

Nails and Pride

by angus macfadyen final draft 03-08-01

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS, NIGHT.

A black cat crosses in front of a pair of feet. It stares up at the face, as yet unseen, and miaws plaintively. A leg kicks out, and the cat leaps out of frame with a hiss.

The legs walk up to a vast wooden door.

Those legs belong to the back of the figure as a hand reaches out and pushes a silent buzzer.

CLOSE UP of the man's face. Sixties. Unshaven, unkempt, artistic; years of extravagance have etched unusuality into his features. He inhales a menacing gauloise cigarette, sans filtre.

The door opens. A woman of forty stands in the doorway. Her face is tight with the discipline that fights the anxiety of a meaningless life. She is an attractive can of worms. TESS.

She is startled by the appearance of the man.

TESS

I haven't any change, sorry.

TESS is closing the door. The man, STANKO, drops his heavy canvas bag. The bag lands on the plush custom fitted carpet with a thump and stops the door from closing.

STANKO pushes past TESS.

TESS (CONT'D)

Hey, what do you think you're...Benjamin. Benjamin. I'm calling the police.

STANKO's back is formidable as he strides into the living room. And stops. Staring at a large painting on a wall.

BEN, TESS' husband, has risen from his plush sofa in front of the 56 inch TV set with surroundsound and observes STANKO.

STANKO stares at the painting. His focus is totally absorbed by it. BEN speaks softly, hiding his fear.

BEN

I've got a gun and twenty four hour security surveillance Tess, call the police right now.

TESS is onto the phone.

STANKO

No.

TESS stops dialling. Looks at BEN who looks at her. They look at the intruder. The intruder looks at the wall. Inhales his gauloise. The ash lingers precariously.

BEN hurries into the kitchen to look for an ashtray. No such thing in this house. He grabs a saucer and hurries back into the living room. The intruder reaches out his arm without looking away from the wall. CLOSE UP of the cigarette, as the ash falls in slow motion away from the burning ember and into the saucer.

Silence. BEN and TESS glance at one another. TESS mouths the word "gun". BEN hands TESS the saucer and leaves.

STANKO swivels around and observes TESS. He breaks into a smile.

STANKO (CONT'D)

I forget to introduce myself. Stanko Radic.

TESS looks puzzled.

STANKO (CONT'D)

You recognize the name, yes? You should.

STANKO points to the corner of the painting. There is his scrawled signature.

STANKO (CONT'D)

(v-o)

This name cost you sixty three thousand dollars, yes?

BEN enters the room wielding a gun.

BEN

All right, I've got a gun, and I'm going to have to ask you to move very slowly towards the front door, I don't want any trouble, Tess, you got a few dollars in your bag? Give 'em to him. No trouble, just walk towards the door.

TESS

Ben.

BEN

Yes.

TESS

Ben, he's the artist.

BEN

The artist.

TESS

Yes.

BEN

The artist?

TESS

The artist.

She points at the painting. BEN looks at the wall. Then at STANKO.

Lowers the gun.

STANKO

Where is the pipi room, please?

TESS points down a corridor. STANKO heads in that direction. Closes the door to the restroom. TESS remembers to lower her hand.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A., NIGHT.

A black man in a wheelchair, homeless, in tatters, rages at the voices inside his head.

ELIJAH

Get away from me, I said get away from me. You're all dead. That's what you are, dead again, dead already, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil. What's evil, motherfucker? The Doubt is our curse, what's the fucking point, get it over with, fuck the lot of ya, I hate ya. Get away from me. Lemme sleep. Sleep? You worthless piece of shit; eat sleep fuck shit eat fuck sleep get up and start all over again falling down is what you do best, fucking losers, the lot of ya, you're all going to die, you're all going to die. Nothing belongs to you. It's an illusion and like the man says, what cannot kill me makes me stronger. Quack quack.

EXT. VENICE BEACH, L.A., NIGHT. A long haired witch in rags pleads

with the full moon.

SHIVA

Love. Love. Love. Love.

INT. BEN AND TESS' HOUSE, LATER THAT NIGHT.

STANKO sits on the sofa, smoking and drinking vodka. TESS sits next to him, quite fascinated by this creature. BEN sits on another chair, still on edge about this unwelcome disruption of his habit. The gun lies on the coffee table.

STANKO

What kind of gun is this?

BEN

A beretta.

STANKO

Bere...?

TESS

Beretta.

STANKO

Be.Re.Ta. This is not only in America you have the gun in every house, yes? Fear in every house. Ah. Marx. Property is theft. I am from Serbia, yes? We not use this number one. Think. And quack quack bullshit talk. We use this. (Shows his fist). How you say?

TESS

Fist.

STANKO

Fiss?

BEN

Fist.

STANKO

Fist. Fist. We are men, pow pow pow, John Wayne, Sylvester Stallone. You like?

TESS

No.

STANKO

Hah?

BEN

No. Precautionary.

TESS

It's not loaded.

STANKO

Hah?

BEN

Tess...

TESS

Not loaded. See.

She opens up the gun to show him. No bullets. He takes the gun. Points it in front of him. Laughs uproariously. Points it at BEN, who winces and smiles thinly. STANKO mumbles something in serbian to himself, suddenly distracted by the painting again. BEN and TESS stare at him. Then at the painting.

THE PAINTING. We see it in detail for the first time. A large canvas,

fifteen feet high by thirty feet wide. Covered in circles of varying sizes and colours.

CAMERA ZOOMS IN SLOWLY until we are inside one of the circles. We hear SHIVA's voice.

CROSS FADE TO EXT. VENICE, NIGHT. SHIVA is talking to the voice of ELIJAH inside her head.

SHIVA

The man is loaded, loaded...John Wayne my ass. I want to tell you a story. S'funny, hear? Wanna laugh? Nah, listen. Now, it ain't easy. What? What? Being human, my man. Being alive on the crust of this planet, like ants on a loafabread, 14.7 pounds of weight always pushing down on every square inch of your body, the gravitational pull which drags us down mister, drags us wailing in its wake towards an inevitable death we never chose, did we, because death is The Lie, because we chose nothing but Love. Hahahaha, did we? Didwedidwedidwe. Didwedidwedidwedidwe.

DOWNTOWN L.A., NIGHT.

ELIJAH

There ain't nothing after this, lady, nothing but the four walls y'all live in with your guns and fear, God is dead. Ya hear? God is one dead m'fucker. See? Nothing. No bolt of fucking lightning, just this empty I, just Jean Paul and nothingness. Get behind me. Get behind me. I don't wanna catch no disease, no categorical imperative. No, no "if you want x, you do y", no community of rational beings.

EXT. VENICE BEACH, NIGHT. SHIVA communicates as if the universe depended on it. Passersby walk around her warily. A cop car can be heard wailing in the distance.

SHIVA

Rational beings? Don't make me holler you no good hatred bringing scum sucker, why don't you come out in the name of Shiva...I call upon her with an omnamahshivayah. Omnamahshivayah. Omnamahshivayah. What? What? I'll give you logic of moral discourse.

DOWNTOWN L.A., NIGHT. ELIJAH kneels there, on the pavement, silently listening to her voice, transported now. Tears run down his sinning face.

ELIJAH

I ain't fighting you, lady. But in a godless land I found an ashtray filled with butts and hows and whys and where oh where my God art thou, it's late and some of us have to get up in the morning. Shut the fuck up. I said shut the fuck up.

Because very loud music is in his mind and in our ears.

INT. BEN AND TESS' HOUSE, EVEN LATER. STANKO is dancing around the living room, holding the vodka bottle in one hand and an omnipresent gauloise in the other. TESS watches him, amused. Drawn in spite of herself into this man's disturbed world. BEN, on the other hand, stands in a corner of the room, eyeing this man up with ever growing concern.

STANKO pulls TESS up onto the living room floor and roughly shoves the coffee table to one side. BEN darts forward to catch the saucer overflowing with butts.

BEN goes into the spotless kitchen. He empties the saucer into a bin. Stands in front of a mirror, looking at himself; TESS shrieks with laughter in the other room. BEN pulls a stern face and mumbles the words "look, it's late, and some of us have got to work in the morning." Observes himself. Tries the phrase again. Satisfied, he heads back into the living room.

He enters the living room. Turns off the stereo. Then, with affected nonchalance;

BEN

Look, it's late, and some of us have got to work in the morning. The silence is deafening.

BEN (CONT'D)

I mean, what is it you want exactly?

STANKO

Hah?

BEN

Why did you come here?

STANKO

The painting.

STANKO speaks to him with undisguised disdain.

BEN

What about it?

STANKO

Heh. It not finished.

Silence.

STANKO stares the canvas.

STANKO (CONT'D)

Not finished. No.

BEN

Yes, it is.

STANKO

Ah no.

BEN

Yes.

STANKO

No. I finish.

BEN

No.

STANKO

Yes. I am artist. My painting. I finish. Heh.

As STANKO goes to the front door, picks up his heavy bag and drops it before the painting, BEN follows, complaining. STANKO opens the bag, ignoring BEN. Paints, brushes, turpentine, pencils, fall out of the bag. BEN removes his glasses and cleans them on his tie.

BEN

Excuse me, sir, but I spent sixty three thousand dollars on that painting six months ago and I say it's finished.

STANKO turns on him aggressively.

STANKO

You say what?

BEN

It's finished, it's mine, I paid for it, it's mine.

STANKO

No finish. Artist. I am. You. Chequebook. Nothing. Pfft.

And he turns away to stare at the painting.

BEN

Right. That's it.

BEN strides over to the telephone and picks up the receiver.

TESS

What are you doing Ben?

BEN

I'm calling the police.

TESS

Put down the phone, Ben.

BEN

What?

TESS

Put down the phone.

BEN and TESS stare at one another. BEN puts down the phone.

BEN

What?

TESS

You call the police, they come, you say arrest this man, they say what for, you say what? He's the artist, and he's finishing the painting, Ben.

BEN

But it's my painting, this is our house, what are you saying, Tess?

TESS

I'm saying this guy knows what he's doing, I'm saying call Burt, find out what the legalities are.

BEN

Legalities? I've got a deranged individual in my house defacing a piece of art which cost me sixty three thousand dollars.

TESS

You fed him vodka, Ben.

BEN

I didn't feed him anything, he helped himself.

TESS (UNDER HER BREATH)

Oh be a fucking man, for chrissake.

BEN

What? What did you say?

TESS

I said if you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen.

BEN

Kitchen? Get out of the kitchen? Baking apple pies, are we?

TESS

Smile, puppy, it might never happen.

BEN

It already has.

BEN goes over to STANKO and takes his arm. Before he knows it, he's on

the floor with a bloody nose. STANKO hasn't even turned around.

BEN (CONT'D)

He broke my nose. He broke my nose.

TESS

Don't bleed on the carpet. Wait. Wait.

STANKO

John Wayne. Sylvester Stallone.

She runs into the kitchen. BEN stares helplessly at STANKO's broad back. ELIJAH's eyes stare back.

ELIJAH(V-0)

He bleedin'. Oh Lord, the lamb is bleedin'.

EXT. VENICE BEACH, NIGHT. SHIVA talks urgently.

SHIVA

That's because the spirit needs love but there is no love in hell. We are the child, we are innocence defiled. That's what a human got inside, brother. The Inner split coming out in the name of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit amen, I said get out of that man and show your face to me. Huh? I only got love for you, Beelzebub. Come and fuck with me, 'cause I got only the Love of the universe for you.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, ELIJAH wheels his chair around in ecstasy, singing.

ELIJAH

All you need is love. All you need is love.

EXT. VENICE. Behind SHIVA we see the cop car flashing, and police trying to catch SHIVA, who dances around them like a spirit.

SHIVA

Look. He's come out to play. Come on devil, is no need for you to be angry no more, I only got love for you. What? Gonna lock me up? Gonna fill me up with your lead pump? Take your best shot, cowboy.

Wonderwoman. I dodge bullets, baby. I'm the speed of light. I'm not even here. I am Love.

A clock chimes.

INT. BEN AND TESS' HOUSE, MIDNIGHT.

BEN and TESS sit on the couch. BEN holds a napkin with ice on his nose, gulping down a large glass of whisky. They stare at STANKO's back and whisper.

BEN

This is a bad dream. I think this is a bad dream.

TESS

Calm down.

BEN

And I'm going to wake up any minute now, I must remember this one, boy oh boy will we have a laugh over breakfast, you won't believe this one when we wake up and I tell you this one.

BEN laughs nervously, tiptoeing on the abyss of hysteria.

TESS

Ssh. Ben.

BEN

Classic really. Quite remarkable, the brain's subconscious capabilities, I wonder what it means, though? Jungian shadow and all that. Coming out to play. OK. I'm fine. I get it. Ha ha.

TESS

Ben. Get a grip.

BEN

Ssh. Ssh. He's coming toward us. What's he doing?

STANKO is moving away from his painting, step by step, backwards. He reaches the sofa. Stops. BEN and TESS quickly part as he lowers himself distractedly between them onto the sofa and smiles. Silence.

STANKO

This is my belief. A painting. Is. Never. Finish. Hah.

He puts his arms around the two homeowners.

STANKO (CONT'D)

So. Tomorrow, I begin.

He kisses BEN on the cheek.

STANKO (CONT'D)

Where I sleep? With your wife? Is joke. Now, no sleep. We drink. Hah.

SHIVA (V-O)

Love is the universe.

EXT. VENICE, NIGHT. SHIVA, dancing around the boardwalk, and shouting "love is the universe", as she is led away in handcuffs by the cops and lowered into the car.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, NIGHT. ELIJAH, screaming.

