

LIKHAIN
MEDIA GROUP

THREE FILIPINO SCREENPLAYS



by

**Xosé "X"
ALZONA**

INCLUDING:

Pinoy Graffiti

Pleasure Dome

The Touch of Death

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Written by Xosé “X” Alzona

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All characters in the screenplays in this book have no existence outside the imagination of the author and have no relation to anyone bearing the same name or names, except where explicitly stated. Any resemblance to individuals known or unknown to the author are purely coincidental..

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THREE FILIPINO SCREENPLAYS

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SCREENWRITER'S INTRODUCTION

Back in 1989, I uprooted myself from the Washington DC area where I'd spent eleven happy years, and drove two days cross-country to Los Angeles. My plan was to leverage a long-standing interest in film and a modicum of writing chops into a Hollywood career. That's right: Hollywood! Showbiz! The Industry! I gave myself nine years to make it happen, because earlier, I'd already noticed that my whole life had consistently unfurled in well defined nine-year stages, so yeah, nine years sounded about right.

Well, nine years later (and a measly total of four legitimate screenwriting assignments, only one of which was fully paid), it still hadn't happened, so I sat down and took stock. We can skip over the many excuses I gave myself to make me feel better, because in spite of what my analyst says, they were just that—excuses. Bottom line, it hadn't happened. So I got out of The Biz and returned to making an honest living.

But every once in a while, I think back to those nine years. I remember that one of my goals then had been to try to raise the presence and recognition of Filipinos in the mainstream American media beyond the “little brown brother” stereotypes we often saw—Andrés Bonifacio III (played by Irish-Mexican actor Anthony Quinn) in *Back to Bataan* (1945), or Poncie Ponce strumming the ukelele in the 1950s TV series *77 Sunset Strip*, or Rookie Carroca baking a parrot into his Meatloaf Mindanao in *My Favorite Year* (1982).

Things got somewhat better after that with performances by Tia Carrere, Dante Basco, and Paolo Montalban, but even John Sayles' *Amigo* (2010), set in the Philippines during the Philippine-American War, rippled nary a ripple. That's why I wanted my foray into Hollywood to contribute, at least a bit, to our Pinóy visibility. I wanted my screenplays to document part of our Filipino-American experience as I saw it.

We have literally hundreds of genuinely talented Filipinos and Fil-American actors working their hearts out to make it in The Biz, but gatekeepers insist there are no roles for them, and blame screenwriters for neglecting to write any. Yet, when we writers do come up with a juicy part for a Fil-Am, the first thing the gatekeepers tell us is to rewrite it for an A-list star (typically a white male), because as-is, it's unmarketable, and therefore unmakeable— no one will invest in a movie with a Filipino lead. Why would they? It won't make any box office, or so they claim. Need proof? Well, they say, just look around! There's never been a box-office success with a Filipino lead!

Basically the same circular reasoning plays out for other career paths in the Industry. Why hire a Filipino or a Fil-Am screenwriter, or cinematographer, or film composer, when we've never had one before? If they want to work in the Industry, let them pay their dues; start them in security, or valet parking, or as film extras (called "atmosphere") or hey, how about craft service? (These Flips make good cooks.) Work their way up. Then maybe they get promoted. To something creative? Well, not yet. To gofer.

However, more and more we've seen rapid growth in content produced for direct distribution via the Internet, thus bypassing the gatekeepers. Young people are producing stuff using digicams and MacBooks and uploading them to the Cloud to entertain each other and, in the process, entertain the rest of the world as well. And young Filipinos count among them. To view some examples, search YouTube for Rawmix Productions. Or try search terms like "amateur shorts," "homemade films," "guerrilla filmmaking," etc. See how many hits you pull up, in addition to the many tutorials mentoring these garage film producers. It's truly exciting to watch them challenge the old ways of creating and distributing entertainment. It's truly exciting that the Fil-Am screenwriter is part of this creative movement.

And this movement isn't limited to the garage nor the Internet. The full-length horror flick *The Silent House*, which was invited to show at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival, was shot entirely on a Canon EOS 5D Mark II (a consumer digital camera). Its budget came to about USD 6K, the cost of a used car or a long Las Vegas weekend.

So, the last time I looked back on my nine lost years, I remembered that some of the screenplays I'd written had Filipinos in leading roles, or in lesser roles that still affirmed the value and worth of our culture. I've collected three of them in this book, styled after the Newmarket Shooting Script™ series, which publishes screenplays exactly as scanned from the actual hard copy used by cast and crew. This is important, because one reason (perhaps the main reason) standard screenplay format is the way it is, is that it allows a producer to estimate total screen time (and therefore production cost) of the film made from the screenplay by this rule-of-thumb: One page of script equals about one minute of screen time— but only if the script is in standard format.

Standard format has also become a quick tool for overworked and frazzled gatekeepers' assistants to weed out the less promising screenplays from the deluge of submissions they get every day. Flipping through its pages, they can easily tell whether it's in standard format. If it's not, it's assumed the writer is a rank amateur who doesn't know the first thing about the Industry, and therefore that his screenplay won't be any good, and it ends up in the trash, unread. Hopefully none of my screenplays suffered such an ignominious end!

The three screenplays I include here— a teenage gang pic, a raunchy ensemble comedy, and a hardboiled noir thriller— all were written in the 1990s. Presenting them here is my way of paying my respects to the nine years of Filipinos and Fil-Americans I met along the way, working in and on the fringes of The Biz, who shared my efforts and gave me so much inspiration. To each I humbly bow: *Salamat, pare. Salamat, mare.*

I also hope that my three screenplays encourage Filipino screenwriters (and non-Filipinos too— why not?) to persist in writing empowering minority roles. I feel the tide is turning. During our first People Power revolution, I saw firsthand how it focused the curiosity and interest of the world on all things Filipino. Unfortunately, at that time, our distribution channels were inadequate and/or bare. Today, however, we have Filipino expats working in every corner of the world. Their very presence is an act of cultural promotion, and the world's response has consistently been heartening.

Writer/Producer Deborah Pratt (*Quantum Leap*) tells about the time she went around pitching a TV series *The Black Kennedys*, logline “A powerful African-American political family grooms the most promising son to become President of the United States.” She reports that one of the TV execs looked her straight in the eye and said, “A black president? Never gonna happen.”

Yes gonna happen. Already has. The tide is turning, *pare, mare..* Trust and ride it in.

A NOTE ON PAGINATION: Some pages in this book have two page numbers—one at page bottom, the other at upper right. The bottom number is the running page count for the whole book, given as a fraction of the total page count; it starts on the first page of this Screenwriter’s Introduction and runs sequentially to the Screenwriter’s Bio at the end. The other number is the page number as shown on the original script; it’s followed by a period, as required by standard script format, and resets to page one on the first page of each of the three screenplays.

— Xosé “X” Alzona
Screenwriter

“PINOY GRAFFITI”

Written by Xosé “X” Alzona

WGAw Registered

SCREENWRITER'S INTRODUCTION TO *PINOY GRAFFITI*

Pi•nóy *n.* a Filipino male; a male of Filipino ethnicity or ancestry; *fem.* Pi•náy;
adj. of or pertaining to the Philippines or its inhabitants.

Of all my screenplays, *Pinoy Graffiti* holds a special place in my heart because I specifically wrote it to be produced by me. At its deepest core, Hollywood is a hardnosed for-profit bottom-line-oriented business, and the cost of producing even the smallest Hollywood film had ballooned steeply to many millions of dollars, so that as a simple self-protective act, Hollywood had curled in on itself and become a closed, tightknit community where even insiders with successful track records had to struggle years just to get their pet projects financed. And still, thousands of hopeful starry-eyes continued to alight daily from planes, trains, and automobiles, come to knock expectantly on Hollywood's doors.

Then Spike Lee reports that he made *She's Gotta Have It* (1986) for just USD 30,000; Robert Townsend boasts that he financed *Hollywood Shuffle* (1987) entirely with his credit cards; and Robert Rodriguez claims *El Mariachi* (1992) had cost him a grand total of USD 7,000 to make. With production costs as low as these, each of these films stood to be profitable even with zero theatrical box-office, recouping their costs many times over in ancillary markets like foreign sales, DVDs, today's streaming income, etc. Of course news like this stunned the Industry and everyone sat up and took notice, including me (for those born post-Y2K, this all took place before the Internet became so ubiquitous that all those starry-eyes are now producing stuff in their garages using digital video equipment and exhibiting over the Web).

Now, my home city of Los Angeles is not only a big filmmaking hub, but also a center of gang culture— reckon 60,000 individual gangs with memberships in the hundreds of thousands.

And via family gatherings of the local Filipino community, I'd managed to meet some members of S.T.S., or Satanans, the most notorious Filipino-American gang. They had some intriguing stories to tell, made me go: Hmm, why not a film about them? Well, the box-office success of John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood* (1991) settled that. It convinced me that if I made a Filipino gang pic, they will come. By chance, I'd gained some film production experience doing freelance work in the Washington DC area, plus I'd written, produced, and directed several cable access programs, including one that was chosen to screen at the Hirshhorn Museum of the Smithsonian, so I wasn't a total babe-in-the-woods.

But to prep myself, I reread Schmidt's *Feature Filmmaking at Used-Car Prices* and took a crash course in film production. I allocated a budget of USD 40,000 for my project— if Spike et. al. had succeeded with less than 75 percent of that, surely 40K included a built-in factor of some safety. Then I took three months to sit down and write. The result— this script, *Pinoy Graffiti*—is the outcome of those months of writing.

Or perhaps more accurately, *are* the outcomes of those months. See, there were at least three major revisions of the script: The original version was over 130 pages; it included music videos featuring *Pinóy* rappers and breakdancers. The last version, the shooting script, was stripped bare to the bones at a not-even-feature-length 80 pages, forced on us by unanticipated staffing and financial problems above and below the line. It had quickly become clear to us in pre-production that we realistically couldn't afford everything in the original script, and we incrementally downscaled several times, until we felt we just couldn't cut anything more.

There was one major revision midway between the original and the shooting script, and that's the version you have in this book. It has simple talking heads where the original had full-scale re-enactments of the action that the heads talk about, and also retains many locations and fantasy sequences that were in the original, but had to be dropped from the shooting script. We have a record of them only because this midway version somehow survived.

My project ended as I imagine many do. Principal photography completed and USD 40K poorer, I sat down to learn to edit, cutting a bit here and there as time allowed (yes, my “editor–

mentor” had flaked out and gone on a cruise). I cut over many months until one day, hearing about a small film distributor in search of projects in progress, I set out to assemble a *Pinoy Graffiti* reel for them, and froze in dismay: The 16mm magnetic sound transfer had deteriorated to the point of inaudibility!

But wait, I still had the original Nagra tapes, right? Yes I did, but I’d foolishly stored those in a broom closet, thinking that was the safest place for them, and the summer heat had stretched and warped them beyond usable. There was no money left, and even if there was, bringing back all the original actors for looping— Automatic Dialog Replacement— two years after wrapping was out of the question. And foley? That would really be reaching for the moon! It was heartbreaking, but my inexperience (or karma) had borne its fruit: *Pinoy Graffiti* was dead in the water.

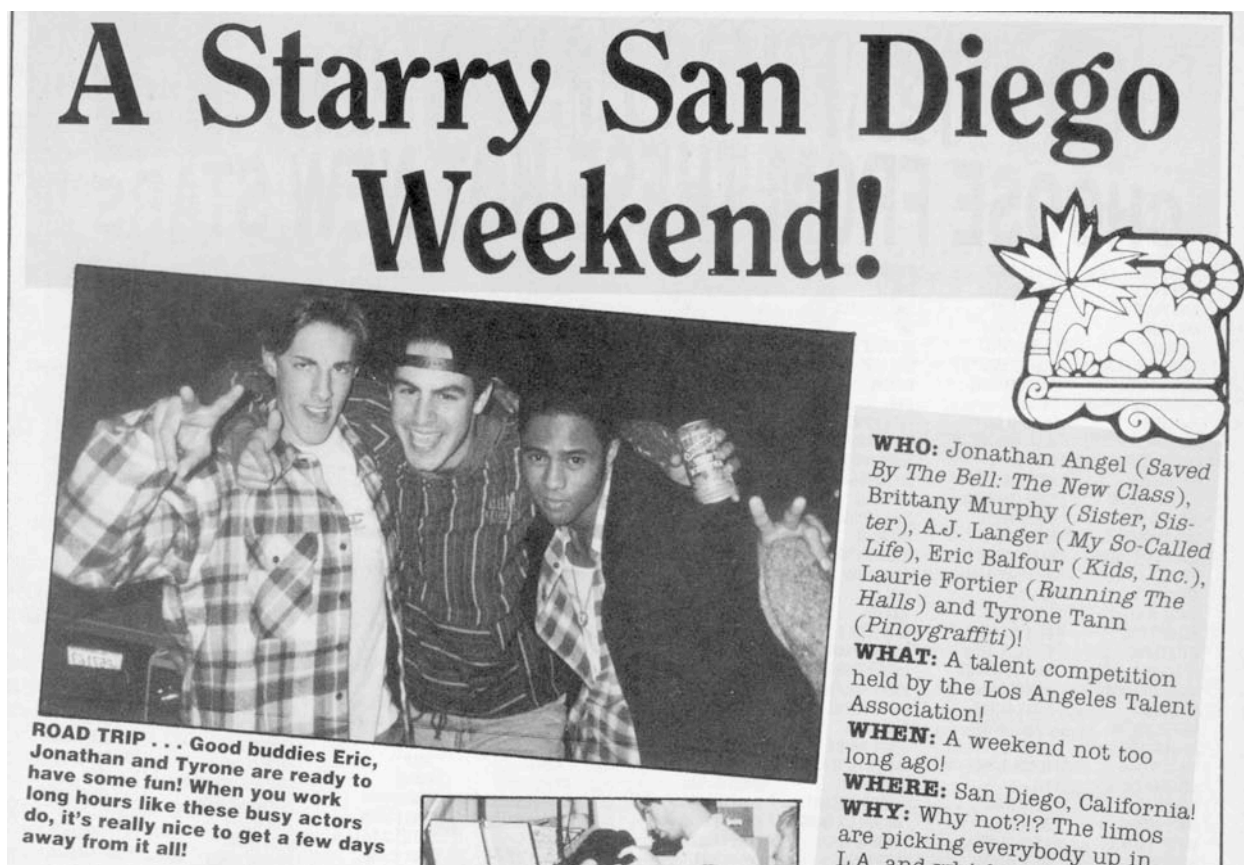
As a consolation, though, I’d learned so much in the process. I learned that a lot of people loved me enough to unconditionally support my dreams, even when they had serious misgivings about my project; I learned that there are a lot of strangers out there (and churches and corporations too— Kodak alone donated more than two hours of color stock)— a lot of perfect strangers who will unstintingly share their resources and hard-won skills out of a sheer love for film, or a genuine desire to help; and I learned that there are people out there who will smile at you and try to sabotage you, even when they have nothing to gain from your failure.

Major, I learned that everything didn’t have to be 100 percent perfect 100 percent of the time; and finally, I learned that it’s okay to let go and accept that the patient’s dead.

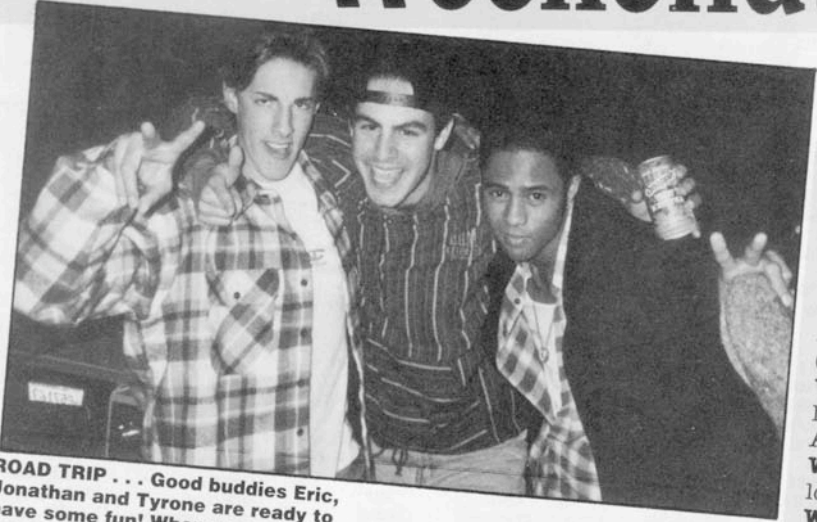
It was an unforgettable experience. I had to enroll in a community college just to get the substantial student discounts on film permits and location insurance; police arrested two of my actors when they were stopped and the cops found the (real) pistol we were using as a prop; I had to fire our first soundman for playing politics; our wardrobe continuity was always a hit-and-miss affair; stealing shots at a cinema multiplex under the noses of suspicious security guards required military precision and nerves of steel; and with no budget for stunts, I ended up doing all the stunt driving myself.

It was unforgettable, heartbreaking and exhilarating, and all that remains from that peak experience is contained here, in this book: The midway screenplay, a scan of the two-page newsletter that went out to cast and crew after principal photography wrapped, and a short mention in an American magazine. Everything else— the call sheets, the dailies, the final shooting script and its associated storyboards— all are long gone. But you can still read *Pinoy Graffiti* the Midway Version, in this eBook. I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed trying to make it real.

Below is a scan of the top part of page 67 of the August 1994 issue of *Tiger Beat Magazine* where, as you can see, Pinoy Graffiti is actually mentioned (!)



A Starry San Diego Weekend!



WHO: Jonathan Angel (*Saved By The Bell: The New Class*), Brittany Murphy (*Sister, Sister*), A.J. Langer (*My So-Called Life*), Eric Balfour (*Kids, Inc.*), Laurie Fortier (*Running The Halls*) and Tyrone Tann (*Pinoygraffiti*)!

WHAT: A talent competition held by the Los Angeles Talent Association!

WHEN: A weekend not too long ago!

WHERE: San Diego, California!

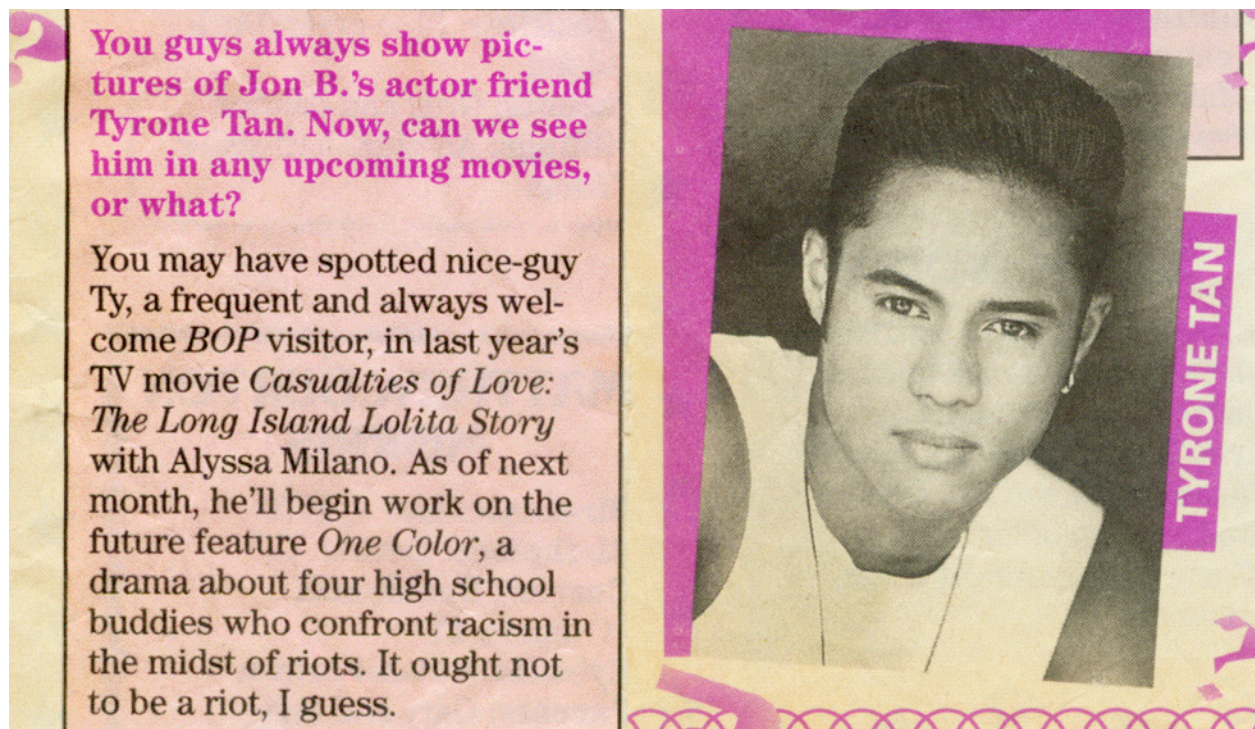
WHY: Why not?!? The limos are picking everybody up in L.A. and...

ROAD TRIP . . . Good buddies Eric, Jonathan and Tyrone are ready to have some fun! When you work long hours like these busy actors do, it's really nice to get a few days away from it all!

Tiger Beat was one of those teenybopper celebrity mags with names like *BOP* and *16*, sort of *People* and *Us Weekly* for preteens. Tyrone Tan, the Filipino actor who played the lead in *Pinoy Graffiti*, appeared regularly in *Tiger Beat* and its clones, shot by paparazzi while squiring personalities like Alyssa Milano (of #MeToo fame), Sara Gilbert, and Soleil Moon Frye around town. On this particular magazine page, there were two photos in which he appeared: The one above, and in another with Laurie Fortier and the late Brittany Murphy.

For me, these teen magazines are notable chiefly for their almost absolute lack of African-American and Asian faces. Then, when one such does appear, like Tyrone in the group pic above, they misspell both his name and his film. Not saying they do this on purpose, but it was partly to counter this sort of dismissive neglect that I decided to try to make and distribute a *Pinóy*-centered film.

Here's one more clip from *BOP*, this time a solo Tyrone pic:



And finally, overleaf are scans of the two-page newsletter I sent out to the *Pinoy Graffiti* cast and crew after we wrapped. You'll see Tyrone in the photo there too, second from left. And I have to mention the guy next to him, Joe Dominic Caro, an excellent Fil-American actor in his own right who played Ken Ruiz. And by the way, look closely— I'm also in that photo ! I was thinking of Alfred Hitchcock, who famously would make sneaky appearances in his films. *Quel hommage* or *quel dommage*?

Project Update

LONG BEACH--The *Pinoy Graffiti* project continues to proceed one slow step at a time. As you probably already know, we went way over budget during principal photography and had to spend the funds set aside for post production and (yes) the wrap party to cover unanticipated costs. So José's been devoting some time to trying to get some investors to put some money into it. We've had a few nibbles, mostly from out-of-town (New York) people, but they're turning out to have attention spans just as short as the local people. This has not stopped us in the past, and we muddle on.

As of this January day, this is the project status: principal photography is complete except for two pickups involving Tyrone Tan at Lovers' Lane that were out of focus. Then there are some voice-overs that have to be taped and transferred. Our second soundman, Sean Sullivan, has agreed to contribute his time to this effort. In the mean time José has been sync-ing the dailies at home, using equipment provided by Ben Calub, who was a film editor at MGM. Three reels of sync-ed dailies were screened at Telesound on Saturday, November 11, where several problems were identified and solutions proposed, but on the whole the dailies looked and sounded good and should impress any \$\$\$ people who can be induced to see them.

After all the sound and picture is completely in and all the dailies have been sync-ed, the next step is to make a rough cut. Since the music is a very important aspect of this film, several composers are being interviewed in order to select the best. Three bands, including a Sacramento-based group headed by one of the Millington sisters mentioned in the script, have agreed to contribute their talents to the project.

So, if all goes well, we should have a complete film before end of 92. Then the selling begins in earnest!

Pre-trial Motions Postponed



Some *Pinoy Graffiti* gangstas get down! Godfrey Chapman is third from right, Rey Gutierrez (holding Ruger) is second from right.

LOS ANGELES--Some of you may have already heard that two of our young actors, **Rey Gutierrez** and **Godfrey Chapman**, who play gangbangers Drifter and Joker respectively, were arrested by police last September 19th for possessing the Ruger automatic pistol that we were using as a film prop in their car. The arrest forced them to miss that day's shoot entirely.

The pre-trial motions, where evidence is presented to a judge who decides whether to dismiss the charges or proceed with a full trial, have now been postponed twice, and are now re-scheduled for February 1992. Lawyers for our guys were unable to work out a disposition or plea-bargain with the prosecutors, who apparently are determined to get some kind of gun-related conviction to make their record look good, so it seems that a full trial will almost certainly take place.

Rey and Godfrey were calling at a

pay phone in East L.A. when the cops accosted them, simply because both wearing the white T-shirt and black pants "uniform" of local Fil-American gangs (they were in costume for our film). A warrantless search (which we deem totally illegal) of Rey's car turned up the Ruger that we first used as a prop pistol during our shoot at Daisy's house's garage. Although it was a legal gun, the cops booked our guys on misdemeanor charges leading to this situation. This is just another of those hassles that arise when you're ridiculously low-budget and are forced to be resourceful.

Rey G. married his long-time girl friend on December 29th, and if the current slow pace of events continues, he may be a father by the time his case goes to trial! Congratulations to them and best wishes for a lifetime of happiness.

Notice - Notice - Notice

José Alzona wants everyone to know that two of his stories appear in the August issue of *Prevue* magazine (a third profile of Griffin Dunne taken on the set of *Step Kids* with help from the ever reliable **Janice Lee** will come out soon). José urges you to keep him posted about your comings and goings-- who knows, your new gig may be just perfect for that story in *People*, *Premiere*, or *Entertainment Weekly* (featuring the ever-popular you!) but it might happen *only* if you keep him posted. At the very least it might lead into our own little gossip column, so do it!

TRIVIA CONTEST

Lea Salonga, Ernie Reyes Jr., and Ramon Sison are well-known in most Fil-American households, representing as they do some of the full-blooded Filipinos who've succeeded in the competitive international entertainment industry.

There are, however, many other entertainment personalities who share some Filipino parentage. Here are just five of them. How many can you identify? The first to mail (see address below), fax (310/402-1890) or phone in (310/438-0728) the right answers will win a Bugs Bunny holiday pin that, Warner Brothers assures me with a straight face, "will become a collectible." So here goes:

FILM ACTOR: Combining in himself several minority groups rolled into one, this talent has played Latino, Native American, and Irish roles in Hollywood.

COMICS ARTIST: Her comic strips appear in most alternative papers, and her style is strangely reminiscent (to me, at least) of jeepney art.

TV COMEDIAN: This talent continues to take chances by performing LIVE on Saturday nights, and actively works for the dawning of "The age of the Pinoy."

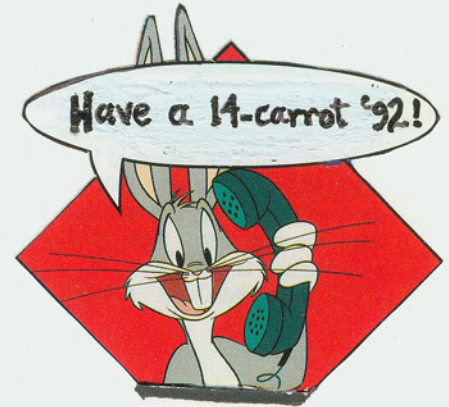
SPORTS: She made her name in international figure skating competition, and continues to entertain in the demanding (and non-tropical) world of ice.

POP MUSIC: His Filipino genes are obvious in his diminutive physical stature, but he stands high as a real force in rock and a mentor to others.

(Fred Cordova graciously contributed to this trivia game.)

The Director's Chair

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish each of you the best that the new year can bring, and to thank you all again for the incredible and often thankless job you put into our project. I knew many of you had to juggle schedules, re-arrange work hours, turn down other gigs, and dig deep into your own pockets to come up with enough gas money just to make it to the location. And you did all this without carping or complaints and generally tried to make my job as painless and easy as possible. I may not have expressed it at the time, but believe me, I noticed, so let me say it now: I sincerely appreciate all your efforts to make this film a reality. You all did your best, and now it's my turn to put everything I have into coming up with film that will reflect all your hours of hard work, a product we all can be proud of, and one that hopefully will lead to better things for all of us in our futures.



TOY & DOLLS

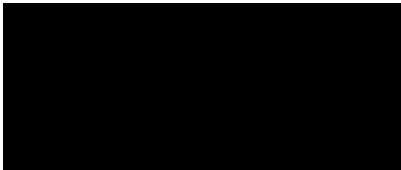
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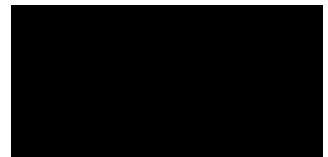
Written by

Xose "X" Alzona



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PINOY GRAFFITI

FADE IN:

Over a BLACK SCREEN, we hear the MUSIC-- MIDDLE EASTERN FIDDLE over a DRIVING, PERCUSSIVE, POLYRHYTHMIC BEAT. It's funky but unpredictable, foreign but familiar, dance music that's interesting enough to really listen to.

PULL BACK. The black screen turns out to be the back of WILLY MACARAEG's head. He's 17, ethnic Filipino, eyes closed, intent on headphones.

He STOPS and RESTARTS THE MUSIC, replaying a segment while doing... what IS it he's doing?

CONTINUE PULL BACK, and as we see more of him, we realize he's TRANSCRIBING THE MUSIC on his DAWs computer.

THIS IS HIS BEDROOM, racks of electronic devices, keyboards, drum machines, amplifiers, mixers, and other audio equipment.

BEHIND HIM the door opens...

...and his tomboyish 12-year-old sister BRIANNA enters, carrying some mail.

She sneaks up on him and starts VOCALIZING a HIP-HOP GROOVE into his earphone. Surprised, Willy STOPS the music and REPLAYS the last few bars.

But Brianna also STOPS and RESTARTS IN SYNC.

Willy REPEATS, but each time Brianna is right there with him.

Willy takes off his headphones and looks them over.

Brianna leans forward and VOCALIZES right into his ear. Willy reacts.

WILLY

Ah. All done with the computer?

BRIANNA

(re: music)

What's that awful noise?

WILLY

F.Y.I., that awful noise has roots as old as the Bible.

He stops the playback and FINGERS BRIANNA'S RIFF on the keyboard. STOPS.

WILLY
(continuing)
Hm. Actually, you had a good idea.

He FINGERS a few more phrases, then PLAYS the same piece, INTEGRATING Brianna's hip-hop ad-lib into the phrase. It's recognizable, but funkier.

WILLY
(continuing)
So, my turn to use the computer?

BRIANNA
You got mail.

She holds out an envelope. He looks at it without taking it.

WILLY
"Juilliard?" They rejected me months ago. Sure it's not for Bing Ruiz next door?

BRIANNA
(reading address)
Are you "William Macaraeg?"

Willy takes the envelope, tears it open and reads.

WILLY
"...late vacancy... pleased to offer you--" I'm in. I'm in?
I'M IN!

It finally hits-- he leans out the window and SHOUTS!

WILLY
(continuing)
JUILLIARD, BABY, HERE I COME!!

He grabs Brianna and kisses her hard.

BRIANNA
Whoa! You gonna molest me?

WILLY
What???

BRIANNA
You're so weird our kid'll be a genetic disaster.

WILLY
Too much Jerry Springer.

BRIANNA
 Would you believe Oprah?

Willy bounds out with a triumphant YELL, Brianna racing after him.

FADE TO:

INT. - RUIZ DINING TABLE - LATE AFTERNOON

GRANDMA, 60ish Filipina, gray, wrinkled, ramrod straight with a look of perpetual suffering, hands a plate of food to seated grandson KEN RUIZ, 17.

GRANDMA
 I know I'm not a good cook.

Ken knows the game but shows no emotion. He brushes long hair from hooded eyes and begins to eat hurriedly.

KEN
 It's fine, Gramma.

GRANDMA
 So nice to have a man in the house again. I'm getting too old to fix what needs fixing and Bing doesn't help much.

Ken gulps down and picks up the jacket rolled on the chair next to his. He gets up and kisses Grandma on the cheek.

KEN
 I'll fix the roof tomorrow.

The TELEPHONE RINGS as he exits.

EXT. - RESIDENTIAL CUL-DE-SAC - LATE AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Ken's sister BING, 16-ish Filipina, sunglasses, languid, pretty in a quiet way, sits playing with her DOG in front of the Ruiz home.

Ken comes out the house with his jacket under his arm.

The dog frisks with him, and now we see he is wearing full GANG ATTIRE.

BING
 Dressed for church, huh?

KEN

Li'l sis, how many times I gotta
tell you:

(raps)

Ain't no heaven, ain't no hell,
where we headed, I can't tell.

An expensive late-model car drives up with BASTOS, STAMPER,
and MARK. KEN throws the BARKADAS GANG SIGN and saunters up.

THE GANG

MARK

You got it?

They crane to look as Ken stealthily unrolls his jacket,
hiding it from Bing. Wrapped in it is...

A .357 MAGNUM REVOLVER,

glinting in its folds.

STAMPER

Where was it hiding?

KEN

Behind the bookcase. Could always
read Dad like a book.

MARK

Hit 'em tonight, huh?

Ken nods and gets in the car.

Suddenly Bastos starts laughing hysterically. Ken, Mark and
Stamper exchange puzzled looks.

BASTOS

Read him like a book? The
bookcase? LIKE A B-B-BOOK?!
Hahahaha...

They peel out.

Bing watches them leave over her sunglasses, restraining her
dog from chasing after.

FADE TO:

EXT. - THE CUL-DE-SAC - SOMEWHAT LATER

Bing is still playing with her dog when Willy comes bounding out of the housenext door in coat, tie, and backpack.

Spotting her, he becomes more formal and tries to breeze past.

BING
Hi, neighbor who I never see.
(indicating dog)
Wanna meet Etta?

WILLY
Etta. So you're the one barks in
E-flat.

BING
Oh, she's such a smart dog, she
can do tricks. Watch: Wag your
tail, Etta!

Etta wags her tail, but it's not clear if she's obeying the order or just responding to her master calling her name.

BING
(continuing; lower)
Actually she's really very stupid,
but I keep telling her she's smart
to give her confidence, you know?
She's so dumb she doesn't even lift
her leg when she pees.

WILLY
Like a horse.

BING
Horses pee like that?

WILLY
Never seen a calesa in the
Philippines?

BING
Nah. Born here. Never been there.
(beat)
Going to the prom?

WILLY
Won't miss it for nothing nohow!

BING
Can't wait till I'm a senior.
(re: Willy's attire)
Off to church?

Willy gives her a look.

She reaches over and adjusts his tie.

WILLY
Tomorrow. I go Sundays.

BING
So. You wanna hit the mall?

WILLY
Uh, thanks, but I've-- ah, got
a date.

Bing lifts an eyebrow-- "You're not fooling me."

WILLY
(continuing)
Well, gotta go.

She peers at him over her dark glasses and smiles ironically
as he hurries off.

GRANDMA (V.O.)
(calling)
Ken! Kenneth!

BING
(calling)
He's gone!

Grandma appears at the door.

GRANDMA
Where did he go to now?

BING
Didn't say. Out with friends.

GRANDMA
Then you're "it." Mr. Guerra's
complained again. I promised
we'd clean his pool. Would you
do that before dark?

BING
Gramma, trees have leaves.
Leaves fall. The wind blows
them all over the place.
Sometimes it blows them into Mr.
Guerra's pool. That's nature.
That's not our fault.

GRANDMA

I know, anak, but just to be good neighbors, avoid trouble.

BING

Those leaves may not even be from our tree!

GRANDMA

I know, pagbigyan mo na, anak.

BING

But this isn't the first time! He's got no right to ask this!

GRANDMA

(strained voice)

Bing, please...

BING

If he can't afford to maintain a pool, he shouldn't have one! Why are we so deferential anyway? Do you want me to be a doctor or his pool boy? Should I wash his windows too?

As Bing fumes, Grandma drops onto the porch couch, breathing hard and clutching her chest.

BING

(continuing)

Gramma! Gramma? Does it hurt?

GRANDMA

(fans herself)

No, it's nothing-- the excitement...

BING

I'll go get your pills.

GRANDMA

No, no, it'll pass.

Her breathing comes easier as Bing hovers solicitously.

GRANDMA

(continuing)

Bing, it'll get dark soon. The pool--

She points painfully. Bing resignedly flops down beside her. Beat.

BING

Okay, okay, but do me a favor. I want to ask Willy to dinner--

GRANDMA

Willy Macaraeg next door?

BING

That's him. Will you cook morcon for us?

GRANDMA

(clutching her chest)

Oh! Oh...

Bing starts to fan her.

BING

No, gramma. I'm not pregnant or anything. It's just dinner!

Grandma looks at her suspiciously.

GRANDMA

You're not doing tot-tot with...

BING

You're funny. No, he never could afford what I charge.

(beat)

Kidding, Grandma, kidding! Look, I clean the pool, you cook dinner. Deal?

GRANDMA

Deal.

Bing looks at Grandma and smiles her ironic smile.

FADE TO:

EXT. - HIGH SCHOOL OUTDOOR ATHLETIC FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

Willy sits up in the bleachers, watching some cheerleaders practicing on the field. We hear the MUSIC from his iPod.

He aims a pair of binoculars at the girls and FOCUSES.

WHAT HE SEES

Cheerleader #1 is CHERYL. The MUSIC CHANGES to suit her look and personality-- a perky Cameron Diaz type with mischievous eyes.

PAN to cheerleader #2. This is BERYL. Again the MUSIC ADJUSTS to her-- an athletic Lucy Liu type with wild, uncontrollable dreads.

PAN to cheerleader #3. This is ARIEL, and WHAMMO! A drop-dead knockout blonde-- alluring, mesmerizing! We watch entranced as she goes through her routine, exuding personality.

WILLY

starts WHISPERING to her, and although she cannot hear him, the moves in her cheerleading routine seem to be direct answers to Willy's words... for example:

WILLY (O.S.)
Ariel... how was your day?

Ariel missteps, stops, makes a face and sticks out her tongue.

WILLY (O.S.)
(continuing; whispering)
That bad, huh?

Picking up the routine, Ariel nods her head to the beat.

WILLY (O.S.)
(continuing; whispering)
Mine was great. I'm leaving this fall. Juilliard.

Ariel looks surprised and blows us a kiss, etc.

DIFFERENT MUSICAL tunes rise and fade, and we hear the formative beginnings of what will become ARIEL'S THEME...

FADE TO:

EXT. - MR. GUERRA'S POOL - EARLY EVENING

Bing drops the last wet leaves into a trash bag as MR. GUERRA, an aristocratic Latino, checks out his pool.

MR. GUERRA
Getting too dark to see, but I call you back tomorrow if you missed any.

Bing's lips tighten. She fumbles for a cigarette as he turns away.

MR. GUERRA
 (continuing; exiting)
 Don't know why you don't just
 cut down that tree.

BING LIGHTS UP...

...and inhales deeply. It's actually a beautiful night.

She takes another drag and flicks the butt into the pool.
 Then she swings the trash bag over her shoulder and walks
 off, WHISTLING.

FADE TO:

EXT. - STORE BACKLOT - NIGHT - CAR'S P.O.V. (TRAVELING)

We DRIVE PAST, fixing on a few Latino GANGBANGERS horsing
 around next to a graffiti-covered trash bin. Their YELLS and
 LAUGHTER drift up as they kick empty beer cans around like
 soccer balls.

STAMPER (O.S.)
 Slow, slow...

BASTOS (O.S.)
 There! That him?

KEN (O.S.)
 Wait... go around. Turn here.

SAME P.O.V. SCENE, DRIVING THE OTHER WAY

MARK (O.S.)
 That him?

KEN (O.S.)
 Yeah... no... go around again.

BASTOS (O.S.)
 Shit, man, they all fucking
 Trece, anyone's good as the
 other! Where the piece?

KEN (O.S.)
 Holmes, we ain't no niggah Crips
 shoot anyone happen to be in the
 way. We barkadas, man! We hit
 what we aim for and we aim! Go
 'round again.

DRIFTER (O.S.)
Barkadas!

MARK (O.S.)
Proud!

STAMPER (O.S.)
Put up the name!

SAME P.O.V. SCENE, DRIVING THE FIRST WAY

Silent except for the CAR'S STEREO.

The gangbangers we were scoping out have noticed us too, and now watch silently as we drive by.

KEN (O.S.)
He ain't here. Try the mall.

We GUN THE ENGINE and race off with a ROAR as we

FADE TO:

INT. - MACARAEG BREAKFAST TABLE - THE NEXT MORNING

MEL and TRINI, a typical middle-class, middle-aged Filipino couple, sit at breakfast with their kids Willy and Brianna.

MEL

speaks into the camera:

MEL
...really happy for you.
Juilliard's quite prestigious, New York's really a great city in spite of the bad press. I know, I lived there for six years. We'll get you an apartment, maybe in Staten Island, you may have to commute, but it'll be worth it, the cultural opportunities are unmatched. It'll be a great adventure for you...

BRIANNA

speaks into the camera:

BRIANNA
...Started off on the wrong foot with a new sub, Mr. MacKenzie.
(MORE)

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

He's calling the roll like it's getting-to-know you time, and he comes to me, only he says "McCraig," but I know it's me, so I raise my hand, and he gives me this dirty look like I'm trying to jerk him around...

TRINI

speaks into the camera:

TRINI

...there's no money in music, no job security. Sure you'd not rather be a doctor or a dentist? Your record's good, we can enroll you in a review course if you need it. Your father and I are still strong, we've got enough good years left in us to see you through med school, uh, if that's what you really want...

MEL, TIGHTER,

into the camera:

MEL

... Mama's right, you should think about some practical field like engineering or computer science to fall back on to if times get lean. Music is a starving-artist type career. Oh I know, so's writing is too, but I'm an accountant too, and still we had several hungry years when I started writing and Mama went out to win the bread...

BRIANNA, TIGHTER,

into the camera:

BRIANNA

... so MacKenzie gives me this dirty look and says: "You? Put your hand down, little Missy, no way you're MacCraig," and I say, "It's Mah-cah-rah-EGG, Mister Mah-ken-ZIGH..."

TRINI, EVEN TIGHTER,

into the camera:

TRINI

...we're not rich, we have nothing to leave you when we pass on, but we promise you this: You will never have to work or worry about meals or a roof over your head while you're in school. All we can give you is the best education we can afford, and that's something that can never be taken away from you...

WILLY,

absorbed in his own internal mindscape.

THROUGHOUT THE PRECEDING MONOLOGUES, ARIEL'S THEME has been softly arranging and rearranging itself in his head, false-starting, transforming, developing...

Gradually the monologues become dreamlike and faraway as the THEME FORMS with more and more confidence...

MEL, TRINI, AND BRIANNA

peer out curiously at us across the breakfast table as ARIEL'S THEME GATHERS FORCE.

MEL

Son?

THE TABLE

THE MUSIC STOPS SUDDENLY. Willy looks at his watch, jumps up and gulps his milk down.

WILLY

Whoops, gotta run!

Brianna gets up too.

INT. - MACARAEG FRONT DOOR

Willy picks up his books while Brianna struggles with her backpack.

WILLY

If Tiger Woods was Filipino, his parents would say, "What's all this golf bullshit? Go do your homework, get all A's and go to college so you can work for the government with a steady income, job security, and a full pension."

Brianna follows Willy out the door.

BRIANNA

Then they turn around and say, "Why can't you be a champion make lots of money like Tiger Woods?"

FADE TO:

EXT. - HIGH SCHOOL GROUNDS

The BELL RINGS and students pour out of buildings. Ariel, Beryl, and Cheryl talk animatedly as they walk towards us.

They are almost upon us when a SHOUT rings out.

WILLY

(from way behind them)

Ariel!!!

They stop and turn surprised as Willy rushes up, pulling his earphones off.

WILLY

(continuing)

Hi.

They look at him without answering, and he shifts from one foot to the other, trying to control his shyness.

WILLY

(continuing)

I'm Willy-- Willy Macaraeg, from English and Math?

ARIEL

I know.

Silence. Stares. Beryl stifles a giggle.

WILLY

And you're Ariel.

ARIEL

I know.

Beryl and Cheryl look at each other and titter softly. A VOICE calls out.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, Ariel!

Ariel turns, waves, and smiles radiantly at the caller O.S.

ARIEL

Going to the prom?

VOICE (O.S.)

For sure! See you there!

ARIEL

See ya!

Then she turns back to Willy.

WILLY

Yeah, well...

(deciding this isn't
the right time)

... just wanted to say hi.

ARIEL

Hi.

WILLY

Hi-- I mean, bye...

He starts to back off, waving awkwardly to Cheryl and Beryl while trying to put his earphones back on.

As he disappears O.S., two six-foot males join the girls. They are CHIP and LYLE, big jocks on campus. Chip wraps an arm around Ariel and they kiss.

CHIP

Who's that?

Ariel shrugs.

BERYL

McCraig from Math class.

CHIP

(cracking his knuckles)

Yeah? What'd he want?

CHERYL

Just wanted to say hi.

LYLE
 (shooting Cheryl
 with finger)

Hi!

He says it like a gunshot and they walk off laughing.

FADE TO:

EXT./INT. - CAPOEIRA SCHOOL

Class in full swing. The students CLAP and SING as they go through their acrobatic dance/fighting moves, in a circle called the roda.

At the head of the roda, a few senior students SING while PLAYING the capoeira musical instruments-- the berimbau, the atabaque, the tambourines, agogo bells.

One of the students, a rangy black male of about 18, takes his turn at the center and does some incredible stuff-- spins, flips, twists, kicks-- all in time to the MUSIC.

This is CARLOS, and he smiles and waves as Willy enters the room.

Willy finds a spot against the wall and leans to watch...

... and is soon grooving to the capoeira music.

FADE TO:

EXT. - CITY STREET - DAY

Carlos and Willy walk, carrying school backpacks.

CARLOS
 That's it? That's it? "Hi"
 and "I know?"

WILLY
 Mmmwell, she also said "Going to
 the prom" and "See ya," but see,
 it's not what she said, it's the
 way she said it.

CARLOS
 How many ways can you say "Hi"
 and "I know?"
 (trying many ways;
 sadly)
 I know...

(MORE)

CARLOS (CONT'D)

(angrily)

I know...

(teasingly)

I know...

(like God)

I know!

WILLY

Well, she said it like... like
Lydian mode... Raised fourths?

Carlos just smiles and shakes his head.

CARLOS

So who you taking to the prom?

WILLY

Haven't asked anyone yet.

CARLOS

Ain't asked no one yet? It's this
Saturday, my man!

Willy makes a helpless gesture. Carlos puts an arm around him.

CARLOS

(continuing)

Look, all the seniors be taken by
now, even the Scoobies, but there's
lotsa fly in eleventh grade.

WILLY

You know, come September I'll be
gone. Maybe for good.

(smacks fist in hand)

I'm gonna go for it! I'm asking
her out!

CARLOS

There, that's my man! Who the
lucky junior?

WILLY

No junior. Ariel Christensen!

Carlos looks stunned.

CARLOS

Chip Wright's Ariel? You brain-
dead? The whole offensive line
goan stomp the farts outta you!
They some mean muhfuggers!

WILLY

I don't care. Got thirty-two
teeth. Won't miss a couple.

He grins to show off his teeth.

WILLY

(continuing; as Brando)

I'll make her an offer she can't
refuse.

Carlos laughs. They exchange high fives as we

FADE TO:

EXT. - THE CUL-DE-SAC - DAY

Ken is sitting on the lawn smoking while Bing, in dark
glasses, plays idly with Etta.

BING

So whatcha think? Do dogs have
souls?

KEN

Souls? No such thing. It's all
parochial school bullshit.

BING

It is not.

KEN

Sure it is! It's like this George
Washing-tee cherry tree "I cannot
tell a lee" bullshee. They teach
it so you believe it, but when D.J.
Trump lies through his fucking
teeth he's a fucking hero. What
they do and what they say, two
diff'rent things, night and day,
but all the say bullshay. Remember,
li'l sis, never forget: Keep your
eyes open and your nose shut,
'cause it's all bull-shtinky poo-
poo-pah-dutt!

Bing pets Etta quietly. Then,

BING

So. Do faggots have souls?

Ken SNORTS impatiently, but Bing spots Willy coming up on his
bicycle. She smiles as he dismounts next to her.

BING
 (continuing)
 Hi! This is my brother Ken.

Willy stops his music and shakes Ken's hand.

KEN
 Ken. You new here?

BING
 Brianna, next door? Brother.

WILLY
 Willy. Moved here two years ago.

KEN
 Yeah? Then we crossed. That's
 when I left for college. See, I
 grew up in this house and I useta
 see your folks all the time, but
 I never seen you till now.

WILLY
 My parents wanted to establish
 themselves here before they sent
 for me. My grandparents
 practically brought me up.
 (beat)
 College, huh? What do you study?

KEN
 General stuff. Where were you
 before?

WILLY
 Manila.

KEN
 No kidding! Never been there but
 always wanted to visit.

BING
 Willy's going to Juilliard.

WILLY
 Who told you that?

BING
 Good news travels fast. Sister.

KEN
 Cool. Hey, maybe we can hang
 sometime, huh?

He extends his hand, and they shake again. Then Willy restarts his music and walks his bike to his door.

INT. - MACARAEG HOME FAMILY ROOM

Brianna is absorbed at the computer while the printer spits out paper.

WILLY (O.S.)

I'm home!

Brianna ignores him, puzzling over the printout. Suddenly a thumb drive drops over her printout, and Willy clamps his hand on the nape of her neck.

WILLY

Back it up and log off now!

She squirms out of his grip.

BRIANNA

Quit it! I'm busy!

He reclamps his hand on her neck.

WILLY

It's my turn! Log off now! What's this shit you're doing anyway?

He grabs some printout, but Brianna jerks it from his hand and holds it away from him.

BRIANNA

DAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAD!!!!

WILLY'S HAND

closes over the computer's electric plug, but before he can pull, Brianna's grabs him! They struggle for supremacy on the power strip until...

...both Mel's hands clamp on theirs and pull them apart and away from the plug.

MEL

Man! What is it this time?

WILLY

She's had the computer since Tuesday and she won't let me use it!

BRIANNA

I'm almost done, dad, I promise--

WILLY

It's unfair. I gotta work on this
song and I need to program...

(to Brianna)

It's not yours, it's ours!

BRIANNA

Just a little more time, dad, I
promise... just a little longer,
dad, please!

MEL

Okay, up, up, both of you.

He tugs them up by their arms.

MEL

(continuing; to Brianna)

How much time do you need?

BRIANNA

I don't know, three days...

WILLY

Three days!

MEL

This song you're doing, can it
wait?

Willy doesn't answer.

MEL

(continuing)

Is it a school project?

WILLY

No. Well, sorta...

BRIANNA

Dad, didn't you say we should
always finish what we start?

WILLY

I'm sorry mom and dad finished
you-- OW!

Mel has squeezed Willy's arm and shaken him.

MEL

Stop! Don't say it! You'll just
make me mad!

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

Now, I bought that computer with my money, I'll decide. Brianna, it's now...

(looks at watch)

...5:35 p.m. Monday. You have three days, till 5:35 p.m. Thursday, to finish. Then Willy gets it for as long as he wants. Understand?

Brianna nods glumly but Willy throws up his hands.

MEL

(continuing; to Willy)

And you, in the meantime, you have that old iMac hooked up to your synth. You can use that for three days.

WILLY

In a self-respecting Filipino family, I'd have seniority!

MEL

In a self-respecting Filipino family you don't question your father!

Mel glares at Willy, who lowers his eyes. Then he turns to Brianna.

MEL

(continuing)

5:35 Thursday. Now please let me write in peace.

He stalks off. Willy glares at Brianna, then exits angrily.

