

A MANY SPLINTERED THING

by  
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The following is a true interpretation of imaginary events that took place in my head, inspired by real events that happened to me and people I know.

All of whom are liars.

Names have been changed or omitted to protect me from myself.

Let's get started, shall we?

FADE ON IN, MOTHERFUCKERS

A MODERATELY GOOD LOOKING MAN stands in a black void.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Hey, there. This is me.

As I stand still, my clothes magically change styles: I'm a monk, then an astronaut, then a Korean villager, etc.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Yeah, I know you're judging me.  
And no, I'm not in some  
experimental Broadway musical. I  
just don't know where to begin.

Lights swirl around me, backgrounds appear, WHOOSHING by.  
It's really fucking dizzying.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Fuck it. I'm gonna close my eyes  
and put my finger down somewhere.

I close my eyes. Deep BREATH. Everything SCREECHES to a halt--

INT. MY CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

I'm ten years old, alone, and sitting in a lounge chair. The lights are dim, lit candles decorate the room.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Ready?

Suddenly "If I Could Turn Back Time" by Cher comes on and an EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL steps out of the bathroom. She starts a striptease.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
That was my baby-sitter. This is  
actually too far back, but man could  
she dance... let me try this again.

I close my ten year-old eyes, and as I open them--

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

I am thirty years old and about to get my face punched--

ME  
Oh, shit.

TWHACK!

My ATTACKER doesn't stop. I try to fend him off, but he SLUGS me hard in the gut.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Ok... one more time.

EXT. ROOSEVELT HOTEL - POOL - NIGHT (LAST WEEK)

I scan the PARTYGOERS, my eyes rest on a CUTE GIRL drinking alone. She smiles at me.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Here we go.

I approach, Patron still wet on my lips.

CUTE GIRL  
You know, I always thought you were  
cute.

ME  
Still have that boyfriend?

CUTE GIRL  
Yes.

A blush (from her, not me).

ME  
Are you in love?

She hesitates.

BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CUTE GIRL sucks on my tongue. My fingers slide inside her.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
This is really my fault. The whole  
"Are you in love?" thing is a trick  
question. No one can "know" if they  
are in love. They can think they  
know, but that still leaves room for  
doubt. See, love isn't a knowing  
thing... it's a feeling thing.

CUTE GIRL MOANS, ferociously grabbing me by the neck. Fingers tense. Nails digging in. Jackpot.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
It's semantics, but it works.  
Although, to be honest, what  
happened next still baffles me.

CUTE GIRL suddenly switches gears. She pulls back and pushes my fingers out of her.

CUTE GIRL  
Wait. I don't want to feel guilty.

FREEZE ON: Me... baffled.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
As if foreplay isn't cheating? I  
always thought it was just guys who  
didn't feel guilty until they came.

MONTAGE - GUYS FEELING GUILTY

A MAN's face goes from ecstasy to "uh-ho" in a split second.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
We feel guilty about everything we  
said...

ANOTHER MAN's face.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Promised...

ANOTHER MAN's face.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And spent... to get to the moment  
right before this moment...

A GUY rolls off a GIRL and looks straight at god.

GUY  
Fuck. You gotta go.

END MONTAGE - BACK TO ME IN THE BATHROOM

CUTE GIRL pulls her dress back down, straightens her panties.

CUTE GIRL  
You can't say anything, ok?

ME  
Sure.

CUTE GIRL leaves. I start to wash my fingers, but look at the "glistening two" and decide not to.

EXT. ROOSEVELT HOTEL - POOL - MOMENTS LATER

I tour the party, navigating the HOLLYWOOD SOCIALITES. CUTE GIRL is already back drinking with her FRIENDS.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I should feel bad, but I don't,  
because the girl I think I love is  
probably fucking some other guy  
right now.

I should cut to a montage of that, but seriously, we're talking about the woman I think I love... I mean...

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
They're probably in a fancy hotel.  
Probably this one. Probably  
drinking red wine off of each  
other's bodies. Staining the sheets  
with pleasure. Coining new words  
with orgasm after orgasm.

I mount up to the bar. The BARTENDER eyes me.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
God knows that's what I'd be doing.

ME  
Patron. Make it a double.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Me, taking the morning piss.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Here is where I should show you the  
main character's daily routine.

I pause and examine the dark yellow of my urine.

ME  
I need to drink more water.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But I'll just cut to the chase.

INT. TALENT AGENCY - DAY (A FEW MONTHS AGO)

BRYAN, a young maverick who traded his flight suit in for a \$3K D&G suit, slams a script down on his desk in front of me. I guzzle a bottle of Fiji water.

BRYAN  
I'll cut to the chase.

I know what's coming.

ME  
No.

BRYAN  
It's a rom-com.

ME  
Fuck romance. Fuck comedy.

BRYAN  
Boo hoo. The producer needs a favor  
polish because the studio hates the  
third act.

ME  
I hate the third act.

BRYAN  
You haven't read it.

ME  
I don't see your point.

BRYAN  
You work your magic on this one and  
he'll put you on his next thing.  
Some Malaysian action flick called  
RAINBOW 2: THE REVENGE.

Action? That's what I'm talking about. Blowing shit up.

ME  
Really?

BRYAN  
Yeah, man. Six weeks in Malaysia.  
Fucking Malaysian women. You ever  
fucked a Malaysian before?

Wait... have I?

ME  
No.

BRYAN grabs a pencil off his desk.

BRYAN  
This pencil's a Hippo Cock to them.

INT. BOOKSTORE - CAFE - DAY - LATER

SCOTT, your basic writer type, purchases a suspicious number of Teen Magazines. The YOUNG FEMALE CLERK looks him over, her eyes say "ewwww gross." His eyes can translate.

SCOTT  
Don't judge me. I'm a writer. It's research.

YOUNG FEMALE CLERK  
Ok. Sure. Whatever.

SCOTT  
I'm not a pervert.

He grabs his stuff and moves across the cafe to sit with ME.

ME  
Goddammit.

I close the script my agent gave me.

SCOTT  
What's it about?

ME  
It's about a guy with multiple personalities... Who meets a girl with multiple personalities. And one of his personalities falls in love with one of her personalities.

SCOTT  
Hmmm. Sounds good.

ME  
It is. I mean it needs work. It's got all the cliches. He has a gay friend personality, she has a bitch friend one. There's the feisty Hispanic, and the black female detective personality. There's even an Act Three "running through the airport" scene.

SCOTT  
So what's the problem?

SCOTT notices a WOMAN eyeing all his *Teen Beats*. He yells.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
I'm not a pervert! It's research!

He's back to me.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Sorry. Continue.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
This is my friend Scott. We've been friends since the day we met.

EXT. CITY BENCH - DAY - FLASHBACK

I'm sitting on a bench next to SCOTT. SCOTT looks around suspiciously, then gets up and hurries away.

SUPER: The day we met.

I look down and notice that SCOTT left a brown-wrapped parcel. I pick it up and go after him.

ME  
Hey! Buddy!

SCOTT looks back at me, panics, then takes off running. I pick up my pace.

ME (CONT'D)  
Hey! Your package!

SCOTT sprints. I'm not sure why, but now I'm in chase. He runs me around town. Until I tackle him in--

AN ALLEY

Both of us are out of breath.

SCOTT  
Don't hurt me. I'm a writer.

ME  
A writer? I thought you were a terrorist. Why were you running?

SCOTT  
You were chasing me.

ME  
You left your package.

SCOTT  
I did that on purpose. Fuck. My heart's gonna come out of my chest.

ME  
People don't leave packages on purpose... You can't do that shit post 9/11.

SCOTT  
It's my favorite book. So I leave copies of it in random places for other people. It's my art.

ME  
That's really cool.

BACK TO THE BOOKSTORE - PRESENT

SCOTT smiles his goofy smile.

ME  
I just don't want to do a romantic comedy. I want to write something that shows love how it really is: neither romantic nor funny.

SCOTT  
Hmmm. Sounds like a downer.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Here's my beef.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A BLISSFUL COUPLE strolls hand in hand. Without warning, the GUY makes an embarrassed face and retracts his hand.

BLISSFUL GUY  
Sorry. My palms get sweaty.

The GIRL grabs his hand back.

BLISSFUL GIRL  
I don't care. I love you.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A different, SERIOUS COUPLE makes confessions by candlelight.

SERIOUS GIRL  
... And then he... threw up. He tried to say it was food poisoning, but I've never been able to make love with the lights on since.

SERIOUS GUY  
You're so beautiful. We can take it slow. I'm lucky to have you.

He blows out the candles.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
"Love is patient, love is kind."  
Sure. It's in the Bible.

INT. LITTLE BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A MOTHER leans in and kisses her SLEEPING FIVE-YEAR-OLD SON.

MOTHER  
I love you.

She turns to leave just as the SON's eyes pop open. The MOTHER registers the SON is awake.

FREEZE ON: A tear escaping the corner of her eye.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But what they don't tell you is  
love is potent. Love is painful.  
And love is kind, as in "kind" of  
like a Nigerian email scam.

EXT. PARKING LOT - EVENING

The BLISSFUL COUPLE doesn't look so blissful anymore.

BLISSFUL GUY  
I work with her! What do you want  
me to do? Quit my job?

BLISSFUL GIRL  
No, I want you to keep eye-fucking  
her all night!

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
You give away your most personal  
information...

BLISSFUL GUY  
Baby...

He puts his arm around her. She recoils.

BLISSFUL GIRL  
And don't touch me with your sticky  
disgusting reptile hands!

BLISSFUL GUY's face turns BRIGHT RED.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Only to have your secrets come back  
to destroy you.

INT. BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

A light comes on. The SERIOUS GIRL quickly covers herself.

SERIOUS GUY  
Stop being melodramatic. Maybe if  
you'd hit the gym once in awhile  
you wouldn't need that sob story.

SERIOUS GUY grabs his things as SERIOUS GIRL erupts in tears.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Love gives you the courage to load  
the ammo and hand them the gun. And  
love gives them the passion to  
shove the barrel in your mouth and  
pull the trigger.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

The SON from earlier goes for a brand new box of Captain  
Crunch. He rips it open, looking for the prize inside.

SON  
Mom! Where's the prize?!

Instead of a prize, he finds a note. His GRANDDAD enters.

GRANDDAD  
Your mom's not here.

The SON opens the note.

NOTE  
I love you so much. But Mommy has  
to go to China for a little while  
with Phillip. Granddad will take  
good care of you. Love, Mommy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
That's what love does. It leaves  
you with Granddad to go to China  
with fucking Phillip.

(beat)  
And that's the last I saw of her.  
Which is why when someone says--

MONTAGE OF THE NEXT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF MY LIFE:

BEDROOM - A GIRL leans over and says--

GIRL  
I love you.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I look at them and say--

ME  
I'm not even sure if that's  
possible.

PARK - ANOTHER GIRL.

ME (CONT'D)  
What is it you think you mean, when  
you say... that word you just said?

ANOTHER GIRL  
What word?

ME  
When you said 'I blank you.'

CAFE - A DIFFERENT GIRL has a piece of paper with a hangman  
game. The hangman is completely filled out, and even has  
arrows stuck in him. The phrase reads: "I \_ O \_ \_ YO\_."

ME (CONT'D)  
C?

DIFFERENT GIRL  
(aggravated)  
No. No "C." Try again.

She draws a flame on one of the hangman's legs.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
We can make this next part quick.

A SERIES OF WOMEN, ALL DIFFERENT AGES - Slapping Me. Punching Me. Pinching Me. Putting a cigarette out on Me. Ending with Me in kindergarten approaching a PRETTY GIRL in the cafeteria. I flip over her bowl of Captain Crunch and she stomps on my toe.

In the background, a DIRTY GUY IN A HEART SUIT watches on, smoking a cigarette. This is what MY HEART looks like.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And there you have me.

END MONTAGE

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DAY - LATER

SCOTT and I walk the streets.

ME  
I don't want my writing to put  
people together anymore. I want to  
blow shit up to gangsta rap.

The SOUND OF A SHOTGUN chambering a shell kicks off a GANGSTA BEAT. SCOTT and I put on sunglasses. The cars behind us start EXPLODING, one by one -- in slow motion, bitch.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But then I met this girl.  
(beat)  
After that speech, I know you'll  
want an explanation... And I know  
you won't believe me. Hell, I don't  
believe me, but a girl like this  
requires no embellishment, no  
writer's liberties, no exaggeration.  
Here's how it starts.

EXT. VICEROY HOTEL - FUNDRAISER - NIGHT

In a suit and an awkward tie, I kick the men's bathroom door.

ME  
Come on, Scott!

SCOTT  
Coming!

ME  
You lied to me. Again. This is a  
cock convention. I know you don't  
care, but I was promised attractive  
girls. Nines and Tens. I haven't  
seen more than a Four all night!

A GIRL appears behind me. That's HER. In the hot sundress.  
Only I can't see HER because she snuck up on me.

Fuck you, then.

I turn around.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
It was blank at first sight.

She was an 11. The same size as the shoe I stuck in my mouth.

**ME**  
Sorry. Not you. I didn't mean that.

Then what did you mean?

ME  
I don't even know. English is my second language so I'm sort of just spitting out phrases I found on this website.

HER  
Hard to believe a classy gentleman like you would x out of the Dutch porn sites long enough to learn basic English phrases.

I immediately liked her style.

Porn <sup>ME</sup> objectifies women.

Is that a bad thing?

She definitely winked.

ME  
I don't have a problem with women being objectified per se, but I'm sick of men not being objectified.

HER  
And I'm sick of women not being  
judged by how much money they make.

ME  
I mean, if I spend an hour and some change getting ready for a date, I wanna be ogled. I'm begging for it.

HER  
Exactly! And I'm sick of being wanted for my body, but not my pocketbook. We're drinking two hundred dollar wine and what, my money's no good here?

We share a smile. I think she's feeling the blank, too. She grabs my hand.

NARRATOR  
 Don't worry if you missed it, we're  
 going to see this three times in  
 slow motion:

ONE: Our hands touch.

TWO: Our fingers interlock.

THREE: On the molecular level, our atoms exchange electrons.

EXT. VICEROY HOTEL - POOL AREA - MOMENTS LATER

She leads me into the main room of the Fundraiser. I watch as she approaches a GUY.

HER  
 (to Guy)  
 Nice ass. You work out?

The GUY is dumbfounded. She pinches it as she walks off.

I approach a GIRL within earshot of HER.

ME  
 (to Girl)  
 So, what kind of car do you drive?

FLASHES of Conversations.

HER  
 (to an OLD MAN)  
 That suit looks good on you, but I  
 bet it would look even better balled  
 up in the corner of a hotel room.

ME  
 (to a DEBUTANTE)  
 What kind of diversity do you have  
 in your portfolio?

HER  
 (to an AWKWARD YOUNG MAN)  
 Hello, sweet cheeks. Grrrr!

ME  
 (to a CLASSY LADY)  
 Is that dress a Valentino?

LATER

We LAUGH in the corner. She brushes her hair behind her ear.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 I'd show you again, but I keep that  
 one for myself.

I spot a STUFFY LOOKING GUY walking in our direction.

ME  
 Check out this douche. Catcall him.

She stiffens. The laugh drains from her face.

ME (CONT'D)  
Or do the blow job motion where you  
poke your tongue in your cheek.

HER  
No... um. That's my boyfriend.

STUFFY comes up to HER and wraps his arm around her waist.

STUFFY  
Wah wah wah wah. Wah wah. NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I have no idea what the fuck  
he said because at that  
moment I went momentarily  
deaf.

They walk off, leaving me devastated. Slowly, SOUND RESUMES  
and SCOTT appears.

SCOTT  
Where were you? I looked a couple  
places.

I'm still stunned.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Now what?

I look him in the eye and say with out words:

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Time to randomly text some chicks.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE GALAXY - MOMENTS LATER

I'm standing in blackness.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
You don't need scenery for this.  
I'm in my texting zone. Hope you  
can read at an eighth grade level.

My texts appear onscreen as I type.

MY TEXT  
O-M-Goodness, just saw this chick  
in drag & had to txt.

A GIRL appears on the other side of the screen, at dinner  
with a FRIEND. She checks her phone, hits me back. Her name  
and message appear onscreen over her face.

LACEY (RED ROCK, 6/6.5)  
LOL, wut? y? how r u?

