

SOUTH OF PICO

written by

Ernst Gossner

Awarded with the Thomas Pluch Award,
Writer's Guild Austria

(10/05/2007)

Ernst Gossner
Schönbrunner Str. 46/12A
1050 Wien
Registered WGA# 1081425

EXT. CURB - LATE AFTERNOON

A snail slides slowly over the curb. The buzzing of the city mingles with birds singing. The sound of a passing motor-scooter.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - EARLY EVENING

JORGE, in his mid 20's - a hard working, short but robust man with a dark beard, drives a beat-up brown PICKUP TRUCK loaded with rusty gardening tools.

His eyes look tired and droopy. He can barely keep them open. His tattooed skin shimmers with sweat.

Three empty beer bottles roll around floor clinking against one another. Jorge's head bobs down but he catches himself, looking around sharply. The street is clear. He takes a deep breath.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

A row of small, run-down houses. One features a defensive wall of cinder blocks built on its perimeter. A white-picket gate guards the path inside. The front porch is a green wall of foliage. The front door is crisscrossed with iron bars. So are the windows.

CARLA SILVA pulls in and parks her polished 70's Vespa in her driveway. Her bright beautiful eyes shine from underneath the helmet. Carla pulls off her helmet, revealing an attractive face, topping a stringy hard-working body in its late 30's. She smiles very happy, almost relieved.

She looks around.

CARLA

Francine?

She gets off the Vespa, grabs her paper bags, sets one on the wall, while unlocking her gate. She turns again.

CARLA

Francine?

Carla carries the paper bags into her house and shuts the door.

EXT. CARLA'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

The snail slowly moves further. Two small white shoes stop an inch away from the animal. The snail retreats in its shell. Two little white shoes get off the bike and step in front of the shell.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - DUSK

WALTER CHAMBERS, early 40's - athletic body, hardened face and dressed in trendy jogging gear - runs like mad through the residential streets.

Sweat runs down his temple. His eyes are wet. Heavy stains under his armpits.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - DUSK

PATRICK WISE (15), glasses, spotty face, rockets his bike down the sidewalk. Jumps over two steps. His shiny silver jacket flaps in the wind.

A black limo passes Patrick.

INT. LIMO - DUSK

ROBERT SPENCER, early 30's - very handsome manly face, in black tie and suit, drives a black stretch limo down the boulevard. He passes Patrick biking on the sidewalk.

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE - DUSK

Sitting on her bed, Carla massages her feet working out the stress of the day.

EXT. CARLA'S HOUSE - DUSK

FRANCINE, eight years old, inspects the slimy underside of the snail. Touches it. Tickles it. The snail oozes its body out of the shell. Francine laughs and looks at Carla's closed door.

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE - DUSK

Carla fills up a bucket with water. She hears Francine's laughter and opens the door.

FRANCINE

Carla!

Carla halts in the doorway - she can't help but smile as she sees Francine holding the snail higher up in the air.

FRANCINE

Look Carla. It's coming out of the shell.

The beat-up brown pickup truck comes up the street behind her.

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

Robert looks up. Spots the brown pickup coming right at him.

ROBERT

Shit!!

He jerks the steering wheel.

EXT. CARLA'S HOUSE - DUSK

The truck swerves to avoid the limo, jumps the curb, sending heavy garden tools flying and heads right for Francine.

Robert Spencer stumbles out the limo. Patrick Wise drops his bike. Walter Chambers stops behind a tree.

After a piercing screech the truck halts.

Carla lets go of the bucket - water spills.

Dead Silence.

The door of the pick up opens and Jorge stumbles out. He looks drunk. An empty beer bottle rolls out and shatters on the curb. His eyes are in shock. His fingers cling to a Los Angeles map, shaking. He drops it.

He looks up from the map and sees Walter, Patrick, Robert and Carla. The four of them stand there, frozen in shock, staring at him.

Jorge looks down at the front of his truck. He moves along the side of the pick up supporting himself with one hand as he goes. He reaches the rear and spots a snail gliding over a hand, leaving a bloody trail.

Carla vents a psychotic scream ---

Jorge looks up and finds Carla storming towards him.

Carla lunges at him. Hits him right in his face. Jorge shows no reaction. She turns and hits him with all her might. Several blows drill right into his jaw.

Behind Carla - Walter, Robert and Patrick watch the two of them.

Jorge bleeds. Carla lands another blow. Jorge suddenly swings and hits Carla hard. She flies back.

ROBERT

No. No. No. Don't do that, man.

Robert heads towards Carla and Jorge. Patrick hesitates - unsure what to do. He looks to Walter, who snaps out of his own funk and runs towards the scene. His new, white jogging shoes move over the black asphalt...

EXT. RUNYON CANYON - EARLY MORNING

The same white jogging shoes move fast over a dusty mountain path. The sound of a man breathing hard as he pushes himself.

Walter Chambers sprints up the Canyon. He reaches the summit overlooking the entire city of Los Angeles.

TITLE CARD: SOUTH OF PICO

The sun rises behind the downtown skyline.

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A shaft of sunlight slices across the bed like it's dividing Carla's head from her body. Carla lies there with her eyes closed.

The phone rings from another room. Carla opens her eyes and grabs her glasses, waging the inner battle of whether or not to answer the phone. The answering machine clicks.

EXT. HUGE WAREHOUSE - EARLY MORNING

In front of a big industrial brick building. An immense door slowly opens. Jorge comes out carrying a rucksack on his back. He waits in front of the huge warehouse. A beat-up brown pickup full of rusty garden tools drives up and stops.

Jorge climbs in next to MIGUEL, who hands him a map of Los Angeles. Miguel is in his early 30's, with a tough street smart face and the gleaming eyes of an alcoholic. He's impatient.

MIGUEL
(Spanish)
Got it?

Jorge pulls some heavy tools out of the rucksack. Miguel smiles pleased.

MIGUEL
That's how I like my boys. Always working. Never tired. Here's the money.

He hands Jorge five twenties. Jorge reaches for the money. Miguel pulls back one twenty.

MIGUEL
My share. Always fair.

Jorge nods. His foot knocks over an empty beer bottle on the floor of the pickup.

MIGUEL

Don't worry. Already empty.

The pickup heads towards the brightening sky up an empty industrial street.

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

It's a tiny but spotless kitchen. Carla dressed in her waitress gear heats up her espresso. She checks the answering machine - a flashing red light. She doesn't dare to press the button. Looks into the mirror.

A noise outside attracts her attention. She sneaks to the window and opens the blinds a bit.

The house next door is practically within arms reach and the window is open. Carla spots little Francine and her DAD - a tall man in his mid 30's. Francine sits at a desk working on a drawing.

DAD

Who's that one for, Francine?

FRANCINE

Carla.

DAD

Carla? Our neighbor, Carla?

Francine nods.

DAD

That's very nice of you.

Francine's Dad softly kisses her on the head. Carla watches him lovingly caress his daughter's neck.

Francine hums and gets up. Carla quickly shuts the blinds.

EXT. BOULEVARD - EARLY MORNING

A stretch limo is parked in the street - way too far from the curb.

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

Robert Spencer sleeps in the front seat of the limo. He's unshaven, his dark suit is crumpled with his tie hanging loose. The sun shines brightly on his face. Robert sweats.

A bird leaves its mark on the front window.

Robert opens one eye. Squints at the dropping.

ROBERT

Shit.

He slowly gets up. He gets out of the limo and re-enters the passenger area. Robert picks a bottle of water out of the cooler. He downs half the bottle in one big swig.

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Carla downs her espresso. The answering machine still flashes red. A knock on the door. Carla opens the door.

Francine is beaming. Offers her the drawing.

FRANCINE

For you.

CARLA

Me?

Francine nods and holds up the drawing.

DAD (O.S.)

(shouts)

Francine?

Francine reaches for her but Carla jerks away. Francine is momentarily surprised, but undaunted she carefully puts the drawing in Carla's hand.

FRANCINE

Gotta go. See you later.

CARLA

Later?

But Francine is already on the run.

INT. PATRICK'S HOUSE - MORNING

Drab and worn out apartment. Patrick Wise sits at the breakfast table with his Mom, MAUREEN (mid 30's but she looks older) and his sister NATALIE (13). Mom is not a morning person.

She looks at her daughter Natalie. She's busy texting someone on her two way pager. Giggles.

MAUREEN

Eat your eggs, honey.

She is ignored.

MAUREEN

Are you seeing him today?

PATRICK

You mean Dad? At Three.

MAUREEN

Where?

PATRICK
(belligerently)
Don't know. He's gonna call, but he's
got something for me.

Maureen looks sceptically at Patrick.

PATRICK
(proud)
A gift.

MAUREEN
Don't get your hopes up. Remember last
time when you needed a telescope?

NATALIE
Got you that shuttle model - just
after it burned up.

MAUREEN
They must have been giving them away.
He thought you wanted to be an
astronaut.

PATRICK
Stop slamming him! He knows what stuff
I'm into. We talk now - all the time.

MAUREEN
Tell him your sister needs money for
clothes. And if he doesn't have any
cash he should trade in that new
Mercedes.

NATALIE
BMW.

MAUREEN
What?

PATRICK
It's a BMW. M3, Convertible.

MAUREEN
And how'd you think he got the money
to pay for the car? Huh?

NATALIE
(not looking up)
Gambling.

PATRICK
At least he got me something. At least
he cares!

Patrick shoots up and leaves the table. Maureen looks after
him - surprised.

NATALIE
(under her breath)
He never gives me anything.

MAUREEN
(to Natalie)
Eat your eggs!

INT. LIMO - MORNING

Robert stretches himself. Looks around. Shakes his head.

Takes another swig from the water bottle. He hears his cell phone ringing. He answers.

ROBERT
Hello?

The high pitched voice of his BOSS darts through the phone.

BOSS
Where are you?

ROBERT
I'm at home.

Robert sits down behind the steering wheel.

BOSS
No you're not. I can see you're at the clients house.

ROBERT
I'm not at a clients house, I'm at your home. Your wife says hi.

BOSS
Very funny. You're at a client's house. It's on the computer. The GPS tells me exactly where you are. You're parked near San Vicente and Hauser! Such a liar.

ROBERT
I'm not. The GPS got stuck. I was there yesterday!

BOSS
No. My GPS is not stuck. And please tell me you're not banging my clients again. Because I know you do. I'm not getting sued because of you!

ROBERT
Don't worry, you won't ---

BOSS
Shut up. What's wrong with your friend?

ROBERT
Phil?

BOSS
Whatever his name is. You recommended him to us and now he's not even answering the phone. He's supposed to do a pick-up this morning. A wedding. He's not answering.

ROBERT
I'll find him.

The Boss keeps nagging away. Robert holds the phone away from his ear and hangs up.

ROBERT
Shit.

He dials another number. Nobody answers. Just the answering machine.

ROBERT
Phil! Where are you! Pick up, man! You have a job! They've been trying to reach you all morning. What the fuck? Phil!

He hangs up. Starts the car. A Homeless guy appears next to him pressing a sign in the window.

ROBERT
Fuck off!

He pulls away. Then stops. He holds out his hand with a dollar bill. The homeless guy runs up and grabs it.

