

FADE IN:

INT. PARTY -- NIGHT

A party. The Every Party. You've been here before, it's full of tired semi-professionals talking small. '90s hits play and there's some embarrassing dancing going on.

CAMERA settles on a MAN and WOMAN (PR AGENT) talking. She's defensive:

PR AGENT

...It takes a lot of intelligence to be a PR agent! You have to totally understand human nature. Let's say I rep a chef, right? Should he go for GQ or The Washington Post? What says "hot"? What says, "eat me" -- in the food kind of way. It's very intellectual.

MAN

I'm sorry. I just asked what you did for a living.

PR AGENT

Oh. Right. So, what do you do?

MAN

I'm an explosive fuel engineer.
(Beat.)
Rocket scientist.

PR AGENT

(Slightly mortified:)
Oh. Excuse me.

And she leaves. CAMERA passes another conversation.

BIG GUY

I run a hotel.

NURSE

Huh. Must be a lot of interesting things going on. Different rooms, secret meetings, stuff like that?

BIG GUY

Not really. Ferret got loose once.
Rode the elevator all by itself. Five
floors.

NURSE

Really. Five floors.

BIG GUY

Yup. Nobody can figure out how he got
up to the buttons.

CAMERA MOVES to a quiet, cute guy standing by the wall, THOMAS
FOSTER, 25.

He's listening to a female WASTE MANAGER who tries to build
suspense by using far too many dramatic pauses.

WASTE MANAGER

Well... did you ever wonder... what happens
to the stuff in your toilet... AFTER you
flush?!!

She waits. Apparently it's not a rhetorical question.

THOMAS

Not really.

WASTE MANAGER

Because I always did. Whoosh! Then
what? That's where waste management
comes in. It's a dirty job, but...
(Trails off. Then:)
So what do you do?

On Thomas's pause...

CAMERA MOVES INTO A LIGHT UNTIL THE SCREEN IS
WHITE.

A BEAUTIFUL PIANO CONCERTO WAFTS IN, leaving the party behind.

CAMERA PULLS BACK from white to reveal...

A WHITE GRAND PIANO.

At the keyboard sits Thomas in a tux, playing Mozart. And he's
pretty damn good.

And then...

P.A. VOICE (O.S.)
Good afternoon Macys shoppers. Don't
MISS our huge savings in the Juniors
and Girls departments.

PULL BACK further to reveal he's...

INT. MALL -- DAY

In an upscale department store. SHOPPERS pass, ignoring him or averting their gaze. No one seems to care.

A MOTHER pushes her DAUGHTER in a stroller shaped like an Easter basket. The girl reaches for the piano, but her mother keeps going--

MOTHER
Not today pumpkin. Mommy's got sales.

The girl WAILS as Mom wheels her away. Thomas gives her a little string of ARPEGGIOS and a wave goodbye.

ROSSMORE (O.S.)
Thomas!

Thomas plays a quick lick of TAPS: Duh duh duh duhhhn.

And there stands MR. ROSSMORE, Thomas's boss. A burly man in his 60s, Rossmore only cares about business.

ROSSMORE (cont'd)
That wasn't on the a-okayed song list, son.

THOMAS
I know, Mr. Rossmore, I thought I'd spice it up a bit.

ROSSMORE
You want spice, kitchenware's on two. Here, we move product. Billy Joel, Elton John, they sell. Sellers. Now get to it, boy. Shop shop.

As Rossmore leaves, Thomas regretfully goes into a jazzy rendition of ROCKET MAN.

AN ELDERLY COUPLE walks by, hearing it.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Oh he's good.

ELDERLY MAN
Ruthie, over here! The blenders are on
sale!

CUT TO:

EXT. XTREME NOTES' OFFICE -- DAY

A small nondescript office building, almost a strip-mall.
You've seen thousands of them and always kind of wonder
what goes on inside.

INSIDE--

INT. XTREME NOTES' OFFICE -- DAY

Even more soul-draining than you'd expect: an office
crammed with cubicles and boxes barely unpacked. WORKERS
type under flickering florescents.

Along one wall is a bookshelf stacked with old, impressively
bound BOOKS. Until...

A passing WORKER easily picks up TEN of them with two fingers. We
see the back of the books -- hollow, cardboard. A facade.

On the wall is a banner with a logo -- a skydiver jumping off a
mountain while reading a book. And the slogan: "JUMP OFF CLIFFS,
OUR NOTES ARE XTREME!"

A smaller sign reads "Please don't touch the books."

ROGER BICKELL, 26, an angst-ridden cynic, sleeps at a cubicle
slumped over a copy of WAR AND PEACE.

ROGER
(In his sleep:)
No Masha. Vasily's smelly. Come back
to my place...

A FEMALE VOICE yells from off.

KUPIAK (O.S.)
BICKELL!

ROGER
(Wakes with a start:)
What? Huh? I'm here.

And in barrels MRS. KUPIAK. A drill-seargant in size ten pumps and a flower dress. Hard-driving relic of the 60s.

KUPIAK
Bickell?! I'm having a very serious problem.

ROGER
(Under his breath:)
Acid flashbacks?

KUPIAK
Excuse me?

ROGER
What can I do for you Mrs. Kupiac?

KUPIAK
I was just wondering...
(Handing him a folder)
...what you think you call this.

ROGER
That's my introduction for War and Peace.

KUPIAK
Really? You know what I call it?
"Blah blah blah War. Blah blah blah
elephant poop."

ROGER
We're gonna have trouble fitting that
on the cover.

KUPIAK
We really need to sock it to these
kids, Bickell, if we're gonna pry them
away from those Cliff Note Bastards.
We're the hip, Generation Z Notes.
Every word has to scream: Hey, we're
cool, dude!

ROGER
(Nods, deadpan:)

Cool dude. I'll add it at the top.

KUPIAK

Look, let me just give you a few examples. See if you can spot the difference.

She shuffles some papers, brings one to the top. Reading:

KUPIAK (cont'd)

"Tolstoy's War and Peace is perhaps the greatest epic ever written. At its core, it argues that human beings are just the pawns of history, and they better get the hell out its way."

ROGER

That would be mine.

KUPIAK

Kee-rect. Not bad. Fine. Now let's look at Vanity Fair. By Wendy Sussman.

Roger looks over at WENDY -- the perfect English major right down to her pony tail and sweater vest. Her desk is covered with BEANIE BABIES, lined up by height.

Wendy scowls at Roger. But when Kupiak looks over, Wendy suddenly smiles and waves, very cutesy.

KUPIAK (cont'd)

Just love her. Now...

(Reading:)

"Becky Sharp is that total Single-White-Female, boyfriend-scamming ho you just want to throw down a flight of stairs. But all the teachers are like, oh, she's a good girl; the girls are like, she's fab; and boys are like, dude, she's da bomb."

Roger is dumbstruck. Can't speak.

KUPIAK (cont'd)

Spot the difference?

ROGER

Uh, yeah.

KUPIAK

That's all I ask. Now, redo.

ROGER

But--

KUPIAK

And how's the summary? Fresh and dope,
I trust?

Roger spots War and Peace on his desk, half-finished.
Pivots to hide it.

ROGER

Oh yeah. Major fresh and dope. Fresh
as a daisy. Dope on a rope.

KUPIAK

I tell ya, Bickell, our launch next
month'll kick those Cliff Note Bastards
to heck and a hand basket.

ROGER

In a handbasket.

KUPIAK

What?

ROGER

It's "heck in a handbasket". Actually,
if you want to be technical, it's "hell
in a--"

KUPIAK

Whatever. Redo. And this time, with
Xtreme attitude! Read me?

ROGER

Like an Xtreme Note, ma'am.

KUPIAK

Word.

And she's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MEYERHOFF SYMPHONY HALL -- DAY

Thomas, his tux tie undone, walks past the Meyerhoff Auditorium, home of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

He gazes up at the stairs leading to its marble entrance. Stares for a long while.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- STREET -- NIGHT

ROGER walks up to a modest apartment building, dragging his bag, as BEETHOVEN'S NINTH BLASTS out from a window.

INT. APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

A CD player BLASTS the music through the meager apartment.

At an old upright piano, Thomas pounds out his frustration along with the CD. It's piano karaoke. And it's loud.

Roger enters, puts down his bag.

ROGER
(Not mad, just loud:)
ROSSMORE AGAIN?

Thomas just keeps playing.

ROGER (cont'd)
You know, you're not the only one who
hates his boss. It's practically a
national pastime.

Roger turns the music down.

ROGER (cont'd)
Sign up for a symphony audition yet?
(Thomas doesn't answer.)
You at least make it up the steps this
time?

Thomas picks up the remote to make it louder again. Roger is slightly annoyed.

ROGER (cont'd)
Look, I realize you're pissed and you
have no social skills to express this
fact, but...
(Music gets louder:)

LOUD MUSIC MAKES IT VERY HARD FOR ME TO
WORK!

THOMAS
THAT'S WHAT I'M DOING! WORK!

Roger turns the music way down again. Thomas tries to turn it up, but Roger stands in front of the stereo.

ROGER
Yes, but while some of our work affects other people, some other of our work affects only ourselves.

THOMAS
Don't be hard on yourself. Your stuff will affect people someday.

ROGER
I meant the banging. Capische? I gotta make War and Peace jiggy wid' it by tomorrow and I'm only half done reading it.

THOMAS
So just give 'em war. They'll figure out the rest.

ROGER
Funny. You're funny. You should be the goddamn writer.

Thomas sees that Roger is away from the stereo -- he turns it up again. So Roger PULLS THE PLUG, goes to his room, and slams the door.

THOMAS
Could be worse. You could have Rocket Man stuck in your head.

CUT TO:

INT. A SUPERMARKET -- DAY

A MUSAK version of ROCKET MAN floats through the air in this run-down working-class supermarket.

As we pass through the store, the voice of CLOE CUNNINGHAM, 25, rises out from one of the aisles.

CLOE (O.S.)

(Like stewardess in pre-flight:)
We're walking. Everybody please notice
the grains. Don't go scooping up
anything yet, but remember where we
are.

The CAMERA finally catches up with her, and she's...

CLOE, cute as a button, a little bundle of intelligent
helpfulness. Kind, perky and perhaps overly sincere, but
still quite charming.

With a business suit and a clipboard, she faces a group of
ELDERLY and OVERWEIGHT PEOPLE. A MOTHER and her SON, 12,
stand on the edge of the group.

CLOE (CONT'D)

I'm sure this is very scary for some of
you, so if you have any questions, just
shout out "Cloe!"--

OLD MAN

What does peanut butter have in it?

CLOE

Mostly peanuts, Mr. Gonzales, but some
brands add sugar. I'll point them out
on aisle six.

OLD WOMAN

I don't like peanut butter. I like
jam.

CLOE

(Forces a smile:)
I'll point out the jams too, Mrs.
Trivedi. Anybody else? Alrighty then,
let's walk...

Before she can turn around--

BOY

Cloe?

She stops, turns.

CLOE

Yes, Zack?

BOY
Are you diabetic too?

This hits her. She kneels down to him, earnestly:

CLOE
No, I'm not. But I've trained for a long time and I can tell you what you need to know. It's going to be fine. I've got some sugar-free candy you couldn't tell from an everlasting gobstopper.

She holds out a piece of candy. He considers it, then:

BOY
Go to hell.

And walks off, followed by his mother's reproachful, "Zack!" Cloe is crestfallen.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR -- "MATTY'S" -- NIGHT

A bar in trendy Fells Point, Baltimore. It's dark, full of pool-tables, but hip and clean enough to be a young meat-market.

Cloe drags herself in and spots LISA, her acerbic friend, cradling a beer on the other side of the room. Heads over.

CLOE
Sanctuary.

LISA
Rough day at the Food Lion?
(To passing waitress)
Debby! Beer for Mother Theresa.

CLOE
Lite, please.

Cloe takes out a PowerBar and starts chewing.

CLOE (cont'd)
You'd think a Masters in Nutrition would be enough for a twelve year old kid. But no, he's not satisfied 'til I

roll up my sleeve and inject myself
with insulin.

LISA

Men.

ACROSS THE ROOM...

Thomas and Roger play pool with JASON, 24. Athletic build,
long hair.

Jason has a quiet New Age certainty about him -- beneath
that you can't tell if he's Einstein or Forest Gump.

ROGER

For a million dollars?

THOMAS

No.

ROGER

Two million.

THOMAS

No!

ROGER

Okay, ten. Ten million dollars.

THOMAS

Would you just let me shoot already?

ROGER

Just answer yes or no.

THOMAS

No.

ROGER

For ten million dollars you would not
eat a piece of human shit?

THOMAS

What kind of question is that?

ROGER

A real-life hypothetical question.
Just a little piece.

JASON

(Chiming in:)

Is it your own shit or somebody else's?

A millisecond look of disbelief.

ROGER

Whatever's easier.

THOMAS

No.

ROGER

A hundred. A hundred million dollars. You'd never have to play another Macys gig in your life. You could hire live-in geishas to tickle each individual ivory for you. Or anything else you want tickled.

THOMAS

You are a pig.

ROGER

Come on. You'd do it. You know you'd do it. It's like two disgusting minutes for a lifetime of ease.

THOMAS

If I say I'd do it, will you drop it already?

ROGER

Sure.

THOMAS

Okay, I'd do it.

ROGER

(Big change:)

You would eat a piece of shit?! You would actually eat a piece of human shit? Oh my god that's the most disgusting thing I've ever heard in my life.

THOMAS

You said you'd drop it.

ROGER

That's before you said you'd eat a piece of shit. That is so gross. You'd be a shit-eater.

THOMAS

That's it. I'm going to the bar.

He hands Jason the pool cue and heads toward the bar. Then stops dead in his tracks.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Oh my god.

ROGER

What?

Thomas has spotted Cloe across the room. Struck by lightning and almost hides behind a pole.

THOMAS

That's Cloe Cunningham.

ROGER

Who's Cloe Cunningham?

THOMAS

She was in my ninth grade English class. Mrs. Bridge. I totally had a crush on her.

JASON

You had a crush on Mrs. Bridge?

Thomas shoots Jason a look.

ROGER

And now he's gonna torture us with romantic whining from across the room.

THOMAS

No I'm not.

(Gazes at her:)

She looks good, though.

ROGER

So go talk to her.

THOMAS

No.

ROGER

Do it.

THOMAS

No.

ACROSS THE ROOM...

CLOE

I just, I don't know... I want to be
inspired, really connect with somebody.

LISA

Why?

CLOE

You know that thing? That makes you
feel like life's amazing and yet
totally easy? That's what I want.
Connection. Is that so hard?

LISA

Impossible. It's the nice thing about
working at the morgue. Nobody expects
you to connect with anybody.

(Beat.)

We had this one stiff the other day--

CLOE

Can we just not talk about work for a
while? Please?

BACK TO THE BOYS.

THOMAS

No.

ROGER

Do it.

THOMAS

No.