MY TEXT  
Great, actually. But the x-dresser  
girl made me think of you. What are  
you up to right this instant?

LACEY (RED ROCK, 6/6.5) disappears and in her place appears a  
CUTE GIRL in sweatpants watching TV alone.

VIVIAN (WINSTONS, 7-ISH IN DARK)  
 WHATTTT?!! You are so crazy! Out  
 dancing w some frends... why am i a  
 xdresser again?

MY TEXT  
 Haha. No! you're not! But chix in  
 drag make me think of gwyneth in  
 shakespeare... the hot scene where  
 he unwraps her. Tell me you love  
 that scene!

VIVIAN (WINSTONS, 7-ISH IN THE DARK) is replaced by ANOTHER  
 GIRL, this one in a cab.

SADIE (BARNES Y NOBLE, 6-7)  
 love LOVE that movie! you think i'm  
 like gwyneth?

MY TEXT  
 Haha. do you think you're gp?  
 that's conceited!

SADIE (BARNES Y NOBLE, 6-7) is gone and a NEW GIRL putting on  
 makeup appears.

HIPSTER CHICK (TARGET, 8)  
 :( ur meeeeeean!

ME  
 i know i know, but not what i  
 meant. my life's goal is to TOP  
 that scene... but first will need  
 the sexiest girl i know. meet me in  
 30... ;)

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

I pull up to the curb and a HOT GIRL hops in my car.

HOT GIRL  
 I'm so glad you called.

ME  
 I didn't.

I hit the gas and she immediately leans over for road head.

EXT. CITY - VARIOUS - MOVING

I zig in and out of traffic, trying to concentrate more on  
 the blow job than the driving.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Love is like a leak in a boat. It  
 pushes in through some weakness in  
 the hull... Ehhh... I'm sorry... I  
 blanked there for a second... and if  
 you don't stop the leak right away,  
 it just gets worse, until you  
 drown... ohhhh this chick is good...  
 Having a hard time concentrating...  
 She gets her own ellipses--

SUPER: (dot-dot-dot)

I pull up next to a fire truck and a FIREMAN, from his elevated angle, can see what the HOT GIRL is doing to me. He nods and gives me a thumbs up.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I wanna tell him: 'No, Mr. Fireman,  
this is not a thumbs up moment.'

I think about it...

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But, yeah, it is.

I return the thumbs up.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
We all have different patches for  
the leak, and mine is sex, which is  
about to erase all traces of that  
girl from the charity event right  
out of my brain. Orgasms are  
perfect mind erasers. I wonder if  
hot Russian spies used this shit in  
the Cold War.

I look down at top of HOT GIRL's head, then close my eyes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Goodbye to love in three... two...

In the darkness of my closed eyes, I see MY HEART, inhaling a cigarette and shaking his head at me.

My eyes pop open.

ME  
(quietly)  
Wait.

HOT GIRL doesn't hear me. I summon all my strength and pull her off me.

ME (CONT'D)  
Stop. I'm sorry.

HOT GIRL  
What the fuck?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Good question, Hot Girl.

We stare at each other. Neither knowing what else to say.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Never, in my own personal history  
of recorded time, have I passed up  
on an orgasm.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. VICEROY HOTEL - EVENT CHECK-IN - MOMENTS LATER

I rush past the cleanup crew to the HOSTESS.

ME

Hey, there was a girl here. Her hair was like... a perfect blonde, y'know? And she was about this tall... just a great, great girl height. And her smile was...

The HOSTESS looks at me but sees an idiot.

HOSTESS

Um...

She stops an EVENT VOLUNTEER.

HOSTESS (CONT'D)

Did you see some girl with a perfect smile?

The EVENT VOLUNTEER rolls his eyes and keeps walking.

HOSTESS (CONT'D)

(back to me)

Nope. Sorry.

I spot the guest list in the trash by the Check-in table.

EXT. VICEROY HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

I hop back in my car, list in hand. HOT GIRL is not happy.

HOT GIRL

What the hell were you doing?

ME

Hey Erin, you were amazing. Really know your stuff. But uh... Is there somewhere I can drop you?

HOT GIRL wrinkles her face and punches mine.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Her name was Reagan, she would go on to explain. At least I think it was. I've forgotten again.

INT. MY APARTMENT - LATER

I pace the room reading the list of names in the lamp light.

ME

Teresa C? Hmm. She could be a Teresa. With no "h." That's... No. Jenn? With two "n's?" No. Never. Mary? Too plain. Carly? Too Nickelodeon. Chastity? I hope not.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So, I'm realizing I'm not good with names. But if I had to pick a name for her, it would be... Anastasia.

I look through the names for...

ME  
Ana... belle. That's pretty  
close... What the fuck am I doing?

I turn off the lights and get into bed.

Beat.

My cell phone LIGHTS UP, aimed at the list.

ME (CONT'D)  
Sofia? That's kinda good.

INT. GUN RANGE - DAY

POP! POP! Gunshots BLAST in the background. I'm against the wall with earmuffs and protective eyewear.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
This is my writing club in action.  
I guess you'll want introductions.

Lined up next to me are SCOTT and three others, wearing the same protective getup. As they step up to fire, little descriptions pop up next to them.

SCOTT raises a shotgun and blasts away: "Scott. You've met him already. Your attention span sucks."

LYLE raises a prostitute's derringer, he doesn't even look down range: "Lyle. Single, low self-esteem and proud writer of the first twenty pages of sixteen screenplays and twelve novels."

SAMSON wields a high-powered sniper rifle. His eye magnified through the scope looks like the eye of god him/herself: "Samson. The married guy. Writes graphic novels, poems and short stories."

MALLORY double fists two 9mm's: "Mallory. She writes and performs intensely personal one woman shows that she drags the rest of us to. Beat. Sometimes we fuck. Beat. For research."

INT. GUN RANGE - SNACK ROOM - LATER

We all sit around eating candy bars and yelling over the muffled background din of caps being popped.

SCOTT  
Why do you care what her name is?

ME  
I don't know.

I know they know it's--

ME (CONT'D)  
(confessing)  
So I can say it over and over again  
when no one is around.

They all GROAN. MALLORY looks a little jealous.

MALLORY

I wish someone would say my name  
over and over again.

LYLE

While rubbing one out, or no?

ME

This is just a passing infatuation.  
It's not like I "whatever" her.

SCOTT

As if you would know. Love hater.

ME

I just think the whole idea of true  
love is too old fashioned.

SCOTT

I sure hope that makes it into your  
romantic comedy.

ME

Art should reflect truth. Maybe  
love existed a hundred years ago,  
before we had real options... but  
we've definitely evolved.

LYLE

Can I use that in a story I'm  
working on about eDating?

ME

Do you promise never to finish it?

LYLE

Slow suck me. I have a good feeling  
about this one. It's called "Love  
in the time of Electronica."

SCOTT

Ooh, good title.

SAMSON

What you need to do is fuck her,  
and then you'll forget about her.

(beat)

How do you think I got my wife?

MALLORY

No wonder your marriage is so happy.

SAMSON

Don't talk to me about being happy.  
Happiness and marriage cannot  
coexist. Suicide was the best thing  
that ever happened to Romeo.

LYLE

Romeo set the standard for love!

SAMSON

Shakespeare didn't understand love.  
That guy was a sexual deviant. You  
can tell in his writing that he  
spent too much time beating off.  
How do you think he got his name?

ME  
True. Hard-y, Dick-ens, Longfellow:  
all sex-starved pen names.

SAMSON  
Eeeeeee Eeeeeee Cummings... Margaret  
Ate-wood...

MALLORY  
AT-wood. But I see your point. Whiny  
teens killing themselves isn't love.  
Love is what keeps fucking you long  
after the sex has dried up.

SCOTT  
Well, I think real love still  
exists. I was watching this Korean  
Soap Opera last night--

We all GROAN again.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Fuck you, you're hearing this.

PAUSE - Everyone freezes for a second.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Ok, you know how whenever people  
wanna show you their photos, you  
get so bored you're either looking  
for pictures of yourself or  
something to stab them with? Well,  
I invented a little trick to help  
me pay attention to other people's  
stories: I insert myself in them...  
Keeps it interesting.

PLAY

SCOTT  
It was an episode of "When the Pear  
Tree Blooms, It Also Weeps."

LYLE (O.C.)  
Damn good title.

EXT. KOREAN COUNTRYSIDE - SCOTT'S STORY - DAY

I am a lonely figure gazing out a lonely window. I am all  
Koreaned out: straight black hair, fashionable clothes.  
Someone enters the room behind me, I turn to see--

INT. KOREAN APARTMENT - SCOTT'S STORY - CONTINUOUS  
HER, from the charity event, also all Koreaned out.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Ok, not good. Usually these stories  
star me and a celebrity: like  
Ashley Greene, Heidi Klum or a  
"Charles in Charge" era Nicole  
Eggert. But never a real girl...

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 What's-her-name has somehow  
 penetrated my subconscious.

She has been traveling and drops her bags. We embrace an  
 embrace that tries to make up for a long separation.

ME AS A KOREAN  
 (in Korean, English subtitles)  
*I thought they shot you and left  
 you to die in that dirty ditch with  
 the oxen.*

HER AS A KOREAN  
 (also in Korean)  
*They did. But my love for you gave  
 me strength. I laid there for three  
 days, until the soldiers were all  
 gone. I tied myself to one of the  
 oxen, who dragged me to the next  
 village. It was a ten day journey.  
 I let flies lay larvae in my wound,  
 so that the maggots could keep it  
 clean... The whole time, all I  
 could see was your face.*

She suddenly turns her back to me.

HER AS A KOREAN (CONT'D)  
*But that is not what I came here to  
 tell you.*

ME AS A KOREAN  
*My jewel and rising sun, what is it?*

She hesitates.

ME AS A KOREAN (CONT'D)  
*You can tell me anything, my bringer  
 of moonbeams and poppy seeds.*

HER AS A KOREAN  
*I... I was not always... a woman.*

ME AS A KOREAN  
*What?*

HER AS A KOREAN  
*I was born a man, but I was always  
 a woman inside. I had an operation  
 so that I could be what my heart  
 knew I was: a woman... your woman.*

She turns to me, but now I turn away.

HER AS A KOREAN (CONT'D)  
*Can you ever forgive me, my prince  
 of the warmth which brings life to  
 my world?*

I hesitate. My words piling up in my throat like a 405-rush-hour-nightmare.

ME AS A KOREAN  
*I, too, must tell you something.*

HER AS A KOREAN  
*Yes, anything.*

ME AS A KOREAN  
*I was not always a man.*

HER AS A KOREAN  
*What?*

I turn to her, but now she turns away.

ME AS A KOREAN  
*I was born with two breasts and a vagina, but I always felt they were not mine. They felt... foreign. So, after experimenting with some threesomes in college and saving a bit of money, I got an operation that liberated me and gave me what I always knew I had...*  
*(dramatic beat)*  
*One penis and two balls.*

She is quiet.

ME AS A KOREAN (CONT'D)  
*Can you ever forgive me?*

She suddenly turns to me and says--

HER AS A KOREAN  
*Don't you see? If I was never the man I was before, and you were never the woman that you were, then we could never have loved each other as the woman and man that we are now.*

ME AS A KOREAN  
*I never looked at it like that...*

We embrace again.

END OF SCOTT'S STORY -- BACK TO GUN RANGE

SCOTT rests his chin on his palm and SIGHS. There's a fair chance he's crying.

SCOTT  
*Now that's love.*

INT. OLD PEOPLE PLACE - DAY

I'm visiting my GRANDDAD at the Old People Place (you met him earlier, when I showed how my mom ditched me).

GRANDDAD  
*Something's on your mind.*

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
*Granddad's still a sharp bastard. Probably had another few years of living solo still in him, but he prefers the attention of nurses.*

ME  
It's nothing.

GRANDDAD  
So then it's a girl. Are you going to marry her?

ME  
Ha. No. Marriage would require a paternity test and a shotgun as my best man. I just think she's cool.

GRANDDAD  
Cool? Sounds like a winner.

ME  
I don't know. I only met her briefly and I don't even know how to find her. But she's invaded my brain and won't leave.

GRANDDAD  
When did you become such a quitter? You know what Columbo would do?

ME  
Prove she's a murderer?

GRANDDAD  
Yes, but first: he'd find her. Use your brain.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Somehow, he was always right. I needed to do some old fashioned detective work to find her, fuck her and forget her once and for all.

GRANDDAD  
And you may want to sleep with one eye open, in case she does turn out to be a murderer.

GRANDDAD winks at me.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And just like that, my mind's racing. I met her at a charity event. She's a philanthropist. I need to blitzkrieg the LA charity scene to find her. How many events can there really be?

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

I google: "Upcoming charity events. Los Angeles."

ME  
Holy shit.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I'm going to need backup.

I make a call.

ME  
Scott? You like doing good things.  
Wanna help me with some research?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Don't worry. I know that even  
though you're a good person,  
charity bores the shit out of you,  
too. We'll montage this part.

## BEGIN HOPEFUL CHARITY MONTAGE

- SCOTT and I sit in the National History museum, picking at the shitty vegan food during the endangered Abdulali Wrinkled Frog Luncheon. I scan the room, looking for HER.
- I sit in my tub and read the romantic comedy script. I lose focus and have to flip back to page one.
- SCOTT and I participate in a 5K run/walk event for boobs. As we jog, I scan the crowd for HER.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Charities are funny. They like to fatten you up with their luncheons and their hors d'oeuvres, their dinners and their drinks... Then they like to sweat it all back out of you with their 5K's.

- In the ol' tub again, reading the ol' rom-com. The words blur, outlining the shape of her face... I snap out of it.
- Some ACTRESS auctions her "art" (the quotations are mine). I scan the room for HER, but accidentally make eye contact with an overweight HEDGE FUNDER who's "giving back."

HEDGE FUNDER  
Hey there! I see you at a lot of these. You're a very caring person.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I didn't wanna burst his bubble so I did what I do best: make up stories.

- HEDGE FUNDER introduces SCOTT and I to some COLLEAGUES. We help a RAGGED GUY replace his worn out shoes with new ones.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Wild, inventive stories about my travels and causes. Just to see the limits of the bullshit they'll buy.

Their faces light up. I look past them, but no sign of HER...

- I dodge Santa Monican BUMS while finishing the 5K for guy cancer. I search the faces. SCOTT approaches, PUFFING.

SCOTT  
That's my best time yet!

ME  
It doesn't matter. She's not here.

SCOTT  
Is that what this is about? You told me we were doing research!

- In my tub, I slowly rip pages from the script and lay them on the surface of the bath to watch them absorb water and sink. My answering machine BEEPS.

BRYAN (V.O.)  
Hey, buddy... just saw this amazing Malaysian chick in a porno. Thought I'd check to see how the rewrite is going... Forwarding you the link!

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I must have misjudged her. She doesn't care about charity at all. It's actually kind of selfish of her to put me through all this.

My phone BEEPS from receiving Bryan's e-mail.

- SCOTT and I are at a round table with HEDGE FUNDER and a bunch of his FRIENDS. I spin tales of my latest undertakings.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Between getting nowhere on this script and chasing the ghost of a girl I only met once, my sole creative outlet had become lying about my charitable adventures.

END CHARITY BULLSHIT MONTAGE

EXT. DOCKWEILER BEACH - EVENING

A makeshift Dinner and Auction on the beach, with a stage and all. I try my best to look enthusiastic but I'm failing. SCOTT glances at the menu and whispers to me--

SCOTT  
It's five hundred dollars a plate!

A WAITER approaches.

WAITER  
Meat or vegetarian?

SCOTT  
Actually, can we share a plate?

WAITER  
Shared plate fee is five hundred.

SCOTT  
I'll have the filet.

HEDGE FUNDER is on the stage speaking.

HEDGE FUNDER  
And now I want to take this moment to have a truly extraordinary man come up here and share with you just what he's been up to...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

There are certain points in your life when all the little, harmless lies you've told...

HEDGE FUNDER

This guy has farmed coconuts in Cambodia, helped with the lepers in South America...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Suddenly aren't so little.

I realize everyone is looking at me and waiting for me to come up onstage. I rise. They APPLAUD. I walk to the stage.

ONSTAGE

HEDGE FUNDER

Most recently he single-handedly got the Abdulali Wrinkled Frog off the endangered list.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That part's somewhat true. I'll explain later.

