

The Necessary Death of Charlie Countryman

by Matt Drake

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We left the bridge and traveled on in the starstudded night toward the world where no one was waiting for us.

– Márai Sándor, Famous Hungarian Writer Who Wrote Sixty Plus Books According to the Internet Not That Anybody Ever Heard of Him Myself Included Because He's Hungarian and Where the Hell is Hungaria Anyway?

A YOUNG MAN'S FACE

Fills the screen. He's in his 20s, and he'd probably be handsome if his whole head wasn't SWOLLEN and GROSS and BLOODIED like it currently is. He is CHARLIE COUNTRYMAN.

A familiar VOICE sets the scene:

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Ah. Here we are seeing it,
dahlinge. The very face of love.
Look upon the miracle it reveals,
for this boy, on this night, under
the moon so full.

Tears fall from his eyes, but weirdly -- they FALL UPWARD.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
He weeps. For her, and for us, and
for the moonlight too, this boy
does weep.

We PULL BACK and FLIP OVER, to find that Charlie is DANGLING from a BRIDGE, HANGING UPSIDE-DOWN over a moonlit RIVER.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
Funny, how love is.

Charlie squirms. He's being held by two TRACKSUITED GANGSTERS. Another TRACKSUIT stands at the rail, grinning.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
In every heart there is a dream, in
every dream a song, and in every
song there is a name.

CHARLIE
GABI!!

Tracksuits laugh, and yank him up to the rail. A YOUNG WOMAN steps out. She's pretty. The kind of pretty that starts wars and makes your stomach ache. This is GABI. Charlie is confused, seeing her here.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Gabi? What...what are you...

Gabi smiles. Oh my god. She's pretty.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Behold her, dahlinge -- the
beloved. Hers is the name in the
song of the dream, which echoes in
the space of his heart.

At Gabi's side, there's a MAN with a FACE LIKE A KNIFE.

KNIFE FACE
Take heart, Charlie. We'll see she
gets the proper care and feeding.

CHARLIE
FUCK YOU!! FUCKING FUCKASS
FUCKFACE!!

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Love is passion!

Knife Face laughs. Charlie looks into Gabi's eyes, pleading.

CHARLIE
Why, Gabi?

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Love is mystery!

Gabi's got a GUN. She looks to Knife Face. He nods. Gabi
swallows. BLAM! She shoots Charlie in the gut.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
And pain. Above all things, love is
pain.

Charlie SCREAMS. Charlie BLEEDS. Gabi leans in and WHISPERS
in his ear. His eyes light up. And he smiles.

Gabi steps away. Knife Face nods to the Tracksuits. They
let go. And Charlie falls. Endlessly and headlong, for the
gray waters of the river flowing below.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
It's the same old story. Of love
and the promise it holds. Of life
and of living it in love. And
perhaps of a little bit of death.
Yes. Just a splash of death...

As Charlie's head crashes through the surface we FREEZE FRAME.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
...you know, to make us truly
believe. In love.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

TITLE: A FEW WEEKS EARLIER

Michigan Avenue bridge. We find CHARLIE mid-span, staring into the paddy-green river. And yes, he is handsome. Maybe not remarkably so, but still.

A SOLID MAN in his early 50s comes up and hands Charlie a HOT DOG. They eat. The solid man begins to cry. He is SCOTT BAKER, Charlie's step-dad. He wipes his eyes.

SCOTT
This a day or what?

CHARLIE
Yeah.

They eat. Scott's trying to be solid, to keep it together. But how? He pulls out a PINT and takes a swig.

SCOTT
Sambuca?

Charlie takes a long pull from the bottle.

SCOTT (cont'd)
Can I say something to you,
Charlie? In this moment, before it
all goes to shit?

CHARLIE
Okay.

SCOTT
She's my only home.

Charlie is felled by this.

SCOTT (cont'd)
You know?

Out of a long silence:

CHARLIE
We don't have to do it, Scott.
Maybe wait a few more days.

SCOTT
Nah. It's time.

Charlie nods. They head off.

SCOTT (cont'd)
Gimme the 'buca.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Beeps, monitors, wires, and a COMATOSE WOMAN whose face is all but lost in swelling. Her head is shaved and scarred, her mouth crammed with tubes. She is MARY, Charlie's mom.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
 It is here, ladies and gentlemen,
 that the story begins for the boy.
 And like all stories worth the
 telling, it starts with goodbye.

Scott talks to a DOCTOR as Charlie sits in the corner.

SCOTT
 Okay. Then we what?

DOCTOR
 Once in hospice, we turn off the
 respirator, switching to a manual
 breathing apparatus, which enables
 us to gradually, um, ease her out.

SCOTT
 Out where?

DOCTOR
 Well. Out. There. Away.

SCOTT
 I see. Out there away. Good. I
 feel good about that.

DOCTOR
 Mr. Baker, I honestly believe
 you're doing the right thing here.

SCOTT
 In letting you suffocate my wife.

DOCTOR
 The, um, procedure is facilitated
 by a hospice careworker. Not me.

Scott just stares at him. Charlie takes a drink of Sambuca.

DOCTOR (cont'd)
 Well. The hospice is on seven.
 Shall I call a priest? A rabbi
 maybe? Would your wife have--

SCOTT
 Please. You've done enough. Go
 fuck yourself.

The Doctor bows out. Scott winces, grabbing his back. He shakes a BIG PILL out of a prescription bottle.

CHARLIE
Let me get one of those.

SCOTT
They're for my back.

CHARLIE
Okay. My back is killing me.

Scott gives him a pill. Charlie pops it.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Still hurts.

Scott gives him another pill. Charlie pops it.

INT. HOSPICE ROOM - DAY

Drawn curtains, muted tones, candlelight. Chinese-ish muzak twinkling appropriately. FAMILY MEMBERS are gathered. A NURSE stands over Mary, pumping breath into her lungs from a HAND-HELD APPARATUS. Scott stands by Mary's side.

Charlie is FLOATING UP ON THE CEILING. He calls down.

CHARLIE
Psst. Scott. What the fuck?

SCOTT
This is what happens. You ready?

Charlie looks to Mary. The nurse squeezes the apparatus, and it becomes FILLED WITH CRYSTALS OF LIGHT from Mary's mouth.

CHARLIE
What's that stuff?

SCOTT
Whatever you see, Charlie, it's the pills. Are you ready?

Some of the LIGHT ESCAPES. Charlie reaches for it as it fades. THUD! He falls heavily to the floor. He gets up.

CHARLIE
May I be excused, Scott?

SCOTT
We're not eating broccoli here,
Charlie. Jesus Christ.

CHARLIE
It's okay. You guys go ahead.

Scott stares at Charlie, giving him every chance.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Here is what makes a life, dahlinge
-- such moments, and the choices we
make within them.

Charlie's eyes flash pure helplessness.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
It is how we become who we are
meant to become in the world. We
choose.

Charlie leaves the room.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
Or not.

OUT IN THE HALLWAY

Charlie sinks into a CHAIR.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Who do we become if we do not do
choose, if we do not do the thing
that life itself is made of?

PEOPLE pass by Charlie. THEY HAVE NO FACES. Like in that
Star Trek episode. Charlie feels his face. IT IS GONE.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
We become no one, dahlinge.

Charlie looks down at his stomach. IT IS GONE, REPLACED BY
AN INFINITE VIEW INTO DEEPEST SPACE.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
And we are nothing.

THEN

A WOMAN we don't fully see takes a seat next to Charlie.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Took a powder, eh, Charlie?

It's MARY BAKER. She's her normal self. A lovely woman in
her 50s who should have a long time yet to live.

CHARLIE
Sorry about that, Mom.

MARY BAKER
I should've made you do your
homework, Charlie. I always knew.

CHARLIE
My homework?

MARY BAKER
I left too much up to you. When
you were young. Now you've got so
much fear, Charlie.

CHARLIE
What? No. I'm okay.

MARY BAKER
You just ran out of my death scene.

CHARLIE
I said I'm sorry.

MARY BAKER
I was always wrapped-up in my own
crap. Meeting Greg, and leaving
your Dad. Then meeting Scott and
leaving Greg. I could never get
the sequences right.

CHARLIE
You were a complicated lady.

MARY BAKER
I didn't mean to be, Charlie. And
now you're such a mess.

CHARLIE
This is good, you coming back from
the dead, us having this talk.

MARY BAKER
And p.s.? You're too sarcastic.

CHARLIE
What do I do? If I'm such a mess.

MARY BAKER
Change. I don't know.

CHARLIE
Change how?

MARY BAKER
I don't know. For the better.

CHARLIE
Tell me what to do, Mom. Please.

Mary Baker thinks. And thinks. Then decides.

MARY BAKER
Got it. Go to Bucharest.

CHARLIE
Bucharest?

MARY BAKER
Yes.

CHARLIE
Why?

MARY BAKER
I don't know. It came to me. I
have to go now, Charlie.

The ELEVATOR DINGS. And the door opens. A nice-looking
WOMAN is inside.

NICE-LOOKING WOMAN
Going up?

MARY BAKER
I should frigging hope so!

CHARLIE
Mom, wait.

MARY BAKER
Yes, Charlie.

CHARLIE
I need another memory. The one
I've got...it's not right.

MARY BAKER
What do you mean?

CHARLIE
The thing I'm going to remember,
it's...I don't want it to be it.

FLASH TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Scott is dragging Mary's body to his truck. Charlie follows with a cell phone, making the call. Mary's sweatpants fall down around her ass. It's not a pretty sight.

BACK TO SCENE

Mary laughs. It's a big and affecting laugh.

MARY BAKER
Oh, Charlie. You goof. Come here.

He leans into her. She kisses his forehead.

FLASH TO:

EXT. RIVER PARK - DAY

Charlie is seven. He and Younger Mary are at a picnic beside a river, giddily BURNING AN ANT with a magnifying glass.

BACK TO SCENE

MARY BAKER
Better?
(Charlie smiles)
Okay, then. I love you, Charlie.
Have fun in Bucharest.

Mary Baker gets in the elevator and the doors close.

INT. BORDERS BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

Charlie is at the help desk. A SUICIDE GIRL is helping him.

SUICIDE GIRL
Dude, Bucharest? No, we don't have any books on Bucharest. You know why? Because no one from there can read or write is why. All they can do is have sex with child prostitutes and get AIDS. Oh wait. They can also harvest organs like nobody's business. It's world capital of that shit.

CHARLIE
Don't they have the gymnasts?
Nadia what's-her-face and all?

SUICIDE GIRL
You'd be a good gymnast too if you weren't allowed to menstruate.
(MORE)

SUICIDE GIRL (cont'd)

(then)

You should go to Budapest. It's super pretty and they shoot all the pornos there.

CHARLIE

Is there someone else on duty? I'd like less dumb-ass information.

SUICIDE GIRL

A sweet-faced boy like you going to Bucharest makes no sense at all.

(then)

Dude, did you not just hear me fully hit on you like I was Lindsay Lohan or something? Where's your head at? I'm off at 11:30. Bring a bottle.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The radio clock reads 11:47. We see a half drunk BOTTLE OF TEQUILA on the driver's seat. We go WIDER to find Suicide Girl fucking the shit out of Charlie in the passenger seat. A TEAR falls from Charlie's eye. She doesn't notice.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Charlie stands on a Chicago-style back porch. He is DRUNK. He reaches into an old winter boot and pulls out a KEY.

INSIDE

Charlie enters a bedroom. A GIRL is asleep. This is MELISSA, Charlie's ex. He watches her until he hears a FART. Charlie laughs. Melissa wakes up and sees him.

MELISSA

Charles! What the fuck?

CHARLIE

You farted.

A RUSTLING in the far side of the bed. There's a GUY there. ANOTHER FART sounds. Charlie doesn't laugh. He goes.

IN THE KITCHEN

Charlie is leaving. Melissa comes after him. He PUKES in the sink.

MELISSA

We are not together, Charles. Why are you vomiting in my sink?

CHARLIE
I like the symbolism. Who's that?

MELISSA
No one you know. Go home.

CHARLIE
(a half-assed stab)
You're my only home.

MELISSA
What are you talking about?

CHARLIE
Forget it.

Charlie turns on the faucet and runs the GARBAGE DISPOSAL.

MELISSA
I'm sorry about Mary, Charles. I
heard but I didn't know what--

CHARLIE
Don't say Charles. I'm Charlie.

MELISSA
Please. You love that I call you
Charles.

CHARLIE
No more. I hate you. My name is
Charlie.

A NAKED GUY enters. He's Ted.

TED
Melissa? Everything cool?

MELISSA
Fine. Just give us a minute.

CHARLIE
Try to hold it in if you can.
Maybe scrunch up your butt cheeks.

TED
Who's he?

MELISSA
Go to bed, Ted.

CHARLIE
No, Ted. Don't go to bed. Forget
what she said. Stay here instead.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Ted. Please. Do not go to bed.
Not back where you far...Ted.

Melissa tries to keep a straight face.

TED

What the fuck is he--

MELISSA

You farted. Okay, Ted? Who gives
a shit. Give us a minute.

Ted blushes.

CHARLIE

Ted's turning red.

TED

Hey, bro! Enough!

Melissa turns Ted toward the bedroom. She whispers in his
ear. Ted glares at Charlie, and goes.

CHARLIE

What's Ted got against Dr. Suess?

MELISSA

Fuck you. Coming here being funny.
You're not funny, Charles. Go home.

CHARLIE

I'm moving to Bucharest.

MELISSA

Romania? With the AIDS and the
organ harvesting?

CHARLIE

And the prostituting of children,
yes. It's the place for me.

MELISSA

What about Budapest? It's supposed
to be very cool.

CHARLIE

Bucharest. Not Budapest.

MELISSA

You should go away. Wherever it
is, I think it's a good idea.

CHARLIE

You do?

MELISSA

You hate your job, you've got no real friends. All you do is sit in your apartment and do nothing.

CHARLIE

You call it nothing, I call it masturbation.

MELISSA

Change would do you good. You can jerk off anywhere.

CHARLIE

Don't mind if I do.

MELISSA

Let me ask you something before you fuck off to Bucharest, Charles.

CHARLIE

Charlie.

MELISSA

Did it ever occur to you that the only reason we fell in love is because I fell in love with you?

CHARLIE

Are you underlining pronouns with your voice?

MELISSA

Go away, Charlie. Fucking do something for once. Charlie.

CHARLIE

Take it worldwide. Like Godzilla. I see. Huh. Okay. Well, Melissa. I had a nice time being your boyfriend for a while even though all we did was fight and you made me cry when it was over.

He offers his hand to shake. She hugs him. He pulls back.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

BTW? I myself had sex tonight. Not by myself. It was me, along with another individual. A girl. FYI.

MELISSA

Take care of yourself, Charles.

CHARLIE
Charlie.

INT. CORPORATE LIMBO SPACE - INFINITE

Charlie walks down a hallway. He wears a suit. He reaches an office, knocks. A woman, JAN, is inside. She's happy.

JAN
Charlie, you so totally nailed the Save Secure Backup section.
(reading)
"Allows you to save a copy of the document which cannot be edited, but which can have functional VersaNotes attached to it."
(not reading)
Italics on the can? Are you serious? Effing nailed it!

CHARLIE
Thanks, Jan.

JAN
You're the Tiger Woods of tech writers, babe. Never cease to amaze.

CHARLIE
I've got to quit today, Jan.

JAN
Pardon?

CHARLIE
This is my last day. Save Secure Backup is my crowning achievement.

JAN
Whoa. I told you you came back from bereavement too soon. Take the week. Don't do anything rash.

CHARLIE
I'm moving to Bucharest.

JAN
That's rash, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Still, Jan. It's something I've got to do.

JAN

Just who is going to write the User Guide for the Paperless Fax Sys?

CHARLIE

Maybe the paperless Fax Sys doesn't need a User Guide, Jan. Being paperless and all.

JAN

Don't talk crazy, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Okay. So. Sorry about the notice.

JAN

You break my heart, Charlie. You son of a bitch.

INT. O'HARE AIRPORT - BAR - EVENING

Charlie and Scott are bellied up. Charlie thumbs through the ROUGH GUIDE TO ROMANIA. Scott lifts a shot of Sambuca.

SCOTT

To Bucharest. Wherever the hell.

They drink. Charlie looks a little piqued.

SCOTT (cont'd)

Nervous?

CHARLIE

Nah. Yeah.

SCOTT

I'm proud of you, Charlie. It's not an easy thing you're doing.

CHARLIE

Okay.

SCOTT

I want to say something, Charlie.

Finally. Okay?

(Charlie nods)

We did the right thing. I know it.

CHARLIE

Yeah. I guess.

SCOTT

You kill what you love if that's what it needs to be set free.