Robert speeds off.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE - MORNING

Walter sits at a food laden breakfast table, sharing a fruity cereal with his attractive wife IRENE (35) and their tomboyish daughter ROXANNE (7).

Walter watches Roxanne. She happily slurps on every spoonful, not realizing she's being observed. Walter shakes his head and starts slurping playfully loud in the off beat.

Irene looks up, watching Walter and Roxanne rhythmically slurping. Roxanne and Walter both start giggling.

IRENE
C'mon you both - be nice.

Irene has to laugh too.

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Carla stands in front of the answering machine. She puts the drawing down and checks the message. It's her mother.

MOTHER (O.S.)
Carla? Hello?... (to somebody else)
No, I don't think it's her... Hello?
Carla! We were wondering... well, your
father has to go back to the hospital
and I'm having a hard time walking. We
can't really take care of the garden
anymore... When are you coming back ---

Carla can't take anymore and cuts her off.

She takes off her glasses and checks her eye make-up in the mirror. Satisfied, she meticulously puts her glasses in a case, drops it in a little red bag, then places that in a bigger blue bag which she finally packs in her messenger bag.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE - MORNING

Walter puts the plates in a pile. Irene puts the tray away. Roxanne runs off to the other room.

IRENE
Honey, can you drop Roxanne off at
school on your way to the hospital?

WALTER
Sure.
(abruptly)
I'm meeting Rush today, Irene.

Irene puts the tray down.

IRENE
Why didn't you tell me?

WALTER
I'm telling you now.

She walks and embraces him. He awkwardly holds on to the pile of plates he's carrying.

IRENE
Oh my god! That's incredible news! I
knew it would happen.

WALTER

Of course you did, what, with your
father pulling strings.

He brings the plates to the sink.

IRENE

Rush wouldn't be meeting with you, if
he wasn't interested in your research.

Walter rinses the dishes and puts them into the dishwasher.

WALTER

Heard he's a big prick.

IRENE

...honey, promise me, you'll keep your
temper in check ---

Irene looks concerned at him. Walter puts his finger on her
lips.

WALTER

Shhhh---! I'll behave myself. Don't
worry.

IRENE

This could mean a whole research
center - he's looking to give away
thirty million dollars! So what if
he's a prick? Think of the good you
could do.

Walter dries his hands.

WALTER

We're not there yet. He's not going to
write a check after one meeting.

IRENE

Why not? You had me sold after one
meeting...

Irene caresses Walter's neck. He grumbles like a bear.
Roxanne enters the kitchen - dressed and ready for school.

ROXANNE

I want thirty million dollars.

WALTER

Then, let's go get it, you little spy!

He grabs Roxanne and lifts her playfully up in the air.
Roxanne screeches with joy.

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Carla - now wearing a jacket and carrying a helmet with her bag over her shoulder. She grabs the drawing that she left in the hallway and looks at it.

Two big houses standing close to each other, a sun and a big snail with an intricate shell. In front of the snail is a little girl reaching out.

Carla folds the drawing. Grabs the handle of her door.

INT. PATRICK'S HOUSE - MORNING

Patrick Wise opens his door.

EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE - MORNING

Walter Chambers, carrying a little pink backpack, hustles Roxanne through his front door and shuts it.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A phone rings.

Noise of a key turning. Another ring.

ROBERT (O.S.)
Phil! Take the call!

A jolt. The door opens a crack. A shaft of light floods into a drab apartment hallway.

ROBERT
Phil! Answer the phone!

Robert tries to open the door a bit further. Something is blocking it.

ROBERT
Phil! What's goin' on? Open the door, man!

Robert sighs. He pushes against the door, forcing it open. A chair with some empty bottles and other trash is pushed out of the way. The ringing stops.

Robert enters the apartment. He wears his shirt unbuttoned, throws the jacket into the corner.

SUSAN (O.S.)
Hello?

Robert turns. Behind him stands SUSAN - an attractive woman in her mid 30's. She looks as if she's just been crying.

SUSAN
I didn't think you'd be here.

ROBERT
Yeah. Sorry. I... forgot.

Silence.

SUSAN
I'm here to get my boxes. And to give
you back the key.

ROBERT
Yeah. Sure. Come in. They're right
here.

Susan enters the apartment. Sees the mess.

ROBERT
I wasn't here yesterday.

SUSAN
No need for excuses. Anymore.

They look at each other in uneasy silence. She grabs the
boxes in the hallway.

ROBERT
Right. Let me help you.

He grabs the other boxes and carries them outside.

EXT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Robert hoists the boxes into the back of Susan's old SUV.

They both look at each other.

SUSAN
Well. I guess that's it, then.

Robert shrugs.

SUSAN
You still can't talk to me, can you?

ROBERT
Sure. I can talk.

SUSAN
So?

ROBERT
So what?

Susan sighs.

ROBERT
I love you, Susan.

SUSAN
That's not how it works, Robert.

ROBERT
How does it work then?

SUSAN
Try being honest for a change.

ROBERT
Honest about what? How's this? I
honestly love you. I honestly don't
want you to leave. Don't go.

Susan shakes her head. Sniffles.

SUSAN
You don't get it.

Robert doesn't know what to say. He's also not going to let her see him cry.

Susan looks at her watch.

SUSAN
I gotta go. Oh here.

Susan hands him the key, gets in her car and drives off.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Carla rides her Vespa through L.A. traffic. She weaves between the cars stopped at a traffic light. She looks up at a billboard - its a sexy ad for jeans with a guy lying on top of a half-naked girl.

A loud honk interrupts Carla's gaze. The Vespa howls and she rides on.

EXT. SAN VICENTE BOULEVARD - MORNING

The door of the beat-up brown pickup pops open. Jorge hops out.

MIGUEL
(Spanish)
You'll help out here until I come back
for you later. It's busy today. We've
got three other gigs.

Jorge squints into the sun. Shuts the door. Looks over to three white trucks with telescoping cranes on them.

Miguel drives off. JERRY, the foreman and a big guy waves him over.

JERRY

Get your ass over here.

Jorge nods and smiles at him - his mouth full of rotten teeth.

INT. WALTER'S CAR - MORNING

Walter drives his luxury car, Roxanne sits behind him.

The light turns red. They stop.

Roxanne points at a huge blue air-propelled figure flapping in the sun to promote a car dealership.

ROXANNE

Look, Dad. The blue man ---

Walter's phone rings. He flips it open.

WALTER

Hello? Hi Corina. Who? Mr. Rush? Yes, I'm meeting him today, lunch. He wants to meet where? Sun Valley? That's almost in the desert! --- Yep, there's a change of clothes in my locker. You better push my schedule. The arrogant prick wants to play golf. I don't have time for this.

He glances at Roxanne in the rear view mirror, realizing she's probably heard him swearing. But Roxanne just stares outside.

WALTER

Did the Weston lab work come in yet? This afternoon? I thought we put a rush on it? Alright, alright. Thanks. Listen, I can't talk right now... yep. Bye.

Roxanne looks in awe at the blue figure.

Walter watches the jerky moves of the blue figure. He sees himself reflected in the car window.

ROXANNE

Daddy. What does prick mean?

Walter laughs.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Carla stops at a stop sign and notices a young couple at a bus stop. The boy puts his arm over the girl, pulling her close. Carla watches them.

EXT. SAN VICENTE BOULEVARD - LATER

Three cranes move like the claws of a towering white monster through the palm trees.

The arms stop abruptly. Jorge, now wearing orange overalls struggles to cut off a huge limb with a chain-saw.

Jerry, the foreman puts his hands on his hips.

JERRY

Hey, don't you know how to hold a
fucking chain saw?!

Jorge smiles, showing his dirty teeth. He shrugs, not understanding.

JERRY

Get your ass down here! I said get
your fucking ass down here!!

Jorge ignores him, switches on the chain-saw and another branch hits the street with a splintering crash. Jerry jumps out of the way.

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

Patrick sits in the first row, next to MICHAEL, a nerdy young boy with dark hair and a pimply face.

Patrick stares past Michael in a daze. Sitting next to Michael is ASTRID, his stunningly beautiful classmate. From the side, Patrick can see through the gap in her blouse, revealing her bra underneath.

LESLIE, THE TEACHER, late 30's - enters the classroom. Sits down.

LESLIE

Patrick. Michael. Go and get the map
of the Amazon from the storage room.

PATRICK

(snapping out of it)
The what?

Michael punches him.

MICHAEL

C'mon.

Patrick nods. Michael grabs the keys out of the teachers hands. On his way out Patrick smiles at Astrid. She appears to smile back. Patrick can't believe his luck.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

It's bright and colorful, the children's ward. Walter walks down the hallway in a white coat. Next to him CORINA (33), his jolly tall assistant gives him the daily breakdown. She talks very fast.

CORINA

...then you have a nine-thirty with Dr. Roberts and Dr. Wang. At ten a reporter from the Times will be ready for you in your office and can you please sign this.

Corina hands him a folder. He grabs it and picks a pen. A CLOWN with animal balloons walks towards them.

CORINA

...and you need to approve your journal article, I'll send it back to them by the end of the day. Oh, and by the way you actually have patients - you know those little kids who are dying to see you.

The clown laughs and walks past Walter.

WALTER

Very funny.

He stops in front of a glass door. As if he doesn't want to be seen.

WALTER

(whispers)
What about the tests? Do we have them back?

Corina shakes her head.

He looks through the glass door. Inside MARK (8), a little boy with bald head, looking tiny in the huge white hospital bed.

Walter hands Corina the folder.

WALTER

(to Corina)
I'll meet you in my office.

Walter enters.

INT. SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Patrick and Michael pace down the hallway. Patrick grabs the keys away from Michael. They roughhouse for a few moments, like a couple of dogs looking to establish dominance.

PATRICK
Did you see that?

MICHAEL
What?

PATRICK
That shirt. You could practically see her tits, man. Awesome. I'm gonna ask her out.

MICHAEL
You don't have a chance.

PATRICK
Why not?

MICHAEL
Astrid's way out of your league.

Patrick trips Michael up. Michael stumbles, then regains his balance.

PATRICK
What the fuck do you know?

MICHAEL
You'll chicken out. I know it.

PATRICK
Bullshit. I'm gonna ask her.

Patrick stops in front of a door. Michael stops. Looks at Patrick. Doesn't know what to say. Patrick unlocks the door.

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Shafts of sunlight pierce through the darkness. Bottles and half full glasses on the coffee table. The ash trays are full, next to the kitchen table are two cardboard boxes.

ROBERT
What the fuck!

He walks to the bedroom. There's a pair of hairy legs on the bed.

ROBERT
Phil! They've been calling you all morning. What's going on?

Phil doesn't answer. Robert walks over to the bed. There lies Phil dressed in a jacket and tie but no pants. He snores loudly.

Robert notices something on Phil's forehead.

It's a cigarette butt including all of it's ash - still in the shape of a whole cigarette. It lies across Phil's forehead.

Robert shakes his head. Has to laugh. He grabs his foot. Shakes it.

ROBERT
Phil! Wake up!

Robert notices a tiny box on the night stand. He opens it - inside's an engagement ring. He snaps the box shut and throws it into the garbage.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Walter walks up to Mark's bed. The young boy's eyes look weak - he's tired. Walter picks up Mark's chart.

