

EAST FIFTH BLISS

Written by
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Adapted from the novel "East Fifth Bliss"
written by Douglas Light

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INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON:

A pair of feet bouncing on a bed.

GIRL (O.C.)
You know. I know you.

GUY (O.C.)
(unsure)
Yeah, I feel I know you too.

WIDE ON:

MORRIS BLISS, 35, body of a swimmer who hasn't swum in years, sits slumped over at the end of his bed naked and mesmerized by STEPHANIE JOUSESKI, voluptuous but sloppy, also naked, 18, or at least she claims to be, as she jumps on the bed.

MORRIS
Like we're connected or something.

STEPHANIE
I know I know you, but not from here.
(off his look)
Not from now and all of this.

Stephanie moves to his bureau and looks over his things including a picture of a woman, STAVROULA BLISS. The picture is old.

MORRIS
Before today?

STEPHANIE
Five times.
(beat)
Are you married?

She holds up the picture of STAVROULA. Morris quickly gets up and takes the picture from her, returning it to where it was.

MORRIS
No. That's my mother.

STEPHANIE
Oh. Why's the picture so old?

MORRIS
She died.
(beat)
When I was a kid.

STEPHANIE

People do that I guess. Die and all I mean.

(beat)

My grandmother did. It ended up making the Post. You know, the way she died. Accidentally hung herself opening her front door.

MORRIS

Oh wow. That was your grandmother? I remember that. So she--

STEPHANIE

Yeah. She wore her keys on a shoestring around her neck.

Stephanie notices a shelf full of books on the other side of the room.

STEPHANIE

(moving)

Wow. D'you read all these? Your last name like Barnes and Noble or something?

Stephanie looks over the books.

MORRIS

Wait. Five times? What do you mean we met five times?

STEPHANIE

Five times.

(pointing to a book)

Oh, I know this guy. We just studied him in school. He's from Britain or England or somewhere.

Morris moves to her.

MORRIS

You studied Ruskin in school?

STEPHANIE

Well, yeah, we studied a lot of different stuff, why not this guy? He's famous I guess.

(beat)

He loved little girls. I mean really little girls. That's what my teacher said.

(MORE)

STEPHANIE (cont'd)
Girls younger than me. But he
stopped loving them when they
started to grow.

MORRIS
He died a virgin.

STEPHANIE
I didn't say he loved them the way
you just did me.

Stephanie rubs against Morris then looks down.

STEPHANIE
Some girls in my class shave. Do
you think I should shave?

Morris isn't sure what to say. He feels her pulling him in
again and steps back. He avoids her gaze and notices the
clock across the room which reads: 5:50 PM.

STEPHANIE
What, you don't want me now?

MORRIS
No. It's just... It's time for you
to go.

STEPHANIE
Go? What do you mean?

She moves back to the bureau and looks at a world map hanging
on the wall that is filled with push pins.

STEPHANIE
It's only four o'clock. I don't
have to go.
(beat)
What's with the map?

MORRIS
It's nearly six.

Morris gathers her clothes.

MORRIS
What were the five times?

He pushes her clothes into her hands. Stephanie holds them
for a second, then drops them.

STEPHANIE
Whoops.

Morris bends down, picks them up, and hands them to her again. Again, Stephanie drops them.

MORRIS
Stephanie. You have to go.

Stephanie reaches for a pin and pulls it out.

STEPHANIE
What are all the pins for?

Morris grabs the pin from her and replaces it.

MORRIS
They're all the places I've gone.

STEPHANIE
Really? You've been to all those places?

MORRIS
Well. No. Not yet. They're all the places I plan to go.

Stephanie looks at the map and grabs another pin.

STEPHANIE
Spain? Why Spain?

Morris shrugs.

MORRIS
Homage to Catalonia.

STEPHANIE
Cata who?

Morris moves to his books and slides one off the shelf.

MORRIS
Catalonia. George Orwell.

Stephanie looks at the map and points to another pin.

STEPHANIE
And here?

Morris slides another book from the shelf.

MORRIS
Anne of Green Gables. Prince Edward Island.

Stephanie likes the game and reaches for another pin. Morris points to a book on the shelf.

MORRIS
Sheltering Sky. Paul Bowles.
(beat)
You've really gotta go.

Stephanie hops on the bed and begins to jump again.

STEPHANIE
Buy me some cigarettes. I don't
have any money.

Morris again gathers her clothes and moves to her.

MORRIS
No. No cigarettes.

They're at a standoff.

MORRIS
Stephanie please. You've got to go.
Daddy's coming home.

STEPHANIE
Daddy?

MORRIS
Danny. My dad's name is Danny.

STEPHANIE MORRIS
You said Daddy. He lives with me.

STEPHANIE
Does he tuck you in at night? Shake
your pee-pee when you're done
tinkling?

MORRIS
Stephanie, it's time to go!

STEPHANIE
Ah, come on. I'm just funnin' with
you. Couples do that, you know?
They fun with each other.

She grabs her clothes as she hops off the bed and moves to the bathroom. Morris takes a breath as he grabs his pants and slips them on.

STEPHANIE (O.C.)
It was outside the comic book
store. Forbidden Planet.

MORRIS
What was?

STEPHANIE (O.C.)
The first time I saw you.

Morris slips his shirt on.

MORRIS
When?

STEPHANIE (O.C.)
That one time. I was with my dad.

MORRIS
Your dad?

Morris moves toward the open bathroom door.

STEPHANIE
You guys were like best friends in
high school.

MORRIS
Best friends? Me and your dad?

STEPHANIE
Steven Jouseski.

MORRIS
Steven Jouseski?

STEPHANIE
Yeah. We saw you. He yelled "Hey
twisted Bliss!" Then you raced into
the store.

MORRIS
Jetski? You're Jetski's daughter?

STEPHANIE
His name is Jouseski. Mine too.
It's also my mom's last name.

Morris stares at Stephanie through the mirror as she fixes
her makeup.

STEPHANIE
Buy me some cigarettes?

MORRIS
He's your dad?

STEPHANIE
Cigarettes?

Morris looks at Stephanie for a second before reaching for his wallet. He opens it and hands her his last twenty.

MORRIS
Jetski?

STEPHANIE
What's this for?

MORRIS
Cigarettes.

STEPHANIE
I need you to buy them for me.

MORRIS
I thought you said you were
eighteen.

STEPHANIE
I am but I just don't have ID and
these deli guys are assholes about
carding.

The BUZZER for the apartment RINGS. Morris takes Stephanie's arm, leads her toward the front door.

MORRIS
Time to go.

STEPHANIE
You know what I don't like?

Stephanie breaks free of Morris. Morris throws her a look.

STEPHANIE
Shoes, please.

Stephanie gathers her shoes, slips them on.

STEPHANIE
What I don't like is the fact that
you're so old. It's gonna be kinda
weird, you know, having a boyfriend
so old.

(MORE)

STEPHANIE (cont'd)
When I finally turn twenty-one and
we can go to bars together, you'll
be, like, I don't know-- you'll
still be a lot older.

MORRIS
Boyfriend?

The buzzer rings again.

STEPHANIE
Is that Daddy?

MORRIS
Danny. And yes. That's why you
need to go.

STEPHANIE
What, you afraid Daddy won't be
happy to see me?

MORRIS
Danny. And no. Or yes. I mean, I
don't think right now would be the
best time to introduce you. He's
older--

STEPHANIE
Older than you? God, he's not one
of those two-hundred year old guys
you have to carry around and feed
and bathe and stuff, is he? Does
he wear one of those big diapers?

The buzzer sounds a third time. Morris drags her to the door.

MORRIS
Stephanie, really, you got to go.

Morris opens the front door, guides Stephanie out. She stops
at the threshold.

STEPHANIE
Aren't you coming with me?

Morris hold up a hand to quiet her. He answers the buzzer.

MORRIS
(into intercom)
Yeah?

SEYMOUR (V.O.)
It's me. Let me in.

Morris buzzes his father in.

MORRIS

Listen, go to the bodega around the corner, right here on First Avenue. Mr. Charlies is the name of the place. It's the name of the guy at the counter. Tell him Mr. Charlies sent you and he'll sell you cigarettes.

STEPHANIE

Tell Mr. Charlie that Mr. Charlie sent me?

MORRIS

Mr. Charlies. With an 's.'

Morris hears Seymour coming. He scoots Stephanie out.

MORRIS

Time to go.

STEPHANIE

When am I going to see you again? This weekend is awful for me. Meet me Monday, after school, at Ray's Pizza. Be there. Don't play with me. And call me, call me often.

MORRIS

Okay, I will.

STEPHANIE

Tell me you love me.

MORRIS

What? Stephanie, come on.

STEPHANIE

Tell me.

MORRIS

Okay. I love you.

STEPHANIE

And that you're sorry for being so crabby.

MORRIS

I'm sorry I was crabby.

STEPHANIE

Now kiss me.

Morris kisses her.

STEPHANIE

A real kiss.

Morris kisses her again.

STEPHANIE

Better. I left you a present. A
little surprise.

Stephanie kisses him again, turns and leaves. Seymour's
footsteps grow louder as he climbs the stairs.

MORRIS

(quietly)

A surprise? What is it?

Stephanie holds up the twenty as she walks down the stairs.

STEPHANIE

Can I keep the change?

MORRIS

(quietly)

Change? Yeah, sure. Keep it.
What's the surprise?

STEPHANIE

Monday, after school. Ray's Pizza.
Don't forget.

Morris closes the door. Puts his head to it. Breathes deeply.

MORRIS

(to self)

A surprise?

Morris races back to the bedroom and scans it.

POUNDING on the front door.

SEYMOUR (O.C.)

Open this bastard door.

Morris goes to the door, opens it.

MORRIS

Hey, Daddy. How was your day?

SEYMOUR

What were you doing in here? I
buzzed and buzzed you.

MORRIS

I was in the bathroom.

Seymour sniffs the air as Morris follows him to the kitchen.

SEYMOUR

Is that what I'm smelling? You got
all day to do that and you wait
until I'm coming home?

MORRIS

Well, if you hadn't lost your keys.
Again. Besides, I had that job
interview.

Seymour moves to the refrigerator.

SEYMOUR

So when do you start?

MORRIS

We're working out the details.
Soon, though, I hope.

Seymour takes a 40-ounce beer from the refrigerator.

SEYMOUR

Good, because I can't keep giving
you an allowance. Did you take
care of those things I asked you to
take care of?

MORRIS

Some.

Seymour takes his favorite glass from the cupboard and pours
the beer into it.

SEYMOUR

Did you pick up the groceries?

MORRIS

Well, no.

Seymour takes a deep drink, then moves to the front room.

SEYMOUR

Mail the letters?

MORRIS

Not yet.

Seymour sits in his beat-up recliner.

SEYMOUR

Please tell me you at least got the keys made for me. Tell me you at least did that.

MORRIS

It's on my to-do list.

SEYMOUR

What the hell have you been doing all day, aside from stinking up the place?

MORRIS

I had the interview, Daddy. I told you.

Seymour turns on the TV. Morris stands, not sure what to do.

SEYMOUR

Well?

MORRIS

Right. Let me go take care of that stuff.

Morris doesn't move.

SEYMOUR

What are you waiting for?

MORRIS

Well, see, the thing is, I kinda spent the money you gave me.

SEYMOUR

Kinda spent it?

MORRIS

I spent it.

SEYMOUR

On what?

MORRIS

Well, there was the interview, and... well, I spent it.

Seymour digs into his pocket and hands him a five.

MORRIS
And the groceries?

Seymour pulls out a twenty and begrudgingly hands it to Morris.

MORRIS
Okay, then. Well... thanks, Daddy.

Seymour turns his attention to the TV.

MORRIS
So I guess I'll see you in a bit.

Morris heads to the front door.

SEYMOUR
Never guess what I just saw.

MORRIS
(stopping)
Yeah? What's this?