ELIJAH

Set the angel free. Let her fly. The Demons. You are The Demons

INT. POLICE CAR, MINUTES LATER. Cruising through the city. SHIVA smiles serenely out the window. The two cops in front discuss weapons.

COP 1

A walter PPK, man, that's for pussies, you can put a round into some crackhead, and he just keeps coming at ya.

COP 2

Oh sure...

COP 1

But you take a 44, now that sucker's going to blow a hole in the guy which is the size of your fist, that baby is going to bring him down, I don't care how much juice the guy is running on...

COP 2

I hear ya...

COP 1

He will be stopped.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, NIGHT. ELIJAH urgently wheels his chair along the sidewalk, past a church and its neon crucifix.

ELIJAH

Stop me m'fucker. Stop me.

INT. POLICE CAR, NIGHT.

COP 2

Say, you hear the joke about the chicken and the egg?

COP 1

No, what?

COP 2

You didn't hear the one about the chicken and the egg?

COP 1

Yeah, which came first, right?

COP 2

No, no. Listen. So the chicken and the egg they finally get in the sack, right?

COP 1

In the sack?

COP 2

Right. You know, they...

COP 1

Yeah, right, right.

COP 2

They do the dirty, and after, the egg lies back in bed, and lights up a smoke, and he says, "well, I guess that answers that question."

EXT. DOWNTOWN, NIGHT. ELIJAH wheels himself beneath a "Jesus saves" sign. Making chicken noises.

INT. POLICE CAR, NIGHT. SHIVA closes her eyes in bliss.

COP 1 (AFTER A SILENCE)

Which question?

COP 2

Which came first. The chicken or the egg.

COP 1

Rightrightright.

EXT. POLICE CAR, NIGHT, as it cruises by a five star hotel.

CAMERA TRAVELS RAPIDLY UP the building to the penthouse suite window.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE, NIGHT.

An ageing rap star, MILES KOOL, sprawled on a couch, blows into a vodka bottle. Kneeling opposite him on the other side of the coffee table, snorting cocaine, is a call girl, CRYSTAL, thousand bucks a night. She has numbed herself to the Nightmare and is Serenity herself. The Talking Asshole continues.

MILES

You hear? If I blow like this, the air speed is of a higher velocity but like this, the air speed is slower, and the note...is lower because...I'm like blowing into the bottle, not at it. It's like playing a flute. As you increase the angle to horizontal, there's less air hitting the surface of the bottle...you dig, the note is produced by an air stream, vibrating off the neck of the bottle and as you blow into the bottle, the vibrations decrease and the pitch drops....

MILES puts down the bottle, and starts to prepare the heroin dose, using a spoon, a lighter and some tin foil. The TV is on in the background, silently flashing its epileptic images.

MILES (CONT'D)

I don't like bullshit. I like to prove I know what I'm talking about. As Descartes said, "I think therefore I am" and if I can convince people that what I'm saying is true, I have an effect...like a ripple in the universe, I exist.

CRYSTAL rises unsteadily to her feet and wanders away.

MILES (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CRYSTAL

Just going to the bathroom.

MILES

Be cool bitch. I'm in the middle of my shit here. Sit down and shut the fuck up. Here's your fucking cash.

CRYSTAL

Sorry darling.

She sits back down. And counts the thousand bucks.

MILES

What fucking shit is this?

MILES reaches for the radio knob and turns it off.

MILES (CONT'D)

I don't like talking about my work, like, my job could be to understand why light refracts off this bottle head but that's not my job. My job is music. Sound.

MILES is carefully drawing the brown liquid into a syringe. CRYSTAL snorts another line.

MILES (CONT'D)

The physics of reverberation...not refraction and I'm interested in the specifics of art, art being for example, that bottle neck. Or rather, concrete matter in life out of which art rises, like, I want to know why things happen, I actually know a lot about music, about techniques...how high a trombone can play...you need technique at your disposal in order to create, like a composer needs to know the wavelength of each note because technique should be omnipresent in the work....it's a path to the sublime and either you have it or you don't and there are people who just talk about it and then there are people who do it and I'm doing it.

MILES has tied off CRYSTAL's arm with a belt and slaps her skin to swell the vein.

MILES (CONT'D)

I play things which don't involve normal chords. Because music is one step more abstract than writing. Music is the most perfect art because it has no bearing on anything except in its rhythm because rhythm comes from our concrete experience of everyday life and our lives follow a rhythm and art is the absurd creative drive in all of us so the best art...the most perfect art...is absurd art...

MILES slowly pushes the syringe into her vein. CRYSTAL quickly snorts another line.

MILES (CONT'D)

art which epitomizes the random process out of which it comes, like music reiterates the process of thought in its most abstract form.

The brown liquid slowly seeps into her vein and through her body, as she lies back. He strokes a breast

MILES (CONT'D)

It's like...hearing the world. Writers write down words but in sounds, in music, you get strange inter-relationships between a mass of noise like Mozart said that a dramatic poet can only write down one thought at a time but a composer can write down every thought...

CRYSTAL does another line of cocaine. That pile of white powder is inexhaustible. She rubs some on her gums and stares at the TV, not

really hearing MILES at all.

MILES (CONT'D)

every feeling, every smell, he can create all of that and it's called a piece of music. Art is a language, and words are limited and the more Art can approximate thought, the more effective it is.

CRYSTAL stares at the ceiling. A tormented face appears through the cement and paint, then recedes back into the wall. She smiles.

MILES (CONT'D)

because thought isn't, like, linear through time, thought is chaotic, anarchic, without structure, in fact, I hate words like art.

CRYSTAL laughs hysterically for no apparent reason.

MILES (CONT'D)

I have difficulty with words, they're rigid and finite symbols, I mean, there they are, in the Oxford dictionary, whereas, music is infinite and that's why I find talking so difficult. Oh, man. Woooo...

CRYSTAL

Can I go to the restroom now?

Crystal rises and seems to recede from the room, floating like a ghost.

MILES

Gotta watch the weight, right? Longevity and discipline.

The room has become a living, breathing entity, as we see the world through CRYSTAL's eyes. He smiles blissfully and whispers a song.

MILES (CONT'D)

The man eating image is all, here in angelsville

The conceptual is so fucking small

here in angelsville

She came to escape, she came for the sights

her soul undone found the city lights

here in angelsville

MILES's face has melted away and we are in the brightly lit bathroom, with CRYSTAL. She looks as awful in bright light as she was appetizing in the soft atmospheric lull of the other room. She stares at herself in the mirror.

she ran away from daddy's knee

and thought at last that she was free

but his touch, his tongue, his appetite

return to haunt her every night

yeah, she's high as a kite

here in angelsville

The image in the mirror stares back and begins to weep. The bathroom

in the background melts away, and she whispers the chorus of the song.

Delicious back-up vocals.

sucking at the tit of beelzebub

here in angelsville

plenty o'cash but not much love

here in angelsville

EXT. CITY STREETS, NIGHT. HALLUCINATION. And now she is running towards us, the pretty baby with mascara running down her cheeks, running and yet moving so slowly as if through a thick darkness.

And there is MILES, hovering over her shoulder, an angel of death, sneering the song at her as she sings and yet tries to escape the tormenting words.

sucking at the tit of beelzebub

here in angelsville

plenty o'cash but not much love

here in angelsville

The black cat leaps over her with a roar, suddenly as huge as a panther. She screams and heads down another street.

The police car, horn screaming, drifts past, SHIVA in the back, smiles out at her with shining eyes and is gone.

ELIJAH, wrapped in blankets, wheels himself out of the darkness towards her with urgent eyes.

ELIJAH

I know what you goin' through girl, but God ain't dead. God is here and now and everywhere inside everything, and life is but a dream flowing into another dream.

CRYSTAL hurries away from him, onto the road. A car violently swerves and squeals to a halt. The Music ends.

BEN gets out of his mercedes and approaches CRYSTAL, who lies disoriented in the street.

BEN

Are you alright?

CRYSTAL

What?

BEN

You almost got yourself killed, are you...

CRYSTAL

I'm...

BEN

It's you...

CRYSTAL

What?

BEN

I know you.

CRYSTAL

Huh?

BEN

Look. Do you need a ride?

CRYSTAL

Huh?

BEN

You shouldn't be out here, it's bad...

As if to confirm this, a voice cackles off in the darkness.

ELIJAH

You're all going to die. You're all going to die. You're all going to die.

CRYSTAL looks helplessly at BEN. BEN leans down and takes her in his arms.

ROMANTIC MUSIC FADES IN.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS, NIGHT. BEN'S mercedes, travelling fast up a hill, screeching around hairpin bends.

INT. MERCEDES. BEN and CRYSTAL stare out at the road winding into the hills.

BEN

I love you.

CRYSTAL

I know.

BEN

I'm married.

CRYSTAL

Oh.

BEN

I'm leaving my wife.

CRYSTAL

OK.

BEN

I'm taking you home.

Silence. CRYSTAL is suddenly apprehensive.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm packing a bag and then we're checking into a hotel until we find ourselves a place, I'll never leave you, I want you by my side for the rest of my life. You're the woman of my dreams.

CRYSTAL

Yes.

Silence. They still stare numbly at the winding road. BEN turns off the radio.

BEN

I have herpes.

CRYSTAL

So do I.

BEN looks at CRYSTAL. She looks at BEN. They smile the most intimate of smiles.

EXT. BEN'S HOUSE, NIGHT.

BEN, holding CRYSTAL in his arms. They gaze into one another's eyes as the door to BEN'S house swings open in slow motion, and BEN carries CRYSTAL across the threshold into the living room.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE, NIGHT.

They are so close to kissing, then CRYSTAL'S eyes swivel slowly in their sockets and FEAR grips her entire soul.

STANKO stands before the wall, naked, covered in paint, a vision of primal mud, ART written across his back. His head swivels around to look at CRYSTAL.

CRYSTAL, in BEN'S arms, begins to scream.

STANKO smiles nakedly, as TESS, throws herself around the room pointing the gun and screeching at BEN.

TESS

Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you Fuck you.

CRYSTAL is running out of the house and into the night.

BEN, running out after her.

BEN

Crystal. Crystal.

INT. MERCEDES, NIGHT.

CRYSTAL is screaming hysterically, flailing her arms, trying to beat BEN, while trying to open her car door and throw herself out onto the road. BEN is trying to ward off her blows, drive the car and reach over to keep closing the passenger door.

CRYSTAL

Youcocksuckerfuckingcocksuckerfuckyoufuckyoufuckyou

BEN

I didn't know I swear I didn't know he was going to be there I forgot OK I'm sorry stop it stop I said stop it.

CRYSTAL starts to weep gently. All the fury is gone. BEN drives he knows not where.

BEN (CONT'D)

Crystal. I love you. All my life I've been looking for you. Please, Crystal. Be happy. Please.

CRYSTAL weeps even more. BEN starts to weep. CRYSTAL, still weeping, leans over and puts her head in BEN'S lap. She starts to perform fellatio on him.

BEN (CONT'D)

Oh my god. Oh my god, what are you doing. Oh god, Crystal. Oh my sweet God in heaven.

BEN slows down and pulls the car over on a street somewhere.

BEN (CONT'D)

Crystal.Crystal. Someone will catch us.

EXT. CAR, NIGHT. On a dark street. A tree looms ominously over the car. Its branches dance shadows across the rooftop.

INT. CAR, NIGHT. BEN is reaching orgasm.

BEN (CONT'D)

Omigodomigodomigodomigod

And as he comes in her mouth, there is a tapping on his car window, and a torch light penetrates the darkness, revealing this moment of ecstasy in its minute detail. BEN cannot stop himself but just stares into the light with bulging eyes as he comes forever and ever and ever.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ogodogodogodogodogodogodogodogod

COP 1

Open the car sir, and step out.

BEN

Ogodogodogodogodogodogodogodogod

COP 1

Sir. Open the car door, and step out of the car.

BEN

IcantIcantIcantomigodomigodomigodomigod

And CRYSTAL looks up at BEN smiling. Only it's not CRYSTAL at all, it's STANKO.

CRYSTAL

Open the fucking door, Ben.

BEN, still having spasms, looks around. CRYSTAL is in the backseat. STANKO is in the backseat too, leaning in to kiss CRYSTAL, but she starts to punch him hysterically.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Get away from me. Get away from me. Open the fucking door, Ben.

COP 1

Sir. Get out of the car now.

BEN turns back and looks down at STANKO, still smiling.

FLASH! A SEARING WHITE LIGHT, INSTANTANEOUS.

INT. POLICE STATION, NIGHT. BEN is being photographed, left profile

FLASH! right profile FLASH! straight on FLASH!

INT. BEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM, END OF BEN'S DREAM. BEN sits up in bed, tears running down his cheeks. A cat miaows outside. He looks at the neon clock. 5.45 am. He has been dreaming.

FLASH! INT. POLICE STATION, NIGHT. CRYSTAL is being photographed, left profile FLASH! right profile FLASH! straight on FLASH!

INT. HOTEL SUITE BATHROOM. END OF CRYSTAL'S TRIP.

CRYSTAL sits up suddenly from the cold tile floor, next to the toilet bowl, puke dribbling down her chin. MILES is sitting on it, taking a shit. He smiles that strange smile.

FLASH!

INT. POLICE STATION.

LAFERN, police photographer, mid twenties, pretty, african american, looks out from behind the camera. This is her job. Taking mug shots. She does it well.

LAFERN

OK. Y'all can relax now, I'm done.

VOICE

Hey, ma.

