

LONNY THE GREAT

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE - DAY

The greatest city on earth.

LONNY (V.O.)

My father's a great man. Ask
anyone. Ask him. He'll tell you.
By the time he was nineteen he
dropped out of college and made
his first million.

INSERT - COVER OF TEEN FORBES MAGAZINE

A smiling young JULIUS BINGHAM (age 17) wears a business
suit and gives a thumbs-up. The cover line reads:
"Don't Hate Me Because I'm Young."

INT. LARGE INDUSTRIAL FACTORY - DAY

We see enormous amounts of LETTUCE LEAVES moving on a
conveyor belt. A twenty-one-year old Julius leads four
German Industrialists on a tour of the plant.

YOUNG JULIUS

The key is removing the moisture.
We bag the salad within three
hours, giving us a shelf life of
eleven days. Mom comes home,
she's tired, she opens the bag.

INT. BAGGED SALAD FACTORY - ANOTHER TIME

Julius stands next to a WORKER, puts on goggles, and
inspects lettuce heads as they move towards a bladed
machine.

LONNY (V.O.)

He expanded nationally, kept a
firm eye on quality control, but
tragically lost his thumb when
momentarily distracted during a
routine inspection.

A FEMALE WORKER walks past. She removes her hairnet and
shakes out her LONG BLONDE HAIR.

We HEAR a nasty CHOPPING NOISE.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Three paramedics race down the corridor pushing Julius on a gurney. The blonde runs beside him. Julius's hand is covered with a plastic salad bag.

LONNY (V.O.)

He briefly married the woman, his first of five wives, and designed for himself a prosthetic thumb.

INT. RESEARCH FACILITY ROOM - DAY

A ten-year-old BOY limps along on a metal PROSTHETIC LEG. He dribbles a basketball.

LONNY (V.O.)

Vowing to help others like himself, he quickly mastered both anatomy and engineering, revolutionizing the field of prosthetic technology.

The boy high-fives Julius.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Julius slips his fingers into a bowling ball.

LONNY (V.O.)

Already an accomplished amateur bowler, my father turned professional when his average score jumped fifty points due to increased ball control with the new thumb.

He throws pin-splintering strike.

INSERT - BOWLERS WORLD MAGAZINE

Julius holds a bowling ball and gives a prosthetic "thumbs-up." Cover line reads: "Man or Machine."

LONNY (V.O.)

He's been honored countless times...

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Julius on a platform with the MAYOR. A cloth is removed to reveal a street sign that says JULIUS BINGHAM WAY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The onlookers applaud.

LONNY (V.O.)
But it wasn't till he met my
mother that he says he became
truly complete.

Julius locks eyes with a breathtaking brunette. Her name
is MARION. PAN DOWN to reveal her prosthetic leg.

LONNY (V.O.)
She opened up new worlds for
him...

*
*
*

EXT. CARNEGIE HALL - NIGHT

*

Marion leads Julius past a three-sheet poster that reads:
TONIGHT ONLY -- THEODORE S. ROME. SOLD OUT.

*
*

INT. CARNEGIE HALL

*

Julius watches a dance performance, his eyes full with
tears.

*
*

LONNY (V.O.)
... And was herself a great writer
of both fiction and historical
biography.

*
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*
*
*

INT. BINGHAM BROWNSTONE - LIBRARY - DAY

*

Marion works at her typewriter. Julius looks on.

*

LONNY (V.O.)
They had two children. Me, then
my younger brother Spencer, and
life was great...

*
*

HOME MOVIE MONTAGE

Yellowed, grainy -- at a BEACH RESORT.

*

-- Julius holds a five dollar bill in the air. 5-year-
old Spencer jumps repeatedly to grab it. Julius laughs.

-- 7-year-old LONNY BINGHAM, (our NARRATOR) works on a
sand sculpture of a seashell. A giggling Julius and
Spencer run past and step on the sculpture.

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(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY (V.O.)

Three summers later it all came to
an end.

-- Julius looks O.S. The grainy image pans to reveal
Julius staring at a spicy CHAMBERMAID on a cigarette
break.

LONNY (V.O.)

That fall we received a letter
from my mother written in a
foreign language in case my father
found it.

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*

INT. CROWDED INDIAN RESTAURANT - DAY

An INDIAN WAITER reads the letter. Spencer and Lonny
look up at him. Four other waiters read over his
shoulder.

INDIAN WAITER

'I love you both very much but my
heart is in pieces. I have gone
far away to put it back together.'

*

LONNY (V.O.)

She wrote she was in India
following a Sikh named Ari Tama
Kahn looking to restore her faith
in humanity.

Young Lonny holds a photo of a bearded guru.

INT. BINGHAM BROWNSTONE - DEN - NIGHT

Julius watches a SOLO DANCE PERFORMANCE on television.
He has a sad, faraway gaze.

LONNY (V.O.)

One year later we received a
telegram saying she had died of
malaria while helping to erect a
schoolhouse on the India-
Bangladesian border.

Young Lonny quietly enters the den.

YOUNG LONNY

Should I go to bed now?

JULIUS

Do you know what genius is, Lonny?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG LONNY

No.

JULIUS

This guy.

(points to television)
Theodore Rome. Your mother was
writing a book about him. He made
people listen without saying a
word. That's what greatness is.
Do you have any idea what I'm
talking about?

*
*
*

YOUNG LONNY

I don't know.

JULIUS

Where's your brother?

LONNY (V.O.)

It was my brother who had the
greatness my father spoke of.

INT. SPENCER'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Spencer works at a whiteboard. Three columns across the
top read "CBS, NBC, and ABC." Along the sides are the
days of the week. The names of television shows fill in
the grid.

LONNY (V.O.)

He would spend hours reprogramming
his favorite TV shows to achieve
maximum viewership.

Spencer switches two of the shows. Julius looks on.

*

JULIUS

That's a powerful Thursday, son.

INT. YMCA - THERAPY ROOM - DAY

For the first time we see the grown-up LONNY BINGHAM, 30
years old, black curly hair. He sits in a circle with
ten other men about his age. It's a FATHER-SON SUPPORT
GROUP. A woman, CLAIRE, obviously the leader, sits with
a clipboard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

They pretty much do everything together. And... this Saturday when Spencer gets married my Father will stand next to him -- as the best man. He asked my Father to be his best man. And --

CLAIRE

Okay, great. Thank you, Lonny, for that... detailed answer. Who's next? Jesse?

*

JESSE

Um, my father's an environmental chemist.

*

*

*

*

*

Claire's alarm watch BEEPS.

CLAIRE

Sorry, we're out of time. We'll have to get to everyone else next Thursday.

*

(the group breaks up)

And remember, everyone, just because you think your fathers don't love you, doesn't mean they don't.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING (DEWITT CLINTON ZOO) - DAY

We're in the second floor of a two-story structure. ZOO POSTERS line the walls. Lonny wears a blue gabardine with the zoo LOGO embroidered on it. Lonny answers the phone. He's on headset.

LONNY

Dewitt Clinton pet and animal hotline.

He wheels his chair back to look out the WINDOW.

LONNY'S POV

A beautiful BRUNETTE, hair tied back, glasses, stands near the apes. She makes notes in her clipboard.

BACK TO SCENE

LONNY

Well, it's not actually seven years to our one, that's more of like a guidepost, you know for fun... No, dogs don't go through menopause... you should consult a veterinarian...

The caller has hung up on Lonny. He looks back out the window. His internal LINE RINGS.

LONNY

Yeah?

VOICE (V.O.)

(on phone)

Have you asked her yet?

LONNY

No. I think I'm just gonna go stag.

OTHER SIDE OF ROOM -- We see that Lonny is talking to GERALD. Gerald is a seventeen-year-old nerdy slacker. He wears his blue DC gabardine open, a T-shirt underneath and long shorts.

GERALD

I'm coming over.

Gerald removes his headset and crosses to Lonny.

GERALD

Dude, you can't go stag. It's suicide.

LONNY

Why not?

GERALD

One, you're not best man. Two, your younger brother is getting married. Before you. Your aunts are gonna be all over you asking why aren't you married. You're looking at a day of pain here. You need to show up with someone beautiful, impressive, and preferably foreign. And she should be taller than you...

*

LONNY

Exactly how old are you, Gerald?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD
Seventeen and a half.

LONNY
Why aren't you in college?

GERALD
I home school. Institutionalized
education's a fraud.

Lonny looks at Gerald. How did this kid become my
friend?

LONNY
Okay, so what'd you get on her?

GERALD
She's 31. She's doing her thesis
on male aggression in tamarind
apes. She grew up in England
until age 12, then moved
stateside. She's five foot ten.

LONNY
How did you find this out?

GERALD
I asked her. Do lizards have
genders? A teacher called in?

LONNY
Yes.
(beat)
I'm gonna talk to her.

Lonny stands, fixes himself.

GERALD
When was the last time you asked a
woman out?

LONNY
Holly dumped me four months ago.
We went out for three years. Do
the math.

EXT. ZOO - MOMENTS LATER

Lonny tussles his hair, trying to get "that look." He
walks with determination to the brunette. Her name is
GAIL. Her split country upbringing gives a sexy pan-
Atlantic accent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Two WORKERS are installing a plastic guard in front of a monkey cage.

LONNY
(re: workers)
What are they doing?

GAIL
Raphael has been expressing his
dominance by throwing his feces.

Lonny looks over at the docile, drugged ape.

LONNY
Really? You should see me when I
get mad.

This joke goes nowhere. Lonny tries to recover.

LONNY
You tranquilized him?

GAIL
Until the instillation's complete.
You're Lonny Bingham, right?

LONNY
Yeah. How did you know?

GAIL
I'm Gail Henwith. I'm observing
here for three months. You're
father's Julius Bingham?

LONNY
Uh-huh.

GAIL
He's an extraordinary man. So you
work on the hotline?

LONNY
Uh, yeah, yeah, I'm currently
between things, you know, deciding
where I want to put my energies
next, but what can I say, I love
animals.

GAIL
Yeah? What do you love about
them?

LONNY
They're cute.

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(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIL
I'm serious.

*
*

LONNY
I think they have a connection to
the earth and nature that we've
lost in our rush to conquer it.
And I think they're free of the
insane emotional weight that we as
people put on each other. That,
and they're good with kids.

*
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*

She laughs. He smiles.

*

LONNY
Look, this might be a little
sudden, but, my brother's getting
married on Saturday, and, I was
going to go alone, but I thought
it might be more fun to, you know,
go with someone...

*

GAIL
Are you asking me?

LONNY
Yeah, I think so.

GAIL
Well... Saturday? Sure, I'd love
to.

*

LONNY
You would? That's great.
That's... So, do you want me to
pick you up, or you can give me
your number...?

GAIL
How about you give me your number
and I'll call you Saturday
morning.

LONNY
Great.

Nervously, he takes her clipboard and writes his number
on what is obviously some important data.

LONNY
Here you go.

GAIL
I look forward to it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY
Terrific. See you then.

Lonny stays an awkward moment too long, then walks away.

INT. PENGUIN HALL - FROM BEHIND - MOMENTS LATER

We see one lone small girl quietly watching the penguins behind the glass.

WAH0000!! Lonny runs across the hall, arms raised, doing a victory lap.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- A felt cloth is unrolled on a table. CHISELS and KNIVES are revealed.

-- A chainsaw is pulled from its case.

-- A large clear square of ICE is placed on a large table.

-- The CHAINSAW's cord is pulled. VRRRRRRR! We see the vibrating blade thrust into the ice.

INT. BINGHAM BROWNSTONE BASEMENT - NIGHT

We are in a refrigerated room. Three slabs of aged beef hang from hooks. Lonny wears goggles.

TIME LAPSES THROUGH VARIOUS ANGLES

as Lonny moves from chainsaw, to chipping ax, to chisel, to detail knife.

He steps back. An ICE-SCULPTURE is revealed. TWO PORPOISES EMERGING FROM A WAVE, MEETING IN A KISS. It's good. *

LONNY
That should wow 'em.

INT. BINGHAM BROWNSTONE - AFTERNOON

Lonny is tying his tuxedo tie. The DOORBELL sounds.

INT. FOYER - SECONDS LATER

Lonny breathes deep and opens the door. Gail looks stunning.

LONNY

Wow, you look... amazing.

GAIL

Thank you.

(beat)

May I come in?

LONNY

Of course. Sure.

She enters.

LONNY

I would have picked you up.

GAIL

My apartment's all the way uptown,
this was easier. Where is
everyone?

LONNY

They've been over at the hall all
day. I'm sort of home base.

She looks about the brownstone. It's eclectic to say the
least. On the wall she sees Julius' framed "thumbs-up"
magazine covers. A bronzed bowling ball on a pedestal.
A prosthetic leg in a glass case.

GAIL

This is remarkable. Are you
living here?

LONNY

Um, yeah, temporarily. I recently
ended a relationship, so... We
were growing apart. I was adamant
about her keeping the apartment.
Make things easier for her.

*

GAIL

That's very thoughtful of you.

LONNY

(changes the subject)

Can I show you something? I want
to show you something. Come with
me.

*

INT. HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

Lonny parts two sliding French doors, revealing a brightly-colored ROOM OF WONDER. It's like Willy Wonka opened the door to the chocolate room.

GAIL

Oh my God. This is incredible.

LONNY

My father calls this 'the great room.'

Gail runs her hand along a high-backed ornate wooden THRONE.

LONNY

That was Napoleon's.

GAIL

Really?

She quickly takes her hand off it.

LONNY

You can touch it. Don't worry.

Gail circles the room. It is filled with the odd and curious.

LONNY

Here. This is what I wanted to show you.

He hands her an antique spyglass. Inscribed near the base is "Darwin."

GAIL

Darwin?

LONNY

It's the spyglass he used on the Galapagos Islands. It was a gift from the ship's captain that brought him there.

GAIL

This is... priceless.

Above the fireplace, Gail sees an oversized LOBBY POSTER. It reads "TONIGHT ONLY. THEODORE S. ROME. CARNEGIE HALL."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIL

Oh my God. Theodore Rome. I saw
him dance once. I was very young.
Are these his shoes?

She gently runs her fingers over a masculine pair of
ballet slippers.

LONNY

Yeah. My father has a lot of Rome
memorabilia. *

(beat) *

My mother was writing a book about
him before she died. *

Forgive Lonny for shamelessly milking his mother's death,
but he really likes this girl.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Lonny checks his watch.

LONNY

I'll be right back. Touch
anything you want.

Lonny hurries to the front door. Opens it. It's Gerald.

LONNY

Great timing. Where the hell were
you? You're two hours late.

Behind Gerald we see a beat-up ICE CREAM TRUCK.

GERALD

The term is thank you. You think
it's easy getting a refrigerated
truck? I had to wait for my
friend's brother to finish his
route.

INT. BINGHAM BROWNSTONE BASEMENT - MINUTES LATER

Lonny and Gerald at a steep angle. They ascend the
basement staircase trying to balance the heavy porpoise
ice-sculpture which is strapped on a wide wooden plank. *

GERALD

Dude, this is a weird wedding
present.

LONNY

Yeah, why's that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD

It melts. Shouldn't a wedding present represent something sturdy? You know, sturdy love.

Lonny hadn't thought of that.

LONNY

The beauty of the art form is that it's designed to be temporary.

Gerald's hand slips.

LONNY

Careful, this took me six hours.

INT. THE GREAT ROOM - SAME TIME

Gail spots a top hat that has MR. ASTAIRE written on it. She puts it on her head and dances playfully around the room.

EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

Lonny shuts the back door of the ice cream truck. He comes around to Gerald who's behind the wheel.

LONNY

Okay. Arrive at the Puck building at seven-thirty. Don't be late. Find the wedding coordinator, she'll come get me, then we'll carry it up to the reception.

GERALD

Can I meet your father?

LONNY

No.

GERALD

Why not?

LONNY

He's not here. You sure you can handle this thing?

GERALD

I've been driving since I was twelve. What about at the wedding, can I meet him there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

We'll see. Seven-thirty. Don't be late.

Lonny hits the truck twice with his palm. The international truckers signal for "all set." The truck ENGINE GRINDS.

INT. THE GREAT ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Gail looks at a large oval table set under a beautiful three-sided BAY WINDOW. On the table are TWO DOZEN PHOTOGRAPHS in VARYING FRAMES. Lonny enters.

LONNY

We should get going.

GAIL

These pictures are incredible. Leonard Bernstein, Nelson Mandela, Maya Angelou. Who are the people next to them?

LONNY

It's sort of a contest. My father calls it the Table of Greatness. You get a picture of yourself with someone famous, not just famous, but important. It started with this one.

Lonny shows her an old yellowed photo, of two men on a couch holding martinis.

