

THE BUCKET LIST

by

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April 2005

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*You see, Mr. Barnes. It is because I have lived
very much, that I can now enjoy everything so well.*

--Count Mippipopolous

"The Sun Also Rises"

*He not busy being born,
Is busy dying.*

--Bob Dylan

THE HIMALAYAS

Wide as all the world. Towering and timeless and rumbling mutely into the sky to scrape the floor of heaven.

We're gliding between them as if on a cloud, and CARTER'S VOICE is quiet and humble and yet somehow makes us feel as though he knows a great many things we don't.

CARTER (V.O.)

Edward Perriman Cole died in May. It was a Sunday, in the afternoon, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky...

One mountain rises above the rest. A plume of ice and snow billows from its wedge-shaped peak which thrusts up into the jet stream.

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

"Life is not measured by the breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away." Whoever said that knew a thing or two.

We're MOVING HIGHER now as the mountain looms closer, drawing us up its massive shoulders.

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

Even now, I can't claim to understand the measure of a life... Some people will tell you it's how we're remembered by history, or by the ones we've left behind. Some believe it can be measured in faith. Some say by love... Other folks say life has no meaning at all. We're only dust in the breeze.

CONTINUING over ridges and glaciers towards the peak.

CUT TO:

A SKI POLE; THRUST THROUGH A CRUST OF FROZEN SNOW

The CLIMBER is wrapped in a hooded mountaineering suit and his face is protected by an oxygen mask and ski goggles.

With great effort, he lifts his right foot and plants it forward next to the ski pole, his thin breath swept away by the exertion.

He pauses and lifts his goggles to his forehead. His eyes are blue and ringed with exhaustion as he turns to take in the view of the entire world beneath him...

CARTER (V.O.)
 What I can tell you is that, by any standard, Edward Cole lived more in his last days on earth than most folks manage to wring out of a lifetime.

Lowering the goggles, the climber turns back to the summit.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I know that when he died his eyes were closed, and his heart was open... And I know that he could hear the mountain...

The climber plants the second ski pole and takes another agonizing step as we RISE high above him until he becomes small on the face of the giant.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And I know the mountain heard him in return.

And we slowly...

FADE TO BLACK.

A CIGARETTE; ASHING INTO AN EMPTY "CHOCK FULL O' NUTS" COFFEE CAN

INT. MCCREATH SERVICE CENTER - DAY

CARTER CHAMBERS is a black mechanic in his mid 60's with a worn, but thoughtful demeanor. His job is beneath him and he's known it for the last 40 years. He leans back against the El Camino he is working on.

MANNY (O.S.)
 So then what happened?

His partner MANNY is beneath the car on a roller. He slides in and out of view over course of the following...

CARTER
 Tesla took his design to the richest man in town, mister J.P. Morgan.

MANNY
 The stockbroker?

CARTER
 That's right. Morgan was the major financier for Tesla's primary rival, a fellow by the name of Tom Edison.

MANNY

The light bulb guy?

CARTER

Between them, Morgan and Edison controlled the entire power grid for New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and so on.

MANNY

(jingling his pocket)
So they had some serious jing.

CARTER

They had "serious jing." Which is why, when Tesla walked into Mr. Morgan's office and unveiled an invention designed to provide free, wireless electricity to the entire population of the planet - remember now, this is 1912 - Mr. Morgan had no choice but to finance it immediately.

MANNY

Hold up. He agreed?

CARTER

Without even blinking.

MANNY

But, wouldn't free energy put him out of business?

CARTER

Invariably.

MANNY

Yo, that's one stupid stockbroker.

CARTER

A year later, Tesla invited Mr. Morgan out to Long Island, where he had nearly completed the first in a series of towers which would tap into the Earth's magnetic field and beam its energy through the air to a nearby receiver.

MANNY

Crazy... So what happened?

CARTER

Morgan knew the invention would make both Tesla and himself famous beyond their wildest dreams...change human history forever... So, the next day Tesla was thrown out on the street and the lab was demolished. The morning papers carried stories about his clinical insanity, quoting "anonymous sources" who claimed to have seen Tesla consorting with prostitutes and criminals.

MANNY

And Morgan protected his company. That's so...

CARTER

Machiavellian?

MANNY

Is that the same as being a bad ass?

(Carter nods with a smile)

Cool... What happened to Tesla?

CARTER

He became a pariah. No one dared cross Morgan. What may have been the greatest mind of the twentieth century, the inventor of alternating current and the Tesla coil lived the rest of his life in isolation and died in poverty... Finished before he ever got started.

The phone rings. Carter ambles towards it.

MANNY

Yo, that's a messed-up story.

CARTER

Most true stories are.

(exhales a plume of smoke)

Happy endings are for suckers.

Answers the phone which hangs on the wall next to a calendar of vintage Ford Mustangs.

CARTER (CONT'D)

This is Carter... Oh, hey... Yep... Dr. Phillips? What did he want?... Uh huh... What does that mean?... It can't be bad as all--

He takes a drag of his cigarette then suddenly stops. His expression changes as he listens...

He removes the butt from between his lips as smoke dribbles from his mouth. He looks at the cigarette for a moment then drops it to the floor.

ANGLE ON the cigarette butt, slowly burning itself out. In the b.g., Manny pulls himself out from under the car, staring up at Carter.

CARTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Nah, today's no good, we got seven more jobs backed up-- Yeah... Yeah... Okay... Yep. Okay.

MANNY

Yo, what the hell is that?

CARTER

(hanging up the phone)

Ah, it's nothing, it's just...

He steps on the cigarette as he walks in a daze past Manny and out the door of the garage into the blinding day which fills the frame with its white light...

COUNTY DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Come to order.

DISSOLVE TO:

AN EXPENSIVE LOOKING COPPER THERMOS

As the lid is unscrewed releasing a waft of rich steam which curls up into the waiting nostrils of EDWARD COLE who inhales deeply.

EDWARD

Kopi Luwak. It's the rarest beverage in the world. At a thousand bucks a pound it better be.

INT. WESTCHESTER COUNTY PLANNING BOARDROOM - DAY

Across the aisle, the COUNTY DIRECTOR is flanked by five fellow BOARD MEMBERS who go through the minutiae of beginning the meeting.

Edward is in his early 50's. He's immaculately groomed and dressed in a tailored Savile Row suit with matching tie and pocket handkerchief.

He unscrews a matching cup from the bottom of the thermos and pours a small amount of the brew before handing it over to RICHARD, one of several EXECUTIVES in Edward's retinue.

EDWARD
(coaxing with his hand)
First the aroma.

Richard bends his head to the cup, sniffing it.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Note the earthy tones and the complexity of the body.

RICHARD
It's just coffee, right?

COUNTY DIRECTOR
Mister Cole?

EDWARD
(to Richard)
It's not 'just coffee.'

Watches Richard take a tentative sip.

COUNTY DIRECTOR
Mister Cole. We're ready to begin.

EDWARD
(focused on Richard)
Well?

RICHARD
(clearly doesn't get it)
Wow. Really, uh, good.

COUNTY DIRECTOR
Mister Cole!

EDWARD
(to Richard)
You're a friggin' Philistine, you know that.

Grabs the cup back and stands to face the board.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Thank you, Mister Director, fellow board members. Very much appreciate you taking the time...

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I'm not big on sugarcoat, so you'll forgive me if this comes across as somewhere south of warm and fuzzy...

(looks directly at them)

All of you should be immediately and pointedly fired. They should haul you up by your boot-straps and dump your bloated salaries into the street. The appalling decline of Jefferson Hospital is a direct result of your gross incompetence and utter lack of fiscal management.

COUNTY DIRECTOR

I beg your pardon! This--

EDWARD

Okay, I got a deal. I'm going to talk for a few minutes, and the moment I speak the slightest untruth you can shout me down. Good? Fair? Good... Your shop is hemorrhaging cash. Overhead costs are in the stratosphere. Your lease and land costs were criminally overbid.

One of the board members raises his hand to protest but the County Director waves him off.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Donations have atrophied to the point where you've fallen hopelessly behind the tech curve in research, pediatrics, oncology, MRI...

He pauses and savors a long sip of his Kopi Luwak coffee, eyeballing the board over the rim of the cup until his eyelids close in ecstasy from the flavor.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Mmmm... Put simply, your hospital loses money every time a patient walks through the door.

The board members range from uncomfortable to furious, though none say a word.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

More truths... The Cole Group is the largest private hospital management firm in the region. Our shops maintain state-of-the-art technology systems, and wield unparalleled clout in negotiating with the unions and insurance companies...

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

We've successfully privatized fifteen public hospitals in the past seven years, each of which now provides the highest standard of medicine to their communities.

He pours a second cup of coffee and brings it to his lips.

FEMALE BOARD MEMBER

Despite being grossly understaffed?

EDWARD

(pausing before drinking)

The stronger the staff, the less need there is for--

Suddenly, he coughs into the cup, spraying coffee onto the table.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

Pulls a silk handkerchief to his lips as his suits search their pockets for tissues to wipe the table.

COUNTY DIRECTOR

What about beds? There have been reports that you increase the number of patients to the point of overpopulation.

EDWARD

(wiping coffee)

That's because I run hospitals, not health spas. Our methods are stringent and effective and one has never suffered at the hands of the other... Truths? The truth is you need me boys and girls...a fuck of a lot more than I need--

Coughs into the handkerchief again.

COUNTY DIRECTOR

Mister Cole?

Edward stares in shock at the ugly puddle of clotted blood staining the white silk of the handkerchief...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HUDSON VALLEY ONCOLOGY CENTER - DAY

A pair of elevator doors open at the far end of a long hallway emitting a hulking man in a tailored black suit, lugging a set of four massive suitcases as he counts room numbers. This is THOMAS. Late thirties, efficient, intelligent, and crisp.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Thomas barrels in, passing a curtained off area near the door, and drops the bags onto the empty bed next to the window. Opening the first suitcase, he sets up the room with practiced efficiency...

He plugs in a cell phone cradle and sets it on the bedside table along with a hi-tech alarm clock... Lines half a dozen shoes and slippers down the length of the bed... Unloads a stack of thick books on living with cancer, cancer treatment, cancer nutrition, new cancer protocols... Sets a laptop computer on the table, surrounding it neatly with pens, notepads and Post-Its...

Places a massive, Royal Classic copper coffee siphon on the window sill, along with copper-lined cups and saucers and spoons and a dark wooden box covered in Arabic writing and Sumatran customs stickers...

VOICES are heard in the hallway - a commotion coming closer.

Anticipating their arrival, Thomas quickly removes a vase and flowers. He jogs through the separator curtain and into the bathroom where he fills the vase with water, completely missing the figure lying in the bed behind the curtain.

The noise in the hallway is reaching a fever pitch as Thomas emerges from the bathroom and nearly loses the vase as he sees Carter lying in the near bed.

CARTER
(eying the flowers)
You shouldn't have.

He's thin and drawn and hooked up to a network of tubes and even his eyelashes have fallen out exposing his sallow skin that's dappled with angry chemo burns.

A vase of less-spectacular flowers sits on his bedside table next to an imposing stack of books on twentieth century Russia.

The wall behind him is collaged with get well cards and pictures of his family: two sons, several grandchildren and a beautiful daughter in her early twenties.

THOMAS

I uh... I'm sorry. What are you doing here?

CARTER

Oh, you know, fighting for my life... You?

Just as the hallway brigade bursts into the room - seen in silhouette and through the gap in the curtains - as doctors and nurses and handlers hover over--

EDWARD (O.S.)

(from his gurney)

And tell Dr. Holcomb I want to know more about this bleo-maya-something.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Bleomycin.

EDWARD (O.S.)

Thomas says it eats your lungs. How do I strike fear in the hearts of my employees if I'm breathing through a hole in my throat.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

That's not exactly what--

NURSE (O.S.)

We're going to move you into the bed now.

EDWARD (O.S.)

I can do it myself goddammit. I'm not dead yet.

A huge clattering is heard as Edward falls off the gurney. He swears bitterly as the doctors and nurses grab him quickly and lift him into the bed.

EDWARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Where the hell is Thomas?

THOMAS

You rang my liege.

Pushing through the curtains, leaving a gap through which Carter views Edward being slid into bed.

EDWARD

You let these people drop me. Did you see them drop me?

THOMAS

I'll be sure to tip them all later.

EDWARD

That's funny. That's absolutely, goddamn hysteri--

Lapses into a coughing fit which doubles him over, allowing him a glimpse through the curtains at Carter.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Who the hell is that?

CARTER

Who the hell are you?

THOMAS

(to Edward)

Alright, just lean back now.

Carter and Edward glare at each other before Thomas gingerly leans him back into the bed.

CARTER (V.O.)

That was the first time I laid eyes on Edward Cole. An inauspicious beginning to be sure, but most stories begin that way... It got worse before it got better.

CUT TO:

ELECTRIC CLIPPERS; SHAVING SMOOTH AVENUES ONTO EDWARD'S SCALP.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Edward's mood has not improved.

EDWARD

This guy's still in my room.

NURSE SHING continues shaving his head with a quiet confidence born of years comforting the sick and dying.

NURSE SHING

Mmmm.

EDWARD

I want him moved.

NURSE SHING
Mister Chambers bothering you?

Pokes her head through the curtain to see Carter lying in bed reading Robert Massie's *Nicholas and Alexandra*.

NURSE SHING (CONT'D)
Carter, have you been bothering Mister Cole?

CARTER
(without looking up)
Who the hell is Mister Cole?

EDWARD
It's not a question of-- Not to pull rank, but this is my hospital. Which, at the very least, should rate me my own room.
(to Carter)
No offense.

CARTER
(still reading)
Mmmm.

NURSE SHING
(disapproving)
Mmmm.

EDWARD
What's "Mmmm?" Is that some kind of secret cancer code? Why don't you run down and tell doctor what's his nuts that I want to see him ay-sap.

