

MOZART AND THE WHALE

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MOZART AND THE WHALE

1 INT. CAB - DAY

DONALD MORTON drives his yellow cab with an air of cheery nonchalance. Rumpled, food-stained, he shares his front seat with an eclectic mix of empty pizza boxes, sort of empty styrofoam cups, and lots of racing forms.

DONALD

See, it's all about knowing when to listen.

Who's he talking to? WE don't see a passenger. Then we do. Crouched on the back seat is DUNDEE, Donald's large and skeptical cockatiel. Surrounding the bird are five large bags of GROCERIES.

DONALD

Too much information at the wrong time can create a fiasco. For example....

He turns up his DISPATCHER RADIO...

DISPATCHER (O.S.)

Ahh...59 to Arizona and Yale.

DONALD

See, actually, we could jump on that if we weren't late for group...

Looks in the rear-view to confirm that Dundee is following this...

DONALD

Wilshire to Federal to Texas. Or maybe Barrington south. Bundy's nice. Course...

WHAMM!! Donald looks back through the cracked windshield at the lamp post he's just smashed into.

DONALD

Hence my point. You okay?

As if in answer, Dundee flies to his shoulder. Bites his ear. Donald turns and walks back up the road, abandoning the cab, as if nothing happened. Bystanders now stream past him, toward the cab. Donald, oblivious, just trudging off against the grain, muttering to his bird, as MAIN TITLES COMMENCE.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER REC ROOM - DAY

Disheveled, sweaty and struggling under a double arm load of groceries, Donald rushes into a humble REC ROOM and past folding tables and chairs, bulletin boards, the dusty Sparklett's cooler, the detritus of forgotten miscellaneous objects. We can smell the stale from here. As the MAIN TITLES CONTINUE, we track with him as he passes...

CONTINUED:

...a kitchenette counter where SKEETS, a lanky, unkempt 16-year-old is WHIRRING an egg beater at red-line speed. Profoundly mesmerized by its blur, the transcendent awe of someone who has just invented fire. THE kid's shirt is buttoned one off, all the way down. He happens to be strikingly attractive. Keep tracking to...

...the long folding table where Donald arrives and dumps his grocery bags across it - chips, sweets, dips, sodas spill out. A budget feast. He begins to arrange them in piles while...

BLUME, a massive, middle-aged slovenly sort, with hostility behind a bright fixed smile, begins snatching the snacks and GORGING himself methodically from a pile he begins hoarding before him. His sole interest in life is that nobody touches his stash. Ever. PAN along the table to...

...a JIG-SAW PUZZLE in progress. The box lid depicts a leaping KILLER WHALE. Working compulsively and with spectacularly little success on a corner of the puzzle, are GREGORY and ROGER. Roger is urbane in appearance, coffee-skinned, exaggeratedly laid-back. As he languidly tries the wrong piece, he remarks...

ROGER (resonant monotone)

Of course, it's not technically a monsoon, but fourteen inches in 36 hours is nothing to sneeze at, even in Sri Lanka, when you consid...

GREGORY (high-pitched, annoying)

They said my writing per se was interesting, but it didn't suit their present needs, whatever that is supposed to mean.

GREGORY is large and hunched-over, he SQUINTS constantly, scrunching his nose in an aggressive-looking grimace. He is rapidly trying to force one absurdly-wrong piece after another into the same obviously inappropriate place. But shows no frustration whatsoever, as if his efforts were smashingly productive. PAN To...

...DAWN, big and beefy with a round bowl-cut hairdo of salt and pepper. A positive person, congenitally intense. She is putting pieces together magically, perfectly, all over the table, as fast as she can take them from the box. It is a dazzling gift. Suddenly, she reaches back...

DAWN

Green!

...and we see chubby little GRACIE, who is hoarding a huge stack of pieces. All green. She holds one out to Dawn, who ignores it,

CONTINUED:

PLUCKS a different piece from the middle of Gracie's pile. It FITS perfectly. Gracie grins wildly, with a charmingly demented eagerness.

GRACIE (glass-etching rasp)
I got a raise at U.C.L.A., y'know.
Thirty-four cents an hour.

JANICE
NOBODY CARES!!!

JANICE, a tiny bird-like woman of careful grooming, who likes to get in your face and talk really loud, blinks through round metal-rimmed spectacles as she keeps trying to fit the same two incredibly-mismatched pieces together. With the concentration one would use on a Rubik's Cube. Standing over her shoulder is...

...BRONWIN, a slender woman with lank hair and a slightly trembling mouth. Dressed by her mother (despite being in her mid-30s) in conservative and tasteful attire, Bronwin's fine-boned features register growing anxiety...

BRONWIN (nodding compulsively)
I'll call my parents on the phone.
They're picking me up at the bulletin
bo...

JANICE (never turning)
THERE'S NO BULLETIN BOARD AT A PARK.
YOU'RE SCREWED!

The inescapable truth of this HITS Bronwin. She keeps nodding through her increasing panic.

JANICE
THEY'LL NEVER FIND YOU! EVER!!!

Donald, finished with organizing the snacks and protecting what's left from Blume, tries to get everyone's attention, as MAIN TITLES CONCLUDE...

DONALD
Okay, listen up, everybody!

None of them do. He's used to it. Everyone keeps doing exactly what they were doing before, during...

DONALD (fast, but clear)
We have to leave for the park in ten minutes to meet the others, it's the 17 bus, transfer to the 301, who needs tokens?

HOLDS them up. JINGLES 'em, like bait. He hooks the attention of precious few of his flock.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

Gracie, can I see you a minute?

Gracie jumps up. Pushes her precious treasure of green pieces toward Bronwin for safekeeping.

BRONWIN (confides)

They'll never find me, ever. Regular people lose autistic people, and that's just the way it is.

GRACIE

We'll buy you a cab! I got a raise at U.C.L....

JANICE (still working the same two pieces)

THIRTY-FOUR CENTS! WE'RE GREEN-WITH ENVY!

Green. Gracie touches each one of her green pieces rapidly, and bustles to join Donald, who stands with his shrink-wrapped Hoagie in front of the microwave. Peering in, he sees four Twinkies already warming.

DONALD

I'm gonna run the meeting a little different today...

Talking to Gracie, but looking at the microwave. The digital time clock keeps counting down.

DONALD

When we get to the park, I'll take all the fellas to the bleachers. I'd like you to gather the women at the picnic ta...

And stops. Cold. Staring at the number of remaining seconds, which reaches...

DONALD

48 is interesting because when you add 4 and 8 you get 12, and if you flip 48 around you get 84 and then subtract the 48 from it you get 36, and all those numbers are exact multiples of the 12...

The clock is now down to...

DONALD

36 is interesting, too, because when you add 3 and 6 you get 9, and if you flip 36 around to get 63 and then subtract the 36 you get 27, and all those numbers are multiples of the 9...

CONTINUED:

Before the clock can run out, he starts PUNCHING in new numbers. Back up to 1:44...

DONALD

Now 144, if you add the one and four you get 9, and when you divide the 9 into 144 you get 16, which is 4 times 4, and add the 9 to the 16 you get 25 which is 5 times 5, then add the 2 and 5 which is 7, and 7 times 7 is 49, which when you multiply it by the original 9 gives you 441, which is your original 144 flipped arou...

GRACIE

Why do I take the girls to the picnic tables?

Oh. Trance broken, he turns to her maniacal endearing grin.

DONALD

Because I want the group to practice telling personal stories. And maybe they'll be less shy without the opposite sex around. You think?

GREGORY (ambling over)

Bad idea. Your raise is incredibly boring. As a story, it lacks dramatic tension and narrative drive.

He hunches his full height over her. Squinting down into her round face.

GRACIE

You won't hear it. You're not a girl.

JANICE (O.S.)

I AM, AND I'M ALREADY BORED!

Oh. Donald points to the sign-up sheet on the wall.

DONALD

Somebody new signed up...
(reading the signature)
...Isabelle...Sorensen. It might be nice if you have her start. Then everybody can get to know h...

BING! The microwave goes OFF. Donald turns to see the clock at ZERO. Sighs.

DONALD

Zero. Can't do much with that.

*
*
*
*
*
*

CONTINUED:

He opens the little door, revealing that the Twinkies have slightly exploded, their blackened insides oozing out with lava-like burnt sugar...

DONALD
See what I mean?

GREGORY
See, that's a story! The dark side of snack foo...

SHOVED aside by a resolute Blume, who SNATCHES up his treat, STUFFS in a mouthful of black...

...ambles back to his lair. Okay...

DONALD
Line up for tokens!

GREGORY (the tallest)
Can we line up by height?

3 EXT. PARK BLEACHERS - DAY

3

Okay, he's got them all here. With the others who came separately, there are twenty males of varying ages and degrees of mental and emotional disability strewn along the bleachers. Those dressed by their mothers look unnaturally neat. The others are a mess.

Donald parades in front of them. His voice loud, a gentle drill sergeant addressing recruits...

DONALD
Okay. It's always good, you guys, to start a story somewhere near the beginning.

He's thinking as he paces. How to begin? Okay...

DONALD
I grew up. In a nice house...

4 INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

4

Suburban front room of a bygone day. Blond woods, wall-to-wall carpet, a bowl of fake fruit. A VOICE calls from somewhere. Sharp, compelling...

VOICE (O.S.)
Hello!

Periodically throughout the scene, the voice of our unseen greeter will repeat its crisp salutation. Endlessly. As he does, we PAN the room to find...

CONTINUED:

...baby DONALD, a big toddler of two, crammed into a WALKER meant for a smaller child. IT is a seat suspended in a frame above a

circular base fitted with wheels. The kid's feet can reach the floor and he can scoot the contraption along. Except just now...

DONALD (O.S.)

By the time I was two, my parents had basically got the drill.

...the walker is flush against the wall. Donald is ROCKING HARD, almost violently, in his seat, which causes the aluminum base to keep BANGING the wall.

DONALD (O.S.)

I didn't offer the one quality they really wanted...

...as he keeps BANGING, as our unseen greeter keeps bidding us HELLO!, Donald's face remains completely neutral. As if pondering the universe.

DONALD (O.S.)

...normal.

Donald's MOM enters frame, crouches by her boy. Looks at him. She's used to Donald, so the stare is not horrified, sorrowful or alarmed. Just analytical. As if looking for a shred of change.

She places a favorite stuffed chewed-eared tiger on Donald's tray. Donald keeps BANGING, staring thoughtfully at the wall. The HELLO! continues from somewhere, but apparently, she's used to this, too.

MOM (softly)

Donald...? The whale is on the TV?
Willie, the Operatic Whale? He's singing!

No dice. No reaction. She strokes his hair, and he stiffens, but only slightly, at her touch. Her hand comes away, and even though this must have happened a thousand times, we can still see the trace of hurt and resentment. She leaves.

Alone, Donald starts flapping one of his hands. He holds it in front of his face, and watches it flap. This stops the banging. But not the distant HELLO! The flapping hand...

...stops flapping. Donald's chubby feet go to work SPINNING the walker in a circle. No playful face, tho. Just the same deep, reflective eyes. He stops. As if hearing the HELLO! for the first time.....he CHURNS toward it. THROUGH the room, the doorway,

A5 INT HALL

A5

DOWN the hall to where...

...a large BIRDCAGE hangs. By the front door. Inside, a really BIG, really black, CROW. Donald stops beneath the cage. Gapes up. Focusing.

CROW

HELLO!

Donald blinks. Drools.

DONALD (O.S.)

When I was two years old, I learned my first word. From a crow. Guess what it was?

5 EXT. PARK BLEACHERS - DAY

5

Donald pacing along the bleachers in front of the softball field.

DONALD

It was 'linoleum'.

Not much facial expression or vocal intonation. But that makes the little bit of sparkle all the more endearing.

DONALD

See, that was a joke.

Lost, apparently, on his audience.

DONALD

That crow didn't say 'linoleum'. We didn't even have linoleum.

Strange body language on these guys. One picks his nose with total concentration. One tries to get another to stroke his hand. Another keeps nodding yes to everything Donald says. Everyone stares in a creative array of different directions.

DONALD

What did the crow say...?

BLUME

CAWWW!!

Blume still has the hostility behind his bright, fixed smile. He is still eating.

DONALD (supportive)

That. And 'Hello!'

An uncanny rendering. The crow would be impressed.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

Crows, it turns out, are the most intelligent members of the avian world. And they love junk food.

Pacing. Oblivious to the fact that nobody cares. His voice softens with genuine feeling...

DONALD

They also mate for life. Family is very important.

He looks around. Sighs.

Their voices FADE as we PAN to picnic tables in distance under a small grove of trees. We CLOSE to see...

...a young woman sits atop a picnic table, knees drawn up, smoking with nervous energy. She is ISABELLE SORENSEN, the beautiful newcomer whose name Donald read on the sign-up sheet. Just now, her stone silence is being scrutinized by...

*
*
*

...a dozen women who are counterparts to our bleacher guys. Junior League, it isn't. Isabelle's agitation and silence are really starting to unglue these girls. They don't know where to look, what to do with their hands, the tension becomes unbearable.

ISABELLE (at once apologetic and irritated)

Okay, I'm new. I don't really know what to say.

They all look to her at once. Relieved that she's said anything. Trusting, fearful, childlike.

ISABELLE

You could help me b...

DAWN (eager to help)

The candy bar Baby Ruth was named after the daughter of President Grover Cleveland.

(an afterthought)

He once worked as a hangman. In Buffalo, New York.

Dawn blinks compulsively. Waiting to see if that helped.

ISABELLE

...by not derailing me with a lot of weirdball irrelevant stuff ab...

DAWN (more help)

He was one of the presidents who had illegitimate children.

CONTINUED:

DAWN (cont'd)

Together with Thomas Jefferson and
Warren G. Harding.

Isabelle blinks.

ISABELLE

How could three guys have children
together? They didn't even live in
the same century!

Dawn joins the others in mass non-compute confusion.
Suddenly, Isabelle realizes her mistake, and...

...LAUGHS. A throaty, smoky, sexy laugh, that makes some of
the girls a little uneasy.

ISABELLE

I do that... -

6

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

6

CLOSE on a tight-lipped, determined little girl. This is 5-
year-old Isabelle on her horsie, mounted on a metal spring.
She ROCKS furiously, her hair wild, her face and dress
streaked with ice cream. A pretty CRUCIFIX dangles from her
throat. The voice CONTINUES...

ISABELLE (O.S.)

...I take things sort of literally.

A crowd is ROARING somewhere. PAN from the rocking child,
across an adobe and terra cotta family room. Adults are
glued to the TV.

ISABELLE (O.S.)

...only one of the ways I'm good for a
laugh.

As from the set...

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)

Eric Heiden, skating flawlessly around
the final turn...

CLOSE on baby Isabelle rocking, her eyes locked in
distance...

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)

He will be the first to win five gold
medals!

As the adults CHEER along with the crowd, we would swear her
mind is a million miles from the sportscaster's words.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)

He breaks the record! He breaks the
record! He breaks the record!

CONTINUED:

We would be wrong.

7 EXT. FRONT LAWN

7

Baby Isabelle with an armful of 78 RPM vinyl RECORDS. Starts dumping them from their paper sleeves onto the grass...

ISABELLE (O.S.)
If that's all it took to impress
them...

She begins to pick them up, one at a time, and BREAK them across her knee. Ferocious, the way she goes for it. Kids notice from next door, from the street, they begin to gather, call out, as...

...an AIRPLANE soars overhead. Isabelle completely forgets her mission. Looks straight up. Holds her arms out to the side, and begins to...

...SPIN in a tight circle, faster, FASTER, a smile BREAKS out on her dirty, angelic face. And still faster, a whirling, graceful BLUR, until at last...

...she falls HARD. The kids close in, laughing, chanting MON-STER, MON-STER, as if this happens all the time. Isabelle springs to her hands and knees, and begins a series of startingly accurate ANIMAL NOISES, coyote, wolf, rooster, chicken, finally BARKING and SNARLING like a vicious dog, BARING her teeth, her crucifix dangling.

The kids jeer as if it's a joke, but they are backing away slightly, because Isabelle isn't joking. She looks pretty crazy. And then...

...a big German shepherd BOUNDS over from across the street, STRAIGHT to Isabelle's growling, and begins to LICK her. Instantly, the kids, her rage, are forgotten. She is any child who ever loved a dog.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
Animals are different. You can't
teach them cruelty.

8 INT. GREEN STAMP REDEMPTION CENTER - DAY

8

S & H Green Stamp redemption center. Lawn mowers, lamps, toasters, kitsch of every description, being redeemed for coupon books. PAN the tableau of this gentler, unashamedly acquisitive era, to find...

...Donald at 7, beside his DAD, staring up with awestruck absorption, as...

CONTINUED:

...a CUCKOO BIRD pokes its way out of a classic white-trimmed clock that looks like a Swiss chalet, and COO-KOOS its brains out...

DONALD (O.S.)

It turns out, you can't control people. Or even predict them.

The last cuckoo dies away.

DONALD (O.S.)

Numbers. Are different.

The boy cocks his head.

DONALD (O.S.)

As I used to say. You can count on 'em.

DONALD (as the crow)

Hello!

The CLERK is a scrawny teenager with wild orange hair, and sympathetic eyes. He likes kids.

CLERK (not getting it)

Hello.

Doanld wasn't talking to him. So far, he doesn't exist.

CLERK

It's a handsome clock.

DAD

We want the wrench kit.

DONALD

Eleven.

That stops them for a beat.

CLERK

Eleven o'clock, right. It's gonna cuckoo twelve times at twelve o'clock, then once at one o'clock. And like that.

Donald just stares at the clock as if it might yield some transcendent secret.

CLERK

That's a lot of cuckoos every day.

DAD

Are you out of wrench kits?

CONTINUED:

DONALD

156.

Dad puts his hand on Donald's head. Affectionate, but not overdoing it.

DAD

Cuckoos per day, maybe. He does that, somet...

DONALD (tells the clerk)

In 6410 days, it'll do that a million times.

The clerk. Falls out.

DONALD

It'll be 9022 days old. That's about twenty four and a half. In years.

Donald seems entirely serious. The teenagers's eyes are wide.

