

# THE LONELY MAIDEN

Written By

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INT. MUSEUM - DAY

CLOSE-UP on an oil painting, THE LONELY MAIDEN, depicting a simple French peasant girl standing on an empty, windswept seashore. Her cloak drawn about her shoulders, she stares out at us, a look of ambiguous contemplation upon her face. Her right hand brushes a few strands of golden hair from her face.

ROGER BARNES, a graying and slightly paunchy museum security guard, stands at his post. One of four guards in a room full of 19th century paintings, he pays no attention to the few people strolling the exhibit. His unwavering gaze is focussed solely on The Lonely Maiden.

The museum is one of the more obscure galleries that dot New York City, housing the not quite famous works of not quite so famous artists.

Suddenly, there is an EXPLOSION and the SHATTERING of glass. The patrons SCREAM, as ROPES drop from the ceiling and several armed INTRUDERS, cloaked in black and wearing hooded masks, descend into the exhibit.

Working with the precision and flawless executing of trained mercenaries, the villains waste no time forcing everyone onto the ground.

The smoke clears and the LEAD VILLAIN steps forward. A cool and sophisticated man of East German descent, he addresses the room with a thick accent.

LEAD VILLAIN

Ladies and Gentleman, I sincerely apologize for disturbing your afternoon. However, if you relax and stay calm, I promise you will all leave here alive. We do not want to harm any of you, we have come only for the girl.

The LEAD VILLAIN pulls out a small map of the exhibit and strolls casually amongst the paintings, searching the walls for a specific item.

At the other end of the room, Roger's eyes follow his every step.

Suddenly, the Villain stops.

LEAD VILLAIN (CONT'D)

You there, where is she? What have you done with her?

A TERRIFIED GUARD points to the other end of the room.

The Villain instantly realizes his map is upside down. He turns it over, then marches towards Roger's end of the exhibit. His determined FOOTSTEPS ECHO through the room.

Roger slowly slides his hand down to his gunbelt. He scans the room. Six armed henchmen, plus the Lead Villain...

Suddenly, Roger draws his pistol and flies into action.

BAM, BAM...Roger fires two shots. Two henchmen go down.

More SCREAMS, as the remaining henchmen RETURN FIRE.

Roger dives behind a nearby wall.

Bullets EXPLODE all around him, but Roger stays cool. He waits, then spins and squeezes off TWO MORE SHOTS. Two more henchmen go down.

The Lead Villain draws his weapon and fires...BAM! Roger barely avoids the shot.

Roger tries to return fire, but he's pinned down by a spray of bullets from the other henchmen. The Lead Villain runs towards Roger's abandoned post. Trapped, Roger can't head him off.

The situation is desperate, but Roger won't quit. He dives to the ground and rolls across the floor. He fires two more expert shots...BAM, BAM! The last two henchmen drop. Now, there is only the Lead Villain...

Roger runs to catch him, but, as he rounds the corner...it's too late. The Villain is in front of The Lonely Maiden, his pistol pointed right at Roger's head.

The Villain lets a cruel smile creep across his face.

LEAD VILLAIN (CONT'D)

Roger Barnes...this time you lose.  
Today, she will be mine.

ROGER

You'll never get out of here alive.  
You know that, don't you?

The Villain pauses. He looks to the doors...other guards are already responding to the commotion.

LEAD VILLAIN

Well then, Roger Barnes, if I  
cannot have her, no one will...

He turns his pistol on the Maiden.

Roger leaps into the air, throwing himself between the Villain and the girl.

ROGER

Noooooo!

The Villain FIRES and his bullet slams into Roger's chest. As he falls, Roger fires his own gun, hitting the Villain between the eyes.

Roger collapses to the floor, gasping for breath and clutching at his chest. The other guards rush to Roger's aid, but he has eyes only for the young girl. He smiles and it almost appears as if the Maiden returns his gaze.

Paramedics rush into the room. They tear open Roger's blood stained shirt and load him onto a stretcher.

As he is wheeled away, Roger struggles to reach out to the Maiden...a fallen hero longing for the touch of his beloved.

A faint BEEPING can be heard...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MUSEUM - DAY

Roger Barnes, security guard, stands quietly at his post, staring at The Lonely Maiden.

The BEEPING continues and pulls Roger from his daydream.

A young boy has gotten too close to the painting, triggering the electronic sensor. Roger steps forward and lightly taps the young man on the shoulder.

ROGER

Uhh...excuse me...could you move  
back from the painting, please.

The boy looks up at Roger, then, without explanation, takes a step back. The beeping stops.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Roger shuffles back to his post and refocuses on the painting. A tiny smile creeps across his lips.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is small and humble.

Roger sits at the table, eating a bowl of soup.

His wife, DORIS (57), is at the kitchen sink, washing the soup pot. Doris is a bit heavy, wears little make-up, but is attractive in her own, comfortable way.

DORIS

So, how was your day, Roger?

ROGER

It was good.

Roger takes another emotionless bite of soup.

ROGER (CONT'D)

How was yours?

DORIS

Mine? Mine was better than good. You know how I had been doing Tuesdays and Thursdays down at Margie's shop? Well, Margie decided they need another person on Mondays and guess who they called?

Doris turns around and notices Roger poking at something in his soup.

DORIS (CONT'D)

What is it?

ROGER

Is this the same soup we usually have?

Doris nods.

DORIS

Chicken noodle.

ROGER

Same brand?

DORIS

No, they didn't have your brand. Why is it bad?

Roger shrugs.

ROGER  
No...just different.

Doris watches for a moment, then turns back to the sink.

DORIS  
You know...I've been wanting to  
work Mondays because it's their  
busiest day, but I never could  
because I'm only a part time.

ROGER  
Doris...

Doris turns around.

DORIS  
Yes?

ROGER  
How come you're not eating?

DORIS  
I grabbed something with the girls  
after the shop closed.

ROGER  
Oh...

DORIS  
Anyway...today alone I did five  
perms and seven colorings. By far  
the most I've ever done.

Doris notices Roger picking at his soup again.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
What is it now?

ROGER  
Nothing...it's just that the  
noodles stick together in this  
kind.

DORIS  
Do you want something else?  
There's some left over pot roast.

ROGER  
No, no...I'm fine.

Roger dutifully puts a large spoonful into his mouth.

Doris shakes her head and reaches into her purse. She pulls  
out a small wad of dollar bills.

DORIS

I don't know what it is about Mondays, but I made more money on tips today than any Tuesday. I was so nervous coming home on the subway...

Doris starts thumbing through the money.

ROGER

You know criminals can sense fear.

DORIS

Really?

Roger nods and takes another spoonful of soup.

ROGER

My first Supervisor told me that once. That's why we're supposed to project confidence out on the floor.

DORIS

Oh...well I'm glad no one sensed me today. I was nervous.

Doris opens up a cupboard, then reaches back behind some pots and pans and pulls out a JAR.

The jar is decorated with magazine pictures of sunny, palmed beaches and flamingoes.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Every little bit gets us closer to Florida...

Doris looks back and sees Roger quietly fiddling with some of the noodles.

DORIS (CONT'D)

You still want to take that vacation, don't you?

ROGER

(distracted)

Huh?

Used to her husband's idiosyncracies, Doris smiles and goes over to the table.

DORIS

Oh, Roger...I know you take that job seriously, but you need a break.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
Somewhere warm, where you can  
relax. Take your mind off the  
museum.

Roger just nods and finishes the last of his soup.

ROGER  
Do you know what happens when a  
security guard relaxes?

Doris smiles and lovingly musses up his hair.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
(protesting)  
Doris...

Doris picks up his bowl and brings it to the sink, where she  
runs it under some water.

DORIS  
Well, I still think a little  
vacation would do you good. Ease  
the tension a little bit.

Roger stands and hitches up his pants.

ROGER  
Tension's part of the job, Doris.

Doris smiles to herself, as she scrubs the bowl.

DORIS  
I'm going to be watching Wheel of  
Fortune later if you'd like to join  
me.

ROGER  
Uhh...well, maybe later. I've got  
some reading to do.

Roger leaves the kitchen, smoothing his hair as he goes.

Doris smiles again, then takes the jar and puts it back into  
the cupboard.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - DEN - MOMENTS LATER

The door to the den is closed. Roger stands in front of the  
bookshelf.

He intently reaches up and pulls down a thick ART BOOK, on  
its cover an old oil painting.

Roger sets the book down, then opens it to a well-worn page. We immediately recognize The Lonely Maiden.

Roger reaches over to an old RECORD PLAYER. He turns the player on, then lowers the needle.

SOFT CLASSICAL MUSIC fills the room. Roger brings his attention back to the young girl in the painting.

INT. MUSEUM - DAY

Roger is at his post, lost in the Maiden.

A few moments later, a museum DOCENT comes along, leading a group of tourists. She steps in front of Roger's painting and begins lecturing.

DOCENT

The Lonely Maiden...painted by  
Marcel de Robert in 1873.

Roger COUGHS. The docent pauses, then continues.

DOCENT (CONT'D)

The girl in the painting is the  
artist's own daughter.

Roger COUGHS again. The docent looks at him and he shakes his head. She struggles to continue.

DOCENT (CONT'D)

(less confident)

Marked by assured brush strokes and  
impressive use of fractured light,  
the painting is a wonderful example  
of the brief, yet influential  
Northern French Naturalist  
movement, which lasted from 1872  
until 1874.

Roger steps forward...

ROGER

(meekly)

Uhh...look, I'm sorry to interrupt,  
but I thought I might be able  
to...clear up a few things for the  
group.

Surprised, the docent looks up at Roger.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(a bit more insistent)

May I?

DOCENT

Uhh, well, I'm not sure if that...

Roger has already turned to face the group. He doesn't look like a man who enjoys speaking to groups, but rather a man who is pained to hear misinformation spread about the young girl.

ROGER

Well...first of all, The Lonely Maiden was painted in 1875 not 1873. And...the uhh...the girl in the painting was not the artist's daughter, but rather a niece from his wife's side.

The docent consults her notes. Roger is getting a little more comfortable, his speech more confident.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Also, the painting technically belongs to an off-shoot of the Northern French Naturalist movement...the Post-Naturalist movement. One of only three works completed during the brief movement, The Lonely Maiden is marked by the subtle use of tone and mood to create a striking image of desperate longing and overwhelming passion.

Roger pauses. Everyone is now focused silently on the Maiden. Roger begins to speak in reverential tones.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Sometimes, when you look at her...the way the light glows upon her face and hair, the way her hand clutches at her breast, the eyes so full of sorrow, you cannot help but ask...what pains this young girl? A broken heart? A fallen lover? What is she searching for on the horizon?

(beat)

Is there anything I can do for her?

For a moment, Roger simply stares, lost in the Maiden's haunting gaze. Then, he realizes he may have said too much. He nervously turns to the docent, who looks a bit overwhelmed herself.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Roger steps back to his post. The group still ponders the painting. Finally, the docent collects herself.

DOCENT

Okay, everybody...let's move on.

Some of the group members linger in front of the Maiden.

One of them turns to a friend.

GROUP MEMBER #1

She looks kind of fat...

Roger looks physically pained by the remark and he watches with displeasure as the group walks away.

A moment later, Roger's eyes drift back to the painting. He is beginning to lose himself again.

ROGER'S POV: The Lonely Maiden stares out at the world. So beautiful and, yet, so alone...

DONNY, a young African-American security guard, comes up to Roger. Donny is casual and relaxed.

DONNY

Oh yeah, that girl is fine. I have got to get me some of that...

Shocked, Roger breaks out of his trance. At first, Roger thought that Donny was talking about the Maiden, but he now realizes that Donny is looking at the docent.

DONNY (CONT'D)

I don't know where they get these new docents from, but this one...mmm, mmm, baby...

Donny catches the docent's eye and waves, but she coolly looks the other way and leads her group out of the room.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Oh, come on...why she gotta be like that?

Donny shakes his head, then turns back to Roger.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Okay, break time, my man. Time to take a load off.

Roger looks at his watch, surprised that time has passed so quickly. Reluctantly, he steps from his post.

Donny takes Roger's place and immediately looks around the room, chewing gum and bobbing his head, as if listening to music. His casual demeanor is a marked contrast to Roger's stiff, formal approach to his job.

Donny suddenly realizes that Roger hasn't left.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Yo, Mr. Barnes...you're supposed to be on break, man. I have it covered.

Roger seems a little disconcerted by Donny's relaxed style. Roger looks to the Maiden and then back to Donny.

ROGER

Are you sure? Watch out for children. They like to put their hands on everything. They get too close and you've got to be right on them.

Donny turns to Roger with a "you've got to be kidding me" look on his face.

DONNY

Yeah, yeah...trust me, its under control.

Donny notices something across the room and instantly straightens.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Uh oh, look sharp now, boys. Looks like the man just walked in.

Roger turns to see the CURATOR (early 40's) walk in with NEEDLEBAUM and an ASSISTANT MUSEUM DIRECTOR.

The Curator is an ambitious and pompous man, with a modern and stylish flair to his clothing and demeanor.

Gangly, mustached, and slightly inept, Needlebaum is the Security Supervisor.

The Assistant Museum Director is a small, nondescript and slightly overwhelmed by the Curator. He is holding a large paper layout of the exhibit.

The Curator is making arm gestures and pointing at specific locations in the room.

ROGER

(puzzled)

I wonder what they're doing?

DONNY  
You didn't hear?

Roger shakes his head.

DONNY (CONT'D)  
Man, don't you read the bulletin board in the lunchroom? They're moving the exhibit.

ROGHER  
(horrified)  
Moving the exhibit? Where?

Donny shrugs?

DONNY  
I don't know. Someplace in Europe...Denmark, I think.

ROGER  
Denmark?

Roger looks at the Maiden, then to the Curator, then back to the Maiden, then heads across the hall towards the Curator.

The Curator is still talking and gesturing.

CURATOR  
The display should be bold, in your face...grab people by the throat and say, "I don't care what you think, I am beautiful. Do not turn away."

Roger approaches and timidly removes his hat.

CURATOR (CONT'D)  
This middle area...wonderful for the dung sculptures. The upstairs, perfect for the series of animal genitalia. Now for the North end of the hall, I though...

As the Curator turns, he suddenly notices Roger.

CURATOR (CONT'D)  
(annoyed)  
Can I help you with something?

ROGER  
Uhh...yes, sir. I was just wondering...uhh, well, someone just told me you were thinking about moving the exhibit. Is that true?

The Curator studies Roger for a moment.

CURATOR

I'm sorry. (to Needlebaum) Who is this?

NEEDLEBAUM

Uhh...that's Barnes, sir. Roger Barnes.

ROGER

I'm a security guard.

CURATOR

Oh, I see...a security guard. Well, that would explain the uniform wouldn't it?

Embarrassed, Roger looks down at his uniform.

ROGER

Yes, sir. It would...sir.

The Curator flashes a patronizing smile

CURATOR

(curtly)

Well, Mr. Barnes, I don't know what you heard, but we are not thinking about moving the exhibit. We are moving the exhibit. There is a flier posted in the employee lunch room. (to the other men) Lets go gentlemen.

The Curator turns to lead the other men away.

A look of panic moves over Roger's face and he hurries to catch up.

ROGER

But, sir, why Denmark? Why so far?

The Curator stops and turns to Roger.

CURATOR

Mr. Barnes...we are not exactly dealing with Picasso's here. This exhibit is tired and it's boring and nobody cares.

Roger and the Curator look around the empty room. The few patrons stroll absentmindedly, glancing without passion at the different pieces. At the far end of the hall, Donny bobs his head and stares at the ceiling.

CURATOR (CONT'D)  
 We've been trying to move it for years. A gallery in Copenhagen finally made an offer and we accepted. I'm sorry we didn't consult you.

Roger looks like he has been slapped in the face.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - DEN - NIGHT

SOFT CLASSICAL MUSIC plays on the record player.

A BLACK BERET perched on his head, Roger sits in a worn easy chair, staring at the picture of The Lonely Maiden in the Art Book.

Roger gently runs his fingers over the image. He loses himself until...

DORIS (O.C.)  
 Roger...are you out there? Roger?

Roger looks up, slightly annoyed at being disturbed.

