

Die in a Gunfight

by

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"All you need for a movie is a gun and a girl." - Godard

BLACK

City noise: CARS, SIRENS, PEOPLE.

A SCUFFLE.

NARRATOR

I wanted it to start with a bird's eye view of Manhattan. There would have been music. Something catchy. Something anyone could enjoy. It would have been in a hip, New York aesthetic. Stylish, with the title splashed across the screen in pink cursive. But, instead, it starts in an alley.

We hear a film reel begin TURNING. Somewhere, a movie has just begun.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Close on a collection of feet SLIDING over pavement. This is a fight, from the shins down. One of the pairs of feet dons designer leather shoes.

Close on the face of BEN GIBBON, 24, leisure-suited. He is sweaty and bruised, BREATHING hard.

A fist flashes into screen and slams Ben in the face; blood splatters.

Freeze on this image.

NARRATOR

Since the age of five, Benjamin Gibbon has been in 723 brawls, fights and scuffles. An approximate 38.05 per year. And he has lost-

A YOUNG BEN GETTING SLAMMED IN THE FACE

NARRATOR

Every-

A SLIGHTLY OLDER BEN GETTING SLAMMED IN THE FACE

NARRATOR

Single-

A SLIGHTLY OLDER BEN GETTING SLAMMED IN THE FACE

NARRATOR

One.

BACK IN THE ALLEY

Unfreeze the image of Ben's bloody face as it takes the punch and disappears from screen.

Pull back. Ben is on the ground, getting his ass kicked by THREE GUYS. The fight is already over. Ben loses, again. But he loses with dignity.

GUY 1

Stay down, bitch.

The guys LAUGH.

Ben struggles to get up. He is smiling at his attackers but, really, he is smiling at us.

He charges the group, getting in a couple of shots before the guys take him down again, three against one. Though taking quite a bit of punishment, Ben does not seem phased.

He struggles to his feet.

When Ben speaks, we discover that his voice is one and the same with the Narrator's. This device will continue throughout the film, with Narrator speaking in 3rd person and no direct connection ever drawn between Narrator and Ben.

BEN

You'll have...

He is almost up.

BEN (CONT'D)

To fucking...

He makes it to his feet.

BEN (CONT'D)

Kill me.

His three opponents struggle to keep him down, but Ben, a man possessed, manages to shake them off one last time, landing a wet, meaty PUNCH on the face of Guy 1.

His opponents rally, tackle him all at once, and bring him collapsing down, out of screen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pull back on Ben, lying in a heap, completely beaten. The guys stand back, astounded by the violence they have just been subjected to.

NARRATOR

With a record like that, one could easily call him a loser. But, for Ben Gibbon...

A determined Ben struggles to his feet.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Winning just isn't the point.

Slowly, Ben stands. He dusts himself off. As he does, his opponents take one, ever so slight, step backward. Ben SPITS blood and LIGHTS a cigarette. He puts his fingers to his neck, feeling his pulse.

BEN

Well, fuck, fellas. Still beating.

Ben lunges.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

BIRD'S EYE VIEW: A 1960 Ford Galaxie Sunliner scoots down a crowded street in Manhattan. MUSIC plays: something catchy, something anyone could enjoy. Over the shot, pink cursive letters are scrawled in flamboyant, loopy handwriting.

This is the beginning the Narrator imagined.

PINK CURSIVE TITLE CARD:

DIE IN A GUNFIGHT

Pull in on the Sunliner. Ben sits passenger. Driving is MUKUL (*Mick-cool*), 21, an Apache Indian with the long hair of a Brave. A tribal knife is tucked into Mukul's boot; it will remain there throughout the film.

They wear tuxedos, and pass a joint back and forth.

Ben rests his gator-booted feet on the dash. He is clean and cool, save the badly beaten face.

Montage of Manhattan: Focus on people. A vibrant New York.

This is Halloween season. Some people wear costumes. Stores are decorated. The city is gearing up for a ghoulish celebration.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Over these images of the city, two RADIO VOICES engage in a debate.

VOICE 1

Fact: Phillip Lowman is a murderer. But somehow Terrence Uberahl is to blame? He hides his face from the public? Fine. He lives behind a wall of bodyguards? Sure. Why wouldn't he want to hide from a media that only wants to crucify him?

VOICE 2

Not so fast, Frank. There are those of us who believe Uberahl's technology corrupts the integrity of human life.

On Ben and Mukul, as the debate fades out.

BEN

I love getting high in a tuxedo. There's something cool about being fucked up and looking good at the same time. Something dangerous. I'm looking at you right now, and I have to say that you look maybe ten times cooler than usual, and you're a cool motherfucker.

MUKUL

Why, thank you. You're looking sharp yourself there, Gibbon.

The car stops at a red light. On the sidewalk, a YOUNG BOY passes dressed in a police officer costume.

BEN

Say, copper. You know the last thing Che Guevera said to his assassin? (*Spanish accent*) Shoot coward, you are only going to kill a man.

Ben draws his hand, in the shape of a pistol, on the boy. The boy responds, drawing a plastic gun and firing with a vocalized BANG. Ben takes the bullet.

BLACK

TITLE CARD:

CONTINUED:

NEW YORK CITY WILDLIFE

"This is funny."

Dying words of Doc Holiday, Dentist and Consumptive  
Gunfighter, d. November 8, 1887

INT. CAVERNOUS ROOM - DARK (FIRELIGHT)

A man we will come to know as THE TUTOR, early-40s, with brooding good looks, sits holding a framed photograph of a girl in her early-twenties. He stares at the girl's image with focused intensity, muttering to himself in a French accent.

THE TUTOR

Mary... Ma-ry... Maa-ryyy...  
Little, lost soul.

EXT. MIDTOWN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS WITH PREVIOUS BEN/MUKUL SCENE

Ben and Mukul pull up to an event hall. A large sign outside the building reads: *An Evening with Sanje Padma, Presented by The Rathcart Family in support of The Good World Foundation.*

EXT. EVENT HALL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Ben and Mukul join an UPPER CLASS CROWD lined at the entrance. Mukul is incredibly stoned and will stay that way for the remainder of the scene.

A DOORMAN checks names off a list as guests enter the party. Past the door, large, ornate dining tables are set up around the room. A stage stretches the far wall, with a podium set up at the center. They reach the front of the line.

DOORMAN

(Eyeing Ben's bruises)

May I help you, sir?

BEN

Benjamin Gibbon, and this is Mukul,  
my plus one.

MUKUL

Pleasure.

The Doorman checks the list, baffled. Yes, Ben is on it.

DOORMAN

Can I see some identification?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN  
Of course.

On NANCY GIBBON, 50s, Ben's mother, cheerfully entertaining a circle of VIPs. Nancy notices Ben in the corner of her eye; a look of concern passes across her face. She recovers, graciously excuses herself, and hurries over to her son.

NANCY  
Benjamin, oh God.

DOORMAN  
Is he with you, Mrs. Gibbon?

NANCY  
Yes, he's my son.

Nancy leads Ben and Mukul to a private corner of the room. She pulls a handkerchief from her purse, dabs a corner on her tongue and attempts to rub the bruises off his face.

NANCY (CONT'D)  
Your father is going to faint. How could you let this happen? Mukul, why can't you keep him under control?

MUKUL  
Your son's an anarchist, Mrs. Gibbon.

NANCY  
No, he's a Democrat.

BEN  
Ouch. Mom, they're bruises. They don't come off.

NANCY  
(Sniffing)  
Have you two been smoking dope?

BEN  
Uh-uh.

MUKUL  
No way.

Nancy frowns quizzically, then goes back into her purse, emerging with concealer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NANCY

I think I have something we can  
cover it up with. We're close  
enough in tone, don't you think?

Ben gently pushes his mother's hand away.

BEN

Relax, mom. It is what it is.

Nancy looks closely at Ben's face, as if she still might  
think of a way to fix it.

NANCY

Your poor face. No one would ever  
guess there's a handsome boy under  
there. I wish I could count on my  
son to make better impressions.

BEN

Screw all these socialites. You're  
the only one I care about.

He throws his arm around her. Nancy smiles, she can't help  
herself.

A WAITER passes them. Ben grabs his attention.

BEN (CONT'D)

Two whiskeys, please. Something for  
you, mom?

NANCY

(Maintaining decorum)

No, thank you.

ACROSS THE ROOM

HENRY GIBBON, 50s, is in the midst of a conversation with  
several SUITS. He catches a glimpse of his wife and son. His  
eyes narrow. He finishes his sentence.

BACK ON BEN AND NANCY

NANCY (CONT'D)

Oh no. Your father. He sees us.

Henry arrives.

HENRY

You have to be joking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NANCY  
Henry, it's fine.

HENRY  
No, it's not fine, Nancy. He can't be seen like this. I'm nearing the end of the most important case of my career. And he wreaks of reefer smoke.

(To Ben)  
Try to get out without anyone recognizing you.

WILLIAM (O.S.)  
Well, well. If it isn't the illusive Benjamin Gibbon.

WILLIAM RATHCART, 50s, heartily enters the screen with his wife, BEATRICE RATHCART, 50s. Beatrice wears a Valium smile and carries the air of a sedated puppy.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
Good God, son. What happened to your face?

BEATRICE  
My! Did we have an accident?

NANCY  
It's nothing. Just a little scuffle. You know how boys are.

HENRY  
Benjamin was actually just leaving, unfortunately. He has a prior, unbreakable engagement.

BEN  
I wanted to come by and show my face.

William CHORTLES.

WILLIAM  
A sense of humor! Excellent! That's important when one is in the business of taking beatings.

Beatrice, a tipsy sidekick, CHUCKLES into her drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HENRY

Funny you should say so. I trust  
you'll keep it in mind. Closing  
arguments aren't far off.

William bristles.

WILLIAM

Fine manners, Henry. This isn't the  
time or the place.

HENRY

Then maybe you should save your  
jokes for the courtroom.

William is enraged, but falters.

WILLIAM

Maybe you should save your jokes  
for...

HENRY

For where, William? Speak up.

Things are heating up.

WILLIAM

I'll show you where.

Things devolve into a stare-down.

Mukul is a stoned spectator. Bloodshot eyes and a dazed  
smile. He collects two whiskeys from the waiter and hands one  
to Ben.

BEATRICE

So, what are your plans, Benjamin?

WILLIAM

(With his eyes on Henry)  
Yeah, Benjamin. How's your future  
looking?

Ben sucks up an ice-cube from his drink and loudly CRUNCHES  
it in his teeth.

BEN

My grandfather and I were close,  
and he left me a ton of money. So,  
nothing. I'm thinking I want to do  
nothing for a while. Then maybe  
open a video store.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

WILLIAM  
(Satisfied)  
Throw a steak on that eye, son.

BEN  
Yes, sir.

William takes one last, extended look at Ben's face, enjoying Henry's obvious embarrassment.

Exit Rathcarts.

HENRY  
(To himself)  
Son of a freaking-

NANCY  
Calm down, darling.

Henry turns to Ben, his forced smile gone.

HENRY  
Make sure no one else notices you  
on the way out.

BEN  
Dad, I just-

HENRY  
(Whispered rage)  
Get the fuck out.

On Ben, red in the face, hurt. He turns to go, followed by Mukul.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Benjamin. Don't steal anything.

Ben acknowledges with a wave over his shoulder.

Henry leads Nancy back into the crowd. Neither of them notices Ben and Mukul duck into the coat room by the exit.

INT. COAT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben is still. Mukul stands by. Suddenly, Ben PUNCHES the wall hard, three times in quick succession. He takes a BREATH and calms himself.

ON THE STAGE - A LITTLE LATER

William ascends the stage to APPLAUSE. He stands at the podium and addresses the crowd, now seated at the tables.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM

I want to thank you all for being here tonight in support of The Good World Foundation and its many worthy causes. I know you're all probably too busy writing checks to listen to a speech.

William pauses to share a CHUCKLE with the crowd.

On Henry, not enjoying the praise received by his opponent.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

So I have decided to spare you. I would simply like to acknowledge my family, who is seated before me: my beautiful wife, Beatrice, and my wonderful daughter, Mary.

We lose William's voice - who, in spite of his promise, is launching into a speech - as we move in on MARY RATHCART, 22, wearing the stoic expression of a well-behaved socialite.

We recognize Mary. She is the girl from the Tutor's photograph.

NARRATOR

Mary Rathcart first upset her parents' expectations when, at eight-years of age, she was asked to leave Manhattan's most prestigious grade-school.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY

YOUNG MARY, 8, sits hidden in the corner of the library, reading a book and smoking a cigarette. She ashes absentmindedly, so engrossed that she fails to notice the flames beginning to flare on the bookshelf beside her.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

STUDENTS and TEACHERS watch the school burn to the ground.

NARRATOR

By the time she was twelve, she had been kicked out of every private school on the island for-

CUT TO:

MONTAGE: YOUNG MARY, AGES 8-12, SITTING BETWEEN WILLIAM AND BEATRICE IN VARIOUS CONFERENCES WITH VARIOUS HEADMASTERS

HEADMASTER 1  
Flabbergasting precociousness.

NARRATOR  
And-

HEADMASTER 2  
Unabashed coquettishness.

NARRATOR  
And-

HEADMASTER 3  
Pathological contrariness.

NARRATOR  
And-

HEADMASTER 4  
Preternatural indecency.

EXT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - DAY

YOUNG MARY, 12, walks through the gate of a lavish Upper West Side townhouse.

NARRATOR  
Resorting to private-tutoring, the Rathcarts employed a decorated scholar and family friend in the continuance of their problematic daughter's education.

INT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - LIBRARY

Young Mary sits with the Tutor, who we just saw fawning over an older Mary's photograph.

Young Mary recites from a book.

YOUNG MARY  
(French)  
"I am. I exist. This is true whenever it is conceived in my mind. I think, therefore, I am."

Young Mary lowers the book, the gears turning in her mind.

YOUNG MARY (CONT'D)  
That's kind of like ghosts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE TUTOR  
 (Intrigued)  
 How so?

YOUNG MARY  
 They keep existing because they  
 keep thinking, even after their  
 body's gone. The soul is still  
 there. Like Casper.

THE TUTOR  
 (Revelatory)  
 Spot on, *le petit...* Spot on.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Young Mary and the Tutor stroll through the park. The Tutor is lecturing animatedly.

NARRATOR  
 Mary's young intellect was  
 extraordinary by any estimation.

On Young Mary, only paying half-attention to her lesson. She watches a group of children playing in the grass.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
 But, like most gifted children, she  
 often witnessed the world around  
 her as if from a distance, and was  
 prone to extended bouts of  
 loneliness.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM

TEEN MARY, 14, dressed in ripped jeans and a flannel shirt, her hair dyed black, lights a joint. Her room is plastered with rock posters and scattered with lit candles. She puts Nirvana's *Rape Me* up high on her stereo and moshes around the room.

NARRATOR  
 Over time, her behavior remained at  
 odds with her parents, and, at  
 fourteen...

William bursts through the door and scowls. Teen Mary freezes, the smoking joint dangling from her lips.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
 She was sent to boarding school in  
 Paris, where her talents would be  
 cultivated in a more regimented  
 environment.

