

THE SECRET AND MYSTERY OF LOVE

A Two Episode Special Event

by

S. J. Glenn

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nom.de.plume.sglenn@outlook.com

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FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT: BEVERLY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING TEXT:

'... More than 30 years ago ...'

INT. CHURCH WEDDING OF YOUNG ROMULUS AND YOUNG NATALIE - DAY

This is quite the Bohemian affair. Just about hippie-like.

Holding a bouquet of wildflowers, a lone BRIDE walks down the aisle.

The bridal gown is a simple, folksy, peasant-style wedding dress, made perfect by a whimsical FLOWER CROWN cobbled together out of dainty little posies, leaves, and vines.

Sporting corduroy trousers and a brand-new pair of Hush Puppies, a long-haired GROOM awaits.

Their wedding bands are crafted by Native Americans and the WEDDING PARTY looks like A Midsummer Night's Dream full of pixies, fairies, and imaginary beings.

AS THE CEREMONY CONTINUES, THE PRESENT DAY ROMULUS SPEAKS IN A VOICE-OVER NARRATION

OLDER ROMULUS GAGE (V.O.)

My name is Romulus. Named after the founder of Rome and not some fictional planet. I find myself facing a complicated question: 'Can a man truly love, and be loved, by two women, at the same time?' This is not a desirable state to be in. Love multiplied by two only puts you through a roller coaster of inexhaustible emotions. Everybody knows how tough it is to find a soul mate and life partner in the first place, let alone if a second true love comes along at the most unexpected and inopportune time. C'mom, let's get real here. What would you do when suddenly your brain is drowning in a deluge of dopamine because two very different people make you feel special and loved in very different ways? If you're an honest person, you can surely understand that being in a tender and close relationship doesn't prohibit or disqualify you from having deep feelings for another. Every now and then, fate intervenes, even when you don't want it to. Some people think you can only love one person at a time.

(MORE)

OLDER ROMULUS GAGE (V.O.) (cont'd)

I get that. But, parents can have two, or even more, children without loving any of them less. And, every year, Mother Nature herself proves to us that two fires can ignite simultaneously in the same forest. It's complicated. And, more complex than a scrambled-up Rubik's cube. True love is supposed to be simple. An inexhaustible, uplifting thing. Not some baffling conundrum that's beyond human comprehension. You know what I'm sayin'. Look, if you're absolutely sure you're in love with two people, are you required to choose? I don't rightly know the answer to that riddle, or what I'm going to do about it. It's just that if all the answers, to all the questions, are already out there... as scientists, philosophers, and intellectuals think... then why has this one gone unanswered since we walked out of the caves? All I can say for certain is that, one way or another, when the time comes for me to meet God, I will do so without shame or remorse.

QUIETLY, CHURCH BELLS RING GRADUALLY BECOMING LOUDER

WEDDING OFFICIANT / MINISTER

And do you Romulus Gage, take Natalie, for your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and honor her all the days of your life, until death do you part?

YOUNG ROMULUS

I do.

FADE TO:

EXT. BASILICA MINORE DEL SANTO NIÑO, CEBU PHILIPPINES - DAY

The CHURCH BELLS are ringing.

APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING TEXT:

'... Present day ...'

FADE FULLY UP:

Bright late morning sunshine. A very pretty, fresh and young looking Filipina, LIWAYWAY LIZARO, is walking up to the cathedral.

She stops and looks skyward in awe at the historic structure and its bell tower.

As Li opens the main door to the church, a CHILDREN'S CHOIR begins to sing "LIBERA'S SANCTUS" or similar ethereal hymn.

TITLE CARD: "The Secret and Mystery of Love"

CREDITS BEGIN

INT. SANTO NIÑO BASILICA - DAY

Li walks in. She is dwarfed by the impressive frescoes, statues, and giant stained glass windows.

As Liwayway proceeds quickly up a side aisle, a PRIEST IN WHITE VESTMENTS begins to stride up the center aisle.

The priest is FATHER RAFAEL FERNANDEZ. And, as Father Rafael begins to swing a large THURIBLE, Liwayway sits in the very first open spot she finds.

THE CENTER AISLE PROCESSION

Behind Father Rafael, appearing out of air fogged with INCENSE SMOKE, come the AREA'S CHILDREN about to receive their First Communion.

The little girls are first, attired in veiled white dresses with rosaries in their folded hands.

Then the boys, in white suits, with black prayer books in-between their "praying" hands. One of the boys is AMADO LIZARO, Liwayway Lizaro's brother.

As the hymn continues...

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE CATHOLIC SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION
FIRST EUCHARIST

- A) As the children reach the altar, they dip their fingers in holy water, make the Sign of the Cross upon themselves, and proceed directly toward the first rows of pews to kneel
- B) One boy and one girl walk to lecterns and give readings found in an illustrated Catholic Children's Bible
- C) Father Rafael gives the Liturgy of the Word and Homily
- D) Liturgy of the Eucharist (the gifts of wine and bread)
- E) The Consecration; the moment when bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood

- F) The Communion Rite (only the children)
- G) The Sign of Peace
- H) Exit Procession (lead by Father Rafael) of the children to and out the same doors Liwayway entered
- I) Liwayway exiting through a side door

CREDITS, HYMN, AND SERIES OF SHOTS END AT

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BASILICA'S MAIN DOOR - DAY

FATHER RAFAEL

(to Amado)

I see your sister came to see you receive the Lord. How very nice. Go to her with thanks.

Amado runs into his sister's arms.

AMADO (SUBTITLED)

(in Tagalog)

Oh! Liwayway, you came! I feel like God is inside me! I ate him! I'm so happy! But, where's mom and dad?

LIWAYWAY

(in Filipino-accented English)

I'm so proud of you Amado. But you must speak in English. That's how one day you'll get to America. By doing well in school and speaking the language of where you want to go, not the language of where you came from. People are rich in America. Don't you wanna be rich one day?

AMADO

Of course! But...

He cranes his neck looking for his parents.

LIWAYWAY

They couldn't make it.

AMADO

Why?

LIWAYWAY

They just couldn't make it, but I did.

Liwayway, looking over her shoulder, walking away, hand-in-hand with Amado.

LIWAYWAY

Thank you padre!

FATHER RAFAEL

Bless you both.

EXT. CHICAGO ILLINOIS USA SAME TIME - NIGHT

This place is on the other side of the world and international dateline, so it's oddly yesterday, in the dark, and despite happening at the same moment, it's a brain-twisting 13 hours ago.

THE LEG-BREAKER AND HIS BOSS

A black Mercedes LIMOUSINE pulls up to Lake Point Tower. It is driven by a big brawny chauffeur named FELIKS YAVORSKY.

EXT/INT. LAKE POINT TOWER - FOLLOWING (NIGHT)

CURBSIDE

Ignoring the NO PARKING SIGN, Feliks parks right in front of the main entrance.

LOBBY/ELEVATOR

He walks straight through the lobby to take the express elevator up to the 70th Floor penthouse.

He will make it just in time, he thinks, to pick up his boss DIMITRI STEFANOVICH KONSTATIN, an avtoritet in the Russian bratva mafiya. This is like a "Capo" in the Italian mob: A crime boss that resolves conflicts and has homage paid to him.

Dimitri is a man not to be fucked with. His heavy Russian accent scares people. And, it should.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

DIMITRI

You're late. You were supposed to be here five minutes ago.

FELIKS

Sorry, sir.

DIMITRI

Don't let it happen again. My time is valuable. Don't you fuckin' waste it.

FELIKS

Yes, sir. It won't ever happen again. I promise.

DIMITRI

I don't give a shit about your lame-ass promises. You promised your wife you'd be faithful to her and then go around every goddamn night screwing any whore you can find. I'm telling you to never be late again.

FELIKS

Yes, sir.

DIMITRI

This ain't American baseball. There's no three strikes and you're out. This is the last time you will ever be late. Or... I PROMISE YOU... you'll bleed. And, unlike you, I keep every one of my damn promises. Let's go.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

DIMITRI

Take me to see T-Bone. That bastard's been ripping me off and only a dumb ass would steal from me. It's lesson time and I'll need your help later.

FELIKS

Whatever you say boss, I do for you.

DIMITRI

Let's go find him.

EXT. INNER-CITY NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

On a drug dealing STREET CORNER, we find TYRONE "T-BONE" PORTERHOUSE. A sweaty, fidgety black man with freckles.

T-Bone's passing out small little BAGS OF HEROIN to suburban white kids. We see a quick transaction. A flash of CASH followed by a dime bag or two tossed onto an SUV's floor.

Feliks drives up and rolls down his window.

FELIKS

Get in the back.

TYRONE

How come? Why da fuck should I do dat?

DIMITRI (O.S.)

(from the back)

Because I said so.

Tyrone gets in.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

DIMITRI

Keep my envelope in your pocket.
Any other cash on you, you can hold
onto. Whatever drugs you got, gets
tossed out the window... now.

As Feliks speeds off, T-Bone tosses out the window about 15
tiny bags of drugs. In the SIDE-VIEW MIRROR, we see PEOPLE
in disarray, scuffling for the stuff.

DIMITRI

Good boy.

TYRONE

Shit man!... Don't call me boy.

DIMITRI

I'll call you whatever the hell I
want to.

Dimitri makes a "Give it to me" gesture. In tribute, T-Bone
hands over an ENVELOPE of cash.

DIMITRI

(to Feliks)

Pull over. Somewhere discrete.

INT. INSIDE LIMO - NIGHT

DIMITRI

(handing the envelope to
Feliks)

Count it.

TYRONE

I'm not cappin'. You think I Fox
News? You don't trust me?

DIMITRI

No. I don't. Every penny better be
there or Feliks here will make it
look like you had an accidental
Fentanyl overdose.

TYRONE

It all there. Even da cash I forget
las' time. Like I told ya, it was
juzza mistake. Math's not my strong
point. Didn't do good in school.
Dropped out. Hey, bad teachers,
man.

FELIKS

He's paid what he owes, even what was missing last week, but there's nothing more in here to express his appreciation.

DIMITRI

Business not been good enough for you to give me a proper... what shall we call it? Hmm... A donation? Yes. Donation. A nice word.

TYRONE

Donation? Shiii'I-dunno. For what?

DIMITRI

Ah, "T", not expressing to me some genuine gratitude, for not cutting off your balls, is a huge miscalculation on your part. Not good. What is it? You don't want to make me happy? Are you lacking the proper motivation?

FELIKS

Boss, I know how to inspire people. Do you want me to make sure T-Bone is paying attention?

DIMITRI

(to Tyrone)

I hear the drug business is booming for you, but not the streets. How about you do better and get your nasty skanks and old whores to make us more money. Listen boy, I'm telling you, if you don't want to live the rest of your life as a fucking eunuch, you need new girls. Prettier ones.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. THE LIZARO HOUSEHOLD, CEBU CITY - DAY

Liwayway walks through the front door into the house. Her brother trails behind her.

A crushed BEER CAN flies past, tossed by Li's dad PABLO LIZARO. It lands next to a TRASHCAN, joining others on the floor all around it. The tall cans say "El Diablo 12%" and the short ones say "Manila Beer".

Pablo and Liwayway's mother, VICTORIA LIZARO, are having a loud argument.

PABLO

Don't you dare complain to me about money, bitch!

VICTORIA

We have to eat. I need money for that.

PABLO

I drive my jeepney the entire day and all I can earn with it is about 2,000 pesos.

VICTORIA

You're nothing but a pathetic drunk. A weakling. You always seem to find money for El Diablo. But, we're always running out of money for food, and for whatever else we need for the kids and the house.

PABLO

It's those buwisit Cebuanos! They won't tip a man who speaks only Tagalog and English.

VICTORIA

Liar. Don't you dare blame our neighbors. It's you! You are a dog. BE A MAN! Go work in the shipyards and make some real money.

PABLO

Cebu favors Cebuanos. My ol' man should have never knocked-up a Cebu girl! Mom should have gotten an abortion. Then I wouldn't have to be here to eat your shit all the time!

VICTORIA

Don't say that. You are supposed to act like a good Catholic, even if you're not one. You sin when you even think about abortion. Stop that right now!

PABLO

I don't give a shit that you want to go to America. Ain't happenin'. 2,000 pesos is like \$38.00 in U.S. money. That's for a whole day of work! We'd be even poorer in the U.S.A.

VICTORIA

Pablo you just drink, screw, and go right to sleep. You lazy. You move
(MORE)

VICTORIA (cont'd)
 like a snail. Slow at everything.
 Except sex. You really quick with
 that. In just seconds, poof, you
 done. Such a disappointment. You
 only think about satisfying
 yourself. Always selfish.

Pablo walks over and punches Victoria hard. She cries out.

AMADO
 I thought they'd be happy today.

LIWAYWAY
 They live a hard life. We'll be
 better off than them because we're
 gonna leave this place. You and me.

AMADO
 When?

LIWAYWAY
 Soon. Now, let's go. You're going
 to go to Aunt Tala's. She's gotta
 cake for you. I've got to go to my
 class. I'll stop by and get you
 after that.

EXT. A ROAD IN THE POOR SECTION OF CEBU - DAY

They walk down the road in silence.

When they come to a fork, Amado goes left, towards Aunt
 Tala's place. Li takes the right fork towards the town
 center and COLON STREET.

That street used to be the heart of the city. It is more than a
 bit run-down now.

Li is joined by her best friend DALISAY PRADO. "Dal", too,
 is young and pretty, but significantly taller than Li and
 dark.

Dalisay flaunts her brownish, caramel-colored skin by
 wearing short-shorts and a top that exposes her midriff.

They walk side-by-side in silence. At least, for a while.

DALISAY
 You're quiet.

LIWAYWAY
 Dalisay, jibber-jabbering away
 non-stop is something you do, not
 me. It's just that mom and dad are
 fighting again. They didn't even
 congratulate Amado on his
 Communion. They didn't even see
 him.

DALISAY

Bad fight?

LIWAYWAY

Dad hit mom. I hate him.

DALISAY

They've been together a very long time. It'll be okay.

Dalisay reaches out and grabs Liwayway's arm to stop her.

DALISAY

I said they'd be okay.

LIWAYWAY

No they won't.

DALISAY

They always kiss and make up. Don't they? You know. Make-up sex? My mom and dad do that. Don't your parents do that, too?

LIWAYWAY

From what I gather, that doesn't go very well.

DALISAY

What do you mean?

LIWAYWAY

Never mind. It's not important. Amado looked like such a handsome young man, too.

DALISAY

In the Philippines, guys are always treated different than girls. It's no big deal. Amado will get over it.

LIWAYWAY

I'm not so sure.

DALISAY

He'll discover girls and won't think at all about any stupid Communion. He's cute. When he grows up, he's going to be a lady-killer.

LIWAYWAY

My brother?

DALISAY

Trust me. He'll be like a k-pop star and attract girls to him like hair to a balloon full of static.

(MORE)

DALISAY (cont'd)

Don't worry. He'll be okay when he notices the opposite sex. Girls are a guy's best medicine.

LIWAYWAY

Yeah, how's that?

DALISAY

Girls are like marijuana. They can make boys forget and feel really, really good. Even exhausted. Sweaty. Literally drained and reaching out for a cigarette.

LIWAYWAY

Shame on you.

DALISAY

Amado's lucky that some priest hasn't been chasing him all around.

LIWAYWAY

Oh my God! Stop that.

DALISAY

Just sayin'.

As they continue their walk, TWO MEN, strangers to the girls, are approaching from the opposite direction.

Dal jumps onto a nearby LIGHTPOST. She spins on it as if it were a stripper's pole with her moves sexy, exotic, and naughty.

She winks at the men as they pass. It has the desired effect. After some shared quiet laughs, Li and Dal resume their walk.

They're nearing DAVE'S FITNESS STUDIO. Dal has exciting news. She becomes a one-girl pep squad.

DALISAY

Well... are you going to ask me?

LIWAYWAY

I'm afraid to.

DALISAY

You want to get out of the City of Cebu, just like me.

LIWAYWAY

Maybe.

DALISAY

I've almost got my ticket punched for Canada! Some rich rancher... a
(MORE)

DALISAY (cont'd)
 widower... at a place called Ta Ta
 Creek.

LIWAYWAY
 Where's that?

DALISAY
 Wherever British Columbia is. I
 guess they call it that because
 they speak English there, and not
 French. I don't know if there's a
 French Columbia in Canada. Maybe
 there is, maybe not.

(beat)
 It's funny. You know what ta-tas
 are, don't you? They're tits! This
 old fart lives on Tits Creek!
 Unreal. I'm going to live with this
 guy and all his horses and wild
 moose and them cows and such shit.

LIWAYWAY
 Huh? What?

DALISAY
 I'm gonna' screw like mad until
 this guy keels over. Then I'm going
 to the bank and withdraw all his
 money and come back here. Retire
 before age 30!

LIWAYWAY
 That does not sound right in so
 many ways. It's immoral.

DALISAY
 Not according to Father Rafael. He
 will marry us proper. Then I fly to
 Vancouver. Then a train. Then a car
 through the Canadian Rockies.
 That's what they call their
 mountains. I'll send you pictures.

Dal makes that V-shaped peace sign about her eyes, which
 Asian girls do.

LIWAYWAY
 Are you sure you want to leave this
 place?

DALISAY
 Canada will be lovely. It'll be
 exciting. Oh, Li, it will be such a
 thrill! I won't miss this place at
 all. Except for you, of course.

LIWAYWAY
 Will I get to meet this guy?

DALISAY

Of course, you're going to be my
Maid of Honor.

LIWAYWAY

How old is he?

DALISAY

65

LIWAYWAY

Holy cow! No wonder this guy lives
on Tits Creek. He doesn't get to
see many of those anymore I would
think. He probably can't even get
it up.

DALISAY

That's why they make the blue pill.
You know, it's kind of yucky to
think about. But, it is the price
one must pay. Plus, I'm getting a
tattoo, in just the right place. An
arrow. To point the way.

Liwayway SNORTS.

LIWAYWAY.

No way!!!

Li can't help but laugh.

LIWAYWAY

C'mon. Joking aside, how did his
wife die? He didn't kill her, did
he?

DALISAY

Cancer. No kids either. Lucky me.
So, the cash will be all mine when
he croaks.

LIWAYWAY

Oh my God! Shame, double shame, on
you.

DALISAY

C'mon, he's going to die shortly
anyway. Maybe five-to-ten years
from now or so. If we have a lot of
hot sex, he'll probably go quicker
than that.

Dalisay pantomimes a heart attack.

LIWAYWAY

You're a bad girl.

DALISAY

I'm sure he'd rather die soon.
Exhausted, breathing heavy, and
smiling at a hottie like me - than
later. You know. Alone and
scowling, all puckered-up, with his
hand on a limp cock. Or, worse
still, poking some fat, farting,
babushka-wearing old lady with
socks fallen around her ankles.

LIWAYWAY

You're going to burn in Hell.

DALISAY

God helps those that help
themselves. Think about it. You can
do what I do and be free of this
place.

LIWAYWAY

I don't know.

DALISAY

Just do it. Follow me. There are
lots of guys in the U.S. and Canada
that need a wife.

LIWAYWAY

What are the requirements?

DALISAY

Just exchange sex for housing.

LIWAYWAY

That's not what I meant.

DALISAY

That is the ONLY requirement. It's
small stuff. That's not any
different from what goes on here.
You find a boy. You marry. He
brings home money. You have sex.
And, repeat, and repeat, and
repeat. So, if you are going to
have to do it anyway, it's just a
matter of what you think it's
worth. Do you want a poor, dirty,
Filipino boy, who earns little
money, and live in a dump... or, do
you deserve someone who is a good
provider with loads of money, so
you can have designer clothes, a
nice car, and a beautiful big
house? Just think about it. Think
about what your future looks like
if you stay here.

They turn and walk into their destination.

INT. DAVE'S FITNESS STUDIO - DAY

MAIN STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING EXERCISE ROOM

DAVE RAMIREZ runs this Fitness Studio. Dave is short and well built. Lean and muscular, he likes to show off his well-toned body.

Dave is a good choreographer. But, he's also a high-testosterone alpha male. He's easily sexually aroused. Dave seeks low-investment sex. He wants it quick-and-fast.

When the girls walk in, Dave is chatting with a MALE PATRON lifting weights.

DAVE

Here comes my favorite.

PATRON

Which one's your favorite? The tall one?

DAVE

Not a chance. She's brown. Who the hell wants an itim [translates to "dark"] Tagalog girl? Even if she is thin and pretty, like Dal.

PATRON

Dalisay's got a nice ass.

DAVE

I give you that, but I don't want to see a coffee-colored butt. I can get that from 95 per cent of the bargirls on Colon. I got my eyes on that little one. Skin like glass. Flawless. White like paper... maybe snow. Light equals beautiful, they say. It's what I crave.

PATRON

White is nice. No debate here.

DAVE

Brown girls come from a line of field workers who were stuck in the sun. Fair-skinned women all trace back to royalty. You might have to go back several generations, but all the white girls have noble blood.

PATRON

Well, she does look like a princess.

DAVE

I will get inside that one soon. Really soon. Today, maybe. She likes me. I know it. I just have to charm her. I betcha she's a virgin! Just watch. Tomorrow she'll be all smiles.

PATRON

Fine. Whatever you say. So, you're not going to be mad at me, if I try my luck with that tall one? I don't give a shit if she's not Snow White. She looks fine. A shantytown brown is good enough for me.

DAVE

Have at it.

The girls approach.

DALISAY

We're ready. Let's Get Down On It!

DAVE

Maybe Kool and The Gang is the way to go. I'll gather up the others.

ZUMBA ROOM

Dave fires up the group's favorite SONG. They all dance and workout, having much fun, until the session is over.

The Patron that Dave was speaking with when the girls walked-in is hitting on Dalisay. He seems to be having much success.

A sweaty Liwayway sits on the floor, back against the wall, knees up. Rameriz plops down next to her.

DALISAY

Hey, Li! Mr. Muscles here has asked me to go with him to see the last hour of the soccer game down the street. And, I've agreed. We'll be back soon.

LIWAYWAY

Okay. Have fun. Be careful.

DALISAY

I will.

"Muscles" (the Patron) and Dal leave.

DAVE

Hey, Liwayway. Luna got married and is gonna have a baby. Girl's just
(MORE)

DAVE (cont'd)
too fat now to dance Ballroom with
me anymore.

LIWAYWAY
That's not a nice thing to say.

DAVE
I'm looking for a new partner. Do
you think you'd be interested in
winning some money at the regional
dance contest?

