

TALK TO HER

by Pedro Almodovar

SEQ. 1 - A THEATER - INT. - NIGHT

The stage is full of dark wooden chairs and a few circular tables, also made of wood. Grey walls with two doors through which the characters appear and disappear, and a revolving door at the back. It is "Cafe Müller", by Pina Bausch, in which the choreographer also appears as a dancer. The spectacle is heartbreaking and yet full of lyricism and emotion.

SEQ. 2 - A THEATER STAGE

When the light is diffused over the set, we see, at the back of the stage, an extremely thin woman (Pina B.). Her skin barely covers her muscles and joints. She's wearing a kind of flimsy, ankle-length white nightdress, sleeveless with a low square neckline and fine straps. The neckline reveals a glimpse of the tops of her breasts.

Her arms hang rigidly by her sides and her hands are open. In the semi-darkness, she seems like a kind of ghost who is gently feeling the wall to have some reference about the space.

When the light comes on on the stage, the slim figure (with her smooth, fine hair tied in a ponytail hanging down her back and her incredibly long fingers) starts to move with short, hesitant movements. She staggers slightly, always in the same way. Her eyes are closed, like a sleepwalker searching intensely for a door in order to pass through to another reality. Or perhaps this is her reality, her world, and these are her movements within it.

Another woman (Malú) appears near the front of the stage,. She is younger and more furiously impatient. She is also wearing a light white slip which comes to just below her knees. Malú's hair is long and loose, untamed.

The two women, some 15 to 20 feet apart and very near the wall on the left, take hesitant, automatic steps. Even though neither of them can see (they never open their eyes), their movements coincide at times, or are superimposed, forming a harmonious duet. At times, one is the echo of the other.

They walk unconsciously towards the wall until they collide brutally with it. They rebound, they turn and drop slowly until they are sitting on the floor. Then they fall to one side with their legs frozen in a dance step.

A very sad looking man appears. He's wearing a suit and his hair is short but easily ruffled. His attention is fixed on Malú, he only has eyes for her. (Pina exposes herself less, she is more cautious.) Malú gets up like a mechanical doll. With her hands widespread and her arms held out in front of her, she walks forward (with the stiffness of someone who has just learned to walk). At dizzying speed, the sad looking man moves the chairs and tables out of her way, knocking them left and right with his hands. In this way, Malú doesn't bump into any of them and can cross the stage diagonally.

She stops and begins to dance, flailing her arms around desperately and spinning round and round.

It's heart stopping.

The man knocks away all the furniture Malú might bump into. Without pausing, Malú goes in a straight line towards the front of the stage. Again, the sad man barely has time to remove all the obstacles in her path. When he finishes, he gasps for breath, sad, exhausted and alert.

Malú pauses, her face hidden by her hair. Her right hand slides slowly upward (like a caress) from her belly to her heart. It stops when it reaches her heart and pauses there for a few moments. We start to hear a fragment of "Dido and Aeneas" by Henry Purcell. Very soft and also heartbreaking.

The stage explodes with emotion.

SEQ. 3 - ALBENIZ THEATER, STALLS - INT. - NIGHT

The Albeniz Theater is full. In one of the rows, two men, Benigno (about 30) and Marco (in his mid-40s) happen to be sitting beside each other. They are watching the show, hypnotized. Marco sheds an occasional tear. Benigno looks at him out of the corner of his eye and notices this.

"Cafe Müller" continues to evolve on the stage.

SEQ. 4 - A PRIVATE CLINIC, ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY

Benigno, the younger of the two men who were watching "Cafe Müller" is talking about the show to a woman lying on the bed.

BENIGNO (OFF)

...The stage is full of wooden chairs and tables.

Two women come out, dressed in shifts and with their eyes closed, like sleepwalkers... You're scared that the poor things are going to bump into everything!

But suddenly a man appears, with such a sad expression, and he knocks the chairs and tables out of their way so they don't bump into them.

You can't imagine how moving it was!

The woman lying on the bed is very beautiful. Her name is Alicia. She is 20 years old and she is lying fast asleep on the bed. While he's talking, Benigno is shaping her nails and attending to her hands with professional skill.

BENIGNO

(Continuing) There was a good looking man in his 40s sitting beside me. He cried several times... from the emotion.

(I'm not surprised.)

SEQ. 5 - PRIVATE CLINIC, ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY (CONT.)

The sleeping beauty remains motionless, her eyes closed and her hands lifeless.

BENIGNO

After the show I went to the dressing rooms
and I asked Pina Bausch for an autograph for you...

He leaves the manicure for a moment and opens a closet where he keeps his backpack (It contains magazines, a change of clothes, etc.). He carefully pulls out a half-page sized photo.

He goes back to the bed and shows it to the patient. He holds it a few inches from her face. There isn't the slightest reaction. The male nurse points to some words written at the bottom of the photo: "To Alicia: So that you may dance again. Pina" (Or, "Alicia, I hope that you overcome all your obstacles")

The photo shows Pina at one point during her performance, that is, in a slip, surrounded by wooden chairs, with her eyes closed and her arms hanging down. The obstacles (tables and chairs) seem insurmountable.

Benigno puts the photo back between the pages of a fashion magazine and puts the magazine into his bag. The rest of the closet is used for storing hygiene and beauty products and everything needed for treating every part of Alicia's body. All the best brands are there, Shiseido, Chanel, La Prairie, etc. There is also an expensive dressing gown hanging there, one that the patient used to wear (in her home).

If it weren't for the bed, the headboard of which is inclined between 30° and 45° and which has Alicia's medical chart hanging at the bottom, it wouldn't seem like a room in a clinic. The walls are painted a terra-cotta color. There are always flowers in a vase.

There are two social areas, or rather, three. To the left of the entrance is a large sofa and a table. The size of the sofa suggests that it becomes a bed at night. On the other side of the bed there are two handsome winged armchairs. A door leads out onto a little terrace with two armchairs and a round outdoor table. The countryside which we see from inside and from the terrace is full of trees. The stretch of greenery freshens the air and brightens the view.

On the wall facing the bed is a large Fornasetti clock. On the bedside table are two photos, one of her parents and another of a distinguished looking woman, about 50 years of age (her ballet teacher) (Maybe a religious picture?). There is also an alarm clock, which belongs to the patient, and the book she was reading ("The Hours" or "The Night of the Hunter", a gift from her teacher, with its page marker), when the accident happened...

SEQ. 6 - CLINIC, ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY (EVENING-NIGHT)

Matilde, a nurse (in her 30s) comes in. She and Benigno between them take care of Alicia. There is harmony between the two. Each one does a shift (he works days and she does the nights).

Benigno opens the chart which is on a tray at the foot of the bed. He writes down, in a different color from the doctor's remarks, her temperature and blood pressure at that time. Everything is normal. The notes (as well as temperature, blood pressure, etc.) are of the kind: "Today I see that she has more bronchial secretions". One of the last notes says: "This afternoon she couldn't tolerate enteral tube alimentation. I decided to remove it for a few hours".

MATILDE

(Looking at the sheets on which Benigno has written his notes) Would you mind staying tonight, Benigno?

My sister can't look after the children
and I don't know who I can leave them with.

BENIGNO

You shouldn't have bothered coming in.
You could have just rung me.

MATILDE

You're sure I'm not taking advantage of you?
You've stayed three nights this week already.

BENIGNO

Don't worry. If I have one afternoon free
that's all I need. I want to speak to the workmen
to see if they can finally finish the work on my apartment...
and I also have to go and get a photo framed.

MATILDE

My situation isn't going to get any better.
If you want, we can speak to the clinic about it
and let them decide.

BENIGNO

It isn't your fault your husband left you with three kids.
Come whatever night you can, and the nights you can't,
I'll stay. We don't need anyone else, we can sort it out
between ourselves.

MATILDE

Thanks a lot, Benigno. (Looking at Alicia)
Rosa removed the enteral tube alimentation.
What do you think if we resume it tomorrow?

BENIGNO

Yes... I never connect it at night.

(Cut)

SEQ. 7 - MARCO'S APARTMENT - INT. - NIGHT

(The end of spring)

For a moment, the enormous, liquid screen of the television is invaded by a really rubbishy program, in which everyone is shouting (like "Tombola" or "Crónicas"), or they're all hitting each other (like "Laura").

These first images disappear, via zapping.

The screen now offers a close-up of a very interesting woman, Lydia González.

Marco, in the sitting room of his apartment, is glancing lazily at some magazines while "watching" the television. He tosses aside the magazine he was flicking through and concentrates on Lydia's image.

Marco is the man in his mid-40s whom we saw sitting beside Benigno watching the Pina Bausch ballet and who cried with emotion.

His apartment is very plainly decorated. There are very few things, but they all have to do with movement, with the act of traveling. A map of the globe some 10 feet long fills one entire wall. A few ethnic details. His desk is untidy. The rest is space.

(Marco could also be exercising on a "body trek" machine when he suddenly sees Lydia on the television. In that case, the machine would be in the middle of the room.)

SEQ. 8 - TELEVISION

WHAT WE SEE:

Lydia is a bullfighter, in her early 30s, gypsy looking, with a fibrous, ephebic body. She's temperamental and nervous because television programs aren't her thing. The female presenter is a reactionary, despicable harpy. Insistent, a hard nut to crack. Lydia is uncomfortable from the outset. She answers curtly. Close-ups of her show a strong but anxious woman.

The Presenter of the program holds up to the camera a little poster (with an old-fashioned design) for the traditional spring bullfight in Brihuega. She says in a sensationalistic tone:

PRESENTER

Six bulls and one woman! Next Wednesday, in the traditional
Brihuega bullring, Lydia González will fight six bulls...

Lydia nods. From the start, she's uncomfortable.

PRESENTER

Six bulls are a lot of bulls. Good evening, Lydia.

(Lydia gives her an icy look)

Why such a drastic decision?

LYDIA

My job is to fight bulls... Two bulls, six
or whatever number...

PRESENTER

Some people say that it's because a lot of bullfighters
have refused to fight along with you just because
you're a woman.

LYDIA

People can say what they want..
That's their business.

Lydia is very annoyed by the presenter's insistent attitude.

PRESENTER

There's too much machismo in the bullfighting world,
you must admit that... with some exceptions,
of course, because El Niño de Valencia didn't mind
sharing billing with you for several months...

We are shown some gossip magazines, with photos of the couple in the ring and in public
places.

LYDIA

(Sharply) That's in the past..

PRESENTER

Do you think that it was all just a front to promote himself,
and then, when he became well known, he left you?

LYDIA

(Interrupting her, sharply)

I warned you in the dressing room that I didn't want
to talk about that!

PRESENTER

(Smoothly, woman to woman) But it's good to talk.
Talking about your problems is the first step
towards overcoming them. Why did El Niño...

LYDIA

(Fed up) Not again!

PRESENTER

Lydia, darling, don't be bad mannered. Let me finish
the question. Why did El Niño de Valencia...

LYDIA

I warned you in the dressing room that I wasn't going to talk about that subject...

PRESENTER

You didn't warn me about anything in the dressing room! And I don't like you saying that because people are going to think that we negotiate the interviews. And I don't negotiate anything. I only work live, never with play back. That's my motto. I'm one of the few who dare to work live, just like you should dare to admit that a man was living off you. Let's call things by their name. Because EL Niño de Valencia was living off you. A man who shared not just fame and the bull ring with you, but also your bed, dumped you when it suited him. I wanted us to talk about that because a lot of women have that problem even if they aren't bullfighters. Don't look at me like that, Lydia... You forget that you're a public person and that the public has a right to know all those details that you're keeping from us... I understand that it isn't easy, but you have to fight, you have to face up to the facts and tell us about them down to the last detail and until you do that you're not going to be a free woman!

Before she can finish her speech, Lydia gets up and walks off the set. The presenter can't believe it.

PRESENTER

(To camera) She's left! There are times when women don't want to face reality!

Marco answers her from his sofa.

MARCO

You fucking bitch!

Marco has followed the television disagreement with close interest. He picks up a mobile phone extension and calls an editor at "El País". He proposes doing an article on Lydia. The "El País" editor likes the idea. (He's just seen her)

SEQ. 9 - PRIVATE CLINIC, ALICIA'S ROOM - INT.

The nurses Rosa and Benigno are at work.

The photo of Pina Bausch, framed, is hanging near the bed head.

ROSA

One day they're going to tell you off, Benigno.

BENIGNO
For putting up a photo?

ROSA
A photo with that dedication!

BENIGNO
Her father saw it and he liked it.

ROSA
You should ease up a bit. People
on the floor have been making comments.

They pull the sheets back from the patient and start to take off her nightdress so that they can wash her. They've got several towels laid out.

BENIGNO
As long as Alicia is all right, I don't care what they say.

The phrase coincides with the moment when Rosa and Benigno uncover the genital area of Alicia's body. There's a stain on the sheet.

BENIGNO
She's got her period.

ROSA
(She looks too) It's a day early.

Rosa opens the closet and takes out a sanitary towel. As she puts it on Alicia, Benigno writes it down in the daily notes they keep on the patient.

SEQ. 10 - ARANJUEZ BULLRING - AFTERNOON

(Decide which part of the bullfight we see)

Lydia is fighting her sixth bull. The public is applauding. The girl is taking a lot of risks. Marco is sitting near the front. He is so close he can hear the heavy breathing of the bull and the bullfighter, the animal's flank grazing against her legs, the sound of the cape, all the noises; as if the bullring were a sound box and there was no one there except the animal and the woman fighting it.

Marco, tense and watchful, doesn't miss a single detail.

El Niño de Valencia is also there. The bull's horn grazes the bullfighter and El Niño suffers watching the spectacle, in a different way from Marco. His manager is with him.

NIÑO
(Worried) That woman's gone crazy.

The manager is more indignant than worried.

MANAGER

She's dedicating it to you. She's capable of letting
the bull tear out her guts as long as you see it...
We shouldn't have come. Especially you.

SEQ. 11 - BULLFIGHTING CAFE, ARANJUEZ - INT. - NIGHT

A large cafe with red, veined upholstery and several bull's heads on the walls. Part of her "cuadrilla" (team of bullfighter's assistants), on-lookers, tourists and people connected with bull fighting. Marco is up at the bar counter, a drink in his hand. He looks down to the far end of the bar, where Lydia is speaking to El Niño de Valencia's manager. The conversation doesn't have much future.

Lydia and the manager:

MANAGER

El Niño has to concentrate... He's got no time
for other worries.

LYDIA

(Concealing her indignation)

I'm not going to give him any... But tell him
to pass by the house to pick up his things
or to tell me where I can send them.

MANAGER

Send them to my house.

LYDIA

He can tell me. I have nothing to do with you.

Before the manager can react, Lydia has left him on his own.

SEQ. 12 - AT THE SAME BAR COUNTER (CONT.)

After cutting the manager short, Lydia comes up to the bar counter, she's thirsty. As she passes, a member of the "cuadrilla" or a fan congratulates her. While she's deciding what to drink, Marco comes up to her:

MARCO

(Very politely) Could I speak to you for a moment, please?

She looks at him but doesn't register his presence. She's watching El Niño de Valencia's arrival.

Against his manager's orders, the bullfighter makes his entrance. He immediately spots Lydia but goes over to his manager. For a fleeting moment their eyes meet. Lydia turns back to the bar counter and breathes deeply. When she turns round again, El Niño is talking to his manager. She looks at him, hurt.

MANAGER

I told you not to come...

NIÑO

I wanted a drink... and at some point I should talk to her.

The bullfighter is uneasy.

MANAGER

Don't even think about it. When something is over, it's over. I told her to send your stuff to my place.

Lydia is trying to tell from their lips what the two men are saying. A renewed pang of anguish suddenly takes her breath away. She looks at Marco who has remained at her side all this time. Lydia vaguely remembers that he'd said something to her a moment before.

LYDIA

I'm sorry, what did you say?

MARCO

I asked if I could speak to you for a moment.

LYDIA

(Upset) If you give me a lift back to Madrid we could talk on the way.

MARCO

I'd be delighted.

Lydia takes his arm and they make their way through the people to the door. Marco notices that, despite the haughty stiffness of her face, the woman is trembling.

From the far end of the room El Niño watches them disappear, a jealous expression on his face.

SEQ. 13 - INSIDE THE CAR - EXT. - NIGHT

The car is moving. A road sign reads: Madrid 13 miles.

A large caption, superimposed on the image

MARCO AND LYDIA / 1

MARCO

Who called you Lydia?

LYDIA

My father.

MARCO

It was like setting out your destiny from you were born.

LYDIA

He always wanted to be a bullfighter, but he only made it to "banderillero". He was the person who gave me the most support in this world... but he died a year ago.

MARCO

I'm sorry. (He explains, even knowing that she's distracted) El País has commissioned me to do an article on you for the Sunday color supplement.

Lydia is still tense. She isn't aware of the importance of Marco's proposal. Distracted and distrustful, she asks:

LYDIA

Do you write about bullfighting? Your name isn't familiar.

MARCO

To be honest, I don't understand the first thing about bullfighting.

LYDIA

(Overly defensive) Then what are you doing here?

She looks at him, surprised and paranoid.

MARCO

(He explains) I don't understand about bullfighting, but I know a lot about desperate women.