DAD

Don't worry, there's plenty of normal stuff he can't do.

Not said to put Donald down. Just to calm the clerk. Who is staring at Donald as if he were levitating.

CLERK

Why don't you get him the clock?

DAD

Why don't you?

9 EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

9

Donald is 9, alone on a bench eating a sandwich. He doesn't look sad, he doesn't look preoccupied...

DONALD (O.S.)

People with Asperger's Syndrome aren't like other autistics...

He doesn't look much of anything at all. Natural camouflage.

DONALD (O.S.)

We want contact with people. Very much. We're just pathetically clueless. Is all.

KID

Hey, Morton!

CONTINUED:

Donald turns, startled. He's not used to being sought out for conversation. There are four boys. He lowers his sandwich.

KID

I got a bet with Genson. Quick,
what's 5589 times 3972 divided by 17?

DONALD (calmly)

1,305,853...

KID (to Genson)

I tol...

DONALD (holding up one finger)

...point four-one-two. Etcetera.

The kid shows Genson a folded sheet of paper. A miracle. Genson's circuits are blown. The others laugh.

DONALD (O.S.)

I knew this stuff made me a freak.
But, at least, a freak is someone.

DONALD

You know, when MacDonald's says '13
billion served, it's not that much,
only 43 visits per person per year
which is only once every 8.49...

They are already walking away. No need to say good-bye.

DONALD

...days.

Donald can resume eating now. He regards his sandwich...

DONALD (O.S.)

Numbers teach us. That everything in
the universe. Is somehow connected.

BIG bite.

DONALD (O.S.)

Theoretically. Even people.

10

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

10

PAN a classroom of 9-year-olds, looking around with varying degrees of inattention as an angelic child's VOICE sings AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL, between SNARFLES of a raging head cold.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE (O.S.)
I was always good with music. I had
perfect pitch. And I understood how
music worked, the rules of it.

Come to a 9-year-old Isabelle, who is singing so beautifully
to the piano accompaniment...

ISABELLE (O.S.)
In fourth grade, I auditioned for
chorus.

But, as at five, she is still a MESS. Tangled ponytail,
bangs in her eyes, sagging socks, a rip in her soiled
sweater, skirt twisted a quarter way around. Dirty face. A
little blood caked beneath her nose.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
I didn't get in.

She SNARFLES again, and wipes her nose on her skirt.
Revealing her underwear. Two teachers share a look.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
Miss Graben said we were judged on
voice. And presentation.

11 INT. ROOM - NIGHT

11

We adjust to the lack of light. Slowly PAN a room of teenage
COUPLES making out. On the sofa. On leather reading chairs.
On the floor. Come to...

TEENAGE VOICE
Jesus, Morton. Is that you?

...teenage Donald. Standing here. Just staring.

DONALD
Yeh, it's me.

Simple answer. To a simple question.

VOICE
What the hell are you doing?

DONALD
I'm watching you.

Which he is. With his hands at his side. Face kind of slack
and contemplative at once.

VOICE
Well, stop.

A beat.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

So long.

Donald turns around slowly. Trundles from the darkened room, into...

...an even DARKER hallway.

DONALD (O.S.)

Yeh...

Starts to walk off and walks INTO the wall.

DONALD (O.S.)

...what the hell was I doing?

12 EXT. PARK PICNIC TABLES - DAY

12

Isabelle is lighting one cigarette from the tip of another. She's pretty much got this crowd in the palm of her hand. They've never seen anything like her.

ISABELLE

See, for me, watching was never enough. I needed to participate.

Deep drag.

ISABELLE

Especially. Sex.

Looks around at the effect of this word. Dawn nods intently, leans forward to drink this in. Bronwin nods her assent in contrast to her increasing panic and confusion. Gracie grins wildly, with her special brand of adorably daffy eagerness.

Isabelle knows she's on, well, virgin ground here.

ISABELLE (matter-of-fact)

My first rape. I was fourteen.

13 EXT. HIGHWAY, ARIZONA - DAY

13

Isabelle, 14 and barefoot, wearing a see-through paisley dress that blows hard against her body in the wind. Long hair whips across her face. She is beautiful, wild, and completely vulnerable.

ISABELLE (O.S.)

It sure wasn't my last, and they're never pleasant, let me tell you.

A pick-up TRUCK pulls over. She leans in the window to talk flirtatiously for a beat. Hops in. The truck PEELS out.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE (O.S.)

He was cute. You remember things like that. But you're still angry.

14 EXT. HAIGHT STREET, SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

14

Barefoot Isabelle in the same dress, saunters down Haight between two GUYS who are maybe 20, and well-built, attractive. The three are high, the guys touching her as they stop to interact with street people, Isabelle laughing uncontrollably. Not a girlish giggle, but the birth of her Joplinesque full-throated whiskey laugh.

ISABELLE (O.S.)

I'd run away, and it was a great success. After the rape.

15 EXT. PARK PICNIC TABLES - DAY

15

PAN the faces of Isabelle's audience. They are curious, if uncomprehending. Like visitors at the zoo, watching a new species. Come to...

Isabelle. Looking to each in turn. And from her heart...

ISABELLE

I thought if I had sex with men. They'd let me be around them.

GRACIE

Why would you want that?

It's a straight question, even if asked with Gracie's trademark irrepressible psycho grin.

ISABELLE (laughs)

Because I've had sex with women, sugar, and it's so dumb. There's no dick!

PAN the shock, overload, and downright confusion this engenders. The only sound is Gracie's CACKLE of hysterical laughter. Tears spill down Bronwin's face.

ANGLE...Donald at the bleachers, where he has been parading in

front of his troops. Only now he's stopped, watching slack-jawed at the picnic tables in distance, where...

...one woman is SHRIEKING, randomly, another is SOBBING, a third FLAPPING her arms violently, several others SHOUT and gesture at

the lone figure seated on the picnic table, who is angrily SCREAMING right back. Chaos.

CONTINUED:

Donald watches with the flat affect we saw at the make-out party. PAN his boys, a few of whom sort of notice. The rest are 'as you were' in the self-absorption of their rituals and internal landscapes.

DONALD (softly)
'Scuse me, guys.

And just walks off, without looking back. This gets noticed. The men begin to rise, in their various manners, and follow after. *

ANGLE...Donald STRIDING toward the vocal melee, oblivious to young couples, moms with strollers, single citizens reading under trees, all of whom are staring with fascination and growing alarm. Donald TROTS the last little distance, calling out...

DONALD
'Scuse me, 'scuse me, ladies! Is there some confusion, h...

ISABELLE (wheeling around)
Confusion? This is no damn confusion, this is a fight!

She is really beautiful. Donald stares at that.

DONALD
Hello, we haven't met. I'm Donald
Mo... *

ISABELLE
Can you tell confusion from a fight,
pal? Or are you as dingy as they are! *

WAVING at the women. Who slow down to watch the new confrontation. The arriving men stand around awkwardly and stare. Skeets fixates on his misbuttoned buttons, like he's alone. Blume is eating. Donald wants to be diplomatic... *

DONALD
You know, some of us are higher-
functioning than others, but that's no
reason t... *

ISABELLE
Don't condescend to these women,
Donald, they're no crazier than I am. *

GRACIE (cheery)
YES WE ARE! *

ISABELLE
I mean, I'm weird, but I'm not
strange. *

CONTINUED:

Some SHOUTS from the women on both sides of that one. The guys pretty much stay out of it.

DONALD (catching up)
You're right, it's not confusion.
It's discord. That's a nice sweater.

She stares at him. Rolls on...

ISABELLE
Look, this is my first time in your little fish-tank, but I've done a lot of 12-step, believe it!

DONALD (sincere)
I really believe it.

ISABELLE
And I was giving these girls a lesson from my heart. Which they sorely need.

A beat. Not wanting to pry...

DONALD
That's just what I was urging the guys to d...

ISABELLE (steamrolling him)
Which is, that if you are willing to show a man that you are not good enough for him. He is usually willing to believe you.

Donald looks around. See, everybody...?

DONALD
So it's all about self-esteem.

She hops OFF the table. She is really mad.

ISABELLE
Kiss my self-esteemed butt, Donald
Duck! I mean why tell your life story
and tell only the good parts?

DONALD
Donald Morton.

ISABELLE
You are missing my point!

DONALD
No, I'm not. I just never know what to say.

CONTINUED:

A delay. Then, she laughs. Which makes her even more beautiful.

ISABELLE
Well. Neither do I.

She draws on her smoke.

ISABELLE
We're quite the pair, huh?

Donald swallows. Hard. Isabelle looks around at all the others.

ISABELLE
Oh, what's the point?

FLIPS her cigarette to the grass. SNUFFS it with her foot. PICKS it up. And just STALKS off. She gets a little distance before he comes up with...

DONALD (calling out)
NOT BEING ALONE!

She WHIPS around, walking backwards now...

ISABELLE (calls back)
CONSIDERING WHO WE ARE. WHAT THE HELL
IS SO GREAT ABOUT THAT?

And turns to march past a garbage can, so she can THROW her cigarette butt away.

JANICE
SHE'S RIGHT, YOU KNOW!

She's right in Donald's face, blinking through her round metal-rimmed spectacles.

JANICE
CONSIDERING WHO YOU ARE.

Without turning to her. A sad, absent little...

DONALD
She means you, too.

DAWN (positive)
And. She means me!

16 INT. DONALD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

16

PAN through a darkened apartment, illuminated by a dim flickering light. There is CLUTTER everywhere, to a bizarre degree.

CONTINUED:

Newspapers, mail, comic books, stacked in towering haphazard PILES, sharing space with take-out cartons, pizza boxes, and various random OBJECTS. If a six-year-old lived alone, this is his pad. There is only one sound...

DONALD (O.S.)

I think better at home...

...the flutter of WINGS. Lots. Of wings.

DONALD (O.S.)

I like the peace and quiet.

SEE Donald sitting in a small empty spot on the threadbare sofa, as a muted, dust-covered vintage Zenith TV displays cartoons. Donald is not watching. He has the Yellow Pages in his lap, and we PAN DOWN the listing of cab companies, to see that each one has been crossed out. Except the last two. With a sigh, he crosses out the second-to-last company. *

PAN to see who he's been talking to. Six BIRDS who stand eating from a huge pile of BIRDSEED that has been dumped on the floor. *

DONALD

I can think about important things.
Like that girl.

He reaches up without looking, and we see for the first time a looming, leering SHAPE beside the sofa. It is a homemade COSTUME that looks something like a huge KILLER WHALE, with a lolling red TONGUE. It sits comfortably near, on its stand. He begins to stroke it, absently.

DONALD

And why she was so mad.

He stands up now. Begins to shuffle through the few pathways among the debris.

DONALD (softer)

What she'd look like. With her hair
down.

He stops to glance at two framed CERTIFICATES on the wall, side-by-side. One is a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics from the University of Michigan. The other, a certificate of participation from the National Science Foundation for a summer math camp.

DONALD

I know she didn't go to college.

Continues on now toward a bright glaring LIGHT. Takes a carefully folded sheet of paper from his pocket. Doesn't unfold it, just making sure it's there. Puts it back.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

I pulled her information form. After the meeting.

He enters the kitchen. This is worse. Unless you cherish bacteria. The sink overflows with unwashed dishes. The garbage and trash bags with everything else. Dundee LANDS on his back as he bends to open the freezer... *

DONALD

What d'you think, Dundee?
Salisbury steak?

The freezer contains a lot of frost. And several Hungry Man dinners. All are salisbury steak. He removes one, leaving the freezer open. Hence, the frost.

DONALD

Nice to obsess on something beautiful.
For a change.

He goes to the microwave oven, which is buried under more stuff. Its door is ajar, and its timer has stopped at 3:09. We're already thinking, uh-oh. He smiles, instantly. Tells the bird...

DONALD

This is a lucky break. 309 Is the number of days I'm older than Isabelle, that's the girl, divided by 10.

The tinfoil EXPLODES in the microwave, and in the living room, the birds FLY CRAZILY in all directions. *

17 INT. CAB - DAY

17

Donald driving a new taxi with an all-business stare that belies his total lack of concentration. His seat cover is made of wooden beads, and Dundee, yep, Dundee, sits perched on the headrest. *

DONALD

This is the best job I ever had.

He's talking in the rear-view to his PASSENGERS, two Korean businessmen who are in a heated, but polite, argument with each other. They speak no English whatsoever.

DONALD

I've been fired by all the yellow and green and checkerboard cab companies. I'm down to my last color. *

He hears no objection. Except from Dundee, who suddenly SQUAWKS out a heart-chilling RASP, which makes the paying customers look UP in terror. *

CONTINUED:

DONALD

Don't worry. He's unflappable.

Donald chuckles over the pun. Thus reassured, the businessmen return to their argument, with one eye on the cockatiel. Donald lifts a half-eaten sandwich of indeterminate age from the stack of empty fast food packaging, assorted Racing Forms and other debris piled on the passenger seat.

DONALD

The birds rarely figure into the accidents. More often, it's the radio...

And he turns UP the DISPATCH RADIO to demonstrate...

DISPATCHER (O.S.)

Ahh...87 to Melrose and Sierra Bonita...

DONALD

No.

SUPERIMPOSE the elaborate TRAFFIC GRID of city streets, which Donald has in his mind. Main arteries glow RED, side streets PURPLE, freeways are BLUE. Everywhere on the grid, DOZENS of GREEN-AND-WHITE dots, move along the grid.

DONALD

The trouble is, I can see in my mind the deployment of the entire fleet. The big trouble is, I can't not see it.

The biggest trouble is, through the grid, we can scarcely see the road.

DONALD

Now, 87 last checked in at Holloway and La Cienega, which puts him a good sixteen minutes away, while 223 and 41 bo...

CRASH. Not a loud one. But solid enough.

DONALD (softly)

Voila.

The grid has DISAPPEARED, leaving only the rear end of the somewhat-bashed flower delivery truck, now leaking fluid, with some of its cargo strewn on the roadside. Our passengers FREAK. Dundee, as advertised, unflappable. Been there, done that.

The Koreans BOLT out of the car, shrieking at Donald and the flower truck driver in rapid-fire Korean obscenities (we guess). Donald gets out slowly, telling Dundee...

CONTINUED:

DONALD

Stay.

Dundee FLIES out of the car to Donald's shoulder. Donald looks around, oblivious to his victims and the general chaos he has brought to Olympic Boulevard. Advises the cockatiel...

DONALD

It'll take the police, oh, eight, nine minutes.

Instinct. And experience. The truck driver is talking to him, but Donald walks straight past him, bends carefully, and picks up a bunch of irises, brushes them off as he walks toward...

DONALD

An opportune moment. To ring Isabelle. You think?

...a public PHONE BOOTH. He is pulling out her neatly-folded information form, getting a little mayo on it that had come from his sandwich. Opens it...

DONALD

You know what's perfect about her phone number...?

He dumps an ENORMOUS handful of CHANGE, mostly pennies and nickels, onto the metal platform beneath the telephone. Gives Dundee the punch-line...

DONALD

...she's really pretty.

He chuckles at the joke. We've never seen him excited before. He fumbles getting the nickels in. Punches up the number. Looks at the irises. They look all right.

DONALD

Blue is her color.

The phone RINGS, and RINGS, and suddenly...

ISABELLE (O.S.)

Yeh, hello...?

And Donald. Freezes. The silence is deafening. Heart-breaking.

ISABELLE (O.S., musical and irritated)

Hell-lo-oh...

At this point, we're hoping Dundee says something. Donald replaces the receiver very, very gently. So it won't sound like hanging up. He is sad.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

First time. Better to get her machine. You think?

18 INT. COMMUNITY CENTER REC ROOM - DAY

18

The usual suspects. PAN to find Donald talking with his friend Roger, the black guy who we recall as weather maven supreme...

ROGER (resonant monotone)

...but 38 celsius in Tegucigalpa, which is something of a record for the day in Honduras and neighboring Nicaragua, not to mention Belize, unless you count 1924, when the record-keeping was suspect. To say the least.

Having said the least, this affable normal-looking chap waits for Donald's response. But Donald's eyes are anxious and elsewhere. Across the room, where...

...Gregory, the hunched-over grimacing writer, is chatting with Isabelle. No surprise, he's doing the talking. She laughs. And we can hear the music of it from here. Donald is dying by inches. Roger is predictably oblivious...

ROGER

...on the humidity front, the only item of note was Hyderabad in the South of India. Twelve percent, which considering the season, was something of an attention-grabber.

Donald, despite the distraction of the Isabelle-Gregory tete a tete, becomes aware that Dawn, our resident presidential scholar, has stepped up comically close to them. Waiting for an opening. So, to be polite...

DONALD

Say, Rog. What was the weather at the McKinley Inaugural? That would have been...

Without looking, he points to Dawn...

DAWN (not missing a microbeat)

January 20, 1900. A.D.

ROGER (especially quick)

Big snow. Three point four inches. High temperature 17 degrees Fahrenheit, low tem...

CONTINUED:

Donald has walked on, leaving them to it. Because Gregory has left Isabelle, and has shambled his hulking, hunched-over form to the punch bowl. Donald strolls by. Real casual. But finesse is not a strong suit...

DONALD

What did you say to her?

Gregory squints up. He's always squinting. Her? Donald gestures discreetly with his head. Isabelle. Oh, her.

GREGORY

I said I was a writer. But she shouldn't read my oeuvre, because it repels women.

DONALD

And men. So she said...?

GREGORY

'Try me.'

DONALD

Figures.

GREGORY

She's coming to the Halloween Party with me.

Donald gags. His eyes water. A weak smile.

DONALD

That's great. Tell me about it.

GREGORY

I'm coming as Batman. A whimsical commentary on decaying popular culture.

Not the all about it Donald had in mind.

DONALD

What will she come as?

GREGORY

Who cares?

DONALD

I do.

GREGORY

Ask her.

DONALD

What she's coming as?

CONTINUED:

GREGORY

Ask her if she'll come with me.

Donald blinks. Just now comprehending...

GREGORY (calmly)

I was seized by terror.

Oh. Well...

DONALD

I don't think I could d...

GREGORY

She has Asperger's, like you. You talk the same language of emotional dysfunction. I, on the other hand, just irritate the shit out of everyone. Even you.

