A Peeling

by Steven Burton

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EXT. OCEAN BEACH - SPRING DAY

It is overcast and breezy.

TOM JAMES, an attractive man in his thirties with a camera, stands alone to face the ocean.

He takes a picture towards the horizon.

He looks out over the desolate beach with few people.

After he quickly looks both ways, his pants unzip and then pisses on the sand.

He walks away.

EXT. BOARDWALK - FOLLOWING

Tom steps on to it from the beach.

JENNY EVANS interrupts him.

    JENNY
    Excuse me.

He looks in the direction of Jenny, a striking woman in her thirties with a free spirit flare and a camera.

    JENNY
    May I take your picture?

    TOM
    Sure.

She moves in with the camera for a head shot close-up.

    TOM
    Why?.....

    JENNY
    Just a minute. A couple more please.

She takes two more at different angles.

    JENNY
    Good.
TOM
Ok. Now it’s my turn of you.

JENNY
Sure. How about over there?

She points away as Tom looks.

TOM
Fine.

EXT. BOARDWALK RAILING – FOLLOWING

The ocean surf is a backdrop.

Jenny moves into view with Tom to strike a campy, fun pose.

Tom takes a camera shot.

TOM
Ok, now why this interest?

JENNY
Good question. Ooh mysterious! And there’s more.

TOM
But....

JENNY
Come on, let’s go take a look. Hello, I’m Jenny.

TOM
Tom.

EXT. BOARDWALK – FOLLOWING

From behind Jenny leads Tom with determination.

INT. LOFT – FOLLOWING

The space is open with sparse furnishings.

Jenny with Tom move into an area dominated by various photographs and paintings randomly arranged.
JENNY
Please, have a seat.

Tom sits in a chair.

She moves towards a computer.

INT. COMPUTER – FOLLOWING

Jenny looks at the screen, and then motions to Tom.

Tom moves beside her to look at the screen.

FLASH images of Tom appear.

He looks away from the computer to notice several long distant printed images of him on the beach.

TOM
What’s with all these pictures of me?

JENNY
Let’s start with curiosity.

TOM
Ok, you’ve been spying on me.

JENNY
I like to call it observing.

TOM
Well, I don’t know....

JENNY
It’s just part of my thing. You come here a lot.

TOM
Yes, and usually alone.

JENNY
Except for my long lens.

TOM
Well, I guess so. But, why me?
JENNY
I’m an artist. You may have seen my work. Anyway, my latest is over here....

They move away.

INT. ARTIST WORKTABLE – FOLLOWING

Jenny picks up a photograph.

JENNY
First off, I get a headshot image of a stranger. Here’s one.

FLASH headshot of a man.

JENNY
Now, I take this as the only information about him and then the imagination takes over and voila.

She picks up a larger canvas, which is a painted image of the same face with a nude body.

JENNY
Then, the next step is this.

She presents a photo of the same man in the nude.

JENNY
I took this after finishing the painting.

The nude painting and the photograph are next each other.

TOM
You just do men?

JENNY
Oh, no. Ok, now that’s three steps. And there’s one more.

She presents another nude painting of the same man.
JENNY
Now, here finally I paint based upon the actual nude photo. And that makes four interpretations of the same person. And then hang them next to each other.

TOM
Very interesting.

JENNY
Now, I’m jazzed to do you.

TOM
But, I don’t know you and to just take my clothes off......

JENNY
That’s the whole point. We’re strangers.

TOM
Maybe, I have to think about this.

JENNY
Ok, Ok. I’ve thrown a lot at you. I’ll get the first phase of you painted, and then take it from there.

She moves to pick up a business card and postcard to give to him.

JENNY
Please go see some of my other work at this gallery.

TOM
I will.

JENNY
What do you do?
TOM
I work in a custom photo lab and also a photographer.

JENNY
Great! See how all this is connecting.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - FOLLOWING
Tom looks out a window towards another car that moves along side on the next track.

EXT. SIDEWALK - EARLY EVENING
Tom walks along a crowded Manhattan street.

EXT. AURA BAR ENTRANCE - FOLLOWING
Tom enters into a laid back Bohemian place.

INT. AURA BAR - FOLLOWING
Friendly patrons greet Tom.

INT. TABLE - FOLLOWING
FRED, a warm, friendly man in his fifties who is Tom’s uncle, sits as Tom approaches. Fred is a little over weight and dressed sloppily.

FRED
Hi, how was the beach?

TOM (Sits.)
Different.

FRED
How?

TOM
I met this woman.

FRED
Ok, Spill it.
TOM
First, the usual? I’ll buy the first round.

FRED
Sounds good.

ROSIE, a cute young perky bar maid, interrupts.

ROSIE
Would you guys do me a favor and give me a hug?

They both get up to give her a warm hug.

ROSIE
Thanks, I needed that positive flow. My Mercury is in retrograde.

TOM
And how about your Lincoln?

ROSIE
What? Oh! Very funny, you got me. And how are you?

TOM
It’s Friday and I have all next week off.

ROSIE
Well, that calls for a celebration! Same treats?

TOM
Fine with me.

FRED
Ditto.

Rosie walks away.

FRED
Oh, I want to share some recent work.
He refers to the wrapped painting that leans up against the table.

    TOM
    Is it finished?

    FRED
    No, not yet.

    TOM
    Then, wait until later.

    FRED
    Oh sure, fine. I just thought you might like to see it.

Fred seems a little confused, but attempts to cover up.

    FRED
    About that girl?....

Rosie arrives with the drinks.

    ROSIE
    Here we go!

    TOM
    Thanks. (Exchanges money.)

    FRED
    Cheers!

As she turns to walk away, her foot bumps into Fred’s painting that leans against the table.

    ROSIE
    Oh, I’m sorry.

    FRED
    No damage.

He pulls it out to display.

    FRED
    Take a look at my latest.

FLASH on a vague painting of two people in dull colors.
ROSIE
Very interesting. Keep up the good work. I’d love to see it again when you add color.

FRED
No, it’s going to stay that way. I thought it would be interesting to take a color snapshot and paint my impression in black and white.

ROSIE
That’s different. I’ve always liked black and white films, especially on the big screen.

Rosie moves away.

INT. JENNY’S LOFT - FOLLOWING

Jenny gazes at the headshot photo of Tom with moody jazz music in the background.

She props it up near an easel, and then picks up a brush to begin work.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Rosie works as she engages in friendly banter with others.

MAN
Hey Rosie how about going out with me for cigarette break?

ROSIE
I gave those up a long time ago.

MAN
I did too recently. For ten hours while I was asleep!

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING

Tom and Fred sit with drinks.

Tom points at the painting.
TOM
Are you taking this somewhere?

FRED
Oh no, not particularly. I just thought maybe someone here might like to see it. I showed it to my group the other night.

TOM
Which one?

FRED
Arts Synonymous.

TOM
Arts Anonymous?

FRED
No, not anonymous, but synonymous. It’s not a twelve-step program.

TOM
What is the group for?

FRED
Well, it’s like a support group for creative people.

TOM
Did they react to your painting?

FRED
Yes, they liked it.

TOM
O.K.

FRED
Yeah! This group is great! They keep praising me or I mean encouraging me. I’m more than just an office clerk.

TOM
Of course. Everybody needs praise. I felt that today.
FRED
Oh, you mean with this girl earlier?

TOM
Maybe, I don’t know yet.

FRED
Sounds interesting! But, like I’ve told you before. I think Rosie likes you.

TOM
I hope not!

FRED
Why?

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

FLASH on Rosie as she continues her friendly routines at the bar.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING

Tom with Fred continue.

TOM
She’s nice enough, but the head always seems to be in the clouds...talking about astrology, energy fields, peace, love, happiness, all that.

FRED
I find that interesting. I don’t know how much of it to believe, but maybe that’s all it takes. Just believing can feel good.

TOM
Yes, I believe in this drink.

FRED
I’ll drink to that. You ready for another? My turn.
TOM
Sure.

Fred waves for service.

FRED
Two more please.

INT. AURA BAR AREA – FOLLOWING
FLASH on Rosie as she waves back.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA – FOLLOWING
Fred and Tom relax with jukebox music.
Rosie brings two drinks.
Fred pays for them.

FRED
Thanks a lot.

ROSIE
Anytime. You guys have good vibes.

She leaves.

TOM
She always gives us a free round.

FRED
I know. Does she give us the free drinks on the rounds you buy or me?

TOM
I think mine mostly, but it doesn’t matter.

FRED
No.

TOM
I’m going to the can.

Tom gets up.
INT. AURA ENTRANCE - FOLLOWING

LINDA, a sexy, middle-aged woman enters.
She looks around and then slowly walks inside.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING

Linda stops near Fred to exchange pleasant glances.
She boldly approaches Fred.
She sits down beside him.
She puts her arm around him, and then kisses him on the lips.

    WOMAN
    Hello.

    FRED
    Hi.

    WOMAN
    How are you doing?

    FRED
    Better. Real good.

She continues to toy with Fred.

INT. AURA RESTROOM - FOLLOWING

Tom washes his hands in the sink next to a toilet stall.
Low VOICES come from within the stall.