INT. PARISIAN BOARDING SCHOOL DORMITORY - NIGHT

A strict-faced NUN turns the light out and SHUTS the bedroom door on TEEN MARY, 15, a set of blonde, Croatian twins we will come to know as SNJEZENA and SVJETLANA, 15 (here), and a FOURTH GIRL, 15.

As the door closes, Teen Mary and the twins throw off their sheets, emerging scandalously clad. They immediately go about tying their sheets together.

The fourth girl turns on her bedside lamp.

FOURTH GIRL  
 (Accented hissing)  
 Again? Are you serious?

SVJETLANA  
 (Thick Croatian accent)  
 Say a word and we cut your fucking  
 tongue out.

EXT. PARISIAN BOARDING SCHOOL DORMITORY - NIGHT

The sheet-rope unravels out the window. One-by-one, the three girls slide down and run off into the night.

PARIS MONTAGE - NIGHT

Teen Mary and the twins tear through the streets of Paris, doing all the things underage kids do when they get away from home.

INT. EVENT HALL - PRESENT

On Mary.

NARRATOR  
 But time has a way of dousing any fire, and, over the years, Mary's had subsided into a vague self-doubt. Twenty-two, and a graduate of the Sorbonne, Mary found herself right back where she started.

INT. COAT ROOM - SAME TIME

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben and Mukul rush through the room, removing the coats from the hangers and piling them in each other's arms. They make for a mad-cap comic sight: hustling from one coat to the next while attempting to maintain the mounting armfuls. Mukul slips on a fur coat and falls to the ground.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And, just as before, she was ready  
for something new.

INT. EVENT HALL

William is finishing his speech.

WILLIAM

And now, without further adieu, I  
give to you, the talented Sanje  
Padma.

The crowd rises in APPLAUSE as William gives the stage to SANJE PADMA, a portly Indian carrying a sitar. The crowd settles, Sanje readies his instrument, and launches into a stylized rendition of Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Freebird*.

Suddenly, there is a RUCKUS by the exit. Sanje stumbles on his sitar, and the crowd turns in offended shock to see: Ben and Mukul, heavy with coats, steam roll the Doorman and make their escape.

William, with a wave and a smile, assures the confused Sanje it is okay to continue. The crowd, though flustered, maintains a ruffled calm.

On Henry and Nancy, mortified.

HENRY

He stole the coats again.

On William, livid.

WILLIAM

Gibbon stole the fucking coats  
again.

WHISPERS in the crowd: *That damn Gibbon boy stole the coats again.*

On Mary, hearing her father's words and staring at the exit, a slight smile on her face.

## EXT. EVENT HALL ENTRANCE

Ben and Mukul flee two steps at a time. Stray coats fly from their arms and catch in the wind.

Freeze on this image.

## NARRATOR

When Ben was twenty-one, he took a leave of absence from University and hopped a bus out west unannounced. He contacted his family only once, via mail, with an affectionate letter confirming his health and safety, which he signed, *Big Non Be*, an anagram for *Ben Gibbon*, with one *B* left out. He returned seven months later in the company of Mukul.

The image unfreezes, and the boys hop into their convertible, throwing the coats in the backseat and SPEEDING OFF.

## NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Neither Ben nor Mukul ever told the story of how they came together. But they had been inseparable ever since.

## EXT. DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Ben and Mukul move down a line of cardboard homes. Their arms are piled high with the stolen coats, which they hand out to the pleasantly surprised homeless residents of the boxes.

## BEN

His name's Uberahl. Terrence Uberahl.

CUT TO:

## COVER OF TIME MAGAZINE

A blackened silhouette with a question mark on the figure's head. It reads: *Some say Genius. Some say Villain. Time's Invisible Man of the Year. Who is Terrence Uberahl?*

## BACK TO STREET

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Lowman's suing his company, Global Network, because he says teletransportation destroyed his soul and made him a murderer.

MUKUL

How so?

BEN

The thing about it is, the first machine doesn't send your actual body. Instead, it copies you, breaks you down, sends your info to another machine, and that machine puts you back together with new shit. It's kind of like faxing yourself. Some shit like that. I don't really get it. It's confusing. All I know is, Lowman used to be an accountant, now he's a regular Mickey Knox. He transported to some client meeting, then, completely out of nowhere, stabbed his client to death with a corkscrew.

A HOMELESS MAN, 60s, is sitting in front of his box on the sidewalk. Ben hands him a coat.

HOMELESS MAN

This is a girl's coat, kid. You got something else?

Ben takes the coat back, definitely a girl's coat, and hands him a man's coat.

Ben and Mukul continue down the line of boxes, resuming their discussion.

BEN

My dad's argument is, Lowman did it because something got left behind with his original physical material.

MUKUL

His soul.

BEN

Precisely. Now he's a soulless killer, so the argument goes.

CONTINUED: (2)

MUKUL  
Gotcha.

BEN  
If my dad wins, he will have  
effectively proven the legal  
existence of the human soul.  
They're calling it the case of the  
century.

Ben balls his fist - on the hand he used to punch the wall -  
and winces in pain.

MUKUL  
You okay?

BEN  
Yeah.

INT. THE RATHCART UPTOWN BROWNSTONE - PARLOR ROOM - LATER

William, Beatrice and Mary stand over a coffee table, glasses  
raised.

WILLIAM  
A toast. To Mary. To her academic  
success and renewed commitment to a  
life of substance and virtue.

BEATRICE  
Here, here.

They CLINK glasses and sip. The admonishment embedded in  
William's compliments isn't lost on Mary.

MARY  
Thanks, dad.

They sit. Beatrice lifts a Vogue magazine off the table and  
pages through.

WILLIAM  
You know, I just can't stomach it.  
That's twice he stole the coats.  
Right in front of our eyes, no  
less. It's an affront. And an  
embarrassment to us. Henry will  
just have to write a check this  
time.

BEATRICE  
It's best not to get embroiled,  
darling.

CONTINUED:

MARY  
His name is Ben, right?

BEATRICE  
Benjamin Gibbon.

MARY  
And he does this kind of thing  
often?

BEATRICE  
(A hint of warning)  
He's high-society's outlaw.

WILLIAM  
You know Felix Graham? The  
psychiatrist that used to golf with  
me before his skiing accident? He  
had a few sessions with the kid  
some years back. Said he had a  
screw loose. Said he had some kind  
of death wish, taking all those  
beatings. Imagine a psychiatrist  
saying that about someone? That  
little punk better not pull any  
stunts at the Halloween Gala. In  
fact, I think I just might suggest  
he not be welcome.

BEATRICE  
Have you decided on a costume for  
the Gala, Mary?

MARY  
I was thinking about going as  
"Alice in Chains". There's a band  
called-

WILLIAM  
Now that you're back from Paris,  
people will be curious to see the  
lady you've become. We'll need  
something that fits the bill.

On Mary, stifled.

INT. BEN AND MUKUL'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

From the look of things, it's obvious Ben has money. But the  
apartment is decorated with an unaffected humility.

*Animal Planet* plays on the television. The current focus is  
on gibbon monkeys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANIMAL PLANET NARRATOR  
 (Female, British accent)  
 Young male gibbon, upon maturation, will challenge the dominant male for control of the family with the gibbon song. The dominant male responds in kind, warning the adolescent to desist. If the adolescent continues its challenge, the dominant male will respond with a violent attack, chasing the adolescent from the family. At which point, the young gibbon strikes off on its own, in search of a mate.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - BATHROOM

Ben leans into the mirror, studying his bruises. He runs a finger over his cuts. There is a sense of ceremony in Ben's focused survey of the damage done to him.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

Ben takes off his tux jacket and hangs it in his closet. The girl's coat is on his bed. He picks it up and throws it over a chair. Something falls from the pocket. He picks it up.

It's an invitation. Simple, white lettering, over black: *Read the directions and directly you will be directed in the right direction. Below this, a Queens address and a date, 10/25.*

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Mary's room looks like a hotel suite at the Ritz-Carlton. Any hint of the girl who once lived here is gone. She SIGHS, approaching her window and staring out into the night.

MARY  
 (Quietly, to herself)  
 Ben Gibbon.

EXT. THE LOWER EAST SIDE TO MIDTOWN - FROM LATE AFTERNOON TO EARLY EVENING

Over whimsical MUSIC (think *Minor Swing* by Django Reinhardt), Ben and Mukul emerge from a bike store with new bikes. Ben wears a New York Jets football helmet, minus the face bars.

They cruise serenely through the streets of the city. Ben smokes a cigarette and, at times, takes pulls from a flask he keeps in his jacket pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Not looking where he is going, Ben SLAMS into the back of a hearse. The music SKIPS. Mukul takes note, and calmly comes to a halt. Ben rises slowly, dusts himself off, assures a worried HEARSE DRIVER he is okay and resumes his bike ride. Just as calmly, Mukul follows behind him. The music resumes.

Soon, as if on que, Ben and Mukul nod to each other and part ways.

EXT. QUEENSBOROUGH BRIDGE - MAGIC HOUR

Ben bikes across the bridge.

Pull back. Ben is a tiny creature crossing a giant bridge in a giant city. The sun sets over Manhattan.

EXT. QUEENS - CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Ben hops off his bike and leaves it on the street. He turns a corner, arriving at a black door marked with the address from the invitation. Ben opens the door on a dark hallway, and ventures in.

INT. CLUB - HALLWAY

At the end of the hall, an ornate picture frame lines a hole cut into the wall. Standing in the frame is SNJEZENA (*Snee-edge-enna*), early 20s, a tough, blonde, Croatian bombshell whom we recognize as the adult version of one of Mary's boarding school accomplices. She is dressed like a Geisha.

BEN

Hi. I'm Ben Gibbon.

Snjezena smiles. This is new. When she speaks, it is in a thick Croatian accent.

SNJEZENA

Hello, Ben. I am Snjezena. Do you have an invitation?

Ben reaches into his pocket and pulls out the invitation.

SNJEZENA (CONT'D)

Thank you, love.

Snjezena looks at the invitation, looks at Ben, looks back at the invitation (at a serial number in the bottom corner). She smiles quizzically. She's on to him.

SNJEZENA (CONT'D)

Go right ahead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Snjezena nods to TWO SUITED BOUNCERS standing by a door at the end of the hall. They step aside, and Ben passes through.

INT. CLUB - MAIN ROOM

POV: The door opens on a cross between a rave and a Japanese tea room. The rambunctious CLIENTELE sip alcohol from china tea cups, served by Kimono-clad WAITRESSES.

Lining the walls are private rooms sectioned off from the main floor. The walls of these rooms, facing out toward the crowd, are sliding rice paper screens, backlit, so we can see the silhouettes of the people within.

INT. THE CLUB - HALLWAY

Mary approaches Snjezena's window.

MARY  
Hey, stranger.

SNJEZENA  
Mary, you came!

MARY  
Wouldn't miss a reunion with my two favorite twins.

SNJEZENA  
It is so happy to see you. We go for coffee soon? Catch up?

MARY  
I'd love to. (*Sheepish*) I lost the invite you sent me.

SNJEZENA  
Yes, I already know this. A beautiful imposter boy with bruises just used it. He smiled nicely so I let him in.

MARY  
A boy?

SNJEZENA  
A boy named Ben.

MARY  
(Shock)  
He's in there?

CONTINUED:

SNJEZENA  
Come.

Snjezena leads Mary to the door at the end of the hall, opens it a crack and points Ben out, now wandering rather aimlessly around the club with a drink in his hand.

SNJEZENA (CONT'D)  
Do you know him?

MARY  
I know of him.

SNJEZENA  
(Smiling mischievously)  
Mary mystery girl. I missed you.

INT. CLUB - MAIN ROOM

Mary makes her way through the club and arrives at the bar, tended by SVJETLANA (*Svee-et-lanna*), Snjezena's twin.

MARY  
(Over the noise)  
Hey, stranger.

SVJETLANA  
Draga! Is it you?

MARY  
It's me.

SVJETLANA  
This is happy. We go for coffee  
soon?

MARY  
Definitely.

SVJETLANA  
Can I get you a drink?

MARY  
No, it's okay. I can't stay long. I  
just wanted to come say hi. But  
let's do that coffee.

SVJETLANA  
(Teasing)  
Look at Miss Mary, all grown up. No  
time for clubs, anymore? Pity,  
pity. Coffee it is! Coffee like  
grown up kittens. Like cats!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Svjetlana GROWLS at Mary, leaving her to attend to patrons at the other end of the bar.

A pair of hands slide over Mary's eyes.

THE TUTOR  
Peek-a-boo, guess who?

Mary pulls the hands from her eyes and turns around.

MARY  
Oh, my god! What are you doing here?

THE TUTOR  
I heard you were back. Of course, I had to see you.

MARY  
But how did you know I was here?

THE TUTOR  
How else? I followed you.

The Tutor smiles, as if proud of himself.

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)  
I got us a room so we can talk away from these animals. Venez.

He takes Mary by the hand, leading her away from the bar. We follow them across the club and watch them enter a rice paper room, but we remain outside as the door slides shut. Instead, we enter the room next door.

INT. BEN'S RICE PAPER ROOM

Ben sits alone, drinking, a little shy. There are several clusters of people in the room. One COUPLE, sitting at the end of a couch, stares at Ben. They are WAYNE, late 50s, and BARBIE, early 30s. Wayne is a walrus of a man, dressed like a Texas oil baron. Barbie is blonde, looking like Mamie Van Doren somewhere between her heyday and her tailspin.

WAYNE  
(Southern draw)  
How'd you get that black eye?

BEN  
Defending a woman's honor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WAYNE  
 (Chuckling)  
 Yeah, right.

There is a long pause. Wayne stares.

WAYNE (CONT'D)  
 My wife thinks you're cute. Cute  
 like a rabbit. (Pause) Hey, Rabbit.  
 This here's my Barbie. And I'm  
 Wayne.

BEN  
 (Extending his hand)  
 Nice to meet you. I'm Ben.

Wayne shakes Ben's hand. Barbie doesn't.

WAYNE  
 Barbie, why don't you go sit over  
 there with your new pet rabbit?

Barbie slides next to Ben.

BEN  
 (Uncomfortable)  
 You guys from around here?

WAYNE  
 Hey, Rabbit. You know what I always  
 thought would be a cool way to die?  
 In a shark attack. Imagine that!  
 Seriously, imagine it! Take a  
 minute and think about it. A big,  
 giant fish with big, giant, razor-  
 sharp teeth. Eating you!

Wayne pulls a bag of powder from his pocket and dumps a small amount onto the table in front of them. He produces a butterfly knife and uses it to cut the powder into lines.

WAYNE (CONT'D)  
 Imagine feeling your arm get yanked  
 out of its socket. Imagine swimming  
 in your own guts. There's a horny  
 beast circling you. It's getting  
 turned on by your squirming.

Wayne scoops up some powder on the knife and SNIFFS it off the blade. Tossing the knife on the table, he places his hand above his forehead, mimicking a fin and the movement of a shark around its victim. Wayne circles in on Ben, the victim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WAYNE (CONT'D)  
It fucks with you. It hangs back  
like so, then... *rah!*

Wayne lunges toward Ben and takes a bite out of his side. Ben jolts.

