

LAMB OF GOD

Written by

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MUSIC UP: A CHEESY, SYNTH-HEAVY BALLAD

EXT. MANNERHEIM HOUSE (TO ESTABLISH) - MORNING

A "Tuscan"-style tract house in a remote, snow-covered field. The house looks very out of place, probably because this isn't Tuscany. A deer grazes nearby.

There's a plastic "life-size" NATIVITY SCENE in the yard. The BABY JESUS is discreetly tethered to the manger with a bike lock. Theft prevention.

CUT TO:

A POOR-QUALITY VIDEO TAKEN AT A TALENT SHOW.

LAMB MANNERHEIM, 17, grips a microphone and paces the stage. Lamb is pretty, but in an extremely modest, wholesome way. Her clothes are dated, and she wears her long hair in an old-fashioned style. Think Walmart meets *Little House on the Prairie*.

A homemade *American Idol*-inspired banner on the stage reads: **"Christ is OUR Idol! Youth Talent Night 2007."**

Lamb takes this performance very seriously, even if it's just for friends and family. She holds the mic like a pro, fanning her fingers and using moves she's learned from TV. She smiles and begins to sing in an unsteady, nervous voice.

The song is "Place in This World," a Christian anthem by Michael W. Smith.

LAMB (2007)  
*The wind is moving  
But I am standing still  
A life of pages  
Waiting to be filled*

INT. MANNERHEIM HOUSE (LAMB'S BEDROOM) - MORNING

We pan past a wall of family photos and mass-produced Christian art. A sticker that says "Real Women Eat Meat." A MONTANA BIBLE COLLEGE pennant. A cross.

Lamb, now 21, is lying in bed. Faintly, as if underwater, we hear the singing performance playing in another room.

LAMB (2007)  
*A heart that's hopeful  
A head that's full of dreams  
(MORE)*

LAMB (2007) (CONT'D)

*But this becoming  
Is harder than it seems*

Lamb rolls over stiffly. We see her arms, covered with FLESH-TONED COMPRESSION GARMENTS-- they're like Ace bandages crossed with fingerless gloves.

Lamb sits up, slowly and with effort. She's a pretty young woman. But her shoulders and neck are marred by PINK SCAR TISSUE. The scars could be covered with the right clothing, but right now, every flaw is exposed.

She winces in pain. Every day begins with pain.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Ow.

We INTERCUT with the video, which we can now deduce is playing in another room of the house.

LAMB (2007) (CONT'D)

*I'm looking for a reason  
Roamin' through the night to find  
My place in this world  
My place in this world*

Lamb groans, stiffly swinging her legs out of bed. She wiggles her toes and reaches for a prescription PILL BOTTLE, close at hand.

Lamb dry-swallows four Vicodin pills in rapid succession-- she's a pro at this.

We see that there's a cup of HOT CHOCOLATE waiting for her on the bed table. A CANDY CANE and some MINI-MARSHMALLOWS dissolve in the cocoa. Lamb moves the cup, revealing that the napkin/coaster bears a handwritten message: "You R Still Pretty!!! XOXO Mom."

Lamb wrinkles her nose at the cocoa.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Ugh.

Lamb exits the room and follows the sound of the talent show video to its source.

INT. MANNERHEIM HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - SAME

The living room is bedecked with religious Christmas items.

MELANIE and DOUG MANNERHEIM, Lamb's surprisingly young parents, are watching the talent show video on a gigantic plasma TV.

MELANIE is an attractive woman with flowing curls and a sparkling bejeweled cross necklace.

DOUG has spiky hair and a fitted button-down shirt with Ed Hardy-esque embroidery on it.

As they watch the video, Melanie provides rapid-fire commentary:

MELANIE

This part I thought she did so well. You know that thing she does where she kind of takes off and makes it her own? That's called a "run."

Doug has watched this many times before.

DOUG

I know.

MELANIE

Lamb could have gotten a talent agent. I should have taken her to that open call in Missoula.

DOUG

That was a a long time ago.

Lamb's annoyed voice interrupts.

LAMB

Mom, you're watching this again?

Lamb has appeared in the living room entry, looking disheveled and vulnerable with her scars and compression garments on rare display.

Melanie reacts as though she's been caught watching porn.

MELANIE

(startled)

Oh! Lamb. You're up early. Doug, where's the clicker?

She roots around for the remote control. Finds a couple of them in the couch. Flings them aside.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

The small clicker...

DOUG  
'Morning, Lamb.

MELANIE  
Do you want your robe?

The Mannerheim household is a modest one, and Melanie isn't comfortable looking at Lamb uncovered. She tries to turn off the tape, but only succeeds in TURNING UP THE VOLUME. Lamb shouts over the song.

LAMB  
I asked you not to watch this anymore. I even hid the tape in Dad's gun safe.

Doug looks at Melanie. She sighs.

MELANIE  
We all know the combination is the dog's birthday.

On the TV: a young, stunning Lamb sings: *My place in this world. My place in this world.* Lamb stares numbly at her former self on the giant screen as Doug turns down the volume.

MELANIE (CONT'D)  
Let's get your robe. You must be freezing.

LAMB  
I'm a burn victim. I'm always freezing. Read the pamphlets again.

An awkward silence.

DOUG  
Hey, did you see Mom made you a Candy Cane Cocoa?

MELANIE  
I even put some midget marshmallows in there.  
(to Doug)  
Is it okay to say "midget" if it's about a confection?

DOUG  
I'd say little. Mini.

Lamb interrupts angrily. She gestures to the TV, where her younger self still sings.

LAMB

Why the-- why the *hell* are you  
doing this to me?

Both parents pause, surprised by her language. Lamb has never uttered the word "hell" in her life. (At least not in this context.)

DOUG

Lamb!

LAMB

This is bull.

Now Doug and Melanie are shocked.

DOUG

That's enough cursing.

MELANIE

(to Doug)

Maybe she didn't take her medication yet. She has so much pain in the morning.

LAMB

I took it, Mom. I took four.

MELANIE

You mean you took one...

LAMB

Times four.

MELANIE

Lamb, you're supposed to be tapering off the pills.

LAMB

Well, Mom, you're supposed to be "tapering off" the scrapbooks and photo albums and talent show videos from back when I didn't look like Frankenstein. Now turn it off.

(hesitating)

Damn it!

Melanie shuts off the TV and stares at her daughter. Cursing is one thing. Taking the Lord's name in vain is another entirely.

MELANIE

Lamb Grace Mannerheim. Did you just say the worst curse in my Tuscan mini-mansion?

DOUG

Frankenstein was the doctor, not the monster. You're an English major, honey. You should know that.

LAMB

I was an English major.

DOUG

You're still technically enrolled.

LAMB

You might say I'm *burned out* on college, Dad. Get it? Ha ha.

MELANIE

You were doing so good. What's gotten into you lately?

DOUG

(to Melanie)  
Could be the Devil.

MELANIE

(whispering)  
Duh. Obviously.

Lamb gives up, her shoulders sagging in defeat.

LAMB

I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I'm just not feeling well today. Got my monthly bill.

DOUG

What bill?

Lamb trudges off back toward her room.

LAMB

I'm going to go practice my guest sermon, okay?

MELANIE

Let me know when you're ready for hair and makeup.

Melanie and Doug exchange glances as she leaves. This isn't the Lamb they know.

INT. LAMB'S ROOM - MORNING

Lamb sits on her bed. She wears a modest dress, a flowered headband and lace tights. Her hair is pulled up into one of those pouf/braid combos commonly seen on fundamentalist Christian women.

Melanie has a large professional tacklebox filled with makeup. She uses a puff to apply some type of cover-up powder to Lamb's scars.

MELANIE

This is from our new line. It's all-natural minerals from the earth. It covers everything. You know Shana Qualley's mom? She has a lot of redness from, well, from drinking. I use this on her and she looks a lot better. Not good-- that would take a miracle-- but better.

Lamb says nothing.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I really don't like to talk about people.

(finishing)

There. You look radiant.

Lamb looks at her neck and collarbones in the mirror. It's not an improvement. We still see the scars.

LAMB

Dr. Cha says I'm not supposed to put anything on there.

MELANIE

Lamb, it's 100% natural. One of our representatives puts this on her four-year-old every day.

LAMB

Why?

Melanie is putting away her makeup tools. She closes the tackle box.

MELANIE

Do you feel ready to give your guest sermon?

LAMB

Mm-hm



MELANIE

If you get nervous, just imagine  
Pastor Rick in his underwear.

LAMB

(uncomfortable)  
That won't be necessary.

MELANIE

Let me just hear the beginning.

Lamb sighs, dutiful.

LAMB

"My beloved family in worship. I  
stand here today as miraculous  
evidence of God's healing grace..."  
Do I have to practice right now?

MELANIE

No. Just remember: God's counting  
on you. You can make a difference  
with what you say today. It's like  
I always say, you can affect change  
in a small way and it makes a big  
ripple. Like a--

LAMB

(interrupting)  
Like a toot in the bathtub. I know.

MELANIE

That's right.

She kisses Lamb's "pouf."

EXT. SUPER CHURCH - DAY

The Mannerheim's car pulls up to a GIANT MEGA-CHURCH COMPLEX.  
The vast parking lot is filling up with worshippers.

The church's giant marquee-type sign reads: "WHY 'TWEET' AT  
SATAN WHEN YOU CAN 'FOLLOW' CHRIST?"

INT. MANNERHEIM FAMILY CAR - SAME

The Mannerheim's are bundled up in parkas and scarves.  
Melanie rolls down the window and peeks out at the  
overflowing parking lot.

MELANIE

Will you look at this clusterhug? I love seeing this many people come together in His name, don't you?

LAMB

I think some of them just come for the smoothies.

We see that one of the many entrances to the church superstructure says "GOD'S BOUNTY SMOOTHIES & COFFEE."

DOUG

We're lucky to belong to a church with amenities. The Catholics don't have a juice bar.

LAMB

The Catholics get to drink the actual blood of Christ.

MELANIE

They think that, don't they? Aren't our differences interesting? I'll pray for them. Doug, park over by the gift shop. I want to pick up a new journal after church.

(to Lamb)

I've been writing.

LAMB

Good for you, Mom.

MELANIE

I'm writing a little story about an old man and an old woman and their whole epic love story going back decades.

LAMB

Sounds like The Notebook.

MELANIE

Um, it's totally unlike The Notebook. I wouldn't copy my own favorite book that I've read 100 times, would I?

(then)

Doug, there's one.

A VAN from an assisted living home pulls into Melanie's chosen parking spot.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(annoyed)  
God BLESS it.

INT. SUPER CHURCH - DAY

A loud CHRISTIAN HIP-HOP BAND plays. Two RAPPERS-- a white guy and an Asian girl-- bust some rhymes.

RAPPER #1

*Jesus, you're my savior.  
You made me like Xavier.  
Roberts. Your creation.  
You rule the nation!*

RAPPER #2

*I love Jesus like William love  
Kate. Jesus, you're my prince,  
let's set the date.*

Melanie, Doug and Lamb take their seats in the front row of the massive auditorium.

On the walls of the church, we see a few large POSTERS with a photo of a smiling Lamb. She wears a black dress with pearls; her neck and arms are creamy and scar-free.

The posters say: LAMB MANNERHEIM SHARES HER INSPIRATIONAL STORY OF SURVIVAL. SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 10:00 SERVICE.

MELANIE

The posters came out nice. I need one of those for my brag wall.

LAMB

Is that the picture you sent them?  
Why did you send them an old photo?

MELANIE

It's the nicest photo we have of you. That reminds me, we need to go to the portrait studio as a family. We could wear matching outfits and jump in the air!

(off Lamb's dour look)  
Or we could sit nicely.

Lamb is fixated on the poster.

LAMB

I don't look like that anymore. I looked like a Barbie.

(MORE)

LAMB (CONT'D)

Now I look like a Barbie that got tortured with a lighter.

MELANIE

First of all, you were never any kind of Barbie. You're obviously a Skipper.

She discreetly indicates Lamb's small chest.

LAMB

Mom!

MELANIE

Honey, if I could crank your arm and make them grow, I would. Secondly, self-pity is unbecoming. You're getting better every day. People don't even look anymore.

We see a MOM and DAD trying in vain to keep their KIDS from staring at Lamb. A LITTLE GIRL, who's about 2, starts to point and cry loudly.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

That's a tough age.

They take their seats. As Melanie and Doug socialize with the people seated around them, Lamb begins to NOD OFF.

INT. SUPER CHURCH - 40 MINUTES LATER

Lamb WAKES UP, a bit dazed. PASTOR RICK, the young, handsome, dynamic leader of the congregation, is introducing her.

PASTOR RICH

...And now, we have a very inspiring young lady who's agreed to talk to all of you today. Lamb Mannerheim has been a member of our church family, since, well, since I was a kid! She's been a valued youth evangelist, the valedictorian of her home school collective and a favorite performer in our music ministry. When we think of well-formed, righteous, feminine role models, we think about girls like Lamb.

(clearing his throat)

(MORE)

PASTOR RICH (CONT'D)

As you all know, Lamb survived a tragic accident while she was away at Montana Bible College two years ago. As a community, we felt her pain and loss. But now, she's miraculously back on her feet to share a courageous Christmas tale of faith and healing. Brothers and sisters...Lamb Mannerheim.

Lamb stands up and makes her way to the podium. She gets a STANDING OVATION from the appreciative crowd.

We can see Pastor Rick CHECK HER OUT briefly (but inappropriately) as she takes the stage.

LAMB

Thanks Pastor Rich. Good morning, everyone. I know you're all expecting me to deliver testimony about the accident and how, through the grace of God, I recovered. But really, you were hoping to hear gory details about the crash. Like how I could smell myself burning, but I couldn't feel it.

On Melanie: her face falls. This wasn't what they practiced. But Lamb remains calm, smiling, even serene.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Isn't that funny? I was in the parking lot of a Kroger, on fire, and as I laid there, all I could think about was my shoes. That they looked strange. "I don't remember wearing clogs today. Oh. I didn't. They're regular shoes, but they're melting. And, come to think of it, so am I."

The crowd begins to murmur. Lamb continues brightly.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Well, the accident was bad. But the surgeries-- those were even worse. Did you know they can take skin from your butt and put it on your back? And where does that leave your butt?

(chuckling)

I guess things are out of the question now! Sorry Pastor Rick.

Now everyone is really uncomfortable.

LAMB (CONT'D)

But enough of that. What I'm really here to say today is that the horrible, unspeakable pain I endured didn't strengthen my faith in the slightest. In fact, I've become an athiest. I'm here to share my new wisdom with you. Everyone, there is no God.