ME

(into the mic)

It wasn't really single-handed, there was a lot of hands in there, it was more like a hand orgy.

Then suddenly I see HER: In all her slo-mo glory. She waves and it erases the ability to speak from whatever part of my brain controls speech.

ME (CONT'D)

Yeah, so... speaking of orgies, I'm just uh, glad to get those wrinkled fuckers fertilizing eggs again... Thanks. Enjoy your dinner.

She gives me a wry smile as I walk off the stage.

LATER - BY THE SEA SIDE

I chug a glass of wine to drink the awful taste of lies out of my mouth and hope nobody finds me.

HER (O.C.)

Wow. Wrinkled frogs. I had no idea you were such a philanthropist.

ME

Yeah, I just came for the food. It's better at frog events than those Rhesus monkey tapas things.

HER

Not Rhesus tapas! They're overpopulated. That's a slush fund charity.

(MORE)

HER (CONT'D)  
 They sprinkle pictures of cute  
 little monkeys around like ruffies  
 and then date rape your checkbook.  
 Bastards.

ME  
 You seem pretty passionate about  
 monkey rape.

HER  
 Like you and frog orgies.

She LAUGHS one of those laughs that makes my heart ache.

ME  
 You wanna go for a walk?

LATER

We walk along the water's edge.

HER  
 Do you see right there? Where those  
 two waves collide and become one?

I do.

HER (CONT'D)  
 It's crazy. It's like who knows how  
 far they've traveled... Miles?  
 Thousands of miles? Years?  
 Lifetimes? To finally meet right  
 here, right now, for one moment. To  
 crash... then go back out to sea,  
 to search for each other again.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 This is a moment. I should seize  
 it. I've always excelled when women  
 mention water: showers, baths, hot  
 tubs. I once fucked a girl in a  
 puddle. She obviously means we can  
 hook up tonight and experience  
 something almost impossible, and  
 then go back to our normal lives  
 out in the ocean.

We silently watch as the waves collide over and over again.

INT. CENTURY CITY MALL - DAY

SCOTT and I wander through the crowd.

SCOTT  
 And then what?

ME  
 Nothing. I didn't seize the moment.  
 It wasn't enough.

SCOTT  
 Weren't feeling it?

ME  
No, I was definitely feeling it. We both were. I just didn't... act.

SCOTT  
You froze up? Ouch.

We take the escalator up to the food court.

ME  
I know. What's wrong with me? I've spent years building up my armor, stocking ammunition, creating a perfect war machine to smash through the gates... And suddenly, it didn't matter. I didn't want to pull the trigger. I wanted... I don't know.

SCOTT  
You gonna see her again?

ME  
She has a boyfriend. I gotta get out before I embarrass myself even more.

SCOTT  
I would say that's two months of stalking well spent.

ME  
At least I never have to see her again. I'm done with charity, I'm done with stalking. Time to--

HER (O.C.)  
Hey, you!

ME  
Shit. NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Shit.

Here she comes down the down escalator.

HER (CONT'D)  
This is weird, right?

SCOTT shoots me a look, which I ignore.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
No matter how much your brain thinks it controls your mouth, there's always gonna be that override switch...

I turn and walk downwards, fighting the escalator pulling me up. She turns and marches upward, against her own stream. Leaving us marching in place.

ME  
Weird that you're following me?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
A terrifying, self-sabotaging, emotionally reckless autopilot.

I push my way through ANNOYED PEOPLE riding up the escalator.

<sup>ME</sup>  
Yeah, it is a little weird. It's like fate wants us to hang out.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And just like that... the self-sabotage kicks in.

She wrinkles her face.

<sup>HER</sup>  
Then why do I feel like something is pulling us apart?

She stops walking and glides away.

<sup>ME</sup>  
Dork.

She starts walking again to meet me in the middle.

<sup>ME (CONT'D)</sup>  
But seriously, right? I think we're supposed to hang out.

A curious look crosses her face.

<sup>HER</sup>  
You're asking me out?

<sup>ME</sup>  
Yeah. I know you have a boyfriend.

<sup>HER</sup>  
Yup, I do. And he doesn't like me going on dates.

<sup>ME</sup>  
He sounds controlling.

<sup>HER</sup>  
He gets jealous. Especially of intriguing philanthropists.

<sup>ME</sup>  
What if we just hung out as friends? I'd make a lousy boyfriend anyway. I'd probably forget your birthday.

<sup>HER</sup>  
That's a terrible pitch! Friends don't forget each other's birthdays! You're a lousy friend!

<sup>ME</sup>  
I just mean he's probably better at relationship stuff.

<sup>HER</sup>  
I bet you're not so bad.

<sup>ME</sup>  
So it's a date? Friend date?

<sup>HER</sup>  
That's ok with you? The friend zone?

ME

Wow, you have a healthy opinion of yourself. Thinking no guy can be your friend without wanting more...

HER

I think straight guys aren't friends with straight girls.

ME

Ok, there's obviously an attraction here, but once I find your flaw, I'll be over you in no time.

HER

My flaw?

ME

Sure. Everyone has one. I just have to find it and focus in on it like a laser to kill the attraction.

HER

I don't know if I like this game. What's your flaw?

ME

You gotta find it.

HER

I'm going with arrogance.

ME

Or is that a turn on?

She narrows her eyes at me.

EXT. PINEAPPLE HILL SALOON - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A PT Cruiser, covered in headshots advertising a Headshot Studio, sits by the entrance.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That's Mallory's car. The headshot studio she works for pays extra if they can plaster her car with the faces of out-of-work actors.

INT. PINEAPPLE HILL SALOON - NIGHT

MALLORY and I drink pints as she practices a German accent.

MALLORY

You're playing with fire.

ME

There is nothing wrong with two adults hanging out in friendship.

MALLORY

Men and women can't be friends. We're squids and squirrels.

ME  
Are you saying we aren't friends?

MALLORY  
I'm saying we've slept together.

<sup>ME</sup>  
So? Friends can fuck. Fuck buddies.

MALLORY  
Have you fucked Scott?

ME  
Not physically. What's with the German accent?

MALLORY  
It's for my new show: "It's Not You, It's Me... But If I Had To Break It Down, It's Like 20/80."

ME  
What happened to "Over You, Ovary?"

MALLORY  
Don't change the subject. I think  
you're starting to like this girl  
and you're just setting boundaries  
so you can push them.

ME  
Wrong. I'm going out with her to prove there's nothing special about her. She's just as ordinary as every other girl I've ever fucked.

Fuck you. **MALLORY**

ME  
Present company excluded.

Why? **MALLORY**

ME  
You know. Because we're...

I hesitate. Feels like a trap.

Say it. MALLORY  
ME Friends MALLORY  
Fuck you.

MATTORY drops the accent.

MALLORY (CONT'D)  
I went on a "friend date" recently.

TNT, MALLORY'S APARTMENT - MALLORY'S STORY - NIGHT

I'm MALLORY in this one. Sexy dress, long hair. I don't look that bad with boobs... HER is the GUY, also in drag.

I grab a wine bottle to top off her glass. She kisses me and then leans back.

ME AS MALLORY  
What was that?

She looks to her crotch and then back up to me.

HER IN DRAG  
My penis hurts.

ME AS MALLORY  
What?

HER IN DRAG  
My penis hurts.

ME AS MALLORY  
Then maybe you should go home and take care of it.

HER IN DRAG  
No. My roommates are home.

My puzzled face is missing pieces.

HER IN DRAG (CONT'D)  
I want you to take care of it.

ME AS MALLORY  
Well, that's not gonna happen.

I look down to my own crotch, suddenly realizing something.

ME AS MALLORY (CONT'D)  
My boobs are sore, and apparently I'm on my period.

She thinks it over.

HER IN DRAG  
I don't even have to take off my pants.

EXT. MALLORY'S APARTMENT - MORNING AFTER THE FRIEND DATE

I'm still MALLORY, and I get into the headshot-covered car, only to see one of the headshots is HER IN DRAG, right above the driver side window.

MALLORY (V.O.)  
And now I have to see that fucking face every day.

END OF STORY AS: HER headshot blends into--

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

HER real face looking at my day dreaming face. We're on our friend date.

A giant sculpture invades the room. It looks like a kid made it out of anything he could get his hands on, and it has a bunch of ear pieces attached that allow you to listen to different simulated heartbeats. It's called a:

STETHOSCOPE FOR ALL LIVING THINGS

I put on one of the earpieces and hear a SLOW DEEP THUD.

ME  
What's number thirty-seven?

She rifles through a pamphlet.

HER  
It's a great blue whale heart.

LATER - She puts an earpiece on. This time the heartbeat is pure machine gun fire.

HER (CONT'D)  
Number eight?

It's my turn to rifle.

ME  
An Amethyst Woodstar Hummingbird,  
the fastest heartbeat in the world.  
Its heart beats so fast that the  
little fucker's always near death.

LATER - The artist left out stethoscopes for the people to use on each other. She listens for my heart as I read a plaque on the wall.

ME (CONT'D)  
It says the ancient Chinese believed you were only allotted a limited number of heartbeats when you were born. You could spend them anyway you liked, but your heart used them up when it beat faster, like when you got angry or excited.

HER  
Shhh.

She moves the stethoscope around.

HER (CONT'D)  
I can't find it.

ME  
Hmm. I wonder if it's the same with your allotment of boners...

HER  
Shhh!

She puts the stethoscope down.

HER (CONT'D)  
Nothing. You don't have a heart.

ME  
I'm a miracle of science. That's what the scientists call me.  
(MORE)

ME (CONT'D)  
 Sometimes just Miracle Man or Mr.  
 Miracle for short.  
 (beat)  
 It's not uncommon for people to  
 applaud and sprinkle rose petals  
 when I enter a room.

HER  
 I'll make a note of it.

EXT. ART GALLERY - LATER

We exit into the parking lot.

HER  
 I had a great time, Miracle Man.

ME  
 Well, deep down, us miracles of  
 science are just regular, fun guys.

HER  
 Thanks for coming. Been trying to  
 drag my boyfriend here for weeks.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 I'd already known tonight was going  
 to be a complete emotional and  
 sexual failure. But I just now  
 figured out why.

I pretend to be unfazed.

ME  
 Common folk. They don't appreciate  
 the little things.

She smiles.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Friend dates involve the emotionally  
 and intellectually satisfying  
 activities that boyfriends avoid.

HER  
 Alright. Gotta get up early  
 to help the man pick out new  
 curtains. Guys cannot be left  
 to their own interior  
 decorating devices.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 But when it's time to reap  
 the benefits of devotion,  
 affection and rabid ravenous  
 feats of sexual exploration  
 too graphic for the nature  
 channel -- the very same  
 unprotected acts of divine  
 revelation that have been  
 echoing through my  
 imagination for the past four  
 hours and seventeen minutes--

I shrug.

ME  
 Yeah. I gotta go, too. I have a  
 late night poker thing.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 When it comes to those things,  
 you're left out in the lying,  
 lonely, masturbatory cold.

ME <sup>HER</sup>  
 Definitely. We should definitely do this again.

ME NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Definitely. No chance in hell.

We hug. I'm barely holding my shit together. If you're watching this performance right now, Sir Ben Kingsley, you should be taking notes.

INT. MY CAR - MOMENTS LATER

I stare at the dashboard. It's a stupid fucking dashboard.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 I've just made her boyfriend's job  
 easier by taking the bullets while  
 he takes home the purple heart.

I pound my hands on my stupid fucking steering wheel.

ME  
 Fuck me. Fuuuuuck.  
 (beat)  
 AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH  
 HHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH  
 HHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH--

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 At least I avoided setting  
 specific plans to see her  
 again. I'll just disappear  
 now, she'll forget me and I  
 never have to see her again--

TAP. TAP. TAP.

I look over to the stupid fucking window, mid-scream.

It's HER.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Sufferin' succotash.

I roll the window down.

ME <sup>HER</sup>  
 Are you ok?

ME  
 Vocal warm-ups. I like to sing on  
 my way home... I thought you left.

ME <sup>HER</sup>  
 My car won't start.

EXT. HER APARTMENT - LATER

We pull up to the curb in my car.

INT. MY CAR - CONTINUOUS

I put the car in park, but leave it running.

HER  
Thanks for the ride. Sorry the tow-truck took so long.

ME  
That's what friends are for.

I'm sorry HER I made you miss poker.

I shrug.

HER (CONT'D)  
Hey, so... are you busy Thursday?

ME  
Oh, um... NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Yes. Yes! Very busy!

HER (CONT'D)  
Because there's this charity event  
I don't have a date to...

ME  
Sure. Cool. Why not? NARRATOR (V.O.)  
You dumb motherfucker.

HER (CONT'D)  
Yay! Second friend date!

ME  
Yay!

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
So, this is me. So awkward and  
stupid I barely recognize myself.

We both look at each other. It's awkward and stupid.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And here's the proof of how utterly  
awkward and stupid this lower-life-form-in-my-body has become.

She puts up her hand to wave bye.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
That's a goodbye wave.

HER  
See you Thursday.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But I mistake it for--

Super ...slow ...motion ...SLAP! I high-five her hand.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
A fucking high-five.

ME  
See you Thursday!

She takes a second to process the high-five. She smiles  
awkwardly, then hops out of the car.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 And now I'm left to hear the  
 fucking echo of the high-five--

SLAP-AP-AP...AP...AP...ap...ap...ap...

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 For the rest of eternity.

I notice a light appear in the top left window of her complex  
 and pop the car in gear before I do anything else stupid.

EXT. GOLF DRIVING RANGE - DAY

My writing group, at it again. We shoot tequila and see who  
 can hit a golf ball farther.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 This is called drunk driving.

MALLORY  
 At least you'll never see her again.

I'm silent. But the truth is written all over my face, clear  
 as a little girl's sidewalk chalk drawing of a sunflower.

ALL  
 Jesus.

ME  
 What? It's for charity!

SAMSON  
 Your dick get non-profit status?

ME  
 I can't blow it off, she thinks I'm  
 a charity worker.

LYLE  
 Starting to sound like love...

ME  
 Fuck your love. This is research.

LYLE  
 You look like shit. You're stalking  
 her. You talk about her nonstop.  
 And you seem sexually frustrated.  
 Are you even masturbating properly?

ME  
 I don't have to masturbate! I can  
 get laid anytime. I'm just hanging  
 out with her to prove she's no  
 different from any other girl.

MALLORY  
 That's what you said last time.

ME  
 Goddammit. I don't have to explain  
 myself. Love is a fairy tale lonely  
 people use to justify sticking it  
 out with each other. End of story.

LYLE

Bullshit. Love is what connects people. And the whole becomes better than the parts.

ME

Look at the divorce rate. People are petty, emotional whores. We don't pair off to connect, we do it so we can spread our misery like STD's.

That shuts them up.

ME (CONT'D)

Love is an ideal that can't survive in our imperfect world. You can't dump gasoline and spoiled meat on a rose and expect it to bloom.

LYLE

But love is what makes you want to feed the rose water and fresh meat.

SAMSON

(to Lyle)  
You're never house-sitting for me.

LYLE

It's like anything else. If you don't understand it, you ruin it... Which is, of course, the lesson of "Frankenstein."

SAMSON GROANS.

INT. DR. FRANKENSTEIN'S LAB - LYLE'S STORY - NIGHT

It's a ridiculous, stormy night. I'm DR. FRANKENSTEIN. LIGHTNING CRASHES outside as I pull a sheet off something in the middle of my lab: It's HER AS THE MONSTER.

LYLE (V.O.)

Everyone thought Dr. Frankenstein was evil, but it was actually love between man and beast.

I pull a switch and HER AS THE MONSTER comes to life.

ME AS DR. FRANKENSTEIN

Live!

LYLE (V.O.)

That's why the villagers killed them. Not because they were evil, but because the villagers couldn't understand that kind of love.

VILLAGERS rush in and stab us both to death with pitchforks.

END OF LYLE'S STORY -- BACK TO GOLF RANGE

That shuts us all up. Until--

SAMSON  
What the fuck was that?

LYLE  
"Frankenstein." It's a metaphor.

SCOTT  
That's not even how the story goes.

LYLE  
Another way to look at it is that  
Frankenstein went against nature  
and so he had to die.

SCOTT  
The exact opposite of your first  
point.

LYLE  
Yeah... but this point is better.  
(to Me)  
You're lying to yourself by trying  
to prove she's not special. It's  
deceptive. To you, to her, to your  
connection. You'll never get to the  
truth through deception.