ROGER

You spotted her. Head on over there.

THOMAS

And say what? Hey, I saw you across the room and I had a crush on you in ninth grade before you switched schools and you look really hot now so I thought we could pursue sex and maybe a meaningful relationship?

ROGER

Yeah. Minus the meaningful relationship.

THOMAS

I don't think so.

ROGER

Well you'd better think so or I'm going over there myself.

THOMAS

So go.

ROGER

Okay.

THOMAS

Okay.

Roger starts over there. Thomas quickly pulls him back.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I'll do it, I'll do it.

ROGER

That's a boy. You're gonna be great.

Thomas looks at him skeptically then heads for Cloe's table.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Ten bucks says he strikes out in a minute.

JASON

You know, you two are like on totally different planes of existence.

ROGER

(Mocking:)

Like, totally?

ANGLE -- LISA AND CLOE

Lisa's going on about work. Cloe listens, defeated...

LISA

(Continuing from before:)

...so I go to crack open his ribs and
they won't crack. Like iron bars,
titanium steel these ribs...

Thomas quietly steps up behind them. Doesn't want to
interrupt. Can't seem to get their attention.

LISA (cont'd)

...So I'm hammering away, and wham!
Out comes flying this gold watch --
from lodged in his intercostals. And
it's still ticking! And I'm thinkin',
wow, that's craftsmanship.

Thomas begins to say something, then changes his mind.
Lisa sees him standing there.

LISA (cont'd)

Did you want something?

THOMAS

No. I mean, yes. I did. Do.

LISA

If you wanted my phone number you blew
it. I don't go out with wimps.

THOMAS

No, I mean, I just wanted to say hi to
Cloe. It is Cloe, right?

Flattered, Cloe smiles. Nods.

LISA

She goes out with wimps.

CLOE

I'm sorry, do we know each other?

THOMAS

I'm Thomas Foster. From Hammond High?
Mrs. Bridge's class?

CLOE

Oh right. With the picture of
Schroeder on your locker.

THOMAS

(Embarrassed/disappointed:)
Right.

CLOE

So what do you do now?

THOMAS

I'm a pianist.
(Beat.)
Piano player.

CLOE

I know what a pianist is.

THOMAS

Oh, of course you do. It just sounds a
little pretentious, that's all.

LISA

Sounds like penis, is what it sounds like.

CLOE

Okay, Lisa. Take a time out.

Thomas kind of hangs out there. Uncomfortable.

THOMAS

So.

CLOE

So.

LISA

This has gotta be the worst bar pick-up
in human history.

Cloe shoots her a look. Lisa gives an "okay, okay" shrug.
Moves off to survey the room.

A moment of awkwardness, then Thomas motions to the chair.

THOMAS

Mind if I...?

CLOE

Sure. That'd be nice.

ANGLE -- POOL TABLE

Lisa works her way over to Jason and Roger. As she does:

ROGER

The other one's coming over here.

JASON

So?

ROGER

So she's gonna want something, right?
She's not just coming over for pleasant
conversation.

Jason looks at him skeptically. Lisa now gets near enough.

LISA

Hey. Your friend Mr. Smooth over there
kicked me to the doorstep.

ROGER

Oh yeah, he does that all the time.

(Rambling:)

Whole town's littered with people on
doorsteps because of him. We could
solve the entire Baltimore homeless
problem if we just stood up to the guy,
but he's just too damn smooth!

He smiles. She sizes him up for a beat.

LISA

You get paid by the word, or what?

ROGER

Actually, yeah, I do.

LISA

Fascinating. How much does it cost to
keep you quiet?

ROGER

(Unfazed:)

You couldn't afford it.

She's a little impressed. Not too much, though. She turns to Jason, who plays pool, oblivious.

LISA

Hey.

JASON

Hey.

LISA

I'm Lisa.

JASON

Jason.

She plays with one of the pool balls a bit. Looks Jason over.

LISA

So, you wanna take me home or what?

Roger is dumbfounded. Jason shrugs, unperturbed.

JASON

Sure. Why not?

He puts down the pool stick and walks away with her.

ROGER

What? That's it?!

(She doesn't answer.)

Jase, how 'bout chipping in on the bill?

Jason shrugs again. Roger's annoyed. And then he remembers:

ROGER (cont'd)

Hey! What about our ride!

LISA

Don't worry, Cloe'll drive you home.

CUT TO:

CLOE AND THOMAS --

Both sitting there, a little uncomfortable in the silence.

THOMAS

So. Been a while since old Hammond
High, huh?

CLOE

Yup.

THOMAS

Go Lions.

CLOE

(Trying to add something:)

Roar.

Really uncomfortable silence.

CLOE (cont'd)

You know, you have a very nice face.
It's like, I don't know, open. Nice.

THOMAS

Thanks. You too. I mean. You have a
nice face too. Beautiful... even.

It's a compliment. But on the other hand the conversation
couldn't get any clunkier. Cloe's charmed, guilty, and put
off all at the same time.

CLOE

Thanks.

Which is when she sees Jason usher Lisa out the front door. He
quickly checks himself out in the bar mirror and follows.

CLOE (CONT'D)

That's funny. Half the time Lisa
leaves with a guy, I end up giving his
friend a ride.

Roger walks up. Waves.

ROGER

Hi there.

CUT TO:

I./E. CLOE'S TRUCK -- NIGHT

Cloe, Thomas and Roger ride in Cloe's pickup truck. She's
driving, Thomas next to her, Roger by the passenger door.

Roger sits with a box of papers, small exercise equipment (weights, gym bag) on his lap. He's struggling with it.

CLOE

Sorry about that, it's my gym stuff. I teach aerobics.

ROGER

No problem, I double as a handy tote bag.

THOMAS

(To Cloe:)

I'm really sorry about this.

CLOE

It's okay. Lisa does this all the time. Drives me crazy.

ROGER

What's her deal, anyway?

CLOE

Why? What do you mean?

ROGER

Okay, she and I are having a conversation -- granted, it's not my best stuff, but there's a rapport there. And she just cuts to the chase. With another guy.

THOMAS

With Jason.

ROGER

With Jason. Who can't put two words together unless you shove a hot stick up his ass.

THOMAS

(Embarrassed:)

Nice.

CLOE

That's Lisa. Pretty much does whatever she feels like.

ROGER

She didn't even ask the standard questions! I mean come on, it's just basic politeness!

CLOE
Why, what're the standard questions?

THOMAS
Oh boy.

ROGER
Okay, when you meet somebody, what's the first thing you ask?

CLOE
I don't know. I guess I try to notice something nice about them.

ROGER
Are you kidding me? Is she kidding me?! Okay, you notice something nice, then what?
(She shrugs.)
"What do you do?" Sound familiar? "Oh, really, what do you do?" Also available, though less standard, are "Where are you from?" and in college "What's your major?" It's the universally accepted way to pigeon-hole a stranger in twenty five words or less. It's gestalt. We need to put people in their little categories. It shows you care. I mean, come on, one question! Is that so much to ask?!

CLOE
Hm. What do you do. I'm sure she'll get around to it.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Lisa and Jason have just finished having marathon athletic sex. Lying in bed, sweaty, exhausted, content.

Jason seems distant, far away. She sits up, getting the urge for conversation.

LISA
So... What do you do?

CUT TO:

INT. CLOE'S TRUCK -- NIGHT

Roger rants on.

ROGER
What is it about Jason, anyway? Girls
draw to him like fat kids to a chocolate
factory. He's a black hole from which
no woman can escape. He doesn't even do
anything, they just come to him!

THOMAS
This is it, up on the left.

Cloe slows the truck.

I./E. CLOE'S TRUCK -- NIGHT

Roger gets out...

ROGER
Thanks for the ride. I'll have my
chiropractor send you the bill.

And heads for the stoop. Thomas stays inside.

THOMAS
Sorry about this. Roger and all.

CLOE
Just another exciting night in the life
of Cloe Cunningham.

THOMAS
It was nice seeing you again.

CLOE
Yeah. Me too.

They're both sort of waiting for anything more to say, but
nothing's coming.

THOMAS
Well, see ya.

He gets out. Closes the door.

As she heads into the driveway to turn around, Thomas looks back at Roger. Roger shakes his head sadly, disappointed.

She's turned around by now, starting to drive off.

Thomas pauses, then RUNS after the truck.

THOMAS (cont'd)

Wait!

He runs up alongside. She sees him, slows.

THOMAS (cont'd)

Wait! Cloe, wait!

She stops, rolls down her window. He runs up, out of breath.

THOMAS (cont'd)

I couldn't let you get away. I don't know what was up with me tonight, I just... I was really glad to run into you again. Extremely glad actually. Very really extremely glad. And I'd like to take you out.

CLOE

Oh. That's sweet, but--

THOMAS

With talking and everything this time. I promise. You're... You just gotta give me another chance.

She sizes him up.

CLOE

730-4160.

He's confused for a millisecond, then he realizes.

THOMAS

730-4160.

(Repeating to memorize:)

730-4160. Got it.

CLOE

Okay.

THOMAS
Okay. I'll call you.

CLOE
Good.

THOMAS
Good.

She rolls up the window and drives off.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Good. She said good. She said--
(Beat.)
Oh my god, I forgot the--

Roger hands him a piece of paper.

ROGER
Here Casanova, I wrote it down.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas can't sleep, he's too excited. He lies in bed, eyes wide. Finally gets up and heads to the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

He tip-toes to the piano and lifts the keyboard cover, trying not to make a sound. Sits, shakes his hands out, and softly...

PLAYS A SWEET, BEAUTIFUL MELODY. An original. He stops to scribble down some notes, then continues playing.

INT. ROGER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Roger lies in bed awake, depressed. The song wafts in. Annoyed, he wraps a pillow over his ears to drown it out.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jason does Tai Chi naked as Lisa watches.

LISA

That's it? Tai chi? That's all you do?

JASON

Mostly. It calms and focuses.

LISA

I meant for a living. What do you--

JASON

Shh. Calms and focuses. Later I'll need to read my Nietzsche.

(Another exercise, slowly,
purposefully:)

Brush the horse, ride the Dragon.

Brush the horse, ride the dragon.

And he just continues his exercises. Annoyed, she looks around for something to entertain her.

Spots a box next to his bed. It's full of MAKEUP supplies.

LISA

Is this makeup?

JASON

It's the new fall line. You can take whatever you want.

(Re: her quizzical look:)

I don't wear the stuff. It's for you.

LISA

But you didn't know I'd be here.

JASON

Somebody would. It's for the ladies in general.

LISA

You really know how to make a girl feel special, don't you?

He doesn't answer, just HUMS as he does Tai Chi.

She tosses the makeup back into the box. Considers saying more, but decides against it. Grabs her cigarettes and goes to light one.

JASON

No smoking in the apartment please. And
I hope those are natural tobacco. It's
much better for you.

Really annoyed at this point, she puts on her sweater,
wraps the comforter around her body and heads out for the
balcony.

EXT. BALCONY -- NIGHT

Lisa comes out and lights a cigarette. It's Fall -- chilly
but not freezing.

LISA

A good fuck is not worth this.
(Beat.)
Okay, maybe it is.

At the next balcony over she sees ROGER, sitting with a pen
and notebook. He mists a small fern with a water bottle.

LISA (CONT'D)

Hey. It's the talker. What are you
doing here?

ROGER

I live here.

LISA

Yeah, well it's nothing to brag about.

ROGER

Charming. Where'd you go to finishing
school, Attack Dog High?

She turns away slightly.

ROGER (cont'd)

Jason's doing Tai Chi, right?

LISA

Yeah. He's a strange one.

ROGER

You have no idea.

Roger goes back to writing. Lisa smokes, notices the fern.

LISA

Isn't that gonna frost?

ROGER

She prefers it out here. Dreams of hopping the fence and making a run for greener pastures.

LISA

You know, anthropomorphizing objects is a sure sign of a lonely person.

ROGER

I don't take advice from strangers on balconies. Even if they do use words like anthropomorphizing.

Beat. She's bored.

LISA

So what's in the little notebook?

ROGER

Not that it's any of your business, but what should be in the little notebook is the great American novel. Weaving the minor details of life to reveal meaning in our shared existential nightmare. What is actually in the little notebook is a summary of War and Peace.

LISA

A summary? You do that for fun?

ROGER

No, you caustic little funny person. No, I work for Xtreme Notes. Like Cliff Notes, only dumber. I get mocked daily by the greatest works of literature, which, in turn, I demolish down to hip-hop subject-verb-object so high school kids with brains of Nintendo mush can cheat on their Monday morning quiz.

LISA

Wow. You're a very angry person, have you noticed that?

ROGER
Yeah, I've noticed.

LISA
And I appreciate that, being one myself.

ROGER
Well... it's nice to be appreciated.
By one of your peers.

She snuffs out the cigarette. Readjusts her comforter.

LISA
Listen, are you hungry? I'm hungry.

CUT TO:

INT. ROGER'S CAR -- NIGHT

They're in Roger's beat up 1985 Honda Civic as they pull up to a drive thru.

ROGER
Yeah, I'd like a number 2 with--

DRIVE THRU VOICE
Roger, is that you?

Lisa's surprised. Roger reluctant.

ROGER
Hi Helen.

DRIVE THRU VOICE
Your usual then?

ROGER
Uh, yeah. And a number 6, diet coke.

DRIVE THRU VOICE
Ooh. Somebody's got a date. Big spender.

Lisa looks at him.

ROGER

I'm well-known at all the classy establishments.

DRIVE THRU VOICE

Ten fifty-three. Please drive around.

CUT TO:

I./E. ROGER'S CAR -- LATER -- NIGHT

Roger drives while Lisa eats and drinks her soda. They're mid-conversation.

ROGER

I mean, in the larger scope of things, we are totally unprepared.

LISA

Really.

ROGER

Yeah. I mean, if we were suddenly picked up and shot back in time, to like the Middle Ages or something, and we had to survive using just our job skills? We'd be sunk. There'd be no internal plumbing, no processed food, no cars. I mean, I don't know how to drive a yoke of oxen, do you?

LISA

I don't even know what a yoke is.

ROGER

Exactly. You cut up dead bodies for a living. They'd burn you at the stake before you could say formaldehyde. And I'd be kicking around town-square looking for a QWERTY keyboard.

LISA

So cancel that trip to the Middle Ages. Check.

Silence for a beat. He starts again.

ROGER

Okay, here's another one. You know what's wrong with relationships nowadays?

LISA

Can't wait to hear this one.

ROGER

The movies. Totally screwed up our standards. I mean, all of our romantic comedies end happily, right? Guy gets girl?

LISA

That's the idea.

ROGER

But our parents' great romantic movies, they all end tragically. Casablanca, Roman Holiday, Gone with the Wind. Guy doesn't get girl. That's why they're not as screwed up with love as we are. We're trying to live up to this perfect standard, but all their fantasies end crappy. They learned to settle for reality.

LISA

Huh. Interesting. Sad, but interesting.

