

RECEPTIONIST

Call you back.

Stephan is distraught. Receptionist goes to sit by him.

STEPHAN

I tried. She saw me. I couldn't ...

RECEPTIONIST

You saw her?! You were up there?

STEPHAN

I have True Claustrophobia so had to take the stairs.

RECEPTIONIST

You walked up to the 18th floor?
Why didn't you take the elevator?

STEPHAN

I can't. Okay? But I need to know what's going on. P-l-e-a-s-e.

Receptionist goes to water-cooler, fills a paper cup, and hands it to Stephan.

RECEPTIONIST

I'll see if her surgeon will talk to you. What's her name again?

STEPHAN

Paula, Paula Santana. She's my --.

He breaks down. Receptionist exits. Stephan tries to drink, can't, and empties cup in cooler's trough, then crumples it.

STEPHAN

First love.

INT. N.I.H. TOWER LOBBY - LATER THAT DAY

Lobby of Tower building is an open area with backless padded benches. Stephan sits on one. Elevator *dings*. Its door opens.

DOCTOR THOMPSON, 40s, stethoscope around neck over a labcoat, exits elevator. He's in a hurry, scans angry, sees Stephan.

DR. THOMPSON
You her so-called boyfriend?

Stephan goes to him with hand out to shake. Thompson refuses.

DR. THOMPSON
What's this about you not wanting
to see her?!

Stephan's taken aback and drops his hand, then head ashamed.

STEPHAN
Have a problem with heights.

DR. THOMPSON
Best get your act together, mister,
she keeps asking for you.

Thompson turns to exit. Stephan's had enough.

STEPHAN
Hey, I just got out of Woodburn,
okay?! Sorry I don't measure up to
your standards. What's going on?

DR. THOMPSON
(turns back a professional)
Paula has Stage 4 C-Hürthle cell
cancer that was misdiagnosed. We
have no Systemic Chemotherapy
Trials for her disease yet so
removing her Thyroid is our only
viable option. Surely you noticed
she is in pain?

Stephan is wobbly and goes to sit but rockets up on "pain."

STEPHAN
"Pain?!" She never said, I didn't
know --? "Disease?" What disease?

DR. THOMPSON
A rare form of Thyroid Cancer where
we only now recognize her square
bumpy tongue as a symptom.

STEPHAN
So surgery will get it all?

DR. THOMPSON
You need to find a way to see her.

Elevator *dings* and door opens. Thompson enters and turns.

DR. THOMPSON

Now.

Elevator door closes. Stephan's world explodes. He turns left, right, and freezes, then *slaps* himself hard. He must "come back" so *slaps* his face again, then *quotes* crazy.

STEPHAN

"There is no greater sorrow, than
to recall happiness, in times of
misery."

(to no one)

Who said that? --Dante's "Inferno."

(to a Stranger)

Guess which of the Nine Circles of
Hell I'm in. Go on. Guess.

STRANGER backs away from Stephan looking for help.

INT. STEPHAN'S KITCHEN - THAT NIGHT

Stephan, dressed same, enters his kitchen. He sees Paula's apron hanging off a drawer and slides down the wall to sit on the floor an empty shell. Wall phone above him *rings*. He punches-up knocking its receiver into the air and catches it.

TOWER NURSE (FILTERED)

This is N.I.C. Oncology Ward. A
Miss Paula wanted us to call you?

STEPHAN

Paula? Yes, yes! Is she okay?!

TOWER NURSE (FILTERED)

She's a little nervous about
surgery tomorrow so we gave her a
sedative.

STEPHAN

Can I talk with her? I have to tell
her why ...

TOWER NURSE (FILTERED)

She can't talk, but wants to know
if you would --?

(hand-on-phone, comes back)

"Talk her to sleep?"

STEPHAN

"Talk her --?" Yes, yes, thank you.

TOWER NURSE (FILTERED)
Okay, I'm putting the phone next to her ear, start talking in a moment.