SEYMOUR
You should have seen it. A clear shot.

MORRIS
Clear shot?

SEYMOUR
Right in front of me. Top of the stairs. Standing all sexy and smart assish. Had a clear shot of her womanhoodliness. No panties.
(beat)
And she called me daddy.
(imitating)
Hello Daddy!

MORRIS
Wow.

SEYMOUR
Wow's right. Got a good smell of her when she passed.

MORRIS
Wow.
(beat)
(MORE)

MORRIS (cont'd)
I better run. Take care of the keys
before they close.

SEYMOUR
Do that.

Seymour turns his attention back to the TV as Morris slips
out the door.

INT. MR. CHARLIES BODEGA - MOMENTS LATER

MR. CHARLIES, age indistinguishable, thick black hair, and an
overbite that makes him look like he's always smiling, is
perched on a stool behind the counter. Morris rushes in.

MR. CHARLIES
Ah. Mr. Charlies, hello, hello.

Morris moves down one of the aisles looking for Stephanie.

MORRIS
Hey. Has a woman--

MR. CHARLIES
No.

Morris looks at Mr. Charlies. Mr. Charlies smiles.

MORRIS
I haven't even asked you the--

MR. CHARLIES
Ah yes, I know. And no.

MORRIS
Well did she say--

MR. CHARLIES
No.

MORRIS
When did she--

MR. CHARLIES
No. Mr. Charlies. The girl, no
problem. I tell her, come anytime,
all the time. A friend of Mr.
Charlies is a friend of Mr.
Charlies.
(beat)
She's your daughter, yes?

MORRIS
Daughter? She's a... No.
She's not my daughter.

MR. CHARLIES
Oh. Understand, understand.

MORRIS
I'm sure you do.

Mr. Charlies smiles wide.

MORRIS
Did she say... Never mind.

Morris heads to the door.

MR. CHARLIES
Mr. Charlies no shop?

MORRIS
Ah. No. Not right now. Later.

MR. CHARLIES
Ah. Yes. Later, Mr. Charlies.

EXT. MR. CHARLIES BODEGA - CONTINUOUS

Morris steps out from the bodega and stops on the corner looking in every direction to see if he can spot Stephanie. No luck. He takes a breath.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - LATER

A pair of hands hold a shiny new key against a grinding wheel. Sparks fly. Morris stares as the hands move the key away from the wheel and place it on the counter next to two other new keys.

COUNTER HELP (O.C.)
Five seventy-five.

Morris produces a five dollar bill and slips it onto the counter. He digs into his pocket and finds the change. He plops it on the counter and the hands slide the money away.

EXT. STREETS - EAST VILLAGE - MANHATTAN - LATER

Morris strolls along, taking in the neighborhood he has come to know and that has come to know him.

EXT. BLISS APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Morris slides a new key in the lock and turns it. It works. He pulls the door open.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Right. Good. I can never find my key.

Morris turns to see ANDREA, late 20's, with a stylish just thrown together look that takes her a couple hours to accomplish.

ANDREA

Right. Thanks.

Andrea touches Morris's arm as she moves past him. She opens her micro-sized purse and pulls out her keys.

ANDREA

Guess you're good luck.

Morris smiles as he moves in next to Andrea at the mailboxes. He pulls out a shiny new mailbox key from his pocket and tries to slide it into his box but has trouble.

Andrea slips her key in, opens her box and pulls out her mail as Morris struggles to get the new key in.

ANDREA

Right. Trouble getting it in?

MORRIS

What?

ANDREA

Happens a lot. Sometimes it just doesn't want to go in.

MORRIS

Oh. No. I. It's new. I usually don't have trouble.

ANDREA

Right. Well, maybe some lube.

MORRIS

Excuse me?

ANDREA

The lock.

MORRIS

Oh. Right.

ANDREA

Right.

Morris notices a travel magazine in Andrea's hand.

MORRIS

Is that a good magazine?

Andrea thinks Morris is referring to the chick magazine she's also holding.

ANDREA

The makeup tips and sex advice are all wrong but the hairstyles and how to lose weight articles are usually pretty good. Like this, right.

She opens the chick magazine.

ANDREA

Bananas are a great way to battle PMS and chronic split ends.

(beat)

I didn't know that. Did you know that?

MORRIS

No. I didn't.

(beat)

I was actually talking about the travel magazine.

ANDREA

Oh. Right. It's my husband's. George's. Never reads it. Here, have it.

She hands him the magazine.

ANDREA

Don't even know why we get it.

(beat)

Do you travel much?

MORRIS

I travel a lot. Or I mean, I plan to travel a lot. I haven't been anywhere yet, but soon.

ANDREA

Right. What are you doing Sunday at five PM?

MORRIS

Nothing I can think of.

ANDREA

Great. Good, let me ask you. Do you eat, what's that stuff called?

MORRIS

What stuff?

ANDREA

That Mexican stuff.

MORRIS

Tacos?

ANDREA

No, the stuff you put on tacos. It's all chopped up. Tomatoes and onions. Comes in a bottle.

MORRIS

Salsa?

ANDREA

Right. Yeah. Salsa. Do you eat salsa?

MORRIS

Ah. Not often but yes. I eat it.

ANDREA

Right. Great. You want to make a hundred and twenty-five dollars?

MORRIS

What do I have to do?

ANDREA

Nothing. Or next to nothing. I need you for a focus group for a new salsa. All you have to do is look at some print ads and make some comments.

MORRIS

Great. Sure. I can do that.

She looks at him a little odd and points toward him.

ANDREA
Troy, right?

MORRIS
Morris. Morris Bliss.

ANDREA
Bliss. Right.

INT. BLISS APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Morris enters the apartment, travel magazine in hand. It's dark. He heads to the front room and can hear the TV. Seymour is asleep in the recliner, his face aglow from the TV. Seymour looks fragile, like a broken, discarded toy. Morris sees himself in his father. He sets the new keys on a table next to Seymour, then straightens the blanket that's half fallen off. Morris turns off the TV.

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Morris enters, moves to his bureau and places the travel magazine next to the picture of his mother. He looks at his map and touches the pin in Greece. He takes a moment before laying down in bed fully dressed. He reaches over and turns off the light.

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - LATER

Morris's cell phone rings. He flicks the lamp on and looks at a nearby alarm clock which reads 1:10 AM. He grabs his phone.

MORRIS
(into phone)
Yeah?

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
We need to talk.

MORRIS
Stephanie? Is that you?

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
I'm outside.

She hangs up. Morris, fully dressed, gets up.

EXT. BLISS APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Morris exits the building.

STEPHANIE (O.C.)
Jeez. What do you sleep in your
clothes?

Morris looks at Stephanie, smoking a cigarette, sitting on a
motorcycle parked nearby.

MORRIS
Yeah. I do.
(beat)
What's up?

STEPHANIE
Don't worry. I'm not pregnant.

Stephanie hops off the motorcycle and moves toward him.

STEPHANIE
But I realize things.

She kisses him.

STEPHANIE
Now that I'm eighteen I realize
things. I realize that I like you.
A lot. I like this Morris and
Stephanie thing we have. But I
realize that this...

She taps him on the chest then points to herself.

STEPHANIE
Our "you and me" isn't going to
work.
(off his look)
I have plans you know? You aren't a
part of them.

MORRIS
I'm not a part of them?

STEPHANIE
No.

MORRIS
What kind of plans are you talking
about?

STEPHANIE

Owning my own Subway sandwich shop
for one.

MORRIS

Come on, be serious.

STEPHANIE

I am serious. This boy from my
class, flabby Robbie, his dad owns
a Subway on twenty-third and
Seventh Avenue and makes a ton of
money. And Robbie can have any kind
of sandwich he wants at anytime. He
has them delivered to the school
for lunch. That's the way he makes
friends. Ordering them free
sandwiches. It's the only thing
people like about him because
Robbie's kind of sickening. His
hands are always sticky like he's
just sneezed in them or worse.

She looks at Morris like "you know what I'm saying" then...

STEPHANIE

Oh Christ!

She looks past Morris.

MORRIS

(looking)

What?

STEPHANIE

Is that a rat? Oh God, it's a rat.

Stephanie jumps on Morris, wrapping her arms around his neck
and her legs around his waist.

STEPHANIE

Kill it!

MORRIS

Get off me.

STEPHANIE

Kill it! Kill it!

Morris is struggling to stay on his feet.

MORRIS

Stephanie. Get off.

She lets go, slides off.

STEPHANIE

It ran down that way. I saw it run. God, I hate rats. They're worse than horny cousins. The way you got to fight them off. This one time, we had a rat in our building. It used to hang out in front of our apartment door. Like he smelled the frozen pizzas my dad was always heating up. We had to look through the peephole to make sure it wasn't waiting. The super wouldn't do anything, so my dad put out those sticky traps and those other kind. The kind that snap. Put them all around our door. But rats are smart. Or this one was smart. Nothing worked. So this one morning, my dad heard the rat scratching outside our door and got so angry he grabbed a mop and went and killed it himself.

MORRIS

He killed it with a mop?

STEPHANIE

Well he tried to kill it. He went out into the hall. Naked except for his underwear and the rat was sitting there with this "what do you want?" look. And my dad whacked it with the mop, but it was one of those sponge mops so it didn't hurt the rat much.

A shiver runs across Morris's body.

STEPHANIE

After he hit it, the rat took off. Cut down the stairs. But my dad chased after it. He gave it another good wallop, really hard, you know, and somehow, the rat got hooked on the mop. Its tail or something wrapped around the handle, and as my dad yanked the mop, the rat came flying up, doing flips and twists like a gymnast or something.

(MORE)

STEPHANIE (cont'd)
And for a split second, for a tiny,
split second, the rat came face
level with my dad.

Stephanie holds her hand horizontal to her nose.

STEPHANIE
Came up to right here. They looked
each other in the eyes.

Stephanie claps her hands.

STEPHANIE
My dad said he's never seen so much
evil as he saw in that rat's eyes.
Then the rat fell down the middle
of the stairwell, hitting the
bannisters as he went down, bang,
bang, bang. When my dad went down
to look, the rat was gone.

MORRIS
Jeez.

Stephanie lightly punches Morris.

STEPHANIE
I don't mean much to you, do I?
I'm just another girlfriend to you.
One of probably three zillion
you've had.

MORRIS
Three zillion's on the high end.
(beat)
So... What other plans do you have?

STEPHANIE
I have lots of plans.

MORRIS
But none that I fit in?

STEPHANIE
You just don't seem...

MORRIS
I don't seem what?

STEPHANIE
You know, you just don't seem.

MORRIS
What's that mean, I don't seem?

STEPHANIE

Before I forget, I got you a gift.

Stephanie pulls out a 12-inch wheel of Brie from her purse and hands it to Morris.

MORRIS

You got me Brie?

STEPHANIE

No. It's cheese. French, I think.
It's expensive stuff.

MORRIS

Where'd you get it?

STEPHANIE

Mr. Charlies.

MORRIS

You bought this at Mr. Charlies?

STEPHANIE

I didn't exactly buy it.

MORRIS

You stole it?

STEPHANIE

Yeah, well that asshole owed me.
He robbed me of that twenty you
gave me, didn't give me any change
from the cigarettes. Kept saying,
"Problems, problems, no change."

MORRIS

Mr. Charlies never has change.

STEPHANIE

No change? Well, I made up for it.
I went back in there and, you know,
did some extra shopping.

MORRIS

But he knows who you are. Knows I
know you.

STEPHANIE

So? He stole from me first. And
anyway, it's not like we're ever
going back there again.

Stephanie pokes him in the stomach.

STEPHANIE

Okay.

MORRIS

Okay what?

STEPHANIE

Just, you know, okay.

(beat)

Give me a kiss.

MORRIS

Does that fit in your plans? I
don't want to ruin your plans.

STEPHANIE

It won't ruin them. I'll make it
fit.

Stephanie kisses him once deeply, then turns and heads off.