He pulls up to the parking lot, next to the only car left there -- Lisa's.

ROGER

Well, here you go.

LISA

Thanks, I had a really good time. The part with you, I mean. I had a pretty good time the other part too, but you probably don't care about that.

ROGER

Oh no. Glad one of us had sex.

(beat.)

Which one of us had sex again?

LISA
Right. Well, good luck with that
existential nightmare thing. See ya.

She offers a hand to shake. Roger, disbelieving, shakes.

She gets out and goes to her car. He bangs his head against the steering wheel a few times.

SFX: Sound of METAL banging against METAL.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD/ALLEY -- MORNING

Jason's wrench BANGS on something under the hood of his car -- a classic Mustang.

Music BLASTS from his radio. MARCH OF THE VALKYRIES. He sings along:

JASON
"Kill de wabbit, kill de wabbit..."

Roger, tired and fried, comes out in a bathrobe. Turns down the music.

ROGER
Okay, what is it? Hypnotism,
pheromones, what? You don't even do
anything, they just come to you!

JASON
I'm very comfortable with myself.
Women see that.

ROGER
Oh come on.

JASON
It's true. They sense power in it.
Works like a charm. Or maybe it's that
I had like six sisters. Or, you know
what else, I've got a really good sense
of humor. I'm a funny guy.

ROGER
Clearly.

JASON
Personally I think it's the Tai Chi.
You should try it.

Roger wanders back inside. Jason goes back to work:

JASON (CONT'D)
(Singing again:)
"Kill de wabbit..."

INT. THOMAS'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Thomas's ALARM RINGS. Though it's annoying, he's all sunshine and smiles as he wakes and turns it off.

Looks at the sun coming in his window. Stretches out. And smiles a happy smile.

INT. KITCHEN -- MORNING

Thomas has a bounce in his step as he pours coffee.

Roger enters, intently reading. Something small, a pamphlet.

THOMAS
Morning, roomie!

Roger tries to sneak by, but Thomas sees.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
What's that?

ROGER
Nothing.

Thomas reaches for it, Roger pulls away. Thomas fakes one way, goes the other, grabs it. And looks:

CLIFF NOTES. To WAR AND PEACE.

THOMAS
Oh come on!

ROGER
I'm scouting the competition.

THOMAS

You're cheating on your homework. For a living. You really want a career based on somebody else's Cliff Notes?

ROGER

That's what they're there for, right? I won't care when somebody copies mine.

THOMAS

Especially if you didn't write them in the first place.

ROGER

Look, do you know how long this book is? NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY ONE PAGES. 981! Three volumes, 21 books, 172 chapters!

THOMAS

Still.

ROGER

And what makes up those almost a THOUSAND pages?! Hundreds of unpronounceable Russian names. "Fyodor Alexesayevich Bledevenko, meet Ivan Borisovich Koleznikoff." I mean, come on, it wasn't the Russian winter that stopped Napoleon, it was the names!

THOMAS

It can't be that bad.

ROGER

Then I have to translate it into Buffy-the-Vampire-Slayer speak! "Hey, dude, that Napoleon's like totally bogus for taking over Europe and all."

THOMAS

You'll regret it, Roger. You're better than this.

ROGER

That's sweet, really, but I'm not.

Thomas knows he's not gonna win. He goes back to fixing breakfast. Roger sits, reads, and changes the subject.

ROGER (cont'd)

So. You figure out where you're taking that Cloe chick? Because after your performance at the bar, boy, it's gotta be good.

Silence as Thomas processes that.

ROGER (cont'd)
You'll think of something.

Roger smugly pats him on the back and leaves. Thomas stands there, a bit stunned.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE -- DAY

Lisa and Cloe talk over lunch.

LISA
So I had the talking one take me back to my car. I just had to get out of there.

CLOE
You're doing it again.

LISA
What?

CLOE
You've got one guy for conversation and one guy for sex. You do this every time.

LISA
I do not.

CLOE
Danny Enright and Steve Wilkins in high school? Bobby Rhodes and Cam Duffy in college?

LISA
God he was a great fuck.

CLOE
And every time, the conversation guy falls for you and you break his heart.

LISA

That doesn't happen every time because
it's not true.

CLOE

Steve Wilkins still talks about you
like the scarring incident of his
childhood. You're the reason he went
into therapy.

LISA

That's not true.
(Then, flattered:)
Really?

Cloe shoots her a look.

LISA (cont'd)

Well how come you can't do that? Why
let that great lay go to waste, right?
And why not talk to the guy who
actually has something interesting to
say. Why not use people for what
they're good at?

CLOE

Because they're actual people you're
using.

LISA

Oh come on, everybody uses each other.
That's what humankind is all about.

CLOE

Lisa--

LISA

Just humor me for a second.

CLOE

Okay, you're right, that's what
humankind is all about.

LISA

Thank you, was that so hard?

EXT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Lisa and Cloe head to their car.

LISA
So... What's the deal with the piano
man?

Cloe smiles.

CLOE
I don't know.

LISA
Oh, I know that smile. Did he ask for your
number?

Cloe smiles again.

LISA (CONT'D)
And did you tell him about Michael?

Cloe's smile evaporates. Lisa glares.

LISA (cont'd)
And you were lecturing me.

INT. FACTORY -- DAY

A line of boxes on a conveyor belt go by. Each box is full
of makeup -- lipstick, blush, mascara -- by the dozens.

JASON, dressed in workman's overalls, stands next to it.

His long hair is gathered in a HAIRNET. Checks his
reflection in the metal of the machine -- ridiculous, but
to him, he's the finest man on the planet.

While surveying the line, he slyly glances around to see if
anyone's watching. Then POCKETS a handful of makeup.

He's convinced no one's seen him. Smiles and nods
slightly, as if grooving to music only he can hear.

ANGLE ON-- A security camera, right on him.

SUPERVISOR'S VOICE
(Over the P.A.:)
Jason Pendleton, we've got you on tape.
You're fired.

He shrugs. Looks over at ANOTHER WORKER, who quickly returns his own stolen make-up to the conveyor belt. Jason takes off the hairnet and tosses it onto the line.

CUT TO:

INT. MALL -- DAY

Thomas sits at the mall, dreamily gazing at the piece of paper with Cloe's number on it. He begins to PLAY...

Beautiful, beautiful music. Let's say Liszt's Sonata in B minor -- a Romantic masterpiece of passion and technique.

AROUND THE STORE --

People stop, gradually look up from their shopping --

A TEENAGER and HER MOM, a YUPPIE COUPLE, an OLD IRANIAN MAN.

All listening. As the piece builds, Thomas gets more into it. He's really cooking now, adding his own flourishes.

People gather. Rossmore, walking by, notices. He looks around the store: no one's shopping, all the cash register lines are EMPTY. He's pissed.

Thomas is deep into the music. Crossing hands, pounding on the keys. He rides the crescendo, banging the last few glorious chords.

And silence.

The last notes hang in the air. Crowd is silent. Then, from the escalator...

IRANIAN MAN
Bravo!! Bravo!!

The Iranian Man is crying, yelling from the escalator as it takes him up. The rest of the crowd breaks into APPLAUSE.

IRANIAN MAN (cont'd)
Too much bang on the finale, but Bravo!

And he disappears up the escalator. Onlookers congratulate Thomas and drop money in the tip jar. A few take his card.

As they disperse, on comes the angry, lumbering Rossmore.

ROSSMORE

Thomas!!

CUT TO:

INT. REMNANTS ROOM -- DAY

Surrounded by rolls of carpet, Mr. Rossmore goes on a tirade.

ROSSMORE

'Til now I've been Mr. Nice Guy. Mr. Laugh-a-minute. I don't come down hard on people. But I will if I have to.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out... a CD.

ROSSMORE (cont'd)

Do you know what this is?

Thomas, slightly defiant, avoids his glare.

ROSSMORE (cont'd)

This is a magic disk. Which, when attached to the piano, will play whatever we want it to play. It doesn't argue. It doesn't criticize. When I say light Pop, it asks "How Poppy?" And it doesn't keep my shoppers from shopping!

THOMAS

Look, if you think this is how I want my music--

ROSSMORE

It's not your music. It's ours. Got it? Now go back there and play background. Back. Round. Or my magic disk will replace you so fast it'll make your piano spin.

Rossmore leaves. Thomas, really pissed off, looks around for something to hit. SLAMS HIS FIST into a roll of carpet leaning against the wall.

And then grabs his hand:

THOMAS

Ow.

INT. MALL -- DAY

Thomas playing "background" music -- bored silly. Shakes out his left hand, still sore.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEYERHOFF SYMPHONY HALL -- DAY

Thomas stands facing Symphony Hall again.

A STREET PERFORMER plays saxophone on the sidewalk, his case open for money. Thomas listens. The saxophone finishes.

THOMAS

Nice. Portable, too.

Tosses some change in the case. He looks back up at Symphony Hall. Makes a decision: Starts walking up the steps. Then stops. Turns around and walks down again.

CUT TO:

INT. XTREME NOTES OFFICE -- DAY

As Roger slips into the office, he spots a crowd already gathered across the room: Kupiak stands before a dozen twentysomethings, Wendy included.

KUPIAK

Xtreme Team, let me be brief: Aspire higher. Stress Less.

(Dramatic pause.)

I once had a dream. That although no extreme sportist myself, I could create a line of study guides for the rebel youths of today. And in one short month that dream will be realized in the launch of Xtreme Notes!

(Polite applause. She's overcome with emotion. Pulls herself together.)

Unfortunately, some of us are not entirely in the push-it-to-the-max spirit. Therefore I have had to, as

the kids say, clean the hizz-ouse. To those of you let go, it's been a pleasure. To the rest, keep up the good work. Thank you, and have an Xtreme day.

She walks off. The crowd is in shock. No one talks. They turn, slowly, back to their desks.

Roger's dreading it, sure he's dead. Gets to his desk, where everything looks normal. There's no sign of dismissal.

But THE NEXT GUY finds a POST-IT on his own computer. Picks it up and reads:

"FIRED!" Roger sees it, shakes his head.

ROGER
She even fires people in Cliff Notes.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Thomas paces behind his piano bench, where JENNY, 10, plays FÜR ELISE -- badly. And you thought piano lessons were painful for the *kid*.

Every wrong note sends a shiver down Thomas's spine, but he just keeps pacing and mumbling encouragement.

THOMAS
Um hm. Good.

And then we see why: as he's pacing, he's also got a pen and notepad in hand. He's writing a list and checking it twice:

LUNCH
COFFEE
DINNER
MOVIE
DRINKS
BOWLING?

He thinks for a second. Crosses out BOWLING. Writes MINIATURE GOLF. Looks satisfied.

Then he realizes there's no music. He looks up from his notepad to see Jenny, sitting there staring at him.

JENNY

Should I play it again?

Thomas realizes. Really doesn't want to hear it again--

THOMAS

No! No, that's good enough for this week. Why don't you wait outside for your mom--

JENNY

But--

THOMAS

And practice your scales. Twice a day.

He ushers Jenny out the door. Takes a check from her.

JENNY

But--

THOMAS

You're doing great. Keep practicing.

He closes the door in her confused face.

CUT TO:

THOMAS RUSHES TO THE PHONE--

Considers. Looks at the notepad. Shakes out his hands... and dials.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

A cute little apartment -- full of creative decorating to cover for its low budget.

Cloe comes clumsily out of a back room -- she's carrying a couple of bags, medical books and folders, while trying to button her business-suit jacket.

As she gets to the door, she feels something in her shoe.

CLOE

Ow. Ow ow.

She takes off her shoe, balancing everything. As she does...

THE PHONE RINGS.

She hops back to pick it up. As she does...

The files slip out and spread out all over the floor.

CLOE (cont'd)
("Shit!")
Sugar!

And then she realizes she still has the phone.

CLOE (cont'd)
Oh, um, hello?

INTERCUT THOMAS --

THOMAS
Cloe? Hi, it's Thomas. From the bar--

CLOE
Oh, right. Sure. Hi. I, I didn't mean
"Sugar" to you, I just dropped some things.

THOMAS
Oh. Right.

CLOE
Right. Because who says "Sugar" at
another person? And how could I even
know it was you? Unless I had caller
ID or something. Which I don't.

THOMAS
Is this a bad time?

CLOE
No. No.
(On the floor, a mess:)
Well, yeah, a little.

THOMAS
I can call you back--

CLOE
No, this is good. Now's good. What's

up?

THOMAS

I just thought...

(Looking at his list:)

You might want to go out sometime.

Like we said.

CLOE

Oh, right.

Right off the list:

THOMAS

We could have coffee, or lunch if you want. Or a movie or something.

CLOE

Well, I don't know--

THOMAS

Miniature golf! We could do miniature golf!

CLOE

Um, no, it's not...

THOMAS

Okay, no miniature golf. You could pick something. What would you like to do?

CLOE

No, see, it's not that. It's just, well, things are a little complicated.

THOMAS

Oh.

CLOE

I mean...

THOMAS

Yeah. I see. I just thought, I don't know, we connected in some way. Maybe not conversationally, but, you know, some way good.

Silence. She's thinking. She should say no, but she wants to say yes.

And then she spots her GYM BAG across the room. There's a racket sticking out.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Cloe? You still there?

CLOE
Racketball.

THOMAS
Excuse me?

CLOE
Racketball? You play?

THOMAS -- stunned:

THOMAS
Do I play racketball?
(Lying.)
Of course I play racketball! I love
racketball! I would love to play
racketball!
(Beat.)
Okay, I'm gonna stop saying
"racketball".

CLOE
Okay. Good. So I'll see you there.

THOMAS
Good. No problem. Cool.

EXT. THOMAS'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Thomas's building from the street. From inside:

THOMAS (O.S.)
YESSS!!

And general sounds of Thomas WHOOPING and HOLLERING.

INT. MORGUE -- DAY

LISA (O.S.)
You made a what?

We find Lisa in the morgue, weighing a fairly goopy human liver. Cloe follows her.

CLOE

I can't watch anymore. You said you'd be done. This is why I could never do Med school.

LISA

You're changing the subject. You made a date. With a guy.

CLOE

It's not a date. It's racketball. It's just a game. Tell me it's not a date.

LISA

If it involves sweating and showering, it's usually a date.

CLOE

Humor me for a second.

LISA

Okay, you're right. It's not a date.
(Beat.)
But if you get naked together, all bets are off.

INT. XTREME NOTES' OFFICE -- DAY

Roger sits at his desk, head in hand, struggling to read War and Peace.

But he notices his drawer is slightly open. Opens it just a bit more, revealing...

The booklet of evil. CLIFF NOTES.

He closes the drawer quick.

Tries to look away. But he can't help it. He gives in, opening the drawer and TAKING OUT THE NOTES.

Sits forward, hiding it in his lap and reading, mouthing the first few sentences. Sneaks a look around to see if anyone's watching--

And notices the FAKE BOOKS -- cardboard cutout FACADE from the bookshelf. Hollow. He looks back at the Cliff Notes.

