

GUNS & ANAMNESIS

by

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OVER BLACK

The sounds of a man and a woman arguing. A fist pounds against the wall. Things crash to the ground. Glass shatters. A door slams.

INT. COCO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John Song, 28, sits by the bed reading aloud from a book of fairy tales. His six-year-old daughter, Coco, lies beneath the covers.

JOHN

(reading)

The king could not help feeling sorry, but it was not long before he found ample consolation in his beautiful wife and children. The end.

COCO

Nah-ah that's not how it ends!

JOHN

And they lived happily ever after.

This seems to satisfy Coco, who snuggles beneath the covers. John closes the book.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good night, sleepy head.

COCO

But I'm not sleepy yet...

John rubs his tired eyes, struggles to remain cheerful.

JOHN

Wanna hear another story?

Coco nods. John opens the book again.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(reading)

Once upon a time...

COCO

Tell me a real story, daddy. Like how you and mommy met.

A cloud passes over his face. He sets the book down, not knowing how to proceed.

JOHN
You heard us fighting again?

Coco nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. You shouldn't have to hear that.

COCO
It's been happening a lot lately.

JOHN
Yeah, I guess it has.

COCO
What do you fight about, daddy?

JOHN
Grown-up stuff, baby.

COCO
I'm a grown-up.

JOHN
You are, are you?

COCO
I have big muscles, look.

She flexes her biceps.

JOHN
Yes, you do.

COCO
So you can tell me.

JOHN
Well, your mother isn't gaining weight like she's supposed to. And she started smoking cigarettes again. She shouldn't do that, if anyone knows that it's Hannah. She's a freakin' nurse for Godsakes.

(catches himself)
Excuse my language, sweetheart. But your mother's got a hard head. She's always gotta do things her own way. That's how it's always been. It's never gonna change...

COCO

I was wrong, then. I thought you guys were fighting about a name. You know, for my new brother. Mom's still gonna have a boy, right?

John smiles at his daughter's innocence, nods.

COCO (CONT'D)

Have you thought of one? A name I mean.

JOHN

Not as of yet, no.

COCO

Well maybe if you quit arguing and started cooperating, you could.

JOHN

Yeah, well we still have a few weeks until the due date.

COCO

(singing)
Father, father, father help us send some guidance from above. 'Cause people got me questioning, Where is the love the love the love?

JOHN

Okay, we'll work on it.

COCO

Promise?

JOHN

Promise.

COCO

Can I suggest a name?

(John nods)

What about Day, like in the story of Sleeping Beauty?

JOHN

Day? Day? What kinda name is Day? You want your little brother to get teased all his life? Because if we name him Day, that's for sure what's gonna happen.

COCO

Day as in short for David, then. How's that?

JOHN
HMMMMM... I like David. David's
good.

COCO
David it is.

John kisses his daughter and rises to leave.

COCO (CONT'D)
Wait. Where's Scruffy?

JOHN
Scruffy the bear? I dunno. Where'd
you leave him?

COCO
I'm not sure, but I can't sleep
without Scruffy.

JOHN
I'll check downstairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John searches for his daughter's stuffed animal, looks in obvious places, behind the couch, in the closet, beneath the cushions, etc.

As a last resort he rummages through his wife's desk, finds a letter in a business envelope addressed to him. It reads: "Dear John." He opens the letter. As he reads, his expression goes from confusion to anger to outrage.

INT. HALL CLOSET

John opens the closet door, squats in front of a portable safe, enters the combination, opens the safe. Inside is a bottle of bourbon. John grabs the bottle, unscrews the top, puts it to his mouth, but does not drink. Something else inside the safe catches his eye. He reaches inside and comes out with a revolver. He sets the bourbon down.

INT. LIVING ROOM

John stands at the desk, the phone cradled in his neck. He holds the letter in one hand and the revolver in the other.

JOHN
(on phone)
Yeah, mom? It's John.
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Your son-in-law, John! I need you to come over for a bit. Yes, right now. No, it can't wait until tomorrow. It's kind of an emergency. No, Hannah's not in labor. It's another kind of emergency. You'll find out when you get here.

John hangs up the phone, looks up in the direction of the bedroom, exhales, starts to climb the stairs.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John enters the bedroom to find his very pregnant wife, Hannah, asleep in bed. He moves toward her. Tears in his eyes. He stands over the bed, puts the gun to his head, but doesn't pull the trigger. Killing himself would be letting her off too easily. He points the gun at her, hesitates, puts a pillow over her face. Pauses, remembering something.

INT. COCO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Back in his daughter's bedroom, John places Coco's stuffed animal in her arms, kisses her forehead and looks at her as if for the last time.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John returns to the bedroom, but Hannah is now awake and watching TV. She looks at him darkly.

HANNAH

(re: his bloodshot eyes)
Whatsamatter with you? You been drinking?

John shakes his head, holds up the "Dear John" letter.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I didn't mean for you to see that until after the baby was born, but it is what it is I guess.

JOHN

Who is he, Hannah? I wanna know who you're leaving me for. Is it your boss. What's his face, Dr. Broxton? Smug son of a bitch, with that shit-eating grin. I hated that fucker the minute--

HANNAH
(over him)
It's not Dr. Broxton.

JOHN
Then who?

Hannah just stares at him, giving nothing away.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Answer me!

He whips out the gun and points it at his wife.

HANNAH
(laughs)
You wouldn't dare. Not when I'm
carrying your child.

JOHN
What makes you think I believe you
when you say it's mine? Coco's not
my daughter, and don't try and
argue with me. She looks nothing
like me, or you. Her daddy was
probably some spic or nigger.

HANNAH
You know we had an open
relationship back then. Besides, we
were broken up that week.

JOHN
So you're admitting it! And all
these years, I went on pretending,
living a goddamn lie. And for what,
so you could go off and do it
again. I won't have it. Not this
time.

He pulls back the revolver's hammer.

HANNAH
Jonathan Christopher, I swear to
you that the baby in my belly
sprung from your godforsaken loins.
'Course that doesn't mean you'll
see much of him when he's born. I'm
headed north, me and...

JOHN
Go on. Say the name. I dare you. I
mean, I order you! Tell me who
you're leaving me for.

HANNAH

(shakes her head)

I've already discussed it with a lawyer. You may be able to obtain visitation rights, if you can come up with child support. Fat chance, since you don't even have a job!

JOHN

That's because I'm a goddamn Mr. Mom! If it wasn't for me, there'd be no groceries. I do all the shopping, the cleaning, I take Coco wherever she needs to go. And for what, so you can leave me for some...

Hannah starts laughing uncontrollably.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I've had about enough lip from you for a lifetime!

He trains the gun on Hannah, who continues laughing. Then, BAM! And Hannah shrieks in pain. John looks at the gun, which didn't fire. His eyes move around the room. He goes to the door, opens it, hears the voice of his mother-in-law coming from downstairs.

ROBERTA (O.S.)

You need to get this damned door fixed. Always slamming on me!

John turns back to Hannah, who is shrieking in agony.

JOHN

What're you cryin' for? I haven't even shot you yet!

HANNAH

Call the doctor! I think my water broke!

JOHN

Shit!

He stuffs the revolver in his pocket and moves to the phone. Hannah's mother, Roberta (late 60s), enters at this moment.

ROBERTA

What's all this commotion about?

JOHN

Hannah's in labor!

ROBERTA

You told me on the phone she
wasn't!

JOHN

I lied! Now help me get her to the
car.

ROBERTA

We're gonna have a baby!

Coco peeks her head in the door.

COCO

Can I come?

ROBERTA

Course you can, sweetheart. He's
your baby brother after all. Go
fetch your mother's purse. Let's
move!

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

John sits outside Hannah's hospital room with Roberta, who
holds the sleeping Coco. A doctor approaches them and
addresses John.

DOCTOR

Your wife is indeed in labor. There
are certain very real risks to
preterm deliveries, for the mother
and for the child.

JOHN

I already had that conversation
with her. I told her she shouldn't
smoke.

DOCTOR

Yes, well, what's done is done.
We'll keep a close eye on her.

JOHN

How long do you think till the
baby's born?

DOCTOR

She requested an epidural, which
delays the progression of labor, so
you should be prepared to wait all
night.

The doctor's pager sounds.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
I'll check back with you folks in a
little while.

The doctor moves off. Roberta watches John, who stares
absently at his hands.

ROBERTA
You doin' okay?

JOHN
I'll be fine. I just need some
fresh air. You mind keeping an eye
on my baby girl?

Roberta nods. John strokes Coco's head and starts to move
off.

ROBERTA
Johnny, you've been a real good
father. And husband. I know my
daughter's not the easiest gal to
get on with. She's feisty as all
hell. But you've done right by her.

JOHN
(nods)
Take real good care of 'em while
I'm gone.

Roberta's look suggests she doesn't fully understand what
John means by this remark. He walks off. Roberta watches him
go.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

John exits the hospital, spots a bar across the street.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

He enters the bar and approaches the bartender.

JOHN
Pack of smokes?

BARTENDER
We don't sell 'em. There's a
convenience store around the
corner.

John scans the collection of spirits behind the bar.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Something to wet your whistle?

JOHN
I'm on the wagon.

BARTENDER
Shirley Temple then, or maybe some
chocolate milk?
(laughs)

John grunts and turns to leave, but finds his exit is barred by Sergio, a prim Latin man in his mid 30s. He holds up a cigarette and flashes a friendly smile.

EXT. BAR

John and Sergio smoke side by side. John doesn't look like he appreciates the company.

SERGIO
You come here much? I mean I never
seen you before.

JOHN
You just answered your own
question.

SERGIO
Excuse me for making conversation.

JOHN
I don't go in much for small talk.

SERGIO
You look like you could use a
drink.

JOHN
Like I said--

SERGIO
You're on the wagon. I heard you.
You wanna hear my theory about
alcoholism? How about we go inside,
and I'll tell you all about it -
over drinks.

JOHN
You're pretty persistent, aren't
you.

SERGIO
Come on, just one.

JOHN
Okay, but I'm letting you know on
the front end I ain't that way.

SERGIO
(innocent)
What way?

JOHN
I ain't no fairy. No foolin'
around.

SERGIO
Just a friendly drink. No foolin'
around.

They stub out their cigarettes and re-enter the bar.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

They are now seated at a booth near the bar's entrance,
drinks before them, and are in the middle of a conversation.

SERGIO
I mean I understand. You don't need
to preach to the choir.

John slugs back his double bourbon. Sergio gestures to the
bartender to bring them another round.

JOHN
Six years of my life. Seven almost.

SERGIO
The seven year itch. That's how
long I was married.

JOHN
I thought gay marriage was banned
in California.

SERGIO
I wasn't always gay. I mean I was,
but my wife didn't know it.

JOHN
You had a wife?

SERGIO

I did, for seven years. Like you. And all that time I tried to convince myself I was straight. Mostly to please my parents, the Church, my homophobic brother. One day I decided it was time to stop pretending and just be myself. What a load off my shoulders. It was like I had been walking around in a Halloween costume, a giant ape suit. And I don't even like Halloween!

JOHN

You two still speak?

SERGIO

Me and my ex? Sure we're still friends. She kinda knew even before I told her. I mean she had her suspicions when her underwear went missing all the time.

(laughs)

We didn't have any children, which made the whole thing easier.

JOHN

I'm from the Midwest. Not many fairies back in Wisconsin, at least not many admit it.

SERGIO

West Hollywood is a far cry from Wisconsin.

JOHN

Ain't it ever.