LAFERN turns. There in the corner is a three month old baby boy.

CHILD

Hey ma.

Odd. The child should not be able to speak this succinctly, let alone use words at his age.

CHILD (CONT'D)

Ma. Give us a tit. I'm hungry.

LAFERN smiles.

LAFERN

What an intelligent little boy you are.

COP 1 and COP 2 surround the child.

COP 1

Huh? What you gonna be when you grow up, boy?

COP 2

Ain't he the cutest.

CHILD

Fuck you, motherfucker, now give me the food.

LAFERN smiles, embarassed. The cops look at her disapprovingly.

LAFERN

He don't mean nothing by that. Be nice.

CHILD

Cops shoot niggers, ma. Cops shoot niggers.

INT. LAFERN'S APT., DAWN. END DREAM SEQUENCE.

LAFERN sits up in bed. Waking suddenly. A long silence. She doesn't move. We hear the first bird sing this morning. She remembers to breathe. Mumbles to herself.

LAFERN

Man. What a strange dream.

She looks around her room. Cramped, but she has made the best of it. Posters of movie stars cover the shoddy walls. A police uniform is hanging up over the closet door. A cat stirs and miaows.

LAFERN (CONT'D)

Hello, Marilyn.

She gets up out of bed and shuffles across to her kitchenette. Another cat lying on the fridge opens an eye and purrs.

LAFERN (CONT'D)

Hello, Jimmy Dean.

She opens the small fridge and drinks from a carton of juice. Wanders over to the curtain, pushes it open. There sits another cat, looking out onto the street.

LAFERN (CONT'D)

Hello, mr. Gable. And how are you today?

The cat looks around and miaows. She opens the window and the cat slips out between the safety bars and into the patch of grass in front of the street.

EXT. LAFERN'S APT. DOOR, LATER.

Cars are rushing their passengers to work now. The city is awake. She leans down and picks up the LA Times. Closes the door.

INT. LAFERN'S APT, MOMENTS LATER.

She sits at her small round dining table and glances at the Entertainment section.

A large colour picture of MILES, the rap star, with an advertisement; "MILES KOOL IN CONCERT. LIGHT BRINGER TOUR. LAST PERFORMANCE TONIGHT. TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE"

She picks up the classified section and starts to pour over the small print. One of the cats walks over the page, seeking attention.

LAFERN

Who's a hungry girl then?

CLOSE-UP of the page, as the pen moves down the column. Stops on an ad which is larger than the others.

"WANT TO BE A TV STAR?

Do you have what it takes?

Daily auditions mon wed fri at 10am, 12 noon and 2pm.

Take a chance."

CLOSE UP on LAFERN. She gazes at the ad.

She circles the ad with a red pen.

EXT. BUILDING, NORTH HOLLYWOOD, LATER THAT DAY.

A placard by the doorway reads; RUSS HARPER STUDIO TALENT.

A determined ELIJAH wheels himself past the building. Past that black cat, scurrying in the opposite direction. They miaow at each other.

RUSS HARPER (V-0)

How are you feeling? HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

INT. BUILDING, DAY.

A small room into which the larger than life personality of RUSS HARPER is striding. He is probably sixty, but baked golden by the good life, shining almost, his pearl teeth could blind you with their sparkle, his ferocious blue eyes may just talk you into selling your soul for a pipedream. He wears blue jeans, a white cowboy hat and a bright red levi shirt. On his wrist is a shimmering rolex watch. He surveys the group of wondering souls who have wandered into his dominion in search of hope. Ten or fifteen of them sit there at school desks too small for them.

FLASHCUT TO SIGNS ON THE WALLS.

"MEET RUSS HARPER"

"IF YOU WILL DO WHAT I TELL YOU TO DO
TO THE EXTENT THAT I TELL YOU TO DO IT
IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO FAIL"

RUSS (V-0)

How are you feeling?

LAFERN is sitting at a table.

LAFERN

Allright.

She says this halfheartedly, along with a few other voices. She is staring at a poster.

"I WILL NOT ASK YOU TO DO ANYTHING THAT IS ILLEGAL

IMMORAL

OR FATTENING."

RUSS HARPER, CLOSE UP.

RUSS

I'm gonna tell you right now, this is no monologue I'm giving. I want you all to participate. Ask questions. Feel the Holy Spirit move through you, let's go. And I don't want to feel any resistance from anybody in this room, or they can get the hell outta here right now. Silence. Nobody moves. All eyes are on him. He smiles. He starts to applaud.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Come on. Applaud. It's for you. Because you came here.

The room starts to applaud with RUSS.

RUSS (CONT'D)

You know what these TV producers want? You know what you gotta do if you wanna be on "Friends"? You gotta smile. You gotta be enthusiastic. Come on now.

A few people cheer.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Everytime I ask you something from here on in, I wanna hear you say, "Hell yeah, Russ". Do you feel good?

A few people say Hell, yeah, Russ.

RUSS (CONT'D)

More than that. Do you feel good?

A few more people say Hell yeah Russ.

RUSS (CONT'D)

I want more than that. Do you feel good?

The entire room shouts Hell yeah Russ.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Pretend you're in a commercial, you gotta sell this product, you're gonna be paid eighty thousand dollars to do it, Do you feel good?

The room erupts in a gigantic Hell yeah, Russ. Silence. Russ smiles.

RUSS (CONT'D)

See how money corrupts?

The room erupts into relieved laughter. LAFERN brushes her hair out of her face, flustered. She glances at a wall

CLOSE UP of a movie poster. Nothing we've heard of, but it looks impressive enough. Sci-Fi Fantasy. Young hero with a laser gun holding a bleach blonde babe.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE-LATE MORNING.

MILES KOOL berates the waiter about his room service.

MILES

I asked for my bacon crispy, dig? Crispy. An' what's this? Egg? Touch it. Go on, touch it, see? Cold,; talk 'bout 24.99 plus tax for cantine slop. This orange juice squeezed a hun'ed percent?

WAITER

Yes sir.

MILES

Don't look like hun'ed percent squeezed OJ to me, hunh? where the pulp, hunh? and how come the butter always be frozen, huh? Lookie here.

MILES throws the slab of butter against the wall. It bounces.

MILES (CONT'D)

See? M'fucker bounces. It don't stick, it bounces, what? it gonna bounce down my esophagus, huh? An' then it gonna bounce around inside my stomach an' then bounce right outta my ass an' down the toilet. Hunh?

CRYSTAL is leaving the suite. MILES smiles and shoots her with his forefinger.

BLAM!

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO.

That sci-fi fantasy poster, still clinging to the wall.

RUSS

You wanna make more money than you could ever spend in a lifetime?

CROWD

Hell yeah, Russ.

RUSS

Then I want you to do exactly what I tell you to do. And I promise...

He points at that poster on the wall.

RUSS (V-O AS WE READ IT) (CONT'D)

"I WILL NOT ASK YOU TO DO ANYTHING THAT IS ILLEGAL IMMORAL OR FATTENING

The crowd laughs in unison. The atmosphere is getting warm now.

RUSS (CONT'D)

And I promise you that..

He points to another poster.

RUSS (V-O AS WE READ IT) (CONT'D)
"IF YOU WILL DO WHAT I TELL YOU TO DO
TO THE EXTENT THAT I TELL YOU TO DO IT,
IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO FAIL"

BACK TO RUSS

RUSS (CONT'D)

And if anyone in this room does not believe me, here and now...then do not waste my time. Get the hell outta here. 'Cause I don't like wasting my time. Waste time and time wastes you.

Silence. Nobody moves. All eyes on RUSS. He smiles again. His eyes searching out the doubters.

RUSS (CONT'D)

That's Shakespeare. Feeling good?

CROWD

Hell yeah Russ.

RUSS

Feeling good?

CROWD

Hell yeah Russ.

RUSS

You. Yeah you. I can't hear you. You don't wanna do it? You embarassed? Are you feeling good?

DOUBTER

Hell yeah Russ.

RUSS

Wanna be a star?

DOUBTER

Hell yeah Russ.

RUSS

Go on, get outta here. (Silence) You got troubles hearing me,son?

The doubter rises and leaves the room.

RUSS (CONT'D)

I see people, I ask them, You wanna be a star?, they go all quiet and say, "well, not a star, really", bull.

The crowd laughs. Russ smiles.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Everybody wants to be a star. Everybody wants to be rich beyond their wildest dreams. You wanna be a star?

CROWD

Hell, yeah, Russ.

RUSS

Wanna be rich?

CROWD

Hell yeah, Russ.

RUSS

You believe in God?

CROWD

Hell yeah Russ.

RUSS

Just say yeah for that one.

The crowd laughs.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Do you believe?

CROWD

Yeah.

RUSS

Say I believe.

CROWD

I believe.

RUSS

Say it again, I believe.

CROWD

I believe.

LAFERN

All right!

LAFERN is clapping her hands, caught up with all of them in the wild encompassing enthusiasm. RUSS smiles that killer smile.

RUSS

Looks like we got us a wild wild west show today.

MUSIC; Still Crazy, by Paul Simon.

EXT. HOSPITAL, DAY. A sign; PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS.

BEN, in a suit today, strides past and through the glass doors into the hospital.

INT. ELEVATORS. BEN stands there, looking tired yet professional. He stares at the computerized digits, going up up up.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR; SAME TIME. CRYSTAL stands there in a corner, watching the digits going down down down.

INT. HOSPITAL ELEVATOR. BEN listens to a conversation between two staff members.

MEDIC 1

You watch the lakers game last night?

MEDIC 2

Yeah, that sucked big time.

MEDIC 1

Big time. Say, you hear the joke about the chicken and the egg?

MEDIC 2

Which one came first?

MEDIC 1

No, no, the chicken and the egg they finally get in the sack, right?

MEDIC 2

Yeah.

He walks out of the elevator, the doors close on the joke we've heard already.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY, DAY. The elevator doors open and CRYSTAL exits, walking across the lobby. The doorman opens the glass doors for her, still talking to the other doorman.

DOORMAN

and the egg says, "guess that answers that question".Hey Crystal.

CRYSTAL

Hey.

She holds her arm up against the blinding glare of the day.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY, DAY. The blinding glare is the white neon light as BEN walks down the long antiseptic corridor, in his element here, responding to respectful greetings from colleagues. He opens the door to his office.

EXT. HOTEL, DAY. As the door to the black limousine is slammed shut, slow motion, on CRYSTAL. And the car glides away with her.

Revealing ELIJAH, pushing his wheelchair down the street, driven by unseen forces. His shouting is drowned out by the interminable roaring river of steel.

INT. HOSPITAL, DAY.

BEN slides his briefcase onto his oak desk and slips off his jacket. He glances at the sweat stains already appearing beneath his armpits, and sits behind the desk. Pushes the intercom.

BEN

Good morning, Mary.

VOICE

Morning, Dr. Arrow.

BEN

Any developments on the western front?

VOICE

Shiva's back.

BEN

Aha.

VOICE

They brought her in first thing this morning. Hearing voices again.

Picked her up last night at the beach. You want me to bring her in?

BEN

Coffee.

VOICE

Of course. First things first.

BEN

First things first. Thank you Mary.

CRYSTAL (V-0)

John?

INT. LIMOUSINE, DAY.

CRYSTAL

John. Turn that up, will you.

CHAUFFEUR

Sure thing, Crystal.

The chauffeur turns up the 'Still Crazy' as CRYSTAL gazes distractedly out the dark windows at the distant world.

"Still crazy after all these years, yeah..."

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, DAY. RUSS is smiling.

"still crazy after all these years."

RUSS

You're all miracles. All children of God. God made us in his image. He made us to be successful, and guess what, some of us fall short of God's potential. But that's OK because I love everyone in this room. Do you love me?

CROWD

Hell yeah Russ.

RUSS

You're all nice people. I like you. That's why I chose you. You are my chosen ones. And today is the beginning. Of a New Life for you.

INT. BEN'S OFFICE, HOSPITAL, DAY.

BEN sits behind his desk, observing SHIVA.

SHIVA

You look tired, doctor.

BEN

As well as can be expected. Let's talk about you, Shiva. You've been hearing the voices again. Did you forget to take your medication?

(silence) You didn't forget, did you?

SHIVA

No, Ben, I didn't forget.

Words, typed on a report; "Bipolar affective disorder. Organic delusional. Mixed psychotic features."

SHIVA glances at the framed photo of TESS on the desk.

SHIVA (CONT'D)

How's your wife?

BEN

Tess is fine.

SHIVA

Is she? Issheissheisshe baking apple pies is she?

BEN studies her in silence and clears his throat. SHIVA rises and goes to the window. Looks out.

SHIVA (CONT'D)

Can you fly, Ben? 's not a trick question, you can fly, you're unique.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, DAY.

RUSS

You are special. Say it.

CROWD

I'm special.

RUSS

You look great.

CROWD

I look great.

RUSS

I am great.

CROWD

I am great.

RUSS

In fact. What comes next? I am the Greatest.

CROWD

I am the Greatest.

RUSS

Don't resist. Let it go. Greatest athlete alive said that. Who was he?

LAFERN

Mohammad Ali.

RUSS

That's right, Cassius Clay said that, and force of saying it he was it. He went in that ring with the most fearful killers of all time, Sonny Liston, George Foreman, Frazier, all bigger'n him, all uglier n'him, hell he just wanted to piss in his pants and run right back out of there but he stayed and he kicked 'em onto their ass. Positive thinking.

INT. HOTEL SUITE BATHROOM, DAY.

