

Empire Tales

By

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Stories developed by
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"THE SILVER BRACELET"

FADE IN:

EXT. PARADISE RESORT - BUNGALOW COURTYARD - NIGHT

Bungalow section of upscale lake resort in upstate New York. One high-rise building surrounded by smaller ones. Has a Mediterranean feel to it with stucco architecture and terra cotta tiles. Dimly lit by lanterns that are set up at regular intervals.

Faint sound of people talking very far off. Then,

WHISTLING is heard, then we see the figure of a man approach from the a path that leads to the courtyard. Foot lights along the path draw his outline.

Walking toward the camera, his path would take him past the high-rise. But he stops dead in his tracks, and stops whistling. Strains to see in the darkness.

PULL BACK to reveal what's he looking at. It's a body lying on the concrete directly underneath the high-rise.

The man runs up to it.

And looks down on the body is a 50-year old man, dressed in a white dinner jacket. He is dead, or close to it.

The man looking down on him is in his early to mid 40s. Leisurely, but well dressed in summer slacks a polo shirt and canvas shoes. He kneels down next to the body.

The victim on the ground gurgles blood, stares at the sky with bug eyes. The man follows his gaze.

ANGLE ON HIGH RISE - our victim came from a long way up.

MAN

(German accent)

Hang on. I'm going to get help.

He tries to get up, but the victim grabs his wrist.

Victim grabs onto the man's wrist. There's a golden bracelet lying by the victim's arm.

While the man is busy looking at it, the victim gurgles his last breath and dies.

The man checks his pulse. Done. As a last thought, he grabs the bracelet and runs off.

INT. PARADISE RESORT - LOBBY

Front desk of the resort. Long shot. The man runs up to the desk. Yells something. The desk clerk picks up the phone, dials and hands the receiver to him.

The man puts the bracelet on the counter so he can grab the phone. He is clearly shaken.

EXT. PARADISE RESORT - BUNGALOW COURTYARD - NIGHT

Harsh lights have been set up. The area under the high-rise has been cordoned off by POLICE: DO NOT CROSS yellow tape.

New York State troopers and paramedics are milling around the body. Flashbulbs pop.

A woman, in her late 40s, observes this in silence, wipes tears from here eyes. An older, plainly dressed woman, puts an arm around her shoulder and leads her off in the direction of the pool that's visible in the background.

Watching the scene with dazed eyes, from within the cordon is the man who found the body.

He turns and lifts up the yellow tape and is about to cross under it, when a state trooper lays a meaty hand on his shoulder.

TROOPER

Detective Bliss will be here any minute.

Man turns around, gives the trooper a cold glance.

MAN

He was going to be here any minute twenty minutes ago.

(beat)

He can find me at the pool.

The trooper takes his hand back. The man walks off.

EXT. RESORT - POOL

He walks down a set of stairs leads from the bungalow courtyard to the pool.

The woman who was led away not two minutes ago sits alone in a wicker chair. Her face is turned away and looking down. A female trooper stands guard a few yards away.

(CONTINUED)

The man pulls up a chair to her and sits down. She is attractive in a severe, silver-haired sort of way. Trim, she wears a light summer dress.

MAN

Mrs. Arnaud? My name is Tomas May.

Mrs. Arnaud looks up and trains her black eyes on Tomas.

MRS. ARNAUD

(French Canadian accent)

You're the one who found...Benoit?

TOMAS

Yes. I'm so sorry.

MRS. ARNAUD

Was he alive when you...?

TOMAS

(quickly)

No.

Mrs. Arnaud is relieved to hear this.

MRS. ARNAUD

You knew him, did you not, Mr. May?

TOMAS

Tomas. We talked once or twice.

MRS. ARNAUD

We were having dinner...I ask him to go back to our room...I had forgot my pills...it's my fault.

Mrs. Arnaud starts to weep. She puts her hand on his.

The trooper watches this with indifference.

A SIREN is heard and we hear a car pull up. The trooper by the pool turns her back on Tomas and Mrs. Arnaud.

Her hand over his.

With his free hand, Tomas reaches into his pocket.

Golden bracelet. Thick links with an inscribed plate.

Mrs. Arnaud's eyes light up at the sight of it.

She runs her finger over the broken link where the bracelet broke.

TOMAS

Perhaps you'd like to give it to the police yourself.

She slips the bracelet into her pocket.

MRS. ARNAUD

May I ask you to keep this among us?

TOMAS

Why? The police should know about it.

MRS. ARNAUD

I hate to say it, but, with us being foreigners...

TOMAS

You're afraid they would keep it because it's valuable?

MRS. ARNAUD

Yes.

She lays a hand on Tomas's arm.

Radio static is heard, squawk comes over the trooper's radio. She talks into it, then walks over to Tomas and Mrs. Arnaud.

FEMALE TROOPER

(to Tomas)

Detective Bliss wants to see you.

Tomas stands up.

MRS. ARNAUD

Thank you.

Tomas looks back at her. She is the picture of the grieving widow, small and fragile.

He gives her a reassuring smile.

EXT. RESORT - BUNGALOWS

A short, bald man in plainclothes is clearly in charge. He is not in great shape, his clothes are wrinkled and he's smoking a cigarette. Another detective in a trench coat approaches him and hands him a plastic bag.

CU - Plastic evidence bag.

(CONTINUED)

Contains a small digital still camera.

DETECTIVE
This was in his jacket pocket.

BALD MAN
Did you look through it?

DETECTIVE
Yes. Nothing out of the ordinary.

BALD MAN
Print them anyway.

A uniformed trooper leads Tomas to the bald man.

BALD MAN
I'm Detective Jim Bliss with the
New York State Police.

He shakes hands with Tomas.

TOMAS
Tomas May.

DT. BLISS
The Tomas May?

TOMAS
No. Same name, that's all.

DT. BLISS
But you are German, correct?

TOMAS
What gave it away?

If Dt.Bliss sees the humor in this, he doesn't show it. He puts the cigarette in his mouth (causing Tomas to take a step back) and pulls out a notebook from his pocket.

DT. BLISS
What time did you find Mr.Arnaud?

TOMAS
Just after seven thirty. I left the Albatross Bar at seven twenty-five and the bar's only five minutes or so from here.

Bliss scribbles.

DT. BLISS
You're staying in one of these
bungalows, I assume?

TOMAS
Yes, number 5.

Tomas points to a bungalow a few buildings down from the
high-rise.

DT. BLISS
After you found the body, did you
go immediately to the front desk to
call the police?

TOMAS
Yes.

DT. BLISS
Did you check the body?

TOMAS
Check?

DT. BLISS
Yes. To see if he's dead.

TOMAS
Oh. I checked his pulse.

DT. BLISS
Anything else that might be
important? Anything at all?

Tomas hesitates for second. A loud BANG is heard. It's a
paramedic closing the back of the ambulance.

TOMAS
No.

DT. BLISS
Very good. I will have more
questions later. Right now, I'd
like you to meet with Sergeant
Davis. He'll take down your
statement. Then you're free to go,
but I ask that you let us know if
you're planning on leaving for
good. Understood?

TOMAS
Understood, Detective.

EXT. PARADISE RESORT - ALGONQUIN BAR

Clock above the bar says 8:30. The bar has a Native American feel to it, with wicker chairs and dream catchers on the walls. Pretty much deserted. A very attractive 40-year woman sits at the back table, sipping a glass of white wine. This is CHARLENE. The only other table is occupied by a young couple who is holding hands under the table.

Tomas kisses her on the cheek and sits down at her table with a tall glass of what looks like a mojito.

CHARLENE

How'd it go?

TOMAS

It went.

Silence. Then Tomas reaches for Charlene's hand, but she pulls it away.

CHARLENE

Terrible, isn't it?

TOMAS

Yes. Only a Frenchman would think of diving from his balcony on his vacation.

CHARLENE

What if he was pushed?

(she watches Tomas for a reaction)

Isn't that how it would happen in a mystery novel?

TOMAS

I wouldn't know. How about dinner?

CHARLENE

I ate already. Besides, I don't want to get used to you.

TOMAS

Why? I only found him, I didn't kill him.

CHARLENE

That's not what I meant and you know it.

INT. PARADISE RESORT - BUNGALOW - DAY

Good sized suite, living room/bedroom combo. Tasteful and modern. Lots of white curtains, glass and steel.

Tomas stands in the living room. He has just finished buttoning his shirt. He tucks it into his pressed slacks, steps into his Birkenstocks.

Charlene comes out of the bedroom. She's wearing a bathrobe. She puts her arms around Tomas, a sign of affection which makes him uncomfortable.

CHARLENE

This certainly helps pass the afternoon.

(beat)

Dinner tonight?

He kisses her on the cheek.

TOMAS

I'll come and get you.

He extracts himself from her grasp and walks to the door. Before closing the door behind him, he winks at her. She disappointed.

INT. STATE POLICE QUARTERS - BLISS'S OFFICE - DAY

Bliss sits in his small, cluttered office, going through a report. He stops reading, reaches for a pile of photos and leafs through them until he finds what he's looking for. Looks from the report to the photo.

DT. BLISS

Sergeant Davis!

Sgt. Davis enters. Bliss shows him the report.

DT. BLISS

Front desk clerk's statement. May had a bracelet in his hand when he made the call from the front desk.

Sgt. Davis is underwhelmed by the news.

SGT. DAVIS

A rich tourist plays with his gold bracelet. So?

Bliss tosses him a photo. Davis looks at it.

(CONTINUED)

DT. BLISS

Do you remember seeing this the
night of?

Davis shakes his head. Bliss reaches for the phone, checks a
number and dials.

EXT. PARADISE RESORT - BUNGALOW 5

Tomas is in a good mood, he whistles as he skips up a flight
of steps, opens his bungalow and walks in.

INT. BUNGALOW 5

He throws his towel and book on his bed. Looks at this
phone.

Blinking red light.

He picks up the receiver and presses a button. The phone is
sitting on a glossy piece of paper.

INSERT - Brochure - Tomas May - Book signing - Barnes &
Noble, Union Square, New York City, May 12, 2010.

Tomas punches in numbers, listens.

PHONE MESSAGE

Mr. May, Detective Bliss. There's
some more questions I need to ask
you. Sgt. Davis will pick you up at
the lobby of the Paradise at eight
tomorrow morning.

Tomas puts the receiver down. His good mood is gone, he
looks worried.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Charlene and Tomas are having dinner. Charlene is talking,
Tomas looks like he's somewhere else.

CHARLENE

...which is why I told her that a
Canadian has no place in
California.

(notices that Tomas is in his
own world)

What's the matter? You seem very
distant.

(CONTINUED)

TOMAS

I'm fine. Does it ever seem to you that holidays are more stressful than work? Like you never know what you're supposed to do?

CHARLENE

That's the whole point. What kind of work do you do?

TOMAS

I told you already.

CHARLENE

I know. But I heard differently. Word around the pool is that you're Tomas May, the German Agatha Christie.

TOMAS

(laughing)

Wouldn't that make me a woman?

CHARLENE

Are you? A famous mystery writer, I mean.

TOMAS

No. I sell commercial insurance in Cologne.

EXT. PARADISE RESORT - FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Tomas is standing at the resort entrance. He looks at his watch, checks out the cab driver who's asleep at the wheel of his cab. Couple of older guests are taking walks, that's about it for activity.

Tomas wipes sweat off his face.

A New York State Police SUV pulls up. Tomas climbs in the back.

INT. POLICE SUV

Tomas observes as the door buttons go down, locking him in.

TOMAS

How far is the police station?

(CONTINUED)

SGT. DAVIS

Not far.

INT./EXT. POLICE SUV

Tomas watches the landscape roll by. They drive through a small town with trailers and shabby houses, signs of the dying local economy. Total contrast to the posh resort.

They roll into town, which doesn't look much better. If there was every money in this town, it was a long time ago.

SUV pulls up to a somber looking building.

INT. STATE POLICE QUARTERS

Tomas and his driver walk down a gray corridor. The driver points to an office and watches as Tomas walks in.

INT. BLISS'S OFFICE

Detective Bliss sits behind his desk. The only sound is the air conditioner cranking.

DT. BLISS

Hot out there, isn't it? Have a seat, please.

Tomas sits and shivers as he gets hit with a blast from the air conditioner.

DT. BLISS

I'm sorry, the only setting that works on the AC is high. As long as it works, the department won't pay to have it replaced.

(beat)

You may be wondering why I wanted to question you again.

TOMAS

I am. I told you everything I know already. I don't see how dragging me here makes any difference.

DT. BLISS

I apologize. We don't like to disturb visitors to our area any more than necessary.

(CONTINUED)

TOMAS

Never a good idea to bother paying customers.

Bliss ignores this.

DT. BLISS

However, when there's a crime, we have to follow leads, wherever they may take us. I'm sure you can appreciate that.

TOMAS

Crime?

DT. BLISS

What time did you find Mr. Arnaud's body?

TOMAS

It must have been just after seven thirty. Like I told you before.

DT. BLISS

How long before you went to the front desk to call the police?

TOMAS

A few minutes.

DT. BLISS

Did you take anything from the crime scene? Anything at all?

TOMAS

(annoyed)

You mean, did I go through Arnaud's pockets to see if had any loose change? No, I didn't.

DT. BLISS

Mr. May, these are routine questions.

TOMAS

Which I already answered two days ago. What's this all about? Do you have any leads?

DT. BLISS

I can't discuss the details of an ongoing investigation. Especially not with a foreign tourist who is involved.

(CONTINUED)

TOMAS

I am not involved. I just had the bad luck of finding the accident victim.

DT. BLISS

Ah! So that's what you think it was. An accident?

TOMAS

Of course I think it was an accident. Unless you think his wife pushed him out of the window to collect on an insurance claim.

DT. BLISS

Isn't that how it would happen in one of your novels, Mr. May?

Tomas doesn't respond.

DT. BLISS

Why did you deny that you are Tomas May, the mystery writer? Afraid it would bring you closer to the case somehow?

TOMAS

No. I prefer to leave work home when I'm on vacation. You have no idea how many people want you to listen to their stories once they find out you're a successful writer.

DT. BLISS

Did Mrs. Arnaud?

TOMAS

What's that supposed to mean?

DT. BLISS

You talked with Mrs. Arnaud right after the ambulance took away his body. Was that the first time?

TOMAS

Yes. And we didn't really talk. I was trying to comfort her while I was waiting for you.

(CONTINUED)

DT. BLISS

The way you comfort lonely women
from Canada?

(waits for a response)

What brings you to the Paradise
resort in particular, Mr. May?

TOMAS

Nothing in particular. I had
finished a book tour in New York
City and I was burned out. My agent
suggested I come up here to unwind
for a while. He's from this area.

DT. BLISS

I'm from the city myself. Brooklyn,
to be exact.