SERGIO

But I still can't understand why you'd ignore it, just sweep it under the rug. I mean her two-timing on you. And for all those years?

JOHN

The lies that people live with I guess...

SERGIO

You musta seen it coming then, her leaving you for...who is it, the same guy as fathered your girl?

John shrugs and gulps his drink.

JOHN

I'm tired of talking about it.

SERGIO

Want my two cents? Just listen. We were not meant to mate for life. Take otters for instance. The furry animal that swims? The males of the species have nothing to do with their progeny. It's the mother's work. I know this because I happen to be a sociologist with articles published in National Geographic.

John holds his drink up impressed, then puts it to his lips and realizes it is empty. Sergio orders him another.

SERGIO (CONT'D)

(continuing)

And sometimes no father is better than just any.

JOHN

Hey, I was a damn good dad!

SERGIO

I'm talking about my father, Humberto. Absent most of the time, abusive when he was around.

JOHN

I see where this is going. You think the world would be better off if everyone was gay.

SERGIO

There would be less war, with population control built-in.

JOHN

Fine, but I still wonder how a dude could be attracted to another dude.

SERGIO

You'll never know unless you try.

JOHN

There are a lot of things I haven't tried that I know in advance I wouldn't appreciate. Frog legs, for instance. A root canal.

SERGIO

Some scholars would take the fact of you're not being successful at heterosexual love as evidence of latent homosexuality. I'm just saying...

John shakes his head and downs his drink, then grabs Sergio's drink.

SERGIO (CONT'D)

You'll never know unless you try.

JOHN

Then I'll never know. But answer me this. How can you be attracted to hairy balls and stubbly whiskers? You already have 'em, would if you didn't shave or wax or whatever.

SERGIO

Not me, senor. I'm naturally hairless.

JOHN

Opposites attract, do they not. Yin and yang. The whole polarity thing. I can understand the whole kindred spirit, like minded thing. Hell, I get along better with guys than gals, but it doesn't mean I wanna go stick my pecker...

(burps)

Maybe it's how I was raised. Did I tell you I was from Wisconsin?

SERGIO

It's a lifestyle choice at least as much as it is about sexual preference. Gays have more fun, unlike you straight people.

JOHN

Now don't go casting aspersions...

SERGIO

Just look at the mess you made of your life, and all because of a woman. Gays have it good. There is always a party around the corner. The relationships are disposable, no strings.

(MORE)

SERGIO (CONT'D)

We're well-groomed, generally of above average intelligence and respected members of the community, with higher median incomes, not to mention a smaller waist to hip ratio. And a gay man never grows old. That's because we are always searching for true love. Hopeful romantics. Who cares if true love is a myth. The search... It's like we've found the fountain of youth. Besides, why be tied down to one woman when you can run free?

JOHN

You're saying gay men don't commit?

SERGIO

Sure they do, but they stray. It's in the male DNA. It's in the interest of fitness to have as many partners as you can if you're a man. That's simple biology.

JOHN

That's if you plan to make babies. When guys get with guys, the point is mute.

(hiccup)

I mean moot.

SERGIO

That's true.

JOHN

And STDs.

SERGIO

You can only get an STD if you have sex. I haven't, not since my wife and I divorced, if you could even call that sex. But if I wanted me some, there is a boy on every street corner ready for the takin', and after the deed is done, we go our separate ways, no strings.

JOHN

I got that the first time.

SERGIO

You just look like you need a friend. I'm just trying to be your friend.

JOHN
 I'm not asking for that kinda
 friend.
 (standing)
 Thanks for the libations. I need to
 piss.

The bartender looks up.

BARTENDER
 Toilet's busted. You'll have to use
 the burger joint across the street.

JOHN
 Dammit, man. My teeth are floatin'.

SERGIO
 We could go to my place. The toilet
 is clean and the drinks are free.

JOHN
 Okay, but like I said no funny
 stuff.

SERGIO
 As if!

Sergio slaps money down on the table and they exit.

INT. SERGIO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A comfortable looking studio apartment. John exits the bathroom. Sergio appears and hands him a drink. They cheers. John wanders around the room a bit before sinking into a papasan while Sergio produces a bag of cocaine and proceeds to prepare them some lines. John spots a guitar lying in the corner. He sets the drink down and picks up the guitar. As he strums the cords, tunes it:

JOHN
 Lovely instrument you got here.

SERGIO
 That I intend to be a gift for my
 niece, Gabby. If my homophobic
 brother will ever let me see her.
 Do you play?

John shakes his hand as if to say a little.

JOHN
 Truth is, I used to want to be a
 musician. I mean I was.
 (MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I had my own band. We called ourselves the Winos. Those were good times. Then I met Hannah and things got all twisted.

SERGIO

Well it's never too late to make it right.

John nods, then after a few cords plays Bad Company's "Shooting Star."

JOHN

(singing)

Johnny was a school boy when he heard his first Beatles song. Love Me Do, I think it was, and from there it didn't take him long. Got himself a guitar, used to play every night. Now he's in a rock 'n' roll outfit and everything's alright. Don't you know?

The song is a classic, and John does it justice, pouring his soul into it.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Johnny told his Mama, "Hey, Mama, I'm goin' away. I'm gonna hit the big time, gonna be a big star someday." Mama came to the door with a teardrop in her eye. Johnny said, "Don't cry, Mama, just smile and wave goodbye." Don't you know? Johnny made a record went straight up to number one. Suddenly everyone loved to hear him sing his song. Watchin' the world go by, surprisin' it goes so fast. Johnny looked around him and said, "Well, I made the big-time at last." Don't you know?

He plays more softly now, the song becoming a haunting anthem to forsaken dreams and desperation.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Johnny died one night, died in his bed. Bottle of whiskey, sleeping tablets by his head. Johnny's wife passed him by like a warm summer day. If you listen to the wind you can still hear him play. Don't you know?

Sergio, who also sings quite nicely, joins in for the chorus.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 (with Sergio)
 Don't you know that you are a
 shooting star, don't you know?
 Don't you know that you are a
 shooting star? Don't you don't you
 don't you don't you don't you know?
 Don't you know that you are a
 shooting star?

And more slowly now:

JOHN (CONT'D)
 And all the world will love you as
 long, as long as you are!

John finishes the song with a flourish. Sergio claps.

SERGIO
 That was the most beautiful
 rendition I have ever heard. I'm
 serious. Better than the original.
 Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll fix
 us another round before I go and
 fall in love.

Sergio disappears around the corner.

INT. KITCHEN

As he fixes the drinks:

SERGIO
 Where did you learn to play like
 that?

No answer.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Sergio returns to the living room to find John has fallen asleep, cradling the guitar in his lap. Sergio sets the drinks down, snorts the lines of cocaine himself, and approaches John.

LATER

Music playing. John still asleep on the couch. We can see the top of Sergio's head bobbing up and down in John's lap. John awakens, looks down at what Sergio is doing.

When it registers that he is getting a blow job, John kicks Sergio off him, gets up and buttons his jeans.

JOHN

Sa matter with you, huh? I told you
I-ain't-no-fairy!

He adds a couple extra kicks to the ribs for good measure, then moves to the door taking the guitar with him as he exits.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

John walking aimlessly on Sunset Blvd, baseball hat pulled low on his head. He passes an alley and sees a woman (long hair, form-fitting dress) being manhandled by a large man.

John pulls the man off the woman. The man turns to him, whips out a knife. The light of the street lamp catches the glint of the metal.

ASSAILANT

Keep walkin' and mind your own damn
business.

John pulls out his revolver and trains it on the man. The man spits, turns, and runs away.

Meanwhile the woman (Francis) has been gathering herself, righting her dress, hair, etc.

FRANCIS

How can I ever thank you!

John turns to her. The light reveals his face.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Johnny? It's me, Francis.

Francis takes off the blonde wig, revealing that she is actually a he.

JOHN

Francis! The hell are you doing
here?

FRANCIS

Working, if you didn't notice.

JOHN

Hooking?

FRANCIS
Life ain't cheap, even on the
streets.

JOHN
(backs away)
Whoa, whatever you're into is fine,
but I gotta go.

FRANCIS
Wait. How's my sister? How's
Hannah?

JOHN
Hannah's having a baby.

FRANCIS
So what are you doing?

JOHN
It's a long story. Still searching
for that happy ending.

FRANCIS
You won't find it here with me.
Come on, you can tell me all about
it on the way to the hospital.

Francis takes John's hand. John lets himself be led down the street, throwing the gun in the dumpster as he goes. As we follow them down the alley, Francis slings his hand through John's arm:

JOHN
Coco won't recognize her Uncle
Francis, not in that get-up.

FRANCIS
You think I should change? I'll
change.

INT. UCLA LECTURE HALL - DAY

A smattering of college students listens to Professor Virgil Hume (70s) give his lecture.

HUME
Only in death, the final release,
can we ever hope to attain pure
knowledge.

(MORE)

HUME (CONT'D)

This freeing or separation of soul from body, which Plato believed only possible in death, is the philosopher's occupation. Therefore the philosopher is not afraid of death. Perhaps he can be said even to welcome it.

In the audience, a student yawns. Undaunted, Hume continues:

HUME (CONT'D)

It is not possible to have pure knowledge of anything so long as we are embodied, but, paradoxically, it is through the body that the process begins. I am speaking here about the Ladder of Love, or the Platonic Ideal, which involves his Theory of Forms. To be skilled in erotics...oh, but I trust that despite its being March Madness and UCLA having reached the Final Four you have read the assigned material, so I need not belabor it...

Chuckles from the students. The success of his unintentional joke enlivens the professor.

HUME (CONT'D)

Not that you have learned anything new, for if you have kept up with the material, you'll know that we cannot be said to learn anything at all, but only to remember what we already know. Of central importance in the Platonic universe was the concept of anamnesis, or the end of amnesia. A remembering of who we are, why we came--

The bell rings. Hume continues droning on as the students head for the exit.

INT. PROFESSOR HUME'S OFFICE - DAY

Hume is in the process of clearing out his desk. He goes through awards, certificates, pictures of his family, dropping them into a cardboard box. The mood is somber, funereal. The end of a distinguished academic career which has long been on life support. He shares the office with another (much younger) man, who moves into the space as he clears out.

HUME

(more to himself)

Fifty years of teaching at this institution of higher learning. You know I was once department chair. Before I was relegated to survey courses. Before they gently but firmly requested my resignation from the department. Their justification? My approach is no longer relevant. Imagine insisting students actually read textbooks and attend lectures, rather than just download slides. They blamed the decreasing popularity of philosophy on me. But it is a generational trend. Students are more interested in practical matters, computer science, electrical engineering. Perhaps it would have been better had I become a technician, like my father, working with my hands, producing something of use, rather than merely parroting the philosophies of historical men, without adding one original thought of my own! And even had I, they'd be just words. Hypocrisy! My personal life being what it is, which is to say in shambles--

He looks over at the other man and realizes that the man has earphones on and hasn't heard a word. Feeling his eyes on him, the man turns to Hume, takes out one earphone, says:

YOUNG MAN

I'm going to hit the head and maybe grab some coffee. You want anything?

Hume shakes his head, no. The young man waves goodbye and leaves.

Hume returns to his business of packing. From a bottom drawer he pulls out a pearl-handled revolver. From the way he regards it we gather he is surprised to see it there.

He continues talking as though the other man were still in the room:

HUME

I bought this at a pawn shop when I was fifteen.

