

6

MOSCOW ON THE HUDSON

by

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and

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(ALL DIALOGUE ENCLOSED IN PARENTHESES WILL
BE SPOKEN IN RUSSIAN IN THE PERFORMANCE.)

REVISED FINAL DRAFT

MOSCOW ON THE HUDSON

FADE IN:

EXT. EAST SIDE LOWER MANHATTAN - DAY

Passengers getting on a bus.

INT. BUS

Bus begins to go uptown. Middle-aged FRENCH WOMAN, looking lost, comes up the aisle and finds a seat next to a Man of about thirty. Man holds a saxophone case in his lap and is dressed like any other youngish American. After a moment, the Woman speaks.

FRENCH WOMAN

(accent)

Excuse me, please, sir. Does zis
bus go to ze Lincoln Centaire?

The Man, who is VLADIMIR IVANOFF, speaks with a slight Russian accent.

VLADIMIR

Did you say Lincoln Center?

FRENCH WOMAN

Oui... Yes.

VLADIMIR

Okay, lady. You are on wrong bus.
But it's okay. You can get right
bus. You have to change at 59th
Street for number twenty-two bus.
Is okay, lady. When is time I
tell you and you change. You
get free transfer.

FRENCH WOMAN

Merci... Thank you.

VLADIMIR

Sure thing... It's tough to find
way around at first.

They smile at each other.

VLADIMIR

Looks out the window... Beginning to remember...

HIS POV

Streets of New York City... We begin to hear RUSSIAN MUSIC.

VLADIMIR

Looking... remembering... Now we hear RUSSIAN LANGUAGE SPOKEN, too.

From Vladimir's face we...

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT OF TV SCREEN

Patriotic SOVIET MUSIC is heard. It is a Male COMMENTATOR seated behind a desk with a large photo of the Kremlin behind him. The show is clearly modeled on an American news show. The Commentator is a Russian version of Brokaw or Brinkley, but his suit is from Bulgaria. It's all like a time-warp trip back to the fifties.

COMMENTATOR

(... So it looks like a typical March day in Moscow. A new cold front moving in from Leningrad. But, luckily, it appears to be a dry cold front.)

INT. APARTMENT - CLOSE SHOT - GRANDFATHER

The unkempt moustache of the GRANDFATHER twitches as he watches the TV, ever suspicious of the Commentator.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

(... and considering all the rain we Muscovites have had this year, it will be a welcome change to have clear weather again...)

During the Commentator's words, Grandfather reaches behind his bed and pulls aside the curtain. Rain smashes against the window.

GRANDFATHER

(Horseshit! You smiling bastard!)

A head comes up from under a quilt on a small cot next to the Grandfather's bed. The head belongs to Vladimir. He is thirty-ish, possessed of great self-control and clearly used to his Grandfather's cursing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

(Good morning, grandfather.)

GRANDFATHER

(Next, they'll tell us that the crops are good this year.)

TV SCREEN

The weather satellite flicks off. Commentator is joined by his FEMALE COUNTERPART. She is Jane Pauley with a moustache. On the screen behind her, shots of tractors, crops, foodstuffs...

FEMALE COMMENTATOR

(The agricultural news is excellent this morning. Large shipments of...)

GRANDFATHER

Chewing on a piece of dried black bread.

GRANDFATHER

(Smooth talking, lying pervert.)

FULL SHOT - APARTMENT

Vladimir is getting dressed. His clothes are in a tiny closet he is sharing with his sister, SASHA. The two-bedroom apartment is small but good by Soviet standards. The usual morning anarchy is further complicated by the size of the rooms and the five people who live there. Sasha, the youngest at twenty, serves her grandfather some tea and a kiss. The PARENTS move in a silent ballet around each other, two dancers who know all the steps. There is hardly any room to maneuver, but somehow bread, herring and tea have appeared on a table. Everyone eats. Only Grandfather talks, still pissed at the Commentators. A photo of the first Secretary appears on the screen.

GRANDFATHER

(What a shop clerk for a leader, eh, Vladimir?)

VLADIMIR

(Nothing wrong with a shop clerk.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANDFATHER

(makes a funny face)
(But this one has eyebrows that
grow together!)

MOTHER

(You shouldn't talk that way,
Father.)

GRANDFATHER

(Why not? I'm the same age as
these sheep. I was here from
the beginning.)

FATHER

(You have no respect for position.)

GRANDFATHER

(Maybe they will come and take
me away like Leonid-the neighbor
boy.)

SASHA

(Leonid was stupid. He sympathized
with the Afghanistans.)

GRANDFATHER

(Trotsky was right. They have
fucked the revolution.)

Even Vladimir is frightened by this one.

VLADIMIR

(You'll land us all in prison,
Grandfather.)

GRANDFATHER

(These imbeciles are good only
for parades. They have tiny,
little balls. Like raisins, eh,
Grandson?)

VLADIMIR

(I have never seen the balls of
our leaders.)

GRANDFATHER

(roars with laughter)
(That's because they don't have any!)

Vladimir gets up to go; picking up his saxophone case.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

(I'll try to find you some pickled mushrooms, Grandfather.)

MOTHER

(They say there will be toilet paper on Letchnov Street.)

FATHER

(That would be a miracle.)

GRANDFATHER

(Who needs toilet paper?)
(waves his newspaper)
(I have Pravda!)

VLADIMIR

(smiles)
(I prefer Isvestia. It's softer.)

GRANDFATHER

(You are a good boy, Vladimir.)

FATHER

(exiting)
(Some day you will both be arrested.)

EXT. STREET - VLADIMIR - DAY (RAIN)

Hurrying now for his trolley. He sees a woman sitting on the curb. She holds up a home-made sign that reads: I AM A JEW. LET ME GO TO ISRAEL. The crowd that passes doesn't look at the woman. It would be dangerous. Vladimir stops for a brief moment. Then, suddenly, the police are there and the woman is scooped up and put in the police vehicle. One of the cops grabs the home-made sign and the car speeds away.

ANOTHER STREET

Colder now. Vladimir walking. Suddenly, people rush by...

VLADIMIR

(to MAN running
beside him)
(Toilet paper?)

MAN

(Shoes, I think.)

ANOTHER ANGLE

The line is formed but the front is not in sight.

VLADIMIR

(They must be Czech or Polish
for such a line.)

MAN

(coldly)
(I don't know.)

Vladimir checks his watch and decides to wait. A FAT
MAN wearing a huge coat gets in line behind Vladimir.

FAT MAN

(Are you a reader?)

VLADIMIR

(I like good literature.)

The Fat Man quickly opens his coat.

INSERT - INSIDE OF COAT

Practically a magazine rack. Prominently displayed are
Playboy, Penthouse and Oui.

LINE

As the Fat Man closes the coat.

VLADIMIR

(Thank you, Comrade, but I am
looking for something deeper.)

The Fat Man moves off looking for another customer.

INT. SHOP - FULL SHOT - DAY

A long time has passed as Vladimir reaches the front of
the line. No one is smiling in this shop.

CLERK

(Size?)

VLADIMIR

(Forty-five.)

CLERK

(No forty-fives left.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR
(Forty-four or forty-six will do.)

CLERK
(We only have thirty-eights.)

VLADIMIR
(I'll take three pair.)

CLERK
(Only two to a customer.)

VLADIMIR
(Two thirty-eights, then.)

INT. MOSCOW CIRCUS - DAY

A bear act is rehearsing in the ring. Four big bears ride bicycles around the ring. They are dressed as girls. Other circus folk chat, smoke. Some musicians play MUSIC for the bears. Vladimir hurries in, obviously late. He gets a dirty look from BORIS, a bald man, who we'll later find to be a KGB contact in the circus unit.

BORIS
(Ivanoff! You are late.)

VLADIMIR
(Emergency!)

BORIS
(We have an important tour to prepare for. So maybe you will not go to New York.)

By now, Vladimir has opened his briefcase. Boris sees a pair of shoes and his eyes glaze over.

BORIS
(continuing)
(Czech?)

VLADIMIR
(The line was endless.)

BORIS
(I am a forty-two.)

VLADIMIR
(Shit. These are thirty-eight.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BORIS

(How much?)

VLADIMIR

(For you, forty roubles.)

BORIS

(I know you only paid twenty.)

VLADIMIR

(I stood in line.)

Bears ride by on their bicycles as Boris pays Vladimir.

INT. AUDIENCE AT CIRCUS (LATER)

Children laughing.

MUSIC DAIS

Vladimir and a six-piece combo, playing their exciting circus MUSIC.

RING

ANATOLY and his brothers (FIVE BROTHERS) are doing a sensational act where Anatoly ends up on the shoulders of five of his brothers, stacked on each other's shoulders.

VLADIMIR

Does a riff.

ANATOLY

At the top now... he is great!

CHILDREN

Gasping.

ANATOLY

Leaps... APPLAUSE.

INT. CIRCUS (LATER)

No more audience. The performance is over, but the performers are now seated in the stands... smoking, listening to Boris... Vladimir sits next to Anatoly, the star acrobat... An elephant sits in the audience too and almost seems to be listening to Boris's rap.

BORIS

(When you arrive in New York you must understand that you are representatives of the nation of the revolution. Many people will take perverse pleasure in tempting you with American decadence... see you as targets for seduction... like whores they want you to share their disease... their immorality.)

ANATOLY

(Look who is talking. KGB pig!)

VLADIMIR

(Quiet!)

INT. ANATOLY'S CAR - DAY

Anatoly is one of the chosen and drives a relatively new Volga sedan. Two fuzzy dice hang down from the mirror as Anatoly and Vladimir ride down the avenue. Anatoly is a terrible driver and this scares the hell out of Vladimir.

ANATOLY

(I am an artist without freedom... like being a bird without wings.)

VLADIMIR

(Watch where you drive! Why do you tell me about all this?)

ANATOLY

(Because, despite your act of disapproval, I know the same nausea is grabbing at you.)

VLADIMIR

(I am content.)

ANATOLY

(Shit! You are a gear in a bad machine. Don't you have a soul?)

VLADIMIR

(I only have things you wait on line for.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, Anatoly swerves the car to the side.

ANATOLY
(Gasoline!)

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Anatoly has stopped the car next to a truck under a highway bridge. The truck driver nods at Anatoly as he pulls out a rubber hose to siphon the gas from the truck into the Volga.

INT. CAR - CLOSE ON VLADIMIR

As they drive. He is nervous, but at the same time, he admires Anatoly's spirit.

ANATOLY AND VLADIMIR

ANATOLY
(See how corrupt we are.)

VLADIMIR
(America is not corrupt? France?)

ANATOLY
(My soul is dying.)

VLADIMIR
(My stomach is growling.)

Anatoly smiles. He lights another cigarette.

ANATOLY
(in English)
Let us practice our English.

VLADIMIR
(enjoys this)
Hello, sir. May I buy a lamb chop?

ANATOLY
Sure thing, mister.

VLADIMIR
Kiss me, beautiful. I love you...
Have you read Ernest Hemingway?

Both of them speak in heavy accents, but are clearly understood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANATOLY
Vladimir...?

VLADIMIR
Yes, my dear acrobat?

ANATOLY
When we get to New York, I am
going to... defect.

Vladimir slaps his forehead in anger.

VLADIMIR
(Why do you do this to me???)

ANATOLY
(still in English)
I had to tell someone.

VLADIMIR
(You know I am obliged to report
you to the... authorities.)

ANATOLY
(smiles)
You are a good boy, Vladimir.
You are my friend.

VLADIMIR
You are a bad boy, Anatoly. You
must not de... def...

Has trouble pronouncing it.

ANATOLY
Defect. I must. I am desperate.

VLADIMIR
(angry)
Don't be so school-boy poetic!

ANATOLY
I thought of getting out as a Jew,
but it is impossible to... (get
a circumcision...)

VLADIMIR
(You are desperate.)

ANATOLY
I want Mercedes Benz. I want to
piss in the wind. I want to see
Rio de Janeiro.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR
You are Russian.

ANATOLY
I am citizen of world.

VLADIMIR
Why do you tell me all this things?

ANATOLY
You are my friend.

VLADIMIR
I could be KGB.

ANATOLY
Then my ass is already frozen.

VLADIMIR
Be careful, my friend...

Anatoly stops the car. He is very emotional. He kisses Vladimir on the cheeks.

ANATOLY
I hate my life..

VLADIMIR
A small penis is better than none.

ANATOLY
(smiles, starts the car)
Russian proverb?

They laugh.

Anatoly just misses a collision with a taxi.

FULL SHOT - STREET - DAY (SNOWING)

Almost grey darkness of a winter afternoon. Vladimir walks purposefully towards a subway entrance when he sees something.

HIS POV - A LINE

Forming for something. People are slipping in the wet snow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR
(to a WOMAN)
(Toilet paper?)

WOMAN
(I thought chickens...)

VLADIMIR
(to a MAN)
(Toilet paper?)

MAN
(First quality.)

LINE

Vladimir walking toward the end of it to find a place.
A tall, gaunt young MAN stops him.

LEONID
(Vladimir?)

Vladimir is happy to see this tired Young Man. They embrace.

VLADIMIR
(Leonid. You're back.)

LEONID
(How is your music?)

VLADIMIR
(I still play for tigers and
bears. And you? Are you teaching?)

LEONID
(No. I have a new job. I pave
streets.)

VLADIMIR
(I am sorry.)

LEONID
(I protested Afghan --)

VLADIMIR
(I know. I heard.)

LEONID
(They said I was crazy, so they
sent me to a mental hospital.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR
(Were you crazy?)

LEONID
(smiles)
(If I was really crazy, how would
I know it?)

VLADIMIR
(We shall talk, Leonid.)

LEONID
(Don't ever go crazy if you can
help it.)

OLD WOMAN
(You! Don't try to break in the
line!)

FULL SHOT - VLADIMIR

He is moved by the gaunt figure of Leonid as he heads back to find the end of the line; but in a surreal, Kafkaesque image, the line goes on and on, around the corner now. He sees another friendly face and nods a greeting. The line is endless and packed and he follows it until he is dizzy and cold. Suddenly, the line seems infinite as he passes Leonid again and the Old Woman. She laughs at him and he stumbles away, shaking his head as if to clear the vision.

ANGLE - MAN

A MAN comes clutching rolls of toilet paper under his heavy coat. Vladimir catches up with him.

VLADIMIR
(Comrade... let us bargain.)

MAN
(I'm not selling.)

VLADIMIR
(This is not for money. Stop a
moment.)

MAN
(You touch me and I shall scream
for the police.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

(No... look.)

The last pair of shoes comes from his briefcase.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

(You look to be about a thirty-eight.)

MAN

(I am.)

The shoes glisten in the cold lamplight.

INT. APARTMENT - FULL SHOT - NIGHT

Father, Sasha and Mother are at the dinner table. Grandfather is watching TV. Vladimir arrives, juggling the new rolls of toilet paper.

VLADIMIR

(Ta ta!!!)

MOTHER

(You found it!)

FATHER

(Congratulations, Vladimir!)

SASHA

(doing her homework
at table)

(Why does everyone in this family
make such a fuss over toilet paper?)

GRANDFATHER

(Eating and shitting are the
secrets of happiness. Not to
mention farting and fucking.)

SASHA

(Stop it, Grandfather.)

MOTHER

(I've made some dinner, Vladimir.)

VLADIMIR

(changing his shirt)

(I can't. I'm meeting Svetlana.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER

(If you married her you'd get a decent flat of your own.)

VLADIMIR

(I'm not ready for another marriage.)

MOTHER

(I like Svetlana.)

GRANDFATHER

(Is she the one with the big tits?)

VLADIMIR

(You should have been a poet, Grandfather. Oh! I almost forgot!)

He yanks a jar of pickled mushrooms out of his briefcase. Grandfather opens the jar and swoons.

MOTHER

(It would make me happy to be a grandmother, Vladimir.)