ROGER  
 Yes, Doris?

DORIS (O.C.)  
 What are you doing?

ROGER  
 I'm reading, Doris. What do you need?

DORIS (O.C.)  
 I need you to come here.

Roger sighs and closes the book. He takes his beret off, slips it into the pocket of his sweater, and wanders out of the room towards the back of the apartment.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Roger enters the bedroom.

DORIS, dressed in a loose pink sweatshirt and sweatpants sits on the bed, flipping through a Reader's Digest and watching Wheel of Fortune.

ROGER  
 Did you need something?

Doris looks up and smiles.

DORIS  
Could you rub my feet?

Doris rubs her feet together in eager anticipation.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
Please, Rogey, they're very tired.

Roger sighs, then goes over and sits on the bed.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
Thank you. I don't know how you do  
it...on your feet all day. One  
extra day at the shop and I can  
hardly walk.

Roger picks up one of her feet and begins rubbing it with the familiarity of a man who has done this many times before.

ROGER  
Arch supports and rubber soles.

DORIS  
Excuse me?

ROGER  
That's how we stay on our feet so  
long. Arch supports and rubber  
soles. It's one of the tricks of  
the trade.

Doris nods, then leans back as the massage begins to take her away. She lets out a soft moan.

DORIS  
Mmmmm...

Roger stares at the television.

ROGER  
They're moving the exhibit.

Lost in the ecstasy of the massage, Doris doesn't respond.

Roger turns around.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Did you hear what I said?

DORIS  
Hmmm? What was that, honey.

ROGER  
I said...they're moving the  
exhibit.

Roger shakes his head, upset by the very idea.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
It's that damned new Curator. That  
exhibit has been there for thirty  
years, it's beautiful, it...it  
needs to be there. But, he says  
it's boring, not modern enough.  
He's replacing it with "Masterworks  
of the Scandinavian Avant-garde."  
Can you believe that?

Roger looks at his wife, but her emotion-level is nowhere  
close to matching his. Roger is disappointed, but continues  
to rub her feet.

Doris looks at him for a moment and smiles. She notices a  
mark on his forehead and his pressed down hair.

DORIS  
(kindly)  
Roger...have you been wearing your  
beret again?

ROGER  
No.

DORIS  
It leaves a mark on your forehead  
and pushes your hair down in the  
back.

Roger reaches up to his forehead. Doris smiles.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
Roger, I know you like to wear your  
beret when you read your art books.  
It's cute.

Embarrassed, Roger looks away.

ROGER  
It's not cute, Doris.

Doris smiles.

DORIS  
I think it is...

Doris settles back and closes her eyes. Roger rubs her feet,  
still stewing over the impending move.

ROGER

It doesn't make any sense...people  
love those paintings.

Doris doesn't open her eyes.

DORIS

Maybe they'll like the new exhibit.

Roger shakes his head. She doesn't understand...how could she? He continues the massage in silence.

A moment later, Doris opens her eyes.

DORIS (CONT'D)

You know, Roger, maybe you should  
retire. You've been at that museum  
an awfully long time.

ROGER

I can't retire, Doris. What would  
I do with myself all day?

DORIS

You wouldn't have to do anything  
with yourself. We could do it  
together.

Doris smiles, but Roger doesn't share the enthusiasm.

ROGER

I don't know..

DORIS

We could move out of the city. Go  
somewhere warm. You know, I just  
talked to the Rosenberg's, they  
bought a condo in Florida. Maybe  
we could do something like that.

ROGER

I thought you just wanted to go  
there on vacation.

DORIS

I do. But, if you're going to  
retire...

ROGER

I'm not retiring, Doris.

Roger turns back to the television. He is still rubbing her feet.

Doris starts to be swept away by Roger's massage. She closes her eyes.

DORIS

Mmmmmm...

INT. MUSEUM - NEXT MORNING

It is just before opening time. Roger is on his way to his post, his FOOTSTEPS ECHOING in the eerie stillness.

As he walks, Roger's eyes drift from one piece to another, painfully aware that soon they will all be gone.

A MUFFLED CRY suddenly comes out of one of the nearby rooms. Surprised, Roger stops. He hears nothing. The sound has stopped.

Puzzled, Roger walks back to the entrance of the room and peers in.

ROGER'S POV: The room looks like any other in the museum; four walls of paintings and a security guard. The security guard stands with his back to Roger. Everything seems normal.

Roger shrugs and walks away, but a moment later he hears another MUFFLED CRY. Roger turns around and hurries back to the door of the room.

ROGER'S POV: Once again, the room is silent. The guard stands at his post. Again, everything seems normal.

Still puzzled, Roger starts to leave, then something occurs to him. He heads inside the room.

The other guard glances back, sees Roger approaching, then seems embarrassed and quickly looks away. He reaches up and brushes something from his eye.

Roger looks to the painting hanging in front of the guard.

An 18th century oil painting entitled YOUNG GIRL WITH CATS, the piece depicts a half-nude Dutch farm girl bending over to feed a saucer of milk to a group of kittens.

Roger immediately understands.

He looks back to the guard. For a moment, their eyes meet and Roger recognizes something...a passion, a longing. Then, the other guard becomes self-conscious and looks away. He rubs his eyes again. Is he crying?

Now Roger is uncomfortable. He glances back at the painting, looks at the guard, then hurries from the room.

EXT. MUSEUM - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The museum has just closed and employees trickle out.

Huddled in a large coat, Roger watches each person exit. He's looking for something...or someone.

A few more people leave, then Roger sees what he was waiting for...the guard from earlier that morning.

Roger approaches, but when the other guard sees Roger, he turns and tries to hurry down the sidewalk.

ROGER

Excuse me...wait a minute. I was hoping we could talk...

Roger catches up and lightly grabs the man's arm. The other guard stops, but looks very uncomfortable. Roger is a bit uncomfortable himself.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Hi...I'm...my name is Roger Barnes. I work in the museum. I'm a security guard.

The other guard nods his head

SECURITY GUARD

(softly)

I know. Sector Three. You started in March, 1967. Three and a half months after I did.

Another moment of uncomfortable silence.

ROGER

Look, I was wondering...would you like to, maybe...get a cup of coffee or something?

The other guard pulls his coat tighter to fight the cold.

SECURITY GUARD

I really need to get home. I have things I have to do and responsibilities and...

ROGER  
 (interrupting)  
 You know they're moving the  
 exhibition, don't you?

The other guard pauses...can Roger be trusted? Then, sensing  
 a kindred spirit, he finally drops his guard.

SECURITY GUARD  
 (softly, pained)  
 I found out last week.

Silence, as each man ponders this harsh reality, then...

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)  
 I'm Charlie Peterson.

INT. COFFEESHOP - MINUTES LATER

Roger and Charlie are sitting in a booth. Roger is drinking  
 coffee and eating a slice of pie. Charlie is drinking a  
 glass of milk.

CHARLIE  
 Do you know what you're going to  
 do?

Roger shakes his head. The very idea makes him sad.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 You thought about moving to  
 Denmark?

ROGER  
 A little bit. I don't think Doris  
 would go for it. How about you?

CHARLIE  
 I've thought about it. It might be  
 good.

Charlie stares into his milk.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 She's all I have.

Roger looks up to see Charlie wipe away another tear.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 It just doesn't seem right. You  
 stand there day after day, year  
 after year, and then one day...they  
 just say she's leaving. Just like  
 that...she's gone.

Charlie takes a long, empowering swig from his milk. Emboldened, he sets it down on the table.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You know, we don't have to let them go. If we were serious enough...we could make them ours.

Roger almost chokes on his pie.

ROGER

Wait a minute...you don't mean steal them do you?

CHARLIE

I do think about it sometimes.

Charlie takes another nervous swig of his milk.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You ever thought about it?

ROGER

I don't know...once or twice, I guess. But, we're security guards...we're supposed to stop crime.

CHARLIE

And you don't think this is a crime? Do you know how far Denmark is?

Roger nods sadly. He's calculated it to the exact mile.

ROGER

I don't know, Charlie. We're not thieves. Besides, just you and me...I don't see how we could do it.

Roger sighs.

CHARLIE

(disappointed)

I know, I know. I shouldn't have brought it up. It was a stupid idea.

Charlie drains the last of his milk, then looks at his watch.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(flustered)

I really need to get going. I have things I need to do.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
I have responsibilities. Thank you  
for the milk.

Charlie grabs his coat and hurries out of the restaurant. Slightly confused, Roger watches him go, then turns back to his pie.

INT. ROGER'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Doris is sound asleep. Roger lies next to her, wide awake. He stares up at the ceiling, lost in thought.

Doris moves slightly and slips her hand around Roger's arm. Roger does not move.

INT. MUSEUM - DAY

Roger stands at his post, staring at The Lonely Maiden. A few moments pass, then out of the corner of his eye, he becomes aware that someone is approaching. He turns to see Charlie.

Charlie waves nervously.

CHARLIE  
Hi...

ROGER  
Hello, Charlie.

Charlie studies Roger's Maiden with dispassionate curiosity, the way a man might observe another man's wife to make sure that she is not more attractive than his own. Satisfied, he turns back to Roger.

CHARLIE  
So...have you given any more  
thought to what we talked about  
yesterday.

ROGER  
No...

Roger looks away. He doesn't want to discuss the idea, but Charlie has seen where Roger's eyes have drifted. He knows there is more and waits expectantly.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Okay, maybe a little bit. Why?

INT. MUSEUM - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

This is one of those areas, behind the walls of the exhibit, restricted to employees only.

Roger and Charlie walk down the hallway, speaking in low voices.

CHARLIE

About six months ago, they started this new program of reviewing the security tapes from the night before to make sure the guards on duty weren't slacking off. Well, I volunteered. I thought a few extra hours of overtime might be good.

Charlie stops in front of a door and opens it. He and Roger step inside.

INT. MUSEUM - SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is full of monitors, each one corresponding to a different camera location.

A young, overweight security guard sits at a control desk. He is wearing headphones, but as Charlie and Roger go past, he looks up. Charlie waves.

CHARLIE

Hi Tony.

Tony nods, then turns back to his monitors.

Charlie leads Roger behind a panel of video equipment. He stops in front of another monitor and picks up a tape.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

This is from last night. Sector Five.

Charlie slips the tape into the machine and hits play.

On the monitor, a security guard (LATE - 30's), with a military-style flat-top and mustache, walks back and forth doing his rounds.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That's George McLendon. He's been a guard for twelve years. Does a night shift twice a week.

Charlie starts to fast-forward. George is suddenly in fast-motion...back and forth, back and forth. Then, George stops walking. Charlie lets the tape play at normal speed.

George stares at a three and a half foot tall statue of a glorious male nude, set on a marble pedestal.

The muscular figure is awe inspiring, its right arm raised in a defiant gesture of conquest.

George looks around. Convinced he's alone, George strips out of his clothes. He peels off his shirt, shoes, pants, and underwear, until he wears only his black socks, security guard belt, and security guard hat.

George's eyes remain fixed and the statue almost seems to return his gaze. It is simply a quiet, thoughtful moment, shared by two nude men. Then, George slowly raises his own arm, mirroring the statue.

Charlie pauses the tape. At first, he and Roger just look at each other. Then, Charlie points to a stack of tapes sitting on the table.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

He's been doing this for the last six weeks. I haven't had the heart to say anything.

Roger nods and looks back at the screen. George is frozen, arm raised in nude triumph.

EXT. MUSEUM - FRONT ENTRANCE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Once again, it is just after closing time. Roger and Charlie have just spotted George leaving the building.

CHARLIE

That's him.

Roger nods and calls out.

ROGER

Excuse me...

George looks over and sees the two men hurrying towards him. Suddenly nervous, he moves quickly down the steps.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Excuse me...

George glances back and quickens his pace. He tries to flag a cab as he walks.

GEORGE

Taxi!

ROGER

Excuse me, are you George McLendon?

A cab veers across several lanes. George moves out to the edge of the curb to meet it.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
We just want to talk.

The cab pulls up and George reaches for the door handle. He looks back at the men, who stand side by side, staring at him expectantly.

GEORGE  
I'm sorry. I don't know what this is about, but I really need to...

CHARLIE  
(blurting out, interrupting)  
We've seen the security tapes.

George becomes even more nervous.

GEORGE  
Oh, Jesus. Look, I don't know what you think you saw, but I'm a happily married man.

George pulls open the cab door and starts to climb inside. Roger steps forward.

ROGER  
No, you don't understand. We just want to talk about your statue.

George hears the word "statue", and suddenly stops. He looks from Roger to Charlie, trying to understand what this might be all about. He senses something but he's not sure...

GEORGE  
(softer, less defensively)  
I'm a happily married man.

ROGER  
(kindly)  
It's okay. We just want to talk.

The CABBIE, a gruff looking veteran of the New York streets, turns back to George.

CABBIE  
C'mon buddy. Where to?

George ignores the Cabbie.

GEORGE  
You know they're moving the exhibit, don't you?

Roger nods.

ROGER  
That's why we're here.

Finally, George understands. He nods and climbs out of the cab.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

The apartment is small and cluttered and overrun with several cats of various sizes and shapes.

The walls are covered with hand-drawn copies of Charlie's beloved painting, Young Girl With Cats. Some are completely painted replicas, others are small pen and ink sketches, done on a variety of paper types, from cocktail napkins, to grocery bags. Some of the sketches depict only a portion of the painting, such as a hand or an arm or one of the cats.

Roger studies the sketches. Charlie is behind him, kneeling down with a bowl of mild for the cats.

CHARLIE  
I hope you don't mind the mess. I usually don't have many guests.

ROGER  
It's fine. (beat) Did you do all these yourself?

Charlie nods with bashful pride.

CHARLIE  
I can do it by memory now. The sketch of the hands on the yellow envelope is my latest. I finished it this morning.

Roger examines the detailed rendition of the girl's hands.

ROGER  
Amazing...

A KNOCK is heard on the front door.

CHARLIE  
That must be George.

Charlie picks up one of the cats and heads for the door. He opens it and George enters carrying a large, stuffed DUFFEL BAG.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Hi, George.

GEORGE

Hi...

George looks around. He seems a little uncomfortable when he sees the inside of the apartment.

Charlie turns to Roger, who is only standing at the other end of the small room.

CHARLIE

George is here.

Roger and George wave to one another.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I hope you didn't have a hard time finding the place...oh, watch your step.

George stops short as a cat scurries away.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(to the cat)

Goya...now you behave.

(to George)

Sorry about that. They're not used to guests.

Charlie smiles nervously. George turns to Roger.

GEORGE

Did you bring the blue-prints?

ROGER

Right over here.

The men go over to a table, where some large blue-prints of the museum are spread out. Another cat is sitting on top of the blue-prints.

CHARLIE

Matisse...

Charlie grabs the cat and sets it on the floor.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

They're not used to guests...

Charlie flashes a nervous smile, but Roger and George hardly notice, as they are already studying the plans.

ROGER

I think the North Entrance is our best chance...

As Roger speaks we...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT MUSEUM - NORTH ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Roger continues in VOICE-OVER as we are now in front of the museum's North Entrance, the images matching his description.

ROGER (V.O.)  
 ...it's quiet and secluded, so we  
 won't be spotted from the street.  
 The door has a triple-action  
 security lock, controlled  
 electronically, and there's only  
 one posted guard.

INT. MUSEUM - NORTH ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A SECURITY GUARD stands just inside the door. He rocks back and forth, as if holding in a full bladder.

ROGER (V.O.)  
 Every other Thursday, there is no  
 relief guard for this sector, so  
 the guard on duty is permitted two,  
 five minute bathroom breaks, every  
 three hours.

The guard looks at his watch, then hurries down the hall.

EXT. MUSEUM - NORTH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Through the glass doors, the security guard can be seen leaving his post.

ROGER (V.O.)  
 We pre-set the electronic locks to  
 release at a specified time...

A series of CLICKS as the electronic locks are released.

ROGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 ...and then we're in.

The dark figures push open the doors and enter the museum.

INT. MUSEUM - NORTH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The three figures hurry down the long hallway.

ROGER (V.O.)  
 Once we're inside, we make our way  
 down the corridor, to the main  
 exhibit hall...

They have just about reached the end of the corridor.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
 What about the two interior guards?