MILES stands before the mirror carving the words AM GOD into his chest. He laughs. The reflection reads DOGMA. Thin trails of blood trickle down his stomach.

RUSS (V-0)

Our whole lives we're brought up to think negative. What's the first word a child learns, huh? No. You grow up with that word, No. No is for losers. No is a disease. It's a cancer. No kills. No is worst than death, no is the Fear, No is a living death, No is no longer in our vocabulary, let me hear you say Yes.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, DAY. LAFERN'S eyes are brimming with tears.
LAFERN

Yes!

INT. BEN'S OFFICE, HOSPITAL, DAY.

Words on a typed page; "Post traumatic stress disorder. Polysubstance abuse. Organic mood disorder."

BEN

No, I can't fly. And neither can you. You have a bipolar affective and organic delusional disorder, with mixed psychotic features. The voices. Are not Real.

SHIVA is leaning her head against the window. Her breath has fogged up the pane. She draws a cross. And starts to walk across the room. She suddenly stops.

RUSS (V-0)

Fly through the sky.

She turns and launches herself at the window to this office fifteen stories up. BEN rises out of his chair in a panic.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, DAY.

RUSS

Fly through the sky. Everybody up!

The crowd stands up. RUSS extends his arm like Superman.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Do superman. Fly through the sky. Be my superhero.

Everybody does superman.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE DAY.

SHIVA

I'll be your wonderwom....

And SHIVA collides with the thick glass.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, DAY.

RUSS

Hit your chest, do Tarzan, come on, yell.

Everybody hits their chests and does the tarzan yell.

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD, DAY. ELIJAH is doing the Tarzan yell, wheeling himself down a street.

ELIJAH

Wonderwoman. Wonderwoman. I be your Ubermensch. Thus spoke Zarathustra.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, DAY.

RUSS

Do the indian. Woo woo woo woo.

Everybody jumps up and down in a circle on one leg doing the indian.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Do the chicken. Cluck cluck cluck.

Everybody doesh the cluck cluck chicken with their elbows flapping.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Do the wet dog.

He shakes his ass, everybody follows. Now RUSS stands back and starts to order the movements one after the other, bringing the group to a frenzy.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Superman. Do the lion, roar. Chicken. Tarzan. Wet dog. Indian.

Chicken. Lion. Superman. Tarzan. Wet dog. Lion. We got some fairy lions in here. Tarzan, come on

hit that chest, got some queen Tarzans in here, hit your breasts, they're not gonna fall off. Indian. Chicken. Superman. Tarzan.

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD, DAY. ELIJAH screaming like there's no tomorrow.

ELIJAH

I'm your Superman. I fly to you.

INT. HOSPITAL HALL, DAY

SHIVA, strapped to a stretcher, bleeding profusely from the face, is being hurried down the corridor. BEN follows anxiously.

RUSS (V-0)

I look great. I feel great. I am great. In fact, I am the greatest.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO

RUSS

Sit down. Stand up. Sit down. Stand up. Chicken. Sit down. Indian.

Stand up. Shake hands with your neighbor. Hug your neighbor. Hug everybody. Tell 'em you like 'em.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD, DAY. SHIVA screams as she is injected with drugs.

SHIVA

I want to hear the world. I want to hear the world. I want to hear the ...hear..the..hear..world...I want...t...

BEN looks guilty

SHIVA slips into a drug induced haze.

RUSS (V-0)

Good.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO

RUSS

You can sit down now.

Silence. RUSS surveys his domain.

RUSS (CONT'D)

See. You came into this room strangers and now you're all friends.

EXT. FRED SEAGALS, DAY.

ELIJAH, in his wheelchair, stares into the sky, listening. Listening.

Silence. Behind him, inside the shop, stands CRYSTAL.

INT. FRED SEGAL'S, DAY.

CRYSTAL and a friend, CANDY are shopping and chatting. They hold up different outfits for each other's appraisal.

CANDY

So what's he like?

CRYSTAL

Who?

CANDY

You know. The Rap star.

CRYSTAL

He's all right. He talks a lot.

CANDY

What about?

CRYSTAL

I don't know. Being an artist, I guess. He wants me to go back to his room tonight before the concert. I guess he kinda likes me. I like this colour.

CANDY

That really suits you.

CRYSTAL

It does?

CANDY

Yeah.

CRYSTAL

Hey. How's the meditation thing going?

CANDY

Pretty cool. It only costs like eight hundred and fifty dollars for a weekend session. She's studied every religion. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Satanism...every religion, you know, she's a guru and the whole point was to open up, that's all, just open your heart to strangers, we were all crying and comforting each other. Then you go into a room and someone is sitting at a table across the room and asks you: "WHAT DO YOU WANT?"...Just like that...."WHAT DO YOU WANT"....And I said: "That's easy enough, happiness"...."WHAT DO YOU WANT?"...."I want to love myself."...'"WHAT DO YOU WANT?", "Uh, a mercedes, a mansion, a million dollars, and so on and so on and soon you've run out of easy answers and you're angry because this doesn't stop. "WHAT DO YOU WANT?"...."WHAT DO YOU WANT?"...."WHAT DO YOU WANT?"....until suddenly, the answer. Nothing. I want nothing. It changes everything, right? because we all rush through this life of ours wanting things. Stop wanting and things will just come to you. If you want nothing...then nothing can disappoint you and life's full of surprises. Apparently, some people in India have trained all their lives just to want nothing and they can live on one glass of water a month. Imagine it. A glass of water.

CRYSTAL

Cool.

CRYSTAL stares at the dress with an absence of desire, and puts it back on the rack.

RUSS (V-0)

I'm gonna tell you a little something about me now.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO

RUSS

I'm fifty two, I've been working in the biz for thirty years now. Guess where I'm from. Wyoming. That's right, a little farming town, middle of nowhere, population, maybe seventy, seventy five. I'm a cowboy, born and bred, I'm the guy in the western who rides up out of the dust and I'm wearing the big white stetson and I'm gonna take out all them mean lookin' indians so y'all can sigh a big sigh of relief, c'mon now...

Everyone does a big sigh of relief.

RUSS (CONT'D)

That's right, the good guy has rode into town, I'm gonna shoot you all. With my Love Gun. Pow. Powpowpow. Can you feel it? Can you feel the love in this room? Man? It's hotter n hell in here, ain't it? That's us, guys. That's our positive energy, good things are gonna come from this. You wanna be a star?

CROWD

Hell yeah, Russ.

RUSS

Wanna be on Friends?

CROWD

Hell yeah, Russ.

RUSS

Then you can do it. I promise you. Look at these photos.

He points to photos and posters on the walls.

RUSS (CONT'D)

This guy was a dentist. Seventy five grand a year but he hated it. Spent 24 years looking into people's mouths and hated every second of it. Threw it all in. And now he's making twice as much on TV. This kid came here. Now he's making movies. Ever seen this movie? Don't. It's terrible. Hell, Steve McQueen's first movie was a stinker. "The Slob".

LAFERN

"The Blob."

RUSS

"The Blob"? (Shrugs). What am I? God? And this girl. Hundred grand a year. Her parents have quit their jobs and she lets them out on weekends if they're good. Hundred grand. And I'm glad. You know why? 'Cause I get 10 percent of everything she makes. If you make money I make money, when we see each other it's "Hey!"

He smiles and opens his arms wide in mock greeting. Laughter from the crowd.

INT. BEN AND TESS' HOUSE, DAY.

STANKO, asleep on the living room couch; he turns restlessly and falls to the floor. One eye opens as he surveys the devastated battleground which is the living room.

RUSS (V-0)

I'm gonna let you in on a secret now. We all hold the Universe in our hands. We all hold the secret key to success. But no-one knows how to

use it.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO.

RUSS

I'm gonna teach you. Three weeks. I'm gonna give you a speech which you go home and learn, relax, it's not Shakespeare, just something like; "I eat Jif Peanut butter by the spoonful. Tastes like peanut butter should. Peanuts.", and every tuesday for three weeks, you come in here, for 3 to 4 hour sessions where I'll tape you and then I'll make a master tape of your best moments. Those I'll show in screenings with important executives in this town. You know how long it takes Bob Evans to call me back? Bob Evans, produced Love Story, Chinatown, Batman, Superman. How long does it take Bob Evans to call me back? Five minutes. Jack Nicholson. Ten minutes. You all need a Russ Harper in your lives. That's why you're here today. You have taken your lives into your own hands. You're no longer losers.

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD, DAY.

ELIJAH wheels his chair down the boulevard, listening very carefully, guided it seems towards his destiny.

RUSS (V-0)

Eighty percent of the population are losers. Your friends are losers.

ELIJAH

I'll be your loser. I'll be your loser.

INT. BEN AND TESS' HOUSE. STANKO is staring at his painting. TESS is staring at STANKO.

RUSS (V-0)

Your parents are losers. They got jobs they hate, they may as well be dead.

INT. FRED SEGAL'S. CRYSTAL stares at herself in the mirror, sucking in her cheeks.

RUSS (V-0) (CONT'D)

Dead from the neck up is what I call 'em.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO.

RUSS

And that's why I don't want you to tell anyone that you're doing this, you hear? No one. Because they're jealous of you. They want you to fail. They want you to be like them. They'll find out soon enough anyway. And I tell you, the day they see you up on that TV, they'll deny it's you. "No way. That's not her." Then suddenly they're your best friend. "Oh, he tells me everything. It was me who told her to go into showbiz."

He points to that poster.

RUSS (V-0 AS WE READ IT) (CONT'D)

"IF YOU WILL DO WHAT I TELL YOU TO DO
TO THE EXTENT THAT I TELL YOU TO DO IT
IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO FAIL"

INT. BEN and TESS' HOUSE. STANKO stands before the painting with a haunted expression.

The circles stare back at him without any expression.

RUSS (V-0) (CONT'D)

What are you afraid of? Failure. Everyone's afraid of failure, because

nobody understands it. So nobody takes risks. When you leave this room, I'm not gonna say Good Luck. Luck has nothing to do with it. I'm not gonna say Take Care, I'm gonna be saying Take Risks, Take Risks. You could be knocked down by a bus tomorrow, you'll be dead anyway, but no more dead than if you're at home sittin' on your ass. Missed opportunities. Fear.

STANKO almost jumps out of his skin when a hand touches his cheek.

TESS appears next to him and smiles with intent.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO.

RUSS

I got a red corvette parked outside, some of you may have seen it when you came in. You can have it if you give me 350 bucks cash right now.

Nobody moves. LAFERN has a dream in her eyes.

EXT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, DAY. LAFERN sits in the red corvette with her four cats, shifts into gear and purrs out of frame.

INT. STUDIO. Nobody has moved. RUSS smiles at his captivated audience. He wanders amongst them.

RUSS (CONT'D)

See. You all missed an opportunity because you were timid. Oh no. That couldn't possibly happen to little old worthless me. I will teach you to eliminate the opposition. I will teach you to eliminate Your Self. Face it, the only opposition you have is yourself. Wouldn't you like to be like me? Wouldn't you like to have my confidence? I'm not gonna teach you acting classes. You all know how to act, hell, you've been doing it all your lives.

INT. HOSPITAL, DAY. BEN watches SHIVA sleeping.

RUSS (V-0) (CONT'D)

Acting is lying, you're all liars. I'm just gonna take away your negative thoughts.

INT. STUDIO.

RUSS

With my Love Gun. Pow.

LOUD GUNSHOTS

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE, DAY.

Loud gunshots coming from the TV as a self mutilated MILES KOOL, dried blood on his chest watches John Ford's Stagecoach. John Wayne is killing the indians.

EXT. TV APPLIANCE SHOP, DAY

The black cat hurries past a plethora of TV sets in the window shop, all playing a bloodbath movie. Someone is shooting someone to death.

INT. STUDIO

RUSS

Pow pow pow. I will be your agent. I will get you guest spots on Friends. I will get you lucrative deals with NBC and ABC and HBO and Showtime. I will make you rich if that's what you want. And all you have got to do is this. I want you to phone me everynight, or first thing in the morning and leave me a message. And I'll give each one of you a video tape with a personal message from me to listen to every night. Listen to some of these calls.

VOICE

Russ. I just wanna say that I feel really great. I left your studio today and I swear my feet weren't touching the ground. Thanks, Russ.
INT. BEN'S OFFICE, DAY. CLOSE UP on the smear of blood that lingers on the window pane.

RAPIDLY RACK FOCUS to the street, fifteen floors down. A bus is pulling away. ELIJAH sits there in his wheelchair.

EXT. STREET, DAY. CLOSE UP on ELIJAH. He looks at the sign; "PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS". He wheels himself over to a corner and settles in, with a clear view of the front door to the hospital.
VOICE (V-0) (CONT'D)

Russ, I've been doing the exercises first thing in the morning when the alarm clock...sorry, the opportunity clock goes off, you know, I look great I feel great I am great and I gotta tell you, it's working. I am the greatest. Thanks. And, Hell yeah Russ.

INT. STUDIO. CLOSE UP on RUSS. Silence.

RUSS

A new beginning for all of you. And all it'll cost you is 495 dollars. Deposit 35 dollars today, and if you pay now, it'll cost you only 450 dollars. That price is all inclusive, it includes the video tape and I'll be seeing you every tuesday for three weeks, helping you to bring out that special quality in you which is gonna make both of us rich. Take risks, kids. Invest in yourselves for once. Go on now, get down to reception, where Kate will take care of you, and I'll be down to talk to you in a minute. Anyone who isn't interested can sneak out past the door.

RUSS stands there watching the crowd rise and disperse.

INT. BEN and TESS' HOUSE, DAY.