WALTER
Hey Mark.

MARK
Hi Doc.

WALTER
How you feeling today?

MARK
A lot better since they took me off the kee-mo. Can I go home soon too?

WALTER
I hope so Mark. We're waiting on some tests, we need to see how well the last round of medicine is working. But I'm very proud of you. You're very brave.

MARK
If the tests are bad, am I going to die?

WALTER
Who told you that?

Walter pulls up a chair.

WALTER
Tell me. What makes you think that?

MARK
My Mom...she cries a lot and doesn't look at me. She's mad at me 'cuz I'm sick...

WALTER

No. She isn't. She's just upset that she can't do more to make you feel better. She loves you a whole lot.

MARK

I pretend I feel good for her even when it hurts a lot.

(He pauses, he's been thinking hard about this)

Dr. Chambers, does the pain stop when you die?

WALTER

Listen Mark. It hurts because your body is fighting and that's what it should be doing. You need to stay strong.

MARK

I'll try. But I want to go home. Can I? Even for a little bit?

WALTER

I'll see what I can do, Mark.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Hello?

Walter turns and finds Mark's parents MR and MRS WESTON, a good-looking, successful couple in their late 30's.

MR. WESTON

How's my little superhero?

It didn't sound very convincing. Mrs. Weston hovers at the threshold, almost reluctant to enter the room.

INT. DINER - DAY

The name tag on the waitress uniform says "Carla". She runs with her arms full of trays through the busy Diner.

The door swings open. Her colleague MARIA - late 50's, a large, heavy set woman with glasses, and a small chain attached to them - scampers out of the kitchen.

MARIA

The new apprentice is pretty, isn't she?

Carla glances at Maria but doesn't answer as she walks inside the kitchen. She puts down the trays and looks at ROSALIND, 17 years old and almost a younger version of Carla.

A hand reaches through the hatch. Carla jumps.

MARIA
 (excited)
 He's back. The Comma's back.

Carla looks nervously to the door, but plays it cool.

CARLA
 Stop calling him Comma. He could hear
 you.

COMMA - extraordinarily slim and slightly hunched with a
 little moustache and a big happy smile.

MARIA
 I can't help myself. Round head,
 hunched over his belly. Just like a
 comma.

CARLA
 Stop it!

Comma tentatively looks at Carla.

MARIA
 (whispers)
 God, he so admires you.

CARLA
 I said stop it.

MARIA
 Sorry, Madam, but your eye make-up
 gives it all away. Now go and grab
 your Comma - Period!

CARLA
 (hissing)
 Maria!

Carla strides over to Comma. He sees her approaching and
 almost knocks the cutlery on the floor. Gives her a goofy
 look.

COMMA
 Good morning... Carla.

CARLA
 Huevos Rancheros with corn tortilla
 and extra hot sauce and an espresso -
 double shot with a bit of foam.

Comma is entranced.

Carla spots Maria behind Comma's back fumbling a go-for-it-
 gesture in the air. Carla's frowns.

COMMA
 What is it? What? Anything wrong?

Carla turns on her heels and walks back into the kitchen.

Comma turns. Maria is gone.

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - LATER

Robert is drying his hair with a towel after showering. His cell phone rings beside him. Robert grabs it, wrapping the towel around his waist.

ROBERT

Yeah?

BOSS

About time! Where's your friend?

Robert looks through the door and spots Phil's feet dangling off the edge of the bed.

ROBERT

Turns out he's sick! At the emergency room. They think it might be appendicitis.

BOSS

He's fired!

ROBERT

I knew you'd understand.

Robert sits on the edge of the bed.

BOSS

So you do the job. They're already goin' crazy over there.

ROBERT

I'll do it. But you have to give Phil another chance.

BOSS

No way!

ROBERT

I think I'm feeling sick now.

BOSS

Damn you!

A phone rings in the background. Robert hears the Boss picking up the other line. A woman's screaming voice erupts out of it.

BOSS

Yes. I'm sorry. Yes. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Yes he will be there very soon!

The boss hangs up on the other line.

Silence again. Robert hears the boss breathing hard.

BOSS

Alright. You win. I'll give him another chance. But you better get your ass over there yesterday.

ROBERT

Give me the location?

Robert writes down the address. Hangs up.

INT. SCHOOL STORAGE ROOM - DAY

The storage area is full of old maps. Patrick wanders through the room.

MICHAEL

Hey, we could hang out at my place after the pool. I just got that game hack where you can see them naked - it's the shit.

PATRICK

Can't. Meeting my Dad. He's got a new M3. Wanna see it?

MICHAEL

Yeah, sweet.

He tosses around some maps.

PATRICK

Found it!

Patrick grabs the rolled-up map. Unfolds it over a cabinet and follows the Amazon River with his finger. He stares at it, engrossed. Michael appears behind him.

PATRICK

Every year there's a huge wave. A huge wave rolling up the Amazon. 15 feet high. And every year it kills all these people, it even destroys whole villages.

Michael moves close to him and reaches out to touch Patrick's hair from behind. Patrick doesn't notice.

PATRICK

Pororoca is what they call it.

MICHAEL

(whispers)
Pororoca.

PATRICK

Yes. Pororoca. It's because of the tides. Low tide pushes the ocean back and all the Amazon water pours into the Atlantic.

Michael keeps caressing Patrick's hair. He touches himself with his other hand through his pants.

PATRICK

But then the ocean strikes back and the high tide creates a huge wave. And the wave pushes back the river... it rolls back into the land. Lots of people die every year. Some guys surf the wave, but some of them fall into the water and get eaten by Piranhas---

The door behind them opens. Beautiful Astrid appears. She secretly observes Michael touching Patrick's hair - and himself.

Patrick turns. Michael retreats grabbing the map to hide his state of arousal. Patrick is oblivious to everything except Astrid's beauty.

An awkward silence.

ASTRID

We don't need the map anymore. You should come back to class.

Michael drops the map on the floor and bends over strangely like he has a cramp.

MICHAEL

I--- I have to go!

Michael runs past Astrid.

Patrick picks up the map and hangs it back up. Astrid lingers. Patrick realizes they're alone together for the first time.

PATRICK

Hey Astrid.

ASTRID

Yes?

PATRICK

Do you think...? I mean would you like to ---

ASTRID

Are you gay?

PATRICK

Me? No! Why? Why do you say that?

ASTRID

Nothing. I mean... there's nothing wrong with it. I guess.

She turns away.

PATRICK

No.

INT. SCHOOL/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick follows Astrid at a distance as she walks quickly down the hallway.

EXT. SAN VICENTE BOULEVARD - DAY

Jerry, the choleric foreman yells at Jorge as he stuffs stacks of traffic cones underneath the small man's arms.

JERRY

Go and put these back there. Back to the garage. Understand?

The foreman points and heads off. Jorge stands there with the piled up traffic cones. He turns and heads off.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Walter sits opposite Mr. and Mrs. Weston, Mark's parents. Mr. Weston is in the middle of a conversation with Walter. Mrs. Weston sits, unmoving, like a statue. Mr. Weston looks to his wife and then back to Walter.

MR. WESTON

---I'm sorry, what does that mean?

WALTER

Again - the test results come in, if he's in remission, you can take him home today. If it has metastasized and spread further...well, let's not jump to any conclusions.

MR. WESTON

Then what?

WALTER

That would be the worst case scenario. And to be frank, after what Mark's already been through, I think you should consider taking him home. No matter what results we get today.

MR. WESTON

Why would we take him home, if he's still sick? For a break?

Walter explains patiently.

WALTER

I could recommend a few nurses for your home, if you feel that's the most comfortable environment for him to be in.

MR. WESTON

And how would we treat him there?

WALTER

Pain management mostly.

A pause. Mrs. Weston stirs.

MRS. WESTON

Pain management? You mean let him die?

MR. WESTON

Wait a minute. What about the Chemo? You said we'd have to up the dose, try again.

WALTER

The odds are not good. He didn't handle the last go around very well at all. It almost killed him. If the test results are not what we're looking for, you'll have to make a quality of life decision.

MRS. WESTON

Quality of life?

WALTER

Yes, meaning whether your son will spend the last days of his life going through an incredibly painful treatment here or to take him home...

MR. WESTON

...and watch him die?

MRS. WESTON

Honey, don't say...please don't.

MR. WESTON

No. Wait. Or let him die, right Dr. Chambers?

Walter stares at Mr. Weston.

MR. WESTON

Right?

Walter nods.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jorge carries two big stacks of orange traffic cones under his arms between two high rises in Century City. There's nobody else on the street but him and traffic.

He disappears into a garage.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Carla enters the kitchen. Stops. Watches.

ALONSO, the COOK, late 50's - heavy, gregarious with a grey beard - stands next to Rosalind. He fatherly guides her as she places an egg into the boiling water.

ALONSO

...and lay it in very softly. Nice and easy. The poached egg - needs a caring hand.

He gently moves her arm. Carla watches every touch very closely. Through her eyes it looks like the cook is hitting on Rosalind.

ALONSO

Very talented.

Rosalind drops the egg into the water.

ALONSO

Don't worry. You'll have plenty of opportunities to practice --

Grabbing a towel, he discovers Carla.

ALONSO

Yes?

CARLA

Huevos Rancheros with rye, and a poached egg.

ALONSO

There you go Rosalind - another poached egg - try it again.

He winks at Carla. She doesn't react.

ALONSO

Something wrong?

CARLA
No. No. Nothing wrong.

INT. BOYS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Most of the boys have already changed into their swimsuits. The coach enters to clear the rest of them out. Patrick ducks into the bathroom stall. As he gets undressed, he pulls his phone out of his pants. Punches in a number. A dark, older male voice says ---

OLDER VOICE
Hello, this 323.555.4547. I'm not available right now, but you can leave a message at the end of this recording. Thank you.

PATRICK
Hi. Just wanted to make sure we're getting together today. Gimme a call as soon as you can. Or just leave me a message where and when you want to meet. Bye. Dad.

He puts the phone away. Hears someone approaching, whispering. One voice seems familiar.

ASTRID (O.S.)
Are you crazy? If someone catches me in here ---

STEVEN (O.S.)
Don't worry. Everybody's gone. We've got fifteen minutes of free swim before the game starts. Put your suit on here.

The door to the stall right next to him locks.

ASTRID
You'd like that wouldn't you. Watching me change.

STEVEN
Here let me help you with that.

Patrick can hear them kiss. Astrid lets out a little moan.

Someone yells into the locker room from the doorway.

VOICE (O.S.)
Stevie? You in here?

They freeze.

STEVEN
Yeah. Taking a dump. What is it?

VOICE (O.S.)
Coach wants to talk to you. Hurry!

STEVEN
Be there in a minute! (to Astrid,
lowering his voice) I'll be right
back. Don't go anywhere.

ASTRID
(pleading) Steven!

Steven leaves, Astrid locking the stall behind him. Patrick presses his face against the partition. He hears a sigh, and then the sound of clothes being removed. A bra falls to the floor, almost rolling into Patrick's stall.

ASTRID
Damn!

As she reaches down to pick it up, Patrick instinctively climbs up onto the toilet to avoid detection. He realizes the top of the stall is only a few feet above him. As he hears a zipper opening, Patrick can't help himself. He silently pulls himself to the top of the stall and peeks over.

