"LIVING IN OBLIVION"

Screenplay by

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A battered 35mm movie camera stands alone on a wooden tripod surrounded by blackness. Opening credits begin. An almost imperceptible DOLLY in toward the movie camera. The dolly forward continues throughout the credits ending in an EXTREME CU of the camera's lens, filling the frame like a giant, glass full moon. Fade to BLACK.

Suddenly a door opens directly in front of the camera, wiping the lens and revealing the following scene in Black and White.

EXT. STREET. NYC. NIGHT

A quiet, deserted industrial street. It is over an hour before dawn and the street is still cloaked in the heavy stillness of night.

In the weak light filtering out of their battered van, BERT and CYBIL -- the Craft Service Managers, finish setting out breakfast supplies on a 6' table. They work in almost complete silence, both nearly paralyzed with sleep. A cheap walkie-talkie, lying beside a paper plate of soggy Oreos, sputters and buzzes occasionally. Other items on the table include a mangled banana, seven grapes, and a box of chocolate covered donuts.

BERT
What time is it?

CYBIL
Four. Why?

BERT
This milk is bad.

CYBIL
(sniffs)
When did you buy it?

BERT
Tuesday? I don't know. What's today?

CYBIL
Monday.
(pause)
There's a deli on Broadway.

BERT
Nothing closer?

CYBIL
Nothing that's open.

BERT
(sniffs the milk)
Is it that bad?

CYBIL

I don't know. You're the one who said it was bad.

At that moment a large truck grinds around the corner and shudders to a stop in front of the building. Bert replaces the carton of milk neatly beside the orange juice.

EXT. STREET. NYC. NIGHT. B/W

Amid low, one-word greetings, the CREW tumbles out of the trucks and stands in a groggy cluster around the Craft Service table. WOLF -- the Cameraman, assumes a place of prominence. He wears a black leather coat, a black beret, and black leather half-fingered gloves.

WOLF
This is the worst fucking coffee I've had in my life.

CYBIL
Then don't drink it.

GAFFER
What're we doing today?

WOLF
(pulls out a wrinkled callsheet)
"Interior. Living Room. Ellen talks to Mom."

AC
Any nudity?

CYBIL
Yeah, you have to take your fucking pants off.

AC
I'll do it. I like Ellen.

GAFFER
Yeah, she's a babe. She was the nurse in that Richard Gere movie.

BERT
I worked on that.

AC
The shower scene.

WOLF
Start with the 5K in the window. Run feeders for three blonds into the living room.

GAFFER

Two people. Sitting? Standing?

WOLF
Who fuckin' knows?

GAFFER
(walks off)
"Ellen talks to Mom."

INT. CAR. NIGHT. B/W

NICOLE sits quietly in the back seat of a beat-up station wagon. She glances out at the empty city moving past her window and lets out a deep sigh.

JEFF, the young intern assigned as her driver, glances into the rearview mirror.

JEFF
Tired?

NICOLE
No, I've been up since four. I've got a big scene today and I'm kind of nervous.

JEFF
"Ellen talks to Mom."

NICOLE
Have you read the script?

JEFF
No. It's on the callsheet.

NICOLE
Oh. Well, it's pretty emotional. I tell my mother I never felt she really loved me.

JEFF
You're going to yell at each other?

NICOLE
I don't know. I'm just going to go with how I feel. Which is the scary part. I'm very close to this character.

JEFF
Problems with your own mom?

NICOLE
Yes. But she died before I, well before we could reconcile...

JEFF

You were great in that Richard Gere movie.

NICOLE
Thanks.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL HOTEL. NIGHT. B/W

CU sidewalk. A pair of women's orthopedic shoes enter the frame and begin pacing.

Camera pans up to reveal CORA, a small woman in her early 60s, pacing beneath the awning of her residential hotel. She appears to be rehearsing dialogue with herself.

CORA
Ellen, I have no memory of this whatsoever. Ellen... Ellen I have NO memory of this whatsoever.

Jeff pulls the car up to the curb and Cora gets into the back seat.

INT. CAR. NIGHT. B/W

NICOLE
Good morning, "Mom."

CORA
(gruff)
Morning.

NICOLE
Sleep well?

CORA
Not a wink.

Cora immediately lights a cigarette. Nicole instinctively wrinkles her nose and turns away. Cora notices this and makes an exaggerated effort to keep the smoke away from Nicole by blowing it hard out the side of her mouth. Jeff glances back at the two women in the rearview mirror. No one speaks.

INT. SET. DAWN. B/W

NICK -- the Director, WOLF -- the Cameraman and WANDA -- the AD, stand in a loose triangle on the darkened set. All are holding coffee cups. The Gaffer can be seen in the background fumbling with a light.

NICK
Look, I'm not blaming anybody, Wanda. I'm just saying we left last night and I knew we didn't get that scene.

WANDA

I'm sorry, I thought it was a great scene, Nick.

NICK
It was OK; and it's going to be alright. But I'm not settling for OK today. This is a big scene and I'm not leaving till we get it.

WANDA
Whatever it takes, Nick. We're here for you.

NICK
Alright, here's what I'm thinking. Wolf, I want to do the whole scene in one shot.

WOLF
It's been done.

NICK
I know that but I'd like to try it anyway.

WOLF
Handheld.

NICK
No, dolly. We go from Close-up to Wide-shot and back to Close-up in the same shot.

WOLF
I'll use the 35, minimize distortion; I'll light it all from the ceiling. It could be kind of great.

WANDA
Sounds incredible. How long, Wolf?

WOLF
I'll need to see a couple run-throughs.

NICK
Not too many. It's a tough scene for the actors. I want them to feel relaxed, fresh...

WANDA
We've got all day, Nick. Whatever it takes. What do you think, Wolf -- an hour, 45?

WOLF
I don't know how you drink that shit

black, Nick. I got to dump in the milk. It's the only way I can cut the taste.

Suddenly the Gaffer turns on the 5K, flooding the room with harsh, blinding light.

NICK
Jesus!

WOLF
What the fuck?!

WANDA
Flame on, asshole!!

The screen goes completely WHITE.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

Screen is still white. Gradually it shifts back to proper exposure revealing NICOLE in Medium CU. Her eyes are riveting; it is obvious she is emotionally primed for the scene. A light meter is thrust in front of her face. She barely registers it.

WS, the entire Living Room set. Nicole sits on a sofa facing Cora seated opposite in an overstuffed chair. Two flats have been joined at right angles to create the Living Room corner. A table lamp and assorted framed photographs complete the rather scrawny looking set.

Most of the movie crew is seen, including Wolf looking through the camera.

WANDA
OK, picture's up. Quiet. Stop the work. Lock it up. Going for picture.

Nick approaches Nicole and Cora.

NICK
OK, nice and easy. Cora you're doing fine. Remember, really listen and really answer.
(smiles at Nicole)
I've got nothing to say to you. Just let it happen. It's all there.

WANDA
Ready, Nick?

WOLF
Look at this a second, Nick.

Nick moves behind the camera and looks through the eyepiece. Another CU of Nicole fills the frame. The image is visually

and emotionally breathtaking.

WOLF
I pushed in a foot. She's incredible. It's coming right through the lens.

Nick grips Wolf's shoulder in gratitude.

NICK
That's great, man. Beautiful.

WANDA
Ready, Nick?

NICK
Let's go. Right away.

WANDA
And, roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
And, roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take one.
(hits the sticks)

NICK
Action.

INT. APT. THE SCENE: TAKE 1. COLOR

From the moment Nick calls "action" the film will cut directly to the shot the set camera is filming. The shot is fluid, graceful and in richly, beautiful COLOR. Nicole's performance is very strong; flawed only slightly by her nervousness.

NICOLE
Dad hit me first and knocked me down. It didn't hurt that much but I started crying anyway, hoping he would leave me alone. He went over and started hitting Danny.

CORA
Ellen, I have no memory of this whatsoever.

NICOLE
You were just standing there looking at me. Then you pulled me up and

said, "You're not hurt." Like I was disgusting for faking, for doing the only thing I could think of to keep him from hitting me again.

CORA
I was worried about Danny.

NICOLE
You do remember.

CORA
He was smaller than you.

Nicole turns to Cora with the heartbreaking gaze of an abandoned child. Nick and the rest of the crew watch in awe.

NICOLE
You were so worried about Danny --

Suddenly the BOOM dips all the way into the shot.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

WOLF
Cut! Boom in. Sorry, I had to cut. Les, your boom was all the way in the shot.

BOOM
Well, where's the frame line?

All the crew move around, all talking at once.

WANDA
OK, can we get a frame line? Hold it down. We're going again right away. Nobody moves. Les, you got the frame line?

BOOM
I guess so.

WANDA
OK, here we go. Right away. Picture's up.

Nick approaches Nicole and Cora.

NICK
Beautiful; both of you. Stay focused. Stay with it. No big deal. Let's go, Wanda. Right away.

WANDA
Roll sound!

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take two.
(hits the sticks)

NICK
And, action.

INT. APT. THE SCENE: TAKE 2. COLOR

NICOLE
Dad hit me first and knocked me down. It didn't hurt that much but I started crying anyway, hoping he would leave me alone. He went over and started hitting Danny.

CORA
Ellen, I --

The image suddenly goes out of focus.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

AC
I'm sorry, I have to cut. I was completely off on the focus. It's my fault, I'm sorry.

WANDA
Thanks for the apology but you'll never work in this town again.
(laughter)

AC
I've got it now.

WANDA
Here we go, right away. Lock it up. And roll sound...

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll Camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take three.
(hits the sticks)

NICK
And, action.

INT. APT. THE SCENE: TAKE 3. COLOR

The scene begins once again. Remarkably, Nicole's enormous commitment is just as full and sharp. Nick is in ecstasy.

NICOLE
Dad hit me first and knocked me down. It didn't hurt that much but I started crying anyway, hoping he would leave me alone. He went over and started hitting Danny.

CORA
Ellen, I have no memory of this whatsoever.

Suddenly a car stops right outside, a heavy, bass-driven rap song blasting out of its trunk-mounted speakers.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

SOUND
Street noise!

WANDA
That's a cut!
(into her walkie)
What the fuck's going on down there!? You call that a lock-up!? Get that car out of there!

NICK
Jesus Christ. Why doesn't the guy just get a flatbed trailer with about 600 speakers on it and tow it behind his car.

Everyone nods in annoyed agreement; everyone except the Boom man who appears to be following the music with the mike, bopping to it through the headphones. Slowly, interminably, the music fades off into the distance.

SOUND
And... it's clear.

WANDA
(into her walkie)
Do I have a lock-up?

WALKIE (V.O.)
kkkkkssst... stttts yes.

WANDA
Is that a real lock-up?

WALKIE (V.O.)
sssssssssssspppkkss.

WANDA
OK, right away. Picture's up. Roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
And, roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take four.
(hits the sticks)

NICK
Action.

INT. SET APT. THE SCENE: TAKE 4. COLOR

NICOLE
Dad hit me first and knocked me down. It didn't hurt that much but I started crying anyway, hoping he would leave me alone. He went over and started hitting Danny.

CORA
Ellen, I have no memory of this whatsoever.

NICOLE
You were just standing there looking at me. Then you pulled --

Suddenly the BOOM drops into frame again.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

WOLF
Boom's in.

NICK
Jesus Christ.

BOOM

Where?

WOLF
The whole left side of frame, Les.

WANDA
Alright, can we please get a motherfucking frame line please?!

BOOM
The frame keeps changing.

WOLF
That's the idea, Les.

SOUND
May I make a suggestion? Is it possible to maybe break the shot down? Maybe two shots instead? Might make it easier for Les.

NICK
No.

SOUND
Then I need ten minutes to switch to radio mikes.

WANDA
Your call, Nick.

NICK
There won't be any other sound problems?

SOUND
No more boom problems.

NICK
Switch to radios.

WANDA
That's a ten-minute break. Release the lock-up. Stand by.

WOLF
(to the AC)
Get me a coffee. Half milk.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

Nick looks for Nicole but sees only Cora standing by the couch. Les has both arms up the back of her dress, running the wire to her radio mike. She's wearing stockings rolled down to just above her knees.