Donald looks across the room. Isabelle is listening with earnest attention to shy Bronwin. From here, it looks like a real conversation.

DONALD

She likes you. She laughed.

GREGORY

Everybody laughs at me. That doesn't commit them to a Halloween Party.

Donald is staring off at the object of his obsession. Lost in her.

GREGORY

Please.

This makes Donald turn. Even though the word was said without affect, it is clearly atypical. Donald is moved by his annoying friend's plea. Muscles slack, arms at his side, Donald nods. You got it.

He strolls over. Past the mirror, stopping to tuck in his shirt front (but not the tail), and to pick something egregious out of his teeth. As he arrives...

BRONWIN (to Isabelle)

I have to be careful. You have to be careful, too.

She speaks with heartfelt earnestness, staring off to one side, nodding constantly. Dressed by her mother in a neat checkered suit and silk blouse, Bronwin is feminine. Plain and somehow pretty at once. She holds a big cookie in one hand.

CONTINUED:

BRONWIN

People take advantage of autistic people all the time. That's just the way it is.

Before anyone can react, the huge, slovenly form of BLUME has appeared, SNATCHING the cookie from Bronwin's hand. His eyes angry above his fixed smile...

BLUME

That's my cookie. You almost ate my cookie.

CHOMPS a big, defiant, crumble-producing BITE!

ISABELLE

HEY!

Donald produces an extra big cookie that he has stolen from Blume's stash. Hands it to Bronwin.

BRONWIN

I'm going to call my parents now. They'll pick me up at the bulletin board. The bulletin board.

She puts the cookie in the pocket of her suit. Isabelle draws a breath to object, but...

DONALD

Good idea. Save it for later.

BRONWIN

I'm going to call my parents now.

Not a question. But her eyes wait for an answer. Donald nods, good. And, hesitantly, Bronwin goes. Donald watches her progress.

ISABELLE

Hi, Donald. Remember me?

Does he ever. And does she know it.

ISABELLE

You know what everybody tells me about you?

DONALD

I'm good with numbers.

ISABELLE

You spoiled the surprise.

She is smiling, happy. In this moment, a lovely, normal woman. Donald doesn't know what to say.

CONTINUED:

DONALD
I take things literally. *

ISABELLE
Me,t... *

DONALD
When I was nine, my dad bought me
breakfast at this diner...? *

Looks to see if she's turned off yet. She's still smiling.

DONALD
He said, 'hominy grits'. I thought he
said 'how many', and I was supposed to
count th...

ISABELLE (fast)
How many were there?

DONALD (right back)
342.

Panic. Written all over his face. Why did he blurt that?

DONALD (trying)
That was a joke. I wouldn't really
remember anything as weird as how many
hom...

ISABELLE
I have to leave now.

His face goes slack. He's blown it, in one second.

ISABELLE
To feed my animals.

DONALD
I've got six birds mysel...

ISABELLE
My birds are chill. But the iguanas
get fed at five o'clock.

DONALD (takes a chance)
I love iguanas. Especially with cream
sauce.

She looks at him in horror. Then LAUGHS.

DONALD
I have to talk to you, Isabelle.
About something important.

CONTINUED:

She looks at her watch. Then, at the door. Donald's life is flashing before his eyes. She turns and sees this. Every inch of it.

ISABELLE

Cream sauce.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

It was a joke.

She leans toward him. Her eyes dancing.

ISABELLE

Are you free for lunch? Tomorrow?

From the way his eyes bug. Maybe he is. She leans closer...

ISABELLE (whispers)

I'll bring the lizard. You bring the sauce.

19 INT. REPTILE HOUSE, ZOO - DAY

19

CLOSE on a KOMODO DRAGON, scuttling toward us across the gravel to STOP in his tracks. His endless tongue FLICKS out toward...

...a glass barrier. Crouched across the glass is Isabelle, staring back. Nobody blinks. The dragon tilts his head. Isabelle tilts hers. She FLICKS out her tongue. Rises slowly. Cocks her finger at the dragon, telling someone we can't see...

ISABELLE

A meal in itself.

...turning to Donald, who holds an amazing amount of junk food. As she takes her half of the stash...

ISABELLE

I said bring the sauce. Not wear it.

And walks off. Donald looks down at the humongous ketchup STAIN on his otherwise sort of white t-shirt. He spits on his finger. Rubs at the stain. Shit.

20 EXT. PRIMATE AREA, ZOO- DAY

20

ANGLE...a hulking orange ORANGUTAN, the big guy. He sits, leaning on his knuckles, staring across the empty pit at... *

...Isabelle, who stares back, doing a fabulous imitation of him. Shoulders rolled forward, jaw jutting, a benign yet menacing scowl. Not only is Donald watching the tableau, but so are a dozen bystanders. Adults, kids, loving the connection between beauty and the beast. Suddenly, Isabelle...

...growls, then BELLOWS like an orangutan. The onlookers laugh, applaud, shout ALL RIGHT! and GET HIM, GIRL! But the orangutan just stares back. No reaction other than fascination... Just like Donald. *

CONTINUED:

DONALD

You know, an orangutan spends two hours a day eating breakfast. So when you think about it...

She turns. Fixes Donald with her orangutan glare.

DONALD

...that's 2,628,000 seconds a year eating breakfast. Which leaves him 28,908,000 seconds to not eat breakfast.

Isabelle SNORTS. Stays in character. Donald feels he's blown it. Again.

DONALD

I don't have to do numbers all the time, y'know, I can control mys...

ISABELLE

Don't stop, Donald. Don't ever stop.

Her eyes are shining. He is overwhelmed.

DONALD

Good. Because I can't.

ISABELLE

I knew that. Neither can I.

She turns back to the orangutan, and COVERS her face with her hands, as if she's hid or gone away. Like you'd play with a baby. The orangutan stares and starts to become...

...AGITATED, moving in a circle, SCREECHING, jumping up and down. The crowd watching starts to zero in.

DONALD

Um. Isabelle...?

The ape is going ape. MORE anxious, more active, the crowd watching, pointing. Isabelle still covers her face.

DONALD

I don't think he likes th...

ISABELLE

Ready?

And suddenly, PARTS her hands. Her beautiful smiling face shows through.

ISABELLE

Peek-a-boc.

CONTINUED:

And the orangutan suddenly QUIETS. Hunkers down. And stares back. *

Could Donald be more in love. *

ANGLE...Isabelle comes to the bench where their food is sitting. Begins to eat her hot dog in a circular fashion, like an ear of corn. He comes and sits beside her. She eats without looking at him... *

ISABELLE

I learned long ago, I can't keep from shocking people. So I make it work for me. Sometimes.

Sometimes. Her voice dropped on that.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

The women in your group? I really
blew them out that day at the park. I
hope they'll forgive me someday.

Said in a matter-of-fact tone. But it is clearly something
she's been thinking about. Donald draws a breath...

DONALD

What you said about being raped...?

She looks up. Straight to his eyes.

DONALD

...rape is a very bad thing. It's not
a joke. Not ever.

There. He's said it. Even though he is terrified of
offending her. She tries a smile. He's not smiling back.
He's worried for her. And seeing this...

ISABELLE

Donald, I used to initiate sex with
strangers. In a really...in a crazy
way. I wanted someone to love me.
And I thought that was the only way I
had.

He stares at her.

ISABELLE

And three times, I picked a really
wrong guy. But I don't do that any-
more.

*
*
*
*

CONTINUED:

And she smiles. It makes her lovely.

ISABELLE

I wish you'd been around then. I
could have used a smart friend.

Hmmn? And then...

ISABELLE

That took guts. Your speaking up,
just now.

Said with admiration.

DONALD

Not rea...

ISABELLE

It did. Because you're attracted to
me. And you want to make a good
impression.

So dead right. There's nothing he can say.

ISABELLE (softly)

And guts. Makes a great impression.
Okay?

He is blushing. Thrilled beyond words.

CONTINUED:

21 INT. AVIARY, ZOO- DAY

21

ANGLE...our couple strolling through an open-air AVIARY. Enclosed by wire far above them. Birds flying free, everywhere. They both look around in wonder, thrilled at the sight.

ISABELLE

This is how the birds are in my apartment.

She draws a big breath. She looks manic, elated.

ISABELLE

Tonight. Let's sneak back in and set all the animals free. Except the polar bears, it's too warm.

She looks at him. Sees incipient panic.

ISABELLE

That was a joke.

Oh. And then...

ISABELLE

So, it's time. You had something important to tell me. Remember?

A different oh. He is torn. But loyal...

CONTINUED:

DONALD
My friend Gregory. Wants to take you
to the Halloween Party.

Donald swallows. Hard.

DONALD
See, I never go to Halloween parties.
Ever.

Silence. It continues.

ISABELLE
I'm waiting, Donald. For the reason.

This gets tougher and tougher.

DONALD
My friends like to dress up in
costume. To hide who they are.

ISABELLE
Now, that's sad. But credible.

He has to tell her. What he's told no one.

DONALD
I have a costume. At my place. But
it's a secret.

A secret.

DONALD
Because it reveals. Who I really am.
And nobody knows.

Wow. The way he said that. She is mesmerized. He misreads
her.

DONALD
That's even more pathetic, huh?

She grins.

ISABELLE
Ever see a bald eagle?

And before he can answer, she WHIPS OFF...

...her WIG. Her head is shiny smooth. His eyes BUG OUT.

ISABELLE
A turn-off, right?

His eyes still wide. Donald just SHAKES his head. No way.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

I don't have cancer or anything, it's for my work. I'm a professional billiard ball.

She LAUGHS. So he laughs, too. Kind of.

ISABELLE

You take me to the party. Wear your costume for me, Donald. I'd be so honored.

And the way she says that. His insides melt. Especially his heart. She puts her wig back on, carefully, expertly. She's once more the Isabelle he knows.

ISABELLE

We won't go to any party. Just meet me at the mall. Everybody's in costume, they won't notice us. That's what I love about Halloween...

She leans close. Whispers...

ISABELLE

It's the only night I'm normal.

DONALD (from his soul)

Don't ever be normal. Okay?

She gazes in his eyes. And nods. Okay, I won't.

ISABELLE

Let's go see the hippos, huh? If we're lucky, they'll be fucking.

She reaches out. Takes his hand. He wants to cry.

Off they go. To see if they're lucky.

21 INT. DONALD'S APARTMENT - DAY

21

Into frame, a huge whale FLIPPER. Pagliacci climbs up on it. Off we go, into...

...the BATHROOM. Okay, this is the worst. Yes, actual MOLD. Shower curtain CAKED with mildew. A mound of empty toilet paper rolls. The floor, forget it. We look in the mirror to see what we suspected we would...

...a killer WHALE, whose face looks more like a dolphin. Pagliacci perched on its flipper. With his other hand, Donald INSERTS the red thing into his jaws. It is the huge, lolling, adorably silly TONGUE. The whale stares into the toothpaste-spattered mirror...

CONTINUED:

DONALD
Hi, Isabelle!

Too jaunty. He tries it AGAIN, in six different attitudes. Suave, sing-song, muy macho, etc. He sighs. Nothing sounds right. He looks at the crud-encrusted clock.

DONALD
Okay. I'm 8 hours and 37 minutes early. Plenty of time. And that's a good sign...

The whale looks at the cockatiel. Who stares back, unafraid, unimpressed.

DONALD
517 minutes, which is a prime number.

Encouraged, he looks back to the mirror.

DONALD
Hi, Isabelle. Wanna dance?

And does a little JIG. The tongue falls out. The whale looks down at it...

DONALD
Staples. You think?

22 EXT. MALL - NIGHT (OLD SC.24)

22

Isabelle withdraws an antique pocket watch on a chain from her waistcoat. She shakes her head how late it is. Have I been stood up?

*
*
*

23 INT. DONALD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (LATER)

23

Donald looks at the clock again.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

I'm late. Which is ironic, since I started out 6 hours and 23...minutes early.

24

EXT. MALL - NIGHT (OLD SC.22)

24

...a slender FIGURE, seen from the rear, staring in a store window. A figure dressed as MOZART, satin jacket, elegant wig, graceful even in repose. A man approaches from behind.

*
*
*

MAN

Excuse me.

*
*

The figure turns sharply. It is Isabelle. The smile. Of dazzling light. It fades when she sees it is not Donald, only an incredibly handsome stranger.

*
*
*

MAN

I was just wondering if you had the time.

*
*
*

ISABELLE

If I didn't why would I be standing here?

*
*
*

The handsome man looks confused. Then, smiles...

*

MAN

Let me take the mystery out of this. I've always wanted to have a drink with an 18th Century genius. What do you think?

*
*
*
*
*

HOLD on his smile. Isabelle's lovely face. And...

*

25

INT. DONALD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (LATER)

25

DONALD

You know what, at this point it's probably better not to go at all. Don't you think?

Donald looks over at Pagliacci. The bird looks back at him, disgusted.

DONALD

I mean like she's probably left already. If she hasn't, she'd be really irritated when I show up, and I wouldn't know what to say. And you know how I get when I don't know what to say.

CONTINUED:

The doorbell rings.

DONALD
Just a second.
(absently, to the bird)
I'll be right back.

He goes to the door, forgetting that he's carrying the bird with him as he goes.

He gets to the door, the bell still ringing. Puts his hand on the knob.

DONALD
(to the bird)
Be right with you.

He opens the door to find a smiling Isabelle standing in the doorway. She admires Donald's costume.

ISABELLE
Hey. Nice whale costume.

SNAP to her view. Actually, it is rather nice. The whale places one flipper across his waist and BOWS deeply. No mean feat, especially with a cockatiel perched on the flipper.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

Doctor Mozart, I presume?

His tongue falls OUT. Shit. As he awkwardly retrieves it, she tilts her head. Begins to WHISTLE something complex, melodic and perfect. The whale (and bird) rocks, wanting to keep time.

ISABELLE

Symphony 40 in G minor. It's about anger, passion and transcendence.

DONALD

Like you.

She liked that. It flashes across her eyes.

DONALD (really contrite)

I'm sorry I'm 63 minutes late, I really was gonna leave...

ISABELLE

I just figured you screwed up.

She takes his arm. They stroll out the door.

26

EXT. MALL- NIGHT

26

A BUS pulls up to the corner. It says 809. Off come Mozart and the Whale, who is still explaining... *

*

DONALD

...the thing is I was figuring to take the 303 bus instead of the 809, because 303 squared is 91809, and the last three digits are 809, so I forgot which one I started with, and I basical...

ISABELLE

Like I said. I figured you screwed up.

Right. The whale nods. He screwed up. She puts her hands against his belly, rubs him, playfully...

ISABELLE

And this is who you really are? This is so hot!

She grabs the open mouth, stands on her tippy toes to peer inside...

ISABELLE (sing-song)

Are you in there? Yoo-hoo! Mister Jo-nah...

CONTINUED:

Hearing derisive LAUGHTER, she whips around at a Gold's Gym couple...

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

What are you giggling at, toots, at
least my boyfriend's a vegetarian!

No come-back is possible. Back to the whale...

ISABELLE

So why is the real you a wha...

DONALD

You have a boyfriend?

ISABELLE (rolls her eyes)

It's a joke. You're the vegetarian.
Because you're a whale.

Beat.

ISABELLE

So why is that? That you're a whale.

He stares in her eyes.

DONALD

All my life. I'm on the outside
looking in. Like I'm struggling
to get a look at the parade that's
going by.

Can she understand...?

DONALD

But when you're a whale. You are
the parade.

Her face wreathed in the loveliest smile.

ISABELLE

I bet you know all about whales.

DONALD

Well, that's a long sto...

ISABELLE

Last bus isn't for two hours, 47
minutes...

Her eyes dancing. She slips her arm through his flipper.

ISABELLE

...and 21 seconds...I mean,
20...oops, 19...check that, it's...

Off they go. Still updating her estimate.

28

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

28

Mozart and the whale. At a bus stop. Here comes the last bus. Maybe a block away. She turns to look at Donald the whale, and pulls...

*

...the silly, lolling red thing out of his jaws. Her eyes are dancing. The way they do.

ISABELLE

It's our first kiss, Donald. No tongue.

She leans up to his face. Whispers...

ISABELLE

Take off the costume. You don't need it, anymore.

*

The whale looks around. The bus is pulling up. A moment of panic.

*

DONALD

Uh. I'm not sure what I'm wearing. Underneath.

ISABELLE (softly)

Well. What the fuck.

Right. So she helps him STRUGGLE out of the huge contraption. As the bulk of it finally lifts over his head, the bus HISSES to a stop beside him, the doors OPEN, giving driver and passengers a ringside VIEW of...

*

...Donald in boxer shorts. His tank top is way too small to cover his belly. There is WHISTLING and APPLAUSE, perhaps because his top bears the legend: INSIDE THIS T-SHIRT LIVES A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. As Isabelle traces the words with a slender finger...

DONALD

Mix-up at the laundromat.

She leans her mouth to his ear. Murmurs...

ISABELLE

You never know. It could come true.

The bus HONKS. She takes his face in her hands.

ISABELLE

On second thought. Let's have some tongue.

And gives him a deep, full KISS. She pulls back. Seeing that his circuits are completely blown, she...

CONTINUED:

...hops on the bus.

ISABELLE

Call me.

The doors SHUT. The bus takes off. Donald stands in his boxer shorts under a bright street lamp. A pile of unused whale at his feet.

*
*

And watches her go.

29

INT. ISABELLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

29

A BOOM BOX is playing what seems to be a concerto for flute. A large brown-and-white RABBIT grazes on the flokati carpet. HEAR The familiar FLAPPING of wings, but as we PAN along the dive-bomber SHADOWS, this is not Donald's cherry-bomb-in-a-trashcan decor. A vibrancy, an unsettling eclecticism. The guerilla choices of a sytlistic iconoclast beneath the birdshit. Come to the wall...

...a mesmerizing, frightening, MURAL. A deep JUNGLE of iridescent human EYES stare mercilessly in swirling COLORS of flame-lit FOLIAGE, a forest AFIRE as it watches us. Like the music, it's fairly impressive. A woman's paint-splattered hand reaches with the brush, and...