Now, Grandfather is looking at a documentary about poverty and misery in New York.

TV SCREEN

Poverty in Harlem.

GRANDFATHER

Eating mushrooms.

GRANDFATHER

(Look at those blacks.)

He crosses himself.

VLADIMIR

(Beautiful people. Coleman Hawkins. John Coltrane. Charley Parker. Dizzy Gillespie. Bebop. Jazz.)

FATHER

(What are you talking about?)

Grandfather plays with the TV dial.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANDFATHER

(Why do they have twenty dials
and only two shows?)

VLADIMIR

(kisses his mother)
(I'll be late, Mother. Good night.)

GRANDFATHER

(talking to the TV)
(Lies. Tell me more lies.)

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Vladimir and SVETLANA walking, arm in arm. She is about
twenty-eight. She has a pretty face, but she is so bundled
up it's difficult to tell what she really looks like.

SVETLANA

(You know, before we marry, you
should join the Party. Make some
contacts. It would help us get
a good flat.)

VLADIMIR

(I'm not a joiner, Svetlana.)

SVETLANA

(It's a bit humiliating always
borrowing Anatoly's flat.)

VLADIMIR

(That's what friends are for
in Russia.)

They go into a nice looking old apartment building.

INT. HALLWAY

As they reach the door of the apartment it opens. Anatoly
and his five Georgian BROTHERS burst out, all dressed for
the Russian night. Everyone exchanges quick hellos and
hugs. It's clear they've been through all this many times.

ANATOLY

(whispers to Vladimir
as he hugs him)

May I kiss your lamb chops, darling?

Vladimir kicks him in the shins. The brothers exit to
riotous laughter.

INT. APARTMENT

It's a nice place, clearly several steps above Vladimir's apartment. Throughout the following dialogue, Vladimir and Svetlana undress. They know where to go and where things are. They get glasses from the kitchen, ice from the refrigerator and they end up in the bedroom.

VLADIMIR

(I have something for you.)

He presents her with a roll of toilet paper.

SVETLANA

(kisses him)

(You certainly know how to get to a girl's heart.)

VLADIMIR

(It's for your soft, rosy bottom, not your heart.)

SVETLANA

(Will you miss me in America?)

By now we see that Svetlana is very well endowed, just as Grandfather described her.

VLADIMIR

(Yes. I will miss you, Svetlana.)

SVETLANA

(You know, I am jealous of you.)

VLADIMIR

(Why?)

SVETLANA

(I wish I could see America.)

By now they are in bed, kissing... licking....

VLADIMIR

(Yes. I am lucky.)

SVETLANA

(I would like to see it with my own eyes... the decadence...)

Vladimir kisses her all over...

SVETLANA

(continuing)

(... The crime... the poverty... the misery...)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR
(nibbling her ear)
(... Paul Newman... Marlon Brando...)

She giggles... Then a really passionate kiss... Svetlana turns the light off... In the darkness, we hear them GROAN.

SVETLANA
(You know what I would like from America?)

VLADIMIR
(What?...)

SVETLANA
(Bluejeans, my darling... Jordache or Sergio Valente... Ahhh... and some pantyhose...)

VLADIMIR
(Pantyhose, yes.)

SVETLANA
(... And anything from Calvin Klein.)

INT. VLADIMIR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As he stumbles in, quite drunk. It is very dark. He is careful not to wake the others. He picks his way over to his cot. Grandfather is snoring like a thunderstorm. Vladimir takes off his coat and boots and slides into bed.

GRANDFATHER
(opens one eye)
(Well, did you give her a good fuck?)

VLADIMIR
(Go back to sleep, Grandfather.)

GRANDFATHER
(... There are whores in Gorky Park who carve my name in trees.)

VLADIMIR
(I believe you. Good night.)

Vladimir pulls the covers over his head. Soon both men are snoring.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - MORNING

Vladimir lives in one of these monolithic buildings. Huge, new Moscow complexes on the outskirts of the city. New, but the buildings are already gone to seed... instead of sidewalks, slush and scrubby bushes... almost like NYC housing projects... Women and children on their way to shop and to school... Vladimir comes out carrying his briefcase and his saxophone case. He walks a few yards and is suddenly bumped by two men in heavy coats. They don't let him pass. One of the men is YURI and the other is Boris, both KGB men.

VLADIMIR

(What is this?)

BORIS

(Good morning, Vladimir Ivanoff.)

A woman passes who obviously knows Vladimir, but she quickly looks the other way and passes. They lead Vladimir to a waiting car with a driver in the front seat.

VLADIMIR

(I have done nothing.)

BORIS

(Perhaps.)

INT. CAR - FULL SHOT

Vladimir is squashed between Boris and Yuri. They smoke like chimneys.

YURI

(Nicholas Ivanoff is your grandfather?)

VLADIMIR

(Of course.)

BORIS

(We have some complaints. Some of your neighbors say he yells anti-Soviet slogans out of the window.)

VLADIMIR

(He is an old man.)

YURI

(Makes rude gestures at people doing their socialist duties.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

(He is a comedian. He likes mischief.)

BORIS

(Perhaps he is senile and should go to a mental hospital.)

VLADIMIR

(He is a war hero. Please. I will talk to him.)

YURI

(Also, Vladimir Ivanoff, it might be wiser for you not to use the apartment of your friend Anatoly Cherkasov for your sexual encounters.)

Vladimir is stunned at the revelation that he has been followed.

VLADIMIR

(I have done nothing wrong.)

BORIS

(Good. It might go well for your grandfather if you kept your eyes on Cherkasov.)

VLADIMIR

(He is only an acrobat.)

BORIS

(Yes. But perhaps he wants to leap out of the Soviet Union... Good morning, Vladimir Ivanoff.)

They let him out of the car.

ANGLE

As he watches the car. Boris leans out the window.

BORIS

(Also, those fucking shoes are killing me.)

The car pulls away. Vladimir is frightened. He looks up to a window and sees his grandfather wave to him.

INT./EXT. TROLLEY

Vladimir seated. Trolley filled with grim-faced men and women on their way to work.

VLADIMIR'S POV

Faces of Russians.

VLADIMIR

Suddenly stands and yanks the pull cord to get off.

EXT. TROLLEY

As he walks towards a large, empty park.

VLADIMIR

Grim, determined... walking through a snowy path.

PARK

Snow covered... no one but Vladimir... He looks around to make sure he has not been followed.

ANGLE - BIRD

A Snow Rabbit pounces away.

VLADIMIR

Opens his saxophone case and quickly puts together the instrument, while warming the reed in his mouth.

ANGLE - PARK

Vladimir is ready... He takes one more look around... Nothing... He lifts the instrument and...

VLADIMIR

He blows and the park is filled with a wild riff lifted from Coleman Hawkins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It is loud and funky. He is good.

ANGLE

Bird... rabbit... creatures seem shocked by the SOUND OF JAZZ.

VLADIMIR

Wailing now... exalted... Suddenly, a WOMAN'S VOICE is heard. Vladimir stops and looks up.

TREES

A LOUDSPEAKER in one of the trees is BLARING the morning Soviet exercise program.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(Good morning, Soviet citizens.
It is time for our morning fitness
program. Today, we will work on
sit-ups and push-ups...)

VLADIMIR

More determined than ever. He lifts the sax to his lips and drowns out the WOMAN'S VOICE.

LONG SHOT - FOREST

The forest seems transformed by this strange and beautiful SOUND.

CLOSE ON VLADIMIR

He blows with his heart until the snow shakes from the trees.

EXT. SKYLINE OF NEW YORK

(SOUND: SAX RIFFS DRIVE THE VIEW OF NEW YORK.)

In bright sunlight...

INT. BUS

The Russian contingent has their faces pressed against the windows. They are snapping photos, gasping... Baghdad!

VLADIMIR/ANATOLY

Their heads next to each other, peering out the bus windows. Vladimir seems almost calm and disinterested. Anatoly is bursting with excitement.

THEIR POV

Manhattan from a distance.

BORIS

Doesn't even look out of the window. Nods, bemused, to Vladimir.

ANATOLY/VLADIMIR

Anatoly nudges Vladimir to see something. With his breath and his finger, he has spelled out the word, FREEDOM, on the window. Vladimir quickly rubs it out.

POV

Car hulks lie abandoned on the shoulders of the turnpike. Some potholes make the bus bounce. Used car graveyards dot the view.

VLADIMIR

Trying to comprehend it.

POV

Skyline disappears behind a truck. Bus slides into a tunnel.

ANGLE - BUS

As it emerges from the tunnel into mid-town Manhattan.

VLADIMIR/ANATOLY

Eyes turned upward to the giant buildings which enclose them. Then they look down to the life of the city. Aggressive life, anarchic life that baffles and seduces them.

POVS

Bearded man playing violin...

Black Young Man wearing clown makeup doing tricks on a unicycle.

Horse and buggies passing.

Beggars.

Bag ladies.

Crazy Man makes fuck-you sign with his hands.

Pretty girl waves.

Pickets marching bearing signs saying "Don't Shop Here. Scab Labor."

A bum taking a leak.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Billboard after billboard of beautiful women in films.

Sexy billboards for Calvin Klein, Sergio Valente and Jordache.

(END MUSIC!)

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Anatoly and Vladimir share this normal Holiday Inn room. Anatoly is already stripped, ready to take a shower. He wears a large towel around his waist. Vladimir is examining the room... locks, telephone, under the bed... He then packs soap, toilet paper and towels in his suitcase.

ANATOLY

They say it is customary to steal the towels. They are truly magnificent.

VLADIMIR

(The only reason I share a room with you is because they want me to watch you.)

ANATOLY

(turns on TV)

Speak in English please. I have to practice.

VLADIMIR

(whispers)

I tell you, Boris knows you are going to de-def -- defeh --

ANATOLY

Defect.

VLADIMIR

You are playing crazy game, Anatoly.

ANATOLY

I must, my friend.

TV SCREEN

A scene from "Emmanuelle." Very erotic.

VLADIMIR AND ANATOLY

Staring at the TV.

VLADIMIR

Perhaps it is all decadent
attempt to lure us.

ANATOLY

Then they have succeeded.

Anatoly exits. Vladimir looks around and sees a
strange slot near the bed. It's a Magic-Fingers slot.
He studies it.

INT. SHOWER - ANATOLY

In ecstasy, as he sings Beatle song, "Back in the
USSR."

BEDROOM

Coin goes in slot. Bed comes alive and Vladimir yelps,
jumping to the floor. He tries to understand why his
mattress is bouncing up and down.

TV SCREEN

Bare breasts.

BEDROOM

Carefully, Vladimir lies down on the shaking bed. He
lets it happen to him and now he smiles as he watches
the TV.

TV SCREEN

Bare breasts as seen from a bouncing bed.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

What a country!

EXT. GORGEOUS EAST RIVER HIGH RISE - NEAR THE UN -
NIGHT

MUSIC: "Cocktails for Two," Coleman Hawkins.

This splendid capitalist jewel glitters in the night.

INT. HIGH RISE - VLADIMIR

All dressed up, staring out of the window at the wondrous view. He is stunned by this New York.

APARTMENT

This penthouse is packed with Important People from the diplomatic and cultural community of New York. Anatoly is talking to an intense Bearded Young American. Boris watches them. Then, Boris is momentarily distracted by a passing tray bearing hors d'oeuvres. He grabs half a dozen tidbits.

VLADIMIR'S AREA

A VERY ATTRACTIVE GIRL stops a WAITER.

VAG

Waiter. I'll have a Black Russian, please.

The Waiter nods. Vladimir can't believe his ears. He stares.

VAG

(continuing)

Is something the matter?

VLADIMIR

No. I am happy here to be.

VAG

Your English is excellent.

VLADIMIR

So is yours.

VAG

.(shakes hands)

Veronica Cohen. I teach Marxism at Columbia University.

VLADIMIR

Vladimir Ivanoff. I am musician with circus.

VAG

I know.

Waiter returns with her Black Russian on a tray.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WAITER

Your Black Russian, ma'am.

VAG

Thank you.

Vladimir is relieved at this discovery. He smiles.

VLADIMIR

... You don't look like Marxist.

VAG

I'm not. I'm a humanist. What does a Marxist look like anyway?

VLADIMIR

Usually has beard or moustache.

VAG

The women too?

VLADIMIR

(smiles)

Especially the women.

Anatoly dances by with a Beautiful Woman. He makes a face at Vladimir to get his attention. He indicates for Vladimir to meet him in the other room.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

I am happy to talk to you. But please I have to make now toilet.

VAG

(smiles)

Dozvedanya.

Boris follows Vladimir out, motioning to another KGB man to follow. (Other man is Yuri, tall and very skinny.)

INT. POWDER ROOM

Vladimir and Anatoly. It's mirrored and quite extravagant.

ANATOLY

I can't make a move. They watch me all the time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

I think Boris watches me to see
if I am watching you.

KNOCK at door.

BORIS (O.S.)

May I use the bathroom, please?

Anatoly opens the door. Boris and Yuri squeeze into
the powder room.

BORIS

(continuing)

(Is everything all right?)

ANATOLY

(Yes. Now I am going to bathroom.
Would you care to watch me?)

BORIS

(I am trying to save you,
Cherkasov.)

Anatoly exits, followed immediately by Yuri.

BORIS

(continuing; to
Vladimir)

(Only two more days.)

Vladimir exits. Boris sprays himself with some
cologne.

EXT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN MARQUEE - DAY

"Moscow Circus Today."

PAN DOWN to reveal picketers. Fifty or so dedicated
men and women bearing lighted candles and placards
reading "Americans For Soviet Jewry," "Let the Jews
Leave Russia..."

INT. GARDEN BACKSTAGE AREA

Circus people and animals. The elephant is practicing
sitting up. Anatoly and his brothers getting ready.
Anatoly has a look of desperation.

BORIS AND YURI

Watching Anatoly. SOUND OF OPENING CIRCUS MUSIC is heard.

VLADIMIR

Playing the sax. He sits on dais with the other musicians...

FIVE FOOT GOLD HAMMER AND SICKLE

Descending from the rafters, hit by a spotlight.

ARENA

As the troupe marches out to the strains of Soviet style circus MUSIC. Anatoly and his brothers are the stars of the show.

ANATOLY

Marching. Waves to the crowd... then up to Vladimir.

VLADIMIR

Sees his friend. He's worried.

RING

The circus troupe finishes its parade.

VLADIMIR

Relieved. Lights out as he finishes his fanfare.

INT. BLOOMINGDALE'S - DAY

A security officer, LIONEL WITHERSPOON, unlocks the front door. He is black and in his thirties. He sports a rather large Afro under his police cap. He carries a gun, Mace and handcuffs and an imposing badge. He speaks to a fellow security guard (BILL).

LIONEL

Hey... brother...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

Hey... man... what's happening?

Handshakes and slaps, the full ritual.

LIONEL

I hope it ain't as bad as when we had them Chinese acrobats.

BILL

Hell, the Italians come in one time and stole half the store.

LIONEL

They weren't Italians. They was Romanians.

BILL

I thought they said they were from Rome.

Lionel smiles at a gorgeous SHOPGIRL passing.

LIONEL

Hey, Lucia. See the game last night?

LUCIA

Magic Johnson is the best guard I ever saw. What a pair of hands.

She waves goodbye and goes off to work.

LIONEL

Buona journa, Lucia, darling...
What a piece of lasagna.

EXT. BLOOMINGDALE'S - DAY

The official bus stops at the side entrance. The doors WHOOSH open. First off are Boris and Yuri. Then the Russians rush into the store.

BORIS

(Remember. Only thirty minutes.
Then we go to the airport.)

Anatoly and Vladimir pass Boris who follows them in.

INT. STORE

The gleam and abundance of the store is breathtaking to Anatoly and Vladimir. Even Boris cannot believe his eyes.

BORIS

My God. What decadence!