And he just can't do it.

Drops the Notes in the trash and turns back to his desk. Knows he's made the right decision. He's satisfied, happy--

And then he sees War and Peace. Resigned, he settles down to read, when--

WENDY

(On the phone:)

No, Mother, not yet. I have to get back to work. Yes, Mother, as soon as I know.

It's Wendy. Flustered, she hangs up the phone. Takes a BEANIE BABY down and pets it -- for reassurance.

Roger sees his chance. Leaps out of his seat, grabs a FLOWER from a nearby desk and approaches...

ROGER

Wendy Wendy. Here I am, ready to whisk you off to NeverLand.

WENDY

No, Roger.

ROGER

I didn't ask for anything yet.

WENDY

You want me to help hipify War and Peace.

ROGER

(Fake indignation:)

What? I don't know what--

WENDY

And as much as I love War and Peace -- and think that it should be brought fully to the rebel youth of today, I've just had a very trying conversation and am in no mood to help.

(Beat.)

Even though I could. With my dictionary tied behind my back.

ROGER

Why? What did your mother say?

She glares. Not the right question.

ROGER (cont'd)

Come on, Wendy. You're a natural at this stuff. TRL crap pours right out of you. Not that I get why. You don't seem all that hip to me--

WENDY

Okay, not helping yourself. Now if you'll excuse me, I am deeply engrossed in The Pearl.

ROGER

The Pearl?! You got The Pearl? It's a hundred and twenty pages! I get War and Peace and you get The Pearl?!

WENDY

Apparently. Now don't you have work to do? Like looking for a job?

ROGER

Alright. Turkey-talk time. What'll it take? What do you want?

She arches an eyebrow, he's piqued her interest.

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET -- DAY

She pulls him into the supply closet and slams the door. Spins around, talking fast and pointedly.

WENDY

Okay, here's the deal: I need one sane, reasonably hygienic man who can keep his mouth shut and his hands to himself to go to a wedding with me.

ROGER

Is that it? A date? I'm surprised you can't catch someone yourself, what with--

WENDY

And I mean a normal, presentable guy.
Not you. No falling asleep into his
pâté, no smart aleck remarks--

ROGER

Smart aleck? What decade are you from?

WENDY

Get that Jason guy you brought to the
company softball game.

ROGER

You too? What is it about Jason,
anyway?

WENDY

He's hot. And he's not you.

ROGER

You'd be lucky to get me, sister.

WENDY

Not you.

ROGER

Okay, I'm not going to take this
personally. Especially, coming as it
does, from a prudish modern-day Brontë
sister who can't get a date.

She grabs him by the shirt and is about to tell him off--

When the DOOR OPENS and a COWORKER walks in. She quickly
lets go, switches gears, checking the shelves for something:

WENDY

You left out Chaucer? He's the father
of English literature?! I mean
Spenser, maybe, but...

The coworker shakes his head, grabs a some pens and exits.

ROGER

Pretty sneaky, sis.

WENDY

You just get me the guy. I'll get you
War and Peace.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Roger comes in, looking around.

ROGER

Thomas!? Thomas buddy, I need a favor.

Thomas enters quickly from the back room. Dressed in sweats and a T-shirt ("Pianists do it with crescendo!").

ROGER (cont'd)

What are you doing?

THOMAS

Playing racquetball. With Cloe.

ROGER

You don't play racquetball. You don't play anything.

THOMAS

She doesn't know that.

ROGER

Well she's gonna. As soon as you step your sorry ass on the court. Which is a great impression for a first date.

THOMAS

No. Not today. You are not going to ruin this very hopeful mood I'm in.

ROGER

I'm just saying. Instead, you could do a favor for your best friend and roommate.

THOMAS

No.

ROGER

Don't answer yet. Picture this: super hot chick from work, just your type.

THOMAS

And...?

ROGER

No and. There's no and. It's perfect.
You hop in your tux, drive over, and
take her to a wedding. Perfect, see?

THOMAS

Yeah, I see. No thanks.

ROGER

Come on. You know women at weddings.
They're like a souffle ready to pop.
All they need is the guy.

THOMAS

Why don't you do it then?

ROGER

Workplace romance. I've got a strict
policy.

THOMAS

What about that thing you had with
the water delivery girl?

ROGER

She was an independent contractor.
Totally different.

THOMAS

And Michelle from Accounting?

ROGER

Okay, we're getting off the subject.
Go back there and change before you
embarrass me, yourself and the entire
male species.

THOMAS

I'm not gonna be that bad. Really.

INT. RACQUETBALL COURT -- MONTAGE

Thomas FLAILS around the court, sweaty, exhausted. Chasing
ball after ball, slamming into walls, missing painfully.

Cloe patiently tries to keep him in the game. Serves it
easy for him. Slams the ball against the back wall.
Covers her eyes when he collides with the wall.

END RACQUETBALL MONTAGE

INT. GYM HALLWAY -- DAY

Thomas, out of breath, sopping with sweat, comes out of the court, lies down on the carpeted hallway. Cloe follows. Sits beside him.

THOMAS

(Catching his breath:)

So... Ready for me to start playing now?

CUT TO:

EXT. GYM JUICE BAR -- DAY

Thomas, showered and in regular clothes, takes a long sip of a tall smoothie, feels better.

THOMAS

You know, for most women this would pretty much be it. Destroying a guy in a sport and all.

CLOE

Oh really?

THOMAS

Yeah. Not the most attractive thing around.

CLOE

Hm. Well what if I was really awful at the piano? Would that be it for you?

THOMAS

No, but...

CLOE

So then I figure it's just a question of home turf.

She smiles. He smiles. They are really liking each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK YARD/ALLEY -- EVENING

Jason is once again working on his car. This time to the ANVIL CHORUS of IL TRAVATORE. Classical music at its head-banging best.

Roger comes out.

ROGER

I've gotta be the only guy in America
who can't get away from classical
music.

Roger turns down the music. Jason looks up.

JASON

You know, that's getting to be a really
bad habit, turning people's music down.

ROGER

Yeah yeah I'm sorry whatever. I need
you to go to a wedding with this girl
from work.

JASON

No can do. I'm seeing that sarcastic
coroner chick. She's got a real dark
side -- I can't tell if that makes her
deep or just negative.

ROGER

Look, it's really important.

JASON

So you do it. A wedding tango with the
right girl might just take that edge
off.

ROGER

Believe me, with this girl, it's only
gonna put more edge on.

(Beat.)

We now return you to our regularly
scheduled program.

He turns the music back up and heads inside.

EXT. STREET -- EVENING

Cloe and Thomas walking down the street, talking.

CLOE

So what's a pianist's dream job?
Carnegie Hall?

THOMAS

Dream maybe. But it's the thing about symphony orchestras, only one per city. You gotta be groomed from like age two.

CLOE

Wow. Dog-eat-dog world of the symphony.

THOMAS

The Meyerhoff's director, Martin Warshaw, he was ten when he wrote his first concerto. My dad used to say, hey, so what've you done lately? I keep thinking of applying for an audition, but... I'd be lucky to get a rehearsal pianist job.

CLOE

Think of it this way -- you probably reach more people playing at the mall.

THOMAS

Maybe. I just wish they were actually there to listen.

CLOE

I'd listen.

He looks at her. She smiles. She said the right thing.

THOMAS

I've still got a lot to learn. Still put too much bang in my crescendo.

CLOE

Really. Sounds fun.

She smiles. He stops, realizes:

THOMAS

Are you-- Were you just flirting with me?

CLOE

No. Definitely not.

Beat.

THOMAS

So what do nutritionists dream about?
Really big vegetables?

CLOE

Oh, I'd love to work at a hospital. Plan
diets for people on specific regimens.

THOMAS

You actually want to make hospital
food?

CLOE

I guess, yeah.

THOMAS

Huh. Cool.

They've come to his car. There's a slightly awkward pause.

He suddenly leans in. Gives her a kiss. She kisses back -
- a little. They pull apart.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Sorry.

CLOE

No. No, it's fine. Thanks.

THOMAS

You're welcome.

Very awkward pause.

THOMAS (cont'd)

Um, so. What now?

She bites her lip. Then:

CLOE

I've got an idea.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINIATURE GOLF -- EVENING

Cloe's lined up for a putt. Thomas stands between her and
the hole, swinging his arms and legs like a human windmill.

CLOE

No fair.

THOMAS

What? I'm just stretching out. It's a physically very strenuous game. Don't want to pull something...

She putts anyway.

CLOE

Come on. Come on...

The ball rolls, and... just misses.

CLOE (cont'd)

(Once again "Shit")

Sugar!

Thomas laughs.

THOMAS

Did you say "sugar" again?

CLOE

(In a slight pout:)

I'm trying to cut out swearing. They don't like it in hospitals. Besides, I'm not talking to you right now.

She finishes the putt.

THOMAS

I'm just saying, it's very cute. And pretty ironic, considering the whole diabetes thing.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas and Cloe enter, mid-conversation. He takes her coat and hangs it up.

CLOE

It just all sounds the same to me.

THOMAS

That's because all supermarkets play is

Musak. Totally castrated. No passion.

She smiles, a bit surprised/impressed. He realizes what he's said, is suddenly a little embarrassed. Changes the subject.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Um. So this is the place.

She spots the piano.

CLOE
That's the piano?

He nods. She heads over, which somehow makes him proud and nervous at the same time. She picks up the sheet music on it.

CLOE (CONT'D)
Beethoven's Sonata Pathetique.
(She looks over at Thomas:)
The Pathetic Sonata?

THOMAS
Full of pathos, not really lame.

CLOE
Oh. For a second there I thought
Ludwig had some serious confidence
problems.

He smiles. Holds back, then can't help himself:

THOMAS
Actually, the Pathetique was his
breakthrough piece. It established his
reputation in Vienna as the passionate
young madman. It's in C minor, this
dramatic, vehement key he uses later in
some of his greatest works.

CLOE
Wow.

She looks down at the keys. Starts to play CHOPSTICKS.
Badly. Looks up at Thomas and shrugs.

CLOE (CONT'D)
You win.

Roger comes in from Thomas's bedroom, wearing Thomas's tuxedo. Surprised to see Cloe.

ROGER

Hey there Health chick. How bad did you beat him?

THOMAS

That's my tux!

ROGER

I know. I'm borrowing it.

(To Cloe again:)

So? What was the damage? Three games to zip?

CLOE

Actually it was pretty close.

ROGER

Uh huh. Sure it was.

THOMAS

Look, just don't spill anything on it. I need it for work.

ROGER

Don't worry. The worst thing that could happen to this suit is I die of boredom in it.

EXT. RITZY TOWNHOUSE -- NIGHT

Wendy stands outside a nice brownstone, dressed to the nines but still a bit too librarian. She is not happy.

Roger's Honda pulls up and he gets out. She looks even less happy.

WENDY

Oh god. I thought I made it clear--

ROGER

I'm not Roger. I'm his good twin brother Rodrigo.

WENDY

Come on. Let's get this over with.

EXT. DOWNTOWN HOTEL -- NIGHT

Roger and Wendy pull up to a swank hotel. He hands the keys to the VALET.

ROGER

Watch the Corinthian leather.

The valet rolls his eyes and pulls the car away. Wendy suddenly YANKS Roger close.

WENDY

(Fast:)

Look, I don't like you, but I'm not spending one more family event explaining to my grandmother that I'm not a lesbian just like Ellen. But if you embarrass me, so help me as God is my witness I will tell Kupiak about our deal and ruin your pathetic little life. Now straighten up. And smile, damn it.

She heads inside.

ROGER

Lovely girl.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas sits at the piano, playing. Cloe watches.

THOMAS

Here, I'll teach you a little trick to recognize a piece. Whenever you hear it. Schubert's Unfinished Symphony. Ready?

She nods.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Okay.

(Sings, kind of boisterous:)

"This is... the symphony... that Schubert wrote and never finished."

Cloe laughs. Thomas has to egg her on to sing.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Come on, come on.

THOMAS/CLOE
(Singing together:)
"This is... the symphony... that
Schubert wrote and never finished..."

THOMAS
(Continues alone:)
"This is his theme in G, that Schubert
wrote and never finished..."

He sees her staring at him and suddenly gets a little
embarrassed. Stops playing.

THOMAS (cont'd)
You get the idea.

And he starts another piece.

CLOE
Why do you do that all the time?

THOMAS
What?

CLOE
Get so embarrassed. There's not really
anything that embarrassing going on.

THOMAS
I don't know. I'm just... sometimes
with you I catch myself saying stuff
without thinking. I'm not sure how it
sounds.

CLOE
Mostly it sounds good.

She notices the new piece: Chopin's Minute Waltz.

CLOE (CONT'D)
Did you write this?

THOMAS
Me? No. It's Chopin.

CLOE

Do you have anything you wrote
yourself?

Thomas pauses. Of course he does.

THOMAS

Well, yeah, I've been working on one
for a long time. Couldn't finish it,
actually, until last week--

CLOE

Would you play it for me?

THOMAS

Um...

She gives him the big eyes. Irresistible.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Okay. Sure.

He turns back to the keys. Shakes out his hands. Is about
to play...

But turns back...

THOMAS (cont'd)

Now just remember it's still rough in a
lot of places.

She nods. He turns back to the keys. Puts his hands over
the keyboard...

THOMAS (cont'd)

And it's part of a larger piece so--

CLOE

Play it or I kill you.

THOMAS

Right. Okay. Just... close your eyes.

She's a little skeptical. But she does.

And he starts to play. The SWEET ROMANTIC MELODY he played
the night after they met. Let's call it THE LOVE THEME.
Incredibly moving.

As he plays and the music starts to swell, she's moved. She opens one eye, peeking at him. He continues to play, lost in the music.

She moves closer. Watches him, seeking something in his eyes. Drawn in.

The music becomes quiet again, sweet. And she leans in slowly... and kisses him.

He tries to keep playing and gently kiss back as well. But the kissing gets more involved. He's having trouble doing both at the same time.

She lifts one of his hands and ducks under it, straddling him on the piano bench. They're making out severely and he's trying to keep playing, but it's a losing battle. Finally.

THOMAS (cont'd)

Oh, fuck it.

And he slams down the cover on the piano keys. Sits her on it and concentrates on her. For both there's nothing else in the world right now.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM -- DAY

Roger and Wendy sit uncomfortably side by side at a dinner table. He's quickly downing a SCOTCH --

WENDY

(Through a fake smile:)

That's your third scotch.

ROGER

That's your fourth Chardonnay.

An ANNOYING KID in a polyester suit runs by and PUNCHES Roger hard on the shoulder.

ROGER (cont'd)

Ow! Quit that, ya little punk!

(Reaching, but the kid runs off:)

Yeah, you'd better run!

WENDY

Wow. I'm so impressed. How you stood up to that big bad ten-year old boy.

ROGER

He started it. And I think he's got brass knuckles.