...a small-crested gray Australian PARROT lands on her arm. Small paint splotches unavoidably on its plumage. PAN to Isabelle, her features staring off, worrying about something. Clearly not the painting, which proceeds masterfully despite minimal attention. PAN down to...

...her left hand. She is writing MUSICAL NOTATION on a series of music sheets. This she doesn't even watch, her hand seemingly on auto pilot, the notes finding their place as if pre-programmed by computer, until...

...a very big IGUANA scuttles over and PLOPS flat down on her music sheet. An attention-getting device.

ISABELLE (O.S., softly)

Move it, Blue. I'm not in the m...

And stops. Because the phone is RINGING. Her eyes have flicked in its direction with the lightning quickness we've come to know. The worry we had seen rises more to the surface. Projects toward the phone. HEAR...

ISABELLE (O.S., machine recording)

Long messages are cheerfully ignored.

Get it over with.

The BEEP. We can HEAR him breathing.

CONTINUED:

DONALD (O.S.)
Uh. This is Donald Morton. It's my
eighth message.

Such intensity in her stare.

ISABELLE (murmurs to herself)
...at least.

DONALD (O.S.)
So. I won't bother you anymore.

ISABELLE (edgier)
...which you said the last six times.

DONALD (O.S.)
Just want to say again, I had a whale
of a time last night.

But something is overwhelming the irritation in her eyes. It
looks like sadness.

DONALD (O.S., honest)
And I understand. I really do.

The impulse. Of an impulsive creature. She is ON her feet,
Blue scuttling, Dingo the parrot fluttering from her arm...

DONALD (O.S.)
And I'm always gonna rememb...

SNATCHES up the receiver.

ISABELLE
Hey, Donald Duck!

A voice as bright as the eyes behind it are dark. And
complex.

ISABELLE
Sorry, I've been out. Yeh.

Her eyes softening as she listens. And listens. But the
sadness stays.

ISABELLE
Yeh. Yeh. Uh-huh, yeh. Well, me
too. Sure, I wouldn't say it unl...

Listens to the next interruption. Licks her lips.

ISABELLE
So. Donald. You ever been on a
Ferris wheel...?

30 EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - SUNSET

30

Isabelle in a gondola which has stopped at the very top of the Ferris wheel. It sways gently, as she gazes around in a pastel sky...

ISABELLE

...the sky is cerulean, with these patches of sage green and gray...

Looks like she's talking to herself.

DONALD (O.S., really trying)

I bet the light is amazing.

ISABELLE

Not especially. To the east, - downtown, which has such an Evil Kingdom/lawyer vibe, it can fuck up a whole sunset.

DONALD (O.S., pushing it)

Actually, the sun sets in the west. *

ISABELLE

Stop making conversation, Donald, this is all somewhat disappointing.

PAN slightly to see him, huddled in the well at her feet, clutching the center pole.

DONALD (hopeful)

It'll be over soon.

He is smiling through his flop sweat. She reaches to touch his shoulder reassuringly.

ISABELLE

We'll get you off. I just wanted to be your kite, that's all. Lift you to new experiences.

The car JOLTS, and he GRASPS the pole in a death grip. But the wheel doesn't start. The car sways more.

DONALD

I just wanted to be your anchor. Keep you connected to the earth.

She tousles his hair softly. Sad affection in...

ISABELLE

So far. You're winning.

31

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DUSK

31

Lights coming on. Donald leads her along the pier. They are eating, as always. Walking close together, they could be any couple. If you weren't listening.

DONALD

...it's like that arcade, over there.
When I want to factor a number, I just
visualize it floating across my eyes.
Pick a num...

ISABELLE (quick, into it)

589.

WATCH Donald's visualization, as the number 589 begins to FLOAT slowly ACROSS the screen. Like a shooting gallery target.

DONALD

Okay, I shoot prime numbers at it,
like ammo. Now, a 3 will bounce off,
cos it doesn't divide in evenly...

The number 3 EXPLODES from a cannon at the bottom of our screen and RICHOCHETS off the 589 with the WHINE of ordnance slamming off a tank...

DONALD (ah, but...)

When I shoot 19, PINGGG, a BA-ROOM!

The number 19 ZOOMS from the cannon, and CRACKS the 589 into 19 and 31, which settle toward the earth with little parachutes.

ISABELLE

Your process is very sexual.

DONALD (shyly)

I know. Primes are hot.

They have come to the RING TOSS booth. Rows of metal milk bottles on a table in the center. 15 rings for a dollar. Donald puts down a five. Holds up a finger. Watch this. As she does, the girl gives Donald 75 metal rings.

DONALD

Now the only way to win this...

He begins to LOB rings high over the center of the table, they fall, BOUNCING OFF the metal bottles with a resounding CLANG, only to CLANG on the next bounce, and the next, five rings, six, seven, suddenly ignited anxiety behind him...

ISABELLE

Donald, I can't r...

CONTINUED:

DONALD
...is to throw them all at once.

And before she can react, ALL 75 rings are AIRBORNE!

ISABELLE
JESUS, DON'T!!!

They SHOWER DOWN and begin to RICOCHET OFF bottles, OFF each other, Donald gazing like a pyromaniac in a forest fire at the horrific uncontrollable CLANGING, as behind him, Isabelle...

...SHRIEKS from her soul, and when he WHIPS around, she is covering her ears, blind PANIC in her eyes, screaming, SCREAMING...

ISABELLE
STOPPP IIIIIITTT!!!

But he can't anymore, nobody could. He is stunned, with the rest of the onlookers, as she screams SAVAGELY, covering her ears,

DONALD
It's okay...it's...

He forces himself to reach both hands to her shoulders, and she SLAMS them away with a FEROCITY that SHOCKS him, the rings still CLANGING, bouncing CRAZILY, CLANGING again, like an endless hailstorm of horseshoes, nearly drowning out her screams, as she...

...sinks to the ground, makes herself as small as she can, just ROCKING like a madwoman, still covering her ears through what has become...

...total silence. Only her ragged breathing. She sits in her own world, surrounded by a crowd of staring 'normals.' Just as when she was a child on her lawn. *

On his knees, Donald looks back... *

DONALD (on the bright side)
Four rings. You win the orangutan.

No reaction. Rocking in a tight, fierce, arc. Her eyes focused on middle distance, locked into some private hell. Donald looks around for help...

Everyone is freaked. Useless. He turns back to her...

Donald sings aloud, atonal.

DONALD
SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW WAY UP
HIGH...

CONTINUED:

She blinks. And as he draws a breath to sing the second line...

*
*

ISABELLE
You know, you really should not be allowed to sing.

He nods, eagerly.

ISABELLE
Let's go home, Donald.

He blinks at her. His heart starts racing. And without being asked...

ISABELLE
Any home. Yours will do.

32 INT. DONALD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

32

Darkness. Except for the eerie flicker that the always-on TV screen imparts. The shadows of fluttering birds. A key turns. PAN through the rubble of Donald's sanctuary to see...

...the door OPEN. The lights (the ones that haven't burned out) go on. Slowly, Isabelle follows him in. Looking around. All around.

DONALD (calls)
DON'T FREAK OUT!

ISABELLE
Don't worry, I w...

DONALD
I'm talking to them.

Meaning his roommates. One of which flies DIRECTLY to Isabelle's wrist. Her smile is liquid light.

ISABELLE (purrs)
Hello, sweet baby.

And rubs the bird's belly.

ISABELLE
I'm talking to them.

CONTINUED:

Others come on over. Begin to flap around her, lighting on her head, her shoulders. A scene from Snow White. She is magic with them. Donald is in heaven. Points everyone out...

DONALD

This is Lucy...and Ricky...
Paglicci...Chicken Boo...Cockatiel
Dundee...Don Juan de Marco...

ISABELLE (softly)

...yes, he's very sexy.

Donald beams. Then, follows her eyes to the incredible trash landscape. Fear takes over.

DONALD

Uh. I save things.

On this. She glances over. Really?

DONALD

...because you never know.

ISABELLE

You said you mom died. You did bury her?

He blinks. Nods, sure.

ISABELLE

Just checking.

With a feathered fan club, she makes her way through the place like it was a mine field. Half the sofa is cleared off, and she sits down. He throws the rest of the junk on the floor, and sits beside her. Not too close. He grins. Relaxing enough to...

DONALD

Something to eat?

She looks around at the place. I don't think so.

ISABELLE

Got some old food in the fridge, do you?

DONALD (brightens)

You like old food?

Gently, expertly, she sets the birds aside. Looks in his eyes. Okay...

ISABELLE

Let's get down to it. This is about sex.

CONTINUED:

She sees stone panic.

ISABELLE
Maybe that was a little abrupt.

DONALD
I haven't had any. In a long. Long.
Ti...

ISABELLE
Now, I had an instinct, there. Girls
know those things.

Her loveliest smile.

ISABELLE
Forget the past, Donald, sex is gonna
be terrific. It's the most fun you
can have with your clothes off.

He swallows. Admits...

DONALD
I'm sure you've been. With more
attractive men.

He braces himself. For the worst.

ISABELLE
See, attraction. Is a whole package.
And the potential for...well, love.
Is the biggest part of it. I learned
that the hard way. The hardest way.
You know?

He's still completely rigid. She tries...

ISABELLE
I've never been with anybody like you.

DONALD
You mean the hygiene.

ISABELLE
That. And...the way you look at me.

ISABELLE
You know how many guys would take me
home? After that show at the ring
toss?

DONALD
Plenty.

Her hand comes away. Doesn't want to push too fast.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

Well, they wouldn't be there in the morning.

DONALD

I will. I live here.

She leans back. And seeing the worshipful way he gazes at her...

ISABELLE

I hate this. I hate you thinking I'm normal. I don't trust normal people, because they have always fucked me over. And believe me...

Her finger stabs out. One of her abrupt mood changes. Aggressive in this moment, an anger that frightens him.

ISABELLE

When someone takes away your ability to trust. They have take a lot.

He is silent. But her words have broken through his obsession with his own fears. He is listening.

ISABELLE

I am not normal, Donald, I can't control anything. How crazy I act, how angry I get...

A hard, appraising stare...

ISABELLE

You know what paranoid is? I can't trust anybody, Donald. Anybody. And the truth is, that includes you. And it always wi...

DONALD (quietly)

You'll learn.

They look at each other. The closest, the realest, they've ever been. She looks around at the surrounding debris.

ISABELLE

Is there a path to the bedroom? Or should we just release the hounds. Let them sniff it out.

She rises. Takes both his hands. C'mon. Pulls him to his feet, and...

They head off, her arm around his waist in a friendly hug. The path through the piles is too narrow, and Donald just PLOWS through, oblivious, SCATTERING mounds of junk. She lifts a lone, smelly SNEAKER from a stack...

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE
Ah. Mens Wear department.

FLIPS it away, over her shoulder. On they go.

33 INT. DONALD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

33

Donald lies under the covers. They are pulled up to his chin. On the curtain rods above the bed, the birds are roosting for the night. Some on one foot, heads tucked into their wing. Isabelle comes to the side of the bed...

...lets her dress fall. Donald stares at her in her underwear. He clears his throat.

DONALD
You know what they say in the jungle.
Some elephants have long trunks. And
some have short ones.

She smiles with sweetness and mischief.

ISABELLE
The jungle, huh?

Slowly, she peels back the covers. Donald wears only his boxers. At least they're clean.

ISABELLE
Well, I don't care how long an
elephant's trunk is...

Slides onto the bed. Right beside him.

ISABELLE
...as long as his dick's okay.

And LAUGHS. That throaty, whiskey, man-killer laugh. She stares into his suffering.

ISABELLE
Sweetie, you can't disappoint me.
Because whatever you are. Is all I
want.

Okay?

ISABELLE
That. Is what we give each other.
And the rest of the world...

She leans. Kisses his cheek. His forehead.

ISABELLE
...can Go fish.

And lies back down beside him. An inch away. Not touching.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

We don't have to do anything. It's
like heaven, just lying here
together.

And she puts her naked leg. Across his. Point up at the
birds...

ISABELLE

They know. How right this is.

But Donald. Isn't watching the birds. He takes on finger...

...traces it. Along her thigh. She breathes deeply.

ISABELLE (whispers)

No elephant. Ever did that better.

34 INT. DONALD'S BEDROOM - MORNING

34

...Donald sits BOLT UPRIGHT in bed. He is alone.

He WHIPS around to examine the bed, which is such a tangled
mess of covers, sheets, pillows and assorted clothing that it
is impossible to tell how many people slept here. He
looks...

...UNDER the covers. She's not hiding there. OVER the side.
She's not on the floor. HANGS his head down to peer beneath
the bed. Nada. His head POPS up. Blind panic.

DONALD

OLLY, OLLY OXEN FREE!!!

And listens. No sound, except the birds who flutter about.
Ricky and Pagliacci land on the bed, watching Donald's plight
with interest and seeming sympathy.

DONALD

Okay, which is worse?

A serious question. He wants an answer.

CONTINUED:

DONALD
If she was never here, I haven't blown
it yet.

The birds stare back. Silent and wise.

DONALD
Of course she was here. I wouldn't
even know how to imagine stuff like
that.

It washes over him. The loss. The longing. All the
dreadful truths. Dundee lands on his shoulder, but Donald's
eyes are staring. Back through his lifetime. A little
shrug.

DONALD (murmurs) -
Hey. It's a memory.

Pulls himself off the bed. Tells his friends...

DONALD
For you, too.

Trudges out of FRAME. HEAR him shuffling blindly through the
place, TRAMPLING on stuff.

35 INT. KITCHEN - LATER

35

CLOSE on Donald's hands. He is actually WASHING a DISH! We
are blown away.

DONALD (O.S.)
See, at first I was upset she didn't
leave a note.

PULL BACK to see ALL the birds are here. Watching him
carefully dry the dish with a scarcely-used towel.

DONALD
Then, I realized it was a kindness.

Places it on the table. The birds begin to gather.

DONALD
I mean, what could she really say?
'Thanks for the lousy sex?'

From the pantry, he pulls an open Tupperware container, and
POURS birdseed ONTO the dish. Keeps pouring til it OVERFLOWS
onto the table and floor.

DONALD
She's a sweet person, why hurt my
feelings, you know? The less said the
better.

CONTINUED:

But his friends have stopped listening. They're busy.

DONALD

So we just...put it behind us, tuck it away, another sad little episode. A lesson in life. Valuable. Tuck it away. Forget it. Not. Another. Word.

PUNCHES up 20 minutes. That oughta do it.

DONALD

She said a lot of beautiful things to me. And I will remember every one of them for the rest of my life.

He looks into her eyes for emphasis.

DONALD

The fact that she didn't mean them, only makes her nicer. She wanted me to feel good. And it's the thought that counts, you kn...

ISABELLE (O.S.)

Are we talking about me?

She is standing in the kitchen doorway with three bags of GROCERIES. He would look less astonished if God had appeared with half his angels.

ISABELLE

I had to feed my animals.

He blinks. Every synapse in overload.

ISABELLE

You know what we could do this afternoon...?

Boy. Does he want to.

ISABELLE

Buy you. A nice suit.

36

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER REC ROOM - DAY

36

Our favorite place to be. The gang has gathered before the bi-monthly meeting, chatting in their various styles, wandering in their own interior landscapes, consuming whatever punch and snacks Blume has been unable to commandeer. When through the door, come...

...Donald and Isabelle. Together.

And everything. Stops. Uh-oh.

CONTINUED:

GRACIE (belated hysteria)
WELL! HERE THEY ARE!!

And giggles maniacally. Her cherubic face endearing as always, she seems supportive. Donald GLARES in Gregory's direction. The hulking, hunched-over writer shrugs in a burlesque of nonchalance...

GREGORY (matter-of-fact)
I felt our friends deserved the truth of your treachery. I believe in truth.

DONALD
And gossip.

Gregory nods. And gossip. Janice gets her tiny immaculate self right in Isabelle's face...

JANICE
ARE YOU SLEEPING WITH HIM?

And starts to pick imaginary lint from Isabelle's shirt. Isabelle clearly doesn't welcome this, but lets her do it.

DONALD
That could be construed as a personal ques...

ISABELLE (softly, to Janice)
Sure. Is it okay with you?

And gently takes Donald's hand.

JANICE (been saving up)
DON'T YOU HATE ALL HIS NUMBERS? DOES HE CHANGE HIS SOCKS? IS HIS PENIS BIG ENOUGH?

(to Donald)
WILL YOU TAKE ME TO THE MOVIES ON SUNDAY AT FIVE O'CLOCK?

ISABELLE (patient)
...no, no, and yes.

DONALD (kind)
...I'm sorry, Sundays I'm with Isabelle.

Janice got it all. Nods, as if satisfied with her answers. Gregory steps up, looming over Isabelle. His intense squint betraying the casual tone of...

GREGORY
Classic vicious betrayal, very common in literature.

ISABELLE
And life. Nice to see you again...

CONTINUED:

She holds out her hand in a friendly way. Gregory stares at it a beat. Then shakes it. Only a little too hard.

GREGORY (earnest)
Very nice to touch you.

LATER...the group sits around folding tables formed into a large square. Like an international conference. They look awkward, eager, confused, catatonic. The usual. Donald and Isabelle are at the 'head' of the tables. The only sound is Blume eating.

DONALD
So, to begin, okay? As you all know, Isabelle and I have been... seeing each other since Halloween. And maybe we should talk about how you feel about th...

GREGORY
It's sexual harassment.

Isabelle LAUGHS explosively. Donald, atypically, GLARES at her. She tries to pipe down, but she is much amused.

DONALD
That is a very serious accus...

GREGORY
You used your position as group leader to extort her sexual favors, and you should be replaced. My sister is a lawyer.

Donald is really angry. He draws a breath, but, as always, she cuts him off...

ISABELLE
Gregory, Donald and I are still just getting to know each other, bu...

GREGORY
So you can still date me?

Silence.

ISABELLE
Right now. I just want to see Donald, bec...

GREGORY
So when you're sick of him, you'll call me?

Another silence.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

Skeets. Let's hear from you.

Skeets is the beautiful 16-year-old whose shirt buttons consume much of his available attention. Today, he has undone them, very slowly. An innocent, absent, striptease.

DONALD

Have you been following the...