    MALE VOICE (OS)
    Oh, baby you’re incredible. Did you miss me?

    FEMALE VOICE (OS)
    Yes, and always thinking about you.

    MALE VOICE (OS)
    Honey, let’s get outa here.
FEMALE VOICE (OS)
I’d love that.

MALE VOICE (OS)
Let’s go.

The stall door opens while Tom dries his hands.

EDWARD, a goofy man, walks out to leave the room.

Tom walks to notice the empty stall as he moves out.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING
Tom walks in to notice with interest Edward by himself at the end of the bar.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING
Tom returns to his table.
He picks up his camera while he does a quick take on Fred with Linda.
He moves away with the camera.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING
Edward sips a drink while Rosie works.

Tom aims and then takes a distant picture of him, which catches Rosie’s attention.

She approaches Tom with a silent question.

Tom refers towards Edward as he silently describes something to Rosie.

ROSIE
Oh my God! What is this? Bi-polar in the toilet?

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING
Tom sits with Linda and Fred.
FRED
Ah, Tom this is. I’m sorry, what’s your name?

LINDA
Linda.

FRED
Linda, meet my nephew Tom.

TOM
Hi. Do you know his name?

LINDA
No.

TOM
Linda, meet Fred.

LINDA
Hello Fred.

FRED
Yes. Do you want a drink?

LINDA
Anything you say, as long as it’s a screwdriver.

FRED
You got it.

He tries to signal someone at the bar.

TOM
It might be faster to go up there.

FRED
Good idea. I’ll be right back.

He knocks over his painting, and then dashes away.

Tom quickly sets the painting back up against the table.

LINDA
What’s your name again?
TOM
Tom.

LINDA
It always takes me at least three times to get a new name, so don’t be surprised if I ask you again, Tom.

TOM
Do you come in here much?

LINDA
Oh, yes. But, I change my hair color and style a lot.

TOM
Well, then maybe I did see. Do you live and work in the neighborhood?

LINDA
No, not as a rule.

Fred returns with the drinks.

FRED
Here you go!

LINDA
Thanks.

FRED
Here’s to friendship!

They click glasses.

Linda drinks fast as Tom and Fred sip.

LINDA (To Fred.)
What’s your name again?

FRED
Fred.

LINDA
Let’s get outa here!
FRED
O.K.

LINDA (To Tom.)
We’ll see you later.

FRED
I need to go to the cash machine anyway. I’ll talk to you soon. Have fun.

Linda and Fred exit.

Tom gets up with his drink.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Tom sits next to Edward and then signals for Rosie’s attention.

TOM
Did you see that girl Fred left with just now?

ROSIE
Yes, Linda. She comes in here every so often. Does he know her?

TOM
No, and I hope he knows what he’s doing.

ROSIE
Me too. I like him.

TOM
Yes, he’s family. Hell, I know him better than my dad, whom I never really had.

ROSIE
What happened?
TOM
Oh, he’s still around. I don’t hate or dislike him, but don’t know him. He took off when I was three with my sister.

FLASHBACK twenty five years ago, with a cute toe headed toddler as he plays in a yard, and then interrupted by a car door slam.

A man in a car drives off as a little girl cries.

A little blond girl cries while she sits in the car as it takes off.

FLASHBACK ends.

Back to Bar.

ROSIE
That’s heavy.

TOM
Yes, but the relationship with my mom was good. May she rest in peace. Anyway, besides the uncle thing with Fred, we have a friendship.

ROSIE
But, something’s changed.

TOM
What?

ROSIE
Fred’s not here. This weekly series has a formula change. Is this a spin-off or what?

TOM
So he’s gone. He’s wherever doing his thing and so am I.
ROSIE
Sounds like a good idea. Maybe, I’ll get to know you better without your security blanket.

TOM
What? I don’t have anything like that! I never even had one as a kid.

ROSIE
Maybe, that’s why you need one now.

TOM
Look, don’t back me into a corner here! Let me breathe.

ROSIE
All right. I wasn’t trying to take your oxygen away. I was just trying to light a fire.

She moves away.

INT. BANK MACHINE - FOLLOWING

Fred works a transaction while Linda is in the background with others as they wait.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FOLLOWING

Fred tries to keep up with the free spirited Linda as they move down the street.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Tom looks towards Edward next to him.

TOM
How are you doing?

EDWARD
Not bad. This is my first time here.

TOM
Welcome, my name’s Tom.
EDWARD
Edward.

TOM
Nice meeting you. I feel like we’ve met before.

EDWARD
Oh really. I wonder where?

TOM
I don’t know, but it will come to me. There’s something about your voice. Do you know anybody here?

EDWARD
No, not yet.

TOM
You will. It’s a very friendly place. I’ll see you around.

Tom walks away.

INT. AURA BAR ENTRANCE - FOLLOWING

Linda, with a confused Fred enters.

Fred follows Linda.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Linda with Fred sit on stools at the bar near Edward.

Fred looks around and then waves at someone.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING

Tom alone at a table waves back.

INT. AURA BAR ENTRANCE - FOLLOWING

RICHARD, a well dressed middle-aged man enters.
INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Richard sits on a stool next to Linda in a familiar way.

INT. AURA BAR ENTRANCE - FOLLOWING

MARIE, a plainly dressed woman enters with a Bible.

She SPEAKS out towards the bar.

    MARIE
    The devil is working overtime and
    he doesn’t take coffee breaks!

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Patrons are with drinks.

    RICHARD (Loudly.)
    Maybe, he can’t drink coffee
    because of the caffeine. So, he
    takes cocktail breaks instead. I’d
    like a daiquiri please.

    ROSIE
    Coming right up.

Marie moves into view.

    MARIE
    All you sinners have a good laugh,
    while the good Lord up above is
    crying out for your salvation. I
    pray that the “man” up above finds
    a way into all your heathen hearts.
    Praise the Lord!

    RICHARD
    Here’s to salvation!

Linda, Rosie, and Richard applaud Marie.

Richard clicks glasses with Linda.

Fred moves away from the bar.
ROSIE
Very good, Marie! If I was casting the part, it would be yours.

RICHARD
Yes.

LINDA
Bravo!

MARIE
You think so? Well, the audition is tomorrow. Wish me luck.

ROSIE
Or break a leg.

RICHARD
What is it for?

MARIE
An off Broadway play. My cousin, Alice, knows the director’s lover real well. And she’s going to put in a good word for me.

RICHARD
Oh, yes, connections are everything.

ROSIE
I have a feeling you’re going to get it. I charted your moon for tomorrow and it’s lined up beautifully with Saturn, which is perfect for a Pisces.

MARIE
Pisces? But, I’m an Aquarius!

ROSIE
You’re kidding? I thought you were a Pisces.

MARIE
No.
RICHARD
I’m a Pisces. Maybe, I should audition.

MARIE
Now, that would be funny.

RICHARD
Yes, but I have no interest in the theatre. I prefer the simple life.

ROSIE
I can’t believe I got your sign mixed up and hope I’m not slipping. A lot of people depend on me for their charts and predictions.

MARIE
Don’t worry about it. Anyway, I think the part is destined for me.

LINDA
Yes, destiny. It’s everything.

ROSIE
Are you going to be able to work your late shift all right? What time is the audition?

MARIE
Not until 2:30, so I’ll be able to get some winks in. But, it doesn’t matter anyway. I sometimes do better at auditions if I’m a little tired. Less anxious and more relaxed.

LINDA
Yes, relaxation. It’s everything. It keeps the real self from hiding.

MARIE
Very well put, but it’s hard sometimes.

LINDA
I know.
INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING

Fred joins Tom at the table.

TOM
What brings you back?

FRED
It just didn’t seem to be working out? She’s all over the place. One minute she seems interested, and then the next she gets distracted. I give up.

TOM
Well, don’t worry about it. Someone else will come along, or not.

FRED
You ready for a drink?

TOM
Sure, why not.

FRED
It’s your round.

TOM
It is? How do you know for sure?

FRED
This is a catch up, because last week I bought one more round than you.

TOM
You’re kidding!

FRED
No, not really. But, I was just keeping score that’s all.

TOM
I don’t understand.
FRED
Look, I’m sorry. I think I’ve had too much excitement or drink.

TOM
I didn’t think I was being unfair.

FRED
You’re not. Let’s just forget about it.

TOM
O.K. Let’s get another drink and we’ll buy our own.

FRED
No, I’ll get this one.

TOM
But, you said I owe you one.

FRED
No please. We don’t owe each other anything.

TOM
No, we don’t.

FRED
But, I feel bad because I caused all this fuss. So, I’ll buy the drinks.

TOM
All right, all right. But, after that we’ll get our own.

FRED
Fine.

Rosie approaches with two drinks.

ROSIE
These are on the house for being such great guys and customers.

TOM
Well, that solves that.
ROSIE
What?

FRED
Never mind. It’s something stupid
I’d like to forget.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING
Linda, Richard, and Edward carry on.

RICHARD
What does a sailor and a submarine
and have in common?

LINDA
No idea.

EDWARD
What?