GAIL

Is that Salvador Dali?

LONNY

With my grandfather. The harder the person is to get to the better. Like, this is my dad's kayaking partner with Salman Rushdie.

Gail picks up another picture.

GAIL

What's this one?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

This is my favorite. That's my Aunt Teri. And that's Seattle Slew right after he won the Triple Crown. See, they're in the winner's circle.

*

GAIL

Do you have one on here?

LONNY

Me? No. But after you've written some books and become a world renown zoologist I'll take one with you.

*
*
*
*

GAIL

(smiles warmly)

Thank you for showing me all of this.

*
*
*
*

LONNY

We should get going.

*
*

CUT TO:

INT. PUCK BUILDING - GROOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Julius and Spencer perfect their bow ties in the mirror. Lonny stands behind them.

LONNY

You look great, Spencer. I just wanted to say good luck.

SPENCER

Thanks, Lon. Dad, I got you this. It's tradition for the groom to give his best man a gift.

Julius unwraps the present.

JULIUS

Oh, my sweet boy.

INSERT - A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH

of Spencer crouching next to a smiling Stephen Hawking in his wheelchair.

BACK TO SCENE

JULIUS

Stephen Hawking.

SPENCER

Not an easy man to get. I had to make a lot of phone calls. Does that get me up on the table?

JULIUS

Front and center. Come here.

He gives Spencer a warm bear hug.

SPENCER

Lonny, run down and tell them we'll be ready in ten minutes.

INT. PUCK BUILDING - BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

It's a high-end affair. About 300 wedding guests sit around beautifully-linened tables with towering floral centerpieces. *

Julius stands in front of the band, microphone in hand.

JULIUS

When my son asked me to be his best man, I said, 'Spence, what about your brother Lonny, or one of your friends?' He said, 'Dad, it's called the best man. Who's better than you?'

Laughter. Warm applause.

JULIUS

About a decade ago I was travelling through Sri Lanka when a monsoon spit up this terrible gale. My eyes were pelted with shards of earth and sand. I duck into a chapel where a wedding was taking place. They welcomed me, and after the ceremony, we sit in a circle, getting drunk on a devil-water they called kava. I turn to the groom's father and ask him what he's feeling? He says, 'Julius, today, there's an uncompromised joy in my spirit.'

(beat)

I just wish the weather wasn't so lousy. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The crowd laughs. Julius and Gail make eye contact. She blushes.

JULIUS

Uncompromised joy. As a parent, you try to nudge your children in the right direction, show them the path to greatness. Spence, you've shown talent in many many fields, but I think your true claim to greatness, is your beautiful new wife, Triana.

*

Applause. Lonny looks around the room. Where the hell is Gerald? He checks his watch.

INSERT - THE WATCH FACE

reads 7:35.

CUT TO:

A DENTED PLASTIC WALL CLOCK

It reads 7:15.

INT. MAXWELL'S DONUTS - SAME TIME

Gerald sits at the seedy counter having a coffee and donut. He does a SEARCH-A-WORD puzzle. He glances at the clock.

GERALD

Terry, my man, I have to rumble.
What's the damage?

A SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD who looks a lot like Gerald steps over.

TERRY

Donut's half-price. Ninety-five cents.

Gerald slides a ONE DOLLAR BILL across the counter.

GERALD

Keep la change.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - SAME TIME

Julius is now seated at the piano, tickling the keys.

JULIUS

Triana's father passed on many years ago. She told me his axe was piano and he was one of the cats who played in Scott Joplin's pickup band. This is for him.

Lonny rolls his eyes. Julius starts in on a quick-tempoed RAG. He's amazing.

EXT. MAXWELL'S DONUTS PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Behind the wheel, Gerald backs the truck out of the parking lot. The MUSIC's CRANKED. He reaches for his coffee on the dashboard when WHAM! He's smacked by an SUV.

Gerald rushes out of the truck. He throws open the back door. PHEW! The sculpture's in one piece.

A sweater-clad YUPPIE fights his air-bag and steps out from the SUV. Looks at the damage.

YUPPIE

Who the fuck taught you to drive?

GERALD

My mom, cocksucker!

Gerald attacks the Yuppie. They fall to the ground, Gerald on top. The Yuppie easily rolls him over and punches his face.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - SAME TIME

Huge applause as Julius' rag ends. Triana runs up and hugs him. So does Spencer.

JULIUS

I already gave them their gift. A Hawaiian honeymoon. But I have one more.

(faces Spencer)

Spence, next month will be my last as head of Bingham Industries. From parent to child -- the world continues. I know you'll make me proud.

*

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*

Spencer is almost in tears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIUS

Now, before we make the toast. My other son, Lonny, has a gift he wants to present.

*

ON LONNY

wishing he could crawl under the table.

LONNY

Dad, actually it's, um, not here yet. I'll have to, uh, give it after.

JULIUS

Okay. Well then, a little anticlimactic, but... Let's all raise a glass, shall we.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - LATER

The party's in full swing. Lonny and Gail stand near the dance floor talking to an intense WEDDING COORDINATOR.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

If your sculpture's not here in five minutes, I'm putting a flower tower as the centerpiece.

LONNY

It'll be here.

Julius approaches.

JULIUS

There you are.

LONNY

Hey, Dad.

JULIUS

Who is your breathtaking friend?

GAIL

I'm Gail Henwith. I very much enjoyed your speech.

Their eyes lock. A definite spark.

JULIUS

Do I detect a bit of an accent? Manchester?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIL

Very impressive. I was born there.

LONNY

Gail and I work together.

GAIL

I'm doing research for my doctorate.

JULIUS

Really? What's your subject?

GAIL

Male aggression amongst tamarind apes.

JULIUS

Well I wouldn't know anything about that.

Julius and Gail both chuckle, flirtatiously.

LONNY

Will you excuse us for a moment?

He pulls Julius aside.

LONNY

What are you doing?

JULIUS

What?

LONNY

Can you please not flirt with my date.

JULIUS

I wasn't flirting.

LONNY

You weren't flirting?! 'Do I detect an accent?'

JULIUS

Are you feeling okay? What happened to your gift? You left me hanging up there.

Lonny spots Gerald poking his head out the kitchen door.

LONNY

I'll be right back. Go talk to someone else.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Gerald's face is GASHED and SWOLLEN from his yuppie beating. He holds a cloth to his bleeding ear.

LONNY

Where the hell were you?

GERALD

I'm fine. Thanks for asking.

LONNY

Is the sculpture okay?

GERALD

Don't panic. It's fine.

EXT. PUCK BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Gerald opens the truck door. Lonny turns white. The top half of the sculpture is melted, deformed. A small puddle at the base.

GERALD

Shit. The cooling system must have got knocked out.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Lonny returns to the party. The guests have formed a circle around the dance floor.

Lonny makes his way through the crowd to find Julius and Gail moving beautifully around the floor, both apparently accomplished ballroom dancers.

CUT TO:

INT. LONNY'S BEDROOM - LATER

He's under the covers, miserable. Can't sleep. We HEAR the muffled SOUNDS of Gail's passion coming through ceiling.

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*

*

Lonny sadly looks at a framed picture on his dresser table.

ANGLE ON PHOTO

Lonny has his arm around HOLLY, an earthy, smiling redhead. We HEAR a CRACK OF THUNDER!!

FLASHBACK - EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Lonny and Holly stand in an OPEN FIELD. It is POURING RAIN.

HOLLY

I love you, Lonny, I do, you can be so great, but I need someone who wants things, passionately, who has goals --

*
*
*
*

LONNY

I have goals.

*
*

HOLLY

I know, but you don't do anything about them.

*
*
*

LONNY

Don't think you have me all figured out, Holly.

HOLLY

I think you purposefully hold yourself back in some misguided childlike rebellion against your father. It's like you embrace mediocrity in defiance of everything great he's accomplished.

LONNY

Okay, just because you have me all figured out, doesn't mean I can't change.

HOLLY

I guess I don't want to be the one who changes you. I'm sorry, Lonny.

(kisses his wet
cheek)

I never knew it could feel this good.

*
*

LONNY

What?

INT. LONNY'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME (PRESENT)

Once again, we hear Gail from above.

*

GAIL (V.O.)

I never knew. Never knew. So good...

*
*
*
*

INT. BASEMENT - CLOSE ON CHAINSAW - MOMENTS LATER

BUZZING to life.

Lonny hurls it like a battle ax into a block of ice, taking out his aggressions.

INT. ZOO BUILDING - DAY

Lonny on the phone; he's looked better.

LONNY

(with attitude)

Take it to a vet. Don't you think that would be bright?

LONNY'S POV

OUT the window he sees Gail by her apes. Julius approaches with flowers. She hugs him.

BACK TO SCENE

LONNY

If you were ripping fur off your body with your teeth, would you see a doctor?... I'm saying if you had fur... Your cat has an allergy, ma'am, go to a vet.

*

He hangs up. His internal LINE RINGS.

LONNY

What?

GERALD (V.O.)

Do you want to talk about it?

LONNY

No.

Gerald comes over from his work station.

GERALD

I think you should talk about it. Suppressed anger causes cancer.

LONNY

If I want to talk about it I'll call you at your desk, okay?

LESTER, Lonny's boss, pokes his head out of his office.

LESTER

Lonny, come see me.

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER

LONNY

Lester, I'm sorry about the
attitude on the phone, last night
was a rough --

*

LESTER

I don't care about that. I have
some bad news. I have to let you
go. City budget cutbacks. I can
only afford one of you on the
phone.

LONNY

Get rid of Gerald.

LESTER

Gerald has seniority. You're too
qualified for this job, anyway.
I'll give you another week until
you find something else. This
can't be all you want to do with
your life, is it?

*
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EXT. STRIP MALL PARKING LOT - LATER

*

They're parked. Lonny sips a soda. Gerald stuffs his
face with food from a metal tin and a Chinese takeout
box.

*
*
*

GERALD

Dude, you getting fired is
bullshize, but if you ask me,
Lester did you a favor.

*
*
*
*

LONNY

How can you eat Chinese and
Italian at the same time?

*
*
*

GERALD

It's delicious. Don't be elitist.
You know what you should do, man,
become a professional ice
sculptor, that porpoise thing you
did kicked ass before it melted.

*
*
*
*
*
*

LONNY

There's no such thing as a
professional ice sculptor.

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD

Yes there is. My cousin just got married to this rich dicky politician, they were all over the banquet hall.

LONNY

Those are made from molds, you pour the water in... it's a hobby, Gerald, nobody makes a living at it.

GERALD

Alright, don't jump down my throat, I'm only trying to help. Jesus.

A bit of tension between them. Lonny rolls his eyes, feeling guilty. He debates sharing something with Gerald, hesitates, then turns to him --

LONNY

Okay, I do have this one idea. You know how they have art therapy, for disabled kids, children with Down's syndrome...?

GERALD

Yeah.

LONNY

And how I've been telling Lester the zoo should do an outreach program with animal therapy...?

GERALD

Screw Lester. Pencil pusher.

LONNY

Shut up, just listen. What if I combine the two? I go into a hospital with let's say a fox. The kids play with the fox, pet its fur, and while they're doing that, I teach them all about it, how it lives, what it eats...

GERALD

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

And after they've gotten to fully experience the animal, both inside and out, they make a sculpture of it. Not out of ice, because, you know, I use chain saws, but clay, puddy, hands-on material, and the sculptures will be these great and amazing things because the kids will have really gotten to know the fox.

GERALD

Dude, I love that. It's brilliant.

LONNY

Yeah?

GERALD

This is what companies do. Synergy. You combine two things and make something new. My father talks about this all the time.

Lonny reaches into a knapsack in the backseat.

LONNY

I actually wrote up a proposal when I broke up with Holly, and a start-up budget.

Hands Gerald a folder.

GERALD

Artimal therapy. This is what you're calling it?

LONNY

Yeah.

GERALD

Dude, the idea's gold but this name sucks.

LONNY

It doesn't suck. Art therapy, animal --

GERALD

Yeah, I get it, it sucks. No offense.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Whatever, it's a working title. I budgeted at twenty thousand to start up, if you're really interested... maybe you could ask your father?

GERALD

For twenty thousand dollars? Ha! Right. Funny.

LONNY

You always say he wants you to have direction in life.

GERALD

Ask your father. The guy has more money than Satan.

LONNY

I don't take money from my father.

GERALD

You're living with him. That's taking money from him. Dude, he boned your wedding date. It's not like he can say no.

EXT. BINGHAM BACKYARD - DAY

Julius trims a bonsai plant in his JAPANESE TEA GARDEN. Naturally, it's amazing, with brooks, exquisitely sculptured flora, and a small wooden bridge.

JULIUS

No.

LONNY

You can't say no.

JULIUS

Artimal therapy? First off, that's a terrible name.

LONNY

I'm changing it. It's a working title.

JULIUS

Second, you don't have experience working with children -- and you can't bring a fox into a children's hospital. Foxes are very unpredictable...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

The fox is just an example. It'll be different animals each -- this is in direct correlation to what you did with the prosthetics -- helping people. How can you turn me down after what you did with Gail?

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JULIUS

Gail? Look, Lonny, Gail went with you to the wedding so she could meet me. I'm sorry about that, but it's true.

(beat)

I want you to know, I've asked her to move in.

*
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*

LONNY

What?!

JULIUS

I know it's quick, but I really think she might be the one.

*
*
*

LONNY

The one? You've been married five times. You're old enough to be her... perverted father.

*

JULIUS

You should be happy I met someone. Do you want to see your father end up old and alone? Hold this.

*

Julius hands Lonny a SMALL PLANT with a bulb on its end. He moves to another spot, and digs a hole.

*
*

LONNY

You've never supported me, you know that?

*
*
*

JULIUS

Hey, that is not true.

LONNY

In sixth grade I had a swim meet. You showed up late and then when you got there you bet against me.

JULIUS

It was a smart wager. That other boy was much bigger than you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

I'm your son!

JULIUS

Yes, you are! Is your idea good?
 Yes. Is it great? My father told
 me there are two types of people.
 Those that fulfill their
 potential, and everyone else. You
 want my money, Lonny? Inspire me.
 Just once. Show me something
 fantastic. Fail, fall on your
 face, I don't care. Just surprise
 me.

*
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*

Julius heads inside. Lonny yells out.

*

LONNY

I make ice sculptures. And
 they're great.

*
*
*

JULIUS

Ice sculptures melt, Lonny. No
 one's surprised by a puddle.

*
*

Lonny's devastated. He stands there, a small man in a
 tea garden.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Then what happened?

LONNY (V.O.)

That's it. He went inside.

INT. YMCA - THERAPY ROOM - DAY

The "sons with issues" sit in their circle.

MALE #1

Your dad's harsh, man. If my dad
 said that to me, I'd start
 bawling.

LONNY

He's right, though. What have I
 done that's special?

MALE #2

My dad never supports me. The
 guy's a dry well. It's like every
 time I send my bucket down it
 comes up empty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALE #3

My bucket comes up empty too.

MALE #4

You know something, I'm tired of
sending my bucket down.

MALE #1

I hear you, man.

CLAIRE

Who else hears him?

They all raise their hands. Lonny looks around. These
guys are pathetic.

CLAIRE

Is that the way you feel, Lonny?
Is your bucket never shiny enough?

*

INT. BINGHAM DEN - NIGHT

Lonny, in pajamas, pint of ice cream in hand, sits
slumped in the couch watching TV. Infomercial -- CLICK.
"Three's Company" rerun -- CLICK. Another infomercial --
CLICK.

*

*

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We now return to 'Modern Masters.'

*

ON THE TV SCREEN:

We see Mark Morris. CHRYON: MARK MORRIS, FAMOUS DANCER.

MARK MORRIS (V.O.)

When Rome danced he became
transparent. It was like you
could see directly into his soul.
To watch him was to watch
genius -- genius in motion.

We see Sean Penn. CHRYON: SEAN PENN,
ACTOR/FILMMAKER/DANCER.

*

SEAN PENN (V.O.)

I first saw him... I was about
fourteen. I always thought dance
was a bit faggy, but not when Rome
did it. The man was a true genius.
Or as I like to say, a genius in
motion.

*

MUSIC AND TITLE FRAME -- It reads "THEODORE S. ROME:
GENIUS IN MOTION."

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We see ALEXANDER PO. 50s, distinguished. CHRYON:
ALEXANDER PO, AUTHOR NATIONAL PSYCHE.

ALEXANDER PO (V.O.)

He was controversial in that he
wanted to right the wrongs of
society. Rome wanted the world to
be better, and dance having no
words allowed him to have an
international impact.