NURSE SHING
(brandishing the clippers)
Look bub, maybe this is your hospital, but this is my ward and we have strict rules. Two beds to a room. No single rooms. No exceptions.

Edward catches his reflection in the mirror...

EDWARD
Jesus...

Snaps back into the conversation...

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Yeah, those are my rules,
(checks her name tag)
Phyllis. I wrote the rules.

NURSE SHING
Then you shouldn't have any trouble
remembering them. Dr. Holcomb will be in
in a minute to dot you up.

She walks out leaving him with Carter who is chuckling to himself. Edward glares.

CARTER
No offense...

EDWARD
(grumbling)
Mmmm.

Carter chuckles some more...

CUT TO:

INT. READY ROOM - DAY

Edward's bald cranium has been clamped into a large, steel halo. A laser marks a point on his forehead and DR. HOLCOMB marks corresponding dots on his skin with a Sharpie.

DR. HOLCOMB
I'm going to ask you to remember
something for me.

Edward is staring with disgust at his shallow reflection in a glass window.

EDWARD
Oh yeah, what's that?

DR. HOLCOMB
The young lion waits in a dream beneath
the cold white lantern.

EDWARD
What?

DR. HOLCOMB
The young lion waits in a dream beneath
the cold white lantern. Repeat it back to
me.

EDWARD

The young lion waits in a dream beneath
the cold white lantern. What the hell's
that mean?

DR. HOLCOMB

Doesn't mean anything. It's a memory
test. Any time we go near the brain--
There's always a risk. It's how we'll
know if you've gone vegetable on us....
Again.

EDWARD

(after a beat...)

The young lion waits in a dream...

CARTER (V.O.)

By the morning of the surgery the cancer
had spread so far throughout his body
that the doctors gave him a five percent
chance to survive...

CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING THEATER - DAY

As Holcomb and his surgical team operate on Edward who
lies in fragile stasis.

CARTER (V.O.)

...but then they didn't account for how
pissed off they'd made him.

PUSH INTO Edward's inert face which, even under sedation,
appears annoyed at the intrusion.

From the operating lights we...

WHITE DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Edward's eyes open slowly. He hears voices and looks over
at Carter, who is sitting up in bed eating a home-cooked
meal brought by his wife VIRGINIA, early 60's, who sits
in a chair beside his bed.

VIRGINIA

No visitors come in to see him?

CARTER
(shakes his head)
He's been out since they brought him
back.

VIRGINIA
I always found it sad, the patients that
wake up alone from that kind of surgery.

Edward struggles to listen as his eyes begin to close
again...

CARTER
(nods sympathetically)
'Least it's quiet.

She's unsure if he's being editorial about her presence.

They eat in silence for several moments. She looks at him
as if expecting him to speak. He finishes his food... Her
discomfort is palpable.

VIRGINIA
Rachel called this morning.

CARTER
How is she?

VIRGINIA
She's up for the lead in next semester's
ballet.

CARTER
That's wonderful.

Another beat... He's feeling uncomfortable now. Finally,
she starts to collect her things.

VIRGINIA
You need anymore books?

CARTER
Nah, I'm good all the way up to Stalin.

Nods at the stack of tomes on his bedside table.

VIRGINIA
(after another beat...)
Got your meds for the night?

CARTER
Already took 'em.

VIRGINIA
 (another beat...)
 How about pillows?

CARTER
 I'm fine... Thank you, Virginia.

VIRGINIA
 (forcing a smile)
 Sure.

A beat as she girds herself, working up to--

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
 I can stay awhile if...

CARTER
 No sense in both of us being useless in
 the morning.

CARTER (CONT'D)
 Okay.

She leans over to kiss him, but the closeness is awkward.
 Her eyes fall as they touch cheeks, feeling the lack.

She squeezes his hand then turns to go, disappearing
 through the door. He stares at the empty doorway for
 several moments...

CARTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 What is a blackberry?... What are
 lingonberries?... Who is Chuck Berry?...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Edward opens his eyes to see the television is turned on
 to Jeopardy. Carter is sitting up in bed, firing the
 answers back at the screen.

EDWARD
 (barely a whisper)
 Excuse me...
 (stronger)
 Excuse me.
 (a hoarse shout)
 Hey buddy!

CARTER
 Huh? Oh.
 (lowers the volume)
 (MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

Doc wanted you to wake up, said I
shouldn't pussyfoot. What is The Great
Wall of China.

Just as Dr. Holcomb enters like a zephyr.

DR. HOLCOMB

So, it couldn't have gone better. We got
in, got out and the tumors came back
benign. All that remains now is to make
sure you're still mentally--

EDWARD

The shit-ass lion waits in a dream
beneath the stupid white lantern.

Dr. Holcomb nods approvingly. Marks the chart.

DR. HOLCOMB

Surliness is a good sign. How's the
catheter feel?

He checks the integrity of the bulging plastic drain
implanted into the center of Edward's sternum.

EDWARD

Like someone took a dump in my chest.

DR. HOLCOMB

(barely listening as he
scribbles on the chart)

Very good. Okay, we saved your brain, now
we're going to clean out the rest of your
body. Your blood markers are through the
roof so I'd like to begin the first
course of chemo in the morning. Good?

EDWARD

I can't wait.

Dr. Holcomb's expression does little to hide the fact
that Edward has no idea what he's in for. Holcomb surges
for the door...

CARTER

Say, Doc. Do you think you could--

DR. HOLCOMB

I'm sorry. I'm running late.

Walks out.

CARTER

Real Mother Theresa, that one.

Edward tries to sit up but is held in place by the web of tubes running in and out of his body.

CARTER (CONT'D)
I wouldn't do that if I were you.

EDWARD
I have a choice?

Carter turns back to Jeopardy. Edward takes a moment to accept his situation, then turns his head and studies Carter.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
How long have you been here?

CARTER
What is a quadratic equation?
(to Edward)
Huh? Oh, in and out the last few months.

EDWARD
Is it uncomfortable?

CARTER
Which part?

EDWARD
The chemo.

CARTER
No, once you get used to the 'round the clock vomiting, watching your veins turn black and the feeling that your bones are made of napalm...it's a day a the beach.

EDWARD
(paling slightly)
Fantastic.

CARTER
Say, I been meaning to ask you, what in the world is that contraption you got over there?

Points over to the high-tech coffee maker.

EDWARD
It's a siphon. Makes coffee.

Fumbles his hand for the nurse call button.

CARTER

I figured that much. What else it do?

EDWARD

Nothing. Just coffee.

CARTER

I'll be damned... Did you know that coffee was originally discovered by a shepherd in Ethiopia?

EDWARD

(struggling with the call
button)

That a fact.

Carter eases himself out of his bed and begins to unravel Edward's call button, while continuing with his story...

CARTER

His goats had been eating the cherries of an unfamiliar bush and soon became unmanageable, running and jumping all over creation. The shepherd chewed one of the leaves and found it gave him a strange vitality, so he took some branches to the local monastery where the abbot decided to roast them. When the cherries started to burn, the beans inside produced such a pleasant aroma that they brewed them into a stew.

EDWARD

Fascinating stuff.

CARTER

(unable to stop himself...)

Within a few hundred years, it spread to Arabia and Europe.

(Edward stares at him)

Even Sumatra, like that hooch you got over there.

EDWARD

It's called Kopi Luwak.

CARTER

I know what it is.

EDWARD

You've tried it?

CARTER

Nah, I'm more of an instant coffee man.

He hands Edward the liberated call button.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Here ya go.

Shuffles back into bed.

EDWARD

Thanks.

CUT TO:

A LARGE I.V. OF FLUID; FEEDING INTO EDWARD'S CATHETER

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As Thomas begins to unpack a stack of aluminum containers from *Il Mulino*. Spoons the contents onto a large plate.

THOMAS

Okay, we got prosciutto, some fresh mozzarell', and Bruno threw in some of that fried artichoke crap you froth over.

EDWARD

Guidea. And the meat?

THOMAS

Double veal chop with lobster truffle oil risotto.

CARTER

You sure you want to eat all that?

He's watching them through thin eyes as he works his way through his own I.V..

EDWARD

I could eat twice this much if some people weren't such goddamn nursemai--

He's cut off as Thomas clears his throat loudly.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

What?

(to Carter; off Thomas' look)

Oh. Uh, you want Thomas to make you a plate? Tommy, fix a plate for mister, uh--

CARTER
Carter.

EDWARD
Right.

CARTER
Eh, I'll pass.

EDWARD
Yeah? It's the best in New York.

Pops a piece of fried artichoke in his mouth and chews it defiantly.

CUT TO:

EDWARD; PUKING HIS KIDNEYS OUT

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As his sumptuous dinner is jettisoned to the floor. He's moaning and spitting as he climbs out of bed and makes for the bathroom but his I.V. tubes jerk him back and he ends up on the floor where he unleashes another torrent.

He looks up to see Carter watching him evenly.

CARTER
(under his breath)
Ain't the best in New York no more.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Edward is in bed and covered in sweat as he shivers uncontrollably. His eyebrows are gone and the first chemo burn blooms above his right eye.

Carter is curled up in his own bed as he turns the last page of *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin: A Poem* by Mayakovsky then places it atop a nearly completed stack of books on the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

CARTER; OPENING AN ENVELOPE

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Carter removes an old, photo. On the back is written:
 "DEAR DAD, 'TO WATCH US DANCE IS TO HEAR OUR HEARTS
 SPEAK.' HERE'S TO GETTING ON YOUR FEET AGAIN. LOVE,
 RACHEL."

He flips it over to see a long-forgotten shot of he and his wife in their twenties, dancing like Fred and Ginger in a ballroom dance contest; glistening, and laughing, and clutching each other... A lifetime ago...

Carter, turns his head as Edward groans in his sleep, twisted in his sweaty sheets. The bandages have been removed from his head, which is now scarred and littered with uneven patches of stubble. Carter watches him until he settles.

DISSOLVE TO:

AN EMPTY I.V. BOTTLE

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Nurse Shing removes the empty bottle from the stand next to Carter's bed.

CARTER

So, that's the end of it?

NURSE SHING

Fourth and final. We'll run some tests and see where we stand.

CARTER

How long?

NURSE SHING

Soon as I can get Dr. Gibian to schedule them. I'm on for another hour. Anything you need.

CARTER

Thanks Phyllis.

She heads out as he checks his watch.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Mind if I turn this on?

Edward is haggard but lucid as he types angrily on his laptop, sipping a cup of water. He waves his hand dismissively.

Carter tunes the television to Jeopardy and becomes immediately engrossed...

CARTER (CONT'D)
What is The Great Divide?... What is
somnambulism?... Who was Warren
Harding?...

Edward pauses in his typing. Glances over at Carter...

EDWARD
You ever miss one?

CARTER
(thinks a moment...)
'Missed one last week.

EDWARD
You watch this every day?

CARTER
Alex and me go way back... Who was
Icarus?

Edward studies him for a moment before turning back to his computer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM - DAY

Edward kneels on the floor, head resting on the toilet seat, fast asleep. He's woken by VOICES coming from the room. He weakly pushes open the door to see who it is.

ROGER, 40's, Carter's oldest son places a fresh stack of Civil War books atop his dad's bedside table.

ROGER
There you go, pop. That should hold you
for a few hours.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ROGER
Anything else I can bring you?

CARTER
Yeah, how about my grandkids?

ROGER
Everyone's coming by after Sunday dinner.
Maya made the honor roll again.

CARTER

Bet your ass she did. Guess that's another fifty I owe her. Girl's gonna put me in the poor house.

ROGER

Don't think she won't be after you to collect... Mom's worried you're not getting enough rest.

CARTER

Imagine my surprise.

ROGER

Sometimes I'm not sure which one of you this is harder on... You'll call when you get the test results?

CARTER

If that day ever comes. I love you, Rog.

Kisses him goodbye as Edward shuffles out of the bathroom, blocking Roger's way.

EDWARD

Sorry.

ROGER

Afternoon, sir.

Edward climbs gingerly into bed as Roger leaves.

EDWARD

Your son?

CARTER

Roger's my oldest. He's a tax lawyer, over in the city.

Pulls down a photo of his family on the wall. Hands it across to Edward, who glances at it briefly.

CARTER (CONT'D)

His brother, Lee, is an engineer. Builds bridges. And our youngest, Rachel's in her first year at the American Ballet Academy.

EDWARD

You got a young one.

CARTER

We call her "The Accident." We'd hardly gotten the boys out of the house when she came along. My sons don't know it yet, but she's smarter than all of us.

EDWARD

(handing it back)
That's how it should be.

CARTER

You got kids?

EDWARD

Never stayed married long enough.

CARTER

You prefer Ed or Eddie?

EDWARD

Edward's fine. What are you reading?

CARTER

Figured I'd take on the Civil War again.
Book on Robert Smalls.

EDWARD

Never heard of him.

CARTER

He was a conscript slave aboard a Confederate steamship, *The Planter*. One night he and some of the crew smuggled their families aboard and stole it right out from under the rebels' noses.

EDWARD

(could care less)
Interesting.

CARTER

He turned it over to the Union Navy who made him a captain. By the end of the war he'd risen to the rank of General.

EDWARD

(knows Carter can't stop himself)
You don't say.

Carter realizes Edward's laughing at him and he knows why. And yet...

CARTER

He later became the second African-American to serve in Congress.

EDWARD

(after a beat...)

I don't like history books.

(off Carter's expression)

I never saw the point. History's just...history. I'd rather make it than read about it.

CARTER

How's that coming along?

EDWARD

I've done alright for myself.

CARTER

All your dreams fulfilled?

EDWARD

Pretty much, yeah. What about you?

CARTER

(holds up the book)

This is as close to history as I'll ever get... Got through two months at city college before I got the news... Young, black and broke with a baby on the way, you take the first job they offer you. Forty-five years goes by pretty fast.

For the first time, Edward fully understands Carter...