EXT. - THE CUL-DE-SAC - DUSK

Bing is sitting on the porch petting Etta. Though she has the usual dark glasses on, she visibly brightens up as Willy rushes out of his house and stomps around steaming.

BING

Hi again.

Willy ignores her, kicks at a stone.

BING

(continuing)

Wanna see Etta do a trick? Here, Etta, lick my hand.

Bing holds her hand out to her dog, who obediently licks it. But again, is it a trick or natural instinct?

Willy looks at them in disgust.

WILLY

Know why that dog's so dumb?
'Cause you named it Etta. Know what eta means in Filipino? It's slang for "shit," so you named your dog "Shit!"

Bing claps her hands over Etta's ears as if to prevent her from hearing.

BING

Oh no. You'll hurt her feelings.

WILLY

What is it with you anyway? Every time I come out you're sitting here playing with Shit! Don't you have a life? Don't you have any friends but Shit here?

Bing ignores the tirade and coos to Etta, petting her gently.

BING

Ooh, tantrum city. Don't mind him, Etta. What does he know about friends?

This seems to calm Willy down, and he feels sorry.

WILLY

Look, I didn't mean that. It's just my sister made me so mad just now.

BING

Ooh, trouble with li'l ol' Briannikins? Wanna talk about it?

WILLY

(sits beside her)

I... no. Kids, huh?

BING

I know. You need to relax. Why don't you come by tomorrow night? I'll throw a little party for you.

Willy is surprised.

BING
 (continuing)
 To celebrate. Juilliard. I know
 you like Filipino food. My
 grandma's promised to make morcon.

WILLY
Morcon's my favorite!

BING
 Tomorrow then, at seven?

WILLY
 Great!

He smiles at her, trying to peer past her dark glasses into her eyes. She smiles back.

Etta comes up to Willy. He takes off his earphones and puts them on Etta, who doesn't seem to mind.

Then Bing takes off her glasses and puts them on Etta.

They laugh as Etta sits there panting, looking for all the world like a very hairy suburban kid trying to look cool.

BING
 All she needs now is a skateboard!

WILLY
 A baseball cap turned backwards!

They share a good laugh...

...then Bing looks up at the sky and "accidentally" leans her head on Willy's shoulder.

BING
 I love to watch clouds. D'you
 ever do that?

FADE TO:

EXT. - SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

CARLOS watches as Willy rehearses his rap.

WILLY
 "Hey, babes. Hi, Ariel. Wha's
 happnin,' doll?"

CARLOS
 No, no, "Wuss happnin," "WUSS
 happnin."

WILLY
 "Hey, babes. Hey, Ariel--" no, "HI,
 Ariel--"

Carlos slaps his forehead in dismay.

CARLOS
 Oh man, don't be memorizin' no
 speech, just go with it, goooooo
 with it! And loosen up, ain't no
 bitty gonna bite you.

WILLY
 Okay, okay. "Hey, ladies, Ariel.
Wuss happnin', babes?"

CARLOS
 Good! Now compliment her on her
 appearance.

WILLY
 I love your hair, I--

CARLOS
 No, man, you comin' across like
 Jose Eber!
 (parodies)
 "I luv youah hayuh..." Compliment
 them things what dudes like in
 babes, but don't be direct about
 it.

He demonstrates, staring down at Willy's chest.

CARLOS
 (continuing; Luther Vandross
 voice)
 "Niiiiiiiice blouse, girl." See?

Willy gives up and sits.

WILLY
 Aw, that's not me. I won't fool
 anyone.

CARLOS
 (sitting beside him)
 Aww c'mon, don't give up.

WILLY
 I'm not.
 (looks at watch)
 Period's almost over, she'll be
 out soon. I'll just like, do
 it! Bahala na.

Carlos gives him a look-- what's that now?

WILLY

That means, "Just jump in and improvise." Sorta.

CARLOS

(he likes it)

Like jazz.

(stands up)

Well, I got band. Good luck.
Lemme know how it turns out.

They exchange a hip handshake and Carlos waves off.

WILLY

stands up, rotates his shoulders, and looks at his watch.

Then he puts his earphones on and presses the PLAY button.

Stirring MILITARY-TYPE MUSIC PLAYS as he gathers his spirit, girds himself and exits to the task at hand.

MONTAGE - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY - THE HUNT FOR THE CHEERLEADERS
(OVER MUSIC)

Establish high school grounds. It's a beautiful school day.

Willy dismounts his bicycle, locks it to a bike rack, and looks around.

He adjusts his iPod and starts off.

At the main school entrance, Ariel, Beryl and Cheryl exit and come down stone steps, talking animatedly.

Willy turns a corner and looks around. Bingo! There they are!

In the distance, Ariel, Beryl and Cheryl, walking away from us.

Willy takes off after them, but he's blocked by a sudden flock of passing students who cut him off.

He finally makes it through them and--

WILLY'S P.O.V.

the girls are gone.

WILLY

looking dejected.

WILLY

It's not meant to be.

But the MUSIC SWELLS.

He regroups, looks around searching, and runs o.s. in their direction.

CONTINUE MONTAGE - SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Willy rounds a tree and BINGO-- there they are again!

The three cheerleaders stand chatting next to a convertible parked at the curb.

Willy stares, gulps. He quickly ducks behind the tree.

WILLY

I don't stand a chance.

Carefully he peeks out at them, as if gauging his chances.

HIS P.O.V.

The girls are laughing, talking animatedly.

WILLY

ducks behind the tree again and starts to hyperventilate.

WILLY

If she comes back this way,
it was meant to be.

He turns and peeks again:

THE GIRLS

Beryl waves goodbye and WALKS OFF while Ariel and Cheryl get into the convertible.

WILLY'S EYES

widen and dilate with the strain of indecision watching...

THE GIRLS AT THE CONVERTIBLE

Ariel STARTS THE CAR and shifts gears, then stops.

ARIEL

Hear something?

Cheryl shakes her head. Ariel shrugs and prepares to drive off when...

WILLY

(calling from afar)

Ariel! Wait!

Willy sprints up and almost slams into the car! He doubles over, gasping for breath.

WILLY

(continuing; panting)

Wait... wait... hi... babe...
wuss... hap... nin'... gasp...
wheeze...

Ariel and Cheryl exchange glances as Willy's gasping subsides.

WILLY

(continuing)

Hi, Ariel... I was wondering--
wondering if... if you would...
like to go... to a movie...
Saturday...

ARIEL

A movie?

WILLY

Yeah, you know, a film...

Ariel shakes her head while Cheryl struggles not to laugh.

ARIEL

No, sorry, I'm going to the prom.

WILLY

Prom. Oh, right, prom. What about
Friday then...

ARIEL

No, we'll be too busy Friday.

WILLY
Oh, okay. Thursday then.
Thursday?

CHERYL
(to Ariel)
We are going to the movies
Thursday.

ARIEL
(to Willy)
That's right. We have to go now.

She looks around, preparing to drive off. Willy becomes agitated.

WILLY
Ariel, wait, wait--

Suddenly a huge hand clamps down on his shoulder and he turns to face...

CHIP WRIGHT,
eyes narrowed suspiciously.

CHIP
Wuss happnin' here, babes?

Lyle and JASON, a hulking linebacker, come up behind Chip, eyeing Willy.

ARIEL
Oh nothing, hon. Uhh...

She indicates Willy, trying to remember his name.

CHERYL
It's Willy.

ARIEL
Yes. Willy was just leaving.

CHIP
Yeah? I think me and Willy should
have a little chat. Something
tells me we got something to sort
out.

He puts his arm around Willy's shoulder and starts walking him around a corner where they won't be seen.

ARIEL
Forget it, Chip, never mind--

She starts to get out to go after him, but Lyle has jumped in the back seat and holds her down from behind.

ARIEL
(continuing)
Chip, wait-- my God!

LYLE
He won't be long. He don't like to talk.

Jason and Lyle laugh and punch each others' arms.

AROUND THE CORNER - WILLY AND CHIP

Chip stops and holds Willy out at arms length, looking him over curiously.

CHIP
Ain't you in Wheaton's class?

Willy is semi-cringing backwards, anticipating the blows. Chip pulls the earphones off Willy's ears.

CHIP
(continuing)
Aincha in Wheaton's--

He hears the MUSIC drifting from the earphones and lifts them to one ear. Then he sings along:

CHIP
(singing along)
"...We are proud to claim the title
of/The United States Mariiiiines..."

Chip listens some more as the MARINE HYMN goes on.

CHIP
(continuing)
Know any marines?

Willy shakes his head.

Chip hands the earphones back.

CHIP
(continuing)
Dad was one. Embassy guard. We
lived all over the world.

A beat. Chip looks away, sighs. Then turns back.

CHIP
 (continuing)
 Ariel's a honey, ain't she? A real
 doll. She's mine, comprende? My
 honey! My doll! Understand?
Understand?

Willy nods weakly, and Chip puts his arm around him again.

CHIP
 (continuing)
 So why you wanna make me look bad
 in front of my crew? Now I gotta--

He stops, picks up the earphones again, and presses it to an ear.

The martial music has ended. ASIAN-INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC
 FILTERS OUT FAINTLY.

CHIP
 (continuing; listening)
Sarod. Tabla and mrindangam.
 Karnatic?

WILLY
 Northern. A morning raga.

Chip listens some more then hands the earphones back.

CHIP
 Lived in Delhi when I was ten.
 (off Willy's look)
 Whatsamatter, can't jocks have
 other interests?

He sighs and holds Willy out at arm's length again.

CHIP
 (continuing)
 So where you want it?

Willy looks confused.

CHIP
 (continuing)
 Chest, ribs, belly...?

Willy makes an uncertain gesture.

CHIP
 (continuing)
 Some like it on the face, wear
 it like a badge of honor. You
 I'd say...

He seems to turn away, then with incredible speed, he drives his fist HARD into Willy's stomach, doubling him over.

WILLY

Arrggh!

ARIEL'S GROUP

They've heard Willy's cry and pile out of the car.

ARIEL

Oh shit, Chip.

All four run towards the corner, but Chip comes out and heads them off.

CHIP

Nothing to see here. Move along. Let's go.

He exchanges victorious high fives with his buddies...

...while Ariel cranes to look around the corner, catching glimpses of Willy doubled over in a squat before they pull her away.

FADE TO:

INT. - RUIZ DINING TABLE - NIGHT

Willy, Bing, and Grandma are having an elaborate dinner. Grandma pushes an exquisite crystal bowl filled with dates towards Willy.

GRANDMA

Try some of these dates. They're from King Faisal, ha ha! A joke. Finish all the food. I know I'm not a good cook, but don't leave any leftovers.

BING

(re: dates)

Daddy sent these from Saudi Arabia.

GRANDMA

My son, an engineer, making very good money. We wanted to send Bing to finishing school, we certainly could afford it, but her mother said no.

Bing sneaks a peek at Willy.

GRANDMA

(continuing)

Her mother's a journalist in Minnesota, though why she chose to live in the icebox of the U.S. I'll never understand.

BING

They're divorced.
(off Willy's surprise)
It happens.

WILLY

Oh, no. It's just that you're-- they're the first Filipino couple I heard of who's divorced.

GRANDMA

That's right, no divorce in the Philippines. Bing's father, we brought him up Catholic. He was twenty when we moved here. Not here, but to Saint Paul, Minnesota.

BING

That's where he met Mom.

GRANDMA

The icebox of the U.S. But American culture's so strong it overcame his upbringing and changed him. I'm not a good cook, anak, but finish the morcon.

BING

He married mom to get a green card. Soon's he got it--

GRANDMA

Nonsense! He tried to make the marriage work, but he didn't like it in Saint Paul, the icebox of the U.S. Who would, except your--

BING

That's where Ken was born.

GRANDMA

Ken's a very bright boy, very intelligent.

(MORE)

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

His I.Q.'s in the genius range, and he's good at so many things he can't decide what to do, so he's taking General Studies. He's a model Filipino: studious, respectful, never makes trouble-- oh, here, eat, eat, don't leave any leftovers. Have some more pancit.

WILLY

I really am full.
(to Bing)
So where were you born?

BING

Right here in L.A.

GRANDMA

Saint Paul was too cold for us, we had to move to a warmer climate. Minnesota's the icebox of the U.S. Have some more fish. We're hoping Bing goes to medical school, becomes a doctor like her uncle.

BING

Mom's second generation
Fil-American.

GRANDMA

Try the dates. They're from Saudi King Faisal. Try them!

Willy tentatively takes a date.

WILLY

(to Bing)
Was your mom born here?

BING

In Saint Paul...

And she lip-syncs along as Grandma speaks up:

GRANDMA

...the icebox of the U.S.

Willy and Bing exchange surreptitious smiles.

GRANDMA

(continuing)
Try the dates...

...and Bing lip-syncs along again:

BING
 ...they're from King Fahd.

ON GRANDMA,
 from across the table.

GRANDMA
 Eat! I know I'm not a good cook,
 but finish everything. I don't
 like to throw food away.

FADE TO:

INT. - BING'S ROOM

BING is lying in bed with her dark glasses on, smoking a joint. POP MUSIC plays softly from the stereo while Willy rummages through her wall shelves of vinyl records.

WILLY
 Wow. I don't know anybody who
 still has vinyl.

BING
 They're mostly Dad's and Ken's.
 No one listens to them anymore.

Willy pulls out the first FANNY album.

WILLY
 Fanny! Yours?

BING
 (peering at it)
 Ken's.

WILLY
 Think he'd sell it?

BING
 I don't know. You want it?

Willy sits beside her and points at the jacket photo.

WILLY
 Fanny was the first all-girl rock
 group to play their own instruments
 write their own material, and place
 hits in the charts. They paved the
 way for the Go-go's, the Bangles,
 Joan Jett... See these two here?
 They formed the group. They're
 sisters, Filipinas.

Bing sits up, interested.

WILLY
 (continuing)
 The Millington sisters, June and
 Jean, really talented guitar
 players, respected. They backed
 Barbra Streisand on several cuts.

BING
 Wow.
 (beat)
 Take it. I'm sure Ken won't mind.

She's slinked uncomfortably close to him.

WILLY
 Umm, when do the other guests
 arrive?

BING
 Didn't you say I had no friends?

WILLY
 You said it was a party.

BING
 It is.

She moves her mouth close up against his ear so that her lips
 brush it as she breathes into it:

BING
 (continuing)
 I'm the party.

Beat. Beat. Beat.

WILLY
 Um. Uh, where's Ken?

SLOW FADE TO:

EXT. - MALL (SUPERMARKET LOADING DOCK) - NIGHT

Ken, Mark, Bastos and Stamper are hanging out, guzzling beer.
 The ground around them is littered with empty beer cans.

MARK
 (wasted)
 What time is it?

BASTOS
 Time to get a fucking watch.

KEN

Ten-forteeeeeeeeee-five. No, six.

MARK

Tonight's the night we get him.
Got the piece?

KEN

In the car.

They start to stumble off when headlights sweep up, blinding them.

The car STOPS, a SEARCHLIGHT BEAM fixes on them, pinning them against their shadows on the wall behind.

BECKER (O.S., miked)

Okay, hold it right there.

We hear his car door OPEN, the CRACKLE OF POLICE RADIO FILLING THE AIR, and BECKER, a burly blonde police officer, approaches, fiddling with his nightstick.

BECKER

Kinda late for a Wednesday, huh, boys?

KEN

On our way home, Chief.

BECKER

Who's driving?

KEN

I am, Chief. Only had two beers.

BECKER

And who's cleaning up this
fucking mess?

Bastos makes a move toward Becker but Ken quickly grabs him.

KEN

(re: the cans)

Right. We'll get on it right
now, Chief.

They start to pick up the cans and stuff them in the cardboard case box, their pockets, their belts.

BECKER

You better watch it. I'm sick
and tired of cutting slack for
you slimy pukes.

FADE BACK TO:

INT. - BING'S ROOM

Bing presses the play button on her boom box and as the MUSIC STARTS, she swirls up and gently pulls Willy into a slow dance.

WILLY
(recognizing the song)
"Kapalaran."

SONG
"Bakit ba ganyan ang buhay ng tao?"

BING
Nice song, but I don't understand
the words.

WILLY
He's wondering about life.

They turn slowly to the music. Bing closes her eyes and presses close.

Willy translates simultaneously as they dance.

<p>SONG <u>"Mayroon mayaman,</u> <u>may api sa mundo?/</u> <u>Kapalaran, kung</u> <u>hanapin/ Di matag-</u> <u>puan/ At kung minsa'y</u> <u>lumalapit/ Nang di mo</u> <u>alam</u></p>	<p>WILLY "Why are some rich, others poor? /Go looking for luck/ You never find it/ Then it comes near /And you don't realize it.</p>
---	--

She nestles closer, grooving on his body heat.

<p>SONG (continuing) <u>"O bakit kaya/ May</u> <u>ligaya't lumbay?/</u> <u>Sa pagibig/ May</u> <u>bigo'r tagumpay?</u></p>	<p>WILLY (continuing) "Why are some happy, others sad?/ And in love/ Why do some win, some lose?</p>
--	--

Realizations are dawning on Willy, and he is starting to feel uncomfortable.

<p>SONG (continuing) <u>"Di malaman,</u> <u>di maisip,/ Kung</u> <u>anong kapalaran/</u> <u>Sa ating ang</u> <u>naghihintay."</u></p>	<p>WILLY (continuing) "Umm-- no one can tell/ What kind of future/ Waits for us."</p>
---	---

She has pressed her lips into his neck and is leaning on him.

As the SONG ENDS, he reaches out and presses the stereo's STOP button.

Then holds her for a few moments.

WILLY

I better go.

He gently sits her on the bed.

Eyes closed, she lies back, trying to pull him down on her, but he gently disengages and walks to the door.

WILLY

(continuing)

I-- really appreciate this, you know. Thanks. Good night.

She doesn't answer. He leaves, quietly closing her door.

She sits there slumped for a while, then gropes for the remote and turns the TV on.

Some stupid film. She picks up a DVD.

ON THE DVD'S COVER

It's a gay male porn video.

BING

pops the DVD into the player, presses PLAY, puts her dark glasses on, lights a cigarette, and settles back.

PUSH INTO HER as the room fills with the SOUNDS of soft MOANING and GROANING.

We can't see too well for the dark glasses, but that could just possibly be a tear.

ETTA comes in, goes to her, and lays her head on her lap.

FADE TO:

INT. - MACARAEG HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Willy enters, back from next door. A light shines from the family room. Pretty late.

WILLY

Dad?

He goes in and finds Brianna sound asleep, sound asleep at the computer keyboard.

He picks her up and lays her flat on the couch. She does not wake up.

He moves O.S., then returns and covers her with a blanket, giving it a few tucks. Then he turns to the computer and puts his hand on the on/off switch.

Stops. Thinks the better of it, and leaves it on.

He exits, switching the light off, leaving the monitor screen the only source of illumination in the room.

FADE TO:

EXT. - RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT - KEN, MARK, STAMPER, and BASTOS

They drive up and turn off their headlights.

KEN

Slow, slow... there he is!

BASTOS

Jackpot!

KEN

Where's the trey?

Stamper hands Ken the magnum while Ken lowers the car window.

KEN

Stop so I can aim. Okay, three shots then take off, okay?

Ken aims the magnum...

CUT TO:

WILLY'S ROOM

Willy, in pajamas, caresses an 8x10 of Ariel on his wall and climbs into bed.

As he reaches for the lamp switch, three POPS sound in the distance in an irregular rhythm. He freezes.

Beat. He tentatively claps out the same rhythm repeatedly, listening hard. ARIEL'S THEME, half-formed, PLAYS IN HIS HEAD, MIXING WITH THE NEW RHYTHM.

He throws the blanket off, leaps out of bed, tears the cover off his keyboard, and switches it on. SIRENS WAIL IN THE DISTANCE.

SIRENS BUILD INTO ARIEL'S THEME, FORMING AND REFORMING OVER, UNDER, SWIRLING AROUND THE RHYTHM AND THE SIRENS...

WILLY

GOT IT! Oh thank you sir YES!

And as ARIEL'S THEME FINALLY EMERGES COMPLETE, WE

FADE TO:

MONTAGE (ARIEL'S THEME PLAYS THROUGHOUT)

Willy at the keyboard, writing notes in sheet music;

He patches up drum machines, MIDI sequencers, etc.;

Rubbing his forehead, stuck;

Strumming his Fender Strat and singing into a mike;

Looking out the window, thinking.

An interruption: something outside catches his attention.

WHAT HE SEES (NIGHT)

BY THE STREET LIGHT, Ken getting out of a car next door, exchanging goodbyes with his homeboys.

The car DRIVES OFF, and Ken bounds up to his door.

BACK TO MONTAGE (ARIEL'S THEME STILL PLAYING)

Willy on keyboard, the notation appearing on the monitor as he plays;

His fingers expertly sliding the mixer switches;

Looking out his window; it is STARTING TO GET LIGHT;

TAPPING OUT THE BEATS, thinking hard;

On his computer screen, the mouse cursor hovers over a button marked "BOUNCE..."

Close up of a big smile right into the camera....

And, AS ARIEL'S THEME BUILDS TO A CLIMAX...

FADE TO:

EXT. - SCHOOL YARD - COVERED WALK - MORNING

The three cheerleaders walk, chatting, when Willy appears in the b.g.

WILLY

Ariel!

ELSEWHERE CLOSE BY,

Lyle turns at the sound of Willy's voice.

WILLY AND THE CHEERLEADERS

Beryl whispers as Willy runs up to them.

BERYL

It's him again!

Ariel rolls her eyes. Willy stops in front of her.

WILLY

Hi.

LYLE

watches, grins, then starts to trot off.

WILLY AND THE CHEERLEADERS

Willy holds out a USB drive to Ariel who is staring dumbstruck.

ARIEL

You wrote a song? For me?

WILLY

Yeah, I hope you like it.

He hands her his earphones. She puts them on as he twiddles with his iPod.

He pulls it off his belt and holds it out to her, but she's intent on listening, her lips curling in a half-smile. She's pleased in spite of herself.

Beryl and Cheryl note this and exchange meaningful looks.

ELSEWHERE IN THE SCHOOL YARD (M.O.S.)

Lyle trots up to Chip and Jason and reports, pointing back where he came.

Chip turns to look, face darkening.

WILLY AND ARIEL

She's listening, smiling, totally enthralled. He takes her hand from her ear and places the drive in it, then curls his hand over it. She doesn't notice, absorbed in the song.

WILLY
(to himself)
My God...

He can't quite believe he's holding her hand.

BERYL AND CHERYL

Nudge each other, suppressing laughter.

CHIP AND JASON

advance menacingly towards us.

WILLY AND ARIEL

They haven't moved. The SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

WILLY
Look, I really want your feedback
on this. Take as long as you
want... uh...

Over her shoulder, he's seen

CHIP AND JASON

starting to jog towards him.

CHIP
Hey!

WILLY,

panic-stricken.

WILLY

I gotta go. Talk to you soon--

He turns to run and BOOM! He runs right into Lyle's arms!

Now Chip's arrived and grabbed him with both paws.

Ariel's startled out of her reverie and tugs at Chip, but he slaps her hands away.

CHIP

Slow learner, huh? I'm gonna
have to teach you again.

Lyle holds Willy while Chip slams a fist into Willy's stomach, doubling him up!

ARIEL

Stop it! Chip!

Chip grabs Willy's hair and tilts his face up.

CHIP

Maybe the face this time.

He raises a fist, but a sharp male voice interrupts.

MR. MACKENZIE

MIS-ter Wright! Football
conditioning, I suppose?
(to the others)
To class, all of you.

The students disperse. Chip lets go and Willy doubles over again, almost retching. Lyle holds him up as Chip smooths his clothing.

CHIP

Mr. Mackenzie. No, our friend umm-
hmm here suddenly took sick.
(to Willy)
You O.K. now? Feeling better?

Ariel goes to Willy and straightens him up.

ARIEL

Feeling better?

Willy nods. Lyle lets Willy go. Chip deliberately steps on Willy's foot as he crosses away.

CHIP

See you after school, chum.

Ariel helps Willy take a few faltering steps.

MR. MACKENZIE
To class, all of you.

CHIP
Exactly, Mr. Mackenzie. Coming,
Ariel?

Ariel freezes, but Willy pipes up.

WILLY
I'll be okay. Go on.

CHIP
Don't want to be late, Ariel.

Willy is now only slightly bent over.

ARIEL
Are you sure you're all right?

WILLY
I'm fine. Go on.

She lets him go and watches as he trudges towards the camera.
TRACK WITH HIM until she's out of earshot. Then,

WILLY
(to us)
I can't believe I said that.

FADE TO:

INT. - RUIZ HOME

Grandma is reading a newspaper while Ken and Bing eat cookies
with milk. Bing is wearing her trademark dark glasses.

GRANDMA
"Witnesses report the shooting was
carried out by a local Filipino
gang, the latest escalation in the
mounting tension between Mexican
and Filipino street gangs."
(puts paper down)
Nakakahiya! Another black mark
against Filipinos!

BING
Gramma, you don't know the details.
Why assume that the Pinoys were
at fault? Maybe the Mexis shot
first.

KEN

(winking at Bing)

No, she's right. But what do you expect? The only president these kids have known was a cold-blooded killer and a shameless thief.

Grandma puts her paper down angrily.

GRANDMA

You think you know everything! History will prove that Marcos was a great man! It's the communists that followed after him who's ruining the country!

KEN

We know, we know. You dated Marcos before he dumped you for Imelda.

He gets up and kisses Grandma, pulling his jacket off his chair back.

KEN

(continuing)

Gotta run. Don't wait up.

He leaves.

GRANDMA

Tch. He's never home anymore.

BING

It's summer break. Let him enjoy it.

EXT. - CUL-DE-SAC - LATE AFTERNOON

Ken starts driving off in his late model car when he sees Willy walking with a slight limp and stops beside him.

KEN

What happened to you?

Willy touches the bruise on his cheek.

WILLY

Disagreement.

KEN

With who?

WILLY

Nobody.

KEN
 Mexicans?

WILLY
 Huh? Oh no. No.

KEN
 Well, whoever they were, I
 hope you gave 'em back as good
 as you got 'cause we Flips
 getting a rep for being meek
 victims.

Willy shrugs ambiguously.

KEN
 (continuing)
 Busy right now?

Willy is noncommittal.

KEN
 (continuing)
 I'm going over kick back with
 some chill friends, unique guys,
 treat you with respect. You'll
 like 'em. Wanna join me?

Willy thinks a beat.

WILLY
 I better not.
 (jokingly)
 Gotta tend to my wounds.

KEN
 Yeah. Well, okay, but if you
 need anything, you know, like
 to talk, we're neighbors.

He smiles and steps on the gas. Willy watches him drive off.

KEN (V.O.)
 ...meek victims...

Willy assumes a stern expression. HOLD on Willy's face as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY (BEGIN BLACK AND WHITE FANTASY SEQUENCE)

A real CHEESY PARODY: Chip, in top hat and cape, twirls his mustache and CACKLES between tying a struggling Ariel to the railroad tracks with rope!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Once again the evil Chip Wright threatens the pure unspoiled Ariel Christensen! She struggles! She weeps! She pleads for her honor! But no one hears her cries and the 3:15 from Mackenzie Bend is due any minute now! Looks like our pure, unspoiled heroine is a goner! Or is she?

EXT. - PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Willy in suit, glasses, and briefcase cocks an ear...

...leaps into the phone booth, and leaps back out IMMEDIATELY in tights and cape!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But wait! Super hearing has won out again!

EXT. - SKY - DAY

Willy flies, hair and cape billowing against passing clouds!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Is it a bird? Is it a plane?

THE RAILROAD TRACKS - CHIP AND ARIEL

Willy lands, arms akimbo. Chip looks up and stares at him in amazement!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

No, it's Super-pinoy-man, defender of truth, justice, and the American-- uhh, the United Way!

Chip and Willy face off!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

(continuing)

He unleashes his super bagoong breath, which he learned from Godzilla...

Willy leans forward and breathes on Chip, who recoils!

THE SKY

Chip recedes into the clouds, tumbling like a drunken kite!

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 ...and the evil Chip Wright is
 foiled again!

RAILROAD TRACKS - WILLY AND ARIEL

Willy stands over the prone Ariel with one arm akimbo,
 holding the other out to her. Beat.

She takes his hand, and in one effortless movement, he pulls
 her up into his arms!

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Good triumphs over evil, and our
 pure, unspoiled heroine is safe--

Willy twists Ariel into a tango drop and kisses her. She
 returns his kiss.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 -- uhh, unhurt, and here comes
 that 3:15 from Mackenzie!

EXT. - DAY (STOCK)

TOOTING its horn, the 3:15 roars into a tunnel!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - MACARAEG FAMILY ROOM - DAY (END FANTASY SEQUENCE)

Brianna is at the computer as Willy walks in. She looks at
 the clock.

BRIANNA
 It's only two o'clock.

He walks up to her, pulling a water pistol from his pocket.

WILLY
 Hmm, it is Thursday.

INSERT SHOT

Ariel and Cheryl, a callback to the earlier convertible
 scene.

CHERYL
... the movies Thursday...

BACK TO SCENE

Willy has stuck the pistol against Brianna's ear.

WILLY
(as Clint)
Go ahead. Make my day.

He pulls the trigger, squirting water into her ear. Brianna rears back and SMACKS him in the cheek!

BRIANNA
Quit it! I mean it!

She angrily wipes off while Willy stares in genuine surprise.

WILLY
Boy! You sure ain't no meek victim.

Brianna turns back to the computer, steaming.

MACARAEG BATHROOM

Willy is undressed, checking his looks, checking the bruise on his cheek in the mirror.

CHERYL FADES UP AND OUT in the mirror.

CHERYL
...Thursday...

WILLY

pulls his eyes into tiny slits with his fingers. A KUNG-FU MOVIE SOUNDTRACK of grunts, yells, and THWACKS! rises and fades as he does a Bruce Lee imitation.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - CHINESE PERIOD TAVERN - DAY (BEGIN FANTASY SEQUENCE)

This fantasy sequence is a parody of a bad Chinese kung-fu movie. All of the dialog is out-of-sync, and everyone goes "Hmpff!" or says "But still..." For example:

Chip, Lyle, and Jason, in period Chinese makeup and costume, noisily seat themselves at a tavern table.

Then Chip's lips move as if saying, "Let's order some wine!" but on the soundtrack we hear

CHIP
Ho, innkeeper! Your best wine,
and quickly!

You get the idea.

MR. MACKENZIE, attired as the innkeeper, runs up to them bowing and scraping obsequiously.

MR. MACKENZIE
Yes, sir! Yes, sir!

He starts wiping down their table with a towel.

MR. MACKENZIE
(continuing)
Yes, sir, at once! Heheheheheh!

The jocks go "Hmpff!" and Mr. Mackenzie turns towards the kitchen, his expression changing.

MR. MACKENZIE
(continuing; shouting)
Hey, you lazy shiftless! Wine!
Quickly! Hmpff!

ON ARIEL IN THE KITCHEN,

also in black wig and Chinese rags, on her knees, scrubbing the floor.

She gets up wiping her hands on her rags and goes to the earthen wine jars to draw some wine.

CHIP'S GROUP

They WHISTLE and nudge each other appreciatively as barefoot Ariel delivers a wine jug at their table.

As Ariel turns to leave, Chip grabs her wrist.

His lips seem to say, "Leaving so soon, girl?" but the soundtrack says:

CHIP
But still, stay and pour for us,
wench!

Ariel shakes her head and tries to pull free but Chip tightens his grip.

The jocks CACKLE as she struggles in earnest, on the verge of tears.

AT THE NEXT TABLE,

a stranger wearing a conical straw hat sits with his back to us.

O.S. we hear Ariel's CRIES OF DISTRESS and the JOCKS' LAUGHTER.

The stranger speaks without turning.

STRANGER

Let her go.

Sudden SILENCE at Chip's table. Then,

CHIP

Who dares?

Mr. Mackenzie closes his eyes in chagrin, runs to his counter and ducks out of sight behind it.

MR. MACKENZIE

Ai-yah!

STRANGER

You want wine? Here!

Without looking, the stranger flings a porcelain cup backwards over his shoulder.

It spins through the air and lands on the table right before Chip without spilling a drop! Everyone looks from it to the stranger and back in surprise.

EVERYONE

Huhhhh?

The stranger slowly turns to face them and dramatically takes off his hat, revealing his face. It is Willy!

He stand up, nonchalantly flinging his queue back so that it curls around his neck!

Carlos, similarly made up as a Chinese period hero, appears behind Willy!

They both stand silently, arms crossed, facing Chip's group.

LONG BEAT (MUSIC!)

Chip finally snorts contemptuously ("Hmpff!") and claps his hands.

Immediately, 30 to 40 SWORDSMEN appear, leaping in through the doors and window, to menacingly surround Willy and Carlos.

Chip smirks evilly.

Ariel finally breaks off and runs to hide behind the counter.

Mr. Mackenzie, anticipating the damage to the inn, has Excedrin Headache Number 13.

TWO AGAINST THIRTY. They face off.

CHIP

Go!

At Chip's command, ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE!

Tables and chairs overturn, crockery smashes, bodies collide with load-bearing posts, shaking the roof, as...

Willy and Carlos turn into whirlwinds of flailing kung-fu arms and legs, yelling, ducking, jumping, whirling, spinning, leaping-- blinding blurs of deadly blows!

And they're efficient. With each blow, one body falls.

SUDDENLY IT'S ALL OVER.

Willy and Carlos alone remain standing, calf-deep in their opponents' bodies.

They begin to step carefully over them, looking for something.

Then Willy reaches down...

...and in one effortless movement, pulls Ariel up into his arms!

She looks at him radiantly and throws her arms around him!

ARIEL

How can this unworthy wretch
ever thank you, O hero of the
people?

WILLY

looks at us over her shoulder, lightbulbs flashing.

CARLOS

discreetly turns away from them and speaks directly to us.

CARLOS

And here's that 3:15 Special from
Mackenzie.

EXT. - DAY (STOCK)

Again the 3:15 roars into the tunnel, TOOTING MIGHTILY.

WILLY AT HIS BATHROOM MIRROR (END FANTASY SEQUENCE)

He watches himself dance around, making little animal cries like Bruce Lee.

Then, SCREAMING MIGHTILY, he chops down on a bar of soap!

It flies up and hits him on his bruised cheek. He YELLS in pain, rubs his cheek...

...looks in the mirror, and starts!

ADJUST SO THAT WE SEE WHAT HE SEES IN THE MIRROR:

Mel, Trini, and Brianna are at the bathroom door, looking at him worriedly.

FADE TO:

EXT. - KARATE SCHOOL FRONT - AFTERNOON

Willy rides up on his bike, dismounts, drops his bike, and peers in the school's window.

INT. - KARATE SCHOOL

Hands carefully arrange cinder blocks on the wooden floor.

WILLY.

in white karate uniform (white belt) kneeling on the floor, watching as...

...THE KARATE INSTRUCTOR focuses on the cinder blocks...

...raises his hand, YELLS...

...and STRIKES, smashing them to rubble!

He turns and indicates a second setup of blocks conveniently placed before Willy.

KARATE INSTRUCTOR

Dozo.

Willy studies the blocks before him.

Screwing up his courage, he lifts his hand, starts a YELL...

SEQUENCE OF QUICK INSERT SHOTS

Willy's hands flying over a keyboard.

His right hand plucking his guitar.

His left hand running rapidly over his guitar fretboard.

BACK TO SCENE

Arm raised, Willy's YELL dies in his throat.

He lowers his hand and looks sheepish, shaking his head.

The Karate Instructor glowers, crosses his arms, and starts tapping his foot.

KARATE INSTRUCTOR

Hmpff!

FADE TO:

EXT. - SCHOOL OUTDOOR TRACK - LATE AFTERNOON

Willy is sitting on the bleachers with his binoculars, watching the cheerleaders go through their routine, when Carlos and Bing walk up.

BING

So there you are.

Carlos and Willy exchange their hip handshake.

CARLOS

Ran into her. She wanted to tag along.

BING

You know how pushy juniors can be. What're you looking at?

She sits beside him and takes his binoculars. looks.

ON BING

CARLOS (O.S.)
You don't know? Ariel's the love
of his life.

We see Bing react but they don't. She pretends to focus the binoculars.

BING
Ariel Christensen?

SLOWLY PUSH IN on her as she keeps looking through the binoculars.

CARLOS (O.S.)
Yeah. So you wanna learn to kick
ass, huh? Well, you just come to
capoeira with me and we get you
all set up.

WILLY (O.S.)
Long's we're out by 7:00. I got
something at 7:00.

CARLOS (V.O.)
(laughing)
Another hot date! Ain't he a
killer, huh, Bing?

Bing is still peering through the binoculars.

BING
A real terminator.

FADE TO:

INT. - CAPOEIRA RODA

Men and women in a circle SING and PLAY THE CAPOEIRA INSTRUMENTS (drums, berimbau, tambourines, etc.) while two students at a time show off their acrobatic fighting skills at the center.

Most of the men are barechested and really buff, led by AMEN, the chief instructor.

WILLY AND CARLOS

join the circle, Willy in an obviously borrowed uniform.

Carlos starts SINGING ALONG, right at home, but Willy is really self-conscious.

The fighters are gymnastic, fluid, incredible, and totally controlled.

AMEN

detaches from the group after a while. Carlos takes Willy and pulls him towards Amen. Introductions.

MONTAGE (CONTINUE CAPOEIRA MUSIC THROUGHOUT)

Amen and Willy side by side. Amen starts the ginga footwork slowly, and Willy takes it up.

Then Amen stops Willy and corrects him.

Amen does a negativa and turns to Willy O.S.

Willy does the negativa, awkwardly but passably.

Amen does an au (cartwheel) then looks at Willy O.S.

Willy does a cartwheel. All right! That wasn't too hard!

Amen does a meia lua kick, looks.

Willy tries to do the same thing and falls on his butt.

Amen does a really complicated, breathtaking combination, perhaps a rolê to a macaco to a dobre esse, ending by kicking a pad Carlos is holding up. He looks at Willy O.S.

Willy is smiling sheepishly. He just scratches his head.

FADE TO:

EXT. - STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Willy and Carlos are walking carrying their gym bags, hair wet from showering. Willy is euphoric.

WILLY

Whooo! I have never been so tired
and sore in my life, but I feel
great!

CARLOS
It them-- what the hell they be--
endorphins, man, endorphins!

WILLY
(singing, as James)
I feel good! Dadadadadadadaa!

CARLOS
It almost 7:00, man. Ain't you
got something at 7:00?

Willy remembers, but he's still high.

WILLY
7:00... I got a movie date.
(secretively)
With Ariel!

CARLOS
(throwing clenched fist)
Oh yeah!

WILLY
(throwing right back)
OH YEAH!!!

And they start high-fiving and shouting triumphant WOO-HOOS
and jumping and getting carried away until suddenly it hits
Carlos.

CARLOS
Wha-- Ariel Christensen?

But Willy has already run far ahead.

EXT. - STREET CORNER - LATE AFTERNOON

Willy rounds the corner and stops.

WHAT HE SEES

A theater lobby. Ariel and Cheryl are buying tickets at the
box office.

WILLY (O.S.)
Bingo!

ON WILLY

WILLY
Ladies, I'm back!

He smoothes his hair and approaches, then stops in his tracks.

WHAT HE SEES

Chip and Lyle are walking up to the girls.

WILLY

quickly goes back around the corner and leans on the wall, hyperventilating his surprise away.

WILLY

He's not supposed to be here!
He's not supposed to be here!

After a moment, he peeks again.

The two couples are walking into the lobby.

WILLY

leans back on the wall, breathes.

Crestfallen, he resignedly collects himself starts to walk away.

Stops.

WILLY

Come September I'll be gone.

He looks back, then shrugs and walks on.

WILLY

(continuing)
It wasn't meant to be.

Resigned, he starts off again, putting his earphones on. He presses the play button, and ARIEL'S THEME starts, taking him completely by surprise. Again he stops.

WILLY

(continuing)
Come September I'll be gone.

Finally he closes his eyes, grits his teeth, and turns back towards the theater, muttering to himself as he walks.

WILLY

(continuing)
Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid...

INT. - MOVIE THEATER

It's dark (PARODY COMING ATTRACTIONS ON SOUNDTRACK?) and the projector streams light towards us.

Cheryl, Lyle, Chip, and Ariel sit watching, empty chairs around them.

Most of the chairs in the theater are empty.

In the b.g. a door opens and we see Willy's silhouette enter.

He peers around, eyes adjusting to the darkness. Then he finds them and reacts.

ON THE GROUP

Willy steals down the aisle and quietly slips into the chair next to Ariel's.

Only Ariel notices him. She glances and double-takes.

He smiles at her.

ON ARIEL'S ARM ON THE HANDREST

Willy's hand closes over hers, turns hers over, intertwines fingers. She doesn't resist.

ARIEL AND WILLY

She is still stunned. He smiles reassuringly.

She looks at Chip O.S. Apparently he hasn't noticed.

She looks back at Willy.

Chip's arm snakes around her shoulder. She turns to him and smiles, leaning towards him.

After a moment she looks back at Willy, and motions with her eyes for him to go.

He just smiles back.

She looks at Chip. He's still unaware.

Willy squeezes her hand. She looks straight ahead, the barest hint of a smile playing around the edges of her mouth.

ON THEIR INTERTWINED FINGERS

She gives his hand a squeeze back.

FADE TO:

ON THE GROUP - CHERYL, LYLE, CHIP, ARIEL, WILLY

"Final credits" music plays and the few people behind them are leaving.

WILLY AND ARIEL

He moves her hand to get her attention. She turns to look and he waves bye-bye with the other hand.

Then he lifts her hand to his lips to give it a kiss.

ON CHIP

He reacts at the SOUND OF A LOUD, SLURPY HAND KISS, turns...

CHIP

You!

THE GROUP

The house lights are coming up. Chip makes a grab for Willy but the latter is up and backing away up the aisle.

ARIEL

No, Chip!

CHIP

(to Ariel)

You didn't say nothing!

Lyle clambers over the seats towards Willy, who runs full speed out the door.

ARIEL

This is why I didn't say anything! Grrr!

But Chip is gone out the door, after Willy and Lyle.

EXT. - NEON STREETS - NIGHT - CHASE MONTAGE

Willy exits the theater running full speed.

Lyle comes out, spots him, and gives chase.

Chip brings up the rear.

Willy running hard, cutting corners and bounding past cars crossing streets.

Lyle stops, looking. Chip runs up to him.

Lyle points. They take off again.

Willy running some more. He stops to rest, looks back.

Chip and Lyle round the corner and race towards him.

Willy takes off again.

P.O.V. SHOT

Sidewalks, turning corners, jumping guardrails, dodging cars at speed.

WILLY - HEAD-ON SHOT,

running. Suddenly headlights fall on him, tires SQUEAL...

EXT. - STREET - NIGHT

...and Ken's car brakes, SCREECHING to a stop inches from Willy.

KEN

You peesashit!

Without thinking, Willy opens the passenger door and lurches in.

WILLY

Go go go!

KEN

What the fuck you doing?

WILLY

Drive! Please!

Ken shifts, drives slowly down the street.

Willy bends forward out of sight as they pass Chip and Lyle standing on the sidewalk, looking around.

FADE TO:

EXT./INT. - RESIDENTIAL GARAGE - NIGHT

The garage door is up and RAP MUSIC blares from a boom box.

Inside, smoking and drinking beer, are DRIFTER, WACKO, JOKER, and a NEW FILIPINO KID with a bandaid on his forehead.

Ken drives up and parks in the driveway. He and Willy get out and they all exchange AD LIB greetings and GANG SIGNS.

Ken presents Willy to the group. Each member gives his tag (gang name) as they shake hands in turn.

They appraise Willy coolly, "sweating" him a bit.

Ken points the new kid out to Willy.

KEN

That's Diet. All he drinks is Diet
Coke so his tag's Diet.

DIET is riffling a deck of cards. Band-aids cover his knuckles and there are bruises on his neck and arms.

KEN

(continuing)

Got jumped in last week. Now
probation's over and we make it
official.

WILLY

"Jumped in?"

WACKO

You don't just sign up to join
like the Army, man. We test you,
see how you do when the shit's
down.

KEN

Willy's getting shit from Chip
Wright and his crowd.

DRIFTER

Football Chip Wright?

DIET

So what's he expect us to do
about it?

JOKER

(to Willy)

What's the matter, can't handle
your own shit?

Willy nervously gets up to go, but Ken pulls him back down
and hands him a beer.

CUT TO:

DRIFTER TALKS TO THE CAMERA - INTERCUT WITH M.O.S. ENACTMENTS
OF THE ACTION BEING DESCRIBED

Drifter, a slight Filipino kid, about 17, white tank top. He
guzzles a 40-ounce bottle of Olde English 800 as he talks.

(N.B. THIS MONOLOGUE SHOULD BE UPDATED TO REFLECT CURRENT
GANG JARGON)

DRIFTER

See, I was walking my bitch home
from school when I see this Crip
and his ho' yelling and arguing,
so I don't pay no attention but as
we go past he turns to me and says,
"What's up then?" So I go "This is
Barkadas, man, this is fucking
B.K.S." And he says, "Fuck B.K.S.,
this is the Southside Crips," and I
look at him, big motherfucker,
six-two and two hundred pounds
must've been, and the butterflies
are fluttering in my stomach, man,
so I go, "Well fuck you and your
crab shit, man, let's do it then!"
And that's how I got these scars.

(showing scars)

Going in there I knew he would beat
the shit outta me, holmes, I ain't
stupid, I knew I was beaten, but I
handle my own shit. See, all my
years in Barkadas, I never saw none
of us rank out, no matter what the
odds. That's rule number one,
holmes: "Don't rank out. Put up
the name."

THE GANG

Ken has put his arm around Willy.

KEN

Kick it. Drink your beer. We're all homies here.

FADE TO:

LATER

Willy is seated on the garage floor with the rest of the group, laughing, a little drunk.

DRIFTER

How? How'd you know the ho's Filipina?

DIET

'Cause all the time I was fucking her, she was goin'...

(Filipino accent)

Pastor! Pastor! (Faster! Faster!)

Diet cracks up but they all boo the bad joke.

STAMPER

I got one! I got one! Why did the Flip go see the doctor? Because he was peeling paint (feeling faint)!

They all BREAK INTO MORRIS ALBERT'S SONG "FEELINGS," but pronounce it "Peelings..."

JOKER

Got one: A Flip, a beaner, and a honky walk into a bar...

JOKER TALKS TO THE CAMERA - INTERCUT WITH M.O.S. ENACTMENT OF ACTION DESCRIBED

Joker's touch is light, his timing perfect, a true comic raconteur.

(N.B. THIS MONOLOGUE SHOULD BE UPDATED TO REFLECT CURRENT GANG JARGON)

JOKER

Walking to school, Fat Roberta comes up and warns me they're waiting for me in home room, but shit, Mackenzie'll be there, what can they do, right? So I go in and sit down at my seat and almost at once BOOM! One of them bops me cross-eyed...

(MORE)

JOKER (CONT'D)

(crossing eyes)

...so I jump up and there's about fifteen of them hitting and pushing me so my legs pinned between the desks so I can't kick and they're bopping me left and right and I'm throwing books and laughing 'cause they're getting in each others' way, holmes, when I feel this arm choking me round my neck and I can't break free, but then I think, well, his elbow's over here...

(pointing at Adam's apple)

..so his face must be here...

(pointing next to ear)

...so I go BOOM! Smack right in his face, turn and look-- it's Fat Roberta, holmes, nose bleeding like a flower, so I laugh and say, "What, Roberta, you in this too?"

LAUGHTER greets his story.

JOKER

(continuing)

Then they all run out the room and I start to run after them, but Mackenzie grabs my arm and twists and shoves me against the wall, and I say, "Man, what you want with me? Fifteen fucking beaners beating up on me, why didn't you do something then?"

(beat)

It's always the Flips, man, somehow it's always the Flips' fault. Pinoy's always left holding the bad.

FADE TO:

LATER

The mood is more somber, the MUSIC SOFTER.

WILLY

I don't know why I like her, you know, she's like a song, a summer song.

MARK

Fuck, man, you ain't said ten words to her, you don't know what she's like. She could be a real bitch.

BASTOS
Yeah, like your mama.

KEN
I know what magic chemistry
motivates him. She's a hard nut to
crack. She makes him hard, holmes!

LAUGHTER all around.

MARK
You want her, I say go win her. Go
for it!

WILLY
That's very American. Winning's
the only thing.

MARK
It is. Don't you believe that?

WILLY
No.

KEN
What do you believe?

WILLY
Winning's doing the right thing.

MARK
He means the "Chip Wright" thing.

More HOWLS OF LAUGHTER.

DIET TALKS TO THE CAMERA - INTERCUT WITH M.O.S. ENACTMENT OF
ACTION DESCRIBED

(N.B. THIS MONOLOGUE SHOULD BE UPDATED TO REFLECT CURRENT
GANG JARGON)

DIET
I was only nine when I first saw
Barkadas fight. Seven or eight
gangstas come down from Carson to
create trouble at the mall, and
right away they see these two
Barkadas at the lotto station and
they go up and drop one of them
from behind, BOOM! sucker punch,
just like that, so there's only
one Barkadas left...
(MORE)

DIET (CONT'D)

(indicating Ken)

... Chino here, but you know? He didn't run, didn't leave his homey behind, stood by his homey and fought all seven or eight till security got there. That was the fight that made him famous. All that week and the next that was all everybody talked about at school, about how Chino stood up to seven or eight and didn't rank out, and that really inspired me. Barkadas stood together. Sure they did bad things, but they cared about their homies and looked after each other and right then and there I said to myself: "Barkadas, man, that's where it's at. That's what I wanna be."

FADE TO:

LATER

MORE BARKADAS ARRIVE, welcomed with handshakes and 40-oz bottles of Old English 800.

Willy is really drunk, but the others are alert and listen to him intently.

WILLY

...but they're huge fucking animals. HUGE! I nearly shit a brick...

WACKO TALKS TO THE CAMERA - INTERCUT WITH M.O.S. ENACTMENT OF ACTION DESCRIBED

A fire of wild unpredictability flickers in Wacko's eyes.

(N.B. THIS MONOLOGUE SHOULD BE UPDATED TO REFLECT CURRENT GANG JARGON)

WACKO

Yeah, it was only about fifteen K.G.B. out there in the middle of the field, they were surrounded, but it was all just cursing and talking back and forth, no one was doing any shit, and I was getting hungry, so I say, "Fuck this talking shit, holmes, I'm gonna do something!"

(MORE)

WACKO (CONT'D)

So I start walking towards them, and Pee Wee, remember Li'l Pee Wee? Li'l muhfugger reaches into his jacket and pulls out this piece and points it straight at me like this...

(pointing two-handed)

...so I look right at him and say, "Wassup, Pee Wee? You gonna shoot me? So shoot then," and I keep coming and he starts backing away and I say, "Do it then, but you better do it with one shot, 'cause you ain't getting another," and suddenly all of them turn and start running away, and everyone takes off after them, throwing stones and branches and shit, so I say, "Fuck this shit, holmes, I'm hungry. I'm gonna go get me some pizza."

He swigs from his beer bottle to LAUGHTER.

FADE TO:

LATER - THE GROUP

has closed in on Willy, somewhat menacingly.

MARK

(to Willy)

You ranked out! Don't feel good, does it?

KEN

Chill it, holmes! He's new.

DIET

He's a fucking pussy.

KEN

(to Willy)

One thing you gotta understand.
God created all men...

(brandishing revolver)

...but a paltik makes them equal.

He takes Willy's hand and places the gleaming firearm in it.

STAMPER TALKS TO THE CAMERA - INTERCUT WITH M.O.S. ENACTMENTS OF THE ACTION TALKED ABOUT

Stamper stamps his foot occasionally for emphasis as he talks. Like the others, his monologue is interrupted a few times with responsive LAUGHTER.