TWO GUARDS spin around the corner, their guns drawn and levelled. The three thieves stop in their tracks.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The men look at one another, privately pondering the horrible fate.

CHARLIE  
 (tentatively)  
 We could always try the South  
 Entrance...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MUSEUM - SOUTH ENTRANCE - NIGHT

This entrance is smaller, but also quiet and secluded. The dark figures are crouch near the entrance.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
 ...there is no guard stationed  
 here, except on weekends. Once  
 again, a triple-action bold with an  
 electronically controlled  
 release...

Three LOUD CLICKS as the locks release.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 There is also a magnetic trip wire  
 on a three second delay, triggered  
 when the door opens...

The men look at their watches, then each one flashes a "thumbs up".

INT. MUSEUM - SOUTH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

They push the door open and scurry inside.

...but, if we get in quick, we can  
reset it before it activates.

One man bends down to the base of the door and resets the  
trip wire. He flashes another "thumbs up". The men start  
moving down the hallway.

ROGER (V.O.)  
What about the motion sensors?

Several BLUE STREAMS OF LIGHT suddenly fill the hallway. The  
men freeze in very awkward positions.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
That could be a problem...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The men look at one another, once again daunted by the  
imagined consequences.

GEORGE  
Have you thought about going in  
through the roof?

Roger and Charlie glance at one another.

ROGER  
Uhh...well, sure...we've thought  
about it. But I don't know if  
we...

GEORGE  
(interrupting, confident)  
I think we should go in through the  
roof. On the roof there's no  
alarm.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MUSEUM - ROOF - NIGHT

The dark figures are on the roof. One of the men has just  
cut a large hole in the glass sky-light and another uses a  
giant SUCTION CUP to remove the cut portion. The third man  
sets off several tear-gas canisters and drops them into the  
museum.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
We drop a little tear gas in first  
and wait for it to put the guards  
out.

INT. MUSEUM - MOMENTS LATER

Gas is pouring out of the canisters. The guards are dropping to the floor.

EXT. MUSEUM - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

The men are wearing gas masks. They wait, poised and ready for action. Again, the men look to their watches and flash a "thumbs up".

GEORGE (V.O.)

Then we go in on ropes...

The men grab ropes, which have been attached with grappling hooks to some nearby piping, and lower themselves through the sky light and into the museum.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Charlie and Roger look at one another. They don't know what to make of the plan. It sounds preposterous, yet it also sounds like it would work.

CHARLIE

Uhh...wouldn't that take a lot of equipment?

George doesn't say anything, just reaches down and grabs the duffel bag. He unzips it and dumps the contents onto the table.

Amazed, Charlie and Roger stare at an incredible array of commando equipment: ROPES, GRAPPLING HOOKS, NIGHT-VISION GOGGLES, Rambo-style SURVIVAL KNIVES, GAS MASKS, and TEAR GAS CANNISTERS.

GEORGE

Do you guys want to do this, or not?

EXT. CHARLIE'S BUILDING - ROOF - 20 MINUTES LATER

ROGER'S POV: Through the green tint of night-vision goggles, we see the flat roof of Charlie's building, with a three-and-a-half foot wall running around the perimeter. The lights of the neighboring buildings shimmer all around and the honks and whistles of city life rise up from the street.

George is busy attaching a rope/grappling hook contraption to a piece of pipe. He is wearing climbing gear, complete with all the requisite straps and devices.

Roger raises his goggles and looks around nervously. He is also wearing climbing gear, as is Charlie. Charlie still has his goggles pulled over his eyes.

ROGER

Are you sure no one is going to come up here?

CHARLIE

Nobody else has a key. The super gave it to me when Gauguin got his asthma. The fresh air is good for his lungs.

George has finished securing the rope to the piping. He tosses the rope over the edge of the building, then pulls himself over the wall and stands on the building's outer ledge. He fastens the rope to one of the hooks on his vest.

GEORGE

Okay, I'll go first. When I get to the balcony, I'll call for one of you to follow.

(beat)

And don't worry, once the rope is attached, you won't fall. Just make sure you control your speed. Remember, your left hand is the gas...your right hand is the brake.

George adjusts his gloves, pulls his goggles down, and gathers the rope in his hands. He scoots to the edge.

ROGER

George?

GEORGE

Yeah?

ROGER

Where'd you learn how to do this?

GEORGE

Marines. I was in Wave Three of the Grenada invasion.

He raises a triumphant fist.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Viva Grenada Libre!

George disappears over the edge.

Roger and Charlie scoot to the wall, but, because of the angle, they can't see anything.

A small CRASH is heard. Roger and Charlie look at one another, fearing the worst.

ROGER

George?

From below, we hear a reply.

GEORGE (O.C.)

(slightly pained)

I'm okay...

(beat)

Charlie, you don't care about these flower pots do you?

CHARLIE

(confused)

No...I guess not.

GEORGE (O.C.)

Good. Okay, who's next?

Again, Roger and Charlie look at one another.

CHARLIE

(to George)

Roger's next.

Surprised, Roger looks at Charlie. Charlie looks away.

GEORGE (O.C.)

Okay, Roger, let's get on out there.

Reluctantly, Roger moves to the wall. He tries to throw his right leg over, but he is not limber enough. He tries the other leg...same result. He tries to raise himself with his arms, but they are too weak. Finally, he flops his belly onto the wall and squirms to other side with the grace of a beached seal.

Breathing hard, Roger gathers himself, then attaches the rope to his climbing equipment and inches out to the edge of the roof. He looks down.

Finally, we see George. He is standing on Charlie's small balcony, a mess of shattered flower pots scattered at his feet. Surprisingly, he is not very far down at all...perhaps only eight feet from where Roger is standing.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Okay, Roger, you ready?

ROGER  
Look, George, are you sure about  
this?

GEORGE  
Of course. Come on...you'll be  
fine. You attached the rope  
correctly, didn't you?

Roger checks the rope.

ROGER  
I think so...

GEORGE  
Alright then, the rest is easy.  
Let 'er rip, soldier!

ROGER  
(reluctantly)  
Okay...

Roger takes a deep breath and flips his night-vision goggles  
down.

ROGER'S POV: Bathed in the green-tint of the goggles, George  
looks up from the balcony and flashes a "thumbs-up".

Roger turns to look at Charlie, who waves at him.

CHARLIE  
Good luck, Roger.

Roger takes another deep-breath.

ROGER  
Okay, here it goes...Yaaaaa!

Roger pushes himself back off the ledge.

Charlie cringes as Roger disappears, but, when Charlie rushes  
to the wall and looks over, we see that Roger has dropped  
only about six inches down the other side. His feet are now  
flat on the side of the building, and his body hovers in an  
awkward crouch. His hands cling tightly to the rope, but his  
arms are beginning to shake.

CHARLIE  
Oh my...Roger, are you okay?

ROGER  
I...I'm not sure.

Roger tires to maneuver his feet, which changes his body angle, but doesn't get him any closer to his destination.

GEORGE

That's it Private, you're doing fine. You got the hard part behind you...remember, your left hand is the gas, your right hand is the brake.

The rope shakes, as Roger trembles under the strain.

ROGER

I think my hand is slipping.

GEORGE

Which one?

ROGER

Both...

Roger suddenly loses his grip and plummets from the wall. George barely has time to get out of the way, as Roger CRASHES to the balcony, bouncing off the scattered soil and crushed flowers.

George rushes to his side.

GEORGE

Jesus Christ...Roger. Are you okay?

Roger MOANS, then opens his eyes, surprised he's isn't dead.

ROGER

(in pain)

I'm alive. I can't believe it...I'm alive.

GEORGE

Of course you are. That was a good job. A little too much gas...not enough brake, but good job. How's your back? Does it feel broken?

Roger moves a little.

ROGER

I don't think so. Am I bleeding?

George looks him over.

GEORGE

Nope...

George starts to unfasten the rope from Roger's chest.

ROGER  
I couldn't hold the rope anymore.  
My arms were shaking, my hands  
started slipping...

George is already moving the rope into position for the next victim.

GEORGE  
Don't worry about it. Same thing  
happened to me.

George looks up to the roof.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Okay, Charlie...your turn!

For a moment, there is no reply. Then...

CHARLIE (O.C.)  
(a little frightened)  
How's Roger?

GEORGE  
He's fine.

CHARLIE (O.C.)  
Are you sure?

GEORGE  
Of course I'm sure. He's right  
here. Come on let's go.

Roger has rolled himself onto his back.

ROGER  
How high did you say it was from  
the roof of the museum to the  
floor?

GEORGE  
Sixty-feet.

ROGER  
And how heavy is your statue?

GEORGE  
About a hundred pounds...

Roger MOANS again, but George is focussed on Charlie's progress on the roof.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
That's it, Charlie. Good job...

From the balcony, we can see Charlie struggling and straining just to get himself over the little wall. He doesn't look like he's going to make it.

You know, guys. Maybe this isn't such a good plan after all...

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

Doris is making the bed.

Roger enters, approaching tentatively.

ROGER  
Uhh...Doris, I've been thinking about what you said. You know, about me retiring and maybe moving somewhere.

Doris stops with the bed. She turns to look at him.

DORIS  
Yes...

ROGER  
Well, maybe its not such a bad idea.

Doris straightens up.

DORIS  
Florida, Roger?

ROGER  
Well, how about Denmark?

DORIS  
(puzzled)  
Denmark? Is it warm in Denmark?

ROGER  
(softly)  
I don't think so.

DORIS  
Roger...

Doris shakes her head and goes back to the bed.

Roger turns and walks out of the room.

Doris looks back, sees him leaving, and notices something.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
Roger, are you limping?

ROGER (O.C.)  
No.

INT. MUSEUM - MAIN ENTRANCE HALL

CLOSE UP: The Lonely Maiden stares longingly out to sea.

Roger is at his post, his sad eyes lost in the girl's enigmatic beauty.

ROGER  
(softly)  
I'm sorry...

Roger stares at her for another moment, then looks down to the floor.

INT. MUSEUM - EMPLOYEE LUNCHROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP on a PINK FLIER...it reads ATTENTION ALL PERSONNEL. WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE CURRENT, LONG-STANDING EXHIBIT, SURVEY OF EUROPEAN ART 400 B.C. TO THE PRESENT, WILL BE REPLACED BY MASTERWORKS OF THE SCANDINAVIAN AVANT-GARDE. MUSEUM WILL BE CLOSED FROM MARCH 13 TO MARCH 21 FOR REMOVAL AND INSTALLATION.

Roger stares with disgust at the flier, behind him a few MUSEUM EMPLOYEES are scattered through the lunchroom.

Roger tears the notice off the board, flings it into a nearby trash can, then hurries out of the room.

INT. MUSEUM - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Roger heads down the hall, then stops as the Curator swoops past him. The Curator has a FILE FOLDER tucked under his arm and he moves down the hallway, then ducks into a nearby office.

A moment later, the Curator leaves the office without the file. He turns the a corner at the other end of the hall and disappears.

Roger approaches the office the Curator had just left. The plate on the door reads MERV NEEDLEBAUM, SECURITY SUPERVISOR.

ROGER'S POV: The office is empty. The file folder is sitting in the middle of Needlebaum's desk.

Roger looks around. TWO EMPLOYEES step out of the lunchroom, but turn in the opposite direction.

Roger nervously chews his lip, then steps into Needlebaum's office.

INT. MUSEUM - NEEDLEBAUM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Roger walks straight over to the desk and looks at the folder.

CLOSE-UP on folder reveals the little filing tab and the words: MOVE INFO.

Roger takes a deep breath and opens the file.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

The park is full of afternoon noise and activity.

Roger sits on a bench, feeding pigeons from a bag of birdseed. Directly behind Roger is an empty bench.

A man, wearing sunglasses and a hat pulled low on his head, sits down and immediately opens a newspaper.

The man waits for a careful second, then, without turning around, begins to speak. We instantly realize it's George.

GEORGE

Where's Charlie?

ROGER

He said he'd be here.

Roger tosses more birdseed. George glances at his watch and impatiently flips a page of his paper.

Charlie scurries up to the benches. He's out of breath and carrying a swirl of cotton candy. He sits at the end of George's bench and turns to explain his tardiness.

CHARLIE

Sorry I'm late. I went to the wrong bench.

GEORGE

Shh...turn around.

Charlie is confused, but does as he's told.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We need to be extra careful now.  
We don't know who might be  
watching.

George looks to make sure they aren't observed by some unseen operative. Charlie hides his face behind the cotton candy, then thinks of something and turns around again.

CHARLIE

(concerned)

Wait a second...guys, I thought we  
talked about this rope thing.  
Sixty feet is a long way down  
and...

GEORGE

Would you turn around?

Charlie turns back. George looks around again.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(quietly)

We have a new plan. We're going to  
steal the pieces during the move.

CHARLIE

(impressed)

Oh...

(then wary)

...wait, won't there be guards?

GEORGE

We are the guards. Tell him Roger.

ROGER

Needlebaum's taking volunteers to  
work security...

CHARLIE

How'd you find this out?

ROGER

I snuck into his office and saw it  
in a file.

CHARLIE

(shocked, slightly impressed)

Roger...

GEORGE

(interrupting)

Charlie, can you drive a van?

Charlie seems a bit bewildered by all the information flying at him.

CHARLIE

I think so...

GEORGE

Good, because we're going to need a driver. You handle the van, then Roger and I work inside to get the pieces.

George folds up his paper.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Okay, we better get moving. This might start looking suspicious.

George starts to get up.

CHARLIE

Uhh, George, wait a minute...

George plops back into his seat. He pulls his hat lower and fluffs his paper.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(carefully)

You say we're going to steal them during the move. Have you thought about what's going to happen when the crates are opened in Denmark and three pieces are missing?

The men pause. Something they hadn't considered...

Suddenly frightened, Roger turns around.

ROGER

Are you saying they're going to know it's us?

Charlie turns around to look at Roger.

CHARLIE

Who else would have a motive?

GEORGE

(impatient)

Would you guys turn around. They'll see us.

ROGER

George, who is "they"?

George never gets a chance to reply...an ERRANT FRISBEE toss suddenly lands at their feet.

The men turn back in their seats and sit in silence, while a young man runs up and throws the frisbee back to his friends.

George waits until the man is out of earshot.

GEORGE

Listen, gentlemen, I don't like what I'm hearing here. Morale seems low. If you're thinking about backing out because of one minor snag, let me know. I am quite prepared to go in on my own. They're not taking that statue.

George folds up his paper, then rises from the bench and walks away.

Charlie watches him go.

CHARLIE

(thoughtfully)

Roger, does George seem a little tense to you?

INT. MUSEUM - EMPLOYEE MEN'S ROOM - DAY

Roger hits FLUSH and steps away from the urinal.

He walks over to the sink and turns on the faucet.

A VOICE calls out in a heightened whisper.

VOICE

Roger...

Surprised that he isn't alone, Roger looks around. He sees George sticking his head over the wall of one of the stalls.

ROGER

(confused)

George?

George ducks down, then steps out of the stall and joins Roger at the sink.

GEORGE

I've been looking for you.

ROGER  
(still confused)  
How'd you know I was going to be in  
here?

GEORGE  
I didn't.

George squirts some soap into his hand and glances at the mirror to make sure no one is entering.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Listen, I've been thinking about  
what Charlie said...about what  
might happen in Denmark when they  
find the empty crates. I think we  
should get some fakes made.

Roger squirts some soap into his hand.

ROGER  
(disappointed)  
That's not really the same, is it?  
I thought the whole point was to  
get the real pieces...

GEORGE  
No, no...we are going to get the  
real pieces. But we'll substitute  
them for the originals. That way,  
when the crates are opened in  
Denmark, no one will be the wiser.

He checks the mirror, then...

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
(carefully)  
I read about this museum in  
France...a few years ago they found  
four forgeries hanging on their  
walls. No idea how they got there,  
no idea when the originals were  
taken...they didn't know anything.

Roger considers this and reaches for more soap.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Pretty good idea, huh? I came with  
it last night.

Roger isn't sure. He's not even sure why he's still washing his hands. Still, he reaches for another squirt, adding to the growing mountain of suds.

ROGER

How do we get the fakes into the museum?