(MORE)

HUME (CONT'D)

It cost me an entire year's allowance. I purchased it not as a gun collector or aficionado. At the time I had no intention of using it, and have never pulled the trigger. I bought it simply on account of its beauty, and it is a sight to behold.

He holds it up to the light, admires its fine lines, runs his fingers over the glistening steel. He checks the chamber: three bullets. He clicks the chamber back into place, spins the chamber and slowly, even nonchalantly, puts the gun to his head.

At that moment, the door opens. Hume returns the gun to its place in the drawer as Jimmy Donovan, one of his students, appears. He is slightly out of breath.

DONOVAN

Professor, am I too late?

HUME

Office hours ended twenty minutes ago. I was just leaving.

Jimmy's shoulders slouch. Hume takes pity.

HUME (CONT'D)

But do come in. What can I do for you?

Jimmy seats himself. We remember him from the front row of Hume's lecture. Now we get a good look at his features. Chiseled jaw. Bright blue eyes. Angular nose. Clear complexion like porcelain, broad shoulders, silken hair, easy confidence. A perfect physical specimen.

DONOVAN

Let me just say how much I enjoyed your class.

HUME

You are in a minority of one.

DONOVAN

It rocked my world. Revolutionary.

HUME

(half joking)

If you mean to boost your final grade, you'll have to flatter the TAs. They handle those matters.

DONOVAN

I mean it. I know I sound like a crazed teenage groupie fan or something, but I never expected to get so much out of a survey course. I sure didn't get anything the first time around.

HUME

You're retaking my course?

DONOVAN

In a sense, but you weren't the lecturer. It was that other prof, Davies I think. Really dry sort. Totally out of touch. You wouldn't think that, seeing how he was so much younger. Not to say you're old or anything, but you know.

HUME

Yes, well I'm happy I made an impact.

Hume looks down at the revolver in his drawer, closes the drawer and returns his attention to Jimmy.

HUME (CONT'D)

Have you any questions regarding the final?

DONOVAN

Just a couple. First, the Ladder of Love. Lemme see if I got this. Begin while young by gravitating to beautiful bodies, and choose one person in particular with whom to "generate beautiful speeches." Which I take to mean discuss spiritual stuff. Am I good so far?

(Hume nods)

Then you gotta realize that the beauty in one person is kinda the same as the beauty found in everyone else. This is the so-called form of the beautiful, with all beautiful things participating. And if all beauty is in essence the same, the lover, well, he loves everybody, for the beauty they possess.

HUME

Yes, but the beauty in souls is of a higher form than physical beauty, so that even if someone has only a slight youthful charm, the lover must be content with it, and love and cherish him.

DONOVAN

By someone you mean one boy.

HUME

Pardon?

DONOVAN

To love. Plato specifically mentions love of young men.

HUME

You see the Greeks believed in pederasty, or sexual relations between older men and...the younger generation.

The two men stare at one another a long moment.

HUME (CONT'D)

The Ladder of Love, which you've summed up quite nicely.

DONOVAN

What happens next? I mean, I haven't read that far.

HUME

I don't wish to spoil it for you.

DONOVAN

I'll read it either way.

HUME

Only when one gets to glimpse the beautiful itself will one become immortal. Or should I say partake of the immortality which one already is. At least that's what Plato believed.

(more to himself)

Although in the East, the concept is somewhat different. We are God, and the trick is to realize it, not in the spirit realm, but while we're in the body, which is life's true...

(MORE)

HUME (CONT'D)

(catches himself rambling)
I'm sorry, you had another
question? You mentioned two.

DONOVAN

Yeah. Yes I do. I'm not clear on
what amanen--

HUME

Anamnesis.

DONOVAN

Thank you. I'm not clear on what
anamnesis means. When you say we
forgot why we came, to Earth I
mean, as humans...

HUME

The purpose of life is love. To
know beauty, or God, the Self, call
it what you will, through love.
That gets lost amidst worthless
trinkets and petty disappointments
and quarrels and imagined slights,
but that's it.

DONOVAN

Love. (laughs) So simple it's
almost cliche.

HUME

(continuing)
Of course, for many love is just a
word. Living it...that's the real
deal.

DONOVAN

Are you married?
(no reply)
I'm sorry. It's none of my
business.

HUME

It's all right. I'm divorced,
actually.

DONOVAN

Children?

HUME

One deceased. Two alive, estranged.
We don't speak. Haven't in...

(MORE)

HUME (CONT'D)

As you see I can spew a lot of rhetoric, my problem is practical application.

He picks up a framed picture of his family, gazes at it thoughtfully, and drops it into the box with the rest of his belongings. Then he brushes the now empty desk of imagined lint, and regards Donovan squarely.

HUME (CONT'D)

Is there anything else?

DONOVAN

Can I buy you a drink?

HUME

(checks watch)

It's not yet after five. I usually wait--

DONOVAN

I mean when I get off work. I dance at Euphoria. It's a club in Hollywood, on the corner of Sunset and Vine. Have you been there? Oh, why would you, it's a gay bar.

Hume studies Donovan for a moment.

HUME

I know the area. I used to live not two blocks from the intersection.

DONOVAN

Say around ten? If that's not too late...

HUME

I'm afraid I'm not much of a night prowler.

DONOVAN

I promise it'll be fun. Be spontaneous. Like the Greeks with their drinking parties.

HUME

The Greeks endorsed many things that I have never explored.

DONOVAN

It's never too late. I hope you can make it.

Jimmy leaves. Hume watches him go. His expression doesn't look so bleak any more. He removes the gun from his desk and places it in his coat pocket, stands, takes the cardboard box, and leaves the office without a look back, turning off the lights as he goes.

INT. HUME'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A drab one-bedroom. Sparsely furnished. Hume hasn't lived here long.

Hume stands in front of the bureau mirror, getting ready. He is conservatively dressed in a checkered V-neck sweater over a corduroy jacket, wool gabardine trousers, bowler hat. He bends closer to analyze himself in the mirror, and under the harsh light sees wrinkles, liver spots, stray hairs. He frowns at his reflection.

He takes out a pair of miniature scissors, begins trimming his nose hairs, then begins trimming his beard.

Next he takes out a pair of electric clippers and shapes a goatee, then removes the lower half to reveal a mustache. He wipes the stray hairs away, then looks at his collar, from which chest hairs sprout.

He takes off his shirt and takes the clippers to his chest.

Now he stands in front of the mirror clean shaven, no tie, no hat, slicked hair, V-neck over bare chest, and a gold chain over the V-neck. He squints at himself, strikes a jaunty pose, tugs on his jowls, sticks in his belly.

He looks at the clock. It's just after 8. Thinks...

Now he is seated in front of the wall clock reading a weighty academic tome and smoking a pipe, but having difficulty concentrating. He puts the book down, takes up a snifter of brandy, takes a sip, winces it back.

Next he goes to the stereo, puts on an opera (Wagner's *Parsifal*), but the music doesn't seem right, turns to a channel playing some hip dance music, stands in the middle of the room and starts to move to the music, just a shake or two of the hips, feels silly, turns off the music, takes his coat and leaves.

INT. CLUB EUPHORIA - NIGHT

The place is wild and flamboyant. Strobe lights. Thumping music. Scantly clad men strut their stuff.

Hume enters and navigates the throng to arrive at the bar. He sits and orders a cognac. His drink arrives, he takes a sip and turns to the stage to see:

JIMMY

who comes on the stage to much hoopla, and now he's dancing on stage, or perhaps elevated in a rotating cage. The effect is rather stunning. He is wearing hardly anything at all. Skimpy briefs, and some glitter or body paint. The song that plays is Donna Summer's "Last Dance."

DONNA SUMMER

(singing)

Last dance, last chance, for love.
Yes, it's my last chance, for
romance, tonight...

Hume can't take his eyes off Jimmy, who seems to dance just for the professor. In Hume's eyes is reflected all the burning desire of his bygone youth, all the passion precluded by a life devoted to the mind.

DONNA SUMMER (CONT'D)

Yeah, will you be my Mr. Right? Can
you fill my appetite? I can't be
sure that you're the one for me.
But all that I ask is that you
dance with me. Dance with me, dance
with me, yeah!

Jimmy finishes his dance, picks up his tips, and leaves the stage to roars of applause. Hume turns back to the bartender and holds up his empty glass for a refill.

LATER

The place is a bit calmer now, music lower, thinned out.

Jimmy, now in street clothes (jeans, t-shirt, bomber jacket), appears beside Hume, sets his bag down on the bar.

DONOVAN

Hey you! Love your new look! Very
stylish!

Hume seems embarrassed by the attention.

HUME

Can I get you a drink?

DONOVAN

What are you having?

HUME
 Courvoisier. It's a type of brandy.

DONOVAN
 Thanks, but I don't drink hard
 liquor. Except tequila. And anyway,
 I told you I was buying.

He gestures to the bartender who comes over with two shots of
 tequila. Jimmy takes one and hands the other to Hume.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)
 Ready one, two, three!

And the two men drain their shots.

HUME
 (trying to seem with it)
 I was very impressed by your moves.

DONOVAN
 Oh that. It's my routine. I've done
 it so many times I could do it in
 my sleep.

HUME
 Nevertheless it was new to me.

DONOVAN
 You're very charming.

Another dancer enters the stage and the music comes on real
 loud.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)
 Whaddya say we get out of here?

HUME
 Huh?

DONOVAN
 (louder)
 Go somewhere we can talk?

Hume cups his hand around his ear. Jimmy gives up, smiles his
 thank you for the drinks to the bartender and leads Hume
 towards the exit.

INT. HUME'S CAR - NIGHT

Hume driving. Jimmy in the passenger seat.

HUME

You'll have to forgive me. I'm rather out of my element. Where should we go?

DONOVAN

My place. I don't have a car, and I'll need to get there sooner or later. Usually Brandon gives me a lift home. Brandon is the bartender, but he's not off for another hour. Take a left at the light and then a quick right.

Hume pulls to a stop in front of Jimmy's apartment, kills the engine. Jimmy attempts to open the passenger side door but it won't budge.

HUME

You need to... Here let me.

Hume leans over and unlocks Jimmy's door for him.

HUME (CONT'D)

Sometimes it sticks.

They are face to face, looking one another in the eyes. Suddenly Hume kisses Jimmy on the mouth. Jimmy doesn't resist, but he doesn't reciprocate either. He just sort of accepts it until Hume pulls away. When Hume does pull away, he pushes his spectacles up the bridge of his nose, and looks down abashedly. He takes his glasses off and wipes the lenses, which have become fogged over.

HUME (CONT'D)

I don't know what came over me.

He is looking for feedback or encouragement from Jimmy who gives away nothing.

HUME (CONT'D)

I apologize.

DONOVAN

There's no need for that.

HUME

(hopeful)

You mean you didn't mind?

DONOVAN

Not at all. Nothing wrong with male-male displays of affection. Make love not war is what I say.

(MORE)

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

(sniffs)

I'm confident enough in my sexuality.

(off Hume's look)

You didn't think I was...(gets it)...oh shit, I mean, I can see why you'd have that impression, with me shaking my ass for a bunch of...I'm really sorry for misleading you. But I thought, married and with three kids...

HUME

Two kids, and divorced.

DONOVAN

I'm sorry. I just...I'm putting myself through school and dancing beats the hell out of waiting tables or tending bar. Hell in one night alone I can earn a month's rent. And the guys are gentlemen, most of 'em.

HUME

So you're not a homosexual?

DONOVAN

Who me? God, no. I have a girlfriend. 'Course, she doesn't know it yet. Won't even return any of my calls... But we had one helluva first date.