LYDIA

Who told you I'm desperate?!

MARCO

That's the impression you gave me.

LYDIA

You don't care about bullfighting. You're only interested is the morbid side, my relationship with El Niño de Valencia. Well, tell El País that I don't need

their article and they're to leave me alone!

SEQ. 14 - ANOTHER LOCATION, STILL INSIDE THE CAR - EXT. - NIGHT

Marco doesn't answer immediately.

MARCO

(Discreet but firm) I think you're mistaken.

LYDIA

(She mutters, paranoid) Yes, I've been mistaken
for a whole year!

They're close to her house. They travel the remaining short distance in silence.

LYDIA

(Pointing) It's over there.

SEQ. 15 - VICINITY OF LYDIA'S HOUSE - EXT. - NIGHT

Marco leaves her at the door of her house. It's cheerful looking, with a certain Andalusian air.

Lydia gets out of the car. Marco doesn't move until he sees her go into the house. He's only driven a few yards when he hears a scream from the house. He brakes. He hears another heartrending scream.

Lydia appears at her door, panic stricken.

She runs over to him, very badly shaken, leaving the front door open. Marco gets out of the car to help her, but Lydia gets in, screaming:

LYDIA

Quickly! Get me out of here! There's a snake in the
kitchen! I've got a phobia about them!

Stunned by her screams, Marco immediately starts the car. He drives some 300 feet from the entrance to the house. He reacts quickly and without asking questions.

MARCO

Wait here for me.

Lydia looks at him, horrified. Marco gets out of the car.

Lydia watches through the window as he goes up to her house and disappears through the front door.

SEQ. 16 - HOUSE IN EL VISO - EXT./INT. - NIGHT

If Lydia were near the front door, she'd hear the sound of running and several blows. The door is still open and the lights are on. We can see Marco chasing after the animal until he traps it with a brush or a broom.

Once he's killed it, he puts it in a plastic bag. (We see him from behind. When he turns round we see that his eyes are brimming with tears)

Before going out into the street, he dries his eyes with a Kleenex. In his other hand he's holding the plastic bag containing the dead prey.

He throws the bag into a community-sized garbage bin.

With his back to Lydia, he takes another Kleenex from his pocket and quickly wipes his eyes and nose again. And he walks back to the car. She, filled with apprehension, is watching him in the rear-view mirror.

SEQ. 17 - VICINITY LYDIA'S HOUSE - EXT. - NIGHT

On the way back to the car he finishes drying his eyes. Lydia is surprised by Marco's expression. She doesn't understand why a man so in control of himself is coming out of her house crying, as if she had passed on her own distress to him, through all the memories she has left lying around in the house.

MARCO

(Serious) That's it. Do you have a key?
I closed the door without thinking.

LYDIA

(Firmly, seriously) I've got no intention
of going back to that house.

Her words sound final. His eyes still have a damp gleam.

LYDIA

Take me to an hotel.

Marco starts the car. Lydia looks at him. After a while she realizes that she hasn't thanked him.

LYDIA

Oh, and thank you very much.

MARCO

Where will I take you?

LYDIA
To the Ritz.

SEQ. 18 - FACADE OF RITZ HOTEL - EXT. - NIGHT

They drive up in front of the Ritz Hotel. Marco gives the keys of the car to a valet. They walk into the hotel lobby.

SEQ. 19 - IN A CARPETED CORRIDOR, RITZ HOTEL - INT. - NIGHT

Lydia and Marco are walking in silence along the carpeted corridor. All we can hear is the jingling of the keys in Marco's hand.
They stop in front of a door.

SEQ. 20 - ROOM, HOTEL RITZ-CORRIDOR - INT. - NIGHT

Marco opens the door and goes into the room. He turns on the light and leaves the key on top of a piece of furniture. Lydia comes in, looking all around. She is calmer, but still intrigued by her companion's sudden sadness.

LYDIA
Don't tell anyone about the snake business,
please! Only my family know.

MARCO
(Reassuring her) Don't worry. If there's anything I respect
it's other people's phobias.

LYDIA
(Changing her tone) After what you've done for me
I'd be very ungrateful if I refused to do the article.

MARCO
Sleep on it. I'll call you tomorrow
and you can tell me what you've decided.

Marco goes to leave.

MARCO
Good night.

LYDIA
(Sincere, calm, but sad) Thanks, for everything.

Marco turns, his hand on the door handle. Lydia is sitting on the bed looking at him.

MARCO

(More to cheer her up than to seduce her)
Do you want me to stay? I can sleep on that sofa.
(He points to it) It wouldn't be the first time.

LYDIA

(Without being dramatic) No, I have to get used
to being alone at night.

Marco takes a last look at the room with the woman in it. He thinks that a woman's solitude is even more noticeable in an hotel. He freezes the image in three times and then it dissolves. (Marco registers it in his memory and files it away in the select group of moments that he will remember all his life)

SEQ. 21 - BENIGNO'S HOUSE - INT. - NIGHT

Benigno, the male nurse, is sleeping in his bed on one of the nights that he isn't on duty in the clinic. He has a photo of Alicia on his bedside table. It's a close-up of her face. The girl's eyes are closed. There is also a tortoiseshell hair slide, the alarm clock and two or three magazines on fashion or decoration: Italian Vogue, Maison Française. And a little framed photo of his mother.

There's a magazine lying open on the floor, showing the image of a room, completely furnished by a well known firm.

The apartment is obviously being renovated. The walls of the room have been scraped down and are of no special color. They are covered with patches of plaster and daubs where colors have been tested. The floor is piled with tiles, packing cases, some bits of furniture covered by plastic, etc.

The alarm clock rings. Benigno opens his eyes. He gets up immediately. (Cut)

SEQ. 22 - "THE WOOD" CLINIC, ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. /EXT. - DAY

THE START OF SUMMER.

A very hot day.

A.- General exterior shot of "The Wood" clinic. The building, of two or three stories, stands in the middle of a beautiful, expensive development, surrounded by trees. From outside, it looks more like an hotel than a clinic.

B.- Benigno goes straight into Alicia's room. Matilde and Rosa are finishing washing her.

BENIGNO

Hello, everyone. (He's carrying the magazines.
He leaves them next to the patient's chart)

Matilde gathers up her things. Benigno asks her how the night was. "Normal", Matilde says before going out.

Rosa, the nurse, stays to help Benigno, but we get the impression that it's the male nurse who directs all operations to do with Alicia's body.

BENIGNO

(To Alicia) Today we're gong to wash your hair,
and we'll cut it so it doesn't make you too hot.
Isn't that right, Rosa?

ROSA

Yes, it's got very long.

BENIGNO

We'll leave you looking wonderful.

(Cut)

SEQ. 23 (THE SAME)

The headboard has been lowered and Alicia's head is resting on one of those mobile washbasins used in hairdressing salons. Benigno and Rosa, a nurse from the floor, are washing Alicia's hair. Benigno talks all the time to the Beauty with Closed Eyes. The situation isn't new to the nurse, she's used to it, although at times she reprimands her companion (but always in a kindly way, as if she were his big sister).

Alicia is sitting on a high-backed chair, facing the terrace. Rosa is gently supporting her head while Benigno dries her hair with an electric drier. They discuss what kind of haircut to give her.

ROSA

Very short is the most comfortable
and the most practical.

BENIGNO

We'll leave it the same as always, just like it was
when she came in. I don't want her to notice
any difference if she wakens up.

ROSA

After four years in coma,
that would be a miracle, Benigno.

BENIGNO

Well, I believe in miracles.
And so should you.

ROSA
(Not harshly) Why me?

BENIGNO
Because one might happen to you, and as you don't
believe in them, you won't even realize.

Benigno cuts Alicia's hair very gently. Rosa helps him.

(Cut)

SEQ. 24 - RITZ HOTEL, LYDIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY

The bathroom.

Lydia is washing her hair in the shower. She manages to hear the ringing of the telephone despite the noise of the water. On the tiled ledge are a handful of medals in yellow gold and a heart in white gold.

She picks it up, either in the bathroom or from the bedside table. In either case, she's got a towel in one hand and she's drying herself as best she can.

LYDIA
Yes?

MARCO (Off)
Hello, this is Marco. Do you remember me?

LYDIA
(Delighted by the call) Of course I do.

MARCO (Off)
How are you?

LYDIA
Naked.

SEQ. 25 - FACADE OF A LARGE DEPARTMENT STORE - EXT. - DAY

Marco and Lydia (she's wearing the same dress as the night before) come out carrying a plastic bag. She hasn't just bought some basic toiletries. She's got another bag with underwear in it.

On the sidewalk, going towards Marco's car:

LYDIA

I should buy myself some clothes.
All I've got is this dress.

MARCO

If you want, I can go to your house and pick up
the things you need most. (Don't worry,
I won't say anything about this in the article.)

LYDIA

I don't want anything from that house.
There'll be time enough.

SEQ. 26 - INSIDE THE CAR, CITY CENTER - DAY

Marco is driving.

LYDIA

You must think I'm crazy.

MARCO

No... When I separated... (He's about to say
a name, but then he doesn't) I couldn't carry on sleeping
in the same bed, so I slept on the sofa in the sitting room.
I did that for over a week, until I decided to buy a new bed.

LYDIA

So you're separated.

SEQ. 27 - PUIGCERDÁ ALLEY, BOUTIQUE - EXT. - DAY

The car drives up in front of a boutique.

SEQ. 28 - CHANGING ROOM, BOUTIQUE - INT. - DAY

A sales assistant with the body and attitude of a former model is serving the customers. She has the virtue of invisibility.

Lydia is going in and out of the changing room, each time wearing a different outfit. Marco is sitting watching and giving his opinion. Lydia is modeling for him. (We should see some of the dresses in later sequences)

The music playing in the background is "Once I loved", by Jobim, the song whose words say that "Love is the saddest thing in the world". The same music accompanies the next caption.

Several months later.

SEQ. 29 - COUNTRYSIDE IN ANDALUCIA, THE ROAD TO A LARGE TOWN - EXT. - DAY

The beginning of September

The Andalusian countryside. A black Mercedes is driving across the countryside towards the town where Lydia is going to fight that day. Inside are Lydia, Marco and the driver. The light is oppressive.

We can still hear the song by Jobim, alternating with a drumming rhythm.

Lydia is looking out thoughtfully at the countryside. She's hiding her worried eyes behind dark glasses. Marco is holding her hand. (The sequence begins with this image) It's obvious that in the months which separate the two sequences they have become lovers, although there isn't a very happy atmosphere inside the car.

LYDIA

It's a very sad story...

She's referring to something they'd been talking about earlier.

MARCO

Love is the saddest thing in the world,
when it ends, says Jobim's song.

Lydia is unconsciously playing with the chain of white gold, winding it between her fingers, like someone turning over an idea which can't be resolved.

Urged on by a pressing worry, she says:

LYDIA

Marco, we have to talk after the fight.

MARCO

We've been talking for two hours.

LYDIA

You have, I haven't.

MARCO

(Smiling) That's true.

SEQ. 30 - AN ANDALUSIAN TOWN, 3.30 P.M. - EXT. - DAY

Facade of the most important hotel in the town.

They get out of the car and go inside.

SEQ. 31 - HOTEL, LYDIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY

4.00 p.m. in the little sitting room of the suite.

Marco, a few close acquaintances, the "mozos" (a bullfighter's assistants) and her sister.

Lydia's sister is lighting candles to several saints on the portable altar which Lydia takes with her to every bullring where she fights. The altar has been set up on a little table. In among the religious images is a photo of their father.

SISTER

Did you read about the nuns who were raped
by the missionaries in Africa?
It was the priests who did it... It's horrible!
What sort of world is this if you can't trust a missionary?

MARCO

They used to rape the native women, but because they got
scared of AIDS they started to rape their fellow workers.
It's incredible.

Some of those present ask what happened.

SISTER

It's awful! And to think I had the missionaries
up on a pedestal!

("There's good and bad", remarks someone)

ASSISTANT

Yeah, and a bad habit can really fuck you up.

SISTER

(Reproaching him) Don't be such an animal!

Lydia comes out of the bathroom. Her hair, still damp, is pulled back in a tight braid which hangs down between her shoulders. A tight black body clings to her from groin to chest. In matching symmetry with the braid hanging between her shoulder blades, she is wearing several gold medals of saints and virgins. A little higher up, a fine chain with a little heart hanging from it, all in white gold, is hanging between her breasts.

She comes into the little suite barefoot. Her fingers are bandaged with surgical tape. Her slim wrists are also bandaged, to prevent any sprains. Her sister and Marco look at her and suddenly the conversation languishes, or loses interest.

LYDIA

(Not really interested) What are you talking about?

SISTER

Nothing, about Africa.

LYDIA

(Mysterious, distracted, referring to Marco)
He really likes Africa.

Her sister looks at Marco who doesn't add any comment. There is silence in the sitting room.

A bereaved gladiator, Lydia puts her body at the disposal of her "mozo" so that he can dress her.

The chair, with all the accessories to be worn, is a character in itself. Upright, everything in its place.

THE CHAIR: On the back (a real wooden torso) is the "casaquilla" (the jacket), beneath it the shirt. On the seat, the "taleguilla" (breeches) and on top of them the stockings. At the foot of the chair, the shoes. The hat is on top of the breeches. It is all covered by the gleaming parade cape.

In silence, Lydia starts to get dressed (or rather, they dress her). Two of her "mozos" assist her in the ritual.

Without Lydia noticing, her sister nods to Marco, as if asking "What's wrong with her?". Marco shrugs, showing his ignorance. The sister says loudly, so as to be heard, that she won't go to the fight but that she'll expect them afterwards at her bar for something to eat. She remains by the altar, lighting the last candles.

First they put the stockings on Lydia, and then the "taleguilla". This is as tight as a second skin. To make sure it fits properly around her legs, the two "mozos" lift her off the ground, each pulling at a side of the waistband. They lift her more than a foot off the ground. This is one of the moments which Marco has always found most striking, ever since the first time he saw it. When he looks at her, Marco freezes the image with his eyes, simultaneously converting "what he's seeing" into "memory".

SEQ. 32 - BULLRING, ANDALUSIAN TOWN - EXT. - AFTERNOON

In the bullring.

1. A picador's assistant comes out from behind the barrier and walks into the center of the ring. He is carrying a sign with the name of the bull and its weight. It can be seen clearly from any part of the ring. He turns it round so that all the spectators can read it. He goes back the way he came.

Marco is sitting in a ringside seat.

2. The matadors and the "banderilleros" perform "verónicas" and fight invisible bulls, unconsciously performing a ballet, catchy and attractive. (They have previously removed their parade capes and the "mozos de espada" have given them their real capes, but we don't see this.) Two matadors, younger than Lydia, are accompanying her. The woman tests the air, with a thoughtful expression, more serious than usual.

3. Marco is looking at her from his ringside seat among the public. He's worried by the expression on her face.

4. The President takes out a handkerchief. There is a roll of kettledrums, which means that the first bull is about to come out.

5. As Lydia is the most veteran of the three bullfighters she is the first to fight. With her cape hanging over one arm, she crosses the ring with a slow, martial pace and then kneels down in front of the bullpen, next to the line marking the inner circle of the ring. She spreads the cape out in front of her knees, like a flower.

6. The two matadors retire inside the passageway between the fence and the public, Lydia's "banderilleros" follow after them and take up position in the shelter nearest to the door of the bullpen, ready to draw the bull away.

It's a lovely day, with a slight breeze. Lydia has already mentioned that at lunch. She positions herself at the established distance (some 30 feet) from the gate in order to face the emerging bull.

The image of Lydia, challenging, kneeling in front of the bullpen, is juxtaposed with the image of the bull, in the darkness inside the bullpen. The animal is trying to make more space, knocking its head against the wall. Lydia calls to the man at the gate of the bullpen to release the animal.

LYDIA
The bull! The bull!

Total silence, among the public as well.

With the index and ring finger of her right hand she touches the medals hanging between her breasts, invoking the help of all her fetishes.

The gate opens. All we can see is darkness. The bull appears, doubly blinded (by the darkness of the bull pen and the dazzling sunlight), and runs towards the spot where Lydia is. Lydia sees him coming.

The bull charges directly towards her, but she'll distract it with the cape. She's done it many times. But this time the bull isn't distracted, it impales her by one shoulder and tosses her into the air like a rag doll.

A cry echoes around the stands.

The "banderilleros" run out from their refuge and go to help Lydia.

Marco springs to his feet.

Lydia falls head first on the ground. A deadly fall. When the "banderilleros" lift her up and carry her to the infirmary, her head is hanging lifelessly.

The rest of the "cuadrilla" try to distract the bull.

The people stand up to see her pass by, carried by the four men. Marco pushes his way through the crowd.

The bull, in the center of the ring, looks at the procession which is bearing Lydia off shoulder high.

Fade to black.

SEQ. 33 - IN THE I.C.U. WAITING ROOM - INT. - EVENING

An aseptic, informal area. (It seems to be part of a bend in the building). A few, ugly bits of furniture.

The sister is there, her face swollen and red from crying. Beside her, a rural looking man, her husband. Marco looks at the door, waiting for someone to come out and tell them what's happening. They are also accompanied by a few members of the "cuadrilla". Several hours have gone by. They've got nothing left to say to each other. Perhaps the sister is still moaning, obsessively.