CUT TO:

THE SOUNDS OF A BASEBALL GAME

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Carter writes on a sheet of lined paper resting between the open pages of his book. He appears to be making a list. We see the words "GREAT WALL OF CHINA."

EDWARD (O.S.)

Come on you bums, it's one out, how hard can it be?

Carter lowers the book just enough to reveal Edward lying on his stomach with his head propped on a pillow at the foot of his bed, stretching his tubes and cables to the limit as he berates the Met game on the TV.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 (to Carter)
 These guys are killing me... What are you
 doing?

CARTER
 Just scribbling.

Edward's attention is diverted as a Phillies player
 bloops a single. Edward is beside himself.

EDWARD
 That's just... That's... I can't take
 much more of this!

Carter's feelings are commensurate as he puts on a pair
 of head phones and listens to Bach's *Cello Suite No.1 in*
G-Major.

Carter returns to his list. He thinks a moment before
 writing the words: "WITNESS SOMETHING TRULY MAJESTIC."

When he looks up again, Holcomb is standing at the foot
 of Edward's bed. The doctor's face is pinched and somber
 as he speaks... Edward listens implacably, his face
 impossible to read.

Carter slides the headphones off to listen...

DR. HOLCOMB
 --a few months, if we're lucky. The good
 news is, we're not giving up. There are
 some experimental programs we're
 conducting and, though I don't want to
 get your hopes up, I think you'd be an
 excellent--

EDWARD
 Doc.

DR. HOLCOMB
 --candidate. It's cutting edge medicine.
 The odds are against you, but--

EDWARD
 Doctor Holcomb.

DR. HOLCOMB
 Yes?

EDWARD
 You're blocking my view.

DR. HOLCOMB
Oh. Sorry.

Holcomb steps to the side of the television. Stares for a beat...

DR. HOLCOMB (CONT'D)
Well, if you have any questions.

Waits another beat then starts for the door.

EDWARD
(eyes on the game)
One question.

DR. HOLCOMB
Of course.

EDWARD
Carter?

CARTER
Yeah?

EDWARD
'Something you needed from Dr. Holcomb?

DR. HOLCOMB
I'm sorry, I'm not Mister Carter's--

EDWARD
You are now.

Holcomb stares at him but Edward's attention never leaves the screen. Finally, Holcomb steps to the wall beside Carter and presses the call button.

FLOOR NURSE (O.S.)
(over the intercom)
Yes, Mister Chambers?

DR. HOLCOMB
Bring me the chart for Mr. Chambers.

Carter adjusts in his bed...

CARTER
Just want to know where I stand is all.

Holcomb nods and pats Carter's shoulder as the Floor Nurse returns with the chart.

Holcomb grabs it and flips through several pages. Carter watches nervously.

After several moments, Holcomb's eyes widen with incredulity before his shoulders slump visibly... He looks over at Edward, then back at Carter.

DR. HOLCOMB

I'm sorry, Mister Chambers. It seems the carcinoma is unabated. Your cancer has spread.

Carter takes it in as if it's the answer he expected.

CARTER

How long?

DR. HOLCOMB

At this extended stage, my guess would be seven months, maybe a year... As I was just telling Mr. Cole, you might qualify for our research program which has had some very positive--

CARTER

Sure, Doc. Whatever you think.

DR. HOLCOMB

I'm truly sorry.

CARTER

Thanks.

He replaces the headphones over his ears as Holcomb glances at the two of them before making his exit.

Bach plays for several moments over the two silent men.

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

There was a survey once; a hundred people were asked, if they could know in advance, would they want to know the day of their death. Out of the hundred, ninety-six of them said no.

Carter closes his eyes as the music washes over him.

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

I never understood that. I always thought it would be liberating, knowing how much time you had left to work with.

He looks over at Edward who is staring back at him over his shoulder.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
So now I knew.

They hold the look for several moments. Neither says a word.

FADE OUT.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON EDWARD; fast asleep. A square of sunlight moves across his eyes. The light is cut off as someone moves past and begins cleaning up the mess of tissues and pill bottles on the bedside table.

The ray of light stutters until Edward opens his eyes to see Thomas straightening up his side of the room.

THOMAS
Rise and shine.

EDWARD
Go fuck yourself.

THOMAS
Or that.

Edward rolls over to see Carter, sleeping with his back to him.

He notices a crumpled ball of paper on the floor between them. With some effort, he leans out of bed to reach for it.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I'll get it.

EDWARD
I got it! Go down get me some'a those
croissants that I like.

He grabs the paper ball and lies back in bed, then unravels it to reveal the lined notepaper Carter had been writing on. The heading reads:

THE BUCKET LIST

He scans the list of activities below, scoffing to himself under his breath.

CARTER (O.S.)
What are you doing?

EDWARD
What is this?

CARTER
Give it back.

EDWARD
What is it?

CARTER
(sighs)
City College. My freshman philosophy professor assigned this exercise in forward thinking. Had us make a list of all the things we dreamed of doing with our lives...

EDWARD
...before you 'kick the bucket.'

CARTER
Back then I had things like, 'Make a million dollars.' 'First black president.' Young man's wishes. Thought I'd make up a new one.

EDWARD
But this is all so--
(reading...)
"Help a complete stranger for the good? Laugh until I cry? Witness something majestic?" Your old one was better.

CARTER
Anyway, it's pointless now.

EDWARD
Why do you say that? Mind if I touch this up a little?

Grabs a red pen and begins to write his own list alongside Carter's.

CARTER
(sliding out of bed)
Matter of fact I do.

EDWARD
You said yourself it's pointless.
(crossing items out)
(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

These are all so...I dunno, dramatic. I mean, the thing with the car's not bad, but-- Wouldn't you want to go out with a bang? Have some fun?

CARTER

It's not about that, it's-- You're missing--

EDWARD

Missing what? What's 'something majestic?'

CARTER

During the Second World War, the Hump Pilots were a squadron that flew supplies through the Himalayas into China. They used to--

EDWARD

That's it! What about skydiving?

Starts to write again.

CARTER

You're missing the point.

Carter snatches the paper from him. Grimaces at Edward's lurid red handwriting scrawled like graffiti alongside his own neatly blocked list.

EDWARD

Am I?

CARTER

(reading)

"Kiss the most beautiful girl in the world?" How you figure on doing that?

EDWARD

That might be a tough one.

CARTER

(scanning the rest)

Get a tattoo? This is the sum of your ambition? Shit, I've taken baths deeper than you.

EDWARD

What'd Holcomb say? You've got months?

CARTER

A year, if I'm lucky.

EDWARD

He wasn't so generous with me. My whole life I've been working my ass off towards...

(can't finish the sentence;
shrugs...)

It's easy to be deep in freshman philosophy.

Carter stares at his feet. Lifts his toes off the linoleum floor, then lowers them. After a beat...

CARTER

Maybe skydiving could be interesting.

EDWARD

Now you're talking.

Edward unhooks himself and hops out of bed. Grabs the list back from Carter and begins pacing...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

We could do this. I've got some money...

CARTER

I don't know, I--

EDWARD

Okay, out of the whole world, who's the one person you've always wanted to meet?

CARTER

I can't.

EDWARD

Why not? So, you'll pay me back in a coupl'a years.

CARTER

It's not that. It was meant to be metaphorical, you know, trying to get a handle on--

EDWARD

Blah, blah. Metaphors are for tea-drinkers. You said yourself you haven't done anything. This is your last chance.

CARTER

To make a fool of myself?

EDWARD

To do something for yourself...instead of wallowing as a guinea pig in Holcomb's bullshit science experiment.

Carter stares at the floor, his mind churning...

CARTER

You think it's bullshit?

Virginia pushes through the door...

VIRGINIA

This place has gone to the dogs. There isn't an M.D. within--

Almost walks into Edward, knocking him off his feet.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Oh my lord.

EDWARD

Excuse me.

VIRGINIA

(helping him up)

What are you boys up to in here?

CARTER

Nothing, we were just talking is all...
So, the results came in.

CUT TO:

VIRGINIA; ABSORBING THE NEWS

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Carter watches her, unsure of what's to come. Her expression hardens slowly, from grief to steel - a look he's seen a million times.

VIRGINIA

So which is it? A year or months?

CARTER

He couldn't be sure.

VIRGINIA

I knew we should have gone to Sloan-Kettering.

Pulls out her cell phone and dials furiously.

CARTER

You know that wouldn't have made a difference.

VIRGINIA

No, I don't know. We're not giving up so easy. I want a second opinion. There's other kinds of treatment.

CARTER

I don't know if--

VIRGINIA

(into the phone)

Yes, Oncology please. Dr. Veteri's office.

CARTER

'Ginia.

VIRGINIA

Let me handle this.

(into the phone)

Dr. Veteri? Virginia Chambers...

CARTER

'Ginia.

VIRGINIA

(not listening)

Yes, that's right... Well, it's my husband. We've had some complications and- Yes, I was hoping I could get him in to see you...

Almost unconsciously, Carter finds himself backing away from her; his bare feet taking him backwards until he finds himself at the door to his room.

Virginia is oblivious as she talks into the phone.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Carter enters and sits on the side of his bed.

Edward waits for him to say something... Carter mumbles something under his breath...

EDWARD

Sorry?

CARTER

Let's do it.

(Edward smiles)

Before I change my mind.

Edward smiles a sunrise.

EXT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - SAME

Virginia paces as she makes arrangements on the phone until Carter's hand reaches into frame and hangs it up.

VIRGINIA

Carter?! What are you doing?

CARTER

I need to talk to you.

VIRGINIA

I was just on with--

CARTER

I'm going away for a couple of weeks.

She takes in that he's wearing a coat over his hospital gown.

VIRGINIA

The hell you are. You know how many strings I had to pull to get you--

CARTER

Edward and I are going away.

VIRGINIA

You and--? Going away where?

CARTER

I don't expect you to understand.

VIRGINIA

I'm a nurse, I understand plenty. You think you can run away because your time's up so nothing matters anymore.

CARTER

That's not--

VIRGINIA

Why don't you tell our children that?
(grabs the phone, starts to
dial)

(MORE)

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

See what they have to say when they find out you've given up on them.

CARTER

(snatches the phone back)

Given up?! I've given everything to this family. Forty-six years greased up under the hood of a car to see that they didn't want for nothing! And they didn't... I think I've earned a little time for myself.

VIRGINIA

To do what? Run off with this idiot?

CARTER

(thinks a beat)

To remember who I wanted to be when I was nineteen.

VIRGINIA

You're my husband.

CARTER

I am your husband... I'm their father. I'm a grandfather and I'm a mechanic. I need to know who else I am.

VIRGINIA

I'll tell you who else you are... You're a fool who thinks he's figured out how not to have cancer for a couple of weeks.

Edward comes out of the room, stopping right in the middle of their conversation.

EDWARD

Sorry.

He eases past them and continue down the hall towards the elevators, the doors of which open revealing Thomas holding a tray of croissants.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

We're blowing this pop stand.

Carter stares at his wife for a moment then hands her the phone and walks off to join Edward in the elevator.

CARTER (O.S.)

And so it began.

He looks back at her at her as the doors close.

DISSOLVE TO:

CENTRAL NEW JERSEY SEEN FROM 8,000 FEET

EXT. SMALL AIRPLANE - DAY

We see Carter beneath a jump helmet, staring wide-eyed through one of the windows. Beginning to hyperventilate, he shuts the blind.

INT. SMALL AIRPLANE - DAY

Carter struggles with the top of a child-proof prescription pill bottle.

CARTER

(muttering to himself)

First time in an airplane and you wanna jump out of it.

KYLE (O.S.)

Need a hand?

CARTER

No, I got it...

(muttering himself)

Gotta be the biggest horse's ass since--

(drops the bottle)

Dammit!

The bottle rolls forward, towards the cockpit where Edward is seen from the back, talking with the pilots.

CARTER (CONT'D)

(about all of it)

Fool... So foolish...

KYLE (O.S.)

Wanna try to get it?

PULL BACK to reveal KYLE, young and brawny, sitting immediately behind Carter. In fact, Carter is literally sitting in Kyle's lap.

CARTER

How do you suggest we do that?

Kyle stands suddenly - he's huge, about 6'5" and Carter is bound to his torso via a series of nylon jump straps.

As his feet dangle, Carter pitches forward until his upper-body is almost horizontal while his hips are still vertically strapped to Kyle.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Just perfect.

Kyle duck-walks the suspended Carter over to the prescription bottle. Carter extends his arms down but the bottle rolls out of his grasp and into Edward's outstretched hand.

Carter looks up at him. Edward's face is peppered with stubble.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Not a word.

(grabs the bottle)

Back to the chair, Kyle!

Kyle waddles back to the chair. Carter almost hits his head on the fuselage.

EDWARD

(to Kyle)

You'll have to forgive him, Kyle. He's on the outs with the wife.

KYLE

(sympathetic hand on Carter's knee)

Been there, man.

Carter swallows a pill. Tries to center himself.

CARTER

Some things are not up for discussion.

EDWARD

I understand.

The CO-PILOT comes out and straps himself to Edward's back.

CO-PILOT

Thirty seconds to drop.

EDWARD

(to Carter)

She's tough, your wife. That's good. The Sequel was tough like that.

CARTER

The Sequel?

EDWARD

The second Mrs. Edward Cole. God that woman hated me.

CARTER

I can't imagine why.

KYLE

Maybe because he called her The Sequel.

CARTER

Thank you, Kyle.

EDWARD

Know what I learned? That independence is the only true gauge of human virtue; what a man is and what he makes of himself. Not what he has or hasn't done for others.

As the Co-Pilot pulls the door open, filling the cabin with whipping wind. Kyle stands and moves them closer to the door. Carter eyes the abyss outside. Edward is nonplussed.

CO-PILOT

Fifteen seconds. Fourteen. Thirteen.

EDWARD

(to Carter)

There's no substitute for personal dignity.

CARTER

(terrified)

Could you shut up?!

CO-PILOT

Ten. Nine. Eight.