LIWAYWAY
I could use some money, sure. How
much we talking about?

DAVE
If we win... 150,000 pesos, split
50/50.

LIWAYWAY
That's a lot of money.

DAVE
Yes it is. Think of what you could
do with so much money.

LIWAYWAY
I could leave this place.

DAVE
I don't know why anyone would want
to leave, but you could do anything
you'd want with your share. Of
course, I mean, if we won.

LIWAYWAY
I'd leave. No doubt about it.

DAVE
Interested?

LIWAYWAY
Maybe.

DAVE
C'mon. Let's do this.

LIWAYWAY
I don't know if I'm good enough.

DAVE
Judges like attractive girls that
look like you. You know... like a
dazzling diamond.

LIWAYWAY
I don't dazzle.

Li takes a big swig out of her WATER BOTTLE and excuses herself to go to the RESTROOM and freshen up.

INT. FITNESS STUDIO - FOLLOWING DAVE'S ACTIONS (DAY)

While Li is in the restroom, Dave takes out of his pocket a VIAL clearly marked: "Ketamine. For Veterinary Use Only. Made in Australia."

He fills a SYRINGE and then squirts this date rape drug into Li's water bottle. Gives it a shake.

Li soon returns. She chugs all the water that remains in the bottle.

Li now jiggles her empty water bottle.

LIWAYWAY

Got any bottled water?

DAVE

Yeah, in the gym. The little fridge by the rowing machine.

LIWAYWAY

Then I'll be right back.

Li's heading to the gym. Dave stares at her butt in motion.

Liwayway looks back over her shoulder and smiles. Dave enjoys this glance-back. He begins to whisper to himself.

DAVE

Nubiles. Gotta love 'em. Without doubt that girl is at the top of my "To Do" list. Look at that ass! Callipygian shit for sure!

Li returns and sits back down, but quickly gets sick and rushes back to the restroom. Dave waits outside the door. When Liwayway reappears, she's really messed-up.

DAVE

Whoa. I better take you to the back to lie down, follow me. Anyone else in your family sick?

LIWAYWAY

Nobody's sick.

DAVE

Can you be pregnant?

LIWAYWAY

Not a chance.

DAVE
(evil-grinning and to
himself)
That's what I figured.

DAVE'S ROOM

Dave lays Li down on the BED. He then goes to a makeshift BAR to make some type of potent alcoholic DRINK.

DAVE
Here. This is medicine for your
stomach.

LIWAYWAY
Thanks. Don't know what happened.
Just all of a sudden, I'm sick.

Liwayway tastes the drink.

LIWAYWAY
Ooh, it's too strong.

DAVE
Just drink it. It will help.

Dave tilts the glass, forcing Li to chug or choke. Seconds after the last swallow, she's out cold.

Dave pulls down her PANTS. She's wearing WHITE COTTON HIP HUGGER PANTIES. He gasps.

DAVE
I'm going to have some fun.

*** USING IMPLIED ANGLES ONLY ***

Dave pushes aside her panties, exposing her genitals.

DAVE
Oh My! Perfect!

He lifts up Li's shirt high above her head, restraining her arms. He undoes her bra and removes her panties.

As Dave takes off his own clothes...

LIWAYWAY
(through her lack of
consciousness)
Who are you?

DAVE
I'm the boy that's going to do you.

LIWAYWAY
(dazed and faraway)
Okay.

EXT. COLON STREET - DAY

A drunken Pablo Lizaro is tottering unsteadily down Colon Street. He is making a beeline toward the dance studio.

INT. DAVE'S ROOM - DAY

Dave obviously has his fingers inside Li.

DAVE

Do you like that? Does it feel good?

LIWAYWAY

(unopened eyes and hushed, drugged, words)

Not really. It'll be better if I do it myself. Let me do it. I know just where to touch. Hmmm. Ooo. Oh, wow. Wonderful.

DAVE

I'm not going to use a rubber.

LIWAYWAY

(rambling silly giggles)

A rubber what? You need a rubber band for something? Rubber boots? Rubber ducky? A hot water bottle? A garden hose? A raincoat? Car tires?

DAVE

Girl, I just need to get off.

Dave proceeds to rape her.

DAVE

(to himself)

One tight bitch. Whoopee!

EXT/INT. FOLLOWING - DAY

Pablo is now entering the studio.

PABLO

Li? Are you here? I know you're in here. Olly, Olly, Oxen, All Free Free. You're it!

Pablo's acting foolish, until he overhears.

INT. DAVE'S ROOM - DAY

DAVE

Oh Yeah, get on your stomach. Just like that! Hot damn!

Dave is moaning loudly, lost in his vile excitement.

LIWAYWAY

(somewhat coming around)

Huh?

(beat; whispering)

Stop, stop, stop.

(then realizing in horror
what's happening,
SHOUTS)

Oh God!!!

Pablo opens the DOOR and sees Li with Dave.

Dave, not seeing who entered...

DAVE

If that's you Dalisay, you're next.
I'm man enough for both of you!
And, when you and I are done, we'll
make it a threesome!

Dave cums.

Pablo crosses the room and rivets a hateful stare at Dave.

DAVE

Don't look at me that way old man.
I'm not your problem. She is! Your
daughter is one loose girl. I think
she's screwing everybody on the
island. And, if she's been telling
you anything different, she's a
liar.

Pablo takes a swing at Dave, but Dave easily blocks it. The
two are face-to-face, staring each other down.

DAVE

Old man, she likes to get drunk and
fuck that one. You need to put a
leash on her. She came onto me.
What did you expect me to do? Just
walk away? I'm a one hundred
percent, cocked-and-ready-to-go,
heterosexual male, not a faggot.
How many guys has she fucked anyway
daddy? Dozens? Hundreds? I'm not
going to turn away any babe that
comes onto me.

Pablo steps back a bit.

DAVE

You're a smart man. Your spawn or
not, Filipino guys stick together.
You understand. It's just not manly
to turn down an opportunity. You
get it, I'm sure. She started it. I
just finished it. I did exactly

(MORE)

DAVE (cont'd)
what SHE wanted. Exactly what YOU
should do, if a young and pretty
woman threw herself at you. I'm
human. You're human. We are both
men. We think like men. We act like
men. We fuck like men.

EXT. COLON STREET A SHORT TIME LATER - DAY

Walking arm and arm, Muscles and Dal are returning to the
studio from the soccer game. They turn to enter the studio.

INT. FITNESS STUDIO - DAY

Dave is lounging in a chair, smoking a joint and smirking.

DALISAY
Where's my girl?

DAVE
She left with her dad.

DAVE
(continuing to Muscles)
I told you mister. She likes me.

Dave grabs his crotch in an obscene gesture.

DAVE
(now to both)
The old man caught us in the act.
Li couldn't get enough of me. And,
I didn't let her down. Like Tony
The Tiger, I was G-R-E-A-T !!! Left
her satisfied. Drained and on cloud
nine.

DALISAY
What you're saying can't be true.

DAVE
Oh, yes it is.

Dal turns to Muscles and slaps him.

DALISAY
You were part of this. You guys
planned this. Fuck you both. Oh my
God! Poor Li. What the fuck have
you two done? If Dave is your
friend, I know the kind of guy you
are, too. You are both nasty pieces
of shit.

Dal goes to leave.

PATRON (MUSCLES)

Geez Dave, thanks for screwing it all up.

DAVE

Screwing it all up is the absolute right thing to say! I showed her a good time. A downright FAN-TAS-TIC mind-blowing experience! Fuck yeah! Lucky me! One girl. All holes.

ESTABLISHING SHOT OF LIZARO HOUSE - DAY

We hear Liwayway scream.

INT. LIZARO HOUSE - DAY

In Li's bedroom, Pablo is beating the girl. There's a bunch of IMPROVISED DIALOGUE that goes along with the beating. More than once, Pablo calls Liwayway, Victoria.

EXT/INT. LIZARO HOUSE - DAY

Dalisay is quickly walking up to the front door. She knocks as we hear Li screaming once more. Victoria opens the door.

VICTORIA

Dalisay, you better leave.

Dalisay barges in.

DALISAY

You have got to stop your husband. Li didn't do anything wrong. I know it. That bastard Dave. He needs to fucking die.

VICTORIA

Pablo says she was enjoying herself. And, if he didn't barge in, Li would have been with all the guys in town performing some kind of sick party train - whatever that is.

DALISAY

You cannot possibly believe that! We need to call the police. Get her to a hospital.

VICTORIA

I don't know what to believe. Pablo says he saw her. Doing things. He says she knew exactly what she was doing. Like she did it many times before. I'm so ashamed.

Pablo comes rushing down the stairs into the main room.

PABLO

You get the fuck out of my house
nog-nog.

Victoria runs off.

PABLO

(harangue)

You stole my baby's soul. Taught
her to sin. Did you have sex with
her, too? You're just a lesbian who
ruins other girls. Did you touch
her? Lick her? Did SHE lick YOU?
You taught my child to be bi-sexual
and got her to smoke pot and booze
it up. I know you did this. You
made this happen! Always a bad
influence on her. Get out!

Li is standing at the top of the staircase and Dal sees her.
Li is all bruised and bleeding. Dalisay gasps at the sight.
They both begin wailing uncontrollably.

PABLO

See. You love each other. Queers.
I'm taking my child to the priest,
and if you follow demon, Father
Rafael will douse you with Holy
Water. You will whimper in pain.

Pablo, violently, is throwing Dalisay out the door. But, as
he does so, Liwayway tries to stop it.

Dad punches his daughter in the stomach. Li buckles over. As
she does so, Dalisay, on the sly, slips a piece of PALM
FROND ANGELFISH ORIGAMI into her hand.

As Mr. Lizaro flings Dal to the curb, Liwayway pockets the
small gift.

EXT. THE BASILICA RECTORY - DAY

Pablo knocks on the RECTORY DOOR.

PABLO

Father Rafael, excuse me. It's my
daughter. She has sinned in the
worst way.

FATHER RAFAEL

In what way is that?

PABLO

She is not a virgin anymore! She
can never get married now. She's
tainted.

FATHER RAFAEL

Liwayway? Are you sure? Not Li. No. I would not expect that of her. Why do you say this?

PABLO

I caught her blaspheming when she was letting some guy have his way with her. I saw it with my own eyes. Shouting God's name when she came, like she was some famous porn star.

FATHER RAFAEL

Pablo, you've been drinking. You're not making sense.

PABLO

She has sinned against God, her faith, you, and me. Sinned against her mother. The whole family. She has disgraced us all.

FATHER RAFAEL

You better come in. Is Liwayway at home?

PABLO

She is on the street where she belongs.

FATHER RAFAEL

You have her walking the streets?

PABLO

She's in the jeepney at the curb... right there [pointing].

FATHER RAFAEL

Go get her. I want to see you both inside.

Pablo fetches Li. As they walk up, Father Rafael can see that Li's been badly beaten.

INT. RECTORY - DAY

FATHER RAFAEL

Did the boy do this to her?

PABLO

I disciplined her. Bible says I should stone her. I still may.

FATHER RAFAEL

Let's not do that. The stoning, I mean. Pablo, tell me again what happened.

PABLO

She was having intercourse with her teacher.

LIWAYWAY

(browbeaten)

He isn't my teacher and...

FATHER RAFAEL

(interrupting)

Liwayway, you go to the other room and close the door. Think about what you did. Pray. Ask God for forgiveness and strength.

INT. FOLLOWING LIWAYWAY (TO THE RECTORY BEDROOM) - DAY

We hear Pablo rambling unintelligibly. Soon after, we hear Father Rafael.

FATHER RAFAEL (O.S.)

I will go to her now and talk to her. The church does not condone fornication or lust.

RECTORY BEDROOM

Liwayway is sitting on the bed crying.

LIWAYWAY

Oh, Father. I don't know where to begin.

FATHER RAFAEL

You can start by telling me why you could not save yourself for a good man. Saved that precious gift of yours [points to her groin] for somebody who is as kind as me.

LIWAYWAY

I was but...

FATHER RAFAEL

If you were tempted, you should have come to me, your priest, instead of acting like a bargirl.

LIWAYWAY

I am not a bargirl.

FATHER RAFAEL

Still, you have started down that sinful path. I could have helped you with such thoughts. Taught you how to deal with your feelings. How to enjoy them. Without you ever having to lose your virginity.

Father Rafael begins massaging Li. In spite of the sixth and ninth Commandments, he has always coveted her.

LIWAYWAY

Father...

FATHER RAFAEL

I know that God wants to forgive you, but you must do penance.

LIWAYWAY

Why?

FATHER RAFAEL

It is not too late to learn how good Catholic ladies act before marriage. I should have taught you this earlier. I am thinking that much of this is my fault. I failed you. God wants you to enjoy romance, not merely be some sex-crazed girl satisfying her own desires.

LIWAYWAY

You think I'm sex crazed? No!

FATHER RAFAEL

You need to know how to please others, not just yourself. It's a sin to think only of yourself at the expense of others.

Father Rafael stops the massage and moves around to face Liwayway. He makes her kneel in front of him.

FATHER RAFAEL

Liwayway, you now have something to hide. You must fool men into never thinking that you put out.

LIWAYWAY

I don't put out!

FATHER RAFAEL

It is a sin to lie.

LIWAYWAY

I have not sinned.

FATHER RAFAEL

Yes you have. Now you must convince men that you remain fresh and unspoiled. I will teach you the right ways.

LIWAYWAY

Am I spoiled? Rotten like bad fish because of this?

FATHER RAFAEL

Child. You know that in the Philippines, only virgins can marry. We need to teach you to pretend, if not for a Filipino, then for a foreigner. It is my job to get that sex craziness out of you.

LIWAYWAY

You think I'm crazy? Sex crazy? No father. Help me instead.

FATHER RAFAEL

I will help you. I will teach you how to be simple, tender, and above all quiet. Be still. Make no noise in the name of God. Let's learn about love the way Christ wants it to be.

Rafael, priest and creep, is unzipping his fly when Pablo quickly knocks twice on the door and walks right in. The priest recovers quickly.

PABLO

We are going to have to leave soon.

FATHER RAFAEL

I am hearing her Confession.

Li's dad finds himself ill at ease and bows. He begins to walk backwards to the door.

FATHER RAFAEL

No Pablo. Take her.

PABLO

What should I do?

FATHER RAFAEL

Maybe take a belt to her bottom. Treat her like the bad child she is.

EXT/INT. LIZARO HOUSE - DAY

Li and her father are walking up to the front door. Liwayway in the lead.

Pablo is removing his BELT as he and Liwayway enter the home. Li is caught off guard when his belt whips across the back of her thighs. She screams. Victoria runs away and locks herself in another room.

Following Father Rafael's instructions, Pablo uses his belt to brutally spank Li. It is a beating timed to the beat of his rant.

PABLO

Listen whore, you are to pay attention to Father Rafael and do whatever he says to save your goddamn soul! Fucking hooker sleaze! Your gay playmate Dalisay is going straight to Hell and you are tagging right along! That Dave boy is not to blame. You charmed him. Tempted him. Just like Eve in the Garden of Eden, you were a snake! What's a boy to do under such circumstances? Not be a man? You women are all the same... [In falsetto voice] 'C'mon boy, don't you want it? Want it right now?' [Back to normal voice] You were supposed to be my innocent girl, not a dog in heat! A bitch! You don't know how blessed you are to have a decent man asking God Almighty to forgive you. Father Rafael is close to the Lord. He can save YOUR soul... give YOU a second chance at heaven. That's Father Rafael. Much more than a priest. A saint.

Pablo thrashes his daughter and then he locks her up in her room. A crying, sniffing, Liwayway takes out her LAPTOP and goes to www.realpinaybrides.com.

She moves the cursor over the many tabs at the top of the page until she gets to 'Register To Become a Member, Sign-up for Free'. She clicks that tab.

A POP-UP MESSAGE appears: "Best Filipina Dating Service. Your New Chance at a Better Life." She opens that link.

A QUOTE ON A BLACK SCREEN

'We do not remember days, we remember moments. Make moments worth remembering.' Anonymous

INT. MASTER BEDROOM GAGE HOUSE DAYS AFTER LI'S RAPE - NIGHT

ROMULUS GAGE is bent over petting his Labrador retriever. The dog's TAG has its name on it: MOLASSES. A great name for a black lab.

Rom stops giving his dog some loving noogies and stands in front of a mirror. He ties the bow tie of his tuxedo. He looks good. Real good.

INT. GAGE HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Romulus walks into the GREAT ROOM where his wife NATALIE GAGE sits in a wheelchair that is parked next to an end table cluttered with medications and medical equipment.

NATALIE

My dearest and most handsome
Romulus, I bet you're happy to be
returning to work. How long has it
been?

ROMULUS

Too long. Six months. A whole
half-year.

NATALIE

Well, at least you are healthy
enough to return to work. Your STD
would have turned into LTD.
Short-term disability pays 60%;
Long-term pays just 40%... and we
could never live on that.

ROMULUS

We still have a little money left
in our IRA and checking account.

A playful repartee begins. Dueling raconteurs.

NATALIE

You look nice. Almost like Richard
Gere with a rose coming up an
escalator. Well. Almost.

ROMULUS

Thanks. And, you're my Pretty
Woman.

NATALIE

Wrong movie dear, but, at the
hospital, I did hear you use that
"You're a Pretty Woman" line on
every medical professional that was
of the female persuasion.

ROMULUS

I did not.

NATALIE

(nodding 'yes')

Hm, hm. And, you spent hours buck
naked in that hospital with a
fine-looking woman. Not to mention
that you weren't just in the nude,
you were hanging upside down, too!
Pervert. Don't deny it. Thinking of
upgrading your spouse were you?

ROMULUS

Not a chance. They only hung my
nakedness upside down so gravity
could move my intestines out of the
way. And, how unfair. I was just

(MORE)

ROMULUS (cont'd)
having my prostate gland removed by
a robot.

NATALIE
Do you deny that some hot young
female surgeon wasn't with you,
close by, the whole time,
thoroughly checking out your
package?

ROMULUS
No. Of course, she was there. And,
she was definitely staring at my
equipment with her eyes wide open.
But, I have a sneaking suspicion
that she had her clothes on the
whole time... I guess. I'm not
entirely sure about that because I
can't remember a damn thing.
Anesthetized the whole time. I keep
wondering what I missed! Come to
think of it, she WAS smiling at me
when I regained consciousness in
the recovery room. I clearly
remember her saying that everything
looked good, and I did a really
fine job, and things went much
longer than she expected or ever
experienced before, and that's why
I needed to rest.

NATALIE
But, she was one hot doctor. Was
she not?

ROMULUS
Not sure if I should answer that.
But, yes, she's a spectacular
specimen of womanhood. Quite
lovely.

NATALIE
Bastard. Give me a kiss and get
your ass to work.

Romulus leaves by the front door. We hear his CAR DOOR OPEN
AND CLOSE, the IGNITION START, and the CAR DRIVE OFF.

NATALIE
(in a melancholic prayer)
Lord, I'm now alone. Just like
before. Why would you leave me
abandoned like this? Just let me
die. I don't want to live. Take me
soon. I just don't want to feel
anything anymore. Please! Set me
free.

INT. LIZARO HOUSE LI'S ROOM - DAY

Li is on the www.realpinaybrides.com website when a POP-UP appears:

'You have a message.'

Opening that message link, she first sees a short bio of CURTIS CONNER COOPER, which includes a verified Net Worth of \$57-million USD.

His personal message says:

'You are so beautiful. I'm in love already. I'm single and financially very well off. Never been married. But, I think I'll be marrying you!'

EXT. CASINO EMPLOYEE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Rom's car stops at the PARKING ATTENDANT BOOTH. He rolls down the driver's side window.

LOT GUARD

Welcome back Officer Gage. Good to see you returning all ship-shape. You look the same. Real double-oh-seven like. Heard you had quite the scare beating off the Grim Reaper. Killed the killer. Good for you! Always knew you to be the bravest guy here.

EXT. CASINO PROPERTY - NIGHT

Rom walks up to the BUILDING.

A neon sign:

'BIG SHOULDERS SPEAKEASY AND CASINO'.

Another billboard:

'HOME TO RUNAWAY BAY WHERE WHALES WIN! VOTED NORTH AMERICA'S #1 HIGH LIMIT SUITE.'

EXT/INT. CASINO - FOLLOWING (NIGHT)

Romulus reaches the EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE and goes in. His boss, CECIL HILL, known as Unit 7, an enormously big man, greets him.

They head down a long, polished, hallway. Their destination is the OFFICERS MUSTER ROOM.

INT. BACK OF THE CASINO HOUSE / WALK-AND-TALK (NIGHT)

CECIL

God, we missed you. We couldn't rely on anybody to do the job up there the right way.

ROMULUS

Is there a wrong way? C'mon there's only one way.

CECIL

The officers that filled-in for you were star-struck and inattentive. They all failed. So, we've made a decision to give you a partner. She starts her orientation in a few weeks with the next batch of new hires.

ROMULUS

She?

CECIL

Yep.

ROMULUS

'bout time

CECIL

And, this ain't got nothin' to do with us thinking you can't do the job all by yourself because you've been away.

ROMULUS

I can do the job.

CECIL

It's just that Runaway Bay is expanding. A high-rolling Asian clientele has descended upon us. Lots of 'em. Never knew nail salons and take-out restaurants were such cash cows.

ROMULUS

You think I can't handle it?

CECIL

Your eyes won't be able to see everything with the crowds we're getting. And, it's best if it's a female backing you up. Can't have you dashing into the Ladies Room.

ROMULUS

Probably best to get somebody trained-up, the right way, with the right skills, anyway. My cancer treatment may end up not being the cure that was promised and hoped for.

CECIL

You'll really like your new partner. Not much to look at... but sharp. On-the-ball.

ROMULUS

I don't need a pageant winner as a partner. What does a man or woman's looks have to do with the job anyway? We ain't looking for a television news anchor or a Car Show model. I need a partner with brains. Someone who can exercise good judgment. That's all.

CECIL

Trust me. That's for sure what you're getting.

They turn into the MUSTER ROOM, where a surprise Welcome Back reception is planned. There's a CAKE and SODA POP.

OFFICERS

Surprise! Welcome back!

ESTABLISHING SHOT: LUXURIOUS RUNAWAY BAY WITH PATRONS GAMING

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

Romulus is getting a briefing from the High Roller Room OFFICER COMING OFF DUTY.

DEPARTING OFFICER

... so, that gets you up-to-date on what's happening. Any questions?

Rom points to a PATRON at a blackjack table.

ROMULUS

Yeah, who's the new guy?