INT. MARY'S RICE PAPER ROOM - SAME TIME

The Tutor sits and runs his eyes over Mary.

THE TUTOR  
I missed you.

MARY  
Seriously, what the hell are you  
doing here? This place is so not  
you.

The Tutor grins guiltily.

MARY (CONT'D)  
You really followed me?

THE TUTOR  
*Mais oui.*

Mary LAUGHS.

MARY  
That's totally weird! (Coy) Now I'm  
embarrassed.

THE TUTOR  
Embarrassment has no place among  
friends. What matters is I'm here.

INT. BEN'S RICE PAPER ROOM - SAME TIME

Close on Ben's face. Wayne's knife is under his nose. The choice already made for him, he SNIFFS the powder off the blade.

WAYNE  
We're all running around like we're  
too special to get eaten. But we're  
not. We're just monkeys in suits,  
Rabbit. Silly, little mascots for  
the great big organ grinder in the  
sky. (Mimicking a monkey) *Ooh ooh  
ah ah!* What about you, Rabbit?

CUT TO:

*BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID, AS THE HEROES BURST THROUGH THE DOOR OF THEIR CABIN, OUT INTO THE SUN.*

BACK ON BEN

A flurry of GUNSHOTS rings out.

BEN

I want to die in a gunfight.

Wayne Hoots.

WAYNE

Well, goddam! Here I was thinking you was just a scared little baby rabbit.

(To Barbie)

You hear that, Barbie?

(To Ben)

Look at her. You got her all tuned up. It's true what they say. Every broad likes a bad boy.

INT. MARY'S RICE PAPER ROOM - SAME TIME

THE TUTOR

(Excitedly)

You must come visit me at my home, like old times. We could be more comfortable there, catch up the way old friends should.

Though Mary maintains her playful approach, a slight caution is beginning to creep into her words.

MARY

We'll see. But, seriously, stop with the following thing, weirdo. Just call me next time!

The Tutor grows suddenly serious.

THE TUTOR

Are you ashamed of me, *le petit*?

MARY

(Taken aback)

What? What do you mean? There's nothing for me to be ashamed of.

THE TUTOR

Have you forgotten our wonderful conversations?

CONTINUED:

MARY  
 (Flustered)  
 Of course not.

THE TUTOR  
 Your clarity of mind is a precious  
 asset. *Like casper!* Do you  
 remember?

The Tutor's unexpected turn has Mary overwhelmed.

MARY  
 Of course, I remember.

THE TUTOR  
 Would it trouble you greatly to  
 stop by and lend me a bit of that  
 youthful wisdom? I have an idea I  
 would like to discuss, and we  
 should toast your graduation! *Oui?*

MARY  
 Yeah, okay. I'll stop by.

The Tutor drops his serious tone, and brightens.

THE TUTOR  
 Bravo! You won't regret it.

INT. BEN'S RICE PAPER ROOM - SAME TIME

Close on Ben's face, wide eyed and sweaty. Drugged. Suddenly, the knife shoots into frame, held just below his nose.

WAYNE  
 Football?

BEN  
 Wayne, I think I'm too fucked up.

WAYNE  
 (To Barbie)  
 Rabbit's too fucked up, Barbie.

BEN  
 Way too fucked up.

Wayne still wants Ben to take the drugs.

BEN (CONT'D)  
 No, Sir. I think I'm quite alright.  
 In fact, I think I should be  
 leaving now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben rises to go. Wayne twitches. He pulls the knife back and quickly SNIFFS the line of powder off the blade. He SNORTS and rises quickly to his feet, stopping Ben in his tracks.

WAYNE

You wait just a goddam second, now.  
We were just getting started here,  
Rabbit. (To Barbie) Barb, you wanna  
dance with Rabbit?

BARBIE

Yes!

Barbie jumps to her feet, launching into an over-the-top sexy dance.

WAYNE

Dance with her, Rabbit.

For a brief moment, Ben does his best to comply, awkwardly affecting a dance while Barbie inches in.

BARBIE

This is fun!

WAYNE

(Pleased)

Yes, ma'am!

Barbie shimmies downward, dropping it low. Ben pulls her up by her shoulders.

BEN

Let's stay up here. It's nicer up here.

She turns her back to him, swinging her arms in a windmill.

BEN (CONT'D)

Wow. That's unusual, but, okay.

Then, Barbie thrusts herself backward, grinding her ass into his crotch.

BEN (CONT'D)

I actually think I should be going.

Ben stops dancing and turns to leave. Wayne gets in his way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WAYNE

I said dance, Rabbit. My wife is my  
shining angel, and if my angel  
wants to dance, my angel's gonna  
dance.

(To Barbie)

Ain't that right, angel?

BARBIE

(From the ground)

That's right, sugar pie.

WAYNE

(Threatening)

You wouldn't aim to hurt my angel's  
feelings, would you rabbit?

BEN

(Gathering courage)

No Sir, Wayne. But, like I said, I  
have to be leaving now. I apologize  
for letting your beautiful bride  
down, but-

Ben takes a big gulp, gathering courage.

BEN (CONT'D)

You're either going to let me past,  
or I'm going to make you let me.

Wayne tosses his hat.

WAYNE

So you want to dance with Wayne?  
Now, there's some sand!

(To Barbie)

Step aside, darling. Looks like me  
and Rabbit are gonna throw down.

(To Rabbit)

Sure on it. We're gonna throw it  
right on down.

INT. MARY'S RICE PAPER ROOM - SAME TIME

Mary sits alone. Shaken, contemplative, smoking a cigarette.

Suddenly, with a CRASH, Wayne and Ben come bursting through  
the wall. Wayne tumbles on top of Ben and starts pummeling  
his face.

Ben, in the midst of the onslaught, looks up at Mary. Mary,  
shocked, looks down at Ben. As Ben takes a punch to the face,  
the image freezes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mary is smiling. There is a sharp glint in her eye, ringing out, DING. Love at first sight.

BLACK

We hear a film reel SPIN EMPTY. The reel is REMOVED and REPLACED with another. The SPINNING resumes.

TITLE CARD:

NEW YORK CITY LOVE

"Josephine..."

Dying words of Napoleon Bonaparte,  
French Emperor, d. May 5, 1821

FADE INTO BLURRY SCREEN

POV: We are seeing through Ben's eyes. His vision is blurred and confused. Mary comes into our view, leaning over us.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ben is sprawled out on the Bed, still wearing his clothes from the night before. He has been beaten badly this time.

Mary is huddled in her trench coat on a couch across the room. She wakes, rubbing her eyes, and takes in her surroundings. She stands and timidly approaches the sleeping Ben.

Ben jolts awake, quickly rising. Mary, surprised, jumps back. They face each other.

BEN

Hi.

MARY

Hi.

BEN

Thanks for getting me home.

MARY

My pleasure. Are you okay?

Ben says nothing. Mary steps forward, almost cautiously. Coming close, she reaches out and places her fingers on his face, running them over his cuts.

CONTINUED:

MARY (CONT'D)  
You should wash off all this blood.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - BATHROOM

Ben's hand turns the shower knob.

Ben stands in front of the mirror, getting a first look at his face. He examines himself. He looks pretty bad this time. His expression betrays his first thought: *There's a hot girl in the other room, and he looks like shit.*

Ben psyches himself up. He takes a step back and, in the fashion of a gunfighter, draws on his reflection. In a whisper, he SHOOTS, and holsters his gun.

He turns, but quickly turns back, drawing and SHOOTING again.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - SHORTLY AFTER

Ben exits the bathroom in a towel. He is covered in bruises.

He pauses; Mary is gone. There is a note on his bed:

*Juliet's at 7? Mary.*

INT. BEN AND MUKUL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Mukul is drinking a cup of coffee. Ben enters in a fresh leisure suit. Mukul hands him a cup. They drink.

MUKUL  
Who's the girl?

BEN  
(Taking a sip)  
I don't know.

MUKUL  
We should go.

They each take a final gulp.

A TELEVISION SCREEN

An all-American family hurries into a large building with a sign that reads: *Global Network.*

Pull in on the sun, setting over the building.

QUICK MONTAGE: Locations all over the world. Paris, Cairo, Tokyo, Moscow, etc.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stop on the same sun, setting over the ocean.

Pull back on the family, watching the sun from lounge chairs on a tropical beach.

COMMERCIAL NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 (A la James Earl Jones)  
 Global Network. Opening doors all over the world.

The commercial ends, and the screen flickers to an image of Henry Gibbon, superimposed over flashing images of accident victims in various forms of agony.

SCREEN HENRY  
 Head injuries, poisoning, soul loss. Victims of accidents may not always know the extent of their injuries.

EXT. LONG ISLAND - DAY

An aerial view of Ben and Mukul in the Sunliner as it darts along a suburban road and pulls into the gated driveway of a sprawling estate.

The voice of Henry Gibbon runs over this image.

SCREEN HENRY (V.O.)  
 What may appear to be a simple injury, could lead to lifelong pain and suffering. Symptoms of serious damage may not always be easily recognizable, but our law firm has the medical resources necessary to spot them. Accident victims, you have rights, and you deserve compensation for your misfortune.

INT. THE GIBBON ESTATE - PARLOR

Henry's commercial plays on a 52 inch, mounted LCD television. Henry is sitting on a leather couch, watching his own commercial.

SCREEN HENRY  
 To enforce all your rights, especially your right to money, call 1-800-921-PAIN. And for enquiries regarding the upcoming class action suit against Global Network, call 1-800-GOT-SOUL.  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCREEN HENRY (CONT'D)  
 I'm Henry Gibbon, the only injury  
 lawyer.

Off-screen, the front door OPENS and SHUTS.

BEN (O.S.)  
 Hello, hello!

INT. GIBBON FAMILY DINING ROOM - LATER

Henry and Nancy sit across the table from Ben and Mukul at a mahogany dining table in a conservatively decorated dining room. They eat breakfast.

BEETHOVEN plays.

Tension.

NANCY  
 Your poor face. I can't look at  
 that face. I just don't understand  
 how you let these things happen to  
 you. Did you forget that you're a  
 nice boy?

HENRY  
 He's an embarrassment is what he  
 is.

NANCY  
 (Under her breath)  
 Henry, please.

An awkward pause.

MUKUL  
 I like the choice of music, Mrs.  
 Gibbon.

NANCY  
 Thank you, Mukul.

BEN  
 (Sincere)  
 Do you guys know what Beethoven's  
 last words were?

Henry EXHALES angrily.

BEN (CONT'D)  
 (Latin) "Plaudite, amici, commedia  
 finita est." "Friends, applaud, the  
 comedy is finished."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY  
God damn it!

Henry tosses a bread basket across the table. Mukul ducks a flying roll.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
I've had enough of this nonsense.  
You're a disgrace, Benjamin! You're  
not fit for this family!

NANCY  
Henry, please don't.

HENRY  
He steals coats from charity events! My twenty-four-year-old son! How do you think that reflects on me? I am this (*shows "this" with his fingers*) close to winning the most important case of my career. I'm on the verge of making history, and you are single-handedly dismantling this family's reputation. A reputation *I* have worked my entire life to build! A reputation I am entirely unwilling to allow you and your... (*sideways glance at Mukul*) Shaman to tamper with.

BEN  
Mukul is my very good friend, and our guest. Please, leave him out of this.

HENRY  
(Eerie calm)  
Benjamin, I'm going to ask that you keep yourself quarantined. We won't be requiring your presence at the Halloween Gala.

NANCY  
Henry.

HENRY  
You are a disgrace. To yourself and to *my* name.

Silence. CHEWING. The table awaits Ben's next move.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Suddenly, Ben shoots a threatening glance at Henry, and HOOTS, like a gibbon monkey. Henry stares at Ben; Ben holds his stare, and HOOTS again. The challenge has been made.

Henry puffs his chest and HOOTS back. Ben POUNDS his fist on the table, HOOTING twice. Henry lets out an enraged HOOT, sweeping the plates and dishes off the table.

Ben jumps on the table. He lifts a plate of sausages and flings it across the room. Henry follows suit, leaping on the table and letting out a warcry HOOT.

In a tense moment, father and son stand facing each other on the table. They hold each other's eyes. This is Ben's last chance to submit. But, inhaling deeply and throwing his head back, Ben releases his most savage HOOT yet.

Henry lunges. Ben dives and runs up the stairs to the second floor. Henry follows closely.

Reaching the top of the stairs, Ben doubles back and leaps off the banister, grabbing hold of the dangling chandelier. He swings back and forth, HOOTING at his father, who watches from the top of the stairs. Henry takes a running leap and dives at the chandelier, knocking Ben to the floor.

Henry pursues Ben. They lay waste to the house in their battle.

#### BACK TO THE MOMENT BEFORE THE CHALLENGE

Close on Ben's face. Tears well up in his eyes. He swallows hard, fighting them back.

He rises from his chair and leaves the room.

MUKUL

Thank you for breakfast, Mr. and  
Mrs. Gibbon.

Mukul dutifully follows.

#### INT. RATHCART UPTOWN BROWNSTONE - SAME TIME

On Mary. She is on her best behavior. Her hair is clean, tied back tight, and she wears a Sunday dress. She takes small, careful bites from her fork, with all the grace of someone who has been taught just how to do so.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

I'm not even going to ask where you  
were. I don't want to know. But  
this is truly disappointing, Mary.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 We've always had such high hopes  
 for you, and yet you continually  
 let us down.

MARY  
 I'm sorry.

Pull back to reveal Mary at breakfast with her parents. They eat quietly.

Beatrice leans forward to take a bite from her fork. She misses, and the food slides off the fork, splashing in egg yoke.

WILLIAM  
 I sincerely hope you are. In this world, you are only as good as *they* think you are. And they *know* you are Mary Rathcart. I can't have you out all night, doing God knows what. Especially not now.  
 Respectability is nothing more than an absence of scandal in the face of scrutiny. Without scrutiny, there can be no respect. And without respect, you're nothing. Sooner or later, you'll need to accept that.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Mary stands in her room, frustrated by the confrontation at breakfast. She glances around and takes a deep BREATH.

She makes a decision.

She goes to her closet and removes a large duffel. She moves about her room, resolutely stuffing clothes into the bag.

INT. JULIET'S - EVENING

Ben sits in a diner booth. He glances at his watch: 7:10.

NARRATOR  
 At ten past seven, Ben began to wonder if Mary would show up at all. He didn't want to care but, the truth was, he did. He had spent the day thinking about his interesting, though brief, encounter with her, and was relieved that she wanted to see him again.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Now, confronted with the possibility that Mary had reconsidered, a dim sense of regret began to creep in on him.

Mary enters the restaurant and spots Ben. She approaches, her bag slung over her shoulder. She sits.

BEN

You showed.

MARY

Did you think I wouldn't?

Ben shrugs, attempting to be casual.

BEN

Where are you going?

MARY

What do you mean? I'm not going anywhere. I just got here, dummy.

BEN

You're carrying a bag. I figure, you packed a bag because you're going somewhere.

MARY

(Coy)

No. Not going anywhere.

BEN

So, what's in the bag?

MARY

Not much. A couple outfits. A few other things. What's with the third degree? Can't a girl carry a bag?

Ben points down at the bag.