HUME

I'm sorry for the misunderstanding. I am rather shit-faced.

(laughs)

I haven't used that excuse since high school, and always with a member of the opposite sex, I assure you.

He waits for Jimmy to say something. Jimmy says nothing. Hume goes on:

HUME (CONT'D)

Perhaps I'm just trying to start over, and I think my first move may have been a false start.

DONOVAN

Hey at least your mojo is still in motion.

HUME

It's not the appetite that fades,
my young friend, only the
wherewithal.

DONOVAN

Speaking of appetites, I'm kinda
hungry. Dancing one helluva calorie
burn. You wanna grab a bite?
There's a sandwich place just
around the corner. I'm buying if
you don't mind driving?

HUME

With pleasure.
(quietly)
After all you saved my life.

EXT. OUTDOOR SHOPPING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Hume's car pulls into a space in the outdoor parking lot. The
two men exit and head over to the eateries.

DONOVAN

You feel like a foot long, or are
you a six-inch kinda guy?

HUME

(laughs)
Actually, I'm more of a milkshake
man myself.

He gestures to the burger joint.

DONOVAN

I'd join you, but I'm a vegetarian.

HUME

Hmmm, like Einstein, Schopenhauer,
and...

DONOVAN

And Hitler. Go figure.

A beat as Hume searches for words.

HUME

I think I see it now. All these
years, I was going about it all
wrong. Basing my whole life on
Western philosophy. Bunch of
pederasts.

(they share a smile)
(MORE)

HUME (CONT'D)
 Looking for the truth up here...
 (points to his brain)
 ...when all the while it's waiting
 for me here...
 (points to heart)

DONOVAN
 What? What is waiting for you?

HUME
 This. Look around you. All this.
 It's all so beautiful. It's as
 if...
 (catches himself)
 Would you look at me? I'm lecturing
 again. Old habits die hard, I
 guess.

Hume holds out his hand.

HUME (CONT'D)
 Thank you for tonight's lesson.
 It's been...quite real.

The two men shake hands and go their separate ways.

INT. SUBWAY SANDWICHES - NIGHT

Jimmy enters and goes to the counter. He surveys the place,
 which is practically empty, sees:

DONOVAN
 Sophie!

She goes up to him. They embrace.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)
 I been calling you like a million
 times.

SOPHIE
 And I've been looking for you all
 day.

They kiss. Then, shots are fired, BANG BANG BANG!

INT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT

Hume enters the Burger Joint, sees a long line of customers
 waiting to place their orders. Frustrated, he heads to the
 bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Inside Francis and John are at the mirror, Francis is dressed in men's clothes and has just finished removing his make-up. They turn to face Hume as he enters.

 JOHN
Dad?

 FRANCIS
Dad!

 HUME
Sons!

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Dr. Amelia Solis (40) in her white coat sits at her desk talking on the phone in a sea of other white coats.

Behind her a group of doctors and nurses appears. The nurse in front, whom we recognize as the very pregnant Hannah, holds a cake with flickering candles.

Solis notices the silence around her and turns and on cue the group yells: Surprise!

She hangs up the phone.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

She sits at a table with her colleagues. And blows out the candles.

 OLDER COLLEAGUE
We're really gonna miss you around here.

 NURSE
And Hannah?

 SOLIS
(off colleague's confused look)
I'll be stealing Hannah away from you, taking her with me to start my new practice in Marin.

 OLDER COLLEAGUE
Well we should have bought two cakes then.

HANNAH

It's okay...
 (reaches over, takes a
 bite of Solis' cake)
 ...I'll have the rest of hers.

SOLIS

I'm watching my weight.

HANNAH

And I'm eating for two.

The other doctors laugh.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Just outside a patient's examination room, Dr. Solis and Hannah arrive from opposite directions. Dr. Solis notices Hannah's pained expression.

SOLIS

You don't look too hot.

HANNAH

Maybe it was the cake.

SOLIS

I'm sure the fact that you're in
 your third trimester has something
 to do with it.

HANNAH

Benefits don't kick in for another
 two weeks. You're stuck with me.

SOLIS

For more than two weeks I hope.
 Look, go home, get some rest, I'll
 put a call into insurance.

Hannah melts with gratitude, turns to go.

SOLIS (CONT'D)

Oh, and...have you said anything to
 your husband?

Hannah gives an innocent shake of her head, no.

SOLIS (CONT'D)

I'm having the place redone. There
 will be a special room for the
 baby. Don't you think you ought to
 tell him?

HANNAH

I wanted to wait till after the baby is born. I can't deal with the stress. John has such a violent temper.

SOLIS

Yeah so does Gerry. Okay. Well call me if you need anything. On my cell.

(beat)

You don't think we are jumping in too fast, do you?

(before Hannah can reply)

Oh and if you can get away this weekend I'd like for you to meet my daughter.

To silence her more than anything, Hannah leans forward and plants a kiss - on Solis' lips.

HANNAH

Stop worrying so much.

She waves and moves off. Solis looks after her tenderly and starts to enter the exam room. But before she does she is wrangled in my another doctor, Dr. Broxton (30s, handsome and knows it).

BROXTON

Got a minute?

INT. RADIOLOGY ROOM - DAY

Broxton stands in front of a viewer with Solis. The room affords a view of the adjacent examination room, in which a waifish girl in her early 20s, Sophie, glumly sits.

BROXTON

(re: Sophie)

Twenty-four-year-old female, fainted at work. She had been suffering nausea, vomiting, and some dizziness on and off for the last week. Said it began after she took a swim at the beach.

SOLIS

Here in L.A.?

BROXTON

(nods)

Malibu I think.

SOLIS
Pregnant?

BROXTON
(shakes head)
But she is a type 2 diabetic.

SOLIS
So, poorly controlled diabetes
resulted in dehydration which
caused the syncopal episode. And?

Broxton flips a radiographic image onto the monitor. It's a
CT scan of Sophie's brain.

SOLIS (CONT'D)
My Lord. Is this...?

BROXTON
Florid infection of her auditory
canal extending into the occiput.

SOLIS
Malignant otitis.

BROXTON
(nods)
Histology confirms it.

SOLIS
Pseudomonas?

BROXTON
No. Staph. MRSA.

SOLIS
(ruefully)
Great... So it's resistant to broad
spectrum antibiotics, which I
assume you've started her on?

BROXTON
Correct. But it won't do any good.
The infection is walled off.

SOLIS
Abscess. Why's she in psych? She
needs a neurosurgeon.

BROXTON
The scans indicate the infection
has infiltrated the base of the
skull, and the parotid gland.
Surgery is not an option--

SOLIS
 (getting it)
 Because to obtain clear margins
 we'd damage adjacent structures.
 She have facial palsy?

BROXTON
 It's subtle, but there.

SOLIS
 And will likely soon be followed by
 paralysis of other cranial nerves.
 Soon she won't be able to talk,
 swallow, speak, or breathe.
 (beat)
 I'm assuming you didn't need me to
 tell you any of this.

BROXTON
 We've ordered a follow-up CT just
 to confirm.

SOLIS
 (getting it)
 So you want me to break it to her.
 (he nods)
 And on my last day. You know in
 Greece they kill the messenger.

BROXTON
 No problem then. She's French.

INT. EXAM ROOM - DAY

Dr. Solis goes in. Broxton makes to follow, but she stops
 him.

SOLIS
 Bad news is best delivered without
 an audience.

Broxton puts his hands up and backs off, understanding.

Solis enters, the door closing behind her.

MOMENTS LATER

Sophie exits, arms crossed, walks slowly away to the sign
 marked exit. Solis calls after her, but Sophie begins to run
 and bursts through the exit sign and is swallowed by sunlight
 as Solis watches her go.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Sophie walks around the block, keeping it together. Then, when she's out of sight of the hospital, she bursts into tears and crumples to the ground.

INT. SOLIS' OFFICE - LATER

Dr. Solis sits with Terrence Hayes ("Trench"). Trench has the surly teenager bit down to a science. He has his legs dangling jauntily over the couch as Solis writes in her chart. His antics would peeve other therapists but Solis remains unperturbed.

SOLIS

I'll have you know that other therapists would deem it necessary to alert your parole officer, but you're probably just trying to get a rise out of me so I see no reason to be concerned. Or should I be?

Trench cracks his gum in an exaggerated way, smiles.

SOLIS (CONT'D)

This will be our last session.

TRENCH

And just when we were getting all warm and fuzzy...

SOLIS

But I want you to begin taking Luvox, it's an antidepressant.

TRENCH

I'm already on Zoloft.

SOLIS

I'm aware. Stop taking Zoloft.

TRENCH

I read antidepressants can make you lose your shit.

SOLIS

Lose your shit? Let's see, that would describe the behavior that got you put on anti-depressants and state-mandated therapy sessions in the first place, lest we forget the petty theft, larceny and angry blog posts.

Trench holds up his hands. She got him.

SOLIS (CONT'D)
 But you're right, meds have side effects, which is why I'm putting you under the care of an experienced professional. Dr. Broxton will be assuming your care.

A nurse enters.

NURSE
 Your daughter is here to see you.

Solis hands Trench his script.

SOLIS
 (to nurse)
 Send her in.
 (to Trench)
 Take good care of yourself.

TRENCH
 I'm gonna miss you.

A beat as some genuine feeling is exchanged between these two. Trench exits. The door closes then reopens as Gabby enters.

GABBY
 Mama!

SOLIS
 Gabby. It's not often you visit me at work. To what do I owe the pleasure?

GABBY
 Just thought I'd give you some love.

She kisses her mother. Solis pulls out her wallet.

SOLIS
 You need any money?

GABBY
 Nah. For reals. Just dropping by to say I love you.

Gabby is snooping around Solis' desk, notices a framed picture of Hannah.

GABBY (CONT'D)
 (holding it up)
 Employee of the month?

Solis, caught, is embarrassed.

SOLIS
 Someone I'd like for you to meet,
 actually.

GABBY
 (getting it before her
 mother says it)
 You were talking lovey dovey to a
 GIRL! My mom's a lesbo!

Solis thinks about it for a second, decides to come clean.

SOLIS
 If you have to label, I prefer the
 term *experimenting*. We are both
 leaving adversarial heterosexual
 relationships and yearn for
 something different, something new.
 It may look like we're jumping in,
 but it feels right.

GABBY
 To her too?

SOLIS
 Hannah? She's not sure what she
 wants, but yes. Since the
 pregnancy, her sex drive has
 diminished - to the point of
 nonexistence, actually. Is she no
 longer attracted to her spouse, in
 which case it is a physical thing?
 Is she unhappy in the relationship
 to the point of depression, which
 would make it psychological?

GABBY
 Mom, stop the psychobabble.

SOLIS
 (not hearing her)
 Maybe she's not all that interested
 in sex. Tenderness, that's what I'm
 about. Besides, I need to get away,
 and it wouldn't be fair to uproot
 you. You're better with your
 father, and he needs the company.

(MORE)

SOLIS (CONT'D)

You're the only one who can tolerate the man, with his moods. I was not the most dotting mother to you, but that is just not my way.

GABBY

So you can have a second chance, with the nurse's baby?

SOLIS

It's not like that. But yes, I hope to be a stable figure to Hannah's son, and to her six-year-old daughter.

GABBY

Great, one big happy, fucked-up family.

SOLIS

Language, young lady. I'd like for you to meet her. When she's ready.

GABBY

What about when I'm ready? This is big news, my mother springing that she's a lesbo.