(N.B. THIS MONOLOGUE SHOULD BE UPDATED TO REFLECT CURRENT GANG JARGON)

STAMPER

My first drive-by, man, I was scared SHIT-less!

(stamping on "SHIT")

I never shot a guy before, so they make me the driver. Joker, Drifter and me get all stoked up and Joker gets the 12-GAUGE and we get in Drift's car, and it's so foggy that night we got LOST! So we're driving around all stoked and suddenly, BOOM! There it is, the house. So Joker says, "Okay, drive up, stop, give me two shots, then blast off, okay?" So my hands are SHAKING and I'm sweating and can hardly SEE where I'm going and Joker says, "STOP! STOP!" But I'm so nervous I step on the GAS instead of the BRAKES, and we go VROOM and I hear the gauge go BOOM! And Joker's swearing and Drift's cursing too 'cause now there's a big fucking hole in his hatchback!

JOKER TALKS TO THE CAMERA,

continuing Stamper's story (CONTINUE M.O.S. ENACTMENTS)

(N.B. THIS MONOLOGUE SHOULD BE UPDATED TO REFLECT CURRENT GANG JARGON)

JOKER

So the niggah's still alive, so I tell Stamper to stop, and I take the gauge, and me and Drifter get out of the car and walk back to the house, now all the lights are on. And I see the niggah in the window so I aim the gauge and BOOM! BOOM! twice and Drift's still pissed about his car so he says, "Let me shoot too," but then a car drives up and it's got three lights, so we know it's parak, so I throw the gauge down and jump in the bushes and hope they can't see me in the fog, but Drifter doesn't have a chance so he goes...

He strikes a motionless one-legged pose, arms like branches, making like a tree.

Amidst LAUGHTER, Drifter gets up and strikes the pose.

JOKER
(continuing)
...and I'm squatting in the bushes laughing, and I go, "Psst. Psst! Drift, they can see you!" And he says...

DRIFTER
(whispering, only lips moving)
Shaddup. Shaddup!

Loud LAUGHTER.

JOKER
Wait, wait! So the fuzz are looking around in the fog, and they're getting closer and closer to Drift, and Drift goes...

Resuming the tree pose next to Drifter, the two of them start to hop away on one leg, to GENERAL LAUGHTER.

FADE TO:

LATER

Diet's been seated on a chair with all the guys except Ken and Willy gathered around him. Mark lights a cigarette and puffs.

KEN
(to Willy)
You can leave if you want.

WILLY
Umm... Wuss happnin'?

As he watches, Mark presses the cigarette flame into the back of Diet's hand!

Diet closes his eyes, clenches his fist, and emits a small CRY as Mark blows on the flame, burning his flesh!

Mark passes the cigarette on to Stamper, who puffs on it to raise the flame, then presses it down into the same spot on Diet's hand.

DIET
 (shouting)
 Barkadas! Barkadas!

Willy grimaces and looks away.

Ken holds up his hand to Willy, showing the scar of his own cigarette burn.

KEN
 It makes us one.

CUT TO:

MARK TALKS TO THE CAMERA - INTERCUT M.O.S ENACTMENT OF ACTION DESCRIBED

Large for a Filipino, Mark's in shorts, and shows us a group of scars forming a circle on his thigh.

(N.B. THIS MONOLOGUE SHOULD BE UPDATED TO REFLECT CURRENT GANG JARGON)

MARK
 The burns are important, holmes,
 'cause if you don't have them and
 the cops or the Crips or Trece
 ask you where you from, you can
not claim. But if you got the
 burns, you're B.K.S., no two ways
 around that. It only hurts at the
 beginning, actually, then you go
 numb and don't feel a thing. In my
 case, my homies were so drunk they
 couldn't put the cig in the same
 spot twice, they were like...

He simulates a drunk trying to hit the same place on his leg but failing.

MARK
 (continuing)
 First they burn here... then here...
 then here, then they take a look
 and say, "Fuck, that ain't Barkadas.
 Tha's the K.G.B. We gotta connect
 the dots!"

LAUGHTER.

MARK
 (continuing)
 So they burn this circle...

He shows the circle on his thigh.

MARK

(continuing)

In the meantime I'm cool, I'm
drinking my forty and going,
"Burn, baby, burn!"

QUICK MONTAGE OF BURN SCARS

JOKER has several on the back of both hands...

DRIFTER has one on his forearm and one on his knee...

BASTOS has them on both forearms...

STAMPER bares his chest to show his burns...

MARK has that circle on his thigh...

...and WACKO has them everywhere.

Intersperse a few others, no faces, just burn scars.

DIET - CLOSEUP

He is gritting his teeth, stifling a scream, and sweating profusely.

WILLY AND KEN

next to each other, watching. Mark's hand comes on frame and hands Ken the cigarette.

Ken takes the cigarette and approaches Diet.

FADE TO:

KEN AND WILLY

Willy is throwing up in the flower bed.

Ken helps him down to a sitting position on the garage floor, and sits next to him.

WILLY

I don't understand. You're models
of behavior at home, with your
parents...

KEN

Hey, they're not the enemy.
They're on our side. Why worry
and aggravate them?

THE GROUP

Willy seated on the floor, Ken smoking next to him. Both watch Diet, surrounded by the others, undergoing the initiation.

Willy is confused.

KEN

Not everyone can take that, but everyone has to do something for Barkadas.

WILLY

Like what?

KEN

Something to, like, weld him to Barkadas. Like a stickup.

WILLY

A robbery?

KEN

Not for money. Fuck the money, that would be wrong. The act and the spirit's what's important.

WILLY

(head aspin)

Why do I think of performance art?

Ken puffs his cigarette, then suddenly grabs Willy's arm in a vise grip and slowly moves the cigarette tip towards it as Willy STRAINS to pull away!

The flame comes closer... closer... it touches--

--and just as suddenly, Ken lets go.

Then he nonchalantly runs the cigarette flame slowly up and down his own arm, from fingertip to elbow and back again.

KEN

Just don't hold it down too long on one spot, see? Doesn't hurt at all.
(crushing cigarette out)
Most of the things we're afraid of are all in our minds.

Willy gets up and stumbles uneasily. Ken gets up to help.

KEN
I'll take you home. We're
neighbors, dude. That makes us
homeboys.

As Willy and Ken stumble out the garage...

...HOLD on Ken's JACKET, rumpled on the cement floor, where
it had fallen next to Ken's lawn chair.

ETTA comes on frame (from next door) and starts sniffing the
jacket. Then she nuzzles it and uncovers...

...THE .357 MAGNUM.

Sniffing the firearm, she takes it in her mouth and trots
away.

FADE TO:

INT. - MACARAEG FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Brianna, asleep at the computer terminal, wakes up when Willy
stumbles in. He goes straight to the couch and flops on it
face down.

WILLY
Drunk. Can't climb stairs.

BRIANNA
You look awful.

WILLY
Don't sound too hot yourself.

BRIANNA
No. Problem with Mr. Mackenzie. I
was going to ask you.

WILLY
Ask away.

BRIANNA
Well, say a friend didn't do his
homework, and he asked to copy off
yours and you let him, and he does,
exactly word for word, and the next
day the teacher gives you an "F"
because he thinks you copied from
your friend, when it was the other
way 'round.

(MORE)

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

And you don't want to be a snitch,
but your friend isn't saying
anything either. So what would you
do?

WILLY

Is the friend white?

Brianna is surprised. Beat.

BRIANNA

What?

But Willy has fallen asleep. Brianna sighs and covers him
with the same blanket he put over her earlier.

Then she returns to the computer and starts clacking away.

FADE TO:

EXT. - THE CUL-DE-SAC - MORNING

Willy comes out carrying his school books and stops, staring.

PAN to what he sees: Bing, waiting for him, same dark
glasses, but a different Bing.

She has dyed her hair blonde!

BING

Like it?

WILLY

It's okay, I guess. No. No, I
don't like it.

BING

Doesn't it make me look like Ariel
Christensen?

Willy reacts, then hurries O.S.

BING

(continuing; calling)

What's wrong? My pussy's blonde
too! Don't you wanna come see?

She glares after him, then gets in her car and STARTS THE
ENGINE...

...leans over, takes a cigarette pack from her bag--

Whoa! Did we just glimpse Ken's .357 MAGNUM inside her bag?

FADE TO:

EXT. - NEAR AMEN'S CAPOEIRA SCHOOL (CULVER CITY) - DAY

Carlos and Willy converse earnestly as they walk.

CARLOS

Days ago was jus' one thing in
your mind, a blowjob from Ariel.
Now you settlin' for one dance
at the prom?

WILLY

Yeah, well, I've been thinking
about it.

CARLOS

Yeah?

WILLY

Know how you say being a minority's
like being a prisoner? Well, it's
like... she's a prisoner too, you
know?

CARLOS

Ariel in gen pop? Clarify, my man!

WILLY

Well, in my gut I feel that she
likes me, but she won't allow it.

CARLOS

Deep stuff.

(beat)

So no B.J. Just promenade with
her at the prom.

WILLY

It'll be a start.

CARLOS

What about Chip?

WILLY

Fuck Chip. I'm getting backup.

Carlos looks questioningly.

WILLY

(continuing)

I'm joining Barkadas. They don't
take shit from anybody.

Carlos is surprised, shocked.

WILLY
 (continuing)
 My turn to dish it out.

Carlos doesn't look too happy with this new development.

CARLOS
 Look, Bing's a fox. Why don't you
 ask her to the prom?

WILLY
 My neighbor Bing?

CARLOS
 Could do worse. Much worse.

WILLY
 Meaning Ariel.
 (beat)
 I don't know. She doesn't-- I
 don't think of Bing that way, I--

Willy gropes for words.

CARLOS
 Bro, how come Flips that never
 seen a blonde in they life think
 the pedestal ho is Marilyn Monroe?

WILLY
 Whites think blondes are hot too.

CARLOS
 In a perfect world you and Ariel
 might work, but here and now you
 just borrowing compound interest
 on installment, hassles upon
 hassles upon hassles to break your
 back and drag you down, and you
 got a future, Juilliard and all.
 Why buy into all that shit?

FADE TO:

INT. - SCHOOL LADIES ROOM

Ariel and Cheryl are freshening up at the mirror (AD LIB
 DIALOGUE) when Bing (still very blonde) enters and uses the
 basin next to them.

BING
 You're Ariel Christensen, aren't
 you?

Ariel looks at her surprised.

 ARIEL
Yes. You're...

 BING
Nobody.

Bing opens her bag and starts rummaging.

 CHERYL
Aren't you in eleventh?

 ARIEL
I think... you're Ken Ruiz's
sister, aren't you?

 CHERYL
Ken's sister? You Filipino?

 BING
 (snorting)
Yeah... Sucks...

ON BING'S BAG

Inside, her hand brushes Ken's gun, and gropes. Oh oh...

THE GIRLS

Bing seems to be thinking... then she pulls out her hand...
...holding a joint.

 BING
Wanna hit?

 ARIEL
Lighter!

Smiles all around. Cheryl gives Bing a light, and they start
passing it around.

 ARIEL
What's the Philippines like?

 BING
Never been there. Say, you watch
gay male porn? Got a video in
my locker.

FADE TO:

INT. - WILLY'S ROOM

He is wearing a black motorcycle jacket and styling his hair "cool" to Steppenwolf's "Born to be Wild." Finally satisfied, stands his collar up, puts on the shades.

WILLY

Barkadas! It's macho time!

He zips up his jacket front, then his left cuff (ZIP SOUND EFFECT). Right cuff. Left pocket. Right pocket. Gives the thumbs up sign to his mirror image and exits, shutting the door behind him.

HOLD on the door. After a few moments, he reenters blushing, and ZIPS up his fly.

CUT TO:

EXT. - THE CUL-DE-SAC - LATE AFTERNOON

Willy comes out in leather jacket and shades, leading a pair of handlebars.

SOUNDS OF MOTORCYCLE STARTING AND REVVING. He starts off and we go to...

A MONTAGE

Palm trees whiz past. Behind them, the blue Pacific.

Palm trees reflect on Willy's shades as the wind ruffles his helmet-free hair.

Wheel spokes spinning. People play on the beach in the b.g.

Finally a FULL SHOT-- Willy pedaling his BICYCLE with all his might.

CUT TO:

EXT. - ARIEL'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

A posh residential area. Ariel's convertible is parked beside a manicured lawn. Willy pedals up and RINGS THE BELL.

Ariel opens the door and stops surprised. Then she steps out and pulls the door almost shut behind her.

WILLY

Hi.

ARIEL

Hi.

An awkward moment.

ARIEL
(continuing; friendly)
Isn't it a bit warm for that
jacket?

WILLY
Huh? Oh, yeah...
(beat)
I was wondering how you liked
the song.

ARIEL
My song? Loved it.

WILLY
You did?

ARIEL
Yeah.

Willy's very pleased.

ARIEL
(continuing)
That was very nice.

Small smiles in the silence.

MAN'S VOICE
Ariel.

ARIEL
Coming, dad.
(to Willy)
I have to go.

WILLY
Ariel, I know you'll be with Chip
at the prom, but will you dance
one dance with me?

She tentatively nods her head "yes," and starts to go.

WILLY
(continuing; stopping her)
I'm not a good dancer, but I can
always fake a slow dance.

MAN'S VOICE
Ariel.

ARIEL
Gotta go. Bye.

She pushes the door open and goes in, leaving Willy exultant.

INT. - ARIEL'S HOUSE

Sumptuous. TRACK as she walks in from the door.

MAN'S VOICE

Who was that?

She doesn't answer. TRACK as she walks down the hall to the rear terrace.

EXT. - ARIEL'S PORCH

Willy is still celebrating.

WILLY

Yes! Yes! YES!

Suddenly he stops, shivers, feeling strange eyes on him.

He turns slowly and looks behind him.

WHAT HE SEES

Three large DOGS have sat down on Ariel's lawn next to his bike, eyeing him suspiciously.

WILLY freezes.

WILLY

Most things we're afraid of are
all in our mind.

(to the dogs)

You are all in my mind.

Especially you, big guy. Yes, I
mean you, Cujo.

WHIMPERING, Cujo gets up and slinks away. The other two dogs follow, tails between their legs.

INT. - ARIEL'S REAR TERRACE

TRACK as Ariel turns a corner and rejoins Cheryl on a couch before a TV set and...

... Bing on the same couch, blonde and in dark glasses, smoking a joint.

FADE TO:

INT. - GARAGE - NIGHT

Ken is showing a nervous Willy how to work the revolver's safety. The other Barkadas stand around watching.

KEN
Safe, Fire. Safe, fire.

MARK
Thought you lost that. Where'd
it turn up?

KEN
Bing's closet. Guess Etta took it.
(to Willy)
You try.

Willy takes the gun.

WILLY
Safe.

He flicks the safety off.

WILLY
(continuing)
Fire.

He pulls the trigger. The cylinder rotates and the hammer falls with a loud CLICK!

KEN
Who's youngest?

DIET
Me. Fifteen.

KEN
You're with me, car number one,
you go in with him. He gets
busted, you take the rap.

DIET
Check.

KEN
(to Willy)
Hand him the piece and the money
soon's you get it.

WILLY
He takes the rap for me?

KEN

Barkadas rule. Youngest takes the
fall. Games the legal system.
(to the others)
Bastos drives. Mark, Drifter, car
number two, decoy and interference.
All set?

They AD LIB assent.

Each one turns to embrace the other, then AD LIB "best of
luck" to Willy before getting in their cars.

FADE TO:

EXT. - AM/PM MINIMART LOT - NIGHT - TRAVELING

We very slowly drive up into the lot and by the front door,
our headlights on bright.

KEN (O.S.)

All clear. Ready?

WILLY (O.S.)

Ready.

We stop, MOTOR RUNNING.

KEN (O.S.)

Here, loaded, safety on.
(beat)
Let's go.

AM/PM MINIMART - P.O.V. SHOT

We TRACK from outside, in past the door, right up to the
CASHIER who is bent over her register. She looks up as we
approach, a middle-aged Asian woman.

EXT. - AM/PM MINIMART LOT - SECONDS LATER

All lit up in the darkness. Their car is right in front,
doors facing the mart left gaping open.

CASHIER'S VOICE

Ay, joskopo! Don't shoot! Take it
all! Take it all!

Willy, pistol in hand, flies out and jumps into the car,
followed by Ken and Diet!

Doors SLAM, and both cars take off, TIRES SQUEALING!

KEN

In the car, front seat, livid.

KEN
 Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Why didn't
 you take the money?

WILLY

In the back seat.

WILLY
 Didn't you hear? She spoke
 Tagalog! She's Pinay, man!

KEN
 Fuck Tagalog! So what, huh?
 Qhat's the big deal? Huh?

CLOSE ON WILLY

Street lights play over his face as he looks off.

WILLY
 Life's hard enough for her as it
 is.

FADE TO:

INT. - ARIEL'S HOME - DAY

Ariel and Chip are having a fight.

ARIEL
 For God's sake, Chip, it's only
 one dance!

CHIP
 No, it's not only one dance. Look,
 we're the creme de la creme here,
 and dancing with him don't make us
 look good. It don't make you look
 good.

ARIEL
 Chip, I just feel sorry for him--

CHIP
 No you don't feel sorry for him.
 It's that song he gave you--

ARIEL

Chip, the song didn't mean anything. You know I'm with you, I'll always be with you. Why're you so jealous?

CHIP

You're mine, that's why. You think I'm a bully? Fine. You think I'm a racist? Fine. I can handle that 'cause you're all that's important to me and I love you and no one's gonna take you away from me.

EXT. - SCHOOL GYM - PROM NIGHT - ESTABLISH

The gym is awash with red-carpet excitement as couples in finery alight from limos.

INT. - BALLROOM MONTAGE

Balloons, streamers, lights, school colors. Dancers mill on the floor to MUSIC FROM A LIVE BAND.

MR. MACKENZIE quaffs some punch, pinches the PROM QUEEN on the butt as he passes, then saunters off archly.

Willy, Carlos, and LISA, Carlos's date, watch this and LAUGH. They are dressed to the nines, Carlos possibly to the tens.

CARLOS

(looking around)

So where's your backup?

WILLY

Got none. Screwed up the initiation.

CARLOS

(sighing)

Guess I'm it, then.

Willy looks off.

WHAT HE SEES

Ariel is radiant, the belle of the ball, laughing with friends. Then she sees someone O.S., and starts off in that direction.

WILLY (O.S.)

She's beautiful, ain't she?

Ariel walks up to Beryl, who doesn't seem enthusiastic about the meeting.

ON ARIEL AND BERYL

ARIEL
Is it something I did?

BERYL
No.

ARIEL
What is it then?

BERYL
All right. It's that-- your new friend? She's a little too off the wall for me.

ARIEL
Who, Bing?

BERYL
Yeah, she's a little too weird. I mean, I don't mind the drugs and all, but I'm not into that porno stuff.

ARIEL
Stuffy ol' Beryl. We're young, carefree! Experience life!

Beryl shakes her head.

BERYL
Good ol' solid reliable Lyle's more my style.

She indicates the GROUP where Chip and Lyle laugh and banter with their buddies and dates...

...and leaves Ariel to go off to join them.

THE PROM - WILLY, CARLOS, AND LISA

The ROCK MUSIC ENDS AND A SLOW NUMBER STARTS. Willy looks around...

...and there she is, laughing with Cheryl.

WILLY
Well, here goes nothing.

CARLOS

Wha-- not now! You crazy???

WILLY

She promised me a dance.

He starts off towards her.

She turns and sees him. Her smile fades. She looks over to the side, to see...

... Chip and his buddies, sharing a joke. He turns and winks at her.

Willy's almost here. She looks apprehensive...

,,,And he's here.

WILLY

Miss Christensen, may I have this dance?

Ariel looks at him, looks at Chip. He's still laughing with his buddies.

WILLY

Ariel. Our dance?

Ariel is clearly uncomfortable. She looks off to Chip again.

Chip and his buddies are looking back silently.

ARIEL

I'm sorry.

WILLY

Ariel! You promised!

Chip and his buddies watch wordlessly.

ARIEL

I know. I'm sorry.

She turns and walks hurriedly towards Chip. He smiles as she approaches, and pointedly puts his arms around her.

Willy watches her go, then stalks off hurt.

FADE TO:

EXT. - SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE THE GYM - NIGHT - LATER

Willy is walking aimlessly, tossing pebbles into a fountain, when Carlos walks up to him very rapidly.

CARLOS
 Been lookin' all over for you!
 Ariel's gone, and Chip's gunnin'
 for you!

WILLY
 For me? Why me?

CARLOS
 He crazy, can't reason. C'mon,
 I'll drive. She ain't here, right?

Willy looks stunned... or pleased? LISA comes up to them.

LISA
 Ty and Lavonda just got back from
 Valentine hill. They saw Ariel's
 car up there.

CUT TO:

EXT. - LOVERS LANE (VALENTINE HILL) - NIGHT

Willy, wearing prom tux and on his bike, rolls slowly past
 the cars parked next to each other, some of them rocking.

P.O.V. SHOT

We TRACK right up to Ariel's convertible and peek in the
 window.

Someone is kissing Ariel, locked in an embrace with her.

We JERK the door open and they break. The light shines on
 her partner's face.

It is Bing.

WILLY

frozen, staring aghast.

BING,

face smeared with lipstick, smiles at him triumphantly.

FADE TO:

INT. - MACARAEG DINING TABLE - EVENING

Mel, Brianna, and Trini are eating dinner. FLAMENCO GUITAR
 MUSIC comes from upstairs, a SEGUIRIYAS (dirge).

It STARTS AND STOPS, clearly not a recording, but Willy playing live.

MEL
(to Brianna)
Go call your brother.

BRIANNA
He's locked the door.

TRINI
He hasn't come out all day.

MEL
Not once?

TRINI
Not to eat, bathe, nothing!
Just plays his guitar all day.

MEL
Sounds like another one of his
"creative" moods.

TRINI
Hope this doesn't last as long as
the last. What's with him anyway?

BRIANNA
Broken heart.

Mel finds this amusing.

MEL
Anyone we know?

BRIANNA
Ariel Christensen. Her picture's
all over his wall.

TRINI
A white girl? Oh, Mel, he'll get
hurt.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - RUIZ FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Ken comes out the door as a PATROL CAR DRIVES UP. He stops beside his own car and watches as Becker steps out.

KEN
Oh hi, Chief. Gonna cite me for
parking here?

BECKER

Nope. Heard about an attempted robbery. Minimart up on 52nd.

KEN

52nd, huh? So, what, you lost, you need directions?

BECKER

Got a description too. Asian, maybe Filipino...

He reaches over and fingers Ken's stubby beard.

BECKER

(continuing)

...little hairs on his Chino-chin-chin.

Ken pushes his hand away.

KEN

Yeah? Sure he weren't blonde, in a cop's uniform?

Becker is trying to contain his anger.

BECKER

What is it with you, Ruiz? Where do you think you're gonna end up?

KEN

You'd be surprised. I'll go to Police Academy, and I'll become a cop, and I'll only hassle white people--

Becker grabs him suddenly and RAMS him into his car, pinning him there!

BECKER

(into Ken's ear)

Now you listen to me, motherfucker, 'cause I've about had it with you! I been bending over backwards because of this!

He shoves his wristwatch up to Ken's face.

INSERT - WHAT KEN SEES

Becker pulls his watch back to show the cigarette burn scar under it.

BACK TO SCENE

BECKER

Thor, first Anglo in Barkadas, and
I upheld the name, I battled my own
people two years in reform school
to put up the name, so don't fuck
with me, puke!

He releases Ken, who turns around looking stunned.

Beat as they stare at each other.

KEN

You-- you're Thor?

He starts to throw the Barkadas sign, but Becker slaps his
hands away and shoves him to the ground.

BECKER

Now I'm telling you and you pass
it on, I've had it with you pukes.
Next time, the smallest littlest
tiniest little thing, I will
personally light you up, hammer
you into the ground... homie!

FADE TO:

INT. - MACARAEG DINING TABLE - THE NEXT MORNING

A haggard Mel joins Trini and Brianna at the table, pours
coffee. Loud GYPSY MUSIC floats down from upstairs.

TRINI

He won't come out, he won't talk,
he won't let me in!

BRIANNA

Fine with me, the computer'a mine
all day, haha.

MEL

He'll need a doctor when I get my
hands on him! That stupid music
kept me up all night!

TRINI

Well, then do something about it!

MEL

I'll grab him when he goes to the
bathroom.

BRIANNA

He doesn't go.

MEL

Not at all?

BRIANNA

He pees out the window. Grandma Ruiz next door saw him do it and complained. God knows where he goes number two.

MEL

I'll handle it tonight when I get home.

He starts to eat irritably.

TRINI

You better. If you don't, I will.

She starts to eat irritably.

FADE TO:

INT. - ARIEL'S ROOM

The GYPSY MUSIC fades into ARIEL'S THEME as Ariel sits, listening again to Willy's music on headphones.

She picks up the iPod to replay the song, stares...

...and realizes it's Willy's iPod.

FADE TO:

INT. - MACARAEG FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Mel enters, home from work. He sets his briefcase aside and looks upward. A KUNDIMAN (Filipino ballad) filters down from above.

His lips tighten. He walks into the sala, loosening his tie.

INT. - WILLY'S BEDROOM DOOR

The MUSIC IS LOUDER. Mel comes up to the door and POUNDS on it with his fist.

MEL

(shouting)

Willy! Open this door at once!

Beat. He POUNDS again.

The MUSIC IS TURNED UP, drowning out the POUNDING. Mel is really angry now. He stomps off.

INT. - MACARAEG LIVING ROOM.

Mel storms down the stairs, passing Brianna at the foot.

MEL
Locked doors! Locked doors in
my house!

He goes O.S., comes back with a crowbar, and stomps up the stairs again.

As Brianna follows him with her eyes, the DOORBELL RINGS.

Brianna turns, goes to open the door, then backs away.

Ariel enters.

ARIEL
Is... uh, Willy home?

BRIANNA
I'll go get him.

Trini comes out as Brianna runs up the stairs.

TRINI
Who is it?

INT. - WILLY'S DOOR

Mel is running his finger along the door jamb next to the lock, trying to decide where to start prying.

Brianna runs up and puts her mouth to the door.

The MUSIC IS SO LOUD THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO HEAR WHAT SHE SAYS, but we can see her mouthing the words:

BRIANNA
Ariel's here.

The MUSIC STOPS IMMEDIATELY. Mel freezes in surprise.

WILLY (O.S.)
What?

BRIANNA
Ariel's here.

Beat. Beat.

WILLY
Tell her I'm busy.

INT. - MACARAEG LIVING ROOM

Trini sits with arms crossed, staring silently at an uncomfortable Ariel.

Brianna appears.

BRIANNA
He's not coming.

Ariel looks sorry. She gets up and hands Willy's iPod to Brianna.

ARIEL
This is his.

Brianna takes it silently. Ariel goes to the door and pulls it open, when we hear Willy's voice.

WILLY (O.S.)
Ariel.

Ariel stops, her back towards them. No one moves.

Then Brianna goes to Ariel and hands the player back to her.

Ariel takes it, but she remains facing away.

Trini watches.

Brianna watches.

Willy walks towards Ariel.

She turns, and finally we see

WILLY

at the foot of the stairs, dressed to the nines in full prom regalia.

He starts to glide towards us (SLOW MOTION?)

ARIEL

holds out the iPod (SLOW MOTION?)

ARIEL

This is yours.

WILLY'S AND ARIEL'S HANDS

approach each other (SLOW MOTION?)...

...and as they finally meet on the iPod...

...we hear the OPENING BARS OF "KAPALARAN."

EXT. - MACARAEG PATIO/TERRACE - EVENING

Begin with a CU of Willy and Ariel's feet as they circle in a slow dance.

SONG

"Bakit ba ganyan ang buhay ng tao..."

CRANE UP slowly as they turn, up their legs...

SONG

(continuing)

"Mayroon mayaman, may api sa mundo..."

MACARAEG FRENCH DOORS (SHOT FROM THE TERRACE)

Mel, Trini, and Brianna press up against the glass from the inside to watch.

MEL

What are they doing?

BRIANNA

They're dancing!

MEL

Dancing without music?

BRIANNA

Shh...

SONG

"Kapalaran, kung hanapin, di matagpuan..."

CONTINUE SLOW CRANE SHOT OF THE DANCERS

SONG

"At kung minsa'y lumalapit nang di
mo alam..."

We're at their waist level now, and as they turn, Willy's player comes into view, hanging from his belt.

THE FRENCH DOORS

Mel, Trini, and Brianna watch. Then Trini nudges Mel, smiles at him.

TRINI

We never needed music.

And they too move into a slow dance.

SONG

(continuing)

"O bakit kaya may ligaya't lumbay/
Sa pagibig, may bigo't tagumpay?"

Brianna turns to watch them, then, unable to take any more of this saccharine mushiness, mimes shoving a finger down her throat and leaves, fake-gagging.

BACK TO WILLY AND ARIEL

Head level, and now we see what's happening: Willy has his earphones on, and Ariel is pressing her ear against his so she too can hear the music they're dancing to.

SONG

(continuing)

"Di malaman, di maisip,
kung anong kapalaran..."

Willy pulls away while they dance and looks into her eyes.

WILLY

Ariel--

But she quickly puts her finger to his lips, and presses close again.

SONG

"Sa atin ang naghihintay."

They slow down to a stop as the LAST BARS OF THE SONG FADE AWAY and search each others' eyes.

Then she kisses him on the lips, a soft kiss...

...and is gone. HOLD as Willy looks after her and we do a

SLOW FADE TO:

EXT. - THE BEACH - DAWN - HIGH ANGLE

A single parked car. It is Ken's.

Now another car drives on frame, a cop car, and pulls up behind it.

KEN'S CAR

Ken and A GIRL are in front, Diet and ANOTHER GIRL in back. Ken rolls his eyes as Becker walks up on the passenger side.

They ignore Becker as he peers in. He reaches in and pulls out a half-empty bottle of scotch, examines it, and drops it back on the girl's lap.

He shakes his head.

BECKER

Let me see your I.D.'s.

They hand him their I.D.'s. Becker looks at each card in sequence.

BECKER

(continuing)

Underage. Underage. Underage.
Ken Ruiz, providing alcohol to a
minor.

He shakes his head, pulls out his ticket book and starts writing.

Another patrol car pulls up and a POLICEWOMAN gets out, POLICE RADIO CRACKLING FROM HER CAR.

She walks up to Ken's side of the car.

POLICEWOMAN

Everything okay?

BECKER

Affirmative. Open container,
underage, the usual.

The policewoman Ken over and pulls his door open.

POLICEWOMAN

Okay, outside and hands on the
hood! Now!

Both Ken and Becker look surprised.

BECKER

I got this.

ON DIET

His eyes fall to Ken's waistband.

WHAT HE SEES

The Magnum is hidden in Ken's belt, under his jacket.

BACK TO SCENE

Ken's mind starts to race.

POLICEWOMAN

I'm patting him down. Out, now!
All of you!

Ken moves to get out. Simultaneously his hand reaches into his jacket...

...and comes up with the pistol! KA-BLAMMM!

THE POLICEWOMAN DROPS. Ken swings and points the gun at Becker, who has frozen in surprise.

BECKER - KEN'S P.O.V.

Looking at Ken steadily, his hands up.

BECKER

Put it down, Ken.

KEN,

too, seems surprised at what he's done. He stares at Becker indecisively. Then he looks down at the policewoman.

BLOOD IS SQUIRTING like a fountain from her forehead.

Ken turns back at Becker.

BECKER hasn't moved, looks back calmly.

BECKER

Chino, just put the gun down.

KEN

is trying to decide, hand starting to shake.

Then he closes his eyes, SCREAMS, and PULLS THE TRIGGER!

CUT TO:

EXT. - RUIZ YARD - MORNING

Bing is sitting outside with her arms around her knees. She watches unemotionally as Ken's car SCREECHES UP, and Ken leaps out and bounds up and into the house.

Then she gets up and follows him in.

INT. - KEN'S ROOM

Ken is rushing around stuffing things into a gym bag-- clothes, money, a watch...

He pulls some clothes out of the closet and drapes them over his arm.

Bing enters quietly.

BING

Etta's dead.

Ken continues to gather stuff. Then it registers.

KEN

What?

BING

Etta's dead.

A CAR HORN HONKS URGENTLY outside.

EXT. - RUIZ GARDEN

Bing stands with her arms crossed as Ken kneels before a blanket on the ground. The outline of an animal underneath can be seen.

KEN

God.

BING

They shot her. Last night. Right there.

Ken lifts the blanket and peers underneath.

BING

(continuing)

Now you take a good look, then you look me in the eye and tell me she didn't go to heaven!

Ken lowers the blanket and rises slowly, head bowed.

BING

(continuing)

Tell me.

He looks at her. HORNS HONK, MORE URGENTLY. Bing starts to SHOVE Ken, who doesn't resist.

BING

(continuing)

Tell me! Tell me!

Then she grabs him and starts BAWLING into his chest. He puts his arms around her, notices her blonde hair, starts to smooth it...

BING

(continuing)

Take me with you, Ken, oh please take me with you! I'll work, I'll get a job, I won't be a burden, I promise, I'll--

Ken SHUSHES her softly, holding her close.

POLICE SIRENS APPROACH...

Then TIRES SCREECH, LIGHTS FLASH, CAR DOORS SLAM. RUNNING FOOTSTEPS, CRIES OF "POLICE! FREEZE!"

KEN

Where would we go?

FADE TO:

INT. - MACARAEG LIVING ROOM

Willy and Brianna sit subdued while Mel fights with Grandma Ruiz. MR. RUIZ, a tall, handsome man in an expensive suit, listens as they argue.

GRANDMA

(pointing at Willy)

It's all his fault, his fault!
Ken was such a good boy until he
met him, that rotten apple!

(to Mr. Ruiz)

Tell him! Tell him how your son
was always such a good boy!

MEL

You call my son a rotten apple in
my own house? Get out. GET OUT!

Mr. Ruiz turns away from the argument.

GRANDMA

(to Mr. Ruiz)

What's the matter? Stand up for
your son! Stand up for Ken!

Suddenly Mr. Ruiz breaks into sobs.

INT. - MACARAEG FAMILY ROOM

Brianna beckons Willy to the computer.

BRIANNA

It's all yours.

WILLY

I've finished the song.

(beat)

Did you get your work done?

BRIANNA

No, but I've logged off. It's
all yours now.

Willy looks at the reams of computer paper scattered around
the printer.

WILLY

All that and you didn't get it
done? What were you doing anyway?

He picks up some printout and looks at it. Surprised, he
pulls more paper and reads. Then he stares at Brianna in
wonder.

WILLY

(continuing)

Holy shit! You hacked into the
state lottery computer!

BRIANNA

By accident. I was trying to break into the school computer to change my grades. I was surprised when that came up.

Willy looks at the rolls of paper.

WILLY

Holy shit! So what did you do?

BRIANNA

Nothing. I couldn't figure it out. It's at least tenth grade level.

Willy looks at the monitor screen but it's dark.

BRIANNA

(continuing)

Nothing there. I told you I logged off.

WILLY

Twerp! Get back on!

BRIANNA

I've tried. Can't. It was a one-in-a-million event.

WILLY

Dumb ass! Why'd you log off?

BRIANNA

You wanted to use it, didn't you?

Willy can't quite get over it.

WILLY

The lottery... damn!

BRIANNA

It makes some sense. Filipinos love the lottery. It was fate.

WILLY

That's true. Too bad the lottery doesn't love us back. Ain't that strange? We loved Marcos. We love gangs. Maybe that's what being Filipino means. We love things that don't love us back.

BRIANNA

We can love each other.

She pecks him on the cheek. A fresh-faced BOY of about 12 enters and approaches.

BOY

Ready?

BRIANNA

John, this is my brother Willy.

BOY (JOHN)

Hi.

This is unexpected. Willy looks from Brianna to John back to Brianna. She holds his look, a faint smile playing the edges of her mouth.

BRIANNA

Remember homework? Copied?

Then she gives him another peck and pats him on the cheek.

BRIANNA

(continuing)

I'll be all right.

(beat)

You will too. Bye.

She motions to John, who dutifully picks up her backpack. Then she waves goodbye to Willy and they walk out the door, he trudging after her, struggling to lug her stuff.

FADE TO:

SEQUENCE OF BLACK AND WHITE HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK PHOTOS:

KEN'S PHOTO

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Convicted and sentenced under the state's mandatory death penalty for cop killers, Kenneth Ruiz, a model prisoner, was found hanging in his death row cell, an apparent suicide, on Christmas Day that same year.

BING SNAPSHOT

Not a yearbook photo, but a color snapshot of her playing with Etta, and an unusual one: Vivid proof that once upon a time, Bing actually had a beautiful smile.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

His sister Victoria left home soon after, and has not been heard from since. Her current whereabouts are unknown.

CHIP (YEARBOOK PHOTO)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Robert Louis Wright was drafted by the N.F.L. right out of high school. He now plays for the Minnesota Vikings.

ARIEL (YEARBOOK PHOTO)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Ariel Christensen entered N.Y.U. to study drama, but married Robert Wright in her sophomore year and dropped out. They have one child and now live in Saint Paul, Minnesota...

(beat)

...the icebox of the U.S.

BRIANNA (SIXTH-GRADE YEARBOOK PHOTO)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Brianna Macaraeg somehow won sixty-two thousand dollars in the state lottery.

(beat)

Being underage, her father Mel had to collect for her, utilizing some (ahem!) subterfuge. He banked most of it for her college tuition but spent a small amount to get her her own computer system.

WILLY (HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK PHOTO)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As for William Macaraeg, well... why don't I just let him speak for himself?

OVER MONTAGE OF MANHATTAN SCENES

WILLY (V.O.)

That all happened just two years ago, but it all seems so long ago now. I'm at Juilliard now, and it's strange, but since I got here, I never once thought of Ariel Christensen... until today. I happened to watch the Jets-Vikings game and thought I saw her behind the Vikings bench, and I felt nothing. I realized I was over her, and I could sincerely wish her and Chip well.

(beat)

My family calls every week with the latest, and they're all doing fine. My sister is really into computers and is trying to invent some kind of computer money. She calls it crypto or something. She's always been into finances and things like that.

(beat)

Carlos came to visit last month, so we got to jam again, just like old times. He finally married Lisa, who's six months on the way. Carlos's become an even better sax player, with post-post-modern ideas no one else can dig but him. I love the guy to death and look forward to jamming with him again.

(beat)

I miss Carlos and the family, but Dad's right, New York's neat, and I've gone exploring together with this voice student I met here, a coloratura soprano, and she's great. Is she Filipina, you ask?

(laughing)

Well, I'll tell you: She's the one for me, and for me, that's all that really matters!

(beat)

Be happy, you all! Peace, out.

FADE OUT.

THE END

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“PLEASURE DOME”

Written by Xosé “X” Alzona

WGAw Registered

SCREENWRITER'S INTRODUCTION TO *PLEASURE DOME*

I wrote *Pleasure Dome* in a 36 hour-stretch— one-and-a-half days of outlining, typing, and rewriting, a feat I've never been able to duplicate since. See, I'd just found out that the Walt Disney Studios offered a competitive fellowship program whose mandate was to discover and mainstream screenwriters who hailed from backgrounds historically under-represented in Hollywood— in other words, minority screenwriters like me. Problem was, I found out about it only two nights before the application deadline. And to submit an application, you had to include a sample script, and none of the ones I had in my drawer seemed particularly suitable for Disney.

Coincidentally, that was also the time in my life when I was only dating strippers, models, and women with tattoos. From them I'd learned about this phenomenon where dancers perform close up private shows *complètement déshabillée*, separated from their audience of one by a glass barrier, thus circumventing the vice laws (I know, I know, it all sounds so dated in the era of the lap dance, but yes, Virginia, life these United States was once like that). I'd gotten to know many of these dancers, and boy, did they have some stories to tell! So now, faced with Disney's deadline, I thought, "Two nights? I can write a script about my dancers' stories in two nights."

To start off, I'd need a blueprint or template of some kind. For that I chose *Car Wash* (1976), a low-budget, lowbrow comedy, featuring an ensemble cast of diverse but simple character types, none of whom were explored too deeply, who relieve the tedium of their workday at a car wash with sophomoric pranks and hijinks. *Car Wash* had no sustained through-plot, simply braiding several strands of uncomplicated storylines together, thereby slowly conjuring up a pointillist Day in the Life of a Car Wash— but come its end, it still managed to deliver some real emotion. Adding to its positives, *Car Wash* actually had been a box-office hit, goosed no doubt by a Richard Pryor/Pointer Sisters cameo and a catchy urban music score (note to myself: Include lots n' lots of musical numbers in my script, and write in many colorful side characters to invite star cameo interest).

Car Wash shouldn't be too hard to clone, right? But, hmm, how would clean, wholesome, family-oriented Disney receive *A Day in the Life of a Nudie Bar*? Well, *Pretty Woman* (1990) had pretty much shown that Disney would accept a romantic comedy with a prostitute for a heroine, as long as she made money for them, so my nude dancers, who were absolutely in no way prostitutes, should pass Disney muster. And Disney would know better than anyone else (from experience? Grin...) how to package and distribute my nudie bar screenplay to replicate *Car Wash's* success. Sure looked like a good fit to me.

I started off at 7:00 p.m. by sketching an outline (still have it, all eleven handwritten lines of it), then sat down to write *Pleasure Dome*. I pounded that keyboard for 30 hours straight, then went to bed while my slow dot-matrix printer clacked out the pages in an unbroken ribbon of fanfold paper. Next morning (deadline day), I got up at 6 a.m. to proofread, and my heart sank: The script's cinematic high point, the kung-fu vs capoeira catfight, fell on page 45 or, using the standard rule of thumb, about 45 minutes into the film— way, way too early! I was confronting the same problem Coppola faced with the helicopter raid in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), but unlike Coppola, I had no time to call in Bob Towne to doctor my script (grin...)

So I sat down again and laboriously beat out each separate subplot from beginning to end on index cards, juggled them around, and through the magic of computer cut-and-paste, finally managed to move the catfight to page 97, close enough to where Syd Field says the second plot point should be. By then it was past noon, so I started the second printout and went off to do the paperwork required by Disney, which included having stuff notarized; then I registered *Pleasure Dome* with the Writers Guild of America West (the WGAw; with the revision still printing out, I had to register the first version as-is). Finishing up about 3:00 p.m., I drove home, picked up my printout, packed it with all the other requisites, and had everything lined up and ready at the post office at 4:00. A few minutes later, the clerk stamped them with the deadline date, and I went home to get some sleep.

I had to send *Pleasure Dome* out to Disney without benefit of workshop critique, but I did show it around in the weeks that followed. One reader suggested I begin or end it with a title card reading "Matthew 25:45." Another reader, one I respect, had this to say: "You know how

to put a story together well... but (your script) is weak on compelling characters and plot.” Just like *Car Wash*. And a third reader, a produced screenwriter, observed that: “It’s a professional job, but... it doesn’t have a strong enough motor, a driving force that keeps building the story all the way through to the end.” Did someone mention *Car Wash*? So, if modeling *Car Wash* was the aim, I’d say *Pleasure Dome* was a runaway success. But if a Disney fellowship was the goal, then it had failed. Disney wrote me back: “We sincerely regret...” No need to read further.

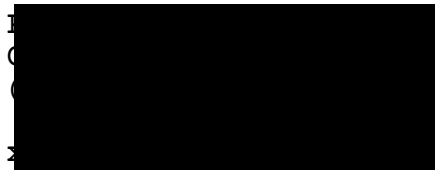
Rereading *Pleasure Dome* today, I think I’d make a few changes. I’d make the scatology more defiantly in-your-face to match my dancers’ attitudes, maybe add an overt lesbian subplot, perhaps twist how my heroine ends up with her knight in shining armor— does he turn out to be a frog? But back then, I was thinking along the lines of a “happy ending” à la *Pretty Woman*. Still, I say *Pleasure Dome* is a more-or-less accurate and empathetic portrayal of my real-life dancer friends— tough, funny, resilient women, all soft curves and stiff upper lips, all of whom I came to care for in one way or another.

In fact, one of them, a regular attraction at a North Hollywood establishment much like the script’s *Pleasure Dome*, wrote a poem about the experience that I wanted to include in my script, but by then she’d moved to parts unknown, and I had no way to get her permission. Yo, Moné, if you’re reading this, know that I kept your poem and may want to use it for something else, so text me that 411!

"PLEASURE DOME"

Written by

Xose "X" Alzona



WGAw Registered

PLEASURE DOME

FADE IN:

SCREAMING ROCK MUSIC blares over BLACK-- driving, sweaty, heart-pounding.

The BLACK is pushed aside-- it's the door to a CRAMPED BOOTH:

Facing us, a TALL WINDOW;

FLUORESCENT BULBS shine behind Plexiglas™ along its jambs, making it an opaque rectangle of light in the dark, enclosed booth.

A PUDGY MAN enters, half-reflected in the glass. He feeds a dollar bill into the machine next to the window.

The LIGHTS GO OUT, revealing, behind the now-transparent glass...

...a DANCE FLOOR, complete with pole and posing dais.

An 18-year-old brunette in heels and skimpy robe detaches from three other scantily clad women sitting on a bench and shashays up close, so we can see...

...heavy glam/death metal style makeup: Spiky hair, black nails and lipstick, raccoon eyes. She's very dramatic, very beautiful. She smiles at us.

ROBIN

Hi. I'm Robin.

The Pudgy Man pushes a bill through a slot above the window. She takes it and drops it at her feet.

ROBIN

(continuing)

Thank you.

And she begins to dance... sinuously, like a viper...

Her floor's elevated so her chest is level with his face, and his eyes bug as her silk robe peek-a-boos, draping and undraping over the delectable, "Jello" goodies underneath.

She undoes the robe... turns her back... shrugs it off-- WHAMMO!

A MAGNIFICENT FULL-COLOR TATTOO of the American Eagle ripples across her back as she continues to dance!

EXT. - JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STREET - MORNING

STUDENTS drift towards the school as Robin's ROCK SONG ENDS and a battered SUV drives up, stops.

FM 86

Oh-yes-oh-yes-oh-yes-oh-yes! Fry
your brains where it never rains
and glom your eyes to the
blinding skies of brain-blind FM
86!

LAURA, the SUV's mid-30s driver, in improvised business suit, plants a kiss on her bespectacled 14-year-old JEFF, who makes no move to get out.

FM 86

(continuing)

Another sticky day in the smelly
Valley, but who cares about the
heat? Who cares about the
drought? Who cares about the
recession when we can all sizzle
to Wizzle's new hit, "I Love You,
Medium Rare?"

Jeff turns the stereo up as Wizzle's new song BLASTS from it. Laura shuts it off.

LAURA

Jeff, birthday or not, you still
have to go to school.

INT. - BACK TO THE WINDOW IN THE BOOTH

JEMIMA, a stunning black woman, gets down to Wizzle at her window, her lithe body a study in grace and control.

Holding eye contact throughout a slow cartwheel, she grins as her skirt flares upside-down like an umbrella and her breasts fall out of her sailor suit. A G-string glitters.

INT. - BANK OFFICER'S DESK

Laura argues with a BANK OFFICER who keeps shaking his head over some papers on his desk.

Finally they stand and shake hands stiffly.

As she leaves, Laura's pleasant features acquire a worried, almost haggard look.

INT. - THE BOOTH WINDOW

Gyrating topless at her window is LUZIA, a petite Latina with flashing eyes, "pools of tar, black blood, and mother-of-pearl." Her claim to having the best-looking legs in the house is unchallenged. In spades.

EXT. - LAURA ON HER PHONE,

Listening HARD, crossing her fingers HARDER, aaaaand...

...she slumps. Hangs up dejectedly. Casts an accusatory look heavenward.

LAURA

Oh, you... Can I have just one
break, huh? Just one, okay?

She picks up felt pen and newspaper.

INSERT SHOT - NEWSPAPER HELP-WANTED ADS

Her pen crosses out an ad, just the last of 20 or 30 other ads that she's already crossed out.

She draws a circle around the next one: "CASHIER: APPLY IN PERSON."

INT. - THE BOOTH WINDOW

BRIDGET, a redhead strewn with freckles, is proving she can bump/grind and chew gum at the same time. All she wears is a nun's headdress and a black miniskirt.

Suddenly she tears the headdress off! Waves of hair all the colors of autumn cascade down shoulders of snow.

She turns her back and snaps her skirt off-- more freckles! Flattening her bottom against the window, she bends forward, but before we can tell if she's a real redhead...

INT. - THE PLEASURE DOME - THE CUSTOMER BOOTHS

An "adult entertainment center," or "gentleman's club," take your pick. Garish neon reflects off the black doors of a row of booths, just like the one we were just in.

PUDGY MAN (O.S.)

Hey!

The door to one booth flies open, and the Pudgy Man waddles out, heading straight for the cashier's station.

PUDGY MAN

Hey! The redhead's got hemorrhoids!

Customers look up from browsing the ADULT MERCHANDISE as he brushes past towards...

...VICTOR, 40's, pencil mustache, bow tie, suspenders, sleeve garters. He eyes the Pudgy Man as he approaches.

PUDGY MAN

(continuing)

I ain't paying to look at no hemorrhoids! I want my money back!

A wiry security guard quietly closes, hair a bit too shaggy for the uniform. This is RICK, laugh lines with a nightstick. He sizes up the Pudgy Man as Victor smiles his best smile.

VICTOR

Sorry to hear about that, sir. Of course. How much was it?

PUDGY MAN

A dollar plus a dollar tip-- no, two-- five dollars plus 'nother five tip...

Victor DINGS the register open, extracts two bills and hands them to the man.

VICTOR

Try our other dancers, sir, most beautiful in California.

PUDGY MAN

Hemorrhoids! Shee!

Rick smiles after the Pudgy Man but Victor looks serious.

VICTOR

Ten bucks, no way! Shee!

He picks up the house phone and dials. MUTED RINGING somewhere.

INT. - THE DANCE FLOOR,

a circular stage fenced from the audience peeping through windows arrayed along the curved wall. Bench and phone upstage. Video cameras watch from above.

Robin, Luzia, and Bridget dance before each of three dark windows (fluorescent lights off), while Jemima sits on the bench arranging her costume.

Just above her, the phone RINGS again.

Beat. RING-G-G...

LUZIA
Jemima! Phone!

Jemima makes no move to pick up the phone. RING-G-G...

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Victor cradles the phone and turns to Rick.

VICTOR
Who's today's redhead?

Rick consults a lighted display board with "Robin," "Luzia," "Jemima," and "Bridget" handwritten in day-glo markers.

RICK
Bridget.

THE DANCE FLOOR

Finally the lights in Robin's window flicker on. She picks her tips up off the floor and strides to the phone, looking daggers at Jemima.

ROBIN
(into phone)
What is it?

THE CASHIER'S STATION

VICTOR
(into phone)
Bridget? Oh, hi, Robin. Tell
Bridget I want to see her in the
office ASAP.

EXT. - URBAN STREET - ITALIAN FOOD STAND - MORNING

This is a pizza/sub take-out place run by GINO and ANGELA, a couple in their late 20s. No tables, no seats, just a long stand-up counter fronting the street.

FM 86

...reports of a ninja out to save
the souls of any and all
purveyors of purple porn! So if
you run into a masked man in a
black raincoat...

Angela hands coffee to a knockdown drop-dead warrior princess in gym clothes. This is ERIKA, breaker of hearts since age 10.

ANGELA

You a dancer? Yeah? Yeah? See,
I could tell at once you was a
dancer. Hey, Gino, she's a
dancer! I knew from just looking
at you from your make-up you was
a dancer. See, I'm a dancer too,
I studied ballet since I was six.
Yeah. Where d'you dance?

ERIKA

Gonna try next door.

ANGELA

Next door? The Pleasure Dome?
You a nude dancer? Gino, you
hear that? She's a nude dancer!
That's great! I'd like to try
that some day, but... Hey, Gino,
think I can be a nude dancer?