MORRIS

Where are you going?

STEPHANIE

Guess what I'm thinking?

Morris doesn't answer, watches her walk away.

STEPHANIE

Guess.

MORRIS

What are you thinking?

STEPHANIE

I'm thinking my plans might have
changed. I'm thinking you might be
a part of them.

(beat)

May twenty-third.

MORRIS

What's May twenty-third?

STEPHANIE

Prom.

(beat)

Don't forget, Monday, Ray's Pizza,
after school.

Stephanie rounds the corner and is gone.

NJ (O.C.)
Who's the girl, man?

Morris spins around, startled, and spots NJ, 35, Morris's best friend, wearing an ill-fitting tux.

MORRIS
Jesus! You scared me.
(beat)
Where you been all week? Haven't returned any of my calls. And what's with the bad tux? You getting married?

NJ
No, man. And that's a blessing. A pure blessing. Buy me a beer.

Morris hesitates.

MORRIS
Okay. One beer.

NJ
I've been risking my life all week, man.

INT. THE OLD HOMEPLATE - MOMENTS LATER

Morris and NJ climb on two bar stools.

NJ
Mawmaw's, man. Saved my life.

Morris pops the wheel of Brie on the bar as he signals MRS. CRUXO, 60, the baked-apple-faced bartender, for two beers.

MORRIS
What the hell is a Mawmaw's?

NJ unwraps the Brie.

NJ
It's what saved me from the Cindi.

MORRIS
It saved you from what?

NJ pulls out a buck knife and cuts into the Brie.

MORRIS
(re: the Brie)
Help yourself.

NJ
It's all about economics, man. How
people spend money. What they spend
it on. It's all about the way
people spend other people's money.

Two beers are placed in front of them. Morris reaches for his
wallet and puts down a twenty which Mrs. Cruxo takes.

MORRIS
Like the way I'm always buying you
a beer because you're always broke?

NJ
Not broke, man. Just frugal.
(beat)
What, man, you keeping a tab?

NJ tugs at his lapels.

NJ
Like Medusa and a mirror. The
economics of Mawmaw's broke the
curse of the Cindi. I nearly had to
use this monkey suit.

MORRIS
I have no idea what you're talking
about.

NJ
Mawmaw's is a buffet up in Harlem.
The Cindi was my fiancée.

MORRIS
Your fiancée?

NJ
Why do you think I got the tux,
man? I was getting married today.

MORRIS
You were getting married and you
didn't even tell me?

NJ
It all happened so quick, man.

MORRIS

You could have called. You could have said, "Morris I'm getting married."

(beat)

How long have you been dating this woman?

NJ

I've known the Cindi since Sunday. I met her at church.

MORRIS

Six days ago?

NJ

I like to think of it as a week, man.

(beat)

A week can be a long time. Rome was ravaged in less. The Seven Days War changed the landscape of the Middle East.

MORRIS

A lot of destruction. And it was the Six Days War that happened in the Middle East.

NJ

God created the world in a week, but what's important is that it didn't happen. I didn't get married. I was saved. We had a four o'clock appointment with the judge to get married.

(beat)

The hottest state, man, the Cindi and I. Really into each other. We were like plaid on polyester, man. Morning, noon, and night. Her place is in Harlem, so we go to Mawmaw's for lunch this afternoon, a pre-wedding meal. Mawmaw's is the best soul food buffet in the city. No kidding. Four twenty-five a pound buffet. Except for chitlins, which cost more. Great stuff. So at the buffet, she loads up on rice and beans. Nothing else. Not the ribs, not the greens, not the pulled pork. Nothing. Just the cheap, heavy stuff, man.

(MORE)

NJ (cont'd)

Her meal ended up costing seven bucks, all for beans and rice. And I was the one paying for it. We were supposed to marry in less than three hours and I suddenly saw it all, man, saw the true colors of the Cindi. I broke it off then and there. How could I marry a woman who has no problem paying seven and change for a plate of beans and rice?

NJ knifes up a slice of Brie, offers it to Mrs. Cruxo, and then signals her for two more beers.

NJ

Who's the 15 year-old girl I saw you with, man? Is she stalking you?

MORRIS

Eighteen. Stalking, no. Why?

NJ points to the Brie, takes another bite.

NJ

Because this is turning. Was it a gift or a threat?

MORRIS

You remember Jetski, that guy from high school?

NJ

Jetski? You mean that kid with the harelip who spit when he talked?

MORRIS

No.

NJ

Oh, man, I know who you mean. The guy who got his finger ripped off by that lathe in shop class. Frankenfinger. That thing never looked real after they sewed it back on.

MORRIS

Yeah, him.

NJ

Ol' Frankenfinger. That guy's an asshole, man. Used to work at that movie theater on Twelfth street.

(MORE)

NJ (cont'd)
Once tried to sell me popcorn he'd swept off the floor. Real asshole, man.

MORRIS
Yeah, well, that girl you saw is his daughter.

NJ
Your girlfriend is Jetski's daughter?

MORRIS
She's not my girlfriend.

NJ
Thank God for that.

MORRIS
Why?

NJ
If she was, I'd have to tell you to dump her, man. My advice would be to dump her quick.

Mrs. Cruxo sets two fresh beers down. Morris grudgingly pays.

NJ
So you're not dating her?

MORRIS
No, I'm not dating her.

NJ
But you slept with her.

MORRIS
Listen, I just met her today.

NJ
Yes or no, man. Did you sleep with her?

MORRIS
Okay, yes. I did. But it's not like you're thinking.

NJ
Really?

MORRIS
Really. Listen...

FLASHBACK

INT. RECORD STORE - 12 HOURS EARLIER

Morris flips through records.

MORRIS (V.O.)
I was looking for a present for
Daddy-- Dad.

STEPHANIE (O.C.)
You got something on your face.

Morris look up, sees Stephanie on the other side of the
record rack. She points to her left cheek. Morris wipes.

STEPHANIE
The other side.

Morris wipes the other side of his face.

NJ (V.O.)
So she came on to you?

BACK TO SCENE

MORRIS
Yeah, but wait. Let me finish.

CONT. FLASHBACK

Stephanie holds up a CD by 40 Ounces and a Mule.

STEPHANIE
Have you heard these guys? They
rock. But, hey, let me show you
something even better.

Stephanie motions for Morris to follow her. Morris follows
her into the basement of the record shop. She pushes him up
against the wall, starts kissing him.

STEPHANIE
I want to see your place.

MORRIS
But I don't even know you.

STEPHANIE
I'm Stephanie. My name's Stephanie.

MORRIS

Yeah, but I don't know who you are.

STEPHANIE

You don't like me? Why don't you like me?

MORRIS

I like you. I just don't know you.

STEPHANIE

But I know you. I know you and know you and know you.

BACK TO SCENE

Morris takes a swig of beer. NJ's speechless.

NJ

Dump her, man. Just tell her it was a mistake. Tell her it was an oversight.

MORRIS

You make it sound like it requires a Congressional investigation.

NJ

Basically, man, you had sex. Two fancy animals doing what animals do. An act of nature. I'd get out before the emotions get tangled. End it before it gets messy.

EXT. THE OLD HOMEPLATE - LATER

Morris and NJ exit the bar as a Mercedes pulls up to the curb. A friend of Morris's from high school along with two hot chicks hop out and head into The Old Homeplate.

WALTER

Shit, is that Bliss?

(beat)

Morris Bliss?

MORRIS

Do I know you?

WALTER

Know me? Damn, Bliss, it's me, Walter. From high school.

MORRIS

Wally? Wally Nuts?

WALTER

Knots. And it's Walter now. I go by Walter.

(beat)

What are you doing here? Back visiting your folks?

MORRIS

Kind of.

NJ

He still lives with his dad, man.

WALTER

His dad! That's rare.

(to NJ)

Jetski, right?

NJ

NJ, man. I'm NJ.

WALTER

Sorry, I thought I recognized you. Thought you went to high school with Bliss and me.

NJ

I did, man. Don't you remember me? I hit you in the face during dodgeball and your braces exploded out of your mouth.

WALTER

You and twenty other guys.

(beat)

Hey, Bliss, I've got to thank you.

MORRIS

Thank me? For what?

WALTER

For what? For what! Listen to this guy! Rare. Really rare. You put me on the path. You're the one who pushed me to be who I am.

NJ

Wally Nuts, man?

WALTER

Walter Knots. And yes. Don't you remember Bliss, at that graduation party? We were black toast, you and me, and I told you that this was the life I was going to live. Black toast for the rest of my life. Remember what you said?

MORRIS

Actually, I don't even remember the party.

WALTER

You were telling me about your mother and how she always told you to be your dream. Be your dream. And then you told me about all the places you were going. Cuba. China. Greece. Russia. Hey, Natasha One and Natasha Two here are from Russia.

MORRIS

(to ladies)

Nice to meet you.

WALTER

Oh, they don't speak English. Hey, Bliss, we're out tearing up a bit. To celebrate. I just closed a three million dollar deal. Come hang out with us.

(to girls)

This is the guy! The one I was telling you about. Bliss!

NJ

Morris has a girlfriend.

Morris throws NJ a look.

MORRIS

Ah, I really have to get home. It's late.

WALTER

Not in Singapore. Did you ever make it there? It's amazing.

NATHASA ONE

Bliss? This Bliss you said of?

MORRIS

No.

WALTER

Come on, let me buy you a drink. I owe you.

MORRIS

I really can't.

WALTER

Ladies, ladies, why don't you head in and get us some libations. The boys need to talk.

WALTER pulls out a wad of money, hands the girls three one-hundred dollar bills. The girls disappear into the bar. NJ follows the ladies inside.

WALTER

Hey Bliss, is that old apple-faced hag still tending bar here?

MORRIS

Mrs. Cruxo?

WALTER

Yeah. Nice to see some things never change.

(beat)

You still tap that?

MORRIS

Cruxo? No.

WALTER

When did you stop?

MORRIS

I never did tap her.

WALTER

Ahhh... Morris... I can't believe I ran into you. Let's get together. I want to hear all about your adventures.

Walter pulls out a card and hands it to Morris, then grabs Morris in a big bear hug.

WALTER

Thanks man.

Walter breaks the embrace and hustles inside.

WALTER
Call my assistant.

Walter disappears.

INT. BLISS APARTMENT - LATER

Morris enters and tries to quietly move through the apartment. It's dark and he kicks the leg of a small table in the hallway, which wakes Seymour who was still asleep in his recliner.

SEYMOUR
Mors?

MORRIS
Yeah. It's me Daddy.

SEYMOUR
No shit it's you. What the hell are you doing out this late? What time is it?

MORRIS
I was out with NJ. It's about three.

SEYMOUR
You get the groceries or did you spend the money I gave you on something useless again?

MORRIS
I'll get 'em.

SEYMOUR
Come here Morris.

Morris enters the living room.

SEYMOUR
How old are you?

MORRIS
Thirty-five.

SEYMOUR
Do you know what I was doing when I was thirty-five?
(beat)
(MORE)

SEYMOUR (cont'd)
I had a kid. A wife. An apartment
of my own. A job.
(beat)
You see what I'm saying?

MORRIS
Not really.

SEYMOUR
I was living. Do you understand
what I'm saying? I was living.

MORRIS
I understand Daddy.

SEYMOUR
I don't think you do. You see, it
was a choice I made. Each and every
step. I made a choice. It wasn't
made for me.

MORRIS
I make choices.

SEYMOUR
Really? I wonder what your mother
would think about your choices.

Morris is speechless, as Seymour exits the room.

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Morris enters, moves toward the bed, and stops. He looks at his shoes, and slowly heels them off. He looks up to the map covered in pins with all the places he plans to go.

He slowly reaches up and pulls one pin out. He studies the map a moment longer, then reaches up and removes another pin. He repeats this, with more and more aggression, until all the pins are removed.

The map holds the wall for a moment, then slowly peels away.