SOLIS

Labels, dear! Do you walk around telling everyone you're straight?

GABBY

I can't believe you came out to me in clinic.

SOLIS

In clinic is where I spend most of my time, so if we were playing the odds, this is where we'd put our money.

Broxton enters, carrying the follow-up CT scans. There is an urgency to his movements.

BROXTON

You need to see this.

SOLIS

(to Gabby)

To be continued.

GABBY

Like, tonight. Remember to pick me up. I'm off at midnight.

Solis nods absently and focuses her attention on Dr. Broxton.

BROXTON

We're in trouble.

He places the scan on the image viewer.

BROXTON (CONT'D)

It was artifact, either that or a miracle, but the infection is not as florid as the previous CT led us to believe.

SOLIS

Meaning we just let a girl loose on the streets thinking she had a day left to live. Did we call her?

BROXTON

Number's out of service.

SOLIS

Address?

Solis takes the chart from Broxton's hand, scans it for Sophie's address. She grabs her purse.

SOLIS (CONT'D)

Cover me.

BROXTON

Where are you going?

SOLIS

To clean up your mess!

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

A modest Hollywood apartment complex with a quaint courtyard. Solis approaches the door to Sophie's unit, sees the spinster landlady nailing an eviction notice to the door.

SOLIS

I'm looking for Ms. Paige.

LANDLADY

Join the party. Unless you wanna pay up her twenty-two hundred in arrears, I got nothing to say to you.

SOLIS

I'm a physician. I treated Sophie--

LANDLADY

I said, I got nothing to say. Don't wanna hear a sob story neither.

Solis walks away. As she approaches the street a tentant (female, 20s) approaches her.

WOMAN

You looking for Sophie?

SOLIS

Yes. It's very important I find her. Any information regarding her whereabouts would be greatly appreciated. I'm willing to pay you, not two grand, but...

She reaches in her white coat pocket, desperate.

WOMAN

I don't want your money. But she liked to visit the park down the road, when she was not at work, which lately was most of the time.

SOLIS

The park?

WOMAN

She liked to bird watch, or duck watch. Whatever. It's just down the road. You'll see it from the street.

SOLIS

(walking off)
Thank you.

WOMAN

Hey...is she okay?

SOLIS

I sure hope so.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Sophie at the lake, watching the ducks waddle. Two ducks, females, get into a tiff, and poke at each other savagely. This lasts a few seconds, then they swim off in opposite directions. Sophie continues to watch. After swimming a few circles the ducks approach one another and one duck preens and grooms the other. Friends again. All forgotten. Sophie smiles to herself and moves off.

We follow her to the sidewalk, where she turns left. Hold there for a moment and then...

Solis approaches from the other direction. Not seeing Sophie, she moves towards the lake a moment too late.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sophie walking aimlessly, stops at a bus stop bench, which reads: *Practice Random Acts of Kindness*. Thinks: not a bad way to spend one's last day.

INT. BUS - DAY

Sophie climbs aboard. Behind her is an elderly lady struggling with her walker. Sophie helps her up and into the bus, pays the lady's fare.

LATER

Sophie talking with the old woman on the bus.

SOPHIE

They told me that by sundown I
wouldn't even be able to walk.

OLD WOMAN

You poor thing. You'll be like me!

SOPHIE

(to herself)

I won't be alive to see another
sunrise.

(beat)

Don't worry, they told me I'm not
contagious.

OLD WOMAN

Aren't you sad?

SOPHIE

I don't know why I'm not devastated. I guess it's because the news is somehow freeing. I have an end date. We all do, but I know mine. March 21, 2013. Which just so happens to be the day I was born.

OLD WOMAN

You poor girl! Your poor parents!

SOPHIE

See that's the thing. They live in France.

OLD WOMAN

See I knew you were a foreigner.

SOPHIE

The way I sound?

OLD WOMAN

The way you look. Exotic.

SOPHIE

As long as it's not the way I sound. I've spent a load on speech lessons, it'd make me real mad if they didn't do any good. 'Course I did spend my formative years in Texas, which'll kill any accent under the sun, except of course a southern one.

(smiles weakly)

OLD WOMAN

You in the movie business?

SOPHIE

Sorta on the periphery. I came here to become famous, but things didn't pan out the way I had planned.

OLD WOMAN

Really? Because I was going to say you look familiar.

SOPHIE

There was this one commercial, for Axe deodorant, but I wasn't even the principal. I was never even sure that it aired, but if you say you saw it, I trust you. But I didn't get any residuals.

(MORE)

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Hell, I can't even pay the rent, much less airfare. Anyway, I could never fly home in time. Imagine expiring at fifty thousand feet.

OLD WOMAN

That's how my husband went. He had the DVTs.

SOPHIE

I don't know what that means.

(continuing)

And since my phone got disconnected, I can't even call them.

OLD WOMAN

You can use my phone. Come with me to my son's place. His name is Ralph. That's where I live. Ralph would love to meet you. That's my son's name. Course he doesn't like being set up, but this is not a setup if you won't live to see the sunrise.

SOPHIE

To hear you say it sounds so depressing...

OLD WOMAN

You simply must get in touch with your parents.

SOPHIE

Really? Because I'm not so sure anymore. I don't know what I'd tell them that wouldn't make it worse.

(laughs; sees herself)

Look at me, telling my sob story to a total stranger. They say never to do that in a movie. It's a big faux pas. A real no-no. Fortunately for us, this is real.

(beat)

Unfortunately for me.

The old woman looks at her helplessly.

INT. CVS PHARMACY - DAY

Sophie is browsing the DVDs. Picks up one. It is Love Story. It costs \$9.99.

She reaches into her pocket and comes out with a ten dollar bill. Then, she looks outside to see a homeless man rummaging through the garbage can. This is Francis. She notices that he's not wearing any shoes. She grabs a pair of Crocs shoes, also priced at \$9.99. She returns the DVD to its place in the stack.

EXT. CVS PHARMACY - DAY

Sophie stands talking to Francis. He is wearing the Crocs. She is telling him her story. Francis is hanging on every word.

SOPHIE

And the strangest thing is how it happened. I've always been deathly afraid of the water, I mean for as long as I can remember I'd never go swimming, not even set foot in the ocean. Then I fall for this guy, this gorgeous guy, and he gets me to go swimming with him, on our first date. We went skinny dipping in the Pacific Ocean! I got swallowed by this wave out of nowhere, went tumbling around under water, nearly lost my bikini top, and would you believe water must have up and gone inside my ear, because I came away with this nasty infection. Don't worry it's not contagious.

Francis doesn't care about the ear infection. He zoned in on the words "gorgeous guy."

FRANCIS

When you say gorgeous...

SOPHIE

A total knockout. Hot as they come.

FRANCIS

Got a picture?

SOPHIE

Why yes, as a matter of fact I do.

She pulls out her phone and shows Francis a digital image of her and her sweetheart.

FRANCIS

He is a knockout, girl!

SOPHIE
That's about all I got.

FRANCIS
You should call him.

SOPHIE
That's what I'm saying. I don't
have his number.

FRANCIS
You got an address?

Sophie shakes her head. Francis continues to study the picture.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
You know, he looks familiar?
(sure of it now)
Yeah, I've seen this fella before.
At that Subway there, on the
corner. I seen him eat there, real
late, usually on weekends. Once he
gave me a bite of his sandwich. It
was so romantic! I'd say your best
bet would be to check there around
midnight, if you want to see him
again.

SOPHIE
Don't I ever. Thanks!

FRANCIS
One good turn deserves another.
Thanks for the shoes.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Solis walking around the area carrying Sophie's chart, stopping by random strangers and showing them Sophie's picture, asking her whereabouts. She's exhausted more reliable measures of tracking down her missing person and now takes refuge in the desperate.

LATER

She looks at her watch, remembers.

EXT. OUTDOOR SHOPPING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Solis approaches the Burger Joint where Gabby works. As she arrives at the entrance, she sees her son-to-be ex-husband, Gerry, pulling up in his Ford F-150. She freezes.

INT. CAR - DAY

Gerry Gomez (40s) drives his daughter, Gabby, to school.

GOMEZ

Here's one. When does a black person become a nigger?

GABBY

When?

GOMEZ

When he leaves the room.

He laughs.

GABBY

I have a better one. Why don't Mexicans want their kids to marry black people?

GOMEZ

Why?

GABBY

Because they would be too lazy to steal.

GOMEZ

(who is Mexican)

It's a good one, except Mexicans aren't lazy.

He drops her off around the corner.

GABBY

Have a nice day, daddy.

GOMEZ

Very funny. See you right quick.

Gabby kisses her father's cheek and exits the car.

We follow Gerry as he turns the corner and enters the teacher's parking lot, where he parks in his assigned space.

EXT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A group of teenage kids waits to enter class. We notice two kids in particular. Their names are Trench and Cody. They are best friends. And practically the only two white kids in a predominantly black and Mexican student body.

We see Gabby and Mr. Gomez as they arrive to class from opposite directions. Gomez lets the class in.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The students find their seats as Mr. Gomez takes roll from his desk. The students answer "here" as he calls each name in turn. From underneath his jacket we see the butt of a holstered gun.

As this takes place, we watch Cody and Gabby, passing notes back and forth, giggling, a bit flirty, etc. Mr. Gomez repeatedly orders them to keep it down, stop horsing around, etc.

Gabby stands to throw the notes away and as she passes Cody's desk he taps her playfully on the behind. Mr. Gomez sees this and becomes infuriated.

GOMEZ

I said knock it off!

Cody snickers. As Gabby returns to her seat he taps her playfully on the behind a second time. Mr. Gomez rises and strides over to the boy.

GOMEZ (CONT'D)

Didn't I tell you to knock it off?

Again Cody snickers.

GOMEZ (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

Trench, who is seated nearby:

TRENCH

Take it easy, old timer!

Gerry wheels on Trench.

GOMEZ

Take your seat.

Trench starts to breathe in heaving gasps, reaches into his trench coat pocket. Gerry interprets this as a menacing gesture.

GOMEZ (CONT'D)

Get your hands out of your pockets.
I said hands out of pockets and
place them on the desk.

Trench continues rummaging in his coat pocket and gasping. Gomez tackles Trench to the ground. He unholsters his gun and trains it against the boy's temple. The other students watch in stupefaction.

GABBY

Daddy no!

GOMEZ

(to Trench)

Whatcha got in your jacket?

Trench takes out an asthma inhaler. Gerry puts away his gun.

GOMEZ (CONT'D)

Get back to your seat.
(trying to restore order)
Everyone get back to work!

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - LATER

It's after class/school. The principal is in the process of haranguing Mr. Gomez. Through the window (in the waiting area outside the office) Gabby can be seen sitting between Cody and Trench.

PRINCIPAL

Don't you think you overreacted
some? I mean you nearly put a
bullet in a student for being an
asthmatic.

GOMEZ

I didn't know he was asthmatic. He
was acting funny, breathing heavy--

PRINCIPAL

Wheezing, that's what they call it.
That's what asthmatics do.

GOMEZ

He spanked my daughter's behind!

PRINCIPAL

I thought you said it was the other student, the Henderson boy.

GOMEZ

I get 'em confused. They're so much alike they're practically the same person. I thought they were homosexuals. That is until the feminine one--

PRINCIPAL

Cody.

GOMEZ

Spanked my daughter's--

PRINCIPAL

(over him)

I got it the first time.

GOMEZ

(to himself)

Maybe they're bi.