There aren't enough seats for everyone. Half of them are standing.

SISTER

My father will be happy now! Not the girl!
How many times did my mother and I tell him that?
Not the girl! But she turned out exactly like him!

El Niño de Valencia appears.

He greets the relatives and joins the group.

NIÑO

(To the sister) How is she?

SISTER

Very bad. They still haven't let us see her.
(To Marco) What do you call the thing she has?

MARCO

Cranial-encephalic traumatism.

Marco says this in a neutral, weary tone. Despite the lack of emphasis it sounds very bad. (Or he may say nothing, and the whole sequence will take place in silence, broken by the sister's occasional moans.)

Dissolve.

SEQ. 34 - PRIVATE CLINIC, ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY

The start of fall.

THREE WEEKS LATER

Some members of the "cuadrilla" and Lydia's sister are walking wearily along the corridor of the private clinic, looking for the elevator. The sister remarks to someone that she's going back home. She's been neglecting her business. If she knew she could be of any help here...

They walk past Alicia's room.

In there, Benigno is applying moisturizing cream (a very good brand) to most of her body. There's a bottle of rosemary alcohol on the bedside table. He hears footsteps and comes out. He opens the door a little and sees the group. He goes back to his work. He remarks to Alicia:

BENIGNO

There's a new girl. Her name's Lydia and she's a bullfighter.
The bull gored her three weeks ago and she's been
in the ICU until now.

SEQ. 35 - LYDIA'S ROOM, PRIVATE CLINIC (CONT.)

Lydia is lying on the bed, in a coma, connected to the necessary machines. She has visible injuries and scratches, her shoulder or her head is bandaged. Her fingers and her wrists, without the surgical tape, seem longer and thinner than ever.

The altar has been set up on one of the bedside tables, just as it was in the hotel. (Like then, it was her sister who prepared it).

Only Marco is left in the room, along with Nurse A who is doing something.

Marco opens a handkerchief belonging to the sister and which contains all the medals Lydia was wearing when the bull gored her.

MARCO

Could I put them on her?
She never took them off.

NURSE A

(Friendly) Not yet... When her injuries have healed.

Marco wraps them all in the handkerchief again and then puts the little bundle in his leather wallet..

El Niño de Valencia comes in carrying a bouquet of flowers. The nurse goes out to get a vase.

Marco and the bullfighter look at each other with respect, without rivalry, but intimidated. They are both torn apart.

NIÑO

I couldn't come before...

MARCO
They've all left a minute ago.

After a long silence.

NIÑO
(With deep regret) I have to go to America
for three months.

Another long silence. Marco looks at him, a neutral expression on his face.

NIÑO
My manager says it's very important but...
the way things are here, I don't want to go.

Marco looks at him again. He doesn't know what to say. El Niño needs to talk, to confide in someone, but Marco is too tired to oblige.

The nurse comes in with a vase for the flowers. While she's arranging them she tells them to go outside for a moment. She can't help giving them a flirtatious look.

SEQ. 36 - CORRIDOR, LYDIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - NIGHT

The two men are standing next to the door or taking a short walk along the corridor.

Silence.

NIÑO
Did she talk to you the day of the bullfight?

MARCO
Yes, or rather, I talked.

NIÑO
(Surprised) What did you talk about?

MARCO
Stuff to do with me.

NIÑO
She didn't say anything about me?

MARCO
If you want me to be honest, Lydia hasn't
talked about you for a long time.

The bullfighter looks very uneasy.

NIÑO

It's my fault that all this happened!

MARCO

No, it's my fault.

The bullfighter shakes his head.

The two men compete in claiming their guilt because they identify guilt with love.

NIÑO

Are you going to spend the night here?

MARCO

Yes.

NIÑO

I'm leaving tomorrow...

They look at each other for a moment, uncomfortable, not saying anything. What they keep back is more important than what they say.

SEQ. 37 - LYDIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - NIGHT (CONT.)

Marco makes himself comfortable in an armchair. He opens a leather briefcase and takes out two or three books, a notebook and a very light portable computer.

He opens the computer and starts to write, looking at Lydia as a painter looks at his model.

The first notes of a song transport us to a party.

A cello and a guitar unveil the dark mystery of "Cucurrucucú paloma".

SEQ. 38 - FLASHBACK, PARTY IN A LARGE HOUSE - INT. - NIGHT

The first notes are accompanied by views of the garden and the horizon.

In the porch of a charming house, open so that we can see the interior, most of the party guests are crowded around Caetano Veloso who, accompanied by three musicians, is singing in velvety tones a very gentle, heartrending version of "Cucurrucucú paloma".

The guests are very varied, artistes and couples, nighthawks, people from the world of fashion and music. They are drinking, smoking and almost all of them are listening, trapped by his violent tenderness, to the Brazilian artiste. Sitting at different levels, on the floor, on a step, on the arm of a sofa, standing, sitting on the sofa, leaning in the doorway which leads out to the porch, etc. The guests form a crowded human skyline, in the style of jazz clubs in the 50's, when the stage and the set for the performances were the public themselves.

Lydia whispers something to a girl friend while listening to the song and drinking as well. In another, darker part of the room, Marco is listening, hypnotized, with tears in his eyes. The spectator must feel as hypnotized as he does... and as touched.

At the end Marco slips away into the garden.
Lydia sees him go off. And she follows him.

SEQ. 39 - GARDEN OF HOUSE - EXT. - NIGHT

Lydia is looking for him in the darkness.
Marco lights a cigarette. Lydia sees him, by the lighter flame, in a dark corner of the garden. One or two groups of 4 or 5 people are smoking joints, sitting on the lawn.
She goes up behind him and surprises him, putting her arms around him. Marco turns. His eyes are still damp. Lydia dries them with her fingertips.

MARCO

(He pauses) Caetano made my hair stand on end.
Didn't he do the same to you?

LYDIA

(Nodding) Yes... (She pauses) Listen, Marco,
I always wanted to ask you. Why did you cry the night
I met you, after you killed that animal?

He wasn't expecting the question and he isn't sure that he wants to answer it.

MARCO

It brought back a lot of memories.

SEQ. 40 - AFRICAN NIGHT - EXT.

The first images of these memories suddenly bust onto the screen.
An African landscape. Everything is an earthen color. Night. We hear a woman's scream. A dust-filled wind sweeps the landscape.

SEQ. 39 (CONT.)

MARCO

Years ago, I had to hunt another snake.
We were in Africa. She had the same phobia as you,
and she was waiting outside the bungalow, horrified,
defenseless... and completely naked, because she'd
discovered the animal while we were sleeping.

(We hear -in the distance- the sound of the past, the girl's labored breathing and the howling of the wind.)

SEQ. 40 (CONT.)

Angela, a beautiful adolescent, runs naked for a few steps and then turns back. A dust-filled wind whips her skin but she doesn't notice, she's too scared. (Think about this)

LYDIA

Was she the same woman for whom you slept
in the sitting room until you bought a new bed?

MARCO

Yes.

Lydia puts her arms around him. Marco lets her, he's feels comforted when Lydia holds him tightly in her arms.

Alcohol drives her to be a bit more indiscreet, otherwise she mightn't dare:

LYDIA

I hate that woman.

MARCO

I haven't seen her in years.

LYDIA

That's even worse. What can I do to make you forget her?

She starts to kiss him on the lips.

MARCO

(Sincere, relieved) Exactly what you're doing.

Lydia continues kissing him with delight.

In the distance we hear the noise of the party. One of the female guests starts singing, perhaps accompanied by Caetano or by one of the flamenco musicians.

Marco and Lydia keep kissing.

SEQ. 41 - LYDIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

Daylight filters through the window. Marco is still sitting there, his head thrown back. At that moment, he is receiving Lydia's kiss on his lips. The dream has given him a notable erection.

He's wakened by a comment.

NURSE A

She's got so many scars!

Marco opens his eyes. The expression of graphic pleasure which had been on his lips disappears. He sees two nurses working on Lydia's body. He looks at Lydia's lips, the same ones which, a moment ago, had been kissing him. He finds his erection most untimely.

He greets the nurses with a grimace. It's hard for him to open his eyes to the reality of the room. The inopportune erection disappears. Nurse A speaks to him in a friendly tone.

NURSE A

You were sleeping so peacefully
we didn't want to waken you.

Marco nods and goes through the door into the little bathroom.

SEQ. 42 (CONT.)

He comes out of the bathroom. He has washed his face and combed his hair, but he is still dazed.

MARCO

Is Dr. Vega here? I'd like to speak to him.

NURSE B

He's in his office... I saw him arrive.

SEQ. 43 - CORRIDORS, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

Marco comes out of Lydia's room and walks slowly along the corridor, his mind dulled. He can't shake off the nightmarish sensation. He looks for the doctor's office. As he walks along, he passes Alicia's room. The door opens suddenly and he can see the half naked body of the girl lying on the bed. Marco is paralyzed by the sight (the door is more than half open), captivated by the woman's marble beauty. Suddenly, mechanically, without moving any facial muscle, Alicia opens her eyes. Marco is about to scream in terror. He steps away from the door just as, first of all, Rosa appears (she's coming from the far end of the room where, by opening the window, she had caused the draught which opened the door) and then Benigno, whom we see from behind as he comes out of the bathroom. Neither of them sees Marco. They get ready to wash Alicia and change her bedclothes..

Marco carries on walking towards the doctor's office. He happens to meet him in the corridor before he reaches his office.

They greet each other.

MARCO

Hello, I was just going to see you in your office.

DOCTOR

Have you had breakfast yet?

MARCO

No.

DOCTOR

I'll buy you a coffee.

The doctor is an amiable, sensitive man, used to dealing with people who are suffering.

SEQ. 44 - RELAXATION AREA, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

It isn't quite a canteen and much less a bar. Really, it's a smoking room. The two men come into a room where the staff from the floor spend their free moments. There's a coffee machine and trays with cookies or pastries.

It is the only relaxation area for the workers on that floor. Even though it's early, there are two people drinking coffee and smoking. (Document the kind of conversation typical of such a place)

The doctor offers Marco some cookies as well as coffee.

MARCO

Doctor, how long do you think Lydia can remain like this?

DOCTOR

Months, years... the rest of her life.

MARCO

Is there no hope?

DOCTOR

As a doctor, I have to tell you that there isn't.
However...

Cut.

SEQ. 45 - DOCTOR'S OFFICE, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

The doctor takes several press cuttings from one of his desk drawers.

The article is illustrated with several photos of a woman leaning on two nurses in order to walk. There is also a close-up of the woman when she was young.

He shows the cuttings to Marco.

DOCTOR

"Meryl Lazy Moon awakens from a coma after 15 years."
She went into a coma when giving birth to her third

child. Meryl was a PVS (persistent vegetative state),
just like Lydia, theoretically unconscious for life.
Her awakening contradicts all the studies carried out to date.

Marco studies the woman's photo at length, as if trying to unravel her secret.

MARCO

This means that there's hope!

DOCTOR

Scientifically speaking, no. But if you think there is,
I'm not going to say otherwise.

MARCO

(He understands) Can she open her eyes? Or is it
a hallucination of mine, because I think...

DOCTOR

Yes, she can open them. But that doesn't mean that
she's seeing you, or that she's aware of anything.
The cerebral cortex was destroyed but the brainstem
is intact. The brainstem is the organ which controls
the automatic functions, such as breathing, sleeping,
wakefulness, intestinal movements... She can open her
eyes as a mechanical action, but her brain is switched
off and she can't conceive ideas or feelings...

Marco doesn't say anything. It's hard for him to accept the reality. (Perhaps the doctor
should have a map of the brain -or a model- with which to illustrate his explanations)

SEQ. 46 - CORRIDOR, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

Marco is going back along the corridor. As he approaches Alicia's room he walks more
slowly. The door is ajar.

When he reaches the door he looks inside and only sees Benigno. The male nurse sees him
looking through the crack in the door and waves to him to come in.

SEQ. 47 - ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY

Marco thinks that he's actually asking him to go away. But the male nurse insists:

BENIGNO

Come in!

Marco obeys.

Benigno is putting Alicia's feet into boots with thick esparto soles, nailed to a piece of wood. It's odd to see him putting shoes on her. He explains to Marco:

BENIGNO

It's so that her feet don't get twisted to the sides
or fall forward.

MARCO

They look like Ibiza boots.

BENIGNO

Do they? I've never been to Ibiza. (Very naturally)
Close the door. My name's Benigno...
(Once Marco's inside) and she's Alicia.

MARCO

Marco Zuloaga.

Marco looks around the room (similar to the patient's room in her own house). He looks closely at the autographed photo of Pina Bausch in "Café Müller". He is shocked by the coincidence: both have their eyes closed. He reads the dedication, written in English: "To Alicia, so that you may defeat all obstacles and be able to dance soon. Pina". This dedication also gives him a shiver. And the alarm clock on the bedside table, and the half read book
In any case, it doesn't look like a hospital room.

BENIGNO

I know you.

MARCO

(Surprised) Have you read something of mine?

BENIGNO

No. It was seeing "Cafe Müller".
We happened to be sitting beside each other.

MARCO

Oh, I didn't realize...

The male nurse finishes buttoning up the patient's esparto shoes. He takes a bottle of eye drops and goes up to the bed head.
He puts drops into her eyes to moisten them. (He pulls the eyelid down slightly and applies the drops)

BENIGNO

There was a moment when you had tears in your eyes.

Marco remembers the moment perfectly. He looks at the male nurse in amazement, then looks down at the impressive body which can be made out beneath the sheet. And at the eyes, from which a few tears fall and slide down her cheeks. (They're the drops which the male nurse is applying)

BENIGNO

(To Alicia) This is the man I told you about, the one I saw crying when he was watching "Café Müller".

Marco is about to say hello to Alicia.

MARCO

Well, I have to go.

BENIGNO

Will you be back this afternoon?

MARCO

Yes, of course.

BENIGNO

Then come and see us. I won't be moving from here. I stay lots of nights too. I'm the most veteran nurse on the floor. So, count on me for whatever you want.

Just as Marco is saying good-bye the door opens and an older man appears. He's about 60, with a good appearance, dressed in Armani. He's Alicia's father, a well known psychiatrist.

SEQ. 48 - ALICIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

The new arrival greets them with a sober "Good morning":
Before Marco leaves, Benigno introduces them.

BENIGNO

Mr. Roncero, this is Marco.

MARCO

Pleased to meet you.

BENIGNO

He's Alicia's father.

MARCO

Ah... I was just leaving. Good-bye, Benigno.

He looks at Alicia as if he were also saying good-bye to her.

BENIGNO

Well... I think that... I'm more inclined...
towards men.

FATHER

Was that why you came to see me at my office?

BENIGNO

I guess so. (He smiles) But I'm fine now.

FATHER

Do you have a partner?

BENIGNO

More or less. I'm not alone anymore.
I don't have that problem now.

Benigno goes back to his work.

FATHER

I hope you aren't annoyed.

BENIGNO

(Falsely) Good Lord, no.

The father nods. He's thinking about Marco.

SEQ. 49 - ALICIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

Rosa comes in. She's come to give Benigno a hand with the patient. He's alone. They're going to wash her and change the sheets, without moving the patient.

ROSA

Her father was here, wasn't he?

BENIGNO

Yes... (Thoughtful) Do you know what he asked me?
If I was a faggot!

ROSA

Why did he do that?

BENIGNO

Well, he used the American expression,
which is more polite. What was my sexual orientation?

ROSA

(Interested) And what did you say?

BENIGNO

(Laughing) That I'm into guys.

ROSA

And...?

BENIGNO

(Laughing) Well, I lied to him, idiot. What business is it of his whether if I like women or men!

ROSA

I don't know... but I'm glad to know it..

SEQ. 50 - LYDIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

Marco takes from his leather wallet the handkerchief belonging to Lydia's sister which contains the bullfighter's jewelry.

As Nurse A looks on, Marco puts the gold medals and the heart of white gold around the patient's neck, as if it were an award for her external injuries having healed.

Nurse A thinks that so many medals will put too much weight on Lydia's sternum.

NURSE A

Couldn't we take some of them off? She's got the holy pictures. All that weight is going to press on her chest. (Marco looks undecided)

NURSE A

Leave the heart, if you want... It doesn't weigh much. Is it white gold?

Marco doesn't answer, he doesn't know. He gathers up the other jewels and wraps them in the handkerchief again. It's true that they weigh a lot.

NURSE A

I love white gold too.

She says it as if Marco had expressed his preference for that metal.

SEQ. 51 - TERRACE, LYDIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

THE START OF FALL

It's a nice day. Marco goes out on the little terrace with a newspaper or a magazine. Or perhaps he's writing something on his computer. From there he can see the little terrace belonging to Alicia's room. He sees Benigno and Alicia, along with a severe looking woman. The beautiful patient is sitting between the two, also taking the air.

SEQ. 52 - TERRACE, ALICIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

Benigno, Alicia and the ballet teacher are on the little terrace belonging to the room. The chair in which Alicia is sitting has a high back and little wheels for moving it around. It looks like an armchair with a higher back than usual. From behind, we can see that Alicia's torso is tied to the back of the chair with a fine pastel-colored cashmere blanket. The chair also has a little shaft from which the nutrition pump hangs. From the front, the blanket looks like a shawl.