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Morris wakes with the sun in his face. He looks at his bare feet sticking out from under the covers, then glances over at the map lying on the floor.

He stands, stretches, and spots the travel magazine on the bureau.

He grabs the magazine and throws it into the trash can. He picks up the map off the floor, rips it in half and throws it into the trash as well.

EXT. PARK BENCH - ST. MARKS SQUARE, EAST VILLAGE - MORNING

Morris sits with coffee and an egg sandwich. As he eats, two girls pass by speaking French. A family walks by speaking German. Morris scans the park and sees an elderly woman, hunched and frail, feeding pigeons. He studies her a moment, then gathers his things and leaves.

EXT. SIDEWALK - EAST FIFTH STREET - LATE MORNING

Morris walks, rehearsing his lines, cell phone in hand.

MORRIS
Stephanie. Listen I...
(beat)
Stephanie I..

Morris stops walking to concentrate. He takes a breath.

MORRIS
Hey Stephanie! Listen I was
thinking and...
(to himself)
This is ridiculous.

He looks at his cell phone and dials.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Ah. You missed me huh?

MORRIS
Hey Stephanie!

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
I missed you too. What are you
doing?

JETSKI (O.C.)
TWISTED BLISS!

Morris spins around and sees STEVE JOUSESKEI, AKA JETSKI, AKA FRANKENFINGER. Morris lowers his phone as Stephanie keeps yammering away.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

I had a dream about you last night.
We had something like twelve kids
and they had your face and my body,
which is kind of sexy in a weird
way.

MORRIS

(to himself)

Jetski.

Morris slowly closes his phone, ending his call with
Stephanie.

MORRIS

Jetski!

Jetski moves quickly towards him.

JETSKI

I should wax your fucking tugboat,
Bliss.

Morris braces for the worst. Jetski grabs him and gives him a
big bear hug.

JETSKI

Jetski! Sweet baby Judas, Bliss, no
one calls me Jetski anymore. I
should take you down for that. You
know I hate that nickname.

(beat)

Twisted Bliss. How you been?

MORRIS

(warily)

Good.

JETSKI

This is a reunion, Bliss. This is
great. How are things? Things good?

MORRIS

Yeah. Well, it was good seeing you.

Morris turns to leave. Jetski tacks, gets in front of him.

JETSKI

I hear what you're saying. It's
good to see you too. We should go
out for a beer or something. Or you
should come over, meet my family.
You'll love my daughter.

MORRIS
I'm sure I would.

Morris's phone rings. He looks at it, recognizes the number, pushes a button to stop the ringing. He pockets the phone.

MORRIS
So what are you doing here?

Jetski motions across the street to a building being renovated.

JETSKI
This renovation, this is my show.
I'm the foreman. In charge of the
whole project, which is already
fucked and I haven't even begun.

Morris's phone rings again. He reaches into his pocket and hits a button to stop the ringing.

JETSKI
But that's life, I guess. You make
plans, things happen. You still got
to get it done, though. You got to
push through, right?

MORRIS
Right, got to push through.

JETSKI
Whatever happened to you?

MORRIS
What do you mean?

JETSKI
We used to be tight, good friends.
But after high school, you
disappeared.

MORRIS
Well, you know. Things happen. I've
been traveling a lot.
(beat)
So, I guess--

JETSKI
Shit, you remember the Bloody Eagle
Brigade? I tell my wife and
daughter that story all the time.

MORRIS
No. I don't.

JETSKI
Oh, come on, Bliss. The Bloody
Eagles.

Jetski playfully jabs Morris in the ribs. It hurts.

JETSKI CONT
You and me. Remember? All the
hijinks. You, Morris the Professor,
coming up with the plan, and me,
the Axe, getting the job done.
Remember all the shit we used to
pull?

Morris's phone rings again with a different ring.

MORRIS
We never really hung--

JETSKI
Twisted Bliss and the Bloody Eagle
Brigade. We were famous in high
school.

Morris pulls out the phone from his pocket and reads the
text.

TEXT READS:

O NO U DIDNT JUST HANG UP ON ME!

Morris turns the phone off and pockets it.

JETSKI CONT
Shit, remember that time we put
black shoe polish on the girls'
bathroom toilet seats, or when you
super-glued Mr. Arnold's chair to
his desk?

MORRIS
No.

JETSKI
Yes you do, Bliss.

MORRIS
Actually, no, I really don't.

JETSKI

The Bliss and Stevie J. The Bloody Eagles, baby. You remember.

MORRIS

Sure.

JETSKI

I really miss that. All those times. But now's now, you know? Got a wife, a teenage daughter. But I make good money.

Jetski turns back to the construction site, takes a deep breath. He looks back to Morris.

JETSKI

What are you doing now? Where you working?

MORRIS

I'm between jobs.

JETSKI

Hey, let's do some beers. How about tonight? Let's get some drinks tonight, catch up.

MORRIS

Tonight? Well, the truth is, I've got to watch my cash right now.

JETSKI

Bliss, you should have called me. I could have gotten you on here. You should have talked to me last week.

Jetski takes out his wallet and hands Morris two twenties.

JETSKI

Here's a tide-over. Until you get going again.

MORRIS

No. No. I can't take this.

Jetski shoves it into Morris's hand.

JETSKI

Take it. From one Bloody Eagle to another.

(beat)

(MORE)

JETSKI (cont'd)
Hey, you want to see the place
before we tear the shit out of it?

MORRIS
Sure.

Morris slowly pockets the money.

INT. BUILDING CONSTRUCTION SITE - MOMENTS LATER

Jetski pushes open the front door to the lobby.

JETSKI
Haven't been in here for six
months. Restrictions, permits, the
wife suing the husband for cheating
and the husband suing the wife for
being ugly. Divorce. I don't get
it. Once you say you're going to do
something, you do it. You stick to
it, right?

MORRIS
Well, yeah. Right.
(beat)
Jesus, what is that?

HATTIE SKUNK, late twenties, squatter and leader of the
Skunks, stands in the middle of a barricade in the hall.

HATTIE
This is your one warning. Leave, or
suffer.

JETSKI
(surprised)
Sweet baby Judas. Who the fuck are
you?

Hattie lights a Zippo lighter, holds it over her head.

HATTIE
We've been breached. Breach,
breach!

JETSKI
You can't be in here. This place is
off limits.

HATTIE
Remember the *Maine*.

JETSKI
It's the Alamo, you asshole.

HATTIE
Ignition!

Hattie ducks down behind the barricade, lighter still lit.

JETSKI
Come on, Bliss. We're cracking some heads.

Jetski strides toward the barricade. A fiery shot from a Roman candle zips across the room, hitting Jetski in the chest. It scorches his coveralls then fizzles.

JETSKI
Mother of God. What the fuck--

Another fiery shot zings across the room, barely missing Morris and Jetski. Morris dances back toward the front door.

MORRIS
Jetski, I'm getting out of here.

Another Roman candle shoots across the room. The room is aglow from the flares.

JETSKI
I hear you, Bliss.

Both Morris and Jetski hustle out of the building. Jetski closes the door and padlocks it.

MORRIS
The place is going to burn down.

JETSKI
They won't be that lucky. Burning to death would be a blessing for them. It'd be the only way to kill that smell.

Jetski flips open his cell phone.

JETSKI
I'm calling the cops, get them to clamp down on this shit.

Jetski pauses in his dialing, snaps the phone shut.

JETSKI
Bliss, I got an idea.

EXT. BLISS APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Morris strolls up to his building. Stephanie is sitting on his steps, yearbook open in her lap.

STEPHANIE

There are three kinds of trouble.
There's regular trouble, real
trouble, and then there's the
trouble you're in.

MORRIS

Stephanie, listen, about--

STEPHANIE

No, you listen. I'm not talking to
you, but if I was talking to you,
I'd tell you how dorky you look in
this picture.

Stephanie holds up the old yearbook.

STEPHANIE

There's a reason muscle shirts are
called muscle shirts, and that's
because you're supposed to have
muscles to wear them. My grandma
had bigger arms than you.

Morris takes the yearbook from her and looks at the photo.

MORRIS

Where did you get this?

STEPHANIE

What do you mean, where did I get
it? It's my dad's. Your high school
buddy, remember? By the way, my
mom's thrilled that you're taking
me to prom.

MORRIS

You told her?

STEPHANIE

I didn't tell her who, but of
course I told her. Prom is like, I
don't know, it's a big deal. Like
a wedding. But she said I couldn't
go.

MORRIS

(relieved)

Oh, well, that's unfortuna--

STEPHANIE

Not until I ask dad. And not until I introduce you to them, which is kinda funny being that you and dad are high school friends and all.

(beat)

You like chicken, yeah? Cause that's all my mom can cook. You might want to eat before you come, just in case.

MORRIS

Listen Stephanie. We need to talk.

Stephanie gives him her full attention.

STEPHANIE

Okay.

MORRIS

Well. I was talking to my friend NJ and...

STEPHANIE

And?

MORRIS

Well, he said I should...

She looks at him in a way Morris hasn't seen from her. Wide, adoring eyes. Innocent.

STEPHANIE

What?

MORRIS

He said... I should find out what color your dress was going to be so I could--

STEPHANIE

Pink. Of course. It's my favorite color. You should know that.

(beat)

You've got a lot to learn about me.

She gets up and hugs him.

STEPHANIE

Like I get really pissed off if you
don't answer my calls.

She breaks the embrace.

STEPHANIE

I got to run.

Stephanie kisses him deeply, then turns and skips off.

STEPHANIE

Monday. Ray's. Don't forget.

MORRIS

Right. Monday.

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Morris opens the bureau door and pulls out a black shirt. He looks at the photo of his mother, then slips the shirt on. He pulls out the record he bought for his dad's birthday from under the bed, studies it a moment, then puts it back.

He looks up to where the map once was. The wall is marked with pinholes. He glances down at the trash can which still has the torn-up map and travel magazine in it.

He picks up a black ski mask off the bed and slides it on.

INT. KITCHEN - BLISS APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Seymour stands looking at the bare cupboard. Morris enters the kitchen, dressed fully in black, ski mask on.

SEYMOUR

(turning)

Damn it, Mors, why haven't--

(beat)

Holy Christ.

MORRIS

It's me, Daddy.

SEYMOUR

I know it's you, goddamn, but you
still scared me. Why are you
dressed like some--

(beat)

I don't even want to know.

MORRIS
I'm helping out a friend.

Seymour stares at Morris a moment then exits the room. Morris looks at the empty cabinets.

MORRIS
(to himself)
I'm making a choice.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Morris's head pops over the edge of the building. He looks about, taking in the view of the neighborhood.

JETSKI (O.C.)
Stay low, Professor. Keep your head down.

MORRIS
Professor? Steven, where are you?

JETSKI
It's the Axe. Call me Axe.
(beat)
I'm over here.

Morris climbs onto the roof and looks about.

MORRIS
Where?

Jetski flashes a penlight.

JETSKI
Here. Keep down, Professor. We're covert, remember?

Morris strolls over to where Jetski is crouched. Jetski is also dressed entirely in black. He hands Morris a paint-ball gun. Morris studies it.

JETSKI
God, I hate heights.
(beat)
I'm having second thoughts on this, Professor. Maybe I shoulda just called the cops.

MORRIS
You can do this, Ste-- Axe. We're the Battle Eagles, remember?

JETSKI
Bloody Eagles.
(beat)
I'm freezing up, Professor. I
can't go through with this.

MORRIS
You made a commitment, Axe, you got
to follow through.

JETSKI
It's just--

MORRIS
No. Find your inner strength. Just
like that time you killed that rat
with a mop. You didn't freeze up
then, did you? You followed
through.

JETSKI
I told you about that? I told you
about the rat?

MORRIS
Let's go over the plan again.

JETSKI
When did I tell you about the rat?

MORRIS
Axe, we're Bloody Eagles, right?

JETSKI
Right.

Morris gets up, moves toward the opposite end of the roof.