(beat)

I offer this bit of
autobiographical info, because
sometimes outsiders look at upstate
New York and jump to all sorts of
ugly stereotypes about small towns
and their law enforcement
capabilities. I don't want you to
fall into that trap, Mr. May.

TOMAS

I appreciate your concern,
Detective.

DT. BLISS

I saw from your passport that you
traveled to Canada a few times in
the last five years. I did a little
additional checking and found two
book tours that had stops in Quebec
City.

(beat)

The Arnauds' hometown.

TOMAS

I have fans all over the world.
Even in Canada.

DT. BLISS

How long have you known Mrs.
Arnaud?

TOMAS

Detective, I don't like where this
is going. I'd like to have a lawyer
present.

(CONTINUED)

DT. BLISS

Why would you need a lawyer? I'm only asking questions. You are free to go anytime you like.

TOMAS

You are accusing me of being involved with Arnaud's death.

DT. BLISS

Now you're putting words in my mouth, Mr. May. Then again, that's understandable, you being a writer and all.

Tomas stands up and walks toward the door.

DT. BLISS

Mr. May?

(waits for Tomas to turn around)

My wife is reading one of your books.

TOMAS

Which one?

DT. BLISS

It's called "Assisted Suicide", I believe.

TOMAS

How does she like it?

DT. BLISS

She said the plot is convincing.

(beat)

But your female characters need work.

Tomas leaves without closing the door.

INT. POLICE SUV

Tomas sits in the back. He's not looking out the window this time. Watches the driver from the rear view mirror, who's watching him.

EXT. RESORT - BUNGALOW COURTYARD

Tomas is walking toward No. 5, when he stops in his tracks, turns around and heads for the high rise.

INT. HIGH RISE - ELEVATOR

Tomas watches the numbers climb. It stops at 9. He gets out.

INT. HIGH RISE - CORRIDOR

Tomas knocks on a door. It's opened slightly and a face sticks out, barely. It's the woman who led Mrs. Arnaud away from her husband's body.

TOMAS

I need to see Mrs. Arnaud.

WOMAN

That is out of the question.

TOMAS

Tell her it's Tomas.

WOMAN

Mrs. Arnaud has had quite a shock.
She needs to rest.

She tries to close the door, but Tomas pushes his way in.

WOMAN

I'll call the police!

INT. ARNAUD'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Similar in look and decor to Charlene's and Tomas's, but larger. Curtains are drawn. Mrs. Arnaud is lying on the sofa, wrapped in a blanket.

MRS. ARNAUD

It's all right, Nancy.

Nancy steps aside, not liking this one bit. Tomas approaches Mrs. Arnaud and sits down on an ottoman across from her.

TOMAS

Sorry to barge in on you like this.
Mrs. Arnaud, I have something
important to tell you.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. ARNAUD

You're the first person who came to visit me who didn't ask me how I am doing.

TOMAS

I don't like idle conversation.

MRS. ARNAUD

Neither did my husband. I guess that's why he enjoyed talking to you so much.

TOMAS

That's just what I wanted to talk to you about. Your husband.

Mrs. Arnaud stares off into space.

MRS. ARNAUD

Benoit was not one to express his emotions. But after 20 years, a wife understands her husband and they rarely have to talk any more. Are you married, Tomas?

TOMAS

No.

(trying to get her back on track)

Mrs. Arnaud...

MRS. ARNAUD

Next year was to be our 20th wedding anniversary. We were planning to go to Greece, like we did on our honeymoon.

This triggers tears and she sobs for a while and Tomas lets her.

Golden bracelet on Mrs. Arnaud's wrist.

TOMAS

Mrs. Arnaud, I think you should hand over your husband's bracelet to the police.

(lets this sink in)

I've just come from the police station. Detective Bliss questioned me again.

MRS. ARNAUD

Why?

TOMAS

He knows about the bracelet. I don't know how, but he knows.

MRS. ARNAUD

He knows nothing. Why can't he leave us alone? Haven't I suffered enough?

TOMAS

I was wondering the same thing myself.

MRS. ARNAUD

I tell you. Because he enjoys this. So many of the locals hate us tourists. Like it's our fault that they are poor. He took Benoit's camera, did he tell you that?

Tomas is surprised by the news.

TOMAS

His camera? Why?

MRS. ARNAUD

Because he could. You tell me, Tomas, what does Benoit's three thousand dollar camera have to do with any of this? I bought it for his birthday.

Tomas thinks about this. Mrs. Arnaud wraps her fingers around the bracelet, as if trying to stop someone from taking it.

MRS. ARNAUD

It is the only thing of his that means something to me.

(beat)

You change your story now and it will look suspicious. I don't want you to get into trouble because of me. You have been kind enough already.

Nancy comes in, carrying a tray with a bowl on it.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. ARNAUD

It's time for my soup. I'm afraid I
must ask you to leave, Tomas.

Tomas stands up, slowly. He walks to the door and looks
back.

Mrs. Arnaud takes the spoon from the tray and with fragile,
shaky hands dips it into the soup.

EXT. PARADISE RESORT - POOL

Tomas sits in a recliner by the pool. Shorts, short-sleeved
shirt and sandals. He is watching two pale, freckled kids
toss a nerf ball back and forth in the pool.

He finishes his drink, gets up and leaves. He walks up the
stairs, his path takes him past the open door that leads to
the front lobby.

INT. CHARLENE'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Living room is empty. There's a knock on the door, then the
door opens and Tomas enters.

TOMAS

Charlene, it's Tomas.

CHARLENE

(o.s.)

In the bedroom.

Tomas walks to the bedroom. Charlene is lying on her
stomach, naked, but covered with a long, white towel.

TOMAS

Bad hangover?

CHARLENE

Bad sunburn. I don't know why I
keep insisting that I can tan. I'm
Irish, for Christ Sakes.

Tomas lifts the towel. Sees her reddened back and whistles.

TOMAS

Would you like me to get you some
aloe vera?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLENE

There's some on the counter there.
You could be nice and rub my back
with it.

Tomas gets the aloe vera, walks back to Charlene and kisses her on the nape of her neck. Starts rubbing the lotion on her back. She hisses and recoils at his touch, then settles into it.

CHARLENE

Where did you go this morning?

TOMAS

To the beach.

CHARLENE

Do you always use a police escort?

TOMAS

You saw me?

CHARLENE

You were seen, let's put it that way.

TOMAS

It's a good thing we're not married. I could never get away with anything.

CHARLENE

No, you couldn't. And that's not an answer.

(she waits for another answer,
but Tomas is silent)

Does it have anything to do with Mrs. Arnaud?

TOMAS

Maybe.

CHARLENE

Word around the pool is that the police don't exactly buy the suicide theory.

TOMAS

Oh? Who told you this?

CHARLENE

You know Ralph, our tour guide?

(CONTINUED)

TOMAS

Short? Loud? Pot belly?

CHARLENE

Yes. His cousin works for the state police. Apparently, the investigators couldn't find anyone who could vouch for Mrs. Arnaud being in the dining room for the entire night on Wednesday. What do you make of that, Mr. Mystery Writer?

Tomas is clearly surprised by this piece of news.

CHARLENE

(cont'd)

It certainly beats a boring accident scenario, doesn't it?

INT. PARADISE RESORT - LOBBY

Tomas and Charlene are checking out. Bell boys wheel out their respective luggage through the lobby and toward the entrance.

TOMAS

Hold the cab for a second, will you? I have to make a quick call.

CHARLENE

Okay. Hurry up. If we miss this flight, we have to go to Syracuse airport like everyone else.

TOMAS

God forbid.
(to hotel clerk)
May I have a phone?

The hotel clerk puts a phone on the counter. Tomas digs around in the pocket of his summer jacket, pulls out his wallet and extracts a card from it.

INSERT - Business card - Detective James L. Bliss, New York State Police.

Tomas picks up the phone, dials a few numbers, hesitates, then hangs up and leaves the lobby.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Town car pulls up to front entrance of airport. It's a small regional one, where you can charter a small plane to take you to La Guardia and avoid the riff-raff at the commercial airport.

A skycap comes to the curb, takes the luggage and wheels them inside.

Charlene and Tomas follow.

INT. AIRPORT LOBBY

Tomas sits alone on a bench. The concourse is small, just a small eatery, a book store and a coffee shop.

The front door slides open and Mrs. Arnaud shuffles in with Nancy. Tomas sits far away and he sinks down in his seat, so as not to be noticed. Mrs. Arnaud walks very slowly, almost like an invalid.

They walk through the concourse and straight to a gate.

SIGN - Quebec.

Charlene comes out of the bookstore. She is holding a paper back. She hands it to Tomas.

Book cover "Seaside Rendez-vous" by Tomas May.

CHARLENE

It was in the summer reading bin.
Would you sign it for me?

TOMAS

With pleasure.

He takes a pen from his jacket pocket and writes something on the inner flap of the book. He hands the book to her.

Inside flap inscription - "to a Canadian Goddess. May she not be burnt by lies or the sun. - Tomas"

CHARLENE

Very clever.
(she looks at her watch)
An hour. We might as well walk to
the gate.

They start walking. Through the large glass window, we can see a plane taxiing to the runway.

(CONTINUED)

SIRENS are heard from outside. Several state police cruisers screech to a halt at the front entrance.

Charlene and Tomas watch, she is fascinated, he is frightened.

Front door opens, Detective Bliss charges in with a few plain clothes officers. He jogs up to the ticket counter and asks the clerk something. She points to the runway.

Runway. A small plane takes off.

Bliss asks something else. The clerk points at Tomas.

CHARLENE

Something tells me he didn't come
to say good bye.

Bliss walks up to Charlene and Tomas.

DT. BLISS

(to Tomas)

I told you to let me know if you
were going to take off.

(to Charlene)

Would you excuse us, please?

Charlene gives Bliss a dirty look.

CHARLENE

(to Tomas)

Meet me by the gate.

She walks off. Bliss leads/shoves Tomas to a nearby table at the cafe.

Bliss fires up a cigarette. The cafe clerk notices it.

CAFE CLERK

There's no smoking anywhere in the
building.

Bliss pulls out his ID card and shows it to the clerk without looking at him. The clerk decides to mind his own business.

DT. BLISS

Something bothered me about you
from the very beginning. When I
first questioned you, I noticed you
were nervous, but that was natural.
It's not everyday one stumbles on a
dead body. I chose to ignore my

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DT. BLISS (cont'd)
instincts that told me that you
weren't telling me everything.

TOMAS
But I was.

DT. BLISS
Let me talk for a bit, Mr. May. It
will all become very clear
soon. On the surface, everything's
neat and tidy. Wealthy French
Canadian decides to off himself on
his vacation. Goes back to his room
during dinner, leaves a neatly
typed suicide note and jumps from
his nine story balcony.

(beat)
But then, little things don't match
up. It seems no one can positively
vouch for Mrs. Arnaud being in the
dining room the entire dinner,
except for an 80-year old
Englishwoman who has a habit of
falling asleep in mid
sentence. Then the front desk
clerk says he saw a bracelet in
your hand when you called the
police, just after you found the
body.

TOMAS
So? Are you saying it was Mr.
Arnaud's?

DT. BLISS
I know it wasn't.

Tomas looks surprised. Bliss takes out a manila folder,
pulls out two photos. Slaps one on the table.

INSERT - Crime scene photo of Arnaud. Close-up of a wrist.
The shirt sleeve is rolled up, revealing a golden bracelet.

DT. BLISS
Taken AT the crime scene.

Tomas is taken aback. Bliss slaps the other photo down.

DT. BLISS
Maybe this will clear things up.

INSERT - Colored photo. Mrs. Arnaud smiling at the dinner
table. Same light summer dress with floral pattern she wore

(CONTINUED)

when Tomas talked to her by the pool. She is leaning her left arm on her chin, exposing her forearm. On it is a heavy golden bracelet.

DT. BLISS

Taken by Mr. Arnaud at dinner the night he was killed by his wife. Yes, Mr. May, I know there are two bracelets, not one. Identical in every way. And here's Mrs. Arnaud wearing hers at dinner, but when I question her an hour later, she doesn't have it.

(beat)

Hm. I think and I smoke and I come up with the following scenario. Mrs. Arnaud wants to murder her husband. But how to do it? She has no experience in the matter. She turns to you, a successful mystery writer. Surely, you know a way to make it look believable. After all, you do it for millions of people in your books.

TOMAS

Yes, that's called fiction. It would never work in real life.

DT. BLISS

It didn't.

(beat)

You tell her how she should do it, because you don't have the guts to do it yourself.

(beat)

You tell her she should have an alibi, and that the murder should be committed while she's having dinner with him, when there are the greatest number of eye witnesses around. How could anyone say with certainty who was in the dining room when?

TOMAS

You can't be serious. Supposing that was her plan, *her* plan, because I had nothing to do with it, how could she be certain that her husband would go back to their room during dinner?

(CONTINUED)

DT. BLISS

Mrs. Henderson overheard Mrs. Arnaud asking her husband to bring her her pills. The old lady does have sharp ears when she's awake.

(beat)

He obliges, she follows him up and pushes him out the window. It all goes according to plan, except for one detail. He rips off her bracelet as he's trying to hold on to her before he goes overboard. She places the phony suicide note on the dresser and goes back to dinner. She's not gone for more than five minutes. When she gets back, she realizes her bracelet is gone and calls you, her accomplice, to mop up after her.

TOMAS

Who's the fiction writer now, Detective? You can't be serious. If I'm in on it, why would I volunteer to be the one who discovers the body?

DT. BLISS

What better way to deflect suspicion?

TOMAS

You have it all wrong. The worse you can pin on me is obstruction of justice. Even that's a stretch, because I didn't know the bracelet was evidence when I took it.

(beat)

I found it next to Arnaud's body and assumed it was his. Anyone would have. There was nothing to think that it wasn't an accident, so when I saw Mrs. Arnaud sitting by the pool, I figured she should be the one to give it to the police.

DT. BLISS

Come now, Mr. May. You can come up with a better story than that.

(CONTINUED)

TOMAS

It's the truth!

(puts his head in his hands)

Oh, my God. I gave her back the only evidence that links her to the murder.

DT. BLISS

Precisely. And she rewards you by leaving you holding the bag.

(beat)

My wife is right. You don't know women at all.

TOMAS

I told you, I have nothing to do with this.

A skycap pushes a dolly with a few pieces of luggage on it and looks at Dt. Bliss expectantly.

TOMAS

My luggage.

Bliss stands up.

DT. BLISS

We'll figure it all out soon enough. There's one more bracelet I would like you to consider, Mr. May.

(He pulls out a pair of handcuffs.)

This one's not gold, but it comes in pairs, too. Stand up!

TOMAS

You're making a big mistake. Why would I kill Arnaud? For money? I have plenty of my own.

DT. BLISS

We'll have plenty of time to get to the true cause. Stand up. I will not ask you again.

Tomas stands up. Bliss spins him around and slaps the cuffs on.