GEORGE

That's easy. Remember, as guards we've only been trained to look for people taking artwork out of the museum. No one ever said anything about bringing artwork in.

George rinses off his hands.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

The important thing is for you to get a fake.

ROGER

How am I supposed to do that?

George shrugs and grabs some paper towels.

GEORGE

Charlie's an artist. Talk to him. He'll need to get something ready too.

ROGER

What are you going to do?

GEORGE

I've got something that's been in the works for awhile. A few adjustments and it should be just fine.

George tosses the paper towels into the wastebasket.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Remember, sign-ups are next Friday.

Roger starts to nod, just as a PUDGY SECURITY GUARD enters the bathroom.

Surprised, George COUGHS, then slips through the door, leaving Roger standing conspicuously with a pile of suds in his hands.

Roger self-consciously puts his hands back under the water.

The Pudgy Security Guard pauses, trying to figure out what he just missed, then heads into a stall.

INT. MUSEUM - EMPLOYEE LUNCHROOM - DAY

The GUARDS line up in front of the bulletin board, each one waiting to volunteer for the move.

George steps to the board and signs his name.

A few spots back in line, Roger's eyes drift around the room. Charlie is sitting at a table, reading CAT FANCY magazine. They make eye contact for an instant, then Charlie looks down.

George finishes and steps away from the board. He passes Roger, but they don't look at one another.

The line moves and Roger steps up one more place.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

CLOSE-UP of Charlie's painting...Young Girl With Cats. The painting looks identical to the one in the museum.

ROGER (O.C.)  
Charlie, that's incredible.

PULL BACK to reveal Charlie, holding the canvas upon which his forgery has been painted. He smiles bashfully. Behind him, cats move silently through the room.

CHARLIE  
Do you want to see yours?

ROGER  
(excited)  
Is it done?

CHARLIE  
Just a few more finishing touches.  
Come here, have a look.

Charlie leads Roger to his easel and gestures to an almost completed version of The Lonely Maiden.

The details of the painting are exact...except that in this version the Maiden does not resemble the Maiden in the original.

Charlie's Maiden is short, pudgy, with brittle scraggly hair, and a sallow complexion. The haunting, enigmatic look in her face is now one of pained boredom.

Roger stares in disbelief.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
What do you think?

ROGER  
Is this a joke?

Charlie seems genuinely surprised.

CHARLIE  
You don't like it?

Charlie looks over to Roger's Art Book, which sits propped open on a chair next to the easel. He looks back and forth between the easel and the book.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
I think it's a pretty good likeness.

ROGER  
(flabbergasted)  
No, no...

Roger grabs the book.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
It's all wrong, the face, the body...Charlie, she looks like a pear.

CHARLIE  
She's a little hippy, Roger.

ROGER  
Hippy? She's not hippy. She's perfectly proportioned. It's called voluptuous. And her hair...it's supposed to be long, flowing, windswept. This...this looks like a rat's nest. And what about the glow, Charlie? This girl has no glow!

Roger holds up the book and points to the Maiden.

Charlie looks at the book, then the version on his easel. He shrugs.

CHARLIE  
I can only paint what I see, Roger. That's how I see it.

ROGER  
That's how you see it? It looks nothing like her.

CHARLIE

Well, I guess I see what I feel and  
that's how your girl made me feel.  
You know, I'm not a Xerox machine.

Roger sighs with frustration.

ROGER

Then how come yours is perfect?

Charlie seems a little bashful.

CHARLIE

I've had lots of practice...almost  
thirty years now. Besides, its not  
like I can do it perfectly.

For a moment, Charlie regards his version.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(passionately)

There's still something about her  
aura that I just can't seem to  
capture. I've tried over and  
over...but it still eludes me.

Charlie sighs, a bit overwhelmed by his failing.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(softly)

Hello, Whistler...

He strokes the cat and studies his painting for another  
moment.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Roger.

Roger glances at the countless versions of YOUNG GIRL WITH  
CATS that cover the walls.

ROGER

You've never tried to paint  
anything else before, have you?

Charlie looks a little embarrassed.

CHARLIE

No...

Another awkward moment of silence. Is the plan falling  
apart?

INT. STUDIO - DAY

George is naked. He stands in the pose of The Bronze Warrior.

Across from George, a SCULPTOR, wearing protective goggles, uses a blow torch to mold a replica of George's statue.

A cell phone begins RINGING.

GEORGE  
Is that mine or yours?

The Sculptor listens for a moment.

SCULPTOR  
I think it's yours.

George nods and breaks his pose.

GEORGE  
It's probably my wife. Lets take two.

George heads to where his clothes have been neatly stacked. He rifles through his pants and pulls out his phone.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
George here...

George listens for a second, then reflects.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I thought I said this number was for emergencies only.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - FAMILY ROOM - SAME TIME.

Roger is on the phone.

ROGER  
George, this is an emergency.  
Charlie couldn't do the painting.

INTERCUT BETWEEN ROGER AND GEORGE:

GEORGE  
What do you mean he couldn't do it?  
Roger, this is a vital part of the plan...without this everything falls apart.

ROGER  
Trust me George, it was terrible.

GEORGE  
What about his?

ROGER  
His looked great. (starting to panic) George, what am I going to do? I don't know anybody else that paints.

GEORGE  
Relax, soldier, relax. Look, the art world has a long tradition of young painters doing forgeries to make ends meet. Some of the most famous artists in the world started out this way.

George has drifted over to his statue. He looks it over, then flashes the Sculptor a "thumbs up".

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
If there's on thing New York has, it's starting artists. It'll cost you a few hundred dollars...maybe more, maybe less.

ROGER  
That's a lot of money.

GEORGE  
Yeah, well artists have to eat too. Look, Roger, you've got to have something done, or...well, we'll have to go on without you.

A pause, then...

ROGER  
(softly)  
Okay, George...

George hangs up the phone and heads back to the middle of the room. He nods with approval in the direction of the statue.

GEORGE  
Looks good...now, lets really try and emphasize the strength in the legs and the chest.

George gets into his stance.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Remember, I'm just here for a visual reference. You really should be referring to the picture for the details.

PAN over to the Sculptor. We see that he is actually working off DETAILED PHOTOGRAPHS of the real statue.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - FAMILY ROOM - SAME TIME

Roger stands by the window, looking out at the streets below. He looks sad.

A moment later, he nervously bites his lip, carefully considering an idea.

Finally, he turns and walks to the kitchen.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Roger goes to the cupboard, opens it, then reaches behind the pots and pans. He pulls out the MONEY JAR.

Roger pauses one more time, considering his options, then opens the jar and takes out a thick wad of cash.

EXT. PLAZA - DAY

A majestic FOUNTAIN stands in the middle of a square plaza, squirting water high into the air. The plaza is filled with a typical crowd of city-dwellers and tourists.

Several ARTIST crouch behind their easels, working intently to capture the fountain scene before them.

Wearing his beret and clutching the Art Book underneath his arm, Roger strolls the crowd, carefully looking at the artists' easels.

He sees an incredible array of images...yet none seem to correctly depict the actual scene.

Finally, Roger reaches the easel of a wild-haired young man, who looks every bit the mad, STARVING ARTIST. His clothing smeared with paint, a second brush clutched between his teeth, the young man has produced an exact rendering of the fountain scene, including a perfect depiction of two people sitting at the water's edge.

Aware of Roger's presence, the young man pulls the second brush out of his mouth and replaces it with a cigarette.

STARVING ARTIST

Can I help you with something,  
mister?

ROGER

(innocently)

No, no...I'm...uhh...just admiring  
your work. Looks pretty good.

The young man doesn't respond. Roger steps a little closer,  
and tries again.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I said it looks pretty good.

The young man nods slightly, but still no response.

Roger steps a little closer.

ROGER (CONT'D)

So, are you...studying art her in  
the city?

Annoyed, the young man gruffly switches the cigarette and  
brush, then continues working.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Expensive place for a young artist.

The young artist glances back at Roger. Roger smiles again.

STARVING ARTIST

(annoyed)

Are you sure there isn't something  
I could help you with? Because if  
you wouldn't mind...you're kind of  
bothering me.

ROGER

(taken aback)

Oh...

Roger pauses. He'd better say something quick.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Actually...there is something that  
you could...uhh..maybe help me  
with.

The young man nods knowingly, but doesn't turn from his work.

STARVING ARTIST

Yeah...

ROGER

Uhh, well...how would you feel about doing a little work on a sort of...commission basis?

The young painter doesn't look away from his work.

STARVING ARTIST

How much?

ROGER

Well, it would only be one painting.

STARVING ARTIST

No...how much? How much money? You said commission didn't you?

ROGER

Oh...right. Uhh, well...how much would you normally charge.

The young man shrugs.

STARVING ARTIST

Depends on what you want me to paint. A guy on Wall Street used to pay me once a month to come over to his apartment and paint him and his mistress blue. I charged him a thousand bucks a pop.

Roger seems mildly shocked.

ROGER

Well, its nothing like that, I can assure you.

Roger opens his Art Book and turns to the Maiden page.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I have a picture here of what I need.

Finally, the young man stops his work. He studies the picture in the book.

ROGER (CONT'D)

It's for my wife. It's a gift.

The young artist nods..."yeah, right".

STARVING ARTIST

You want this actual size?

ROGER  
Definitely...

Another moment of study, then...

STARVING ARTIST  
How soon do you need it?

ROGER  
Five days.

The young man pauses to consider.

STARVING ARTIST  
Five hundred dollars.

ROGER  
(surprised)  
Five hundred dollars?

STARVING ARTIST  
Plus supplies. I'll take half now.  
The rest when you pick it up.

ROGER  
(wary)  
That's pretty expensive.

The young painter shrugs.

STARVING ARTIST  
I could charge you less, but then  
it would take a lot longer.

ROGER  
No, no...five hundred dollars is  
fine.

Roger takes a deep breath and counts out the money. He holds  
it out to the artist.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Now, are you sure you can do this?  
It's important that it look exactly  
right.

The young artist glances down at the book.

STARVING ARTIST  
(nonchalantly)  
Yeah, I can do it...it's no  
problem.

ROGER

She has this glow...a mysterious quality. It really needs to be there.

The young man grabs the money and puts it in his shirt pocket.

STARVING ARTIST

(already bored)

You just make sure you have the rest of the money.

The young artist takes a sketch pad and quickly writes his phone number down using his brush. He tears off the scrap of paper, blows on it, then hands it to Roger.

STARVING ARTIST (CONT'D)

Call me in five days.

Roger nods, then takes the paper and turns to go. He suddenly remembers something and stops.

ROGER

You know, this just occurred to me. You'll need to sign the painting with the artists' signature. My wife loves little touches like that. The book has a nice shot of it on page seventy-eight.

The Starving Artist has already turned back to his easel.

STARVING ARTIST

No problem...

ROGER

And be careful with the book. Don't get any paint on it or anything.

The Starving Artist turns back to his easel.

STARVING ARTIST

Call me in five days.

Roger smiles nervously, then turns and walks away.

INT. MUSEUM - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Needlebaum stands at the front of the room, using a pointer to indicate color-coded selections on a map of the museum.

He reads tentatively from a stack of 3x5 index cards, giving the impression that he is simply relaying orders.

NEEDLEBAUM

Sector three will be the first to be moved, starting from the North wall...

He searches for the location, then smacks his pointer against the map.

NEEDLEBAUM (CONT'D)

...then working our way south. The museum has been divided in color-coded sectors and each painting assigned a number...

A slow PAN of the guards reveals that they aren't even paying attention. Only Roger and George seem alert. George even pauses occasionally to jot down notes.

INT. MUSEUM - BASEMENT - LATER

The guards stand in front of a large crate. The inside of the crate has been slotted to hold several paintings.

Needlebaum points to a colored sticker on the side of the box. He reads from another card.

NEEDLEBAUM

Each piece will be placed in the crate and slot designated by its color code and number, then marked off on a checklist and double-checked with the master-list.

George looks around, then makes another notation.

Needlebaum flips to a new card.

NEEDLEBAUM (CONT'D)

All pieces will be loaded and secured by the night of the thirteenth, ready to be shipped out by 7 AM the following morning. The rest of the week will be devoted to the installation of the new exhibit.

Needlebaum flips to another new card.

NEEDLEBAUM (CONT'D)

Now, the Curator has written a few words that he would like me to read.

Needlebaum clears his throat and begins to read.

NEEDLEBAUM (CONT'D)

(emotionless)

The Masterworks of the Scandinavian Avant-garde represents a daring and exciting new direction for the museum. Join me as we launch boldly into the 21st century, an era where beauty is but an illusion, while lust and pain are uneasy, but constant bedfellows...

George and Roger are now as bored as their co-workers.

EXT. PAY PHONE - NIGHT

A busy New York street. Roger is inside making a call.

INT. PAY PHONE - CONTINUOUS

Roger holds a scrap of paper with the artist's number.

ROGER

Hi...it's me...yeah, the one who is paying you to do the painting...yeah, right, for my wife. Uhh, listen...

Roger stops as the party on the other end interrupts.

ROGER (CONT'D)

No...no, I still have the money...I just uhh, wanted to make sure everything is going okay...with the painting I mean.

Roger pauses, take aback by the response he hears.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Right, right...no, I understand. Artists need their space. Maybe I should just...right, call you back when I said I would. That might be better...

Disturbed, Roger hangs up the phone. He stuffs the paper into his pocket, then exits the phone booth.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Roger enters and closes the door. He looks around, expecting to see Doris. He puts his bag down and takes off his coat.

ROGER  
Hello? Doris?

No answer.

Roger peeks into the kitchen. Doris is sitting at the kitchen table with her back to him.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Oh, there you are...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Roger can't see, but, from a REVERSE ANGLE, we realize Doris has the money jar in front of her and the bills stacked neatly on the table. A pad of paper is scribbled with calculations and several Kleenex lie crumpled on the table.

ROGER  
I didn't think you were here. I yelled when I came in, but you didn't answer...

Roger stops as soon as he sees the jar and the money. He looks like he wants to disappear.

DORIS  
There's 500 dollars missing.

ROGER  
(painfully)  
Oh, Doris...

Doris turns to him, her face awash with confusion.

Roger sighs and sits down at the table.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Do...do you think we've been robbed?

Crushed by his reply, Doris puts her head down.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Did you check the rest of the apartment? What about the stereo? Is the television still here?

DORIS

(softly)

We weren't robbed. This is all that was missing. I opened the jar to put in my change from the store and to do my weekly count...

ROGER

I thought you did a monthly count.

DORIS

No. I do a weekly count. I've always done a weekly count, and this week we're 500 dollars lower than last week.

ROGER

That's weird...just in case, maybe I should check the television.

Roger tries to leave, but before he can get up from the table, Doris gets a new flood of tears.

DORIS

Roger, why didn't you just tell me you needed the money? We could have worked something out...but to steal?

Shocked by the accusation, Roger drops to his seat.

ROGER

Why would I take it?

DORIS

That's what I'd like to know.

Doris blows her nose loudly into her Kleenex.

DORIS (CONT'D)

You don't gamble, you don't go to bars, you aren't seeing another woman...

ROGER

How do you know?

Doris looks patronizingly at her husband. She already knows the answer, but feels compelled to ask anyway.

DORIS

Okay, Roger, are you seeing another woman?

ROGER

No, of course not...but how do you know I don't gamble...and go to bars?

DORIS

Oh, Roger...

ROGER

Hey, why am I the one to blame? Money gets stolen and you automatically accuse me? How do I know you didn't take the money?

Doris is now on the verge of a complete breakdown.

DORIS

Me? How could you? I'm your wife, Roger. Your wife!

ROGER

(weakly)

Well, you accused me...

Doris stands up and stuffs the money back in the jar.

DORIS

(hysterical)

This money was for us. To think that I would steal...from my own jar.

Doris grabs the jar and hurries from the room.

Roger hustles after her.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Doris rushes into her bedroom. Roger follows closely behind.

ROGER

Wait...Doris, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.

Doris SLAMS the bedroom door in Roger's face. He looks poisoned with self-loathing.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - FAMILY ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The apartment is dark and still.

Roger sits stiffly on the couch. His head in his hands, he looks racked with worry. He is wearing his beret.