In front of them, the grove of trees.

Benigno and the teacher are talking. The woman, well in her 50s, distinguished looking, with her nerves on edge, her skin equally taut, speaks with a foreign accent. She's a friend of the male nurse. We can see that they've known each other for a while. She too includes Alicia in the conversation. And we can see that she adores her. While talking to her, she's holding one of the girl's languid hands and stroking it.

The ballet teacher is holding a C.D.. She says to Alicia that she hopes she likes it, it's the music of a choreography which she is preparing with her pupils. She gives it to Benigno. He gets up and slips it into the player. Taking advantage of her own musical background, the ballet teacher takes her leave of Alicia with a tender kiss. She says good-bye to Benigno and tells him what day she'll be back. (This is the same music the girls are dancing to in the academy, in some of the moments when we see them)

SEQ. 53 - TERRACE, ALICIA'S ROOM (CONT.)

Caption: ALICIA AND BENIGNO

Once they are alone, Benigno opens one of the decoration magazines which he has to hand and shows some pieces of furniture to the motionless Alicia. The music from the CD accompanies the photos of the furniture. Benigno points to a folding armchair. He asks Alicia for her opinion but naturally she doesn't react.

BENIGNO

We can put this beside the window. That way,
you can see your friends across the way dancing.

In the same magazine, a few pages further on, is the publicity photo of a whole "bedroom", bed, sheets and bedspread, bedside tables and lamps, all the same brand. Benigno shows it to Alicia and remarks:

BENIGNO

I love this room.

He hears someone knocking at the door. He looks round. Yes? And he closes the magazine. Marco appears round the door.

BENIGNO

Hello. (To Marco) Come in and close the door, please.

Marco closes the door and comes out to the couple on the terrace. Benigno puts the magazine to one side. He offers Marco the chair in which the ballet mistress had been sitting.

MARCO

Can you play music here?

BENIGNO

We can. We've got pull, because of her father, and Dr. Vega is a really nice guy.

MARCO

Who was the woman who just left?

BENIGNO

Katrina, Alicia's teacher.

MARCO

(Surprised) Her teacher?

BENIGNO

(He explains) Her ballet teacher. She's got an academy just across from my house. Alicia was a pupil of hers and she loves her like a daughter.

Over a shot of the trees, swaying in the wind, (and accompanied by the music which the teacher brought) there appears the caption:

FOUR YEARS EARLIER.

Cut.

SEQ. 54 - FLASHBACK - BENIGNO'S APARTMENT AND THE "DECADANCE" DANCE ACADEMY - INT. - DAY

A.- ("Decadance" Dance Academy)

The teacher (whom we saw in the clinic) is directing Alicia at the bar. There are 10 or 12 pupils, more girls than boys. A man is playing the piano at one end. (The sound will be recorded live, so the pianist must be real and very good)

B.- Benigno's Apartment.

Benigno is looking from his window into the dance academy across the way. Out of the group of students, he only has eyes for the very young Alicia.
(Choose the music they're dancing to. It could be a prolongation of what they are listening to in the clinic).

We hear a voice off-screen calling Benigno.

MOTHER'S VOICE

Benigno, you've been at the window for half an hour.

BENIGNO

Coming, mother.

He goes off to the left, to where the voice is coming from. Before he disappears from the frame there is a fade to black.

SEQ. 55 - FADE IN FROM BLACK

In the blink of an eye:

The shot is almost identical to the previous one. Benigno is looking through the window. This time he's dressed in dark clothes. He looks down into the street. We don't hear any voice calling him or distracting him from what he's doing.

SEQ. 56 - FLASHBACK - AT THE DOOR OF THE DANCE ACADEMY - EXT. - DAY

Alicia is waiting at the door. Some of the girls or boys who comes out are saying good-bye to her in a familiar way. She's obviously waiting for someone, or wants to meet someone "accidentally on purpose".

Benigno is watching her from his window.

SEQ. 57 - BENIGNO'S STREET - EXT. - DAY

Alicia gives up waiting and starts walking away, an annoyed expression on her face. She takes a walkman from her bag. As she pulls it out, a little leather wallet with all her cards falls out. Benigno has come out of his front door and seen her wallet falling to the ground. He puts it in his pocket and follows Alicia, a few steps behind her. Alicia, wearing her headphones, looks back every so often to see if the person she was hoping to see has appeared.

The second time she sees Benigno, Alicia walks more slowly and this means that the boy catches up with her. When Benigno is beside her she stops. The boy is a bit embarrassed.

ALICIA

(Annoyed) What is this, are you following me?

BENIGNO
No, well, yes...

ALICIA
(Unsociable) What do you want?

BENIGNO
(He takes the wallet from his pocket) I think
this is yours. You must have dropped it.

Benigno hands her back the wallet. She looks inside to make sure nothing's missing. Once she's sure, her attitude changes.:

ALICIA
Thank you very much.

BENIGNO
Where are you going? Do you mind if I walk with you?
I've got nothing to do.

SEQ. 58 - FLASHBACK - ALICIA'S STREET - EXT. - DAY (CONT.)

They are walking along the street where Alicia lives.
The girl is telling him that what interests her most is ballet.

ALICIA
I couldn't live without ballet. I enjoy watching it too.
Are you fond of ballet?

BENIGNO
I guess so, but I've never gone to see any.
What else do you do, besides dance?

ALICIA
Well, I love traveling and I see a lot of movies
at the Filmothèque. For instance, I've just discovered
the silent cinema. I think it's what I like most.

BENIGNO
(Surprised) The silent cinema?

ALICIA
Yes... What do you do when you go out?

BENIGNO
Nothing. I don't go out.

ALICIA

Come on, you must go out sometime.

BENIGNO

No. I was looking after my mother until recently,
but she died two months ago.

ALICIA

I'm sorry. My mother died too,
but that was a long time ago.

They arrive at a building. Alicia stops.

ALICIA

Well, we've arrived. Thanks for the wallet.

She holds out her hand to say good-bye.

**SEQ. 59 - ALICIA'S STREET, ON THE SIDEWALK OPPOSITE HER HOUSE -
EXT. - DAY**

And she starts to run across the road, skillfully avoiding the cars which are passing very close to her. She reaches the middle of the road and stops, caught between streams of cars traveling in opposite directions. A few even graze her dress.

Benigno, watching from the sidewalk, is afraid something will happen to her. She turns for a moment and smiles, as if saying that she isn't in danger.

Benigno either takes this for an invitation or simply decides to follow her. He too crosses into the middle of the road, avoiding the cars, at the same time as Alicia crosses the second half of the road.

As Alicia did, Benigno has to stop in the middle of the two-way traffic, trapped by the cars coming and going, and uneasy because the girl keeps running away.

He looks anxiously (and very attentively) as Alicia reaches the doorway, just across from where they'd said good-bye, and pushes a buzzer on the entry phone. Benigno tries to see which apartment she's calling. The door opens and Alicia disappears into a wide doorway. Benigno crosses the second half of the road when the traffic eases.

He reaches the front of the building where Alicia lives. He goes up to the entry phone. He thinks that Alicia buzzed the apartment 4th Floor, Right. He remembers that there was a plaque alongside it. On the plaque is the name of a psychiatrist, Dr. Roncero, probably Alicia's father. He looks at it and for a moment it seems he's going to push the buzzer. But he doesn't and, frustrated, he walks away, disappearing out of frame.

SEQ. 60 - ALICIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - PRESENT DAY

Marco is looking at the sleeping dancer. Then he looks at his naive interlocutor.

BENIGNO

(To Marco) The next day was my day off and I spent the whole day at the window.

MARCO

What were you working at then?

BENIGNO

I was working here by then... But as I was saying, the next day, Alicia didn't go to the academy.

SEQ. 61 - FLASHBACK - BENIGNO'S APARTMENT - INT. - DAY

From his window, Benigno is looking obsessively at the Academy opposite.

BENIGNO (Off)

I was fed up waiting. I remembered that the plaque said that her father was a psychiatrist.

Benigno looks for Alicia's address in the phone book until he finds the telephone number of a psychiatric consultancy which coincides with the name he saw on the plaque. He dials the number. He's answered by the voice of Adela, the psychiatrist's assistant. He asks for an appointment as a patient for the next day. He would have liked to go that same day but the doctor doesn't have any free time.

SEQ. 62 - BUILDING, ALICIA'S FATHER'S HOME - EXT. - DAY

Benigno reaches the door of the building to which he'd accompanied Alicia two days earlier. He looks at the entry phone. He presses the same buzzer as she did.

SEQ. 63 - ALICIA'S HOUSE - INT. - DAY (CONT.)

Benigno comes into the house. The door is opened by a girl dressed in a white uniform. Benigno follows her to a small reception area with a little desk or a counter. The girl takes out a form, or a simple sheet of paper.

GIRL

You have to give me your details.

Cut.

WAITING ROOM

Benigno is waiting in a little room. It has three doors, one through which he has entered,

another leading to the psychiatrist's office and another which communicates with the family's living area.

SEQ. 64 - OFFICE OF ALICIA'S PSYCHIATRIST FATHER - INT. - DAY

BENIGNO (Off)

All I wanted was to see Alicia again, but as I was there and her father was a psychiatrist, I took the opportunity to tell him how much I missed my mother!

Benigno comes in and sits where the psychiatrist indicates, probably on the other side of the desk. The start of the conversation serves as background to Benigno's story which in turn serves as an ellipsis to take up the conversation in mid-flow.

The father takes note of some of the things which Benigno says. He's already written the words "Immature", "Omnipresent mother, dead"...

PSYCHIATRIST

The last fifteen years, you said?

BENIGNO

Yes. I was still almost a child when I started looking after her.

PSYCHIATRIST

Over these last fifteen years, you haven't done anything except look after your mother?

BENIGNO

I never left her side. Well, I studied to be a nurse. I only went out to attend classes. And I took beautician classes, make-up and hairdressing. But I did that by correspondence course.

PSYCHIATRIST

You did your mother's make-up, and fixed her hair?

BENIGNO

Of course... And I colored her hair too. My mother was a very pretty woman and I didn't want her to neglect her looks

The psychiatrist is trying to imagine the scene.

PSYCHIATRIST

And your father?

BENIGNO

He's living in Sweden. Well, I guess he is,

I haven't heard from him in a long time.

PSYCHIATRIST

Doesn't he come to see you?

BENIGNO

No, he's had another family for ages,
since he left my mother.

We don't have any relationship.

The psychiatrist looks at him for a moment. His eyes don't show any judgment.

PSYCHIATRIST

Why have you come to see me, Benigno?

Benigno is surprised by the question. He thinks about his answer, takes a deep breath and expires audibly.

BENIGNO

Well...

PSYCHIATRIST

What's your problem?

BENIGNO

(He thinks, hesitates) I don't have one.

PSYCHIATRIST

You must have some problem
if you've come to talk to a psychiatrist.

BENIGNO

(He thinks again) Well, loneliness, I guess...

PSYCHIATRIST

Have you ever had sexual relations with a woman?

BENIGNO

No.

PSYCHIATRIST

Or with a man?

BENIGNO

No.

PSYCHIATRIST

I'd like to see you next week. (He notes something down)

BENIGNO

(Worried) Is there something wrong with me, doctor?

PSYCHIATRIST

(Smiling) No, no. But you've had a special adolescence, and it would be a good idea to analyze it more deeply.

BENIGNO

(He nods, naively) Very well, I'll come back in a week.

After the word "Virgin", the psychiatrist has written in his notebook "Sexual orientation?" as a topic to be dealt with in the next session.

SEQ. 65 - FLASHBACK, WAITING ROOM AND CORRIDOR, ALICIA'S HOME - INT. - DAY

Benigno comes out of the office. Instead of going out the door leading to the exit, he goes along a hallway in the part of the house where the family lives. There are several doors in the hallway. He walks along until he finds one half-open.

SEQ. 66 - ALICIA'S ROOM, PSYCHIATRIST'S HOME - INT. - DAY

He looks inside. It's Alicia's room. The walls are painted the same terra cotta color as the room in the clinic, or vice versa.

Once inside, he looks closely at everything: the bed, the writing desk, a chest of drawers, the lamps, all the little objects, some of which he will try to ask the father for.

On the bedside table there is a half-read novel, "The Hours", the same alarm clock which is now in the clinic, and the same photo of her ballet teacher. On the wall there is a poster with the image of the robot from "Metropolis", another of King-Kong on top of the Empire State Building, with a blond in his hands, an autographed photo of Baryshnikov and the famous photo of Marilyn Monroe wearing a tutu.

He goes over to the desk. Among other things there's a magazine (or a postcard) of Turkey showing some whirling Dervishes, deep in a trance. He sees a half-written note, undoubtedly written by Alicia... (a love letter to a boy she likes and was hoping to see at the dance academy). Benigno takes the note, crumples it up and puts it in his pocket. He doesn't look tense or nervous. He also takes the tortoiseshell hair clasp with which he has seen her tie her hair back when she dances. He puts it in his pocket with that same serenity.

SEQ. 67 - HALLWAY, PSYCHIATRIST'S HOME - INT. - DAY

He comes out into the hallway. He has just gone a few steps when he hears a door opening behind him. It's Alicia, coming out of the bathroom. The girl looks at him, scared at first and then indignant. She doesn't understand what Benigno is doing there

ALICIA

(Throwing him out with the question)

What are you doing here?!

BENIGNO

(Gesturing with his hand) Nothing, I was just leaving...

Alicia looks daggers at him.

It's strange that Benigno doesn't even get nervous.

He walks away as Alicia looks after him in an unfriendly way.

(Think about this, perhaps she doesn't see him)

SEQ. 68 - FLASHBACK, BENIGNO'S APARTMENT - INT. - DAY

Benigno doesn't move from the window. Outside, it's raining most of the time. He has Alicia's hair slide in his hand. (There are no changes in the décor, furniture which is crying out to be reupholstered and walls which need a coat of paint)

He's looking through the rain and wind at the dancers.

Someone (a secretary) comes into the room and says something in the teacher's ear. The woman looks very upset.

She tells one of the pupils to take over the class and gives her some instructions.

A little later, the teacher appears in the street wrapped up in a gabardine and carrying an umbrella. She disappears, swallowed up by the rain.

BENIGNO (Off)

Alicia never came back to the Academy. I didn't want to scare her again, so I didn't go to her house until a week later, when I had the appointment with her father.

It never stopped raining the whole week.

SEQ. 69 - FACADE ALICIA'S BUILDING - EXT. - DAY

Benigno presses the buzzer repeatedly. No one answers. He insists but to no avail.

SEQ. 70 - ALICIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - PRESENT TIME (CONT.)

BENIGNO

The next time I saw her, it was here.

MARCO

(Looking at her) What happened to her?

BENIGNO

A car accident, on one of those rainy days.

Silence.

BENIGNO

The father didn't want Alicia to be alone for one moment, day or night. He asked for the best nurses and... well, I've got a very good reputation and they recommended me. When he saw me, he remembered that we knew each other and he had a moment's doubt, but he ended up hiring me and Matilde exclusively. That was four years ago and here we are...

(Matilde may appear, to do the night shift)

SEQ. 71 - ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. - NIGHT

At another moment

Alicia is lying on the bed. Marco is at one side, looking at her, and Benigno is doing some kind of crochet work or embroidery. His mother taught him to do those kinds of things. He says, as if joking, that he's preparing his bottom drawer. (He's embroidering the initials A and B. He still has to finish the lower part of the B. In the final sequences, when we see Benigno's bed, he'll have this sheet with the B completed.

BENIGNO

On my days off, I started to go to the ballet. And I go to the Filmothèque too. I see as many silent films as I can.. German, American... and then I tell her what I've seen. These last four years have been the richest in my life, looking after Alicia and doing all the things she liked to do, except for traveling, of course.

Marco is listening closely. He really likes the male nurse. He particularly envies him his relationship with the patient.

MARCO

(Sadly) The opposite is happening me with Lydia.

BENIGNO

Why's that?

MARCO

I'm incapable of touching her. I don't recognize her body. I'm even incapable of helping the nurses to turn her over in the bed. And I feel so mean.

BENIGNO

Talk to her. Tell her that.

MARCO

I'd like to! But she can't hear me.

Benigno stops what he's doing for a moment.

BENIGNO

How can you be so sure they can't hear us?

MARCO

Because their brains are... dead, Benigno!

BENIGNO

A woman's brain is a mystery, and even more so in this state.

(He puts down his handiwork and sees to Alicia)

Patients like Alicia get loads of infections, pneumonia,
urinary infections, loss of menstruation...

But look at how Alicia has flourished in these four years!

She hasn't had the slightest infection! I know
it doesn't sound very scientific but with women,
no matter what their state is, you have to pay them
attention, talk to them, make nice gestures from time to
time. Caress them without any reason, remember they
exist, that they're alive and that they matter to us.
It's the only therapy. I'm telling you from experience.

MARCO

And what experience do you have with women?

BENIGNO

Me? Everything! I lived twenty years, day and night,
with one, and I've lived four years with this one...

(Meaning Alicia)

He smiles, shaking his head as if giving Marco up for impossible, but he does it in a nice way.