DT. BLISS

You're under arrest for conspiracy to murder Canadian national Benoit Arnaud.

(CONTINUED)

Bliss recites the Miranda rights.

TOMAS

You can't do this. I'm a German citizen.

DT. BLISS

You'll get your phone call. You can use it to call your embassy.

Tomas notices Charlene standing nearby, watching the scene in horror.

Bliss leads Tomas toward the front door. He pushes him through it.

The doors whoosh shut.

FADE TO:

INT. PARADISE RESORT - DINING ROOM

The night of the murder. Desaturated, soft look. Mr. And Mrs. Arnaud sit at their table. Mrs. Henderson, the elderly Englishwoman, sits at the nearest table.

Restaurant is full. He snaps a picture.

She looks through her purse, can't find what she's looking for.

MRS. ARNAUD

(in French)

Damn! I forgot my pills. Darling, do you mind awfully to get them? If I take them too late I won't be able to sleep.

Ever understanding, Mr. Arnaud puts down his fork and replies, also in French.

MR. ARNAUD

Of course. Don't be silly.

He slips the camera into his jacket pocket and leaves. Mrs. Arnaud watches him go, waits a bit, then gets up and leaves herself.

EXT. PARADISE - BUNGALOW COURTYARD

Mr. Arnaud enters the courtyard. He stops, looks behind him.

Shadow of a cat on the wall. Mr. Arnaud smiles at himself.
Keeps going.

Shadow of a cat followed by shadow of a human being.

BUNGALOW COURTYARD - HIGH RISE

Mr. Arnaud walks into the building.

INT. HIGH RISE - CORRIDOR

Elevator door opens, Mr. Arnaud comes out of it, walks down the hallway and opens a door, walks in.

Staircase door opens shortly afterwards, someone comes out of the stairwell.

POV - Moving down the corridor, a hand pushes the door open.

INT. ARNAUD BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Moving through the suite. Balcony door is open. Curtains billow in the breeze. Mr. Arnaud is on the balcony. He grabs a vial of pills that's on the table.

Move in on him. His back is half turned.

A push.

He tries to hold on by grabbing the wrist of his assailant, and a SNAPPING sound is heard.

He goes over the railing.

Mrs. Arnaud looks over the railing to admire her handy work.

Looks down at her arms.

MRS. ARNAUD

Merde!

Mrs. Arnaud looks around the balcony, frantically looking for the bracelet. She can't find it, looks over the railing again.

A WHISTLING sound is heard.

(CONTINUED)

Mrs. Arnaud's POV - Tomas is walking up the path from the Algonquin Bar.

Mrs. Arnaud's worried face on the balcony.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

Her face as she sits by the pool. Same face as in the beginning, but now the grief reads as worry.

Tomas pulls out the golden bracelet and shows it to her.

Her face lights up with relief.

THE END

"THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW"

FADE IN:

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DAY

The Masterson's lake house framed by fall colors and late afternoon sun.

TITLE CARD - October 31st

Front door of the house opens, BARRY MASTERSON emerges with a picnic basket. He is in his mid to late 40s, well-fed in a jovial kind of way.

He puts the picnic basket on the ground, surveys the tree tops.

INSERT - Surveillance footage from a high angle, looking down at Barry.

The front door opens, JEANELLE screams through it, but is not visible.

JEANELLE

(o.s.)

Barry!

Barry looks back, concerned.

BARRY

Yes!?

(CONTINUED)

JEANELLE

(o.s.)

Do you have the corkscrew?

BARRY

(relieved)

Yes! I have everything.

Their loud voices bounce off the water, creating an echo.

JEANELLE MASTERSON comes out of the house. She is dressed in yuppie casuals, brand-name jeans, a fleece jacket, and Jackie O.-type sunglasses. She is trim and attractive.

She walks down the driveway where Barry is waiting for her. The two make their way down the path to the long dock that leads to the pontoon boat.

EXT. DOCK - DAY

The pontoon boat is a six-person boat with a flat surface, so you can walk around on it. It's topped by a canopy that covers most of the deck, except for the bow.

Barry gets on first, gives his hand to Jeanelle and helps her aboard. She sits down and watches as Barry does all the work. He is all routine; unties the boat, starts the engine, backs it up into the channel, reverses it and chugs off.

INT. BOAT - DAY

The channel widens and empties into the main lake. With the fall colors reflecting off the water and the late afternoon sun, it's quite a sight.

There are only a few boats out on the lake, it being a crisp day. Barry steers the boat in the middle of the lake and cuts the engine. He puts a CD into on-deck player. Soft, soothing music begins to play.

He gets up and turns his attention to the cheeses.

BARRY

All right, let's see what we have here.

He unwraps them, lays them out, cuts a few slices off each one.

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

The Santo Camambert, your favorite.
We had it at our wedding, remember?

JAENELLE

We had the Rossini Camambert at our
wedding.

BARRY

Did we?

He offers her the plate, she takes some. She chews it, then
coughs a few times.

BARRY

Are you all right, honey?

JEANELLE

Yes. There's a reason we had the
Rossini. This one is too sharp.

BARRY

Maybe we don't have the right
cheese. But we have the right wine.
The Morceau Chardonnay.

JANELLE

Not fair, that's my favorite wine,
period. You couldn't very well have
forgotten *that*.

He opens the Chardonnay first, is about to pour her a glass
when he notices a smudge on it. He turns to the picnic
basket, his back is now turned to Jaenelle.

CU - Wine glass. He drops a few drops of a liquid into the
glass, then takes a napkin and wipes the rim of it down
while he turns back toward his wife.

He pours her a half glass. Then, he opens the red wine, a
Chianti and pours a glass of that. He hands her a glass, she
stands up and takes off her sunglasses.

They toast under the setting sun.

BARRY

To 15 great years.

JAENELLE

To the patience of a good wife.

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

A great wife. Is it that bad?

JAENELLE

No. You know the secret to a great marriage?

BARRY

Keep you feelings out of it.

JEANELLE

Exactly.

They drink.

JEANELLE

Hm. This wine tastes different.

BARRY

Different how?

JEANELLE

Better. It has a sort of zing to it.

She hands it to him.

JEANELLE

(cont'd)

Here. Try it.

BARRY

I'll take your word for it.

JEANELLE

No, you have to try it. It's kind of interesting.

BARRY

You know Chardonnay gives me a headache.

JEANELLE

Suit yourself.

She takes a few more sips, then starts to choke. This takes a while, as she gasps for air, tries to speak, but cannot.

Barry can't stand to watch and he turns his back to her to look out over the water. At last, she breathes her last breath and drops to the deck.

ON BARRY - He closes his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

FADE TO:

TITLE CARD - TWO WEEKS AGO

INT. BARRY'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Noveau chique decor suggests a pricey menu. The place is closed, chairs are placed upside down on the tables. Judging by the light filtering in through the windows, it's late afternoon.

There's a ladder by the front door. The man standing on top of it is screwing in a surveillance camera, a round gadget that looks like a the eye of a fly, able to look in all directions in the dining room.

The man on the ladder is JUSTIN CHANDLER, a slender man in his mid to late 30s. He is dressed in casual, but stylish clothes; name-brand pressed jeans and a black polo shirt.

The man watching him from the floor is Barry. He is clean cut, wears an expensive suit with an apron over it.

Barry looks at his watch.

BARRY
How much longer?

Justin finishes with the last screw.

JUSTIN
All done.

Justin climbs off the ladder and faces Barry.

BARRY
Are you sure I can't pay you?

JUSTIN
Quit insulting me, Barr. It's the least I can do.

BARRY
How about materials? How many are there?

Barry points at the camera with the last line.

JUSTIN
Two that you can see. Six that you can't. All from my private collection.

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

Where?

JUSTIN

All over.

Barry waits for more.

JUSTIN

I don't want you to tip your hand
to your employees.

BARRY

I wouldn't.

JUSTIN

I know you, Barry. You don't have a
sneaky bone in your body.

(beat)

But I will tell you what you can
do. You can take me somewhere nice
to show your love.

Justin steps to Barry and strokes his face.

BARRY

I will. Next month.

Justin drops his hand in frustration.

JUSTIN

You always say that.

BARRY

Don't start. We have the election
in a few days, which means endless
rallies, this place and "The Catch"
are both losing money,...it's a bad
time for me, Justin.

JUSTIN

Us. It's a bad time for us.

Barry kisses him by way of answer.

A polite COUGH is heard. Justin and Barry look to the
source.

Just inside the door stands Jeanelle Masterson, dressed at
the height of conservative fashion.

She looks at the pair with something like amusement. Justin
is frightened, but Barry seems actually relieved.

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

Jesus, you scared me. You're early.

JEANELLE

They moved up the press conference.

She walks to the window, turns the blinds down.

JEANELLE

(cont'd)

We don't want any unpleasantness
three days before the election.

Justin reacts. She turns to face them.

BARRY

Jeanelle, this is Justin Chandler.
Justin, this is my wife, Jeanelle.

A coolness runs through Justin's face. He shakes hands with Jeanelle.

JEANELLE

I heard so much about you, Justin.
I hope you can find out who's
stealing money from Barry. He's too
trusting to do it himself.

JUSTIN

I'll do my best.

JEANELLE

I'm sure you will.
(beat)
Is that your mini Cooper outside?

JUSTIN

Yes.

JEANELLE

Well, since you're a New York State
resident don't forget to vote on
Thursday.

She hands him an election ad that's the size of a postcard.

INSERT - Election postcard - Picture of a balding Italian man in his 70's smiling with capped teeth that look like Chiclets. Underneath the picture, in bold letters: Re-elect Arthur Giafaro - R to the Senate.

Justin looks at the card like it's a dead fish.

(CONTINUED)

JUSTIN

That depends. Where does Arthur stand on gay marriage?

Jeanelle and Barry smile at this rhetorical question. She claps her hands.

JEANELLE

All we need to know is he hates tardiness. Let's go, Barry.

Barry puts away the ladder, takes off his apron, folds it up neatly and puts it away in a bus stand.

They all walk out.

EXT. BARRY'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Jeanelle and Barry get into her brand-new BMW, Justin lights a cigarette, then gets in his mini Cooper. He watches with disdain as the BMW pulls away.

BMW license plate - Imsoin2u

Justin's sour face.

INT. JEANELLE'S CAR - DAY

Jeanelle's driving.

JEANELLE

How long have you been with Justin?

BARRY

About a year.

JEANELLE

I get a weird vibe from him.

BARRY

Are you surprised?

JEANELLE

There's something about him that I don't trust.

BARRY

You don't even know him. I promise I'll shelve him until after the election.

(CONTINUED)

JEANELLE

Relax. I'm just looking out for you.

INT. JUSTIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Loft-type space, high ceilings and big windows, which have curtains, or blinds over them, the place is dimly lit. There's technical equipment everywhere, monitors, computers, cameras and lenses, motherboards, etc.

Justin steps to the front door, throws open the four double bolts and lets in Barry who is dressed in the suit he was wearing earlier, minus the tie. He looks exhausted.

As he walks into the open living room, we see more of the loft. It's messy, what space isn't taken up by equipment is home to liquor and soft drink bottles, fast food wrappers. Half smoked joints and cigarettes in the ashtray. A few prescription pill bottles on the coffee table.

BARRY

Okay, where's the fire?

JUSTIN

Have a seat. Do you want a drink?

BARRY

I just came from a Republican political rally. What do you think?

Justin starts making drinks, a Cosmo on the rocks for Barry, one up for himself. There's already a few empty glasses scattered on the table, so it's safe to say this isn't Justin's first drink of the night.

BARRY

(looking around)

I know what to get you for your birthday.

JUSTIN

What?

BARRY

A maid.

JUSTIN

I've been busy.

He hands Barry his drink. Barry takes a sip and nods in approval.

(CONTINUED)

Uncomfortable silence as Barry is waiting for Justin to state his business and Justin is delaying. He has the demeanor of a sugared up child, all kinetic energy he's trying to contain.

JUSTIN

So...

BARRY

So...

JUSTIN

I've been thinking.

BARRY

Uh-oh.

JUSTIN

I came up with a way for us to be together.

BARRY

We are together.

JUSTIN

For good.

BARRY

(warning)

Justin, I've had a long night and we've been over this many times. Once the elections are over we're going to Berlin for two weeks.

JUSTIN

I'm not talking about two lousy weeks.

BARRY

We'll stay at the Peacock on the Kudam. Just like last June.

JUSTIN

I said for good, Barry.

BARRY

You know the drill. Everything's in her name. The restaurants, the house, everything.

JUSTIN

And let's not forget the prenup.

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

And let's not forget the prenup.
That's provided she agrees to
divorce me, which she won't. So,
let's put an end to this right now.
We have a good thing going,...

JUSTIN

Of course she won't agree to a
divorce. Who would she take to her
father's fascist rallies? Or to her
kitschy fund raisers? Aren't you
sick of being a straight prop,
Barry?

BARRY

How many times...

JUSTIN

Of leading a double life?

BARRY

...do we have to go through this?

Barry slams down his drink.

BARRY

Life's full of compromises. Maybe
you'll realize that if you ever
decide to grow up.

JUSTIN

If growing up means getting
leftovers, then I don't want to.

BARRY

See? Just what a child would say.

JUSTIN

I'm not the kept man, Barry. I can
take care of myself.

BARRY

Well, I can't.

JUSTIN

Is that how you justify her running
your life?

BARRY

I'm not leaving my wife. So that's
that.

Pregnant pause.

(CONTINUED)

JUSTIN

I know.

Barry stares at him, unclear as to what this agreement means.

JUSTIN

(cont'd)

I'm not talking about you leaving her.

He lets this sink in. Barry laughs, and gets up.

BARRY

You're unbelievable. This is what you send me a 911 text for?

JUSTIN

I'm serious.

(beat)

Remember when we talked about what it would be like...not to have her in the picture? Just the two of us?

BARRY

I remember. That was all pillow talk. Fantasy.

JUSTIN

It was more than that.

BARRY

Tell me something, Justin. How many pills have you taken today? Or did you lose count after the fourth Cosmo?

JUSTIN

Don't try to put this all on me. You want it as much as I do.

BARRY

That's where you're wrong. I'm very happy with the way things are.

JUSTIN

I guess that's why you complain about her all the time.

(imitates Barry)

I don't know how much more of this I can take, Justin. The parties, the fund raisers, the small talk.

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

Justin!

JUSTIN

Think about it. You get everything, plus the insurance money. You get to play with your restaurants and more importantly, me.

BARRY

And no one will ever catch on, right? Just an unfortunate accident, where the husband who has nothing suddenly gets everything, right?

JUSTIN

You've thought about it.

BARRY

(uncertain)

No, I have not. I'm just trying to jolt you back to reality. But since that's not going to happen, I'm going home to get some sleep.

JUSTIN

You're close with her family. They like you. They will never suspect...

BARRY

Enough!

Barry walks to the door. Justin follows him.