AT A GATE

Scott gathers Charlie in a hug. Scott cries. Charlie goes.

INT. AIRPLANE - EVENING

Charlie stares out the window.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
 Look how sad, dahlinge. The poor soul. We want so badly to believe he does the right thing for himself. But how can we, when we know how it ends for him? I will tell you how -- because of love. We may comfort ourselves knowing that love awaits him.

An OLD MAN'S HEAD lolls over onto Charlie's shoulder. He tries to push the man back, but he wakes. His name is ISTVAN. He's got high gray hair and the bluest eyes.

ISTVAN
 (thick Hungarian accent)
 What do you mean with touching me?

CHARLIE
 Your head fell on me.

ISTVAN
 I see. Never mind. What is wrong on your face?

Istvan touches Charlie's face.

ISTVAN (cont'd)
 The eyes. Here. You look bad.

CHARLIE
 My mom died.

ISTVAN
 Fooey. I am sorry for you. My wife died many years time ago. I have never had another woman since.

CHARLIE
 Well, hopefully it won't be the same for me. But I see your point.

ISTVAN
 I am Istvan Banyai.

CHARLIE
Charlie Countryman.

ISTVAN
Why going to Budapest, Charlie?

CHARLIE
I'm going to Bucharest.

ISTVAN
The airplane goes to Bucharest? *Ur Isten!* I don't go to Bucharest!

CHARLIE
It's okay. We're going to Budapest.
I take another flight to Bucharest.

ISTVAN
I see. Good. I am in Bucharest
one time. Never again. Fooey.

Charlie takes out a BOOK.

ISTVAN (cont'd)
I see. You do not like to speak
with me. No trouble for me.

CHARLIE
It's not that. I just--

ISTVAN
What is wrong with you? Should you
not want to know what I am doing in
Chicago? Why an old Magyar man is
going to there?

CHARLIE
Maud-yar?

ISTVAN
Hungarian. Magyar is Hungarian
word for Hungarian. See, you can
learn something by talking.

CHARLIE
What were you doing in Chicago,
Istvan? I'm curious.

Istvan pulls a CUBS HAT from his bag. He sets it atop his
high gray hair.

ISTVAN
I'm going to see the Cubbies at
Wrigley's Field.
(MORE)

ISTVAN (cont'd)
I say to my daughter, I want to
sing Take Me Out To The Ballgame
one time before I die. So she send
me to Chicago to visit a game with
the Cubbies...

Istvan's blue eyes brighten and his face beams.

FLASH TO:

WRIGLEY FIELD

Istvan in the bleachers, holding a beer. Weeping happily.

ISTVAN
ONE! TWO! THREE STRIKES YOU'RE--

BACK TO SCENE

Istvan is tearing up. Charlie smiles.

ISTVAN
Now you do not wish to ask me how
an old Magyar man can be a Cubbies
fan who lives in Hungary?

CHARLIE
What I can't figure out is how you
became a Cubs fan, Istvan. I mean,
you live in Hungary.

ISTVAN
The story of how is this: when I am
young my father buys audio tape
recordings of Mr. Jack Brickhouse
and the Cubbies on the black market
and we listen together under the
blankets for fear of being caught
by secret police. And then later
my daughter buys me the satellite
to watch WGN, the TV SuperStation.

CHARLIE
I should apologize to you, Istvan,
the Cubs being so bad and all.

ISTVAN
For me, the Cubbies are same as the
Hungarian people. We are, how do
you say, long time suffering.
Always an invasion or occupation,
always beaten in the wars. We are
the heartbreak people, but our
character is always strong. Same as
the Cubbies.

CHARLIE
You make a lot of sense, Istvan.

ISTVAN
I told you, you can learn if you talk to an old man sometimes. May I show to you something incredible?

Charlie nods and Istvan pulls out a Cubs BATTING HELMET, the kind that holds two beers and has a straw hanging down to drink out of. Istvan puts it on and smiles.

ISTVAN (cont'd)
For my daughter to say thanks you for sending me to Chicago. You think she will love it?

CHARLIE
Who wouldn't?

ISTVAN
Who wouldn't! This is what I thought! Who wouldn't.

MANY HOURS LATER

It is night. Istvan is asleep, leaning on Charlie's shoulder again. A line of DROOL hangs from his mouth onto Charlie's shirt. Charlie sleeps too.

DAWN

Sunlight oranges Charlie's face. He wakes. Istvan still leans on him. He gently tries to move him. But Charlie BLANCHES, yanking his hand back. Something's wrong.

CHARLIE
Istvan? Sir?

Istvan's face is ashen. Charlie tries to shake him. He's unmoving, as stiff as a board -- DEAD.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Oh shit. Oh no.

He DINGS the call button.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Hello? Can someone...is there a doctor? This man is--

People begin to stir. The British FLIGHT ATTENDANT arrives.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
May I help you, sir?

CHARLIE
This man -- Istvan. I think he's,
um, I don't know. He was fine.
Earlier.

Flight Attendant reaches for Istvan's arm to check his pulse,
but SHE CAN'T MOVE IT. Rigor mortis. Charlie looks sick.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Is he...what can I do?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Be quiet. You'll alarm the others.
(to passengers)
Ladies and gentlemen, we have a
potentially grave situation
involving this man's mortality. Is
there a doctor on board?

THEN

A DOCTOR LADY shakes her head over Istvan's body.

The PILOT confers with the flight attendants. They look back
at the body. At Charlie. He remains in his seat by the
window. Trapped, stunned. After a bit, Flight Attendant
approaches Charlie. She's got a DRINK and a SHEET.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
I'm sorry, sir, but we have no
choice but to continue on to
Budapest. This man is from there
and it really does simplify things.

CHARLIE
I can't sit here.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Unfortunately, the flight is full.
We are sorry for the inconvenience.
(setting drink down)
Enjoy this complementary beverage.
We'll keep them coming.

CHARLIE
It's morning. There's a dead
person sitting next to me.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Only two hours more. Let's try to
make the best of it, shall we?

She places the sheet over Istvan. She goes.

LATER

Charlie's had enough drinks to be drunk. He DINGS the call button. Flight Attendant comes over.

CHARLIE
I have to go to the bathroom.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Hm. You'll have to climb over, I suppose.

She goes. Charlie stands and tries to squeeze, but the person in front of Istvan is reclining and asleep. Charlie tries to step over Istvan, but he FALLS into the aisle.

He's getting up. Istvan's sheet moves.

ISTVAN (O.S.)
Psst. Charlie, come in to here.

Charlie looks around to see if someone is talking to him. They're not. Charlie lifts the sheet. Istvan smiles at him.

ISTVAN (cont'd)
I see your mother, Charlie. I tell her you are going to Bucharest.
She smiles for you.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry you died, Istvan.

ISTVAN
Never mind. I see also my wife and she made some sex with me.
(then)
Charlie, I wish to ask you a special thing. It is my daughter -- perhaps you will give her my gift, and tell her she is my *édeshem lány*.

CHARLIE
Your daughter...adesh-em what?

Istvan is gray and dead again. Charlie comes out from under the sheet. Everyone's looking at him like he's a freak.

FINALLY

The plane has landed. Passengers disembark, moving around Istvan like he's, well, a dead body. Charlie is stuck there.

Soon, an AIRPORT OFFICIAL arrives with two other GUYS who are pushing a wheelchair. The official takes Istvan's bag from the floor. Charlie picks up the BEER HAT.

AIRPORT OFFICIAL
(subtitled; Hungarian)
This is your funny hat?

CHARLIE
I don't understand. What?

A HELPFUL PASSENGER is there.

HELPFUL PASSENGER
He want to know if the funny hat is belonging to you.

CHARLIE
Yes. It is belonging to me. It's my funny hat. Ha ha.

HELPFUL PASSENGER
(to official; subtitled)
He says it is his, but he is lying.
It was the dead man's funny hat.

The official takes the hat. Charlie turns to the passenger.

CHARLIE
What did you say? Tell him it's my funny hat.

HELPFUL PASSENGER
But it is not your funny hat.

CHARLIE
You're a fucking asshole. How do you say you're a fucking asshole?

The official gives Charlie a cold stare.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
He told me to give it to his daughter. I have to--

AIRPORT OFFICIAL
(to guys; subtitled)
Get the guy. Don't let the American take the funny hat.

INT. BUDAPEST FERIHEGY INTERNATIONAL - DAY

Charlie is in the terminal. The guys move Istvan away from the gate. The OFFICIAL has Istvan's WALLET.

He opens it and surreptitiously pulls out a HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL. He pockets it. Ms. Gabor chimes in:

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
How do we choose, dahlinge, between
something and nothing, if nothing is
all we've ever done?

Charlie is going to explode. He eyes the BEER HAT sitting on top of Istvan's bag.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
I will tell you: if something will
bring us closer to love, we must do
it! God dammit, we must do it!

Charlie breaks into a run. He's going for the hat. The official sees him. No time to react. Charlie's there. He SWIPES THE HAT and tears off down the corridor.

The official yells. TWO GUARDS note the commotion. Charlie's heading right for them. He doesn't see them.

SMASH. Charlie is knocked to the ground. He slides into the wall, in a heap. The guards jump him, yanking him up. He flails wildly.

CHARLIE
I need to give Istvan's daughter
this hat! You fucking pricks!
Lemme go! IT'S HER FUNNY HA--

A TASER is out. ZZZAAP! Charlie convulses, and goes limp.

INT. HOLDING ROOM - DAY

Charlie sits at a table in a small room. He seems dazed. His hair is staticky. His suitcase is there. He checks his watch. He calls through the open door.

CHARLIE
Got a plane to catch. Hello?

He can see the TWO GUARDS. Guard One has the beer hat on, and is slurping coffee from a cup set in one of the holders.

Soon a weary-looking MAN in a cheap suit arrives. Guard One takes the hat off and hands it to him. He enters the room, holding the hat and Charlie's passport.

CHEAP SUIT
You have a story to tell? About
why you take this hat and run away?

CHARLIE

The guy who died asked me to give it to his daughter.

CHEAP SUIT

You knew this guy who died? Banyai Istvan?

CHARLIE

Istvan Banyai.

CHEAP SUIT

In Hungary we say family name first, name name second.

CHARLIE

My friend Richard Small should never come here. Right?

CHEAP SUIT

Why does a guy want a guy he does not know to take a hat to his daughter? Why can't the guy take the hat to his daughter by himself?

CHARLIE

It's an interesting question. You should ask it to someone who didn't just get tasered.

CHEAP SUIT

Do you think Banyai Istvan knew he was going to die? Or perhaps he said it to you after he was dead? Maybe you talk to dead people like the boy in the Bruce Willis film?

(whispering)

"I talk to the dead people."

CHARLIE

First of all, he sees the dead people. And second, Banyai Istvan got this hat for his daughter. I thought, the poor guy died, his daughter should get the hat.

CHEAP SUIT

You are a hero of some kind? Like Bruce Willis in many other films?

CHARLIE

The guy who took the body from the plane also took a hundred American bucks from the body's wallet.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Which made me doubt the hat would
ever get to the body's daughter.
So. You know. Fuck this.

Cheap Suit's cell phone RINGS.

CHEAP SUIT
Nem igáz. Most? Bistos? Azzonal.

He hangs up and tosses Charlie's passport on the table.

CHEAP SUIT (cont'd)
Go to your plane or you will be
detained more seriously.

CHARLIE
That's it?

CHEAP SUIT
There is a gypsy uprising in the
car park. Lucky for you.

CHARLIE
A gypsy uprising?

CHEAP SUIT
In the car park, yes.

Cheap Suit heads out, taking the hat. He directs the guards.
They run off.

CHARLIE
What about the daughter?

CHEAP SUIT
Zotlán! Gyere már!

The OFFICIAL comes out of an office. Cheap Suit hands him
the hat, saying something. Charlie jumps to his feet.

CHARLIE
But that's the fucker who--

CHEAP SUIT
The daughter will get the hat.
(to official; subtitled)
See him to his plane. Make sure he
gets on it.

Cheap Suit hurries off.

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

Charlie climbs into a crappy commuter jet. He looks back.
The official is on the tarmac, holding the hat.

CHARLIE
Better give it to her, pal!

The official gives Charlie THE FINGER.

IN THE PLANE

Passengers file in. Charlie is in his seat. He notices something off in the distance, at the terminal.

We SWITCH TO HIS POV: it's an AMBULANCE. Two EMTs load a gurney into the back, a body laid on it. A WOMAN is there.

The official is still outside. Charlie knocks on the window, gesturing to the ambulance. The official gives Charlie ANOTHER FINGER. He's about to explode. He closes his eyes.

IN BLACKNESS

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
You must do it, dahlinge. Wake
yourself up and god damn do it!

The SOUNDS of running, frantic breathing.

SMASH TO:

THE TARMAC

With Charlie. He's racing like mad toward the ambulance. He's got the hat. In the background, the OFFICIAL struggles to his feet, grabbing for his WALKIE-TALKIE.

AT THE AMBULANCE

The EMTs and the woman hear YELLING. They turn to find Charlie racing toward them, waving the hat.

CHARLIE

Approaching the ambulance, calling to the woman:

CHARLIE
Istvan's daughter! Your father got
you this funny hat in Chicago!

The woman is confused. Charlie reaches the gurney. He stops. It holds an ALIVE GUY, his leg wrapped and elevated.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
You're not Ist--

BAM! He's KNOCKED OUT OF THE FRAME. Tackled by a GUARD.

INT. LONG CORRIDOR - DAY

Charlie is handcuffed, getting pulled along by the guard who tackled him. The official walks out in front.

Down the hall, CHEAP SUIT steps out of an office. He's covered in something red and sticky.

CHEAP SUIT
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Put him with the fucking gypsies.

AIRPORT OFFICIAL
(subtitled; Hungarian)
You have some kind of shit on you.

CHEAP SUIT
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Tomatoes. Fucking gypsies.

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Charlie sits amid a ragtag group of dark-skinned, brightly-dressed people. An OLD MAN is next to him, staring. He's wearing PINK EYEGLASSES. They have a BARBIE LOGO on them.

CHARLIE
How'd the uprising go?

The old man begins talking animatedly. Charlie listens.

LATER

A YOUNG MAN plays GUITAR, singing a tune of gypsy heartache. KIDS dance with WOMEN. Charlie claps along with the crowd.

THEN

Charlie listens. The old man in pink glasses is talking again. The DOOR opens. Cheap Suit motions for Charlie.

CHARLIE
Pardon me, Ilya.
(to Cheap Suit)
What about these people? None of us
are free until all of us are free.
(to gypsies)
Right?

The gypsies laugh: don't-be-ridiculous!

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Okay, well, goodbye, friends. Keep
on uprising!

GYPSIES
Viszontlátásra, Charlie!

WHAP! A TOMATO smashes into Cheap Suit's chest.

IN THE CORRIDOR

Cheap Suit opens the door to a room. Charlie looks in. A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN is standing there, holding the FUNNY HAT. It is GABI, the *femme fatale* from the beginning, though right now she looks more like a girl who's father just died.

Charlie's face flushes and he gasps at her beauty.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
 This is how it happens, ladies and
 gentleman. One moment, nobody is
 your anything. Then boom!
 Somebody becomes your everything.

She smiles as best she can at Charlie. His mouth is open. She offers her hand. He grabs it like a lifeline.

GABI
*Jo nápot kivánok. Banyai
 Gabriella, vagyók.*

CHARLIE
 Hello. I'm Charlie Countryman.
 Er, Countryman Charlie.

He holds her hand for too long. His whole being is alright.

GABI
 You have gone to so much trouble
 for my father and this funny hat.

CHARLIE
 I'm glad you got it. It seemed
 important. Also, I'm a Cubs fan.

GABI
 I want to ask, how did he...what
 happened, with my father?

CHARLIE
 He fell asleep. And he just, um,
 he didn't wake up.

GABI
 You are sure? There was no pain?

CHARLIE

No. He was asleep, on me. Here.
You can almost see -- drool marks.
I would have known, you know?

GABI

Okay. I see. Okay.

CHARLIE

He asked me to tell you something.

GABI

I don't understand, he asked you.
How could he know we would meet?

CHEAP SUIT

(subtitled; Hungarian)

That's what I said! It makes no
fucking sense!

CHARLIE

What I mean is, he said something.
Maybe you'd like to hear it.

GABI

Please.

CHARLIE

He said you're his...a-desh em, um--

CHEAP SUIT

Édeshem lány?

CHARLIE

That's it.

This lands on Gabi. She struggles to keep it together.
Charlie gestures to Cheap Suit: what's it mean?

CHEAP SUIT

It means "candy child of my own".

CHARLIE

Are you sure?

GABI

It means my sweet girl.

CHARLIE

Oh. That's nice.