Astrid's sitting on the toilet. Topless. She's just getting rid of her panties. Inspects her legs and toes.

Patrick looks on in awe as he hangs there naked.

Suddenly Patrick spots another pair of hands appearing on the other side of Astrid's stall, he ducks. It's Steven.

STEVEN
Hi baby!

ASTRID
(angry)
Stop that!

STEVEN
Let me back in.

Steven drops down and Astrid unlocks the stall letting Steven enter. She covers her breasts with a towel. Steven embraces her. Patrick observes everything from above. As her towel drops Patrick loses his grip and drops hard - and loud.

ASTRID
What was that?

Patrick recovers quickly, grabs his clothes and dashes - naked - out of the stall and around the corner. Peeks back.

Legs dance quickly under the stall door.

Patrick sighs.

Michael appears behind him. He freezes, looking at Patrick's naked body. Michael can't move. He's overwhelmed.

Patrick suddenly realizes - he's naked. Whirls around.

PATRICK

What?

MICHAEL

Nothing. We... we...should play on the same team.

Patrick looks at him suspiciously.

EXT. SANTA MONICA HOUSE - DAY

Robert arrives in front the middle-class house and gets out of the limo. The BRIDE, late 20's, beautiful in her slim white dress with JOANNA, her mother, run down the stairs towards the limo. Several suitcases are lined up on the sidewalk.

JOANNA

Are you out of your mind! You're ruining my daughter's life! Get the suitcases!

The Mother guides the bride down the stairs. Robert puts the luggage in the trunk.

JOANNA

Get going, driver!

Robert opens the passenger door. The bride steps into a dirty puddle.

JOANNA

Oh no!

ROBERT

It'll be okay. I have napkins in the car.

JOANNA

You shut up!

The mother gets into the car.

JOANNA

I forgot my bag. My bag! Oh no! You have to rush off. Sweetheart, you have to be there in twenty minutes. (to Robert) Get her to church! Quick! Twenty minutes! Understood?

ROBERT
Understood!

JOANNA
My baby. What a great catch you'll
make today sweetie.

She embraces her daughter again. Then shuts the door. Gives Robert a glare. The limo pulls away.

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

The bride sits in the back. Sighs. Her dress fills up the entire back seat. She looks beautiful.

BRIDE
Where's the booze?

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Mark lies in his bed. Surrounded by his parents Mr. and Mrs. Weston. They don't move - as if it's a photograph.

Walter watches them through the glass. Mark seems very composed compared to his outburst before. Mr. Weston talks on his cell phone. Mrs. Weston stares out the window. Even with his parents, Mark seems very much alone.

Mr. Weston sees Walter in the hall. Mr. Weston walks to the door.

Corina approaches.

CORINA
Walter, you better change. You have to
leave for Sun Valley. Rush is waiting
for you.

WALTER
Almost forgot.

CORINA
Not a chance. We need the money.
You've been promising me a raise for
two years now.

Walter laughs and shakes his head.

CORINA
Oh, and you're wife called, she said
you better let him win.

He turns around and sees Mr. Weston staring at him.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Jorge stumbles through a dimly lit garage. He's dropped the cones, sending them scattered across the space.

As he gathers them up, he pauses, hearing footsteps. Jorge looks around but sees nothing.

He hears it again - more like a shuffling or clicking - coming from around the corner. He nervously approaches the sound. He hesitates, then peeks around to see --

-- A DEER. Right in front of him - staring right back.

Jorge doesn't dare to move. Both creatures look at each other.

A door slams behind Jorge. The deer runs off. A YOUNG WOMAN in a mini-skirt and high heels walks to her white Jaguar. She doesn't even look at Jorge.

INT. LIMO - DAY

The bride rummages around in the open cooler.

ROBERT
Don't you think you should wait
until...

The bride gives Robert a what-do-you-care-look.

ROBERT
The glasses are to the left.

She grabs a glass and a bottle of whiskey. She pours the glass half full with whiskey and downs it like an alcoholic.

Robert watches her.

BRIDE
What?

ROBERT
Nothing.

She pours herself another glass, downing it like the first one.

BRIDE
Shit.

She notices her blue satin garter had slipped off, hanging loosely around her ankle. She gathers her dress up carefully, trying not to create wrinkles. More and more of her legs are revealed. Robert can't help but watch this display in the rear view mirror.

She slides the garter back up her leg until it rests high on her thigh, right below her lacy white panties. She freezes in this position.

Robert looks up to find her staring right at him in the mirror.

They don't speak. She doesn't move to cover herself either. Her finger traces the inside of her thigh.

BRIDE
Do you have cigarettes?

ROBERT
Sorry. No. We don't provide any. But --
-

He grabs his chest pocket. It's empty.

ROBERT
No. Mine ran out as well.

She lets the dress fall back.

BRIDE
We have to stop. I need a cigarette.

ROBERT
Can't. Need to get you to the church.

BRIDE
Hey Mr., it's my wedding day and when I say stop for cigarettes then you stop for cigarettes.

She spells it out for him.

BRIDE
So - stop for cigarettes.

Robert looks at her again.

ROBERT
Alright.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

The limo parks in the back lot of the liquor store. Robert gets out and enters the store through the back door.

INT. DINER - DAY

Two CUSTOMERS enter and sit down. Carla takes their orders. Looks over at Maria standing next to Comma.

Comma is engaged in telling a story, he gestures and points. Maria laughs in her own cackling way. Heads over to Carla.

MARIA

Oh my god he's so cute. I have no idea why, but he's definitely got a thing for you.

CARLA

So?

MARIA

Go over and give him a refill.

Carla grabs the pot and carries it over to Comma. Fills up his cup and gives him three extra packets of brown sugar.

COMMA

Thank you very much. You remembered.

CARLA

That's my job.

COMMA

I once worked as a waiter myself. And one time a guy came in and ordered the fish special. Not long after, another guy comes in. Only place left was the same table as the first guy. So he sits down opposite him.

Carla puts down the coffee pot.

COMMA

He, of course, also orders the fish. In the kitchen, I get handed the pan with the last two fish specials. I look down, and what did I see?

Carla, now into the story, shrugs.

COMMA

The two fish are there, but one was like this...

He gestures a huge fish.

COMMA

And the other one like this.

He gestures again, a much smaller fish.

COMMA

So you see the dilemma? What would you have done?

Carla shakes her head.

COMMA

Right! Nothing to be done. I put the pan with the two fish on the table and ran around the corner where I hid and watched the two guys.

He hesitates, for dramatic effect.

COMMA

They both look into the pan. Then look at each other. Nothing happens. Then the left guy says, "After you." The right guy goes, "No after you." It goes back and forth like this a couple of times.

Carla smiles.

COMMA

Finally, the left guy says, "Alright," grabs a fork, reaches into the pan and takes - the big fish.

Carla is hooked now.

COMMA

The guy on the right turns bright red and says, "Are you out of your mind?" "Why?," says the left guy. "How can you take the big one?" "Well, which one were you gonna take?" And the right guy answers, "The smaller one." Then left guy says, "And that's exactly what you got."

Carla laughs out loud.

CARLA

That's what you got...

COMMA

Finally, I get to see you smile.

Carla stops smiling as if it was something to be sorry for.

COMMA

You're losing something.

He points to a piece of paper peeking out her pocket. Carla grabs it.

CARLA

Oh, thanks.

Comma looks at it.

COMMA

A drawing?

CARLA
It's the neighbor's daughter's.

COMMA
May I?

Carla hands him the drawing.

COMMA
Interesting. Are you very close to her?

CARLA
No. Yes. I mean...in a way. I don't know. Her mother died a year ago.

COMMA
I'm sorry to hear that.

Comma studies the drawing.

COMMA
Looks like she's reaching out... nice snail. Kid's got talent.

CARLA
Anything else?

COMMA
What? No. No. Thank you very much.

Carla grabs the drawing and escapes back into the kitchen. The door shuts behind her.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Robert exits the store. Opens the passenger door of the limo. Hands the bride the cigarettes.

ROBERT
Here you go.

Her hand grabs his arm.

BRIDE
Kiss me. I'm getting married.

Robert isn't sure if he heard quite right. But the hand pulls him strongly into the passenger seat.

ROBERT
What are you doing?

He resists.

BRIDE
Kiss me.

ROBERT

But. You're getting married in fifteen minutes.

Robert's resistance shrinks to almost nothing as he looks into her shimmering green eyes. She seems on the verge of tears.

BRIDE

Please. I need to know.

He finally bends down. They kiss. Softly. He pulls back. She grabs him. Holds him. He resists for another second. Sees the yearning in her eyes. He slowly moves in closer to her. They kiss again. Harder. The door shuts. Robert reaches under her dress.

BRIDE

Oh my god.

He pulls her legs up, moving in between them. The bride puts her elegant white high heels on the roof of the limo.

He tears her panties off.

BRIDE (O.S.)

Oh, my god. Wow. Oh that's good,
yeah... wow -- oh my god. Oh my god.
Oh my god.

Her legs fall apart. Her shoe imprints remain visible on the roof.

BRIDE (O.S.)

Oh my god. Yes, yes, yes. Watch the
dress. Don't get any on the dress!

ROBERT

Don't worry! I won't!

The limo shakes in the parking lot.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

On top of the hill, a few hundred yards distant, stands a black silhouette of a man, looking like a general commanding his troops. The silhouette-man waves a golf club back and forth, assistants scatter.

WALTER

Oh my.

Walter slowly walks up the hill.

INT. INDOOR POOL - DAY

A huge indoor pool. The boys in their swim trunks monkey around. Patrick paces around the edge of the pool.

Michael watches him. Patrick looks around. Spots Astrid sitting on the other side of the pool. Her laughter echoes from the big blue tiles.

CRAIG, the instructor (mid 20's) holds a red ball. He whistles.

CRAIG
Gerardo, you're first.

GERARDO
(like a gunshot)
Steven.

Tall and slick Steven steps out of the line and joins Gerardo.

Steven winks at Astrid. Her face lights up. Patrick notices.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Walter walks up the last steps to MR. RUSH (79). A tall, wiry, old man with a charming and determined look in his eyes. He is flanked by two golf caddies. Three assistants hover nearby.

WALTER
Mr. Rush, how are you?

RUSH
Couldn't be better. How about you Mr. Chambers?

WALTER
Good.

Rush looks at Walter. Doesn't continue the conversation - just smiles.

WALTER
Well, thank you for taking some time to meet with me. This isn't the easiest environment for a presentation...

RUSH
I hear you're a decent golfer.

WALTER
I haven't played for quite a while.

RUSH
In that case, should we make it two hundred a hole?

WALTER
How about two million?

Rush laughs.

RUSH

Let's go.

Rush marches off towards the first tee. His many minions move as well, like a strange dance.

INT. INDOOR POOL - DAY

Patrick offers himself to his co-players, but the game never reaches him.

PATRICK

Here! Here!

He swims furiously. The score is tied, 4:4.

INT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Patrick dives down. Gets lost in the blue water. Bubbles everywhere.

He sees Astrid shimmering through the water. A group of girls has stopped their laps and gathered at the edge of the pool to watch the game. Astrid cheers and points. Patrick turns.