SEQ. 72 - PUBLIC CAFETERIA, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

A glass wall converts the cafeteria into a terrace overlooking the development.

At this moment, there are several relatives of patients in the cafeteria.

Marco and Benigno are having a sumptuous breakfast, especially Benigno, who is taking almost obscene pleasure in it.

BENIGNO

(Confessing) I can't resist pastries, I admit it.

Marco looks at him eating.

MARCO
I envy you.

BENIGNO
Envy me? Why?

MARCO
Because you're immune to death and illness.

BENIGNO
It isn't like that at all. (Finishing the last mouthful)
One day my mother told me she was going to die.
That day I wasn't immune to death, believe me.
(A waiter interrupts them with a glass of juice
for Marco, but Benigno continues with his story)
My mother asked me: What are you going to do when I die?
I told her, I guess I'll commit suicide. Because, the
truth is, without her there was nothing for me to do
and I wasn't of very much importance here.

MARCO
And what did your mother say?

BENIGNO
She liked my answer, but she said to me: You have
to live, Benigno. When you don't have to look after me
anymore, you'll have to look after yourself... Go out
on the street, look in windows, travel... Out there,
you'll find a very unpleasant world, it'll be hostile
most of the time, but you'll also find things that
interest you, and you'll want some girl for yourself
and you'll fight for her. (He pauses) That was the
first day I went to the window and saw Alicia dancing.

Marco listens to him in silence. His admiration for Benigno is starting to acquire other overtones, even though he hasn't lost an iota of his liking for him.

SEQ. 73 - STAFF REST ROOM, ON THE SAME FLOOR - INT. - DAY

(Optional)

It's the same place where the doctor invited Marco to have coffee. There are several nurses, including the head nurse, nurse A and Rosa. An orderly is having coffee and chatting to a male nurse. Nearly all of them are smoking. It's their break time.

Amidst the coffee, tea, cookies and smoke:

NURSE A

I love the bullfighter's boyfriend.
I bet you anything he's well hung.

ROSA

How do you know? Have you seen it?

NURSE A

No, but you can tell things like that from a guy's face.

HEAD NURSE

From his face and especially from his crotch.

They laugh.

HEAD NURSE

(Reticently, to Rosa) He's got very friendly with Benigno.

ROSA

Yes.

HEAD NURSE

You don't think he's a faggot too, do you?

NURSE A

No way, come off it!

ROSA

Are you insinuating that Benigno's a faggot?

HEAD NURSE

I'm not insinuating it. It's vox populi.

ROSA

You're very much mistaken.

HEAD NURSE

Dr. Vega confirmed it to me.

ROSA

(Curious) And how does he know?

HEAD NURSE

Alicia's father told him. As I didn't think it right
that Benigno was taking so many liberties with
the patient, Dr. Vega told me not to worry,
that Benigno didn't like women, he preferred men.

She gets up to leave.

ROSA

You lot are the limit! I'll leave so you can carry on
tearing him apart all you like.

And she goes out.

NURSE A

The poor thing likes Benigno.

HEAD NURSE

She's crazy..

SEQ. 74 - LYDIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

Marco is working on his portable computer.
He hears someone knock at the door. It's Benigno.
He comes in.

BENIGNO

This is my night off, I'm going to the Filmothèque.
You want to come with me?

MARCO

I can't, I've got an appointment with my editor.
One of these days I have to go back to work.

Benigno goes over to the bed and looks carefully at Lydia.

BENIGNO

This woman isn't well.

MARCO

(Almost reproaching him) Benigno, please!

BENIGNO

No, listen... (He looks under her eyelid)
Her eyes are dry, the poor thing. (He looks for eye drops
and puts some in her eyes) Have you talked to her?

MARCO

(Annoyed) No...

BENIGNO

You haven't even told her anything about me or Alicia?

MARCO

No.

Meanwhile, Benigno's making sure that the patient's comfortable, the bed's aired, etc. He looks at her as if he's about to say something, but Marco's repressive expression persuades him not to.

BENIGNO

She needs to get some air. One day
we'll take them both out on the terrace.

Lydia's expression remains unchanged. So does Marco's.

Nurse A comes in, without knocking.

She looks at the two men. Benigno makes some suggestion to her about the patient's skin, that she should rub it down more, or moisturize it. The suggestion is not very well received by Nurse A, who gives him an unfriendly look.

Benigno says good-bye to Marco.

MARCO

Enjoy the movie.

When they're alone, Nurse A smiles at Marco. Marco, in turn, gives her a tired, curious smile.

Cut.

SEQ. 75 - FOYER OF THE NATIONAL FILMOTHEQUE - INT. - NIGHT

Facade. There's a poster which just gives the name of the film (Shrinking Lover) and that of the director (Hilario Muñoz).

There isn't much of an audience and most of them are freaks.

The box office looks like a confessional.

On one of the screens which give out on the street is showing images from the film.

SEQ. 76 - CINEMA - INT. - NIGHT

The freaks are sitting listening to the Director of the Filmothèque who is accompanied by a man in his 50s, also a freak, who is going to introduce the film. (They both look like people from the silent cinema). Benigno is in the audience.

CHEMA-DIRECTOR

"Shrinking Lover" is an unusual silent Spanish film.
which we are proud to have rescued given that, in its day,
it was never shown in public, among other reasons
because of censorship problems.

"Shrinking Lover" is a very beautiful love story

and undoubtedly the first accursed film of our cinema.
Tonight we have with us the director's grandson,
Jacinto Muñoz Marquina, to introduce it and talk about it.

JACINTO

Good evening. Despite my love for the cinema, I didn't know that my grandfather had been a director until I was over thirty years of age. His first films were pornographic, and my family were very discreet about the matter, I would say they were even embarrassed...

Cut

SEQ. 77 - FACADE OF CLINIC - EXT. - NIGHTFALL

The music from the opening credits of "Shrinking Lover" is the musical background to this sequence.

SEQ. 78 - ALICIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - NIGHT

We can still hear the music.
Benigno is tending to Alicia. He informs her:

BENIGNO

Rosa's got flu. I hope she didn't give it to you.
I'm going to give you a rub-down with rosemary alcohol.

Benigno takes a bottle of rosemary alcohol.

BENIGNO

Last night I saw a silent film that
really made a big impression on me.

Meanwhile he's rubbing her down with alcohol...
(The film title appears, as it would appear in the cinema, in its original format)

BENIGNO (Off)

It's a love story between Alfredo, who's a bit overweight but a nice guy, and his girlfriend, Amparo, who's a scientist. Amparo is working on the formula for an experimental diet that's going to revolutionize the world of nutrition...

SEQ. 79

A. General shot of Amparo's laboratory.

It's a large room with a corner for visitors (sofa, low table, rug, etc.) In the wall at the back there is a large window. Most of the space is taken up by the what is the actual laboratory, with all the equipment befitting the case, the time and the genre. Amparo, while working, is arguing with her stout boyfriend. Alfredo doesn't seem to be giving much importance to the argument and he's smoking a cigar. We can't hear their dialogue. We can only read the captions. The music, played on a piano, is the film's only soundtrack

AMPARO

You could at least stop smoking in here!

ALFREDO

I'm a smoker, you should have got used to it by now!

AMPARO

Alfredo, don't make me any more nervous. For months I haven't known what to do with you. Don't push me...!

ALFREDO

If you want me to go, just tell me clearly and...

AMPARO

What I want is for you to change...

ALFREDO

Give me a bit more of your time. Any of these test tubes spends more time with you than I do!

CAPTION: *"You're selfish... You only think about yourself."*

(Medium close up of both of them. Alfredo is moving around the table)

ALFREDO

And you only think about your work.

AMPARO

I'm sorry, I'm a scientist.

ALFREDO

There should be a law against pretty women being scientists.

Amparo pulls a bored expression at her boyfriend's banal remark, but something distracts her and her face lights up with joy. She looks at the tubes and test tubes... Something in one of containers is showing the culmination of a long awaited process.

(Tubes, test tubes, smoke, liquids which regurgitate, etc., that is, a close up of laboratory apparatus)

Alfredo looks at the tube and at his girlfriend, with a depressed, jealous expression. He takes a long pull on his cigar before stubbing it out.

Amparo is excited.

AMPARO

I've got it.

Caption: *"I've got it."*

Alfredo grabs the "final test tube" from her and threatens to drink it. He raises it provokingly to his lips.

AMPARO

(Upset) Don't joke with things like that.

ALFREDO

I'm going to take it, to see if I lose weight!

AMPARO

(In distress) It could be dangerous, Alfredo.
I still haven't tested it on humans.

Caption: *"It could be dangerous. I still haven't tested it on humans."*

ALFREDO

Try it on me, I'm pretty human.

AMPARO

I appreciate that, but it isn't wise...

ALFREDO

Let me help you. Everything for you
and for science.

AMPARO

Oh, Alfredo!

ALFREDO

Do I still seem like a selfish man
who only thinks about himself?

Caption: *"Do I still seem like a selfish man who only thinks about himself?"*

No sooner said than done. Alfredo knocks the potion back in one gulp.

Amparo looks at him, terrified, fascinated and madly in love with her boyfriend. Alfredo has a reaction in the very depths of his stomach. Her terror doesn't prevent Amparo from taking a notebook and a pen.

AMPARO

(Ready to take notes but also worried about her boyfriend)

What's happening to you, my love?

Alfredo is shaken by an internal tornado which finally comes out through his mouth in the form of a resounding belch. The beautiful scientist gets the belch full in the face, and it moves the tips of her hair like a slight breeze.

Alfredo smiles, satisfied, and Amparo throws herself on his lips and devours his mouth, without letting go of the notebook and pen.

Ellipsis.

B. (Medium close up of Alfredo and Amparo, identical to the previous one)
She is dressed differently, his face is thinner and he no longer has a double chin. Alfredo has become an attractive young man with a fine jaw. The couple are still kissing.

As if we'd done a pan down to their legs.

Alfredo is standing on several thick books, or directly on a step ladder. The bottoms of his trousers are falling in folds on his shoes which are very big for him. He hasn't just lost weight, he's also lost 2 inches in height

The look of passion on Amparo's face is replaced by one of anguish.

AMPARO

Don't worry, I'll find the antidote, my darling!

Caption: *"Don't worry, I'll find the antidote, my darling!"*

C. Amparo, along in her study-laboratory, is working frantically. Her tears mingle with the chemical formulas.

She has to repeat many of the formulas because of all the smudges.

D. Alfredo's room.

Amparo isn't the only one who is crying. At his writing desk, (Alfredo has shrunk some 6 inches and the desk comes to his chest) Alfredo is like a child at an adult's writing desk. He has shrunk but his body is still correctly proportioned. The only thing out of proportion to his new size is the cigar, five times smaller than the ones he used to smoke. Fortunately, they exist on the market.

Alfredo has a sheet of paper before him on which he is writing a letter to his loved one. The letter is larger than that which would correspond to his hand. (He is writing in her size of letter).

The Letter: Amparo, my love. I don't want you to feel guilty. What I did, I did freely and out of love. Only I must assume the consequences. I don't want to see you suffer and I don't want to ruin your life. I have decided that the best thing is that I should go to a place where you can't find me. Don't look for me, my love. I'll always love you. Your Alfredo.

A tear falls on the sheet of writing.

Caption: *"Don't look for me, my love. I'll always love you. Your Alfredo."*

E. Hall.

Alfredo measures 3 ft. 11 in. He goes out sadly to the street, laden with two suitcases which are too big for his present size.

The furniture in the hall seems enormous and much heavier.

F. He comes out into the street, in the "Austrias" area of Madrid.

Caption: *Alfredo goes back to his mother in a dull, provincial city. He hasn't spoken to her in 10 years, and never told Amparo about her."*

(This caption can also form part of Benigno's narrative, we can see him giving Alicia a massage and telling her about it.)

SEQ. 80 - THE MOTHER'S HOUSE, 1924 - EXT. - DAY

Alfredo arrives in front of a house in a provincial city (South or North?).

He knocks at the door. It is opened by an elegant, bourgeois lady, beautiful for her age, but she looks as if she has a bad temper. The woman looks him up and down in astonishment.

MOTHER

What do you want? (She looks at him closely, and gets emotional) You remind me of... of my son Alfredo!
My God, who are you? (She thinks of the worst possibility, an illegitimate son of her husband) You're not an illegitimate son of my late husband?

ALFREDO

Mother, you're unbelievable. I'm Alfredo, your son!

The woman goes to put her arms around him but she faints from the emotion.

Caption: *"Who are you? You're not an illegitimate son of my late husband?"*

SEQ. 81 - ALICIA'S ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - NIGHT

After giving her a massage, Benigno starts to spray her with rosemary alcohol.

BENIGNO

A lot of things happen.. but the important thing is that
"after two years of remorse and study, Amparo discovers
Alfredo's mother's address" And she turns up there...

SEQ. 82 - ALFREDO'S MOTHER'S HOUSE, A DISTANT TOWN - EXT. - DAY

Alfredo's mother opens the door, an unfriendly expression on her face.

MOTHER
Who are you?

AMPARO
I'm Amparo.

MOTHER
(Not at all welcoming) I thought so.

AMPARO
(Caption) "Alfredo never spoke to me about you. It took me two years to find your address. I have to see him, please."

The mother says a load of silent curses. A subtitle summarizes them as:

MOTHER
(Captions) "Go away, you've done enough harm to my poor son already."

SEQ. 83 - SITTING ROOM, MOTHER'S HOUSE - INT. - DAY

A.

Alfredo hears the conversation between the two women as a murmuring. At this point, he is no more than 5 inches high. He's sitting between the pages of an open book. Next to the book is a normal-sized ashtray. Alfredo is smoking a cigarette which he himself has rolled (it's the thickness of two or three strands, like a tooth pick, more or less). The proportions of the furniture, the carpet, etc. are gigantic. Even though it's an adult's room, there's still a toy there which meant a lot to him in his childhood.

B.

The carpet is a bear skin which ends in a huge head. The bear's head is taller than Alfredo. The fur is so thick it comes to his knees. Alfredo runs through the fur towards the door. The tiles on the floor form a checkerboard. He walks between the legs of the furniture. From his perspective, the legs are as high as five-story houses.

C.

He is near the door. With a little, distant voice he greets the recent arrival and smiles at her. In comparison with his body, the women are like skyscrapers.

ALFREDO
(He exclaims) Amparo!

The woman raises her hand to her mouth to stifle a cry of amazement.

AMPARO
Oh, Alfredo!

Alfredo runs to her and, overcome with emotion, hugs her ankle (as the mother looks on disapprovingly).

Amparo crouches down, picks up Alfredo in her huge hand and raises him to the level of her lips so as to give him a kiss. A pair of colossal lips surround Alfredo's head, although Amparo only grazes him with her lips.

The mother exclaims: "Cannibal, you want to eat my son!"

Little Alfredo is a prisoner between Amparo's face and that of his mother.

ALFREDO
(To Amparo) Don't listen to her,
She's terrible.

AMPARO
(To his mother) I'm taking him with me,
we have a lot to talk about.

Caption: *"I'm taking him with me, we have a lot to talk about."*

MOTHER
Alfredo isn't leaving this house!

Alfredo says "Yes" as loudly as his little voice allows.

SEQ. 84 - INSIDE A TAXI IN A PROVINCIAL CITY - INT. - DAY

Amparo is sitting in the passenger seat. Her purse is half open. She has got Alfredo inside.
(Look for an area in the city)

SEQ. 85 - INSIDE THE PURSE

The man rummages around among the things with which he's sharing the space inside the purse (face powder, lipstick, coin purse, cigarettes, cough sweets, a little notebook, a pen and some papers)... and he finds his farewell note, in which he tells her that he loves her and that's why he's going away, so as not to see her suffer for her mortal error...

Alfredo is delighted that she has kept his note and that she carries it with her. And he cries with emotion...

SEQ. 86 - HOTEL ROOM, BED - INT. - NIGHT

The two are in bed, talking. Amparo is taking notes.

Caption of the silent film: *"They have so much to tell each other... that they talk until dawn."*

Amparo has filled a notebook with the details which Alfredo has given her. She promises him she'll find a formula to save him. She's willing to ask for help from all the scientists in the country.

Tiny Alfredo is sitting with his back and head leaning against the pillow. His loved one's lips are as big as his arms. He's happy.

(A shot of the dawn at the window, through the curtain) The atmospheric light on the bed changes.

AMPARO

It's daybreak... I'm sleepy...

ALFREDO

Sleep, my love...

AMPARO

What if I squash you, when I move...?

ALFREDO

Don't worry, you won't squash me.

SEQ. 87 - THE BED AREA

...Amparo is asleep. Alfredo sits down. Her face becomes his background décor. Alfredo's horizon is the face of his loved one. The woman's breathing reaches him like a warm breeze. Alfredo stands up. He has the impression that the relationship of sizes between Amparo and him is the right one. It was always like this, he insignificant and she a woman of gigantic beauty and talent.

Alfredo takes the sheet with both hands and pulls with all his strength to reveal the naked body of the Beautiful Scientist. From Alfredo's point of view, it's as if he were pulling back a tarpaulin from a gigantic body which he can't take in all at once with his eyes

He walks by her body, savoring its smell and warmth and enjoying the sight of all the details. The Beauty moves a little. Half-awake, she embraces Alfredo who is in the angle which her arm forms with the line of her torso.