Pastor Rick appears at her side, but she slaps him away.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Don't touch me. My skin grafts are very fragile. I could bleed all over our nice new alter carpeting and then you'd have to take up another collection!

(to congregation)

Another collection. You already tithe most of your income to this place. How's that working out for you? Do the skate park and the putting green make you feel more righteous?

MELANIE

Lamb, stop! Get down from there!

LAMB

I'm not done yet, Mom. Almost. Okay, so I don't believe in God. Here's what I do believe: I believe in science. I believe in the doctors who were there when I woke up. I believe in opiates and morphine, which work whether you have faith in them or not. I'm willing to believe that the universe was created in an explosion, and that fish-creatures crawled out of the mud and evolved into human beings. And, in our next presidential election...

(pause)

I may vote for Obama.

That does it. Chaos breaks out in the auditorium.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Before I'm forcibly removed from the stage, I want to say that I'm leaving Billings for a while. I've spent my entire life abstaining from earthly vices and drinking the smoothie of ignorance concocted by this very church. Tomorrow, I'm getting on a plane to Las Vegas, Nevada, where I plan to gamble, drink alcohol, and frolic with homosexuals--

Melanie seizes control of the podium. Feedback squawks as Melanie grabs the mic and interrupts in a shaky voice.

MELANIE

I'm very sorry, everyone. My daughter is still recovering.

LAMB

(sarcastic)

What? Mother, I'm radiant!

Melanie is too close to the mic. Her voice booms in an unintentionally hilarious way.

MELANIE

Please pray for us.

LAMB

Or don't. The last time you prayed for me I wound up looking like this. *Wah-wah!*

MELANIE

Let's get you out of here.

She reaches for Lamb, who lunges back toward the mic, pulling her cardigan aside to reveal her shoulders. She shouts cheerfully into the mic.

LAMB

My shoulders look like turkey bacon! God who?

As Melanie takes Lamb's elbow and hustles her away from the podium, she accidentally hurts her daughter's skin.

LAMB (CONT'D)

OW.

She collapses and grabs her elbow.

MELANIE

Oh no! Baby, are you okay?

The sound drops out. Lamb shouts a VERY BAD WORD.

The forbidden curse echoes off the walls of the enormous church. A fitting climax to Lamb's public rejection of God. Doug takes a long, uncomfortable sip from his "God's Bounty" smoothie.

INT. AIRPLANE - THE NEXT DAY

Lamb is sitting on the crowded Vegas-bound PLANE. She wears a modest dress and looks bewildered and overwhelmed.

A TEENAGE GUY, 17, stashes his stuff in the overhead compartment and climbs into the seat next to hers.

He stares at the fingerless COMPRESSION GARMENTS on her arms and hands as if they're some cool accessory.

TEENAGE GUY

Where'd you get those gloves?

Lamb can barely hide her annoyance.

LAMB

The Mayo Clinic.

(then)

They're compression garments. Like big Band-Aids.

TEENAGE GUY

Oh. Do you cut?

LAMB

Do I what?

TEENAGE GUY

Like, are you a cutter? Do you cut yourself on purpose, like with a razor blade or a knife?

LAMB

No.

The guy pulls up his arm to reveal a ladder of 4 or 5 small, pathetic red slashes. Scratches, barely.

TEENAGE GUY

Check it.



Lamb is offended by these self-inflicted wounds.

LAMB

You should be ashamed of that.

TEENAGE GUY

Why?

LAMB

Because it's disrespectful. That's your *arm*. You are the earthly custodian of that arm and you choose to treat it like a whittling block?

TEENAGE GUY

A what?

LAMB

A block of wood that one whittles.

TEENAGE GUY

It's not my fault. My therapist says I have a textbook "Type D" personality.

LAMB

"Type D"?

TEENAGE GUY

Depressed. It means you pretty much want to kill yourself all the time.

Lamb considers this.

LAMB

When I feel "depressed", I go for a bike ride in the sunshine or I play my flute or I read Scripture  
(catching herself)  
-- well, I don't read Scripture since I renounced God, but the other two. Anyway, I would never *cut* my body. That seems counterintuitive if you're trying to be of good cheer.

The guy stares at her.

TEENAGE GUY

Sunshine and the flute? Are you from that family on TV that has like 20 kids and is in a cult?

LAMB

I don't watch TV.

(quietly)

Also, it's not a cult. They're just Baptists.

A pause. The guy drums his fingers anxiously on the armrests.

TEENAGE GUY

I hate takeoff. I get so jumpy on planes.

LAMB

There's pretty much zero chance this plane will go down.

TEENAGE GUY

I know there's all those statistics, like, safer than a car and stuff but...

LAMB

No. Factually speaking, the odds of this plane crashing are much lower than you realize. Like one in approximately ten trillion, since I'm on here.

TEENAGE GUY

(scoffing)

What, because you're magic or something?

LAMB

No. Because it never happens to anyone twice.

The guy, realizing, stares at Lamb in awe.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Type D.

(shaking her head)

D for Dummy. My goodness.

She takes a brand new copy of The Audacity of Hope by Barack Obama out of her bag, cracks the spine, and begins reading.

INT. AIRPLANE - 45 MINUTES LATER

The teenage guy sleeps. Lamb is wide awake, bored with her book. She gazes out the window.

She turns to the personal IN-FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT SCREEN on the seatback in front of her. She presses "Movies."

Lots of options come up. Lamb scrolls past the family-friendly categories, determined to corrupt herself. She chooses a category called "Exclusive! Vegas-Inspired Movies to Get You in the Mood!"

We see a selection of famous Las Vegas moves: *The Hangover*. *What Happens in Vegas*. *Leaving Las Vegas* and then...

*Showgirls*. If it's possible for a person to blush at the mere sight of a movie title, Lamb does. The movie is aptly described as "The Cult Classic Erotic Thriller!"

Lamb glances at her seatmate. Still sleeping. The aisle seat is occupied by a senior citizen doing Sudoku.

Tentatively, Lamb presses "Play" on *Showgirls*. She makes sure no one is looking and settles in.

INT. AIRPLANE - AN HOUR LATER

Lamb is watching the infamous pool sex scene. Her brow is furrowed, as if she's watching an interesting ritual from some foreign civilization.

The teenage guy stirs. Lamb immediately leans forward and tries to turn off the movie.

TEENAGE GUY

(dazed)

Hm?

(seeing)

Whoa! All right!

Lamb is wildly pressing the "home" icon on the touchscreen. It's stuck on *Showgirls*, frozen in the land of violent pool sex.

TEENAGE GUY (CONT'D)

What is this? *Species*?

Lamb is mortified, but holds her head high.

LAMB

*Showgirls*.

TEENAGE GUY

I would not have thought you would choose this particular film.

LAMB

Well, I did.  
 (primly)  
 I love erotic thrillers.

The guy cranes his neck to check out the screen

TEENAGE GUY

Me too.

Lamb looks away, but her eyes wander back to the screen.

INT. MCCARREN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (ARRIVALS) - DAY

Lamb moves through the airport, past the *ding-ding-ding* of slot machines and hordes of tourists. The whole place is decorated for Christmas and the mood is both festive and profane.

INT. MCCARREN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (BAGGAGE CLAIM) - NIGHT

Lamb stands at the baggage claim and waits for her suitcase. She carries her flute in a black case.

Three STRIPPERS from the same flight wait just behind her in the crowd. They wear sweatsuits in contrasting pastels.

STRIPPER #1 is a Latina beauty with hair down to her waist and 0% body fat. She stamps her feet dramatically.

STRIPPER #1

I need a smoke so bad.

STRIPPER #2 is a tan, corn-fed blonde.

STRIPPER #2

You're making it worse by talking about it.

STRIPPER #1

Ladies, I got that feeling like I'm gonna bank this weekend. I'm gonna make six Gs.

STRIPPER #2

Nobody makes six Gs anymore. Not even feature girls.

STRIPPER #1

I know the economy sucks, but this bubble don't break.

She does a few booty-pops. The girls giggle.

STRIPPER #3 is a tough, short girl.

STRIPPER #3

If I even make one G, I'll be happy. We keep coming out here for the weekends, but truth is, Vegas is as broke as Montana.

(to Lamb)

Hey, can you grab that big Louie for me?

A LOUIS VUITTON suitcase is making its way around the carousel. It's positioned in such a way that Lamb can reach it but the stripper can't. Lamb isn't sure what a "Louie" is but she guesses.

LAMB

This one?

She grabs the bag with difficulty and swings it over to its owner. The strippers see the scars on Lamb's arm as she reaches forward.

STRIPPER #3

Girl, what happened to you?

Stripper #1 is embarrassed by her friend's rudeness.

STRIPPER #1

Lexus!

STRIPPER #3

Looks like someone said they was gonna cut a bitch and *actually did it*. Damn.

(by way of apology)

You still cute, though.

STRIPPER #2

Yeah. She's cute. She could probably get a day shift at the Lumberyard.

LAMB

The Lumberyard?

STRIPPER #1

You know the Lumberyard in Helena? We work there.

(then, aggressive)

Yeah, I said it. There's no shame in the game.

LAMB

Why would you be ashamed of that?  
Christ was a carpenter.

The girls exchange glances and burst into peals of laughter. It's not "mean girl" laughter, per se, but genuine surprise at Lamb's dorkiness.

STRIPPER #2

We're not carpenters. The  
Lumberyard is a gentlemen's club.

LAMB

Oh. Ah. You'd think I would have  
gotten that, since I just watched  
*Showgirls* on the plane.  
(whispering)  
I know all about what you do.

An awkward beat.

STRIPPER #3

Right. You got it all figured out.

The girls shake their heads as Lamb reaches onto the baggage carousel and takes her childish pink suitcase. We see peeling letters printed on the suitcase: GOING TO GRANDMA'S.

Lamb extends the handle and walks away, rolling it behind her with her head held high. The strippers watch, amused.

EXT. MCCARREN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (TAXI STAND) - DUSK

Lamb approaches the taxi stand, where a jaded ATTENDANT flags down cars. Clutching her printed itinerary, she takes a deep breath.

LAMB

One taxi, please.

ATTENDANT

Uh-huh. Where you headed?

LAMB

Um, the Planet Hollywood Resort?

ATTENDANT

Play-Ho. Got it.

LAMB

Planet Hollywood.

The attendant tosses her pink suitcase carelessly into the trunk of a waiting cab. It lands with a THUNK as Lamb meekly protests.

LAMB (CONT'D)  
Hey, I have dishes in there.

The man stares at her.

ATTENDANT  
Why'd you bring dishes to Las Vegas?

Lamb climbs into the back seat of the cab. She goes to buckle up and discovers only a lap belt.

LAMB  
(to driver)  
Sir? Is there a shoulder belt?

DRIVER  
(thickly accented)  
What, you want a baby seat too?  
Goo goo.

The attendant slams the door shut and the cab squeals away.

INT. TAXI CAB - EVENING

Lamb admires the spectacular lights of the Strip from the back of the cab. Remembering *Showgirls*, she decides to ask about a certain Vegas landmark.

LAMB  
Excuse me, sir. Where is the Stardust?

The driver's accent and ethnic background are impossible to place.

DRIVER  
Eh?

LAMB  
The Stardust Hotel. Where they have the *Goddess* musical performance?

DRIVER  
Stardust? That was, eh, bombed a few years ago. Blown up inside with dynamite. Big boom.

Lamb has been raised to be very wary of terrorism.

LAMB

Oh, no.  
(whispering)  
Was it Muslims?

DRIVER

Muslims? No, man! The guy who owned  
it blew it up with purpose so he  
could build a new hotel. What do  
you think I know about some  
terrorists?  
(then)  
Ah, I hate this Trop light.

They're stopped at the intersection of Las Vegas Boulevard  
and Tropicana. It's gridlock on every side.

LAMB

Trop light?

DRIVER

Yeah, man. Tropicana. Longest light  
in town.

The cab slows to a stop. Lamb looks out the window at the New  
York, New York roller coaster and the Excalibur's fake castle  
turrets illuminated overhead. She's enchanted by the sight.

LAMB

Kind of looks like Disney World.

DRIVER

(sarcastic)  
Disney World. Ha. That place? You  
ever been to Disney World?

LAMB

No. I wasn't allowed to, because  
the Disney Corporation supports the  
homosexual agenda.

DRIVER

Last night, in this cab, I have two  
gay guys getting married. I got no  
problem with it. As long as they  
keep their penis inside the blue  
jeans. I said, if I see some gay, I  
see some Doogie Howser bullshit,  
you're out! Here we are.

He pulls over to the curb quickly, sending Lamb flying.



EXT. PLANET HOLLYWOOD - SAME

The driver takes Lamb's pink suitcase out of the trunk. Lamb nervously peels off a few bills from a conspicuously large WAD OF CASH.

LAMB

Here.

DRIVER

Thanks. Hey, you know how you said you weren't allowed to go to Disney World?

LAMB

Yes?

DRIVER

Was the Disney Channel also forbidden?

LAMB

Yes, sir. Emphatically so.

DRIVER

Even *The Wizards of Waverley Place*?

LAMB

Satanists.

Lamb turns and walks toward the hotel with her suitcase and her flute.

The driver looks down with surprise at the LARGE WAD OF MONEY she's handed him.

DRIVER

You sure?

INT. PLANET HOLLYWOOD - EVENING

Lamb walks into the hotel. She scans the room nervously. It's early in the evening. TOURISTS play craps and blackjack and wander around with drinks. The scene is relatively tame and even a little hokey. Lamb seems relieved.

LAMB

Huh. It's kinda like Branson.

An OLD WOMAN pulls the lever on a cheesy branded slot machine. The machine discharges a few quarters.

LAMB (CONT'D)

No problem.

She steps forward bravely.

INT. HOTEL GIFT SHOP - EVENING

Lamb, checked in, tucks her room key into her pocket. She's about to walk to the elevator, but she pauses and goes into the hotel's gift shop.

Lamb takes a tacky, sparkly T-shirt off one of the racks. It says "I (HEART) LAS VEGAS," only instead of a heart, there is-- nonsensically-- a pair of dice.

LAMB

(whispering)

"I Dice Las Vegas."

It doesn't look like anything Lamb would normally wear. But nothing about this night is normal.

INT. PLANET HOLLYWOOD (ELEVATOR AREA) - EVENING

Lamb, now holding a SHOPPING BAG, waits for an elevator to take her up to her room. From where she stands, we can already hear some raucous shouting coming up the elevator shaft.

The elevator doors open, revealing about 5 WET FRAT BOYS coming up from the pool area. They're drunk and in various states of undress. Think damp towels, tribal tattoos, steroidal acne and loud, booming voices.