GINO

You try, you go back to purdah.

ANGELA

Purdah, that means veil, my
husband just threatened me. See,
we're Italian, but we're Muslim.
You heard of Black Muslims?
Well, we're Wop Muslims. We
don't eat pork, nothing here is
pork, our pork sausage is all
beef, our pepperoni...

Erika pretends to listen, but her mind is next door at...

THE PLEASURE DOME - FRONT ENTRANCE

Laura has just fed the parking meter and is studying the neon announcing "THE PLEASURE DOME: YOUR PLEASURE IS OUR PLEASURE TOO."

Smaller letters: "Adult Entertainment at Its Finest."

FM 86

...and the Dow Jones is down.
Employment is down. Housing is
down. The President's pants are
down...

Laura throws fingers-crossed up heavenward and heads with determination towards the door.

As she touches the door handle, however, it's flung open and the Pudgy Man steams out, still GRUMBLING.

FM 86

The only thing that's up is the
up-angle of my dangle so let's
all get down to this!
WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

A lunatic cacophony of HORNS, BELLS and WHISTLES mix with the RELENTLESS POUNDING of PUNK ROCK as Laura watches the man waddle off. Then she reaches for the door again...

...and grasps warm flesh! She jerks her hand away.

Erika, hand on door handle, smiles at her winningly.

ERIKA

(re: Laura's
classifieds)
Here for the job?

Laura nods uncertainly, checking out the hottie before her.

ERIKA

(continuing)
Me too.

Laura's heart sinks. She throws an accusatory glance heavenward as she follows Erika inside. This is gonna be tough!

INT. - CASHIER'S STATION

Laura, Erika, and Bridget all reach Victor at the same time. Rick, leaning on the counter, eats Erika up with his eyes.

ERIKA

Who do we see about the ad in the paper?

VICTOR

Me. Me? God, yes, ME!

He's clearly dazzled by Erika too.

LAURA

(to heaven)

A female boss too much to ask?

Rick overhears this and turns his attention to Laura. Victor addresses Laura but feasts his eyes on Erika.

VICTOR

You here about the ad too?

Laura nods glumly. Bridget, chewing gum, turns to leave.

VICTOR

(continuing)

Bridget, I guess we can do this all at the same time.

He picks up the phone again and dials.

THE DANCE FLOOR

All the window lights are on (no customers). Robin and Luzia chat and smoke off to one side.

The phone RINGS next to Jemima. Again she makes no move to answer.

SECOND RING. Robin and Luzia stop chatting and glare at Jemima. Third RING.

LUZIA

Jemima!

Jemima ignores them.

Robin strides angrily to the phone and picks it up. Jemima looks up at her, eyes expressionless.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

VICTOR

Robin? Gotta audition some girls here. Can you cover for me a minute? Thanks.

He hangs up and rises.

VICTOR

(continuing)

Names?

Laura extends her hand.

LAURA

Laura Granger.

A beat, then Victor hesitatingly takes her hand, and they shake. He quickly disengages and wipes his hand on his shirt.

Laura notices the others' smiles.

VICTOR

Victor.

ERIKA

Already got an Erika?

VICTOR

Erika's fine. Victor. Ooh, good skin.

Laura watches gloomily as Victor eats Erika up with his eyes. Erika smiles back with the whitest, evenest teeth you ever saw.

VICTOR

(continuing)

Are you 18 or over?

Erika nods, beaming.

VICTOR

(continuing; to Laura)

Are you-- never mind.

(looking around)

Where's Robin?

As Laura smoothes her blazer worriedly, a somber, 60-ish Filipino in baseball cap and janitor's apron shuffles by, emptying ashtrays and wiping them up.

His surly manner makes Laura step back as he passes.

RICK
 Oh, I got one, I got one.
 (to the janitor)
 Hey, Prank! Prank!

PRANK looks up with sullen eyes.

RICK
 (continuing)
 What's a pair of pliers?

Realizing the joke is really meant for the group, Prank ignores him and returns to his ashtrays.

RICK
 (continuing)
 Two Filipino pilots!

It goes over Laura's head, but everyone else laughs, including Robin, who is just joining them. Prank shambles on to the next ashtray.

PRANK
 (Filipino accent)
 Puck you.

That's how he says it, with a "P." The laughter is renewed. Done with the ashtrays, Prank retraces, throwing Laura a sour look as he passes. She steps back again.

VICTOR
 (to Robin)
 All yours.
 (to the rest)
 Ladies, this way.

He steps off the cashier's platform and leads them towards the back office.

As she trails after the group, Laura gapes at the display of condoms, vibrators, dildoes, and sex paraphernalia on display.

She stops, thinks.

Turns and heads for the door. Puts her hand on the handle.

Stops. Closes her eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. - LAURA'S FRONT YARD - WINTER - DUSK (BLACK AND WHITE)

SILENT MOVIE ORGAN MUSIC PLAYS as Laura and Jeff huddle in rags, barefoot in the blowing snow as the BANK OFFICER we saw earlier, in stovepipe hat and frock coat, twirls his mustache.

Laura desperately pleads with him, to no avail. Dramatically, he points, ejecting them into the relentless howling wind.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - THE PLEASURE DOME

Laura turns back and half-runs after the group.

LAURA
(apologetically to
heaven)
Temporary. 'Til I get a real
job.

As she disappears around a corner, a black-hooded figure pops out from the shadows of an ornamental plant. Black mask, black leggings, black raincoat, this is the dreaded NINJA FLASHER!

VICTOR'S OFFICE

Desks, lockers, a floor safe, and another bank of closed circuit TV monitors. The MUSIC isn't as loud in here.

Laura squeezes in past the door Rick holds open. Then Rick moves to follow...

...but Victor stops him.

RICK
(re: Erika)
Aw geez, Victor! Just this once!

VICTOR
You'll see all you want to see
after she's hired.

Rick snaps his fingers in disappointment as Victor shuts him out.

RICK
Damn! Almost!

LAURA has overheard Victor.

LAURA
 (mouthing silently)
After she's hired????

Laura scowls at heaven, then steels herself to go down fighting.

LAURA
 (continuing; to herself)
 Get the job or lose the house,
 girl. That's the stakes.

Victor pulls forms from a file drawer and hands them to Laura and Erika.

VICTOR
 Got a pen? Start with this while
 I finish up here.

He turns to Bridget who chews gum, bored. Laura looks up, wondering what it's all about.

VICTOR
 (continuing)
 Gotta check out a complaint,
 Bridget.

BRIDGET
 Look, I'd just taken a crap,
 okay? It goes away after a few
 minutes.

VICTOR
 Bridget, please.

Bridget turns her back angrily on Victor and drops her G-string. No one really wants to see this, so we CUT QUICKLY to...

LAURA, chewing air in shock!

VICTOR shuts his eyes and grimaces.

VICTOR
 God, you should see a doctor!

BRIDGET straightens up, worried.

BRIDGET
 It's temporary, okay?

VICTOR
It's business, Bridget.

Bridget starts to rub Victor's arm.

BRIDGET
Look, I'll try some makeup--

Victor withdraws.

VICTOR
Look, I'll give you a good
recommendation at the Lovin'
Eyeful--

BRIDGET
That lovin' hell hole? Thanks a
lot, asshole!

She wads her gum against his face and exits, SLAMMING the door.

Laura and Erika watch Victor peel the gum off and trash it

VICTOR
So temperamental, these artistes.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Robin's on the phone and does not notice the black raincoat creeping stealthily past BROWSING CUSTOMERS towards her...

...until he's right in front of her! She reacts just as Rick arrives.

RICK
You!

He leaps, but the Ninja Flasher steps away agilely, gripping his raincoat, preparing to flash.

ROBIN
Shit.

Calmly, she shields her eyes with her hand in anticipation.

NINJA FLASHER
(singing; muffled)
Heh-heh-heh-HEH-heh!/
Heh-heh-heh-HEH-heh!

And he opens his raincoat, WASHING THE SCREEN OUT COMPLETELY with a BRILLIANT FLASH OF WHITE LIGHT!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

ROBIN AND RICK

She is cradling him on the store floor. He is still half-blind, seeing spots before his eyes.

RICK
He surprised me. I wasn't ready.

ROBIN
Of course.

She helps Rick stagger up.

RICK
But I'll get him next time.

ROBIN
Can you see?

Rick nods and disengages from Robin's arms.

RICK
Yeah. Don't tell Victor, okay?
This is my fight.

He turns to leave and BONK! walks right into the wall.

VICTOR'S OFFICE

Victor collects the forms from Erika and Laura.

VICTOR
Well, who wants to go first?
(beat; to Laura)
Lana?

LAURA
Ahem, it's Laura, Laura Granger.

VICTOR
All right, Laura, let's see what you got.

He motions to the open area before his desk and waits.

LAURA

Sorry?

VICTOR

Show me what you got.

He motions again. Laura is lost. Erika notes this.

ERIKA

I'll go first, if you like.

Laura can't let the competition show her up.

LAURA

No, I'll go.

She walks tentatively to the open area and faces Victor. They wait.

VICTOR

You like this music? This music okay?

FM 86 is playing a FUNKY GROOVE.

LAURA

I'm-- I'm sorry, but I've been out of the work force so long, it's all so new-- you'll have to give me some guidance--

She gestures helplessly. Victor chews his mustache for a beat, then riffles through her application.

VICTOR

Any experience in this line of work?

LAURA

I-- I worked three years at a Baskin-Robbins in Joplin, Missouri.

Victor and Erika look stunned.

VICTOR

Baskin-Robbins.

ERIKA

The ice cream place? With kids and all?

LAURA

Why, yes-- and after I got married I organized a lot of church fundraisers--

They all stare at Laura with unabashed awe.

LAURA

(continuing)

I-- I know it's not much, but they liked me a lot, I mean, they praised the way I did it-- worked-- and I--

She catches herself, realizing she's not doing very well.

LAURA

(continuing)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Just give me a minute...

VICTOR

Just relax.

LAURA

Maybe if you asked questions--

Victor studies her intently.

VICTOR

Why don't you take off your clothes? You can put them on that chair there.

Palpable shock.

LAURA

Sir?

VICTOR

You know, clothes? Take off your clothes.

Wave after wave of emotion passes over Laura's face. Then she looks at Erika, who looks back worried about her.

VICTOR

(continuing)

Look, you want the job or not?

Cold reality. So the boss is a prick. Well, he's not the first, won't be the last.

Laura steels herself, then pulls her blazer off.

Sets that on the chair.

Unbuttons her blouse. Lays that over her blazer. Reaches to unhook her bra.

Her hands hesitate, trembling.

FLASH INSERT: the Bank Officer throwing Laura and Jeff into the howling wind of the Siberian winter.

Her hands firm up, but before they can do the deed...

VICTOR

Come on, I'm a busy man. Let's see the boobies, the vajayjay--

Her hands freeze. She's close to tears.

LAURA

Sir, are-- are you the company doctor?

Erika jumps up and starts stripping to the music.

ERIKA

I'll go first.

The MUSIC SWELLS, and Erika launches into what would be a SHOW-STOPPING DANCE NUMBER combining the best of Broadway and burlesque-- IF we could see all of it.

What we do see is her amazing start, but since we want an "R" rating, all we catch next are glimpses, CLOSE UPS of body parts.

We imagine her routine from Victor's and Laura's reactions.

FOR EXAMPLE:

ERIKA whips her hair around, bends down out of frame, then surfaces with her bra dangling from her teeth. She holds the pose, snarling...

LAURA GASPS!

ERIKA'S FEET do three quick pirouettes, then her shorts drop to her ankles...

VICTOR'S JAW drops with them!

ERIKA'S HANDS doing impossibly focused karate chops...

LAURA FEELS THEM

and protectively covers her throat with both hands!

ERIKA'S BREASTS

jiggle simultaneously in opposite directions...

VICTOR'S EYES

blink alternately in disbelief!

And now, as Erika builds to a climax at SONG END, we finally see ALL OF HER:

She twirls and freezes into a bodybuilder's pose, muscles ripped, lats flared, abs rippling like a flag in the wind!

Poised there glistening, completely naked, with absolutely no tan lines, she is AN AMAZON GODDESS descended among us.

She holds the pose as they gasp to catch their breath.

Victor clears his throat and mops sweat from his brow.

VICTOR

(strangled)

Ahrrm... Can you start today?

Erika smiles and starts pulling her clothes on. Laura can't hold back anymore. She clenches her fists and stomps her foot.

LAURA

It's so degrading, so obscene!

Victor and Erika turn, surprised.

LAURA

(continuing)

What do her looks have to do with a cashier's work? It's so-- so unclean!

Erika sniffs her armpit suspiciously, then double-takes.

ERIKA

Cashier? Your ad said nude
dancers, didn't it?

VICTOR

Two ads, cashiers and dancers.
You mean you thought--
(beat)
You're not--
(stifling laughter)
Baskin-Robbins!

He breaks out in a loud belly laugh, slaps his thigh,
shaking all over!

He LAUGHS AND LAUGHS while Laura and Erika watch,
exchanging glances.

Suddenly he stops and fixes Laura with a look.

VICTOR

(mock serious)
Take off your clothes anyway.

And then he's GUFFAWING again, wiping tears from his eyes.

It's hard to tell who's turning redder, Victor or Laura.

FADE TO:

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Victor and Laura approach Robin and Rick at the cash
register.

VICTOR

(to Laura)
Should've guessed. A bit too old
and mousy to be a dancer.

He BREAKS UP at his own joke. Laura's unsure how to take
this.

ROBIN

'Bout time. Gotta go make some
bucks.

VICTOR

Not yet. This is our new cashier
Lena. Start her slow. She ain't
too bright.

He SLAPS Laura's unsuspecting butt and has another fit of GIGGLING.

RICK
Where's the hottie?

VICTOR
Erika? She's out on the floor--
there! She's dancing right now!

Everyone but Laura leans down to peer at the CLOSED-CIRCUIT TV MONITORS under the cashier counter, and as the MUSIC SWELLS, their expressions change:

Eyes bulge... jaws drop... necks crane... veins pound...

...then a collective shudder runs through them like a wave of electricity and shakes them all back to reality!

LAURA

watches them, somewhat repelled.

THE GROUP

comes back to earth with a deep breath.

VICTOR
Great, huh?

ROBIN
Quite a dancer.

VICTOR
That too.

RICK
Awesome.

But he has made this last comment about Laura, who's standing stiffly, arms crossed, trying to ride out her distaste.

VICTOR
Well, Leigh's in your hands. I gotta run over to the other store, but I'll be back to empty the coin machines.

ROBIN
You gotta make it up to me.

She turns to Laura as Victor and Rick leave.

ROBIN
 (continuing)
 Hi, I'm Robin. Ever worked a
 computerized register before?

Laura shakes her head. Robin starts pointing objects out
 to Laura.

ROBIN
 (continuing)
 Your drawer. Screen. Keyboard.
 Printer.

LAURA
 How can she expose herself like
 that to perfect strangers? It's--
 - it's--

ROBIN
 --a job just like this. Your
 scanner, everything here's bar-
 coded, like at the head shop.

LAURA
 (pointedly)
 Or the library.

Bridget joins them, scowling and chewing gum.

ROBIN
 (to Bridget)
 Take the money and run, dude.

Bridget shakes her head. She pulls a thick wad of small
 bills from her jacket.

ROBIN
 (continuing)
 You sure? It's cool.

Bridget nods, peels some bills off and hands them to her.

ROBIN
 (continuing; to Laura)
 Each dancer tips the janitors
 five bucks a shift, minimum.
 Those bills go in here.

She takes Bridget's bills and puts them in an envelope
 marked "Janitors."

Bridget pulls another twenty from her wad and hands it to Robin.

ROBIN

(continuing; to Laura)
Each dancer pays the house twenty
bucks a shift--

LAURA

They pay the house? Don't they
get a salary?

Robin tears a Post-It note from a pad and picks up a pen.

ROBIN

Nope, just tips. Write her name
down...

(writes "Bridget")

...clip it to the money like
this...

(uses paper clip)

...and that goes in here.

She puts the money in another envelope marked "Rent."

Bridget holds the rest of the money out to Robin.

BRIDGET

Cash me out.

Robin takes Bridget's loot and hands the sheaf to Laura.

ROBIN

Okay, when they leave, you buy
their tips, which you can use to
make change for the customers,
see?

BRIDGET

Benjamins, please.

Laura looks at Robin.

ROBIN

She wants hundred-dollar bills.
They'd be back in the locker or
under the drawer if you have
them.

Robin DINGS the register open and lifts the inner drawer
out, showing Laura the \$100 and \$50 bills among checks and
credit card slips underneath.

LAURA

Why, how-- how much do you have?

BRIDGET

Three hundred ten.

Surprised at the amount, Laura looks at Robin, but Robin has turned to Bridget.

ROBIN

Gonna work the Eyefull?

BRIDGET

Think I'm ready for the glue factory?

They look at each other. Then Robin embraces Bridget.

ROBIN

You'll be fine, girl. Got my cell?

Bridget nods, suddenly tearful.

ROBIN

(continuing)

I'll call if something comes up.
I work a lot of bachelor parties.

Bridget nods. Laura watches as they embrace again.

One of the customers, a HISPANIC MAN, takes a box from a display shelf and walks up to Robin, speaking rapidly, urgently.

HISPANIC MAN

Excuse me--lescusado, dondesta?

Robin picks up the house phone, looks back at Laura...

...and sees her backing away from the man.

LAURA

Sir?

ROBIN

Have you cashed her out yet?

Confused, Laura snatches Bridget's tips from the stand and away from the man and forces a smile at him.

LAURA

Be right with you, sir.

She turns back to Robin at the register, which is still open, money exposed.

ROBIN

Rule number one: Never leave the money lying around. Keep the register shut and locked. Open it only when you need to.

Laura pulls out three \$100's and a \$10 bill, shuts and locks the register, and hands the money to Bridget.

BRIDGET

Where's Rick?

RICK

turns up right behind her, smiling. Bridget smiles back, pats his crotch twice, and takes his arm to go.

The Hispanic Man quickly intercepts, talking to Rick in Spanish, but Rick steers Bridget away from him without breaking stride.

RICK

(indicating Laura)
She'll help you, sir.

AT THE CASHIER'S STATION,

Robin is showing a distracted Laura the speed dial buttons on the house phone.

ROBIN

I called Rick for Bridget.
Always call security to walk the dancers out to their cars.

LAURA

Three hundred ten... they make that much a shift?

ROBIN

More. Tax free. All except me today. I'm stuck here instead of in there.

Laura WHISTLES, watching Prank wipe Bridget's handwritten name off the display board with Windex and paper towels.

She comes back to earth as the Hispanic Man RAPS ON THE COUNTER.

HISPANIC MAN
(urgently)
Perdón, peroqui ayscusao?

Laura opens her mouth to reply but Robin interrupts again.

ROBIN
Wait a minute. Now you're three
hundred ten bucks short.

Laura turns back to Robin uncomprehendingly.

ROBIN
(continuing)
You just gave Bridget three
hundred ten out of your register,
so now your register's three
hundred ten short.

Catching on, Laura takes the wad of bills she'd put down and riffles them.

The singles are sorted from the fives and the occasional two-dollar bill. She starts to count.

Prank shambles up to Laura.

PRANK
Is Bridget pyred?

LAURA
Wha-- "pyred ???"

Intimidated, Bridget's wad slips from her fingers d. \$310 IN SMALL BILLS scatter at her feet. She quickly drops on all fours and starts picking up.

ROBIN
Ffired, Prank. Yes, she's gone.

PRANK
Did see lib de janitor's tip?

ROBIN
Yes, Prank, she left your tip.

Prank goes and unlocks the LARGE DISPLAY CASE where photos of the dancers strutting their best assets are pasted up over their stage names. He takes down Bridget's picture.

HISPANIC MAN
 (hopefully, to Robin)
 Excuse me. Speak Spanish?

ROBIN
 No.
 (to Laura)
 You don't have to count it. I
 know Bridget.

LAURA
 ... fifty, sixty... trust a nude
dancer? Hah! ...sixty-five,
 sixty-six...

Laura catches herself and stops. Puts the bills down.
 Turns to Robin.

LAURA
 (continuing)
 I didn't mean it that way.

Robin is studying her nails.

ROBIN
 It's okay, we're used to it. But
 then you should've counted it
 before you cashed her out.

Prank comes up and drops Bridget's head shot on Laura's
 stand. Laura's hip BANGS the open register painfully as
 she gives him lots of gangway.

The Hispanic Man RAPS on the counter again and starts
 speaking rapidly, bouncing on his feet impatiently.

ROBIN
 What is it, motherfucker?

Aghast, Laura stops rubbing her hip.

LAURA
 Robin! He's a valued customer!

ROBIN
 He's a valued motherfucker is
 what he is. What is it, a-hole?

LAURA
 Let me handle this. I took
 Spanish in school. All right.
 Now. Baskin-Robbins.

Deep breath. Turns and smiles at the Hispanic Man.

The latter speaks to her super-fast, occasionally pointing at his crotch.

RICK joins them, observes, shares a secret smile with Robin. It's clear Laura doesn't understand a thing.

ROBIN

He wants you to suck his dick.

Laura considers this shocking possibility... then decides no, they're ribbing her.

LAURA

No, it's that--

She points at the package under the man's arm.

LAURA

(continuing)

Did-- do you want to buy that?
Kee-ay-rez oosted-- uh, uh, buy
that?

HISPANIC MAN

Comprarlo? Nono, quesiteng
unescusao, unescusao.

LAURA

Coe-mow?

HISPANIC MAN

Lescusao! El ex-cu-sa-do!

LAURA

Ah, the excused. The excused???

HISPANIC MAN

Nono, el retrete! Retrete!

LAURA

Ruh-tray-tuh... the retreat! No,
wait, the picture! The picture!

The man is about to cry. Robin SIGHS, exchanges looks with Rick and picks up the phone.

HISPANIC MAN

Los servicios! El bandombre!

LAURA

The service? The, uh...

ROBIN
 (into phone)
 Luzia? Can you help a poor
 motherfucker out here?
 (to the Hispanic Man)
 Here.

She hands him the phone. A rapid exchange follows, and he hands it back to Robin.

LAURA
 The band of shoulders? The--

ROBIN
 He wants the bathroom.

The man claps his hands and starts bouncing again.

HISPANIC MAN
Basroom! Basroom!

LAURA
 Well, why didn't he say so?

RICK motions to the man, who follows him with that funny walk, package under arm.

Robin and Laura stare coolly at each other.

LAURA
 What'd you expect, I flunked
 Spanish. Twice. I thought
 conjugation had something to do
 with marriage.

They share small smiles, then Laura suddenly remembers:
 She begins counting Bridget's money all over again.

CUT TO:

INT. - PLEASURE DOME REAR ENTRANCE

Luzia is heading for the bathroom just as Rick points it out to the Hispanic man...

...who beats her to it, hurrying inside and locking the door.

RICK
 Luzia! How's my favorite
 brunette?

LUZIA
 (posing)
 Still the best. What else is
 new?

RICK
 New cashier. Better lookin'n the
 last guy.

LUZIA
 Oh oh, Cupid's arrow...

She mimes archery as she leaves for the cashier.

A MUFFLED THUMPING begins in the bathroom, regular as
 heartbeat. Rick BANGS on the door.

RICK
 Hey! Quit that in there!

The THUMPING continues. Rick BANGS again, but he's
 interrupted by...

LUZIA'S FRIGHTENED SCREAM!

LUZIA
 Rick! Rick!

As he turns, a figure all in black LEAPS PAST HIM,
 KNOCKING HIM DOWN!

The figure pauses at the Dome's back door-- it's the
 dreaded Ninja Flasher again!

He looks at Rick over the mask half-covering his face.

NINJA FLASHER
 (singing, muffled)
 Heh-heh-heh-HEH-heh!
 Heh-heh-heh-HEH-heh!!

RICK
 (singing)
 "It's the Woody Woodpecker song."
 (spoken)
 I know, I know... ohh...

NINJA FLASHER
 Heheheheheheheheheheh...

This exchange takes place as the Ninja Flasher opens his
 raincoat, again WHITING OUT THE SCREEN COMPLETELY!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. - THE STAFF LOCKER ROOM

A jumble of cardboard boxes, broken video equipment and janitorial supplies on steel shelving.

Laura and Luzia are propping Rick up on a folding chair.

LUZIA
Any broken bones?

RICK
I'm all right-- ohh...

He waves them off unsteadily, but they help him up.

LAURA
We should call the police.

RICK
No! No police! This is my job.
I'll take care of this.

They watch as he staggers to his locker and spins the combination.

RICK
(continuing)
That asshole has screwed with me
for the last time.

He reaches in and drags out a HUMDINGER OF A .44 MAGNUM, its barrel longer than evil!

The girls step back in unison as he turns and holds it up.

RICK
(continuing)
Ninja Flasher, meet the Hell
Express!

They step back another step. Then Laura turns to leave.

LAURA
I'm calling the police on him.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Robin is dealing with customers when Laura arrives and picks up the house phone, dials.

FAINTLY we hear BEEP BEEP BEEP. Laura presses the hook, dials again. Same BEEP BEEP BEEP. Tries again.

ROBIN

What's up?

LAURA

Rick's getting ready to shoot some flasher so I'm calling the police.

ROBIN

What, that pest again?

Robin quickly takes the phone from Laura and hangs up.

ROBIN

(continuing)

City hall's just dying for an excuse to shut us down and that weirdo just might fit the bill.

A WELL-DRESSED YOUNG COUPLE walks up, and the WOMAN hands Robin a dildo. Robin hands it to Laura.

ROBIN

(continuing)

Here, ring this up.

Laura picks it up with exaggerated daintiness and throws the female customer a withering look.

LAURA

Of course. One... uh, ah, one thingy.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - THE STORE (THE DOME'S MERCHANDISE DISPLAY AREA)

FM 86 blasts from the speakers and the PLACE IS STARTING TO FILL.

CUSTOMERS browse the magazine racks, select videos to buy or rent, look over the displays of whips, chains, leather, lingerie.

MONTAGE - A TYPICAL VIDEO BOOTH

A TIPSY man enters and sits before a dark TV screen. QUARTERS clink into a machine. The MOANING SOUNDTRACK of an X-rated film starts as the red "occupied" light switches on over his booth.

PULL BACK: the red lights on ALL the video booths glow as an orgy of soundtrack MOANS AND GROANS assails our ears.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Robin shows Laura how to ring up various transactions as men come up to buy, rent, and exchange goods or break large bills. A line has formed, and it's a long one.

CUSTOMER #1 holds up a bottle.

CUSTOMER #1
What's this?

Laura doesn't know, looks at Robin.

ROBIN
Lubricating jelly.

The customer looks at the label again.

CUSTOMER #1
Why does it say "safe sex?"

ROBIN
'Cause you do it by yourself.

MONTAGE - THE DANCE FLOOR

The girls are really making bucks, smiling and dancing their hearts out as tips flutter down from the window slots.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Laura is getting confused by the crush of people she has to serve. CUSTOMER #2 holds up the bottle of lubricating jelly.

CUSTOMER #2
What's this, Miss?

ROBIN
(to Laura)
Remember?

LAURA
Of course. It's lubricant, sir.

CUSTOMER #2
Why does it say "safe sex?"

LAURA

Because you buy it yourself.

The man goes "Huh?" Robin rolls her eyes, but Laura learns fast.

LAURA AND ROBIN TOGETHER

Because-you-do-it-by-your-self.

ISHIHARA, Asian, late 30's, natty business suit, hands Laura a \$100 bill. Robin recognizes him at once.

ROBIN

Mr. Ishihara! How nice to see you again! I'll tell Luzia you're here.

(to Laura)

Give him five twenties.

Then she looks down at the monitors, picks up the phone and dials.

ROBIN

(continuing; into phone)

Tell Luzia Mr. Ishihara's here.

Ishihara steps toward Robin so Laura can serve the man behind him.

ROBIN

(continuing; to Ishihara)

She'll be right out. And how are you today?

ISHIHARA

(small bow)

Good, good. When Luzia dance again?

Robin consults a calendar next to her.

ROBIN

You lucky dog. Tomorrow, same shift.

ISHIHARA

Yeah? Arf arf OWOOooooooooo!

LAUGHTER from everyone except Laura, who goes OUCH! Surprised by his howl, she's nicked her finger sliding the credit card imprinter on a card.

Luzia and Erika approach, trailing squads of DROOLING MALES in their wake. Rick accompanies them protectively.

LUZIA

Ishihara-san! Irrashae! O-genki
desu ka?

Ishihara feasts his eyes on her as she takes his hand. Robin hands Luzia a key, who then leads Ishihara off towards the back.

Laura watches agog.

LAURA

But-- that key-- where--

Rick joins them at the counter before Robin can answer.

RICK

Lucy's really struck it.

ERIKA

So that's Ishihara. Not bad.

RICK

He works nearby, and whenever Luzia dances, he comes in twice.

ROBIN

Tries to be the last to see her before she leaves.

ERIKA

Does he really tip her a hundred each time?

RICK

Twice. Two hundred a shift.

Laura reacts to this. Then she turns away tightlipped.

LAURA

(to heaven)
God, I could sure use that money.

ROBIN

That's nothing. He wants to marry her, asked her many times.

ERIKA

No way!

ROBIN

Swear, dude! He's offered me bucks to convince her to accept.

RICK

Ain't love grand! Maybe two grand!

Laura spins around to face them.

LAURA

That makes-- what they're doing now all right?

No one's expected this.

LAURA

(continuing)

I'm not stupid. That key-- I know what they're doing!

ROBIN

Calm down, dude. This isn't a brothel. All he does is look at her neck.

Erika glances off towards the back.

ERIKA

And she's no spring chicken.

RICK

Luzia? "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety."

Laura looks at Rick with surprise.

ERIKA

(frightened)

AIDS? She's got AIDS???

RICK

Wha--? No no, I was quoting--

LAURA

"She makes hungry where most she satisfies."

Laura and Rick lock eyes.

ERIKA

Oh. Whew! I shook her hand.
 "AIDS can't weather her." Oh, I
 just love Bob Dylan, don't you?

From the back, ISHIHARA'S WAR CRY reverberates.

ISHIHARA (O.S.)

Arf arf OWOOOOOoooooooooooo....

LAURA

My God, what are they doing?
 What was that key you gave them?

ROBIN

That's right, you don't know
 about private booths yet.

RICK

Why don't I give her the nickel
 tour?

Robin takes another key from under the register and hands
 it to Rick.

He guides Laura towards the back, but clearly delays,
 prolonging their walk together.

LAURA

Wasn't expecting Shakespeare in a
 place like this. Actor?

RICK

Standup. Almost got a part in
Last Standup Standing. Actress?

LAURA

Writer. What's back here?

RICK

Private booths. Married?

LAURA

Divorced. What's a private
 booth?

RICK

A special one-on-one. Kids?

LAURA

One son. Why's it so dark here?

RICK
Helps sustain the fantasy. Son
Chris? Kyle? Archibald?

LAURA
Jeff. What fantasy?

RICK
You'll see. Boyfriend?

LAURA
Hah! That'd be a fantasy! You
did say "fantasy?"

RICK
Indeed did I. But "too old and
mousy" isn't one.

Laura shoots him a look.

RICK
(continuing)
What Victor said, remember?

LAURA
What did you mean fantasy--
whoops!

She stumbles in the dark, bumping against him. He catches
and steadies her, holds her.

RICK
This fantasy. Nice.

LAURA
(pulling away)
Where are we?

RICK
The private booths.

ANGLE DOWN A CORRIDOR OF DOORS,

lit by candy neon spelling out "FANTASYLAND" and "TALK
BOOTHES."

SOLITARY MEN loiter around nervously, almost like
expectant fathers.

The doors come in pairs: A solid, numbered door, paired
with another door featuring an inset five-foot glass
window.

Rick inserts the key into the nearest glass door's lock and pulls it open.

RICK
Say you're the dancer. I like
your perfume. You go in here.

LAURA PEEKS IN

to find a tastefully decorated enclosure: Wicker chair, print fabric cushions, large painting on wall, pattern rug, plants and flowers, soft lighting, everything quite cozy and pleasant.

SHE ENTERS,

sits on the chair, folds her hands and looks at Rick.

LAURA
Say I'm the dancer.

RICK
Right. I'm the customer. I go
next door. Lock this door and
pick up the white phone, okay?
You look hot.

Laura notes two telephones on the wall beside her, one black, one white. She picks up the white one.

LAURA
I'm hot. Ten-four.

RICK CLOSES HER DOOR.

then enters the paired booth next door, the one with the number. He pulls the door shut after him.

It's bare, nothing but a bar stool and wastebasket on a concrete floor, a paper towel dispenser, a white phone...

...and a curtained glass window on the wall between the two booths.

Rick sits on the stool and picks up the phone.

The following dialogue is all by phone. INTERCUT.

RICK
Laura, do you copy?

LAURA

Loud and clear. You next door?

RICK

That's where. Okay, now I feed the machine some money...

(fumbling in his pocket)

Wanna go out tonight?

LAURA

Hah! How much will this cost "the customer?"

RICK

Five bucks for three minutes. I know this rad Moroccan place. Great couscous.

LAURA

Moroccan, whoo! Five bucks? I'll do my best to be worth it.

Rick slides a five into the machine and VOILA! The curtain in the window between them rises. Now they can see each other.

RICK

"But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Laura is the sun!"

Laura smiles, pleased in spite of herself.

LAURA

So what happens now?

RICK

First, always draw the blinds.

He indicates the entrance door to her booth. She turns to look and drops the phone!

THREE OR FOUR MEN leer at her through her glass door, trying to see up, down, and through her suit!

She quickly lowers her blinds and angles the slats for maximum privacy.

More secure, she picks up the phone again.

RICK

Nice er... stockings. So, dinner?

She tugs at her skirt and crosses her legs, but she's flattered.

LAURA

My son'll be waiting. Now what?

RICK

Now you please me. Sing, tell jokes, dazzle by flashing your... sparkling wit. Jack, right? How old?

LAURA

Jeff. Dazzle, as in geisha?

RICK

More like as in magazine centerfold. So, Jeff's how old?

LAURA

Fourteen. Dazzle as in Playboy bunny?

RICK

A centerfold. Not the model in the photo, the actual photo itself.

The window curtain drops, screening them off from each other.

RICK

(continuing)

Whoops, was that three minutes? And that was my last five. Meet you outside.

They both hang up and exit. Rick locks Laura's door with the key.

LAURA

What did you mean centerfold?

At that moment THE BLINDS IN ANOTHER GLASS DOOR SCRAPE UP to reveal Erika, flashing the sexiest of lingerie under her robe. She opens her door and steps out.

RICK

I'll show you. How'd we do, Erika?

Erika beams and spreads a \$50 bill for them to see.

ERIKA
Quite well, thank you.

She saunters off, heels CLACKING, trailed by BREATHERS AND DROOLERS devouring her with their eyes. Rick turns to Laura.

RICK
I forgot. The customer also tips the dancer.

He fumbles in his pockets, while Laura looks after Erika.

LAURA
Fifty dollars? How long was she in there?

RICK
Five, ten minutes, I don't know. Here's your tip, geisha lady.

He hands her a small card.

INSERT SHOT - RICK'S CARD

A cute drawing of Rick's face, next to which it reads:

HI, MY NAME IS GEORGE CLOONEY.
I'D LIKE TO DATE YOU.
YES? KEEP THIS CARD.
NO? JUST HAND IT BACK.

BACK TO SCENE

A gloved Prank has stopped beside them with his janitor's cart, waiting. Laura shies again.

The paired door to Erika's booth finally opens, and her "CUSTOMER" walks out, fixing himself.

RICK
These doors can only be locked from the inside. Let her see why, Prank.

Prank stands back. Still intimidated, Laura sidles up to the door and peers inside.

LAURA
(recoils)
He didn't dare!

RICK
 (looking inside)
 This one smeared it all over the
 window, Prank.

PRANK
 So let me get in dere already.

Laura reels back nauseated. Prank enters with towels and
 spray bottle. Rick walks Laura back to the cashier.

LAURA
 This is so-- so pestilent!

They pass a door and ISHIHARA'S VOICE ECHOES from inside.

ISHIHARA
 Owooo owooo oWOOOOOOOOOOOOO...

Laura stops at the paired door, whose blinds are drawn.
 She indicates it to Rick questioningly. Rick nods.

RICK
 Luzia.
 (beat)
 Now, no mess with her friend
 here. He uses a condom.

Laura presses her forehead. She's finally gotten it.

LAURA
 Living centerfolds under glass.
 Close-quarters phone sex.
 Intercourse in the age of AIDS.
 My God... they have no shame!

RICK
 They have no outlets. Your
 fourteen-year-old does it too.

Big mistake. Laura's EYES BLAZE! SHE RAMS his card back
 at him and storms away.

RICK turns dejectedly to look out the rear entrance... and
 brightens up!

EXT. - THE DOME'S REAR ENTRANCE - PARKING AREA - DAY

A very young-looking ASIAN WOMAN with shimmering black
 hair pulls her dance togs from her Miata and hurries in.

RICK

Asia! How's my favorite
brunette?

Asia laughs, pats him twice on the crotch.

ASIA

Ready to party. How's business?

RICK

Noon crowd's in. Go kick butt.

ASIA

Haha! Bring 'em on! 'Bye.

THE CASHIER'S PLATFORM

Laura storms up next to Robin.

ROBIN

Hi. Learn anything?

LAURA

More than I care to, thank you.

Asia walks up to the display board and writes her name on
it in day-glo pink.

ASIA

Hi, guys. Sorry I'm late.

ROBIN

Won't tell if you won't.

(to Laura)

One of Victor's scuzzy rules is
to dock us a buck for every
minute we're late. If I were a
bitch, Asia there would've had to
shell out...

(checking wall clock)

...thirteen bucks before she even
starts her shift. But I never
do. Victor doesn't know.

She looks at Laura pointedly as Asia EXITS toward the
dressing rooms.

As soon as she's out of sight, Robin picks up the phone.

THE DANCE FLOOR

JEMIMA and LUZIA sit on the bench while Erika works a window.

The wall phone RINGS. Although seated nearest, again Jemima makes no move to answer it. Luzia has to reach over her to pick up.

A beat as she listens, hangs up, turns to the others.

LUZIA

She's here. We have ten minutes.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

The Hispanic Man walks up from the bathroom and places his package on the counter before Laura and Robin.

HISPANIC MAN

Excuse me. This no good.

Laura glares and turns to the package. She opens it-- sheets of pink rubberized plastic folded many times over.

As she pulls it out, the other end drops to reveal a life-size inflatable female doll.

LAURA

A human cushion. So what's wrong with it?

HISPANIC MAN

No good, no good, loreja nosirve panada, esmuypequeno.

He points at his ear while he talks.

As Laura struggles to make out his problem, Luzia walks up carrying a big BIRTHDAY CAKE.

LUZIA

Where's Asia?

Robin looks at the monitors below the register.

ON ONE OF THESE MONITORS,

we see Asia sitting stark naked before a mirror in the dressing room, braiding up her hair.

ROBIN
Still on hair.

LAURA
Luzia, what's his problem?

LUZIA
It's a love doll, anatomically
correct.

Shocked, Laura inspects the doll, then drops it in
disgust.

HISPANIC MAN
Love. Si, si.

Somehow, PRANK is there to hand Laura paper towels and
hand sanitizer. She wipes off frantically.

ROBIN AND LUZIA are LAUGHING HARD now!

LAURA
Ecch! What does he want?

Laura gingerly holds the doll up by its ears.

LUZIA
He tried a fourth entry point,
but it was too small!

HISPANIC MAN
(points at his ear)
Small, si.

ROBIN
He put it in her ear ???

THE OTHERS CRACK UP as Laura realizes she's holding the
doll by the ears and drops it again.

PRANK picks it up and takes it away.

LAURA
Get away from me, pervert!

ROBIN
Uh uh, he's "a valued
customer..."

HISPANIC MAN
Si, always right.

LAURA

Tell him I'll give him his money back if he just leaves and never comes back.

She looks at the price tag on the box.

LAURA

(continuing)

One hundred twenty dollars...

She opens the register and starts counting.

ROBIN

Wait a minute. What're you doing?

LAURA

...thirty, forty... I'm giving him his money back.

ROBIN

Does he have a receipt? Didn't he just pick it up off the shelf a few minutes ago?

Laura stops cold.

ROBIN

(continuing)

Besides, house policy is no refunds. Credit or exchange only.

Luzia takes over and speaks to the man rapidly in Spanish. He quickly leaves in a huff as Luzia's LAUGHTER rings out.

ROBIN

What did you tell him?

LUZIA

I said get a male doll. Their ears are bigger.

They LAUGH, then she nudges Robin towards a monitor, where we see Asia dabbing makeup on. Robin picks up the house phone and dials,

ROBIN

The dance floor will be closed for fifteen minutes. Repeat, the dance floor is closed for fifteen minutes.

A YOUNG MAN hurries towards the dance booths but PRANK is hanging a velvet rope barrier across the entrance, barring the YOUNG MAN'S way.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, my lunch break's only a half-hour!

PRANK

Sorry, no English.

Robin and Luzia are leaving with the cake.

LAURA

Where are you going? Didn't you say this was our busiest time?

ROBIN

Screw it. Pick up the house phone and warn us when Asia's ready. Extension four-oh.

Laura picks up the house phone and looks heavenward.

THE DANCE FLOOR

Robin has put the cake on the dais and is lighting the candles. Excited, Erika and Jemima gather around. Luzia holds the phone, waiting.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Laura watches Robin and the girls on one monitor, Asia in the dressing room on another.

Finally Asia, a knockout in garter belt and fishnets, is satisfied. A few final tugs, and she gets up.

LAURA

She's on her way.

She hangs up.

ON THE MONITOR,

she watches Asia move to enter the dance floor, but the dancers block her way and her view, pretending to chat.

Then a distant chorus of female voices: "SUR-PRI-IIIIZE!" Then the refrain starts: "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU..."

Laura smiles to herself. The song makes her feel better somehow.

SUBLIMINAL INSERTS: Was that Jeff and Laura in party hats? Or Laura as a kid?

THE DANCE FLOOR

ASIA blows out the candles. The girls CLAP, LAUGH, hand her small presents, hugs and kisses.

RICK AND PRANK join them with paper plates, plastic glasses, napkins, and soft drinks. They seem immune to the girls' blatant nakedness.

ROBIN turns the radio up, and as FM 86 MUSIC swells, RICK starts to dance for Asia.

THE CASHIER STATION

Laura watches at the monitors, laughing, but Erika interrupts. She puts a pink latex dildo on the counter together with some dollar bills.

ERIKA

I want to buy this soybean.

Laura picks up the dildo and examines it.

LAURA

Soybean?

ERIKA

Meat substitute.

(smiling)

I didn't know it was Asia's birthday.

LAURA

Aw, you're not giving her this for her birthday?

ERIKA

Oh, no, no. They told me Asia's always wanted to learn deep throat. I'm really good at that.

Laura looks blank and Erika looks almost apologetic.

ERIKA

You know, deep oral sex.

Laura is stupefied.

ERIKA

(re: money)

I think that'll cover it. You know, it's harder when you're like me. Men expect more. We have to try harder.

(taking dildo with her)

Then they leave anyway.

THE DANCE FLOOR

PARTY in full swing! Rick's top is off, and dollar bills stick from his waist.

He prances, then looks up into the TV camera, smiles and waves.

LAURA,

watching the monitor, is surprised to find Rick dancing AT the camera. He is dancing for her!

ON THE MONITOR,

Rick ends with a flourish, holds his date card up close to the camera. Laura smiles and CLAPS in spite of herself.

Whoops, a CUSTOMER, who hands Laura a ten.

CUSTOMER

Singles.

As she's counting out the singles, Prank comes up, cigarette dangling from his mouth, and puts a soft drink and a slice of cake on the counter.

LAURA

Why, thank you, P-Prank. How's--
how's the cake?

PRANK

takes the cigarette from his mouth, takes a forkful of cake from Laura's plate, and chews while exhaling smoke.

PRANK

Too sweet.

ASIA AND ERIKA

saunter up, GIGGLING like schoolgirls. They give the dildo back.

ASIA

It was too big! I kept gagging!

ERIKA

Start with a carrot.

ASIA

I'll start with Herbert.
 (indicating "small" with
 thumb and forefinger)
 He just loves to go teacher on
 me!

Another FIT OF GIGGLES all around. Even Prank smiles a little. Erika embraces Asia.

ERIKA

Well, happy birthday.

Kiss-kiss and Erika's gone. Asia comes around and joins Laura behind the counter.

(THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE GOES ON WHILE THEY SERVE AN INTERMITTENT STREAM OF CUSTOMERS.)

LAURA

Happy birthday from me too. What are you, all of thirteen now?

ASIA

Haha! Thanks. Asia. Laura, right? Robin asked me to sit with you a bit while she makes some bucks.

PRANK

Open de ploor?

Laura steps back, looking blank. Asia picks up the house phone, punches some numbers, and hands it to Laura.

ASIA

Announce the dance floor's open.

Prank walks off to remove the rope barrier. SEVERAL MEN stand waiting, chafing at the bit.

LAURA

Ahem...

(on P.A. system)

The dance floor is now open. The
dance floor is now open.

ASIA

Don't let Frank scare you. he's
got this real gruff exterior but
deep down he's really a puppy.

LAURA

I thought his name was Prank.

ASIA

Oh, Rick started calling him that
'cause he's Filipino and his F's
and V's come out P's and B's, you
know? An accent, like my
parents mix up their R's and L's.
His name's Francisco, so his
friends call him Frank.

LAURA

That's mean of Rick.

ASIA

Oh, Frank's all scowly but I know
he doesn't mind. Kidding breaks
up the tedium. So, how's the
first day been so far?

LAURA

A lot to learn.

She starts to eat cake.

ASIA

(re: cake)

That was a really nice surprise.

LAURA

You know, it's my son's birthday
too.

ASIA

Really! So we're both Libras.
How old is he?

LAURA

Fourteen today. He's getting a
raincheck for a present.

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)

You know, until things get more stable. He really wanted to skip school today. As a present. And I said no.

ASIA

That's fourteen for you. Wow. Fourteen seems like ages ago.

LAURA

Is Herbert your boyfriend?

ASIA

Hah! Anatomy professor.

LAURA

Oh. Your in Med school.

ASIA

Vet Med. I love animals. I'll be a vet in two years.

Laura stops eating.

LAURA

So how come you're here showing off your-- yourself to your future clients? Big bucks?

ASIA

Not really. A lot goes for hair and makeup and lingerie to keep up your image. Which is really what you're selling here. It's the time. In two hours here I can make what I'd make in one day at Macdonald's, then I can put in those study hours. Besides...

(grins)

It's a trip. Power.

LAURA

Any other doctors in there?

Asia points towards the photos in the display case.

ASIA

Lulu, not here today, just started law school. Hmm...

(MORE)

ASIA (CONT'D)

They haven't taken Tianna's photo down yet. She's gone, worked just long enough to pay for her boobs. Actress. Cosmetic surgery. Stacey, real estate. Jemima's in some M.F.A. program, dance choreography, but I don't really know, that one doesn't talk much.

Laura can't believe this.

LAURA

Robin?

ASIA

Robin's in a band that's getting a major label. Speak of the devil.

Robin comes back with a wad of bills.

ASIA

(continuing; rising)

My turn to earn while the noon crowd's here.

LAURA

(suddenly remembering)

Noon-- what time is it?

ASIA

Almost one.

LAURA

I promised Jeff--

Laura picks up the phone and dials while Asia and Robin switch places.

ROBIN

(without looking)

Dial nine first.

Laura presses the hook and redials.

CUT TO:

EXT. - JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL GROUNDS - LATE MORNING

It's break time in the sun-- the KIDS are laughing, joking, horsing around, or just lazing in groups.

JEFF,

alone in the shade, fiddles dejectedly with his music player.

A MOTHERLY TEACHER beckons, and he follows her into...

THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICES

where Assistant Principal JULIAN SCHIMMER is at his desk, working over a book with scissors. He points Jeff at the phone.

JEFF

(into phone)

Mom? Whew, Thought you forgot...

Oh, okay. Did you find a job?

Great! Doing what?

(beat)

What? Adult what?

(beat)

Really... REALLY??? You mean
porn videos and love dolls and
naked models-- that is so cool!

Schimmer's head snaps up from his book.

JEFF

(continuing)

Oh, everybody knows about that,
private dancers and all... my
favorite's Traci Lords...

(beat)

Dad told me... yeah, Dad. Wow!
Wait till I tell everyone how
cool my mom is! They'll all want
to be my friend and-- What? Why
not? Okay, what's the number
there... five seven five...

SCHIMMER

reacts, ripping a page from his book and trashing it.

WHAT HE TRASHED

We look into his trash can. The Boticelli Venus smiles up at us, body a little crumpled on the page.

SCHIMMER

shuts the book and presses a post-it note onto it's cover.
The note reads: "RETURN TO SCHOOL LIBRARY."

FADE TO:

LAURA

Hangs up her call to Jeff, pressing her temples with her hand. Then she gives a LITTLE SCREAM!

RICK AND ROBIN

look up at her, surprised. She's prowling the CASHIER'S STATION, furious.

LAURA

(accusing heaven)

He's been corrupting him all this time!

(to the others)

My ex-husband has been giving my son smut!

She BANGS ANGRILtY on the couner, picks up what happens to be handy on the counter, raises her arm to fling it, and SHOUTS TO THE WORLD!

LAURA

(continuing)

You dirty little sick depraved abominable lecherous dissolute foul perverted fuh-- fuh--

ROBIN AND RICK

urge her silently as she gasps, lips shaping and reshaping, struggling to spit out the "F" word. "Fuh... FUH...." Here it comes...

Nope, false alarm-- wait, here it comes now... REALLY...

LAURA

Fuh-- fuh-- FOUR-FLUSH-ER!!!!

THE STORE (LAURA'S P.O.V.)

The NOON CROWD HAS FROZEN, staring up at her, stricken with fear and awe at the wrath of her righteousness.

No one moves. No one makes a sound. NOT A PEEP. Even FM 86 is silent.

LAURA

catches herself arm raised. She looks around.

THE STORE (LAURA'S P.O.V.)

A CUSTOMER who was leafing through an adult magazine lets it slip through his fingers. It PLOPS to the floor. He WHIMPERS and starts edging towards the door.

Keeping his eyes on Laura, he speeds up as he goes, then turns and sprints the last few steps out the door!

THIS BREAKS THE SPELL!

The MEN drop whatever they were doing and SCURRY towards the exits.

In seconds, the place is stone-cold empty.

LAURA slumps. RICK helps her sit. ROBIN leans over and takes the object from Laura's limp hand.

ROBIN

Dude, you just killed prime time.
What the hell was that all about?

Then she notes the object she's taken from Laura-- it looks like a remoted garage door opener-- and reacts.

ROBIN

(continuing; sharply)
Did you press this?

CUT TO:

EXT. - PLEASURE DOME'S REAR ENTRANCE - DAY

COP CARS SCREECH into the parking lot, roof lights flashing.

INT. - PLEASURE DOME FRONT AREA

A UNIFORMED POLICEMAN BURSTS IN and crouches, aiming his pistol here and there. He's in full battle gear, kevlar vest, leggings, helmet, dark goggles over a gas mask.

A SECOND COP,

much older, strolls in gulping down the last of his doughnut. Brushing powdered sugar off his mouth, he walks around the first cop towards Robin.

ROBIN

False alarm. False alarm.

The YOUNG COP rips his gas mask off and flings it to the floor in disappointment.

YOUNG COP

Shit!

Holstering, he follows the OLD COP.

ROBIN

New cashier, pressed it by mistake. Sorry.

MORE COPS pour in from the rear.

OLD COP

Ay ay ay ay ay...
(to the other cops)
False alarm, guys.

SOME OF THE COPS exit grumbling, OTHERS start looking over the B & D merchandisec(handcuffs, leather collars, leashes, etc.)