A long moment passes, then Roger lets out a troubled sigh and looks up at the ceiling. He takes the beret off, then slowly rises and walks to the bedroom.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

ROGER

Doris?

No response.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Come on, Doris, please. You know I don't like it when you're mad at me.

For a moment, no response. Then...

DORIS

Go away Roger...

Defeated, Roger leans against the door frame.

ROGER

Okay, Doris...I took the money.

Awkward silence. Roger looks down.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Look, Doris, I didn't want to tell you this...it was supposed to be a surprise.

Roger stops, hoping he doesn't have to continue.

DORIS (O.C.)

I'm listening...

ROGER

Uhh...well...remember how you and I talked about maybe taking that trip to Florida?

DORIS (O.C.)

Yes...

ROGER

Well...I thought that I might surprise you, so I...uhh...went to this travel agent...and...I booked a trip for us. I needed the money for a deposit.

Another long pause. Roger waits nervously.

The bedroom door opens slightly and Doris peers through the crack. She dabs at her teary eyes with a tissue.

DORIS  
(warily)  
We're going to Florida?

Roger nods timidly.

ROGER  
(meekly)  
It was supposed to be a surprise.

Doris studies Roger for a long moment. Then lets out a happy sigh and a smile. She throws the door open.

DORIS  
Our anniversary...you remembered!

Doris throws her arms around Roger. Roger seems puzzled, as if he's just added two and two together and they're not equally four.

ROGER  
Uhh...Doris...our  
anniversary...that's next week.

Doris smiles and nuzzles into his arms.

DORIS  
Of course it is...I thought you'd  
forgotten.

Roger winces at the realization of what he has just done.

The sound of a SUBWAY TRAIN POUNDING THE TRACKS as it races through a tunnel and we....

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Roger, Charlie, and George are covertly gathered in a lightly crowded section of the train.

Reacting to something George has just said, Roger and Charlie exchange a look...part surprise, part fear.

George misreads it.

GEORGE

Look guys, I know what you're thinking... "why does George get to be the one in the crate?" Well, the truth is... I'm the only one with combat experience, so it just seemed logical. Besides, Charlie, you'll be in the surveillance room and Roger, well, I didn't think you could handle the Bronze Warrior. No offense.

ROGER

None taken.

George gives a careful look around the train, then pulls two walkie-talkies out of his coat. He hands them to Charlie and Roger.

GEORGE

We'll be in constant communication.

Charlie starts to fiddle with the knobs.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Put it away, Charlie, you can look at it later.

Charlie complies.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Okay guys, we have one week...

George pulls two envelopes from his jacket and hands them to his partners.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I've written everything down. Read it, memorize it, then burn it. Charlie, your envelope has the name and address of the place where you'll get the van. The guy's name is Ray. He knows not to ask any questions.

George notices that both of his partners seem a little overwhelmed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Look guys, if you have anything you want to add... now's the time.

Roger looks like he wants to speak, but he remains silent. So does Charlie.

A moment later, the train pulls into the next stop.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
 Okay men, if that's it, I'd better  
 go. Remember, once you memorize  
 the information, burn it. Anything  
 comes up, let me know.

George stands up and hurries off the train.

Charlie and Roger exchange another furtive glance. Charlie wrings his hands nervously.

CHARLIE  
 (softly)  
 Seems like a lot to remember. You  
 think he knows what he's doing?

Roger nods. He waits another moment, glances at the other passengers, then...

ROGER  
 (timidly)  
 Say, Charlie, you wouldn't happen  
 to have five hundred dollars I  
 could borrow, would you?

The train takes off again.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - A FEW HOURS LATER

Roger enters the apartment, sets his bag down, and begins taking off his coat.

He listens for a moment, then calls out.

ROGER  
 Hello? Doris?

Doris answers from the kitchen.

DORIS (O.C.)  
 (cheerful)  
 I'm in here...

Roger hangs up his coat, takes a deep breath, then walks to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Doris is carefully arranging some flowers in a ceramic vase. She hums happily.

ROGER  
Those look nice.

DORIS  
Thank you. I just picked them up  
at that little shop on the corner.

Doris makes a few more happy adjustments.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
So, how was your day?

Roger reaches in his pocket.

ROGER  
Uhh...Doris, listen...about that  
Florida trip. Remember how I told  
you they were moving the exhibit  
next week...well, they're putting a  
special crew together and my  
Supervisor says they're going to  
need me. It's an important  
assignment, so it looks like we  
won't be able to go. I'm sorry.

Doris' face falls.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
The good news is I went to the  
travel agent and we got our deposit  
back.

Roger pulls out a wad of money and drops it on the table.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Five hundred dollars...it's all  
there.

Doris looks at the money. Her eyes well-up with tears.

DORIS  
(crushed)  
We're not going.

Roger cringes a little. He doesn't enjoy seeing his wife in  
pain.

ROGER  
I'm sorry Doris...

INT. MUSEUM - DAY

Roger stands in front of The Lonely Maiden, lost in her  
beauty.

Donny, the young relief guard, approaches Roger's post.

DONNY  
Hey, Mr. Barnes, Supervisor wants  
to see you.

Roger slowly returns from his daze.

ROGER  
Huh?

DONNY  
Needlebaum, man...he just grabbed  
me outside his office and told me  
to come get you.

Roger seems a little confused, a little concerned.

ROGER  
What does he want me for?

Donny shrugs.

Roger is hoping for more explanation, but Donny spots the docent, who has just entered with another small group.

DONNY  
Oh yeah...perfect timing. Here  
comes my sweet little docent.  
That's right...lead the group over  
here, baby. Donny's got a work of  
art for you.

Roger shakes his head and walks away.

INT. MUSEUM - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Roger RAPS LIGHTLY on Needlebaum's door.

ROGER  
You wanted to see me, sir.

Through the doorway, Needlebaum is partially visible. He looks up and smiles.

NEEDLEBAUM  
Ahh...yes, come in Roger. Have a  
seat.

INT. MUSEUM NEEDLEBAUM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Roger steps nervously into the office. As he does, the remaining space comes into view.

Doris is sitting in one of the chairs in front of the desk. She turns and smiles sweetly to Roger.

DORIS

Hi, Roger...

ROGER

(shocked)

Doris...what are you doing here?

NEEDLEBAUM

Roger, your lovely wife was just telling me that you had been planning to take a trip next week. Is that right?

Roger swallows hard, unsure of what to say. He sits clumsily in the remaining chair.

ROGER

Uhh...well, yes...it was something that I'd been planning. It was supposed to be a surprise, but...

Doris smiles and pats Roger on the arm.

DORIS

He knows all about it, Roger.

ROGER

Oh...

Needlebaum leans in.

NEEDLEBAUM

Roger, you know...working on this move is not mandatory. If you had something planned, you didn't have to volunteer.

DORIS

Volunteer?

Roger hurries to respond.

ROGER

Uhh...yes, sir...I realize that, sir. It's just that...uh...well, Mr. Needlebaum, I guess I was just a little confused. I wasn't quite sure what you meant by voluntary. Sometimes when people say voluntary, they actually mean mandatory.

Needlebaum smiles.

NEEDLEBAUM

Oh no, this time I actually meant "voluntary". If you and your wife have a vacation planned...it's no problem. I'll just find somebody to take your place. Consider it done.

Roger smiles, but it looks painfully forced...like a man trying to grin after he's been kicked in the testicles.

ROGER

Oh, that's good. I appreciate this, sir. Thank you very much.

Needlebaum beams. He's done his good deed for the day.

NEEDLEBAUM

So, where are you two going?

Doris is glowing.

DORIS

Roger's taking me to Florida for our anniversary.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET - DAY

George, Roger, and Charlie stroll through the produce section, trying to appear inconspicuous.

George has just heard something that has upset him. He struggles to maintain his cover.

GEORGE

Florida?! What do you mean you might be going to Florida?

Roger looks around, hoping that they haven't drawn any attention. To his left, Charlie casually sniffs a melon.

ROGER

I can't help it. Doris thinks we're going.

GEORGE

And why does she think that?

ROGER

(shamefully)  
Well, I kind of told her we were...

George stares at him with disbelief.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
It's a long story.

George turns to Charlie.

GEORGE  
Did you know about this?

Charlie lowers the melon.

CHARLIE  
(innocently)  
I just found out.

George shakes his head, chagrined by the new development.

GEORGE  
Roger, we can't have you going  
AWOL...not now. You just talk to  
Needlebaum and let him know that  
there's been a misunderstanding and  
that you're not going on any trip.  
Then tell him to put you back on  
the list. He'll understand.

George nods...problem solved. Charlie looks relieved. Only Roger seems uncomfortable by George's solution.

ROGER  
What about Doris? What do I tell  
her?

GEORGE  
Who's Doris? Your wife?

Roger nods.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Roger, who calls the shots in your  
house?

ROGER  
(unconvinced)  
I do...(beat)...it's just that  
she's not going to like this very  
much.

GEORGE  
She doesn't have to like it.  
Roger, you're the man...you tell  
her how it's going to be.

George moves in close for emphasis.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Listen, in my house, my wife knows that as long as I'm paying the bills, I'm calling the shots. If she doesn't like it, she knows where to find the door.

Roger swallows hard and looks at Charlie.

Charlie catches Roger's glance, but quickly looks away and grabs another melon.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY -NIGHT

Roger stands outside his door, key in hand, trying to gather his courage. He rehearses several possible reactions in a whimpered, but firm tone.

ROGER

I'm sorry, Doris, but that's the way it's going to be. Doris, that's my final answer. Doris, no. No, Doris. Doris, we're not going.

Emboldened, Roger opens up the door and steps inside.

ROGER (O.C.) (CONT'D)

(re: his wife)  
Oh, hello Doris...

The door to the apartment closes.

EXT. CHARLIE'S ROOF - DAY

The roof is empty. At the far end of the roof, there is a WOODEN SHED. The door to the wooden shed is open.

INT. WOODEN SHED - CONTINUOUS

The fraudulent versions of The Lonely Maiden, Young Girl With Cats, and the Bronze Warrior have been gathered together.

George studies the print in Roger's Art Book. The fake Maiden is a perfect duplicate of the original.

GEORGE

(impressed)  
The guy did a great job, Roger. It looks exactly the same.

Roger seems worried.

ROGER

Something's missing...the glow.  
She's clearly not as lonely in this  
one.

GEORGE

Do you think anyone will notice?  
Besides you, I mean?

ROGER

I don't know. Charlie's is  
perfect, but this one...

George flips to the page in the book with Charlie's painting.  
Like the Maiden, it is an exact copy.

Charlie sighs.

CHARLIE

(thoughtfully)

I don't know, Roger...I feel like I  
haven't captured here essence.

GEORGE

(frustrated)

Look guys, of course they don't  
look perfect to you. We've stood  
in front of our pieces for weeks,  
months, years...we've come to know  
them in ways the average person  
will never understand.

Georges's attention drifts to the fake Bronze Warrior.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Look at the Bronze Warrior, the  
sense of power, the feeling of  
potency, the rippled abs...still  
it's no substitute for the  
original.

George ponders the statue for another moment, then snaps  
himself out of his enflamed state.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

But, it doesn't matter if they make  
us feel the same. What matters is  
whether or not someone in Denmark  
is going to notice they're fake.

Charlie and Roger look to their own pieces and nod. They  
finally understand.

George reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out a key.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Roger, this is the key to the  
janitor's closet.

He hands Roger the key.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Have you gone over the  
instructions?

Roger nods.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Memorized the timetable?

ROGER  
Yes.

GEORGE  
Know exactly what you're supposed  
to do at every moment, including  
options A, B, and C?

Roger nods seriously.

ROGER  
I've got it George.

George nods coolly, then turns to Charlie.

GEORGE  
Charlie, you've arranged for the  
van...memorized the route?

CHARLIE  
Yes.

GEORGE  
The time table?

CHARLIE  
Check...

GEORGE  
Options A, B, and C?

CHARLIE  
Affirmative.

George studies their faces. They look momentarily steeled  
for their task.

George reaches into his pocked and pulls out a small index card.

GEORGE  
(solemnly)  
Gentlemen, I'd like to read a  
little something...

George clears his throat, then begins...

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Far better is it to dare mighty  
things, to risk glorious triumphs,  
than to take rank with those poor  
spirits who neither enjoy much nor  
suffer much, because they live in  
the gray twilight that knows  
neither victory nor defeat.

A bit unnerved, Charlie and Roger sneak a careful glance at one another, then instinctively look to their pieces.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
The timid man, the ignorant man,  
the man of dull mind.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MUSEUM - NEXT DAY

Roger approaches the front of the museum, carrying his usual black bag. As he walks, George's VOICE-OVER continues.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
...each possesses a soul incapable  
of feeling the mighty roar that  
thrills the man who endeavors to  
wrest triumph from toil and risk.  
Let us strive only for victory, but  
if triumph be not ours to gain, let  
our final testament be that of the  
struggle...of the blood, sweat and  
tears that give man his truest  
glory.

Roger gets to the large museum doors. A SIGN reads...MUSEUM  
CLOSED - REOPENS MARCH 21. NEW EXHIBIT: MASTERWORKS OF THE  
SCANDINAVIAN AVANT GARDE.

Roger opens the door and walks inside.



Roger unzips his bag and pulls out TWO CARDBOARD POSTER TUBES, EIGHT THIN PLANKS OF WOOD (the kind used to make the frame of an artist's canvas), a SMALL HAMMER, some TACKS, and a SMALL CURVED METAL TOOL.

He slides the wood pieces together to make a frame, then pulls a rolled up canvas from one of the tubes. He unrolls the canvas...the FAKE MAIDEN. Roger checks for damage, then uses the metal tool to stretch the canvas over the frame.

EXT. SIDEWALK - SAME TIME

George comes up from a subway station, straining from the weight in his duffle bag. He sets the bag down, wipes his brow, then checks his watch.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Charlie sits on his couch, a cat curled in his lap. He stares at a clock that ticks audibly upon his wall.

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

Roger is finishing with Charlie's painting. He pulls a DARK BLANKET from his bag and covers the paintings, then conceals them behind some brooms.

He checks his watch again and flips off the light.

INT. MUSEUM - ENTRANCE AREA - SAME TIME

George comes through the front doors, doing a decent job of concealing the weight of the bag.

GEORGE

Bob...

Bob hardly looks up, simply giving a half-hearted wave.

BOB

Mornin'...

George moves through the turnstile and into the museum.

INT. MUSEUM - HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Roger peers out of the closet. No one is coming, so he slips out and walks away, disappearing around a corner.

For a moment, the hallway is empty, then a door opens at the other end and George enters with his bag.

George hurries to the janitor's closet. The strain of the weight is beginning to show.

He looks around, then unlocks the door and steps inside.

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

George sets his bag down with relief, then unzips it to reveal the FAKE BRONZE WARRIOR.

WIPE TO:

INT. MUSEUM - EXHIBITION AREA - SEVERAL HOURS LATER

The move is in full swing. Clad in white jumpsuits and gloves, the museum employees dart back and forth, carrying out their required tasks.

The Lonely Maiden is pulled off the wall and carried to a group of long tables covered with a white table cloth.

Roger waits at the other end of the table, watching as the Curator steps up and examines the Maiden. He dismisses her with a disinterested wave.

CURATOR

This one's fine...take it.

The Maiden moves down the table. She is covered in BUBBLE WRAP, she slipped into a BOX and secured with HEAVY STAPLES.

Finally, the Maiden reaches Roger's end of the table. Roger takes out a GREEN STICKER, then checks a list and writes down the Maiden's assigned number...B-12. He seals the box with the sticker.

The box is placed on a cart with other boxes, then pushed away. Roger can't help but watch it go, wondering if he'll ever see his Maiden again.

Finally, he brings his attention back to the table. He writes the Maiden's number on an IDENTICAL GREEN STICKER, then takes the sticker and slips it into his pocket.

WIPE TO:

INT. MUSEUM - EXHIBITION AREA - LATER

SEVERAL QUICK SHOTS of paintings coming down, paintings being wrapped, Roger applying stickers, carts being taken away.