Kyle lowers goggles over Carter's face.

CARTER

I'm not sure I can do this.

EDWARD

Sure you can.

Nods at Kyle to continue.

CO-PILOT

Seven. Six. Five.

CARTER
I'm more of a guy who likes to think of
himself as a guy who jumps out of--

Carter screams as Kyle jumps and they disappear out the door. Edward watches them fall away then dons his goggles...

CO-PILOT
Here we go.

EXT. SMALL AIRPLANE - DAY

As they leap from the plane, free-falling into the ether. Everything goes quiet save for the flapping of their jump suits.

They dive towards Kyle and Carter, whose scream grows louder as they approach. The Co-Pilot locks hands with Kyle so that Carter and Edward are once again face to face.

EDWARD
Isn't this amazing?!

Carter's too busy being terrified to respond.

CO-PILOT
Cords in five seconds.

He and Kyle separate, getting distance between them...

KYLE
You wanna do it?

CARTER
No!

KYLE
Sure ya do. Just let 'er rip!

Carter is unsure which cord is which, so he pulls everything. He's jerked to a stop as both main and emergency chutes billow open.

Edward and the Co-Pilot continue to drop, watching their counterparts' dueling chutes flapping high above.

EDWARD
Nine toes in the grave he's still afraid
to let go.

CO-PILOT
Okay, let's deploy.

EDWARD
Right there's the piss of it. When you're
living for someone else you can't help
but be careful... No progress in careful.

CO-PILOT
We're in the red zone.

EDWARD
I was in love once.

CO-PILOT
Pull the damn cord!

But Edward just closes his eyes, spreads his arms out,
and lets god decide.

CUT TO:

IMPACT; OF AN ANGRILY SLAMMING DOOR

EXT. JUMP SCHOOL - DAY

The furious, muffled swearing of the Co-Pilot is heard
from within the building as Edward and Carter walk
towards the limo.

Edward has taken out The Bucket List. With the red pen he
crosses off "JUMP OUT OF A PERFECTLY GOOD AIRPLANE" from
his side of the list.

EDWARD
That's one down. How you feeling?

CARTER
(horrible)
Terrific.

EDWARD
(oblivious)
Me too. Who'd believe that only yesterday
we were rotting in a cancer ward.

THOMAS
Back in one piece I see.

EDWARD
We live to die another day.

THOMAS
How encouraging.

EDWARD
Tommy, do me a favor?

THOMAS
Anything, sir.

EDWARD
Go fuck yourself.

THOMAS
Certainly, sir.

CUT TO:

VIRGINIA SEATED AT THE SUNDAY DINNER TABLE

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

The rest of the Chambers family is there: Roger and his wife CHANDRA, 40's, along with their daughter MAYA, 12, and son KAI, 7; Carter's younger son LEE, late 30's, is there with his pregnant wife ELIZABETH, 30's; and finally Carter's daughter RACHEL, 19.

Virginia is tuned out of the conversation, trying not to look at the empty chair at the opposite end of the table.

LEE
I know, but that doesn't give him the right to abandon us.

ROGER
He didn't 'abandon' us.

He looks over at Virginia. Chandra reaches out and lays her hand over Virginia's. The phone rings in the kitchen.

MAYA
I'll get it!

Runs into the kitchen.

RACHEL
I know why he left... Because of this, what we're doing right now. Trying to decide what's right for him, like we know better.

LEE
It's called love.

ROGER
 (to Rachel)
 You'll understand when you have a family.

RACHEL
 I have a family. I'm not saying I agree
 with what he's doing, I just think we
 might want to wait for his side of it
 before we--

MAYA
 Grandpa's on the phone. He wants to talk
 to Grandma!

Holds the phone out to Virginia. Everyone stops...

Roger looks over at Virginia. She shakes her head,
 doesn't want to speak to him.

ROGER
 Here ya go, baby.

Takes the phone from Maya.

ROGER (CONT'D)
 Where are you, pop?

INTERCUT WITH;

EXT. URBAN TATTOO PARLOR - EVENING

Carter stands outside the doorway which bears the sign:
 "INK, INC."

CARTER
 Atlantic City.
 (looking around)
 Not the good part.

ROGER
 Give me the address and we'll come pick
 you up.

CARTER
 How's your mother?

ROGER
 She's holding up.

CARTER
 I need you all to look after her for me
 for a while.

ROGER
When are you coming home?

CARTER
I don't know.

ROGER
Are you coming home at all?
(a beat)
Pop?

CARTER
I know you don't understand why I'm doing this. To be honest, I don't entirely know myself... But I need this, son... I've never once asked anything for myself, from any of you, but I need to do this.

Roger listens for several moments while the others watch him. Finally his shoulders slump...

ROGER
Okay, pop... Will do... We love you too.

He hangs the phone up. Turns to look at his family. Virginia gets up from the table and leaves the room.

Carter closes the cell phone. Takes a deep breath then exhales...

EDWARD (V.O.)
Yaah!

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - EVENING

Carter enters to find Edward seated in a chair while a heavily inked TATTOO ARTIST works Edward's shoulder with a buzzing needle.

EDWARD
Decide what you're going to get?

CARTER
Huh? Oh, I dunno. I can't think of anything worthwhile.

EDWARD
What's worthwhile? We're gonna be dead in five minutes.

The buzzing stops.

TATTOO ARTIST

Come again?

EDWARD

Not literally...

(to Carter)

You could get a skull. Or a dragon!

CARTER

I think I'm gonna--

EDWARD

--pass, yeah... We're supposed to be in this together.

CARTER

I never agreed to desecrate my body.

EDWARD

What are you worried they won't let you be buried in a Jewish cemetery?

He suddenly erupts into a coughing fit.

TATTOO ARTIST

I can't do this if you keep moving.

EDWARD

I'll tell the cancer to take the day off.

TATTOO ARTIST

(pulling back)

You got cancer?

EDWARD

Don't worry, it's the non-contagious kind.

(to Carter)

What's your problem?

Carter looks up from staring at his feet again.

CARTER

Nothing. Just thinking.

EDWARD

It's not like you're ditching her for another woman.

CARTER

I've never been with another woman.

A beat as Edward shakes off his incredulity...

EDWARD
Say that again?

CARTER
'So hard to believe?

EDWARD
Actually, yeah. It's just so-- That's
gotta go on the list!

CARTER
Forget it.

Edward starts digging in his pockets, which jostles the
needle.

TATTOO ARTIST
That tears it.

Sets the needle down and pulls a strap from under the
cradle.

EDWARD
(to Carter)
Sixty five years and-- Shit, we should
throw you an orgy. Hey!

As the tattoo artist straps his arm tightly into the
cradle.

CARTER
I said no!
(surprised at his own
vehemence)
No.

EDWARD
Okay. It's your funeral, so to speak...

Grits his teeth and the tattoo artist resumes with
renewed vigor.

CUT TO:

EDWARD'S TATTOO; A PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF

A tiny parachute visible in the background.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS 500 RACE TRACK - DAY

Empty save for the two men. Edward examines the
reflection of his tattoo in the window of a pristine
Mustang Shelby GT.

EDWARD
It's not bad actually, it's just... Do I
really look that--

CARTER
Old?

Carter is running his fingertips across the car. Both men
are dressed in racing suits.

EDWARD
I was going to say satanic. Still, it's a
pretty good likeness.
(looking at the car)
This the one you were talking about?

Carter grins as he nods and pulls on his helmet.

CARTER
Ready for an ass-whuppin'?

Edward replaces the bandage and zips his suit up. His
unshaven face is littered with stubble.

EDWARD
We'll see.

He walks around the Mustang to the waiting Lamborghini
Murciélago LP640. Nearly one of a kind, it's more rocket
than automobile.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
First one to fifty laps. Loser buys
dinner.

He slips into the car, closing the gull-wing door beside
him.

INT. MUSTANG - DAY

Carter climbs into the car. Checks the gauges as he runs
his hand along the beautifully refurbished dash.

CARTER
Hello darlin'.

EDWARD (O.S.)
(filtered)
Grown-up enough for you?

Carter adjusts the helmet-mic in front of his mouth.

CARTER
You sure we're cleared for this?

The Lamborghini comes to life, whining like an aircraft engine.

EDWARD (O.S.)
It's taken care of. Why, you want to wimp out again?

CARTER
Not on your life.

Carter turns the ignition on the Mustang. Its growl is guttural and primal.

CARTER (CONT'D)
You're in my world now, sonny. See you at dinner.

EXT. RACE TRACK - DAY

The Mustang drenches the Lamborghini in a shower of gravel as it fishtails out onto the track.

INT. LAMBORGHINI - DAY

Windshield wipers clear the dirt as Edward struggles to put the car in gear.

EDWARD
So it's like that, is it?

The gears grind as he works the stick. Finally gets the car in gear as Carter is heard over the headset, cackling for joy.

ON THE TRACK; where the Mustang screams around a turn, taking a line towards the infield where the Lamborghini hiccups in fits and starts towards the track.

IN THE LAMBORGHINI; Edward wrestles with the stick...

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Come on, you stupid--

The car jerks forwards onto the tarmac, right in the path of the oncoming...

IN THE MUSTANG; Carter hits the gas, taking the car low across the infield, narrowly missing the Lamborghini before he roars back onto the track.

Carter grins into his rearview mirror, sees Edward's car swerving across the track behind him.

IN THE LAMBORGHINI; Edward's trying to control the car.

CARTER (O.S.)
It's a racing set up. Steer with the throttle.

EDWARD
Which one's the throttle?

He's about to hit the wall until he mashes the gas and the car suddenly launches down the track.

DOWN THE TRACK; Edward pulls even with the Mustang.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
So we're having fun now?

CARTER
It's a step in the right direction.

The Mustang jumps ahead, cuts the Lamborghini off.

EDWARD
You know what your problem is?

CARTER
I'm sure you'll enlighten me.

The Lamborghini cuts around and pulls even again.

EDWARD
You're the guy behind the chairs at the poker table.

CARTER
Come again?

EDWARD
The guy who stands behind the players with his hands in his pockets, studying the game like he's learning something, but never has the balls to sit at the table.

CARTER
Some people can't afford to gamble.

EDWARD
Then why be in the casino in the first place?

The Lamborghini pulls up next to the Mustang. Edward looks over at Carter.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I don't think it's losing you're afraid of. I think that deep down, you're actually afraid to win.

Now the Lamborghini takes the lead, clipping the front of the Mustang as it pulls in front.

CARTER
Jesus!
(regains control of the car)
Why on earth would anybody be afraid to win?

EDWARD
That's between you and your shrink, I just call 'em where they fall.

CARTER
You want to talk about--

Pulls the Mustang alongside. His turn to yell.

CARTER (CONT'D)
You're the most fearful person I've ever known. God forbid you ever open the door a crack and give up even the smallest ounce of control.

EDWARD
My work done my way. Personal, selfish, egotistical motivation. Look where it's gotten me.

CARTER
Alone, bitter and scared of anything with a hint of emotional consequence.

EDWARD
Depravity's in the eye of the beholder. At least I'm not chicken.

IN THE MUSTANG; Carter rolls his eyes, knowing he shouldn't take the bait. He drives evenly for a moment. Then, despite himself...

CARTER
Ah, screw it.

ON THE TRACK; the Mustang revs and roars, nailing the rear of the Lamborghini...

He moves around to pass but Edward slams sideways into him, nearly putting Carter into the wall...

Carter fights back, smashing hard into Edward's car...

Both cars careen off the track, through an open section of the wall, then punching through a chain link fence to the outer parking lot.

LONG SHOT; as the two cars play demolition derby in the empty lot, colliding towards us until they roar past and slam through the striped security gates and out onto the open road.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

The cars speed down either side of the double-yellow line doing well over a hundred as they smash back and forth.

EDWARD

Do you have any idea what these cars cost me?

CARTER

We're playing poker, aren't we?

SIRENS BLARE as a police car appears behind them.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Oh, Jesus.

Edward sees the cop... For some reason, he smiles.

EDWARD

Are you sure?

CARTER

Am I sure of what?

As the Lamborghini suddenly guns ahead, red-lining down the highway.

CARTER (CONT'D)

'Son'vabitch is crazy...

He checks the police car filling up his rearview mirror.

Suddenly, the Mustang nearly leaps out of its tires. The police car loses ground quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL POLICE STATION - DAY

As Thomas emerges followed by Edward and Carter. Thomas carries their racing suits towards the waiting limo while Carter scans the police paperwork.

CARTER
That's a serious fine.

EDWARD
Chump change.

CARTER
How much money you got, anyway?

EDWARD
Enough.

CARTER
(nods; a beat)
How much is enough?

EDWARD
Didn't anyone tell you it's rude to talk about money?

CARTER
I never knew anyone with enough money to ask.

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Edward and Carter settle in the back. Edward pulls out the Bucket List and crosses off "RACE A VINTAGE MUSTANG."

EDWARD
I was going to put "get into a police chase" on the list, but I figured you'd think it was infantile.

CARTER
It wasn't?

EDWARD

You had fun.

(Carter shrugs, hides a
smile)

Come on, let's go grab a bite.

CUT TO:

AN EXQUISITE ICE SCULPTURE; THREE TRITONS SUPPORTING AN
ENORMOUS BOWL OF CAVIAR WITH THEIR TRIDENTS

INT. LE LOIUS XV RESTAURANT, MONTE CARLO - NIGHT

A WAITER carries the caviar on a china platter inscribed
with the logo of LE LOUIS XV through the Versailles-
inspired dining room of what is arguably the world's
greatest restaurant.

He deposits the sculpture in the center of a table where
Edward and Carter are seated alongside their own
respective lineup of prescription pill bottles - pain
killers, etc. Both men are garbed in new, beautifully
tailored suits.

WAITER

Messieurs. Two kilograms Imperial Iranian
Caviar.

A RUNNER sets plates of toast points around the
centerpiece.

WAITER (CONT'D)

Bon appétit, messieurs.