FRAT GUY #1

I swear, I only had a half a pill,  
but I'm rolling so hard.

FRAT GUY #2

Dude, I'm flying. We should call  
those sluts from Tao and get an  
eight ball for tonight.

FRAT GUY #1

Phenomenal, bro!

FRAT GUY #3

*Phenomenal.*

FRAT GUY #4

Hey.

The shouting and laughing stops abruptly when they notice Lamb standing there. Silence. Lamb primly steps into the elevator.

INT. PLANET HOLLYWOOD (ELEVATOR) - SAME

The frat boys are trying to hold it together, but they're making crazy expressions at each other and (barely) suppressing laughter. They don't know how to respond to a pretty girl who's been desexualized by injury. Finally, one of the guys talks.

FRAT GUY #2

Hi.

LAMB

Hello.

One of the guys begins to crowd her in a creepy way. He strokes her ponytail. One of them whispers

FRAT GUY #2

Uh, where are you from?

The other guys snicker. This is the equivalent of the high school quarterback hitting on an ugly girl to make his friends laugh.

FRAT GUY #3

(under his breath)

Chernobyl. Huh huh.

LAMB

I'm from D.C.

FRAT GUY #2

Oh yeah?

LAMB

Yes. I'm a federal agent. Drug enforcement.

FRAT GUY #4

Oh really?

LAMB

I just orchestrated a huge meth lab sting in Iowa. The place blew sky high. Messed me up pretty bad, as you can see. But I'm back in action. Vegas is my new beat.

Lamb's voice is shaking, but she sticks to her story.

FRAT GUY #3

Wow.

LAMB

I'm looking forward to making some arrests. The people here aren't very discreet, so it should be easy! Plus, I'm a super-smeller. You know drug-sniffing dogs? I'm a drug-sniffing human. I'm accurate up to four yards, that's how I got into the DEA. I beat out a golden retriever in tests.

FRAT GUY #2

(to his friend)

Hey, let's get off here, man.

FRAT GUY #1

Yeah, yeah. We passed our floor.

They begin stabbing buttons in a panic. The doors open on the mezzanine level.

LAMB

This isn't your level is it? This looks like a convention of Chicano attorneys.

An easel-style SIGN welcomes people to the NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHICANO ATTORNEYS.

Nevertheless, the frat guys all scurry off the elevator, failing to blend in with the crowd.

Lamb exhales as the doors close. She closes her eyes. The encounter scared her more than she let on.

EXT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lamb takes out her key card. We see a group of cute, happy 20-SOMETHING GIRLS headed out for a night on the town. They skip down the hall toward the elevator, holding hands.

GIRL #1

Wait, Zoe, this is your first time seeing *Cirque*? You're so gonna cry.

GIRL #2

Oh my God, I know.

GIRL #3

Liz, those shoes are phenomenal. So phenomenal.

GIRLS #1 AND #3

*Phenomenal!*

Wistfully, Lamb watches them as they pass. She tries out the word everyone her age is (over)using.

LAMB

Phenomenal. Phenomenal.

She slides her key into the door. The light turns green.

INT. LAMB'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

It's a much nicer hotel room than we might expect a young, small-town traveler to stay in. Lamb unzips her suitcase. There's a BROKEN "FIESTAWARE" DISH on top of her neatly folded clothes. She sadly removes the pieces.

LAMB

Shoot.

There are three other dishes that are intact. Lamb removes them and carefully stacks them on the TV console.

Then, she begins to hang up her clothes.

INT. BATH/SHOWER - NIGHT

Through frosted glass, we can barely make out Lamb's silhouette. She stands in a big, square Vegas bathtub. Her compression garments are hanging on the towel rack.

Rather than normal showering sounds, we hear a trickle of water. Lamb is washing herself slowly and methodically. Her hand clutches a bar for support. We see how her movement is limited and that something as simple as bathing has become complicated for her.

She quietly sings, her voice echoing off the walls.

LAMB

(singing)

*The wind is moving, but I am  
standing still...*

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Lamb slides a compression sleeve up her arm.

LAMB

*A life of pages, waiting to be  
filled...*

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lamb, now wearing her sequined Vegas T-shirt and her customary knee-length denim skirt, brushes her hair and slides her stocking-covered feet into pink flats.

LAMB

*Feels like I'm looking for a  
reason...*

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Lamb rides down to the lobby with a group of shoddily dressed TOURISTS. As always, she wears her cardigan, though the T-shirt's sequined logo is visible. She sings under her breath.

LAMB

*Roamin' through the night to  
find...*

The doors open.

LAMB (CONT'D)

*My place in this world. My place...*

INT. CASINO - DAY

As the elevator doors open, Lamb's ears are suddenly assaulted with autotuned, bass-heavy hip-hop music. The mood of the hotel has changed considerably. Shit is GOING OFF.

Lamb walks through the casino, observing the chaos.

A few hired DANCERS are working the pole next to a craps table. Lamb stares at their hard, flawless bodies as they writhe and gyrate, bored.

A PREGNANT BRIDE in handcuffs and a light-up "penis tiara" gets led through the lobby by her FRIENDS. Lamb's eyes widen as the colorful penises blink at her, as if in code.

In a nearby bar, a MIDDLE-AGED MAN plants his mouth at the bottom of an ice luge while someone pours vodka down the ramp.

LAMB

That doesn't seem clean.

At a centrally located casino buffet, TOURISTS scoop piles of crab legs onto their plates. Even something as innocent as food seems to become excessive and wasteful in Las Vegas.

A crab leg falls off the plate of a JOLLY FEMALE TOURIST.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Excuse me, you dropped a...leg.

CRAB TOURIST

(to friend, ignoring Lamb)

Ha! No, no, no, no Leslie. You're on crack! You are legit smoking crack. Wait, that's my phone.

LAMB

A crab was trapped and asphyxiated so that you might be nourished by its leg.

The woman still isn't listening. Lamb might as well be invisible. Finally, Lamb scurries over to the buffet area and picks the leg off the floor.

Immediately, a STERN BUFFET ATTENDANT rushes away from his prime rib carving station and confronts Lamb.

BUFFET ATTENDANT

Ma'am, the buffet is for paying customers, not scavengers.

LAMB

(shocked)

I wasn't scavenging. She's wasting food.

BUFFET ATTENDANT

Oh, I saw the whole thing. The king crab leg hit the floor and you came scurrying out of nowhere like a dirty raccoon.

LAMB

I did not *scurry*. These people are gluttons.

(MORE)

LAMB (CONT'D)

It's like they think crabs come from a factory, rather than a delicate marine ecosystem. They have no respect for life.

BUFFET ATTENDANT

Are you from PETA? Do you hate the circus and pony rides?

LAMB

What? No.

BUFFET ATTENDANT

Are you one of those anti-abortion psychos?

LAMB

I don't think so...

BUFFET ATTENDANT

"Hookers for Jesus"?

LAMB

I suppose I just think buffets are wasteful.

BUFFET ATTENDANT

Please leave my carving station immediately.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Lamb walks down the street, dejected. She passes a NASTY LITTLE MAN handing out fliers for female escorts.

NASTY LITTLE MAN

Merry Christmas! Beautiful, sexy girls! Hot girls delivered to your room!

Lamb plucks a flier from his outstretched hand. It says: REAL GIRLS! NO BULL! A photo of a YOUNG BRUNETTE GIRL gazes out at Lamb. The caption reads: RYDER, 19. MASSAGE, ROLE PLAY, SHOWER, GREEK. ANYTHING GOES!

Lamb's face falls. For some reason, she stuffs the flier into her purse, even though it repulses her.

She keeps walking and encounters a YOUNG CHRISTIAN EVANGELIST handing out RELIGIOUS COMIC BOOKS.



EVANGELIST

Jesus saves! Accept Christ as your  
Lord and Savior today! Christ died  
for your sins.

Lamb looks at the young evangelist, seeing herself in his or  
her hopeful gaze. The evangelist thrusts a book into Lamb's  
hands.

EVANGELIST (CONT'D)

Here. This comic book contains the  
key to eternal life.

The comic is called "Viva Las Satan?" The cover depicts a  
smirking DEVIL presiding over a poker table. Lamb takes one  
and examines it with an air of familiarity.

LAMB

(holding up comic)

Ah yes. A fine title from Salvation  
Press. I'm acquainted with this  
one. At the end, the gamblers all  
go to hell and learn that God's  
love was the real jackpot. Oh, and  
Jews are vampires. The end.

She hands the comic book back to the evangelist.

EVANGELIST

Oh. Are you saved?

LAMB

Do I look saved?

EVANGELIST

Um, well, we're all redeemed  
through Christ's love. If we accept  
it. Would you like to pray with me  
and be saved?

LAMB

My parents used to take me to  
Bighorn Canyon every summer.  
There's this place where you can  
stand on the edge and get a triple  
echo if you yell loud enough.

EVANGELIST

I don't get it.

LAMB

I would just yell my own name over and over, and eventually I could convince myself that someone was calling out to me.

EVANGELIST

Maybe you need to re-read this.

She tries to hand Lamb the comic book again, but Lamb seizes her wrist. Lamb's eyes are shining, solemn.

LAMB

You're wasting your life. I can already tell it's too late for me to be normal. Maybe it's not too late for you.

EVANGELIST

Let go of me.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE HOTEL & CASINO - NIGHT

Lamb has been wandering for a while when she comes upon the enormous neon facade of the Imperial Palace. There's a sign advertising "*LIVE DEALER-TAINERS! Only place in Vegas where the dealers SING and DANCE!*"

Lamb shrugs, exhausted, and enters.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE - NIGHT

MUSIC UP: "Holly Jolly Christmas"

Lamb enters the lobby of the hotel. The night is in full swing. She walks toward the main bar.

The bartender, "SWEET" WILLIAM CARR, is in his mid thirties. He would be handsome in the right scenario, but Vegas has taken its toll on him. His hair is a mess, his expression is weary, and arms are patterned with tattoos of questionable quality.

LAMB

Excuse me, bartender?

William seems annoyed by this formal mode of address.

WILLIAM

Yes, drunkard?

Lamb scans the liquor selection and lands on a bright, cartoonish looking bottle.

LAMB  
I'll have the peach schnapps.

William shudders visibly at this request.

WILLIAM  
Peach schnapps. Neat?

Lamb blinks.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
Would you like ice?

LAMB  
No thanks. Takes up too much room  
in the glass, and I want as much  
liquor as possible.

At this point, William is humoring her.

BARTENDER  
Oh. I agree.

As he grabs a highball glass from behind the bar, he looks at Lamb's T-shirt and reads it.

WILLIAM  
(deadpan)  
"I Dice Las Vegas."

LAMB  
It doesn't really make sense,  
does it?

William likes to spook young girls. He lunges across the bar and stares her down accusingly.

WILLIAM  
It makes perfect sense if you've  
come to here chop people up into  
little pieces.

Lamb doesn't flinch.

LAMB  
Oh, great. 'Cause that's totally  
why I'm here.

William slides the schnapps across to Lamb.

LAMB (CONT'D)

When do the "dealer-tainers"  
perform?

WILLIAM

Let's see, it's almost nine...ah,  
yes. Looks like my dear friend  
Loray is on deck.

He gestures to a YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN leaving a crowded blackjack table. Another DEALER is in the process of subbing in at the table.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Here we go.

An EMCEE's voice booms over the microphone.

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen, the Imperial  
Palace is proud to present the  
musical stylings of our dealing  
diva, Loray!

William mutters to himself as he wipes down the bar.

WILLIAM

She hates the word "diva."

People at the bar turn toward Loray as she moves to the center of the room, holding a cordless mic. She has a commanding presence, even in her silly Imperial Palace uniform. The bar patrons begin to murmur and speculate as to what Loray might sing.

MALE PATRON

Ooh. Look at this black girl! I bet  
she's gonna blow the doors off.

His friend's response is equally stereotypical.

PATRON #2

Oh yeah man, she's gonna take us to  
church!

PATRON #1

(calling out)  
Do Aretha! "Respect!"

Loud, recorded music fills the casino. But it's not the powerhouse R&B song everyone is expecting.

Rather, it's the gentlest, whitest ballad imaginable: "In My Room," by the Beach Boys,

Loray's voice is pure and sweet.

LORAY

*There's a world where I can go and  
tell my secrets to. In my room...*

PATRON #1

BOOOOO! What is this?

Patron #2 dismisses Loray with a pointed finger, jabbing wildly to the left as if to direct her offstage.

PATRON #2

To the left, girl!

An elderly WHITE WOMAN turns to her companion.

OLD WHITE WOMAN

(disappointed)

I thought she was going to  
have soul.

William returns to Lamb's corner of the bar, shaking his head as the customers hiss and complain.

WILLIAM

She's not supposed to sing this.  
She's been warned.

Indeed, we see the PIT BOSS frowning at his defiant employee.

LAMB

But it's beautiful.

WILLIAM

People here don't want beautiful.  
They want--

DRUNK GIRL

(screaming)

Ke\$ha!

LAMB

I don't know what that is.

LORAY

*Now it's dark and I'm alone but I  
won't be afraid...*

Lamb watches Loray sing and is affected. There's something so brave about Loray's sincerity and conviction in this room full of bawdy revelers.

William, despite his toughness, is touched by the fact that Lamb is touched.

BARTENDER

I'm William.

LAMB

Lamb. Lamb Mannerheim.

She offers him her GLOVED HAND. He notices the compression garment for the first time, but only hesitates for an instant before shaking her hand.

Loray finishes her song on a high, clear note.

LORAY

*In my room...*

Lamb takes her first sip of the drink and makes a horrified face. A river of peach nastiness escapes down her chin. William hands her a cocktail napkin as tepid applause fills the casino.

WILLIAM

Was that your first, ah, schnapp?

Lamb's voice is a faint croak.

LAMB

My first anything.

WILLIAM

Here. This is called a "water back."

(winking)

All the experienced drinkers order these.

He gives Lamb a glass of water. She downs it gratefully.

Lamb takes a PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLE out of her purse, shaking a few capsules into her hand. She puts the bottle down for a moment to politely applaud Loray.

As Lamb turns away, William zeroes in on the label, reading it: VICODIN (HYDROCODONE). His eyes are filled with longing. Desire. Pain.

Lamb turns back and William acts casual. Loray is headed straight for the bar. She squeezes in next to Lamb.

LORAY

Well, the good news is, I'm off for the night. We are officially on LST: Loray Standard Time.

WILLIAM

You were great, honey. In what may have been your final performance.