RICHARD
They are both full of semen.

INT. AURA DANCE FLOOR - FOLLOWING
A DJ sets up some AV equipment.
A banner reads, “Disco Friday at the AURA”.

EXT. OCEAN BEACH - FOLLOWING
A dark view of the waves and shore.

INT. JENNY’S LOFT - FOLLOWING
Jenny stands to look at the painting she works on.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING
Rosie stands at the Table.

TOM
You said something was in
retrograde. Well, it feels like a
full moon too.
ROSIE
It’s a strange night, but the moon is not full. It feels like a Saturday night, because that’s when Linda and Richard usually come in.

TOM
I’ve never come in on a Saturday.

FRED
I have.

TOM
I didn’t know that.

FRED
Sure, a few times.

ROSIE
Say, I just got off my shift. Can I join you guys?

TOM
Sure.

ROSIE
I’ll be right back.

She moves away.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Marie sets up for her shift near Edward, Linda, Richard, and others.

Rosie mixes a drink as louder disco music begins to play.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING

Tom and Fred continue.

TOM
Now’s your chance.

FRED
What?
TOM
Get to know Rosie better.

FRED
She’s more interested in you and closer to the same age.

TOM
Don’t be so sure. And age doesn’t matter. It’s about connection.

Rosie returns with a drink.

ROSIE
Party time!

FRED
Cheers!

ROSIE
What happened with you and Linda?

FRED
Nothing much. She looks like what I want, but it’s not working out.

ROSIE
Doesn’t sound like a good night.

FRED
I’ve had better.

ROSIE
Well, I’m here to help change that. Come on Tom, how about a dance?

TOM
All right.

Rosie and Tom move away.

INT. JENNY’S LOFT – FOLLOWING

Jenny opens the door to CHAD, her boyfriend, followed by a kiss.
CHAD
How’s things?

JENNY
I’ve been working; so let’s take a break.

INT. AURA DANCE FLOOR - FOLLOWING

With a few other people, Rosie and Tom dance to Disco music.

The happy, loose Linda and Richard join them.

Linda’s dance moves quickly becomes sexual, with Richard as well.

Linda focuses on something off the dance floor.

She moves away.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING

Linda approaches Fred and then seductively pulls him up.

INT. JENNY’S LOFT - FOLLOWING

While Chad intently looks at the painting, Jenny comes up behind with drinks.

JENNY
What do you think? It’s coming along. I just met him today.

CHAD
You have put his face to my body! What’s going on here?

JENNY
I don’t know what his body looks like yet. It’s all imagination, so far.

INT. AURA DANCE FLOOR - FOLLOWING

Linda pulls Fred into the dance, where she continues to tease and taunt him.
INT. JENNY’S LOFT - FOLLOWING

Jenny and Chad continue to look at the painting.

CHAD
But, that’s my body!

JENNY
Well, maybe similar, but it’s not you.

CHAD
Oh, yes it is!

JENNY
It’s just that I’ve seen your body a lot. It’s in my mind.

CHAD
Ok, but what is this project? Doing nudes of strange men. It’s porno!

JENNY
Look, I’ve done women too. It’s an art installation about identity.

She moves to other paintings nearby next to their headshots and then gestures towards them with explanation.

JENNY
Do you see where I’m going?

CHAD
Not exactly, but maybe I will.

JENNY
Or maybe not, but it will be exciting to see all of these on display.

CHAD
Yes, it’s unique.
JENNY
And so are you. That’s what this is all about.

CHAD
Yeah, but it looked like you were putting my body with another face. Like trying to improve on me or something.

JENNY
Oh, no honey. But, if that’s how you interpret it, that’s ok too.

INT. AURA DANCE FLOOR - FOLLOWING

They dance in a fever pitch, when Linda screams out.

LINDA
Take me home!

She collapses and then passes out on the floor.

Fred rushes to her, followed by Rosie, Richard, and Tom.

Fred tries to lift her head.

ROSIE
Don’t move her.

TOM
Yeah, maybe something’s broken.

FRED
We’ve got to do something!

RICHARD
I know CPR.

TOM
She doesn’t need mouth to mouth.

RICHARD
I didn’t say I was going to put my mouth on her, Mr. Doctor!
TOM
Just calm down! We don’t know what’s wrong!

RICHARD
All right. If you need help, I’ll be at the bar.

He walks off in a huff, and then Marie calls out from the bar.

MARIE (OS)
Do you want me to call 911?

ROSIE
Maybe. But, wait a minute. Pat her face.

Fred pats Linda’s face after which she responds with moans.

LINDA
Help me! Help me! Take me away!

FRED
Where?

LINDA
Anywhere, anywhere!

ROSIE
Let’s see if we can get her up on her feet. I don’t think anything is broken. She’s just had too much of whatever.

They all help Linda get up.

FRED
Where does she live?

ROSIE
I don’t know. Does anyone here know?

No response.
FRED
I can take her to my place around
the corner. She can rest or maybe
I can call a doctor.

TOM
I’ll come with you.

FRED
No, I can handle it. I live on
the first floor.

TOM
What’s that got to do with
anything?

FRED
I won’t have any trouble getting
her into the apartment.

TOM
So, what happens after you get
there? You don’t know her. It’s
just better if the two of us are
there.

FRED
Why?

TOM
Two heads are better than one.

FRED
You’re right.

TOM
Then, let’s go.

FRED
Wait. Linda’s head and mine make
two. That’s enough.

TOM
You might think so, but I would
feel better......
FRED
No! I’m sorry, but this isn’t about you feeling better. Linda and I will be fine.

ROSIE
Let’s not argue. They should be all right. She needs to rest and food maybe. Do you have food?

FRED
Yes, don’t worry.

INT. AURA BAR ENTRANCE - FOLLOWING
Fred moves slowly with Linda towards the door.

ROSIE (OS)
Call if you need anything.

FRED (OS)
I will.

Fred and Linda Exit.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING
An upset Richard drinks next to Edward.

EDWARD
Fasten your seat belts! It’s going to be a bumpy night!

This flawless imitation of Bette Davis gets Richards’s quick attention.

RICHARD
And you’re fucking crazy!

INT. AURA TABLE AREA - FOLLOWING
Rosie sits with Tom at the table.

TOM
How well do you know Linda?
ROSIE
Just a little. She’s sort of a free spirit.

TOM
He could be in for trouble.

ROSIE
No, Linda is harmless.

TOM
How do you know?

ROSIE
I’m going on instinct.

TOM
Well, it could be wrong. Forget the moon, stars, and instincts. Look at the facts. We don’t know anything about Linda......

ROSIE
There’s nothing wrong with the moon, stars, or my instincts! I trust them and usually get into trouble when I don’t. Don’t you think Fred can take care of himself?

TOM
No! He’s too trusting.

ROSIE
And you’re not trusting enough! What perfect compliments.

TOM
Come on. We’re talking about Fred, not me.

ROSIE
Maybe, we should be talking about you.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FOLLOWING

Fred gently guides Linda.
INT. JENNY’S BEDROOM – FOLLOWING
Jenny with Chad lay silently, but distantly next to each other in bed.

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT – FOLLOWING
Fred leads Linda into his small cluttered place.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA – FOLLOWING
Rosie and Tom sit at the table.

ROSIE
I truly believe that Fred is just trying to help someone in need and it will probably make him feel good.

TOM
You don’t know him like I do. He has a long history of getting taken for a ride.

ROSIE
Then, why didn’t you stop him?

TOM
I’m not about to tell him how to live his life.

ROSIE
So, you’re telling me about it instead. Or, what are we talking about? Are you trying to deny Fred happiness?

TOM
No, of course not. I hope he’s happy with Linda or anybody else, but someone like you would be better for him.

ROSIE
You’ve decided this for him?
TOM
I even told him that.

ROSIE
Did he agree?

TOM
Yes, but he’s shy.

ROSIE
Oh, that’s no excuse. Everyone is shy. (Pause.) Would you mind massaging my neck a little?

TOM
I’m not that good at it.

ROSIE
Don’t worry. Whatever you do will be fine. I just need some outside touching.

Tom begins to massage her neck.

TOM
I can feel some knots.

ROSIE
Yes, but I think they’re going away. Linda just might be the ticket for Fred, even more than me. Although, we both know that I’m God’s gift to all males.

Marie approaches and then begins to massage Tom’s neck.

MARIE
Let’s have a three way.

TOM
Go right ahead.

MARIE
No problem. Besides, I had to get away from the bar for a minute.
ROSIE
What, Irving again?

MARIE
Yes, he won’t quit.

TOM
Who’s that?

MARIE
Don’t look now, but he’s at the far end of the bar.

FLASH on an older MAN who sits and leers at the bar towards Marie.

MARIE
He’s madly in love or lust with me and won’t give up.

TOM
I guess you’re not interested.

MARIE
Hell no! I’m a happily married woman. See you later.

Marie moves away.

ROSIE
Thanks for the massage. It felt great.

TOM
My pleasure.

ROSIE
You have nice hands. You can tell a lot about a person from their hands. I could give you a reading sometime.

TOM
A hand reading?