MORRIS
Then let's do this.

INT. BUILDING CONSTRUCTION SITE - MOMENTS LATER

Hattie and her fellow Skunks are huddled behind a barricade.

TORC, male, skinny and gritty, nods to MAY, 22, also skinny
and gritty, wearing thick glasses.

TORC
This is bullshit. No one's coming.

MAY

Yeah, we've been waiting for something like twelve hours straight. I'm hungry.

HATTIE

They're coming.

TORC

They're not coming. They pussied out, the big--

A soul-shaking screech roils the building.

TORC

What the fuck was that?

Hattie jumps up, faces the front door and sparks her lighter.

HATTIE

It's them.

TORC

No cops sound like that. That sounds like--

JETSKI

Revenge!

Jetski bounds down the stairs, stumbles and takes a fall.

JETSKI

Ahhhhhhh! Professor, I'm down!

Morris stares at the Skunks, not sure what to do. He looks down, sees the paint-ball gun in his hand, raises it and opens fire.

Paint-balls explode on Hattie and Torc. Both howl in pain.

HATTIE

We're under fire. Retreat, retreat!

Hattie leads the retreat. Other Skunks follow.

Morris continues firing, hitting a couple in the back as they escape out a window.

Jetski gets back onto his feet and hobbles on his hurt knee.

JETSKI

Remember the Alamo, assholes.

Jetski fires random shots.

JETSKI

Goddamn it, Professor, we did it.
Bloody Eagles, baby. Taste our
talons.

Jetski hobbles toward Morris.

MORRIS

They tasted the talons, all right.
(beat)
You hurt yourself?

JETSKI

All victories carry a cost,
Professor.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Hattie races down the street, Skunks following.

HATTIE

Split up. Don't let them get a bead
on us.

The Skunks break up, running off in separate directions.

Hattie turns a corner and checks to see if she's being followed. Certain she's not, she slows her pace to a jog. Seeing an Indian restaurant, she cuts in and walks across the dining room, through the kitchen, and out the back. She hops a fence into a building's backyard, jumps and grabs a fire escape ladder, and climbs it to the second floor. She slides open an unlocked window.

INT. PLUSH, MODERN APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Hattie climbs through the window into the bedroom and breathes a sigh of relief. She walks into the kitchen, pulls a bottle from the wine refrigerator and opens it. She pours herself a full glass, and takes a sip. She crosses into the bathroom, wine glass and bottle in hand. She starts running a bath, and then sprinkles bath salts in. She strips out of her Skunk-wear and slowly slips into the hot bath.

Hattie lies in the tub, watching the water slowly cover her. She takes a moment, then glances at the Skunk-wear heaped on the bathroom floor.

INT. BUILDING CONSTRUCTION SITE - EARLY MORNING

CLOSE ON DOOR - a paint-ball explodes against a paint-splattered door.

JETSKI

My wife was the first woman I slept with. Can you believe that Professor? The first and probably the last. She got pregnant that first time we did it, middle of senior year. What are the chances of that? When I'm lucky, it's always with bad luck.

(beat)

You should see my daughter. A beauty. But I don't feel the same around her anymore, you know? She's all grown up.

(beat)

Fathers and daughters. It's not the same as fathers and sons.

Morris fires another paint-ball.

MORRIS

Fathers and sons.

(beat)

Have you, I don't... have you ever felt that you're waiting?

JETSKI

Waiting? For what?

MORRIS

I don't know. Something. Anything.

(beat)

It's like at the end of Moby Dick, you know, when Ishmael is out there in the middle of the ocean with nothing, just praying something comes along and saves him.

JETSKI

What the hell are you talking about Bliss?

MORRIS

I don't know Steven. I'm just talking.

JETSKI
So what happens?

MORRIS
When?

JETSKI
With this guy, the one in the
middle of the ocean? Is he saved?

MORRIS
Yeah, he's saved. By his best
friend's coffin.

JETSKI
Damn, Bliss, what's wrong with you?
(beat)
Hey, I know what you need. You need
some woman action. You got a
girlfriend, Professor?

Morris stands.

MORRIS
Steven, I got to get going.

JETSKI
You hungry Professor? You want to
grab some breakfast?

MORRIS
I'd love to, but I can't.

JETSKI
It's Sunday morning. What do you
got?

Morris pauses a moment, thinking.

MORRIS
Church.

Morris extends his hand for a goodbye. Jetski struggles to
stand.

MORRIS
Well, Steven, it's been good.

Jetski takes Morris in a hug.

JETSKI
It's Axe. And no Professor, it's
been great.

INT. BLISS APARTMENT - LATER

Morris enters quietly and hears the TV in the front room. He glances in and sees his father asleep in the recliner.

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Morris enters the bedroom, kicks off his shoes, and tosses the ski mask to the floor. He crawls into bed and lies a moment. He sits up, pulls off his shirt, then lies back down.

INT. STERILE ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON a jar that's shaped like a sombrero, with a small silver-dollar sized lid.

ANDREA

This is the product we are going to discuss.

She looks across the table to see the focus group's reaction. NANCY, face of a professional poker player, MARIA, a woman who looks like she's just come off a heroin nod, and NADINE, face of a wounded groundhog, sit next to Morris, all wearing name tags.

NADINE

Are we going to taste it?

ANDREA

Right. And no.

Andrea moves to the easel.

ANDREA

We're here to look at ads to get your thoughts on them, like this one.

Andrea removes the cloth from the easel revealing a presentation board with a photo of a jar of Sombrero Salsa, a bowl of corn chips and ad copy which reads:

"Take your hat off to the best salsa in town. Sombrero Salsa, Heads Above the Rest."

NANCY

Is that supposed to be funny?
Sombrero, Heads?

ANDREA

Right, well, catchy. Do you think it's catchy?

NADINE

I don't speak Mexican so I don't know what the name means.

(beat)

Sand Burro? What is that, a desert donkey?

MARIA

There's donkey in this? My god, I can't eat donkey, even if it is free-range.

ANDREA

Right. So this ad, does it make you want to run out and buy Sombrero Salsa? What are your thoughts, Morris?

MORRIS

The ad's got a humorous--

MARIA

I wouldn't buy it.

ANDREA

Right, thank you, Maria. Nancy, your thoughts?

NANCY

I don't eat salsa. It messes with my menstruation.

ANDREA

But in the interview you said you did, right?

(beat)

You said that you eat salsa and you'd be glad to comment on a new product. Am I wrong or did you not say that? Am I wrong, right?

NANCY

I stated I've *eaten* salsa. But I don't eat salsa. Messes with my menstruation.

ANDREA

Right, okay, duly noted.

Andrea looks to Morris.

MORRIS

Like I started to say. It's
humorous, the bottle, eye-catch--

MARIA

You know, I wouldn't buy the stuff
but I dated a Latin American
studies professor in college so I
can appreciate the whole Central
American vibe, the echoes of a
proud heritage, the work, the
harvesting, all of which is
represented by the sombrero, the
mascot, if you will. But listen, I
just got a great idea.

MORRIS

I was speaking.

MARIA

Think about this. A TV ad showing
Inca Indians high in the mountains
of Mexico, show them toiling under
the crushing sun, sweating,
struggling with rudimentary tools
made of fallen trees or ox bone or
something, all to produce the
perfect tomato, the perfect pepper
that will go into the making of
Sombrero Salsa.

Maria raps the table.

MARIA

That's the tie-in. The Indians
will be wearing sombreros. "From
the sweat of our brow to your
dining room table" can be the tag
line. Or something like that. I
could see it working. But I'd
recommend dropping the donkey meat
from the product, even if it is
free-range.

NADINE

What's this? Indians? You said
Indians. I don't get it. Why would
Indians sell salsa on TV? Turkey,
Stove Top Stuffing, cranberry
sauce, yeah, okay.

(MORE)

NADINE (cont'd)
The whole Thanksgiving thing I can
see, but salsa? What do Indians
have to do with salsa?

LATER

Andrea swings open the door, letting out Morris and the
ladies from the focus group.

ANDREA
Thank you all so much for your
input, right. I am sure our clients
will find all of your comments very
useful.

Andrea hands an envelope with their pay to each of the women
as they pass her.

ANDREA
Thank you.

MARIA
They definitely should lose the
donkey.

ANDREA
Right. Thank you.

Nancy has a hand on her stomach as she takes her envelope.

NANCY
Even talking about salsa gives me
cramps.

ANDREA
Right. Okay.

NADINE
I'm available anytime you need me
for one of these things. Especially
if we actually get to eat
something.

ANDREA
Right. Okay. Thank you. Duly noted.

Morris steps up. She hands him his envelope, but doesn't let
go.

ANDREA
So what are you doing now Morris?
Going to get some dinner?

MORRIS

Oh. No. I was just going to head home.

ANDREA

Good. Me too. Let's share a cab, right?

INT. BEDROOM - PLUSH, MODERN APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

HATTIE ROCKWORTH (A.K.A. Hattie Skunk) holds up her shirt to check out the bruises left on the side of her torso from the paint gun pellets. She studies them carefully before sliding her shirt down and turning her attention toward the full-length mirror in front of her.

She takes a step forward and looks closely at her face. She takes a breath. She quickly moves out of the bedroom and through the apartment to the kitchen. She throws open a cabinet, reaches in and grabs a new trash bag.

Closing the cabinet she moves swiftly to the bathroom, stopping in front of the pile of clothes that belonged to Hattie Skunk. Her eyes fill a bit before she reaches down, grabs the pile of clothes, and stuffs them into the trash bag.

EXT. BLISS APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Hattie hustles out of the building, bounds down the stoop and stops at the trash can. She removes the lid, throws the trash bag in and takes a moment before slamming the lid closed.

NJ (O.C.)

I was hoping you could help me.

Hattie, startled, turns to see NJ standing close by.

NJ

You see, my friend Morris lives in your building and...

Hattie gives him a wary look.

EXT. STREETS - EAST VILLAGE - NIGHT

Morris hops out of the cab as Andrea hands a twenty to the driver. Morris pulls some money from his wallet. Andrea collects her change and slips out of the cab. Morris holds out a five which Andrea doesn't take.

ANDREA

Right. I was thinking. I don't want to go home yet.

She looks at him for a response.

MORRIS

Well.

ANDREA

Drink, right?

MORRIS

Sure.

(signaling)

There's a place right--

ANDREA

Right, fine. Good.

She follows his lead as he starts heading in the direction of The Old Homeplate.

ANDREA

You know I almost didn't marry George? I almost got married to someone before him, a guy named Carl.

MORRIS

Really? What happened?

ANDREA

Nothing happened. That was the problem. Carl was a good guy, but he was a Hydrox, right?

MORRIS

A Hydrox? You mean like--

ANDREA

The cookie. The cheap, knockoff Oreo. He wasn't even an Oreo, you know, wasn't real. He looked pretty good, had pretty nice teeth, right? But he was, what's it called, in between. What's it called when a person is neither too much one way nor the other?

MORRIS

Indecisive?

ANDREA

Moderate. In everything he did, right? Ordered his steak medium, his latte with one shot decaf, one regular. Folded his dirty laundry before putting it into the hamper, which is plain strange. But I liked him, right? I guess I liked him. I didn't dislike him. We got along fine. No arguments. Nothing, right? And that was the problem. Who wants to spend the rest of their life with someone they like? Who wants to be just fine? This is my moment, my life. I want better than *like* and *fine*. It was terrible, right? Like one of those movies you sit through and can't remember a thing about it the moment it's over.

Morris and Andrea stop in front of The Old Homeplate.

ANDREA

If it had been a bad relationship, okay. Then at least I'd have something to remember. I mean, if he'd beaten me, or cheated, or had the habit of picking his toes, just something, well... Really, you don't know how awful it is to see your future and be bored with it.

MORRIS

Actually--

ANDREA

But George. Now there is nothing *fine* about George and me. I don't *like* him.