Nick turns and spots Nicole by herself in a dark corner of

the set and walks over to her.

INT. SET APT. A CORNER. DAY. B/W

NICK
I'm sorry about all this, Nicole.

NICOLE
It's not your fault, Nick. Is there a way to use some of the earlier takes?

NICK
Not unless I change the shot; do a cutaway of Cora or something and intercut the takes. I don't want to do that. It's a really nice shot and what you're doing is incredible.

NICOLE
Thanks, Nick.

NICK
The radio mikes are going to make everything easier. So, look. Take a moment. Let all this shit go. We don't roll till you're ready.

NICOLE
OK.

Nick moves back to the set, leaving Nicole in the shadows. Camera stays on her as she begins emotionally preparing herself once again.

SCRIPT (V.O.)
How was she in that Richard Gere movie?

CYBIL (V.O.)
So-so.

Camera slips halfway through an open bedroom door, holding Nicole on one side of the frame while revealing PAM the Script Supervisor and CYBIL sitting on the floor smoking. Though separated by the wall, Nicole hears everything the two women say.

SCRIPT
Her career really took off, didn't it?

CYBIL
I saw her in a Michael Bolton video.

SCRIPT
She is nice; but I could do a better

job.

Camera slips into a CU of Nicole. She closes her eyes as the two women continue talking about her. Screen goes BLACK.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

A BLACK scrim, held by the Gaffer, passes in front of the camera, revealing the set with Nicole and Cora settling in for a take.

WANDA
Where's that flag going?

GAFFER
It's a scrim.

WANDA
Wolf!

WOLF
Two seconds, Wanda.

WANDA
No. No more tweaking. Picture's up.
(into her walkie)
Lock it up!

Wolf quickly motions Gaffer to hand-hold the scrim in front of the 5K.

WANDA
And, roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take five.
(hits the sticks)

NICK
Action.

INT. SET APT. THE SCENE: TAKE 5. COLOR

Once again the scene begins. Nicole shows the first signs of losing her concentration.

NICOLE
Dad hit me first and knocked me down.

It didn't hurt that much but I started crying anyway, hoping he would leave me alone. He went over and started hitting Danny.

CORA
Ellen, I have no memory --

Suddenly there is a tremendous EXPLOSION sending bits of glass flying through the frame. Cora jumps, clutching her chest.

CORA
Oh, God!

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

CU the light the Gaffer had been holding the scrim before. It is smoking and shattered.

NICK
Jesus fucking Christ!

WOLF
(to the Gaffer)
Kill it. Kill it. Pull the plug. Right there by your foot.

WANDA
That's a cut. Anybody hurt? Cora, are you alright?

Cora nods wordlessly, gasping for breath.

WANDA
Props. Props! Let's get a broom up here right away. Clear the set!

INT. APT. HALLWAY. DAY. B/W

Nick, Cora, and Nicole stand in a corner of the landing. Nick is making obvious attempts to lighten the mood.

NICK
Well, let's see. What do you think is going to happen next, Cora?

CORA
I'm going to have a heart attack!

NICK
No, you're not. You're going in there in two minutes and we are really going to nail this scene. I know it. I have no doubt about it. Nicole...

Nick turns to Nicole and stops in midsentence. He looks at

her for a long moment. Nicole returns his gaze then suddenly looks away.

WANDA (V.O.)
Nick! Nick!

NICK
One second!

Nick hesitates a moment then rushes back to the set.

CORA
I'll tell you this much right now; I am never, ever doing another fucking low-budget movie.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

Nick joins Wanda and Wolf on the set couch and chair.

NICK
What's up?

WANDA
Wolf and I were talking... Ellen's losing it a little bit. You got three quarters of the scene really, really incredible in the first take. Do a quick cut-away and all you need is a pickup of the last part of the scene.

NICK
Wolf?

WOLF
You know how I feel; I love this shot. Hell, I designed it.

NICK
Then let's just stick with the game plan, OK? It's a simple shot. We're going to get it this time, I feel it.

WANDA
We're here for you, Nick. Whatever it takes.

Nick moves off. Wanda stares at Wolf who studiously inspects his light meter.

WANDA
Thanks.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

Camera is close on the black-and-white clapboard. Nicole's

face can be partially seen behind it.

WANDA
And, roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
And, roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take six.
(hits the sticks)

NICK
Action.

INT. SET APT. THE SCENE: TAKE 6. COLOR

As the scene begins again, it is obvious that both actresses are completely distracted. Nick's face betrays a rapidly increasing anxiety.

NICOLE
Dad hit me first and knocked me down. It didn't hurt that much but I started crying anyway, hoping he would leave me alone. He went over and started hitting Danny.

CORA
I...

There is a long awkward pause as Cora realizes she can't remember her line.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

NICK
Cut. That's OK, Cora. What's the line? Just say it to me; no acting.

CORA
I...
(pause)

AC
"Ellen, I have no memory of this line whatsoever."

Amid general tittering from the crew, Wanda yells out.

WANDA

OK, could we get the line please?!
Script!

SCRIPT
(Pam)
"Ellen, I have no memory of this
whatsoever."

WANDA
Thank you. And, roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
And, roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take seven.
(hits the sticks)

NICK
Action.

INT. SET APT. THE SCENE: TAKE 7. COLOR

The scene begins again. Nicole is lifeless; she's merely saying the lines.

NICOLE
Dad hit me first and knocked me down.
It didn't hurt that much but I started
crying anyway --

CORA
I was worried about Danny!

Nicole stops cold, completely thrown by Cora jumping her line.

NICOLE
I'm sorry, I'm lost...

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

NICK
Cut. It's OK. No big deal.

Nick's voice has the rigid tremble of someone barely able to keep from screaming.

NICK
Everyone relax. We're just going to
run the lines. That's all. No acting.

Just run the lines. Then we're going
to shoot this fucking scene.

INT. SET APT. THE COUCH. DAY. B/W

Nicole gets up quietly and sits next to Cora on the couch, wordlessly taking her hand in hers.

CORA
(whispers)
I'm so sorry. I'm fucking this up
for you.

NICOLE
(whispers)
Cora, don't even think that. You're
doing great. I'm the one who's fucking
it up. If I get through this I swear
I'm never acting again.

She means it. Cora glances up at her, seeing for the first time how pain and defeat have drawn the life from Nicole's face. On an impulse Cora reaches out and gently lifts a strand of Nicole's hair from her eyes.

A sudden amazed alarm fills Nicole. The living room grows strangely quiet.

NICK
(faintly, from a
distance)
And, action on the run-through.

CU Nicole. She looks quickly toward Nick in confusion.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY. COLOR

DISSOLVE to a nurse moving quickly past the camera and out the open door of the hospital room.

CU Nicole, seated on the edge of the hospital bed. Still confused, she looks down at the old woman lying in the bed. The woman's face is pale and drawn. As Nicole leans closer her mother reaches out and gently brushes a strand of hair away from her face. The gesture is one of love, acceptance, and farewell. It is identical to the one we have just seen Cora make to her.

NICK (V.O.)
And action on the run-through.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

WS, the Living Room Set. Nick, Wanda, the rest of the crew standing quietly. Nicole glances over at Cora and instantly something unspoken and unexplained passes between them. The run-through begins.

From the moment Nicole opens her mouth it is obvious there has been a remarkable change in her. Every word now has the stunning clarity of truth. Cora is completely engulfed in the moment.

NICOLE
Dad hit me first and knocked me down. It didn't hurt that much but I started crying anyway, hoping he would leave me alone. He went over and started hitting Danny.

CORA
Ellen, I have no memory of this whatsoever.

NICOLE
You were just standing there looking at me.

As Nicole continues, one by one the crew turn and watch this exquisite moment happening before them. Nick's face is lit with rapture.

NICK
(whispering)
Roll camera... roll camera.

He glances over and to his horror sees that no one is behind the camera. He whispers frantically to the AC.

NICK
Where's Wolf?

AC
(whispers)
In the bathroom... he doesn't feel good.

NICK
(whispers)
Get him! Get him!

Nick turns back to the scene, watching its beauty now in agony.

NICOLE
Then you pulled me up and said, "You're not hurt." Like I was disgusting for faking, for doing the only thing I could think of to keep him from hitting me again.

CORA
I was worried about Danny.

NICOLE
You do remember.

CORA
He was smaller than you.

NICOLE
You were so worried about Danny. What about me, Mom? Why weren't you worried about me?

There is a heavy, stunned silence as the scene ends. Nicole and Cora are in each other's arms. Pam and Cybil share a piece of tissue. CUT TO: an extreme CU of Nick.

NICK
Where the fuck is Wolf?!!!

INT. BATHROOM. DAY. B/W

In the cramped confines of the dingy basement bathroom, Wolf pukes violently into the toilet. His face is pale and slick with perspiration. His eyes look upward toward the sound of Nick yelling.

WOLF
One second!

Wolf tries to continue but another spasm of nausea wrenches him back toward the toilet bowl.

INT. SET APT. THE COUCH. DAY. B/W

The set is quiet, subdued. Nick sits on the couch with Nicole and Cora. Wolf sits groggily behind the camera wiping the sweat from his face. Wanda addresses the crew.

WANDA
OK, listen up. Nobody drinks the milk downstairs. OK? It appears to be bad.

Nick speaks uneasily to Nicole and Cora. He is a wreck and his insistent smile of encouragement looks absolutely demented.

NICK
I've had to, well I've changed the shot; we're just a little pressed for time. It'll just be a CU of Ellen for the last part of the scene, starting with Cora's "I was worried about Danny." OK? I'll find a way to cut this into the fourth take. We almost had it. That was unbelievable, both of you. But let's not think about it. That moment is gone, and...

we'll, we'll get another one. I have
no doubt about it. OK? Here we go.

Nick walks over and stands beside the camera.

INT. SET APT. BY THE CAMERA. DAY. B/W

WOLF
I'm ready, Nick.

Nick is so angry he can't even look at Wolf.

NICK
Call it, Wanda.

WANDA
And, roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
And, roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, Pickup, take one.
(hits the sticks)

NICK
Action.

INT. SET APT. THE SCENE: PICKUP 1. COLOR

The scene begins at the pickup point. Miraculously, both Cora and Nicole are just as concentrated and engaged as they were in the run-through.

CORA
I was worried about Danny.

NICOLE
You do remember.

CORA
He was smaller than you.

NICOLE
You were so worried about Danny.
What about me, Mom? Why weren't --

In the middle of this final, delicate moment an insistent electronic beeping is heard.

INT. SET APT. DAY. B/W

NICK
CUT!!!!

WANDA
What the fuck is that?! Sound?

SOUND
(frantically checking his equipment)
It's not me.

BOOM
It's the camera.

WOLF
The fuck it is. It's off; it's not even running.

The beep continues, growing louder.

WANDA
(into her walkie)
What's going on down there?! Do I have a lock-up?! Nothing? You don't hear a beeping sound?
(to Nick)
The street's quiet.

NICK
Then what the fuck is it!!?

AC
It's somebody's watch!

Everybody holds their watches up to their ears.

WOLF
Not mine.

WANDA
Not mine.

SOUND
Not mine.

BOOM
Not mine.

And so on, until all watches have been checked with negative results. The beeping continues, growing louder and louder.

Suddenly Nick loses it. He starts running around the set, ripping things apart, knocking over tables, lamps, chairs. He shoves Cora off the couch and whips off the cushions, heaving them against the wall with a startling violence.

NICK
Where is it!! You motherfucker! You cock-sucking motherfucking bastard! Where the fuck are you!? Where!! Where!!

Everyone watches Nick demolish the set in stunned, open-mouthed amazement. Nick turns to the crew in rage.

NICK
Can someone help me please?! Do I have to do everything myself here?!

Nick loses it completely.