The Old Cop turns back to Robin/Laura/Rick.

OLD COP

(continuing)
Each false alarm costs you a
hundred smackers. You know that.

Erika and Jemima join them in skimpy robes, curious about the excitement.

Robin holds the "garage door opener" up to Laura.

ROBIN

This is our silent alarm, for if we get robbed or something.

Tall, hunky, swaggering, the Young Cop looks Jemima over.

YOUNG COP

Maybe we should check the place out, just to make sure.

The Old Cop shrugs resignedly.

YOUNG COP
 (to Robin)
 Call everyone out here.

Robin throws up her hands, picks up the phone and dials.
 Her voice booms out over the P.A. system.

ROBIN
 Okay, guys, the policeman wants
 everybody out here, front and
 center. Everybody.

She hangs up as

THE OLD COP

sighs and pulls out pad and pen. He looks even more bored
 than before.

THE OTHERS

come drifting in-- LUZIA, ASIA, and PRANK. They somehow
 fall into an inadvertent line before...

THE YOUNG COP,

who walks past them like an inspecting officer, then stops
 in front of JEMIMA.

JEMIMA

avoids his eyes and pulls her robe tighter as he studies
 her, tapping his flashlight on his palm.

Suddenly he grasps her elbow.

YOUNG COP
 Come with me.

He pulls her after him towards the back as Laura turns to
 Robin.

LAURA
 What is this?

ROBIN
 It's cool, dude. Just be cool.

LAURA

What!? He can't do that! I
mean--

She looks to Rick, who turns away, motioning to the others to go. Erika, Asia, and Prank start off.

LAURA looks to the Old Cop, but he's absorbed in his paperwork.

LAURA

But it's wrong, it's so-- so--

LUZIA

Oh Laura just chill okay?

ON LUZIA

Without the fantasy lighting of the dance floor, her true age shows. Bags under the eyes, wrinkles. Twenty's definitely been a while back.

A GRAYING MAN

in a wheelchair rolls up and hands Laura a DVD.

GRAYING MAN

Do you accept credit cards?

ROBIN

MasterCard and Visa.

GRAYING MAN

Good. Finally found a golden
showers video and I don't want to
lose it.

He hands Laura his card. Robin gets up to help her.

ROBIN

Here. First you--

LAURA

I can do it. Just tell me how to
get authorization.

She starts RINGING up the sale.

Robin and the Old Cop exchange shrugs, then Robin wordlessly taps a yellow Post-It note on the counter next to Laura and returns to Luzia.

LAURA
(continuing)
Thirty dollars even.

GRAYING MAN
It's worth it!

Acting very professional, Laura picks up the phone and dials the number on the Post-It while the Graying Man starts humming the BEATLES' SONG "Golden Slumbers."

Then Laura reads from his credit card.

LAURA
Four oh five four...

The Graying Man's HUMMING grows louder. Robin and Luzia watch Laura hang up...

...imprint the card slip...

...and punch the register, the very picture of efficiency.

The printer CLICKS out the receipt while she lowers the card slip and a pen to the man.

GRAYING MAN
(signing)
Ever try them golden showers?

LAURA
Sir, I have no idea what those are, and absolutely no desire to know.

The Old Cop looks up at this, shakes his head, then returns to his paper work.

OLD COP
Ay ay ay ay ay...

Laura puts everything in a plastic bag and hands it to the Graying Man...

...then crosses her arms haughtily as Rick rolls him to the front door.

GRAYING MAN
(singing happily)
"Golden showers fill your eyes..."

Rick exits with the man. Beat.

Then Robin jumps up, DINGS the register open and holds out her open hand to Laura.

ROBIN
The slip goes in here.

LAURA
Slip?

ROBIN
Our copy of the credit card slip.

Laura wavers.

ROBIN
(continuing)
Our bank needs the merchant copy to collect for us. Without it we have no record of the card number, the authorization number, it's like the sale never happened.

LAURA
I put everything in the bag-- my God!

Laura takes off racing headlong for the door, jerking it open as the Old Cop shakes his head.

OLD COP
Ay ay ay ay ay...

EXT. - THE STREET - DAY

Laura looks left and right. Rick, alone, is walking past the Italian Food Stand towards her. A car with the Graying Man in the back seat is pulling away behind him.

RICK
Boy, he sure wanted to watch that video real bad.

Laura watches the car disappear over his shoulder.

LAURA
Did you hear where he lives?

RICK
(shaking head)
You're beautiful in the sun like that.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Rick and Laura join Luzia and Robin. The Old Cop keeps writing.

Then Laura snaps her fingers. Light bulb!

She picks up the phone and dials.

ROBIN

They only authorize them, not record them.

LAURA

(into phone)

Yes, this is the Pleasure Dome. A few minutes ago I called in to authorize a thirty-dollar transaction, and forgot to keep our copy. Is there any way we can reconstruct the sale...

(long pause)

Okay. Thanks anyway.

She hangs up, thinks.

Then she tears her purse open, snatches a few bills, plunges them into the register, and SLAMS it shut.

LAURA

There! I still owe you twenty dollars! I'll have it for you when I get paid...

Robin and Luzia exchange looks. A THIN MAN walks up to Laura.

THIN MAN

Excuse me. I called earlier about some enemas?

LAURA

What????

ROBIN

hey're over here.

She reaches under the counter, pulls out a package, and hands it to Laura.

Recovering, Laura RINGS it up and bags it. The printer CLICKS out the receipt.

LAURA
Eighteen sixty-four with tax.

The Thin Man holds out a twenty. Laura starts to take it, then freezes. Beat.

THE THIN MAN

looks at her warily. He waves the bill at her.

THIN MAN
Miss?

LAURA

looks around, arm half-extended, a trapped look on her face.

THE GROUP

Robin, Luzia, Rick, and the Old Cop wait for her reaction.

LAURA

again moves to take the bill... again she stops.

Then gritting her teeth, she tears off a plastic bag from her supply and sticks her hand in it, using it like a glove.

THE OTHERS

watch incredulous as she takes his \$20 as if it were a dead rat and drops it in the register. Then she makes change.

The Thin Man looks insulted, and the Old Cop returns to his paper work.

OLD COP
Ay ay ay ay ay...

LAURA
Your change, sir.
(hands it)
Your purchase, sir.
(hands it)

The Thin Man leaves in a huff! Laura strips the bag off her hand and trashes it, then wipes her hand on her skirt.

PRANK is there to hand her some napkins.

ROBIN

Sure this is the right job for you?

The Young Cop reappears, HUMMING and smoothing his hair.

YOUNG COP

Let's go.

He exits. The Old Cop hands Laura the paper work.

OLD COP

Sign there please. Thank you.
The instructions are on the back.

He tears off a copy and pockets it as he follows the Young Cop out.

LAURA

Where's the black girl?

LUZIA

Jemima. In the back.

IMAGES FROM DIFFERENT SECURITY CAMERAS

flash on their monitors as Robin flicks switches...

...and they finally find JEMIMA hunched on the dressing room floor, face in hands, WRACKED WITH SOBS.

LAURA

can't look. She turns away.

LUZIA

Cry, bitch. You deserve it.

LAURA

How can you say that?

LUZIA

Easy. She's a bitch.

ROBIN

Won't try to fit in.

LUZIA
Got an attitude this big.

ROBIN
(pointedly)
Like some people we know.

Laura doesn't care to reply.

TWO OR THREE CUSTOMERS

start to drift back in-- well-heeled, white-collar suit-and-tie types.

ROBIN
All dancers required on the bench
during the noon period.

She picks up the phone and dials, then hands it to Laura.

ROBIN
(continuing)
Tell Jemima to get her ass back
on the dance floor.

Laura takes the phone uncertainly.

ROBIN
(continuing)
You're the cashier. The
cashier's the boss when Victor
ain't around. What you say, goes.
Tell her.

LUZIA
It's the rule.

LUZIA

leaves the station and starts back to the dance floor as

LAURA

peers at Jemima on the monitor.

LAURA
We don't need her on the floor.
It's past one. Lunch is over.

ROBIN
Lunch's twelve to two. Tell her.

LAURA
What's her number?

ROBIN
You're on speaker. Tell her.

LAURA
Ahem, Jemima? Jemima.

ON A SECOND MONITOR

we see Luzia join Erika and Asia on the dance floor bench.
Some windows go dark, and the girls go to work.

LAURA
Jemima, please return to the
dance floor. Please return to
the dance floor.

JEMIMA

lifts her head and looks around uncertainly...
...then buries her face in her hands again.

LAURA AND ROBIN

look up from the monitors.

ROBIN
See? Thinks she's better than
all of us. Fugging bitch.

She snorts in anger but Laura sighs.

LAURA
(to herself)
I did this. This is all my
fault.

She hangs up and slumps back on her stool.

Beat. Then,

LAURA
(continuing; decisive)
I'm cashier, right? I'm the boss
when Victor's not here. Well,
the boss says let her sit there
as long as she damn well pleases!

THE CASHIER STATION

Robin SLAMS the register shut as Rick walks up with Prank.

ROBIN

Dude, I've about had it with this attitude of yours. Victor's gonna be tickled to hear you tripped the alarm and cost us one hundred bucks, lost a thirty-dollar credit card sale, almost gifted Bridget two-hundred-ten, another hundred to the Spanish doll man--

RICK has squat down behind Laura and motions Robin to shut up.

LAURA is CRYING softly, as unobtrusively as possible.

PRANK

hands her some paper towels from his cart. She takes them and BLOWS HER NOSE.

LAURA

That bastard! I try so hard to make a good home for our son...

She folds and refolds the paper towel.

RICK

You all right?

LAURA

...and all this time he was undercutting me...

RICK

Why don't I take her next door? Air, coffee, pizza... do some good.

Robin studies Laura.

ROBIN

Nobody gets lunch breaks around here.

(beat)

Fifteen minutes.

Rick helps Laura up.

RICK
Come on. Time for some of that
famous smog.

Asia comes up to them.

ASIA
Is this the noon crowd? Where
are all the big spenders?

She senses the heavy atmosphere and shuts up, watching
Laura wipe up. Rick decides to try for more levity.

RICK
Oh, Prank, did you know that
Imelda Marcos really likes
bananas? Really really REALLY
likes bananas? Your cue,
Prank...

Prank's mouth tightens. He picks up a wastebasket and
holds it out to Laura so she can dump her tissues in it.

RICK
(continuing)
Aincha gonna ask me how I know?
Ask me how I know she likes
bananas.

LAURA
(sniffling)
How?

RICK
Well, her favorite song is...
(singing)
"Peelings... nothing more than
peelings..."

Tentative laughs, all but Laura. Prank has shuffled off
scowling.

RICK
So, wanna go outside?

He takes Laura's arm but she doesn't budge. Beat.

LAURA
Robin says none of us get a lunch
break.

RICK

I say we do. You and I do.

All of a sudden she pushes him away!

LAURA

Men!

She stalks off, doubles back, tears a five from her purse, and thrusts it into his pocket.

LAURA

(continuing)

Now we're even.

Then she runs for the front door.

Asia looks around, takes Laura's blazer off the coat rack and shrugs it on. It comes down past mid-thigh, good enough for the street.

ASIA

I'll go get her.

EXT. - THE ITALIAN FOOD STAND - MIDDAY

The sun is brilliant, but a cloud seems to loom over Laura. She has ordered coffee and is popping aspirins.

Asia joins her, eliciting appreciative stares from the COUPLE OF MEN eating standing up at the counter.

ASIA

(to Angela)

Cappuccino.

(to Laura)

I love pizza but if I eat some now I'll be leaden all afternoon.

(beat)

I borrowed your coat. Nice fabric.

Laura nods.

LAURA

It's over fifteen years old. Feels like I've had to mend it more than a hundred times.

(smiling weakly)

A baby bumps a new coat way down your list of priorities real quick.

ASIA

Still very stylish.

(beat)

Rick really isn't mean. It's just his jokes are so lame. He really needs better writers.

LAURA

Oh, it's not Rick. My ex has been sneaking around behind my back showing my son things I don't think he's ready for, and it really hurts...

Angela arrives with Asia's cup just as Laura starts to SOB.

ANGELA

Aw, honey...

LAURA

No child support for months, I need eight hundred by Friday or the bank forecloses, my son's birthday and I can't afford a present, my first job in thirteen years I'm not doing too well, and now this--

She cries softly, trying to hide it from the others.

ANGELA

Oh, honey, don't cry. That's our lot. My grandma used to say, "Mankind is born to weep," that's what she used to say-- Well, not really, she didn't speak English, she would say that in Sicilian, "Mankind is born to weep." And you know, it took me twenty years to learn that, but she's right. I'm forty-six now, four miscarriages, I love kids like anything and can't have any--

Gino yells from the kitchen.

GINO (O.S.)

Service!

Angela talks to them while delivering the orders.

ANGELA

I lost both my dad and my favorite uncle in Vietnam, my mother's at home with Alzheimer's, and every day it gets harder, but I cope, because you know what else my grandma said? I remember this so clearly, like it was yesterday.

Asia listens while Laura begins to get a grip. An unkempt homeless DERELICT stops next to them to listen.

ANGELA

(continuing)

It was my fifteenth birthday and I had this great party. All my friends were there, all the guys I liked were there, we had great music and we danced, and laughed, and I got all kinds of neat presents, my first real bra, and after it was over I hugged my grandma and told her how happy I was, and she, tiny little Sicilian woman, never learned to read or write, she smiles and says, you know what she says? You know what she says?

Everyone leans forward, hanging on her every word.

ANGELA

(continuing)

She says, "My Angela, be happy, but never forget that this happiness is not yours to keep. Presents break. Friends leave. Lovers pass away."

By now it's clear Angela has missed her calling. Everyone is caught up in her story, listening with undivided attention.

ANGELA

(continuing)

"The only thing that is really truly our own is our sorrow, and our only happiness is in offering up that sorrow in a spirit of joy and acceptance." That's what she said.

The listeners exchange uncomfortable glances. Angela leans towards Laura and lowers her voice.

ANGELA

(continuing)

Wet blanket, right? You're thinking, spoiling my party like that, right? But then, she gives me the best present of all. She shares this wonderful secret that's sustained me when the night's too long and the road's all uphill and you feel the burden's too much to bear. She says--

The emotion in Angela's voice is unmistakable. Everybody cranes to hear.

ANGELA

(continuing)

She says, "Offer it up in a spirit of joy and acceptance, my Angela, and every day, kneel and thank God that you were born a woman, because a man by nature cannot do this. A man will deny his sorrow, he will struggle and kick and claw to hold his happiness, and he will always fail. But not a woman." And you know why? You know why a woman can do this and a man cannot? You know why?

GINO has come out from the kitchen to stand beside her, and she puts an arm around him.

ANGELA

(continuing)

Because, my grandma said, because "WOMAN... IS... LOVE." Think about that. "Woman is Love." So simple, huh? But you know, she was right. And her words have always given me the strength to cope. "Never forget this," she tells me, and I never have: "Woman is Love... Woman is L..."

Her voice trails down to a whisper. Gino envelopes her in huge hammy arms and they embrace softly. A moment.

A man at the counter starts to CLAP, and the others pick it up. Angela turns to Laura, opens her arms, and they embrace across the counter. The APPLAUSE grows.

Laura moves down to Gino, Asia steps up to Angela, and they hug. The APPLAUSE is sustained.

The DERELICT steps up and Angela hugs him without reservation.

Then everyone is LAUGHING, SLAPPING BACKS, HIGH-FIVING, hugging everyone else!

Totally exhilarated, Laura and Asia break free and skip to the Dome's entrance...

...where they stop and hold each other's eyes.

FM 86

(drifting in and out)

... Mother Theresa... Corazon

Aquino... (blah blah)...

Rigoberta Menchu... (blah

blah)... Malala... Violeta

Chamorro... (blah blah)...

Laura and Asia clasp hands.

ASIA

Woman is Love.

LAURA

Love.

Triumphantly, they sweep arm-in-arm into The Pleasure Dome as MUSIC BLASTS from FM 86.

A MONTAGE (SUGGESTIONS)

ROBIN slithers around the dance pole like a snake and caresses it provocatively. Tips drop at her feet.

ERIKA clowns/dances at a window with a teddy bear, holding it against her in creative ways while the other dancers watch, laughing.

LAURA efficiently rings up several magazines. She turns and smiles at Robin.

An OBESE COUPLE sit in a video booth (he on the chair and she in his lap), eyes slowly widening at the action on their TV screen.

JEMIMA and a "customer" enter paired talk booths.

Many dollar bills being fed into different machines.

LAURA takes a credit card slip and tears the store copy off, holds it up to Robin, who smiles back at her.

PRANK AT THE BACK ENTRANCE wrings a mop in a bucket under a faucet. Sunlight streams down, the sky a brilliant blue.

Two stockinged legs raised upward in a V, flat against a private booth window. LUZIA'S face pops up smiling at the V's vertex.

RICK motions at the obese couple in the video booth and points at a sign: "One person per booth." The woman struggles to get off her partner's lap.

MUSIC CHANGE. ASIA pressing her body against the glass. in a private booth. She holds her smile, trying not to cringe as stuff sprays on it from the other side.

THE CASHIER'S STATION - LAURA, ROBIN, ANGLO CUSTOMER

Laura looks over a boxed item that the ANGLO CUSTOMER has just returned.

LAURA

Sir, store policy is no refunds,
credit or exchange only.

ANGLO CUSTOMER

Got no choice, do I? Credit.

Laura punches keyboard and the printer starts CLICKING out the credit slip.

She hands it to the Angle Customer, who leaves scowling.

ROBIN

Awesome, dude. Learn fast.

LAURA

Good teacher.

They sit side by side.

LAURA
 (continuing)
 How did you get into this crazy
 business?

ROBIN
 No tabloid story there. Always
 loved to dance. Back in
 Cleveland I had friends who did
 bikini dancing, you know, dance
 on tables for tips. So one day I
 needed some cash and they said
 why not come down work a shift.
 Easiest money I ever made. So
 here I am.

The phone RINGS and Robin picks up. A CUSTOMER hands
 Laura a MAGAZINE and she gets up to ring up the purchase.

ROBIN
 (continuing; into phone)
 Pleasure Dome, where your
 pleasure is our pleasure too.
 (beat)
 Right now we have Robin, Asia,
 Jemima, and a new girl, Erika.

Laura looks at the magazine and CRINGES.

Its title is PREGNANT MAMAS, on the cover a photo of very
 pregnant woman very naked (R-rating) or... ?

She quickly flips the magazine over to avoid the photo and
 on the back cover, in HUGE letters...

The single word: "LOVE."

This seems to calm her. She does the transaction--
 ringing it up, making change, bagging the purchase--
 exuding serenity.

Her smile is not forced. The customer leaves happy.

ROBIN
 No, Bridget's no longer with
 us...
 (beat)
 No, Erika's um a redhead,
 stacked, real fresh babe. Come
 check her out.

She hangs up and Laura picks up the thread.

LAURA

Any qualms? On your first job?

ROBIN

The first few times were a bit scary, but life's scary, you know? You learn.

LAURA

I mean, moral qualms.

Robin decides to answer this.

ROBIN

Look, we're not hookers, but even if we were, we wouldn't be doing anything every woman in America isn't already doing.

LAURA

Which is...

ROBIN

Hustling. Same as you.

Laura is unsure how to take this.

ROBIN

(continuing)

Come on, you played the game too: First base, second, third... depends what the dinner cost. Business transactions. "She married well." "She caught a rich husband." Yakety yak.

LAURA

I married for love.

ROBIN

Because you needed love.

Laura looks hurt. Robin's expression softens.

ROBIN

(continuing)

Okay, maybe there's exceptions. I sponsor a foster child with "Save the Children," okay? And I got my limits in the booth. Some men ask me to call them "Daddy," and I say no. Lines I won't cross.

"Save the Children--" Is she kidding? But Laura succumbs to a different curiosity.

LAURA

What happens in those booths?

QUICK MONTAGE OF MALE FACES TALKING INTO THE PRIVATE BOOTH PHONES

A quick cross-section of male American society, all colors and races, old and young, rich, poor, our fathers, uncles, brothers, sons.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Some want to talk about their jobs, their families. They want to share what's happening in their lives. They want approval...

A WIZENED OLD GEEZER

seems to be fondling himself, grinning with broken teeth.

WIZENED OLD GEEZER

(into phone)

Ever see anything this big? Go fetch, boy! Whoosh!

He starts to LAUGH and ends up in a fit of COUGHING.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Some want to dominate you.

A CREW CUT

in business suit and dark glasses slaps on a Pershing cap.

CREW CUT

(into phone)

Crawl! Cower! Shake in your boots!

ROBIN (V.O.)

A lot depends on how you look. If you look wholesome, they may try to shock you.

A BEEFY MAN

in a pinstripe suit unbuttons his shirt to reveal...

...a frilly bra. His pants are down and he grins, showing off his garter belt, tiger skin panties and net stockings.

ROBIN (V.O.)

(continuing)

The guys who choose me usually want to be dominated.

A PRIEST

WHIMPERING, repeatedly whipping himself with a heavy rosary.

PRIEST

(into phone)

I'm a sinner! A sinner! Yes...
oh... oh... ARRRHHHHHH....

ROBIN (V.O.)

Some want you to act out a fantasy for them.

QUICK MONTAGE OF FEMALES IN VARYING ROLES

Catholic schoolgirl, Earth mother, socialite, the other woman, schoolmarm, E.R. nurse, Madonna, Tina Turner, etc.

ROBIN (V.O.)

They want you to be someone they know...

ERIKA,

in a Dallas Cheerleaders costume, makes love to us with her eyes.

ERIKA

(into phone)

You're the best... I've had them all and you're the best...

ROBIN (V.O.)

Or maybe someone they can't know...

BRIDGET,

costumed like a décolleté Statue of Liberty, holds torch aloft and speaks earnestly to us.

BRIDGET
(into phone)
Give me your huddled, massive...

ROBIN (V.O.)
...or maybe it's the only way
they can get off.

ANGLE ON ROBIN BEHIND GLASS,

in black leather teddy and chains. She CRACKS a whip at the window (at us).

ROBIN
(into phone)
I want you to go potty now! I
said NOW! Yes, right there, in
your hand! IN! YOUR! HAND!

She presses up against the glass and strains forward to watch.

ROBIN
(continuing; into phone)
Thaaat's it... goood boy...

BACK TO LAURA AND ROBIN

Robin smiles at Laura's unconcealed shock and amusement.

LAURA
Where'd you learn to do that?

ROBIN
Around. Just being a woman.

Laura has that little frown again.

ROBIN
(continuing)
It helps if your kid brother gets
all the attention at home.

LAURA
Do your parents know what you do?

Robin smiles wryly.

ROBIN

Those a-holes? They changed the
locks and unlisted their number
the day I left.

The phone RINGS again. Laura beats Robin to it.

LAURA

Pleasure Dome. Your pleasure is
ours too.

A MALE MOUTH SPEAKING INTO A PHONE (INTERCUT)

MOUTH

How're you doing, bebeh? What's
happening?

LAURA

Well, right now we have Robin,
Asia, Jemima, and a new girl
named Erika--

MOUTH

How about you, whatchoo wearing?
Uh... uh...

LAURA

What am I wearing?

MOUTH

Do you have big titties? Are
they warm, heavy, fragrant...
Uhn... uhn...

LAURA finally guesses what's going on.

LAURA

You're sick! Sick! SICK!

MOUTH (V.O.)

Yes! Say it! Don't stop now--

BANG! goes the phone! Laura paces, trying to compose
herself.

ROBIN

That was your fringe benefits.
(standing up)
Anyway. This is home for me now.
This is my family now.

The phone RINGS again. Laura grabs it.

LAURA
Buzz off, you sick pervert!

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL SCHIMMER'S OFFICE

JEFF
(into phone)
Mom!

Schimmer grabs the phone from him.

SCHIMMER
Mrs. Granger, we're sending Jeff home early today. He's been sharing unacceptable material with his impressionable friends... adult material... Smut... Hnno, no suspension, but we need to discuss this... Hnnyesss...

EXT. - OUTSIDE THE PLEASURE DOME - DAY

Laura paces anxiously between the Italian Stand and the Dome's door. Luzia lazes at the Stand, sipping a coke.

LAURA
He'll be here anytime now. Oh, Luzia! What'll I do?

LUZIA
Relax. What is it?

LAURA
Oh, I have this problem saying no.

LUZIA
Didn't you say no to your son's birthday present today?

LAURA
Oh, I couldn't say yes, I didn't have the money... But I don't mean just Jeff, men in general...

She peers down the street at a bicycle rider in the distance.

LAURA
 (continuing)
 ...especially when they make like
 their whole life and happiness
 depended on it.

She watches as JEFF pedals up and dismounts, gives him a
 kiss. He ogles Luzia.

LAURA
 Well. What kind of trouble are
 you in now?

JEFF
 Traci Lords trading cards. They
 weren't anything "X" or even "R,"
 mostly head shots, swear.

LAURA
 Mr. Schimmer said it was adult
 stuff.

JEFF
 No way. No way.

LAURA
 Let me see. Where'd you get
 them?

JEFF
 Dad. Schimmer took them. He
 busted me just 'cause of her
 reputation.

LUZIA
 Traci Lords was an underage porn
 star who became a real movie
 star.

Jeff ogles Luzia anew. Laura puts an arm around him.

LAURA
 That's Luzia. My son Jeff.

JEFF
 It's my birthday. Can I have a
 coke?

Jeff walks right up to Luzia. She leans back on the
 counter and poses nonchalantly under his unconcealed
 scrutiny and admiration.

Gino hands Jeff a coke.

GINO
 (leaving)
 On the house.

JEFF
 (to Luzia)
 You a nude dancer?

LUZIA
 No, I'm the waitress here.

Laura indicates Luzia's skimpy robe.

LAURA
 Yes she's a dancer. One of the
 best. She's my new friend.

LUZIA
 So you're a Traci Lords fan? I
 shook her hand once.

JEFF
 Really! Where?

LUZIA
 (showing right hand)
 Right there!
 (laughs)
 Kidding. Right in there. She
 was on tour, danced here two
 days.

Jeff can't stand it. He pleads with Laura.

JEFF
 Can we go in, Mom, please? Can
 we?

Laura looks off.

JEFF
 (continuing)
 You promised! Please? Please?

Laura sighs and walks him to the door. Luzia can't
 believe this.

LUZIA
 What are you doing? He's
 underage. We'll get busted.

JEFF
 They'll never take me alive!

LUZIA

I'm not thinking about you,
Scarface. I'm thinking about my
job they close the place down.

Laura's relief is palpable.

LAURA

There it is. Underage. Busted.
Job.

JEFF

Oh mom, just for a minute so I
can tell my friends! Please!
Please!

Undecided, Laura puts her hand on the doorknob.

JEFF

(continuing)
My friends will think I'm so
cool! Please, Mom, puh-leeze!

LAURA

Well, maybe just a peek.

She pulls the door open about a foot and holds. Jeff
sticks his head in, oohing.

Laura chafes, impatient. Jeff takes his time.

JEFF

What are those?

Laura leans over him to look, then pulls her head back
out.

LAURA

Um... soybeans.

LUZIA

Don't get us busted!

LAURA

Okay, that's enough.

She tugs him out, closes the door, kisses him.

LAURA

(continuing)
You go home now and I'll see you
about seven.

Jeff's head drops in disappointment.

LUZIA
It's only a few years' wait.

Crushed, Jeff pulls his bike upright, then stops before Luzia.

JEFF
God, Traci Lords... Can I shake
your hand?

Luzia holds her hand out and they shake. Jeff has a thought.

JEFF
(continuing)
Um, Traci's okay, but I really,
um, I'm really into brunettes
more. They're so hot.

LUZIA
(amused, to Laura)
He's a real operator.

JEFF
Um... can I touch your leg?

Laura is struck dumb, but before she can do anything...

Luzia lifts a leg and pulls up her already short robe. Jeff runs his hand over her thigh, awestruck.

JEFF
Soft but firm... bouncy...
beautiful...

LUZIA
(to Laura)
Now I see why you can't say no.

JEFF
To "no" me is to love me. Hee
hee!

LUZIA
Another Rick in the making.

MRS. RIVERO, a buxom, mature Latina, all in black, walks up the sidewalk with her thirteen-year-old daughter MINDA on her right and her rosary and bible on her left. She stops dead in her tracks.

Her voice, operatic at best, BOOMS OUT towards them.

MRS. RIVERO
CRISTINA!!!!

LUZIA

drops her leg hurriedly and tries to cover.

LUZIA
Mama!

MRS. RIVERO

puffs up to Luzia, dismayed by her deshabelle. Her son, a teen CHOLO in gang colors, brings up the rear.

MRS. RIVERO
Ay, tonta! Have you no shame
before your sister, before your
brother?

LUZIA
Mama, what are you doing here?

Minda looks uncomfortable. Cholo looks Laura over and Jeff does the same with Minda.

MRS. RIVERO
(holding up bible and
rosary)
Cristina, I pray, come home!
Leave this unholy life before
it's too late!

PEDESTRIANS stare as they pass. CARS slow down to watch.

LUZIA
Mama, we've gone over this
already--

MRS. RIVERO
Cristina, your mother begs you!
Your brother, your sister, with
their pure eyes, they beg you...

She nudges Cholo and Minda.

MRS. RIVERO
Beg, beg your sister...
(MORE)

MRS. RIVERO (CONT'D)

It's not too late, mijita!
Repent and turn to the light...

Cholo moves to the pizza counter, embarrassed. Luzia's tone becomes sharper.

LUZIA

Mama, too much water under the bridge!

MRS. RIVERO

Ay, Cristina, please, please come home...

LUZIA

To what? Being watched like a hawk? Kneeling on salt before a statue because I kissed a boy? Mama, I'm thirty-eight!

Mrs. Rivero crosses herself.

LAURA

studies Luzia, perhaps flash-forwarding to her own 38th birthday.

THE STREET

Mrs. Rivero starts to SOB. Minda gazes at Luzia with huge, lovely eyes, moves closer and WHISPERS. Luzia takes her hand and opens the Dome's front door.

LUZIA

Make it fast. It's illegal.

MRS. RIVERO

(blubbering)
Where you take your sister...

MINDA

The bathroom, Mama!

As they enter, Mrs. Rivero follows, SPOUTING SPANISH. Laura quickly turns to Jeff.

LAURA

I'm the boss here, so I gotta go.
(kisses him)
See you tonight.

INT. - PLEASURE DOME'S MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

ROBIN AND RICK start up surprised as Luzia enters and pilots Minda very quickly towards the back. Shameless customers ogle as they pass.

Rick double-takes as Mrs. Rivero follows, waving her bible and PLEADING LOUDLY IN SPANISH.

MRS. RIVERO
Cristina! Minda!

She stops dead and really starts to weep. Rick goes to her.

THE PLEASURE DOME'S BATHROOM

Luzia holds the door open, waiting, but Minda pulls her in with her, then throws the lock.

They face each other silently. Beat.

LUZIA
What, you gonna lecture me too?

Suddenly Minda throws her arms around her. Totally unexpected. Luzia clings tight, and they rock together back and forth.

LUZIA
(continuing)
Okay, okay, I'm sorry. How's things at home?

MINDA
I miss you, Crissy. I don't care what they say. I want to be like you.

Whoa...

LUZIA
Still so young and stupid. Study hard and become a doctor or a lawyer. Or a plumber. Rich.
(she is moved)
Everything okay at home? Got everything you need?

Minda nods, smiles weakly.

MINDA

I miss you.

She throws her arms around Luzia again.

MINDA

(continuing)

I can't stand it! I can't!

Luzia is starting to cry too.

MINDA

(continuing)

He keeps trying to touch me, his smelly breath...

Luzia hugs her tighter.

LUZIA

Oh baby, I'll get you out, I swear. Just give me a little more time. Don't tell anyone, especially not your brother! He'll kill him, he will, then they'll come and take him away. And Mama'd die of grief.

MINDA

I know.

LUZIA

Hang on just a little longer. I'll come get you, I swear. Just a little longer.

Luzia smooths Minda's tears away, wiping off her makeup where it's smeared Minda's cheek.

LUZIA

(continuing)

Tch. Look at you, so grown up and all. You should be thinking about dances, parties, the beach... where do you get your strength...

Minda pulls a scapular (a colorful religious tag worn around the neck) from under her blouse and shows it.

MINDA

Remember? I kept it...

A memento of Luzia's religious childhood. She really STARTS TO BAWL now. They hug again.

LOUD BANGING ON THE DOOR!

MRS. RIVERO (V.O.)
MIIIIINDA! CRISTIIIIINA!

OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM,

Rick tries to calm Mrs. Rivero down. Then he too knocks.

RICK
Luzia?

The door opens and the sisters come out, completely calm. Mrs. Rivero grabs Minda.

MRS. RIVERO
(to Minda)
Are you all right, mijita? What did this lost woman do to you?

LUZIA
Starting her off to be a lesbian, Mama.

Mrs. Rivero looks, terror-stricken, from Luzia to Minda to Rick and back, makes the sign of the cross and holds her rosary out to ward off evil.

LUZIA
(continuing)
A joke, Mama, a joke.

RICK
She's underage.

He starts guiding them out the back door, but Luzia motions front.

LUZIA
My brother's out front.

THE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Rick guides a weeping Mrs. Rivero to the front door.

Luzia and Minda follow behind, holding hands. Laura joins them.

THE SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Cholo is teaching Jeff an elaborate jive handshake at the Italian Food Stand, while Angela and Gino laugh and try to follow along.

The Dome's door opens and Mrs. Rivero comes out, then the others. Laura is surprised to see Jeff.

LAURA

Still here?

Jeff eyes Minda, who eyes him right back.

JEFF

I was waiting... uh, for you. To say goodbye.

Rick and Cholo guide the sobbing Mrs. Rivero to the counter where Angela hands her a glass of water.

The OLD COP and the YOUNG COP cruise slowly by in their black-and-white, eyeing them suspiciously.

Then the OLD COP passes the JOINT to the YOUNG COP, and they drive on.

Luzia tugs her robe to cover herself and hugs Cholo.

LAURA

(to Jeff)

Well, you better get going too.

She kisses Jeff. Luzia and Minda hug.

Then Luzia, chin set decisively, hurries inside.

Laura is waving goodbye as Jeff cycles off...

...then follows Luzia in.

HOLD ON ANGELA

as she studies Mrs. Rivero earnestly.

IN THE STORE,

Laura walks up to Robin at the register.

FM 86

Yesyesyesyesyesyes. My studio guest is none other than Julian Schimmer, spearhead of the "Clean Up Neighborhood Trash" movement, advocate for a return to the old-time family values of religion and decency. Mr. Schimmer, you're for parental guidance ratings on music?

SCHIMMER (ON RADIO)

Most certainly. Expunge this Gomorrhic plague of filth that rots the moral fiber of our youth...

LAURA

That's my son's--

Robin shushes Laura.

ROBIN

That's the fugger trying to close us down.

SCHIMMER

...blah blah moral values.

FM 86

Julian Schimmer of Clean Up neighborhood Trash speaking his cleanup mind on FM cleanup, FM 86. Tell me, Mr. Schimmer, ever notice what your organization's initials spell?

GONGS, BELLS, and WHISTLES explode from FM 86 and smoothly segue into another SONG.

LAURA

That's Julian Schimmer. He's assistant principal at my son's school. I have to see him later.

CUT TO:

ASIA

bare-breasted in a private booth, SHOUTING at her "customer" on the white phone. She is aputtering, livid.

ASIA

The hell you say! Big or small,
these are my titties, and if you
don't like my titties, tough--
tough titty! Go get your own--
your own titties!

She pushes the button, lowering the curtain between them.

THE TALK BOOTH CORRIDOR

Asia bursts out of her booth as her "guest" exits his.
She won't let him get away.

ASIA

Here's your money back! Get some
implants!

And still topless, she huffs off past a BIKER type who is
lounging around, checking out the girls as they come and
go.

Asia's "guest," a tanned, GOOD-LOOKING MAN in his mid-30s,
crushes the bills she's handed him in his hand.

GOOD-LOOKING MAN

Look, I'm a plastic surgeon, I
know about these things--

But he's talking to air.

GOOD-LOOKING MAN

(continuing)

Bitch!

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Laura is making a sale and does not notice the Good-
Looking Man walk up, but Robin beams immediately.

ROBIN

Why, Alex! How are you?

GOOD-LOOKING MAN

Oriental girl's a bitch!

ROBIN

Sorry. Too bad Bridget's gone,
huh? But we've got a new girl
who's just your type.

GOOD-LOOKING MAN

Don't know about that. I think
I'll need more than girls under
glass today.

He goes off to the doll display, picks one, and reads the
box. Robin nudges Laura.

ROBIN

Alex. A regular. Fan of
Bridget. Real good-looking.
Real generous.

(getting up)

I'm going on the floor. Maybe
he'll want me to dance for him.

She goes out of her way to pass him, unleashing her most
inviting smile.

He watches her, debating with himself...

... but then shakes his head. Still reading the doll box,
he comes up to Laura at the Cashier's Station.

GOOD-LOOKING MAN

I'll take this.

He hands her the box...

...and FREEZES! Their eyes lock. Beat.

LAURA

looks stunned, her lips trembling blue.

THE GOOD-LOOKING MAN gulps. The box DROPS from his hand.

LAURA'S anger rises. HER FISTS start to clench and
unclench.

HE backs away from her fury, jostling OTHER MEN and
stumbling over displays in his retreat.

LAURA looks around for something to throw, picks up the
silent alarm...

remembers, puts it down, tries to pick up her stool, too
heavy, looks...

AHA!

The credit card imprinter! She grabs it and winds up!

THE GOOD-LOOKING MAN breaks into a run!

LAURA
WHERE'S MY CHILD SUPPORT ?!!!

THE DANCE FLOOR

Jemima is dancing at a window for the Biker we saw earlier. He shouts instructions at her through the glass.

BIKER
Press 'em against the window!

Jemima holds her left ear against the tip slot.

JEMIMA
Whaaaaaat?

The Biker pantomimes as he shouts.

BIKER
Your boobs! Push 'em up against
the glass!

Jemima complies, keeping the beat with her hips. The biker rubs one hand over the glass where her breasts are.

ANGLE ON ROBIN

at the dancers' bench next to Asia and Erika, watching Luzia and Jemima dance before their windows.

ROBIN
Dude, go see if Alex is still
here.

ERIKA
Who?

ASIA
I yelled at him earlier. I'll
go.

She gets up and walks off, passing Jemima at the Biker's window.

BIKER
Now stand up and spread 'em!

Jemima straightens up and presses her ear against the slot again.

JEMIMA

Whaaaaat?

BIKER

Spread 'em wide! I wanna see
pink! Uh, or black!
(laughing)

Jemima resumes dancing and we can't see it, but she complies.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Laura is still fuming as Asia approaches, searching.

ASIA

Is the brown suit still here?
Thirties, blue eyes, wavy hair?

LAURA

George.

ASIA

What?

LAURA

His name's George Stuart Granger,
and he's been tipping Bridget
with my mortgage money.

THE BIKER

is starting to breath hard.

BIKER

Okay, okay, now finger yourself.

Again the ear against the slot.

JEMIMA

What?

BIKER

Twenty bucks to finger yourself!
Do ir! Now! Now!

Jemima resumes dancing. COMPOSE so she complies OFF-SCREEN.

BIKER
Oh... oh... oh...

THE DANCE FLOOR

Robin and Luzia see it at the same time.

ROBIN
Jemima, stop!

LUZIA
Jemima, don't do that! Rick!
RICK!

THE BIKER

oblivious to Robin and Luzia heading towards Jemima.

BIKER
Oh... oh... AARRRRRHHHHHHH!

He THUMPS the glass again and again in time to his moans as Robin and Luzia reach Jemima at the window. At that moment the window lights blink on, hiding the girls from view.

RICK

inches the booth door open and catches the Biker arranging himself.

RICK
Look, you can't do that here--
(recognizes)
You again? Told you if I caught
you here again, I'd-- hey!

The Biker shoves him aside and saunters off without a glance.

Rick recovers and rushes after him...

...but the man's out the back door and gone.

Prank, lounging by the back door, looks up from his cigarette.

RICK
Damn! Almost got him...

THE DANCE FLOOR

Erika watches as Robin and Luzia push and shove a sullen Jemima around angrily.

LUZIA

What the hell's wrong with you?
Didn't you hear us yelling stop?

JEMIMA

Leave me alone!

ROBIN

You ever listen to anybody,
bitch?

THE CASHIER'S STATION

The SOUNDS OF THE ALTERCATION drift out to Laura and Asia. Surprised, they bend down and peer at the monitors.

THE DANCE FLOOR

LUZIA

Don't you know rule number one is
never, ever finger yourself, not
for anybody?

Jemima shakes her head, but...

ROBIN

He could be undercover! You ever
think of that, bitch?

JEMIMA

Fuck, I'd know a cop--

LUZIA

They're dying to close us down!

Jemima breaks away and starts off.

JEMIMA

Get outta my face, both o'you!
Fuck off!

Flames shoot out of Robin's eyes. She follows Jemima and spins her around.

ROBIN

Wha-- how dare you, bitch!

THE SLOW-MOVING SHIT FINALLY ARRIVES AT THE WHIRLY FAN.

Robin swings, but Jemima shoves her to the floor!

SCREAMING, claws out, Luzia starts for Jemima, but Erika intercepts, pointing her towards Robin.

ERIKA

See if she's okay.

(to Jemima)

Let's see how bad you are.

FM 86

And now, for all you guitar
freaks out there, something from
our request line: Van Halen's
cover of Wagner's Ride of the
Valkyries!

And Erika and Jemima face off as the Ride begins!

LAURA AND ASIA

can't believe the monitors! They watch Jemima and Erika
drop into what look like karate stances, then...

JEMIMA AND ERIKA

are off! Blinding flurries of lightning punches, whirling
kicks and dazzling footwork!

Their little ASPIRATED YELLS resound through the walls as
they swing and duck, missing by fractions of an inch!

AT THE CASHIER'S

LAURA

Oh, God, I just remembered, I'm
incharge here! What do I do?
What do I do?

But Asia has already picked up the phone.

ASIA

Security to the dance floor!
Rick to the dance floor quick!

THE DANCE FLOOR

Evenly matched, the fighters pause to regroup! Erika spits into her hands and forms them into iron fists, flaring her lats.

Jemima touches the welt on her cheek. Then she starts the footwork of the ginga from Brazilian capoeira, starting slow and picking up speed.

PERCHED ON TOP OF THE WALL ABOVE THEM,

Black ninja tabi (the Japanese "mitten" socks) have been observing the bout.

Using the ninja cross-step, they sneak ominously along the rail-thin top of the partition separating the dance floor from the booths.

ERIKA AND JEMIMA

They CLOSE again with a YELL, ducking and counter-kicking with dizzying, balletic speed!

ROBES are ripped. BRAS are torn off. BODIES heave and glisten-- lean, athletic, beautiful.

THE STORE

A CUSTOMER rushes out from the dance booth area.

CUSTOMER

Hey, fight on the floor!
Catfight on the floor!

Customers STAMPEDE after him, pulling banknotes from their pockets, wallets, whatever.

A MONTAGE

of bills being fed into machines and window lights going out.

ERIKA AND JEMIMA

are down to their G-strings. The men CHEER them on as they circle, oblivious to everything else.

CUSTOMER #1
C'mon, Erika!

CUSTOMER #2
Oh, do it, Jemima! Yes!

CUSTOMER #1
Yank her panties off!

ERIKA works the air: Explosive leaping, spinning haymakers and slashing kicks!

She DRIVES A TREMENDOUS PUNCH at Jemima, but the latter somersaults-with-a-half-twist away, just in time, and...

...Erika's fist keeps going, RIGHT THROUGH THE VENEER PARTITION, behind where Jemima was!

Jemima has stuck the landing and stands there, feigning a yawn at Erika.

Erika angrily yanks her fist from the hole she's made...

...and a CUSTOMER's face appears at the newly created "window" (the hole). He drops a few bills on the floor.

CUSTOMER
Yeah! Give us a show!

JEMIMA hugs the ground: Hands on the floor, her legs suddenly slice up to fan the air from unexpected angles with the upside-down, razor-sharp kicks of capoeira!

She aims A HEEL BLAST at Erika's knee, missing by inches; her heel SLAMS right through the wall behind!

As she retracts her foot, another CUSTOMER drops down to watch through this new hole.

THE CATFIGHTERS

close again in a blur of limbs, YELLS, and flying drops of sweat!

They slam the dais, overturn the bench, knock the telephone off its hook as they cover ground, flailing at each other!

They knock the pole from its supports. One video camera CRASHES to the floor.

ROBIN AND LUZIA,

who were watching agog at all the action, duck away as dust and plaster shower from the ceiling.

THE CATFIGHTERS

perforate the wall with bigger and better holes through which more and more FACES appear.

And at each difficult, flashy, or revealing technique, the CUSTOMERS CHEER and FLING greenbacks on the floor! But-- oh oh, what's this?

UP ABOVE THEM,

the Ninja Flasher, perched atop the partition! He's about to leap into the fray, but sees something. It's...

RICK,

finally dashing in from one wing, sizes up the situation.

RICK

Okay, ladies, break it up.

He sized it up wrong. With a YELL, Erika and Jemima CLOSE AGAIN!

RICK throws his arms around Erika from behind as she goes past him...

...finds his hands on her boobs...

CUSTOMERS

OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH...

YELLING, Erika SLAPS her palm backward into Rick's groin, doubling him over and making him dance the funny dance!

The Customers CHEER and APPLAUD, but...

ASIA AND LAURA,

watching on the monitor, GROAN together.

RICK

smiles woozily... but he's not fazed! He crouches...

...and as Jemima cartwheels by, he grabs her upside-down on the hips and tugs her away from Erika...

...hesitates when he realizes his hand is on her ass...

CUSTOMERS
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH...

...and gets WALLOPED when Jemima lands a knee on his head, knocking him bowlegged!

CUSTOMERS
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.....

Rick staggers around a bit and falls to the floor. More tips drop on him. The floor's getting slippery with money.

AT THE CASHIER'S

Watching all these on the monitors, Asia closes her eyes, pressing her forehead with her hand...

...but Laura is getting frantic. She stands, then sits, picks up the phone, then puts it down, clutches at Asia...

THE NINJA FLASHER

decides this is the moment! Atop the wall, he stands up with a TERRIFIC YELL, freezing everybody into silence...

...leaps into the air...

...and lands like Spiderman in the middle of the floor!

All eyes are on him as he poses there surrounded by the banknotes...

RICK

struggles to get up, pawing his waist for his (missing) pistol...

RICK
I own you now, asshole!

THE NINJA FLASHER

reaches, slowly, dramatically, for his raincoat lapels...

NINJA FLASHER

Heh-heh-heh-HEH-heh!
 Heh-heh-heh-HEH-heh!

He pulls them apart...

ASIA AND LAURA

REEL BACK from the monitors, BLINDED by an incredibly bright FLASH that shoots out at them and...

...(you guessed it) whites out the whole screen.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Laura looks around blinking, then looks down at...

HER HAND:

In her excitement, she has pressed the SILENT ALARM again!

LAURA

closes her eyes, realizing her mistake.

THE STORE - LATER

The rope barrier closing off the dance floor is up.

Somewhere, a VACUUM CLEANER is going.

The Young Cop is again strolling past the GROUP lined up for inspection, the girls almost nude.

YOUNG COP

... Three, four... Who's missing?

RICK

Janitor's sweeping up.

Just then the VACUUM STOPS and Prank enters from the dance floor, dragging it behind him. He lines up with them.

The Young Cop stops before Jemima and notes the welt on her cheek.

YOUNG COP
What happened to you?

Jemima lowers her eyes wordlessly.

The Young Cop lifts the hem of Jemima's robe with the tip of his flashlight, noting her bruises. Jemmima moves to cover herself.

Then he takes Jemima's arm and leads her to the back.

LAURA
Wha-- what, again?

OLD COP
You all can go now.

They disperse. Laura looks around for support but no one backs up her protest.

She sees Robin leaving for the dance floor and hurries after.

THE DANCE FLOOR

Robin surveys the damage with Luzia as Laura enters.

ROBIN
We can fake it. Laura, send Prank next door for our carpenter.

LAURA
Robin, that policeman--

ROBIN
We've only got a few hours before Victor gets back.

She shoots Laura a look, then turns to the broken pole.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Rick has sunk down on the carpet as Laura comes up.

RICK
Damn! I almost had him. Almost!
What rotten luck!

Laura picks up the phone and dials.

LAURA

Frank, please come to the register. Frank, to the register, please.

RICK

Story of my life... Almost.
Almost standup of the year...
Almost got in Last Standup
Standing... almost...

He leans back and closes his eyes.

THE DANCE FLOOR

Erika is trying to fix the bench's leg with Elmer's glue.

Luzia is cleaning the windows with a towel and Windex.

Robin enters with a small toolbox and squats next to the pole.

AT THE CASHIER'S STATION,

Laura watches all this on the monitors. Prank walks up with the CARPENTER, a curly-haired young man.

PRANK

Carpenter's here.

Laura gets up to walk them to the dance floor, when they hear a loud THUMP!

Rick has slumped back against the wall, face bruised, eyes shut.

LAURA

Rick? Rick! My God, is he dead?
looks up, then resumes his placid writing.

THE OLD COP looks up, then resumes his placid writing.

LAURA approaches Rick and gives him a tentative shake.

LAURA

Rick! Rick!

Rick slowly opens his eyes and looks up at her.

RICK

What a day. Slapped in the groin, kicked in the head, and pierced in the heart by three beautiful women...

THE DANCE FLOOR

The Carpenter has his hand in one of the holes, but he is ogling the dancers.

CARPENTER

Looks back--er, bad, Prank, real bad.

ROBIN

jiggles as she works on the pole's foundation with a wrench. She stands up and shakes the pole to test it, jiggling some more.

CARPENTER

Those are some good-sized ho's--er, holes! Holes! Those are some good-sized holes!

LUZIA

carries the video camera up a ladder to re-attach it. She is wearing dental floss panties, something the Carpenter finds almost unbearable.

CARPENTER

Still got that leftover legs--er, leg-over limber-- er, leftover lumber from last thigh?

PRANK

(peering at him)
What, you sweating already?

LAURA AND RICK

She is feeling him around for broken bones-- WHOA! A TICKLISH SPOT! Rick reacts.

RICK

Really, I'll be fine--

LAURA

No no no. If you don't attend to fractures, they heal up crooked.

Laura's hands approach the crotch... hesitate...

...take the detour and slide down one leg instead.

ASIA

joins them, fully dressed. She drops her gym bag and kneels beside Rick.

ASIA

Allow the vet.

(to Rick)

Say "Arf!" Hurt anywhere?

RICK

Only in my heart.

Asia holds up one finger and slowly moves it to and fro. Rick follows it with his eyes.

ASIA

Just some minor brain damage.
Won't make much difference. Hot bath, good night's sleep you'll be good as new.

THE YOUNG COP

enters, smoothing his hair and WHISTLING a happy tune. He joins his partner.

The Old Cop hands Laura the papers, and she signs.

OLD COP

You should open a charge account with us, get billed monthly.

They turn and leave. Asia hands Laura some bills.

ASIA

The rent and Prank's tip. Dance floor's all shot, might as well hit the books.

She picks up her bag and turns to Rick, hunched on the floor.

ASIA
(continued)

And Quasimodo here won't have to
walk me out today.

She pats his crotch twice, making him wince, then he grabs
her arm and pulls on it to help himself up.

RICK

No, I insist. It's my job... ow!

They exit, Asia helping to hold Rick up.

THE DANCE FLOOR

Prank's on his knees, holding plywood for the Carpenter to
nail over a hole. Erika walks by, carrying her gym
clothes. She is stark naked.

POW! The Carpenter HITS HIS THUMB! Even with some nails
pressed between his lips, he manages a silent "OW!" from
the left side of his mouth...