GABI

Okay. Thank you, Charlie.

She looks at the hat. A TEARDROP slides down her cheek. It drops off her chin. Charlie CATCHES IT in the palm of his hand. Rightly, they consider this odd.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry about your father...

GABI
Gabi.

CHARLIE
Gabi. I'm sorry, Gabi.

She nods and GOES OUT. Cheap Suit follows her. We hear them talking. Something's wrong with Charlie. He looks dazed.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Gabi.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
The name in the song of the dream,
it echoes in the space of his heart.

CHARLIE
Gabi. Gabi, Gabi. Gabi.

He hears a THROAT CLEARING. He turns. Gabi is back.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Oh hey. Gabi. I was just...saying
your name.

She moves in close to him, right up under his chin.

GABI
Please. Would you allow me?

Charlie gulps. Gabi takes his arms and wraps herself in them.

GABI (cont'd)
Squeeze tight. Please.

Charlie does. Gabi presses into him. She closes her eyes and inhales deeply, for Charlie carries the final traces of what will now be ever gone from her life. She pulls back.

GABI (cont'd)
Okay. Thank you, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Gabi, would it help if...do you want
this shirt? I brought others.

She smiles and goes. Cheap Suit gives him a look.

EXT. FERIHEGY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Doors slide open. Charlie is pushed out. Cheap Suit directs a GUARD to toss Charlie's bag out. Charlie stands there at a loss, for a while. He sees a TAXI STAND.

IN A TAXI

Charlie sits in the back of an old Lada. The DRIVER is smoking West™ cigarettes. He offers one. Charlie declines.

TAXI DRIVER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Where to?

CHARLIE
If you just asked me where to --
good question. There a youth
hostel or something?

TAXI DRIVER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
You look like a guy who doesn't
know where to go. Maybe I'll take
you to the youth hostel. Okay?

CHARLIE
Okay.

EXT. TAXI - M1 HIGHWAY - DAY

The taxi creeps along in a TRAFFIC JAM. The radio plays THE WAY WE WERE. The driver smokes.

TAXI DRIVER
Barbra Streisand! Robert Redford!
(Charlie nods)
Hubble and Katie!
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Do you know this movie?

CHARLIE
Love this movie.

TAXI DRIVER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Do you know it is actually an
allegory? About the homosexual love
affair between Arthur Laurents, the
ugly writer of the movie, and Farley
Granger, the handsome actor from
Strangers on a Train?

CHARLIE
Of the smiles we left behind...

TAXI DRIVER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
I love a nice love story, whether
it's based on faggots or African
niggers or what have you. You know?

The driver notices something over on the shoulder. A TRABANT -- a tiny robin's-egg-blue CAR -- with a CELLO strapped to its roof. A WOMAN is inside, slumped over the steering wheel, weeping uncontrollably.

TAXI DRIVER (cont'd)
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Poor thing. I'd stop, but a crying
woman often gives me a hard-on.

The woman sits back and wipes her eyes. You know who it is.

CHARLIE
Gabi.
(to driver)
STOP! Pull over!

TAXI DRIVER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
I told you, I will get a boner.

CHARLIE
Stop the car, man!

TAXI DRIVER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
This is your love story? A weeping
woman with a cello on her Trabant?

ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

Charlie knocks on Gabi's window. She rolls it down.

GABI
Jo nápot kívánok, Charlie.

CHARLIE
That a cello on your roof or are
you just happy to see me?

He smiles. She stares.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
It's a joke. Maybe not here. I'm
sorry.

Gabi SNORTS magnificently, then wipes her nose with her sleeve.

GABI
I've got so much snot in my nose.

CHARLIE
Luckily, you've got that sleeve.

GABI
I meant to follow my father. The van he is in. But I was crying.

CHARLIE
Ah. So the snot.

GABI
Yes. So the snot.
(down the road)
It's gone now.

CHARLIE
Actually, there's just a bit...

Gently, he wipes her lip with his thumb.

GABI
The van is gone.

CHARLIE
How long were you crying for?

GABI
I don't know. Time is not itself when you are crying. You know?

CHARLIE
Say five minutes. We can catch it.

GABI
Never mind. I'll just--

CHARLIE
No! You followed the van for a reason. This is a critical time for you. You've got to follow through on this stuff. Trust me.

GABI
I don't know you.

CHARLIE
No? What's my favorite baseball team?

She smiles. He opens her door.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Let me drive. I'm snot-free.
(off her hesitation)
It's fine. I had this same car
when I was five.

She slides over. He climbs in.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Mine had a clapping monkey on top,
but what's the difference, right?

EXT. M1 HIGHWAY - DAY

Charlie speeds the Trabi through heavy traffic.

INSIDE

They're looking for the van. Neither speaks for a while, until Charlie can't not.

CHARLIE
So, you play the cello.

GABI
No.

CHARLIE
No?

GABI
What gave you that idea?

Charlie looks up to the roof.

GABI (cont'd)
Maybe you imagined it. Maybe you
have some kind of fantasy about
coming to the aid of a sad woman in
a far away land? A sad woman who
happens to play the cello?

Now Charlie stares at her.

GABI (cont'd)
Now I'm making a joke. You don't
understand it?

CHARLIE
Sort of. Not really.

GABI

The joke is to imply that you are making this up in your mind. Because I am pretty, I'm vulnerable, I play the cello -- it's a boy's dream, no?

CHARLIE

You're kind of pretty. I guess. But I like the tuba.

GABI

Perhaps it's more of a Hungarian type of joke.

CHARLIE

I go for a simple type of joke. A dick-joke, for example. Nothing better than a good--

GABI

Two guys stand on a bridge. Drinking lots of beer. So much beer they need to urinate.

CHARLIE

You're not going to--

GABI

First guy takes out his dick to go.

CHARLIE

Stop it. He does not.

GABI

He has a big dick.

CHARLIE

Really...like, how big?

GABI

So big that when he's urinating he is able to say, this water's cold.

CHARLIE

What about the second guy?

GABI

Second guy takes out his dick.

CHARLIE

Does he have a big dick too?

GABI

Bigger. So much bigger that when
he's urinating, he is able to say:
yeah, it's deep too.

Charlie cracks up. So does Gabi.

CHARLIE

The second guy's dick not only
reaches the water, it hits the
bottom of the river as well!

GABI

Yes. Exactly.

They laugh. Then they settle. Gabi starts to cry.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, Gabi. I shouldn't be--

GABI

I play cello in the orchestra of
the Budapest Opera House. My
father was my teacher. From the
time I was a little girl. This
explains the cello, no?

CHARLIE

Yes.

GABI

Okay.

INT. MORTUARY VAN - DAY

In the cargo hold, Istvan's BODY is laid out in a white bag.
SMOKE clouds the air. We MOVE through it, up to the front.

Two GUYS are there, PÉTER and PÁL. Péter drives, Pál smokes
from a HASH PIPE. They're both fucked up. (*Dialogue is in
Hungarian, SUBTITLED throughout scene.*)

PÉTER

Taste familiar?
(Pál shrugs)
Search your mind. You know this
taste. It is a taste you love.

PÁL

It tastes like hash. I love hash.

PÉTER

You don't sense an extra element?
A certain pungency which makes you
feel sentimental?

PÁL

I don't know. It's fucking hash.

PÉTER

Hash that I brought from Slovenia
in my asshole.

(Pál gags)

Now you recognize it? The taste of
your mother's kiss after she has
spent the day licking my asshole?

Pál takes out his CELL and pretends to dial.

PÁL

Hello, mom. Please stop licking
the assholes of my friends all day.
It's so embarrassing for me.

Péter's laughing, too fucking high. He grabs for the pipe...AND THE VAN VEERS WILDLY TO THE RIGHT.

OUT ON THE HIGHWAY

Charlie and Gabi drive along. And suddenly...

THE VAN FLIES IN FRONT OF THEM, flipping over and over.

Charlie STOMPS the brakes. THUNK! Something heavy and white bounces across the hood.

The Trabant spins into traffic. Cars screech around it.

Charlie skids to a stop.

The VAN creeks onto its side, PÉTER and PÁL are tangled up in the wreckage. Bloody and dead.

Dust settles, quiet spreads.

Charlie and Gabi sit there stunned. Gabi sees something.

GABI

Ápu?

Dazed, she gets out. Charlie sees what she's looking at: in the road, hanging out of the white bag, is ISTVAN'S BODY.

Gabi walks into the road. Charlie leaps out of the car.

CHARLIE
Gabi, don't!

He grabs her and turns her away.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Don't. Please. You can't--

SMASH. She punches him in the face. But he won't let her go. SMASH. She punches him again. His mouth is bleeding.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Okay. Okay. Just--

SMASH. Again. He takes it. He pulls her in. She SLUGS him in the stomach. Still, he takes it and holds her. She HITS him on the head a couple of times. He holds her.

WIDER

From afar, amid the horrible mess, we see Gabi begin to sob, her body heaving. Charlie holds to her as she drops to the pavement. He sits with her, cradling her in the aftermath.

LATER

Istvan's body is in an AMBULANCE. Gabi sits with it, dazed. Charlie stands outside, helpless. An EMT closes the doors.

Gabi looks at Charlie through the window, blank-faced and empty-eyed. The ambulance pulls away. Charlie waves.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
What does the world mean, dahlinge,
when it conspires to keep lovers
apart and their hearts at bay?

Charlie looks around. Cops and ambulances. The overturned van. Flares and slow-moving traffic. Charlie looks in his hand. A set of KEYS with a TOY CELLO dangling from them.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
It means for to us to prove we are
worthy, that it is love we deserve.

AT THE TRABANT

Charlie rummages through Gabi's bag. He finds a cell phone. He checks it -- a picture of Istvan smiling. Then he finds a HANDGUN -- a silver nub nose .45. The handle is ENGRAVED. Charlie reads:

CHARLIE

"For Gabi, the girl with a killer
ass. Love, Nigel"

Charlie puts the gun back in the bag. He opens the glovebox. He finds an old OPERA PROGRAM.

GABI'S VOICE

I play cello in the orchestra of
the Budapest Opera House.

EXT. OUTER BUDAPEST - DAY

The Trabant passes endless arrays of Eastern Bloc apartment buildings. Charlie is behind the wheel looking dumbstruck. The PROGRAM is on the seat next to him.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

Charlie pays for a MAP with a credit card.

CHARLIE

You speak English?

COUNTER GUY

No.

CHARLIE

You don't speak English?

COUNTER GUY

Not really.

CHARLIE

That's English.

COUNTER GUY

If you say so.

CHARLIE

Let me ask you this -- can you show
me how to get to the Opera House?

COUNTER GUY

No.

CHARLIE

Dude, I'm not in the mood. Really.

COUNTER

I'm sorry. I don't understand you.

CHARLIE

Wait here.

COUNTER GUY

Okay.

Charlie goes out.

THEN

He comes back in. He sticks the GUN in Counter Guy's face.

CHARLIE

Hey, I was wondering: do you speak English?

COUNTER GUY

Yes I do.

EXT. BUDAPEST - DUSK

Charlie drives. Nearing the city center. Grand and beautiful structures line the streets.

ELSEWHERE

The Trabant passes City Park, and Heroes Square, then turns onto the city's most glorious street -- Andrassy.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE - DUSK

A magnificent beaux-arts wedding cake of a building. Charlie parks the Trabant.

INT. OPERA HOUSE - DUSK

Charlie enters carrying the CELLO and Gabi's BAG. A GUY in a BERET walks in behind him. He's got his own CELLO.

UPSTAIRS

Beret walks down a long hallway. Charlie follows him, hanging back. Beret goes into a room.

AT THE ROOM

Charlie opens the door. A hall. Several CELLISTS sit against the wall, while some MEN AND WOMEN sit at a long table in the middle of the room. A lone CELLIST sits in front of them, playing. An AID approaches Charlie.

AID

(subtitled; in Hungarian)

You're late. Take a seat.

CHARLIE

Uh, I'm not--

A pinch-faced MAN quiets them:

MAN
(subtitled; in Hungarian)
SILENCE, GOD DAMN IT!!

His voice echoes. The room is still. All eyes on Charlie.

CHARLIE
I'm, uh, a friend of Gabriella
Baynai's. Banyai Gabriella's.
Does anyone know--

Suddenly, the BEE-GEE'S' JIVE TALKIN' begins playing. It's coming from the bag. Charlie grabs around inside.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Hold on. This might be...

He pulls something out...it's THE GUN. People gasp and shrink back. A couple of judges dive under the table.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Sorry.

Jive Talkin' is still sounding. Charlie finds the phone.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Hello, Gabi's phone.

INTERCUT WITH: Gabi on a pay phone, at a MORGUE.

GABI
Charlie, this is me, Gabi. Where are you?

CHARLIE
Gabi, are you okay? Where are you?

GABI
No, you. Where are you?

CHARLIE
At the Opera House. It's the only place I could think to come. I've got your cello and your car...

GABI
And my gun, Charlie?

CHARLIE
(whispering)
And your gun, by the way. What's up with that?!

GABI

I overheard some policemen here.
There was an incident at a petrol
station, involving an American and
a gun. This was not you, was it?

(uh, um)

Úristen! What did you do?!

CHARLIE

Nothing. I was upset. Maybe I
overreacted. I never had a gun as
an option before. You know?

GABI

Now you are at the Opera?

CHARLIE

I think I'm about to audition.

GABI

Audition? Is there an assholish
man there? With a face like he
maybe ate shit or something?

Charlie looks right at the MAN who yelled. He's now enraged.

CHARLIE

He's here.

GABI

Béla. Give him the phone.

Charlie walks to BÉLA, who's skinny and stiff and in his 40s.
Charlie hands him the phone. He turns sickly sweet.

BÉLA

Tessék, Gabika?

He listens. For a while. He hangs up and looks at Charlie.

CHARLIE

You hung up.

BÉLA

Wait in the corridor, sir, if you
please.

CHARLIE

But--

BÉLA

The corridor, sir.
(subtitled; Hungarian)
IF YOU GOD DAMN PLEASE!

Charlie heads out, asking the cellists a simple question.

CHARLIE

How many assholes can a guy meet in a day? Seriously. There must be a limit. Right?

IN THE HALLWAY

Charlie sits on the ground, cello and bag next to him.

SOON

Charlie is struggling to stay awake. Cellists begin filing out. Béla is there. He kicks Charlie's foot.

BÉLA

Come now, please.

The AID is with Béla. Charlie gets up and grabs the cello and the bag. Béla nods to the aid. She takes the cello.

CHARLIE

What's going on?

Béla walks off. Charlie follows.

INT. OPERA HOUSE - MAIN AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Béla leads Charlie into a viewing box. He's now in one of the world's most beautiful rooms -- gilded archways, a grand proscenium, luxurious velvet draperies, and a domed ceiling supporting an elaborate crystal chandelier.

BÉLA

Wait here.

CHARLIE

For what?

Béla leaves.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Is there anywhere nicer? To wait, I mean? How about some nachos?

LATER

Charlie is ASLEEP. He twitches, and starts awake. He hears MUSIC, and SINGING. A well-dressed WOMAN is next to him, scowling. He looks around. And is shocked to find that...

THE HOUSE IS FULL and AN OPERA IS IN PROGRESS.

Charlie rubs the sleep away and looks down into the ORCHESTRA. He scans the PLAYERS. BÉLA is conducting. Then he locates GABI, playing her cello. Her eyes are closed, and tears stream down her face. The day's pain washing over her.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
How do we know when it is love we
are in, dahling? When we can see
the world through another's eyes,
when we can feel it through her
heart.

Charlie can't help but cry a little himself.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
This is how we know.

THEN

Lovelorn DON JOSÉ is begging at the feet of the mysterious gypsy, CARMEN. But all Charlie can do is watch Gabi. Eventually, she glances up at him, and we...

SWITCH

TO A MYSTERIOUS POV: watching Gabi through BINOCULARS as she looks up into the crowd. She smiles slightly and shrugs.

Suddenly, our POV SHIFTS, and the binoculars sweep across the crowd, following the line of Gabi's gaze. Soon, we find CHARLIE. He waves at Gabi. And we...

REVERSE

To find a MAN looking through a pair of OPERA GLASSES. He lowers them. It is the KNIFE-FACED MAN from the opening scene. This is NIGEL.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Of course the boy would like to
believe his beloved was born upon
their meeting today. She was not.

Nigel's got the bottomless stare and the deep scars of a soldier of fortune. Which is precisely what he is. He could be 38, he could be 56. It doesn't matter. What matters is he's upset. We pity that piece of gum he's chewing.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
Like so many of us here, she brings
to love a troubled past, a darkness
of history.