ROSIE
Yes, but it’s usually called a palm reading.
TOM
You’ve got quite a few skills and talents.

ROSIE
Oh, maybe a few. (Pause.) Would you like to come over to my place?

TOM
Not just yet.

ROSIE
O.K., whenever you’re ready.

TOM
It’s a deal. Time to go.

He gets up.

ROSIE
Oh, before I forget. I want to buy one of your prints.

TOM
Great. Which one?

ROSIE
I have one in mind, but maybe I should look at your book.

TOM
Sure. I’ll bring it in soon.

ROSIE
Good. See you later.

TOM
Yes, soon.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FOLLOWING

Tom walks with his camera.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING FRONT DOOR - FOLLOWING

Tom stands ready to push the door buzzer of Fred Evans.
He changes his mind, and then walks away.

INT. FRED’S LIVING ROOM – LATER

In the cluttered room, popular music plays.

A woozy Linda gets up from the couch.

INT. STEREO – FOLLOWING

Linda changes the station to find a piano concerto.

INT. FRED’S LIVING ROOM – FOLLOWING

Linda returns to the couch.

Fred enters with a glass of water.

    FRED
    Here’s some aspirin.

Linda swallows them with the water.

    LINDA
    Thanks.

    FRED
    No problem. Did you like your dinner?

FLASH on a half empty frozen dinner tray on the coffee table.

    LINDA
    It was fine. I’m full. I forgot how big those “hungry man dinners” were.

    FRED
    They sure are. I like all three—chicken, meatloaf, and turkey. You get more food with the turkey because of the dressing. But, sometimes the turkey gets dry if I let it heat too long. (Pause.) This is nice music.
LINDA
Yes, anything with a piano.

FRED
It’s relaxing.

LINDA
I used to play.

FRED
Play what?

LINDA
The piano.

FRED
I wouldn’t have guessed that about you.

LINDA
Why not?

FRED
Oh, I don’t know. I really didn’t look at your hands.

Fred picks up her hands to look at them.

FRED
Well, sure enough you have piano fingers.

LINDA
Yes, I guess so. I never understood what that meant.

FRED
Strong.

LINDA
I thought it was long.

FRED
Yes. Strong and long. Both.

LINDA
I guess so.
Linda gets up.

INT. STEREO - FOLLOWING

Linda changes the station to slow dance music.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FOLLOWING

She brings Fred up to dance slowly and closely.

    FRED
    I’m not really very good at this.

    LINDA
    Just feel the music.

    FRED
    I’ll try.

    LINDA
    No try. Just do it.

    FRED
    Oh....

    LINDA
    There’s something different about you.

    FRED
    I hope that’s good.

    LINDA
    You’re nice. You like to please, don’t you?

    FRED
    Yes, I’ve been known to. (Pause.) You know my being here now is unusual. I’m usually still at the bar.

    LINDA
    I like that trait.
FRED
What? Going to the bar every Friday night?

LINDA
No, pleasing people.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FOLLOWING
Tom ambles along on a quiet, dark street.

A sexy female VOICE interrupts.

VOICE (OS)
Hi honey.

EXT. WALL - FOLLOWING

BETTY, a sexy woman with heavy makeup and tight clothes leans up against a wall.

BETTY
How’s it going?

TOM
Ok.

BETTY
You’re cute. You shouldn’t be alone. Do you want a date?

TOM
No, not now.

BETTY
Oh, come on. You can take advantage Of my Friday night special. Any two things for the price of one.

TOM
No thanks, anyway.

BETTY
All right, but maybe some other time. I do house calls.

She goes into her purse to give him a business card.
BETTY
Here you go. Anytime, just leave a message for my cleaning service. The price list is on there in code. I’m sure you will figure it out.

TOM
Ok. Take care.

She notices the camera.

BETTY
Would you like to take a picture of me?

TOM
Sure.

She prims up in a pose.

He takes a picture.

BETTY (Male voice)
Now that should be a great shot.

FLASH on a surprised Tom.

BETTY (Male voice)
I told you, it’s two for the price of one. With two or more possibilities, if you get my drift. May I have a copy of that photo? Just between us guys. Please?

TOM
Sure, I’ve got your card. And there’s someone I met tonight who might be right up your alley.

BETTY (Female voice.)
Ooh, great! The more the merrier.
INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - FOLLOWING

Linda and Fred sit closely on the sofa.

LINDA
I’ve done things to make me feel good. But, I don’t think I’ve ever really felt them deep inside. Maybe, you can feel good without really feeling it. I don’t know what I’m talking about.

FRED
Well, don’t look at me. I’m no expert about feeling good. (Pause.) But, there’s something new going on here. What made you come to me in the bar tonight?

LINDA
Your eyes were like magnets. And then you were like one of those crackling fireplace fires. Warm, cozy, and hard to leave. I felt like a kid again.

FRED
Yeah, but you kissed me like a woman, who knew what she wanted.

LINDA
Well, I guess I felt like a kid and a woman all at once.

Pause.

LINDA
What are you feeling right now?

FRED
Afraid. You’re beautiful, practically my ideal woman, and we’re alone. Boy, what a fantasy I could have.
You can have your fantasy after I leave. I’m not a video. Right now, I’m here.

INT. APARTMENT - FOLLOWING

SUSAN, a pretty sleepy young woman in a bathrobe, opens a door to an anxious Tom.

SUSAN
What ....Come in.

TOM
Sorry, it’s so late.

SUSAN
That’s all right. Nice surprise. But, this is your Friday night thing.

TOM
I know, but I just had to see you.

SUSAN
Good. Are you hungry? I’ve got some of your Lasagna.

TOM
No, not really.

He passionately kisses her.

She breaks away from.

SUSAN
Ok, just relax and slow down a minute. This is a surprise.

TOM
Sorry.

Tom backs away with frustration.
INT. FRED’S BEDROOM - LATER

With squeals of laughter, Linda and Fred run around the cluttered room.

Linda tickles Fred without mercy.

He pleads for her to stop.

She continues around the bed and all over the room, until they land on the bed.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

A beautiful sunrise looks out over the ocean.

INT. JENNY’S LOFT - FOLLOWING

Jenny with Chad quietly have coffee at the table.

INT. FRED’S BEDROOM - FOLLOWING

Linda with Fred are in bed wrapped up in comfortable slumber.

INT. SUSAN’S BEDROOM - FOLLOWING

Tom restlessly tosses in the bed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DREAM

A lively, crowded party takes place with Tom in view.

A man with a gun bursts into the room, and then tells the crowd to get down on the floor.

Chaos with screams as everybody scrambles to find safety.

Tom lays down in terror next to the others as gunshots ring out.

End of DREAM.

Back to Susan’s BEDROOM.

Tom bolts up in the bed with Jane in the background.
INT. FRED’S BEDROOM - FOLLOWING

Linda and Fred wake up next to each other with a warm afterglow.

INT. FRED’S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Linda wanders around to look at various framed things on the walls that are crammed together.

Fred walks into the room with coffee.

FRED
Here we go.

LINDA
You’ve joined a lot of groups.

FRED
Yes. It keeps me busy and out of trouble.

LINDA
But, some kinds of trouble are fun and good for you. You know what I mean?

FRED
I think so.

LINDA
It’s very interesting that you joined Jehovah Witnesses.

FRED
Oh yeah, I accidentally buzzed one of them in, one thing lead to another and then I ended up joining for a year.

LINDA
What happened after a year?

FRED
It just wasn’t me. I felt like moving on to something else.
LINDA
It’s good to keep moving.

FRED
I’d like to move on and join your club.

LINDA
Well, you did last night.

FRED
That was quite an initiation ceremony.

LINDA
And, I hope there’s more.

FRED
Me too. I want to keep joining, and joining, and joining.

LINDA
Good, because there are many more rituals to come, which we can makeup as we go.

INT. SUSAN’S BEDROOM - FOLLOWING

Tom waits on the phone for an answer.

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - FOLLOWING

Linda answers the phone with a busy Fred as he sets up some paintings.

LINDA
Hello.

In a SPLIT SCREEN, Tom talks on his phone.

TOM
Hi, this is Tom.

LINDA
Oh, yes. Remember me?
TOM
Yes, I guess you are feeling better.

LINDA
For sure. Fred is taking real good care of me.

TOM
Good. I’d like to talk to him.

LINDA
Sure.

She signals to Fred, which brings him to the phone.

FRED
Hello?

TOM
Hi, it’s me.

FRED
Good morning.

TOM
Yes, how are things?

FRED
So far, so good. It’s just what the doctor ordered.

TOM
You had to call a doctor?

FRED
No, it’s just a saying. Linda and I are doing fine.

TOM
Is there anything you need?

FRED
I can’t think of anything right now.
TOM
Well, if you do, call me.

FRED
I will and thanks for checking.

TOM
You’re welcome.

INT. SUSAN’S BEDROOM - FOLLOWING

Tom gets dressed as Susan looks on.

SUSAN
Is Fred Ok?

TOM
I don’t know.

SUSAN
Do you know my name?

TOM
Ah, come on. What’s this all about?

SUSAN
You come in here late without saying much and have sex with me like I’m just some casual nothing.