(beat)

Right, well, you know what I mean.

MORRIS

Technically, the Hydrox came before the Oreo. It was the Oreo that's the knockoff.

ANDREA

Right. But I still don't want to go home yet.

(noticing)

So, this is it, right? Rustic.

INT. THE OLD HOMEPLATE - MOMENTS LATER

Andrea and Morris sidle up to the bar.

MORRIS
So what would you like to drink?

ANDREA
A Latino Temper hold the salt.

Mrs. Cruxo sets down two beers.

MORRIS
Beer alright?

Andrea grabs her glass and tinks his.

MORRIS
Cheers and thanks for the focus group.

ANDREA
Tell me something interesting.
Something about yourself that few people know.

MORRIS
Well... I'm half Greek.

ANDREA
I knew there was a reason I liked you. Mediterranean men know how to handle women, right? You have a way with women. Tell me something else. Tell me a story. Tell me about your first concert.

MORRIS
My first concert? Well, my first concert was Liberace.

ANDREA
Right, great. No really.

MORRIS
Really. Liberace, Bob Hope, and for some reason, Bruce Jenner. All three on one stage, one night.

ANDREA
Bruce Jenner, you mean the guy from the Wheaties box?

MORRIS
The Olympian. Him.

ANDREA
You almost had me. I thought you
were serious.

MORRIS
I am serious. I was twelve. My
mother took me. I was too young to
appreciate the oddness of the whole
thing. I didn't understand who
these people were, what we were
going to see. That, and I was angry
at my mother then.

ANDREA
I can't think of a time I wasn't
angry with my mother. Then she
died, right, and now I don't know
who to be angry with.

MORRIS
How'd she die?

ANDREA
How does anyone die? Something
stops or something doesn't stop.
Cancer, a car wreck, a coronary.
But all's good, right? I'm not
complaining, not saying things are
bad. I just wish things could be
clear and clean with smooth edges.
Why can't I bolt off witty lines
and responses when I need to?

MORRIS
You speak well.

ANDREA
I speak well. Right. But tell me
something, something you like about
me.

MORRIS
Well, I like your blouse.

Andrea pulls closer to Morris.

ANDREA
And I like you, right. I like you a
lot.

Andrea kisses him deeply, then breaks away.

ANDREA

Me and George had a terrible,
terrible fight last night.

She swigs some of her beer.

ANDREA

I stormed out of the house, right.
Stayed with my friend who lives on
Eighty-Eighth and Lexington in this
tiny place she claims is a one
bedroom but is really just a
glorified studio with a Pullman
kitchen.

MORRIS

I'm sorry.

Andrea downs the rest of her beer.

ANDREA

You know what frightens me the
most? Not being appreciated. At
home, I don't feel appreciated,
right? That, and turning shabby.
I'm twenty-eight and fear I'll
never look better. I don't want to
be like a couch, don't want to get
worn and run down and lumpy. I
don't want to wake one day and
realize I look used. You know what
happens to shabby couches, right?
They get junked. You've seen them,
right? On the street. They're
thrown out.

She looks at Morris. He leans in and kisses her.

INT. FOYER - BLISS APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Morris and Andrea make out heavily. Morris breaks off.

MORRIS

We shouldn't be doing this. Not
here.

ANDREA

I want to see your place.

MORRIS
Now? But Daddy's home.

ANDREA
Daddy?

MORRIS
No, I mean, Danny, my father. He's home.

ANDREA
Kinky. I like it.

Andrea kisses him again.

MORRIS
It's just, he's not well.

ANDREA
Oh. Right. Got it. How sweet of you, taking care of him.
(beat)
Is he medicated?

MORRIS
Ah, well, yes. He is.

ANDREA
Maybe he won't notice.

MORRIS
Yeah, well, the thing is, it's tempting and all, but I just don't feel right about it.

Both Morris and Andrea hear a door open on a floor above.

ANDREA
(quietly)
Shhh. I think it's George. I swear he's got a GPS on me.

MORRIS
(quietly)
Maybe you should go.

ANDREA
(quietly)
Right.

Andrea gives him another passionate kiss, breaks it off and climbs the stairs.

ANDREA
(quietly)
I hope your dad gets better.

MORRIS
(quietly)
Right, thanks.

Morris watches Andrea round the corner of the first flight and disappear. The sight of NJ replaces Andrea at the top of the stairs.

MORRIS
NJ?

NJ
I found *it*, man. The woman. My
life. The reason to go on.

MORRIS
Two days ago you were planning to
marry. What happened to that
woman? That love of your life?

NJ
Man, that was years ago, but
listen. Two things have happened
since then, two important things.
The first. No wait, man, I don't
have time. I only got a minute. I
got to get running, get packed.

MORRIS
Get packed? Where are you going?

NJ
Montana.

MORRIS
Montana? What the fuck is in
Montana?

NJ
Me and the one. The woman. And just
to think, man, she was in your
building the whole time.

NJ moves to the front door, opens it.

MORRIS
Who was in my building?

NJ
My bliss, Bliss. Hattie Rockworth.

NJ's out the door, gone.

MORRIS
Hattie Rockworth?

INT. BLISS APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Morris keys the door, enters. Seymour calls.

SEYMOUR (O.C.)
Mors, come in here.

Morris walks to the front room. Seymour sits in his recliner, beer in hand. Seymour shows him a woman's thong underwear. Morris stares at them blankly.

SEYMOUR
I found these in the bathroom and I
know they're not mine.
(beat)
You don't wear these, do you?

MORRIS
(to himself)
The surprise.

SEYMOUR
Please tell me you don't wear
these.

MORRIS
No, Dad, they aren't mine.

Morris grabs the thong and moves toward his bedroom.

SEYMOUR
I don't run a hot-sheet hotel. You
understand?

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Morris enters and shuts the door.

SEYMOUR (O.C.)
Is that where my money's been
going?

Morris takes a moment before looking at the underwear in his hand. He thinks then tosses it onto his bureau. The underwear lands next to the picture of his mother. Morris picks up the picture and studies it. Still holding the picture he moves to his bed, reaches under and pulls out the album he bought his father for his birthday. He looks at the album then the picture.

After a couple moments he puts them both down on the floor, slips off his shoes, shirt and pants, and climbs into bed.

EXT. SIDEWALK TABLES - RAY'S PIZZA - 3RD AVE - 3:35 PM

Morris sips a coffee as he waits for Stephanie. He watches people as they stroll by. He looks up at the clock inside the pizza shop which reads: 3:35 PM. Morris looks around for her.

GIRL (O.C.)

She's not coming.

Morris turns just in time to move aside as a SCHOOL GIRL FRIEND of Stephanie's rolls up on her roller blades and nearly knocks into him. She crashes into his table, spilling his coffee.

MORRIS

Jesus!

(beat)

Who's not coming?

GIRL

Ah shit. Yeah right, who?

(beat)

Stephanie.

(beat)

Sorry about the coffee. Listen she's not coming. She told me to tell you that and to meet her tonight at the Ukrainian Festival out front of McSorley's pub. Seven o'clock. Okay? And she said you'd buy me a pepperoni slice and a root beer.

MORRIS

I'm not buying you anything.

The girl rolls off.

GIRL
Personally, I think you and her are
perfect together. You're both
really gross.

EXT. BLISS APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Morris strolls along and spots NJ sitting on his stoop
dressed in full leather cowboy attire.

MORRIS
What's up with the outfit? You kill
a cow?

NJ
When in Rome.

MORRIS
What's that's supposed to mean?

NJ
Montana, man. This is what they
wear in Montana. This is what I'll
be wearing when I herd.

MORRIS
Herd what?

NJ
Buffali.

NJ pulls out a medallion he's wearing around his neck. The
medallion has the symbol of a looped rope, the ends pointing
skyward.

NJ
Check this out, man. Hattie gave it
to me.

MORRIS
What is that, a tapeworm?

NJ
It's the Red Thread, man. I'm in
the cartel.

Morris stares at NJ blankly.

NJ
Come on. Let me show you.

EXT. ESSEX STREET MARKET - LATER

NJ and Morris are bent over studying a medallion in the base of the lamp post that looks identical to the one NJ is wearing.

NJ

See?

Morris looks at NJ and stands. NJ stands.

MORRIS

So, what you're telling me is
you're in a secret cartel--

NJ

Yeah, the Red Thread.

Morris holds up his hand to silence NJ.

MORRIS

Right. That controls the world's
energy resources.

NJ

And--

MORRIS

And runs an international sex
trade.

NJ starts to speak but Morris holds up his hand again.

MORRIS

And this Maddie woman--

NJ

Hattie.

MORRIS

Hattie. Who you met yesterday,
while waiting for me, and is now
the new love of your life that
you're going to Montana with,
introduced you to her father who
runs the North American chapter of
the cartel. The Red Thread.

NJ

Yeah, it was him--

Morris throws up his hand once more.

MORRIS

Right, right. He's sponsoring you to become a full-fledged member of the cartel, which merely entails you initiating a coup in some Third World country?

NJ

Yeah.

Morris stares at NJ in bewilderment.

NJ

You don't believe me do you?

Morris isn't sure how to respond.

NJ

That's okay. Took me a few minutes to digest it all too, but look at this.

NJ points across the street to a sign that reads ESSEX STREET RETAIL MARKET. Morris looks.

MORRIS

Yeah?

NJ

Move over here. Look from here.

NJ moves Morris to a specific spot to read the sign. In this spot, the lamp post with the medallion in the base BLOCKS part of the sign leaving the following visible.

SIGN: SEX STREET TAIL MARKET

MORRIS

And I'm looking at?

NJ stands right next to him and points out the new version of the sign.

NJ

(reading)

Sex street tail market.

(beat)

It's our highest grossing sex trade market in the states, but it's gonna get raided tonight so we have to move operations.

Morris focuses in and reads, then turns to NJ.

MORRIS

Okay. Well. I got to get going. I
ah... I wish you luck with it and
all...

Morris starts to move.

NJ

Hey man! Wait a second. You don't
believe me, do you?

MORRIS

Of course I believe you. Just like
I believe you went to Cuba last
summer. And the Nigerian terrorist
training camp you visited two
Christmases ago. And how Bill Gates
called you to ask advice on one of
his new products. Of course I
believe you.

NJ

Wait a minute, man. Maybe I'm a
little sensitive but I think I'm
detecting some harshness in your
tone.

MORRIS

Really? No, I love to hear your
stories. So fascinating. Hard to
believe one guy could be so lucky
to meet so many famous, wealthy
people, travel the world, and all
without leaving the East Village.

NJ

Oh. And what about your little map.
All the places you PLAN to go. At
least I've done something.

MORRIS

Yeah, lied.

Morris turns, walks away. NJ stands and watches Morris.

NJ

(calling)

You remember how we met? I saved
your life! That day in the pool.
You were a rock and I was Mark
Spitz. I pulled you up!

MORRIS
(to himself)
I saved you.

Morris keeps walking as NJ stands watching his best friend walk away.

EXT. MCSORLEY'S PUB - EAST VILLAGE - MANHATTAN - LATER

The annual Ukrainian Festival is in full swing. The street is littered with people trying hard to have a good time. Morris looks around the crowd for Stephanie when he suddenly feels a hand on his shoulder.

JETSKI (O.C.)
Shit, Morrie old buddy, I didn't
know you were into this stuff.

Morris turns around and looks at Jetski. Jetski's liquored.

MORRIS
Jets-- Steven. Oh I'm just waiting.
For someone.

Morris starts to move.

MORRIS
Nice seeing you.

Jetski throws his arm around Morris and squeezes.

JETSKI
Where you going? Bloody Eagles,
baby. We've got to have a drink.

MORRIS
I would, but I'm waiting on
someone.

JETSKI
Who you waiting on, a girl?

MORRIS
Yeah, a girl.

JETSKI
Is she Ukrainian?

MORRIS
Down the line.

JETSKI
Does she have really big--

MORRIS
I should get going.