STEPHAN
Paula? Oh Paula, I'm so sorry I'm not stronger for you, I ...

PAULA (FILTERED)
Unintelligible speech.

STEPHAN
No sweetie, let me do the talking.
(stands, clears throat)
I have so much I can finally tell you, Paula. I love you, baby, so very very much. And I want to take care of you when you get out, like you did me. Okay? So close your eyes my love and go to sleep.

PAULA (FILTERED)
(labored breathing)

STEPHAN
It'll be okay, sweetie, I love you. I'll keep talking till you ...

TOWER NURSE (FILTERED)
Hello sir, she's asleep now. Her surgery is at eight a.m.

Tower Nurse hangs up. Stephan holds the receiver until its dial-tone clicks on, then goes to that horrible *beeping* sound. He calmly hangs up, then rips phone off the wall.

INT. PAULA'S N.I.C. PATIENT ROOM - NEXT EVENING

Paula lies in bed with Frankenstein-sutures around her neck. A breathing tube is in the middle of them so she can't talk.

Stephan enters *breathing* hard and sees Paula's neck stitches.

DREAM INSERT: Paula's head falls off backwards tearing her sutures wide open and leaving her head dangling behind.

Stephan is losing it. He jams a palm over a chair's torn back-support tearing his skin. Physical pain, he can deal with.

STEPHAN
Hey there, good lookin'.

Gurgle *sounds* come out of her neck-tube as she tries to talk.

Stephan's face goes bloodless. He fights back tears, reaches in a pocket, and opens a small jewelry case so she can see.

Inside is a small engagement ring. Its tiny stone *sparkles*.

STEPHAN

Can you, will you --marry me?

Paula's eyes open wide. Stephan puts ring on Paula's finger. She holds her trembling hand up to look at it and *gurgles*.

Doctor Thompson enters, sees Stephan, and gets angry again.

DR. THOMPSON

About time!

Paula holds up her ring finger. Thompson sees the ring and calms down, then checks her Vitals.

Paula and Stephan stare lovingly into each other's eyes. Stephan strokes her dirty hair. She tries to talk, *gurgles*. He *shushes* her. She smiles, then nods head. Stephan gets a huge smile and kisses her forehead. He grins up at Thompson.

STEPHAN

She said, yes!

Thompson sees their love, bites lower lip, then shakes head.

Too much. Stephan's world shatters. He backs out lying.

STEPHAN

NO! No, I, I've got to go, for just
a moment --but I'll be back.

Paula reaches for him. Stephan reaches for her continuing to back up. Paula drops her outstretched hand on bed and tears.

STEPHAN

Forgive me.

Paula nods. Stephan begins ducking like someone is beating him. He's in searing pain and sprints crying out childlike.

STEPHAN

N-n-no, s-s-stop, M-m-mommy!

INT. N.I.C. TOWER CIRCULAR STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Stephan *bursts* through its door. He tries to walk down the stairs normal but his legs give out. He uses handrail to support all his weight dragging his feet down each step *sobbing*. These stairs become his own soulful *Via Dolorosa*.

Stair-People walking both ways in stairwell go up and down ignoring and stepping around him without offering to help.

INT. STEPHAN'S KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Stephan walks down hallway in shirt and tie, then freezes.

Kitchen phone now hangs from its hole in the wall by a clothes-hanger. It *rings*. Stephan reaches for it, hesitates. It *rings* again. He clutches his chest, then answers resigned.

STEPHAN

I know.

DOMINO (FILTERED)

No one could find you last night.
She put me down as a contact, so
they --Paula --she, she's gone.

Stephan falls against the wall with no emotion.

DOMINO (FILTERED)

It all happened so fast, she kept
trying to say your name.

Stephan slides down the wall onto floor with no emotion.

DOMINO (FILTERED)

Her parents fly in tonight. They
want to take her back to their
country. We convinced them to have
a viewing here tomorrow night.

Stephan's legs stretch out on the floor still emotionless.

STEPHAN

When?