TESS' hand slips away from STANKO's cheek and she stands before him. His attention remains focused beyond her, to the wall; those circles.

TESS

Can I get you anything?

STANKO

Hah?

TESS

You must be hungry, a man of your size. Your appetites.

The telephone rings. She ignores it. He ignores her. It rings and rings. Her poise crumbles.

TESS (CONT'D)

Oh, fuck it.

She disappears from frame. STANKO inches towards the wall until his nose almost touches the painting. He stands there as we listen to

TESS' conversation.

TESS (V-0) (CONT'D)

Yes.Yes. He's still here. I didn't ask. You tell him. Stanko. Stanko, telephone. It's my husband Ben.

STANKO does not move an inch.

TESS (V-0) (CONT'D)

He's preoccupied, Ben. With the painting. I don't know. Stanko. Ben wants to know if you'll be finished today. When you'll be finished.

(silence) He's not answering. I don't know, he's in a trance or

something. Fine. Fine. What time? Fine, bye.

TESS re-enters frame. Tears are rolling down STANKO's cheeks. TESS' smile turns to sympathy as she strokes STANKO's face, and ever so gently kisses away his tears.

TESS (CONT'D)

Ohhh, there now, don't cry, silly. Sshh. Sshh.

His large frame shudders as she takes him in her arms. A whimper escapes his lips and his large arms take her in a bear grip. For a while they stand there as imperceptibly the energy becomes sexually charged and her kisses become exploratory, his hands begin to carress her body and stroke her hair. Their tongues reach into each other's mouths...

INT. BEN'S OFFICE, DAY.

BEN spits on the blood smeared across the window. Watches the spittle dribble down the pane.

INT. BEN and TESS' HOUSE, DAY.

In the foreground stands the telephone in close-up. Behind it in the distance, we can see body parts; arms legs, heads bobbing up and down, and the sounds of no holds barred sex.

The phone starts to ring. And ring. And ring. And ring.

INT. BEN'S OFFICE, DAY.

BEN sits at his desk, with the phone receiver in his hand, waiting for TESS to answer. He hangs up abruptly.

EXT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, DAY.

A beefy bald headed American Indian, called T.T. (titi) is throwing a suitcase into the trunk of the red corvette. He wears jeans that are too tight for him and a wife beater t-shirt.

RUSS (V-0)

Smile at me. Flash them pearls, girl. Don't be timid.

INT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, DAY.

LAFERN, in close-up on TV. RUSS HARPER is framing up LAFERN with a video camera. LAFERN is shy. Awkward. Giggly.

RUSS

Where you from Lafern?

LAFERN

Chicago.

RUSS

And what's your day job?

LAFERN

Oh, I'm a police officer with the LAPD.

RUSS

I'm innocent, officer, I swear.

LAFERN

You're funny.

RUSS

Anyone ever tell you you got a great smile.

LAFERN

Thank you.

RUSS

You gotta smile more, Lafern.

LAFERN

Yes sir.

RUSS

So, you got a gun, Lafern?

LAFERN

Oh no, sir, I'm a photographer. You know. I do the ID shots, like left profile, and then right profile and..

RUSS

You mean the mug shots.

LAFERN

Yeah.

RUSS

You married, Lafern?

LAFERN

No, I live alone with my four cats. Mr. Gable, Marilyn, Jimmy Dean and uh, oh no, three cats.

RUSS

You don't know how many cats you've got?

LAFERN

Yeah, I know, I know.

RUSS

And you wanna be a TV star, huh?

LAFERN

Hell, yeah, Russ.

RUSS

OK, you're doing great Lafern, now I want you to read from the cue cards.

LAFERN

Those ones there, sir?

RUSS

Right over my head, you got beautiful eyes, girl. Read.

LAFERN

OK. Uh. People don't understand me. Just because I don't use soap. I haven't used soap for years. And I bet I'm cleaner 'n you are. I've just showered with Deodorant Zest. It isn't soap. Really, it isn't. Look, soap lathers this much and Zest lathers this much more. You can only feel really clean with Zest.

RUSS

Lafern. Lafern Lafern Lafern.

LAFERN (GIGGLING)

What?

RUSS

You are going to be a major star, I'm telling you. That was great. You've done this before haven't you?

LAFERN

No.

RUSS

Applaud. Come on. Give yourself a round of applause. You are going to make me rich, girl.

Lafern awkwardly applauds herself and giggles uneasily.

INT. BEN and TESS' HOUSE. Sixty seconds after orgasm.

TESS lies on STANKO'S stomach, wearing a cat swallowed the milk smile. STANKO stares at the painting. They are sprawled across the couch.

TESS

I wanna tell you a story. It's about love. It's about betrayal. It's about choosing a little lower on the thorn bush. Picking a nerd instead of a rose. No golden boy for this gal. Who promises her the moon. And gives her herpes. A nerd. First time we had sex, he tells me, in the heat of the moment or whatever heat there can be with a cerebral psychiatric jerk, he says wait, shouldn't there be a condom, because there's diseases out there. I said I'm clean. Couple days later I'm laid up with flu and sores. Happy birthday, you've got herpes. Some people never get it, I have too much guilt. But you're OK. You're strong. 3/4 of the country have herpes. And then the guy wondered why I wasn't returning his phone calls. Turned up on my doorstep. Lied to my face. No, I don't have herpes. Then he starts crying. And guess what this bonehead goes and does. Marries the jerk. Yep. Love doesn't last forever but herpes does. You're OK. I take pills. Valtrex. Harsh. Now I'm on Famvir. They dry you out. I'm a modern day leper. Hey. Stanko. I really like you. Just don't. Waste. My. Time. God, I don't even know you. And that's good. You're so...so...sosososo...

She giggles and starts to kiss him. He slips out from under her and approaches his painting on his knees, eyes burning with inspiration.

STANKO

Yes. Yes.

He starts to mix paints feverishly on a plate, grabbing at brushes with his huge paws. Stands, naked, before the wall. And mumbling to himself, he begins to paint; large x's inside each circle. TESS watches him with a lingering smile.

TESS

You want something, honey? Some juice. Eggs and bacon? Honey? I gotta go to class soon. I teach. Spinning. Part time. You're in great shape. You're beautiful. So primal. Horny. Selfish. In a good way. You know what you want. And you take it. Like you took me. Like Time takes tomorrow and makes it yesterday.

She has approached him, on her knees too, naked, and holds him tight around the waist with one arm from behind as he paints. He grunts with pleasure. With her other hand she takes a paintbrush and writes ART on STANKO's back. The phone starts to ring again.

MUSIC; Expressions, by The Clayton Brothers

INT. BEN'S OFFICE, DAY. BEN stands looking down into the street, with the receiver to his ear.

EXT. HOSPITAL, STREET, DAY. ELIJAH sits opposite the hospital door, staring up at BEN at his 15th floor window.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD, DAY. SHIVA sleeps.

EXT. RUSS HARPER STUDIO, END OF THE DAY.

RUSS comes out the door. There stands T.T (aka titi), by the red corvette. He holds up a pair of handcuffs.

TITI

Hey sweetie. Look what I got.

RUSS

Get in the car.

TITI

Look what I got. I'm gonna hurt you.

RUSS

Get in the car.

TITI

I love you.

RUSS

Love ya baby.

They are in the car. As TITI puts the handcuffs in the glove compartment, we catch a glimpse of a gun. Then, RUSS roars that red corvette out of sight.

EXT. POLICE STATION, DOWNTOWN, DUSK.

LAFERN enters the building, on her way to a hard night's work.

The black cat crosses her path and miaows plaintively. She bends down to stroke it.

LAFERN

Hello, Mr. cat, who are you?

The cat miaows a response.

LAFERN (CONT'D)

Oh, Tupac. Will you be here later? I'll be out in twelve hours, OK?

The cat miaows again.

LAFERN (CONT'D)

OK Tupac. Bye. Bye.

She enters the police station.

EXT. LOS ANGELES HIGHWAY, DUSK.

RUSS and TITI on the road, somewhere out there.

TITI

Sweetheart. Sweetie. Ignoring me.

RUSS

Lot on my mind, baby.

TITI

Talk to me, sweetie. Sweetie. I'm so excited. The Grand Canyon. I'm fifty years old and I've never been to the Grand Canyon. I love you, Russ.

RUSS

Love ya baby.

TITI

"Love ya baby", like you're too cool to say it with meaning, hey, I'm the baldie, I'm Kojak, honey.

RUSS

Looks like we got us a wild wild west show.

TITI suddenly clicks the handcuffs onto RUSS' and his own wrists.

TITI

Hey hey lover boy.

RUSS

Yeah, I'll never leave you, lover bitch.

TITI

Yeah, 'cause I'll never take them off.

RUSS

I'm gonna hurt you, bitch.

INT. HOTEL PENTHOUSE SUITE, DUSK. The sun is setting blood red across the horizon to the west, from this magnificent 30th floor view as MILES admires his reflection in the windows.

CRYSTAL, kneeling by that coffee table, does another line.

CRYSTAL

I've only eaten an apple today. Pretty good. Not that I'm fat or anything. I just like the discipline. And this is not a problem. I just do this on weekends. And on a wednesday to, you know, break up the week, and then on special occasions like tonight. It's not a problem. Hey, did you see that rerun of Baywatch Nights today? they did, like, a rerun of the first year, and I was in episode four, like three years ago. That was when I was an actress. It was pretty cool. David Hasselhof was pretty cool. You know. Kinda cheesy but a really nice guy. You want a line? I'm gonna have just one more. (Snort) It's like, God. I mean, where is he, right? And then, just when you can't take it anymore and you're gonna jump off like a really tall building or something along he comes, like a glass explodes in your hand or a box of matches spontaneously combusts right before your eyes or you wake up in the night and something evil is fucking you and you say the Lord's prayer and it has to go away and you didn't dream that...you know what I mean?

MILES stares at her coldly.

EXT. HOSPITAL, SUNSET.

ELIJAH hears the voices and laughs them off.

ELIJAH

No, girl, you are not dreaming that. No, It dreaming you, girl. Jump in front of that bus. Oh no. I ain't jumpin' in front of nooo bus. Not in front of that bus. Another bus maybe. Another day. You belong to me cockroach. I do not belong to you. You in my mind and Wonderwoman will make herself known, why any day now she gonna come walkin' right out that door. The Holy Communion. Halleluljah.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD, SUNSET. SHIVA wakes and hears ELIJAH's voice.

SHIVA

Halleluljah. Yes. Love is the Universe.

EXT. HOSPITAL, SUNSET.

ELIJAH

Love is the Universe, you hear me? Beelzebub. Beelzebub. I said get thee behind me.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD, SUNSET.

SHIVA

Our Father who art in Heaven, halo'ed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done

EXT. HOSPITAL, SUNSET.

ELIJAH

On earth as it is in Heaven, give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us

INT. HOSPITAL.

SHIVA

lead us not into temptation

EXT. HOSPITAL.

ELIJAH

but deliver us from evil for thine is Kingdom

INT. HOSPITAL

SHIVA

the power and the glory, forever

EXT. HOSPITAL.

ELIJAH

and ever, amen.

ELIJAH stands up renewed by the Holy Spirit, steps away from his wheelchair, and crosses the road, advancing past the sign "PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS", towards the glass doors of the hospital.

INT. BEN'S MERCEDES.

BEN is on his way home in rush hour traffic. Pent up frustration. Car at a standstill.

EXT. MERCEDES. His car is trapped in a coagulated river of steel at dusk on the 101 freeway. A living nightmare.

TESS (V-O SCREAMING)

See the peak in your mind, see it and reach for the impossible inside, reach deep inside into the light of your desire

INT. FITNESS STUDIO, EVENING.

TESS teaches her spinning class. She screams into a microphone over the damagingly loud music while pumping her legs relentlessly up an imaginary mountain on her work-out bike. A class of ten fitness fans pump their legs up the imaginary mountain with her.

TESS

You can do it! That's why you're here. Oh yeah! The body is weak, the mind is strong. Strong! Come on! See that peak and become the mountain! Oh yeah! Does it feel good?

The class responds with panting "yeah's" and "all right's".

INT. HOSPITAL, EVENING. As ELIJAH bursts through the glass doors and INTO the hospital lobby, shouting with a passion becoming of madmen.

ELIJAH

I feel good! I feel the strength of the Holy Spirit in me, and behold, said the Lord, I shall move mountains.

An alarmed receptionist stands up abruptly.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD. SHIVA has sat up and glides across the white tile floor with breathless expectation.

SHIVA

for I was lost who now am found...

INT. RUSS' CAR, DESERT HIGHWAY, NIGHT. RUSS abruptly smashes the map which TITI is peering at into his face.

RUSS

You trying to fucking lose us, titi?

TITI

I swear that was the turning. I swear it. Look. I marked it all out last week. See? The ten takes us out to the 304 and then we turned off before Palm Springs and headed north on the 205 but that should have

put us here only...

RUSS

Where the fuck am I Titi? Jesus Christ, I'm just trying to get through another day, here, you have no idea, I got the FBI on my ass, I'm bankrupt, I'm totally broke, Titi, and now I'm lost. Take the handcuffs off, bitch.

TITI

Don't fucking shout, honey. Where's the key? Where's the key? I think it's...

RUSS

Don't think. Don't fucking think, Titi. God help us when Titi fucking thinks. Titi the thinking machine. Living proof that the universe is shrinking. What did I do to deserve this? Huh? Hey, God. I know I've done some bad things but what. Did I do. To deserve. This. Fat. Piece. Of shit? Huh?