EDWARD

Wait a sec, where's the eggs and capers
and--

The waiter's face assumes an odious expression. Carter
shakes his head.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

What?

CARTER

It diminishes the flavor.

(to the waiter)

Thank you.

EDWARD

You've had this before.

CARTER
(scooping caviar onto a toast
point)
Not even close. In Iran they call it
Aswad Thahab, Black Gold.

Hands the toast to Edward, who sniffs at it before taking
a tentative nibble. Carter chews rapturously.

CARTER (CONT'D)
When the female sturgeon is caught, the
fisherman must take great care that she
dies peacefully. If she feels at all
threatened, she'll secrete a sour
chemical that will ruin the eggs.

EDWARD
Where do you come up with this stuff?

CARTER
How's the caviar?

EDWARD
Honestly?

CARTER
Of course.

EDWARD
It tastes like ass.

Carter almost chokes on his food.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
What?

CARTER
(clears his throat)
Sorry, that's an expression my daughter
used to say. Took us years to coax her
out of it.

EDWARD
I know, the day Emily started seventh
grade it was like someone hooked her
mouth up to a sewer.

CARTER
Who's Emily?

EDWARD
My little-- Well, she's not so little
anymore, she's--

CARTER

You have a daughter? I thought you said--

EDWARD

Had a daughter...we don't--

CARTER

Why on earth not?

EDWARD

We just don't.

Edward plays with his knife for several moments, before--

CARTER

When was the last time you saw her?

EDWARD

I'd really rather--

Edward just shakes his head. Carter grabs the list and the pen and adds "#11" to the bottom of Edward's ten tasks.

CARTER

(writing)

Get back in touch--

EDWARD

(slamming his hand down)

Stop it!

CARTER

Why?

EDWARD

Because, 'Some things are not up for discussion.'

CARTER

Not this. This is too important.

EDWARD

You don't know what you're talking about.

CARTER

I know when something's more important than flinging yourself off an airplane or--

He clears his throat again. Takes a sip of water.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Some things are more important... Excuse
me.

He stands and asks the waiter for the bathroom.

CUT TO:

EDWARD SPOONING CAVIAR

He eyes his freshly laden toast point. He picks it up to
take a bite, then puts it down.

INT. LE LOUIS XV MEN'S ROOM- NIGHT

Carter stands at one of the sinks, back turned as he rubs
his shirt with a towel.

EDWARD
Are you okay?

Then he sees the flecks of blood splattered across the
sink.

CARTER
It's nothing. Just a small blood vessel.
It's already stopped.

Edward sees Carter's reflection in the mirror. The flecks
of blood are now smears across his white shirt. His nose
and mouth are covered in blood.

Carter turns to look at him.

CARTER (CONT'D)
I'm a little dizzy.

Edward steps forward to steady him...

INT. LE LOUIS XV DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As Edward and the waiter help Carter through the room.
Edward notices everyone staring at the blood on Carter's
face, whispering to each other, doing little to hide
their distaste.

EDWARD
(to a gawking woman)
Can I help you? You've never seen a dying
man before?

CARTER
Edward.

EDWARD
Sure you don't want to go to the
hospital?

CARTER
Just busted outta the hospital. Take me
up to my room.

EDWARD
Are you sure?

CARTER
It'll pass.

Edward loops his head under Carter's arm and resumes
their way towards the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL DE PARIS, MONACO - NIGHT

Establish.

INT. HOTEL DE MONACO - ROYAL SUITE - NIGHT

A pastiche of cream and gold and antique furniture framed
by a fresco over the bed and blue silk curtains leading
out to a large terrace with a breathtaking view of the
sea.

Carter stands in the doorway, taking in the room.

CARTER
So this is how the other half lives.

EDWARD
The other half of a half of one
percent... Is it like you imagined?

CARTER
(looking out the window)
Better.

EDWARD
Want me to hang around for a bit?

CARTER
I'm okay. Really... Price of admission.

EDWARD
You're sure.

CARTER
(peering into the bathroom)
Good soak in that big ol' tub, I'll be
good as new.

EDWARD
Okay. I'm right next door.

Carter nods.

INT. EDWARD'S HOTEL SUITE - HOTEL DE MONACO - NIGHT

Edward sits on the bed. Turns on the TV. Watches French Jeopardy, but can't understand a word. He switches it off as the phone rings.

EDWARD
Yeah?

INTERCUT; VIRGINIA - STANDING IN HER KITCHEN - DAY

VIRGINIA
Mister Cole?... This is Virginia
Chambers.

EDWARD
Oh, yeah, hi. Lemme get Carter for you.

Jumps off the bed.

VIRGINIA
Actually, I called to speak to you.

EDWARD
Oh.

VIRGINIA
Is he alright?

EDWARD
Uh, yeah. He's fine.

VIRGINIA
(after a beat)
May I ask where you are?

EDWARD
Uh, Monaco, actually. Tomorrow we're
supposed to fly down to--

VIRGINIA
Give him back to me.

EDWARD
I'm not sure I can.

VIRGINIA
I'm not asking for his sake... I've been a nurse my entire adult life. Had a ringside seat to more human tragedy than any woman should ever have to bear. I'm prepared for him to die... I'm just not prepared to lose him while he's still alive.

Edward stares... Nothing he can say.

CARTER (V.O.)
Who is Howdy-Doody?

CUT TO:

INT. CARTER'S HOTEL SUITE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Carter lazes in the massive marble tub, his face largely obscured by mountainous bubbles as he watches a badly dubbed French version of Jeopardy on a small television.

CARTER
Who are Kukla Fran and Ollie?

There's a knock on the door.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Entrez-vous.

EDWARD
How you feeling?

CARTER
Relaxed. Who is Winky-Dink?

Edward pulls a chair next to the tub.

EDWARD
Is it deeper than me?

CARTER
I don't know, it's pretty deep. Think I went a little overboard with the bubbles. You don't have to pay extra for that? Who is Clutch Cargo?

EDWARD
It's an amenity. Comes free with the room.

CARTER

That's a wonderful word, amenity... Who is Lamb Chop?

EDWARD

So I was thinking...maybe we should put this on hold for a while.

CARTER

Come again?

EDWARD

It's been great, but it's easy for me, you've got your family to think about.

Carter turns the TV off...

CARTER

You spoke to Virginia.

EDWARD

Why would you think that?

CARTER

Why do you think I'm doing this?

EDWARD

Because I talked you into it.

Carter shakes his head. Uses his hands to sculpt the bubbles in the tub.

CARTER

At first, you tell yourself it's a rut; just another one of the ups and downs of marriage. You figure the pendulum will swing back the other way like it always has before and everything will be right again... A year goes by, then another, and soon you've been sleeping over on your side of the bed so long you forget how it felt when you couldn't walk down the sidewalk without holding her hand or what it was in her smile that stirred you... She worries a little more, and lord knows her driving hasn't gotten any better, but for the most part, she's the same girl I fell in love with at seventeen. So little has changed, and yet everything's different... Then I realized, it's me. I lost something along the way...

Edward nods slowly, affected by Carter's clarity.

MUSIC BEGINS; Carter's favorite Bach *Cello Suite No.1 In G-Major* plays over the following MONTAGE of scenes...

CUT TO:

EDWARD AND CARTER; SCREAMING INTO THE WIND

EXT. NGORONGORO CRATER, TANZANIA - DAY

Their heads protrude through the sunroof of a Land Rover doing fifty across the crater floor. Edward's stubble has been shaved into enormous Elvis chops.

A soda lake spreads out ahead of them, its distant waters cast in a strange, pink hue.

The Land Rover splashes into the shallow lake, hurtling towards the pink mass which suddenly EXPLODES INTO THE AIR...

TEN THOUSAND FLAMINGOS take flight, filling the sky with neon wings. The visual is indescribable.

The sound of flock overpowers the music, becoming thunderous as we--

CUT TO:

DENSE MIST; BILLOWING ABOVE THE JUNGLE

We find Edward and Carter standing side-by-side in rain jackets. Though we can't hear a word of it, Carter tries to explain that the native name for the place is "Mosi-oa-Tunya - The Smoke That Thunders", but Edward keeps shouting "What?"

ANOTHER ANGLE; reveals that they are standing at the top of VICTORIA FALLS which plunges into the immense chasm below.

The thunder continues as we...

CUT TO:

WHITE WATER RAPIDS

EXT. ZAMBEZI RIVER, ZIMBABWE - DAY

Hammering the river. Plumes of foam rocket into the air. An inflatable raft bursts from behind a large torrent of water.

Carter clutches at the safety line for dear life, while Edward sits in the bow, hands in the air as if going down a roller coaster.

Slowly, Carter lets go of the line and raises his arms.

In the stern, their Zimbabwean RIVER GUIDE shakes his head at the silly Americans.

DISSOLVE TO:

CARTER; WEARING A SIMILAR EXPRESSION

EXT. A LUSH GARDEN - DAY

As he walks alongside Edward who is deep in conversation with another man.

REVEAL that they are walking with NELSON MANDELA in the garden of his home.

They reach a patio where a small table has been set for three. Mandela politely bids them to be seated as he talks.

Carter's eyes are liquid and he actually pinches himself on the forearm to make sure it's real...

Edward sees it... Returns Carter's smile... They share the look for a moment, appreciating the situation and each other...

Mandela pauses in his discourse to make sure his guests are okay. Carter assures him he's fine and comments on the meal laid out before them.

WIDE SHOT; as the three men tuck into their lunch in the Eden-like garden.

DISSOLVE TO:

A WILDEBEAST -- SEEN THROUGH A HUNTING RIFLE SCOPE

EXT. SERENGETTI - DAY

The cross-hairs settle on the animal's neck. Suddenly, there's movement in the grass. The scope REFOCUSES onto a lioness, lying in wait.

Edward smiles as his finger tightens on the trigger.

The cross-hairs steady on the lioness until she turns and stares right at us.

Edward's finger trembles, a hair from pulling the trigger.

The lioness continues to stare...

Edward's finger moves away from the trigger...

He looks up to see Carter, using his own hunting rifle as a putter, knocking stones across the dry earth. Carter looks up at him questioningly.

The *REQUIEM LACRYMOSA* ENDS as we...

CUT TO:

THE DESERT; SPREAD OUT BELOW

EXT. EGYPTIAN HILLTOP - DAWN

Bathed red in the first ray of the morning sun. Edward and Carter sit atop an ancient wall, taking in the endless expanse of desert below, though Carter's eyes are closed.

Edward has the List out. Crosses off "See the Pyramids."

EDWARD

You know technically, we can kill two of these.

CARTER

Yeah?

EDWARD

What are you doing?

CARTER

(eyes still closed)
Listening.

EDWARD

To what?

(Carter doesn't answer)
Anyway, I figure you want to "Witness something Majestic," this is about as good as it gets.

CARTER

You haven't seen the mountain yet.

EDWARD

Never will if we sit around here all day.

Starts to get up, but Carter doesn't move...

CARTER

The ancient Egyptians had a beautiful belief about death... When their souls reached the entrance to heaven, the gods would ask them two questions. Their answers determined if they were admitted or not.

EDWARD

I'll bite... What were they?

CARTER

Have you found joy in your life?

Edward realizes that Carter has opened his eyes and is looking directly at him.

EDWARD

What, you're asking? Oh, how the hell do I--

CARTER

It's a simple question. Have you found joy in your life?

EDWARD

(thinks for several moments)
Yes.

CARTER

Has your life brought joy to others?

EDWARD

This is horseshit.

CARTER

Is it?

EDWARD

Haven't I done enough for you?

(getting agitated)

I set everything up myself. Paid for the cars, the plane tickets. I can't tell you what I went through getting Mandela set up.

CARTER

For me or for you?

EDWARD

Are you that ungrateful?

CARTER

I'm more grateful than you'll ever know.
I didn't know you before, but now you're
my friend and if it's within my means
there's nothing on earth I wouldn't do
for you.

EDWARD

(after a beat)

Thank you.

CARTER

The question still stands.

EDWARD

I don't know...

He walks several paces away, hands in his pockets.
Moments pass... A long, difficult exhale...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Emily was born on a Sunday and there
wasn't a single cloud in the sky and I
thought it was somehow appropriate... I
know, cheesy, right?

Carter shakes his head, recognizing Edward's joy.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

At first, I was afraid to even touch her.
She was so...helpless. But when the
nurses practically forced her into my
arms, I knew that, for the rest of my
life, I would do anything to protect
her...

Takes a conflicted breath...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

A couple years later her mother and I...
It was tough at times, but me and Emily
stayed pretty close. In college, she
joined another one of her "save the poor
people" groups where she met Carl Okafor.
He was an activist and I guess they met
and she decided she loved him... Good
looking kid. Smart. Driven. But there was
something about him I didn't... Anyway,
when she said they were engaged I told
her I was against it. But, being my
daughter, she went ahead anyway... We had
some distance for a while, but she seemed
happy...

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(a difficult beat...)

The first time he hit her she came to me. I wanted to-- I wanted to beat him into the dirt until he begged for forgiveness...but she wouldn't let me. She said it wasn't his fault. He was broke. Had a few drinks. Said she was the one who picked the fight... I gave her some money and she went back to him. When the money ran out he did it again. This time, she didn't come to me.

CARTER

What did you do?

EDWARD

I did what any father would do. I got him a job. Administration in a small hospital in Great Neck. Gave him an office and a salary. Company car.

CARTER

I don't understand.

EDWARD

I let him get comfortable. Let him think he'd got it made until one night, when he was out banging one of the nurses, I had someone crack his computer and move a bunch of money around. The next morning he showed up for work and they arrested him on the spot. My lawyer's a pitbull. Got him ten years for embezzlement.

CARTER

And Emily?

EDWARD

She cursed me out in front of the entire courtroom after his sentencing. Called me names you wouldn't believe. Said I was dead to her. But I figure, if that's what it took... I'm not proud of everything I've done but I've played by the rules for the most part. If my daughter hates me and they don't let me into heaven...well then I guess that's just life, isn't it?