DEPARTING OFFICER

He's not new. You've just been away for a while. That's CURTIS CONNER COOPER. Likes to be called Triple-C. Nowadays, the highest of our high rollers.

ROMULUS

And he's so special why?

The Departing Officer hands a COMPUTER GAMING MAGAZINE to Romulus. The masthead says: NERD. The cover image is a photo of Curtis with a video game box cover. That box cover is nothing but a big boob Manga cartoon.

The strapline reads: 'The Great God of Gaming'. The Main Cover Line explains: 'Nothing at all like Madden NFL'. Finally, the caption declares: 'Hero to thousands of lonely men living in their mom's basement'.

DEPARTING OFFICER

He's made nearly a billion dollars on that shit, and, in the last few weeks, lost several million of that right here.

ROMULUS

Any issues?

DEPARTING OFFICER

So far we've had no problems with the guy. You have a good night. I'm outta here.

As the Departing Officer leaves, Rom's radio crackles to life. His ear bud tells him to attend to business.

RADIO

Unit One to Unit Fifteen.

ROMULUS

Go ahead One.

INT. CASINO SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS CENTER - NIGHT

It's dark in here. A \$12-million room packed with large display monitors on a huge wall with dozens of smaller monitors on desktops everywhere.

Casino feeds, from cameras nearly everywhere, go to the monitors. You smell the ozone. In the center of the room is a raised PLATFORM with a CAPTAIN'S CHAIR.

Seated in that chair is UNIT #1, Director of Surveillance Operations. A highly professional, social-alpha-obsessive female. Strong and always in control.

Surveillance is identified by its codename ZEUS.

A dozen young and handsome men - Surveillance Technicians - sit at those desks packed with monitors. Colloquially, they are referred to as ONE'S STUD FARM.

RADIO TRAFFIC

UNIT ONE

Radio check.

ROMULUS

Zeus... Fifteen reads you five by five. Lima Charlie.

UNIT ONE

Glad your back and everything worked out. Good to see you. But, then again, you never know, I may be lying.

ROMULUS

Gee thanks, I guess. I heard you were on vacation last week. How'd that go?

UNIT ONE

Took the Harley and went to the Black Hills to see Mt. Rushmore. Best to go in the off-season they say.

ROMULUS

Wasn't much I bet?

UNIT ONE

I wouldn't say that.

ROMULUS

I would. Didn't you ever notice that nearly all the statues and monuments in this country are politicians or wartime combatants? Almost always guys. Men trying to look impressive. When they start making sculptures of teachers and nurses; factory-workers and bricklayers; garbage collectors and social workers; then Carl Sandburg and I will be impressed.

UNIT ONE

Sandburg? Actually, no, I never did notice or even think about that. And, I don't have time to give it much thought now. We got work to do. You're needed at the cage. Title 31.

ROMULUS

10-4. En route.

END RADIO TRAFFIC

INT. ON THE UP ESCALATOR TO RUNAWAY BAY - FOLLOWING (NIGHT)

Amongst the CLAMOR and HUBBUB of a busy casino, T-Bone, Feliks, and Dimitri are all looking sharp. Halfway up the escalator, Dimitri hands a big WAD OF BILLS to Porterhouse.

DIMITRI

Here. You've done well this day. My treat.

TYRONE

Really?

DIMITRI

No strings attached. Have fun. If you do right by me, I do right by you. Understand how this works?

TYRONE

Hell yeah!

At the top, Konstatin hands Feliks his RUNAWAY CLUB CARD.

Feliks holds it up to the electronic lock. CLICK. They are greeted by the Runaway Bay CONSIERGE.

CONSIERGE

Good evening gentleman. Mr. Konstatin, you have two guests tonight?

FELIKS

Yes.

CONSIERGE

Great then. A stop at the bar first?

Feliks looks to Dimitri, who, almost imperceptibly, shakes his head no.

FELIKS

No. To the pit, please.

CONSIERGE

Right away, sirs. Should I send a drink server your way after you buy-in?

A glance by Feliks at Konstantin, who quickly sends back a nuanced look.

FELIKS

Yes. Fine. Make sure it's that petite, hot-as-shit, Puerto Rican MILF. If you have to fetch her from downstairs, do that.

CONSIERGE

Yes sir.

TYRONE
 (looking about and to
 Dimitri)
 Whoa! This joint is bomb-ass sweet
 sauce. Thanks man.

They walk to the pit and sit at a BLACKJACK TABLE. As the three are buying in, Konstatin is all smiles, until he sees Romulus at the CASHIER'S CAGE. His smile becomes a frown.

DIMITRI
 (to Feliks)
 The warden is back.

INT/EXT. GAGE HOUSE HOME OFFICE - FOLLOWING (NIGHT)

We see a crying Natalie completing a membership FORM for the Death With Dignity Society (DWDS), which promotes self-deliverance.

DWDS PAMPHLETS are strewn atop the desk. Natalie completes the form and stuffs it into an ENVELOPE.

She walks through the house to the curbside rural-type MAILBOX. She sets the envelope inside. Lifts the RED FLAG.

EXT. CASINO GUEST PARKING - FOLLOWING (MORNING TWILIGHT)

T-Bone, Feliks, and Dimitri are heading to the limousine. Porterhouse is counting his winnings as he walks.

DIMITRI
 Enjoy it. It will most likely never
 happen again.

They get to the limo. They drive to T-Bone's corner.

The street corner, as expected, is deserted. Feliks opens the car door to let Porterhouse out.

As T-Bone exits, Feliks pulls out a PISTOL, and puts two BULLETS into Poterhouse's skull.

T-Bone crashes to the ground. Feliks bends down and takes Tyrone's winnings and gets back into the limo.

INT. LIMO - DAY

FELIKS
 Here's the thank you money
 dick-head forgot to give you.

DIMITRI
 Nice job. Now, put one of our
 people on this corner and tell them
 to chase off all the whores.

FELIKS
 Sure boss. Will do. But, why?

DIMITRI

Selling sex buys me nothing but trouble. With the pimps, tarts, and toy-boys all gone, there will be fewer cops for me to buy off.

FELIKS

Understood.

DIMITRI

Too many Baptists and ex-con storefront ministers around here. They can put up with the drugs, just not with the world's oldest profession. Got it?

FELIKS

Yes, boss. Got it.

Feliks drops Dimitri off at Lake Point and drives off.

EXT. FERRY DOCK FOLLOWING FELIKS - DAY

Making sure T-Bone's DNA strands and the murder weapon will be long-lost history, Feliks drives the limousine onto an otherwise empty FERRY. We see him pay the pilot.

The ship sails out into Lake Michigan where Feliks deep-sixes the limo and his favorite gun.

INT. LIWAYWAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Li is texting Curtis on her phone or laptop.

SERIES OF INSTANT MESSAGING BUBBLES WITH EMOJIS

CURTIS (TEXT)

'I won big \$\$\$ at casino yesterday!'

LIWAYWAY (TEXT)

'k'

CURTIS (TEXT)

'That means I can afford 2 fly over & visit u & ur parents in-person.'

LIWAYWAY (TEXT)

'I though u said u were rich. U should b able 2 accord trip w/o any gambling \$\$\$.'

LIWAYWAY (TEXT)

(correction)

'Afford not accord. I h8 auto-correct. Urgh!@#!&?!!!'

CURTIS (TEXT)

I'm happy to win at blackjack bcuz
I save my money 2 spoil u!!!! I
wrote ur dad. He said I can marry
u!!! Dowry just \$2k!!! Gr8 deal!
Best \$\$\$ I ever spent! :-) B there
in 10 days.'

INT. SANTO NIÑO BASILICA - DAY

A cavernous and echoing cathedral. Empty but for Liwayway,
her parents, brother, Curtis, and the priest.

FATHER RAFAEL

Do you have the ring?

Amado hands Coop a small black box.

CURTIS

Yes.

FATHER RAFAEL

Curtis and Liwayway, have you come
here freely and without reservation
to give yourselves to each other in
marriage? Will you love and honor
each other as husband and wife for
the rest of your lives? Will you
accept children lovingly from God
and bring them up according to the
Law of Love and Compassion?

LIWAYWAY

I will.

CURTIS

I will.

FATHER RAFAEL

Since it is your intention to enter
into marriage, with your hands
joined and declaring your consent
before God in the Grand Cathedral
of the Child Christ, I ask: Do you
Liwayway Lizaro, in the presence of
your father Pablo, take Curtis
Conner Cooper of the United States
of America as your lawful husband,
to have and to hold, from this day
forward, all the days of your life?

LIWAYWAY

I do.

FATHER RAFAEL

And, do you Curtis Conner Cooper
take Liwayway Lizaro as your lawful
(MORE)

FATHER RAFAEL (cont'd)
 bride, to have and to hold, from
 this day forward, all the days of
 your life?

CURTIS

I do.

FATHER RAFAEL
 You have declared your consent
 before the Church. May the Lord in
 his goodness strengthen your
 consent and fill you with his
 blessings. What God has joined, let
 no one separate. Amen.

We are drawn to the crucifix above the altar.

FATHER RAFAEL (O.S.)

You may kiss the bride.

EXT. SOON THEREAFTER IN FRONT OF SANTO NIÑO BASILICA - DAY

CURTIS

And, as I promised, I'll be sending
 you a check to re-roof this old
 place. I can afford it and you need
 it.

FATHER RAFAEL

God bless you.

CURTIS

Thanks for the advice about
 marrying Liwayway here and not in
 America. Now, I won't have to worry
 about her ever getting a divorce
 and pocketing what's mine. Money I
 earned. I didn't know divorce was
 illegal in the Philippines. For a
 guy that cannot marry, you sure
 know how to protect a husband's
 rights. I owe you.

FATHER RAFAEL

No. It is Li that owes you. You
 came to her in her time of need.
 How did you find her?

CURTIS

Simple. I just Googled: 'Mail Order
 Bride Starter Kit'.

FATHER RAFAEL

You serious?

CURTIS

Oh yeah.

(MORE)

CURTIS (cont'd)
 (beat; day-dreaming)
 Look at her. So beautiful. A tiny
 hourglass body. Petite meat. Fuck
 yeah!
 (catches himself)
 Oh, sorry padre.

FATHER RAFAEL
 Don't worry. We priests don't think
 of things like that.

INT. INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL O'HARE AIRPORT CHICAGO - DAY

Curtis and Liwayway are deplaning arm-in-arm. HAWAIIAN LEIS
 are draped over their necks and shoulders.

CURTIS
 Enjoy your honeymoon?

Li does not answer that question, but asks one of her own.

LIWAYWAY
 This place is H-U-G-E !! Where do I
 go to show my passport?

Curtis takes Liwayway to the AUTOMATED PASSPORT CONTROL
 MACHINES.

Though designed to help travelers move quickly through the
 U.S. Border clearance process, they all have long lines.

As he waits, unable or unwilling to control his perverse
 instincts and urges, Coop is checking out all the women in
 the area.

He gives an extraordinarily pretty flight attendant a
 terribly long once-over. The lech ogles, sneers, and
 rubbernecks.

Li does not see this.

EXT. O'HARE AIRPORT ARRIVALS AREA - DAY

Curtis, Li, and a RED CAP PORTER with a LUGGAGE CART
 overloaded with baggage, exit the airport doors.

As the porter and a bantam-weight LIMOUSINE DRIVER load the
 suitcases and bags into the trunk, Li reaches for the limo's
 door handle.

CURTIS
 (angrily shouts)
 No! What the fuck are you doing!

A baffled Li is obviously frightened by the outburst.

Triple-C points at the driver.

CURTIS

That's his fuckin' job! You wait!
Don't be a dumbass flip your whole
life.

Soon thereafter, the driver comes around to open the door
for his passengers.

CURTIS

Next time, do that fuckin' first,
you little shit. Did you find it
amusing or entertaining making us
just stand here? We're in a hurry.
Move it!

Li and Coop get in. As the limo drives off, the porter
remains standing there with his tip-less hand still out.

RED CAP PORTER

(to himself)

Asswipe dork! Geeks and jocks get
all the good-looking babes. Goes to
show you, the only thing hot women
want is a big... thick... fat.....
wallet.

INT. LIMO - DAY

LIWAYWAY

I didn't mind waiting.

CURTIS

That's not the point. I minded! I
gotta get to my office. You know...
chop-chop. Everytime I'm away
there's some kind of crisis. My
wife's not gonna be just an
empty-headed jungle girl. You're
gonna need to change a lot of
things. Starting with your hair. I
think you are going to like being a
redhead or blonde.

LIWAYWAY

Why do I have to change the color
of my hair? I'm not a member of
BlackPink or Girls Generation. I
don't want to.

CURTIS

Tough shit. You will. Because I
said so.

ESTABLISHING SHOT: ST. SEBASTIAN HOSPITAL BUILDING

INT. CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP MEETING - DAY

GROUP LEADER

For those of you, who are new to the Saint Sebastian Hospital's Caregiver Support Group, welcome! I know that many of you have your significant others in our Adult Daycare Service and that will end in a bit more than an hour. So, let's get started... starting with you [points to Rom].

ROMULUS

Holy crap! Me?

GROUP LEADER

Yeah, you. You're new. What's your name and what brings you here?

ROMULUS

I'm Romulus. Named after the boy in Roman mythology who killed his brother and was suckled by a wolf. Don't know what my parents were thinking. Thank God Star Trek came along and made my name cool.

GROUP LEADER

Nice to meet you. And?

ROMULUS

My wife is very ill. Dying. Suffering. Housebound, not hospitalized. There's just my wife and me. We don't have kids. We don't have any other reliable family members. They either live far away or they just don't give a shit. I was doing a very good job of supporting her. Then I got cancer and nearly died on her. My cancer's in remission now, but I'm not cured. I'm really scared because I know my time on Earth is limited. And, she needs me.

GROUP MEMBER

We're all afraid. Just like you. We dread watching our loved-ones suffer. Many of us fear we'll die on the people who rely on us being there. We drink too much. We get seriously depressed. How YOU holding up?

ROMULUS

I don't know if I can deal with it anymore. I'm terrified I'm going to let my wife down. Let her down again. I kinda just blew her off when she first got ill. Doctors told me it was all in her head. I believed the doctors and not my wife. I regret that.

GROUP LEADER

What's her name, and how did you meet her?

ROMULUS

Her name is Natalie. We are really different people. Proof that opposites attract. She's prudent and reserved. I'm laid-back and outgoing. I knew in second grade I was going to marry her. She was the new girl in school. Real pretty. I started hanging around her. She called me a sissy for not playing with the boys. Told me to get lost and said I was a pest. Well, she succeeded in getting me to leave her alone, but when I walked away that day I said: "I'm going to marry you!" And, I did, while in college. Over 30-years ago.

GROUP LEADER

You still love her?

ROMULUS

With all my heart and soul. She's a woman one would die for.

EXT. ST. SEBASTIAN PARKING LOT - DAY

Romulus walks to his vehicle and then gets in his car.

There's a STICKY NOTE adhered to the steering column that says: 'STOP AT PET STORE'. He removes the note and drives off.

INT. BOARDROOM CURTIS COMPANY - DAY

Eight BOARD MEMBERS are in the conference room ahead of Curtis's arrival. There's a sign on the door: BOARD MEETING IN PROGRESS: DO NOT ENTER.

BOARDMEMBER #1

I don't care if he invented the game. He may have founded this company, but he's an asshole. And, now there's a question about the
(MORE)

BOARDMEMBER #1 (cont'd)
 disappearance of corporate funds.
 Coop's a dick. A cheat and a thief.
 If we get audited, we're in it
 deep. Right now, the business is
 making so much money, it won't be
 noticed.

BOARDMEMBER #3
 I agree. We owe our loyalty to the
 investors, not Triple-C. I don't
 want to see an otherwise well-run
 and profitable enterprise end up in
 a shocking scandal.

BOARDMEMBER #6
 Listen everybody. We're not killing
 the goose that laid the golden egg
 here. We're keeping the egg from
 getting poached. There is
 absolutely no doubt about it.
 Curtis has been embezzling funds.
 And, we have to keep things quiet.
 I mean really hush-hush. Give him a
 golden parachute and let's be done
 with him.

BOARD CHAIR
 Before he gets here, let's have a
 show of hands. Who wants to keep
 Curtis around? [No hands] Who wants
 to see him gone? [All hands]

Curtis Conner Cooper, jet-lagged and ragged in appearance,
 enters the Conference Room for the last time.

ESTABLISHING SHOT: SUBURBAN PETCO STORE - DAY

Rom enters his local Petco.

INT. SUBURBAN PETCO STORE - DAY

Rom's walking the aisles and is putting dog items in his
 hand-carry basket. As he walks past the book display, he
 stops dead in his tracks.

There it is. The book's front cover has the picture of a
 Labrador retriever on it. The title says: 'Black Lab
 Obedience'.

Rom puts the BOOK in his basket. He pays for the stuff. Goes
 to his car. Drives off.

EXT/INT. ROM'S CAR AT A STREET CORNER STOP LIGHT - DAY

A young man is selling flowers. Romulus rolls down his car
 window and purchases a simple bouquet of mixed flowers.

EXT. GAGE HOUSEHOLD DRIVEWAY - DAY

Rom drives onto his property, but before he turns off his car, he retrieves the BLANK CARD that goes with the flower bouquet.

He writes:

'Natalie you are a hummingbird that
can fly in a gale. Love, Leonardo
DiCaprio.'

INT. GAGE HOUSEHOLD - DAY

The moment Romulus walks into the house, Molasses, with a big happy tail, runs up. Rom reaches into his Petco bag...

ROMULUS
(to Molasses)

Here.

...and drops the book right in front of the dog.

ROMULUS
Read that.

Rom immediately walks off to the kitchen and you swear Molasses is rolling his eyes in disbelief.

Inside a cabinet above the stove, Romulus finds a vase. He fills it partially with water and places the flowers in it. He positions the card nearby and heads off for the master bedroom.

It is here that Rom finds Natalie having a breakdown in front of the full-length bedroom mirror. She sees Rom and turns on him.

NATALIE
(loud, fuming, crying
tirade)

Romulus, you goddamn sonofabitch,
mutherfucker! I told you to get rid
of these awful mirrors! I look
hideous! Nothing but an ugly,
grotesque face of death looks back
at me! Do you think I want to see
my nightmare every goddamned time I
walk into this room? Or, when I
wake up each morning? I TOLD YOU, I
don't want to see my reflection! I
told you to end this horror show!
Do you think you can do something
this simple for me?

(beat)

You don't give a shit about me! You
don't care about my feelings, let
alone my health. You go to work and
just forget about me. Think it's

(MORE)

NATALIE (cont'd)

just fine to take a break from the witch, do you? Listen to me cocksucker! I mean listen to me. Just don't fucking hear me with your ears; listen. Pay fucking close attention and write it down so your senile demented brain won't fucking forget. You cover-up all the mirrors in this house NOW, or I'm going to break them all. And, I don't give a flying fuck how many years of bad luck that will bring. I've lived most of my life unlucky. Been sick. Been poor because I've been sick. Do as I say or I will break all the mirrors in this hovel and take one of them broken shards and put it in your stone-cold, unconcerned, pitiless, heart.

Natalie storms into the bathroom, slamming the door shut.

AN EMERGING QUOTATION AGAINST A BLACK SCREEN.

'Lord, grant that I may seek to comfort, rather than to be comforted.' ... Mother Teresa

INT. GAGE HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Rom is taping OLD NEWSPAPER over that mirror. Tears well up in his eyes. Natalie walks up to him.

NATALIE

Oh, Rom I'm so sorry. It's just that I sometimes wonder if you really understand how hard life is for me.

ROMULUS

You don't see the tears inside me, but they're there. I'll always be by your side.

NATALIE

Look at me. I'm a wreck. A miserable wretch.

ROMULUS

You're not your disease. I know when it's you talking. And, I know when it's your illness talking. They're not the same. Your struggles are real. They're tall and steep. We'll scale the mountains together.

END OF EPISODE ONE

EPISODE TWO TEASER SEQUENCE

EPISODE ONE END CREDITS

* * * * *

BEGIN EPISODE TWO

RECAP SEQUENCE

NARRATOR

Previously on 'The Secret and
Mystery of Love'...

END RECAP

FADE IN:

EXT. UNKNOWN LOCATION IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS USA - DAY

A forensic death investigation is underway in a nondescript and not-to-be-revealed outdoor setting.

By the CRIME SCENE TAPE, the multiple POLICE CARS and a CORONER'S VAN, we know there has to be a victim.

Behind the tape are two UNIFORMED COOK COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICERS.

One is an overweight and well-seasoned deputy. He is consoling a young and inexperienced patrolman who, gagging at the smell of death, is queasy and becoming nauseous.

Walking slowly towards the tape are two PLAINCLOTHES DETECTIVES of the Special Investigations Division.

One detective, young and slim, like a long-distance runner, wears bespoke tailoring; and the other, much older, is dressed in an ill-fitting and somewhat tacky suit.

DEPUTY

You okay there Rookie?

ROOKIE

Yeah. I guess I have to get used to this, huh?

DEPUTY

Yep. Now pull yourself together and act professional. If you ever wanna get promoted, don't puke in front of the suits. Just give them a

(MORE)

DEPUTY (cont'd)
 Situation Report and you're outta
 here. Like Sergeant Joe Friday
 says: Just the facts. Get it done.
 Do it right.

The detectives pull out BADGES and flash them as they reach
 the crime scene tape. The deputy raises the tape for them.

DETECTIVE #1
 (pointing at the Rookie)
 Looks like he's gonna' throw-up.

DEPUTY
 Yeah. It's his first time. He's got
 your info.

DETECTIVE #2
 Aah, shit. How 'bout you, and not
 the kid, tell us?

The Deputy does not answer. Just as the CORONER walks up to
 listen in and take questions, the Deputy quickly turns on
 his heels and departs. A notepad appears. The Rookie faints.

DETECTIVE #1
 Well, at least the boy didn't lose
 his lunch. No need to pay a dry
 cleaner to launder those
 eye-catching high-water pants of
 yours. You look like that Biff dude
 at the end of the Back To The
 Future movie.

DETECTIVE #2
 Up yours, Deputy Fife. You can
 dress like a GQ cover boy if you
 want, but they'll still only issue
 you one bullet.

DETECTIVE #1
 Well, you're wrong. Gone and
 gotchyourself all confused again.
 You're thinking Detective Bullitt,
 not Deputy Fife. You know... Steve
 McQueen, the actor, not the
 director. The King of Cool. The
 chick magnet. That's me. Just get
 the EMTs here. If the tenderfoot
 there needs any mouth-to-mouth,
 give the pretty boy what he needs.
 I'm gonna' find out what's up from
 the big man. [To the Coroner] You.
 Come with me.