JUSTIN

If you don't do it, I will!

Barry stops, his hand on the door handle. He looks at Justin, whose face borders on the fanatical.

BARRY

Tell me you're joking!

Justin holds his pose, then his face softens, he smiles. He adopts the attitude of the stereotypical flaming gay guy. He speaks with an exaggerated gay lisp.

JUSTIN

Did anyone ever tell you that you look sexy when you're scared?

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

Stop it. You know I hate the fag
act.

JUSTIN

Are you trying to deny your
essence, Barry darling?

Barry opens the front door, is about to step through it, but
Justin pulls him back and kisses him passionately.

JUSTIN

(back to normal)
All kidding aside...

BARRY

Not tonight. I'm exhausted.

INT. JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Barry climbs out of Justin's bed, gets dressed. Stares down
at Justin's sleeping body.

PAN or DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JEANELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Barry is staring at Jeanelle's sleeping body. He takes off
his shirt, and in his pants and undershirt goes downstairs.

INT. BARRY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Barry rummages around the bottom drawer of his desk. He
pushes aside a silver revolver and digs out a weather-beaten
pack of cigarettes. He takes one out.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Barry enjoys a quiet smoke.

INT. BARRY'S RESTAURANT - BACK OFFICE

Barry's doing accounting, running the calculator with a tape
roll attached to it. Things are not adding up. He is
frustrated.

A GIRL in her mid twenties, dressed like a hostess at a
restaurant, appears.

(CONTINUED)

GIRL

There's a Justin Chandler here to see you, Barry.

BARRY

I'm not expecting him. Tell him I'm not here.

Alas, it's too late. Justin is already standing behind her, having followed her in. The hostess throws an embarrassed look Barry's way and slinks away. Justin walks into Barry's office.

JUSTIN

Where have you been all week? I've been calling and texting like mad.

BARRY

Here.

(beat)

Or haven't you checked the tapes?

Justin sits down.

JUSTIN

Grumpy, grumpy. The cameras are for your own protection, Barry.

Justin pulls out what looks like an iPhone and hands it to Barry.

BARRY

What am I supposed to do with this?

JUSTIN

Tap the screen.

Barry taps the screen.

INSERT - Grainy black-and-white surveillance footage from the vantage point of the camera overlooking the bar. The hostess we saw a minute ago takes out the till from the bar and carries it away.

BARRY

So, what? That's Mary taking the till out, the way she does at the end of every night. She's the one who locks it away.

JUSTIN

It certainly looks that way. If you look through the off the shelf

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUSTIN (cont'd)
camera I installed as a decoy. Keep
watching.

Screen. Other footage of better quality.

Till POV. A fish eye lens observes as Mary pulls out the
till and palms a twenty off the top.

BARRY
I'll be damned.

JUSTIN
A twenty here, a twenty there. Hard
to detect and she can always blame
it on the bartender. That doesn't
account for the entire loss, but
it's a start.

BARRY
Mary.

JUSTIN
I always said you give women too
much credit. Especially pretty
ones.

Barry hands the i Phone back to Justin.

JUSTIN
I'm afraid we're not done yet.

Barry returns his attention to the screen. And watches:

Surveillance footage of him and Jeanelle driving to the
political rally, taken from inside her car.

Footage of Jeanelle shopping at a kitschy organic food
store.

Jeanelle showering in the all-marble bathroom.

Barry is shaken. He puts down the i Phone and regards Justin
with curiosity and fear.

BARRY
This is crazy, even by your
standards. You break into my house?
To plant cameras?

JUSTIN
You need a little prodding, Barry.
I can't wait forever.

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

What's that supposed to mean?

Justin gets up, walks around the desk and sits on the corner of the desk. He comes on sweet and strong.

JUSTIN

Don't look at me like that. I'm doing this for your sake. And mine. Our future. Don't you love me?

BARRY

You know that I do.

JUSTIN

Don't you want to be with me?

BARRY

You know that I do.

JUSTIN

Then it's simple.

Justin starts running his hand up Barry's leg.

BARRY

Except for one thing. I'm not like you. I can't just kill another human being. Much less my wife of 15 years.

Justin's hand arrives at Barry's balls.

JUSTIN

You'd be surprised at what you're capable of once someone has you by the balls.

Justin unzips Barry's pants and gives him the hummer of all hummers.

EXT. BARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Barry pulls up in his driveway. He's wearing the same clothes as the scene before, so presumably he's coming home from work. He sits for a second, thinking, then gets out.

The front door opens and a 25-year old pretty boy walks out wearing a yellow golf shirt. He nods to Barry, who nods back, then looks after the man, puzzled. He walks into the house.

INT. JEANELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jeanelle sits in front of her dresser mirror in full evening wear. She's putting the finishing touches on her attire by putting in her ear rings.

BARRY

Hi. Was that my golf shirt that just walked out of the house?

JEANELLE

I hope you don't mind, hon. Chad's shirt had a big hole in it.

BARRY

I bet.

(beat)

I don't like the yellow one anyway.

JEANELLE

Oh, good.

BARRY

But don't you think it's a little risky? In the house?

Jeanelle turns around, surprised.

JEANELLE

It's Friday.

Barry gives her a "so what?" look.

JEANELLE

(cont'd)

The elections were yesterday. Dad won.

BARRY

Well, that's a relief.

JEANELLE

Hurry up, I don't want to be late.

(beat, as Barry gives her another clueless look)

You've forgotten? The gallery showing. Sandol Backali, the expressionist?

BARRY

(snapping his fingers)

Of course. I'll grab a shower. Be ready in ten.

(CONTINUED)

JEANELLE
Wear the blue suit!

EXT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Jeanelle's BMW pulls up to the valet parking in front of the gallery. Barry runs his eyes up and down the car's interior, looking for something he can't see.

She gives the key to the valet guy. They walk into the gallery. It's really a combination sculpting studio/gallery, with sculptures and paintings on exhibit, with a workshop clearly in the background.

The city's finest and wealthiest turned out to nibble some cheese and crackers, sip Veuve Clicquot and talk art. Barry walks around with his wife, makes small talk.

SHORT MONTAGE - Barry doing the Barry thing, shaking hands, smiling, being superficial.

He breaks away for a few minutes to gather himself and comes face-to-face with a bizarre looking painting. This is Sandol Backali's self-proclaimed masterpiece. While Barry is looking at it, a big guy with frizzy, thinning hair steps in behind him.

This is SANDOL BACKALI, the next hot thing in the world of expressionist painting.

He watches Barry watching the painting.

BACKALI
What is it telling you?

Barry notices him.

BARRY
Excuse me?

BACKALI
What is the painting telling you?

Barry studies the painting more closely.

BARRY
I don't think it has a particular message. I think it's all about visual aesthetics.

Backali is not pleased with this answer.

(CONTINUED)

BACKALI

You're looking at it all wrong.
Look at these lines. These colors.
This painting can only be about one
thing.

BARRY

What's that?

BACKALI

Perfect love.

Barry studies the painting, then studies Backali.

BARRY

I guess you've never really been in
love.

He leaves Backali standing, then notices the big plackard
that has a picture of Backali and shakes his head.

He notices Jeanelle who's standing across the room, talking
to a bunch of people. She gestures for him to come over. A
look of displeasure crosses Barry's face, then he steps in
to perform his duty.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The entrance of the gallery. Barry steps outside and walks
off to the side, so he can smoke unobserved. Parked down the
street is a mini Cooper, the only car on the street, hence
very noticeable. It looks like someone is sitting behind the
wheel.

Barry takes a couple of steps toward it.

The car starts, pulls a sloppy U-turn and drives off into
the night.

Barry steps on his cigarette, worried.

INT. BARRY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Barry and Jeanelle are eating dinner. Or she is, Barry's
plate is untouched and he is staring above her head at the
ceiling.

JEANELLE

What are you looking at, honey?

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

I never noticed they missed a spot
in the corner when they painted the
trimmings.

Jeanelle puts her fork down.

JEANELLE

What's on your mind?

BARRY

Nothing really. Just stress from
work.

JEANELLE

Did you fire Mary?

BARRY

Yes. Woman's stealing from me and I
feel bad for firing her.

JEANELLE

You're too trusting. You always
think things will work out in your
favor.

BARRY

I guess that's part of my problem.

JEANELLE

It's also part of your charm.

BARRY

(surprised)

Thanks.

JEANELLE

Don't worry. We'll be at the lake
soon. It's impossible to feel
stressed up there.

Barry stares out of the window, then back at her. He is lost
in thought.

INT. JEANELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jeanelle is getting ready to go to bed. She is wearing a
night gown, she's putting cold cream on her hands. She seems
different, more nervous, not her usual, icy self. Barry's
sitting on the bed, reading. He puts the magazine down.

(CONTINUED)

BARRY

I have some work to do, I'll be up
in a bit.

JEANELLE

Okay.

INT. BARRY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Barry rummages through a filing cabinet, pulls out a file.
It's a folder neatly labeled insurance.

He skims documents.

INSERT - Life insurance, Jeanelle Masterson - \$2,000,000.

Barry is lost in thought. He puts the file back. Picks up a
picture of the lake house on his desk and studies it.

INSERT - Surveillance shot of Barry sitting in his study,
reading the file.

Justin's elbow holding a drink. Cigarette smoke smolders
through the frame.

Back to the study. Barry fondles a memento that says B. and
J. Forever.

Surveillance footage. Zoom in on the B. and J. Forever.

Barry turns off the lights and leaves the room.

EXT. ZOO - DAY

Barry stands at the gorilla cage. It's feeding time, the
gorillas take their food and eat greedily.

Barry ponders the scene. Justin walks up. He is eating
popcorn from a bag. There's something different about him,
he's calm and confident. His hair is even combed.

JUSTIN

This is an odd place for a meeting.

BARRY

This is the only place where I know
I won't run into anyone from
Jeanelle's fold.

(CONTINUED)

JUSTIN

For once, I'd have to agree with them. Zoos are kind of creepy.

Barry walks away from Justin, the two sit down on a bench.

JUSTIN

So. You have a plan?

BARRY

Yes.

JUSTIN

Solid?

BARRY

Foolproof.

(beat)

But I don't know if I can do it.

JUSTIN

I know it's difficult, but it's really for the best.

(beat)

I know I can be impulsive at times, but this makes sense. It may seem like you have a good thing going, but what happens when she gets tired of you and wants a divorce on the grounds that you're gay and can't satisfy all her needs? Where will you be then? She has everything and you have nothing.

BARRY

I've known her for 15 years.

JUSTIN

Known her. Without the element of love, there are no guarantees, Barry.

BARRY

And what happens when love runs out?

His eyes bore into Justin.

JUSTIN

I'll always take care of you.

He chucks his bag of popcorn and leans forward.

(CONTINUED)

JUSTIN
(cont'd)
Now, what's the plan?

Barry rubs his cheeks, closes his eyes.

FADE TO:

EXT. LAKE - PONTOON BOAT

Barry opens his eyes. We're back in the present.

Reverse zoom from the fallen body and Barry staring out over the water to Justin, who takes off his headphones in his john boat. He is the antithesis of the picture on the pontoon boat, all happiness and satisfaction. The look of a man who's been waiting for a long time to get what he wanted.

He has binoculars in the boat and what looks like a portable hard drive. He starts the motor and zooms out from under the foliage and toward the pontoon boat.

EXT. PONTOON BOAT

Justin ties the john boat to the pontoon boat and climbs aboard.

Jaenelle is lying face down on the deck, Barry has the 100 yard stare over the water. Justin approaches him gently and puts an arm around him. Barry is clearly shaken, doesn't respond.

JUSTIN
You were wonderful.

Barry shivers. Justin approaches Jeanelle's body. Barry turns around.

BARRY
Don't!

Justin is looking down at Jeanelle's body. He turns to Barry.

JUSTIN
Help me move her into my boat.

BARRY
Not before we dismantle all the cameras.

(CONTINUED)

JUSTIN
What's the rush?

BARRY
I don't want any evidence of this.

JUSTIN
You know I don't give away
professional secrets, Barry. Not
even to you.

Barry approaches him.

BARRY
I'm not playing around, Justin. I
want to know where you hid your
bugs. I want to erase this scene.
This whole day, in fact.

JUSTIN
Okay, okay. Jeez, Louise.

Justin walks around the boat and removes four cameras. Then he pulls out a small object from the handle of the picnic basket.

BARRY
You're unbelievable.

JUSTIN
Relax, it's just a microphone.

Barry shakes his head.

BARRY
Is that all of them?

He is looking at Justin with something like regret, loses it and starts to cry. Justin comforts him.

JUSTIN
I know it's difficult, but it's
really for the best.

BARRY
(through tears)
I know.

Jeanelle jumps on him from behind and starts strangling him with a rope.

Justin's stunned face. Barry can't stand it and he gets behind him and helps Jeanelle finish Justin off. It takes a

(CONTINUED)

while, as Justin has quite the fight in him. Finally he goes limp. They stand over the body, exhausted.

BARRY

I didn't give the signal.

JEANELLE

I thought you did.

BARRY

I didn't. You should try listening to *me* once in a while.

JEANELLE

Hey! Don't give me that. You don't know what it's like to lie down there, not knowing what's going on.

BARRY

Now I have to search every inch of this boat.

He gets up.

BARRY

Help me put him in the john boat.

She gets up and they grab Justin's body. In the background, another pontoon boat approaches.

BARRY

Who the hell is that?

JEANELLE

(dejected)

The Kirbys.

BARRY

Damn.

The KIRBYS roll up in their boat to chat. Barry and Jeanelle push the body next to the seats and out of sight.

The Kirbys are a jovial middle-aged couple, made up of BRUCE and CATHY.

Two trick-or-treaters are on board, a boy and a girl, both about seven years old. The boy is dressed as a skeleton, the little girl wears the costume of a fairy.

The skeleton waves to Jaenelle, the fairy to Barry. They wave back.

(CONTINUED)

JAENELLE

How cute.

BRUCE

You don't say hi to your neighbors any more?

BARRY

Not if it's you, Bruce.

Strained laughter. They exchange hellos.

BRUCE

New boat, Barry?

BARRY

You mean the john boat? No. Rusty left it at our place.

JEANELLE

I used it to get into the marsh to take pictures.

Barry is impressed with this lie.

BRUCE

Where are your manners, Barry? Aren't you going to invite us on board and offer us some of your expensive wine? If there's one thing the Mastersons know about, it's wine.

BARRY

You know I would, but we really have to get home.

JEANELLE

We have Ginny's dog at our place and he's been cooped up for hours now.

CATHY

Oh.

BARRY

Why don't you guys come over for dinner tomorrow night? I'm making pork tenderloins. If you behave, I'll let you have my recipe for my Old Fashioneds, Brucie.

(CONTINUED)

BRUCE

Cock tease.

More superficial laughter, then the Kirbys mercifully shove off.

BARRY

Fancy footwork, honey. Thanks for everything.