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Childhood photos of Theodore Rome.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Born in a sod dugout, Theodore
Rome was the son of a mediocre
flamenco dancer, who himself was
the son of a mediocre avocado
farmer.

Old photo of TWO MEN. The older dressed in farmer's
overalls. The younger in a polka-dotted pink shirt
tucked into high-waisted flamenco pants.

ALEXANDER PO (V.O.)

The problem was, Theodore's father
was a terrible dancer. The family
was very poor. To save money they
moved into a one-room apartment
located in the rear of a boxing gym.

Photo of adolescent Theodore and his father in a doorway.
Photo widens to reveal the foreground: Two dozen sweaty
boxers train amongst worn-down equipment.

MARK MORRIS (V.O.)

I think his father's mediocrity is
what drove Rome to be so great.
The two had a very contentious
relationship.

REVERSE ANGLE - ON LONNY

He sits up.

BACK ON TV SCREEN

NARRATOR (V.O.)

With family relations strained,
young Theodore was raised by the
community of concerned boxers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Footage of a pugilist shadow-boxing in slow motion.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

'It was while watching my surrogate fathers train,' said Rome, 'that I first learned the expressiveness of the human body in motion.'

We see Margaret Harrington, 60s, wealthy. CHRYON: MARGARET HARRINGTON, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL DANCE THEATRE.

MARGARET HARRINGTON (V.O.)

Growing up impoverished Rome wanted to use dance as an instrument for social and political change. The first major piece he choreographed, 'Broken arrow/Broken treaty' was a caustic, eleven-hour diatribe on the treatment of Native Americans.

*

Still photo of dancers. Two wear Native American headdresses. CHRYON: BROKEN ARROW/BROKEN TREATY, PART IV.

We see NORMAN MAILER. CHRYON: WRITER, BOXING ENTHUSIAST, PERSONALITY.

*
*

NORMAN MAILER (V.O.)

Of all his accomplishments, he's best known for the Ali story. Ali is to fight Foreman for the championship. Rome tells Ali, hold the fight in Zaire -- to raise consciousness for the devastations in Africa.

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Promotional POSTER for "Rumble in the Jungle."

*

NORMAN MAILER (V.O.)

Ali knows Foreman can out punch him. He and Rome talk.

*
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*

Footage of Ali.

*

ALI (V.O.)

I'm gonna dance. Foreman won't touch me.

*
*
*

NORMAN MAILER (V.O.)

Ali 'Rope-a-dopes' and wins.

*
*

Photo of Ali, arms raised over a downed Foreman.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORMAN MAILER (V.O.)

The ring clears out, then, Rome spontaneously climbs in... and starts dancing. To no music. He dances for 57 hours straight. Against African Dictators. Against African poverty and neglect. He doesn't ask for a dime but over one billion dollars in donations come flooding in. And then he was gone.

ALEXANDER PO (V.O.)

Why did he disappear? That's the big question, right? Maybe his role as international dance humanitarian became too much for him.

Silhouette of man in mid ballet-leap. It recedes, getting smaller and smaller.

MIKAL BARYSHNIKOV (V.O.)

Personally, I think he's dead. People have reported sightings in the Philippines, Peru, San Diego, but no one really knows...

SEAN PENN (V.O.)

I like to think he's with Bobby Fischer, J.D. Salinger, and all the other recluses, partying together somewhere.

We see Julius Bingham in "the great room." CHRYON: JULIUS BINGHAM. INDUSTRIALIST, PROFESSIONAL BOWLER, MEDICAL ENGINEER, HORTICULTURIST, HUMANITARIAN, COLLECTOR. Behind him we see the "Table of Greatness."

JULIUS (V.O.)

The best description of him I ever heard came from my third wife. She said, 'When Rome danced the world stopped, and while he had it stopped, he wanted to fix it.'

Lonny's gaze centers on the "table of greatness."

JULIUS (V.O.)

Great men have achieved many great things, but only Rome achieved great things and then gave it all away. You ask me -- that's true greatness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lonny has a brilliant idea.

*

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

-- Lonny in the biography section of a bookstore. He takes several Theodore Rome books from the shelf.

-- Lonny at a camera store. He buys a Minolta and three disposable cameras from a HASIDIC MAN.

-- Lonny at work. On the computer. He Googles in: THEODORE S. ROME WHEREABOUTS.

-- At the Museum Of The Moving Image. Lonny and Gerald watch footage of a forceful ROME dance performance.

-- Outside the Museum. Lonny puts his arm around a statue of Charlie Chaplin. Gerald takes a picture with the Minolta.

-- Lonny and Gerald eat lunch and read Rome books. Lonny rubs his bleary eyes. He looks across at Gerald who holds his book in front of his face. Lonny is intrigued by the dust jacket. His gaze moves in on the PICTURE of the GRIZZLE-FACED AUTHOR.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARKHAM PUBLISHING - DAY

Lonny marches toward the revolving door entrance of an enormous skyscraper.

GERALD

Hold up. I don't understand? If you don't even like your father, why are you trying to get on the table?

BEAT.

LONNY

It's my bucket, Gerald. It's my bucket.

He heads into the revolving door.

INT. MARKHAM PUBLISHING - DAY

A BELL DINGS. The elevator opens. Lonny and Gerald enter a brightly lit reception area. A RECEPTIONIST works the phones.

RECEPTIONIST
Markham Publishing... I'll
transfer you.

She holds up one finger, signaling them to wait.

LONNY
(to Gerald)
Let me do the talking.

RECEPTIONIST
Markham Publishing... I can
transfer you. Yes?

LONNY
Hi. I'm looking to talk to
someone about one of your authors,
Maxwell Strimm.

RECEPTIONIST
What is it in reference to?

LONNY
One of his books. I have some
questions I'd like to ask.

RECEPTIONIST
Are you a journalist?

LONNY
Um, yes. I'm from guer... ni...
ca magazine.

RECEPTIONIST
Guernica magazine? I haven't
heard of it.

LONNY
It's a small literary publication.
Very well respected. Can I see a
representative?

INT. MARKHAM PUBLISHING - TEN MINUTES LATER

Lonny and Gerald sit in the waiting area. Gerald does a
WORD SEARCH PUZZLE in a magazine.

TINA, an impressive 30-year-old in a skirt-suit, greets
them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TINA

Hi. You're from Guernica magazine? Forgive me, I haven't heard of it.

LONNY

We're just starting out. I'm looking to contact a Maxwell Strimm, he's one of your authors.

TINA

Why don't you give me your business card, and I'll pass it along to him.

LONNY

I really need to speak to him directly.

TINA

If you give me a phone number I can have him contact you.

Gerald steps in.

GERALD

The truth of it is, Guernica's a high-school publication. This is my history teacher, Mr. Botho. I'm a huge fan of Mr. Strimm's work and I want to interview him on the relationship between a biographer and his or her subject. When I graduate from Brown, where I was just shortlisted, I hope to go into the biography arts.

TINA

Well, he's doing a reading tomorrow of his new book at the Union Square Book Paradise. It's on Gutzon Borglam, I'm sure you'll find it interesting being a history teacher.

LONNY

Gutzon Borglam, that's great. I love his... struggle... to...

GERALD

Mr. Botho taught us all about how Borglam carved Mount Rushmore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY
I taught him that.

TINA
Great. You'll find him there.

EXT. BOOK PARADISE - DAY

In the window is a large posterboard mockup for the book GUTZON BORGLAM: MANIAC. A picture of Mount Rushmore is the cover. A sign next to the posterboard says: READING TODAY BY THE AUTHOR.

Lonny and Gerald enter the bookstore.

INT. BOOK PARADISE - LATER

MAXWELL STRIMM bellows from the podium.

Fifty folding chairs are set up. Only eight of them are filled. Four old women up front; a young couple making out in the back; and Lonny and Gerald in the middle. Gerald's rapt. Lonny fidgets.

LONNY
Is he gonna read the whole book?

STRIMM
Rushmore exemplifies the
colossally wounding, surprisingly
contagious ambition of one man.
Despite his many great sculptures,
Gutzon Borglam's most gripping
creation... was Gutzon Borglam.

He closes the book.

STRIMM
I'll now take any question from
the audience.

The four old women and Gerald all raise their hands.
Lonny pulls down Gerald's arm.

LONNY
Let's wait for him outside.

EXT. BOOK PARADISE - LATER

Lonny and Gerald eat street hot dogs. They spot Strimm coming through the revolving door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Mr. Strimm, can I speak with you
for a moment.

STRIMM

You two didn't stay for the Q & A.
It's the best part.

LONNY

We wanted to, but, um, my friend
didn't eat lunch --

STRIMM

You want me to sign your book.
Yes, I'd be happy to.

Strimm takes a pen from his jacket breast pocket.

LONNY

Um, we didn't get a copy.

STRIMM

It's considered offensive to
approach an author after a reading
having not purchased the book.

GERALD

We wanted to but the cashier's
line was too long.

STRIMM

Well, lucky for you. I have one
extra copy on me.

He takes a book from his briefcase and signs it with a
flourish.

STRIMM

Here you go. I'll charge you
twenty-five even, that's the list
price. Save you the tax.

LONNY

Sure...

(digs out wallet,
hands him money)

Here you go. I'd like to ask you
some questions about Theodore
Rome.

GERALD

He did buy that book.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Yes, I have it right here.

Lonny quickly gets the book from his shoulder bag.

LONNY

It's a wonderful read.

STRIMM

It is, isn't it. Rome was a challenging subject. Very muscular. Buy me lunch, I'll tell you anything you want to know.

INT. DINER - LATER

Lonny and Gerald have soda. Strimm cuts into a large, hot, open roast beef platter.

STRIMM

The book world's a killer. Especially for serious biography. Nobody reads anymore. It's all self-help pap or cookbooks. Not to mention that British wizard thing. Do you know I only made twenty-three thousand last year?

LONNY

Can we talk about Theodore Rome?

STRIMM

What do you want to know? My knowledge is at your service.

LONNY

Where is he?

STRIMM

That's the million dollar question, isn't it? I write four-hundred-twenty-three probing insightful pages, and all people care about is, do I know where he is?

GERALD

So do you know where he is?

STRIMM

What's it worth to you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

You mean money?

STRIMM

How much you got on you?

LONNY

I'm buying you lunch.

STRIMM

Do you know what some people would pay for this information?

Lonny begrudgingly takes out his wallet.

LONNY

I have... fifty-two dollars.

STRIMM

How much does the kid have?

LONNY

You're gonna take money from him.
He's seventeen.

Strimm shrugs.

GERALD

I have seven dollars.

STRIMM

Okay, but you have to promise not to tell anyone. I can't betray his trust.

LONNY

Of course.

Strimm looks around, makes sure no one is listening.

STRIMM

He's in New Jersey.

GERALD

New Jersey New Jersey?

STRIMM

Hiding right under everyone's nose. He lives modestly. He looks different, he's old, and he's not a hundred percent in the head. Years of isolation take their toll. You have to call him Teddy. That's important.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Teddy. Got it. Should I call first?

STRIMM

Never call a recluse first. Don't worry, he'll be there. Take this note for me.

Strimm takes paper from his briefcase. Writes a brief note. Puts it in an envelope with a five-dollar bill and seals it.

STRIMM

I owe him five dollars for cab fare.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEW JERSEY STREET - DAY

Lonny's car pads down the quiet street. It stops in front of a lower middle class row house.

INT. LONNY'S CAR - SAME TIME

Lonny fixes his hair in the rearview.

LONNY

Okay, you know how to work the camera?

GERALD

It's a point and click, I think I can handle it.

LONNY

Take the disposables as backup.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Lonny RINGS the BUZZER.

LONNY

Let me do the talking.

GERALD

Act calm.

LONNY

Why? I don't seem calm?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A very old man opens the door. He's obscured by the screen door.

LONNY
Hi, are you Teddy?

TEDDY
That's right.

LONNY
Sir, forgive the intrusion. My name is Lonny Bingham. If you have a minute I'd like to --

TEDDY
Are you coming in? It's my birthday.

LONNY
Yes. Yes. Thank you.

He opens the screen door.

INT. TEDDY'S HOME - CONTINUOUS ACTION

A lot of books, a lot of paintings on the walls, a lot of dust.

LONNY
Maxwell Strimm gave us your address.

TEDDY
You're friends of Maxie's. He doesn't come by anymore. Who's this young man? *

GERALD
My name's Gerald, sir.

LONNY
He's my friend.

TEDDY
He's kind of young to be your friend.

LONNY
We work together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TEDDY

A guy up the block got himself in trouble for spending time with young men. It was all over the news.

LONNY

It's nothing like that, I assure you.

TEDDY

Did you bring me a cake? It's my birthday.

LONNY

No, sorry, we didn't know.

TEDDY

I've made some meat and rice. We'll celebrate with that.

Teddy heads off to the kitchen.

GERALD

Dude, I don't think it's him.

LONNY

It is. Look at his eyes. He's just a little frail.

INT. TEDDY'S HOME - MINUTES LATER

They sit in the wood-paneled den, eating meat and rice from water glasses.

TEDDY

It's a table?

LONNY

You take a picture of yourself with a great world figure. It's sort of a contest. I want mine to be with you. It would be a great honor.

TEDDY

Dancing meant a lot to me. Did you know there's a tribe in Africa whose entire religion is based on dance? No words whatsoever. I was quite a good dancer, everyone said so.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I'm out of clean dishes.
The girl only comes once a week.

LONNY

No problem.

GERALD

This is really delicious.

TEDDY

How is my Maxie?

LONNY

He's good. He has a new book.
Oh, he asked me to give this to
you.

Lonny hands him Strimm's envelope. Teddy opens it,
reads.

TEDDY

(re: five dollar bill)

He was always cheap that one.

He puts the note on the desk.

TEDDY

Well, you seem like nice boys.
I'll tell you what, I'm gonna take
this picture with you.

LONNY

Great. Thank you so much. Um,
how about over here, by the
mantle.

TEDDY

I suppose I should shower first.

LONNY

What? No, that's not necessary.
You look fine.

But Teddy's off to the bathroom. He shuts the door
behind him. Lonny sets up the shot by the mantle.

LONNY

How's the lighting here? Make
sure you use the flash.

*

GERALD

Dude, it's not him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Use the Minolta first, then the disposables for backup.

GERALD

Dude, I know you want it to be him. So do I. But he's not. Let's get out of here.

*

LONNY

Just take the picture, alright. It's him. I know it is.

Teddy comes back with a towel around his waist.

TEDDY

Okay, where do you want me?

LONNY

Aren't you going to shower?

TEDDY

It's my birthday. I'll take the picture in my birthday suit. It'll be humorous.

Lonny grabs his jacket.

LONNY

Here, put my jacket on. You'll look great.

He slips the jacket on Teddy and zips it up.

LONNY

Okay, Teddy, if you'll just stand over by the mantle... this way.

From an alcove off the main room, Gerald calls out...

GERALD (O.S.)

Lonny, come here.

LONNY

I'm setting up the shot.

GERALD (O.S.)

Get over here. I think you should see this.

Lonny crosses to where Gerald is.

LONNY

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gerald points to the bookshelf. They see, lined up, book after book, Strimm's work. Twenty copies of the Rome biography, twenty copies of his Gutzon Borglam biography.

LONNY

I don't get it.

Then Gerald points to the wall next to the bookshelf. Pictures of Strimm clutter the wall. Strimm graduating from college. Strimm getting a writing award. And several pictures of Teddy and Strimm together, throughout the years. They're family photos.

LONNY

Shit.

Lonny crosses back to the desk where Teddy put Strimm's note with his five dollars. He picks it up.

INSERT - THE NOTE

Reads: HAPPY BIRTHDAY DAD. MAXWELL.

BACK TO SCENE

LONNY

Unbelievable. Teddy, we have to go.

TEDDY

What about the photo? I was looking forward to it.

Lonny stops. He can't disappoint the old man.

LONNY

I'll tell you what, we'll take the picture and you give us your son's home address.

Lonny stands next to Teddy. Teddy grins broadly. Gerald takes a picture with the Minolta. OFF the flash, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST VILLAGE STREET - DAY

Strimm walks, whistling, holding a GROCERY BAG. He takes his keys from his pocket but stops short when he sees...

Lonny and Gerald sitting on his stoop. They lock eyes. A hesitation. Then, Strimm takes off down the block.

ON STRIMM

Sprinting...

STRIMM

Call the police! These punks are
chasing me!

ON LONNY AND GERALD

In pursuit...

LONNY

We're not punks! Don't call the
police!

Gerald smashes into a DELIVERY MAN on a BIKE. He wipes
out on the PAVEMENT. *

*

Strimm positions a WOMAN PUSHING A BABY CARRIAGE between
himself and Lonny.

LONNY

You lied to me. I want my money
back.