Morris turns to leave and runs directly into Andrea.

ANDREA
Surprise, right?

MORRIS
Andrea. What are you doing here?

ANDREA
(quietly)
Stalking you.

MORRIS
Really?

JETSKI
Sweet baby Judas, Bliss. Show some
manners. Who's the pretty filly?

Andrea looks at Jetski, then back to Morris.

ANDREA
So after last night, after our
drinks and that... *talking* we did,
what you said really sank in,
right?

MORRIS
What did I say?

ANDREA
Right, like you've forgotten. No,
your words really cut me to my
soul. So this morning I woke and
thought, "Andrea, time for
something new." So I went and got
my haircut. What do you think?

Andrea touches Morris on the chest.

JETSKI
Looks like the Professor has
finally got tenure.

Jetski steps up to Andrea, holds out his hand.

JETSKI
I'm the Axe. I'm sure the
Professor has told you all about
me.

Andrea looks at Jetski.

ANDREA
Right.
(to Morris)
I'd love to talk some more, but
George gets so jealous.

MORRIS
George is here?

ANDREA
Yeah.
(yells)
George, over here.

A huge man in a pink shirt with GEORGE written on it comes
lumbering over.

ANDREA
(to Morris)
I got him that shirt as a joke, but
he loves it, wears it all the time.

George approaches.

ANDREA
Georgie, you remember Morris,
right?

GEORGE
No.

ANDREA
Yes you do. I had drinks with him
last night. That's why I came home
so late.
(to Morris)
George was upset about that.

GEORGE
This is the guy?

ANDREA
This is him, my little Bliss. His
dad is real sick.

JETSKI

Professor, your dad's sick? You didn't tell me.

GEORGE

This is the guy.

ANDREA

Now Georgie, we talked about this.
(to Morris)
Drinks again, right? And more talk?

MORRIS

Right. Drinks.

ANDREA

And talk. Don't forget the talk.

MORRIS

Right, talk.

ANDREA

We got to run. Say goodbye, Georgie.

GEORGE

You're the guy.

Andrea steers George away. Both Morris and Jetski study her as she walks.

JETSKI

Bloody fucking Eagle, baby. I bet you gave her a taste of your talon.
(beat)
Be careful with that, Professor. You're flying high right now, but little Georgie looks like he could clip some wings.

STEPHANIE (O.C.)

Hello, Daddy.

Morris and Jetski turn to find Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

What are you looking at?

JETSKI

What? Stephanie. Hey, you know my good friend Morris. The Professor.

STEPHANIE

The Professor? You teach? I've been having some problems in my classes. Maybe you could tutor me.

JETSKI

You're having problems in school? You never told me.

STEPHANIE

You've never asked.

(to Morris)

So what do you teach, Professor?

MORRIS

I'm not really a professor.

STEPHANIE

So what are you then?

JETSKI

He's a Bloody Eagle, Stephanie. I've told you about him. Remember?

STEPHANIE

I might need a reminder.

She glares at Morris.

STEPHANIE

Oh, I remember now. I remember everything. You're my daddy's best friend from high school. You did everything together. Everything.

(beat)

So who was the woman you were talking to?

JETSKI

Nobody.

MORRIS

Nobody.

STEPHANIE

She didn't seem like a nobody. She seemed like she's probably a somebody.

Jetski pulls out his wallet, hands her a twenty.

JETSKI

Here, why don't you buy your friends an ice cream or something. The Professor and I have business to talk about.

Stephanie takes the money.

STEPHANIE

Does mom know you've been drinking?
You know how she hates it when
you've been drinking.

JETSKI

Stephanie, I'm the adult here--

STEPHANIE

And Morris. Morris is an adult.

JETSKI

Yes, the Professor is an adult.

STEPHANIE

And I'm just a child.

JETSKI

And you're the child, right.

Stephanie pushes her breast forward toward Morris.

STEPHANIE

But I won't always be a child.

JETSKI

Stephanie, what's gotten into you?

STEPHANIE

Morris.

There's an awkward pause.

STEPHANIE

(to Morris)

It's been nice meeting you.

Stephanie turns and prances off.

JETSKI

Christ... She's my own daughter and
even I don't understand her. She's
acting like, I don't know--

MORRIS

A woman.

JETSKI

Exactly. She's acting like a woman.
Pretty soon she'll be going out
with boys, and then...

(MORE)

JETSKI (cont'd)

God, I can't even think about it.
Can you believe she's got a date to
Prom? Some guy. She's bringing him
over for dinner tomorrow night.

MORRIS

Really, tomorrow?

JETSKI

And I'm going to tie that boy's ass
in a knot if he even tries to touch
her.

MORRIS

Right.

JETSKI

I mean, she's a good-looking girl,
right Professor? You wouldn't kick
her out of bed, would you?

(beat)

Sweet baby Judas, what am I saying?
You're a Bloody Eagle. But that
would be weird, right?

MORRIS

Yeah, weird.

(beat)

Look, Steven--

JETSKI

Axe. Call me Axe.

MORRIS

Axe. I need to... I need to go.

Morris turns to leave. Jetski grabs his arm.

JETSKI

What about the girl?

(beat)

The one you're waiting on.

MORRIS

Yeah, well, Bloody Eagles, right?

JETSKI

Bloody Eagles!

Jetski lets go of Morris's arm to pump his fist in the air.
Morris takes off. Just as he steps away from Jetski, Morris
pulls out his cell phone and dials.

MORRIS
(into phone)
Stephanie.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Your place. Now.

EXT. BLISS APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Stephanie sits waiting for Morris who comes hustling down the sidewalk.

STEPHANIE
Who are you dating, me or my dad?
And who was that tramp?

MORRIS
Not here.

He keeps moving past Stephanie to his door.

MORRIS
Come on.

STEPHANIE
What? You're taking me up to your
place? What about Daddy?

Morris holds the door open and throws her a look. Stephanie resists for a moment but gives in to the demand. She skulks past Morris and sticks out her tongue. She passes and Morris shakes his head.

INT. BLISS APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Morris pushes open the door and moves through the apartment toward his room, Stephanie in tow.

SEYMOUR
Mors, have you seen my keys?
(noticing Stephanie)
Oh. I see--

STEPHANIE
Hi Daddy.

MORRIS
Not now Dad.

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Morris leads Stephanie into his room.

STEPHANIE
You're hurting me.

He lets go of her arm.

MORRIS
Sorry.

STEPHANIE
No. I kinda like it.

MORRIS
Stephanie. This isn't working.

STEPHANIE
What's not working?

MORRIS
This. Us. You and me.

STEPHANIE
Are you breaking up with me? It
sounds like you're breaking up with
me.

MORRIS
No. I mean. It wasn't... It's just
not--

STEPHANIE
Did my dad put you up to this?

MORRIS
What? Jetski? Are you kidding me?
He can never know.

STEPHANIE
Why not?

MORRIS
It just wouldn't... I don't think
your dad would understand about...

Morris looks at her and slows himself down.

MORRIS
Look. I like you. I do. You're fun
and....

STEPHANIE

And what?

MORRIS

Stephanie. It was mistake. An oversight. We had sex. Two fancy animals doing what animals do. An act of nature. I think we should end the relationship before the emotions get tangled.

Stephanie looks at him for a moment.

STEPHANIE

Your emotions are getting tangled?

MORRIS

Well. Yeah. Kind of.

STEPHANIE

So, when you see me you can't control the animal in you?

MORRIS

Something like that.

STEPHANIE

It's okay.

(beat)

You know, you remind me of this puppy I once had. He'd always cry when I'd leave and hump my leg when I would come home.

(beat)

But I always loved him. Until he got run over.

MORRIS

I don't think you're understanding what I'm saying.

STEPHANIE

Yes I do. I understand.

Stephanie notices the map is down.

STEPHANIE

You took your map down.

MORRIS

Yeah, I just... It was time.

Stephanie moves to the photo of Morris's mother. Her underwear is resting beside it. She picks up the photo.

STEPHANIE

Where was this picture taken?

MORRIS

Greece. That's where my mother was from.

STEPHANIE

Greece? There's a lot of sun there, right? And naked beaches? We should go there. You and me.

Morris grabs the photo from her.

MORRIS

Stephanie. You're not understanding me.

She turns and looks at him.

STEPHANIE

Yes I am. I'm too much woman for you. And that scares you. That and you find it weird that I'm your best friend's daughter. And that you're so old you'll be dead way before me.

(beat)

By the time I'm old enough to go clubbing you'll be ready to retire... If you had a job.

Stephanie spots the record Morris bought the day they met. She picks it up.

STEPHANIE

I'm not dumb, you know. I know what's happening here.

(beat)

You're not the only one who's changed, you know.

Stephanie holds up the album.

STEPHANIE

Remember this?

(beat)

Remember how I kissed you?

(beat)

Remember what we did after that?

MORRIS
How can I forget?

STEPHANIE
Wow, this really sucks. I feel like
one of those chocolate Easter
rabbits. All hollow inside. But hey
it's all part of growing up right?
(beat)
Two animals doing what animals do.
(beat)
What doesn't kill you...

MORRIS
Only makes you stronger.

She extends a hand.

STEPHANIE
Nice knowing you... Professor.

Morris hesitates a moment before extending his hand.
Stephanie gives him a couple firm shakes, then lets go. She
hands him the album, nods, then heads to the door. She stops
abruptly, moves back to the bureau, grabs her underwear and
exits.

STEPHANIE (O.C.)
(to Seymour)
Bye Daddy!

Morris hears the front door close. He looks down at the album
in his hands. After a moment he moves to his bureau, looks at
the photo then reaches past the photo and grabs a pin. He
looks at the place on the wall where the map used to hang. He
reaches up and sticks the pin into the wall.

EXT. BLISS APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Morris exits his apartment building and stands on his stoop.
He doesn't know which way to go. He notices all his
building's trash cans overturned.

A cab pulls up. NJ hops out.

NJ
(to cabbie)
Keep the change my man and pop the
trunk!

The trunk pops. NJ heads to the trunk to retrieve his bags.

MORRIS

Since when do you take cabs?

NJ looks up, spots Morris then turns away.

NJ

I don't talk to strangers.

Morris hustles over to NJ and helps him with his bag.

MORRIS

Come on NJ. Let me help.

NJ

Don't expect a tip.

Morris grabs a bag and carries it to the stoop.

MORRIS

So, you're really going? Out to the wild west to heard buffalo?

NJ

Buffali, man. I told you.

MORRIS

Right. I forgot.

NJ

Forgot? How about not believed?

MORRIS

I believed. Come on man, let me buy you a beer. Let's not leave on a bad note.

NJ stops for a moment, then nods.

NJ

Okay. Give me a minute.

NJ grabs the bag from Morris and enters the building with his own set of keys.

INT. THE OLD HOMEPLATE - MOMENTS LATER

Morris and NJ sit on stools as two beers are placed in front of them. Morris pulls out some money.

NJ

I got it, man.

NJ pulls out a wad of hundred-dollar bills and hands Mrs. Cruxo one.

MORRIS
Holy shit, where'd you get that?

NJ
Hattie's dad. Little walking around money.

NJ peels off five bills and sets them before Morris.

NJ
Here.

MORRIS
Five hundred bucks?

NJ
Christ man. You *have* been keeping a tab.

He peels off three more hundreds and plops them down.

MORRIS
Eight hundred dollars.

NJ
Don't get greedy on me, man. No way I owe you more than that.

Mrs. Cruxo brings the change from the hundred. NJ slides a twenty toward her.

MORRIS
So this is all real?

NJ
What's real is real man. Sorry you're not able to see that.

MORRIS
So the guy who was always broke is now a member of some big money cult?

NJ
Cartel, not cult. And not broke man, just frugal. And I'm not a member yet. Just a junior member on trial probation. Got to go through a rite of passage.

MORRIS

Like what, sitting naked on a block of ice for an hour or something?