LORAY

Yup, my ass is grass. Management says they want me to sing "Respect." I mean, can you believe that?

WILLIAM

(dry)

No. Why would anyone want to hear a rousing Motown crowd-pleaser?

LAMB

I loved your song.

Loray barely glances at Lamb.

LORAY

Brian Wilson. That's my jam. I mean, I prefer his more obscure compositions, but...

WILLIAM

Loray, this is my new friend Lamb

Loray looks at Lamb then back at William. She rolls her eyes as if to say: *you're hitting on this?*

LORAY

I hope that's Pedialyte, 'cause your new friend is 10.

LAMB

I'm 21.

Loray glances at Lamb's modest *decolletage*.

LORAY

21 double-A. You're a fetus.

She accepts a COCKTAIL that William has automatically poured for her; we can see this is a standard end-of-shift ritual.

WILLIAM

Lamb is...what, celebrating her birthday? Where are your friends?

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Surely there must be a gaggle of drunk college girls looking for you.

LORAY

A gaggle? No, I think a pride.

WILLIAM

A murder. Like crows.

LORAY

No, no, no, a flock! Get it? A flock of--

WILLIAM

Too obvious, honey.

LAMB

I'm here in town alone, actually.

Loray looks up from her drink and snorts.

LORAY

Uh-oh.

LAMB

Excuse me?

LORAY

Let me guess. You came here-- hm, best case scenario, you came here to be...

(deciding)

A showgirl.

LAMB

No.

LORAY

Come on. You're sitting here alone on a Monday night in December. Cute little face, calling yourself LAAAM-*buh*.

LAMB

That's my real name.

LORAY

Weave down to your butt...

LAMB

This is my hair.



LORAY  
Bleach blonde...

LAMB  
Real blonde. I'm half Finnish.

Loray tosses back most of her cocktail.

LORAY  
Hey, look. I'm half-finish, too.  
(to William)  
Top me off.

She chuckles and heads toward the bathroom. William reaches for Loray's glass to refill it.

Before he can stop Lamb, she's jumped off the stool and is following Loray. Bad idea.

WILLIAM  
Don't chase it into its cave. It bites.

Lamb realizes she's left her purse hanging on the chair. Naively, she continues on her way, calling back to William.

LAMB  
Watch my purse, please. Thanks!

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE (BATHROOM) - SAME

A TOILET flushes. Loray emerges from the stall and sees Lamb standing by the sinks, her eyes narrow and indignant.

LORAY  
Whoa. You look like an  
angry...baby...cobra.  
(beat)  
Look, I'm sorry I gave you shit  
back there. I have to amuse myself  
somehow.

LAMB  
I'm not a showgirl.

Loray pumps soap into her hands, annoyed.

LORAY  
No one cares what you are.

Lamb is overly invested in proving her innocence.

LAMB

I care very much. I care how I'm perceived. Besides, I could never do that even if I wanted to.

(solemn)

People would stare. I have a condition. A skin condition.

She holds up her gloved hands. Loray, who is casually rinsing her hands in the sink, barely glances.

LORAY

Yeah? I have a skin condition too. It's called "black."

She laughs at Lamb's angst.

LORAY (CONT'D)

(mocking)

"People would stare." Yeah. Try being me at the cell phone store.

LAMB

Um...

Loray walks up to the high-tech Dyson hand dryer, her dripping fingers outstretched.

LORAY

Shh. This is the best part.

She lowers her hands into the wind tunnel, then withdraws them slowly and indulgently.

LORAY (CONT'D)

Love the Airblade.

She shakes her head, satisfied. As she heads for the door, Lamb interrupts once more.

LAMB

I'm from a conservative religious community where I wasn't allowed to date or dance or even attend a normal school. Then I was in an accident that left a third of my body burned and disfigured. I don't think there is a God anymore, which is a pretty big deal for me to be saying, because God used to be sorta my *jam*.

Loray blinks.

LAMB (CONT'D)

I left my home for the first time today because I feel like I've missed out on all of this and I want to experience worldly pleasures for the first time.

LORAY

Wow. Am I in the first five minutes of pornography?

LAMB

No, I--

LORAY

That is quite the pitch, Lamb. I have heard some crazy stories from some broken folks here in the People's Republic of Bad Choices, but that one? That one takes the whole hash brownie.

(suspicious)

Are you looking for money or something? Are you a junkie? I bet those gloves are covering some tracks...

Lamb whips off her cardigan wordlessly. We see not Lamb, but Loray, as she looks at Lamb's scars.

LORAY (CONT'D)

Oh.

LAMB

Oh.

LORAY

You're telling the truth.

LAMB

Yes.

LORAY

And you're all by yourself, looking for trouble. You want to be a criminal?

LAMB

No. No, not a criminal. I just want to be an American.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE (CASINO FLOOR) - DAY

Loray is walking quickly across the casino floor. She's changed into STREET CLOTHES and carries a backpack. Lamb trots after her eagerly.

LAMB

Where are we going?

LORAY

I don't know yet. I know if I leave you by yourself, you're going to wind up somewhere horrible, like the trunk of a car or Circus Circus. I feel an strange sense of responsibility toward you. You're just a little deep-fried pickle from Ohio...

LAMB

Montana.

They're veering back toward the BAR, where William regards them with curiosity.

LORAY

From Montana, population *four*, and you came here to commit sins. What did you have in mind, specifically?

LAMB

Well, intoxicants, games of chance...

LORAY

Sex?

(looking Lamb over)

I'm sure you'll have no problem finding someone to wreck that.

Lamb is uncomfortable with this suggestion.

LAMB

Um, well, just basically the whole Vegas experience.

(then)

Hey, thanks for watching my purse!

They've arrived at the bar. Lamb takes her purse from William, who looks a bit guilty.

WILLIAM

Thanks for believing in me. What's going on?

LORAY  
I'm taking Lamb downtown.

WILLIAM  
OMF-Jesus.

LAMB  
You should come with us!

LORAY  
William's in the program. He only goes out for donuts and his "Higher Power."

WILLIAM  
I'm off at eleven.  
(to Loray)  
You have my number. The new number, the 702...

Loray raises an eyebrow at him, surprised.

LORAY  
I got your number all right,  
Pedo-Bear. Have a nice night.

LAMB  
Wait! This is to pay for my drink.

She tosses a single bill onto the bar as Loray hustles her toward the casino exit.

LORAY  
Come on, Lamb..what's your last name?

LAMB  
Mannerheim.

LORAY  
Jewish?

Lamb gasps, delighted by this "shocking" suggestion.

LAMB  
No!

They disappear out the casino doors.

LORAY  
Uh, sorry?

LAMB

No, it's cool! Did you really think  
I was Jewish? Wow!

BACK ON WILLIAM: Watching their departing forms, William scoops the money off the bar. Like the cab driver, he's surprised by the bill's denomination.

INT. LORAY'S CAR - NIGHT

Lamb rides shotgun in Loray's beat-up Hyundai. We hear a DIALOGUE SNIPPET from the *Natural Born Killers* soundtrack, followed by the appropriate song.

LAMB

Why are we leaving?

LORAY

If you want to see Las Vegas, we  
have to go to Las Vegas.

LAMB

But we're in Las Vegas.

LORAY

No, we're not. We're in Paradise.

Lamb is perplexed.

LORAY (CONT'D)

They may call this the "Vegas Strip," but it's actually located in a census-designated area called Paradise. Paradise, Nevada. You can look it up. Most tourists don't know. They all say they're headed to Vegas, but technically, they're going to Paradise.

Lamb stares longingly out at the lights of the Strip.

LAMB

Well, maybe I want to see  
Paradise, then.

LORAY

No you don't, Lamb. Paradise is processed cheese. Do you want roller coasters and a fake Eiffel Tower and a bunch of tourists clapping for a frigging computerized fountain? *Yay, robot! Yay, robot fountain!* No.

(MORE)

LORAY (CONT'D)

You want real Las Vegas, where the locals go. None of this trifling theme park trash.

Actually, the other stuff sounded pretty good to Lamb.

LAMB

It's just that I've never been to a theme park. Besides Creation Land.

LORAY

What is Creation Land?

LAMB

It's a place in South Dakota with rides and um, exhibits about how humans were created by God and lived among the dinosaurs.

Loray throws her head back and laughs heartily.

LAMB (CONT'D)

They have a pretty cool log ride...Oh, the Trop Light. This is the worst, huh?

They're stuck at the infamous traffic light. Loray looks suspiciously at Lamb.

LORAY

"Trop Light." How long have you been here? You're sure you're not a hooker?

LAMB

It bothers me so much when you say things like that.

LORAY

Sorry.

LAMB

Terrible.

EXT. "REAL" LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

Loray drives through downtown Vegas, aka "Glitter Gulch." Everything seems dirtier, more tragic, and also much more romantic.

LORAY

Glitter Gulch. This is the real life, yes indeed.

Lamb rolls down the window, then cautiously rolls it back up halfway.

LAMB  
This is where you go for fun?

LORAY  
Sure, when I'm not at school or at the Palace.

LAMB  
(surprised)  
You go to school?

LORAY  
Yeah, UNLV. Is that so shocking? You don't have any black friends, do you? Everyone says they have the one black friend, but you don't even know that guy.

LAMB  
We had a visiting pastor from Africa all last summer.

LORAY  
If he comes back next year, tell him Loray says hi.

Lamb changes the subject.

LAMB  
What's your major?

Loray expertly maneuvers herself into a parking spot.

LORAY  
Film.

LAMB  
Oh. There was nothing like that at my college.

Lamb shakes her head as they climb out of the car.

LORAY  
Really? Nobody made shorts?

LAMB  
We weren't allowed to wear shorts.



EXT. SCEPTRE LOUNGE - NIGHT

A line of LOCAL HIPSTERS snakes around outside Loray's favorite bar, The Sceptre. Loray and Lamb are quickly waved to the front of the line.

INT. SCEPTRE LOUNGE - NIGHT

Close on Lamb'S GLOVED HAND, gripping an oversized LEVER.

LORAY (O.S.)

All right, let's get this out of the way. Pull.

Reveal Lamb in the crowded bar, the kind of place that has Christmas lights even when it isn't Christmas. She eagerly yanks the lever on a campy vintage SLOT MACHINE. The machine's display reveals a CHERRY, a BELL and "BAR."

LORAY (CONT'D)

There. You gambled. You played your game of chance. And now you see why it's stupid. Let's move.

She tries to urge Lamb ahead, but Lamb is perplexed.

LAMB

What's "bar"? Did I lose?

LORAY

Yes, Lamb, you lost. Ultimately, everyone loses. If you lit that dollar on fire, at least you'd have kindling. I have no respect for gamblers.

They make their way toward the bar.

LAMB

You deal cards for a living.

LORAY

That's right, for a living. Not for my own personal edification. Charlie! Hey, Charlie!

CHARLIE, a cute, tattooed FEMALE BARTENDER, looks up from the taps, where she's busily filling pints. She grins.

CHARLIE

Loray-who-I-wanna-lay. What are we thinking?

LORAY

I'm thinking we're going to need  
some shots. Line 'em up.

BEGIN DRINKING SEQUENCE

Loray and Lamb are ensconced at their own tiny table near the jukebox. Loray's HIPSTER FRIENDS hover around them. They wear tight jeans, scarves, ironic T-shirts, weird beards, the whole nine. Loud music blasts. The mood is crowded, boozy and festive.

A tray of assorted shots sits in front of them. Loray downs one effortlessly; Lamb attempts a sip.

Loray proudly plays show-and-tell with her new "discovery."

LORAY (CONT'D)

Lamb's from Montana. She was home-  
schooled.

The hipsters shout over the jukebox, admiring Lamb.

HIPSTER #1

Wow! That's awesome.

LAMB

It is?

HIPSTER #2

It's anti-establishment. The public  
school system in this country a  
joke. I'm going to home-school my  
kids for sure.

LAMB

Maybe don't do that.

LORAY

Lamb has never danced. She's not on  
Facebook. She's never even seen an  
R-rated movie.

LAMB

I saw *The Passion of the Christ*.

HIPSTER #3

So basically, you've avoided so  
much empty, spirit-stealing pop  
culture.

(beat)

You're lucky.

HIPSTER #1

Right? It's so punk rock.

LAMB

Thanks?

LORAY

Watch her try to drink this.

Loray pushes a SWEET TART toward Lamb. Everyone watches Lamb as if she's an exotic zoo animal. Lamb takes a tentative sip of the vile pink concoction. Her face crumples.

HIPSTER #1

She can't do it!

HIPSTER #2

Her face, like, repels the booze.

HIPSTER #3

Amazing.

INT. SCEPTRE LOUNGE (ANOTHER CORNER OF THE BAR) - NIGHT

A HIPSTER GIRL and her GAY HIPSTER FRIEND drape a trendy fringed SCARF over Lamb's neck, tucking it fashionably.

HIPSTER GIRL

This is so cute on you. It'll cover up some of your battle damage.

LAMB

I like it. What is it?

GAY HIPSTER FRIEND

It's a keffiyeh.

LAMB

A what?

HIPSTER GIRL

A keffiyeh. It's a Muslim head scarf.

Lamb nearly does a SPIT TAKE.

LAMB

(choked)  
Muslim?

GAY HIPSTER FRIEND

Oh, don't worry; it's not offensive to them or anything.

(MORE)

GAY HIPSTER FRIEND (CONT'D)

These things are so popular;  
they're totally depoliticized.

LAMB

Okay.

The two of them admire their handiwork. The scarf does look kind of adorable on Lamb.

GAY HIPSTER FRIEND  
SO CUTE.

HIPSTER GIRL  
SO CUTE.

HIPSTER GIRL

Phenomenal.

LAMB

Why does everyone keep saying phenomenal? A scarf isn't a phenomenon of any kind.

GAY HIPSTER FRIEND

On you it is. You go, Baby Gisele.

INT. SCEPTRE LOUNGE (DANCE FLOOR) - NIGHT

Lamb and another GROUP OF HIPSTERS are on the postage-stamp-sized dance floor. Everyone BOPS AROUND to the Black Keys. Lamb bends her knees awkwardly. She doesn't know how to dance and her skin grafts limit her movement.

DANCING HIPSTER

(to friend, pointing at  
Lamb)

She was in a *plane crash*.

DANCING HIPSTER #2

Like, a 747?

LAMB

It was a single-engine plane.

DANCING HIPSTER

You've had a crazy life, man.

Loray dances over holding two cans of CHEAP DOMESTIC BEER. She shouts over the loud music.

LORAY

Look. You're on a dance floor and hell hasn't swallowed you up.