SKEETS

The largest tumor ever removed intact was a multicystic ovarian mass. It weighed 303 pounds.

DONALD

Did the woman recover?

And Skeets looks up. As if surprised to be taken seriously. He nods, quite earnest. Oh, yeh.

DONALD

Any questions about me and Isabelle?

SKEETS

There are 200 to 300 million sperm cells in the average ejaculation.

The others are impressed, frightened, confused, inspired, or bored by this data.

ISABELLE

Penguins mate only once a year, and it only lasts three minutes. But I think they're extremely sexy. Do you want to know why?

Skeets' luminous smile fades. His eyes go down to his buttons, which he tries to button up as swiftly as he can. Which is not all that swift.

ISABELLE

Because I'll only tell you. If you want to know.

GREGORY

I want to know.

DAWN (positive)

I don't. And that's for sure.

ISABELLE

Skeets...?

The softness of her voice. He looks up. It is the first time we've seen his eyes meet someone's directly. No word, no nod. Just the eye contact. It is enough.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

When penguins are reunited. After a long separation. They stand breast to breast...

She pauses. He needs to know her soft voice is just for him.

ISABELLE

...their heads thrown back...their outstretched flippers trembling. And they sing, Skeets. Because they are so happy. To find each other.

The look between them holds. Holds. Then, his light goes out. His eyes go down. The buttons resume their fascination.

DONALD

Gracie. How do you feel?

Everyone turns to plump little Gracie's maniacal grin and dancing eyes. She is oddly silent, formulating her thoughts behind the false merriment of her face. At last...

GRACIE

I feel sad.

A definitive, accurate statement. She nods, firmly. Still grinning.

DONALD

About me and Isab...

GRACIE

Bronwin's daddy has blood cancer.

An instant of shock. Nobody knew this. Many do not understand the words. Most look at shy Bronwin anyway, who shrivels before the sudden attention. Her hands fluttering in her lap.

DONALD

Bronwin, I'm so sorry your fath...

BRONWIN

Regular people get sick, too. Not just autistic people. That's just the way it is.

Clearly parroting what she was told at home. Donald nods.

DONALD

But these days, lots of people get well from th...

CONTINUED:

BRONWIN

I have to go now. My parents are meeting me at the bulletin board.

A very awkward silence. Bronwin's head is down, her eyelids blink. She makes no move to rise.

DONALD

You know, the meeting just started. Maybe your par...

ISABELLE (rising)

Would you like me to go with you? We could call your parents, and we could wait together.

Standing. But not moving.

ISABELLE (very softly)

By the bulletin board. I'd like to do that.

And walks, with all eyes on her. To Bronwin's side. Bronwin looks up, and through whatever filter she sees the world, one thing is clear. This woman cares for her.

So Bronwin stands up. Slowly, as if it hurts. Isabelle takes her by the hand.

GREGORY

I'll go, too.

ISABELLE (without looking)

Not today.

The two women exit. All eyes on the door they disappeared through.

JANICE

CAN I GO TO THE FUNERAL!

DAWN (positive)

I'm not going. And that's for sure.

37

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

37

Isabelle rocking along on her MOUNTAIN BIKE, fat knobby tires, custom paint job. Neon faces appear on the spokes when the wheels spin fast. The CAGE with five BIRDS is mounted on the back rack, her pals' feathers blown back in the wind. They are loving it. PAN to...

...the large CART being towed behind the bike. Three IGUANAS in a huge glass case, Godzilla, Blue and Rover all chilling. Bongo the Rabbit's cage is strapped on top. He looks nervous.

CONTINUED:

She pedals hard, keeping to the bike lane. Her lilting voice updating a culture classic...

ISABELLE (singing)
It's a story...
Of a man named Donald.
Who was living with
Six birds of his own...

38

INT. DONALD'S APARTMENT - DAY

38

Mozart BLASTING on the boom box. The overture to Cosi Fan Tutti. Godzilla, the senior iguana, scuttles through the modified-Donald-environment, a living room with its piles neatly stacked. Only papers and documents remain, all pizza boxes and obvious trash are gone. Space now for wide walking aisles at right angles. CUT TO...

An actual KITCHEN. Even more improvement here. Appliances revealed from their patinas of crud. No dirty dishes, no mounds of debris, a floor you would walk barefoot on without precautionary typhus inoculation. CUT TO...

Isabelle on her knees, wearing a surgeon's filtering mask, she SCOURS the bathroom floor. Turns out, it was supposed to be white. Three empty containers of cleanser are lined up like dead soldiers. All the birds are here, perched on sink fixtures, towel rods, watching and chattering.

ISABELLE (through the mask)
Just for one day. Nobody shit.

And looks up. To the fungus-infested SHOWER CURTAIN. This thing could be named its own disease. She looks from it to her array of cleaning materials. Hmmn.

39

INT. DONALD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

39

A key turns. Donald enters his dimly-lit place carrying his ANIMANIACS lunch pail from work. A fourth-grader from the Twilight Zone.

DONALD
IZZY? YOU HOME?

No answer. He shuffles toward the kitchen, as Blue, the biggest iguana, SCRAMBLES out of the darkness. Donald STARTLES. Then grins. Follows the lizard into the kitchen doorway, flicking ON the light, to...

DONALD
Hey, fella! Which one are y...

...stop. Cold. He GAPES at the transformed kitchen. SNAP to Donald's VIEW...

CONTINUED:

...everything GLEAMS, highlights TWINKLE, almost BLINDING. Donald throws up a hand, squinting, disoriented. As if finding himself on Zorg the Planet of Hygiene. He goes to the fridge...

...FLINGS it open. No rot. No mold. Only actual food on the sunny side of its expiration date.

He staggers back. Nearly tramples the iguana as he stumbles out the door, down the hall to...

40 INT. BATHROOM- NIGHT

40

...the bathroom. Pole-axed. He stares, dumbly, from toilet to sink to mirrored medicine cabinet to...

...the tub. His slime-encrusted shower curtain has be replaced. The new one depicts FISH swimming. Even a playful dolphin. Donald's jaw is slack. His eyes spin in cognitive dissonance. LUNGES out, down the hall to...

41 INT. LIVING ROOM

41

...the newly-ordered maze of his keepsake-oriented living room. His eyes WIDEN. He reaches to a stack of ancient newspapers, lifts one. Stares at it as if it is an alien object. DROPS it on the floor, now seeing...

...Isabelle asleep in an easy chair we never knew existed. Her breathing deep, regular. Her hands still cradling a can of beer in her lap. He goes to stand in front of her. Stares down.

DONALD
WHAT DID YOU DO??

She blinks awake. Disoriented, confused.

DONALD
WHERE IS MY STUFF?

She shakes away the sleep. Zonked, having worked so hard. But her eyes are already narrowing. Neither she nor we have imagined he could look like this. He is vibrating with uncontrollable emotion.

DONALD
DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SA...

ISABELLE (quietly)
Your stuff's all here, Donald. It's just organized.

DONALD
BUT I KNOW WHERE EVERYTHING IS!!

She's nodding. Deciding how she wants to react to this.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE
Well, now I know where everything is.
So you better take good care of me.

A small smile.

ISABELLE
Or I'll take the secret to my gra...

DONALD
WHERE IS MY SHOWER CURTAIN??

ISABELLE
That, I threw away. I called the
Center for Disease Control in Atlanta,
but it was more than they could han...

DONALD
IT WAS MINE! THESE ARE MY THINGS, YOU
HAVE NO RI...

ISABELLE (quiet, anrgry)
I thought. You'd be grateful.

GRATEFUL? The last straw. His arms start WAVING around
incoherently. Nothing he can say is big enough...

DONALD
YOU STOLE MY LIFE!!

She blinks. What?? Tears in his eyes...

DONALD
YOU RUINED EVERYTHING!!!

He looks like his heart has snapped in two. He turns and
STALKS from the room KICKING over neat piles which DOMINO
into other piles, so that as she hears the front door SLAMM,
more stuff is TOPPLING...

The house of cards of her new life collapsing. And to no one
in particular...

ISABELLE
YOU ARE AN UNGRATEFUL LITTLE SHIT!!

Tears in her eyes now. Something we never thought we'd see.

She closes her eyes. Sips her beer.

42 EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

42

A billion cars. And one lost soul. He is wandering down the
row of vehicles, staring at every LICENSE PLATE he sees. As
he does, we SNAP to...

CONTINUED:

...Donald's visualization of the numbers. 8172 gets factored by a 227 shot from a cannon, which EXPLODES the 8172, a little 36 and 227 drifting down by parachute. Next plate has a 2187, this becomes 2-1-87...

DONALD (mutters)
A Sunday. That's nice.

He shoots a 3 at the 2187 which explodes into seven little 3s, all parachuting down like rain, as...

...the BLAST from a car HORN makes Donald JUMP. The DRIVER is a bearded jerk in a black Mercedes convertible...

JERK
YOU TRYIN' TO GET YOURSELF KILLED?

Donald ponders this, seriously.

DONALD
Maybe later.

The jerk drives OFF. Donald stares at his vanity plate...

DONALD
H LIME? WHAT THE HELL IS THAT
SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

VOICE (O.S.)
Harry Lime. Orson Welles, The Third
Man. It's a movie.

Donald turns to see...

...a HOMELESS GUY sitting on the hood of a Cherokee. He wears a knit cap, and is drinking from a bottle wrapped in a paper bag.

DONALD
Your plate is better.

The homeless guy looks down, trying to see the plate Donald is pointing to.

DONALD
2CXV127. If you take the letters as Roman numerals, it's 215 plus the 1, which is 216, which is 6 cubed. Then the 27 is 3 cubed. Also '27 was Babe Ruth's big year.

The guy blinks at him.

GUY
Thanks.

CONTINUED:

He slides over. Leaving a space. Donald goes and sits beside him. The guy offers the bottle, but Donald shakes his head.

DONALD

I'm doing all the plates. I started on level 5. It calms me down.

GUY

Lose your job?

DONALD

My woman.

The guy nods. Been there, done that.

DONALD

And my shower curtain.

Little flicker from the guy on that one. But, live and let live. They stare off blankly, just alike.

DONALD

What's your Social Security number?

43

INT. ISABELLE'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

43

No Mozart here. Isabelle's own composition plays, over a rhythmic THUMPING from somewhere nearby. We watch her parrot Dingo PECKING at the answering machine, as it CLICKS...

ISABELLE (O.S., machine recording)

STOP! CALLING!!!

The BEEP. We can HEAR him breathing.

DONALD (O.S., trying cheerful)

Hi. This is my fourteenth message, if you're scoring at home. Vin Scully used to say that. I respectfully think you should change your greeting. In case you get called by your boss or Publisher's Clearing House.

Hear him suppress a chuckle. Dingo cocks his head. Doesn't get it.

DONALD (O.S., but seriously)

Seriously, I'm fine now. And I'm sorry I spoiled our evening.

Silence. Begin our slow pan, across the room to the MURAL. A forest of EYES, consumed by burning foliage.

DONALD (O.S.)

I am really, really sorry.

CONTINUED:

To Isabelle, facing the mural. She is ROCKING, violently, on a sawhorse frame fitted with a riding saddle...

DONALD (O.S.)
And it could never, never, ever happen
again.

...she is mouthing her silent mantra rapidly, as she rocks FASTER, spittle flying from her lips...

DONALD (O.S.)
I mean. To hell with the shower
curtain.

And her eyes. Are scarcely human.

44

INT. BASE CAMP, FILM LOCATION - DAY

44

A harried young P.A. In cut-off jeans and a MOLIERE RULES t-shirt, brandishes her walkie-talkie, c'mon...

P.A.
...let's go, we've got singles up...

PAN to Donald. In his nice suit. It has pinstripes and makes him look shockingly normal. The tie works against him, but just a little. Timidly...

...he follows the P.A. through trailers, over cables, past equipment, the base camp of a film company on location. The P.A. gestures to...

...a row of figures, sitting, standing, waiting around the craft service table. They are diverse ALIENS. As if we've stumbled into Lucas' Mos Eisley Bar. Slowly PAN the bizarre array, until...

...one figure. Looks back at us. She is a BOLIAN, bald and blue-skinned. Lithe, lovely. And somber.

ISABELLE (very softly)
Hey.

They stare at each other. Assorted creatures begin to take note of the weight of this moment. Donald clears his throat. Desperately doesn't want to sound like a child...

DONALD (mumbles)
Sorry.

...but he does. She nods. She stands.

ISABELLE
People, this is my boyfriend Dona...

KLINGON COLONEL
The shower curtain?

CONTINUED:

The Colonel pulls off his mask, revealing MAC, an extremely handsome young actor. Mac and Isabelle exchange small smiles. Obviously they have shared something that completely humiliates Donald. Isabelle puts her hand on the handsome guy's arm...

ISABELLE

Donald, this is my friend, Mac
Farraday.

Mac steps up to give Donald a really strong handshake.
Donald tries not to wince.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

...and Susie Balthus, Walter
Martinez...

*

Everyone else stands up. Donald heads down the line, shaking
claws, hooks, paws, flippers, even the occasional hand. When
he reaches our Bolian beauty...

*

...she slides an arm around his neck. Kisses his ear.

*

ISABELLE

I bought him this suit. It was on
sale.

45

EXT. STREET - DAY

-

45

Back in civvies, Isabelle strolls a colorful and risky
neighborhood with Donald. They see only each other. She's
finishing a hoagie, messily yet delicately. He won't take a
chance with his precious outfit.

*

*

ISABELLE

You know, driving a cab is not your
work.

DONALD

Who told you?

She glances over. Uh-oh, she hadn't known after all. He
tries a shrug...

DONALD

...an insurance thing.

ISABELLE

As in, if they let you drive anymore,
theirs would get cancelled.

Basically.

ISABELLE

Good. Your real work is leading that
group of dear people.

DONALD

And Blume.

ISABELLE (shudders)

And Gregory. And I was telling Doctor
Trask about how loving and
constructive y...

DONALD (immediately suspicious)

Doctor. Trask.

CONTINUED:

The bus arrives. Hearing his tone, she simply climbs on. He's still on the curb.

ISABELLE
Let's save this. Til we get to the tree.

DONALD
Uh. Tree?

The hydraulic HISS! Donald barely JUMPS ON, as the closing doors slap his butt.

46

EXT. STREET - DAY

46

Isabelle steps off the bus beside a CHURCH, which fronts a fenced-off green area dominated by a giant FIG TREE. Donald follows hesitantly, as she goes to sit beneath the ageless broad leaves. From her bag, she removes...

...four oranges. He sits close beside her. Watches her...

ISABELLE
One of the reasons I cleaned your pla...

DONALD
Boy, it's great! The cleaner the better!

She looks up. A sharp eye.

DONALD
...within reason.

ISABELLE
...is so when our friends come over, w...

DONALD
We have no friends. Who come over. Ever.

ISABELLE
Wanna guess why?

Oh. She looks up now, spreading her arms, her fingers, toward the leafy branches.

ISABELLE
This tree is older than anybody we will ever know. It tells us that the real world is incredible. And the life of people is petty and small and fleeting.

Okay. He's waiting for the punch line.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

Donald, we need a little house, with a yard. So we can plant flowers, and sit in shade, and kiss under the stars. The heavens are very important to me.

She BITES a piece of skin from an orange, and begins to peel it. Donald's fear starts to pound in his veins.

ISABELLE

I found a tiny house. The rent isn't much more than what we're paying on our two apartm...

DONALD

I got fired, remember? -

She nods. She does. Choosing the moment...

ISABELLE

Dr. Trask is the guy at the university who diagnosed me, and I see him sometimes. I was telling him how you organized this group of lonely people everybody else ignores. And you did it all by yourself.

DONALD

I was lonely, t...

ISABELLE

...how much you help them, how much you mean to them. This is the real work of your life. Only nobody pays you, so...

So. She bites her lip. This is a tough one, even for her.

ISABELLE

...if he could help find you a nice job, then he'd be enabling you to continue this invaluable work.

DONALD

You. What?

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE
...and he said yes!

Donald. Just blinks.

DONALD
Izzy. They don't have cabs at the
University Med Center.

She leans closer. Stares in his eyes.

ISABELLE
Donald Duck. It comes down to this...

Closer. Closer. Her lips part. Her voice gets just a
little dreamy...

ISABELLE
Do you want. To make me happy.

One inch away, his lips part, too. She POPS an orange
segment in. Then. She kisses him. *

ISABELLE
You know what proves God is autistic? *

He doesn't. *

ISABELLE
He made the planets spin. *

47 INT. OFFICE - DAY

47

HENRY WALLACE sits back in his aged institutional executive
chair. Fingers his unlit pipe. And smiles the smile of a
genuinely nice guy.

WALLACE
For one thing, I understand you're a
mathematical genius.

See Donald now. The Suit is pressed. Clearly, Isabelle has
knotted the tie, ironed the shirt. Probably combed his hair.
What she couldn't control...

DONALD (alarmingly flat)
Who told you that?

...is Donald's aversion to eye contact. At least with
'normals'. He is staring blankly off to one side. It is
really unsettling.

WALLACE
Well, Dr. Trask recommended that I
call Isabelle Sorensen. I hope that
was all right?

CONTINUED:

DONALD

Sure. It's her fault I'm here in the
first place.

His mouth is dry. His forehead sheens. His attempt to sound
casual was hopelessly non-human.

CONTINUED:

WALLACE

After everything she told me, and checking on your excellent record in college...I'm wondering why you'd choose to drive a taxi for a living?

Donald is thinking. Suffering. Staring at anything inanimate.

DONALD

I'm not a people person. Around regular people.

WALLACE

I don't meet many of those. I'm an accountant.

How to put this...?

DONALD

At my interview with IBM? They asked me what my plans were?

Watch him remember. It makes him sadder, but less gridlocked.

DONALD

I said, probably go by MacDonald's for two cheeseburgers and a 12-piece McNuggets. And then do my laundry.

Silence.

WALLACE (kindly)

Did they laugh, at least?

The kindness gets through. It brings Donald's eyes back to almost real.

DONALD (quietly)

No. They smiled. And said they'd call me.

The administrator shifts in his chair. He studies Donald's silent profile.