CARTER

Happy endings are for suckers.

EDWARD

Yeah.

They stare at the desert for a beat. Then Carter stands and he and Edward begin to climb down the stepped wall as WE PULL BACK to reveal that they have been sitting atop the peak of the GREAT PYRAMID OF KHUFU this entire time.

DISSOLVE TO:

VIRGINIA; WORKING AT A TABLE ON THE BACK PORCH

EXT. CARTER'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Virginia's working her way through a stack of forms with a pen, carefully inking over answers she's already marked in pencil.

RACHEL

What are you doing, Mama?

VIRGINIA

Oh, just trying to put a dent in these applications.

RACHEL

So you're going?

She takes a pen and begins filling out another application (sans-pencil) for her mom. We see the name and logo for RUTGERS UNIVERSITY in the corner of the form.

Virginia frowns as Rachel speeds through the questions, but doesn't say anything.

VIRGINIA

Don't see why I should be the only one afraid to get on with things.

RACHEL

What are you afraid of?

VIRGINIA

Same things as most women: silence, darkness, things we can't control.

RACHEL

You think he left because of you?

VIRGINIA

Twenty or so years ago, just after Lee started up at Northwestern, your father and I had planned our first real vacation since Roger was born.

(MORE)

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Supposed to drive out to the Grand Canyon in that old convertible he used to have. See America. Just the two of us. Alone at last.

RACHEL

Very romantic... Isn't that around the time you got pregnant with me?

VIRGINIA

That came a bit later... Day before we were supposed to head off, he asks if we can put it on hold a week. Says he's backed up at the shop... And that was it.

RACHEL

What do you mean? You didn't go?

VIRGINIA

Something always seemed to come up. It was a month before I could unpack my suitcase.

RACHEL

Why didn't he want to go?

VIRGINIA

Twenty two years we had the boys in the house. Grand Canyon's a long drive for two people scared to find out they've got nothing left to talk about.

RACHEL

Why didn't you leave him?

VIRGINIA

You love who you love. Anyway, pretty soon we had something new to talk about.

RACHEL

Me?

(Virginia nods)

So I really was an accident, then?

VIRGINIA

(without looking up)

Not really, no.

Rachel gapes at her, Virginia keeps tracing over the pencil.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAJ MAHAL - DAY

Establishing.

CARTER (O.S.)

The empress was the beloved wife of Shah
Jehan, the fifth mughal emperor.

INT. TAJ MAHAL GALLERY - DAY

Carter and Edward walk past murals depicting the history
of the monument.

CARTER

And though it was an arranged marriage,
they were deeply in love and inseparable
until she died giving birth to their
fourteenth child.

EDWARD

Fourteenth? That's a lot of love.

CARTER

Indians didn't write the Kama Sutra for
nothing... It took twenty-thousand
volunteers twenty-two years to complete
the structure in sixteen forty-eight.
Every square foot designed by Shah Jehan
himself.

They stop at a tile mural of the empress.

EDWARD

So that's true love.

CARTER

Yeah.

EDWARD

Must be nice.

Carter realizes that Edward is looking at him...Carter
stares a moment, then nods slowly, before staring back up
at the empress. Edward reads Carter's thoughts and
quietly walks away.

EXT. TAJ MAHAL - DAY

Edward and Carter walk along the promenade beside the
reflecting pools.

EDWARD

I think I might get another tattoo.

CARTER

Starting your own art gallery?

EDWARD

You ever wonder why all the great historical monuments have to do with dead people?

CARTER

Because they're monuments. That's what they're for.

EDWARD

Yeah, but does being dead have to be a prerequisite? We can't put up a tomb to the unborn soldier? "He would have died for his country if only his parents had been Catholic."

CARTER

You're losing your grip, aren't you?

EDWARD

My family's got this plot upstate. My mother's buried there. Cousins. Grandparents. The whole shebang. We even got a little monument of our own.

CARTER

That where you want to end up?

EDWARD

I don't know, I'm not sure they'd have me. What about you?

CARTER

Want myself cremated and my ashes put in a can and buried somewhere with a view.

EDWARD

You mean an urn?

CARTER

(shakes his head)

I never liked the sound of it. "Urn."
Nope, an old can of Chock Full O' Nuts do me just fine.

EDWARD

Chock Full O--? The instant coffee?

CARTER

Yup. Better coffee even your money can't buy.

EDWARD

I wouldn't bet on that.

CARTER

Ah yes, Kopi Luwak. You really dig that stuff, don't you?

EDWARD

It's the best. Why, what do you got against it?

CARTER

(shrugs, bemused)

Much too fancy for my taste. Simple pleasures my man, simple pleasures.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA - DAY

Seen from a distance as it looms across the hilltops. A sound is heard in the far off distance. We can't quite make it out, but it clearly doesn't belong.

ANOTHER SECTION OF THE WALL; closer now. The sound is heard again, a faint buzzing.

AT THE BASE OF THE WALL; the buzzing is closer now. It's joined by voices.

ATOP THE WALL; plunging down a hillside before us then surging back up to our position. The buzzing is louder still and the voices appear to be singing.

VOICES (O.S.)

Ah Louie Louie. Oh no. Say we gotta go.
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Said ah Louie
Louie--

And suddenly a motorcycle bursts into view up the hillside. Edward clings to Carter's back as they ride along the center of the wall, roaring by us then disappearing down the opposite hillside in a cloud of dust.

VOICES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
--whoa baby! Said we gotta go. Yeah,
yeah, yeah, yeah.

CUT TO:

THE FAR OFF SUN; SETTING AT THE EDGE OF AN ENORMOUS PLAIN

EXT. GREAT WALL OF CHINA HILLTOP FORTRESS - DUSK

As the two dusty men lean against the motorcycle,
watching the sun's dying embers.

CARTER
...Actually, it was built in several
different sections, until Emperor Qin
Shihuang joined them together to fend off
invasions from the Mongolian Huns.

EDWARD
Did it work?

CARTER
Ever heard of The Great Wall of Mongolia?

EDWARD
Nope.

CARTER
There you go...
(looks out at the view)
Virginia would love this.

Edward studies Carter's face while Carter stares out at
the vista...

EDWARD
(after a beat)
You know, I saw this documentary once,
about this English archaeologist guy
flying around the world digging up these
crummy old ruins... Did you know that
even the most primitive villages had
walls built around 'em.

CARTER
(of course he knows)
Is that right?

EDWARD

(after a cold beat)

Anyway, the irony is that by the time these places are discovered, the walls are the only thing left standing...all the things they were built to protect are long gone. So, I guess if the walls don't work, you just what, run away?

CARTER

So now we're trying to be metaphorical?

EDWARD

Look all I'm saying is that you've got a family and a wife who's at home, holding her heart in her hands while you're out here otrying to dig up whatever it is you think you "lost along the way".

CARTER

You have no idea what I feel.

EDWARD

(after a beat)

I know you're not going to be the first black president. You'll never be a millionaire and I'll never see my daughter again, and all the monuments and caviar in the world won't change that.

Carter stares, stubbornly out at the view, slowly shaking his head. Edward sighs, and finally turns to the sun.

WIDE SHOT; as the two men stand atop the wall on the other side of the world, silhouetted against the light as the sun vanishes from sight.

CUT TO:

EDWARD; SHAVING IN A STEAMING SHOWER

INT. HOTEL SUITE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

His body is adorned with a road map of tattoos: a Lambourghini, the face of a lion, the pyramids, and the still healing Taj Mahal.

EDWARD

Like 'em? One for each item on the list.

Thomas waits outside the opening with a towel.

THOMAS
How Rand McNally of you.

EDWARD
Thomas.

THOMAS
My lord?

EDWARD
Go fuck yourself.

THOMAS
Trying my best, sir.

Heads out of the room...

CUT TO:

A TELEVISION; AS CARTER FLIPS THROUGH THE LIMITED
CHANNELS OF CHINESE TELEVISION

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter is on the couch, covered in motorcycle dust save
for a clear area around his eyes from the goggles.

He finally stops on a black and white scene from "Top
Hat" as Fred Astaire courts Ginger Rogers on a bandstand
in Hyde Park.

Carter becomes solemn as Fred begins to sing:

FRED ASTAIRE
The weather is frightening/The thunder
and lightning/Seem to be having their
way/But as far as I'm concerned, it's a
lovely day.

Thomas comes in, stopping to watch him.

FRED ASTAIRE (CONT'D)
The turn in the weather/Will keep us
together/So I can honestly say/That as
far as I'm concerned, it's a lovely day.

THOMAS
(sings)
And everything's okay.

Carter smiles up at him.

CARTER

I won a dance contest to that song. My wife and I did. We were something.

(after a beat)

He trying to drown himself in there?

THOMAS

One dares to dream...

CARTER

Say, let me ask you something Thomas. Is it Thomas or Tommy?

THOMAS

It's Matthew actually but he finds that too biblical... Thomas is fine.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - BATHROOM

Several minutes later, Edward emerges from the shower in a cloud of steam.

EDWARD

She's all yours.

He wipes condensation from the mirror to reveal his new look: Kojak meets Founding Father. Admires himself appropriately.

CUT TO:

DISTANT MOUNTAINS; RISING UP INTO AN IMPENETRABLE BANK OF CLOUDS

EXT. TIBETAN ROOFTOP - DAY

Where Edward and Carter take in the vista.

EDWARD

Okay, it's majestic.

CARTER

That's nothing. Twelve thousand tops.

EDWARD

What's our mountain?

CARTER

We're only going to base camp, but the peak's about twenty nine thousand feet.

Edward whistles.

EDWARD

What's your thing this one? Something about the humper pilots?

CARTER

The hump pilots. All volunteer squadron that single-handedly kept China from falling to the Japanese by flying supplies over the Himalayas from India. Most non-combat casualties of any squadron in the war.

EDWARD

I had to ask.

CARTER

First off you had the Jap zeros which could ambush you from anywhere as you flew through the valleys, or above the cloud cover. That was the easy part... When the weather came in, they couldn't choke off the supply runs, so they flew in the soup... Sonar was all they had back then. They used to try to ping off the mountains to plot their course between 'em. Sometimes it even worked... Sixty years and they're still finding wreckage up there. I read an account by one of them... When the storms rolled in and he couldn't see an inch past the windshield, he used to close his eyes and focus until he couldn't hear the co-pilot or even the engines. He'd focus until everything fell away except the sound of the mountains passing on either side.

EDWARD

What did they sound like?

CARTER

"Voice of god," he said.

EDWARD

Wow, that's... Is there anything in this world you don't have a story about?

CARTER

Virginia calls me Mister-Talks-Most-Says-Least.

EDWARD

Don't get me wrong, I mean it's interesting, but where do you come up with this stuff.

CARTER

It's called reading. You should try it someday... Here, you can start with this.

Slams a book in Edward's chest, *Gandhi an Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth*.

EDWARD

This some kind of yoga manual?

Carter's incredulous... Thomas comes up the steps. Edward tosses him the book.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Here. Read this for me.

THOMAS

So, shitty news or really shitty news?

EDWARD

The first one.

THOMAS

There's a storm up there. They won't fly until the weather clears.

CARTER

When do they expect it to clear?

THOMAS

Next spring sometime. That's the really shitty news, in case you were wondering.

EDWARD

Next trip, huh?

They know full well the remoteness of that possibility.

CARTER

Definitely.

EDWARD

(pulls out the list)
So Hong Kong on the way to Angkor Wat.

As the view of the mountains...

DISSOLVES TO:

THE LIGHTS AND LOOMING TOWERS OF HONG KONG; BREATHTAKING
THROUGH THE GLASS WALLS OF THE HOTEL LOBBY

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL LOBBY LOUNGE - NIGHT

Edward talks on his cell phone at a cocktail table near
the floor to ceiling windows which offer a breathtaking
view of the misty lights and towers of the city.

Thomas sits opposite him, dutifully reading Carter's
Ghandi biography.

EDWARD

So what's the second highest?... And the
third?... Anything outside the Himalayas?

Both men look up as a pair of long, stockinged legs
disappearing beneath a crisp pinstripe skirt-suit passes
their table...

Seen from their POV, the WOMAN'S posture is impeccable as
she strides towards the bar where Carter is proselytizing
to the BARTENDER while he waits for their drinks.

CARTER

The Tibetans call it Chomulungma, meaning
"Goddess Mother of the Snows."

WOMAN

"Goddess Mother of the World," actually.

She takes a seat at the corner across from where he
stands. She's middle-aged and black and even Carter is
struck by the blend of uncommon beauty with a manifest
intelligence.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

In the traditional Tibetan translation.

Edward spots the exchange. Share's an impressed look with
Thomas.

EDWARD

(into the phone)

Chile, huh. Tell me more about that one.

CARTER

(to the Woman)

I stand corrected.

WOMAN

(to the bartender)

Pinot Noir, please.

(MORE)

WOMAN (CONT'D)
(to Carter)
I take it you've been there?

CARTER
(shakes his head)
Hoped to make it up to base camp, but the weather--

WOMAN
You're a little late in the season.

CARTER
So they tell me. My name's Carter.

WOMAN
(shaking his hand)
New Yorker?

CARTER
Jersey. You?

WOMAN
Staten Island. Though I've been over here for quite some time.

CARTER
Must be nice.

WOMAN
It has its allures... I'm sorry if this sounds terrible, but aren't you a little developed in years to be running up giant mountains?

CARTER
(laughs)
Developed. That's certainly one way of putting it.

She turns slightly towards him and smiles as if to say the question still stands...

Carter's eyes drift momentarily to the bodice of her suit which has opened only slightly, revealing a hint of white lace.

CARTER (CONT'D)
I guess you might say I got a late start.

WOMAN
(deadpan)
So what's the attraction?

CARTER

Excuse me?

WOMAN

Why the sudden urge to see it?