Lamb looks around at the DANCING IDIOTS in skinny jeans.

LAMB

(dry)  
Are you sure?

LORAY

Ha. All right.

LAMB

Hey, I just realized that we do  
have something in common.

LORAY

We do, huh?

LAMB

Yes. You don't have any black  
friends either.

LORAY

Drink your beer.

She hands Lamb a beer. Lamb looks at the CAN. The beer is called "Snowy Piste"; the can depicts a man skiing down a mountain.

LAMB

"Snowy Piste."

LORAY

It's ironically delicious.

(then)

Oh, shit. Look who came out for the  
first time in MONTHS.

She shouts toward the offending entrant. Lamb peeks up over the bobbing heads.

LORAY (CONT'D)

Sweet William.

William nods at them as he passes the doorman and maneuvers himself through the crowd. Lamb sees him and lights up. She waves. Loray seems sincerely shocked-- perhaps even a bit hurt-- by William's arrival.

LORAY (CONT'D)

He never comes out. Never-ever-ever-  
ever-ever....

Lamb interrupts the drunken broken record.

LAMB

Right, he doesn't come out.

William makes his way to dance floor. He looks good in his non-bartender street clothes. Tough, but good.

LORAY

William, I thought you were going to pick up a second shift tonight.

WILLIAM

I changed my mind, called Patti.  
(to Lamb)  
I thought Loray was going to look after you. She's got you drinking "Snowy Piss?"

LAMB

I haven't had a sip. As it turns out, I'm hopeless at drinking.

Loray grabs Lamb's beer can and shotguns it.

WILLIAM

I could have told you that back at the hotel. I was there for the "schnapp-ocalypse."

LAMB

I'm going to go get a cup of water or something.

Smiling, she dashes off to the bar. Loray shimmies up next to William, dancing. He frowns at her as she does the Swim.

WILLIAM

What are you doing, Lor? Show-and-tell?

LORAY

Hey, she wanted to come here. William, she's from, like, a religious commune. Okay? Like, Basement. Religious. Slave. She's never done any of this. It's like she's a weird-ass Disney princess that's been locked in a tower her whole life.  
(singing *The Little Mermaid*)  
"She wants to be where the people are. She wants to see, wants to see them dancing..."

WILLIAM

Is that true?

Loray is at the stage of tipsiness in which everything is hilarious. Paraphrasing Ariel:

LORAY  
(still singing)  
"She was-- what's the word--  
BURNED? When's it her tuuurn?"

WILLIAM  
I believe the sheltered bit. She's definitely confused about certain customs. Do you know how much money she tipped me for one drink?

LORAY  
She's country, huh? Did she put pennies on the bar?

WILLIAM  
No...

LORAY  
Well, don't complain, because I didn't get a tip! She did not tip me, and I sang. From the heart! I was an unexpected treat.

Before William can ask any more questions, Lamb returns from the bar with a soft drink.

LAMB  
Would you believe I got this for free? They said designated drivers get free pop.

LORAY  
What largesse.

Lamb leans against the wall. Though she's trying to stay energetic, her body language betrays that she's SORE and TIRED. She touches her arm. William notices.

WILLIAM  
Do you want to sit down?

LAMB  
I'm fine.  
(then)  
I don't see any seats, anyway.

The bar is indeed packed, sweaty and seat-less.

WILLIAM

There's an upstairs bar. It's sort of not open on weeknights, but they know me here. They don't care. Maybe we'll just sit down for a few minutes.

Lamb considers this cautiously.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Are you scared of me?

LAMB

(yes)

No.

WILLIAM

I'd understand if you were.

LAMB

Why, because you have a leather jacket and some tattoos? Big deal. I know ministers who look as "tough" as you. Punks for Jesus. Yeah, that's old news.

WILLIAM

(take aback)

Well, those guys are faking it. They're using a look to sell religion.

LAMB

They're playing a part, same as you. I don't know what you're selling, but I suspect you're as toothless as they are.

WILLIAM

You're mean, Lamb. I think I'll just let you suffer.

LAMB

What?

William would never, but he's very convincing.

WILLIAM

You can stand here throbbing in pain. I don't care. Hey, there are some nice seats in the latrine if Hepatitis B is on your to-do list.



LAMB  
(emphatic)  
Take me upstairs, please.

Everyone turns around, surprised.

INT. SCEPTRE LOUNGE (STAIRWELL) - NIGHT

William gently helps Lamb up the steep bar stairs. She's having trouble.

LAMB  
Thanks.  
(embarrassed)  
I get really sore and stiff at night. I'm just-- I can't move very well anymore.

WILLIAM  
Me neither, but I don't have a cool, tragic excuse. I've got a hundred bucks that says you can dance better than I can.

As William helps her, we see him discreetly RETURNING THE TIP she left him, tucking it back into her purse. She doesn't notice.

LAMB  
Dancing? No. All I can do is sort of bounce up and down.

WILLIAM  
There's nothing wrong with that. All dancing is just a prelude to bouncing anyway, right?

He winks.

LAMB  
(tight-lipped)  
Mm-hm.

Lamb's not sure why she's following this guy upstairs, but it's too late to turn back.

INT. SCEPTRE LOUNGE (UPSTAIRS BAR) - NIGHT

William unhooks a rope blocking the entrance. The upstairs bar is a quiet, empty room with an old-school big screen TV, a Christmas tree, and plenty of seating. Lamb and William sit down at a high-top table.

There's a row of PAPER CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS tacked to the wall with EMPLOYEES' names on them.

LAMB

Oh, stockings for the people who work here. That must be so fun.

William can't help but smile at Lamb's wistful enthusiasm for everyday things.

LAMB (CONT'D)

You don't have anything to drink.

WILLIAM

I don't drink.

LAMB

Like me.

WILLIAM

Not even a little.

(then)

I don't drink anymore. I had some problems with, ah, substances, and the sale thereof.

(beat)

Did some time. In prison.

LAMB

Oh.

Lamb opens her purse, looking for something. She pulls out the FLIER advertising "Ryder," the prostitute. Her face falls as she looks at the image.

WILLIAM

What is it?

LAMB

I got this on the street.

She shows him solemnly, as if it's a rare, horrible artifact.

WILLIAM

Oh. Yeah, you always see these on the Strip. Kind of grim, I guess.

LAMB

I can't stop thinking about her. I wish I could find her. She must be so scared, don't you think?

WILLIAM

Ah, this isn't even a real girl.  
These places use fake, misleading  
pictures.

(then)

I hear.

LAMB

The picture might be fake, and the  
name might be fake, but if you dial  
this number, a real human being  
shows up.

William scans the flier.

WILLIAM

She does in-call as well.  
That means you can also come  
to her...

LAMB

(interrupting)

I'm worried about her.

William, jaded, can't believe how idealistic this girl is.

WILLIAM

You can't just go around saving  
people. Trying to do that here is  
like that arcade game, you know,  
with the little mallet? You put one  
devil down, another one's just  
gonna pop up.

LAMB

My religion  
(catching herself)  
Well, I'm an atheist now, but my  
former religion says if you can  
save one soul, you can save the  
world.

Lamb is rummaging in her purse. She takes out her VICODIN  
BOTTLE and opens it. She shakes out three pills. Shakes  
again. NOTHING LEFT.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Oh no. Oh gosh.

WILLIAM

What is it?

Lamb is panicking.

LAMB

Some of my pills are missing. I need these.

WILLIAM

No worries. You probably have, like, unlimited refills right?

LAMB

Somebody stole from me. They stole medication from a burn survivor.

(then)

Do you think Loray would take it?

William's guilt is suddenly compounded.

WILLIAM

No. Loray wouldn't do that.

LAMB

I don't know her.

WILLIAM

Oh. No. She's so good, Lamb. She's a deeply good person. She loves the Beach Boys.

(serious)

I've worked with her for four years; she's like my sister. She's my pit wife. Please don't even think for a second it was Loray. You have enough for now, right? There's a bunch of 24-hour pharmacies right around here. I'll drive you.

LAMB

Okay.

The mood has changed. Lamb swallows one of her remaining Vicodins as William looks around for something, anything, to cheer her up. He glances at the big TV.

WILLIAM

Hey, you wanna see if there's a silly movie on or something?

LAMB

(dejected)

Sure.

INT. SCEPTRE BAR (DOWNSTAIRS) - SAME

Loray is grinding with a HEAVILY BEARDED GUY. She takes a swig of beer and tries unsuccessfully to make out with him through his mass of facial hair.

LORAY

I can't find your mouth.

INT. SCEPTRE LOUNGE (UPSTAIRS BAR) - SAME

William takes a remote from behind the bar and turns on the big TV. He flips through the channels and finds...

The classic 1960s special, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. Lamb reacts like a delighted child.

LAMB

*Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer!* I remember this.

William watches with her, equally pleased. The light flickers on their faces.

WILLIAM

Of course. Total classic. Even I've seen this and my childhood was a blur of beatings and evictions.

LAMB

I watched this like, every year when I was little. Then my parents realized it left the Christ out of Christmas, and that was the end of that.

They watch for a moment. It's the "Island of Misfit Toys" sequence, in which a haunting song is sung by imperfect toys: a polka-dotted elephant, a boat that doesn't float, a train with square wheels, and a lonely little rag doll (among others).

LAMB (CONT'D)

Oh, this part is so sad. These are the Misfit Toys. Nobody wants them because they're defective.

ELEPHANT

(on TV)

*How'd you like to be a spotted elephant?*

BOAT  
(onscreen)  
*Or a boat that can't float?*

Lamb watches, her eyes shining. Then:

WILLIAM  
What's wrong with the doll?

LAMB  
I don't know. Nobody wants her.

WILLIAM  
Seriously, though, what's her defect? I can see the train has square wheels. And the elephant has polka-dots. But that little doll looks completely normal. What's she doing with those broken toys?

We see the rag doll. She *does* look perfectly normal. (This is one thing that has never made sense about the "Misfit Toys" scene.)

LAMB  
We probably just can't see what's wrong with her.

WILLIAM  
You think it's under her dress or something?

Lamb is uncomfortable. Her voice is strained.

LAMB  
Yeah.

WILLIAM  
Or...maybe she's perfect.

LAMB  
Nah.

WILLIAM  
Maybe she's just in the wrong place.

Loray emerges from the stairwell, interrupting them. She glances at the TV, drunk and dismissive.

LORAY  
What is this? Gumby?

William and Lamb groan at Loray's flippancy toward such a beloved show.

WILLIAM

You don't know what this is?

LORAY

You guys need to come downstairs immediately. Some people are line dancing as a joke.

William fakes jumping out of his seat. Then:

WILLIAM

She needs to rest.

LAMB

No, I'm fine now. Much better.

They rise and head toward the stairwell. Loray continues babbling happily.

LORAY

Hey William, you know that girl who always does the splits? She did it *again*. I'm like, bitch, we get it, you can put your whole vagina on the floor.

WILLIAM

Okay.

LORAY

I'm gonna fight her.

WILLIAM

I think it's time to switch to water.

Loray takes a last glance at the TV and shakes her head as they descend. She loudly whispers to William.

LORAY (O.S.)

You take a girl upstairs and you put on cartoons? You're a mess.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

Lamb, William and Loray walk down Fremont Street, eating HOT DOGS from a busy food truck.

LORAY

So is dirty street meat against  
your religion?

Lamb is enjoying her hot dog immensely.

LAMB

I think it could *be* my religion.

CHARLIE, the CUTE GIRL BARTENDER suddenly rushes up to Lamb,  
still wearing her bar apron.

CHARLIE

(breathless)

Hey, thank you so much for that  
tip. Wow. I just wanted to say  
thanks before you take off. I  
really appreciate it.

LAMB

No problem.

CHARLIE

I can go to Burning Man now!

LAMB

Great.

Charlie, grinning, runs back into the bar. William realizes  
Lamb has left another massive tip, but shrugs it off as  
typical weirdness.

LORAY

What was that all about?

LAMB

I'm really not sure.

A beat as they walk. William changes the subject, ticking  
Lamb's "crimes" off on his fingers.

WILLIAM

So. You gambled, you drank, you  
danced with-- what did you call  
them, Sodomites?

LAMB

Yes. I failed at all three tasks.

WILLIAM

You watched a movie with Santa  
Claus.

(redneck drawl)

(MORE)



WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
You're wearin' anti-Amurrican  
clothing.

He flicks at the fringe on Lamb's scarf.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
What are you going to do next?

LORAY  
She needs to get turned out.

LAMB  
Hm?

William shoots an annoyed look at Loray.

LORAY  
What? Don't tell me "sins of the  
flesh" aren't part of the agenda.  
It should be right there in your  
little Sanrio day planner: GET  
LAID. What else is there? At least  
you have to do something dirty.

LAMB  
(flustered)  
Okay. Well. Okay then. Let's  
go...see...*Goddess*.

LORAY  
What's *Goddess*?

Lamb is already blushing before she even describes it.

LAMB  
You know. The adults-only show?  
With the topless girls and the  
volcanoes?  
(sighing)  
You know, where Nomi performs in  
*Showgirls*? I know the Stardust  
isn't there anymore, but maybe they  
moved the show to a different  
venue.

Loray bursts out laughing.

LORAY  
Lamb, *Showgirls* is not real. Okay?  
It is not a documentary about Las  
Vegas. It is fiction. It came out  
of a horny Dutch man's imagination.

LAMB

I know! I just thought maybe *Goddess* was real. The character of Nomi, she makes such a big deal about being in it.

WILLIAM

That's perfectly understandable. I thought it was real myself.

LORAY

(dying)

William, you did not.

WILLIAM

I did. I've looked for it. Checked every marquee.

LAMB

All right, I'm an idiot. I'm a gullible idiot from the prairie. Where do we go next, then?

LORAY

Back to Paradise, baby!

LAMB

I thought we hated Paradise. I thought Paradise was processed cheese and dumb fountains, etcetera.

WILLIAM

After hours is when the employees come out to play.

LORAY

We know everyone, and everyone loves us. We can go wherever we want and our money is no good.

LAMB

Um, I sort of need to find a pharmacy first. I take medication. For my pain. And somebody stole most of it.

Loray glances at William. A COLD, DISAPPOINTED GLANCE, but brief enough that Lamb doesn't notice. Lamb turns to Loray.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Do you think it could be one of your friends?

LORAY

(sadly)  
Possibly.

WILLIAM

I'll take you, Lamb. Loray, come on. I don't want you driving.

LORAY

It's fine. I'll get a cab.  
(accusingly)  
You take her to the *drug store*, William. I'll catch you later.

She begins to walk away from them rather suddenly.

WILLIAM

You sure?