TITI'S lower lip starts to quiver.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY, EVENING. ELIJAH strides down the hall, storming the establishment, taking the forces that be by surprise. The receptionist is on the phone calling security.

ELIJAH

Because the Lord said that the sins of the father shall be visited upon the son to the third or fourth generation of those who hate me but I will show Love to a thousand generations...

INT. HOSPITAL, ANOTHER CORRIDOR. SHIVA glides along, hearing the screaming voice of ELIJAH in the distance.

ELIJAH (V-0) (CONT'D)

...of those who love me and keep my commandments, m'fucker. Y'hear? I said, do you hear me?

SHIVA (A WHISPER)

Love is the Universe.

INT. HOSPITAL, ANOTHER CORRIDOR. ELIJAH, CLOSE-UP, wide-eyed and blinking. He hears her now, not RUSS.

ELIJAH

That is correct, ma'am. Love Is the Universe and the action of Loving pertains to all who are in it. Surrender the vengeance. Vengeance is mine, said the Lord.

TESS (V-0)

Fight the doubt. Do not surrender!

INT. FITNESS STUDIO. TESS screams into that microphone, as the sweat cascades off her into the abyss of time and space.

TESS (CONT'D)

Fight that doubt. You're number One! That's right. You're number One. Just you and the mountain and the mountain will be moved.

RUSS (V-0)

Shut up.

CUT TO INT. CORVETTE, DESERT HIGHWAY, NIGHT. TITI weeps tears of humiliation; an unloved insecure soul.

TITI

I just wanted for us to have a nice weekend...

RUSS

Where's the fucking key? Don't cry, you fat piece of shit. Don't fucking cry.

TITI

I've lost the key, Russ, be nice...

RUSS

Shut the fuck up will you shut up. Jesus Christ. You're not a man. You faggot. You fucking faggot. Jesus...

TITI

You're never nice, you're always either silent or shouting, I hate you Russ, I really really hate your stinking...

But he never finishes his curse because the car suddenly seems to hit an air pocket with an enormous thump and a voice screams hell. RUSS grips onto the steering wheel.

ELIJAH (V-0)

The Hhhhaaaaaaaaaa...

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR, NIGHT. ELIJAH writhes on the floor, screaming.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

aaaaaaaaaaaaate....

INT. MERCEDES; NIGHT. TRAFFIC JAM. Ben in the car, screaming frustration.

BEN

aaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh...

INT. RED CORVETTE DESERT HIGHWAY, NIGHT.

RUSS

hhhaaaaaaaaaa....

INT. FITNESS STUDIO, NIGHT.

TESS

aaaaahhhhhhhhhh...

INT. DRESSING ROOM, NIGHT.

MILES (PUMPING UP)

hhhaaaaaaaaaa....

EXT. POLICE STATION, NIGHT.

As a savage pitbull tied to a lamppost, strains from afar to get its foaming jaws around the black cat's neck.

DOG

aaaaaarrrrrrggggggffffffhHHHH....

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR, NIGHT. ELIJAH fights off the security guards in SUDDEN SILENCE, swinging a fire cannister left and right. JERKY FAST MOTION. The guards keep their distance, ready to pounce.

INT. HOSPITAL, ANOTHER CORRIDOR, NIGHT. SLOW MOTION. SHIVA turns a corridor and sees ELIJAH for the first time, fighting off the guards.

INT. MERCEDES, NIGHT. JERKY FAST MOTION BEN, driving furiously now, up into the Hollywood Hills, around hairpin bends, tires screeching.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE. STANKO paints his crosses furiously into the circles, singing L'Internationale.

EXT. POLICE STATION, NIGHT. As that stray pitbull still strains with all its ferocious might to break the rope and kill that cat.

DOG (CONT'D)

aaaaaarrrrrrggggggffffffhHHHH....

INT. DRESSING ROOM. MILES is all pumped up in front of the mirror,

behind him, a chattering entourage of hangers-on. MILES loses his temper.

MILES

Shut the fuck up all of you. I do not live fucking tomorrow. Just Here. And Now. I live in the Here. And Now. (Back in the mirror) You're the boss you're the boss you're the boss you're the boss...

INT. HOUSE OF BLUES. The audience is pumped up and chanting for their idol.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR, NIGHT. SLOW MOTION. SHIVA approaches ELIJAH as the security guards pounce on him and wrestle him to the ground.

INT. RED CORVETTE, DESERT, NIGHT. FAST MOTION.

RUSS and TITI, horror on their faces, are driven off road and into the desert darkness by some supernatural force which pounds relentlessly against the car. Hell broken loose.

EXT. DESERT NIGHT, as the red corvette disappears off the road and into the black dust like a bat out of hell, coming to rest in a blinding maelstrom of dust.

EXT. BEN'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY, NIGHT, as BEN slams the mercedes door and BEN bursts through the front door into the house.

INT. HOUSE LIVING ROOM, NIGHT. BEN launches himself wholeheartedly into STANKO who is painting, and grapples him to the floor.

INT. RED CORVETTE, NIGHT. A hysterical TITI throws himself at RUSS. His large hands grasp at RUSS' throat and begin to squeeze the life out of him, with the strength of a madman.

INT. HOSPITAL, NIGHT. ELIJAH struggles against all odds with the security guards. TIME SLOWS as SHIVA appears over them.

EXT. POLICE STATION, NIGHT. As that stray pitbull still strains to get at the cat. The rope is beginning to give.

DOG

aaaaaarrrrrrggggggffffffhrrrrr....

INT. HOUSE OF BLUES, NIGHT. The RAP STAR bursts forth onto the stage and the audience goes wild.

MILES

Hello Hollywood. How y'all feeling? Y'all all right. Ohhh...It's a special night tonight. Can y'all feel it in the air? Who's on drugs, man? I said who's on drugs? Just say no, man. That's what I say. Just say no.

CRYSTAL, CLOSE UP, laughing hysterically.

CRYSTAL

It's like a dream. It's like a dream.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE. BEN and STANKO grapple mercilessly.

INT. POLICE STATION. FLASH! LAFERN takes a mug shot.

INT. HOUSE OF BLUES.

MILES

I wrote a lotta songs when I was on a cocktail of drink and drugs back in my wild misspent youth as a drunk manic depressed self-obsessed ego-maniac. Angry songs 'bout death and destruction, 'bout hate, 'bout being a black man in these disunited states of America, but then one day, say hallelujah, Jesus took this sinner's hand and showed me another world, a world of Love, my friends, and He led me down the

path of righteousness and now...I'm still a manic depressed self-obsessed ego-maniac, but I'm a sober one. And I am redeemed. Through Christ our Saviour. Amen. I could stand here and talk and talk but y'all came here to hear me sing, didn't ya?

The crowd hollers approval. As the intro begins.

EXT. POLICE STATION. SILENCE. The rope snaps and the dog hurls itself jaw slobberingly at the cat in slow slow slow motion.

INT. RED CORVETTE, NIGHT. JERKY MOTION. RUSS and TITI fight for their lives, strangling each other to death. TITI reaches into the glove compartment for the gun.

INT. HOSPITAL. SILENT SLOW MOTION, SHIVA leans down into the violent fray of struggling bodies.

INT. HOUSE OF BLUES. MILES sings a rap gospel song.

MILES (CONT'D)

He's a light bringer, haunting my sight
He's a light bringer, He ain't on no diet
His name is Jesus and He's hungry
Oh so hungry for my love

INT. BEN'S HOUSE. BEN gains the upper hand, and is on top of a tired STANKO. He smashes the empty bottle of vodka on the TV set.

MILES (V-0) (CONT'D)

I was a fight winner, destined for the Fall
a well intentioned sinner, blind to the Call

INT. HOSPITAL; SHIVA leans in slowly, eyes shining so ecstatically in CLOSE UP.

MILES (V-0) (CONT'D)

I was a loser and a boozier, desperation was my Way

EXT. POLICE STATION. CLOSE UP; The cat stares blankly at the dog, charging in slow motion, imminent Death.

MILES (V-0) (CONT'D)

I was a cat, lady killer
I was the dawg, yo, the dealer

INT. RED CORVETTE. TITI pulls the gun trigger. The bullet enters RUSS' stomach as RUSS is winning in the battle of wills, and TITI's life force slowly ebbs out of him.

MILES (V-0) (CONT'D)

Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and O.J. Simpson all
rolled into one

INT. HOUSE OF BLUES; CRYSTAL stops laughing suddenly.

MILES (CONT'D)

I was a walking time bomb, folks, the radiation Son

INT. BEN'S HOUSE; BEN raises the broken bottle over his head, preparing for the death blow to STANKO, beneath him.

MILES (CONT'D)

Nagasaki was my mother

EXT POLICE STATION. The dog stops before the cat. Puzzled.

MILES (V-0) (CONT'D)

Hiroshima, hello dad

INT. BEN'S HOUSE. BEN looks puzzled, bottle poised in mid air.

MILES (V-0) (CONT'D)

Then Jesus held out his palms
oh yes He did and with my lips
I kissed his bleeding wounds
EXT POLICE STATION. The cat stares through the dog, recognizing the
illusion, refusing to play the role of victim, refusing, in fact, to
be a cat for this dog.
MILES (V-0) (CONT'D)
and with my teeth I tore out the nails
of an Empire's hate
and I spat them at the Devil's pride
INT. HOUSE OF BLUES. MILES is transported by the crowd's ecstasy;
MILES (CONT'D)
and with His tears
Jesus washed away my evil years
INT. BEN'S HOUSE. STANKO stares, puzzled, at BEN. Still poised to
kill, in mid air.
MILES (CONT'D)
and whispered in my ear."Faith,
EXT. POLICE STATION. The dog stares at the cat.
MILES (CONT'D)
is the birth
of an endless recurring gesture
INT. HOSPITAL. SHIVA kisses ELIJAH.
MILES (CONT'D)
called Love.
EXT. POLICE STATION. The cat reaches out a paw and slaps the dog
across its muzzle. The dog is puzzled.
INT. HOUSE OF BLUES. MILES stops mid song. He stares into empty space.
EXT. POLICE STATION. The cat slaps the dog again. Huh? the dog says
with its bewildered eyes.
INT. HOUSE OF BLUES. The same bewildered expression on MILES' face.
The audience has gone silent. Murmurs, then a restless buzz as the
silence stretches out and out. The band members look disconcertedly at
each other.
We see what MILES and no-one else sees.
There stands A SPIRIT. Smiling at MILES.
INT. RED CORVETTE, DESERT, NIGHT. RUSS sits there bleeding from the
bullet wound, with a dead TITI attached to his wrist. He tries to
start the car. It is dead too.
INT. BEN'S HOUSE. BEN still holds the bottle above his head. The phone
starts to ring. No movement.
EXT. POLICE STATION. The cat stares down the dog. At a loss, the dog
suddenly turns the other cheek, as t'were, and rolls over in playful
submission. The cat whacks him disdainfully in the face again.
INT HOUSE OF BLUES. MILES and the SPIRIT stare at each other. MILES
begins to laugh, softly at first. The SPIRIT smiles in response.
MILES' laughter becomes more and more hysterical, and the SPIRIT
slowly floats towards him.
INT. BEN'S HOUSE. The phone ringing. Nobody has moved.
INT. RED CORVETTE, DESERT, NIGHT. RUSS lies curled up, cradling TITI's

dead body in his arms.

INT. HOUSE OF BLUES. The SPIRIT is almost upon MILES and as the thick darkness begins to enter into MILES' spirit his laughter turns to a cry.

He collapses, alone, on stage, in the spotlight. A woman screams. Band members and security rush to him.

INT. MILES' IMAGINATION; as a distant phone rings endlessly MILES sees himself falling inside the SPIRIT, falling, falling, losing himself in his entirety, losing his identity, his very image disintegrates as the real world falls away and we plunge with him into the abyss.

FAINT OUTLINE of a child running across space, almost falling, laughing, enjoying the precarious joy of flight because the child has just learnt how to run.

ECHO of a blues mouth organ which seems to capture the elation of the child's spirit. Carefree.

The back of A WOMAN in a summer dress as a breeze blows her dress.

Huge eyes of the child, as it hears the beauty of music and is rendered immobile by its haunting, hypnotic force.

MILES stands there in this memory of his own childhood, and stares at his mother's back, then to the child, standing next to him. The child MILES smiles and reaches out for his hand. ADULT MILES takes it.

A coffin passes before them.

The child sings a song before the open coffin of their mother, still wearing that summer dress.

MILES (CONT'D)

I wanna be wherever you are
in the rain or in the stars, oh
I wanna be with you
I wanna be wherever you go
In the sun, or in the snow, oh
I belong to you
I will love you to the end of time
I will love you till the seas run dry
I will love you till you say you're mine
I will love you
though they call love blind

MILES overturns the coffin, to the consternation of the child, who begins to weep. MILES walks away, furious.

MILES (CONT'D)

Fuck that shit. I do not need to remember that. I will not remember it.

He advances towards a museum display. Of his life as a rap star.

MILES (CONT'D)

Hey. Lookie this shit. Tsst.

All the memorabilia, costumes, photos, old instruments, golden records encased in glass, posters from concert tours, all over the past thirteen years, a testament to Hate.

And MILES' face in each photo, becoming perceptibly older. The last poster is the latest. LIGHT BRINGER TOUR.

And then, on an ornate oak desk, an enormously large antiquated book, open. MILES approaches. The page is nothing but a list of names, scrawled in ink, by each individual. MILES turns a page. More names. And another page. More names. He flicks through. Names names names. He notices something. Peers in close.