STRIMM

What money?
(to woman)
I've never seen them in my life.

Strimm bolts across the street. Gerald's back on his
feet. Lonny and Gerald chase and corner him. *

*

STRIMM

(catching his breath)
Okay. Okay.

LONNY

You owe me fifty-seven dollars.

GERALD

Fifty-nine.

LONNY

Fifty-nine dollars.

STRIMM

I spent it. Have an orange.

He offers Lonny an orange from his grocery bag. Lonny
knocks it out of his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STRIMM

Can't you two take a joke? What's the big deal, you kept an old man company on his birthday.

LONNY

He's your father, you keep him company.

GERALD

What kind of son gives his father five dollars?

STRIMM

That's all the old bastard ever gave me on my birthday.

LONNY

Tell me where Rome is?

STRIMM

I spent two years of my life looking for him. You think I'm just gonna tell you for fifty-nine dollars.

Gerald, trying to do something menacing, takes Strimm's grocery bag.

STRIMM

Careful, those are organic.

Lonny grabs him by the jacket.

LONNY

Tell me.

STRIMM

Okay, okay. The truth is, I never found him.

GERALD

You have a conversation with him in your book.

STRIMM

I made it up. Gotta give the readers what they want. I did find his daughter, though. That's as close as I got. Honest.

LONNY

Give me her address?

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STRIMM

I don't have it anymore. She
lives in Staten Island. Her
married name's Juliet Schmidt.
She's in the book. I swear, cross
my heart. Now let me go.

Lonny releases him.

STRIMM

(to Gerald)

May I have my oranges back,
please?

Gerald hands him the bag.

LONNY

I wish I had a father like yours.
The man has a whole shrine to you
in his bookcase.

*

STRIMM

I know, it's pathetic. He does
help my book sales, though. You
try being an only child of a
former Marine.

Gerald takes an orange and fakes a punch at Strimm.
Strimm flinches. Lonny and Gerald walk off.

STRIMM

You'll never find Rome. If a man
like that wants to stay hidden, he
stays hidden.

CUT TO:

INT. BINGHAM BROWNSTONE - LONNY'S ROOM

*

Gerald sits at Lonny's computer -- on the Internet.

*

LONNY

Do you have it?

*

*

GERALD

Dude, chill out, your computer's a
piece of shit.

*

*

*

(lifts the back of his
shirt a bit)

*

*

How bad is this raspberry? That
delivery dude's pedal totally
gashed me.

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The door opens. It's Julius. *

JULIUS
Hey. What's this?

LONNY
Hey, Dad. Um, this is Gerald.

JULIUS
Hello, Gerald.

GERALD
Sir, it's a great honor to meet
you. I'm a big fan. *

JULIUS
Sweet of you to say. Lonny, can I
have a word with you.

INT. HALLWAY - DOORFRAME OF LONNY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS
ACTION

JULIUS
How old is that boy?

LONNY
Seventeen. He's helping me with
something. *

JULIUS
Huh. *

Julius lets his suspicions go. *

JULIUS
I need you to move your car. I'm
taking Spencer and Triana to the
airport. *

LONNY
For what? *

JULIUS
For what? Their honeymoon. *

We see Gerald throw up his arms, victorious. *

GERALD
Got her. Juliet Schmidt. 28
Livingston Road. Bingo.

Spencer walks up, suitcase in hand. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPENCER

Pop, whenever you're ready.
Triana's downstairs. I still
think you should come with us,
it'll be fun...

*
*
*
*
*

Spencer's eye is caught by Gerald, awkwardly positioned
at Lonny's desk. His shirt is hiked up as he tries to
look at the raspberry on his lower back.

*
*
*
*

SPENCER

Who's that?

JULIUS

Friend of Lonny's.

SPENCER

Anything you want to tell us, bro?

CUT TO:

EXT. VERRAZANO NARROWS BRIDGE - DAY

Lonny's car travels the long expanse.

INT. LONNY'S CAR - SAME TIME

Lonny drives.

GERALD

Dude, I'm not arguing, I just
think if we want his daughter to
tell us where he is, we need a
better excuse than you want a
picture for your father's table so
you can give him his bucket.
Whatever that means.

*
*
*
*
*

LONNY

Fine. You got something in mind?

*

CUT TO:

INT. JULIET SCHMIDT HOME - EVENING

Lonny and Gerald talk with JULIET, 30s, an attractive
blonde mother who bounces her crying eight-month-old,
FRANK JR. Baby toys are everywhere. The TV is heard in
the b.g.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIET

So you're a doctor?

LONNY

I'm more of a biochemical research technician.

GERALD

But you have a medical degree, right?

LONNY

Yes. Technically I am Doctor Bingham. If we can find your father, I can do a blood test and DNA scan to confirm that Gerald here is indeed his son. And hopefully put to rest many deep and debilitating psychological issues for him.

GERALD

Debilitating's overdoing it, but I would like to know.

JULIET

So, you're my brother? That's so exciting.

LONNY

Half-brother, if it's true.

FRANK, JR. WAILS up a storm, squirming.

JULIET

Sorry, he hasn't had his nap. Can you wait a few minutes while I put him down? Make yourselves comfortable. There's drinks in the fridge...

She goes into the back room.

GERALD

She's pretty, isn't he? She really got her shape back quickly after the baby.

LONNY

Whatdaya wanta date her? She's a mother.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD

I'm just saying she'd make a great sister.

The front DOOR is HEARD OPENING, followed by --

*

MAN'S VOICE

Hey.

The voice belongs to FRANK SCHMIDT, a very intense, muscle-bound, stubble-headed man with a severe Napoleon complex. He stands no more than five-foot-four.

*

GERALD AND LONNY

Hey, hi...

*

*

FRANK

Who the hell are you two?

LONNY

Um, we're here to see Juliet.

FRANK

You mean my wife. About what?

Frank takes an intimidating stance.

*

GERALD

He's a biomedical research technician.

FRANK

What is that, some sort of doctor?

LONNY

Kind of --

FRANK

Is something wrong with the baby?

LONNY

No, not at all.

FRANK

Then what the hell are you doing in my house?

GERALD

I think you should take a step back.

FRANK

(in Gerald's face)

And if I don't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD

Hey, don't you be getting all up
in my cake.

*

Juliet comes from the back.

JULIET

Frank, what are you doing?

FRANK

I walk in here and these two
hambones are watching television.

GERALD

Hambones?!

*

Lonny grabs Gerald's arm -- "simmer down."

*

JULIET

They're here about my father.
They think... Gerald, right?

GERALD

Yes.

JULIET

Gerald might be his son.

FRANK

His son. You mean, like your
brother.

LONNY

Half-brother, actually.

FRANK

Why didn't you say so...

He gives Gerald a big bear hug.

FRANK

A brother, that's terrific. I
love family.

LONNY

I can tell. All those pictures on
the wall.

FRANK

Oh man, sorry about being so
aggressive, but you know, with a
baby in the house... A brother.
Oh, man.

*

*

He punches Gerald in the arm.

INT. SCHMIDT HOME - LATER

Around the dinner table. Frank shows Lonny an extremely thick photo album.

FRANK

These are my brothers. You got Michael Vincent. This is Tommy Vincent. This is Vincent Vincent...

JULIET

Frank's Frank Vincent.

INSERT - A PHOTO

of nine short men all in tuxedos at Frank's wedding.

BACK TO SCENE

Gerald feeds Frank Jr.

GERALD

(baby talk)

That must make you Frank Vincent Jr.

JULIET

He likes you. You're good with kids.

GERALD

You think so? Hey, this makes me his half-uncle, right?

JULIET

Yeah.

(baby talk)

You like half-uncle Gerald, don't you?

GERALD

I didn't think I'd ever be an uncle.

JULIET

You're an only child?

GERALD

Yeah.

FRANK

So's Juliet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD

It's hard, isn't it?

Lonny's had enough of Gerald's antics.

LONNY

So, Juliet, do you have any pictures of your family? With your father?

JULIET

No, I don't even remember him.
Just what my mother told me.
She's passed away.

*
*
*

FRANK

He was a famous dancer.

*
*

Juliet gathers the dishes.

JULIET

I have one memory. He took me to the beach once. He had these really thick hands. And a big round head. It's like everything about him was oversized. He still sends me a birthday card every year.

*

LONNY

Really? Do you have them?

From a drawer she takes out a stack of weathered envelopes.

*

JULIET

They won't help you. There's no return address, and the postmarks are from all over the place.

FRANK

The guy just writes 'happy birthday.' Not even a 'love dad.'

Lonny looks through the envelopes.

GERALD

He doesn't send me birthday cards. Maybe he's not my father.

JULIET

It doesn't mean that.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Let me tell you both something.
Kids are for real. They're easy
to screw up so you gotta treat 'em
right. 'Cause if you don't,
twenty years down the road,
they'll end up sitting in some
group therapy circle with a bunch
of other losers bad-mouthing you.
Trust me on that.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

OFF Lonny's reaction...

EXT. SCHMIDT FRONT PORCH - LATER

Frank gives Gerald another bear hug.

FRANK

If this uncle stuff works out, you
got a lot of babysitting ahead of
you.

Frank goes inside.

*

LONNY

(re: birthday cards)

Do you mind if I keep one of
these? It might be useful for a
handwriting analysis.

JULIET

Take them all. I really don't
even know why I hang on to them.

(beat)

I don't know if this will be
helpful, but about a year ago
someone came here to make a
recording of my voice. He said he
heard my father on a short wave
radio or something and wanted to
do a comparison.

LONNY

Do you remember who he is?

JULIET

No. That writer brought him.

(yells to Frank)

Honey, what was the name of the
man who was writing the biography
on my father?

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK
(from inside)
Oh yeah, that cheap son of a
bitch. What was his name?

*

CUT TO:

*

EXT. EAST VILLAGE BROWNSTONE BUILDING - DAY

Strimm stands in the doorway at the top of the stoop.
Lonny counts out MONEY into his hand.

LONNY
You should be ashamed of yourself.

STRIMM
(re: Gerald)
How much does the kid have on him?

CUT TO:

*

INT. LONNY'S CAR - NIGHT

*

Lonny drives along a two-lane road, surrounded by woods.

*

GERALD
I could live up here, man. Hour
fifteen outside of the city. Look
at this nature.

*
*
*
*

Lonny doesn't respond.

*

GERALD
Okay, we take this to the end.
Left on Route 131, into Carmel.

*
*
*

Lonny is silent.

*

GERALD
Dude, what's up? You mad at me,
you're not talking.

*
*
*

LONNY
What, no, I'm sorry. Holly lives
like twenty minutes from here, in
Cold Spring.

*
*
*
*

GERALD
Jesus, man, the road's deserted,
it's not like we're gonna run into
her. You gotta get past her.
Move on.

*
*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Have you ever even dated a girl?

GERALD

Yes. I've dated a girl.

Silence. They pass a yellow "Deer Crossing" HAZARD SIGN.

GERALD

Hey, you know what's fucked up,
everyone uses the phrase 'deer in
the headlights.' But seriously,
how many people have seen a deer
in the headlights, like five
hundred. It's like you shouldn't
be able to use the phrase 'deer in
the headlights' unless you've
actually --

LONNY

Holy shit!!

Lonny SLAMS on the BRAKES!! We catch a GLIMPSE of a deer
and then a big THUD!!

LONNY

Fuck! Fuck! Holy shit!

The boys burst out of the car. Lying on the pavement is
indeed a deer. Lonny inspects it. It's dead.

GERALD

Is it dead?

LONNY

Nice going, Gerald, brilliant, yes
it's dead.

GERALD

Don't blame me. I'm not the one
who hit it.

LONNY

You jinxed us with all that
fucking talk with 'deer in the
headlights.'

GERALD

I'm sorry, Jesus, I was just
thinking out loud...

(silence)

Whatda we do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

I don't know.

(kneels next to it)

You know, I've never seen anything
this big dead before.

GERALD

Anyone ever call the hotline with
this?

LONNY

You tell me seniority, I only
worked there three months.

(beat)

Okay, look, I have some bungees in
the trunk, let's strap it to the
roof, we'll go see Strimm's guy,
then we'll take the deer to the
police station.

GERALD

I don't know, man. Let's pull it
over to the side of the road, let
nature take its course.

LONNY

Nature didn't take its course
here, Gerald. We murdered it.
Okay? We're gonna take care of
it.

INT. LONNY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Lonny drives, carefully.

GERALD

I can feel it up there. It's like
it's deadness is creeping through
the roof.

LONNY

When we get there, play it cool
this time, don't get carried away
like you did at Juliet's.

GERALD

I didn't get carried away.

LONNY

Really, Uncle Gerald, 'cause I
thought you did.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Lonny RINGS the BELL. The door is opened by JOHN, 35.
He looks a bit like Lonny, but wearing a flannel.

LONNY

Hi. We're the guys who called
before.

JOHN

Yeah. Come in. You're looking
for Brad.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lonny and Gerald stand watching over the shoulder of
BRAD, a 20-year-old computer nut who oddly looks a bit
like Gerald. There's high-tech computer equipment
everywhere.

An antique Rome POSTER hangs on the wall, nearby.

BRAD

I captured this audio off my
H.A.M.M. radio about fourteen
months ago.

The transmission is HEARD. On the MONITOR we see a RED
LINE pulsate in sync with the words.

BRAD

It's a love poem written in
tachometer, which is an obscure
poetic meter. He read about forty
of them over eight hours.
Beautiful stuff, so I started
recording. It wasn't until I was
asleep that I thought the voice
sounded familiar.

GERALD

Does it mask the layout in binary?

BRAD

The program assigns a number to
each characteristic of the voice,
then bumps it into a decimal
matrix.

Lonny looks over at John, who is reading a newspaper.
The whole John/Brad -- Lonny/Gerald doppelganger thing is
wiggling him out a bit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD
(to Lonny)
You getting all this?

*
*
*

LONNY
Yeah, decimal matrix.

*
*

We HEAR a different transmission and see a second GREEN LINE pop on the monitor. It mirrors the red line.

BRAD
This is Rome's voice from a 1972 interview he gave after a hurricane relief performance in Haiti. Perfect match.

*

GERALD
Why did you record Juliet's voice?

*

BRAD
The daughter? Voice patterns and intonations can be hereditary and are formed in infancy. I removed the upper register and slowed her backtone.

*
*
*

A third YELLOW LINE appears on the monitor.

*

BRAD
Close enough, I say.

LONNY
So where is he?

GERALD
Did you RTC the radio transmission?

BRAD
It was a cloudy night, half moon, and there was static interference from a Japanese user... but I'd definitely say Rome's somewhere -- west.

*
*

GERALD
West where?

BRAD
I'm not sure, but what I am sure about is that he's by the water.

*
*

Brad isolates a section of the green line, boxes it, and removes the upper layer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRAD

Listen close. This background noise definitely sounds like waves.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT

They walk towards the car. Lonny boils with frustration.

LONNY

West and by water! We got him now! Make sure there's film in the camera!

GERALD

At least we narrowed it in half.

Lonny sees the deer on top of his car.

LONNY

Shit. I forgot.

He turns his back to the car, shakes his head, defeated.

LONNY

It's over, Gerald. I'm done. This whole thing has been a...

GERALD

Disaster?

The car is parked by a SHED. Leaning against the shed, Lonny spots SEVERAL SHOVELS. With determination, he grabs two of them.

LONNY

Let's go. We're burying that deer. I remember seeing a cemetery near the parkway when we turned off.

He puts the shovels in the back seat.

GERALD

Okaaaay. But maybe we shouldn't steal their shovels. We've got enough bad Karma killing the... I'm not big on stealing.

LONNY

What do you mean you're not big on stealing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD

Nothing. I just don't believe in it.

LONNY

Only fighting and everything else you do. That you believe in? They have nine shovels over there, they're not going to miss them.

GERALD

Look, take the shovels if you want. I'm just saying, I'm not big on stealing.

Lonny stares at him, a bit in disbelief. Then he takes out his wallet, marches back towards the shed and leaves forty dollars under one of the other shovels.

LONNY

Get in the damn car.

INT. LONNY'S CAR - NIGHT

Lonny drives.

GERALD

Look, man, I know you're feeling disheartened, but the situation's not as bad as you think. You just passed the cemetery.

Lonny SLAMS on the BRAKES. The deer shoots off of the roof, onto the hood, then onto the pavement.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

They dig a grave. The deer lies nearby.

GERALD

He's somewhere west, east of Japan --

LONNY

Great, so we've limited it to the entire Pacific coastline, both sides of Central America, and maybe Australia -- I can't exactly place it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD

Or, we've eliminated ninety
percent of the earth's land mass.
If you ask me, the glass is almost
full.