A QUOTE ON A BLACK SCREEN

'That you and I can live the same time on earth, how
 incredible God's plan.' ... Flavia Weedn

INT. CASINO ORIENTATION CLASS - DAY

A Human Resource manager named OLUFEMI ("OPAL") WASHINGTON is standing beneath a banner that says: 'Orientation Session'. Five new hires are seated at desks.

One of the new hires is ZOFIA LIPINSKI. She's Dot Jones/Coach Beiste huge and looks foolish behind a student desk. Unlike the others, she wears a women's suit.

Two of the new hires are dressed like SLOT ATTENDANTS. Another newcomer is attired as a BEVERAGE SERVER. And, LIWAYWAY COOPER (Nee: Lizaro) is clothed in the uniform of a TABLE GAMES DEALER.

Her hair is now blonde and she's beyond cute.

OPAL

Welcome to the Big Shoulders' Welcoming Session. My name is Olufemi Washington and people call me Opal. Like the gemstone for the month of October. Besides running this class, I'm one of the managers in the Benefits Department. After your 90-day Probationary Period, if you ever have a problem with your health insurance, you'll be talking with me. But, today, I'm your host.

Opal writes her name and phone number on the whiteboard.

OPAL

(pointing to Liwayway)

Let's do a quick around-the-room. Tell us where you'll be working and why you joined Big Shoulders. Let's go. Left-to-right.

LIWAYWAY

My name is Liwayway. Call me Li and I'm from the Philippines. Just got married. My husband said I should take this job to practice my English and learn how to be an American. Act like a resident and not a green card holder.

OPAL

And...

LIWAYWAY

I want to become a United States citizen, and then have my little brother join me. I take the bus because I don't know how to drive. I'm good at adding and counting, so personnel made me a dealer. I

(MORE)

LIWAYWAY (cont'd)
 wanted to be a slot girl like you
 two [pointing]. But, they said no.
 So, here I am.

Opal points to Lipinski.

ZOFIA
 Hi. Wassup. My name's Zofia
 Lipinski. Don't let the name fool
 you. I'm from Chicago. Born and
 bred here. I served two tours in
 Afghanistan and one in Iraq. I
 earned a Purple Heart and Bronze
 Star after one of those IED's
 killed everybody, except me, in the
 Humvee I was driving. Merely
 survive and you get an undeserved
 medal for bravery. Lucky I guess.

OPAL
 (interrupting)
 Let me first say - for all of us -
 thank you for your service. That
 had to be hard on you. Go on.

ZOFIA
 I wanted to join the Chicago Police
 Department, but they wouldn't take
 me. Either because I'm gay, or they
 think that all recently discharged
 combat veterans have PTSD and will
 go postal on the job. I'll be
 working overnight Security at
 Runaway Bay.

OPAL
 Don't worry. Big Shoulders is an
 equal opportunity employer. We just
 plain don't discriminate. Period.
 You're welcome here. And, let me
 tell you, you ARE lucky.

ZOFIA
 How's that?

OPAL
 You get to work with Unit 15 at
 Runaway.

OVERLAP - ESTABLISHING SHOT: ANTON CERMAK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

A white board: CONTINUING EDUCATION SELF DEFENSE CLASS.

Rom is instructing several women of various ages.

OPAL (V.O.)

Everybody respects Officer Gage. He knows his stuff. He's an older guy, but don't be fooled. He like teaches combat judo to the other officers here, and trains women in self-defense at the Community College. Rom's dependable, decisive and fearless. He can cut the red wire.

ZOFIA (PRE-LAP)

No shit?

INT. RETURNING TO CASINO ORIENTATION CLASS - DAY

Zofia looks skeptical.

OPAL

Yeah. No shit. I know. Because I'm a Marine. Semper Fi. Saw my own share of action in the desert. I wiped off the drool and cleaned the diapers of many an officer. Gage is just not like that.

(now pointing to the
Beverage Server)

Okay. Your turn.

INT. CHICAGO LOOP COCKTAIL BAR - DAY

Coop is drowning his sorrows at this sophisticated, swanky, libation haven. He should be drunk as all hell after polishing off the dregs of his third double-martini, but he holds his liquor well.

Still, the BARTENDER points to a sign, which says: 'Don't Drink And Drive' with phone numbers and App info on it for three different Taxi Services, two Limousine Companies, plus Uber and Lyft.

CURTIS

I'm taking the el.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - FOLLOWING (DAY)

Vibratingly tipsy, Curtis is pleasantly buzzed and not blitzed. As he walks out of the bar and down the sidewalk, he neither staggers nor zig-zags; just dodders and wobbles a bit.

DESCENDING INTO THE NEARBY SUBWAY STATION

Triple-C scans a card to get through the turnstile. He boards a train.

Even though there are OPEN SEATS EVERYWHERE, Coop sits next to a YOUNG WOMAN, a co-ed with backpack, science textbooks, and an iPad. They are the only two in this car.

He leans into her, shoulders touching.

CURTIS

Hi, you're pretty. A real cutie. My name is Curtis. I'm a millionaire. What's your name?

She does not answer and puts on her headphones.

Coop doesn't quit. He talks anyway. Loud, so she can still hear.

CURTIS

When and where do you get off? Or, is that too personal a question to ask? [snickers] You know, what I'm sayin'. Get it? Magic wand? I've invested heavily in Hitachi stock.
(beat)

Look, I recognize you from your Facebook page. I've checked out every single one of your posted photos. You're sweet in all of 'em. Tasty [licks his lips]. You should be on TV. Want to be a weather girl? I could help with that.

She stands to get off at her stop.

CURTIS

I'll carry your textbooks. They look too heavy for a girl your size. Let me help.

YOUNG WOMAN

No, thank you. Now, beat it. Or, am I getting too personal? [snickers] You know what I'm sayin'. Get it?

Curtis doesn't give up and is following her off the train.

Thank God the station is fairly crowded. The girl sets a very quick pace, widening the gap between the two.

CURTIS

(shouting)

Can I have your phone number?

She walks into the WOMEN'S RESTROOM to rid herself of him.

INT. CASINO ORIENTATION CLASS - DAY

OPAL

(while demonstrating)

Okay, let's all get our heads around this... WE POINT WITH THE WHOLE HAND, never the finger. [Play Acting] 'Ma'am, the restrooms are
(MORE)

OPAL (cont'd)

this way.' 'Sir, Lost & Found is down this hall on your left.'

(beat)

Liwayway, you're not from around here. I'm sure can you tell us a bit about hand gestures never done where you come from.

LIWAYWAY

(while demonstrating)

Well... You never should CURL YOUR INDEX FINGER in a come here fashion. That's bad. Really bad. In the Philippines you can get arrested and have your finger broken as punishment for doing that. I'm not making this up. It means the person you are doing that to is a filthy dog. And, you should never pat someone on the head, especially the back of the head. That's very demeaning and tells the person "You're stupid and I am your better". Then there's THE FIG, [demonstrates] where you put your thumb between your index and middle finger; that's very bad, especially for men to do. It's really obscene.

OPAL

And, I know why! No need to explain! Please don't. Now, who wants to show me how to "CLEAR HANDS"?

One of the Slot Attendants goes through the ritual of gently slapping her hands together and then facing them, palms-up, to the ceiling.

OPAL

Perfect. Everybody got that? You show your hands to the cameras immediately after you handle anything, especially money and chips; or if you shake hands with, or otherwise touch, a casino guest. And, remember, unless you're doing CPR, giving the Heimlich maneuver or other such thing, YOU NEVER, EVER TOUCH A FELLOW EMPLOYEE. Never. You don't shake hands, fist-bump, chest-bump, fix someone's uniform, or put somebody's hair back into place. While on the casino floor, NO PHYSICAL CONTACT OF ANY KIND BETWEEN TEAM MEMBERS IS ALLOWED. Got it?

ALL

Got it.

OPAL

Before we call it a day... and, I know it's been a long and boring one, too... here's something to memorize. If you ever find yourself in need of a Security Officer, just PULL ON YOUR EARLOBE. Like this [demonstrates]. You should do it in a casual manner, so as not to further upset or alert the person causing the problem. Don't worry, if an officer doesn't see the signal, Surveillance will. They'll get someone to you right away. Questions?

There are none.

OPAL

And, that's it for today.

Sighs of relief from the students.

OPAL

Hope you all enjoyed the lunch. There are survey forms in the back that we'd like you to take. Tomorrow, you come back to this room at your shift start time. Your DEPARTMENT TRAINER will pick you up right here. Good luck to you all.

INT. FOLLOWING DAY CASINO ORIENTATION CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Quickly, one at a time, new hires are being gathered up by their trainers. Left waiting are Zofia and Liwayway.

ZOFIA

(to herself by way of Li)
Looks like we're the last to go. I hope this old man is a good trainer. I need this job. I need the distraction. I'm fat. I'm gay. Nobody wants to be around me. It's like I have leprosy or something. Where is this guy?

LIWAYWAY

I'll be your friend. All my friends are in the Philippines, except one. My best friend. She's in Canada now. I'm lonely. You're lonely. You seem to be a very nice, levelheaded person. I think you'll eventually make a lot of friends, and you're
(MORE)

LIWAYWAY (cont'd)
going to start with me. Right here.
Right now. Deal?

Romulus enters as Zofia and Li are shaking hands.

When he spots Liwayway, Rom's eyebrows "click" with a slight rise. Then his pupils widen as he subconsciously adjusts his tie and smiles.

ZOFIA
Deal.

ROMULUS
Good evening ladies. Which one of
you is Lipinski?

ZOFIA
That's me.

ROMULUS
That's great. [Turning to Liwayway]
And, you are?

LIWAYWAY
I'm Liwayway Cooper. People call me
Li. My trainer's not here yet. I'm
a dealer.

ROMULUS
Well, Ms. Cooper... I was able to
tell by your uniform that you work
in Table Games. I hear that you
graduated at the very top of your
training class and that you're some
type of math wiz. I like people
with big brains. You'll find
yourself one day in the High Roller
Room, I'm sure.

Handshakes all around.

ROMULUS
I'm very pleased to make your
acquaintance, Li. You, too, Ms.
Lipinski.

They all clear hands.

ZOFIA
Call me Zofia.

ROMULUS
Best I call you by your Unit
Number. What's that?

ZOFIA

I'm Unit 330. But, let me ask you boss... If you're such a hotshot officer, and you know which uniform goes with which department, why did you ask which one of us was Lipinski when you waked in?

ROMULUS

Hmm. I actually don't know. Must not be the hotshot you think I am. Now, let me ask you. Do you think it wise to smart-off to your trainer, right off the bat, like that?

ZOFIA

You bet. Gotta keep you on your toes. Guys like you need more than prunes for stimulation.

Liwayway has her hand covering her teeth like Asian females tend to do when they smile or laugh.

LIWAYWAY

(an aside; whispering to herself)

Twilight Zone! I thought only Dalisay could say such a thing!

ROMULUS

Oh! A wise-ass. A brave one, too. I like that.

ROMULUS

Li. Don't worry. You won't be here alone much longer. The Table Games Department has the farthest office from here. It's quite a walk.

MARIA TORRES, Table Games Trainer, arrives just then.

ROMULUS

See. Told you. Liwayway Cooper, this is your trainer Maria Torres. Maria, this is Li. And, Maria, this is Unit 330.

MARIA

Hello. Welcome aboard both of you. Ms. Cooper, you're with me.

All four of them walk through a DOOR and find themselves quickly immersed in the cacophony of the CASINO. Maria and Li go one way. Units 15 and 330 go another.

INT. CASINO FLOOR - FOLLOWING LIWAYWAY (NIGHT)

MARIA

So, how's your first day here going so far?

LIWAYWAY

Actually, I'm kinda impressed. That Gage guy didn't once say anything about my looks. Usually, guys are always hitting on me. Like right off the bat! Telling me I've got sex appeal. It's nice to have a man talk about my brain... my math ability... my accomplishments... and not my body. Are all the guys here like that? Respectful?

MARIA

Absolutely not! Rom's not like the others. He's different. Gentlemanly, and without doubt, the opposite of what you're going to run into day after day in this meat market. Prepare for the worse. Defend yourself. Nearly all the guys that work here - and just about every male guest too - are horny rabbits and act like wolves.

INT. CASINO FLOOR - FOLLOWING ROMULUS (NIGHT)

Romulus and Zofia walk to an ELEVATOR BANK. They wait for a car's arrival. Once inside, Rom places his ID BADGE in a CHIP READER and off they rise to the HIGH ROLLER SUITE.

IN THE ELEVATOR

ZOFIA

So, what do you think about my friend Liwayway?

ROMULUS

I think she's spicy.

ZOFIA

Spicy?

ROMULUS

Okay. Smokin' hot!

ZOFIA

I thought you were married?

ROMULUS

I'm married, not dead.

Awkward elevator silence until Rom winks at Zofia.

ROMULUS

It makes no difference where you get your appetite, as long as you eat at home.

ZOFIA

I'm going to like working for you. I highly approve of honesty.

ROMULUS

Let's get this straight. You will not be working FOR me. You'll be working WITH me. Don't ever forget that. You and me, we're the same. We're equals. In many respects, you'll prove the better of me I'm sure. You're very sharp. I'm glad to have a person like you watching my back.

ZOFIA

You like Li, don't you? I could tell by your body language.

ROMULUS

Observant, aren't we? That's just grand. I love my wife, but still enjoy the sight of a good-looking woman. God made beautiful things to be enjoyed, not ignored.

The elevator doors open.

HIGH ROLLER ROOM

Except for Dimitri and Feliks in the distance, Runaway Bay is packed with biker types. Leather and tattoos everywhere.

Zofia looks concerned. Rom looks back at her.

ROMULUS

They're like bald-faced hornets. They look ferocious, but they're really quite docile.

A giant of a man, a BIG ASS BIKER, decked out in Harley-Davidson gear and weighing in at about 400-pounds, sees Romulus for the first time in months.

BIG ASS BIKER

Holy shit! Fifteen's back everybody!

A half-dozen leather-vested MEN converge on Rom. Several WOMEN in black t-shirts and jackets, too.

Everybody's pumping Rom's hand and slapping him on the back. Rom "clears" his hands.

Soon the crowd walks away. The Big Ass Biker last.

ZOFIA

What would you do if you ever had to fight a guy that big?

ROMULUS

Whatta'ya, nuts? I would never fight anyone that big. Look at him. He's heavy, like some damn Sumo wrestler. All he needs to do is put his hair in a topknot and take off his shirt! I'm an old man for Chrissake's. Good Lord! After I take a shit I risk a hernia just lifting my pants! Me? I'd be waiting for the cops. You should, too.

ZOFIA

Wow. So, you think you're an old man, huh? Does that mean if I asked you to act your age, you'd die?

EXT. STREETSIDE - NIGHT

Triple-C is on his cell phone, standing near the curb, awaiting his taxi. He's very angry. It's like John McEnroe versus tennis official. Only worse.

CURTIS

Those motherfuckers had the nerve to vote me off the board! I created that goddamn company. It's my company! My baby! Each one of those assholes owes their position to me. Every one of them. That bitch from the private equity firm was the worse. She accused me of stealing. How the fuck can you steal from your own company? That little witch said that it was no longer my company and it really belongs to the investors. Fucking cunt threatened to call the cops. I told that dyke I ain't signing shit. I reminded her that I have the best lawyer in town AND, THAT'S YOU! So, get your shit in gear and get me back my company. Do whatever it takes. I want to see the entire board gone. I want them crying and begging for mercy before I fire them. If they put up a fight, I want the vampires dead. Put a fucking stake in 'em all. Stick them in the sunshine, for all I care. I don't give a shit. I just

(MORE)

CURTIS (cont'd)
 want to see them shattered like
 fallen pottery. All of them are to
 be nothing but little piles of ash.
 Get me back my company! Hear me? If
 a kike hard-on with a suitcase and
 a black grifter can get O.J. off,
 you can get me my company back! Do
 it. Do it now. Or, you won't ever
 see a fucking dime from me again.
 My goddamn ride's here. Get to
 fucking work!

Coop hangs-up. Gets into his cab, which is driven by a MAN
 IN A TURBAN, who speaks Punjab-accented Indian English.

DRIVER
 Seat belt, please.

As he is putting on the seatbelt, a young pre-teen girl
 rides past on a bicycle. Triple-C is gawking; leering at her
 bottom and the bicycle seat.

In the rearview mirror, the driver sees this and does not
 approve, but says nothing.

CURTIS
 Take me to the Babe Barn.

DRIVER
 Am I in the right spot? I was
 dispatched for a person wanting to
 go to the casino.

CURTIS
 Yeah, I wanted to go to the casino.
 Now, I want to go elsewhere. You
 taking me or not?

DRIVER
 I don't go into that area.

CURTIS
 You too fucking prissy to drive me
 to the neighborhood I was born in?
 Fuckin' pussy. You afraid? Might
 piss your pants? Listen Chucky, you
 little acne-faced Rugrat coward,
 you're taking me to the Babe Barn
 and don't tell me you don't know
 where that is. Why are you acting
 like a fucking little girl in a
 pink dress? Put the damn car in
 gear and drive me there. Go.

EXT. BABE BARN STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Curtis is getting out of the cab. He tosses the driver a
 \$100 bill and demands change. He does not offer a tip.

CURTIS

I don't tip fucking ragheads.
 Though you probably could use some
 extra cash to go find a plastic
 surgeon and get your testicles
 enlarged.

Curtis storms off. The BABE BARN is covered in neon signs,
 mostly pink, that say things like: Vegas Review! Topless and
 Bottomless! Peep Show! Live! Nude! GIRLS! GIRLS! GIRLS!

The DOORMAN/BOUNCER recognizes Coop.

DOORMAN

Hey, Triple-C! It's been awhile.
 Crystal's pissed. She thinks your
 hot new Asian mama has been loving
 you long, long time. Too long,
 long. She misses you.

CURTIS

She misses my money. That's all.
 Crystal's not as tight as my
 almond-eyed poo-tang at home, but
 she gives better head. Got way
 bigger tits, too. Crystal doesn't
 need to worry. Tell her to dial it
 down.

DOORMAN

How's your mom? She was one of our
 very best strippers ever. The old
 guys still ask for her.

Curtis spits in the doorman's face.

CURTIS

Fuck you. Don't you ever talk about
 my mom again. Tell the old guys to
 stop asking.

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Coop's drunk from his visit to the Babe Barn. He sits on his
 sofa, starring at the front door, awaiting Li's arrival from
 work. Liwayway walks in.

CURTIS

What took you so long to get home?

LIWAYWAY

Silly question. The bus. I'd get
 home faster with a car. When do I
 get a car?

CURTIS

When do you get your car? When you
 stop saying you're shy or you don't
 (MORE)

CURTIS (cont'd)

know me well enough. When you stop having your period or cramps when I want to be with you. When you stop having headaches. And, when you stop telling me you're tired or busy all the time. We are husband and wife and you will act like a wife. Sit next to me.

Li does, but as far from him as possible. Then she curls her index finger in that "come here" fashion. When he scoots next to her, she pats him gently on the back of the head.

Triple-C grabs the remote. He punches a few buttons. The big screen TV comes on.

CURTIS

You gotta' learn some shit honey.

It's porn.

CURTIS

Keep watching. I'll get us something to drink. Pay attention to what the actresses do.

Li gives him The Fig and a middle finger behind his back.

In the kitchen, Triple-C is making early morning bloody marys. He adds a substance to Liwayway's drink. Here we go again.

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD MASTER BATHROOM HOURS LATER - DAY

It's late afternoon. Triple-C is in front of the mirror dancing. Wiggling his ass and patting his belly.

The front doorbell RINGS.

INT. FOLLOWING CURTIS - DAY

Silently whistling, Curtis walks out of the bathroom, through the bedroom where we see Li sleeping, and into the living room to open the door. It's Grub Hub/Door Dash.

Coop hands the deliveryman a \$50 bill and slams the door in the guy's face. He takes the food to the kitchen and begins to place breakfast items on plates.

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

All smiles, Coop appears at the bedroom door with a breakfast-in-bed tray. A single rose on the tray. Li awakens.

LIWAYWAY

(disoriented)

Hi... what's this for?

CURTIS
 (placing tray on bed)
 You were great!

LIWAYWAY
 I was?

CURTIS
 Oh, yeah. See, the video helped you become uninhibited. Let you act normal. I guess you really were just shy. I was beginning to think you were frigid.

LIWAYWAY
 Frigid?

CURTIS
 This is going to make our lives better. You passed out from exhaustion. Now eat. It took me almost an hour to cook all this stuff up.

Li looks down at her breakfast and notes the packets of butter, jelly, and sugar. Thinks: 'Cooked this my ass.'

She takes a nibble of the food anyway.

CURTIS
 We should have a baby. It will bring us closer together. That'll fix everything. You've been lonely. And, I'm thoroughly proficient at pleasing women. You know that now. I have lots of practice and I have the skills needed to get you pregnant. Mommy and baby. It's natural. Mother Nature's way.

LIWAYWAY
 (making sense of things)
 I feel sick.

Li rushes to the bathroom. Curtis waits a few moments as she closes the door. He begins to rummage through Li's chest of drawers.

CURTIS
 You okay?

Coop finds what he's looking for. Li's passport. He pockets it. She's not going anywhere.

LIWAYWAY (O.S.)
 Yeah. Just nauseous.

CURTIS

Ha! Morning sickness already. My mom always said I could hit any target on the first try!

Liwayway comes out of the bathroom and sits on the bed.

CURTIS

Want some more?

LIWAYWAY

(quietly)

Okay.

Li reaches for the breakfast tray.

CURTIS

I didn't mean food.

Coop then does that utterly trashy move of forcefully pushing Li's head down towards his penis for a blowjob.

ESTABLISHING SHOT: ONE CHICAGO BANK AND TRUST BUILDING

INT. BANK LOBBY - DAY

BANKER

Hello Mr. Gage. Back again so soon?

ROMULUS

Yep. Got a brand new Explanation of Benefits from the insurance company and I'm here to cash out another retirement instrument.

BANKER

You know that's your last one. There'll be a penalty. A hefty one at that.

ROMULUS

Yeah. I know. But, what else can I do? You guys won't give me a loan. You know, loyalty should go both ways. I've banked here for decades and I really don't appreciate the fact that you stopped lending me money the moment I got a cancer diagnosis. I've been a good customer. My mortgage is here. So's my car loan. My paychecks are direct deposited here twice a month. You should treat me better.