BEN

That's no bag. That's a suitcase.

MARY

(Playing defeated)

Well, if you must know, I had to unexpectedly vacate my residence. Temporarily.

BEN

Where are you staying?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY

I haven't figured that out yet.  
 But, don't you worry about me.  
*(Blatantly changing the subject)* I  
 had such a big breakfast but, for  
 some reason, I really want waffles,  
 with lots of butter and syrup. What  
 are you feeling? I could be into  
 splitting two things, but it  
 depends on what you get.

What Ben says next, comes from a place within him over which  
 he has no control.

BEN

You can stay with me.

Mary smiles. She got what she wanted.

MARY

Really?

BEN

It's not bedbugs, is it?

MARY

What do you mean?

BEN

You said you had to vacate your  
 residence. That sounds like  
 bedbugs.

MARY

(Laughing)

No. Not bedbugs. Are you sure it's  
 not weird? I could find somewhere  
 else to stay.

BEN

It's cool, I like sleep overs.

They sit in a moment of silence, both of them pleased.

BEN (CONT'D)

So, what's your last name?

MARY

We're already on a first name  
 basis. Why digress?

Ben doesn't know what to make of this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN

Why, are you the president's  
daughter?

MARY

Not exactly.

BEN

Fair enough, Mary. I'm Ben Gibbon.

Mary is a little surprised by how forthright Ben is proving to be.

MARY

I'll tell you, if you really want to know, but then you'll go on Facebook and spoil everything. There's something refreshing about anonymity.

BEN

Yeah, I get that. You could be an assassin, hired to kill me. It's exciting. I'm not stressed about it, as long as my dad didn't send you.

MARY

Why would your dad send someone to kill you?

BEN

(Laughing)

Never mind. I don't do Facebook, by the way.

Mary is liking Ben more and more.

MARY

This is going to be fun.

A WAITRESS appears at the table.

WAITRESS

You guys ready?

MARY

I'll have the waffles, extra butter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BEN  
 (To Mary)  
 How do you feel about a bacon  
 cheeseburger?

MARY  
 (To waitress)  
 Does it come with fries?

WAITRESS  
 Sure does.

MARY  
 (To Ben)  
 I'm in.

BEN  
 (To waitress)  
 The bacon cheeseburger, please.

WAITRESS  
 Anything to drink?

MARY  
 Two root beers, please.

WAITRESS  
 Coming right up.

The waitress leaves the table. Ben stares at Mary.

BEN  
 Do you know who Ken Kesey is?

MARY  
 I do.

BEN  
 He had this thing where he always  
 talked about making his movie.  
 Like, he was living his life,  
 making his movie. I always liked  
 that. I always thought of my life  
 that way.

Mary thinks this over, then takes a risk:

MARY  
 So, am I in your movie now?

BEN  
 Seems to be the case.

CONTINUED: (5)

Mary puffs her chest in mock pride.

MARY

Well, lucky for you, I studied  
acting at the Sorbonne. I'm going  
to be great in your movie.

BEN

(Playing along)  
Then, consider this your audition.

MARY

I'm bad at crying, though. They had  
a whole class for crying on demand.  
I could never do it. Our final was  
the Sally Field scene from Steele  
Magnolias. I sucked.

The waitress comes back with the root beers.

BEN AND MARY

Thank you.

They CLINK bottles and sip.

MARY

We need a little backstory. For our  
movie. How about, we both get to  
ask one question?

BEN

You go first.

MARY

Alright, slugger. Why does your  
face look like that?

BEN

You saw my face get like this.

MARY

No, I saw you get beat up. But  
that's not how your face got like  
that. It was like that before. I  
saw you.

BEN

You were checking me out?

MARY

(Playing shy)  
Maybe.

CONTINUED: (6)

Ben settles back in his chair.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

YOUNG BEN, 7, dressed in a miniature leisure suit, sits with a YOUNG GIRL, 7. The girl, who wears glasses, is hunched over a Lunchable, making a cracker sandwich. She hands the sandwich to Ben, who accepts it nonchalantly, too busy with Nietzsche's *Will to Power* to pay her much attention.

YOUNG BEN

Even the human body is nothing but  
a series of power struggles.

The girl does not understand what Ben is saying, but she bats her eyelids, fully impressed.

Suddenly, the book is SLAPPED out of Ben's hands. A group of BULLIES stands over them.

LEAD BULLY

Only girls read.

YOUNG GIRL

He was reading to me.

The Lead Bully reaches out and grabs the girl's glasses off her face.

LEAD BULLY

Try making sandwiches for your  
boyfriend now.

Ben stands and faces the Lead Bully.

YOUNG BEN

What's a foot for?

LEAD BULLY

What?

YOUNG BEN

What's a foot for?

The Lead Bully does not know how to respond.

YOUNG BEN (CONT'D)

For kicking.

Ben KICKS the Lead Bully in the balls, and follows with a swift PUNCH to the face.

Close on the Lead Bully's nose BREAKING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The other Bullies pounce on Ben, who disappears under the pile, taking punches from all sides, smiling on the way down.

BACK IN JULIET'S

The waitress brings their food to the table.

BEN AND MARY

Thank you.

Ben cuts his burger in half and Mary does the same to her waffle. They make their exchange and dig in.

NARRATOR

Believe it or not, Ben was telling the truth.

BEN

I guess I've just always been... principled.

MARY

(Half-sarcastic)

So romantic.

BEN

Now, I get a question. (*Pauses, thinking*) Where did you learn your manners?

Mary smiles.

MARY

My what?

BEN

Your manners. They're cultivated.

MARY

How so?

BEN

You haven't put your elbows on the table since we sat down. Your napkin is folded and placed on your lap.

Mary looks down at the napkin placed on her lap.

BEN (CONT'D)

You don't slouch.

On Mary's posture, perfect.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (CONT'D)  
 And the way you hold your utensils.  
 The fork is balanced between your  
 middle finger and the tip of your  
 index finger while the thumb  
 steadies the handle. And you hold  
 your fork in your left hand when  
 you cut, then place your knife down  
 on your plate and switch your fork  
 to your right hand to take the  
 bite. The zig-zag method, standard  
 etiquette.

Ben points at Mary with his fork and speaks with a mouthful of food.

BEN (CONT'D)  
 You have very good table manners.

Mary concedes, and launches into a story...

MARY  
 Well, my parents sent me to school  
 in Paris when I was-

Mary continues, but her voice drops out.

Instead:

NARRATOR  
 Mary went about telling the story  
 of her extended term of cultivation  
 in Paris, allowing hints of her  
 rebellious streak to shine through  
 in an effort to avoid sounding...  
 lame... The stories we tell are  
 often just as much about the  
 details we choose to omit, as those  
 we choose to include. And, as Mary  
 told her Paris story, her mind was  
 stuck on a rather large detail  
 that, in its deliberate omission,  
 revealed itself for what it truly  
 was: a secret. This realization  
 gave her pause...

On Mary. She falters in her story telling, her eyes drifting downward into a blank daze.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
 Suddenly, she was overwhelmed.

Something like panic washes over her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN  
You okay?

She snaps out of it.

MARY  
What? Oh, yeah. Sorry. It's a  
little hot in here, huh?. I think I  
just need some water.

Mary CHUGS her glass of water.

MARY (CONT'D)  
What was I saying? Oh yeah, so-

Mary continues, but her voice drops out.

NARRATOR  
Mary momentarily put her concerns  
aside and picked up where she left  
off. But the details of her  
omission made for a far more  
interesting story and, indeed, a  
far more relevant one. That story  
begins like this:

EXT. PARIS - BLACK AND WHITE

A slightly younger Mary, 20, strolls through the Pere-Lachaise Cemetery.

As she walks, looking closely at a name here and there, a dark figure looms in the foreground, watching her from a distance.

POV: We follow Mary with the figure.

EXT. COURTYARD OF THE HOTEL COSTES - BLACK AND WHITE

Mary sits alone at a table, sipping a cappuccino and reading a book of Greek Myths.

A man approaches. It's the Tutor.

The conversation vacillates between French and English, with all French subtitled.

THE TUTOR  
(French)  
Well hello, little American.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY  
(English)  
Hi! How was your flight?

She rises to hug him.

THE TUTOR  
(English)  
Quick and easy.

They sit.

MARY  
(English)  
It's really so sweet of you to want  
to show me around.

THE TUTOR  
(French)  
When your father said you were  
staying in Paris for university, I  
figured you might benefit from  
seeing the city through the eyes of  
a native.

Mary smiles with self-effacement.

MARY  
(English)  
Well, I hope you didn't come all  
this way just for me.

The Tutor, somewhat conspicuously, changes the subject.

THE TUTOR  
(French)  
Where are you focusing your  
studies?

MARY  
(French)  
Acting.

THE TUTOR  
(French)  
Ah, magnificent. A far more useful  
trade than some might think.

Mary LAUGHS dryly. Suddenly, she's a bit... uncomfortable?

MARY  
(English)  
I hope so.

CONTINUED: (2)

THE TUTOR  
 (French)  
 Paris, via New York. Very chic.  
 (English)  
 But you've been gone so long! Don't you miss America? I like America. I like the people. People like you, Mary. You have passion. No one rivals the passion of the French like the Americans. But it's a different passion. The French have a passion for self. When you think of France, what do you think of?

MARY  
 (English)  
 I don't know.

THE TUTOR  
 (English)  
 C'mon! You think of our bread, our cheese, our coffee, our wine, our women. Cezanne, Monet, Godard. We're hedonists. You even named your kisses after us. But say "America" and we think of your democracy, your army, your influence, your reality television. America's passion is for the other. America loves the human race so deeply, it must possess it... Don't tell anyone, but I suspect my passions are often more American than French.

On Mary. Embarrassed.

INT. JULIET'S

On Mary. Embarrassed. Awash in her memory.

Ben's nose begins to bleed.

MARY  
 You're bleeding.

Ben quickly reacts, putting his napkin to his nose.

MARY (CONT'D)  
 Here, let me see.

Mary comes around to Ben and grabs the napkin. She leans his head back and cleans his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY (CONT'D)  
There you go.

Electricity.

Suddenly, there is a jarring BOOM from off-screen and a blast of fire from the kitchen. Over Ben's shoulder, we see the EMPLOYEES of the restaurant running about, SHOUTING, while the PATRONS go into a panic. The kitchen, it seems, has exploded.

Ben and Mary do not take their eyes off each other.

HOSTESS (O.S.)  
Ladies and gentleman, we have a small emergency taking place in the kitchen. If you could please calmly exit the restaurant, we can get this sorted out.

The sprinkler system goes off, and the PATRONS, hardly obeying the Hostess' request to proceed calmly, begin rushing and pushing toward the door. But Ben and Mary do not move.

Suddenly, Mary lunges toward Ben and kisses him hard on the lips. She quickly pulls away.

MARY  
I'm sorry.

Ben kisses her back, longer and deeper. The water from the sprinkler rains down on them.

INT. STAIRWELL OF BEN'S APT. BUILDING - LATER

Mary's bag is slung over Ben's shoulder. He follows her up the stairs. Her butt shakes in his face. He pokes it. She looks back and GIGGLES, running up the next flight of stairs.

INT. BEN AND MUKUL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ben and Mary burst through the door, wet, out of breath, flirtatious.

Mukul is standing at the kitchen counter with his back to us. Without turning, he waves hello.

Mary SNIFFS and winces.

MARY  
(Whispering)  
What's that smell?

CONTINUED:

BEN  
US Government Standard Bathroom  
Malodor. Mukul's making stink  
bombs.

Ben whisks Mary into his room. Mary drops her purse, some of the contents spill onto the floor.

We stay on Mukul, facing him now, and see that he is wearing a surgical mask. Carefully arranged in front of him are several hardboiled eggs, a long eye dropper, a plastic bottle labeled, "US Government Standard Bathroom Malodor", a straw and a roll of aluminum foil. He gets to work.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

Mary is looking through the things in her bag.

MARY  
I really don't like any of my stuff  
anymore.

BEN  
Why?

MARY  
Well, I guess I never really loved  
any of it.

She stands, and walks over to Ben's closet. She casually opens it and sorts through, coming upon her own coat.

MARY (CONT'D)  
(Knowing)  
Where'd you get this?

BEN  
Long story, but I stole it. You  
want it?

MARY  
(Smiling to herself)  
No, thanks.

She continues sorting and arrives at the t-shirts. There's Big L, Tupac, Biggie, Pantera, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Kurt Cobain, Jim Morrison, Sid Vicious, Lynard Skynard, Bob Marley, Marvin Gaye, etc. She picks out the Sid Vicious.

MARY (CONT'D)  
These people are all dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Yep.

MARY

Turn around.

Ben turns. Mary strips her wet clothes and slips on the Sid Vicious t-shirt.

MARY (CONT'D)

Okay.

Mary, wearing the t-shirt, her hair wet, makes for an idyllic image. Ben stares.

MARY (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that. You're making me shy.

They spend a moment in silence. Ben is transfixed. There is a hole in the t-shirt. Mary pokes a finger through it.

MARY (CONT'D)

There's a hole in it.

Mary turns away from Ben and, affecting an innocent curiosity, peruses his room.

She comes across a red, plastic View-Master and puts it to her eyes.

VIEW THROUGH THE VIEW-MASTER, IMAGES CYCLING DOWN WITH A CLICK: A MOUNTAIN RANGE, A BEACH.

MARY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sometimes I want to run away to one of these places. Start a totally new life where no one knows me. Be totally anonymous.

BACK IN THE ROOM

She puts the View-Master down, looking at Ben.

MARY (CONT'D)

Is that stupid?

BEN

It isn't stupid at all.

She smiles and approaches the fully stocked bookshelf, running her finger along the titles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY  
(Casual)  
Do you have a death wish?

BEN  
What? Why would you ask that?

MARY (CONT'D)  
I don't know. Just curious.

BEN  
About what?

MARY  
Do you wanna die?

BEN  
I didn't realize I had a choice.

MARY  
Seriously, when you think about  
dying, do you want it? Is it  
something that excites you?

BEN  
(More guarded)  
I don't know.

MARY  
Well, do you want to live?

Ben shrugs.

MARY (CONT'D)  
(Laughing)  
That's fucked up, slugger. So... do  
you want to pay me before or after  
the sex?

Ben is shocked. Mary LAUGHS.

MARY (CONT'D)  
You don't really think I'd sleep  
with you looking like that, do you?

Ben struggles to keep up.

BEN  
I don't think anything.

Mary softens and sits next to him on the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARY

I'm joking. I think you look cute.  
(Off Ben's disbelief) Really. I do.  
And I'm not a whore, just so you  
know.

BEN

Were you hoping I would invite you  
to stay with me?

MARY

I knew you would.

BEN

That's a little presumptuous, isn't  
it?

MARY

No.

BEN

Why not?

MARY

Because I could just tell something  
about you. And, anyway, I was  
right, wasn't I?

Mary leaps onto Ben's bed and stands, looking down at him.

MARY (CONT'D)

Do you really want to die?

BEN

I didn't say I want to.

MARY

But you didn't say you don't want  
to.

Mary begins bouncing on the bed.