A bright white SEARCHLIGHT blinds their eyes. Then we
HEAR the BLOOP of a POLICE SIREN and see the flashing
reds.

INT. POLICE STATION - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

An OFFICER unlocks the holding cell door.

OFFICER

Let's go, you two, you made bail.

INT. POLICE STATION - FRONT DESK - NIGHT

Lonny sees Holly, his ex-girlfriend, filling out papers
at the front desk. She's dressed for a night out.

LONNY

Hi. I didn't know who else to
call -- I knew you lived in Cold
Spring.

HOLLY

Why were you burying a deer?

LONNY

It's a long story.

HOLLY

You realize it's illegal to bury
an animal in a human cemetery.

LONNY

I know that now.

HOLLY

You owe me five hundred dollars.

A tall, striking MAN in a suit, MARCUS, comes over with
two plastic cups of water. He gives one to Holly.

MARCUS

Everything okay?

HOLLY

Lonny, this is Marcus. Marcus,
Lonny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS

I've heard a lot about you.

An OFFICER walks by and pats Marcus on the back.

OFFICER

Thanks again for that information,
Doc.

MARCUS

No problem.

LONNY

Doc? You're a doctor?

MARCUS

I'm a biomedical research
engineer.

Boy, does Lonny wish he had a statuesque beauty next to
him now, but instead...

LONNY

Um, this is my friend Gerald.

EXT. POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The four of them stand in the parking lot.

HOLLY

Okay, well, this was interesting.

Awkward silence.

GERALD

(making conversation)

So how long have you two been
dating?

Lonny turns and stares at Gerald.

HOLLY

Marcus, will you give me a moment?
I don't know, start the car.

MARCUS

Sure.

(as she kisses him)

Nice to meet you both.

Now Lonny, Holly and Gerald are standing there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD
So?

*
*

LONNY
Would you get in the car.

*
*

Gerald obeys.

*

LONNY
So, do you and doctor wonderful
dress up like this every night?

*
*
*

HOLLY
We were out to dinner with his
parents when I got the call. You
should be happy I came at all.

LONNY
Is it serious?

*
*

HOLLY
Lonny...

LONNY
You can tell me. Is it serious?

HOLLY
It's only been a few weeks, but,
yeah, it's good.
(beat)
What about with you and Gerald?
I'm kidding. How was Spencer's
wedding?

*
*
*
*

LONNY
It was fine. Everyone asked about
you.

*
*

HOLLY
Did you take someone?

LONNY
Yeah. My dad really liked her.

Beat. There's a genuine warmth between them.

HOLLY
Are you happy, Lonny?

LONNY
Me? Yeah, I'm great. Good.
Actually, I'm kinda on this big
mission at the moment, it's a sort
of a quest, and well...

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lonny notices Marcus, looking over from inside his car. He would love to tell her everything, but he knows their worlds are different now.

HOLLY

A quest?

*
*

LONNY

It's kind of tough to explain.
Look, thanks for everything,
Holly, I mean it. I'll send you a
check, I promise.

*
*
*

HOLLY

Okay. 'Bye, Lonny. I hope you
find whatever it is you're looking
for.

OFF Lonny, as he watches her get into Marcus's Lexus.

INT. BINGHAM BROWNSTONE - ATTIC - NIGHT

*

Lonny watches HOME MOVIES that spool from an antique projector. On the projector's side is written: PROPERTY OF DEMILLE.

*

ON THE SCREEN

Images of a young Spencer and Lonny running around the house. The cameraman turns the camera on himself. We see a younger Julius mugging for the camera.

ON LONNY

He smiles, halfheartedly.

BACK ON SCREEN

Young Spencer and Lonny run into the Library. Their MOTHER works at the typewriter. Julius's camerawork dotes on his wife. He fixes his camera on her page in the typewriter. She covers it playfully with her hands. He closes in on the pages next to the typewriter. The cover page: "A great Leap forward. The Life and Dance of Theodore S. Rome."

INT. LONNY'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

A clock reads FOUR AM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Newspaper clippings and Juliet's envelopes are strewn about the bed. Lonny speaks excitedly into the phone as he reads from the yellowed BIOGRAPHY PAGES.

LONNY

'When I was ten I built a ship based on actual ancient Greek designs. Not a night goes by that I don't dream about getting in that boat and just heading west.' That's an actual quote.

INT. GERALD'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Gerald, looking ragged, sits up in bed.

GERALD

Dude, it's four AM.

INTERCUT LONNY/GERALD.

LONNY

Listen to this.

(picks up a newspaper clipping)

'The island nations of the Pacific were the last holdouts of great feudal kings. Hawaii had a king for each Island. Brutal proud men ruling a brutal proud world. Then the white man came, and turned the whole nation into a depressed humid parking lot.'

GERALD

So?

LONNY

So. He makes thirteen other comments about Hawaii in various interviews... And, and, and, the last two birthday cards he sent to Juliet... He mailed one from Maui, and one from Oahu.

GERALD

Dude, it's a bit of a reach.

LONNY

He's obsessed with Hawaii! All great men are obsessed! That's what makes them great!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY (CONT'D)

This is it, Gerald. Thanks for
the help. I mean that. I
couldn't have done it without you.

*
*

Lonny hangs up. He smiles, feeling he's on the right path. He leafs through the biography notes and comes across something that stops him cold. An old, square PHOTO of a six-year-old Lonny sitting on his mother's lap. Lonny runs a finger over the photo. He feels approximately 47 emotions.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT TICKET COUNTER - MORNING

A FEMALE TICKET AGENT taps at her keyboard. Behind her we see a logo for AIR HAWAII.

TICKET AGENT

Without a fourteen-day advance
purchase the fare comes to one
thousand seven hundred twenty-
eight dollars.

LONNY

For coach?

TICKET AGENT

It's a ten-hour flight. Would you
like me to book it?

Lonny hesitates, then with determination...

LONNY

Yes. Whatever it costs.

He hands her a credit card. She taps her keyboard.

Gerald runs over, panting, backpack slung over his
shoulder.

GERALD

Holy crap... I found you... I went
to your house...

*

LONNY

Gerald --

*

GERALD

You weren't gonna leave without
me, were you?

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Look, you've been a huge help,
really. But I kind of need to do
this on my own.

*
*
*

GERALD

No way. Totally unacceptable...

*

LONNY

Listen --

GERALD

No, you listen! This last week
has meant everything to me! I
have a shitty telephone job! No
girlfriend! No friends! Do you
know that my parents bought me a
very expensive New York condo just
so I wouldn't have to live with
them. I'm lost, man! I'm
floating!

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

LONNY

You're seventeen.

GERALD

Don't you get it? You're me! In
fifteen years! And up till now
that has scared the shit out of
me! But now you're... you're...
you're inspiring, man. You're
running around trying to find some
freakin' madman so you can take a
picture with him. I mean, what is
that? That's out there. I'm
coming.

*

(beat)

Don't take this the wrong way,
Lonny, but you're like my hero.

(to Ticket Agent)

This guy is my hero.

TICKET AGENT

Well, your hero's card's been
declined.

LONNY

What? No. That's impossible,
check it again?

TICKET AGENT

Your issuer says a charge this
large exceeds your available
credit. It's declined.

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gerald hands her his credit card.

GERALD

We'll take two.

(to Lonny)

Don't worry, it's my father's card.

She taps her keyboard.

TICKET AGENT

We only have singles available, is that okay?

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Lonny's in an aisle seat. Next to him sits BETH, 30, extremely cute. On her lap is an ANIMAL TRANSPORT CARRIER. She feeds some seeds through the front metal grate.

BETH

Who's being such a good flier...?

LONNY

That's a Mesquite Armadillo, isn't it?

BETH

Yeah. How do you know that?

LONNY

If you cover the carrier it might go to sleep. Armadillos like tight dark places at night. Is it male or female?

BETH

Oh, I'm not sure, actually. It's not mine. I work for this company that does animal transport, pet relocation, I'm just delivering the... armadillo.

*
*
*
*
*

LONNY

Do you work for Animal Airlines or Jet-A-Pet?

*
*
*

BETH

Jet-A-Pet. You've heard of us?

*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

I wor -- used to work at the
Dewitt Clinton Zoo. On the
information hotline. I've
recommended you guys.

BETH

Yeah?

LONNY

So you're taking it to Hawaii?

BETH

No, Japan. I have an hour layover
in Maui and they're not letting us
off the plane which I think they
should 'cause it's a 19 hour
flight. I'm thinking of making a
run for it. What about you?

LONNY

Hawaii. So it must be a good job,
free travel...

BETH

Well, mostly it's simple dog and
cat... I take the dog to the
airport, meet the airline
representative, fill out the
paperwork... This is different.
It's called a fly-on. This is my
first one. Fly-ons are very
coveted. Usually they're for
senior staff but I finally wore my
boss down.

LONNY

I'm Lonny.

BETH

Beth. Nice to meet you.
(as they shake hands)
So you said you used to work at
the zoo; you don't anymore?

LONNY

Um, no, I've recently moved on.
I'm looking to start this thing
with animal therapy, you know, for
disabled kids. It's combining
animal therapy and art therapy.
It's called Artimal therapy. It's
a terrible name, I have to change
it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beth laughs. Gerald interrupts.

*

GERALD
Dude, you got anything to read?

*

LONNY
What? No.
(subtly signaling
to shoo-off)
Go back to your seat, the
seatbelts sign's on.

*

GERALD
No it's not. Hey, is that a
mesquite armadillo?

BETH
Are you two together?

GERALD
Yeah. They only had single seats
left.

BETH
Do you want to sit together?

GERALD
If you don't mind. That would be
great.

LONNY
(to Beth)
Would you excuse us for a moment.

Lonny grabs Gerald's arm, and walks him back a few rows.

LONNY
Go sit in your seat.

GERALD
Why does she have an armadillo?

LONNY
I'll tell you later. Go sit down.

GERALD
C'mon, man, look who I'm next to.

Gerald points over to a very large WOMAN wearing shorts
and a T-shirt that has ALOHA written in sparkles.

*

A STEWARDESS approaches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEWARDESS

Please take your seats, the
seatbelt sign is still on.

Lonny smirks at Gerald.

AIRPLANE - LATER

Lonny refills Beth's plastic cup from a plane-sized wine
bottle. They're having a great time.

BETH

... That was Rome?

*

LONNY

See, to Rome the body was all
about expression, a way to
communicate ideas that went beyond
words. Like here, in this book...

(takes a Rome book
from his knapsack,
turns to a dog-eared
page)

He tells a story about a young
dancer whose mother just died.
Everyone's telling her how sorry
they are, what can they do to
help... but this one dancer comes
over to her, someone she hardly
knew, and just touches her
shoulder. That's it. And Rome
says, he saw in her face, how that
one gesture did more for her than
a thousand words.

Beth smiles a smile that says it all.

LONNY

He sort of changes the way you
look at things.

BETH

I have an idea. Let's look at
each other. We won't say anything
and we'll see if we can figure out
what each other is thinking.

LONNY

(nervous at first,
but charmed by her)

Okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They shift towards each other and stare. Beat. Lonny laughs.

BETH
What's that laugh?

LONNY
Nervous laugh.

BETH
Don't be nervous. Take a deep breath.

She takes a deep breath. Then Lonny does the same. They stare into each others eyes. Beat. Beth smiles.

LONNY
What's that smile about?

BETH
Nothing. You have this pretty incredible copper ring around the brown of your eyes.

*

Lonny would give anything to kiss her, when... Beth's attention is shifted.

BETH
I think your friend's upset. He keeps looking over here.

Lonny looks over at Gerald, who quickly sits back in his seat, averting his eyes. The large woman slumps onto him, sleeping. Gerald elbows her head, waking her up.

LONNY
He's fine. We could actually use some time apart.

INT. AIRPLANE - BY THE BATHROOM - LATER

Lonny and Beth wait on line. Behind them stands a cool-looking BRITISH GUY sporting a leather jacket and a head of thick fantastic hair.

BETH
... I think your trying to find Rome is really inspiring. You're like Don Quixote on a quest. People are so timid these days. Everyone's so afraid to fail.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BETH (CONT'D)

I respect passion, people who know
what they want and go after it.
Know what I mean? God, I really
have to pee.

She knocks on the door, taking charge.

The bathroom opens. Gerald steps out.

LONNY

Hey.

He shoots Lonny a dirty look and heads off.

BETH

(a flirtatious
smile at Lonny)

Only be a minute.

She steps inside. The cool British Guy looks at Lonny.

BRITISH GUY

You going in there?

LONNY

Where? The bathroom?

BRITISH GUY

Take her hint, Quixote. She
invited you. Mile high club. Are
you a man of daring or not?

LONNY

You know, Quixote was actually an
old disillusioned Spaniard.

BRITISH GUY

And someone wrote two thousand
pages about him. They don't write
about the guy who sits on his ass.

Lonny pauses, then stiffens his spine.

LONNY

You know something, you're right.

He takes a deep breath, and KNOCKS on the door.

BETH (O.S.)

Lonny?

LONNY

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BETH (O.S.)
What do you want? I'm still in
here.

LONNY
Nothing. Just making sure
everything's okay.

Lonny backs off. The British Guy shrugs.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - LATER

The plane has landed. People in the aisle taking down
bags from the overhead compartments. Lonny slings his
backpack over his shoulder.

LONNY
Well, it was really great meeting
you.

BETH
You, too.

Awkward pause.

LONNY
You should get some water and
napkins, wet him down every couple
of hours.

BETH
Okay. Good luck on your quest.

LONNY
Thanks. Good luck in Japan.
'Bye.

He turns. Going up the other aisle, he sees Gerald
walking towards the front exit. Lonny hesitates. He
turns back to Beth.

LONNY
Look, I know this is gonna sound
crazy, but get off the plane with
me.

BETH
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Come with me. Help me find Rome.
 You'll take this same flight in a
 couple of days, connect to Japan,
 I'll pay for the change. You'll
 have to use your credit card but
 I'll give you cash.

RANDOM PASSENGER

Buddy, let's move it. You're
 holding everyone up.

LONNY

One second. Come with me.

BETH

I can't. The armadillo...

LONNY

Be two days late. Say there was
 plane trouble. We'll buy it
 lettuce and fruit. We'll get
 worms from a bait shop...

RANDOM PASSENGER

Buddy, let's go.

LONNY

Can you give me a break here? Go
 around me.

He turns sideways, pushing up against the seat. People
 push past him knocking into him as he tries to make his
 plea.

LONNY

Come on. You're the one who
 mentioned Don Quixote. You can be
 my... Sancho Panza.

BETH

I think Gerald's your Sancho
 Panza.

LONNY

Okay. You can be, you know,
 what's her name...?

BETH

Dulcinea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Yeah, she had an armadillo. Come on.

(to passenger)

Take it easy.

BETH

Lonny, I'd love to, but there's someone meeting me at the airport in Japan. I have to do my job. I'm sorry.

LONNY

No, I understand.

BETH

Otherwise, I really would...

LONNY

It's fine. It is. It was really good to meet you.

BETH

You, too.

A really FAT GUY is now behind Lonny.

FAT GUY

Hey, pal, does it look like I'm gonna make it past you?

LONNY

No.

FAT GUY

Then what do you say we move it.

INT. MAUI AIRPORT - DAY

They walk, trying to get their bearings.

LONNY

So what, we didn't sit together...

GERALD

Yeah, it's no big deal, I only paid for your ticket!

They stop to read a confusing multi-directional sign.

LONNY

Buses to rental cars. This way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We hear Beth's voice.

BETH

Lonny!

She runs up, a funky backpack on and holding the armadillo transport.

LONNY

Hey.

BETH

There was sort of a problem with the plane and they say they can't put me on another one for a couple of days.

LONNY

Really?

BETH

No, but when I call Japan that's what I'll tell them.

LONNY

Okay. Great.

GERALD

What's going on?

LONNY

Uh, let me talk to you a second.

Pulls Gerald aside.

LONNY

I sort of invited her to come with us.

GERALD

What the hell for?!

LONNY

Look, don't get freaked out.

GERALD

I'm not freaked out. I just wish you would have asked me first.

LONNY

I don't have to ask you first. You weren't even supposed to be here, you ambushed me at the airport.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beth calls over.

BETH

Lonny, if there's any problem --

LONNY

Don't worry, no problem.

GERALD

Dude, I'm outta here, I'm not
being the third wheel.

LONNY

You're not gonna be a third wheel.
She works for Jet-A-Pet, she's one
of us. Look, I'm sorry I didn't
ask you first, okay? Don't worry,
you're not gonna be a third wheel.
I promise.