BANKER

Cancer has nothing to do with that decision. It's just that we wouldn't be good bankers if we

(MORE)

BANKER (cont'd)

extended loans to a couple that are both racking up medical bills. We have our shareholders to think about. The business of business is profit.

ROMULUS

Yet, the government will bail your ass out anytime one of your Banana Republic investments tank. After today, every red cent I put aside to supplement my Social Security in retirement will be gone. I don't need a magic eight ball, or a fortuneteller, to tell me my future. I'm going to need to work until the day I breathe my last breath. Probably die on a Wal-Mart floor as a door greeter.

BANKER

You don't know that for sure. Do you? You may just win the lottery or something.

ROMULUS

You're an asshole for saying that. Buying lottery tickets should never be anyone's retirement plan. Just shut up and give me my money.

BEGIN A SERIES OF INTERLEAVED SNIPPETS, OR INTERCUTS, JUXTAPOSING THE COOPER AND GAGE HOUSEHOLDS

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD LIVING ROOM - DAY

Triple-C is watching girl's gymnastics on the television. He shouts to Liwayway who is in the kitchen.

CURTIS

Honey, this shit's even better than Baywatch. When you're done with the dishes, we still need to do something about having that baby.

LIWAYWAY (O.S.)

I hear you.

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD KITCHEN - FOLLOWING LIWAYWAY (DAY)

Li quickly wipes her hands in a dishtowel and heads off to the bathroom.

Once there, and with the door closed, she digs through a little POTPOURRI VASE until she retrieves her BIRTH CONTROL PILLS.

After taking one, she replaces them.

INT. GAGE HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Natalie is sitting in a kitchen chair placed near a CRACKLING fireplace. Rom is cutting her hair.

The stereo is playing a love song. Nat holds up a hand-held mirror.

NATALIE

You're getting pretty good at this.

ROMULUS

I'm glad I can do this for you.
But, you know, me doing this is
turning me gay.

(in a raging queen voice
and over-the-top
gestures)

I think I'm going to open up a hair
salon for just us boys. I'm calling
it: Romeo and Julius!

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD KITCHEN - DAY

With a wok, Liwayway is cooking a special meal. Triple-C walks in. He's not happy to see her preparing Asian cuisine.

CURTIS

What the fuck are you doing? I
don't want to eat any fucking
vegetables! The only time I eat
good around here is when I eat
pussy.

LIWAYWAY

Why are you like this? This is a
fine meal. My mother taught me how
to make this.

Coop grabs the wok full of food and throws it on the floor.
Liwayway runs off, just like her mom used to do.

CURTIS

When you're done acting like a baby
you can eat this crap off the
floor. I'm going to McDonald's.

He leaves. Li can't control her emotions and breaks down,
but her crying affirmation builds in volume, anger, and
resolve.

LIWAYWAY

(to herself; crying in
frustration)

What am I doing?! I was never like
this in the Philippines. What has
gotten into me?

(MORE)

LIWAYWAY (cont'd)

(beat)

Curtis. That's what's gotten into me. A filthy degenerate. My vagina's a hazardous waste site. A sewer that takes in the most foul excrement. A noxious toxic dump. A cesspool. I feel dirty. Contaminated. Polluted.

(long beat; less crying)

I've always been, a level-headed, intelligent person. Decent. Competent. Strong. What the fuck am I doing? Where has my self-respect gone?

(beat; no crying; determined)

Endurance is my superpower! I GOT GUTS! From now on, I'm gonna be a steely-eyed bitch as unbreakable as air. And, in the end, I WILL WIN!

(beat; indignant)

That asshole just wants me to fuck him really good. I can do that...

Li goes to her COMPUTER. Creates a fictitious Google Account claiming to be an eSports tournament champion and professional computer gamer who participated in the WORLD CYBER GAMES.

She Googles: 'The Cooper Company' and leaves a GOOGLE REVIEW. We read--

'Take it from a pro. Whoever invented this shoddy piece of crap is proof that brothers and sisters shouldn't have sex and children. This game SUCKS! About as thrilling as plain rice cakes. You'll have more fun playing tic-tac-toe.'

END JUXTAPOSITION SERIES

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

Units 330 and 15 are walking together making their rounds. In the background we see Dimitri and Feliks playing.

ZOFIA

I still don't get this money-laundering thing. Give me some examples.

ROMULUS

Okay, lets say someone robbed a bank and a dye pack exploded in their getaway bag. That someone could just load the marked bills

(MORE)

ROMULUS (cont'd)
into a slot machine and pull the handle a few times. Then cash out the machine and take that ticket to the cage for new cash.

ZOFIA
People do that?

ROMULUS
When the slot machines are emptied, the Counting Room finds bills with dye on them quite often.

ZOFIA
No shit?

ROMULUS
Yeah, no shit. The government calls that Minimal Gaming. Or, let's say someone is on a hot streak and winning big. She or he wants to cash out and they'd be over that \$10,000 mark. So, Mister or Misses Lucky gives some of their chips to a friend to artfully cash out for them. That's a suspicious activity defined as Agency. And, we need to complete a Suspicious Activity Report. What Title 31 calls a SAR.

ZOFIA
Does that happen a lot, too?

ROMULUS
Downstairs, not so much. But, you're here in the High Roller Room. You see people wager hundreds, or even thousands of dollars, on a single hand of blackjack or a roll of the dice. I've seen people win or lose a quarter of a million dollars in a single night. Working class people don't wager here. Rich people and criminals do.

ZOFIA
Criminals?

ROMULUS
Hell yeah. But, you're going to see way more professional athletes, CEOs, high tech geniuses, and entertainers, than crooks. Above all, you'll be meeting people bred into money. Born rich. Play rich.

ZOFIA

Is this place immoral? Is it right to flaunt and gamble away this kind of money when there's so much economic inequality in the world?

ROMULUS

Hell no, it's not right. And, I don't ignore the ethical question. The affluent SHOULD put humanitarian interests over their selfish need for leisure. But, how can I question their compassion when our own government fails to place the public's welfare ahead of warfare? Each and every year, nearly SEVEN HUNDRED BILLION DOLLARS is appropriated to the Pentagon for war-making.

(beat)

Do you have any idea how long it takes to count \$700-billion at a dollar per second, 24/7/365?

ZOFIA

No.

ROMULUS

61-years! Capitol Hill has far less compassion than these people.

ZOFIA

What do the patrons say when we tell them that we're filling out one of those SAR reports?

ROMULUS

Oh, we don't tell them. We just make a report and off it goes. In fact, it's illegal to even confirm the existence of a SAR report.

ZOFIA

So, that's our main job?

ROMULUS

Kinda sorta. In all honesty, you'll spend more time making sure people just plain have a good time. In particular, any player from a visiting sports team. Our job is to make sure they drink a lot and stay here as late into the morning as possible. We do are part in supporting our home teams.

ZOFIA

You serious?

ROMULUS

Yep.

ZOFIA

For real?

ROMULUS

Yes indeed. And, if you're into sports betting, you have one hell of an edge.

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Staggering, Triple-C enters his house. He's drunk as all hell. As he walks about, he stumbles mightily.

CURTIS

(to himself)

I gotta' piss bad.

He jogs unsteadily to the bathroom. He sways as he's standing above the sink, unable to make it to the commode, urinating more on the floor than in the washbasin.

He begins to fall. And, as he does so, he knocks over the potpourri.

On the floor, mixed within all the dried flowers becoming wet with piss, is Liwayway's birth control pill dispenser.

CURTIS

What the fuck? That fuckin' bitch!

ESTABLISHING SHOT: RUNAWAY BAY ENTRANCE

A SIGN on the door says: 'Closed This Week For Remodeling. Join Us This Saturday For The Grand Reopening.'

INT. THE NEW RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

We see contractors galore busy doing their thing. A whole team is putting down a carpet with a dragon in it.

The PROJECT MANAGER is conducting a tour. The tour group is made up of Unit One, Cecil Hill, The Concierge, and Rom.

CONSIERGE

(upset and pointing at the carpet)

Didn't the decorator read my memo? This room is being upgraded to attract more Asian clientele. A dragon on the floor is bad feng shui. Not one Asian will walk on that mythological creature and ruin their luck, even if they're hammered and drunk as a skunk. This is wrong. And, red is good in

(MORE)

CONSIERGE (cont'd)

moderation. It signifies richness, luxury, and luck. But, there's way too much red here. That will only cause anger and overstimulation. Did we all forget how to read? Must every communication be 160 characters or less?

PROJECT MANAGER

The order came from the top. It specifically said we had to have an Asian dragon, not a European one, in the color gold, on a red carpet, placed right here. Look, here's the work order. They just gave me drawings and said 'Make it happen'. And, then said you have just six days to do it!

CECIL

What's an Asian dragon? Aren't all dragons the same?

CONSIERGE

Asian dragons don't have wings. They are strong powerful symbols. And, you don't step on them! We did a study. We're not going to lose any of our regular crowd up here. We're just going to gain many more new players. All Asian or Asian-Americans. Our new guests will forever be stepping around that damn image for as long as it's there. And, it's smack dab in the middle by the main entrance! If they can't walk around it, they will jump it. Mark my word. This is a big screw-up.

UNIT ONE

What else are we supposed to know? I didn't get any memo.

CONSIERGE

For the new crowd, 8 is a lucky number because it sounds like the word "prosperity" in Mandarin. And, 4 is very unlucky because it sounds like the word "death". You see... right here... [pointing] there's no spot number 4 on the baccarat table.

PROJECT MANAGER

Nobody told me this stuff. We're working around the clock.

ROMULUS

Sounds typical.

CONCIERGE

That's not all. Our hotel has always lacked a 13th floor. We'll now need to have no 4th floor and no floors between 39 and 50.

CECIL

What else is in this memo that obviously none of us got?

CONSIERGE

A whole bunch of things, like they'll often be wearing red underwear, especially the women...

Cecil, Rom, and the Project Manager, all share an approving glance.

CONSIERGE

(continuing)

They find luck and even magic in the jade pendants they'll be wearing. Chinese men who gamble rarely have mustaches. The staff in here should never chew gum or blow their noses. How to pronounce common Vietnamese surnames. And...

UNIT ONE

Enough. Get us all a copy of this memo within the hour. How many pages?

CONCIERGE

70.

ROMULUS

That's a lot to study.

PROJECT MANAGER

I'll need a copy, too.

ROMULUS

So will my partner.

UNIT ONE

Who's going to be the new dealer? They'll need to be vetted by my team. We just don't let anybody up here.

CECIL

What new dealer? Why do we need a new dealer up here?

UNIT ONE

For the baccarat table.

CONCIERGE

Table Games told me it'd be one of the newer girls. She's Asian. From the Philippine's, I think. She knows all the games.

ROMULUS

Liwayway?

CONCIERGE

Yeah, that's it.

UNIT ONE

You know her?

ROMULUS

No. I met her. Her husband's a whale and is authorized to play at Runaway Bay. You know him. Triple-C. Coop. Cooper.

CONCIERGE

She's married to THAT guy? What the hell does she see in him?

In a bang-bang way, the Project Manager quickly makes a money gesture by rubbing his thumb over the tips of his index and middle fingers.

UNIT ONE

Just make sure he knows that he can't play in the room when his wife's up here dealing.

CONCIERGE

No problem. Will do.

A QUOTATION AGAINST A BLACK SCREEN.

'If love wills to take another course, it goes.' ...Leo Bascalia

INT. OFFICER'S READY ROOM - NIGHT

Rom and Zofia are donning their radios and grabbing gear.

ZOFIA

The guest parking structure is packed. Do you think this new high roller room has anything to do with that?

ROMULUS

I honestly don't know. We'll find out when we get there.

INT. CASINO FLOOR - FOLLOWING (NIGHT)

Romulus and his colleague are heading to the elevator.
People are everywhere.

ZOFIA

I want to see your face when we get
there.

ROMULUS

Why's that?

ZOFIA

Wait to you see Li! I just saw her
in the locker room. If the uniform
she's wearing was supposed to be
modest and make her look demure and
shy, they have a full-scale fashion
fail on their hands! If they aimed
for modesty, they missed.

(beat; slow
singsong-like)

I know you like her.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

ZOFIA

You once called her spicy. Start
thinking Jalapeños and Cayenne
Pepper. Forget spice. Think lava.
Trust me partner. She's friggin'
awesome! Get ready for the thrill.
I'm going to enjoy watching you
detonate and explode.

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

Rom and Zofia exit the elevator and begin walking towards
the CONCIERGE DESK. Rom is clearly looking for Li, but only
sees customers, including Dimitri and Feliks, playing at the
slot machines and tables.

RADIO TRAFFIC

ROMULUS

(into his sleeve radio
microphone)

Zeus. Units 15 and 330 on station.
How do you read?

UNIT ONE

Runaway officers coming on-duty, we
got you loud and clear. Unit 15,
please greet the guests entering
the main entrance right now.

ROMULUS

Roger. Will comply.

END RADIO TRAFFIC

We hear the CLICK of the door lock disengaging. A smiling, happy, LATE MIDDLE AGE CHINESE COUPLE enters.

ROMULUS

Good evening. Welcome to Runaway Bay.

As the couple attempts to avoid the dragon image on the floor, Rom waves for the Consierge to come over.

CONCIERGE

(as he approaches)

Wa'nsha'ng ha^o [pronounced: 'Wang-shah-how']...

(he arrives and slightly bows)

Ah, Mr. And Mrs. Zhao [pronounced: 'jaw']... It is an honor, and my pleasure, to see you here. May I have your identification please?

The Zhao's hand over PUBLIC AFFAIRS PASSPORTS issued by the Peoples Republic of China. We get a good look at them. These are not the usual burgandy colored ones, but are of a purple-brown hue.

They are very special and only issued to personnel of state-owned enterprises, or where the state has controlling financial interests.

ROMULUS

(quietly into the radio)

Unit One, why did you send me here?

UNIT ONE (O.S.)

(on radio)

Standby. Right there. Don't move.

CLICK. The door opens. It's Liwayway.

Li's wearing a short, above-the-knees, modern-cut, stylish-and-chic, white QIPAO [pronounced: 'chee'-pow'] with black trim and black flower embroidery.

It is slit on the left side, up to nearly the hip, exposing a flawless leg. Adorned in Hanfu accessories and earrings, she's mind-blowing beautiful.

Li has returned to her normal black hair. It's worn in a side-fringes high pinned-up ponytail with long, thick, silver shafted ASIAN FLOWER STICKS poking through it.

Liwayway's eyes are fixed on the carpet and that damn dragon. She frowns. Then she struggles to walk around it, nearly losing her balance.

Rom darts forward to catch her should she fall, but she does not. Now, grasping sight of Romulus, Li abruptly halts, frozen in her tracks.

Rom's mouth is agape. Zofia is smiling broadly. Mrs. Zhao can overhear.

LIWAYWAY

Do I look okay? I told the Uniforms Department that I was Filipino, not Chinese, but they didn't care. Told me it was just a costume. But, it doesn't feel... well... accurate... or appropriate. Like I'm a pretender. Stealing from another's culture. Most of all, I'm not sure if I look good enough. Is this outfit all right?

Romulus can't say a word.

UNIT ONE

(on the radio)

Ah, 15... the lady asked you a question.

Rom is still speechless. Dumbfounded by the sight of Liwayway.

ZOFIA

Girl. You're fine. Go to your workstation.

Li goes. Rom looks Zofia right in the eyes, but only the spectacle of Liwayway lingers in his brain. Zofia bursts out laughing.

INT. CASINO SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS CENTER - NIGHT

Unit One is swiveling around in her captain's chair. A mug of hot chocolate in her hands and a grin on her face.

UNIT ONE

(again on the radio)

Unit 330. There are smelling salts in the first aid kit.

ZOFIA (O.S.)

(jokingly into the radio)

Unit One. I think this individual is merely overwhelmed and in a trance. It'll pass.

CECIL

(overhearing the radio traffic and seen on a camera feed)

Do we have some kind of emergency up there?

UNIT ONE

Unit 7 disregard. All is well.
Quite fine indeed.

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

Unit 330 is snapping her fingers in front of Rom's eyes.

ZOFIA

Hey Rom! Oh, Rom! Nice looking
scenery wouldn't you say? Quite
fascinating. Don't you think?

ROMULUS

Huh? What did you say? I'm sorry.
Was I ignoring you?

ZOFIA

(into the radio and meant
for Zeus)

Mission Control. We have
splashdown! Houston, we no longer
have a problem.

UNIT ONE

(giggling on radio)

10-4. Glad to hear.

ZOFIA

(not on radio; to
Romulus)

Welcome back to Earth my brave
astronaut. Did you go to outer
space or heaven?

Liwayway moves to the PIT. She speaks with the PIT BOSS and
relieves the dealer at the BACCARAT TABLE. Taking seats at
the table are the Zhaos.

The Baccarat LIMIT SIGN says: 'Minimum Bet \$100 / Maximum
Bet \$25,000'.

Mr. Zhao buys-in for his wife and himself. He reaches into
his suit-jacket pocket and tosses onto the table two bundles
of currency having MUSTARD COLORED STRAPS. Both the \$100
denomination and \$10,000 bill amounts are visible.

MR. ZHAO

(pointing to the chip
tray)

Half purple. Half orange.
[Values = \$500 and \$1,000]

PIT BOSS

Yes, sir. Plus, you still have a
bit over \$7,000 on deposit at the
cage... and... if you wish... your
\$50,000 line of credit remains
available.

MR. ZHAO
 (pointing towards his
 wife)
 Give the big ones to her.

As the Pit Boss does so...

MRS. ZHAO
 (to Li)
 I heard what you said to that man
 in the tuxedo. The one who so
 obviously likes you. We Chinese are
 confident about our culture. The
 qipao is the most beautiful style
 of dress in the world. You are
 honoring us by wearing it. It shows
 appreciation, not misappropriation.
 My country would never prevent any
 woman from adopting it. You look
 Hau'li' [pronounced: Hwon-nee and
 means 'enchanting']... Thank you
 for wearing it.

Liwayway blushes. Bets are placed. Mrs. Zhao plops two
 \$1,000 chips on the TIE SPOT. Li begins to pull cards out of
 the shoe.

Male bystanders, some of them famous athletes and
 celebrities, begin to orbit, or stand near, the game. As Li
 deals the cards to the appropriate spots, they are making
 their appraisals.

ROMULUS
 (to Zofia)
 Like bees to a flower.

ZOFIA
 No shit! I want to stand over
 there, too.

The PLAYER cards are a Queen of Hearts and a Seven of
 Diamonds [totaling 7]. The BANKER cards are an Ace of
 Diamonds and an Ace of Hearts [totaling 2]. As Li pulls
 another card out of the shoe for BANKER...

MRS. ZHAO
 (shouting)
 Monkey, monkey!

Li flips over a Five of Clubs [a tie paying 8-1].

MRS. ZHAO
 Thank you, sugar.

EXT. THE HOME OF DALISAY TREMBLAY (NEE: PRADO) - NIGHT

Through a frosty window and falling snow, we see Dalisay at
 a table writing a letter to Liwayway.

DALISAY (V.O.)

'... My dearest friend, Li. It is so hard to believe that I would come to love my husband so much and this land we live in! My life is amazing!!! I wish I could go back to that time I told you that I wanted to return to Cebu a widow and rich. I take back those sinful words. They were the thoughts of a wicked, selfish girl. I never want to go back to the Philippines and I want my man to live forever. He told me that when he dies, he's set aside a small annuity for me. And, that's good enough. He plans on giving the ranch to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and I think that's great! Nature abounds in this place and such marvelous creatures should forever have a place to stay here. Why don't you ever write me back? Are you mad at me? I hope not. I trust you are doing well. I want to hear from you. I miss you and I care about you with all my heart. We are truly soul mates. Are we not? Perhaps we can get together sometime?'

INT/EXT. TRIPLE-C'S CAR - THEN FOLLOWING (DAY)

Coop wants Liwayway to see a DOCTOR and he made an appointment for her. As they turn into the medical center's parking lot, a SIGN reads: 'Quiet Mind Clinic - Parking'.

Curtis sees an open parking space, but someone else turns into "his" spot. He's mad, but says nothing.

As Li and Curtis walk to the entranceway, Coop on-the-sly keys [vandalizes] that car which dared to trespass on his spot.

INT. A PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

There are various CREDENTIALS and CERTIFICATES on the wall. The couple and the doctor sit in posh high-backed chairs facing each other.

CURTIS

She is not adapting to America very well.

PSYCHIATRIST

Like how?

CURTIS

She doesn't want to have kids.

PSYCHIATRIST

That's not unusual. Many women prefer to wait.

CURTIS

No. I mean she uses birth control behind my back and refuses to make love to me without a struggle. She's my wife and I'm not going to beg for it.

PSYCHIATRIST

Well, we can't have that, can we? Wives must contribute in many ways. Share and share alike.

LIWAYWAY

I heard something like that from a priest back home.

PSYCHIATRIST

See. A truth known around the world. Doesn't your man provide for you young lady?

CURTIS

(interrupting)

I buy her all sorts of things: an iphone, a smart watch, even an ipad. I got her an Echo and an Alexa from Amazon. For her safety, I even got her one of those state-of-the-art Ring Wireless doorbells with a camera.

LIWAYWAY

Those are just surveillance tools he uses to keep an eye on my whereabouts and what I do. Things he can trace with some App. When he finally gets around to buying me a car, he'll promptly Lojack that thing and watch me on a map. See where I drive. Then lock down the car when I make a wrong turn and stray a few yards from the route he has assigned to me.

CURTIS

I buy you other things, too.

LIWAYWAY

Sex toys don't count! Aren't you in the least bit embarrassed or ashamed?

PSYCHIATRIST

They count. Sex in a marriage is important. Essential actually.

CURTIS

She lacks interest, so I get those things to help her out.

PSYCHIATRIST

Ms. Cooper, maybe you're just homesick? Depressed a bit from the changes in culture? Believe it or not, I get lots of women in here that come from other places and have difficulty with their new marriages and new surroundings. I prescribe them SSRI's. Like Prozac. They work wonders.

LIWAYWAY

No doubt, you treat a lot of women like me. Coop found you. I wonder where? Perhaps some Internet chatroom that caters to domination, bondage, and snuffing the life out of little Asian girls?

CURTIS

See what I mean.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER PARKING LOT - DAY

CURTIS

Get in the fuckin' car.

He waves around a piece of paper.

CURTIS

We're gonna' get this prescription filled on the way home.

LIWAYWAY

I'll take the damn bus.