TOM
Look, I didn’t mean to do that. I’ve just got a lot on my mind. It was a strange day.

SUSAN
How? Wasn’t it your regular Friday?

TOM
No, I met this girl at the beach who wants to paint me in the nude, Fred got picked up in the bar, I met this prostitute who’s a guy. And that’s just for starters.
SUSAN
And, which of those do you want to get involved with?

TOM
I don’t know. It’s just a little confusing.

SUSAN
Sounds exciting. And, then seeing me after all that must have seen very routine and boring.

TOM
Maybe, I don’t know.

SUSAN
Ok. Well, I don’t want to be responsible for boring up your life.

TOM
That’s not what I meant.

SUSAN
Well, when you figure it out let me know. But, please don’t just pretend to be with me or just go through the motions.

TOM
No, and I’m sorry.

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT – FOLLOWING

Linda and Fred look at his paintings on display. They are mostly big, colorful, whimsical, animal depictions.

LINDA
They are you.

FRED
How?

LINDA
Innocent and simple.
FRED
Some people have called them naïve.

LINDA
Yes, and it’s beautiful. Hang on to that.

FRED
Thanks. I would like to give you one.

LINDA
I would love that. A gift from one innocent to another.

FRED
It’s hard for me to think of you as innocent.

LINDA
Oh, but I am. Why don’t you paint me as an animal?

FRED
Great idea! What?

LINDA
A tigress.

She growls with a fierce look.

She leaps towards him.

INT. TOM’S APARTMENT – FOLLOWING

Tom hits the answering button on his machine. He listens to the elderly voice of GRANDMA JANIE.

GRANDMA JANIE (OS)
Hi Honey. Grandma Janie here. How are you doing? Spring is springing. You wouldn’t believe how the garden is growing already. It may come in and move me out. Anyway, I hope you are doing well and would love to hear from you. With love, Bye.
Tom moves towards his camera on the table next to the business card and postcard for Jenny.

He pulls out a book with his name and contact information on the first page.

Various photographs appear as the plastic covered pages turn. They are beautiful depictions of natural settings on the beach, sunsets, etc.

He closes the book.

He moves away.

INT. COMPUTER – FOLLOWING

Tom brings up the recent images of Jenny, Edward, and Betty.

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE-NY – SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Linda with Fred walk on a sidewalk.

EXT. FRONT BUILDING STEPS – FOLLOWING

Linda with Fred walk towards a front door.

INT. BUILDING STAIRWAY – FOLLOWING

Linda with Fred climb stairs.

INT. APARTMENT DOOR – FOLLOWING

Linda with a weary Fred enter into a cluttered, dark room as quiet music plays.

KIDDER, a scruffy guy, sleeps on the couch.

Linda signals Fred to be quiet as they move into the room.

Kidder abruptly awakens.

KIDDER

What?
LINDA
Sorry.

KIDDER
That’s ok. Hi baby. How’s it hangin?

LINDA
Real good. Meet Fred. My new knight in shining armor.

KIDDER
Oh yeah, but I thought I was.

LINDA
But, of course. But, a damsel such as myself needs more than one. Specialties you know.

KIDDER
All right. Hi! (To Fred) I’m kidder.

FRED
Hi.

KIDDER
Nice to meet you.

INT. BEDROOM - FOLLOWING
Linda pulls out some clothes from the closet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER
Linda, in another outfit, approaches Fred and Kidder.

LINDA (To Kidder)
Do you want to come out with us?

KIDDER
Not right now. I’ve got some things to do.

FRED
Maybe some other time.
KIDDER
For sure.

She gives Kidder a big sexy kiss as Fred looks on.

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATER

Linda with Fred window shop.

INT. PIANO STORE - FOLLOWING

Linda skillfully plays a grand piano, with onlookers and Fred as a concentrated audience.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Tom looks for an address on a street with Jenny’s card.

INT. ART GALLERY - FOLLOWING

With a small crowd, Tom looks at various collage artworks on the walls, by Jenny Oliver, which combine photography and painting.

He is interrupted by Jenny’s voice from behind.

JENNY (OS)
What a surprise!

Tom turns around to find Jenny.

TOM
Well, I guess so.

JENNY
I’m glad you’re here.

TOM
Me too. It’s very impressive.

JENNY
Thank you. It’s fun to sneak in and maybe get some reactions.

TOM
Well, you got mine.
JENNY
Yes. The first two stages of you are finished. Now, it’s time for your nude photo.

TOM
I’m thinking about it.

JENNY
All right, no pressure. But, it’s really not about thinking. Hope to see you soon.

TOM
All of me, right?

JENNY
But, of course.

EXT. ROLLER COASTER - TUESDAY
Linda with Fred move up and down in a car.

EXT. BOARDWALK - FOLLOWING
Linda with Fred walk and then stop.

A MAN with a marionette puppet performs as a boom box plays music with a small crowd.

INT. PHOTO BOOTH - FOLLOWING
FLASH on a series of various playful snapshots of Linda with Fred.

EXT. PHOTO BOOTH - FOLLOWING
They exit when Linda gets an idea.
She pulls Fred to follow.

INT. DOOR - FOLLOWING
Linda with Fred are at the door when a surprised Jenny opens it.
JENNY
Oh, hi. Great! I tried to reach you.

INT. JENNY’S LOFT - FOLLOWING

Jenny shows a nude painting of Linda to them.

JENNY
Here it is. The imagination of what you’re body might look like based on the headshot.

LINDA
Very interesting. There is some similarity.

JENNY
Oh really, but now I need a nude photo of you for the last step to paint that.

LINDA
Oh sure, that’s right. No problem.

Linda begins to disrobe as a confused Fred looks on.

FRED
Are you going to show it?

JENNY
Yes, soon, but I have a few more people to finish.

LINDA
You should do Fred?

JENNY
Sure. I’ll get the camera.

She moves away to get the camera

She returns to Fred.

JENNY
Here we go.
Fred smiles, and then she takes a few close-up head shots.

FRED
Wow. Now, what happens?

JENNY
I do a nude painting of your body from imagination. Then, a nude photo to compare, followed by another painting based on the photo. Are you game?

FRED
Well……..

LINDA
Of course, we’ll be in the show together.

FRED
Sure, sounds good, but this posing nude thing.

LINDA
Don’t worry honey. I’ll come with you and hold your hand or what ever else it takes to relax you. Or think about it as a new group to join.

FRED
Ok.

JENNY
That’s the spirit. Now it’s your turn.

Jenny aims the camera at the nude, relaxed Linda, and then clicks the camera.

INT. TOM’S APARTMENT - DAY

Tom enters, and then moves to the answering machine to play back.

The first message is from Grandma Janie, in a weakened and confused condition.
GRANDMA JANIE (OS)
Hi dear. I am planning a trip. I hope to hear from you before then.
Love you, bye.

Tom gets on the telephone, starts to punch in a number, quickly changes his mind, and then moves away.

INT. BUS TERMINAL - LATER

Tom, with a backpack, boards a commuter bus.

EXT. BUS - FOLLOWING

Tom exits at a rural stop.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FOLLOWING

Tom walks on a quiet tree lined street, with small widely spaced houses.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - FOLLOWING

Tom rings the bell, but no answer.

He knocks, waits for a response, but no answer.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - FOLLOWING

Tom moves down a path towards the backyard.

EXT. BACKYARD - FOLLOWING

Tom looks into the over-grown yard, which is a mixture of healthy flowers, shrubbery, and weeds.

    TOM
    Janie, are you there?

Tom moves further until he finds a disheveled elderly woman with bright white hair and heavily wrinkled face, as she dozes in a lawn chair.

Two cats are nearby who scatter as he approaches.

    TOM
    Janie?
She lazily opens her eyes to discover Tom.

GRANDMA JANIE
Yes, oh what a surprise!

TOM
It’s been too long.

GRANDMA JANIE
It’s so good to see you.

They hug.

TOM
How are you?

GRANDMA JANIE
I’ve been better, but that’s ok.

She starts to cough.

TOM
A cold?

GRANDMA JANIE
Nah! I don’t know what it is.

She reaches for a pack of “Lucky Strike” cigarettes on the table, and then takes one out to light.

GRANDMA JANIE
Want one?

TOM
No. What’s this about a trip?

GRANDMA JANIE
Great idea, isn’t it?

TOM (Refers to yard.)
Sure. The place sure looks healthy around here.

GRANDMA JANIE
I know, isn’t it beautiful?
TOM
And I came prepared for some fun.

Tom pulls out a pair of gardening gloves from his backpack.

FLASH on Tom as he weeds, prunes, and rakes in the yard.

Later, he stops to wipe off the sweat and then surveys the progress.

GRANDMA JANIE (OS)
Ok, break time.

EXT. LAWN CHAIRS - FOLLOWING
Janie sits while smoking with a drink.

Tom takes a couple of close-up pictures of her.

GRANDMA JANIE
Now, that you’ve broken the camera, do you want a shot?

TOM
Well, there’s still more to do. I’m just getting started.

GRANDMA JANIE
No hurry. Come on, let’s catch up. I’m going to pay you.