We PULL BACK to find we should also pity the OLD MAN in the next seat over, as the opera glasses are attached to his neck and he's being pulled out of his seat, choking on the chain. Eventually, Nigel hands the glasses back.

NIGEL
(English accent)
Cheers, mate.

Nigel gets up and leaves. Eyeing Charlie all the while.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
And so clouds do gather, dahlinge.

INT. OPERA HOUSE DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Gabi wearily puts her cello into its case. A WOMAN approaches.

WOMAN
(subtitled; Hungarian)
A man is here to see you, Gabika.

CORRIDOR

Gabi comes out expecting to see Charlie, but it's...

GABI
Nigel.

NIGEL smiles a crooked smile. His eyes are more alive with sex and violence than any we've probably ever seen.

NIGEL
Hallo, gorgeous.

The HAIR on Gabi's forearms stands on end. Nigel notices and runs his finger along her arm.

NIGEL (cont'd)
Good to see you as well, baby.

GABI
What are you doing here, Nigel?

NIGEL
Partaking of the arts. Care of the soul and all that. What else?

GABI
It's just, I didn't realize you were back.

NIGEL
I wasn't. Til now.

GABI

Why are you here?

NIGEL

I just said why.

GABI

To see Carmen.

NIGEL

Yes, Carmen. The sad fucking cow.

Beyond Nigel, Gabi sees CHARLIE enter the corridor. She subtly shakes her head, begging him off. Nigel notices.

NIGEL (cont'd)

Who's this, then?

GABI

Nobody. I want you to go, Nigel.

NIGEL

You're nobody, mate? Is that a possible thing for one to be?

CHARLIE

Who are you?

NIGEL

Hold on. You'll want to posit that again. And beware I'm giving you an opportunity to recalibrate your tone.

Charlie gulps a little.

NIGEL (cont'd)

Don't piss yourself. Simply ask who I am again.

(Charlie hesitates)

Go on.

CHARLIE

Are you serious?

NIGEL

I am utterly.

GABI

Nigel, don't--

NIGEL

Let's go, boy-o. Last chance for petrol. "Who are you?"

Gabi's eyes implore Charlie to ask. He flattens his voice.

CHARLIE
Who...are...you...

NIGEL
Good. All robot like. Zero tone detected. I'm Nigel. Who the fuck are you? Besides nobody which is by now well and truly established.

CHARLIE
My name is Charlie.

NIGEL
Hallo, Charlie. Who the fuck is Charlie, Gabi?

GABI
Charlie is an American...tuba player. Here to observe the company. He is homosexual.

This characterization surprises Charlie.

NIGEL
Is he now? Must make you quite the star cocksucker. Eh, Charlie?

GABI
Nigel, please, what do you want?

NIGEL
Baby, it's like this. I'm in Monrovia under fire from a battalion of cross-dressing no-monkey boys out their minds on Chinese molasses when all of a sudden I get the words "to have and to hold" ringing in me Ned. And it strikes me: eight years is too long a time for a man to have neither had nor held his wife...

Charlie's surprised again.

NIGEL (cont'd)
So, in an act which can only be described as merciful, I shoot out as many of their ashy little kneecaps as possible, and speed my way back to you.

GABI

I am not your wife, Nigel.
(to Charlie)
We divorced many years ago.

CHARLIE

Oh. Sorry.

NIGEL

Thank you, Charlie. But Gabi knows
such technicalities mean fuck-all
to a lawless cunt like me.

Gabi turns to Charlie, who is all but lost.

GABI

Charlie, perhaps you should go now.

CHARLIE

Okay. Where would be good? For me
to go, do you think.

GABI

To the Marco Polo Youth Hostel, of
course. Where you are staying.

CHARLIE

Marco Polo Youth Hostel. Right.

GABI

Maybe I will see you tomorrow.
During your observation time.

CHARLIE

Okay. I guess I'll just...Will you
be all right, Gabi?

NIGEL

She's grand, Charlie. Be a dear
and fuck off already, would you?

Charlie looks at Gabi. She wants him to go. So he goes.
But then he comes back.

CHARLIE

So, Gabi, "Marco Polo" in
Hungarian. It's Marco Polo, right?
Not Polo Marco?

NIGEL

Jesus me, Charlie! If you're not
the most helpless gay tuba man I
ever encountered.

EXT. MARCO POLO YOUTH HOSTEL - NIGHT

Charlie climbs out of a TAXI in front of an OLD BUILDING.

INT. HOSTEL - NIGHT

Charlie hands his passport to a CLERK. It's a bright, clean place with TRAVEL-KIDS of various nationalities wandering in and out. The clerk hands Charlie a key.

CLERK
Top floor please. Enjoy your time.

CHARLIE
Thank you for not being an asshole.

CLERK
Thank you. For not being an asshole also.

Charlie moves toward the elevator.

CLERK (cont'd)
You have no bags, not-asshole?

Charlie's shoulders fall. He remembers.

FLASH TO:

STREET BY OPERA HOUSE

Charlie's BAG sits in the back seat of Gabi's Trabant.

INT. TOP FLOOR - HOSTEL - NIGHT

Charlie steps out of the tiny elevator. He checks his key, finds his room. He knocks. The door opens. It's a SMALL GUY with a MAPLE LEAF on his sweatshirt. His name's LUC.

LUC
What's up, bro. Come on in.

INSIDE

Charlie enters. There is a LANKY GUY in a BLACK SUIT reclining on a bunk. This is KARL. He's German.

KARL
Hi, man. Welcome. Your bed is that one. I am Karl. That's Luc. He's Canadian.

CHARLIE
Charlie. Good to meet you guys.

LUC
Just get here, Charlie?

CHARLIE
Yeah, today.

LUC
It's awesome, right? The people?
With their hugeness of spirit and
everything?

KARL
What you are hearing, Charlie?
It's what a Canadian sounds like.
All day and night.
(offering)
Crisps?

Charlie takes some chips and sits heavily on his bed.

LUC
We were going to get some beers,
maybe do some E. You up for it?

Charlie looks at Karl, who shrugs.

KARL
It is only this aspect of a
Canadian which makes him tolerable,
in my opinion.

INT. BASEMENT PUB - HOSTEL - NIGHT

Karl and Charlie sit at a table in the cave-like space.

CHARLIE
Karl, the suit. That's your thing?

KARL
I have a very important meeting
this week.

Luc approaches with three giant GLASSES OF BEER and sets them down. Charlie grabs his and begins chugging.

LUC
Charlie, did Karl tell you he's
auditioning to become a porn actor?

KARL
Porn star. We don't say porn actor.

CHARLIE
You've done this before, Karl?

KARL

Many times. Never on film, but I am often told I have the appropriate anatomical make-up.

LUC

I told him myself. When I saw it up in the room.

KARL

Accidentally.

LUC

Yeah, obviously, accidentally. What about you, Charlie?

CHARLIE

It's okay, I guess. Not freakish or anything.

LUC

No, what brings you to Budapest?

Charlie takes a deep drink. He seems drunk already.

CHARLIE

I'm really supposed to be in Bucharest but this guy Istvan died next to me on the plane and then I got arrested trying to give his daughter a gift he brought home for her and it turns out she might be the coolest most beautiful woman I have ever seen anywhere. In person, on TV, the internet -- anywhere. Her name is Gabi. Gabriella. She plays cello. Your heart stops just looking at her and your ears and stomach go warm when she talks. I've never chosen before. I've got so much fear. But her, I'd choose. I do choose. Her.

KARL

LUC Sounds magical. KARL Describe her titties.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

But it's complicated. Not only did her father die today, there's this soldier of fortune ex-husband who looks like he could chase down a lion, fuck it, eat it, do basically whatever he wanted to it.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Anyway, I feel like I think I
already love her. Which is fucked,
I know.

Karl shoots Luc a questioning look. Luc smiles and shrugs.

KARL

Charlie, how do you feel at this
time?

CHARLIE

Strong. Alive. I feel brand new
in the world. I want to find her.
Posses her, even. Tell her that I
feel what she feels, that I can see
what she sees. You know, inside?

Luc giggles.

KARL

You should be made aware, Charlie,
that Luc put ecstasy in your beer.

CHARLIE

He did? You did?

LUC

It's okay, bro. Mine and Karl's
are laced too. You're not alone.
We're all in a zone of mutuality.

Charlie looks around. EVERYONE IN THE BAR IS NAKED.

CHARLIE

Is everyone in here naked right now?

LUC

If we want them to be. Your
experience is your own, but we're
sharing the zone of mutuality. We
vote on any shared hallucinations.
Who among us would like everyone in
here to be naked right now?

Charlie and Karl raise their hands. So does Luc.

LUC (cont'd)

Sweet.

LATER

Charlie waits at the bar, smiling at the NAKED bartenders --
one buff GUY, one tattooed GIRL. The guy brings three beers.

CHARLIE

You look good, man. What you're doing? Seriously, keep doing it.

(to the GIRL)

Check you out, all tatted up.

What's that one...the Jolly Roger!

Aarggh and avast, ye maties! Bring me that horizon!

Charlie takes the beers. Then he sings.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Johnny Depp. Lives in France. Not the type. FOR UNDERPANTS!

Luc and Karl are laughing. Charlie delivers the beers. Suddenly, he hears the SOUND OF A CHOIR. He turns toward the door. WHITE LIGHT IS STREAMING IN. And GABI is there.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Is she real? Is she in the zone of mutuality?

Charlie stands. Gabi sees him. She smiles. He smiles.

LUC

Wait. Does her being real make her not in the zone? Or is she in the zone due to her not being real? Damn. I should know this.

KARL

Can we vote her clothes off?

Charlie weightlessly BOUNDS ACROSS TABLE-TOPS, SOARING OVER PEOPLE to reach her. She doesn't notice because really it's just the drugs. She's got Charlie's BAG.

CHARLIE

I said I like the tuba. Which isn't even true. I love you. Which makes me gay how exactly?

GABI

Excuse me?

CHARLIE

What did I say?

GABI

What is wrong with you?

CHARLIE

Let's go on a walk. With food as our secondary objective. Romance being the primary.

GABI

You are on drugs?

CHARLIE

Agreed. See that little-ish Canadian person with the well-dressed German fellow? He put ecstasy in my beer. Not in a mean way. I think he's a good person. A Canadian person. We're in a zone of mutuality. Oh my god, your father died. I am so sorry. Istvan. Remember how your tear landed in my hand? That means something. Everything. I know it.

GABI

You are hungry? Perhaps more so after all this talking?

CHARLIE

Yes, Gabi. Gabi. I am hungry. Hungry in Hungary. How many times has that been said? More than a million, I bet. At least.

GABI

Can you walk, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Yes. Gabi. Gabi. Yes.

Charlie smiles back at Luc and Karl as he goes. They offer him a very emotional thumbs-up.

LUC

No zone of mutuality is forever.
Go on, Charlie. Live.

KARL

Live, you beautiful bastard.

EXT. RÁKÓCZI ÚT - NIGHT

Gabi and Charlie stroll along the half-beautiful, half-tacky commercial thoroughfare. Buses and cars stream by despite the late hour, and the sidewalks still conduct people.

GABI

What would you like to eat? There
is Taco Bell/Pizza Hut Express.

CHARLIE

So Nigel. He seems nice.

GABI

He is not.

CHARLIE

He gave you a gun.

GABI

Why do you think I carry the gun,
Charlie? Every day for eight
years? To protect me from fucking
Nigel if he ever came back.

CHARLIE

He wouldn't hurt you. No one
could. I can see that so clearly.

GABI

You would like to see what he gave
me for my twenty-first birthday?

She pulls her shirt up, revealing CIGARETTE BURNS scarred
around her belly-button in the shape of a HEART. Charlie
touches it, almost moved to tears, and a little turned on.

GABI (cont'd)

It took a while. Seven cigarettes
is what I counted. He had to chase
me a couple of times. Also, the
neighbors interrupted when they
came to see about the screaming.
You know why he gave this to me?

(Charlie gulps)

Because I invited my friend Eszter
to dinner for my birthday. Oops.
Nigel has some trouble with sharing.

A BUS goes by. The AD on its side catches Charlie's eye. It
shows CHARLIE, DRESSED IN TUX, LIGHTING A CIGARETTE FOR GABI.
It's the drugs again. Charlie shakes it off.

CHARLIE

Why is he back here?

GABI

Whenever he comes or goes, it's
because of some kind of trouble.
He is running to or from something.

Gabi SCREAMS in frustration. ALL THE LIGHTS EVERYWHERE GO OUT. Charlie gasps, the sight of her face in the moonlight.

CHARLIE

God damn.

GABI

What am I supposed to do? I've got to bury my father, you know?

A single NEON SIGN SNAPS BACK ON. It says KISS HER.

CHARLIE

No way. Too soon.

Gabi looks at him. All the lights COME BACK ON.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

No way, too soon...to be worried.
It will be okay. I can help you.

GABI

You are a tourist on drugs,
Charlie. I never thought I'd say
this to another human, but you
should go to Bucharest.

They walk on for a while. Then Charlie sees a BILLBOARD: it's GABI, WEARING AN APRON, WAGGING HER FINGER AT A LITTLE BOY WHO IS COVERED IN SPAGHETTI -- CHARLIE.

CHARLIE

Can I say something to you, Gabi?
Not about Nigel because he freaks
my shit out, but about the other
stuff, your father and all.

GABI

If you must.

CHARLIE

I understand.

GABI

Yes?

CHARLIE

That's all.

GABI

What do you understand?

CHARLIE

It.

GABI

Fine. It. Maybe you will explain it to me.

CHARLIE

There is no explanation. It is just hard. You know? To lose someone who is your home. Your only home in the world. You think, Jesus Fucking Christ, I'm all alone now. How did it come to this? I should have had a back-up home. Some other person or place or thing to go to, to feel safe. But I don't. Now I'm lost.

Gabi is crying.

GABI

"Now I'm lost." The end? You cannot do better than this?

Charlie looks around for a sign on the SIGNS. He sees none, just regular ads selling crap products, crap lifestyles.

CHARLIE

That's it, as I understand it. At this point. It's a process.

GABI

This is the thinking of a child. Now I am not lost. Now I am angry. My father died alone on an airplane. His body was thrown onto my car in traffic. I am too angry to feel lost. All I feel is angry.

(then)

There is KFC. I want KFC.

INT. KFC - NIGHT

Charlie and Gabi eat.

CHARLIE

Can I say something else? It kind of just came to me. Regarding being angry but not lost?

GABI

Uristen. Why not?

CHARLIE

You're going to need a different memory.

GABI

My memory is fine. Nine times
seven is sixty three. The capital
of Ethiopia is Addis Ababa.

CHARLIE

Of your father. You can't have a bad
memory. You'll be stuck with it.

(off her dubious look)

What's the one you have? First
thing you think of?

FLASH TO:

EXT. M1 HIGHWAY - DAY

Istvan's BODY bounces across the hood of Gabi's car.

BACK TO SCENE

Her look of horror.

CHARLIE

You need to change it.

GABI

How?

CHARLIE

Think of something else.

She tries.

FLASH TO:

EXT. M1 HIGHWAY - DAY

Istvan's BODY bounces across the hood of Gabi's car.

BACK TO KFC

GABI

Still there.

CHARLIE

It's hard. Try though.

She tries again.

FLASH THROUGH:

A SERIES OF IMAGES

- Young Istvan dances with Gabi's MOM in pool of light. Little Gabi watching from the doorway.
- Istvan drinks *Unicum*, a disgusting and powerful Hungarian liquor, with four musician friends.
- Istvan conducts an orchestra, his hair high and wild.
- Istvan watches the Cubs on WGN, TV Superstation.
- Istvan, in a crowd, watches teenage Gabi play solo cello.
- Istvan gets on a plane to Chicago, wearing a Cubs hat.

BACK TO KFC

Tears fill Gabi's eyes.

GABI

So many.

CHARLIE

Pick one. One good enough to keep
the bad one unstuck.

Gabi thinks.

FLASH TO:

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Istvan sits in the BUBBLE BATH. He's got his eyes closed. He's humming loudly, maniacally wielding an ORCHESTRA BATON.

BACK TO KFC

Gabi laughs. So does Charlie.

CHARLIE

Good?

GABI

Yes.

CHARLIE

See?

GABI

The wisdom of a child. Thank you,
Charlie.

Charlie beams, but Gabi's face falls.

CHARLIE

What?

GABI

Now I am lost.

CHARLIE

Yeah. It's a process.

GABI

Tell me I need to go to fucking
Bucharest, I will hit you.

Charlie laughs.

EXT. RÁKÓCZI ÚT - NIGHT

Gabi and Charlie walk.

GABI

It is late. I should go home.

CHARLIE

You don't want to walk? I see a
river. We could walk alongside it.
With the moonlight and everything.