JEANELLE

What are friends for?

Barry strokes her face.

BARRY

Best friends.

She laughs, a clear, healthy laugh that reverbs off the water. She looks around.

JEANELLE

I wonder. What would it've been like to get married on the lake?

BARRY

Chilly. The Plaza was much cozier.

JEANELLE

I guess. Still, this has romantic appeal.

They put Justin's body in the john boat and Barry covers it with a tarp he takes from the pontoon boat.

BARRY

See you at home.

JEANELLE

See you.

Barry takes off in the john boat. He opens it up and the wind is fierce and blows the tarp a little back, exposing the top of Justin's face.

Justin's lifeless eye staring at Barry.

Barry covers it with the tarp. A look of sadness crosses his face.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Barry connects Justin's hard drive to his laptop. Searches files by date, opens the one that says 10/31/10.

A bunch of aborted quicktime files. Barry erases them all, gets up and leaves the room.

ECU - zoom in on tiny text on screen - Live feeds: 1

EXT. DOCK - NIGHT

Construction lights are set up by the pontoon boat. Barry is going over the boat with a fine tooth comb, looking for cameras. All the seat cushions are off, crap everywhere.

INSERT - Surveillance shot of Barry sitting on the deck, exhausted. It's a high angle, the camera is probably in the canopy.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - NIGHT

Jeanelle is staring out the window, looking at the dock and Barry.

INSERT - hard drive light. Red light blinks once.

Laptop screen - searching for wifi connection.

Connection found.

INT. JUSTIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Camera pans through the apartment, settles on Justin's computer screen. It comes to life, the picture of Barry sitting on the pontoon boat is frozen on the screen.

SCREEN - Hard drive reached maximum capacity. Begin download.

VIDEO - download bar begins.

AUDIO - download bar begins.

THE END

"ROOM FOR RENT"

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - CABIN - DUSK

Cabin in the middle of the woods, in the middle of nowhere. Dead of winter, snow piled up high. The sun is setting. Pine trees, with sprinkles of oak, birch and aspen.

The road is behind the house, visible because it and the driveway are the only things plowed.

Smoke plumes out of the metal chimney collar. No car in the driveway, but someone is home.

INT. CABIN - KITCHEN

Rustic going on run-down. Living room is separated from the kitchen by a counter. Free standing wood stove, the only heat source, is cranking in the living room.

Galley kitchen is a rectangle with a sink and a stove that runs into a dead end.

In it stands LYLE VOSS. 45 years-old and looking every day of it. What sparse hair he has is frizzing in ten different directions. Horn-rimmed glasses, cigarette dangling from his lips.

Coffee maker percolates. He pours himself a mug full. Looks at his watch.

Lyle's POV. Looking out over a river, which is now frozen solid.

Lyle is making a pan of eggs on the stove, a gastronomic marvel that will never be seen on The Food Network. For one, they are beginning to crispify and the gallon of hot sauce he's pouring on is like kicking the dead.

SOUND of a car's tires crunching on the snow. Lyle walks across the living room and looks out of the side window that faces the driveway.

Lyle has a weird gate and usually slumps his body to the left.

A gray Ford Expedition SUV pulls in.

Lyle looks relieved.

A MAN in a big puffy white winter jacket hops out of the SUV. He takes a duffel bag from the back seat.

Lyle watches.

(CONTINUED)

The man pulls out another duffel bag, this one different than the first.

Lyle's puzzled reaction.

The man shoulders both bags and heads off toward a shed at the bottom of the driveway.

Lyle seems puzzled at this, then runs back to his eggs and tries to save the unsalvagable.

Door opens, the man in the snow suit enters.

He is FAST EDDIE KLAPCZEK. Despite his name, he has an Italian feel to him, slicked back black hair and dark eyes.

Right now, Eddie seems on edge. He walks to the kitchen, checks out the eggs.

LYLE
(apologetic)
It's all we had in the house.

Eddie says nothing, seems like he has other things on his mind.

LYLE
Any trouble at the border?

EDDIE
No trouble.

Lyle is ill at ease, since it's clear Eddie is not in a talkative mood. He takes out two plates, puts eggs on them, puts the plates on the table. Takes two Utica Clubs from the fridge, places them on the table.

Lyle takes off the snowsuit. He's wearing a business suit under it. He sits down. Lyle does, too, and they begin to eat.

EDDIE
You'd think that after two years of doing this, you'd learn to cook.

LYLE
When I'm doing the drop, I always stop by the Price Chopper on my way back. But you insisted on going this time, so...

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

All right, all right. I'm just saying. Man drives all day, sometimes he wants something decent to eat.

They eat in silence for a moment.

LYLE

Was Marcel at the drop?

Eddie shakes his head.

EDDIE

He has more important things to do.

LYLE

I didn't realize the shipment was bigger than usual.

Eddie stares at him, not understanding.

LYLE

Two bags?

EDDIE

What's it to you?

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Full moon.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Eddie is asleep on one couch. PAN to the other couch, facing it. Lyle is awake, staring at Eddie. He gets up, puts on his pants and galoshes.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Lyle makes his way down the driveway and arrives at the wood shed. The full moon reflecting off the snow makes for good visibility.

EXT. WOOD SHED

The door faces the lake, not the house. Lyle opens it and steps inside.

INT. WOOD SHED

A snowmobile, shovels, and a shelving system in the back with gasoline and assorted tools.

Lyle heads toward the shelf. On the bottom sit two duffel bags. He opens one of them.

Bag is full of clear plastic containers which hold pills of all shapes, sizes and colors.

Lyle is not surprised at this. He closes it up, opens the other duffel bag.

Second bag is full of rubberbanded money. Hard to say how much is there, but a lot.

This does surprise Lyle. He stares at it.

LYLE

You stupid fuck.

Lights a cigarette.

SOUND of feet crunching on the snow. Lyle freezes, stubs out his cigarette and goes to the back window and looks out.

Driveway - Lyle's POV. A black Range Rover is parked far down the road. Three men are walking down the driveway. Out front is a huge black man, in the neighborhood of 300 pounds. He wears a long dark coat and a bowler hat. Black gloves.

Flanking him are two minions, tall, well-built white guys, also in long dark coats.

One of them pulls something from under the back tire well of Eddie's Expedition and hands it to Marcel.

INSERT - Black box. Tracking device with a red light in the middle.

The black guy pockets it. The minions pull handguns and the three walk into the house.

Lyle is freaking out. He keeps looking at the house, the duffel bags, not knowing what to do.

(CONTINUED)

We hear commotion from inside the house, like things being thrown around, then a GUNSHOT, and then another.

Lyle decides he has heard enough. He grabs the two duffel bags and leaves the shed.

Long shot. Lyle is running up the embankment that leads to the road with the two duffel bags. Not the least bit athletic, he sways to and fro like a drunken sailor.

Once he reaches the top of the embankment, he hides behind a tree to catch his breath.

Lyle's POV. The three men come out of the house and are heading straight for the wood shed.

Lyle grabs the bags again and crabs his way to the road. Once he reaches the road, he starts sprinting as fast as his smoker lungs will allow.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

INSERT - Lame motivational poster. Man climbing a mountain peak. The word PERSEVERANCE written under it.

ALLEN LIENFORTE's face. Mid 40s, styled short black hair. But the horn-rimmed glasses remind us of Lyle Voss. He is looking at the poster with faraway eyes.

He is sitting in a posh lawyer's office, across from ROGER ACKERMAN, who is suited and styled and sits behind a big desk. 40-ish, exudes success and confidence.

A stack of papers sit on his desk. He studies one paper in particular.

ACKERMAN

Your father left quite a mess behind. Two hundred thousand personal cash loan from a local banker at an interest rate that would make Al Capone blush. Two car washes are barely scraping by, the other two are losing money. Seventy five thousand in a savings account that he was using to keep the car washes going and to pay the interest on the loan. But that's not enough to stop the bleeding, so I recommend that you sell his house and pay off the car washes with that. That leaves you with the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ACKERMAN (cont'd)
cabin in the Adirondacks. I
recommend you use that to pay of
the personal loan.

Lienforte is a defeated man.

LIENFORTE
Sell the cabin?

ACKERMAN
Yes. You never use it.

LIENFORTE
Marie left me.

Ackerman leans back in his chair and ponders this turn of
events.

ACKERMAN
Well, then, I recommend you rent
out a room to help pay with the
expenses. Price of heating oil's
going up again.

LIENFORTE
Who's going to want to live in the
middle of nowhere?

ACKERMAN
You'd be surprised. Put up a
listing on one of those web sites
where rich wannabe artistes look
for a place to write a book, paint,
or whatever. You know the type.
Retired investment banker decides
he must torture the world with a
screenplay about an investment
banker.

Lienforte fails to see the humor in this.

LIENFORTE
Roger?

ACKERMAN
Yes?

LIENFORTE
I thought my Dad was a great
businessman.

Ackerman shrugs his shoulder as if to say, "what are you
gonna do?".

EXT. LAKE FRONT HOUSE - DAY

Sunset to be exact. Late 19th century Victorian two-level that faces the lake, which is currently frozen over.

A snowmobile comes into view, riding the path that goes over the lake. It climbs the embankment.

WOOD PILE

The rider parks the snow mobile behind a wood pile and covers it with a tarp. The way the wood pile is positioned, you can't see the snowmobile from the house.

The rider takes off his helmet. It is Allen.

INT. HOUSE

House looks barren, there are boxes everywhere, like he has just moved in. Windows look out over the driveway on the side of the house.

Allen is cooking eggs in the kitchen, styling himself unknowingly after Lyle. Butt hanging out of his mouth, horn-rimmed glasses. Same height and build as Lyle, too, just neater in appearance.

He looks at his watch, cooks the eggs.

SOUND of tires crunching on snow. Allen goes to look out of the window.

A pick-up truck stops on the road. A MAN gets out of the passenger seat, pulls bags from the back of the truck. Two duffel bags and a luggage on wheels.

Truck drives off. Even at this distance, we can see it's Lyle coming up the driveway, the duffel bags on his shoulders and pulling the luggage through the snow.

Allen goes to open the door for him.

Lyle comes in, puts the duffel bags down.

LIENFORTE

Any trouble finding the place,
Greg?

LYLE

No trouble at all.

(CONTINUED)

They shake hands. Allen moves to pick up one of the duffel bags.

ALLEN
You need any help with the bags?

LYLE
No, I'm fine.

ALLEN
Leave them here for now, I'll show you around and then we'll take them down to the basement.

Lyle looks around the house. Allen goes back to his eggs, realizes that they are burnt beyond help and tosses the whole mess in the garbage.

LYLE
Nice house.

ALLEN
It's something, isn't it? It was built in 1890 by a wealthy furrier from New York City. He wanted a house to get away to.

LYLE
Just what I'm looking for. Total isolation.

ALLEN
Well, we'll have plenty of that.
(beat)
So, what's your screenplay about?

LYLE
Oh. It's kind of family drama. It's about a patriarch who tries to untangle his dysfunctional family's secrets.

ALLEN
Sounds interesting. Can I offer you some coffee?

INT. BASEMENT

Allen and Lyle are walking down the basement steps. Lyle is carrying the duffel bags, Allen the suitcase. They are both holding a cup of coffee to add to their troubles.

(CONTINUED)

ALLEN

Watch your step, there's a loose board on top I never got around to fixing.

The basement is not very large, but it's clean. There's a bed in the corner and a shelf.

LYLE

Cozy.

ALLEN

To be perfectly honest, the house is not zoned for a live-in basement, but out here, who's going to know?

LYLE

Or care.

ALLEN

Exactly. You have your own bathroom, but we'll have to share the kitchen. As I said on the phone, the rent is..

Before he can finish, Greg pulls out a rubberbanded wad and hands it to Allen.

LYLE

For six months.

ALLEN

Okay. Good. Well, I'll let you settle in and then why don't you come up in a half hour or so and we'll have dinner.

LYLE

Sounds good.

Allen walks up the stairs. Lyle pushes the duffel bags under the bed and starts unpacking the suitcase. Takes out an old-school record player, plugs it in, lays some records on top of it. Takes out clothes that were never folded, just thrown into the bag.

Looks around nervously. Dry-swallows a pill.

INT. HOUSE - DINING NOOK

Allen and Lyle eat a meal of macaroni and cheese and hot dogs. Fresh pot of coffee is on the table. Like two life-long bachelors.

LYLE

I have a bit of an condition, so I'm lucky that I'm a writer. I don't have to get out much. As long as I have my coffee and my Menthols, I'm fine. What do you do, Allen?

ALLEN

I have...used to own a talent agency. For kids.

LYLE

What happened to it?

ALLEN

My business partner was arrested and we lost most of our clients.

LYLE

That's rough. You think you know a guy.

ALLEN

Yeah. I'm a child actor myself from way back when.

LYLE

Really? Anything I would've seen?

Allen thinks for a moment, puts down his hot dog. Suddenly he's a 7-year old kid with all the appropriate mannerisms.

ALLEN

Ah, Ma, you know I don't like oatmeal!

Takes an imaginary spoonful of oatmeal, a huge grin break out over his face.

ALLEN

HMMMM...

LYLE

It's not oatmeal, it's McCann's.

(CONTINUED)

ALLEN

Yup, that's the slogan.

LYLE

That was you? Holy shit. That was
was on in like the 70s.

ALLEN

Hey, don't go there.

They laugh.

LYLE

I have a lot of admiration for
actors. Me, I can't be anything
other than what I am.

ALLEN

Don't feel bad. I can't write.

Allen lights a cigarette, Lyle does, too.

LYLE

It's nice to share a house with a
smoker.

ALLEN

I know. One by one our freedoms are
being stripped away.

They smoke in silence for a bit. Lyle looks out of the
window.

LYLE

That road is the only way to get to
the house?

ALLEN

Yes. Unless you snowmobile across
the lake. That's how I do my
shopping.

LYLE

Perfect.

ALLEN

You won't be disturbed, I promise.
I have some business to wrap up in
Westchester, so I'll be gone from
time to time as well.

(beat)

I never got around to getting the
internet in here, but if you
want...

(CONTINUED)

LYLE
(quickly)
No, that's fine. You can't trust
it. Even with the firewalls, and
everything, people can hack in and
find you.

ALLEN
Find you?

LYLE
Your identity, I mean.

ALLEN
Hah. With all the problems I'm
having, I'd like to have my
identity stolen.

But Lyle doesn't think this is funny.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Allen comes out of his room in his pajamas. He's heading
toward the bathroom, but suddenly he stops in his tracks.

Lyle is standing by the window, peering at the driveway. He
notices Allen.

LYLE
A car pulled into the driveway.

Allen looks out of the window. Driveway is empty.

ALLEN
That happens. We're the last house
on this road and people who are
lost turn around in the driveway.

Lyle is relieved to hear this.

FADE TO:

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Allen comes out of his room with an overnight bag. Living
room is a mess, so some time has passed.