There it is. His name. He dares not even begin to contemplate its symbolism. A voice behind him makes him jump out of his skin.

SPIRIT

Love indeed.

The voice belongs to the SPIRIT, who was on stage earlier.

MILES

Who the fuck are you, motherfucker?

SPIRIT

I am Music.

MILES starts to walk away down a corridor, which turns into a maze; and every corner MILES turns, there stands the SPIRIT, singing.

SPIRIT (CONT'D)

I'm the Falling Down song. Goes something like this;

I got the suicide blues

wasted a life fucking anything that moves

MILES

Yeah? Fuck you and the cloud you rode in on.

SPIRIT

I'm suicide green

wasted a lifetime not becoming a has-been

MILES

Get the fuck outta my way.

MILES takes a swing and connects. Walks away. But, bleeding profusely, the spirit is still there, around the next corner.

SPIRIT

I smell that suicide red

soon I'll be rotting soon I'll be dead.

Sing along, buddy,

MILES starts to beat the SPIRIT to a bloody pulp.

SPIRIT (CONT'D)

I got that suicide pose

signed mine away to the destroyer of souls.

The SPIRIT is meaningless absurdity embodied. MILES is more and more desperate as it becomes apparent that there is no escape from this haunting.

The SPIRIT's face becomes a frightening schizophrenia of emotions, from the extremes of laughter to pure terror in an instant. His body contorts in an unbelievable display of epileptic motion; he is a mirror of MILES' inner life.

SPIRIT (CONT'D)

Omnamahshivayahkristusnomolestecuntsuckmyfuckinghelpmetohelpmewhereohwhereisthelovemydeargod...

MILES stares at this transformation and is now afraid. He turns and runs.

Straight into a wall. While the SPIRIT relentlessly vents.

SPIRIT (CONT'D)

Omnamahshivayahkristusnomemolestecuntsuckmyfuckinghelpmetohelpmewhereo
hwhereisthelovemydeargod...

MILES gets up, turns and runs straight into another wall.

He turns again and blindly runs into another wall.

MILES stops and stares at this SPIRIT, possessed by an anarchy of
conflicting emotions.

SPIRIT (CONT'D)

Omnamahshivayahkristusnomemolestecuntsuckmyfuckinghelpmetohelpmewhereo
hwhereisthelovemydeargod...

Suddenly, the SPIRIT stops. And stares back. A strange smile on his
face.

That ringing telephone is deafening now. A panic-stricken MILES sees a
telephone in the distance. Strides towards it.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE. The phone is ringing. BEN gets up off STANKO and
answers the phone.

BEN

Yes?

MILES (V-0)

Help me please.

BEN

Yes?

MILES

I'm in hell. I am lost in a hell.

BEN

Who is this?

MILES

This is not Who, this is Is. I am.

BEN

Where?

MILES

Where angels fear to tread. In my mind, motherfucker. Here.

BEN

I'll be right there.

MILES

Now.

BEN puts down the phone and then the broken bottle, pulls his car keys
out of his pocket and walks out the front door. STANKO stares after
him, somewhat bewildered.

INT. MILES' IMAGINATION.

MILES puts down the telephone receiver. Turns and stares.

At the SPIRIT. Who watches him intently.

Across MILES' panicking face, a flurry of uncontrollable impulses
begin to race to and fro.

The SPIRIT smiles, turns and limps away. Around a corner.

MILES follows him, emitting a series of guttural whimpers, his body
starting to erupt into anarchic meaningless gestures. Reflecting the
SPIRIT's epilepsy.

He turns the corner and sees the SPIRIT disappearing around a corner
ahead.

He hurries to the next corner, turns it.
The SPIRIT is gone. And he is alone. His entire body spasms in an
absurd epilepsy of despair.

FLASH!

INT. POLICE STATION. ELIJAH photographed FLASH! left profile FLASH!
right profile FLASH! face on.

LAFERN looks out from behind the camera.

LAFERN

Sir, could you stop smiling please?

Because ELIJAH is on top of the world, a transcendent grin splitting
his face in two.

ELIJAH

She out there, right now. She filling in forms and she gonna get me
outta here. She my wonderwoman, hear? My wonderwoman.

LAFERN

Sir. Stop smiling.

ELIJAH

Where my wheelchair, huh? Hallelujah, girl.

LAFERN

Sir.

ELIJAH

Beware the false prophet, sister. He come to you promising you the
earth, ain't nuthin' but the devil in disguise. Wanna make you a star
in this here firmament but you gotta walk the path you on, sister, and
that ain't no Hollywood boulevard.

LAFERN

Oh, sshh now.

ELIJAH

Yessir, Jimmy Dean, he just a pussycat, and Marilyn, she no candle in
the wind, Tupac, he waiting, Lord he waiting.

LAFERN

How you know about my cats?

ELIJAH

'Cause I gone with the wind, sister, I said beware the false prophet,
he harpin' on an' on, but it be sound and fury that signifies sweet
fuck nuthin'.

LAFERN

Mind your language.

ELIJAH

That Shakespeare.

LAFERN

No it ain't, it's bad language, that's all.

ELIJAH

Shakespeare, angel. And that cowboy gonna kill you wi' his love gun.

LAFERN

You crazy.

But she's not so sure.

EXT. HOTEL. BEN'S Mercedes. He is getting out and taking a valet
ticket.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY. BEN crosses the polished marble floor. And stands

before the elevator doors. PING!

The elevator doors open, and there stands CRYSTAL. She stares at BEN. He does not see her, and crosses her path, to get into the elevator. She exits, turns and stands in the lobby staring at BEN as if seeing a ghost.

Finally BEN looks up and the recognition is mutual. They stare slack jawed and open mouthed at one another as the elevator doors. Close.

INT. ELEVATOR.

BEN

Shit.

BEN hits the "door open" knob, but too late. The elevator is already climbing. BEN hits the "lobby" knob and breaks into a sweat just standing there waiting for the elevator to get back downstairs.

The elevator stops at a floor to let a guest out. BEN pushes the "door close" knob. The doors take their time. Up the elevator goes. Stops at another floor. Another guest gets out and two guests get in. The tension is unbearable. As the elevator climbs another floor.

The doors open and a party of guests begin to crowd in. This becomes too much for BEN.

BEN (CONT'D)

Excuse me. Excuse me. I said excuse me.

BEN breaks into a run down the corridor, looking for the fire exit. Or for some stairs, any stairs that will take him back down to the woman he dreams of.

He reaches one end of the corridor. Dead end. Turns and sprints back up the other end. Bursts through the Fire Exit doors and leaps down the stairs five by five.

INT. LOBBY, NIGHT. BEN bursts through the doors breathing heavily, his wild eyes desperately searching for a sign of lovelife. None.

He rushes out the front doors.

EXT. HOTEL, NIGHT. BEN cannot find CRYSTAL.

INT. LOBBY. BEN, as close to tears as he has ever been, makes his way towards the men's room. He stops short.

There she is. CRYSTAL. Coming out of the Ladies' room. She stops short and looks back at BEN. He walks over. They talk simultaneously.

CRYSTAL

I was gonna wait for you in the lobby...

BEN

I thought I'd lost you there...

CRYSTAL

Didn't know how long I was gonna wait but...

BEN

I'm a little outta breath...

CRYSTAL

I'd have waited all night...

BEN

Ran down the stairs to try and catch you...

CRYSTAL

So here we are...

BEN

Here we are. Uh. I'm a doctor, I was called into look at one of the guests up on the top floor.

CRYSTAL

Mick Kool.

BEN

Yes. How did you...

CRYSTAL

Hi. I'm Crystal.

BEN

Benjamin. So...

CRYSTAL

I'll be here.

CRYSTAL seems to float away. BEN watches her recede into the distance while standing completely still.

INT. POLICE STATION REST AREA, NIGHT. LAFERN drinks a coffee with a colleague. The colleague sees a video tape in LAFERN'S bag.

OFFICER

What's that?

LAFERN

Oh, nothing.

OFFICER

Russ Harper, huh?

LAFERN

What?

OFFICER

I was there. Six months ago. Paid my four hundred bucks. What he tell you? You gonna be on "ER"?

LAFERN

"Friends"

OFFICER

The man is a cowboy.

LAFERN

Huh?

OFFICER

Check him out on the files, girl.

LAFERN

I'm cool.

OFFICER

Check him out.

LAFERN

I'm cool.

She looks cool, too, but the doubt is growing.

INT. HOTEL SUITE.

MILES stands in the middle of the room, performing corporeal pyrotechnics, in a state of spiritual anarchy. BEN and the PRODUCER watch aghast.

INT. POLICE STATION.

LAFERN is at a computer.

CLOSE UP on the screen. FBI files. She types in the name RUSS HARPER. Computer searches.

LAFERN in front of the computer. Her expression is resigned, as she reads;

FBI FILES; RUSS HARPER, born Wyoming, 1938, out on bail pending multiple trials for fraud in seven states across the USA.

INT. HOTEL SUITE.

BEN observes MILES, barking like a puppy, on all fours, pacing the room. If he could wag his tail, he would. He licks BEN's hand. Yelps. And pees excitedly on the carpet. BEN is on the phone.

BEN

Yes. State of extreme agitation. Seems to be some break down of identity possibly caused by drug induced hallucinations. This man has had a complete and utter collapse, both emotional and mental.

INT. POLICE STATION CELL.

LAFERN stands looking at ELIJAH in his cell.

LAFERN

All right, so how'd you know about the cowboy, mister?

ELIJAH

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, say, you gonna help a brother?

INT. BEN'S MERCEDES. BEN and CRYSTAL drive in silence through the city.

CRYSTAL

Wow. Deja vu, or what.

BEN

What?

CRYSTAL

Deja vu. Like I've been here before. Where are we going?

BEN

I don't know.

He smiles peacefully at her. She smiles and takes BEN's hand in hers.

CLOSE UP of their hands, enlaced.

INT. POLICE STATION, ENTRANCE.

CLOSE UP of two other hands, enlaced. Those of SHIVA and ELIJAH. They stand at the counter, as LAFERN signs release forms.

ELIJAH

Wonderwoman, I don't even know your name.

SHIVA

Shiva.

SHIVA smiles at LAFERN. LAFERN finishes signing bail.

LAFERN

That's it, Elijah. You're free now.

ELIJAH

Lafern, Lafern, Lafern.

LAFERN

What?

ELIJAH

Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

LAFERN

And are you religious too?

SHIVA

I am God.

LAFERN

Oh.

ELIJAH

For we was lost who now is found. In a river called Time, angel.

SHIVA

Angel.

LAFERN

Why thank you, takes one to know one. Two to know one. Well. You got a place to stay?

ELIJAH

Halleluljah.

LAFERN

Yeah, I guess just for a night. Or two. I guess.

LAFERN smiles and moves away towards the exit. They smile with luminescent eyes and follow her.

INT. MERCEDES.

Romantic music plays. BEN and CRYSTAL are in the recurring dream. They both stare out at the road winding into the hills.

BEN

I love you.

CRYSTAL

I know.

BEN

I'm married.

CRYSTAL

Oh.

BEN

I'm leaving my wife.

CRYSTAL

OK.

BEN

I'm taking you home.

Silence. CRYSTAL is suddenly apprehensive.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm packing a bag and then we're checking into a hotel until we find ourselves a place, I'll never leave you, I want you by my side for the rest of my life. You're the woman of my dreams.

CRYSTAL

Yes.

Silence. They still stare numbly at the winding road. He turns off the radio.

BEN

I have herpes.

CRYSTAL

So do I.

BEN looks at CRYSTAL. She looks at BEN. They smile the most intimate of smiles.

EXT. POLICE STATION, NIGHT. As LAFERN walks away with SHIVA and ELIJAH, a miaowing sound stops her in her tracks. She turns.

The CAT. It looks at her and miaows. LAFERN breaks into a grin.

LAFERN

Hello Tupac. You are Tupac, aren't you? Yes, of course you are. Hello. Ohhhh, are you hungry? Are you cold? You wanna come home with me?

The CAT miaows and rubs itself against her legs. SHIVA and ELIJAH smile.

EXT BEN'S HOUSE, NIGHT. The mercedes before the house with its headlights off.

INT. MERCEDES. BEN and CRYSTAL stare out into the night.

BEN

You don't have to come in.

CRYSTAL

I'll come in.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE. THE PAINTING. Now complete. Every circle has been painted in with an "x". SOUND OF The door being unlocked.

BEN enters, followed by CRYSTAL.

STANKO stands in the living room before his painting, in only his underwear, skin splattered with dry paint. He turns to see BEN.

Who moves aside to reveal CRYSTAL behind him. She looks up.

STANKO'S startled face.

CRYSTAL'S startled face.

STANKO'S shock becomes a sudden mask of indifference and he looks away. Back to his painting.

CRYSTAL's shock melts away as she follows his game of pretense.

BEN

Where's Tess? Where's Tess?

STANKO

Heh?

BEN

My wife.

STANKO shrugs and continues to stare at the wall.

BEN (CONT'D)

Sorry, this is Stanko, Crystal. Crystal, Stanko.

STANKO and CRYSTAL ignore the introduction.

BEN (CONT'D)

OK?

CRYSTAL

Mhm.

BEN

I'll pack a bag.

And BEN leaves them standing there in the living room. Long silence.

CRYSTAL

You fucking asshole.

STANKO glances at her. Shrugs. Lights a cigarette. Distant thunder.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Gimme one of those.