CUT TO:

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Lonny drives. Beth sits shotgun. Gerald sits in the
back seat, feeling very third wheel.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Lonny and Gerald and Beth comb the beaches and streets of
Maui. They show a picture of Rome to several passersby,
a cop, a Hawaiian couple, the guy who sells water on the
beach. No help.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Beth sits on one bed looking through the birthday
envelopes. Gerald lays on the other reading a book.
Lonny comes out of the bathroom.

LONNY

I filled up the tub a little bit
and left a trickle from the
faucet. Maybe he'll use it as a
wading pool.

(to Gerald)

Anything in the phone book?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD
 (while reading)
 Did you really think he was gonna
 be listed in the phone book?

LONNY
 Why are you reading? It's bad for
 morale.

GERALD
 I'm sorry. I wouldn't want to be
 bad for morale.

BETH
 I have a question? All of these
 birthday cards are postmarked
 March the ninth...

LONNY
 Yeah?

BETH
 Except for this one. It's
 postmarked the tenth. It's the
 first one he sent from Hawaii.

LONNY
 What's your question?

BETH
 Well, genius types are supposed to
 be very methodical, they like
 routine. Like I read somewhere
 that Einstein wore the exact same
 outfit every day? He owned seven
 black suits that he rotated, so
 he'd never have to think about
 what to wear.

GERALD
 (snotty, but intrigued)
 They weren't black, they were
 blue.

LONNY
 What are you saying? He couldn't
 get to a mailbox that day...?

BETH
 Because maybe he had to travel to
 one, and he didn't calculate that
 he would...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY
(getting excited)
Something he corrected for the
next time he mailed from Hawaii.
He's in a remote area...

*

GERALD
Or on a remote island.

They look at one another.

*

LONNY
Where's the phone book?

*

*

INT. MAUI HALL OF RECORDS - DAY

A corpulent Hawaiian man with a misplaced Midwestern
accent and a big smile, BILL, comes from the back with
three maps rolled under his arm.

BILL
I was born on Oahu but my pop
moved us out to Oklahoma when I
was six. Wasn't easy leaving
paradise.

He rolls out the maps on the long wooden TABLE.

LONNY
How many islands are there?

BILL
Eighteen in the chain. Three are
privately owned. Let's see, ya
got Kahoolawe.

LONNY
Which one is that?

He points at an oblonged-shaped island on the map.

BILL
Here. It's off limits. The U.S.
military spent fifty years using
it for bombing practice and they
say it's still full of unexploded
bombs. It was once the most
beautiful of the islands.

GERALD & BETH
(simultaneous)
What else?

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

Niihau. It was sold for \$10,000 to a wealthy Scottish family named Robinson in 1864. Legally it's a Scottish estate. Some islanders still live there serving the Robinsons. Sort of like serfs.

LONNY

What do you have besides bombs and serfs?

*

He points to a horseshoe-shaped island.

BILL

Ya got Liihua Island. This one. It's privately owned but there's a deal going on to sell back half of it to be used as a bird sanctuary.

*

*

*

GERALD

Who owns the private half?

BILL

Um, registered name is Thomas Deere. Some sort of shipping magnate. Liihua used to be a leper colony. Some say it still is.

LONNY

Is there anyone else who might know more?

BILL

You could try the fishermen. But they don't like Haoles much.

LONNY

What's a haole?

BILL

White people.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Lonny and Gerald and Beth walk on the dark sand by the water. They hold their shoes. The beach is crowded.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

It's definitely not the Scottish island. Maybe the bomb thing or the leper thing is a cover to keep people away.

BETH

Hey, there's a bait shop. I'm gonna go buy some worms for the armadillo.

*
*
*
*

She runs off.

*

GERALD

Dude, I'm roasting out here, you gotta put some of this lotion on my back.

*
*

LONNY

Put your shirt on.

GERALD

It's a black shirt. You want me to die. What, is your girlfriend gonna think you're gay?

*
*

LONNY

She's not my -- have I made you feel like a third wheel?

*
*
*

GERALD

Look, man, hook me or don't. Forgive me for being fair-skinned, Jesus.

*

LONNY

Just gimme it.

*

Begrudgingly, Lonny applies lotion to Gerald's back.

*

ANOTHER AREA ON BEACH

We FIND Spencer and Triana honeymooning on the sand. They have an elaborate set-up. Reclining chairs, umbrella, drinks... Spencer is startled.

SPENCER

Holy shit. Where are the binoculars?

TRIANA

Under your chair?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spencer frantically grabs them and focuses.

TRIANA

What is it?

BINOCULAR POV

Lonny, Gerald, and the lotion.

CUT TO:

INT. JULIUS' BEDROOM - DAY

Julius is on an antique, MARBLE-HANDLED PHONE. We see him from the waist up. He's shirtless. On the bed, in the b.g., we see a naked Gail lying on her side doing a crossword.

*
*
*
*

JULIUS

What's he doing in Hawaii?

*

We hear Spencer on the other end of the line.

*

SPENCER (V.O.)

I thought you would know.

*

JULIUS

You didn't talk to him?

*

SPENCER (V.O.)

No. He was with that kid. I called you right away.

*
*

JULIUS

Find him and have him call me.

*

SPENCER (V.O.)

I don't know where he is? I don't want to jump to any conclusions, Pop, I think something weird is going on.

*
*
*
*
*

CUT TO:

EXT. FISHERMAN'S DOCK - DAY

TWO Hawaiian FISHERMEN load boxes onto their boat.

FISHERMAN #1

Those islands ain't no place for haoles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FISHERMAN #2
Full of bombs and lepers.

LONNY
The islands are owned by haoles.
(to Gerald)
Give me the picture.

*
*
*
*

Gerald does so. Lonny shows them the picture of Rome.

LONNY
Does this person look familiar?

The Fishermen look at the picture. They converse surreptitiously in HAWAIIAN, then answer Lonny.

FISHERMAN #1
No.

LONNY
What do you mean no? What did you just say to each other?

Fisherman #1 gets in Lonny's face.

FISHERMAN #1
Why should we help you, haole?
You white people come here with your fast-food and pollution. You bring disease which kills our fish and birds.

FISHERMAN #2
Hawaii has lost more indigenous species of birds than anyplace on earth.

FISHERMAN #1
You stole our paradise. Why should I tell you anything, haole?

Beth holds up a crisp FIFTY.

*
*

BETH
We can pay you.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. FISHING BOAT - DAY

The fishing boat skipping along the choppy sea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fisherman #1 stands next to Beth, whom he's letting
steer. The MOTOR is DEAFENING so everyone YELLS!

FISHERMAN #1
LOCAL PEOPLE CALL HIM THE CAELO.
SORT OF MEANS HERMIT, BUT A BAD
ONE. SOME SAY HE'S A LEPER. SOME
SAY HE DOESN'T EXIST. I'VE NEVER
SEEN HIM BUT NO ONE HAS.

(to Beth)
GINGER, YOU DRIVE REAL GOOD!
WANNA GO FASTER?!

BETH
DEFINITELY!

Gerald, nose down, works at something with pen and paper.

LONNY
KNOW WHAT'S FUNNY? WHEN WE
STARTED THIS I KIND OF ALWAYS
PICTURED THAT ROME WOULD BE ON A
DESERTED ISLAND. LIKE A REAL
HERMIT.

(beat)
GERALD, TALK TO ME.

GERALD
THE GUY IN THE HALL OF RECORDS
SAID THE ISLAND WAS OWNED BY
THOMAS DEERE, RIGHT?! IT'S AN
ANAGRAM!

Gerald holds up the sheet of paper. On one line it
reads: T-H-O-M-A-S D-E-E-R-E or (letters O-R). Beneath
it reads: THEADORE S. ROME.

LONNY
THEODORE'S SPELLED T-H-E-O. NOT
T-H-E-A!

GERALD
DON'T BE A DICK!!

CUT TO:

INT. BINGHAM BROWNSTONE - LONNY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Julius pokes around Lonny's room, looking for some clue
as to his son's disappearance. On the floor by the bed
he notices a yellowed piece of paper. He picks it up.
It's one of the ROME BIOGRAPHY PAGES.

INT. THE GREAT ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Julius opens a small ANTIQUE CABINET that stands beneath the Rome poster and dance shoes. The cabinet is empty.

Gail enters the room. She reads the quizzical look on Julius' face.

GAIL
What's going on?

JULIUS
How would you feel about me if I whisked you away to Hawaii?

CUT TO:

EXT. NEAR LIIHAU ISLAND - LATER

The boat idles forty feet offshore, riding seven foot waves.

For the first time we see the island atoll of LIIHUA. It's a long crescent-shaped paradise ringed by white sand and wide-palmed coconut trees. The interior looks dense with large-leaved jungle foliage. The volcano that formed it, rises into the sky.

Unfortunately, none of this is approachable because a heavy white-foamed surf is smashing into the coral reef that surrounds the island.

FISHERMAN #1
You're gonna have to swim it from here. Strong tide today. Reef's too dangerous.

LONNY
Isn't there another spot with less reef?

FISHERMAN #1
This is the spot with less reef. There's a lot of compressed air under the curl of those waves so stay out of 'em. They'll break you against the coral.

LONNY'S POV

White water explodes into the air. The wave is sucked back revealing a dry meadow of beautiful pink, but piercing CORAL.

BACK TO SCENE

LONNY

Maybe we can wait for it to calm down.

FISHERMAN #1

You'd have to wait about six months.

Lonny turns to Beth. Their faces are as white as the surf. *

BETH *

I'm a terrible swimmer. *

He turns to Gerald. *

LONNY *

What about you? *

GERALD

I swam the lake at camp once. *

FISHERMAN #1

If you stay to the left of the reef and go through that channel, you should be fine. It's only a thirty-foot swim.

A huge wave pounds the corral. *

LONNY *

(to Beth) *

Gerald and I will go through. If it's safe, I'll come back for you. *

BETH *

Okay. *

GERALD

What about the cameras?

FISHERMAN #1

I wouldn't be taking any camera through there.

LONNY

We have to.

The Fisherman lifts up a hatch and hands Lonny a yellow SACK.

FISHERMAN #1

You can try this. It's waterproof.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

How waterproof is waterproof?

The Fisherman shrugs.

EXT. FISHING BOAT - MOMENTS LATER

Lonny's in the water. Gerald hands him the now-bulging yellow sack. Lonny holds it above the water.

LONNY

No guts no glory, right?

BETH

Try to stay on top of the wave. *

LONNY

Why? *

BETH

I don't know. It sounds good. *

Gerald dives into the water.

FISHERMAN #1

Remember, keep to the left. *

They swim away from the boat, heading left of the coral. Lonny struggles to keep his head and the sack above water.

A ten-footer rolls in. It knocks them around but they both ride it up and over. The calm channel beckons closer. *

Gerald makes progress, but Lonny's pulled right, a wave sucking the water around him. *

ON THE BOAT

The Fisherman stands, concerned.

FISHERMAN #1

Left. Left.

Lonny sidestrokes with his one free arm. A TWENTY-FOOT WAVE builds with his name all over it. *

GERALD

Behind you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

What?

GERALD

Look behind you!

*

Lonny turns to see the monster wave assembling into a fist.

LONNY

(quietly)

Oh dear Lord.

The wave explodes over Lonny. The sack flies from his hand.

UNDERWATER

We see Lonny's arm scrape along the reef, the coral cutting him like razor wire.

The wave recedes, revealing Gerald desperately clinging to the reef. He's swallowing water, trying to hold on to the coral that's cutting his hand.

*

Lonny, stumbles, dazed, but now in SHALLOW WATER. He's made it. He coughs, all water, trying to get air.

GERALD

LONNYYY!! LONNNYYYYYY!!

Beth yells from the boat, pointing.

*

BETH

LONNY, GERALD!

*

*

Lonny looks out to see Gerald holding the coral. Another wave pounds in.

LONNY

Oh shit.

Yes, Lonny heads back into the surf to get Gerald, but WHAM, he's hammered by a wave. The water clears, Lonny's still standing. He does his best to get out there, fighting, paddling. He gets closer. He grabs Gerald's leg. He looks up -- THE MONSTER OF ALL WAVES POUNDS IN!!

LONNY

LET GO! GERALD, LET GO!!

Gerald lets go. The wave hits hard. They thrash in the foam, fighting for air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Like a gargantuan pump the wave is sucked back into the sea. Our two boys are spit up onto the sand. Drenched and battered, but victorious.

ON THE BOAT

Beth and the Fisherman hoot and holler. He BLARES his HORN in triumph.

*

ON THE BEACH

Lonny lies face-down, coughing up water. Gerald crawls over to him.

GERALD

Holy shit. You okay? Your arm is bleeding.

*

*

LONNY

I think so.

*

*

Lonny turns over, sits up. They look at each other.

*

LONNY

Thanks, man.

*

They smile, then, slowly they both begin to laugh, bruised but victorious.

*

*

*

Then, as if the sea gods were granting a reward, the yellow sack washes up to their feet. Gerald opens it. The Minolta and the two disposables are in one piece.

Gerald snaps a PHOTO of the smiling but worn Lonny.

Past the reef, we hear the boat's MOTOR KICK UP. The boat spins to port and at a wide arc, heads towards the island.

*

*

*

GERALD

Where's he taking her?

*

LONNY

Hey! Hey!!

*

*

They run along the beach following the boat, which oddly, is heading towards shore, going around the corral, which seems to be ending.

*

*

*

LONNY

What the...

*

*

A HUNDRED YARDS AHEAD

The boat stops within ten feet off the beach. The Fisherman gently helps Beth into the water.

FISHERMAN #1
Watch your feet, Ginger, there's
some starfish and loose corral
here.

Lonny and Gerald run up, OUT OF BREATH.

LONNY
What the -- I'm --

FISHERMAN #1
Hey, you two did real good back
there. Thought you weren't gonna
make it.

BETH
Your arm is bleeding.

LONNY
Why did you -- you could have
killed us!!!

FISHERMAN #1
Like you killed all our birds and
animals. Hama kala lichawan!

LONNY
What does that mean?

FISHERMAN #1
It means go screw yourself --
Haole!

He cackles, GUNS the MOTOR, spins starboard, and heads
off.

BETH
Are you both okay? That was
amazing.

GERALD
Yeah.

Despite everything that just happened, Lonny feels great.
he smiles a big grin.

LONNY
Let's go find Rome.

EXT. ISLAND - DAY

Lonny thwacks away at the thick jungle terrain. Gerald and Beth struggle to keep up.

GERALD

Slow down. Which way are we walking?

LONNY

Inland, Gerald! We're walking inland!

EXT. ISLAND - FURTHER INLAND - LATER

They march, all drenched in sweat. The jungle interior is endless. Endless and humid. Finally, ahead is a clearing. They approach and crouch in the brush.

THEIR POV

It's a small jungle ENCAMPMENT that's seen better days. Worn thatched huts, etc. It doesn't seem as if anyone has lived here for a long time.

BACK TO SCENE

Gerald breaks off a thick leaf from a small plant. He snaps the leaf in two and applies the gelatin innards to the cut on Lonny's arm.

LONNY

What is that?

GERALD

Aloe. Good for cuts.

BETH

What are you going to say to him?

LONNY

I'm going to tell him who we are and ask him for a picture.

GERALD

Maybe we should do the Guernica magazine routine?

LONNY

No. No more routines. We're doing this straight up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They move out of the brush and investigate the encampment.

GERALD

Hello?!!

Lonny hits Gerald. Puts a finger to his mouth. Shhhh. They look in a hut. It's empty except for a torn hammock.

*
*

BETH

I don't think he lives here anymore.

*
*

Gerald snaps a picture.

*

LONNY

What are you doing?

*

GERALD

Getting a picture.

LONNY

What the hell for?

GERALD

Well, I was gonna surprise you, but... I've been sort of keeping a pictorial record of our adventure. I'm gonna make a scrapbook when we get home.

He snaps a shot of Lonny.

LONNY

Stop it. How much film have you wasted?

GERALD

I didn't waste any. Chill out. You're gonna thank me.

Suddenly, a NOISE from ABOVE. The boys look up. A HELICOPTER comes INTO VIEW whirling high overhead, descending towards the far side of the island.

LONNY

That's him!

They take off, into the jungle, following the path of the helicopter.

GERALD

This way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gerald finds a weathered path. They run as fast as possible, jumping logs, dodging limbs.

BETH
It's going left.

The helicopter drops altitude. They run up a hill -- the road ends. They're atop a small bluff. Over the edge, in the beautiful valley below, they see the unexpected. The frame of a very large WOODEN STRUCTURE is being erected. WORKERS in hardhats pound nails, saw wood. The structure is about the size of a resort hotel.

GERALD
Holy crap.

The helicopter comes in for a landing.

Lonny, Gerald and Beth lie on their stomachs -- surveillance.