CARTER

They asked Hillary that. He was the first man on earth to--

WOMAN

Reach the summit in fifty-three, yes I know.

Carter smiles in surprise. She blushes demurely.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. When you spend your life running your own companies, your social graces tend to wither from neglect. Forgive me... What did Hillary say?

CARTER

He said that "People do not decide to become extraordinary. They decide to accomplish extraordinary things."

WOMAN

And which one are you?

CARTER

I'm nothing special.

WOMAN

Oh, I doubt that very much...

Now it's Carter's turn to blush.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I've been there, you know? Made it up to twenty eight thousand feet before we had to turn back.

CARTER

What was it like?

WOMAN

Cold, mostly. During the day, the sky is more black than blue. There's not enough air to reflect the sunlight... But at night, you've never seen so many stars;

(MORE)

WOMAN (CONT'D)
just out of arm's reach, and so bright
they're like holes in the floor of
heaven.

Their eyes lock and Carter falls a little bit in love.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
There's always next time, for both of us
it seems.

CARTER
Yeah.

He looks down at his drink, swirling the ice...

WOMAN
Did you know that of all cities, Hong
Kong has the fifth highest concentration
of human life?

CARTER
I didn't.

WOMAN
It's true... You wouldn't think it can
feel like the loneliest place on earth.

He stops swirling his glass and looks up at her...

WOMAN (CONT'D)
What I'm about to say... I've never done
this before, but... I have a room
upstairs.

Carter just stares until she lays her hand over his, a
breath of suggestion on her lips...

CARTER
(after a long beat)
I'm sorry.

Gently, he pulls his hand away.

CARTER (CONT'D)
It's not you, I just... It's not you.

The woman nods, accepting the rejection without a hint of
self-consciousness.

WOMAN
You must love her very much.

Carter nods slowly...

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Good for you.

She squeezes his hand gently then walks alone towards the elevators...

Carter watches her for a moment, then looks over to catch Edward watching them with a smug expression on his face, before quickly looking away.

It now dawns on Carter...

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL LOBBY LOUNGE - NIGHT

Thomas looks up from his Ghandi book.

THOMAS

You really should read this.

EDWARD

I should do a lot of things.

(listening on the phone)

Right. Tuesday's no good, we're in Cambodia tomorrow.

CARTER (O.S.)

Okay, you win. Let's go home.

Edward looks up at him.

EDWARD

(into the phone)

Yeah, hang on a sec.

(to Carter)

What did you say?

CARTER

It's time to go home.

EDWARD

(holding up the List)

But we haven't finished the...

CARTER

(shakes his head)

That was very clever of you, Edward.

EDWARD

(transparently)

I don't know what you're talking about.

Carter pats Edward on the shoulder and walks off. Edward closes the phone and removes his red pen.

ANGLE ON THE LIST; As Edward crosses off the words: "MAKE CARTER REMEMBER HE LOVES HIS WIFE."

He looks up to see Thomas smiling at him.

THOMAS
I'm proud of you.

EDWARD
Shut up.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE MANHATTAN SKYLINE; SEEN FROM ABOVE

EXT. GULFSTREAM PRIVATE JET - NIGHT

As Edward stares down at the city through a window. His expression is neutral.

CUT TO:

INT. EDWARD'S LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Driving through the leafy suburbs of northern New Jersey. Edward and Carter sit side by side in the back. Taking measure of what they've accomplished.

CARTER
Thank you. For all of it. Really.

EDWARD
Don't be-- It's nothing. It's--

THOMAS
You're welcome, is what he's trying to say.

EDWARD
(after a beat)
Dead in a month my ass.

He and Carter laugh and he glances out the window.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Hey Tommy, this isn't Newark. You leave your compass back in Hong Kong?

Thomas shares a nervously conspiratorial look with Carter in the rearview mirror before putting up the divider between himself and the back seat.

IN THE FRONT; Thomas exhales a deep breath.

THOMAS

One more stop.

EXT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Pulling up in front of a small ranch-style house.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

EDWARD

Why are we-- Thomas, you off the
methadone? What the hell's--

Stops as he sees something through the window. It's a woman. She's standing in the window of the ranch house, pacing back and forth as she talks on the phone.

CARTER

He kept tabs on her in case you ever
wanted to--

EDWARD

(livid)
This was his idea?

CARTER

No, it was mine. Took the whole flight
back to talk him into it.

EDWARD

Hey Carter, will you do something for me?

CARTER

Name it.

Edward opens the door and climbs out of the car and walks briskly away from the house. Carter watches him go...

CARTER (CONT'D)

(softly)
Go fuck myself.

EXT. SUBURB STREET - NIGHT

Edward walks briskly through pools of light from the street lamps. The limo pulls up alongside and Carter jumps out.

CARTER

This isn't what you want.

EDWARD

Don't tell me what I want. Just because I told you my story doesn't invite you to be a part of it.

CARTER

Is that right? Just like the girl in Hong Kong?

EDWARD

That's different.

CARTER

What are you so afraid of?

EDWARD

I'm not afraid of anything.

CARTER

No?

EDWARD

How did you see it playing out? I knock on the door. She answers. She's surprised and angry but I tell her how much I love her and missed her, and oh, by the way, I'm going to be dead soon and I'm only reaching out because I'm scared to die alone and didn't care enough to consider what that would put her through.

CARTER

Everyone's scared to die alone.

EDWARD

I'm not everyone.

CARTER

Then you're kidding yourself.

Edward pulls out the Bucket List.

EDWARD

This was supposed to be fun, Carter.
That's all it ever was.

Then he tears it in half, then again, and again, and lets the pieces flutter to the sidewalk.

Edward walks off leaving Carter to watch the piece of the The Bucket List scatter...

A LONELY GUITAR PLAYS; Jeff Buckley's version of "Hallelujah".

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE; AS THE SONG PLAYS OVER...

CARTER; walking up the steps to his house. He goes to turn the doorknob then stops... After a moment, he rings the doorbell and waits...

Several moments pass before Virginia opens the door... After a beat...

CARTER
I'm so sorry.

She nods for him to come in. He follows her inside and closes the door behind him.

EDWARD; in his high-rise office sitting at his desk which faces the window with a view of the city shrouded in fog below. His hair is growing in again. He brings a coffee cup to his lips. It's empty.

CARTER; at the Sunday dinner table with his family. Virginia is saying grace. He's watching her. She feels it and her eyes open. He reaches out and takes her hand. She smiles as their eyes hold each other and she continues to pray...

EDWARD; in his office kitchen. The box of Kopi Luwak is empty. He searches the cupboard finding only a can of instant. He puts the can back and walks out.

CARTER; walking up behind Virginia in the living room. He lays his hands on her hips and slowly turns her towards him. She starts to speak but he places her hands in a dance pose and slowly begins to move his feet.

Rachel enters from the kitchen and stops short as she sees her parents gliding across the room, laughing.

EDWARD; shakes his head in disgust as he switches off the Met game. Drops the remote next to a book on the coffee table - Carter's Ghandi Autobiography.

VIRGINIA; waiting in the car for Carter. It's autumn now and the windows are painted with frost. A finger appears, drawing letters on the windshield. WILL YOU MARRY ME?

EDWARD; working out on the elliptical machine at the gym. It's late and the place is empty.

CARTER; home in bed staring at a copper paperweight of the Taj Mahal. He puts it away as Virginia comes in, dressed in her nightgown.

She climbs in bed and he reaches across and pulls her to him. They kiss. His hands move to her hips under the covers.

VIRGINIA

Do you have any idea how long it's been?

CARTER

Do I want to know?

VIRGINIA

No, I don't think you do.

CARTER

I love you, 'Gin.

VIRGINIA

I know you do.

CARTER

Remember that night, when I took you to the Bowl-O-Rama over on fourteenth street?

VIRGINIA

How do you think I could forget our first date? You wore that shirt with the stain on the front and your black shoes and brown belt.

CARTER

I was so out of my league. I remember thinking, "What's a girl looks like this doing slumming with a kid who's best shirt got a grape juice stain on the front?"

VIRGINIA

You weren't worthy.

CARTER

I've never been worthy of you.

VIRGINIA

I was joking, baby. I knew that night after I got back. I told my mother I was your's forever if you'd have me... Forever's just getting started.

They kiss again, more passionately until she pulls away and stands out of bed.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
I got something for us. Wasn't sure I'd need it.

CARTER
Don't be long now.

She goes into the bathroom and closes the door halfway. We see her feet stepping out of her pajamas and into something black and lacy.

When the door opens her hair is down and spilling over her shoulders and a thin, satin negligee.

VIRGINIA
Carter?

The bed is empty. She walks around it.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
So we're playing games now? You think you can get me all riled up then--

She stops as she sees him face down on the floor, his hands twitching.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
Carter!

She turns him over to see his eyes are rolled back into his head as the seizure storms through him.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BOARD ROOM - NIGHT

Edward sits at the head of the burnished conference table, listening to a report by his team of EXECUTIVES.

RICHARD
...increase in cash assets following the sale of the recovery care center to Axis Medical.

EDWARD
Hold up. We sold what care center?

The suits exchange looks.

RICHARD
It was in the report... Our stock was
tanking. We tried to contact you but--

EDWARD
Whatever. Keep going.

EXECUTIVE #1
Maybe we should break for the night.

EDWARD
Keep going!

More looks...

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I'm in remission. I'm a medical fucking
miracle and I'm in full remission. Now
let's finish the meeting before I start
chopping heads.

RICHARD
Right... So, where was I?

A SECRETARY enters the board room.

SECRETARY
I'm sorry Mister Cole. There's a call for
you. He says it's urgent.

Edward turns to the door where Thomas stands holding
Edward's open cell phone. His face says everything.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edward emerges from the elevator and walks pointedly
towards his old room. Passes Holcomb at the nurse's
station.

EDWARD
When did this happen?

DR. HOLCOMB
It came out of nowhere but it's spread to
his brain and the tumors are deep.

EDWARD
So you can operate?

DR. HOLCOMB
Day after tomorrow.

EDWARD
And he'll be alright?

DR. HOLCOMB
In his condition it's not-- The odds
aren't what we'd like them to be.

Edward sees there's little hope. Resumes walking into--

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Where Carter is back in bed covered in tubes. Virginia
lies with Rachel on the bed next to him. Rachel is
asleep.

EDWARD
How is he?

VIRGINIA
Quiet. I wasn't sure if I should call
you, I--

EDWARD
Of course. Please. Is there anything I
can do for you? Are the kids--

VIRGINIA
We're fine. Really... He wanted me to
give you this.

She sits up and pulls the taped-together Bucket List out
of her purse.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
There's a letter too. I was supposed to
wait until... But then I thought--

CARTER (O.S.)
--she's never listened to me before, why
let a coupl'a tumors get in the way.

Edward sits down on the side of his bed.

CARTER (CONT'D)
What's with all the hair?

EDWARD
How they treating you?

CARTER
Food sucks.

EDWARD
I'll talk to the owner.

CARTER
I hear he's a prick.

EDWARD
He has his moments...

Edward nods. It's all under the bridge.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
(holds the List)
What am I supposed to do with this?

CARTER
It isn't finished.

EDWARD
It's not a one man job.

CARTER
It's going to have to be.

Edward sits down, giving in...

EDWARD
Is there I can do for you?

CARTER
Really. I'm fine.

EDWARD
You sure? Bowl of caviar?

Carter shakes his head... They smile at one another, then suddenly Edward stands bolt upright...

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I'll be--
(heads for the door)
Don't go anywhere.

Runs out.

EXT. HOLCOMB'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Holcomb's packing up for the night when Edward enters, speaking on his cell phone.

EDWARD
I don't care how, just get a hold of him
and call me back.

He snaps the phone shut and glares at Holcomb.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Can he be moved without hurting him?

DR. HOLCOMB
Well, technically yes, but--

EDWARD
I'm taking him out of here.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edward walks with Holcomb trailing him. Thomas stands as he sees them.

EDWARD
Pull the car up front.

DR. HOLCOMB
I cannot allow you to sneak him out again. I could be personally liable--

As Edward slams him into the wall.

EDWARD
Plain English. I'm taking my friend out of here and you're coming with us. You've got ten minutes to pack what you need or I will personally ask Thomas to rearrange your kidneys.

Thomas smiles at Holcomb who nods abruptly.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Edward enters just as Carter is standing out of bed with help from Virginia.

EDWARD
How fast can you get him dressed?

VIRGINIA
Why?

CARTER
I can dress my own damn self. Where we going?

EDWARD
One more trip.
(to Virginia)
Can I talk to you?
(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)
 (to Carter)
 Pack it up. We're not home yet.

He ushers Virginia out into the hallway.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

The limo doors open and Thomas emerges along with Edward, Holcomb and the entire Chambers family. Carter is weak but shuffles along towards the waiting Gulfstream.

EDWARD
 If you could step it up we're kind of on a schedule.

CARTER
 I'll step it up when you tell me where we're going.

EDWARD
 Roger?

ROGER
 Sorry dad.

As he lifts his father into his arms and carries him towards the plane.

CARTER
 Boy, put me down. Whose side are you on!

EDWARD
 (to Lee)
 Does he ever stop talking?

LEE
 Only when he's eating.

EDWARD
 Well, that I can relate to.

CUT TO:

A GOLF CART; ZIPPING BETWEEN MASSIVE SOUND STAGES

EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Carter sits in the back with Virginia. He's blindfolded and bitching and wearing his Monaco suit. Edward's in the front next to a SECURITY GUARD.

The golf cart pulls to a giant stage door. Virginia helps Carter out while Edward gets the door.

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

The doorway is curtained off with thick, sound-eating drapes. Virginia leads Carter inside.

CARTER

You're enjoying this, aren't you?

Muffled clapping is heard from the other side of the curtains. A man in a BASEBALL CAP pushes through an opening.

BASEBALL CAP

Great. We're ready for you.

CARTER

Who the hell's he talking to?

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now our contestants entering the studio: a college professor from Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, Deenaz Olpadwala.