NICK
Hey, Cora. Why don't you go learn your lines! Hey Scriptgirl, are you finally going to pay attention here?! Hey, focus puller, you want to make a movie or get stoned?! Huh, I got some great fuckin' Thai Stick here! Hey Wolf, you pretentious, beret-wearing motherfucker! I saw your reel, man; it sucked! Who the hell would hire you anyway! Hey Wanda, next time can you wear a shirt that's a little more distracting to my actors!
(to the Gaffer)
Hey Bob! Hi Bob! Can you please make a little more noise on the dolly you creaky motherfucker!
(to Cybil)
What is your name!? What do you fucking do around here?!
(to the Soundman)
Hey Speedo, what's the matter? Can't even find a teeny fucking beep?!

CU of Nicole. She turns away, unable to watch anymore. The beeping continues.

NICK
See what I have to put up with, Nicole!? Maybe next time you'll do some of that magic on camera!? But no, no -- wait till Wolf is puking his guts out, "Oh now I'll be good!!"

WS, the entire room. Nick's last word echoes throughout the silent set. Suddenly he stops in the center of the demolished set and lets out a long, wrenching scream.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT. COLOR

QUICK CUT TO extreme CU Nick's face, just as his eyes open.

The film is in COLOR now. The room is in heavy darkness except for the light on Nick's face. Nick reaches over and shuts off his clock radio. The digital dial shows 4:00 A.M. The beeping finally stops.

Nick turns on a light and sits up in bed, drenched in sweat and still breathing heavily.

NICK
God...
(this is not a sigh of relief)

The camera DOLLIES swiftly back away from Nick. He stares at it in stunned amazement. Just then a DOOR closes right into the lens turning the frame into complete BLACKNESS.

Out of the BLACKNESS a door opens away from the camera revealing WANDA looking into her closet (the camera is inside the closet). From this point on, the rest of the film is in COLOR except where specifically indicated to be Black and White.

INT. WANDA'S APT. DAWN

She is wearing only a bra, black stretch pants, and cowboy boots. She rummages quickly through some blouses, selects the same garish one she wore in Part One, then walks away revealing WOLF sitting on the edge of the rumpled bed. He is dressed exactly the same as when we last saw him, complete with beret. He struggles groggily into his socks and boots. The entire apartment is in disarray. A bedside clock reads 4:13 A.M.

WOLF
Well, when did he ask you?

WANDA
Yesterday, when I was helping him check into his hotel.

WOLF
What, the guy can't even check into a hotel by himself?

WANDA
Listen, Wolf, having Chad Palomino in this movie will benefit us all. If being there when he checks into his hotel makes him feel better, then I'm happy to do it.

WOLF
Well, how did it come up?

WANDA
He asked me if I liked jazz, I said

yes, and he suggested we meet tonight
at a jazz club.

WOLF
I like jazz.

WANDA
He did not invite you.
(applies perfume)

WOLF
Why are you wearing perfume to work?

WANDA
Because I feel like it.

WOLF
You didn't wear it yesterday.

WANDA
Oh, stop it. You're acting like a
child.

Wanda playfully swipes at Wolf's face with a negligee she is returning to the closet. It misses him completely.

WOLF
My eye!

WANDA
Oh, God. Sweetheart, are you alright?

WOLF
Do I look alright?!

WANDA
Let me see. Christ, we're going to
be late.

Wanda sits and perfunctorily examines Wolf's eye.

INT. CAR. DAWN

The car is parked outside a rather seedy hotel. JEFF, the Intern and NICK, the Director, sit quietly in the motionless car.

NICK
Should we call up to the room again?

JEFF
He said he'd be right down.

Nick lets out a huge yawn.

JEFF
Tired?

NICK
I'm exhausted. I dreamt I was on the set all night. I was just trying to do one shot and everything kept going wrong.

JEFF
That's an anxiety dream. Are you anxious about something?

NICK
I don't know. Sometimes I wonder what the hell I'm doing in this business. It's all just one compromise and disappointment after another. I don't know if I have the personality for it.

JEFF
Sounds kind of like an identity crisis.

NICK
Maybe you're right. Who am I? What am I really capable of? Maybe I should just get a job teaching at a women's college somewhere.

JEFF
How'd you get into cinematography?

NICK
I'm not a cinematographer.

JEFF
You're not?

NICK
No. I'm directing this movie.

JEFF
(pause)
How'd you get into directing?

INT. HOTEL ROOM. DAWN

In the dim light of the hotel room, CHAD PALOMINO dresses quickly. He is young, handsome, with long blond hair. A WOMAN sits nude on the bed, her back to the camera. The faint sound of a shower comes from the adjacent bathroom.

PALOMINO
They're waiting downstairs.

WOMAN
Go ahead, I'll take a taxi.

PALOMINO
Oh, OK. Listen, I've got to tell you, I had a lot of fun last night, really, but for me, where I'm at right now in my life, a relationship is...

WOMAN
Chad; hold it. This was a one-time deal. You know it, I know it. There is no need for melodrama.

PALOMINO
I just thought you might...

WOMAN
Look, all I ask is that you don't mention this to anyone.

PALOMINO
Hey, that's not my style.

WOMAN
Good.

PALOMINO
So, I'll see you on the set.

Palomino slips out the door. The woman falls back onto the bed, turning her face toward the camera. We see it is NICOLE.

NICOLE
God damn it.

She lies for a moment, listening to the sound of the shower. The bedside clock reads 4:30 A.M.

INT. CAR. DAWN

The car pulls up outside a NYC apt building. Jeff, Nick, and Palomino sit inside.

PALOMINO
I got two films coming up right after yours, Nick. One I play a rapist that Michelle Pfeiffer falls in love with. The other I'm kind of a sexy serial killer who shacks up with Winona Ryder.

NICK
That's great, man.

PALOMINO
Yeah, but I'm not into that hostess twinkie shit, Nick.

NICK
Hostess twinkie?

PALOMINO
That Hollywood shit. It's all fluff, man. These are the kind of movies I want to do, right here.

NICK
I'm glad you feel that way, Chad. And I just want to tell you, I'm really happy we can work together.

PALOMINO
Hey, me too! You're a great director, man. Your films are wacked! And I'm gonna be watching you, buddy. Like a hawk. I want to learn from you, Nick. I'm gonna pick your brain.

NICK
Good. Then you can pick my nose.

PALOMINO
(big laugh)
See what I mean? You're wacked. Hey, what are we sitting here for?

NICK
We're waiting for Nicole.

PALOMINO
Nicole? She's takin' a tax --
(he stops)

NICK
What?

PALOMINO
Probably taking a shower or something. Hey, how was her shower scene in that Richard Gere movie?

NICK
Good.

JEFF
Really great.

The three men sit in silence. WS, showing the car parked outside Nicole's apt, the men inside waiting.

INT. THE SET. MORNING

A small, elegant bedroom set has been constructed in the middle of the huge empty space. One wall has a fake window.

The GAFFER lies on the bed staring absently at the AC sitting motionless beside the camera a few feet away. Neither speaks for a long moment.

GAFFER
I think we got nudity today.

AC
(reads from his callsheet)
It just says "Scene Six: Ellen and Damian kiss."

GAFFER
Could be a kiss with nudity.

AC
I like Ellen. She's my type.

GAFFER
Why is that?

AC
She's pretty. Smart. Kind of kooky.

GAFFER
Maybe I'll give her a part. That's right; I'm makin' my own movie pretty soon.

AC
Oh yeah?

GAFFER
Yup. Feature. I brought my script.

The Gaffer tugs a thin, tattered SCRIPT, folded lengthwise, out of his back pocket.

GAFFER
Palomino's perfect for the lead. I'm going to give it to him right during lunch. Maybe right after.

AC
Alright.

GAFFER
Got to be aggressive. You want to shoot it?

AC
Sure.

GAFFER
You ever shot anything?

AC
No.

GAFFER
That's alright; got to start somewhere.

Suddenly the Gaffer reaches out and warmly shakes the AC's hand.

INT. MAKEUP CORNER. DAY

Nicole sits before the makeup mirror. LORDE, the male Makeup artist picks up a tube of Preparation H and begins applying it under Nicole's eyes just as Nick walks up.

NICK
Jesus, what are you doing?

LORDE
Shrinking tissue. That's what this stuff is for. Let that sit for two minutes, pumpkin; I'll be right back.

NICK
How'd you get here?

NICOLE
Took a taxi.

NICK
Oh. We've been waiting in front of your apartment for half an hour.

NICOLE
God, I'm sorry, Nick. Something came up. I forgot to call. I'm sorry, I feel like such an asshole.

NICK
You're just saying that because you have Preparation H on your face.

NICOLE
I never should have gone out last night. I hate jazz. God, I look terrible.

NICK
No you don't.

NICOLE
Don't bullshit me, Nick.

NICK
I'm not. You really look beautiful.

Something in Nick's voice makes Nicole glance up at him. He looks away quickly. The moment is awkward, as if they both realize he has inadvertently revealed something. Just then Palomino approaches.

PALOMINO
Hey! How'd you get here, Nicole?

NICOLE
I took a cab.

PALOMINO
Oh, cause we were wondering how you got here.

Nick looks at both of them in a moment of silence.

NICK
Alright, good; everybody's here. We'll do a run-through as soon as you guys are ready.

PALOMINO
You got it, Chief.

Lorde reenters as Nick leaves. Palomino sits in the chair beside Nicole and Lorde immediately begins his makeup. No one speaks.

INT. THE SET. DAY

The crew is assembled behind the camera. Wolf is now wearing a black eyepatch over one eye. Nick is on the set, talking with Nicole and Palomino. Palomino wears a tuxedo and Nicole is in an elaborate low-cut gown.

WANDA
Hold it down, hold it down, people. Actors working.

PALOMINO
Great shirt, Wanda.

WANDA
(big smile)
Why, thank you, Chad.

NICK
OK, let's work out the rest of this blocking. Wolf --
(notices Wolf's eyepatch)
What happened to your eye?

WOLF
A little accident.

NICK
You going to be alright?

WOLF
I think so.

PALOMINO
It looks good on you, man.

NICK
Nicole is standing here, Chad, you're there by the chair. Camera is close on Ellen: her first line.

NICOLE
I've always admired you from afar.

PALOMINO
Admired? That sounds rather professional.

NICK
Good! "Professional," that's the cue; Damian steps up to the bed. Camera pulls back. The scene continues.

NICOLE
Well, then: loved. How does that sound?

PALOMINO
It sounds like the champagne talking.

NICOLE
I've loved you from the moment we met.

PALOMINO
Why didn't you tell me?

NICOLE
We were working together. I didn't want anything to interfere.

PALOMINO
God. And all this time I thought...

NICK
Then the kiss. How's that feel?

PALOMINO
Great.

NICK
Nicole?

NICOLE
Good.

NICK
Wolf, any thoughts?

WOLF
Nope.

PALOMINO
I've got a thought. What about Damian having an eyepatch like Wolf's?

NICK
Let me think about that one, Chad.

PALOMINO
OK, you're the genius. Nick Reve, Living in Oblivion, Scene Six, Take One. Let's shoot it!

NICK
One second, Chad. You ready for one, Wolf?

WOLF
Hell, I been ready.

PALOMINO
Alright, Wolfman.

NICK
Good. Call it, Wanda.

WANDA
Going for picture. Lock it up. And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take one!

NICK
And, action.

INT. THE SET. TAKE ONE

Instantly the film cuts from color to B/W. Chad and Nicole begin their Love Scene.

NICOLE
I've always admired you from afar.

PALOMINO
Admired? That sounds rather professional.

The camera starts to dolly, however Chad does not move. He goes out of frame forcing Wolf to pan abruptly to Nicole.

NICOLE
Well, then: loved. How does that sound?

PALOMINO
It sounds like the champagne talking.

NICOLE
I've loved you from the moment we met.

PALOMINO
(finally moves to his mark)
Why didn't you tell me?

NICOLE
We were working together. I didn't want anything to interfere.

PALOMINO
God. And all this time I thought...

Palomino and Nicole embrace. Their kiss, like the entire scene, is flat, lifeless, and awful.

INT. THE SET

NICK
Cut. Very good.

WOLF
Not for camera. Chad was completely out of frame.