CURTIS

(getting into the car alone)
Suit yourself. You better learn some manners. Change your behavior. Otherwise, you may just find your Green Card gone. And, without a passport, you're screwed.

LIWAYWAY

You took my passport?

CURTIS

Enjoy your bus ride.

He sneers and drives off, burning rubber.

EXT/INT. COOPER HOUSE - FOLLOWING (DAY)

Curtis parks at the curb. As he is walking to his front steps, the Postal Service LETTER CARRIER comes up.

LETTER CARRIER

I got another one of those Canadian letters. Someone up there must be immune to writer's cramp.

Without a word, Coop takes the letter from Dal, walks inside the house, and places the letter in a shredder.

CURTIS

(to himself and the envelope shredding)

Fuck you both.

INT. GAGE HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Romulus is in the kitchen preparing food, humming a tune, when he hears a CRASH.

ROMULUS

Oh, hell... what has she dropped now?

He moves through the house to see what Natalie has broken this time. But, Natalie didn't drop anything. She passed out and did a face plant.

Facedown, there's BLOOD OOZING onto the floor. She's out cold. She's breathing, but her nose is broken. Her upper lip is badly cut. She's choking on the blood from her injured mouth.

Rom, normally a very levelheaded and composed man under pressure, gets flustered and goes to pieces.

The EMERGENCY 911 OPERATOR can't understand his ramblings.

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

Calm down sir. You're talking too fast and too loud. Let's not panic. Don't worry. We have your exact location via the cell system and GPS. I've already dispatched an ambulance to your location. We're talking about your wife. Are we not?

ROMULUS

(still overexcited)

Yes!

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

Is she breathing?

ROMULUS

Yes!

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

Is she bleeding?

ROMULUS

(angrily)

I already told you she's fucking breathing!!!

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

Is she BLEEDING?

ROMULUS

SHE'S BREATHING GODDAMNIT!!! Oh!... Ah... Ah... she's not bleeding as much now, but there's a lot of blood all around her! Tell me what the fuck to do!!

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

I'm showing the EMTs are just seconds away. Less than a minute. Please turn on your porch light, open the front door, and stand in your driveway, so they may more easily find you.

ROMULUS

Yes. Okay.

The PARAMEDICS arrive doing their usual thing. One of them spots Natalie's MEDICAL ALERT TAG. It says DNR along with other things.

PARAMEDIC

Is she still a Do Not Resuscitate?

ROMULUS

Yes.

PARAMEDIC

Well, I doubt we will have to deal with that. Now, you go talk to that other guy over there [pointing]. The one with the laptop. That's the Rescue Team leader. He needs to know exactly what happened and some of your wife's medical history.

ROMULUS

I don't know what happened! I was in the other room and just heard her fall!

PARAMEDIC

Just go talk with the team leader. Like now. Right now. I'm busy here.

Rom goes. Natalie is regaining consciousness.

NATALIE
Whoa. What the...

PARAMEDIC
Did your husband do this to you?

NATALIE
What?

PARAMEDIC
Did your husband strike you? Did he hit you? You can tell me. Don't worry. The cops are here and they'll take him away. You don't have to be afraid.

Before answering, she passes out again.

INT. RUNAWAY BAY HOURS LATER - NIGHT

Liwayway is walking past Zofia who is at her post.

LIWAYWAY
I'm heading to lunch. Do you think you'll be able to join me?

ZOFIA
Standby.

In mockery, Li stands to attention and salutes.

LIWAYWAY
Ma'am, yes, ma'am. I will follow your order to standby!

Zofia mugs and mouths: 'Bad Girl!'

ZOFIA
(into radio)
Unit 330 to Unit 7.

RADIO TRAFFIC

CECIL
Go ahead 330.

ZOFIA
Can you spell me for lunch?

CECIL
10-4. Standby. En route. ETA 4-minutes.

ZOFIA
10-4. Copy. Standing by for relief.

END RADIO TRAFFIC

LIWAYWAY

You guys do more standing-by than a scarecrow. I'll meet you in the lunchroom.

INT. GAGE HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Rom is with a bandaged Natalie returning from the hospital. They walk in through the front door.

Molasses takes a playful "pose", with front paws forward and butt high in the air, and then gets the "zoomies" [a Frenetic Random Activity Period or FRAP].

NATALIE

I need to sit down.

Rom helps Nat into a reclining chair. As soon as she's situated, Molasses comes barreling along and jumps up onto Natalie's lap.

ROMULUS

Moe!

NATALIE

I'm okay. Take him for a walk. Better yet, a jog. Now fetch me the frozen peas for my nose, will ya'?

INT. BIG SHOULDERS EMPLOYEE LUNCHROOM - NIGHT

Li and Zofia are seated at a table for two; voices at a low volume.

LIWAYWAY

Is Rom okay? Is he on vacation? Have a PTO day or something?

ZOFIA

Since the start of the shift, you've been staring at the elevator doors just hoping to see him.

LIWAYWAY

I have not.

ZOFIA

Oh, yes you have. And, that's just fine with me. Rom likes you. More to the point, you like him back. It's as obvious as water being wet.

LIWAYWAY

Is he okay?

ZOFIA

He's fine. His wife isn't. She took a fall. He's with her.

LIWAYWAY

Is she in the hospital?

ZOFIA

Only the Emergency Room. He'll be gone tomorrow, too. So, you won't be seeing him until Friday night.

LIWAYWAY

You're always telling me how much he cares about his wife.

ZOFIA

He's not afraid to share his feelings. How many guys do that? Your Curtis is certainly no Rom.

(beat)

Li, Coop dishonors you. He's a pig. Creeps out all the girls. You should see how he acts when you are not in the room. Listen honey, the man's heart is as dark as tar. Ever think about going back to the Philippines?

LIWAYWAY

(picking at her salad)

My brother Amado is there and I miss him. Otherwise there is nothing for me in Cebu but ruins.

ZOFIA

Girl, you do understand, don't ya, that this is America where marriage vows are as permanent as ice cubes removed from a freezer. Set yourself free.

LIWAYWAY

I got married in the Philippines, not here. Divorce is illegal there. Even if I left Coop and went back home, I'd be arrested and given back to him.

ZOFIA

Then never go back. You said it's in ruins anyway. If I were you, I'd just have Amado come here. And, then dump that loser of yours for my partner. Just go hook-up with Romulus. I mean that. He rocks!

Li blushes and speaks softly.

LIWAYWAY

I've dreamt about him, I admit.

ZOFIA

Make it real.

LIWAYWAY

He's not married in my dreams.

ZOFIA

Well, you'll have to come to terms with that. Won't you? Listen, Rom will never put Natalie in a nursing home. He truly does love her. Respects her way too much to allow her to suffer the indignity of dying alone. He'll be by her side.

LIWAYWAY

Then it could never happen? Him? Me?

ZOFIA

I'm not saying that. The problem isn't with Romulus. It's with you. Rom doesn't just talk to me about his wife. He talks to me all the time about you, too. Moreover, you're always asking me about him! You two... it's like you're in high school. What's next? Want me to ask him if he'll take you to the prom?

LIWAYWAY

(embarrassed and shy
giggling)

No.

ZOFIA

There's only one question you need to ask yourself. Are you willing to share a good man, knowing you can never have him all to yourself? It's a simple YES or NO question. But, before you answer, understand that Rom's greatest fear is to be lonely... to not have someone to love. It's important for him to love rather than get love.

LIWAYWAY

Hmm...

ZOFIA

Rom thinks you're wonderful! Don't you get it? H-E-L-L-O. You two are so friggin' fascinated with one another. Neither one of you fools

(MORE)

ZOFIA (cont'd)
 can hide that. Li, you both are in
 dark places and the shining light
 of love would do you both good.

LIWAYWAY
 You think?

ZOFIA
 He's significantly older than you
 are, but from what I've heard, that
 doesn't mean a thing where you come
 from. Go enjoy the thrill love
 brings. If I were you, I'd let it
 happen. Just do nothing. Doing
 nothing's easy. Girl, you're not a
 diabetic, you need something sweet
 in your life.

INT. GAGE HOUSEHOLD MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Rom is helping Natalie get into bed.

NATALIE
 Rom, I'm dying.

ROMULUS
 I honestly believe I cannot live
 alone.

NATALIE
 Don't worry. You won't be alone.
 You got Li.

Rom is caught off guard. Eyes askance. Uncertain.

NATALIE
 You talk in your sleep.
 (beat)
 You dream about this woman. And,
 the subconscious mind doesn't lie.
 I'm not mad. Rom, it's not a sin to
 feel deeply.

ROMULUS
 But, I love you.

NATALIE
 You just don't love me. You love
 her, too. Your sleeps are filled
 with burning imagination! Go make
 your dreams a reality.

ROMULUS
 I'm not going to do that. I can't
 control my dream states, but I sure
 as hell can exercise self-control
 when I'm awake.

NATALIE

My dearest Romulus, live your life
while you're still among the
living. Go get her before she can
no longer be gotten.

INT. FRIDAY NIGHT RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

Out of the high roller room windows, Rom is watching the lightning and rain. He turns from the window.

Liwayway is dealing blackjack. Her face card is a six (6). The players all show 16's through 20, except for a single 21, which was paid on the spot.

The usual strategy is to not take a new card when you have a 16-to-20 and the dealer shows a 6. But, one of the players, looking like a SOUTHWEST OR MIDEAST ASIAN, "hits".

Even though the guy makes a 21, the table erupts.

UNKNOWN PLAYER

(inebriated and angry)

Now you've gone and messed up all
the cards in the shoe! My cards are
going to go to somebody else!
You're not supposed to hit on a 17
like that you dumbass camel jockey!

OTHER PLAYER

(Farsi-accented)

I am not an Arab. I'm Persian. From
Iran.

UNKNOWN PLAYER

Saddam Hussain's place? Where Osama
bin laden was hiding?

Liwayway casually pulls on her ear lobe. Of course, the smitten Romulus sees this.

ROMULUS

(into radio)

Unit 15 to Zeus and Unit 330. Table
11. Signal from dealer.

INT. CASINO SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS CENTER - NIGHT

ZEUS

(one of the harem on the
radio)

Roger 15. We saw it, too.

The Surveillance Tech puts the Table 11 image up on one of the big screens. Unit One now sees it, as well.

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

ROMULUS

(radio)

Unit 330. Please respond to Table 11.

ZOFIA

(radio)

10-4.

OTHER PLAYER

(condescending with exaggerated politeness)

Ahmagh American. [pronounced: ash'-zmah, and means stupid in Farsi] Saddam was the leader of Iraq, not Iran. Bin laden's center of operations was in Afghanistan. Osama hid out in Pakistan. Those are Arab countries. Iran is not an Arab country. If you're going to watch cartoons, try Dora the Explorer.

UNKNOWN PLAYER

You're responsible for 9-11.

(beat; louder)

You want the bomb!

(beat; shouting)

You took the hostages!

He strikes the other player. They exchange blows.

Romulus begins his march to the pit and speaks into his radio microphone. Zofia arrives at the altercation.

ROMULUS

(cool as a cucumber)

10-99. Pit 5. Table 11. Runaway.

Zofia has no problem moving the Iranian player to the side. She shields him from the other guy.

While WALKING STEADILY to Table 11, Romulus is acting like a drill sergeant with new recruits. He's in control. Looks brave. Admirable.

UNIFORMED OFFICERS are arriving, responding to the 10-99 radio distress call.

Fearing a ruse, SIMPLY BY POINTING, Gage orders:

-- One of the uniformed officers to watch the tabletops

-- Another he orders to watch the tip boxes

-- Then another he assigns to guard the Cashier's Cage

-- Others to watch the elevators and doors

Finally speaking...

ROMULUS
 (to the Drink Server)
 Get drink orders from everyone.
 Tell them they're on the house.

Rom's on top of things. Self-confident. Unflustered. Li misses none of this. He ARRIVES at the melee.

ROMULUS
 (radio)
 Zeus. Unit 15 approaching patron.
 Eyes On, please.

UNIT ONE
 (radio)
 Fifteen. We have eyes.

Rom draws near the patron still trying to slug it out with the other.

ROMULUS
 Excuse me, sir.
 (beat)
 Sir. Please stop.

UNKNOWN PLAYER
 Fuck you, Rent-A-Cop!

The guy takes a SWING at Rom just as UNIT 7 shows up. Rom dodges the swing artfully with a simple head weave.

CECIL
 (into the radio)
 Unit 15. You're cleared to engage.

In his earbud, Romulus hears the authorization. He carries out some kind of simple, low-impact, JUDO MOVE, which causes the assailant to fall back a bit.

ROMULUS
 (to Liwayway)
 You okay?

LIWAYWAY
 Yeah.

ROMULUS
 Good.
 (to the Pit Boss)
 Gotta' pen or pencil?

The Pit Boss hands Rom a PENCIL. Rom places the thing between the forefinger and second finger of his right hand.

As the Unknown Player comes at him again with open hands to grab or choke, Rom surprisingly shakes the man's hand, slipping the pencil between the guy's middle and third fingers.

Now, Romulus squeezes the man's hand hard. It looks like a simple handshake, but the pencil is crushing into the man's finger bones. He instantly stops fighting.

Leaning in, close to the man's head, Rom whispers into the patron's ear.

ROMULUS

Do I look like the kind of guy you
want to fuck with?

UNKNOWN PLAYER

No sir.

Rom loosens his handshake grip, but doesn't let go.

ROMULUS

(into radio)

Zeus. Units 15 and 330 are enroute
to the Interview Rooms with two
newly banned patrons.

UNIT ONE

(radio)

Zeus copies.

With the soon-to-be excluded patrons in tow, Cecil signals Romulus to stop. Zofia and her wrongdoer continue onward.

CECIL

Nice job 15. I'll stay here until
you and your partner are done
processing these guys. Amazing what
a simple handshake can do. What the
hell is that maneuver called
anyway?

ROMULUS

Bone Crusher. Originally
demonstrated by Claude Saint Denise
in 1963.

CECIL

Neat. Get on your way.

(beat; into the radio)

All clear 10-99 at Runaway Bay. All
Clear.

Liwayway has seen and heard everything. She's made up her mind. She's going to do nothing.

INT. BIG SHOULDERS BACK OF THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Rom's banned patron is signing a form in one of the Interview Rooms. Romulus opens the door and hands the guy off to a UNIFORMED OFFICER.

Just outside the door, in the hallway, Zofia has been waiting. She enters the room and closes the door behind her.

ZOFIA

Rom, I'm sorry. I screwed up. I should've saw the problem long before Li signaled. It was my job to watch the pit.

ROMULUS

That is utterly, completely, absolutely, C-O-R-R-E-C-T. You win!!! You get a chance to spin the big wheel!!! Congratulations! Now, get over it. You WILL make mistakes. All human beings are born with the fuck-up gene. No exceptions. It's universal and we're all hard-wired with it. Fucking up isn't a special skill we brag about on social media or offer up at a job interview. Yet, we all do it. Routinely. All the time. Every single one of us can whip up a smelly brain fart that can't be burned away with a flame. Now set it aside and give me a hand. We need to prepare for tomorrow's birthday party.

EXT. BIG SHOULDERS BUS STOP NEXT DAY - NIGHT

We see Li get off the bus. She wears a knee-length CARDIGAN SWEATER atop her uniform.

When the bus doors close, there's that familiar HISSING SOUND. For the first time in her life, Liwayway sees her breath.

As she approaches the building, we see the BIG LIGHTED SIGN that says: 'Big Shoulders 15th Anniversary! Fireworks Tonight!'

INT. CASINO ESCALATOR - FOLLOWING (NIGHT)

We follow Liwayway onto the first step of the escalator as she rises up to the Runaway main door. Tonight her QIPAO is tangerine in color. Wow!

She scans her ID card. CLICK. She enters and looks towards the pit.

Nothing's happening. All the patrons are at the windows.

CONCIERGE

Hi, Li! The Anniversary Fireworks are about to begin. Gaming is temporarily suspended until they're over. Just go by the windows and watch with the others.

Just as we hear the first BOOM and see the first BURST, Li stands next to Rom at the lounge window. He's watching Dimitri and Feliks in the crowd.

That first explosion forces a SQUEAK out of Li.

LIWAYWAY

I've always been afraid of fireworks, ever since I was a kid. It's the noise. I love the flash. The sparks and waterfalls of light. Just hate the booms.

DIMITRI

(to Feliks)

I betcha Dudley Do-Right over there would like to make his own fireworks with the little Pinay.

FELIKS

He's old enough to be her father.

DIMITRI

Nope. Those two are in love. They just don't know it yet. If we ever need to, we can use that.

EXT. WALKWAY BETWEEN CASINO AND BUS STOP - FOLLOWING (DAY)

As she walks, being from the tropics, an underdressed and uncomfortable Liwayway is fighting against sleet and freezing rain.

When she makes it to the BUS STOP SHELTER, she huddles against a wall to block the wind. Romulus drives past and notices.

He stops, backs-up, stops again, and rolls down the passenger window.

ROMULUS

Get in the car please. I'll drive you home. You're going to freeze to death.

LIWAYWAY

That's okay. I'll be fine.

ROMULUS

Nonsense. Get in.

He reaches over to fling open the door. Li rushes in.

LIWAYWAY

Oh! Thank you. I mean that. This sure isn't Cebu. I checked my phone. It's 30-degrees and clear in Manila right now! It's hot there. It's always hot there. This sucks.

ROMULUS

30? That's what it is here right now.

LIWAYWAY

No way! You crazy?

ROMULUS

(long beat)

Ah. I get it. I'm talking Fahrenheit. You're not. Bit slow on the uptake. You know what they say about us old guys. The mind is the second thing to go.

Li misses the double-entendre.

LIWAYWAY

You're forgiven.

She gets the joke now and gives a cheerily surprised look.

LIWAYWAY

A reindeer with a red nose should be pulling your car. Why do people even live here? Shit, I was nearly blown away! I mean like down the street!

Romulus laughs.

LIWAYWAY

That's not funny.

ROMULUS

No, it's not. But, I never heard you swear before. This is nothing. It gets worse.

LIWAYWAY

Then I changed my mind. Please drive me to the equator.

EXT/INT. ROM'S CAR AND LI'S HOUSE - FOLLOWING (DAY)

Inside the car at the curb...

ROMULUS

Nice digs.

LIWAYWAY

Coop's in court. Something went wrong at his company, so he's suing somebody. Said it would take all day. Come on in. Just for a bit. I'll brew up some Lapsang Souchong to keep you warm and awake for your drive home.

ROMULUS

My favorite. Okay.

LIWAYWAY

You know what that is?

ROMULUS

Yep. I drink it at home; the organic kind. Smoked tea. The stuff Captain Jean Luc Picard was supposed to drink until somebody decided to opt for Earl Grey instead.

LIWAYWAY

You ARE full of surprises.

(beat)

Wait here.

Li exits the car and walks to her door, then reaches into her purse. She takes out a roll of MASKING TAPE. Pulls off a strip and tapes over the doorbell's camera lense.

She opens the door and walks inside. Unplugs Alexa. Puts her in the freezer above the refrigerator.

She goes back to the front door and shouts...

LIWAYWAY

Rom! C'mon in!

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD KITCHEN - DAY

Liwayway and Rom are at the KITCHEN TABLE.

From an intricately stylized Philippine RIMAOONTE INFUSER, Li is pouring tea in an elegant way.

ROMULUS

You don't have to wait on me.

LIWAYWAY

Where I come from, one does not pour their own tea. The person next to you does. Then they watch your cup and refill it when the time comes. It's kinda' like: You show me yours and I'll show you mine.

As Rom takes hold of the teapot, Li tantalizes and tempts.

LIWAYWAY

(pointing to her teacup)
 Your turn. Fill me up, please. Do it correctly. Don't rush. Perform the act in the time-honored fashion. Slow, but stimulating, with a bit of panache. Smoothly with good pace and tempo and rhythm. Wow! Excellent technique. You have some experience, I see.

EXT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Triple-C exits the courthouse and enters a cab.

CURTIS

Take me to the Babe Barn.

DRIVER

Sir, I don't think it's open at this hour.

CURTIS

I know. I'm meeting someone there. A friend. And, after you drop me off, come back in three hours to pick me up. Will two hundred bucks cover that?

DRIVER

Yes sir! My pleasure.

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD KITCHEN - DAY

Rom and Liwayway are still at the kitchen table.

ROMULUS

(pouring Li tea)
 You need more tea. So, what exactly did this Zumba guy Dave do?

LIWAYWAY

He drugged me and raped me.

ROMULUS

Oh, my God. I'm so sorry that happened to you.

LIWAYWAY

And, because of that, I had to marry Coop. My life is ruined. I liked Dave. Didn't see it coming. It was my fault. I should've never been alone with him. We were training for a dance competition, but I should've never been alone with that guy. I was attracted to him. Probably wanted him. Maybe, led him on.

ROMULUS

The victim of a rape is never at fault. Never. Stop thinking that. It's dumb to think that you should NOT act in reasonable and predictable ways. I expect normal people to act normal. A young woman being attracted to a fit and handsome young man is something ordinary and expected. Simply a biological event. Such a feeling isn't unusual and it's certainly not abnormal or deviant. You didn't rape him. He raped you. He was never interested in getting your consent. You didn't give. He took.

LIWAYWAY

My father had a different opinion. He said I was bad.

ROMULUS

The only opinion that matters is yours. Did YOU ever commit a rape? Murder someone? Plant a bomb somewhere? Mistreat animals? Commit arson? Starve, abuse, or exploit a child? Support terrorists? Lie to tarnish somebody's reputation? Piss on somebody's grave? Ever take advantage of anyone in any way?

LIWAYWAY

No.

ROMULUS

Then convince yourself that you're good. Just another woman with the needs, wants, and desires typical of individuals everywhere.

LIWAYWAY

My dad called me the C-word.

ROMULUS

Courageous?

LIWAYWAY

He said I was a disgusting, ugly insect. A worm!

ROMULUS

So, what? It may just be that your dad's right. Did you ever think of that?

Li has a catch in her breath. Tears form in her eyes.

ROMULUS

Butterflies are insects that start as slimy, sometimes prickly, little worms. Yet, these worms are strong enough to lift 50 times their body weight! They are tiny self-confident beasts that don't care at all about the past. They instinctively know that a new, better future comes only after transformation. Your dad's worm is really a lovely creature. You only need to believe in the future, sprout wings, and fly.

LIWAYWAY

You think I'm a butterfly?

ROMULUS

Leave the past where it belongs, in the past.