SCOTT sort of pauses at that.

SCOTT  
That actually had a thought behind  
it, Lyle. I'm a little surprised.  
(to Me)  
He's right. You're going to ruin  
this, because you're a love hater.

ME  
None of you know what you're talking  
about. Don't romanticize everything  
because you read *Love and Yellow  
Fever*. It's idealized bullshit.

SCOTT  
It was cholera, you dick, and if  
you really believe that, then why  
can't you stop seeing her? She has  
a boyfriend. Doesn't that mean  
anything to you?

ME  
She's participating as much as I am.

MALLORY  
So, what, you're going to wreck her  
relationship until you get bored and  
stop calling? Business as usual?

ME  
Fuck you. Don't take your stupid  
"man issues" out on me. I'm already  
pissed I've gotta go to whatever  
dumb charity event this is tonight.

MALLORY sees red. She throws her golf club at me.

MALLORY  
Fuck me? Fuck you!

ME  
Hey! What the fuck, Mallory?

She kicks over a bucket of golf balls, picking some up and pelting them at me.

MALLORY  
This is all your fault! You're the one who keeps going out with her!  
Quit whining about it!

ME  
Me whining? I didn't even want to talk about this shit! And now you got me all worked up right before I've gotta go home and put on a fucking suit!

MALLORY  
So just go already!

SCOTT, SAMSON and LYLE watch quietly, not sure what just happened, as I grab my clubs and storm off.

EXT. YOGA STUDIO - EVENING

I show up in a suit. I see HER in spandex, carrying two mats.

ME  
What kind of charity is this?

HER  
It's actually yoga class.

ME  
I think I missed something.

HER  
I didn't think you'd come if I told you we were doing yoga.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
She had the biggest balls I'd ever seen on a chick.

ME  
Um... I'm not dressed for this.

She opens the door to the studio and looks back at me. Her eyes have a pleading, Bambi-like quality.

HER  
Are you scared?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Since I was five, I've never been able to back down from a challenge. Which I'm sure will be my downfall.

ME  
Challenge accepted.

I drop my suit pants. Good thing I'm wearing boxers. She smiles and I follow HER in.

EXT. PAPER OR PLASTIK CAFE - LATER

We sit drinking bottles of water. I'm in suit pants and a wife beater, and we're both drenched in sweat. She still looks hot.

ME  
Yeah, I'm pretty limber, right?

She LAUGHS.

HER  
I'm sorry. You looked so ridiculous. You spent half the time in child's pose. Where's your stamina?

I look around.

ME  
Shhhh! You'll ruin my reputation!

HER  
I think that noise you made during downward dog beat me to it...

ME  
Not a normal position for a man.

She LAUGHS again. I smile, but can't take my gaze from her. She smiles back, looking at me slyly.

HER  
What?

ME  
What's the deal with you and Stuffy?

HER  
That's not his name.

ME  
I'm reviving the art of nicknames.

HER  
We'll get married, probably.

ME  
Sounds romantic. You gonna get him Uggs for his cold feet?

HER  
He already proposed.

ME  
So... you're engaged?

HER  
Not exactly.

ME  
You said "no?"

HER  
I haven't answered him yet.

ME  
Not sure he's the one?

HER  
It's not him, it's me. I'm just...

ME  
Not the one for him?

HER  
You're impossible. No. I'm just... afraid. You wouldn't understand.

ME  
Challenge accepted.

She SIGHS.

HER  
Why get married? Is it the goal of love? Shouldn't love be the goal?

ME  
You're afraid you don't love him.

HER  
No. I'm afraid of my life being over. I don't want to give up my independence.

ME  
You can't look at things that way.

HER  
It's different for guys. You get to graduate, get a job, get married, get promoted, conquer the world. Blah blah blah.

ME  
It's never that easy. Besides, women have that same potential.

HER  
But the expectations are different. We're brought up dreaming of weddings, not careers.  
(beat)  
Describe your perfect wedding.

ME  
I don't know. My family and friends and... a cool DJ, I guess.

HER  
San Francisco. An outside wedding, but in the winter, so it's crisp enough to crave each other's body heat. They have these wonderful romantic heart sculptures in the city. Fifty people. Modern ceremony. Write our own vows. Reception at the Terra.

ME  
Ok. Wow. That's...

HER  
Ask any girl. It doesn't matter if she's eloping or renting an island, she has it down to the last detail.

ME  
"Woman" equals "obsessive." Got it.

She shoots me a look.

HER  
What scares me is: I don't know what I want to do with my life yet. So when I get married, is that the end of me? I become a wife and then a mother. But where is my life? What if my dreams fade into the background or I never figure it out? Getting married is like being a rose waiting to bloom. There's that one perfect, beautiful day, and then you start to wither away to nothing.  
(beat)  
And I'm fucking scared to death.

I take her whole being in.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
She's too fucking cute.

ME  
I like you.

She cuts her eyes at me.

HER  
Only because you find me interesting.

ME  
And that's a bad thing?

HER  
It's the worst of things.

Off my unacceptance SIGH:

HER (CONT'D)  
Don't you see? One day all these little things that you find interesting about me, and I you, would make us lie in bed at night thinking of new ways to kill each other without being caught. But with the rate that technology is advancing, and forensics, that just won't be possible. So, the only escape would be for one of us to have the balls to kill both of us.

I wait for it.

ME  
So you're saying you like me, too?

She HUFFS.

HER

Yes. Unfortunately. Which is why this isn't working. The rule was: we're supposed to just be friends. But now it's getting complicated.

ME

It's not that complicated.

HER

I have a boyfriend. We've been together for four years.

ME

We have a connection, though.

HER

So? I can't just break things off with him because you decided you like me. I owe him more. Us liking each other doesn't change that.

SMASH CUT TO:

A CHALKBOARD DRAWING OF A BRAIN.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The brain is funny. It finds a thing it likes and gets fired up.

Animated CHALK FLAMES engulf the brain.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The heart beats three times faster.

Three CHALK HAMMERS pulverize a CHALK HEART.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Blood gets diverted to other areas.

The red chalk flames travel from the brain down to the GROIN.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Which causes the feeling of butterflies in the stomach.

Small CHALK BUTTERFLIES zip around inside a CHALK STOMACH.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It's like a hit of cocaine.

Chalk dust falls off the butterflies into a line, which a CHALK NOSE snorts, filling the entire chalk person with more red flames.

The chalk butterflies become real butterflies and stream off the chalkboard filling THE ENTIRE WORLD WITH COLOR.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But when you can't have it...

All the butterflies suddenly DRAIN OF COLOR and drop dead, raining down in black and white wings.

INT. MY APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

I'm wrapped in a blanket and looking at my pale, disheveled face in the mirror. I'm almost black and white myself.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
... It's like withdrawal.

EXT. PARK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

I'm working on the script but can only write variations of: "Who cares? Who Cares! Who: Cares."

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
You can't taste anything, can't focus.

I see some FRAT GUYS barbecuing and drinking. I walk over and throw my script onto their barbecue, cover it in lighter fluid, grab a beer and watch it burn.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Every atom of your being craves just... one... more... hit.

INT. OLD PEOPLE PLACE - HANDBALL COURT - DAY

Playing handball with the ol' Granddad. Scott's playing, too.

GRANDDAD  
Don't be a pussy.

SCOTT  
Yeah, don't be a pussy.

ME  
Granddad! I've never heard you curse before.

GRANDDAD  
I never needed to before. Do you know how many years I've waited for you to actually fall for a girl? And now you're puttering around! If I'd been half the pussy you are, you think you would've been born?

ME  
This isn't me! She's the one staying in an unhappy relationship. She rejected a marriage proposal from the guy, but won't cut him loose. That's not on me.

I miss a shot. I'm already way more winded than GRANDDAD.

GRANDDAD  
Your grandmother was engaged to a wop when I met her. You think that douchebag would have known what to do with her? I had to steal her. I saved her. And when I die, I want to be buried right on top her.

SCOTT  
That's so romantic. Face to face?

GRANDDAD  
No, you cum rascal. In a 69.

SCOTT and I exchange looks, trying to process that...

GRANDDAD (CONT'D)  
You kids have such wonderful words  
these days. Tool. Douchebag.  
Fuckstick. I love it.

ME  
That's it, I'm having them block  
HBO in your room.

GRANDDAD  
No, you won't. You won't even fight  
for the girl you love. Pussy.

ME  
Who keeps saying I love this girl?  
It's not love.

SCOTT  
It's definitely "something."

I miss another shot. I hunch over to catch my breath.

ME  
I'm ok with that definition. Can we  
take a quick break? Granddad's  
getting old. I don't want to wear  
him out.

GRANDDAD  
A real man knows what he wants and  
goes after it. Because he knows  
he's the best thing for it.

SCOTT  
I thought you were going to leave  
her alone.

GRANDDAD  
He can't leave her alone. Look at  
him. He looks terrible!

ME  
Thanks.

GRANDDAD  
Don't let the ghost of your mom  
haunt you for the rest of your  
life. Get on with things.

SCOTT  
He's right.

ME  
Why are you ganging up on me? This  
has nothing to do with that!

GRANDDAD

Love is like your 401K. It matches your investment. You love little, you're loved little. But if you love with your balls in the lion's mouth, then there's nothing that can stand in your way.

SCOTT

Tell him the story.

ME

What story? Wait... do you guys hang out without me?

SCOTT

I never knew my granddad. Don't be

selfish.

(to Granddad)

Tell him the story.

INT. BAR - GRANDDAD'S STORY (1943)

GRANDDAD likes to exaggerate, so I've got a feeling this is going to be overdramatic. And like most things from his time, it's gonna be in technicolor.

GRANDDAD (V.O.)

It was 1943. I was on R and R in San Diego.

I'm GRANDDAD, wearing a pair of Dress Navy Blues.

GRANDDAD (V.O.)

And then I saw her. Every man in the bar was lined up to talk to her.

I see HER AS MY GRANDMOTHER, in a long skirt and a Letterman Sweater. All the GUYS are lined up to talk her, literally.

I push my way to her. She shows me her engagement ring. I take her wrist, ignore the ring, and kiss her hand.

She BLUSHES as I lead her to the dance floor. All the lights dim, except for the jukebox, which plays on my cue: "Paper Doll" by the Mills Brothers. It's pure magic. As we dance, the walls fade away and give birth to a million stars--

GRANDDAD (V.O.)

I shipped out the next day.

EXT. PIER - GRANDDAD'S STORY - NEXT DAY

I'm on a Naval ship. She waves from the pier, wipes her tears with a white handkerchief, and then lets it go. A gust of wind catches it and carries it to my hand.

GRANDDAD (V.O.)

After that, things got ugly.

## EXT. NAVAL SHIP - GRANDDAD'S STORY - NIGHT

The sea is wild and stormy. The ship rocks. I pull out the handkerchief and smell it to calm my nerves.

GRANDDAD (V.O.)  
I never thought I'd see her again.

A helicopter drops a bag of mail from the sky. I'm handed a letter with just "MY NAME" written on it. I read the letter.

HER AS MY GRANDMOTHER (V.O.)  
(hamming it up)

My Dearest. I do not know when or if I will ever see you again. I wake up at night and say your name to the same stars that I imagine govern your sky. But I am already betrothed to a man whom my parents call certifiable. I am sorry, my love. If we could be together I would turn the world on its side, but the wedding date has been set for this thirteenth of January.

I look at a calendar and see that the wedding is three days away. That moment my ship takes German fire. It is rocked sideways and sinks.

A German Vessel pulls our survivors from the water.

GRANDDAD (V.O.)  
But not even Germans can stop love.

## EXT. GERMAN VESSEL - GRANDDAD'S STORY

On the German Ship, I overtake a machine gun and fire like a mad man, freeing the OTHERS.

Staring out at the empty ocean, I caress the handkerchief once more, and then dive in and swim away.

## TRAVEL MONTAGE - GRANDDAD'S STORY

LATER IN THE OCEAN - Sharks circle ME AS GRANDDAD.

ON A WOODEN RAFT - I paddle, wearing a shark's skin like a rain coat and his teeth on a necklace.

IN AN AFRICAN DESERT - I strain water from a rock.

IN THE HIMALAYAS - I barter for a llama. A SHERPA touches her handkerchief and I stab a knife through his hand.

IN ALASKA - I mush a dogsled team across the Iditarod Trail.

IN NORCAL - I fight a bear with my shark tooth necklace.

GRANDDAD (V.O.)  
That was the longest three days of my life.

INT. CHURCH - GRANDDAD'S STORY - DAY

HER AS MY GRANDMOTHER and STUFFY AS AN ITALIAN are ready to be pronounced man and wife.

PRIEST  
If anyone has reason for this  
marriage not to take place, speak  
now or forever hold your peace.

Silence. The PRIEST opens his mouth to finish, but there is a LOW RUMBLE. A YOUNG BOY looks out the church window to see a herd of horses cresting a hill. They storm past the church. I ride up on the last horse and pop a wheelie.

BACK INSIDE

The back doors fall down as I enter. I hold up the worn handkerchief. She cannot believe it. I walk towards HER AS MY GRANDMOTHER, slowly. She runs into my arms. We kiss.

STUFFY AS AN ITALIAN rushes to intervene and I punch him out, without having to unlock lips. Confetti falls. APPLAUSE.

GRANDDAD (V.O.)  
That kiss changed everything. The solar eclipse came three days early, a rainstorm swept the drought-ridden town of Umhadawa, and the Allies turned the tide of the war.

END OF GRANDDAD'S STORY - BACK TO HANDBALL COURT

SCOTT sighs.

SCOTT  
Great story. It's right up there with *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

I roll my eyes.

ME  
Most of that is not even possible.

GRANDDAD  
You're missing the point. Women want to be fought for, to feel desired.

ME  
It just seems like if she felt half of what I feel, she would explode.

GRANDDAD  
But you feel all of what you feel and you're not doing a fucking thing about it.  
(beat)  
Which makes him what, Scotty?

SCOTT  
A pussy.

GRANDDAD  
A pussy.

INT. MY APARTMENT - MY BEDROOM - NIGHT

I'm lying there, just a pussy staring up at the ceiling.

EXT. HER APARTMENT - NIGHT

I grab a rock and toss it at her window. The top left one. Yeah, it's old fashioned, so sue me.

CRACK. The rock goes through the window.

ME  
Shit.

A light pops on. A NEW GUY comes to the window, he's Gerry-Butler—"300" buff.

NEW GUY  
What the f?

Who the fuck is that?

ME  
Who the fuck are you? Is she sleeping with you?

ANOTHER GUY comes to the window behind NEW GUY. Just as buff and hairless.

ANOTHER GUY  
Where did that rock come from?

NEW GUY  
This douchebag threw it up here.

ME  
Two of you? I'm gonna be sick.  
What the hell? Is it some no-body-hair-invitation-only orgy up there?

HER (O.C.)  
What's going on?

I look over to the right side window. She lights it up. She's all by herself.

NEW GUY  
This guy threw a rock through our window.

HER  
You have something against gays?

ME  
What? No. I thought you lived in that one... I love gay people.

A NEIGHBOR has come outside to see all the commotion.

NEIGHBOR  
What's going on?

NEW GUY  
We can't tell if this guy's a bigot or coming out.

NEIGHBOR  
That's how it goes. You hate because  
you're afraid of your own feelings.

ME  
No! I was just looking for her.

ANOTHER GUY  
Why?

HER  
Yeah, why?

ME  
I just want to do... something...  
with you.

HER  
Like what?

ME  
Anything.

HER  
What time is it?

A DOG WALKER, who has stopped to watch, chimes in--

DOG WALKER  
It's 12:01.

HER  
It's kind of late.

NEIGHBOR  
Yeah, it is kind of late.

ME  
Yeah. But is it too late?

INT. SUPERMARKET - LATER

She leads me through the fluorescent flickering maze. As we pass the cereal, she stops to grab a box of Frosted Flakes.

HER  
Life's too short, y'know?

I see a box of Captain Crunch. That motherfucking Captain is looking at me all wrong. I turn it backwards so I don't have to see him.

HER (CONT'D)  
You have a beef with the captain?

ME  
Ehhh... bad memories.

HER  
Do tell.

ME  
No... I'm just kidding.

Sir Ben, if you're still watching: acting school is over.