PERFUME AREA

Vladimir passes a sea of exotic, mirrored displays. He cannot believe the abundance. He stops in front of Lucia, the pretty salesclerk.

LUCIA

Can I help you?

VLADIMIR

Excuse me.

LUCIA

Oh, you must be Russian.

VLADIMIR

Yes. I am with circus.

LUCIA

I heard you guys were coming today. Let me tell you, I wish for peace among all nations.

VLADIMIR

I'm looking for blue jeans.

LUCIA

We had a nuclear freeze demonstration this year and I marched. "Make love, not war," we say.

VLADIMIR

Make love for sure, thank you.

(smiles)

I look for jeans, please.

LUCIA

Right. Designer jeans?

VLADIMIR

I don't... know.

LUCIA

Jordache, Calvin Klein...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

Yes! Sergio Valente.

LUCIA

Go straight back... to men's
wear... like where that pole is...

She leans out to point the way. Her breasts brush
Vladimir's body for a moment. He is breathless.

VLADIMIR

I am Russian. Not Pole.

LUCIA

Take a left. You can't miss the
Denim Den.

VLADIMIR

Thank you.

LUCIA

I hope you have a nice stay in
New York.

VLADIMIR

I go back to Moscow today.

LUCIA

Well. 'Bye... Ciao.

He goes.

LUCIA

(continuing)

Not my type, but kind of cute.

He stumbles away, sniffing the perfume of a Blonde
who rushes by him with laughter in her voice. The
free and extemporaneous movements impress Vladimir.
It is a climate of sudden improvisation. He turns
back to stare at Lucia. She sees him.

LUCIA

Waves at Vladimir. Blows him an innocent kiss.

VLADIMIR

Blows a kiss back to Lucia. He is for a milli-second
in love.

FULL SHOT - BLUE JEANS DEPARTMENT

Filled with Russians. Half of the entourage is KGB, but they too are into the frenzy. Lionel is watching the madness with sophisticated disdain.

Boris is trying on a too-tight jeans.

MED. SHOT - VLADIMIR

He moves into the Jordache section remembering Svetlana's admonition. He sees Boris scrambling.

MED. SHOT - ANATOLY

He is nervous, leaning against a wall, sweating. He goes for a drink of water.

MED. SHOT - LIONEL

He stands like a beacon of order in the madness.

LIONEL

Only three items in the dressing room. Please.

MED. SHOT - ANATOLY

The other KGB (Yuri) is shadowing Anatoly as he moves into a quieter zone. He is in men's wear.

YURI

(It's best to buy socks and underwears.)

ANATOLY

(Yes.)

YURI

(Are you feeling well, Anatoly? You look so pale... you're sweating.)

ANATOLY

(It's nothing... a slight cold... from the change of climate.)

YURI

(Soon you will be back in Moscow where the air is clear.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anatoly nods and stumbles away. Clearly, Anatoly is losing his nerve.

CUBICLE

Vladimir is half undressed, trying on a pair of jeans. Anatoly enters, almost in tears. There is barely room in here for two.

VLADIMIR

Are you well?

ANATOLY

(whispers)

I can't do it.

VLADIMIR

Good.

It is an awesome confession of defeat.

ANATOLY

(taking his pants
off)

I thought I could. But what of
my brothers? They would be
punished because of me.

Suddenly the curtain is pulled aside. Lionel stands there, pissed off.

LIONEL

Only one customer to a cubicle.

VLADIMIR

Yes, sir.

LIONEL

This ain't Russia, you know.
(mutters)

Fags everywhere.

The curtain closes.

ANATOLY

(in tears now)

I am in total despair. I am
coward.

VLADIMIR

I am sorry, my friend.

PERFUME COUNTER

Lucia hands Yuri his purchase.

LUCIA

I think you'll enjoy Macho Man.

Boris hurries up, loaded down with purchases.

BORIS

(We must load the bus now. Go
get Cherkasov.)

JEANS COUNTER

Vladimir is paying for his purchases. He turns and
sees Yuri.

YURI

Takes Anatoly by the arm and leads him out of the store.
Anatoly has his head down, like a prisoner.

VLADIMIR

Agitated, himself in despair. He begins to sweat.
The homosexual CLERK notices.

MALE CLERK

Are you all right, sir?

VLADIMIR

I am suddenly dizzy.

MALE CLERK

Would you like a glass of water?
Or an aspirin?

Now Lucia, the pretty sales girl, passes. She smiles
at Vladimir and blows him another sweet kiss. He
almost faints.

MALE CLERK

(continuing)
Let's get you some H2O.

WATER FOUNTAIN

Lionel taking a sip of water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's glad to see the Russians go. Crossing his arms now, he makes an imposing figure. The Male Clerk fills a cup with water.

MALE CLERK

I've got a dizzy Russian.

LIONEL

Take him home for supper.

MALE CLERK

You think there's a big gay community in Russia?

Vladimir comes over. He quickly takes a sip of water. Then he washes his face with some water.

LIONEL

Hey! Men's room is in the basement to the left as you get off the escalator. This ain't no health club.

Vladimir looks up and sees this imposing figure of American justice.

VLADIMIR'S POV

A slightly larger than lifesized Lionel. A Brave Black Man.

VLADIMIR

Drenched in sweat now, but knowing what he has to do. He grabs Lionel by the arm.

FULL SHOT

VLADIMIR

(whispers)

I... I def... I defeh...

LIONEL

Say what?... Hey, don't be grabbing on the uniform. I have to supply the threads myself, man.

VLADIMIR

I defetekit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIONEL

You ain't gonna do that here. I told you where the men's room was.

MALE CLERK

Maybe I'd better take him.

VLADIMIR

I am Russian... I want to defect!

LIONEL

You about ready to get maced.

MALE CLERK

(suddenly gets it;
shrieks)

My God, he's defecting!!!

Now Lionel gets it. Vladimir looks around, panicked.
He sees:

BORIS AND YURI

Walking, now running.

VLADIMIR

Bolts in terror.

LIONEL

In charge now... presses his two-way radio.

LIONEL

Code Two. We got a defection going on. Style Boutique. Officer fourteen on the scene. Call the damn police. Get a black and white down here!

Boris and Yuri hurry past Lionel who takes off after them.

VLADIMIR

Running, looking for a place to hide. He races into the Designer Clothes Area and bursts through a row of cubicles with women in various stages of undress in them. Some women shriek; one or two merely smile and wave.

BORIS AND YURI

Running, but concerned about not making a scene. They pass through the exact same cubicles. This time, a Fat Woman who has had just about enough, swats Boris on the head with her purse.

EXT. BUS

Jammed with the Russians. Anatoly, tears in his eyes, sits by a window.

INT. MANAGER AND LIONEL

MANAGER

What the hell is going on here,
Mister Witherspoon?

LIONEL

(out of breath)
We have the makings of an
international incident.

A well-dressed CUBAN wearing sunglasses and trying on tennis hat, perks his ears at Lionel's comment.

LIONEL

(continuing)
One of them Russians is running
loose. Says he wants to defect.

The Cuban hurries away, up to something.

VLADIMIR

On his hands and knees down the length of a counter until he bumps into a pair of woman's legs.

COUNTER - LUCIA

She feels Vladimir against her legs. She almost jumps, then she looks down at him.

LUCIA

Oh... hello.

VLADIMIR

(on his knees)
Help me! Please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCIA

Are you the one defecting?

VLADIMIR

I am in danger from KGB.

He gets further under her legs, which is slightly arousing to her. Yuri searches down the aisle. Lucia gets his attention.

LUCIA

Hey! He ran that way.
(she points him to
the door; then;
to Vladimir)
I think it's safe.

CUBAN

Miss!

Lucia starts! The Cuban is the same man we saw a moment ago.

CUBAN

(continuing;
whispering)

I know the Russian is behind the counter. Please give the man my card. My name is Orlando Ramirez. I'm a lawyer. I specialize in immigration.

He hands her a card and leaves as quickly as he appeared. Lucia hands the card to Vladimir.

LUCIA

Well, you've got a lawyer.

Vladimir reads the card, not quite able to take it all in. He looks up, but finds himself looking up Lucia's skirt.

LUCIA

(continuing)
Enjoying yourself?

VLADIMIR

I am sorry.

LUCIA

You can't hide there forever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR
Too bad.

Embarrassed, he crawls away.

VLADIMIR

Crawling... right into Lionel.

LIONEL AND VLADIMIR

Lionel reaches down and helps Vladimir up.

LIONEL
Don't go nowhere.
(into radio)
Officer fourteen. I got the
defector. We're right between
Estee Lauder and Pierre Cardin!

YURI AND BORIS

They see Vladimir and head towards him.

VLADIMIR AND LIONEL

VLADIMIR
Officer. You must to help me!
I want political asylum.

LIONEL
I'm a security guard, not a
policeman.

VLADIMIR
They will send me to mental
hospital.

Boris and Yuri try to grab Vladimir. But Lionel holds
them off. They are speaking Russian to Vladimir,
threatening him.

LIONEL
Who are these dudes?

VLADIMIR
KGB. They will kill me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BORIS

We are Soviet officials!

LIONEL

Keep your hands off the man!

BORIS

Don't threaten me!

LIONEL

I got Mace. I got a blackjack
and if that don't dissuade you,
I got a 357 Magnum that will end
the entire argument. Now you
stay put till the proper authorities
get here.

BORIS

(to Yuri)

(Call the Embassy.)

Yuri exits.

BORIS

(continuing; friendly)

I want to keep my comrade from
making a big mistake.

SIRENS heard in b.g.

LIONEL

I told you to back off. You're
in my jurisdiction -- which runs
from Style Boutique through Denim
Den -- right up to Personal
Fragrances. So keep your hands
off the man!

EXT. STORE

The police contingent arrives, tucking in their shirts,
JINGLING WITH EQUIPMENT. As they enter the store, a
TV Eyewitness News truck pulls up and a PRETTY CHINESE
FEMALE REPORTER and a small crew hurry out.

BUS

Anatoly and the other Russians know that something is
up. They are quite agitated. Yuri tells them to be
quiet. He exits.

INT. STORE

Quite a crowd gathered now. The Police stand between Boris, who is quite frightened, and Vladimir, who is terrified. Lionel is ready for action. In the crowd we see the sun-glassed Cuban and Lucia. Some folks yell typical New York challenges to the Russians, but most realize that something serious is going on.

BORIS

In the name of the Soviet Union,
I protest. I believe this Soviet
citizen has been drugged and is
being held against his will.

VLADIMIR

I am not drugged.

LIONEL

Ain't nobody been smoking no
shit around here.

MED. SHOT - TV REPORTER

Lights are on and camera is rolling.

REPORTER

This is Connie Wong at Bloomingdale's
where a dramatic chapter in Soviet-
American relations is being played
out...

FULL SHOT

BORIS

(pleads)

(I trusted you. Now you do this
to your family and to me. You
know what my life will be now?
Vladimir... Have mercy... you
are a Russian... please... I
will give you everything I own...)

VLADIMIR

(very quietly)

... I defect.

COP

(to Boris)

The man can do what he wants, as
long as no crime has been perpetrated.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BORIS

(threatens)

(You will never again see your
parents or your sister. Your
grandfather... never.)

VLADIMIR.

(almost silent)

... I defect.

REPORTER AND CREW

CONNIE WONG

We have just been informed that
the FBI and the Justice Department
have arrived on the scene.

CROWD

Cheers at the news. They are rooting for Vladimir.
The Cops are trying to keep order. THREE MEN have
moved into the area. They are all in plainclothes,
but they look like FBI men.

VLADIMIR

He looks around.

HIS POV

A sea of faces... Boris, Lionel, the crowd, the Cuban,
the Reporter... now the three FBI and Justice Men.

NEW ANGLE

AGENT

(to Vladimir)

I'm agent Ross with the Federal
Bureau of Investigation.

JUSTICE MAN

I'm Williams of the Justice
Department.

VLADIMIR

I am Vladimir Ivanoff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BORIS
I protest. I am an official of
the Soviet Union.

WILLIAMS
What exactly do you protest?

BORIS
This man cannot be permitted to
defect.

WILLIAMS
Seems to me he's already defected.
(to Vladimir)
Can you tell me why you are
defecting?

VLADIMIR
Freedom.

WILLIAMS
Artistic freedom or political?

VLADIMIR
Freedom.

WILLIAMS
Okay. For now, Mister Ivanoff,
you are an applicant for political
asylum. That's an immigration
matter.

Yuri arrives, breathless, motions to his watch that
they will miss the plane.

BORIS
You can still come home, Vladimir
Ivanoff.

Vladimir shakes his head to say "no." Boris and Yuri
turn on their heels and exit.

The crowd cheers.

WILLIAMS
Do you have any friends or
relatives in the United States?

VLADIMIR
I can stay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAMS

Yes.

VLADIMIR

Thank you.

ROSS

Do you know anyone here, sir?

VLADIMIR

No... only you and this good black man... and shopping girl.

WILLIAMS

Are you Jewish?

VLADIMIR

No.

WILLIAMS

That's a drag. Would have made it easier.

ROSS

Where the hell is he going to stay?

LIONEL

Man can stay with me if he wants. I'm Security Officer Witherspoon.

VLADIMIR

I can stay in your home?

LIONEL

I know how the brother feels.

(to the TV camera)

I'm a refugee myself. From Alabama.

The crowd laughs.

Vladimir suddenly starts to run out of the store.

VLADIMIR

Running for his life.

GROUP FOLLOWING VLADIMIR

Williams, Ross and Lionel followed by two Cops.

EXT. BLOOMINGDALE'S

As Vladimir rushes out. He stops and looks around, desperate.

VLADIMIR'S POV

The bus starting to pull away. Anatoly's face pressed up against the window, tears streaming down his face.

VLADIMIR

Waves. Cries.

VLADIMIR

Anatoly!!! Anatoly!!!

The Group rushes out. They spot Vladimir.

VLADIMIR'S POV

The bus is almost gone... then it turns the corner.

VLADIMIR AND GROUP

VLADIMIR

(Goodbye, my friend. Goodbye, my life. Goodbye, my family.)

LIONEL

What are you saying, brother?

Vladimir sees Lionel. He wipes his eyes.

VLADIMIR

I say goodbye to my saxophone.

LIONEL

Say what?

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Going to Harlem. Crowded. All black, except for Vladimir, who stands next to Lionel. On the other side of Vladimir is a Mean-looking Man. For some reason the Mean-looking Man doesn't much take to Vladimir. Lionel sees this bit.

MEAN-MAN, VLADIMIR AND LIONEL

LIONEL

(whispers)

I think he knows you a foreigner.
He's jiving on you. So first
thing you gotta learn is how to
look mean. Understand, Vladimir?

VLADIMIR

(whispers)

Is all right, Lionel. I am used
to hostile people on Metro. But
ours is cleaner.

The Mean Man throws a killer look at him.

LIONEL

Uh... uh... get ready. I told
you to look mean. Look crazy.

VLADIMIR

Mean and crazy?

LIONEL

That always scares 'em off.

Vladimir looks at the Mean Man. The Mean Man doesn't
like it. He looks real mean at Vladimir. Vladimir
pauses. Then he looks very mean and crazy... right at
the Mean Man. The Mean Man turns away, scared
shitless.

EXT. HARLEM - NIGHT

Vladimir and Lionel walking, their coats around their
necks. BLACK MUSIC coming from windows, shop fronts,
passing dudes. Lionel regards Vladimir's reaction,
which is stunned.

LIONEL

You sure you don't want some
chicken or ribs? A side of slaw
and some french fries maybe?

VLADIMIR

Are there many white peoples in
this area?

LIONEL

Uh, uh. This is what is known
as a ghetto. We talking a capital
G.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

I like it. The music is so nice,
so free.

LIONEL

Must be pretty bad in Russia.

VLADIMIR

Is not human. But many peoples
are beautiful.

LIONEL

Sounds like Alabama.