GABI

I'm sorry, Charlie. Like they say,
another time, another place. Right?

CHARLIE

Not right. Who is they? It's this
time, this place. All of this, it
means something. To us.

GABI

Us.

CHARLIE

Two letters, the whole world. All of
the past and future inside them like
an oyster you could live in forever.
How crazy is that? Us, a pearl.

GABI

Oh, Charlie. God bless ecstasy.

CHARLIE

God bless us, Gabi. God bless us,
every one.

She touches his cheek.

GABI

You are a sweet boy, Tiny Tim.
 (subtitled; Hungarian)
 Find me tomorrow and if I am not
 crying I will kiss you.

CHARLIE

Wait. What? That sounded good.

She leaves.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
 What did you say? Gabi?!

She's gone. Charlie stares where she was.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
 How can one feel so full, dahlinge,
 yet be so empty? What can one do in
 the face of such exquisite suffering?

CHARLIE
 GABI!!

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
 One can scream. One can run.

Charlie turns and RUNS. As fast as he can. To nowhere at all. The people, the lights, the world -- all lost in a BLUR. Like in Star Trek when they go warp speed.

Until...SMASH! Charlie is HIT BY A TAXI. He THWACKS onto the hood, FLIES for a bit, then SLAMS onto the sidewalk.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Or, one can fill the void with a
 pain of another sort. Ouch.

Charlie is dazed, tangled in a pile of himself. People stand over him. A MAN leans in. It's the TAXI DRIVER from earlier.

TAXI DRIVER
 (subtitled; Hungarian)
 I know this guy.

He slaps Charlie.

TAXI DRIVER (cont'd)
 (subtitled; Hungarian)
 Hey, Hubble. Why are you running
 into the street? This is part of
 your love story? You fucking moron?

Charlie recognizes the driver. He sings.

CHARLIE
Misty water-colored memories.

The driver picks him up.

TAXI DRIVER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
You are fine. I will take you to
the youth hostel. Okay?

CHARLIE
I'm fine. Take me to the youth
hostel. Okay?

INT. HOSTEL ROOM - DAY

Charlie sleeps. Blood has soaked his pillow. He stirs awake. Luc is there writing in his JOURNAL.

LUC
Glad you're awake, bro. I was
worried you were lying there dead
in a pool of your own blood.

Charlie creaks up. He winces in pain.

LUC (cont'd)
I was just writing a speculative
narrative about what might have
happened to you in my journal.

CHARLIE
I got hit by a taxi.

LUC
Hmm. No elves or daemons involved?
No lady werewolves?

CHARLIE
Nah.

LUC
I was way off.

Charlie goes to the sink and runs his head under water.

LUC (cont'd)
Grab a vicodin from my bag.

Charlie looks in the BAG. It's full of drugs.

CHARLIE
They let you travel with this?

LUC
I'm Canadian. Try a B-12 patch.

Luc gets up, making to leave.

LUC (cont'd)
I'm meeting Karl. He had his interview. Come with, bro. He said I could smell his finger.

INT. UNDERGROUND RESTAURANT - DAY

Charlie and Luc enter. They see Karl sitting in a booth, looking distressed. They join him.

LUC
How'd it go? Do I know an actual porn star now?

CHARLIE
You don't look so good, Karl.

Karl begins to cry.

LUC
Hey, easy. What's wrong, bro?

KARL
He won't go down.

LUC
Who won't go down?

KARL
Karl Jr. He is staying up.

Karl stands. A BIG ERECTION tents his suit pants. He sits.

KARL (cont'd)
Five hours and counting!

CHARLIE
Yikes.

LUC
How many viagras did you take?

KARL
Four?

LUC
One, Karl! I said take one! Damn it!

KARL

I could not even do my interview scene. I mean, I did it. And then did it, and did it more. That's not what they want, you know?

LUC

Of course not. The money shot is the whole point. I said take one!

KARL

My head has no blood left in it.

CHARLIE

Maybe try some ice?

KARL

I did, Charlie. My balls merely went from blue to purple.

They think, options and such.

CHARLIE

It feels weird, us sitting here. Karl being like he is.

LUC

I feel so helpless.

KARL

We must go to a titty bar. Only there will I be less conspicuous.

CHARLIE

I was thinking hospital, but a titty bar's good.

EXT. CLUB DOLCE VITA - DAY

Charlie, Luc and Karl climb down some stairs. A TRACKSUITED BOUNCER stops Karl and his bulge.

BOUNCER

(subtitled; Hungarian)

He can't bring that in here.

CHARLIE

He has incurable penis cancer. His dying wish is for one last lap dance.

LUC

(subtitled; Hungarian)

He has penis cancer. Have a heart.

INSIDE - AT A TABLE

It's nighttime-like. Girl on a pole. A bar. Your basic strip-club. The GUYS drink beers.

CHARLIE
You speak Hungarian, Luc?

LUC
Sure, Charlie. Being Canadian, I don't only speak one language. I also don't invade sovereign nations to guarantee the sustenance of my ravenous military industrial complex.

KARL
Luc, please, this Canadian bullshit. My balls cannot take it right now.

LUC
You're right, bro. We're having a nice afternoon. I shouldn't politicize it. My grandparents are Hungarian, Charlie.

CHARLIE
How do you say I love you?

LUC
I like to send flowers.

KARL
I prefer voluntary and spontaneous cunnilingus.

CHARLIE
How do you say it in Hungarian?

LUC
Szeretlek.

CHARLIE
Sehrehtleck.

LUC
If you really love this person, you can say *imádlak*. "I love you too much."

CHARLIE
Eemahdlok. Eemahdlok.

KARL

Look at us! In the middle of pussy town talking about the military industrial complex and "I love you too much, baby"! To hell with it. I'm getting a lap dance.

He gets up. He winces. Still a big BULGE in his pants.

LATER

Charlie and Luc are drunk. Karl is getting his lap dance. The dancer is sweating, looking tired and annoyed.

CHARLIE

She's a champ. He should marry her.

LUC

I'm worried about the bill. I hear these places try to scam you. Secret charges and shit like that.

A TITS-OUT WAITRESS delivers some beers.

CHARLIE

Ask her.

LUC

(subtitled; Hungarian)

Pardon me, miss. Have we incurred any secret charges on our bill?

TITS-OUT WAITRESS

(subtitled; Hungarian)

You are fine, cutie.

LUC

She said I'm cute.

Charlie is dubious.

LUC (cont'd)

Are you on TV, Charlie?

CHARLIE

People used to say I look like Chandler. I'm like, who the fuck is Chandler?

Luc points to the bar. A TV silently plays the news. It's a report showing SECURITY FOOTAGE OF CHARLIE HOLDING A GUN IN THE GAS STATION GUY'S FACE.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Fuck me.

Karl watches from behind his dancer.

KARL
Hey, Charlie? Is that you, man?

LUC
It is him! What did you do, bro?

CHARLIE
That guy was a dick, totally
unhelpful and rude.

LUC
Did you kill him?

CHARLIE
Yes, I killed him. Can you tell
what it's saying, besides that?

LUC
(off GRAPHICS)
"American terrorizes clerk for not
speaking English."

CHARLIE
He spoke perfect fucking English!

LUC
They don't seem to have your name.
I think you'll need a disguise.

Charlie snatches Luc's MAPLE LEAF HAT, and puts it on.

LUC (cont'd)
Good thinking. A Canadian would
never try to kill someone for not
speaking English.

CHARLIE
He fucking spoke English, Luc!

Suddenly, Karl begins to MOAN. The Dancer jumps off him.
Karl closes his eyes and convulses with great violence.

DANCER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
The German pig came in his pants.

ANOTHER DANCER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Good work, honey. Don't forget to
put it on his bill.

Karl gets up smiling. He adjusts himself. Greatly relieved.

KARL
Charlie, you are on the run from
Johhny Law? How cool are you, man?
Fucking Belmondo in the hizzy!

CHARLIE
Don't you need to clean yourself?

KARL
Never mind. I believe most of my
ejaculate stayed in my scrotum.

CHARLIE
Let's go. I need to see someone
again before I get arrested.

He signals the waitress. She brings the bill. Luc checks it. His face becomes ashen. Charlie looks.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Six hundred fifteen thousand.
That's what, a hundred bucks.

Karl grabs the bill. He is ashen too. He calculates.

KARL
Three thousand, what...

LUC
Three thousand ten.

CHARLIE
Three thousand ten what?

LUC
Dollars.

CHARLIE
American dollars?

They look sick. Charlie gets up and goes to the waitress.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Excuse me, there's a mistake. This
is three grand. It seems high.

WAITRESS

The German had twenty two private dances. He also, how do you say, shot a load. This is very expensive.

CHARLIE

How much is it exactly? Show me "shoot a load" on the menu.

WAITRESS

You would like to talk to the manager?

CHARLIE

Phase two. Let's get to it.

WAITRESS

(subtitled; Hungarian)

Boss! You're on!

A MUSCLED SERBIAN GUY in a tracksuit and no shirt comes out. He's got a TATOO OF LENIN on his neck.

DARKO

Hallo, I am Darko.

CHARLIE

Come on. Really?

DARKO

Really. There is a problem?

CHARLIE

Yeah, Darko. This bill is wrong. We had some beers and my friend got a few dances.

Darko takes the bill. He looks it over.

DARKO

I see. Yes. This is correct. Due to your friend...

CHARLIE

Shooting his load. Fucking ridiculous.

DARKO

Not to mention disgusting.

Charlie looks to the exit. The BOUNCER is now there, along with another TRACKSUIT SERB.

CHARLIE

We don't have that kind of money.
So what now?

DARKO

Come to my office. Perhaps we can
make an agreement.

INT. CLUB OFFICE - DAY

Darko sits behind a desk. Charlie, Luc and Karl are on a couch. The thugs fill the doorway. Two PIT BULLS sleep on the floor. There are PICTURES all over the walls -- strippers and their round tits, gangsters and their Euro-crap Mercedeses.

DARKO

Okay. I need this money.

CHARLIE

Let's make an agreement, then.

DARKO

Okay. You pay me this money, I
don't fuck you up. Agreed?

KARL

Hey, Dorko, he told you, we do not
have this kind of money.

DARKO

Darko. Perhaps I should stick this
pen into your asshole and write my
name inside so you remember it.

Charlie laughs.

DARKO (cont'd)

Something is funny?

CHARLIE

Darko, come on. You're talking
about autographing the inside of
someone's asshole. It's funny.

KARL

It would not even help me remember.
Who can read inside his asshole?

DARKO

A guy who's head is cut off and
stuck up inside it. Okay?

(Karl wonders)

Listen to me. Everything I say in
here? It is all possible.

CHARLIE

Can I go ahead and say what we're all thinking, Darko?

(timing being all)

If you cut off his head and stuck it up his ass, he'd be dead. You can't read if you're dead.

Luc and Karl laugh. Darko EXPLODES, jumping up, swiping the shit off his desk. The DOGS wake up, and BARK and SNARL.

DARKO

This is not play time, little bitches! You owe me fucking money!

LUC

Is anyone else's vicodin wearing off? It's time to call the police--

The BOUNCER snatches Luc's PHONE and smashes it.

CHARLIE

Whoa! Take it easy!

(to Darko)

Listen. We're staying at the youth hostel. We have friends there.

Meaning you can't fuck us up without making trouble for yourself. Okay? So let's just come up with a number we're all willing to--

Something Charlie's seen stops him. Something on the wall.

DARKO

What is wrong, mister talk a lot?

You have seen a ghost or something?

Darko turns to where Charlie is looking.

It's a PICTURE OF DARKO dressed in the FATIGUES of the ARMY OF REPUBLIKA SRPSKA. Next to him, NIGEL. They're smiling, displaying the MATCHING SCORPION TATTOOS on their arms. Darko takes the picture from the wall.

DARKO (cont'd)

Something in this photo is making you stop talking a lot?

(nothing from Charlie)

Do you know this man who I am with? Because how you look is how people who know this man look when they see him. He is this kind of man.

CHARLIE
I don't know him.

Darko smiles and takes down another PICTURE. It is of GABI. IN A G-STRING, STRIPPING. Charlie nearly pukes.

DARKO
You know her? By your face now it looks like maybe you do.

KARL
Is that the girl from--

Charlie backhands Karl in his tender balls. He squeals.

CHARLIE
The Opera. We saw her playing.
Thought she was hot is all.

Darko stares at Charlie, searching his face.

DARKO
You seem to know this man, my friend. I would very much like to know how you know him.
(Charlie's mind reels)
Okay, tell me this. Was it recently that you came to know him? It would be very good for me to know if this man is in Budapest.

Charlie tries to focus, tries to process.

CHARLIE
What if I did? Would that affect our situation with you?

DARKO
Perhaps.

CHARLIE
We need more than perhaps.

DARKO
Stay within yourself now. It would be nothing for me to take you and your friends to my cousin's restaurant and put your faces into the frying machine where he makes his pork rinds.

LUC
He's very creative with this stuff.

DARKO
(to Charlie)
Tell me about you and this man.

CHARLIE
His name is Nigel.

DARKO
Correct. Nigel is in Budapest?

CHARLIE
Perhaps. Or perhaps I met him in
the shit in Monrovia. I get around.

DARKO
Okay, my friend. Tell me where he
is and your bill, your friend's
load shooting, it is on the house.

CHARLIE
I'll need to call you. After we
leave here.

DARKO
Yes? So easy for you? Maybe you
are new to this type of negotiation.

CHARLIE
First time. But I smell desperation
coming from inside your ugly as fuck
tracksuit. Okay? Something tells
me knowing where Nigel is is worth
way more to you than any of this
bullshit. I will call you. After
we leave here.

DARKO
You are right, mister first time.
I do not care so much about load
shooting now. What this means is I
am no longer fucking around with
you. You will call me. If not, I
will cook your nice American face
into a pork rind. Which I will
then feed to my dogs. I promise
you this.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Charlie, Karl and Luc walk away. Karl and Luc buzz on
adrenaline. Charlie is sick to his stomach.

LUC

Can I just say something? Charlie?
 You were frigging awesome!

KARL

Very Charles Bronson, Charlie.

Charlie turns down a different street.

KARL (cont'd)

Hey, Charlie? Where are you going?

Charlie waves absently and is gone.

KARL (cont'd)

What's his problem?

LUC

Karl, bro, he just found out the
 girl he loves was a skank stripper.

KARL

Oh, poor guy. I play the world's
 smallest piano for him.

He mimes playing the world's smallest piano.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE - DAY

Charlie climbs the stairs. In the window he sees a SIGN announcing the death of BANYAI ISTVAN. Charlie smiles at the high-haired PICTURE. He tries to puzzle out the sign. Suddenly, the door opens. A couple of people come out, followed by BÉLA, dressed in a suit, wearing a SILK SCARF.

CHARLIE

Béla, hi. You're going to the
 thing? What is it? A memorial?

Béla pushes past him. Charlie follows.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Wait up. I want to...

Charlie grabs his arm. Béla loses his shit.

BÉLA

DO NOT TOUCH ME, SIR!

CHARLIE

What's with you and the yelling, man?
 I just want to know where it is.

Béla keeps walking.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Fine. Walk on, ass. Just know I'm
on your...ass.

Charlie follows. Béla keeps walking. Until he gets to a car. He opens the door.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Shit. Come on. Let me come with
you. I want to pay my respects.

BÉLA

HORSEDICK!

CHARLIE

Excuse me?

BÉLA

You heard me, sir. What you are
saying is horsedick.

CHARLIE

You mean bullshit?

BÉLA

In Hungarian, horsedick!

(Charlie: hmm)

Leave Gabriella be. It is obvious
you merely want do sex with her,
with your swimmer's body.

CHARLIE

My what?

Béla climbs in his car. He lowers the window.

BÉLA

Leave her be, sir. She has had
enough pain from handsome rogues
such as yourself.

Charlie focusses on Béla's scarf. Then he notes his manicured NAILS. And a CHRISTINA AGUILERA CD on the seat.

CHARLIE

You're gay!

BÉLA

I beg you, sir, LEAVE HER BE!

Béla pulls away. Charlie runs after the car. He's flying down the street. He gains the car. And runs alongside it.

CHARLIE

You're gay, Béla. I can see that now. You must love Gabi in a protective yet competitive way. That's cool. The fag-hag dynamic can be great. But I'm not a rogue. Thank you for saying so. I don't swim either. But I do like Gabi.

(still running, btw)

I like her in a selfless, aching, soul-stirring way. I guess it's more than like. More of a supernova in my fucking chest. Granted, I'm dealing with the stripper issue as we speak, but I'm not backing down. No, Béla. She gave wings to these feet. I'm not--

THWACK. CHARLIE DISAPPEARS. An OPEN CAR DOOR has knocked him on his ass. He's in the street, moaning, writhing. Béla backs his car up. He opens the door.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

The streets of Budapest hate me.