HER  
No, you weren't. There's totally a story there.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Don't tell her. Don't you do it.

ME  
I was eating Captain Crunch when I found out my mom left me.

HER  
Oh... And you're holding a grudge.

ME  
I don't know what else you're supposed to do with grudges.

HER  
Unacceptable. Come on.

She leads me to the greeting card aisle.

HER (CONT'D)  
Help me find a birthday card.

She picks one up.

HER (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
"To my dearest daughter - May you live all the days of your life.  
Happy birthday."

I grab one.

ME  
(reading)  
"If Christmas isn't in your heart,  
you'll never find it under a tree."  
(beat)  
Happy birthday.

HER  
This is not a joke.

ME  
Whose birthday is it?

HER  
Mine.

I hand over the card.

ME  
Surprise! Happy birthday!

She opens it up and feigns surprise--

HER  
What, no cash? You cheap asshole.

ME  
Buying a card for yourself is kind of depressing. Maybe you should get one of the "cheer up" ones.

She pauses the pause that comes before something heavy.

HER  
There's something I haven't told  
you.

ME  
That you live on the right side of  
your complex? Because I could have  
used that information earlier.

She looks away.

HER  
When I was little... like real  
little... my father killed himself  
a couple days before my birthday.

HER (CONT'D)  
But then, on my birthday, I got a card from him. He'd sent it before he died. The card said he was sorry, and that he loved me.

She is crying a little, but hiding it well.

Love sure is fucked up sometimes.

She composes herself.

HER (CONT'D)  
So now, every year on my birthday,  
I pick out a card that I think he  
would get me and I sign it for him.

She looks at ME. I am speechless.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I want to scream at the top of my lungs that as long as I have breath I would never let anything hurt her.

I walk towards HER.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But I don't. Because those are only words.

I reach HER and take the card from her hand.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And words are bullshit. Trust me,  
I'm a writer.

I look into her glassy eyes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
The only thing that really speaks  
in this world is action.

I kiss HER. It's awkward and passionate.

INT. CULVER ICE ARENA - DAY

LYLE ice skates backwards, facing ME and SCOTT.

LYLE  
What did her tongue feel like?

He has no idea that SAMSON is about to--

SLAM! Bodycheck him into the wall.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
Goddammit, Samson! Quit it! I'm  
trying to hear this.

LYLE recovers.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
(to Me)  
So, that was it? You just kissed  
her and took her home?

SLAM! MALLORY bodychecks Lyle, knocking him on his ass.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
You guys are assholes!

MALLORY  
I'm a girl, that couldn't hurt!

LYLE gets back to his feet.

SAMSON  
(to Me)  
So, no boobs, no bones?

ME  
It wasn't that kind of kiss. It was  
emotional, but it wasn't about sex.

LYLE  
I don't know what that means.

ME  
What's wrong with me? I've never not  
been able to get a girl out of my  
head before.

SAMSON  
Are you ready to have a real  
conversation about this, without  
you freaking out again?

I nod.

SAMSON (CONT'D)  
You two are way off course. If you  
don't fuck soon, you're going to  
fuck it up for both of you.

SCOTT  
Don't listen to him. You do not  
want to be the other man.

SAMSON  
Sexual tension clouds a man's  
thinking. The dick takes over and  
the brain shuts off.

SCOTT  
That's terrible advice. You're gonna end up hurting one or both of you.

SAMSON  
This is Writing 101: Women need romance, men need climax. That's why chicks like chick flicks and dudes like action. One good orgasm will answer all your questions.

SCOTT  
Questions? There're no questions!

SAMSON  
You meet a girl, you like her, you have questions: Am I in love? Could I live without her? Is she the one?

MALLORY  
Do men really think sex is the answer to everything?

SAMSON  
It's a time-tested shortcut that dates back to the dawn of man. If you can forget a girl after fucking her, she's forgettable. And if you can't, then you have your answer.

SCOTT  
And where does that leave her?

SAMSON  
She's already kissed him. She's got questions, too.  
(to Me)  
There's this story about a serf...

#### EXT. HILLSIDE - SAMSON'S STORY - DAY

Since this is a SAMSON story, I have to expect it will be weird and so I'm just going to start it in Black & White. I'm dressed as some sort of SERF back in the 13?/16?/1500's. Time probably doesn't matter. Think of it as a Fellini film.

I look up to see, perched on a hill: HER dressed as a MAIDEN. She's with STUFFY. He's down on one knee.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
The serf was in love with a maiden, but he never told her. And so she married another.

The hill sprouts PEOPLE. STUFFY stands up and they're at an altar. Getting married.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
The serf vowed to never be a slave to love again.

WOMAN after WOMAN approach ME AS A SERF.

ME AS A SERF  
No. No. No.

I turn them away and each withers like a vampire in sunlight.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
He became a cold bastard.

Ice crystals form on my face. I brush them off.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
He was unfulfilled. Empty.

I open my serf coat, revealing a latch on my serf chest. Inside is an empty compartment where my heart should be with nothing but an ashtray full of smoldering cigarette butts.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
There had to be more. So he became a monk, looking for the divine.

I shave a circular bald spot into the back of my head and put on a brown monk cloak.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
He ran to the ends of the Earth  
searching for the spiritual  
fulfillment of the boundless,  
immutable everlasting.

I run, but COLLIDE with a transparent wall. Through the wall, nothing but emptiness stretching forever. Everything ZOOMS OUT, the transparent wall becomes the atmosphere of the Earth.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
Then the monk serf looked inward.  
He sought tranquility through  
meditation and communion with his  
surroundings.

On a mountain top, I sit Indian style in my serf monk outfit next to a mountain goat, also sitting Indian style.

ME AS A SERF MONK  
Ommmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm....

SAMSON (V.O.)  
And after many years had passed...

The hair around my bald spot turns salt and pepper, and then stark white.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
... And he had finally cleared his  
mind of all earthly thoughts, he  
stood up.

I stand up. The mountain goat stands up.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
And opened his mouth for the first  
word that popped into his mind.

The mountain goat looks at ME AS A SERF MONK, expectantly.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
And it was...

ME AS A SERF MONK  
Her name.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
Her name.

I blink. Unsure what to do. The mountain goat YAWNS.

LYLE (V.O.)  
Ooh... It's kind of like that  
astronaut.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
Lyle, I'm telling a fucking story.

LYLE (V.O.)  
But it's the same story, because  
there was that astronaut.

Gravity disappears and I start floating. I put on a space  
helmet to breathe. I float up next to a spaceship and climb  
into the side door.

LYLE (V.O.)  
He was Russian, I believe.

A bottle of vodka floats by my astronaut head.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
Jesus Christ.

LYLE (V.O.)  
He was in love with a mistress of  
the tsar or president or someone.  
So, he joined a mission to the space  
station so he could forget her.

I look at a picture of HER AS A RUSSIAN, next to STUFFY AS A  
RUSSIAN TSAR. I tear up the picture.

LYLE (V.O.)  
Only, he never could. He was stuck  
alone in space by himself, going  
crazy thinking about her.

I try to tape the picture back together. I tear it up again.

LYLE (V.O.)  
Just floating out in space, no  
spaceship, no space station,  
nothing.

I step out the side door of the spaceship, floating off.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
That's it? Do any of your stories  
have a proper ending?

The torn pieces of HER picture float around me. The mountain  
goat swims by, eating the pieces.

LYLE (V.O.)  
Well... he'll probably run out of  
oxygen at some point. And die.  
So... that's kind of an ending.

I open a latch in my astronaut chest, only to find more  
infinite space inside.

SAMSON (V.O.)  
 The point of my story, is that you  
 can't just forget someone. You have  
 to answer the question.

LYLE (V.O.)  
 Mine, too. Answer the question or  
 you suffocate in space.

INT. MY APARTMENT - NIGHT

I flip channels. Bored out of my mind.

ON TV - A Korean soap opera.

FLIP - A nature doc on how the Abdulali Wrinkled Frog mates.

FLIP - A MAN looks at me compassionately from the TV.

TV MAN  
 Are you lonely? Are you cold? Do  
 you just wish you could disappear?

Yes. NARRATOR (V.O.)

TV MAN  
 Then try: The Burkuddler.

An image of SOMEONE on a couch wearing a Burka-blanket combo.

TV MAN (CONT'D)  
 Just call this number.

The number haunts me from the screen. I look at the phone.  
 Considering: TV. Phone. TV. Phone.

ME  
 No.

I turn the TV off and in the black screen I see my ASTRONAUT SELF, suffocating. I realize I'm not breathing. Suddenly--

My phone VIBRATES. I GASP for breath, and answer.

ME (CONT'D)  
 Hi...

HER (O.S.)  
 I need to talk. Are you busy?

In the TV screen my ASTRONAUT SELF pleads with his eyes.

INT. NORM'S DINER - NIGHT

We stare at each other over a cup of coffee.

HER  
 This friend thing has kind of  
 gotten off track.

ME  
 It was the kiss, wasn't it?

HER

It's sort of everything. I think my boyfriend knows something's up.  
We've been fighting nonstop.

ME

So... it was a good kiss?

HER

We can't keep doing this.

ME

You think we should just have sex and get it out of our system?

She almost chokes on her coffee on that one.

HER

We're not having sex!

ME

Well, you're not offering any solutions! I'm just being helpful!

HER

To yourself! How does you getting laid help me?

ME

I've explored every other option: I can't just be friends. I won't get a sex change. And I refuse to join a monastery or die out in space.

HER

How are those the only options?

ME

Well... I'm open to suggestions.

HER

I got nothing. But that does not mean sex.

ME

I'm just saying that if this thing between us is nothing... if it's some sort of infatuation, then maybe sex will cure it.

HER

And if it's not?

ME

Wouldn't we want to know?

HER

No! It's not that simple. Sex doesn't "cure" anything for women.

ME

But what if it's good sex?

Our WAITER stops by.

HER

Stop it.

WAITER  
So what will it be?

HER  
(more to Me than him)  
I think we need some cold turkey.

ME  
I don't want cold turkey. I want a  
hot open-faced sandwich.

HER  
No. Nothing hot.

ME  
I want something steamy, like soup.

HER  
No, you can have gazpacho.

WAITER  
We don't do gazpacho... the menus  
are right there...

ME  
Fine. Something cold it is... But  
it's gonna be sweet and a little  
bad for you.

She narrows her eyes.

ME (CONT'D)  
(to the Waiter)  
Ice cream.

WAITER  
We're all out of ice cream.

ME  
Of course you are.

WAITER  
(not sorry)  
Sorry, dude.

She thinks for a second.

HER  
Can we get two bowls of ice, two  
empty glasses, a bunch of creamer  
cups, jelly and some whipped cream?

WAITER  
Whatever.

He wanders off.

ME  
If you're broke, I can buy you real  
food. You don't have to eat  
condiments.

HER  
Shh. Don't talk. Just do what I do.

The WAITER brings HER the stuff.

She mixes ice and salt in one of the empty cups, dropping in some little unopened creamer cups. I follow suit with my empty cup. We cover our cups and shake them to mix it all together. We pull out the creamer cups, open them up.

ME  
Mine are frozen.

HER  
That's the point.

We scoop out the frozen creamer into the bowls and mix in packets of strawberry jelly. She tops it with whipped cream.

HER (CONT'D)  
Voila. Ice cream.

I take a bite.

ME  
Not bad.

She smiles and it almost melts my ice cream.

ME (CONT'D)  
This was fun.

HER  
Yeah.

ME  
So... cold fucking turkey...

She scoops out a bit of ice cream and accidentally gets whipped cream on the tip of her nose. It's too fucking cute. We stare at each other... The whipped cream calling to me.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And just like that... It's on.

INT. HER APARTMENT - LATER

GANGSTA RAP MUSIC kicks in. She looks into me. My heart beats so fast. It feels like--

INSIDE MY CHEST: MY HEART, cigarette dangling from his lips, is a MERCENARY shooting a machine gun that fires out hundreds of those Amethyst Woodstar Hummingbirds.

BACK TO HER ROOM: We're all over each other, hard kisses that break things. We fall on her bed.

ME  
Wait.

The Gansta Rap stops.

HER  
What?

ME  
I just want to do this right.

I lean in again as the Gangsta Rap is replaced with one of those indie songs that makes everything feel like the movie "Days of Heaven."

This is two people using their fucking like a wrench to unbolt their souls from their bodies. It's tasteful.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 One thing I learned is that when you orgasm from making love to someone you actually care about, you don't feel guilty. You feel...

We lock eyes. Her pupils widen enough to swallow the world, then pulse.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Absolute forgiveness.

Our bodies collapse as we catch our breath.

ME  
 So.

HER  
 So.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 And sometimes it's necessary to forgive each other more than once.

She looks me over, then climbs on top of me as the Gangsta Rap KICKS BACK IN.

INT. HER APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

My eyes pop open and I roll over: Yup, she's still there. It wasn't a dream.

I stretch my shit out and YAWN, looking and feeling refreshed. Her eyes pop open.

ME  
 Good morning.

HER  
 Ugggh. Don't tell me you're a fucking morning person.

ME  
 Not traditionally. But today I feel good. You wanna get some breakfast?

HER  
 Breakfast?

ME  
 Yeah. Come on. I know a great spot.

HER  
 Oh, fuck you, morning person.

She rolls over.

ME  
 Or, I could make you something. Do you have eggs and stuff?

She MOANS something incoherent.

INT. HER KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

I claw through the cupboards. Nothing but sugar cereals.

I pause. Staring back at me from the cupboard is the face of my old nemesis: Captain Crunch. Only he doesn't look so menacing anymore. I open the box, grab a handful and pop it in my mouth.

INT. HER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

I enter with the Captain Crunch.

ME  
I couldn't even look at this stuff  
before last night. Now look at me.

She opens her eyes to look and then rolls back over.

ME (CONT'D)  
Don't you see what this means?

She sits up. Looks at me solemnly. Weighing her thoughts.

HER  
I hope you don't think it means...  
"something."

ME  
Of course it means "something." You  
feel it, too. I can see it.

HER  
Yes, I feel... something. But...

ME  
But what?

HER  
I told you last night, we can't  
keep doing this.

ME  
But... then we had sex. That  
changes everything. You can't tell  
me you don't feel different.

HER  
Yeah, but it always feels this way  
at first. Like with my boyfriend.  
And all the guys before him.

ME  
Wait... when you say "all the guys,"  
does a number pop in your head?

HER  
Jesus, that's not the point.

ME  
The point is you don't feel that  
with them anymore. You feel that  
way with me. Here. Today.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Seriously, though, what does she mean by "all the guys before him?"

HER  
 But if you start to think this feeling that you have with every new person who comes along is "love," then it no longer means anything. It's not some sort of special, true, real love. It's just... ordinary.

ME  
 Ordinary? You thought last night was ordinary?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Does she mean like allll three guys?

HER  
 No, no, no. Last night was amazing. Please don't take it like that. I just don't want to confuse anything. What I meant was: How many new "you's" are there out there?

ME  
 There's only one me, I hope. I try to always wear a condom.

HER  
 But what about the next guy after you? Is that gonna be "love," too?

ME  
 Next guy? There's a fucking next guy already?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Or does she mean like "all" as in "I can't remember all of them because they were wearing costumes and coming at me two at a time?"

Her ALARM SOUNDS. She punches the button to turn it off.

HER  
 There's no next guy. The metaphorical next love. I just don't know what to believe in. And now I have to go meet my boyfriend for lunch.

She gets up and pulls some pants on.

ME  
 Are you going to tell him about us?

No! HER

ME  
 What, I have to tell him?

HER  
 Tell him what? That I fucked some  
 philanthropist because my life is a  
 mess? That I have doubts about who  
 I am and what I want? That I'm  
 confused by the whole idea of love?

ME  
 Hey, you're the only one throwing  
 the love word around. I thought we  
 were just enjoying each other.

I pull on the rest of my own clothes.

HER  
 If that's all it is to you, why are  
 we having this conversation?

ME  
 I don't know! I thought we had fun,  
 but you're telling me it was  
 ordinary. I thought you were  
 special, but I guess I was wrong. I  
 guess you're forgettable.

I slam the box of Captain Crunch into her trash can and storm  
 out, letting this gem echo as I go--

ME (CONT'D)  
 Enjoy "all" your next guys.