WALLACE

Mr. Morton, I run Administrative Services for the Medical Center. Your profile is a plus, because we want to give opportunity to...

And stops. Because he's not quite sure how to finish.

DONALD

You can say 'autistic'. I already know.

CONTINUED:

WALLACE

Touche.

And on that. Donald turns. Looks at this man.

WALLACE

Your job would be looking at
statistical runs, and finding
inconsistencies.

He smiles.

WALLACE

Telling me. Where the computer got it
wrong. You can do that, can't you.

DONALD

Oh, sure.

The look holds. Holds.

WALLACE

Well, I can't. And neither can anyone
else I've ever met. So I'm blessed to
have you.He holds out his hand. Across the desk. Donald looks at it,
swallows. But the man keeps smiling...

...and The hand comes away.

WALLACE

Change. Is not in the job
description.

48 EXT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

48

A taxi pulls up to a small, unimposing house, on a plain
little street. But the sun is shining. And the couple
exiting the taxi stare at the dwelling as if it were the
chateau at Chantilly. Speechless wonder that this home, this
life, this happiness, could be theirs.Donald begins pulling animal cages from the cab, passing them
to his love, who lines them up in a row.

49 INT./EXT. NEW HOME MONTAGE

49

A quick SERIES of SHOTS over Isabelle's haunting symphonic
MUSIC..49PT1 ...moving Donald's stuff into the living room. This involves 49PT1
re-stacking piles of papers to re-create the exact geography
of our archives, though in a somewhat larger and unavoidably
better-furnished space. Isabelle does the grunt work, which
Donald supervises. Anxiety exuding from every pore.

CONTINUED:

- 49PT2 ..Isabelle and Donald on their knees together, planting pansies. They work hard, happily, if at considerably varying degrees of competence. 49PT2
- 49PT3 ...Donald staring at girl stuff, taking half the space in the bathroom. Just staring. And staring. He raises a hand as if to move something. Thinks better of it. Keeps staring. 49PT3
- 49PT4 ...Isabelle whitewashing a living room wall. She's done this before. Donald plays cheerleader, supplying her and the birds with popcorn. 49PT4
- 49PT5 ...Donald trying to make the bed. Whatever he pulls, nothing stays even. Trust me. It's funny. 49PT5
- 49PT6 ...Isabelle walking alone at night among the neat stacks of Donald's detrius. Her arms are folded, except when she sips her beer. Her face is dark. Impulsively, she SCOOPS up a stack of something. Looks around. Looks around. And puts it back. Where she found it. 49PT6
- 49PT7 ...first light. Donald stands before the mural that Isabelle has been painting on the whitewashed wall. It is violent, primitive, disturbing, and oddly beautiful. Rosseau on acid. He stares at it, trying to get a fix on the dark side of this volatile, unknowable woman. He sees a burned out cigarette in an ashtray piled with butts. He looks disgusted, agitated. He takes the ashtray with him. 49PT7
- 49PT8 ...afternoon. Isabelle in the yard, asleep in a hammock between the trees. Bongo peacefully on her belly. PAN to a card table in the shade. Donald paying a stack of BILLS. He looks scared to the bone. 49PT8

50 EXT. FRONT STEPS - MORNING

50

Donald and Isabelle exit the house. He's dressed for work in a clean shirt and tie. She carries a large brown sack. He turns to her, smiles, with anxiety behind it.

DONALD

Um. I want to ask you something. But it's the kind of thing that sometimes enrages you.

Beat.

ISABELLE

Oh yeah?

DONALD

Yeh.

Another beat.

ISABELLE

Try me.

CONTINUED:

Okay. He looks borderline terrified.

DONALD
Tonight? When I bring my boss home
for dinner? I Just want everything to
be...really nice.

ISABELLE (cheery)
Okay, I'll change my plans.

He studies her placid smile. Is he in trouble?

DONALD
He's a good person. And I really like
my job, and I jus...

ISABELLE
...want everything to be nice.

Got it. She hands him his lunch sack.

DONALD
What are you gonna do today?

ISABELLE
Cook, clean, iron. Make myself
pretty. Stare at your picture.
(beat)
The usual.

And kisses his mouth.

ISABELLE
Have a nice day. At work.

He nods, slowly. She smiles. He smiles back. With a wave,
he heads off for work. HOLD on her watching him go.

51 INT. DONALD AND ISABELLE'S HOME - DUSK

51

PAN the empty living room. Donald's piles of papers.
Isabelle's mural. Animals, everywhere. No people. HEAR the
key in the front door. Donald enters, followed by...

...his boss, Henry Wallace. As they walk through the place,
Wallace is drinking it all in, struggling for nonchalant.

DONALD (plaintive)
IZZY? WE'RE HERE!

No Izzy. Keep walking around the piles, as Wallace comes
face-to face with the whale costume on its stand. Okay, folk
art. Now the birds get ACTIVE, begin their strafing runs...

*

CONTINUED:

DONALD (irritated)
I told her to put everybody in his or
her or their cage. Depending.

Wallace shies a little when they flap too near. We have
reached the sliding glass door to the back yard, where we
see...

...Isabelle swinging slowly on the weathered swing set.
Despite the dusk, she wears sunglasses. Takes a swallow from
her beer. Sees Donald's giant, pleading WAVE. Climbs down
from the swing, and...

...takes her time sauntering across the lawn. Leaves the
sunglasses on. Another swig of beer. We are watching
attitude, here. As she enters the living room...

The boss holds out a friendly hand...

WALLACE
Hank Wallace, Isabelle. Niceto put a
face with the voice.

DONALD
You could, if she'd take off her
gla...

ISABELLE (ignoring Donald)
That's right, we talked about what a
genius Mr. Morton is. Not to mention
a saint...

From the voice, we're a few beers in. But not drunk.

ISABELLE
...meaning the noble work he does with
the less fortunate, less sky-high-
functioning, of the autistic realm...

POUNDS her chest with her fist. Donald is actually jiggling
with helpless outrage and humiliation.

ISABELLE
...including me, Hank. Why, only this
morning, he advised me to be on my
very tippy-to best behavior tonight,
so I wouldn't weird you out...

Apparently, a mistake on his part. She takes OFF the
sunglasses. BATS her baby blues at Donald...

ISABELLE
How'm I doin'? Don't hesitate to
offer some mid-course correction if I
deviate from normality at any time.

CONTINUED:

He is speechless, vibrating with fear and shame and anger.
She turns to wallace...

ISABELLE

Sense. Of humor. We're workin' on it.

Winks at the boss.

ISABELLE

You like vegetable lasagna, Hank? How
about a beer...

52

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

52

Supper at a small kitchen table. Isabelle is cheerful-to-slightly-manic, Wallace seems amiably comfortable. Donald is sullen and scared. Isabelle's music plays, eerie and lovely.

WALLACE

I don't pretend to be an expert, b...

ISABELLE (taking it literally)

Great! I hate when people do that.

WALLACE

...but your paintings are impressive.

ISABELLE

They are. I could dig some up for you,
there's several buried in the back
yard...

Wallace looks at Donald. Who nods, darkly. Yup.

ISABELLE (confides)

We can't afford insurance.

We may notice that the dining decor is all-whale programming. Fish-shaped serving plates, killer whale placemats, glasses from Sea World, salt-and-pepper shakers in the shape of leaping dolphins.

WALLACE

Do you sell them?

ISABELLE

Every once in awhile.

DONALD

Actually, sh...

ISABELLE

Mostly, they want me to paint
something else? With fewer eyes?
Less violent? Less insane?

And sighs.

*

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

I used to tell Donald that I wanted
him to hear my paintings and see my
music. I wanted him to understand
them like other people couldn't. But
I guess...

*
*
*
*
*

CONTINUED:

And against the sadness, she laughs. The laugh is mostly sexy and genial, but sharp enough to be just a little crazy too. *

DONALD

She just refuses t...

ISABELLE

I'm basically a failure, Hank, in the material world. Used to be a piano tuner...

DONALD (quicker)

She has perfect pi...

ISABELLE (like he wasn't there)

I made good money, it's a valued trade. But half the clients hit on me, and the other half would say something stupid enough to where I'd blurt out something rude...

She smiles. Beautiful, honest and not drunk at all.

ISABELLE

I don't fit in. I can't hold my temper, I call 'em as I see 'em...

DONALD (glum)

Out loud.

ISABELLE

...I'm arrogant, impatient, and I don't suffer fools.

She likes Wallace. Her voice softens on...

ISABELLE

I have a good heart, believe it or not. But that doesn't pay so good.

And turns the smile toward...

ISABELLE

Thank God, I have a wonderful guy. Who's very generous.

Unquestionably genuine. She strokes his hand, and Donald's tension melts into confusion. She WHIPS back to Wallace...

ISABELLE

Did he tell you our plans for the house?

Wallace shakes his head. Doesn't see that Donald has been struck by a lightning bolt of pure panic.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

They're not exac...

ISABELLE (manic, fast)

There'll be this big sandbox in the living room, for people and animals to play, create, whatever, and a screened-in aviary in the yard for the birds and lizards to Bongo...

DONALD (desperate)

Have you noticed the snow comes later every year...?

*
*

ISABELLE (in a zone)

...and a piano outside, so the neighborhood animals and birds can hear me play, then put all these ficuses and rhododendron and Japanese palms in the house, so the animals will have like one continuous environm...

*

DONALD (too loud)

...must be the global warming.

*

They both look at him.

ISABELLE

Interrupting is not the way to become the focus of attention, Donald. It's very autistic.

Back to Wallace...

ISABELLE

...paint the walls these one-of-a-kind savage colors, get fabrics for the floor and furniture that scream 'jungle', you know...?

Donald timidly tries to raise his hand. Like in school. No one notices.

ISABELLE

Maybe for the entrance there, a big whale thing you have to walk through, then eventually...

The hand goes higher, urgent...

ISABELLE

...a pool-sized aquarium...

The arm is RIGID, fingers WRIGGLING. Teacher! Teacher!

*

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE
...an exotic zoo of creatures who c..

DONALD
HOW THE HELL AM I GONNA PAY FOR
THIS???

Crashing. Silence. Wallace stares at his plate.

ISABELLE
Donald. I hardly think this is the
time. Or the place.

53

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

53

Donald is FUMING, pacing (which basically means lurching about) through the stacked papers of his life, hands clenched fitfully at his waist, eyes spinning through the terrible alternatives of the things he wants to say. What keeps him from appearing as grave as he might wish, is...

...Dundee perched on his shoulder throughout. Sort of a Long John Silver effect. At last...

Okay. Now or never.

STORMS to the glass door. A single yard light illuminates Isabelle, just as we saw her earlier. Swinging slowly, sunglasses, beer. A cigarette has been added. Donald...

...TEARS open the door, dramatically. Then, realizing Dundee is on his shoulder, he has to get him off before he goes out. Dundee BITES him. Donald YELPS. Looks up nervously, wondering if Isabelle heard that. No way to tell, she's just swinging lazily.

He STALKS over. Stands before her, arms rigid at his side, sort of hopping on the balls of his feet. And when she, perhaps, turns her sunglasses slightly in his direction...

DONALD
A SANDBOX? IN THE LIVING ROOM???

Slowly, elegantly, Isabelle slips the sunglasses down to peer at this raving insect. Her silence is menacing. Too late, he's committed.

DONALD
In the first place, that's our secret.
My boss is gonna think we're crazy!

ISABELLE
Not crazy, Donald. Abnorm...

DONALD
And in the second place...

*
**
*
**
**
*

CONTINUED:

He's lost it.

*

DONALD
DO YOU THINK I'M MADE OF MONEY!!!

And so low as to be nearly inaudible...

ISABELLE
We'll get. The sand. On sale.

She's missed the point.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

It's not that, it's everything! New
wigs, phone calls, organic Lizard
Chow, a collar for Blue with a silver
bell, for god's sake. Every day,
fresh-cut flowers!!

*

ISABELLE (so hurt)

Oh, Donald.

He swallows.

DONALD

Okay. Maybe I picked a poor example.

*

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

Your boss, your job, your money. Who
got you that job in the first pla...

*
*

DONALD (been waiting for this)

You only did it, so I could get you
this house and all these luxuries and
fantasies about aviaries, and...

*

He stops. Because there are tears in her eyes. There is
silence now.

ISABELLE (quietly)

Well, it's obvious we don't share the
same dreams. That is very sad. And I
do have my selfish side, and I'm not
ashamed of that. But Donald...

She shakes her head. This really hurts.

ISABELLE

That job was for you. And I pushed,
and I sweet-talked you into it,
because you would never have gone down
there, but it was all, or mostly all,
for you...

She points a finger.

ISABELLE

So you could be proud. Of yourself.

He feels like a dog. But defensive, conflicted. He has a
legitimate beef, and now she's guilt-tripping him.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

I have put up with an array of shit from you that no woman should tolerate, because I thought you'd do the same for me, well, forgive me for saddling you with an extravagant, vile-tempered psycho!

She is OFF the swing, coming toward him...

ISABELLE

You made me feel like a freak! Behave? For your boss? This from Mr. Whale Costume, Mr. Toxic Toilet, Mr. Poster Boy for Compulsives Anonymous, Mr. Paper-Drive-As-Living-Room-Decor?

DONALD (backing up)

Oh, yeh?

ISABELLE

Great comeback.

DONALD

What about that show YOU put on? Did you do ONE thing the whole NIGHT that was HALFWAY NORMAL?

She stops.

ISABELLE

Nope, I was mad. So I wasn't making the effort. Sadly, I was just myself. And that's the real point, Donald Duck.

His face is twisted in a childish, angry pout. Because the closer she comes to the truth the more it hurts.

ISABELLE

You are just one more guy, who sees who I really am, and can't handle it. It broke my heart to watch how scared you were.

DONALD

SCARED? HAH!

ISABELLE

You were bringing the boss home to prove you were normal, by showing off your smart, pretty, little wife. Only he saw she was as crazy as you are.

DONALD

Crazier.

CONTINUED:

She steps up to him. POKES him in the chest.

ISABELLE

There's one difference between us,
Bud. You want to be normal. You
fucking crave it.

One step back. The first one.

ISABELLE

And that. Is what broke us up.

His belly turns to water. Cold fear on his childlike face.

ISABELLE

I'm going out. Don't be here when I
get back. You HEAR THAT? —

GRABS him by the shirt, ferocious. He is terrified.

ISABELLE

DON'T BE HERE EVER!!

She lets go. Pure hate in her eyes.

ISABELLE

Or you will FUCKING regret it.

She stalks off. The glass door SLAMS.

A miracle it didn't shatter.

54

INT. GREGORY'S APARTMENT - DAY

54

Gregory sits awkwardly on the windowsill of his one-room apartment, guzzling Dr. Pepper from a gigantic plastic bottle, squinting with trademark-seemingly-pained concentration at something we can't see, as...

ISABELLE (O.S., weary)

...unlisted number, but there was no
other way. I can picture you, still
calling every 3 minutes, hoping for
some electronic miracle.

PAN slowly across the single room. Crap everywhere. Used underwear, plates of food scraps, comic books, a microwave with a long extension cord, a futon strewn with Donald's clothes and possessions. Donald, cross-legged at the answering machine, re-playing her message...

ISABELLE (O.S.)

I tore up your check, save it for
dancing lessons. That's not sarcasm,
you genuinely need them.

CONTINUED:

GREGORY (helpful)
You really do.

Donald is the saddest human we have ever seen.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
I'm not mad anymore, Donald, I'm okay.
Don't obsess on all the stuff I
said...

GREGORY
Does she have any idea who she's
talking t...

DONALD (softly)
Shhh.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
It's more than the sex, the money, the
hygiene, the arguments, the staggering
fundamental incompatibility...

GREGORY
Tho that's a lot.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
I've never been able to stay with any
guy for very long. So I knew I'd end
up breaking your heart.

Donald has no tears left anymore. It's just as well.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
That was a lot. To carry around.

She sounded sad there. His eyes flicker on that.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
I'll keep the birds til you find a
place. And don't do a whole number on
how much you miss them.

Donald SIGHS. A big one.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
A piece of advice? Set a limit on how
many times you'll replay this? Like,
twenty? And then erase it, okay?

CLICK. WHIRR.

MECHANICAL VOICE (O.S.)
End of final message.

GREGORY
It's 32 times that I've heard.

CONTINUED:

DONALD (real quiet)
It doesn't cost anything.

Swallows.

DONALD
Anyway. Not money.

GREGORY
Don't worry. I won't go out with her.

Donald turns. Looks at his friend.

GREGORY
I could never do that to you.

Donald nods. Thankful, because he knows it is meant well.

GREGORY (brightens)
Pizza time?

It is. It's pizza time.

GREGORY
Pineapple and pepperoni, with cheese
on the side?

A shadow of disgust. Becomes a smile. Reaching for the phone...

DONALD
The usual. Coming up.

55

INT. ISABELLE'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

55

CLOSE on Isabelle's mural. Mozart's Jupiter Symphony is playing LOUD. The mural has red paint SPLASHED across it. As if it were blood.

Isabelle walks through the room. Level, serious eyes, a large CHOPPING KNIFE in her hand. As she opens the glass door to the moonlit yard...

...Dundee FLIES to her shoulder. She stops. Casts a sideways glance, and brings the knife...

...up to the bird's belly. She turns the sharp edge down, and the bird steps ONTO the dull edge. She brings the bird to her face. Looks in its eyes.

Kisses its feathers. Dundee pecks at her, but she doesn't mind. Sets him gently down.

56 EXT. BACKYARD- LATE NIGHT

56

Into the yard now. It has been dug up. A number of canvasses lay spread across the grass. She looks over them, analytically. Kneels beside one...

...SLASHES the canvas, brutally, with empty eyes. STABS the blade DOWN into another. And rises.

Bongo is nibbling at greenery, and she snatches him up. Climbs nimbly into the hammock. Cuddles him close.

They watch the stars.

57 EXT. PARK PICNIC TABLES - DAY

57

Group meeting. Everyone sits with his or-her lunch. Or what's left of it after Blume has commandeered his bully's tribute. Donald sits atop a table, chairing proceedings with a glazed look of a man preoccupied by what has gone forever.