NICK
Yeah, Chad; what happened, buddy? Forget your cue?

PALOMINO
Oh no, man. I held back. It really felt like something Damian would do; holding back to the last moment.

NICK
Oh, I see. How's that for you, Wolf?

WOLF
I don't care when he moves. Just give me a fucking cue.

PALOMINO
The Lone Wolf!

NICK
What line did he move on?

SCRIPT
"Why didn't you tell me?"

NICK
Alright, "me" is the new cue. Nicole, how does that feel to you?

NICOLE
Fine, if that's what Chad wants to do.

PALOMINO
"Me, me, me," that's the cue. Let's shoot; I'm stoked!

NICK
One second, Chad.

Nick approaches the bed and speaks quietly to Chad and Nicole.

NICK
Chad, how would you describe this scene, in one word?

PALOMINO
Great. It's a great scene, man.

NICK
No, I mean it's a love scene. Right?

PALOMINO
Definitely.

NICK
These two people really love each other. And we want to see that, especially in the kiss.

PALOMINO
Hey, say no more, Chief.

NICK
Nicole?

NICOLE
I understand, Chief.

NICK
Good. Here we go. Call it, Wanda.

WANDA
Going for picture. Lock it up. And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take two!

NICK
And, action.

INT. THE SCENE. TAKE TWO. DAY

NICOLE
I've always admired you from afar.

Palomino moves immediately to the bed, changing his blocking and causing the camera crew and Nicole considerable confusion.

PALOMINO
Admired? That sounds rather professional.

NICOLE
Well, then: loved. How does that sound?

PALOMINO
It sounds like the champagne talking.

NICOLE
I've loved you from the moment we met.

PALOMINO
Why didn't you tell me?

NICOLE
We were working together. I didn't want anything to interfere.

PALOMINO
God. And all this time I thought...

The scene once again is awful. Nick gives their listless

kiss a few moments then calls CUT.

INT. THE SET. DAY

NICK
And, cut. Very good. Wolf?

WOLF
Chad missed his cue again; the whole dolly is unusable.

NICK
Yeah, Chad. What happened; I thought you were going to hold back till "me"?

PALOMINO
The more I thought about it the more it didn't seem right. And I'm thinking, watch me here, instead of coming around the bed, what if I just slip here like this and do the whole scene lying down?

NICK
I don't know, that seems a little...

PALOMINO
Hey, I'm just throwing out ideas here. Trying to get the juices flowing.

NICK
Nicole, how does that feel to you?

NICOLE
Well, I can turn to look at him. But won't you be shooting the back of my head?

WOLF
Plus Chad is completely out of the light down there.

PALOMINO
Hey, Wolf; I'm not worried about my face, man. It's about the acting; that's all I care about.

WOLF
It's your call, Nick. His acting or his face.

NICK
For some reason I was hoping we could get both.
(laughs)

I thought that's what we were trying to do here.

WOLF
I'll have to set another light.

WANDA
We're ahead of schedule, Nick. I think we can afford a few minutes to set a light for Mr. Palomino.

NICK
Good, let's do it. Ellen, Damian; let's talk for a second.

As Nick, Nicole, and Palomino step off the set Wanda speaks to the crew in general.

WANDA
We'll pause to set this light and go again right away. How long, Wolf?

Wolf doesn't answer, though he stands a mere foot away, watching the Gaffer set up a light.

WANDA
Wolf?

Wolf walks away from Wanda without a word. The entire crew watches this.

INT. A CORNER. DAY

Nick, Palomino, and Nicole confer, all three smoking.

NICK
OK, let's make sure we know what's going on here. These two people have loved each other for years, each of them not knowing the other was in love with them. And tonight, in this little room it all comes out. It's like a dam bursting. Does that make sense? Nicole?

NICOLE
It makes perfect sense. I just haven't found it yet. I'll get it though.

NICK
What about you, Chad?

PALOMINO
I'm there, man. I got the dam going, the river, everything. You watch, that little change in the blocking is going to open the whole scene up

for me.

WANDA (V.O.)
We're ready, Nick!

NICK
Good. Let's go.

INT. THE SET. DAY

WANDA
Going for picture. Lock it up. And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take three!

NICK
And, action.

INT. THE SCENE. TAKE THREE. DAY

NICOLE
I've always admired you from afar.

Palomino saunters over and sprawls on the bed, forcing Nicole to turn her head completely away from the camera.

PALOMINO
Admired? That sounds rather professional.

NICOLE
Well, then: loved. How does that sound?

PALOMINO
It sounds like the champagne talking.

NICOLE
I've loved you from the moment we met.

PALOMINO
Why didn't you tell me?

NICOLE
We were working together -- I'm sorry,

can we cut, Nick?

INT. THE SET. DAY

NICK
Cut!

WANDA
That's a cut!

PALOMINO
Dammit! That was a good one!

NICOLE
I know, I'm sorry. But this feels really awkward; turning all the way around like this.

NICK
Yeah, I think the lying on the bed is not quite working, Chad. Let's try one with the original blocking.

PALOMINO
Which one was that? There's been so many damn changes. Could somebody help me out please?

SCRIPT
The cue for the original blocking is "professional."

PALOMINO
(intimate)
Thank you. Thank you very much.

NICK
OK, right away. Call it, Wanda.

NICOLE
Nick? Could I just have a moment? Is that alright?

NICK
Of course, Nicole; are you kidding? Hold the roll, Wanda.

WANDA
Holding the roll!

Nicole remains seated on the bed, lowering her head and closing her eyes as she attempts to generate some emotion for the scene. Everyone watches her in complete silence.

INT. NEAR THE CAMERA. DAY

Palomino tiptoes over to the camera where Wanda and the

Scriptgirl are standing side by side. As he leans between them, checking his lines on the Scriptgirl's script, he inhales deeply then exhales with a barely audible sigh.

PALOMINO
(whispers)
Someone over here smells very, very nice.

Thinking he means her, Wanda's lips flutter in a brief, involuntary smile. Meanwhile, the Scriptgirl turns away, blushing furiously.

INT. THE SET. DAY

Palomino tiptoes again back to his spot. Nicole raises her head and nods once to Nick. She seems to have aroused some real emotion in herself.

NICK
(with quiet intensity)
Call it, Wanda.

WANDA
And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take four!

PALOMINO
(suddenly)
Nick, I just had a great idea!

WANDA
Hold the roll!

NICK
What is it, Chad?

PALOMINO
Just stop me if I'm out of line here, but she says "admired from afar," right? Doesn't it make sense to see Damian up close and her "afar?" You start on a Close-up of Damian, watch me here; as she declares her love, the camera moves with me into this primo two-shot that you and the

Wolfmeister have set up here.

NICK
What do you think, Wolf?

WOLF
I don't like it. This is Ellen's scene.

NICK
I don't know; it sort of makes sense.

PALOMINO
Hey, you did it, man. It's all there in the writing.

WOLF
I'd have to relight.

Nick pauses, thinking hard.

WANDA
We're still ahead of schedule, Nick; if that means anything to you.

NICK
Let's do it.

WOLF
(to the Gaffer)
Get me a tweenie right here, with diffusion.

WANDA
OK, everyone stand by. We're pausing briefly to set one little light, then we're going again, right away. Stand-in please for Mr. Palomino.

GAFFER
I'll do it.

WOLF
Get the fucking light!

INT. CRAFT SERVICE TABLE. DAY

Several members of the crew loiter around the table. The Scriptgirl approaches carrying a donut in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other. Palomino notices her and moves quietly to her side. Without a word he picks up the milk and pours some in her coffee. Nicole stands nearby and watches the following exchange.

SCRIPT
Thanks.

PALOMINO
My pleasure. Sugar?

SCRIPT
Just a bit.

Palomino puts sugar in her coffee with extreme care.

PALOMINO
You like jazz?

SCRIPT
Very much.

PALOMINO
Maybe we could go hear some tonight.

Palomino smiles and moves away just as Wanda comes up for a coffee refill.

WANDA
It's going well I think. Don't you think?

SCRIPT
Very well. What time do you think we'll finish?

WANDA
Early I hope. I'm going to a jazz club tonight.

SCRIPT
Really? So am I. He's wonderful, isn't he?

WANDA
Chad?

SCRIPT
He's so natural, like... air.

Nicole approaches.

SCRIPT
I wonder what his sign is. Do you know, Nicole?

NICOLE
I don't know his sign, but I think his moon is in Uranus.

Wanda chokes hard on her coffee as Nicole walks off with a bitter smile.

SCRIPT
You don't have to be nasty.

INT. THE SET. DAY

Palomino saunters onto the set as Wolf and his crew finish relighting.

PALOMINO
Yo, Wolfman. Is this my new mark?

WOLF
Until you change it. Where's my fucking eyepatch?!

Wolf walks off. The Gaffer slips the AC a shrewd wink then walks over and stands next to Palomino, giving him a big, friendly grin.

GAFFER
Hey, Chad.

PALOMINO
Hey, whatya say.

GAFFER
I'm Bob. I'm lighting this show.

PALOMINO
Chad Palomino; Actor.

GAFFER
(big smile)
I know.

PALOMINO
(to the ac)
Hey, what's your name?

AC
Maurice.

PALOMINO
Maurice! Hey, Maurice Chevalier! Any relation? Probably not. Hey, smoking crew guys, really.

The Gaffer slips his own script out of his back pocket and begins leafing through it.

GAFFER
Hey thanks, Chad. Actually I wrote a script.

PALOMINO
Oh, yeah?

Palomino takes the Gaffer's script and holds it up to his eyes, shading them from a light he's looking at across the

room. He points to the light.

PALOMINO
Hey, Bill. See that light over there?

GAFFER
Uh, yeah.

PALOMINO
Lower it about three feet.

Palomino hands the Gaffer back his script and walks off. The Gaffer and AC stand in silence for a long awkward moment.

INT. BATHROOM. DAY

Nick intently scrutinizes himself in the mirror. Leaning closer he makes a careful adjustment to the way his hair falls over his ear, then steps back to examine himself.

NICK
Would you care to have a drink tonight? Hey, Nicole, what do you say you and I have a drink tonight?

Suddenly the door opens behind him and Nicole walks in.

NICOLE
Oh, Nick! I'm sorry!

NICK
That's OK, no problem. I'm just slapping a little water on my face.

The two stand in embarrassed silence for a moment. Nick looks like he's gathering the nerve to ask her out.

NICK
So, it's going pretty good, huh?

NICOLE
Is it? Something feels off.

NICK
Yeah, you seem a little tense.

NICOLE
Do I?

NICK
But don't worry about it. Just take your attention off yourself and put it on Chad. Work off him a little more.

NICOLE
OK, I'll try that.

NICK
And listen, I know he's no Olivier. But he's got something, don't you think? Kind of a natural presence.

NICOLE
Oh yes, he's very natural.

Nick hesitates, again gathering his nerves to pop the question.

NICK
So Nicole... anything else I can help you with?

NICOLE
Actually there is. Could you maybe ask him to brush his teeth?

NICK
Oh, sure.

INT. THE SET. DAY

Wanda crosses the set and assumes her position beside the camera. Wolf sits behind it, barely a foot away.

WOLF
My eye is killing me.

WANDA
Put your eyepatch on.

WOLF
I lost it.

WANDA
Is that little light set yet?

WOLF
That little light was set ten minutes ago.

WANDA
(into her walkie)
Get me the A Team in here right away. Nick, Nicole, and Mr. Palomino.
(to Wolf)
Why didn't you tell me?

WOLF
Hey, you're not worried about the time, I'm not worried about the time.

WANDA
Oh, I am very worried about the time!

WOLF
I know you are.

WANDA
What is that supposed to mean?

WOLF
What do you think it means?!

WANDA
I don't know what it means!

WOLF
Oh yes you do, you know exactly what it means.

WANDA
I have no idea what you're talking about! Why are you --

WOLF
You don't understand me, Wanda! You have no idea --

WANDA
I don't understand you?!! All I do is take care of you!!!

Nick suddenly runs up just as Wolf and Wanda are on the verge of blows.