Alfredo climbs up to her neck and walks to where the rise of her breasts begins. He embraces one with both arms and climbs to the peak. He comes down as if it were a slide and climbs the other breast. From there, he slides down again and walks to her navel. In the distance, like a luxuriant bush, is the beautiful pubis.

Tiny Alfredo walks towards that part of her body. He slides down a thigh until he is between her legs. The Beautiful Amparo, asleep, opens her legs slightly. She's probably dreaming. Alfredo makes his way through the luxuriant thicket and puts his arms through the fleshy

door. He takes off his undershirt and shorts and, naked as the day he was born, he plays at going in and out until finally he remains inside forever.

A shiver runs through the sculptural sleeping body, and the Beautiful Scientist is flooded with a feeling of immense pleasure. (*Caption: Ahhhhhhgghh!*) She doesn't waken until a few hours later.

SEQ. 88 - ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. - NIGHT

It is nighttime. Benigno has never felt so perturbed by his own narration. .

He pulls back the sheet, revealing the lower part of Alicia's body. Although we can see her genitals, by the angle from which the camera and Benigno are looking, we don't see the catheter. He gives her a slow rub-down with rosemary alcohol on her legs, and her stomach...

BENIGNO

"Alfredo remains inside her, forever."

The gravity of his tone suggests a meaning both physical and metaphysical.

In the room, the silence of the night magnifies Benigno's breathing, which is still irregular. He can't help looking at Alicia's genitals.

It's a summer night. The open window frames a brilliant moon, flanked by shreds of clouds. In the silence of the night, all we can hear is Benigno's irregular breathing and sound of the trees, which we can see through the window, rustling in the breeze.

SEQ. 89 - ON THE CLINIC'S LARGE TERRACE - EXT. - DAY

One month later. (That is, October 2001)

Benigno and Marco are pushing wheelchairs in which are sitting, respectively, Alicia and Lydia, motionless, their eyes closed. The weather is good. A sea of trees spreads out before them. The open air terrace is on the second floor of the clinic. The views are very pleasant. The two women are wearing dark glasses and they are tied to the backs of their chairs (so they don't sway around). Their feet are in special boots, nailed to blocks of wood. A bottle of enteral alimentation is hanging from each chair. They've both made an effort so that the girls look as similar as possible to two girls taking the air on a terrace with their companions.

At first, the men are silent, each engrossed in his own problems.

The two women's heads are slightly inclined towards each other, as if they were talking. Benigno looks at them and smiles.

BENIGNO

Look at them, it's as if they were talking about us.

Marco looks at them and, indeed, that is how they look.

BENIGNO

What do you think they'd talk about?
Women tell each other everything.

MARCO

(Sadly) Lydia would tell her it's been two months today
since the bull gored her.

BENIGNO

That's why you're so serious.

Marco doesn't say anything to this.

Caption: *MARCO AND LYDIA / 2*

**SEQ. 90 - FLASHBACK, A CHAPEL IN THE ANDALUSIAN COUNTRYSIDE - INT.
- DAY**

The charming, little chapel is full of people. Marco has sat in one of the last rows, intending to go unnoticed.

When the bride and groom appear through the door and begin their walk down the main aisle, the bride (Angela) sees him immediately and gives him a wide, nervous smile. It's the same girl we saw shaken by the wind on an African night.

SEQ. 91 (THE SAME)

From his seat, Marco watches the whole ceremony very closely. It's been a while since he's been to a wedding and he thinks this one is beautiful. Every word spoken by the priest or the couple is filled with meaning and emotion.

On the other side of the aisle, Lydia is watching the ceremony with the same attention but with more emotion than Marco. Neither Marco nor the camera has seen her come in. Marco looks amazed when he sees her inside the chapel. It's as if Lydia had suddenly materialized there.

Lydia weeps copiously behind dark glasses (the same glasses as she was wearing in the previous sequence). She can't contain herself. Marco looks at her, gets up and sits beside her. They speak softly, out of respect and so as not to disturb the guests.

MARCO

(Surprised) What are you doing here? You told me you didn't want to come, that you'd wait for me in (he says the name of some Andalusian town nearby).

LYDIA

I've always liked weddings.

As if that justified her contradiction.

MARCO

It's a lovely ceremony, isn't it? (The ceremony is coming to an end) Listen, I still have to speak to the bride and groom. Angela saw me.

LYDIA

Go on your own.

MARCO

Is anything wrong?

LYDIA

No, nothing.

MARCO

I just want to say hello. I'm not going to stay for the reception, so we can have lunch together.
I know a place near here.

Unlike her, Marco is overflowing with happiness.

SEQ. 92 - RESTAURANT IN THE COUNTRY - EXT. - DAY

There is no one, or very few people, in the restaurant.

Marco sees Lydia a distance away, sitting alone at a table and speaking on a cell phone. She has a mysterious expression on her face, a mixture of worry and emotion. Marco likes to watch her unobserved, as he did in the chapel before he got up and went to sit beside her. When she sees Marco, Lydia puts an end to the phone call. Marco kisses her lightly on the lips.

MARCO

Isn't this place wonderful?

LYDIA

Yes.

She looks at the countryside surrounding them as if it were the first time she's seeing it. She is still wearing her dark glasses.

MARCO

I don't think you can see a lot with those glasses.

LYDIA

There's too much light... (She looks at some nearby trees) And there's a wind blowing.

MARCO

It's very pleasant.

LYDIA

Bullfighters don't like the wind.

Marco raises his hand and calls one of the waiters.

LYDIA

Marco, we have to talk...

The waiter comes up to the table.

(Cut)

SEQ. 93 - (SAME PLACE)

They are now eating the main course. Lydia is eating very little, just a French omelet. Marco is making good work of a nice fish. They're both drinking water. They're in the shadow of a vine or under a sunshade. In the distance, the slope of a wooded mountain hides the sky.

As a continuation of Lydia's last words:

MARCO

(Happily) About whatever you wish, my love.

Lydia looks at him, slightly annoyed, as if Marco hasn't understood her.

MARCO

I suppose you came to the wedding because you didn't trust me.

LYDIA

I came because I didn't want another day to go by without us talking.

MARCO

(Interrupting her again) You needn't worry. I'm over Angela. I've got proof.

LYDIA

(Slowly) Proof?

MARCO

I didn't cry during the ceremony, and it couldn't have been more moving! (He says this as a great victory)

LYDIA

(Now she understands) Yeah...

MARCO

Today you were the one who cried.

LYDIA

(Thoughtfully) That's true.

MARCO

(Happily) And you don't have to.

Lydia looks at him questioningly.

MARCO

Don't you believe me?

LYDIA

It isn't that.

MARCO

I swear that you've got no reason to be jealous. If I cry again, it won't be about Angela. (He says this with a certain sadness, as if he had lost something).

SEQ. 94 - ANDALUSIAN COUNTRYSIDE - EXT. - DAY

The black Mercedes drives across the countryside. The same image as in Seq. 29. There's something threatening in the heavy August light. The Oludum drums can be heard in the distance and they mingle with "Love is the saddest thing", by Jobim, creating a dense, unreal and distant atmosphere of sound which alludes to the characters' memories and envelops them like smoke inside the car.

In the back seat, Marco is holding Lydia's hand. Lydia is looking out at the countryside, absent, wrapped up in her own thoughts. (The images of the Andalusian countryside mingle with those of the journeys to which Marco will refer, although he doesn't mention any names. If they are seen, they'd be photos or postcards).

Accompanying the landscape, we hear Marco's voice.

MARCO (Off)

Angela and I traveled a lot. The pretext was to write a travel guide about some exotic place, but the truth is it was to get her away from drugs... to escape from Madrid.

INSIDE THE CAR

MARCO

(He recalls his agony) Life in Madrid was hell.
Our relationship only worked when we were escaping.
After trying for five years, and writing seven travel
guides, I took her back to her hometown, to her parents.
. They undertook to keep her away from drugs
for once and for all, and from me.

Marco looks at Lydia.

LYDIA

You still loved her.

MARCO

Yes... That's why I'd cry when I saw something that
surprised me and moved me, because I couldn't share it
with her. There's nothing worse than separating from
someone you still love... (Lydia looks inside herself
and couldn't agree more)

LYDIA

What a sad story!

It's as if she were talking about herself.

MARCO

Love is the saddest thing in the world, when it ends,
says a song by Jobim.

Lydia is playing unconsciously with the white gold chain, winding it around her fingers, as if
turning over an idea which can't be resolved.
Impelled by a sudden preoccupation:

LYDIA

Marco, we have to talk after the bullfight.

MARCO

We've been talking for two hours.

LYDIA

You have, I haven't.

MARCO

That's true.

(In these last two sequences, the actors should give a lesson in moderation and depth.)

SEQ. 95 - LARGE TERRACE OF CLINIC - EXT. - DAY

Marco and Benigno are going back into the building, with their two motionless companions in their wheelchairs.

BENIGNO

(Worried, in case his friend is right) Do you really think
that love is the saddest thing in the world?

MARCO

When it ends, yes. And at times, even if it doesn't end.

BENIGNO

That's lousy.

The two men seem as worried as at the beginning.

SEQ. 96 - CLINIC - EXT. - DAY

One month later. (September? Fall)

Exterior.

The outline of the clinic, seen from its most expressive exterior angle.

Marco parks his car in the parking lot. He gets out of the car, carrying a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

Cut.

SEQ. 97 - CORRIDOR OF CLINIC, DOOR OF LYDIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY

Marco is walking along the corridor towards Lydia's room, carrying the bunch of flowers. He finds the door half open. He is stopped by the sound of someone sobbing inside. Lydia? Her sister? Frightened, he decides to go in quietly.

SEQ. 98 - LYDIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY

El Niño is sitting by the bed, holding Lydia's hand. The neck of her nightdress is open and for the first time we see the tracheotomy tube. On her sternum, in perfect symmetry, the heart of white gold is gleaming between her breasts.

The bullfighter is wearing outside his shirt an identical chain and heart.

Marco looks at it and understands without any need for words who gave Lydia the jewel.

There's a walking stick leaning against the bed. El Niño is injured. That's why he has come back from America sooner than expected.

When he sees Marco come in, the bullfighter lets go of the patient's hand. He does it slowly, more out of delicacy than a sense of guilt and he tucks the gold chain inside his shirt.

Silence.

MARCO

(Making a statement in the form of a question)
It was for you she was crying at the wedding...(?)

NIÑO

(He explains, nostalgically) Yes. She called me from the restaurant to tell me that she'd cried. Women call you on the phone to tell you things like that. Although we don't admit it, men love it when they do it.

Marco listens to him in silence, his eyes popping a little more than usual.

NIÑO

We'd been back together for a month. Lydia went to the wedding to tell you, but when I saw you in the ICU I realized that she hadn't said anything to you.

Marco leaves the flowers on the bedside table. And he keeps one in his hand. The situation is very embarrassing for him. (Perhaps we see an image of the meal in the restaurant in the country. This image makes him feel ridiculous, absurd, pathetic...)

He makes a gesture, as if he's going to leave.

NIÑO

As I'm injured, I won't be fighting for at least two weeks. If you don't mind, I'd like to spend these nights with her.

MARCO

Of course. Make yourself at home.

And he leaves.

SEQ. 99 - ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY (CONT.)

He knocks. No one answers. Marco goes into Alicia's room. He's carrying the flower he took from Lydia's bouquet.

The girl is looking wonderful.

He leaves the flower on the bedside table, among the patient's old belongings (her clock, her book, etc.).

Benigno comes in. He's got something in his hand, for Alicia. During the whole conversation, he doesn't stop doing things. (Document this)

BENIGNO

(Half joking) You might deny it, but I caught you
looking at her breasts.

MARCO

It's hard not to, they're getting bigger every day.

Marco's voice is very dry. He seems more furious with himself than sad at losing Lydia.

MARCO

Benigno, I think I'm going to go on a trip.

BENIGNO

(He doesn't like this) Why's that?

MARCO

I have to work.

BENIGNO

But what about Lydia?

Marco tries to explain in a few words, but it isn't easy.

MARCO

Lydia doesn't need me anymore.

BENIGNO

Have you split up?

The simplicity of the question catches him unawares. He gives a faint smile.

MARCO

That's one way of putting it.

Rosa the nurse comes in.

Marco says good-bye.

BENIGNO

(He doesn't like the idea)

When are you thinking of leaving?

MARCO

Within a few days, but we'll see each other before then.

Rose is busy with Alicia. She looks at the chart. Something isn't right.

Cut.

SEQ. 100 - ALICIA'S ROOM - INT. - DAY

One week later.

In the morning.

We see the passing of time via the growth of details on the chart. When Rosa looks at it in the previous sequence only a quarter of the page is written on; suddenly the page is filled, using a speeded up camera, by the details of a whole week. The page is now over half full. Rosa begins the sequence writing on the chart about the delay in Alicia's period. It should have come a week ago.

Benigno and the nurse are washing Alicia as they usually do, small areas of her body at a time and then drying them.

The nurse and Benigno look carefully at the area around her genitals.

ROSA

It's been more than a week. That's too long.
Are you sure she had it last month?

BENIGNO

I put the sanitary towels on her myself.
It was the week you had flu.

The nurse feels the girl's stomach. She trusts Benigno but...

ROSA

She even feels swollen.

The nurse can't hide her concern.

BENIGNO

At times they aren't regular. (Rosa nods)
For example, Lydia's periods have stopped.

ROSA

Yeah... In any case, we have to tell Dr. Vega.

(As an option to washing her, they could be changing the sheets, without moving the patient. It's a real display of skill, a spectacle.)

SEQ. 101 - FACADE OF CLINIC. SEEN FROM THE PARKING LOT - EXT. - NIGHTFALL

Marco parks and gets out of the car.

He goes into the clinic.

SEQ. 102 - CLINIC, CAFETERIA - INT. - NIGHTFALL

Benigno is sitting at a table at one end, sadly stuffing himself with various kinds of pastries. But he isn't enjoying them. He seems worried and uneasy.

Marco has just come into the cafeteria. He sees Benigno without the latter seeing him. He's surprised to see that he's looking worried for the first time.

Marco comes up to his friend's table, greets him and sits down. He leaves a plastic bag containing some books on the table.

MARCO

I've brought you some of my travel guides,
for you and for Alicia.

BENIGNO

Thank you.

MARCO

I've said good-bye to Lydia. And I tried to see Alicia
but Dr. Vega and the head nurse were in her room
and they wouldn't let me in. Is anything wrong?

BENIGNO

I don't know... It seems Alicia has an infection.
Will you drive me home? I'm not on duty tonight.

Marco nods.

MARCO

It isn't anything serious, is it? They were talking
about something, and they seemed kind of nervous.

BENIGNO

I don't know. They're doing some tests on her,
but they wouldn't tell me anything either.

Marco nods, now he understands why his friend is worried.

SEQ. 103 - PARKING LOT (OUTSIDE THE CLINIC) - EXT. - NIGHT (OR NIGHTFALL)

Marco is walking along, looking for his car. He's accompanied by Benigno who has taken the books out of the bag and is looking at the different covers. He remarks admiringly:

BENIGNO

..Abidjan, The Yemen, Brazil, Cuba...
I'll read them to Alicia, at night.

MARCO

They're just travel guides.

BENIGNO

If you wrote them, I'm sure they've got something special.
Are you going on your own?

MARCO

Yes.

BENIGNO

Someone said: It isn't good for man to be alone.

MARCO

God said it in Genesis, and he was right, especially if the man
who's alone is going on a trip for a few months.

BENIGNO

I want to talk to you about that, Marco, before you leave.

MARCO

About what?

Benigno chooses his words carefully, as if he were going to speak in another language. They are approaching the car.

BENIGNO

About loneliness. I want to get married.

MARCO

(Amazed) Get married? To whom?

BENIGNO

To Alicia, of course, who do you think?

They are on opposite sides of the car. Marco takes out his keys. Before he opens it:

MARCO

You're crazy, Benigno!

BENIGNO

Alicia and I get on better than most married couples!
Why is it so odd for a man who's in love with a woman
to want to marry her?

Marco opens the car and lowers his voice, in case anyone hears them.

MARCO

Because the woman is in a coma! Because Alicia cannot
say with any part of her body, "I do, I take this man,
I promise to be faithful to him the rest of my life."
Because we don't know if vegetative life
can even be called life!

He closes the door. They are both inside.

Cut.

SEQ. 104 - VICINITY OF THE CLINIC, INSIDE THE CAR - EXT./INT. - NIGHT

On the road to Madrid.

Marco is driving.

MARCO

(Furious) Benigno, your relationship with Alicia is a
monologue and a madness. I don't mean that talking is
of no use, but people talk to their plants too
and they don't marry them!

BENIGNO

(Hurt, serious) I can't believe you're saying that.
I thought you were different.

MARCO

Promise me you won't mention this again!
That you won't even think about it! Promise me!
(Urgently)

BENIGNO

Why?

MARCO

Because if you tell anyone what you've just told me,
you're going to be in serious trouble.
And I won't be there to help you.

BENIGNO

If it'll make you feel happier, I promise.

MARCO

(Forcefully and affectionately) And don't forget,
however much we love her and like her...