The principal eyes Mr. Gomez for a long moment.

PRINCIPAL

You're probably not the best person to be carrying a gun on campus, you know.

GOMEZ

Why's that?

PRINCIPAL

You're trigger happy.

GOMEZ

Yeah well I didn't pull the trigger. Besides, I'm the only guy who's properly trained. No one else is skilled in gun safety.

PRINCIPAL

Be that as it may, there is the little thing of your IED.

GOMEZ

(thinks)

Huh? I get it up just fine. You been talking to my wife?

PRINCIPAL

That's EDD. Erectile something or other. I said IED. Intermittent explosive disorder. You have anger management issues. You're a loaded gun, in more ways than one.

GOMEZ

You have been talking to my wife. She hung that b.s. label on me. Anger management issues my left... She's not exactly unbiased you know.

PRINCIPAL

Your wife? I heard you two had separated.

GOMEZ

It's a trial separation, just till I get my temper under control.

PRINCIPAL

My point exactly. You are hereby prohibited from carrying a firearm on school grounds. Your services as school marshal are no longer needed. That is all. And try and calm down.

Gomez grunts and rises.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Try meditating. Take up yoga. Eat a chill pill. Whatever. Just calm the heck down!

Gomez exits the office and motions for his daughter to follow him. The boys smirk at him. Gabby smiles at Cody.

GABBY

(to Cody)

I'll see you later?

Cody nods. Gabby follows her father away. Trench holds up an imaginary gun at Gomez's back and pulls the imaginary trigger (his thumb), making Gomez disappear (around the corner).

INT. GOMEZ'S CAR - DAY

Gomez and his daughter drive.

GABBY

I guess our cover is blown. You want me to go back to using your last name?

GOMEZ

What I want is for you to stop hanging around with those boys. They're up to no good.

GABBY

Don't you think you maybe wiggled out a little? I mean you're the grown up. The teacher. You should be more mature.

GOMEZ

The dude spanked your behind. And in front of your father!

GABBY

He didn't know you were my father.

GOMEZ

He was way out of line! And what were you passing back and forth?

GABBY

I was trying to firm up plans for this afternoon. I'm supposed to interview Cody's grandparents. You know, for the article I'm writing.

GOMEZ

Oh yeah. Remind me what that was about again?

GABBY

(for the hundredth time)
The changing nature of romantic relationships. I'm thinking of changing the title to the Myth of Monogamy. Kind of catchy, don't you think?

Gomez sneers at her.

GOMEZ

I bet you'll be interviewing mom as well?

GABBY

Speaking of mom, could you maybe swing by her work?

GOMEZ

It's no use. She won't see me. She hasn't been returning my calls.

GABBY

I meant so I could see her!

GOMEZ

Has your mother mentioned me?

GABBY

For the gajillionth time, no. Why don't you accept that it's over?

GOMEZ

Because it's not over. You don't just flush twenty years of marriage...

GABBY

Mom has a new boyfriend. Don't ask me who, but I heard her on the phone talking all lovey-dovey with someone.

Gomez is clearly upset by this.

GABBY (CONT'D)

I been doing a lot of research for my article, and lemme give you some daughterly advice. We weren't meant to mate for life.

GOMEZ

You sound like your uncle.

GABBY

Uncle Serge is a wise man. Marriage was invented, yes invented, when people lived like half as long as they do now. If you lived in the time of Jesus, you'd already be dead. But you're not, so you should try living a little, even if it's not with mom.

GOMEZ

Twenty years. That's how long your mother and I have been together. That's older than you are.

GABBY

Couples should stay married because life is better together than apart, and then only until the child is raised, unless they are happy. And since I'm a grown-up...

GOMEZ

You're fifteen, Gabriela.

GABBY

I have a job, and other things that make me a woman.

GOMEZ

You need a mother and a father.

GABBY

I have a mother and a father. They're just not together. And I hate to break it to you, but that's for the best. Being around the two of you was misery. You were always yelling, mom was always nitpicking. I'm lucky I don't have issues.

Gerry pulls over in front of a hospital.

GOMEZ

Tell your mother to please call me.

GABBY

It's a lost cause, but I love you anyway.

She kisses her father and exits the car.

GOMEZ

What time you get off work?

GABBY

It's mom's turn to pick me up.

GOMEZ

I said, what time--

GABBY

Around midnight.

Gerry watches his daughter go.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Gabby approaches the door to her mother's office, watches Trench on his way out.

INT. CODY'S HOUSE - DAY

Cody wheels his mother, Deborah, into her bedroom and helps her into bed. Deborah has multiple sclerosis, which has left her nearly blind and without the use of her legs.

She reaches for a glass of water but knocks it over. Cody bends to pick it up and places it back on the table.

DEBORAH

Not on the bills.

He moves aside a large stack of hospital bills. The topmost bill indicates an outstanding balance of \$14,000.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

They know we can't pay 'em, but that don't stop 'em from sending them.

CODY

Want me to toss 'em?

DEBORAH

No. They've become a sort of collector's item to me. My new hobby, watching the interest accrue.

CODY

Can I get you anything, mom?

DEBORAH

I'll take a kiss.

She holds out her cheek for her son to kiss. Trench appears at the door.

TRENCH

Good afternoon, Mrs. Henderson.

She smiles at Trench.

DEBORAH

You boys run along, have a good time.

Cody joins Trench at the door and they exit.

INT. GAME ROOM - DAY

Cody and Trench play video games. The doorbell rings.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

Cody's grandparents, Ethel and Dominick Henderson, open the door for Gabby.

INT. GAME ROOM - DAY

As Gabby passes she pokes her head in the room and smiles at Cody.

GABBY

Hey Cody.

CODY

Hey.

Gabby follows Cody's grandparents to the backyard.

TRENCH

Is it just me or is that bitch everywhere?

CODY

She's not a bitch.

Trench sniffs, gets up, goes to the closet.

TRENCH

I'm sick of playing Doom. Lacks all realism.

As he rifles through DVDs, he searches the top shelves and comes out with a handgun. He shows it to Cody.

CODY

My granddad's. I swear he's getting senile. Forgets to keep it locked up. I'll take it.

Trench doesn't let him have it. Instead continues to search, comes out with a second handgun and a box of ammunition.

TRENCH

That's what I'm talking about. A little realism!

CODY

I said gimme that!

TRENCH

Come on, just a few rounds. I bet
you never even fired a gun before.

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAY

The boys have arranged five empty cans of Coor's Light on a ledge in a vacant lot. Trench drains the remaining beer from a sixth can, belches, and places it in the row.

They take a few steps back and Trench gives directions.

TRENCH

Now it's real easy. I loaded yours
already. So all you have to do is
put your finger on the trigger and
kaboom.

Cody aims and squeezes off a round. The gun starts in his hand. He hits nothing.

TRENCH (CONT'D)

You shoot like a girl. You gotta
hold it steady.

Cody winces at the target, squeezes the trigger again. It hits a rock.

TRENCH (CONT'D)

Closer. Give er another try.

Cody does so, hits a can of beer.

TRENCH (CONT'D)

Easy, ain't she? Just like playing
games.

Trench fires off a round and hits a can.

TRENCH (CONT'D)

Booyah!

(beat)

Hey, if you could shoot anyone,
who'd it be?

CODY

Why would I want to shoot a person.
I ain't got no beef.

TRENCH

I'm just sayin'. Just play along.

CODY

(thinking)

Well I guess...I'd hold up a liquor store and make 'em gimme what's in the register, not all of it, just what's enough to pay my mom's hospital bills. I'm afraid my grandparents'll lose the house.

TRENCH

How much she owe?

CODY

Twenty.

TRENCH

Thou? Damn, boy. No liquor store carries that much.

CODY

A bank then.

TRENCH

Too much security. If you really wanted to pull it off, you'd have to hit a place you knew. Maybe a place keeps money in a safe in back, you know precisely how much money, and where that particular safe is located, and the combination.

CODY

You mean that place you used to work, whatchamacallit?

Trench nods. Cody laughs.

TRENCH

I'm serious.

CODY

No way. Uh-uh. What happens if we got caught?

TRENCH

The courageous consider not the consequences but the rewards. You like that, I just made it up.

Cody squeezes off another round, hits a can.

CODY
You been thinking about this for a
while, haven't you.

TRENCH
(sniffs)
So what if I have?

CODY
I'm just sayin'. I 'member you said
something about the manager there.
You got beef with him?

TRENCH
Maybe I do, but it ain't about
that. This is something bigger.

CODY
Bigger.

TRENCH
Much bigger. This is about making
history.

CODY
What you mean history?

TRENCH
Like they did in Columbine,
Virginia Tech. That joker dude in
Colorado.

CODY
You're talking about killing
people. I ain't in for that.

TRENCH
I'm not saying we'd go through with
it, only that if we wanted to, we
could. They'd be all there. At
midnight the bars let out, gays
flood the place, the joint is
overflowing with folks, hundred,
maybe more. So many I seen the fire
marshal come. If those people all
died, just went up in a what have
you, it'd outdo Virginia Tech three
times over. Biggest American
massacre ever. Like I said:
history.

CODY
You'd...we'd go away for life.
You're talking crazy now.

TRENCH

We could be like those Colombine
dudes. Just shoot each other.
Suicide ain't all that bad.

CODY

Maybe not for you, but I wanna
live.

TRENCH

What for? The world is shit. And
since it is shit, who can blame us
when all we're doing is flushing
the toilet.

Trench shoots another can. Cody looks at him warily.

TRENCH (CONT'D)

I'm just f-ing with ya.

A cop car pulls by, stops, sees the boys, its lights flash.

TRENCH (CONT'D)

Let's go get us some more beers!

The two boys run away, hop the fence and are gone.

EXT. CODY'S HOUSE - DAY

Gabby sits in yard with Cody's grandparents, (80s). She holds
a dictaphone.

GABBY

(into dictaphone)

The topic of my paper is the
changing nature of romantic
relationships. With a divorce rate
of fifty percent - sixty percent in
some countries - and homosexuality
on the rise, the question to ask
is, are we meant to mate for life?
With the average life expectancy
now at over eighty, twice what it
was in Jesus' time, are we better
off leading two lives in one, with
two careers, two mates, even two
sets of kids. What do you think
about this, being over the age of
eighty yourselves, and married for
three quarters of your life?

Gabby holds out the dictaphone. The old couple looks at each
other.

The man starts to speak but before he can get a word out she sees the time on her wristwatch, whips the phone away and says:

GABBY (CONT'D)
I'm late for work. To be continued.

She stands.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Thanks for the tea. It was delightful! And if I can't make it back before my deadline I'll just, you know, make it up. It's called editorializing, journalistic license. Gotta run!

EXT. CODY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Trench and Cody stand in front of the mirror. They wear jackets, and their guns are visible in their belts.

CODY
I don't know about this...

TRENCH
Don't you want the twenty grand that's hiding in back?

CODY
Just so long as we don't get caught and nobody gets killed.

TRENCH
You have my word. Have I ever lied to you?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The boys walk down a quiet residential street.

CODY
You never told me what's the beef with the manager?

TRENCH
Score to settle, is all.

CODY
I know that. I'm asking what's the score?

Trench kicks a can across the street.

TRENCH

Well after work one night we went
out drinking, out by the beach.

CODY

Just you and him?

TRENCH

A bunch of us, but it got late, and
it wound up being just the two of
us.

CODY

(teasing)
How romantic!

TRENCH

(glares at him)
This is serious! Anyway, he held a
knife up to me, and...