Roger massages his shoulder. Wendy tries to ignore him, turning to her near-deaf GRANDMOTHER sitting beside her:

WENDY

So Grams, Roger's off tonight to Istanbul for the firm. International law.

GRANDMOTHER

That's nice. We were so worried about Wendy -- she doesn't bring around a lot of boys and she listens to all that "folk" music.

ROGER

No need to worry, Grams. I can vouch, she's a regular sex machine.

Wendy kicks him under the table.

ROGER (cont'd)

Ow. Sorry honey.

(To Grams:)

Guess she's just a little shy.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Lisa and Jason walk in. She drops her bag.

LISA

Okay. Let's get to it.

And almost business-like they start kissing. Taking off their clothes.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas and Cloe. Lying in his bed, both blissed out, with his arms around her.

THOMAS

Hey there.

CLOE

Hi.

He kisses her. They snuggle in.

And maybe just a little cloud passes over Cloe's face.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM -- DAY

The wedding party listens as the BEST MAN makes a toast in the most boring, monotone voice ever...

BEST MAN

There've been many women in Phil's life, considering he's a gynecologist. Which should make Louise feel reassured -- the choice he's made is sure an informed one.

Roger, tipsy, laughs hard. Wendy jabs him in the ribs with her elbow.

ROGER

Ow! Come on! I'm gonna be black and blue after this night. Next event let me know it's body-armor optional.

The Annoying Kid runs by, HITS him again.

ROGER (cont'd)

That's it! Look you little punk--

He grabs the kid. The kid GRABS the glass of RED WINE, and SPILLS it ALL OVER ROGER'S TUX. Roger lets go and freaks, brushing off the wine.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Little Fucker! Shit! Fuck! Fuckshitfuck!

Everyone stares. He notices.

ROGER (cont'd)
Everybody enjoying the party?
(They still stare:)
I'll just go send in the dancing girls.

And he exits.

WENDY
(Under her breath:)
My entire fucking life is a travesty.

INT. THOMAS'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas and Cloe sit in bed, partly dressed. Eating ice cream.

CLOE
So how come everyone calls you Thomas?
No one calls you Tom or Tommy?

THOMAS
Nope. Not really.

CLOE
Well now I do. What you need to do,
Tom--
(Stops. Not quite right:)
Tommy...
(Doesn't work either:)
You know what, it doesn't work. It
really is Thomas, isn't it?

THOMAS
Pretty much, yeah.

CLOE
Okay. Thomas. What you really need to
do, Thomas, is walk right up to the
symphony and ask for an audition.

THOMAS
I'm not so sure about that.

CLOE
When I was a little girl I used to be
afraid of the order counter, you know,
at stores, fast food places? My mother
would give me money and I'd just run
back to her and hide.

THOMAS

That's sweet.

CLOE

Not to a five year old, it was terrifying. So one day my Dad leans down and says, "Clo? I'm gonna give you two very magic words. Secret fairy language. They give you the courage to do anything." Cheesy, I know, but what do you want, I was five. So, I closed my eyes and said 'em, and sure enough I walked right up to the counter and ordered a Happy Meal with a Princess Leia crown.

THOMAS

Aww. So? Come on, spill 'em. What were they?

CLOE

I can't tell you, they're secret.

(Beat.)

Okay. Talked me into it. The magic words are...

(Grandly, as if from royalty:)

"Carburetor Arboretum!"

THOMAS

Oh come on.

CLOE

(Nods.)

My dad was kind of a crackpot sometimes. But they work. I get what I want.

THOMAS

So... what do want now?

Their eyes have locked.

CLOE

Now?

(Beat.)

More ice cream.

She hands him the bowl. He's reluctant.

THOMAS

Oh. Yeah, but, you know, I was thinking--

CLOE
Carburetor...

THOMAS
You wouldn't dare.

CLOE
...Arboretum!

Thomas pretends to be suddenly lifted, forced out of bed:

THOMAS
Oh, I don't know what's happening! It's like I'm being compelled... to go get ice cream!

She swats him. He gets out of bed, reaches back, gives her a kiss, and is gone.

She watches as he goes.

And then she LEAPS for her purse. Pulls out her cell phone. Dials a number quick.

CLOE
Come on Lisa, pick up. Be home, be home, pick up.

CUT TO:

LISA'S PHONE.

Ring. Ring. Answering machine:

LISA'S VOICE
I'm not here. Leave whatever.

CLOE IN THOMAS'S ROOM--

CLOE
Lisa, where are you? Pick up if you're there. I think I did something stupid. I'm at his place, the piano guy. All bets are off. I really wish you were there. Where the hell are you?

CAMERA PANS THROUGH THE WALL TO:

INT. JASON'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Lisa, annoyed, lies on Jason's bed, watching him do Tai Chi naked.

LISA

You don't want to talk at all?

He holds out his hand, telling her to be quiet.

LISA (CONT'D)

You're not the least bit curious about
the person you just fucked?

Unfazed, though a bit snobbish about the vulgarity, he
turns away and does his Tai Chi facing the wall. She
pouts:

LISA (CONT'D)

Least you could do is have a goddamn
TV.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Thomas, in boxers, gets ice cream out of the freezer.

Roger enters the apartment, defeated, dragging. He's got
his overcoat closed to cover up the tux.

Thomas greets him joyously.

THOMAS

Hey, Rog! Have a good time?

ROGER

Thomas, look, before you say anything,
I'm really really sorry.

THOMAS

About what?

Roger opens up his jacket, revealing a big wine stain on
the tuxedo jacket.

Thomas doesn't react. Roger takes this as a bad sign:

ROGER

It'll come right out, I'm sure. It was this freak thing. Giant waiter -- we're talking Lurch here -- trips on this little midget guy... but it's prime stuff. Really good vintage.

THOMAS

Don't worry about it.

ROGER

There's an all-night cleaners out in Towson. I'll drop it off tonight.

THOMAS

I said don't worry about it. No problem.

Thomas takes another spoon of ice cream. Roger sizes him up.

ROGER

Damn it, you got laid.

Thomas just smiles.

ROGER (cont'd)

And what, she's still here?

THOMAS

Ah, ever the eye for detail. That's what's gonna make you a great writer.

Thomas goes back into his room.

ROGER

Just gets better and better.

He takes a beer out of the fridge and heads to his room.

CUT TO:

INT. ROGER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Cradling his beer, Roger undoes the bow-tie. Gingerly takes off the wine-stained tux jacket, winces at the bruises.

Looks in the mirror. Not happy with what he sees.

A thought crosses his mind: after a beat, he slowly lifts up his arms, watching...

And does a little Tai Chi. Seriously. Just to try it on for size.

EXT. BALCONY -- NIGHT

Lisa smokes out on Jason's balcony, once again wrapped in the comforter. Bored, she looks over into Roger's room...

And sees him doing Tai Chi.

LISA
Oh god. Not him too.

INT. ROGER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Roger slowly raises one arm and lifts a leg-- And then realizes: he looks ridiculous.

LISA (O.S.)
Hey!

He does a double take. Stops the Tai Chi and tries to cover up somehow. Drapes the jacket over the mirror, as if that proves he wasn't doing anything. Grabs his notebook.

EXT. BALCONY -- NIGHT

She's leaning over the railing:

LISA
Hey! I'm bored!

Roger's door slides open, he's carrying the notebook.

ROGER
Hey. You didn't just see me in there, did you?

LISA
No. What were you doing?

ROGER
Nothing. (Points to notebook:)
Writing.

LISA

Okay.

He takes a beat.

ROGER

So. You paying rent on that balcony yet?

LISA

Not yet. Am I keeping you up?

ROGER

Me? No, insomnia. Maybe the cool night air'll slip me into a coma.

LISA

I've seen it happen. Not pretty. Your skin turns pale blue.

ROGER

Nice. You must really be a hit at parties.

She notices the plant's gone.

LISA

What happened to the fern?

ROGER

We got in a fight. I said something about pesticides, she took off for sunny climes full of pollinating man-bees.

LISA

You're pretty weird sometimes.

(Sees the notebook:)

So whatcha writing? Meaning of life? Or more summaries?

ROGER

Neither. Tonight I thought I'd just generally be bitter at the world.

Roger sits. Lisa takes a hit off her cigarette. Then:

LISA

You need to do that here, or you wanna go someplace and talk?

Roger looks. Thinks.

ROGER
No, I'm flexible. I can be bitter just
about anywhere.

CUT TO:

INT. DENNY'S -- NIGHT

Roger and Lisa sit at a booth in this all-night haven.
Chowing on fries.

LISA
So is it too much to ask for a little
smalltalk? I mean, beyond Ride the
horse, brush the frickin' dragon?

ROGER
Well you're the one who picked him.
Why did you pick him again?

LISA
Seemed like a good idea at the time.
Figured he'd be a good lay.

ROGER
And they say Feminism's dead.

LISA
And he was. I mean really good--

ROGER
Okay, enough information--

LISA
Like outstandingly, amazingly good.

ROGER
Alright already! Jesus.

LISA
But come on, he can't make a little
effort? Make me feel like a human
being?

ROGER
Maybe that's not what he's amazingly
good at. Look, I mean this is the best

possible way, but Jason's pretty much a sociopath.

LISA

How is there a good way to call somebody a sociopath?

ROGER

He can be charming when he wants, with that goofy new-age dumb guy thing. He can be a good friend when he wants to. But when it comes right down to it, all Jason really cares about is Jason. Nothing else registers.

LISA

Nice.

ROGER

I'm just saying.

LISA

So why are you guys friends?

ROGER

(Shrugs:)

He grows on you. And I try to pick up his leftover chicks.

That one hit a little close. He changes the subject.

ROGER (CONT'D)

So, you really cut up dead people for a living? How do you do that?

LISA

I'm not the main examiner. I'm just an assistant. You get used to it.

ROGER

Right. "What'd you do today, honey?"
"Oh, nothin', just carved up Mr. Ohlsson, made little cupie dolls out of his intestines."

LISA

We don't do that anymore. Not since the lawsuits.

ROGER

I'm serious. How can you do that?

LISA

You just don't think about it. It's like a big science kit, you turn off your feelings. Disassociate.

ROGER

That's what Jason does. Only he does it with live people.

She's slightly stung.

ROGER (CONT'D)

See, I figure I'm the opposite of you two. I can't just turn it off, I gotta find the story on everything. You know what fascinates me? Obituaries. This week, there was the guy who invented sliced bread. Sliced bread! When he was born, there was no "oh, it's the greatest thing since sliced bread". He had to invent the greatest thing before there was sliced bread. I think we all hope to make a difference like that.

He promptly downs another fry. Licks the ketchup off his fingers as the check arrives.

ROGER (cont'd)

You wanna go splits on this? I think I'm gonna be unemployed come tomorrow.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

They're walking to Roger's car.

LISA

It's funny. I wonder if kids cramming for tests know that you guys cram to write the cheat guides.

ROGER

Yeah, that's how we define irony in the teacher's edition.

LISA

I can't believe you did that.

ROGER

What?

LISA

Shouted "fuck" and promised to send in the dancing girls. You do that at my wedding, I'll kick your ass.

rOGER

It was insomnia. And scotch. Drives me crazy. I'm like in a daze half the time.

LISA

So what's keepin' you up?

ROGER

I don't know.

LISA

Oh, I think you do.

Roger studies her for a moment.

ROGER

Alright. But if I tell, we're talking serious business. No wise cracks. No sarcastic remarks.

LISA

Scout's honor.

ROGER

Okay. It's just... It's like I gotta keep running, keep working. Like there's this whole amazing ridiculous world out there full of stuff, and every minute there's more of it, and I gotta get it all down, write it down for posterity. I've gotta make sure people know what I see, right? 'Cause what if they don't see it?

LISA

And if you don't write it down, it might never have existed.

ROGER

Exactly.

LISA

So we can add immense ego to your list of attributes.

(Beat.)

Sorry. Couldn't resist.

(Beat.)

I think you're just lonely.

ROGER

Very insightful. Thanks.

Silence.

ROGER (cont'd)

Alright, your turn. Why always with the sarcastic line? Don't have anything nice to say?

She takes a drag of her cigarette. Then, sadly:

LISA

It's not on purpose. More like...

(Looks at him:)

Promise?

ROGER

On my immense ego.

LISA

It's just, I'm, I don't know, so... dead all the time. Heart's burnt out, to a smoldering little rock in the middle of my ribcage. Big empty lump. How does that happen?

Roger doesn't answer. Takes it in.

ROGER

Yeah. But then something comes along to fan the fire, right? Get you excited. Totally out of the blue. And then you don't even remember the old hurt.

LISA

This from the cynical insomniac control
freak.

ROGER
You're a very angry person, have you
noticed that?

LISA
Yeah, I've noticed.

ROGER
And I appreciate that, being one
myself.

She smiles faintly.

LISA
Shut up and take me home.

INT. ROGER'S CAR / EXT. LISA'S APARTMENT BLDG. -- NIGHT

Roger pulls up, parks the car. There's that uncomfortable
tension -- both of them wondering what comes next.

LISA
So. Thanks.

Roger nods.

He suddenly leans over and KISSES HER. Awkwardly meets her
mouth. Then sits back in his seat.

Both sit there for a moment.

She, a little awkward, not really embarrassed but not
wanting to deal, OPENS THE DOOR and GETS OUT. Walks up to
her building and enters.

Roger says nothing. Just puts the car in gear and drives off.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Early morning. Cloe and Thomas both asleep, sprawled in
comfortable positions. When...

A CHIRPING SOUND rings out. And AGAIN. Thomas starts, hits his alarm clock. But the CHIRPING keeps coming. He looks around.

Cloe's stirs too, dazed. Then SHE REALIZES: it's coming from her purse. Her phone! She suddenly leaps out of bed.

THOMAS
What is it?

CLOE
It's mine. My phone. I'll get it.

And she grabs the purse and vaults out of the room.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Cloe closes the door and fishes out her phone. Answers...

CLOE
Lisa?

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- PAYPHONE -- MORNING

A GUY, mid 20s, in big baggy jacket, is on a payphone. Kind of short and stocky, he's attractive but maybe a little shlumpy. This is MICHAEL.

SHOUTING over traffic in the background.

MICHAEL
CLOE? IT'S MICHAEL! THAT'S HOW YOU
ANSWER A PHONE?

INTERCUT:

CLOE
(Whispering:)
Michael? It's 6 am. Is something
wrong?

MICHAEL
WHAT?! NO, NO, NOTHING'S WRONG. I
JUST WANTED TO SAY HELLO. HEAR YOUR
VOICE FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.

CLOE

Why are you shouting?

MICHAEL

AM I SHOUTING? THIS CRAPPY PAY-PHONE,
I CAN BARELY HEAR MYSELF.

(To some guy on a street:)

HEY, BUDDY, GET AWAY FROM THAT!

CLOE

(Whispering:)

Michael, this really isn't a good time.