VLADIMIR

I have read about slavery.

LIONEL

At least with slavery, the work
was steady.

VLADIMIR

Sounds like Russia.

Lionel laughs.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

I have made my first joke. I am
happy. To make joke in another
language is very nice for me.

They stop in front of Lionel's building. It's in
pretty bad shape.

LIONEL

Well, here we are. Welcome to
the Sherry-Netherlands.

VLADIMIR

(lies)

Is beautiful.

INT. LIONEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A small two-bedroom apartment. Most of the stuff is
plastic, except for the appliances which are huge.
TV, radio, Beta-max, tape deck, fridge and air condit-
ioner. Lionel and Vladimir come in and then we see
Lionel's family.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His MOTHER, his STEPFATHER, his sixteen year old SISTER and his GRANDFATHER (who looks like Redd Foxx). They are all watching TV. When they see Lionel and Vladimir, they go crazy.

MOTHER

Get in here, Lionel. You're on TV!

SISTER

You look handsome, Lionel.

TV SCREEN

Lionel and Vladimir being interviewed by Connie Wong.

GRANDFATHER

Fuckin' television is all lies.

MOTHER

Hush, Grandpa.

Vladimir is stunned by it all: himself on TV and now his family.

LIONEL

(to the TV)

Yeah! Say it cool, Witherspoon...

(to Vladimir)

You look great, Vladimir. Hey, there you go running out the store.

TV SCREEN

Vladimir running.

ROOM

LIONEL

We can watch it again on the eleven o'clock news. Hey, Momma, this is Vladimir.

She kisses Vladimir.

MOTHER

You poor little man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIONEL

This is my stepfather, Fletcher...
and my sister, Lee-Ann... and this
is my grandfather. Watch out for
his ass.

GRANDFATHER

I never met a Russian. They all
white?

STEPFATHER

(to Vladimir)

So you've defected.

VLADIMIR

Yes. You are so kind to share
flat with me.

STEPFATHER

(beautiful speech)

I hope you didn't plan on getting
a job. I've been out of work for
eight years now.

LIONEL

Welcome to the USA.

Vladimir suddenly stumbles, almost fainting.

MOTHER

Sit the boy down. He's tired.

They make Vladimir comfortable. Lionel turns off a
light. A GAME SHOW IS ON THE TUBE now. Mother LOWERS
THE SOUND. Sister gets a blanket and covers Vladimir,
who is now on the studio couch. Vladimir takes a card
from his pocket and hands it to Lionel.

VLADIMIR

(yawns)

Thank you, dear Mother... Lionel
... this is card from lawyer in
store.

LIONEL

(reads)

Orlando Ramirez. Sounds like a
Cuban ambulance chaser to me.

VLADIMIR

Good night, my American family.

He falls asleep. They all turn and watch TV, almost
as if nothing happened...

TV SCREEN

Game show... Silent.

INT. ORLANDO'S OFFICE - DAY

Small room. Clean. On the wall behind Ramirez is his law degree, a photo of Cuba and a photo of Batista.

Orlando is a well-groomed man of thirty-five. He speaks with a slight accent, has lots of charm and constantly smokes cigars. Vladimir sits opposite him. He is clearly still in a state of shock.

ORLANDO

I am going to help you with everything, Mister Ivanoff. Everything. Always, it is important for you to know -- that you have a friend in Orlando Ramirez.

VLADIMIR

Thank you.

ORLANDO

You don't have to thank me. You have to pay me. That's how capitalism works, my friend. One hand helps the other.

VLADIMIR

I have approximately nine hundred dollars... And three pair blue jeans.

ORLANDO

My fee for helping you with all the immigration matters is fairly cut and dry. We'll get into that this morning...

(looks at his watch)

As a matter of fact, we should be going.

INT./EXT. TAXI - STREETS OF NEW YORK - DAY

Orlando and Vladimir headed to downtown Manhattan. Through the following we sometimes see Vladimir's POV of New York City... He is flabbergasted at the life of the city...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORLANDO

I want to place you on the talk shows... maybe Johnny Carson or Merv... the lecture circuit... lots of anti-communist organizations these days, my friend... maybe even a book or a movie...

VLADIMIR

I want only to play saxophone.

ORLANDO

Not easy, my friend. The musicians' unions are tough here. It's going to take time.

VLADIMIR

I have plenty time...

ORLANDO

I know how you feel, my friend. Can I call you Vladimir?

VLADIMIR

Of course.

ORLANDO

(shaking hands)
Orlando...

VLADIMIR

Orlando is musical name.

ORLANDO

My father was named Orlando. He rolled the finest cigars in Havana ... Orlando El Rey, they called him... Orlando the king... Then Castro came along and my father was on his ass.

VLADIMIR

But Castro is great man.

ORLANDO

Castro is a Cuban bullshit artist who's been taken in by Russian bullshit artists.

VLADIMIR

Please. I am not political.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORLANDO

(remembering)

We had to get our asses out of
Cuba!

VLADIMIR

You made defect?

ORLANDO

(smiles)

No, my friend... I took a nice
life raft to Miami Beach, Florida.
The only way to fly, let me tell
you. It was nine years ago.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - HOT SUN

Beating down on an exhausted, ragged, shark-bitten
Orlando... lips cracked... eyes glazed... lying on
life-raft, close to death...

CLOSE

Orlando... Then his eyes open a bit... he sees
something...

HIS POV

Shore of Miami Beach... the Fontainebleu...

BEACH FONTAINEBLEU

BLANCHE and Dave, a nice couple, are sunning themselves
in chairs. Blanche looks up...

SHORE

Orlando staggers onto the beach, overjoyed at making it.

BLANCHE AND DAVE

As Orlando approaches...

BLANCHE

Dave!... Dave!... There's the boy!
Ask him for a couple of towels and
two Cuba Libres.

INT. TAXI

Vladimir can't figure this one out.

ORLANDO

... So, here I am. Yes, my friend.
It hasn't been easy, but you can do
anything in this country... Hey!

(to Driver)

Where are you going? You passed
Chambers Street twice already!
Don't try to scam me, amigo!

DRIVER

Turns around. He is Korean. He is very sweet and truly
innocent. His English is not good.

KOREAN DRIVER

Oh... I am... sorry, sir... I think
Chamber Street here... but Chamber
is over there...

VLADIMIR AND ORLANDO

ORLANDO

Drive a cab in Korea! Maricon!!!
You don't know one street from
another!

Curses in Spanish.

Vladimir can't figure it out... He sighs.

INT. IMMIGRATION OFFICE - DAY

Vladimir and Orlando seated in a cubicle opening onto
crowded office. Interview is performed by MRS. MARLOWE,
a large, attractive black woman with a heavy Jamaican
accent. It is difficult to hear because of the constant
BABBLE OF THE CROWD. They are every nationality think-
able. Some are poor... Others appear to be prosperous...

MRS. MARLOWE

(writing on form)

Now, Mister Ivanoff, this is only
stage one. You will be interviewed
again and at that time we will
determine your status. Up to then,
you'll need a work permit.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

(to Orlando)

Make sure the man understands all this, Mister R.

ORLANDO

(charming)

Of course, Senora Marlowe.

VLADIMIR

When for next interview?

MRS. MARLOWE

In about a month, we'll give an advisory opinion as to whether asylum should be granted.

ORLANDO

Don't worry. You'll get it.

MRS. MARLOWE

Then, in a year you can petition for citizenship.

VLADIMIR

A year to wait?

MRS. MARLOWE

You know how many people want to get in this country? Vietnamese, Korean, Salvadorians... those Iranians, Mexicans, Bolivians, your Greeks, your Turkish...

VLADIMIR

Mercy me. So many peoples.

MRS. MARLOWE

I have mercy, but I can't carry the work home. I'm just like a TV set. Turn me on at eight and turn me off at four!

A wealthy-looking IRANIAN comes over abruptly.

IRANIAN

I have been waiting two hours!
Who is your boss?

MRS. MARLOWE

His name is Ronald Reagan! Now sit the fuck down, Mister Bakhtar ... That'll be all, gentlemen.

They thank her, pick up the forms and leave.

CORRIDOR

All the faces from Vladimir's POV... The new immigrants and he is one of them...

VLADIMIR

So many colors, so many races!

CORRIDOR

Orlando stops and exchanges a quick word with a Latin Woman. He slips her one of his cards and they exit.

ORLANDO

Oh, by the way, Vladimir, do you like to dance?

INT. DANCE HALL - SPANISH HARLEM - NIGHT

This is where the Latins come to dance. Hot and wild. Small ORCHESTRA. On the floor, Lionel and Puerto Rican girl. They are sensational! Orlando and his wife, Wanda (blonde). Very good. Vladimir and Lucia, the pretty salesgirl. Lucia is very good. Vladimir is getting the hang of the cha cha and starting to get into it. Lionel urges him on. MUSIC ENDS. Orlando goes up to the stage and grabs the microphone.

STAGE

ORLANDO

(in Spanish)

Ladies and gentlemen, let us greet two friends of liberty...

TABLE

Spotlight hits Vladimir and Lionel. They stand and bow...

ORLANDO (V.O.)

... Lionel Witherspoon, the famous security guard, and Vladimir Ivanoff, the famous defector from Russia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Applause. MUSIC STARTS and Lionel and his girl get up to dance.

LIONEL

Come on, Vlad.

VLADIMIR

I rest, Lionel.

LIONEL

... Be cool.

Lionel dances away.

LUCIA AND VLADIMIR

Sipping their drinks.

VLADIMIR

He is good boy, Lionel.

LUCIA

I wouldn't call him "boy."

VLADIMIR

Why so?

LUCIA

Black men don't like to be called "boy." They take it as an insult ... That was a brave thing you did yesterday.

VLADIMIR

For first time in my life, I act from here...

(touches his heart)

Not here.

(touches his head)

Now I am embarrassed.

LUCIA

You'd be crazy if you didn't feel crazy.

VLADIMIR

You are good girl, Lucy. I would like to know you.

DANCE FLOOR

As Lucia and Vladimir dance to a SLOW SAMBA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCIA

I'm from Italy... from the Abruzzi...
a little village named Casoli.

VLADIMIR

Everybody I meet is from somewhere
else.

LUCIA

Is America.

VLADIMIR AND LUCIA

She nestles against him, swaying to the music. She is
a sexy woman.

DANCE FLOOR

Agent Ross of the FBI is dancing furtively with a Latin
agent. He watches Vladimir.

VLADIMIR AND LUCIA

VLADIMIR

Why did you come here?

LUCIA

(no sentimentality)

I want a piece of the rock...
My father died six years ago.
We were six children. Very poor.
Not much opportunity for a girl...
or a boy, for that matter... I'm
the lucky one. My uncle Sal has
a funeral parlor here. So he
sponsor me. Sponsored me.

VLADIMIR

You speak very well.

LUCIA

Hey, in a few months I'm a citizen.
Then watch me take off!

VLADIMIR

Take off?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCIA

I want to be in media. TV. Maybe
a sportscaster. Maybe the news.
You ever hear of Jessica Savitch?

Suddenly Vladimir spots Agent Ross. He whips Lucia
around and exchanges partners so that he is suddenly
dancing with Orlando.

VLADIMIR AND ORLANDO

VLADIMIR

I am being followed!

ORLANDO

What?

VLADIMIR

Over my shoulder. Look, please.

Orlando looks, then laughs.

ORLANDO

FBI... for your own protection.
They watch you for a couple of
weeks... Make sure you are not
a spy... also to keep the KGB
from kidnapping you. Relax,
amigo.

Vladimir is comforted. He whips Orlando around, dipping
him to the music, and switches partners back to Lucia.

LUCIA

Is that a new dance from Russia?

VLADIMIR

Please excuse my rudeness.

(to Agent Ross,
who dances by)

Thank you, sir, for protection.

Vladimir and Lucia samba...

INT. LIONEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Door opens and Lionel and Vladimir come in quietly. Lionel
tiptoes into his room and Vladimir tiptoes over to the couch.
The TV flickers in the semi-darkness...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

... no sound, only an old cowboy movie... Vladimir takes his shoes off. Grandpa snores like a thunderstorm.

VLADIMIR AND GRANDPA

As Vladimir takes his pants off, Grandpa opens one eye:

GRANDPA

Did you get laid, comrade?

Vladimir smiles and gets under the covers. Grandpa is snoring now...

He falls asleep.

FULL SHOT - APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Early morning action pretty much like it was in Russia. Everybody doing their thing, Grandpa watching TV and putting it down. Lionel getting his act together, which isn't easy.

LIONEL

Man, that was some bad dope last night.

MOTHER

You shouldn't be smoking that shit, Lionel. And I don't want to catch you turning Vladimir on.
(she kisses Vlad)

How are you this morning, Vlad?

VLADIMIR

(helps her with dishes)

I want to be useful, Mother.
Thank you.

STEPFATHER

You can do the shopping. I've got a meeting down at the Department of Human Resources this morning.

LIONEL

I think that Lucia has something going for you, Vlad. What an ass is that!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

I liked so much the musicians.
Excellent saxophone.

GRANDFATHER

(suddenly rational)
Ever hear the Bird?

VLADIMIR

You mean the great Charley Parker?

GRANDFATHER

Get down, bitch... Now that boy
could play.

VLADIMIR

I have only heard records. Excuse
me, Grandpa. But why you call
Charley Parker a boy?

GRANDFATHER

What you want me to call him, a
rhinoceros?...

LIONEL

How's the coffee doing, Momma?

STEPFATHER

We are out of coffee.

MOTHER

(to Stepfather)
If you got off your ass once a
week we'd have some coffee.

STEPFATHER

Don't you talk to me that way,
woman! I've walked my feet off
looking for a job!

MOTHER

You could have delivered those
telephone books!

STEPFATHER

Bull-shit! I've got some pride!
Deliver books! I've got a college
education!

VLADIMIR

I am ready to go shopping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIONEL
I'll show you the store on my
way to the subway.

VLADIMIR
But I insist to pay.

INT. A&P STORE - DAY

The large supermarket in the early morning. No lines.

INT. STORE - VLADIMIR

His face is full of hesitancy. He doesn't know how to shop here and in this airy, bright market with the MUSIC playing, he can only try to guess. He sees a BAG BOY arranging the carts.

VLADIMIR
(smiles)
Coffee?

BOY
Twelve B.

VLADIMIR
Twelve B?

This code is a mystery to him.

Vladimir pushes through the turnstile and into the shelves of the market. The abundance is just dawning on him.

VLADIMIR
(continuing)
Coffee line, please.

The CLERK is marking cigarette boxes and loading the shelves.

CLERK
Twelve B. No line, though.

He points over in a general direction. Finally, Vladimir sees the numbers over the shelves.

NEW ANGLE - MARKET

He must pass through the produce section which is abundant with mounds of fruit and vegetables.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He has never seen so much food displayed in the open. He fondles an apple and touches some potatoes as if they were breasts.

CLOSE SHOT - VLADIMIR

The amount of food has rocked him and he now begins to sweat under his shirt. This is no special market for us, but for him it is a cornucopia.

He must now pass the meat cases. A small black woman sorts through some T-bone steaks.

Vladimir is stunned by the meat. He gets dizzy and tries again to find Twelve B as if trying to escape the meat.

VLADIMIR

(desperate)

Coffee.

He finds the right aisle and now he walks up to the coffee section and sees twenty brands of coffee... The names he mumbles to himself and then he sees the different types of coffee.

VLADIMIR

(continuing; stunned)

Maxwell House... Yuban... Nescafe
... instant... drip... regular...
decaffeinated... Maxim...

The sweat is flowing and a sudden anxiety begins to surge through him like some warm, electric shock.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

Sanka... Chock Full O'Nuts...

With the last phrase his panic overwhelms him as he begins to hyperventilate. He begins to trot for the exit. He knocks over a stack of Tab and sprawls, gasping, to the floor.