BENIGNO

(Interrupting him) Do you like her too?

MARCO

Well, of course, how could I not like her?

But we can't forget that Alicia is in a vegetative state. In other words, almost dead!

Benigno maintains a taciturn silence. He doesn't agree with his friend, but he senses that it's better to keep quiet.

Marco has been emphatic. Benigno's silence is filled with unease.

SEQ. 105 - COMMITTEE ROOM, CLINIC - INT. - DAY

The director is a man of 50 to 60, dressed in impeccable pearl gray. He's got a resounding voice and looks as if he's about to kill someone. Terrible style.

DIRECTOR

(Emphatically) Our patient Alicia Roncero has been raped and is pregnant!

He looks at all those present as if they were all guilty.

Most of the staff on Alicia's floor are present, along with a few orderlies, etc. Rosa the nurse is the most deeply affected.

DIRECTOR

(Firmly) I still haven't told her father because first of all you're going to tell me "who" the pervert was... who dared, in my clinic...!

DR. VEGA

(Interrupting) Sir, we are all upset, but I'd be grateful if you'd moderate your tone of voice.

Those present don't dare look at each other. Benigno's expression is neutral, evasive and erratic.

DIRECTOR

I am using the tone which is in accordance with the gravity of the circumstances (it sounds like: "the tone I fucking want to use") Alicia is on your floor. You are responsible for what has happened!

DR. VEGA

Then let me be the one who sets out the situation (He looks at Rosa) Nurse Rosa Salmerón, please.

ROSA

Alicia's periods stopped two months ago.
At first, I thought it had only been one month,
but I was mistaken.

HEAD NURSE

Perhaps you were mistaken because on last month's
chart there wasn't any mention of a missed period.
Quite the contrary, it says that you put a sanitary towel
on her... as always...

ROSA

I was off sick with flu those days.

HEAD NURSE

But the notes are in Benigno's writing,
isn't that so?

Benigno nods his head.

DIRECTOR

(To Benigno) Why did you put false data
on the chart, Benigno?

Rosa is having a worse time than Benigno. She'd like to help him but doesn't know how.

BENIGNO

(Absent and sincere) I didn't want to cause any alarm.
It isn't the first time that a patient has missed a period.

DIRECTOR

Do you realize that this omission make you
into the main suspect?

Benigno doesn't answer. Everyone looks at him. The doctor comes to his defense.

DR. VEGA

Benigno, I'm sure you've got a better explanation.
I know you're incapable of harming Alicia...

BENIGNO

You can be sure of that.

DR. VEGA

(Without violence) Then, why did you cover up that
first missed period? You must have had some reason,
you're a professional!

Benigno looks at him, nonplussed. It seems that he isn't going to answer.

HEAD NURSE

(To Benigno) You're also the person who has spent most time with the patient, hundreds of nights alone with her. If you don't say anything, you're forcing us to suspect you.

ROSA

Perhaps he's trying to protect someone...

HEAD NURSE

Who? (Rosa doesn't answer, neither does Benigno)
Marco?

Murmurings.

BENIGNO

(Coming out of his strange lethargy)
Marco has got nothing to do with this.

A male nurse's voice interrupts him.

MALE NURSE

Last night, I happened to be in the parking lot and I heard a conversation between Benigno and Marco...

All those present focus questioningly on the male nurse.

MALE NURSE

Benigno was confessing to Mr. Zuloaga that he wanted to marry Alicia.

The reaction of all those present.

A close-up of Benigno, his face frozen in an absent, stony expression.

MALE NURSE

Mr. Zuloaga tried to dissuade him, but Benigno wouldn't listen to reason. He was very worked up. He said he knew a lot of married couples who didn't get on half as well as he and Alicia did.

Fade to red and mutterings.

SEVEN MONTHS LATER.

SEQ. 106

(Optional)

Marco is in some exotic place, to be decided on. He's enjoying a natural phenomenon, a distinctive landscape, a gastronomic discovery, or all these things at the same time. Far from Spain, in any case. There is food and drink on his table which he has to evaluate for his guidebook.

He's making notes on a tiny computer, and in passing he checks out the digital Spanish press.

He sees the news about Lydia's funeral. She died a few days before.

SEQ. 107 - IN THE EXOTIC PLACE

Marco takes out his cell phone and his book of telephone numbers and dials the number of the Clinic. In close-up we see the details of the call (names, search, name: clinic). The telephone was acquired outside of Spain.

Just then, the waiter comes up with an important dish which he would like to explain to Marco. Marco gestures to him to leave it for later.

SEQ. 108 - "THE CLEARING IN THE WOOD" CLINIC, THE RECEPTIONIST (OR SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR)

The receptionist answers Marco over the telephone.

RECEPTIONIST

The Clearing in the Wood Clinic.

MARCO

May I speak to Benigno Martín?

He works on the second floor.

The receptionist answers in a hostile tone.

RECEPTIONIST

That gentleman doesn't work here anymore.

MARCO

Are you sure?

RECEPTIONIST

Absolutely.

MARCO
And Nurse Rosa Salmerón?

RECEPTIONIST
I'll put you through. Who's calling?

SEQ. 109 - CLINIC, NURSING STATION, 2nd FLOOR - INT.

Rosa picks up the telephone at the nursing station on her floor. She is surprised, delighted and disconcerted to hear Marco's voice.

ROSA
Marco?

MARCO
I'm calling from.... I read that Lydia had died.

ROSA
Yes.

MARCO
Why wasn't I told?

ROSA
(Affected) I... I don't know...
With all the problems...

MARCO
What's going on? The operator told me that Benigno doesn't work there anymore. Is that true?

ROSA
(With a serious tone and expression)
Yes. I see you haven't heard.

MARCO
(Uneasy) Haven't heard what?
(Urgently) What's going on, Rosa?

ROSA
Something horrible. (She's almost crying)
Benigno is in jail, accused of raping Alicia.

MARCO
That's impossible.

ROSA

I didn't believe it either, but all the evidence confirms it. Why don't you come and help him?
The poor guy's completely alone.

MARCO

Haven't you gone to see him?

ROSA

No. After what he's done to me, no...

SEQ. 110 - BARAJAS - INT./EXT. - DAY

Surrounded by international passengers, Marco arrives at Barajas. He's thinner, he has a beard and he's been burned by the sun (?) (Think about the physical change). It seems that more time has passed than actually has.

SEQ. 111 - VICINITY OF THE MECO 2 PRISON

Marco arrives in a taxi. The prison building is situated in the middle of the countryside, in no man's land. Marco looks at it apprehensively.

SEQ. 112 - PRISON

Marco arrive at the main gate. He asks one of the guards for the offices. The man nods. "Over there".
He's referring to a low building which is set apart from the main building, the prison.

SEQ. 113 - INMATES' OFFICE - INT. - DAY

Marco comes into an area separated from the office by a window. Behind the window is a pregnant office worker.

OFFICE WORKER

What do you want?

MARCO

I'd like to see the prisoner Benigno Martín.

OFFICE WORKER

(She consults a computer) But he hasn't requested a visit from anybody.

MARCO

He doesn't know I'm in Madrid.
I've just arrived, my name is Marco Zuloaga.

OFFICE WORKER

Are you a relative?

MARCO

No, I'm his friend, the only one he has.

OFFICE WORKER

(She explains) The inmate has to request the visit himself.
I'll tell him you came to see him.
May I see your I.D.?

Marco takes his passport from his pocket and gives it to her.

MARCO

May I call him on the phone?

OFFICE WORKER

No, but he can call you.

MARCO

Do you mind giving him the number of my cell phone?

He takes the phone from his pocket and looks at the number. He doesn't know it by heart.
The office worker writes the phone number beside Marco's name and explains:

OFFICE WORKER

The communication days are Saturday and Sunday,
but the inmate has to make the request.
By the way, we don't have prisoners here,
they're inmates.

MARCO

I'd realized that. Thank you.

SEQ. 114 - FACADE OF CLINIC - INT. - AFTERNOON

Marco comes out of the clinic, looking serious. He's obviously been asking for information about Benigno. (Probably unnecessary)

SEQ. 115 - PRISON, CORRIDOR, PUBLIC TELEPHONE - INT. - AFTERNOON

At one end of a wide corridor there is a public telephone attached to the wall.

The inmates only have access to it through a prison employee.

An employee is dialing the number which Benigno is dictating (He doesn't know it by heart, he's reading it directly from a note on which it's written).

Once he's dialed the number, the employee hands the phone to Benigno and walks off a few steps, as if to allow the inmate some privacy.

SEQ. 114 AGAIN

Marco's cell phone rings. He takes it from his pocket.

BENIGNO (Off)

Marco, is that you?

MARCO

Yes, Benigno.. At last!

SEQ. 115 AGAIN

BENIGNO

It's great to hear you! I've requested your visit.
I'll see you on Saturday.

MARCO

Great.

These two sequences are alternated.

Marco is on the esplanade in front of the clinic, which is used as a parking lot. As he talks, he looks around for a taxi. There are lots of cars coming and going.

He is full of contradictory feelings. He's delighted to hear his friend, but at the same time he can't forget what he's just been told in the clinic. Nor can he forget the last conversation he had with Benigno, in his car.

BENIGNO

Where are you? There's a lot of noise...

MARCO

I'm outside the clinic.

BENIGNO

Ah...

MARCO

(Severely) Dr. Vega has just told me everything.

Benigno remains silent on the other end of the phone.

MARCO

(Barely controlling his anger)
How could you do it, Benigno?

BENIGNO

(Interrupting) Listen, you haven't come back to Spain
to blow me out, have you?

Marco thinks and controls his answer. It doesn't matter what he's done, he still likes Benigno.

MARCO

No. (He changes his tone) Do you need anything?
Do you want me to bring you anything on Saturday?

Although there are sparks of the old affection, there is no joy in Marco's voice.

BENIGNO

I need information. What do you know about Alicia?
Everyone in the clinic has been forbidden to speak to me.

MARCO

From what they told me, Alicia's father took her
to another clinic, they don't know where.

BENIGNO

I don't believe that.

MARCO

Neither do I. But I'm not surprised they won't tell us.

Over the telephone, Benigno's voice sounds very worried.

BENIGNO

Listen, Marco, are you still my friend?

MARCO

Of course... Why do you think I'm here?

BENIGNO

(Begging) Then find out what's happened to Alicia!
If she's alive, if she's given birth, if it was a boy or a girl,
if it's alive too... I need to know, Marco! (Pleading)
Even though you're annoyed with me, you understand that,
don't you?

MARCO
Yes, I'll try to find out.

He takes a step forward.

SEQ. 116 - PRISON VISITING ROOM - INT./EXT. - DAY

Marco crosses an enormous yard. His figure is reduced, lost in the huge expanse of concrete.

He goes into the room where the visiting cubicles are. Radiant with impatience, Benigno is waiting behind one of those methacrylate confessionals.

Marco and Benigno go up to the transparent barrier as if it didn't exist and they could hug each other. But they can only put their hands in the same place, on both sides of the methacrylate. A metallic surface with little holes in it, down at the bottom, allow them to hear each other.

(The sequence begins directly with the dialogue, the two men are sitting facing each other.)

BENIGNO
(Anxious) Did you find out anything?

MARCO
Not yet, but I will, be patient.

BENIGNO
I was patient until Alicia was due.
But that was over a month ago!

Marco looks at him helplessly. He tries to distract him with another subject of conversation.

MARCO
What do you do here all day?

BENIGNO
I work in the sickbay. As the prison is new it's very quiet here.
There aren't very many people.

MARCO
From outside, it doesn't look like a prison.

BENIGNO
My problem isn't being here, Marco. The worst thing is not seeing Alicia. According to the forensic officer and Alicia's father (a bit late) it turns out I'm a psychopath.

As always, Marco is surprised by Benigno's naturalness.

BENIGNO

Yes, like in the movies. It's good for the trial.
But I don't give a shit about the trial. I need
to see Alicia, and find out how everything ended!
And if this doesn't change I swear I'm capable
of anything! Don't they say I'm a psychopath?
Well, then, I'll behave like a psychopath!

MARCO

(Alarmed) Don't say that, Benigno!

BENIGNO

Oh, get me another lawyer. The one I've got was
appointed by the court and every time he sees me
it's a miracle he doesn't throw up on me.

MARCO

All right.

BENIGNO

I'll call the caretaker in my building and tell her
to give you the keys of my apartment.
Rent it out and use the money to pay the lawyer.

MARCO

If it's all right with you, I'll rent it myself.
My own place is rented out too.

BENIGNO

That's good. I like that you're my tenant.

He pauses. Silence. Benigno's tone changes again.

BENIGNO

In these last months you've been in my mind a lot, Marco,
especially at night. (Marco looks at him in surprise)
I read all the travel guides you gave me...
I, who've never left Madrid, haven't stopped
traveling for months with you at my side.

MARCO

I've written three new guides.
I'll send them to you.

BENIGNO

(Serious) I identified a lot with the one on Havana.

MARCO
(?)

BENIGNO
I'm a man of windows too.

Marco begins to understand. He thinks of all the windows and doors that appear in the book on Havana.

BENIGNO
(Darkly, sadly) When you describe that Cuban woman,
leaning on a window, looking out at the seafront,
waiting uselessly... seeing how time passes
without anything happening... I thought
that woman was me...
(He gets upset at the end, he's about to cry)

Mario looks at him, struck, in silence. He understands his friend's sadness.

SEQ. 117 - BENIGNO'S STREET AND BUILDING - EXT. - DAY

Marco walks up to the door of the house where Benigno lives. He rings the caretaker's bell and the door opens.

SEQ. 117A - CARETAKER BENIGNO'S BUILDING - INT. - DAY

Marco comes into the hall. In a tiny, little space at the back, next to the elevator, a net curtain is pulled stealthily back. Behind it is an elderly lady, the caretaker. The woman comes out of her cubby hole and looks at Marco in a familiar way.

MARCO
Good morning, ma'am. I'm Benigno's friend.

CARETAKER
You must be Marco. I'm the caretaker.
Benigno called me to tell me that you were
renting his apartment.

MARCO
Yes...

The woman goes back into her cubby-hole and hunts in a cardboard box. She comes out with the keys in her hand but she takes a while in giving them to Marco.

CARETAKER
You'll find it a bit dirty, but he forbade me absolutely

to go in and clean it. I wasn't going to charge him anything, but...

MARCO

I'll take care of that, thank you.

CARETAKER

Have you seen him?

MARCO

Yes.

CARETAKER

How is he?

MARCO

(In a neutral tone) Fine.

He takes the key and makes as if to go, but the woman continues talking. Marco stops half way, out of politeness.

CARETAKER

Poor thing! Even in prison he wasn't lucky. He got so little publicity. Not one lousy television came here, not even a paparazzi. Can you believe that with all the rubbishy programs that there are... not one of them bothered to come and interview me? It just isn't right, that contempt for human suffering! I was terribly upset about it. I got so depressed I had to go to a psychiatrist.

MARCO

Are you better now?

CARETAKER

(Making light of it) Yes. By the way, do you know why they've put Benigno in prison? As he's so reserved, the last time he was here, he didn't tell me anything.

MARCO

Benigno is innocent.

CARETAKER

Of course, but innocent of what?

MARCO

I don't know.

CARETAKER

Something odd is going on. I've called several television and radio programs, and when I say that my problem is that they've put a neighbor in prison and I don't know why, they say good-bye and cut me off very rudely. In this country they only promote four sluts who've been operated on and their pimps, but when a good, simple person like Benigno is in prison, no one's interested. It's very sad how the "masses media" are today.

Marco starts to go up the stairs. The caretaker is still talking.

CARETAKER

If you need anything, you just have to ask me.

MARCO

Very well, thank you very much.

SEQ. 118 - BENIGNO'S APARTMENT - INT.

Marco comes into the apartment. The decor is a mixture of the mother's style with another, younger style. It's the apartment which Benigno had prepared for his future wife, Alicia.

There are several photos of her on the wall (enlarged and framed), always with her eyes closed. The effect is disturbing.

Benigno has tried to place some pieces of furniture just as he saw them in her room, or in a similar style. In any case, he has managed to achieve a pleasant atmosphere, but the colors and surfaces are covered with a thick layer of dust.

The dust, the cobwebs and the darkness help create a slightly ghostly atmosphere. Some of the few snippets of light which filter through the cracks in the windows illuminate the photos on the walls showing Alicia with her eyes closed.

Marco immediately opens a window. The place is making him slightly nervous. The window he has just opened looks out on the windows of the dance academy in the building opposite. Marco identifies it from the story which Benigno told him. Next to the window is an armchair so that the voyeur could watch the windows opposite in total comfort. Marco doesn't know this but it's the same chair which Benigno was discussing with Alicia in Seq. 53, when the dance teacher brought her a CD. Benigno was saying to Alicia: "From here you can see your friends across the way dancing." Marco sits in the chair. And looks.

SEQ. 119 - THE DANCE ACADEMY, SEEN FROM BENIGNO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Marco recognizes the teacher from the time he saw her in the clinic, coming out of Alicia's room.

The pupils (six girls and three boys) are moving in time to the music being played live on a piano. (We've heard the music before) They are performing the choreography which brings the class to an end.

SEQ. 120 - THE SAME (CONT.)