...drops the hammer to grasp his thumb... THUNK! It lands
on his foot! Silent "OW!" from the right side.

He bends to grab his foot just as Prank is handing the
hammer up to him. IT HITS HIM FULL ON THE CHIN. GULP!
The nails are gone!

PRANK shakes his head in disgust.

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Erika comes up, dressed in her gym suit.

ERIKA

Guess I'll go. Tell Victor I'll
see him tomorrow. Um, I leave
you some money, right?

LAURA

Five for Frank. And twenty for
the rent, but I don't know, you
didn't work a full shift.

ERIKA

Oh, that's okay. Easy come, easy
go.

She begins counting out as Jemima drags herself up.

Jemima's also in street clothes, no makeup. Laura looks at her, not quite knowing what to say.

JEMIMA

What a day, huh?

She puts a sheaf of bills on the counter and wearily plops down where Rick had slumped. She feels the carpet with her hand, noticing.

JEMIMA

(continuing)

Warm.

(beat)

I made a mess of the floor. I'll tip Prank ten bucks today.

Erika looks up sharply. Then she counts off five more for the janitor.

Laura picks up Jemima's stack, pulls off a ten... a twenty...

JEMIMA

(continuing)

Two hundred there. Short shift.

Laura opens the register, stuffs Jemima's money into it without counting, and pulls out two Benjamins.

LAURA

Will you be all right?

But Jemima has closed her eyes and seems to have fallen asleep. Laura looks at Erika.

ERIKA

(feeling her own
bruises)

Some Ben-Gay will fix me up.

LAURA

(re: Jemima)

I'd like to turn in that jerk
cop.

Erika looks at Jemima with genuine concern.

ERIKA

Oh no. Did he-- I thought--

LAURA
Pigs! Bullies!

She rants LOUDER AND LOUDER as her anger rises.

Erika watches surprised, then urgently gestures to head her off.

LAURA
(continuing)
If there's anything I hate it's a
criminal with a badge!

ERIKA
Um Laura... Laura...

LAURA
What's a working girl to do when
the people sworn to protect her
are first in line for their pound
of flesh...

Erika jerks Laura's arm and motions with her eyes.

Laura turns to look...

...and chokes!

THE YOUNG COP

is standing behind her, menacing in dark glasses!

YOUNG COP
I'm here for her.

He points his chin at Jemima.

LAURA STARES AT THE YOUNG COP,

shocked. She blinks several times.

LAURA
Wha--? On what charge?

He approaches threateningly, thumbs hooked on his belt.

YOUNG COP
MasterCard. Cut the crap. I'm
taking her home with me so she
can keep me warm tonight.

Laura's sense of outrage finally takes over.

LAURA
Like heck you are! Haven't you
done enough today? No-sir-you-
are-not-taking-her-home!

She backs towards the oblivious Jemima, getting between her and the Young Cop...

...as Erika, heartened by Laura's defiance, decides to go eyeball-to-eyeball with the Young Cop.

ERIKA
No-sir-you-are-not--

OOPS-- her breasts have gotten in the way. She adjusts.

ERIKA
(continuing)
No-sir-you-arenot, Mr. badge
number...
(reading)
"...B-B one nine!"

She looks at him challengingly, but he starts to walk around her.

YOUNG COP
That's eight eight one nine.

LAURA
Run, Jemima, quick! Jemima!
Jemima!

But Jemima just sits there, eyes closed.

In no hurry, the Young Cop walks around and stops at Jemima's right. (Laura is on her left.)

LAURA
(continuing)
Jemima, get up! Run!

The Young Cop pulls off his shades and smirks.

YOUNG COP
Watch this.

He kneels on one knee next to Jemima...

...leans forward...

...and whispers in her ear:

YOUNG COP
(continuing)
Lisa baby...

Jemima's eyes flutter open. Seeing him, she rubs his leg.

JEMIMA
Here already? Give me a kiss...

The Young Cop smiles as he complies. Then,

YOUNG COP
(to Laura/Erika)
She's deaf in the left ear.

LAURA REMEMBERS:

Jemima ignoring the RINGING PHONE to her left.

ERIKA REMEMBERS:

Jemima ignoring Robin's/Luzia's injunctions to stop fingering herself.

ERIKA
(to Jemima)
I didn't know...
(indicates ear)
I'm sorry.

JEMIMA
No hard feelings. Hey, you're quite a dancer. I have a troupe. Come down audition for our music video.

ERIKA
A real music video? I'd love to.

JEMIMA AND THE YOUNG COP

Grinning happily at each other.

JEMIMA
This is Earl, my boyfriend of two years. Today we made up after our worst fight ever.

YOUNG COP
Second worst.

JEMIMA
Yeah? What was the worst?

YOUNG COP
The Cambodian leeches cure?

They LAUGH together over their shared experience, then catch Laura and Erika watching them.

JEMIMA
(re: Laura/Erika)
They're both new. They didn't know about us.

LAURA AND ERIKA

continue to stare openmouthed.

LAURA
But-- but you were crying!

THE GROUP

EMIMA
Oh, we were negotiating the non-negotiables. You know what true love's like.
(to Young Cop)
And how was your day?

The Young Cop picks her up in his arms.

YOUNG COP
Better than usual.

He winks at Laura.

YOUNG COP
(continuing)
Thanks for setting the alarm off. Twice.

JEMIMA
Well, time to go.

She holds out her hand and Laura hands her her \$200. The Young Cop picks up her bag.

Rick shows up and goes straight to them.

RICK
Hey, Earl! Stealing my job, huh?

YOUNG COP
How's it going, Rick?

RICK
You should come by when you're
off so we don't have to play-act
for the rest of the P.D.

They exit chatting without glancing back, Earl's arm over
Jemima's shoulder, her's around his waist. Erika and
Laura watch them go.

Then Erika turns to Laura.

ERIKA
Who would've guessed? Well, nice
meeting you. See you tomorrow.

She waves and leaves.

FADE TO:

EXT. - STREET - FRONT ENTRANCE - LATE AFTERNOON

Erika comes out. The Italian Food Stand is closing up.

ANGELA
Hi! Lots of excitement today,
huh? Cops all over the place.
Well, did you get the job? You
did? You did? That's fantastic!
Congratulations! Gino, hear
that? She got the job!

Gino smiles and waves as Erika walks on. Angela's voice
fades as she goes into the kitchen.

ANGELA
(continuing)
Why people don't like nude
dancers I'll never understand. I
like them, they're nice people.

GINO
You like everybody.

FADE TO:

VICTOR'S FACE

In quick succession: Shock, disgust, frustration... then anger.

VICTOR
You're fired!!!

THE CASHIER'S STATION

Victor, Robin and Luzia ARGUE while Laura is packing up in the b.g. Rick hovers around her solicitously.

ROBIN
Dude, it's her first day! You want championship strokes first time in the pool?

LUZIA
Lighten up a bit.

Victor shakes the silent alarm and the police citations at Luzia.

VICTOR
You better watch your ass, 'cause you're not bringing 'em in like you used to and you could be next!

Luzia gives him the finger and starts for the dressing room.

Robin follows. As she passes Victor, she points to the silent alarm in his hand.

Victor notes this...

...and slaps his forehead.

In his anger, he is PUSHING THE BUTTON, hard!

RICK

watches Laura pull on her blazer.

RICK
Well, good luck... don't feel too bad... maybe we'll meet again.

Prank starts to dust in the b.g. Rick's face lights up and he nudges Laura.

RICK
(continuing)
Hey, Prank! You know whites are three times more likely to use condoms than blacks or Hispanics?

Prank dusts, ignoring him completely.

RICK
(continuing)
Hey, your line is, "What about Filipinos?" Hey!

He watches Prank's receding back, and decides to perform both roles himself.

RICK
(continuing; looking right)
Whites are more likely to use condoms than blacks or Hispanics.
(looking left, different voice)
What about Filipinos?
(looking right)
Filipinos don't have sex, they--

But Laura has hurried off after Prank without waiting for the punchline.

RICK
(continuing; to himself)
...They have shoes... like Imelda Marcos... Ricky boy, you're almost so funny, you're almost a riot...

LAURA

is about to knock on the door of the staff locker room when she hears a MELODY float out from inside.

A HARMONICA. The tune is lovely, foreign but familiar at the same time.

She listens a while, then knocks. The HARMONICA STOPS.

PRANK (O.S.)
I'm on break.

The HARMONICA STARTS AGAIN, haunting, moody.

LAURA
Can-- can I come in?

No answer. The HARMONICA CONTINUES.

She grasps the doorknob, hesitates, and pushes inside...

...THE STAFF LOCKER ROOM

Prank sits on a crate PLAYING THE HARMONICA. Coffee steams from a kettle next to him.

He eyes her but doesn't stop. She shuts the door behind her and leans on it, listening.

Then he looks away and PLAYS ON...

THE DANCE FLOOR

Victor remonstrates with Robin as she changes clothes. Luzia is already in street wear, talking on the phone.

VICTOR
Come on, Robin, I need you here!
People think this place rakes it
in but you know how thin our
profit margin really is!

Robin continues to dress, ignoring him.

VICTOR
(continuing)
If we don't make enough to stay
open, where'd you girls go to
make money? Isn't this place way
better than the Eyeful?

Robin is dressed. She turns to Victor...

...smiles... holds her hand out to him...

...then SHOVES him to the bench when he moves to take it!

She turns to Luzia as the latter ENDS her call.

Victor opens his hands imploringly as she and Luzia exit O.S...

The door SLAMS.

He sits disconsolate. Shifts his weight on the bench...

...and the leg Erika had glued on BREAKS OFF, SPILLING him onto the floor!

He looks up.

The video camera is teetering on its mooring... uh-oh...

A VIDEO MONITOR AT THE CASHIER'S STATION

Victor's face FLASH ZOOMS towards the camera. Then the screen fills with SNOW.

STAFF LOCKER ROOM - PRANK AND LAURA

Prank's SONG THREADS DOWN TO ITS GOSSAMER END.

THE MELODY HANGS IN THE AIR for a moment...

Then Prank shakes the harmonica and starts wiping it off.

PRANK

So how you like my song?

LAURA

Beautiful. What was it?

PRANK

A balitaw. Pilippine poke song.

He says "Pilippine" instead of "PHilippine" and "Poke" instead of "Folk."

LAURA

I came to say goodbye... I got fired...

Prank stands up and puts the harmonica in his locker.

PRANK

Girl like you, find another job real quick.

LAURA

Frank, I wanted to tell you... I think it's terrible the way Rick keeps at you...

Prank finally looks at her, a curious, searching look.

LAURA
 (continuing)
 ...and... I want you to know that
 I noticed your kindness, Frank...
 and I sincerely appreciate it.
 (softly)
 Thank you.

Impulsively she gives him a quick hug. He staggers,
 totally surprised.

LAURA
 (continuing)
 Well. I better get going.
 (smiling weakly)
 Good luck to us all, huh?

She turns to go, fumbling with the doorknob.

PRANK
 (flawless English)
 Come visit once in a while.

Laura FREEZES, stunned! She whirls around and stares.

PRANK
 (continuing)
 Not a word. To anybody.
 Especially not to Rick.

NOT A TRACE OF AN ACCENT! She can't believe it, opens her
 mouth to speak, stops, tries again!

He is GRINNING now. She leans on the door and has fits of
 silent laughter.

LAURA
 You mean-- all this years-- you--
 they-- Rick--

PRANK
 Am I an actor or am I an actor?

Laura has regained control.

LAURA
 No one suspects?

He shakes his head.

LAURA
 (continuing)
 But-- but why?

Prank's smile tightens a bit and he studies her face.
Beat. Beat.

He decides; let's see.

PRANK

You know, this is a funny
country. When you're different,
people here can be so cruel.

LAURA

So you co-opted "different."

He smiles. She's understood.

PRANK

Music can sustain you only so
far.

Beat. Suddenly Prank reaches for the vacuum cleaner.

PRANK

(continuing)

Asia told me about your mortgage.
I want you to have this.

She watches puzzled as he unzips the bag and pulls out the
inner liner. He gives it a quick wipe then hands it to
her. PUFFS OF DUST rise from its mouth.

She doesn't quite know what to make of this, but takes it
without looking at it. She can't get over Prank's acting.

LAURA

Appearance and reality.

Prank indicates the liner meaningfully and reaches out to
squeeze it. WISPS OF DUST PUFF OUT of the hole, but...
WHAT'S THIS peeking out from inside?

PRANK

Reality and appearance.

Laura peers in, and pulls out...

...a twenty dollar bill, spotted with gray dust balls!

She reaches in again and pulls out...

...another twenty.

Ignoring the dust, she pulls out a handful of bills--
ones, fives, tens.

She looks at them wonderingly...

...then shoves them back in and proffers the bag to Prank.

LAURA

Oh no. I can't take this.

Prank gently pushes it back.

PRANK

Not my money. Remember the floor fight? Those are the tips. If anything, they belong to you ladies.

Laura is speechless.

PRANK

(continuing)

Must be close to eight hundred in there.

LAURA

You went in there and vacuumed the tips...

PRANK

(pointing to self)

Fastest sucker in the West.

Laura tries to laugh but tears are welling up. She moves to kiss Prank, catching the bag between them...

...forcing out a BLAST OF GRAY SMOKE that settles on them like a fog.

COUGHING, they wave it away.

Now their faces are gray from the dust. They stare, then break out LAUGHING, dusting themselves off.

Beat. Then Prank extends his hand.

PRANK

Good luck.

LAURA

(wiping a tear)

I'll never forget you, Frank.

SOMEONE OUTSIDE pushes the door a little open but Laura is in the way. Rick's arm reaches in, feeling for the obstruction.

RICK

Laura?

Prank motions, reminding Laura to keep his secret. Laura moves so Rick can enter. He notices the dust.

RICK

Ugh. Been making mud pies?

LAURA

Frank gave me a bag for my vacuum.

THE REAR ENTRANCE

A masked head pops DOWN from the roof and peers in the door upside-down. It's the return of the dreaded Ninja Flasher!

He looks left, he looks right. No one. But wait...

Here come Laura, Rick, and Prank from the locker room.

RICK

Really, it's no problem. I was saving it for college but hey-- I got that funny-guy fever.

Laura pats him on the cheek.

LAURA

Rick, that's sweet, and I truly appreciate it, but I'll manage. Really.

RICK

Will I ever see you again?

LAURA

Maybe.

RICK

You mean "almost..."

Suddenly she remembers something and stops.

LAURA

Why do all the dancers pat your-- pat you there?

Rick smiles. He slips back into performance mode.

RICK
 Oh, that. Hey, Prank! Listen to
 this: why do the dancers pat me
 here?

PRANK
 Por sure not por luck.

Prank walks off while Laura suppresses a chuckle.

LAURA
 No, really. Why?

RICK
 Why? Well...
 (punchline)
 ...it's a long story!

And he laughs.

RICK
 (continuing)
 A long story! Get it? Hahahaha!

But he is interrupted by a LOUDER CACKLE.

NINJA FLASHER
 Heh-heh-heh-HEh-heh!
 Heh-heh-heh-HEh-heh!

Startled, they look towards the rear entrance.

THE NINJA FLASHER stands at the door, hands on lapels,
 getting ready to flash! Laura stifles a SCREAM!

RICK
 reaches behind for the weapon in his waistband.

RICK
 NOW I got you, turkey fucker!

But his hand doesn't come back. He paws around some more,
 then twists to look at his waist behind.

His Magnum is missing.

THE NINJA FLASHER
 Starts to part his raincoat.

NINJA FLASHER
Heheheheheheheheheheh!

Before he can get it open, however, LAURA GRABS HIM around the body, PINNING HIS ARMS TO HIS CHEST!

Rick leaps back into the locker room!

RICK
Hold him! Don't let go!

BUT LAURA is losing the struggle.

LAURA
Rick! HELP! HELP!

Laura can't hold on! The Flasher sends her reeling, then turns to face her and grasps his lapels.

She ducks away, but suddenly RICK IS BETWEEN THEM! He aims his pistol two-handed at the flasher...

LAURA
Don't shoot! DON'T SHOOT !!!

The Flasher opens his raincoat just as Laura SCREAMS and Rick FIRES...

RICK
Drink piss and drown, turkey fucker!

...or rather, just as Rick SQUIRTS!

It's a MAGNUM WATER PISTOL and it does exactly what Rick intended:

WATER SPRAYS all over the STROBES AND BATTERY PACKS strapped on the Flasher under his raincoat...

...and SHORTS HIM OUT! Hair straightened out to the limit, the Flasher spins and jerks in a FOURTH OF JULY FIREWORKS DISPLAY...

...falls to the floor in a spasm...

...and lies there in a cloud of white smoke, twitching to an occasional FLASH! and ZAP!

RICK AND LAURA

lean forward for a good look while Luzia and Robin run up.

EXT. - THE REAR PARKING LOT - EVENING

The Old Cop drives his police cruiser up and gets out.

OLD COP
They should give me a reserved
parking space here.

He walks up to find the group gathered around the fallen
Flasher.

RICK reaches down and pulls the flasher's mask off.
Everyone cranes to look! It's...

LAURA
Mr. Schimmer!

Schimmer's eyes snap open when he hears his name.

SCHIMMER
No hall pass! Detention!

Rick squats down and sticks his water pistol in Schimmer's
mouth.

RICK
You have the right to remain
silent. You have the right to an
attorney...
(idea)
Hey, anyone know how to
waterboard?

FADE TO:

THE REAR LOT

A LIMO pulls in. Luzia waves at it, then turns to the
others.

LUZIA AND LAURA

A quick hug.

LAURA
Sorry I got you fired too.

LUZIA
It was time to move on. But do
me a favor.

THE LIMO

The CHAUFFEUR gets out and opens the door as Luzia runs up. She smiles at the occupant before she gets in.

Then they're off! As the limo U-turns, Luzia lowers her window and waves her hankie continuously at the group. Then the hankie drops and from the limo comes...

ISHIHARA

Arf arf owWOOOOOOOOOOO.....

NOW we see the paper roses and the sign stuck on the limo's trunk: "JUST MARRIED."

LAURA AND ROBIN

in the parking lot. Robin plops her bag in the bed of her pickup, then turns to Laura.

ROBIN

So whatcha gonna do now?

Laura shrugs.

LAURA

I'll figure it out. Go back to writing? Maybe I'll write about this place.

ROBIN

If you do, be kind. Good luck.

They shake.

LAURA

Robin, I want you to know that I like and respect you--

ROBIN

Same here, dude. Wrong foot, but we got it right.

LAURA

No, I mean, this morning, I thought dancers were nothing but sleazy leeches, sucking men dry--

ROBIN

-- and now you think we're all saints and all men are scumbags.

Laura realizes she has not really fathomed Robin, but it's cool, they can still be friends. They shake again.

FADE TO:

THE SUNSET,

impossibly glorious! Palm trees glide majestically past, silhouetted against the sunset as we drive by.

FADE TO:

RICK AND LAURA,

snuggling in the dark, warm in each others arms. CRICKETS ARE SINGING. They kiss with a mighty SMACK!

LAURA

So what's this Luzia said about me?

RICK

That you can't say no.

SMACK!

LAURA

You'll be sorry. It's been years since I've... known a man.

RICK

What the-- "known a man"???

INT. - LAURA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The only light comes from the TV. Minda sits on the floor, munching pizza from a box.

Jeff joins her with a cereal box from which he pulls...

...a DVD.

JEFF

Ever see Traci Lords?

Minda shrugs.

JEFF

(continuing)

We have to turn the sound down, okay? So Mom can't hear.

LAURA AND RICK - NIGHT - WIDER

So it's a hammock they're snuggling in. SMACK!

LAURA
Been years since I've...
experienced congress.

RICK
What? What??

JEFF AND MINDA,
absorbed in their movie.

MINDA
What's that?

JEFF
(proudly)
Soybean.

Minda chews pizza, mulling this over.

MINDA
Runs on batteries, huh?

LAURA AND RICK - EVEN WIDER

The hammock is in Laura's backyard. SMACK!

LAURA
It's been years since I've slept
with a man.

RICK
"Slept with a man"???

JEFF AND MINDA

TV light flickers over their faces.

JEFF
Go, Traci! Ain't she something?

MINDA
(shrugging)
If you like blondes.

LAURA AND RICK - STILL WIDER

A full moon hangs above them. SMACK!

LAURA
Years since I've made love.

RICK
Made WHAT???

JEFF AND MINDA

slumped against the sofa, leaning against each other,
still watching. Minda yawns. Jeff SNIFFS her hair.

JEFF
How come girls smell so good?

MINDA
Pheromones.

EXT. - LAURA'S YARD

We can hardly distinguish the shadows; hammock's been
swallowed up by the dark-- but the SMACK! is unmistakable!

LAURA
Years since I've, um, gotten
laid?

RICK
Gotten wha-a-at ?????

LAURA
You're going to make me say it,
aren't you? Aren't you?

RICK
What? WHAT???

LAURA
Years since I fucked! There, you
happy now? Huh? Huh?

RICK
Hey, don't grab-- ow!

TILT UP to the moon.

LAURA (O.S.)
Heyyyyy... it is a long story!

RICK (O.S.)
Ow! Ow! OWOOOOOOOooo...

UP MUSIC AND

FADE OUT.

THE END

“THE TOUCH OF DEATH”

Written by Xosé “X” Alzona

WGAw Registered

SCREENWRITER'S INTRODUCTION TO *THE TOUCH OF DEATH*

(READER ALERT: This introduction contains spoilers!)

One of my guilty pleasures is the Asian martial arts film, a wide-ranging grab-bag into which I lump everything from classics like Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954) to the most shamelessly exploitative post-Bruce Lee Hong Kong chop-socky. So when Hollywood finally started making American versions of the genre, showcasing such exotic Asian weapons as *shuriken*, *nunchaku*, and *balisong*, I was sure it was only a matter of time before they made a film about the ultimate close-quarters killing app: *dim mak*, the fabled delayed death touch! Think about it: You strike your victim today; there seems to be no immediate effect, but days, weeks, even months later, he falls down dead, perhaps while you're lying on the beach a long plane flight away. Perfect alibi, perfect crime! Could there be a better McGuffin for a policier? What screenwriter could resist?

As it happens, I also love film noir, the sensibility and the craft of it. I love its look and feel—the venetian blinds, the moody lighting, the deep focus, the long takes, the voiceover—all children of necessity, really, because most noirs were shot as ultralow-budget “B” undercards meant to fill the bottom half of theatrical double features. But look what's happened since: Today, many noirs have acquired a vibrant life of their own, while the main “A” features they were meant to support lie unsung in the dustbin of film history. *Out of the Past* (1947) is not only one of my favorite noirs, it's one of my favorite *films* of all time. And although I've watched *Night and the City* (1950) many many times, I'm always surprised by how it can still grab below the short-and-curly and squeeze when the hulking wrestlers Gregorius and the Strangler finally collide in the ring—and squeeze hardest when all you see on screen is what looks like a still picture of Gregorius' fingers locked behind the Strangler's back! The fact that noir can tell such gripping stories with such meager resources just proves that its makers possessed a deep, deep understanding of the art of storytelling.

Now, because the plot of *Night and the City* relies on some subtleties of fight technique, it can be seen as a seminal American martial arts film— there’s the seed of a martial arts noir there. So why not go whole hog and combine the tropes of both genres— the flawed protagonist and scheming femme fatale of noir, with the unstoppable killing machine and the esoteric secret weapon (here, *dim mak*) of the martial arts genre? Mix in a long-standing character of mine, a hardboiled Filipino-American private eye, and *voilà* my screenplay, *The Touch of Death!*

Now, some who’ve read my script have complained that because my hero’s 12-year-old kid plays such a large part in it, I break the noir convention of “no kids allowed.” Well hey, while I’d love nothing more than to take credit for this innovation, the truth is that *The Touch of Death* started out as a very conventional spec pilot for a very conventional TV detective series. The kid was to be a recurring character, a foil for the hardbitten hero. I don’t remember when the idea of converting that pilot into a feature-length noir came to me— maybe after I’d watched *Out of the Past* one time too many? Anyway, the kid just stuck around during the conversion— she just would not go away. And I like the kid. Every reader who’s ever critiqued this screenplay, the kid was always one of the first things they mentioned. One even said that my script starts to take off only after the kid enters the picture. So I know the kid does make some kind of an impact. Glad she decided to stay. Thanks, kid.

I shopped *The Touch of Death* to so many film companies, I’ve lost count— there must be more than ten different rewrites of it floating around Hollywood. And every once in a while I’ll watch a film made by one of these companies and see something that’ll make me think, “Wow, that sure looks like it was lifted from my screenplay.”

In fact, a company run by some people I thought were friends did make a film about *dim mak*, *after* they’d passed on my script, from which I’m pretty sure they lifted some parts wholesale, because those parts don’t really fit into their film; they stick out like sore contrivances, like they were grafted on as afterthoughts. But how do you copyright a martial arts technique like *dim mak*? You can’t. It would be like copyrighting a boxer’s left hook. My only consolation is that their company went belly up a few years later, coincidentally while I was lying on the beach in Cannes, a long plane flight away. So no way you gonna pin that stinkin’ rap on me!

To avoid any similar unpleasantness, let me give full credit where credit's due for two lines in *The Touch of Death* that I freely admit I nicked: The first line is Philip Raven's (Alan Ladd's), who says "Cats bring you luck" several times in the 1942 noir *This Gun for Hire*, script by W.R. Burnett and Albert Maltz, based on the novel by the British spy Graham Greene. And the line "It's Chinatown," of course, is a direct lift from writer Robert Towne's great modern noir, *Chinatown* (1974), directed by Roman Polanski.

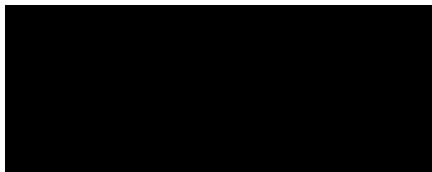
On the other hand, there's a scene in the 1944 noir *Murder, My Sweet*, where the hero Philip Marlowe (Dick Powell) is temporarily blinded by gunfire and has to wear bandages over his eyes, similar to what happens to my Fil-American protagonist early in my script. Quite uncanny, since I emphatically did *not* copy it. My scene was original with me. I can say this confidently because, while I may have seen other filmizations of this Raymond Chandler novel years ago, I first saw *Murder, My Sweet* only after I'd already completed *The Touch of Death*. I'm quite sure of this.

I believe that takes care of everything. Now imagine the black-and-white newsreels and the coming attractions are over and the "B" undercard is starting. Turn up the collar on your trench coat, tilt your fedora to one side, light a cigarette, and enjoy.

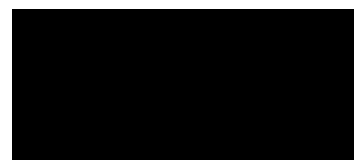
"THE TOUCH OF DEATH"

Written by

Xosé "X" Alzona



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WGAw Registered



THE TOUCH OF DEATH

FADE IN:

The sign on the door reads "INTERVIEW ROOM." A UNIFORMED POLICEMAN opens it for us, revealing TWO POLICE DETECTIVES staring out at us from behind a bare steel table.

KILBY, the younger one, addresses us as we enter.

KILBY
Sit down, sir.

A chair SCRAPES as the visitor (MANNY) sits facing them, but we don't see him. EVERYTHING IS SHOT FROM HIS P.O.V.

KILBY
(continuing)
Detective Kilby. You know Detective Garrison.

Kilby shakes our hand. Garrison just stares at us.

KILBY
(continuing)
You wanted to report a murder?

MANNY (O.S.)
(dark, numbed voice)
Two murders.

Kilby looks at Garrison, who stares straight at us.

MANNY (O.S.)
(continuing)
I killed one. The doctor.

KILBY
We know about that one. Who's the other?

MANNY (O.S.)
Me.

Garrison looks away in disgust.

MANNY (O.S.)
(continuing)
I'm the other victim! I'm dead!

MANNY CACKLES INSANELY, then succumbs to COUGHING.

KILBY

Want to start at the beginning?

CONTINUE Manny's O.S. LAUGHTER as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - DINGY OFFICE (BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)

A KITTEN curled up in the dimness. FOOTSTEPS. It reacts.

Then window blinds RASP and noir strips of light fall on its furry form.

JOHN WHITTAKER reaches down to shake the crumple of laundry under the animal, sending it scampering.

JOHN

(bright, masculine)

Up, up, up. Can't be late.

A hand rises from the bundle and SLAPS John's hand away.

John peers down-- he's burly, 30s, perhaps Irish, well-groomed, many smile lines. He probes the bundle with his fingers.

JOHN

(continuing)

Manny! Hey, Manny!

His hand comes up with an empty pint of bourbon. MUFFLED CURSES of protest follow from the bundle.

JOHN

(continuing)

Come on, we need the work.

More MUTTERED OATHS from the laundry.

John picks up a bottle of cologne from somewhere and tosses it on the pile.

JOHN

(continuing)

Slap some of this on. Fifteen minutes.

FADE TO:

EXT. - URBAN CHINATOWN STREET - DUSK - TRAVELING (CAR)

It's perhaps the early 70s, before disco, before Bruce Lee, the waning days of Vietnam, flower children, and the counterculture.

John pilots the RATTLING vehicle thru jaywalkers as neon signs start to blink on in the dusk.

His passenger SPEAKS, and we recognize his voice: it's Manny, the visitor in our first interview scene with the detectives. But all we see is his back.

MANNY

Christ, you know I hate this place.
I hate this job already.

JOHN

They wanted us. Absolutely demanded
us. None but us will do.

MANNY

(lighting cigarette)
You said a "Mr. Young" hired us.
"Young" ain't no goddam chink name.

JOHN

I said "Yang," Y-A-N-G.

John draws the Chinese character for "Yang" in the air with his index finger, then waves the cigarette smoke away.

MANNY

The big Asiaphile. Asia-phile-of-
shit. You know I'd rather slurp my
own puke than come down here.

JOHN

Which I'm sure you've done many
times in a drunken stupor, my
friend.

Manny blows more smoke at him and tosses the spent match out the window.

WE PASS CHINESE HOUSEWIVES AND GRANDMOTHERS

shopping from sidewalk stalls.

MANNY

Smell that? Fish. I hate every goddam stink in this goddam place, but that goddam stink I hate worst of all.

JOHN

Could use a shower yourself, oh stinky one.

A THIN CHINESE MAN, shirt completely unbuttoned, sits at a stall, right leg up, rubbing between his bare toes, staring at nothing.

MANNY

Look at that. Fucking chink.

JOHN

Racist scum.

MANNY

Slant lover.

He flicks cigarette ash, letting it fall where it will.

JOHN

Born here, weren't you?

ON MANNY

At last we see our protagonist's face: Broad nose, slant eyes, tired, drawn, in his 40s... or is it 50s? He's still in the overcoat he slept in, and his fedora's not much better.

MANNY

Right there.

WE LOOK DOWN A SIDE STREET,

more like a large alley-- no bright lights or commercial establishments.

MANNY (O.S.)

A Flip ghetto in a Chink ghetto smackdab in the heart of the downtown ghetto. Left soon's I could and never looked back.

IN THE CAR

JOHN

Here we are.

He pulls into a space and parks.

With a smooth, practiced movement, Manny extracts a flask from his coat pocket, uncaps, swigs, and recaps.

He is about to slip it back into pocket when he notes John's look and teases him with the bottle.

MANNY

(meaningfully)

Eat your heart out.

John exits the car, rolling his eyes.

JOHN

That's not funny.

MANNY

Blame your doctor, not me.

He pockets the flask and exits the car.

THE STREET,

looking up at an old gray stone building.

Under the Chinese characters, a sign reads "Chinese Merchants Benevolent Association."

INT. - MEETING HALL

A NOISY CROWD, rows of folding chairs, colorful political banners, balloons, placards in Chinese and English proclaiming "VOTE FOR YANG!"

Our heroes enter and look around.

A tall, aristocratic Chinese wearing the traditional floor-length silk coat comes to meet them-- DR. ENG, every inch the affluent physician that he is.

Eyeing Manny's unkempt look, he extends his hand.

John smiles and takes his hat off. Manny leaves his on.

DR. ENG

Doctor Eng.

JOHN

John Whittaker.

(indicating)

Manuel Lee.

(to Manny)

Doctor Eng's the bad guy. He's running against our client.

DR. ENG

Lee... Hmm. Chinese?

MANNY

No, thanks.

DR. ENG

I didn't know whether to be outraged or amused when I learned that your employer had hired bodyguards. As if he were in any danger from us.

He watches Manny flick ash on the carpet.

DR. ENG

(continuing)

Manuel... Filipino?

MANNY

American.

DR. ENG

Ah, the melting pot. American style politics is new to us, but we strive to absorb its virtues while rejecting its vices.

A young Chinese man in SPECTACLES comes up to Manny and recoils slightly from his odor.

SPECTACLES

Mr. Lee? This way, please.

DR. ENG

Your employer calls. I'm sure we'll meet again.

Spectacles leads them into a softly lit corridor...

...stops at a door, and KNOCKS. It cracks a bit, hesitates, then opens, the doorman leaning out to peer behind them as they file in.

At this, Manny and John exchange looks.

They walk into a CACOPHONY of volunteers, telephone banks, computers, xerox and fax machines, CHINESE and ENGLISH mixing freely...

A second door. The same cautious entrance is repeated...

...and we enter into a smaller study.

A smiling, roly-poly Chinese gentleman in his 60s bounces from a desk to greet them. This is MR. YANG, recognizable as our candidate from the pictures on the posters.

JOHN

Hi, sorry we're late.

MR. YANG

(Chinese accent)

Don't worry. We wait all night if necessary. Please, sit.

The only couch is surrendered to them. Manny maneuvers John between him and Mr. Yang.

MR. YANG

I called as soon as we decide hire security.

He pulls a sheet of paper from his pocket and hands it past John's outstretched hand towards Manny.

THE SHEET OF PAPER

is covered with Chinese characters clipped from newspapers.

MANNY

looks sidelong at the proffered note, makes no move to take it.

MANNY

(to John)

Read any Chinese?

John takes the note gently from Mr. Yang.

JOHN
 (to Mr. Yang)
 I read Chinese.

MR. YANG
 Sorry. A death threat. "Withdraw
 candidacy or die."

JOHN
 Have you contacted the police?

MR. YANG
 Mr. Whittaker, in Chinatown, we
 always try settle our differences
 among ourselves. Police poke nose
 in... not good.
 (indicates Manny)
 That is why we need you.

Manny looks annoyed.

JOHN
 Sir, any idea who this might be
 from?

MR. YANG

seems to debate with himself... then decides.

MR. YANG
 Well, perhaps some elements of my
 opposition. You see, they are
 mostly chang pei, "ruling class,"
 and exercise power here for
 generations. Now that American
 politics coming to us, with tax
 dollars for winners, perhaps they
 think this is threat... or
 opportunity to make it official.
 (laughing)
 Everything has two faces.

Manny and John have been carefully studying him during this
 long speech.

JOHN
 (indicates note)
 How did you get this?

MR. YANG

In mailbox. No envelope, no address, just like that.

JOHN

When?

MR. YANG

Ten days ago.

The partners exchange glances. Mr. Yang shrugs, almost apologetic.

MR. YANG

(continuing)

We don't know if serious matter. Maybe big joke.

JOHN

Well, we'll do our best, sir, but we still suggest notifying the police.

MR. YANG

Thank you, no. You start now. I debate opponent in...

(looks at watch)

...fifteen minutes ago!

ALL THREE MEN RISE,

John stuffing the note in his pocket and Manny grinding his cigarette out on the carpet.

MANNY

I'll walk point.

He opens the door to the anteroom, and we TRACK AFTER THEM as they exit, followed by staff to...

THE CORRIDOR

Manny and Spectacles lead, with John and Mr. Yang right behind, flanked and trailed by stoked supporters.

People in the corridor STOP AND APPLAUD as they approach, making slow way for them.

LOOKING OVER MANNY'S SHOULDER,

we watch voters applaud and part to let us pass. Manny leads slowly towards...

THE BRIGHT LIGHTS

beckoning from the wide open door to the meeting hall, about 30 feet ahead.

SOMETHING ELSE. A Chinese youth in a LEATHER JACKET, very tall and thin, stands munching a sandwich right at door left.

TWENTY FEET. The fast-food bag he holds reads "THE CHEESE PLACE."

TEN FEET. A second youth in DARK GLASSES peers at us from door right.

FIVE FEET. LEATHER JACKET nonchalantly lowers his sandwich into the paper bag.

WITH A SUDDEN YELL,

Manny shoulders John and Mr. Yang aside while tugging out his gun under his coat!

BLAM! BLAM!

All hell breaks loose as LEATHER JACKET blazes away through the paper bag, while DARK GLASSES spits leaden death from the door!

SCREAMS, SCONCES SHATTER, PLASTER SHOWERS, bodies drop, run for cover!

John has flung himself over Mr. Yang and is firing back two-handed!

LEATHER JACKET screams and grabs his leg-- he's hit!

DARK GLASSES turns, aims at his pal and coldly BLOWS HIM AWAY! Then he takes off running!

IT'S ALL OVER IN SECONDS,

but people are still SCREAMING.

Spectacles lies motionless in a pool of blood.

JOHN

pulls Mr. Yang up-- he's unharmed-- and turns him over to his staff, who hustle him off. Then he looks around.

JOHN

Manny?

John finds Manny standing, leaning against the wall, back to us, left hand over his eyes, revolver limp in his soaked right hand.

GLISTENING BLACK DROPS run down the barrel of his gun and SPLAT on the carpet.

John goes to him and helps him down to a SITTING POSITION.

MANNY

has kept his left hand pressed tight over his eyes, as if he were afraid to look. A dark liquid stain is spreading on his coat right at the heart.

JOHN

Easy.

JOHN

pries Manny's revolver from his fingers... stops...

...sniffs it, then raises Manny's limp right hand and sniffs that too. Rubs a finger over the wet spots on the rug.

JOHN

Bourbon!

He RIPS Manny's shirt pocket open at the stain and shakes shards of broken glass onto the floor, the remains of the whiskey flask.

MANNY

just keeps his hand over his eyes while John LAUGHS in relief!

JOHN

slumps down beside Manny.

JOHN
(laughing)
Bastard! You scared me!

His laugh dies as he notes

MANNY'S LEFT HAND,

still over his eyes. Real blood has started to seep thru the fingers, trickling into red runs down his face.

SIRENS in the distance. John peeks under Manny's unresisting hand.

MANNY'S EYES are a bloody mess.

JOHN
Easy. You'll be all right.

FADE TO:

INT. - HOSPITAL ROOM - MANNY IN BED,
eyes swathed with thick bandages.

FOOTSTEPS. He reacts.

JOHN (O.S.)
Well, aren't we chipper today!

JOHN - MANNY'S P.O.V.

OR, how Manny IMAGINES John would look today if he could see him.

But since Manny has never seen this particular hospital room, the b.g. behind John is COMPLETELY BLACK.

JOHN
Just saw the doc. Lucky bastard.
You're not going blind.

MANNY (O.S.)
How's the client?

JOHN
Safe and secure. Had to call the
cops, though. No way around that,
not with three dead. One pro, still
no I.D. Asian, out-of-towner.
They're working on it, but don't
hold your breath.
(beat)
Still got those reflexes, bro'.

MANNY(O.S.)
Nah. Smelled it.

JOHN
Huhn?

MANNY(O.S.)
The cheese.

JOHN
Cheese.

MANNY
Most of the chinks down there are
Cantonese. Hate cheese. Can't
stand the smell.

JOHN
Often wondered why you never find
cheese on their menus. No wonder
Yang wanted you!

As they continue their conversation, we peek in on,,,

INT. - DR. ENG'S OFFICE - CHINATOWN

A dim, museum-like room, specimens stuffed and bottled, dried
herbs, Chinese anatomical charts on the walls.

Dr. Eng is very angry about something, telling off three very
deferential HOODS.

JOHN (V.O.)
Cops talked to Eng. Guess what. He
claims he's gotten death threats
too. "Quit the election or else."

A NURSE brings Dr. Eng a brown envelope. He opens it and lays the contents out on his desk. His hoods gather around.

JOHN (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 Blames communist elements in
 Chinatown.

MANNY (V.O.)
 (incredulous)
 Communists!

THE ENVELOPE CONTENTS

Papers, and an 8x10 head shot, marked with Chinese characters, of a very fair Caucasian male wearing a black turtleneck, vaguely reminiscent of Rutger Hauer's replicant in Blade Runner.

FADE TO:

INT. - AIRLINER FIRST CLASS SECTION - IN FLIGHT

CLOSE on the man in the photo, eyes shut, absorbed in his headphones. He is so fair that his hair and eyelashes are transparent-- a true ALBINO.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT enters, inadvertently allowing a stray of sun to sneak past the curtain and fall on his face.

Irked, he shades his eyes with his hand. She immediately closes the curtain.

The first class section is quite dim. The only passengers in it are the Albino and a LARGE, WHITE PIT BULL.

FADE BACK TO:

MANNY, propped up in his hospital bed, fewer bandages over his eyes. He drags on a cigarette while a passenger jet WHINES overhead outside his window.

FOOTSTEPS. He hurriedly stubs out his cigarette and tries to look innocent.

JOYCE'S VOICE
 Daddy!

MANNY

Angel?

JOYCE - MANNY'S P.O.V.

A 13-year-old charmer in braids and overalls leaps out at us from the b.g. blackness with a slurpy kiss...

...only to break up into jagged lightning and dancing stars. OUCH!

JOYCE'S VOICE

Oops, sorry. Did I hurt you?

The fireworks die down, and she re-materializes out of the black.

MANNY (O.S.)

Nahhh. Give us a big hug.

As Joyce blurs out towards us...

CINDY'S VOICE

Hello, Manny.

A coiffured blonde MATERIALIZES behind Joyce as she breaks from the hug. The family resemblance is obvious.

JOYCE

Mom's here. We brought oranges.

A colorful fruit basket MATERIALIZES in Cindy's arms.

JOYCE

(continuing)

She made me wear that yecchy pink dress, and it don't hardly fit no more.

Her T-shirt and overalls are magically replaced by a frilly pink dress, the kind you wear to birthday parties.

(NOTE: FROM HERE ON, ANY DESCRIPTIONS OF JOYCE AND/OR CINDY SHOULD MAGICALLY AFFECT THEIR SCREEN APPEARANCE AS MANNY'S IMAGINATION ADJUSTS.)

ALL THESE IMAGINED P.O.V. SHOTS ARE PAID OFF IN A LATER CRITICAL FIGHT SCENE.)

CINDY

And her hair's up in ribbons. She looks so pretty like that!

JOYCE

Yecch! I hate ribbons! I'm more like you, Dad, more Filipino than American.

MANNY (O.S.)

Who, me? I'm tried'n-true red-white'n-blue. Whatcha been up to?

CINDY

Oh, she gave me such a fright yesterday. She was on that skateboard juggling this chainsaw--

JOYCE

Not juggling, dad! You dig it on the ground in front and it pulls you forward like a tractor!

CINDY

You could've really hurt yourself!
(to Manny)
I really wish you hadn't given her that skateboard...

MANNY (O.S.)

Let's not fight.

Gentle KNOCKS. Joyce and Cindy turn to look.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(very throaty, sexy)
Sorry. Am I interrupting?

MANNY (V.O.)

Who's there?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Sally Robinson, David Yang's campaign manager.

(beat)

Uh, your client David Yang? Is this a bad time?

Cindy turns back to us.

CINDY

I'll just leave your fruit on the table. Come on, Joyce. Dad's got some business to tend to.

JOYCE

'Bye, dad.
 (leans towards us for a careful kiss)
 I love you.

MANNY (O.S.)

Nice "seeing" you, angel.

Cindy and Joyce move off waving, leaving the SCREEN COMPLETELY BLACK.

SALLY (O.S.)

How are you today?

As they talk, VARIOUS FEMALE IMAGES rapidly flash by, stopping briefly on a few. before flashing on... Manny's imagination is struggling to fit one to that SEXY VOICE.

MANNY (O.S.)

Huh? Fine. Fine.

SALLY

Family all fine?

The bed CREAKS as Sally (now a ravishing redhead) sits beside him.

MANNY (O.S.)

Family? Oh, we're divorced.
 (beat)

She's mad 'cause I gave the kid a skateboard for her birthday.

SALLY

Skateboard. Ah. She'll outgrow it in no time.

MANNY

Chloé.

SALLY

A lovely name.

MANNY

No, your perfume. It's Chloé.

Beat. Sally's image wavers between pleased, nonplussed, and insulted.

SALLY

Mr. Lee, your partner didn't want to leave his post at Mr. Yang's side and asked me to update you in his place.

Papers RUSTLE. She transforms into a stunning blonde in tailored suit extracting papers from her briefcase.

MANNY

John.

SALLY

Is that your cologne's name?

Was that a jab? Maybe she didn't like his Chloé remark?

MANNY (O.S.)

How's he doing?

SALLY

Quite creditably. But we got another threat yesterday. A very strange one.

As they talk, we peek in on

INT. - MR. YANG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Yang's in a canopy bed, surrounded by exotic bric-a-brac.

A PRETTY YOUNG CHINESE WOMAN helps him prepare for bed.

SALLY (V.O.)

Your partner gives it a lot of weight. It reads: "Your last chance. We have touched you with the touch of death. Drop out of the election and we will cancel its effects. Otherwise you will surely die at 3 a.m., day after tomorrow."

PULL BACK OUTSIDE Yang's window as she speaks...

... IT'S CHINATOWN, LATE NIGHT. Yang's room is on the corner of his building's top floor. Taller buildings with neon signs loom over it.

MANNY (V.O.)
 "The touch of death?"

Now we're across the street and still PULLING BACK. The bedroom is a good distance away. Another building comes IN FRAME...

...and there, crouching on its roof in the moonlight, dressed all in black, is the still figure of the Albino.

SALLY (V.O.)
 An old Chinese tale. In ancient times some extremely skilled people supposedly could touch you a certain way and make you die days later, weeks, even years later.

As the Albino watches, the lights in the bedroom go out.

SALLY (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 It would look like a heart attack, a stroke, something like that.

The Albino picks up a metal tube and aims...

...not at Yang's building, but at a taller one behind it.

WHOOOSH! A wire SHOOTS OUT of the tube, FLASH-WHIPS across space, strikes the taller building's wall, and STICKS!

The Albino quickly fastens the other end to some pipes behind him and tests the wire's tautness. It is now strung past and above Yang's building.

SALLY (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 But what bothers us is, this note was found inside Mr. Yang's bedroom...

Now the Albino picks up a pulley with handles, fits it over the wire, grips it with both hands, takes a deep breath...

...and leaps off at BREAKNECK SPEED into VERTIGINOUS SPACE!

SALLY (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 ...as if to stress that they could get to him anytime they wanted to.

Timing it exactly right, the Albino releases his handhold, spreads his arms to flair out some fabric wings like a flying squirrel...

...and glides through space, dropping down... down...

to land silently on Yang's roof!

He's over the edge in a flash, clinging to the wall like a spider...

MANNY (V.O.)

How'd they get in?

Finding footholds and handholds in the brick, the Albino works his way rapidly towards Yang's window.

SALLY (V.O.)

The bedroom window. Glass was cut, but we've no idea how anyone could've gotten up there unnoticed. We're on the fifth floor on a very busy corner, and security's really tight.

Perched at the window ledge, the Albino shines a penlight thru the window.

Nothing stirs inside. He touches the penlight to the pane and leans his ear against the other end.

FAINT SNORING-- deep and regular. He smiles.

MANNY (V.O.)

Where's Yang now?

SALLY (V.O.)

He's hardheaded. Won't move elsewhere, cut down appearances, change his schedule. Your partner's doing his best. Someone's with Yang round the clock.

The Albino CLICKS a switch on the penlight and cuts a circle on the window pane with its point.

Then he presses his mouth against the glass, and, using it as suction...

...he POPS the cutout noiselessly!

Reaching inside thru the hole, he turns the latch, opens the window, and slips inside, glass still glued to his mouth.

MANNY (V.O.)

Good. John's real good at that.

SALLY - MANNY'S P.O.V.

...or, the blonde Manny imagines her to be.

SALLY

That's the update. Any message for Mr. Whittaker?

MANNY (O.S.)

Tell him I should be back in a few days.

SALLY

Will do. Well, I have to get back. Terribly sorry about your-- I hope you feel better soon.

She RUSTLES papers. The bed CREAKS as she rises.

MANNY (O.S.)

Wait.

(beat)

Blonde or brunette?

SALLY

(is she laughing?)

Brunette.

The stunning blonde DISSOLVES into a sultry black-haired beauty who starts unbuttoning her blouse.

MANNY (O.S.)

Married?

SALLY

(laughing now)

Divorced.

(beat)

I have to go. We'll update you regularly. Goodbye, Mr. Lee.

She sashays off, STRIPPING to her undergarments as she leaves.

MANNY

If we could see his eyes, they would be grinning.

MANNY

Tell John I need hourly updates. On
the hour.

FADE TO:

INT. - HOSPITAL ROOM - MANNY

On the PHONE by the window. Only small white patches remain
over his eyes.

JOYCE'S VOICE

... dinner at grampa's last night. I
tried to use gramma's electric fan
to drive my 'board, but the cord was
too short.

(beat)

I miss you, dad. Hope you get well
soon.

He listens, quietly pleased.

INT. - EYE EXAMINATION ROOM

A DOCTOR is peering into Manny's eyes with an instrument.

Satisfied, he lowers it and we see the BLACK BRUISES for the
first time.

DOCTOR

(holds up middle finger)
How many fingers?

MANNY

Fuck you right back, doc.

DOCTOR

You can go home tomorrow.

INT. - HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MANNY AND JOHN

Manny in hospital gown, John in hat and coat. They are
walking very fast.

JOHN
They think it's a heart attack.
(beat)
It was my watch.

They turn the corner into a waiting area filled with

MR. YANG'S SUPPORTERS,

waiting and talking softly in small groups.

THE YOUNG CHINESE WOMAN we saw helping Mr. Yang into bed is pacing, struggling not to show too much distress. John takes Manny up to her.

JOHN
You've met Sally (Su Li) Robinson?

The Chinese woman smiles weakly and offers her hand.

SALLY
(same throaty voice)
Glad to find you better, Mr. Lee.

Manny can only stare speechless.

A YOUNG INTERN IN SCRUBS joins them.

INTERN
Are you the niece?

Sally nods apprehensively.

The intern makes a helpless, apologetic gesture. Everything seems to stand still.

Then, with a muffled cry, Sally flings herself into the nearest pair of arms...

...which just happen to be Manny's.

FADE TO:

INT. - FUNERAL PARLOR

Smoke from numerous incense sticks hangs over the room.

Mourners take turns walking up to the bier where they bow three times.

Behind the casket is a huge framed headshot of Mr. Yang, draped with white streamers covered with Chinese characters.

MANNY

sits next to Sally in his shabby overcoat. His bruised eyes note her faraway look.

DR. ENG

walks up to her. She turns away. His face tightens.

EXT. - DRY CLEANER'S STORE FRONT

Manny comes out wearing a freshly cleaned, pressed, and mended overcoat. He turns and primps at the store's glass window.

EXT. - DAY - CHINATOWN STREET

A white-uniformed MARCHING BAND playing a DIRGE leads a slow procession past silent onlookers lining the street.

Behind the band, a white Cadillac with top down follows, carrying Yang's framed photo. MOURNERS in black and white accompany it on foot, including...

MANNY,

freshly barbered, walking beside Sally.

He watches her... makes a tentative move to take her elbow...

...then thinks the better of it, and withdraws his hand as the procession stops in front of the Benevolent Association building.

TWO MEN

come down its steps carrying a very large wreath of white carnations.

They put it in the Cadillac, and the procession continues.

MANNY

watches Sally, hesitates, gathers his courage...

...reaches...

...and grasps her elbow.

He waits for a reaction, but she hasn't even noticed.

She continues to stare ahead with a fixed, inscrutable expression.