CLERK

Something the matter, sir?

VLADIMIR

I cannot breathe... I have pain...
I cannot breathe.

CLERK

(alarmed)

Just relax...

FULL SHOT - AMBULANCE

An AMBULANCE SCREAMS to the scene carrying the paramedics.

MED. SHOT - VLADIMIR

The sight of the paramedics and their equipment just makes his reaction worse.

VLADIMIR

I need... coffee.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - FULL SHOT - DAY

Vladimir is in a bed of a small ward off the emergency room.

MED. SHOT - DOCTOR REDDY

A short, rotund Indian DOCTOR smiles over Vladimir. Two Filipino nurses giggle over his shoulder.

DOCTOR REDDY

Mr. Ivanoff... don't worry... you are merely suffering some hyperventilation... do not be alarmed. You are with friends. I know it can be frightening and, considering you are a new resident of New York, it is understandable ... You wonder how I know. I saw you on the Eyewitness News. I think I am in love with Connie Wong. You can sit up. Oh, you should have seen yours truly when I first came from Bombay. I was extremely nervous.

He and the nurses laugh.

DOCTOR REDDY

(continuing)

Look at these girls. They know, too.

VLADIMIR

I'm feeling better.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR REDDY

And so you will. This giggling one would like your autograph before you leave. You see... you're something of a celebrity here.

Orlando walks in, overhearing the last remark.

ORLANDO

Is he all right? I'm his lawyer, Orlando Ramirez.

DOCTOR REDDY

He is just fine.

ORLANDO

Everyone was worried about you, Lionel,... my wife thought you'd been kidnapped by the KGB.

VLADIMIR

I am sorry.

The Doctor and the nurses leave, giggling over their autographs.

ORLANDO

I have some good news... I have been making some calls to find you a job.

VLADIMIR

I take it.

ORLANDO

It's nothing fancy, my friend.

VLADIMIR

I take it.

EXT. RUSSIAN RESTAURANT - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Marquee even looks Russian. Sign announces Russian food and music.

MUSIC: Russian Gypsy Dance.

KITCHEN

Vladimir and another man (LEV) are washing dishes...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the background we hear the CHEFS TALKING RUSSIAN ... As we GET CLOSER TO Vladimir we see he is wearing a Sony Walkman, earphones and all... obviously some time has passed.

VLADIMIR AND LEV

It is clear that Vladimir and Lev now know each other. Lev's English is better than Vladimir's.

VLADIMIR

Tell me, Lev. Does your mouth hurt?

LEV

My mouth is fine. My brain is what hurts, Ivanoff.

VLADIMIR

Speaking English is causing my lips and my tongue to ache.

LEV

Oh, how I wish they would stop playing that music.

VLADIMIR

Oh, how I wish I could be playing music.

LEV

You'll get your chance, Ivanoff.

VLADIMIR

So will you, Lev. So will you...

LEV

Do you know how difficult it is to find work in celestial mechanics and astrophysics?

VLADIMIR

How well you speak English, though.

LEV

(looks at clock on wall)

In a few minutes we can take a break.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

Good. Let's grab cheeseburger
and side of fries.

FOLLOW Vladimir's hands into sink as he washes a dish.
CAMERA MOVES IN TIGHT ON hands and water.

WATER SWIRLING IN SINK

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"Dearest Parents, dear Sasha and
beloved Grandfather: I do not
know if you will ever receive
this letter, but I will write
to you every week..."

HAND WRITING LETTER IN RUSSIAN

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

I am sorry to cause you pain.
But I acted out of a real need.

INT. LIONEL'S APARTMENT - FAMILY WATCHING TV - CLOSEUP
VLADIMIR

As he writes...

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

America is strange and wonderful.
I live with a nice black family.

VLADIMIR WASHING DISHES IN RESTAURANT

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

I have job washing dishes. My
Cuban lawyer helped me also to
find sales job.

FOURTEENTH STREET - DAY

TRACKING PAST all the outdoor market action on the side-
walk, mostly Latino. FIND Vladimir selling Crazy
Antennas (the kind the kids wear on their heads that
shake and bobble). Vladimir is wearing one, shaking
his head at passing shoppers and trying to entice them.

CLOSE VLADIMIR

VLADIMIR
(to passing Latino)
Es muy bien, amigo. Aqui, por
favor... Only a dollar, comrade.

INT. NIGHT SCHOOL CLASS

Vladimir sitting with other immigrants as teacher
writes on blackboard. Vladimir writes a word.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
"I am learning to read English
absolutely free of charge. Also,
I have met nice Italian girl who
likes American sports."

BASKETBALL GAME ON TV (KNICKS AND LAKERS)

INT. BLOOMINGDALE'S

Game is on ten TV sets at once. Small crowd of shoppers
watch, as well as Vladimir and Lionel, as Lucia
the game.

LUCIA
(fast and good)
... Magic Johnson brings the ball
down. Westphal all over him like
an octopus... Magic passes to
Kareem... Kareem looks to his
right... looks to his left...
My God! They are practically
breaking the big guy's back...
Kareem sky-hooks! Two points!
What a shot! Maroon!!!

Crowd applauds, Lucia smiles. Vladimir cannot get
over her.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
"I am able also to get good discount
on shoes."

INT. BLOOMINGDALE'S - CLOSE SHOT - SHOES - DAY

The polished new shoes wiggle and we TILT UP to see
Vladimir nodding to the salesman, a sixty year old man
with a bow tie, dyed hair and delicate mustache,
MR. AARON.

VLADIMIR
I like them. I take.

FULL SHOT - GROUP - DAY

Lucia and Lionel are watching scene. Lucia shakes her head.

LUCIA

This isn't Russia, Vladimir...
you don't have to take the first
pair you see.

VLADIMIR

They are so... nice.

LIONEL

They're kind of dull... You need
something a little more sporty.

MR. AARON

(friendly)

My time is your time.

LUCIA

Try these. They are very popular.

VLADIMIR

No wonder.

Mr. Aaron heads towards the storage.

LUCIA

Bring black and brown.

LIONEL

What's he need that Madison
Avenue, Ivy League Preppy junk
for? Now here is something,
Vlad... make your feet sing.

He holds up a two-toned boot. Aaron returns.

LUCIA

I might remind you that the best
students are in the Ivy League
and the money is made on Madison
Avenue.

LIONEL

Bring him a pair of blue jobs, too.

VLADIMIR

I'll try both.

LUCIA

People make judgments from your
shoes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIONEL

(smiles)

What the hell do you know? You're a foreigner.

LUCIA

I remind you that while your ancestors were beating drums in Africa and chasing animals barefoot, my ancestors were giving the world Michelangelo -- Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael... We invented style... we are born with taste.

LIONEL

You ever been down to Little Italy? All I see is plastic fruit and fat guys. We, on the other hand, are into our bodies... comfort... elegance -- grooving --

Mr. Aaron interrupts with more shoes. Vladimir is trying to please everybody. By now he holds three pairs of shoes.

VLADIMIR

I like these.

LUCIA

You see.

VLADIMIR

And these.

LUCIA

Keep looking.

VLADIMIR

Is hard work shopping in America.

TV SCREEN

Featuring some Maharishi doing his thing on cable TV.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"Tell Grandfather that the television here has about fifty different channels and they all work. So, beloved family, I will say goodbye..."

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - MORNING

PAN DOWN FROM blossoming trees TO man selling hot dogs (Sabretts). It is Vladimir selling a hot dog to an East Side ad exec.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
"Tomorrow morning, I begin a new job."

SAUERKRAUT AND MUSTARD ON THE DOG

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
"I love you, Vladimir."

EXT. LINE - FULL SHOT - DAY (FALL)

A long line of people stretching around a corner. Vladimir sees the line and crosses the street to get on the line.

VLADIMIR
(to a teenage girl)
Is this line for food or clothing?

GIRL
It's for "Tootsie"... A movie...

Vladimir smiles and moves on... Unbeknownst to him, a MAN in a Panama Hat follows him.

ANOTHER STREET

Vladimir stops to look in at a record shop and he is reminded of his music by the photo of a saxophonist on an album cover. He looks up and exchanges a smile with another window-shopper, the handsome Man in a Panama Hat.

ANGLE - VLADIMIR

Walks on. His pace is quick. As he turns to look for traffic, he sees the Man in the Panama Hat following. His Russian habits go on alert.

STREET

Vladimir walks on. So does the Man. Vlad catches another glimpse of the Man in a window. He knows he is being followed. Vladimir moves quickly.

MAN IN THE PANAMA HAT

Moves quickly...

CORNER

Vladimir suddenly appears, blocking the Man's path.

FBI? VLADIMIR

PANAMA HAT
(smiling)
FBI? No.

KGB? VLADIMIR

PANAMA HAT
(laughs)
No, G... A... Y...

VLADIMIR
(understands)
Oh.

The Man laughs and starts away.

PANAMA HAT
Sorry. You do have a nice face.
I thought we had a moment back
there. I didn't mean to upset you.

Vladimir watches him turn away, but, as he moves, he
sees a saxophone glowing from the window of a pawn shop.

INT. SHOP - FULL SHOT - VLADIMIR

Vladimir waits while the Greek MANAGER fetches the
saxophone.

How much? VLADIMIR

Three hundred. MANAGER

May I play? VLADIMIR

Be my guest. MANAGER

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cautiously, he wets the reed. He plays a quick run.
He is happy.

Two hundred. VLADIMIR

Two-fifty. MANAGER

Deal. VLADIMIR

DETAIL - CHECK

Vladimir writes his first check. He flourishes the pen like a sword. His signature is large and flamboyant.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
"Dear Anatoly: I have a new saxophone, but because of unions, I cannot get work as musician. I have many other jobs, though..."

INT. BURGER KING STORE - DAY

Vladimir is a counter-man. Wears the complete outfit, including funny hat and plastic name-plate that reads: VLAD. He is serving a chubby Puerto Rican WOMAN.

VLADIMIR
That is three Whoppers, hold the onions. Three Root Beer Floaters, two Taquitos, lots of cheese, and four Hot Apple Pan Dowdies. Is that to go?

WOMAN
No. I eat it here.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
"Finally, I have found my own flat..."

INT. TINY EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT - DAY

One room with sink in kitchen. American flag shower curtain. Vladimir soaks in the tub.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
"It is very small, but I have privacy. Also, I can now practice my music."

INT. APARTMENT - LATE DAY

An orange glow of dusk. Vladimir, dressed now, opens the saxophone case. Quickly, he assembles the gleaming parts of the tenor sax. He moistens the reed in his mouth. A few tentative toots. He pauses and then, like a man jumping from a diving board, he blows. It is a beautiful, if stumbling, riff...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, shut the fuck up! This isn't a nightclub!

Vladimir goes to the window and shuts it tight. He resumes playing. Another sweet riff.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(continuing)

Hey... Mister! You lookin' for trouble, you're gonna get it!

Vladimir moves into the tiny bathroom and closes the door behind him.

FULL SHOT - ROOM

Touched by the dusky gold. From within the bathroom, we hear a LONG, LYRICAL PIECE. The NOTES ARE MUFFLED, but strangely beautiful.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"I have met some members of the Russian community..."

INT. SOHO LOFT - NIGHT

Half a dozen Russian emigres smoking, drinking... Vladimir and Lucia are there...

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"Some of them are quite well-known. Painters..."

PAINTING ON WALL

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"... Sculptors, writers, photographers..."

PHOTOS TAKEN IN RUSSIA ON WALL

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
 "They have all made adjustments
 to life in America."

VLADIMIR AND TWO OF THE RUSSIANS

Laughing, very intense...

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
 "But, to tell you the truth, dear
 Anatoly, they still despair...
 and so do I..."

VLADIMIR

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
 "We have happiness here, but we
 cannot forget our loved ones.

INT. ROOM IN MOSCOW

Svetlana stands in front of a mirror. She is bare
 from the waist up, but she is wearing a too-tight
 pair of Sergio Valente jeans. She is crying.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
 "If you see Svetlana, tell her I
 wish to apologize. I wish her a
 happy life."

SVETLANA
 (in tears)
 (Cold, decadent, traitorous,
 bourgeois bastard!)

EXT. RUSSIAN BEACH - DAY

Anatoly and others standing around, enjoying the
 Soviet bathing beauties.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)
 "And, dear friend, I wish... you
 joy for all your days. Say hello
 to your brothers. Kiss the
 elephant and the bears. Perhaps
 someday I will see you again.
 Vladimir."

Anatoly, moved by the memory of the letter, moves his
 foot in the sand...

DETAIL - FOOT MAKING WORD IN SAND: "F R E E D O M"

INT. VIDEO GAME STORE - UPTOWN - DAY

Electronic space weapons fill a green screen. PULL BACK to reveal Vladimir firing the multiple weapons and revving his score past forty thousand. Vladimir is looking more American. Lionel, on his lunch break, munches a taco.

LIONEL

So how's the apartment working out?

VLADIMIR

Okay... Goddamn! What a shot I make... Next week they install my cable TV.

LIONEL

Except for the news and sports, it's all a lot of crap.

VLADIMIR

I like David Letterman... Son of a gun!

A spaceship explodes.

LIONEL

How's work?

VLADIMIR

I have two jobs now. Also, Orlando told me he can get me good job if I have driver's license.

LIONEL

Can you drive?

VLADIMIR

I will go to driving school.

LIONEL

Save your money. I can teach you.

VLADIMIR

You don't have car.

LIONEL

I can borrow one from an acquaintance. Let's make it Sunday.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR
Sunday I have date with Lucia.

LIONEL
Lover boy. Bring her along.

VLADIMIR
You are too kind, Lionel.

LIONEL
I thought there was something
going on with you and her.

VLADIMIR
Unfortunately, nothing is going
on. Just friends.

A final spaceship explodes.

VLADIMIR
(continuing)
Son of a gun!

LIONEL
Not healthy for a man and a woman
to be just friends for too long...
Sunday.

VLADIMIR
(starting another game)
Give my regards to Grandfather.

Lionel heads back to work.

STREET CORNER - QUEENS - DAY

Quiet neighborhood. Lucia and Vladimir wait.

LUCIA
Lionel is a wonderful man.

Vladimir checks his new watch.

VLADIMIR
He is a good person. But fourteen
minutes late.

ANGLE - CORNER

Sliding around the corner at 5 m.p.h. is a low, mean-
looking Cadillac-based pimpmobile. Heads turn at this
absurd iridescent vehicle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The car, with Lionel at the wheel, pulls to the curb. Lucia is amused and Vladimir is impressed.

VLADIMIR

What a machine!

LIONEL

I don't want to hear any racist comments, understand?

Lucia and Vladimir get into the car. She finds it all very funny.

LUCIA

Who is this friend of yours, Lionel?

LIONEL

He said he knew you, baby.

She laughs as the car pulls away.

PARKING LOT OF EMPTY SUPERMARKET

Vladimir is at the wheel. Lucia is sprawled in the back seat. It has a TV, a bar, and a vanity. Lionel is up front explaining things.

LIONEL

This is the lights... this is the windshield wiper... the turn signal ... very important... right... left ... Try it.

Suddenly the seat tilts back. Lucia laughs.

VLADIMIR

Excuse me.

He hits another button and the seat comes up. But then the windshield wipers start to work. Lucia turns on the TV.

LUCIA

I'll watch the ball game.

LIONEL

We don't want nothing to happen to this car... the man trusted us.

LUCIA

This reception stinks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIONEL
Turn off the tube!

VLADIMIR
How do you go forward?

LIONEL
Put her in gear... Drive... That's
a "D."

Instead of going forward, the car goes backward.

VLADIMIR
Oh, my goodness!

LIONEL
You are in "R" for reverse.

VLADIMIR
We use different alphabet in Russia.

LUCIA
I'm missing the game.

Suddenly, the car leaps forward and whips around the
parking lot.

LIONEL
Shit, slow down.