LORAY

Yeah, yeah, I need some breathing room. It's like shawarma and liquor are having a UFC fight in my stomach. I'll see you guys on the Strip.

WILLIAM

Okay.

Lamb, high on life and being "cool", flashes the peace sign.

LAMB

Later! Peace out.

Loray rolls her eyes.

EXT. WALGREENS PARKING LOT - NIGHT

William waits behind the wheel of his TOYOTA. Lamb runs out of the 24-hour Walgreens clutching a PAPER BAG from the pharmacy. She slides into the front seat cheerfully.

LAMB

Phew. That wasn't so hard. They had it right there in the computer.

He watches her gobble down a couple of pills with a bit too much enthusiasm.

WILLIAM

Good, great.  
(then)

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Hey, can I ask you a sensitive question?

LAMB

Yes?

WILLIAM

You know that prescription pain killers are extremely addictive, right?

LAMB

I have very serious injuries.

WILLIAM

No. I know. I know. I'm just saying that this is, sadly, my area of expertise. I happen to know that certain controlled substances, such as this one, can cause a dependency. Even when people don't set out to abuse them.

Lamb is crumpling the bag irritably.

LAMB

I know all this. I spent six months in a hospital. I'm not some pill-abusing druggie criminal like the people you might know from "the joint."

WILLIAM

Lamb.

She sees how serious he is.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

It's not something a person can always help. Even if they're the most well-meaning, most responsible, nicest, loveliest person in the world and they're named after a baby farm animal.

Lamb looks away.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I know people who've been so hooked on that stuff that they'd do anything to get it. Gross things. Really bad things, not fake-fun-bad like what you're doing here.

LAMB

Look, I know you guys think what I'm doing here is so funny, but you have no idea how serious it is to me. Being here tonight goes against every belief that's been instilled in me. It's like bending a bone backwards. I'm trying to smile and have fun and let go, but I feel like I'm going to snap.

WILLIAM

If it makes you feel better, it's not just you. Everyone who comes to Vegas is testing the tensile strength of their conscience.

LAMB

Well, when does it get fun? I just want to have fun. How is this something people enjoy? Bars aren't fun. That bar smelled like the flu. And that dumb slot machine wasn't fun. It took my money and just said "bar." Great, I just paid ten dollars for a machine to tell me where I am. It's not fun, William. I just want to do something that's fun for me.

William considers what might be fun for Lamb.

WILLIAM

Hm.

EXT. MANHATTAN EXPRESS ROLLER COASTER (TO ESTABLISH) - NIGHT

The huge ROLLER COASTER looms over the Strip.

INT. NEW YORK NEW YORK HOTEL (ROLLER COASTER) - NIGHT

Lamb, William and Loray wait in line for the roller coaster. Loray's arms are crossed and she's pissed off. Lamb, however, looks THRILLED.

LAMB

Now *this* is wild and crazy, you guys!

WILLIAM

(humoring her)

I know.

LAMB

They didn't have a roller coaster at Creation Land. I've never been on one. Aren't you guys excited?

LORAY

No.

LAMB

Loray, I think you might be Type D.

LORAY

What the hell is Type D?

LAMB

You don't know? It means depressed.

LORAY

Maybe it's just late on a Monday and I'm tired of being your magical negro.

LAMB

What?

WILLIAM

Oh, boy.

LORAY

The "magical negro" is, uh, a narrative convention in which a black person uses their special black wisdom to help a dumb white person. We learned all about it in film school. *Ghost*, *Green Mile*, *Bagger Vance*. All magical negroes.

WILLIAM

Except you're not wise or magical.

Loray burps.

LORAY

Yes I am! Lamb, don't I say a lot of things that make you go, "Wow, Loray just told me! She's so insightful."

LAMB

Yes.

LORAY

That's extremely racist.

LAMB

I'm sorry.

WILLIAM

(to Loray)

Let's face it. You're no  
Bagger Vance.

LORAY

Shut up.

WILLIAM

Bagger Vance is immortal. He  
doesn't age.

LORAY

No, that's just what Will Smith  
looks like.

WILLIAM

No, the character didn't age.

LAMB

What was the right answer? What was  
I supposed to say.

William tries to put a friendly arm around Loray, but she shrugs him off, annoyed. Now we can see she's REALLY MAD, and not about the Bagger Vance thing.

INT. ROLLER COASTER PLATFORM - NIGHT

William, Lamb and Loray stand behind the automated airgates as the COASTER TRAIN arrives in the station.

WILLIAM

Look, Lamb. There's a spot open at  
the front. Take it.

Lamb hesitates, peering at the front car.

LAMB

But then I have to sit next to a  
strange man in a cowboy outfit.

WILLIAM

This is your first ride. You gotta  
have the front so you can feel the  
bugs hit your teeth.

Lamb looks again at her fellow passenger.

LAMB

The cowboy outfit has no...behind part.

LORAY

Aw. Baby's first assless chaps. Don't worry. You don't have to talk to him. Git.

Lamb boldly jogs to the front of the coaster train. The airgates open. Loray is stuck riding with William. She looks away as they climb into the train and pull down the restraints.

WILLIAM

Why are you mad at me?

LORAY

You know why.

The roller coaster lurches out of the station.

WILLIAM

Don't be like this.

LORAY

It's bad enough that you stole pain relief from a girl who's held together with bandages and chewing gum. But it's even worse that you're up her ass all night. The whole "white knight" routine you do. Helping her up that dark stairwell. Bringing her *here*-- you know we're never caught dead doing this tacky shit! And you're flirting with her. Making her feel pretty. It's cruel.

WILLIAM

She is pretty.

LORAY

Obviously, yes, but she's pretty like the Playboy Mansion. Looks like a dream, but you don't want to pull up the carpet.

The coaster ascends the lift hill.

LORAY (CONT'D)

Why are you here?



WILLIAM

(defensive)

I don't know, I felt like it tonight. My sponsor says I can't stay in forever and I thought it was time.

LORAY

Time. I bet it's time. You're here because you found a blonde virgin with a purse full of dope.

WILLIAM

Lor, I have not broken any promises. I've been staying out of trouble.

LORAY

"Trouble" is up there next to the naked cowboy, and you're acting like you'd rather get *in* it.

WILLIAM

I know this is hard to believe, coming from me. But I would never take advantage of her.

LORAY

Ha. Yes, it is hard to believe coming from you. The man they call "William the Conqueror." "Fill'em Will'em." "Bill the Butcher"...

WILLIAM

Loray, I would *never*. Not her. I wouldn't take that from her.

LORAY

Didn't you already take something from her?

A moment of silence. Loray looks off toward the side of the lift hill. They're almost 200 feet above the Strip.

William reaches for Loray's hand. She's confused for a moment. When William lets go, Loray opens her palm. He's surreptitiously handed her FOURTEEN VICODIN PILLS.

WILLIAM

They're all there. I didn't take a single one. I mean, yes, I took them out of her purse about four minutes after I met her. But I didn't take them.

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I've thought about them nonstop since they've come into my possession, but I haven't taken one.

There's a moment of relieved silence for Loray. Then:

LORAY

What do you expect me to do with these? You know I prefer crack.

WILLIAM

I don't know. We'll give them back to her and she'll hate me and I'll have a pathetic story for my next NA meeting.

LORAY

No. I like how she looks at you. She looks at you like you're a good person and not a total jagoff.

WILLIAM

I know. But I can't let her think you stole it.

LORAY

I don't care. Let's protect her from something. She's gotta hang on to some of that sweetness.

As the train crests the lift hill, Loray tosses the handful of tiny white pills over the side.

WILLIAM

What are you doing?

Loray does her best meteorologist impression.

LORAY

Tonight's Clark County forecast calls for scattered flurries.

William watches the pills disappear.

WILLIAM

Merry Christmas, assholes.

LORAY

Open your damn mouths!

The train PLUNGES into the roller coaster's spaghetti-like mass of steel track.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Lamb's head is hanging between her knees.

WILLIAM

Hey. Hey. You going to be okay?

They're standing on the still-busy sidewalk. Lamb downplays her nausea and discomfort.

LAMB

Yes. I'm phenomenal.

She stands up. We see a spot of BLOOD on the elbow of her cardigan.

LORAY

You're bleeding.

LAMB

(downplaying)

I think I bumped my elbow going around one of those turns.

William pulls up the sleeve of the cardigan. Lamb recoils from this violation of privacy.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Stop it.

The elbow of Lamb's compression garment is SOAKED in blood. Loray winces and looks away.

WILLIAM

You're hurt.

LAMB

It's my skin graft.

William is trying to stay calm.

WILLIAM

Can they re-graft it?

Lamb pulls away from him angrily.

LAMB

Yeah, at a special clinic in Minnesota for human-jerky. I TOLD you I was a mess. I told you. Nobody ever believes me.

WILLIAM

You're not a mess. It's not a big deal. You just need to take it easy. Chill at the hotel.

LAMB

Chill? I'm tired of "taking it easy." I've been taking it easy for two years now and I feel like I'm rotting alive.

LORAY

From a scientific standpoint, we're all rotting alive.

LAMB

My gosh, I never thought about it that way. You're so wise.

On Loray: OWNED.

WILLIAM

I think you've had enough fun for the night. We need to patch you up.

Lamb is clutching her bleeding elbow.

LAMB

Enough fun my skinless ass! It's easy for you to say "enough" and to "take it easy", because you already got to do everything you wanted. You already got to screw up and disappoint your whole family.

On William: sadly, this is true.

LAMB (CONT'D)

You've got those lines on your face and that silver in your hair because you lived. Now it's my turn.

WILLIAM

I'm a dirtbag. You don't want to be like me.

LAMB

(through tears)  
Yes I do.

LORAY

You're lucky you had a nice life. I know you resent all the Jesus stuff and not being allowed to wear shorts and the fact that they made you practice the recorder every day.

LAMB

The flute.

LORAY

But there are worse things than being protected. Having someone care where you go and what happens to you.

We can see that Loray has wished for this very thing. William glances at her protectively.

LORAY (CONT'D)

People in your family are probably looking for you right now. Nobody's looked for me in years. The last time someone Googled me, there was no Google. They had to Alta Vista that shit.

Lamb looks up at Loray, still holding her elbow.

LORAY (CONT'D)

Also, I'm not the one bleeding on the street right now. You've lived, all right? All right, plane crash? You lived, you died, and now you're living again. You're a lot harder than most of these clowns.

She gestures to the LATE NIGHT REVELERS on the street.

WILLIAM

Let's get you to the hospital.

LAMB

Don't bother. They'll just wrap it in some gauze and parade me around in front of the med students. I hate when people treat me like I'm some kind of curiosity.

Loray glances at William. Guilty.

LAMB (CONT'D)  
I'm just going to go back to my hotel.

WILLIAM  
You're not going alone.

LAMB  
Why not? I took a taxi from the airport. I know what I'm doing.

LORAY  
Let William take you back.

William looks at Loray, surprised. Loray nods.

LORAY (CONT'D)  
He's the best guy when you need taking care of. Once I got food poisoning at work and he guarded the door to the women's bathroom for six hours.

William smiles at this awful-yet-touching memory.

LORAY (CONT'D)  
He's not perfect. I'll tell you no lies. But he'll get you home in one piece. Or whatever pieces you've got left.

Lamb giggles through the pain.

LORAY (CONT'D)  
You can trust him.

With that, she extends her blessing. William's gratitude is evident. Loray's RESPECT means a lot to him.

Lamb considers it.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP (CORNER) - NIGHT

William flags a CAB. Loray waits with Lamb on the sidewalk. A taxi appears and pulls up to the curb.

William gives Loray a friendly hug and a peck.

WILLIAM  
(to Loray)  
Good night, sweetie.

LORAY

See you in the pit.

William gestures for Lamb to enter the cab. She hesitates.

LAMB

You go ahead. I want to say goodbye to Loray.

William shrugs and hops in, leaving Loray and Lamb on the sidewalk.

LAMB (CONT'D)

It was truly a pleasure to meet you. I know our time together was short, but I valued it.

LORAY

It was something meeting you, too.  
(then)  
Hey, look, I'm sorry I teased you about all that sex stuff. I could tell it upset you. It was pretty insensitive of me.

LAMB

Oh, sheesh, it's fine. It's not like I'm a virgin.

LORAY

Uh, what?

Lamb is shockingly casual.

LAMB

I've *had* sex. Of course.  
(explaining)  
I had sexual relations with Pastor Rick, or just "Rick" as he asked me to call him during that fateful youth retreat. I'd been attracted to him for a while and I succumbed to baser urges. Looking back, I can see that it was an abuse of power on his part, but what's done is done...

Loray's like *what the fuck?*

LAMB (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you're surprised. You think fundamentalist Christians don't have sex?

(MORE)

LAMB (CONT'D)

Ha, everyone has sex. It's the one thing they haven't figured out how to control.

LORAY

I just thought...

LAMB

Even the church leaders do it. Sometimes they get caught with other men, even! Don't you read the news?

She hops into the cab, shrugging cheerfully despite her injury.

Loray prevents her from shutting the car door.

LORAY

Wait. What's going to happen to you?

LAMB

You don't care.

LORAY

Let's pretend I do.

LAMB

I don't know.

LORAY

Well, I know you think Las Vegas was kind of a bust. But this is all make-believe. It's fake, like *Goddess*.

Lamb smiles.

LORAY (CONT'D)

If you still want to be a regular American, like you said?

Lamb nods.

LORAY (CONT'D)

I think you need to go see America.

Lamb takes in this advice. Then:

LAMB

Hey, you know how you said no one ever came looking for you? That nobody cares where you are?



LORAY

Yeah?

LAMB

Well, I followed you into the bathroom. And then I followed you downtown and, well, I gotta say... more people should come looking for you. They'd find some amazing things.

Lamb reaches, painfully, to shut the CAB DOOR. Loray intercepts, closing it gently and waving goodbye to her "Disney princess."

INT. PLANET HOLLYWOOD - LOBBY

William and Lamb enter the lobby. William is holding Lamb's injured elbow. They look cozy.

Yet another group of adorable young COLLEGE GIRLS walks by. They're not "bad girls" ; they're just having the time of their life. They carry drinks and laugh. Lamb watches them enviously. This is the normal life she dreams of.

Three of them cluster together for a photo while one holds up her camera phone.

GIRL WITH CAMERA

Say it with me, guys...1-2-3...  
(everyone together)  
*Phenom-enal!*

Lamb turns to William suddenly.

LAMB

Where do you think they're going?

William is dismissive. Derisive, even.

WILLIAM

I don't know. There's a nightclub at this hotel that all the "Trixies" and "Chads" seem to love. They're probably going there.