ROGER

Who'd go whale watching? It's a wholesome activity, and the weather should be ideal. Barring unforeseen conditions to the contrary. Such as a low pressure front which could really have the boat rocking and rolling.

There were seven hands up, until that last part. Four came down. Hmmn.

DAWN

The ocean's five hours away.

Beat. This is not helping...

ROGER

Yeh, but whales are Donald's favorite thing. And would cheer him up from Isabelle dumping him.

Great. But...hands begin to rise. They are timid, but it is really quite touching. Roger counts...

ROGER

Ten. Just two more.

DAWN (positive)

I'm not going. And that's for s...

GREGORY

You could be the cruise lecturer. That's a prestigious honor.

CONTINUED:

Dawn hadn't considered that.

GREGORY

Perhaps contrast the administrations
of Millard Fillmore and Chester A.
Arthur. Or whatever.

Dawn stares dead in his eye. Her hand goes up.

ROGER

Blume. You could be in charge of
snacks.

Blume looks up. Anger flashing across his eyes, above the
false smile. Goes back to eating.

JANICE

IF YOU COME, I'LL MAKE YOU A PIE!

BLUME

You won't.

JANICE

YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT YOU COULD STILL
COME!

Gracie has her hand held high. Keeping it there, she walks
around to where Bronwin is folding and refolding her brown
paper lunch sack. Gracie peers around with her maniacally-
cheerful smile, only inches from Bronwin's face.

GRACIE

Let's watch a whale!

Bronwin refolds a little faster.

GRACIE

It's on Sunday!

BRONWIN (never looking at her)

Sunday, I see my daddy in the
hospital. That's just the way
it is.

Gracie nods. Her hand still ramrod-straight in the air, she
looks to Donald...

GRACIE

I could call Isabelle! She doesn't
hate me!

Donald just stares at her. He clears his throat. His eyes
go down. The group is silent, almost focused, watching him
keep his composure.

CONTINUED:

GRACIE (feels responsible)
A duck walks into a drugstore. He says, 'I want some Chapstick.' The man says, 'Can you pay for it?'

Is he listening? Hard to tell.

GRACIE
The duck says, 'Just put it on my bill.'

Silence.

BLUME
He told us that joke last ti...

DONALD (looking up) -
Well, I forgot it. That's funny, Gracie. You tell it great.

She nods. She does. He still looks so sad.

GRACIE
I have a list of friends.

And takes a piece of paper from her pocket. It is folded small...

GRACIE
Some of 'em are women.

When she unfolds it, we see it is very old and very precious. She holds it out toward Donald...

BLUME
Those are just names you write down. Those aren't real friends, it's all in your mi...

DONALD (quietly)
Am I on it?

She nods. Big.

DONALD
Then Blume is full of shit. Pardon my language.

Gracie nods. She does. Smooths her list, tenderly.

DONALD (voice cracking)
I'm going to take a little walk now. Rog, run the meeting.

He climbs awkwardly off the table. Head down, hands in his pockets, he trudges off. All eyes follow.

CONTINUED:

Gregory rises.

58

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE PARK

58

ANGLE...Donald walking through the park, deep in his funk. Hulking Gregory walks beside him, too close, squinting at his pal's profile...

GREGORY

I know why you like living with me.
I'm neater than Isabelle.

DONALD

You're neater than me. Tied with
Blume. And that's it.

GREGORY (playing his ace)

I file my food. No one does that.

Donald nods, this is true.

DONALD

Speaking of which. I looked for Tim's
Cascade Brand Potato Chips, under 'T'
for Tim, 'C' for Cascade, 'P' for
potato, 'C' again for chips, even 'B'
for brand, 'S' for snack...

GREGORY

Under 'F'. They're my favorite. Can
I give you some advice?

DONALD

Can I humanly stop y...

GREGORY

I'm a better writer than Andrew
Golinka.

On this. Donald has to look over.

DONALD

How does that constitute advice, and
who is Andr...

GREGORY

...a schizophrenic wannabe pedophile.
He writes from imagined experience.
I'm much better.

Against his better judgement, Donald nods, go on...

GREGORY

But compared to William Faulkner, I'm
not so good.

We're still drawing blanks on this end.

CONTINUED:

GREGORY
Hang with the group. Compared to us,
you're a god.

GREGORY
Next to Isabelle, which you have no
chance to ever be again, you don't
come off so hot.

Donald absorbing.

DONALD
Thanks. For the advice.

GREGORY
Normal people, avoid altogeth...

JANICE (O.S.)
WE CAN'T HEAR YOU!!

LONG ANGLE...half the group trailing through the park after
them. Like motherless ducks.

59

INT. GREGORY'S APARTMENT - DAY

59

CLOSE on the blinking red light of an answering machine. A
key turns... *

...Donald enters. He's come from work. Looks down at the
blinking red light... *

DONALD
You got a message.

Spoken to Gregory, who we now see getting dressed in an old
rumpled suit. Donald looks closer at the machine. *

DONALD
In fact. 17 of 'em.

GREGORY
Actually. They're not for me. *

Strange. Donald kneels down on the ratty carpet. Presses
the button. The tape REWINDS like crazy. The numeral '1'
flashes. CLICK. *

ISABELLE (O.S., frightened)
Donald? Donald, be there, please?

CLICK. His eyes are frozen, riveted. Number '2'. CLICK.

ISABELLE (O.S., freaking)
Goddammit, he's dead! DONALD!!

CLICK. His eyes WIDE now, SHOCKED. Number '3'. CLICK.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE (O.S., sobbing)
Oh, Donald, it's Bongo. Where are
you?

60 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

60

A taxi pulls up to the little house. Donald flies out, dressed in his nice suit that Isabelle bought him. He now remembers, wheels around and thrusts some bills at the driver. Runs, stubs his toe, hops on one foot, hobbles up the path to...

*
*

...the front door. The note says...YOUR KEY STILL WORKS. ANYWAY, IT'S OPEN. He stares at that for a beat. Then, slowly, hesitantly, goes...

61 INT. HOUSE - DAY

61

...inside. The birds are dive-bombing, soaring, and they chatter to see him. Pagliacci and Dundee and Lucy come to visit his head, his shoulder, his outraised arm. Donald's eyes shine. How he missed them.

DONALD (softly)
Guys, where's mommy?

Through the place. None of his papers are there. But the whale costume IS, proudly on its stand. Donald stops, moved by this. Now, he sees the red-splattered mural. He is stunned, eyes moving over its surface. Then to...

*

...the glass door. Isabelle is on her knees by the hammock. A small mound of earth. Instead of a marker, there is a mound of vegetables. Carrot, lettuce, celery. He gently sheds the birds, steps out into...

62 EX. BACKYARD- DAY

62

...the yard. She doesn't seem to know he's there, so he comes up quietly behind her. Afraid to speak, afraid not to, he is immobilized by indecision, until...

...her hand reaches back. Curles around his leg. A gesture so spontaneous, so filled with genuine affection, Donald is nearly overcome with emotion. He kneels beside her. She turns...

ISABELLE (a whisper)
Jesus. You look great.

And kisses his cheek. It is not sexual, but soft and tender and lingering. The bittersweet contradictions in this kiss tear Donald apart.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

Uh. Bronwin's father died. Her
family is giving a party about it.
We're all going.

*
*
*
*

Oh. She hadn't known.

*

DONALD

Are you okay? You look...

CONTINUED:

Silence. Her wan smile is luminous despite her exhaustion. She has gone through a lot, and she wears that.

ISABELLE
...like shit, yeh. You are such a
sight for sore eyes.

She strokes his hair.

ISABELLE
Your stuff is packed in cartons, it's
all in the right order.

He nods, transfixed by the gift of her presence. Wanting only for this moment not to end.

ISABELLE
You never came for the birds. Or the
whale. God, you must have missed
th... *

DONALD
I missed everything.

She studies his eyes. Can sense how much.

DONALD
If I took them away, this wouldn't be
my home anymore...

Can she understand this?

DONALD
And my home is with you. Even if I
never see you again.

She's just looking in his eyes. With the trace of that sadness that is almost hardness. That is distance, that scares him so.

DONALD
Is that why you never changed the
locks? So I'd take the birds and
stuff.

She draws a breath.

ISABELLE
That's the kind of question. Gets you
in trouble.

She pats his hand. What might have been lovelight has died away. But friendship remains, this much is clear.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE

I'm so glad you came. I don't know why I went over the edge, I've lost pets all my li...

She stops, because he has impulsively opened his mouth to respond, but...

...thinks better of it. There he is, his mouth wide open. Afraid to say it. He looks four years old.

ISABELLE

What...?

Trapped. His eyes go down, he mumbles...

DONALD

If you missed me. Ten percent of what I missed you. That would do it.

When he looks back up, her eyes slide away to the mound of earth. She touches it.

ISABELLE

Say something for Bongo, or sing a song, or...

Whatever. He clears his throat. Feels the pressure.

DONALD (solemn)

Bongo was a good rab...

ISABELLE (immediately disappointed)

Sing, maybe.

He nods. Leans closer to the earth. Easier for Bongo to hear.

DONALD (sings loud)

SOME-WHERE...

*

ISABELLE (softly)

Bongo's birthday? Was February 8.

She has deftly derailed the train.

CONTINUED:

ISABELLE (innocently)
Is that an interesting number?

DONALD
It's an interesting number. February
8 is 2-8 in numbers. You have two
names, both with 8 letters. If you
subtract 2 from 8 you get six, and
both my names have 6 letters...

She smiles with sweet delight. Loves when he does this
stuff.

DONALD (picking up speed)
...now '28 was a great year in sports,
Reigh Count won the Derby, Victorian
won the Preakness, Vito won the
Belmont, it was the first Olympics
where women competed in track and
field, and the first Olympic Flame in
baseb...

She kisses him. Right there. Sweetly, on the lips.

ISABELLE
Be my friend, Donald. Be my best
friend. I need you.

Donald's world. Stops spinning.

ISABELLE
Do you know what I'm saying?

Do you?

ISABELLE
We're the two most insecure people on
this earth. It makes you want to
cling. And that makes me need to run.
Okay?

He nods, okay. But is riddled with confusion

ISABELLE
I always felt like you wanted us to...
(softer)
...you know. Get married. Or
something.

He gulps.

DONALD
Did I ever say th...

ISABELLE
With every. Desperate. Glance.

CONTINUED:

DONALD (quietly)
Oh. Those.

She kisses him once more. This time, on the nose.

ISABELLE
Can we be what we were really meant to
be? What we can really be forever?
The best, the dearest, the closest of
friends?

A beat. Not to put too fine a point on it...

DONALD
Without the sex.

ISABELLE
Without the pressure. Helping each
other be what we need to be.

He doesn't know what the hell that means.

DONALD
Can I sleep here tonight? On the
couch, mayb...

ISABELLE
I don't think that's a good idea.

You don't. Donald can't decide between ecstasy and suicidal
depression. She smiles, gently.

ISABELLE
With a stud like you, one thing might
lead to another.

DONALD
You think?

Staring at each other.

ISABELLE
I asked you a question, Donald. My
friendship is all I have to give. Do
you want it?

And now. There is no doubt in his mind. He takes her
slender hand in both of his. Kisses the back of her fingers.
Beams from his soul.

ISABELLE
This makes me so happy.

62A. EXT. GARDEN - LATER

62A

*

CONTINUED:

62A

62A

The funeral reception is over. People are leaving the pleasant garden, saying farewells. Bronwin's mother smiles and clasps hands, as if in a receiving line. And off to one side...

...Bronwin and her friends. Gracie still holds her hand. Gregory and Roger. Dawn and Janice. Even Skeets stands with his blank angelic smile. Donald is taking Bronwin's purse, putting something inside it.

DONALD

...and Isabelle made this necklace, it's a garnet, see? That's your birthstone, you're March.

BRONWIN

March 26.

Sounding as normal, as present, as any soul could ever be.

DONALD

It's really pretty, isn't it?

Isabelle thought that was sweet of Donald, and strokes his arm. But to Donald, her touch is electrifying.

ISABELLE (unaware, to Bronwin)

So when you wear it, you'll think of me. And I'll think of you. And that's how we'll be together.

BRONWIN

Autistic people can be together, too.

Isabelle nods. Yes, they can.

DONALD

And this paper has our number. And you can call it collect if you want. And we'll...

Isabelle puts her arm through Donald's. Once again, unaware of how much this excites him.

DONALD

...and we'll talk. About stuff.

He nods to Isabelle, right? She nods back.

DONALD (back to Bronwin)

You call. Cause I'm really looking forward to th...

CONTINUED:

62A

62A

*

...a huge shape BURSTS past Donald, nearly knocking him down. Blume stands before Bronwin. An open greasy bag of Lay's potato chips in his hands. He stares at her with his menacing eyes and standard grin. And then...

*

*

*

*

...THRUSTS the bag of chips INTO her hands. She is startled. But hangs onto it. He clears his throat...

*

*

...then walks away, brusquely. Never looking back.

*

ISABELLE (softly)

*

Well. It's the thought that counts.

*

Donald reaches into the bag. Eats one chip. Smiles at Bronwin.

*

*

DONALD

*

That is so good.

*

Nods, go ahead. Try one. So Bronwin does. Chews carefully. Nods, it is good. So Gregory reaches in, and then Janice, and pretty soon...

*

*

*

...they are all eating. From the bag Bronwin holds. As Isabelle grabs a handful...

*

*

DONALD

*

Uh, actually? I have dinner plans. For us.

*

*

*

Isabelle's reaction. Really? That's nice.

*

63

INT. REALLY NICE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

63

Elegant, extremely quiet French restaurant. Upscale, soft-spoken clientele. As Isabelle looks at the posh surroundings, Donald murmurs to the hostess...

*
*
*

DONALD

Mr. Morton. For the special table?
For the really special evening?

*
*
*

Oh, yes. The HOSTESS nods conspiratorially, and Isabelle is like: what's this? As they are led through the ritzy place...

*
*
*

ISABELLE

You can't afford this. Are you
crazy??

*

He doesn't look back.

DONALD

Nope, just autistic.

They've reached the table. The hostess hands them menus. Donald starts scanning his immediately, panic rising in him, because he knows what's coming.

*
*

DONALD

Hank said this was the best food in
town.

*
*

ISABELLE

Donald. This will cost a fortune. Do
you understand tha...

*
*

DONALD

It's just. I have something important
to say, and I wanted the place to be
special.

CONTINUED:

Uh. Oh. All her antennae are perking. *

ISABELLE
Something. Important. *

The SERVER has appeared. A part-time actor in a ponytail, being a little too French for comfort. He fills their water glasses. *

SERVER
Something from the bar fo...

ISABELLE
Go. Away.

He stares in her eyes. Nods.

SERVER
Take a minute. I'll be back and give you the specials.

A friendly side glance to Donald. You got your hands full, pal. He goes. Donald knows his time is running out.

DONALD
Look, I thought about what you said this afternoon. In the yard. And I know... *

He clears his throat. Jesus. Here we go.

DONALD
There's a part of this. You don't understand.

Her eyes sharpen. Anger is rising. *

DONALD
I know you think you're the more together of the two of us. At least about relationships...

ISABELLE
Donald, I don't th...

DONALD (firm, rolling on)
...yes, you do. Because you're very experienced and verbal, and I'm this shy slob who's never had a girl.

Can you hear this?

DONALD
But all your talk, and all your brashness, is there to hide something.

CONTINUED:

DONALD (cont'd)

That you're more afraid of real
intimacy. Than even I am.

His hands begin to play with his silverware. We can hear it
CLANKING. Suddenly, every NOISE in the place is MAGNIFIED to
Isabelle's over-sensitive hearing...

*
*

DONALD

You don't trust, because you've been
screwed over. I never had a chance to
get that far, and...

Every fork HITTING every plate. Every ice cube CLINKING.

*

DONALD

...and you're my only chance. And I
want that chance.

*

ISABELLE

How very fucking flattering.

DONALD

...you're my only chance. Because I
love you. And I'm your only chance...

He has to say it.

DONALD

...because you love me.

Somewhere in the open kitchen, a stack of plates SHATTER, and
she jumps. Not Donald. He's locked onto his target...

*

DONALD

I heard the truth today. From
Bronwin.

He nods. All the conviction in his heart...

DONALD

Autistic people. Can be together,
too.

Her eyes widen, because somehow she knows he's going to
say...

DONALD

Marry me, Isabelle.

She freezes. Every synapse on overload. Staring in complete
disbelief.

ISABELLE

Thanks. For taking the pressure off.

DONALD

Look, I know you're freaking, but...

CONTINUED:

He reaches his hand to gently cover hers, and she JERKS it away, as if electric-shocked, SWEEPING her water glass OFF the table, to CRASH into a soaked woman, the glass SHATTERING on the floor, her date JUMPING UP in rage...

DATE

What the HELL do you think y...

But Isabelle has LEAPT to her feet, glaring at Donald as if he is a rapist, a savage predator, her chair FLYING BACK into a patron, who WHIPS around. Isabelle takes a stumbling step BACK, TRIPS on the clattering chair, nearly goes down, EVERYONE anywhere near is staring at the bizarre sight of...

ISABELLE

You are JUST like all the others!

Boy, the whole place FREEZES.

DONALD

No, I'm n...

ISABELLE

You ARE! You THINK you're different.
You think I want what YOU want, so
it's all for my own GOOD!

That stops Donald. A crystal bullet of clarity. Maybe she's right.

ISABELLE

Which makes you as SELFISH as the REST
of them!

He is immobilized in the absolute silence.

ISABELLE

I don't need ANY of you bastards to
SAVE me, I just need to be left ALONE!

Now she's backing away, bumping into tables, her finger STABBING out at the rigid, horrified Donald...

ISABELLE

Don't follow me. Don't you FUCKING
follow me!!

And BOLTS like a frightened deer, SLAMMING against half the patrons between here and the door, until she...

...is gone.

Donald alone. Oblivious to the numberless eyes of the normal world.

65 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 65

Donald nervously approaching the front door, his key already in his hand. He stands there, utterly torn and petrified, trying to decide. Should he do this? Then, fits the key into the lock...

...it works. He lets himself...

66 INT. HOUSE - NIGHT 66

...in, closing the door carefully. Seeing him, the birds go CRAZY, diving, squawking, as if to tell him, to warn him. For once in his life, he doesn't even see them...