INT. - MEN'S CLOTHING STORE

Manny trying on a new hat, while a SALESMAN behind him holds the clothes he has selected.

EXT. - DAY - CHINESE CEMETERY

Atop a hill, at a pagoda-style mausoleum amidst weeping willows, a GROUP of mourners.

SALLY,

grieving, pulls away from the group.

MANNY

hesitates, then goes after her.

A LIMO

arrives... windows roll down, and in the back, watching everything, sit Dr. Eng and the Albino.

FADE TO:

INT. - RUN-DOWN BUILDING CORRIDOR - OFFICE DOOR

The door is marked "WHITTAKER AND LEE, PRIVATE INVESTIGATION." VOICES come from within.

JOHN (V.O.)

Damn! I was hoping you'd change her mind!

MANNY (V.O.)

No autopsies, period. Ain't natural to them.

INT. - MANNY'S OFFICE/"BEDROOM"

The blinds soften the sunlight. Manny nurses a bourbon at the desk while a restless John can't decide whether to stand or sit.

JOHN

We need an autopsy to make sense of this!

MANNY

Forget it. Job's done. Case's closed.

JOHN

Damn!

John smacks his fist into his hand in frustration.

JOHN

(continuing)

I don't know, Manny, can't get it out of my mind. Never saw anything like it, not in the 'Nam, nowhere!

(softly)

It gives me nightmares.

Manny looks surprised at this confession.

The kitten sniffs up to his glass on the desktop and starts to lap up the liquid.

JOHN

(continuing)

The note said three o'clock, right? We took no chances.

INT.- YANG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (BEGIN FLASHBACK - SYNC TO V.O.)

START WITH THE SCENE WE SAW EARLIER of Sally helping Mr. Yang prepare for bed.

John's in the room, too. He leans out the window talking AD LIB into a walkie-talkie.

TWO MEN

on the sidewalk below, similarly equipped, wave up at him.

JOHN (V.O.)

We were ready for it. Security beefed up, extra men, covered all the angles.

JOHN

looks at a car parked on the street. It FLASHES its lights twice.

He looks up at the roof of the building across. TWO MEN carrying rifles wave back.

Satisfied, John shuts the window with the hole in the glass, and swings a new addition, a frame of iron bars, against it.

He locks the bars, draws the curtains, walks to the door.

JOHN (V.O.)

Place so tight an ant hanging onto my shoelace couldn't get in. Took the bedroom myself.

MANNY (V.O.)

No one's blaming you, John.

INT. - MR. YANG'S LIVING ROOM

TWO TOUGH GUYS in shirt sleeves and shoulder holsters lift their heads from their card game as John pokes his head through the door.

Sally comes out through the door from behind John, nodding at him as she CROSSES OFF.

John retreats back behind the door and pulls it shut after him.

JOHN (V.O.)

But damned if they didn't get to him!

MR. YANG'S BEDROOM

The only light comes from a very subdued floor lamp. John settles in a chair next to it, puts his feet up.

He studies Mr. Yang in the mirror. Sleeping like a baby.

John's eyes move to his own image in the mirror. He studies his shave.

Somehow the effect in that light amidst the alien bric-a-brac is EERIE! A bit spooked, John picks up the table clock on the dresser.

It reads "11:17."

DISSOLVE TO:

JOHN,

his back to us, looking out through the window bars.

A STRANGE SOUND. He spins, jerking his gun from its holster...

... then relaxes. Mr. Yang has started to SNORE.

The clock reads "11:50."

DISSOLVE TO:

A CROSSWORD PUZZLE

PULL BACK to see John working it. Another clock CHIMES somewhere. John picks up the table clock, sees "12:00," and NEARLY DROPS IT in surprise!

In the b.g., Mr. Yang has just JERKED HIMSELF UP in bed with a swift, robot-like motion, as if pulled by invisible strings!

John stands up and tentatively starts towards him.

JOHN

Mr. Yang?

Yang's eyes are shut, his mouth working soundlessly. He's massaging his right arm near the elbow, as if he's feeling strange sensations there.

JOHN

moves towards him and looks closer at...

...MR. YANG'S ELBOW, where he notes some discoloration.

JOHN

Are you all right?

Suddenly Yang's eyes blink open and stare! Saliva flecks on his lips!

Then, IN A FRIGHTENING, GHASTLY MOMENT, he slowly turns to look at John, GRINNING WITH UNSEEING EYES!

PURE UNREMITTING HORROR!

John wrenches away at the sight!

JOHN

(continuing)

Aah! Tom! Richie!

Lights flare on and men pour into the room!

MR. YANG

blinks and looks around, startled awake by the to-do.

SALLY

enters, goes to Mr. Yang, and helps him out of bed.

JOHN,

sweating and wondering what happened, trying to stay calm.

He watches Sally slowly walk Mr. Yang towards the bathroom.

THE TWO TOUGH GUYS

stare at John curiously.

Somewhere, a toilet FLUSHES.

THE BEDROOM

John waves them out, and they exit doubtfully as Sally and Mr. Yang enter.

Sally helps Mr. Yang back into bed, eyeing John questioningly. John looks uncomfortable.

SALLY

I'll get you more coffee.

As she leaves, she turns off all the lights except the floor lamp beside John's chair. John looks at the clock. It reads "3:12."

JOHN (V.O.)

Nothing else happened. But he never got up again.

BACK TO DINGY OFFICE - (END FLASHBACK)

JOHN

If that was a heart attack, I'm Elvis Presley! We need an autopsy!

MANNY

Come on! Now you're an M.D.? You got spooked. It can happen to anyone. It happened a lot back in the 'Nam, remember?

JOHN

No, this was different.

(beat)

Don't laugh, okay?

Manny makes a deprecating motion with his hand.

JOHN

(continuing)

Okay, I've been asking around, doing some research, and I'm convinced this death touch is for real. It's what killed him.

It takes Manny a few moments to absorb this, then he stares at John amused.

MANNY

I won't laugh, but I didn't promise not to sneer. John, all that nouc nam you took in Saigon's fried your brain!

JOHN

Dammit, Manny, I was there! That was no goddam heart attack!

MANNY

Well, this is the goddam twentieth century! You really think I can kill you next week by grabbing your balls today? Why not blame radioactivity or microwaves, or-- or the full moon, for Chrissakes! That'd make more sense than some fairy tale some chink emperor dreamed up back in the first century to keep his subjects in line!

JOHN

Radioactivity kills by cancer-- too slow! Microwaves, ultrasound-- I was in the room with him, they would've freaking killed me too!

MANNY

Poison, then! He O.D.'d on Sominex!

JOHN

I'm way ahead of you. I checked it all out-- D.M.S.O., everything! I talked to two forensic experts and the symptoms just don't jibe! We need an autopsy!

Manny throws up his hands in exasperation.

JOHN

(continuing)

Besides, these guys were real thorough! You ever hear of food tasters? Well, Yang had three of them!

This is news to Manny. Thinking, he watches the kitten stumble around on his desktop, drunk.

JOHN

(continuing)

All I'm saying is: eliminate what the facts don't support, and whatever's left, no matter how dumb, has to be... Manny, this was a goddam homicide!

Manny picks up the kitten and pets it, lost in thought.

JOHN

(continuing)

Look, all I'm saying is let's try to get some hard evidence that'll justify a court order for an exhumation and an autopsy.

(beat)

Manny, it was my watch, like in the 'Nam!

MANNY

(dawning)

That wasn't your fault, goddamit! You can't drag that shit around with you the rest of your life!

He puts the kitten down and takes his overcoat.

MANNY

(continuing)

Dammit, John, I don't want to hear it. We didn't fuck up. We did our job, we did it well, but sometimes shit happens. It does. It happened, and now it's over. Case closed. Now I'm going to go see my daughter.

He starts to put his coat on.

MANNY

(continuing)

You need to take a coupla days off, see a movie with Hoa and the kids.

(beat)

Wanna join us for dinner? I hate to walk in on my ex's boyfriends.

John slumps wearily.

MANNY
 (continuing)
 Come on. Do you good.

JOHN
 No, think I'll go home.

MANNY
 Leave it, John. Win some, lose
 some. It's all behind us now.

Manny exits the office, leaving John looking tired and
 confused.

The phone RINGS. John picks it up.

JOHN
 Whittaker.

SALLY (V.O.)
 John, this is Sally Robinson.

CUT TO:

INT. - CINDY'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Comfortable, lived-in, simple, tasteful. Joyce is belly down
 on the floor watching TV, a kung-fu movie, Shaw Brothers'
Fist of the White Lotus.

(Note: THIS FILM WAS RELEASED IN 1980, WHILE THE ACTION IN
 THIS SCRIPT SUPPOSEDLY TAKES PLACE AROUND 1971-72.

IT'S OKAY THOUGH: If the film's title isn't mentioned, only
 superfans of the genre will catch this. The film itself is a
 very generic kung-fu movie, and not easily dated.)

INSERT: THE SCENE FROM THE FILM

where the white-haired Taoist priest fights several men and
 strikes each one with his "Seven Step Palm."

Then he loudly counts off their steps as they stagger away.

Sure enough, as soon as each takes that fatal seventh step,
 he falla down dead.

INTERCUT with Joyce watching raptly.

CINDY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Manny appears at the screen door. BUZZER.

Joyce leaps up with a SQUEAL and runs to hug him. It turns into a short hug.

JOYCE

Phew! You been drinking, Dad!

A distinguished-looking GENTLEMAN comes out to meet them.

GENTLEMAN

Hello. You must be Joyce's father.

MANNY

Manny Lee.

GENTLEMAN

Gary Hyde. Personal care products.

They shake. He gives Manny his card as Cindy enters.

CINDY

Late as usual.

(to Gary)

Let's go. Bye, you two.

MANNY

(to Joyce)

Wanna go to Grampa's?

JOYCE

Neat! I'll get my shoes!

CINDY

Don't forget your key. Have fun.

EXT. - MANNY AND JOYCE IN THE CAR

Manny's driving is steady. Suburban houses go past.

JOYCE

Grampa's fun. And he knows the neatest things! Plus he lets me do a lot of really neat things.

(beat)

Mom never lets me do anything.

MANNY

Well, chainsaw ain't really a toy,
you know.

JOYCE

Dad, I'm almost 14! When Lam-ang was
nine he already had kids!

MANNY

Lam-- who???

JOYCE

Lam-ang, the Ilocano hero? Grampa
never told you about him?

MANNY

Why do mess your head with that
cra-- that stuff? What's wrong with
Snow White or Cinderella or Red
Robin Hood--

JOYCE

Riding Hood.

MANNY

I'm beginning to think maybe you
shouldn't spend too much time at
Grampa's. They put all these funny
ideas in your head.

JOYCE starts examining her chest, pulling her T-shirt
forward.

JOYCE

Dad, d'you ever wish I was a boy?

MANNY

Silly. I love you just as you are.

JOYCE

But if I was a boy, you could call
me Number One Son.

Manny gives her a dirty look.

JOYCE

(continuing)

Dad. Can I ask you a personal
question? Real important and
personal?

MANNY

You can ask me anything, angel.

JOYCE

Do you think I'll get an American bosom, or a Filipino bosom?

MANNY

Filipino bosom? What the hell's that?

JOYCE

You know, dad. Boobs. Knockers. Hooters. Think I'll ever get any?

Manny doesn't quite know how to answer.

JOYCE

(continuing)

If I was a boy, I wouldn't have to worry about it, but they're real important for a girl.

MANNY

looking at her, realizes that his tomboy'll be dating soon. He is moved, but manages to control his voice.

MANNY

Angel, believe me, they ain't that big a deal.

JOYCE

Fellas think so, and the bigger they are, the bigger deal they are.

MANNY

Not so. Look, I'm a fella, I don't think they're that big a deal, okay? You got 'em, fine. You don't, that's fine too.

JOYCE

studies him searchingly. Then,

JOYCE

Liar. Mom said you couldn't keep your hands off her--

(pointing suddenly)

You passed it!

EXT. - STREET

Their car SCREECHES to a stop, then CAREENS WILDLY INTO REVERSE.

INT. - GRAMPA'S LIVING ROOM

Typical Filipino-Ilocano immigrant: Cramped, eclectic knick-knacks, somewhat pretentious.

The regulation piano sits in a corner, draped with crocheted top and covered with framed family pictures.

Prominently displayed is a framed photo of a younger Manny, smiling out at us in his U.S. Army uniform.

GRAMMA,

thin, wrinkled, 70ish-- shuffles out, chomping on a cigarette Ilocano style, with the flame end inside her mouth.

She hugs Joyce, and ignores Manny.

GRAMPA,

a short, wiry cutup with cauliflower ears, throws Joyce up with glee then catches her in his arms. He is clearly a very strong man.

GRAMPA

(accent)

You just in time for dinner.

JOYCE

Look, I learned this move today!

She demonstrates a move from the kung-fu movie on TV.

MANNY

She could do tennis or gymnastics,
but she wastes her time on that.

Grampa, moving very well, begins to spar Joyce playfully.

INT. - GRAMPA'S DINING ROOM

A carving of the Last Supper hangs on the wall.

They sit cramped before plates of steaming white rice, except Granma, who's up and carries a bowl in from the kitchen. She starts to ladle a black stew onto Joyce's plate.

JOYCE

Yum, dinuguan!

MANNY

Ma, you know I don't eat that stuff.

GRAMPA

(to Granma)

Fry him up some burgers.

(to Joyce)

He too good for our kine food.

MANNY

You know I stopped eating that when I was eight.

JOYCE

I saw this neat movie. This guy hits you like this, you step away five, six, seven steps, whatever he fixes on, then you die. How would you fight someone like that?

GRAMPA

Never hear that. How that work?

JOYCE

Your body makes poison where he hits you, then, you know how exercise speeds up the blood? Each time you take a step, the poison spreads in your body until you die. I guess. How'd you fight someone like that?

GRAMPA

Well, he never touch me.

JOYCE

But suppose he did.

GRAMPA

No can. See, his power in his palm, right? Well, I got my power too. My anting-anting.

Manny makes an exasperated face, while Joyce becomes all ears.

JOYCE

Anting what? What's that?

GRAMPA

Ask your papa. He got one too.

MANNY

Aw, stop with that nonsense!

JOYCE

Aw, don't tease. What's it called?

GRAMPA

Anting-anting. Get many kind. Your
papa have prayer kind.

He starts to demonstrate to a fascinated Joyce as he talks.

GRAMPA

(continuing)

Say you try hit him? He just
whisper to hisself, do this...

(making sign of the cross)

...and no way you hit him now.

(dramatically)

He stare you, you move real slow,
like, slow-slow!

Manny has heard enough. He angrily throws his hamburger
down.

MANNY

Go on, fill her head with crap!
Shovel it in there!

GRAMPA

She half-pinoy, ain't she? She got
right to it too!

MANNY

But it's all crap! That's why they
look down on us, call us foolish!
Superstitious savages!

JOYCE

Who does?

GRAMPA

You the fool!

(MORE)

GRANMPA (CONT'D)

Look me, 17 fights, 12 K.O.'s, you see mark my face? Not even Ali got face clean as me! Why? Because my anting-anting! Superstition? No sir! Noooo sir!

The telephone RINGS O.S.

MANNY

What about Elorde? You were out almost five minutes! What about that, huh? HUH?

GRAMPA

Dumfool! His anting-anting stronger than mine!

Manny gets up and pulls his overcoat off his chair back.

MANNY

Come on, Joyce, we're leaving.

Gramma enters and wordlessly hands Manny the telephone. He spends a few moments composing himself, then takes it.

MANNY

(continuing)

Hello, Manny here.

JOHN (V.O.)

John. Sally Robinson called. She wants to see us tomorrow.

MANNY

(pleased)

Say why?

JOHN (V.O.)

She's decided to run in her uncle's place. You go see her. Got some things I gotta take care of.

HOLD on Manny struggling with the phone and his coat as we

FADE TO:

INT. - MR. YANG'S OLD CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS

Volunteers are as busy as ever. An immaculate "new" Manny walks right into the smaller office without knocking.

HE SITS ON THE COUCH

to wait as Sally finishes up with some workers. Then she comes and sits next to him.

MANNY

You look nice.

SALLY

I never did thank you for all you did when my uncle... you'd just gotten out of the hospital yourself, still you were there for me.

(leaning forward)

It may have looked like I didn't notice, but I noticed everything. I'm very grateful.

They search each others' eyes intently.

MANNY

(softly)

Prove it.

Suddenly they're kissing, clasped in a tight embrace.

SALLY

Oh, I'm glad that's all out.

MANNY

I didn't dare hope.

They kiss again. She breaks off and smooths her clothes as a VOLUNTEER comes in to drop some papers on the desk.

SALLY

(formally)

I'm sure John's told you that I've decided to run in my uncle's place. I'm going to need security...

The volunteer leaves. They clinch again.

SALLY

(continuing)

Can we just go somewhere for a while?

MANNY

Why not?

A FEMALE STAFFER enters. Again they break.

SALLY

John seems to be convinced my
uncle was killed by something he
calls the delayed death touch.

MANNY

John's been under a lot of strain
lately.

SALLY

You don't agree?

Manny waits for the staffer to leave. Then,

MANNY

No.

SALLY

Good. I'm modern, American-born,
but I share my ancestors' feelings
about autopsies. Let the dead rest
in peace.

MANNY

Don't worry. No autopsies.

SALLY

I feel so much better now.
(pressing close)
Help me win this election, Manny.

MANNY

First things first. How about
lunch?

SALLY

(wickedly)
How about first things first?

FADE TO:

INT. - HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

The door reads POISONS. It opens, and John comes out
scribbling, accompanied by a Chinese doctor. They shake
hands and part.

EXT. - CHINESE RESTAURANT FRONT

Sally is working a CROWD OF VOTERS, waving, shaking hands.

A LITTLE CHINESE GIRL pushes through and hands her a rose. She kisses the girl, takes it, and hands it behind, smiling. to Manny, who seems embarrassed by it all.

INT. - ACUPUNCTURIST'S OFFICE

The ACUPUNCTURIST explaining, gesticulating over a chart of the human body to a seated John.

EXT. - SUNSET - CHINATOWN STREET

A CROWD surges around Sally as she climbs into a Lincoln. Manny shuts the door after her, circles to the other side, and gets in.

As they drive off, she gives him a happy kiss.

INT. - CITY MORGUE

John's face screws up intently as QUINCY points out stuff on the uncovered corpse lying on the slab between them.

INT. - SALLY'S BEDROOM

Manny and Sally embrace each other's nakedness.

INT. - CHINESE HERB SHOP

John asking questions to A STOOPED, GRIZZLED CHINESE SHOPKEEPER, who keeps shaking his head "No." John is insistent. The shopkeeper keeps turning away.

Frustrated, John leaves. As soon as he's out of sight, the shopkeeper picks up the phone and dials.

FADE TO:

INT. - DR. ENG'S OFFICE KITCHEN (DARKENED)

THE ALBINO, laughing, plays with his pit bull. He tosses treats to the dog, then knocks them away with WHISTLING KICKS split-seconds before the dog can leap up and snatch them.

His timing, speed, and accuracy are truly beautiful to see.

The dog retrieves each treat, then comes back and waits for the next one.

At his desk in the b.g., Dr. Eng BANGS the phone down. The Albino head-butts a last biscuit towards the sweating dog, then goes to join Dr. Eng.

FADE TO:

INT. - SALLY'S OFFICE - DAWN - MANNY AND SALLY

on the couch, looking deep into each others eyes.

SALLY

I have to go.

MANNY

Yes.

SALLY

But I'll be back tonight.

MANNY

Yes. How about dinner? There's someone important I'd like you to meet.

SALLY

Not your folks now?

Manny shakes his head.

SALLY

(continuing)

Ah. Ribbons, frilly pink dress?

Their faces are very close, then... LOUD KNOCKS. A door SLAMS.

JOHN (O.S.)

Halloo.

Manny and Sally move apart on the divan and turn to see John picking his way towards them past staffers sprawled asleep on chairs, on the floor, etc.

JOHN

(continuing)

Compliments of my wife.

He hands Sally a thermos and turns to Manny expectantly.

MANNY
Nothing to report.

JOHN
Nothing new?

MANNY
No, I said nothing to rep-- OOF!

Sally has just elbowed him. She gets up and goes off to get coffee cups. John takes her place on the couch.

He leans towards Manny surreptitiously.

JOHN
(whispering)
The autopsy?

MANNY
John, can we just drop it already?

JOHN
You didn't ask? Manny, this is important! Important!

Sally joins them, handing John a steaming styrofoam cup. John considers while taking it, then takes the plunge.

JOHN
(continuing)
Sal, I think we really need an autopsy here.

SALLY
Haven't we already settled that?

JOHN
Please reconsider. It'll put a lot of serious doubts to rest.

Sally looks searchingly at Manny.

MANNY
No doubts of mine.
(to John)
The doctor said to quit this type "A" behavior. Your heart--

JOHN
 Screw it. Look, I punch you here...
 (indicates side of Manny's
 neck)
 it swells up, a whatchamacallit...

He pulls a pocket notebook out and starts riffling pages.

JOHN
 (reading)
 ...a "hematoma." Six hours later
 you die. The swelling blocked off
 the blood to your brain, boom,
 you're dead. Six hours.

He flips a page on his notebook.

JOHN
 (continuing)
 Okay, I smack you here, kidneys,
 necrosis, uremic poisoning, slow
 death. Five, six months, dead,
 okay? Six hours, six months, time's
 relative. Now--

Sally looks at Manny, who moves to interrupt.

MANNY
 John, John, we can accept the man
 gets hit by a car, gets right up
 like nothing happened, then's dead
 in bed the next morning. The
 problem's all the voodoo mixed up
 with this death touch!

JOHN
 Tell me.

MANNY
 Well, don't you have to hit me at
 just the right time, phase of the
 moon or something like that? Does
 that sound scientific to you?

JOHN
 Ah, circadian rhythms.

He riffles and quickly finds the page.

JOHN

(continuing)

You're gonna love this: Doctor, Doctor Arthur T. Winfree at the University of Arizona has shown that, quote:

(reading)

"There is a precise moment between two beats of the heart when a small stimulus can send the heart into ventricular fibrillation." That means your heart'S going brrrrrrp. Five minutes later you're pushing up daisies.

(reading)

"This precise moment is called," in Western, I emphasize Western, non-voodoo physiology, "the vulnerable phase."

He looks from Manny to Sally and back in the silence.

(N.B. Dr. Arthur Winfree is a REAL PERSON at the University of Arizona and "the vulnerable phase" mentioned is real research. Rights may have to be cleared).

JOHN

(continuing)

That means if your heart is going ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-BOOM!

He smacks his palm on Manny's chest, right on the "BOOM!"

JOHN

(continuing)

Nothing happens. Or I go ba-boom, ba-boom, BOOM! Ba-boom...

He smacks Manny on "BOOM" again, but right between beats.

JOHN

(continuing)

... again nothing happens. But if I just happen to hit during that vulnerable phase...

He smacks Manny on the chest again.

JOHN
 (continuing)
 ...BOOM, five minutes later you're
 turning blue on the floor. If I
 time it just right!

Manny gets up, genuinely surprised. John turns to Sally with imploring eyes.

But Sally looks distinctly unimpressed. And Manny has thought of something else.

MANNY
 Okay, but we're not talking five
 minutes here. It's days we're
 talking here.

John flops back on the couch in vexation.

MANNY
 (continuing)
 Delay ain't the issue here. You hit
 me now, my heart goes BOOM tomorrow,
 I can buy that...
 (sits next to John)
 ... but you're saying you can fix
 the delay! You decide if it's gonna
 be tomorrow or next month or next
 year, based on my body type or skin
 color or God knows what--

JOHN
 Doctors do it all the time, adjust
 drug dosage depending on weight,
 age, sex, state of health. No magic
 there.

Sally sits beside John.

SALLY
 You don't seriously think my uncle--
 You don't seriously believe that?

John leans back and closes his eyes, suddenly subdued.

JOHN
 That's just it. I don't know.

SALLY
 But what would an autopsy prove?

John is silent.

SALLY
(continuing)
Say for the sake of argument they
dim-mak'ed him using the "vibrating
palm" or--

MANNY
Say what now?

JOHN
The vibrating palm.

He indicates a palm strike against Manny's chest like before.

MANNY
No, the other thing, din-- din--

JOHN
Dim-mak.

He paints the Chinese characters for dim-mak in the air with his fingertip.

JOHN
(continuing)
The delayed death touch.

Manny tries to absorb this, but Sally is unconvinced.

SALLY
John, let's say they did touch my
uncle. Three days later he goes
into cardiac arrest. What would an
autopsy find?

John closes his eyes and presses his temples.

SALLY
(continuing)
It would find cardiac arrest,
wouldn't it?

John NODS wearily.

SALLY
(continuing)
Would they even guess at a palm
strike?

JOHN

If it marked him somehow they might.

SALLY

If the mark were near the heart.
But suppose all they see are, say,
five little bruises on his elbow?

A VOLUNTEER stretches and yawns behind them. Manny sighs and gets up.

MANNY

Too deep for me. Well, I gotta hit
the sack.

He picks up his overcoat and turns to Sally at the door.

MANNY

(continuing)

You're in good hands. Don't forget
about tonight.

Sally blows him a long-distance kiss.

SALLY

Can't wait.

Then she turns back to John, who makes a helpless gesture.

John's shift is just starting, and he already looks
exhausted.

FADE TO:

INT. - RITZY RESTAURANT - MANNY, SALLY, AND JOYCE

Manny and Sally dine in very high spirits, but Joyce, in her
frilly pink dress, just plays with her food.

SALLY

Don't you like steak?

JOYCE

I'm just not hungry.

MANNY

Why, that's prime grade "A" proof
U.S.D.A.-inspected top-o'-the-line
Good-Housekeeping-seal-of-approval
corn-fed Iowa-born-and-bred filet
mignon!

Sally and Manny GIGGLE, but Joyce rolls her eyes.

SALLY

I love your hair. Mine's so coarse
and straight. Yours is...

Joyce leans away as Sally reaches for her hair, then pushes
her chair away from the table.

JOYCE

May I be excused? Ma'am.

She heads for the restrooms. Sally waits till Joyce is gone.

SALLY

She hates me.

MANNY

It'll take time. You're the first--
you know, since my divorce.

(lifting glass)

Well, what shall we drink to?

SALLY

How about "ribbons and frilly pink
dresses?"

They CLINK and sip.

MANNY

You know we almost didn't have her?
Oh yeah. Marriage was rocky and the
last thing we needed was a kid, but
my folks wanted an apo, a grandson.
Incredible fights! It was nag, nag,
nag, day in day out. That's the
Filipino way, they won't quit until
you give them a football team, but I
thought, really? Bring another sad
Flip into this world? Too too cruel.

SALLY

She's lovely.

MANNY

(shrugs)

Takes after me.

She gives his cheek a quick caress.

MANNY

(continuing)

When she was born, I go, "Oh no, a girl yet?" The nurse is holding her up at the window and I'm standing there staring at her and thinking poor poor baby, forgive me, when suddenly she opens her eyes-- She's not a day old, remember-- I swear she opens her eyes and fixes them right on mine, and I swear, I swear! I hear this voice saying, "I'll be fine, dad, but I'm gonna need your help."

SALLY

Wow. She's a great kid.

MANNY

Hate to admit it, but my folks were right. Now I thank God they refused to help us with an abortion.

(he sips)

She's taught me more about myself than anything, not Vietnam, not being a cop, nothing.

SALLY

They say raising kids, you relive your childhood, work out all your own complexes.

MANNY

Don't know about that. In many ways she's stronger than I ever was. She loves all these things, Filipino things, things that growing up I felt held me back and tried to leave behind--

Suddenly they realize JOYCE IS BACK-- they'd not noticed her approach.

MANNY

(continuing; smoothly)

--in my work, but it's hard, you know? I am my work. Ain't that right, angel?

JOYCE

Can I have a coke, please?

Manny stares at her but she fixes her eyes on her plate.

MANNY
You're not giving it a chance.

SALLY
(quickly)
I'll have one too.

Manny motions for a waiter.

MANNY
Now, Joyce, let's not be rude.
Let's-- OW!

INSERT

a BLUR as a foot connects with Manny's shin under the table!
OW!

MANNY

recoils and looks at Sally in surprise, but...

SALLY

is smiling at Joyce. There's no indication that she's moved at all. Plus she would've had to focus on him to aim right.

MANNY

rubs his shin and looks at Joyce. Did she do it?

JOYCE

just stares at her plate. Manny looks back at Sally.

SALLY

winks at him. It was her.

Then another surprise. The WAITER approaches, leading an exquisite CAMBODIAN WOMAN in her late thirties.

MANNY

(rising)

Hello!

(to Sally)

This is Hoa, John's wife.

(to Hoa)

Sally Robinson.

HOA

(French accent)

Charmed. Hi, Joyce. Manny, I must speak with you. Important.

(to Joyce)

I know is early, I am sorry, but is an emergency.

Manny looks from her to Joyce and back suspiciously. Joyce wears a "busted" expression.

HOA

(continuing)

Manny, s'il vous plait.

She dismisses the waiter who has been holding a seat for her.

Manny gets up and they walk a few feet into the b.g. where she talks to him urgently, with controlled agitation.

Joyce stares glumly at her plate while Sally studies her.

SALLY

(re: Hoa)

She's lovely, isn't she?

Joyce nods unenthusiastically.

SALLY

(continuing)

Looks like we're not going to get our cokes.

Joyce looks at her watch.

JOYCE

Um, I've got homework. Aunt Hoa can drive me home.

SALLY

I'm really sorry this wasn't much fun for you. I like your father very much and I'd hoped--

Manny has come back.

MANNY

We gotta go.

(to Joyce)

Ho'll take care of the bill and
drive you home.

Sally and Joyce rise.

SALLY

Something serious?

MANNY

(to Joyce)

Let's say goodbye outside.

Ho'a hands the waiter a credit card as the others leave.

CUT TO:

THE PARKING LOT

Joyce stands alone. Behind her, Manny helps Sally into his car, then walks up.

He stops beside Joyce and lights a cigarette.

Both stare ahead a beat, then....

MANNY

Ho'a told me about your secret
agreement.

JOYCE

Stool pigeon.

MANNY

That's not why she's here, though.
Something else is up.

JOYCE

That's why she's early.

He blows smoke. Ho'a appears in the b.g. and chats with Sally in the car.

MANNY

John's up to something that's
bothering her so she came to get me.

(MORE)

MANNY (CONT'D)

(beat)

I'm really disappointed, angel. An hour of polite conversation too much to ask?

He blows smoke.

Joyce suddenly turns to him and she's fighting tears.

JOYCE

I'm disappointed too, Dad! If you felt lonely, why didn't you come to me?

Manny is taken aback.

JOYCE

(continuing)

I can feel it! She'll-- She's a--

MANNY

Careful now, young lady--

Hoang walks up to them.

HOANG

Please, Manny...

MANNY

We'll talk about this later.

JOYCE

bites her lip as Manny goes to his car. She hears the DOOR OPEN, turns, runs and flings her arms around him! They hug.

JOYCE

Sorry, dad. Really I am.

MANNY

It's all right...

JOYCE

I really want you to be happy.

Manny kisses her and they break. He puts a foot in the car.

MANNY

We'll talk later, okay?

She smiles and nods while brushing away tears.

As he STARTS the car, she produces a gold, circular object and stuffs it in his breast pocket.

He moves to pull it out but she stops his hand and indicates Sally with her eyes.

Then she leans in and lands a quick kiss.

JOYCE

See you, Dad.

She gives Sally a brief, expressionless look, then turns and runs to Hoa, waiting in the b.g.

Manny pulls the object out-- keeping it close to his chest so Sally can't see-- and examines it.

It looks like a regular woman's compact, but the lid has a tiny spiked handle at its center.

JOYCE (O.S.)

It's mom's!

Manny takes the handle and, lifting it gingerly, looks inside.

Four or five condom packets glisten back at him.

MANNY

(under his breath)

Gary, you old fart you.

SALLY

What is it?

MANNY

Good luck charm.

EXT. - CHINATOWN STREET - NIGHT

Manny's car pulls out into traffic.

IN THE CAR - MANNY AND SALLY

MANNY

You might as well know. John's decided to exhume the body.

SALLY

What ???

MANNY

John's digging him up right now.
I'll drop you off then go there.

Sally looks upset.

EXT. - FRONT OF SALLY'S CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS

Manny stops the car under the "Benevolent Association" sign.

SALLY

Not here. Take me home.

MANNY

Sally, we're still running security
for you--

SALLY

Oh, I'll be safe there! Besides
it's on the way!

THEIR CAR pulls out and merges with traffic.

EXT./INT. - YANG'S MAUSOLEUM - NIGHT - JOHN,

in the shadowy interior, pressed against one of the marble
pillars, hiding from a car stopped on the road some 40 yards
away. The car plays a SEARCHLIGHT over the tomb.

After a few seconds, it DRIVES OFF. John resumes chipping at
the burial tomb with a mallet and a chisel wrapped in cloth
to DEADEN THE SOUND.

The dust, the beads of sweat on his forehead and the stone
chips at his feet show that he's been at it for some time.

And... he's done. He drops his tools with a CLATTER, picks
up a crowbar and starts to pry.

The lid moves slightly with a HOLLOW GRATING SOUND.

He pries at another spot, then freezes when he hears a car
DRIVE UP and SHUT ITS ENGINE OFF.

He listens intently.

A car door SLAMS.

JOHN

Shit.

He squeezes up against the pillar again, gripping his crowbar.

Now a flashlight beam plays over the mausoleum. He lifts the bar to strike, when he faintly hears...

...a four-note WHISTLE.

John relaxes. He WHISTLES the same four notes...

...and Manny pokes his head past the pillars into the vault.

JOHN

Get in here!

He grabs Manny's lapel to pull him in, only to snatch his hand away almost instantly!

JOHN

(continuing)

OW! What the hell's that?

Manny aims his flashlight down his breast pocket.

MANNY

Good luck charm.

John quickly snatches the flashlight and turns it off.

JOHN

Jesus! Are you nuts? The guards are suspicious enough already!

MANNY

Pointless. I parked right in front for all to see.

John leans out to look. Manny's car, headlights on, sticks out like a sore thumb in the otherwise empty lane, .

JOHN

Jeez! Help me finish up then!

TOGETHER

they struggle to move the stone lid. It is very heavy.

JOHN
 (continuing; huffing)
 How'd you find me? Who's watching
 the client?

MANNY
 (puffing)
 Safe at home. Hoa told me.

The lid CRASHES to the floor with a reverberating BAMMMMM!
 that ECHOES AND RE-ECHOES in the vault.

Quickly they go to work on the coffin lid.

MANNY
 (continuing)
 This is sick. What we looking for?

CRACKING WOOD indicates final entry. Manny recoils at the
 smell, but John grabs the flashlight and shines it inside.

JOHN
 Got a knife?

Manny pulls a pocket knife out while holding his sleeve up to
 his nose.

JOHN
 (continuing)
 Quit making like Dracula and cut his
 right sleeve open. To the elbow.

MANNY
 (muffled)
 Are you kidding? I can't breathe!

JOHN
 Gimme that. Hold this.

He grabs the knife and hands Manny the flashlight.

JOHN
 (continuing)
 Hold it still.

Manny shines the light while John leans into the coffin and
 goes to work. SOUNDS OF TEARING, then:

JOHN

Look! Look!

Sleeve to nose, Manny peers in.

YANG'S BODY

in his funeral clothes. John tugs Yang's stiff right arm upward, cuts his sleeve open, and reaches over to the flashlight in Manny's hand to aim it at...

YANG'S ELBOW

The skin is waxy white. John points out five dime-sized black spots around Yang's elbow.

MANNY still has one arm over his nose and mouth.

MANNY

(muffled)

What is it?

JOHN

The death touch! This is where they touched him!

Manny turns away annoyed, then quickly kills the light and waves to John in warning.

WHAT THEY SEE

Another car has stopped behind his, its headlights shining on it.

Silhouetted against this, two UNIFORMED SECURITY GUARDS are stealing up towards the mausoleum.

They play their flashlights before them, and their guns are drawn.

JOHN AND MANNY

watch them approach.

MANNY

Shit.
 (idea)
 Quick, help me.

EXT. - THE MAUSOLEUM - CONTINUOUS

The guards are cautious. They play their beams over the walls and pillars; then one stays and covers while the other pokes his head in.

GUARD

Park security! Whoever's in there,
 come out!

He slowly peeks around the entrance, leading with his light. ADJUST so we see what he sees...

The place is a mess! A mallet and chisel lie in the dust.

HIS PARTNER

comes up; ADJUST as they move farther in.

Their beams PAN slowly, slowly...

... SUDDENLY SHINING ON A GHOULISH, FRIGHTENING HORROR !

YANG'S CORPSE

is propped up in its bier, wearing Manny's fedora; a folded pocket knife protrudes from his mouth like fangs, and from his eyes two red condoms with white tips hang trembling, looking for all the world like eyeballs hanging on gristle!

THE GUARDS

Bug-eyed, hair on end, SCREAM in unison, drop their guns...

...and take off pell-mell down the hill!

MANNY AND JOHN

hunkered down LAUGHING, watching the guards' frightened flight.

MANNY

Let's pick up and go.

He retrieves his hat and knife and bends down for the crowbar when...

WHAMMM! He is knocked forward by a TERRIFIC KICK!

Turning as he falls, he sees a lithe figure in a black NINJA outfit and a Western fencing mask WHEEL and SLAM John with a shattering kick to the head!

John COLLIDES backward into the wall...

...and slides to the ground out cold.

MANNY

Struggles to rise, pistol just clearing his coat when WHAP! WHAP-WHAP!

Without looking towards him, the ninja has unleashed THREE LIGHTNING KICKS, first knocking his gun away, then striking his face twice in succession!

Manny drops again, his gun skittering over the dust.

MANNY'S P.O.V.,

floor-level, as the ninja picks up the flashlight and steps towards him (towards us).

He is wearing tabi, the black, soft-soled ninja "mitten" shoes, big toe separated from the rest.

Kneeling, he shines the light full at us, blinding us occasionally.

Then the light's gone. The ninja gets up, turns, and walks easily over to John, slumped against the wall.

Grabbing John's hair, he shines the light on John's face.

John is just coming to and raises his arm in protest.

The figure roughly grabs John's wrist and...

...starts to take his pulse!

OUR (MANNY'S) P.O.V. PANS over to Manny's gun, resting against the side of the tomb several feet away.

The ninja's still taking John's pulse, paying no attention to us. We (Manny P.O.V.) start to DOLLY stealthily towards the gun when...

THE NINJA,

apparently satisfied, drops John's arm, grabs John's shirt, and RIPS IT OPEN DOWN THE FRONT!

Then, in a lightning series of moves, he STRIKES JOHN'S CHEST IN SEVERAL PLACES with the extended tips of his joined index and middle fingers, EXHALING HARD WITH EVERY THRUST!

This is our big chance-- WE DIVE FOR THE GUN!

But he's heard us, and he spins into a low crouch!

MANNY AND THE NINJA

move simultaneously! Manny's .38 BELCHES FIRE as the ninja leaps sideways and literally RUNS A FEW STEPS UP THE WALL...

...to kick off and SOMERSAULT over Manny, who ducks and FIRES again, bullets throwing up sprays of marble and stone...

...too late! The ninja has landed behind him and head-butts him forward!

MANNY

is slammed against the wall, and quick as a cat, the ninja is on him, grabbing and twisting his gun away!

Disarmed, Manny turns to face his tormentor.

THE NINJA approaches; the light playing over his wire mesh mask makes it look like the giant compound eye of a fly.

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS

They stand facing each other...

Suddenly the NINJA'S FOOT LASHES OUT AGAIN, SLAMMING INTO MANNY'S CHEST!

The impact HURLS Manny backward against the wall again...

... but WHAT'S THIS?

THE NINJA IS HURT, hopping around on one foot and rubbing the sole of the other!

Manny watches as the ninja gingerly regains his footing, then limps towards him...

... each step of his injured foot leaving a spot of blood on the floor.

MANNY

backs away...

...until his back is against the wall.

He can only watch, cowed, as the ninja's gloved hand reaches out to his breast pocket...

...and fingers a gold spike (now bloodied) that has pierced out through the cloth, right at the center of the imprint left by the ninja's foot.

So that's what hurt him. But what is it?

He reaches inside Manny's pocket and pulls the now-crushed object out.

THE SPIKE

is the lid handle of the box Joyce gave Manny earlier.

THE NINJA

twists the box open and watches its contents scatter...

...condoms of several kinds, colors, and varieties!

Almost contemptuously, he lets the box CLATTER to the floor...

Then his black-gloved hand slowly reaches out towards Manny's face again.

MANNY

is helpless, breathing apprehensively...

The hand gets closer... CLOSER... Manny closes his eyes, preparing for the end...

... instead, the hand pinches his cheek playfully!

Manny opens his eyes in surprise to see...

(MANNY'S P.O.V.)

...nothing but a slight breeze in the willows outside. The ninja has disappeared into the night.

John stumbles into frame, shirt open, and smiles at us.

JOHN

You all right?

MANNY AND JOHN

Manny nods.

JOHN

(continuing)

I have to keep bailing you out.

They look at each other, try to smile, grimace in pain.

JOHN

(continuing)

Let's blow.

FADE TO:

INT. - SALLY'S CAMPAIGN HQ - SALLY AND MANNY

She looks very upset.

MANNY

I know how you feel.

She turns away angrily.

MANNY

(continuing)

You can fire us.

SALLY
I'm thinking about it.

INT. - JOHN'S KITCHEN

Tasteful, with a continental touch. A seven-year-old mophead plays on the floor as John, Manny and Hoa have coffee. Hoa talks to Manny in an agitated manner.

HOA
I see them last night.
(to John)
Show to Manny.

JOHN
Oh, drop it.

Manny looks from one to the other.

HOA
Please, please, John...

She pronounces it "Zhan," in the French way.

JOHN
Honey, it's silly.

Hoa makes an impatient gesture and turns to the mophead, pouting.

JOHN
(continuing)
All right, all right. Here.

He turns to Manny and unbuttons his shirt.

JOHN'S CHEST has several small, reddish-blue marks on it.

HOA
There! See?

Manny bends forward and examines them.

HOA
(continuing)
This I have seen before, in Tibet.
Dianxue, delayed death strike.

JOHN

Honey...

HOA

Manny, please, please, tell me everything! Something strange happened?

MANNY

(to John)

Don't you remember?

JOHN

Think I was out most of the time.

HOA

Tell me everything, please!

MANNY

has a faraway look.

FLASH INSERT: The ninja striking John very fast, in some prearranged sequence, on the chest.

BACK TO SCENE

JOHN

(buttoning up)

She knows about the grave and the guards and the ninja.

MANNY

(to Hoa)

That's all of it.

HOA

Nothing more?

MANNY

Nothing more.

HOA

I don't believe. Then from where come such marks?

MANNY

They're bruises. This-- ninja?

(MORE)

MANNY (CONT'D)

He was kicking us all over the place. You should see my chest! Look at my face, here.

John gets up and puts his arms around Hoa from behind.

HOA

I don't know. I have fear. Please, Manny, talk to Dr. Eng.

MANNY

To Eng? What for?

JOHN

Eng was Hoa's doctor before we met. Apparently he's an excellent doctor of traditional Chinese medicine. Knows about all that dim-mak stuff.

HOA

He knows all these merizhongs.

JOHN

Meridians. She's convinced our venerable doctor sees us as enemies and sent this ninja out to get rid of us.

(to Hoa)

You worry too much.

(nuzzling her)

I love you for it.

Entangled in John's embrace, Hoa looks at Manny, pleading with her eyes.

Manny puts his cup down and rises.

MANNY

I guess one visit won't hurt.

John's jaw drops and Hoa runs to Manny to hug and kiss him.

HOA

Oh, merci! Merci! You are a true friend! Merci!

JOHN

Watch it. You're kissing the wrong guy.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)
 (to Manny)
 Stick around for my daily song?

Manny looks at his watch and sits back down.

MANNY
 Why not.

John picks up the mophead, who laughs shyly, and puts his other arm around Hoa.

JOHN
 Okay, Bobby Boy. Let's see if
 you've learned today's song.
 (singing)
 "Believe me if all those endearing
 young charms...."

MANNY

sits enthralled. John's tenor is great! Bobby Boy tries to sing along, laughing.

JOHN
 (continuing)
 "...That I gaze on so fondly
 today..."

John sings on, beautifully. Manny watches this idyllic family scene, a tinge of envy playing on his face.

EXT. - CHINATOWN STREET - JOHN AND MANNY IN THE CAR
 (TRAVELING)

Similar to our first Chinatown scene. John is still HUMMING the song.

MANNY
 Still do that bit every day, huh?

JOHN
 They seem to enjoy it.

MANNY
 Ain't this Eng's? You can let me
 off here.

JOHN

(stopping car, idling)

Really going up there? Thought you didn't think much of all that dim-mak stuff.

MANNY

Thought you did. You sure are taking those bruises lightly, for someone whose days are numbered.

JOHN

Not to worry. Dim-mak's a Chinese thing. That weirdo who jumped us was Japanese. Ninjas are Japanese.

MANNY

Japs, Chinks, they're all slants.

(beat; then)

But why you and not me? Got a motive?

JOHN

You know, that bothers the hell out of me. Unless he was Yang's guardian spirit come to bust me for desecrating his grave.

He grins at his joke, but Manny looks serious. They're quiet for a while, then Manny opens the car door and starts to get out.

JOHN

(continuing)

What'll you do up there? Want me to wait?

MANNY

Nahh, nothing's gonna happen. I fixed things with the client, I think, but you better get going. We've been away too long as it is.

JOHN

Take care anyway.

Manny stands at the curb, shuts the car door, and watches John drive off.

Then he turns and goes up the stone steps.

INT. - BUILDING LOBBY

As Manny walks towards the elevators, he is suddenly accosted by TWO HOODS who block his way.

HOOD #1

Where go?

MANNY

Sick. Doctor.

HOOD #2

No doctor. Doctor out. Out.

Manny looks at him contemptuously and tries to shove past, but they grab him! A scuffle is starting when...

DR. ENG (O.S.)

Well, well, well...

Dr. Eng, the Albino, the pit bull, and a few other FLUNKIES walk up.

DR. ENG

(continuing)

Mr. Lee. You look so much more professional. Amazing what a shave and a haircut will do.

He SPEAKS to his hoods in Cantonese, and they release Manny and start smoothing out their suits.

DR. ENG

(continuing)

Not a social visit, I expect?

The Albino, almost completely covered up from head to toe, pushes the elevator button as one guard REMONSTRATES in Cantonese with Dr. Eng. He hands Dr. Eng a revolver.

Manny reacts. His revolver is gone from its holster.

DR. ENG

But Mr. Lee is a friend. Of course he may keep his firearm.

He hands the revolver to Manny, who is trying to hide his displeasure at not noticing the hood had pinched it. He takes the revolver and holsters it.

MANNY
 (covering)
 Thought he was after my bourbon.

The elevator arrives with a DING! They all get in.

DR. ENG
 (to the guards)
 Don't forget, Mr. Lee is an honored
 guest, always welcome here.

INT. - ELEVATOR

Dr. Eng indicates the Albino, inscrutable under sunglasses
 and thick sunscreen lotion.

DR. ENG
 My best student.

The Albino nods, and Manny sizes him up.

Sensing this, the dog starts to GROWL at Manny, but the
 Albino SHUSHES it with a tug at the leash. It is clearly a
 very strong, very aggressive animal.

DR. ENG
 (continuing)
 Ironic that he not be Chinese, but
 he's studied with me for over thirty
 years. He's the best.

The elevator DINGS, the lights indicating the sixth floor.

INT. - DR. ENG'S OFFICE

They enter past ornate doors into the same dim, museum-like
 office we saw earlier (page 13). Eng goes directly to his
 desk.

DR. ENG
 Please sit down. Tea?

MANNY
 Bourb-- uh, no, thanks.

Dr. Eng motions to his ASSISTANT, who leaves. Eng sits.

Manny takes one of the chairs before the desk, and the Albino
 quietly takes the other, facing him.

DR. ENG
You bring good news, I hope?

MANNY
Good questions.

DR. ENG
Ah, too much to hope for then.
Please be brief. We are quite busy.

MANNY
Okay. My partner's wife thinks my
partner's been hoodooed with some
black hand called the delayed death
touch.

DR. ENG
Not Mr. Whittaker? How dreadful!

MANNY
What do you mean? What do you know
about this?

Dr. Eng's eyes narrow at the implication.

DR. ENG
Careful, Mr. Lee. Suppose there
really were such a thing. Suppose
we knew how to do it. Suppose we go
so far as to say-- to confess-- that
yes, we dispatched Yang with it.
What could you do? Have us
arrested? On what charge? Do you
really think that any jury, any
judge in America would believe this
death touch, this-- this "Oriental"
nonsense?

The Albino smiles as Manny turns stonefaced.

DR. ENG
(continuing)
Why not be friends, Mr. Lee?

He extends his silver cigarette case.

DR. ENG
(continuing)
We really have so much to offer each
other.

MANNY
 (taking a cigarette)
 I'm all ears.

Dr. Eng hands him a book of matches.

DR. ENG
 Chinese like you and me are a very
 private race. We do not like
 gossip, rumors about us. A matter
 of face.

Manny's face darkens... then he lights up, drops the spent
 match in an ashtray on the desk, blows smoke.

MANNY
 I'm no Chink.

DR. ENG
 Your partner, and now you, go around
 starting these rumors. Now, to us,
 saving face might be worth, shall we
 say... five thousand dollars?

Manny puffs, playing with the book of matches in his hand.

DR. ENG
 (continuing)
 Take your time. We Chinese think in
 terms of dynasties, of thousands of
 years. Patience is the ultimate
 virtue. We never hurry.

He leans back, a faintly superior smile playing on his lips.

MANNY
 I can give you an answer right now.

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS

He touches the matches to the cigarette on his lips, and as
 they flare up, flips them onto Dr. Eng's desk!

LOSING HIS CALM, Dr. Eng jumps back, knocking his chair over,
 but the Albino reacts even faster!

In the blink of an eye, his fingers flick the crystal ashtray
 so that it tumbles thru the air (SLOW MOTION?)...

...and lands upside down over the matches. The flames sputter out and die. Only the Albino's fingers have moved!

Still seated, he takes the letter opener on the desk.

Manny jumps to his feet, reaching for his revolver as the Albino flings the letter opener towards him! But it wasn't intended to hurt!

It WHIZZES past and sticks into the far wall with a THUD!

.38 in hand, Manny takes his cigarette out of his mouth and looks at it ruefully...

HIS CIGARETTE is out, its end split into two. The letter opener HAS SLICED IT AND PUT OUT THE FLAME!

Now on a roll, the Albino picks up the ashtray, spins it like a frisbee towards the letter opener vibrating on the wall--

--TING-G-G! It connects, hammering the blade deep into the plaster--

--and rebounds back, knocking Manny's fedora off his head on its way to...

THE ALBINO,

hands lifted serenely. The ashtray spins right into one lifted hand, and Manny's hat softly settles over the other.

The Albino's eyes, which have not once left Manny, now smile slightly.

Still performing, he turns the hat over, drops the ashtray into it, holds it at stomach level...

...forms his other fingers into a SPEARPOINT --

-- and with a YELL, RAMS his fingers down into the hat!

Crystal SHATTERS! The Albino turns the hat over, and SHARDS of crystal scatter to the floor.

Now he gets up, steps towards Manny, and hands him the hat.

MANNY,

.38 still in hand, takes it and examines it. It is completely undamaged.

Trying to look unimpressed, he brushes his hat with his sleeve, puts it on, and adjusts it.

THE ALBINO smiles.

MANNY
(smiling back)
You're a real ninja, aincha?

Suddenly he spins and drops to one knee, .38 blazing rapid-fire at the wall-- BANGBANGBANGBANGBANGBANG!