MICHAEL

WHY ARE YOU WHISPERING? I CAN BARELY
HEAR YOU!

CLOE

Why am I... The new neighbors.
They're crazy, very touchy in the
morning. The walls are like paper. I
need to call you back.

HALLWAY--

THOMAS comes groggily up to the bathroom.

THOMAS

Cloe?

BATHROOM--

CLOE

(To Michael:)

See? That's them. I'll call you back--
-

MICHAEL

YOU CAN'T. I'M ON THE STREET. LISTEN,
I'M FLYING IN TOMORROW NIGHT--

CLOE

What?

MICHAEL

I TRADED MY SHIFT. I GET IN AT SEVEN
THIRTY.

(Beat. She's silent.)

CLOE? YOU ARE HAPPY ABOUT THIS, RIGHT?

CLOE

Of course. Of course I'm happy. But I've gotta go. I'll call you later. Bye.

She hangs up. Michael looks at the receiver, a bit puzzled.

INT. THOMAS'S APARTMENT -- HALLWAY -- MORNING

Thomas knocks on the bathroom door, just as Cloe opens it up with a forced grin.

CLOE

All done.

THOMAS

Everything okay?

CLOE

Sure, why wouldn't it be?

And she brushes past him.

EXT. BACK YARD/ALLEY -- MORNING

Roger, dressed for work in a jacket and tie, wearily passes Jason, who's working on his car again.

ROGER

Time to go get fired.

JASON

There's that positive attitude we all know and love.

Roger looks at him, annoyed.

ROGER

Doesn't anything get to you?! Huh?!

Jason just waves his wrench and goes back to work on the car.

CUT TO:

INT. XTREME NOTES OFFICE -- DAY

Roger peeks in the door, wary. Looks both ways, sneaks, almost tip-toes, into the office.

EVERYONE turns and stares at him. Sadly. He gets a very bad feeling.

Walks slowly. Drawn to his desk, dreading. They all watch.

And finally, he gets there...

And it's fine. Nothing out of the ordinary. No post-it of death. Looks around at the others:

ROGER
What? I'm fine.

A nervous smile breaks out on his face.

That is, until a COWORKER sadly points at the ground.

Roger looks. There, having fallen, is a yellow POST-IT. His grin vanishes. He reaches for it, picks it up and reads:

"FIRED."

He looks up, exhausted. Devastated and a bit relieved. Well, that's it.

And then comes Kupiak. And in her wake is Wendy, triumphant.

KUPIAK
Bickell!

Roger's lost his patience:

ROGER
What?!

KUPIAK
How could you do it, Bickell?

ROGER
I don't know. I give up.

KUPIAK
More than anyone, I understand the drive, the need, to work. But with your Grandmother at death's door and

your entire family imprisoned on a false charge in Guatemala? No wonder you seemed sluggish.

ROGER

Excuse me?

KUPIAK

Damn it, man, Wendy told me the whole story. Sounds like a best-seller on your hands. And how she begged to take W and P but you wouldn't budge.

(Grabs the Post-it, crumples it:)
No need for that. You and Wendy will co-write W and P, we'll knock it back to the second wave, nobody teaches it anymore anyway. Now that's Xtreme Team! But damn it, man, let somebody know next time!

Kupiak slaps him on the back, almost knocks him over. As she strides off, Roger turns to Wendy, stunned.

She smiles brightly, tight-lipped.

ROGER

(Near speechless:)

Why?

She doesn't answer. Begins to walk away. Roger follows:

ROGER (cont'd)

I was drunk. I threatened a kid, promised dancing girls for the wedding. I was an asshole to poor Grams!

WENDY

I know. And I was all set to have Kupiak, as the kids say, put a cap in yo ass. But then I discovered -- through more than one phone call -- that my entire family is gossiping about my sex life. In a heterosexual way. For the first time since the eighth grade dance with Bjorn Meyerson. So I figured I owed you.

ROGER

Well thanks. Really.

(Beat.)

Imprisoned on a false charge in Guatemala?

Wendy's half-embarrassed, half-proud:

WENDY

I have a very vivid imagination.

CUT TO:

EXT. B & O MUSEUM -- DAY

Baltimore's B & O railroad museum -- a Victorian-style roundhouse that was once a train-car switching station.

Jason stands at the door, reading Charles Bukowski's Barfly.

You can tell he's reading because his lips are moving.

Suddenly a TRAIN WHISTLE SHRIEKS. He lays down his book, picks up a big train CONDUCTOR'S HAT and puts it on his head.

Waves a LINE of TOURISTS and SCHOOLKIDS toward him.

JASON

(Deadpan:)

All aboard. All aboard. For the amazing Baltimore and Ohio railroad museum.

As he takes tickets, the schoolkids file through.

KID

This is so stupid.

JASON

I'm right there with ya, little dude.

CUT TO:

INT. SPINNING CLASS - DAY

Cloe and Lisa, dressed for sweat, pedal furiously on bikes in the gym.

CLOE

I'm a horrible person.

LISA

No you're not.

CLOE

Yes I am. I'm a horrible, horrible person. They have moral codes to stop people like me.

LISA

Would you stop it? You're the best person on the planet. Tom Hanks is shaking in his boots, Princess Diana was an ice queen next to you. So stop being such a lame ass.

CLOE

He was just so cute. His fingers spread out on the keyboard and he gets that serious look on his face. I couldn't resist.

The WOMAN on the next bike looks over at them.

LISA

Eyes on the road, Missy.

(To Cloe:)

So big deal. You had a frolic with a keyboard fondler.

CLOE

No, it's too messy. He's gonna find out, Michael's gonna find out.

LISA

How's Michael gonna find out, he...

She looks. Cloe is suspiciously silent.

LISA (cont'd)

When's he coming in?

CLOE

Tonight.

LISA

Oh Clo, you just have to make things tough, don't you? Okay. Keep them

apart, that's all. Don't see Piano Guy
for a few days.

CLOE

What if he calls? He's gonna call, I
know it...

LISA

So dump Michael. It's only been, what,
two years? So what if he's fairly
obsessive? I'm sure he'll take it
well.

CLOE

Could you be, like, a little
supportive?

LISA

I'm trying to. Look, either deal with Michael
or heisman Liberace for a while.

The woman biking next to them nods her agreement.

CLOE

You're right. You're right. I'm sure
it'll be fine. It's no big deal,
right?

CUT TO:

EXT. SYMPHONY HALL -- DAY

Thomas, walking along the street, practically dancing:

THOMAS

(Singing:)

"Well, I guess you say-- What can make
me feel this way-a-ay? My girl.
(Higher:) My girl. (Real high:) My
girl! (Now low:) Talkin' 'bout my gir-
r-l. My girl!"

He spins around in place, finds himself at the bottom of
the hill of marble steps leading up to Symphony Hall.

Suddenly gets serious, a bit daunted, looking up at them.

THOMAS (cont'd)

Okay, Tommy. Carburetor Arboretum.

(Beat.)
Stupidest thing I've ever said.

He takes a breath, then walks up the steps.

EXT. SYMPHONY HALL DOORS -- DAY

He boldly comes to the doors. Reaches out, pulls...

And it's locked. He goes to another one.

THOMAS
Carburetor Arboretum?

It's locked too. They're all locked.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Really gonna have to talk to her about
those magic words.

He follows around the building...

EXT. SYMPHONY HALL SIDE DOOR -- DAY

To a side door, more office-like. A sign reads: BALTIMORE
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, GENERAL OFFICES. He reaches for the door,
and this one opens.

INT. SYMPHONY HALL -- DAY

A middle-aged RECEPTIONIST, soon to be a blue-haired old
lady, sits at a desk.

Thomas comes in boldly, nervous -- putting on a slightly
too-affable, too-upper-crusty attitude.

RECEPTIONIST
May I help you?

THOMAS
Yes, I was wondering... if Martin
Warshaw might be in. I'm an old
student of his.

RECEPTIONIST
Really. An old student, you say?

THOMAS
Yes. Years ago. Taught me everything

he knows, old Marty. A flat through G sharp.

Thomas laughs too affably again. She smiles thinly.

RECEPTIONIST

It's funny, I don't think Mr. Warshaw has taught students since he became Artistic Director. Twenty years ago. That would've made you...

THOMAS

Five. I was five. A prodigy.

RECEPTIONIST

Of course. Look, to be frank, do you have any idea how many people would like to perform for Mr. Warshaw? Hundreds. Perhaps thousands. We simply can't let just anyone in.

THOMAS

Maybe there's someone else--

RECEPTIONIST

No, I'm sorry.

THOMAS

Come on, this is a symphony orchestra, right? There must be somebody here who can hear me play?

RECEPTIONIST

Short of you setting up on the sidewalk? I don't think so.

CUT TO:

I/E. CLOE'S TRUCK -- DAY

As Cloe drives to work, she starts HUMMING A TUNE. Then realizes, happily:

CLOE

(Singing:)

"This is... the symphony... that Schubert wrote and never finished..."

INT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY

In a great mood, Cloe directs the tour through the market again, this time with their hands covering their eyes.

CLOE

Okay, we're almost through. And... open.

(They take their hands down:)
We have passed the candy section. Anyone looking back will turn into a pillar of envy. Now, at this point I'd like to answer questions. Anybody confused?

Silence. In the background, Thomas sneaks up on the group. No one responds, so Cloe tries to coax them out:

CLOE (cont'd)

I know this is scary, but I'm a trained nutritionist. I can answer any questions you have. I can tell you how the glucose molecules react with your bloodstream. I know what sustained exercise can do to your insulin intake. I've studied everything about diabetes for years. So, please. Ask me. Ask me anything!

Silence. Then an elderly woman raises her hand.

CLOE (cont'd)

Yes! Mrs. Trivedi?

MRS. TRIVEDI

Um, I was wondering, can I still give my grandson sugar cookies?

CLOE

Yes, Mrs. Trivedi, you can still give your grandson sugar cookies. Anyone else. Anyone?

Mr. Newburg, an older man, slowly raises his hand.

CLOE (cont'd)

Mr. Newburg! What's your question?

MR. NEWBURG

How come I can't eat Frosted Flakes? I love Frosted Flakes.

CLOE

(Slowly losing it:)

Because, Mr. Newburg... Frosted Flakes are about a hundred percent SUGAR!!

(Calm but curt:)

Anyone else? No? Good.

She turns and continues the tour.

CUT TO:

INT. FROZEN FISH SECTION -- DAY

Cloe steams by the frozen fish section as Thomas carefully approaches. She picks up a fish package, looks at it and tosses it back in.

CLOE

Stupid fish.

THOMAS

Not big enough. Throw it back.

She's surprised to see him.

CLOE

Thomas?

THOMAS

Hey. You okay?

CLOE

Fine. Turns out I'm not a nutritionist after all -- I'm a tour guide for aisles one through fifteen. Anybody could do my job. You could do my job.

THOMAS

That's not true. I got lost in aisle six for half an hour.

She smiles. Then sad again:

CLOE

I go home and comb through journal articles, night after night, making

sure I'm up to date. Did you know there are four new diabetes drugs on the market this year, each one with different side effects?

THOMAS

No.

CLOE

Well there are. And I stand there, waiting for them to ask something about that, so I can reassure them. Show them I know what I'm talking about. And all I get is "why can't I eat pixie sticks? I love pixie sticks!"

THOMAS

I guess that's what they need to be reassured about.

(Beat.)

If it makes you feel better, if I get diabetes, you're the first person I call.

He kisses her on the cheek. She melts a bit. Then realizes:

CLOE

What are you doing here?

THOMAS

You're so beautiful. And I need to borrow your truck.

CUT TO:

INT. SYMPHONY OFFICE -- DAY

A plaque reads: MARTIN WARSHAW, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR. WARSHAW, a Polish man in his 60s, sits scribbling at a desk. He hears MUSIC off in the distance faintly.

Slides his chair to the hallway to listen, but doesn't hear anything. So he slides back to the desk.

Hears it again. Looks up--

And out the window to see...

THOMAS--

Playing his piano in the middle of the sidewalk.

EXT. SYMPHONY HALL SIDE DOOR -- DAY

He pounds on the keys, breaking a sweat even in the Fall chill.

Cloe stands beside the piano, proud and kind of inspired. Looks up at the symphony building, waiting.

Jason stands further off, wearing his conductor hat and doing Tai Chi to the music.

Employees of the symphony on their way out, including a VIOLINIST and CLARINET, slow and watch.

VIOLINIST

Oh god. A sidewalk guy. Why do they think that's gonna work?

CLARINET

Weren't you a sidewalk guy?

VIOLINIST

Yeah. But I was damn good.

Thomas refocuses and plays with more gusto. A crowd gathers, listening. The Receptionist has come out too, glowering in bitterness.

And then out steps Marty Warshaw. The employees all look for his reaction, but he's stone-faced.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry, Mr. Warshaw. I tried to tell him to go away.

Warshaw's silent.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)

I've called the police. They'll be here any minute--

CLARINET

Do you mind?! We're trying to listen.

ANGLE ON --

Thomas playing, maybe the best he's ever played. Jason and Cloe look around, enjoy the growing crowd.

He finishes with a flourish. Applause from the crowd.

The clarinet player approaches. Promptly places some sheet music in front of him on the piano.

CLARINET (cont'd)
Brahms's Clarinet Quint in B Minor.
You can handle this?

Thomas nods, nervous.

CUT TO:

THOMAS and THE CLARINET play the Quint. He steals glances from the music to check in with her, work together.

Then the VIOLIN joins in. Cloe smiles, enjoying the growing excitement, the surprise that it's going on at all, really.

As they finish the piece to more applause, the performers congratulate each other, exchange handshakes, smiles.

And Martin Warshaw approaches, still with an air of command about him. The merriment fades.

WARSHAW
You play well.

THOMAS
Thank you.

WARSHAW
You've studied?

THOMAS
Some. I'm self-taught, mostly.

WARSHAW
I see. I'm Martin Warshaw, Artistic Director of the BSO. What is your name?

THOMAS
Thomas. Thomas Foster.

WARSHAW

(To Clarinet:)

Amy, is there some way we can use
Thomas Foster to our advantage?

CLARINET

Rehearsal pianist?

WARSHAW

Good.

(To Thomas:)

Tomorrow at four. We will discuss the
details.

THOMAS

Yes sir. Thank you.

Warshaw nods and walks away. The crowd begins to disperse.

CLARINET

Nice going, kid.

VIOLINIST

Eh. I've seen better.

They leave. Thomas is smiling, but really sedate. Cloe's
waiting for the explosion of joy.

CLOE

Well? Hello?

THOMAS

That's pretty good. Okay.

CLOE

Excuse me?

And then a big grin breaks out on his face. He grabs her,
lifts her up in the air and spins her around.

THOMAS

It's fuckin' great! It's incredible!
I can't believe it! And it's all
because of you! We've gotta celebrate!
Whatever you want. Wherever you wanna
go. We're gonna celebrate all night
long!