NICK
Hey, hey, hey! What the hell's going on here?! Jesus, Wanda. This is a very intimate scene and a lot of tension on the set doesn't help. OK? Now, Wolf, let's just go through the first part of the move. Damian, on your new mark. Good. Close-up, Damian; Ellen in the background.

Nick suddenly sees Palomino is wearing a black eyepatch.

NICK
Chad, what are you doing?

WOLF
Hey, that's my fucking eyepatch.

PALOMINO
Wolf, could I borrow it? Cause I'm telling you, Nick; it really feels right. I feel like this guy now, man.

NICK

I don't know, Chad. I don't think it works.

PALOMINO
You're wrong, man. I'm going to fight you on this one.

WOLF
Hey, it's my fucking eyepatch and I don't want anyone wearing it. It's insanitary.

Palomino removes the eyepatch and tosses it back to Wolf.

PALOMINO
Fine. I'll get my own. Nick, send someone out for an eyepatch. I'll fucking pay for it myself.

Nick pulls Palomino aside and whispers to him confidentially.

NICK
Listen, Chad. I didn't want to say this in front of Wolf but it makes you look a little... gay.

PALOMINO
Really?

NICK
Yeah, a little bit.

PALOMINO
Jesus.

Palomino sneaks a glance back at Wolf then whispers to Nick.

PALOMINO
You're right. Thanks, buddy. Good call.

WANDA
Are you ready, Nick?

NICK
One second. You need a rehearsal, Wolf?

WOLF
Let's just fucking shoot it!!

PALOMINO
El Lobo!

Palomino winks at Nick and walks back to his new mark, making a barely audible howling sound behind his hand.

NICK
Call it, Wanda.

WANDA
Going for picture. Lock it up. And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take four!

NICK
And, action.

INT. THE SCENE. TAKE FOUR

The scene begins again. Palomino milks his Close-up for all it's worth.

NICOLE
I've always admired you from afar.

PALOMINO
Admired? That sounds rather professional.

NICOLE
Well, then: loved. How does that sound?

Right on his cue, Palomino walks to the bed. As the camera moves into the 2-shot he begins stroking Nicole's hair with extreme care and concentration.

PALOMINO
It sounds like the champagne talking.

NICOLE
I've loved you from the moment we met.

PALOMINO
Why didn't you tell me?

NICOLE
We were working together. I didn't want anything to interfere -- God!

Under the onslaught of escalating hair-stroking, Nicole

suddenly jerks her head away hard. Palomino jumps up and begins pacing at the rear of the set.

INT. THE SET. DAY

NICK
Cut!

WANDA
That's a cut. Hold the work, going again, right away.

NICOLE
I'm sorry, Nick. I don't know why I did that. I'm sorry.

Palomino suddenly stops pacing and addresses Nick with a curtness that is a little startling.

PALOMINO
Nick, could I talk to you a second?

Palomino disappears behind the set, a jerk of his head indicating his wish for Nick to follow him.

WANDA
A momentary delay. Everyone stand by. We're going again, right away.

SOUND
Excuse me, Ellen? You were a tad low on that take.

NICOLE
Oh, OK. I'll bring it up. Actually could I listen to the take before?

The Sound man gives Nicole his headphones and rewinds the tape recorder for her. The first several lines of the last take are heard through the headphones.

INT. OFF THE SET. DAY

Nick follows Palomino behind the set, stopping just beside the fake set window. Palomino whirls on Nick and whispers fiercely.

PALOMINO
I'm out of here, man!

NICK
What's the matter?!

PALOMINO
I like you, but I made a big mistake taking this part. Have someone call me a cab.

NICK
Wait a second, Chad. Just talk to me. What's going on!?

PALOMINO
I can't act with this woman. I know she's a friend of yours but I got to tell you: she cannot act worth a shit! I'm giving her everything! The whole thing I just did with the hair; did you see that? I came up with that on my own because I thought it would help her. But no, she's giving me nothing! I'm out of here.

INT. THE SET. DAY

Nicole listens to the last line of the previous take.

PALOMINO
God, and all this time I thought...
(the muted rustle of the kiss)

The Sound man stops the recorder at the end of the take, sets the machine in standby mode, and picks up his crossword puzzle. Nicole is just about to take off the headphones when she realizes she can hear Nick and Palomino talking quite clearly. Glancing up, she sees the Boom man has left his boom leaning against the wall, the mike pointing out the open set window.

PALOMINO (V.O.)
Why did you cast her? She sucked in that Richard Gere movie!

NICK (V.O.)
You're right. She is not the best actress in the world. I see that now but you've got to help me, Chad. I'm asking you to please help me here. We've got to get through this somehow.

The camera begins a slow DOLLY in to Nicole's astonished face. This will be intercut with a similar DOLLY in to the microphone leaning against the wall, ending in an ECU of the mike.

INT. OFF THE SET. DAY

Camera is close on Nick and Palomino.

PALOMINO
I'll tell you what this is about, man. You know why she took a cab this morning?

NICK
Something came up.

PALOMINO
No. She was in my hotel room and she didn't want you to know it. OK? I'm sorry it had to come out like this but I told her this morning "thanks a lot, it was a lot of fun last night but let's get something straight -- it was just a one-time deal," and she didn't want to hear that. She wanted more, you see what I'm saying? It's rejection.

INT. THE SET. DAY

The camera reveals Nicole now seated in her spot on the bed. She rises as Nick and Palomino reappear and approach her from behind the set.

NICK
Nicole, listen...

NICOLE
Nick, it's my fault the scene isn't working. I apologize. Chad, I apologize to you too. I'm completely unfocused here and I think you're absolutely right; what we need to do is loosen the scene up somehow.

Nick and Palomino stare at Nicole for a moment.

NICK
What would you like to do?

NICOLE
I was wondering if we could try improvising the scene. More along the lines of what Chad has been doing. Maybe that would help me find something.

Nick's smile of gratitude to Nicole looks almost drug-induced.

NICK
That's a fantastic idea. What do you think, Chad?

PALOMINO
Hey, that's the only way I can work. Let's take it apart, let's cut loose.

NICK
Good! And we'll shoot it! Hell, why

not?!

PALOMINO
Roll that motherfucking camera, Wolfie!

WOLF
Kiss my ass!

Although Wolf says this quite loud, Palomino doesn't hear him because he suddenly yells:

PALOMINO
Yeah! Let's go!

NICK
Alright, now we're making a fucking movie! Call it, Wanda!

WANDA
Going for picture. Lock it up. And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take five!

NICK
And, action.

INT. THE SCENE. TAKE FIVE. THE IMPROV

Nicole stays seated, though Palomino moves around making a great show of loosening up.

NICOLE
I've always admired you from afar.

PALOMINO
Have you? That's, wow; that's incredible. But that sounds kind of professional doesn't it? Admired?

NICOLE
You're right. How does despised sound?

PALOMINO
Great!
(laughs)

What's it mean?

NICOLE
(laughs)
It's sort of like I think you're a piece of shit.

Palomino is somewhat startled by this. He looks to Nick in confusion. Nick silently encourages him to keep going.

PALOMINO
(another laugh)
That sounds like the champagne talking.

NICOLE
It's not. I really do think you are a piece of shit.

PALOMINO
No, you don't. You love me.

NICOLE
The fuck I do. I can't stand looking at you!

PALOMINO
Then I guess I have nothing else to say.

NICOLE
No, I think you have a lot more to say, Damian.

PALOMINO
Well, I am surprised you feel this way, Ellen. I always thought you admired --

NICOLE
That's not what I meant. You should tell everyone what you just told Nick behind the set.

PALOMINO
Hey, this isn't part of the scene.

NICOLE
Say it anyway: The reason this scene isn't working is because you and I slept together last night. Did everyone hear that?! I fucked Chad last night!

Nick and the rest of the crew stand in stunned amazement.

PALOMINO

See, Nick! I told you this was about rejection!

NICOLE
You fucking scumbag! You think I give a rat's ass about you?! I was there to get laid and even that was a joke!

PALOMINO
You know, you are really starting to piss me off!

NICOLE
Oh, does that mean you're not going to come wiggle on the bed anymore, or stroke my hair real soft and concerned, or kiss me like a soap opera acting piece of shit!

Palomino snaps, and lunges for Nicole. She leaps to the other side of the bed.

NICOLE
Come on! I'll kick your ass! Come on!

Nick steps between Nicole and Palomino.

NICK
OK, guys, I think we can stop there.

PALOMINO
You bet your ass we can stop! Wanda, call me a cab!

NICK
Hold on, Chad. Let's just try to calm down.

PALOMINO
Fuck you. I'm out of here, man. This movie is bullshit.

NICK
Now wait a second, Chad. There's no reason for hostility.

PALOMINO
Shut up, you fucking loser. The only reason I took this part was because someone said you knew Quentin Tarantino! You're nowhere, man.

NICK
Hey, you want to go? Go! I'm sick of your shit, you hostess twinkie

motherfucker!

PALOMINO
What'd you call me?

NICK
You heard me.

PALOMINO
Say it again.

NICK
You hostess twinkie motherfucker!

Palomino suddenly punches Nick in the stomach, leaving him bent over and gasping for breath. Nicole instantly leaps on Palomino's back and begins pounding her fist on the top of his head. Palomino spins wildly trying to dislodge her as Wanda rushes forward.

WANDA
Alright, everyone just stop. Stop!
Stop this right now!

As she tries to separate Nicole and Palomino, Palomino shoves her hard, knocking her down. Instantly Wolf leaps off the camera and runs up to Palomino.

WOLF
Alright, you've asked for it, Chad!

Palomino suddenly punches Wolf in the teeth, dropping him like a stone.

WANDA
(shrieks)
Wolf!

Suddenly Nick staggers to his feet and rushes at Palomino. His momentum knocks all three backwards onto the bed, Palomino's head cracking Nicole in the teeth.

NICOLE
Oh, God!

Nicole rolls free as Nick and Palomino wrestle on the bed. Nick gets Palomino in a vicious headlock and starts pounding his head against the mattress.

NICK
You want to pick my brain?! This is the way I direct hostess twinkie scumbags like you!

As Nick continues to pound Palomino's head the Gaffer notices Palomino's eyes are starting to bug out from the pressure of Nick's forearm around his neck. He and the Boom man rush

forward and finally manage to pry Palomino free.

NICK
Get him out of here! Someone take him back to his hotel!

As the Gaffer and Boom man drag off the almost unconscious Palomino, the Scriptgirl takes one faltering step after him.

SCRIPT
(sniffling)
Chad...

Suddenly, everything becomes quiet except for Nick's labored breathing and the Scriptgirl's sniffles. Nick leans over and touches Nicole's shoulder.

NICK
Are you alright?

NICOLE
Don't touch me.

EXT. DAY. THE STREET OUTSIDE THE SET

The Gaffer and AC help the still-groggy Palomino into the back of the production van. JEFF, the driver, watches them in sleepy curiosity.

With Palomino safely propped in a seat, the AC goes back to the set. The Gaffer waits a moment then slips his script out of his back pocket and slaps it into Palomino's motionless hand.

GAFFER
It's called "Tsunami." A Japanese tidal wave hits New York. You've an ex-Navy S.E.A L. frogman, working undercover. You save the city. You'd be perfect for the lead. That's my number; call me, or I'll call you. Either way it's been great working with you, man.

As Palomino stares at him blankly, the Gaffer slams the door. The car pulls out.

INT. THE SET. DAY

Nick and Nicole are sitting up on the bed, alone on the now empty set.

NICK
Nicole, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. You were great in that Richard Gere movie.

NICOLE
Shut up. You're no different than he is. You lie, you're deceitful...

NICK
I'm not lying. Christ, I tell everyone how great you are. I've got nothing but respect and admiration for you.

NICOLE
Oh God, now you're doing your own fucking script.

NICK
Well, why do you think I wrote it?!

NICOLE
I have no idea!

NICK
It's about you. It's about how I feel about you.

NICOLE
Christ, did you get a bump on your head, Nicky. 'Cause you're talking like an idiot.