The Albino recoils, shielding himself from the muzzle flash.

Plaster sprays, and when the dust settles...

...six bullet holes have formed a neat ring around the letter opener!

MANNY
There. Write that off as an entertainment expense.

And he turns on his heel and exits.

ON DR. ENG AND THE ALBINO

As the door SLAMS shut, Dr. Eng kicks his chair in fury!

FADE TO:

INT. - YANG'S TOMB

Detectives Kilby and Garrison are looking over the mess. Forensics is working on the spots of blood left by the ninja's foot.

Something on the floor catches Garrison's eye. He squats, pokes at the debris with his fountain pen, turns a chip of marble over...

...and exposes Manny's pocket knife.

EXT. - LATE AFTERNOON - CINDY'S STREET

Manny walks past her rose bushes and goes up to the porch.

He's about to knock when Joyce comes out carrying her gym bag and skateboard.

They look at each other, a bit awkwardly.

MANNY
Going out, huh?

JOYCE
Kung-fu class.

Beat.

Then Joyce fixes him a dazzling smile.

It's like the sun rising, and he smiles back.

She takes his arm like an adult and walks him to his car.

JOYCE
Come. You can watch me kick butt.
We can talk afterwards.

IN THE CAR

JOYCE
(puffing out her chest)
Notice anything?
(beat)
I've been doing kung-fu exercises to
build up my bust.

MANNY
Hate to bum you out, angel, but
those exercises ain't worth sh-- the
time.

JOYCE
They work. They're from Chinese
medicine, massage and qi and things
like that. They can make you lose
weight, quit smoking, things like
that.

(off his look)
(MORE)

JOYCE (CONT'D)

They can even kill at a distance.
Hit you now and you die ten days
later, so they can be someplace else
when it happens so no one suspects
them of nothing.

MANNY

Where'd you learn that?

JOYCE

My sifu. It's called the delayed
death touch, or...

JOYCE AND MANNY TOGETHER

... dim-mak!

WHOA! He guns the engine and TEARS OFF as she holds onto her
cap in surprise.

EXT. - STRIP MALL - DUSK

Their car slips into a parking space in front of Joyce's
kung-fu school.

The sign on the show window reads "Academy of the Internal
Arts."

INT. - KUNG-FU SCHOOL (CONTINUOUS)

Full-length mirrors, trophies, spears and staves on racks.
Students stretch or spar. A life-size dummy of a man hangs
from a bar.

This is ROBERT W. SMITH'S Academy, and it's this same Robert
W. Smith who stands laughing with a group of students next to
his office door at the far wall.

He turns to greet Joyce and Manny as they walk up.

(Note: ROBERT W. SMITH IS A REAL PERSON living in Bethesda,
MD who trained in China in the 1950's and who wrote several
books on the internal arts. RIGHTS HAVE NOT BEEN CLEARED.)

MANNY, JOYCE, AND SMITH

shake hands, exchanging greetings. Then they start to talk.

SMITH

Sure dim-mak exists. I studied these matters for the C.I.A. back when. I have absolutely no doubts.

MANNY

"No doubts" ain't evidence.

SMITH

Depends what you call evidence. There's no basis for it in Western science, but that's also true for acupuncture, and you've seen that work. Dim-mak's based on the same theoretical precepts.

He motions them into his office.

INT. - WHITTAKER MASTER BEDROOM - JOHN AND HOA,
ready for bed. She is massaging his shoulders from behind.

JOHN

Ahhhhh... that feels great.

She giggles and starts nibbling.

INT. - KUNG-FU SCHOOL - SMITH

picks a bicolor cat off a chair and pets it.

SMITH

Sorry, Rutherford. Need the dummy.

He puts the cat down on his desk, pulls the chair aside to get at another life-size dummy behind the chair.

The dummy is covered with Chinese characters and the meridian lines running throughout the body.

SMITH

(continuing)

Every day we swim in a sea of germs, thick around us as we speak. I get sick, you don't. Why? The Chinese say: life force.

Rutherford yawns, bored. He's likely heard all this before.

SMITH
 (continuing)
 Call it qi, prana, pneuma, or the
 breath that Yahweh breathed into
 Adam. That life force.

He turns to the dummy and uses it as a visual aid in what follows.

SMITH
 (continuing)
 The seat of this force is here.
 (indicates dummy's navel)
 From there, it flows thru these
 meridians much like the blood
 circulates. As long as nothing
 interferes, the person stays
 healthy. But disturb the flow...

WHAP! With blinding speed, he punches the dummy's navel! He is so fast that Manny and Joyce have no chance to be startled.

SMITH
 (continuing)
 He withers away. Mind deteriorates.
 Immune system no longer can cope
 with the same germs he once took for
 granted. Death's come that much
 closer. Tomorrow, next week, next
 month.

He smiles, letting this sink in.

JOHN AND HOA

The nibbling has grown more aggressive, over a wider area. As they squirm around, she falls out of her negligee.

It's too much for him. He grabs her and starts kissing her wetly, deeply, while struggling to unbutton his pajama top.

SMITH'S OFFICE

MANNY
 But how can you get a heart attack
 from a blow on the arm?

SMITH

Think of acupuncture. How does a needle in your foot allow open-chest surgery without anesthesia? The meridians link them, heart meridian here, lung here, liver...
(tracing meridians on dummy)

Off by a quarter-inch, say here instead of here...

(striking dummy twice at adjacent points)

...or miscalculate the time of strike, it doesn't work. It's all very exact science.

(smiling at Joyce)

How's your form?

(to Manny)

One of our more dedicated students.

JOHN AND HOA

in bed, squirming around in earnest. John's top is off and she's gloriously naked.

Suddenly she pulls away and sits up.

They stare wide-eyed at each other, breathing hard, hearts pounding...

Then she attacks his pajama bottom.

SMITH'S OFFICE

MANNY

But fix the exact time of death?
Come on!

SMITH

Look at it this way: I destroy your lungs...

(hits dummy's chest)

You can't breathe, you die in a few minutes. I destroy your kidneys...

(hits dummy elsewhere)

... congestive heart failure, uremic poisoning, takes weeks. I decide when it happens by the target I choose.

JOHN, LYING BACK ON A PILLOW

He is clearly helpless against some indescribable pleasure!
His eyes are shut and he twitches and gasps occasionally.

SMITH'S OFFICE

MANNY

But it's all just words! Do you
have any data ...

SMITH

I don't think you need any data. I
think you already believe.

He smiles at Manny who stares back darkly.

MANNY

I'm no superstitious fool!

SMITH

Then would you be willing to let me
try it... on your daughter?

Manny is taken aback. Smith calmly starts to take Joyce's
pulse.

SMITH

(continuing)
It's almost 7:00, so the flow should
be right about here...
(indicating on dummy, but
we cannot see it)
...all I'd do is press her arm here
like this... and here, with the
knuckle... and here.

Still taking Joyce's pulse, he looks at Manny challengingly.

MANNY

What happens then?

SMITH

If you're right, some slight
bruising at most.

He releases Joyce's wrist and smiles at Manny, waiting.

Long beat. Joyce is finding this absolutely fascinating.

MANNY

And if I'm wrong?

Smith puts his arm around Joyce, and speaks with maddening assurance.

SMITH

Some abdominal discomfort. About six tomorrow evening, she'll turn pale and feel weak. About midnight, she'll start throwing up, then she'll pass out.

MANNY

Then what?

Smith pulls Joyce tighter.

SMITH

Then this lovely young creature would be gone by Tuesday, but I'd resuscitate her before then.

MANNY

Resuscitate?

SMITH

(showing on dummy)

Everything has two faces. What I did, I can undo. I unblock the flow here and here and here. Mix her up some herbs. In a few days she'd be good as new.

(beat)

Well?

Again the challenge. Joyce stares at Manny with an ambiguous look, but he seems confused. Then,

MANNY

Tuesday? She'll miss school.

JOHN'S FACE

Hot, flushed. He's breathing much faster, and sweat starts to bead on his upper lip...

MANNY AND SMITH

MANNY

Why not try it on me?

SMITH

Because you're a boozer and I'm not sure I'd know how to revive you.

Manny reacts.

SMITH

(continuing)

Oh yeah, I can tell.

MANNY

(reddening)

Haven't touched it in days.

But Smith is studying the cat on his desk. He picks it up and places it in Manny's arms, where it seems content to nestle.

SMITH

Shall we try Rutherford? You take him home, and if all goes as planned, he should look and act normal until, oh...

(looks at his watch)

... say, about three days, when he should start choking to death.

JOYCE

No, dad, no!

MANNY

Yeah. Cats bring you luck.

SMITH

Don't worry, I'm fond of him too. I'll be around to revive him a few minutes after he goes out.

MANNY

How're you gonna do that?

SMITH

Simple. I do it to him, I can undo it. The lung meridian here...

(indicates on cat)

(MORE)

SMITH (CONT'D)

Now hold him absolutely still. Cats have smaller pressure points. I have to hit just right. I'm sure you wouldn't want cat shit all over your coat.

Manny looks at him suspiciously. Was that a joke? Smith LAUGHS at Manny's reaction.

Manny LAUGHS with him uncertainly.

Serious again, Smith adjusts Manny's hold on the cat, takes his stance, extends middle and index fingers, one over the other, like the ninja at Yang's tomb, and moves his hand like a snake about to strike.

Rutherford looks away, bored and oblivious.

SMITH

concentrates, breathing deeply and rhythmically.

MANNY

looks from Smith to the cat, confused and unsure.

CUT TO:

JOHN'S BEDROOM

JOHN'S gasping is faster. He's getting close... straining, openmouthed... closer... closer... almost there...

...almost there... reaching... pushing...

... aaaaaANDDDDDDDD...

:

CUT TO:

SMITH'S OFFICE

Smith inhales sharply, cocking his hand for the blow...

Joyce shuts her eyes tight, looks away...

... and Manny steps back, pulling the cat out of reach.

MANNY
 But you could miss, hit here--
 (indicating two points an
 inch apart on cat)
 -- instead of here, right?

Smith puts his hand down and smiles as Manny realizes the implications of what he's just said.

CUT TO:

JOHN

HAS MADE IT! TOUCHDOWN! TOUCHDOWN! He jerks his head spasmodically and emits a choked moan...

BACK TO:

MANNY

He drops the cat and staggers out the office.

CUT AGAIN TO:

JOHN

Eyes wide open. He grabs at his chest, his neck and shoulder muscles ripped, straining.

He begins to twitch and jerk his head from side to side. HOA'S head comes O.S. from below.

HOA
 What? What?

John is struggling for air. Still clutching at his chest, he fights to rise against what seems to be extreme pain.

HOA

Her SCREAM reverberates on and on as we

CUT TO:

CINDY

on the phone IN HER LIVING ROOM, talking fast and looking very perturbed.

EXT. - JOHN'S FRONT YARD - EVENING

All the house lights seem to be on.

In his car, a haggard Manny SCREECHES UP and stops behind an ambulance with flashing lights.

Paramedics roll John out on a gurney as Manny runs up. John has literally turned blue.

Joyce runs to Manny and throws her arms around him while Cindy tries to comfort a weeping Hoa.

MANNY

What happened?

CINDY

He's passed out.

MANNY

What happened?

TWO BOYS,

the mophead and an OLDER TEN-YEAR-OLD, come out dragging blankets and teddy bears.

Joyce goes to them while Manny, Cindy, and Hoa whisper together in the b.g. Then...

MANNY

(shouting to Hoa)

YOU DIDN'T CALL 9-1-1?

HOA

(crying)

Inutile! Death touch! No use!

In a SUDDEN EXPLOSION OF VIOLENT RAGE, MANNY STRIKES HOA!

She drops to the ground, BAWLING!

Cindy and Joyce fight to restrain him while the two boys start SCREAMING and CRYING.

Catching himself, Manny closes his eyes and grits his teeth, stumbling blindly away with what sounds like A CRY OF PAIN.

FADE TO:

EXT. - CEMETERY - DAY

A mixed group of mourners under the awning... Hoa in black veil... John's parents, MR. AND MRS. WHITTAKER...

Sally, very chic in black...

A Roman Catholic PRIEST DRONES on and on...

SALLY

isn't listening, She's gazing off to the side, off towards...

MANNY,

bareheaded, uncombed, in dark glasses.

Sally comes up beside him and tries to take his hand.

Without looking at her, he rejects it and moves away.

SALLY

follows him with her eyes.

MANNY

Expressionless under the sunglasses. Then he sees something O.S. and stares.

CINDY AND ANOTHER WOMAN

are just joining the mourners.

MANNY

Staring intently.

THE WOMAN WITH CINDY,

black suit, white gloves, with her hair up, tinge of lipstick, slightly wobbly on high heels...

,,,is Joyce.

MANNY,

fighting to control his feelings.

THE GROUP

The priest DRONES on. WEeping, Hoa reaches out for Mrs. Whittaker's hand, but Mrs. Whittaker. also CRYING, rejects it and turns to her husband.

MANNY

He's the only one who's seen it.

HOA

Heartbroken, weeping silently.

MANNY

Watching. Then Sally's beside him again, reaching for his hand.

He looks at her for what seems a long time, then lets her take him in her arms.

INT. - MANNY AND JOHN'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

The venetian blind's shadows stripe the wall. Manny is nursing a bourbon while cleaning out John's desk. He picks up the picture frame and studies it.

INSERT - TWO FRAMED PHOTOS

John and Hoa as newlyweds, then the other of the two boys.

MANNY puts the frame in a cardboard box and opens a drawer.

Another picture. A Huey behind a group of grunts in fatigues, mugging for the camera. Squatting in front are Manny and John, looking fresh out of high school.

He puts it in the box.

A shadow on the door glass. Then Detectives Garrison and Kilby walk in without knocking. Garrison is chomping on a cigar.

GARRISON

Door was open.

Manny says nothing, sips his bourbon, waits.

GARRISON

(continuing)

This yours?

He holds up Manny's pocket knife in a plastic bag. Manny sips again.

Beat. Then,

MANNY

Looks like something I lost years ago.

GARRISON

Of course. Lost where?

MANNY

Vietnam.

They stare at each other. Manny sips again.

The detective's exasperation changes into a profound distaste.

GARRISON

Lee, I hear good things about when you were P.D., but look at you now, drunk, dirty, no self-respect...

MANNY

Get out.

Garrison flips the knife onto the desk, where it lands with a CLATTER.

GARRISON

Chinese cemetery. Oriental satanic ritual. Condoms and a corpse. How'd it get there, Korean Air?

MANNY,

a faraway look.

FLASH INSERT: John and Manny at the cemetery laughing mightily as the security guards take off in terror.

Grieving again, Manny struggles to control his emotions.

MANNY
Book me or get out.

GARRISON AND KILBY

look him over. Huh... is that actually SYMPATHY we see on their faces?

EXT. - NIGHT - DOWNTOWN STREET

Manny is much drunker now, sitting in the gutter, nuzzling his bourbon with his stubble. He has relapsed into his old pre-hygienic self.

MANNY
(to himself)
Time's up...

LATER

Rain has started to fall. The bottle has been replaced by his .38.

MANNY
Time's up...

THE STREET - PERHAPS DAYS LATER

It is getting light, and all we see is urban blight.

MANNY (V.O.)
AAAARRRRGGGGHHHH !!!

EXT. - THE SIDEWALK - DAYBREAK

A slight drizzle. Sally has her arms around Manny from behind while he squats in the gutter hugging himself.

She motions, and two young STAFFERS with a THIRD holding an umbrella come out of a Lincoln and carry Manny into...

THE BACK SEAT

Manny out cold, Sally wiping his face with a towel. Through the raindrops on the rear window, we see the streets of Chinatown go by.

EXT. - ENTRANCE TO SALLY'S BUILDING

They lift Manny bodily out of the car and up the stairs.

SALLY'S BATHROOM

Manny naked in the tub. Sally watches the boys clean him up.

SALLY'S BEDROOM

Manny sprawled out under the blankets, Sally on a chair watching beside him.

DISSOLVE TO:

MANNY IN BED

He opens his eyes and sits up suddenly, blinking.

Recognizing the place, he reaches and tugs at a rope.

A MAID appears.

MANNY

My clothes.

MAID

Wait Miss Sally.

MANNY

What time is it?

MAID

(leaving)

Two p.m.

He flops back into bed.

SAME BEDROOM - LATER

Sally is unbuttoning her blouse. Then she gets under the covers with Manny.

SEQUENCE OF DISSOLVES

The two of them, kissing hungrily...

Their nude bodies twining and untwining...

His hands roaming over her naked back, over her buttocks...

She closes her eyes and sighs...

His hands caressing her thigh, the back of her knee...

She surrenders completely to his touch...

He explores her calf, her ankle, her foot --

SALLY STARTS

and jerks her foot away.

MANNY

looks surprised, gently takes the foot and touches the sole again.

Again she winces.

He peers at the plaster on the sole, then looks up at her.

MANNY

How'd that happen?

SALLY

Dropped a bowl on the floor and stepped on a shard. It'll be all right. It's healing fast.

MANNY

Kiss'll make it go away.

He kisses her sole gently, then continues to kiss his way up.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

The afterglow of love. He is tracing her profile with his finger.

MANNY

Flat nose.

SALLY

What, you prefer beaks? Daisy Duck?

She QUACKS at him playfully,

MANNY

Tweety bird.

SALLY

Puddy tat.

MANNY

"Thufferin' thuccotath!"

They smile quietly. They're both as American as can be. He continues to explore her face lovingly.

MANNY

(continuing)

Sally, I...

Long pause.

MANNY

(continuing)

I...

But the two other words won't come. He has an idea, though: He quietly pulls an ornate, antique gold ring off his finger and slips it on hers.

MANNY

(continuing)

My grandmother's. My mother gave it to me long ago.

She examines it. It's beautiful in that light.

MANNY

(continuing)

Joyce won't-- I want you to have it.

She looks at him surprised, genuinely touched. He takes her newly be-ringed hand in his and kisses it, then pauses.

Pulling her arm close, he examines her elbow.

MANNY
(continuing)
What's this?

Five bluish-red, dime-sized marks show around her elbow.

SALLY
I don't know. I've been shaking
hands with a lot of people.

MANNY
How can you get that shaking hands?

He tries to rub the marks off, but she takes his hand.

SALLY
I remember Dr. Eng did it like this.

She shakes Manny's hand. At the same time she grasps his right arm around the elbow with her left hand.

MANNY
Eng?

He tries it on her.

The marks neatly align with his left thumb and fingertips.

MANNY bites his knuckle, stifling a cry.

EXT. - MANNY IN HIS CAR - DUSK (TRAVELING)

His manner calm, but his face grim.

INT. - DR. ENG'S BUILDING LOBBY

The same hoods who accosted him earlier stop Manny as he walks up...

...then they recognize him and wave him on, smiling apologetically.

INT. - DR. ENG'S OFFICE

Dr. Eng looks up from his desk as Manny storms in, gun drawn.

MANNY

Bastard! You did it, didn't you?
Yang, John...

DR. ENG

(rising)

Mr. Lee. Drunk again?

MANNY

Sally too... Well, you're going to
cure her or they'll find your brains
splattered all over your fucking
desk!

He aims. It's point-blank range, but Dr. Eng is cool, not
fazed in the least.

DR. ENG

Oh, put that away. Take a seat.
Let's talk--

MANNY

CURE HER!

DR. ENG

Shouting won't make things easier!
Sit down and listen!

Manny stares, face twitching. Dr. Eng's traditional blue
silk coat shimmers as he motions to a chair.

Manny looks at his watch and lowers himself into the chair,
keeping the gun leveled at Dr. Eng.

DR. ENG

(continuing)

You say I killed Yang? No, Mr. Lee,
it was not I who killed him, just as
it will not be you who kills me when
you pull that trigger.

(beat)

It is this country, Mr. Lee, it is
America that has killed our
ancestors and that continues to kill
us all!

(MORE)

DR. ENG (CONT'D)

This bastard society that sets
brother against brother, children
against parents, rich against poor--

MANNY

Cut the campaign crap and get to the
point!

Dr. Eng searches his face...

...then smiles.

DR. ENG

All right. Suppose I say I have no
idea what you're talking about.
Then what? Do you kill me? Prison
for you... or worse! Then what
would happen to Sally, to the people
you love...

(insinuating)

...your daughter?

Manny's face tightens. He gets up and approaches
dangerously.

MANNY

What about my daughter?

DR. ENG

(getting up)

You don't see it, do you? You no
longer think like a Chinese! Who
stands to gain the most if you kill
me?

MANNY

(approaching)

Hmm. Know what? I don't think I
need you after all. I know someone
else who can undo this death
touch...

He cocks the revolver and aims.

DR. ENG

(backing away)

Lee! You've been duped! You've
become an assassin, a bullet aimed
at my head, exactly as planned!

Manny pauses, but only briefly, then resumes backing Dr. Eng inexorably towards the window.

MANNY

(calmly)

You know, you shouldn't lie so much.
You're about to die.

DR. ENG

They were heart attacks, I swear!
People do have heart attacks!

MANNY

Yeah. I hear they fall out of
windows too.

EXT. - DR. ENG'S BUILDING - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The only light comes from a sixth floor window.

A man in the traditional Chinese silk robe comes CRASHING backwards through the window, sending glass flying all over!

He falls, arms and legs flailing, as if dancing...

...and he falls... and falls... and falls ...

THE WINDOW

Manny peers down, face contorted. Then he shuts his eyes in pain and STICKS THE BARREL OF HIS GUN UP HIS MOUTH.

DR. ENG'S OFFICE

Manny starts to pull the trigger, then remembers something.

MANNY

Angel!

EXT. - FRONT OF SMITH'S KUNG-FU SCHOOL - NIGHT

Class over, Joyce and her kung-fu friends chat and wait for their rides.

A SENIOR STUDENT hangs a sign on the front door that reads:
"CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING."

SENIOR STUDENT
Keep training while school's out.

They CHORUS promises, then turn back to each other with AD LIB goodbyes, "See you after Thanksgiving," etc.

DR. ENG'S OFFICE

Manny grabs the phone and dials in a frenzy.

CINDY (V.O.)
Hello.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION - MANNY AND CINDY

MANNY
It's me. Where's Joyce?

CINDY
At karate.

She looks at the wall clock, showing 6:10.

CINDY
(continuing)
Class just ended. She should be home soon.

MANNY
Now listen very carefully. I'm going to go pick her up...

OVER THE FOLLOWING PHONE CONVERSATION, A SERIES OF M.O.S. SHOTS:

At the front of Smith's school, Joyce flings her gym bag over her shoulder, waves to her friends.

MANNY (V.O.)
Soon's I hang up, call the school and tell her to wait for me. If I miss her, get her inside at once and lock the door and don't let anyone in, understand?

JOYCE pedals her skateboard over the parking lot into the darkness of residential suburbia.

PULL BACK to a car parked in the f.g. The driver studies an 8x10 photo of Joyce with a penlight, then starts the car.

It is the Albino.

CINDY (V.O.)
(into phone)
Is anything wrong?

BACK TO MANNY ON THE PHONE IN DR. ENG'S OFFICE

POLICE SIRENS can be heard outside.

MANNY
Just do it!

And he's out the door.

SERIES OF SHOTS

JOYCE skates past some houses, HUMMING to herself...

UH OH... headlights sneaking up behind her...

MANNY driving at speed. He pulls from a flask with one hand, runs a red light, HORN BLASTING.

JOYCE skating on the sidewalk, ignoring the headlights throwing her shadow before her ...

MANNY CURSING, HONKING, weaving crazily in and out of traffic...

MANNY
Come on! Come on!

The MYSTERIOUS HEADLIGHTS behind JOYCE pulls up alongside...

...and drive on.

EXT. - CHINATOWN SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Flashing lights, PARAMEDICS, POLICE, RUBBERNECKERS.

Detective Garrison is chomping on a cigar, staring up at the light shining in Dr. Eng's broken office window.

SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT

A MOTORCYCLE swerves to avoid Manny and flies straight up onto the sidewalk!

JOYCE skates by a park with a softball field. She kicks her board up, crosses to the park, and cuts across the grass. Crickets are SINGING.

THE ALBINO drives up in the f.g., watching her. He turns his engine off, looks around.

Secluded enough. He gets out and opens the back door.

The pit bull jumps out and frisks. He tugs at the leash, taking it off...

...and they start off together jogging after Joyce.

INT. - DR. ENG'S OFFICE

Garrison is the only calm center in a hubbub of police activity.

He stares quietly at Dr. Eng's desk telephone. The receiver is off the hook and emits a steady BEEPING...

His thoughts are interrupted by a uniformed ASIAN POLICEMAN who walks up to him from Eng's hoods/concierges in the b.g.

ASIAN POLICEMAN
 Won't cooperate, sir. They prefer
 to settle things their own way.

SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT

HORN BLARING, Manny charges past another red light.

Feet shod in black pad across park grass next to white paws...

JOYCE

lopes on over the lawn... then she freezes: something's changed, different, but what?

Oh, it's only the CRICKETS. They've STOPPED SINGING, probably disturbed by her presence.

As she starts again, she notices that the park lights are casting weird shadows on her path.

MANNY

SCREECHES into the strip mall and runs up to Smith's kung-fu school.

It's locked up, totally dark, "CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING" sign on the window.

CURSING, he jumps back in the car and SQUEALS SHRILLY away.

JOYCE

looks over her shoulder. She starts to jog, breathing evenly to establish a rhythm...

THE SHOES AND PAWS

pick up to match her pace...

MANNY

driving at speed, takes another swig, and POW! A tire blows!

FLASH ZOOM into a tree-- CRASH! Then hubcaps and broken glass fly all over.

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS - NIGHT

JOYCE escalates to a fast trot. Something's tracking her from behind!

THE ALBINO'S feet, pumping next to the dog's...

MANNY running urgently over the same grass. In the b.g., his car's radiator is spouting steam.

JOYCE at full speed, breathing hard...

MANNY racing, gasping even harder...

JOYCE running past the rose bushes outside her house... just a few more step to safety, when...

THE ALBINO whistles. The dog leaps forward ...

JOYCE turns to look back...

...and a HUNDRED POUNDS OF SALIVA-FLECKED FANGS LEAP UP AND KNOCK HER TO THE GROUND! YAAAH !!!

MANNY wheezing down the sidewalk... he hears the SCREAM!

THE DOG HAS CLAMPED ITS MONSTROUS JAWS ON THE SKATEBOARD! Joyce shoves it away and springs up to run...

...RIGHT INTO THE ARMS OF THE ALBINO! Frightened, she knees him in the crotch, but HE DOESN'T REACT!

They dance around as she tries to get free while he struggles to hold her while he extracts his penlight from his pocket,

SUDDENLY SHE POKES HIM IN THE EYES with her fingers! He lets her go, the penlight rolling away as he staggers back, rubbing his eyes...

JOYCE takes off, but before she can take three steps-- YAAH!

THE DOG JUMPS HER AGAIN! It sinks its teeth into her ankle and she trips and falls to the ground!

MANNY appears in the b.g., running as fast as he can, pistol out!

MANNY
 (breathless)
 Joyce!

JOYCE
 Daaaaad! HELP MEEEEEE!

THE ALBINO, eyes red, turns to face the rapidly approaching newcomer.

Anguish written all over his face, MANNY makes a decision:

Slowing to a stop, he drops to one knee and takes a deep breath. With a supreme effort at control, he blocks out the terrible DIN ahead...

...concentrates, carefully aiming his revolver at the writhing mass of girl and dog...

WE HOLD OUR BREATH as MANNY starts to SQUEEZE, and...

BLAM! The dog JERKS, YELPS, and rolls over prostrate! Joyce yanks her leg from its slack mouth and starts to get up!

The Albino leaps to his pet's side, SCREAMING and SHAKING it!

JOYCE, ankle mangled, struggles to drag herself over to Manny, who's waving her urgently out of the line of fire!

With a terrible HOWL, the ALBINO is rocking the pit bull in his arms...

...then, face twisted with grief and fury, he lets the carcass drop, and slowly turns to face Manny...

At last JOYCE clears and MANNY FIRES, but the ALBINO is unbelievably fast!

He's airborne as if by magic, hurtling through the air to SLAM MANNY down before he can get off a second shot!

JOYCE
 Daaaaad!

MANNY'S GUN lands a few feet away! He dives for it, but the Albino does a soccer tackle and kicks it into the bushes!

Incredibly, he then springs to his feet like a jack-in-the-box, then stares balefully as Manny slowly rises to a crouch.

MANNY has never been so alert in all his life. Senses taut, he notices something.

A spot of blood is growing, billowing on the Albino's shirt. So he hit him after all.

Manny shifts his gaze to Joyce... to her front door, only a few feet away.

MANNY
Go inside! Go!

JOYCE sees it, but keeps looking around for something.

THE ALBINO sees it too. He turns to Joyce, bows, and gestures, "You're free to go."

Joyce looks at Manny uncertainly. Manny motions with his head.

MANNY
Go! Do it!

A TRICK. As Manny drops his guard, the Albino EXPLODES towards him with BLINDING SPEED, THWACKING his foot into Manny's face and knocking him several feet away!

THE ALBINO (MANNY'S P.O.V. - UPWARD FROM GROUND LEVEL)

He slowly approaches, nursing his hurt hand...

CRACK! He's LASHED out at us again, foot too fast to see!

We BLACK OUT for a split second, then recover and woozily try to focus on...

JOYCE
Get up, Dad! Get up!

We turn our eyes towards the Albino...

...then LUNGE UP at him with a YELL, but his foot WHIPS OUT AGAIN! Our P.O.V. shot drops back to ground level and rolls around a few times.

Fuzzily we watch THE ALBINO'S SHOES step slowly towards us.

JOYCE

is desperate! Then her eyes find what she was looking for.

She picks it up. It's the Albino's penlight.

Frantically she fiddles with it. It HAS to be a weapon of some kind!

THE ALBINO (MANNY'S P.O.V.)

He squats down and peers at us while we groggily try to focus.

Then slowly, he forms the fingers of his good hand into the spearpoint, same as he did earlier for the ashtray.

MANNY (O.S.)
(whispering fervently)
Nga dili sa atong contra...

THE ALBINO LEANS OVER A PRONE MANNY,

his hand raised, poised to strike...

Manny makes the sign of the cross and fixes the Albino with an intense, almost trancelike stare...

MANNY
...en principio erat berbom...

MANNY'S P.O.V.

THE ALBINO pauses, a slight smile at this sudden display of religion...

...then lips tighten, eyes grow hard, he cocks his hand again, and...

...STRIKES DOWN!

MANNY (O.S.)

...sicon dom!

...BUT as Manny's prayer ends, the Albino's strike suddenly SHIFTS INTO ULTRA SLOW MOTION!

A MIRACLE...

The Albino's fingers approach so slowly we have time to note the reddish hairs on the back of his hand...

... enough time to examine with incredible clarity the white whorls of his fingerprints...

...and enough time for Manny to ROLL OUT of harm's way!

JOYCE'S P.O.V.

Manny rolls away from the strike as the Albino drives his fingers into the concrete sidewalk!

The Albino grimaces with pain, gripping his broken fingers!

SUDDENLY he squints towards us. A light is shining directly at his eyes!

JOYCE

SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY, is aiming his penlight straight at him!!

He can't take it! He covers his eyes with his bloodied hands, turning away!

JOYCE won't let him go! She follows with the penlight as he stumbles around to get away!

MANNY

Grabs the opening! He pulls the whiskey flask from his pocket, smashes it on the sidewalk...

...and leaps forward, DRIVING the jagged edge into the Albino's neck!

Warm blood SPURTS from the artery and sprays over him and Joyce!

THE ALBINO,

in shock, broken hands useless, is slowly being bent backward...

...by Manny, breathing hard, coming on frame pushing, pushing, refusing to let the Albino wriggle off the hook.

JOYCE,

in horrified tears, keeps the penlight focused, stamping her feet and SCREAMING GIBBERISH at them. It's like she's in a trance.

MANNY AND THE ALBINO

Though they look like two kneeling figures carved in stone, they are doggedly straining against each other in a terrific contest of physical strength (panting, a teeth, muscles rippling, etc.)

Then the Albino opens his eyes wide, slowly twists his lips, now painted with blood, into a ghastly smile...

... GURGLES...

... and falls backward to the pavement.

Manny slumps back on his knees as Joyce runs up to hug him, CRYING.

Both turn to stare at the fallen Albino, still breathing, body tangled on the sidewalk.

THE ALBINO (THEIR P.O.V.)

Gazing up at them through dying eyes, this once-fearsome assassin, choking in his own blood, now actually looks pitiful.

Moving his lips as if to speak, he struggles to raise his mangled fingers...

...and motions towards his dog's corpse.

JOYCE AND MANNY stare at him, undecided.

Then Manny, with Joyce clinging to him, stumbles over to the pit bull's carcass and drags it back next to the Albino.

The Albino smiles, petting it, leaving streaks of blood on the white fur. He GURGLES, almost happily, lays the dog over him.

Then he turns back to Manny, eyes glowing, and slowly extends his right hand.

Joyce cringes back, but Manny's face is a mask. He makes no move, just continues to watch the fallen warrior on the pavement.

The Albino's hand trembles as he wills it not to drop...

...but his eyes are closing. He is about to go.

Manny tentatively moves to take the proffered hand.

The Albino winces as they shake, holding each others' eyes...

SUDDENLY

the Albino's left hand FLIES UP and grabs Manny around the elbow! His mouth contorts into a twisted smile!

Joyce SCREAMS again and tugs at Manny as he struggles to free himself from the iron grip! BEDLAM ONCE MORE--

But it's over as suddenly as it began! The hands fall away, and Manny and Joyce back off in horror from the prostrate Albino...

... but he is finally at peace.

Hold on him as we

FADE TO:

INT. - POLICE STATION OFFICE

Manny and Garrison sit at a desk...

...while a red-eyed Cindy is holding a bedraggled Joyce, wrapped in a blanket, on the couch along one wall.

Joyce's ankle is bandaged.

Manny is nodding off, dog-tired.

Detective Kilby enters and shows Garrison something on a sheaf of computer printouts. Then both of them turn to Cindy.

KILBY

Mrs. Lee, phone records show that at 6:12 tonight, about the time Dr. Eng died, someone called you from his office, using his phone.

CINDY

looks at Kilby uncomprehendingly.

FLASH INSERT: She is on the phone telling Manny that Joyce is at kung-fu. The wall clock behind her says "6:10."

Cindy looks to Manny, who's suddenly wide awake.

CINDY

Why, yes. I'd forgotten. The excitement--

But Manny does not return her look.

CINDY

(continuing)
He called me to ask--

Joyce closes her eyes.

KILBY

Who called?

THE GROUP

They all wait expectantly.

Cindy looks at Joyce, who stares back hard at her.

CINDY
Why, Dr. Eng did.

GARRISON
Eng! What did he want?

CINDY
He was looking for Manny-- for him.

Garrison and Kilby exchange looks.

KILBY
(doubtful)
Him? What for?

CINDY
Oh, he-- he didn't say, just-- that
he wanted to talk to him-

MANNY
(interrupting)
Look, I already told you, he's been
trying to buy me off, okay?

KILBY
(to Cindy)
And what did you tell him?

CINDY
That my ex-husband never tells me of
his plans or-- or whereabouts.

KILBY
And then?

CINDY
He said good-bye and hung up.

Silence. Finally Garrison stands up.

GARRISON
All right, Mrs. Lee. You can take
your daughter home now. We'll call
if we need anything.

Joyce limps over to Manny and hugs him quietly for a few moments.

KILBU

I'll discharge you. Follow me.

Then she and Cindy exit following Kilby.

Garrison flips an 8x10 glossy of the Albino on his desk in front of Manny.

GARRISON

Chinese name's Huang Di, real name unknown. Eng's protégé, Hong Kong domicile.

He unwraps a cigar, bites the end off, and lights it, waiting. Manny ignores his cue.

GARRISON

(continuing)

Okay, Lee, I'm buying your story. But it stinks. It smells like revenge for John Whittaker by his chink partner gone mad who believed some crazy chink voodoo about some death hand.

MANNY

I'm no chink, pizza face.

GARRISON

If I had my way I'd ship all you chinks back to Chink-land. This country used to be a real nice place.

Manny gets up wearily and puts his hat on...

... as Kilby re-enters.

GARRISON

(continuing)

If there's more to this than you've let on, ex-cop or not, I will personally hand you your dick on a silver platter.

MANNY

Hand it to your wife. She'll appreciate it.

Kilby quickly takes Manny's arm.

KILBY
You're exhausted, sir. Go get some
rest. We'll be in touch.

Manny jerks his arm free and exits, SLAMMING the door.

EXT. - STREET IN FRONT OF POLICE STATION - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Cindy and Joyce sit idling in their car when Manny runs down the steps. He reaches them as Cindy fastens her seatbelt.

MANNY
Thank you.

Cindy stares back coldly. Suddenly, with a little cry, she SLAPS HIM HARD!

JOYCE
Mom!

Cindy turns away in anger and frustration as Manny rubs his cheek. He leans forward again but she quickly raises the window and puts the car in gear...

...then drives off, leaving Manny staring after her.

Then Manny suddenly remembers.

MANNY
Sally!

He is about to run back up the station when he stops, fumbles in his overcoat pocket, then pulls out a card.

INSERT - BUSINESS CARD

It is Smith's business card, "Academy of the Internal Arts," next the round yin/yang symbol.

BACK TO MANNY

A smile slowly dawns with the realization.

He positively CHORTLES while brandishing the card triumphantly!

MANNY
(continuing)
He knows the antidote! Hear that,
Eng? You've lost, motherfucker!
It's over and YOU'VE LOST! YOU'VE
LOOOOOOOOOOST!

And he runs down the sidewalk, CACKLING all the way.

FADE TO:

EXT. - CHINATOWN STREET - DAY

A laughing Sally is mobbed in an open convertible by VOTERS reaching to shake her hand.

INT. - BATHROOM

Through the shower's steam we see Manny soaping up, grooving on the hot water.

He steps out and towels off, looks in the mirror to examine the bruises on his face.

Then he starts at the image of his elbow. He holds it up and examines it closely.

WHAT HE SEES

Bruise spots, just like the ones he found on Sally's elbow!

MANNY'S EYES

Wide with realization!

FLASH INSERT: the Albino grabbing his elbow as they shake hands.

The realization changes to fear and terror.

MANNY
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO !

He SMASHES the mirror into a million silver pieces!

CUT TO:

MANNY AT HIS DESK,

fully dressed. His lips tighten as he listens on the phone.

MAN'S VOICE

Miss Robinson is out campaigning and cannot be reached, but if you leave your number...

EXT. - FRONT OF SMITH'S KUNG FU SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Manny anxiously peers in through the glass at the dark interior. Nothing. Then the sign catches his eye: "CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING."

ON MANNY,

stunned, as the full import of his predicament finally dawns on him. HOLD, then...

FADE TO:

EXT. - CINDY'S LAWN - EVENING

Manny drives up (N.B. DIFFERENT CAR), stops, and gets out.

He leans on the car for a second, then reaches in and pulls out the office kitten.

MANNY

(petting kitten)

Looks like you didn't bring me much luck, pal.

He sets it down on Cindy's lawn and watches as it explores its new environment.

MANNY

(continuing)

John's gone too. You're on your own now, good buddy.

He looks at his watch again and strides up to the front door.

INT. - CINDY'S LIVING ROOM (CONTINUOUS)

Cindy, eyes red from crying, opens the door. She immediately tries to shut him outside, but he pushes in...

...and surprises her by pulling her into an embrace.

Beat. Then...

CINDY

It's no use. I've decided and
that's that.

Manny looks confused as Cindy breaks off...

... spins back, and POUNDS HIS CHEST WITH HER FISTS IN
FRUSTRATION! Then turns away...

He goes after her, but she won't look at him or let him near
her.

They stop several feet apart. Manny waits.

CINDY

(continuing)
You nearly got her killed!
(off his look)
Try to understand...

Beat.

CINDY

(continuing)
I love her too...

Manny turns and speaks with his back to her.

MANNY

We had our differences, but we were
good together once, weren't we?
It's just that it wasn't--
(with feeling)
-- we did our best, didn't we? I
mean, no one could've asked for
more, could they...

She is touched without knowing why and wipes her eyes.

CINDY

Thank you. I'll go get her.

She leaves the room quietly.

Seconds later JOYCE enters. She limps up tentatively, and then they embrace tightly, rocking back and forth as they speak.

JOYCE
We're moving away.

MANNY
She told me.

JOYCE
Far away.

MANNY
I know.

JOYCE
I don't wanna go.

MANNY
It won't be for long.

Joyce kisses him happily!

JOYCE
Oh, Dad, I knew you'd find a way!

MANNY
That's not what I meant.

Joyce senses trouble, searches his face. He looks undecided. Then...

MANNY
(deciding)
Joyce, your mom loves you very much
and--

Not what she wanted to hear. She breaks the embrace and starts backing away, anticipating, staring resentfully.

MANNY
(continuing; with emotion)
Angel, never forget this: You mean
more to me, more to me than anything
in the world--

JOYCE
I bet you say that to her too!

She runs out, limping, and is gone.

Manny closes his eyes, and is about to start after her...

...but spots the clock on the wall and changes his mind. He trudges to the door.

FADE TO:

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION - SALLY AT CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS
AND MANNY AT A BAR PAY PHONE

Frenetic activity surrounds Sally-- she is constantly interrupted by a flow of messages, papers to sign, fans wanting selfies, etc.

SALLY
Tonight's impossible.

MANNY
Sally, it's very important.

SALLY
What is it?

MANNY
I can't-- the death touch... what about late tonight?

SALLY
Death touch?! Manny, the election's Tuesday! I can't--

MANNY
Tuesday's too late!

SALLY
(irritably)
Call back in a few hours. I'll see what I can do.

She hangs up and turns to greet a GROUP.

At the bar, Manny stares at the phone, then stalks off.

FADE TO:

INT. - GRAMPA'S LIVING ROOM

Gramma and Grampa sit on the couch next to Manny as he tries to talk. Gramma's arms are crossed.

MANNY
 (struggling)
Iti ayat co nga-- nga ibaga--
 (giving up)
 I never was any good at Ilocano, but
 I-- I beg your forgiveness for-- for
 all the trouble and heartache I
 caused, and-- and in spite of what
 it looked like, I've always loved
 you both, and I love you both so
 much I...

She embraces him as he lays his head against her chest and Grampa smiles, consoling him, patting him on the back.

PUSH IN on a wall clock... 4:30...

FADE TO:

EXT. - PAY PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT - RAIN

The headlights of Manny's car shine in the b.g. as he listens on the phone.

MAN'S VOICE
 I'm sorry, but Miss Robinson is
 unavailable. If you leave your
 number--

MANNY
 Listen, listen carefully, It's very
 important. I may not be around much
 longer. Tell her to go see a Robert
 Smith about her elbow. He has a
 kung-fu school in Hawthorne. She
 can ask my daughter Joyce about him.
 Tell her she may not have much time
 and to attend to this as soon as
 possible, as soon as possible. I
 can't stress this enough.

He slams the receiver down and jumps back in his car.

FADE TO:

INT. - CATHOLIC CHURCH

The priest we saw at John's funeral sits on one of the front pews before a very wet Manny, still wearing his dripping hat.

PRIEST

Of course we should be ready for death at any time, but you can be sure: it will come only when He in his infinite wisdom wills it, and not a moment sooner.

(sudden suspicion)

It would be a terrible sin if we were to pre-empt His will.

MANNY

I'm not thinking of suicide, Father.

He looks around, seeming to gain peace from the surroundings.

MANNY

(continuing)

It's been so long. Help me make my confession.

FADE TO:

EXT. - CHINATOWN - DUSK

The persistent BEEP BEEP of a busy signal continues into

MANNY AT A PAY PHONE,

Stony-faced, holding the receiver.

He hangs up, looks at his watch, and lights a cigarette.

Stands there smoking, watching the sun set.

DISSOLVE TO:

GARRISON AND KILBY STARING STRAIGHT AT US (END FLASHBACK)

We FINALLY are back in the police interview room of the opening scene. Manny exhales cigarette smoke.

KILBY

You know, you should quit.

ANGLE TO INCLUDE Manny, who laughs and pulls back his sleeve to show the dim-mak bruises.

MANNY

These are dangerous to your health!

KILBY
So you're dead.

MANNY
Shortly.

KILBY
Killed by Dr. Eng's death touch.

MANNY
Who'da thought, huh?

He looks at the clock on the wall.

MANNY
(continuing)
In a few minutes this won't matter.
Nothing will.

Garrison finally breaks his silence.

GARRISON
(holding back anger)
Play it your way, Lee. You've
wasted so much of our time that a
few more minutes won't matter. What
time do you kick the bucket?

MANNY
Midnight.

BONG! As he says this, the clock on the wall starts to STRIKE
the hour.

They all turn to look. It is EXACTLY MIDNIGHT.

BONG! Manny quietly closes his eyes...

Outside, CRICKETS CHIRP. The clock CHIMES RING ON as the
MUSIC SWELLS and we do a

SLOW FADE TO:

THE "LIFE FLASHING BEFORE YOUR EYES" MONTAGE

This montage should be simply awash with NOSTALGIA and SEPIA
TONES and the WHIRR and FLICKER of silent home movies, but it
ABSOLUTELY POSITIVELY CANNOT BE SENTIMENTAL OR MAWKISH!

The emotion desired is that of Procol Harum's "A Whiter Shade of Pale," with perhaps just a hallucinatory tinge.

The tone should be one of TRIUMPHANT RECAPITULATION and AFFIRMATION, "This was my life, a chain of irreplaceable moments that happened once before in history and will never happen again."

Some possibilities for this montage include:

(BONG!) In a sunlit garden, an amazed Filipino toddler discovers splendor in the grass and glory in the flower...

(BONG!) At age seven, he kisses a girl (same age), wearing their first communion gowns...

(BONG!) At age eleven, cheering on his father at a boxing match...

(BONG!) Manny and John dancing with their dates at the senior prom...

(BONG!) At a Ford dealership, Manny and John admiringly walking around a '64 Ford Mustang convertible (first car?)

Then they jump in laughing and drive it off...

(BONG!) Manny and Cindy cut their wedding cake to applause...

(BONG!) Choppers darken the sky like hornets over rice paddies while explosions BOOM in the distance...

(BONG!) An ambiguous image: A young Cindy in the f.g. stares at the floor while Manny is silhouetted at the b.g. door, clad only in jeans.

(BONG!) Manny and John in police uniforms getting into a patrol car...

... and finally, Manny, John, and Hoa looking on happily as a baby cries, cradled in Cindy's arms...

...while a priest trickles baptismal water over her supine head.

Church bells RINGING slowly morph into...

...the police clock's LAST SHIMMERING BONG-NG-NG-NG...

MANNY (V.O.)
(whispering)
Angel...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

MANNY'S HAND,

motionless on the desktop, smoke rising from his cigarette...

The hand clenches involuntarily, dropping ash on the desktop.

THE INTERVIEW ROOM

Manny seems to be asleep. Garrison watches sharply while Kilby leans in and peers at Manny.

KILBY
Mr. Lee?

Beat. Beat.

Then Manny's eyes slowly open.

Kilby is close, staring at him, curious.

Manny looks peaceful. He stubs his cigarette out on the ashtray while the detectives watch closely...

Reassured, Kilby retakes his seat.

Also watching Manny, Garrison clenches his jaw in disgust, working hard to keep his temper.

The clock's TICKING seems to get LOUDER...

With an effort, Manny turns his head to look at it.

12:20.

Kilby follows his gaze, then turns back to him.

Manny looks from Kilby to Garrison.

They stare back wordlessly.

Manny begins to examine the marks on his arm.

GARRISON
(rising)
Throw the fucking crank out.

FADE TO:

INT. - MANNY'S OFFICE

Unshaven and wearing a T-shirt, Manny nurses a bourbon at his desk, which is a mess. He examines the bruises on his arm.

They are almost gone.

MANNY
(mildly drunk)
Know what, white boy? I think you
got more credit than you deserve.
Don't think you knew anything about
no death touch.

He sips and picks up the newspaper.

MANNY
(continuing)
You did it, baby.

The headline blares "ELECTION RESULTS!" with a photo of Sally in front.

MANNY
(continuing)
How could you lose? Your opponent
fell out a window.

He peers at the photo: A full-body shot of a triumphant Sally, holding a bouquet of flowers aloft.

He caresses the photo with his eyes, starting from the top.

MANNY

Yeah, you look beautiful, babe, from
your head...

His eyes caress down her body.

MANNY

(continuing)
...to your toes...

His eyes reach her foot and HOLD...

MANNY REACTS,

struggles to remember...

FLASH INSERT: They're naked in bed-- she winces as he touches the sole of her foot.

FLASH INSERT: At Yang's tomb, the ninja rubbing the sole of his foot.

Manny has a sudden headache. His glass CLATTERS to the floor.

He pulls a magnifying glass from a drawer and returns to the photo.

THROUGH THE LENS, SALLY'S UPRAISED ARM

The image is a halftone, dotted, but the skin looks smooth and creamy. There are no visible marks on the elbow.

MANNY (O.S.)

Always had a great complexion, babe.

The lens travels up to her hand and holds.

MANNY'S EYES, wide open.

Again memories stream back:

FLASH INSERT: The ninja pinching Manny's cheek in the mausoleum...

FLASH INSERT: At the restaurant, Sally caressing his cheek...

MANNY'S EYES slowly close.

FLASH INSERT: The ninja kicking out without looking at him.

FLASH INSERT: At the restaurant with Joyce, Sally kicking his shin under the table without looking!

Manny flings the lens away and looks around confused, breathing hard. Then he grabs the phone and punches the buttons.

MAN'S VOICE

Robinson campaign Headquarters.

MANNY

Is Sally there?

MAN'S VOICE

You mean Assemblywoman Robinson?
She's busy. Is there a message?

MANNY

She ain't dead yet, huh?

MAN'S VOICE

What? Who is this?

MANNY

Who's this?

MAN'S VOICE

This is her fiancé. Who's--

Manny hangs up and cradles his head.

EXT. - CHINATOWN STREET - DAY

Manny staring up at Sally's Campaign Headquarters, swigging from a brown paper bag.

Suddenly a squad of UNIFORMED POLICEMEN arrive and take up positions. Some run into Sally's building.

POLICEMAN
 (to Manny)
 Move on.

MANNY
 What's up?

POLICEMAN
 Death threat on a public official.
 What the country's come to.

MANNY
 (gesturing over everything)
 It's all their fault. Who let all
 these chinks in anyway, huh?

The Policeman smiles, watching Manny shamle off.

Manny swigs, stops at a wooden light post.

Stapled to it is a torn campaign poster. Sally's face beams
 out at him.

He toasts her with his paper bag.

MANNY
 Hand it to you, babe. You're
 untouchable now. Know what I think?
 You won't die, but the next guy
 crosses you sure will, and they'll
 find my grandma's ring next to the
 corpse.

Two buttoned-down Chinese businessmen carrying attaché cases
 walk by, eyeing him suspiciously.

Manny takes a swig, then makes a face.

MANNY
 (continuing)
 Ahh, who the hell cares. It's
 Chinatown.

He trashes his bag and starts to trudge away...

The two uniformed security guards from the Chinese cemetery
 run past him bug-eyed, still spooked, still SCREAMING in
 fear...

129.

...and we CRANE UP AND UP, soon losing Manny in the bustle of pedestrians below.

It's business as usual on the street as we

FADE OUT.

THE END



ABOUT THE SCREENWRITER

Xosé Alzona, who goes by “X,” was born in Manila, the Philippines, and trained as a Physicist and Software Engineer. He has, however, always been a storyteller. He scripted and illustrated his first comic book (and sold it too!) at age seven. Now retired, he continues to write books, screenplays, and graphic novels while blogging about his many interests. His next eBook, *So You Could've Been Santana*, is a memoir centered on his 1960s surf-rock band, to be released later in 2022. Watch for it.