Charlie's painting is brought to the table. It is checked, wrapped, and boxed, then Roger seals it with a RED STICKER. As the box is placed on a cart, Roger makes another duplicate sticker and places it in his pocket.

WIPE TO:

INT. MUSEUM - EXHIBITION AREA - LATER

George heads to the janitor's closet with an empty crate loaded onto his cart. He looks around, then opens the door and slips inside with his cart.

WIPE TO:

INT. MUSEUM - EXHIBITION AREA - LATER

Roger is still at the table. The museum is almost clear.

Roger checks his watch, then stretches uncomfortably and motions to another worker.

ROGER

Phil, would you mind finishing these last few for me? I need a break. I've been at it all day.

Surprised, Phil looks up to see Roger hurrying away.

INT. MUSEUM - HALLWAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Roger walks towards the janitor's closet.

A couple of guards are coming, so he walks past the closet, then once they are gone, hurries back.

He opens the door and slips inside the closet.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Roger flips on the light. The crate is in the middle of the floor.

ROGER  
 (almost whispering)  
 George...

The lid pops up and George sticks out his head. He is dressed in BLACK COMMANDO GEAR.

GEORGE  
 What took you so long?

ROGER  
 Sorry, I couldn't get away. How are you doing in there?

GEORGE  
 I'm fine.

Roger pulls a plastic-wrapped sandwich from his jumpsuit.

ROGER  
 I bought this for you at the vending machine. I thought you might get hungry later.

George stares at the sandwich. He almost looks offended.

GEORGE  
 Roger, the Marines train men to endure hardship. In 'Nam, soldiers would go for days in the jungle without food.

ROGER  
 I thought you said you were in the Grenada Invasion?

George looks frustrated by this "civilian", but grabs the sandwich anyway.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
 How are the paintings?

GEORGE  
 They're right here, everything's fine...

George pulls out his walkie-talkie.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
 Lets do one more test.

Roger pulls a walkie-talkie from his jumpsuit.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Blue Dragon, this is Red Dragon,  
come in Blue Dragon...

Roger hesitates.

ROGER  
Uhh...look, George, about these  
code names...

GEORGE  
(serious)  
Roger, if we're going to do this,  
let's do it right...

George lifts the walkie-talkie back to his mouth.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
...come in Blue Dragon.

ROGER  
Copy, Red Dragon...this is Blue  
Dragon.

GEORGE  
Okay, I guess that's it.

Roger pulls out the stickers that he had been hiding.

ROGER  
Don't forget these.

GEORGE  
Oh right. Thanks.

George takes the stickers and slips them into his pocket.

ROGER  
Good luck, George.

George smiles and gives Roger a bold "thumbs up".

GEORGE  
See you tomorrow, Roger.

George pulls out a small drill and disappears underneath the lid of the crate.

He slides into position, then, inside the crate, a SOFT WHIR, as the first bolt is spun into place.

Roger looks concerned. He leans close to the crate.

ROGER  
 (meekly)  
 George...

No reply. The drill still WHIRS.

ROER  
 Red Dragon...

The drill stops.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
 What?

ROGER  
 I don't think I can get you onto  
 the cart. It's too heavy with you  
 in there.

The WHIRRING starts again and the bolt comes up.

George lifts the lid and looks out at Roger.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
 I'm sorry...

George sighs with frustration and climbs out.

They lift the crate, then George climbs back inside.

GEORGE  
 By the way, make sure Charlie is  
 there on time tomorrow.

ROGER  
 I will.

Another "thumbs up", then George disappears.

The lid goes into place, the drill WHIRS, the bolts spin  
 down.

EXT. HALLWAY - A FEW SECONDS LATER

Roger peers out of the closet, then emerges with the cart.  
 He hurries off down the hallway.

INT. STORAGE WAREHOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Roger pushes the cart into the warehouse.

GERRY, a large warehouse employee, approaches with a  
 clipboard.

GERRY  
You guys still got more?

ROGER  
(flustered)  
Oh, uh...yeah, well this one was  
part of a...special collection. A  
couple of pieces had to be wrapped  
separately. Took a little longer.

Gerry takes a look at the INVENTORY TAG posted on the side of  
the crate, then marks something down on his clipboard.

GERRY  
Alright, Pops...we can get it from  
here. Thanks.

ROGER  
Oh, well...it's just that it's kind  
of heavy and...

GERRY  
(interrupting)  
Yeah, yeah...

Another guard is sitting nearby reading a magazine.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
Hey, Pauly, come here a minute.  
Give me a hand with this thing,  
would you?

ROGER  
I can help...

Gerry waves him off.

GERRY  
No, no...you take it easy Pops. Me  
and Pauly's got it.

PAULY Comes over. Gerry points to one end of the crate.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
Get that end...

ROGER  
It's very heavy.

The two men bend down casually, then instantly strain as they  
take on the weight.

GERRY  
Jesus Christ...put it down, put it  
down.

Roger cringes as the crate THUDS to the ground.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
Get the fuckin' dolly.

Roger, is sweating, staring at the crate.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
Man, what did you say was in there?

ROGER  
Huh...oh, uhh, well...it was a  
special collection. A few  
different pieces actually.

Gerry nods as Pauly returns with the dolly.

GERRY  
Alright, Pops, we got it from  
here...

Gerry and Pauly slide the dolly underneath the crate and carry it away.

Roger sighs nervously, then turns and walks out of the warehouse towards the elevators.

Gerry walks behind Pauly and the crate. Pauly brings it over to a group of identically sized crates.

Pauly sets the crate down, then Gerry goes up and rips the inventory list from the side. He pulls a YELLOW STICKER from his clipboard and slaps it onto the crate.

CLOSE-UP on sticker...it says SPECIAL COLLECTION.

As George and Pauly walk away, pull back to reveal the whole group of identical crates, each on marked with the same yellow sticker...SPECIAL COLLECTION.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The warehouse is silent and still.

CLOSE-UP on a wooden crate. A bolt slowly spins up from the lid. After a moment, another bolt spins up, then aother, and another.

The lid slides back and George carefully sticks up his heard. He raises a small flashlight, moves the beam across the room, the lifts his walkie-talkie to his mouth.

GEORGE

This is Red Dragon...everything's clear. Start your watches. I'm coming out.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - BUSH - NIGHT

Roger starts an identical stopwatch, then peers out of the bush with binoculars.

ROGER

Blue Dragon...check.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie starts an identical stopwatch.

He hooks at the row of monitors...throughout the museum all quiet.

CHARLIE

Yellow Dragon...check.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George climbs out of his crate, then reaches back inside and pulls out Charlie's painting.

He speaks into the walkie-talkie.

GEORGE

Okay, I'm starting with Yellow Dragon's...

EXT. SIDEWALK - BUSH - NIGHT

Roger shines a small pen light onto a hand-written list.

ROGER

Young Girl With Cats...Red, C-9

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George moves through the crates, shining his light...

He finds the crate marked with the red tag. He runs his finger down the list...Young Girl With Cats.

He speaks into the walkie-talkie.

GEORGE  
Found it...

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie is crouched over the walkie-talkie, listening with anxious fright.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A SOFT WHIR, as George unbolts the side panel.

He lowers the panel, revealing the crate's slotted interior and rows of boxed paintings. Each box is sealed with a numbered sticker.

George pulls out a box...Red C-9.

He pulls a small pair of pliers from his vest, plucks out the staples, then uses a knife to slice the sticker.

George pulls out the painting and peels back the bubble wrap. The painting is revealed...Young Girl With Cats.

GEORGE  
Yellow Dragon...I've got her.

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie still looks anxious.

CHARLIE  
How's she look, Red Dragon?

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George looks at Charlie's painting for only a the briefest of moments. He's already reaching for another tool.

GEORGE  
She looks fine. I'm making the switch right now.

Charlie's voice comes over the walkie-talkie.

CHARLIE (O.C.)  
 How about the cats? Do the cats  
 look good?

George doesn't even look, he's struggling with the  
 canvas...he can't seem to get it free from the frame.

GEORGE  
 (impatiently)  
 The cats look fine. Now, would you  
 shut up and let me work?

CHARLIE (O.C.)  
 Sorry...just be careful. She's  
 very delicate.

George finally grimaces and POPS the canvas free, sending the  
 frame CLATTERING to the ground.

George freezes, fearing the worst. He looks at the  
 canvas...no damage. Then he examines the frame. He wets his  
 finger and rubs out a small SPECK in the left hand corner.

Next, he reaches for the fake, secures it in the frame, then  
 wraps it with the bubble wrap.

George slips the painting back into the box, then pulls out a  
 STAPLE GUN from his vest and secures the box.

He peels off the old sticker, seals the box with the  
 substitute sticker...Red C-9, then picks up the box and slips  
 it into the crate. He positions the side panel and secures  
 it with the drill.

George looks at his watch and raises the walkie-talkie.

GEORGE  
 One painting down...7 minutes, 24  
 seconds. Blue Dragon you're up  
 next.

EXT. SIDEWALK - BUSH - NIGHT

A MIDDLE-AGE COUPLE, bundled in long coats, are giving a  
 SMALL POODLE a quick walk around the block. They are in a  
 heated discussing, oblivious to the fact that their little  
 dog is BARKING and straining against the leash. The poodle  
 has its face shoved into the bush with Roger.

MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN  
 Because I think it's  
 disgusting...that's why.

MIDDLE-AGE MAN  
 Disgusting? Margaret, it's not  
 disgusting, it's completely  
 natural.

Inside the bush, Roger is trying to scare the dog away  
 without making too much noise.

ROGER  
 (whispered, but urgent)  
 Shh..nice doggy, nice doggy. Go  
 away.

George's voice comes in over the walkie-talkie.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
 Blue Dragon...Blue Dragon, are you  
 there? Come in Blue Dragon.

ROGER  
 Shoosh! Go away!

Roger picks up the walkie-talkie.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
 (to George)  
 I'm here...  
 (to the dog)  
 Go away! Get, get...scram!

The dog continues it's attack.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
 Blue Dragon, what's going on out  
 there?

Meanwhile, the couple is still arguing.

MIDDLE-AGE MAN  
 It's not weird, Margaret. Besides,  
 a lot of couples are doing it.

MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN  
 (surly)  
 A little warning might have been  
 nice.

The woman turns to the dog.

MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN (CONT'D)  
 Come here, Maxwell...

She gives another halfhearted tug, but gets no response.

Inside the bush, Roger is still under attack.

ROGER  
 (to George)  
 No, everything is fine...I've got  
 it under control  
 (to the poodle)  
 Scram, puppy. Get...go away.

Roger jabs at the dog with a stick, then looks down at his  
 little paper containing the painting information.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
 (to George)  
 The Lonely Maiden...Green B-12

Roger takes another jab at the dog.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
 (to the dog)  
 Shoosh...go away.

Out on the sidewalk, the woman gives the leash another gentle  
 pull.

MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN  
 (to the dog)  
 Come on, Maxwell...come with Mommy.

MIDDLE-AGE MAN  
 Margaret, I'm sorry. I thought I'd  
 just go with the flow. You know,  
 like the therapist  
 said...spontaneity. Besides, you  
 seemed so relaxed.

The woman suddenly looks appalled.

MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN  
 (offended)  
 I was sleeping...

The woman gives the leash a final, violent yank. The poodle  
 CRIES OUT, as it is ripped off its feet and yanked towards  
 the woman, who is already storming off down the sidewalk.  
 The man and the poodle hurry to catch up.

MIDDLE-AGE MAN  
 Margaret. Margaret, wait...lets  
 talk about this.

Inside the bush, Roger's face is beaded with sweat.

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Much calmer now that the safety of his painting has been confirmed, Charlie is quietly working on a small pen and ink sketch of his painting.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
 Yellow Dragon, how are you doing?  
 Everything still okay up there?  
 (beat) Yellow Dragon?

Charlie suddenly remembers that he is Yellow Dragon. He grabs for the walkie-talkie and he looks at the monitors. Everything is calm...still no problem.

CHARLIE  
 Uhh...10-4, Red Dragon.  
 Everything's fine...I  
 repeat...everything is fine.

Charlie goes back to his drawing.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George places the real Maiden inside the crate, then looks at his stopwatch and raises the walkie-talkie. The job is almost done...

GEORGE  
 Okay, Dragons...21 minutes gone. T-  
 minus 34 until the next patrol.

EXT. SIDEWALK - BUSH - NIGHT

Still agitated, Roger raises his binoculars.

ROGER'S POV: (THROUGH BINOCULARS) The guard is in his booth, reading a magazine and drinking from a thermos.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George undoes the bolts from the final crate. He pushes back the lid, then reaches into the crate and pulls out The Bronze Warrior.

He holds it up for a moment, studying the glorious physique.

George sets it down to get a more complete view. Mesmerized, he shines his flashlight over the Warrior's chiseled torso.

George looks at the stopwatch hanging around his neck....TWENTY-EIGHT MINUTES to go. He looks to his Warrior, then back to the watch. Something is going through his mind.

He takes a deep breath, then slowly takes off his stopwatch.

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

The monitor room is silent. Charlie works calmly on his little sketch. By now, it has gotten quite detailed.

He glances at the monitors. Everything is calm...except...suddenly there is some movement on one of the screens. The PATROL GUARD has just rounded a corner and is headed down a hallway.

Stunned, Charlie grabs for his stopwatch....TWELVE MINUTES left.

Charlie grabs the walkie-talkie.

CHARLIE  
(panicking)  
Red Dragon, this is Yellow  
Dragon...come in, Red Dragon.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George is naked.

He stands in front of the Bronze Warrior, mimicking its triumphant pose.

The walkie-talkie is thrown on top of George's clothes.

CHARLIE (O.C.)  
Red Dragon, come in, Red Dragon!  
(beat) George, where are you?

Annoyed, George goes over to the walkie-talkie.

GEORGE  
What's going on? I'm trying to  
concentrate down here. And why  
aren't you calling me Red Dragon?

CHARLIE (O.C.)  
(panicky)  
Sorry, Red Dragon, we've got a Code  
3!

Now, George looks panicked. He grabs for the stopwatch.

GEORGE

He's not supposed to be here for  
another twelve minutes.

CHARLIE (O.C.)

I know, I know, but...I'm watching  
him right now. It's a definite  
Code 3!

George reaches frantically for his clothes.

GEORGE

Oh God. Charlie, where is he?

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie grabs a map and runs his finger over it, trying to  
pinpoint a location.

CHARLIE

Sector three, North hallway. Hurry  
George...he'll be there any minute.

On the monitor, the Patrol Guard strolls the hallway.

EXT. SIDEWALK - BUSH - NIGHT

Roger is agitated by the commotion.

ROGER

Charlie, George, what's going on?  
What's happening?

CHARLIE (O.C.)

The patrol guard...he's early.

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

On the monitor, the Patrol Guard waits for the service  
elevator.

CHARLIE

Oh, Jesus, George...he's at the  
service elevator.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George has only managed to get into his socks.

He grabs the fake Warrior, shoves it into the crate, then  
slides the lid into place.

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

On the monitor, the Patrol Guard gets into the levator and hits the BASEMENT button.

CHARLIE

George, he's in the elevator...he's on his way.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George tries to secure the bolts into place, but his haste makes the job more difficult.

CLANK...one of the bolts falls and rolls away.

George swears under his breath.

CHARLIE (O.C.)

Hurry, George...hurry.

EXT. SIDEWALK - BUSH - NIGHT

Rogher listens with dread, as their plan crumbles.

CHARLIE (O.C.)

George...he's off the elevator.  
Please, hurry...

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George gathers the rest of his materials. He scoops up the Warrior and runs to his crate.

INT. BASEMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Patrol Guard walks towards the warehouse door.

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie is on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

CHARLIE

He's twenty feet away, George.  
He's...he's fifteen feet away.  
George, he's twelve...

EXT. SIDEWALK - BUSH - NIGHT

Roger closes his eyes.

CHARLIE (O.C.)  
 ...ten feet away, George. Hurry!

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George throws his equipment and clothing into the crate. The Warrior has not been loaded.

CHARLIE (O.C.)  
 Five feet away, George. Four,  
 three, two, one...he's at the door,  
 George.

Panicked, George looks towards the warehouse door.

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie stares in horror at the monitor.