BÉLA

Get in. I am late.

(Charlie: huh?)

GET IN THE GOD DAMN CAR, PLEASE!

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - COURTYARD - DAY

Charlie limps after Béla through an old baroque building's covered driveway, then into a beautiful courtyard.

SIX FLOORS UP

They reach a landing overlooking the courtyard. Charlie's in pain and out of breath. Istvan walks to an apartment.

INSIDE

A party underway. BOHEMIANS old and young drink, smoke and argue. Charlie follows Béla through the crowd. A BAND can be heard -- a convulsive beat, percussion and chanting.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Charlie enters the ballroom-sized space. The band is a bunch of COOL DUDES banging on shit and speaking in tongues. A SLIDE SHOW is projected onto the wall -- it's playing images of ISTVAN'S LIFE -- teaching, drinking, laughing.

And off in a corner he sees her...GABI. Glass of wine, eyes closed, swaying to the music. Charlie smiles.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
 See his face, ladies and gentlemen,
 how it explodes into a smile? This
 is not really what love is. Love is
 more than loving beauty, dahlinge,
 so much more than loving nice
 boobies and sweet laughter.

Charlie watches her. She's lost in the sounds. Suddenly...

FLASH TO:

GABI IN A G-STRING

Disco light spins on the walls as Gabi undulates on a POLE.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
 Love is loving everything your
 beloved has every been, and all she
 ever will be.

Gabi opens her eyes. She stops dancing.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
 All and everything, dahinge. Love
 is loving all and everything.

BACK TO SCENE

Charlie waves at Gabi. And her face does something surprising -- it EXPLODES INTO A SMILE of its own.

Now she's coming to him. Smiling, smiling, smiling. She takes a drink of WINE. Charlie's eyes brim with tears.

CHARLIE
 God damn.

A TEARDROP rolls down Charlie's cheek. Gabi is there. SHE CATCHES IT. Gabi raises her hand to him. He raises his, the one he caught her tear in. They press their palms together.

GABI
 (subtitled; Hungarian)
 I am going to kiss you now.

CHARLIE
 What?

She eases into him, like he's the other half of a thing she once was, a thing perfect and complete, a thing that became nothing when it was divided in two by the bullshit world.

THEY KISS. Then she breathes into his ear.

GABI

Say my name, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Gabi. Gabi. Fucking Gabi.

GABI

Two letters, the whole world inside them.

CHARLIE

Us.

GABI

A pearl.

CHARLIE

Are you drunk?

GABI

Yes. A little bit. Charlie.

CHARLIE

Okay. Gabi.

They pull back. A little awkward.

AT THE DRINKS TABLE

GABI

How did you find me?

CHARLIE

Béla.

GABI

I am surprised. He thinks he is my mother.

CHARLIE

It's common with them.

GABI

He and Andi have been very good to me. Through my years of shit.

CHARLIE

Andi's his boyfriend?

Gabi nods. Béla dances with a ELEGANT WOMAN in her forties.

GABI

Andrea. His wife.

CHARLIE

Oh, I thought he was...

GABI

Come on, Charlie. A real man can't love manicures and Mariah Carey?

CHARLIE

Not Christina Aguilera?

GABI

Sure, and Kylie Minogue too. How he wept when she got the cancer.

ELSEWHERE, Béla stops the band. He goes to a SUPER-8 PROJECTOR. He blows Gabi a kiss and presses play.

ON VIDEO: ISTVAN's in a sunlit room. His cello rests between his legs. He's talking to the camera. (*Dialogue is in Hungarian, SUBTITLED throughout video.*)

ISTVAN ON SUPER-8

This is stupid. Put it away.

GABI'S VOICE is behind the camera:

GABI'S VOICE

Don't be shy, old man. We must document your mastery for posterity. You are an old man.

ISTVAN ON SUPER-8

Which should I do?

GABI'S VOICE

Glissando.

ISTVAN ON SUPER-8

Glissando. We play it like it sounds. Glissando. The pitch rising and falling smoothly, with no space, no separation. Only variation of essence.

GABI'S VOICE

Do it.

Istvan draws his bow, sliding his finger up and down the fingerboard without releasing the string, producing an achingly beautiful sound.

Everyone in the room gasps and sighs. Someone yells:

SOMEONE
Bravo, Pishty!

Everyone concurs in cheers. On video:

GABI'S VOICE
Give us something juicy. Something personal. The real Banyai Istvan.
(he waves her off)
Do it.

ISTVAN ON SUPER-8
I'm an old man with no juice left.
May I say something my father said?

GABI'S VOICE
Depends. Is it about the godforsaken Cubs?

Everyone laughs. Istvan laughs.

ISTVAN ON SUPER-8
No. It is a quote he would often say. From Lenin.

GABI'S VOICE
John, or Vladimir Ilyich?

ISTVAN ON SUPER-8
Vladimir Ilyich, who killed twenty million of his own people. Much worse than marrying Yoko, yes?
(Gabi's voice LAUGHS)
Lenin said: I cannot listen to music too often. It makes me want to do nice things.
(then)
You understand this quote, Gabika?

GABI'S VOICE
Yes, daddy.

ISTVAN ON SUPER-8
I know you do. My sweet girl.

GABI'S VOICE
I love you, daddy.

ISTVAN ON SUPER-8
I love you. Now put it away. I
would like to go pee.

THE VIDEO ENDS. Everyone cries. They all look to Gabi. She musters a heartbroken smile. Charlie looks into her eyes. She sticks out her empty WINE GLASS.

IN THE KITCHEN

Charlie fills two glasses. A COMMOTION sounds from the front of the apartment. Bohemians rush away to see what's what.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

BÉLA faces off against an unwanted visitor -- NIGEL.

BÉLA
GET THE FUCK OUT, YOU!

NIGEL
Still screaming, Béla? Still our
old excessively bothersome self?

BÉLA
You will not come in here, sir.
This is a private function.

In a flash, Nigel RABBIT PUNCHES Béla in the nose. Béla doubles over. His nose is BLEEDING, expertly broken.

Nigel moves into the apartment. An ARTIST steps to him. Nigel raises a KNIFE TO HIS EAR.

NIGEL
Something to say, Van Gogh?

The artist thinks better of it.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gabi's splashing water on her face.

NIGEL (O.S.)
Gabi!

Gabi closes her eyes: fuck.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Nigel's looking for her. Charlie steps in front of him.

NIGEL
Hallo, Charlie. Seen Gabi of late?

CHARLIE

She doesn't want you here.

NIGEL

Charlie, I meant to ask you before --
can you do the Louis Armstrong bit
with your cheeks? When he goes all
puffy-fish like?

CHARLIE

He played the trumpet, I think.

NIGEL

But you can do it, yeah? Being the
champion tubaist and cocksucker you
are reputed to be?

(Charlie does nothing)

The present occasion's a sorrowful
one, Charlie. I believe some relief
in the form of funny face would be
much appreciated by everyone here.

Charlie stares. Nigel sticks the KNIFE to Charlie's throat.

NIGEL (cont'd)

Go on, Charlie. Do the puffy-fish
bit for us.

Charlie does nothing. FLICK. He nicks Charlie's neck with
the knife. BLOOD drips down it. Nigel cinches the blade.

NIGEL (cont'd)

Last chance for petrol, boy-o.

Charlie's got no choice. He PUFFS OUT his cheeks.

NIGEL (cont'd)

Jesus me, Charlie. If that's not
the most woeful bit of puffy-
fishery I ever did see.

(then)

It occurs to me, Charlie -- maybe
you're not a tubaist, and maybe
you're not even an actual faggot
either. Maybe the hard truth is
you've got designs on my wife. Can
that be? What do you think, Gabi?

GABI's in the doorway, her GUN raised.

GABI

I'm not your wife, Nigel.

NIGEL

The very gun I gave her, Charlie.
The irony's nothing short of fucking
poetical.

Nigel lowers the knife and turns around.

NIGEL (cont'd)

My condolences for your loss, baby.
Old Istvan was a right cunt to me,
to be sure, but I won't deny he was
a fine enough gentleman. A worthy
adversary in the perilous battle for
your affections.

Nigel takes ISTVAN'S MEMORIAL FLYER out of his pocket.

NIGEL (cont'd)

To be honest, Gabi, I'm well
heartbroken you didn't mention it.
Like I'm some sort of strang--

BLAM! Gabi's fires! The WALL behind Nigel EXPLODES. PEOPLE hit the floor. Nigel doesn't move. He looks at his SHIRTSLEEVE. It's got a SMOKY HOLE in it. He smiles.

NIGEL (cont'd)

The ass of an angel, the brain of a
man, the aim of Annie Oakley. Ever
the total package, my Gabi is.

GABI

Leave, Nigel. I will shoot your
fucking face off. You know I will.

CHARLIE

(to Gabi)

You meant to do that?

NIGEL

I taught her a whole hat-full of
useful shit, Charlie. Quite the
eager beaver, she was. Always a
quick study. I remember the first
time she took it up the--

GABI

Five seconds, Nigel.

NIGEL

Counting down, baby? Bit of a
cliché, is it not?

GABI

Five...

All of the BOHEMIANS join in.

BOHEMIANS

...four...

NIGEL

Bloodthirsty bohemians. How the
thin veil of civilization does fall
so readily away. Fucking love it!

GABI AND BOHEMIANS

...three...

Nigel squeezes Charlie's cheek.

NIGEL

We'll get a funny face out of you
yet, Charlie boy. Mark it down.

LATER

Charlie and Gabi sit blank-faced on a couch. Gabi's got the GUN on her leg. The flat is empty. Béla and Andrea clean up.

CHARLIE

So Nigel. Again. Wow.

(nothing)

And you. With that gun!

(still nothing)

Wow.

GABI

You would like the story? Of how a
nice girl like me fell in love with
a psychopath like him?

CHARLIE

I figure, you know, boy meets girl.
Right? Not like there's a standard
for it. My first girlfriend was
Lynn McDougall. She was black.
Not a very black name, but she was.
I'm not sure how it's relevant, but
there you go.

GABI

Obviously her ancestors were slaves
and the owner was McDougall, yes?

CHARLIE

Hmm.

GABI
I met Nigel when I was seventeen.

FLASH TO:

EXT. MUSIC SCHOOL - DAY

A gaggle of teenage GIRLS smoking cigarettes. They've got various INSTRUMENT CASES at their feet. Inhaling, coughing, laughing. By them walks a girl with a CELLO -- YOUNG GABI.

GABI (V.O.)
My life was music. Nothing else.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - DAY

Young Gabi is alone with her cello, lost in concentration.

GABI (V.O.)
I was in love with what I could do.

She stops, looking at her fingers. They bleed. She plays on.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Young Gabi at home. Playing her cello.

GABI (V.O.)
It was an obsession. An addiction.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DARK

Istvan watches BRAVEHEART, grinning at the DISEMBOWELMENT.

GABI (V.O.)
My father would try to introduce me
to other things.

Young Gabi is next to him with her eyes closed, her hands miming playing the cello.

GABI (V.O.) (cont'd)
But there was nothing else for me.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Istvan stands in the door yelling at Young Gabi.

GABI (V.O.)
He became a bit fed up.

ISTVAN
 (subtitled; Hungarian)
 One more note and I kill myself!
 Go have some god damn fun!

Istvan slams the door.

BACK TO GABI AND CHARLIE

GABI
 Why do I need fun when I can make a
 sound that sounds like the breath
 of god? With my own hands I can
 make myself and anyone else cry?
 (then)
 These are the things I would say.
 Being seventeen and ridiculous.

CHARLIE
 Makes sense to me.

GABI
 Because you are a child, as we have
 said. Anyway...

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Young Gabi walks down some stairs into a basement.

GABI (V.O.)
 ...in winter, I discovered a place
 to practice. A secret place.

IN A BOILER ROOM

Gabi plays her cello in the glow of the furnace.

GABI (V.O.)
 Where no one could say, hey,
 fucking Gabi, you play too much!

ANOTHER DAY

Gabi plays.

GABI (V.O.)
 What I did not know was above my
 place, there was a small flat.

WE RISE UP, like the sound, through the floor and we're in...

INT. SMALL FLAT - NIGHT

Cramped and dingy. A SEVERELY WOUNDED MAN lies on a bed.

GABI (V.O.)

In this flat -- broken into pieces
by a bomb, hiding from criminals
for things he had done as a soldier
for hire Bosnia -- was Nigel.

The music sounds, the man is still. From the bandages around his eyes, a TEAR falls.

ANOTHER DAY

In the BOILER ROOM, Gabi plays.

In the SMALL FLAT, Nigel sits on the bed, straining to raise his arm even an inch.

GABI (V.O.)

He would listen to my playing as he struggled with his injuries.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Moving from boiler room to flat...

- Gabi plays. Nigel removes the bandages from his head.
- Gabi plays. Nigel pulls himself across the floor, sweating and straining to work his legs.

GABI (V.O.)

Every day he would hear me, every day he would become stronger.

- Gabi plays. Nigel stands.
- Gabi plays. Nigel does chin-ups.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Gabi walks into the courtyard, heading for the stairs. She sees NIGEL waiting there.

GABI (V.O.)

After many months, he approached me and told me I saved his life.

He smiles at her. He's not scary at all. He begins talking.

GABI (V.O.) (cont'd)

He said it is a universal rule that when someone saves your life, you are then responsible for that person forever.

Nigel gives Gabi a FLOWER. She smiles. He laughs.

GABI (V.O.) (cont'd)
He was the most beautiful man I had ever seen. With his scars and his eyes. Like some kind of animal.

EXT. CHAIN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Gabi and Nigel walk across the lovely span. Gabi talks, Nigel listens bemusedly.

GABI (V.O.)
I had no idea who he was, what he did. All I knew is he said my playing saved his life. Which confirmed everything I believed about myself and my ability. I could save a man's life with my hands, with what was in my soul.

BACK TO GABI AND CHARLIE

Charlie's looking at her.

GABI
Do not look at me like that. I told you, I was seventeen.

CHARLIE
And you married him?

GABI
Not then. We were together for three years before we married.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gabi pulls a METAL CASE from a closet. She opens it. The bad-guy trifecta: GUNS, DRUGS and MONEY.

GABI (V.O.)
Over time, I learned what he was, but it was too late -- I loved him.

Gabi picks up a small packet and examines it -- HEROIN.

GABI (cont'd)
I became as addicted to him as I was to my music. More so.

Nigel storms in and pushes her down on the bed, yelling. But then he softens. Because she's on the bed and so fucking sexy. He joins her. She doesn't push him away.

EXT. FORREST - DAY

Gabi's got a GUN raised. Nigel is guiding her. She FIRES. Blowing a bottle off a tree trunk.

GABI (V.O.)
I learned a lot from Nigel. Things I would not have otherwise learned.

THEN, Gabi whips a THROWING STAR into a tree. Impressive.

BACK TO GABI AND CHARLIE

Charlie is squirming.

CHARLIE
So you really loved him, that guy I just saw you shoot at.

GABI
Do not do this puppy dog confusion face. You never loved the wrong person? And that person didn't love someone wrong before you?

CHARLIE
I thought I loved someone. Melissa. But she was a bitch.

GABI
Exactly. If I, Gabi, were to love you, Charlie, do you think it would make any sense for me to do a puppy dog confusion face over the bitch Melissa? How can Gabi love Charlie if Charlie loved the bitch Melissa? Fucking Melissa who loved the asshole George? Is this how your mind is working?

CHARLIE
I don't know. Who's George?

GABI
I have a past. Most people who have not been in a coma do. Maybe mine is disgusting to you. It's not to me. It's just my past.

CHARLIE
What about, um, Darko?

GABI

Darko? Fucking Darko? What do you know about Darko, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Nothing. Just that you were, um, a dancer in his club.

GABI

How do you know this, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I went there. There was a picture. We got in trouble. I owe Darko three thousand dollars.

She gets up.

GABI

I need to feed my cat.

She goes. He gets up and follows.

CHARLIE

A cat?! I didn't know you had a cat. Aren't you the mystery lady. There's a surprise at every turn with you. Don't forget your gun!

INT. GABI'S FLAT - NIGHT

Gabi opens the door.

CHARLIE

You're sure it's safe here.

GABI

He has tracked down and killed people on most continents.

CHARLIE

You're saying not completely.

IN THE KITCHEN

Gabi gets a bottle of wine.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Charlie looks around. Lots of books. An old LP record player and lots of vinyl. He sees the CUBS BEER HELMET.

CHARLIE

Where's your cat?

GABI (V.O.)
No cat. I said it to get you here.