The red ball flies through the air. Possibly within reach. Steven is already chasing after it.

Patrick swims and dives as fast as he can. He gets to the ball first. Grabs it. Throws it to one of his team mates. Steven's too late.

CRAIG

Great! Go guys!

Patrick looks up at the instructor and realizes he was speaking to him. The small success gives him a boost of energy.

PATRICK

Over here! Over here!

Patrick swims like a fish.

CRAIG

Alright! Next score wins it!

The red ball flies to Patrick. He grabs the ball. Swims as fast as he can. Steven is onto him. Pushes him aside. Patrick manages to fend him off and hold on to the ball. He passes it to another team member. The ball gets passed right back to him.

Patrick shoots out of the water to catch it. But next to him Steven exits the water like a rocket launched from a submarine. Steven catches the ball and pushes Patrick under the water.

Patrick is out of breath. Bubbles everywhere. The blue water all around him.

Patrick spins out of the calm and reaches the surface. Gasps for air. He's just in time to see Steven downing the shiny red ball into the opposite goal.

Steven swims to the edge of the pool where Astrid and the other girls are cheering. He splashes triumphantly.

Patrick treads water. His teammates shake their heads at Patrick and swim away from him. Patrick looks at Craig, but he avoids eye-contact.

Astrid leans over the edge of the pool and kisses Steven. She doesn't even look in Patrick's direction.

Patrick let's himself float in the water like a dead body.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Robert sits with the bride in the back. She puts her make-up back into place. He seems exhausted and lost in thought.

BRIDE

A bit higher.

Robert raises up a lighted mirror for her as she works. The bride looks at Robert, who is lost in his own thoughts.

BRIDE

Don't tell me you feel guilty.

ROBERT

I'm not the one about to get married.

BRIDE

Kinda ironic then. So what's wrong?

ROBERT

It was a tough morning.

BRIDE

Who's Susan?

ROBERT

What?

She looks at him.

ROBERT

Did I say...?

She nods.

ROBERT
I split up with her. I mean, she moved
out. Took the last two boxes...

He looks at his watch.

ROBERT
...an hour ago.

EXT. HILLSIDE GARDEN - DAY

Lavish green treetops above the L.A. skyline.

All of a sudden Jorge pops up through the top of the canopy
and trims a branch with a large pruner.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Robert flies through the dense traffic. The bride adjusts
her dress.

BRIDE
So, why don't you want to tell me why
she left you?

ROBERT
Complicated story.

BRIDE
Please. Either you can't commit or you
cheated and got caught. (a beat) Or
both, maybe?

ROBERT
Maybe.

BRIDE
Men think we're such idiots. We know -
we always know. You should too. Admit
it, beg for forgiveness.

Robert watches the bride adjusting her hair.

ROBERT
She'll hate me for it. It was...her
best friend. We were drunk, we both
made a mistake...

BRIDE
Please spare me. If she really loves
you, she'll take you back.

ROBERT
She won't. I lied to her.

BRIDE

What have you got to lose? She already left! Why don't you try the truth for a change?

ROBERT

Right, like you're going to tell your husband-to-be what we just did?

The bride looks at Robert and smiles.

BRIDE

Watch the road.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The limo stops abruptly right in front of the church. Members of the wedding party stand there, anxiously waiting.

Robert gets out and opens the door.

ROBERT

Here you go.

The bride jumps out, perfect as ever. LAWRENCE, the groom's father - 75 years old, all dressed up in a fancy Tuxedo, grabs her arm.

LAWRENCE

Let's go, Angela. My son doesn't like to be kept waiting.

ANGELA

Yes, let's go.

Lawrence regards Robert as less than a cockroach.

LAWRENCE

(to Robert)

You wait here. Directly after the ceremony and brief reception you'll take them to the airport. LAX.

ROBERT

Got it, Sir.

They quickly walk up the stairs.

Robert watches her go. She doesn't look back. The door slams shut behind the wedding party.

Robert grabs a cigarette and lights it.

ROBERT

(whispers)

Angela.

He shakes his head. Smiles.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Walter and Mr. Rush senior stand motionless on top of a small rise. Walter watches as Mr. Rush looks down at his golf ball and focuses. The assistants don't move.

Then Mr. Rush swings the club and rockets the ball out.

WALTER
Nice shot, Mr. Rush.

Walter addresses his ball, getting ready to swing. Mr. Rush doesn't wait before talking.

RUSH
So, Walter. You want a nice shiny new wing for your hospital?

Walter swings and ruins the shot.

WALTER
Fuck! --- Sorry. What was that?

RUSH
I'm giving you the chance to run a major research center? Do you think you're ready?

WALTER
Absolutely.

RUSH
You know, your wife was like a daughter to me growing up. I'd do anything for that family.

WALTER
I appreciate that, Mr. Rush.

RUSH
I wouldn't want to see anything happen to her.

WALTER
What are you talking about?

RUSH
I heard you have, how shall I put it --
- violent tendencies?

Walter is silent.

RUSH
Punching out a sick kid's Father? What was that all about?

WALTER
He deserved it.

RUSH
Not exactly the qualities I'm looking
for in my top researcher.

WALTER
He told his dying son that he was
weak, that he was disappointed in
him. You have to give these kids hope.

Walter holds on tight to his golf club. Rush looks at
Walter, trying to read him.

RUSH
Let me be frank. You're not the only
one up for this research grant. I'm
looking for the best deal here.

Walter stares at Mr. Rush.

WALTER
Deal?

RUSH
(walking away)
You give me what I'm looking for and
I'll cut you a check today.

Walter hurries after Rush.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Robert follows the ceremony from the back. The PRIEST'S
voice echoes via cheap loudspeakers through the church.

The priest stands in front of Henry and Angela.

PRIEST (O.S.)
...and you Angela?

ANGELA (O.S.)
I, Angela, take you Henry to be my
husband, my partner in life and my one
true love. I will cherish our
friendship and love you today,
tomorrow and forever. I will love you
faithfully through the best and the
worst, through the difficult and the
easy. What may come I will always be
there for you. As I have given you my
hand to hold, so I give you my life to
keep. So help me God.

PRIEST
I hereby declare you to be husband and
wife. You may kiss the bride now.

Robert shakes his head. His phone vibrates. He walks out.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Some of the water polo team exit the building. They laugh and chat about their victory.

After they disappear, the door opens and Patrick sneaks out.

MICHAEL

Patrick!

Patrick walks on. Michael runs after him.

MICHAEL

Wait up, man.

He catches up.

MICHAEL

Which way you goin'?

Patrick stops, unlocks his bike.

MICHAEL

Hey. I said, which way you goin'?

PATRICK

What's it to you?

MICHAEL

I thought we were going to check out your Dad's M3?

PATRICK

Forget it.

He wheels off. Leaves Michael behind, crushed.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Robert answers the phone.

ROBERT

How's your head?

He listens and smiles.

ROBERT

I'm at the church. Doing the job you were supposed to do... You're welcome... You are? Wait. I'm coming.

Robert walks down the stairs.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Through the window we see Jorge exit a small MONEY TRANSFER storefront. Several people of various ethnic backgrounds wait in line out front. He gets back in the pickup truck.

MIGUEL

How much are you sending them?

Jorge doesn't answer. Just shrugs at Miguel.

MIGUEL

Don't worry. You don't have to tell me. How many kids do you have?

Miguel opens another bottle of beer.

JORGE

Two.

MIGUEL

How long since you've seen them?

Jorge doesn't answer. Just looks down on the ground. It's four bottles of beer now. Miguel pulls into traffic.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Phil leans on the limo, smoking. His forehead still has the cigarette-shaped burn mark.

Robert cleans the inside of the car. Above him are the imprints of Angela's shoes. He doesn't notice them.

PHIL

You gotta be kidding me. You did her on the way to church?

ROBERT

Sshhh! The service is over, somebody might hear you.

Robert pulls the bride's panties out of his pocket.

PHIL

No fucking way.

ROBERT

And the fool inside is marrying the nympho.

Behind them the front door of the church springs open. The wedding crowd exits.

PHIL

At least that fool gets the girl.

ROBERT
What are you talking about?

Phil pulls out the box with the engagement ring. Tosses it to Robert.

PHIL
Found that in the trash.

ROBERT
Don't need it anymore. She took the last of her things this morning.

The bridesmaids align. The bride turns around. All the unmarried girls squeal in excitement. The bride throws her bouquet. It lands squarely at Robert's feet.

He picks it up. Phil laughs and elbows Robert.

PHIL
A sign!

INT. DINER - NOON

It's busy. Maria and Carla dash through the Diner to serve all their customers promptly.

Comma, who is back for lunch as well, sits alone at the counter finishing up the last bites.

Carla - her arms full of plates - walks by. She spots Francine and her Dad outside the window. Francine waves to her.

GUEST
Check please.

CARLA
I'm coming.

Francine and her Dad enter the diner. The only available seats are next to Comma.

DAD
May we?

COMMA
Sure.

Francine jumps up into the seat next to Comma.

FRANCINE
Hi.

COMMA
Hi.

Francine points at Carla and whispers in Comma's ear.

FRANCINE
She's our neighbor.

Carla runs past Francine.

CARLA
With you in a second.

Comma glances at Carla, shyly. Francine notices how they look at each other.

FRANCINE
(to Comma)
What did you eat?

DAD
Francine, please leave the poor man alone.

COMMA
(to the Dad)
I don't mind. (back to Francine) I had mashed potatoes with onion rings.

FRANCINE
Really.

COMMA
It's my favorite.

FRANCINE
Why?

COMMA
Because they remind me of my aunt.

FRANCINE
Why do they remind you of your aunt?

COMMA
'Cause she had a secret recipe.

Francine's jaw drops when she hears the word "secret."

FRANCINE
A secret recipe?

Comma leans in conspiratorially.

COMMA
It was so good, that whenever we heard that Auntie was making her mashed potatoes on Sunday, the whole family - in the entire county - didn't eat all day.

Carla steps in front of Comma and Francine, but both are deeply involved in their conversation.

FRANCINE

What's the secret?

COMMA

For years we tried to find out. Tried to trick her into telling us. But it was no use. After a while, she even got angry from all our begging. So we stopped.

FRANCINE

So you don't know it!

COMMA

One day, my aunt got very, very sick and - we knew she'd soon...

Carla puts down the cutlery for Francine. Comma looks up and sees Carla. She shakes her head warning Comma not to talk about his aunt's death.

A customer calls for Carla but she hesitates, wanting to hear the rest of the story.

COMMA

...go on a long trip to a place where she'd get better. Everybody wanted to know the recipe before she left, so we could cook it ourselves. But nobody dared ask her, since she was getting ready for her journey.

The customer yells for Carla. Maria comes up.

MARIA

Carla, are you gonna deal with that?

Carla leaves and approaches one of the far tables. Another customer tries to grab her as she moves past, but she avoids him. She takes the order while looking back at Comma and Francine. Maria joins them as well.

Comma slowly holds his hand out to Francine, acting out the story. She eagerly puts her hand in his, as her father nods along also engrossed. Carla hurries back, but she's just missed the end of the story.

FRANCINE

Carla, you need to hear the secret!
You have to tell her.

COMMA

OK. I'll tell her.