EXT. NORTH HOLLYWOOD PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

A small door plastered with a PLAYBILL reading: One night  
 only: Mallory Thomas in "I Used To Think Love Was Blind, But  
 Now I Think It's Just Ignoring Me."

MALLORY (O.S.)  
 I want him to crawl inside my vagina  
 like an underground missile silo,  
 where we'll make love until we're  
 famished and eat all the rations.

INT. NORTH HOLLYWOOD PLAYHOUSE - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

MALLORY performs to an almost empty house: It's ME, SAMSON,  
 LYLE, SCOTT, and one OTHER DUDE a couple rows back. The OTHER  
 DUDE gets up to leave. SAMSON notices.

SAMSON  
 Hey! Sit down! Don't you know it's  
 rude to leave in the middle of a  
 performance?

OTHER DUDE  
 It's not like that... I just have  
 really bad gas.

SAMSON  
 I don't care. Sit the fuck down  
 before I rip your jaw off and wear  
 it like a tiara.

OTHER DUDE heads back towards his seat.

SAMSON (CONT'D)  
Not there. Sit up here with us.

OTHER DUDE sits next to ME.

SAMSON (CONT'D)  
There.

LATER

MALLORY  
My ovaries became like abandoned  
potatoes in a basement and started  
growing legs and arms and forming  
political parties.

OTHER DUDE wasn't lying. Because he, LYLE, SCOTT and I all  
have our noses tucked down into our shirts. Not SAMSON. He  
watches the show with a big smile on his face.

INT. RESIDUALS BAR - LATER

ALL OF US from the play, including OTHER DUDE have a beer.

OTHER DUDE  
Sounds like you gotta give her some  
space. You're crowding her.

MALLORY  
Shut up. You don't get to talk.

SAMSON  
I think dude's got a point.

ME  
You're the one who told me sleeping  
with her was the only way!

SAMSON  
No, I said sleeping with her would  
answer the question. I didn't tell  
you to freak out and get "needy."

ME  
I'm not needy. We had a connection.

SAMSON  
Dude, if you slept with a chick for  
the first time and the next morning  
she wanted you to rearrange your  
life, what would you do?

ME  
(realizing)  
Fuck me. I am needy.

OTHER DUDE  
You better fix that shit stat.

A FLASH IN MY MIND: Mallory's car. The headshot above her  
driver's side door. It's OTHER DUDE's face.

I raise my eyebrow at MALLORY. She averts her eyes.

EXT. RESIDUALS BAR - LATER

I pull out my phone as I walk to my car and dial HER up.

HER (O.S.)  
This better be good.

ME  
Truce lunch?

HER (O.S.)  
Are we at war?

EXT. THE GROVE - SOME RESTAURANT PATIO - AFTERNOON

I'm sitting at lunch with HER.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Ok. Just be cool. Calm. Flip, even.

ME  
(none of the above)  
I'm sorry about... you know. I was out of line. But - if I can explain myself - it seemed like you freaked out a little, and that freaked me out a little, which freaked you out even more. And then it was all a little freaky.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Or you can not listen to me at all.

HER  
(calm, cool... flip even)  
I feel like you have this image of me in your head, like I'm this person that I'm not. This expectation of me that has nothing to do with the real me and that I'll never be able to live up to.

ME  
If the expectations you have of me can't live up to the expectations I have of you, then you need to do some better expecting. And while you're at it, add three inches.

HER  
I'm confused. Are we having a serious conversation?

ME  
It just seems like the universe is pushing me in a direction. For example, y'know how when people are telling you stories about a breakup or their cat dying or whatever? Well, I do this thing where I imagine myself acting out the stories, to keep from getting bored. But now, I can't do it without you being in the stories, too. Is this making sense?

HER  
 So... basically whenever someone's telling you their own deeply personal or painful stories, you cut them out and insert yourself?

ME  
 Ok, with that spin it sounds...

HER  
 That's the most narcissistic thing I've ever heard.

ME  
 But you're in there, too! So, it's sort of all about you if you think about it.

Over her shoulder, I see a face I don't want to see: HEDGE FUNDER approaching.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Shit.

I try to hide behind HER, but he's spotted me.

HEDGE FUNDER  
 Hey! I thought that was you. Where have you been? I haven't seen you at any of the monkey dinners.

ME  
 Yeah... my schedule's been crazy.

HEDGE FUNDER  
 Yeah, so then I went to Assist-a-Sister's craft sale and thought for sure you'd be there. But when I asked the event coordinator, she said she'd never even heard of you.

ME  
 Yeah, uh...

HEDGE FUNDER  
 And I was like, 'screw that, sister. He's on the board of directors.' But her business card said she was on the board of directors.

I look from HER to him and back.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 I would have ran, but this guy's Fun Run times are off the chart.

ME  
 Ok. See... uh...

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Liar's block. It's like writer's block, but for shitheads. And it feels roughly equivalent to being slapped in the face by a large, misshapen prison dick.

ME  
 I'm not technically as involved...  
 in the charity world... as I may  
 have led you to believe.

She frowns.

HER  
 What does that mean? Aren't you  
 like a full-time charity worker?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Questions. They will only lead to  
 more questions.

ME  
 Charity events don't pay the bills.  
 I mean, I go when I can, but not as  
 often as I'd like to go. Or...  
 claim to.

HER  
 So... what do you do, then?

ME  
 I'm a writer.

HER  
 You make up stories for a living.

HEDGE FUNDER  
 You've been lying this whole time?

ME  
 Don't think about it like that.  
 (beat)  
 Although, it's technically accurate.

HEDGE FUNDER  
 Africa? The rain forest? The frogs?

HEDGE FUNDER snatches my drink off the table.

HEDGE FUNDER (CONT'D)  
 I wanna throw your drink in your  
 face so bad...

HEDGE FUNDER shakes his head. Disgusted. He pours my drink  
 slowly and deliberately into a nearby plant and huffs off.

ME  
 I did help with the frogs!

I turn to HER. She looks like she just survived a bomb blast.

ME (CONT'D)  
 I did. I met a frog scientist at an  
 event and he was this total nerd.  
 But we got to talking about some of  
 my theories on group sex... mating  
 theories. Simple stuff really...

HER  
 I don't care about the frogs!

ME  
Is it the lying?

She stands up, which I assume is a "yes."

HER  
I don't even know who you are! How could you expect me to feel anything real for you, if it's all based on make believe?

ME  
You know me! As a person. Just not all the little white facts.

She picks up her purse.

ME (CONT'D)  
Please give me a chance to explain.

HER  
Didn't you just explain?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
She had me there.

ME  
We can't just leave here mad.

HER  
I'm not mad. I'm... depleted.

I can only watch her go.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
They say, "the truth will set you free." But I didn't want to be free. I wanted us to be tied together and thrown into the ocean.

EXT. CITY - SIDEWALKS AND SHIT - LATER

I'm walking through the universe.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
They also like to say, "there's someone for everyone." And as much as you may think that's right--

I see the most awkward looking LOSER LONER DUDE.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
-- You can always find that one person out there who's so offensive to the natural order of things that you realize it can't be true. But then suddenly--

An even more awkward looking LOSER LONER GIRL meets up with the LOSER LONER DUDE. He kisses her hand and they walk off.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
-- You're wrong again.

I watch them with a look of horror mixed with disbelief.

NARRATOR  
 And then everywhere you look is  
 like googling "Awkward Engagement  
 Photos."

All around me, it's nothing but strange couples: A SIX FOOT GIRL holds hands with a MEXICAN HIPSTER... A COWBOY wearing a suit that looks like the American flag caresses a SMALL ASIAN WOMAN... TWO TINY BEETLES on a flower mount each other like prison inmates.

I look up and see my reflection in a store front window.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 And you realize you're wrong a  
 third time. You're that one person.  
 The exception. There's someone for  
 everyone. Everyone except you.

INT. MY APARTMENT - EVENING

I stare at my phone.

ME  
 No.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 You're lying to yourself.

ME  
 Fine.

I call HER. VOICEMAIL.

ME (CONT'D)  
 It's me. Please call me back.

The other line BLINKS. It's BRYAN. I answer.

BRYAN (O.S.)  
 Hey, so... I read the pages you  
 sent me. There's, uh... some weird  
 stuff in there. Let's do drinks.

ME  
 Not now. I'm going through some  
 stuff.

BRYAN (O.S.)  
 You sound down? Is everything ok?

ME  
 I don't know.

BRYAN (O.S.)  
 Sounds like you could... use a  
 drink?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Damn. I just got agented.

INT. HEMINGWAY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

It's a swanky spot filled with books and drinks named after Hemingway's works. BRYAN plops down across from ME. I have a sampling of cocktails.

ME  
I mixed *The Old Man and the Sea*,  
with a *Garden of Eden* and *A Death  
in the Afternoon*. Do you know what  
that makes?

BRYAN  
A headache?

ME  
A shotgun suicide.

BRYAN  
Haha.  
(beat)  
I don't get it.

I can only EXHALE loudly and obnoxiously.

BRYAN (CONT'D)  
You look like hell. Are you like  
one of those method writers?

ME  
I'm a fraud.

BRYAN  
Don't go to the dark place. Rom-  
coms are supposed to be fun.

BRYAN grabs a bar napkin and sketches out some stick figures.

BRYAN (CONT'D)  
It's not that hard: Boy meets girl,  
shit happens, boy fucks girl.  
Happily ever after.

He draws three panels for his stick figures: a meeting, an explosion, a stick figure 69.

ME  
That's not how the world works.  
It's a fucking mess. And you didn't  
even put hair on the girl, I can't  
tell which one is the dude.

BRYAN moves the napkins awkwardly.

BRYAN  
I don't fucking know. Just keep it  
simple. You'll crack it.

ME  
It always seems simple, doesn't it?  
In our minds. But we try to put it  
out there in the world and it gets  
fucked up. You can't even draw love  
on a piece of paper without it  
ending up two dudes sixty-nining.

BRYAN is suddenly a little uncomfortable, I don't see it  
because I'm in a big abyss, but you notice it.

ME (CONT'D)  
Aren't you sick of hiding behind  
all the lies?

BRYAN  
Lies?

ME  
The lies we sell each other about  
who we are and how we're supposed  
to live. Trying to live up to them  
is eating our souls... like your  
two dudes eating each other out.

BRYAN is nervous, but I still don't see it.

BRYAN  
Who told you?

ME  
No one. I had to find out on my  
own. Isn't that something?

BRYAN takes a breath, leans in, and whispers--

BRYAN  
But I act straight, right?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I'm sorry? ME  
What?

BRYAN pulls back. He shrugs it off.

BRYAN (CONT'D)  
What?

ME  
Are you-- BRYAN  
No.

ME  
But you just-- BRYAN  
No, I didn't.

ME  
Bryan...

We both look down to the table--

ME (CONT'D)  
You're holding my hand.

BRYAN pulls his hand away.

BRYAN  
Of course I was holding your hand,  
because I'm your agent. I have to  
hold all of my clients' hands.

ME  
Dude! Why are you lying to me?

BRYAN  
I don't fucking know! I'm relating  
to you. My job is to motivate you.

ME

My best friend is gay, you don't  
think I can handle it?

BRYAN

Since I've known you, all you  
wanted to talk about was pussy, so  
I talk with you about pussy. I  
don't have to be straight to talk  
about pussy, do I?

ME

It helps.

BRYAN

No offense, but you're a talker.  
That's how we relate. Other clients  
are listeners. It's just not you.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That last part sounded gay, but I  
don't think I should mention it.

BRYAN

We cool?

ME

Of course. I'm just dealing with my  
own relationship shit.

BRYAN

Say no more. There's a Hollywood  
thing at the Roosevelt tonight.  
Poolside. As a gay man to a  
straight man, I think you should  
come with me and we'll both hose  
down some tonsils.

ME

I don't know if my heart's in it.

BRYAN

Fuck your heart, I'm talking about  
your dick. And that's one thing I  
know way better than you do. I'll  
email you notes on the script. Let's  
just keep you out of the dark place.

EXT. ROOSEVELT HOTEL - POOL - LATER

I pass by CUTE GIRL I fingered at the beginning, talking with  
her FRIENDS. This is the end of a scene we've already seen. I  
mount up to the bar. The BARTENDER eyes me.

ME

Patron. Make it a double.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So, here we are. Back at the start.

I look at my fingers glistening, from fingerling CUTE GIRL.

ME

And a water.

The BARTENDER serves up the drinks. I shoot the patron and rinse my fingers in the water.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
The truth is: I lied to you. I did  
feel bad about fingering that girl.

I wave the BARTENDER back over.

ME  
Again.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Not because she was cheating, but  
because I felt like I was cheating.

The BARTENDER refills my patron. I slam it back.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But maybe that's not even right. I  
honestly don't know what I felt.

BRYAN comes up.

ME  
Hey. I think I'm gonna take off.

BRYAN hugs me.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I was an emotional zombie, stumbling  
through the city with no purpose. A  
tin man with an empty chest.

Over BRYAN's shoulder, I spy: MY HEART, lying face down in  
the pool, a la the opening scene of "Sunset Blvd."

BRYAN  
Keep fighting the good fight.

INT. LYLE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

LYLE takes off his shirt to audition a different one. Both  
shirts have a shiny quality.

ME  
Maybe she's not the one. Maybe my  
instincts and my body and the whole  
universe are lying to me. I don't  
even know what makes sense anymore.

LYLE  
A really good sign for me is when  
I'm surfing porn. If I keep trying  
to find girls that look like  
whoever I'm with, then, well that's  
a good sign, right?

I shake off the thought.

ME  
What's with all the shiny shirts?

LYLE  
I set up a "date" with one of those  
"Meet A Horny Neighbor" websites.

ME  
I thought we were hanging out!

LYLE  
We are. Don't worry, this chick's into DP. It said so on her profile.

ME  
Wait. I'm not--

The doorbell RINGS.

LATER

LYLE sits with his arms crossed, mad as hell. His HORNY NEIGHBOR is crying.

HORNY NEIGHBOR  
And she chose him?

ME  
She didn't choose me.

HORNY NEIGHBOR  
You have to go to her. Tell her how you feel.

ME  
She knows how I feel.

HORNY NEIGHBOR  
But did you tell her you love her?

ME  
I don't know if she believes in love. I don't even know if I do.

HORNY NEIGHBOR  
That doesn't matter. As long as you feel it.

I think about that as LYLE taps my shoulder.

LYLE  
Can I talk with you at the door?

AT THE DOOR

LYLE opens the door and ushers me outside.

LYLE (CONT'D)  
Sorry, but you've gotta go.

ME  
You're kicking me out?

LYLE  
I've got needs and you're need-blocking me. At this point, I don't even think I want you here as a cameraman. You should talk to Mallory. She loves talking about your issues.

LYLE closes the door in my face.

INT. MALLORY'S APARTMENT - LATER

MALLORY lines up four tequila shots.

MALLORY  
Here's to relationships.

ME  
No, thanks, Mal. Alcohol will just  
make me more depressed.

MALLORY  
Suit yourself.

She takes two of the shots, then bites a lime.

ME  
She won't return my calls. She  
ignores my texts. Why are all girls  
so crazy?

MALLORY downs the other two shots. Winces.

MALLORY  
Men. Men make us crazy.

ME  
You know what I mean, right? You're  
with this crazy person and they're  
making you crazy, too, and you just  
want to shake them and make them  
see what you see.

MALLORY  
Yeah, I've been there.

MALLORY pours herself some more shots.

ME  
How did you handle it?

MALLORY  
Me? Ha. I didn't do anything.

ME  
Nothing? You must've done something.  
How strong were your feelings?

MALLORY  
Pretty strong.

ME  
Not the dude from the play...

MALLORY  
No. He's too needy. Some other guy.

ME  
If you had it to do all over again,  
would you tell him how you felt?

MALLORY  
I don't know. It might hurt.

ME  
Yeah, but doesn't it hurt now? And what if he felt the same way?

MALLORY down another shot. She looks at me.

MALLORY  
I love you.

ME  
Sorry?  
NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Oh, fuck.

MALLORY (CONT'D)  
I love you. I should have told you.  
I thought you knew.

ME  
Fuck, Mallory! I can't deal with this right now.

MALLORY  
And that's why I never told you.

I guiltily grab a bottle of gin and rush out the door.

EXT. LA RIVER - LATER

I stumble along the concrete river bank, downing gin.