DOMINO (FILTERED)

Six p.m. at the funeral home on
Route 50. Do you know it?

STEPHAN

(still emotionless)
I'll find it.

DOMINO (FILTERED)

Stephan, I'm so sorry. I know how
much she loved you.

Stephan pushes disconnect button on receiver and sits there quiet, then hits the back of his head on the wall three times harder and harder each time denting its drywall repeating.

STEPHAN

"Stupid. --Ugly. --Failure."

INT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - NEXT EVENING

Stephan sits on edge of bed wearing a black suit. He goes to closet and pulls a shoebox off a top shelf, then sits on bed again. He dumps the box onto bed. Small paper targets, ammo, cleaning kit, and a handgun fall out. He ejects gun's clip, loads one bullet in it, slides clip into handle, then racks gun's slide. He hears Paula's *laughter* and turns to pillows.

DREAM INSERT: Paula appears naked under the covers pulled up to her chin, smiling, laughing, and finger-beckoning to him.

Stephan puts the gun's barrel to his temple.

STEPHAN

Yeah, baby.

EXT. STEPHAN'S APARTMENT PARKING LOT - IMMEDIATELY

Car drives by in front of Stephan's building and *backfires*.

INT. PAULA'S FUNERAL HOME LOBBY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Plush carpeting, big pictures on walls, and small tables with large flowers in vases. Lobby area has stairs that lead up to the *Viewing Area*. Paula's profile is seen in her open casket.

PAULA'S PARENTS, Latinos, 60s, greying, in black clothes, sit in two straight-back wooden chairs by Paula's coffin.

Domino, America, Carol, Carmella, Josez, and Virginia's Miami-Delegates, stand around Paula's coffin consoling each other.

Front door opens. Stephan enters wearing a black overcoat and sees Mourners, then Paula's profile. He takes off his coat to step inside a walk-in closet where he completely *loses* it.

OTHER MOURNERS arrive ignoring him to hang up their coats.

INT. SAME FUNERAL HOME CLOSET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Stephan is still *crying* uncontrollable in the closet now over-filled with coats. Carmella enters.

CARMELLA

Paula's parents want you to have
her car for being there for her.

Stephan *wails* in guilt and turns away *sobbing* even harder.

Domino appears in closet doorway and puts hands on her chest.

DOMINO

None of us really knew how much you
both cared for each other till we
saw her ring. Is there anything we
can do to help?

STEPHAN

Clear, room.

CARMELLA

You want us to make room for you?

STEPHAN

Have to, talk to, her alone.

Carmella and Domino look at each other, then exit.

INT. PAULA'S VIEWING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Viewing room is now empty. Parents chairs are next to coffin. Stephan sits in closest chair staring ahead. He *sighs*, then sees his ring on her finger. Tears flow as he talks to her.

STEPHAN

I asked them to clear the room so I
could tell you, sweetheart --I'm
still here, because of you. Your
spirit kept me alive when my own
died. Your love of life showed me,
just how great life can be. Your
love for me taught me, I could
love, and I do. I love you with all
my heart and always will. So
tonight, I made a pact with God
that to honor your life, I give you
mine. No matter how bad things get
or how scared I get, I won't give
up. If I get close, like I did
tonight, I'll 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.

Stephan squeezes her lifeless ring-hand then leans back
sobbing.

PAULA (V.O.)

Stephan never flew or loved again.
He ran for public office, twice. He
found a new dream training under a
Yale screenwriting professor who
ordered him to move Los Angeles. He
did, going into Show Business.
You've probably seen one of his
films. He uses daily incessant
writing to fight through bouts of
scared depression. Still single, he
wrote our story to remind everyone
how important it is to always be
someone's --true love.

FADE TO BLACK.

DEDICATION: *We lived and loved an entire lifetime, in just
one year. I remember her daily, always smiling.*

FADE OUT.

SUGGESTED END CREDIT SIDEBAR:

Pictures of their summer Miami trip and 1977 Virginia General
Assembly Session with Grease's "Summer Nights" playing.