Workers run over and unload lumber beneath the slowing blades.

BETH
It looks like a hotel.

LONNY
Give me the camera.

Gerald hands him the Minolta.

POV

Lonny looks through the eyepiece and ZOOMS in on a sign of what the structure will become.

BACK TO SCENE

LONNY
(reading sign)
'Liihau Valley Island resort and hotel.' Shit.

GERALD
Dude, get a picture for the scrapbook.

LONNY
There's not going to be any scrapbook, Gerald! We're on the wrong island.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALE (O.S.)
You're on my island.

Lonny, Gerald and Beth slooowly crane their necks,
looking behind them. A menacing FIGURE hovers over them.
The face is obscured by the bright sun behind him. *

MALE
The name is Deere. Tom Deere.

The figure steps forward, blocking out the sun. For the
first time we get a clear look at the face of THEODORE S.
ROME. The hair is long, the face weathered by salt air
and sun, but he's clean-shaven and wears a white shirt,
pants, and wide sun hat.

ROME
Make sure you shoot several angles
on that structure. Your boss
wants clear documentation. *

Rome steps forward to look into the valley. *

ROME
(to himself)
And thus Adam was cast out of
paradise. *

Lonny, Gerald, and Beth scramble to their feet. Rome
turns. *

ROME
I was told by your office that two
were expected -- that was five
days ago. Hawaii time, I know,
everything at its own pace -- but
I count three? *

LONNY
Uh, yes, let me introduce
ourselves. I'm Lonny Bingham,
this is my associate Beth... *

BETH
Peterfriend. *

Lonny does a take learning her odd last name. *

LONNY
And... *

GERALD
Gerald Prichard, sir, nice to meet
you. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gerald extends a hand. Rome doesn't take it. *

ROME
Prichard. From the French. *

GERALD
One eighth. *

ROME
How old are you, Mr. Pichard?

GERALD
Seventeen.

ROME
(suspicious)
You're kind of young to be working
for the government?

LONNY
Um, uh, Gerald is our intern. *

BETH
We thought this would be a good
hands-on experience for him. An
internship should be more than
data entry and filing. *

Rome studies Gerald. Then -- *

ROME
Mr. Prichard, you broke a piece
off one of my aloe plants? *

GERALD
Um -- *

Rome swipes his hand in the air, capturing a fly. *

ROME
I could end the life of this fly
right now if I wanted. But I
don't, know why? *

Terrified, Gerald shakes his head. *

ROME
Because the fly fulfills a purpose
in the harmony of my island. I
respect it and it respects me. *

He opens his other hand. The fly releases. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROME
Do I make myself clear?

GERALD
Absolutely.

ROME
Very good. Let's go.

Rome heads down the hill.

EXT. ISLAND - ANOTHER PART - MOMENTS LATER

Rome moves quickly. Lonny, Beth and Gerald try to keep up.

ROME
I was assured that if I sold back half my island, it would be designated a bird sanctuary. A resort hotel is not a bird sanctuary.

LONNY
Mr. Deere, if could just --

A flock of BIRDS fly overhead. Rome stops short.

ROME
See that? Capistratus variety. Looking for a home. They used to land here. Do you know that Hawaii has suffered the greatest loss of indigenous birdlife?

LONNY
Actually, we do.

ROME
I'm taking you to my home. What you see with your eyes, stays in your head. And no pictures. Let me see your hands.

LONNY
What?

ROME
All of you. Put out your hands.

They extend their hands. Rome flips them over, palms up. He studies their hands, thoroughly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROME

Right. Let's go.

Rome walks.

GERALD

You gotta like this guy.

EXT. ISLAND - MOMENTS LATER

Lonny and Gerald are wide-eyed. It's paradise. A gorgeous waterfall cascades from a breathtaking cliff face. They walk through a well-ordered VEGETABLE GARDEN. Row after row of greens, cabbages, etc...

A beautiful columned entranceway is carved into the cliffside. Rome stops at the entrance.

ROME

Wait here. I'm going to get the agreement I signed with your department.

*

He heads inside. They all look at one another.

*

LONNY

(to Beth)

Your last name is Peterfriend?

*

*

BETH

Yeah.

*

*

Gerald peeks in through the rock-carved window.

*

GERALD

Dude, you gotta check this out.

*

*

LONNY

Get away from there. Don't look.

*

*

(quick beat)

*

Alright, move over.

*

Lonny looks out the window. Then Beth.

*

LONNY'S POV

The room is filled with endless stacks of books and papers. On a table sits a H.A.M.M. RADIO. It's what you might expect from a hermetic mad genius.

BACK TO SCENE

GERALD

I gotta get a picture of this.

He raises the camera.

LONNY

No. He said no pictures. Let's respect that.

Rome comes from inside.

ROME

Follow me.

Heading off to the left, Rome walks down a winding stone-lined path.

ROME

Are any of you asthmatic?

*

LONNY

No.

GERALD

I have psoriasis.

ROME

We'll do a short purification ritual so the island spirits can accept you as helpful beings.

They come to a short, round structure, a YURT. The entrance is covered by an animal pelt. Next to the yurt a seventeen-year-old Hawaiian beauty named MELE tends a blazing hot fire with a shovel.

ROME

This is Mele. I'm training her.

(to Mele)

Alak bdadowan do fidalaloo?

She nods.

BETH

It's a tamazcal.

*

*

ROME

Yes. In Mexico. Here the ritual is called Mulakee. Traditionally, it's done naked. I'll leave it up to you.

*

*

*

*

Rome pulls the animal pelt aside and gestures for the three to enter.

*

INT. YURT - MOMENTS LATER

It's warm and dimly lit. A hot glowing stone sits in a round pit dug into the center of the floor. They all sit cross-legged. Beth is down to her bra and underwear. Lonny and Gerald are fully clothed. Rome is indeed naked.

ROME

Breathe in.

He puts some leaves on the hot stone.

ROME

This is eucalyptus.
(yells, so Mele
can hear)
Albudamoo mulatay!

Mele enters with a red-hot, orange-glowing stone on her shovel. She puts it in the pit.

ROME

Ahhooohhhhh. Give an ahoh.

LONNY & GERALD & BETH

(weak, unsure)

Ahhooohh.

ROME

Like you mean it, you're cleansing
your spirit. Ahhhoooohhhh!

LONNY & GERALD & BETH

Ahhoooohhhh.

ROME

Good. This is the agreement I
signed with your agency. Page 3,
article 22. Ms. Peterfriend, will
you paraphrase?

He hands Beth the papers. She tries to read by the dim light of the stones.

BETH

Um, it says that if either of the
parties act in bad faith that the
entire agreement will be voided.

ROME

Wouldn't you say you're acting in
bad faith?

The question catches Lonny off guard. Is Rome on to him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rome takes a ladle from a nearby bucket and pours liquid onto the stones. A scalding HISS of steam pours forth. *

GERALD *

Oh my God. *

He takes off his shirt. *

LONNY

Okay, um, I need to ask you a few questions, to get things rolling.

ROME

Questions?

Lonny wipes sweat from his forehead and lip.

LONNY

Just formalities, before I can re-file the, um, papers.

Mele enters with another stone in her shovel. She places it in the pit.

ROME

Ahhooooohhhh!

LONNY & GERALD & BETH *

Ahhooooohhhh!

LONNY

Okay. You've been living here for, how long, about...

Rome just stares at him.

LONNY

Okay. Besides um Mele, you live here alone, correct? *

ROME

Mele only stays for a few days when she trains. Are these questions necessary?

LONNY

I need to fully understand the situation. I, um... it's really hot.

GERALD

Dude, I'm taking my pants off, I'm dying.

(CONTINUED) *

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Next question. Um, if you're a private man, why did you want to sell half your island?

Long pause. Lonny gets nervous. Rome studies him. Then --

ROME

I have several charitable organizations that I make contributions to. I want to continue to honor my gifts. They're important. And Mele brings me items I need from the mainland. They cost money.

*
*

BETH

What, like books?

*

Rome shoots her a look.

*

LONNY

Okay, last question?

ROME

That's enough questions. Now is the part when we sit in silence. I want you to tell me what you hear.

He pours tea on the stones. HISSSSSSSS.

EXT. MAUI AIRPORT TARMAC - SAME TIME

A large private jet comes to a stop. The door opens. Julius steps out, followed by Gail. They are met by several dignitaries and reporters. Hawaiian women in Hula skirts drape them with LEIS.

DIGNITARY

Mr. Bingham. It is a great honor to welcome you to the island of Maui.

JULIUS

Hala maka tomalow.

*

Everyone who understands Hawaiian laughs.

*

Spencer and Triana approach.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPENCER

Pop, I can't begin to tell you how
happy I am you're here.

*
*

JULIUS

Tell me in the car. Any more word
on your brother?

*
*

They head towards the terminal.

CUT TO:

INT. YURT - MINUTES LATER

The boys are now lying down, woozy from the heat. Beth
sits stoically, a pro. Lonny has his shirt off.

*
*

GERALD

(spacey euphoria)

I hear my heart and the blood as
it moves in and around my heart.
I hear a woman's voice inside my
heart.

Beth and Rome still sit cross-legged. Mele drops another
stone into the pit.

*

ROME

What was your high game...
Ahoooooh!

*
*
*

BETH

Ahhoooooh!

*
*

LONNY & GERALD

(wobbly)

Ahheewww.

*
*
*

LONNY

(woozy)

I got one more questmiyan...
question for my report. Why are
you living on this island? In the
middle of nowhere?

*
*
*

ROME

Because, Mr. Bingham, the world is
a very noisy place.

(to Mele)

Hala meta lakawan.

*
*

She nods.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROME

We're done now. It's time for
Mele to train.

CUT TO:

THE FACES OF LONNY, BETH AND GERALD

*

Bewildered expressions. We HEAR the sound of GRUNTS and
THUMPS.

REVERSE ANGLE

To reveal:

EXT. ISLAND - MOMENTS LATER

Mele pounds a boxing HEAVY BAG that hangs from a tree.
Rome holds the bag for resistance. A makeshift BOXING
RING is seen behind them.

ROME

See the way she draws power from
her laterals? A fighter can spend
years learning that, she does it
naturally.

*
*
*

LONNY

Um, I think we have all the
paperwork we need to re-file your
claim.

ROME

I want the workers off by week's
end. Understood?

*

(to Mele)

Let's hit the ring.

Mele steps into the ring. Rome puts training pads on his
hands.

LONNY

We just need a photograph of you,
to complete the claim and then
we're all set.

ROME

Photograph?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

It's a formality, but required.
If you'll just stand over here.
With me.

ROME

I don't take photographs.

LONNY

It'll only take a second. Gerald,
if you'll do the honors.

ROME

I don't think you heard me. I
don't take pictures.

LONNY

I can't file the claim without
one.

BETH

(bullshitting)

It's part of the Standall Clause.
A couple of years back we had a
big problem...

*

*

*

LONNY

Yeah, the wrong guy got the wrong
land. It was a total disaster.

ROME

Let me put it this way, take a
photograph of me and I'll have to
kill you.

He steps through the ropes into the ring.

LONNY

Look, Mr. Rome --

*

Oops, Lonny spilled the beans, said the wrong name. Rome
turns, a slow menacing burn.

LONNY

Mr. Deere...

ROME

Who are you?

*

Mele steps forward with an intimidating glare.

ROME

What's with the cameras?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lonny's frozen. *

GERALD

We're from Guernica magazine.
It's my school newspaper.

ROME

Reporters?

LONNY

No, no, we're not reporters. *
We're not from any school -- he's
home-schooled.

ROME

You're with the resort -- *

BETH

We're not -- *

ROME

If you and your two friends aren't *
off my side of the island -- *

LONNY

I'm not leaving!! Okay!! I've
been through way too much to find
you. I almost drowned, got it!
I've been arrested, embarrassed *
and yelled at by several people *
most of whom think I'm a
pedophile! I've also used up all
my savings, which weren't
substantial to start with, all to
find you! So the least you can do
as a... former international dance
humanitarian is listen to why the
hell I'm here! 'Cause trust me,
I've had a lot of sun and I'm
dehydrated from all that steam and
you don't want to mess with me
when I'm this cranky!

Everyone's a little stunned by Lonny's outburst. Most of
all Lonny. Rome stares at him. Then makes an odd
gesture that says, "Let's hear it."

LONNY

Okay... There's this bucket... *

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY (CONT'D)

(beat)

My father is a very difficult man.
A demanding man. In his house
there's a table with pictures of
people he knows standing next to
important men and women who've
actually made a difference in this
world. He cares more about that
table than he ever will about me.
But I want to be on it. With you.
He loves you. So if there's any
of that humanitarian still in you,
I'm asking, please, just one
picture.

*

Pause. Lonny looks at Rome, determined.

MELE

Hala batin wahalawin mata?

ROME

Hata muallawin tenta fatawaua.

LONNY

What did she say?

ROME

I'll make you a deal. Knock her
out and I'll give you what you
want.

LONNY

Knock her out?

Rome hands Lonny a pair of gloves that hang from a corner
post of the ring.

ROME

She's only sparred with me. She
needs some new competition.
Someone closer to her age.

LONNY

I've, uh, never really boxed.

GERALD

I'll do it.

(to Rome)

What if I knock her out?

ROME

(to Mele)

Mala halan watwuha pa?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mele nods.

ROME

She says either one.

*

Gerald moves to take gloves from Lonny. Lonny resists.

LONNY

What are you doing?

GERALD

Look, man, you saved my life
before in that ocean. Let me do
this. I get in fights all the
time.

*

*

BETH

Mr. Rome, there's obviously been a
misunderstanding...

*

*

*

GERALD

Give me the gloves.

*

*

LONNY

Gerald, I appreciate your help but
I really think I need to do this.

GERALD

Yeah? When was the last time you
threw a punch?

*

LONNY

I don't know. Eighth grade? Mark
Polito.

GERALD

What happened?

LONNY

He threw me down and dragged me
around by my hood.

Gerald takes the gloves. Lonny lets him.

LONNY

Okay, we're ready.

Gerald slips on the gloves and climbs into the ring. He
shadow-boxes. Mele stands still, a silent deadly viper.

Lonny and Beth go to the corner nearest Gerald.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Okay, she's probably faster than
you so try to trap her in a
corner.

*

BETH

Yeah, that's good.

*

*

LONNY

And you're bigger than her so if
you're winning, ease up.

*

*

Gerald looks across the ring at Mele. She smiles.

GERALD

She's kinda hot.

Rome CLANGS a cowbell.

Gerald comes out dancing. He's already tiring himself
out. He throws a jab, misses by a mile and Mele CLOCKS
him. Gerald goes down hard.

Rome playfully winces.

LONNY

You okay?

Gerald gets up, shakes it off. Dances again. ONE-TWO.
A quick combo and Gerald is face-down again.

LONNY

Okay. That's enough.

Gerald gets up. Now he's angry.

GERALD

I'm fine. I'm fine.

He turns. Knocks his gloves together. Moves in. Throws
a punch and hits Mele square in the ARM. She counters.
BAM! Down he goes!

LONNY

Gerald, stay down.

(to Rome)

Hit the bell.

GERALD

Don't hit the bell.

ROME

The kid's got heart.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gerald stumbles around the ring, a sad sight. Mele smiles, but this time it's more out of respect. Gerald takes a breath, and with a last burst of adrenaline yelps his war cry and charges...

GERALD

Cocksucker!

BAM! Mele clocks him square in the nose. Gerald goes down for the last time. Mele steps out of the ring.

Lonny jumps in. Rome throws Lonny a towel.

ROME

Clean him up. Then be on your way.

Rome and Mele head off. Lonny tends to Gerald.

LONNY

You okay?

Gerald's somewhere between laughter and tears.

GERALD

I kept pretending she was my father.

(beat; emotional)

I got a lot of anger in me, Lonny.

*

LONNY

I know you do, Gerald. I know you do.

Lonny watches Rome walk away.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND HOTEL PALACE-MAUI - DAY

Julius, Gail, Spencer and Triana walk the long main portico towards the lobby front desk. Several bellhops follow.

SPENCER

Pop, the diving here is fantastic.
I set us up for Thursday morning.
Gail, are you certified?

*
*
*
*

GAIL

Yes. For class five and six.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPENCER

This is so much fun. It's like a
honeymoon double date, right?

*
*
*

TRIANA

(not thrilled)

Absolutely.

*
*
*

SAM the hotel manager approaches.

SAM

Mr. Bingham.

JULIUS

Sam.

They hug warmly.

SAM

It's wonderful to have you back.

*

JULIUS

Sam, this is my new favorite
person in the world, Gail Henwith.