MUSIC filters up from the basement.

He inspects the kitchen. Hungry Man dinner wrappers
everywhere, dirty dishes are piled high in the sink. The
coffee in the coffee maker looks like motor oil.

Allen is not pleased. He puts down the overnight bag and heads into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT

The basement is set up as a room. The record player sits on a shelving unit, there are some books on it and records. The bed is unmade and one hates to speculate when the last time the sheets were washed.

There are beer bottles and a few empty whisky bottles lying about, as well a few loose pills.

Allen stops the record player and looks around like an angry mother. He stomps up the stairs.

EXT. HOUSE - WOODS

Lyle stands in the woods, watching the driveway. He is an unshaven mess with circles under his eyes. Allen stomps up to him in the snow.

ALLEN

You said you were going to clean
the kitchen last night.

Lyle doesn't say anything, just stares.

ALLEN

I'm going to Westchester for two
days. When I get back, I want the
house spotless. Understand? I'm
serious. This shit's gotta stop.

Lyle nods, then turns back toward the woods. Allen walks off.

Lyle fondles the butt of the gun that's tucked into his waistband, under his coat.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN

Lyle is cooking. He takes a pill, washes it down with whisky. His eyes are glazed over, he seems like a man who is in his own self-prescribed bubble.

Scratchy classic rock blares from the basement.

He walks to the pantry shelf that's by the basement stairs. He grabs something off the shelf, kicks over a bottle of

(CONTINUED)

olive oil that's by his feet by mistake, gives no sign that he has registered what has happened and goes back to the kitchen.

Overturned olive oil bottle. Oil seeps out of the bottle and is spreading towards the stairs.

Lyle shovels the food he's made onto a plate, grabs the bottle of whisky and heads for the basement.

Floor. RACK FOCUS from Lyle's approaching feet to olive oil stain that is now spreading down the stairs.

Lyle walks down the stairs without turning on the lights.

Or attempts to. He slips on the olive oil, manages to catch himself, even with the plate and the whisky bottle. However, his foot gets caught on the floor board that Allen's been meaning to nail down and he goes ass over teakettle down into the dark basement.

The music reaches the crescendo.

EXT. HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Allen's clunker pulls into the driveway.

INT. CAR

Allen sits motionless for a while. He gathers up the papers that are on the passenger seat.

INSERT - Top sheet - Lienforte vs. Lienforte. Family Court, White Plains, NY.

He grabs the papers, folders and the travel mug that's filled to the brim with cigarette butts.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Allen walks in and can't believe his eyes. Everything's still a mess. He puts his stuff down, and takes off his coat, which makes him shiver.

Fire's dead as a doornail in the wood stove. Allen inspects the kitchen, it clearly sickens him to the core.

He has reached saturation point. He storms off in the direction of the basement.

Sees the olive oil just in time.

(CONTINUED)

ALLEN
What the fuck?

He looks down the stairs into the basement.

From the bottom, looking up. Lyle's body in the foreground, Allen staring down at it. He walks down the steps, very carefully.

Lyle's lying in a heap. His horn-rimmed glasses are snapped in two. The whisky bottle is in a dozen pieces.

Allen checks Lyle's pulse, but it doesn't tell him anything that the vacant eyeballs staring into space haven't already.

A record is spinning on the turntable, the needle is off the groove. Allen turns it off.

He sits down on the bed and stares at Lyle's body. He puts his head in his hands.

Slowly, he gets up, pulls out Lyle's wallet from his pants.

INSERT - Driver's license. The picture is of the man Allen knows as Greg, but the name is Lyle Voss with a Buffalo address.

A credit card in the name of Lyle Voss.

About \$2,000 in cash. Allen pulls out the cash and looks at it, then puts it on the counter.

Allen starts a thorough search. In a box on the shelf, he finds a little box. He opens it.

Finds another driver's license, the picture is still Lyle, but the name says Samuel Smith. Albany address underneath.

Another license underneath. James Leary, Herkimer address.

A piece of paper.

INSERT - Deposit Slip - James Leary - Bank of Utica -
Checking Account - \$250,000

Allen nearly faints.

He keeps searching, pulls the duffel bags from under the bed. Opens one and sees the pharmaceuticals.

Unzips the other one, finds about \$50,000 in cash, rubber banded together.

Allen stares at the money.

INT. HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

It is now daytime. Living room is clean, so is the kitchen. Allen sits at the kitchen table. Laid out in front of him are Lyle's wallet, the deposit slip and a pile of cash. Also a single sheet of paper with the Bank of Utica's logo printed on it.

He gets up and walks to the old school rotary phone.

INSERT - Picture of a little girl standing next to Allen, presumably his daughter. Backyard of a nice suburban house. Happier times in Allen's life.

He looks off to his left. PAN to what he's looking at. It's the full length mirror by the door.

When the camera lands on it, we are looking not at Allen, but at Lyle. Same slumping gait, facial expression.

Back to the phone. Allen dials.

FEMALE VOICE

(chipper, on the phone)

It's a great day at the Bank of
Utica, how may I help you?

ALLEN

(in Lyle's voice)

I'd like to talk to Mr. Lippincott,
please.

FEMALE VOICE

May I ask who's calling?

Allen's face.

ALLEN

It's James Leary. I opened a rather
large account at your bank two
months ago.

FEMALE VOICE

Just a minute.

Allen waits and sweats.

LIPPINCOTT

Mr. Leary? How can I help you
today?

(CONTINUED)

ALLEN

Hello, Mr. Lippincott.

LIPPINCOTT

I told you, call me Bob. All my best customers do.

ALLEN

Of course. Listen, Bob, I found a real estate deal that I want to go for right away. If I decide to take out a large chunk of my money in cash, how long would that take?

LIPPINCOTT

Of course I'm very sad to hear that you're taking your money out of our bank, but as always, I'm ready to assist you. How much did you have in mind?

ALLEN

About two hundred thousand.

LIPPINCOTT

For that much, I would recommend a cashier's check. You can never be too careful these days.

ALLEN

Does that take long?

LIPPINCOTT

Not at all. Just come in, sign a few forms that's it. You'll be in and out in twenty minutes.

Allen is very happy to hear this.

ALLEN

Okay. Thank you, Bob. I'll be by in a few days.

LIPPINCOTT

Anytime, Mr. Leary.

He hangs up the phone.

INT. BASEMENT

Allen walks down the steps. Basement is empty, save for the mattress. Spotless, too. Allen grabs the mattress and wrestles it up the stairs.

EXT. HOUSE - WOOD PILE - DUSK

Allen has built a bonfire next to the wood pile. It is not lit yet. The items to be burned are all of Lyle's possessions, including the record player. Lyle himself is presumably rolled up in the rug that is the centerpiece of the bonfire.

Allen douses the whole thing in gasoline, lights it. The flames shoot up the long wooden pieces that form the tepee. Fire dances against the barren lake.

Allen watches it, takes a swig from his bottle of bourbon. Determination on his face.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DINING ROOM TABLE

Allen is practicing the James Leary signature. Holds the real thing up next to his and nods in approval.

He reaches for one of his Marlboros, then lights one of Lyle's menthol cigarettes instead.

He walks into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM

He dumps a CVS bag onto the counter. Takes out a hair coloring kit and a curling iron.

EXT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Allen is getting ready to go out. His hair is redder, like Lyle's, and there's some gray in his beard.

Two wallets are lying on the counter. He grabs his own out of habit, then puts it back and grabs Lyle's.

EXT. BANK OF UTICA - DAY

Allen comes into the shot, the spitting image of Lyle. He crosses the street and walks into the bank.

Old-fashioned looking bank. Row of tellers, desks and chairs to deal with the more preferred clientele.

Not too busy at this time of day. A bald man in a business suit is talking to a client in front of the corner office.

Allen fills out a withdrawal slip, then walks up to the teller. It's ROSA, an attractive Latina in her early 20s. Her conservative outfit fails to hide her curves.

She takes the deposit slip, looks at, does a double take.

ROSA

For anything this large, I'll have to get the branch manager's approval.

ALLEN

I talked to him over the phone. He said I could just...

ROSA

It will only take a minute. He's right there.

She points at the bald guy, who looks up. She picks up the phone.

LIPPINCOTT looks at Allen, smiles. Picks up the phone on the nearby table, talks into it.

Rosa listens, then puts down the phone.

ROSA

Mr. Lippincott says it's okay. You'll want a cashier's check? You can have a seat, it will take about twenty minutes.

Allen sits down in a nearby chair. A series of jump cuts show him in different positions. Time passes.

Rosa walks up to him from the direction of the bank manager's office, hands him a check.

ROSA

Can I help you with anything else?

(CONTINUED)

ALLEN
Actually, yes.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Allen sits across the table from Rosa. Romantic, low lighting, it's an upscale joint.

ROSA
...I'm looking to move back to the City, though. I'm tired of this small town mentality. And of dating boys.

Allen looks at her in horror. Does she mean?

ROSA
I want a real man, someone I don't have to take care of.

Allen is relieved.

A waiter takes away their plates.

WAITER
Any dessert for you this evening?
Coffee, perhaps?

ALLEN
I'll have some if you have some.

ROSA
I thought maybe we could go somewhere a little more private.

ALLEN
(quickly)
Just the check, please.

The waiter withdraws.

ALLEN
It's never too late to change direction. You just have to recognize that you're on the wrong path and have positive expectation that things will turn out in your favor.

She smiles. The waiter drops the bill. Allen pulls out his wallet.

INSERT - Lyle's wallet - Empty, save for a five dollar bill.

(CONTINUED)

Allen rifles through it and finds the credit card that's in Lyle Voss's name.

Looks at Rosa. She looks at him, hot and young, and full of life.

He takes out the credit card and puts it in the folder with the bill.

The waiter takes it.

BUS STAND

The waiter takes the card.

INSERT - Card being swiped.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL ROOM

A mobster type sits at a table, working the pill sorter. A computer BLIP is heard.

He turns his attention to the nearby flat-screen. Smiles. Gets up and knocks on the door that leads to the other room.

VOICE

Qui?

MOBSTER

It's Arnaud.

He opens the door.

INT. LARGE OFFICE

Behind the desk sits the 300-pound black guy we saw in the beginning. The mobster walks toward him.

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER LARGE OFFICE

Allen crosses the huge office, and sits down in the chair that's in front of it. He is dressed like himself.

Behind the desk sits DAVID WATERS, a banker type with lots of money and very little hair.

(CONTINUED)

WATERS

What can I do for you, Mr.
Lienfort?

ALLEN

(accentuating the last e)
Lienforte.

WATERS

Beg pardon.

ALLEN

I came to pay off my father's
debts.

WATERS

How much of it, Mr. Lienforte?

Waters accentuates the e this time.

ALLEN

All of it.

Water's eyes are about to pop out of his head.

INT. ALLEN'S CAR - DAY

Allen is driving, blasting hard rock from the radio and
singing along with it, out-of-tune but in love with life.

He pulls into the driveway. He grabs the expensive bottle of
wine from the passenger seat, walks to the house whistling,
doing little dance steps.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Allen walks in, a hand grabs him, punches him in the face
and throws him in a chair that was prepped in the middle of
the living room for the occasion.

Sitting on the sofa is the 300-pound black dude. Same dark,
long overcoat. His hat sits on the coffee table. The other
minion, the one who didn't hit Allen stands next to him.

BLACK DUDE

(French Canadian accent)
Welcome home, Mr. Voss.

Allen's holding his bloody nose. He's not looking too good.

(CONTINUED)

BLACK DUDE

You know who I am.

ALLEN

No.

He gets a punch in the face for this. Black dude stands up, takes a duffel bag and throws it at Allen's feet.

Duffel bag. Half open, shows the pharmaceuticals.

Throws another duffel bag. Has some money in it, but not much.

BLACK DUDE

Where's the rest of my money?

Allen stares at the bag, then at the black dude.

MINION

Want me to beat it out of him,
Marcel?

MARCEL

Let's give the boy a chance. His
type can't take too much.

(beat)

You know what fascinates me most
about people, Jean? Their endless
optimism. You have a man who's been
working for me for two years and he
has heard the stories. He knows who
I know and who I kill. And still,
he thinks he can disappear with my
hard earned money and my hard
stolen pharmaceuticals.

ALLEN

You don't understand. I'm not who
you think I am. My name is Allen
Lienforte. I took in a lodger by
the name of Greg Shaw. He had all
this money on him, I didn't know
him before. He was just a renter.
Then he died and I took his money.

MARCEL

You're not Lyle Voss from Buffalo?

ALLEN

No.

(CONTINUED)

MARCEL

Oh. Well, I am very sorry for the inconvenience I caused you. Let's go boys.

The boys don't move.

MARCEL

Who do you think I am? Some kind of idiot?

ALLEN

I'm telling you the truth.

Marcel walks up to Allen. He snaps his finger. A minion pulls up a chair. Marcel sits down.

MARCEL

Believe it or not, I believe you. You have an honest face. I believe you so much that I'm giving you two days to come up with the money.

He holds up a finger.

MARCEL

A word of caution, however. Sometimes, in these situations, our first instinct is to run. Resist that urge, Mr. Voss. I'll be watching you.

They leave. Allen spits blood into a handkerchief.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Allen peers out of the window.

Car parked at the end of the driveway.

Allen throws on a backpack and a jacket. He climbs out of the living room window.

EXT. WOOD PILE - NIGHT

Allen goes behind the wood pile. Uncovers his snowmobile, very slowly. He pushes it down the slope, jumps on it, starts it, but does not turn on the light.

Engine catches, he inches his way onto the lake and drives off.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

Another clear night. Long shot. Allen racing across the lake.

ANGLE on back of snowmobile. A red light goes on underneath the seat.

INSERT - Red light of tracking device that Marcel pulled off Eddie's Expedition.

Wide shot, taking in the vista. The snowmobile is now a tiny dot on the landscape. It fades into the whiteness.

FADE TO:

Fade from total whiteness to total yellow. We are in a desert. House in the middle of flat barrenness. 360 degrees, nothing else.

INT. DESERT HOUSE - DAY

A WOMAN is cooking at the stove. A MAN sits at the kitchen table, reading the newspaper.

WOMAN

Tell freakshow dinner's ready.

Man sighs, puts the paper down. Gets up and walks out of the kitchen.

INT. DESERT HOUSE - HALLWAY

The man walks down the hallway, knocks on a half-open door. Pushes it open all the way.

EXT./INT. ROOM

Small room, an utter disaster. Bed is unmade, books and half empty wine bottles everywhere, as well as high-end liquor, single malt scotch and the like. A bottle of prescription medication.

Man shakes his head, closes the door.

EXT. DESERT HOUSE

Man opens the front door, looks out.

There's Allen standing just off the front porch, looking off into the distance.

ON Allen

Disheveled mess, unshaven and circles under his eyes. One hates to speculate when the last time was he took a shower. He has a cigarette in his mouth.