NICK
Nicole. I've loved you since the day we met.

Nicole sits for a long moment in stunned silence.

NICOLE
Why didn't you tell me?

NICK
I didn't want anything to get in the way of us working together.

NICOLE
God, and all this time I thought...

Nick and Nicole move into a shy, trembling, heartfelt kiss.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. DAWN

Nicole snaps awake with a jolt. She glances quickly at the clock which reads 4:35. The sound of the shower still running in the bathroom.

NICOLE
Oh, God.

Nicole leaps out of bed and races into the bathroom. As the camera follows her, she closes the bathroom door, right

against the lens, turning the image to total BLACKNESS.

The frame is BLACK. The recognizable clatter and clunk of the FILM CREW is heard. Wanda's voice is prominent.

WANDA
Don't go out that door!

Suddenly a DOOR opens away from camera and the AC stops, a foot away from the lens. Behind him, Wanda and the rest of the crew can be seen through the door, preparing for filming. We see now the door and the plywood walls around it are FAKE.

INT. THE SET. DAY

AC
Why not?

WANDA
It's part of the set, goddamnit. Now go around.

AC
Next time. This is an emergency.

The AC rushes past and a moment later the camera DOLLIES slowly through the fake door toward Wanda pacing near the set camera.

WANDA
(into her walkie)
Has Ellen showed up yet?

WALKIE
ssss... kkkkkrrk.

WANDA
Get her into wardrobe right away.

WALKIE
ssskk... ssssrrrk?

WANDA
No! Scene six; Scene five has been postponed. I'm not going to say it again; Mr. Palomino is not working today. Now where is that smoke machine!

INT. SET BUILDING, HALLWAY. DAY

The AC bursts through a door at the end of the hallway and walks quickly toward the camera. Without knocking he pushes open the bathroom door and suddenly stops short.

AC
Oh. Sorry.

Standing on his tiptoes at the sink, straining to turn off the running faucet is, TITO a DWARF. He is dressed in a sky blue tuxedo with tails. A top hat and white gloves rest on the closed toilet seat. Tito appears extremely annoyed.

TITO
What do you want?!

AC
I need to use the bathroom. Kind of an emergency.

TITO
Well, fucking knock!!

Tito grabs his hat and gloves and marches down the hall, the AC staring after him in astonishment.

TITO
(muttering)
I swear to Christ, one of these days I'm going to punch somebody in the balls!

INT. WARDROBE ROOM. DAY

Camera is close on Nicole, her eyes clenched shut as a thin white veil is placed on her head. Camera pulls back to reveal SACHIKO, the Costume Designer putting the finishing touches to Nicole's costume, which appears to be an elaborate white wedding gown. Nick stands nearby, smoking.

NICK
Just as we pull up to your apartment Palomino suddenly says he feels so sick he can't work today.

NICOLE
God. Was it something he ate?

SACHIKO
Stand up, please.

NICK
I don't know.

NICOLE
Can he work tomorrow?

SACHIKO
Turn around, please.

NICK
Don't know that either. But I'm not worrying about it. I had this dream last night where I was on the set.

You were in it, and another woman, someone older. Anyway, everything was going wrong. The harder I tried to hold things together the more they fell apart. And you know what that dream was telling me, Nicole? You just got to roll with it. And that's what I'm doing, I'm rolling with it. So, we'll just shoot the Dream Sequence today.

Just then Tito walks in.

NICK
Hey, Tito. You look great, man.

TITO
I feel like shit.

NICK
No, you look good. Thanks for coming in on such short notice. This is Nicole; she's playing Ellen.

NICOLE
Hello. Toto, is it?

TITO
Tito.

NICOLE
Oh, I'm sorry.

NICK
Listen, if there's anything I can do to make you... if you need... uh, just let me know.

TITO
Put a stool in the bathroom.

Tito walks out, followed immediately by Sachiko, leaving Nicole alone with Nick.

NICK
Did I just offend him?

NICOLE
What did you say?

NICK
"Short notice?"

NICOLE
Come on; that was nothing. I'm the one who called him "Toto." Jesus, I'm out of it. I dreamt I was on the

set last night too.

NICK
Oh yeah?

NICOLE
Yeah. You were in the dream.

NICK
Was I freaking out?

NICOLE
Actually, you were.

NICK
That's great: I freak out in my dream;
I freak out in your dream. No wonder
I'm fucking exhausted.

NICOLE
Nick...

NICK
Yeah?

Nicole stares at Nick for a long moment then smiles briefly and turns away.

INT. A CORNER OF THE SET. DAY

A dented, ancient smoke machine squats forlornly in the middle of the set. WOLF (with eyepatch), the GAFFER, AC, BOOM MAN, and the SOUND MAN stand around it, scrutinizing it intently. Wolf seems in an unusually good mood.

WOLF
Alright, guys; special effects today.
Could be fun. Who knows how to work
this baby?

GAFFER
It's the old T-160. I used it once
in '85.

AC
Damn. '85.

WOLF
What's this?

GAFFER
That's where the gas goes.

BOOM
No, that's where the oil goes.

GAFFER

Is it?

BOOM
I think so.

GAFFER
You're right. It's coming back now.

WOLF
I'm going to let you handle this one, Bob. This is your baby. And Les, if he needs help you give him a hand. OK, guys? We're all working together today.

Wolf walks off. The Gaffer kneels to inspect the smoke machine closer.

GAFFER
Yup, all coming back now. Like riding a bike. T-160, 1985. 1985, T-160.

AC
Way to go, Bob.

INT. THE SET. NEAR THE CAMERA

Wanda stands alone by the camera, looking around at the bustling crew like a battalion commander watching her troops in battle. Nick approaches her.

NICK
How are we doing, Wanda?

WANDA
Not good, Nick. Not bad, but not good. We need to finish this scene and do Scene thirty-one today.

NICK
Scene thirty-one?! I left my notes for Scene thirty-one at home! I didn't know we were --

WANDA
Nick, Nick. I'll send someone to your apartment to pick them up. Now, relax.

NICK
Oh, OK. Send somebody to my apartment to pick them up; it's the red notebook, under the bed.

WANDA
It's taken care of, Nick.

NICK
Good. Great. Good.

Nick walks off quickly, muttering to himself. A moment later Wolf strolls up to Wanda.

WOLF
We're all lit, the smoke machine is under control; we're ready to go.

WANDA
(hard)
What about the dolly?

WOLF
Just need to see a run-through and we're all set. I'm going to make your job easy today, Wanda. Wandaful.
(he slips his arm around her)
Mmm, I'm glad you wore that perfume. And don't worry about Palomino; I'll take you to a jazz club tonight.

WANDA
Oh, I can't make it. I have to go see Chad; he's extremely ill.

WOLF
Oh, by the way my eye's much better.

WANDA
Listen, Wolf, this may not be the best time to say this but our relationship is going nowhere.

WOLF
What do you mean?

WANDA
Please, don't take it personally. Because I care for you, Wolf, I really do. But I've had this feeling for quite a while and I think it's time we ended it. OK?

WOLF
(pause)
OK.

WANDA
I think it's better.

WOLF
So do I.

WANDA

Well, good. Still friends?

WOLF
Sure.

WANDA
Great, cause we still have to work together and there's no reason it has to be unpleasant. Give me a hug.

Wanda and Wolf move into an extremely wooden embrace.

WANDA
You're a real special guy, Wolf.

WOLF
Thanks.

Wanda slips Wolf a tender smile then walks away.

WANDA
(into her walkie)
OK, let's get the A Team in please! Nick, Ellen, Mr. Tito!

INT. THE SET. DAY

Nick is working with the crew and the actors. The set consists of two flats (one with the fake door) joined to make a corner. The flats are painted fire-engine red.

NICK
OK, here's the shot. We start wide with Ellen standing absolutely still right in the middle of the frame. You got that, Wolf?

WOLF
Yeah.

NICK
(notices eyepatch)
What happened to your eye?

WOLF
Nothing. It's a little sensitive today.

NICK
Can you see?

WOLF
(snaps)
Of course I can see!

For a moment Nick looks like he might snap back at Wolf but he draws a deep breath and continues.

NICK
OK, Ellen is standing there. The smoke is flowing in and: Ellen's line.

NICOLE
I am so hungry.

NICK
Good, Tito, that's your cue.

The fake door opens and Tito enters wearing his top hat and carrying a golden apple in his gloved hands.

NICK
You walk around her once, hold the apple out, that's right; just beyond her reach. You're staring at her hard. Harder, good. Then stop right here. Can we get a mark, please?

The AC moves up to Nick and places a piece of yellow tape on the floor. CU the yellow tape.

NICK
Then we dolly in to Tito's Close-up. Alright, Wolf?

WANDA
It should be hand-held.

NICK
No, I think it's better on the dolly.

WOLF
Whatever.

NICOLE
Nick, do I see him?

NICK
No, just the apple. And Tito, right after we dolly in give me a little laugh there.

TITO
A little laugh?

NICK
Big, little; anything you feel like doing. OK? Good. Let's shoot one. Call it, Wanda.

WANDA
OK, here we go. Camera back to One. Action on the smoke.

The Gaffer turns on the smoke machine which emits a pathetic wisp of smoke that immediately dissipates.

WANDA
And roll sound.

NICK
Hold it, Wanda. Can we get a little more smoke? Is that possible?

GAFFER
Oh, sure.

The Gaffer adjusts a knob and another thin puff of smoke wheezes out.

NICK
Good. Call it, Wanda.

WANDA
Going for picture. Lock it up. And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take one!

NICK
And, action.

INT. THE DREAM. TAKE ONE. DAY

Nicole stands motionless in the middle of the empty set. Her white wedding gown stands out sharply against the deep red walls. A sad shred of smoke drifts by her head.

NICOLE
I am so hungry.

Tito opens the door and walks in, staring hard at Nicole. His sky-blue tuxedo gleams in the rich light. He walks around her in a circle holding the golden apple just beyond her reach. He stops on his mark and the camera dollies into a CU of him. He doesn't laugh. Nick watches this for a moment in intense concentration.

INT. THE SET. DAY

NICK
And... cut.

WANDA
That's a cut. Nick; comments?

NICK
Yeah, just a couple. I thought that was uh... good. Tito, that was very good, man, really. You didn't feel like laughing?

TITO
I laughed.

NICK
Oh, OK; I guess I missed it. You could make it bigger if you want. And Ellen, maybe just a little more tension when you see him.

NICOLE
I thought I didn't see him.

NICK
Right, maybe you see him a little bit.

NICOLE
Alright, I'm confused. Do I see him or not?

NICK
You see him.

NICOLE
OK, what is the tension? Who is Toto?

TITO
(hard)
It's Tito.

NICOLE
(alarmed)
What did I say?

TITO
Toto.

NICOLE
Oh, God. I'm sorry, Tito. I don't know why I'm doing that. I'm really sorry.

NICK
Ellen, come on now; concentrate. Remember; you're marrying Damian

tomorrow. You're a little anxious. You have this dream. Let's call it an Anxiety Dream, and Tito represents the anxiety.

CU Tito looking none too happy about this representation.

NICK
OK? It seems pretty simple.

NICOLE
Let's just try it.

NICK
Good. And Bob, let's really have some smoke on this one.

GAFFER
OK, more smoke.

WOLF
I still think it should be hand-held.

NICK
Yeah, well, I don't want it hand-held. I want it on the dolly. Where's my notebook, Wanda?

WANDA
On it's way, Nick.

NICK
Good. Call it, Wanda.

WANDA
Lock it up. Going for picture. And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take two!

NICK
And, action.

INT. THE DREAM. TAKE TWO

Nicole stands motionless as a few more emaciated puffs of smoke hang in the air.

NICOLE
I am so hungry.

Tito enters, walks around her holding the apple just beyond her reach then moves to his mark. The camera dollies into a CU. He does not laugh.

INT. THE SET. DAY

NICK
Cut.

WANDA
That's a cut. Going again, Nick?

NICK
Yes.

WANDA
Going again, please stand by.

NICK
OK, Ellen, good. You're on to something there.