CHARLIE  
 George, he is at the door. I  
 repeat...he is at the door.

On the monitor, the Patrol Guard unlocks the door to the warehouse, then opens it and steps inside.

Charlie turns helplessly to the monitor covering the warehouse door. On the screen, the Patrol Guard enters the warehouse and shines his light across the room.

EXT. SIDEWALK - BUSH - NIGHT

Roger bites his lip, terrified by what may happen.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The Patrol Guard moves the beam of his flashlight across the room. Everything appears calm.

He flips on a light. Still, nothing seems amiss.

Across the room, George is crouched behind some crates, his arm around the Bronze Warrior.

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie watches on the monitor, as the guard steps away from the door and out of view of the cameras.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

George holds his breath. The guard's footsteps grow louder, as he moves down the center aisle.

George peeks out from his spot and is shocked to see...THE BOLT that he had dropped earlier. It has rolled right into the middle of the floor.

The guard passes the bolt without noticing, but he'll have to turn at the end of the aisle and come back.

George watches the guard's back...ten more steps until he turns around.

Still wearing only his socks, George dashes out and grabs the bolt, then darts back behind his crate.

Just as George disappears, the guard turns around. To him everything still looks calm.

Behind the crate, George listens to the guard's retreating footsteps.

The guard gets to the door, turns the lights off, then leaves the room.

The door LOCKS, then George sighs with tremendous relief.

A moment later...

CHARLIE (O.C.)

George, are you still there?

GEORGE

Yeah, I'm still here. Everything's okay. He didn't see me.

EXT. BUSH - NIGHT

Roger looks exhausted by the evening's tension.

GEORGE

Okay Dragons...that's it. I will see you tomorrow morning.

Roger lets out his own sigh of relief.

INT. SECURITY MONITOR ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie sits poised over the walkie-talkie.

                          GEORGE (O.C.)  
                           Oh...and Yellow Dragon, don't be  
                           late.

Charlie smiles meekly.

                          CHARLIE  
                           (full of hope)  
                           Don't worry, Red Dragon.

He waits a beat then...

                          CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
                           See you tomorrow, Roger.

EXT. SIDEWALK - BUSH - NIGHT

Roger manages a small smile.

                          ROGER (O.C.)  
                           Bye, Charlie...

Roger climbs clumsily out of the bush, gives a quick look around, then hurries off down the sidewalk.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on the crate, as the first one bolt, then the remaining three, are wound down into a secure position.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Dressed in his uniform and SECURITY GUARD JACKET, Roger moves through the "special collections" crates, searching frantically for George's crate. He can't find it. All he sees are the yellow "special collection tags".

A small group of workers have already arrived at the warehouse. They talk casually near the coffee machine.

Roger looks desperate.

INT. CRATE - MOMENTS LATER

The inside of the crate is pitch black. We can't see but we can hear...

ROGER (O.C.)  
 (urgent whispering)  
 Red Dragon...Red Dragon...come in,  
 Red Dragon!

George flips on his flashlight, filling the crate with a soft glow. He lifts his walkie-talkie to his mouth.

GEORGE  
 Blue Dragon, what are you doing?  
 You were supposed to suspend  
 communication. It's too risky  
 now...someone could hear you.

Roger interrupts.

ROGER (O.C.)  
 No, listen to me. We've got a  
 problem.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Roger is crouched nervously behind a crate.

ROGER  
 I don't know which crate you're in.  
 They took the inventory list and  
 the crates all look the same.

CUT TO:

INT. CRATE - CONTINUOUS

Relax, Blue Dragon, there's nothing to worry about. I noticed it last night. What's your current position?

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Roger looks around, ascertaining his location.

ROGER  
 I'm in the Northern half of the  
 warehouse. I'm looking at the  
 crates right now.

CUT TO:

INT. CRATE - CONTINUOUS

GEORGE

Good...I'm facing North. You're looking right at me. I'm in the second box from the left.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Roger peers out at the "special collections" crates.

GEORGE (O.C.)

There is a row of five crates, then a second row of five crates. I'm in the first row...second box from the left.

ROGER'S POV: The crates are set up exactly the way George has described them.

ROGER

Second box from the left. Are you sure nothing's been moved?

GEORGE (O.C.)

Blue Dragon, I'm trained to notice these things. Nothing moved. I'm in the second box from the left.

ROGER

Okay, okay. Second box from the left..

ROGER'S POV: A quick ZOOM as Roger focusses on the crate...second box from the left. There is no more doubt.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Alright, I've got you.

Roger tucks the walkie-talkie away and hurries to George's crate. He takes his jacket off and lays it on top...just to make sure.

A moment later...a GRINDING SOUND, as the large steel doors open. Sunlight pours into the warehouse.

Startled, Roger turns around and almost runs into an other WORKER. The Worker just moves past him.

WORKER

Hey, get ready. The vans are almost here. Needlebaum just showed up.

Needlebaum stands at the other end, trying to organize some paperwork. The warehouse is coming to life.

Roger looks nervously at his watch.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

An overheated station wagon blocks traffic. Cars HONK, cabbies scream...

PAN to reveal Charlie's van trapped in the mess of cars.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie nervously grips the steering wheel with one hand, his other hand pets a cat, perched calmly on his lap.

Charlie looks to his watch, then at the traffic.

CHARLIE

Oh, this is not good, Renoir.  
George is not going to like this.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

The first two vans pull up to the warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

The warehouse is full of activity. Men are wheeling around carts and dollies, boxes and crates.

Needlebaum stands at the opening of the garage, trying to maintain some sense of order.

NEEDLEBAUM

Come on, people. Let's be organized about this. I want one line...

Despite his pleas, this is anything but organized.

Roger watches George's crate...second from the left.

Two WORKERS approach the "special collection" crates. One of them stands over George's crate, wondering about the jacket that is sitting on top.

Roger hurries over.

ROGER

Uhh...hold on a minute, guys. This one doesn't go yet.

The workers look puzzled.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Charlie's van frantically weaves through traffic. Up ahead, the museum is just coming into view.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie has a look of manic intensity. The cat is still sitting calmly on his lap.

A cab makes and ABRUPT STOP and Charlie is forced to slam on the brakes.

Charlie BLASTS his horn and sticks his head out of the window.

CHARLIE

Come on! Move your ass, ball sack!

The ANGRY CABBIE turns around.

ANGRY CABBIE

Hey, fuck you!

Charlie flips the "bird".

CHARLIE

Bite me, pencil dick!

Shocked by his outburst, Charlie reaches down and pets his cat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Renoir. You shouldn't have heard that.

Still angry, Charlie gives the horn another BLAST.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Roger is still defending the crate, but the "collection" has grown smaller. Most of the boxes have been taken.

Two more MEN approach with a cart.

ROGER  
Uhh, sorry guys. Special collection. We're supposed to wait on this one.

The men pause for a moment.

MAN #3  
Needlebaum just said to come get it.

ROGER  
He did?

Roger looks at Needlebaum. He doesn't know what to do.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Well, maybe we should just hold on a minute...

Behind Needlebaum, another van screeches into the lot. It's Charlie...

ROGER (CONT'D)  
On the other hand, maybe we get it now.

Roger grabs his jacket and reaches for the cart.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Why don't I do this one. If you could just help me get it on the cart here...

MAN #4  
That's okay, we got it.

Man #4 won't relinquish the cart. Roger stands firm.

ROGER  
Come on guys, how about giving an old guy a chance? Let me feel like I did something useful.

Now, Man #4 is really confused. He looks to Man #3. Man #3 just shrugs.

MAN #3  
 Jesus, Carl, if the guy wants to do  
 it, let him do it.

Man #3 steps forward.

MAN #3 (CONT'D)  
 (to Roger)  
 Here you go, we'll help you get it  
 on the cart.

Roger smiles.

ROGER  
 Thanks, guys. I really appreciate  
 this.

Together, they lift the crate up onto the cart, then Roger  
 strains to get the cart started.

MAN #3  
 You sure you got it?

ROGER  
 Oh, I got it. I definitely got it.

Roger hurries away with the cart, moving across the  
 warehouse, towards the open doors.

NEEDLEBAUM  
 Barnes, what do you got there?

Roger hardly even slows down.

ROGER  
 Special collection.

Needlebaum flips through paperwork. Other carts are coming  
 by, distracting him. He's confused...

NEEDLEBAUM  
 Uhh...Van Three, Barnes. Van  
 Three.

Roger doesn't even listen, just hurries outside.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Roger pushes the cart down the line of vans.

A HORN honks and a VOICE calls out to Roger.

VOICE  
 Hey, Mr. Barnes...over here!

Roger turns and sees Donny the relief guard, sitting in one of the vans. He is wearing sunglasses and has the radio booming. He yells over HEAVY BASS.

DONNY

Hey, what's shakin', man? Can you believe they let me drive this thing?

ROGER

Uhh...that's nice, Donny.

Donny suddenly frowns.

DONNY

Hey, wait a second...I thought you were supposed to be on vacation.

Roger looks nervously in the direction of Charlie's van.

ROGER

Uhh...no, no. That got changed.

DONNY

Oh...

Donny nods his head, then seems to get distracted. He reaches for the stereo and makes a quick adjustment.

Roger strains to get the cart rolling again.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Say, that looks kind of heavy. You sure you don't need any help?

Donny waves to another worker, CARLOS, standing nearby.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Hey, Carlos...how about giving my man a hand here?

ROGER

No, no...that's alright.

Roger turns and waves Carlos off.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I'm fine. Believe me, I'm fine.

Roger gives the cart a hard shove and starts it moving.

ROGER (CONT'D)

See you later, Donny.

Donny flashes Roger the "peace" sign.

DONNY

Keep it real, Mr. Barnes.

Roger hurries to Charlie's van. Charlie eagerly sticks his head out of the window.

ROGER

What took you so long?

CHARLIE

Traffic. I couldn't help it.

Roger wheels the cart to the back of the van. Charlie jumps out and follows.

Roger opens up the back doors.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Looks heavy. Should we get some help?

ROGER

No. No help. We have to do this ourselves.

Charlie looks unsure, but Roger has already maneuvered the crate up against the back of the van.

ROGER (CONT'D)

All we have to do is push. We'll guide it in from here.

Charlie gets against the opposite side of the crate.

Roger bangs against the crate.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Okay, hang on George. (to Charlie)  
Now, on the count of three...one,  
two, three...PUSH!

Roger and Charlie throw themselves against the crate. It topples into the van with a BANG.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(urgently)

Here...now, push it in.

They push against the bottom, sliding it into the van.

Roger SLAMS the van doors shut.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Okay, lets get out of here.

Roger pushes the cart away, then he and Charlie run around and jump in the van.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie grabs the cat and places it on his lap.

CHARLIE

This is Renoir. He likes to ride  
in the car.

Roger nods, then notices that the first few vans are pulling away. He points them out to Charlie.

ROGER

Come on, lets go. Right behind  
them.

EXT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

The van veers out of the line, then speeds up and follows the other vans out of the lot.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Roger leaps back and taps on the crate.

ROGER

Sorry, about banging you around  
like that, George. I didn't know  
how else to get you in the van.

There is a long pause. No response.

CHARLIE

I don't think he can hear you. The  
crate's probably too thick.

Roger suddenly understands.

ROGER

Oh, right...

Roger pulls out his walkie-talkie.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Red Dragon? Come in, Red Dragon?

For a moment, no response. Then...

GEORGE (O.C.)

Blue Dragon, is that you?

ROGER  
It's me. Yellow Dragon's here,  
too.

Roger holds the walkie-talkie up to Charlie's mouth.

CHARLIE  
Hi, Red Dragon.

INT. CRATE - CONTINUOUS

GEORGE (O.C.)  
Forget the code names gentleman, we  
did it. (solemnly) We beat the  
odds...we took everything they had  
to throw at us and we threw it  
right back. I'm proud to have  
served with you, gentlemen. Semper  
Fi...

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie stares at Roger with a wide smile.

CHARLIE  
(happy)  
It does feel pretty good, doesn't  
it, Roger?

Roger nods his head and allows himself a relieved smile.

ROGER  
You know...it does. It really  
does.

Roger looks at his watch, then settles into his seat. He notices that Charlie is still looking at him.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Watch the road, Charlie.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Three white vans head down the block, one of them trailing a bit behind. They get to a stoplight, the first vans go through, but the third van makes a sudden right turn.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - MINUTES LATER

The van winds through the garage, until it reaches an area free of cars and pulls into a parking space.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Roger and Charlie scramble into the back of the van.

ROGER  
(eager)  
Okay, George, here we come. (to  
Charlie) Where's the drill,  
Charlie?

Charlie reaches between the seats and hands Roger the drill.  
Roger bangs on the crate.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Almost there, George...

A soft WHIRRING, as Roger removes the bolts.

Roger and Charlie look eager with anticipation.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Okay, George, get ready...

Roger and Charlie triumphantly open the crate.

They stare at the Styrofoam filled interior, expecting George  
to burst out. Nothing happens...

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Uhh...George. You can come out  
now.

Still nothing...

Puzzled, Roger starts sifting through the Styrofoam.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
George? George, are you alright?

Still, no response. Roger digs frantically. Charlie joins  
him.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
George? George...

They hit something and their faces freeze.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Hurry, get him up...get him up.

The men strain and lift, then are shocked to see the object  
they are raising is not George at all, but a bronze rendering  
of a medieval knight.

They instantly drop the piece. It THUDS back into the crate, sending Styrofoam all over the van.

CHARLIE

Roger, what's going on?

ROGER

I don't know...

Roger suddenly grabs the walkie-talkie.

ROGER (CONT'D)

George...are you there, George?

George's voice crackles, reception is fading...

GEORGE (O.C.)

Roger, is that you? I'm getting a lot of static.

ROGER

Yeah, it's me, George. Listen, back in the warehouse when you said second crate from the left...was that second crate from my left...or second crate from your left?

INT. CRATE - CONTINUOUS

George looks a little concerned.

GEORGE

From my left, of course. And hey...I thought you said we were supposed to be stopping. Why haven't we stopped?

More static...

ROGER (O.C.)

Uhh...George, I think we have a little problem.

George looks suddenly panicked.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

The first two vans are still heading down the street.

ZOOM into the back window of the second van. A yellow-tagged "special collection" crate is clearly visible.

This is George's crate.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
Problem? What kind of problem?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie's van screeches out of the parking garage and peels out onto the street.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie drives like a madman.

Behind them, the crate has been sealed up again. Pieces of Styrofoam are scattered about the floor of the van.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
(rambling frantically)  
Roger? What's going on? You guys are coming after me, right? The mission's in jeopardy. We have no battleplan. Options A, B, and C are a wash. This is chaos, gentlemen.

ROGER  
(a bit panicked himself)  
George, calm down, George...we're coming to get you. We just have to make one quick stop first.

INT. CRATE - CONTINUOUS

George is in a full-blown breakdown.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
Stop? What kind of stop? I'm down behind enemy lines. You can't leave me here. They'll make me talk. I don't think I can handle being tortured...I'm not the man you think I am.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

George's van rumbles down the street. The crate still visible in the window.

EXT. ROGER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Charlie's van SCREECHES to a halt in front of the building.

Roger jumps out, then looks back at Charlie.

ROGER  
I'll only be a minute.

Roger hands Charlie the walkie-talkie.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Keep him company. Make sure he  
doesn't think we've abandoned him.

CHARLIE  
(confused)  
What am I supposed to say?

ROGER  
I don't know.

Roger closes the van door and runs inside his building.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie nervously holds the walkie-talkie up to his mouth.

CHARLIE  
Uhh...hello, George? Hi, it's  
Charlie.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
Where's Roger?

CHARLIE  
Uhh...well, he had to go get his  
wife. (a beat) So...how's  
everything going?

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Roger bursts through the front door.

ROGER  
Doris? Where are you Doris?

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Roger rushes into the room, startling Doris, who is dressed  
in a flowered sundress and wearing a straw hat.

Partially packed suitcases and bags are laid out on the bed, along with several clothing items.

DORIS

Roger? What's going on? You were supposed to be here a half an hour ago to help me finish packing.

ROGER

I know, Doris. I got hung up at work but we need to go right now. Get your things.