DONALD
IZZY, IT'S ME! ARE YOU DECENT?

No answer. *

67 INT. HALLWAY- NIGHT 67

Here he goes. Slow and scared. All the way to the bedroom door. Push it open to see... *

68 DELETED 68

69 DELETED

69

70 INT BEDROOM- NIGHT

70

...Isabelle lies across the bed, eyes closed. Her face is slack, her body splayed somewhat awkwardly. A murmur, so as not to wake her...

DONALD

Honey? Are you asleep?

Must be. He relaxes, a little. Probably for the best. Climbs up carefully, if clumsily, onto the bed beside her.

DONALD (already rehearsed)

I think, you know, I'm reflecting on the day, and...

(beat)

I think you're absolutely right.

Nods his head. You bet.

DONALD

You told me this afternoon we were just gonna be friends. And I think proposing to you at dinner was too soon.

He understands that now. If she were only awake, she'd be glad to hear it.

DONALD

You need more space, and you are gonna get it. Hours. Days, even. Whatever. Y...

Gazes down...

DONALD

God, you look beautiful.

Looks at her closer. Shrugs

DONALD

Okay, you look terrible.

But...

DONALD

But, with you, that's still beautiful. See, that's my point.

Leans back. Against the wall.

DONALD

Not that 'beautiful' is my point at all.

CONTINUED:

Gazes at the ceiling. So what is my point?

DONALD

My point is. Lots of times, love
isn't about all the wonderful things
you can get from the other person.

Looks down at her. As if they were having a conversation.

DONALD

It's what you can give them.

She's just lying there. So silent. So still.

DONALD

That is why. We belong to each other.

CONTINUED:

He smiles.

DONALD
I oughta write that down.

Lean close. As if to murmur in her ear.

DONALD
Then maybe I'll have the brains to say
the right thing. Sometime when you're
conscious.

He reaches to tenderly stroke her arm...

DONALD (a whisper)
You think?

...which FALLS. Limp, dangling, over the side of the bed.
Something cold grasps his belly. He stares.

DONALD
Iz? Are you...

He leans over her, and now...

...sees. Slightly protruding from beneath the bed.

A Ziploc BAG. Half-filled with more than a hundred PILLS of
all colors. *

How many did she take? *

71	DELETED	71
72	DELETED	72
73	INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM	73

ANGLE...morning. Gregory sits beside a despondent Donald,
who takes no notice of the pile of vending machine snacks in
his friend's lap, most of which have been opened for
simultaneous sampling. Gregory is trying to bite through the
plastic wrap on an egg salad sandwich...

DONALD (never looking up)
Thanks.

GREGORY (fearing he has offended)
I would have offered you some, b...

CONTINUED:

DONALD
Thanks. For being here.

Oh. Sincerity.

GREGORY
When she's dead, they come and tell
you. That's what happened with my
brother Robert.

DONALD (turns now)
I'm sorry.

GREGORY
No, it's good they tell you. Or you'd
sit there for years.

He has the sandwich open. Takes out half. Tears that half
in half. Gives the smaller piece to Donald.

74 INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM

74

ANGLE...night once more, and the WHOLE gang is here, taking
over the waiting room. They are speaking boldly to the
civilians, standing alone with arms occasionally flapping,
SPINNING when the spirit moves.

Roger has found an EKG machine which has been left standing
on a cart, and is flicking a switch ON and OFF to make it
SQUEAL, PING and BEEP. A million times. Gracie has
someone's stethoscope, and is aggressively soliciting
volunteers. Maybe 25 of our group on hand, so we are the
majority. Reactions of the normals range from amusement to
fear to indignation.

At the nurses' station, Donald stands with a bouquet of
irises, waiting for a nurse to get off the phone. Blume is
taking hard candies by the handful, shamelessly, from the
bowl on the counter. Hey, at least he's here. Skeets stands
beside Donald, holding an open box of gift chocolates, eating
them one at a time.

A passing GANGBANGER surveys the scene...

BANGER
Don't you know psycho ward's on th'
eighth floor?

A small, meticulously-groomed woman steps into his face...

JANICE
WHY? DO YOU LIVE THERE?

The kid LAUGHS, likes her. Meanwhile, the nurse has hung up.
Donald steps forward with his flowers...

CONTINUED:

DONALD
These are for Miss Sorensen.
She's in Intensive Care.

NURSE
I'm sorry, no flowers are alo...

DAWN (positive and large)
Take them. Or we'll sue you.

DONALD (will this help?)
They're fresh-cut.

He looks to Skeets for validation. The kid, still resolutely eating chocolates from the open box, nods knowingly. An instant of seeming normal as hell.

NURSE (flipping through charts)
Uh. Ms. Sorensen was released from
ICU nine hours ago. She's on 6 West
now, and resting comfortab...

DONALD
Can I see her?

The nurse looks him in the eye. Glances down at her chart.

NURSE
You'd be...Mr. Morton?

The way she said that. Uh-oh.

NURSE (sincere)
I'm really sorry. She left specific
instructions. About you.

He absorbs this. Holds the flowers forward...

DONALD
Will she take these? Blue's her
color.

The nurse just looks sad. Skeets finishes the last chocolate. Closes the fancy box. Hands it toward the nurse. She doesn't know what to do.

DONALD (quietly)
Go ahead. It's for her.

75

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

75

Donald's eyes flutter open. He is sprawled across the waiting room sofa like a beached whale. A face is staring from inches away. It speaks softly to awaken him...

*

CONTINUED:

TRASK

Donald? I'm Jerry Trask. Are you okay?

He is a chubby leprechaun of a man with wispy, thinning hair, wearing several shades of mismatched green. Donald blinks, focuses...

DONALD

Izzy's shrink. Is she okay?

The little man nods. His eyes are lively, undeniably friendly. But they are watchful. They see a lot.

TRASK

I signed her release, and she left.

DONALD

Is that safe?

TRASK

She's going to be fine. She'll be in therapy.

Therapy.

DONALD

She doesn't need that. She's not crazy. She's just weird.

TRASK

Donald, she needs someone to listen to her.

Donald nods, great.

DONALD

I'll go right home, and start listening.

He tries to sit up, but Trask gently puts a hand on his shoulder. Chill, okay?

DONALD

I'm an excellent listener.

Trask tilts his head, just a little. Smiles. Oh yeh?

DONALD

I'll improve.

Trask tilts his head until it is sideways. Like a lizard.

DONALD

I won't. I'm autistic.

Ah.

CONTINUED:

TRASK

Well, Asperger's is a funny animal.

DONALD (quietly)

Can I go home now?

CONTINUED:

76

EXT. PARK - DAY

76

Our VIEW is CIRCLING a public PAY PHONE, moving fast, agitated. The whole group is here, some of them standing between us and the phone.

CONTINUED:

Blume positioned squarely in front of the instrument, a last line of defense, as he eats pop tarts (two at a time) from their foil wrapper.

GRACIE

Look at it this way. She tried to kill herself because you wouldn't stop calling her.

*
*
*
*

DONALD

Nope. She tried to kill herself because I want to marry her. It's completely different.

*
*
*
*

He watches them try to absorb this.

*

DONALD (O.S.)

I mean, I already did not-calling, and it didn't help.

GRACIE

How much did you not-call?

SEE him now, pacing around the treasured pay phone like a stalking predator.

DONALD

I didn't call every 30 seconds since last night. It's exhausting. And I think she has every right to be offended.

ROGER

She doesn't want you to call. She's probably proud and amazed and...

DONALD

Aha! Then why didn't she call to tell me! And YOU...

WHIRLING on Gregory...

DONALD

Wrapping my phone in layers of duct tape! What if she tried to call me?

GREGORY

I'll take that chance.

Right. Donald suddenly BOLTS for the phone, but Roger, Gregory and Dawn GRAB him. It was a desperate, pathetic attempt and he knows it. Gracie keeps feeding pop tarts to Blume the Goalie, from a cardboard box she's brought for the occasion.

GREGORY

If I were you, I would ask me for advice.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

Find another phone?

GREGORY

That. And don't play her little game.
Show her you don't care. Write a
story about her where she gets eaten
by Peruvian fire ants. And then run
over by a car. Then fax it to her.

CONTINUED:

JANICE

I'LL E-MAIL IT! GET HER OFF YOUR
BACK!

GRACIE (her best shot)

Look. There's other fish in the sea.
Nobody gets married anymore, anyway.
Also, it's not like somebody died or
was twisted and maimed in a horrible
train wreck like the kind in The
Fugitive or one of the Amtrak ones.

Did that help? Maybe not. His finger STABS out a poor
little Gracie...

DONALD

Most of the horrible pain of this
world is inflicted by well-meaning do-
gooders! Okay, actually it's not.
Not at all. Not even four percent. I
have a completely different point.
Which is...

Come on, brain...!

DONALD (okay, I got it)

She is expecting me to call! When I
don't, she'll go crazy, because...
she'll think...

She'll think...

DONALD

...I don't love her anymore. Do you
want that on your conscience?

Nobody. Is buying that one.

DONALD

Okay, I'll find a phone, I've got the
number...

GRACIE

Is it as good a number. As, say,
2809?

Donald stops. His compulsive requires...

DONALD

Actually. That's 53 squared. And 5
plus 3 is 8, which is Isabelle's dress
size. I bought her this white
sundress? It had these lit...

ROGER

What about 5435?

CONTINUED:

Donald sighs. He is one dead Donald Duck. Sits on the grass.

DONALD

May 4, 1935 was a Saturday and the day Omaha won the Derby on the way to his Triple Crown. And 54 is the number of pickets in the fence in front of her beloved fig tree. And Mozart was 35 when he died.

SKEETS (almost getting it)

Six?

Everyone. Shares a look.

DONALD

Not a richly-textured number. But it is her shoe size. You should see her feet.

Skeets nods. He should.

DONALD (glum)

It's no use, guys. You can't follow me everywhere.

This sinks in. Depresses the gang.

GREGORY

Okay, say you were giving up smoking...what would you wear...?

In his eyes. The flame of genius.

GREGORY (isn't it obvious)

Nicotine patch.

77 EXT. MALL - NIGHT

77

VIEW through the glass of the Yankee Doodle bar. CLOSE on an inviting, unused, pristine, pay phone. Then, a REFLECTION. Donald on the outside looking in. His clothes are completely covered with POST-IT notes, on each of which is written a different multi-digit number.

He gazes at the telephone like the wino at a gallon of Thunderbird. RIPS Off a Post-it. Reads...

DONALD

Okay, 9660...

GREGORY (O.S.)

HOLD it, Number Boy!

*
*

CONTINUED:

Donald looks to see Gregory hobbling over, panting and wheezing. Maybe he's not in shape. When he catches his breath...

GREGORY

I just came. From her house.

At those words, the Post-it flutters from Donald's hand.

GREGORY

I went to tell her that even tho she's completely available. I would not be asking her out. Out of loyalty to you.

(beat)

In case that's what she was waiting for.

Oh.

DONALD

Did she mention my na...

GREGORY

That slut! We are so well rid of her! I mean your body is barely cold, and there he was!

'He.' A word scarier than 'metastasized.'

DONALD (a choked)

Um. Did you say...

(more choked)

...'he?'

77A EXT. HOUSE - AS SOON AS HE COULD GET THERE

77A

Donald at the front door, breathing really hard. Maybe he's not in shape either. He stares at the key in his hand. This would be the bravest, craziest, stupidest thing he's ever done.

He does it. Soundlessly, the door opens and he sneaks into...

77B INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

77B

He creeps along the hallway. Toward a light. Toward soft voices. One of them male. He enters the living room to see...

...the glass door open. Sitting on the porch. With two cold beers. The woman he loves. And MAC the gorgeous actor, without his shirt. The guy is, of course, ripped. And from the depths of Donald's soul...

CONTINUED:

77B

77B

DONALD

YOU!!!

Boy, do they WHIP AROUND. Okay, maybe that was a little loud. No turning back now...

DONALD

You. You were supposed to be her friend.

ISABELLE

Uh, Donal...

DONALD

I'll handle this!

The handsome guy smiles. Real comfortable.

MAC

Don't I look friendly?

DONALD

You don't understand her. You love her just because she's beautiful, but you have no idea who she really is. Inside!

Isabelle's mouth just drops open.

DONALD

You'll just break her heart like all the 'normal' guys. Because you'll never see that she's better than any woman you'll ever be with.
(for that matter...)
Any woman anywhere!

MAC

Look, Dona...

DONALD

And she doesn't need bastards like you. Or me. She doesn't need anyone to save her, because she's...

But now he's stuck. And his eyes are welling over. And in the silence.

ISABELLE (quietly)

Mac came over to fix the porch. He's a carpenter.

Beat.

CONTINUED:

77B

77B

*

DONALD

Sure! Right! I'm buying that! If
you think I...

*

*

*

MAC (softly)

Donald. I'm gay.

*

*

DONALD

That's what they all say, that
they're...

*

*

*

Donald tries to keep his cynical sneer in place. But his
eyes dart to Isabelle, who nods. Yep. Gay. A full beat.

*

*

DONALD

So. You're. Okay, then.

*

*

Her face so hard to read. She nods.

*

ISABELLE

I'm fine.

*

*

DONALD

Well. Okay, then.

*

*

And just...turns around. And walks away with every shred of
dignity he can pretend to still own. Down the hall, through
the entry way, and as he exits through the front door...

*

*

*

...the FLUTTER of wings. His old companion Dundee has flown
to his shoulder. And as they go down the path to the
street...

*

*

*

DONALD (to Dundee)

So. Feel like a cold one?

*

*

78

EXT. UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON

78

End of the workday. The afternoon shift is departing out onto the Plaza, chatting in twos and threes. Except for one who ambles alone. With his weathered ANIMANIACS lunch pail.

And then he stops. We CLOSE on his confusion. SNAP to his VIEW of...

...the cement pedestrian barriers lining the walkway, some distances off. As the crowd passes, we catch a brief glimpse of someone who could almost be...

DONALD

Yeh. They're all Izzy.

...and is. She looks back at us, unsmiling, across the distance. Well-groomed and healthy. Her head slightly tilts in that trade-mark appraising stare. The crowd OBSCURES her again, and when it passes...

...she is walking AWAY, swiftly, without hurrying. Donald JOLTS from his trance, and TAKES OFF...

...she is way ahead, he is bumping into pedestrians, losing sight of her.

She climbs on a BUS, which sits waiting, as he makes his MAD DASH for glory, hears it HISS, closer, closer, and...

...it just PULLS OFF. He stands GASPING his bronchia out, squinting at the number of the departing vehicle. An OLD GUY sits on the bench, reading the Wall Street Journal.

DONALD (huffing)

Excuse me. Do you know how often the 271 runs? Please.

The man shrugs. Sorry. Goes back to reading, as...

DONALD

I'm chasing someone.

This gets the senior citizen's attention.

OLD GUY

By bus.

DONALD

Well. It's important.

Now the guy looks Donald over from stem to stern.

OLD GUY

Important enough. To take the bus.

CONTINUED:

DONALD

My girlfriend left me because I wanted
to marry her. Instead of just being
friends.

And points. At the retreating bus. The old fella nods in
complete agreement...

OLD GUY

The slower this chase. The better.

79 INT. BUS, BOULEVARD - LATER

79

Donald on his feet, face against the window as the bus
JOUNCES along. His unguarded eagerness is kind of riveting.
Everyone, even the driver, is following his vigil. Share his
VIEW of...

...a passing church. A giant FIG TREE. And...

DONALD (O.S.)

STOOOOPPP TH' BUSSSS!!!

And our moving view of the fig tree JARS to a STOP, with an
excruciating hydraulic HISS. Sure enough...

DONALD (O.S.)

Thank you, very much.

...under her tree. Sits our girl.

80 EXT. FIG TREE - LATE AFTERNOON

80

Isabelle sits with a baggie of bread scraps, feeding a
growing coterie of pigeons, mourning doves and sparrows.
When the larger birds get pushy, she skillfully sends them
off in one direction, so that she can feed the sparrows
unimpeded. She doesn't look up when...

...Donald kneels down. But she knows he's there. He watches
her feed the birds for a moment.

ISABELLE

All that time. You didn't call. *

And glances up. Eyes narrowed slightly, against the angle of
the sun. *

DONALD

At first, I thought of calling...

ISABELLE

Did you.

CONTINUED:

DONALD
...just to tell you that I wasn't
gonna call. So you wouldn't be
aggravated, waiting around wondering
when I was...

ISABELLE (quietly)
...gonna call, yeh.

She nods, comfortably sharing the illogical logic of it. He
pauses. In wistful appreciation of that.

DONALD
In the end, I just figured forcing
myself on you was sort of...not right.
And I would probably always do that...

He sighs.

DONALD
So the only nice thing I had left to
give you. Was not to call.

ISABELLE (simply)
I hated you. For not calling.

Something. Of a surprise.

ISABELLE
I mean, what happened to my being your
kite? And you being my anchor?

A lifetime of feeling. Comes to her eyes.

ISABELLE
Those calls were my bit of string, you
know? To my anchor? The one thing I
could depend on in this messed-up
world was...

She swallows. No other words for this...

ISABELLE
You were always going to be there.

Deep breath. Against the rising tide.

ISABELLE
And when you didn't call...it was as
if...

Isabelle shrugs. To her dismay, her voice breaks a little
on...

ISABELLE
...you didn't love me anymore.

CONTINUED:

Silence. Ignored birds coo and cheep for attention.

DONALD

So go home. I'll call y... *

ISABELLE

And then last night. When you told
Mac that I didn't need you... *

Everything in her heart. Comes straight to her eyes. *

ISABELLE

I can't promise the future, Donald
Duck.

She can't.

ISABELLE

I don't know if this is for two days
or twenty years.

Ah.

DONALD

Finally. Something about us that's
normal.

She stares into his eyes for a long moment. Wants so much to
say this right. *

ISABELLE

Donald. I have one leg. And so
do you. But if we hold on to each
other...

And her smile splits the world. All the brighter for its
softness. *

ISABELLE

...maybe we can dance. *

FADE SLOWLY TO BLACK. ROLL END CREDITS.