From out of the shadows, MY HEART appears with a shovel, and CLOBBERS me in the back of the head.

INT. MY APARTMENT - EARLY AFTERNOON

My phone VIBRATES. More VIBRATING. A pile of clothes stirs in a corner, then rises like a mountain emerging from the plains.

ME (O.S.)  
AhhhhhhhHHHHHHHH.

My head pokes from under the mountain of clothes. Eyes half shut, my hand stabs at the phone. Clicks "answer."

ME (CONT'D)  
Do you know what time it is?

HER (O.S.)  
One-thirty. I need to tell you something.

I finally open my eyes.

ME  
One-thirty post meridian?

EXT. SANTA MONICA - BEACH - DAY

We stroll along the Santa Monica Pier, hands in pockets. SOME KIDS run by, LAUGHING in the sand and sun.

ME  
Don't you miss how simple things  
used to be?

HER  
Were they? Or do we only remember  
the good things?

ME  
I remember bad things. But I prefer  
my highlight reel.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
God, it's a fucking sweet highlight  
reel, too. Now that I'm thinking  
about it, I really wish I had time  
to show you, but we'd miss too much  
important shit on the beach.

HER  
I need to tell you something.

I cut HER off and square her up.

ME  
I love you.

She SIGHS.

HER  
No, you don't.

ME  
I'm not asking for your opinion.  
I'm telling you: I love you.

A group of seagulls starts SQUAWKING nearby. Total mood  
spoiling bastards.

HER  
Ok. Great for you. But I don't. I  
don't love anyone.  
(beat)  
I'm not sure I ever will.

ME  
You don't believe that. I know I  
screwed up.

HER  
It's not just you. I doubted it  
before you. But everything that's  
happened, it makes me realize that  
love is just a feeling. And  
feelings are too fleeting and  
insubstantial to mean anything.

ME  
But you do feel it. I know you do.

The seagulls SQUAWK louder.

HER  
I'm engaged.

ME  
What?

She looks me in the eye as she pulls her hand from her pocket: a fucking diamond ring.

I finally gave him an answer.

Let me see...<sup>ME</sup>

I take her hand as if to get a closer look, but pull the ring from her finger. I fling it at the nearest seagull.

WHAT THE <sup>HER</sup> FUCK?!

ME  
Why would you do this? You don't  
love him! You just said so!

She punches me in the chest.

What is wrong with you?

I love you!<sup>ME</sup>

HER  
Stop saying that! You better find  
my fucking ring!

She punches me again.

I'll buy you a new one.

HER  
I swear to god if you make one more  
goddamn joke!

My face FLUSHES.

I'll find it! <sup>ME</sup> Jesus.

I go sift through the sand.

I'm not fucking kidding. <sup>HER</sup>

ME  
Maybe if it was bigger it would be easier to find.

Really? You hear that a lot?

Burn. NARRATOR (V.O.)

I see a GLINT of ring sparkling in the sunlight.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Fuck. My heart really hadn't been  
in finding this thing.

I pick it up.

<sup>ME</sup>  
Here. Here's his stupid ring.

She snatches it back. We look at each other, tempers boiling.

<sup>HER</sup>  
Why do you complicate everything?

<sup>ME</sup>  
I don't want you to marry this guy!

<sup>HER</sup>  
It's the best thing for everyone.  
Feelings fade. Love fades. You'll  
see I'm right. We can't control it,  
we can only try to make good choices  
and stick to them. I'm finally ready  
to do that. I need to do it.

<sup>ME</sup>  
That's all bullshit. Why now? Why  
this guy? Give me one good reason.

<sup>HER</sup>  
He's handsome. He's smart. He's  
good in bed. He has a good job.  
What? What do you want to hear?  
What will make you understand?

<sup>ME</sup>  
That you love him.

She puts his ring back on.

<sup>HER</sup>  
That's not what you want to hear.  
You want to hear that I love you.  
But I can't give you that.

INT. VILLAIN'S TAVERN - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

SCOTT and I nurse beers in the corner. Some "band" drones on.

<sup>ME</sup>  
She won't even listen to me.

<sup>SCOTT</sup>  
Yeah. That sucks, man.

<sup>ME</sup>  
I wanna put my face in a waffle  
iron, y'know? Or step in front of  
one of those maglev trains.

<sup>SCOTT</sup>  
No, you don't.

<sup>ME</sup>  
You're right. That'd be way too  
quick. What I really want is to go  
to a homeless shelter and gather  
all the STD's I can find and make  
soup. Like an AIDS, crabs and  
hepatitis soup.

(MORE)

ME (CONT'D)  
 And then microwave it, to add in  
 some cancer, and then just pour it  
 straight into my lungs so I breathe  
 it in, choking and gagging on AIDS  
 and cancer.

SCOTT  
 Seriously? When you say shit like  
 that, I want to kick your face in.

ME  
 I wish you would.

SCOTT  
 Have you ever thought that you're  
 pitying yourself a little too much?

ME  
 It's not pity. I. Am. Hurt.

SCOTT  
 Yeah, but what about her? You put  
 her in a tough place, too. Maybe if  
 you really love her, you should let  
 her go.

ME  
 She's going to marry a guy she  
 doesn't love. She put herself in a  
 tough place.

SCOTT  
 And you went after a girl who has a  
 boyfriend. You did that to yourself.

ME  
 Whose side are you on?

SCOTT shakes his head.

SCOTT  
 Do you ever get that crazy feeling  
 when you're up on a roof or in the  
 front row of a theatre balcony,  
 looking over the audience below,  
 and you get the urge to just jump?

ME  
 What are you talking about?

SCOTT  
 I'm talking about this scary,  
 exhilarating, paralyzing urge.

ME  
 Don't try to "out suicidal" me.

SCOTT  
 See, I know you've never gotten  
 that urge. Cause if you did, you'd  
 jump. That's how you live your  
 life: when you get crazy impulses,  
 you see them through. It's what  
 I've always admired about you.  
 (beat)

But not everybody is a jumper.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
 Just because you think she has that urge, doesn't mean she's ready or even able to jump. What you see as an option, she sees as a danger.

ME  
 I really don't need any of your romanticized metaphors.

SCOTT  
 I'm trying to help you see her side.

ME  
 Oh, really? And you gained this insight from what relationship experience? You have none. Running around leaving some romance book for strangers to read doesn't make you an expert on love.

SCOTT  
 That book's my art, man!

ME  
 Nobody cares! I bet not even one person who found it ever read it!

SCOTT  
You never read it? You told me you read it!

SCOTT makes a face where he purses his lips.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 He was making the Scott face, which meant he was unreasonably upset.

SCOTT  
 I can't believe I'm just now realizing this.

ME  
 Realizing what? Don't make your Scott face. I'll read it if it's that important to you. I just never had the time.

SCOTT  
If it's important to me? I got pinkeye from a charity dunk tank for you! You're so fucking self-absorbed. That book is my art!

ME  
 You didn't write it.

SCOTT  
 It changed my life! It inspired me to write! It helped me accept myself! I've told you all of this!

ME  
 I get that. But I'm going through some shit right now. My heart just got crushed. I think that's a bit more important than some book you wanna blow.

SCOTT  
 How long have I listened to you  
 whine about this girl? And before  
 that, it was all your vain and  
 selfish stories about using girls  
 and not giving a shit about anyone.  
 And the whole time I thought we  
 were coming from a place of  
 understanding, of friendship.

ME  
 Come on, don't do this.

SCOTT  
 I see you run through Mallory and  
 dismiss Lyle. You barely visit  
 Granddad. I thought I was exempt. I  
 thought I was the exception.

ME  
 Seriously? You want to take it  
 there over a book?

SCOTT  
 Am I wrong? Have you ever really  
 listened to me?

ME  
 I listen to you all the time!

SCOTT  
 What's the name of the book?

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Goddammit.

ME  
*Eternal Love and Leprosy.*

He makes the "Scott face" again.

ME (CONT'D)  
 Just kidding. *Love and Cholera*. No,  
 wait, *Love and the time of Cholera*.

SCOTT  
*Love in the time of Cholera.*

ME  
 Ninety-percent.

SCOTT  
 The only thing I've ever asked you  
 to do... in all the time I've known  
 you... was read one fucking book. If  
 you're this much of a dick, how did  
 you ever expect her to pick you?

SCOTT gets up and leaves.

ME  
 You didn't write that book! And  
 he's my fucking granddad!

EXT. PARK - DAY

I'm at a birthday party for one of SAMSON'S KIDS. I spike my punch, and talk to his KIDS.

ME  
You guys ever been in love?

LITTLE GIRL  
How do we know?

I help the RUNTS onto a merry-go-round and spin it gently.

ME  
Love... it starts out like this.

I spin a little faster.

LITTLE BOY  
Weeee!

ME  
Yeah, weeee! Fun, right? But then...

I spin it faster. They don't look so happy anymore.

LITTLE BOY Hey, stop. LITTLE GIRL I want off.

I spin it faster and faster.

ME (CONT'D)  
I know you do. But that's the rub.  
You can't. It's out of your hands.

BY THE GIFT TABLE - SAMSON'S WIFE watches me like a shark.

SAMSON'S WIFE  
(to Samson)  
What is your asshole friend doing?

BY THE MERRY-GO-ROUND - SAMSON approaches.

SAMSON  
I don't know what you're doing...  
but it's awesome. I love it. The  
fuckers will sleep all the way home.  
Seriously, though, you need to stop.

The KIDS start puking all over god's green earth.

ME  
There it is, kids. That's love.  
(to Samson)  
They need to know what's coming.

EXT. HER APARTMENT - NIGHT

I stumble up the street, put my hand on the callbox and BUZZ her place. I'm pretty fucking drunk at this point.

ME  
It's me.

HER (O.S.)  
Jesus. Please go away.

I step back and stare at her window.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
If I had a lowlight reel, this  
would be on there. More than once.

ME  
HEY! HEY! I wanna talk to you!

I pick up a rock and lob it at the window, just as: Her head pokes out.

ME (CONT'D)  
Shit! Heads up!

Luckily the rock misses HER.

HER  
Did you just throw a rock at me?

ME  
Not on purpose! You can't marry  
him... I brought you reasons!  
First, you don't love him. He's so  
booooooring.

HER  
I don't want you here!

ME  
Second, the sex is better with me.  
I have firsthand experience.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Who is it?

HER  
(calling back inside)  
It's no one.

ME  
It's not no one! She's lying!  
(to HER)  
Third, he doesn't like hearts. He  
hates museum hearts and he'll hate  
San Francisco's hearts and my  
heart... because my heart smokes.

STUFFY appears.

STUFFY  
What's going on out here?

HER  
Just go back inside.

ME  
Secondly, look at him! Your kids  
will look like that! I want your  
kids to look like us. But I would  
raise them either way...

STUFFY

Hey man, I don't know who you are,  
but can you leave us alone, please?

ME

You leave us alone. What do you  
think you're doing here?

STUFFY

I'm packing, jackass. What are you  
doing?

ME

Packing?

STUFFY

Do you want me to call the cops?

ME

Only pussies call the cops.

HER

He's drunk. Let's just go inside.

ME

Go inside. Go home. Go to hell.

STUFFY

I swear to god, I'm gonna--

ME

--Gonna what? Stand up there and  
talk me to death or come down here  
and stuff my balls in your mouth?

STUFFY

That's fucking it.

HER

Stop!

She tries to grab him, but he disappears from the window. I  
see some lattice and climb up to the window.

As she pops her head back out, I am waiting for her.

ME

Thirdly, I love you. There's no one  
else. I've looked round and round.

STUFFY comes storming out the front door. Looks for me, sees  
me, starts jumping and swatting at my feet.

STUFFY

You got a problem, punk? You want  
to harass me and my fiancee?

ME

She doesn't love you. She loves me.

STUFFY runs back inside, and I drop back down.

ME (CONT'D)

I can do this all night.

But STUFFY tricked me and comes right back out.

ME (CONT'D)  
Oh, shit.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Damn. That was smart. Let me show  
you what happens when you're drunk.

SPLIT SCREEN

On the left side is what I think I am doing, and on the right side is what I am actually doing.

LEFT SIDE - I assume a perfect boxing stance.

RIGHT SIDE - I clumsily raise two limp fists.

LEFT SIDE - STUFFY comes at me. I slip, bob and weave. I punch: head, body, head. He gets in a shot or two, but he's taking quite the beating from me.

RIGHT SIDE - He CLOCKS ME across the face. I stumble and spin, but I don't go down.

LEFT SIDE - She rushes out. CHEERS me on!

RIGHT SIDE - She rushes out. YELLS at us--

HER  
Stop it! Both of you!

END SPLIT SCREEN and the right side takes over.

I claw at STUFFY, miserably. He brushes off my hands, and SLUGS ME in the gut. The force of the hit does not react well with the whiskey--

I VOMIT all over STUFFY.

STUFFY  
What the fuck?

He steps back, disgusted and a little afraid.

STUFFY (CONT'D)  
Goddammit! This shirt is Hugo Boss,  
fucker!

He STOMPS back inside, grabbing HER as he passes.

STUFFY (CONT'D)  
Come on!

She lingers, staring at ME: pathetic, drunk, vomit-covered.

HER  
He asked me to move in with him.  
We're going to elope in February.

I grab her hand.

ME  
You hate me.

HER  
I don't hate you. You no longer  
exist to me. I nothing you.

She lets go of my hand. For symmetry we need to see that three times.

ONE: Our hands separate.

TWO: Our fingers un-interlock.

THREE: On the molecular level, my electrons return to my atoms, as hers return to her atoms. Leaving me in total--

BLACKNESS

It's like I don't exist to anyone. Until--

SCOTT (V.O.)  
Wake up.

INT. MY APARTMENT - LATE MORNING

My eyes slowly take in light.

SUPER: Suck Date Log: The Worst Day of My Life. Location: Unknown. Forecast: Whatever.

SCOTT's there. He sees a mass of porn magazines laid out. All have pictures with certain parts of the girls circled in red.

LITTLE LABELS pop up pointing out resemblances I found: "Her eyes." "Her mouth." "Her right ankle."

SCOTT has a strange look on his face.

ME  
Scotty?  
SCOTT  
Hey.

I stretch out gingerly. My face and body hurt.

ME  
I hurt in some weird places. Did anything happen... between us?

SCOTT  
Fuck you, man. You have to get up.

ME  
Where are we going?

SCOTT pauses.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
If there's one universal law, beyond relativity and string theory and M theory, it's this: Things can always get worse.

SCOTT  
Granddad died.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
From an etymological standpoint, I hate funerals.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

It's a bright, shiny day.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
It's not just that there's no "fun" in "funeral." Although, they really are pretty joyless in my experience.

They lower GRANDDAD's coffin onto another coffin.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
It's terms like "funeral party." As if there's a vodka luge and a condom bowl? I wanna throw a funeral rager for the dumb fuck who thought that term up.

There's a joint headstone for both GRANDDAD and GRANDMOTHER. They're burying him on top of her.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And there's a "wake." Seriously? Wake? No, he fucking won't. He's fucking dead.

SCOTT directs the CREW.

SCOTT  
Her head is over here? Then his head goes at that end, face down.

EXT. STREET - LATER

My car moves mechanically through traffic.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
People. We're a sad sack ADHD bunch.

INT. MY CAR - CONTINUOUS

I stare ahead into traffic. Expressionless. Still in my funeral "party" suit.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Yes, I'm fucking including you. Go on, check your iPhone. We'll wait.

INT. MY APARTMENT - DAY

I walk in, set my keys down. Stare around the apartment.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Here's my beef: it's impossible to always focus on the big picture. So death comes as a reminder. It grabs us, shakes us, opens our eyes. But death, like life, is fleeting.

MY POV: The closet.

I walk over to it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The big picture only lasts a second and then it's gone again. Our vision narrows and we focus back in on some small thing or another. As we are prone to do.

I rummage through it. Settling on a brown parcel.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But every now and again, our focus is changed. Shifted. Revised. And the small thing we now settle on is actually an important one.

I tear open the brown parcel to reveal--

MY POV: *Love in the Time of Cholera.*

NARRATOR (V.O.)

If you're like me, and you are, then your life is about yourself. Is that selfish? Maybe.

I sit in my armchair with the book. I run my hands over the cover, feeling the texture of an old, worn out story.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But our lives need connection with other people. And the emotional fulfillment that comes with it.