MARY (CONT'D)

It's nothing to be ashamed of. I  
get it, I think. It's just a simple  
matter of curiosity. Who wouldn't  
be curious? I sometimes wonder what  
it *feels* like, you know? That  
moment... when you officially cross  
the line. *Click.* Out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BEN

That used to keep me up at night  
when I was a kid.

Mary stops bouncing.

MARY

What did?

BEN

That moment. Crossing the line. But  
with sleep. I started thinking  
about the moment your mind clicks  
off, the moment you officially fall  
asleep, and I started paying  
attention to it and looking for it  
so hard that I stopped it from  
happening. I would be lying there,  
thinking, "Here it comes."  
Thinking, and then it wouldn't  
come. I didn't sleep for three  
months.

Mary LAUGHS.

BEN (CONT'D)

No, really, it was a problem.

Mary resumes her bouncing.

MARY

So, what's it like getting punched  
in the face?

BEN

I don't know. It hurts

MARY

Do you like that or something?

A pregnant pause. Mary stops bouncing.

MARY (CONT'D)

Will you punch me in the face? I  
want to know what it feels like.

Mary drops to her knees and sticks out her chin for Ben to  
punch.

BEN

(Laughing, incredulous)  
What? No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MARY

Do it. Punch me in the face, I give  
you permission. Right in the  
kisser.

BEN

I'm not going to do that.

MARY

Come on. A girl hardly ever gets  
the chance. On the count of three,  
punch me in the face, or I'm gonna  
punch you. One..... Twwwwoooo..  
I'll do it... Three.

Mary gives Ben a right hook to the jaw.

BEN

*Ouch!*

MARY

(Giggling)

You didn't do it.

Ben grabs his jaw in pain.

BEN

I didn't think you were serious.

Mary moves close to Ben and puts her hand on his face.

MARY

*Aww, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do  
it so hard. I guess I'm a natural.*

A moment passes.

MARY (CONT'D)

What are you thinking about,  
right... now?

BEN

Well, now I'm thinking about you  
asking me what I'm thinking about,  
so I don't know. What are you  
thinking about?

MARY

Now I don't know, either.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

BEN

See? How about, on the count of three, we both say what we're thinking at the same time. Then, depending on what you say, maybe I'll punch you in the face.

Mary LAUGHS.

MARY

Okay. Ready? One...Two...Three-

EXT. BEN AND MUKUL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Close on Mary's cellphone, on the floor beside her purse, VIBRATING with a call.

Pull back. Mukul, smoking a joint and looking rather high, stands silently over the phone, considering his next move.

He answers.

MUKUL

Hello?

A long pause.

THE TUTOR (O.S.)

Pinocchio?

MUKUL

Excuse me?

THE TUTOR (O.S.)

Pinocchio.

MUKUL

What about him?

TUTOR (O.S.)

He was nosey.

Over the phone, a soft, threatening CHUCKLE.

INT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - LIBRARY - SAME TIME

The Tutor is obscured in the darkness of the room.

THE TUTOR

It got him into trouble.

BACK ON MUKUL

Mukul almost smiles in disbelief. But he doesn't.

MUKUL

Hey, fuck you man.

THE TUTOR (O.S.)

Well, Pinocchio, could you please  
remind Mary that I am expecting her  
tomorrow evening?

MUKUL

And whom should I say is calling?

BACK ON THE TUTOR

THE TUTOR

Her number one fan.

CLICK.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - MORNING

Mukul drives the Sunliner, Ben sits passenger.

MUKUL

I don't like her.

BEN

No?

MUKUL

No.

Ben considers this. He values Mukul's opinion.

BEN

Why not?

MUKUL

Because she brought you home  
unconscious, she managed to move in  
within a day... and because a guy  
calling *himself* her Number One Fan  
called her and calls *me* Pinocchio.  
And there's something about her.  
She holds herself like a liar.

Ben LAUGHS to himself.

CONTINUED:

BEN  
Pinocchio... I'm sure it's nothing.  
She's surprisingly normal.

Pause.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Why did you answer her phone?

MUKUL  
(Matter of fact)  
Because it rang.

The car drives past a large building. A sign out front reads: *Global Network*. PICKETERS are gathered outside: Philosophy professors, students, assorted hippies and some religious folk, carrying signs and SCREAMING slogans like, *Psychological continuity is not enough!; What's wrong with airplanes?; Teleabortion!*

As the car passes, we stay on the crowd outside the building.

A female NEWS REPORTER, late 20s, stands in front of the crowd, in the middle of a report.

NEWS REPORTER  
That's right, Ken. We are outside the headquarters of Global Network, whose controversial teletransportation technology is creating quite a stir as the landmark case, Lowman Vs. Global Network, nears closing arguments.

She sticks the microphone in the face of a PICKETING METAPHYSICIAN (who wears a t-shirt that reads: *Picketing Metaphysician*), 30s, bearded.

NEWS REPORTER (CONT'D)  
Sir, why are you protesting?

PICKETING METAPHYSICIAN  
This technology is perverting the sanctity of human life. I hope Mr. Gibbon puts Global Network out of business!

A HIPPIE jumps in front of the metaphysician.

HIPPIE  
This is a witch hunt, man!  
Perpetrated by Big Oil!

INT. HALLOWEEN STORE - SAME TIME

Close on the face of Snjezena. She's wearing pair of Groucho Marx glasses, complete with nose, and points a finger at us.

SNJEZENA  
Shady bitch.

Pull back to reveal a brightly lit Halloween store, glowing candy pink and lined with props, costumes, masks, etc. Think: *Ricky's*.

Snjezena, we now see, is pointing at Mary, who wears Ben's Kurt Cobain t-shirt, fashioned into a dress, with a belt cinched around her waste.

MARY  
What's so shady about it?

Svjetlana, wearing a Batman mask, is standing behind Mary. The twins surround her.

SVJETLANA  
(To Snjezena)  
*Jebi ga!*  
(To Mary)  
Look at you, uptown girl. So scared of your fucking fuck Daddy Esquire.

MARY  
It has nothing to do with what my father may or may not think.

SNJEZENA  
Oh, no?

MARY  
No! It has everything to do with what Ben may or may not think... if he knew who my father was.

SNJEZENA  
Like a poor little cage bird.

Svjetlana lifts a devil pitchfork from the rack and tosses it, like a spear, at Snjezena.

SVJETLANA  
So, birdie, did you fuck your fightboy yet? Does he have big one?

MARY  
Eew! No! No way.

CONTINUED:

SNJEZENA  
 (To Svjetlana)  
 Do you forget who you are talking  
 to, slut? Miss Mary "I don't put  
 out until the tenth date" Rathcart.

Snjezena spanks Mary with the pitchfork. Mary retreats to the next aisle.

MARY  
 Shut up!

SNJEZENA  
 I say, fuck him. Make him... what?  
 Number three?

SVJETLANA  
 (To Snjezena)  
 I still say she fucked Old Man  
 Teach. (*Affecting a French accent*)  
 Oh, Mary. Let's go to la Louvre!

MARY  
 Gross. No... fucking... way. Not  
 even close. He's just a family  
 friend, who's honestly starting to  
 weird me out.

SVJETLANA  
 About time.

MARY  
 But that's a whole other thing...  
 Weren't we talking about Ben? I did  
 kiss him, and it was totally  
 embarrassing. I said "sorry"  
 after... But then he kissed me  
 back. It was cute.

The twins brighten.

Mary lifts a black wig off a mannequin head and tries it on,  
 fussing with it in a mirror.

MARY (CONT'D)  
 But seriously, I don't want to tell  
 him yet. I'll see where it goes. I  
 prefer a little mystery, anyway.  
 Mystery's sexy.

SVJETLANA  
 Mary Mary Mystery Girl.

CONTINUED: (2)

Mary, with the wig still on, tries on a pair of black sunglasses.

MARY

Look at someone like Jackie O. She was anonymous, so beautiful behind those big, black glasses. To me, that's sexy.

The twins trade costumes.

SNJEZENA

(Looking in mirror)

You say sexy mystery, I say hide yourself so no one can know real Mary.

MARY

(Resolute)

No. That's not it. Or maybe that's just it. I have always had to be Mary Rathcart.

Mary pauses, lost in a moment of confusion.

MARY (CONT'D)

I don't even know who that is anymore. But I do know that I don't want to let my last name stop this thing in its tracks, just because his last name is Gibbon.

SVJETLANA

I don't get the big stupid deal.

Mary SIGHS.

MARY

He's the son of my father's arch nemesis. Like, arch.

SNJEZENA

So? He's sexy enemy boy.

MARY

He's completely rejected a world that I'm stuck in. He probably thinks he's slumming it. And I know it's stupid, but I'm nervous about what the truth would mean to him.

SNJEZENA

So, lie forever?

CONTINUED: (3)

MARY

I don't know. I'm figuring it out.  
And, until I do, I'm just Mary. For  
him, I'm just Mary.

The twins LAUGH.

SVJETLANA

A lie that tells the truth.

INT. BEN AND MUKUL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ben and Mukul are sitting on the couch, watching the news.  
The room is smokey. Mukul is high.

Mary enters the apartment.

MARY

Hey, guys.

BEN

Hey, there.

On the television screen, a MAN, middle-aged, sits in an interrogation room. He speaks calmly, giving an interview, bound in a straightjacket. A caption on the screen reads: *Exclusive Interview with Phillip Lowman from inside Sing Sing Correctional Facility.*

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

But isn't it a little convenient to blame it on teletransportation?  
There are a lot of people who commit murder every year. Are they all soulless?

LOWMAN

Maybe they are, maybe they aren't. I'm no expert. The only thing I know is that something in me went missing. And now I'm a killer, Diane. I can't be trusted. I'd kill you if I could get free enough. Jab that pencil of yours right in your neck. Let the blood squirt on my face. I'd love nothing more.

MUKUL

Ooooooohh snap.

Mary HUFFS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY  
 (Sarcastic)  
*That guy's innocent, and the  
 technology's busted. He tested it-*

Mary catches herself mid-sentence.

Ben and Mukul share a glance. *Wait, what?*

MARY (CONT'D)  
 I need a shower.

Mary hurries into Ben's room. Ben hurries after her.

Mukul watches them go with no small hint of suspicion. Eventually, he turns back toward the television. He lifts a bong and takes a HIT.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben chases Mary into the room. His television is paused on an image of Sally Field.

BEN  
 (Re: the screen)  
 Look, it's your scene!

Ben unpauses the screen. It's *Steel Magnolias*, and Sally Field is CRYING HER EYES OUT.

Mary can't help but smile.

MARY  
 Oh, god. So embarrassing.

BEN  
 I'm sure you rocked it.

MARY  
 Trust me, I didn't... So, can I use  
 your shower?

BEN  
 Sure.

MARY  
 Thanks.

Mary disappears into the bathroom, CLOSING the door behind her. After a moment, the door POPS OPEN a crack and she pokes her head out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY (CONT'D)  
 I'll be out in a sec.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - BATHROOM - SHOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Mary, deep in thought, lets the water run over her.

Her cellphone, resting on the sink, VIBRATES. She reaches around the curtain and checks her message. She frowns.

Ben YELLS through the bathroom door.

BEN  
 (Muffled)  
 You want to go to Central Park  
 tomorrow?

MARY  
 What?

Ben YELLS again.

MARY (CONT'D)  
 Just come in!

The door OPENS a crack. Ben's lips appear in the small opening.

BEN  
 I was just wondering if you want to  
 go to Central Park tomorrow.  
 Weather man said it's going to be  
 nice.

MARY  
 Don't be so shy. I'm behind the  
 curtain. Come in.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Ben hesitates a moment, then enters the bathroom, CLOSING the door in our face behind him. We linger a moment, listening to their MUFFLED VOICES on the other side of the door.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Ben sits on the closed toilet, his eyes facing downward. He and Mary converse through the shower curtain, talking over the SHOWER.

MARY (O.S.)  
 I haven't spent a day like that in  
 a while. I say we do it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN  
Cool. I'll make sandwiches.

MARY (O.S.)  
Like a picnic?

BEN  
Yeah, like a picnic.

A moment passes.

MARY (O.S.)  
You're pretty shy, huh?

BEN  
Just being a gentleman.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - BATHROOM - SHOWER - SAME TIME

A mischievous smile grows on Mary face.

MARY  
You know what I think?

BEN (O.S.)  
What?

Without warning, Mary pulls back the curtain, exposing herself to an astonished Ben. Only, she has fashioned a bikini out of soap suds.

MARY  
I think you're a perfect gentleman... How do I look?

BEN  
Like a million bucks.

Satisfied, she retreats back behind the curtain.

We stay with Ben. He sits, stunned... He grins.

INT. BEN AND MUKUL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SHORTLY AFTER

Mukul is still on the couch. Mary enters, wearing her trench coat, and passes quickly through the room.

MARY  
See you later, Mukul.

Mary exits.

Soon after, Ben FLOPS down on the couch next to Mukul.

CONTINUED:

MUKUL  
Where'd Mary go?

BEN  
Had to go see a friend.

Mukul frowns. He just doesn't trust her.

EXT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - RAINING - NIGHT

A cab pulls up to the townhouse. Mary steps out of the cab and hustles through the rain toward the gate.

She stops, staring up at the town house. Hesitation.

Finally, she RINGS the bell at the gate.

THE TUTOR  
(Through the intercom)  
Enter, *mon cheri*.

INT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Tutor sits in a chair at the center of the room, drinking a glass of red wine.

He reaches for a pill container on a table at his side, removing a pill and dropping it into a small mortar and pestle. He CRUSHES the pill, takes a pinch of the powder, and SNIFFS it.

Mary enters the room, dripping from the rain.

THE TUTOR  
You're soaked.

MARY  
I didn't have an umbrella.

Mary removes her trench coat and hangs it on a coat rack. Underneath, she is sporting another one of Ben's weathered t-shirts, worn as a dress, featuring Michael Jackson.

THE TUTOR  
(Re: Mary's shirt)  
Ah! MJ... The quintessential example of how America insists upon rendering its geniuses as monstrosities.

Mary shrugs.

CONTINUED:

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)  
This calls for celebration.

MARY  
I'm terribly sorry in advance but,  
I can't stay long.

The Tutor, ignoring her, rushes to a record player across the room. He starts the record.

*Bal Petit Bal*, by Yves Montand, comes on the player. He turns to Mary, and SINGS with Montand through the slow start of the song.

He approaches her, taking her by the arms and leading her in a dance around the room. He stops them at a table with a bottle of wine and two glasses. He pours and offers Mary a glass.

They CLINK their glasses.

THE TUTOR  
To our reunion.

Mary, overpowered by the Tutor's energy, gulps a sip of wine.

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)  
Venez.

The Tutor passes through a doorway. Mary follows, into...

INT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We scan across a dining table that has been artfully arranged with a decadent meal.

MARY  
Oh, I'm sorry, but I can't stay for dinner.

THE TUTOR  
Have a seat.

The Tutor pulls a chair out for Mary. Flustered, she sits, and he SCOOTS the chair in behind her. Standing there a moment, the Tutor closes his eyes and steals a WHIFF of Mary's hair. He shivers in excitement, then takes a seat himself.