NICOLE
No, something's not right. It all feels fake to me.

Nick's tone with Nicole suddenly takes on an almost imperceptible edge, tinged with annoyance.

NICK
Well, it's not fake; it's real. Just remember, you really want the apple. Tito, I still think we could see more of a laugh at the end.

TITO
What kind of laugh?

NICK
Just a laugh.

TITO
Show me.

NICK
Oh, OK. A laugh. I'm thinking maybe like this. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Everyone watches Nick demonstrate the laugh. He seems unaware he resembles a drunken, slightly annoyed idiot.

NICK
Something like that. OK? And remember,

Tito, this is a dream. Not everything has to make sense. A laugh right there heightens our sense of... of...

TITO
Anxiety.

NICK
Exactly. Wolf, how was that for you?

WOLF
I still think it should be hand-held.

NICK
(snaps)
Well, God damn it! It's not going to be! It's on the dolly so just forget about it!

There is a strained moment of silence on the set as everyone witnesses this rebuke.

NICK
And Bob, what the fuck is that smoke? Might as well get a couple hamsters in here blowing smoke rings for Christ's sake.

GAFFER
The septic valve wasn't open. I got it now. We're going to see some smoke now.

NICK
Alright, let's try another take.

WANDA
And, lock it up.

WOLF
Nick, could I talk to you for a minute?

NICK
What?!

WOLF
In private.

NICK
(sighs in exasperation)
Alright.

Nick follows Wolf off the set.

WANDA
Release the lock-up. Everyone stand

by.

GAFFER
We'll see some smoke now.

AC
Way to go, Bob.

INT. A CORNER. DAY

As soon as Wolf and Nick reach the darkened corner, Wolf whirls to face Nick.

WOLF
I really don't like being spoken to like that, Nick!

NICK
Yeah, well I don't like your attitude!

WOLF
I don't have an attitude!

NICK
The hell you don't! Every time I ask you to do something all I get is No, No, No and I'm sick of it! I hired you to do a job; if you're not going to do it you better let me know right now!

Wolf is about to yell back at Nick when suddenly he stops and lets out a deep, painful sigh.

WOLF
I'm sorry, Nick. I'm going through some heavy shit.

NICK
What do you mean?

WOLF
I can't really go into it. It's pretty heavy.

NICK
Personal?

Wolf makes a slight motion with his head toward Wanda who is standing some distance away watching them. Seeing the two men looking at her Wanda shoots them a hard glare which prompts Wolf and Nick to turn away quickly.

WOLF
Personal, professional, emotional. It's doing a number on me. And now you're telling me you're going to

fire me.

NICK
I didn't say that, Wolf. Come on, I'm not going to fire you. You're doing a great job here.

WOLF
Am I?

NICK
Yeah, I don't know what I'd do without you, man. You've got a great eye. I just hope it's not the one under that eyepatch.

Nick lets out a tense, strained laugh but Wolf's only response is to stare back at him sadly.

NICK
Listen, Wolf. Let me tell you one thing I've learned; sometimes you just have to roll with things. You know?

WOLF
You're right.

NICK
Roll with it, man. You'll be OK.

Wolf lets out another deep sigh.

WOLF
Thanks, bro.

INT. A CORNER OF THE SET. DAY

The Gaffer, Boom man, and AC kneel around the smoke machine. A can of gas and a quart of oil stand beside them.

BOOM
That's where the oil goes.

GAFFER
No, that's where the gas goes.

BOOM
I'm tellin' you, Bob. That's where the oil goes.

SOUND
Lester, don't you think Bob knows where the oil goes?!

GAFFER
I don't remember using oil in '85.

AC
Maybe both the oil and gas go in there?

The Gaffer and Boom man turn and look at the AC for a long moment.

BOOM
I think he's right.

GAFFER
I think he is too. OK, three parts gas, one part oil.

The Gaffer and Boom man pour liberal amounts of gas and oil into the T-160.

INT. THE SET. DAY

Nick rushes up to his position by the camera.

NICK
Is my notebook here yet, Wanda?

WANDA
Any minute, Nick.

NICK
Good. Call it, Wanda.

WANDA
Going for picture. Lock it up. And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take three!

NICK
And, action.

INT. THE DREAM. TAKE THREE

Nicole stands motionless in her white wedding dress, looking genuinely alarmed, possibly because of the huge clouds of smoke now spewing out of the panting smoke machine.

NICOLE

I am so hungry.

Tito enters, stares at her hard and walks around her in a circle holding the apple just beyond her reach. The smoke is so thick both of them are barely visible. Just as Tito gets to his mark the smoke machine backfires with a tremendous explosion and begins filling the room with dense, blinding smoke.

INT. THE SET. DAY

The smoke blanks out the entire frame. Frantic shouts are heard from unseen bodies.

NICK
Cut! Cut! Cut!

WANDA
Turn it off! Turn it off!

GAFFER
I can't find the switch!

WOLF
Pull the plug! Bob! Pull the plug!

WANDA
Open the door! Get some water!

GAFFER
I got it! I got it!

The smoke machine emits a loud hiss and dies, filling the room with sudden silence. Slowly the smoke begins to clear as the crew moves around muttering and coughing.

WANDA
Clear the set! Ellen! Tito! Please step off the set!

TITO (V.O.)
I'm off the set!

NICOLE (V.O.)
So am I.

WANDA
Then who is that? Who is that? Please step off the set!

A pair of fuzzy-slippered feet enter the smoky frame. The camera BOOMS up, passing over a woman's bare shins, a flowered, blue silk housecoat until finally coming to rest on the pleasantly smiling face of CORA. This is the same woman who played Ellen's Mother in Part One; she is dressed exactly the same as she was in their scene. The camera pulls back to reveal JEFF the Intern standing nervously beside her

with a red notebook in his hands.

CORA
Hi, Nicky.

Nick gapes in utter astonishment.

NICK
Mom!

INT. THE SET PRODUCTION OFFICE. DAY

Wanda speaks urgently into the phone while Nicole stands beside her. Jeff (still wearing his hat) waits at a distance clutching Nick's red notebook.

WANDA
Cora Reve, R-E-V-E. Blue housecoat, blue slippers. How do I know? Because she's sitting ten feet away from me. Well sweetheart, that's going to be a real fucking problem.

Nicole turns away and walks past Jeff to the Craft Service table.

JEFF
She was waiting outside Nick's apartment when I went to pick up his notebook. She said she was looking for him so I figured I should just bring her up here. You look really pretty in that dress.

Nicole nods politely then looks to the Makeup corner where Nick sits talking earnestly to his mother.

INT. MAKEUP CORNER

NICK
How did you get here?

CORA
I took a bus in; went right to your apartment.

NICK
How did you get out of your room?

CORA
Oh, I just went right through the door.

NICK
It was unlocked!?

CORA

No, it was locked. I just went through it. It's something I've learned to do, Nicky. I can walk through just about anything; like air.

NICK
Mom, you've got to stop doing this. I'm serious. I'm a little upset with you. You could have gotten lost, or hurt.

CORA
I wanted to see you. I've missed you.

NICK
I know, Mom; I've missed you too. But it's not really a good time.

Nicole approaches, holding up the hem of her wedding gown. There is a subtle tension smoldering between her and Nick.

NICOLE
They're sending a car. It should be here in a couple of hours. They didn't even know she was gone.

NICK
Jesus, I don't believe this.

CORA
I'm sorry, Nick. If I knew there was going to be a wedding I would have worn my fucking hat.

INT. THE SET. DAY

The camera holds on Tito pacing slowly, alone on the set. He is smoking fiercely, holding his top hat with one hand. Suddenly he begins laughing in a loud, stage bellow.

INT. A CORNER OF THE SET. DAY

Nick sets a chair for his mother and helps her sit down. Nicole joins Tito on the set and talks quietly to him.

NICK
There. How's that, Mom? Can you see?

CORA
Is the little fellow going to do gymnastics?

Tito glances up at her quickly.

NICK
Shhhh! No. Now come on, Mom. You've

got to be quiet. Absolutely quiet.
OK?

CORA
(whispers)
OK.

INT. THE SET. NEAR THE CAMERA. DAY

Wanda and Wolf stand beside each other in tense, awkward silence for a long moment.

WANDA
How are you doing?

WOLF
Good; real good.

Wolf looks as if he's about to burst into tears as Nick walks up.

NICK
How's the smoke machine?

WANDA
It's dead, Nick. I've got calls out to every Effects house in the city but I just can't seem to locate --

NICK
Forget it. We'll shoot without it.

WANDA
But Nick, it's a Dream Sequence.

NICK
That's the way it goes, Wanda. We're just going to have to roll with it. Nothing else we can do. We've got to roll with it, right, Wolf?

Wolf meets Nick's eyes and gives an extremely melancholy nod. Nick turns to address Nicole and Tito and the edge immediately slips back into his voice.

NICK
OK, here we go. Ellen, you've got to keep reaching for that apple. I don't feel that you really want it. I mean, Christ, how many times do I have to tell you!

Nicole glares at Nick for a moment then abruptly turns and walks off the set. Nick stares after her in confusion then quickly follows her.

WANDA

Everyone stand by. Nobody move. Going again, right away.

EXT. STREET. NYC. DAY

Nicole stands with her back to the camera as Nick strides up to her with impatience.

NICK
Alright, Nicole. What's the matter?

NICOLE
You tell me! You're the one with the bug up your ass!

NICK
Now wait just a second!

NICOLE
You've been picking on me all day! I can't do anything right!

NICK
I'm sorry if I was short with you, Nicole, but I think you can see I'm under a little pressure here. I'm shooting a Dream Sequence without a smoke machine, my mother's out there thinking she's at a circus wedding and you tell me the whole movie seems fake!

NICOLE
I never said that!

NICK
You did too. You said, "Everything feels fake."

NICOLE
I meant me! I feel fake! Everything I'm doing feels fake. I can't act. I should just do shower scenes in Richard Gere movies for the rest of my life!

NICK
Nicole, that's ridiculous. You're a fantastic actress. All you have to do is show me you want that apple more than anything else in the world; don't give up. Understand? You cannot give up.

NICOLE
OK.

Suddenly Wanda yells out.

WANDA
Ready, Nick?!

NICK
Ready!

INT. THE SET. DAY

Nick rushes back onto the set.

NICK
OK, here we go. Everybody focus, concentrate. And Tito, we're still looking for that little laugh, pal. OK? Call it, Wanda!

WANDA
Picture's up. There will be no smoke in this scene. No smoke. No smoke in the Dream Sequence. And roll sound.

SOUND
Speed!

WANDA
Roll camera!

AC
Rolling!

CLAPPER
Scene six, take four!

NICK
And, action.

INT. THE DREAM. TAKE FOUR. DAY

Nicole stands motionless in her wedding gown.

NICOLE
I am so hungry.

Tito walks in, stares at her hard, then walks around her once with the golden apple just beyond her outstretched hands. He stops and the camera dollies into his CLOSE-UP. Nick watches in hopeful expectation. He waits and waits but Tito does not laugh.

Just then the door in the rear set wall opens and Cora steps in, looking oddly puzzled.

CORA
Oh, I thought this was the TV room.

INT. THE SET. DAY

NICK
Cut!

WANDA
That's a cut. Going again, right away.

INT. OFF THE SET. DAY

Nick escorts his mother back to her chair.

NICK
Mom, listen to me. I don't want you to move from this chair. Do you understand?

CORA
Oh Jesus, you sound just like your father...

NICK
Mom, I'm serious.

CORA
OK, OK. I won't move.

NICK
Thank you.

INT. THE SET. DAY

Nick walks back on the set and addresses Nicole and Tito.

NICK
OK, good. Very good.
(laughs)
Tito, I think we're having a little communication problem here. All I want you to do is laugh. OK?

TITO
Why?

NICK
I told you why.

TITO
Tell me again.

INT. OFF THE SET. DAY

Wolf (still wearing his eyepatch) walks over and sits quietly in a chair beside Cora. He does not speak to her and gazes blankly out at Nick, Tito, and Nicole on the set some distance away. Cora however stares at the side of his head with such

intensity Wolf can't help but turn to her.