FRANCINE

Promise?

COMMA

Alright. I promise. Oops, I'm late. I have to go now.

Comma gets up and leaves a twenty on the counter. Maria grabs him on the way to the door.

MARIA

You promised.

COMMA

Yes.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Mr. Rush aims and swings quickly. It's a worm burner. The ball bounces along the ground - miraculously rolling up and onto the green. It settles a couple of feet from the cup.

Rush grins. Walter shakes his head and swings his club. It's well struck, arching beautifully - straight for the pin, but it lands short on the edge of the green. The caddies hand them their putters and they both head towards the green.

RUSH

I have to give you credit Walter. You've managed to make losing on purpose into an art form.

WALTER

I'm just trying to make you look good.

RUSH

I like the people who work for me to have a little more backbone.

WALTER

It's a good thing I don't work for you.

Rush doesn't answer at first.

RUSH

I bought a medical research start-up. It's an incredibly exciting opportunity. I was thinking we could share resources---

WALTER

How?

RUSH

Oh. I figure about 50% of your research funds could go towards a joint venture.

Walter stops.

WALTER

Is that what this is about? You want to kick back half your "gift" to your own company?

He stops at his ball. It managed to catch the very edge of the green.

RUSH

Return on investment is what I'm looking for.

WALTER

OK. How's this? You come down to the hospital and sit in the room with a sick child, who's about to die. Spend some time with him. And you know how you'll get your return on investment?

WALTER

When you watch a little boy walk out of there, healthy, with his whole life in front of him - and you know that you had something to do with that - there's your return on investment.

Rush nods, turns around and calmly unzips his pants to relieve himself on the edge of the green.

RUSH

Save the indignation. There's no start up company. I just wanted to see if you could be bought.

WALTER

Well, I can't. Now you know. How about if I sink this putt, you come down and visit the hospital.

Rush is still finishing up his business.

RUSH

I've got a better idea. All or nothing. Thirty million for one shot. That's more than Tiger Woods ever got for one swing.

Rush laughs.

WALTER

You're joking.

RUSH

What? You don't want the money? What will the poor cancer kids say. C'mon!

WALTER

You'd promise to pay up when I sink it?

Rush nods.

RUSH

I'm an old man, I need a little excitement in my life.

Walter focuses. It's about a twenty footer. He circles the green trying to read the break and speed. He stops briefly behind the hole, and then returns to the ball.

Rush enjoys the spectacle.

Walter addresses the ball and eyes his line. He swings smoothly and strikes the ball firmly.

The ball rolls. Walter watches it closely. It's moving fast - definitely not short. It looks like it's going to miss off to the right but then it turns sharply and breaks right into the center of the cup.

WALTER

Yes!

RUSH

Congratulations. I didn't think you'd go through with it.

WALTER

Hope you brought your checkbook.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Patrick bikes down the street. His phone rings. He grabs it out of his pocket without stopping.

PATRICK

Patrick Wise here.

DAD (O.S.)

No Patrick Wise here.

Patrick smiles big.

PATRICK

Hi Dad. Where are we meeting?

DAD (O.S.)

I can't come pick you up. The car is in the shop.

PATRICK

The BMW?

DAD (O.S.)

Nothing serious. Just new tires, and
shit. But I'm running late for a
meeting in Temecula. Can we do it some
other time?

PATRICK

I can come to you.

DAD

It's Inglewood. It'll probably take
you an hour.

PATRICK

That's alright. I'll come... What's
the address? What? 1205 Hardy
Boulevard? OK, I'm on my way.

He pedals enthusiastically down the street.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS MANSION - DAY

Jorge digs with a shovel. He's laboring, his movements
clearly slower.

Miguel approaches munching on a burger. He has another one
for Jorge with a soda.

MIGUEL

(Spanish)

Here. Take a break.

They both sit down. Miguel hastily downs a bottle of beer.
Jorge unfolds the paper wrapped around his burger.

MIGUEL

Look at the walls they have here.

Every property on the street has large perimeter walls.
Jorge opens his coke. His eyelids are heavy.

Miguel points.

MIGUEL

The sign says NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH!
How can they watch the neighbors when
their walls are so high you can't see
anything?

Miguel looks over to Jorge. Jorge is asleep. His burger
untouched.

MIGUEL

Jorge?

No response.

Miguel grabs Jorge's burger and takes a big bite.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Robert drives down La Tijera Boulevard. Behind him GERALD, Angela's new husband plays cutsie-tutsie with her. They stop at a light. Gerald pulls out their travel documents.

Robert checks out Angela through the rear mirror. Angela looks at him. Winks. Robert notices he's holding on to the ring.

As Robert leans over and puts it in the glove box he spots something else in the upper edge of the rear mirror. He ducks down to see more. Then moves the rear mirror slightly - IT'S ANGELA'S SHOE IMPRINTS.

Angela looks up as well. She seems amused, shares a moment with Robert.

Robert focuses on the street.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA - DAY

It's concrete and drab. Patrick pedals down a deserted street.

He stops. Looks around. Turns. Bikes back.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Robert opens the passenger door.

Angela and her husband get out of the limo. They're all over each other. Robert walks over to the trunk and opens it.

GERALD

I'll get us a cart, honey.

ANGELA

Of course.

The husband walks off.

Robert grabs the last suitcase out of the Limo. Puts it next to the others on the curb.

Robert pats his hands together - a professional gesture. Angela appears from the front of the car. She's removed her bridal veil and her long hair flies in the wind.

ROBERT

Well then. Have a safe trip.

Angela hands him the tip.

ANGELA

Here.

ROBERT
I can't take that.

ANGELA
There's still time.

ROBERT
For what?

The husband comes back with the cart.

GERALD
I got it.

Angela still has the tip in her hand. Robert grabs the luggage and puts them on the cart.

GERALD
Don't worry, baby. I'll take care of that from now on. You get in line - premier. I'll be there in a second.

ANGELA
Sure, sweetie.

She gives her husband a quick peck and goes.

The husband pulls out several hundred dollar bills and stuffs them into Roberts pocket.

GERALD
I want to thank you.

ROBERT
(confused)
My pleasure, Sir.

GERALD
No, I mean it - Angela told me what happened. Why you were late.

Robert can't believe his ears.

GERALD
Stopping for cigarettes and then - how you helped her out.

Robert can't move.

GERALD
She might not have gone through with it, if you hadn't - moved her the way you did.

Robert doesn't know what he means. Angela returns.

ANGELA

You know, how you were honest with your fiancé, how you begged for forgiveness and won her back. It was very sweet. (to Gerald). Honey, you left your carry-on in the back.

Robert is speechless. As Gerald reaches in for his bag, he slips and looks up noticing Angela's shoe imprints on the ceiling. He looks at Angela's shoes, then looks back at the imprints. He's puzzled.

Robert quickly gets into the limo and drives off.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA - AFTERNOON

Patrick heads back down the road he just came from.

Three skinny, tall teenage punks hang around their tricked out car. Patrick speeds up, passing them. They watch him go by.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Walter walks down the hallway towards his office. Corina intercepts him and grabs his arm. Holds it. She is full of urgency.

CORINA

I've been trying to reach you. How did it go?

WALTER

Wanna know what a thirty million dollar check looks like?

CORINA

You didn't!

Walter shows it to her.

WALTER

I did.

Corina grabs the check and looks at it. Corina turns grim.

WALTER

What is it? We got the money!

CORINA

The Weston results are in. It's not good. Not good at all. I left the file on your desk.

WALTER

Find the parents. Have them meet me in my office. Here, don't lose this.

He hands her the check.

INT. DINER - AFTERNOON

The sun shines warm afternoon light into the seating area. There's only one customer, at the bar, eating a burger.

Carla cleans cutlery. Maria strolls out of the kitchen, munching.

CARLA
What are you eating?

MARIA
Nothing.

She's caught in the cookie jar.

CARLA
I saw you chewing.

Maria blushes.

MARIA
(angry)
So? I don't point out your sore spots, do I?

CARLA
What are you talking about?

Maria realizes she went too far.

MARIA
Nothing.

CARLA
No. Tell me.

MARIA
Doesn't matter.

Carla slams her hand on the bar.

CARLA
No. I want to know. What's my problem?

MARIA
Carla, come on --

CARLA
You seem to see my problem every damn day, must be pretty obvious.

MARIA
I'm just worried about you.

CARLA

I don't bother you with my issues. Or my private life. You don't know anything about me, how can you be worried?

MARIA

That's why I'm worried. You never say anything!

The door opens. Comma comes back inside. Carla is surprised to see him back. Maria looks at her.

Comma walks up to them.

He moves from one foot to the other. Looks at Carla. She stands there with her mouth wide open.

COMMA

I was wondering... you know...

MARIA

I'll go and check on the whipped creamer.

He looks at Carla again. Maria hides behind the cash register.

COMMA

So, since I promised Francine to tell you the secret...

COMMA

I was wondering if you would join me for a coffee. When you've finished work...

Silence. Carla shifts uncomfortably.

CARLA

I have to work for another---

Maria's head appears from behind the cash register.

MARIA

---She's finished.

Carla turns to Maria, shocked.

CARLA

I have a half hour left!

MARIA

I'll cover.

COMMA

Great. Thank you.

CARLA
I still have to clean everything in
the kitchen --

MARIA
---Already done.

CARLA
But not the cutlery.

MARIA
Did the cutlery.

She smiles victoriously. Carla gives her a fierce look.

CARLA
Alright. Then - coffee.

COMMA
Really?

Carla gets rid of her waitress outfit.

CARLA
Let's go.

Comma is overwhelmed.

COMMA
Alright.

He nods to Maria.

COMMA
Thanks again.

Maria winks at him.

EXT. NEXT TO FREEWAY - AFTERNOON

Jorge blows leaves on a steep hill right next to the freeway. The noise of the blower and the rush-hour traffic blend into a cacophony.

Despite the noise, Jorge almost falls asleep. He stumbles. Picks up a leaf. Blows it away.

It flies high up in the air.

INT. LIMO - AFTERNOON

Robert switches on the music. Switches it off again. Pulls over.

He looks at the wedding bouquet. He opens the glove compartment and pulls out the ring - dropping it to the floor. He scrambles to pick it up.

ROBERT

Fuck it.

He grabs his phone. Punches in a number. Reaches Susan's happy voice on her answering machine.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Hi. It's Susan. I'm not at home right now. You can either leave a message here or you can reach me on my cell phone ---

Robert punches in the other number. Again the voice-mail.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Hi. It's Susan's voice-mail. Please leave a message after the...

The tone hums. Robert doesn't say a word. Waits, as if somehow Susan could still answer his call.

He bites his lip. Dials another number.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Hello?

ROBERT

Melissa. Hi, it's...

MELISSA

What the fuck are you calling me for, a consolation hook-up?

ROBERT

I need to talk to Susan.

MELISSA

She's not here.

ROBERT

Where is she?

MELISSA

What do you care? By the way I told her everything.

ROBERT

Look, she's your best friend, it's not like you're blameless. --- Hello, Melissa? You still there?

MELISSA

So what do you want?

ROBERT

Where is she? I need to know.

MELISSA

On her way to the airport.

ROBERT

To the airport? Where's she going?

MELISSA

Flying back home. See if she wants to move back.