Edward removes the blindfold and pushes Carter through the curtains.

ON CARTER; As his eyes adjust then light up as a familiar theme plays.

INT. JEOPARDY SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

The real deal, replete with a live studio audience, though it all seems much smaller than on TV.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Our second contestant, a garage mechanic from Newark, New Jersey...

CARTER

(to Edward)

You son of a bitch.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Carter Chambers.

He straightens his tie and walks purposefully towards his podium. Roger, Lee and Rachel cheer him on from the stands as he nervously takes his place.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JEOPARDY SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

The game is underway. ALEX TREBEK calls the clues...

ALEX TREBEK

This sophistic monk is often credited as
one of the causes of the Russian
Revolution.

Carter hits the button but his timing is off.

DEENAZ

Who is Rasputin?

ALEX TREBEK

Correct.

DEENAZ

I'll take Mad Men for two hundred.

ALEX TREBEK

An animated character with a predilection
for tall headwear... Carter.

CARTER

The Mad Hatter.

ALEX TREBEK

No... Sherman?

SHERMAN, the bookish current champion clears his throat.

SHERMAN

Who is the Mad Hatter?

ALEX TREBEK

Yes... Remember, Carter, your answers
need to be in the form of a question.

Edward stands anxiously with Virginia.

EDWARD

Get it together.

Virginia shushes him.

SHERMAN

Mad Men for three-hundred.

ALEX TREBEK

This King of England earned his maligned nickname in part by conversing with a tree he believed to be the King of Prussia.

CARTER

Who is King George?

ALEX TREBEK

Can you be more specific?

CARTER

Who is "Mad" King George the third.

ALEX TREBEK

Correct.

Virginia grabs Edward. The Chambers kids cheer.

ALEX TREBEK (CONT'D)

Carter takes control of the board.

CARTER

I'll take Mad Men for four-hundred, Alex.

A SERIES OF CUTS; as Carter begins to run the board. His answers are quick and on the mark. The other contestants get an answer here and there but the game is clearly Carter's to win.

Roger, Lee and Rachel continue to cheer him on. Virginia's grip on Edward's arm grows tighter and tighter until he winces.

VIRGINIA

Oh. Sorry.

(Carter gets another answer)

Go on, baby!

She's punches Edward's arm in glee.

The game continues. Carter is doing well but he's beginning to tire. Sweat stains are visible on his collar.

Edward now stands several feet away from Virginia.

EDWARD

Is he okay?

VIRGINIA

He'll be fine.

She applauds as he gets another correct answer.

INT. JEOPARDY SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

The game is down to Final Jeopardy. Their scoreboards show that Carter is about ten thousand ahead of the other two. The final category is on the board:

ALEX TREBEK

The category is Great Minds of the
Twentieth Century and the final clue is--

The clue is revealed...

ALEX TREBEK (CONT'D)

(reading)

Though he died in poverty, this
controversial scientist and contemporary
of Thomas Edison is credited with the
invention of alternating current, as well
as a particular coil which bears his
name.

Edward watches Carter as the Final Jeopardy theme plays. Carter's eyes are closed. His expression is unreadable until the smallest hint of a smile appears at the corners of his mouth.

EDWARD

It's in the bag.

His grin begins to subside as he watches Carter wipe a thick band of sweat from his forehead.

CARTER'S POV; is blurred as his hand slips on the pen. He closes his eyes to steady himself, but his vision is blurred even further.

VIRGINIA

Edward.

EDWARD

I see it.

He starts circling the stage, crossing behind the cameras to get closer to the contestants.

Carter scribbles loosely on the screen but drops the pen and falls just as Edward gets there to catch him.

FADE TO WHITE.

Voices are heard...

HOLCOMB (O.S.)
...do our best, but it's too far along.

EDWARD (O.S.)
Anything you need.

FADE IN ON:

Carter's POV as Virginia stares down at him.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

VIRGINIA
Hey, babe. Can you hear me all right?

CARTER
(dazed)
Wha-- Where time is it?

His face is paralyzed on one side. His head is shaved and heavily marked with surgery markers.

VIRGINIA
We're in the hospital. You had a stroke,
but you're gonna be fine.

CARTER
Where's Alex?

EDWARD
He's probably sleeping. It's almost
midnight.

VIRGINIA
They're taking you in for surgery in a
minute.

CARTER
Okay.

EDWARD
I'll leave you two alone.

CARTER
Wait.
(to Virginia)
My bag.

She reaches for his overnight bag.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Can you--

She opens it for him. He reaches inside and pulls out a sealed envelope and a folded slip of paper.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Got any of that coffee left?

EDWARD
I'm all out. I can see if there's
anywhere that sells it out here, but--

CARTER
(smiles)
Not if I was dying of thirst in the
Sahara desert... Wanna know why?

EDWARD
"I'm sure you'll enlighten me."

Carter hands the paper to Edward.

CARTER
Read.

EDWARD
(reading)
Kopi Luwak is the world's most expensive
coffee, though, for some, it falls under
the category of too good to be true. In
the village where the beans are grown
lives a breed of wild African tree-cats.
The cats eat the beans, digest them,
then...
(a beat; he swallows)
...then defecate them out for the
villagers to collect. It's the gastric
juices of the cat that give the coffee
its unique flavor and absence of
aftertaste... You're shitting me?

CARTER
Cats beat me to it.

Carter bursts into weak laughter. Edward stares for a moment then starts to chuckle himself. Soon both men are laughing until tears stream down their cheeks. As he laughs, Edward's tears become gradually laced with grief as he holds Carter's wrist.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Still have the list?

EDWARD
Of course.

He pulls it out and watches as Carter runs a finger down the items, until he reaches "LAUGH UNTIL I CRY." He crosses it off shakily with the pen. Only four remain.

His finger stops on the half finished "#11) GET BACK IN TOUCH" Edward sees this.

CARTER

There's a difference between dying alone
and living like you're already dead...
Finish the list, Edward.

He places the envelope atop the list.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Go home.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Edward emerges through the sliding doors. He wipes the tears flowing from his face, unsure of where to go.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As Holcomb enters, scrubbed for surgery, with several nurses.

DR. HOLCOMB

We're ready.

Carter reaches out for Virginia's hand and presses it to his heart.

VIRGINIA

I'll be here when you get back.

CARTER

Forever's just getting started.

Her hand slips out of his as he's wheeled out of the room. Faintly, we hear him singing:

CARTER (CONT'D)

Let the rain pitter patter/but it really
doesn't matter/if the skies are gray/Long
as I can be with you, it's a lovely day.

INT. GULFSTREAM PRIVATE JET - NIGHT

Edward loses himself in the raindrops sliding down the window as the plane readies for takeoff.

He glances down at the envelope in his lap and turns it over. On the front is his name and address. He thinks a moment, steeling himself before he opens it.

INT. OPERATING THEATER - NIGHT

Carter lies unconscious with a tube in his mouth as the surgeons do their work. In contrast to Edward, he looks completely at peace.

CARTER (V.O.)

Dear Edward. It's turning cold out here in Newark and the trees are like skeletons beneath the lamp posts. Winter's almost upon us and despite what the doctors tell me, I know it will be my last.

EXT. THE NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE - NIGHT

Seen from the Hudson, the mandala of lights reflect like jewels in the water. Carter sits on the edge of a pier taking in the view...

CARTER (V.O.)

You know how I love to tell stories so if you can spare a few minutes I think I've got a good one for you...

He returns to the letter in his lap, and resumes writing...

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

There was an old farmer who spent his life working the earth to give his family all the cares and comforts he'd never had.

INT. GULFSTREAM PRIVATE JET - NIGHT

Edward reads the words as Carter speaks them.

CARTER (V.O.)

One day the farmer fell sick and he called his sons to his bedside where he took up a tied up bundle of sticks and said to his eldest son, "Show me that you can break it." The son strained and strained, but with all his efforts was unable to break the bundle.

Edward finishes the letter and wipes the tears from his cheeks. The flashing wing lights of the plane reflect the raindrop on the window indelibly onto his face.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Seen from above as Roger, Lee and Rachel lie in bed with their mother, clinging to her as she prays.

CARTER (V.O.)

The other sons also tried, but none of them could break the bundle. "Now, untie them," he told them, "Each of you take one stick."

EXT. SUBURB STREET - DAWN

As Edward walks up the path to his daughter's house. He knocks on the door without hesitation.

CARTER (V.O.)

When they had done so, he called out to them, "Now, break it," and each stick was easily broken...

The door opens revealing Emily. She's surprised and her sleepy features harden instantly. Edward begins to talk.

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

No man is an island, my friend. We're just not built that way.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Virginia pours a packet of instant coffee into a styrofoam cup, then fills it with hot water. She looks up as Holcomb appears at the other end of the hallway walking towards her. His face is unreadable.

CARTER (V.O.)

You measure yourself by the people who measure themselves by you, and no matter how hard you battle the current--

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Watching through the window as Edward and Emily speak.
Her guard is still up, but she's listening...

CARTER (V.O.)
--our lives are streams flowing into the
same river towards whatever heaven lies
in the mist beyond the falls.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

We can't see Holcomb's face or what he's saying as he
reaches Virginia, but her expression says it all. The
coffee cup slips from her hands and lands at her feet,
spilling onto the floor.

CARTER (V.O.)
Find the joy in your life, Edward. Close
your eyes and let the waters take you.

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Edward shakes Emily's hand goodbye. She's not giving in,
but it's a start. He reaches for the front door just as a
LITTLE GIRL, still half-asleep, comes out from the back
bedroom. Edward is stunned.

CARTER (V.O.)
Open your heart and listen to the
mountain...

He looks up at Emily who says something to the little
girl. He crouches down as the girl walks right up to him
and sleepily lays her head on his shoulder.

Edward's eyes are full as he looks up at Emily in
amazement then slowly kisses the curls on his
granddaughter's head.

INT. LOS ANGELES OPERATING THEATER - NIGHT

Carter's face is at peace. Virginia's face comes into
frame and kisses him softly. Her tears fall onto his
eyelids and continue down his cheeks.

CARTER (V.O.)
I promise you'll be heard.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Virginia stands in the doorway, staring at her sleeping
children. Rachel opens her eyes and looks at her mother.

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Edward walks the path towards Thomas and the waiting limo.

Thomas opens the car door for him.

THOMAS
So that's your daughter?

EDWARD
(emotional)
Yup.

THOMAS
Pretty.

Edward looks angry. Thomas waits for the rebuke. Instead, Edward pats him on the shoulder before climbing into the car. Thomas looks back at the house as the lights go out.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAWN

Edward pulls the list out of his pocket. With the red pen he crosses out: "KISS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD."

He lowers the window and looks out at the painted dawn sky as the limo drives away. He stares for several moments then closes his eyes in the breeze and listens...

EDWARD (V.O.)
Good afternoon. My name is Edward Cole
and, unlike the man we're here to honor,
I'm not much of a storyteller.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE ROOM - DAY

Edward is in his business suit again. His game face on.

EDWARD
I'm a business man. I started out with
nothing but cold ambition, and over the
years my company grew until I had
everything I ever wanted... I know now
that-- I know now that I was never a
wealthy man until Carter came into my
life... And judging from this incredible
turnout, Carter was truly the richest man
I know.

CAMERA TRACKS until we're behind Edward revealing his audience of SEVERAL HUNDRED MOURNERS filling every last inch of the room including Carter's family who sit in the front row. Familiar faces in the crowd include Manny, Holcomb, Nurse Shing.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I don't know what most people say at these things, so I'll just tell you what I think Carter would want you to know. He's dead and I still can't shut him up... He loved his children more than his own heart. He loved his wife more than his own soul. You took him in and made him whole again and you will never know how grateful he was.

His eyes move from the family to Thomas who stands against the wall with Emily and her daughter.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(taking out the Bucket List)
Carter and I saw the world together. Pretty amazing when you think that only nine months ago we were strangers... He saved my life, and he knew it before I did.

With the pen, he crosses out: "HELP A COMPLETE STRANGER FOR THE GOOD."

Beneath it, the last remaining task lies unfulfilled: "WITNESS SOMETHING TRULY MAJESTIC."

Slowly, the words on the page--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE PEAK OF EVEREST - DAY

As the climber from the opening scene finally arrives at the peak.

EDWARD (V.O.)

Carter gave me a book once. It was about a man who knew a thing or two about the world.

His hands lift to his face, removing the oxygen mask and hood revealing THOMAS.

EDWARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The man said: "Learn as if you were going
 to live forever. Live as if you were
 going to die tomorrow."

Thomas walks over to a flat stone and lifts it onto its
 side, exposing a hole underneath.

EDWARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Tomorrow comes for all of us.

Carefully, Thomas lifts A FROZEN CHOCK FULL O' NUTS CAN
 from its resting place in the hole beneath the stone.

He smiles as if greeting an old friend. He brushes off
 some frost, then sets the can on the snow.

EDWARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 It's what we do in-between that makes us
 who we are.

Thomas reaches into his backpack and removes a SECOND
 CHOCK FULL O' NUTS CAN wrapped in plastic.

CARTER (V.O.)
 Edward Perriman Cole died in May. It was
 a Sunday, in the afternoon, and there
 wasn't a cloud in the sky...

Thomas unwraps the plastic, then places the second can on
 the ground next to the first.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 He was seventy-three years old.

Finally, Thomas deposits both cans into the hole.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Even now, I can't claim to understand the
 measure of a life, but I can tell you
 this...

Atop the can he lays the nearly completed Bucket List.
 All of the items have been crossed off, save for one:
 "WITNESS SOMETHING TRULY MAJESTIC."

He lays Edward's red pen on the list then replaces the
 rock over the cans.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I know that when he died his eyes were
 closed, and his heart was open... I know
 that he could hear the mountain...

THE CAMERA lingers on the rock for a moment then tilts up to reveal the infinite view of the entire world spread out below.

CARTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And I know the mountain heard him in
return.