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)  
I've prepared us a feast. To start,  
*escargots cassolette*, with hazelnut  
and champagne garlic butter.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)

It goes nicely with truffle corn soup. Followed by sole *meuniere*, a very light butter sauce, and forbidden rice. And, if there's room, *crepe suzette*. *Bon appetit*.

They begin eating. All the while, the Tutor keeps his eyes on Mary. Aware of this, she stares down at her plate.

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)

I have something I want to say.

In an attempt to throw the breaks on a situation that is clearly beginning to spin out of control, Mary pipes in with a forceful:

MARY

That's good, because so do I.

THE TUTOR

(Excited)

But, me first.

He sits back, taking Mary in with a smile.

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)

It's funny, the way roles are consistently reversing. Here I am, your tutor for many years, and yet, in watching you grow from a promising, young student to... a beautiful, young woman....

The color drains from Mary's face.

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)

Don't be shy. It's true. Watching you... I've learned many things. When I visited you in Paris-

MARY

But, that's what I want to talk about.

THE TUTOR

Your horses, *cheri*. Please hold them... If you can't tell, I've rehearsed this. So, how do you youngsters say it? Please, go with it? ... Yes, well, when I visited you...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)  
 You were so full of life, and I  
 realized, what I love most about a  
 woman is the *life* she contains. The  
 life of a woman's *intellect*. I've  
 heard men say, "I'm a legs guy."  
 Or, "I'm a breasts guy." Me? I'm a  
*mind* guy.

The Tutor pauses a moment. Mary's discomfort has begun to  
 evolve into something more along the lines of terror.

MARY  
 I don't follow. You're starting to  
 frighten me, Te-

The Tutor rises abruptly, startling Mary and cutting her off.  
 He paces around the table, circling in on her. Mary stiffens.

THE TUTOR  
 But don't you see? It had  
 everything to do with *you*, Mary!

He approaches her.

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)  
 I realized there was something I  
 was missing. Something I lost. But  
 then, I realized I'd found it  
 again... in *you*. Do you understand?

He puts a hand on Mary's shoulder, and she jolts, spilling  
 her glass of wine onto Ben's shirt.

MARY  
 Shit!

THE TUTOR  
*Merde*. One moment.

The Tutor leaves the room. Mary rises, looking around the  
 room like a cornered mouse. But, in a flash, he is back,  
 carrying a shirt of his own.

THE TUTOR (CONT'D)  
 Here you are.

MARY  
 What's that?

THE TUTOR  
 You can wear this, for now. I'll  
 get the stain right out.

CONTINUED: (3)

MARY

No, it's quite alright. Like I said, I really can't stay. I'm sorry, but-

The Tutor raises his voice in disconcerting agitation.

THE TUTOR

No, no! It isn't quite alright. I simply cannot allow it. (*Lowering his voice*) Change into this, and I will cleanse your garment. I'll even turn around, like a perfect gentleman.

The Tutor thrusts the shirt into Mary's jittery arms, and turns. We stay with him - close on his face - and fully register his mad desperation.

MARY (O.S.)

Okay.

He turns toward her and she hands him the soiled shirt.

MARY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Of course, you're right. Go ahead and work your magic on that stain. When you come back, I want you to finish what you were saying.

The Tutor smiles with garish warmth. Victory.

He leaves the room again. Alone, Mary's tension finally boils over. She BREATHES heavily, attempting to get control of herself.

She inches out of the room.

INT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mary STEPS QUIETLY through the room, glancing over her shoulder to see if the Tutor has caught on.

She pulls her trench coat off the rack.

EXT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - RAINING - NIGHT

Mary runs full speed away from the townhouse. She's CRYING now, her eyeliner-stained tears mixing with the rain droplets.

## INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Ben is in bed, asleep. Off-screen, the door to his bedroom OPENS and CLOSES. Mary, barely visible in the darkness, creeps into the room. She drops off her wet coat and changes out of the Tutor's shirt.

Ben is half awakened by Mary, now in a Jim Morrison shirt, crawling into bed. She slides next to him. He wakes slowly.

BEN  
I missed you.

Mary is taken aback, touched.

MARY  
I missed you, too.

BEN  
Did you have fun with your friend?

Mary doesn't answer. She just looks at Ben.

BEN (CONT'D)  
What?

She just looks. Ben LAUGHS in self-defense.

BEN (CONT'D)  
What?

Mary reaches out and touches Ben's face, running her hand slowly over his bruises.

MARY  
I'm happy.

They kiss. They pull back. They kiss again, more intense.

They tumble, tangling in the sheets. Ben disappears from the screen. Mary looks down to see where he went and smiles. Ben is going down on her.

Close on Mary's face: pleasure, orgasm. She calms. Ben reenters the screen. Their faces are close. They kiss.

Sex.

LATER

Ben and Mary lie together in the dark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

Ben and Mary laid side-by-side in the post-coital silence and allowed their minds to wander.

On Ben. He breathes in.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Ben realized that Mary never seemed to wear perfume, and yet, his room still smelled sweeter since the night she arrived. He smiled (*Ben smiles*), surprised that he hadn't hesitated to perform oral sex on her. Ben tended not to perform oral sex on girls he barely knew, because he inevitably found himself wondering where she, and her vagina, had been. But, with Mary, he hadn't thought twice. (*Ben raises his eyebrows, surprised*) In fact, he hadn't thought at all.

On Mary.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Mary was delightfully surprised by Ben's... skill. (*Mary breathes in*) Enjoying the way his smell mingled with hers on the pillow, she began to suspect that Ben might be a boy who could, as it were, "get" her. She measured her breaths, timing them so that her inhale coincided with Ben's exhale, and then giggled (*Mary giggles*), recognizing she was stooping to a rather saccharine girlishness. (*Mary's smile fades, but remains*) Nevertheless, she couldn't help but notice how these breaths somehow seemed easier than ever before.

Mary turns toward Ben.

MARY

Ben?

BEN

Mary?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY  
I'm really happy you got thrown  
through that wall.

BEN  
Thanks.

Mary smiles and rolls over on him.

MARY  
You know what I mean.

She kisses him on the cheek.

NARRATOR  
They were falling for each other.

EXT. BEN AND MUKUL'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

The Tutor lurks in the darkness. He is disheveled, agitated.  
He stares up at Ben's window.

Close on the Tutor's face. Ominous.

THE TUTOR  
*D'accord.*

EXT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - MORNING

William approaches the gate, hanging open a crack. He enters.

INT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

William knocks on an ornate door.

WILLIAM  
Hello? May I come in?

No answer. William pushes the door open. It CREAKS. He enters.

INT. THE TUTOR'S HOME - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The room is darkly lit, cavernous.

The Tutor sits behind a large, wooden desk, sipping whiskey  
from a glass. He looks disheveled, distraught.

WILLIAM  
Terrence. There you are. I've been  
calling.

It's now that we realize: the Tutor is TERRENCE UBERAHL.

CONTINUED:

UBERAHL  
Drink?

WILLIAM  
No, thank you.

William takes a seat across the desk from Uberahl.

UBERAHL  
Give me good news, William.

William SIGHS.

WILLIAM  
I can't. At face value, we're neck and neck. But I never go by face value. I go by my gut and, when I look at the faces of those... excuses for jurors, I see sympathy... For Lowman.

Uberahl rises to his feet, pensive.

UBERAHL  
And none for me? I've been working my entire life on this technology. I have poured all of myself into it, everything I have, and they're going to just take it away? They're going to steal my life from me? They can't do that!

WILLIAM  
They can.

UBERAHL  
You have to stop them!

WILLIAM  
I'm working hard to do that, Terrence. But, you need to understand, people want to believe they have a soul. We need to color your side of this thing.

UBERAHL  
Color it how?

WILLIAM  
Listen, you and I know your stance on these things. But they don't. We need to make you pro-soul.  
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

We need to make your technology soul friendly. We need the jury to think of Lowman's... condition... as the psychosomatic effect of a misunderstanding.

UBERAHL

But that's just what it is!

WILLIAM

How?

Uberahl takes a breath, calming himself and preparing his thoughts.

UBERAHL

If the soul is the source of our being, then it is the sum of our experiences, thoughts and beliefs. These are what make us who we are. Together, they are us. And, if that's the case, then that means our souls are malleable. They change with each experience. Isn't that beautiful? My technology can fully participate in that beauty, by passing our soul from one bundle of physical material to another in the shape of uninterrupted psychology. The soul can survive this precisely because that's all the soul is, William! Psychology!

William considers.

WILLIAM

When you die, does it get carried away to Heaven by angels?

A look of disgust passes over Uberahl's face. The scientist in him is offended by the simplicity of the notion.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

(Off Uberahl's disgust)

Science works from time to time, Terrence. But the people want angels.

UBERAHL

So, what are you saying?

CONTINUED: (3)

WILLIAM

We're dealing with a murder. And now others are making similar claims. It's becoming an epidemic. Society needs someone to blame. We're fighting an uphill battle.

For a moment, Uberahl seethes.

UBERAHL

Angels!

He smashes his glass on the desk, breaking it and cutting his hand.

WILLIAM

Terrence! Get a hold of yourself. You take the stand in a matter of days. Do you realize that? You were the first person in the world to teletransport. Your soundness of mind is the key to our case. So keep it together!

Uberahl's hand is bleeding, but he disregards it.

UBERAHL

Yes, yes. I know. I'm fine.

William studies him. He is certainly not fine.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - MORNING

Ben and Mukul stroll casually down the street. Mukul carries a sack of quarters, passing handfuls to Ben, who feeds them into the parking meters lining the block.

BEN

I think I'm in love with Mary.

MUKUL

After a few days?

BEN

I think I fell in love with her the moment I saw her.

They continue in silence for a moment.

BEN (CONT'D)

She's a cool chick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUKUL

How so?

BEN

I don't know. She's just really  
fucking cool.

MUKUL

No, how do you know you love her?

BEN

Oh.

Ben thinks this over.

BEN (CONT'D)

I don't know.

Mukul pulls a baggie out of his pocket and hands it to Ben.

BEN (CONT'D)

Peyote?

Mukul nods. Ben stuffs it in his pocket, looking around to  
see if anyone noticed the exchange.

BEN (CONT'D)

See? That's why I like you, man.  
You just have peyote in your  
pocket.

MUKUL

Eat it.. with Mary.

Ben grins sheepishly.

BEN

Remember the last time I took  
Peyote?

CUT TO:

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAY

TITLE CARD:

THREE YEARS AGO

An exhausted Ben, wearing a weathered leisure suit, stumbles  
through a vast desert.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN  
(To himself)  
I'm lost.

He drops his head and keeps walking.

Something ROARS. Ben stops in his tracks and turns, coming face to face with a mountain lion, poised threateningly a short way off. It GROWLS, hunching low, readying itself for a spring forward.

Ben swallows hard, and squares off. The lion lunges.

With a sharp WHISH, a knife comes flying into screen, taking the lion down and out of screen.

Ben, stunned, looks down at the newly dead mountain lion. The knife is sticking out of its neck.

He looks up to see: Mukul, wearing a suit and an Apache headband.

Mukul pulls his knife from the lion's neck, wipes it on his pants and returns it to his boot.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Hi. I'm Ben Gibbon.

MUKUL  
I am Mukul.

BEN  
Thanks for saving my life.

Ben reaches out his hand.

MUKUL  
Not a problem.

They shake.

BACK TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN - MORNING

Mukul places a gentle hand on Ben's shoulder.

MUKUL  
If you love her, look inside her.  
See it all.

## INT. UPSCALE GROCERY STORE - AFTERNOON

Ben and Mary - wearing a t-shirt featuring Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G. - stroll through the aisles of an upscale grocery store (think: *Dean & DeLuca's*), putting supplies in their basket.

Ben opens the refrigerator and grabs a carton of orange juice.

BEN  
Vitamin C.

Mary picks out a couple of sandwiches, tosses them in the basket, and they continue down the aisle.

We move away from Ben and Mary, through the shelves of food, to the next aisle, where Mary's mother, Beatrice, is shopping with a FRIEND. Their arms are overflowing with bags from a day of shopping.

FRIEND  
Have you heard from her?

BEATRICE  
Not word one. She's slipping back into her old habits, I'm afraid.

FRIEND  
Oh, my poor Bee. I'm sure it's just a phase.

BEATRICE  
One can only hope... She gets it from William's side. (*Whisper*) You've met his mother.

They GIGGLE.

FRIEND  
You are bad.

Back on Ben and Mary. As they turn the corner, Mary jolts at the sight of her mother. Quickly, she grabs Ben's hand, pulls him back around the corner and, to keep him quiet, plants a kiss on him.

BEN  
Whoa, tiger. Is that a cucumber, or are you just happy to see me?

Mary glances around nervously, but it seems the coast is clear.

CONTINUED:

BEN (CONT'D)  
Get it? Because we're in a grocery  
store and a cucumber is shaped like  
a cock.

Mary rolls her eyes.

MARY  
On second thought, let's ditch the  
picnic.

Mary drops the basket where she stands. We remain, focusing  
on the "Great source of Vitamin C" scrawled on the orange  
juice box, as she pulls Ben speedily from the store.

BEN  
Alright. I know a good little spot  
by the park.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - EDGE OF CENTRAL PARK - SHORTLY LATER

Mary follows Ben toward a hotdog cart parked at the edge of  
the park. The VENDOR sees them coming, and brightens.

BEN  
Hey, Raj!

On Mary. Of course, Ben knows the hotdog vendor.

RAJ  
Benjamin Gibbon! Long time, my  
friend, very long time. (Re: Mary)  
And who is the pretty baby?

BEN  
Raj, Mary. Mary, Raj. The hotdog  
guru.

RAJ  
It is a pleasure.

Raj kisses Mary's hand.

MARY  
The pleasure's mine.

Raj examines Ben's face.

RAJ  
My friend, you look like a Bombay  
prostitute with that face.

Raj and Mary share a LAUGH.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAJ (CONT'D)  
Jokes, jokes. What can I do you  
for?

BEN  
Would you mind if I jumped back  
there and prepared a dog for my  
lady?

RAJ  
Anything for Ben Gibbon.

Ben goes about preparing a hotdog for Mary.

BEN  
How do you take it.

MARY  
Messy.

BEN  
Nice. I'm going to go ahead and put  
ketchup and mustard on it, because  
that's the only way to eat a  
hotdog.

MARY  
Duh.

Ben presents the hotdog.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Slap some relish on that bitch.

Ben slaps some relish on and hands Mary her hotdog. She takes a giant bite. Ben and Raj wait eagerly for a response, but Mary just continues to stuff her face until the dog is gone. Ben and Raj are in awe.

MARY (CONT'D)  
(With a mouthful of  
hotdog)  
It's good.

Ben and Raj just stare at Mary, her mouth streaked with condiments.

MARY (CONT'D)  
What?

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

Ben leads Mary by the hand into a secluded hideaway within a willow tree enclosure. The lake shimmers through the trees; BOATMEN pilot TOURISTS in slowly drifting gondolas.

From the look of them, we can tell Ben and Mary have taken the peyote.

BEN

This is my special spot. It's the only place in the city where it's still possible to be alone.

MARY

Is it okay if I'm here?