MAN

Dinner's ready, Steve.

Allen looks back, slowly, a haunted and defeated man.

ALLEN

I'll be right in.

Man goes back inside the house. Allen stares for a second, then turns around.

LONG SHOT - Taking in the barren landscape, house in the background, Allen is barely visible as he walks inside the house.

The wheel of a black Range Rover caked with dust rolls into frame, cutting off our view of the house.

THE END

"THE TRANSCENDENCE OF HARRY"

FADE IN:

EXT. HARRY'S HOUSE - GARDEN - NIGHT

Harry's retirement party is in full swing. The French doors of the living room are thrown open to the early May breeze.

The garden of his lake-side house is set up with folding chairs and tables. Hot 20-year old girls sway to and fro, carrying trays of hors d'ouvres and champagne.

Lanterns are set up, there is plenty of light to see by. Cover band plays "I did it my way", slow and sensual. Most of the guests are over 50.

The banner stretched between two trees spells: "Happy Retirement Harry!".

(CONTINUED)

Sitting on a folding chair in the shadows of the terrace is the Man of the Hour, HARRY LENNOX, in all his 72 years of glory. What hair he has left over is cut very short. He is wearing a suit with the tie loosened and arching over his ample gut.

He surveys the scene with discomfort, drinks his double Scotch on the rocks like it's mother's milk.

Suddenly, he perks up.

Harry's POV. A SERVER bends down to serve a seated guest. Her youthful bust is enveloped by a tight white blouse, golden light spills through her hair.

Harry is lost in the moment for a second. But...

His POV. A hefty woman in her 60s enters the frame, cutting off the great view. This is ANNA, Harry's wife of 45 years.

Harry's expression grows cold once again. Anna sits down next to him.

ANNA

This isn't like you, Harry. Hiding at a party. Your own, no less.

HARRY

I just needed to rest for a bit.

ANNA

Do you want me to go to the garage and get Ben?

HARRY

No, he's not really a people person. I don't think he would feel comfortable here.

Harry drains his Scotch.

ANNA

You're worried.

HARRY

I'm not worried.

They sit in silence.

HARRY

What the hell am I supposed to do now?

ANNA

Enjoy life. Do all the things you
couldn't do when you were working.

She hands him a fishing pole that's leaning against the house, next to Harry. It has a bow on it, presumably it was a gift. She hands it to Harry.

Harry stands up, plays with the pole, casts out the line, then reels it in.

A man in his 50s notices his pole play from across the garden. This is STEVE, Harry's best friend. Steve has obviously had one too many. He pantomimes casting out a line and mock struggles with the line as he's reeling in a really big fish.

Harry puts the rod down.

He makes the rounds. His POV, people come up to him and talk directly to the camera.

A man in his late 50s, early 60s in suit and tie.

SUITED MAN

It'll be tough crushing the sales
quotas without you, Harry!

A younger man.

YOUNGER MAN

K & R won't be the same.

Blue collar type guy.

BLUE COLLAR

No one knew tractors better than
you, Harry!

A man Harry's age.

OLD MAN

Now that you'll be over more, I'll
keep the cards and the Glenlivet
handy.

Woman in her mid 40s. This is LINDA, Harry's youngest daughter.

LINDA

You look pale, Dad.

End of POV. Harry and Linda walk to the end of the garden, away from the guests.

(CONTINUED)

HARRY

I'm fine. It's been a long day.

LINDA

It will take a while to get adjusted to retirement, Dad. Especially for someone like you, your job meant everything...

HARRY

I know. How are you and Adam?

LINDA

We're still in counseling.
(beat)
It's a process.

Harry nods. In the background, some commotion. They walk closer to take a look.

Steve is now drunk enough to make a toast. He climbs onto one of the tables, sending food flying everywhere, but oblivious to it. He puts his fingers in his mouth and whistles.

The party comes to a halt. Band stops playing.

STEVE

I'd like to say a few words, if I may!

A man who has a front row seat to the mess.

FRONT ROW MAN

Like anyone could stop you!

General laughter.

STEVE

We are here to celebrate the retirement of a great man. The best of co-workers, a giant among tractor salesmen. A great husband and a father and to me, a best friend. We wish him the best as he's hanging up his spurs to finally kick loose.

Steve turns to Harry.

STEVE

I've worked with you for 25 years and if there's a guy who can't live
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEVE (cont'd)
without his work, it's you Harry!
But you're going to have to get
used to it, big guy! With your luck
you have another 20 years to go.

Harry looks forlorn at this prospect. Steve raises his glass.

STEVE
To Harry!

Everyone drinks except for Harry.

TERRACE

Harry sits alone in his chair. Party's over, everyone is gone. He has taken off his jacket, his shirt sleeves are rolled up, the tie is wrapped around his neck. He finishes his drink and goes inside.

INT. HARRY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Living room has a little nook where Harry has set up his sales trophies. Harry stands looking at them, wearing a bathrobe and sipping a glass of milk.

INSERTS - Sales trophies. Kellner & Rikowski, MVP, Harry Lennox - Salesman of the Year, Producer of the Year. Some of the awards have a tractor on top of them, or other farm equipment.

Harry walks away.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Anna is putting cold cream on her face. Harry takes off his bathrobe, revealing his blue pajamas.

He climbs into bed.

HARRY
Can you believe all the people that
showed up? Sometimes I don't
realize how lucky I am. A wonderful
wife, two loving daughters, great
friends, health, money. I have it
all.

But his face betrays his emotions. He knows this and is

(CONTINUED)

turned away from his wife. Anna looks at him, her face a literal mask because of the cream.

ANNA

You've led a great life, Harry.

Overhead shot of Harry lying on his back under the covers. Only his face is visible. He looks frightened.

INT. HARRY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Harry's having breakfast with his wife. She puts a plate of eggs in front of him. They are white, so it's an egg white omelette.

She spreads butter substitute on toast and lays it next to the eggs.

ANNA

(perky)

And a perfect cup of decaf.

She puts the coffee in front of him. Harry looks at the meal like a condemned man.

Time lapse. Anna takes away Harry's dishes and puts them in the sink. Harry stands up.

HARRY

Well, I have a big day ahead of me.

EXT. HOUSE - TERRACE

Harry watches the catering company folding up chairs and putting them in their truck.

HARRY

Do you guys need any help?

The closest worker regards Harry suspiciously, trying to decide if he's kidding.

WORKER

No, we got this.

Montage of Harry trying to fill his day. Set to sappy, melodramatic music.

Harry fixes a bad fence post.

Mulches.

(CONTINUED)

Chops wood, hurts his back and stops.

Cleans the gutters.

Rakes the bachi court.

Stands at the dock, staring out over the water. Checks to see if no one is around, lights and puffs on a stogie.

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Harry and Anna are eating dinner.

Do you sometimes feel that life has
passed us by?

Anna gives him a strange look, continues eating.

ANNA

How can you say that? You've done
everything you were supposed to.

(beat)

Do you taste anything different
about this casserole?

Harry shakes his head.

ANNA

I've used real bacon, not Bacos.

She winks at Harry.

ANNA

We can cheat once in a while.

Harry takes another bite, smiles.

HARRY

You always know how to cheer me up,
Anna.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Harry and Steve are fishing. They're in the marshes, no one else around. They're wearing fishing vests, and hats.

STEVE

How's the new pole?

HARRY

Terrific.

Steve cracks a beer, leans back, puts the cap over his face.

(CONTINUED)

HARRY

Let me ask you something, Steve.

STEVE

Shoot.

HARRY

Do you ever have regrets? Things that you wish you would've done, but didn't?

Steve raises his hat, looks at Harry.

STEVE

Sure. When I was 19, my little sister's best friend had a crush on me. I wish I would've done something about that. I mean she was only 16, but what the hell? I was a kid myself...

Not really the kind of regret Harry was talking about. He decides to give it one more try.

HARRY

I wish I would've painted more.

STEVE

Paint? Like houses?

HARRY

No, like paintings. I used to paint a lot when I was a kid.

Steve sits up, attends to his pole once again.

STEVE

Just because you're scared of this retirement thing, it's no reason to go all fruity on me, buddy.

(scoffs)

Painting.

HARRY

All I'm saying is that maybe there's more to life than we can see, maybe there's another world beyond the routine one that...

STEVE

(cuts him off)

Holy smokes!

(CONTINUED)

He grabs the pole harder, starts reeling it in. He struggles with it, finally pulls up the line and lifts a fish into the boat.

STEVE

This is what life is all about,
buddy. Catching the big fish.

INT. HOUSE - ATTIC - NIGHT

Harry's rummaging around the attic. Finally finds what he's looking for.

A painting, very old and very dusty. A landscape, a little crude, but not bad overall.

INSERT - The corner of the painting. A childish signature. Harry Lennox.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN

Harry walks into kitchen with the painting. Anna and Steve are prepping dinner. Harry shows her the painting.

HARRY

Look what I found.

Anna stops washing vegetables for a second.

ANNA

That's nice.

(beat)

Could you prep the fish?

Harry puts the painting down, stares at the fish that Steve caught. It's lying on a cutting board.

Harry takes a cleaver and chops off the fish's head. He stares at it.

ECU - Fish eye.

ECU - Harry's eye.

DISSOLVE TO:

Fishbone in a pan. Harry takes it out, looks at it, then tosses it in the garbage.

Steve walks in from the dining room, followed by Anna. He drains his Pabst Blue Ribbon, pats his gut.

(CONTINUED)

STEVE

Well, I'm stuffed. Time for me to hit the road.

Steve says his good byes, leaves.

ANNA

What's wrong? You've been silent all night.

HARRY

I don't know. Sometimes I feel like I have nothing to live for any more.

ANNA

Why don't you see Dr. Martin? Maybe your blood sugar is acting up again.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harry wakes up, clutches his chest. Anna is sleeping. He gets out of bed, leaves the room.

LIVING ROOM

Harry is seized by a panic attack. He tries to catch his breath, can't, sits down, starts unbuttoning his pajama top.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Harry buttons his shirt back up. DR. MARTIN walks in, a jovial man in his 50s. He has a chart with him.

DR. MARTIN

I understand we had us a little scare last night, Harry.

(looks at chart)

Chest pain, dizziness? How do you feel right now?

HARRY

Okay. I thought I was having a heart attack. Or a stroke.

DR MARTIN

Well, we ran a slew of tests and other than your cholesterol, which is a tad high, there's nothing

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR MARTIN (cont'd)
wrong with you. Have you been
veering from your diet?

HARRY
No. Not really.

DR. MARTIN
Well, the receptionist will give
you a list of foods you should
stick to. Let's lay off the
saturated fats for two months and
see what that does, ok?

HARRY
So, if there's nothing wrong with
me, what was the attack about? Am I
losing my mind?

Dr. Martin puts the chart down and takes a seat.

DR. MARTIN
No, not at all, Harry. It's not
uncommon for someone at your stage
of life. Retirement after 50 years,
workaholic, feeling worthless now
that you have no defined set of
duties, hm? Just relax. Enjoy your
golden years and I guarantee these
attacks will go away.

Harry doesn't look convinced.

DR. MARTIN
Talking to someone might help. I'd
like you to see a colleague of
mine, Harry. A good man.

HARRY
A shrink?

DR. MARTIN
A psychiatrist. He'll be better
able to help you.

HARRY
Thanks, Dr. Martin. I think I can
manage on my own.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Harry's having another mid-night attack. He lies down on the sofa.

Overhead shot of Harry on the sofa.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DR. GREENBAUM'S OFFICE.

Overhead shot of Harry lying on a couch in a therapist's office.

Typical shrink's office with couch, desk, humidifier. Dr. Greenbaum sits in a leather armchair. He is in his 30s.

DR. GREENBAUM

What seems to be the trouble, Harry?

HARRY

Please call me Mr. Lennox.

DR. GREENBAUM

What seems to be the trouble, Mr. Lennox?

HARRY

I keep having these panic attacks. I can't breathe and I feel like my heart's going to explode.

DR. GREENBAUM

I meant what's going on with you? What's going on in your life right now? I see that you have just retired. How do you feel about that?

HARRY

Like I have no purpose. I keep thinking about things I used to do before I got lost in my work. I used to paint as a kid, but for some reason I gave it up. I feel like I've missed out on some things.

DR. GREENBAUM

Tell me about your parents, Mr. Lennox.

(CONTINUED)

HARRY

I was raised by my Mom. My father
walked out on us when I was ten.

Dr. Greenbaum scribbles furiously.

DR. GREENBAUM

Perhaps you are worried that you
won't be able to provide for your
family, in the way your father
hasn't provided for you and your
mother?

HARRY

But I have provided for my family.

DR. GREENBAUM

Well, then, is there a reason why
you can't do the things that you
feel you missed out on now that you
have the time?

HARRY

It might be too late. I think there
are things you can't re-live,
like...

DR. GREENBAUM

Looks like we're out of time. We'll
have to pick this up next time.

He reaches for a pad, writes on it, tears it off and hands
it to Harry.

HARRY

In the meantime, take one of these
every morning with breakfast.

Harry takes it from him with disdain.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Sunday sermon just ended. The sinners are filing out. Harry
and Anna are some of the last ones.

PASTOR SPEYBURN calls after Harry.

PASTOR SPEYBURN

Harry, could I see for for a
second?

Harry stays behind, Anna walks on.

(CONTINUED)

PASTOR SPEYBURN
Anna has asked me to talk with you.

HARRY
Why?

PASTOR SPEYBURN
She said you were going through a difficult time, with the retirement and everything. I just wanted you to know that my door is always open, if you want to talk about anything.

HARRY
Thank you, Pastor Speyburn. I appreciate it. Really.

He shakes the pastor's hand and scurries out as quickly as possible.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Harry wanders the house with insomnia. He walks into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM

Opens the medicine cabinet, sees his prescription bottle, shakes out a pill, looks at it, then puts it back in the bottle. Closes the medicine cabinet.

KITCHEN

Harry's looking at the box of Cheerios that's on the counter.

INSERT - Cereal box - Heart healthy!

EXT. TERRACE - NIGHT

Harry opens one of the French doors and steps out. He draws the bathrobe tighter around his waist. Looks up at the sky.

Clear night, the stars are clearly visible. Harry looks up with a lost expression.

MALE VOICE
(o.s.)
You won't find the answers out there, Harry.

(CONTINUED)

Startled to the max, Harry whips around.

A man steps out from the shadows. He's around 40 years old, slim, with dark hair. Looks like a younger version of Harry. He wears a robe, something that's half monk robe, half New Age outfit.

HARRY

Who the hell are you?

MAN

Relax, Harry.

HARRY

You're trespassing. I have a rifle inside.

MAN

I'm not trespassing. You invited me.

HARRY

I did not. Who are you?

MAN

I'm your Higher Self, Harry.

HARRY

Can I see some ID?

(beat)

What's a Higher Self?