LAMB

I want to go to the club.

WILLIAM

I don't think that's one of the recommended steps in wound care.

LAMB

Just for a minute. Just for one  
minute so I can see.

WILLIAM

It's not you. It's loud and crowded  
and it's full of disgusting  
aggressive people who will try to  
put their...private parts...against  
your...rear end.

LAMB

You don't have to mince words  
around me, William. You can say  
butt. Look, I said "butt" and hell  
didn't swallow me up.

A crying BRIDE stomps past, holding up her soiled hem.

WILLIAM

You sure about that?

LAMB

Let's go.

WILLIAM

Okay.

LAMB

(surprised)  
Okay? Okay!

She clutches her elbow in pain, grinning.

INT. PLANET HOLLYWOOD HOTEL (CLUB ENTRANCE) - NIGHT

A long line of CLUBGOERS snakes out of a huge, high-concept  
Vegas hotel nightclub.

William moves easily to the front of the line, exchanges  
pleasantries with the DOOR GUY, and ushers Lamb in.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

The interior of the club is a dark labyrinth. There are  
beautiful half-naked GIRLS dancing everywhere in Eden-themed  
fig leaf ensembles. The music is bone-jarringly loud.

Lamb keeps one hand on William's shoulder as he cuts through  
the crowd. She's never seen this many people crammed into one  
place.

They finally emerge at the CENTER OF THE CLUB. It's the time of night when drunk and drugged people completely lose their minds. It's so loud that William can't speak to Lamb, and vice versa. He simply gestures as if to say, "Here we are."

Lamb's expression is hard to read. Her face is solemn. There are CLUB KIDS going wild all around them. Lamb is surrounded by mayhem and indecency. William is concerned. Has he gone too far?

A TINSEL CANNON goes off, spewing silver tinsel into the air. It pours down on the cheering crowd.

Lamb can't move, but she smiles. She starts laughing. It's the happiest William has seen her.

INT. PLANET HOLLYWOOD HOTEL - ELEVATOR

Lamb and William are standing in the corner of an OPEN ELEVATOR, about to ride up to her floor. Lamb's hair is full of tinsel.

Suddenly, two of the FRAT GUYS we saw when Lamb first arrived run to make the elevator. One shoves his hand between the closing doors; they both hop in. Their eyes are bloodshot; they're clearly messed up on some kind of disco biscuits.

LAMB

Hi, guys!

The two GUYS freeze, horrified.

FRAT GUY #1

(under his breath)

Oh shit, it's the narc. *It's the narc, man!*

LAMB

No, silly, narcs report to me. I'm a fed, remember?

The guys back away.

LAMB (CONT'D)

This is my partner, Officer Cha.

William plays along flawlessly.

WILLIAM

Good evening, boys. Or should I say, good morning! My, you seem wide awake at such a wee hour.

FRAT GUY #1  
 (twitching)  
 We drank a lot of coffee. Energy  
 drinks.

WILLIAM  
 Energy drinks.

LAMB  
 Your pupils are unusually large. I  
 better get my eye flashlight.

The frat guys are wildly stabbing the "open door" button.

WILLIAM  
 Very strange indeed, Officer  
 Krupke. Say, do you mind if I ask  
 where you purchased those drinks?

FRAT GUY #2  
 We have to go.

The two guys dash off the elevator. William looks at Lamb,  
 amused.

WILLIAM  
 How long have you been here?

LAMB  
 Only a few hours, I swear.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - 3:00 A.M.

Lamb and William enter Lamb's suite. William is surprised by  
 its size.

WILLIAM  
 This is some room. Did they comp  
 you or something?

LAMB  
 I had a coupon.

This seems an unlikely explanation, but William lets it go.

LAMB (CONT'D)  
 I was planning to stay here for  
 a while anyway.

William looks around the immaculate suite. He sees Lamb's  
 clothing. Her Obama book. Her flute in its case. Then he sees  
 Lamb's DISHES sitting in a neat stack.

WILLIAM  
What's with the dishes?

Lamb sighs.

LAMB  
I brought my own dishes from home.  
I don't know why people find this  
so strange!  
(exasperated)  
I had to let go of a lot of  
prejudices and fears to come to Las  
Vegas, so I don't know why it's  
such a big deal that I'd want to  
have my own tableware. I should  
have something familiar. Hotels are  
notoriously dirty.

WILLIAM  
It's fine. I was just wondering.  
You know, hotel comforters are  
supposed to be the worst.

Lamb eyes the patterned BEDSPREAD warily.

LAMB  
Really?

WILLIAM  
Yeah, they don't wash them and  
they're allegedly covered in se...  
(correcting himself)  
Cigar...ette ash.

LAMB  
Should I take it off?

WILLIAM  
Sure.

Lamb pulls the comforter off the bed and onto the floor.  
There's something awkward about discussing the bed.

LAMB  
You didn't have to come all the way  
to my room. I could have found my  
way up from the lobby.

WILLIAM  
I see that you can take care of  
yourself. You'd already used some  
kind of mind trick on those bros in  
the elevator.

LAMB

Well, that's a bit like hypnotizing chickens.

(off his blank look)

Easy.

William sits down on the DESK CHAIR.

WILLIAM

So when you said you'd be staying here for a while, how long did you mean?

LAMB

I don't know. I just don't want to go back to Billings.

WILLIAM

There are other places on the good-times continuum between Billings and the Vegas Strip.

LAMB

I'm figuring that out.

WILLIAM

Hm. You know, I think you'd love Chicago.

LAMB

Where are you from?

WILLIAM

Chicago.

Lamb smiles.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Since I'm never going to see you again, you should know-- you have a right to know-- that I'm the one who stole your Vicodin. I fished them right out of your bag.

LAMB

Ahhh...

We think she's going to protest.

LAMB (CONT'D)

...bviously.

WILLIAM

How did you know that?

LAMB

I left my purse with you and you're a recovering drug addict. My mom always says that when people tell you who they are, you should listen.

William nods: fair enough.

LAMB (CONT'D)

I mean, I understand. I'm not without my vices. I'm totally addicted to-- well, you know those vanilla sandwich cookies, with the creme filling? I love them. If you had a big bag of those cookies, boy, when you weren't looking? I'd eat a couple. Maybe I'd eat 10. My flesh is weak.

She's anything but weak, and William knows that.

WILLIAM

I doubt that.

LAMB

No, I'll admit it. I love vanilla sandwich cookies.

(quietly, almost  
whispering)

And also Vicodin.

WILLIAM

What?

Lamb whispers again, this time closer to him. He nods.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I think you can get the situation under control. The cookies, I mean.

Lamb looks worried and self-conscious. Obviously, he's not talking about the cookies.

LAMB

I don't know.

WILLIAM

If you need help, there are lots of counselors that specialize in creme-filled desserts. No big whoop. But personally? I think there probably isn't anything you can't do.

LAMB

William, I mean no offense. But are you trying to get into my surgical support hose?

WILLIAM

No. This is not to say I wouldn't. I would.

Lamb blushes.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I would! I love support hose. I would peel 'em right off. Throw them around my head like a lasso.

Lamb bursts out laughing despite being totally scandalized.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I think I should go. I understand if you don't want to exchange email or whatever. Or regular addresses. You do live on a street, right?

LAMB

Rural Route 13. And don't go.

WILLIAM

(surprised)  
What?

LAMB

Don't go.

WILLIAM

I lied to you. I'm a liar and an addict Just another Vegas lost cause. Why do you keep trusting me?

LAMB

It's a very potent act to put your faith in someone who's lost their faith in themselves.

WILLIAM

Yeah, I guess it is.

Lamb seems to have an epiphany.

LAMB

Will you help me with something that might seem weird?



WILLIAM

What have we been doing all night?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - 3:30 A.M.

Lamb sits on her bed and picks up the ROOM PHONE. We can't see who she's calling. William lingers supportively.

LAMB (ON PHONE)

Hi. I have a question. My name is  
Lamb.

(calmly)

No, actually I am not a prostitute.

EXT. CHEETAH STRIP CLUB - 4:00 A.M.

Dusk approaches. Lamb, still in her bloodied cardigan and jeans, approaches the cheesy, neo-Classical facade of the CHEETAH GENTLEMAN'S CLUB. William is apprehensive about this plan.

WILLIAM

I'm going in with you, of course.

LAMB

Certainly not. I have to go alone.

WILLIAM

What? I'm coming in!

LAMB

You can't do that.

WILLIAM

Why? Is this a religious thing? You don't trust me, do you? I don't blame you if you don't.

LAMB

(interrupting)

I trust you! It's just that I will die of embarrassment if I have to enter this temple of Jezebel with a guy that I like!

WILLIAM

Oh.

(pleased)

Oh.

Lamb walks toward the club. She offers the COVER CHARGE to one of the two BOUNCERS. He waves her in wordlessly. She looks small and vulnerable as she ducks through the doorway.

BOUNCER #1  
I gotta call my daughter.

INT. CHEETAH STRIP CLUB - SAME

Lamb enters. The vibe at a strip club at 4:00 AM is a strange one. Some of the GIRLS are cashing out. There are girls onstage, girls leaving. Lamb scans the room.

A baby-faced, Michael Cera-esque MANAGER approaches her.

MANAGER  
Hi, do you need an application?

A STRIPPER in a dowdy PUFFER COAT, Uggs and a Chicago Bears hat heads for the door, counting a wad of bills.

MANAGER (CONT'D)  
Justice? What did I say about no street clothes on the work floor?

JUSTICE  
Sorry, *Bernard*.

She saunters out of the club, rolling her eyes.

MANAGER  
It really ruins the illusion.  
Thanks.  
(to Lamb)  
Sorry. Hi.

LAMB  
I'm looking for someone.

The manager sighs.

MANAGER  
Are you hear to make trouble?  
Collect a real or imagined debt?  
Choke a bitch out?

Lamb reaches into her purse and slips a BILL into the manager's hand. She shakes it firmly.

LAMB  
Peace be with you.

MANAGER

Oh. Merry Christmas.  
(looking at the bill)  
Please enjoy the club.

INT. CHEETAH STRIP CLUB (MAIN FLOOR) - SAME

Lamb crosses the club floor. It's a sad place that masks its sadness with colorful lights and thumping music.

Lamb looks at one of the dancers and realizes: it's STRIPPER #3 from the airport baggage claim. The girl meets Lamb's gaze; she recognizes her, vaguely, but is too fucked up on something or other to register much.

Lamb waves and continues across the floor. She follows two GIRLS up a STAIRWAY and through an open door.

INT. CHEETAH STRIP CLUB (DRESSING ROOM) - SAME

Lamb cautiously enters the large, grimy DRESSING ROOM. She brightens immediately. She's found the person she was looking for: A tired BRUNETTE in her mid-thirties, checking her makeup in the mirror. She wears a Santa Claus bikini.

LAMB

Hello. Are you Ryder?

"Ryder" has to think about that one.

RYDER

Huh? Uh, yeah. Yeah, I'm Ryder.  
What do you want?

She looks around as if expecting some kind of ambush. Lamb holds up a familiar, crumpled yellow paper.

LAMB

I called the number on the flier.

Ryder takes a plastic BRUSH out of her purse and begins brushing the matted ends of her hair extensions.

RYDER

I'm not working tonight.

Lamb begins picking soiled COSTUMES and DRESSES up off the floor. She brushes them off and starts hanging them neatly on a nearby rack.

LAMB

I know. The agency told me. I asked where I could find you, and they said you dance here.

RYDER

They're not supposed to give out that information.

Lamb folds a bikini bottom and sets it on the counter.

LAMB

I know. I'm afraid I lied. I told them I was your babysitter and there was an emergency.

Ryder bristles, alarmed.

RYDER

How do you know about my kids?

LAMB

I don't.

RYDER

Did a guy put you up to this or something? I can do couples, but it costs extra.

LAMB

Oh no, it's just me.

Lamb picks up a can of DISINFECTANT and sprays it liberally all over the room.

RYDER

Why are you cleaning?

LAMB

I just like things to be nice.

Ryder is straddling the nasty old "boudoir" chair in her thin bikini bottoms.

RYDER

I get it. I'm weird about germs too.

(Somehow, we doubt this.)

A prolonged silence. Then:

RYDER (CONT'D)

I'm supposed to be in the Jell-O  
pit in ten minutes.

LAMB

I'd like to pay you for your time.  
Is there somewhere we can speak  
privately.

INT. STRIP CLUB (JACUZZI) - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Lamb and Ryder soak their feet in a nasty old Jacuzzi in the  
strip club dressing room. Lamb's SUPPORT HOSE are off. The  
water bubbles around their ankles.

LAMB

So this is nice!

RYDER

(not really)  
Yeah.

LAMB

Okay, here's the thing: I'm a  
Christian. And a big part of that,  
at least ideally, is reaching out  
to people. Where there is charity,  
there is God.

Ryder has been proselytized at before.

RYDER

Oh no. No offense, but I hate all  
that religious stuff.

LAMB

Wait. Listen, I know what it's like  
to not believe in anything. You see  
my scars?

RYDER

Yeah. No offense, that's busted.

LAMB

I was in a plane that went down.  
The boy who was courting me-- my  
boyfriend, I guess you would call  
him-- he was a pilot in the Air  
Force. It was our first date  
without a chaperone, and he decided  
to take me up. He was very  
experienced, but...

RYDER

Did he get as messed up as you?

Lamb smiles. The Jacuzzi shuts off and the water stagnates.

LAMB

He got lucky.

RYDER

Not a scratch, huh?

LAMB

No, he died.

This matter-of-fact statement reveals how truly difficult Lamb's recovery has been.

RYDER

Hard to believe in God after that.

LAMB

You said it, Ryder! That's been my whole crisis. My cross to bear if you'll pardon the expression. I know you don't like "religious stuff."

RYDER

S'fine.

LAMB

But if that hadn't happened- the pain, the operations, the skin grafts, everything-- I wouldn't have been able to come here. I wouldn't have come to this incredibly spiritual city. I wouldn't have made new friends that I couldn't have found anywhere else in the world. I wouldn't have met William...

RYDER

(interrupting)

You think Vegas is spiri-chall?

LAMB

Technically, this is Paradise.

RYDER

Whatever. You hooked up with some guy and now you believe in God again? Girl, you're just dickmatized.

LAMB

No. I know it seems strange to suffer so much pain for just the tiniest flash of beauty-- but it's fair. I don't know how, but it adds up. The world is tipped in favor of goodness. That's how I know someone is there. I can't see him, or her, or it, but I know. I can feel His hand on the scale, making things even out. Giving our lives worth.