A. Through the upper part of the window (from the far end of the studio) a newcomer appears. It's a woman. At first, we only see her feet, entering slowly through the upper part of the window which looks out on the street. Next to the feet we see some crutches. A dancer with crutches? When the lower part of her body has come into frame, the teacher interrupts what she's doing and comes over to her. She helps her to sit down in a comfortable chair after embracing her affectionately. From there, with her particular style, the teacher suggests the next movement to the pupils. She moves away from the newcomer to correct a dancer. Until then Marco hasn't had a chance to see her face. The new comer is none other than Alicia.

Marco is glued to the window. As if she were aware of this, Alicia seems to look in his direction. Marco pulls away from the window and leans against the wall, breathing heavily.

Cut.

B. Inside the Academy.

The pupils have gone. Only the teacher and Alicia are left. The teacher asks her how the rehabilitation is going. Alicia speaks slowly and with an effort. She is also regaining her speech. "The best rehabilitation is being here..."

-Let's do a few little exercises, eh?

The teacher, so harsh with her pupils, is crazy about Alicia.

Marco watches the scene, motionless, from Benigno's window. (His point of view). The teacher helps Alicia to move in the world again. They walk slowly alongside the bar-quadrilateral. Alicia likes to rest one hand on the bar. She has a crutch in the other.

SEQ. 121 - LAWYERS' OFFICE - INT. - DAY

Marco is talking to the new lawyer, a man of impeccable appearance, an absolute professional.

Large reference books, bound in red leather, a little framed drawing by a child hanging on the wall and a photo of his wife. A lack of any other personal details. The large leather desk, an antique, could be found in any office.

They are in mid-conversation.

LAWYER

The fetus was born dead. It was a boy.

MARCO

But Alicia has woken up! Benigno should know!

LAWYER

From what you tell me about his mental state,
I think he shouldn't know! He could do something crazy.

Marco recognizes that the lawyer's conclusions are not totally mistaken.

MARCO

But I can't lie to him, I'm his only friend,
the only one he has. And he trusts me.

LAWYER

I'll do it. It's doesn't cause any dilemma for me.
I'll tell him that Alicia is still in a coma and that
the baby was stillborn. The important thing is that he
doesn't do anything stupid and lets us do our job.
But it's also important that you don't tell him anything!

MARCO

(He doesn't like the solution, but...) And what about bail?

LAWYER

We can try for it, but it'll cost us a lot...
50 or 60 million.

MARCO

(Calculating) We'd have to mortgage his apartment.
Once he's out, how could we organize it so that
he can see Alicia?

LAWYER

(Unequivocally) Absolutely not, that's impossible!
(He's surprised that a man like Marco
could ask him such a question. He warns him:)
He can't go anywhere near her!

MARCO

But he saved her life.

LAWYER

Legally, he's only raped her.

MARCO

(He admits regretfully)
With our help or without it,
Benigno will try to see her.

LAWYER

If we do get bail, Benigno can't go into Alicia's
neighborhood or be less than half a mile from
anywhere she is. You should know that
before we start anything.

(Document these last remarks more precisely)

SEQ. 122 - PRISON AND VISITING ROOM - IT'S RAINING WITH LOVE

(That is to say, it's raining gently, without violence, in a regular, soporific way.)

Marco doesn't have an umbrella and he runs across the patio to the visiting room door. He stops and looks at the gray, rainy, prison day. As he wipes his face with his hand he soaks up that image which (frozen in three times) now forms part of his bank of indelible memories.

SEQ. 123 - VISITING ROOM - INT. - DAY

The sound of the rain accompanies and warms the conversation between the two friends. They are sitting facing each other. A shudder runs through Marco, he seems out of sorts, more psychically than physically.

BENIGNO

You're soaked.

MARCO

Just a bit.

BENIGNO

Be careful you don't get a chill. (Marco shakes his head.
The other recommends something he should take)
Since I've been here, I like rainy days.

He is silent, as if to hear the pattering of the rain, falling on the ground in the patio. Marco is surprised and intrigued by how calm Benigno is. Even when he brings up the most difficult subject.

MARCO

Did you see the new lawyer?

BENIGNO

Yes, he was here. He told me everything.

Apparently, things don't look too good for me, do they?

MARCO
(Hesitating) No.

BENIGNO
At least Alicia is still the same after the birth.
That's the only thing that comforts me.

Another silence. Marco is finding it very hard not to break the promise he made to the lawyer.

BENIGNO
I saw a film by the Marx brothers yesterday.
The ending was... (He pauses, thoughtful, as if at a loss)

MARCO
(Uneasy) What happened at the end?

Benigno looks at him as if he'd forgotten that Marco was still there...

BENIGNO
(Slowly, thoughtfully) Harpo is surrounded by people.
He's got a spray in his hand, (He gestures)
the kind you use to kill flies.

SEQ. 124 - THE MARX BROTHERS FILM

Images of the film he's talking about, treated in a special way, with a slow camera, with another light...

(One of the people standing around Harpo represents authority and scolds him continually. The mute, without thinking about it beforehand, aims the spray at the face of whoever is beside him or is protesting about what is happening), whether it's man, woman or "brother", and the victim falls to the floor like a fly. One of those who fall is Groucho. The last one to be fumigated is a pretty, lively girl. After she falls to the floor, Harpo fumigates himself and collapses on top of the pretty girl, with his usual satyr's smile, happy to enter into her dream.

Back to 123

Silence.

The two friends look at each other in silence. Even though it's the Marx Brothers, for Benigno that isn't a comic scene. It provokes a deep, mysterious emotion in him. Marco looks questioningly at him, disconcerted, waiting for his friend to say something else. But Benigno doesn't say anything. And Marco has a strange feeling of uneasiness. Benigno doesn't seem inclined to break the silence.

Benigno continues with his work. He starts putting pillows under the patient's legs so that she isn't always in the same position and thus won't get bedsores. The father watches how he does it.

The father remains standing at the foot of the bed, looking at his daughter. His eyes are dulled and saddened by what they see. He also glances through the details of the chart. A comprehensive diary of a body, as material.

Benigno finishes positioning her legs. He does it very carefully. It isn't a sexual image, but it does demonstrate a great intimacy.

BENIGNO

Shall I call Dr. Vega?

FATHER

No, carry on with what you're doing. (Pause)
The other day, when I was going through my things,
I found a notebook with some notes I made
the day you came to see me.

Benigno turns to him, surprised he should have chosen this as a topic of conversation.

FATHER

I'd written down a subject that we would talk about
on your second visit... a visit that never took place.

BENIGNO

(Inquisitive) What subject?

FATHER

Your sexual orientation.

Benigno wasn't expecting this. He's surprised, he hesitates.

BENIGNO

My sexual orientation?

FATHER

Yes, your sexuality... Do you like men, or women?

BENIGNO

Ah. (He thinks about it)

FATHER

When you came to my office,
you told me then that you were a virgin.

MARCO

Are you all right, Benigno?

Benigno gives him a look which seems to say that he is.

BENIGNO

I'd like to give you a hug, Marco.

Marco looks at him, he doesn't know what to say. He finds it natural but he is also disconcerted.

BENIGNO

In order to give you a hug, I'd have to ask for a face to face meeting, and I checked it out, you know? They asked me if you were my boyfriend... and I didn't dare say yes, in case you minded.

MARCO

I don't mind at all. You can say whatever you want.

BENIGNO

(Without being melodramatic
like someone stating the bare facts)
I've hugged very few people in my life.

SEQ. 125 - BENIGNO'S APARTMENT - INT. - DAY

Marco is sleeping in what would have been the couple's room. Everything is new. On the bedside table there are books which Marco is reading, an ashtray, photos of the mother, of Alicia, etc. Perhaps there is also a photo of Lydia. Among the photos, the cell phone is charging.

Although there is less of a view than from the sitting room window, one can see the academy from the bedroom window too, more of a diagonal view and more restricted.

Marco awakens.

He unplugs the mobile and turns it on. He walks over lazily to the window. He looks at the covered windows of the Dance Academy. It's early. There are very few people on the sidewalks... (Marco's viewpoint)

SEQ. 126 - BENIGNO'S APARTMENT - INT. - DAY (CONT.)

There are two sharp beeps. Marco jumps. It's a warning from the cell phone. He goes to the bedside table and picks it up. There's a message on the screen. He presses OK. It's a voice message. Marco puts the gadget to his ear.

TELEPHONE (Off)

(Benigno's voice) Marco, I was so happy to see you

today! As you know, they won't let me out of here, and if they do, it'll only be to lock me up somewhere else. The lawyer told me that in the unlikely case that they grant me bail, I couldn't live in the same neighborhood as Alicia, or go anywhere near her! I don't want to live in a world where Alicia isn't present, a place where I can't even have her hair slide with me... so I've decided to escape. I didn't want to tell you because I didn't want you to worry or try to stop me. A big hug.
A very big hug.

SEQ. 127 - LANDING, BENIGNO'S BUILDING - INT. - EARLY MORNING

The door slams shut and Marco races down the stairs.

SEQ. 128 - FRONT DOOR, BENIGNO'S BUILDING - INT. - DAY

Marco runs past the caretaker who sees him disappear out the front door like a shot. The woman can't believe that he hasn't even said good morning.

SEQ. 129 - BENIGNO'S STREET - EXT. - EARLY MORNING

Marco waves at a taxi which stops. He jumps in and the vehicle drives off.

SEQ. 130 - PRISON, GATE - EXT. - DAY

Marco arrives at the prison. He gets out of the taxi. He goes in through the main gate and greets one of the guards. He goes directly to the building where the offices are.

SEQ. 131 - PRISON OFFICE - INT. - DAY

Behind the window is the same pregnant office worker he spoke on his first visit to the prison. She is looking more serious and nervous now. Marco thinks it's because he has arrived at such an unearthly hour.

MARCO

(Distressed) I need to see the inmate Benigno Martín urgently.
I know this isn't how things are done, but it's a matter
of life or death.

Mario is expecting the woman to tell him that the inmate has to request the "communication", but to his surprise instead of that she says in an urgent tone:

OFFICE WORKER

The Director of the Center is waiting for you in his office.

MARCO

(Surprised) For me? Where's his office?

The office worker tells him how to get there.

Marco practically runs out.

SEQ. 132 - PRISON - INT. - DAY

(Document this) Marco may have to pass through a scanner, go up a staircase, etc. He barely stops running until he's at the door of the Prison Director's office.

SEQ. 133 - PRISON DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - INT. - DAY

Marco arrives out of breath. He finds the door open and he goes inside.

MARCO

(Gasping for breath) I'm Marco Zuloaga.

The Director stands up, shakes his hand and gives him an opened letter. It has his name and the number of his cell phone written on it.

DIRECTOR

Benigno left this letter for you. We had to open it.
I suppose you'll take care of things.

Without asking the director what's happened, Marco throws himself on the letter.

BENIGNO (Off)

Dear Marco: It's still raining. I think it's a good omen.
It was raining the day of Alicia's accident too.

SEQ. 134 - PRISON, BENIGNO'S CELL OR THE SICKBAY - INT.

In either of these two places, Benigno is alone and sitting at a table. A half written page, a ballpoint and a lot of different colored pills (Would it be too much if he'd formed Alicia's name with the pills?) he looks at the window, he sees how it's raining... We hear part of the text during this sequence.

BACK TO SEQ. 133 - PRISON DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - INT. - DAY

Marco, in front of the Director, is still reading Benigno's letter.

BENIGNO (Off)

I'm writing to you moments before I escape. I hope that the dosage I've taken is enough to put me into a coma and reunite me with Alicia. You're my only friend. The apartment is for you of course. ... Oh, wherever they take me, come and see me and talk to me, tell me everything. Don't be so secretive. Farewell, my friend!
Signed, Benigno.

Marco looks at the director, his eyes are damp.

DIRECTOR

We found him dead about an hour ago. He committed suicide during the night, with pills. He had this letter in his hand.

Marco looks at the letter without saying anything.

SEQ. 135 - ONE OF THE PRISON ROOMS

An employee is giving Marco a bag with all Benigno's belongings. His clothes. The travel books which Marco gave him. A photo of his mother and a hair slide (the one he stole from Alicia), etc. Very few things.

SEQ. 136 - IN THE CEMETERY

The next day.

Marco is alone, standing at Benigno's grave. (Also his mother's)
He is racked with grief.

MARCO

(Invoking him) Benigno, it's me. Alicia is alive, you woke her up. After I heard your message I went back to the prison to tell you, but it was too late. Forgive me for not having done it before. Thank you for the apartment. I put Alicia's hair slide in your pocket so it could be with you for all eternity.

SEQ. 137 AND 138 - ALBENIZ THEATER, A SHOW BY PINA BAUSCH. ON THE STAGE AND IN THE STALLS

A FEW WEEKS LATER

In memory of Benigno, Marco goes to see "Mazurca Fogo", a marvelous show by Pina Bausch.

In the first part, a woman appears with her hair loose and wearing a long flowered dress. She takes a 70s style microphone which is on the left of the stage. She gives the impression that she's going to sing or talk, but she doesn't do either of those things. She gives a long, deep sigh. Then she walks across to the other end of the stage. She looks at the public from there and, still holding the microphone, the woman gives another deep sigh. Several dancers, four or five, appear. She keeps sighing.

Marco remembers Benigno and starts to cry.

Two rows behind him -Marco can't see them- Alicia and her teacher are watching the show, fascinated.

The woman with the microphone and the flowered dress is still sighing, while a group of dancers, forming a block on the floor, carry her through the air. They pass her from hand to hand.

As if to escape from her own emotion, Alicia looks away and breathes deeply. Her eyes fall on Marco's back, profile and tears. The stranger's tears intrigue and move her. For a moment she concentrates on Marco's tears and forgets about the stage.

SEQ. 139 - IN THE LOBBY OF THE ALBENIZ THEATER - INT. - NIGHT

DURING THE INTERVAL

Marco is among the members of the audience who come out into the lobby. He takes out his pack of cigarettes. Scattered around the walls are various posters for the show. Marco likes the show, but at the same time it fills him with a lacerating sadness.

He sees the teacher and Alicia from the back. The teacher is telling Alicia to sit down here and wait for her, she's going to buy a bottle of water at the bar on the first floor.

Marco lights a cigarette and sits down on a wine-colored velvet bench.. Alicia, leaning on a walking stick, sees him and sits down beside him Marco looks at her as she comes over. He can't believe it. Alicia looks back at him. Marco feels intimidated. He pulls on his cigarette. Alicia feels attracted by that man. She has to think of every single word she says because she still has some difficulty speaking. Marco is wearing a bracelet which we've seen on a few previous occasions.

ALICIA

What a lovely bracelet!

MARCO

(Trying to control his emotions)

I bought it in Turkey.

ALICIA

Turkey... I'd love to go there...
Did you see the Dervishes dancing?

MARCO
Yes, of course.

ALICIA
Ohh... They're... (It takes her a while
to say it and Marco interrupts her)

MARCO
They're wonderful.

ALICIA
I want to go to Turkey.

MARCO
(Finally smiling) In that case, let me recommend
the El País Aguilar guide.

Alicia nods her head.

MARCO
I wrote it.

Marco can't help looking at her in a special way, until they are interrupted by the presence of the teacher, who appears in front of them with two bottles of water, very alarmed to see them together and talking.

SEQ. 140 - THEATER LOBBY (CONT.)

She gives Alicia a bottle of water and keeps the other for herself.
And she looks inquisitively at Marco.
A bell rings, announcing that the show is starting again.

TEACHER
Let's go inside, Alicia.

She gives the girl her walking stick and helps her to stand up.
Marco watches them.
When they reach the door, the teacher tells Alicia go in on her own. Alicia moves adeptly,
leaning on her stick.

SEQ. 141 - AT THE LOBBY DOOR, NEXT TO THE CURTAINS

The teacher turns back to Marco when they have reached the door separating the lobby from the stalls.

TEACHER

What did you say to her?

MARCO

We talked about Turkey.

TEACHER

(Disconcerted) About Turkey?

MARCO

Alicia wants to see the Dervishes dance.

(The teacher knows this is true)

MARCO

Don't worry, I'm as concerned about Alicia as you are.

The teacher looks at him, trying to believe him and to understand why he is so concerned. She tries not to be afraid. They hear the first bars of the Mazurca.. Pairs of dancers come on from the left and end up forming a ellipse in continuous movement on the stage.

MARCO

If you see me in the street, don't be scared.
I live across the way from your school.

TEACHER

(Now she is scared) In Benigno's apartment?

MARCO

Yes.

TEACHER

(Reproaching him) And you tell me not to worry!
Why are you living there of all places?!

MARCO

Benigno is dead.

The teacher looks at Marco, terrified.

They walk down the aisle. The teacher is very affected. Alicia has already taken her seat. And she's looking at them.

They've reached the row where Alicia is sitting. The teacher sits next to her. Marco goes to his own seat.

SEQ. 142 - ON THE STAGE

The Mazurca is continuing, you might say moved by its own inertia.

From his seat, Marco turns his head to take a sidelong glance at Alicia. He discovers that she is looking at him and he smiles at her.

The caption of the following chapter appears over this image:

MARCO AND ALICIA

The credits appear over Pina Bausch's choreography.

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Fifth version