HIGHER SELF

I'm a greater version of you. Younger, thinner, with more hair and more wisdom. A lot more wisdom.

HARRY

Yeah, okay. How much is Steve paying you?

(looks the Higher Self up and down)

Nice outfit. I hope you saved your receipt.

H.S.

Okay, Harry, I'll prove it to you. Harry Stockton Lennox, born 1937 in Schenectady, New York, son to Gilda Long of Herkimer and Rudolp Lennox of Salisbury. Graduated Rochester Institute of Technology, 1959, joined Rakowski & Kellner, then the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

H.S. (cont'd)
second largest distributor of farm equipment in the Northeast the same year. Prefers the Yankees over the Mets, Coke over Pepsi. Never takes a chance.

HARRY
These are facts you could've gotten from Steve.

H.S.
How about the odd tidbit? Even though you're right handed, you masturbate with your left. You're ambidexterous when it comes to that particular function. Also...

HARRY
Okay, okay, that's enough. Suppose I believe you.

H.S.
Suppose? Do you know why I'm here?

HARRY
I've lost my way?

H.S.
No, Harry. You haven't lost your way. You have just found it.

He snaps his finger.

Moving images are projected onto the foliage behind him. It's like a movie screen stretched out between the trees, partially obscured by leaves.

Images flash, seemingly at random, then...

SCREEN - A man in his late 20s is passed out on the floor of a shabby living room, an empty bottle of bourbon by his side. A woman of similar age stands over him, crying. A toddler plays on the carpet with a toy tractor, oblivious to the ugly scene.

H.S.
Your father. The picture of irresponsibility formed by your mother, passed on to you at a very early age.

Higher Self snaps his fingers again.

(CONTINUED)

SCREEN - Ten-year old Harry doing homework.

H.S.
Responsibility.

SCREEN - Ten-year old Harry painting at an easel.

H.S.
Passion. For you.

SCREEN - Pull out to reveal Harry's mother looking at Harry painting.

H.S.
For her...

SCREEN - Switch to Harry's Dad passed out on the floor.

H.S.
Irresponsibility.

SCREEN - Harry's Mom gather up the easel, paint brushes, etc. (Harry is not in the room) and takes them out to a dumpster and throws them out.

The current Harry watches this with horror.

HARRY
Bitch!

Realizes what he said, covers his mouth.

HARRY
Sorry, Mom.

The Higher Self smiles. Snaps his fingers.

SCREEN - Ten-year old Harry doing homework.

H.S.
Mission accomplished.

Higher Self claps his hands, the screen disappears.

H.S.
I could go on and on, but I think you get the picture. Your whole life has been one of avoiding risk at all cost. Staying on the straight and narrow, as the saying goes. You've buried your passions for so long that you've forgotten you've ever had any. You've used

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

H.S. (cont'd)
work to keep your mind off your
soul, but now that you have free
time, you can't help but wonder
what you missed out on.

HARRY
I've led a great life. I've married
a great woman.

H.S.
A distraction.

HARRY
I've raised a family.

H.S.
A way to pass time.

HARRY
I contributed to a great company.

H.S.
All to cloak your true nature with
earthly trappings.

HARRY
What's that supposed to mean?

H.S.
This is not where you want to be,
Harry. If it were, I wouldn't be
here.

HARRY
(dejected)
I know. How do I get there? Is it
too late?

H.S.
It's never too late, Harry. All you
have to do is close your mind and
open your heart. Follow your
instincts.

Harry contemplates this. The Higher Self fades away.

H.S.
(o.s.)
Good night, Harry.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

Harry is sleeping like a baby, a big smile on his face. Anna comes in with a tray of breakfast.

Harry stirrs awake.

ANNA

Good morning, sleepy head. I can't remember the last time you slept past eight o'clock.

She puts the tray in front of him.

HARRY

Thanks. But I think I'll take a walk first.

EXT. TERRACE - MORNING

Harry walks out into the garden. He looks around.

His POV. Everything looks a little desaturated in color.

He closes his eyes. Keeps them closed for about five seconds. Opens them again.

His POV. This time everything is bright, colors are popping everywhere. The red roses are really red, grass is a luscious green color.

Harry can't believe his eyes. He walks around the garden, as if seeing it for the first time.

He smells a flower, pulls back his head, reacting to an intense fragrance.

Harry rushes back into the house.

INT. KITCHEN

Anna is putting flowers in a vase.

HARRY

Anna! I saw the garden!

ANNA

What are you talking about, honey?

(CONTINUED)

HARRY

It was insane! The colors! The fragrance. It was like I was seeing it for the first time.

ANNA

I know what you mean. It's the new fertilizer. It works miracles.

HARRY

It's not the fertilizier. It's me. I can see things clearly now.

ANNA

Good. Do you mind deadheading a bit, then?

Harry runs out into the garden again, leaving her stunned and confused.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Another stellar sermon by Pastor Speyburn. Harry sits in the middle row with Anna. His head is bowed.

INSERT - Harry's Blackberry. He is playing a fishing game on his Blackberry.

PASTOR SPEYBURN

God assigns a unique role to all his children. Father, mother, husband, lawyer, doctor. He knows what's best for each and every one of you, the best role that will help you walk His path.

Harry looks up, suddenly interested.

End of sermon. Everyone is filing out.

HARRY

Pastor, may I have a word?

PASTOR SPEYBURN

Of course. What is it, Harry?

HARRY

I don't agree with what you said in your sermon, Pastor.

(CONTINUED)

PASTOR SPEYBURN

How's that?

HARRY

What you said about the roles God assigns to us. I think it's identifying with a role that causes unhappiness. For 50 years I thought of myself as a salesman and when I retired, I became very depressed, because I thought I had lost my identity. But now I realize that it's all an illusion. I'm not that role.

PASTOR SPEYBURN

No, you are not. You are also a husband and a father.

HARRY

No, all of those roles are just an illusion. These are just clothes that I wear. My essence is beyond all those things. My true self is without profession, or needs.

The pastor looks at Harry like he has lost his mind.

PASTOR SPEYBURN

I will pray for you, my son. Now go in peace.

He scurries off.

INT. HARRY'S PICK UP TRUCK - DAY

Harry drives through the center of town. He parks and gets out.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

He is walking toward the hardware store when his eye catches another store next to it.

EXT. STORE - USED BOOKS

Harry walks in.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - BOOK SHELF

A row of books, all of them Tom Clancy novels. Harry's hand comes into frame, takes them off the shelf.

Puts another row of books in their wake, all of them with spiritual titles, or self help. Or both.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CLOSET

Harry opens the closet, looking for something. He sees shirts, pants, shakes his head. That's not what he wants. Sees a big, white bed sheet on the shelf above the hangers.

He takes it down, looks at it.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Anna is in the living room, looking at the shelf that used to house Harry's sales awards.

They are gone. Rows of rocks sit on the shelves.

HARRY

(o.s.)

What do you think?

Anna startles. We PAN from her to Harry.

He's modified the bed sheet to look like a monk's outfit. A simple rope holds it all together.

ANNA

What are you wearing? And where are your awards? And what are these rocks doing on the shelf?

HARRY

The awards don't mean anything to me anymore. These rocks remind me of the illusion of permanence. Here, take a look.

He hands a rock to Anna. She looks at it quizzically.

HARRY

The very picture of stability, right?

(beat)

Wrong. It's an illusion. Right now there are electrons swirling at

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HARRY (cont'd)
dizzying speeds around the nucleus.
The rock is never at rest.

Anna puts the rock down.

ANNA
Pastor Speyburn said you were
acting strange. You were asking
questions. In church.

Clapping is heard. Harry looks toward the source of the
sound, Anna does not. She can't hear it.

The Higher Self sits on the sofa.

Anna's POV. The sofa is empty.

H.S.
Bravo, Harry. So far you're
exceeding my expectations. One word
of caution. What you're seeking
cannot be experienced with your
current mindset. Or in your current
environment.

HARRY
I'm not moving to Florida.

The Higher Self laughs.

ANNA
Who are you talking to? What's in
Florida?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna is on the phone. Through the window, she can see Harry
sitting in a hammock on the terrace, reading a book and
taking notes.

ANNA
I'm telling you, Blair, he's acting
very strange. He has wierd ideas
and he talks to himself. Was your
husband acting this way, too?

BLAIR
(on phone)
Which one?

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

Tom. You know, before...

BLAIR

Tom was forgetting things. He had Alzheimers.

Anna looks forlorn.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Harry and Steve are fishing. Steve is wearing his usual garb, Harry wears his robe and a necklace.

There's a bite on Steve's line. He pulls a big fish out of the lake.

STEVE

Who's the best fisherman on Canada Lake? Who? Who?

Harry takes the fish from him, takes out the hook and throws the fish back in the water.

Steve goes into a tirade.

STEVE

Are you insane? What did you do that for? What the hell?

EXT. DOCK - DAY

The fishing buddies are tying up the boat. Steve is still pissed.

STEVE

Anna's right. You are losing your mind.

He stomps off. Harry calls after him.

HARRY

Steve!

Steve turns back.

HARRY

It is not you who is angry, but your ego, Steven. It needs a constant comparison to everyone else and needs to feel superior in

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HARRY (cont'd)
order to feel alive. But that is
not the real you, Steve.

STEVE
What's the matter with you? That
fish was four pounds, easy!

EXT. TERRACE - DAY

Harry is sitting at his easel. Anna approaches, but can't see what he's painting.

ANNA
What are you painting?

HARRY
The way things really are.

Anna steps in front of the easel to see it.

Easel - a painting of Anna portrayed as a dragon.

She stomps off.

EXT. ROCK GARDEN - DAY

Harry stands on the biggest rock, giving a lecture. Two people are sitting on rocks, one of them is BEN, dressed in worker clothes. This is the actor who played Bob Rozycki in "4th of Summer".

The other audience member is the Higher Self.

HARRY
Your life has an inner purpose and
an outer purpose. Inner purpose
concerns Being and is primary.
Outer purpose concerns doing and is
secondary.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Anna is watching this scene, clearly horrified.

INT. DR. GREENBAUM'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Greenbaum is scribbling furiously on a pad. He adds it to a large stack.

HARRY

Those notes will tell you nothing about me, Dr. Greenbaum.

DR. GREENBAUM

And why not?

HARRY

Because they're concerned with facts. Content. But my essence cannot be captured on paper.

He stands up and walks out of the office. Dr. Greenbaum makes a note of this.

EXT. ROCK GARDEN - DAY

Another lecture. This time there are 15 people in the audience. Some of them are attractive women.

HARRY

The question remains. Can we stand naked in front of our Being, stripped of all that is false? Can we shatter our false ego and live in the eternal Now and say no to materialism and break the chains that shackle us to our personalities and keep us separate from our souls?

Anna comes out of the house. She's dressed for church.

ANNA

Harry? It's time to go to church.

Harry gives her a steely glance.

HARRY

Can we say no to dogma, and the blind and the misguided who through their ignorance lead the blind away from the truth and toward the false doctrine that fills us with fear and doubt?

Anna slinks off.

The Higher Self looks on with approval.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Harry is drinking beers with Ben.

HARRY

I have to apologize to you, Ben. When I first met you, I felt superior to you in every way. I thought, here's a man who doesn't have life figured out, has no bed to call his own, no property, no family. He is like a eaf that blows from town to town. But now I know I was wrong. I was the coward. I was the weak. You are unencumbered by identity and ego. You are your own person, Ben James.

BEN

Thanks, Harry. That means a lot coming from you. It confirms what I learned on the road. That it's never too late to change. Sometimes the change comes from the unlikeliest person.

They sip their beers.

HARRY

Between you and me, I might be going away for a while.

BEN

Maybe I'll go with you. I'm just about ready to hit the road again.

HARRY

I would love nothing more, but I have a feeling that where I'm going, no one can accompany me.

BEN

In that case, happy trails, Harry.

They toast and drink.

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM

Anna, Harry and their daughter Linda are having dinner.

ANNA
The only thing that matters is, do
you love him?

LINDA
I do.

HARRY
No, you don't. That's just your ego
trying to feed itself with the
image it has formed of your
husband. It needs it to stay alive.
Real love needs nothing.

Linda slams her fork down and storms off from the table.
Anna glares at Harry.

HARRY
Could you pass the salt, please?

Anna leaves the table, too.

Harry grabs the salt, puts some on his plate and eats with
gusto.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Harry walks up to the front door. He leans his walking staff
against the house. He goes in.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Full of Harry's inner circle. There's Pastor Speyburn, Dr.
Greenbaum, Anna, Linda and Gabriella, his two daughters and
Steve. Also a granddaughter, Kate, and Linda's dog, Socrates.

Harry's POV. The living room is in color, everyone else is
black and white, except for Kate and Socrates who are in
full Technicolor.

Harry regards the scene with utter serenity.

ANNA
This is an intervention, Harry. We
love you and care about you and we
had to step in to save you. You've
been acting irrationally and you
have grown distant from us.

(CONTINUED)

STEVE

You are not yourself, buddy.

LINDA

I want my Dad back.

DR. GREENBAUM

We are here to help.

ANNA

You have to commit yourself to a place where you can get better.

Harry listens, but doesn't say anything. He looks over the sofa. His Higher Self is standing there.

H.S.

It's time, Harry.

He points to the window and the lake beyond it.

Harry walks out of the house.

EXT. HOUSE - PATH

Harry's walking down the path that leads to the lake. Everyone else is following him at a safe distance.

ANNA

Where is he going? We have to stop him.

DR. GREENBAUM

Leave him be. It's the first step of the healing process. I've seen this before.

EXT. DOCK

Harry arrives at the dock. He steps onto it.

The Higher Self stands in the middle of the lake, seemingly on the water.

Harry walks to the end of the long and narrow dock. He stands by the edge of the water. He looks back.

ANNA

Stop this nonsense, honey. Come back to the house. I'm your wife. I love you!

(CONTINUED)

PASTOR SPEYBURN

God never gives us a challenge we
cannot overcome!

DR. GREENBAUM

There are still medications we can
try!

Kate, the grandchild, waves. Socrates wags his tail and
barks happily.

Harry drops his robe and stands naked against the lake. He
takes a step and walks on water, to the middle of the lake.

As he's walking, he fades away into nothingness.

The crowd watches in horror.

Anna screams and passes out.

Everyone is too stunned, there's no one to catch her and she
falls onto the dock with a thump.

Pastor Speyburn drops to his knees and starts praying
furiously.

FADE TO:

TITLE CARD: TWO MONTHS LATER

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

It is now fall, the leaves have almost completely fallen.

Anna is watching the lake and the dock from the living room
window.

Behind her, Blair is playing solitaire with a deck of cards.

ANNA

I keep thinking he'll come back.

Blair looks up, gives a sour expression and starts dealing
the cards.

BLAIR

Once they leave, they never come
back.

Anna looking at the lake.

FADE OUT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

114.

THE END