TOM
No, you’re not.

GRANDMA JANIE
Yes, I am.

TOM
No. I’m not here for that. Just to see you.

GRANDMA JANIE
Come on, sit down and relax.

She pours some “Jack Daniels” into a shot glass and offers it to him. They click glasses.
GRANDMA JANIE
Cheers! Here’s to ten years ago, when you lived in town and I answered your ad for gardening work.

TOM
That long? I miss this and still love it.

Tom moves to his backpack and then pulls out his book of prints.

Janie thumbs through it.

GRANDMA JANIE
You do connect well to nature. They are beautiful.

TOM
Choose any of them you want and I’ll get them framed.

GRANDMA JANIE
I will. Something is missing though.

TOM
What?

GRANDMA JANIE
No people.

TOM
I know, but I’m just getting started with that. I took some recently and it’s a whole new thing.

GRANDMA JANIE
Good, because you don’t want to ignore your own species.

TOM
No.

GRANDMA JANIE
Now, help me plan the trip.
TOM
Sure. How?

GRANDMA JANIE
Imagine it with me.

TOM
Where?

GRANDMA JANIE
I’m not physically going anywhere.

TOM
What do you mean?

GRANDMA JANIE
But, these are …

Points to her head and then her heart.

INT. AURA BAR – NIGHT

On the following Friday night, Rosie talks on a cell phone near the bar.

INT. AURA ENTRANCE – FOLLOWING

Tom enters and then waves to Rosie.

INT. AURA TABLE AREA – FOLLOWING

Tom sits at a table.

Richard approaches him.

RICHARD
About what happened last Friday with that CPR thing. Don’t worry, I forgive you.

TOM
I’m not asking you to forgive me.

RICHARD
Oh, let’s just forget it. I forgive you and you forgive me. O.K.?
TOM
Fine.

RICHARD
What’s your name?

TOM
Tom, and yours?

RICHARD
Richard love never fails.

TOM
Maybe so, but my name is Tom, not Richard.

RICHARD
I know. You just told me and my name is Richard Love Never Fails.

TOM
What?

RICHARD
Richard Love Never Fails.

TOM
You’ve got to be kidding.

RICHARD
No, Richard is my first name. Love and Never are the middle names. Fails is my last name.

TOM
Did your parents name you?

RICHARD
No, I did. I took the words “Love Never Fails” from a greeting card, then added my first name. I design cards.

TOM
What was your old name?
RICHARD
I don’t want to tell you, because it might spoil the illusion. Would you like a new name?

TOM
No, I don’t think so.

RICHARD
What would be a good name for you besides Tom? Daiquiri! That’s a great first name! Wonderful sound.

TOM
How did you come up with that?

RICHARD
It’s my favorite drink. I just finished one.

TOM
Would you like another?

RICHARD
Sounds great.

Rosie moves to join them with drinks.

ROSIE
Marie says this is on the house and since I’m off tonight, this is a free delivery.

RICHARD
Oh how sweet. Thank you so much. I love that word!

ROSIE
What?

RICHARD
Free. It has brought such pleasure, turmoil and usually means an expensive price tag later.
ROSIE
Not this time sweetie. Oh! I feel better now. I just talked to my numerologist and he said Linda and Fred are very safe and right for each other. It’s almost a perfect match.

RICHARD
How did the numerologist figure this out?

ROSIE
By counting the letters in their names. At first, he wanted both the first and last names. But, I forgot Fred’s and I don’t know Linda’s.

RICHARD
Without the last names, doesn’t that cut down on the accuracy?

ROSIE
Well, normally it would, but when I told him their first names, he freaked. They are extremely strong and compatible. The first F, in Fred comes before L, for Linda in the alphabet. Also, Fred has four letters, Linda has five, which makes for continuity when the names are together. You see, four letters, Fred, then five letters, Linda. It makes sense, doesn’t it?

RICHARD
Well, based on those names, yes. But, there’s only one slight problem.

ROSIE
What?

RICHARD
Linda is not her real name.
ROSIE
What is it?

RICHARD
I don’t know. She likes to be called Linda, her mother’s name, who died suddenly when she was little. Maybe, it helps to keep the memory alive, because they were very close and it was very traumatic.

TOM
Well, I guess that theory is shot to hell!

ROSIE
Oh. I still think they’ll be O.K. This guy felt some strong positive energy around them.

RICHARD
At least we know that Linda’s dead mother and Fred are compatible.

INT. FRED’S BATHROOM - FOLLOWING

Fred sits on the toilet with pen in hand while he quietly reads from a tablet.

FRED (OS)
Dear Linda, I’m not very good at this, but wanted to further express how you make me feel. So, that you can put this somewhere and keep it. I’ve never been happier and want it to go on forever. But, don’t go away yet please and this is not goodbye, but instead many more hellos...........

A large thump against the closed door interrupts.

FRED
Ok, I’ll be right out. I’m just about finished.

He flushes the toilet.
RICHARD
I met someone recently.

FLASHBACK- DAY

A handsome young man tries to hail a cab on a busy New York street a short distance away from Richard as he does the same.

As they continue to try for cabs separately as strangers, their eyes meet into a magic connection.

INT. CAB - FOLLOWING

They ride together with a glow of anticipation.

INT. APARTMENT - FOLLOWING

Richard leads him in.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FOLLOWING

On a sofa Richard and the man share drinks as they speak with dreamy eyes.

They embrace into a kiss.

INT. BEDROOM - FOLLOWING

They make love in bed with a gentle, sensuous manner.

Later, they are asleep cuddled together.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Richard opens his eyes to discover that the man is gone.

He lifts up to look around the room to see that nobody is there.

He gets out of bed.
INT. LIVING ROOM – FOLLOWING

Richard frantically looks around the room to see that no one is there.

He sadly sits down on the sofa to look off into the distance.

FLASHBACK ends.

Back to Bar.

RICHARD
All I wanted was to give and share myself in a loving way. But, that wasn’t enough.

ROSIE
That’s too bad.

RICHARD
It’s amazing how one minute you care for a person and think they care for you. There’s magic in the air. Then, something weird happens and that’s all changed. Everything gets turned over.

ROSIE
No explaining, but feels like some kind of curse.

RICHARD
Oh yes, those dreaded curses. (Pause.) Have you ever had those?

TOM
Oh yes, of course. But, it’s more a feeling of restlessness for something more. Maybe, I’m looking for it here every Friday night.

RICHARD
Don’t’ you look for this “something more thing” during the rest of the week too?
TOM
God, I hope so.

Marie approaches with a ringing cell phone.

MARIE (To Rosie)
Here hon. You left this at the bar.

ROSIE
Thanks.

She answers it while Richard and Tom look on.

ROSIE
Excuse me guys, I need to find some quiet to deal with an energy alignment. Be back soon.

She moves away.

RICHARD
Ok, time for another cig break. Would you like to join me?

TOM
Sure.

EXT. AURA PATIO - FOLLOWING

Tom and Richard stand with their drinks.

TOM
You regret taking that guy home?

RICHARD
No. Part of what happened felt good. I took a chance. I’ll do it again. But, maybe next time it will work out better. Maybe, even find Mr. Right. I have been in love before. That is most important.

TOM
Well, good luck.

RICHARD
Thanks.
EXT. AURA BAR - FOLLOWING

Rosie talks on a cell phone.

    ROSIE
    Yes, that’s right, always seek the
    white light. Just plug in and share
    the energy.

She waves to someone.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FOLLOWING

Jenny walks alone nearby as she catches Rosie’s attention
in front of the bar.

Jenny and Rosie hug.

    ROSIE
    What a surprise!

    JENNY
    Is this the place you work and told
    me about?

    ROSIE
    Yes, come in.

    JENNY
    Sure.

EXT. AURA PATIO - FOLLOWING

Richard and Tom are still together.

    RICHARD
    What are you trying to find?

    TOM
    I’m just trying to relax and have
    a good time.

    RICHARD
    It’s not working.

    TOM
    What do you mean?
RICHARD
You’re already too relaxed.

TOM
How can you be too relaxed?

RICHARD
You could be dead.

TOM
I’m very much alive.

RICHARD
Well, you’re breathing. But, your life is like sub-zero.

TOM
How do you know? You don’t know me well enough.

RICHARD
No, I don’t. But, that’s what I feel.

TOM
It’s not true!

RICHARD
Maybe it’s not, but it’s something to think about as we enjoy our drinks.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING
Jenny with Rosie move away from the bar with drinks.

EXT. AURA PATIO - FOLLOWING
Tom with Richard continue.

TOM
Well, here’s something else to think about. You’re hiding behind fake names.
RICHARD
Now, wait a minute! It’s just a name, but I’m the real thing behind it.

TOM
Oh yeah, I’m not so sure. It looks like false advertising.

RICHARD
Look, I may be a lot of things! But, I’m not a fake. And how about you?

TOM
What?

RICHARD
You come in here every Friday night and repeat the same old thing. It’s safe here and that’s all you want. You just float through a haze that disappears when you leave. You don’t experience or feel it! It’s gone when the alcohol wears off.