I crack the book and notice a handwritten inscription.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And that's what Scott's book was about, as it turns out.

BOOK INSCRIPTION

To the Finder of This Book -- This book changed my life, so I wanted to share it with you. Reading it won't change yours. But I bet there is something - a book... a song... a memory... a feeling - that has changed your life. And if you shared that with even one person, maybe they would share their beautiful thing, too. And then, wouldn't we all have done something beautiful together? Finders keepers. --Scott

I start reading.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I'm going to show you this in POV, because if you're like me, and you are, then you're selfishly gonna insert yourself in here anyway.

EXT. BOAT - MY MIND - DAY

OUR POV: The wide ocean, stretching out before me.

This whole story is seen from OUR SHARED POV.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The basic story is a guy loves a girl from the second he meets her, but they can't get their shit together until the very end of their lives.

Looking around, we see: we're on a boat.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They're stuck on a boat with one other couple and realize the only way they can stay together is to never go to shore. So they raise the yellow cholera flag so no port will take them. And they stay together, adrift at sea until the end.

We see: A yellow flag on a mast.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And it makes you realize, there are people in your life so important they dwarf everything else. It's up to you to figure out who they are.

We see: SCOTT. Dressed as a KOREAN. Smiling at us.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

If you had to give everything else up and spend the rest of your days on a boat, who are the must-haves?

Past SCOTT we see: MALLORY IN DRAG... SAMSON AS A MONK... LYLE AS DR. FRANKENSTEIN... BRYAN IN HIS SUIT...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Who could you not live without?

We also see: GRANDDAD, happy and healthy in his DRESS NAVY BLUES, at the wheel.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Figure out your own list. And then do everything you can to let them know how much they mean to you.

Beyond everything we see: HER. Simple and radiant in the sun.

INT. MY APARTMENT - DAY

I pace. Back and forth. Is there another way?

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It was time to get my life back on track. First up, I had to finish writing this script.

I'm reading the script that I've been working on out loud. Acting out the different personalities of the characters. To make it easier, let's do this in MONTAGE. Little captions pop on the screen to let you know which character I am...

ME AS BLACK FEMALE DETECTIVE  
PERSONALITY

Just because I wear a badge doesn't  
mean I can't feel. A kiss can do  
more damage than a bullet...

I cover my wall in sticky notes, each with a story beat.

ME AS BITCH FRIEND PERSONALITY

... It's too late. He's Heisman-ed  
you into the friend-zone, baby...

I move sticky notes around wildly. Like I'm trying to make a  
puzzle work.

ME AS BLACK FEMALE DETECTIVE  
PERSONALITY

... It's useless. She could never  
love us...

I type.

ME AS GAY FRIEND PERSONALITY

... You're just saying that because  
we're crazy...

ME AS BITCH FRIEND PERSONALITY

... He's no different than us,  
girl. Everyone has all these  
different faces to hide behind. It  
comes from our insecurities, hiding  
our true selves...

I eat pizza.

ME AS FEISTY HISPANIC PERSONALITY

... Love is the same way. It keeps  
changing. One minute it's a red,  
red rose, the next minute it's a  
machete, then it's a rebellious  
teen french kissing his  
girlfriend's bubble gum mouth, then  
it's an old couple who don't even  
have to speak to each other because  
they understand each other's  
smallest movements...

I move stickies around.

ME AS BITCH FRIEND PERSONALITY

... That's why we can love each  
other. Because love is infinite, and  
we're infinite, it embraces every  
part of us. All encompassing...

I type.

ME AS GAY FRIEND PERSONALITY

... It's like what they say "Love  
is a many splintered thing."

ME AS BITCH FRIEND PERSONALITY

It's not "splintered." It's "love  
is a many splendored thing," like:  
beautiful, magnificent, swanky.  
Splintered sounds painful.

ME AS BLACK FEMALE DETECTIVE  
PERSONALITY  
Well, it's that, too.

ME  
(to myself)  
Yeah. It's that, too.

I stare at the computer screen and type the most beautiful words in the universe: "Fade It Out, Bitches."

It's so quiet. And the sun comes through my window like Crayola's wet dream.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I want to tell myself not to do what I'm about to do.

I stir, look at my bed. I stand.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But I can't. Sometimes my past self knows me better than I do.

I crouch by the bed and reach under it. I grasp for something. Pay dirt. I pull out a shoebox and open it, shifting some dusty items until I see: The note my mother left me.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Hey! Viewer! What's that over there?

My eyes start to water.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Didn't fall for that, did you? So I guess you can see this--

I CRY. It's sweet and pathetic.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I don't know what's happening here.  
(beat)  
My Granddad just died. FYI.  
(beat)  
And my mom abandoned me.  
(beat)  
And finishing a screenplay is a really emotional thing.

I WEEP, and there is some snot.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Ok, that's just disgusting.

INT. VILLAGE IDIOT - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

A banner congratulates me on finishing my script. Everyone is there: SCOTT; SAMSON and HIS WIFE; MALLORY and her friend OTHER DUDE; LYLE and his HORNY NEIGHBOR; BRYAN. I walk through, smiling, nodding, shaking hands.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Things were as right as they could be. Scott and I had made up...

SCOTT  
Y'know, Marquez wrote other books...

SCOTT hands me *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Don't internalize the title and  
think I'm implying you'll die  
alone. Just read it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Mallory had finally decided to give  
her friend date a real shot.

MALLORY turns to OTHER DUDE.

MALLORY  
I need a drink.

OTHER DUDE smiles.

OTHER DUDE  
Three shots of tequila, coming up.

MALLORY  
Go.

MALLORY rolls her eyes and shrugs at me.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Samson and Lyle were up to their  
old antics.

LYLE pulls SAMSON aside and points to his HORNY NEIGHBOR.

LYLE  
Dude, she's totally into DP. How's  
your wife as a camerawoman?

SAMSON  
Read my lips: my naked balls will  
never be in a room with your naked  
balls. That goes double if there's  
thrusting and touching involved. I  
don't know what could have led you  
to believe otherwise.

LYLE  
But think about what a great story  
this would make!

SAMSON  
Unlike your stories with no endings,  
this one won't have a beginning...  
which is sort of an ending.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Bryan was elated that I'd finished  
the script.

BRYAN approaches me.

BRYAN  
The producer called me again on my  
way over here. He loves it. Great  
work and not a moment too soon:  
they've moved the start date for  
RAINBOW 2: THE REVENGE up two weeks.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But even with my boat pretty full,  
there was still something missing.  
And the longer I tried to ignore  
it, the more the absence ripped  
cavities into my chest.

BRYAN hands me an envelope.

BRYAN

So, I wanted to personally give you  
a first class ticket to six weeks  
of first class Malaysian pussy. You  
fly out Saturday.

I smile, but my heart's not in it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Saturday. Her elopement was  
supposed to be Saturday.

BRYAN

Didn't I tell you I'd get you  
everything you wanted?

BRYAN senses it.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

What? Don't get dark on me.

ME

I'm not dark. It's just funny: you  
don't like pussy and I don't like  
Malaysia.

BRYAN

So, what, try for more money?

I think about it as SCOTT walks over.

ME

Have you two met? Bryan, this is my  
best friend, Scott.

BRYAN

You the guy with the book art?

SCOTT

Sure.

BRYAN

That's pretty cool. What are you  
doing hanging out with a dick like  
this guy?

SCOTT

I have low self-esteem. Being  
around him makes me feel better  
about myself.

BRYAN

Yeah. I started repping him when I  
realized how much more attractive I  
look standing next to him at  
industry parties.

BRYAN and SCOTT share a moment.

ME  
I can see my work here is done.

EXT. VILLAGE IDIOT - SIDE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

I walk out to get some air.

I need a moment so keep your distance. You can watch this through the window...

I notice MY HEART, smoking. He offers me a cigarette. I take it. We have a heart to heart.

I'd tell you what we said, but that shit was personal.

INT. VILLAGE IDIOT - BACK ROOM - LATER

SCOTT gets in front of the room.

SCOTT  
Attention, ladies and gentlemen.  
The time has come to toast the man  
of the hour. The man who we've all  
come to celebrate. My best friend.

EVERYONE raises their wine glasses.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Unfortunately, he's not here.

PEOPLE look around, not having noticed my absence.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
He did, however, leave a note.

SCOTT pulls a note from his pocket.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
"I love you all so much. But I have  
to go to San Francisco for a little  
while. Scott will take good care of  
you. Love, Me."

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I'm told they took it well.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - DAY

I sprint through the airport, trying to outrun the cliche.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

I hail a cab. Hop in.

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

The CABBIE glances into the rearview at me.

CABBIE  
Where to?

ME  
Don't you guys have a bunch of  
heart sculptures somewhere?

CABBIE  
Yeah, buddy. We got hearts. We got  
a hundred and thirty of them.

ME  
Awesome. Take me there.

CABBIE  
Which one?

ME  
All of them.

CABBIE  
Are you crazy or something?

ME  
Something. I am definitely  
something.

The cab takes off.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - LATER

I hop out of the cab and run to a nearby heart sculpture. I look around for HER. Nothing. Back to the cab.

INT. CAB - MOMENTS LATER

I hop in to see a TOURIST COUPLE in the cab.

ME  
Hey, sorry this cab is taken.

TOURIST COUPLE GUY  
Oh, we know. Gabriel--  
(re: Cabbie)  
--Told us what you're doing.

TOURIST COUPLE GIRL  
We want to see all the hearts, too.

ME  
It's not just that. Uh.  
(to Gabriel)  
The next one please.  
(to Couple)  
See, there's this girl...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - LATER

Another heart. Still no sign of HER. I accost a BYSTANDER.

ME  
Hey, you didn't happen to see a  
wedding, or a girl with you know...  
just perfect.

BYSTANDER  
 I'll see what you want me to see  
 for fifty bucks.

The COUPLE snaps a picture by the heart.

ME  
 (to Couple)  
 Let's go.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - LATER

The cab pulls up near a trail.

GABRIEL  
 There's a bunch of them along this  
 trail.

The COUPLE and I take off down the trail. I search each face  
 I cross, and question anyone that is standing still.

A group of SKATEBOARDERS look interested.

SKATEBOARDER KID  
 Wait. You're gonna bust up some  
 dude's wedding?

He turns back to his GANG.

SKATEBOARDER KID (CONT'D)  
 Yo, this dude's gonna bust up a  
 wedding. Hell, yeah.

An ARTISTIC KID overhears and brightens up.

ARTISTIC KID  
 Can I take pictures of this?

I begin to amass a following.

MONTAGE OF HEARTS

The sun moves across the sky, as each heart's shadow  
 stretches across the ground... A PERSON calls their friend  
 who lives by a heart, they run out to look for HER... ANOTHER  
 PERSON tweets people to look for HER at the heart sculptures.

The heart sculptures become a blur: One is a heart-shaped  
 spool of thread unwinding, one is a mosaic, one is a cut-  
 along-the-dotted-line.

A TV IN A WINDOW - plays a news story of our growing search.

A HOTEL - I enter and search the heart by the lobby: no dice.

The sun gets lower, and so does everyone else's spirits.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - SUNSET

We pull up to the Golden Gate Bridge. I hop out.

<sup>GABRIEL</sup>  
The last one's just over that hill.

<sup>ME</sup>  
She has to be here!

The CROWD that has been following me is apprehensive. They make me go by myself.

I walk over the hill and disappear from their sight. They wait, nervously.

Beat.

I walk back over the hill, and hang my head.

BYSTANDER  
Bitch.

TOURIST COUPLE GUY  
Whore.

<sup>ME</sup>  
Guys, guys. Sometimes things just don't work out. I'm sure I'll learn something one day from all this. Become a better person... Or some shit.

I look across the water and see: A giant Bow and Arrow sculpture stuck into the ground.

<sup>ME (CONT'D)</sup>  
Hey, Gabriel. What's that?

<sup>GABRIEL</sup>  
That's cupid's bow.

<sup>ME</sup>  
How come we didn't go there?

<sup>GABRIEL</sup>  
You specifically said heart sculptures. That's not a heart.

I have a sudden flush of hope.

<sup>ME</sup>  
But it's pointed at the heart, Gabby!

The Crowd stirs. I take off running for it.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Some of the CROWD runs with me.

<sup>NARRATOR (V.O.)</sup>  
The bridge is longer than I thought, but all those 5k's are paying off.

The CROWD RUNNERS are a lot faster than me.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Although these San Frannies are  
 healthy bastards.

EXT. CUPID SCULPTURE - MOMENTS LATER

I come WHEEZING up. I have to stop and catch my breath. I notice that the CROWD has also stopped. They HUSH themselves, look back to me and part. Through them I see an unmistakable form, kicking Cupid's Arrow.

It's HER. She looks up to see me.

HER  
 Fuck you, man!

ME  
 I would love that. But we tried it once, and you got all spooked remember?

She stabs me with her eyes.

ME (CONT'D)  
 You're right. I'm sorry.  
 (beat)  
 Hi.

HER  
 Why do you have to complicate everything?

ME  
 So... you're single?

HER  
 Yeah. Congratulations! My life is one big mess.

The Crowd waits.

ME  
 We're all a big mess, though... But that shouldn't stop us from finding each other and being happy.

MAN FROM THE CROWD  
 Give him a chance!

HER  
 (to Man)  
 Believe me, he had a chance!

MAN FROM THE CROWD  
 Give him another chance!

HER  
 He pretended to work with sick kids and donate money to charity in order to sleep with me.

MAN FROM THE CROWD  
 Nevermind! Fuck this guy!

ME

Wait! I know I fucked up. And I'm sorry as hell. But I didn't do it just to sleep with her.

(to HER)

I did it to be near you. I did it because I knew I could love you.

WOMAN FROM THE CROWD

So your relationship was built on a mountain of lies?

HER

(to ME)

She's right, don't you see? This isn't substantial. Love is still just a feeling. And just because you feel it today, doesn't mean you'll feel it tomorrow.

ME

If you'd said that yesterday, you'd see you were wrong. Because I still love you today.

(beat)

When I told you I loved you before, it was selfish. I get that. It was about me. I needed to say it for me. But the emphasis shouldn't have been on the "I" or even on the "you." It's the "love" part that's important.

HER

You're missing the big picture. I have doubts... about everything. And I don't know if I can ever get past them.

ME

You can't worry about the big picture. That's a trap, because we're all going to die someday.

MAN FROM THE CROWD

Jesus, dude.

WOMAN FROM THE CROWD

That shit ain't working...

ME

It's true, though. We'll die and the sun will explode, consuming the Earth, and entropy will turn the ever expanding universe into a cold, dead place -- until gravity pulls it back together into a singularity and it all starts again with another Big Bang.

HER

That's terrible.

ME

But does that mean I can't go have a nice dinner tonight? Or that I can't pursue a career that makes me happy? Or spend as much time as possible with the girl I love?

(beat)

We don't live in the big picture, we live today. And today, there's nothing more important than being together. It's the only thing that matters.

HER

But... how can you be so sure? What makes us worth fighting for?

ME

Because we're us. Nobody else gets to be us. They can't be inside our heads and hearts to think and feel what we do. So fuck the universe and fuck the sun and fuck death. They don't get us. In the end, we're special because we're us.

Beat.

She doesn't say anything.

The CROWD seems on the fence. Until-

MAN FROM THE CROWD

Aw, shit. Give him a chance.

ME

I love you. I need you. I'm desperate for you.

I get down on one knee in front of HER, like I'm proposing.

ME (CONT'D)

And I'll do everything I can to prove it to you every day.

I take her hand.

ME (CONT'D)

So the next time you get one of these...

I slip the ring off her finger.

ME (CONT'D)

... You'll know for absolute certain it's what you want.

I place the ring into her pocket.

A tear rolls down her cheek. She smiles at me.

HER

You'll prove it every day?

ME

Like crazy.

I stand up and she wraps her skinny arms around me.

Take me home. <sup>HER</sup>

WE KISS, and all hell breaks loose. You watch for a second, and then drift your eyes away, to...

## A STREET CORNER

MY HEART stands, watching, smoking a cigarette. He sees a dollar bill and picks it up.

MY HEART'S POV: The dollar bill is actually a religious tract about quitting addictions.

He puts his cigarette out on the tract, and throws them both away. MY HEART inhales a DEEP BREATH of fresh air and walks into the San Franciscan night.

FADE IT OUT, BITCHES