EXT. QUIET STREET

Vladimir at the wheel. The car is driving smoothly.

INT. CAR

Vladimir is gaining confidence.

VLADIMIR
Very easy.

LIONEL
You doing good. Remember to always
check the rear-view mirror and your
side mirror.

VLADIMIR
Is very good car, Lionel.

LUCIA
(pouring a drink of
wine)
I like the Chrysler LeBaron.

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

Nothing wrong with a Toyota Celica.

LUCIA

I don't like foreign cars.

LIONEL

Okay. Now let's go for a left turn. Remember to signal.

Vladimir calmly hits the signal which turns out to be the windshield washer.

LUCIA

Is it raining?

LIONEL

Other side, brother.

VLADIMIR

I forget. Sorry, Lionel.
(looks in mirror)

Oh, my. Police car is following.

Lionel checks the mirror. There is indeed a police car following.

LIONEL

It's okay. Just make your turn.
Put your hand out just to make sure.

EXT. CAR

We see Vladimir's left hand go out the window and point left, but the Cadillac turns right.

INT. CAR

Lionel is horrified. A car is coming right at them.

LIONEL

Oh, shit! This is a one-way street.

LUCIA

Mamma mia!!!

VLADIMIR

What means one-way?

We hear a SIREN.

EXT. ONE WAY STREET

The oncoming car just misses the Cadillac. Even worse, the police car is forced to skid to a halt to avoid hitting the oncoming car.

INT. POLICE CAR

As the cop shifts into gear and goes up the one-way street, SIREN WAILING.

CORNER

The police car makes the turn. There is the Cadillac parked calmly at the curbside. The COPS get out, ready for action.

INT. CADILLAC

Lionel is now in the driver's seat. He has quickly transformed himself into the rightful owner of the car. He sports sunglasses and smokes a filter-tip. Vladimir sits in the back seat with Lucia. Her skirt is pulled high showing plenty of thigh. She caresses Vladimir.

COP

That's a one-way street, asshole.

LIONEL

(super cool)

Sorry, officer. I made the mistake of watching the little lady.

COP

Let's see your driver's license, pimphhead.

As Lionel gets his license out.

INSERT

Lionel's license on top of a fifty dollar bill.

INT. CAR

Vladimir sees the transaction going down. He is frightened. The Cop hands the license back to Lionel, without the money.

COP

I don't want to see your face around here, again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Cop and his partner split. Lucia bursts out laughing. Lionel is relieved and wipes his brow.

VLADIMIR

(in awe)

... What a wonderful country
America is!

INT. VLADIMIR'S APARTMENT - LATE DAY

The door opens and Lucia and Vladimir enter. They are still up from the driving lesson. Vladimir has by now added a few touches to the apartment, particularly some photos of Russia and some posters of black jazz artists.

LUCIA

It's nice, Vladimir.

VLADIMIR

Not much furniture yet... But what
else do you need?

LUCIA

(picks up blender)

Ah, you bought that blender we
had on sale.

VLADIMIR

Yes. Also, Lionel got me discount.

LUCIA

What do you make with it?

VLADIMIR

Nothing. I don't blend anything.
Please sit, Lucia.

But she is looking at the pictures now.

LUCIA

You miss Russia, don't you?

VLADIMIR

Sure... sometimes... vodka?

LUCIA

Sure.

He pours them each a shot of vodka. She sits on the bed. As he speaks he puts a CASSETTE into a large tape deck.

VLADIMIR

You like some music?

LUCIA

This is a nice tape deck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

I bought from friend of Lionel's
from back of truck. Ghetto blaster.

LUCIA

You are a good host, Vladimir.

The TAPE comes on. SMOOTH SAX SOLO. Sexy music in
this sexy apartment.

VLADIMIR

I bring this tape from Russia...
Wild Bill Hawthorne. Great black
saxophone man. I tape it from
Radio Voice of America.

Now she pours them each a shot of vodka. They toast
each other. Vladimir in Russian and Lucia in Italian.
They laugh.

LUCIA

Nice music.

VLADIMIR

Would you care to dance?

They dance now... close... very aware of each other...

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

Do you miss Italy?

LUCIA

I miss my family. My brothers.
My sisters. If I hit it big, I'm
going to bring them all here. My
mother... I don't think she'd like
it. She's sweet, but she's in
that black dress for life.

VLADIMIR

... When I go to Brooklyn... the
Russian stores... the smells...
reminds me of Moscow... I can
never go back... at least you
can go back to your village...

LUCIA

I don't want to.

VLADIMIR

Ah, my friends... my family...

LUCIA

Did you leave a girl there? Did
you leave a broken heart?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

(holds her closer)

You smell so good.

LUCIA

Is "Charlie."

VLADIMIR

No. It's you, not the perfume.

LUCIA

I really like you.

VLADIMIR

Likewise.

LUCIA

But I'm...

VLADIMIR

You have boyfriend?

LUCIA

No... not that... I'm a free woman. I don't want to be involved.

VLADIMIR

Me too.

LUCIA

I mean if I stay here tonight... with you... I don't want you to think anything special about it. To exaggerate what it is. Do you understand?

VLADIMIR

I assure you... as former citizen of Socialist Republic I don't make moral thought about sex. I respect your... new life.

LUCIA

Thanks.

VLADIMIR

But I do desire you in big way.

LUCIA

Likewise.

They dance even closer together now than before... they pause and Vladimir, only hesitating for a beat, leans to Lucia for his first American kiss.

EXT. BLACK LIMOUSINE - FULL SHOT - DAY

INT. LIMO

Vladimir is now a limo driver. His hair is hipper and longer... Passenger is a wealthy TEXAN in Western garb.

VLADIMIR

I'm taking the mid-town tunnel.
Beat the traffic. Okay, sir?

TEXAN

(accent)

Whatever you say. This is my
first trip to New York.

VLADIMIR

Perrier water in bar. TV is working
if you care to watch, sir. I think
"As The World Turns" is on.

TEXAN

What time is it, by the way?

VLADIMIR

Three o'clock and five minutes.

TEXAN

Had my damn watch stolen last night.

VLADIMIR

Check this out, sir, if you please.

He hands the Texan a watch.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

Digital. Japanese, but touch
button gives you pulse rate,
heart beats... Try it.

TEXAN

(amused)

You selling?

VLADIMIR

Regular price is seventy-five,
eighty dollars. It's yours for
forty.

TEXAN

Where you from?

VLADIMIR

East Village... Eight Street.

TEXAN

You sound further away than that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

Russia. I have also ballpoint pen with alarm clock built in.

TEXAN

You're an enterprising fellow.

VLADIMIR

I also sell vitamins. Nature True. Very good for sex life.

TEXAN

Hell! Just get me to my hotel on time!

INT. VLADIMIR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Vladimir and Lucia are in bed having Chinese take-out food. Vladimir is struggling with chopsticks and watching TV. Apartment now has large color set. Lucia is reading a pamphlet.

VLADIMIR

If all Russians could eat Moo Shoo pork, they would not be afraid of Chinese.

LUCIA

Are all Russians as funny as you?

VLADIMIR

Of course not. Party members are boring... Are you always happy?

LUCIA

Sometimes, in the middle of the night, I sit up straight and wonder where I am.

VLADIMIR

In Russia, you do that all day long.

She laughs. She hands him the pamphlet.

LUCIA

Help me study.

VLADIMIR

(reads from pamphlet)
Date of Declaration of Independence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCIA
Fourth of July, 1776.

VLADIMIR
What did Declaration of Independence
say?

LUCIA
All men are created equal and
that they are given certain rights
inalienable... life, liberty and
the pursuit of happiness.

VLADIMIR
Good. What is Bill of Rights, please?

LUCIA
(a la newscaster)
Good evening. And here's Lucy
Lombardo with the Bill of Rights.
The Bill of Rights is the first
ten amendments of the Constitution.
Freedom of religion, of speech, of
peaceful assembly... of --

VLADIMIR
(kisses her)
How about you sign off and we
make free love?

They do.

EXT. BLOOMINGDALE'S - DAY

Lucia and Lionel come out. He's in uniform. They're
on their way to lunch.

LUCIA
I didn't say I love him.

LIONEL
Let's put it this way. You
are attached to the man.

LUCIA
I like him.

LIONEL
You got a thing for the Russian.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCIA
He is sweet.

CORNER

As Lionel and Lucia turn.

LIONEL
And how's the sex thing?

LUCIA
Fine. What is this, Sixty Minutes?

LIONEL
What's the problem?

LUCIA
Remember when I was going out
with Jeffry Miller?

LIONEL
The Jewish guy in luggage?

LUCIA
Yeah! You know why we broke up?

LIONEL
Say it, girl.

LUCIA
He wanted a nice girl to bring
home to his momma. Someone to
take care of his house.

LIONEL
What's wrong with that? Give
me the right house and I'll put
my hair up in curlers, put on an
apron and be real sweet in bed.

A passerby throws Lionel a look.

LUCIA
I want to do what I want to do!

LIONEL
Don't we all! And don't hand
me none of that Women's Lib shit.

INT. SMALL LUNCHEONETTE

Jammed. Lionel and Lucia enter and wait for a seat at the counter.

LUCIA

... Lionel. In the good old days, it was boy meets girl, boy marries girl. These days, it's different. Boy meets a girl, but she's got a Career. Like me! Boy meets girl, but she swings both ways. Boy meets boy. Girl meets girl. Or boy meets girl and girl turns out to be boy.

LIONEL

Happened to a friend of mine. Trouble is, he fell in love.

LUCIA

Or boy meets girl and they get married and they soon discover that they really don't like each other so they have a couple of kids to make it better but that doesn't work so they get divorced.

By now the entire place is listening.

LUCIA

(continuing)

Oh, hell! I think I'm getting my period.

LIONEL

Me, too.

They exit.

EXT. EAST SIDE MOVIE HOUSE - NIGHT

Cinema One territory. Vladimir, looking hipper than ever, escorts Lucia out of the theatre.

VLADIMIR

I think it is over-rated.

LUCIA

It was fun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

It was childish. No point of view. No moral content.

LUCIA

You are looking for more than was intended. On the Lucy Lombardo scale of one to ten, I give it a seven.

VLADIMIR

You are obviously reviewing films for the masses.

LUCIA

Vladimir, it's a fantasy.

VLADIMIR

Speaking of fantasy, let's go to my place.

LUCIA

Not tonight. I have a class tomorrow and I want to study.

VLADIMIR

Classes... all American women do is go to classes.

By now they are walking towards subway.

LUCIA

Don't get possessive... We're supposed to be having a healthy... uncomplicated relationship.

VLADIMIR

What is healthy about no sexual activity?

She laughs.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

I understand your... liberation. But what are you going to do with these classes?

LUCIA

Maybe I'll be a newscaster... or a sportscaster... or a teacher...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCIA (CONT'D)
... or a stockbroker... maybe I'll
teach dance aerobics.

VLADIMIR
Too many choices.

LUCIA
I told you. Everything is possible
here... How about your music?

VLADIMIR
Fucking unions!... But I practice.

LUCIA
When will you play for me?

VLADIMIR
(smiles)
Come home with me and I will make
concert for you.

She smiles, hugging him.

LUCIA
You know, you're becoming more
American every day, caro mio.

VLADIMIR
Believe me, sexual impulse is
international.

They go down the subway steps...

INT. VLADIMIR'S APARTMENT

Low light. Lucia is in bed, smoking a post-sexual cigarette. Vladimir, naked, plays a sexy jazz number (maybe "Blues For Yolanda").

DISSOLVE TO:

VLADIMIR AND LUCIA

Kissing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FEDERAL BUILDING - FULL SHOT - DAY

Vladimir smoothing his hair as he climbs the long flight of steps.

INT. ROOM - FULL SHOT

A small theatre filled with a hundred or so foreigners. Their families and friends sit in the rear. Small platform stage in front with American flag, microphone and several seats on the stage. Vladimir joins Lionel, who is talking to three older Italians. The Man is about sixty and the women, who wear black dresses, are about sixty and seventy-five, respectively.

LIONEL

Vlad, my man. Meet Lucia's
uncle Sal.

UNCLE SAL is not too thrilled at meeting Vladimir or Lionel, for that matter. The two Italian women are uncomfortable.

UNCLE SAL

(heavy accent)
Lucia told me about you.

VLADIMIR

Likewise.

UNCLE SAL

This is my wife and my mother.

VLADIMIR

(to older looking woman)
How do you do, Mother?

UNCLE SAL

That's my wife. This is Momma.

Vladimir turns red and says hello to both women. Lionel covers a smile.

Vladimir looks for Lucia. She is in the front row. She sees him and waves. He waves back. A berobed JUDGE enters. The Judge is black.

PLATFORM

JUDGE

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Today you will become citizens
of the United States of America.
You will no longer be an Englishman
or an Italian or a Pole or whatever.
Neither will you be a hyphenated
American.

CAMERA sees Lucia, Vladimir, Lionel, Uncle Sal, Momma,
Wife, and other faces of foreigners from all lands...

JUDGE

(continuing)

... From this day you are no longer
the subject of a government but an
integral part of the government. A
freeman... May you find in this
nation the fulfillment of your dreams
of peace and security and may America,
in turn, never find you wanting in
your new and proud role of Citizen
of the United States. Will the
petitioners please rise?

They all do. Lucia is moved. So are the others. A BABY
CRIES. We hear someone tell the baby to hush in Spanish...
Laughter.

JUDGE

(continuing)

Now let us take the oath of
Allegiance. "I hereby declare,
an oath, that I absolutely and
entirely renounce...

VLADIMIR

Listens intently.

JUDGE (V.O.)

... all allegiance and fidelity
to any foreign prince or potentate...

LUCIA

JUDGE (V.O.)

... that I will support and defend
the Constitution and laws of the
United States of America against...

GROUP OF FOREIGNERS

All speaking the words now...

JUDGE (V.O.)

... all enemies.

JUDGE AND OTHERS

JUDGE/OTHERS

(together)

I take this obligation freely
without any mental reservation
or...

VLADIMIR

Mouthing the words too, unconsciously.

JUDGE (V.O.)

... purpose of evasion; so help
me God.

FULL SHOT

JUDGE

Congratulations... fellow citizens.

A CHEER goes up.

JUDGE

(continuing)

Now let us all rise and sing the
National Anthem.

EXT. YARD - AFTERNOON

The Orlando Ramirez home in Flushing. We can see the water from here. The small backyard has been decorated with red, white and blue paper. The backyard contains a birdbath and a large plastic wading pool. Also, a happy Labrador and his doghouse. Orlando is tending the steaks on the grill. Wanda and Lucia are setting the table. Uncle Sal, Wife and Mother are sitting, just taking in all these types. A baseball game is on a small TV set. Lionel is pitching a softball to Vladimir. CARLO, Orlando's fourteen-year-old son, is at bat. TINA, the twelve-year-old daughter is in the outfield.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIONEL
Here's my curve.

CARLO
Nothing.

VLADIMIR
How about another beer?

Orlando tosses a can of beer to Vladimir.

ORLANDO
Pop-top can. Man who did
that made millions.

LUCIA AND WANDA

LUCIA
I was crying... I thought I
would faint.

WANDA
Sounds so emotional. I wish
I had been there.

ORLANDO AND UNCLE SAL AND FAMILY

ORLANDO
Can I get you something, Uncle
Sal?

UNCLE SAL
We're fine.

ORLANDO
You have a beautiful niece.

UNCLE SAL
She's okay.

ORLANDO
(holds up a steak)
Look at this beauty. I got
a Greek butcher.

UNCLE SAL
I got an Italian.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORLANDO

As long as they are rare.

LUCIA

(at the TV set)

Hey, way to go! Goose Gossage
just struck out Eddie Murray!

LIONEL

Man can pitch.

VLADIMIR

Gossage is good, but personally,
I'll take Dan Quisenberry of the
K.C. Athletics.