Li tugs at Rom's sleeve. They gaze into each other's eyes. Talking without speaking. Finally, Rom softly blurts...

ROMULUS

You're so freaking pretty.

LIWAYWAY

Rom, you're a good man.

ROMULUS

No, I'm just average. Nothing special.

LIWAYWAY

Oh, no your not. You ARE special. Worthy.

It's going to happen. Right here. Right now. Fate.

ROMULUS

I better go.

LIWAYWAY

Now? Right now?

ROMULUS

Probably best if I did.

A QUOTATION AGAINST A BLACK SCREEN.

"Love doesn't make the world go round. It makes the ride worthwhile." ... Franklin P. Jones

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

Feliks Yavorsky is standing at a urinal in the mensroom finishing his business. When done, he fails to wash his

hands and just walks out the door.

As he is striding back to his table, he overhears Romulus on his radio.

RADIO TRAFFIC

ROMULUS

Zeus, Unit 15 will be e-filing a FinCen 111 SAR report on the patron at Spot 10 Blackjack Table 8. Tell the Treasury analysts to expect it.

ZEUS

Roger 15. We'll log it. The Russian's buddy is coming up behind you. He may have heard.

ROMULUS

(quietly)

Appreciate the heads-up. If someone took notice, it's too late. Stuff happens.

ZEUS

Copy that. Look out the window.

END RADIO TRAFFIC

Rom looks out the big set of windows just as Li, who is on her way to her break, approaches.

She stops and gasps in awe at the sunrise about to break. Grand CREPUSCULAR RAYS stream from the cloud gaps.

LIWAYWAY

That's me.

ROMULUS

You?

LIWAYWAY

The dawn. That's what my name means. Dawn.

ROMULUS

Fits. When night and day become one beautiful moment. A gift for all.

It begins to SNOW. Flurries to start. More to come.

LIWAYWAY

Oh, my God! That's snow! I've never seen snow before in my life. It's pretty. I've seen pictures of snow before and my girlfriend used to talk about it before she moved to Canada. Rom, what's it actually like?

ROMULUS

Best to learn from first-hand experience. Let's take a short hike in it after work. Just you and me. Somewhere surrounded by nature. A winter wonderland. I know just the place.

LIWAYWAY

It's a date! But, what's it really like?

ROMULUS

Snow is white and it's cold. It twinkles like diamonds in the morning sunshine. It falls silently. It crunches under your feet when you walk on it...

An emotionally charged Li merely smiles as she tumbles inside Rom's soul.

CUT TO TABLE:

FELIKS

(to Dimitri and pointing at Rom)

Boss, I have to tell you about the security guy.

DIMITRI

I told you those two will soon be making fireworks. James Bond over there is giving our cute little dealer some bullshit about a big blizzard. Look. He's telling her about the snow just to plow her.

FELIKS

Boss, that's not it. He filed some kind of report on you with the Feds.

Giving a silent order, Konstatin glares icily at Feliks.

EXT. NATURE TRAIL - DAY

Rom has driven Liwayway to the Evanston GROSSE POINT LIGHTHOUSE on the Lake Michigan shore.

Because it's winter and it's snowing, they have the place to themselves. Unlike the other day, Li's in a parka, snug and warm.

Strolling along on the nature trail, they are happy.

LIWAYWAY

(as she removes a mitten)

Hold my hand.

ROMULUS

Sure.

LIWAYWAY

Heaven must be like this. Just not cold. Do you believe in God?

ROMULUS

I'm a pantheist. I believe God is everywhere and in everything. She's in the animals of the earth, the trees, the rocks, and the water, in you, in me, everywhere.

LIWAYWAY

She?

ROMULUS

Damn straight. Guys suffer deficiencies in several benevolent and divine nutrients needed for appropriate growth. I sometimes think only women have souls.

LIWAYWAY

You're some pagan tree-lover then?

ROMULUS

Pagan, no. Tree-lover, unquestionably yes. I want you to think of me as a man that loves trees. Look at that old oak over there [points]. It is alive... and when its leaves are not on their annual winter vacation... that tree breathes! And, in turn, the animals all around here breathe its breadth. Without trees we all die. I owe my life to that tree. Without that tree, and all the other trees on this planet, I'd be dead, and I would've never found you.

LIWAYWAY

Kiss me.

They kiss softly, delicately. Lost in a passionate moment.

They resume their walk and crest a dune and stop. They can see the LAKE.

Rom puts his arms around Liwayway. Pulls her close. She's smiling as she looks up to meet Rom's gaze. Her face is wet. She's ravishing.

LIWAYWAY

Kiss me again.

They kiss.

ROMULUS

I have fallen in love with you.

LIWAYWAY

I know. And, I with you. But, we're both married to others.

They resume their walk.

LIWAYWAY

Tell me about your wife.

ROMULUS

Natalie likes this place, too. Especially the lighthouse and the gulls. At least she did. My wife hasn't been here in many years. She's a tree hugger, like me. In fact, Natalie made me the person that I am.

LIWAYWAY

How's that?

ROMULUS

I grew up in a troubled, violent household. Both my parents were drunks and abusive. They were bigoted, xenophobic, uncompromising racists. No joke. They weren't good people. And, I was growing up to be just like them.

LIWAYWAY

You?

ROMULUS

Yes, me. Then, when I was a senior in high school, Natalie - who lived down the block and I knew as a little kid - came back into my life. She enlightened me; changed my beliefs. Made me a feminist, a defender of human rights, an environmentalist. She taught me to like poetry and make sense of Robinson Jeffers. Got me hooked on organic gardening, sociology, and politics. Took me to protests. Turned me on to Cat Stevens, Joni Mitchell, Pete Seeger, and Joan Baez... Heck! Even Childish Gambino. I hate to think of the man I would have become had I not met her. She made me, me.

LIWAYWAY

Do you have any photos of her?

ROMULUS

Just one. Her and me. When we were younger.

The photo is shared.

LIWAYWAY

Holy cow! You're handsome in that picture. Not saying you're not now, but Whoa! Look at that long hair! You were a HIPPIE! And, wow! Natalie's gorgeous! She's such a knockout! You two were a hot couple. Movie stars.

ROMULUS

Natalie doesn't look like that anymore.

LIWAYWAY

From the cancer?

ROMULUS

It's not cancer, but it is a very nasty disease with a hard to pronounce name. She's lost so much. It's destroyed her body. Damaged her mind.

LIWAYWAY

And you still love her?

ROMULUS

Yes. But, her heart's become a locked door and I can't find the key. Though I'm married, I'm desolate and alone.

LIWAYWAY

You just lonely?

ROMULUS

No. I'm in love with you. In this, I am certain.

LIWAYWAY

Then kiss me.

He does.

LIWAYWAY

We'll figure things out. For now, just take me back to the bus stop.

ROMULUS

All right. But, tell me truthfully. Are you positive you love me, too?

LIWAYWAY

Totally. Completely. I'm sure.

Rom reaches out and gently holds Li's face in his hands.

ROMULUS

I don't like you being with Curtis.

LIWAYWAY

I don't like it either.

ROMULUS

Coop's no good. He doesn't deserve you. It's like giving rubies to a child. Doesn't know the value of what he has.

INT. DARK SEEDY MOTEL ROOM NEAR THE BABE BARN - DAY

CRYSTAL and ANOTHER STRIPPER stand behind Triple-C who is snorting lines of cocaine on a table. They all appear to be naked.

When he's done, Crystal begins dragging Curtis towards the bed.

CRYSTAL

You ready now?

CURTIS

Fuck yeah. Get the shower curtain.
Get the whip. Get the razor blades.
Get the honey.

INT. BIG SHOULDERS TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Opal Washington is handing out paperwork to the new hire group that includes Liwayway.

OPAL

So, as of today, you have all qualified for medical insurance coverage, five PTO days, five sick days, the 401(k) plan, and life insurance at a rate of three times your annual earnings. Not bad considering what other employers offer these days.

BEVERAGE SERVER

Will we get a turkey or something at Christmas time?

OPAL

No. You get something much better. Because Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, New Years Eve, and New Years Day are our busiest times

(MORE)

OPAL (cont'd)
 here at the casino, our Holiday
 Party is always the second Saturday
 night in the month of January.

SLOT ATTENDANT
 January? After Christmas?

OPAL
 Yep. It's held at the Big Shoulders
 hotel. Everyone gets a free
 overnight stay for you and your
 spouse or significant other. Or, go
 solo, if you like. If you got kids,
 we pay for the babysitter. At the
 party, every employee gets a great
 gift. And, the drinks, meal,
 dancing, and much, much more are
 all at no cost to you! It's one
 hell of a party.

INT. BIG SHOULDERS EMPLOYEE LUNCHROOM - NIGHT

Romulus and Liwayway are eating together at one of the
 tables. They are chatting quietly.

ROMULUS
 Your telling me Coop's in jail?

LIWAYWAY
 That's what I'm saying. He got
 busted for drugs at some sleazy
 motel. He wasn't alone.

ROMULUS
 Will he be there long? Did he make
 bail?

LIWAYWAY
 He has to wait for something called
 an arraignment. That's not until
 tomorrow and he can't bail out
 before that. Are you free today?
 Can you make yourself available?

ROMULUS
 I'll find a way.

EXT. CHINATOWN STREETS - DAY

Li and Rom are walking along the sidewalks. They're
 sightseeing and window-shopping.

ROMULUS
 This remind you of home?

LIWAYWAY

Not the weather! But, the neighborhood sure does. It's nice to see people on the street that look a lot like me. Thank you, Rom.
(beat)

Here.

Liwayway hands Rom something from her pocket.

ROMULUS

What's this?

LIWAYWAY

It's a palm frond shaped like an angelfish. It means a lot to me. My best friend gave it to me when she left for Canada. I miss her. That thing in your hand is the greatest token of love I possess and I want you to have it.

She kisses him.

ROMULUS

I can't take this. It's too precious a gift.

LIWAYWAY

Oh, yes you can because you're going to buy me something in this store right here to replace it. It's directly in front of you, on display in this window...
[pointing] Right there!

The store's window display has a JADE PENDANT shaped like an ANGELFISH.

ROMULUS

Holy shit! How's that possible?

LIWAYWAY

God's watching. Made this moment happen. She's pleased to see us together.

They walk into the store. The CLERK eager for a sale.

LIWAYWAY

This man here wants to buy me a talisman. It's in your window. The fish.

The clerk retrieves the necklace.

CLERK

Sir? Would you like the honor of placing it about her neck?

ROMULUS

You bet.

CLERK

What's the special occasion?

ROMULUS

I have chosen to surrender to the sweet.

Rom makes a show of it. Li's neck a subtle sexiness.

LIWAYWAY

You hungry?

ROMULUS

Starved.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - DAY

The two are finishing up their meals and drinking tea. Rom opens a FORTUNE COOKIE.

It says:

'The problem with resisting temptation is that it may never come again.'

Rom takes a long pause as he contemplates what is written.

ROMULUS

I need to check on Natalie. Let me get you home.

EXT/INT. COOPER HOUSE - FOLLOWING LIWAYWAY (DAY)

Exiting Rom's car without a kiss should the neighbors see, Li walks up to the house. The POSTAL CARRIER approaches.

LETTER CARRIER

Ma'am, another one of those quaint Canadian stamps for your collection. A lighthouse this time. You must have dozens in your stockbook by now.

Li takes the ENVELOPE from the carrier, nods a thanks, and enters her house.

LIWAYWAY

(to herself)

That bastard.

She sits on the sofa to read:

DALISAY (V.O.)

My dearest friend Liwayway. I'm so worried about you. You never answer
(MORE)

DALISAY (V.O.) (cont'd)
 my letters and refuse to give me
 your phone number or email address.
 Why? Did I do wrong in not stopping
 your dad that day? If so, I'm
 sorry. He was so mean and we both
 know that I couldn't have won a
 fistfight with him. Please write me
 back. Please! Is it snowing yet by
 you? It snows here a lot, but my
 sexy, grey-haired, cowboy's got
 something called a front-end loader
 and he just moves it all away. I've
 learned to like the cold and I'm a
 better person now and very ashamed
 of who I was. I've got a Christmas
 gift for you. A godchild! I'm
 pregnant and you're going to be the
 baby's godmother! We had to pick a
 name after the ultrasound. We're
 going to name her Dawn... after her
 aunt Liwayway! You know, we were
 always like sisters. Best of best
 friends. I'll be visiting you this
 holiday season to make plans for
 the baptism and christening. Love
 you forever, Dal.

LIWAYWAY

That son of a bitch!

INT. RUNAWAY BAY CHRISTMAS EVE - FOLLOWING (NIGHT)

The night before Christmas. Strangely, the room is packed
 with guests with many patrons wearing Santa beards and
 green-and-red elf hats.

Zofia and Liwayway are about to head to the lunchroom, but
 Rom needs to stay behind.

ZOFIA

Unit 15, stuck with paperwork again
 I see. Me and this girl here are
 about to head to the lunchroom for
 the Christmas Eve feast.

ROMULUS

Go ahead. Just don't forget.

ZOFIA

Roger. I won't forget. You know me.
 Reliable and loyal. I'm on your
 side.

(pointing a thumb at Li)

Her's, too.

They exit the room and step onto the escalator.

LIWAYWAY

What's that all about?

ZOFIA

You'll see.

INT. EMPLOYEE LUNCHROOM - NIGHT

Li and Zofia are seated at a table for two. Their voices are low enough not to be overheard.

ZOFIA

Rom knows that Triple-C is picking you up straight from work and that you're going to be visiting his mom. Our guy says that that makes things more than a bit inconvenient.

LIWAYWAY

I never met Coop's mother. I think she's institutionalized or in jail. I'm not looking forward to it.

ZOFIA

Rom said to give you this.

Zofia hands over a SMALL HOLIDAY WRAPPED BOX and CARD.

LIWAYWAY

Oh, crap. He said we'd exchange gifts at the holiday party in a couple of weeks.

ZOFIA

He lied. Open it.

From the little box comes a small BRACELET with a DRAGONFLY design. She opens and reads the card inside.

ROMULUS (V.O.)

You fill my soul. More than watching puppies or kittens at play. From the first moment I saw you, like a child's first taste of chocolate, I felt good inside and happy. I love you. Merry Christmas.

ZOFIA

Have you guys done it yet?

LIWAYWAY

(smiling while sniffing)

No. I don't know why he waits?
Maybe I'm not pretty enough?

ZOFIA

Trust me. I would know. You're plenty pretty enough. Don't forget, he's had cancer. Probably messed up down there. Do you think maybe the plumbing doesn't work and he's embarrassed?

ESTABLISHING SHOT: RUNAWAY BAY DOORS

The sign at the main entrance says:

'New Years Eve Party Tonight. Club Members And Their Guests Only. No Passes. No Exceptions.'

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

The room has a special ENTERTAINER for this night and it is packed with PARTYING PATRONS adorned with funny hats or tiaras and the occasional masquerade mask.

Everybody's readying their paper horns, noisemakers, and party favors.

Li is standing very near Rom.

ENTERTAINER AND PATRONS

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one. Happy New Year!

Auld Lang Syne.

Rom and Li affectionately look at each other.

ROMULUS

(having to shout over the tumult)

Happy New Year Liwayway!

Li surreptitiously grasps his hand and gives it a squeeze.

LIWAYWAY

You, too, Rom!

A deep gaze follows. It's very loving and electrical.

INT. CASINO SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS CENTER - NIGHT

SURVEILLANCE TECH

Hey boss. We have a violation.

UNIT ONE

What violation?

SURVEILLANCE TECH
(pointing to the big
screen)

There. Right there. Did you see that? They're touching hands. More than that actually. THEY'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO DO THAT! This wasn't any accident. The chick did it intentionally.

UNIT ONE
I don't see shit.

SURVEILLANCE TECH
Jeez! One. Take a closer look! See that? You need to do something right away! Get them off the casino floor. Write them up. Suspend them.

UNIT ONE
Listen idiot. First of all, that's a woman, or team member, not a chick. Second. You don't tell me what to do. DO WE HAVE OUR ROLES REVERSED OR SOMETHING? Of course I see that. Leave them alone.

SURVEILLANCE TECH
But, boss!

UNIT ONE
I said drop it. And, I'm not going to repeat myself. Go find something else. Kill that video and put your eyes on that small monitor atop your desk. I'm sure you're quite used to looking down and seeing small things. Shut your mouth and get back to work. Now!

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

People are kissing and making toasts with their drinks. Someone has hit a slot machine jackpot: DING DING DING DING.

LIWAYWAY
(to Rom; over the din)
You still going to the holiday party?

ROMULUS
Yeah, I'm going to the holiday party.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY PARTY BANQUET HALL BIG SHOULDERS HOTEL - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: 'Rock And Roll is King' by ELO or any other upbeat song with an outrageously strong start.

We see a huge banquet hall decked out in elaborate holiday decorations. Rom is DANCING with Zofia. He's wearing a SUIT, but the tie is loose or missing.

They're good. Professional-like. For a big girl and an older guy, this dance couple crushes it. They're da bomb!

No one else is dancing because EVERYBODY ELSE is watching and clapping. Encouraging more shimmies, shakes, and twists.

Li enters wearing a classic LITTLE BLACK DRESS with EBONY HEELED SANDALS that have a Roman style ankle-wrapped look. Her neck flaunts a black CHOKER.

She walks through the crowd and sees Rom and Zofia. She's impressed. Those two can cut a rug.

The song ends to loud APPLAUSE and CHEERS.

ZOFIA

(out of breath; bent
over; hands on knees)

Your date's here.

ROMULUS

Where?

ZOFIA

She's heading towards the DeeJay,
but you better not look. If you do,
she'll turn you to stone. You'll be
rock hard.

Rom turns to look anyway. The crowd's too large and he can't see Liwayway as she walks up to the DEEJAY.

LIWAYWAY

Do you take requests?

DEEJAY

For you? Absolutely!

LIWAYWAY

I want to hear a song by Taeyeon
[TAY-on].

DEEJAY

Taeyeon? Never heard of him.

LIWAYWAY

She's a girl. A woman actually.

DEEJAY

Well. Never heard of her. What's she done?

LIWAYWAY

She's made every woman wish she were gay and every gay man wish he were straight.

DEEJAY

That doesn't help.

LIWAYWAY

Any slow, romantic, k-pop? C-pop? From the Asian Billboard charts? Mnet? You know... material that'd be right for someone like me?

DEEJAY

No.

LIWAYWAY

You need to broaden your horizons. Do you have anything slow and romantic? Something good? Really good? I don't care by whom.

DEEJAY

I can do that.

LIWAYWAY

Here's ten bucks. Play it next.

Liwayway walks away. Just a few steps later, a contemporary, slow, Asia-pop love ballad begins.

Li smiles and turns to glance back at the deejay. He holds up his smartphone and mouths: 'Technology'

Liwayway makes a beeline towards Romulus.

DEEJAY

(to himself)

I wonder who's the lucky bastard?

Rom has his backed turned. Li arrives to strike a pose that hints of things to come. She plays with her choker.

ZOFIA

Gypsy woman's here to cast her spell.

As Romulus begins to turnaround...

ROMULUS

She did that long ago.

As he completes the turn, in pleasant surprise, his DRINK AMUSINGLY SPRAYS past his lips...

ROMULUS

Oh my God! Wow! You look absolutely fantastic!

As he wipes away his spittle, there's an admiring, appreciating, gaze. A testosterone produced intense look.

ROMULUS

Oh, my God!!! You make me feel like a downed power line. Inside I'm sizzling and sparking!

Li drags Rom onto the dance floor. The deejay's eyes are like ping-pong balls.

As they dance, they move beautifully together. Almost as one.

LIWAYWAY

(whispering into Rom's ear)

Open your heart and let me in. It's where I want to be.

The song ends. Romulus is leading Liwayway to the OPEN BAR.

ROMULUS

I need a drink. Gotta build-up some courage.

LIWAYWAY

Nope. If I'm going to be naked, you can't be wasted.

Liwayway takes Rom's hand to sneak away. As they exit the hall, Zofia notices.

ZOFIA

Yes!

DEEJAY

(shaking his head "no" in disbelief)

Come off it! No fucking way!

INT. BIG SHOULDERS HOTEL HALLWAY - FOLLOWING (NIGHT)

Li breaks into a run, dragging Rom along. She pushes him up against the ELEVATOR DOORS and they kiss. The doors open. They nearly fall in.

ROMULUS

I'm on the seventh floor.

LIWAYWAY

Me, too! Lucky number that seven.

Fleeing the elevator on the 7th Floor, arms around each other and giggling, they walk the LONG HALL. Rom takes a

slight lead, heading for his room, when Li pulls him to a stop.

LIWAYWAY

My room! Now!!!

She backs up to her door. Backhands her KEY CARD into the slot without ever turning away from Rom's eyes.

LIWAYWAY

For once in my life, I am completely alive. Through and through to the core. The time is now, right now! Lie with me. Purify me. Make me whole again.

INT. LI'S ROOM AT THE BIG SHOULDERS HOTEL - NIGHT

Li's PURSE is on the nightstand. There's a seductive whisper.

LIWAYWAY

I want to see it.

ROMULUS

Aah... you know... I can't... you know... the cancer.

LIWAYWAY

Yeah, I know. I've made plans. I want you any way I can have you.

*** USING IMPLIED ANGLES ONLY ***

Liwayway starts unbuttoning Rom's shirt. His heart thunders inside a body of muscles and unexplained scars.

Rom's at work on her dress zipper, which exposes a BLACK LACE BRA.

When his clothes are all off, Li has him lay atop her bed.

ROMULUS

Li. I'm excited, but awfully nervous. Scared actually. You know...

LIWAYWAY

Don't worry. I got this. You're in very safe hands. I understand.

Li moves to the foot of the bed and plays with her hair. Unpins it. Let's it drop; loose and long.

The dress falls to the floor. Liwayway wears BLACK LACE BOY SHORTS that matches her bra. She's crazy-hot.

She gets into bed. Lies on top of Romulus face-to-face and they kiss.

LIWAYWAY

(whispering)

Touch me. Touch me, now. Gently.
Take me away from here.

Rom moves his hands from her tiny waist, to her narrow hips, and then under her shorts, onto her little butt.

LIWAYWAY

Oh! God I need you!

With that, Li sits up and removes her bra. Her breasts are displayed like fresh fruit.

LIWAYWAY

Take off my shorts.

Rom does. She proceeds to sit on his face, looking down into his eyes.

LIWAYWAY

(whispers)

Oh, yes!

ROMULUS

(quietly, softly, more to
himself really)

You taste good.