NJ

This isn't some tree house gang, man. This is for real. I already told you what the initiation is. I have to prompt a coup in some Third World country.

MORRIS

And if you can't pull it off?

NJ

Style counts for a lot. Guy can get in strictly on style.

(beat)

You still don't believe me.

(beat)

Open your eyes man, listen to the world. Read the papers. Guy's going for initiation tonight. Knocking over Zambia.

(beat)

Hattie will tell you.

MORRIS

Yeah? When do I get to meet this Hattie?

NJ

You been sending checks to her every month, at least your dad has.

(beat)

She owns your building.

MORRIS

She owns my building?

NJ

That and about fifty others in the city.

(beat)

Her family's got the kind of money other money stops and stares at.

NJ looks over Morris's shoulder toward the door.

NJ

Hey. Isn't that the asshole we went to high school with? He looks like shit.

Morris turns and sees Jetski who has definitely had a few more beers and is feeling it.

JETSKI

I'm calling you out Bliss.

NJ

(realizing)

Jetski.

(to Morris)

He's calling you out, man.

MORRIS

Yeah. Thanks. I heard.

NJ

You gonna need help on this?

MORRIS

I don't think so.

NJ

You sure, man. He seems pretty pissed, but then I'd be pretty pissed too if you fucked my fifteen year old daughter.

MORRIS

She's eighteen.

JETSKI

Got a score to settle with you.
I've got your number. Gonna punch your ticket.

(beat)

Are you coming out or am I going to have to drag you out?

NJ

Something I learned in Calcutta.
He's gonna take a swing at you man and when he does, lean into the punch. Go at him like he's his daughter, like you want a kiss.

Morris gets up from his stool.

MORRIS

When have you ever been to Calcutta?

EXT. THE OLD HOMEPLATE - MOMENTS LATER

Jetski's followed by Morris. NJ stops at the door.

JETSKI

She told me everything. Told me
all about the two of you. You
betrayed me, Bliss. A fellow
Bloody Eagle and you betrayed me.
My own daughter!

MORRIS

Steven, listen, I--

JETSKI

My own daughter. You fucked me--

NJ

And your daughter.

MORRIS

(to NJ)

NJ, please, let me handle--

JETSKI

She doesn't love you, Bliss.

Jetski throws a wadded piece of paper at Morris. Morris
picks it up. It reads I DON'T LOVE YOU, STEPHANIE.

JETSKI

Read it and weep, fellow Eagle.

Morris studies the note a moment.

MORRIS

Okay.

JETSKI

Okay what? What's okay?

MORRIS

Just okay. You, us, Stephanie--

JETSKI

Don't say her name!

MORRIS

I just meant--

JETSKI

Don't try taking my daughter from me!

MORRIS

I haven't taken anything.

NJ

Except her virginity.

MORRIS

I didn't take that.

JETSKI

Are you calling my daughter--

MORRIS

I'm not calling her anything. All I'm saying is--

Jetski charges at Morris, swinging. Morris steps into the punch as NJ advised. Jetski's swing loops around Morris in an awkward hug. Both men fall to the ground, rolling about. Jetski catches Morris with a punch to his left eye. Morris struggles, finally pins Jetski to the ground, making it impossible for the man to move.

Jetski starts crying.

JETSKI

Don't take her from me, Bliss.
Don't take my daughter. Don't take that from me.

Morris cautiously gets up. Jetski stumbles to his feet.

MORRIS

Steven, I really--

JETSKI

Shut up. And stay away from my family, Bliss. I'll kill you. I swear, I'll kill you.

Jetski staggers off, crying.

NJ

That was weird, man. You got something on your face.

NJ hands him a silk kerchief. Morris wipes his face.

NJ
No, man, the other side.

Morris wipes the other side. The kerchief comes away with blood.

MORRIS
Jesus, I'm bleeding.

Morris and NJ head back in. No one notices anything has happened. The two sit back at the bar.

NJ
(speaking past Morris)
Hattie, man, you just missed it.
My boy Morris just served up a
serious beating, a la carte.

Hattie studies Morris.

HATTIE
Your face is bleeding.

Morris dabs his face again.

HATTIE
(to NJ)
Let's go.

MORRIS
Have we met before? You live in my
building, right?

NJ
She owns your building, man.

HATTIE
NJ, we don't speak like that.
That's something we don't speak
about.

MORRIS
You own my building?

HATTIE
I own some things. My family owns
other things.

NJ
Hattie's family owns a big chunk of-

HATTIE
NJ. Stop.

MORRIS
(to Hattie)
I know you.

HATTIE
No you don't.
(beat)
Your face is still bleeding.
(to NJ)
Let's leave.

MORRIS
The construction site. Saturday.
That's how I know you.

Hattie freezes for a moment.

HATTIE
You must have gotten hit pretty
hard. You're confusing me with
someone else.
(to NJ)
We're leaving. Now.

NJ
Jetski did catch you pretty bad,
man. You don't look so good.

NJ stands, gives Morris a big hug.

NJ
I'll send you some buffali hide,
man. Keep safe.

Hattie and Morris stare at each other a moment before Hattie leads NJ out by the hand.

Morris watches the two leave, looks around the bar, then looks at the half empty beers. He glances up and spots Mrs. Cruxo looking his way. She raises an eyebrow in a "come hither" way. Morris half smiles.

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Morris wakes from the early morning sun. He is naked and has a black eye. He sits up and takes a moment to get his bearings. He looks up at the pin stuck in the wall.

INT. KITCHEN - BLISS APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Morris pulls the coffee container out from the cabinet just as there is a knock on the door.

MORRIS

Shit.

FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Morris pulls the door open. Andrea is standing there.

MORRIS

Andrea?

ANDREA

Right, so that looks like it hurts.
Listen, I was talking to Georgie
last night and I told him
everything.

MORRIS

Everything?

ANDREA

Right, and he was pretty upset. But
I explained everything and he has
something to tell you.

Andrea scoots out of the way and George, still wearing his pink "George" t-shirt moves in front of Morris.

MORRIS

George.

GEORGE

Like she said I was pissed. And
usually when I'm pissed I hit
things.

MORRIS

Look George I--

GEORGE

I'm talking here!

Morris nods.

MORRIS

Sorry.

GEORGE

So, like I was saying. I was pissed
but Andrea explained it all to me
and I really wanted to...

George trails off and looks over at Andrea.

ANDREA

Go ahead.

GEORGE

(to Morris)
I want to say thanks.

MORRIS

You're welcome.

ANDREA

Good boy Georgie.
(to Morris)
I explained to him how I was
telling you about feeling
unappreciated and how you
encouraged me to express that to
Georgie. Right?

GEORGE

I certainly appreciated her last
night.

ANDREA

Georgie.
(beat)
So I just want to thank you as
well. For listening. And talking.

MORRIS

Anytime.

ANDREA

Okay. We got to run. Right?

Andrea moves away with George following. Morris watches as
they head down the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN - BLISS APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Morris opens the coffee container and sees that it's empty.

MORRIS

Shit.

INT. GROCERY STORE - MORNING

Morris places various items on the checkout conveyer belt as the CHECKOUT GIRL scans the items.

MORRIS

Oh. And a paper too.

EXT. SIDEWALK - EAST FIFTH STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Morris strolls along, newspaper under his arm, carrying groceries. He sees NJ and Hattie exit his apartment building and move to a limo double parked.

Hattie climbs into the limo as the driver helps NJ place their bags into the trunk.

MORRIS

(calling)

NJ!

NJ doesn't hear Morris and climbs into the limo. Morris hustles to catch them before they pull away. He gets to the back window just as it starts to move and raps on it. The limo stops sharply and the back window slides down.

MORRIS

Shit, you weren't kidding. You're really going.

HATTIE

We're late.

NJ

Ouch! Jetski did punch your ticket, huh?

MORRIS

Fancy animals. Right?

(beat)

Hey, that first time we met. You were the rock and I was Mark Spitz. I saved you.

NJ

The one thing I learned in prison in Haiti man is that keeping a hundred percent true to a tale isn't what's important. It's the story that's important. The moral.

(MORE)

NJ (cont'd)
 Whether it lingers and lives on
 after it's been told. That, man, is
 what's important.

The two friends look at each other.

NJ
 Page 12.

MORRIS
 Huh?

NJ
 Page 12.

NJ points to the paper under Morris's arm.

HATTIE
 Drive driver.

The limo pulls away as Morris takes the paper out from under
 his arm and opens it up to page 12.

PAPER READS:

"Failed Coup in Zambia"

Morris shakes his head, glances down and notices another
 headline.

"ES'SEX' STREET SCANDAL"

MORRIS
 Son of a bitch.

Morris looks up and watches the limo disappear around the
 corner.

MORRIS
 Prison in Haiti?

INT. KITCHEN - BLISS APARTMENT - LATER

Morris is sitting at the table drinking coffee and reading
 the paper. The gift-wrapped album is on the table. Seymour
 enters.

MORRIS
 Happy Birthday Dad.

SEYMOUR
 (noticing the black eye)
 What the hell happened to you?

MORRIS
I made a choice.

SEYMOUR
A bad choice.

He hands Seymour the present.

SEYMOUR
You remembered?

Seymour looks at it for a second then sets it down on the counter and pours a cup of coffee. He opens the cabinet for some sugar and finds the groceries.

SEYMOUR
Finally got the groceries.

MORRIS
Some things take awhile.
(beat)
Aren't you gonna open it?

Seymour finishes making his coffee, grabs the present and moves to the table. He sits opposite Morris and unwraps it.

SEYMOUR
God, where did you find this?

MORRIS
You like it?

SEYMOUR
Your mom and me used to listen to
this all the time.
(beat)
I can't believe you remembered.

Pause

SEYMOUR
Thanks.

MORRIS
You're welcome.

Seymour gets up and leaves the room. Morris sits, unsure what to do. A few moments later Seymour returns with a shoebox.

SEYMOUR
You might be interested in this.

Morris opens the shoebox and pulls out old letters and photographs of his mother.

SEYMOUR

It's your mom's. Letters I wrote her and she wrote me.

(beat)

I was your age when she died.

Morris stops on a picture of his mother and another woman in the same location as the photo in his room.

MORRIS

Who is this with Mom?

Seymour looks.

SEYMOUR

That's your Aunt Christina.

MORRIS

God. Whatever happened to her?

SEYMOUR

Got married, had a kid, and moved back to Greece.

(beat)

Sorry you didn't get to know your mother's family. Though it's just as well. Christina was always okay with me but not your grandparents.

(beat)

They never forgave your mother for marrying me. Didn't even show at the funeral.

Pause

MORRIS

Do you have her number?

SEYMOUR

Who?

MORRIS

Aunt Christina.

EXT. TRAVEL AGENCY - DAY - TWO WEEKS LATER

Morris exits, his black eye now healed, envelope in hand.

INT. BLISS APARTMENT - DAY

Morris enters the apartment. He hears the television. As he moves to his bedroom he catches a glimpse of Seymour sitting in his recliner.

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - DAY

Morris enters and places the envelope from the travel agency on his bureau next to the picture of his mother. He looks up and discovers his map, taped back together, and hanging on the wall. A single pin is sticking in Greece. Morris smiles, takes a moment, looks at the picture of his mother, grabs it and moves to an open suitcase on his bed. He places the photo into the suitcase and zips it shut.

INT. FRONT ROOM - BLISS APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Morris enters from his room carrying luggage. Seymour looks up.

MORRIS

I'm going.

SEYMOUR

You got everything?

MORRIS

Think so.

(beat)

Need anything before I go?

SEYMOUR

I'm good.

MORRIS

Okay then.

Morris takes a moment then heads to the door.

SEYMOUR

Mors.

Morris turns around.

SEYMOUR

Have you seen my keys?

Morris walks over to his father. He pulls his keys from his pocket and holds them out. Father and Son look at each other. Morris hands him his keys.

CUT TO BLACK.