They drop to the ground and lay side by side, looking up at the ceiling of trees above them.

BEN

Yeah. You're cool.

Mary smiles and reaches upward; Ben reaches too, running his fingertips along Mary's hand and sliding his finger through hers.

MARY

Look.

Ben looks. On a tree, the shadows of their arms intertwine and collapse into each other.

BEN

Don't you ever feel like we're letting the world disappear?  
There's so much noise and new ways of making connections, no one ever takes the time to actually connect.  
There's so much loneliness. But what about just lying on the ground and feeling the earth hold you up?  
And touching?

MARY

I don't want to ever go home. I want to stay here forever.

BEN

I could build you a little house.  
Bring you food from time to time.

CONTINUED:

MARY  
But I'd want you to stay with me.

Ben turns to look at Mary. She turns to look back.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Hey, mister.

Ben just looks.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Your pupils are huge. I feel like I could fall into them.

She squints, looking closer.

MARY (CONT'D)  
You have so much beautiful pain in your eyes, Ben. (Pause) Does that sound like a cliche? (Pause) You're like a real person. (Pause) You're making my stomach warm. (Pause) I need to push it against you.

She pushes herself toward him. He pulls her in so that she comes to rest in the nook of his arm.

MARY (CONT'D)  
I'm so happy I found you. You're my best friend. Is that okay?

A moment passes.

BEN  
Yeah. It's more than okay.

They roll in the grass, kiss.

They stare deeply into each other's eyes, and then they both burst into LAUGHTER.

Pull back. Looming in the shadows, is Terrence Uberahl. He watches them.

LATER - TOWARD EVENING

Ben and Mary sit by the lake.

BEN (CONT'D)  
All this stuff going on in our heads, everything we think and feel, it all just sits in our brains.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN (CONT'D)

So, when we die, it rots like everything else. It's as gone as our nose cartilage and no one will really ever know that these thoughts were thought, or these feelings were felt. I've been scared my whole life that I could die without anyone noticing, like I was never here.

Mary ponders this.

MARY

I changed my mind about staying here forever. I say we run away to Mexico.

CUT TO:

INT. SUNLINER - BEN AND MARY CRUISING THROUGH A GREEN-SCREEN BACKDROP OF THE DESERT

They shout over the BURNING ENGINE and the RUSHING WIND.

MARY

First thing I want to do is get three fish tacos!

BEN

Then we'll rent a little hacienda on the beach, and just lay around in the sun until we're old and grey.

Mary throws her hands in the air and SCREAMS into the wind.

NARRATOR

Emanuel Swedenborg, an eminent Swedish scientist, philosopher and Christian mystic, had an elaborately detailed theory on angels. He believed that, in Heaven, a single angel was made of two people who had loved each other on Earth, and that their souls, thus combined, formed the shape of a perfect human, and so the shape of Heaven itself.

BACK IN CENTRAL PARK

The sun sets over the city.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POV: We watch Ben and Mary reenter the tree cover from the pond. There is heavy BREATHING in our ear.

Uberahl steps into the open from behind a tree. He glares.

In this moment, the shadows are sharper, darker. The trees are taller. The air is colder. Ben and Mary's trip has gone bad.

Mary stops in her tracks.

UBERAHL  
Hello, Mary.

Ben looks questioningly at Mary, who is too shocked to notice.

MARY  
Terrence? What are you doing here?

Ben attempts to get a grasp on the situation.

BEN  
You know this guy?

No answer from Mary.

UBERAHL  
Yes, she does. And I know her.

Ben doesn't like the way this sounds, but he maintains cordiality. He approaches Uberahl and extends his hand.

BEN  
Benjamin Gibbon.

Uberahl's eyes go wide. He GUFFAWS incredulously.

UBERAHL  
You don't say... I guess that makes us enemies times two. Terrence Uberahl. Pleasure.  
(To Mary)  
You're proving to be quite the trouble maker, Miss Rathcart

On Ben. Utter confusion. Shock, personified.

Without warning, Uberahl grabs Ben by the collar of his shirt and throws him, with entirely unexpected strength, into the trunk of a tree. Ben collapses in a heap.

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN  
(Wow, that guy just threw  
me against a tree)  
Goddam.

UBERAHL  
Don't you know that the penalty for  
hunting in the King's forest is  
death?

What follows is a thorough beat-down in which Uberahl manages to combine nearly super-human strength with the delicacy of an aesthete.

He lifts Ben to his feet and slams him hard in the face.  
Tosses him, lifts him again.

Ben is getting pulverized.

UBERAHL (CONT'D)  
You should learn to ask questions  
when a stray cat shows up at your  
door. You never know who it might  
belong to.

MARY  
Stop!

UBERAHL  
(Laughing, to Mary)  
Is this your idea of a man? I am  
disappointed...

Mary rushes him, but he grabs her by the hair and twists her around.

UBERAHL (CONT'D)  
How does it feel to be in danger,  
children? Are you excited yet? Is  
it everything you imagined?

Ben attempts to get up.

BEN  
(With a mouthful of blood)  
Fuck you.

Uberahl CHUCKLES with an air of superiority and KICKS Ben hard in the face.

UBERAHL  
The last words of a pitiful  
generation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Uberahl produces the Michael Jackson t-shirt Mary left at his apartment and tosses it at Ben.

UBERAHL (CONT'D)  
Wipe yourself off.

With that, he grabs Mary by the throat. Now, all of Uberahl's affected coolness is gone. With Mary's throat in his hand, he breaks down. He is the penitent madman. His own victim.

UBERAHL (CONT'D)  
(Ranting)  
The youth! Your world is filled  
with so much information, you have  
grown into little sponges, no? You  
look human, but when the time comes  
to speak your humanity, there is  
nothing there.

He pushes her against a tree, squeezing harder. Mary's eyes go wide. She CHOKES.

UBERAHL (CONT'D)  
Squeeze a sponge and all that comes  
out is-

THWACK.

Uberahl looks down to see Mukul's knife protruding from his leg.

He releases Mary, who collapses WHEEZING, and calmly pulls the knife out.

UBERAHL (CONT'D)  
And who might you be?

On Mukul.

MUKUL  
Pinnochio.

Mukul charges. Uberahl readies himself, knife in hand.

In the meantime, however, Mary has risen to her feet with a large rock in her hands. She lifts it over her head and, just as Mukul and Uberahl are about to clash, brings it down hard on Uberahl's head.

Mukul stops short.

Uberahl staggers forward in confusion, drops the knife and slowly lifts his hand to his head. His knees wobble.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

He looks up, glancing menacingly at his opponents before turning and rushing into the darkness.

Mukul retrieves his knife, wipes the blade on his pants and returns the knife to his boot.

Mary hurries to Ben, only now regaining his senses.

MARY

Ben, oh my god. Are you okay?

Ben is a bloody mess.

MARY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry.

He looks at Mary, then down at the shirt in his hands. He rises slowly to his feet, woozy from the beating.

BEN

(As if to the world at  
large)

Are you fucking serious?

MARY

He kicked you in the face. Are you  
hurt?

She touches him cautiously, as if feeling for injuries.

BEN

(Re: Are you hurt?)

I got kicked in the face.

MARY

Baby, sit down.

Ben comes to his senses. He pulls away from her.

BEN

Why does he have my shirt?

Mary doesn't know where to begin. There is an awkward pause.

BEN (CONT'D)

Why does Terrence Uberahl have my  
shirt, Mary Rathcart?

MARY

Ben. I want to tell you.

But she doesn't know how.

CONTINUED: (5)

BEN  
Forget it. I don't want to know. I  
wouldn't believe you, anyway.

Ben turns to go.

MARY  
Ben, please wait. Please.

He turns back abruptly.

BEN  
I have no fucking idea what's going  
on here, and I don't really feel  
like finding out.

MARY  
Listen, you just need to stop and  
talk to me. I need to-

BEN  
(Angry, hurt)  
Need to what? I didn't ask for  
this.

He turns back and continues on.

MARY  
Where are you going?

BEN  
Home.

MARY  
(Tears)  
Can I come with you?

Ben continues on, without answering. Mukul lingers for a moment, offering a sympathetic glance at Mary before falling in behind Ben.

BLACK

DREAM SEQUENCE

Ben is sweaty and blood is dripping from reopened cuts on his face. He is running desperately toward something. His eyes are wide, panicked. He dives.

Freeze. A GUNSHOT rings out.

WHITE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Title card over white:

NEW YORK CITY DEATH

HALLOWEEN

"I've had a hell of a lot of fun  
and I've enjoyed every minute of  
it."

Dying words of Errol Flynn, Actor, d. October 14, 1959

A NEWSPAPER SPINS INTO FRAME

Headline: *Global Network Loses!*

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

The verdict is in! After a  
disastrous turn on the stand,  
Terrence Uberahl's own sanity has  
been called into question. With  
this first victory behind him,  
Henry Gibbon has filed a class  
action suit. It's the beginning of  
the end for Global Network.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - BATHROOM

Ben stares into the mirror, enacting his post-fight ritual of examining the damage to his face. Only this time, his reflective air is replaced with one of somberness. He looks sad.

He peers into his bedroom at Mary's bag, sitting untouched in the same spot on his floor.

Off-screen, his cellphone RINGS. He exits the bathroom.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben lifts the phone and glances at the caller ID: *Mary*. He hesitates, then ignores the call.

On Ben's call log, all the missed calls are from *Mary*.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM

Mary, in her underwear, stands in front of a full length mirror. She removes a black dress from a hook by the mirror and slips it on.

She lifts her phone and scrolls to Ben's name. Her finger lingers over the send button.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There is a KNOCK on the door.

MARY  
Come in.

The door opens to reveal William, dressed as Napoleon. He looks her over, as if for flaws.

WILLIAM  
Ready?

MARY  
Almost.

William gives her a long hard look. Judgment. He slowly shakes his head and, SIGHING, leaves the room.

Mary is left alone with herself in the mirror.

INT. BEN AND MUKUL'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Ben lounges with Mukul on the couch, watching an old slasher film. Ben is dressed as Han Solo, and Mukul is dressed as Chewbacca, complete with the mask. They pass a joint back and forth and take swigs from a bottle of Jack Daniels. Mukul drinks and smokes through the mask so that, when he exhales smoke, it streams out the orifices. They seem pretty wasted.

BEN  
You want to go stink bomb the  
Halloween Gala?

Mukul considers this.

MUKUL  
You miss her, don't you?

INT. WALDORF-ASTORIA (OR SOMETHING LIKE IT) - NIGHT

The Halloween Gala. Decorations mix garish with eloquent, and the GUESTS, costumed to the nines, have allowed the celebratory nature of the gathering to loosen the standard codes of decorum. There is an active dance floor. People are having fun. People are drunk.

We cut around the room, favoring our main characters:

William and Beatrice Rathcart, dressed as Napoleon and Cleopatra, smile and CHATTER with a horde of FRIENDS, ACQUAINTANCES, COLLEAGUES and WELL-WISHERS. They tow Mary with them, dressed as Jackie O, her true appearance all but hidden beneath a dark wig, deep red lipstick and excessively large black sunglasses.

CONTINUED:

Mary does her best to be polite to the many people OOH-ING and AH-ING over her, but she is clearly miserable.

Henry is dressed as Franklin Roosevelt on Safari, with Nancy as a 1920s era Flapper on his arm. They schmooze every bit as hard as the Rathcarts.

The Rathcarts and Gibbons cross paths in the center of the crowd. Henry extends a hand.

HENRY  
No hard feelings?

They shake.

WILLIAM  
Fucking smart ass.

MARY  
(To Nancy)  
Will your son be here tonight, Mrs. Gibbon? I would love to meet him.

NANCY  
Oh, not tonight, I don't think.

WILLIAM  
Little hoodlum better not show up,  
or else-

HENRY  
(Surprisingly defensive)  
Or else, what?

WILLIAM  
Or else...

HENRY  
I thought so.

WILLIAM  
(Muttering)  
I've been taking tae bo. Show that punk a thing or two.

EXT. HALLOWEEN GALA - CONTINUOUS

Here comes trouble. The Sunliner pulls up to the curb, and Mukul tosses the keys to a VALET.

Close on Ben's gator-booted foot hitting the pavement. Pan-up on Han Solo: Ben Gibbon on a mission.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben leaves frame, but we remain. Into frame, steps DEATH, a black-cloaked figure carrying a sickle. Ominous.

Standing at the entrance is a DOORMAN wearing a white cloak and a halo, with a sign on his chest reading: *St. Peter*. He checks the names of the GUESTS who pass in a white, leather book.

Ben and Mukul approach the line... and make a break for it, dashing past the Doorman, who attempts to grab them and stumbles into some GUESTS. The line dissolves in confusion; Ben and Mukul vanish into the party.

Taking advantage of the confusion, is Death, slinking into the party past the befuddled Doorman. We notice... a limp.

INT. HALLOWEEN GALA - MOMENTS LATER

The Phantom of the Opera and the Hunchback of Notre Dame emerge from the coat room. Ben and Mukul have pulled a switch. Ben (the Phantom) scans the room. Mukul (the Hunchback) zips up a backpack and slings it over his shoulder.

BEN

You know what to do. I'll get us some drinks.

MUKUL

Whiskey sour.

BEN

Okay. Break.

They break off and enter the soiree.

ON BEN

Ben orders two drinks at the Bar, turns, and is confronted by Henry and Nancy.

HENRY

I really can't believe you're here.  
I can't believe it.

BEN

I'm a little surprised you could tell it was me.

NANCY

We're your parents, Benjamin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY

It's just... you... You were banned, Benjamin. That's bad enough. But you crash the party? How did you even get in here?

BEN

Sneakiness.

Nancy GIGGLES.

HENRY

(To Nancy)

This is not-

(To Ben)

This is not funny.

BEN

Look at this place. I doubt anyone will even notice I'm here. I just wanted to take a look. Those are some pretty cool costumes, by the way.

NANCY

I know, right? Not so bad your-

HENRY

No! You're up to something. No way you came here innocently.

(To Nancy)

Look at him! He has a plan.

Ben is smirking; he does look like he has a plan.

BEN

And what if I do?

HENRY

(At a loss)

Well, then I ask that you not go through with it.

BEN

Why?

HENRY

(Even more lost)

Because, Benjamin. Why do you do this to me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN

What makes you think I'm doing it to you? Are you one of (*motioning to party*) them? Is it You the People versus Benjamin Gibbon? Because I never really wanted to think of it that way.

Henry has been silenced.

Ben pats his father on the shoulder and kisses his mom on the cheek.

BEN (CONT'D)

Just have fun, guys. I can take care of myself. Oh, and Dad. Congratulations.

Ben, drinks in hand, leaves them at the bar. Nancy shrugs and smiles at Henry, as if to say, *you gotta love him*.

We follow Ben to a corner of the room, where he rendezvous with Mukul.

MUKUL

Okay, so I did a perimeter of the room, and I think the best blast points would be-

BEN

You know what? Why don't we hold off? People seem like they're having fun, and it's kind of a cool party.

MUKUL

Yeah.

BEN

So, why don't we just hang for a little? Have some free drinks?

MUKUL

Okay.