Robert looks at a passing car.

ROBERT

Is she driving?

MELISSA

No, she took the shuttle. Why?

A shuttle passes the limo.

MELISSA

Hello?

Robert hangs up. The wheels screech. He hangs a sharp U-turn.

EXT. DESERTED INDUSTRIAL AREA - AFTERNOON

Patrick looks around. Not a single soul. He stops his bike. Grabs his phone. Dials.

DAD (O.S.)

Wise?

PATRICK

Dad? I'm on Hardy.

DAD (O.S.)

1205 Hardy?

PATRICK

Yeah. But I can't see any car shop.

DAD

I'll come outside.

PATRICK

I'm waiting.

A car roars. Patrick turns - nothing. Looks around.

PATRICK

Hello?

The same tricked out car from before appears behind him, slowly rolling closer. Patrick quickly mounts his bike.

PATRICK
Dad? Can you hear me?

The car comes closer. He doesn't dare turn around.

PATRICK
Dad? You outside yet? I can't see you.

DAD (O.S.)
(talking to somebody else)
What's this street?

Patrick pedals faster. The car is almost right beside him.

DAD (O.S.)
It's not Hardy? It's Arbor Vitae
Street.

PATRICK
(nervous)
Dad?

The car is now next to Patrick, crowding him.

PATRICK
So it's Arbor Vitae Street --

A hand pulls the phone from Patrick's ear. He swerves.
Falls. Hits the street hard. Gets up.

PATRICK
You nuts?!

It's the three teens he saw on the street before. They
stop. One of them - apparently their leader - gets out.

FERNANDO
Nice bike you got here.

PATRICK
Thanks. Gotta go --

He reaches for his phone, but Fernando tosses it to himself
just out of Patrick's reach.

FERNANDO
Lakers or Clippers?

PATRICK
What?!

FERNANDO
Who's your team? Lakers or Clippers?

Patrick peeks inside the pickup. He spots a Clipper flag.

PATRICK
Not sure.

FERNANDO

If you want your phone back, you
better make up your mind.

The other boys get out of the car. The three encircle him.

PATRICK

If I had to choose, I'd go for the
Clippers. The Lakers suck ever since
Shaq left.

He focuses on the still-wobbling cell phone. Fernando
glances at his peers. Pulls his finger back. Patrick dives.
Grabs the phone right before it hits the street.

FERNANDO

Clippers, huh?

PATRICK

I gotta go. My father's waiting for me
just around the corner. He's a cop.

FERNANDO

Sure, kid. You can go, right after you
lick me.

PATRICK

What?!

FERNANDO

You heard me.

Patrick stares at him, puzzled. The two other teenagers
also look a little unsure, but they move closer.

FERNANDO

Go down, man.

The two other teens put their hands on Patrick's shoulders.
Push him down.

FERNANDO

Lick!

No answer.

FERNANDO

I said LICK!

Patrick grabs the guy's zipper and tries to open it.

He quickly grabs Patrick's hair. Pulls him back.

FERNANDO

You think I'm a fuckin' fag?! My
bitches suck my cock whenever I tell
'em!

His two friends crack up at this. Fernando looks at them sharply. Then he slaps Patrick right in the face.

PATRICK

Stop!

FERNANDO

Shut up and repeat after me. I'm sorry. You're not a fag. Say it!

PATRICK

I'm sorry and you're not a fag.

FERNANDO

And to show you my respect...

PATRICK

And to show you my respect...

FERNANDO

I'll lick your shoes clean.

Patrick doesn't answer. One of the other guys kicks him in his back. Patrick sprawls. A police siren can be heard in the background.

FERNANDO'S FRIEND

What a pussy! C'mon, let's get out of here.

He gets back into the car. The third teen joins him.

FERNANDO

Wait, I'm not done yet.

He grabs Patrick's head and forces his face towards the shoes - full of dirt and stink.

FERNANDO

Say it! "I'll lick your shoes clean ---
"

But Patrick is silent. He twists Patrick's hair until he responds.

PATRICK

OK! - I'll lick your shoes clean.
Asshole!

FERNANDO

What?

Patrick grabs his assailant's foot and twists up - hard. The teenager falls back on his ass. He freezes. Looks up at his partners, they are laughing at him.

Patrick spots his bike - flat on the ground.

Fernando swings his foot aiming it right at Patrick's face. But Patrick spins, grabs the bike and pedals like mad.

FERNANDO

Let's get him!

Fernando runs to the car. It's locked. His two friends laughing hysterically inside. Fernando pounds on the door.

Patrick disappears behind a run-down brick building.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

The meeting with Mark's Parents is finishing up. It's a grim scene. Mrs. Weston stands at the far side of the room staring off into space while Walter talks to Mr. Weston.

WALTER

--- Most of his current symptoms are related to the chemotherapy, he should start to feel much better over the next few days. He should have weeks, possibly even a few months of good health to pursue various activities. I've got a friend over at the kids-wish foundation. He can help you out with travel or anything else Mark might want to do. I've got the discharge papers already in process.

MR. WESTON

Thank you, Doctor. But that won't be necessary. We're not taking him home.

WALTER

I don't understand.

MR. WESTON

My wife and I discussed the options and we've decided to continue the treatment.

WALTER

I can't recommend that. The odds simply don't merit ---

Mrs. Weston breaks in.

MRS. WESTON

--- I'm not taking him home to watch him die!

Silence. Walter turns back to Mark's Father.

WALTER

Talk to her. You want him to die here? In pain? At home, he would be ---

Mr. Weston stands up.

MR. WESTON

--- The decision's been made doctor.
My son is sick. He needs to be in a
hospital.

He gets up and joins his wife. They head to the door.

WALTER

Don't you think Mark should have a say
in this? What are you going to tell
him?

MRS. WESTON

Treat him here or we'll find someone
else.

The door slams behind them.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA - AFTERNOON

Patrick, his face and pants smeared - pedals like hell. His
phone rings.

PATRICK

Hey Dad. I'm just ---. No Dad. I'm not
late - you gave me the wrong address.
And then this Latino guy and his
friends...

DAD

Fucking Chicanos? What happened?

PATRICK

They wanted to know if I liked the
Clippers or the Lakers, and then ---

DAD

You said Lakers, right?

PATRICK

No.

DAD

Why?! Eh, doesn't matter. What's
taking so long? I gotta go.

PATRICK

(hesitates)

Nothing. My bike... lost my chain, and
now... I'm just around the corner.
With you in a second... Hello?

But the line is already dead. Patrick pedals through
deserted industrial streets.

INT. LIMO - AFTERNOON

Robert drives past a blue airport shuttle. Looks at the passengers. No Susan.

Something moved. A woman sits in the shadow. The shuttle stops at the red light. Robert right behind it.

He jumps out of the limo and runs to the front of the shuttle. Knocks on the window.

ROBERT
Susan! Hello Susan!

The woman turns. But it's not Susan.

ROBERT
Sorry.

The light turns green. The shuttle drives off. The cars behind the limo honk. Robert walks to the car. Another shuttle passes him. Susan sits inside of it. Looks out of the window.

Robert jumps into the limo and follows after her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Walter closes the door. Waits.

WALTER
Hi.

MARK
Hi.

An uncomfortable silence. Mark watches Walter pull up a chair next to the bed.

MARK
Did you get the money?

WALTER
How do you know about that?

MARK
I heard the nurses talking about it.

WALTER
Yeah, I got it.

MARK
What are you going to do with it?

WALTER
Cancer research. So we'll be able to help boys like you in the...

MARK
...in the future?

WALTER
Yes.

MARK
It's OK. Dr. Chambers. I know.
Whenever you pull your chair to the
bed it's bad news.

WALTER
I'm sorry. We'll have to restart the
treatments tomorrow morning.

Mark can't hide his disappointment. Tears run down the
little boy's cheeks.

MARK
No, I'm not doing it again. I can't do
it again.

Mark tries to swallow his tears like a brave boy.

MARK
It hurts so much. Doc. It burns. From
inside. I can't move. I can't breathe.
Then it's like icy needles that don't
go away. Please, you said you would
help me.

Walter take his hands.

WALTER
I know, Mark. I know. It's the only
way to make you healthy again. And we
have to try.

Mark wipes away the tear. Shakes his head.

WALTER
This is the best chance we have.

Mark pushes Walter's hand away and with a sudden strength
jumps out of bed. Walter moves to intercept him.

MARK
No it's not! Why do you have to hurt
me so much when you can't cure me. All
I want is to go home. I don't want to
be here anymore! Let me go home!

Walter catches him and gently puts him back into the bed.

After a while, Mark's breathing begins to come back to
normal. Walter sits with him, holding his hand.

Mark closes his eyes. Walter gets up and crosses to the door but is stopped short by Mark's voice.

MARK

I hate you.

EXT. PARK - AFTERNOON

Comma and Carla stroll through the park.

COMMA

Do you want to sit down?

CARLA

Yes.

They find a bench. Stare straight ahead. Carla fumbles with her skirt. Awkward Silence.

CARLA

So, for years you tried to get the recipe and your aunt didn't give it up, and then?

COMMA

And after a while she got angry, when we begged her. So we stopped asking.

Carla nods and looks nervously at Comma's hand, which is resting on the bench, right next to hers.

COMMA

One day, she got very sick. We knew her time had come. We stood around her bed. I finally gathered my courage and told Auntie, she can't take the recipe to the grave and to please leave it here with us. I said, "Please Auntie tell us! Why are your mashed potatoes so good?"

CARLA

And?

COMMA

And, with her last ounce of strength Auntie pulled herself up and slowly reached out a hand for me...

Carla stares at Comma - full of anticipation. Comma extends his hand slowly out towards Carla. Looking at his hand, Carla trembles. She doesn't know what to do. Looks fearfully up at Comma.

COMMA

I gently took her hand...

He leaves his hand out, waiting.

Comma doesn't dare to breathe as Carla reaches out and carefully puts her hand into his. A tear runs down Carla's cheek. They don't speak. They don't move. It's as if both are afraid to break the spell.

CARLA

So... what's the secret...

COMMA

What's your secret?

CARLA

What?

COMMA

What's your secret?

Carla looks desperate. Another tear crawls down her cheek.

COMMA

Look, you don't have to tell me ---

CARLA

I... it's... too much. Too soon.

Carla looks up into the air. The wind blows through her hair.

COMMA

You're right. I can wait.

Comma wipes a tear from her cheek. They both look at each other - surprised, nervous, curious.

CARLA

But what's the secret?

COMMA

Secret?

CARLA

Why your aunt's mashed potatoes were so good?

COMMA

Oh, yes. (he leans in) Holding on to my hand, my Auntie pulled me in close and whispered: "Because I never made enough!"

Carla smiles.

CARLA

She never made enough?

Comma nods. She grips his hand tightly.

EXT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP - AFTERNOON

Patrick stops his bike in front of a run-down German Auto Repair Shop. IVAN, a mechanic in his mid 50's, dirty face, kneels before an oil-soaked motor.

PATRICK

Hello?

The Mechanic looks up.

IVAN

Man, you look like a truck hit you.

Patrick pushes the bike inside.

PATRICK

My chain fell out.

IVAN

So you must be Patrick.

Patrick nods. Looks around for his Dad.