*
*

SAM

My extreme pleasure to have one so
beautiful at The Grand Hotel
Palace-Maui.

*

(to Julius)

Business or pleasure this trip?

Julius puts his arm around Sam and walks him off. He
proffers a C-NOTE.

JULIUS

I need you to find my son for me.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. ISLAND - OUTSIDE ROME'S LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

Lonny, plenty pissed, paces back and forth.

*

LONNY

Mr. Rome, come out here!

He chucks a rock at the stone dwelling wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

I'm not leaving! I'm sorry we
lied to you about the government
thing, but we didn't exactly lie,
you assumed something and we...
you know, played along.

*
*
*
*
*

He throws another stone.

*

LONNY

I know you can hear me!

BETH

Lonny, maybe we should go?

*

LONNY

Go?! Where are we going?!

*
*

BETH

He's not going to take the
picture. Look at Gerald.

*
*
*

Gerald holds the towel, now wet, to his face.

*

GERALD

Dude, I don't feel so hot.

*
*

LONNY

You wanna leave! Go! I don't
need your help!

*
*
*

BETH

I'm trying to help you!

*
*

LONNY

Help me? You've been here two
days, Beth! I've been trying to
find him for two months!

*
*
*
*

BETH

Why? To impress your father?

*
*

He looks at her.

*

BETH

Why do you care so much what he
thinks?!

*
*
*

He turns to throw another stone but is stopped by a
deafening ROAR. A HELICOPTER streaks above them, heading
towards the hotel.

*
*
*

Rome appears in the doorway. He marches towards Lonny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROME

Put the rock down.

Lonny drops them from his hand.

ROME

I don't know who you are, but I
have spent the last fifteen years
restoring this island, that has
known nothing but neglect,
disease, and bloodshed, to what it
once was. This is my home. Don't
touch a rock. A plant. A tree.
Take your friends and go.

Rome heads towards a path in the jungle.

LONNY

I'll go when you take a picture
with me.

Rome stops.

ROME

I'm a recluse, right? What kind
of recluse would I be if I let you
take my picture?

He heads off into the jungle.

Pause. Silence amongst the three.

GERALD

Dude, I'll do whatever you want
here but maybe we should just call
it. We came pretty close.

Lonny has his head down, hands on his hips. He turns to
Beth.

LONNY

I didn't want the picture to
impress my father. At first it
was that, yes, but really, I
wanted to impress myself. I
wanted to do something that wasn't
mediocre. Just once. The whole
thing's dumb anyway, getting a
picture to go on a table.

BETH

You're not mediocre. What do you
know better than anyone?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY
Mediocrity.

BETH
Lonny. What's the one thing you
specialize in, more than anyone
else?

LONNY
I don't know. Animals?

GERALD
Rome.

BETH
You said you've read every word
that's been written about him. If
you need something, take what you
know and figure out how to get it.

He looks at her. Just then, A FLOCK OF GEESE fly
overhead. They swoop down as if they're going to land on
the island, but then turn up and fly away.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A GLASS STATUE
of A BIRD on an END TABLE.

INT. GRAND HOTEL PALACE-MAUI - ROOM - SAME TIME

BAM! The STATUE is KNOCKED OFF its perch as two bodies,
wrapped in white hotel sheets smash into the table and
roll to the floor. We HEAR the MOANS of intense
pleasure.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

The ER doors BURST open. Julius lies on a GURNEY. An
OXYGEN MASK is over his mouth. Two Paramedics, a DOCTOR,
a nurse, Gail, Spencer and Triana run alongside.

DOCTOR
Code blue! Cardiac arrest! I
need room two cleared now!
(to Gail)
Why are his hands tied?

GAIL
Long story.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They rush Julius into room two.

DOCTOR

You three need to wait out here.

The doors close.

SPENCER

(genuinely distraught)

He'll be fine, right?

Sam, the hotel manager, runs up, out of breath.

SAM

I just heard.

GAIL

They took him inside.

SAM

(to Spencer)

Mr. Bingham, I spoke to one of the fishermen. If you wish to notify your brother of what's happened, I know where he is.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. ISLAND - DUSK

Gentle, lilting MUSIC is heard. A CHOPIN ETUDE. Lonny follows the sound. He comes to a stop, struck by a beautiful sight. Against the descending soft-orange sun, Rome DANCES on the beach. He spins and swoops, quiet and graceful. The arms, head and torso flow in unison. The magic is still there.

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*

Lonny notices that the MUSIC comes from a wind-up VICTROLA that rests gently on a log.

He watches Rome. He could watch this forever.

EXT. ISLAND - BY THE WATERFALL - DUSK

The MUSIC continues. Gerald sits, peacefully, keeping the cool soothing towel to his face. Mele approaches. She wears a light island dress. Her hair is down. A natural beauty. She sits on her knees in front of him.

MELE

(broken English)

You have the soul of a fighter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GERALD
I'm tired of fighting.

MELE
Then it is time stop.

She smiles. In her hand is a snapped-off aloe palm. She gently dabs the soft gelatin to his cuts.

EXT. ISLAND - BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Rome gazes out at the ocean. He is peaceful, lost in the sound of the WAVES. Lonny approaches.

LONNY
That was beautiful. I didn't mean to watch, I heard the music. Mr. Rome --

ROME
You know, my father liked to take photographs. Bought all the equipment, spent all our money. He had no eye whatsoever. Terrible dancer too. Really, he was awful.

LONNY
He didn't like that you were better than him.

Rome shoots him a look.

ROME
I've asked you several times to leave.

Rome walks towards the Victrola.

LONNY
Why did you stop dancing? Why did you disappear?

ROME
I didn't disappear. I'm here.

LONNY
Time magazine, 1971. You said 'I dance because I want to change the world.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY (CONT'D)

I want people to believe that despite all the damage and destruction, human beings genuinely want to do good. To love. To feel passion.'

*

He removes the horn from the Victrola.

LONNY

How can you change the world hiding on an island?

He snaps the cover into place.

LONNY

You weren't always like this. I know a lot about you.

ROME

What are you passionate about, kid? Trying to get a picture so your father will approve of you? The world doesn't want to change. Stamp out an injustice or war in Africa and it pops up a month later somewhere else. The world doesn't change because people don't change. And if you try to change someone you're going to end up disappointed.

*
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LONNY

So that's it. You just give up? Become a hermit? You made people feel things. You inspired them. My mother was writing a book about you. She brought my father to all your performances. They fell in love watching you. You can't just stop caring. Not after all you did. It's not fair.

*

Rome picks up the Victrola.

ROME

East. Walk east. When you come to the bamboo forest, turn left. You'll find a rowboat at the water. Use it.

Rome starts off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY
I saw your daughter.

Rome stops.

LONNY
I went to Staten Island. I know
about the birthday letters you
send her. She's married, you
don't even know that. You have a
grandchild. A boy. She said if I
found you I should tell you that.
What are you passionate about?

Rome stares at Lonny. Lonny looks right back in his
eyes, not backing down. Rome turns and walks off.

*
*
*

REVERSE ANGLE

Beth watches Rome walk off the beach. She looks back at
Lonny.

BACK TO SCENE

He stands there, lost, alone on the beach.

EXT. BEACH - EARLY NEXT MORNING

Lonny sleeps on the sand. He's startled awake by the
sounds of a LOW-FLYING HELICOPTER. Beth wakes up next to
him. They are clothed. The helicopter descends. It
says "GRAND HOTEL PALACE-MAUI" on its side.

INT. HELICOPTER - MINUTES LATER

Lonny and Beth in the back. Sam sits up front next to
the pilot.

SAM
We had to wait till first light to
fly out.

LONNY
How bad is he?

SAM
It's not good.

EXT. ISLAND - SAME TIME

Gerald watches the helicopter ascending away from the island. Mele sleeps next to him.

EXT. ISLAND - ROME'S LIVING QUARTERS - SAME TIME

Rome steps out of his doorway. He watches the helicopter fly off.

CUT TO:

INT. MAUI HOSPITAL - DAY

Lonny and Beth walk through the waiting area. Triana comforts a blubbering Spencer.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Lonny quietly opens the door. Julius sleeps in the bed. Oxygen tubes in his nose. An I.V. drip in his arm. Gail stands.

GAIL

Hi, Lonny. He's sleeping. They just gave him some morphine.

Lonny's eyes tear up. The sight of his father and all the hospital equipment is overwhelming.

CUT TO:

EXT. ISLAND - ON THE BEACH - SAME TIME

Rome steps onto the beach where he left Lonny the night before. Something catches his eye. Something that moves him deeply.

REVERSE ANGLE

To reveal a majestic, gravity-defying SCULPTURE made out of SAND. It's of ROME, in mid-dance. On the palm of the extended right hand sits a BIRD, its wings outstretched, taking flight. It's Lonny's masterpiece.

BACK TO SCENE

Rome sees something half-buried in the sand. It's one of the DISPOSABLE CAMERAS. He picks it up and snaps a PHOTO of the sculpture.

*

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Lonny sits forward in his chair. Beth sits next to him, holding his hand. The TV is on with the sound off. Julius wakes.

BETH
I'll be outside.

LONNY
Tell Spencer he's up.

Beth exits.

LONNY
Hey, Dad.

JULIUS
Lonny. Let me tell you something,
morphine dreams, nothing like 'em.
Brought me back to my Hong Kong
days.

LONNY
How do you feel?

JULIUS
For the first time, not so great.
Like there's an elephant in my
chest. Where's your brother?

LONNY
He's coming in.

JULIUS
Keep him away from me. He keeps
crying. It's depressing.
(beat)
Well, come on, aren't you going to
let me have it? When my father
was on his deathbed, I gave it to
him real good. That guy was such
a hard ass.

LONNY
I'm not gonna let you have it.

JULIUS
Come on, I stole your girlfriend,
I rarely said I love you, I
haven't always believed in you.
What do you say about me in that
father/son support group? Don't
think I don't know about that.
Give me your best shot.

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(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LONNY

Okay. You never said I love you.

JULIUS

Not my style.

LONNY

You stole Gail from me.

JULIUS

It was your first date. And look what happened, I got what I deserved. What else?

LONNY

You never really believed in me.

JULIUS

That's true. I wanted to. I wanted you to be great.

LONNY

I'm not great, Dad. I don't want to be great. You know why I love animals? Because they never try to be anything they're not. A dolphin never tries to be a monkey. They have nothing to prove. You know who told me that. You did. At the zoo, when I was five. You're a bear. I don't want to be a bear. I'm me. Once in a while I'll pull off something great. That's enough.

JULIUS

Not bad. That's better than what I told my father.

Julius looks at the television.

ON THE TV

Fred Astaire dances in TOP HAT.

*

BACK TO SCENE

JULIUS

Did you find him?

*

*

LONNY

Who?

*

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIUS

You took your mother's papers.
 She always thought he was hiding
 in Hawaii. You probably don't
 remember, but when you and Spencer
 were young, we'd vacation here and
 she'd run us all over the island
 looking for clues. You and
 Spencer would cry because you just
 wanted to get back to the beach.

Lonny is emotional. That is a lot of information for
 him.

LONNY

No. I didn't find him.

JULIUS

I did a lot of great things,
 Lonny, but I was a shitty husband,
 especially to your mother. She's
 the only one I really loved. And
 I was not a great father.

(beat)

You'll be good.

(beat)

Spencer -- it could go either way.

They both share a small laugh. A glimpse of ASTAIRE on
 the TV.

JULIUS

Too bad you never saw him dance.
 That would have changed your life.

LONNY

Yeah.

The door slowly opens. A man enters holding flowers.
 It's ROME. Lonny and Julius both look at him.

ROME

Hi. I'm Theodore Rome.

JULIUS

This morphine's good stuff.

ROME

You have an interesting son here.

Rome looks quizzically at Julius' face.

ROME

You look familiar to me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He notices Julius' prosthetic thumb.

ROME

Aren't you that bowler, with the magic thumb?

JULIUS

That was a long time ago.

ROME

You were great. I remember coming to watch you throw. Reno, Nevada...

*
*

LONNY

I'll be right outside.

Rome takes a seat next to Julius' bed. We FOLLOW Lonny out the door, as the conversation continues...

ROME

I used to love to bowl. I never mastered the spin. I remember you'd throw this wide arc, and the ball ride the gutter and then turn in, last second, towards the center pin -- that's the charm, isn't it. What was your high game?

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

JULIUS

292. St. Petersburg, Florida, it was a Thursday...

*
*
*

EXT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

Lonny sits with Beth. Rome walks out of Julius' room. He stops as he and Lonny share a look. Then, Rome walks off, down the corridor, towards the elevators.

INT. JULIUS' ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Lonny enters. Julius holds Rome's flowers. Julius is weak.

JULIUS

He said these flowers come from his island. He picked them himself. Thank you, Lonny. Next to you and Spencer being born that was maybe the greatest moment of my life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lonny smiles. He could cry, but doesn't. He holds Julius' hand.

LONNY (V.O.)
That was it. Four hours later, my
father passed away.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Last light of the day. We see from the headstone that
Julius is being buried next to Lonny's mother. *

LONNY (V.O.)
Spencer and I executed funeral
arrangements in accordance with
his will.

FIREWORKS shoot up and EXPLODE in the sky over the
cemetery. Hundreds are present: amputees with their
prosthetic limbs proudly displayed; white-smocked workers
from the salad factory; a group of men holding bowling
ball bags etc... It is very windy. *

LONNY (V.O.)
Despite strong winds, hundreds
came out to pay their respects. *

INT. YMCA - THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Claire reads a letter to the father-son support group.

LONNY (V.O.)
I would have liked to have told
you all in person that I won't be
attending our meetings anymore...

We PAN ALONG the lame group, moist eyes filled with
bittersweet tears. *

LONNY (V.O.)
... But I'm sure you'll all be
excited to hear that I've begun a
fulfilling and hopefully
beneficial small business
venture... *

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY *

Beth and Lonny with several disabled children. Beth
works with one child who pets a RABBIT. *

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nearby, Lonny works with another child who is making a Rabbit SCULPTURE out of clay. Smiles all around. Beth and Lonny wear identical T-shirts that say: THE PET PROJECTS - ART AND ANIMAL THERAPY. (Other options are: My pet project; Kids at Clay -- the kid part would be a logo of a baby goat; or my secret favorite -- To kiln a Mockingbird.)

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INT. YMCA - THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Claire continues to read the letter.

LONNY (V.O.)

I often sat in our meetings and thought, 'what kind of father will I be?' Because I certainly don't want my son sitting where you are.

EXT. PARK - DAY

We see a father gently tackling his son who runs with a football. Lonny looks on, sitting on a park bench, writing the letter.

LONNY (V.O.)

I think I'll make a good father.

Lonny looks left. Another father SCOLDS his son, taking an ICE-CREAM BAR from his small hand.

LONNY (V.O.)

At least I hope so.

EXT. THE SKY - DAY

A flock of birds flies in a perfect V formation.

LONNY (V.O.)

I guess you could say there's greatness everywhere...

One suddenly, violently falls from the sky.

REVERSE ANGLE

TO REVEAL: Three hunters in a duck blind. One's rifle is smoking. The others pat his back.

LONNY (V.O.)

We just measure it, each, in our own individual way.

EXT. ROME'S ISLAND - DAY

Gerald and Mele box in the ring. It's playful.

LONNY (V.O.)
One thing I definitely believe is
that we're at our best with other
people...

Mele punches Gerald in the chest, then comforts him with
kisses.

EXT. PORCH (STATEN ISLAND) - DAY

Rome, holding flowers, nervously steps onto the porch and
KNOCKS on the front door.

LONNY (V.O.)
And sometimes the greatest act can
be something really simple.

The door opens. Juliet, Rome's daughter, stands in the
doorway holding Frank, Jr. They stare at each other.
Rome smiles, then Juliet.

*
*

INSERT - A THICK MANILA ENVELOPE

with Lonny's name and address handwritten in black
marker. A hand tears it open.

LONNY (V.O.)
My friend made me a scrapbook of
the whole adventure. I wish you
could all see it.

INT. BINGHAM BROWNSTONE - DEN - DAY

Lonny and Beth cuddle on the couch turning pages looking
through the scrapbook. In the b.g., a dog, a monkey, and
a cockatoo are visible.

LONNY (V.O.)
There are some pretty great
pictures.

INSERT - A HAND

(Lonny's) places a small FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH on a table.
The photo is of JULIUS and LONNY smiling warmly on
Julius' hospital bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We PULL BACK to see that the photo has been placed forefront on the TABLE OF GREATNESS. We continue to PULL BACK REVEALING the Table of Greatness amongst all the prized possessions in Julius' "GREAT ROOM."

FADE OUT.

THE END

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