The big smile suddenly drops from Cloe's face. She remembers. Checks her watch.

CLOE

Oh my god, I've gotta go.

THOMAS

What?

CLOE

The airport. I got so wrapped up I...
I've gotta pick somebody up.

THOMAS

Who?

CLOE

Huh? Oh, just a friend. I've gotta go.

THOMAS

Okay, I'll come too. We'll celebrate.

CLOE

No. Really, that's okay.

THOMAS

I want to.

She gets into her truck.

CLOE

You can't. I'm sorry. I'll explain later.

THOMAS

What about the piano? You're gonna just leave us here?

CLOE

I'll come back. We can pick it up later.

She closes the truck door, a little frantic. Starts the engine. Leans back out of the truck, gives Thomas a kiss.

CLOE (cont'd)

Sorry. Bye.

And pulls out fast, leaving him there in the dust.

Jason steps forward, watching the truck drive off.

JASON
Couldn't have predicted that one.

Thomas stands there staring after her. And then... SIRENS.
A POLICE CAR pulls up.

The Cop rolls down his window, eyes the piano.

COP
You got a permit for that thing?

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY -- NIGHT

Thomas and Jason sit in the lobby of the police station.

Thomas stares out into space. Jason puts his legs out,
resting them on the piano bench in front of him.

Thomas shoots him a look.

JASON
Oh. Sorry.

And he gingerly puts his feet down. Roger enters, spotting
them.

ROGER
There they are, my little jailbirds. Ma
Barker'll be so proud.

JASON
We paid the fine. Have to come back to
pick up the piano. Fascists.

ROGER
What happened?

Thomas doesn't say anything. Just leaves.

JASON
Seems to be the karmic equivalent of
eating a large piece of shit.

EXT. AIRPORT -- NIGHT

Cloe swings her truck up to the curb, hazards flashing, and gets out, looking around.

And then a baggage cart moves aside and there's Michael. At a payphone, holding flowers. He sees Cloe and rushes to her.

MICHAEL

Cloe! Are you okay? I've been waiting for like forty-five minutes.

They head to her truck.

CLOE

I know, I'm sor--

MICHAEL

I called your apartment twice. I called your cell phone. I thought you got hit by a truck or something.

CLOE

I was at the grocery store. The battery must be dead.

MICHAEL

I told you, always recharge. In an emergency, dead battery equals dead you.

CLOE

I know. I know.

MICHAEL

Anyway. It's great to see you.

He kisses her. Hands her the flowers.

CLOE

Thanks.

MICHAEL

(As he gets in the truck:)
I love you.

But she's already around to the other side. Doesn't answer as she get in.

INT. CLOE'S TRUCK -- DAY

As they drive, Michael goes on and on.

MICHAEL

The exam's next month. They say it's too early for me to think about detective, but I got a lot of plans.

CLOE

You sure do.

MICHAEL

You know, detectives get paid a lot more. Good enough to start a family maybe, even in New York--

CLOE

Michael.

MICHAEL

I'm not pushing, I'm just sayin', that's all.

They drive in silence for a bit. Then:

MICHAEL (cont'd)

So... this is a funny story. Last week? Malick and I run into this dealer -- real lowlife, smack, crack, whatever you want. Well Malick trips him, and out spills this stash of heroin and this gallon bag of Tootsie Rolls. Turns out the guy's a Tootsie Roll freak. And he's like, here, don't arrest me, you can have half the stash. And Malick goes, half the H or half the Rolls?

Michael laughs. Cloe not so much.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

See, Malick, he's a big fat guy. I guess I should have told you that part.

CLOE

Oh. I get it.

MICHAEL

I don't know, I thought it was funny.
The lighter side. Like something on
NYPD Blue or something.

CLOE

Sure.

MICHAEL

You okay, Clo? You seem, I don't know,
a little distant.

CLOE

No. Yeah, I'm fine. It's just, a lot
to think about. New York.

He takes it in. Tries to figure out what to do next.

MICHAEL

You know what it is? It's cold feet,
that's all. 'Cause we've been apart so
long. Everybody gets cold feet. You
just gotta warm 'em up, that's all.
That's why I'm here.

He spots some sheet music on the seat of the truck.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What's this? The Pathetic sonata? You
doing music stuff now?

CLOE

No. No, it's nothing. It's from one
of my patients.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas sits staring straight ahead. Gripping a beer far
too tight. Numb. In denial.

JASON

Sorry, dude.

ROGER

That's rough.

THOMAS

What? She had to go to the airport.
So?

ROGER
So, you couldn't go with her. Even if
it meant stranding you and your eighty-
eight keys on the street. They
impounded your piano!

THOMAS
That wasn't her fault, she had to pick
somebody up.

ROGER
Okay, we're rapidly crossing over here from
benefit-of-the-doubt to doormat.

Thomas looks away, pissed.

JASON
Dude, far be it from me to agree with
the Grim Roger, but look at it with
logic. Ipso: the only reason you
couldn't go with her, is if, facto: she
was picking up a guy.

THOMAS
That's crazy. There are plenty of reasons.

ROGER
Name one.

THOMAS
She's embarrassed about the person
she's picking up. She's embarrassed
about me.

ROGER
Now there's the bright side.

THOMAS
Maybe it's her parents and we're too
early in the relationship.

ROGER
Then why didn't she just say that?

THOMAS

Look, do you have to destroy this perfect thing? Is that it? Is your life so totally fucking miserable that you just need to ruin everybody else's? Huh?

ROGER

Whoa. Where's this from?

THOMAS

Do you have any idea what it's like to have a friend you're always apologizing for? "Oh no, Roger's a great guy. You just don't know him." So maybe I was wrong. Maybe you are an asshole.

Roger is about to speak. Thinks better of it. Turns and walks off. Thomas calls after him, defiant:

THOMAS (cont'd)

There's no reason to think she's suddenly out with some other guy!

Roger SLAMS his door. Jason shakes his head:

JASON

Ouch. Denial and displaced anger. Twin portals to bad karma.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Michael sits at the table, eating the last of his meal. Cloe's in the kitchen, washing the dishes.

MICHAEL

I just love this health food stuff, Clo. Up in the city it's all pizza and hotdogs. I swear I put on thirty pounds. Don't worry, though, hon, it's all man.

(Beat.)

You know, I figured out what's so great about us. We like, inspire each other. I can't tell you how many times I'm on the street and I'm thinkin', I'm protecting Cloe right now. Not literally, but in a larger sense. Clo

and our kids someday. It's like we
inspire each other, you know?

She hears this too. And she just knows.

Wipes her hands. Takes off her apron and heads past him
toward the door. He sees her.

MICHAEL (cont'd)
Where're you going?

CLOE
I'm sorry. I've gotta pick up a piano.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas sits on the piano bench, staring out into space. He
spins and faces the empty wall where the piano used to be.

Puts out his hands, hovering over the imaginary keyboard.
Jason watches.

JASON
Okay, this is probably not healthy.

Roger storms past, putting on his coat.

ROGER
I'm going out. Wouldn't want to
accidentally be an asshole all over
somebody.

And leaves, SLAMMING the front door.

Thomas makes a decision. Slowly spins around, matter-of-
factly:

THOMAS
Me too.

Thomas grabs his coat and leaves.

JASON
Definitely not healthy.
(Beat.)
Wonder what they got in the fridge.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

As Roger storms down to his car, Lisa walks up.

LISA

Hey.

(He brushes past.)

What's with you?

ROGER

Oh, that's right. I'm Mr. Asshole!

LISA

Of course you are. But are you okay?

ROGER

Depends. You coming to see Jason?

LISA

Yeah.

ROGER

See ya.

Suddenly Thomas comes storming out of the house, headed to his car. Passes Roger without a word.

Roger sees this and addresses Lisa, loudly:

ROGER (cont'd)

Say Lisa... does Cloe have another guy?

Thomas stops in his tracks. Doesn't turn, but he's listening.

LISA

Why would you think that?

ROGER

That's not an answer.

Thomas continues on to his car.

LISA

Where's he going?

ROGER

Apparently he's going to Cloe's. Any reason that would be bad?

LISA
Oh yeah. Big reason.

ROGER
I thought so. But no, I'm just the
ASSHOLE.

Thomas starts his car and pulls out.

As he does, another car swerves in, almost colliding.

A MAN, 30s, in a suit and carrying a briefcase, gets out
and blocks Thomas's way. He's a LAWYER:

LAWYER
Are you Jason Pendleton?

THOMAS
No. Now get out of my way before I run
you over.

Thomas screeches out. The lawyer, a bit shell-shocked,
jumps out of the way.

He also clearly suffers from a bad cold. Sneezes big into
a handkerchief. Then, to Roger:

LAWYER
Was that Jason Pendleton?

ROGER
No.

LAWYER
Are you him?

ROGER
He. No, I'm the asshole.

LISA
You just love saying that, don't you?

LAWYER
Do you know where Jason Pendleton is?

Lisa steps up, a little protective.

LISA
Why?

LAWYER

I'm from the firm of Mahoney, Singer,
Boerger, Beck, and Strouse. We've been
trying to reach him for quite a while.
It's a matter of some importance, I'll
have to check his apartment.

LISA

He's not there. He left for the night.

LAWYER

Oh. Well...

(Gives them both his card:)

If you see him, please give him my
card.

As he turns to his car, he sneezes again. A huge one.

LAWYER (cont'd)

This is not what I went to law school
for, I can tell you that.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Roger and Lisa knock on Jason's door.

LISA

Come on, Jason, open up.

The door behind them -- Thomas and Roger's door -- opens up.
Jason's standing there, eating ice cream out of the container.

JASON

What's up?

Roger sees it.

ROGER

That's our ice cream!

And takes it from him. Roger heads inside. Lisa holds up
the lawyer's card for Jason.

LISA

A lawyer was looking for you. He
didn't seem happy.

Jason shrugs it off, not taking the card.

JASON

They've been after me for a while. I
dodge 'em pretty good.

LISA

You wanna talk about it?

JASON

Not really. Wanna mess around?

CUT TO:

EXT. SYMPHONY HALL -- NIGHT

Cloe's truck pulls up to where Thomas's piano had been.
She gets out and walks in slow circles looking around the
area.

CLOE

Oh no. No no no no no.

She sits. Head in hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLOE'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Thomas stands outside Cloe's apartment building, looking up
at the windows. Decides to head in.

INT. CLOE'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- HALLWAY -- NIGHT

He faces Cloe's door. Conflicted. Goes to knock. Changes
his mind and turns away. Gets down one step on the stairs
and changes his mind again.

Goes back to the door. Shakes out his hands... and knocks.
The door opens.

Revealing Michael, a police manual open in hand. Thomas is
a bit stunned. Trying to stay positive.

MICHAEL

Can I help you?

THOMAS

I'm looking for Cloe.

MICHAEL

She's out. You a friend of hers?

THOMAS

Yeah. I guess so, yeah.

MICHAEL

You wanna wait?

He opens the door more. Thomas steps in, slowly, deliberately.

THOMAS

Thanks.

Over the couch he sees Michael's bag and his GUN holster.

THOMAS (cont'd)

Is that...?!

MICHAEL

It's alright, I'm a cop.

THOMAS

Oh. Is something wrong?

MICHAEL

No. No, I'm just visiting for a while.
I'm Cloe's fiance.

Michael says it matter-of-factly. But Thomas freezes -- the color suddenly drains from his face. He tries to act casual, hide the fact that he HAS TO GET OUT OF THERE NOW.

THOMAS

I... you know what? Just tell her I
stopped by.

MICHAEL

Sure. What was your name again?

But he's already gone.

I/E. CLOE'S TRUCK -- NIGHT

Cloe climbs into her truck, shaken. Unsure what she's feeling.

She spots the sheet music on the seat. Picks it up.

There's the Pathetique. And behind it... Another piece, handwritten:

"FOR CLOE".

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

She speeds down the highway, crying.

CUT TO:

INT. MATTY'S BAR -- EVENING

Thomas comes storming into the pool hall. Sits at the bar. Focused, determined.

THOMAS
Matty! A hundred whiskeys! Right
away!

MATTY the BARTENDER takes it in:

MATTY
Let's just start you off with one.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLOE'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Cloe's truck screeches up to the parking lot.

INT. CLOE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Michael sees her out the window. Opens the door as she comes up. He's pissed, smoldering, and having trouble hiding it.

MICHAEL
So where's the piano?

CLOE
It's gone. It's all my fault.

MICHAEL
Some guy dropped by. Didn't seem all
that happy to hear we were engaged.

CLOE

Did you-- We're not engaged, I didn't say yes yet!

MICHAEL

Oh really? Maybe we're not even going out, huh?

CLOE

Michael--

MICHAEL

This guy -- he some piano player? The Pathetic sonata or whatever? I'm not dumb, Clo--

CLOE

I know you're not.

MICHAEL

Then talk to me. What's going on? I thought we had something here!

CLOE

You had something. You had your plans and your ideas and whatever the hell else you had. I was never really a part of it.

MICHAEL

I thought you wanted it! We always had so much fun together. I made you laugh. We were good together.

CLOE

We were. Now, I don't know... I don't want to go to New York.

(Beat.)

No. You know what, that's an excuse.

(Beat. As kindly as she can:)

I don't love you, Michael. You know that. You've always known it. Like you said, you're not stupid.

MICHAEL

No. I guess I was just fooling myself.

CLOE

I'm sorry. I just didn't know for sure. Till now.

She grabs her coat and heads out.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jason stands with his arms out, as if holding a beachball, another Tai Chi pose. Lisa sits, trying on stolen makeup.

LISA

What's going on inside that thick skull of yours! Who the hell are you?!

(He shrugs.)

This is so frustrating! At least tell me why you won't tell me!

He looks at her. Makes a decision:

JASON

Look. Bottom line? I like myself, I like what I've got going on inside. I don't need anybody's approval. That makes me self-involved, so be it.

(Picks one of the lipsticks:)

Think this would look flattering on me?

LISA

Look, if you ever want to have sex with me again, you're gonna have to let me know what's going on inside.

JASON

You're not gonna like it.

LISA

I don't care. I wanna hear it.

CUT TO:

Jason doing one-armed push-ups while Lisa sits on the bed. Staring out into space.

JASON

...so I figure all attraction, and therefore so-called love, is about power. Vulnerability is more about controlling than about loving. I, like all men, am biologically compelled to have as many sexual partners as

possible. Women, on the other hand, are programmed, in genetics and society, to be monogamous. That's why all the great thinkers of our time are misogynist: Keruac, Hemmingway, Picasso, Einstein. I was reading Beckett last week, and he seems to say, hey, keep lookin' out for number one...

As he goes on, Lisa stares out blankly.

CUT TO:

EXT. BALCONY -- NIGHT

Roger sits on his balcony, angry. From inside he hears:

LISA (O.S.)
Shut up! Just shut up!

And Lisa comes out on Jason's balcony, slams the sliding glass door. She's fully dressed. Roger nods hello.