Suddenly, a hand reaches into frame, pulling Ben around by the shoulder and bringing him face-to-face with Jackie O. She jerks Ben toward the dance floor. Ben, taken by surprise, allows himself to be led away; he hands Mukul his drink before being pulled out of reach. Mukul remains, calmly sipping his drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

We move onto: Jackie O and the Phantom. They dance. They dance skillfully, better than we would have expected. They stand out amidst the less talented crowd of FELLOW DANCERS. In fact, they are almost comically good.

Mary lifts her glasses.

MARY

Hi.

Ben feigns shock.

BEN

(Sarcastic)

Mary? Mary Rathcart?

MARY

How did you know it was me?

BEN

It's a pair of sunglasses, babe.  
This isn't a superhero movie.

Mary smiles.

MARY

I missed you... Did you miss me?

BEN

No.

MARY

Shut up. Did you?

BEN

Yeah. Maybe a little bit.

Pause.

MARY

Listen. I misled you. I'm sorry.

BEN

Did someone put you up to it?

MARY

No. I knew who you were all along.  
But I didn't plan it. I swear.

BEN

The whole time?

Mary nods.

CONTINUED: (4)

BEN (CONT'D)  
Why didn't you just come out with it?

MARY  
You know why.

BEN  
You really thought I would care what your last name is?

MARY  
Yeah, I kind of did. Silly, I know.

Ben LAUGHS.

MARY (CONT'D)  
What?

BEN  
Mary Rathcart. Your dad is going to be *pissed* when he finds out Ben Gibbon fucked his daughter.

Mary GIGGLES shyly.

MARY  
Yeah, he is. But, listen. The guy from the other day...

BEN  
I mean, he's going to be really *pissed*.

MARY  
Hey. The guy from the other day-

BEN  
(Flippant)  
Which guy?

MARY  
The one that kicked you in the face.

BEN  
Oh. You mean, Terrence Uberahl?  
Yeah. Weird.

MARY  
I just want to apologize about that, too. He really kicked your ass bad and it's all my fault.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BEN  
(Playing it cool)  
It wasn't *that* bad.

MARY  
Yeah, it was pretty bad. And I don't know what you may or may not think about what went on between us, but nothing happened. He's old and weird and I would never. I can explain it all, but it's stupid, trust me.

BEN  
Are you lying?

MARY  
Ben, I wouldn't lie to you.

They both notice the lapse in logic.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Anymore. I just want you to know that I'm sorry. I didn't know what I was doing. You were kind of a surprise. I never meant to hurt you, but things just happened so fast and-

BEN  
I mean, the guy had super human strength, and he caught me off guard in the middle of a peyote trip. It wasn't fair.

Mary LAUGHS. They spend a moment in silence.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Alright, I forgive you. Just say you're a liar.

Mary scowls.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Come on. Say it. Say, "I, Mary Rathcart am a filthy, rotten, no good, liar".

Mary smiles guiltily.

MARY  
I, Mary Rathcart, am a filthy, rotten, no good liar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

BEN  
And?

MARY  
And what?

Ben gestures like, *And?*.

MARY (CONT'D)  
(Shy)  
You're really amazing in bed?

BEN  
(Victorious)  
I forgive you.

MARY  
Cross your heart?

Ben crosses his heart.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Hope to die?

BEN  
Stick a needle in my eye. Bottom line, I'm kind of a weird guy. I don't need things to be normal. Never have. And it doesn't matter to me how fucked up you may or may not be. I really don't care. I don't even care that you almost got me killed. I don't care what your name is, or how checkered your past is. You should probably get a restraining order on Uberahl, or something. But we can figure all that out later. I have fun with you, even though you're a dirty liar. And I missed you like crazy.

MARY  
Yeah? But I called and you didn't answer.

Ben thinks for a moment.

BEN  
What do you say you and I go out on a date? I could pick you up at your place. Take you out to a movie. I think that's how it goes.

CONTINUED: (7)

MARY  
(Giggly)  
Yeah... yes.

BEN  
Yeah?

MARY  
Sounds awesome.

She removes Ben's mask.

MARY (CONT'D)  
You might be the raddest person I  
know, Gibbon. You're a gentleman.

By now, Ben and Mary have managed to dominate the attention  
of the room. An enraged William is already pointing the  
Gibbon boy out to several SECURITY GUARDS.

BEN  
We're going to freak a lot of  
people out.

MARY  
I don't care.

Ben dips Mary, kissing her deeply. For a brief moment, they  
are alone in the room.

A hand reaches into frame and grabs Ben by the shoulder.

SECURITY GUARD  
Party's over, kid.

Ben casually takes the Security Guard's hand off his  
shoulder.

BEN  
(To Mary)  
Call me?

MARY  
(Charmed)  
Yeah.

The Security Guard grabs Ben more forcefully.

SECURITY GUARD  
I said, move it!

Ben just as forcefully shakes him off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

BEN  
I can see myself out.

The Security Guard does not like being put in his place. Grabbing Ben by the collar, he attempts to lead him toward the door. But Ben turns to face him. Every security guard in the room is now circling.

BEN (CONT'D)  
I'm counting down from three.

## SECURITY GUARD

BEN SECURITY GUARD  
Three, two- Three, two-

WHAM. The Security Guard gets it first. Only, it's not Ben who has delivered the blow, but Mukul, who has come flying into the frame like a demon possessed.

The circling security guards pounce on Mukul, who's backpack falls and gets kicked into the crowd.

Ben and Mukul struggle, but are outsized and outnumbered. The guards lift them to their feet, taking the opportunity to rough them up.

Henry approaches.

HENRY  
That's quite enough! Get your hands  
off them!

But Ben and Mukul are not going quietly, and Henry takes an elbow in the confusion. Everything stops. The Security Guard who's elbow has done the damage knows he just made a mistake. A tense moment passes.

Henry regains his composure and... PUNCHES the guard in the face.

Now things get messy. As Henry is pulled into the fracas, others rush to put a stop to it. But now both Gibbons are looking for a fight.

As arms reach in to pull combatants apart, the tussle only expands into a brawl. And expands, and expands...

Until a WOMAN IN HEELS steps on Mukul's bag.

Something SQUISHES and, looking down, the woman only has a moment before the smell hits her.

CONTINUED: (9)

Her eyes go wide, as a great SNIFF echoes through the room. Amidst CRIES of confused disgust, the woman standing at ground zero suddenly, and violently, VOMITS.

To make matters worse for the poor woman, Mukul comes crashing into frame (not under his own power), mowing her to the ground like a vomiting blade of grass.

Chaos.

Fists fly. Feet slip in vomit. There is a stampede for the door, but the fight at the center of the room has expanded to the point where those stampeding are just as likely to get pulled in as they are to make it out.

On Ben. He helps his father to his feet. Finally, Team Gibbon. But our attention is pulled away from father and son by an ominous sight:

Death is moving toward them, deftly weaving his way through the chaos of the crowd.

Soon enough, Death arrives. He lifts his arm, revealing the muzzle of a gun. Death removes his hood. It is Terrence Uberahl. He FIRES a round into the air, everyone in the room freezes.

UBERAHL  
Henry Gibbon!

GASPS from the crowd as Uberahl takes aim at Henry.

WILLIAM  
Terrence?!

UBERAHL  
Nobody move! Watch. Everybody  
watch! Gibbon. What have you built  
with your life?

Henry is frozen in panic.

UBERAHL (CONT'D)  
What have you built?! Nothing! You  
are a dismantler. I have worked too  
hard! I've sacrificed everything!  
And I'm to lose it in a class  
action suit?

WILLIAM  
Terrence! Put the gun down. Be  
reasonable.

CONTINUED: (10)

UBERAHL  
I've spent my life being  
reasonable.

HENRY  
Terrence, please... Listen.

Uberahl's agitation is mounting.

UBERAHL  
No! No more litigation.

Uberahl COCKS THE HAMMER of his gun.

UBERAHL (CONT'D)  
Yesterday, all you wanted was for  
my machine to inspire a murderous  
impulse. But now, in this moment, I  
would wager that's the last thing  
in the world you want. Am I right,  
Henry?

HENRY  
Terrence, there's proof of-

UBERAHL  
Here's your proof.

Uberahl takes aim.

MARY  
Terrence!

Mary's voice takes Uberahl off-guard.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Terrence, don't. You're a good man.  
I know you are. But you're sick...  
You need help.

She approaches, her arms outstretched in a defensive posture.

She glances at Ben. He gives her a nod of support.

She closes her eyes, takes a DEEP BREATH and... produces  
tears. Mary is CRYING on demand.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Don't do it, Terrence. Please? ...  
For me? (*Getting into it*) Why are  
you doing this? (*Doing Steele  
Magnolias*) God, I want to know why?  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

MARY (CONT'D)  
Whyyyy!? Lord, I wish I could  
understand!

On the crowd. *What is this chick doing?*

GUEST  
(Whispering to another  
GUEST)  
Is that... Steel Magnolias?

On Ben. Proud. He sneaks her a thumbs-up. *That-a-girl.*

Mary has reached his side; her hand is moving toward the gun. For a moment, it seems as if Uberahl will relent. But when her hand grasps the gun, he pulls back.

UBERAHL  
You almost had me, slut.

He knocks her to the ground.

What happens next happens quickly. Ben, seeing that Uberahl is about to pull the trigger, rushes forward. Mary, seeing Ben rushing forward, rushes forward as well. Uberahl aims.

On Ben, running. We remember this image.

He dives in front of his father.

Freeze on Ben, midair. BANG.

NARRATOR  
The moment lasted a lifetime for Ben. But his life didn't flash before his eyes. Instead, his mind drifted to the memory of a childhood toy. A red View-Master he received on his fifth birthday.

IDYLLIC IMAGE OF A BRAND NEW RED VIEW-MASTER, CIRCA 1990

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
As a boy, Ben spent hours flipping through pictures of miraculous things.

VIEW THROUGH A VIEW-MASTER, IMAGES CYCLING DOWN WITH A CLICK:  
THE EGYPTIAN PYRAMIDS, THE MAYAN RUINS, STONEHENGE.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
And momentous periods in human history.

CONTINUED: (12)

IMAGES CYCLING DOWN WITH A CLICK: PIRATES WAGING WAR AT SEA, COWBOYS AND INDIANS SKIRMISHING IN THE WILD WEST, ALLIED TROOPS STORMING THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Though too young to understand it at the time, Ben was struck by the seemingly impossible fact that these were images of real things. And that they were all mere specs in a cataclysmically immense reality that he could never fully grasp. Or even accept.

IMAGE OF A YOUNG BEN, STARING INTO THE MIRROR.

This image is reminiscent of an older Ben, inspecting his bruises in the mirror.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Ben remembered feeling weightless.

BACK IN THE GALA

On a frozen Uberahl, pointing a gun at us.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Ben had contemplated this moment many times. He had dreamt up countless scenarios. He had imagined many good deaths. But he couldn't remember any of them now. Nor did he try.

VIEW THROUGH A VIEW-MASTER, IMAGES CYCLING DOWN WITH A CLICK: A FLURRY OF IMAGES OF OUR VAST UNIVERSE.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

In that moment, Ben couldn't try to do anything. He could only do what he did.

IMAGES COME TO AN ABRUPT STOP ON A MOVING IMAGE OF: MARY IN BEN'S T-SHIRT AFTER THEIR DINNER AT JULIET'S.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He thought of Mary.

BACK IN GALA

Suddenly, the world breaks back into normal speed. In a flash, Mary has dived in front of the diving Ben.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

With a meaty THUNK, she takes the bullet. She drops limply to the ground. Blood begins to pool.

The room descends into full-blown madness. If people wanted out before, they are even more desperate now. They careen toward the exits.

On the Rathcarts, eyes wide with dismay, Beatrice SHRIEKING.

Ben crawls to Mary, gathering her in his arms. It takes a moment for him to understand what has happened.

BEN  
No. No, no, no.

Uberahl, seeing that Mary has been shot, stammers in dismay.

UBERAHL  
(To himself)  
*Mon Dieu.*  
(To Ben)  
Thief. She was *my* soul. Not yours.

Uberahl takes aim at Ben.

NARRATOR  
And that's the thing about these moments. These horrible, beautiful, unknowable moments. People always just seem to do what they do. Be what they are.

Ben closes his eyes, accepting his fate.

THWACK. Mukul's knife lodges in Uberahl's healthy leg.

#1 FAN  
*Ahhhhhhh! Merde!*

His gun goes OFF.

Across the room, the Security Guard who started it all gets a bullet in the face.

Here comes Mukul, diving into frame and tackling Uberahl. The gun flies from Uberahl's hand and SKIDS across the floor. This is all Ben needs. He scrambles across the bloody floor toward the gun.

Uberahl tosses Mukul, and pulls the knife from his leg. With murder in his eyes, he turns and charges.

CONTINUED: (14)

NARRATOR  
Just when we least expect it.

POV: Ben FIRES at us.

Pull back. Uberahl has been shot in the face. He falls back flat.

Ben drops the gun and returns to Mary. He lies next to her, pushing the bloody hair from her face. He kisses her. Her eyes are glassy and her skin is pale, but she smiles up at him. Tears stream down Ben's face. He calls to her shrinking life, he implores her to stay. But we hear none of it over the AMPLIFIED CACOPHONY of the room.

Then, the room goes silent.

MARY  
Ben.

Mary is almost gone.

BEN  
Stay awake.

MARY  
I love you.

Her eyes flutter shut. Silence.

Though the room is a flurry of panic, we hear only: THE SOUND OF A FILM REEL RUN ITS LAST COURSE THROUGH A PROJECTOR AND SPIN EMPTY.

WHITE

NARRATOR  
I wanted it to end right here. I was going to be dead. Slain. An incorrigible rascal just not meant for this world. Misunderstood. Loved. Missed. Done.

FADE IN

Moving aerial shot of Manhattan.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
But, instead, it fades in on an aerial shot of Manhattan.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Death makes for good punctuation,  
and mine was going to be a perfect  
example. It was going to catch  
everyone off-guard and, when the  
credits rolled, the audience was  
going to stay seated for a moment  
or two, everyone mourning me in  
their own way. He was flawed, they  
would think, but his heart was in  
the right place. They would regret  
the ending, but think it fitting,  
perhaps even inevitable.

We pull in on a hospital.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But it doesn't end that way.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Police cars, news vans and ONLOOKERS crowd the street.

CLOSE ON BEN

Ben's face is freshly and oh-so-severely bruised. He stares  
at us blankly. He forks a bite of food into his mouth and  
slowly chews.

NARRATOR

It ends at breakfast.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

I knew the man well. It's so sad.  
He was brilliant. But rather  
godless.

Pull back.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

The Rathcarts and Gibbons - all of them bruised and battered  
from the Halloween brawl - converse in a kind of sewing  
circle at the corner of the room.

HENRY

Well, it certainly makes for an  
interesting story.

BEATRICE

You can say that again. Look at us.  
Who would have thought? Really,  
it's rather remarkable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben sits at Mary's bedside. Her arm, shoulder and side are in a large, cumbersome cast. Ben holds her hand, forking her bites of food from a tray.

They share a quiet, knowing smile.

NANCY (O.S.)  
All said and done, I think it was a  
lovely affair.

THE END