Gabi enters. She's got the wine and glasses, and an ENORMOUS CAT in her arms. She drops the cat in Charlie's lap.

GABI (cont'd)
Charlie, Frank Flour. Frank Flour,
Charlie.

CHARLIE
Man, he is fat.

GABI
He is named for our most famous
composer, Ferenc Liszt. Frank
Flour in English.

CHARLIE
Hello, Frank Flower.

GABI
Flour -- the kind you cook with.

CHARLIE
Hello, Frank Flour. You are fat.

Gabi sits. She pours the wine.

GABI
Now you want to hear about Darko.
What do I get to hear about you?
Nothing because you have been in a
coma your whole life?

CHARLIE
My mom died. Just before I left.
She was a good person. A good mom.

GABI
Charlie. I am sorry.

CHARLIE
Yeah.

GABI
This explains a lot. About what
you have said to me.

CHARLIE
I guess.

GABI
How did she die?

CHARLIE

Cancer. Bone marrow cancer. Multiple Myeloma they call it. Really, she died from the treatment for the cancer. Which I guess is common. She'd gotten spinal meningitis but was feeling okay so she wanted to come home for my stepdad's birthday. Scott. No one wanted her to leave the hospital but she was stubborn like that. Anyway, she was making flank steak and she had a brain aneurysm. She went into a coma and we took her off life support. The doctor said it was the right thing to do. You have to kill what you love sometimes, to set it free. Scott said that. I try to believe it. But I don't know. You know?

GABI

I am such an asshole. I said you were in a coma, when your mother really was. What an asshole I am.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I'm gonna go. I hate you now.
(then)

Listen, you think I don't feel weird rubbing all up on you with drug-fueled sweet-talk when your father just died next to me on a plane? I do. I really do. But also, I kind of don't. Part of me feels very right about it. You know?

GABI

It's a complex situation.

CHARLIE

Yes, it is.

GABI

Shall I tell you about Darko now?

CHARLIE

Nah.

GABI

No?

CHARLIE

Show me.

GABI

What?

CHARLIE

Never mind.

GABI

No, what do you mean, show me?

CHARLIE

Nothing.

GABI

You want me to show you how I
danced? Is that right? You think
that is something I'd do for you?
At this point here?

CHARLIE

I said never mind.

GABI

You never mind. I am sick that you
think I would do something so sick.

She walks over to the record player.

CHARLIE

Sorry, okay? I was joke--

A song begins -- PRINCE, LITTLE RED CORVETTE. Gabi peels her
shirt up over her head and tosses it on Charlie's face.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

--ing.

He pulls it away. She is dancing.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

God damn.

GABI

This is what you want, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Basically.

GABI

You are sure?

CHARLIE

Yes.

GABI

Okay, Charlie. You fucking tourist.

She puts her foot into his chest and pushes him back on the couch. She shimmies out of her jeans in a way that is so sexy I can't even find the words.

Charlie's mouth hangs open. He just stares. The way she moves, it's so beautiful. Not sexy. It's more than that. Her body slows and his eyes fill with TEARS.

GABI (cont'd)

What's wrong, little boy?

CHARLIE

Nothing.

She puts one knee on the couch next to him. Then the other on the other side. She lowers herself onto him.

GABI

You think you love me, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Yes.

GABI

You think things like this happen to people?

CHARLIE

Yes. To some people.

GABI

What people?

CHARLIE

You know what people.

She thinks. She smiles.

GABI

Us, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Yes, Gabi. Us.

GABI

Okay, Charlie. Us.

She pulls him into her chest. He breathes her in. He exhales. Something like relief. Like coming home.

She kisses him. Softly at first, and then harder, and then it's on -- she yanks away his clothes, he pulls off what's left of hers.

And they fuck. Er, make love. No, it's definitely fucking. Wait. Now they're making love. Okay, that right there? Fucking. Jesus. They're doing both. Is that even possible?

Of course it is.

INT. GABI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie lies awake. Gabi seems to be sleeping. She's not.

GABI

You are waiting for the story of
Darko?

CHARLIE

Here in the dark. O.

She sits up.

GABI

Last story, Charlie. Okay?

(he nods)

I needed to get away from Nigel.
He is not permitted to enter the
UK, being who he is, so I decided I
would go to London to study. I
needed money. Nigel knew Darko
from the war. He got me a job at
the club. I made money and I went
to London.

CHARLIE

He just let you go?

GABI

We married before I left. It was
the only way I could make him
believe I wasn't leaving him. My
father almost died...

The phrase catches her up. Charlie smooths her hair.

GABI (cont'd)

Béla pursued the divorce when I was
away, and many bribes and forgeries
later, it was granted.

CHARLIE

And Nigel does what anyone would --
he goes to Africa to kill child
soldiers hopped up on molasses.

GABI

Chinese molasses. Opium.

CHARLIE

(no idea)

Of course not regular molasses.

GABI

Any more questions for me tonight,
Charlie?

CHARLIE

Let me think.

(then)

Can we do it again, Gabi?

GABI

Okay, Charlie. We can.

They dive into one another.

INT. GABI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Charlie stirs awake. Gabi is not there.

CHARLIE

Gabi?

GABI (V.O.)

Jo régelt kívánok, Charlie. Would
you like coffee?

Gabi comes in. She's NAKED, except for her head, where she's
wearing the CUBS HELMET. CUPS OF COFFEE sit in the holders.

CHARLIE

Don't mind if I do.

She sits on the bed. She puts the drinking tube into his
mouth. He drinks some coffee.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

I need to tell you, Gabi, Darko is
looking for Nigel. I think he
wants to kill him.

GABI

It is more complicated than this.

CHARLIE
I had a feeling.

GABI
Since the war, Nigel and Darko have circled each other, each believing the other is in possession of something, a powerful thing which both of them desperately want.

CHARLIE
The one ring to rule them all?

GABI
A piece of evidence showing them both in a place where terrible things happened. Each of them thinks the other has it. Once they find out neither of them has it, they will kill each other, or maybe be friends again. Who knows with these guys?

CHARLIE
But neither of them has it? This mysterious and powerful thing?
(off her look)
Who has it, Gabi? Not you, right?

IN THE LIVING ROOM

From the floor, Gabi pulls up a RADIATOR GRATE. She pulls away false WALL. She reaches in and pulls out a VIDEOTAPE.

THEN

Gabi puts the tape in a VCR. She plays it.

ON VIDEO: NIGEL in a BLOODY UNIFORM, fully strapped for battle. He's in a GYMNASIUM. DARKO'S VOICE sounds.

DARKO'S VOICE
Perhaps you will say what you have done during your visit to the nice village of Bratunac?

NIGEL
Bit of this, bit of that. Nothing remarkable, really.

DARKO'S VOICE
You are too modest.

The SHOT MOVES to a BLOOD-SOAKED PILE OF DEAD BODIES stacked against the wall. Probably fifty men, shot where they stood. In the corner, a BODY MOVES. The SHOT ZOOMS in on it.

DARKO'S VOICE (cont'd)
My friend, please, one living Mujo is the same as a thousand.

Nigel strides over. BLAM! Killshot to the head.

DARKO'S VOICE (cont'd)
Okay. Get me now.

The SHOT TURNS over a couple of times, blurring. And then DARKO comes into focus. He smiles and gives a thumbs up.

VIDEO ENDS.

Charlie is sickened.

CHARLIE
How did you get this?

GABI
From Darko's. I meant to make a copy, then put it back. He saw it was missing before I could. I've kept it all this time to make sure my father and I are safe, to use against Nigel if he ever came back.

CHARLIE
Jesus, Gabi. Your life. What the fuck?

GABI
A life is a life is a life, Charlie. Who knows what the fuck.

CHARLIE
This is the only copy?

GABI
I have another. I won't tell you where in case you are tortured.
(Charlie laughs)
I am not making a joke.

CHARLIE
Why not use it now? I can go to Darko and tell him we've got the tape, that he can have it if he kills Nigel.

GABI

Charlie, do not be a fucking idiot.

CHARLIE

What? It's a good plan. A two birds plan. Darko kills Nigel, he gets the tape. If Darko doesn't kill Nigel, CNN gets the tape.

GABI

Do you hear yourself? Talking about plans and CNN and two fucking birds.

CHARLIE

The tape being the stone. Yeah.

GABI

You saw this tape, Charlie. Stay away from Darko. And fucking Nigel. I will deal with it when the time is right. Okay?

Gabi goes into the bedroom.

CHARLIE

Hey, far be it for me. It's your genocide tape.

BEDROOM

Gabi's getting dressed. Charlie enters.

GABI

I need to go out. Wait here, and do not do anything.

CHARLIE

What? No. Where are you going?

GABI

To get my father's remains. Okay? Just stay. Take a bath.

BATHROOM - LATER

Charlie sits in the tub. Just kind of sitting, his face lit up, thinking of what's become of him in so short a time.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)

Remember, dahlinge, the boy is in a story, and like all stories worth the telling, it has only one possible end -- an end that was written long ago and far away in the stars.

(MORE)

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
I am sorry to say it, dahlinge.
Today is the day the story will end.

Charlie hears the FRONT DOOR open.

CHARLIE
Gabi? What took so long?

The bathroom door opens. IT IS NIGEL. He's got a SIG 9MM.

NIGEL
Came as soon as I could, Charlie.
Let's us take a ride.

He tosses a LACY BATHROBE. On Charlie's face. Poor Charlie.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Today is the day the boy will die.

EXT. GABI'S BUILDING - DAY

Nigel pushes Charlie onto the street. Charlie's in the robe. Not much left to the imagination. Nigel opens the back of a funky Russian TRUCK and bids Charlie to get in.

IN THE TRUCK

Charlie's jostled about. Nigel can be seen through grating.

CHARLIE
Where is she, you fuck?

NIGEL
Aren't we suddenly the hard man.
In our lacy ladies finery.

EXT. BARREN COMMERCIAL AREA - DAY

The truck stops at a LOADING DOCK. Nigel climbs out.

NEARBY

A BUM sits in the BUSHES eating *langos hideg*. He sees Charlie pulled from of the truck in his robe. He squints in recognition, then down at the NEWSPAPER spread before him. In it, a PHOTO OF CHARLIE holding Gabi's gun on Counter Guy.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Nigel pushes Charlie into the room. A CHAIR waits in the center of the floor.

NIGEL
Have a seat, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Eat a dick. Where's Gabi?

THWAP. Charlie falls, pistol whipped. Nigel grabs him by the HAIR and DRAGS him across the floor.

AT THE CHAIR

Nigel duct-tapes Charlie to the chair. The chair is BOLTED to the floor. Charlie's eye is nearly swollen shut.

NIGEL
Something you should see, Charlie.
Might come as a bit of a shock. So
gird yourself, yeah? Okay?

Nigel tapes Charlie's mouth shut.

THEN

Nigel goes into another room. Charlie's eyes sweep the place. He wracks his body against the chair. No chance.

NIGEL (O.S.)
You sitting down, Charlie?

He enters. With GABI. Her arm draped over his shoulder, he half-drägs her to a shitty COUCH. She's fucked-up on something. Charlie's muffled screams draw her eye.

GABI
*Jo nápot kivánok, Charlie. Banyai
Gabriella, vagyók.*

Charlie's eyes go to Nigel, desperate.

NIGEL
Don't say she didn't tell you,
Charlie? About her prior and
wholly devoted relationship with
her Uncle Henry?

Nigel waggles a BAG OF HEROIN.

FLASH TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

GABI looks into the METAL CASE with the GUNS, DRUGS, MONEY. She picks up the BAG as before, but now she appears to smile.

BACK TO SCENE

NIGEL

What sort of sorry affair are you
two conducting? Secrets are a
cancer in love. Everyone knows it.

Nigel sits next to Gabi. He's drinks from a bottle of VODKA.

NIGEL (cont'd)

I'd heard she's been free of the
monkey for some time yet, but she
took well kindly to what I put into
her today. Did you not, baby?

Gabi smiles a warm smile.

NIGEL (cont'd)

Right back on the horse, as it
were, if you will.

Gabi tries to sit up.

NIGEL (cont'd)

Looks like she's coming round. No
worries, Charlie. I shall administer
her a top-off most gladly.

Nigel opens a KIT, laying out the apparatus. Gabi stirs.

GABI

(subtitled; Hungarian)

Where is Charlie, Nigel? He loves
me. Do you think it's too soon?

Nigel cooks up a dose in a spoon.

NIGEL

Put it out of your head, baby.
He'll be dead soon enough.

Nigel sticks a SYRINGE into Gabi's arm. Charlie goes wild,
screaming and jerking. Gabi shudders and smiles.

NIGEL (cont'd)

I'm going to fuck my wife now,
Charlie. With your permission, of
course.

Nigel takes off his shirt.

NIGEL (cont'd)

Christ. Nearly forgot.

(walking to Charlie)

(MORE)

NIGEL (cont'd)
 A minor detail, really, but a plan
 is a plan and I'm sticking to mine.

Nigel TAPES CHARLIE'S EYES OPEN. Then goes back to Gabi.

WE STAY on Charlie. His horrified face says it all. He turns away, tears streaming from his taped eyes.

FINALLY

Nigel sits on the couch, sweating. Gabi's passed out. Nigel takes a drink of Vodka and walks to Charlie.

NIGEL
 Well, Charlie. I hope you've taken my point here today. Love is a brutal, brutal thing. What you just saw is what I saw full in my mind when I first saw Gabi look at you. Pain begets pain, Charlie. It's the proper way of things.

RIP! The tape comes off Charlie's eyes. Fuck, that hurts. He RIPS the tape from Charlie's mouth. Charlie can't talk.

NIGEL (cont'd)
 I know, Charlie, it can be well trying to pull off a decent turn of phrase at a time like this.

CHARLIE
 Fuck you.

NIGEL
 I stand corrected.
 (wielding his GUN)
 Okay then, Charlie. Your travels in this world are through. It's pennies on the eyes for you now.

Nigel puts the gun to Charlie's head. Charlie's desperate eyes go to Gabi. She's passed out.

NIGEL (cont'd)
 Fair thee well, boy-o. May you find peace in that place where gay tubaist impersonators go.

CLICK. Nothing.

NIGEL (cont'd)
 Bloody hell, Charlie! Forgot to chamber it. You'd fucking think with all my experience in the area.

Nigel YANKS the slide. He raises the weapon again. A SOUND outside -- CARS arriving in a hurry. Nigel goes to the window, and SEES SOMETHING that makes him change plans on a dime. He gathers his shit, LEAVING. Charlie is confused.

NIGEL (cont'd)
Welcome to limbo, Charlie. Don't
get comfortable. It's not your
final destination. I'll be along
soon to hasten you there.

He slides out of the WINDOW. GABI opens her eyes a sliver.

GABI
(subtitled; Hungarian)
People can't be a pearl. It's sad.

A COMMOTION at the door. BAM! It is kicked in. TWO COPS enter with GUNS drawn. They scream at Charlie in Hungarian. He is confused. So are the cops, the scene being what it is.

The BUM peeks in, holding the NEWSPAPER with Charlie's photo.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Charlie is CUFFED, being led in his robe to a POLICE CAR. He watches Gabi being loaded into an AMBULANCE. He notes the HOSPITAL NAME on the side -- SZENT ISTVAN.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Charlie's cuffed to a bench. He's wearing a JAIL JUMPSUIT.

IN AN OFFICE

BÉLA is there, broken-nosed, sitting across from an OLDER COP in a SUIT. Béla hands an ENVELOPE to the older cop.

BÉLA
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Private box. *La Bohème*. I trust
Mrs. Chief Inspector will be pleased.
(the cop harumphs)
It is Mrs. Chief Inspector who will
accompany you? Not that gorgeous
creature you brought to *Cosi Fan
Tutti*? Your daughter, I assume?

Béla hands the cop a TRAIN TICKET to Bucharest.

BÉLA (cont'd)
(subtitled; Hungarian)
As agreed, you will give this to
the American.
(MORE)

BÉLA (cont'd)
And you will make an effort to get
the Englishman off the streets.

OLDER COP
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Yes, yes. You are sure this is a
private box? As agreed?

BÉLA
(subtitled; Hungarian)
I assure you, Chief Inspector, the
ideal place to fondle one's daughter.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

TWO UNIFORMS up front, Charlie in back.

CHARLIE
Take me to Szent Istvan Hospital.

Uniform One hands Charlie the TRAIN TICKET.

COP
Bucharest.

The cops laugh.

EXT. MARCO POLO YOUTH HOSTEL - DAY

The car stops. In front of the MARCO POLO YOUTH HOSTEL.

CHARLIE
No, Szent Istvan Hospital!

COP
Bye bye.

INSIDE

Charlie's at the front desk. The CLERK is there. He checks out Charlie's jump suit, his jail slippers, his face.