Trench can't go on.

TRENCH (CONT'D)

(suppressing rage)
I'm gonna kill that sonofabitch!
(catches himself)
I mean I could. Not like it would
come to that!

CODY

I understand, man. We've all been
wronged by someone sometime.
Sometimes it's the system that
screws us. Take my mom.

TRENCH

(brightening)
Well we're gonna fix all that. Come
on let's go!

Something in the distance catches Trench's eye. He stops Cody
and points at a limousine, idling on the corner. From inside
can be seen, just under the hem of a cocktail dress, a
woman's finely shaped leg, wearing high heels.

The two boys walk over.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS MANSION - NIGHT

Lucian Demetrius (70s, dignified) leads his beautiful wife, Dora, down the steps outside this palatial home on the north side of Beverly Hills. Dora (short for Pandora) appears to be about thirty years old, although it's hard to tell. Either she takes really good care of herself or she has a really good plastic surgeon. Or maybe something else.

In the driveway awaits a limousine.

LUCIAN

And now, dear Dora, may I present
to you, the world. Or, more
fittingly, may I present the world
to you.

He leads her to the car as though it's the first time she's been outside. As they go he points out flowers, a marble statue, etc. She nods acknowledgement but never says anything. We get the feeling that maybe she's some kind of mail order bride or recovering from an illness that may have brought on amnesia? Whatever the case is, she is not in the least bit familiar with her surroundings.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

They enter the car and Lucian hands the driver their destination's address.

LUCIAN

(to driver)

And please, take the scenic route.
We have so much to see along the
way.

Lucian fixes himself a drink from the car's bar, takes a sip. Finds Dora's eyes fixated on him.

LUCIAN (CONT'D)

How rude of me. I'd offer you a
cocktail, dearest, but need I
remind you: you don't drink. Not
alcohol. Not anything!

Lucian scoots over to Dora and takes her hand.

LUCIAN (CONT'D)

I've waited so long until this
moment, to be here with you, and
yet it seems as though we've known
one another always. Wouldn't you
agree?

Dora smiles and nods.

LUCIAN (CONT'D)

Quite the perfect couple are we,
I'd say. Harmonious in every way!
But I shouldn't be so selfish and
keep you all to myself. Share and
share alike, is my motto. And a
friend in need is a friend in deed.
Mind you, I have just the friend in
mind. Poor Virgil is, so very
tragic. I fear for his life. He is
just the type to take it.
Schopenhauer would say there is
nothing undignified in suicide, and
Virgil is at the tether's end, in
years I mean, but the golden years
should be a time of enjoyment, and
for that, my lovely, there is you!

He takes a sip.

LUCIAN (CONT'D)

But first I need to know if he'll
be convinced you're real. We need
experimental subjects. Empirical
evidence! Driver, pull over. If
nothing else, I need to pee. Tiny
bladder. Gets worse with age.
Something you need not worry about,
my dear!

He pinches her face as he exits the limousine, handing Dora
his drink.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The limousine has pulled over beside a large tree. Lucian is
peeing on its trunk.

LUCIAN

If it's fine for the canine, it's
all right by me...

Across the street we see Cody and Trench approaching the
vehicle.

TRENCH

(to Cody)
Let's hitch a lift.

CODY

What if they're not headed our way?

TRENCH

Pfff... They'll listen to Smith and Wesson. Power of persuasion, my friend.

They arrive at the car as Lucian is stepping back in. Trench taps him on the shoulder.

TRENCH (CONT'D)

Me and my mate here were thinking you could give us a ride. Knowing is more like it.

LUCIAN

(appraising them)

What is your destination?

TRENCH

Sunset and Vine.

LUCIAN

Same destination as ours. It must be destiny. Hop right in.

(to Dora, stepping inside)

Scoot aside my dear. Make way for some flesh and bone males, blood boiling and testosterone a-rage.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

The boys sit opposite Lucian and Dora.

LUCIAN

You boys care for something to drink?

They look at one another. Should they?

TRENCH

Don't mind if we do. Two Scotch and sodas.

LUCIAN

Ah, Scotch. The gentleman's preference.

CODY

(quickly)

Nothing for me.

(off Trench's glare)

Water's fine.

TRENCH
 (trying to be tough)
 Actually, we're not gentlemen.

LUCIAN
 Again?

TRENCH
 I said, we're not gentlemen.

LUCIAN
 How do you know? Circumstances make
 the man. Perhaps you have not yet
 been tested. Chivalry is, after
 all, a learned behavior.

He hands the boys their drinks and they toast.

LUCIAN (CONT'D)
 So my young men, what have we
 planned for the evening?

TRENCH
 I don't know about you, but me and
 my friend here have masterminded
 something big.

LUCIAN
 Do tell.

TRENCH
 Top secret. I tell you, I'll have
 to kill you. And don't think I
 will. I mean won't.

Under his coat, he displays his gun.

LUCIAN
 (to Dora)
 It seems we have corralled the real
 deal. Speaking of which, my young
 friends. What opine you of my
 female companion here.

TRENCH
 Her? She's not too bad.

LUCIAN
 Not too bad, as in, fairer than
 girls you know, as in, more
 beautiful, and real?

TRENCH
 I seen better.

LUCIAN
Have you? Do tell.

TRENCH
For one thing. Her face. It's too
made up. Like she's had work.

LUCIAN
Oh but she has, she is, a work that
is, and of the highest quality.
(more to himself)
Yes, I could have added blemishes,
for authenticity's sake, since all
faces are asymmetrical and flawed,
but why, when I could make her
physically perfect? And mind you,
her quintessential attributes are
not merely skin deep.

Trench drains his drink.

TRENCH
(holds out glass)
I'll take another.

LUCIAN
Moderation in all things is best,
especially when one desires to keep
one's wits about him...
(off Trench's glare)
...but if you insist.

He refills the glass.

LATER

Trench has traded positions with Lucian and has his paws all
over Dora, who bears the rough attentions stoically. Lucian
looks on not the least bit jealous. If anything, he seems
satisfied with something. Trench is kissing her face, neck.
Then looks at her, then at Lucian.

TRENCH
How come her makeup don't smear or
nothing?

LUCIAN
It is tattooed on. She's made for
pleasure, so that nothing should
obstruct its fulfillment. As you
were.

Trench resumes kissing. Cody appears nervous.

CODY

Say, uh, Trench. Don't you think you should put on your game face right about now, considering what we're planning to do?

LUCIAN

I'm afraid he's right. We've arrived.

Lucian opens the limousine door to reveal the glowing lights of the Burger Joint that is the boys' destination.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The boys stumble out of the car, Trench bleary eyed and Cody looking very concerned.

LUCIAN

Good luck in your endeavors, my young friends!

He watches them move toward the entrance.

LUCIAN (CONT'D)

(to Dora)

On second thought, I find myself craving a milkshake from yonder eating establishment. Dora be a love and fetch me one, medium, double chocolate. Oh, make it a large. Let's splurge!

INT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT

Gabby arrives for her shift, enters the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gabby at the mirror checking her face. She turns to the side to check her profile, lifts her stomach to see if her baby bump is showing. It hardly is. She's just over 3 months. She cradles her belly and pretends to rock it back and forth.

INT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT

Gabby exits the bathroom and as she moves behind the register, Jamal, the security guard, who has been seated waiting for her, stands up as if to speak.

GABBY
Not now, Jamal.

JAMAL
I've had a really shitty day.

GABBY
So now you wanna shit on mine?

JAMAL
At least you could return my calls.

GABBY
I'm carrying your seed. Doesn't
that count for anything?

JAMAL
I lost my firearm.

GABBY
You men. It's always all about you.

JAMAL
Did you hear me? I'm a security
guard without a gun.

GABBY
So go find it!

JAMAL
I spent all day looking.

GABBY
Looking? You're supposed to be
guarding the premises! How they let
a good for nothing like you carry a
gun... And here I am carrying your
sperm... A one night stand turned
into a lifelong nightmare.

The employees hear it all. It's not news to them. They're
used to it. Jamal hangs his head, crushed. Gabby looks at him
severely, then breaks into a smile.

GABBY (CONT'D)
I'm only playin'.

She gets on her tiptoes and kisses Jamal's forehead. She
pulls him around the corner and whispers:

GABBY (CONT'D)
Oh hey, I think I felt it kick
today. Feel.

Jamal places his hand on Gabby's belly.

JAMAL

I felt it. I felt it move!

GABBY

Don't get all excited on me, not in public. That's how this whole thing happened.

(kisses him)

Love ya.

JAMAL

Love you.

GABBY

Now go find your gun!

Jamal exits, beaming. Gabby makes her way to the front of the joint and around the register, nods at her coworkers. The manager (30s white trash) comes over to her, frowning.

MANAGER

You're late.

GABBY

Not by my watch.

MANAGER

Come in back. We gotta talk.

GABBY

We can debate the accuracy of your wristwatch while customer service suffers or I can get to work.

The manager concedes the point and moves off. Gabby turns to the next customer in line.

GABBY (CONT'D)

May I take your order?

INT. ABANDONED BUSINESS - DAY

That morning. Security guard Jamal Jamison (20s) walks up the stairs and down the 2nd floor walkway of the open-air mall on Sunset & Vine. He's making rounds, talking on the phone as he goes.

He passes an abandoned/vacated business, which has been gutted and boarded up. He does a double take when he sees someone asleep inside. This is Francis Hume, whom we've met.

JAMAL
(on phone)
I gotta go.

He enters the abandoned business and roughly shakes Francis awake. Francis squints into the sunlight and sits up.

JAMAL (CONT'D)
You're not supposed to be here. I told you before. Come on. Get up and out you go!

FRANCIS
Hey, quit being so rough. That's no way to treat a lady.

JAMAL
Lady shmady. Now out!

Francis is pulled to his feet, grabs his back pack as he is shoved out the door.

FRANCIS
Hey lemme get my shoes. I said I forgot my shoes!

JAMAL
I said get out. Now go!

Jamal chases Francis down the stairs. We see that Francis is barefoot.

JAMAL (CONT'D)
How many times I gotta tell ya I catch you loitering around here again and I'm gonna, I'm gonna--

FRANCIS
With all due respect sir...

And Francis gives Jamal the bird.

Jamal watches Francis walk around the corner, then dials into his phone.

JAMAL
(into phone)
I'm back. Now, where was I?

Jamal heads inside the burger joint.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

We follow Jamal into the restroom. He is talking on the phone as he enters a stall, takes off the holster around his waist and hangs it on the bathroom stall as he does his business on the toilet. He flushes the toilet and then exits the stall, checks his hair in the mirror as he washes his hands, then leaves, forgetting his gun.

EXT. BURGER JOINT - DAY

Jamal exits the joint, still on the phone. Francis hides behind a garbage can, watches him go, then enters the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Francis in the bathroom, standing in front of the mirror, wearing a dress and looking rather lovely. He takes his bag and is on the point of leaving when Jamal's gun catches his eye. Francis takes the gun, stuffs it into his bag, and exits.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Francis walking along the sidewalk. Alongside him pulls a car driven by his mother, Roberta Hume.

ROBERTA

Francis.

FRANCIS

Mom.

ROBERTA

I bought you some new underwear.

She reaches over and through the passenger window hands her son the purchases.

FRANCIS

Mom you know I don't wear tightie whities.

ROBERTA

And some new panty hose.

Francis inspects them.

FRANCIS

They're nylon. They don't breathe.

But he takes them to be polite.

ROBERTA
How are things?