Cora still doesn't take her eyes off him and in fact stares even more intently into his eye.

Wolf glances away for a moment then looks back. Cora continues to stare at him. Suddenly, his eye is full of tears. Cora watches in rapt silence. Wolf is crying openly now. Cora reveals no hint of emotion as she reaches out and gently lifts the eyepatch off of his eye. A tight smile of satisfaction creases her lips as a tiny pool of tears is released, streaming quickly down Wolf's cheek. No one sees this.

INT. THE SET. DAY

Nick paces tensely in front of Nicole and Tito.

NICK
Look, Tito. It's not that big a deal. It's a dream, alright. Strange things happen in a dream. All you have to do is laugh. Why is that such a problem?

TITO
Why does it have to be a dwarf?

NICK
What?

TITO
Why does my character have to be a dwarf?

NICK
He doesn't have to be a dwarf.

TITO
Then why is he?! Is that the only way you can make this a dream; put a dwarf in it?

NICK
No, Tito; that's not --

TITO
Have you ever had a dream with a dwarf in it?! Do you know anyone who's had a dream with a dwarf in it? NO! I don't even have dreams with dwarves in them! The only place I've seen dwarves in dreams is in stupid movies like this! Make it weird; put a dwarf in it. Everyone will go "whoa whoa whoa, must be a dream, there's a fucking dwarf in

it!" Well, I'm sick of it. You can take this Dream Sequence and shove it up your ass!

Tito hurls his top hat and gloves to the floor and walks out. Everyone stares at Nick who is frozen in stunned silence. Finally Wanda approaches him hesitantly.

WANDA
Nick?
(no response)
I can get right on the phone. We'll try to get another... small person here as soon as possible.

NICK
No. He's absolutely right.

Nick sighs heavily and sinks to sit on the dolly in silence. Wolf appears behind him, still wiping his eyes.

WOLF
You want to just shoot Ellen, Nick? She could be in the dream by herself.

NICK
No. We're not going to shoot anything. I'm sorry. Thanks for all your help, but it's over. I can't take it anymore. I tried to roll with it but it's time to face the music; I can't do this. I am not a director. The shoot is over. I give up.

Nick's speech has the simple eloquence of truth; he is not bitter or self-pitying. He seems unaware of how disturbing this is to the crew. They all stand around him in shock, afraid to move or speak. Finally Wolf turns to the AC and puts his hand on his shoulder, like a father to his young son.

WOLF
Take the camera off the dolly. Start putting it away.

Everyone watches the AC unfasten the camera in silence. Nicole stands alone on the set in her wedding dress, still holding the golden apple. Her face is frozen in dismay. Suddenly CORA comes through the set door and marches up to Nicole.

CORA
Give me that apple!

At the sound of his mother's voice, Nick looks up. He sees her snatch the apple from Nicole's hand and march back out the door, closing it behind her.

CORA
(behind the door)
I'm ready, Nick!

INT. BY THE CAMERA. DAY

Nick gets up slowly and whispers intensely to Wanda, Wolf, and the rest of the crew.

NICK
Roll camera. Roll sound. Let's go. Right away.

Wolf grabs the camera and puts it on his shoulder (hand-held) as the rest of the crew moves quickly and silently into position. On a terse signal from Nick the camera starts rolling.

INT. THE SET. THE DREAM. DAY

Nicole takes the silent "action" cue from Nick.

NICOLE
I am so hungry.

Right on cue Cora walks through the door, holding the golden apple out in front of her. She circles Nicole with determination, seemingly oblivious to Nick and the rest of the crew hovering behind Wolf as he begins following her with the hand-held camera. Wolf is now in his element; gliding like Nureyev with the camera. When he pans suddenly with Cora the whole crew ducks wildly and dives out of camera range.

Cora finally stops circling Nicole and stops abruptly. Suddenly she raises the apple right out in front of Nicole. Wolf glides forward with the camera, framing an amazing CU of the apple with Nicole seen behind it. Nicole reaches out, grabs the apple and takes a huge, resounding bite out of it.

CU Nick's face, eyes wide in anxious delight.

Cora takes one step forward. CU her fuzzy slippers stopping right on the yellow tape mark. Cora waits momentarily until Wolf has reframed both her and Nicole, then lets out a huge laugh.

INT. THE SET. DAY

NICK
And cut!!

General mayhem erupts on the set.

NICK
Wolf, talk to me, man! Did you get it?

WOLF
Got it, Nick! Everything!

NICK
The Close-up?

WOLF
Perfect. See? That's what I meant about going hand-held!

NICK
You're a genius, man! What about the focus?!

AC
Nailed it.

WOLF
Fuckin' A!

Wolf slaps the AC's palm, then the Gaffer's standing right beside him. He turns gleefully to the next person but seeing it is Wanda he rigidly turns away.

WANDA
Going again, Nick?

NICK
How was the sound?

SOUND
I could use another but definitely acceptable.

Nick runs up to his mother and throws his arms around her. Nicole stands beside him.

NICK
Mom, you kook! That was incredible! Did you know we were filming?

CORA
(testily)
Of course I knew you were filming.

NICK
You were great, you're a natural. And Nicole, that was beautiful. Don't you dare tell me that felt fake.

Suddenly, on an impulse surprising both of them, Nick and Nicole embrace. Just then Wanda steps up.

WANDA
Going again, Nick?

NICK
Oh, hold on. Let me think a second.

The set grows suddenly quiet as Nick begins pacing rapidly, muttering to himself.

NICK
Can I use it for the Dream Sequence, that's the question. Does it work for the Dream Sequence?

Nick suddenly looks up and sees everybody staring at him; Nicole in her wedding gown, Wolf with his eyepatch, his mother still eating the apple, Wanda, the crew.

NICK
We're going with it, Wanda!

WANDA
Alright everyone, listen up. That is a wrap on Scene Six.

The set erupts in applause.

SOUND
Hold it! Hold it! Hold it!

WANDA
What?!

SOUND
I need to record room tone. I'll need thirty seconds of silence.

WANDA
Oh, alright! Quiet. Quiet! Shut up!! Thirty seconds of room tone. The sooner you're quiet the sooner we're done.

CORA
(whispers to Nick)
What's room tone?

NICK
It's for the sound, Mom. We just have to be quiet.

At that moment a door opens at the rear of the set and a DOCTOR and NURSE enter. The Nurse carries an extra overcoat. Jeff, the Driver, turns and sternly whispers for them to be quiet.

WANDA
And roll sound. Nobody move.

SOUND

Speed.

INT. THE SET. DAY

The camera is wide, showing the entire set, actors, and crew. Everyone stands in perfect silence, as motionless as statues. As the silence continues the mood on the set gradually changes. One by one people drift into their own private worlds of reflection.

MS the Sound man, alternately watching his recorder and his stopwatch. Behind him the Boom man holds the mike in position to record general ambiance while staring off into the distance.

CU the tape recorder spinning in quiet precision.

CU the stopwatch, its giant second hand showing five seconds have passed.

MS Nick standing next to his mother who drapes one arm casually over Nick's shoulder. Nick glances up and sees Nicole beside him, absorbed in her own thoughts. Suddenly she looks up and her eyes meet Nick's. She slips him the barest hint of a smile.

The camera DOLLIES slowly through the standing, silent group, passing over faces in different degrees of thought.

CU the Sound man's stopwatch, the giant second hand showing ten seconds have passed.

MS Nick. He is so immersed in thought he looks at no one. The camera slowly DOLLIES into a CU of him.

INT. AN AWARDS CEREMONY

CHAD PALOMINO stands at a gleaming podium, looking radiant in an immaculate tuxedo. He holds an envelope in his hands.

CHAD
We have a new category this year:
Best Film Ever Made by a Human Being.
And the winner is none other than my
Best Bud, Nick Reve!

Amid thunderous applause Nick bounds on the stage and accepts an Oscar from Chad. He stands grinning like an idiot as the applause continues.

INT. THE SET. DAY

MS Nick, still wrapped in thought, his lips starting to form the same idiotic smile. MS Nicole. The camera DOLLIES slowly into her face, now tinged with a slight uneasiness.

INT. A CHEAP RESTAURANT

Wide shot at the counter. Nicole stands facing a large bald man with his back to the camera. She is wearing a cheap pink waitress uniform and has her hair under a hairnet.

MAN
Had any experience?

NICOLE
I was an actress for a while.

She pulls her headshot out of her shoulder bag and hands it to the man with a hopeful smile. He flips over the headshot and looks at her credits with confused annoyance.

MAN
Yeah, but can you cook a hamburger?

NICOLE
(doubtfully)
Probably.

INT. THE SET. DAY

MS Nicole. She jerks her head slightly in response to this moment of thought.

CU the stopwatch, showing fifteen seconds have passed.

MS Wolf. The camera begins a slow DOLLY into his CU.

INT. WANDA'S APT. DAY

Wolf stands like Thor in the middle of the Red Set, his arms crossed over his chest, his jaw set in determination. Smoke billows around him. At his feet, dressed in Nicole's wedding gown, Wanda sobs hysterically.

WANDA
Wolf, I'm sorry! Please forgive me! I love you, Wolf! Please! Give me one more chance. Let me prove it! I love you! I love you, Wolf!

Wolf remains unmoved for a long moment. Finally he reaches out with a forgiving smile and pats Wanda's head.

INT. THE SET. DAY

MS Wolf. He glances furtively at Wanda with a trace of hope still in his eyes.

MS Wanda, looking off. The camera DOLLIES into her CU.

INT. A CHEAP HOTEL ROOM

This is the same hotel room from Part Two, in which we saw

Nicole and Chad Palomino. At the moment Wanda and Chad lie panting in the sweat-soaked sheets.

WANDA
What I love about you, Chad, is you're not afraid of my power.

CHAD
Oh God, Wanda! I love your power. It's like an afferdesiac to me!

INT. THE SET. DAY

MS Wanda. She shifts slightly and glances quickly around her. Her smile is tinged with the hint of sexual pleasure.

MS the Gaffer, frowning, absorbed in thought. The camera DOLLIES into a CU of him.

INT. A CHEAP RESTAURANT. DAY

Suddenly, a CU of an incredibly beautiful hamburger being placed in a toasted bun on a gleaming white oval plate. A hand places a garnish of parsley on it then carries the plate to the lunch counter. Camera PANS to reveal the GAFFER sitting on the stool. He picks up the hamburger and takes a huge bite out of it. This shot holds for quite some time as he continues to chew.

INT. THE SET. DAY

MS The Gaffer. A hopeful, delicious smile spreading over his face.

CU the Sound man's stopwatch, the giant second hand showing twenty seconds have passed.

MS Cora. She gazes serenely out before her.

INT. NURSING HOME. DAY

In the pale afternoon light, Cora stands in the middle of her drab, barren room. She appears to be staring at the door. Suddenly she begins striding toward it. Effortlessly, easily, she walks right through it.

INT. AN AWARDS CEREMONY

Nick still stands at the podium with his Oscar.

NICK
In closing I'd like to say to all the people who told me not to make this movie, who wouldn't meet with me or return a simple phone call. To my favorite professor at Film School whose parting advice to me was to

take a job teaching at a women's college. To Delores DelSporto, the girl I loved in high school who left me for a Jr. Varsity football player: to all these people I'd like to say thank you but I can't because what I really feel like saying is go fu -- !!

INT. THE SET. DAY

MS Nick, his head and body jerking in a sudden spasm. He finishes the last word of his speech in a choked whisper and the Sound man frowns hard at him.

CU the Sound man's stopwatch showing twenty-five seconds have passed. The camera stays on the watch until the final five seconds have elapsed.

SOUND
And, that's a cut on room tone.

The room erupts with activity. Everyone moves and talks at once. Nick whispers something to Nicole then runs off.

WANDA
OK, strike the set. Props! Art Department! Redress for Scene thirty-one. Let's go! Right away people! Nick! Nick! Anyone seen Nick?!

WS the set. Suddenly the fake door closes right into the lens, turning the frame completely BLACK.

END CREDITS.