LIONEL

How much longer on the steaks,
Orlando?

ORLANDO

Few more minutes. Have some salad.

The game breaks up.

VLADIMIR

(to Orlando)

Where is the men's room, Orlando?

CARLO

Right next to the women's room!

ORLANDO

Keep your eyes on the steaks,
Carlo.

(to Vladimir)

Come with me, amigo. After
we eat, we can go for a boat
ride. Carlo will teach you
to water-ski.

VLADIMIR

What is that vehicle, Orlando?

He points to an old Winnebago.

INT. HOUSE

As they enter. Small, neat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORLANDO
That's an RV. We go to the
country in it. Head for nature.

VLADIMIR
It's a wonderful life.

ORLANDO
You can have it, too, amigo.

EXT. BACKYARD

Later. The steaks have been devoured. Wanda and Tina clear the table. Uncle Sal and his group are all sleeping in their chairs. Lionel and Orlando are playing chess. Vladimir and Lucia stroll to the water. They carry drinks in plastic cups.

WATERSIDE

As they stroll.

VLADIMIR
It was nice day, I think.

LUCIA
Yeah.

VLADIMIR
Do you have period today?

LUCIA
No. Why?

VLADIMIR
You are so serious.

LUCIA
It was an emotional day. I'm
just tired.

He pinches her ass. She stiffens.

LUCIA
(continuing)
Goddamn it!

VLADIMIR
I'm sorry. Could not resist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They sit at the water's edge.

Vladimir takes a pint of vodka out of his pocket and adds to his drink.

VLADIMIR
(continuing)
Nightcap?

LUCIA
No.

VLADIMIR
What's the matter? You don't like being woman and having a man crazy for your bottom?

LUCIA
Not with my Uncle Sal around, no.

VLADIMIR
He is sleeping... I don't think he likes Russians.

LUCIA
(laughs, in spite of herself)
He thinks you're a communist.

VLADIMIR
You know, Lucy, I have been thinking. We should live together. You should move in with me.

She doesn't answer.

VLADIMIR
(continuing)
We would each save on rent, on utilities... even on subway fare. We don't have to take train to make love.

But Lucia is crying.

VLADIMIR
(continuing)
What is the matter?

LUCIA
I don't feel like talking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

All right. Don't talk... But tell me what is the matter.

LUCIA

Haven't you ever felt like not talking about something?

VLADIMIR

In Russia, that is permanent way of life.

LUCIA

... Give me some vodka.

He pours a shot into her glass.

VLADIMIR

Don't you care for me?

LUCIA

That's the problem.

In the b.g., we hear some sweet LATINO MUSIC on a RADIO.

VLADIMIR

Problem?

LUCIA

I think I care too much.

He tries to kiss her. But she pushes him away.

LUCIA

(continuing)

Please, Vlad. No.

VLADIMIR

I think I am being in love with you.

LUCIA

That makes it worse.

VLADIMIR

But love is good, not worse.

LUCIA

It's all too soon, too fast.
I don't want all this...

(indicates the place)

Not yet. Not so soon. Oh, shit!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

What???

LUCIA

I have struggled and worked to
make myself an American. An
American!

VLADIMIR

So now you are American.

LUCIA

I want to be in love with someone
who fits in...

VLADIMIR

(both hurt and
understanding)

Okay... I understand... Robert
Redford I am not.

LUCIA

I feel terrible. I didn't mean
it that way.

VLADIMIR

(getting angry now)

What the hell way you mean it
then?

This is pretty loud. The others hear it and turn.

LUCIA

I'm not ready for a backyard yet!
I'm not ready for full-timea love
yet!

Everyone is standing and watching now.

LUCIA

(continuing)

I want my goddamn dreams to come
true first. I don't want to end
up in the black dress! I don't
want to be loved so much so soon!

VLADIMIR

(shouting)

All right! I don't love you!

LUCIA

Yes, you do!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She walks away from him, crying.

VLADIMIR
You are crazy!

LUCIA
You are an immigrant!

VLADIMIR
Go back to Italy!!!

The others are totally stunned. Lucia turns and spouts off at Vladimir in Italian. He shouts back at her in Russian. Uncle Sal holds his heart.

UNCLE SAL
Communist bastard! Pope killer!

INT. LIMO - DAY

Vladimir driving a striking REDHEAD wearing a fur coat. He looks depressed.

VLADIMIR
Would you prefer mid-town tunnel
or 59th Street bridge, ma'am?

REDHEAD
I don't give a shit... You got a
light?

VLADIMIR
(trying to figure
her out)
Lighter in panel next to right
door, ma'am.

REDHEAD
You can call me madame.

VLADIMIR
Okay, madame.

She is inhaling on a joint by now.

REDHEAD
You want a hit?

She leans forward to offer him a hit on the joint. Her coat opens and Vladimir sees clearly that she is wearing nothing under the fur coat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

No, thank you, madame. Not on the job.

REDHEAD

(sees him staring)

... I just came from work.

VLADIMIR

You are prostitute?

REDHEAD

That's calling. 'em like you see 'em... You're cute. Are you Russian?

VLADIMIR

Yes, madame.

REDHEAD

I've never had a Russian... I had a Polish guy once.

VLADIMIR

Poland is merely Russian satellite.

REDHEAD

You want to party?

VLADIMIR

How much, please?

REDHEAD

You're really cute... You pay for the limo.

VLADIMIR

Your place or mine?

EXT. VLADIMIR'S BUILDING - DAY

Limo is parked in front, quite incongruous in this neighborhood.

INT. VLAD'S APARTMENT

He and the Redhead are going at it.

TV SCREEN

"GENERAL HOSPITAL"...

CLOSE ON VLAD

The Redhead is doing all sorts of things to him, but he is watching the soap opera, totally depressed.

EXT. STREET - VILLAGE - NIGHT

Vladimir and Lionel walking. Vladimir carries his saxophone case. Vladimir is still down.

LIONEL

Let me tell you something, Vlad.
She ain't the only piece of pasta
on the menu. You got to make a
move for something else.

VLADIMIR

Is very difficult.

LIONEL

(to a passing girl)
Hello, sweet thing.

She pays him no heed.

LIONEL

(continuing)
Don't turn up your nose, honey,
because it blocks the light.

VLADIMIR

It is better that I don't play,
Lionel. Okay?

LIONEL

Here we are.

They are in front of a small jazz joint.

MARQUEE

Announcing the presence of WILD BILL HAWTHORNE, photo
and all. A Black saxophonist.

INT. CLUB

As they enter. Very small. Nice crowd.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vladimir and Lionel are greeted by the HOSTESS.

LIONEL

Hello, sweet thing.

HOSTESS

Hello.

(to Vladimir)

Don't I know you from somewhere?

VLADIMIR

(trying to be cool)

You been to Leningrad?

HOSTESS

Is that in Jersey?

TABLE

As they are seated.

STAGE

WILD BILL and a small combo are finishing a number.
Wild Bill, who is about seventy, is wonderful.

TABLE

Vladimir is in heaven.

VLADIMIR

... I dream of this.

WILD BILL

Finishes a great riff.

CLUB

Applause.

WILD BILL

Thank you, folks. We've got a
little surprise for you all
tonight. A friend of mine informs
me that we have a Russian musician
in the crowd.

TABLE

Vladimir is sweating. Lionel is beaming.

WILD BILL (V.O.)
... A saxophonist, Mister Vladimir
Ivanoff.

Lionel forces Vladimir to stand up and take a bow.

CLUB

WILD BILL
You know, I played in the Soviet
Union in 1964. Vladimir, why
don't you join us in a number?

Lionel nudges Vladimir toward the small stage. Crowd
applauds.

VLADIMIR AND WILD BILL

Right into the number. Wild Bill takes the lead.

VLADIMIR

Waits... then he plays...

LIONEL

Beaming.

STAGE

Wild Bill is sensational. Vladimir is good, but
clearly not in this league. But the audience likes it.

Vladimir looks at Lionel and shrugs. Lionel urges
him on...

EXT. STREET - VLADIMIR'S BLOCK - SAME NIGHT

Lionel and Vladimir are very drunk. Lionel drinks
from a bottle of vodka.

VLADIMIR
... It is better to know who you
really are. To know the limits...
the limits of your talent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIONEL

All the man said is practice.
Work on it...

VLADIMIR

I am shit.

LIONEL

You are full of shit... Hey, Vlad,
don't you realize you are white?
You don't pick up soul in a few
months, even if you are Russian
... Fuckin' self-pity don't get
you nowhere.

VLADIMIR

(very Russian)

Saddest thing in world is life.

LIONEL

Some days it gets so heavy I don't
think I'll make it... You know, I
got a kid in Alabama.

Vladimir cries.

VLADIMIR

Poor, poor Lionel.

LIONEL

Thomas Alva Witherspoon. He's
five years old. When I think of
that boy, I want to cry.

VLADIMIR

Cry! Is good for you.

LIONEL

Got me involved with a sweet
thing about six years ago. She
found out she was pregnant and
went back to Alabama.

They sit down on the front steps of Vladimir's building. Vladimir is really crying now at the story.

LIONEL

(continuing)

... No way I could go down there
and still put the money on the
table up here. Oh, yeah...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A PUNK DOPE PUSHER, totally wasted, passes them.

PUNK DOPE PUSHER
Reds, whites, ups, downs? Hash,
acid, smoke-a-dope?

But they pay no attention to him.

VLADIMIR
... I did not love my life in
Russia. But I loved my misery.
Yes. It was my misery. I could
caress her and hold her, my --
misery...

Now Lionel begins to wail.

VLADIMIR
(continuing)
Oh, yes, the saddest thing in
the world is life.

They just sit and sob... Finally...

VLADIMIR
(continuing; gets up)
Good night, Lionel. Thank you
for a wonderful night.

LIONEL
If that was wonderful, what
happens when you hit deep
depression?

Vladimir goes in and Lionel heads off...

INT. APARTMENT

Vlad comes in... puts the light on... very drunk...
takes out his sax and puts it together... He blows a
long riff. The loud neighbor yells up immediately.

VOICE
Hey, Mister Asshole! Pipe down!

This time Vlad goes to the window, opens and shouts
out.

VLADIMIR
Hey, go fuck yourself! Yes. Go
fuck myself, you bastard! You
shut up or I come down there and
rape you. Understand?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He closes the window and begins to play again. He stops. No Voice this time. He smiles and begins to play again...

INT. BLOOMINGDALE'S - DAY

Vladimir, wearing his chauffeur's outfit, comes in. He looks, starts to go out again, then decides to come in.

COUNTER

Lucia is chatting with a handsome young blond man. They are both laughing. He is very Ivy League.

VLADIMIR

Sees them, spins on his heels and heads out, embarrassed. But then he decides to go back.

COUNTER

Now Lucia is finishing sale. She hands some perfume to a woman.

LUCIA

If he doesn't like this, you can bring it back. But don't lose the sales slip.

As the woman turns to go, Lucia almost jumps. She looks down at her feet.

HER FEET

Vladimir on his hands and knees.

VLADIMIR

Fancy meeting you here.

He gets up.

LUCIA

Hi.

VLADIMIR

You are not laughing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCIA

They don't like for us to be
chit-chatting.

VLADIMIR

You didn't mind to talk to that
Ivory League blond man.

LUCIA

He works here.

VLADIMIR

(goes to other side
of counter)

What does he sell, American flags?

LUCIA

I don't want to argue with you,
Vlad.

VLAD

You love me.

Lionel saunters by, looking glum.

LIONEL

(spots Vlad)

Hey, defections are in the bluejean
department.

They exchange hand slaps.

VLADIMIR

What do you say, my main man?

LIONEL

Hi, Lucy... I got some news.

LUCIA

What?

LIONEL

I'm turning in my badge.

VLADIMIR

What?

LIONEL

I'm quitting. I was due for a
raise and that didn't come. I
think they're going to start
laying folks off next month anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

What are you going to do?

LIONEL

I'm going to Alabama to see the kid.

VLADIMIR

I am very sad.

LUCIA

I'll miss you, Lionel.

LIONEL

Why don't the two of you come visit me?... Talk to you later.

VLADIMIR

I will call you, Lionel.

Lionel splits.

VLADIMIR

(continuing; to Lucia)

Is very far, this Alabama?

A JAPANESE WOMAN is at the counter now. She has accent.

JAPANESE WOMAN

Can somebody help me?

VLADIMIR

(to Lucia)

I want to see you tonight. Make party for Lionel.

LUCIA

No.

(to Japanese Woman)

Did you want perfume or cologne?

JAPANESE WOMAN

Toilet water.

VLADIMIR

Why not?

LUCIA

I can't talk now. Please, Vladimir.

VLADIMIR

I am sad about Lionel. I insist that you come out with us tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

No! LUCIA

VLADIMIR
Why not? You have another class!
(to Japanese Woman)
All she has is classes!

JAPANESE WOMAN
I want toilet water.

LUCIA
I don't have a class! I have a date!

VLADIMIR
Aha! With who?... That Robert Redford?

LUCIA
None of your business. But yes!

JAPANESE WOMAN
I want toilet water.

VLADIMIR
If I go now, Lucia, it is for good. I warn you.

He is trembling. This is very tough for her.

LUCIA
Goodbye.

He turns and goes.

JAPANESE WOMAN
I want toilet water.

INT. LIMO DAY

Vlad at the wheel. Lionel in back seat. Some good JAZZ ON RADIO.

VLADIMIR
Possibly it is my fault. I am maybe too possessive. But she is bitch, too.

LIONEL
She's just going through her thing. Shit!... If it's meant to be, it'll happen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR
I am so confused.

LIONEL
Join the club.

VLADIMIR
In Russia, all I had to worry
about was toilet paper.

EXT. PORT AUTHORITY BUS TERMINAL

As the limo pulls up. Vladimir opens the trunk and
hands Lionel his luggage.

VLADIMIR
Thank you for everything, Lionel.
You have been my greatest friend.

LIONEL
I'm just a citizen.

They hug. Vladimir gives Lionel the Russian treatment:
three kisses, one on each cheek.

LIONEL
(continuing)
Dozvedanya.

VLADIMIR
Keep your pecker in your pocket.

Lionel goes into the bus terminal.

LIONEL

Tears...

VLADIMIR

Blows his nose.

FULL SHOT

Limo pulls away... JAZZ MUSIC DISAPPEARING...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VIDEO ARCADE - FULL SHOT - NIGHT

Vladimir feeling alone now. He plays his favorite video game and scores an easy 45,000 points, impressing a young boy beside him. It bores him now.

ANGLE - BAR - DAY

The bar is completely dark. A ballgame on the TV. A topless waitress comes to take Vladimir's order. Her breast hangs in his face as she wipes off the table. He stares at the nipple as an enormous abstraction.

INT. MARKET - FULL SHOT - NIGHT

Vladimir is shopping, and the same market that overwhelmed him months before now is ordinary. He shops for food like an old lady. He piles the cart with junk food items. He looks up.

HIS POV

A poster in the liquor store. Nureyev selling Japanese vodka.

INT. LIONEL'S APARTMENT - FULL SHOT - DAY

Vladimir has come to visit the Grandfather. He sits alone in his chair with his feet propped up.

GRANDFATHER

So glad you came up here, Vlad.

VLADIMIR

Just want to check in. How you feeling?

GRANDFATHER

Good and bad. My feets have been swelling up real bad so I got to keep them up, or so they say.

VLADIMIR

You look good.

GRANDFATHER

Shit... don't get old if you can help it.

VLADIMIR

In Russia we honor the old people.

GRANDFATHER

Maybe I should move out there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

You hear from Lionel?

GRANDFATHER

He sent a card. He didn't say much.
Says he's okay.

VLADIMIR

Did he find work?

GRANDFATHER

I don't know. Man do need work to
feel good. Can I offer you something
to drink?

VLADIMIR

No.... I don't need it.