IVAN

Your Dad had to leave. Some meeting in Temecula. He wasn't very happy about it. But he left you something. Here.

The mechanic hands Patrick a plastic bag. Patrick opens it. A crumpled jacket. He unfolds it. It's a SILVER NASA SPACE JACKET.

IVAN

You wanna be an astronaut?

PATRICK

No. Astronomer. I wanted. But not anymore.

He inspects the jacket. Sighs.

IVAN

I love watchin' the world spinnin' myself.

PATRICK

You can only see it spinning from space.

IVAN

So why'd you wanna become an astronomer?

Patrick shrugs again.

IVAN

You don't know much, do you?

PATRICK

So I could look into the past.

IVAN

How's that?

PATRICK

When you look through a telescope, you see a star that's 100 light-years away. Do you know how long it takes for the light to reach you?

IVAN

100 years I guess.

PATRICK

That's right. Now what you're seeing is how it looked a hundred years ago, not right now.

IVAN

So when... let's say... an alien living on a planet 100 light-years away --

PATRICK

There are no aliens.

IVAN

How do you know?

PATRICK

Have you seen any?

IVAN

No. Thought I married one, though.

Patrick puts on the NASA jacket. It's too small.

IVAN

Wow. Cool jacket!

PATRICK

Thanks.

IVAN

OK, but let's just - for now - say there are aliens. And one of those bastards looks through his own telescope, and spots us. The alien sees the earth how it was 100 years ago? Then they get to look into the past too - I like that.

PATRICK

Yeah.

IVAN

But that means the alien sees the world without you and me. Because we haven't been born yet.

PATRICK

That's the way it is.

A loud ring breaks the silence.

IVAN

I have to get that. Be right back. And then we'll continue, right? This is interesting stuff.

He trots inside his tiny office space. Picks up the phone.

Patrick grabs his bike. He rides off wearing his new jacket. He pauses, looking at the empty plastic bag.

The wind blows it through the air.

INT. LIMO - AFTERNOON

Robert drives behind the second shuttle. He's sweaty and nervous.

He pulls up next to the shuttle. Looks again. It's definitely Susan inside.

Robert decides to go for it. He abruptly cuts off the shuttle, blocking it's path. The shuttle skids to a stop.

Robert jumps out, taking the wedding bouquet with him. He realizes the ring is in his other hand and quickly sticks it in his pocket.

He walks up to the driver's window. The driver looks at him - he's scared.

ROBERT

I need to talk to one of your passengers. Please, it's very urgent. A matter of life and death. Please.

The driver doesn't answer. He looks at the bouquet and unlocks the doors. Robert runs to the side door, opens it, and steps into the shuttle. The van is packed. The other passengers stare at Robert.

Silence. Nobody speaks. Robert stares at eight faces full of anticipation, then at Susan. The wedding bouquet is still in his hand.

SUSAN

What are you doing?

Robert glances nervously at the other passengers. Decides to go on anyway.

ROBERT

--- I... know I'm not the easiest person...and I know I'm not a good listener sometimes... okay that's all bullshit. I'm shit, I'm dirt, I'm scum (explains to the other passengers) I slept with her best friend.

The passengers look back and forth between Robert and Susan.

ROBERT

Susan, I get it now. I know I screwed up, I know I lied to you and I know that I needed to tell you the truth but I just didn't want to hurt you... Give me another chance and I promise, I --- I'll change.

He looks around at the other passengers, then back to Susan.

SUSAN

Why?

ROBERT

What?

SUSAN

What makes you think you can change?

ROBERT

A... a bride.

SUSAN

A bride?

ROBERT

I drove a bride to her wedding today and well, she made me...

Robert reaches down and pulls out the ring. Angela's panties dangle out of his pocket.

ROBERT

...she made me realize--

SUSAN

What?

ROBERT

Look...

SUSAN

What's that?

ROBERT

It's a ring. I meant to give it to
you, so many times ---

SUSAN

No, what's that?

She reaches over to him and grabs the panties out of his
pocket. Robert stammers.

The other passengers vent dismay.

SUSAN

Whose are these? From today? A bride
convinces you to come after me and
gives you her panties? No
wait...they're torn.

She starts putting the puzzle together. An Old Lady sitting
in the back gasps.

SUSAN

You didn't. Tell me, you couldn't. No,
not even you could...

Robert is frozen. Susan realizes she's right. Susan sobs,
almost convulsing.

SUSAN

Please! Go! Just go!

ROBERT

Susan, please ---

SUSAN

(screaming)
Get out! Get out! Get out!

Robert glances around. The other passengers look at him
with great hostility.

BIG GUY

You heard the lady.

Robert gets up. Turns around and stumbles out of the
shuttle.

The door slams. The shuttle drives off. The panties shoot
out of the shuttle window and land on the road. Robert
leaves them there and walks back to the limo.

A car honks behind him, but Robert doesn't care. He climbs
slowly into the back. Throws the wedding bouquet back on
the passenger seat.

EXT. NEXT TO FREEWAY - AFTERNOON

Jorge and the MIGUEL stack the last piece of equipment into the pickup. MIGUEL points at a van behind them.

MIGUEL
(Spanish)
Here we go. I have to drive Jose's
van. You take the truck. Understood?

JORGE
(Spanish)
Yes.

He hands Jorge the keys, and gets into the van.

MIGUEL
Good work today. You can finally get
some sleep. Keep the truck until
tomorrow. But drive carefully.

Jorge looks at the beat up truck and smiles. Miguel opens another bottle...

MIGUEL
Saludo!

He drives off.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Walter flips a jacket over his jogging gear. Ties the second shoe.

Corina enters.

CORINA
What are you doing?

WALTER
I'm out. I have to get out of here.

CORINA
But what about Mark? Why hasn't he
been discharged?

WALTER
You tell me.

Corina looks at him.

CORINA
OK. Go.

Walter runs down the stairs.

EXT. PICO BOULEVARD - AFTERNOON

The limo stops next to a rusty garbage container.

A window slides down. Out flies a wedding bouquet, hits the edge of the container, missing the opening and falls to the ground.

The window closes and the limo drives off.

EXT. STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun shines it's brown yellow light on L.A. Carla rides her Vespa through her district.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

Walter jogs down a boulevard. He's sweating profusely as he passes the blue air-propelled figure flapping in the sky.

Walter stops underneath the figure, jogging in place. Two dancing men. The light changes. He crosses the street, dashing into a residential area. He speeds up as if he's trying to exhaust himself.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - LATE AFTERNOON

Jorge drives the pickup. His eyes close for a split second of sleep. He jolts awake and opens the window. Fumbles out a crumpled map of L.A. Straightens it out on the steering wheel.

He sings to stay awake.

EXT. IN FRONT OF CARLA'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Carla stops her Vespa in the driveway.

CARLA
Francine?

Carla takes off her helmet.

CARLA
Francine?

She gets off the motor bike and grabs her bags.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

Patrick rockets his bike down the sidewalk. Jumps over two steps. His shiny silver jacket flaps in the wind.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

Walter runs fast.

INT. LIMO - LATE AFTERNOON

Robert fiddles with the radio. As he looks up, he sees a pickup truck coming right at him.

EXT. CARLA'S HOUSE - DUSK

Carla opens the door and sees Francine carries a big snail on her hand.

Francine holds the snail higher.

FRANCINE

Look Carla. It's coming out of the shell!

CARLA

I learned the secret.

FRANCINE

You did!

Carla shrieks. The pickup swerves, jumps the curb and smashes, with a mind-bending blast into - Francine.

CARLA

No!

The momentum of the vehicle sends the little girl flying forward. Bones break, she disappears. The wheels of the truck run over her body twice, then finally screech to a halt.

Robert hits the brakes of his limo. Stumbles out. Patrick drops his bike. Walter stops next to a street sign. Carla lets go of the bucket - water spills.

Dead Silence.

The four - Robert, Walter, Patrick and Carla - look on in shock.

The door to the pickup opens and an empty bottle of beer drops out and shatters. Jorge stumbles out. His hands clinging to a Los Angeles map.

Jorge moves along the side of the pick up supporting himself with one hand as he goes. He reaches the rear and spots a hand.

The snail glides over Francine's dead hand, leaving a bloody trail.

Jorge stares at the little girl. Her face looks all fine, just a little bloody bruise and messy strands of hair. Her big brown eyes gaze out in shock at him. She's dead.

Jorge sobs quietly and crouches next to Francine. Reaches out and touches her, gently moving her hair off her face.

Carla sees this and vents a psychotic scream --

She runs at him. Hits him right in the face. Several blows drill right into his jaw.

Walter, Robert and Patrick watch the two of them.

Jorge bleeds. Carla lands another blow. Jorge suddenly swings and hits Carla hard. She flies back.

ROBERT

No. No. No. Don't do that, man.

Robert runs towards them. Patrick hesitates. Walter runs over to Francine's lifeless body. Patrick follows Walter.

Robert pulls Jorge away from Carla. He explodes and hits Jorge in the stomach.

ROBERT

Fucking Asshole!

Robert kicks Jorge right in the face.

Walter holds Francine's head and closes her eyes with his bloody fingers. He looks up and finds Patrick watching him.

Jorge manages to free himself and runs away blindly. Walter stands up. Jorge bumps into Walter who grabs him and drills him right in the nose, breaking it. Jorge drops back like a stone. Patrick follows Walter's example and attacks Jorge in a mad frenzy. Carla and Robert join him.

Their eyes become blind with rage. Their blows harder. Patrick grabs a trimmer and smashes it into Jorge's back.

Jorge holds his arms up to shield himself. But nothing protects him. Robert lands another blow in Jorge's face. Blood spurts all over Robert's white shirt.

Walter stands aside, watching.

The beating continues until Jorge's face is an unrecognizable mush. Jorge's not moving anymore. He's gone limp - breathless.

WALTER

(whispers)

He's dead.

Patrick, Robert and Carla are still kicking and beating him.

WALTER
(yells)
He's dead!

Carla stops. Robert stops. Patrick keeps on kicking. Walter grabs Patrick and shoves him down on the ground. Patrick sits, breathing hard.

They look at each other.

CARLA
He's dead?

WALTER
He's dead.

They're all covered in blood and sweat. They are exhausted. As they regain their breath, they look at each other - it's a moment of bonding.

It's just them and the dead bodies of Francine and Jorge. It's quiet.

Walter trembles. He drops to one knee next to Patrick. Carla screams. Robert rushes over to her. Holds her. She lets him. He quiets her down. Patrick sobs quietly. He drops the trimmer and wipes his bloody hands on the pavement frantically. Walter puts a hand on his shoulder.

Sirens holler from afar. A few people from the neighborhood stand at distance watching.

We slowly move away. The figures of Carla, Robert, Patrick, Walter, Jorge and Francine recede in the distance. The skyline of the city lurks above them.

Curious people head down the street towards the accident scene. A police car passes, siren blaring. Some kids run after it to see what's going on.

As we move further away, a few curious people look towards the commotion but they can't see anything from here. Some look up as a police helicopter approaches the area.

We move another block down the street where nobody realizes what happened. Traffic moves as usual. People walk down the street. Some others wait for a bus.

And another block. Traffic as usual. Life as usual.

END.