He tosses the packet at her. She catches it. Lights one, inhales deeply, puts the pack in her pocket. He registers the gesture but refuses to be drawn. Crystal moves into the room and studies the painting.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

I feel sorry for you. I do. I just want you to know that I forgive you. But you're still a fucking asshole. Daddy.

SOUND of keys in the front door. TESS enters. Stops. You could cut the tension around here with a pair of pliers and all hell would break loose. She appraises the situation like a cat pissing on its territory. She is "high" on adrenaline from the work-out.

TESS

Who the fuck are you?

CRYSTAL

I'm a friend of your husband.

TESS

Could you be more specific?

CRYSTAL

He's upstairs packing a suitcase.

TESS just smiles strangely. She goes up to STANKO and kisses him on the lips. Then she exits to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM, NIGHT. BEN is throwing it all in there, carelessly. Time to go. TESS enters and watches him.

TESS

You're a sad, pathetic creature. She can't be more than half your age.

BEN

I love her. I'm going to marry her.

Silence. Except for the thunder, closer now. TESS smiles.

TESS

I fucked him. I fucked Stanko.

BEN

I know.

TESS

How do you know?

BEN

I've had you followed over the past year. I know all about your casual liaisons. Billy, the waiter at Le Dome, the guy who delivers the wood once a month, uh, Jack and Roger in class, and a few others, it's all in here, dates, photos, recorded telephone conversations...

BEN takes a file from the suitcase and drops it on the bed, then resumes packing. Silence.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm divorcing you, Tess. You can keep the house. If you can keep up the mortgage payments. I'm taking the mercedes, and this suitcase. That's all I need.

TESS

A new chapter, huh?

BEN

Yes. And do me a favour, stop telling everyone I gave you herpes. I didn't give you herpes, you gave me herpes.

TESS laughs softly. Outside a window, lightning flashes.

TESS

Fuck you, Ben. Fuck you and your teenage bimbo. Now get out of here before I fucking kill you.

BEN slams the suitcase shut. A thunderclap.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MOMENTS LATER. BEN stands there with the suitcase. CRYSTAL and STANKO ignore each other. BEN crosses the room without stopping.

BEN

Let's go.

CRYSTAL follows him. But TESS steps out of nowhere and blocks holds up the gun. Silence. BEN'S voice is tired now.

BEN (CONT'D)

Put the gun down, Tess.

TESS

Cocksucker.

BEN

Tess. Put the gun down.

TESS

I'll blow your fucking brains all across the bimbo's tight little tits.Cocksucker.

TESS points the gun at CRYSTAL. STANKO doesn't even look up.

STANKO

John Wayne, bang bang mister, you dead.

BEN

Don't worry. It's not even loaded. Tess, put the gun down.

TESS

It's loaded. For a rainy day. Here's that rainy day.

BEN

It's not loaded. We don't have bullets in the house.

TESS

It's fucking loaded. I bought the bullets, OK? You think you can just walk out on me? You fucking fuck? Huh? Siddown. Sit down on the cocksucking couch now.

TESS fires the gun. BOOM! BEN and CRYSTAL move to the couch and sit down. Outside, the lightning flashes, and rain begins to pound against the windows.

TESS (CONT'D)

Huh? OK. Let's have some music. Huh? Eine kleine nacht musik, ja? Holding the gun still, she moves to the CD player, stabs the power button, and stabs random play.

MUSIC; Beethoven's MOONLIGHT SONATA.

TESS (CONT'D)

Now what we got here is a failure to communicate. You don't leave me, Benjamin. Capishe? You do not walk out on moi. These legs here were made for walking, I walk, I fucking walk out on you. (she laughs suddenly) Look at your faces, will you look at your faces, 'smatter? cat got your tongue, Benjamin boy? What's your name, slut?

CRYSTAL

Crystal.

TESS

Crystal. Crystal, you look like something the cat dragged in. Benny here is thinking "she hasn't been taking her prozac". Am I right? Am I right am I rightamIright? Well you can suck my cock. Who's number one,

huh, Ben? Who's number one?

STANKO has quietly sat up against the wall, mildly entertained by this domestic dispute. Enough to take his mind off the ubiquitous painting.
TESS (CONT'D)

I am number one. Numero uno. Das nummer eins. Du bist zwei, ja? Let's see you two kiss. Come on, kids, I wanna see the two of you swapping saliva, do it. Don't be shy.

BEN

Tess, I'm gonna call the hospital and I'm gonna ask Dr. Edelstein to come over...

BEN is reaching for the phone as he speaks. TESS pulls the trigger. BLAM! The telephone explodes into a shower of metal. Everybody jumps out of their skin. Even STANKO, but he covers quickly. Another loud thunderclap.

TESS

I've killed many an afternoon down at the shooting range, honey. And I'm a natural, so they say. Annie Oakley eat your heart out.

EXT HOTEL, NIGHT. As a restrained epileptic MILES is whisked into an ambulance on a stretcher. The producer is fighting off paparazzi in the rainstorm. FLASH! A photo catches MILES strapped to the stretcher and howling at the moon.

EXT. NIGHTSKY OVER LOS ANGELES. A spectacular electrical storm looms like an alien entity over the city. Flash!

INT. BEN'S HOUSE.

TESS paces languidly to and fro with the gun in her hand as BEN and CRYSTAL kiss awkwardly.

TESS

Ohhh. That's cute. Real cute.

BEN and CRYSTAL stop kissing. TESS smiles that sick smile.

TESS (CONT'D)

Stanko, kiss Ben.

STANKO

Uh huh.

STANKO quickly moves over and puts his tongue in BEN'S mouth. Stops. Smiles at TESS.

TESS

Now kiss the slut.

STANKO shakes his head. No. TESS points the gun at STANKO, who shrugs and half-heartedly tries to kiss CRYSTAL but she is off the couch like a flash. TESS points the gun at STANKO; he shrugs and attempts against his will to corner CRYSTAL but she keeps slipping through his fingers.

TESS (CONT'D)

It's all love, Crystal. Doesn't matter where it comes from. All comes from God.

BEN

Stop it, for God's sake, stop it.

TESS

For God's sake? I'm not a fucking christian, Ben. I'm a tiger. I'm a fucking maneater, you asshole.

A scream. STANKO is on the ground, in terrible agony, holding onto his

groin. TESS immediately goes to him.

TESS (CONT'D)

Honey? Are you OK?

She turns on CRYSTAL, nastier than ever. Grabs her by the hair and forces the gun in her mouth.

TESS (CONT'D)

You bitch. You tight assed whore. Eat this.

TESS leers at BEN. Lightning distorts her features.

TESS (CONT'D)

Huh? Ain't I just your worse nightmare?

Suddenly, she is pulled off CRYSTAL and as the gun slips from her grip and clatters across the kitchen floor, she is over STANKO's knee, being given a good spanking. She starts to scream and kick, but STANKO has her in his bear grip.

STANKO

You are bad little girl. Bad little girl.

TESS

Ben. Help me, Ben. Ben.

STANKO looks up at BEN and nods towards the exit.

STANKO

You go now.

BEN and CRYSTAL stare at the two of them for a moment, numb. Then look at each other and start to leave.

TESS

Help. Ben. Help.

STANKO

Bad bad little girl.

INT. MERCEDES, CLOSE TO DAWN. BEN and CRYSTAL stare out at the road. The heavy rain seems intent on punishing the earth. The front window is an ever-changing palate of water-colours. CRYSTAL consumes a box of chocolate chip cookies.

CRYSTAL

I'm a drug addict. You name it, I put it in me. Mostly coke. And I'm a hooker. A very expensive hooker. When I was a little girl, mummy took my back teeth out so I could be in commercials. But I just wanted to be a nun. I wanted to give myself to Big Daddy. Biggest of 'em all. I still pray three times a day. In India, some people can survive on one glass of water a month. So you can stop the car anywhere, and let me out. I'll survive.

BEN pulls the car over. Looks at her.

BEN

I love you, Crystal. You're my dream. We were lost inside our own nightmares for a little while, that's all. Marry me.

CRYSTAL

Happy ending?

BEN

Happy ending.

INT. MERCEDES, NEAR DAWN. As BEN and CRYSTAL smile and reach over to kiss.

EXT. SKY. A terrific bolt of lightening is cast out of the cloud.

EXT. MERCEDES, NEAR DAWN, as the bolt hits the car.

INT. MERCEDES as BEN and CRYSTAL's lips pass the bolt of electricity between them, killing them instantly.

EXT. ROAD, DAWN, as the Mercedes sits there, undisturbed. Inside, we see BEN and CRYSTAL locked forever in that embrace.

CAMERA PULLS BACK SLOWLY. Two pairs of unidentified legs appear from above. A man's legs and a woman's legs. Floating away.

BEN (V-0) (CONT'D)

I can fly. Crystal.

CRYSTAL (V-0)

Yes, Ben.

BEN (V-0)

I can fly.

RUSS (V-0)

You're all miracles. All children of God. God made us in his image. He made us to be successful, and guess what, some of us fall short of God's potential. Why?

CAMERA PULLS BACK FASTER AND FASTER from the mercedes on the road, as the sun creeps over the distant mountain range.

RUSS (V-0) (CONT'D)

Negative thinking. What do you do when you get up first thing in the morning? What's that thing wakes you up? An alarm clock? No wonder folks have such a bad day. An alarm clock.

INT. LAFERN'S APT, CLOSE TO DAWN. The black cat sits on LAFERN'S lap as she watches the videotape RUSS HARPER sold her.

LAFERN looks over at the sleeping angels, SHIVA and ELIJAH. Tucked up in her bed.

RUSS (V-0) (CONT'D)

OK. Now, on, that clock is gonna be called, an Opportunity clock. When that thing goes off, opportunity is knocking and you can't wait to get outta bed.

Matter o' fact, you're gonna get up ten whole minutes before you have to get up. 'Cause snoozers is for losers.

INT TESS' HOUSE. KITCHEN, NEAR DAWN.

STANKO is cooking up a storm whilst listening to opera. With the deft touch of a connoisseur, he places two bowls of hulking pasta on the kitchen table and sits down opposite a sulking TESS.

STANKO

Eat.

TESS

I can't mix carbs and protein, and besides it is almost five am, it's not good to eat now.

STANKO

Eat.

STANKO glares at her. She timidly picks up her fork and rolls the spaghetti.

EXT. LAFERN'S APT. DOORSTEP, DAWN. A paper lands on the "welcome" mat. There it is. The photo of MILES, strapped to a stretcher, wide eyed and foaming at the mouth. "RAP STAR IN DRUG OVERDOSE" reads the headline. A pair of legs appear. A hand picks up the paper.

CAMERA TRAVELS up with the paper to LAFERN'S face, with the black cat purring on her shoulder, as she reads the headline and closes the door.

RUSS (V-0)

Say it; "It's a great day to be up and at 'em!". Say it! I wanna hear you say it! You think I can't hear you just because I'm on this video and you're in another time, another place?

INT. LAFERN'S APT, DAWN. LAFERN yawns and sits at the table with the paper. RUSS HARPER'S voice can be heard in the background.

CLOSE UP of the TV. RUSS HARPER speaks.

RUSS (CONT'D)

This cowboy got eyes and ears everywhere, come from years of tracking down the injun, it keeps me alive. And if you believe me, and do exactly what I tell you to do, to the extent I tell you to do it...then, today is the beginning. Of a New Life for you. Where's your deputy marshall's badge that came with this here video tape? I want you to put it on right now. And repeat after me; "I will not do anything that is illegal, immoral, or fattening." I want you to do God's work out there. So repeat after me...

LAFERN has pushed eject. The tape ejects. She takes it and drops it in the trash basket.SLOW MOTION.

EXT. DESERT.

FAST MOTION SHOT of the sun appearing at dawn and climbing high into the cloudless sky.

INT. OVERTURNED RED CORVETTE. TITI's corpse is not there. The car is abandoned. A maelstrom of flies molest the pool of coagulated blood on the driver's seat.

EXT. RED CORVETTE, CLOSE UP on the sand by the driver's door.

CAMERA PANS UP AND PULLS BACK SLOWLY to reveal a trail of footprints dragging something heavy, leading off into the vast emptiness of a desert.

CAMERA KEEPS PANNING UP into the blue of a sky.

Heavy breathing.BLUE. Nothing but BLUE forever.

PAN DOWN from the sky into a CLOSE UP of RUSS HARPER. Close to death now. His face is pale, lips cracked.

He still bleeds profusely from the knife wound to his stomach.

Attached to his wrist is the 225lb corpse of Titi.

EXT. DESERT, AFTERNOON. LOCATION UNKNOWN. CAMERA PANS the horizon. Nothing but wilderness.

RUSS collapses into the sand. He shouts into the emptiness.

RUSS

All right. I don't care.

He stretches out and prepares to die. Chuckles nihilistically at the vultures circling over him. Closes his eyes. RUSS HARPER dies.

Long silence. Vultures screeching. Then a horse whinnies.

RUSS HARPER opens his eyes.

A magnificent indian, sitting barebacked on a white stallion. TITI's spirit. TITI'S face. He stares at RUSS.

RUSS sits up. The two men stare at one another. TITI, the indian beckons him to stand up.

RUSS stands. The indian points an arm. RUSS turns to see a black stallion canter up to him and nudge his shoulder. RUSS looks at TITI, the indian. TITI nods gravely. A vulture squawks echoingly. RUSS leaps onto the back of his black stallion; he is no longer attached to TITI'S corpse. He wears his white stetson. His shirt is spotless. The golden boy resurrected. He draws in the reins. The cowboy and the indian ride off into the desert, to become a shimmering illusion, and then they are gone. Only the desert remains.

THE END