Roger starts gathering up the clothes and stuffing them into the suitcases.

DORIS

No, Roger...wait. What are you doing? I'm not ready yet. I haven't even packed my vanity case.

Roger hurries into the bathroom.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The counter top is cluttered with several beauty products, along with an empty vanity case.

In one sweeping motion, Roger scoops all the items into the case.

He turns to the shower and grabs several random items including soap, a long scrub-brush, and a shower cap.

He dumps them into the overflowing case. The lid won't close, but Roger hurries back to the bedroom.

INT. ROGER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Roger moves back to the bed.

ROGER

Okay, Doris, everything's ready. Let's go...

He shoves the vanity case into one of the suitcases and jams the lid closed.

Doris is shocked by Roger's crazy behavior.

DORIS

Roger, what is going on? Why are you acting like this?

ROGER

Like what, Doris? I just can't wait to get going. Is there anything wrong with that?

Roger forces the other case closed.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Okay, Doris, now we really have to leave.

DORIS

Roger, wait...how are we going to get to the airport? I have to call a cab.

ROGER

I got a friend to drive us.

DORIS

(surprised)

A friend? Roger, what is going on?

Roger struggles to gather up all the cases.

ROGER

It's somebody I work with. He's downstairs. Look, Doris...I can't explain right now, but we really need to go.

Doris gets a small smile. She looks like she's starting to catch on...

DORIS

Wait...Roger, are you planning some sort of surprise?

ROGER

Uhh...yeah, that's right, Doris...it's a surprise.

Roger stands up with the pile of bags.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Now let's hurry.

Doris studies Roger for a moment, then shakes her head.

DORIS

No, Roger, wait...this is wrong.

Roger freezes.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
(emphatically)  
If we're going to do this, let's do  
it right.

Doris points to a flowered shirt hanging on the door of the closet.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
Put on your flowered shirt.

INT. VAN - DAY

Charlie is petting his cat, listening to George on the walkie-talkie.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
I don't understand what his wife  
has to do with this? I thought I  
told him to stand up to her and  
cancel that trip.

This gets Charlie thinking.

CHARLIE  
(innocently)  
George, do you mind if I ask you a  
question?

GEORGE (O.C.)  
(wary)  
What kind of question?

CHARLIE  
Well, it's kind of personal,  
but...uhh...it's something I've  
been wondering...are you really  
married?

GEORGE (O.C.)  
(suspicious)  
What's that supposed to mean?

CHARLIE  
Well, I was just  
wondering...because of the statue.  
I mean...it's a man. A naked man.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
And what's wrong with that?

CHARLIE  
(confused)  
I don't know.

Thankfully, Charlie notices Roger rushing out of the building, loaded with bags. Roger is wearing his flowered shirt and Doris is trailing right behind him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Uhh...George, I've got to go.  
Sorry.

Charlie switches off the walkie-talkie.

Roger opens up the side door, and tosses the bags into the van. They bounce with an audible THUD.

DORIS  
Careful, Roger.

ROGER  
Don't worry, Doris. They're fine.

Roger gets into the van and helps Doris onto his lap.

Roger turns to introduce Charlie and Doris.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Uhh, Doris, I want you to meet,  
Charlie. Charlie, this is my wife,  
Doris.

Doris holds out her hand for a friendly handshake.

DORIS  
It's a pleasure to meet you,  
Charlie. Roger said you  
volunteered to take us to the  
airport. That's so nice.

Charlie shakes Doris' hand. He's not quite sure what to say.

CHARLIE  
Uhh...well...I...

DORIS  
No, no...don't explain. Roger told  
me it's a surprise. You don't need  
to say a thing.

Charlie flashes Roger a puzzled look.

ROGER  
Step on it, Charlie.

Charlie nods and slams the gas pedal to the floor.

The van launches forward.

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - SHIPPING WAREHOUSE - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

This is a large shipping warehouse, with one side open to trucks and vans, the other side opening up onto a portion of the runway containing large cargo planes.

The van races towards the entrance.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The warehouse is loaded with activity. A group of white vans are parked near a collection of crates.

Charlie brings the van up to the crate.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Doris looks around, completely confused.

DORIS

What is this? Roger why are we stopping here?

ROGER

We're here to pick up George. He's another friend of mine.

DORIS

George? I don't know a George. Roger, what is going on? Who are all these friends of yours?

ROGER

Another friend from work, Doris. I told him we'd pick him up.

Roger starts to get out of the van.

DORIS

Roger, is this part of the surprise?

ROGER

Uhh...sort of.

Roger looks over to Charlie.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Okay, Charlie, I've got to get the other...uhhh...

He doesn't want Doris to catch on.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
 ...thing out. Then I'll get  
 George.

Roger starts to get out.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
 Doris, I'll be right back. Charlie  
 is going to stay with you.

Roger closes the door, leaving Charlie and Doris alone.

DORIS  
 Who's this George? He's never  
 mentioned a George before.

Charlie looks uncomfortable.

CHARLIE  
 So...do you like cats?

A moment later, the back doors to the van open and Roger appears with a couple of men to help him. He flashes Charlie a "thumbs up" sign, which Charlie tentatively returns.

ROGER  
 How's it going, Doris?

DORIS  
 Roger, I hope you realize we're  
 going to miss our plane.

ROGER  
 We're fine, Doris.

Roger helps the men slide the crate out of the van. The door slams shut.

Doris shakes her head and reaches for the cat.

DORIS  
 We're going to miss our plane.

INT. JFK AIRPORT - SHIPPING WAREHOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Roger is creeping through the yellow-tagged "special collection" crates, softly knocking on the side of each box.

First one, no response. Second one, no response. Third one, same thing. Fourth one...that might be something.

Roger crouches down and KNOCKS again. This time he's pretty sure.

He pulls out a walkie-talkie.

ROGER  
George...is that you? Can you hear that?

Roger KNOCKS again.

INT. CRATE - CONTINUOUS

George knocks against the wall of the crate. He raises his walkie-talkie.

GEORGE  
I hear you...I need you to get me out of here, Roger. My legs have fallen asleep. I can't feel my toes.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Roger is suddenly startled by a large Teamster-looking sort of fellow. This is LEO, the man in charge of the warehouse.

LEO  
(accusingly)  
Can I help you with something, mister?

Roger straightens up.

ROGER  
(trying to sound official)  
Uhh...yes...as a matter of fact you can. You see, I need to get this crate into that van, ASAP.

LEO  
You need what?

ROGER  
This crate into that van.

Leo takes in Roger's flowered shirt.

MAN IN CHARGE  
(skeptically)  
And you are?

ROGER

I work for the museum. Some items got sent off when they shouldn't have and they sent me to work it out.

MAN IN CHARGE

DO you have any paperwork?

ROGER

Nobody said anything about paperwork.

MAN IN CHARGE

Well then, you don't get no crate. That's how it works.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie is nervously watching Roger's struggle.

Doris is quite upset. She pets the cat with agitated strokes.

DORIS

What time is it, Charlie?

Charlie looks down at his watch.

CHARLIE

10:20...

DORIS

10:20? What is he doing?

Expecting an answer, Doris focuses her gaze on Charlie.

Charlie squirms in his seat.

CHARLIE

(tentatively)

Uhh...I think it's part of the surprise.

Doris shakes her head.

DORIS

Well, this is ridiculous. We're going to miss the plane.

Doris plops Renoir back into Charlie's lap.

INT. JFK AIRPORT - SHIPPING WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Roger is still arguing with Leo.

ROGER

Look, I don't mean to be...getting under your balls, as you say, but...well, I've also got a job to do. And my job is to get this crate, into that...

Suddenly Doris' voice CRIES OUT.

DORIS

Roger? Roger, what are you doing out here?

Shocked, Roger turns to look at his wife. So does Leo.

ROGER

Doris, what are you doing? I told you to wait in the car.

DORIS

Roger, it's 10:20. We need to go right now. Where's George? I thought you said we were picking up your friend, George.

Doris looks to Leo.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Are you George?

LEO

(confused)

Who the fuck is George?

DORIS

Please, sir. Your language.

Doris turns to Roger.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Roger, lets forget about the surprise, okay? It's sweet, but we can do it another time. We need to catch our plane.

Roger is silent. On Doris' face he can see hope and excitement and nervous anticipation...all hanging in the balance of the next few moments. He's torn...

Roger looks at the crate, then back to his wife.

ROGER  
 (softly)  
 Doris, I can't...I can't leave here  
 without this crate.

LEO  
 Listen, buddy, I already told  
 you...

ROGER  
 (with strength, to Leo)  
 Hold on a minute...

Roger turns to Doris and looks at her with complete sincerity.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
 Doris, I know how much this trip  
 means to you and I know I've been  
 acting crazy lately, but believe  
 me...it's all going to end soon and  
 we're going to make that plane. I  
 just need you to please,  
 please...just go wait in the van.

Doris looks overwhelmed by the morning's mayhem.

DORIS  
 Roger...

Roger looks at his wife with compassion, but there is also a sense of firmness.

ROGER  
 Doris, please...we'll make the  
 plane. We're going to Florida.

Doris wants to protest, but she sees the determined look in Roger's eyes. Without a word she goes back to the van.

Roger watches her for a moment, on his face a look of slight regret. But, he still has a job to do...

Roger turns to Leo.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
 Okay, here's the deal. That was my  
 wife, Doris. In less than twenty  
 minutes I promised her we'd be on a  
 plane to Florida for our  
 anniversary. It'll break her heart  
 if we don't go, but I can't leave  
 here until I get this crate into  
 that van.

Leo stares at him blankly, perhaps also a little overwhelmed.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
You a married man, Leo?

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - SHIPPING WAREHOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER  
The van races out of the warehouse and down the road.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Doris is on Roger's lap again.

Roger points out a spot up ahead on the road.

ROGER  
Here...pull over here.

Charlie brings the van over to the side of the road.

Doris can't believe it. After all she's been through...

DORIS  
Oh no. Not again. Roger, why are we stopping? What are we doing?

ROGER  
Just one more thing, Doris.

Roger scrambles to the back of the van. He KNOCKS on the crate.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Hang on, George. You're almost free.

A muffled KNOCK answers back.

Doris looks startled.

DORIS  
What was that? Roger, what's going on here?

Roger doesn't answer. Doris turns to Charlie.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
Charlie, are you going to tell me?

Charlie just shakes his head and watches Roger grab the drill and undo the bolts. One, two, three and four...they're off.

ROGER

Doris, you're going to have to trust me here. What you're about to see...it's not what you think.

Roger pulls back the panel, revealing a crate full of Styrofoam. Something begins to move...a hand reaches out, followed by an arm...suddenly George bursts from the Styrofoam.

He's naked.

Doris SCREAMS.

GEORGE

I'm free!

Charlie scrambles for his painting.

Doris stares in shock at the nude man standing before her.

DORIS

(horrified)

This isn't my surprise, is it?

EXT. BEACH - SOMEWHERE IN FLORIDA - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

It is a cloudy, stormy afternoon. The kind of day that is an obvious disappointment to tourists. Nevertheless, the beach is still scattered with fleshy, pale bodies of travellers bound and determined to enjoy their Florida vacation.

Roger sits motionless in the water, submerged up to his shoulders. He is wearing a diving mask, the inside of which has fogged over. He seems to be in some sort of trance, his thoughts elsewhere...

Up on the beach, Doris has ventured down to the water's edge. She has a large towel clutched around her, trying to fend off the cold.

Roger is facing out to sea, he can't see her.

She calls out to him.

DORIS

Roger! Roger!

Roger waits a beat, then slowly turns around. He doesn't take off his mask.

ROGER'S POV: Through the mask's foggy lens, Roger can see his wife.

Somehow the distorted image...the flowing towel, the stormy skies...suddenly resembles The Lonely Maiden. She calls to him from shore.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Roger!

He lets the image linger for a moment.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Roger...what are you doing?

Roger pulls up his mask.

ROGER'S POV: Without the mask, the woman on the beach is clearly Doris; a cheap blue swim towel wrapped around her and a background of scummy South Florida sand and palm trees. Still, there is something...the same vulnerability, a longing...perhaps even a bit of a glow.

ROGER

Just a minute, Doris. Stay right there.

Roger puts his head down and begins to swim to shore.

He gets to the sand and stands up. He stares at Doris.

ROGER'S POV: Doris clutches the towel, trying to fight off the chill, and looking a bit...yes, lonely.

Roger stands there, mesmerized by the image.

DORIS

Roger, I'm cold. Let's go back to the Motel.

Roger shakes his head.

ROGER

Don't talk...

DORIS

Roger, are you feeling okay?

ROGER'S POV: The Maiden is right in front of him, calling his name...

DORIS (CONT'D)

Roger?

Roger takes another step, bringing the image even closer.

Suddenly, Roger reaches out and throws his arms around Doris. He pulls her into an embrace and begins to kiss her passionately.

DORIS (CONT'D)  
 (shocked, then overcome)  
 Roger? What are you...oh, Roger.  
 Roger...

Doris returns the kiss and loses herself in the arms of her husband.

EXT. CHARLIE'S BUILDING - ROOF - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Looking tan and healthy, Roger walks across the roof towards the wooden shed. Charlie is with him.

CHARLIE  
 So, how's Doris? Did she ever calm down?

Roger considers this for a moment.

ROGER  
 Well, I'm not sure she ever really understood...but, after a few days in Florida, she just never mentioned it again. Neither did I.

CHARLIE  
 (thoughtfully)  
 I guess it's not the kind of thing you can really explain.

ROGER  
 No...

They've arrived at the door to the shed. Charlie KNOCKS.

CHARLIE  
 George, Roger's here.

George's voice answers from inside the shed.

GEORGE (O.C.)  
 Okay, I'll be right out.

Charlie turns to Roger.

CHARLIE  
 I'll think you'll find that we made some improvements. We felt like they needed a more appropriate atmosphere.

Roger simply nods.

A moment later, the door opens and George steps out. His confident swagger returned after his harrowing ordeal, George is wearing only a white terry-cloth robe. He carries his clothes folded underneath his arm.

GEORGE  
She's all yours, Roger. Charlie,  
I'll put these on down at your  
apartment.

CHARLIE  
Sure...

GEORGE  
(to Roger)  
So, how was the trip?

Roger smiles.

ROGER  
It was nice.

GEORGE  
Good. (beat) Well, say hi to Doris  
for me.

George steps away from the shed and starts walking towards the stairs at the other end of the roof.

CHARLIE  
Well...I better go let him into my  
apartment. You can just lock up  
the shed when you're done.

ROGER  
Okay, Charlie...

The two men nod at one another, then Roger steps into the shed and closes the door.

INT. WOODEN SHED - CONTINUOUS

The shed's crude interior has been completely overhauled to look like a miniature museum. Each piece is elegantly displayed on its own wall and illuminated from above by strategically placed pin lighting. Red carpeting neatly covers the floor and a small wooden bench sits in the middle of the room.

Roger marvels at the transformation of the little space. Across from him, glowing in her new setting, is The Lonely Maiden.

Roger goes to the bench and sits down. He focusses his gaze on the Maiden...but nothing happens. He used to be able to lose himself in an instant.

He adjusts himself, then tries to focus again...nothing.

Roger doesn't seem concerned, but rather as if he had prepared himself for such a result.

He glances around he room, taking note of the Bronze Warrior and Young Girl With Cats, then with a final glance at the Maiden, he lets out a RESIGNED SIGH.

Roger stands up and goes to the door. He flips off the light and exits the shed.

ROLL CREDITS

INT. DANISH MUSEUM - DAY

A large, healthy looking SCANDINAVIAN SECURITY GUARD stands at his post, his eyes focussed straight ahead.

REVERSE ANGLE: We see what has captured his attention, The Lonely Maiden...or rather the Fake Lonely Maiden.

The Guard's eyes take on the distant glaze of a man who has just lost himself in her haunting image.

MORE CREDITS

INT. MUSEUM - DAY

Roger stands at his post, staring at a painting positioned directly in front of him.

An esteemed piece of the Scandinavian Masterwork collection, the painting is simply three large green paint splotches.

Roger looks at it with confusion. He turns his head to the right, still confused. A little more...then he stops. A smile starts to creep across his face.

FADE OUT.

THE END