Jenny with Rosie enter to see Richard and Tom in an animated conversation.

ROSIE
Oh, there they are.

JENNY
I met him……..

They begin to move towards them, and then Jenny stops Rosie.

JENNY
Let’s wait a minute. This looks good.

They stop to observe Richard and Tom without notice from a distance.
TOM
You can’t tell me what I’m experiencing.

RICHARD
What are you experiencing tonight?

TOM
I found you to talk to or argue with.

RICHARD
No, I found you.

TOM
We’re talking together, so why does it matter who did the finding?

RICHARD
Do you want more than talk?

TOM
No, talk is just fine.

RICHARD
Why?

TOM
Because you’re not what I want.

RICHARD
Come on, take a chance.

TOM
Not that one.

RICHARD
What have you got to lose?

TOM
Maybe everything.

RICHARD
Haven’t you ever lost everything before?
TOM
I don’t think so.

RICHARD
It can be very exciting. And besides you never really lose everything. As long as you’re alive, there’s always a way out. And maybe even after you’re dead, but I’ll find that out later. I have no fear.

TOM
Well, I do.

RICHARD
So be it. What do you want then?

TOM
I’ll know it when I see it.

RICHARD
Maybe. You still have time.

TOM
For what?

RICHARD
To find out what you’ve already found.

TOM
You mean you?

RICHARD
No, you.

TOM
Jesus, this is getting too deep.

RICHARD
You’re probably right.

TOM
And what do you want?
RICHARD
The same as you.

Rosie with Jenny approach to find a surprised Tom.

TOM (To Jenny)
Oh my god! Are you stalking me?

JENNY
No, I know Rosie and stopped in. What a small world. Now take off your clothes like I want you to.

ROSIE
What?

TOM
We’ve met.

ROSIE
I guess so, where?

JENNY
At the beach near my place and I want him for my installation that I told you about.

ROSIE
Oh, good idea. Do it Tom. There’s a good vibe around that.

TOM
I’m thinking about it.

RICHARD
What’s this all about?

JENNY
I want to take a nude photo of Tom.

RICHARD
Oh, do tell! May I watch? My name is Richard.

JENNY
Hi. I’m Jenny.
RICHARD
Nice to meet you and maybe
I could help persuade him.
Although, I haven’t had too
much luck so far.

JENNY
Oh really. It looked like you
were doing a good job just now.

TOM
Now, wait a minute, none of this
is what it seems! I’m not
interested in that!

JENNY and RICHARD
What?

TOM
Getting together with Richard.

RICHARD
Oh, well I’ll just have to wallow
alone with my fake names.

JENNY
Then, what about my nude?

TOM
Ok, time out.

Tom moves away.

ROSIE
What’s been going on here?

RICHARD
We’ve been diving into one
another’s lives.

ROSIE
And you’ve been trying to push
him into your deep water, right?

RICHARD
You might say so.
ROSIE
Be careful. We don’t want him
to drown.

RICHARD
Don’t worry dear. I’ve learned
a few tricks from a lifeguard.

ROSIE
You’re terrible.

RICHARD
Thank you.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Tom has a drink at the crowded bar.

INT. AURA ENTRANCE - FOLLOWING

A spaced out, calm Fred enters and then slowly moves
inside.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Fred is at the bar where Marie greets him.

MARIE (To Fred)
How are you doing, babe?

FRED
I don’t know yet.

MARIE
Oh, can I get you anything?

FRED
I’m not sure.

MARIE
Ok, just let me know. Your
buddies are here.

FRED
Good.

From the other end of the bar, Tom spots Fred.
Tom approaches Fred.

    TOM
    I’m glad you could make it. I’ve been wondering about you all week.

    FRED
    Well, I’m still here and it’s very good to see you.

    TOM
    All right, hey it’s Friday. Come on, it’s my round.

    FRED
    Ok, sure.

Tom signals to Marie at the bar.

Rosie, Richard, and Jenny approach them.

    ROSIE
    Hi honey. How are you?

    FRED
    Like I woke up from a dream too fast.

    RICHARD
    That sounds interesting.

    ROSIE
    Does this have anything to do with Linda? How is she?

    FRED
    She’s happy, I hope.

Marie comes with Fred’s drink, and then joins in.

    TOM (To Fred)
    You look nice and mellow.

    RICHARD
    Come on, tell all.
ROSIE
No, you don’t have to. This is not a kiss and tell firing squad.

FRED
I want to.

TOM
Then, let’s go sit down.

FRED
No, I feel like standing.

TOM
What’s up? You always sit. It’s your favorite position.

FRED
Well, not right now. How about going someplace else?

ROSIE
Sounds good.

EXT. PARK - FOLLOWING

Rosie, Jenny, Tom, Richard, and Fred amble on a path with benches.

ROSIE
Oh, look up!

They look up into to see a bright star.

JENNY
It’s looking down on us.

ROSIE
That’s Mars, and a very good sign. It’s a good connection night.

RICHARD
Oh, I like the sound of that.

ROSIE
Or some incredible news to find out. Maybe, Fred?
JENNY
Well, sounds good, but I have to
Get back home. I’ll invite you
all to the show which will feature
Tom. Right Tom?

TOM
We’ll see.

RICHARD
Well dear, I’ll try to push this
along. I think it’s a great idea
and want to support the arts
in whatever way possible.

Jenny moves away as they wave goodbye.

ROSIE
Let’s go over there.

EXT. BENCH – FOLLOWING

The group sits together.

ROSIE
Fred, are you all right?

FRED
I’m a little numb or something.

TOM
Oh, I know where this is going.
Time to bring in the censors.
You don’t have to tell all the
bedroom details.

RICHARD
Unless, you want to.

ROSIE
Well, how is she after last week?

FRED
Resting.

ROSIE
Oh, at her place?
FRED
No.

ROSIE
Still at yours?

FRED
No, she’s gone. I feel like I’m trapped inside of a cloud.

ROSIE
Cloud nine?

FRED
No, not now, but earlier I was. We were really hitting it off all week.

ROSIE
That’s wonderful.

TOM
Yeah, that’s great. We should all get together sometime.

FRED
Not possible.

TOM
Why?

FRED
She died.

ROSIE
What?

RICHARD
Oh, my God. What happened?

INT. BATHROOM - FLASHBACK

Fred opens the bathroom door to find Linda slumped on the floor.

In a panic, he tries to revive her, but she seems lifeless.
End of FLASHBACK.

Back to Bench.

    ROSIE
    I’m so sorry.

    FRED
    The doctors said it might be some kind of heart attack.

They all move to hug him, except Tom.

    TOM
    I knew you shouldn’t have taken her home!

    FRED
    What do you mean?

    TOM
    Look at all the trouble she’s caused you!

    FRED
    Wait a minute! Linda didn’t cause any trouble. She died! We all will and glad I was there. I’m in shock, but I’ll get over it. At least, I have something to get over.

    TOM
    Yeah something stupid! A dumb mistake. You can’t save the world. You’ve done this a thousand times. Helping crazy strangers!

    ROSIE
    Both of you settle down!

    RICHARD
    Yeah!

    FRED
    If this is a dumb mistake, I want more.
TOM
Well, it was and you will.

FRED
I don’t care what you think. Linda was happy. We liked each other. I want to feel that way again, but if I don’t, I know I did tonight. I wish the same for Linda. I have another chance and hope she has too. But, I don’t know.

ROSIE
None of us know. But, you sent her off to a beautiful, magical place and gave her the best moments of her life.

FRED
Maybe. (Pause.) This has not been a normal Friday night.

ROSIE
You can say that again.

RICHARD
And again.

TOM
Why did you cut me off this week? I might have been able to rescue this. Can you count the number of times I’ve saved you?

FRED
And I’m grateful, as I’ve told you before.

TOM
Then, why didn’t you let me this time?

FRED
This was different. I needed to get through this by myself.
TOM
But, are you ready for that?

FRED
I don’t know. It’s a risk to see if I survive. You’ve felt that way, right?

TOM
Of course I have, but don’t bring it around to me. We’re talking about you.

FRED
Well maybe we should be talking about you. I wonder about you a lot and care. Sometimes I ask, is he missing something?

TOM
What?

FRED
I don’t know.

TOM
What is this? Analyze Tom night. You’re all doing it! Maybe, you should all compare notes and figure it out for me!

Tom rushes away.

EXT. SIDEWALK – FOLLOWING

Tom walks with unsteady frustration among other people.

He takes his cell phone out to make a call.
TOM
Are you there? Well, I wish you were home. I love you. And in case I haven’t told you enough. I love you, I love you. I love you etc, etc. etc. Boy, I’m really fucked up! I just don’t know what do! Hope to see you soon. No, I’m going away, but not that far. I’ll let you know.

He clicks off the phone.

He wanders away.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Rosie, Richard, Fred, and Marie are together.

MARIE (Hugs Fred)
I’m so sorry.

FRED
I’ll be all right. We all will.

MARIE
Including Tom. Death hits everybody differently. Hell, I cracked up laughing and got the hiccup at my Aunt Agnes funeral. It just hit me that way and I really loved her.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FOLLOWING

An intense Tom walks.