ROGER
You got all your clothes this time.
You earn enough brownie points or what?

LISA
I just broke up with Jason.

ROGER
Really.

LISA
Yeah. I finally got him to talk, turns out he's incredibly annoying.
(Beat.)
I know. You told me so.

They sit in silence. He doesn't want to say it, but has to:

ROGER
You do that because of me?

LISA
No.

ROGER

Come on. Not even a little?

LISA

Sorry. Maybe it's that ego of yours acting up again.

She sees he's vulnerable. Wants to soften the blow.

LISA (cont'd)

Hold on a second. I got you something.

She ducks back inside. Brings out a small potted cactus. Holds it out for him:

ROGER

A cactus?

LISA

I thought it was appropriate.

ROGER

Whenever it pricks me I'll think of you.

LISA

You know, under all that frothing sarcasm, you're actually a pretty good guy.

ROGER

Shocker. So how about checking out the view from this balcony for a while?

She smiles. Shakes her head sadly.

LISA

Sorry, just doesn't work for me. I wish it did. But there's no... spark.
(Beat. Silence.)

I'm thinking of moving away. Find some inspiration. L.A. maybe.

Roger takes that in. Then explodes.

ROGER

Are you kidding me? That's it?! L.A. maybe?! You and I talk till four in the morning everytime we meet -- we fight, we enjoy ourselves. For the

first time in our miserable lives, it's like we're okay people. And that little glimpse -- dare I say "spark" -- of happiness is not worth staying in the same time zone for?

LISA

It's like you said. I need something to fan the flame.

ROGER

That was supposed to be me! Jesus, women can be so thick sometimes! Do you have any idea the carnage you leave behind? You and your little supermarket friend. Use guys up like a Kleenex and throw away the gooey crumpled mess when you're done!

(Beat.)

Okay, that wasn't as good a simile as I wanted, but you get the picture!

LISA

Look, I don't say this, but... I'm sorry.

ROGER

Oh, well that makes everything different.

LISA

Hey! So I didn't fall for you. That's rough, but, grow up, that's how it is sometimes. No need to get snippy.

ROGER

Really. I guess I'm just not as good at disassociating as some people.

That stung. Lisa heads back inside. Then stops herself:

LISA

But Cloe... Cloe really likes that piano guy of yours. So if he blows this he's the biggest fucking idiot that lives.

She goes inside.

ROGER
Oh yeah? Well--

He hears the PHONE RING inside.

ROGER (cont'd)
Well I gotta answer the phone!

INT. THOMAS AND ROGER'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Roger comes in and picks up the phone.

ROGER
Hello, what!
(Beat. Slightly annoyed:)
Oh man. How bad?

CUT TO:

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Thomas is at the bar, drunk going on smashed. And he's singing. Loud.

THOMAS
(To "Bingo":)
...had a dog and Piano was his name-oh.
P-A-I-N-O. P-A-I-N-O. P-A-I-N-O.
Piano was his name-oh. Come on,
everybody!

Roger enters. Sees Thomas making a fool of himself. Matty stands by the door.

MATTY
We didn't wanna throw him out till he
had a ride. Or at least finished the
song.

ROGER
Thanks Matty. You're all heart.

And goes to Thomas.

THOMAS
P-A-I-N-(clap), P-A-I-(clap)-O, P-A-
(clap, clap)-oh-- Piano was his name-
oh!

ROGER

Time to go. You're spelling it wrong.

THOMAS

How am I spelling it?

ROGER

Pain-o. Like Draino.

THOMAS

(Sings:)

And Pain-o was his name... (Swoons:) uh-oh.

Roger catches Thomas, puts his arm over his shoulder and helps him walk out.

ROGER

Come on big guy. Plenty of falling
down you can do at home.

(To onlookers:)

Imagine. And after all the charm
schools we sent him to.

INT. ROGER'S CAR -- NIGHT

Roger drives. Thomas leans against the window, sobering
up.

THOMAS

What are we doing with our lives? Can
you answer me that?

ROGER

Don't ask me this now.

THOMAS

What the fuck are we doing?

ROGER

I am driving my drunk roommate home
after we both got our hearts trampled.

THOMAS

I mean with our lives. What are we
doing with our lives?

ROGER

We're living the dream.

THOMAS

What dream? Slow and steady wins the race? What are we gonna be like in ten years, huh? Scratching away at worthless jobs that are sort of like our dreams in the distant hope that eventually they'll turn into our dreams. Without anyone in our lives to make 'em even remotely seem special?

ROGER

(Kindly:)

You have the ability to be very, very annoying. Now shut up.

EXT. THOMAS'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- STREET -- NIGHT

Roger and Thomas pull up in Roger's car. They get out. Thomas is walking a little better on his own.

ROGER

I'll get some water and aspirin. Cut down the hangover.

THOMAS

Thanks.

And there's Cloe sitting on the building stoop. She stands up.

CLOE

Thomas?

He sees her. Immediately straightens up, trying to look less dishevelled. Roger sees it.

ROGER

He's not really in the best shape right now.

THOMAS

No, I'm fine. Fine. Go ahead, Rog. I know who my friends are.

Roger pulls him aside, talks close.

ROGER

Look, I appreciate that, but--

THOMAS

You were right. I was wrong.

ROGER

Thomas. From your asshole friend who was right before -- don't let this slip away. She makes you feel remotely special.

And he lets Thomas go. Heads up the stairs. And inside.

CLOE

Hello.

THOMAS

Hello.

CLOE

You met Michael.

THOMAS

Yes. And let me just say, I'm not impressed.

CLOE

Thomas--

THOMAS

Sure, you had me there. Magic words! This fantasy world of like, oh, anything's possible. All because this amazing, beautiful woman wants to be with me. With me. Everything will work out, will be just fine. Well it isn't. And it doesn't.

A voice from another apartment yells out:

NEIGHBOR VOICE

Shut up down there!

THOMAS

You shut up! I'm talkin' here!

CLOE

Thomas, this is not you.

THOMAS

Maybe it is. Maybe I'm not the man you think I am at all. Oh no! Maybe, I'm a ROCKETMAN!

(Realizes what he's done. Sinks to
his knees:)
I JUST QUOTED ROCKETMAN!!

Jason peeks out from the door. Followed by Lisa and Roger.

JASON
Dude? You're waking the dead out here.

THOMAS
Sorry, Dude, if I'm not playing it cool
like some people.

JASON
Okay, now you're redirecting your anger
at me, and I don't appreciate it.

Which is when the Lawyer's car pulls up again.

LISA
Give it a rest, Jason?

LAWYER
Jason Pendleton?

LISA
(She points at Jason:)
Right here. That's him.

LAWYER
I knew it! I knew I'd getcha.

JASON
Okay, guy. You got me. Just not here,
alright? Not in front of people.

LAWYER
And let you slip away? Not likely,
guy.

He slaps an envelope into Jason's hand.

LAWYER (cont'd)
There. Your trustee check. All you
need to do is sign for it.

They're all stunned. Even Thomas and Cloe turn.

ROGER

Excuse me?

LAWYER

(Still to Jason:)

Your father explicitly directed that you sign for it. If you can't be in touch with the family, at least you can be made to acknowledge their support.

JASON

I'll come into the office. Please. Just let's not do it here.

ROGER

You're a trust fund baby?!

LAWYER

I was also instructed to inform you that your mother cries constantly.

THOMAS

Hello? Do you all mind?! We're sort of in the middle of something here.

LAWYER

Not that it's any of my business. My business is to get this fucking thing signed so I can get home to my wife and my six month old baby.

Ashamed, Jason signs the paper. The lawyer sneezes again and then storms off.

Roger is about to burst with a mix of amazed joy and anger:

ROGER

You stiff us all the time! You still owe me for the pool game, and you're fucking rich?! Why the hell do you take all those stupid jobs?

JASON

I just wanted to be like everybody else. Don't make a big deal out of it.

ROGER

(Laughing:)

Oh, look at me. I'm Mr. Tai Chi rebel philosopher. I don't care what other

people think. Only I just want to be like everybody else. That's so sweet. But I can't, because I'm filthy stinkin' rich!

THOMAS

Would you two get out of here?!

Jason, still embarrassed, makes a bee-line for inside.

JASON

Sure thing, dude.

ROGER

Hey Jase! I'm a little low! Spot me a twenty?

They clear out. Lisa heads down the steps.

LISA

(Deadpan:)

My work here is done. Cloe, if you need a ride, I'm going home.

Cloe shakes her head. Lisa pats Cloe on the shoulder as she walks off, watching them as she goes.

Cloe and Thomas are left. Silence.

CLOE

I'm sorry. I'm very very sorry.

(Silence.)

Michael's not my fiance, he just... I just broke up with him.

(Still silence.)

I didn't tell you before because... I don't know, I didn't want to screw things up. And I didn't know for sure.

THOMAS

I knew. About you.

CLOE

Yeah, well great. You're perfect. Just like your music. Always know how it's supposed to sound, right?

(Beat.)

I liked the piece you wrote for me.

No reaction. She goes to leave. Turns back, pissed:

CLOE (cont'd)

Look, I just destroyed somebody who had been very important to me so I could be with you. Because you made me feel good. Too good to give up. And if that's not a fantasy world, I don't know what is.

She goes.

He looks up to stop her. But he doesn't.

DISSOLVE TO WHITE:

EXT. BACK YARD/ALLEY -- MORNING

A BRIGHT new day outside the apartment building.

Jason works on his car. Roger comes out, singing:

ROGER

"...He can rely on the old man's money.
He can rely on the old man's money..."
("Discovers" Jason there:)
Oh, hi there. Isn't it a lovely
morning? Slept like a log last night.

Jason keeps working, depressed.

ROGER (cont'd)

And you know why? Because everybody's
fucked up! You showed me that, old
pal. In their own special way,
everybody's fucked.

JASON

And that makes you feel good?

ROGER

Ecstatic.

And he saunters past.

JASON

Glad I could be of help.

INT. THOMAS'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Thomas's ALARM goes off. LOUD. Cranky beyond belief, he yanks it out of the socket and chucks it across the room.

INT. XTREME NOTES OFFICE -- DAY

Roger sits at his desk reading TEEN PEOPLE. Wendy approaches.

WENDY

I see you got the magazine I left.

ROGER

Yeah, thanks. It's keen.

WENDY

I read your rough draft on War and Peace. It's good. For a rough draft.

ROGER

Thank you. That was almost a full compliment.

WENDY

Except of course for your overuse of semicolons joining independent phrases.

ROGER

I happen to like semicolons joining independent phrases.

WENDY

Clearly. Seems like you hardly know any other punctuation at all.

ROGER

Look, Miss Strunk and White, I'm a damn good writer and I don't need some prissy school marm telling me how to get through to the Extreme youth of today. Semicolon... Thank you. Period.

WENDY

Well I don't need some cynical nihilist insulting me and just generally being a jerk. Exclamation point!

ROGER

Fine!

WENDY

Fine!

ROGER
Hey Wendy?

WENDY
What?!

ROGER
You want to go to a movie sometime?

Silence. She's still angry.

WENDY
Yes! Very much.

And she kisses him. And leaves.

ROGER
I knew she would.

INT. WARSHAW'S OFFICE -- DAY

Thomas sits in a chair across from Martin Warshaw, staring absentmindedly out the window. The older man is explaining Thomas's duties:

WARSHAW
...called on a rotating basis according to needs and availability. I recommend being as available as possible.
(Beat.)
The facilities are not perfect, but they are outstanding. A good opportunity to learn and be inspired. Although seeing you play in the cold for so long, inspiration doesn't seem a problem, yes?

As Warshaw talks, Thomas rises from his chair:

THOMAS
I'm sorry, Mr. Warshaw. I need to do something. I'll be available any time, starting tomorrow.

And he leaves. Warshaw's stunned, but also a bit amused.

WARSHAW

Vive l'amour.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Cloe leads a new group through the aisles. But now she's dead bored. The sparkle is gone.

CLOE
This is the breads and cereals aisle.
Breads. Cereals. And of course you
don't have any questions.

She turns away from them to continue.

CLOE (cont'd)
Ahead is the ever so interesting meat
counter.

THOMAS'S VOICE (O.S.)
Excuse me? Miss Cunningham?

She turns. Sees Thomas there among the group, his hand raised.

THOMAS
Miss Cunningham, I have a question.

She's a bit stunned, a bit pissed. Not sure what to make of it.

CLOE
Yes?

THOMAS
I was wondering. Could you explain to
me the primary side effects of the four
latest diabetes drugs?

The tour members are quizzical. But Cloe can't help it, she melts. A huge grin spreads across her face.

He steps forward, takes her face in his hands...

THOMAS (cont'd)
Carburetor Arboretum.

...and kisses her. As the kiss becomes more passionate, the LOVE THEME (FOR CLOE) fills the air...

CAMERA PULLS BACK to a soaring shot of the supermarket and...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MALL - DAY

A large crowd stands before the WHITE PIANO, gaping in awe. The music has segued into Billy Joel's PIANO MAN...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL...

The bench is empty; Thomas isn't there. The Piano plays by itself, Rossmore's CD working its magic, making the keys move on their own.

Everyone in the store gawks at it, amazed.

Rossmore is extremely pissed.

CUT TO:

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

A party like the first one. People talking. Classical Music playing in the b.g. Camera weaves in and out. It finds:

ROGER and WENDY-- Chatting with a woman, very much doing the couple thing.

WENDY

...But we're thinking of writing a novel on the side. Kind of a "he says, she says".

ROGER

Where she says long-winded intellectual things and he says quick funny ones.

She jabs him in the ribs a bit.

WENDY

Not so funny. But he tries.

CAMERA MOVES AGAIN. Past Jason, who's cornered some pretty young thing (THE PR AGENT) in a corner:

JASON

Mostly Tai Chi. A little auto repair.
I'm taking up Jai Alai. It's the
indigenous sport of Papua New Guinea.

PR AGENT

Actually, no it's not. It's Basque.
From Medieval France and Spain.

JASON

Oh. Excuse me.

He moves on, back to being the strong, silent type.

CAMERA MOVES across the room TO LISA, talking to a boring
guy:

LISA

LA wasn't any better... Can't swing a
dead cat without hitting an actor or a
screenwriter.

(beat.)

Your job isn't anything quirky or
interesting, is it?

BORING GUY

Not really. I'm an accountant.

LISA

Great. Wanna fuck?

CAMERA catches Jason as he heads over to Roger.

JASON

Hey, where's Thomas, anyway?

INT. MEYERHOFF AUDITORIUM - DAY

Thomas, alone on stage, plays "FOR CLOE" on a grand piano.

CAMERA MOVES TO REVEAL the audience -- only Cloe. But she
sits, rapt. He brings the piece to an end. Pushes back
from the keyboard.

Cloe LEAPS to her feet, clapping and giving a standing
ovation as Thomas stands up and takes a bow.

FADE OUT.

THE END