GRANDFATHER

You don't look like you're missed
too many meals.

VLADIMIR

I've gained twelve pounds. Junk food.

GRANDFATHER

Too much eating and too little making
love.

Vladimir laughs.

VLADIMIR

That's what my grandfather... in
Soviet Union would say.

GRANDFATHER

One thing about getting old... you
can say what's on your mind.

VLADIMIR

Well... tell everybody hello...

GRANDFATHER

Come again. I just sit here watching
white people on television.

VLADIMIR

Maybe I get some tickets next week...
we go to a ballgame.

GRANDFATHER

I'd love to if my feet are better.

Vladimir reluctant to leave.

VLADIMIR

Goodbye, Grandfather.

TV SCREEN

Baseball game.

VLADIMIR'S APARTMENT

He is in bed, watching TV. He smokes a joint.

There is a KNOCK on the door. Vladimir doesn't even get up.

VLADIMIR

(suspicious)

Yeah?

VOICE

(Vladimir Ivanoff?)

Hearing Russian frightens Vladimir. He goes to the door, but doesn't open it.

VLADIMIR

Who is there?

VOICE

(My name is Blozonov.)

VLADIMIR

Who the hell are you? KGB? What?

VOICE

(I have a letter for you. From your family.)

Vladimir opens the door. A dark-haired YOUNG MAN stands there. He wears obvious Russian clothes. He is rather shy.

VLADIMIR

(A letter?)

Blozonov hands him a letter. Vladimir looks at it.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

Come in...

Blozonov doesn't move

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

(Come in, then.)

Blozonov comes in and looks around. He is very impressed, especially by the American flag.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

(How did you get this?)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLOZONOV
(I know your sister, Sasha, at school.)

VLADIMIR
(How is Sasha?)

BLOZONOV
(Fine.)

VLADIMIR
(How did you get here? To America?)

By now, Vladimir has opened the letter and is reading it.

BLOZONOV
(My family is lucky. We were permitted to leave after only three years. We are Jewish... You have a beautiful home, Vladimir Ivanoff.)

But Vladimir doesn't hear him... He is in despair.

BLOZONOV
(Bad news?)

VLADIMIR
My grandfather is dead...
(My grandfather is dead.)

BLOZONOV
(I am sorry.)

VLADIMIR
He was a comedian...

BLOZONOV
(Well, I will leave you, Vladimir Ivanoff.)

VLADIMIR
(Thank you. Please call me when you get settled.)

BLOZONOV
(very shy)
... Goodbye.

His English is very tentative. He leaves. Vladimir sits on the bed. Almost silently, he weeps... In self defense he begins to click the TV clicker.

TV SCREEN

Images rushing by...

VLADIMIR

Suddenly rises... Squeezes into one of his sharp American outfits.

SUBWAY

Vladimir rides amid the graffiti.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

The Russian neighborhood is busy with its own thoughts.

MED. SHOT - VLAD

He is comforted by the Russian language, by the sights and sounds of the small shops and the Russian people.

INT. BAR/CLUB

Russian bar and night spot. A few regular customers are laughing together as Vladimir enters and orders a vodka. The Band is warming up.

VLADIMIR

Gulps the vodka like a true Russian... And another! A party arrives.

INT. CLUB - FULL SHOT - BAND - NIGHT (LATER)

The wild sentimental music of Russia fills the room. The remnants of a wedding party sing and dance.

MED. SHOT - VLADIMIR

He decides to dance and he lets the music fill him until he drinks the vodka and leaps to the floor in one burst of emotion.

The crowd claps and encourages him. This is a bitter-sweet moment of homesickness.

NEW ANGLE

The dance speeds faster and faster until Vladimir collapses in a sea of shouts, laughter, and song. For the first time in the evening he smiles as the patrons lift him and hand him a well-earned vodka.

MED. SHOT - GROUP

The bathos has intensified as the customers have thinned out. Vladimir sings with a few other compatriots. The balalaika players yawn.

EXT. BAR - FULL SHOT - NIGHT

The bar's front still gleams as the patrons leave. Vladimir salutes his new friends. The sign goes out. The revelers separate.

EXT. BAR - MED. SHOT - VLADIMIR - NIGHT

He is drunk and still full of fury, but his pain has eased. He stumbles down the boulevard still singing to himself.

VLADIMIR

Maybe I go downtown, have a few more drinks. Hear some -- goddamn jazz. Some good jazz. Wild Bill Hawthorne.

EXT. STREET - MANHATTAN

Vladimir comes up from a subway station. He doesn't notice the two YOUNG MEN tailing him. Suddenly he is spun to a wall and a gun is pushed into his face.

BOY

Hold still, motherfucker.

VLADIMIR

Who are you? What do you want?

One grabs his gold chain, wrenching it from his neck.

BOY

Where's the money?

VLADIMIR

Why you do this? I'm not your enemy.

BOY

(nervous)

Shut the fuck up.

VLADIMIR

I am Russian. I believe in justice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As they go for his wallet, Vladimir resists. He gets hit by the gun barrel.

BOY

Try inside his jacket! You ain't no Russian, you motherfucker!

They find the wallet. Vladimir is on his hands and knees. He explodes with rage.

VLADIMIR

Why! Why! Bastards!

Vladimir grabs the one with the gun, and knocks the gun from his hand. The boys are now only interested in leaving with their loot. Vladimir's shouts panic them. His strength holds the main culprit and he will not release him as he bellows out Russian curses. Finally the fight rolls into the street. Vladimir loses balance and is kicked in the side. He rolls over holding his ribs.

BOY WITH EARRING

Let's get the fuck outta here.

BOY

I want my piece, man.

BOY WITH EARRING

Fuck your piece.

Car lights panic them. The boy runs to Vladimir and kicks him again.

VLADIMIR

Why?

Vladimir grabs the boy to the asphalt. Vladimir becomes an animal and pounds down on his assailant just as a cop car speeds over.

INT. POLICE STATION - MED. SHOT

It's a busy night in the station. Hookers and pimps stream in. Orlando Ramirez arrives in a rush. He has come from the serenity of his little estate into this bizarre circus.

INT. POLICE STATION - FULL SHOT

Vladimir waits in a hallway. The right side of his face is bruised from the fight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He has a cut on his nose. Orlando checks with the officer at the desk. The conversation is matter-of-fact, cheerful.

EXT. POLICE STATION - FULL SHOT

Orlando and Vladimir come to the street. Orlando wipes the sweat from his face.

ORLANDO

What was in the wallet besides the money?

VLADIMIR

Some I.D., Social Security card
... Driver's license...

ORLANDO

Easily replaceable, my friend.
You want to go to a doctor?

VLADIMIR

No, maybe tomorrow... Goddam crazy country. Stupid. Their eyes were cold, like animals.

CORNER

As they turn it.

VLADIMIR

In Russia, you know exactly who the enemy is... This is too confusing...

ORLANDO

You are overreacting, my friend.
I always heard that Russians overdid things.

They pass a disco, still crowded with people trying to get in. Androgynous faces and bodies clamor at the front door.

VLADIMIR

Is this... liberty? Then it is false liberty... Where are the poets?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORLANDO

What the hell do you want, a perfect place to live? No such thing, amigo.

VLADIMIR

The police said maybe the boy will go free. Free! Did you hear that?

ORLANDO

He is a juvenile. They do get away with a lot of crap.

They have come to a coffee shop. They enter.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Truckdrivers and loaders from the produce market gather here. Vladimir and Orlando take seats at the counter. The place has half a dozen customers.

VLADIMIR

... What kind of law allows these animals to run free? What kind of society is this? It's terrible.

The TRUCKDRIVER seated next to Vladimir gives him a look. He is a big, burly Teamster type.

ORLANDO

Everything is explained by freedom.

COUNTER-WOMAN

Can I help you?

ORLANDO

Two coffees.

VLADIMIR

And some Brown Betty... What freedom? You cannot walk down the street. Is that freedom?

BURLY TEAMSTER

Doesn't like the sound of what he is hearing.

COUNTER

ORLANDO

You really think you were better off before? In Moscow?

Vlad points at a "Hustler" the Truckdriver is reading.

VLADIMIR

Is this freedom for woman to spread her legs?

ORLANDO

(to Truckdriver)

Excuse us.

VLADIMIR

(to Truckdriver)

Are you free?

Now the burly Truckdriver really glares at Vladimir.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

There is freedom here, but she is an orphan.

The coffees and the Brown Betty arrive.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

I tell you the truth, Orlando. New York frightens me. It's brutal. Crazy.

(he sees the Truckdriver glare at him)

What the hell are you looking at?

ORLANDO

Take it easy, Vladimir.

VLADIMIR

Don't tell me to take it easy! I've taken it easy too many times...

(to the Truckdriver)

Now what are you looking at?

TRUCKDRIVER

(I am looking at an asshole from Moscow.)

Yes. The Truckdriver speaks Russian. Vladimir is stunned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORLANDO

What did he say?

VLADIMIR

He said he is looking at an asshole from Moscow... (You are Russian?)

TRUCKDRIVER

(From Leningrad, you giant asshole.)

ORLANDO

What is he saying?

VLADIMIR

Now he is calling me a giant asshole.

TRUCKDRIVER

(I've been here seven years and I love it.)

VLADIMIR

(In Moscow, we have to fight for a crumb of freedom! Here, you shit on it!)

TRUCKDRIVER

(Then go back to Moscow, you giant turd of an asshole!)

ORLANDO

What the hell is going on?

VLADIMIR

(shouting)

He is calling me a giant turd and telling me to go back to Moscow!

MEXICAN DISHWASHER

(peers out of window
and says in Spanish)

"Que paso?"

ORLANDO

(in Spanish)

"These two Russians are having an argument about freedom."

MEXICAN DISHWASHER

(in Spanish)

"Who is freedom?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRUCKDRIVER

(You want order and perfect patterns? Go back to Moscow and stand in line for stale bread!)

VLADIMIR

(explains to Orlando
without being asked)

If I want order I should go back to Moscow and stand in line for bread.

TRUCKDRIVER

(corrects him)

Stale bread!

VLADIMIR

Stale bread!

He realizes that the Truckdriver has spoken in English.

Suddenly, the sound of a wild BURST OF FIRECRACKERS makes them all turn around. Outside, we see the firecrackers light up the sky.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

What is this?

TRUCKDRIVER

Independence Day.

VLADIMIR

(to Driver)

Vladimir Ivanoff. I'm sorry.

TRUCKDRIVER

(they shake hands)

Sergei Golub. It's okay.

They click coffee cups to toast each other.

VLADIMIR

(to Orlando)

This is the day for Declaration of Independence?

ORLANDO

Yeah, my friend... "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary..." I forget the rest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR

We hold these truths to be self-evident...

Another burst of firecrackers.

TRUCKDRIVER

... That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with...

VLADIMIR

(smiles; in Russian)
(Certain inalienable rights...
These are Life...)

MEXICAN DISHWASHER

Que paso?

VLADIMIR

(in English)
"Liberty and the Pursuit of..."

ALL OF THEM

(in Russian; English;
and Spanish)
"Happiness..."

SKY - FIRECRACKERS - DAWN

PAN DOWN TO EXT. VLADIMIR'S BLOCK as he enters his building... tired and worn-out... but smiling.

INT. VLADIMIR'S APARTMENT

As he lets himself in... He checks himself in the mirror over the kitchen sink. Pulls off his shirt to find the tender ribs... not so bad... Dropping his pants, he slides under the sheets only to jump back in surprise. Lucia is there.

LUCIA

Hello, comrade.
(sees his bruises)
My God, what happened?

VLADIMIR

I got mugged... What are you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCIA

You want me to go?

VLADIMIR

No... what a nice surprise.

LUCIA

I came over to give back my key
... Then I just waited and finally
I went to sleep... Are you okay?

VLADIMIR

I am Russian bear. Very strong
... How have you been?

LUCIA

I missed you so much.

VLADIMIR

Me too.

LUCIA

I am a fool.

VLADIMIR

I am giant asshole.

LUCIA

I am still not ready for marriage,
but I would love to live with an
immigrant.

VLADIMIR

(starts to undress
her)

You are my sweet bowl of borscht.
Oh, how I love you... you are my
little poplar tree...

They begin to kiss passionately... trying desperately
to get her clothes off... There is suddenly a KNOCK at
the door.

VLADIMIR

(continuing)

What is this, Grand Central
Station?...

(to door)

We don't want any!

LIONEL (O.S.)

Vlad, my man!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vladimir looks at Lucia and bolts to the door. He opens it. It's Lionel carrying his suitcase.

VLADIMIR

Lionel. You have returned.

LIONEL

I hope I'm not interrupting you citizens.

VLADIMIR

Please. Come in.

They hug.

LIONEL

What happened to your face?

VLADIMIR

Two black guys beat shit out of me.

LIONEL

I leave town and your whole karma goes to seed... Hi, Lucy.

LUCIA

What happened, Lionel?

LIONEL

Ah, women!... She's living with some dude. Real nice guy. Sells insurance. The kid seems very happy. He is really sweet... Anyhow... I'll get to see him summers...

OVER the last few lines of dialogue and the following, we begin to hear VLADIMIR'S VOICE READING HIS LAST LETTER.

LIONEL

(continuing)

Shit! I can't stay out of New York nohow... Plus, there are some mighty large mosquitoes in the state of Alabama...

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"Beloved Family, I received the news of Grandfather's death.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VLADIMIR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"Of course, I am very sad. But he lived life on his own terms, even to the end. I am playing my dear saxophone again..."

INT. RUSSIAN NIGHT CLUB

Vladimir, in Gypsy outfit, playing Gypsy music on sax, with small Russian combo.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"Yes, I have finally gotten into musicians' union. My good friend Lionel has returned from Alabama and he now..."

INT. LIMO - DAY

Lionel, in chauffeur's rig, driving some rich folks...

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"... has my old job."

INT. BUS - DAY

Vladimir seated next to window, suddenly stands and pulls cord.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"In the daytime, I am free to do whatever I please..."

CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Jammed with the summer crowd. Vladimir walking, carrying his saxophone.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"... wherever I want to, as long as it is legal."

Vladimir has stopped for a hot dog at a Sabretts wagon. As he is about to order, he recognizes the vendor. It is Boris, the KGB man.

BORIS

Vladimir Ivanoff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Boris smiles. Vladimir is stunned. He quickly looks around.

VLADIMIR

Boris.

BORIS

Don't worry, my friend. I am retired.

VLADIMIR

What are you doing here?

BORIS

Did you think I could go back to Moscow after what happened?

Boris has put the hot dog in a bun.

BORIS

(continuing)

Onions? Mustard?

Vladimir nods.

BORIS

(continuing)

Have you been well?

VLADIMIR

Yes. It's a strange country.

BORIS

Strange and wonderful... Can I say "thank you?"

Vladimir reaches to pay for the hot dog.

BORIS

(continuing)

Put your money away!

Vladimir takes a bite.

VLADIMIR

... Good hot dog.

BORIS

The best in New York.

Vladimir leaves.

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"This is a free country, welcome to almost anyone..."

ANGLE - PARK

Vladimir is walking... he stops... looks around... takes his sax out and sets up shop... his case is on the ground... he puts a dollar and some change in the case...

VLADIMIR

Starting to blow "Let's Fall In Love"...

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"I hope that someday you can join me here. Of course, I will..."

FULL SHOT

A crowd is starting to gather to hear Vladimir play... He is really getting better... A black woman drops a coin in his case... So does a teen-age boy... then a white man...

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

... "continue to write to you every week."

SAX CASE

As money drops in...

VLADIMIR (V.O.)

"Yes. In America anything is possible. Goodbye, for now, beloved family. I love you, Vladimir."

VLADIMIR

Playing... really into it... His fear is on the run.

FULL SHOT

Central Park... SOUND OF VLADIMIR'S HORN fills the park.

FADE OUT.

THE END