INT. AURA BAR AREA - FOLLOWING

Rosie, Marie, Richard, and Fred are with drinks.

RICHARD
Fred, you can stay at my place tonight.

ROSIE
You are welcome at my place too. Whatever you want. We’re all here for you.
FRED
God, that feels good.

MARIE
Here’s to Linda!

RICHARD
Good luck.

ROSIE
And peace.

FRED
We didn’t have a long time to get to know you, but we did get started and it felt good.

ROSIE
A sweet stranger.

FRED
She loves to keep moving and still is with us now.

LINDA’S VOICE (OS)
Oh, yes I am and love you all.

This shocks everyone as they turn towards Edward as he sits nearby, who has just flawlessly imitated Linda.

EDWARD
Sorry, if I scared you, but it’s my tribute.

FRED
I’ve got to go. Thanks and I’ll see you later.

He abruptly leaves followed by a concerned Rosie.

EXT SUBWAY STAIRS – FOLLOWING

Tom stumbles down.
EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - FOLLOWING

Tom with a few strangers in the background waves towards the tracks like hailing a cab.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FOLLOWING

Susan lifts her cell phone up to her ear.

She listens with concern and then punches a button to make a call.

INT. SUBWAY - FOLLOWING

Tom stares out a window in a tunnel.

INT. AURA BAR - FOLLOWING

A concerned Susan walks in to see Tom’s friends.

They have a concerned conversation and then Susan leaves.

EXT. SUBWAY STOP - FOLLOWING

Tom walks up the steps.

EXT. BEACH - FOLLOWING

Tom walks in the dark.

He sits down on the sand to stare out towards the ocean.

A thought hits him and then he gets up.

He walks away from the beach.

EXT. JENNY’S LOFT - FOLLOWING

Tom knocks loudly on the door.

A surprised Jenny opens the door.

    JENNY
    Well hello.
TOM
Hi, sorry not call first, but I’m here.

JENNY
I can see that. Not a problem come in.

INT. JENNY’S LOFT – FOLLOWING
Jenny leads Tom in.

JENNY
Would you like something to drink?

TOM
That would be great, but I just want to warn you, I’ve had a lot already.

JENNY
Oh, I see....

TOM
Well, what the hell! One more won’t hurt!

JENNY
Ok, have a seat. What would you like?

TOM
Maybe, just a beer if you have it.

JENNY
Sure.

She moves away.

INT. COUCH – FOLLOWING
Tom sits with a beer.

Jenny sits nearby with a drink.

JENNY
Nice to see you. How are you doing?
TOM
Ok, it’s been a wild night, but now I’m ready.

JENNY
For what?

TOM
Your picture.

JENNY
Oh, that’s great!

TOM
Where?

JENNY
Over by the work area if that’s ok?

TOM
Sure.

JENNY
I’ll go over to set up.

She moves away with her back turned towards him.

Tom gets up to clumsily strip off his clothes.

INT. WORK AREA – FOLLOWING

Jenny quickly sets things up with the camera, backdrop etc.

She turns around to look towards Tom.

INT. COUCH AREA – FOLLOWING

Tom stands totally naked with his clothes scattered about.

INT. WORK AREA – FOLLOWING

A surprised Jenny quickly checks Tom out.

JENNY
Well, I guess you’re ready.
TOM (OS)
Is this what you want?

JENNY
Yes, we are ready here, but could take some pictures over there to start if you want.

TOM (OS)
Whatever, both places are ok.

Jenny picks up the camera and then moves towards Tom.

INT. COUCH AREA – FOLLOWING
Jenny approaches Tom within a few feet.

She picks up the camera, aims it towards Tom, and then makes adjustments.

She clicks the camera.

She looks at it on the camera.

JENNY
Looks great!

TOM
Aren’t you going to warn me?

JENNY
Yes, I can, but this was just a test.

TOM
How many more?

JENNY
A few more. I just want you to have fun with it. This just between you and me.

TOM
And the ones who see it later.
JENNY
Well yes, but they will enjoy it too especially if you do. Maybe think of it as a shared experience.

TOM
Yeah, just my body.

JENNY
No more than that. Your beauty is a combination of mind with body which is what we’ll see.

TOM
I hope so.

JENNY
Please trust me.

TOM
I do.

Jenny takes a few more shots from different angles.

INT. WORK AREA – FOLLOWING

Before a backdrop Tom poses with more ease as Jenny takes more shots.

JENNY
I think we have it with a few choices. Would you like to see them?

TOM
No, not now. I would like to be surprised later. I trust you.

JENNY
Thank you very much.

TOM
You’re very welcome.

INT. COUCH AREA – FOLLOWING

Tom picks up his clothes.
Jenny approaches.

JENNY
Do you want to dress in the other room?

TOM
No, it doesn’t matter. You’ve seen everything else. Just one more piece of the puzzle to the mystery of me. Maybe, you should take pictures of that?

JENNY
No, that’s ok. Do you want anything?

TOM
I don’t think so.

Jenny walks away.

Tom gets dressed.

He sits on the couch in a quandary with fatigue.

He flops down.

Later, Jenny brings a sleeping Tom a blanket which she puts over him.

She walks away.

EXT. SIDEWALK – MORNING

As Tom walks, he speaks on the cell phone.

INT. TOM’S APARTMENT – MORNING

Tom enters to look at a blinking answering machine.

He hits the button to listen.

FRED (OS)
I hope you are OK. It was an upsetting night and I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings. Talk to you soon. Bye.
SUSAN (OS)
I left a message on the cell too. Where did you go? Let me know. I love you too.

ROSIE (OS)
Tom, are you there? ...I guess not. Anyway, we will all be all right. It’s in the stars! Ha-ha! See you soon. Love Rosie.

GRANDMA JANIE (OS)
Not to worry, but somebody thought I should be in the hospital..........

He continues to listen with concern and then hangs up.

He is upset as he makes three quick phone calls.

INT. KITCHEN - FOLLOWING
Tom quickly eats some cereal.

INT. FRONT DOOR - FOLLOWING
Tom leaves.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FOLLOWING
An anxious Tom looks around.

Separately Susan, Rosie, and Fred meet up with Tom.

After a brief conversation, they move towards the street.

Fred hails down a cab.

All four get in.

EXT. HOSPITAL - FOLLOWING
All four get out of the cab.

INT. HOSPITAL RECEPTION AREA - FOLLOWING
All four rush up to a reception desk with attendants.
TOM
I’m here to see Grandma Janie.

ATTENDANT
Who?

TOM
I mean, Jane Grant.

ATTENDANT
Are you her grandson?

TOM
Yes.

ATTENDANT
Well, we’ve been trying to reach her son without any luck.

TOM
Look, it’s a long story but she wasn’t close to him. She called me tonight!

ATTENDANT
Ok, ok. Don’t’ worry. You should see her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Tom enters Grandma Janie’s room with her asleep in bed.

She weakly opens her eyes with a smile when Tom touches her hand.

GRANDMA JANIE
I just got back from a trip and ready to take another one.

TOM
Where?

GRANDMA JANIE
I don’t know.
TOM
You’re so lucky to be able to travel. That’s what I should do more of. Any suggestions?

GRANDMA JANIE
Just take chances and travel with your greatness.

Tom nods and then gently hugs her.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

Tom sits in a chair while Rosie, Susan and Fred sit on a sofa nearby.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Janie sleeps peacefully.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - FOLLOWING

Tom dozes in the chair.

EXT. WINDY OCEAN BEACH - NIGHT - DREAM

Tom slowly walks towards the surf.

He dives in.

EXT. UNDER WATER

Tom tosses around for several cycles.

His voice mystically comes up.

TOM (OS)
I know something that nobody else knows. And they don’t have to, but they will.

EXT. OCEAN - FOLLOWING

Tom thrusts upward above water.

His eyes open.
The sea is calm with a bright distant horizon.

He begins to swim with steady strokes towards it.

End of DREAM.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - FOLLOWING

Tom abruptly awakens as a nurse stands over him.

She gives him sad news.

Tom comforted by Rosie, Susan and Fred slowly walk out.

SEVERAL MONTHS LATER

EXT. ART GALLERY - OPENING NIGHT

A banner reads, A PEELING

New Photography - Painting Collages

By Jenny Oliver

Various people enter.

INT. ART GALLERY - FOLLOWING

A large crowd mingles with drinks, appetizers, and live music as they view the artwork on the walls.

FLASH on paintings - photographs combinations of various people which include both headshot and nude images.

A slow movement around the room reveals the pairs of; Rosie and Fred; Richard and Edward; Marie and Husband; Susan and Tom; as they react to the artwork in various parts of the gallery.

FLASH on the paintings and photographs of Fred, and then Tom as part of the exhibit.

Chad and others look on.

Later, a lively party with louder music and dance is in progress.
INT. LINDA EXHIBIT IMAGES - FOLLOWING

Rosie, Fred, Richard, Edward, Jenny, and Marie observe quietly together.

Later, this same group affectionately pose together with the images of Linda as Tom takes several pictures of them.

Tom joins the group to pose with them.

Susan stands with Chad as he takes their picture.