Ryder makes a face that (somewhat) approximates a SMILE.

RYDER

My time is almost up.

Lamb stands up, wincing a little. The usual morning pain. She walks over to her purse and takes out a MASSIVE ROLL OF BILLS.

RYDER (CONT'D)

Don't hand it to me. Just leave it on the side of the tub.

Ryder looks at Lamb and realizes that she's peeling off MULTIPLE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS.

RYDER (CONT'D)

Hey, I said a hundred.

LAMB

I'm giving you five grand in cash, and writing you a much bigger check as well. I know you guys don't take checks, but I promise I'm good for it.

RYDER

Is this a joke?

Lamb is writing a CHECK with a pink ballpoint pen. She doesn't even look up as she explains herself.

LAMB

There was a problem with the plane. Major mechanical failure. Our families-- my family and Micah's family-- they sued and won. I'm worth like, eight million?

She places the check and the cash on the side of the Jacuzzi tub, as if it doesn't matter if it falls in or gets soggy.

LAMB (CONT'D)

I think people expected me to give it to my church, but I have some other ideas. Maybe I'll be like... a traveling ministry. People are always saying "Oh, if I had millions of dollars, I would help people." Well now, I'm that person.

RYDER

Is this a reality show?

LAMB

No.

RYDER

Then why?

LAMB

Sometimes a little ripple can affect a big change, like...

She quickly amends Melanie's favorite saying, glancing at the hot tub.

LAMB (CONT'D)

Like, uh, like that jet in the tub. Just shooting out a little air.

Ryder looks confused. Then:

RYDER

It's a good thing you picked me. Because these other girls-- man! some of them would just blow it all on junk or clothes or whatever. Not me.

(rambling)

I'm going to get some things for my boys. My one son's birthday is the day after Christmas, so.

She gathers up the money.

LAMB

That must have been a great present.

RYDER

Yeah. Why did you pick me, anyway?

LAMB

I got the flier. I saw your picture. I liked your face.



Ryder sees the HUGE FIGURE on the check and gasps in disbelief. She looks up at Lamb like "Are you serious?"

RYDER

That picture's 10 years old. I don't even look like that anymore.

LAMB

But it's still you. Don't say that.  
(fierce)  
It's still you.

Lamb suddenly lunges forward and HUGS Ryder, who resists, her arms and legs locked. Ryder has forgotten how to hug. But she lets Lamb do it anyway. Passively, charitably, she allows the hug.

Lamb exhales, shuddering, into Ryder's sun-damaged bosom. Her eyes are shut tight.

RYDER

You're giving me one thing to not screw up.

LAMB

As long as you try. That's all.

INT. CHEETAH STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

As Lamb heads down the staircase adjacent to the main stage, she pauses. She reaches into her purse and tosses a handful of CASH into the air. It drifts gracefully down onto the floor. The STRIPPERS FREAK OUT.

BLONDE STRIPPER

Holy crap!

AIRPORT STRIPPER

These are Benjamins!

CHUBBY STRIPPER

Bloody Elbow's making it rain!

CRAWLING STRIPPER

(pocketing bills)

Thank you, Jesus.

She crosses herself and prays quietly. Lamb watches for a beat. Then she hurries out the door of the club.

EXT. CHEETAH STRIP CLUB - SAME

The sky is growing light. Lamb walks across the mostly empty parking lot toward William. One of the bouncers calls out to her, concerned.

BOUNCER

Hey, where you going?

Lamb turns to face him, stumbling backwards. She opens her arms to embrace the world.

LAMB

Everywhere.

William takes her gloved hand. They walk off into the dawn.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - DAWN

It's a grey early morning. Williams HANDS are COVERING Lamb's EYES. He removes them, revealing...

The Excalibur CASTLE that captured Lamb's imagination when she first arrived.

LAMB

(pleased)

The castle! Finally.

WILLIAM

Do you like buffets?

Lamb briefly recalls her bad buffet encounter. Then:

LAMB

I love them.

INT. EXCALIBUR ROOFTOP - SUNRISE

Lamb sits on the roof, watching the sun rise among the fake castle turrets. William appears with two plates. Lamb's has MICKEY MOUSE PANCAKES, which she notices with delight.

William settles in and takes in the sunrise. Lamb leans in suddenly and KISSES HIM.

William is startled, but he does not resist.

LAMB

Thank you.

WILLIAM

Yes, I've done so much for you.

LAMB

I'm sorry about the bar, when I said you weren't scary. I lied. I'm terrified. Here, feel this.

She puts his hand near her heart.

WILLIAM

That's not fear.

LAMB

You don't think?

WILLIAM

No.

LAMB

It's been a couple of years since my heart raced for any good reason.

WILLIAM

Now it's your turn.

They KISS again. And we LEAVE them, looking out onto the waking city...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Lamb returns to her hotel room alone, looking dreamy. Smiling, she packs her suitcase again, tossing everything in with uncharacteristic recklessness.

Before she exits, she takes one last look at the now sun-filled room.

She rises onto her tiptoes and sinks. Up and down. Up and down again. It's a strange little bounce. Her arms swing. Could it be? Lamb is...DANCING.

INT. PLANET HOLLYWOOD HOTEL (FRONT DESK) - DAY

Lamb approaches the reservation desk, her bags in tow.

CLERK

Checking out?

LAMB

Yes. 1427.

She slides over her key. The clerk types on the computer. His demeanor changes to one of recognition/annoyance.

CLERK

1427. Did you happen to check your messages upstairs?

LAMB

I didn't see any messages.

CLERK

When your phone blinks, it means you have messages.

LAMB

Sorry. I wasn't in my room a lot.  
(winking)  
Vegas.

CLERK

Well, you have 17 messages.

LAMB

17?

CLERK

A Doug Mannerheim. Then Melanie Mannerheim. Then Melanie and Doug together, crying and singing hymns. Then Melanie again. Pretty much off and on like that for *hours on end*. Eventually she was just like, "Hi sweetie, it's just me, Mel."  
(beat)  
She's crazy.

Lamb is touched. Loray was right.

LAMB

Sorry about that.

She signs for the room, tips the clerk and heads for the exit. The clerk looks at the tip?

CLERK

Hey, what did you play? Did you shoot craps?

LAMB

(leaving)  
Pardon me!

EXT. MANNERHEIM HOUSE - NIGHT

MUSIC UP: A Christmas carol

A CAB from a RURAL TAXI COMPANY drives up the isolated country road to the Mannherheim's house. From a distance, we see Lamb exit the car.

A disheveled Lamb heads up the snow-covered front walk. The house is lit-up and looks cozy and inviting.

She pauses to look at the big, illuminated NATIVITY SCENE by the front entrance. Yes, it's plastic and tacky. But it's also touching. Lamb smiles sadly at the Baby Jesus doll tethered to the manger with a bike lock.

Lamb opens the front door. Melanie is passing through the kitchen with a cup of cocoa. She wears glasses and sweatpants and looks adorably frumpy compared to her glamorous "church look."

She turns and sees Lamb.

MELANIE

Oh thank God.

Melanie and Lamb rush toward each other. Melanie sweeps Lamb into her arms, her first words summing up every mother's chief anxiety:

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Are you hurt? Are you hurt?

Lamb's face is muffled against her mother's shoulder. They're both in tears.

LAMB

No... I'm happy.

Doug hurries down the stairs in pajamas.

DOUG

Is she in pain?

MELANIE

She says she's happy.

Doug's relief turns to anxiety in an instant.

DOUG

(worried)

Oh no.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Melanie and Doug sit on the couch near the Christmas tree. Lamb sits in a chair facing them. Melanie is rapidly tapping her foot on the floor.

MELANIE

You going to talk first?

LAMB

If you don't mind...

Melanie's reply is machine-gun rapid.

MELANIE

Ha, of course I don't mind. I'm a very generous listener; you know me. All-Ears Mel.

She bites her lip impatiently.

LAMB

What I did in church-- it was wrong. Disrespectful. I had a problem with people shouting their beliefs at me, but then I went and did the same in turn.

DOUG

Everyone understands that you've been through a trial.

LAMB

But they must have been upset.

DOUG

People tried to talk. But your mother wouldn't let them get away with it. She would defend you through anything.

Lamb looks at Melanie. Melanie looks down.

LAMB

(touched)  
Really, Mom?

MELANIE

(quiet)  
Yes, duh.

DOUG

You committed apostasy. Are you prepared to repent before God and the community?

LAMB

No.

Doug and Melanie are startled by this.

LAMB (CONT'D)

...not before the community. This is between me and God. I know you love your church, but right now I don't need the stadium-seating and the Teen Club and Christian Talent Night. There's nothing wrong with those things, but I want to know who I am and what I believe away from all of it. Just me, flesh and bone.

Melanie and Doug take this in. Then:

MELANIE

Well, you're a just a *little* too old for Teen Club...

LAMB

That's not my point. I want to go out in the world and act on it. If you stay in a place where everyone thinks and acts the same as you, it's just an echo-chamber for Jesus.

DOUG

(missing the point)

I think the new carpeting really cut down that echo.

MELANIE

Lamb, you may not realize this, but I can be bit of a maverick myself. Remember that sermon about the dangers of yoga and how it subtly encourages the worship of false gods? Well, I thought that was a bunch of bunk. I went ahead and joined a yoga class at the gym. I've been going regularly. What do you think of that?

LAMB

Good for you, Mom.

MELANIE

I just change it up a little in my mind. Sun Salutation becomes God Salutation. Down Dog is Down Satan, and so forth.

DOUG

We're not stuffy, honey. We're open to hearing about your new beliefs as long as they're still extremely conservative.

LAMB

(carefully)

Dad...I disagree with many of the things I've been taught.

Heavy silence from Melanie and Doug.

DOUG

Certain things aren't a matter of agreement or consent. Some things are just God's word--

LAMB

(heated)

Or *your* interpretation thereof--

DOUG

Christ speaks directly into the hearts of our leaders.

LAMB

Like Pastor Rick?

MELANIE

(interrupting)

Hey!

Lamb and Doug look at Melanie. Her sharp tone implies that maybe she's not totally ignorant of the Pastor Rick incident.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I know there's one thing God hates and that's sharpened tongues in the home. So let's just throttle down here and save the arguing for an appropriate time, like tomorrow.



LAMB

Just-- just let me show you guys  
this one thing. You're not going to  
like it, but just promise me you  
won't judge.

DOUG

(suspicious)  
What is it?

LAMB

This is important to me. Try to be  
open-minded.

INT. MANNERHEIM HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - MINUTES LATER

The lights are low. The Mannherheims watch *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* on the big TV. It's near the end.

Melanie and Doug are tight-lipped with disapproval, as if they've been forced to watch something racy.

DOUG

Where did you get this?

LAMB

The airport, on my way back.  
(then)  
It reminded me of a nice time.

MELANIE

Your childhood, huh?

LAMB

Sure.

They watch for a few beats.

MELANIE

This isn't so bad, I suppose. It's  
clean.

Doug seems surprisingly approving.

DOUG

You know, at least it celebrates  
*Christmas*.  
(sanctimonious)  
Not Kwanzaa or Ramadan

LAMB

That reminds me. I got this really  
cool scarf on my trip.  
(MORE)

LAMB (CONT'D)

It would look great on you. I'd like you to have it.

DOUG

Really? Thanks, honey.

Lamb is completely straight-faced.

LAMB

You should wear it to church.

DOUG

I will.

Lamb snuggles up between her parents. There are certain things that will divide them forever. But for now, they're together and Lamb is safe. Then.

MELANIE

Are you leaving, Lamb?

Lamb stares at the screen. The Misfit Toys, finally appreciated, are being dropped from Santa's sleigh into the outstretched arms of children.

LAMB

This is something I need to do.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE (BAR) - NIGHT

MUSIC UP: AN UPBEAT PARTY SONG

Close on a POSTCARD from Chicago with a photo of the BLUES BROTHERS. "Greetings from the Windy City!"

Reveal William behind the bar. He reads the postcard for a moment. Then, he carefully tapes it to the wall above his cash register. There are FIVE OTHER CARDS already affixed to the wall: New York. Hollywood. Austin, Texas. New Orleans. Walt Disney World.

Loray sidles up to the busy bar in her sequined "dealer-tainer" finery. William turns around.

LORAY

Another postcard, huh? The girl gets around.

WILLIAM

She's on a mission from God.

(then)

I can't believe they even find their way here.

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

The address just says "William and Loray, Imperial Palace, Paradise, Nevada."

LORAY

We've worked here so long we're on the National Registry of Historic Suckers.

WILLIAM

At least you're graduating soon.

Though Loray shrugs this off, we see a glimmer of pride in her eyes.

LORAY

With my lucrative B.A. in Complaining About Cinema.

(then)

So where is she now? Chicago?

WILLIAM

She was, for a time. The she went back to Montana to make things right with her folks. Sounds like it went fairly well.

(casual)

She mentioned she might want to give Las Vegas another chance.

LORAY

I see you trying to not smile. Look at that. You're like a seventh-grade girl.

William turns away, refilling a CUSTOMER'S pint glass.

WILLIAM

I'm not smiling.

Loray tries to catch him in the act as he bobs and weaves to avoid her.

LORAY

Yeah, right! I see you cheeing back there. Careful, you might pull a muscle.

The EMCEE has taken the stage. Loray finishes her drink.

LORAY (CONT'D)

I'm up.

WILLIAM

Break one.

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen, the Imperial  
Palace is proud to present the  
musical stylings of our dealing  
diva, Loray!

Loray takes the mic.

LORAY

I think you're going to like this  
one. It swings.

She nods to the BAND. We hear the tinkling opening notes of  
"Wouldn't it Be Nice?" by the Beach Boys. Loray begins to  
sing in her sweet, clear voice.

LORAY (CONT'D)

*Wouldn't it be nice if we were  
older...*

The CROWD responds favorably, applauding as Loray bounces  
around the casino with the mic. This is the musical "happy  
medium" she's been looking for.

William watches her with admiration and affection.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Lamb sits in the window seat of an airborne JET. She looks  
more confident and assured than we've ever seen her.

No longer hiding in shapeless garments, she wears the clothes  
a "normal" 22-year-old woman would wear. Skinny jeans, a  
hoodie, and a pair of boots. But there's a small CROSS around  
her neck and she still carries herself with Lamb-like  
dignity.

Lamb gazes out the window as the sun melts into the clouds.  
It's as beautiful as any religious illustration. But it's  
REAL.

We hear Loray's voice singing joyfully: *Wouldn't it be  
nice...*

We don't know where Lamb's going. But we know she's going to  
be all right.

THE END.