CLERK
Hey, man. You are okay? You do
not look too okay.

CHARLIE
Where is Szent Istvan Hospital?

CLERK
Your friends, they said you were
ill. They checked you out of the
hostel. The Canadian and German.

CHARLIE

Luc and Karl? They checked me out?
Why the fuck...

Clerk gives him an ENVELOPE.

CLERK

A mean guy, he left this for you.

Charlie opens it. Piece of paper, on it a DIGITAL PHOTO -- LUC AND KARL, NAKED, TIED TOGETHER around a STRIPPER POLE.

CLERK (cont'd)

You should run away.

CHARLIE

I probably should.

CLERK

No, man. Now. The guy is here.

He points. Charlie turns. DARKO IS OUTSIDE, SMILING.

CLERK (cont'd)

Back door through pub, man.

Charlie BOLTS. Darko SPRINGS. Charlie runs INTO THE HOSTEL and leaps down the STAIRS.

IN THE PUB

Charlie FLIES through the PUB. Darko's on the stairs. Charlie makes for the back, KNOCKING into IDIOT TRAVEL-KIDS.

Darko enters. Charlie UPENDS TABLES to block him. As if. Charlie HURDLES the BAR, and RACES back into the KITCHEN.

EXT. BACK DOOR - HOSTEL - EVENING

Charlie BURSTS through the DOOR, BOUNDS up the STAIRS.

ON THE STREET

From a side-street, Charlie HURLS HIMSELF out onto the busy sidewalk of Rákóczi. He rips through the crowd. He looks back. Yeah, Darko -- coming fast and unrelentingly.

Charlie VEERS into the street, DEAD INTO TRAFFIC. WHAANH! A BUS SCREAMS BY, SKIMMING HIS NOSE. CARS SKID and SCREECH as he DARTS around them. He gains the opposite sidewalk.

Darko's in the street. Traffic's no problem. Fred Astaire, but violent, not as ugly. Charlie spots a METRO STATION.

INT. BLAHA LUJZA TER - EVENING

Charlie VAULTS down some STAIRS and finds himself in an UNDERGROUND SQUARE. He spies the ENTRANCE to the METRO.

AT THE STATION

Charlie lumbers in. He looks. No sign of Darko.

Charlie gets on the CROWDED ESCALATOR, heading down, way down, under a gleaming futuristic half-dome ceiling. It seems not to ever end. Maybe in hell.

Charlie looks back -- Darko slides into view and steps onto the escalator. He comes, pushing through people. Rude.

Charlie tries to step it up. It's too crowded. He notes a NARROW SLIDE-LIKE SECTION that separates the escalators.

Charlie THROWS HIMSELF onto the slide -- WHOOSH! Now he's A BULLET. On the slide, STEEL KNOBS are spaced to deter punks from sliding down. The first knob's about to de-ball Charlie. But he BOUNCES up, enough to clear it. Nifty.

He looks back. Duh. Fucking Darko sliding after him...

Charlie slides and bounces, slides and bounces. He notices a SMILING WOMAN coming on the UP ESCALATOR. It's his...

CHARLIE

Mom?

MARY BAKER

Look at you, Charlie! No fear!
Even though I said Bucharest! You goof!

ON THE PLATFORM

Charlie's BODY is SHOT OUT with great velocity. He tumbles, scrambles to his feet, over to the TRACKS. No trains. Shit.

Charlie ducks behind a COLUMN. He peeks back to find DARKO BARREL ROLLING onto the platform. All parkour and shit.

WITH DARKO. He stands. No sign of Charlie. He strolls forward. Bad motherfucker.

TWO TRAINS pull into the station, one on either side. They stop. DOORS OPEN. And PEOPLE start to pour out.

Darko stands surveying. With killer robot eyes.

WITH CHARLIE. He looks from train to train. What to do? People file into the cars. Soon the doors will close. Charlie peeks. Sees Darko, eyes sweeping, ready to pounce.

Charlie breathes -- one, two, three, he LAUNCHES HIMSELF across the platform, heading for the far train.

Darko spots him, and SPRINGS toward the same train.

The DOORS are CLOSING. Charlie's not going to make it. He LEAPS into the air...

Darko LEAPS too, his own set of doors closing...

They're both in the air...

WHOOSH! Darko SLUICES THROUGH the closing doors...

WHACK! Charlie HITS THE SIDE OF THE TRAIN, and crumbles to the platform. Fucking missed on purpose. Clever Charlie.

The doors close. The train begins to move. Darko stands, looking, expecting to find Charlie in the next car.

But Charlie is OUT ON THE PLATFORM, watching Darko being drawn away into the tunnel.

EXT. BLAHA LUJZA TER - EVENING

Charlie approaches a TAXI STAND. Several DRIVERS mill about, smoking. One takes notice of Charlie. It's HIS TAXI DRIVER.

TAXI DRIVER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Fucking hell, Hubble! What kind of crazy love story are you in?

CHARLIE
Can you take me to Szent Istvan Hospital? I don't have any money.

TAXI DRIVER
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Saint Stephen Hospital. Okay, Hubble. Whatever you say.

INT. SZENT ISTVAN HOSPITAL - EVENING

Charlie's at the front desk. An ATTENDANT checks a PC.

THIRD FLOOR

Charlie exits the ELEVATOR.

CHARLIE
GABI!!

BÉLA sticks his head out of a room. Charlie runs at him.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Béla! It's me, Charlie!

Béla rolls his eyes gayishly, goes back in the room.

IN THE ROOM

Charlie enters. Gabi's in bed, hooked to an IV.

CHARLIE
Gabi. I'm so sorry, Gabi. I
couldn't...

GABI
Charlie. Listen to me. You need
to--

CHARLIE
I didn't help you...I'm sorry.

GABI
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Bela, please go now.

BÉLA
(subtitled; Hungarian)
Do not worry, Gabika. I will take
care of everything.

Béla leans in and kisses her. He leaves.

GABI
Why are you here, Charlie? Did you
not get the ticket?

Charlie takes the ticket from his jail jumpsuit.

CHARLIE
This is from you? You think I'd
leave without--

GABI
Go to Bucharest, Charlie. This
whole thing, it's been a mistake.

CHARLIE
Mistake? No...this is...this is
it, Gabi. Right? Us?

GABI

There is no it, or us. I do not love you. I could never love someone like you.

CHARLIE

What?

GABI

Don't ask what. Okay? Don't make it worse for yourself. Just go.

CHARLIE

But, Gabi--

GABI

Stop saying fucking Gabi! Okay? You make me hate my own name!

CHARLIE

What are you...I don't understand.

GABI

Fucking obviously! I told you, Charlie, you are a child. Your mommy dies and you think if you go on a big adventure you will feel something different than what you are supposed to feel.

(scoffs)

You see, it is no different for me with what Nigel put in me, Charlie. It is my adventure. I had forgotten, but now I remember.

CHARLIE

Remember what?

GABI

Who I am. A girl who will leave here and find Nigel as soon as possible so she can shoot some adventure into her veins.

CHARLIE

Fuck you. Bullshit.

GABI

No, it's the first true thing I have said to you.

Charlie reels. Gabi kills him.

GABI (cont'd)
The little boy is lost again. So
sad to see. Go away, little boy.
Bucharest or wherever you want. No
one cares. Just leave.

Charlie stands there. With his annihilated heart.

GABI (cont'd)
LEAVE!

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Charlie sits in a row of chairs. Crushed. A WOMAN we don't fully see sits next to him.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Took another powder, eh, Charlie?

It's his MOM. She gives him a reproving-Mom-smile.

CHARLIE
It's not the same, Mom.

MARY BAKER
I really should have made you do
your homework.

CHARLIE
Again with the homework?

MARY BAKER
It's a for example, Charlie. I
left you to make your own choices
before you were ready. I didn't
help you enough. You felt alone,
you were always scared.

CHARLIE
Of homework?

MARY BAKER
For example. A kid has homework,
but his Mom doesn't say hey, kid,
do your homework. The kid knows
he's supposed to do it. He thinks,
why isn't anyone telling me to do
this frigging thing I'm supposed to
be doing. Why I am being left
alone? Am I not loved enough to be
told to do my homework? See?

Charlie thinks about it. He understands.

MARY BAKER (cont'd)
I'm sorry, Charlie. Fear is a
terrible thing to have in your
heart.

CHARLIE
So here I sit.

MARY BAKER
You've come pretty far.

CHARLIE
To sit here?

MARY BAKER
It's a process.

CHARLIE
I can beat it. The fear.

MARY BAKER
You're almost there.

CHARLIE
I know what to do.

MARY BAKER
Then quit talking to your dead
mother and do it, Charlie!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie bursts into Gabi's room.

CHARLIE
Gabi, I...

She's gone.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Charlie flies down the stairs.

AT THE FRONT DESK

The Attendant points Charlie out the door.

OUTSIDE

Charlie races out, looking, looking, until he spies NIGEL'S TRUCK double-parked on the street.

CHARLIE
GABI!!

AT THE TRUCK

Nigel is preparing a NEEDLE for Gabi. She looks helpless. We NOTE theVIDEOTAPE on the seat.

NIGEL

Picture my surprise, baby. Finding it in your flat after all this time!

He ties a RUBBER BAND around her arm. Tears fill her eyes.

NIGEL (cont'd)

I've spoken to Darko. He's well relieved, to be sure.

Nigel plunges out the air, ready to inject...THE DOOR FLIES OPEN. CHARLIE puts both hands in Nigel's HAIR and YANKS him out of the truck. Nigel's slammed onto the pavement.

Charlie's got CLUMPS OF HAIR in his fists. He lifts his foot...SMASH. DOWN ON NIGEL'S FACE! Unfortunately, he's wearing jail slippers, so Nigel is only marginally fucked.

Charlie jumps in the truck, starts it and tears off.

GABI

What are you doing, Charlie?!

CHARLIE

I choose life, Gabi. I choose you! So what if it kills me?!

GABI

You are on drugs again?!

CHARLIE

You are! But we'll figure all that out after. Together!

Charlie checks the SIDE-VIEW MIRROR -- NIGEL's up and running. Like the fucking T-1000.

Uh oh. A CAR blocks the narrow street. Charlie stops. Nigel's getting bigger in the MIRROR.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Your gun. Where is it?

GABI

I don't have it!

CHARLIE

That's unfortunate. Wish me luck.

GABI

What?

Charlie gets out.

GABI (cont'd)
Charlie, no!

IN THE STREET

Well. Okay. So Nigel proceeds to beat the shit out of Charlie. Charlie lands a couple of shots, but they're pretty much accidental, and also super goofy-looking. Mostly, it's an ugly, brutal, monumental ass-whooping -- one that passes beyond the physical, into the realm of metaphor.

Poor Charlie. He gave it a shot. But there he is, splayed out in a spreading pool head-wound ooze.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
To the beginning now, dahlinge,
where it all will end.

ON CHARLIE'S FACE

Swollen and bloodied. His TEAR falls UPWARD.

We PULL BACK and FLIP OVER, to find him DANGLING from SZABADSÁG BRIDGE, HANGING upside-down over the DANUBE RIVER.

Darko's THUGS hold his legs. Darko grins down at him.

CHARLIE
GABI!!

Darko laughs. Charlie is yanked up to the rail. GABI steps forward. Charlie is confused, surprised she's with them.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Gabi? What...what are you...

Gabi smiles a heroin smile. Nigel is at her side.

KNIFE FACE
Take heart, Charlie. We'll see she gets the proper care and feeding.

CHARLIE
FUCK YOU!! FUCKING FUCKASS
FUCKFACE!!

Nigel laughs. He's got a GUN. Charlie looks into Gabi's eyes, pleading. Gabi looks around, as if waiting.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Why, Gabi?

Gabi REACHES FOR THE GUN, appealing to Nigel: let me do it. He thinks it over, then gives it to her. Gabi gulps. BLAM! She shoots Charlie in the gut.

Charlie SCREAMS. Charlie BLEEDS. Gabi leans in close to him.

GABI

You kill what you love to set it
free, Charlie. *Imádlak, édeshem fiú.*

Charlie's eyes light up. He smiles. Gabi steps back. Nigel nods. The Serbs let go. Charlie falls. To the gray waters of the river flowing below. He crashes through the surface.

ON THE BRIDGE

Gabi searches the water. Sees nothing. Behind her, POLICE LIGHTS FLASH and SIRENS SOUND. TWO SWAT VANS roar up.

Nigel and Darko share a look. Darko runs. So do his THUGS.

POLICE in URBAN ASSAULT GEAR pile out of the VANS. Some chase Darko, others break for Nigel.

Nigel looks to Gabi. She smiles and pulls a CELL PHONE from her pocket. Nigel reaches for his gun. But GABI'S GOT IT.

COPS surround him. Nigel pulls ANOTHER GUN out of his waistband. He smiles at Gabi.

NIGEL

Like I always said, baby. You're
the total pack--

BLAM! He SHOOT HIMSELF IN THE HEAD.

A POLICE CAR is there. The CHIEF INSPECTOR is at the wheel. BÉLA gets out, HOLDING A COPY OF THE GENOCIDE TAPE. Gabi smiles a thank you. He blows her a gayish kiss.

Gabi drops the gun, turning back to the railing.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Yes, dahlinge, the boy did die
today. But let us not weep for him.

Gabi's eyes well with tears.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
Let us take comfort knowing that in
his final hours...

Gabi stares into the water.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
...he came more alive than he had
in all the days of his life entire.

UNDERWATER

Charlie's body floats beneath the surface, being swept along by the current. His eyes are open, lifeless.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
For the boy chose love -- in
defiance of fear and the hazards of
this world, he chose love.

Charlie's HAND MOVES. To his stomach. He lifts his shirt.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
Fortunately, dahlinge, a funny thing
occurred. Something wondrous and
magical...

His wound is in his SIDE, not his gut, and it's merely an expertly inflicted FLESH WOUND. Fucking Gabi.

ON THE BRIDGE

Gabi smiles.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
Love chose him back.

BACK UNDERWATER

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
And so, dahlinge, the boy is reborn
a man. A man in love.

Charlie smiles.

EXT. BUCHAREST, ROMANIA - DAY

TITLE: A FEW DAYS LATER

Charlie sits at a Belle Époque outdoor cafe. The sun is shining. His face is kind of fucked up, but otherwise he looks like his old fairly handsome self.

KARL is with him. A little bruised himself, but otherwise looking good in his SUIT. LUC approaches with some BEERS. He's fine, wearing his MAPLE LEAF clothes.

KARL

I have to say, I like it here. No one has yet touched my liver, and the prostitute I fucked last night must have been at least forty.

LUC

And the people, dude? They're kind of magical. With their quietness and their decency? Pretty awesome.

Charlie picks up his beer.

CHARLIE

Anything besides beer in this beer?

LUC

Bro, you know the riot police took my stuff during the rescue.

Charlie drinks. He checks his watch. Then he gets up.

CHARLIE

I'll see you guys later.

KARL

Fucking Warren Beatty, off to put his thing down.

INT. GARA DE NORD - TRAIN STATION - DAY

Charlie waits on the platform. A TRAIN appears in the distance. But something is off -- it is FLOATING ABOVE THE RAILS. Oh shit. Charlie looks around.

On a BILLBOARD. AN OLD MARRIED COUPLE IN A DENTURE AD -- CHARLIE AND GABI.

On the ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE BOARD, over and over and over: CHARLIE & GABI: FOREVER, CHARLIE & GABI: FOREVER.

FLASH TO:

THE CAFE

Luc and Karl are laughing. Everyone around them is NAKED.

LUC

The zone of mutuality is awesome.

KARL

Fucking Bucharest is awesome.

BACK TO TRAIN STATION

The train is nearing. Charlie's feet are EIGHT INCHES OFF THE GROUND. CLOUDS OF LIGHT MOLECULES BLOW OUT FROM UNDER THE TRAIN. Charlie steadies himself as the train stops.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
This is our story, ladies and
gentlemen. Of love and the promise
it holds. Of life and of living it
in love...

GABI's in the door. She's got her CELLO, and she's wearing the CUBS BEER HELMET. She smiles. He smiles.

GABI
Say it, Charlie. Please.

CHARLIE
Gabi. Gabi. Fucking Gabi.

A CHOIR SINGS as she comes toward him.

ZSA ZSA GABOR (V.O.)
...of all and everything, dahlinge.
For love is all, and love is
everything.

Charlie gathers Gabi into his grown-up arms. And with one word, two letters...

CHARLIE
Us.

...a SUPERNOVA EXPLODES THE WORLD.

THE END

A SONG PLAYS while you sit there -- THE MAGIC POSITION, by Patrick Wolf. Hear it, and you will know. Thank you.