FRANCIS
Good. With you?

ROBERTA
Come with me to visit your sister.

FRANCIS
She still with that loser?

ROBERTA
Hmm-mmm.

FRANCIS
Then no thank you.

ROBERTA
(adding)
But John's not a loser. I don't
know how you always get me to agree
with you when you call him that!

FRANCIS
I know how to get what I want, I
just never know what I want. How's
dad?

ROBERTA
How should I know? If I spoke to
your father, would you agree to
come back home?

FRANCIS
I don't even know where home is.

ROBERTA
I think maybe we should go see that
therapist again? Dr. Solis. You
remember her?

FRANCIS
Why, did you forget what she said?
I am a fragile personality,
incapacitated after the death of my
older brother followed by the
breakup of my parents' marriage,
compounded by my father's unspoken
judgement.

ROBERTA

Your father doesn't judge you. He was born in a different era. When he grew up, homosexuality was taboo. Can we not have this discussion in public?

FRANCIS

(continuing)

I have sexual identity issues and am more comfortable on the streets than in a strained living situation. Let's see, what else. Oh, I am schizoid - or schizotypal, I forget which - with shades of, what was the term she used, tranvestic fetishism? I don't buy it. I'm more mentally stable than she was. She was in the closet and didn't even know it. At least I am what I say I am. I may be lost and confused but so what isn't everybody? I gotta go, ma. Someone took my home and my shoes with it.

Roberta stares sadly at her son.

ROBERTA

Why are you so difficult?

FRANCIS

I am still recovering from the pain of being born.

Not knowing what to make of this, Roberta drives away. As she rounds the corner, Francis tosses the panty hose in the trash and moves on.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Same place, hours later. Our two troubled teens, Trench and Cody, come upon the panty hose in the trash can. Trench hands a pair to Cody and then unwraps the package and places it over his head. Cody does the same.

INT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT

The boys enter the joint.

CODY

Everybody freeze!

Everybody turns and looks at the two boys.

TRENCH
 (to Cody; slurring)
 You lemme do the talking.
 (to crowd)
 Everybody, hand over your wallets.
 (to Cody)
 You go after the register.

As Trench collects wallets into a garbage bag, Cody negotiates the throng and as he reaches the register he sees Gabby.

CODY
 (surprised)
 Gabby!
 (catches himself)
 I mean, I don't know you. Hands in
 the air. Give me the cash.

GABBY
 Which one is it, hands in the air,
 or give you the cash? I can't do
 both now can I?

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS EARLIER

Francis and John are at the mirror. Francis is now wearing men's clothing. As he returns his dress to his bag, Hume enters.

FRANCIS & JOHN
 Dad?

HUME
 Sons!

THE THREE IN UNISON
 Boy am I glad to see you.

HUME
 (to Francis)
 Bygones?

FRANCIS
 Be gone!

Hume and Francis embrace.

JOHN
 Hannah is gonna have a baby. She
 may have even had it by now.
 (MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

You should come with us to the hospital.

HUME

I'm not sure Hannah would approve. I'm sort of in the dog house.

JOHN

I'm the one in the doghouse. We'll probably break up after she's delivered, but that's another story. Come on!

The three exit the bathroom.

EXT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT

And as they exit the burger joint they pass Cody and Trench who are at that moment putting on their panty hose masks. As the teens enter the joint, Francis remembers:

FRANCIS

I forgot to give the security guard...

He sees Jamal.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Jamal, you left this in the John.

Jamal takes the gun.

JAMAL

I been looking all over for this. No hard feelings, huh?

FRANCIS

None taken. Jamal, meet my father. Estranged until today, for reasons I can't even remember, which makes me think they weren't very important. And this is my brother-in-law, John. He's no longer an asshole.

This is more information than Jamal can process in such a short time, but the men nod hellos.

HUME

(adding)

And we're having a baby!

JAMAL

Yeah, me too.

And the trio are on their way. Jamal turns to the Burger Joint where he can see Gabby in the window. At that moment Gerry Gomez pulls up and exits his car. Jamal appears to recognize him.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

Evening, sir.

GOMEZ

Do I know you?

JAMAL

No, but hopefully one of these days we'll be properly introduced. You see your daughter--

Dr. Solis arrives at that moment. The exchange between Gomez and Jamal is cut short as Gomez focuses his attention on his wife.

GOMEZ

Hello, dear.

SOLIS

Hello Gerry. I thought tonight was my night.

GOMEZ

It is. I just wanted to make sure. I know how busy you are.

SOLIS

I'm not so busy I forget to pick up my daughter when it's my night.

A fight is brewing...

JAMAL

You're the mother? I mean, pleased to meet you.

SOLIS

(go Gerry)
Who's this?

GOMEZ

Beats me.

SOLIS

Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Jamal. Your daughter's...

He falters here. Not knowing exactly how to put it.
 Something inside catches Jamal's eye.

JAMAL
 Excuse me a minute...

He goes inside, leaving these two Bickersons to their own devices.

INT. SUBWAY SANDWICHES - NIGHT

Sophie and Jimmy are embracing. They hear the sound of gunshots and Sophie pulls away.

INT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT

Cody has his gun trained at Gabby, who stands behind the register.

GABBY
 (amused)
 So which is it, huh? Hands in the
 air, or give you the cash?

Cody can't speak, so he raises the gun and fires into the air, three shots.

EXT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT

At the sound of the shots, Gerry and Dr. Solis stop their arguing.

INT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT

Trench and Cody look up at the ceiling, where three gaping bullet holes stare down at them.

TRENCH
 Not like that, goober! You're
 supposed to point the gun at
 someone. Lemme show you how it's
 done.

He reaches for his own piece but finds it missing from his belt. He thinks, looks around, sees Dora as she enters the joint, and she's carrying Trench's gun, which she points at Cody. Cody drops the gun and puts his hands in the air.

TRENCH (CONT'D)
 You can't give up that easy, not
 without a fight.

Trench reaches for Cody's gun, points it at Dora.

TRENCH (CONT'D)
 You're hot, but that won't stop me
 from pulling this trigger and
 killing you dead, bam!

Behind the register, the manager appears holding a sack of
 money.

TRENCH (CONT'D)
 Hand it over, and get on the floor.
 Do it in that order.

The manager does this. Trench goes behind the register, puts
 his knee to the guy's face, and the barrel of the gun on his
 forehead. The gesture is reminiscent of how Trench was
 treated by Gerry Gomez.

TRENCH (CONT'D)
 Now you're the bitch. How you like
 it?

Over the register appears Gerry, hands in the air.

GOMEZ
 Young man.

TRENCH
 You.

GOMEZ
 Put the gun down.

TRENCH
 You gonna make me?

Gomez slowly shakes his head. Trench smiles, then shoots
 Gomez in the arm. The bystanders shriek. Jamal comes forward.

JAMAL
 All these pieces up in here, I bet
 I'm the only one licensed to use
 one on the premises, am I right?
 Now everyone else drop 'em and kick
 'em my way.

Gomez takes his gun out of his holster, drops it. Dora drops
 hers. Some of the patrons, who also carry concealed weapons,
 drop theirs as well. Lots of clattering.

But Trench turns his focus back to the manager. As he pulls back the trigger Dora leaps over the register with superhuman swiftness and kicks the gun away. Before Trench knows what just happened Dora kisses him on the mouth. By the time the kiss ends, Jamal has handcuffed Trench to the counter.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Lucian waits in the limousine. He is on the phone.

LUCIAN

(on phone)

Virgil, ole buddy. Long time. I happened to be in the area. Are you at home? There's someone I want you to meet, with a very shall we say pressing urgency. What? You're having a baby? Stupendous! I'll meet you there!

Dora enters the limousine as Lucian hangs up. She kisses Lucian on the cheek.

LUCIAN (CONT'D)

My milkshake?

She pats him on the stomach.

LUCIAN (CONT'D)

You're right. I can do without.

(to driver)

To the hospital!

(to Dora)

We're having a baby!

EXT. BURGER JOINT - NIGHT

Flashing lights outside the place as the police enter and the clubgoers exit.

CLUBGOER 1

I didn't even get my burger.

CLUBGOER 2

But we got all that free entertainment!

Trench and Cody are led away in handcuffs.

Gabby and her father exit and join Dr. Solis on the curb. Gabby holds a guitar. Gerry puts his arms around Dr. Solis and they look at Gabby.

GABBY
 (re: guitar)
 Someone left this in the bathroom.
 And look, it has my name on it!

SOLIS
 We're just so glad you're safe.

Jamal approaches.

GABBY
 Don't speak too fast. Mom, dad, I'd
 like for you to meet Jamal. My
 baby's daddy.

Her parents gasp.

GOMEZ
 (aghast)
 He's...

JAMAL
 An honest hard-working man who
 loves your daughter very much. And
 with your permission sir, I'd like
 for her to be my wife.

GOMEZ
 She's fifteen.

JAMAL
 I'm willing to wait a few years, or
 however long it takes.

SOLIS
 Well you'll have to ask me. I wear
 the pants in this family.
 (looks down at her dress)
 Just not tonight.

She looks at Gerry, who puts his arm around Jamal.

GOMEZ
 Welcome to our crazy, whacked-up
 family.

Dr. Solis sees Sophie exiting the joint.

SOLIS
 Excuse me a minute.

She approaches Sophie and Jimmy, taps Sophie on the shoulder.

SOLIS (CONT'D)
I've been looking all over for you.

Sophie nods.

SOPHIE
I know. Don't drive or operate any machinery. Time is running out. I don't need you to remind me.

SOLIS
It's nothing like that. We made a mistake. The infection is not as bad as we thought.

SOPHIE
You mean I have a week to live rather than a day?

SOLIS
I mean...you're cured.
(hearing herself)
I know how ridiculous that sounds. But...just promise me to visit me the first thing in the morning. Not me. Another doctor. I won't be there.
(looks over at her husband and daughter)
On second thought, maybe I will. Who knows?

SOPHIE
(nodding; tearful)
Okay...

SOLIS
Sorry for the misunderstanding.

SOPHIE
Mistakes happen I guess.

SOLIS
Miracles do too.

SOPHIE
Thanks for giving me back my life.

Jimmy appears by Sophie's side. He holds up a flower.

DONOVAN
Happy birthday.

The lovers kiss. Dr. Solis rejoins her family.

SOLIS
 (to Gerry)
 Come on, let's get that arm looked
 at.

Gerry affectionately submits to her inspections.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Hannah, in the final stage of labor, squeezes out her new son, David. A doctor takes the baby and lays it in its mother's arms. She looks up at John and hands the proud daddy his son. John shows the baby all around.

Dr. Solis watches from the doorway but doesn't enter. She turns back and rejoins Gabby and Gerry and they head off.

Lucian and Dora appear at the door. Hume goes over to them and they embrace. Hume turns to his wife and they hug.

HUME
 There is so much I wish to say to
 you.

ROBERTA
 (puts her finger to his
 mouth)
 Sometimes it's best to let silence
 speak, dear.

Francis, watching his parents from his sister's bedside, comes over and joins them. Everybody is united. Who knows how long it will last, but for the moment, everyone is content.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Cody's grandparents, Ethel and Dominick, sit outside their house facing Gabby, who holds a video camera.

GABBY
 And, action!

DOMINICK
 The secret? There's no secret. I
 told her from the start. Ethel, I
 says, I promise to put you before
me till I becomes we. That's it.

GABBY
 That's it?

ETHEL

That's love.

The old couple kisses.

FADE OUT.

THE END.