LIWAYWAY

Oh! Yes. Right there. Like that.
Right there. Don't stop.

Even so, Rom does, all of a sudden, stop.

We watch Rom's face as he lifts Liwayway up. Looks through her thigh gap. Down his torso. Past his abdomen. To his loins.

ROMULUS

The doctors told me that with my
surgery that's not possible.

Liwayway bends forward and whispers in Rom's ear.

LIWAYWAY

I make magic.

She flips around into a 69 position.

INT. LIWAYWAY'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

It's sunrise early Sunday morning. In their underwear, the lovers are cuddling, positioned like nestled spoons.

ROMULUS

It can only be by God's hand that
you came into my life.

LIWAYWAY

Rom. Do you think we're sinning?

ROMULUS

No. Something that feels this good can't be wrong. Desire and intimacy like this is the Nirvana of the Buddhists and Hinduism... the Garden of Paradise promised in the Bible and in the Qur'an. Such passion is a heavenly gift. The will of the divine.

(beat)

Li, you fill me with wonder and joy. I simply need to listen to you breathe and my soul goes to heaven.

LIWAYWAY

In that case, wait right here.

Liwayway heads to the bathroom and returns with her PURSE. She's wearing nothing but Rom's BUTTON-DOWN SHIRT and we see enough to know, without doubt, she's going full commando.

Li crawls into bed with her lover.

LIWAYWAY

Kiss me. Kiss me until I say stop.

He does.

As they are kissing, lying side-by-side, face-to-face, Rom cannot see Li reaching into her purse.

Soon there's the obvious BUZZ of a vibrator.

ROMULUS

I can hear it!

LIWAYWAY

It's for me, not you.

ROMULUS

You really did make plans ahead of time.

LIWAYWAY

Shush. No talking. I want to luxuriate in your arms. Just hold me close. Don't stop kissing me, until I tell you it's okay to do so. I mean it.

(short beat; then a giggling whisper)

Though I'm sure you're gonna know when that time comes anyway.

As the power is increased, the SOUND of the vibrator gets LOUDER. There's a subdued and satisfying moan and exhale.

INT. LI'S HOTEL ROOM A FEW HOURS LATER - DAY

Romulus stirs. He's slowly awakening. He hears the shower turn off.

Moments later, Li comes out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel. Her hair is wet.

ROMULUS

I will remember last night and this moment long after I die.

LIWAYWAY

I got something for you.

ROMULUS

If we do it again, I won't be able to stand or walk. You'll cripple me.

LIWAYWAY

No silly.

Liwayway retrieves a small GIFT-WRAPPED BOX from that purse of tools and toys.

LIWAYWAY

Belated Merry Christmas, Rom. With love. From me.

ROMULUS

You already gave me the best present a man could get. You.

LIWAYWAY

Open it.

Romulus unwraps the present. Opens a small box.

Inside is a tasteful, old-fashioned, ANALOG COMPASS. The kind with the arrow and degree markings around the dial. It looks more like an expensive pocket watch than a compass.

LIWAYWAY

Open it some more.

Rom is able to snap open the face that holds the pointer in some type of clear oil.

He finds two things. LIWAYWAY'S PHOTO and an elaborately ENGRAVED INSCRIPTION:

'So you can always find your way back to me.'

INT. COOPER HOUSE THE SAME MOMENT IN TIME - FOLLOWING (DAY)

In his stained GREASY T-SHIRT and DISHEVELED HAIR, Coop is alone in the house. As he scratches his balls, he opens the refrigerator door to grab some leftover cold pizza.

With a slice in his one hand, and a beer in the other, he plops his ass down on the sofa. As he reaches for the VIDEO GAME CONTROLLER, both the pizza and drink fall to the floor.

When he picks up the BEER CAN, the lager drains out like a miniature waterfall.

CURTIS

(to himself)

Bitch better get home soon to
cleanup this mess and fix me
something hot to eat. What kind of
fucking company celebrates
Christmas in January? I shouldn't
have let her go.

INT. STORE SECTION OF GAS STATION SAME MOMENT IN TIME - DAY

Through a service station's window, we see CARS and a GRAVEL TRUCK at the gas pumps. Feliks Yavorsky is inside, stocking-up on all sorts of MUNCHIES.

He grabs a PREPAID PHONE off a display peg and pays the cashier.

INT. LI'S HOTEL ROOM CONTINUING SAME TIME - DAY

LIWAYWAY

Rom. Please stay. At least for the
rest of the day? PLEASE! Maybe
forever?

ROMULUS

You're wonderful. Nothing else I
would rather do. And, you know I
can't.

LIWAYWAY

Is this the end? Will you even
think of me after this?

ROMULUS

Oh my God, Li! I will always think
of you. Today. Tomorrow. Always.
And, when I leave this world,
you'll be my last living thought.

LIWAYWAY

And, your wife?

ROMULUS

Natalie. I love her very much. In a very different way. Not like I love you. I know that doesn't make much sense. It's like there's assorted varieties of love. Unconnected and dissimilar. Both special. Both unique. Each with a distinct one-of-its-kind feeling. It sounds crazy, I know. Natalie knows about you. She says I yell your name in my dreams. I don't get it, but she wants me to be with you. She says that she's my purpose, but you're my passion.

(beat)

I've been blessed. Providence gave me Natalie and you. Li, the strongest force in the universe holds us together. A Swiss Super-Collider cannot break us apart.

LIWAYWAY

Kiss me. Kiss me like you mean it. Like you always do.

Romulus cradles Li's face in a single hand. As they kiss farewell, raw emotions invade and destabilize their senses.

LIWAYWAY

You need to get going.

They begin a slow walk to the door.

LIWAYWAY

How do you intend on making your escape from me unnoticed?

ROMULUS

My suitcase never made it to my room. It's still in the car. So, you just check the hall and make sure the coast is clear. I'll go out the west side door because I'm parked on that side. You use the Main Lobby door. It's nearest the bus stop.

Liwayway unfastens the door's CHAIN-AND-LOCK MECHANISM. She stops before opening the door.

LIWAYWAY

When will I get to see you again in your birthday suit?

Rom places his hand on the door and leans forward. She can't open it.

Li looks up at him. They both burst into smiles and laughter. And, then begin ripping off their clothes.

INT. AN HOUR OR SO LATER BIG SHOULDERS HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Liwayway opens her door and peaks around the doorframe.

LIWAYWAY

Coast's clear.

She kisses Rom goodbye. He heads down the hall.

INT/EXT. BIG SHOULDERS HOTEL - FOLLOWING ROMULUS (DAY)

The elevator arrives and it's a slow ride down. Satiated and full of joy, an on top of the world Romulus inclines against the car's wall.

The doors open at the Main Floor. Rom heads to the west exit.

Car now found, he gets inside. A big, cheery, somewhat wicked, smile appears on his face. He winks at himself in the REARVIEW MIRROR.

ROMULUS

I wonder if she's as happy as me?

INT. LIWAYWAY'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Liwayway has her EAR BUDS on. Her iPhone or iPod is playing some really UPBEAT MUSIC, which we can hear.

Li's packing, while dancing furiously. Joyous, frenzied, exciting moves. It's hysterically unrefined and primitive. Wild and vigorous dance steps. Li is happy to be sure.

INT. ROMULUS'S CAR - DAY

Romulus rotates the KEY and the ENGINE TURNS OVER starting. He pulls out his COMPASS and flips it open to reveal Li's photo and inscription.

He heaves a loud, contented sigh. And then...

A loud huge BOOM! Something has rammed the driver's door. Whatever it is, it's big. BREAKING GLASS flies all over the place. Every single AIR BAG inflates.

Having not yet fastened his seat belt, Rom is thrown in all sorts of directions. His head smashes first into the WINDSHIELD and then into the PASSENGER DOOR WINDOW.

The car begins to ACCORDION, squeezing all the driver-side metal inward. Hot RADIATOR FLUID scatters a blistering mist into the car's interior.

Rom gets jostled even more. Now, the driver door is right up against him on the left and the passenger door is pinning

him on the right. Before he will scald to death, he may be crushed.

But, it gets worse. SMOKE rises from the hood, then FLAMES. WHOOSH! Gas fumes ignite.

ROMULUS
(lamenting)
Oh, Natalie. I'm so sorry. I'm not
going to be there for you.

As the flames begin to burn his flesh.

ROMULUS
(screaming)
Liwayway!

Liwayway was indeed Rom's last living thought.

INT. CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY BUS AT THE SAME MOMENT - DAY

As she looks out the BUS WINDOW, Liwayway still has her earbuds in her ears.

She smiles and sighs in happy satisfaction. A woman in love.

EXT. CASINO HOTEL WEST END PARKING LOT SAME TIME - DAY

A huge GRAVEL-HAULING TRUCK is jammed into the side of Rom's burning car. A figure, whose face is obscured by a HOODIE, exits.

The individual pulls out and dials a throwaway PREPAID PHONE.

FELIKS
It's done.

Nothing more is said by him or the person he dialed. He ends the call. Removes the SIM card. Tosses the phone into the burning car.

Feliks walks away. When he's a bit down the block, he lowers his hoodie, dropping the SIM card through a grate and into the city's sewage system.

INT. BIG SHOULDERS CASINO ESCALATOR MUCH LATER - NIGHT

An unaware Liwayway rises up with the moving stairs to enter the High Roller Room.

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

Nobody can make eye contact with Li. Except Zofia, who is balling her eyes out.

ZOFIA
 (choking with tears)
 Oh! My God!, Oh! My God!, Oh! My
 God! Li. It's Rom. He's dead.

Li's eyes grow wide in horror and she grabs her womb.

LIWAYWAY
 (screams)
 No!!!

ZOFIA
 Li, I'm so sorry! It was a car
 wreck. A truck creamed his car.

Liwayway plunges to her knees and intensely VOMITS. Then
 great DRY HEAVES.

She falls to her side in fury and hysteria. A mix of
 terrible tears and sad shouts.

ZOFIA
 Li, it was an accident. A
 hit-and-run. IT WASN'T ROM'S FAULT!

LIWAYWAY
 Oh, my Lord... Natalie!

Li runs into the BATHROOM. Zofia follows her in.

INT. CASINO SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS CENTER - NIGHT

RADIO TRAFFIC

UNIT ONE
 Unit One to Unit 7.

CECIL
 Go ahead, One.

UNIT ONE
 Send two uniformed officers to
 Runaway and have them standby
 there. Please immediately phone me
 on a secure landline. Out.

CECIL
 Message received. Understood.

END RADIO TRAFFIC

INT. RUNAWAY BAY - NIGHT

You can hear Liwayway's bawling beyond the CLOSED RESTROOM
 DOOR. It is intense grief.

Units One and Seven are talking just outside the ladies
 room. When done, Cecil approaches the UNIFORMED OFFICERS.

CECIL

You two will be taking over here
for the remainder of the night.
Don't you dare embarrass me.

A UNIFORMED OFFICER

What happened?

CECIL

None of your goddamn business. And,
don't ever question my instructions
again.

UNIT ONE

(to Cecil)

Do you think she needs an
ambulance?

CECIL

(loudly)

HOW THE HELL WOULD I KNOW !?!?!!

(long beat)

Sorry. Just go in there and ask 330
what SHE thinks.

UNIT ONE

Cecil. There's a good chance I'll
come out crying, too. If that
happens, don't give me any shit.
Please.

CECIL

I won't. And, I shouldn't have
yelled. He was a good friend.
Listen One, I think we all know
about Rom and Ms. Cooper. You need
to keep a close eye on her. When
the shock wears off, she'll not
want to breathe. She'll want to be
with Romulus.

Unit One goes inside. Moments later, a drained Zofia comes
out with badly BLOODSHOT EYES.

ZOFIA

Seven. Liwayway and I can't stay.
We just can't.

CECIL

You've already been relieved. Table
Games has the girl's replacement on
the way. It's covered. I ordered
you a cab.

ZOFIA

What about Li?

CECIL

Unit One will be driving your friend home in her own car, as soon as we can get her out of there. One needs to talk to her. And, it's gotta be tonight.

INT. UNIT ONE'S CAR - NIGHT

Unit One is driving. Liwayway is in the passenger seat still a wreck.

UNIT ONE

Is your husband home?

LIWAYWAY

He'll be at the strip club with his mistress. When I'm at work, that's where he goes. He thinks I don't know. But, that's where he'll be.

UNIT ONE

Do you think he did this?

LIWAYWAY

Did what?

UNIT ONE

Rom's death.

LIWAYWAY

THEY SAID IT WAS AN ACCIDENT !!!

UNIT ONE

Two vehicles were involved, yes. But, it was no accident.

INT. BACKROOM AT THE BABE BARN - NIGHT

In a dirty, tawdry, vulgar, SPACE that's routinely used to jerk off regulars, Coop is alternately SNIFFING COCAINE and hitting a BONG.

CURTIS

All set?

CRYSTAL (O.S.)

(in a subdued manner)

Not yet. One more thing.

Triple-C sprays a SOLVENT into a BAGGIE and huffs.

CURTIS

(dizzy, fucked-up,
slurring)

Are you ready for some real action?

CRYSTAL

Hm, Hm.

Coop's detestable girlfriend is on all fours. BALL GAG in her mouth. There's OTHER BONDAGE STUFF, too.

Crystal may be a tramp, but she doesn't deserve this. She looks scared.

CURTIS
 (slurred speech while
 unzipping his fly)
 You're a dirty girl. You need a
 shower. A golden one.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN SEEN FROM SHORE - DAY

A breaking sunrise.

INT. COOPER HOUSEHOLD LIVINGROOM - DAY

When Curtis gets home, Li's on the couch still crying. Coop's all fucked up.

CURTIS
 What the fuck are you doing home so
 early? You should still be at work.

Liwayway just cries.

CURTIS
 (mockingly)
 Are you too fucking depressed to
 work? Oh, poor baby. I'll play my
 little violin for you.

LIWAYWAY
 No. I mean yes. No. Yes. Yes, I'm
 depressed. A co-worker died. You
 knew him. Officer 15.

CURTIS
 That asshole! Never liked him. Glad
 he's gone. Fucking goody two shoes.
 The farthest thing from a man a man
 could be. Did he die in his mommy's
 arms? Fucking sissy. About as
 masculine as Barney the Purple
 Dinosaur.

This makes Li mad. She walks into the KITCHEN. Curtis follows. In the foreground, the KNIFE BLOCK is prominently displayed on the island countertop.

Liwayway opens an overhead cabinet. She is startled by the unexpected sight of the RIMAOONTE TEA INFUSER stored there and the memory it invokes. It devastates her already broken heart.

LIWAYWAY
 (whispering to herself)
 Fill me up, please.

She lets loose a wavering howl.

CURTIS

What did the candy-ass die from anyway? Betcha the yellow-bellied rodent saw his shadow, ran back into his hole, had a heart attack, and now we'll have six more weeks of winter.

Liwayway doesn't answer.

CURTIS

Best he could do was to be a sad sack security guard. What a failure. He wasn't smart or rich like me. Just a gutless loser.

LIWAYWAY

Rom was one of the greatest men that ever lived. A real man! Not like you!

CURTIS

Oh, it's ROM now is it? He was a weakling!

LIWAYWAY

He was my lover!

CURTIS

Yeah, right. No fucking way some hot slant-eyed slope is gonna choose a man way beyond his prime over me. You're lying. A piece of shit like that wouldn't make me jealous. Nice try.

LIWAYWAY

He was the love of my life.

CURTIS

Have you been fucking that old man? Have you? You bitch! I'm gonna' fuck you up.

Curtis launches a vicious diatribe.

CURTIS

You came to me used. That priest told me you were with at least one boy. Maybe, more than one. And, I forgave you, you bitch! I saved you from a life of poverty and misery. Brought you to America to give you a chance at the American dream. I buy you pretty things, expensive things, feminine things. Things to
(MORE)

CURTIS (cont'd)

excite you and make you happy. I give you my love, my attention, my affection. Everything a woman wants in a faithful, committed husband! And, now you've been going behind my back screwing an old man more than twice your age, when I have to just about tie you up to fuck ME! Tramp. Whore. I should cut you up into tiny pieces and let the goddamn seagulls pick at you! Just like they do with any other trash! Same as my mother, open your legs to the most disgusting guys in town.

LIWAYWAY

Romulus was a prize and you... I just despise. Everything Rom touched, he made better. He made me whole, after you tore me apart. Made me feel joy. Made me feel loved!

CURTIS

You would choose him over me!

LIWAYWAY

Fucking right I would. Every time. When I was with him, I was alive! He gave me goose bumps and stomach butterflies, while you gave me NOTHING. Rom respected me... valued my mind... and never caged me in. He was always on my side. Made my world better. And, he gave me pleasure. I was aroused and wet just being near him! He helped me lose a guilt I should have never carried. Romulus let me recover my desires long ago lost. They were there. Those feelings. Hidden at the bottom of a sad, shadowy, cave. Long buried by you, and a dirt bag named Ramirez. Rom just gave me permission to stand up on my own two feet and simply walk out of the dark and into the sunshine. His spirit will remain with me forever to make every moment bright. Rom helped me discover me. And, I like what I found! You're just a small-minded, self-absorbed, nasty boy with a tiny dick. With you, every single fucking day was an entire year! I'm going back to Cebu and live with Amado. I will destroy that goddamn priest if I see him!

CURTIS

Go to the Philippines? I think not.

Triple-C grabs a KNIFE out of the KNIFE BLOCK.

CURTIS

You're going to Hell instead.

He stabs Liwayway. He plunges the knife in again and again and again.

Adorned with a blood-spattered dragonfly, a gory hand grabs hold of the JADE ANGELFISH PENDANT.

LIWAYWAY

(soft whisper)

Rom.

A gurgling, choking, drowning-in-blood, last breath.

EXT. SAME UNKNOWN LOCATION AS THE BEGINING OF EPISODE 2
ILLINOIS USA - DAY

SHOT OF THE CRIME SCENE TAPE COMING INTO FOCUS

DETECTIVE #1 (O.S.)

... if the tenderfoot there needs any mouth-to-mouth, give the pretty boy what he needs. I'm gonna' find out what's up from the deputy. [To the Coroner] You... Come with me.

Strides in the sand come to an abrupt halt.

DEPUTY

Why are YOU here?

DETECTIVE #1

Deputy, the patrolman you left me with is on the ground and in need of a medic. He can't tell me shit.

DEPUTY

Nothing much to say. It's a woman. Not pretty. C'mon over. Take a look.

They march over to the victim's body. It's off screen, just out of the frame.

Above their heads, as if shrimp trawlers were bringing in their hauls, SEAGULLS fly in circles.

FOLLOWING THE GULLS, THE SWIRLING SHOT BEGINS TO SLOWLY LOWER, BRINGING INTO FRAME THE LIGHTHOUSE AND THEN THE MEDICAL EXAMINER

CORONER

More or less cut-and-dry. There's no doubt about it, but I'll have to wait for the lab results before making it official. Autopsy will be straightforward. Easy-Peezy, lemon squeezy. We know what happened here.

DEPUTY

Probably she was some kind of drama queen. Said she couldn't live without him, dumb bitch. Even if you're married to a saint, a husband's death is never a good reason to off yourself. Women are brittle. Cowards.

Detective #1 points to the off-screen body.

DETECTIVE #1

Girls are such fragile little things. They make shit up. They're cranks and troublemakers one minute, then fussy crybabies the next. There was a full moon last night. Women tend to be lunatics, y'know. At least most of 'em anyway.

INT. A BRIGHTLY LIT PLACE - DAY

Someone's on the phone. The screen is slowly coming into focus on a set-to-burst belly.

DALISAY (O.S.)

No. I don't know what happened. I came over to surprise her and found her in a pool of blood. Wait.

LIWAYWAY (O.S.)

(mumbling)

Ugh... Say what? Ow!... Ouch! What the...?

As we pull back from the pregnant belly, Liwayway is lying on a hospital bed in a typical INTENSIVE CARE UNIT area. I.V. lines, tubes, and monitors abound.

Dalisay's husband, cowboy hat and all, stands near his wife. Dal can't hold back the tears.

DALISAY

(through her crying)

Amado, she's coming around. I'll call you back.

Li opens her eyes. Her vision is blurred, but as it comes into focus Li sees only Dalisay's face. A look of surprise

is followed by a smile of recognition.

A second later her eyebrows rise and she opens her mouth slightly in fear.

LIWAYWAY
(quietly)
Are you real? Am I dead?

DALISAY
My dearest friend, you are alive.
And, I love you.

Their HANDS find each other. Their FINGERS intertwine.

EMERGING STATISTICS AGAINST A BLACK SCREEN

- * 1 in 3 women will be raped, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. A sexual assault occurs every 92 seconds and every 9 minutes that victim is a child
- * In America, someone is raped every 6.2 minutes and 98% of rapists never spend a day in jail. The CDC has reported that nearly half of all murdered women are killed by their spouse, former lover, or romantic partner
- * There are about 12,000 - 15,000 mail order bride weddings each year. The new name for the mail order bride business is Premium International Dating Services. On the average, the most active users are American men making annually more than \$100,000
- * The federal government in Manila continues to demonstrate a serious effort towards eliminating human trafficking and fully meets the minimum standards of the relevant international conventions

FADE OUT

CLOSING CREDIT SEQUENCE

INTERRUPTED OR POST CREDIT SCENE

INT. HOSPITAL ICU UNIT - DAY

DOCTORS, NURSES, and TECHNICIANS descend upon Liwayway's room.

UNKNOWN NURSE
We're gonna need some space to evaluate her. Like, right away. Please go to the Waiting Area or the cafeteria downstairs. Go and get your makeup fixed. Whatever. Just move. Now go.

Dal and her husband leave the room.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - FOLLOWING (DAY)

MR. TREMBLAY
(comforting his crying
wife)

She's alive. God wants it that way.

DALISAY
But why? She only lives a life of
torment and sadness.

MR. TREMBLAY
On earth, those with the purest of
hearts seem to suffer the most.

DALISAY
Why is it like that?

MR. TREMBLAY
Only God knows.

DALISAY
There's gotta be a reason!

MR. TREMBLAY
For your friend, I'm sure there is.
And, it'll only be revealed in the
future. You two are together again
for whatever purpose that is. No
matter what, we'll be witnesses to
every little thing that lies ahead.

Dalisay just tearfully stands there, fixed in a stare.

DALISAY
Dawn's drawing near. My water
broke.

END

LOGLINE: Wed to a repugnant American, a sensible but ill-fated Asian mail-order bride stumbles into a forbidden affair with a devoted and kindhearted man caring for his seriously ill wife.

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